

Embossing 101: Embossing Cards, 3D Embossing Folders, Custom Embossing Folders, and More!

Have you ever noticed a beautiful and intricate raised pattern or design on a piece of paper, metal, fabric, textile, or other surfaces? This is the art of embossing. Created through the use of engraved dies, plates, or **embossing folders**, the raised impression gives a lovely texture and detail to any kind of artwork or craft. What exactly is embossing? **What are embossing folders**, and how do you use them? Where can you buy the best **3D embossing folders**? What is the difference between heat embossing and dry embossing? If you want to find out more about the beautiful art of embossing, keep on reading!

All About Embossing Folders for Card Making: History, Types, Techniques, and More!

I. A Brief History and Introduction to Embossing Folders

While not as unique as **stamping** or **die-cutting**, embossing isn't a new arts and crafts technique. Back in the 15th century, personalized stationery was created by using heated stamping plates. This early form of embossing was seen as high-quality and professional work, making it not just expensive but limited and well-sought after as well.

The 19th century saw the advent of printing services. This turned embossing into art since printing became more affordable and much more attainable even for regular people. According to **Signet**, "the most notable embossed product from this era is embossed and engraved coins, which are still available from a penny press as novelty gifts." These embossed coins are often called "the 'stretched' or 'elongated' coin with an image embossed on the surface of the material."

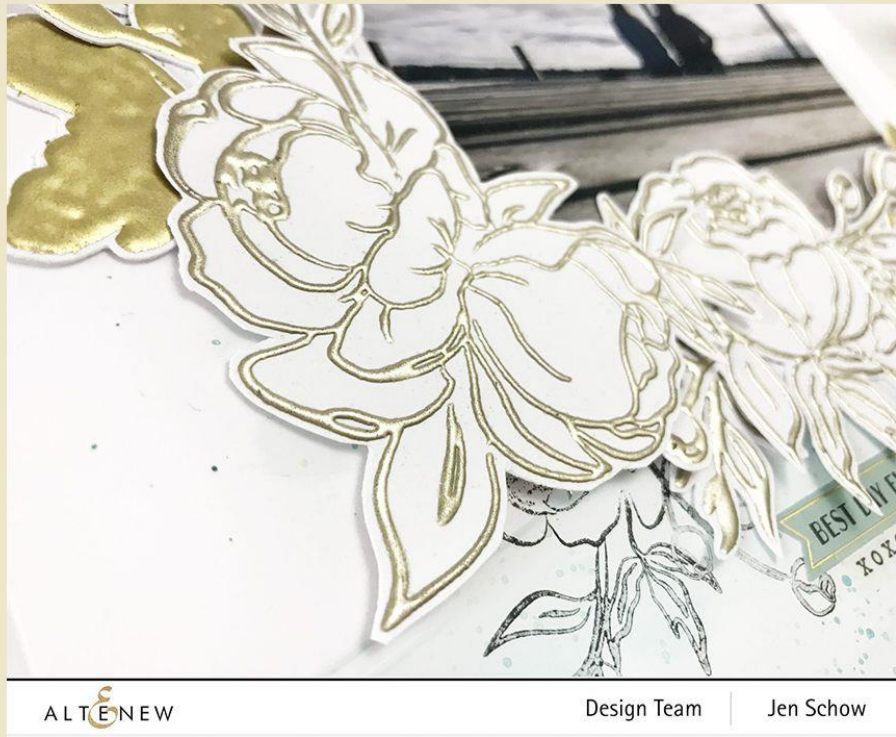
Since then, businesses thought the beautiful and elegant raised element created by embossing could add a wow factor to their company's overall brand and identity. Various materials and surfaces were embossed from then on - from paper and metal to leather and textiles. The notary public used embossing seals to authenticate documents or mark legal documents. The seals they used were either an adhesive seal or a clamp-like embossing device. Government agencies and registered professional engineers also used embossing seals to authenticate original copies of documents or certify signatures on documents. Postage and stamps (from early 18th century Britain) also used embossing on both papers and envelopes.

