

GO PRINT CRAZY!

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If you're looking for a hands-on activity to try this summer, why not have a go at block printing. With just a few materials and lots of imagination you can easily print up an old sheet to make into a wall hanging, decorate a bag, or breathe new life into your clothes. What's more, printing is such good fun. It appeals to

all age groups, from pre-schoolers who just love to see what happens, through to teenagers, who want to experiment with the latest fashion trends. So get all the family together and follow the step-by-step instructions below and you'll soon be going print crazy!

You Will Need:

- ❖ Printing blocks
- ❖ Fabric paints – in assorted colours
- ❖ Fabric – white, cotton gives the best results
- ❖ Paintbrushes or foam brushes
- ❖ Polystyrene tray or plate for mixing paint
- ❖ An iron
- ❖ Masking tape
- ❖ Plastic sheet – to cover work surface
- ❖ 3-Dimensional Fabric Paints (optional)

Printing Blocks:

Find a selection of objects that make good prints. Look for things that have an interesting shape or texture such as jig-saw pieces, cotton reels, straws, Lego blocks, dowel, bamboo, wine corks etc. You can make your own printing blocks, too; almost any material will do. Glue pieces of corrugated card, pipe cleaners, string, funky foam shapes or letters, polystyrene or sponge to wood off-cuts – use jar lids for a block base instead, if you cannot find any wood.

Did You Know?

Before the Industrial Revolution, all cloth was printed by hand. Skilled craftsmen would carve a detailed pattern into a block of wood, dip it into coloured dyes and press it onto the fabric. Today, most commercial printing is done by machine-operated rollers or silk screen processes, although some craftspeople still print one-off designs using traditional methods.

Crafty Tip:

A motif is reversed when it is block printed. A figurative design, for example, one that has letters, should be reversed before it is applied to a block to make sure it prints the right way round.

HOW TO DO IT:

STEP 1.

Pre-wash fabric to avoid printing onto creases.

STEP 2.

Stretch fabric taught using masking tape. To prevent colour seeping through a garment or a bag, insert a backing card inside it.

STEP 3.

Apply an even coat of fabric paint onto the surface of a block using a brush. Alternatively, pour paint onto a plate or tray and press the block into the colour.

STEP 4.

Press the block down firmly onto the fabric without moving it. Lift the block off carefully. Re-paint the block after every print or after every two prints to vary the intensity of the colour.

STEP 5.

Give yourself permission to experiment when printing:

- Print at regular intervals to form a repeat pattern or place your block at random on the fabric.
- Overlap prints in different colours or tones.
- Apply more than one colour to a block to get multicoloured prints.
- Outline shapes or lines using 3-Dimensional fabric paints.
- Mix different coloured paints together to extend your colour palette.

STEP 6.

Allow printed fabric to dry thoroughly.

STEP 7.

Detach fabric from the work surface and fix (set) the colour by ironing on the reverse side using a hot setting for 2-3 minutes; make sure an adult helps with this. Once fixed the fabric is machine-washable.

Further Steps:

- Visit the Dylon educational website www.dylon.co.uk to download a free printing fact sheet; click on Primary Education and scroll down to a block printing to access the pdf file.
- Check out newspapers or your local authority website for details of textile workshops being held in schools, museums or art galleries in your area. Most workshops run at weekends or in the school holidays and are reasonably priced.
- Find out about an American designer, Gloria Page, who shares inspiring ideas for printing (stamping) on fabric and lots of other surfaces, as well. Go to www.impressionistart.com and click on the Shops link to view pages of her latest book, 'Art Stamping Workshop'.