

Firing Tips



SUCCESS WITH GOLDS

Gold overglazes are known as liquid precious metals. They are expensive and because of this they are traditionally used only for decoration. Golds are typically used to add detail or distinction to plates, cups and china blanks. There are several types of gold available in different forms, including bright golds and burnished golds.

Bright Golds

These are gold overglazes. They are not solid gold; instead they contain some percentage of gold, usually about 5 to 15%.

They come as a liquid solution and are usually applied with a brush to reduce waste. A thin coat is preferred to prevent the decoration from running, or failing to adhere.

If the liquid gold becomes too thick, it can be thinned with gold essence. Both of these products are very expensive and come in small vials or bottles.

Burnished Gold

Burnished golds are also gold overglazes. They differ from bright golds in that they require finishing (burnishing) to develop a lustrous finish and bright sheen.

Burnished golds are more durable and have a higher resistance to scratching than other golds. Their appearance is very rich and dense and slightly more matte. The brightness or matte quality can be controlled by application. A thinner application makes for a brighter gold.

Burnished golds contain 16-32% gold, including gold powder. Burnished golds are available in several forms: liquid, paste, dry powder or concentrated pats. The dry powder is extremely expensive.

There are some burnished golds that do not require polishing. These contain between 12 and 20% gold.

Firing Golds

Golds generally fire in the 022 to 018 cone range. This can vary greatly depending on the gold itself and the ware it is being used on. For typical glassware, an 022-021 firing is the most common. For china blanks, the gold can fire as high as 011. Follow the instructions of the manufacturer when firing golds.

Gold will adhere best with a slow firing and a soak. This helps them to develop the proper color and finish.

A faster firing increases the risk of surface defects which can be magnified through washing or use.

Golds contain heavy solvents which make kiln ventilation a must for both health and safety reasons and to bring air into the kiln. Usually gold is fired alone to reduce contamination problems.

Typical Gold Faults

Most gold faults are surface defects. These include:

cloudy appearance

caused by inadequate ventilation or too heavy application, firing too fast or overfiring

gold not adhering

caused by underfiring or too heavy of an application

gold is running

caused if application is too heavy

burnished gold is dull

caused by insufficient burnishing or possible underfiring

dull or scummy appearance

caused by inadequate ventilation or possible overfiring

cracking in finish

caused by firing too fast

pinholes and blemishes

caused by poor quality of gold or contamination of gold

blisters

caused by heavy application

Application and proper firing is the key to great gold results. Gold should be applied in moderation using a very light coating. Be sure to vent the kiln until it glows red-hot. Use witness

cones to verify the proper heatwork was achieved.

Want to learn more?

Read more about using golds in the Orton Firing Line and Technical Tips publications. Each issue is packed full of articles to help you learn more about firing. Members of the Orton Center For Firing receive these publications at no charge. Single copies are available to non-members at a per issue rate. Orton's 80-minute video, *Key Principles of Successful Firing*, is also an excellent resource on firing.

For information on Orton products, see your Orton dealer or distributor.

For information on the Center For Firing or publications, contact Orton, PO Box 2760, Westerville OH 43086, 614-895-2663.