

# Linocut Printmaking — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into hands-on practice. Each section matches a course module and asks you to make decisions, carve test pieces, and document your prints the way a working studio does. Work through it alongside an actual block and you will finish with a registered, signed edition and a record you can repeat.

## Materials, Tools, and the Studio Setup

Choose and test your block, gouges, ink, and paper before you commit a real design.

### Exercise: Carve a four-mark test swatch

On a scrap corner of your chosen block, carve four small patches using each of your core gouges: a fine V line, a small-U shape edge, a medium-U clearing, and a hatched mid-tone. Warm traditional lino first if using it. Ink and pull the swatch, then judge it.

- Did your thinnest V line survive carving and print unbroken? If not, what tore or filled in?  
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- Which gouge cleared open space fastest and left the flattest floor?  
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- Based on this swatch, is this block right for the detail level of your planned image, or do you need a harder or softer substrate?  
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### Worksheet: Studio and materials inventory

Record exactly what you are working with so your results are repeatable and so you know what each material costs you in time and money.

Block type and brand (e.g. Essdee softcut, traditional grey lino, Japanese vinyl)

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Block size (mm) and intended image size (mm)

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Gouges owned: profile, width, and brand for each

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Ink: water-based or oil-based, brand, and colours

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Paper: name, gsm, and sheet size

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Printing method: baren, wooden spoon, or press

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Last sharpened / stropped date

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### Checklist: Bench-ready safety and setup check

- Bench hook in place so every cut travels away from my holding hand
- Gouges stropped until they shave lino with no downward force
- Carving zone is dry and ink-free with raking light across the block
- Inking station is separate, with damp cloth, dry cloth, and clean paper stacked
- Edge guards or a tool roll ready so blades never touch each other
- Spare scrap block cut for test swatches and proofs

### From Drawing to Block: Design and Transfer

Plan an image that reads in relief, handle the mirror flip, and transfer it cleanly.

#### Exercise: Notan to four-value plan

Take your chosen image and reduce it to a flat two-value (pure black and white) notan study at block size. Then add a third and fourth value as hatching textures, noting which gouge makes each.

- Does the composition still hold as a pure two-value image? If it goes flat or confusing, what needs to change?

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- Which areas are positive (printed) and which are negative (carved away)? Mark them.

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- Which clearing is the largest, and is it so big it might warp or print unevenly?

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#### Worksheet: Reversal and transfer plan

Decide in advance how you will handle the mirror flip and how you will get the design onto the block, so transfer day has no surprises.

Does the image contain text or handedness? (yes / no)

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Reversal decision: flip before transfer / use auto-reversing method / no reversal needed

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Transfer method chosen: carbon-graphite / laser-toner / direct drawing

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Fixative to be used after transfer (workable fixative / hairspray)

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How the source will be hinged to the block (tape edge / pins)

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Test letter or detail to proof before full transfer (if text present)

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#### Checklist: Transfer-day checklist

- Drawing finalised at exact block dimensions
- Image reversed if it contains text or handedness, confirmed in a mirror
- Block surface clean and, if pale carving is hard to see, lightly tinted
- Source taped on one edge as a hinge so I can check without losing position
- Transfer completed and immediately fixed against smudging
- Keep-lines optionally inked in with a fine permanent pen

#### Exercise: Test one transfer method on scrap

Before transferring your real design, run your chosen method on a scrap with a small sample of lines and one reversed letter. Pull a quick proof to confirm orientation and line clarity.

- Did the line deposit cleanly and survive light handling, or did it smear or fade?
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- If you used toner transfer, was your acetone or heat amount right, or did it smear or under-transfer?
- Did the reversed letter print correctly the right way round?

## Carving and the First Single-Colour Print

Carve in the right order, ink to the correct film thickness, and read your proofs.

### Exercise: Detail-first carving pass

Carve your block in the protective order: fence every keep-line with the fine V, add textures while the surface is supported, then clear small-to-large with the U-gouges. Rotate the block, not your wrist, on curves.

