

FIRST ON YOUR BLOCK

Homemade Prints Trump Hallmark Any Day

by Steve Dodds

Got a long holiday card list but no desire for the cheesy box set? Linoleum block cards are for you. Block prints allowed Renaissance masters to reproduce lavish manuscripts, and 20th-century sad sacks like Edvard Munch used them to carve out lighthearted odes like *Blossom of Pain*.

Linocut is the most common method used to create printing blocks. Unlike wood, linoleum is easy to carve in all directions. You'll need a lino cutting set, ink roller (or brayer), glass sheet (pop one out of a picture frame), and printer's ink (water-soluble makes cleanup a breeze). Once you're rolling, experiment with other media: wood block, eraser, potato, even fabric. Use several blocks to make multicolor prints.

For more ideas, check out *The Complete Printmaker: Techniques, Traditions, and Innovations*, by John Ross, Claire Romano, and Tim Ross (Touchstone); and *The Idea and Story Without Words: Two Novels Told in Woodcuts*, by Frans Masereel (Shambhala Publications).

MAKE IT

MINI BLOCK CARD



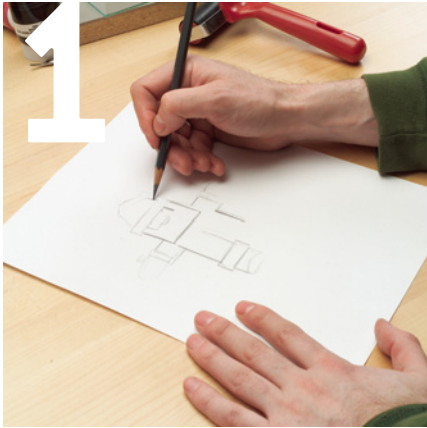
INGREDIENTS:

- Linoleum block
- Water-soluble ink (or poster paint)
- 8" x 10" sheet of glass
- Paper
- Transfer paper (optional)

TOOLS:

- Ink roller
- Carving tools
- Pencil
- Sharpie
- Wooden spoon





1. Sketch an image—start with black and white. Remember that non-inked parts will be carved away, so any large open spaces will take serious digging. **2.** Practice with your cutting tools on a small block. **3.** Redraw or transfer the design onto your printing block, leaving areas to be carved gray. The print you make will be a mirror image, so carve in reverse. **4.** When you're ready to start carving, outline the cuts with the smallest gouge from that to establish the edges. Cut slowly and deliberately—any surface left behind will print. If you goof,

glue the piece back in place. **5.** It's printing time. Squeeze a blob of ink onto the glass and roll the brayer over it. Get a good, even coat, then ink the block. Be careful not to overink and fill the finer cuts. Do a few test prints to get the feel. Additional carving may be necessary. **6.** When the block is inked, carefully place the paper on top, making sure it doesn't shift or slide. Using the bowl of a wooden spoon, burnish the back of the paper to transfer the ink. Now peel off the paper. **7.** Wash your tools and go make some eggnog.

