

ALL ABOUT INK

Everything you wanted to know about inks and how to use them.

Over the past few years there have been huge advancements in the ink industry, fueled in large part by the continued growing interest in all manner of papercrafts. As a result, the characteristics of specific inks change frequently. For example, there was a time when traditional dye inks dried too fast to allow for embossing, but special additives allow manufacturers to produce dye inks with a longer “open time” (the amount of time it stays moist and workable). As a result, it is now possible to use many different types of inks for embossing.

This chart is intended to provide you with information you need to be successful in your projects using rubber stamps. While it is detailed, please do remember to do a test run first, before you jump into your final project- just in case!!

One last thought: Every time you buy an ink pad, buy the reinker as well. That way you will always be able to refresh an ink pad that has gone a little dry, even in the middle of a project. The reinkers can also be used to “paint” pieces, and can be used to dye ribbon. But that is information for another article....

INK CHARACTERISTICS

Waterproof/Permanent	When used with water, or a water-based medium, these inks will not run and smear. Some inks become waterproof if you heat-set them. This is an important characteristic if you plan to stamp a line image in black, and then color it in with water-color pencils, dye-based markers, or water-soluble paints. Some of the best permanent inks for this purpose are India Ink Black (Stewart Superior Corp), VersaFine Black (Tsukineko), StazOn Black (Tsukineko), and Brilliance Graphite Black (Tsukineko).
Fade Resistant/Light Fast	These inks will not fade over time after exposure to direct light. This is important if you plan to display your finished work, particularly if it is in a well-lit, sun-exposed room. Equally important if you want to keep your work for a long time without fading.
Acid-Free/Archival	Acid-free/archival inks are safe to use in scrapbooks and artwork that is intended to be kept for a long period of time. They are manufactured at a neutral pH level (pH 7.0) or higher, and are stable over time. They are lacking the acid that causes paper and photographs to yellow and breakdown (think of what a very old newspaper looks and feels like). Most inks these days are acid-free.
Non-toxic	This means there are no chemicals that are harmful to humans, pets or the environment. (It’s okay if your little one licks the stamp pad...It may not be very pretty, but it won’t hurt them!)

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TYPES OF INKS

<p>Dye Ink Thin-bodied, water-soluble, brightly colored ink. These penetrate the paper surface, and can bleed on uncoated paper, but don't dry on non-porous surfaces. Some may fade when exposed to light, and some can bleed or smear when wet. Most are quick drying, but a few allow embossing if you work quickly.</p>	<p>Pigment Ink Thick-bodied, opaque colors that sit on top of whatever surface they're stamped on. They are slower to dry, and therefore excellent for embossing. They will dry by themselves on absorbent papers, but must be embossed or heat set on coated papers. Most are fade-resistant and water-based.</p>	<p>Alcohol Ink Vibrant, transparent inks that blend with each other to create a variegated or distressed look. They come only in bottles. Use these on non-porous surfaces like glass and dominoes and glossy paper. Use special blending solutions to allow the colors to mix together and to extend the time they remain open.</p>
<p>Solvent-Based Ink These are quick-drying, permanent inks. They have a strong chemical odor and should be used in a well-ventilated area. You must use a Solvent-based cleaner to clean your stamps after using these inks, as they are not water soluble.</p>	<p>Heat-Set Ink Any ink that can be made permanent with heat; all "Craft" ink falls in this category. Some inks not branded as heat-set, can be made permanent by using heat. The heat from an embossing gun is sufficient. In the case of fabric, you can use an iron or put the stamped fabric in your clothes dryer to heat set.</p>	<p>Chalk Ink These are dye-based inks that dry with a soft, pastel, chalk-like finish. They do not contain chalk! The name refers to the final look. The colors are generally muted and subtle. Chalk ink by Clearsnap can be embossed if you work quickly.</p>
<p>Embossing Ink Any ink that stays moist for a period of time can be embossed. Thus most pigment inks can easily be embossed. There are also clear, or slightly tinted ink pads made expressly for embossing, when you want to guarantee that the color of your embossed image remains true to the color of the embossing powder.</p>	<p>Watermark/Resist Ink This is a sticky ink that dries slowly. It is clear, and creates a subtle tone-on-tone look, great for elegant backgrounds. Watermark ink can be used with embossing powder, and with pigmented powders containing mica (eg Pearl Ex or Perfect Pearls). Be sure to clean stamps thoroughly after using this type of sticky ink.</p>	<p>Fabric Ink Ink absorbed by fabric. It won't spread too much, resulting in a very crisp, clean stamped image. Once heat set, it is permanent and washable. These inks are specifically formulated to stay soft on fabric and will not become brittle and flake off.</p>



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THE DETAILS (See also the Notes at the end of the table.)