As time went by, various techniques involving embossing also became popular in the arts and crafts industry. **Embossing cards, embossing envelopes, and 3D embossing folders** became popular. While it is unclear how embossing folders came about, it has been a staple in every crafter's stash.



What are embossing folders?

Are you familiar with the heat embossing technique in paper crafting and card making? **Embossing folders** will give you the same result but in a different way. Generally, the term “embossing” refers to any technique that results in a raised pattern or design on a surface such as paper, metal, leather, or textile. With heat embossing, the raised design is created by stamping an image using embossing ink and adding **embossing powder**. An **embossing ink** works as a “glue,” making sure that the powder sticks to it. It is also called a watermark or resist ink and dries slower than regular dye or pigment inks. Heat is then applied to the stamped image (with a heat tool or a heat gun) to melt the embossing powder. The combination of the ink and the powder will result in a shiny and lovely texture and a gorgeous 3D effect.



Embossing folders, on the other hand, are used in a technique called “dry embossing.” Dry embossing, much like heat embossing, also results in a beautiful 3D effect. However, it raises the paper itself. **Embossing folders for card making** are often translucent and made out of a thicker plastic material. They have designs, patterns, or images engraved or embedded into them. When you place a piece of **cardstock or paper** inside the folder and run it through an embossing machine, the pressure will transfer the design into the paper. This will give the paper an instant raised effect.

II. Industry Updates (Latest News and Trends)

In the world of paper crafts, **embossing folders for card making** have often been overlooked, especially with the popularity of photopolymer stamps, craft metal dies, and other paper crafting tools.

Earlier **custom embossing folders** have basic designs such as flowers, foliage, shapes, lines, and simple patterns. Thanks to technology and crafting companies’ creativity, a plethora of intricate designs and patterns are now available in the market. With the popularity of paper embossing rising, companies and business owners have started embossing on glass, metal, cloth, and other surfaces. Embossing on a wide variety of products - whether it is heat embossing or dry embossing - became a great way to personalize items and gifts. The demand for more unique and eye-catching designs

on custom embossing folders paved the way for 3D embossing folders.



What exactly is the difference between **standard embossing folders** and **3D embossing folders**?

Standard Embossing Folder

3D Embossing Folder

It comes in a single unit

It comes in a single unit or in sets

It has an indented side and a recessed side

It has an indented side, a recessed side, and a few undulations and layers

Made of thinner plastic

Made of thicker plastic

Requires two embossing plates

Requires only one embossing plate

A promotional banner for a free online class. On the left, there is an image of purple embossed flowers on a card. The text 'CRAFTING 101' is in bold black, and 'Embossing Folders' is in a cursive font. Below this is a circular portrait of Lydia Evans with her name 'LYDIA EVANS' underneath. To the right, the text reads 'Try This FREE Online Class for Heat Embossing Beginners!' in a clean, sans-serif font.

CRAFTING 101
Embossing Folders

LYDIA EVANS

Try This **FREE** Online Class
for **Heat Embossing**
Beginners!

Try Embossing Folders Today!

III. Manufacturing and Materials

There are some similarities in the manufacturing of **custom embossing folders** for paper embossing and metal embossing. In metal embossing, dies are used to imprint on sheet metal. According to [Wikipedia](#), the dies' production involves *"engraving the desired image into several metal plates, which are the embossing dies for use on an embossing press."*

How Do Embossing Folders Work?

The process requires using a set of two thick plastic folders; one raised side (the embossing side) and one recessed side (the debossing side). Since it is a set, the two folders perfectly fit when pressed together. Placing a paper or card stock in between the folders and running them through an embossing machine forces it into the raised side, therefore creating the embossed impression. The pressure applied to both sides of the folders squeezes the paper's fibers and creates the 3D or raised area in the cardstock. This easy and cost-efficient process can instantly add a beautiful texture and elegance to even the most simple piece of paper or cardstock.

