



How to Make Prints from Blocks and Screens

KS2 ART & DESIGN

Ages 9-12 ⌚ 3 min read

What is Block and Screen Printing?

Block printing and **screen printing** are ancient art techniques that let you make many copies of the same image. Instead of drawing or painting the same picture over and over, you create a **template** (a special pattern or design), and then use it to stamp or push ink onto paper, fabric, or other surfaces. Artists have used these methods for thousands of years.

Block Printing: The Stamp Method

Block printing works like using a rubber stamp. You start with a **wooden block** or **rubber block**. Then you carve away the parts you don't want to print, leaving raised areas that will touch the ink. When you press the block onto an **ink pad** and then onto paper, only the raised parts leave a mark.

Think of it like a potato stamp you might use at school. You carve a design into a potato, dip it in paint, and stamp it on paper. A block works exactly the same way, just more permanent and professional.

Artists carefully plan their design before carving, because once you've cut away the wood or rubber, you can't get it back. The final print appears as a **mirror image** of your original carved block.

Screen Printing: The Stencil Method

Screen printing uses a different approach. You stretch a fine mesh **screen** (like a window screen) over a frame and block out areas with a special substance called **emulsion**. The areas you want to print stay open so ink can pass through. When you pull ink across the screen with a tool called a **squeegee**, it pushes through only the open mesh holes onto your surface below.

Imagine a strainer you use in the kitchen. Pasta passes through the holes, but bigger things get blocked. Screen printing works like this - ink flows through the open mesh

holes but gets stopped by the blocked areas.

Why Artists Love These Methods

Both techniques let artists create **multiple copies** quickly and cheaply. Once you've made your block or screen, you can print hundreds of identical images. This is why posters, t-shirts, and fabric designs often use these methods. Professional printers might print **thousands** of copies from a single screen or block.

These printing methods have been used to create everything from ancient Chinese art to modern concert posters. They're fun, creative, and prove that sometimes the best art comes from clever invention rather than complex technology.