



Davinia RS

Getting to Know Your Pottery Studio



Lesson Overview: Step inside the world of pottery with this essential studio orientation. In just 8–10 minutes, you'll explore the unique nature of clay, learn how a pottery studio is set up, and discover best practices for staying safe, clean, and creative in a shared space. Whether you're working at home or in a group studio, this lesson will help you understand your space, and your responsibilities as a pottery learner.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the basic properties of clay and why proper handling is essential.
- Identify and describe key areas of a functional pottery studio.
- Recognize essential equipment and tools required for storing and managing pottery projects.
- Apply safety and cleaning practices that support a healthy studio environment.
- Reflect on personal responsibilities in maintaining a safe and welcoming space.

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Click the "***Start Course***" button to begin.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR POTTERY STUDIO



Welcome to the Pottery Studio!



Understanding Clay's Nature



Creating a Productive Workspace: Studio Zones



Keeping the Studio Clean & Safe



Storing Projects & Reclaiming Clay



Meet the Kiln (From a Distance)



Studio Etiquette: Respecting Shared Spaces



Ready to Step Into the Studio

Lesson 1 of 8

Welcome to the Pottery Studio!





Welcome!

Before we begin working with clay, let's explore what a safe, welcoming, and functional pottery studio looks like. A good setup supports creativity and keeps everyone safe.

Listen to the audio below to discover what we will cover in this lesson:



In this lesson, we'll walk through everything you need to know to get comfortable working in a pottery studio. We'll explore how ceramic studios are set up, how to keep them safe and clean, and the essential spaces and equipment you'll need to know.

Whether you're learning at home or in a shared space, understanding how a studio works will set you up for success. Let's begin!

Ready?

CONTINUE

Understanding Clay's Nature



Clay is more than mud

Clay it's a responsive, living material. It holds memory, just like paper you crumple and try to flatten. Even when smooth, it remembers the stress. Clay reacts to how you treat it. Pushing too hard or manipulating it when it's dry can weaken the structure.

Clay can be shaped endlessly while wet. As it dries, it remembers how it was handled. The more it dries, the more carefully it must be handled.

Think of it like a toddler: it can be guided but not forced.

Quick Knowledge Check

Select an option and click submit to reveal:

What does it mean for clay to have memory?

- ☐ It can be reused over and over again without change
- ☐ It remembers how it was treated, stress or distortion can show up later
- ☐ It dries faster than other materials
- ☐ You can imprint writing on it and it stays forever

SUBMIT

CONTINUE

Creating a Productive Workspace: Studio Zones

Common Studio Zones

A well-functioning pottery studio is divided into zones, each with a specific purpose. Let's take a closer look at these zones so you know where to find what you need.

Click on each area to learn what happens there.

Work Tables —

This is the heart of your handbuilding work. At the work tables, you'll wedge (prepare) clay, shape forms, and refine your pieces. These large, sturdy tables are designed to handle messy, tactile work like rolling slabs, coiling, or pinching clay. You'll often find tools, texture mats, and bats here. Clean, dry surfaces and good lighting make this zone ideal for focused crafting.

Throwing Area —

The throwing area houses the pottery wheels, where artists shape clay on spinning platforms. Each wheel typically includes a splash pan and nearby tools like wire cutters, sponges, and ribs. This area gets messy—expect wet clay everywhere! It's common to see buckets of water and reclaim containers nearby. It's essential to keep this space tidy and clean your wheel after use.

Glaze Area —

This colorful corner is where pottery gets its shine. Glazing is the process of coating bisque-fired pots with liquid glaze before the final firing. This area typically includes glaze buckets, mixing tools, brushes, and tongs. It's important to avoid contamination here—keep tools clean and never return leftover glaze to the bucket. Only bisqued pottery belongs in this zone!

Drying Shelves —

These shelves are where pieces dry slowly and evenly before firing. They are usually open, labeled, and organized by wetness or student. You'll see everything from freshly made pieces covered in plastic to leather-hard pots stiffening up. It's crucial not to rush this stage—good drying means fewer cracks!

Kiln —

The kiln room is where transformation happens! Kilns are extremely hot chambers that fire your work to become ceramic. Most studios have electric kilns with visible controllers, peep holes, and kiln shelves. Only trained staff operate the kilns, and safety signs are common. Always respect boundaries and treat this zone with caution.

Storage & Reclaim Clay —

This area includes shelves and bins for tools, finished work, clay bags, and reclaim buckets. The reclaim bucket collects scrap clay to be recycled.

Cleaning Station —

This space is stocked with mops, rags, sponges, and a sink (if available). It's where you clean your tools and work surfaces—always wet clean! Cleanliness matters for health and creativity. Proper

studio hygiene protects everyone's lungs and keeps the studio pleasant to work in.

Whether you're working in a shared studio or setting one up at home, it's important to know how each space is used. Knowing your way around the studio helps you stay organized, clean, and safe.

