



# How Screen Printing and Block Printing Create Images

KS3 ART & DESIGN

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 4 min read

## What is Printmaking?

**Printmaking** is a technique where artists create an image once, then repeat it many times on paper or fabric. Instead of drawing the same picture over and over, they use special methods to transfer ink onto surfaces quickly and efficiently. Two of the most popular printmaking methods are **screen printing** and **block printing**.

Think of it like a rubber stamp at the post office – you create the stamp once, then press it onto hundreds of letters to repeat the same design.

## How Block Printing Works

**Block printing** is one of the oldest printmaking methods, dating back over **1,000 years** in China. An artist carves an image into a hard surface, usually a wooden block or rubber block. They cut away the parts they don't want to print, leaving raised areas that will touch the ink.

To print, the artist rolls ink across the raised surface of the block, then presses it firmly onto paper. The inked parts leave a mirror image on the paper. Artists can create colorful prints by using multiple blocks – one for each color.

Think of it like carving a potato stamp – you cut away what you don't need, coat it with paint, and stamp it on paper to see your design.

## How Screen Printing Works

**Screen printing** works very differently. Artists stretch a piece of fine mesh fabric (like a thin net) tightly across a frame. They cover most of the mesh with a special chemical that blocks ink, except for the areas where they want the image to appear.

When printing, the artist places ink at the top of the screen and uses a tool called a **squeegee** to push the ink down and through the open mesh holes onto the paper or fabric below. Only the uncovered areas let ink pass through, creating the design. This method is perfect for printing on t-shirts and can create very vibrant, detailed images.

Think of it like squeezing paint through a stencil - the mesh acts as a barrier that only lets ink through in certain places.

## **Why Artists Choose These Methods**

Block printing is great for simple, bold designs and is inexpensive to start with.

**Screen printing** is better for detailed images and works especially well on fabric.

Both methods have been used for centuries and remain popular today for creating posters, t-shirts, fine art, and decoration.