What Are the Different Embossing Folder Sizes?

Sizes of **embossing folders for card making** vary by manufacturer. The standard dimensions available in craft stores are **4" x 6"**, **5.5" x 4.5"**, **5" x 7"**, and **6" x 6"**. The variation in sizes is helpful when creating different kinds of paper crafts - from cards to scrapbooks. Smaller ones used for borders are about six inches long and can be one to two inches wide. With the cornucopia of available designs and sizes out there, embossing cards has never been this easy!

What Are Embossing Machines?

Like everything in arts and crafts, advanced technology helped create various tools, machines, and materials used with embossing folders. Embossing machines have gained popularity along with the folders. While some **die-cutting machines** also work as embossing machines, the latter do not and cannot work as die-cutting machines. It is crucial to find an embossing machine that can fit most of your **embossing folders for card making**.

There are two types of embossing machines: *manual embossing machine* and *electronic embossing machine*. The former is usually hand-cranked using a lever or a handle on the side, while electricity is needed to run the latter. This makes the latter better at creating an embossed image since it adds more pressure. Both embossing machines work and operate the same way, though; you just need to consider the price point. Embossing machines will also include two or more plates. These plates are vital in the die-cutting and embossing process.



Here are some of the popular embossing machines available in the market today, along with some pros and cons.

Embossing Machine Brand	Pros	Cons	Type
Sizzix Big Shot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -adjustable multi-use platform -reasonable price -super versatile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -a bit bulky -not very travel friendly -limited accessories 	Manual
Cuttlebug by Cricut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very versatile -works with most embossing folders and dies from other companies -great price point -travel friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -C plate (used for other companies' dies and embossing folders) is sold separately -extremely thick materials could get stuck in the machine -6-inches cutting capacity, so you can't work on larger embossing folders 	Manual
Gemini Junior Portable Die Cutting and Embossing Machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -quieter and faster than most machines -can accommodate several folders at once -comes in 3 different sizes -compact and small -very portable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -too pricey -concerns about the cutting plates not lasting long -incompatible with wooden and plastic dies 	Electric
Spellbinders GC-200 Grand Calibur Die Cutting & Embossing Machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -compatible with dies and embossing folders from other brands -can accommodate paper as large as 8.5" x 11" -super versatile and user-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -too bulky -a bit pricey -a few complaints about difficulty turning the handle and getting the plates to go through 	Manual

<p>Sizzix Vagabond 2 Embossing Machine (Inspired by Tim Holtz)</p>	<p>-works with a lot of Sizzix dies and embossing folders -ease of use -unique and chic design and style</p>	<p>-needs an adapter (sold separately) to be able to use other manufacturers' dies and embossing folders -too pricey</p>	<p>Electric</p>
--	--	--	-----------------

IV. Types of Embossing Folders

Before you start **embossing cards** and other paper crafts, knowing the different types of **embossing folders for card making** is essential. Should you go for **5x7 embossing folders** or **6x6 embossing folders**? Where can you buy themed ones such as **Christmas embossing folders** and **birthday embossing folders**? Which one is the best embossing folder for you?

- **Standard Embossing Folders**

For the longest time, standard embossing folders were the only type of embossing folders available in arts and crafts stores. Also known as 2D embossing folders, these add a raised layer onto your **cardstock or paper**. These are perfect for creating quick and instant backgrounds and adding texture and layers to any paper craft project. Sizes may vary depending on the manufacturer, but these are usually 1/16" thick.

- **3D Embossing Folders**

3D embossing folders are relatively new to the paper crafting world. Like 2D embossing folders, these will also add an instantly gorgeous raised effect on any paper or cardstock. There are also a variety of sizes available: 4" x 6", 5.5" x 4.5", 5" x 7", and 6" x 6" and are usually 1/8" thick.

