

The Merrill Pottery Cooperative **Member Guidebook**

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COOP AND MEMBERSHIP	2
Introduction	2
About The Merrill Pottery Cooperative	2
Studio Membership	2
Managers	2
Membership Agreement	3
USING THE STUDIO SPACE	5
Most important Points	5
Cleaning Up	5
Guests	5
Respecting Others and the Studio	6
Using the Slab Roller	7
Managers Corner	7
Accessing the Studio	7
Studio Windows	8
Communication	8
WORK HOURS	9
Quarterly Work Hour Requirements	9
Logging Work Hours	9
STUDIO HAZARDS	10
Kilns	10
Dust	10
Other Hazardous Materials	11
FIRING, RECYCLING CLAY, AND GLAZING	11
The Firing Process	11
Recycling Clay	12
Glazing	12
MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT	15
Making Payments	15
Membership Scholarships	16
WORK HOUR TASK INSTRUCTIONS	17
Mopping	17
Shop Vacuuming	17
Pugging	17
Cleaning Jobs	18
Loading and Unloading the Bisque Kiln	18
Laundry	19
Taking Out Trash	19
Dehumidifier/Glaze Water Buckets	19
Filling Plaster Boards with Slop	19
Other Jobs	19
HELPFUL LINKS	20

INTRODUCTION TO THE COOP AND MEMBERSHIP

Introduction

Welcome to the MPC member handbook! In this document you can find all information relevant to being a member in the Merrill Pottery Cooperative. It includes our rules for a safe and respectful environment as well as clear instructions and protocols for a variety of work hour tasks and scenarios. If for any reason there is something missing or that you do not quite understand, please reach out to a manager. It is our job to make sure the studio expectations are understood and to be a helpful resource.

About The Merrill Pottery Cooperative

The Merrill Pottery Cooperative is a member-run studio that has now been around for over 50 years. It is based out of Merrill College located at UC Santa Cruz and is supported entirely by membership fees and work hours. Every year 130 members are welcomed into the studio and given access to the studio for the entire school year. The studio is closed to members in the Summer months and orientations begin for a new set of members every Fall. We look to dispel any notion that this studio is just a cheap place to make pottery. Membership to the studio is a commitment to our shared goal of maintaining a safe, respectful, and creative space we all get to enjoy. Members who fail to meet the membership commitments outlined in this handbook will lose access to the studio without refund.

Studio Membership

Every year we accept roughly 130 studio members. Membership includes 24/7 key card access to the studio (outside of Winter Break/Spring Break/ Summer Break), bagged and recycled clay, one ware board in the studio, access to all communal tools and equipment, firings, and glaze. Membership is contingent on following rules and expectations outlined in this handbook, paying studio fees (200 for students/450 for community members), and completing 5 work hours per school quarter with at **least one mop!** (2.5 hours by week 5, 5 hours by week 11, one mop of one room).

Admission breakdown:

- **Studio Hands (6-8)**

This is a new part of the studio we are trying out this year!! During application, members who receive a qualifying quiz score can submit an additional essay prompt to increase their chances of admission. Studio hands commit to a couple additional hours per week with studio activities, and towards helping foster community at the MPC through demos and firing activities.

- **Community members (5)**

We accept 5 community members (non UCSC affiliates) each year

- **Returning members (up to 45)**

Members in good standing with the MPC (complete work hours, less than 3 warnings) will be automatically readmitted to the coop. This number can fluctuate depending on reapplying members.

- **New students (at least 85)**

We reserve a majority of space for new applicants to ensure as many people at UCSC get the chance to join our studio!

Managers

Managers are in charge of keeping the studio running and organized. This includes tasks such as handling money, making purchases, giving orientations, restocking materials, planning events, communicating announcements, keeping inventory, making glazes, loading kilns, organizing the studio, cleaning, training, and sometimes offering workshops. It is important to remember that the managers of the studio are unpaid volunteers and also your fellow students. Managers help take the lead on maintaining the studio, but it is every member's collective responsibility to keep it in working order. Managers are continually learning how to better run the studio and your input is always valued and welcome.

If you are interested in becoming a manager in the future, we encourage you to get involved with the studio procedures wherever you can and to participate in studio maintenance even when not asked to and beyond your expected work hours. Managers look for those dedicated to both pottery and community building when looking for new managers. Please keep in mind that the number of managers is limited and there may not always be an opening for new ones at the current moment.

OUR CURRENT MANAGERS:

****Please use the contact information for emergencies only, otherwise contact us via discord or email: merrillpottery@gmail.com**



Hazel Young (they / he / she)

(909) 435-7630 * symyoung@ucsc.edu

Hazel is a strange fella with a love for all things nature, especially plants, insects, and birds, and you'll find these motifs in their art. They're studying environmental science / biology and art, and are in their junior year.



Rose Cuthbert (she / her)

(619)-865-2366 * rocuthbe@ucsc.edu

Hi, I'm Rose! I am a fourth year student studying Biology. I have been a part of the co-op for the last 2 years and have been a manager for the past year. In my spare time I love being outdoors and spending time with animals. I also love throwing on the wheel and making vases to hold all kinds of flowers! Please don't hesitate to introduce yourselves, I love meeting new people!!



Lucy Irwin (she / they)

(510)847-5175

Lucy has been a part of the Mpc for the past four years. They love to explore the wooded areas of Santa Cruz for little guys and ceramic inspiration. They are always happy to answer any questions about pottery or the studio.



Tavi Maes (he / him)

(530)-219-5116 * tavimaes@gmail.com

Hi! I just graduated from UCSc and have been managing the co-op since the end of freshman year. I like to make mugs, try new glazes, and fire the kiln. I study Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, specifically with birds and native plants. I love being outside backpacking, birdwatching, and anything else!



