

# Steps of Pottery –

(Instructor Specialties can be found at the end of this document)

## Introduction

These lessons are an extra tool to help guide you through the pottery learning world. Each lesson plan, and all its modules, takes about 3 months. The lessons are divided up into weeks with the assumption that you are practicing once a week. If you would like to come in twice a week, follow the same plan but get extra practice for each step. If you would like to come in more than twice a week, feel free to work through the weeks a little faster, however, following the lessons week by week is still recommended. There is no such thing as too much practice.

## Lesson 0

There are quite a few steps in the clays journey and it is helpful to understand the entire process before starting. One of the biggest challenges to pottery is learning when to do something now, verses later. Here is a brief overview of the journey:

1. **Wet** – this is the stage the piece is in right after it comes off of the wheel. Unless you have specific decorating or altering ideas that must happen at this stage, don't touch it!
2. **Leather hard** – After a piece dries covered for about 3 to 7 days it should be in the leather hard stage. Leather hard is a spectrum and you will learn where on that spectrum that you prefer to work. This is the point where attaching handles, trimming, carving, and most decorating happens. It is the strongest point in the clay's life before being fired.
3. **Bone dry** – Once all moisture has left the piece is should look much lighter than before and this is a very brittle part of the clay's life. The piece must be bone dry before being fired. If the clay is cold to the touch then that is a good indicator that it is not dry yet. Fun fact: when clay is a little wet it is better at absorbing moisture, when it is bone dry water will deteriorate the clay instead of moistening it. Avoid excess water at this stage.
4. **Bisque** – Once it is bone dry and you are happy with the form, including any rough edges, the piece will be bisque fired. Now it is ready to be glazed.
5. **Finished** – Once it is glazed it will be glaze fired to it's finished form.

Here is a rough order of what to learn and when you know when you are ready for the next step –

## **Wheel Throwing**

**Basics** – In this class you will learn how to make a tumbler. Once you can comfortably make a tumbler that is about 4 inches wide and 6 inches tall, with straight; even walls, and a sharp angle between the bottom and the side, you are ready for the next step. (For absolute beginners this should take about 6 to 8 weeks.)

**Glazing** – Once you have a bisque fired piece it is time to glaze it. In this class we go over how to treat and glaze a bisqued piece so that it can be glaze fired into it's finished form.

**Bowls and Trimming** – In this class you will learn how to throw a bowl and trim the bottom on a pot. You will also learn when to trim and when not to trim. Bowls and tumblers are two of the most important base forms in pottery.

**Handles/Mugs** – In this class you will learn how to pull and attach handles effectively. It is very important to use your finished mugs before determining their success.

This is where most people start to diverge into the direction that suits their interests more. That's great! And if you don't have an idea of where you want to go just ask.

*(Also see "More Wheel-Throwing Topics")*

The important thing is to get a basic understanding of the two fundamental forms:

**Cylinders** - A flat bottomed piece that requires zero to minor trimming.

**Bowls** - A round bottom piece that requires trimming and has a foot to provide stability, minimize unglazed surface, and create a uniform thickness throughout the piece.

# **Handbuilding**

**Intro- Slab Roller** – In this class students will learn how to use the slab roller as well as how to properly treat the slabs and the basics of building with them. Possible projects include: functional wares, cups, and tumblers.

**The following classes can be taken in any order according to your interests!**

**Extruder, Coils, and Pinch pots** – Students will learn how to use the extruder to make coils and how to construct a vessel with them. Possible projects include: large scale vessels, sculptural figures

**Molds** – In this class students will learn how to use molds of various shapes and styles. We'll explore how to use both slabs and coils to construct a form with the use of a mold. Possible projects include: Bowls, platters, and serving dishes.

**Sculptural** – This class will explore making non-functional wares. Possible projects include: animals, human figures, and abstract forms.

**Glazing** – Once you have a bisque fired piece it is time to glaze it. In this class we go over how to treat and glaze a bisqued piece so that it can be glaze fired into it's finished form.

## **More Wheel-Throwing Topics:**

**Saucers** – Saucers are a great introduction to plates. They also start the process of connecting two or more pieces together in a uniform style. The cup and the saucer beneath.

**Plates** – Plates are harder than they seem. They are a 3rd fundamental form, (after the cylinder and the bowl). Throwing them isn't as challenging as the after-throwing-care. Drying/Trimming can be difficult to time and drying can't be rushed.

**Jars** – In this class you will learn how to throw, measure, and finish a lidded jar. Jars are all about the details, so if you aren't confident in your ability to control the clay into a particular shape, then you are not ready for jars.

**Vases** – Vases employ almost all of the same technique as tumblers but require a lot more practice and technique. If you are having a hard time getting height quickly with a tumbler, wrestling more than 4lbs of clay, or controlling any wobbles in your pieces, then you are not ready for vases.

## **Additional Topics (Wheel or Hand-building):**

**Slip Decorating** – This is the main decorating class. A lot of these techniques are also useable with underglaze. Here we will go over things like paper resist, sgraffito, mishima (slip inlay), and slip trailing.

When signing up - please specify if you'd like to see decorating demos or just have questions! We are happy to answer any questions and do any demos, we'd just like to prepare accordingly.

**Underglaze and Mason Stain Uses** – This is a simple topic that doesn't actually have a demo, so you don't need to add this to the comments, you can just ask about it in class. We will go over when to use and the different ways to use underglaze and mason stains. I recommend signing up for a Slip decorating class and then asking about these things too! Please don't sign up for slip decorating if you aren't interested in the demos and DO sign up for slip decorating if you want the demos. Decorating demos are one of the most time-consuming demo for us to prep for.

**How to make slip** – Slip is useful for all sorts of things! Mainly attaching clay together or decorating. The studio supplies decorating slips in white and black. In this class we will go over the process of making different types of slip and how to decide what consistency you want in your slips.

# Instructor Specialties

Staff bios can be found here! <https://www.seansclaycorner.com/about-the-instructors>

All instructors are well versed in a variety of topics, including the following:

- Cylinders
- Bowls
- Trimming
- Glazing
- Handles/ Mugs
- Vases

In reality, we can help with many forms/ projects, so if you have an idea, just ask!

## **Each instructor also has specialties listed below:**

*You can sign-up for any topic with any instructor. The instructor may only be able to give you a brief introduction based on their skills, but they will point you towards another instructor who can help further! We are here to help, if you ever feel lost just sign-up for any class and we can help!*

### **Sean**

- Beginning and all-levels of Wheel throwing and Handbuilding
- Surface design/ Decorating
- (Specialty) Handle pulling/ Mugs
- Throwing with Porcelain
- Glaze Mixing
- Jars/ Teapots

### **Amanda**

- Beginning and all-levels of Wheel throwing and Handbuilding
- Color development – gradients and ombres.
- Open forms bowls, plates, and platters.
- Surface Enhancements/ Alterations
- Abstract forms

**Jade**

- Beginning and all-levels of Wheel throwing and Handbuilding
- Jewelry, patterns, baskets
- Surface design/ Decorating
- Color theory
- Strong design skills.

**Henry**

- Beginning and all-levels of Wheel throwing
- Throwing with Porcelain
- Altered forms - collapsed, scallops
- Surface detailing - carving, chattering
- (Specialty) Handle Pulling/ Mugs

**Jane**

- Intermediate to Advanced Wheel throwing and Handbuilding
- Large Forms
- Jars/ Teapots
- Long necked bottles, serving bowls, and much more!

**Caitlin**

- Beginning Wheel-throwing
- Specializes in first-time throwers.

**Iphis**

- Beginning and all-levels of Wheel throwing and Handbuilding
- Abstract forms