

PAINTSTIK INSTRUCTIONS

by Laura Murray

WHAT ARE PAINTSTIKS?

Made from pigment, oil and wax, Shiva Paintstiks resemble jumbo sized crayons. There are two types of Paintstiks; professional colors in a matte type finish and iridescent colors which have a metallic sheen. In addition, there are blenders -- a Paintstik without pigment -- which can be mixed to lighten colors. The advantages include:

1. Paintstik colors don't change the hand of the fabric
2. Iridescent colors produce stunning effects on dark fabrics. Professional colors work well on light to medium value fabrics.
3. There is very little waste because a film forms over the paint when not in use. Non-toxic.
4. Color is very durable once it has been heat set. Care is machine wash and dry.
5. Paintstiks will adhere to almost any type of fabric, including cotton, silk, synthetics, suede, leather, etc. In addition, they can be used on any porous surface, such as walls, leather, paper -- making them an extremely versatile product for creative projects.

PREPARATION

Prewash commercial fabrics to remove any sizing using a plain detergent with no bleach or softener additive. The reason for this is that sizing, bleach residue and softeners can interfere with paint adhesion. Press out any wrinkles.

It's a good idea to cover your work surface with heavy plastic drop cloth, as with any paint project.

Before you begin to paint, remove the protective skin from the end of the paintstik. To remove the skin, place the end of the Paintstik into about four layers of folded paper toweling, and twist into it. At first you'll feel friction, but as you rub, the skin will transfer to the toweling and feel slippery. Some people like using a potato peeler to remove the skin, followed by using the toweling to smooth all skin from the end of the paintstik.

TECHNIQUES

Adding texture with rubbings -- my favorite, since large areas of fabric can be covered with texture and color in just a few minutes. To make the rubbing, you need a textured surface that is reasonably flat with raised elements that are firm enough and thick enough for the texture to be felt through the fabric, i.e. rubber mats, stamps, rubbing plates, blocks wrapped with string or cord, etc.

Place the fabric over the top of the textured surface. Gently apply the paintstik color directly to the fabric using even strokes and rubbing in one direction AWAY from the hand holding the fabric securely. Move the textured surface to a new location under your fabric and make additional rubbings.

New textures and colors can be layered without waiting for the paint to dry. Click here for my [Five Top Ten Tips for Successful Rubbings](#).

Stenciling -- Paintstiks are excellent for stenciling on fabric, and produce a lovely airbrushed effect. Because the paint is nearly solid (vs. liquid like other fabric paint), there is no chance of paint seeping under stencil edges.

When working with stencils, add the paintstik color to your fabric with a stencil brush rather than using the paintstik directly. However, for larger images, it's ok to get color started by rubbing directly into the open spaces on the stencil, but it is necessary to always finish with the stencil brush for smooth, blended effects. You can just rub the brush directly into the paintstik for loading color. After loading the paint onto the stencil brush, use a gentle, circular motion to apply the color.

Experiment with blending colors and shading effects. Generally, if shading is desired, apply the lightest color first, and continue adding darker colors until you are satisfied with the effect.

Stencils may be purchased from a variety of sources, or consider making your own from freezer paper, card stock or stencil plastic.

Apply Color directly -- Simply apply the color directly to your fabric either with a stencil brush, or directly with the Paintstik. Use a stencil brush to smooth and blend the colors. Masking tape can be used to create boundaries, creating designs such as plaids, lattices, triangles, etc.

This is a great technique for use in shading flowers, leaves, etc -- simply build up layers of color until the desired effect is achieved.

Blending -- Colors can be mixed on the palette, and lighter values can be achieved by use of a "blender" Paintstik. First, rub a small amount of the blender onto a palette surface, put the selected color on the stencil brush, and rub into the blender paint. A lighter value will result. You can mix any of the colors together to achieve new colors by using this method, i.e. mixing yellow and blue will result in green. It's ok to mix matte colors with iridescents.

CLEAN UP

Clean up is easy, since soap and water work fine and are readily available for cleaning hands and tools. Traditional solvents, such as turpentine, are effective, but have a strong odor. Other options include odorless solvents (found in art supply stores); citrus based household solvents or any cleaning product labeled with the word "degreaser".

HEAT SETTING

Heat setting is necessary to complete the chemical reaction that occurs when the paintstik dries.

Frequently asked questions

How to avoid fabric slipping?

To prevent fabrics from slipping across the surface of the plate, spray the plate with a temporary spray adhesive such as Sully KK2000 or 404. This holds everything in place, making it easier to obtain a crisp image for your rubbing.

I've also found that using a [Grip n'Grip](#) greatly helps with slipping. This is a mat with a slightly tacky surface that minimizes slips. Place your fabric on the mat and it stays where you put it. Great for stenciling -- no need to tape your fabric to your work surface. Also keeps rubbing plates where you put them. In lieu of a mat, you might try using masking tape.

How to avoid little "globs" of paint on the design?

Try a lighter touch when rubbing, and make sure to wipe off the tip of the paintstik to eliminate any loose paint particles. Little chunks of paint can be picked up with the sticky side of tape (masking, duct, scotch, etc), or by running a lint roller over the surface.

How to add layers of color?

It's ok to layer colors and designs one on top of the another -- no drying required between applications.

When using a stamp with paintstiks, does the paint go on the stamp first?

No, use the stamp as a rubbing plate. Place the fabric on top of the stamp, and gently rub the surface with the paintstik. Rubbing paint directly onto a stamp adds an unnecessary step, and most of the paint remains on the stamp instead of the fabric.

Why can't I just rub the paintstik directly onto the stencil, instead of bothering with a brush?

The paintstik tip is too blunt to reach into the fine detail of a stencil. Very clean, crisp lines can be obtained by first putting the paint onto the stencil brush.

How do I avoid smeared designs?

Using too much pressure on the Paintstik, and rubbing back and forth without lifting it up are the major culprits in smeared designs. Experiment with pressure until you find the most effective level. Move the paintstik in one direction, lift up, and continue. Be sure to frequently wipe the paintstik on a paper towel to remove any loosened skin.

Follow these steps to permanently heat set the color:

1. Allow the painted fabric to "cure" for 3 or 4 days.
2. Choose one of the following:
 - Dryer -- Place the fabric in a hot dryer for 30 minutes. This method is quick and easy, and the one I use most of the time.
OR
 - Iron- No steam, hottest setting for the fabric. Place a paper towel, or an old piece of fabric or muslin on your ironing surface, then place the painted fabric face down on the muslin and press thoroughly from the back side for 10-15 seconds to set the color.

CARING FOR YOUR FABRIC

After heat setting, wash your fabric by hand or machine in cold water to remove residue from the chemical process that occurs as paint dries. Line dry or tumble dry.

Do NOT dry clean fabrics embellished with paintstiks because the dry cleaning solvents will break down the paints.
