

**NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #4**

SLIP CASTING

SLIP PREPARATION – COMMERCIAL SLIP

- Ensure that the slip is thoroughly stirred – use a long stick at least 1" wide (paddle) for approximately 4 minutes.
- Always stir to the bottom of the bucket.
- Make sure your slip is of the correct type (earthenware, stoneware, mid-fire, porcelain, terracotta) for the work you intend to make.
- Stinky/Smelly is desirable for plasticity but you can mask the odour with a small amount of household bleach (25ml/per 10L bucket of slip).
- Ensure that no "clags" of leather hard, dry slip go back into the casting bucket.
- Always keep lid on the bucket when not in use – even during casting.

MOULD PREPARATION

- New moulds should initially be sponged lightly before use.
- All moulds must be completely dry before use.
- If older moulds develop white fur, this should be brushed off with a dry, coarse paintbrush before casting.
- The "face" of each mould should be perfectly clean (free of old clay, dust etc.) – sponge if necessary (the day before casting).
- Place mould sections together, strap and hold up to the light – if you can see the daylight, the mould is not properly fitted together (check for stray bits of clay on the locking devices "natches").
- Each mould has a life of approximately 100 casts. Past this, they will begin to lose detail and the seams enlarge.

CASTING

- Place all prepared moulds on a bench. Take a large jug and pour some casting slip into the jug (rather than dipping the jug into the bucket).
- Pour the casting slip slowly into the bottom of the mould (not down the walls) till the mould is full. Top up till meniscus forms.
- Sit the mould for an appropriate time until the firm slip (cast) forms up on the inside walls of the mould (approximately 30 minutes). Casting times vary according to weather, mould condition etc.
- Empty the excess slip out of the mould into the original slip bucket (through a 30-40# sieve preferably).
- Invert the mould to drain at an angle.
- Approximately 1 hour later, turn the mould up and use a plastic picnic knife to trim the "spare" (excess clay at the top of the mould shape). **DO NOT USE A METAL KNIFE BECAUSE YOU WILL DAMAGE THE MOULD.**
- Take the bands/straps off the mould and lie the mould on one side, carefully lift off the top half of the mould evenly and without ripping the cast apart.
- Keep the cast sitting in half of the mould for a further 15 minutes before removing the cast completely from the mould.
- Re-band/strap the mould and continue casting, or keep mould parts separate to dry until next occasion.

CLEANUP

- "Fettle" (trim) the joins off the cast to remove the "seams" – a metal bladed knife is fine for this.
- Trim the "spare" (excess) at the opening to the cast to achieve a suitable, even finish.
- Sponge "seams" and "spare" using clean water and small sponge till smooth.
- Allow to dry as for any other pottery item.
- If you are using 2 different temperatures/types of casting slip in the one studio, it is a good idea to colour one with food colouring to tell them apart. It can also help if each piece has E/W, S/W, M/F etc. engraved on the bottom.
- Glaze and decorate as appropriate for the slip type.

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