Tara Advani (she / her)

(206) 305 0187 * tadvani@ucsc.edu

Hi there! I am a third year marine bio major and I have been a part of the coop since my freshman year. I really enjoy throwing bowls and trying fun glaze combos. I'm excited to work on mugs and vases this year. Outside MPC, I love to read, swim in the river, paint, backpack and play tennis.



Avery Crochetiere (she / they)

(909)-647-8144 * acrochet@ucsc.edu

Heya I'm Avery! I'm a third year Environmental Studies + Art double major and I have a passion for pottery. I love to crochet, be in nature, read queer books, and of course make whimsical things out of clay.



Antoinette Chase (she / they)

(442) 214-7301 * abchase@ucsc.edu

Hiiii I'm Antoinette! I'm a second year Psychology major/Biology minor. I love rock climbing, hypotheticals, and of course pottery. I'm always happy to answer questions about anything, so don't hesitate to ask! :D



Cammy Schurer (she / her)

(626) 710-6017 * cschurer@ucsc.edu

Hello! I'm Cammy, I'm a third year Econ major and I'm obsessed with doodling, painting, and all things pottery! I love gathering my inspo in the great outdoors and glaze that looks like rust! :)



Abel Garvin (he / him)

(707) 357-6172 * agarvin@ucsc.edu

Hi, I'm Abel! This is my second year being a part of the co op, and besides pottery I like to surf and mountain bike. I am excited about both atmospheric and reduction firing, and I am always happy to help!



Paul Zaleski (any)

(747) 249-9221 *pzaleski@ucsc.edu

Hi, I'm Paul! I'm a second year Marine Biology major. I love to explore nature, go rock climbing, and of course pottery! I like to experiment with different glaze combos and explore different forms. If you have any questions feel free to ask!

Studio Hands

We've decided to reserve (6-8) spots in our member pool for studio hands; dedicated MPC members who commit to completing extra tasks around the co-op, helping with firings, events, and more. If you are really committed to being in the pottery coop, you can submit an application for a chance to surpass the lottery with a commitment to dedicate more time to the studio. You could be selected to be a studio hand, or you'll be placed in the lottery as normal.

Those who are accepted as studio hands get the chance to become more familiar with the MPC and get more involved in studio happenings. This position will provide MPC members with the opportunity to dedicate more time to the co-op, and spend that time on specific tasks they're passionate about. Managers hope to provide planning and material support for any approved projects that studio hands carry out, as well.

Application Requirements:

- a submission to our Studio Hand Application google form, shared out at orientations
 - you submit your response by our SUBMISSION DEADLINE
- a qualifying score on the Orientation Quiz (100%)
- a great attitude and readiness to learn and engage with the studio

Work hour specifications:

- you'll still be expected to complete regular MPC work hours (5 hours per quarter) with an added 1 hour per week of your choice of tasks to help the studio. This comes out to 15 hours a quarter.
 - *Your work hours will be due at week 5 (7.5 hours) and week 10 (7.5 hours), like other members.*
 - *All of your work hours can be spent completing tasks not on the general work hours sheet, if you'd like to do so. However, studio hands can also complete general work hours tasks.*

- Ceramic experience is recommended for this position, but not required.
- You will be asked to log your hours on a separate form than regular MPC members. This form will be used by both managers and studio hands to create a better record of co-op activity.

You can:

- Plan and teach Demos or workshops in the studio
- Load bisque Kilns and Glaze Kilns
- Fire glaze kilns
- Make and test new glazes
- Lead a larger self-guided project (with manager approval!)
- Help with events and markets
- And more! This is a new position we are working to add to the co-op, so we are open to feedback and suggestions for projects! Managers are willing to work with any fun and unique ideas, please reach out to us!

Please note:

- Studio Hands are still expected to pay regular MPC membership fees. (\$200/Student, \$450/Community Members)
- Studio Hand progress will be assessed each quarter, and can be revoked (like a regular MPC membership) if work hours and membership requirements are not fulfilled. (see below)

Membership Agreement

When you become a member of the MPC, you fill out and sign a membership agreement form that testifies that you acknowledge and agree to the rules of the MPC. Breaking any of the agreements in this contract is grounds for membership termination at the discretion of the managers' collective decision. Minor infractions will result in a warning and while major infractions may result in immediate termination. **After 2 warnings any additional infractions WILL result in termination of membership.** Should your membership be terminated, you will be notified and will lose access to the studio and may be banned from future participation. If your membership is terminated there will be no refund of membership fees. Below you will find a copy of the membership agreement form:

I understand the rules and regulations of the Merrill Pottery Co-Op and the University of California, Santa Cruz. I will not use the Merrill Pottery Co-Op equipment or supplies to produce any items that are either illegal or are in violation of University policies (i.e. bongs, hookahs, or other drug paraphernalia).

I understand the safety standards provided and posted in the facilities. I understand that if I violate any of these policies, my membership may be revoked without refund.

I understand and agree to follow the policies and regulations of the University of California, Santa Cruz. If I am found in violation of any policies or restricted from access to residential areas, my membership in the co-op will also be immediately revoked as it is housed in a residential space.

I also understand that, because the Merrill Pottery Co-Op is housed in a residence hall, I cannot access the facilities during periods of residential closure (Winter Break, Spring Break, Summer Break). I understand that if I am found in the Pottery Co-Op facilities during a period of residential closure, I will be charged with trespassing through the campus judicial process. My membership will be revoked and I will forfeit my membership fee.

I understand that the membership I am purchasing does not allow me to run a production pottery business which leads to resource inequity (If the amount of work I am producing begins to become an issue, the managers will address it and give me a chance to remedy the situation before terminating my membership).

