

Instructions for a basic Cone 5/6 Glaze Firing- Mid-range Stoneware and Porcelain.

Segment 1 50 degrees F per hour up to 200 degrees F

Glazed wares should be completely dry. It is advisable to glaze your work and allow it to dry over night prior to loading and firing. Going 100 degrees per hour up to 200 allows any remaining moisture in the wares to evaporate/ dry.

This pace will also warm all the refractory materials (stilts, posts, and shelves) to a consistent temperature allowing all refractory materials to move together.

Segment 2 100 degrees F per hour up to 800 degrees F

This allows time for the naturally occurring organics and gases in the clay to begin burning and or vapor out of the kiln. All clays contain organics and if not allowed adequate time to burn out, can get trapped and cause bloating of the clay or out gassing in later stages of firing that will show up in the form of pin holing in your glaze.

Segment 3 150 degrees F per hour up to 1300 degrees F

This allows chemically combined water (on molecular level) found in all clay particulates, to dissipate/ dehydrate from the clay. In addition, it allows safe passage through the quartz inversion process. This is one of the vital stages of the firing, both on the way up in heating and on the way down in cooling. During this time free silica found in all clays will expand by 1% while remaining particulates are shrinking; silica process reverse on the cooling cycle. You can imagine the contraction that is happening amongst all those clay particles. It is very stressful on the clay and going through this phase to quickly can cause damage in the form of cracks.

Segment 4 200 plus degrees F up to Cone 5= 2163 degrees F or Cone 6= 2228 degrees F

Once you are past 1940 degrees F (bisque) then most of the damage that can be done to clay has passed. Your clay is now considered "bisque" and has changed from clay to ceramic. Continuing the firing to the mature temperature of the clay can now be done rapidly. If your kiln can go faster, then 200 degrees per hour then you are welcome to program it accordingly. It is always best to go slow at the end of the firing or hold the kiln at mature temp for 5 to 10 minutes to ensure all wares and refractory items are fully heat saturated.

At the end of each Segment programmed the kiln will ask if you want a hold. Here is where you would program in a 5 to 10-minute hold at the end of Segment 4.

When firing is complete, shut down the kiln ensuring to seal it up the best you can to deter air drafting into the kiln. This includes turning off any vent system you may have. Allow the kiln to cool naturally. It takes the kiln approximately the same amount of time to cool as it did to bring it up to temperature. If your firing takes 13 hours to complete you can expect the cooling to take 13 hours.

It is of importance to proceed slowly through cristobalite inversion portion of the cooling. Cristobalite happens during cooling around 428 degrees F. During this time the silica that expanded earlier in the firing, now suddenly shrinks. Fast cooling at this temp can cause cracking. Do not open the kiln until the temp is below 400 degrees F.

Note: Some clay bodies are more susceptible to this process than others. It is always best to err on the side of caution.