

# Altenew Guides for Paper Crafting

## Essential Information About Die Cutting for Paper Craft

Have you heard about **dies** and **die cutting** but weren't sure what these words mean? Have you marveled at beautiful paper crafting creations made with dies and wondered how you could make these, too?

Most paper crafters, stampers, card makers, and scrapbooking enthusiasts are passionate about **dies** and die cut machines. Die cutting is a great crafting option that makes the crafting process more convenient, easy, and fun. It allows crafters to experiment more with paper, provides them with more time to try out new **crafting techniques**, and offers tons of possibilities for card making, scrapbooking, journaling, and other paper crafting projects.



### History of Die-Cutting

Believe it or not, die-cutting, or the act of cutting out shapes using **dies**, has a long history that dates back to the mid-1800s. According to Colvin Friedman, die cutting started as a way “to cut leather for the shoe industry more efficiently.” Back then, making shoes was very labor-intensive

and time-consuming since the holes in the leather were individually punched by hand. The manual process yielded many inconsistencies between the shoes, hence the introduction of die cutting. Since then, cobblers were able to “create sole patterns that could be reliably replicated through the die cutting process.” With the advent of the mallet handle **die cutting machine** came the mass production of soles and standardized sizes for the masses.

It wasn't until the early 1900s when further innovations in dies and die cutting machines were invented. The creation of the swing-arm clicker press helped the shoemaking industry and other industries to die cut different shapes and sizes with various sized and shaped dies. This then started the mass production of products like plastic, metal, tubing, and food items.

The 1950s saw the invention of hand-held **die cutting tools** and small table machines, which were mostly used for homes and schools. What started as a simple and convenient way to help cobblers speed up the shoemaking process has turned into a staple tool in every crafter's home.

## What is die cutting?

Die cutting is a process by which thin materials are cut to shape with the implementation of a die. Interestingly enough, **die cutting** is not limited to paper crafting. In fact, it is used widely in the manufacturing world to cut elements such as sheet metal, rubber, plastic, cloth, and many other substances for mass production. This process is even used to cut the template shape for cardboard boxes as well as around the paper shipping label so that items can be shipped all around the world. It is clear that many of the items we take for granted in our everyday lives include some kind of dies in their production.

This guide provides everything you ever need to know about what die cutting is, the different types of dies that are available on the market, the different types of **die cutting machines**, the benefits of having dies, how dies are manufactured, and more.

### **Know Your Dies! From Cover Dies to Layering Dies, Learn More About Different Craft Dies!**

Within the crafting world, dies are a popular tool often used to cut paper and cardstock or decorative elements like felt or cork sheets. The process of die cutting is used for **card making**, **scrapbooking**, **journaling**, and other **paper crafting projects**.

For at home or personal use, die cutting machines fall into two main categories: manual and digital.





Although durable, steel rule dies are thick and cumbersome and do not lend themselves well to the home crafter. Because of this, many crafters gravitate towards wafer-thin dies.

### **Wafer Thin Crafting Dies**

Wafer-thin dies are as their name suggests are thin, small, and lightweight. Due to this, they are also more affordable than steel rule dies. The cutting edge of the die is not sharp which makes them very safe to use. The pressure of the die against the paper as it passes through a die cut machine is what cuts out the desired shape.





Wafer-thin dies usually fall under three main categories: stand-alone dies, coordinating dies, and nesting dies. Stand-alone dies are dies which can be used and enjoyed on their own. They come in tons of different shapes and sizes to be used for a wide variety of paper crafting projects.

Here are some examples of popular stand-alone dies:

- Delicate Word Dies - These can be used as sentiments on cards or titles for scrapbook layouts. Whether it is the word “hello”, “thanks”, or “love”, a delicate word die provides a beautiful touch to any handmade project.



- **Shape Dies** - Flowers, leaves, balloons, **geometric shapes**, and more! There is a myriad of options out there for shape dies, and crafters love to use them on their cards, scrapbook layouts, journal pages, and other projects.

