

POTTERS HANDBOOK

Revised and updated WH Pottery Committee May 2025

**Noosa Shire Arts and Crafts Ceramics Studio
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A community studio for beginners through to advanced
ceramicists

*"The means of self-expression and creativity are essential human needs
and essential to the health of society"*

Commonwealth Government Cultural Policy Creative Nation 1994

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WELCOME TO NOOSA SHIRE ARTS & CRAFTS ASSOCIATION

Our Mission:

The mission of Noosa Arts and Crafts Association Inc. (NSACA) is to be inclusive, offer friendship, learning, teaching, sharing ideas, co-operation, inspiration, collaboration, and achievement in a safe environment for all its members.

Our Values:

As a not-for-profit organization and registered charity, the Association's values are to be apolitical, secular and non-discriminatory in all its operations.

The Association is committed to upholding a strong apolitical stance, ensuring that our Association remains neutral and unbiased in all matters relating to politics.

The Association is dedicated to providing a creative and welcoming space without any religious affiliation and to making our facilities accessible to all individuals from all backgrounds and beliefs.

The Association is committed to non-discrimination. The Association will treat all individuals equally with respect regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

Code of Conduct:

Respect: Treat everyone with kindness, empathy and respect. We have zero tolerance for abusive, insulting, or offensive language or comments; abusive, unjustified criticism or complaints; and spreading misinformation or malicious rumours also including behaviour that is victimizing, humiliating, intimidating, bullying or threatening.

Inclusivity: Embrace and support people of all backgrounds and identities
Discrimination, harassment, and exclusionary behaviour will not be tolerated.

Collaboration: Encourage collaboration and constructive feedback. We grow stronger when we work together and learn from one another.

Safety: Prioritise the safety and well-being of all community members. Report any concerns or incidents through the appropriate channels.

Creativity: Embrace creativity in all its forms and encourage experimentation.

Community Spirit: Contribute positively to the community through active participation, volunteering, and promoting a sense of belonging for all.

Compliance: Follow all local laws and regulations, as well as any additional guidelines set forth by the NCASA Constitution.

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INTRODUCTION TO POTTERY

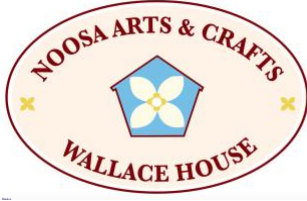
Humans have been using clay for thousands of years to make vessels, ritual objects and decorative sculptural work. Our diverse group of members have one definite thing in common, we all love creating with clay!

As members of Noosa Ceramics Studio we are part of a community who share a space and some expensive equipment. As with all workplace environments there are potential health and safety risks. All new members are required to attend an induction meeting and will receive safety instructions. We do have a "visitor" policy and a rule that adults only (18+) may be admitted.

Our studio is part of a flourishing arts community and it will only thrive if individuals contribute to the organisation and running of the studio in a range of ways. Our studio relies on everyone being autonomous and responsible for, most importantly:

- Health and safety routines being followed
- Respectful sharing and careful use of all equipment and studio space
- Cleaning (damp cloth, wet mop or damp broom only) and tidying of any area used before leaving the studio.
- Honesty and prompt payment of daily fees and individual firing fees.
- Our attendance fees are vital to the continued maintenance of the studio. Volunteer jobs are not an excuse to avoid paying if we are also (on the same day) using the studio for any of our own work practice.
- Making the majority of work in our studio (85%). We are not just a firing service and the continuing maintenance of the studio depends on our regular attendance fees.
- When joining NSACA you will receive a lanyard with a coloured tag that identifies each member as a currently paid up. Please wear it (where practical) in the studio, or have it displayed near you.
- There is an established line of communication re any concerns or queries, including incident reporting i.e .Member>Daily Team Leader> Pottery Group Leader> Pottery Committee> Management Committee

We welcome you and hope you enjoy your studio experience with us!



HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES **AND PROCEDURES**

1. ON ARRIVAL

Enter the ceramics studio via the door to the left of the main entrance -the key is kept in a coded safe next to the door. Two people must be present before entry is allowed.

If you are first at the studio, unlock both gates and kiln shed, BEFORE returning the key to the key safe. The key is not required to lock up.

