

Curwen Print Study Centre

How to make a linocut print

Materials required

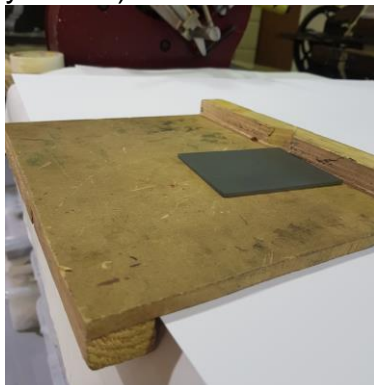
Lino: A piece to cut your image and a smaller piece to try out the cutting tools



Lino cutting tools: Some tools with V-shaped blades and U-shaped blades of various sizes. These tools have separate cutting blades that can be changed and slotted into the handles when required.



A bench hook (if you have one): This hooks over the side of your table and gives you something to push against when cutting your lino. If you do not have bench hooks simply ensure you keep the hand NOT holding the lino cutting tool **BEHIND** your other hand and not in front of the blade of your cutting tool (so you don't cut yourself).



Relief or Stay Open Inks – Caligo Safewash Inks are ideal



Roller(s)

Palate knife or spatula



Baren or wooden spoon for hand burnishing:



The back (with the handle) and front of 2 different barens



A wooden spoon will work too

Washing up liquid and water for cleaning the ink from your rollers, surface and lino

Smooth board or surface to roll your ink

Tracing paper

Drawing materials

Paper for registering your print (optional)

Paper for printing

Newsprint

1 Introduction

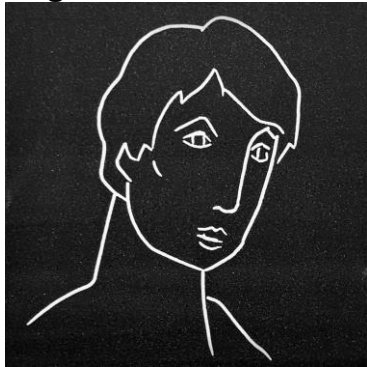
Lino prints are a relief form of printmaking, which means that prints are formed from an image cut into the surface of a material such as lino or wood. These cut areas do not hold ink and therefore do not print. The surface area left uncut (in relief) holds the ink and forms the basis of your image.

Wood was the first material used for Relief printmaking, but in 1863 Linoleum was invented as flooring and was cheaper to use than wood. Now there are many types of lino style materials you can use, including traditional hessian backed lino, modern lino tiles and soft easy carve lino.

2 Choosing your Image

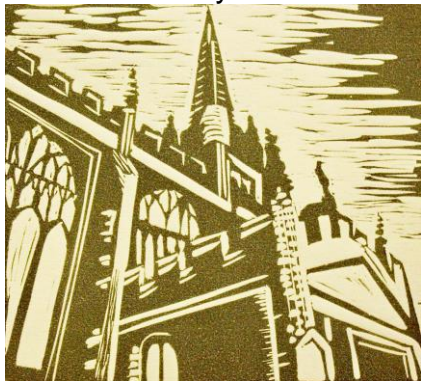
You can make your image in either:

Negative - the cut areas are the 'drawn' parts of your image, this is a white line print



A NEGATIVE cut tile, the white line forms the image

Positive – the areas left in relief that hold ink and print form your image, everything else is cut away.



A POSITIVE cut tile, uncut lino left forms the image



A combination of NEGATIVE & POSITIVE

The vase on the table is formed by a **NEGATIVE** white line, and the flowers in the vase are formed with **POSITIVE** uncut shapes left.

- Lino is a direct form of printmaking so the image you cut into the tile will be reversed when printed.
- When choosing your image remember that if it contains information that needs to be the correct orientation you will need to cut it in reverse ie lettering.



A tile with reversed cut letters



The print with correct printed lettering

- Where you place your image on the tile can make a difference and add impact, it does not have to be in the centre



Image to the side of the tile for impact

- You can trace your image, then trace it onto the tile in reverse and use this a guide to cut your tile.
- It can also be helpful to draw in a white pencil/crayon on black paper to get an idea of what the finished print may look like.
- Chop marks (what is left when you cut away areas of the lino tile) will be picked up to some degree, you can make these contribute to your image by considering the direction of your cutting and relating it to the image as a whole to make these marks part of your print.

