

Clay tools and their at-home equivalents

There are a MILLION tools, but if I could only pick 5, it would be these 5



Banding wheel



Lazy Susan



Fettling knife



Pairing knife



Rubber rib



Spatula top



Wooden modeling tool



Spatula handle

In truth, the “at-home” equivalents are cute, but none of these tools is that expensive (except the banding wheel) and all can be purchased online quite easily—see page 8.



Retractable scoring tool



Comb

Other things you'll need



If you're going to continue, it's worth buying a good rolling pin from an online restaurant supplier.



Dry cleaning plastic is also very good.



Table-top fan is a must-have. Otherwise, you'll be waiting forever for things to dry.

CLAY

I almost exclusively use Standard 420 Sculpture Clay

https://ceramic-supply-inc.myshopify.com/products/420-sculpture-clay?_pos=1&_sid=35b3041bc&_ss=r

The Pros

- Strong
- “Forgiving”
- Holds almost any shape

The Cons

- Never water-tight, so you have to seal the inside of pieces somehow after glaze firing them
- Therefore, not really “food safe”
- Some people don’t like the way it feels—it has a lot of grog (ground up fired clay, which gives it its strength and structure), so it feels very “grainy”

Other clays I like:

308 Brooklyn Red

https://ceramic-supply-inc.myshopify.com/products/308-brooklyn-red-clay?_pos=1&_sid=62655e10d&_ss=r

- Really beautiful color, especially if you are a fan of terra cotta
- Possible cons: it’s REALLY red, so watch out for clothes, etc

It’s a short list, but in addition to technical considerations, a lot of it just comes down to how the clay feels to work with, which you’ll have to discover for yourself.

ORDERING CLAY

As a material, clay itself is super cheap. However, it’s heavy so shipping is always expensive. I would recommend buying it through or from whatever studio you decide to fire your work at. The list of studios starts on page 6.

5 STEPS:

1) Wedge the clay

What this does: removes air bubbles, helps remove excess moisture, mixes the clay, helps align the molecules

Here's a good demo:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=98&v=A8eEMTgW7u8&feature=emb_logo

(Don't tell anyone I said this, but I've known people who skip step 1.)

2) Roll out a slab (1/8-1/4" thick)

I do this by feel, but you can buy 1/4" wood trim at a hardware store to use as guides if you want:



3) Press the slab into your "mold" to make a component

Dry your slab slightly before you press it in. It should be flexible but not "mushy", kind of like a leather belt. Use either a sheet of plastic or cornstarch as a release

4) Dry the molded component(s)

Depending on the clay you use, they should be harder, rather than softer

5) Score and slip the components together to create a piece

CLEANING UP

In general, always clean up with a damp rag or mop—NEVER A BROOM. Clay dust is NOT good for your lungs.

You don't want to rinse your tools or hands off regularly in your kitchen or bathroom sink. The clay will eventually accumulate and clog your drains.

The best thing to do is rinse off in a bucket and then dump the bucket outside in the gutter. You'll just be pouring out some "muddy water".

Plastic—once you've used your plastic for awhile the clay will stick to and start to dry producing clay dust. At that point, it's time to throw it out and use fresh plastic. Clay dust is NOT good for your lungs.

CLAY STUDIOS IN BROOKLYN (not all inclusive—just the three I have the most experience with)

WEDGE (small)

10 Grand Ave.

My studio—yay!

Currently accepting new members.

Multiple membership levels.

Group clay orders from Ceramic Supply.

www.wedgeceramics.com

GASWORKS (medium)

673 5th Ave.

Gas kiln

Multiple membership levels, in person and online classes available.

Clay available through the studio.

<https://gasworksny.com/>

BKLYN CLAY (large)

535 Carlton Ave.

Currently accepting new members.

Multiple membership levels and online classes available.

Multiple clay bodies available to purchase online.

<https://www.bklynclay.com/>

CLAY STUDIOS IN QUEENS (not all inclusive—just the two I have the most experience with)

BRICKHOUSE CERAMIC ART CENTER
10-34 44th Drive, Long Island City, NY 11101
In-person socially distanced classes.
<https://brickhouseny.com/>

SCULPTURE SPACE NYC
47-21 35th Street, Long Island City, NY 11101
Gas and electric kilns
2 membership levels
Kilns available to rent for non-members
<https://www.sculpturespacenyc.com/>

CLAY STUDIOS IN MANHATTAN (Note: there are several. This is only one I have experience with. Most are smaller than what you will find in Brooklyn and Queens, except for GHP.)

GREENWHICHHOUSE POTTERY
16 Jones Street, New York, NY 10014
Fall schedule not available at the time of writing
<https://www.greenwichhouse.org/pottery-about/pottery-curbside-pick-up-and-reopening-information/>

Where I shop online:

Clay, tools, glazes, etc.

There are MANY places, my default is usually:

<https://ceramic-supply-inc.myshopify.com/>

If you're getting a scoring tool, get this one:

http://www.xiemtoolsusa.com/Retractable-Scoring-Tool_p_313.html

If you think you'll continue and are want to "splurge" on one thing, it's a banding wheel. There is no such thing as "good" and "cheap" in this category. Expensive, but worth it:

https://ceramic-supply-inc.myshopify.com/products/shimpo-banding-wheels?_pos=4&_sid=593b0abee&_ss=r

SHL9 or SHL10

DID I FORGET ANYTHING?

Probably. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at:
info@humblematter.com