Be sure to sign your name in the attendance book and the time in and out, including if you are a visitor to the premises (this is an insurance requirement)

2. WORKING SAFELY WITH CERAMIC MATERIALS

Clay, slip and glazes contain silica. When DRY this produces silica dust. Inhaling silica dust can lead to silicosis which is a serious and irreversible lung disease.

(a) ROUTINES TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF INHALING CLAY DUST

Wash down the work areas at the end of each day's work and clear up any spills immediately. This includes tabletops and chairs.

WET/ DAMP CLEANING ONLY !

- Wipe down and clean well around the wheels after using. Empty and clean used buckets and bats.
- To prevent creating and inhaling dust NEVER use compressed air or dry brooms to clean the studio. Wet or damp brooms only.

- It is recommended you wear a protective outer garment e.g. apron or smock to stop clay particles from clinging to your clothes. A waterproof apron can be wiped clean and is recommended over cotton or denim. Avoid wearing wool or fabrics that trap dust.
- Wash clay off your skin before it dries.
- For your safety wear a mask when fretting /sanding unfired work. This must be done OUTSIDE, out of the wind and away from other people. Where possible use a sponge for finishing off work rather than sanding or scraping or use a spray bottle to damp down the unfired work first to avoid raising dust.
- Grinding of fired work or fired glaze off kiln shelves requires the concentrated use of tools, an industrial ventilator mask and extractor. If your work causes damage to shelves it will be your responsibility to pay for the shelf to be professionally cleaned. Any fretting / grinding of fired work must be done well away from the building and conducted responsibly.
- Store your clay and tools in an airtight lidded container in your personal storage space.
- Dry clay can be put into designated buckets for recycling.
- Be responsible for bringing and taking home a hand towel and sponge for drying your hands and cleaning your area.
- Washing hands and tools can be done in the clay sinks.
- Never wash clay hands in the toilet hand basin or kitchenette sink as it will block the plumbing. Washing outside in a bucket is suggested.

(b) RE GLAZING: ROUTINES FOR MINIMISING RISKS

Dry glaze components are potentially toxic if inhaled or ingested. When mixed with water and clay, some can be absorbed through the skin.

- Metal oxides and other expensive materials are stored in a locked container.
- All glazes and dry glaze components are stored in air- tight containers and stored in a lockable area.
- Only experienced glaze makers have access to glaze components.
- Each container is labelled. Read the label and any corresponding information provided.

- To be on the safe side treat all glaze as though toxic.
- Wear a face mask, latex gloves and apron (preferably waterproof) and protective eye wear when making glaze.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Glaze makers should work with a partner to avoid mistakes. (Second person double checks).
- The scales used for weighing dry glaze components are expensive and delicate and must remain in the studio. Please avoid moving them unnecessarily.
- Wash hands carefully before consuming food or drink after handling glaze.
- For cleaning glaze utensils, use the outside hose, and wash well out on the grass, away from the building. Buckets may otherwise be available in the glaze room for rinsing and washing and storing of glaze residue.
- Refer to any glaze making instructions displayed in the glaze area.

Even commercial glazes have risk so please research.

<http://walkerceramics.com.au/health-safety>

3. ROUTINES AROUND HEAVY LIFTING TO MINIMISE RISK OF INJURY:

Clay is heavy. Once fired, if dropped, it will shatter into sharp edged pieces. Some of the equipment used in the studio (e.g. kiln shelves) is very heavy. It is strongly advised to wear closed in shoes at all times. Always operate within your physical capacity.

PRACTICE SAFE LIFTING FOR HEAVY OBJECTS

- ✓ Feet hip width apart
- ✓ Bend your knees
- ✓ Keep your back as straight as possible
- ✓ Breathe. Don't hold your breath
- ✓ Hold the object as close to your body as possible

4. GENERAL SAFE STUDIO PRACTICES:

- Always have 3 exits open. They are your exits in case of fire. There is an evacuation procedure on the noticeboard at the front desk. The wall adjacent to the fire hose reel needs to be kept clear at all times for emergencies.
- There should be at least two people working in the studio at all times.
- Ensure your hands are dry before touching any power connections or switches.
- It is recommended you wear closed in shoes and an apron (preferably waterproof). If you are loading or unloading kilns you must wear closed-in shoes for foot protection.
- Follow any operational or OH&S procedure charts displayed in a work area or attached to specific equipment. They are there for your information and protection.
- Be prepared to answer questions from less experienced members.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions of other members if you are in doubt about something.
- There is a First Aid Box at the front entrance near the desk for minor injuries. Dial 000 in any emergency.

