Pearl at Home

Art projects designed for suggested ages of 5 and up, designed to be completed at home with easily-accessible art materials.

SIMPLE PRINTMAKING: MARKER PRINTS

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SIMPLE PRINTMAKING: MARKER PRINTS

MATERIALS

- **Paper:** Use WHITE paper so the marker ink that transfers will appear bright. Inexpensive sketch paper works best, but you can experiment with other paper. Test the paper you’d like to use. It should stay damp when sprayed or brushed with water, but not bead up or absorb the water unevenly. Cardstock is okay, but might warp a bit.

- **Pencil or pen**

- **Scissors**

- **Water soluble (washable) markers**
  Note: Sharpies will not work for this technique

- **Styrofoam plates/trays** or Inovart Presto Foam Printing Plates

- **Spray bottle** (fine mist)

- **Sponge roller** or sponge brush

- **Paper towels**

- **Work mat:** Newspaper, wax paper, freezer paper, or copier paper
  *This work surface should be larger than your printing paper*

- **Optional:**
  - Hand brayer (roller)  
  - Baren (a round, smooth pad used in printmaking)

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The process of **block printing** involves carving a design into wood, linoleum, foam, or another material and then printing it onto a surface such as paper or fabric. The artist carves their composition on a reusable plate (or block), then prints the images by adding ink to the plate and pressing it against paper.

In this project we’re using simple methods to create printing plates out of Styrofoam. We’ll carve grooves into our printing plate using safe objects (pencil or pen!), and use washable markers as our “ink.”
BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Keep in mind that as with most printmaking processes, our technique here will produce prints that will be REVERSED – like a mirror image from what is on your plate.

So if you want something to face a certain direction, you MUST put it on the plate in REVERSE, from right to left. This is particularly important if you want to add lettering to your printing plate.

If you glue down your letters like this:

It will print **reversed** like this:

```
art
```

If you glue your letters reversed like this:

It will print **correctly** like this:

```
jap
art
```

DIRECTIONS

1. **Prepare your Styrofoam printing plate**

   If you are using a Styrofoam plate, cut off the rims and the curved sides so you have a flat area to work with. If your Styrofoam has an embossed logo or brand name, make sure that side is on the bottom (so you’re working on the “clean” side).

   You can leave your Styrofoam or Inovart foam printing plate in its current shape, or you can use scissors to cut your printing plate into a new shape.

   Next, you’ll select one of two methods to apply your design onto your plate. If you’d like to reuse your plate and make multiple block prints, choose option B!
2 Apply your design to your plate

Option A
This method will make ONE print, and maybe a ghost print – a lighter print made without reapplying ink. Draw an image onto your printing plate using washable markers. Draw any design you like, but remember that the image will be REVERSED on your paper.

Option B
Draw an image onto your printing plate using a pencil or pen. Press down with enough pressure to create grooves in the foam. These “engraved” lines will NOT hold the marker ink once it’s applied – only the remaining flat parts will. Your engraved lines will remain in your foam after printing, so you can reuse the plate to make another print.

After you’ve drawn the lines, use the markers to color the flat parts of your image.

TIPS:
• Designs with larger, less-detailed areas will work best for this project because this material may not hold lots of detail.

• You can use your plate to print multiple times, repeating designs to make a larger image – like how multiple quilt blocks arranged together create a quilt.

3 Prep your paper with water
Place both your paper and your printing plate (with the design facing up) on the work mat.

Just as in some formal printing methods, you’ll start the printmaking process by wetting the PAPER. Do *not* wet the foam! Keep your plate and paper separated on your mat during this step, so you don’t accidentally wet your plate.

Use a spray bottle of water or a heavily-damp sponge roller to evenly *dampen* the paper. Be careful not to soak the paper.

You need just enough water to where it will be wet enough to transfer. Getting the paper too wet will cause your marker colors to run together.
Make a print!

Quickly but carefully lay the damp side of the paper onto the colored side of your plate. Try to apply the paper without wiggling it around too much.

CAREFULLY rub the back of the paper with a wadded paper towel, brayer, or baren for about 20 seconds, or until the image starts to faintly show through the back of the paper. See our example to the right.

Lift the paper off the plate by grabbing it from the edges. Set it aside to dry.

TIPS:
• If your colors bled together, try making another print using less water on your paper.

• You may be able to repeat the print again without recoloring the plate, resulting in a ghost print.

• If you engraved your foam, you can reuse it to make another print. Use a new sheet of paper, as you will not be able to re-wet the original paper without ruining your first print.

• You can recolor the printing plate over and over as long as it lasts.

• Make multiple block prints to assemble into larger designs, like our examples below!