



## Glossary

Below is a glossary of some useful ceramic terms.

**Aftercrazing.** Glaze crazing after firing—days, weeks or months later.

**Bisque.** Ware which has passed through its first firing without benefit of glaze.

**Candling.** The practice of slow firing and holding the kiln temperature around 150° for a period of time to thoroughly dry ware.

**Ceramic.** In general, any man-made solid product resulting from the fusion of mineral substances. Also used to identify a type of high-talc body which fuses at moderate temperatures—Cone 05-03.

**Clean-up.** The process of cleaning, scraping, sanding and sponging greenware to make it ready for firing and decoration.

**Cone plaque.** A stand or rest for holding shelf cones during firing.

**Controller.** Electronic device that can be programmed for specific firing results. Can be an independent device that is wall-mounted, or built into the kiln.

**Crackle glaze.** A type of glaze which when fired is intentionally “crazed”. Stains or other colorants are often rubbed into the cracks to heighten the effect.

**Crazing.** Small hairline cracks in glazed surfaces that appear after firing. Usually caused by underfiring the body.

**Dipping.** Application of glaze to bisque or greenware by simply immersing it in a container of the glaze.

**Dry footing.** Leaving the base of a piece of ware free of glaze, or removing applied glaze from the underside of the foot by wiping. Avoids the need to stilt.

**Element.** A coil of resistance wire through which current passes, creating the necessary heat for firing.

**Element groove.** The recess in the kiln brick into which the element is placed.

**Firing.** The act of maturing clays and glazes by the application of heat.

**Firebrick.** The insulating blocks which form the chamber of your kiln.

**Foot.** The supporting rim at the base of a piece of ware.

**Glaze.** A special finely ground glass suspended in water with the aid of gum or emulsifiers. Glaze may be clear or colored; glossy, eggshell or matte; applied to bisque or greenware by brushing, spraying, pouring or dipping.

**Greenware.** Unfired, fragile clay forms, wet or dried.

**Impurities.** Minute quantities of foreign matter in clays which often cause spots in glaze.

**Incising.** Cutting through moist greenware in a desired pattern.



**Kiln-Sitter.** A Dawson trade name for their device which uses pyrometric cones to automatically and accurately shut off the kiln.

**Kiln wash.** A high heat-fusing powder to which you add water and brush onto kiln shelves and kiln floor. It allows removal of accidental glaze drips.

**Limit timer.** A device which operates by time alone, back-stopping the KilnSitter in case it is defeated.

**Lusters.** Iridescent overglazes, applied thinly.

**Mature.** A completely fired piece of ware or glaze.

**Multitester.** A combination ohm/volt meter.

**Nesting.** Placing one piece of greenware within another for bisque firing.

**Ohm meter.** An instrument for measuring resistance in elements.

**One-fire.** The practice of applying glaze to greenware and firing one time.

**Overglaze.** Decorative liquids applied over the glazed surface, such as china paints, lusters, gold and other metallics. Fired at lower temperatures.

**Peephole.** An opening in the kiln wall which allows visual inspection of the chamber during firing.

**Peephole plug.** A piece of refractory used to plug the peephole.

**Pinholes.** Small holes in the glazed surface of ware.

**Porcelain.** A clay body which when fired to approximately Cone 6 becomes vitreous and translucent.

**Posts.** Ceramic shapes that support kiln shelves during firing. Three posts per shelf are recommended.

**Pouring.** The act of filling a mold with slip.

**Pyrometer.** A high temperature thermocouple device. Most useful in glass firing.

**Pyrometric cone.** Slender, unfired clay pyramids which soften and bend when the kiln load has matured to the desired degree. Two sizes are available. Junior Cones are for use in the KilnSitter and Self-Supporting Cones are for visual use on shelves.

**Refractory.** Any high temperature clay material.

**Sgraffito.** The decorative technique of removing some areas of underglaze from ware with a sgraffito tool, thus allowing the color of the body to show through.

**Shelf.** A slab on which ware is placed in the kiln. Allows utilization of the full kiln height separated by posts.

**Slip.** Liquid clay slurry which is poured into molds.

**Soaking.** Holding a kiln at a given temperature.

**Stilts.** Various single and multi-pointed supports used to hold ware up off the shelves during the glaze fire, thus preventing adhesion.

**Stoneware.** A high fired ceramic body which is vitreous, not translucent, and usually made of native clays.

**Talc.** A white powder used in ceramic clay bodies.

**Terminal brick.** The kiln brick through which the twisted element ends pass into the switch box.

**Terra cotta.** A natural, low firing red clay.

**Thermocouple.** A pair of wires which are inserted into the firing chamber to serve as the temperature-sensing element of the pyrometer or controller.

**Underglaze.** Liquid coloring which is applied directly to bisque or greenware.

**Venting.** The practice of propping up the kiln lid (posting) to allow the escape of vapors during initial stages of firing.

**Vitreous.** Fully fused, waterproof ware which need not be glazed to hold water. For sanitation reasons food surfaces need to be glazed.

**Volt meter.** An instrument for measuring voltage at the kiln.

**Warping.** The loss of ware shape during firing, usually caused by overfiring or improper placement in the kiln.

**Ware.** Any shaped piece of pottery, stoneware, earthenware or porcelain, in any state of completion.