4. SAFETY AROUND KILNS AND FIRINGS:

- Kilns are to be loaded and fired under the guidance of experienced (volunteer) members only BUT please offer to help so that you can learn, gain experience yourself, and share the work load.
- The electric kiln programs are set and should not be changed without the knowledge of the Kiln Co-ordinator.
- All care but no responsibility is taken, if for some reason, your work is damaged during loading or unloading.
- Work to be bisque fired must be completely dry and free of air pockets.
- Glazed work needs to be free of glaze on the bottom.
- Work to be fired must be clearly marked with a potter's mark, entered on to the load sheet and left on the relevant shelf.

- Work that has been on the shelf the longest should, where possible, be given preference to go in the firing. If work does not bear a clear mark or details are not logged properly it may be left behind.
- Pricing of the firing is done after the unloading, and follows a process. To avoid any disputes there is a team present to follow procedure and ensure correct details.
- Loading, unloading, firing and pricing is all voluntary so please thank the volunteers when you see them.
- After your work has been fired and priced, the fee owing will be entered on to a firing sheet in the Firing Fees Folder at the front desk. Please keep up to date with your payments, this saves a lot of unnecessary time wasted and stress in chasing up unpaid fees. Finished work must be paid for before taking it home.

5. RESTRICTED USE OF THE PUG MILL:

This is limited use - volunteer to use the pugmill by attending a workshop first on readying clay and then you can proceed to using the pug mill safely.

Note: Please present “brand named” clay only, no “wild clay” for re-cycling.

6. CLEANING SCHEDULE FOR CLAY RECYCLING SINKS & CLAY ARRESTOR:

Both sinks (dark clay and white clay) need to be drained of the water and the deposited clay slip removed and placed in the drying moulds. From here it can be put through the pug mill and wrapped into cylinders.

A regular cleaning schedule should be conducted once a month so that the clay does not build up too high in the sinks. The S-bends should be removed and washed every six months.

The arrestor needs to be cleaned twice yearly perhaps January and July. Any clay found in it should be placed in the recycling buckets.

This cleaning job should take no more than 30 minutes.

6. GENERAL USE OF THE SLAB ROLLERS:

- The slab rollers require a minimum of two 2 canvas sheets, one on each side. The canvas is marked for use for as "white clay" or "dark clay". If the canvas becomes soiled it needs to be washed and hung out to dry. Unwashed canvas if left around will create clay dust.
- Raw clay must never touch the rollers.
- Do not try to force excessive thicknesses through the slab roller - slow and steady is the key.

7. UPON DEPARTURE:

There is a process - ensure lights and fans are off, wheels are off, any keys are returned to their place and all outside doors are locked, sign out of the attendance book and make sure the front door key is in the box and code is scrambled.

Like learning to drive, these safety routines will become automatic after a while, leaving you to concentrate on your creative journey into the wonderful world of working with CLAY, and gathering lifelong friends along the way!



A GUIDE TO GENERAL PRACTICES

1. Welcome to the Pottery/Ceramics Group

Once you have joined the Noosa Shire Arts & Crafts Association, and paid your yearly membership fee, the Ceramic Group Leader will arrange to meet you to give you a walk through, there is a proper “induction” process.

The Pottery Committee is responsible for the running of the group, so if a new member, please feel free to contact the Group Leader or any of the committee members if you need anything at all. Many members are highly accomplished and experienced potters who are happy to help and offer support.

Each weekday has an allocated Daily Team Leader – their details are on display on the noticeboard and by the front desk, get to know them! If you have a problem, complaint, or query relating to attendance on a specific day, you contact the Daily Team Leader for that day. The line of communication is from Member >Daily Team Leader >Pottery Group Leader >Pottery Committee >NSACA Management Committee with regard to any real concerns.

Once you have had an induction and a walk through the pottery studio you are free to attend the studio as long as there are always at least two members in attendance. The studio is open most days, or for at least for part of the day; normal opening hours are considered to be from 8.30am to 4.30pm. No-one is allowed to be in the studio alone - this is a rule put in place by the Management Committee for obvious health and safety reasons. We do have a What's App Attendance group for asking who is going into the studio and when, and for arranging to meet with others, alternatively you may check in with the nominated Daily Team Leader.

