

# Printing Without a Press

## Pressure Printing

---

Pressure printing is a contemporary letterpress technique that involves creating a print from a low relief collage/stencil plate (stratographic matrix). It differs from other relief techniques in that ink is applied to an acrylic or lino block rather than the matrix itself. Pressure is applied to the back of the printing paper through the matrix which displaces ink onto paper. The result is a silhouetted, halo-like effect with images that can have a soft-edged, delicate quality not usually associated with relief printing techniques. The method typically employs the use of cylinder press such as a Vandercock, where control over pressure can lead to sophisticated outcomes. However, it is possible to create pressure prints at home with a minimum of equipment and materials.



### The Plate

The stencil plates (stratographic matrix) are inexpensive and easy to make from a sheet of copier paper or acetate cut to the size of your intended print area + 20mm on all sides. Onto this, layers of torn or cut cartridge paper, tape or other similar materials are adhered. Overlaying layers built up on the plate will increase pressure in those areas, dispersing more ink and producing darker tones. Various kinds of tape and pressure sensitive labels are ideal as they are self adhesive, with the former offering the ability to create different textures. Non-adhesive materials can be glued down with a gluestick or PVA though care should be taken as lumps of glue will show in the final prints.

### The Block

Sometimes called a 'flat' or 'tint' block, the inking block is a piece of acrylic sheet that is cut to the size of your intended print area - this will avoid ink transferring onto the edges of your printing paper. A piece of lino could also be used, due to the nature of the pressure print process the print will feature a tone across the whole image, with no non-printing areas. By using a lino block and cutting into it, white or non-printing areas can be achieved.

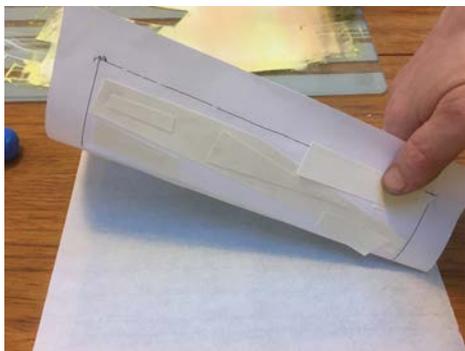
### Paper Selection

Thin papers with a smooth surface work well, especially when printing by hand. Thicker papers such as Somerset or heavy cartridge papers will result in disappointing results. Japanese lightweight paper work well as should lightweight text papers of around 90gsm or lower. The paper should be cut slightly larger than your block and plate. A margin of about 20mm on all sides will give a clean border and make prints easier to handle.

# Printing Without a Press

## Pressure Printing

---



### Tools & Equipment

For printing at home, work in an area with sufficient space and at a firm flat work surface. You will need: an **ink slab** - any non-absorbent smooth surface can be used such as a piece of acrylic from a picture frame; old tray; or piece of acetate. **Ink roller & ink knife** for preparing and rolling out the ink onto the block. A **2nd ink roller**, this should be clean and slightly larger than your block, it will be used to 'press' the print. A rolling pin or rigid cardboard tube can also be used. **Scrap paper** to cover the work area and for rolling out excess ink from the roller when cleaning up and **Rags** to clean the block and roller.

01. Cut your printing paper to size allowing for a 20mm margin around your block. Cut your stencil plate from a sheet of copier paper or acetate to match, draw the margins for your block onto it.
02. Make your stencil using cartridge paper, tape or labels. Use up to 4 layers of cartridge paper for the darkest tonal values, gluing down onto the stencil plate.
03. Roll out a thin and even layer of relief ink onto a plate or glass surface. Use this to Ink up your block, ensure you get an even film of ink on the block.
04. Lay your paper over the inked block and then place your stencil, face down, on top.
05. Using a printmaking roller or rolling pin immediately put pressure on the back of the stencil.
06. Remove the stencil and gently pull off the paper to reveal your print.

### Tips

- If the print is too dark reduce the amount of ink you roll out.
- If the print is too light, dampen the paper a little before printing to encourage ink transfer.
- Oil based inks are best as they tend to have a smoother consistency and don't dry immediately.
- Water based printing inks may be used, and will provide successful results with practice. The addition of a suitable retarding medium will slow the drying and provide a longer working time with the ink.
- Once you have experimented and achieved successful results you can try creating prints with multiple stencils and colours by printing the layers sequentially.
- Extender may be used to adjust the transparency of the inks. This can prove especially effective when layering colours.