

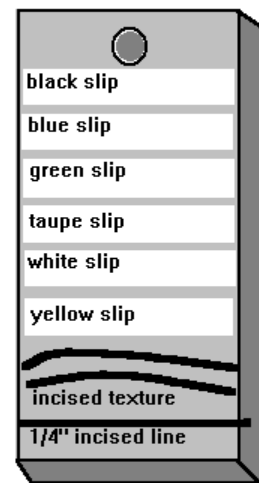
TEST TILES

Making accurate glaze tests is a good investment of time. You learn how materials work, and have a visual record for future use. There are many ways to make test tile: thrown rings with a flange, cut into sections (these take up more room for storage or mounting, but are self-standing in the kiln), extruded tiles (a die is made to extrude a tile or self-standing shape), or slab tiles. Using slip on the test tiles gives you more information than using your clay body alone. Due to the interaction of fluxes and colorants, not all clear glazes, for example, are alike, and using the glaze over a range of slip colors helps you find the best glaze for your use.

Make test tiles NOW for future use! It's a good idea to have a stock of bisqued tiles on hand for glaze testing.

Use the appropriate clay body. A standard size of 2" x 4" is handy. Make horizontal stripes of shop slips, leaving a space or spaces to view the glaze result over bare clay, too. If you don't use shop slips, it helps to label slip colors. Put the shop leatherhard slips on in the same order each time. Alphabetical is convenient. Note in your sketch book which slips you used. Put an incised line 3" from the bottom of the tile. This will be where the glaze stops, making a definite gauge of how runny your test glaze is. It is helpful to make a hole for mounting/hanging test tiles. Remember, the holes shrink during drying and firing, and if you want to mount these on a nail later, you have to make them bigger than the desired result to allow for shrinkage. Make an incised texture to test for glazes that break or pool (A fork is handy for this. Don't use a pin tool: lines are too small.).

Use iron oxide and water with a small brush to label the glaze recipe on the back of the tile. *So often* someone finds a tile interesting and owner can't locate the recipe notebook. **PUT THE GLAZE INFORMATION ON THE BACK OF THE TILE!** If you are firing in a gas kiln in reduction, it is very helpful to have 2 tiles in the kiln, one top and one toward the bottom to give you a better gauge of optimum heat and reduction, which usually vary some in gas firing. Mark the tiles Top and Bottom. After you have done this, wax the tile back and the bottom 1/4 inch up to the incised line.



If you plan to apply the glaze to your pots by dipping, dip your tile. Dip the entire tile. Wait a moment until all the liquid dries. Dip the right half a second time. If you have insufficient glaze to dip, brush. This will give you regular/thick application tests, and will show how much the glaze moves in firing.

Fire the tiles upright, propped against a brick!!! You will need to know if the glaze pools, striates, mottles, or is runny. If you leave tiles for someone else to get in their kiln, make sure you leave a note specifying upright firing. Firing the glaze flat will only give you partial information (i.e. what the glaze looks like on flat tiles, not on vertical surfaces).

Glaze testing is a great adventure! Every kiln should have a test or two in it!