

Kiln Corner

How to Choose a Kiln

by Arnold Howard

Photography Courtesy of Paragon Industries, LP.

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.

Is there anything in particular I should check before ordering a kiln?

Make sure the kiln will fit through all of the necessary doorways to reach the kiln room. Ask your dealer for the kiln's exterior width. Some catalogs include doorway clearance for each kiln.

I am considering buying my first electric kiln. The choices and information seem overwhelming. What are your suggestions of things to consider when choosing a kiln?

Choosing a kiln becomes simpler when you narrow the search to these criteria:

- **The size of the electric circuit in your studio.** Your kiln choice will be limited by the number of amps available.
- **The size of the kiln.** Estimate how much firing chamber space you need.
- **Front loading or top loading.** Top-loading kilns cost less per cubic foot than front-loading kilns. However, if you need to open the kiln at fusing temperatures for glass raking or embossing, get a front-loading kiln.
- **Firing temperature.** Determine whether the kiln you are considering can handle the temperatures at which you normally require for firing your projects.

I need a small kiln that will have to be moved frequently. Do you recommend a ceramic fiber or firebrick kiln? I've read that moving a brick kiln could damage the elements and bricks.

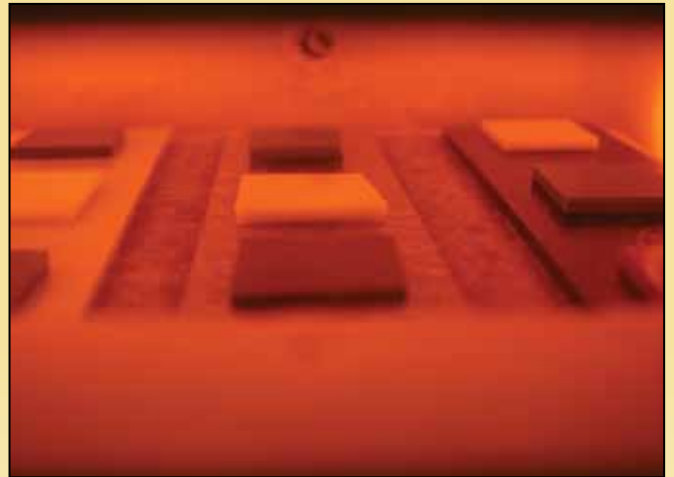
Since you are going to move the kiln frequently, I would choose a ceramic fiber kiln. This is because they are lighter than firebrick kilns. The fiber kilns also cool down more rapidly than the firebrick ones, so you would have to wait longer before moving a firebrick kiln.

You can frequently move a small tabletop firebrick kiln without damaging it, though. Whether you get a small fiber or firebrick kiln, save the carton and foam packing that the kiln was shipped in. The packing is designed to protect the kiln during UPS shipment, which can be pretty rough. Be sure to place a sheet of foam packing material between the kiln body and door whenever you move a kiln.

Can glass be fired in an enameling kiln that has sidewall elements?

Yes. Unless the kiln has door elements, the side toward the door will be slightly cooler than the other three sides, but you can compensate for that by placing items that require a lower temperature near the door.

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A glass window is optional on many kilns. This window enables you to conveniently monitor the glass as the firing progresses.



Kilns are insulated with either ceramic fiber or insulating firebricks. Ceramic fiber heats and cools more rapidly than firebricks, while a firebrick kiln is more suitable for long annealing times.

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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