

Playful Printing at Home

by Ruth Ander

Materials List for Playful Printing at Home

A good, flat, sturdy table to work on.

Table covering if you don't want it to get covered in paint!

A flat surface to roll ink onto

This will essentially be your printing 'plate', so it's size will dictate how big you can print. If you only have something small, that's fine- we can still be playful!

This could be:

A piece of plastic/perspex- available from B&Q and other DIY stores- they will often cut it for you if you ask.

A Gelli plate- literally a flat surface made of jelly- and probably some silicone (available here- <https://www.greatart.co.uk/gelli-arts-gel-printing-plates.html>)

Home-found alternatives: Glass from an old picture frame (put tape round the edges for safety)

A flat ceramic tile

A plastic place mat

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Inks or paints

If you have some suitable paints lying around at home, feel free to use them, whatever the colours. Don't feel you have to buy paint or ink specially. I almost always use oil paint.

If you do want to buy paints or inks your first choice is whether to use oil-based or water based inks or paints. Either are fine. You will only need 4 colours to start with- a blue, a red or magenta, a yellow and a white. At a push you could just use black and white- monochrome can still make stunning prints.

Considerations are:

Colour choice and quality

How you want to clean up- If you use water based inks you can clean them up with water or baby wipes, we will clean up oil based inks with vegetable oil and rags/kitchen towel. We will be doing a lot of cleaning up between prints, so you will need to have a fair amount of whatever you're using.

The kind of paper you have- you will need thicker paper for water-based inks as they tend to buckle thin paper.

There's lots to choose from out there and most paints or inks are fine to use. The only ones you can't use are normal acrylics and gouache. They are not suitable as they dry too quickly to print from.

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Inks/paints cont.

You can get proper block printing inks online:

<https://www.greatart.co.uk/printmaking/relief-printing/printing-inks/>

<https://intaglioprintmaker.com/product-category/inks/relief-inks/> and

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/colour/printmaking/relief-and-lino-printing/ink>

These ones are oil-based but washable with water, which might be useful

<https://www.greatart.co.uk/cranfield-caligo-safe-wash-relief-inks.html>

Alternatives:

I use normal oil paints without any mixer, available online or at any art supply shops.

‘Golden’ produce ‘open’ acrylic paints which stay ‘wet’. You can get them here-

<https://www.greatart.co.uk/golden-open-acrylic-paints.html>

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A rubber roller

If you want to create even blocks of printed colour this is pretty essential.

You can get them from most art shops these days as well as online-

<https://www.greatart.co.uk/printmaking/relief-printing/barens-and-rollers/>

and here- <https://intaglioprintmaker.com/product-category/rollers/economy-rollers/>

You will want one that's at least 15cms wide, and I prefer the ones with plastic or wooden handles rather than the metal handled ones.

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Applying pressure to the back of the print

I use a printmaking baren to apply pressure to the back of the paper to get a print. This is a tool that applies even pressure to the back of your paper.

You can get different ones at different price ranges here-

<https://www.greatart.co.uk/printmaking/relief-printing/barens-and-rollers/>,

and here-

<https://intaglioprintmaker.com/product-category/printmaking-processes/relief/barens/> and some art shops also stock them.

The cheaper ones are fine, they just don't last as long.

Home found alternatives:

A rolling pin (make sure it's pretty even/straight),

A spare/extra roller

The back of a wooden spoon

The bottom of a jam jar

Hand pressure (thinner paper work best for this)

You can also experiment with things that will make UNEVEN marks on your paper, such as play doh tools, whisks, and brushes

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Paper

We'll only be using hand pressure to get the ink off the plate onto your paper, so thin-ish paper is better. As a general guide try to pick paper about 30gms or under.

Each type of paper will print differently, so it's good to have a selection.

DON'T get papers billed as traditional printmaking papers for etching etc, as they will be too heavy for hand printmaking.

Papers to try could be:

Tissue paper

Chinese or Japanese paper (Washi is good), buy here-
<https://www.greatart.co.uk/papers/specialised-and-recommended-papers/asian-papers/> and

<https://intaglioprintmaker.com/product-category/papers/paper-packs-sketchbooks/japanese-paper-pads-packs/> .

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Papers cont.

Home-found alternatives:

Cartridge paper,

Tracing paper

Computer or copy paper,

Old maps or old sheet music,

Newspaper (these last will give a mixed media, collage feel to your prints)

Brown (or any colour) wrapping paper - not the shiny metallic type though

Each type of paper will print differently, so it's good to have a selection.

Please note that water based inks will need slightly thicker paper to print on as detailed above. For instance tissue and the lighter Asian papers will curl and buckle.

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Sundries

Something to squeeze ink/paint onto and mix it on. Another piece of plastic is ideal for this, but a plastic or paper plate, or food package would do as well.

Lots of scrap or newspaper, for protecting the back of prints, making stencils/masks, and protecting surfaces.

Vegetable oil and lots of rags or kitchen towel for cleaning up oil based inks/paint. Source of water or baby wipes for cleaning water based inks/paint.

Something to use as a bin nearby. This will really help you keep your work area clear.

Gloves if you would like to keep your hands relatively clean. Old clothes or apron.

A place to dry your prints or a clothes dryer or pegs.

Objects or textures to print with- leaves, seed pods, lace, doilies, foil, clingfilm, bubble wrap- anything interesting and relatively flat.

Spatulas, plastic knives or pieces of card for mixing and spreading ink/paint.

Old tools, kitchen utensils, sticks, pencils etc for making marks and lines in the ink/paint.