

## DIY Art Stencils



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Design unique tools for fast, repetitive printing and pattern-making.

Older than the pencil and more widely used than a paintbrush, the stencil is perhaps the most versatile tool in artmaking.

First used by prehistoric humans and later elevated to multi-million-dollar status by contemporary artist Banksy, a stencil is generally defined as a flat, non-porous material with cut-out designs that allow pigment to pass through. Often called "templates," stencils efficiently reproduce designs with speed and accuracy.

Techniques like screenprinting, silkscreen, pochoir, and stencil lithography either rely entirely on stenciling or incorporate it heavily. Stencils are also essential in other creative applications such as airbrushing, sign making, fabric design, interior decoration, and graffiti art.

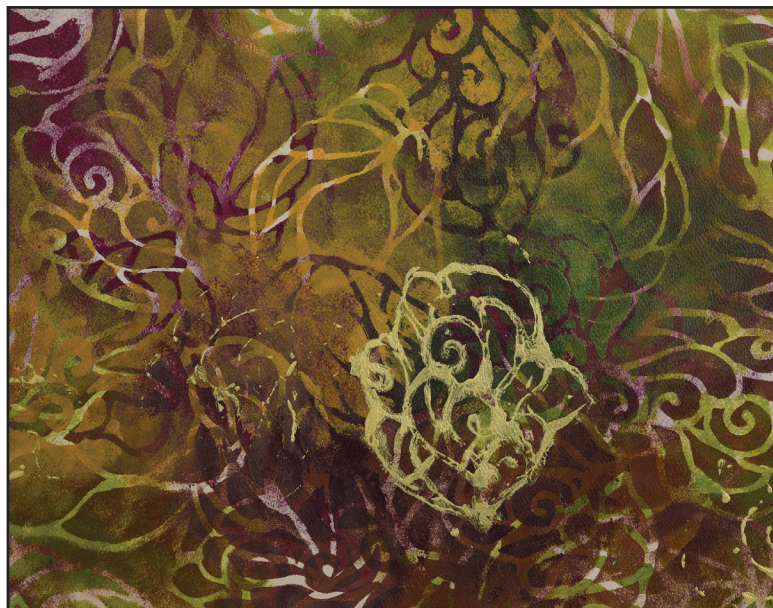
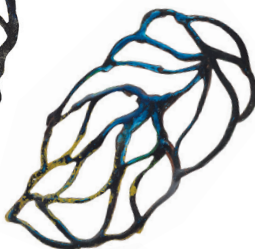
Despite their usefulness, one drawback is that pre-made stencils aren't always suitable or desired. Additionally, creating custom, hand-cut stencils can be a time-consuming and challenging process.

These instructions will show you how to create a simple, line-based stencil using common art supplies. This quick and easy method allows students to personalize their designs and use them to create paintings and prints.

**Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.**

### Preparation

1. Twist the top section off a plastic squeeze bottle with a narrow lining and writing tip. Fill 3/4 of the way with gel medium. Add a small amount of acrylic color and use a craft stick to blend the color with the medium. It does not need to be thoroughly mixed.
2. To first use the bottle, the tip will need to be snipped with scissors. Cut as close to the top as possible in order to create a small opening for fine lines.



