

Kiln Corner

Storing Kiln Shelves

by Arnold Howard

Photography Courtesy of Paragon Industries, L.P.

Though Arnold Howard works for Paragon Industries, L.P., the information here applies to all brands of glass kilns. Feel free to send questions for this column no matter what brand of kiln you own.



This shelf rack built by Dennis Sieving for his wife's studio allows posts to be sorted by length on the top storage area. Racks should have casters, especially if studio space is limited.

Kiln shelves are flat slabs of fireclay that support glass inside a kiln's firing chamber. Shelves last a long time when they are treated with care. Storage is an important aspect of proper care. Here are some important points to consider when storing your kiln shelves.

1. Store the kiln shelves in a dry area. Moist shelves can crack or even explode inside a kiln. A shelf that is freshly coated with glass separator should be allowed to dry thoroughly before firing.

2. There is less danger of cracking if you store shelves vertically in a shelf rack rather than stacking them horizontally. The photo shows a shelf rack, or cart, made by Dennis Sieving of Sedalia, Missouri, for his wife, Julie. Dennis has separated the shelves with slots cut into the wooden rack. He added a shelf for storing kiln posts, which are sorted by length.

3. If you stack the shelves against each other in storage, the sides with glass separator should face each other. This prevents flakes of separator from transferring to the underside of other shelves.

4. A kiln shelf cart should have casters. This will allow you to move the cart next to the kiln during loading and unloading or outside during cleaning.



Shine a side light across the shelf to see if there are any cracks in the separator or shards of glass.



Dry and store the shelf inside your kiln and keep the kiln door or lid closed when it is not in use.

5. Before storing shelves, remove any bits of glass. Wear gloves when examining your shelves. Small shards of glass or glaze are very sharp and not always easy to see. To examine the coating of separator after a firing, shine a side light across the shelf surface. With light shining directly across the shelf, it is easier to see any cracks and flakes in the separator.

6. You can also store a shelf inside the kiln between firings. After applying glass separator to a shelf, place it inside the kiln. Hold the kiln at 300°F / 148°C for 15 minutes. Then turn the kiln off and leave the shelf inside.

7. Handle shelves as gently as you would a computer monitor. Shelves are delicate and easier to damage than you might expect.

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Arnold Howard writes instruction manuals and advertisements for Paragon Industries, L.P. His hobbies are glass fusing and karate. He also enjoys studying history and watching classic movies. You can reach Arnold at ahoward@paragonweb.com with questions for future columns. Sign up for his kiln newsletter at www.paragonweb.com.

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