

7 Secrets to Perfectly Stamped Images

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There are 7 secrets to creating perfectly stamped images each time you rubber stamp. There is nothing more rewarding than creating and giving a handmade card or gift to someone. You want to be proud of the card or gift, even if your not a perfectionist!

1. Condition and prepare your stamps: When you first get your stamps, you should lightly sand them with a pumice stone. This will give the ink some texture to actually stick to. You can recondition them at any point that you notice the ink is not sticking well. This is especially important to do with large stamps with lots of flat surfaces. You should do this for both clear and rubber stamps.

2. Use a foam stamping mat. When I first learned to stamp over 20 years ago, I was encouraged to purchase a large foam mat to do all of my stamping on. Using the mat under your paper, gives you a nice crisp image. It helps to prevent that halo or smudge from ink that is sitting on the edges of the rubber as well. The foam "gives" as you stamp and the image you get is much crisper. A piercing mat works well for this. You can stamp on one side and pierce on the other. You can also use the foam craft pads from the children's section of the craft store!

3. Use the correct ink for the job: You need to choose the ink for the kind of surface you are stamping on to get crisp, clear images that won't smudge or smear. For example, dye based inks work well for paper projects but I would choose a pigment ink for stamping on tile or glass.

4. Make sure you fully ink your stamp: The first time I use a stamp, I always test it on scrap paper. I also always look at the rubber side after I ink it up. Push it firmly into the ink pad and then look at it to see if the ink is covering the entire stamp. For larger surfaces, you should consider using a brayer to help you fully cover then entire surface of the stamp.

5. Don't rock your stamp: Always make sure you stamp straight down, apply even pressure and lift the stamp straight back up. Be very careful not to rock the stamp as you are creating the image. Rocking it will cause any ink on the edges of the rubber to transfer to your paper, giving you the halo of ink that we all hate to see when we lift our stamps!

6. Use your tools: You purchase your tools to help you make great cards. Use them! Keep them within reach of your workspace at all times so you remember you have them. Don't guess where to place your stamp, use your Stamp-a-ma-jig to position it! Make sure you have fully inked your rubber surface with a brayer!

7. Keep your stamps clean and store them properly: Use a cleaner and a scrubber designed specifically to clean your stamps. Clean them as soon as you use them. Store them in the recommended containers away from the elements. Don't store them in direct sunlight as it will break down the rubber. DVD cases work great for clear stamp storage. There are all kinds of craft drawer units available to store your wood mount stamps. Check out the hardware store for great storage ideas. Take care of your stamps and tools and you will have them for a very long time!

A few tips and tricks will keep you stamping perfect images each time. You will be creating cards and projects that you are proud to give. There is nothing like giving or receiving a card someone made especially for you!

Kimberly Skinner is the Owner and CEO of Stamping Imperfection. You can get more stamping lessons with video tutorials on her blog at <http://stampingimperfection.com>. Sign up for her mailing list to get 3 video tutorials just for subscribers. You can also find ideas, inspirations and beautiful handmade paper crafting projects on her website. You can also purchase stamping and paper crafting supplies through her online Stampin' Up! store at <http://stampingimperfection.stampinup.net>.

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