

Block Printing - West End Style



No sew cushion using craft foam, bubble wrap and washing up sponges for stamps. Printed with acrylic on up cycled cotton fabric



Block Printed Historical Architecture from Morecambe's West End. Printed onto fabric and made into bunting. Using a pizza tray stamp which I drew into with biro and then cut out the shapes and stuck on to card. Then printed with acrylic paint onto fabric. Squares of Cotton fabric are glued onto a bias binding strip, folded ribbon or string.

Block Printing encompasses all kinds of printing from letterpress to linocut. It's possible to make printing blocks without the need for special cutting tools or specialist equipment. In this session I show you how to make several different stamps that you can use for making repeat pattern and creating your own artwork. Examples of things to make with stamps could include a set of cards for a friend or maybe some unusual wrapping paper. You can use your homemade stamps on card, paper, wood and even fabric.

In this session I am going to show you how to print on paper and on fabric. I will finish the session by creating a simple no sew cushion from recycled material. You don't have to make a cushion use your stamps on anything you like. Experiment with the technique and have fun.

I am spending a lot of time outdoors at the moment and this will be my dedicated outdoor cushion, although it's not waterproof. You could make a waterproof one but that's for another day.

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If you like sewing do feel free to sew your own.

There are lots of other different ideas for no sew cushions online if you have access to the internet

Materials List

- Strong recycled card
- Washing up sponge
- Craft foam (Funky foam works best)
- Glue such as PVA
- Jar lids
- Fabric Glue or Copydex (for cushion) optional
- Plain up cycled fabric (natural fibres work well but polycottons are also fine)
- Acrylic paint
- Decorating roller
- Tray
- Newspaper
- Scrap paper for testing your designs
- **Optional Extras:** String, corrugated card, lace, buttons. Different things you can glue onto card to create texture.

Block 1 Cockle Shell: Pizza Tray Stamp

Polystyrene pizza trays are great for printing on. Other polystyrene takeaway packaging also works well. Cut out a suitable square or oblong from the packaging to get you started. If you have a Pizza tray you may even like to use the whole round shape.

- 1) Take your polystyrene packaging and cut it to a convenient size to work with
- 2) Draw your design on paper first so you know what you want. Keep your design simple
- 3) Trace or copy your design softly onto the polystyrene with a soft pencil (optional)
- 4) Take a biro or sharp pencil and press down firmly as you draw you design into the polystyrene. Make sure you make a good indent but don't go right through the polystyrene. *As well as pencils you can make different marks with other objects for example a fork (dots and swirls) or lolly sticks (the half moon tips of lolly sticks are great for making fish scales or seagull feathers)*
- 5) When you have finished your design cut out your shape as required. Then glue it onto an old jam jar lid, this makes a quick easy and effective stamp. *If your stamp is too large for a jam jar lid try some thick card or a block of recycled wood.*

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1. Polystyrene plates can be found in lots of take away and frozen pizzas.

Chips and other takeaways meals also come in Polystyrene so give them a clean and save them for a rainy day. Perfect for printmaking



2. Copy your design onto the plate with a soft pencil

Go over your drawing with a sharp pencil or biro pressing into the polystyrene. Try not to go all the way through



3. Cut out your shape and glue it onto the top of a jam jar lid

Block one is now ready to print with

Block 2 - Craft Foam Sea Bass or Sea Horse

Craft foam can usually be found in the craft section or children's section of pound shops. It's also available in most arts and craft stores. It works great for printmaking though some varieties do work better than others especially if you want to add fine detail to your design. My favourite brand is 'Funky Foam' but not the sticky backed variety which annoyingly doesn't work as well

Trace or copy your design onto the craft foam using a soft pencil. Copy this design or create your own.

Using a biro go over your drawing firmly creating a strong indented line. Add dots and detail making sure you press firmly with your biro. Cut out the shape when you are happy with your drawing.

Cover the back of your foam stamp with glue and stick to a piece of thick card. When your block is dry it is ready to print with.



1. Draw or trace your image with a soft pencil



2. Go over your image with a biro, press down firmly to make a deep indent



3. Cut out the shape of your fish or other design

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4. Glue the back and stick it onto a thick/strong piece of card



Block 3 Sea Grass

With Block three I am using a washing up sponge and some card. Cut out long thin strips of sponge and glue them to a strong cardboard backing.

Cover the exposed cardboard with extra PVA and leave it to dry.



1. cut a piece of cardboard to size



2. Cut thin strips from a washing up sponge



3. Decide on arrangement



4. Glue all over one side of cardboard with PVA



5. Stick your strips of sponge into place and add extra glue if required

6. Leave your stamp to dry fully before it is ready to print with

Block 4 - Bubble Wrap Stamp



1. Cut out a piece card and a piece of bubble wrap measure and cut them to size. If the bubble wrap is bigger than the card you can draw round the card

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2. Once you have cut your bubble wrap to size cover you card in PVA glue and stick your bubble wrap in place



3. Once your glue is fully dry it is ready for stamping.

Block 5 - String Cockle Shell

For block four use some recycled string. Cover the string with PVA and stick to a piece of sturdy cardboard, shape the glued string into a cockle shell design. You may find it easier to two larger or several smaller pieces of string

Apply a layer of PVA all over the cockle shell side and leave it to dry before it is ready to print with.

You can create stamps with lots of different materials including sandpaper, buttons, lace, corrugated card. You can make a stamp with just cut out card and glue if you wish.