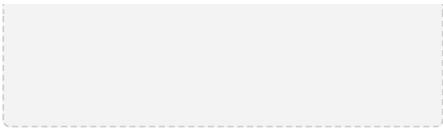
Let's see if you remember where we should place the following objects. Select the object and drag it to the correct area in the studio:

**Work Tables and Throwing
Area**

Splash pan

Ware Board

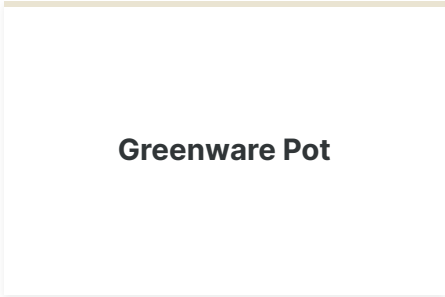
Glazing Area



Glaze Brush



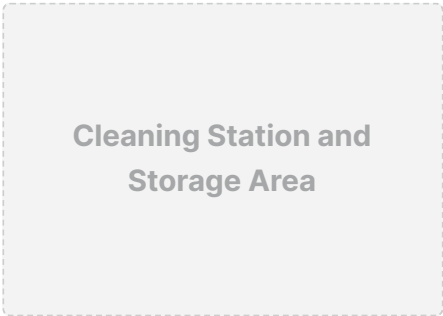
**Kiln Room and Drying
Shelves**



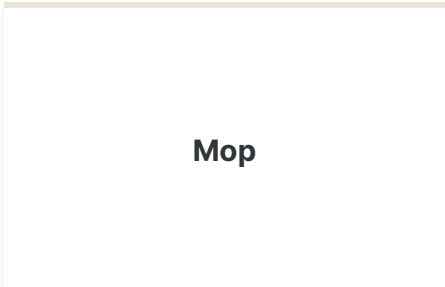
Greenware Pot



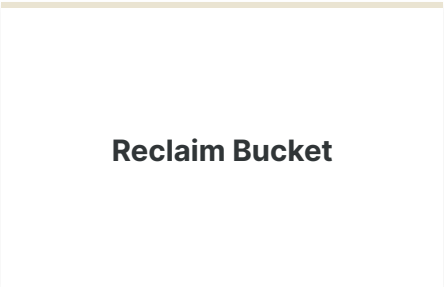
Kiln Shelf



**Cleaning Station and
Storage Area**



Mop



Reclaim Bucket

Nice work! You've got a great sense of how a pottery studio is organized.

CONTINUE

Keeping the Studio Clean & Safe



Clay is forgiving when wet, but once it dries and becomes dust, it can be harmful, especially if inhaled. Clay dust may look harmless, but it contains silica, a tiny particle that can float in the air for hours. Long-term exposure can harm your lungs over time.

So instead of sweeping or using a regular vacuum, we clean wet. Spray water to weigh down dust before mopping or wiping.

Keeping a clean workspace protects you and everyone around you.

Safe or not? Flip the cards below to explore cleaning scenarios and reveal if they are safe or unsafe:

Sweeping up dry clay at the end of class with a regular broom.

Unsafe. Sweeping dry clay stirs up silica dust, which can stay airborne for hours and be harmful if inhaled. Always clean using damp methods instead.

Spraying a worktable with water before wiping it down.

Safe. This is the right approach! Spraying with water keeps clay dust from becoming airborne. Follow with a damp sponge or cloth to clean.

Vacuuming the floor after trimming clay.

Unsafe. Unless the vacuum has a certified HEPA filter, it will recirculate clay dust into the air. Use only HEPA vacuums or clean with wet mopping methods.

Wiping down your wheel and tools with a damp sponge.

Safe. Excellent habit. Damp cleaning is the safest way to remove dry clay particles. Always wipe down shared spaces and tools after use.



Keep your tools clean. Wipe surfaces before and after work. A clean studio is a safe studio — for everyone!

CONTINUE

Storing Projects & Reclaiming Clay

When you're not working on your piece, store it properly. Proper storage keeps your work in good shape and workable, as well as your studio tidy.

Use drying shelves for in-progress pieces, works that are ready to stiffen or dry evenly.

For moist clay, wrap your work in plastic and label it clearly with your name and the date (especially in shared studios where you don't have your own shelf or enough space on it).

If your clay is drying faster than expected, lightly mist the surface with water and rewrap until you're ready to work again.

**Reclaim bucket:**

Leftover trimmings or unusable bits (clay too dry or broken)? Don't throw it away, collect it in the reclaim bucket. It can get a second life and be recycled later!

Just check that no tools, or non-clay items are mixed in. A clean reclaim bucket makes everyone's recycled clay usable again!

Quick Knowledge Check

Select an option and click submit to reveal:

You're working on a project and notice your clay is drying faster than you'd like. What should you do?

- ☐ Leave it out overnight to dry completely
- ☐ Keep working on it and push through before it dries
- ☐ Lightly mist it with water and rewrap in plastic
- ☐ Dunk the entire piece in a bucket of water

SUBMIT

CONTINUE

Meet the Kiln (From a Distance)

In a studio, the kiln area is where your clay becomes ceramic. It's the final transformation zone!

