



## Stencil a Wall or Border – Decorative Technique

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Stenciling is perhaps the most widely used decorative painting technique. The reasons must be its aesthetic appeal and the fact that it takes no particular skill or talent. Anyone can stencil anything. Stenciling also can be an inexpensive fix for decorating and architectural problems. Border a too-small window to make it appear larger. Use a border on a wall just below the ceiling to warm up a cold room or to make a high-ceilinged room more cozy. If you like the look of a chair-rail molding but aren't up to the carpentry involved, try a stenciled border there, too. You need very little paint but likely several colors. Choose colors that coordinate with your furnishings.

### Materials Checklist

- Tape Measure
- Stencils
- Craft Knife
- Painter's Tape
- Straightedge
- Marking Pen and Pencil
- Level (2-Ft. or longer)
- Ladder or Stepstool (If needed)
- Spray Mounting Adhesive
- Latex, Acrylic or Stencil Paints
- Stenciling Brushes or Mini Foam Paint Roller
- Shallow Containers for Paints
- Drop Cloth

### 1. Purchase or Make a Stencil

Whatever your taste, there are pre-cut stencils you can purchase. Generally, the less formal designs, such as flowers and vines, are easier to work with than geometric patterns, especially for borders around windows and doors that have mitered corners.

### 2. Draw a Guideline

To keep your lines straight, level, plumb, and parallel to ceilings and trim, you may want to align your stencil on a guideline. For example, if you want the bottom of the stencil to be 12 inches below the ceiling line, measure down 12 inches from each corner and make a mark. Make additional marks as needed to connect them with a long straightedge, and very lightly pencil a line.



### Tip: Choosing Stencils

- If you live in an apartment and can't paint the walls, pulverize colored chalk, add a little water and you have removable "paint"!
- Bring a dimensioned sketch and some fabric samples as you shop for stencils and paints.

### Feeling ambitious?

If you can't find a design you like in the store or online, try looking through books or wallpaper sample books. Using a copy machine, enlarge/reduce it as needed. Then trace it onto 7-mil Mylar or a clear plastic file folder with a marking pen; or use the copier to transfer it to clear acetate. Using a craft knife, carefully cut out the areas that you want to paint. Make extra copies if you are making a separate stencil for each color. Stack the stencils together and use a hole punch to create registration marks (see Step 4) on the lower edge of the stencils about 1 inch in from each end.



### Tip: Using Stencils

- Acetate or Mylar stencils are transparent so you can see previously applied colors. This makes it easier to align the pattern as you move the stencil along the surface in Step 6.
- Make extra copies so you can bend or cut them as needed at corners.
- If the area being stenciled is out of easy reach use a sturdy ladder, stepstool, or low scaffold to gain access, not chairs or other unreliable setups.

Steps 3 – 6 on Back

### 3. Mask Cutouts

While it's faster to apply several colors at a time, doing so may increase chances for error. Unless there's one stencil for each color, cover the areas that are not being stenciled, except the section being painted.



#### Tip: Wrapping or Mitering a Corner

**Wrap an Inside Corner** - Measure the distance to the corner and transfer the measurement to the back of the stencil. Score (don't cut through) a vertical line at that point on the back of the stencil with a utility knife and it will bend nicely. If you're wrapping an outside corner, score the front face of the stencil.

### 4. Affix the Stencil to the Wall

Spray mounting adhesive onto the back of the stencil and carefully align it with your guideline. (Or use low-tack painter's masking tape - placing a small piece of tape on the surface under the registration holes.) With continuous designs, start in any corner. With non-continuous designs, plan each wall separately so the pattern stops equidistant from the ends. Center the first stencil or place it to the left or right of the centerline, whichever produces the best result.

You need to plan carefully if you are bordering a window or door. The design will need to be mitered ("cut" at a 45-degree angle). You want this cut to be made in a relatively open area in the design so any mismatch is less noticeable. Test your plan by tracing it on paper.



#### Tip: Painting Stencils

- If you want to use a solid color, consider using a mini foam paint roller, rolling out a little of the paint on paper before you roll the surface.
- Shade or accent the edges of a stencil by swirling the brush around the edge but not in the center.
- If paint gets under the stencil edge, move the stencil to cover it and paint that area again to get a sharp edge.

### 5. Load Your Brush

Hold your stencil brush very close to the bristles. Use very little paint. Dab the brush in paint and then dab or swirl it on a paper towel to evenly distribute the paint across the tips of the bristles.

### 6. Reposition the Stencil

Carefully peel the stencil off the wall and clean off any paint. Reposition it on your guideline so that the registration hole/notch aligns with the previous registration mark. (If you move to the left, the right-hand registration hole will align with the left-hand painted mark left by the previous stencil.) Repeat steps 4, 5, and 6 until you finish one color and it dries. Repeat again for subsequent colors.

Find a complete selection of Stencil Ease stencils, paints and brushes in the store or online at [www.truevalue.com](http://www.truevalue.com).

Be sure to use the paint calculator on the site before starting your next painting project.