

Home Kilns: FAQ's



Thousands of people purchase kilns every year to use safely in their homes. Kiln ownership usually leads to further experimentation, more creativity, and ultimately the discovery of exciting new techniques!

When someone purchases a kiln, they are making an investment in the hobby, A high percentage of these people will continue to advance in fired arts seeking more knowledge, purchase more products and potentially be the next generation of teachers or studio owners. It is also more likely for someone advancing their knowledge to show their creations to others, eventually creating more interest and more future artists.

Kilns are safe to use in the home. The myths that electric kilns can blow up are completely untrue. Many safety precautions are simple common sense. Just like other appliances that get hot, you want to avoid touching the surface or placing flammable materials close by. New kilns come with a complete instruction manual outlining all of the safety precautions. If you purchase a used kiln, make sure to ask for the manual or contact the manufacturer to get a copy.

Kilns are not costly to operate. Small kilns can use less than a dollar worth of electricity to fire a load. Larger kilns can cost a few dollars to complete a firing cycle. The newest KMT Kilns from SKUTT will actually calculate and display your firing cost.

Here are some of the most common questions asked by those contemplating placing a kiln in their home.

Do you need special wiring for a kiln?

Many smaller kilns on the market were designed to plug right into a standard household outlet. Other kilns to require special wiring. Check with the kiln dealer or manufacturer for all of the electric requirements. Some wiring projects may be simple enough for the do-it-yourselfer while others may require an electrician.

Can I place a kiln in my basement?

Basements are a very common place for kilns. Most electrical boxes are located in basements so it is often less costly to run any special wiring that may be required. Concrete walls and flooring are a perfect non-flammable surface to surround the kiln.

Can I have a kiln in an apartment?

You really should check with your landlord. Since many kilns will plug right into a standard outlet, you may not require any special wiring. Make sure you follow manufacturer's directions for

placement of the unit. Avoid placing a kiln on top of carpet or other flammable surfaces. Some may be small enough that you can place them on top of a countertop like a kitchen appliance.

What else do I need to go with my kiln? Do I need other accessory items?

Depending on the kind of kiln you select and the type of work you will do, you may need a few items. Kilns with a kiln sitter will need items called cones to operate. Self-standing cones for checking a kiln with accuracy are recommended with all kilns. Both kinds of cones are very inexpensive and usually only cost pennies per load. You may wish to purchase furniture (shelves and posts) so you can make the most efficient use of space in the kiln. Stilts are used in glaze and overglaze firings if you decide not to dry foot (remove glaze from the bottom) your ware. Kiln wash is a special coating that is applied to the bottom of the kiln and tops of shelves to protect the surface from any drips of glaze.

How large of a kiln should I get?

Start out with a smaller kiln and work your way up. Buy a kiln that will be able to fire the size of most of your ware. If you think you may have a couple of pieces too large to fire on occasion, plan to take them to a local studio for firing. Don't purchase a huge kiln because you might need to fire a few large pieces. The few dollars you spend to pay someone else to fire large objects probably would not justify the additional cost of a larger kiln or the additional items needed before firing a full load.

Will my insurance company need to be notified?

Any time you purchase equipment of value you should alert your insurance company. A kiln should not be a concern for the company, and you should not have a fear that they will cancel your policy or raise your premium (any more than another piece of equipment to insure). All kilns sold by Ceramic Arts are CSA Approved.

What if I don't have enough items to fill the kiln for a load?

You don't have to have a full load to fire your kiln. Firing one or a few items in a load is a common practice. If this is the case, simply load your pieces in the centre of your kiln.

Do I need special venting?

It is strongly encouraged to add a venting system to your kiln. This will not only take fumes and heat out from your home but will often give you better firing results. Many venting units have ducting similar to dryer venting.

Should I buy a new or used kiln?

New kilns have many advantages. Most new kilns come with a two year warranty to cover a variety of malfunctions or breakdowns that could occur. It's less likely that you will have a breakdown with a brand-new unit. If you are looking at a used kiln, make sure you find out the history. Find out if you will be able to get service and parts. Who will be able to do the service?

What brand of kiln is best?

Many reputable manufacturers exist, each making quality kilns with some unique features. DO your research and talk to others who own kilns. Find out if they are happy with the brand and model they own. Find out about service after the sale. Many kiln repairs are pretty simple to make, but you should still have options in case you need assistance.

Should I buy a digital kiln or one with a kiln sitter?

It really depends upon your personal needs. Some people feel more comfortable and believe they have better control with a kiln utilizing switches and a kiln sitter. Others believe digitally controlled kilns give the best results. The digital kilns of today have advanced from years past giving more options to control firing rates and holds. Your best bet is to talk with the manufacturer or dealer to determine what will fit your needs. Having a digital kiln also allows you to do more precision firings and you will also be able to fire glass.

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