Altenew's 3D embossing folders are 6" x 6" in size, making them perfect for landscape and portrait designs. Unlike the standard ones, these have both raised and flat areas, as well as in-betweens. The added undulations and layers will create a beautiful 3D look on any cardstock, making the image pop.



Pro Tip! Spritzing your cardstock or paper with water will slightly soften up the fibers, therefore preventing them from cracking. This process will ensure that the folder's layers will easily be pushed into the paper and create a crisp embossed image.

- **Cut and Emboss Folders**

Die-cutting and embossing cards usually go hand-in-hand in paper crafting. This is why some crafting companies now offer cut and emboss folders. To put it simply, cut and emboss folders will give you an embossed finish while also die-cutting some areas. The raised embossing details and die-cutting elements will provide any paper crafting project texture and interest. Most designs include borders and frames.

Get The Best 3D Embossing Folders Here!

V. Uses of Embossing Folders

The use of **custom embossing folders** in paper crafting has been a popular and timeless technique that often gets overlooked and underestimated. With exciting techniques such as layered stamping, watercoloring, and alcohol marker art gaining popularity, **embossing cards** seemed too basic for most crafters. When you think about it, though, the fabulous extra texture and raised layer added through dry embossing can add a wow factor to your card instantly. You don't need many crafting supplies or tools to get an impressive result with these folders. All you need is cardstock or paper, your **custom embossing folders**, and your embossing machine.

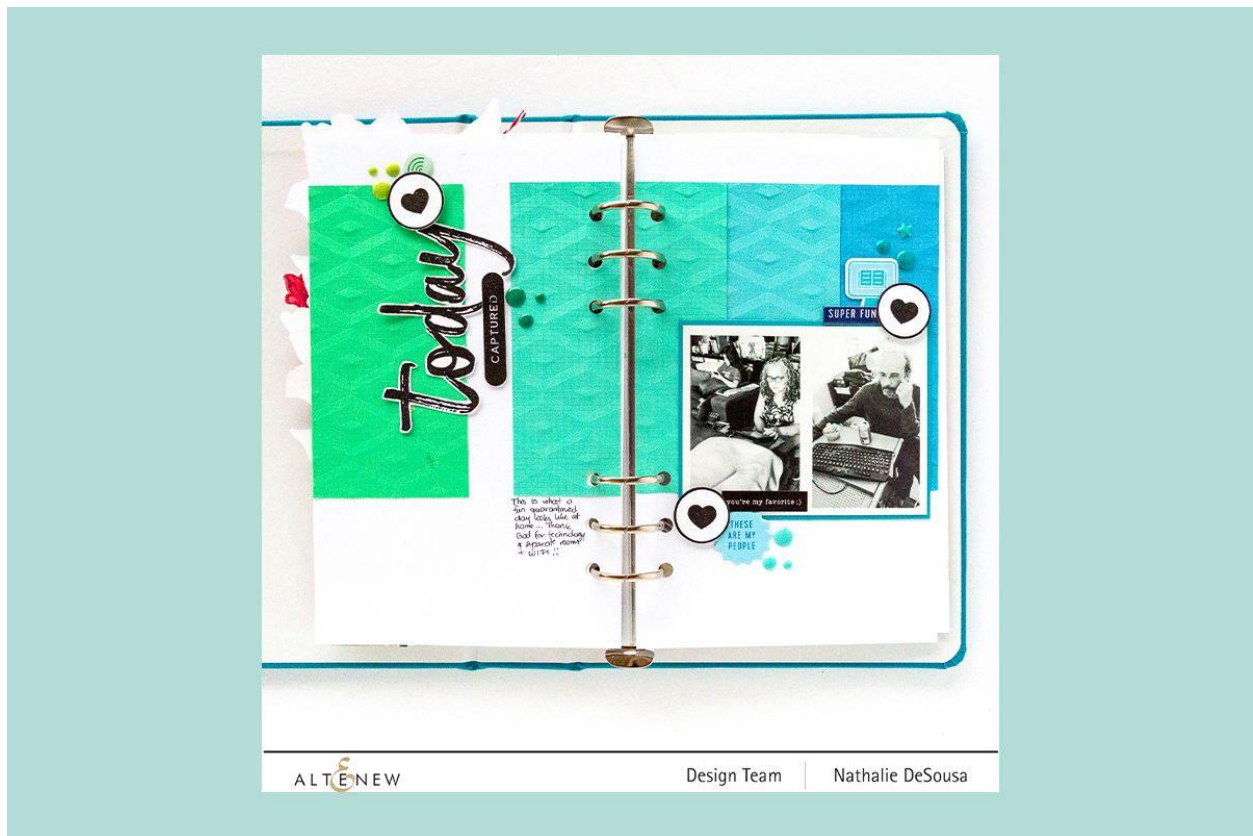
Here are a few ideas and techniques for using your **embossing folders for card making** and other paper crafts.