TYPE OF INK & BRAND	Characteristics*			Paper**		Other Surfaces							
	Waterproof/ Permanent	Fade Resistant	Non- Toxic	Glossy	Vellum	Acetate	Shrink Plastic	Wood	Metal/ Foil	Polymer Clay	Fabric/ Leather	Plastic	Glass/ Ceramic
DYE INKS (use standard stamp cleaner)													
CLEARSNAP													
Ancient Page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	No	No	No
Vivid!	No	No	✓	✓	No	No	No	No	No	✓	No	No	No
MARVY UCHIDA													
Heritage	No	No	✓	✓	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Marvy Matchables	No	No	✓	✓	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
RANGER													
Adirondack	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	Stamp on underside	No	✓	No	No	No	No	No
Adirondack Color Wash	heat set	heat set	✓	✓	✓	No	No	✓	No	No	✓	No	No
Big & Juicy	No	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Distress	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	Stamp on underside	No	✓	No	No	No	No	No
Nick Bantock Dye	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	Stamp on underside	No	✓	No	No	No	No	No
STAMPIN' UP!													
Classic Ink	heat set	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	No	No	No	No	No
STEWART SUPERIOR													
India Ink Black	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	test	✓
Memories Dye	✓	✓	✓	✓	heat set	heat set	heat set	✓	heat set	No	✓	heat set	heat set
Palette (hybrid ink)	✓	✓	✓	✓	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set
TSUKINEKO													
Impress	No	No	✓	✓	slow	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Kaleidacolor	No	No	✓	✓	slow	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
PIGMENT INKS (use standard stamp cleaner)													
CLEARSNAP													
ColorBox	heat set	✓	✓	emboss	heat set	No	No	No	No	✓	No	No	No
MicaMagic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JACQUARD													
PearlEx Pad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RANGER													
Color It	No	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	emboss	No	✓	emboss	No	emboss on leather	No	No
STAMPIN' UP!													
Craft Ink	No	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	emboss	No	✓	emboss	No	emboss on leather	No	No

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STEWART SUPERIOR													
Memories Pigment	heat set	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	emboss	No	heat set	emboss	heat set	heat set	No	emboss
Memories Metallics	heat set	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	emboss	No	heat set	emboss	heat set	heat set	No	emboss
Palette (hybrid ink)	✓	✓	✓	✓	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set	heat set
TSUKINEKO													
Brilliance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	test	✓	✓	No	✓	test	No	No
Encore Ultimate Metallic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	No	No	No	✓	No	No	No
Opalite	✓	✓	✓	emboss	slow	No	✓	✓	No	✓	No	No	No
Splendor	✓	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	No	No	seal	No	✓	No	No	No
VersaColor	✓	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	No	No	seal	No	✓	No	No	No
VersaFine	✓	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	No	No	✓	No	✓	No	No	No
ALCOHOL INKS (require special cleaner)													
JACQUARD													
Piñata	✓	No	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RANGER													
Adirondack Alcohol	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SOLVENT INKS (require special cleaner)													
RANGER													
Archival #0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DecorIt	No	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	Fabric No Leather Y	✓	✓
213 Non-Porous	✓	No	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	Fabric No Leather Y	✓	✓
TSUKINEKO													
StazOn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Fabric No Leather Y	✓	✓
CHALK INKS (use standard stamp cleaner)													
CLEARSNAP													
ColorBox Fluid Chalk	heat set	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	No	✓	Fabric Y Leather No	No	No
STEWART SUPERIOR													
Memories Chalk	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	No	heat set
TSUKINEKO													
VersaMagic Chalk	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	No	✓	test	No	No
HEAT SET INKS (also called Craft or Crafter's Ink; use standard stamp cleaner <i>before</i> it dries; MUST be heat set)													
CLEARSNAP													
Crafter's Ink	✓	✓	✓	emboss	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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RANGER													
Heat Set	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No
TSUKINEKO													
All-Purpose	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	No	No	✓	No	No	✓	No	No
VersaCraft	✓	✓	No	emboss	No	No	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	No	No
Walnut Ink	No	No	✓	✓	✓	No	No	✓	No	✓	Fabric No Leather Y	No	No
EMBOSSING INK (use standard stamp cleaner)													
CLEARSNAP													
Top Boss	emboss	n/a	✓	emboss	emboss	No	No	emboss	test	No	No	No	No
MARVY UCHIDA													
Tinted Emboss	emboss	n/a	✓	emboss	emboss	No	No	emboss	test	No	No	No	No
STEWART SUPERIOR													
The Embosser	emboss	n/a	No	emboss	emboss	No	No	emboss	test	No	No	No	No
Palette Emboss & Watermark	emboss	n/a	No	emboss	emboss	No	No	emboss	test	No	No	No	No
TSUKINEKO													
Emboss (tinted)	emboss	n/a	No	emboss	emboss	No	No	emboss	test	No	No	No	No
WATERMARK/RESIST (use standard stamp cleaner)													
RANGER													
Clear Resist	✓	n/a	✓	✓	test	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Perfect Medium	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	emboss	emboss	rebake	Fabric Y emboss leather	emboss	No
STEWART SUPERIOR													
Palette Emboss & Watermark	emboss	n/a	No	✓	✓	No	No	emboss	test	No	No	No	No
TSUKINEKO													
VersaMark	✓	n/a	No	✓	✓	No	No	No	No	✓	No	No	No
FABRIC INKS (use standard stamp cleaner)													
CLEARSNAP													
Crafter's Ink (heat set)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
STAMPIN' UP!													
Craft Ink (Heat set)	✓	✓	✓	emboss	emboss	emboss	No	✓	emboss	No	Fabric Y emboss leather	No	No
TSUKINEKO													
VersaCraft (Fabrico) (heat set)	✓	✓	No	emboss	No	No	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	No	No

* Characteristics: Essentially all inks are now acid free. But read the label just to be sure if you want something truly archival.

** Paper: All inks will work on matte paper (as opposed to glossy). Some Glossy papers have an absorbent coating, some have a plastic coating, and ink will react differently to each. If in doubt, test a sample first.