

# HANDBUILDING at home



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# WELCOME

TO YOUR VERY OWN HANDBUILDING AT HOME BOX!  
ALTHOUGH WE WISH WE COULD HAVE BEEN IN THE CERAMIC  
STUDIO TOGETHER - OUR TEAM HOPES YOU ENJOY THESE  
CURATED ITEMS IN YOUR HANDBUILDING AT HOME BOX!

IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME HANDBUILDING, BEFORE YOU GET  
STARTED PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT ALL YOUR MATERIALS.

WE HAVE A LIST OF SUGGESTED YOUTUBE VIDEOS AND  
ONLINE TUTORIALS THAT WILL HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY.

THE TIMELINE FOR HANDBUILDING TAKES SEVERAL WEEKS,  
PLEASE REVIEW THIS BOOKLET FOR NEXT STEPS IN THE  
PROCESS. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT OUR  
CERAMIC TECH, BOB CERAMICS@AGASSIZ.ORG

Included in this box  
One 25 pound bag of White Clay  
4 Masonite Ware Boards  
Clay Tools  
Slip Jar  
Spray Bottle  
Bucket

Not included in box but included with programming  
In-studio glaze session with Bob

Suggested other materials  
Towels  
Large sponge  
Apron  
Ruler  
Water dish, buckets or large bowls  
Plastic wrap (dry cleaning wrappers, plastic bags, etc.)  
Painters Tape or masking tape

# THE ART OF HANDBUILDING

THE HANDBUILDING PROCESS OF HANDLING CLAY, IS AN ANCIENT TECHNIQUE. OF CREATING CERAMIC PROJECTS BY HAND AND NOT ON A 'WHEEL.' THERE ARE A WIDE VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES WHEN HANDBUILDING, COIL, SLAB WORK, PINCH ETC! HOWEVER YOU CAN SHAPE THE CLAY WITH YOUR HANDS IS HANDBUILDING!

Ceramicists will bring their boxes home, open them up and admire their contents! Next you'll watch the suggested video links that will give a quick run down of the materials you're admiring. Then you'll create your ceramic masterpieces! Once your done creating your masterpieces, the texture of your projects will start to dry out. The texture is referred to as, Leather-hard; meaning that your work is dried and hardened, and has an almost 'leathery feel' when touched.

It's then time to Email Bob and plan a time to drop off the work in the MMA lobby for firing. Please continue reading in the 'leather hard and drying' section for more technical details on what it means for your clay. When you arrive at your scheduled drop off time, you'll meet Bob and sign your work into the ceramic firing binder, and please make sure that your name & email address are written on the outside of your box. Bob will take the work (and once it's dry enough), and load the kiln for a bisque fire.

Bisque refers to ware that has been fired once and has no chemically bonded water left in the clay. This makes the clay harden and appears to be white stone. Once the bisque firing is complete, Bob will email you for your in-person glazing appointment. The glaze appointments are typically on the weekend and scheduled in the Maud Morgan Arts Ceramic studio. Appointments run for 3 hours. If you need more time to glaze your items, you can register for an 'a la carte' glaze session with Bob. He can share the details with you.

After you finish glazing your work. Bob will load the kiln again for the second firing. Once work is done be fired, and cool to the touch - Bob will email again arranging a time for pick up from the studio. All of this amazing and hard work takes several weeks of building, drying, firing and glazing! We're so excited for you to work with us!



# BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

WEDGING CLAY WEDGING CLAY IS VERY IMPORTANT BEFORE YOU START HANDBUILDING YOUR PROJECTS. ONE MUST TAKE YOUR LUMP OF CLAY AND SLAM AGAINST A TABLE (SEVERAL TIMES) TO GET ALL OF THE AIR BUBBLES OUT. AIR BUBBLES IN YOUR PROJECT CAN CAUSE THE PIECE TO EXPLODE INSIDE OF THE KILN. WEDGING ALSO MAKES THE CLAY MORE USABLE AND PLIABLE.

WATCH THIS VIDEO FOR AN EXAMPLE:  
[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/I1RA5Y2PRKA](https://youtu.be/i1RA5Y2PRKA)



Our kiln cannot fire anything that exceeds over 16 inches in any direction. When your building your pieces, ceramicists need to make sure that the clay walls aren't too thin! Your piece must be at least 1/4-inch thick. At the thickest spots in your sculpture, it should not exceed more than 1 inch. This is to help ensure that the ceramic piece does not explode inside of the kiln.

If a piece explodes in the kiln it also risks breaking other pieces in the firing process. steam holes & hollowing pieces out The reason the piece might be explode could be because of air bubbles, or too much moisture in the piece. Water turns into steam at 212°F degrees. This creates a pressure from the steam with nowhere for it to escape, causing the piece to explode. If you're creating a solid sculpture this can be avoided if you add a hole for steam to escape, or hollowing out your sculpture.

Take a peek at this video tutorial explaining the process of hollowing out a solid sculpture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXw1yaJyg5Y>

If you decide to not hollow out your sculpture, make sure to add plenty of steam holes - holes that are big enough that they won't close when the clay shrinks from drying.

# CLAY MAINTENANCE & HANDLING

- SHRINKING

Once clay is dry, it shrinks! Total shrinkage is about 8-12% everything you create will become smaller! If making holes for function keep that in mind!

- MOISTURE

It's important while your working to keep your clay piece moist. Not soaking wet, but moist. If your clay starts to crack while you're handling it, try lightly spraying/misting water over the clay. Note that if you keep your clay pieces on the ware board for too long there is a risk of mold growing. Try to wrap up your particular handbuilding project within 3 weeks. To keep your piece moist in between work periods; when you're done for the day, dampen a paper towel and wrap loosely around your work. Then take a piece of plastic and loosely drape/wrap the plastic to cover your piece and your ware board. Use painters tape to secure the plastic to the board. To keep unused clay moist, keep a damp paper towel inside of the bag and make sure to wrap tightly.

