

Teaching Methods

There are two distinctly different approaches to teaching stained glass. The Project Building approach and the Skill Building approach. Different instructors might prefer one teaching approach, or might use a combination of both. It depends on what the instructor is trying to achieve.

Project Building

Having students make something simple to take with them is usually the preferred way to teach beginners. The students are taught a single easy way to make some project item. Sometimes it's a standard project set by the instructor and sometimes it's something the student selected. In either case, the object is to teach the student by having them acquire basic glass skills while making something to take home with them.

The student learns enough to do simple work and feels good about having something they personally made. This works well to encourage the student to continue working with stained glass and wanting to learn more.

Because this approach is mostly concerned with having the student complete the project, the instructor will teach the simplest and easiest method and will often have the students use whatever tools and assisting devices will help the student. The reliance is usually more on these devices than on the student's personal skills. Using glass saws instead of cutting by hand, or breaking buttons instead of tapping or breaking by hand is an example to this.

Skill Building

To do advanced work, an aspiring glass artisan must acquire more skills than are taught to beginners. The focus then is NOT on completing any particular project, but instead on learning and practicing new skills. Skill Building involves introducing the students not to any single methods, but to all possible techniques and procedures. The student can then later move onto more varied and complex projects of their choosing.

This requires the student learn to rely on their personal skills. They are taught to use tools and devices to supplement those skills - not to replace them. They're taught to experiment with alternatives and devote time to practicing different ways to build their projects.

Comparison

Each method has its place. It's not practical to start beginners off with difficult to master techniques. They'd probably get frustrated and quit. Some beginners will never want to go beyond making a few simple things. Those that do want to move forward can come back to work on expanding their collection of skills. An instructor does a disservice to beginner students by trying to push them into practicing methods that are beyond what they need.

An instructor does an equal, if not greater, disservice to progressing students by failing to introduce them to ALL the alternatives. It is not the instructor, but the student that should ultimately choose how something is to be done.

Perhaps the most effective instructor is one that combines both methods by using a series of carefully selected projects that requires the student constantly learn and develop new skills.