

Printmaking Basics

Block Printing

Block (or relief) printing is a process that involves carving into linoleum, wood, foam, or another carving material and printing an impression of the carved surface onto paper, textiles, felt, leather, and more.

Printmaking blocks are typically carved with sharp cutting tools. Some blocks are easier to cut through than others. Some can even be cut with a wood stylus or pencil

Sketch an illustration and/or create repeat patterns and designs easily. Start by sketching a design on a block, and carve out the surrounding surface. Then, roll ink or paint onto the block with a brayer.

To print lay a piece of paper on the block, and rub it with a baren so all the ink transfers evenly. A printing press can also be used to transfer ink from printing blocks.

Inking Plates

Roll out your printing ink on an inking plate prior to coating your printing block with ink. Similar to a painting palette, these flat surfaces provide a place to squeeze out ink or paint and roll it out with a brayer. Ink can be thick and have lumps — rolling it on an inking plate smooths the ink out and prepares it for printing. Inking plates also ensure even distribution of ink on brayers.

Blick carries inking plates in a variety of styles and materials, including wood, metal, and a glass inking plate. Shop inking plates with attached bench hooks, v-grooved plates, a Grafix Inking Palette, and more.

Brayers and Barens

Brayers and barens are essential tools for printmaking projects. A brayer is a small hand roller used to roll ink and paint onto printing blocks. It applies a thin layer of ink or paint — the perfect amount to transfer onto paper, fabric, and more. The brayer rollers are typically made of rubber or foam and have wire or plastic handles.

A baren is a circular hand tool with a smooth, flat face and a handle. Roll ink onto your printing block, place a piece of paper on top, and rub the paper firmly with the baren. It will help lift the ink or paint from the block and onto the paper.

Blick: Discover block printing supplies, from printing inks and blocks to brayers, barens, printing presses, and much more. Shop artist-grade pigments, presses, and more, or find easy-to-carve blocks and kits for beginners and students.