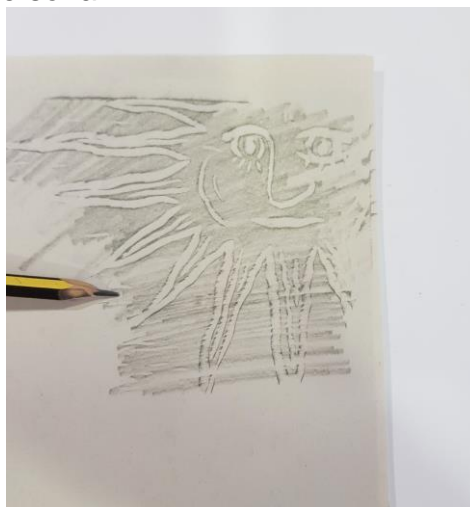


Chop marks make the water in this print



Chop marks create landscape for the skier

- As you cut your lino, you can take a rubbing to see how it is progressing using thin paper such as newsprint and graphite stick or the side of a pencil lead. Put the newsprint on top of your lino and gently rub the paper to make a rough impression of your cut image so far.



Taking a rubbing of a lino tile with a stick of graphite (left) and the side of a pencil lead (right)

Tools

- Lino is cut using special tools, different tools make different marks. A V-shaped Veining tool is usually used to cut line, and a U-shaped Gouging tool is usually used to cut away larger areas.
- They come in different sizes, the larger the size of the blade the wider the line or cut area. You can also use these to make marks and find what suits your image. Try using the tools on your small piece of lino to see what marks they make.

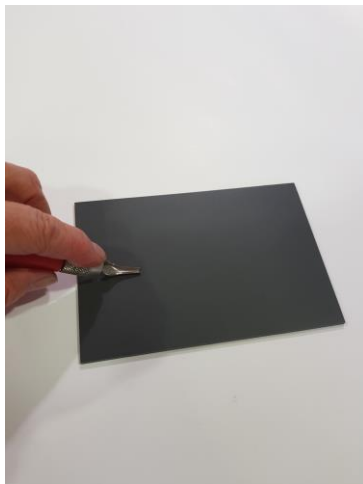


A V-shaped tool (left) & U-shaped tool (right)



How to hold your lino cutting tool

- Always cut away from you for safety, keep your head up, and if you have one, use a Bench Hook to push against, keeping your hands behind the blade.



Cutting your lino - AWAY from you

- To remove/cut away larger areas of the surface of your lino tile, cut a line around the area to be removed then cut away from this line, this cut line is called a moat. This helps prevent your cutting tool slipping into an area you want left uncut.

Registering your print

If you are doing this, do so **BEFORE** you ink your lino tile

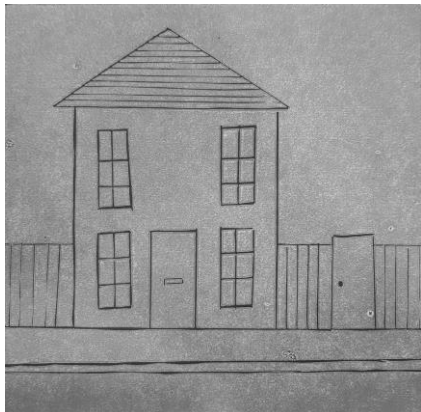
- If you want to place your print in the centre of your paper, or on the exact same place on the exact same size of paper each time you print it, you can use this easy way of doing it – this is called **Registration**.
- On a larger sheet of paper than the one you are printing onto, draw round your printing paper (**outline 1**).
- Within that drawn outline of your printing paper, work out where you want to place your lino and then draw round your lino tile (**outline 2**) – now you have a **Registration Sheet**.
- When you have inked your lino tile and are ready to print, put the registration sheet on a flat even surface/table where you will be sitting to print your image and place the lino in the marked out drawn **outline 2**, ink side up.
- Carefully place your printing paper on top of the lino, in the marked out **outline 1**.
- Once you have placed the paper on top of the inked tile it will be marked by the ink so must be kept in place to get a clear print. It is a good idea to keep one hand on the paper to keep it in place until you have finished printing and want to take the paper off the tile.