### Materials (required)

**Blickrylic Gel Medium**, quart (00711-1007); share one across class

**Blick Studio Acrylic**, choice of colors, 120-ml (4 oz) tubes (01637-); share a minimum of six across class

**Blick Studio Disposable Palette Paper Pad**, 9" x 12", 50 sheets (03063-2023); share one across class

**Blick Scholastic White Stencil Brush**, 1/2" (05691-4012); need one per student

**Mayco Detailer Writers**, pkg of 6 bottles (32929-1009); share four sets across class

**Creativity Street Craft Sticks** - Bag of 150, Natural (60401-1500); need one bag

### Optional Materials

**Gel Press Printing Plates**, choice of sizes (37841-)

**Pink Soap Artists' Brush Cleaner**, 8 oz (05704-3050)

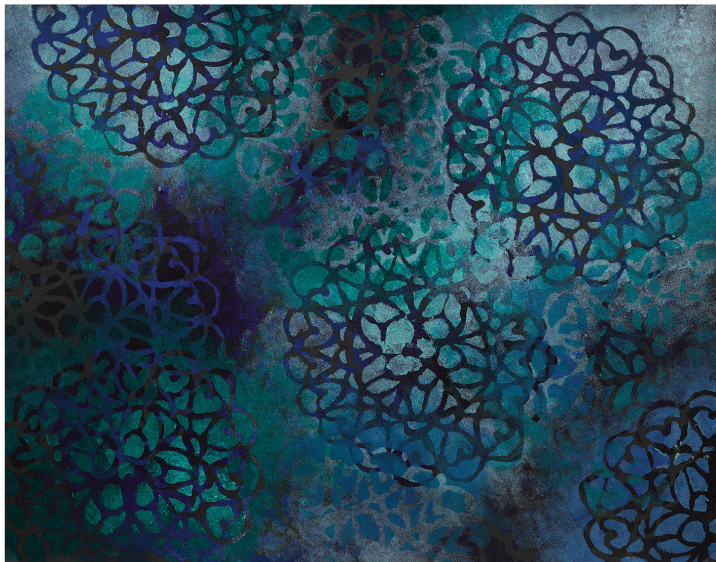
**DecoArt Extreme Sheen Metallic Acrylics**, choice of colors (09451-)

**Canson Graduate Mixed Media Pads**, 11" x 14", 12 Black sheets (89533-2014)

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## Process

1. **Plan the Design:** Use the uncoated side of a piece of palette paper to sketch your design with a pencil. Ensure the design uses **closed linework**; straight lines can be more challenging, so curves are recommended.

For best results, include several "cells" or open areas between lines. The design needs enough lines to provide strength and support, along with negative spaces where paint will pass through. See example designs for reference.

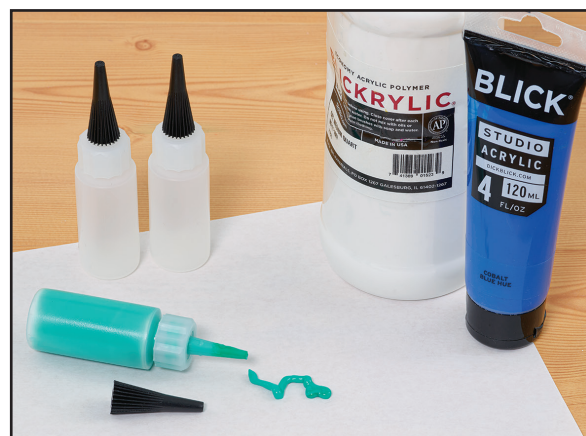
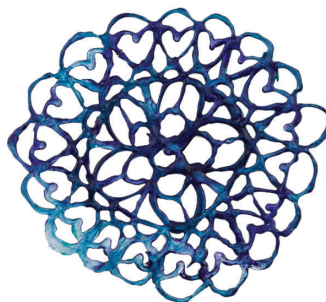
Keep the design size around 4" x 6" or up to a 6" diameter. Larger stencils may be more delicate.

2. **Trace with Marker:** Trace over the design with a black marker. Flip the palette paper so the design shows clearly through the translucent page, with the coated side facing up.
3. **Practice with Gel Medium:** Practice squeezing gel medium onto scrap paper before working on your design. Apply firm, even pressure with a continuous motion.
4. **Trace the Design with Gel Medium:** On the coated side of the palette paper, trace your design with gel medium. Work slowly for accuracy, turning the page frequently as needed.

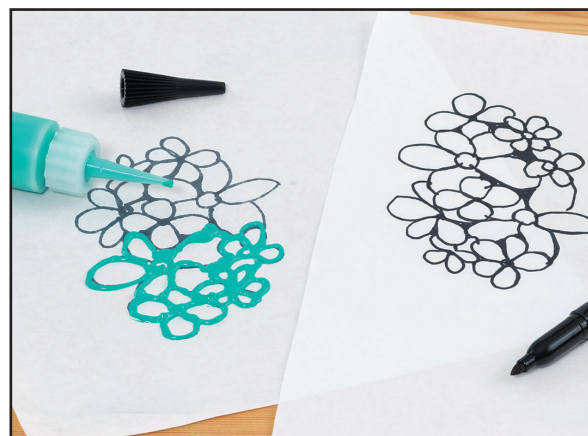
If a mistake is made or too much medium is applied, leave it in place rather than wiping it away. Once dried, excess medium can be trimmed away with scissors.

