



*Celebrating Life Through Art*

*Paintings & Sculpture*

# Creating Your Own Unique Stamps

## Tutorial





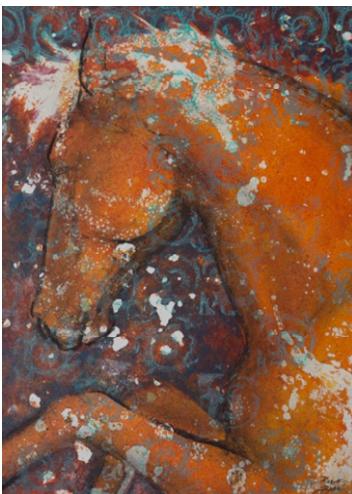
## Introduction:

Stamps are useful for incorporating a design or pattern into your artwork in numerous ways. Typically, they are used to transfer the stamp design one or more times to the art support surface with ink or paint. Stamps can also be used to “emboss” a dimensional layer of paint, gel medium, or gesso creating an impression of the stamp design into the medium. I personally enjoy using them in both manners as tools to create accents, a pattern, or a physical dimensional texture in my work. Although multitudes of designs are available commercially, creating your own unique stamps brings more of your creative hand and voice into the stamp design and their application in making your art uniquely yours!

In this tutorial you will learn about the simple materials and tools needed to create your very own stamp designs you can employ for years to come! Hints and best practices are also provided to prepare you to create your stamps quickly and confidently.

*“If you have the courage to begin, you have the courage to succeed.” -- David Viscott*

*“The question isn’t who is going to let me; it’s who is going to stop me.” -- Ayn Rand*





## Supplies:

To make your own stamps you will need:

- Rubber Carving Blocks (come in many sizes, can cut larger ones into smaller pieces)
  - Easier to use than linoleum which is very hard, these rubber carving blocks cut like butter and are easy to work with.
  - Speedball Speedy-Carve and Speedy-Cut Rubber Carving Blocks
  - Other brands available
  - You can also use a white Staedtler Mars Plastic Eraser for making small stamps!
- Speedball Linoleum Cutter Tool (assortment of blades included stored in handle)
  - Square blade good to remove large open areas of rubber and work around larger shapes and curves
  - Large V blade good for remove areas of rubber in tighter/smaller parts of the design
  - Small V blade for those tiny areas you want to ensure fine detail with
  - Round blade is useful for cleaning tighter curves
- Tracing or lightweight paper to draw your design on
- Drawing pencil or pen
- Thin Sharpie permanent pen
- Ball point pen to use as stylus to transfer design
- Transfer paper
  - Graphite Carbon Paper
  - Make your own covering a piece of tracking paper with thorough coating of graphite (pencil lead)
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Exact-o or Utility Knife & straight edge if want to cut rubber block into smaller pieces



## Creating Your Stamp:

This tutorial will guide you through the following steps:

1. Creating your stamp design ~ Select or create desired size of rubber carving block for your design and create a stamp design on paper
2. Transfer the stamp design from the drawing to the rubber carving block
3. Carve out your design in the rubber carving block
4. Clean and try out your stamp!

### Step 1 – Create Your Stamp Design

#### Regular Text

1. Determine the size of stamp you want to create and trace around or measure out the outline on your paper.
2. Draw out your design on your paper inside the carving block shape.
  - a) Consider what areas you will want to show when you use your stamp, these are the areas you will carve AROUND since these areas are that will:
    1. Leave an impression in the wet paint or medium or,
    2. Be where the ink or paint will be placed to then transfer to your art surface
  - b) The areas outside of the shapes you want to use to transfer/imprint with are the areas you will carve away to expose your stamp design.
  - c) With more complex designs it can be helpful to shade one area or the other to ensure you keep clear in your mind what is the design and what is the “negative” space around the design that will be carved away when you transfer the design to the rubber carving block.
  - d) The more complex your design, the longer it will take to carve. Keep your first attempts smaller in size and simple in design as you learn how to handle the tools and how they behave with the rubber carving block material you are using.
3. You can also use existing sketches from your sketch books as starting points for your stamp designs. Simply trace the outline you want and use the tracing as your design drawing for your stamp!
4. When you are happy with your design, cut away the excess paper from around the shape of your rubber carving block. You can leave a small border, removing the excess makes it easier to handle during the transfer process.



## Step 2 – Transfer Your Stamp Design to the Rubber Carving Block

### 1. Using Transfer Paper to Trace Design

- a) Cut a piece of graphite transfer paper the same size as your drawing/rubber carving block.
- b) Place the transfer paper, graphite side down against the rubber carving block. Handle gently as even finger pressure can cause graphite to transfer to the rubber carving block surface!
- c) Place your drawing on top of the transfer paper. Depending on the size of stamp you are making, you may find it helpful to use masking tape to tape the transfer paper and drawing to your rubber carving block to prevent shifting.
- d) Check to ensure your design is positioned correctly (not hanging off the edge where it will not be transferred!)
- e) Use the ball point pen to trace your design, using enough pressure to transfer the graphite to the rubber carving block surface. You can start near an edge so you can lift up the paper to see if it is transferring. Adjust the pressure as needed.
- f) When done tracing your entire design, remove the drawing and transfer paper.
- g) To prevent smudging as you carve, you can use the thin Sharpie permanent marker pen to draw on top of the transferred lines to create a clear design to carve. You can also use the ball point pen for this purpose, but that ink can smudge some as you handle the rubber carving block when you carve it. Smudging will not hurt anything as you will clean the stamp prior to using!

