

WORKSHOP: "LINO BLOCK CARVING"



Summary: Participants carved a lino block and a rubber block using a set of carving tools and working away from their hands for safety. The block can then be used to print on paper and/or fabric using printing ink for paper and acrylic paint. Participants were encouraged to experiment. Participants also had the option to add a wood backing with handle to their carved block.

Materials and Equipment:

lino block	pencil, eraser, sharpener
flexible rubber block	sketch paper
printing ink	carbon paper
card stock	masking tape
brayer	palette knife
clear plastic	scissors
set of carving tools	sample drawing
instructions/ideas sheet	plastic to cover your work surface
bench hook or wood & screws to make one	

Class Plan:

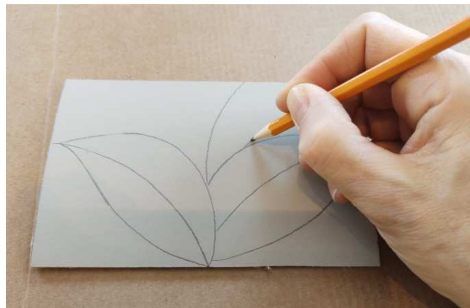
1. Types of carving surfaces:
 - a. Lino block (top on left, back on right) is a firmer surface and takes more hand strength and care to achieve fine lines and avoid slipping. It lets you achieve more detail and lasts well after much use.



- b. Softer rubber carving surfaces are available for easier carving. These will last longer with wood backing to prevent them breaking over time.



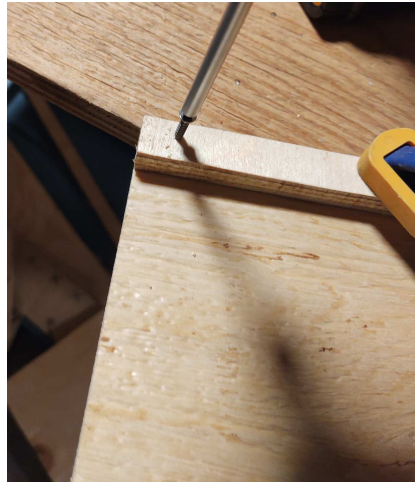
- c. We have provided several lino surfaces to experiment with and a softer rubber block.
2. Plan your design or work spontaneously.
 - a. Sketch a design either directly onto your lino block or onto a paper the same size.



- b. Transfer your design onto your lino block using carbon paper, a pencil and masking tape.
 - c. If you prefer not to draw, you can carve a random pattern of lines into your lino block.
3. Decide which areas of your design you are removing with your carving tools.
 - a. It is the area that is left behind that will print. So if you are printing with black ink all the areas not removed from the lino surface will print black.
 - b. You can mark the areas to remove with an X if you like, to help you remember your plan. The lino can also be stained for the areas to remove.
 4. Using a bench hook makes carving a lot easier and safer. It is piece of wood about 1" wider and 1.1/2" longer than your lino or rubber block. You can make a larger one to use with a variety of surfaces.



5. To make a bench hook we used a three ply (layers of wood) piece of plywood and two narrow off cuts of the same wood, cut to the same width as your plywood base.
- a. Attach one of the narrow lengths of plywood at the top edge of your wood base, with two screws that are long enough to go join the two pieces but not come out the other side.



- b. Attach the other narrow length of plywood at the bottom edge of your wood base, but on the other side.

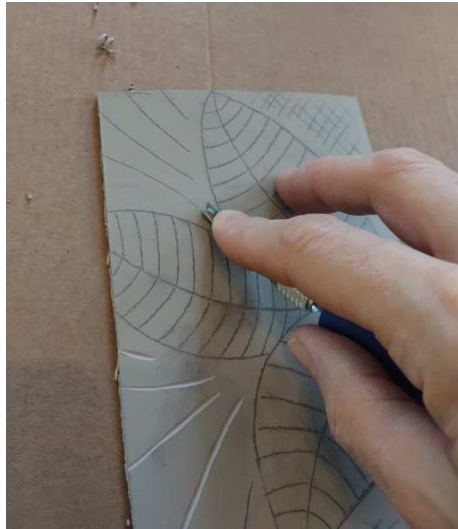


6. Safety when using your carving tools:
- a. Cover your work surface with cardboard before starting to protect it from the carving tools.