I understand that the membership I am purchasing requires work hours (5 per quarter, 2.5 each half quarter, and 1 mopping session) to be fulfilled and logged regularly as a requirement to continue using the space. **If I do not fulfill my work hour requirements, if I fail to log my work hours correctly, or if I log work that was done poorly, my membership will be revoked and I will forfeit my membership fee.**

I understand that the membership I am purchasing is for me alone. I will not loan my key to anyone else. I will not bring guests regularly or during peak hours. My guests will only use recycled clay.

My membership will begin in Fall quarter 2026 and ends on the last day of Spring quarter. I understand that some parts of the studio close earlier than the last day of Spring quarter to ensure time to complete necessary tasks such as cleaning and firing.

Members who don't return access cards will not be granted membership in the following year. Members who are kicked out for any reason will not be given access the following year.

Once paid, the Merrill Pottery Co-Op will not provide refunds for any reason.

I am responsible for communicating with MPC managers ASAP when there may be an issue preventing completion of work hours.

I am responsible for knowing and understanding all MPC rules outlined during orientation and in the member handbook and will ask a manager if there is something that I do not understand.

We understand that there are a lot of rules, but each one has been devised to ensure our community remains respectful, safe, and functional.

USING THE STUDIO SPACE

The Merrill Pottery Co-op is both a small and shared space. For this reason, there are several guidelines and rules that must be followed to make sure the studio is a place for everyone to enjoy.

Most important Points

- Silica dust (from clay and glaze) is dangerous and should be minimized whenever possible!
- Ask if you are unsure about something! The managers love to answer questions but don't like fixing things that could have been prevented by simply asking.

Cleaning Up

This rule should go without saying: everyone in the studio should never leave behind a mess for someone else to clean up, regardless of their level of familiarity with pottery. Cleaning up is not just common courtesy but also a **safety precaution** as clay that is left to dry out turns into dust which poses a serious health hazard (for more see the "studio hazards" section).

Proper cleanup includes the complete washing of all tools used, sponging off surfaces such as the wheel or table you worked on, and replacing all tools and equipment to their correct locations (meaning nothing should be left in the drying rack such as tools, ribs, or wheel pans). The drying rack is only for bats in order to let them dry properly so they do not warp. Tools should instead be washed and returned to where you found them, metal side up to avoid rusting. **All clay and glaze covered tools and equipment needs to be washed on the left side of the sink where we have a sink trap to catch sediment.** You should also leave your wheel how you found it (hopefully) with

the stool flipped upside down on the wheel head, the pedal off the ground, and the switch turned off. These practices allow for easier mopping and prevent possible damage to wheels in case of power outages.

Guests

Because of the small studio space, the co-op has several guest policies for the studio. Bringing a guest is a privilege that can be revoked and should not be taken advantage of.

You may only bring one guest at a time. The coop spaces are quite small, so please be respectful and only bring one guest at a time.

Guests should not be invited during peak hours. Bring guests at a time when the studio is relatively empty. The space is first and foremost for paying and work-hour-completing members. Guests are welcome to come and experience pottery, but not at the expense of a member. If you arrive with a guest and the studio is quite full (6+ people), ask them to come another time. You can use the “mudroom traffic” channel on the discord to check how busy the studio is beforehand.

Guests may only use recycled clay. Fresh, bagged clay is for members only. If there is no pugged clay, it is up to the guest and/or their accompanying member to recycle clay. Lack of any workable/recyclable clay is not an invitation for guests to use bagged clay, they must simply come back to the studio at another time.

Do not bring guests often. Guests should not be coming with you the majority of the time you come to the studio or anywhere close to it, even if it is a new guest each time. Your membership is for yourself only and guests should be brought a limited number of times throughout the year. **Repeatedly breaking the rules of the guest policy will result in termination of membership.**

Guest pieces that are placed on the to-be-bisqued shelf must have a member signature as well. They can be signed by the guest but must also indicate the member they came to the studio with.

Guests are welcome in our studio, but **encouraged to use the studio** while inside. Our studio is small, and isn't a hangout spot!

Respecting Others and the Studio

The pottery coop is a space for members to focus on their craft and many find it a calm and relaxing environment. We ask that all members be thoughtful about their impact on others by **limiting phone calls inside the studio, keeping discussions with friends quiet, avoiding gossip**

and harsh topics, keeping music at a respectful volume, keeping walkways open, not eating in the studio and supporting all members regardless of their level of experience.

Some other ways to respect the space are to never touch other people's pieces, leaving a note if you accidentally break a piece, sharing things as much as possible (especially the handbuilding table and the sink), and opening the door for other members (especially when they are dumping mop water, carrying clay in, or loading kilns with the cart). Respect hasn't been much of an issue in the past, just be nice and everything should be great!

Finally, remember that this studio is not equipped with the staff, equipment, or space to handle production pottery work. You are limited to the vertical + horizontal space on your wareboard and a manager will ask you to slow down if you are cranking out too many pieces.

Using the Slab Roller

The slab roller is the table in the mudroom that has a big metal wheel on its side. Its purpose is to roll clay into sheets of varying thickness for handbuilding. When using the slab roller there are a few things to keep in mind:

- If you have never used the slab roller, ask someone to show you how!
- Always use canvas to protect the metal rollers from clay. Use the "white clay" canvas for white clays and the "dark clay" canvas for dark, and recycled clays.
- Don't use the slab roller as a regular table, keep it clean and open for those who want to roll slabs.
- Use the black plastic knob to adjust the thickness of your slabs.

Managers Corner

The Managers' Corner is located near the sink area of the mud room. Everything in this area is reserved for managers only. Do not touch or take any items (tools, clay, slip, or anything else) from the manager's corner in the back of the mudroom. These are their personal supplies and not for general use. Members can use bagged clay that has been placed on the wedging table only, in addition to recycled clay. If there is no pugged (recycled clay) ready for use, recycle some! If you aren't sure how, don't hesitate to ask a manager!

