

HOW TO BUY A WHEEL

Choosing a potter's wheel is not as complicated as deciding what electric kiln is right for you, but there are differences in the major brands. The first question of course is "Do I want an electric wheel or a kickwheel?". This decision is usually based on personal preference. Most potters making a living by production would choose an electric wheel because of the speed in which they can produce their pots. An electric wheel is also much lighter, smaller in size and, for the most part, easily transportable. On the other hand, a kickwheel gives one more of a feel for the process, in that the operator provides the energy to turn the wheelhead. A lot of potters feel more comfortable trimming their pots on a kickwheel. For those who want the best of both worlds, there is the motorized kickwheel.

ELECTRIC WHEELS

Great Lakes Clay now carries only the electronic type of electric wheel due to the discontinuation of the Shimo RK-10 series. The RK-10 Basic and Super have been replaced by the RK-Whisper. The Shimo Velocity has also been discontinued but the styling lives on in the VL-Whisper. Other electronic wheels carried by Great Lakes Clay are our own Throw-N-Go™, Brent, Creative Industries, and Willie Wheels by Lockerbie. These wheels are 120 volt and plug into any wall outlet.

Almost all of these electronic wheels weigh over 100 pounds and can be transported, but are not that easy for most people. The introduction of the Throw N' Go™ last year brought about a new option pertaining to the electric wheel: portability. With a weight of only 43 pounds and a throwing capacity of 50, the Throw N' Go™ is durable enough to be a production wheel, but light enough to take to a vacation home or demo site.

Another consideration in deciding which electric wheel is right for you is the design. All models except for the Throw-N-Go™ and the RK-Whisper are designed with a built-in work area or table (optional work tables are available for these models). Brent and Lockerbie Willie Wheels have a raised lip on the worktable to help contain water and work drippings. Creative Industries Clay Boss and Big Boss have flat tabletops. The Throw-N-Go™ utilizes a built-in splash pan and two water and clay receptacles up front. The Throw-N-Go™, Brent, VL-Whisper, Clay Boss and Big Boss have their work space more in front and the RK-Whisper (with the optional worktable) and Lockerbie Willie Wheels have their work areas more side to side.

One consideration used to be the wheelheads of different brands. Soldner began with three holes for bat pins which meant that a special drilled bat was needed. Creative Industries had their holes drilled 9" on center which required another specially drilled bat. Shimpos that are made in Japan have their holes drilled 10" on center but the bat pin heads are 10mm, which require a specially drilled bat. Brent and Lockerbie have the bat pin holes drilled 10" on center and use a bat pin with a 3/8" bat pin head. This became standard in the industry and now Soldner and Creative Industries have followed suit. The Throw-N-Go™ utilizes our Versa-Bat™ System as the wheel head with the 8" side up. A pair of bat pins is included that can be put on the Versa-Bat™ so that 12", 13" or 14" bats can be used instead of our 8" square inserts.

All brands and models of electric wheels carried by Great Lakes Clay are of excellent quality and will give the potter many years of dependable service.

KICKWHEELS

Why buy a kickwheel? Some potters prefer to sit up high on a kickwheel bench and feel more in control of the process, especially with trimming pots. There are no electronic parts that can go out, making them very low maintenance. The addition of a motor gives you the option of leg or electric power. Keep in mind that a kickwheel is not very mobile and more than likely will stay in its allotted space for a long time.

Kickwheel designs have not changed much over the centuries, just the materials used. Most brands utilize tubular steel and angle iron framework, and either a concrete or cast iron flywheel. They are built to last a lifetime. All feature adjustable seats and are available with or without motors. The lone exception is the Brent kickwheel kit which has a wood and plywood frame and no available motor. The major design difference is the work table. Thomas-Stuart and Brent have flat tabletops and Lockerbie has a raised lip on its aluminum table.

The big question would be whether or not to have a motor. A motor is helpful with the initial centering of the clay, especially if you are using a very large amount. Ever try to center 25 pounds of clay on a kickwheel? After that, a little kick here and there or a brief touch of the motor is all that is needed to finish the pot. One nice feature with having a motor on a kickwheel is that you don't have to use it all the time, whereas with an electric wheel there is no choice.

The kickwheels listed on the following pages are all excellent brands, and are built to provide the potter with a lifetime of enjoyable use.