

**Ceramics: Terra Sigillatta.** A way to make Terra Sigillatta.

**EQUIPMENT: What you will need.**

		
<p>Calgon (Water softener) or sodium silicate</p>	<p>Plastic containers with lids</p>	<p>Dust mask</p>
		
<p>Buckets</p>	<p>water</p>	<p>6 Cups bone dry clay in powder form or in very fine pieces</p>

## Glossary: words you need to understand

- Bone dry .** Very dry clay that will no longer feel cool on touch. Likened to dried out bones that have been in the sun and have no moisture left.
- Calgon.** Used as a water softener. Also used to separate clay particles in liquid form, to make the slip known as terra sigillata.
- Terra Sigillata** A very fine clay slip where heavier, coarser particles are separated from fine particles by sieving or levigation. 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.
- 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.

## Terra Sigillatta

### Water

Measure 6 cups of water into container.



### Water softener

Measure 3 teaspoons of calgon or sodium silicate, add to water and stir well.



### Dust Mask

Wearing dust mask, sprinkle 6 cups of powdered clay on top of water.



### Mix

Stir well.



### Leave to sit

Let the mixture sit for at least 36 hours (one and a half days).

After 36 hours, the mixture will have separated into 3 layers.



### Scoop off water

The top one is very watery. Carefully scoop it out with a cup.

**Throw it away.**



### Middle layer

The middle layer is the special terra sigillata.

Scoop out the terra sigillata.

**Keep it.**



### Store Terra Sigillata

Put it in a plastic container. Put a lid on, so that it will stay wet.

Throw out the bottom, heavy layer.



### Ready to use

You now have a beautiful, satin smooth **terra sigillata**, or **slip**, ready to apply to your clay work.

It may be used in some very special ways.



## Tips: Terra Sigillata

The completed mixture should be like runny custard. If it is too thin, leave the lid off so that some water evaporates. If it dries out too much, add more water in small amounts at a time.

Terra sigillatta means very fine clay. It has been used for thousands of years.

- it makes a smooth, slightly shiny surface over the clay you are using.
- it may be a different colour than the main clay body.

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- it will help make the clay waterproof once it is fired.
  - it can be used to paint design, or to paint over the whole pot.
  - Use it without a glaze.
  - Fire it no higher than 1000 degrees celcius and it will stay slightly shiny.
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## Recipe for making Terra Sigillata

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6 cups of powdered clay.

6 cups of water.

3 teaspoons of calgon (water softener) or soda ash.

Sieves can be used instead of the calgon or soda ash. The clay/ water mix is passed through sieves of smaller and smaller sizes, until the mixture is as fine as the one separated by the calgon .You will need to end up with a very fine sieve.