

# Ceramics and Pottery

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## Ceramic Terms to Know

### Handbuilding Terms

→ **Handbuilding** This term refers to the one of several techniques of building pots using the only the hands and simple tools rather than the potters wheel. The term used for creating pottery using the potter's wheel is "throwing".

→ **Pinch** "Pinch" in ceramics is a method of shaping clay by inserting the thumb of one hand into the clay and lightly pinching with the thumb and fingers while slowly rotating the ball in the palm of the other hand. [See [resources](#) for links to tutorials on how to create. See the Assignment 2 page for [examples](#) of pinch pots.] Pots made in this manner are called "pinch pots".

→ **Coil** This is the technique of building ceramic forms by rolling out coils, or ropes, of clay and joining them together with the fingers or a tool. (How to do this can be found at <http://www.jhpottery.com/tutorial/coil.htm> and <http://www.jhpottery.com/tutorial/scoil.htm>.)

→ **Slip** Slip is liquid clay. The easiest way to make slip is to gradually sift or spoon dry, powder clay into a small cup of water. Stir well as you add because it will tend to thicken up after it sits for a minute or two. You want it to be about the consistency of thick cream.

→ **Score and Slip** *Score and slip* refers to a method of joining two pieces of clay together. First, *score* the clay; this means that you make scratches in the surfaces that will be sticking together. Then you *slip* it; that is you wet the surface with some slip, using it like glue. Next, you press the two pieces together. It is very important to always *score and slip* clay that is leather hard. If you do not, the pieces will likely pop apart when they are fired.

**Molding** In this technique, flat slabs of clay are pressed into molds in order to create various shapes or forms.

### → Stages of Dryness

When speaking of clay, we refer to three basic stages of dryness: wet, leather hard and bone dry. They are self-explanatory.

## Decorative Techniques and Terms

### → Sgraffito

Sgraffito is a decorating technique developed centuries ago. In its simplest embodiment, leather-hard clay is coated with an engobe or slip of contrasting color and then a pattern or picture is added by carving through or scraping off the slip to reveal the clay underneath. [More examples of sgraffito pottery](#), [Howto Tutorial](#).

### → Wax Resist

In this decorative technique, patterns or designs are created by brushing a wax medium over an area of clay, slip, or glaze to resist the final glaze application when the wax is dry.

### Slip Trailing

*Slip trailing* is another decoration method. Slip (a liquid clay) is applied to the greenware through a tube or nozzle, much like icing a cake. [See a demonstration here](#). [Example of a casserole dish decorated with slip trailing](#).

### Stamping

This is the technique of pressing forms into the clay to get decorative effects. [Examples of shell stamped Early Native American pottery](#).

### Majolica

Below is the definition from [encyclopedia.com](http://encyclopedia.com)

(mejol' ike, mejol' -) or maiolica [from [Majorca](#) ], type of [faience](#) usually associated with wares produced in Spain, Italy, and Mexico. The process of making majolica consists of first firing a piece of earthenware, then applying a tin enamel that upon drying forms a white opaque porous surface. A design is then painted on and a transparent glaze applied. Finally the piece is fired again. This type of ware was produced in the ancient Middle East by the Babylonians, and the method remained continuously in use. It was extensively employed by the Hispano-Moresque potters of the 14th cent. By the mid-15th cent. majolica was popular in Italy, where it became justly famous through the decorations of the [Della Robbia](#) family. The method is still widely used in folk art.

**Bibliography:** See G. Liverani, *Five Centuries of Italian Majolica* (tr. 1960); M. Barnes and R. May, *Mexican Majolica in Northern New Spain* (1980).

[Examples of Majolica roosters](#).

This refers to a method of creating designs by folding different colored clays together into "rods" or bars, then slicing them as if you were slicing rolled cookies. This duplicates a design over and over for each slice.

### Mille Fiore

Here is a YouTube demonstration showing how "Mille Fiori" as a ceramic decoration technique might be used in ceramics. The artist is Curtis Benzle. His work is advanced, but it is a wonderful demonstration of what's possible with ceramics. It is shown in 3 parts: [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#) and [part 4](#).

## Firing Processes and Terms Dealing with Firing

→ **Firing** This is the process of heating the pottery to a specific temperature in order to bring about a particular change in the clay or the surface.

→ **Bisque** The term *bisque* refers to ceramic ware that has been fired once without glaze.

→ **Greenware** This refers to ceramic ware that has not been fired.

→ **Glaze** A glass-like surface coating for ceramics that is used to decorate and seal the pores of the fired clay.

→ **Reduction** A kiln firing in which there is insufficient oxygen to consume the free carbon emanating from the heated glaze and clay, resulting in the formation of carbon monoxide. Oxygen-starved carbon monoxide pulls oxygen from the clay body and glaze, forming color changes in the coloring oxides.

→ **Oxidation** A kiln firing with a full supply of oxygen (as opposed to a reduction firing). Electric kilns are this type.

**Raku** Raku is a method of firing pottery that takes a ceramic piece in its raw state, greenware, and quickly (in 45 minutes to an hour rather than 8 to 18 hours) takes the temperature up to almost 2000 degrees. Examples and explanations:

<http://members.shaw.ca/daniel51/artstudio/raku.htm>  
[www.guild.com](http://www.guild.com) (Search for "raku".)  
[The Japanese Connection Glossary](#)

## Parts of a Vase

Note: The parts of a vase correspond to the parts of a human body. See [Parts of a Vase](#)

- **Mouth**    The opening at the top of a vase.
- **Neck**    The (usually) narrower part that leads from the body of the vase to the mouth.
- **Body**    This is the main part of the vase. It is usually the largest part.
- **Foot**    This is the part of the vase that meets the floor.

### Ceramics Glossaries

[iweb.tntech.edu/wpitelka/syllabi-handouts/handouts/glossary\\_of\\_ceramic\\_terminology.htm](http://iweb.tntech.edu/wpitelka/syllabi-handouts/handouts/glossary_of_ceramic_terminology.htm)

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