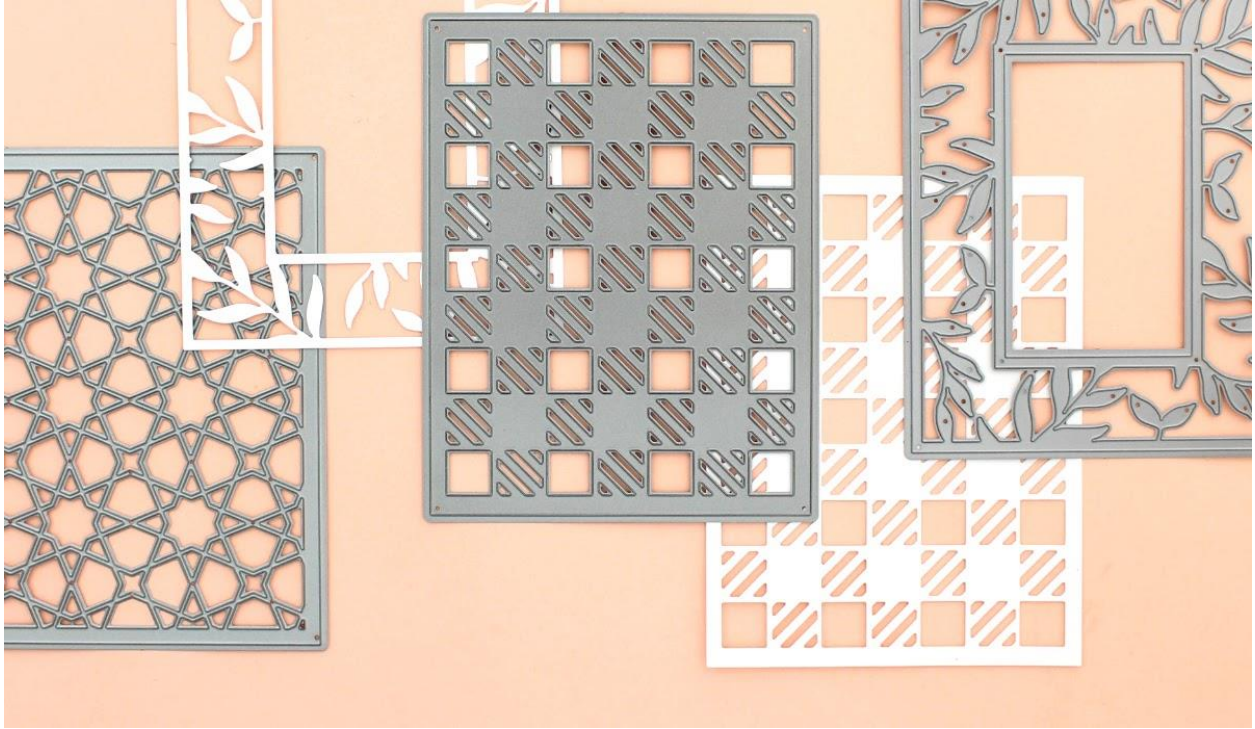




- **3D Dies** - Creating a three-dimensional paper craft project can be difficult on your own, but 3D dies can make the process a breeze! You can use these dies to create boxes, ornaments, DIY home decor, and more.



- **Cover Dies** - These are designed to cover the front of a card. The most standard card size in the United States is A2, which measures 4.25" x 5.5". A cover die will typically match these measurements as a perfect card fit.



- **Layering Dies** - Layering dies are designed to cut different shapes that will be stacked and adhered on top of one another in the final project. These popular dies can range from simple to more intricate ones with 2 or more layers. **Floral layering dies** are especially popular among paper crafters, as they offer the ability to piece together a three-dimensional paper flower with only a few simple steps.





## The Advantages of Using Wafer Thin Crafting Dies

Wafer-thin dies are often open in the center to allow the user perfect and convenient placement as they plan their project. This opening also aids in the cutting of coordinating stamped images. Gone are the days of tediously fussy-cutting around your stamped images! These dies make cutting very detailed images so easy. **Coordinated die cutting** is especially useful for crafters who suffer from arthritis or other disabilities, as it is often less stressful on the hand to use dies than to use scissors.

**Nesting dies** also take advantage of an open center. This allows manufacturers to nest multiple sizes of the same shape within each other. This cuts down the cost of the die set and provides the crafter with many size options for their projects!

**Start Your Die Cutting Collection Now!**

## Die Cutter

Dies are not all you need to get beautiful perfect cut-outs for your paper crafting projects. You also need a specially designed **die cutting machine** to allow you to cut out your dies. However, there are many different die cutting machines and **die cutting tools** to help you make the most of your die cutting experience.

Die cutting machines are a staple in most paper crafters' craft rooms. These handy machines allow crafters to die cut designs with the dies in their collections. The different types of die cutting machines that are available on the market allow for use with different types of dies, crafting techniques with dies, and certain crafting styles.

