



## Beyond the Needle Design Techniques

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If you look in your closet, chances are you own a screen-printed t-shirt or two. Screen printing is extremely popular, especially in the personalized fashion business. Screen printing can be a bit intimidating at first, but there are methods that allow even beginners to find success. The basic idea of screen printing is pretty simple and works similarly to stenciling. In the screen-printing industry, screens are coated with a photo-sensitive chemical (emulsion) and images are burned into the screen. Although using photo-emulsion is the preferred method for professional screen-printers, it is a longer process and requires special equipment.

For 4-Hers who have never screen-printed before, contact paper is a great option to get them started. The following instructions will guide you through screen-printing with contact paper:

**Supplies needed:** contact paper, exacto-knife, self-healing cutting mat, Silk screen (110 mesh is best for beginners), Ink (use water-based ink that was made for printing on textiles), screen-print squeegee, Screen-print press (can do without this), t-shirt or other garment.

### Instructions:

- 1) Start with a dry, blank silk screen.
- 2) Cut a piece of contact paper a bit larger than your silk screen
- 3) Draw the design on the contact paper – draw your design on the front of the contact paper (non-sticky side) or reverse the design if you're drawing on the sticky side.
- 4) Peel the contact paper and stick to the back (the side that is flat) of the silk screen. Make sure that the contact paper is stuck really well, especially in the spots by the design that was cut out - use the back of a spoon or a credit card to make sure all parts are completely adhered to the back of the screen.
- 5) Place the t-shirt or garment onto a screen-printing press or put a piece of cardboard between the layers of the shirt.
- 6) If you're using a press, place the screen in the press and tighten the bolts securing the screen in place. If you're not using a press, simply lay the silk screen onto of the t-shirt or garment that you want with the flat side (back side) down.
- 7) Place a small glob of screen-printing ink on one end of the design and use a squeegee to pull the ink at an angle across the silk screen.
- 8) Let your design air dry and use an iron to heat set the ink.
- 9) Clean the screen using water – spray nozzle works the best; as long as your contact paper is still on the screen, you can reuse it.

