WELCOME

TO CANBERRA POTTERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

getting the most out of your class



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

CONTACT DETAILS

We communicate with all our students by email. Check your email details are correct when you enrol or you will miss out on important information! We copy and paste so what you type, is what we get.

Your booking confirmation and welcome emails will come from admin@canberrapotters.com.au and can sometimes get caught in junk filters. To help avoid this, add us to your contacts.

While you're at it, also add education@canberrapotters.com.au and classes@canberrapotters.com.au. These are the email addresses we will use to communicate with you about your class.

ACCESSIBILITY

Most people can find a way of working with clay that fulfils their creative interest. Some skills do require additional strength or mobility. If you have pre existing health conditions such as a bad back, neck, shoulders, wrists, asthma or other respiratory illnesses we recommend you talk to us and consult your GP prior to booking.

Where possible we will work with you to make reasonable adjustments to ensure you are able to participate fully in class. It's important to note that Canberra Potters can not take responsibility for pre-existing illnesses or health issues that may be aggravated by being in a course.

LEARNING WITH US

Our tutors are all practicing artists who are enthusiastic about their work and teaching clay.

Whether you're at the start of your clay journey, or are a clay veteran, we're here for it. We take pride in developing classes and courses to help our community to grow their creativity and develop their skills.

As well as our term classes, we have short courses and master classes teaching more specific and/or advanced skills. Our Artist-In-Residence program provides us with a unique opportunity to offer courses from practicing ceramic artists from around Australia and across the world. If you pop into the Shop we can show you some of the work from previous artists who have done a residency with us.

MISSED CLASSES

We do not offer make up classes. Your tutor will do their best to help you catch up when you return.

If you are unable to attend a session it helps to let your tutor or the class administrator know (classes@canberrapotters.com.au). By doing this, your teacher can move any finished work from your class shelves up to the firing queue, resulting in a better work flow for your term. Please note, if you miss a session, we cannot refund you for that.

On the rare occasion we need to cancel a session, all students will be notified by email or phone and we will offer you a replacement session where possible.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

Clothes you don't mind getting dirty are perfect, you're also very welcome to bring along an apron from home! If you have long hair, tie it back and it's advisable to leave your valuables at home.

You must wear enclosed, sturdy shoes in the workshop at all time. This one is a health and safety requirement so there are no exceptions.
Lets keep those toes safe.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

Each course has specific requirements. The welcome email you get sent at the time of booking will have a list for you.

Remember, if you can't find that email, search your junk folders and add admin@canberrapotters.com.au to your contacts list. If your tutor would like you to bring anything specific, they will let you know at your first session.

One thing you will absolutely need to bring is a sponge or microfibre cloth as well as a clean old towel. What for? Read on!

CLEAN UP

Part of working with clay is cleaning up. Not the most exciting, but 100% necessary.

In the last 10 minutes of every session you will be required to pack up and clean up after yourself. Store your work on your class shelves, clean and put away any workshop tools or batts you've used, wet wipe your work station with your sponge/microfibre cloth and then dry it with your old towel.

All shared equipment must be cleaned too, so make sure you check it before you leave.

Side note - don't forget to wash your sponge/microfibre cloth AND your towel between classes! Cleaning with dirty cloths and towels is a bit redundant, right?

HEALTH

We live in complex times. We strongly encourage all students to wear face masks during their classes.

If you are not well please do not attend. Your tutor will do their best to catch you up in following weeks.

Workshop cleaning is also very important to keep us all healthy. Over time, breathing in dry clay dust can give you silicosis (a nasty lung disease). It's for this reason that we wet wipe our work stations and ask that you regularly clean your sponge/microfibre cloth and towel.

Our workshops are regularly wet vacuumed, and together we can keep the dust down and protect our lungs!

ETIQUITTE

Sharing the workshop with your fellow class mates is an essential ingredient to a good term of clay. Spread the love rather than your stuff ♥

Please treat others the way you would like to be treated, including your class mates, your tutors and Canberra Potters staff. There is no instance where inappropriate behaviour or language is acceptable. If this does happen, your tutor or a staff member will ask you to leave.