## Manual Die Cutting Machine

**Manual die cutters** are the first type of die cutting machine that crafters tend to use. These die cutters contain heavy-duty rollers and are sold with a collection of plates. These plates are unique to the machine and cannot be swapped out with plates from another company. The thickness of the plates allows the precise amount of pressure needed to cut out the desired material.

Watch the quick video below to see how to use a manual die cutting machine:

To use a die cutter, you must create something that is called a "sandwich." This "sandwich" is simply the order in which you place your materials into the machine. This refers to the way you place the plates, die, and cutting material to go through the machine when cutting. Different sandwiches can be used for different effects (such as embossing the material instead of cutting all the way through). There are a variety of sandwich options that are sold by various paper crafting and stamping companies to accommodate different crafting uses. The most common sandwiches are as follows:

- *Base Plate*
- *Material to be cut*
- *Die (cutting edge facing down)*
- *Top Plate*

The sandwich is then passed through the machine's rollers via a hand crank or electronic button (depending on the machine itself). If the material is not cut cleanly, more pressure may be required. In these instances, a shim would be used to add more pressure and weight on the die.

The video above shows how to use a metal shim on your die cutting machine.

A **metal shim** is another die cutting material that is often mentioned in association with dies and die cutting. The shim can be anything from a makeshift scrap **piece of cardstock** or a thin metal plate designed by the manufacturer to be used in the machine for this particular purpose. Many paper crafters keep a metal shim handy near their die cutting machine.



## Digital Die Cutting

Another type of die cut machine that is used by paper crafters is the digital die cut machine. As the name suggests, digital die cut machines are controlled using digital tools, such as a cartridge or computer program. These machines differ greatly from manual die cut machines. One key difference is that these machines use a sharp blade instead of pressure to cut the desired material. To use the machine, the user selects or creates a design using special software, and the design is then sent to the machine wirelessly or through a cable. The desired cutting material is then passed through the machine, often adhered to a carrier provided by the manufacturer. Once the cutting is complete, it can be ejected from the machine.





Clearly, there is a lot to know about the world of die cutting, dies, and die cut machines. These **handy crafting tools** provide interest, convenience, beauty, and joy to the crafting experience, and paper crafters worldwide enjoy taking advantage of die cutting features. Frequently associated with stamping but not limited to **stamping techniques**, dies offer so much to the art of **card making**, **scrapbooking**, **journaling**, and even **home decor**.



Hopefully, this guide has provided you with the answers to all the questions you had about **dies** and die cutting. We hope you have a great time using dies in your own crafting projects. Have fun!

## Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Q1 - What does "die-cut stamps" mean?

This is where you stamp your chosen design and then cut it out using a matching die. This means you will not need to fussy cut the image, saving you time while crafting.

Q2 - How do you make a die cut card?

There are a few ways to do this, the easiest way is to use cover dies. With your card base open add the cover die to the front panel of the card. Die cut, being careful to offset the top plate so it does not cut the edge where the fold line is. Once this has been run through a die cutting machine, simply remove the die and fold the card on the score line to create a beautiful die cut front.

Q3 - How do you use a die and stamp set?

There are a couple of different ways to use dies with matching die sets. The most used way is to stamp the image you require, then take the die that matches the image, place this around the stamped image then run this through a die cutting machine. This will cut the image out so you don't have to.

Q4 - How do you dry emboss using dies?

You can also emboss with dies. What you will need is an embossing mat that works with your die cutting machine. Simply place your cardstock on top of the embossing mat then place the die into position on the cardstock then run through your die cutting machine to create an embossed impression.

Q5 - What are the different types of dies in crafting?

There are many types of dies that you can use on your handmade projects. The main ones being nesting dies, cover dies, stand alone dies and matching dies. Nesting dies are normally simple shapes that nest together to create different sizes of mats and frames. Cover dies are usually 4 ¼" x 5 ½" and will create die cut panels that fit onto the front of an A2 card base. Stand alone dies come in all different sizes and designs and will cut these perfectly to add to your projects. Matching dies work with stamped images to cut them out so there is no need for fussy cutting.

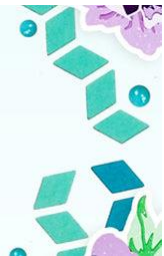
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Different **Dies** and  
**Die Cutting Techniques!**

**CRAFTING 101**

*Dies*



TERI WILSON



**Let's Start Die Cutting Together!**