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🎨 In this tutorial I will walk you through the steps I take to make a drypoint print at home with somewhat simple supplies.

🌱 I will also suggest some alternative materials to encourage experimentation without any special supplies; because the ideas in this lesson can be transferred easily to whatever you may have on hand.

💰 Low budget? No problem- make it your asset, have fun with limitations, they will force you to be more creative.

🚩 Disclaimer - I have no formal education in art. I mostly learn via osmosis, through friends and family, books and the good old internet. So if you are looking for a professional education this tutorial won't be the best fit for you.

But... if you just like making cool 🤖 then you have come to the right place.

Steps:

- 1) Choose a drawing you want to turn into an etching. It may be good to begin with a basic draw first.
- 2) Measure and cut a piece of plastic stencil sheet in a 5 inch by 6 inch rectangle.
- 3) Tape your plastic sheet over your drawing so it doesn't shift around while you "scratch" your image into it.
- 4) Using your scraper/etching tool, begin tracing your image from your drawing onto the plastic. Use cross hatching, directional lines and various pressures to describe the form of your drawing.

👉 It will be difficult to see what you have scratched into your plastic- but if you warm near a window or bright light source you can shift your view so that you can see the lines contrasting with the shiny plastic better.

- 5) Once your plastic etching plate is finished then measure and cut your watercolor paper into 5 by 6 inch rectangles. Cut as many pieces as you think you would like to print and a few extra in case some prints don't look as nice. 👉 Additionally, cut out two extra pieces of watercolor paper of the same size that will be your back and your front to run through the spaghetti press (don't worry this will make more sense later on in the tutorial).

👉 I have found that the plastic etching plate only pulls between 6 to 10 decent prints. After that the quality gets lower. It's as though the grooves we cut in with the etching tool wear out or get filled too much with ink? I have noticed even with cleaning the plate loses definition. But that's part of what makes this process special. You can only make a small run of prints. ✨ Please note that you can clean your etching plate off with a bit of odourless mineral spirits (the kind used for oil painting) and a rag.

- 6) Now taking your spare sheet of glass, put down some ink, about the size of a \$.25 piece, and a few drops of oil. You probably want three times as much ink as you do oil. Using your old credit card, combine the ink and the oil by scraping them back-and-forth together until they are evenly mixed and have a texture somewhat like honey.
- 7) Set up your spaghetti press and secure it to a table. lay down a bunch of newspapers on a surface that you will be working on. Keep some other newspapers on hand as you will need to change your surface pretty often to keep your work clean.
- 8) Put your etching plate on the news. Using your credit card covered in your ink and oil that you've mixed on your glass, begin spreading it over the etching plate. Push your credit card back-and-forth over the plate to work the ink into all the little grooves. This will be messy, you could wear gloves, but I just find them to be a pain so I don't. I wash my hands with warm water and soap in between each step so I don't get ink everywhere I don't want it.

👉 Make sure you have no interruptions for the next while from this point on. Because it is time sensitive, you don't need to panic, but you will need to move with a sense of urgency. The more time that your ink lays on your printing plate the more chance it has to dry as well as your paper as you will see in the next steps.

- 9) With your cheesecloth or rag begin wiping off the excess ink from your etching plate. Don't apply too much pressure as you might pull the ink out of the scratches. And hold down the edges of your plastic as it bends pretty easily and these bends will show up in the final print if you make creases in the plastic. This will be an experimental process, go slow, wiping off the access ink. Don't worry about making the plate completely clean. Because a little bit of ink residue adds a cool effect to the final print. When you're finished go wash your hands. They're going to be covered at this point.
- 10) With your clean hands, take one of your watercolor sheets that you've cut and run it under warm water, turning it over for a few minutes. Completely saturate the paper. Now take your paper and gently lay it down on a tea towel, fold the tea towel over your paper, ever so lightly tap on the top of the towel a little. This will take away some of the excess water.

11) Now it's time to make a sandwich. Or a printing 🍞 take those two extra pieces of watercolor paper you cut earlier. These will be the "bread" for your print sandwich. Lay down one of these pieces of bread, on top of that lay down your wet piece of watercolor paper. Now face down, lay your etching plate onto the wet paper, on top of that place your final piece of bread. Now you have a print sandwich. Make sure it is lined up nice and straight.

👉 We are about to run this print sandwich through the spaghetti press. The spaghetti press comes with a dial that adjusts the width of the press. I have mine turned all the way up to the highest, most narrow setting. But you can experiment with this. I've found narrow works best.

12) Holding your sandwich firmly, place it in the mouth of your spaghetti press and begin to turn it through your press. Turn the wheels smoothly and be ready with your other hand to receive the print at the bottom of the press. Once your print is through, place it down on your clean work surface. Begin carefully removing each layer of the sandwich. When you have reached your wet piece of paper you have arrived! Now you can see the fruit of all your labor. Your print will be on your wet piece of paper.

13) At this point, you may look and find that you want to make changes you might want to go in and scratch more lines into your printing plate. Or you may find that you just don't like the design at all and you want to make a new printing plate. Every time I do this process, it is new. So there is no right and wrong. If you have success the first time that's awesome, but don't expect it. If it changes, this is perfect in my experience.

Once you have achieved the results you desire, make as many prints as you can squeeze out of that plate!

Alternative Materials:

Like I was saying at the beginning if you can't afford or don't have these supplies on hand. Don't worry about it. Here are some things you can experiment within the meantime. If you have a rolling pin or a big wine bottle and no spaghetti press, no problem. Just use either one of these in place of it. You can lay your print sandwich in between some fabric and roll your rolling pin or bottle with an even amount of pressure over top again and again. If you don't have the kind of ink that I have been using here, I don't think that's going to cause any serious problems. You could experiment with whatever pigments you have on hand. Just be mindful of their drawing times. If you don't have plastic essential sheets, I have seen people cut open beer cans, and scratch the images onto those. Using the body of the beer can as a clean slate to scratch an image into. Or you could use a plastic container that has a large flat surface. These are some alternatives. There are probably many more to be discovered.

Supply List:

- Cheese cloth or rags
- Watercolor paper

- Stencil paper
- Etching ink
- Odourless mineral spirits
- Walnut oil
- Dish rag (for drying wet watercolor paper)
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Masking tape
- Permanent marker (for marking stencil sheet to cut to size)
- Spaghetti press
- Old piece of glass or plastic lid (for mixing the ink and oil on)
- Old plastic credit card/ member card/ ID (for mixing the ink and oil together and spreading)
- Paper towel

✨ And...if you want to go shopping right now ✨ I am in a partnership with Amazon as an associate. I get a commission every time you purchase a product through my affiliate link below. Which is cool as it helps me make more art and feed my kids 💕

Amazon shopping List:

- Watercolor paper <https://amzn.to/3Vvs1Cu>
-
- Stencil paper <https://amzn.to/3ViObqe>
-
- Etching ink <https://amzn.to/4aZzePM>
-
- Walnut oil <https://amzn.to/3XxNbBF>
-
- Spaghetti press <https://amzn.to/3Rf0HpO>
-
- Etching/scratch tool <https://amzn.to/3XeJ3pZ>
-
- Odorless mineral spirits <https://amzn.to/3KUPI1f>