Learning new techniques can be stressful and/or frustrating. If you need to do some deep breathing in the garden for a bit, that's okay, just let your tutor know.

HOW LONG IS EACH TERM?

Canberra Potters terms run for 9 weeks roughly in line with ACT School Term dates. Term dates can be found on our 'Learn' page on our website.

Children's courses run for 1 and 1/2 hours each week for 9 weeks.
Adult courses run for 3 hours each week for 9 weeks.

WHY IS WEEK 8 THE LAST WEEK OF WET CLAY?

Week 8 of every term is the last week for wet clay making. This leaves week 9 to finalise and glaze your creations and get them up for firing.

Everything on your class shelves, be it raw, bisque fired or finished work, must be taken home with you at the end of your final session. During the holidays our workshops undergo a deep clean and the shelves are cleaned and prepared for the next term of courses.

To get the most out of your course, it's important not to leave your work until the last minute to bisque, glaze and fire. There is more information about firing processes and timing later in this booklet.

Note: Once your course ends there is no opportunity to come back to complete work unless you enrol in a course for the following term.

SUSTAINABILITY

We encourage all of our students and members to think and act in a sustainable way at Canberra Potters and in their own studios.



Resources are finite and fuel is costly. Worldwide, ceramic materials and clay are in high demand. It is important to know that once fired, your work is in the world forever and will never break down. Like Roman pottery it will be with us forever.

Here are a couple of ways you can work with clay with sustainability in mind.

CRITIQUING YOUR WORK

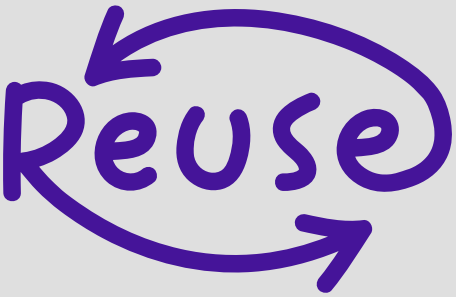
Self critiquing is a necessary part of working with clay.

Learning to critique can be difficult especially when you're just starting. Your tutors are there to help you, and if they tell you that piece won't survive, trust them.

Here are some questions to ask yourself which will help you decide if you should fire your piece:

- Do I love it?
- Once fired, what will I do with it?
- Is it fit for purpose?

If you decide not to fire, good for you! Clay in its raw state can be recycled so you can make something else. Are you going to make something new or remake make the same thing? What will you change this time?



RECYCLING YOUR CLAY

Recycling your clay is a win for the environment and your budget.

We suggest bringing along a bucket and an old pillowcase with you to class.

- Put your pillow case into your bucket - you now have a recycling bucket!
- Any 'not-to-be-fired' pieces can go into your recycling bucket along with dried out bits of clay.

Note: drying out your clay completely before recycling will result in a more consistent recycled clay body.

- At home, fill your bucket with water to cover the clay you have in your recycling bucket and leave to 'silt' or break down.
- Take your pillow case of silted clay out of the bucket to let it drain/drip and dry for a while. You can hang your pillowcase on your clothes line or put it on a sunny section of concrete in your back yard.
- Every so often, check to see how dry the clay is in the pillowcase. Remember that the clay on the outside will dry faster than the clay in the middle.
- Once you're happy with the firmness, take your clay out of the pillow case and wedge it to get out the air bubbles. If you still have the clay bag your clay came in originally, why not put your recycled clay back in that? Those bags can serve you and your recycled clay for many, many years to come.

How long do I leave my pillowcase of clay to dry?

This is a tricky question with no straight answer. In winter your clay could take up to 2 weeks, in the middle of summer, maybe a day. Moisture management is a big part of working with clay. The clay will be ready in its own time.

FIRING YOUR WORK



How long will it take to fire my pots?

The short answer is between 3 and 5 weeks.

