

CLAY LITHOGRAPHY

For Sixth Graders or Adults

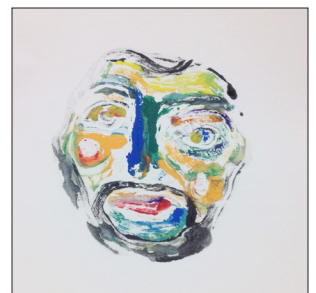
Lithography is a printing process based on the principle that oil and water don't mix. In this process, a stone or metal plate is typically used to receive oil-based ink or paint. We'll be using clay instead of a stone or plate, and since our ink is water-based, we should probably call this project "clay monoprinting," for accuracy. But "lithography" sounds cool.

Here's your cheat sheet in case you get "distracted" and forget to pay attention:

- 1) Pat out a "mudpie" of clay onto your waxed paper. It should be about 6" around. Use one of the rolling pins to further flatten the clay to a thickness of about 1/4 inch or more. No more than 1/2 inch.
- 2) Use the inks and brushes to apply color in any way you like. You may blend colors, paint realistically, make a pattern, or simply swirl the ink in any way that makes you happy. (Do keep in mind that if you want to incorporate a word, letter, or numeral into your design, it will be printed backwards. I'll let you think for a moment and realize how you might prevent that outcome.) Try not to apply the ink too thickly.
- 3) Use the combs, brushes, skewers, your fingernails, or any texture tools on the table to alter or etch into the surface of the clay. Think: pattern. Think: texture. Add and take away. Experiment. **IMPORTANT:** after painting, take a clean paper towel and wipe away any ink that may be on the waxed paper so that it won't transfer to your print.
- 4) When you're done painting and such, clean your hands. (Nobody wants fingerprints on their clean paper!) Then take one of the pieces of "good" paper and place it on top of your painted clay.
- 5) Put on a second sheet of waxed paper. This is to act as a buffer to prevent your "good" paper from tearing.
- 6) Lightly rub the top of the waxed paper with a bamboo baren. Don't squish it. Don't use force. You're simply trying to transfer the ink from the clay onto the good paper.
- 7) When you think you've successfully transferred the ink, remove the top layer of waxed paper and then peel back the good paper slowly. There's your print!
- 8) Sign, date, and title your print with a pencil. It may take 24 hours for the ink to dry.

Want to do that again? Knead the clay and start over. The clay may have a slightly tinted appearance the next time because there is still ink in it. No problem---just incorporate that into your next design.

Submitted by Melanie Mitchell Tucker
Greenville, Mississippi



Gelli-Plate Printing

Supplies:

Gelli plate (purchased or homemade)

Paper for printing (copy, sketch, watercolor, rice, cardstock, etc.)

Acrylic paints

Brayer

Spray bottle of water

Variety of tools for printing: combs, cotton swabs, cling wrap, textured paper such as gift wrap, string, stencils, etc.

Water dish with paper towels

Baby wipes or hand sanitizer for clean-up

Paper towels

Steps in Gelli printing:

First, you must understand that print-making of any kind is serendipitous. You never know what to expect when you pull that paper off the plate. This is particularly true of gelli-plate printing. So, be prepared for a creative adventure every time you print.

Shake each jar of paint that you select before you squeeze several drops on your gelli plate.

Use the brayer to blend the drops into an even coating. You need to work quickly before your paint dries.

Create a design by removing some of the paint with cotton swabs, a stylus, comb, etc.

Lay a sheet of clean paper over the plate. Press with your hands, the back of a large spoon, or a baren to transfer the paint. Carefully pull the paper from the plate. This is your print. *(Don't title and sign it yet, until you decide if you will continue to add to it in another session.)*

Alternatively, press found objects such as cling wrap, textured paper, lace, string, or stencils onto the plate as a mask before laying your paper over the plate. Press the paper on the plate without removing your masking objects. Pull your prints.

You can add to your print by layering, painting, or stamping.

Clean your brayer between prints on a scrap piece of paper.

At the end of the session, or between changes in your palette, clean your brayer and your plate with soap and water, baby wipes, or hand sanitizer. Do not let the brayer rest on its rollers as this may ruin it.

Submitted by Janice N. "Honey" Dean
Brandon, Mississippi

Make your own Gelli plates!