UPGRADES

Off cuts of wood if you want to upgrade your foam stamp and mount it on a wooden block

Preparing to print

You will need

- A baking tray (alternatively old chopping board, laminated sheet, acrylic mat)
- A small foam decorating roller
- Acrylic paint
 - Homemade textile medium - Optional but helps paint adhere to fabric

20 mils Water

10 mils glycerine (available from the supermarket baking section but better value from the chemist)

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10 mils vinegar

Mix all ingredients together and store in a jam jar or other suitable container. You only need couple of drops to blend with your acrylic paint so it will go a long way and you can store it for ages. Blend thoroughly before use

Once you have thoroughly blended your Acrylic paint with medium put it at the top of you tray and roll it with the foam roller until you have a smooth velvety nap to your printing ink (acrylic).

Test Printing

If you're going to print on fabric or even on some good quality card I recommend testing you print on scrap paper or even newspaper first. Testing also gives you a chance to experiment with you block and decide what pattern you want to make.



Ink you block by rolling the ready prepared decorating roller with three or four thin layers of ink.

Remember to re-ink the block each time you print if you want a strong image. Alternatively if you use the block more than once between inking you will create a fainter image called a 'ghost image'. You might like to experiment with this.



Note

Sometimes when you print you print the outside of the block as well as the image. If you don't like this remember that once you have inked your block you can wipe off any excess with a soft damp cloth.

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Printing the No Sew Cushion

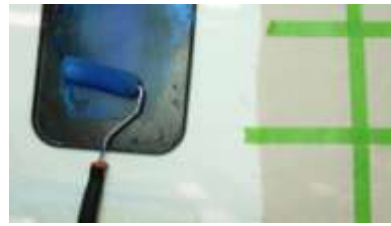
Begin by measuring the fabric for your cushion cover. Plain cotton, linen or polycotton work well. I used cushion filler 40cm by 40cm so I made sure my fabric was 100cm long and 50cm wide this allows me room for a hem which I can fold and glue.

1. Fold your fabric in half to create a square and then create just a couple of centimetres overlap. One side will measure 50cm by 48cm and the other will measure 50cm by 52cm.

When you print your design remember to allow some space all the way around for your hem if you don't want to crop your design



2. Decide where you are going to put your stamps and if you like mark out the spaces with masking tape to make it easier.



3. Prepare your ink as described earlier. Mix acrylic paint with a couple of drops of printing medium. Add homemade medium carefully in very small amounts as the ink needs to be thick and creamy, not watery. If you use a readymade medium follow manufactures instructions. You can print with just Acrylic paint but it will be less durable and it may dry a bit too quickly.



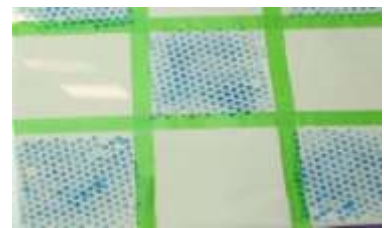
4. Roll your prepared ink (acrylic paint and fabric medium) with the foam roller. I recommend 3 or 4 coats.



5. Turn your stamp over and press firmly all over. For extra pressure try a wooden spoon.

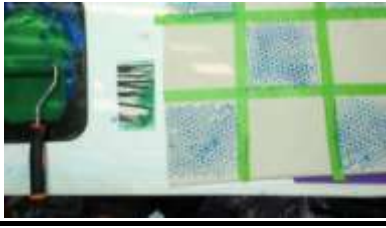


6. Lift up your stamp and ink it again to print the next square.



7. Re-ink and print the stamp until all 5 spaces are stamped.

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8. Add yellow acrylic and a drop of medium to the blue ink. Mix well before rolling onto the roller.
Roll onto the sea grass stamp. Clean excess ink off the edges of the card with a soft damp cloth



9. Press firmly down with the sea grass stamp. Re-ink and repeat on all four sides.



10. Clean your tray and roller. Prepare your red ink with acrylic paint and a couple of drops of medium. Mix well. Roll the ink until it has a nice velvety nap. Ink your fish or seahorse stamp.



11. Press down firmly with your stamp. You can use a wooden spoon for extra pressure.



12. Re-ink and repeat for all four sides.

Continue printing with different blocks until you are happy with your design

Remember less is more. As you can gather I don't always take my advice here.



13. When you have finished printing and your design is dry, heat set your design by covering it with an old towel and ironing.

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Finishing the No- Sew Cushion



1. Turn over your cushion cover keeping it folded in two. The folded edge is at the top. Firmly Fold the left hand edge one or two centimetres. Mark the fold with a pencil if that makes it easier



2. Unfold the edge and glue all the way along. I use Copydex you can also use fabric glue and some PVA's depending on what fabric you are using. Check to see if your glue is suitable for the fabric you are using.



3. Fold the glued edge over



4. Press down firmly on the folded edge



5. Glue the folded edge and fold it over again



6. press down firmly all the way along



7. Iron in place. Check heat setting for fabric



8. Repeat steps 1 to 6 on the opposite side and iron into place



9. Fill you cushion case with a cushion filler or well chopped up recycled fabric



10. Take the longer edge and mark a fold one or two centimetres wide



11. Glue



12. Fold

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13. Glue along the fold press down
Fold again



14. Iron along the glued edge to fix in place



15. Your cushion is now complete

Alternative Finishes

Instead of gluing the final edge you may like to add Velcro so you can change your cushion cover. Velcro comes in sew on or stick on varieties.

Alternatively if you can sew you might want to add a button or a zip. The glue and iron technique can still be used for hemming.

NOTE Covers made with fabric glue, Copydex or heat set fabric is best suited to gentle hand washing. PVA and glue not designed for fabric may not be washable. Prints may fade on washing

It's possible to make a no sew cushion without glue using an old T-shirt. I might have a go at this later.

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