Accessing the Studio

The studio is located in the basement of the Merrill A dorm building. Because of this, the studio can only be accessed when the building is open and unlocked to its residents. **Closures occur during all of Summer break, Winter break, Spring break and during any power outages** that may occur. The key pads are electronic and very old, which sometimes causes issues with getting inside the studio. A manager can help you if you are having trouble getting in.

To access either of the studio's rooms, hold your ID card or temp card up to the keypad until a green light flashes and you hear a buzz. Remove your card and type in your pin that you received with membership. Sometimes this takes a few tries, simply rescan your card and type in your code again. If it continues to fail, you may email the pottery coop/tell a manager and visit the Merrill Housing Office, located on the other side of the Merrill A dorm building, halfway up the steps from the moat.

Access will be removed from your card immediately following termination of your membership. If you have things you need to retrieve from the room after this occurs, please contact a manager.

Community members who do not have student or staff IDs will need to ask for a temporary ID when they drop off their check. You will pick up your TEMP ID from the housing office where it will be electronically encrypted with a pin. Losing your student or staff ID does not mean we will grant you a temporary ID, you will need to order a new one from the University and have it encrypted at the housing office.

Studio Windows

There are two windows in both the mudroom and glaze room. You are welcome to open these to let fresh air in, but when leaving the studio please make sure they are closed. In the past we have had issues with forest critters crawling in through windows and people without access to the studio sneaking in. If you notice that a window has been left open when leaving the space, please close the window.

Communication

Communication is key for a functioning studio. For this reason, there are several modes of communication that are regularly used in the co-op:

Discord Server - this is the main form of communication. Announcements about firings, reminders, dates, and questions are all commonly sent via Discord. **Joining the Discord is mandatory for becoming a member.** When you join the Discord, it is also required to make sure your **username displays your real name** so everyone knows who messages are from.

Email- is also a place where important messages are sent out regularly. Typically emails will be sent out at the start, middle, and end of the quarter with reminders and pertinent information. Be sure to read these in their entirety. Other important announcements that are shared over email are events and membership status updates. On occasion there are mistakes in adding up work hours and so we encourage you to email us if you see any potential mistakes. Email is checked by all of the managers and it is the quickest place to get a response for questions regarding work hours. We ask that you utilize email rather than private messages with managers to ensure all managers are involved in resolving concerns. It is every member's responsibility to stay up to

date with email announcements and the membership contract includes an agreement to regularly check your email for MPC notices.

Paper Notes are used in the studio as reminders. You may leave certain firing instructions on a piece for a manager, such as “please fire on stilts” or “fire both pieces together” or “this piece has missed several firings will you please put it in the next?”. Notes are also used to let others know if you broke a piece of theirs. Always leave a note if you break someone’s piece by accident; it sucks to come back to a broken piece without any explanation and people are more understanding than you might think.

WORK HOURS

Work hours are required to maintain co-op membership and are an integral component of keeping the studio running. Failure to complete your work hours (or logging them incorrectly or failing to do them well) will result in the termination of your membership without refund. Try your very best to space your work hours out over the whole quarter so that jobs are being done continuously and the studio remains clean, safe, and functional. **Continuously cramming work hours for the last week of the term does not contribute to maintaining a functional studio and will result in the termination of your membership.** It’s collective action that keeps this studio running and we encourage you to consider this commitment when signing up to be a member.

We do not give workhour extensions as of the 2026-2027 academic year. You are expected to have the time to complete 5 hours per quarter (30 minutes per week). If you don’t have the time for this then you do not have the time to be an active member of the co-op.

Quarterly Work Hour Requirements

- Mop at least once (either room).
- 2.5 hours due by Sunday at 11:59pm following Week 5
- 5 hours due by Sunday at 11:59pm following finals week
- Log all your hours using this [online form](#), immediately after completing your work hour task. Logging is your responsibility and failure to log your hours will generally result in membership termination.
- Space your hours throughout the entire quarter (no cramming). Cramming work hours for the last week of the term does not contribute to maintaining a functional studio and will result in the termination of your membership.
- Only do jobs from the whiteboard, unless you specifically talk to a manager about another task. We are happy to find alternative jobs, but please ask first!

Logging Work Hours

- The work hours log can be found using a QR code in the mudroom or [this link](#).
- Every active member is listed on the form. You must click on your name on the drop down bar. If for some reason you are not on the list, please notify us ASAP.
- All entries will automatically be tallied and associated with your name, so after entering your work hours you can go onto [this Google Sheet](#) where entries live and see how many hours you have completed. Your cell will automatically change to green once you have met the required number of work hours. (It may take a few minutes to update.)
- To have an updated tally of everyone's work hours and to know when tasks are getting done, **all hours must be logged directly after they are done**. Because of this we will not accept any work hours that were not logged the moment of. This only takes a few moments to log and we will not accept any excuses. Managers may take away logged hours if they are not logged the day of (you will be notified).

STUDIO HAZARDS

There are several hazards to be aware of when using the studio space.

Kilns

Kilns get very hot, please do not touch them when they are in use or cooling down. To be extra careful, don't touch them at all without a manager asking you to.

Kilns release hazardous fumes, especially the outdoor, gas-fired, reduction kiln. Be mindful of this and try to avoid standing near the kiln. When the indoor kiln is firing, make sure the ventilation system is turned on and the windows are opened when possible.

Kilns are made of hazardous materials. Even when kilns are not firing please refrain from touching them. The bricks, mortar, and chemical residues are toxic and shouldn't be excessively touched.