We fire 18,000-20,000 pots each year and our kiln packers are the ones to thank. We love our kiln packers, they're legends, but they are on a very tight schedule to get all student and member work through the kilns. Please let them focus on getting your worked fired and don't interrupt them while they are working!

We can't always guarantee to have your pieces back to you as quickly as you would like. To get a better work flow for your term, we recommend putting your work up for firing progressively rather than keeping it all to the end of the term. Toward the end of term there is always a greater volume of work going through the kilns, so inevitably it will take a bit longer for your work to come through.

Why should I put an identifying mark on the bottom of my pots?

Once your work has gone through the kilns, our kiln packers will unload them onto a trolley on the kiln shed veranda. With so many pieces on these trolleys, it can be hard to identify your work.

Sometimes when pieces come out of the kiln they look very different. Having a mark or name on the bottom of your work is a clear identifier. It is also very helpful to take a photo of your pot before it goes up for firing!

Help! I can't find my piece!

Don't stress! Very few pieces actually go missing. 9 times out of 10 they turn up. It may take a couple of looks to find your fired pieces. Work gets stacked on the trolley, so make sure you're carefully lifting pieces up and looking inside others.

Have you looked on the 'rejected' shelves to see if the packers have put it there? Has your tutor picked it up and put it on your class shelves already?

Still nothing? Leave it a week and check again.

As a last resort, our staff are happy to assist you where they can. This is when a photo of your piece and your identifying mark is vital. Otherwise we are looking for a needle in a haystack..... well, actually, it's like looking for a bowl in a bowl-stack.

How many pieces can I make and get fired?

Some courses have a maximum number of pieces each student can have fired. Please check with your tutor to discuss if this applies to you. This is when your self-critiquing skills will come into play.

Where do I pick up my pots?

Your pots can be collected from the kiln shed veranda at any time! Just remember your work may not be fired together. Our kilns are packed for efficiency of space and sometimes course work gets separated.





What happens if pieces crack and break in kiln?

Clay is a cruel mistress. Remember that you are learning and that with the development of skills there will be casualties. Your tutor will provide you with advice as to why problems have occurred to help prevent issues happening in future. Sometimes we need to take it on the chin and learn from our mistakes. Critique your work. If your tutor says it won't survive, trust them. They're talking from experience.

Can I fire my work in my oven at home?

Alas, no. Our kilns are designed to take your pots to much higher temperatures. Below is a break down of what your pots will go through in our kilns.

The first firing, bisque firing, goes to 1000°C. Bisqued pots are not water soluble, however still absorbent so glaze will adhere to the surface.
The second, glaze firing, goes to 1200°C or what is referred to as 'Midfire'.

What are the reject shelves?

We have 'reject shelves' located on the kiln shed veranda. Pieces may be rejected by the kiln packers if they believe it will damage the kiln or other works in the kiln. If you find your work on these shelves, check with your tutor, make adjustments as necessary and put it back up for firing.

Some reasons for raw work to be rejected include, but is not limited to:

- the piece being solid
- it's hollow but doesn't have an appropriate air hole

Some reasons for bisqued work to be rejected include, but is not limited to:

- glaze has not been wiped off the base or is too close to the base
- overly thick glaze application

QUESTIONS

CAN I BRING MY DOG TO CLASS?

If your dog is a licensed assistance animal, absolutely. If not, sadly the answer is no. Canberra Potters is an ACT Government facility and as such, dogs are not permitted on site.

CAN I SMOKE ON SITE?

Watson Art Centre is an ACT Government facility and is therefore a NON-SMOKING AREA. This includes all buildings and grounds.

CAN I BRING MY OWN TOOLS?

Absolutely! We do encourage students to bring along their tool box to class, especially for Clay Foundations and Continuing Clay course.

If you don't have your own tools yet, that's okay, our teaching workshops have an assortment of tools for class use. Please note, we cannot take responsibility for loss or damage to personal tools and equipment. We recommend labelling all of your tools before bringing them to class.