The first two members to arrive should unlock all the studio doors and the kiln room (carefully if the kilns have been running – be aware of any signage). The key should then be placed back in the lock box and the combination scrambled. The last two members to leave should ensure that the studio is left clean and tidy, bins are emptied, power to wheels is off, all lights are off and all doors locked behind them.

There is a daily activity fee payable each time you attend. The fee is \$5.00 paid in the form of a voucher. Vouchers are available for purchase in the main office or online via the For Members page on our website (\$2.00 goes to the House and \$3.00 goes into the pottery account). You must write your full name in the attendance book, pay with a voucher, and/or enter your name as a visitor. At the end of the day, the Daily Team Leader (or someone nominated) will collect and check the vouchers and place them in the Daily Activity Fee Box.

You are expected to bring your own clay and tools. The studio has a lot of amazing tools, rolling pins, slump moulds, banding wheels, boards etc however none of these should be taken home. This equipment is there for us all to share. All club equipment - wheels, slab roller sheets, wedging tables and work tables should be cleaned thoroughly after use.

Please remember to wear your membership lanyard and closed- in shoes.

A lot to remember, but it will become habit! If you are not sure about anything please ask.

2. Potter's Mark

Ensure that you have your own Potter's Mark to clearly identify your work. It must be defined from any already existing member's mark, no two can be the same or similar. This mark has to be clearly visible on the bottom of your work both before and after firing. There is a \$10.00 additional annual administration fee paid (called the "MM Fee") to register your mark in a folder at the front desk when you begin to make in the studio and can look forward to your pieces being fired. If your mark is not registered, your work may not be fired. This is a most significant requirement.

3. Personal Box Storage Spaces.

The only place where personal belongings can be stored in the Pottery Studio is in the designated Box Storage Spaces. These spaces are divided into sections that are grid referenced for easy identification – there is a reference chart.

Belongings are to be stored neatly in one or two plastic boxes that fit into each sub-part, and there is a limited number available. They need to be clearly labelled with your name, kept lidded and tidy.

There is a \$10 annual fee charged for each sub-part. This fee is due for payment late in December each year and prior to the new year in January. Payments can be made in the office upstairs or via the cash box downstairs. It is important to detail that you are paying for “Box Storage”.

If you choose not to use this service, or there is no space available, the only option is to take all your personal belongings home after every session. *This was an important stipulation placed on us by the Council during the refurbishment of the Pottery.*

4. Drying Shelves

When your made piece is placed in the drying area, please also fill in one of the laminated slips with a wipeable pen to identify your work. Items should not remain there for longer than about a month. If left there for too much longer they will be removed and the clay re-cycled (if there is no name or number to discuss). Many pieces have previously been abandoned and taken up lots of valuable space, creating clutter and leaving dry dust on the shelves.

When your pieces are fully dry they can then be moved into the kiln room and placed on the appropriate shelf for firing.

5. Glazes and Glaze-making

Some members use commercial glazes, some use glazes that are already mixed at the studio and made available for use. Glazes are clearly labelled as mid-fire or high-fire and it is important for you to know if both your clay and your glaze are suitable and compatible for mid and/or high firing to avoid any accidents in the kilns. Any accidents caused by incorrect glazing methods may result in you having to repair kiln shelves or pay for someone else to do so. Good communication should help to avoid these issues. Never be afraid to ask – no question is a silly question!

Glazes should only be mixed by experienced members and/or with the co-operation of the Glaze Co-ordinator. If you do wish to try mixing a glaze there is a strict procedure to follow and a recording of the process must always be done. If you are not at all familiar with in-house procedures (2 person rule, entries into the glaze book etc) then please consult with the Glaze Co-ordinator. If you notice a glaze bucket getting low, please also inform the Glaze Co-ordinator.

When you are mixing and making glazes using raw materials, gloves and a mask must be worn for the whole time – this is basic procedure.

Before any glazes are made in a large quantity there will be test tiles produced and the glaze approved for use. Test tiles should be tied to the handle of the bucket and/or displayed on a board for visual consideration.

You can glaze by either pouring, dipping or brushing.

Important – When glazing please remember that glaze touching the kiln shelf will fuse to the shelf. Always, always ensure there is NO glaze close to, or on the bottom of your work.

