

## Adding Paper to Fabric

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Adding paper elements to your projects give you the opportunity to personalise the materials you use and extend your story telling. You can add photos, script, stamped elements, newsprint, preprinted images and so much more. There are a couple of variations on this theme; one gives you clear images, the other is more abstract. This technique, in its various forms, uses gel medium to bond and seal the paper elements. Gel Medium is one of my must have, go to products that get used all the time for one thing or another. It works well with paper as it; dries clear, is water proof and is flexible so it will drape and can be stitched through. You can use any paper at all. I have glued everything from tissue paper, napkins, newsprint and everything through to high quality gift wrap. The fabric that you adhere it to can also be anything, from sheers through to denims or upholstery fabric.

To create this effect, there are just a couple of steps.

- Spray or paint, print or draw on the paper first and allow this to dry thoroughly.
- Cut or tear the paper into bits. How you do this will influence the background. You may have structured cut shapes or random ripped strips.
- Place some gel medium in a bowl and dilute with tap water, so that it has a consistency of unwhipped thickened cream. You can use the gel medium straight out of the jar, but the finish will be stiffer than if you were to dilute it slightly.
- Paint the background fabric with the gel medium in the general position of where you will place the fabric. Place the fabric on the wet medium, right side up and press into place.
- Finally, use a small amount of extra medium and paint over the top of the adhered paper. This process does three things: removes air bubbles from behind the paper; ensures that there is medium all the way to all of the edges of the paper; and seals the paper to make it water resistant or water proof.
- Leave this to dry and then you can continue to embellish, paint, stamp, applique, quilt or embroider over the top. Once dry, you can iron over the surface.

The second way of incorporating paper has become known as paper lamination. This is a variation of gel medium photo transfer. It is sort of a mix between the paper adhesion above and the photo transfer. It creates a much more abstract fabric. There are two key differences to the techniques above: the background fabric becomes foreground fabric and it should be a transparent sheer such as an organza and instead of gluing the images to the background fabric, face up, we are going to layer the images first, then place the fabric over the front of the images, forming a foreground.

The steps are:

- Lay out your images, building a collage.
- Place sheer fabric over the top of the images.
- Use a liquid gel medium or one that has been diluted. You want it to be the consistency of thin cream. Apply over the fabric through a silk screen or if working on a small scale, stencils.
- Leave to dry - either leave for several days so that the medium has cured completely or heat with an iron or heat tool to fully dry out.
- Soak in a bucket of water until fully damp. Wring out excess water.
- Working from the back, rub off the excess paper.

What is then left is a very light fabric with the ink and a very thin layer of paper adhered to the surface. This is a great technique to play with.