

HANDBUILDING TECHNIQUES - SLAB

Technical Tips and
Product Information

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- Making the slab is done from a cube of clay not a slab cut directly off the block.
- Place the cube on a non-absorbent surface (timber, hessian etc.) and beat it with the heel of your clenched fist starting in the centre of the block and working out slowly to the edges. Turn the thick slab over and do the same to the other side. This evenly de-stresses the clay and starts your slab.
- Neaten the slab by using a rolling pin on both sides to smooth the surface until the slab is 1cm thick. Make as many slabs as required to make your form. Do not cut any shapes from the slab at this stage. Leave the slabs uncovered overnight (not in a heated room) to become leather-hard, but not dry.
- Next day, using a paper/card template placed on the slabs, cut all the form pieces from the firm clay slabs. All slabs should be equally firm and of the same thickness and moisture content. If making slab boxes, you will have to 'mitre' the edges of the slabs to fit together (45° angle) with a sharp knife. This will give an attractive corner join.
- To join the slabs, mash up some soft clay with a little water to toothpaste consistency. Apply this mix to each surface and scratch/score till the 'slip' or 'slurry' mixes with the clay slab. Press joins together firmly. You may need to apply a coil of moist clay to the inside of the join if it doesn't meet neatly. Then run your finger along the join to smear the coil into the rest of the slab. Use this technique on every join until the complete form is put together.
- Always dry slab forms very slowly (2 weeks) inside a plastic bag on a board. Sometimes it helps to sticky tape around your form to hold it in place till it dries just in case it wants to warp.
- Large slab forms (especially those with large bases) are best fired on a bed of coarse grog. This allows heat to penetrate between the slab form and the kiln shelf so that the form is heated evenly, and doesn't crack in firing.

RECOMMENDED CLAY FOR THIS ACTIVITY

Beginners: PS2000 Terracotta, PS3010 Stoneware, WEB White Earthenware.

Experienced: PS4080 Fine White Earthenware, PS10 Porcelain, PS5000 Earthenware/Stoneware Blend.

