

Basic Stenciling Instructions

Thank you and congratulations on your stencil purchase. The following instructions cover most common techniques for stenciling either our single or multiple overlay Embellishments stencils, or our single overlay, one time use *SayWhat?* lettering. However the application of the *SayWhat?* lettering is somewhat different, be sure to read the separate instructions which come with them.

Dry brush, stippling or **airbrush** methods work well with most designs, and **roller stenciling** can be a huge time saver for large areas. But whatever stenciling method you choose, layer very small amounts of color at a time, building intensity and depth with each layer. Be sure to take your time, and have fun!



Apply paint along the edge of the window using a circular or tapping motion

Dry Brush Method: Pour a quarter sized puddle of paint onto a paper plate. Dip the end of your stenciling brush into the paint, wetting just the tips of the bristles. Swirl the brush firmly into a stack of paper towels (Bounty® brand works extremely well) using a circular motion- this will load the brush properly and remove excess paint before application to your painting surface. Very little paint should be left on the brush. **If paint runs under the edge of the window (bleeding), you have too much paint on your brush.**

If you experience a build-up of paint on the brush, which sometimes dries and prevents even paint application, you may drag the brush against a paper towel saturated with some isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol to remove some of the paint.

Apply paint along the edge of the window (the shapes cut out from the stencil) using the circular motion described above. Work the paint gradually toward the center of the window. A nice effect is to allow the area in the center to remain lighter. Go over the area repeatedly rather than attempting to cover it in one application.

Stippling is also dry-brush stenciling, substituting a firm tapping motion rather than a circular motion. Stippling will provide a clearer print on rough surfaces such as textured walls. It will add a more textured look to stenciling on a smooth surface. You may wish to load the brush slightly heavier when stippling than with swirling.

Roller Stenciling Technique- Some designs call for even coverage of a large area, which is then shaded with dry brush or other methods. Stencil the exposed shapes with a compact foam roller. If you have a problem with the paint drying too fast you can extend the drying time by mixing 3 parts paint to 1 part extender, or use pre-mixed glaze. After rolling into the paint mixture, remove excess by rolling onto paper towels or paper bags. This will even out the paint distribution. Roll the paint into the windows, repeating application after it is dry to the touch if necessary. Stencil subsequent overlays when dry.

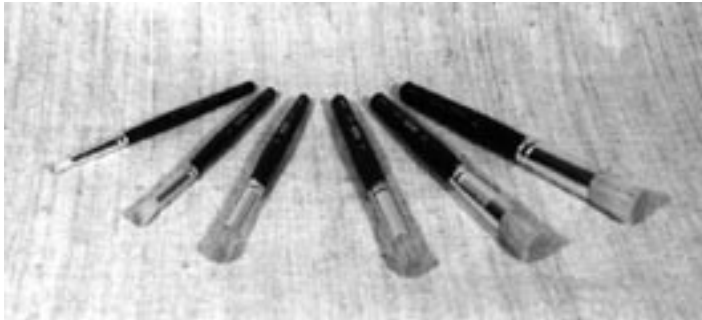
Airbrushing delivers a fine spray of paint to the surface, the control of which is manipulated by a lever on the airbrush and the distance from which the paint is being sprayed. Follow manufacturers instructions and practice to gain control of the paint flow. If you are airbrushing, it is recommended that you use artist grade acrylic paint rather than the less expensive craft paints. The pigments in these paints are ground finer for successful use through the airbrush without excessive clogging. Please contact us for further information on this distinctive technique.

Brushes

Use brushes specially designed for stenciling. Good brushes will last a long time with proper care. It is best to have a separate one for each color of paint, this will save you time and effort, and give the best results. Brushes are available in a variety of sizes; select diameters that are appropriate to the window sizes of the stencil. Stenciling brushes are

available through The Mad Stencilist or your local arts and crafts store.

Sponges and other special applicators can also be utilized, with various results. We recommend you see your local craft store for more information.



Stencil brushes are available in a variety of sizes

Paints

With the right choice of paint you can stencil on almost anything. Here are some of the most common types:

Acrylics are the easiest and most versatile paint to use for stenciling. Commonly available at most craft stores, they come in an enormous assortment of colors, are durable, and work well on a wide variety of surfaces, including painted or unpainted walls, floors, wood, fabric, natural stone and the like. They dry very fast so you can proceed to the next overlay immediately. The common 2 oz. bottles will last a long time, and is usually plenty for all but the largest projects.

