

How does a lump of clay become a piece of pottery we can use?



Study*[ladder](#)*

Preparing Clay

The clay is kneaded to make it softer and malleable. Kneading helps to remove any air pockets from the clay.



Using a Potter's Wheel

Clay is placed firmly in the middle of the potter's wheel so that it sticks tight.

Potters use wet fingers to squeeze the clay while the wheel is turning.

The shape of the ball of clay changes when the potter presses their fingers into the clay.

The potter gently squeezes the clay and pulls the clay into the right shape.





Hand-Thrown Pottery

When a potter makes a piece of pottery on a potter's wheel it is called *throwing*.

A lump of clay is *thrown* onto the center of the wheel when you begin to make a pot. This is where the name *throwing* comes from.

Potters need to be firm but gentle when they shape the clay with their hands.

One wrong move and the whole pot could collapse!

Trimming Clay

Finished pots are left to dry for a while until they are firmer but not completely dry.

They can then be placed back on the wheel for *trimming* to be finished off.

The potter uses a sharp tool to scrape away unwanted clay and smooth out any rough edges. This makes the pot a neat shape.

The pots are then left on shelves to dry out.





Firing in the Kiln

Once they are air dried the pots are ready to be *fired*, or baked, in a hot oven called a *kiln*.

Pots are fired twice. The first firing, called the bisque firing, takes out all the water in the clay.

Glazing

The bisque-fired pots can then be coated with a special liquid called a *glaze*.

When the pots are fired a second time the glaze changes into a glossy coating on the surface of the pot.

Decorative Designs

Glazes can be painted on in intricate patterns. Sometimes a design is created by the glaze as it melts during the firing process.

