

Making a Stamped Slab Mug

Unit Overview:

1. Make stamps-a great way to start your first week of school!
2. Make a cylinder-learn the skill of crafting a quality cylinder.
3. Make a stamped slab cylinder-using your DIY tools and practicing your crafting skills.
4. Handles! Learn how to make them.
5. Make a Stamped Slab Cylinder-put all the parts together!

Lesson 1: Making Stamps

Have students create their own clay stamps. I ask them to make 3-5, knowing some will work better than others.

Reference artist: [Sarah Pike](#)

1. Sketch designs for designs: ideas include initials, spirit animals, geometric shapes, patterns, etc. Encourage students to make some stamps that will fit and work together.
2. Designs will need to be IN REVERSE on the stamp-pay attention to letters and any images where that matters.
3. Students can press image into clay for an image transfer-charcoal pencils work great for this technique.
4. Use loop tools to carve negative space-anything raised will imprint in the clay. Make sure carving is deep enough to make an impression.
5. As stamps dry to bone dry, students can gently test stamps for quality of printing. Stamps can still be carved or smoothed at the bone dry stage.
6. Fire them up! Bisque fired stamps will be ready to use.

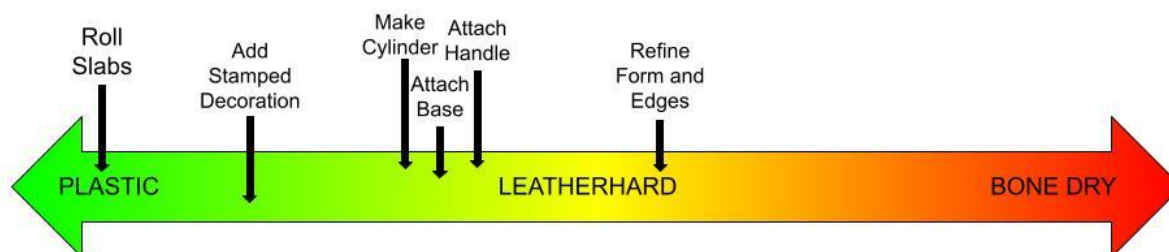
Lesson 2: Making Cylinders

To see a full tutorial on how I teach cylinder construction, [watch this video on my Youtube Channel](#).

Building a cylinder is a foundational skill that applies to a number of ceramic forms, including the ever popular mug making. It's important to take time to teach the nuances of joints, slab thickness, weight, lip shape, refining surface, etc. We learn to make a plain cylinder while our stamps are firing and plan to repeat the process throughout the year to practice this integral skill.

1. Cut rectangular slabs for cylinder sides. I keep paper templates on hand that are 12" x 4.5", but also allow students to cut their own rectangular templates to design a size they like.
2. Make sure slabs are no thicker than 1/4". Use rolling pins and guidesticks or a slab roller. Thicker than 1/4" will result in a too-heavy mug. I encourage students to work as thin as they are comfortable working.
3. Thoroughly smooth all sides of slabs with a rib. This helps cut down on warping later.
4. Cut a base that is 5" or larger in diameter. This will be cut to size later.
5. Discuss drying time: it's really difficult to control drying in a school but imperative that you build cylinders when the clay is firm enough to hold shape but plastic enough to create quality joints.

DRYING TIME CHART: WHEN TO DO EACH STEP OF THE PROCESS



6. After cutting all flat pieces, clean up edges, thin the lip, and bevel the ends.
7. Attach beveled ends to make a cylinder when clay is ALMOST leather hard. I have students use PVS pipes and small flower pots to round their cylinder nicely.
8. Compress all seams inside and outside with a brush and small amount of slip.
9. On the outside of the cylinder where the base meets the walls, trim so there is about $\frac{1}{8}$ " overhang and press that up gently into the walls. This can be smoothed or accented as a bottom edge.
10. Roll base around perimeter against the table to create a bit of lift at the edges of the base-this helps prevent breaks or cracks along the edge.
11. Add handles. I teach how to make slab, coil and pulled handles and let students choose their favorite method.
12. Be sure to spend time refining the form, surfaces, and joints.

Lesson 3: How to Make Handles

After making stamps and learning how to build a cylinder, I have students spend a day handle making. I demonstrate three methods of handles: slab, coil, and pulled. To see me present this lesson, [watch this video on my youtube channel.](#)

[I also have a video about attaching handles, available here.](#)

Lesson 4: Making a Stamped Slab Mug

We scrap the handles from this practice session, but now we are all set to make our final, culminating project: Stamped Slab Mugs.

1. Cut slabs for a cylinder and base.
2. Follow procedures for building a cylinder but ADD IN TIME TO DECORATE! Stamp your slabs with a pattern made out of bisqued stamps while clay is still plastic and flat.
3. After stamping, the slab will have lost some of its shape. Clean up the edges by recutting the top and bottom, thin and smooth the lip, and bevel the ends.
4. Build cylinder, making sure to pay attention to drying times.
5. ADD A HANDLE: this is new. I demonstrate attaching handles, making sure they are smooth, a good shape, and securely attached.
6. Refine mugs in the leatherhard stage. Roll base for uplifted base edges, smooth any rough spots, compress any seams once more, and make sure the form is circular.