5. **Dry the Gel Medium:** Allow the gel to dry completely. It will become more transparent as it dries.

Depending on the thickness of the application, drying may take several hours. Placing the paper in front of a fan can help speed up the process.



**Step 1:** Fill Detail Writer squeeze bottle with gel medium. Add a drop or two of fluid acrylic to give it color.



**Step 2:** Draw design with black marker on back side of a piece of palette paper. Turn over, trace design by squeezing paint from the bottle.



**Step 3:** After drying, peel design away from palette paper and use acrylic as a stencil. Clean gently with soap and water and keep flat when not in use.

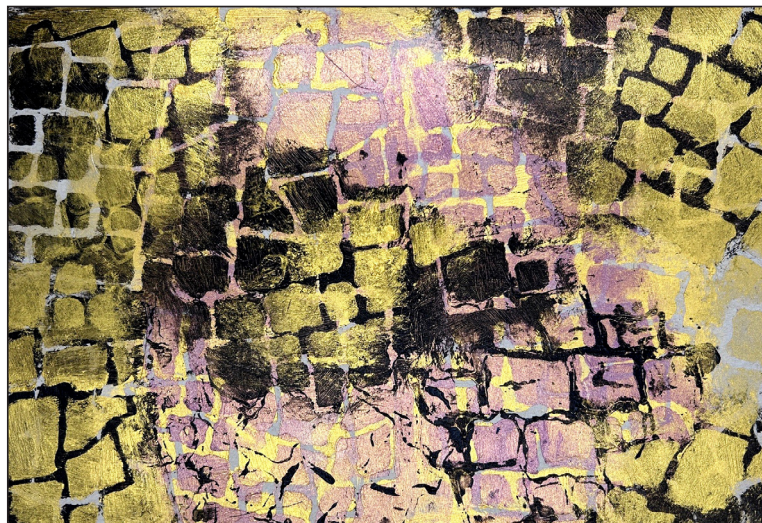
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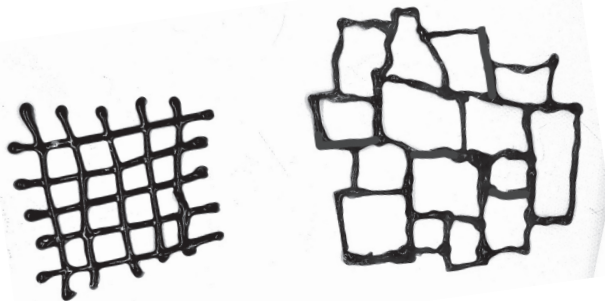
## Process, continued

6. **Peel and Use the Stencil:** Once dry, peel the design away from the palette paper.
7. **Create a Layered Patterned Painting:** Dispense acrylic paint onto a flat palette and dab the stencil brush into the paint.  
Position the flat side of the stencil onto paper or canvas and hold it in place with one hand. With the other hand, dab paint by pressing the flat top of the brush over the stencil repeatedly.  
Move and rotate the stencil, then repeat the process with another color. Fill the page with designs, layering and blending colors as desired.
8. **Clean the Stencil and Brush:** Rinse the stencil and stencil brush frequently with water and brush cleaner. Blot the stencil between towels to dry thoroughly.
9. **Store the Stencil Properly:** For best results, store the stencil flat in a cool, dry location. Between the pages of a sketchbook works well for storage.  
Stencils are reusable and can be used multiple times.



## 10. Ideas for Stencil Use

- Filling journal pages
- Designing backgrounds
- Adding repetition and texture to paintings
- Making collage papers
- Printmaking with gel plates



## Options:

- Designs can also be used for rubbing textures. Place paper over stencil and use a colored pencil to gently sweep color across surface .
- Stencils can be used to make a stamp. Use a stamping pad or acrylic paint applied to the flat side of the stencil. Position against the surface and press down repeatedly on all portions of the stencil.



*Stencil used for texture rubbing*

## National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

### Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

### Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



*Stencil used with gold paint to make a stamp*



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