

Y9 Textiles Article 2

What is silk screen printing?

Screen printing is a printing technique whereby a mesh is used to transfer ink onto a material, except in areas made impermeable to the ink by a blocking stencil. A blade or squeegee is moved across the screen to fill the open mesh apertures with ink, and a reverse stroke then causes the screen to touch the material momentarily along a line of contact. This causes the ink to wet the material and be pulled out of the mesh apertures as the screen springs back after the blade has passed. One colour is printed at a time, so several screens can be used to produce a multi-coloured image or design.

Basically, the action is like spreading butter on toast, but you're spreading ink across a screen, and with a "squeegee" instead of a butter knife. Along the way across the screen, the ink goes through little tiny holes and sticks to what you're printing on.

You control what the image looks like by putting a stencil between the screen and the material you're printing on. The ink only affects the section of the shirt that isn't covered by the stencil. This needs to be taped securely in place, either to the material or to the screen. You can only print one solid colour at a time.



When you're done passing the ink, carefully lift the screen off the material so it doesn't smudge. The process can now be repeated by repositioning the screen on the material or by cleaning the screen and changing the stencil and colour.



To make a print, you take a spoonful of ink and create a line in the “well” of the screen. The well is an area off to the side where there aren't any holes. Look at the picture. Then, take your squeegee, and put it in the line of ink. Now, with the squeegee at a 45 degree angle, pull the ink across the screen. In this case, more is not merrier, twice is enough. If your stencil is made of paper, too many passes with the ink will saturate the paper and make the ink bleed outside the lines.

