

Instructions for Cutting a Stencil

1. Examine the design you have been given carefully. You must cut a stencil for this design with *at least* two overlays. The purpose of cutting more than one overlay is to separate elements within the design that are too close together thereby creating a sturdier stencil with two overlays. Elements in a design can also be separated by colors thereby making paint application easier. Looking at your design decide which elements you wish to separate into Overlay 1 and Overlay 2. If it's a very intricate design you may need more than two overlays.
2. Measure your design and find the center. Cut stencil material (see end of instructions for resources) to the size of the design allowing an extra inch all the way around. Thus if your design is 6" x 8" cut the stencil material 8" x 10". Make sure each overlay is the same size. With a fine line permanent marker, make a center registration mark on each overlay. Have the center registration marking make a cross from top to bottom of material and from side to side across.
3. Tape your design down on a firm smooth surface. Place the first overlay stencil sheet over the design, lining up the center markings and tape it down. With a fine line permanent marker, trace the elements that you want on your first overlay with a solid line. When you have completed the tracing for the first sheet, place the second sheet over the design (leaving the first overlay in place), again lining up the center markings. Trace the elements you want to have on your second overlay with a solid line. Then trace some of the elements that were on your first overlay, with a dotted line. These dotted line markings are your registration marks for helping you to align the second overlay. Each overlay needs to be labeled with its number and a reference site such as #1 Overlay, Top Right. Remember that when you submit this stencil all labeling must be typed, no handwriting.
4. Once you have traced the pattern onto all your overlays, you are ready to cut your stencil. Remove all overlays from drawing. For cutting the stencil you will need a craft or utility knife (such as an Xacto knife with a #11 blade) which is recommended or a electric stencil burner with a curved tip. You will need to cut on a hard firm surface such as a piece of glass with beveled edges or a large smooth ceramic tile.
5. Since most candidates are successful when using a craft knife, these general instructions will explain how to work with one. Hold the knife like a pencil and rest the heel of your hand on the cutting surface. Always cut towards you, letting your fingers move the knife. Your other hand is used to continually turn the stencil material so that the stencil cutting is always towards you. Work slowly and keep the heel of your cutting hand down. Do not lift your knife until an entire

shape has been cut. When you come to a point or a curve, lift the heel of your hand so you can turn the stencil material but keep the point of the knife down. When you reach the point where you started cutting, turn the stencil so that your blade is in its original position and the shape should pop out. (Much of what was written above has been taken from Stenciling Techniques by Jane Gauss).

6. Continue this technique for each overlay. Change your blade frequently. Make sure when you are done that you label your overlays such as #1 Top Right with a typed label and make sure your typed applicant number is on the back of each overlay. Return the stencil with the three items you are submitting for the CSA program.

7. As mentioned in the CSA Guidelines, you do not have to stencil the cut design. However, it may be helpful for the applicant to make a stenciled proof in order to evaluate how well the design was cut. If a proof is made, be sure to gently clean your stencil well before submitting.

8. Stencil cutting is an acquired skill that takes time to develop. If you have never cut a stencil before, you will need to practice to become proficient enough to pass in the stencil cutting category.

9. Sources for purchasing mylar:

www.royaldesignstudio.com
www.dresslerstencils.com
www.victorialarsen.com
www.dickblick.com

Source for purchasing EZ Cut Plastic:

www.pjstencils.com

Reference sources on stenciling and stencil cutting:

The Art of Decorative Stenciling by Adele Bishop and Cile Lord

Stenciling Techniques by Jane Gauss

