

“Stick-Start” Abstractions

A beginner's approach to abstract painting, inspired by the works of Wassily Kandinsky

(art + geometry)

Widely considered to be the father of abstract painting, Russian-born artist Wassily Kandinsky became as well known for his teachings, theories, and writings about art as he did for his paintings.

In 1926, while teaching design at the Bauhaus in Germany, he wrote a book called *Point and Line to Plane*. This influential book is, among many other topics, a discussion of the relationship of a point and a line, not just in art but as the primary basis for expression in music, nature, architecture, and time. One of his most famous quotes is “Everything starts from a dot.”

In this lesson plan, students explore the point and line concept using a simple wooden tool to create a variety of marks on a paper surface. These marks become the structure for an abstract watercolor painting.

GRADES 2-8 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Process

1. Place black tempera paint on plates for easy application. Sticks can be dipped in the paint or paint can be applied to the stick with a brush.
2. Begin by taking one end of the Smart Stick and dipping it in the paint. Dot the paint in various places around the paper to make points on a plane.
3. From these points, form a variety of lines using only the stick. Try the suggested techniques pictured on page 2.
4. For best results, allow lines to cross each other and shapes to intersect. Turn the paper frequently to get a fresh viewpoint.
5. Allow 30 minutes for the tempera paint to dry completely before proceeding.
6. Create a watercolor painting over the black lines, using undiluted color and mixing to create a variety of hues. The lines can serve as barriers or guides, but the painting doesn't need to be controlled by the guides. In other words, allow paint to flow together or create shapes that are beyond what the lines define.



Materials (required)

Smart Sticks, box of 1,000 (60407-1000); need 1-2 sticks per student

Blick Premium Tempera, Black (00011-2006); share one bottle across class

Blick Liquid Watercolor, assorted colors (00369-); share colors across class

Rectangular 6-Well Mixing Tray (03068-1006); share one between two students

Blick Scholastic Pony Hair Round Brush, size 8 (05865-1008); one per student

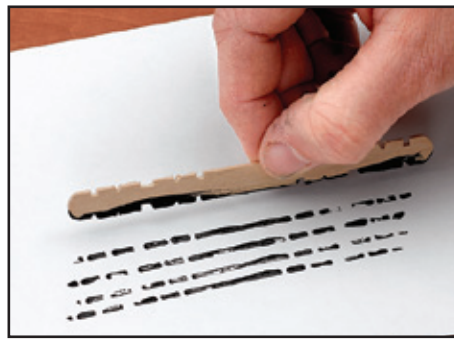
Blick Student Watercolor Paper, 90 lb, 22" x 30" sheet (10028-1022); share one sheet among six students

Optional Materials

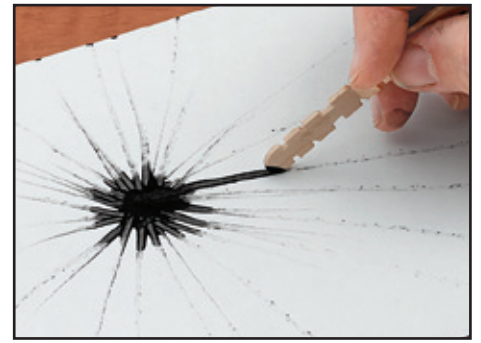
Hygloss Gloves for Kids, package of 12 (32935-1012)



1) Use the broad, flat side of the stick to make single stamps.



2) Turn the stick and use the notched edge to make stamps with a dotted line.



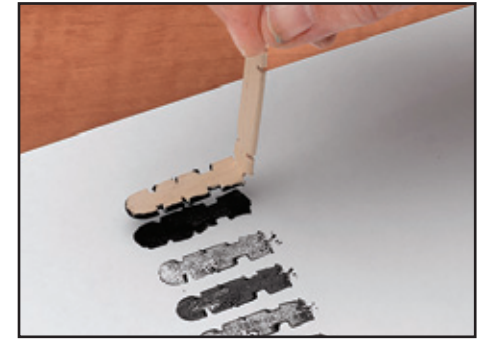
3) Drag paint from the point using one end of the brush.



4) Hold one end of the stick and drag the rounded tip to make random and curvy lines.



5) Place the notched edge against the paper. Hold the stick at one end and turn the other to make arched links and circular marks.



6) Bend the stick at one of the notches and use it as a handle for easy stamping and lifting.



7) Break the stick at a notch to make a small and medium-size tool for creating marks.



8) Use the jagged edge from the break for making brush-like strokes.



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.

Anchor Standard 3:

Refine and complete artistic work.

Presenting

Anchor Standard 5:

Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Responding

Anchor Standard 7:

Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9:

Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 11:

Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

K-4 Students describe how different materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions.

K-4 Students describe how different expressive features and organizational principles cause different responses.

5-8 Students generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work.