

STENCILING INSTRUCTIONS

What You Need:

- Painter's Masking tape: to position your stencil—Use Low stick so it won't peel off paint.
- Natural bristle flat top brushes of varying sizes. I prefer a 1 inch round, ½ inch round and ¼ in round brushes as my basic brushes. For detail work you will need some even smaller. You will need 1 brush for each color used. (This is an investment but you will use them repeatedly.)
- Murphy's Oil Soap- for cleaning the brushes, and possibly the stencils
- Paintbrush Scrubber- has spikes for removing paint from brushes.
- At least 3 shades of acrylic paint color for whatever stencil you choose. This creates depth and a more artistic and realistic look allowing for shading and highlighting.
- Pencil for marking the stencil register mark for aligning your stencil properly each time. Especially important in layered stencils where you have to get them lined up exactly the same for each layer.
- Paper towels
- Paper plates or plastic palette to hold the paint
- Optional clear ruler
- Acrylic liquid paint- with 3 shades of a similar color to create depth. May be diluted with "Folk Art Extender" 4 drops per tsp. Makes it more translucent for shading, and less buildup on the brush.
- Rubbing Alcohol and a Q-tip- can remove acrylic paint on small mistakes

Practice First:

Practice first: You can take a poster board found at your local office supply store or discount store and practice with your stencil first. Don't just dive into your project on the wall or fabric first without a test run. If it's a small project you can use art paper found at an art supply or craft store. Make a test run of the project so you can see if the colors you have chosen work well with the other surroundings and to practice your technique.

Preparing to Stencil:

When working with a layered stencil, you need to stack them in order beginning with the first stencil marked with #1 and ending with the last. There may be many layers. I have worked with stencils that had 5 layers. Locate the hole in the top corners of the stencil called the registration mark. You will be using a pencil, preferably chalk pencil to outline the registration mark to allow you to align the layers of the stencil properly. If your stencil is a single layer stencil, and has no registration mark, I recommend making one in the corners in a triangle shape with an Exacto knife. You may need to go back and touch up a stencil later, and a registration mark really helps with alignment. If you are doing a border, the registration mark allows you to stay in a straight line.

Tape the stencil to your practice surface. With the pencil outline the registration marks in each corner. Make sure your stencil is even and straight. Use a ruler if needed. Clear rulers work best because they often have a grid for concise alignment.

Stencil Techniques:

Stippling: I prefer the stippling technique, which is a repetitive light pounding movement. It allows you to get the depth and shading you need more concisely than the swirling technique. (The paint has much less tendency to leak up under the stencil ruining the look of the stencil art.) Begin half on and half off the stencil and from the outer edge and with a light tapping apply the paint from the outside to the inside filling it all in. The brush is pounded straight up and down on the stencil-- not at an angle.

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Swirling: Just like it sounds, you will be using a circular motion. Begin with the brush half on and half off the stencil while moving in a circular motion. Go around the edges of the stencil, and move toward the center filling it all in with paint.

Choosing Your Colors: Begin with the lightest shade of the 3 similar colors you have chosen for your project. For example: When I was stenciling a single layer “ivy leaf” stencil, I chose a medium shade of green as the base color. I then filled in the whole leaf in this lightest shade of base color, using my largest brush 1” brush. Next, beginning around halfway to the edge of the stencil, I began shading the leaf with my darkest green color and took the color all the way to the edge of the stencil, and then onto the stencil itself to assure your paint goes all the way to the edge. Next I chose a very deep blue, yes blue, to add depth, shading and contrast to the very edge of the stencil approximately ¼” from the edge of the stencil.

How to load the brush with paint: It seems counter-intuitive but you will be loading color onto the brush then taking most of it off. You will be working with a very dry brush so the paint doesn’t bleed under the stencil. You can use a paper plate as your palette or a plastic palette with reservoirs for the paint. Squeeze out about a nickel sized blob of paint onto your palette. Dip your brush into it directly not at an angle. Now, offload most of the paint by taking a folded paper towel and in a swirling motion, remove most the paint off the brush. Now rub the brush back and forth on the paper towel to get the paint off the outer bristles. With a mostly dry “loaded” brush you are ready to stencil.

Stenciling Your Project: Using your preferred method of stippling or swirling, begin to paint your project. Using the register marks as a guide, line up the layers and fill in with paint. Begin with the first layer and complete with the last. If you are doing a border, line up the registration marks and overlap with a continuous design.

Adding Depth and Shading: Use at least 3 shades color when possible, use the lightest as the base and fill in the whole area with the lightest shade, then the next darkest shade around halfway to the edge, and the darkest shade at the edge of the stencil. Think of the where the light source would fall on your subject, and have lighter shading where the light would permeate and darker shading where the shadow would be. Shade parts furthest from the eye with darkest colors, highlight parts closest to the eye with the lightest shades. In very small areas you may not be able to use 3 colors for shading, try to shade half of the area for example a small leaf, or just shade the tip and the base. Just try to vary the color a bit to add dimension. (Purchased stencils will have a color picture and suggested colors.)

Project Surfaces: If you paint on a heavy traffic area, use a water base varnish over the top. If you are painting onto a wall use flat or eggshell surface. Semi-gloss and gloss will not take paint well.

Care of your brushes and stencils after stenciling:

Stencils: Don’t clean the paint off the stencil itself as it may damage it. If you have too much paint build up and must clean it, immerse stencil and soak for 10 minutes in soapy water. Add Murphy’s Oil Soap to the water. Gently scrub with a mildly abrasive kitchen sponge or “Dobie”.

Brushes: Always clean brushes immediately after use. Acrylic paint can stick and ruin your expensive brushes if you don’t clean them. Apply Murphy’s oil soap to the brush and scrape over the paint scrubber back and forth to remove all paint. Rinse thoroughly and apply a hair conditioner to the bristle and allow to dry on the natural bristles. You can begin painting with the conditioner on the brush for your next project.

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