

# Thermofax Screens

## Use and Care

### Printing Surface

- The printing surface should be neither too hard, nor too soft. Two layers of acrylic/polyester felt, stretched and stapled over some plywood will make a very stable print surface but you could improvise by taping felt or an old blanket to your table. Make sure the surface is smooth as any creases will leave their mark on the fabric.
- The print surface should be covered with a drop cloth – this will absorb excess media and to help prevent the image from blurring. The drop cloth could be calico, cotton drill or even an old bed sheet but it should be washable – especially important after printing with thickened dyes. Plastic drop cloths can be used but they are slippery and excess media can ‘pool’ under the fabric, spoiling your work.
- Spread the fabric for printing on top of the drop cloth. Pin around the edges, stretching it slightly, to hold in place. If you use a plastic drop cloth, you will need to clamp or tape the fabric to the plastic.
- For the sake of your back, try to work at a table or workbench that is just above waist height. If you don't have access to (or room for) a suitable workbench, kitchen worktops are a good substitute.

### Placement of Thermofax Screen

- The Thermofax Screen should be placed with the shiny plastic coated side of the mesh face down (you should be able to see the words THIS SIDE UP on the frame). This will help to prolong the life of the plastic coating.
- If you occasionally want a reverse image you can place the screen the other way up but avoid doing this too often as the plastic coating will quickly deteriorate if the squeegee is continually drawn across it.

### Squeegee

- Use a lightweight squeegee – such as those available from Thermofax Screens - or a rubber edged grouting tool (available from most DIY stores). Standard silkscreen squeegees are unsuitable for use with Thermofax Screens.
- Ideally the squeegee should be a little wider than the design. If it is narrower than the design you may have to pull the squeegee across twice – see below.

### Technique

- Unlike a traditional wooden silkscreen, there is no real ‘well’ for the media but you can spoon or pour a ‘bead’ of your chosen media (see separate sheet) onto the taped area at the top of the screen. (For small or fine designs that won't use a lot of media, you can even dip the squeegee in the media and then pull it straight down the screen.)
- Position the squeegee behind the bead and draw it towards you with a firm, smooth action keeping the angle of the squeegee as close as possible to the perpendicular. If you slope the squeegee too much you will get a blurred print.
- Always pull the squeegee towards you for the best results. When you get to the bottom of the image, scoop up any unused media with the squeegee and deposit it back at the top of the screen. Lift up the screen carefully and reposition for the next print. Never push the squeegee back to the top of the screen.
- The first time you use the screen you may need to pull the squeegee across twice to get the media flowing through the mesh. Thereafter, one pull will generally be enough unless the squeegee is narrower than the design in which case it will take two pulls.
- Light to medium pressure is generally sufficient – it is not necessary to use the same sort of pressure required with wooden screens. Practise on a drop cloth first until you are happy with the results. The consistency of the media and your choice of fabric may also determine the pressure required – less pressure is required for fine smooth surfaces than for coarser fabrics.
- Keep the media flowing across the screen and never let any media dry on the screen. Take particular care with screen inks, especially metallic ones, and glues. They can dry very quickly, especially in warm conditions. Once dry they will seal the mesh permanently, spoiling it for any further printing.

## Ghost images and Partial Images

- If images are printed close together or overlapping, you may find that you have picked up medium from an earlier (still wet) print on the back of the screen. On the subsequent print this will cause a 'ghost' image to be laid down. If you need perfectly clean images, you can cover any wet areas that the screen may overlap, with a double layer of kitchen paper. However, the ghost images can prove very interesting and can add texture and an extra dimension to your fabric!
- If you want to print just part of the image, you can mask off the unwanted area with a double layer of kitchen paper. You can lay the paper directly on the fabric or temporarily tape it to the back of the screen with a couple of pieces of masking tape.

## Getting the most out of your design

- You can print single images as focal points or repeat images to form patterns.
- You can use the screen to print and overprint, creating wonderful textures with one or more colours.
- The screen can be rotated to print the image randomly all over the cloth.
- Two or more screens can be combined on the same cloth.
- Experiment ..... and continually ask yourself 'what if?'

## Cleaning your Thermofax Screen

- Wash Thermofax Screens in COLD water with a soft sponge – never use brushes or abrasive scourers as this will damage the mesh. Screen inks and dyes may cause staining of the mesh but as long as the water is running clear the screen should be clean. Squeeze the edges of the tape to make sure none of the media has crept underneath and then wipe the edges of the frame thoroughly.
- Dry the Thermofax Screen by placing it between the folded layers of an old towel and pat gently. Avoid rubbing as this may damage the plastic coating.
- If you want one layer of print to dry before printing the next layer you should wash and dry the screen while you wait – it doesn't take long and you can always sit and contemplate your next move while you wait!

## Storing your Thermofax Screens

- The screens are best stored upright and out of direct sunlight. Extreme heat (eg leaving in a car on a hot day) can cause the frames to warp.

## Thermofax Screen Maintenance

- With care you will get hundreds of prints from a Thermofax Screen. However, they do not last forever. The media you use, how often you use them (eg repeatedly for long sessions or sporadically) and how carefully they are washed and dried will all affect their longevity.
- The plastic coating will eventually lift and break down around the edges of the design. Some minor repairs can be made with duct tape or by filling in an edge with acrylic paint (do this on the rough side and allow to dry thoroughly before use).
- Once the image is beyond further use, the mesh can be cut out and the frame reused with a new image (see the price list for details of imaged mesh without frame).

## [www.thermofaxscreens.co.uk](http://www.thermofaxscreens.co.uk)

Visit the website .....

- Buy ready-made Thermofax Screens - new designs are added regularly
- Order custom screens made from your own designs
- Buy water-based Textile Screen Inks and lightweight squeegees

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