1. Ink it up! You can add color to your embossed image using your **dye inks** and an **ink blending tool**. Check out [this blog post](#) where Therese shows two easy ways to add color to your dry embossed cards. [Here](#), Virginia used **ink sprays** to add color to her embossed image. Nathalie used **mixed media inks** and **watercolor** for her projects in [this blog post](#).

2. Use different types and colors of paper or cardstock. Embossing on white cardstock is classy and elegant. However, you can use various types of cardstock or other paper types to add a wow factor to your handmade cards. Here are some paper and cardstock that you can use with your **3D embossing folders**.

- Colored cardstock
- Vellum
- Parchment
- Specialty paper



Pro Tip! When using vellum paper for embossing, make sure it's a thicker type of vellum to avoid breaking and tearing.

3. Deboss it! The fun thing about dry embossing is that, unlike in heat embossing, there will always be a debossed side. While most would go for the embossed or raised side as the focal point of their project, you can always mix things up and use the debossed or recessed side. In [this blog post](#), Norine shows how to create an elegant, letter-pressed look by inking up the raised side and using the debossed side.



ALT E NEW

Design Team

Norine Borys

4. Use it on scrapbook pages. 6x6 embossing folders are perfect for embossing cards, embossing envelopes, and other smaller paper crafts. However, you can also use these for your 12" x 12" scrapbook pages, either as a background or an embellishment! Check out how Lilith used it as a backdrop for her scrapbook photo [here](#).

5. Try sanding! Sanding is one of the easiest and quickest ways to elevate your embossed design. It will give it a more rustic look. This is done by gently using fine sandpaper or sanding block to sand the raised areas, bringing up the white core of the paper.

Pro Tip! Do not go crazy with the sanding. Do it gently and lightly to avoid losing the raised areas of your embossed image.



ALT E NEW

Design Team

Tania Ahmed

Other creative ideas and techniques to try are heat embossing, **watercoloring**, adding color with chalk, using **embossing paste**, dry embossing your die-cuts, embedding die-cuts into your embossed image, and adding **gold or silver sequins**.

How to Use Embossing Folders for Beginners

Out of all the paper crafting supplies readily available in the market today, embossing and debossing folders are probably the easiest to use. As long as you have the necessary tools, you can emboss (or deboss) to your heart's content! In recent years, card makers have figured out a variety of fun and cool techniques to help them stretch the use of their **6x6 embossing folders**. Some of these techniques are super easy to recreate, while others would require more practice and keen attention.

For beginners, it's always a good idea to start with the most basic and straightforward embossing and debossing technique. Once you get the hang of it, you can easily start recreating those Instagram and Pinterest-worthy embossed and debossed handmade cards. The best way to practice is to try something as clean and simple as Laurie's gorgeous greeting card in [this blog post](#). Don't get fooled by all the white space on her card - there's more to it than that.