Be sure to clean up any spills, leave buckets clean, wash tools well, and dispose of used glaze water appropriately.

6. Kiln Firing and Procedures

Please note that at this time we do not offer any external or stand-alone firing service. All pieces fired here should be made in our community studio. We do have currently:

- Kiln 1 used for low and mid-fire
- Kiln 2 used for high fire (an oxidization process)
- Kiln 3 used for bisque firing
- Kiln 4 is a gas kiln and is fired to 1300 deg C (in a reduction atmosphere)

There is an Electric Kiln Operational Manual for each process and specific to tasks involved with loading, firing and unloading of the kilns.

Our immediate reference for the Electric Kilns is the Woodrow Kilns Manual which is stored in the room. The kiln crew need to be familiar with these instructions.

Kiln loading and firing is undertaken by a dedicated team who operate under the guidance and co-operation of a Kiln Manager.

It is House Policy that a minimum of two people are required to load and unload the kilns. This is always done under the supervision of at least one of the kiln crew at the time.

If assisting with loading and firing the kiln the following minimum safety gear should be worn and/or be available for use: mask, gloves, long-sleeve non-combustible clothing, safety glasses/goggles.

The NSACA allows only qualified members to fire the gas kiln. Two members must be in attendance at all times and under the instruction of at least one experienced member. There is a register of names of those who can assume this responsibility and who can access keys to the gas bottle etc. It is a very specific skill. There is detailed instruction for “Firing of the Gas Kiln” available in the shed and associated graph sheets etc.

If a person wishes to become a qualified member with regard to managing either the electric kilns or the gas fired kiln you need to 1) be involved with a number of firings and make observations of what actually happens 2) take charge of the firing under the supervision of the Co-ordinator 3) if you demonstrate proficiency, then you will be awarded a certificate and your name added to any registers held.

7. Pricing Policy

All ware that is fired is now priced according to its weight.

Currently it is \$4.00 per kilo bisque fire, \$5.00 per kilo mid-fire, \$6.00 per kilo high-fire and gas-fire. It is expected there may be a small annual increase. There is a specific guide to the “Unload and Weighing Process” which requires the attention of a small group to assist and verify weight and pricing. Please be involved in this as much as possible. Prices per kilo are determined annually by the committee and validated at the AGM.

When your pieces have been fired they will be priced and placed in a designated area. You cannot remove your fired pieces until you have paid all your outstanding firing fees.

The amount you owe is written clearly in the Firing Fees book located at the front desk. Find your name and reference number, fill out a paper slip and make payment accordingly either with cash or via the office.

Bisque fired pieces, once paid for, can be placed on the designated shelf area outside the glaze room door. If you prefer, you can take them home until you are ready to glaze.

Moving forward as a cashless society, there are many ways you can now pay for amounts owing from the Ceramics Studio during the year. Please consider these –

1. Go to the website <https://noosaartsandcrafts.org.au/for-members> (ask another member for the password if required) and there are drop down boxes for paying Firing Fees and for booklets of \$5.00 blue attendance vouchers, then follow the prompts for an online payment.
2. Pay via direct transfer to NSACA (CBA bank) BSB: 064 449 Acc: 0014 0546 for anything else. This may include “Box Storage Fees”, individual “MM Fees”, rolls of clay sales etc.

Please always be sure to reference properly - this is most important! Your first initial, your surname and a reference is required. There are hundreds of members so make sure your payment doesn't get lost!

3. Pay with your credit card or eftpos savings account card upstairs at the desk, slip a receipt into the box downstairs for easy reference
4. Pay with good old-fashioned cash upstairs at the desk. Slip a receipt into the box downstairs for easy reference.
5. Pay with good old-fashioned cash into the boxes downstairs in the studio with a reference.

8. Other Equipment

Refer to the Health & Safety Policy with regard to use of the Pug Mill and the Slab Rollers.

9. Privacy Policy

While we try to observe respect for members own privacy and especially with regard to personal details, it can be difficult to maintain in a shared community environment and when shared communications are often essential. We do our very best to respect the wishes of individuals in each situation.

The NSACA disputes handling system is based on the principles of natural justice (i.e. the person who is being accused of wrongdoing should be treated as innocent until it is proven otherwise). If a member feels aggrieved and cannot resolve the complaint by themselves or through their group leader, then this procedure may be followed. All efforts will be made to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

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