

Innovative techniques and supplies for fabric artistry.

FREE Instructions!

Like that hand painted look on garments, but not the price tag? Can't find the perfect fabric envisioned in your mind's eye? Stenciling with fabric paints is a great way to make your own hand painted projects with just the right designs and color.

Gathering Supplies

Stencils: Stencils are made from thin sheets of plastic, with laser cut perforations that allow paint to pass through to form designs on the surface against which the sheet rests. The same concept applies to lace, mesh ribbons, wire grids, etc. So look around your home for objects that can be used for stenciling.

Paints and foils: I use the following products for stenciling.... All produce excellent and somewhat different effects.

Textile paints: Liquid fabric paints designed specifically for stamping and stenciling are easy to use and colorfast through launderings. Be sure to read the product label carefully to ensure the paint is designed for fabric stenciling. Most textile paints have a soft hand, which is desirable for garments. Opaque paints cover the fabric color, for stenciling on black or dark colors, and provide the most flexibility for working with a full range of light to dark fabrics. Metallic, pearlescent and glitter versions are available to add sparkle and shine to your projects. My favorite is [ProFab Opaque paint](#) because I've found it to provide superior coverage.

Shiva Artist's Paintstiks: A very versatile product, and produces a soft-airbrushed effect. Paintstiks can be used with a stencil brush to alter the color of fabric or add subtle texture, without the need for a stencil. [To see how, click here](#)

Foils: Add sparkle and pizzazz.

Fabric: All natural, synthetic fabric or blends may be stenciled. Prewashing is recommended to remove factory sizing for best laundering results.

Stencil brushes and sponges: Stencil brushes are flat topped; 1/4", 1/2", and 3/4" sizes are sufficient for most projects. Sponges can also be used for stenciling with liquid fabric paints; either sea sponges or cosmetic sponges work well. Generally, brushes are better for shading, while sponges cover large areas more quickly. Try both to determine your preferences.

Miscellaneous supplies: Tape, plastic plates and knives, paper towels.

How to Stencil

Positioning the Stencil: Lay out the clean, dry, ironed fabric on top of a protected surface. Place the stencil on the fabric and use small pieces of tape to secure the corners of the stencil to the fabric.

Using Liquid Paint: Pour approximately a teaspoon of color onto a plastic plate, which serves the same purpose as an artist's palette. Plastic knives are handy for dipping paint and mixing. Mix colors as desired from the primary set of red, yellow, blue, black and white. Or purchase a variety of colors if you want to use the exact same shade frequently. For example, adding blue to yellow provides greens, red and blue make purple, etc. Add white to lighten the color, and black to darken. The charm of this technique is to vary and contrast colors, so don't worry about getting exact matches when you mix more batches.

Stenciling: The key to good stenciling is to use very little paint. Follow these simple steps:

1. Dip the brush or sponge into the paint lightly, and then use a tapping motion — five to ten times — on the plastic plate. This works the paint into the bristles or sponge and removes any excess paint. Overloading causes bleeding under the stencil and blurred edges.
2. Dab the brush or sponge evenly up and down all over the stencil surface until paint covers the open area. Reapply paint as needed, always taking care to tap off the excess before going to the stencil.
3. When finished, remove the stencil and check your work. If some area needs more paint, carefully realign the stencil and complete the work.
4. If reusing the stencil immediately, blot against a paper towel to remove any paint that may have seeped under the edges from the previous application.



Tip: Block off sections of a design to create new shapes by using tape, or slip small pieces of paper under the stencil to mask sections from the paint.

Using Shiva Artist's Paintstiks: Since the paintstiks are oil paint in stick form, there is no liquid to drip or blur the design. Load your brush with color from the stick, and brush into the stencil. No need to worry about getting too much paint on your brush.

Using Foils: Using a foam brush, brush a light layer of foil adhesive onto the stencil. Carefully lift the stencil off the fabric and allow the adhesive to dry before applying the foil.

Caring for Tools

For fabric paints and foil adhesives, immediately clean brushes by placing them under warm,

running water. For paintstiks, clean brushes with a solvent or any soap. Swish them around in your palm or the bottom of the sink to remove paint. Blot excess moisture with a towel, dry, and store flat.

Place stencils flat under warm, soapy water and rub gently with a soft sponge or cloth. Dry completely and store flat in plastic or paper envelopes.

Cleaning your project

Paint ingredients vary by manufacturer — as do the care instructions. For best results, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for heat setting and cleaning.