Here's how to achieve this clean, simple, and classy debossed design on your handmade card:

1. Prepare a **white cardstock**.
2. Grab your chosen embossing or debossing folder. Laurie chose the [Mega Hello Debossing Folder](#) for her handmade card.
3. Place your white cardstock inside the folder and run it through your embossing machine. Make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions as every machine is different.
4. For a bit of interest, Laurie stamped a [tiny sentiment](#) in black ink at the bottom part and a [tiny heart image](#) in red ink.

This classy and elegant handmade card will take you less than 5 minutes to create and you can easily make a huge batch too. In case you prefer embossing instead of debossing, you can still follow the same instructions above, just swap your debossing folder with an embossing one. Easy peasy, right?

Are you still wondering **how do embossing folders work**? Do you still need more ideas and lessons on **6x6 embossing folders**? Watch the video below or sign up for [this Crafting 101 class](#)!

VI. Are You Ready to Try Crafting With Embossing Folders?

Whether you are a beginner or an experienced paper crafter, dry embossing is a fun, easy, and quick way to elevate your **handmade cards**, scrapbook pages, journals, and other [mixed media project](#). The wide variety of embossing folders might overwhelm you, but don't fret! Now that you know a few basic knowledge and facts about these nifty crafting supplies, you can decide which size, type, or design suits you best. If you want to know more about **Altenew's embossing folders**, check out [this short unboxing video](#) or visit [our store](#) to see our collection.

A promotional banner for a free online class. On the left, there's a collage of purple flowers and a brown card. The text 'CRAFTING 101' is in bold black, with 'Embossing Folders' in a cursive font below it. A small circular photo of Lydia Evans is next to her name. To the right, the text reads 'Try This FREE Online Class for Heat Embossing Beginners!' in a clean, sans-serif font.

CRAFTING 101
Embossing Folders

LYDIA EVANS

Try This **FREE** Online Class
for **Heat Embossing**
Beginners!

[Learn More Ideas and Techniques Using Embossing](#)

[Folders Here!](#)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1 - What's an embossing folder?

An embossing folder is a translucent white plastic folder with an embedded design on it. It has a positive or raised side and a negative or recessed side.

Q2 - How do you use an embossing folder?

Place a cardstock or a piece of paper between the embossing folder and run it through an embossing machine. Instructions vary depending on the embossing folders and machines' manufacturers, so make sure to check these.

Q3 - Can I use embossing folders without a machine?

Yes, you can use embossing folders without a machine. Here's a simple technique you can try. For this technique, you will need an embossing folder, cardstock or paper, rolling pin or brayer, and soft surface (e.g., foam mat, mouse pad). To use embossing folders without a machine, place your cardstock or paper inside the embossing folder, aligning it with the design. Lay the embossing folder on a soft surface. Then, use a rolling pin or brayer to firmly roll over the embossing folder, applying even pressure. Roll in different directions to ensure the entire design is embossed. Finally, carefully remove the cardstock from the embossing folder to reveal the embossed pattern. *Please note that using this technique may not yield the same level of depth and detail as using an embossing machine. However, it can still create a subtle embossed effect on your paper crafts.

Q4 - What types of materials can be used with embossing folders?

Here are some materials that work well with embossing folders. Cardstock is the most commonly used material with embossing folders. It is sturdy enough to hold the embossed design and comes in a variety of colors and textures. Regular or specialty papers such as vellum, parchment, or mulberry paper can also be used with embossing folders. However, they may require a different pressure or technique to achieve the desired results. Metallic or holographic foils can create stunning and shiny embossed designs. However, it is important to use a heavier weight foil to ensure it can withstand the pressure of the embossing folder. Thin leather sheets can be embossed to create unique textures and patterns for DIY projects such as wallets, purses, or book covers. *It is important to note that not all materials will work well with embossing folders, and some may require experimentation to achieve the desired results. Always refer to the manufacturer's instructions for recommended materials and techniques.