

Glass Fusing FAQ

1. What Is Glass Fusing?

Glass Fusing is the process of stacking multiple pieces of compatible glass together to make a design, then melting them together in a kiln. The fired result is a flat glass “tile” that, if desired, can be fired again (“slumped”) to take the shape of a 3D mold. The possibilities range from small simple projects to complex fine art, and everything in between.

2. Can I use my ceramic kiln?

Any kiln will do. Preferably, your glass fusing kiln will be equipped with a programmable controller (most newer kilns are). At the very least, the kiln needs a pyrometer (temperature display). These are inexpensive and simple to install.

3. What cone do you use?

Glass fusers think in degrees Fahrenheit or Celsius, not “cone.” We work in temperatures ranging up to about 1500° F (815°C)

4. What do you mean by “Compatible Glass”?

To fuse separate glass pieces together successfully, the pieces must be similar in expansion characteristics. Our System 96 glasses are made to match and tested to be sure. “Incompatible” glasses will fracture in the fusing process. For more info, see our article, “Understanding Stress in Glass Fusing.”

5. What is “Firing Paper”?

It’s a thin ceramic-fiber paper used between the glass and kiln shelf, to prevent the hot glass from sticking.

6. Can’t you use kilnwash?

Yes, you can. But we use and recommend Firing Paper in the program because it’s consistent -- always the same, time after time. That makes it a controlled variable in the process, so to speak. “Kilnwash” is always different -- different brands, different chemistry, different mixing proportions, different application procedures, etc. -- we never quite know what to expect.

7. What ages can participate?

We recommend “assembly only” projects for kids under 10 -- projects that don’t require cutting or nipping glass pieces. Program components like Pebbles, Chips, Frit, fiber paper, etc. are used to decorate a glass base using Elmer’s. Many teachers pre-fire small scrap glass pieces or tumble them in coffee cans to blunt sharp edges, then add those to the kid’s pallet. The results are delightful and children are thrilled with what they’ve made.

8. What about safety?

This is a “common sense safety” craft. Safety glasses are important, sometimes gloves. There are no toxic materials or hazardous activities. Glass pieces can have sharp edges so we remind students to handle them sensibly. Keep some band-aids handy and take minor nicks in stride.

9. Isn’t it expensive?

Because budgets are tight we offer many inexpensive options for introducing fusing at your school. Contact us by phone or email to chat about various low cost-per-student projects and approaches.

10. We have stained glass scraps — will they work?

You will need to test your non-System 96 glass to find out what is compatible. Information on testing can be found at various places on the internet. Most stained glass will also devitrify -- form a scummy film on the surface -- at high temperatures. This can be masked with an overglaze, like Super Spray from FusionHeadquarters.com.