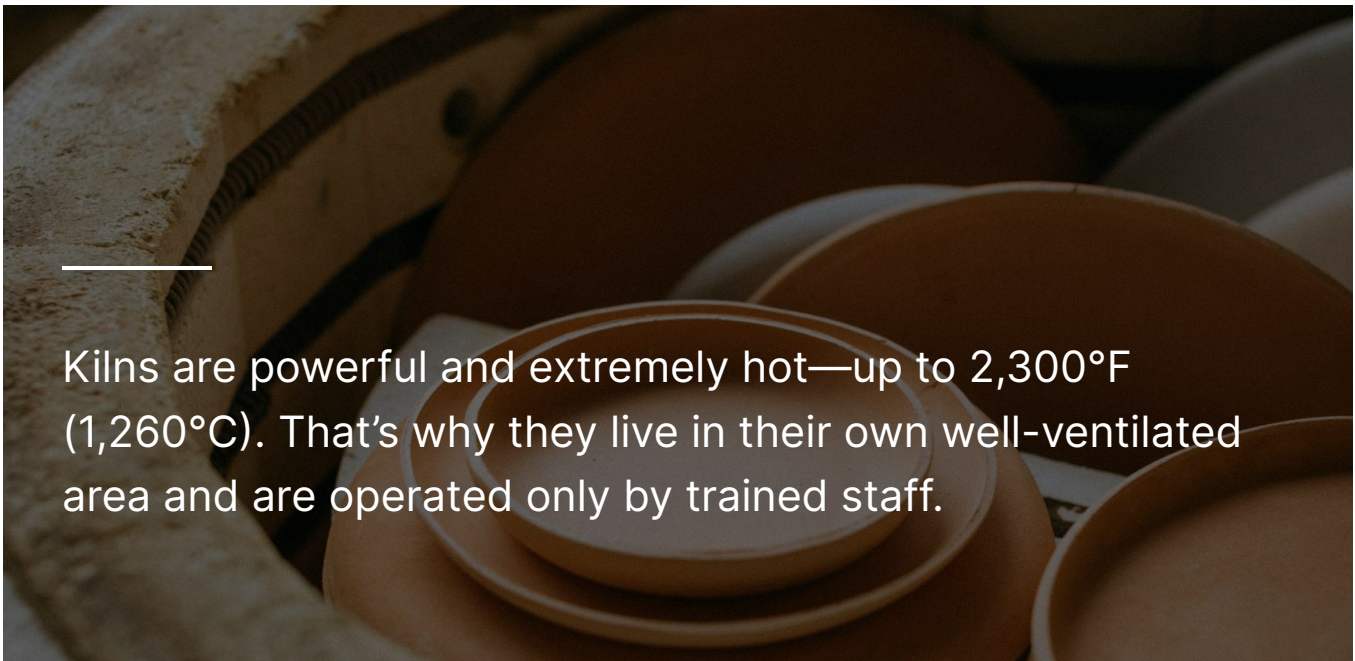
Most pottery goes through two firings;

1

Bisque firing: The first firing. It hardens the clay so it can be safely glazed.

2

Glaze firing: The second firing. It melts the glaze, creating a smooth, glassy surface.



Kilns are powerful and extremely hot—up to 2,300°F (1,260°C). That's why they live in their own well-ventilated area and are operated only by trained staff.



Studio Tip: Never touch or open a kiln unless trained. Always give it space and follow safety signage and studio rules.

CONTINUE

Studio Etiquette: Respecting Shared Spaces

In a shared studio, we all contribute to a creative, respectful space, and we are all part of a community. Here are some helpful habits:

- Always label your pieces with name/date.
- Don't touch or move others' work.
- If you accidentally break someone's piece, leave a polite note and let the studio staff know.
- Never leave glaze buckets open — this keeps them clean and prevents contamination.
- Clean shared tools and surfaces after use, even if you're "just coming back later.
- Return tools to where they belong.
- Don't hog space—leave room for others.
- Be mindful of space and noise — everyone works differently.
- Ask questions — better to clarify than make assumptions.



Creating art is personal, but studios are shared. Small acts of care help everyone succeed.

CONTINUE

Ready to Step Into the Studio

Congratulations!

You're ready to start working in a pottery studio! Here's some key takeaways we have covered:

- Clay is sensitive and remembers how it's treated, especially as it dries.
 - Studios are divided into zones, knowing them keeps you safe and productive.
 - Clean wet, not dry! Silica dust is dangerous. Protect yourself and others. Clean wet, not dry! Silica dust is dangerous. Protect yourself and others.
 - Store and label your pieces properly (moisture matters, and reclaim clay the right way).
 - The kiln is powerful, never touch it unless trained.
 - Studio etiquette matters, be kind and respect others. Share responsibly.
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You're now equipped with the knowledge and awareness to work safely, respectfully, and creatively in any ceramic studio. Before you go...



Please take a moment to reflect:

- What habits do you value most?
- Can you think about other habits you could bring into your own pottery practice to stay safe, creative, and respectful in the studio?

Feel free to download the resource below as a quick reference for setting up your workspace, maintaining safety, and respecting the shared studio environment. Great for printing or saving digitally!



Pottery_Studio_Checklist_DRS.pdf

3.8 MB



You have now completed this lesson.

End Lesson