Prehistoric Pots

Prehistoric pots are pieces of pottery that humans made during the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. One of the most famous types of prehistoric pottery is called Bell Beaker pottery, which was made at the beginning of the Bronze Age, c2500 BC. Bell Beaker pots were a completely new, more sophisticated and decorative style of pottery compared to the Neolithic pottery already made in Britain.



Neolithic pottery



Bell Beaker pottery

Bell beaker pottery

Shape and form

The Bell Beaker pots were shaped like an upside-down bell with a flared lip. Archaeologists believe this lip allowed a lid to be tied over the top of the pot.



Pattern

Bell beaker pots were usually elaborately decorated. Repeating patterns of lines, marks and shapes were scored into the clay using a variety of natural objects including fingernails, stones, shells, twigs, combs, rope and cord.



Glossary

archaeologist	A person who studies buildings, graves, tools and other objects of people who lived in the past.
pattern	A regularly repeated arrangement or design made from lines, shapes or colours.
pinch pot	A clay pot made by pinching clay between a thumb and fingers.
potter	Someone who makes objects from clay.
score	To make a mark or cut on the surface of something with a pointed tool.

Exploring clay



Rolling coils

Coils are long, round rolls of clay. Coils can be used one on top of another to make a clay pot.



Making slip

Slip is a runny mixture of clay and water. Potters use slip to join two pieces of clay together.



Joining clay

Potters score clay and apply slip to join two pieces of clay together. This method of joining is called the score and slip technique.



Making a pinch pot

A pinch pot is a simple clay pot made by sticking a thumb into a ball of clay and then pinching the clay between the thumb and the fingers.

Image from: Getty Images/Werner Forman
Image from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain

Downloaded by Sheppeck at Bishop Pursglove Primary School on 16/07/25
Copyright © 2025 Cornerstones Education Limited