

Embellishing 101: Negative Sponge Print-Along



This tutorial is part of a series I am doing that will give you lots of ideas for how can embellish the clothing you make, or even RTW if desired. I've found it especially useful for boys' clothing as you really can't use the cutesy fabrics as much with them!! But, of course, it works great for girls as well.

For this technique, I want to point out that you have 2 choices. You can do your print directly onto the shirt front, OR you can print onto a scrap and applique it later after the print dries. You will probably want to try the fabric scrap method first until you get the hang of it, but it is not hard, so if you want to save yourself the time, you can go directly for the shirt front. And of course you can do this on a jean leg or pocket, or whatever you think up! If you are interested in using my stencils, they are available to download and print as well.

1. First, choose your material, either a scrap for applique or the actual pattern piece for the garment. If using a

scrap, think about the size you need based on your design. You'll need a bit of space around the edges to sew it onto the garment. Here, I am doing a Ben 10 print using the letters I cut out for Gavin's top I did last week, and I am going to print directly onto the shirt front.



2. Next, you will choose the design. These are the pieces that I didn't use for Gavin's top last week. When you are doing a negative print, you are covering the actual design and printing the negative space around it to make the design stand out. I am going to do a green top, and my sponging will be in brown paint. So for this, I need the actual letters cut out. You can do any type of design for this, but lettering looks cool. So does a multi-piece design. You can use one of my designs printed out (look for my stencil patterns), look up something on google images and print it (which is what I did for the Ben 10), or you can just freehand design something. After you choose your design, you need to trace it onto the nonshiny side of freezer paper, and cut it out of the freezer paper using an x-acto knife or scissors if you don't have one. If you cut carefully, you can save the outside negative area of the design for a positive print later.

3. Next, lay it out. Here's mine laid out on the top. Move your pieces until you get them placed how you want, then

carefully iron them down with a dry iron. (shiny side down)



4. Next, choose your brush and paint. You will want a sponge brush or just a regular sponge for this. I bought a big pack of brushes/sponges at walmart that I am using. It comes with a couple of circular brushes. I like the sponges for this because it will give a nice textured look.



5. Take your paint and squirt some onto a paper plate or a sheet of paper. You may need to blend to get the color you are going for. Here, I'm going for brown to match the sleeves, so I need to blend.



6. Dip your sponge in the paint, then start sponging all around your design, covering your freezer paper and the area around it at least a bit so that you will see the design in the negative space when you remove the paper. If using a white or light colored fabric, you may want to sponge on the paper plate a few times to reduce blobs on the fabric - white will become opaque very quickly as opposed to dark. Nothing wrong with opaque of course, but I am going for a spongy, graffiti-type feel.



7. Here's mine after I've sponged it all. Let it sit for several hours. My tulip paints say wait 4 hours laying flat, but wait a couple days before washing/drying.



8. After it is dry, you can remove your freezer paper. Just peel it off. Here is mine after removing the paper.



9. Optionally, you can choose to outline the design with either more paint or with stitching. For this one, I wanted the design to pop since the shirt and paint were both pretty dark, so I chose to outline it with yellow. Of course, then I had to let it sit the rest of the day again. Doing this makes it not quick, but it looks pretty cool!



There you have it! A negative printed design. :)

I will have lots of other embellish-alongs coming here pretty soon!