Dust

Clay dust is the most dangerous element of working in a pottery studio. Silicosis is an irreversible lung disease caused by the inhalation of silica particles, found in clay and glaze. These particles are small enough to linger in the air for hours before settling. Managing clay and glaze dust is crucial to the health and safety of our studio.

Dry trimming: **Absolutely no trimming of pottery pieces is allowed when the clay is dry.** If clay trimmings do not come off of the piece in ribbons, and instead create dust, it is too dry to trim. Spray the piece generously with water, cover overnight, and try again.

Sanding: **sanding is never allowed inside or outside the studio because it creates silica dust.**

Mopping and wiping surfaces: Clean clay messes immediately, always with a wet sponge or mop. Use multiple changes of water to avoid just pushing clay around. Please get into the habit of giving the studio surfaces a wipe down with a clean sponge often. **Do not sweep** or brush away dry clay or dust, **always clean with water.**

Plastic sheets and bags: The plastic bags used to cover members' ware boards are often coated with a thin layer of clay. Do not shake or wave these bags around, and please wipe them down often with a wet sponge to avoid launching clay dust into the air.

Eating in the studio: we strongly discourage eating in the studio, not just because of past issues with rats. Dust, especially heavy metal oxides from glaze, can be toxic when ingested. For this reason it is not advisable to eat in the studio. Consider taking your snack outside.

Other Hazardous Materials

There are many dangerous materials in the studio beyond dust. These include unfired glaze mixture, fiberglass, mason stains, sharp tools, plaster mix, and others. Be cautious and aware of the materials you are touching. If you have questions about our safety protocols, ask others in the studio or a manager!

FIRING, RECYCLING CLAY, AND GLAZING

The Firing Process

The firing process is long and takes your piece from dry mud to vitrified ceramic! It takes two firings before a piece is finished, a bisque firing to remove chemical water and burn out organic matter and a glaze firing to fully turn the piece to ceramic and fuse glaze. Here are the steps to follow to ensure your piece makes it to the final stage of the ceramic process:

1. When you are done sculpting your piece and it is at least leather hard (preferably bone dry), you can place it on any shelf of the to-be-bisque-fired shelf in the mudroom. When there are enough pieces, managers or trained members will load these pieces into the indoor electric kiln in the glaze room for bisque firing. **Pieces will NOT be bisque fired and instead be recycled if they are placed on the bisque shelf without a signature, if they are thicker than your thumb in any area, if they are drug paraphernalia (bongs, pipes), or if they are broken on the shelf and no instructions have been left to fire it anyway. Overly thick pieces don't dry out properly and explode in the kiln.** To avoid

having your pieces sit on the shelf and eventually recycled, you can fix the issue or ask a manager if you are unsure.

2. After your piece is fired in the bisque kiln, it will be stamped with the date and placed on the racks above the glaze buckets in the glaze room. You will have 1 month to glaze your piece or it will be thrown out or donated to CCS. Once fired, clay can never again be recycled. **If a manager has to throw away more than five of your pieces you will receive a warning or your membership may be terminated. Additionally, bisqueware is only allowed in the glaze room to avoid contaminating our recycled clay** (there are no exceptions to this rule, even on your own wareboard).
3. Once you are done glazing, you will place your piece on the to-be-glaze-fired shelves. Every other weekend (usually) but depending on how quickly the shelf fills up, the managers will load and fire the outdoor, cone 10, gas reduction kiln. Usually, not every piece makes it into the firing due to limited space, but we try to avoid having pieces sit unfired for too long. If you have a piece that has been sitting on the shelf unfired for a long time, you may leave a note requesting that it be fired.
4. When the glaze kiln has cooled, managers will unload all the beautiful pieces onto the finished work shelves in the glaze room. You have till the end of the quarter to claim your piece before these pieces will be thrown away or donated.

Recycling Clay

Until clay is loaded into a kiln and fired, it can be infinitely recycled! At the MPC, we are proud to recycle as much clay as possible and reuse it for all sorts of pieces. To ensure efficient and correct results, it is important to follow a couple rules and steps when recycling clay:

1. The first step in recycling clay is sorting scraps and slop into their proper bins. All wet clay, slip, trimmings, and small dry pieces can be put into the **wet clay bin** provided there is room for more clay. If there is no room in the bin, wet clay can be placed directly on the plaster recycling boards. All large dry pieces can be put into the **dry clay bin**. Any clay that is still a workable consistency (meaning you yourself would be able to throw or handbuild this clay) can be put into the **workable clay bin**. Often times, clay that is too wet is put in the workable clay bin. If you are unsure about what the right consistency is, compare it to bagged clay!
2. The next step in recycling clay is to spread wet clay into an approximately 2-3 inch layer across the plaster recycling boards. When adding to plaster boards, ensure the clay is the consistency of soft serve, it should not be dripping water. The top layer of the wet bin is often too wet, aim for clay that is deeper in the bin. Clay on the plaster boards should be checked over the next couple of days until it is workable consistency, after which it can be wedged then placed into the workable bin.
3. Dry clay can be added in small pieces to the wet clay bin as needed. This serves to thicken the wet clay mixture and create more space in the dry bin. This isn't needed often and a manager should be consulted first.

4. After enough workable clay is produced, it can be loaded into the pug mill and mixed to form amazing new clay!
5. See the work hours section of the guidebook for more information on how you can get involved in the recycling process! Don't forget that using the pug mill requires training from a manager beforehand.

Glazing

Glaze is a mixture of powdered materials that are mixed with water to create slip that can be applied to bisqueware. Once glaze has been fired it will create a glassy layer that is fused to your ceramic piece. The benefits of glaze are that it provides an opportunity for adding color and texture to your piece and makes your final product water tight. Unglazed or exclusively underglazed pieces may still be porous, meaning that they can not hold liquid the way a functional vase or cup might. Not all glazes are food safe because of their chemical makeup or final texture, so make sure you read the top of glaze buckets.