- Did any unsupported island of detail snap off? If so, was it because you cleared bulk too early?
- Are your clearings a consistent shallow depth (about 1 to 2 mm), or did you cut too deep anywhere?
- Did you have to force the tool at any point? Mark where, and stop before continuing.

### Worksheet: Inking and proof diagnosis log

For each proof you pull, record the variables and what the print told you, so you can converge on a clean pull and then repeat it for the edition.

Proof number

Ink passes applied to block

Roller sound (slap = too wet / hiss = ready)

Burnishing tool and pressure

Paper used

Result: pale patches / filled lines / clean — and where

Change to make on the next pull

### Checklist: Clean single-colour pull checklist

- Ink rolled to a soft hiss and even orange-peel texture on the slab
- Block charged in two to four thin passes, raised surface uniformly satin
- No ink pooled in carved channels (cleaned out if so)
- Paper lowered in one motion with no sliding
- Whole image burnished in overlapping circles from the centre out
- Proof marked in pencil with the variables I changed
- Re-inked fully before the next pull (no double pulls from one inking)

### Exercise: Establish your bon a tირ

Pull proofs and adjust ink and pressure until one print is clean across the whole image. Carve away any stray spots that print where you wanted white, re-proof, then designate one print as your bon a tირ (BAT) reference.

- What exact ink-pass count and burnishing pressure produced your best pull?

- What did you carve away after proofing to remove unwanted ink marks?
- How many spares beyond your target edition will you print to allow for rejects?

## Colour, Registration, and Finishing an Edition

Register accurately, layer colour by reduction or multi-block, and close the edition properly.

### Exercise: Build and stress-test a registration jig

Construct an L-jig or pin-bar system. Before printing any colour, print the same single layer ten times, checking each against the first for drift.

- How much variation appeared across ten pulls? Is it within a hairline, or does the jig need tightening?
- Where will you place a deliberate hairline overlap (trap) so colour drift does not show as a gap?
- Which registration method (L-jig vs pin-bar) gave you tighter results for this image?

### Worksheet: Colour-layer plan (reduction or multi-block)

Map every colour layer before inking the first, since reduction printing permanently fixes your edition size and order.

Method: reduction (one block) or multi-block

Final edition size (fixed now if reduction)

Layer order, light to dark, with the ink colour for each

Overlaps planned to create extra colours (e.g. yellow over blue = green)

Transparent base / extender used in which layers

Drying time required between layers for this ink

What gets carved away after each layer

### Checklist: Edition completion and finishing checklist

- Every layer registered and printed light to dark, dried between layers
- Pulls culled against the BAT so the edition is consistent
- Prints numbered sequentially in pencil (e.g. 7/20), titled, signed, and dated
- Artist proofs marked AP, kept aside, within about ten percent of the edition
- Edition logged: title, date, size, paper, ink, number printed and destroyed
- Prints stored flat between acid-free tissue, away from light and humidity
- Block cleaned and dried flat; gouges wiped, oiled if carbon steel, and guarded

### Exercise: Document and price your edition

Complete an edition record for your finished prints and decide how you will present and, if selling, price them. Use the templates to keep the record consistent.

- What is the closed edition size, and how many artist and printer proofs exist outside it?
- What did each print cost you in materials and time, and what does that imply for a fair price?

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- How will you describe the print honestly (technique, paper, ink, edition status) to a buyer?
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## Your Action Plan

1. Test a four-mark swatch on your candidate block and confirm it holds your finest line.
2. Assemble and sharpen your four core gouges, then set up separate carving and inking zones.
3. Reduce your image to a two-value notan and a four-value carving plan at exact block size.
4. Decide the mirror-flip approach and transfer the design, fixing it against smudging.
5. Carve detail-first, fencing keep-lines before clearing bulk to a shallow even depth.
6. Roll ink to a hiss, charge the block in thin passes, and pull proofs until one is clean.
7. Designate a bon a tizer and print the single-colour edition plus spares against it.
8. Build a registration jig and stress-test it with ten identical pulls before adding colour.
9. Plan and print your colour layers light to dark, drying fully between each layer.
10. Cull, number, sign, log, and store the edition, then clean and protect block and tools.









