

# SELECTING A POTTER'S WHEEL



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INFORMATION SEE OUR  
WEBSITE:**

[www.saxarts.com/Potterswheel-info](http://www.saxarts.com/Potterswheel-info)

## TYPE: Kick or Electric Wheel

**KICK:** A kick wheel takes up more space, and due to the weight needed for the flywheel, is heavier and harder to move and store. Most weigh between 200 and 300 lbs. It however, allows the potter to be "at one" with the clay... establishing a quiet rhythm and an almost Zen experience. It may be less expensive than an electric wheel and of course, requires no electricity. Some models have the ability to add a cone drive motor.

**ELECTRIC:** Electric wheels are easy to operate and allow the potter to employ a pedal to turn the wheel anywhere from 0 to 250 RPMs. It frees the potter to concentrate on the piece rather than on the mechanics of wheel operation.

## MOTOR TYPES & SIZE (Horsepower)

**TYPES:** Wheels employ a motor of between ¼ to 1½ horsepower which turns an aluminum 12 to 14" wheel head in one of three ways:

- **Belt/pulley**...though capable of slipping, when properly tensioned, can work well and are the most popular method of wheel head drive.
- **Gearbox/direct drive**...like a gearbox of a car, directly drives the wheel head with a series of gears. Reliable and strong.
- **Cone/pulley**...has a steel cone mounted on the end of a constant speed ac motor that directly presses against the wheel. The varying diameters of the cone increase or decrease the wheel head speed.

**SIZE (horsepower):** Manufacturers generally tout how much clay a wheel can center since this activity is when the wheel needs the most power, speed and torque. Generally, a ½ horsepower motor can center 50 lbs. of clay. Remember, a mug weighs a pound. A wheel of ½ horsepower or more is good for an advanced potter.

## ACCESSORIES

**BATS:** Throwing bats are disks of plastic, wood or plaster set on the wheel head so that the ball of clay is thrown on the bat rather than the wheel head itself. That way the finished piece can be removed intact with its bat, without distortion.

**SPLASH PANS:** Removable splash pans help contain the mess of trimmed clay and water and make cleanup easier. A two-piece design allows for easy removal of the pan. Splash pans that are not removable may have a drain to remove excess water. Some do not and require more effort for cleanup.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- The controller (foot pedal) is one of the most important considerations in electric wheel selection. Smooth operation, ability to maintain a speed when you remove your foot, and low speed torque (without jerking) are things to consider.
- Does the wheel have a reversing switch for left handers/ right handers?
- Does the wheel have a 12 or 14" (aluminum) wheel head with bat pins or at least holes pre- drilled for bat pins?
- Does the wheel feature an integral splash pan with a drain plug or a two- piece removable pan? Is it included or optional?
- Is there a spacious work area that is easy to clean?
- Is the wheel adaptable? Some manufacturers gear models towards both young potters (table models) and those with special needs or wheel chair accessible. Is the height adjustable? Will it convert from a table top to floor version?
- What is the weight of the wheel?
- Is there a seat incorporated or do you have to purchase one separately?
- What is the warranty? How long and what is covered?
- What is the best value? Shop around and choose the one that fits your needs. The most expensive is not necessarily the best option.

## SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR POTTERY WHEELS

- Type: kick or electric
- Motor type
- Motor size (horsepower)
- Wheel-head size
- Accessories: controller (foot pedal), splash pans, bats, reversing switch, and a seat
- General considerations: warranties, price, portability, accessibility, and durability

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