



## LESSON 18 LEVEL B PRINTMAKING

## STYRO-PRINTS

**WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:** learning the basic techniques of relief printmaking

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** sheets of styrofoam about 13x15.5 cm. (5"x 6") (clean flat sided styrofoam meat trays with the sides cut off) or commercial styrofoam such as Scratch-Foam Board (TM); ballpoint pen or dull pencil; black or colored water-based printing ink; one or two rubber brayers for ink, available at crafts or art supply stores; a small sheet of formica or a smooth plastic mat for an ink pad; a variety of kinds and colors of papers; damp sponge or towel; newspapers to cover work surface.

**"TIPS":** Set up your work table as indicated in the diagram. You will draw on your styrofoam "plate" some where else and then move to the printing place. If you have never printed before, you may want a grownup to help you the first time. It will be fun for both of you!  
Important: read through all the directions before you begin to print.



Relief Print

Teacher Example

**Getting Started:** Relief printing began thousands of years ago in China. Much later, in Europe, wood blocks were smoothed and then cut into with sharp tools. They were then inked to make prints that were handed out like posters and handbills or flyers. In the 1500s, John Gutenberg put rows of little wooden block letters into a printing press, and the first modern

books were made. In relief printing, "the ups print and the downs don't." That means that the surface that is inked will print and the part of the block



that is cut away or pushed down, will not. Can you tell which is the inked part in the print that illustrates the lesson?

1. Draw your picture or design very lightly with a pencil or ballpoint pen on the styrofoam. Then go over your lines, pressing harder to make the lines go deep below the surface. These lines will not print, but the rest of the plate will receive and transfer ink to the print paper.

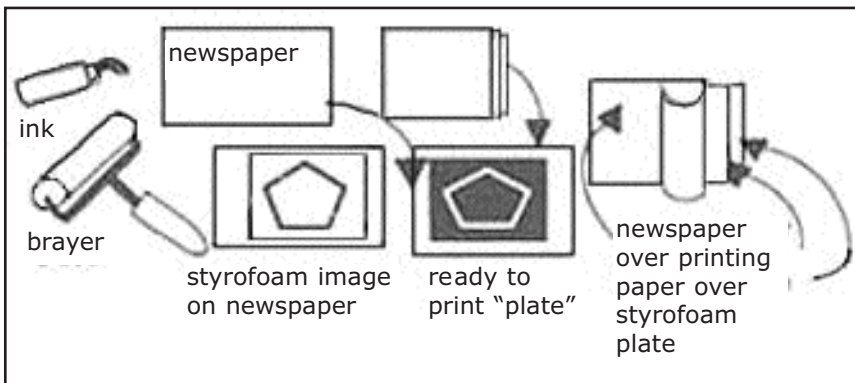
2. Add some textures and patterns to the styro plate: dots or dashes, or press some small areas down where they won't be inked.

3. Think! If you want to use letters or numbers, remember that you must print them backward, so they will print the correct way. (Clue: Write a word on scratch paper. Place the paper, writing side facing the window, on a window glass.



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paper. Place the paper, writing side facing the window, on a window glass. See how the letters look from the back.)



Arrangement for Printing Work Area

4. Squeeze out a 5 cm (2") strip of ink onto the plastic ink pad. Roll through it, back and forth, with the rubber brayer. Stop when it makes a "smacking" sound and the ink looks like snakeskin. The brayer should be coated with ink.

5. Put your styro plate, design side up, on a piece of newspaper and roll the brayer across it. Pick up more ink on the brayer and roll in a different direction. Continue until all the surface of the styrofoam is smoothly covered with shiny ink. The cut lines should have no ink in them. If they do, use a pencil tip or a toothpick to clear them.

6. Put the brayer back on the ink pad and wipe your fingers clean. Carefully

place your plate, ink side up, on a clean piece of newspaper.

7. Pick up a piece of printing paper (a little larger than your plate) and put it down very carefully on the plate.

8. Rub gently but firmly with your fingers (or use another, clean brayer) to be sure the ink will be transferred from the plate to the paper.

9. Slowly peel off your styro print. Examine it. Did you use enough ink? Too much? Did your drawing print evenly? Put this first print, called a "proof," away to dry.

10. Make another print, and another. Explore the effects of different papers. Try to make each print better than the last.

**CLEAN UP:** Wash the brayer and ink pad under running water in the sink. Rinse off your "plate" too, if you plan to use it again. Fold your "rejects" and inky newspaper so the ink is on the inside. Then throw them in the trash.

**TALK ABOUT IT:** When a machine prints a design, each print is the same. With handprinting, each print is different. Which of yours do you think turned out the best? What could you use your prints for?

**MORE IDEAS:**

1. Use your prints as greeting cards. Or print designs on plain paper paper bags to make gift wrap.
2. Explore the effects of different papers.
3. Try to make each print better than the last.

**CONNECTIONS:** Relief printing, the kind you have been doing, began more than two thousand years ago. Ask your librarian or use the Internet for help in finding out more about the history of printing. Do you think technology will someday make printing, and even books, unnecessary?