

ART FUNDAMENTALS

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CLAY TERMS

CLAY

- **Comes from the earth**
- **Not sand, dirt or other stuff**
- **Can be dug up in moist form or in southwest if found in dried powdered form**

CLAY BODIES/TYPES

Earthenware is low fire pottery (below cone 03) usually red or tan in color with an absorbency of from 5 to 20 percent. It is fairly porous. Found in the Great Lakes region.

Stoneware is very plastic medium-high fire pottery (cone 5-10) usually buff to gray colored with medium porosity. Found in New York, New Jersey and the Midwest. Similar to porcelain except that it has increased plasticity and the color.

Porcelain is a hard, nonabsorbent clay that is whit and translucent. In both types of porcelain the bisque is low fired and the glaze is high fired generally to cone 14-16. Used for high-end china.

CLAY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Plasticity** is the flexibility of clay or the quality of clay that allows it to be manipulated and still maintaining its shape without cracking or sagging.
- **Porosity** is the how much water the clay is able to absorb. This is important in determining whether or not clay is dry.
- **Shrinkage:** the most plastic clays shrink the most. Shrinkage occurs as clay dries, when it's fired and when it's glazed. Building strong joints and seams that consider this contraction or shrinkage will prevent cracking.

CLAY STAGES

- **Greenware:** is pottery that has not been fired yet.
- **Leather Hard:** is the condition of the raw ware when most of the moisture has left the body but it is still plastic enough to be carved or joined.
- **Bone Dry:** is the condition of the raw ware when all moisture has left the body and it can no longer be carved or joined. Clay is most fragile at this stage and great care should be taken when handling it.
- **Bisqueware:** is clay that has been fired once to harden it. It has not yet been glazed at this point, but could include some slip decorations.
- **Finished** is how you choose to complete your pot. This step could include glazing, painting or in some instances nothing at all.

HAND BUILDING TECHNIQUES

- **Pinching** using your hand and fingers to literally pinch out a form.
- **Coil** is when the pot is built with a series of rolled coils of clay that are joined together and then smoothed or left showing.
- **Slab** is when flat thin (1/4-1/2 inch thick) slabs of clay are rolled out and used to form the walls of the sculpture/pot. It is important to make sure the joints/seams of slab building are strong.

OTHER

- **Kiln** is used to fire clay at high temperatures.
- **Slip** is liquid clay used to decorate and/or join pieces together
- **Score** is when the surface of the clay is scratched or carved into slightly to create a better bond when joining coils or slabs.
- **Wedge** is when clay is first dug out of the ground/bucket. The process blends the clay and eliminates air bubbles.