



## HOW TO

### *Make a block printed tablecloth*

**You can easily re-purpose old sheets** they make brilliant tablecloths! Alternatively, as I have, buy a plain tablecloth that's already been hemmed. Just like napkins, tablecloths might have to cope with a lot of thrills and spills, so make sure you pick a quality washable fabric. I carved this design into lino pre-mounted onto a fibreboard block. The very simple stripe comes to life once printed across the expanse of the fabric. If you are concerned about the symmetry of your pattern, you will need to measure the cloth, measure your block, and plan for the best method of fitting the design within the printing area.

**MATERIALS** table padding • old sheet or plain, hemmed, tablecloth • pins • foam sponge or sheets of wool felt, as required, to create a 'springy' printing pad • fabric paint • plastic sauce bottle • paintbrushes • carved lino pre-mounted onto a fibreboard block



Photographs by Kristin Perers.



If you would like to make your tablecloth from scratch, first measure the length and width of your table. Next decide on the 'drop' for the skirt (the amount of fabric you'd like to hang over the table), and add that measurement, plus a 3cm hem allowance, on all four sides. If you're making a short-skirted tablecloth, allow at least 10cm for the skirt to drop, as any less will probably look too short. Cut your fabric to the required size. Fold and pin a narrow double hem all the way around. Stitch the hem to secure it in place.

Wash your hemmed tablecloth at the highest temperature the fabric can take. Once dry, iron out all the creases and you're ready to print following the instructions. Once you have completed your pattern and the fabric is dry, set the paint by giving the tablecloth a long, gentle press with a dry iron on the highest temperature the fabric can take.

1. To print a tablecloth you will need a much larger work area. Ideally you want a table large enough to fit the width of the fabric, so you can print down the length.

2. Prepare the table. If you're right-handed, position the fabric so that the top left corner is

in the correct position for your first print. If you're left-handed, position the fabric in the top right corner. Pin the corners securely in place, then smooth the fabric out as flat as you can. Tuck any overhang neatly under the table – making sure you won't stand on it as you work. (I have a nifty shelf under the table in my studio that I use to gather the overhanging fabric.)

3. Prepare the printing pad. As this design is quite large, I created a printing pad using an old piece of foam sponge wrapped in a few sheets of wool felt. While it's important to create a pad with a 'springy' feel to allow the block to absorb the paint, it's best not to make the pad too thick – as it will simply absorb (and waste!) your paint.

4. Pour the paint into the bottle and dilute with water until you achieve a creamy consistency. Shake the bottle well, remembering to keep your finger over the top. Gently squeeze the paint onto the pad. After making sure the pad is well and evenly covered in paint with the help of a paintbrush, load the block with paint. Starting in the top left corner, print your way across the width of the fabric.

5. Focus your mind as you continue the process again and again and again, loading your block with paint before every print. Repeat until the fabric in the print area is completely covered.



6. Next, gently and carefully move the printed fabric away from you – up and over the top of the print table – so you can continue printing down the length of the fabric.

Be mindful that if the printed fabric is left to hang over the side of the table as you continue to work, your print may smudge when the tablecloth hits the floor. Try supporting the printed end of the tablecloth with a cardboard box, chair or bench to prevent unwanted additions (marks or blotches) to your design.

7. Continue printing until the tablecloth is fully covered.

**DESIGN NOTES** You might find that your block doesn't fit exactly within the edges of your tablecloth's hem. In these instances, I place a piece of paper over the hem so that when the block lands on top of it, it only prints in the centre of the cloth, leaving a plain hem behind.

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