

Printmaking Tips and Hints

1. “Inking chips” (cardboard) can be used to remove ink from a can, to spread ink over a plate for printing, and can be used to mix small amounts of ink or to spread ink out to be rolled with a brayer. Never take a chip from the “chip box” if your hands are dirty or inky, use clean hands only (the ink will spread to another chip and ruin someone else’s ink.)
2. If you have trouble removing the lid from an ink can you can bet the next person will have trouble also. Help yourself and your classmates by cleaning the lid and can edge and applying a little Vaseline to the edge of the can (this helps seal the can, as well as making it easier to open next time.)
3. Do not dig ink out of a can, it makes a greater surface area on the ink and makes the ink dry out faster. *Skim ink from the top* and spray the ink with a little light oil (also called Overnight, or Anti-Skin, Spray) before closing the can.
4. The best way to protect your hands, and to make cleaning them easier and more complete, is to rub some water-soluble hand lotion into your cuticles, fingernails, and hands before getting oil-based ink on them. Then, when you clean your hands, all the ink will just slide off leaving little or no residue.
5. Keep all your “edged” Printmaking tools sharp. A dull tool is more dangerous, is harder to work with and requires more physical effort, and will make a more ragged, uncontrolled, line than a sharp tool. Once a tool is sharp it can be kept that way by frequent honing and by not being abused (protect the sharpened end of the tool, don’t let it scrape against another tool or anything hard.)
6. Protect your clothes while in the studio; wear a smock, an apron, or an old oversize shirt over your clothes. You will, no matter what you do to avoid it, get ink on anything you wear, and oil-based ink does not easily wash out of any material. Unless you come to class naked you have been warned about wearing something to cover your clothes. I will not listen to any complaints about the damage done to your clothes.
7. Do not wear jewelry in this studio, including rings, bracelets, and watches, because they WILL get ink imbedded in them and the chemicals will damage them we use.
8. The viscous, pigmented, printing medium we use is called “Ink,” rather than “Paint.” When we, as Printmakers, use the term paint (within the context of Printmaking) we are using it as a verb and then only to describe hand-coloring Monotypes or Monoprints.
9. Clean Brayers and Rollers with Mineral Spirits ONLY, do not use alcohol on the rollers.
10. The press-blankets (also called “felts”) we use are, from the press bed up to the top roller,) the Starch Catcher (this, the thinnest blanket, absorbs most of the water from wet printing paper and it also absorbs some of the sizing, called starch, from the paper.) ② The Cushion, or “forming,” blanket (which is the thickest, softest blanket) used to push the paper down into the ink on the plate. Cushions come in varying thickness and softness and will be used according to how deep into the plate the paper has to be pushed.) ③ The Pusher, a tough, hard, usually woven felt blanket that protects the other blankets and the top press roller. Exceptions: Not all Intaglio printing is done using all three blankets,

an example is a shallow line etch that does not have deep areas may only require a starch catcher and the pusher. Relief printing is, due to the fact that you DO NOT want to emboss the block you only want to pull ink from the top surface of the block, usually printed (when printed on the press) with a cardboard and pusher combination or a Naugahyde blanket only. Lithography uses a Tympan (made of Lexan) instead of blankets.

11. No ink is allowed to touch any of the blankets we use. If you get ink on them it quickly makes them unusable and you will have to replace them (they are very expensive and can only be mail-ordered, they are not available locally.) The easiest way to **destroy** blankets (if you have more money than you know what to do with) is to: ①Get ink on them (if you would rather not have to pay for blankets do not touch the blankets with inky hands.) ②Don't clean the Lexan bed cover after you print (if instead you would rather not pay for a blanket, **DO** clean the bed cover, but use only Alcohol. Mineral Spirits will also destroy the blankets.) ③Don't bevel your plates, you will surely cut the paper you are printing on, it will cut the blankets, and you could scar the top roller causing you to have to replace not only the blankets, but the top roller as well.
12. Paper Towels are supplied by the college (tri-fold, non-absorbent, scratchy) but every student is asked to bring in 2 rolls of blue shop towels and 1 roll of white paper towels (this is an initial request, more will be needed by the middle of the semester, and you must make sure the instructor knows you have complied with this request.) No matter what towels you use...DO NOT WASTE THEM. Each towel may be used for more than one cleaning process, and the blue shop towels are usable until they are no longer blue.
13. Newsprint paper is given to us by the Austin American Statesman. They are very kind and generous to do this, please do not waste this resource. Newsprint that has been used to cover printing paper on the press, and that has not picked up any ink, can be re-used to wipe plates on for printing. It can also be used to protect the sheetrock drying system we have, and paper that has ink on it can be used to clean up an inking slab, printing plate, and tools. See if you can come up with any other uses for used newsprint. Prizes will be given for the most creative, and ecologically sensitive, uses.
14. Studio cleaning and organization habits are critical to maintaining a workable Printmaking Lab. If we are neat and organized, conscientious, and observant everyone will be able to fully utilize the studio to the best advantage. If, on the other hand, someone is messy, destructive, wasteful, and/or uncaring...we will hunt you down like a dog.
15. Because we all make mistakes (and sometimes "zone out" for no apparent reason) it is possible that the equipment and tools in this studio will not be clean or in their proper place. I am not your Mama, it is not my responsibility to make sure you are organized and neat, so it is a good idea to pre-clean whatever you are going to use, make notes of where things you need (that the school supplies) are kept. Any time you move something in order to use it, put it back in the same place when you are finished. If the person before you has moved that item from its proper place, find out where they got it and put it in its proper place when you are finished.