

# *ceramics canada*

## Time Line for working with clay

Prepare the work surface.

Cover the table with cloth or newspaper. Many potters make their own portable work surface from a 3' x 3' piece of plywood or particle board that has been covered with a heavy fabric like canvas or denim. Edges are secured with staples or upholstery tacks.

Prepare the clay

Using fresh, moist clay ensures a positive experience and helps to avoid frustration. Old, dry and previously used clay may be used but must be conditioned first (moistened/soaked, wedged/kneaded).

- Day 1            Create clay project. Cover loosely, encasing the entire project in a large plastic bag. This allows the moisture content of the project to even out.
- Day 2            Project may be uncovered for additional carving or the addition of more clay. Slip and score add-ons. Cover again. Plastic bag may need to be turned inside out to prevent condensation from dripping on the clay. Drips could cause deep cracks to form on the project.
- Day 3            Open the plastic bag but do not remove it. Allow fresh air to slowly dry the project.
- Day 5            Remove the plastic bag and dry completely.
- Day 7            Most projects should be completely dry by now. To test, place project against your cheek ... if it feels cold it is not completely dry.

When projects are completely dry they may be fired. The first firing is called a "bisque" firing. This firing proceeds slowly over the course of 6-8 hours. This is to ensure that no projects explode from trapped steam. It usually takes one day to fire and at least 12 more hours for the kiln to cool. See: How to Fire a Bisque Load

- Day 8            The projects may be unloaded when the kiln is cool. Projects may now be finished using a wide selection of techniques. See: Room Temperature Glazing, How to Glaze, How to Fire a Glaze Load