

A free project, compliments of...

*Terri Stegmiller*

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# Rubbing Plates

What's a rubbing plate? A rubbing plate is a tool used to create a layer of pattern and texture on fabric or paper. Rubbing plates come in a wide variety of materials and will either have an etched surface or a raised design.

Using a rubbing plate is simple. Just place your fabric or paper over the surface of the plate and then using a pencil, paint or some other type of coloring agent, rub over the surface to transfer the rubbing plate's design to the surface of the cloth.

I love adding an allover pattern or design to my fabrics and I especially enjoy using rubbing plates to further embellish my sun printed fabrics. Consider adding rubbing plate designs to hand dyed fabrics, commercial fabrics or even plain white fabric.

Rubbing plates are fun and easy to make. Start by choosing a sturdy base to paint your design on. I use cardboard and the sturdier it is, the better. A flimsy cardboard will tend to warp and bend a bit too easily. If you only have access to a cardboard that is not very sturdy, just glue two pieces together to create a sturdier base. Another option to consider using for your base material is matboard, which you can get at most framing and craft stores that sell framing supplies.

To create your design on the cardboard you will use dimensional paint. This type of paint is thick and remains raised on the surface after it's applied. It doesn't matter what color you use. I normally watch the bargain bins for dimensional paint that is being sold on clearance or discontinued.

Now it's time to plan your design. If you prefer, you can draw out your design on paper first, so you have an idea of what your design will look like. You can even draw it onto your cardboard with a pencil and then follow the design with your paint applicator. I usually just start doodling with the paint directly on the cardboard.

## Supplies

- Sturdy cardboard or matboard
- Dimensional paint
- Brayer
- Textile paint
- Fabric

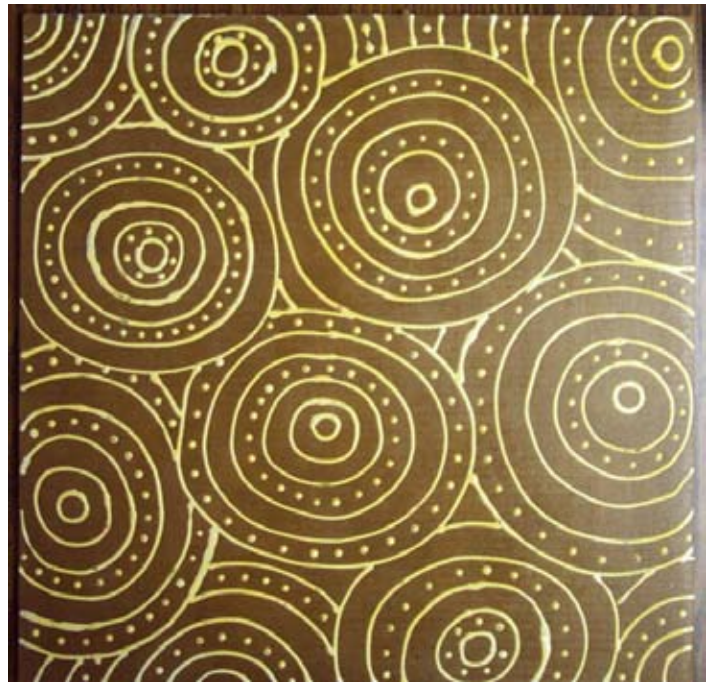
You can do a design that repeats over and over or do a whole board with different designs. It's your own personal rubbing plate, so create it your way!

Once you've planned your design just start squeezing the paint onto the cardboard surface. Sometimes there will be air bubbles in the paint which will cause breaks in the lines you are drawing and you'll also notice high and low spots as you squeeze the paint onto the board. You can go back over these with the paint once your design is drawn if you want to try and create a more level design. I like to leave the high and low spots alone as I feel this "imperfect" look is more unique.



You can choose to do a very detailed pattern or a simple pattern. One of the nice things about creating your rubbing plate, is if you have a simple design and don't know what else you want to add to it, you can let it set and dry and come back later to add more detail.

The next photo shows some swirls that I've painted, but I didn't know what I wanted to do next so I stopped. I can add more at a later date.



After your cardboard is completely covered with paint, let it dry completely. It will need from 48 to 72 or more hours to dry really well. I usually let my rubbing plates dry around a week before I use them, because I want to be really sure there is no soft paint that will flatten if I use it before the paint is totally cured. Below are samples of some of the rubbing plates I've created. Notice in the second photo, the plate on the left-hand side has what looks to be some strange spots? Well that's what happens when you forget you have wet paint and you go and try to pick up your plate. Never fear, you can easily fix this blunder, just add more paint.

Once your rubbing plate is cured, you can use it. Simply lay your piece of fabric on top of the plate. Roll your brayer in some paint. You want a nice thin coat of paint on your brayer. Then start rolling the brayer over the fabric. Here I am applying a metallic textile paint to a sun printed fabric.



You will want to hold the edge of your fabric so that it doesn't shift on top of the plate as you are rolling. If your rubbing plate is smaller than your fabric, roll one section, move your plate and then roll the next section until your fabric is covered. You can apply the rubbing plate design to your entire piece of fabric or just to specific areas. Let your paint dry. If you are applying textile paints to fabric, you will need to heat set according to the manufacturer's directions.



Let your imagination go wild and use rubbing plates to create your own unique fabrics!