

NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #5

POWDERED STAINS

- Stains are prepared mixtures of naturally occurring colourants combined to form a 'formula colour' which is always the same. Once the formula mixture has been made, the colour is fired and then ground to create a 'stain' with a specific brand, code and colour name.
- Stains are traditionally used to colour glaze, clay bodies or slips.
- When colouring a glaze, try creating a line blend which is a test to see how much stain is required to create the desired colour.

	Test A	Test B	Test C	Test D	Test E
Clear or White Base Glaze	100gm	100gm	100gm	100gm	100gm
Stain Powder	10gm	8gm	6gm	4gm	2gm

- You will need a set of digital scales or triple beam balance to measure such small quantities. Once you have applied each of glaze test A – E onto a small bisqued test piece, fire them in the same kiln to the correct temperature for the base glaze. Once fired, decide which effect you like and mix up a bigger batch of glaze using your recipe.
- When colouring a wet clay body, first slice the clay into 1cm thick slabs. Dip each slab into water, then sprinkle with some stain powder and place into a plastic bag. Place each slab on top of the others to form a 'sandwich stack'. Close up the clay bag and let sit overnight. Next day, knead to integrate the clay and stain, and create a uniformly coloured clay which is not too firm (see Technical Tips and Product Information Sheet #10 Neriage).
- Making coloured decorating slip is no more difficult than making coloured cake icing. Simply add stain (moistened with water) to white slip and stir. Add as much stain as you like, keeping in mind that your are colouring a WHITE base, so choose a dark stain to start because the white slip will lighten your final colour (see Technical Tips and Product Information Sheet #7 Coloured Decorating Slip).
- Powdered stains can also be used to 'stain' textured bisque fired pottery items. Simply apply a creamy mix of stain and water to bisqueware with a soft brush. Force the stain mix into the texture, then once you have covered the relevant area, sponge off the excess stain to reveal the enhanced textural detail. Always fire stained clay to its glaze firing temperature to ensure the mixture fluxes onto the clay body.
- Stains can also be used for maiolica or inglaze decoration (see Technical Tips and Product Information Sheet #20 'Maiolica').
- Stain colours are NEVER intended to be fired in a reduction atmosphere in a gas kiln. An oxidation or neutral atmosphere is the correct environment for achieving the correct colour response. NB this does not mean that stains cannot be fired in reduction. They can be fired this way but may give a variety of undesirable responses other than that which the manufacturer intends. TEST colours prior to use to ensure their suitability for YOUR purposes.
- Powdered stain colours will last forever if stored in a dry, labeled jar out of contact with other materials.
- Stains and underglaze powders are very similar and can often be substituted one for the other in various ceramic decorating processes (see Technical Tips and Product Information Sheet #6 Powdered Underglazes).

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