

Crafts Council
Education
Craft Careers

How to become a Ceramicist



What does a ceramicist do?

Ceramicists make objects from clay.

They use a number of methods to create items ranging from culinary and household items to sculptural and decorative objects.

Ceramicists employ a variety of techniques in their work. In order to create an object they may:

- Use hand-building techniques
- Throw or mould softened clay, while rotating it on a wheel. This is the traditional method of making vessels including cups and bowls
- Make flat goods such as plates using a process called jiggering. It can be carried out by hand, but is often partly or fully automated. A flat piece of clay is placed on to a rotating mould and a metal profile or pattern is pushed down to squash the clay into the required shape
- Make hollow items such as cups, by hand or by machine using a process called jolleying
- Cast an object, which involves pouring liquid clay (or 'slip') into moulds to form items such as bowls, or sections of products such as teapots. They are then joined together using the liquid clay as an adhesive
- Finish an item, by turning and shaping on a lathe, using either hand tools, semi-automatic or automatic processes.
- Firing and glazing



Ceramicist Sam Andrew

Skills.

Key skills for a ceramicist include:

- creative flair and practical ceramics skills
- time management and the ability to work to deadlines
- excellent communication skills
- organisational ability
- attention to detail
- photography, computer software and design skills
- business management skills
- a good understanding of health and safety procedures



Nerikomi plate, Sam Andrew

Qualifications.

Many ceramicists will have studied an art or design degree in an areas such as applied arts or design, ceramics, or 3D design.

Some providers include:

- [Central Saint Martins](#) and the [Royal College of Art](#) in London
- [University of Sunderland](#)
- [Cardiff Metropolitan University](#)
- [Plymouth College of Art](#)

A postgraduate qualification is not essential, but studying for a Masters level qualification in ceramic design might help you to hone practical skills and prepare for professional life.

A variety of part-time courses are available in further and adult education institutes, providing the opportunity to develop ceramics skills.

Career Progression.

How your career develops will depend on your specialism.

You might want to be self-employed and concentrate on the design and production of your own ceramic products. If you opt for self-employment, career development will come by building your reputation through exhibition success and your visibility through networking, writing articles and giving talks about your work and techniques.

Alternatively, you could be employed in a larger company. Here, career progression comes from working with production teams, liaising with external clients and seizing opportunities to be innovative. There may be opportunities in research departments or for promotion to managing teams of designers within the studio. Increased responsibility will inevitably bring an increase in non design-related tasks.

Another potential route is in academia. With further study, it's possible to work in higher education as a lecturer in ceramics.

Ceramicists often develop a portfolio career. Combining varied roles may spark creative ideas and keep you motivated. Ceramicists often combine their creative practice with:

- arts management
- community arts work
- gallery management
- teaching

Nerikomi bowls and plates, Sam Andrew



Find out more.

- [Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust](#)
- [Craft Potters Association](#)
- [British Ceramic Association](#)
- [British Ceramics Biennial](#)

Featured Maker.

[Sam Andrew](#) is a Manchester-based ceramicist making a functional range inspired by time living in Japan, Hungary, The Netherlands and the UK.

Find out more about [his career journey here](#).



Craft Careers

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To learn more about craft careers visit:
www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning/craft-careers