There are a variety of ways to apply glaze and these methods create unique final results. The two most common methods for applying glaze in our studio are dipping your piece into the glaze or brushing glaze on like paint. If you are new to applying glaze we encourage you to find tutorials online and to ask fellow studio members/managers.

Glaze is an essential part of the ceramic process that presents hazards to those using the glaze and to all of our equipment that comes in contact with it. Before glaze is fired it is capable of getting into eyes, seeping into skin, and when left to dry out, can be breathed in as dust. For these reasons it is incredibly important that we clean up after glazing and that while you are glazing you minimize opportunities for splashing and skin contact. During the firing process, glaze that is applied too thick or to the bottoms of your pieces have the potential to melt and fuse to our kiln shelves, stilts, and other peoples pieces. For these reasons we have a variety of rules regarding glazing in the coop that we ask you to know and follow. Failure to do so will result in danger to others and/or damage to our equipment. If you are unsure about anything glaze related, it is best to ask a manager.

No glaze on the bottom of your pieces! All pieces must have clean bottoms with at least a quarter inch of unglazed clay at the bottom. This space will ensure your piece does not fuse to our shelves destroying both your artwork and our kiln shelves. Clean bottoms can be achieved by thoroughly sponging off glaze or waxing.

Before glazing, consider waxing the bottom of your piece, but be prepared to wait 24 hours before glazing. Wax will cover the pores of your piece so once applied, glaze will not be able to attach and can easily be wiped away. Wax takes 24 hours to cure completely and you cannot

begin glazing until it dries or it will flake off into glaze and ruin other peoples pieces. Glaze that has been contaminated with wax will need to be tossed out and costs the studio a lot of money, time, and materials.

Only keep one glaze bucket open at a time. This prevents cross-contamination in case of accidental splatter and prevents bucket lids from being swapped.

Mix all glazes thoroughly before use, as glaze tends to settle to the bottom. Glaze will not come out as intended if not properly mixed. Whisking for about 45 seconds or using the power drill for 20 will generally be enough to thoroughly mix settled glaze. Start the drill slowly to avoid splatters. A well mixed glaze has no layer of water on the top and has the consistency of heavy cream throughout. There should be no chunks of material at the bottom of the bucket.

Read the lid of the bucket. It often has important information about the glaze. If it says “not food safe” the fired glaze is not safe for functional pottery. If it says “runny” the glaze runs down the clay during firing, meaning you should take extra steps to protect the kiln shelves when using these glazes. For runny glazes, please leave extra vertical space at the bottom of your piece and dip for a shorter period of time.

Don’t dip a piece longer than 3 seconds. The longer your piece is in the bucket, the thicker the glaze will be. Overly thick glaze has a tendency to run (damaging the kiln shelves), blister, or crawl. If you plan on doing a second glaze on top, don’t dip for the full three seconds and let your piece completely dry out before dipping the second glaze. Dipping a piece with wet glaze into a new glaze will contaminate the new glaze.

Wash all glazing tools when you are done and put them back where they came from. Wax tools can only be washed on the **right side** of the sink with hot water.

Sponge off any surfaces where glaze was spilled. Mop the floor for good measure. Do your part to minimize dust at all times.

Glaze hospital: The glaze hospital is the blue square on the end of the “to-be-glaze-fired” shelves. Your piece will be placed here if a manager determines it is a risk to the longevity of our kiln shelves. This may be due to one or more of the following reasons:

- the bottom and/or lower ¼” of the piece is not free of glaze
- the glaze is applied too thickly (think credit card thickness!!)
- the glaze is flaking off
- the structural stability of the piece means the managers cannot ensure it won’t fall over in the kiln or break.

If your piece is in the hospital and you aren’t sure why, ask a manager and we will let you know. If your piece is not fixed within 2 or so weeks of entering the hospital, it will be thrown out or fixed in whichever way a manager sees fit. Generally, we will announce and send pictures when we put

new things into the hospital, and an announcement will be sent via discord before pieces are tossed.

Check the tiles! Test tiles in the glaze room can give you an idea of how a glaze or glaze combo may turn out. Keep in mind every firing is a little different and that the glaze's appearance is heavily determined by the clay body it is applied to.

DO NOT TOUCH the dry ingredients in the glaze room. They are extremely dangerous! More information can be found in the "Studio Dangers" section. They cause cancer and lung diseases if not handled properly!!

Managers are in charge of making glazes, but they will train members who are interested. Even after you have been trained, ask a manager before making glaze. If there is a glaze missing that you would like to have in the studio, let a manager know. We may be able to make it again.

Underglaze tips and tricks:

To keep in mind (always):

- Paint your glazes in light-dark order
- Fired underglaze will always form a more transparent layer of pigment than when you first started. Dark colors under lighter ones will alter the color or completely conceal it.
- Paint 3+ even coats for best coverage
- You can also smooth down each layer as you add it to make sure the layers are as even as possible.
- Shake before using
- Always shake your bottles for even mixing of underglaze materials.
- Keep bottle rims clean
- Especially when pouring out colors to mix, underglaze can stick to the outside edge of the plastic container. Sponge off if you can, this will make the lid easier to put on / take off later on.
- Need a hard - to - get color? Mix it!
 - Understanding color theory is super helpful when painting with underglaze, because mixing your own colors like pinks and purples from more reliable colors can allow you to replicate those shades.
- Underglaze applies best to greenware.
 - You can still touch up your underglaze after a bisque fire, but the colors are more vivid and more difficult to remove from your piece if you paint them before the first firing.

Our most reliable underglazes: black, red, blue, darker oranges, dark greens, emerald, white, browns

Our most iffy: purple / plum, any lighter violet shades. Light pink, light green

Planning your designs:

Graphite will burn off in any firing, so feel free to sketch basic shapes with a pencil to start your design process. Pencil works best on bone dry clay.

