

Alternative Marbling: The Basics

Note: the fabric prep is a bit involved, but it must be done for the cloth to pick up the pattern.

Student supply list

- scissors – paper and fabric
- 1 permanent black marker, such as “Sharpie” or “Rub-A-Dub” for name marking
- cardboard box or plastic tray – I like to use an empty liquor box measuring approximately 10”x15” and cut down to about 3” in height.
- 12 or more white plastic (13 gallon kitchen type) trash bags – the inexpensive kind from the dollar store
- one or more 1-2 gallon buckets (as a rinse bucket and transfer bucket)
- roll of paper towels
- wear old work clothes, smock or apron and even old shoes
- Don’t hesitate to write, call or email me if you have any questions about the supply list

Handy List (only if you have it, then bring it)

- A selection of acrylic and/or textile paints you already have in your stash to experiment with the marbling techniques we’ll cover in class
- plastic or cafeteria type tray
- one roll of masking tape (partial roll is fine)
- Freezer paper (a partial roll is fine)
- Rubber and/or disposable gloves if you like protecting your hands
- We need a couple of irons and ironing boards, about 4-5 for 20 participants.

Fabric

2-3 yards of prepared cloth. Bring one type or a selection of hand-dyed or commercially dyed pastel, dark, or even white, cotton, silk, linen, polyester, nylon, or any blend of fabric to marble. Bring a total of 2-3 yards of fabric. Some good choices include: cotton lawn, sheeting, twill, broadcloth, sateen, gauze, voile, and duck. If you want to marble silk, look for crepe de chine, shantung, pongee, dupionni, chiffon, organza, gazar, taffeta and china or habutae silk.

Fabric prep

Your fabric **MUST** be properly washed for long lasting results.

1. Wash your fabric (yes, even PFD or PFP fabric) in the machine, or by hand, with hot water and a heavy-duty laundry detergent. Hang to air dry or dry in the clothes drier. **DO NOT** use any fabric softener in the washer **OR** drier sheets in the clothes drier.
2. Test fabric for absorption by dropping one drop of water on your washed and dried fabric. If it is absorbed immediately and without hesitation, then go ahead and soak in the alum soak. If the water beads up, or hesitates at all, then wash it again in hot water with a heavy-duty laundry detergent. If you are asking the question, is there any hesitation? Wash it again.

ALUM SOAK: If you are wondering where to get alum ... here are some mail order suppliers, and it is also available from some grocers and hardware stores that have pickling equipment. You will need about 2 ounces to make a 4 gallon bucket.

Via mail order:

PRO Chemical & Dye: in MA

HYPERLINK

["http://www.prochemical.com/Glossary/Alum.htm"](http://www.prochemical.com/Glossary/Alum.htm)["http://www.prochemical.com/Glossary/Alum.htm"](http://www.prochemical.com/Glossary/Alum.htm)

Earth Guild: in NC

HYPERLINK

["http://www.earthguild.com/products/dyes/dyemord.htm"](http://www.earthguild.com/products/dyes/dyemord.htm)["http://www.earthguild.com/products/dyes/dyemord.htm"](http://www.earthguild.com/products/dyes/dyemord.htm)

TALAS: in NYC

HYPERLINK

["http://apps.webcreate.com/ecom/catalog/product_specific.cfm?ClientID=15&ProductID=17060"](http://apps.webcreate.com/ecom/catalog/product_specific.cfm?ClientID=15&ProductID=17060)["http://apps.webcreate.com/ecom/catalog/product_specific.cfm?ClientID=15&ProductID=17060"](http://apps.webcreate.com/ecom/catalog/product_specific.cfm?ClientID=15&ProductID=17060)

Dharma Trading: in CA

HYPERLINK ["http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/3334-AA.shtml?lnav=chemicals.html"](http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/3334-AA.shtml?lnav=chemicals.html)

["http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/3334-AA.shtml?lnav=chemicals.html"](http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/3334-AA.shtml?lnav=chemicals.html)

Follow the directions that come with the alum for the proper proportions for soaking. If there are no directions, mix 2 ounces of alum in 1 gallon of warm water.

Procedure: While wearing rubber gloves, add the washed and dried fabric to the alum soak. Stir the fabric intermittently for 10 to 15 minutes. Make sure the fabric is completely submerged and can move freely. Don't cram it. If you have lots of fabric to soak, do it in batches, making sure all the fabric in each batch can "swim freely".

While wearing rubber gloves, remove the fabric and lightly squeeze, DO NOT wring out, excess alum soak solution. DO NOT RINSE! Hang the fabric so it is completely flat on a clothesline to dry (the fabric will be dripping a lot, this is ok) and make sure it is not folded back on itself or folded in half on the clothesline. DO NOT use a clothes dryer to dry Alum soaked fabric.

Cut 2 yards of your prepared cloth into approximately 9"x9" squares, and mark each piece with your name. Bring the remaining prepared cloth as one piece, to cut up in class to the appropriate size.

Press with a cool-ish iron to remove any creases. If the creases are not flattening out, then turn the iron a little hotter. The iron does need to be hot enough to remove the creases.

Discard alum soak after 2 to 3 months or if alum has crystallized around the edges of the soaking bucket. Do not store alum soaked cotton fabric for longer than 2 to 3 weeks before marbling, because the alum disintegrates cotton fibers.