

## Artfully Altered Fabric Design

Breathe new life into shirts, jeans, and more using common art materials (that you probably already have).

In fashion design, a textile designer specializes in how fabrics look, feel, and perform. Through training and experience, they learn to select materials in order to structure the proper weight, texture, and flow for a design, but also utilize color, pattern and other fundamental principles. Some textile designers specialize in surface design, using traditional or digital materials to invent new and trendy concepts for artwork that will be produced commercially on clothing, bedding, linens, and more.

To experience some of the problem-solving that being a textile designer requires, students can select a piece of pre-made clothing and create a custom design using their drawing or painting skills. Any item from their own closet or a thrift store can be altered and personalized without special paints or markers, from shirts and jeans to jackets, bags, hats, shoes, and fabric swatches.

Fabric medium is a clear acrylic fluid that can help make many drawing and painting supplies more permanent and washable on fabric. It can be mixed into fluid paints, including artists' or student acrylics, to make them softer and help them bond with the fabric. It can also be brushed over the surface of a colored pencil, pastel, or ink drawing to seal it.

As any textile designer would agree, experimentation, individuality, and perseverance are the keys to success. Science and art share a great deal of common ground. As part of the process, students can make a hypothesis about how the fabric medium will react with select materials, then test their theories.

**GRADES 5-12** Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

### Preparation

1. Select items of clothing or fabric decor to alter. Wash and dry before use. For best results:
  - Select items that are mid-to-heavy weight, such as t-shirts, denim, or cotton. Lightweight polyester and silk may become stiff from the fabric medium.
  - If using darker fabrics, select opaque paint and drawing supplies to create designs.
  - Fabrics and clothing that are pre-printed with logos, designs, or patterns may be useful and will provide special challenges for creative alterations.



### Materials (required)

**Chromacryl Textile Medium**, 16 oz bottle (00709-1006); share one across class

Recommended Drawing Materials:

**Jolly Superstick Colored Pencils**, Class pack of 288 (20349-1288); share across class

**Crayola Color Sticks**, Class pack of 120 (22083-1120)

**Sharpie Fine Point Permanent Black Marker**, Class pack of 36 (21316-2026)

**Playcolor Tempera Paint Sticks**, Assorted sizes and sets (00061-)

**General's MultiPastel Chalk Pencils**, Class pack of 144 (20533-1109)

**Blick Scholastic Wonder White Brush**, Fan, long handle, size 4 (05378-1004)

### Optional Materials

**Blickrylic Student Acrylic Paint**, Assorted colors (00711-)

**Canvas Tote Bag**, Large, 16" x 18" x 3", with Pockets (15732-1030)

### Ready to order materials?

Go to  
[www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/artfully-altered-fabric-design](http://www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/artfully-altered-fabric-design)  
to access a product bundle for your convenience.

## Process, continued

1. Select a few art supplies to test and experiment using the scientific method of research. As a time and material saver, this can be completed prior to the session and the results shared with the class. Students can also form groups and test different materials. First, allow students to predict results and make a hypothesis on how each test medium will react with the textile medium.
2. Next, perform the experiment. On a piece of muslin or scrap fabric, test drawing materials by making an area of marks. Use whatever drawing materials are available, and use multiple colors if possible. For example:
  - Pencils: graphite, colored, watercolor
  - Markers: waterbased, solvent-based (permanent), gel, paint, etc.
  - Pastels: chalk, color sticks, oil, wax, etc.
  - Other drawing media, such as crayons, ink, charcoal, etc.
3. Brush fabric medium over the marks and observe the results. Do some colors bleed, while others don't? Are there some materials that "repel" the medium, not allowing it to cover?
4. Test paint as well. Acrylic paint, including student-grade acrylic, can be added in a 50/50 ratio. Greater amounts of medium will make the acrylic more transparent, producing watercolor effects.
5. Examine the test results and decide which materials will be best for creating textile designs
6. Next, create the textile design. Designs will vary according to the object being embellished and how much time will be spent making it. Small images and linear "rings" can decorate hems, cuffs, pockets, or collars to keep it simple. Existing designs, such as logos or prints can be enhanced, while large drawings and illustrations can fill up entire areas with color. If desired, create designs on a separate sheet of drawing paper first, then use transfer paper to trace it onto the fabric. This is especially helpful if the design will have a repeating pattern.
7. Place a piece of corrugated cardboard beneath the surface and between front and back sides of clothing. This will keep colors and medium from bleeding through the fabric.
8. Once the design is finished, seal it by applying a very thin layer of textile medium using a brush. For extra protection, brush the back side as well. Allow to dry, then heat set with a warm iron.

## Options:

- Combine textile designs with sewing or embroidery.
- Group projects, such as T-shirts, bags, pouches, etc. can be printed with a basic logo or design, then filled with color according to individual taste.



*Step 1: Experiment with art supplies to determine which ones will work best for textile design.*



*Step 2: Design a pattern, image or illustration to create on an existing piece of clothing or decorative fabric.*



*Step 3: Create the design using selected media and finish by sealing it to the fabric with an acrylic textile medium.*

### Ready to order materials?

Go to [www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/narrative-collage](http://www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/narrative-collage) to access a product bundle for your convenience.



## National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

### **Creating**

**Anchor Standard 1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

**Anchor Standard 2:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

### **Connecting**

**Anchor Standard 10:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experience to make art

**Anchor Standard 11:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.