

"Easy" Personal Stamp-Making

I needed a method to have 40 to 50 people (mostly adults involved in Girl Scouting) make small personal rubber stamps in a fairly short amount of time. Although I've used gouges and "real" stamp-making materials, I didn't think that would be practical (or cost-effective!) under the circumstances. For a nice explanation of the "right" way to do it, see [Carving 101](#) or any of the sites listed at [Silent Doug's Letterboxing Site -- Stamps, Carving, and Bookbinding](#).

I was aware of some of the other "easy" stamp-making methods, such as using [art erasers and pencils](#), using [bunion and corn pads](#), or using ["fun foam" and film containers](#), but I decided to try using "fun foam" mounted on wood to have people make their stamps. Although not an ideal material for this purpose, since the foam is porous and will pick up a lot of ink before making a good image, "fun foam" can be cut with scissors.

In order to mount the stamps, I used garden stakes ("grape stakes"), which can be obtained at garden shops. These are, again, cheap (notice a pattern here?), and can be cut into small pieces for making the support for the stamps. Since I was trying to have them make small stamps, I decided that pieces 2 inches (5 cm) long would be about right, and pre-cut pieces of the stake to that length. (The stakes were about 1-3/8 inches (3.5 cm) wide.) Such stakes are pretty rough, so I brought along some sandpaper to smooth things out a little.



surface effect visible in the stamp image.

I made two samples, a butterfly and an acorn. Copies of the stamped images produced are shown at left. I cut the pieces out of the foam, and glued them onto the wood, using contact cement for the butterfly (took a long time to dry to the point I'd trust it), and glue from a hot glue gun for the acorn. I scored the acorn's "hat" using a sharp knife to produce the

A photograph of the stamps is shown at right. The scoring on the acorn can be seen; the little pieces used to produce the butterfly's antennae can just be made out. I explained what was to be done to the room full of adults, showing them the samples and the images, and let them go

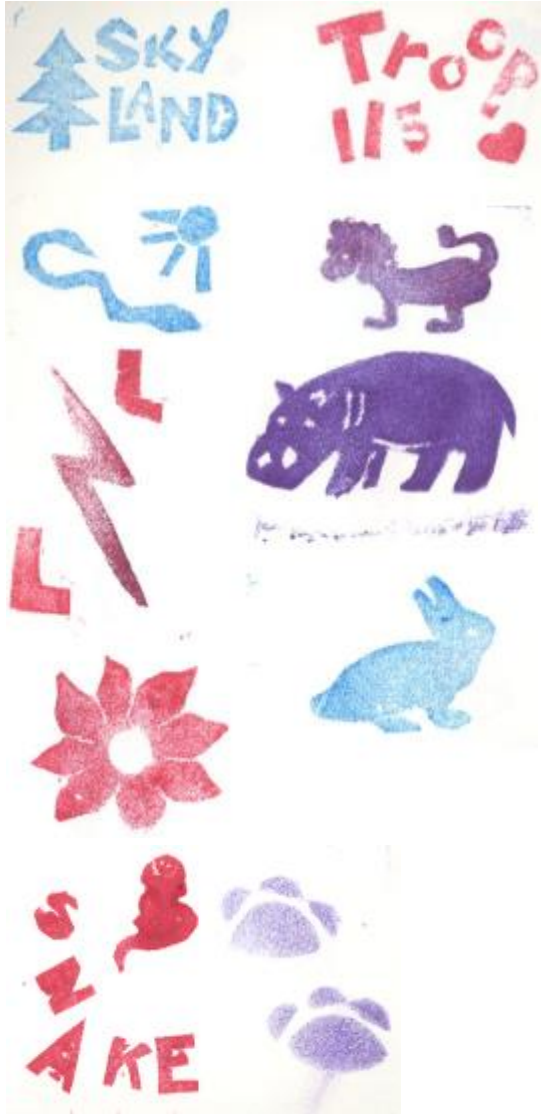


to work.



They loved it! It had apparently never occurred to any of them what sort of effects could be achieved in making very simple stamps, and many of them took the whole thing as a personal challenge! The experimenters in the group quickly determined that white glue could be used (if you were a little patient) to glue the foam pieces onto the wood, and it had the advantage that it allowed the crafter to move the pieces around on the wood so that they would end up in exactly the right spot (this is much harder with either contact cement or glue from a glue gun).

The biggest problem they had was remembering to reverse any letters or numbers in their designs, but on the whole, they were thrilled with the process! Some designs produced by the group are shown below:



Their biggest complaint was that they couldn't stamp the design directly on the back of the wood, as you would find on a professional stamp. I gave them two options -- draw it in using markers (after all, they did it once!), or stamp it on paper and glue the paper to the back of the wood.