- TOOL TIPS

For tips on how to best use your tools visit these suggested link:  
<https://youtu.be/4Lrenmts9Sk>



# CLAY MAINTENANCE & HANDLING

## • JOINING PIECES TOGETHER

Slip, score & blend! Slip is a silky form of clay you create with water to join pieces together. Use slip to help secure and joint pieces of clay together. Scratch the surface of the clay where you're joining the pieces of clay - this is called 'scoring,' then lightly smear the slip over the scratches, almost like a glue.

Blend the slip and two pieces together. Lean the pieces against something while drying to keep pieces secure. Watch this video for an example: [https://youtu.be/kdtM\\_G9OrhA](https://youtu.be/kdtM_G9OrhA)

We have already provided you with your own pre-made slip, but if you're interested in making your own - To make slip, take the bone dry pieces of clay, and submerge in water in your slip jar. Cover and leave overnight. The texture should be wet and silky consistency still being able to move the clay body. Check out this video for slip making tips! [https://youtu.be/V\\_x2v00TUIY](https://youtu.be/V_x2v00TUIY)

## • SUGGESTED TECHNIQUE TUTORIALS

Check out these videos for tips on how to build with your clay. Basics of Ceramics Clay Stages, Storage, Handbuilding Tools and Clean Up <https://youtu.be/PSHQxlbMNpE>

Pottery Basics: Hand Building <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mlyN7BjliM>

Coil Clay <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SA-rGYh2UHO>

Pinch Pot <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjhnLu36j4A>

How to roll out a slab <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OK-vP6SVy6O>

Slab Building <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QFBKLDsbs>

Once you're done creating your piece, before it dries to your ware board - use your wire clay cutters to slide the wire along the board to loosen your piece. (If its a solid piece make sure to have steam holes or the piece has been hollowed out)! Then lightly carve your initials on the bottom of the work with your metal poker. It will be ready to dry! Its important when you're drying your work that it dries evenly.

Uneven drying can lead to cracks and separation of joints. Place the plastic wrapping around the piece, and add a dry paper towel between the clay and the plastic. This will keep the condensation from re-wetting the clay and causing unwanted cracks. By keeping your drying clay piece wrapped, it will gradually dry the clay evenly. Close up the box and then its time to email Bob about drop off and glazing!







## • FIRE & GLAZING

As stated earlier, once your pieces are bisque fired and ready for glazing Bob will reach out about glazing! Please note that sometimes work does break in the kiln. We will do our very best to ensure the safety, but air bubbles and slip cracking does happen! During your glaze visit, Bob will go over a lot of information about color combinations, high fire vs low fire glazes and more!

## • HOME MAINTENANCE

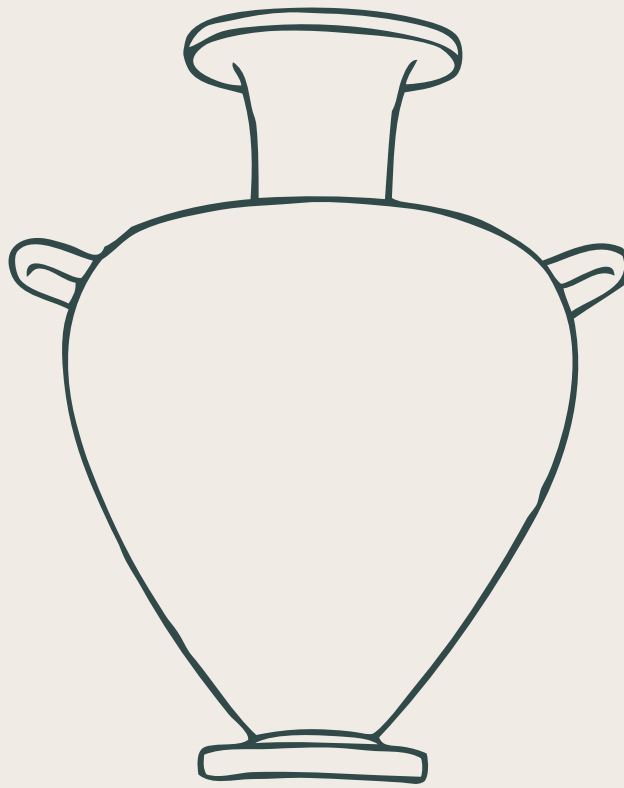
### Clay Dust Vs. Wet Clean Clay

When cleaning up your ceramic at home space, all clean up should be done with a 'wet clean.' This means using a large wet sponge, or paper towels. Rather than vaccuming clay dust. Sweeping up clay actually stirs up particles into the air, and even smaller particles do not get sucked in by your vacuum. This is an issue because clay bodies have Silica as one of the ingredients. Which can cause health problems if inhaled over an extended period of time. Silica particles are one-millionth of a meter in diameter, therefore being able to hang in the air for longer. Cleaning up with water, or a 'wet cleaning process' prevents the clay dust from becoming air born. avoiding clay in your pipes Another factor of clean up is that clay can build up in one's plumbing. To avoid this, take all your clay tools and wash off in the provided bucket. It doesn't need to be with soap, just a good scrub with a sponge. Once the tools are clean set them on a towel and move the bucket to an area where it won't be disturbed. The clay will eventually settle to the bottom of the bucket - then you are able to dump the water out, and scoop the residual clay that's collected at the bottom of the bucket into the trash. Or keep a scoop for your slip jar!



# NOTES

Reminder Email Bob to set up the glazing appointment!



## CONTACT US

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