

Certified Stenciler Tip Sheet

1. Read the rules and regulations packet carefully and closely. As one CS put it, “Read, read and read again”. The rules are there to keep the process fair and consistent from the applicant’s submission to the judging. It’s heartbreaking to see an artistically excellent submission not pass because of a rule violation.
2. Allow yourself plenty of time to complete the certification project. A good project is time consuming, don’t rush. You can enter one category at a time if you wish.
3. Contact the Certification Chairperson if you have any doubts or questions.
4. Use the judging forms enclosed with your packet to objectively critique your work. The judging forms provide you with an idea for what the judges are looking for when they review your submission.
5. Make a sample board first of your work, experimenting with different colors and backgrounds.
6. View your certification work from a distance and also in different light sources to check color balance. Does one color overpower another? Does the paint color fade away at a distance?
7. View your certification work up close. Is there any run under of paint in the stenciled design? Is there color harmony and balance in your stenciled design? (For example, if you are stenciling green leaves, are you incorporating other colors from the design into the leaf’s colors?)
8. Make sure you have enough registration markings on the stencil overlays. The judges want to see if you understand registration and what it is used for. Don’t just use a dot for a center registration mark. On each overlay draw in with a permanent marker and a ruler, a large horizontal and vertical line that intersect at the center of the design. On your second and any subsequent overlays, trace the contours of the shapes already stenciled, with a broken line. This will allow for proper alignment as you use each overlay. Finally, make sure you find the center of your design, not the center of the paper the design is on.
9. Cutting stencils is an acquired skill, so practice, practice, practice. There are many different materials on the market for cutting stencils, find what works best for you. Applicants who cut with a blade as opposed to a stencil burner, usually receive higher marks.
10. It’s best to choose a room for the wall category that has four straight standard walls with no unusual architectural features such as slanted ceilings. Unusual architectural features can make it difficult to stencil all required elements in the wall category in the manner specified in the rules. Bathrooms can be very challenging! Their small size makes it difficult to fit in all the wall requirements and to take quality pictures.

11. Make sure the pictures taken of the stenciled room show all the elements necessary and how they relate to each other. Take lots of pictures at different times of the day, choose your best three (8x10). Judges must determine if the stencil designs chosen complement the room's existing furnishings and décor. Make sure your pictures reflect that.
12. Many successful applicants use wide cambric cloth for their wall sample proof.
13. It is highly recommended that you include a brief description of the room and the overall concept when you type up your 3x5 card for the wall category.
14. Wood finishing plays a large part in the wood stenciling category. Make sure your finished wood piece is smooth to the touch; sand, sand, sand. Hold it up to the light and look for any build up or irregularities in the finishing process. Remember, a painted wood piece often shows the design better than a stained one especially if that stain is dark.
15. Allow sufficient time for the wood piece to completely cure. Some wood submissions have arrived at convention with the packing material stuck to the wood. You are sending your wood submission during warm weather months, make sure it's completely cured.
16. For your own peace of mind, it may be best to send your Certification submission through a reliable shipper that lets you track your package.