

Brushing Glazes – Advice from Bailey Pottery Supply

Sometimes we have a great glaze that works well when it is dipped, poured or sprayed on, but try to brush with it, and that is a whole other issue. Choosing glazes formulated for a brushing application and using glaze additives in glazes that are not already formulated for brushing is the key to making that great glaze behave beautifully when brushed.

Make brushing on glazes the most relaxing part of your ceramic process. We are going to help you turn those glazes that don't spread evenly and dry way too fast into glazes that you will love to brush.

Here is a story you may be able to relate to: "I bought a glaze from Bailey in the 5 lb. dry form. I mixed it well with water and sieved it through a Talisman Sieve. The dry mix made about a half-gallon of glaze and I dipped a few pots into it with good success. It adhered well and dried quickly. When I went to brush it onto a piece, the brush stuck to the pot and the glaze wouldn't spread at all. "

As a general rule, commercial glazes that come in liquid form, especially small sizes like pints and 2-4 ounce containers, are formulated for brushing unless otherwise noted. Choose these glazes if you are brushing. There will already be ingredients added to keep the glaze particles in suspension longer and to help the glaze flow smoothly off the brush. Commercial glazes in the dry form that you mix with water or glazes that you mix from raw materials need to be conditioned with a glaze additive to improve the glaze's brushing performance.

Our favorite glaze additives are CMC Gum, Spectrum Brushing Media, both organic cellulose gums, and Apt II Ceramic Enhancer, an acrylic based medium. Each of these additives has the ability to keep glazes in suspension and extend the drying time for a smooth application. The easiest way to test how much of a glaze additive you need in a particular glaze is to simply introduce one of these additives in liquid form drop by drop into a pint of your liquid glaze until the desired consistency has been reached. Keep in mind that CMC Gum is a powder that needs to be converted into a liquid solution. To do so, mix 1 to 2 tablespoons of CMC Gum per gallon of warm water and let stand for 24 hours, and then add to your liquid glaze.

You can also follow these ratios when adding glaze additives to liquid dipping glazes. Use one part of the CMC Gum Solution to two parts water when mixing a glaze. Add the Spectrum Brushing Media at 5 percent and up to 10 percent of the volume of the product being adjusted. For APT II Ceramic Enhancer add 3-4 drops per ounce into liquid glazes.

Get yourself a soft, thick brush and there you have it, brushing glazes made easier.