# DIY Block Printed Patches

## by Thing in the Dirt

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### SUPPLIES

- Block printing ink: **must be oil-based to be waterproof once dry!** (I mostly use Speedball's fabric ink)
- Rubber or Linoleum carving block: I prefer the pink rubber blocks
- Carving tool(s): Speedball has an affordable multi tool that comes with 5 different gouge sizes; this is still what I use most often. Flexcut makes higher quality tools at a steeper price.
- Fabric: this varies! It's good to experiment, as some types of fabric will be harder to transfer your design onto than others. In general I try to avoid synthetic materials.
- A smooth flat surface on which to roll out your ink (ink plate)
- Brayer, for rolling out ink. Always store these with the roller facing up!
- Palette knife/spatula
- Baren, for pressing your stamp: I have a glass one, but you can find cheap ones or use your hands (my preferred method for smaller stamps)
- Paper and stamp pad for test prints
- Rags or paper towels
- Vegetable oil for cleanup















### STEP 1: CARVING

1. Draw your design with pencil on paper. I like to use drawing paper with a slight tooth, as it transfers to the rubber more easily. Remember that you are leaving behind the parts that ink will appear on. Try not to give yourself lines too thin to carve around! Also, large areas of black will be more difficult to print evenly.
2. Cut out the design and tape it face down onto your rubber stamp. Rub it with the back of a spoon to transfer the design.
3. Carve your design! I tend to start with the outside edge, using a larger V-shaped gouge before moving onto the details with a smaller gouge. I like to test my blocks with a stamp pad before printing.

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## STEP 2: PRINTING

1. Make sure your fabric is clean, dry, and free of lint and wrinkles. It doesn't need to be perfect.
2. Add a glob of ink to the top of your ink plate and mix it with a spatula or palette knife. Try to spread it evenly in a horizontal line across the plate.
3. Use your brayer to roll out the ink. (It's difficult to describe this process; I recommend looking at a video online.) Make sure you have enough ink to collect on the brayer but not so much that it feels wet; it should feel sticky and resemble the surface of a stamp pad.
4. Roll the ink onto your stamp, making sure it stays in place on your work surface.

Tip: For larger designs with a lot of black it helps to add a few layers of ink, letting it dry for a minute or two in between.

5. Do a test print on paper. This also helps to "prime" the block.
6. Carefully place the stamp face down onto your fabric. Press hard on the stamp using your baren or hands.
7. Let your print dry! For oil based ink this can take anywhere from overnight to a week depending on humidity levels. In Santa Fe it tends to dry pretty fast.

## STEP 3: CLEANUP

1. **Important: DO NOT wash oil-based ink down the drain,** as it can clog the pipes. Use vegetable oil and a rag or paper towel to gently pat down the stamp and wipe off as much ink as possible. Use caution when disposing of oily rags.
2. Do the same for your tools, first using your palette knife or spatula to scrape the ink off the ink plate.
3. Wash with mild dish soap and water. (Don't use hot water on your stamps, as this can damage the carving.)
4. Pat dry and lay flat to dry further.

**Don't store rubber blocks touching;** they can stick together and damage each other! You can still stack them with paper in between.

## STEP 4: SEWING

1. Cut out the design, making sure to leave enough space to sew around it.
2. Option 1: sew onto clothing as is. Leaving the edges to fray is perfectly acceptable if you sew the patch securely and add something like a zigzag stitch, but if you want them to be more neat, fold them over as you sew. This can be done by hand or on a sewing machine.

Tip: You can buy fusible web to make your patches iron-on. I still recommend sewing after doing this, but it makes the process much easier. Read the product description carefully, as there are many different kinds.

3. Option 2: add a backing to your patch. I use thick cotton flannel or felt. I also use fusible web to stick the patch onto the backing so it stays flat against it, but this isn't the most eco-friendly option so you absolutely don't have to. Sew as many borders as you want around the design and then secure the edge however you like.
4. Pin or iron the patch in place on your clothing and then sew it on. Just like the backing, I like to do a straight stitch around the inside of the patch and then a zigzag or blanket stitch around the edge.