

Making a Form (Rib#2)

The Form can be made on either an electric or a banding wheel

Tools required

Rib #2, Electric Wheel or Banding Wheel (heavy duty banding wheel is recommended), Sponge, Cutting Wire, Cookie Cutter, Turning Tool.

Clay

Any clay may be used to make your Form however the size of your form may vary slightly depending on the clay used.

Smooth clay body ie: Porcelain = slightly smaller Form

Coarse clay body ie: Raku Clay = slightly larger Form

*The differences in size will be minimal and should not affect the fit of the pattern.

I use the clay I have available in my studio which is Keanes midfire 33 (a throwing and hand building clay body with some fine grog). I recommend that you use whatever clay you have available.

Making the Form

1. Weigh out **1.5 kg/3.3lb** of soft clay. If using reclaimed or recycled clay wedge clay thoroughly to ensure a soft, even consistency (no lumps!) throughout.
2. Place the clay firmly on the centre of the wheel/banding wheel. Ensure the wheel is dry or only slightly damp so that the clay adheres firmly when centering.
3. The clay needs to be roughly centered before beginning. Use the circular markings on the wheel to position the clay and pat it into a cone shape. **You can draw a circle (approx 12.5cm) on the wheel with a permanent marker, if needed, as a guide for the width and to help with centering.* Centre the clay as well as you can – The better centered the clay is, the easier it is to make the form. The symmetry of the form may be affected if the clay is off centre.
4. Using Rib#2 as a guide pat the clay into a ‘cone’ shape that resembles the profile of the rib - it should be taller (approx10cm/4in) and wider (approx12.5cm/5in) than needed.
5. Use a sponge to squeeze water over the clay ball. **Water is crucial throughout this process.**
6. Place the Rib#2 against the side of the clay ‘cone’ and press firmly while the wheel spins at a slow to moderate pace. The softness of the clay will determine the ease with which excess clay is removed. The pressure applied with the rib and the speed of rotation of the wheel will depend on the consistency of the clay and must be judged by the individual.

7. During the making process remove the excess clay that gathers on the rib.
8. Keep adding water. Rotate at a slow to medium pace keeping the rib at right angles to the clay form and ensuring the entire bottom surface of the rib is always in contact with the wheel.
9. Initially, firm pressure is required but lighter pressure can be applied as the desired shape is reached.
10. The 'button' of clay on top of the Form will get smaller as the desired width is reached. When the Form is complete the top edge of the rib should sit over the centre point of the clay form and the clay 'button' will have completely disappeared. The Form should conform to the shape of Rib#2 with no gaps between Form and Rib.
11. Once this point is reached add more water and very gently, without removing more clay, use the rib to smooth the surface.
12. When you are happy with the surface, run a cutting wire under the form, 2 to 3 times, to detach the Form from the wheel (ensure the wire is pressed firmly against the wheel head during this step so that the base of the form remains flat) and allow it to dry overnight or until it is leather hard. ***Do not attempt to move it while it is soft/wet.**
13. Once it can be picked up without distorting, remove the Form from the wheel (you may need to run the cutting wire under the Form again). Turn it over to expose the base. Use a turning tool to carefully remove some clay from the inside (this is optional but can make it a bit lighter and therefore easier to use). I use a cookie cutter to mark a circle shape on the base and a turning tool to remove some clay. Make sure the walls remain very thick (for added strength) as **the Form will not be fired.** (This process is best done while holding the Form against the body or resting on a piece of soft foam rather than placing on a tabletop as it may distort if pressed against a hard surface.)
14. Allow the Form to dry slowly – it could take a few days to one week to be fully dry depending on the temperature in your studio. It does not need to be covered if the temperature is mild to moderate but I recommend covering lightly with plastic if it is very hot and dry. Place the Form on a flat, absorbent surface (plasterboard, wooden bat, plaster bat etc) to help with even drying.
15. The size of the Form when leather hard will be around d:11cm/h:9.5cm (d:4.3inches/h:3.7inches) Fully dried should be d:10cm h:9cm (d:3.9inches/h:3.5inches). Slight variations in size and symmetry are acceptable. If your Form is significantly different in size and not symmetrical (ie oval rather than round) I would recommend remaking the Form – it may take a few attempts to get a feel for how the rib works.