

Decoupage Can Be Deadly

THE ART OF DECOUPAGE

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Decoupage is a method of laminating paper to surfaces. The craft dates back to the seventeenth century where it was first used to decorate furniture. The term comes from the French *découper*, “to cut out.” Decoupage appears complicated but is actually a very simple craft. All you really need to know how to do is cut and paste.

Basic Decoupage Directions

Decoupage will work on just about any surface—glass, wood, plastic, metal, ceramic, clay, terra cotta, slate, leather, plastic, plastic foam, paper, cardboard, and fabric. To begin, clean the item you want to decoupage. Wood should be smooth and dust free. Wipe down glass surfaces with rubbing alcohol or vinegar. Metal surfaces must be coated with rust-resistant sealer. Lightly sand very smooth plastic surfaces before decoupage.

Choose the images you want to decoupage onto the surface. You can work with photographs, pictures from magazines, fabric, greeting cards, wallpaper, wrapping paper, ribbons, doilies, dried flowers, postcards, decorative napkins, or clip art images from a computer.

All-in-one decoupage medium is the easiest to use as it works as a glue, sealer, and finish. Some mediums require an acrylic sealer to be applied as the final coat. Check the directions on the medium you purchase.

Materials: Item to decoupage, images for decoupage, rubber brayer or wooden craft stick (optional), foam brush, scissors, decoupage medium, tweezers (optional)

Carefully cut out the images to decoupage. Using the foam brush, apply decoupage medium to the wrong side of the image. Position the image on the item being decoupage. If using small images, a tweezers aids in placement. Eliminate wrinkles, air bubbles, and excess medium by gently pushing down on the image with your fingers, the brayer, or craft stick and working from the center outward. Remove any excess medium with a damp cloth. If using multiple images, glue each in place in the same manner. Allow decoupage to dry completely. Once dry, apply several coats of decoupage medium to the entire surface, allowing each coat to dry completely before applying the next coat.

Tips

Patience is key when it comes to decoupage. Always allow plenty of time for the medium to dry completely between coats.

If using images from your computer, print with a laser printer. Images printed from an inkjet printer will smear when the medium is applied.

For flimsy papers, apply a layer of medium to the back and allow to dry before cutting out the image.

If you're decoupage a curved surface, place the print face up on a damp sponge to moisten the paper first.

For papers that are printed on both sides, apply a coat of white acrylic paint to the reverse side to prevent the image from showing through to the front once it's decoupage.

Experiment with tearing paper instead of cutting it to create a deckled-edge look.

Eliminate any stubborn air bubbles by pricking them with a pin and pressing down firmly with your fingers.

The more finish coats of medium you apply, the more the paper images will recede into the surface, making them look like they were painted on.

Potichomanie Decoupage

Potichomanie Decoupage originated in Victorian England. The technique was developed to simulate the look of Chinese vases, a popular decorative element in wealthy Victorian homes. Potichomanie Decoupage created a convincing, inexpensive substitute for those who couldn't afford real Chinese vases. Potichomanie literally means "pot crazy" and is derived from the French words *potiche*, meaning large vase and *manie*, a fad.

In Potichomanie, a print is decouped to the inside of a glass container, and the interior of the glass is painted with latex or acrylic paint to produce a porcelain-like finish. Choose a clear glass container with a wide mouth, such as a bowl, vase, or brandy snifter and a print or prints that will fit within the container.

Carefully cut out the image to decoupage. Place the printed image face up on a damp sponge to moisten the paper. Once the paper is damp, apply decoupage medium to the right side of the image. Position the print inside the glass. Press on the paper to mold it to the curve of the glass, working from the center outward to remove any air bubbles. Allow the decoupage image to dry completely. Once dry, paint the interior of the glass with a latex or acrylic paint.

Illuminated Decoupage

Illuminated Decoupage is a marriage of the decoupage print and paper foil to create a play of light within the decoupage item.

Using a craft knife, carefully cut away areas of the print you've chosen to illuminate, such as the windowpanes of a country cottage. Cut out pieces of paper foil slightly larger than the cut-out portion of the print. Apply decoupage medium to the foil and place behind the cut-out area of the print. Apply decoupage medium to the back of the print. Finish the project by following the Basic Decoupage Directions.

Embossed Decoupage

Embossing will give a three-dimensional look to decoupage. The easiest way to create this effect is by choosing to decoupage prints that are already embossed. If you can't find any, it's easy enough to emboss the prints yourself. It's best to choose images printed on heavyweight paper or card stock for this technique.

Don't trim the edges of the print. Place the print against a window with the back facing you. Using a pencil, outline those areas of the print you wish to emboss. Place the print face down on several layers of felt. Using the handle of a spoon or rounded paint brush, press down on the areas you've outlined. Gently continue to work the paper until you've created a slight depression in the paper. Don't press too hard; you'll tear the paper.

Once you've achieved the desired effect, follow the Basic Decoupage Directions for applying the print to the item you've chosen to decoupage, but don't press down on the embossed areas of the print as you're smoothing it, or you'll flatten the embossing.

Repoussé Decoupage

Repoussé Decoupage is a technique that adds an even greater three-dimensional quality to decoupage by incorporating papier-mâché. The technique works best when used on rounded objects and requires two sets of identical prints and dry papier-mâché (available at craft stores.)

Cut out the first print. Place the image face up on a damp sponge to moisten the paper. Apply decoupage medium to the back of the print. Position the print on the item chosen to decorate, pressing the paper to mold

it to the curve and working from the center outward to remove any air bubbles.

From the second print, cut out the areas you want raised. Place the image face up on a damp sponge to moisten the paper.

Follow the manufacturer's directions for mixing the papier-mâché. The consistency should resemble dough. Apply a small amount of papier-mâché to the back of each cut-out shape, leaving 1/8"-1/4" around the cut edge of each shape. Apply decoupage medium and position in place over the identical area of the first print, carefully pressing down the edges of the cut-out shape. As the papier-mâché begins to set up, use the handle of a small paint brush to form indentations to define the raised areas.

Allow the repoussé to dry completely (several days) before finishing the project by following the Basic Decoupage Directions.