

NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #14

MENDING POTTERY

MENDING RAW CLAY WITH VINEGAR BASED SLIP RATHER THAN WATER BASED SLIP. This technique is especially suitable for leather hard and almost dry pieces which are cracking, or have fallen apart. A vinegar-based slip will assist rejoining, but will not easily act like glue to hold weighty pieces in position. Vinegar based slip gives better results because vinegar is a flocculent which improves the chance of a good mend and retards re-cracking. Once you have used the vinegar based slip to execute a mend, return the repaired piece to a plastic bag and dry very slowly. Vinegar based slip is simply a mixture of the same clay that the piece is made from (in dry form), combined with any cheap vinegar to make a thick paste. Vinegar based slip could easily be used as your standard joining slip at all times. It's a good way to recycle any spare dry clay. Keep a pot on each workbench in the classroom/studio.

PAPERCLAY SLIP FOR RAW AND BISQUE JOINS/MENDS. Commercial paper clay bodies can be wet down to a thick paste to create a joining and mending slip. It is best if this slip is the same type as the clay to be joined (i.e. terracotta paper clay for joining terracotta clay). If you don't have the appropriate paper clay body, you can use dry fibre fluff which is the equivalent of the paper in paper clay, to create your own matching paper clay slip based on the clay you use. Simply stir some fibre fluff into your usual wet joining slip.

MENDING RAW/BISQUED CLAY WITH FIBRE CEMENT. It's a 'big ask' to expect a mending product to stick a major weighty piece of clay onto another piece of clay work. Be reasonable in your expectations. Use the fibre cement as a glue to hold the two pieces together in position. Sometimes it's helpful to use masking tape to hold the pieces in place until they are fully dry. Once fired, the fibre cement changes from mint green to white, and you can easily glaze over it to disguise the join.

MENDING FIRED POTTERY ITEMS. Araldite is really the best solution for these repairs, in particular, the five minute (2 part) Araldite. There really isn't any other glue that is as effective. Super Glue is impossible. Clear silicone bathroom sealer is acceptable for joins where much of the clay work is missing or chipped off and the glue needs to be a filler as well as a glue. But, silicone is very difficult to get where you want it and keep it neat at the same time. Tarzan Grip is a very ordinary glue other than for sticking little pieces of clay onto small works.

OTHER JOINING/MENDING TECHNIQUES. Some potters swear by using a paste of water-based clay slip with sodium silicate (a de-flocculent material) for repairing raw clay. However, this technique is particularly unattractive because the mend often comes up looking like a crispy, flaky, glossy area that is far too visible and not very nice to glaze over.

SOMETIMES REPAIRS ARE NOT WORTH IT! Don't be afraid to start again. Some repairs are so traumatic and take so long that the whole piece could have been remade in the time it takes to repair. Try thinking outside the square and consider whether the work can be mended using alternative methods – wire, cane, plastic tubing, nuts and bolts etc could be utilized in a more innovative and integrated way to become part of the finished work.

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