Paper

- Print onto smooth dry paper.
- If you are hand burnishing your print you will need to use thinner paper.
- You can try printing in different coloured inks and on different coloured paper, this can make a really different print.



Printed in black ink onto white paper



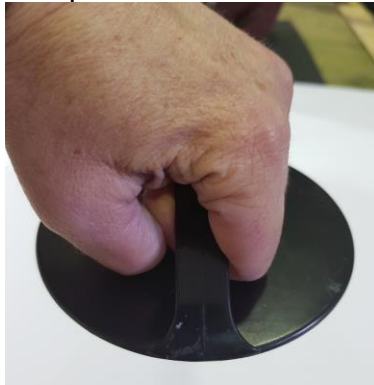
Printed in white ink onto black paper

Inking

- You will need to roll your ink out onto a flat smooth surface that is easily cleaned, plastic chopping board, glass surface, or a laminated piece of paper stuck to your table surface with masking tape will work well.
- Using a palette knife put a thick line of ink (a **well** of ink) on the back of the surface/board for your ink, then, use the roller to pick up some of this ink by dipping the roller in the ink then lifting it out.
- Roll the ink on the roller onto the board, in front of or away from the thick line of ink at the back of the board. Keep rolling the ink until you have coated the roller in a fine even layer of ink, it will look similar to shiny suede in appearance, and the sound as you roll is a gentle 'swish'.
- A thick layer of ink looking more like the surface of an orange, sounding more 'sticky' when you roll, will be too much and seep into your cut marks, and you may not see some details from your print.
- If you have too much ink rolled out on your board and on your roller, scrape back some of the rolled out ink with your spatula and add it to the well of ink at the back then roll the roller out. Repeat this until you have the correct thin layer of ink.
- Using your ink coated roller, roll ink over the whole block, rotate the tile so you roll from different sides of the tile to ensure even coverage.
- As you go on to print more and need to re-ink your tile, after a few times you will use the rolled out ink and need to pick up and roll out a little more ink.

Printing

- You can print lino using a press, or by hand using a barren or wooden spoon. Some artists use old small flat tins such as boot polish tins, or large old metal spoons.



How to hold a baren

- Whatever you use to hand burnish you need to push down hard onto your paper and move your hand in **small** circles. If you are too random or large with your movements you can create darker 'scribble' marks on your print
- It is also a good idea to be methodical about how you work, ie start at one edge of your tile and work your way along so you know where you have hand burnished.
- If you are using a wooded spoon use the underside 'bowl' side of the spoon.
- At any time if you want to see how your print is coming along you can hold the paper in place with the baren. Move the baren to one side of the paper,

keeping it in your hand and pressing down (as in the image above) and gently lift the other side of the paper to have a look at your print.

- This will help you work out where you may need to keep burnishing to add more ink to your print.
- Place your tile on your Registration Sheet if you are using one, and then place your paper on top and start hand burnishing your print.
- When you have made a print you can take second 'ghost' print without re-inking. This will have a lesser softer layer of ink and can look very different from the first print. Or you can re-ink your tile and burnish another print.
- If you want to change colours you need to clean your lino before adding a new colour.
- If using Caligo Safewash or water based inks you can use washing up liquid and water to clean your roller, inking surface and lino.
- When cleaning your tile use a damp cloth rather than putting the lino in water.

If you have time you can experiment with your lino tile to create different prints, and print backgrounds and layered prints with more than one colour.

Additional experiments with layers & colours

Experiments

- You can rotate your block and reprint it over an existing print in a different colour to create interesting patterns.
- Or slightly move the block diagonally in to one side to print on top of an existing print in a different to create a shadow effect.
- If overprinting onto a wet print inks may blend and a darker colour for your second layer works best.

Backgrounds

- You can use the back of your tile to print a background colour for you to then print your image on top. It is a good idea not to have too thick a layer of ink for background colour layers to make it easier for your image print to sit on top.
- You do not have to wait for the first layer to dry before printing on top (this may take several days to dry) but printing onto wet ink means your different coloured ink layers may blend together a little.
- Or you may want to print backgrounds in time to allow the first layer of ink to dry.