- b. Always point the sharp end of your carving tool away from your hands.
- c. If you are right handed rest your left hand back a bit and under your right hand when carving. This hand holds the lino in place so it doesn't move while you are cutting.

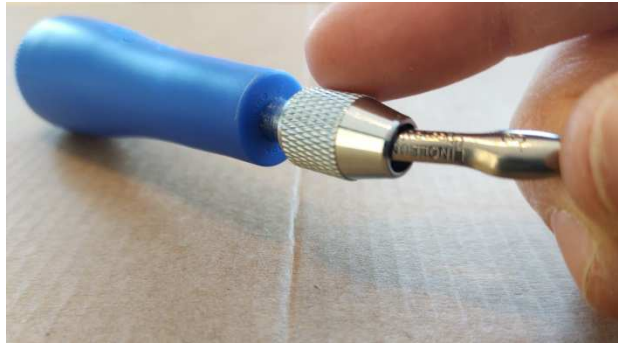
- d. Do not place your hand in the line of the sharp end of your carving tool to avoid hitting your hand if you slip.
- e. The handle of the tool goes in the palm of your right hand, and your index finger can rest on the top of the tool behind the blade.



- f. These positions are reversed for left handers.
 - g. Periodically check in with yourself to make sure you haven't shifted your hand position.
 - h. Do not share these tools with others who do not know how to use them safely. Keep out of reach of children.
7. Optional: clean your lino block before printing with it to avoid the pencil smudges from mixing with your printing ink.



8. For carving tools with removable ends, store tips not in use in the end of the handle. One end of each tip is for cutting and other end fits into the tip of the handle screwed in place. Ensure the screw is tightened all the way before starting to carve.



9. Use your carving tools to cut your design into your lino block:

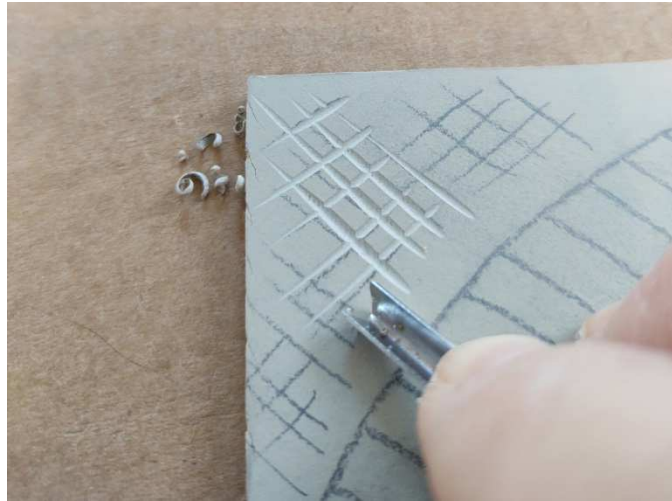


- a. The U-shaped gouge is great for carving even channels into the lino. You can get different thicknesses of lines depending on how deep you cut. This tool is usually best for clearing large areas because it won't create peaks and troughs.



- b. The V-shaped cutter can be used for making fine lines in the lino for very accurate detailed edges.
 - c. The square gouge tip is used for making square channels in your lino.
 - d. The flat tip is used for scraping areas flat for large areas cleared.
10. Carving techniques:
 - a. A line can vary in width along its length if you vary the depth you cut as you go.

