

Guidelines for Glazing

Stirring – Mix every glaze thoroughly with the drill-impeller mixer, stirring up all materials from the bottom of the bucket. Hold mixer wand at an angle with impeller in the lower corner of the bucket, and bring mixer slowly up to speed, especially if there is only a little glaze in the bucket. Move the stir wand around the bottom corners of the bucket to make sure all glaze materials are in suspension. Turn off drill, hold wand vertically, and move around the bottom of the bucket to feel for any settled materials, and mix until all are incorporated into the glaze. Re-mix frequently while glazing, and **never dip a piece when there is a visible film of water atop the glaze.**

Wax Resist - Apply wax resist to all surfaces that will be touching or within 1/8" of the kiln shelf, and to all contact surfaces between pot and lid, etc. **On lidded vessels, examine closely to make sure you have waxed all contact surfaces.** Don't glaze until wax is dry, and have a damp sponge handy to wipe residual glaze droplets from surface of wax.

Glaze Thickness In the Bucket – Don't use a glaze if it seems too thick. When you drag the mixer wand or a brush through the glaze, there should be absolutely no raised wake remaining – **all glazes should be fluid enough to return to absolutely level in the bucket.** At the same time, never thin glazes excessively. If you are unsure about the consistency, check with the instructor, resident, or any advanced student.

Thickness of Glaze Coating On the Ware - An average coat of glaze is equal to three sheets of writing paper. If you apply glaze thicker, you risk glaze-cracking during drying, and running during firing.

Food-Safe Glazes – Use only food-safe glazes on food-contact surfaces. Non-food-safe glazes are marked with an asterisk on the sample board.

Contamination of Glazes - Avoid anything that might contaminate glazes with even small amounts of other glazes, oxides, wax, etc. **Rinse pitchers and tongs before dipping into another glaze.**

Glaze the Inside of a Vessel First - Always glaze inside first, because you can wipe runs or drips off the unglazed exterior with sponge. You cannot do that if you have already glazed the outside.

Contrasting Glazes - Think carefully about color divisions – inside rim, right at rim, just below rim on the outside, vertically down the center of the form, etc. For a sharp dividing line, apply the first glaze just beyond where you want the dividing line to be. Paint a wide band of wax resist over the glaze right up to the intended dividing line. When the wax is dry, sponge off all glaze beyond the wax line, and then apply the second glaze to the unglazed portion of the piece. Think about how color divisions subdivide the form into shapes, and make sure that the subdivisions work with the overall design.

Dipping - Carefully plan how to hold and shake a piece before dipping. When using tongs, don't squeeze too hard. Dip quickly and shake off excess glaze, and have a damp sponge handy to wipe off any residual glaze that clings to the wax resist. Handle only the dry portion of the piece.

Double/Triple -Dipping - Unless you are very sure of your glaze, confine double-dipping to the upper half of a piece, triple dipping to just the rim. If unsure, fire the piece on a saucer.

Oxide Patinas should only be used over an already-applied glaze except when applied to a raised texture and sponged back off the high spots. Oxide patinas are pure colorant and water, and should be mixed very thin, stirred frequently, and when used over a glaze should be brushed thinly onto the dry glaze surface. Oxide patinas should never be used by themselves with no glaze on low-fired work.

Pouring Glazes - Use the “pour-and-slosh” technique to glaze inside closed forms. Pour (or spray) glaze over outside of large forms. Pouring one glaze over another can be judiciously used for decorative effects, within the limits of double/triple-dipping mentioned above.

Spraying Glazes – Make sure spray nozzle is clean, and that glaze is of a proper consistency for spraying. Sieve the glaze as you pour it into the spray-gun reservoir (small sieves in drawer next to sink). Adjust air pressure to 40 PSI, and keep spray nozzle 5”-8" from surface. Be sure to turn on the exhaust fan in the spray-booth before spraying. Make sure that the spray pattern constantly wets the surface at the point of contact. A very small amount of sagging or running on the surface as you spray is not a serious issue, but if the glaze is flowing down the surface, you are either holding the gun too close or moving it too slowly. If you hold the gun too far away, the glaze dries before it hits the surface, and you sometimes end up with a fired surface that is like sandpaper. If you are holding the gun the proper distance from the piece, and are moving the gun at an appropriate speed, there will be a shiny, wet spot where the glaze is hitting the surface as you move the spray gun along, with minimal flowing or dripping on the surface.

Small Surface Cracks and Pinholes – If these defects are visible on the surface of the glaze after it dries, they may be smoothed over by gentle rubbing with your fingertip. If cracked sections come loose when you rub them, see below.

Bad Surface Cracks as Glaze Dries – Some specialized crawl/crackle slips and glazes are intended to crack as they dry, but all other glazes are not. If the glaze cracks badly as it dries, either the glaze has gone bad, or you have applied it much too thickly. In this case, your only option is to completely wash off the piece in the sink with plenty of water, let it dry completely, and reglaze it.

Shino First or You’ll Be Cursed – Remember that shino glazes cannot be applied over any other glaze. If you are using a shino, it must be applied first. At the same time, other glazes look great over shino, especially trailed with a slip-trailing bulb. Shino glazes do not tend to run, even when applied fairly thickly, so they are ideal as a base-coat for glaze-on-glaze decoration.

Trail Glaze over Glaze – Very interesting effects can be achieved by trailing one glaze over another using a slip-trailing bulb, because it applies the glaze more thickly than a brush, and the trailed lines tend to show up better. The instructor has bulbs you can use. If this is something you enjoy, get some inexpensive empty hair-tint bottles. They make great slip-trailing bulbs.

Glaze Work Carefully – Think carefully about all glaze decisions, and keep a record of the glaze and stain effects you use on each piece so that you may build on your successes.