



Clayworks

Beginner Tips

Mastering claywork takes time. Here's a few tips that will help you minimize the time needed.

Build skills. Spending time building skills is a better investment than spending money buying gadgets. Too many of the geegaws and gadgets offered for sale are more toy than tool and too easily become a crutch to avoid spending the time to build skills.

Try different techniques. Everyone has personal favourites. You don't know what your favourite is until you try all the alternatives.

Try different clays. Someone else's favourite might not be yours. For wheel work you might prefer a softer clay but firmer clay is often better for handbuilding. For large pieces gravity can become your enemy with soft clay.

Use less water than you think you should. It's easier to add than to remove.

Wedge more than you think is needed. Too much is better than not enough.

Throw a piece and cut it in half from top to bottom to see the thickness of the clay. This is a perfect way to see if you have one part thicker than another part. Variation in thickness encourages the clay to crack as it dries.

Always allow for shrinkage Clay shrinks when it dries so the finished project will be smaller. This is especially a concern if you're making something with a lid that must fit in place.

Take longer than you think is needed to dry the clay. Too much dry is a lot better than too little dry.

Experiment. Do the mad scientist stuff. That's where art comes from.

Expect failure. It's where you learn the most. If you're trying something you've never done before assume it will fail.

Practice repetitive work. Repetition builds skill. If you want to be good at something practice repeating it.

Don't become attached to a piece. It's not your child. You can make another.

Embrace the 2 Rules.

Rule 1. If you do the work, you make the rules.

Rule 2. If you obey Rule 1 there won't be a Rule 2.