

The Kiln Corner— Loading a Glass Kiln

by Arnold Howard

Though I work for Paragon Industries, L.P., the information in this column applies to all brands of glass kilns. I welcome your questions for this column no matter what brand of kiln you own.

When I'm slumping glass into a mold such as the wine bottle slumper, do I need the kiln shelf under the mold or can I set the mold directly on posts?

I recommend a shelf under the mold to protect the kiln bottom from melted glass. If there is no danger from melted glass, you could eliminate the shelf. Separate the mold from the shelf with short posts or stilts. This reduces the chance of thermal-shocking the mold.

What is the best height for the shelf in the Paragon Fusion-10 glass kiln?

Place half-inch posts under the shelf in the Fusion-10. This height aligns the shelf with the side element for even heating. Feel free to experiment with shelf height.

Can the shelf inside a glass kiln be placed directly onto the firebrick bottom?

Because the kiln shelf is a heavy thermal mass, it takes longer to heat up than the air around it and the glass on top of it. Placing the shelf directly onto the kiln bottom makes the shelf even more difficult to heat. This is why I recommend placing half-inch posts under the shelf. The posts allow heat to circulate under the shelf.

Can you fire two or more shelves in a glass kiln that has lid or roof elements?

Glass kilns that fire only from the top are not designed for multiple shelves of glass. If you fired two shelves slowly, the bottom shelf would reach a low fuse and the top shelf a higher fuse. I know people who have worked around this limitation by designing full-fuse and tack-fuse pieces for the same kiln load. However, the kiln should have a sidewall element in addition to the top elements. Before trying to fire multiple shelves of glass, experiment with small glass scraps.

How closely should one follow published or recommended glass firing schedules?

Never hesitate to change a firing schedule. A schedule is only a guideline. Since every kiln fires a little differently, results may vary from one kiln to another, even when using the same firing schedule.

How does one know when the glass has fused properly?

You can look at the glass as it fuses. The first glass kiln that I fired did not have a digital controller. I checked the glass visually each time. Position the glass so you can see it through a peephole. If your kiln has no peephole, crack the door or lid open half an inch for a couple of seconds to view the glass as it fires. Better yet, watch the glass through a high-temperature glass window. (Always wear firing safety glasses and, if necessary, protective gloves when you look into a hot kiln.) When the glass reaches the stage of fusing that

On some kilns a mirror aids in viewing the glass, because you don't have to get down low to view through the peephole.



You can see the bright interior of your kiln through the high-temperature glass window. Wear firing safety glasses when viewing.



Some peepholes are enlarged to give a wider view of the interior.

you like, turn off the kiln. Write down that temperature for future programming so that you can duplicate the firing.

Should silver clay be fired on a separate shelf from glass?

Yes. The silver contamination in the shelf can affect the color of glass in future firings.

I got a Paragon Fusion-7 glass fusing kiln for Christmas. Can this kiln fire clay?

The maximum temperature of the Fusion-7 is 1700°F. You can fire it to cone 09 but no hotter. Cone 09 is pushing the kiln to its maximum, so we suggest not firing to that temperature regularly. The elements will last longer at glass fusing temperatures.

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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.