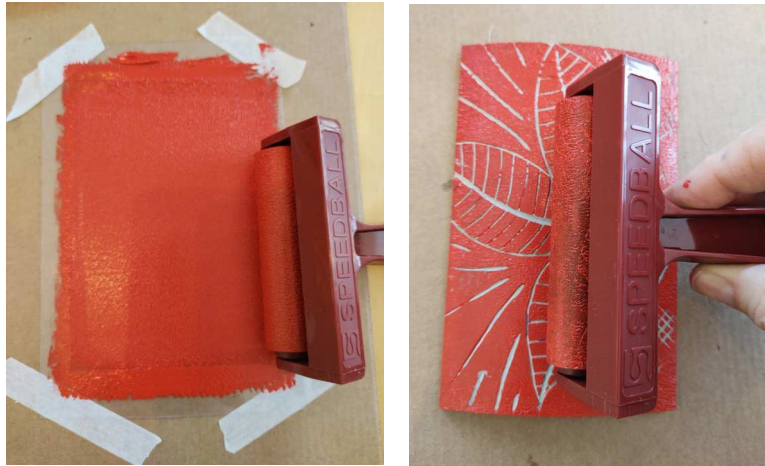
- b. To remove a large area where you don't want anything to print, use the widest U-cutting tool you have and cut overlapping rows. Go back over it again to remove the peaks left behind.
- c. To cut a circle, put your U-cutting tool into the lino and then rotate the lino in a circle instead of moving your hand. This makes a nice small circle.
- d. To create shading make a patch of cross-hatched marks. Use a V-shaped tool (smaller for finer shading) and make a series of small line cuts that aren't very deep. Repeat this overlapping another series of small line cuts crossing over the first set.



- e. To make a line ending in a flat edge, lift your tool at the end to snap off the edge of your cut piece.
 - f. To create a nice smooth wiggly line start your cutting line with a U or V-shaped cutter and wiggle the lino as you cut. You can do a combination of moving the lino with your left hand and wiggling your right hand holding the cutting tool. Remember to always keep your free hand away from the direction the blade is heading in case you slip.
 - g. To create tiny ovals, use a small V-cutter and carve in and immediately out of your lino.
 - h. For pointy lines use a V-cutter ending on another previously cut line. This looks like pointy teeth for example.
 - i. Little cuts with a V-cutter ending in the same place can look like stars.
11. Inking your block:
- a. Tape your stiff but flexible plastic sheet to a piece of cardboard at each corner.



- b. Scoop a small amount of ink onto your plastic with a spoon or your palette knife.
- c. Roll your ink smooth using a brayer (rubber roller), then roll ink onto your carved lino surface. Avoid excess ink because it will fill the carved spaces of your design and lose detail in your print.



- d. Alternatively, you can also press your lino block onto your plastic surface to pick up ink.
- e. Press your paper surface onto your inked lino block. If you have a second dry brayer available roller it over the back of your paper on your lino block to maximize ink transfer. This can also be done by finger.



- f. Peel off your paper print and set aside to dry. We achieved our favourite results rolling the ink directly onto the lino block, touching up with the foam brush and then dry rolling to press the paper firmly onto the inked lino block.



12. Clean your lino block after using, preventing paint and inks from drying in the design. An old soft bristle toothbrush works well for gentle cleaning. A sponge also works for the flat surfaces of the design.
13. Happy creating, and please share pictures of your creations if you feel comfortable.

Useful Information/Adaptions/Variations:

- Using acrylic paint instead of printing ink will give a faded textured appearance print because the paint doesn't spread evenly and become stiff like the ink. It works but gives a different effect.



- Attach your carved lino or rubber pad to a wood block with a handle to help with printing and to make it last longer.



- Carve several blocks and layer your prints on the same image using different colours if available.
- Cutting tips are numbered for size. The smaller the number the smaller the cutting tip.

Trouble Shooting:

- If the lino block does not stay attached to your wood block with handle using wood glue or if you are short of time, try using hot glue to attach your lino to your wood block. You could also try a high tack wood glue.
- Pressing a regular ink pad onto the lino block didn't work that well for us.

