

Beyond the beginner tool kit

So, you're getting pretty good at this pottery thing, huh? If you're feeling like you're going to stick with this for a little bit, think of these tools as the next little set of upgraded essentials for your toolbox. Some will increase your control and precision, some will empower you to try new techniques, and some will just save a lot of time. Not everyone will need each tool, but browse through and see what makes sense for you.

Take this chance to get yourself a sketchbook if you don't already have one! Somewhere to jot notes and drawings and keep track of your work and ideas. I recommend something at least 5 x 8" so you can draw bigger than a thumbnail.

While you're shopping for tools, get onto a good ceramic supply site and browse each category page by page. Tools have weird names that we might not know how to find, and you might stumble across just what you were looking for but didn't know anyone manufactured! I like theceramicshop.com and continentalclay.com

OK, onto the list!

1 & 2. Serrated Ribs

Serrated ribs are great for score-and-slip, and for making textures in the surface of pieces. If you plan on attaching more than 6 handles in your lifetime, you won't regret picking this up.

3. Fettling Knife

Buy yourself a knife, people! A dull paring knife from your kitchen is OK, too. Remember, knives with removable blades are not allowed at many group studios.

4. Teeny Kemper carving tools

These are my favorite little wooden fingers for reaching into small spaces and moving clay around attachments. Also a good upgrade for sgraffito. The butt end of each tool is a little different shape, too. I've seen this as "Kemper 5" Wire and Wood Tool"

5. Clean Up Tool

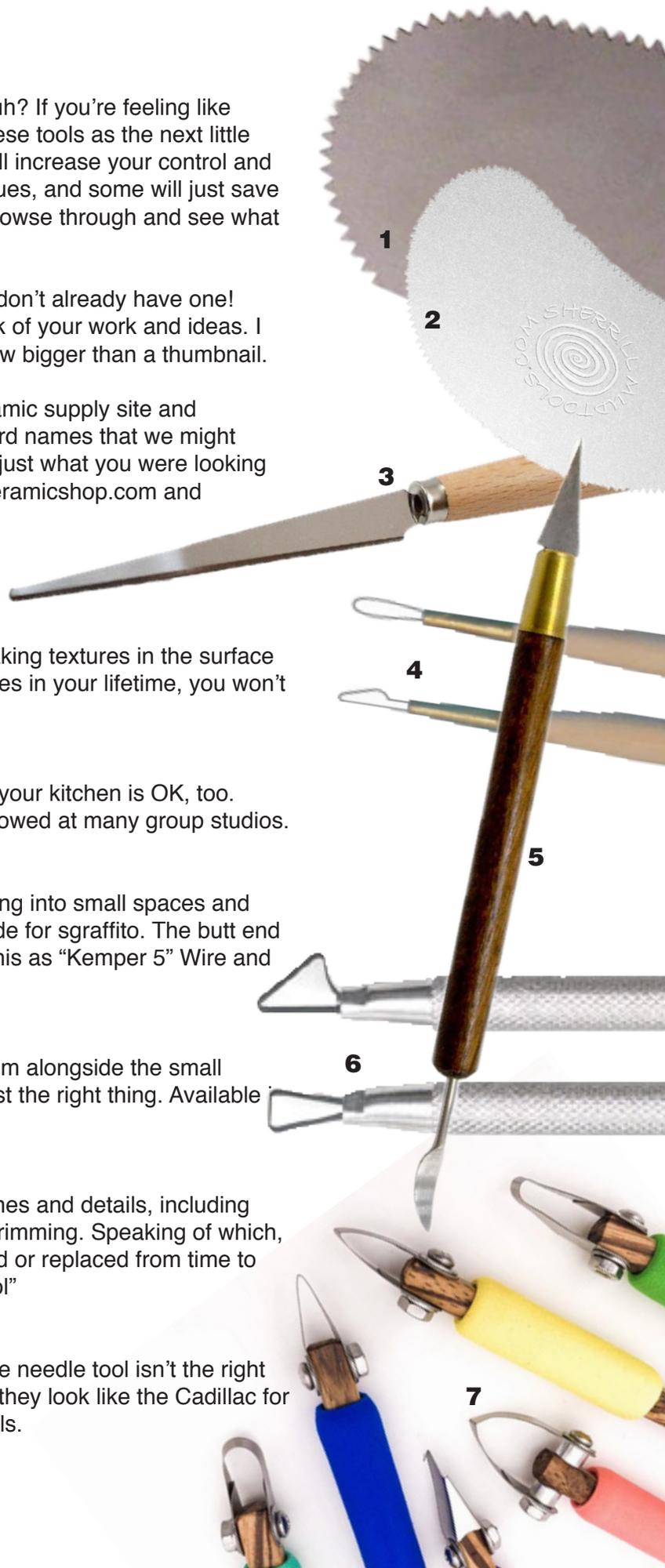
I was skeptical of these for a while, but now I use them alongside the small wooden tools. Sometimes a curved metal blade is just the right thing. Available in a few different sizes and combinations.

6. Sharp Steel Trim Tools

These are good carving and trimming tools for fine lines and details, including sgraffito. Maybe not great for work-horse, everyday trimming. Speaking of which, trimming tools do wear out and need to be sharpened or replaced from time to time. This is called "Kemper Mini Ribbon Carving Tool"

7. Really good lookin sgraffito tools

Some of you have asked for better sgraffito tools - the needle tool isn't the right tool for much of anything! I've never used these, but they look like the Cadillac for carving lines! These are made by Diamond Core Tools.



8. Really affordable sgraffito tools

I've recommended this to a lot of folks—it's just a dull pencil and is easy to find in multiple widths. Reach for this to draw lines, not your needle tool!

9. Bear Claw "Scoring Tool"

Scoring tool for scratch-and-attach, or texture. The needles are a bit further apart and heavy-duty than a serrated rib.

10. Ball Point Stylus

A more expensive cousin of the "dull pencil." I use this for mishima (inlay) work and it comes in different sizes so you can make thick or thin lines. Also good for signatures.

11. Lid Calipers

Some sort of calipers are necessary for lids. This is sort of a deluxe set, simpler is OK too.

12. Fancy Cut Off Wire

If you're interested in upgrading your cutting wire, check out a few options - different types of handles, different thickness of wire, and different lengths. I use a 7" thin wire from Dirty Girls most of the time.

13. Soft Rib

You're probably going to come across these, this is my favorite flavor. I have a soft rib to help smooth attachments. Mud Tools Ribs are available in different hardnesses. Sometimes a longer, firm rib is helpful for plates or bigger forms.

14. Rounded Wooden Rib

I like this rib for plates and also bowls. The wooden rib that comes with the beginner kit has that pointed end that sometimes gets in my way, so I have a rounded one. Check out the other shapes and sizes too—a different shape is useful for different things!

15. Finishing Sponge

Something like this can also be good for smoothing texture around an attachment or edge—it has a finer texture than the yellow throwing sponge. I use white triangle make-up sponges instead of purchasing this fancy one.

16. Diamond Sanding Pads

If you're interested in a smoothy-smooth surface, hit your work with a sanding pad after the final firing. There are great because you can use them wet to prevent dust from spreading—always polish your work wet! Be careful, these do scratch glaze. They last forever. I have a 60 grit and a 120 floating around my studio. From Diamond Core Tools, but you'll find others, too.

17. Artists Masking Tape

The jury's out a little on this one; I don't use a lot of tape. This is useful for masking good, straight, hard lines primarily on bisque ware. I recommend something a little stretchy and not too papery. Some tapes come in a variety of widths so you can have different size lines.