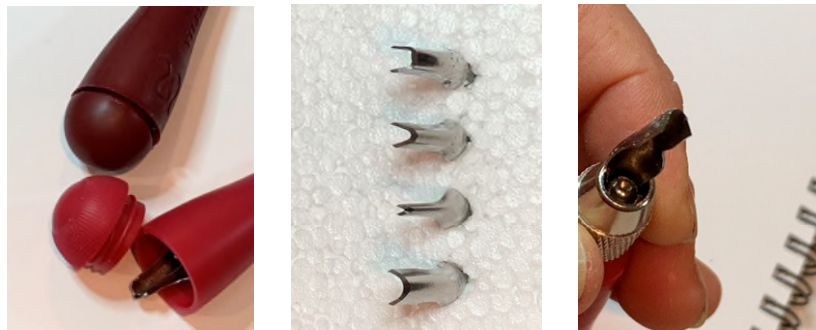
### 2. Drawing Design Freehand

- a) If you prefer, you can simply draw directly onto the rubber carving block, referring to your drawing for reference purposes.
- b) In this case you can opt to use pencil just in case you make an error and need to correct any marks.
- c) When happy with the design, you can use the thin Sharpie permanent marker pen to draw on top of the transferred lines to create a clear design to carve. You can also use the ball point pen for this purpose, but that ink can smudge some as you handle the rubber carving block when you carve it. Smudging will not hurt anything as you will clean the stamp prior to using!



### Step 3 – Carve Out Your Design in the Rubber Carving Block

1. Prepare your linoleum cutter by mounting the square groove blade
  - a) First familiarize yourself with the cutter. Remove the end cap from the handle of your cutter. It will either pop or screw off. You can store your blades in the handle when not using.



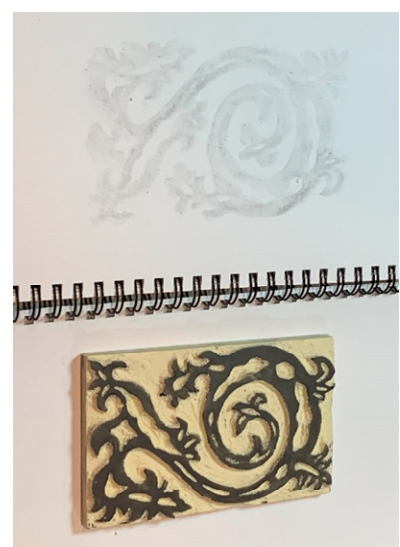
- b) Be careful when handling the blades, the cutting ends are very sharp!
  - c) You will mount/change blades by twisting the metal flange to loosen allowing you to pull the blade out and insert another. Tighten the metal flange to secure the blade, you don't want it to shift while cutting!
2. Consider how deep of a "relief" you want your design to have, if using for embossing you will need between 1/16" to 1/8" to allow impression of only the design not the entire area! Less "relief" is needed if your intent is to use to transfer ink and paint impressions.
3. Remove the large areas AROUND the outside of your stamp design first using the square groove blade.



- a) Start slowly since the blades slice easily and quickly in the rubber carving block material. You can always take off more material but once it is cut away there is no putting it back!
  - b) ALWAYS keep the blade motion directed away from your body and fingers... those sharp blades leave a nasty gouge and can go deep without a lot of effort being so sharp.
  - c) You may need to work from different directions so turn the carving block as needed to allow you to carve accurately and comfortably.
  - d) As you work close to the edge of your design, use care not to cut into it!
4. Next, mount the large V Blade to remove material from those tighter more intricate places in your design.
  5. You can refine even further using the small V Blade.



6. To confirm your design is finished "color" the entire design with a graphite stick or pencil and see if there are any final adjustments you need to make in your carving.

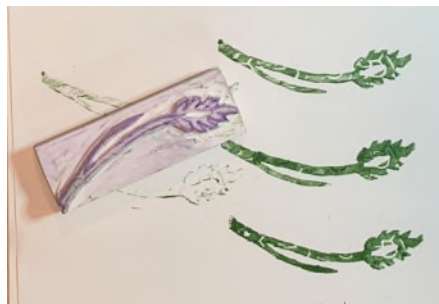


## Step 4 – Clean and Try Out Your New Stamp Design

1. Rinse off your stamp. If there is graphite still visible use rubbing alcohol to remove.
2. Load your stamp using
  - a) A pre-inked Ink Pad



- b) Apply paint to stamp design surface with brush



- c) Apply ink or paint to stamp design surface with brayer

3. Test your stamp on a piece of scratch paper
4. Experiment with the amount of media (ink or paint) you load the stamp with and the amount of pressure to apply to get a clean impression of your design.
5. Now try “embossing” a layer of wet media leaving your stamp’s physical impression.
  - a) Spread a relatively thin media layer (~ 1/16” max) of gesso, gel, or acrylic paint on your scratch paper.





- b) Press your stamp into the wet media and lift to expose the imprint left by your stamp.



- c) If the edges are not distinct you may have too much media to leave a clear impression. Try again with a thinner layer of media.
- d) Once dry, try embellishing with color either inside the impression or try dry brushing the edges for a different effect. Use your imagination!

## Summary:

I hope you enjoyed this “Create Your Own Unique Stamps” Tutorial and you are now equipped to create your own personal art stamps. I use them to add patterns and texture to paintings, create handmade paper designs, and embellish journals. The possibilities for using them are only limited by your imagination! Happy stamping and creating!



*“If we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless.” -- Jamie Paolinetti*

*“Never be limited by other peoples limited imaginations” -- Mae Jemison*