

# How to store kiln shelves

By Arnold Howard

Kiln shelves are flat slabs of fire clay that support layers of ware inside the firing chamber. Shelves last a long time when treated with care. Storage is an important aspect of proper care.

- Store your kiln shelves in a dry area. Moist shelves can crack or even explode inside a kiln. A freshly kiln-washed shelf should be allowed to dry thoroughly before firing.
- There is less danger of cracking if you store shelves vertically in a shelf rack rather than stacking them horizontally.
- If you stack the shelves against each other in storage, the sides with kiln wash should face each other. This prevents flakes of kiln wash from transferring to the underside of other shelves.
- A kiln shelf cart should have casters so you can move the cart next to the kiln during loading and unloading.
- Before storing shelves, remove any bits of glass or glaze from them. Wear gloves when examining shelves. Small shards of glass or glaze are very sharp and not always easy to see.



Shelves that are spaced correctly can be left inside front-loading kilns between firings. Slide ware onto them for the next firing. Shown here is a glass kiln with a single shelf that will stay inside the kiln.



Handle kiln shelves as gently as you would a computer monitor. Avoid touching the kiln walls, thermocouple, or kiln sitter tube with a shelf.

- The shelf in a clamshell kiln can be left in the kiln between firings. Layers of shelves in a front-loading kiln can also be left in the kiln, provided you fire the same type of ware each time. Just reach into the kiln between the stacked shelves to load and unload the kiln. Make sure the ware does not touch the kiln walls.
- Handle shelves as gently as you would a computer monitor. Shelves are delicate.

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## questions & answers

# Clay beads and high-temperature wire

By Bre Kathman

**Q:** How do I fire beads made of out a cone 6 clay body?

**A:** Unglazed cone 6 beads can simply be placed on a kiln shelf free of debris such as fired glaze chunks. Glazed cone 6 beads can be tricky, because traditional bead racks are usually only rated for cone 2, and firing to cone 6 could permanently damage the rack.

If a bead is glazed, wipe the glaze away from both ends with the holes, set it gently on the kiln shelf with one of the unglazed sections down, and fire according to the clay and glaze instructions. When the beads are strung together, the unglazed portion is typically not seen.

**Q:** Can wire be added to clay and survive a firing?

**A:** It depends on what kind of wire you plan to add. Some wire is not designed to withstand a ceramic firing. I personally love Kemper's high-temperature wire. It is designed to withstand the high temperatures of ceramic firings and does not discolor. The key to adding wire to clay is to form the end that will be embedded in the clay into a hook shape. Without the hook, a wire can pull out of the fired clay with little effort.

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