

How to Make a One-Color Print in the Japanese Style

<p>Supplies in the Kit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3mm Sankaku To (v-gouge) 4.5mm Maru To (u-gouge) 18mm Surikomi Bake (brush) 70ml Sumi (ink) 100gm Nori (rice paste) 12mm Baren Camellia Oil (in bottle) two 4" x 6" Shina wood blocks five Washi Postcards 	<p>In addition to the materials in this package, you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A marking pen or tracing paper (optional) Masking tape Paper towels A small cloth towel (optional) Clean newsprint A plastic bag Two small jars or dishes and one medium jar A spray bottle Two inexpensive water color brushes An old towel or cotton rag
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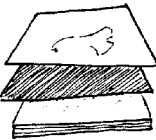
Planning the Image

Decide on the image that you want to print. Keep the image simple. Bold, flat, sharply delineated designs usually make more successful relief prints. Your image must be no larger than 4" x 6" to fit on the woodblock.

drawing
directly
on the
block



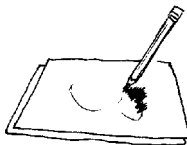
drawing
(face down)
carbon
paper
(face down)
wood block



Transferring the Image to the Block

Either sketch your design directly on the wood block with a marking pen or draw the design on tracing paper.

If you sketch directly on the block, the image will be reversed when it is printed. If you use tracing paper, place a piece of carbon paper face down on the block. Place the drawing face down on top of the carbon paper. Tape the tracing paper onto the wood block with masking tape so it will not shift while you are drawing. Carefully draw all of the lines of the image with a sharp pencil. Do not press down so hard that the wood is dented. Remove the carbon and tracing paper. The image on the block is now reversed. When it is printed, it will look like your original drawing.



Tip: How to Make Your Own Carbon Paper

Place a piece of tracing paper on top of your drawing. Using a very soft pencil (3B or softer) scribble plenty of graphite onto the tracing paper following the outlines of your drawing. Now flip the two pieces of paper over, attach to the wood block with masking tape, and draw the image as described above.

Carving

The Shina wood blocks in this kit can be carved on both sides. If you have not carved wood before, you may want to practice using the tools on one side of a block before attempting to carve your image.

Place a damp paper towel or small cloth towel under the block to keep it from sliding as you carve.

Some people find it more comfortable to cut down the handles on the tools so they fit into the palm of their hand. To do this, measure from the tip of your longest finger to the web between your first finger and thumb. Cut the handle off to this length. Round the end with sandpaper.

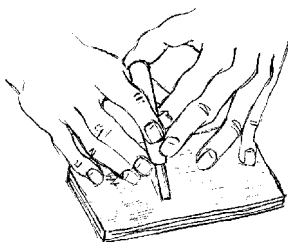
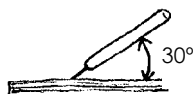
Tip: Always keep both hands on the tool as you carve. If you do this, you cannot cut yourself.

Both the maru to (u-gouge) and sankaku to (v-gouge) are pushed away from you as you cut. If you are right handed, hold the tool in your right hand as shown. Place the tool on the wood and tilt it up to a shallow angle, about 30 degrees. From this angle, you will be able to make a shallow cut into the wood by pushing the tool away from you. Keep your left hand on the tool as a brake. Push gently back against the tool with your left hand as you push forward with your right hand. (If you are left handed, do the same but hold and push the tool with your left hand and brake with your right.) In addition to being safer, carving with both hands on the tool gives you much more control than trying to carve with just one hand.

NEVER force the tool. NEVER wiggle the tool to wedge it deeper into the wood, and NEVER flick the tool up at the end of a stroke. You will very likely damage the sharp, thin blade tip if you do.

ALWAYS carve shallow cuts and gently push the tool through the wood. If you want to carve deeper, take several strokes instead of trying to do it all in one cut. Try to carve with the grain of the wood as much as possible, turning the block as needed.

length of
carving tool
so it will fit
into your
palm:



Getting Ready to Print

It is often easier to do these steps the day before you plan to print, since they take some time.

1. Cut Proofing Paper

Cut a sheet of clean newsprint into 4" x 6" pieces. Ten will probably be enough. You will use these to proof your print before printing on the Washi cards.

2. Make a Damp Pack

Start by cutting twelve 8" x 10" pieces of newsprint. Spray the first sheet with water until it is lightly covered but not dripping. Place two pieces of newsprint on top and spray the top sheet. Continue alternating wet and dry sheets until you have a stack six sheets tall, ending with a dry sheet. Place one of the Washi cards on top and spray it. Place a dry card on top. Repeat until you have stacked up all of the cards that you want to print in one session. Now place a dry piece of newsprint on top of the last card, followed by a wet piece. Continue until six more sheets of newsprint are stacked up. End with a wet piece of newsprint on the very top of the stack.

Place the stack of paper into the plastic bag, place a light weight on top (a book works well) and let the pack sit overnight so the moisture spreads evenly throughout the paper.

3. Prepare the Nori

Nori is the translucent white rice paste in the yellow jar. It gives body to the ink and helps the ink spread evenly over the block.

Place a small amount, around 1 tablespoon, of nori in a small jar or dish. Add a little water and stir. Add enough water so the mixture has the consistency of heavy whipping cream. If you are preparing the nori the day before printing, cover tightly.

4. Prepare Ink

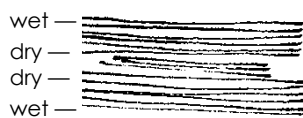
Pour a small amount of ink into a small jar or dish. If you wish to print with gray instead of black, first place some water into a jar or dish, then add sumi ink a little at a time until you reach the desired shade. Akua Kolor inks, gouache or watercolors can also be used if you prefer. Akua Kolor can be used straight out of the bottle or mixed with Extender for a more translucent shade. Gouache and watercolor should be mixed in a bowl, adding small amounts of water, until the paint spreads easily. If you are preparing the ink the day before printing, cover the dish tightly.

