

Ceramics: Glossary of words you need to understand

- Bone dry** Very dry clay that will no longer feel cool on touch. Likened to dried out bone that have been in the sun and have no moisture left.
- Burnish** Make a surface shiny and compact by polishing with a smooth, rounded tool. This also helps to seal the clay and make it waterproof.
- Calgon** Used as a water softener. Also used to separate clay particles in liquid form, to make the slip known as terra sigillata.
- Dust mask** Mask that helps you stop breathing in dust. Usually made of paper.
- Kiln shelves & props** Ceramic work is placed on shelves inside the kiln. Props higher than the work packed on the shelves make legs for the next shelf to be placed on top. Made of special ceramic material, these are also known as kiln furniture.
- Leather-hard** Leather-hard is firm but still able to be worked a little. It will still feel damp and cool, and will keep its shape when turned over.
- Leather heat proof gloves** These are special safety gloves to be used when using a kiln. Available from ceramic suppliers.
- Levigation** The separation of lighter and heavier particles within a liquid using a special substance which floats the light particles while sinking the heavier. Substances used include water softeners such as calgon, and sodium silicate.
- Occupational health & safety** Understanding health risks and how to work safely in different areas of work.

Plastic	Describes clay when it is able to be moved into a shape, and keeps that shape.
Pyrometric cones	Small cones made of ceramic material that give a very exact reading of heat that ceramic work has received inside a kiln. They have numbers on their side to show what temperatures they are to be used for.
Relief	A surface that has higher and lower areas.
Respirator	A mask that seals over the mouth and nose, allowing breathing through special cartridges. These can be either to filter fumes or very fine dust. Will give greater protection than a dust mask.
Safety goggles	These should be worn at all times when looking inside hot kiln. They should have green glass in them like welding glasses. Wearing them will prevent serious damage to your eyes.
Shellac	A type of estapol or varnish made of beetle wings. It is often used on furniture but it can be used to paint onto dry clay as a resist.
Sodium silicate	Used also to make terra sigillata.
Terra Sigillata	a very fine clay slip where heavier, coarser particles are separated from fine particles by sieving or levigation . It makes a very smooth, slightly shiny slip. Can be made from clay of any colour. Used in ancient Greek pottery for making different colours. Also helped clay become waterproof before the discovery of glazes. Terra means from the earth, sigillata the separated fine slip.