

# RECIPE SHEET

## TOUCHING CERAMICS



SERVES  
A GROUP  
OF 10

SET UP  
TIME  
60 MINUTES

COOKING  
TIME  
60 MINUTES

## INGREDIENTS

6 ceramic items people can touch (can include replica items).

Magnifying glasses.

Name badges.

Light and dark foam to put on the table underneath the object when it is being passed around.

Large print copies of any small details or back stamps.

Any text should be minimum font size 18 and be black on buff/sand colour card or paper.

Text should be in simple language.

At least one assistant.

## PREPARATION METHOD

**This recipe gives advice on running ceramic object handling sessions with audiences who are blind or have visual impairments. It is based on research conducted at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery on how to increase engagement and access through handling sessions. It was developed as part of a European Union Funded project called Ceramics and its Dimensions and through consultation with partners working in the visual impairment field and an audience focus group.**

There are inherent barriers to engaging audiences with ceramics. Most ceramic objects are displayed in glass cases or labelled with do not touch signs because of their fragility. These barriers are particularly acute for those who are blind or are visually impaired. They often cannot get up close to the objects to see them better or use their sense of touch to gather information. Other challenges faced within a gallery are low lighting or small sized text on labels.

The handling workshop in this recipe is made to be flexible and adaptable so you can change it to meet your audience's needs to reflect the many different kinds of visual impairments. Also, people come to handling sessions with different interests, knowledge and aims. The recipe gives advice on situating your handling workshop, choosing ceramic objects to use and leading a handling session. We have also included web links for people who wish to find out more about specific visual conditions.

## RATING



“ I really enjoyed taking part in the session and being able to handle the pots. ”

“ It is a great way for people with limited sight to be able to experience ceramics close up. ”

# RECIPE SHEET

## MAIN MEAL

### ROOM SET UP

Choose a room with even, bright light. Have a central position to lead the workshop, where you can be easily heard and seen by those that have some vision.

Have on the table a large piece of foam to be placed beneath the object when being handled. Ideally this should be white on one side and black on the other side to add contrast to the object. If not two pieces of foam with contrasting colours is fine.

Choose objects that have large, raised decorative patterns to aid those who have low sensitivity in their fingertips and a contrast of colour between the background and the decoration. Objects must be easy to pick up and handle.

Choose a variety of objects to suit your workshops theme. If possible use different shapes, weights and surface textures to add interest.

Create large images of small details like back stamps.

### INTRODUCTION

Meet participants at the museum entrance with your assistant and introduce yourselves, then take your group to the workshop room, first checking if any one wishes to be guided. If so ask which side they would like you to stand and ask them to hold just above your elbow. Describe changes in direction and obstacles as you walk. Tuck your arm into your body to guide them behind you in narrow spaces.

**5mins** Introduce yourselves again.

Explain the room layout, where the exit is, toilets etc.

Explain your assistant is available to guide people to toilets.

Get people to write and wear name badges. Assistants may be needed with this.

Explain the aim or theme of the session.

**5 mins** Ask people to introduce themselves and say what they would like to get out of the session. If possible could they share how much sight they have now and if they had full sight in the past. Ask also if anyone would like their hand guided during handling?

Use people's names when you talk to a participant so that it is clear who you are talking to.

### PRACTICAL TASK

Take the object to each person in turn. Ask them to tuck their arms in and feel where the edge of the foam is, and to try and keep the object above the foam.

Describe the object, its historical context, or the objects own history. Try to have a logical route in your story about the object and don't jump from one theme back to another.

Questions you could ask as the objects are passed around are:

What does the shape feel like?

Does it remind you of anything?

Can you feel a raised pattern?

Have you seen/felt this kind of pottery before?

Is there something you would like to know about this object?

When describing size use the human body for comparison, for example, as big as your finger.

If you are not sure if you are leading the handling correctly, don't be afraid to ask your participant; Would you like to know more about this?

### REFLECTION

Ask participants to reflect on their experience.

What object were they most interested in?

Were there any objects they found difficult to handle and why?

What would they like to see if you had another session?





# CERAMICS AND ITS DIMENSIONS



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