

# NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #29

## FIRING & TRANSPORTING POTTERY

### PLANNING YOUR PIECE

- Mark the bottom of your work with your name and clay type (code).
- The ideal maximum thickness for hand built pottery is 1 - 1½ cm. Radical variations in the thickness of pottery items will promote uneven heating and therefore, cracking. Keep checking the thickness of your piece as you go along and rectify unevenness before the piece dries hard.
- Very thick or solid pottery is hard to dry fully and therefore will not fire successfully (i.e. it cracks, explodes) due to trapped moisture heating and expanding inside the work.
- Make sure your work will fit into the kiln or on the kiln shelves you have.

### DRYING YOUR WORK

- The a) more joins, b) larger the piece or c) more uneven or variable the thickness of a piece, the more chance there is of cracking occurring in drying.
- DRYING SHOULD BE SLOWED BY PUTTING PIECES INTO A PLASTIC BAG AND TAKING UP TO 2 WEEKS FOR SLOW AND EVEN DRYING.
- Never 'rapid dry' clay because it has a memory for the stresses which are created in making and these, coupled with uneven drying, can cause major disasters.
- Never expose drying pottery to extreme cold or hot or variable conditions (i.e. never leave near frosty windows in winter or draughty doorways in hot summer).

### FIRING

- NEVER FIRE MOIST POTTERY!
- Always know your clay type and glaze type – is it earthenware, mid-fire or stoneware/porcelain? The clay bag or glaze bottle will tell you. Always use earthenware glaze with earthenware clays, stoneware glaze with stoneware clays etc.
- Never put glaze on the bottom of pots. Start glaze ½ cm up from the base of the pot; this ensures that there is no chance of excess glaze running and sticking your work to the kiln shelves.
- Always read the application instructions on glazes and underglazes and follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Do not over fire glazes.
- Always fire slower if you are doubtful about the firing rate required for your piece (approximately 50°C/hr is a good conservative rate).

### TRANSPORTING UNFIRED POTTERY

- Newspaper is not always a good wrapping product for transporting unfired pottery because it can often damage fragile work.
- Pizza boxes are very useful for transporting slabs/plates/flat ware.
- Stockings filled with sawdust can be useful packing. So can straw, shredded newspaper etc.
- Never pack layer upon layer of pottery into a box unless the largest and heaviest work is at the bottom and lightest at the top.
- Only transport pieces in rigid boxes, not flexible ones that allow the work to move and break.

### TRANSPORTING FIRED POTTERY

- Use bubblewrap, newspaper, towels and quality, robust packing materials. Ensure the packing box is packed tight with work so that nothing moves in transit. Making a fake wall inside a packing box is helpful in taking any knocks in transit.
- Check the Yellow Pages phone book for professional packers if sending work overseas etc. They will use wooden crates and specialty spray foam products to surround odd shaped works.
- Insure your work!

©Northcote Pottery Supplies

NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES PTY LTD  
142 – 144 WESTON STREET BRUNSWICK EAST 3057  
PHONE: 9387 3911 FAX: 9387 4011  
INFO@NORTHCOTEPOTTERYSUPPLIES.COM.AU

MON-FRI 9.00AM TO 5.00PM SAT 9.00AM TO 4.00PM SUN CLOSED

**[www.northcotepottersupplies.com.au](http://www.northcotepottersupplies.com.au)**