



## Sponge Stamps

Here are some helpful hints to get you started.

### **STROLLING = Stamping + Rolling**

Using the sponge stamps takes a little practice to get the feel of how to use them. While they are called stamps, when you use them you will actually be “strolling” - a combination of stamping and rolling. Whenever the word stamp appears as an action here, it’s really strolling.

### **What’s Strolling?**

Do - apply very light pressure so that the head of the stamp is only very slightly compressed. Do - slightly roll on as you “stamp” versus applying the head of the stamp directly on the surface and pushing. Don’t - push the stamp on too firmly as it will be like wringing out a sponge and the material will often drip leaving a messy print.

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

For any material you plan to use with the sponge stamps, I recommend that you test first. When you first start using the stamps there will be trial and error. If possible try and test the stamp on the material and with the material you plan to use. For example, take a shard of bisque fired pottery to test with before you commit to work you plan to finish fire. You can also use newsprint to test most materials on but this doesn’t always translate to green or fired clay. Testing and practicing strolling will help you figure out the best way to load and apply whatever the material you are working with. It’s a good idea to experiment and practice first.

### **First Step**

For all materials you will get the sponge very lightly damp before use. Dip it in clean water and squeeze it out as much as possible.

### **Glazes**

For glazes that you would dip or pour, put glaze in a container large enough for you to immerse the stamp in the glaze. Dip the sponge head facing down into the glaze at least halfway. Squeeze several times until it is saturated with glaze. Once saturated squeeze a bit out until the sponge stops dripping yet is loaded with glaze. If possible hold the area you plan to stamp parallel to the floor or table and stamp gently onto the surface. Beware of drips. Dripping is more likely to happen if you are stamping on a surface that is vertical versus horizontal. Try to position the area you plan to stamp flat and horizontal. It’s a delicate balance between saturating the sponge enough to get a good application and too much that it drips when you stamp. You can stamp over where you have already stamped so if enough glaze didn’t get on the first time, stamp over it again lining up the design. You can use the stamp to apply glaze on bisque surface and on top of glaze.

Some glazes may benefit from adding CMC Gum to make them more suitable for stamping.

For glazes that you would paint on versus dipping or pouring use a brush to paint on the glaze to the head of the stamp then use. (See slips and undervalues) You will likely need to repaint the stamp with the material after one or two applications. Alternately, some glazes will work by putting some in a shallow dish and dabbing the head of the sponge to saturate it.

## **Slip and Underglaze**

For decorating slips and underglazes with a brush paint the slip or underglaze onto the damp sponge to saturate the head of the stamp. Or put some in a shallow dish and dab it onto the sponge head. For flashing slips and body slips that you would dip or pour, follow the same application technique used for glazes that you would dip or pour (see above).

## **Oxide Wash**

Use the same technique you would use for glazes. Some oxide washes can permanently stain the sponge but in most cases will not affect future use. Also as oxide washes are generally the consistency of water they will have more of a tendency to drip when stamping.

## **Wax Resist**

Try to use the thickest wax resist possible. Watered down or watery wax resist is particularly hard to work with. Dip the head of the stamp into wax to cover just the raised design portion of the stamp. Blot it out on a piece of plastic such as the underside of a top to a large yogurt container or a paper plate that has a shiny surface. Do not use paper plates that are absorbent. Repeat this process until the design portion of the stamp is well saturated with wax resist but not dripping. Check the design to make sure that a pool of wax hasn't settled into the design. If it has tap or blow it out. Beware not to get the stamp too saturated with wax as it will drip when you use it. Stamps can be used to apply wax to leather hard, bone dry, bisque ware and on top of glaze. If you are stamping on top of glaze and there are small drips or over-stamps, once the wax has completely set you can make small corrections by using a straight edge razor or exacto blade to cut and then get under the excess and peel it off. This is only for minor adjustments and corrections.

## **Care Instructions**

The stamps are made from an industrial sponge used to make sponge mops so it is quite durable and long lasting if cared for properly. First and foremost, do not let any material set-up or dry in the sponge. This is especially true for wax resist.

Use water to clean the stamps. In order to use as little water as possible for clean up, in a container of warm water first squeeze out the material from the sponges as much as possible. Then under clean warm running water continue to squeeze out the stamp until the water runs clear. For wax resist or colored /underglazes slips, put a dab of dish soap on the design side of the sponge as you rinse and squeeze it out. This will break down the wax resist.

If material has dried in the sponge, particularly wax resist and/or the stamp seems to be getting stiff and they don't hold material or stamp well, place in a container and pour boiling water over them. Using a wooden spoon or tongs, squeeze the stamp several times immersed in the boiling water. This should rejuvenate them.

After cleaning, squeeze the stamp fully and then place design side up. Do not put in a sealed container until the sponge is completely dry.

**Now get to strolling and have fun!**

**Please reach out to me with questions or comments.  
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