Acrylic paint kits are available from The Mad Stencilist for most Embellishments Stencils, if you would like to replicate how we show the design. We also have available a large selection of individual hues to create your own color scheme.

Stencil crèmes or crayons are generally oil based and have a longer drying time, producing a softer look and enabling the beginner to blend the colors more easily. However, depending on the surface being stenciled, there may be a waiting time of up to 24 hours between overlays. It may also be necessary to wipe crème paints off the stencil between each application so that you do not drag color from the stencil material onto your next print.

Unusual surfaces:

Most acrylic or crème paints will work fine on fabric, though may require a fabric medium and heat setting for permanence. There are also paints specially

formulated for this use. Several suppliers now offer glass and tile medium, a chemical additive that creates lasting results on those surfaces, and other types of paint specifically made for ceramics are also available. For some applications cans of spray paint may be suitable. Metal surfaces or areas previously painted with enamels or oil based products may require a primer for maximum adhesion. It is always a good idea to try out a new technique on a sample area first.

The sheen of your wall paint will also effect your stenciling results. Satin, eggshell or flat paint is recommended as the base coating for best results. If you have semi-gloss paint on your walls and wish to avoid repainting you may add some “tooth” to the surface by lightly sanding the area to be stenciled. When dry brushing, stippling works best on slick surfaces, and waiting a little longer between colors for the paint to dry may be helpful. Another option would be to stencil first with a latex primer or all purpose sealer.

Tips for using Embellishment Pre-cut stencils

Note: Not all of the following will be applicable to *SayWhat?* lettering

Color and Shading:

Start with your lightest color first. Shade with additional colors, a small amount at a time for soft blending. Shade with darkest color last. When dry brush stenciling, the blend of color occurs on the stenciled surface. It is very helpful to try your colors out on paper first to determine the color blend. Go over the area repeatedly rather than attempting to cover in one application.

As you stencil your colors from light to dark, each color should cover less area than the color before it so that you see the blend and the variations between them. As an example, when shading a leaf, start with yellow, lightly covering most of the leaf’s area, shading heavier at the edges. Then stencil with green, varying the tones by shading deeper at the base and perhaps the tips of the leaf. Leave some of the yellow area untouched by the green. Stencil with red, shading the deepest tone you have established with the green and yellow. Lightly shade over the reserved yellow for some orange tones. The red layered over the green will give you a brownish tone. You may also stencil another layer with blue, in just the deepest areas of shadow. Where it layers the red you will get purple tones. If you layer color in this manner, you may find it unnecessary to use many colors, getting more tones out of a few.

Complimentary colors such as red and green; blue and orange; yellow and purple; look great next to each other. When mixed together, or layered over each other in the stenciling process, they will cancel each other out, which results in a muting of the tone. If a color is too bright, lightly shade with it's complement to tone it down. A color wheel, available at most art supplies, may help you determine complimentary tones. A quick and easy option for toning down a color is by adding a small amount of raw



Drop shadows may be rendered by stenciling the design askew very lightly with your shadow tone just below and to one side of the stenciled design.

umber, which will darken and mute the color without graying it as black will. Lighten a color by adding white. Practice stenciling on paper first for shading and color blending variations; try different intensities of color.

Colors in the specific design instructions are recommended in general terms so that you may use whatever is available to you. For example, if a medium green is called for, "**medium**" pertains to the **value**, or darkness of the green. Choose a shade of green that is close to other elements you being used in the room or by preference.

Shading for realism:

Trompe l'oeil or "fool the eye" effects are greatly enhanced by shading the design with a consistent light source in mind. This can be real, such as a window or lighting in the room, or it can be imaginary at your discretion. If the light source is at the upper right, for example, it would be shaded darker at the lower left. There may also be a distinct shadow thrown on the wall at the lower left, depending on the shape of your design. Oftentimes I will stencil a very slight shadow around the whole image to soften the line between the image and the wall color. This can be done after the stencil is removed, stenciling along the outer contour. This will give a soft edged shadow. The darkest tone used in the design or a variation of that tone will often work well for this. If some paint overlaps to the stenciled area, it does not adversely effect the print. A shadow is not necessarily gray; it

is a darker value of the surface it is cast upon. I will often use a muddy purple, (made up from raw umber, purple and white) or a soft gray-blue tone depending on the colors used in the design and the colors used in the room.

