

Suits Me



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Create a suit of playing cards reflective of your unique personality.

If it seems like playing cards have “been around forever,” it’s because they have! Well, not forever, but for a really, really long time. But what we know of as a standard deck – one with spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs – wasn’t invented overnight. It took centuries of development, alterations, and input from several countries and cultures to arrive at the modern card deck. Suits and their corresponding graphic icons, called pips, changed over time based on geography and popular culture. Stars, birds, cups, and acorns are just a few examples of different pips. Decks would also be commissioned by wealthy families, who used suits, pips, and iconography to represent themselves. These slips of paper aren’t just toys; they are culturally significant objects that reveal the popular customs of their time.

Although card decks are now standardized, there are several special novelty decks available for purchase. But wouldn’t it be more fun to create your own? Much like the commissions made by noble families in the past, the card design, suit name, and pip should all reflect the individual creating the suit. Drawing and printmaking are used in combination for this project. Begin by picking a theme and carve a base image for the three face cards, another for the numbered cards, and a pip. When complete, grab three friends and shuffle the suits together for a game!

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



Materials (required)

[Speedball Speedy-Cut Easy Blocks](#), 4" x 6" x 1/4", (40425-4804); need one per student, plus one extra

[Blick Lino Cutter Set](#), (40216-1001); need one per student

[Strathmore Artist Trading Cards](#), 300 Series Bristol, Vellum, Pkg of 20, 2 1/2" x 3 1/2", (13321-1020); share 16 packages across class, each student needs thirteen cards.

[Ranger Archival Ink Pads](#), Asst. Colors, Jumbo, (21154-); share at least 5 colors across class

Suggested Materials for Decoration:

[Blick Studio Brush Markers](#), Set of 24, (24532-1249)

[Sakura Gelly Roll Metallic Pens](#), Set of 10, Assorted Metallic Colors, (20713-1010)

[Richeson Collegiate Semi-Moist Watercolor](#), Metallic Set of 12, (01679-1129)

[Richeson Collegiate Semi-Moist Watercolor](#), Matte Set of 12, (01678-1129)

[Richeson Opaque Watercolor](#), Set of 8, (00380-0079)

Optional Materials

[Strathmore 300 Series Bristol](#), Vellum, 22 1/2" x 28 1/2", 100 lb, (13316-1052)

[Midwest Products Mini Carving Block Bags](#), Basswood, (60415-8514)

[Hygloss Wooden Blocks](#), 48 Pieces, Assorted Sizes (60452-1048)

Preparation

1. Show a variety of card decks. Discuss the components of a modern standard deck consisting of 52 cards. There are four suits: clubs, diamonds, hearts, and spades. Each suit has 13 cards: ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, jack, queen, and a king.
2. Discuss the design of icons and simplified images.

Process

11. 1. Chose a theme for the suit. This should be reflective of a specific personality trait, passion, or hobby.
2. Create a number of sketches, keeping in mind that the print needs to fit within a 2 1/2" x 3 1/2" card. The image should be clear and simple and will be further decorated with markers after printing:
 - a. Design the main element of the face card.
 - To create an image that can be read from both directions first create the image, then trace the image using tracing paper.
 - Turn the tracing paper upside down and over, to make an upside-down mirror image of the original drawing.
 - Place the tracing paper on the original drawing, lining up the bottoms of the two drawings. Secure in place.
 - Use a second piece of tracing paper to trace the combination of the two images.
 - b. Create a 2 1/2" x 3 1/2" decorative border for the number cards. This design should leave space to hand letter the number in the top right and bottom left corner of the card.
 - c. The pip is a simplified version of the face card design. This design will be used on the numbered cards. The image should be small enough that it can be clearly stamped the number of times as the card it represents. In other words, it needs to be small enough to be stamped a total of ten times.
3. Use transfer paper and a stylus or ball point pen to transfer the sketches to the Speedball Speedy-Cut Easy Block. One 4" x 6" block should be enough to create all three designs. The block is soft enough to be cut with scissors, allowing each piece to be arranged to reduce waste. The blocks will be used like stamps, allowing the edges of the block to be trimmed in irregular shapes, as needed.
4. Carve the images using a Blick lino cutter. As always, when using a sharp cutting tool, cut way from yourself and your hand.
5. To print, first lay the Strathmore Artist Trading Cards on a piece of newsprint or scrap paper. This will help with clean up, in case of overprinting or ink smears.
6. Use the carved Speedball Speedy-Cut Easy Block like a stamp. Press the block down onto the ink pad, ensuring the image is fully inked before stamping it onto a card.
7. For a standard suit of cards, there should be 13 cards total: nine numbered cards, three face cards, and an ace, which could be represented with the same stamp used for the face cards.
8. When the ink has dried, the cards can be embellished with a variety of media, such as marker, gel pen, watercolor, and gouache.
9. A design will also need to be printed on the reverse side. This is the side of the card that shows when playing, so it should be the same across the class if they want to keep their hand secret when playing a game. The class can design the image together, create proposals in small groups, or create their own and hold a class vote.



Step 1: Transfer sketches to Speedball Speedy-Cut Easy Blocks and carve.



Step 2: Use Ranger Archival Ink Pads to print cards.



Step 3: Embellish the printed design with marker, pen, or watercolor.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize 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.

Connecting

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

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