



Combing Glass

To comb glass, you will be opening the kiln when it's heated to a high temperature and reaching in to comb hot molten glass. The heat escaping from the kiln can do serious damage. Be careful that escaping heat doesn't burn anything near the kiln – especially you. Take special care to be certain there is nothing flammable too near the kiln and that you wear good protective gear.

Turn the kiln off.

Accidentally touching your metal combing tool to a live kiln element will be a shocking experience.

Wear gloves

Preferably some kind of silica cloth gloves rated to 2000° F. Long ones that come up to your elbow are preferred but the shorter ones that come just to your wrist will be enough if you're careful. Regular welding gloves will work but only for extremely short openings and with small kilns.

Heat resistant jacket or leather apron.

A fully fireproof jacket like firefighters have will allow you to work close but such jackets are expensive and not really needed. Flameproof welder's jackets are relatively inexpensive and will allow you to get close enough to comb and still provide adequate protection. So will a leather welder's apron or jacket.

Green welder's glasses.

It's important to wear something to protect your eyes from the infrared light that comes off molten glass. It can cause PERMANENT eye damage. If you choose to use a green plastic face shield instead of goggles, remember, the kiln heat can soften and might even melt it if you get too close the kiln. No. 3 tint is plenty of protection. Darker makes it needlessly hard to see. If you have didymium glasses for torchworking, they work well to remove the glare from the molten glass and allow you to more easily see where you have combed.

Face Shield.

Any kind of face shield will help protect your face from the heat – but remember, plastic can melt if you get too close.

Cotton or wool clothing.

Do NOT wear anything synthetic. It can melt and stick to your skin. There are no "special" prizes for glass artists with scar tissue from melting their shirt to their arm. Remember to cover your exposed neck – either with a buttoned up collar or a cotton scarf.

Long tools.

The longer the tools you use to comb the molten glass, the further you are from the heat so the less risk of you getting burned.

Hair.

If you have long hair, tie it back. If you want it trimmed, go to a barber. Also, the smell of burning hair can be a bit distracting while you're busy trying to comb a beautiful pattern in the glass.

Be quick.

The best safety precaution when combing hot glass in a kiln is to work fast. Resist the urge to do "just one more comb". Open the kiln, do a quick pass, and close the kiln. Come back later to do another pass. The longer the kiln is open, the greater the possibility you will burn something. Probably you.