Most of our designs have multiple overlays, (see photo) which build detail in the design layer by layer. **Registration marks** have been cut into the stencil to assist you in overlay and repeat lineup. It is recommended that you apply a small piece of masking tape to the wall where the registration holes fall and stencil them onto the tape. Line up each subsequent overlay with these marks for perfect alignment. The registration marks will also correspond end to end if the stencil design you have chosen has a linear repeat. **Dropouts** are included with selected designs in the event that they may be useful in your painting process, such as masking your stenciled area so that you may work on the background while leaving your work undisturbed.

Refer to the color image of the stencil often (also referred to as the **shading guide**). When using multi-overlay stencils, it is sometimes difficult to tell exactly what form a window is part of. Is it a petal or a leaf? Your color shading guide is also a diagram of all the shapes cut into the overlays. If you are uncertain, locate the shape on the guide.



Multiple overlays build detail in the design layer by layer

Use **tape** (we recommend blue painter's tape) and/or a repositionable stencil adhesive spray (we recommend Delta) on the matte side of the stencil. Adhesive spray is especially important if you are airbrushing to prevent blurred images. When finished, store the stencil flat, if possible. We recommend **cleaning the stencil only if paint build up affects the stenciled image**. If necessary, use warm, soapy water (*Simple Green* cuts the

paint well) and a toothbrush, being careful not to bend small protrusions. Mineral spirits (paint thinner) will remove the adhesive. If you are flipping your stencil for a mirror image, it may be best not to use the spray adhesive. You may apply paint to either side of your stencil with no adverse effects. Paint will be more easily removed from the shiny side; the matte side reduces slipping against the wall when positioning. Store the stencil flat in its original bag after use. If you have used adhesive spray, stack the overlays sticky side up, then slide into the bag.



A contouring template makes it easy to stencil partial lines without additional overlays

Tips for shading theorem (bridgeless) stencils:

Theorem stencils require more overlays than “bridged” stencils to accomplish the seamless, more hand painted look of the finished design. Whenever possible, the window shapes are arranged so that you may stencil in consecutive order, starting with overlay A, etc. It may **sometimes** be necessary to **replace** an overlay to stencil a detail over another stenciled area, such as the veins in a leaf. Depending on your stenciling style, you may be able to successfully stencil the veins before the leaf without adverse effects. Alignment of registration marks is essential to the success of theorem designs. Shade darker along the common edge of the shapes that are “behind” another. This contrast will help define the forms in theorem style designs, where there are no bridges of mylar material to separate them.

Perspective:

Several of Embellishments’ trompe l’oeil designs have been drawn from a certain perspective. It is important to place the stencil at the proper height and viewing angle for this effect to be convincing. The eye level

may vary somewhat depending on your project, but it is recommended to establish it within the eye level of the average adult. If you are stenciling a child’s room, you may wish to lower the eye level for a child’s height. Where applicable, the specific instructions to the design you have chosen will include further instructions for placing the design at the correct position for convincing perspective. For further information about using perspective, we recommend the book *Perspective Without Pain* published by North Light Books.

Contouring Templates:

Selected designs feature contouring templates, or templates with details cut from the dropout section of the stencil. A contouring template makes it easy to stencil partial lines, (or contours) creating details within the body of the stenciled area without additional overlays. Used most often in motif designs, the template may also be used as a spacer for fine details. Simply position the template where it fits exactly inside the stencil, like a puzzle. The specific stencil you choose will have additional instructions pertaining to the use of the contouring template included with that design. Lift and bend the section of mylar away from the surface, stenciling along the exposed edge where indicated in the shading guide. You may use tape to keep the mylar out of the way while you are working. Shade the contours as instructed, then remove the template and resume stenciling. The contouring template dropout may be used to mask a painted area while painting background areas behind it.

We hope you have fun with your project, and we would love to hear from you!

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