A mixture of a couple drops of food dye and water can be painted onto ceramics to serve as a starting wash, this will also burn off with kiln heat.

Do not use wax on greenware to create underglaze patterns, it will create fumes when burning off in our electric kiln!!!

Application techniques:

Sgraffito

I prefer to paint large globs of color, then scrape in details once the underglaze is dry to the touch. This method works best on nearly dry / very leather hard clay. Underglaze will always dry faster and apply more evenly on drier surfaces, but can be more difficult to scratch away afterwards if bone dry. The heat gun is your friend for this technique.

Watercolor style

Watered-down underglaze can be built up in many thin layers to create a more translucent look. Remember that underglaze appears thinner once fired, so make your layers darker / more intense than you think they should look.

Color blending

You can either dry or wet blend your colors together

Wet blending: easier to do on wetter pieces, sometimes the colors won't mix evenly on the pot. This marbled effect can be desirable, but not always intended. Keep in mind!

Dry blending: make sure the underglaze is matte and dried, then gently buff the two colors together

Make sure to lay down thicker layers than usual, because the blending will inevitably remove some material.

Erasing

Luckily, underglaze is a pretty forgiving medium!

Sponge method: wiping can remove large swaths of color, but will often smear or pull color across the piece. Will also change surface texture if applicable.

Etching method: you can scratch away details or adjust shapes with a sharp needle tool once the underglaze is fully dry

Sponge Details:

Using a sponge, dab on underglaze for a light, blended look. Make sure to do more layers than normal, this application method is usually thin.

Painting a thin wash of underglaze onto a bisque fired piece and then wiping off excess from high points with a sponge can help highlight shadows and bring out sculpture detail

Stencils / Masking:

You can create negative images by adding tape or attaching stencils to your pieces before underglazing them!

This is a great way to make perfectly straight lines or easily duplicate a design

TIMELINE OF COOP YEAR

Orientations are required to become a member. They take place during the first week of fall quarter and dates and times can be found on [our website](#) and instagram (@merrillpotterycoop). During orientations managers will provide information regarding studio membership, our selection process, and answer any questions. It is recommended you take notes.

Safety quiz, Selection, Payment. Once orientations have concluded, everyone who has attended an orientation will be sent the link to a safety and policies quiz, along with the link to this document. Completion of this quiz with a score of 100% accuracy during the allotted time will enter you into a lottery. The lottery will randomly select the 130 studio members, 125 students and 5 community members. Selections will be made within a few days after the quiz has been completed. If you are selected, you will have one week to pay for your membership unless you contact us to set up a later date.

Mid-Quarter Work Hours. At the end of week five of each quarter, managers will check if you have completed half of your work hours (2.5 hours). Those who did not will lose their memberships or be issued warnings. Please reach out well in advance if you cannot meet this deadline.

End-of-Quarter Work Hours. At the end of each quarter, managers will check to see if you have done 5 hours. Those who did not will lose their membership. Please reach out well in advance if you cannot complete this deadline. New members will be selected to fill spaces that open up.

School Breaks. The co-op is closed whenever the residential building closes. These include winter break, summer break, and spring break but not thanksgiving break or any three day weekends.

End of Year. Towards the end of spring quarter, several deadlines will be announced. The last day to work on new pieces, the last day to glaze, and the last firing days will be planned and announced. Generally, this occurs within the four to five weeks of the quarter. Membership ends on the last day of spring quarter finals week and does not extend into the summer or hold into the next academic year.

MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT

Making Payments

Payment for the coop must follow strict guidelines in order for the university to accept it. We **can only accept checks or money orders as payment**. Please follow the directions below exactly when writing your check or money order, or we may reject your payment and you will have to redo it. The cost of membership (the only fee you will ever need to pay) is \$200 for students and \$450 for community members, anyone who is not affiliated with the university. We have some money reserved as scholarship money to help those that would be burdened by membership fees. If this is something you think would benefit you, please reach out to a manager by email after you have been accepted into the co-op.

Checks must be made payable to “UC Regents”, included written and numerical amounts that match, signed (only on the front) by the check writer, dated, include student ID or Drivers license number in pencil on the front and include no markings below the signature line. Please write legibly and pay the exact amount only.

Common check errors we see:

- Not fully filled out
- Signed on back (only the university does this)
- Illegible
- Incorrect amount

If you are still unsure how to fill out your check completely, you may bring it to the drop of time and a manager can help you to fill it out.

Money Orders can be purchased at many places such as CVS, Safeway, and the post office. They must be made payable to “UC Regents” and cover the exact cost of membership. Please include your name and signature and any other information on the face of the money order. A manager can help you during check drop off if you are unsure.

Dropping Off Payment. After the membership roster has been determined by the lottery, managers will send out drop off times for payments. Failure to drop payments off during the following week will forfeit your membership. Students and UCSC staff please bring your UCSC ID with you. Non-UCSC members, please bring an ID or driver's license. Please download the discord app on your phone as well, as joining the discord server will occur during this time as well.

Membership Scholarships

In order to ensure there are as few barriers to entry at the MPC as possible, we will be offering scholarships to members who would be burdened by our membership dues. If you are selected to become a member by the lottery process, please email us letting us know if you believe scholarship funds would allow you to join the co-op. In your email, please let us know how much of the membership cost you would need covered. We want to help as many people as possible, so please keep in mind that our scholarship fund is limited and financed by additional members that get in from the waitlist throughout the year. Last year, waitlist member fees brought in \$2500 dollars to the MPC which will make up the 2025-26 scholarship fund.