For “disposable” gelli plates (good for 2-4 weeks of fun) you’ll need:

- 1 box (4 packets) Knox Unflavored Gelatin
- 1 cup water, divided
- 5x7-ish container with a SMOOTH BOTTOM

Put 2/3 cup room temp water into your container. Sprinkle in ALL FOUR PACKETS of the gelatin. Stir quickly with fork- it will start to “bloom” and thicken immediately. Quickly pour in 1/3 cup HOT water and stir quickly to dissolve. Place in the fridge for 2-4 hours.

For PERMANENT gelli plates:

- Knox Unflavored Gelatin
- 1 6oz. bottle of Vegetable Glycerine (or 2/3 cup)
- 1/3 cup HOT water
- 5X7-ish container with a SMOOTH BOTTOM

Pour 2/3 cup (the whole 6 oz. bottle) of glycerine into the smooth-bottomed dish. Sprinkle in ALL FOUR PACKETS of the gelatin. Stir quickly with a fork, as it will start to “bloom” and thicken immediately. Quickly pour in the HOT water and stir it around to break up any thick parts or clumps. Let it set up for 2-4 hours before using.

****Notes from Melanie*** I used a square Pyrex dish, and made the “permanent” recipe above, except that after some experimenting, I found that microwaving the whole recipe after some initial mixing gave me much better results. Nuke the dish for a minute and 20 seconds before sticking the dish in the fridge. Obviously, you can’t do this if you’re using a metal pan! Also, I left the dish in the fridge for longer than 4 hours....maybe 8 or so. Sometimes overnight.*

Also, I bought the glycerin by the quart from Amazon. It was kosher food-grade stuff. Two quarts made 11 plates.

BLOCK PRINTING

You can think of a block print kind of like a homemade stamp. You take a material like wood (“woodcut”) or linoleum (“linocut”) and carve away every part of the image you want to be white (or whatever color your paper happens to be). Professional printers from throughout art history use layered color and precise tools to make beautiful and detailed works, and you can too, using the simple process I describe below. Although it is possible to make a print with multiple colors, I recommend starting with one color.

My favorite way of block printing is to use Soft-Kut printing blocks that more closely mimic the process of using linoleum and wood but is still easy enough for an upper elementary age student to cut (with close supervision).

First, sketch the design onto the print block. Tracing your design in permanent marker will help you when you start cutting. Also, be sure to draw all text and numbers backwards, as the resulting print is a mirror image.

Next, use a linoleum cutter to carve out all of the areas of the design that you want to be white (or the color of the paper you’re using). This tool usually comes with several tips for different thicknesses of lines. If you have a true linoleum block, this will take some muscle. We will be using the Soft-Kut blocks; they will cut smoothly and quickly, like butter. I’ve had upper elementary age kids use these with little trouble.

Safety Tip: Be sure to push away from your hands and your body when using this tool!

Next, spread some ink on an inking plate, a piece of glass, plexi-glass, or anything non-porous and flat. Water-based printing ink is best. You can use tempera or acrylic paint, but it doesn’t work as well. Use a roller (or “brayer”) to roll the ink flat. Go in both directions to spread the ink evenly on the roller. Roll the ink onto the print block and then put the paper on top of the block. Use the baren, the back of a wooden spoon, or a second clean roller to press the paper onto the block (this is called “burnishing”).

Carefully remove the paper from the block. Voilà! You have a beautiful print! Sign, date, and title it in pencil right under the image—not at the bottom of the paper, unless that’s where the bottom of the image is.

Now make lots more! If you make a series of identical prints on the same type of paper, then you need to number your prints in the order that you pull them.

Resources: All are available at dickblick.com

Soft-Kut printing blocks come in sizes from 4 x 6 to 12 x 18”……yours is 4 x 6” and cost \$1.65.

Bamboo barens are \$5.92 each.

Brayer: a 4” hard rubber brayer is about \$7.00.

Printing inks are available in lots of colors and sizes of containers. We are using the Blick brand, which is cheaper than Speedball; they range in price from \$4.32 to \$13.49.

Lino Cutter: Speedball Lino Set No. 2 — This set contains two Speedball handles and one each of styles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The end of the handle twists off for convenient storage of cutters inside. This set has two cutters at a cost of \$12.80, which was more economical for this class. If you purchase an individual cutter, the cost is \$9.21. (But you may keep your cutter today!)

Paper: Don’t buy special paper unless you just want to! Blick offers too many good papers to list. You can also just use copy paper, card stock, thin fabrics, silk, book pages, etc.

Submitted by Melanie Tucker