ARE CLAY AND FIRING INCLUDED IN MY COURSE FEE?

Clay and firing are included in all children's courses and adult Introduction to Clay courses. Our Introduction to Clay courses have a set curriculum and a maximum number of pieces that can be fired as part of the course.

Clay and firing are an additional cost for Clay Foundations and Continuing Clay courses. You can buy clay during class from the Shop or from your tutor. Different projects will call for different clay bodies. Have a chat to your tutor about your project, they will be able to recommend a clay to suit.
Firing is paid for by the kilo. In these courses some students focus on small creations while others work on a larger scale. As you can imagine, smaller items will be lighter and therefore cheaper than larger sculptural works. Bone dry work can be brought into the Shop or taken up to the kiln shed with your tutor to 'weigh and pay' for firing.

HOW BIG CAN I MAKE MY PIECE?

30cm x 30cm x 30cm MAX. If your piece is larger than this it will not be able to go through our kilns. Pull out that ruler!



CAN I SELL WHAT I MAKE IN MY COURSE?

We are here to provide an opportunity for you to learn and develop you skills with clay. When you are learning it is common to have pieces break or not turn out the way you envisioned. If you are thinking about selling your work, we strongly encourage you to have a conversation with your tutor before hand.

WHY IS MY POT SO SMALL?!

Clay shrinks approximately 12% from when it's first made to when it's finished it's final glaze firing.

CAN I ATTEND COURSES WITH MY CHILD?

Parents who would like to share the experience of a pottery course with their child are welcome to enrol and join the fun.

Parents and Carers who wish to attend to support a child with identified additional needs please note the following:

- Prior arrangement must be made by contacting education@canberrapotters.com.au
- Attendance will be at the discretion of Canberra Potters
- Is subject to the provision of a current Working with Vulnerable People card, COVIDSafe practice and course enrolment availability
- For health & safety reasons children under 5 years are not permitted in the workshops.

WHAT IS THE MINIMUM AGE FOR CHILDREN'S CLASSES?

6 years and attending school.
Some children's courses have age limits listed in the course description.

ADMIN NOTES

CANCELLATIONS/REFUNDS

Please treat your course booking as a commitment to attend.

Our cancellation policy is as follows:

- Refunds are provided (less 10%) if requested 10 days (or more) prior to course commencement.
- No refunds are provided for cancellations within 10 days of course commencement.
- If we cancel a course 100% of your course fee will be refunded.
- Member discounts must be applied at time of booking courses online. We are unable to apply member discounts retrospectively.

We do not offer refunds for partial term attendance or where requested after the course start date.

Another option if you cannot attend the course you're enrolled in is to transfer your place to a friend for no additional cost. Just let us know their details.

If you don't have a friend who can take your place and it's within 10 days of of your course commencing, we can try to find a replacement for you. If successful we will offer you a refund less a 10% admin fee.

We operate on limited class sizes. Last minute cancellations where we cannot find a replacement for you impact on our ability to run courses. If we cannot find a replacement for you, asking for a refund means you are asking us to wear the cost for you.



TRANSFERS

Prior to courses commencing we will accept transfer requests for courses offered in the same term. We cannot guarantee we will have space to accommodate your request.

Please choose your course carefully as transfers will incur a 10% administration fee. Courses are not transferable between terms.

NO WAITLISTS

Unfortunately we do not have the capacity to maintain waitlists for any courses.
If we have any cancellations, the places will be put back up for booking on our website. Time allowing, we also post to Instagram and Facebook as places become available.

Courses are booked by the term. Keep an eye on our website for the next term's booking launch dates!

CONTACT US

Please contact us with your enquiry, and the appropriate team member will respond as soon as possible.

02 6241 1670

admin@canberrapotters.com.au

We would love to hear your experience of your course at Canberra Potters. This QR code will take you to our online Feedback Form which will take no longer than 3 to 5 minutes to complete. Your feedback helps us continue to improve. Thank you for your time.

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