In addition to scholarships, we are also able to provide a quarterly payment plan to students that would benefit. If you are interested, please let us know after becoming a member. Please acknowledge that this is somewhat tricky to work out with the financial affairs office, so if you are able to pay in full at the beginning of the year we would appreciate it if you did.

If there are any other financial barriers or barriers of any nature that would prevent you from joining or continuing your membership with the co-op, please reach out to the managers at any time. We want this community to be as accessible and inclusive as possible!

WORK HOUR TASK INSTRUCTIONS

Mopping

- To keep everyone safe in the studio mopping must happen daily!
- Check to see if anyone else has already mopped that day, but if the floor still looks muddy you can mop that same day.
- Fill up the black and red mop bucket and begin mopping, using just enough water to dampen the floor but not so much that a puddle forms.
- Mop a small section of the floor, then wash and spin the mop in the bucket. Repeat a few times.
- Change your water often, about 3-5 times per room, dumping used water outside far away from the doors, **not in the sink**.
- Mopping counts for **45 minutes** and should take about this long if done correctly

Shop Vacuuming

- This should be done when there are trimmings and dry pieces of clay that are too big to mop on the floor.
- A mask is recommended and this should be done when the studio is completely empty.

- Use the vacuum to suck up any dry bits of clay, usually behind the wheels and under tables and recycling shelves and buckets.
- This counts for **30 minutes** and should take that long.

Pugging

- **This requires manager training before attempting.**
- Once you have been trained, you may pug whenever
- First, make sure there is enough workable clay to pug. Workable clay can be touched with a finger without any clay sticking. Workable clay is something you could immediately work with yourself, it should be the same consistency as bagged clay.
- The pug can't handle clay that is too wet or dry, so please never fill it with such. Wet clay will break our pug!
- A manager will instruct you on proper pugging procedure, but scan the QR code for a refresher video if you forget what to do. [check here](#) for the video as well
- Pugging counts for **45 minutes** and takes about 30 minutes If you run into issues, message a manager on discord.

Remember to:

- Unseal the vacuum once done pugging

Cleaning Jobs

- These include: cleaning tools (15 minutes), cleaning windows (30 minutes), cleaning all glaze buckets and racks (45 minutes), wiping down wheels (30 minutes), and cleaning the wedging table (15 minutes). These are five distinct work hour activities, and should take you the amount of time listed to complete.
- Clay dust is dangerous, so please help us keep the studio clean.
- There is windex and a squeegee in the mudroom under the sink for cleaning windows.
- Cleaning the wedging table includes the table top, legs, scale, and the actual plaster board.
- The job of cleaning tools includes cleaning all tools that are dirty in the mudroom or the glaze room.
- Cleaning the glaze buckets and racks includes sponging down the sides and rollies of each bucket with a clean sponge (wring it out often) and sponging down the metal racks.
- Cleaning the wheels includes sponging down the legs, sides, and pedals of every wheel.

Loading and Unloading the Bisque Kiln

- **These two jobs require prior manager training and approval.**
- To load the bisque, take the cart from the glaze room and bring it to the mudroom. Load it up with pieces, checking to make sure that they are fully or almost fully dry. When the cart is full, roll the cart to the glaze room. This will require two people. Fill the bisque as instructed by a manager, being very careful not to damage the thermocouple or member pieces. Follow written instructions on starting the kiln. If you have any questions, ask a manager. Loading the bisque is worth **60 minutes**.
- To unload the bisque, first clear a shelf on the bisqueware shelf by stacking older pieces in a stable way. Unload the bisque carefully when it is around 100°F. Stamp the date on the bottom of every piece with the ink pad and stamp. Replace stilts and shelves to their proper places. Unloading the bisque is worth **45 minutes**.

Laundry

- Laundry is worth **90 minutes**.
- It should be done by people who live in or near Merrill College so that it is not gone for too long.
- Laundry should only be done if about 75% or more of the laundry is dirty.
- Laundry must be folded as part of completing the work hour job.
- Please return the laundry **immediately** after it is done

Taking Out Trash

- Taking out trash is worth **15 minutes**.
- Completing this job includes taking out the trash from both rooms.
- Only take out the trash if there is a substantial amount in the trash cans.
- Replace the bag when you are done.
- Please do not throw away the plastic bags, these are used in the studio for wrapping pieces and are not trash.
- Throwing away food and drink inside the studio is discouraged to avoid rats and other pests.

Dehumidifier/Glaze Water Buckets

- This is a combined job and is worth **15 minutes**.
- Empty the water of the dehumidifier by pulling out the bottom and dumping it in the right side of the sink.
- In the glaze room, empty and refill the buckets that the whisk and the drill are in. Refill the buckets 80% of the way so the mixing tools are fully covered in water.

Filling Plaster Boards with Slop

- This task is worth **15 minutes per board**.
- Skim off any water from the top of the slop bin first using a bucket.
- Mix the slop a bit with the shovel to get the thicker slop from the bottom up.
- Use the shovel or a bucket to pour a layer of slop on an empty board, spreading it evenly with your hands. Try to avoid spilling it off the slides. Poke holes like focaccia on the top to increase drying. The slop should be 2-3 inches thick.

Cleaning the Sink Trap

- **These jobs require prior manager training and approval.**
- Clean sink

Other Jobs

- Other work hour jobs will be periodically posted on the discord, added to the job board in the mudroom, or given to you directly by a manager if you are looking to get hours done.
- Instructions on how to log hours for “other” jobs are given at the top of the form. Follow these carefully to avoid any issues with your hours being totalled on the sheet.

HELPFUL LINKS

[Link tree \(useful studio links\)](#)

[Beginner throwing tutorial](#)

 HowToPug

[Scoring and slipping tutorial](#)

[Learn more about pottery](#)

[Darwin's pumpkin-making demo](#)