5. Prepare the Baren

Place one or two drops of Camellia Oil into the palm of your hand and rub this into the bamboo sheath on the outside of the baren. Pay special attention to the edges of the baren. This will help keep the bamboo supple so it does not tear or split when it is used.

6. Make Back Paper

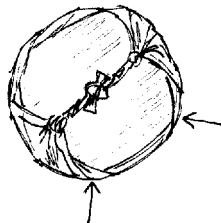
Cut a piece of tracing paper or newsprint a little larger than 4" x 6". Back paper protects the baren and printing paper from one another during the printing process.



damp pack:
6 sheets of newsprint
top and bottom with
Washi cards in
between



1 Tbsp. nori plus water

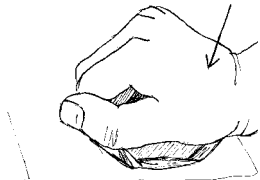


rub oil on the sides
as well as the
smooth face of the
baren

Printing Checklist:

- carved woodblock
- spray bottle with water
- proofing paper
- printing paper in damp pack
- back paper
- dry newsprint or blotters
- ink
- Nori mixed with water
- 2 watercolor brushes for applying ink and nori
- dampened surikomi

press down with the
heel of your hand, not
your fingers



Printing

1. Prepare the Brushes and Block for Printing

On the day you plan to print, place the surikomi bake (brush) in a medium size jar of clean water for about 10 minutes before printing. This will soften the bristles and allow them to expand to help prevent excess shedding.

Spray the carved block with water. Allow the water to soak in and spray again. Wait about 5 minutes, then wipe off any excess water with a towel.

Dampening the block keeps the wood from instantly soaking up all the ink when you brush it on the block.

2. Proofing

Before printing on the Washi Cards, proof the block by making a few prints with the 4" x 6" pieces of newsprint. This will help you decide if you need to do any more carving. It also charges (saturates) the block with ink.

Using a watercolor brush, place a dab of the nori/water mixture on the area of the block that you want to print. Blot as much water as possible out of the surikomi bake by pressing it in a towel. Spread the nori around on the block with the surikomi bake. You only need to do this step the first time you add nori and ink to the block.

Add another dab of nori to the block. Use a second watercolor brush to add ink to the block. Mix the nori and ink with the surikomi bake and spread the ink evenly across the print area. The ink should look slightly matte, not too watery. If it looks watery, blot some of the ink up with a towel and spread out the ink evenly again with the surikomi bake.

Center a 4" x 6" piece of newsprint on the block. Place the back paper on top.

Hold the baren with your fingers lightly tucked under the handle. Begin slowly, to avoid wrinkles, and then rub briskly using plenty of pressure. Rub with the heel of your hand, not your knuckles. Use a circular motion as much as possible and make sure you rub the entire block equally. Remove the back paper, and carefully lift the newsprint from the block. You have just made your first print!

After looking at your proof, if you decide you need to cut quite a bit more, allow the block to dry first since it is much easier to cut wood when it is dry.

Here are some common problems and solutions:

- 1) The ink is very thick with blobs around the edges of the image.
Use less ink.
- 2) The ink is not solid, it looks mottled.
On the next print try adding more nori, and/or use less water. Press harder with the baren. It takes time and experience to learn how much ink, nori and water is needed to produce a smoothly inked area. Some people find sanding the block very smooth with very fine sandpaper after carving helps, but do this when the block is thoroughly dry. Also, printing on the rough side of the paper instead of the smooth side can result in a mottled look; try flipping the paper over and see if the problem persists. In Japan, this mottled look is called *goma suri* (sesame seed print), and is often used intentionally by Japanese printers to add interest and texture to their prints.
- 3) The ink is too faint.
Press more heavily while using the baren. Apply more ink to the block, but be careful; it is easy to overdo.
- 4) The paper sticks to the block.
Use less nori.
- 5) No two prints look exactly the same.
It takes years of printing experience to produce Japanese style prints that look alike, and even then, a close look will still reveal slight differences. This is one of the appealing qualities of handmade prints vs. mass produced art. Try accepting and enjoying each print for its unique beauty.

Final Printing

When you are satisfied with the image, and the block is well charged with ink, print the Washi cards. You may find that you need to press more firmly with the baren when printing the cards compared to the newsprint, since they are quite a bit thicker. Be sure to always use back paper between the baren and card, to protect the card from the heavy rubbing.

Drying the Finished Prints

As you finish a print, place it between sheets of newsprint or blotters. At the end of the printing session, place a light weight on top of the stack and allow them to dry overnight. If you use newsprint you may need to replace it at least once before the prints are finally dry.

Clean Up

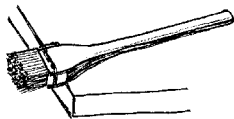
When you are finished printing, wash the brush out carefully with warm soapy water, rubbing the brush gently against the palm of your hand, until all the ink has been removed. Press the bristles of the brush in a towel to remove as much water as possible, then either hang the brush with the bristles pointing down or place the brush at the edge of a table, so air is allowed to reach all sides while it dries.

Ink dishes or jars can be cleaned with soap and water.

Smooth out the nori in the yellow jar so it is level, and then put in just enough water to cover the nori; this will keep it from skimming over.

The block does not have to be cleaned unless you wish to print it again with a different color. Then wash it with a soft brush and warm, soapy water and allow it to dry completely away from heat. Always store your blocks flat to prevent warping.

hang brush or place over
edge of table to dry



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