DIY Marbled Paper

It is unclear where marbled paper originated, but the practice is thousands of years old. Different styles of marbling developed in China, Japan, and the Middle East beginning in the 14th century, each taking on different styles, media, and cultural meaning.

This technique is called marbling because it creates designs similar to the naturally occuring look of marble stone. Today, we see paper marbling most often on the endsheets of books or notecards, but similar techniques can also be used on objects like cups or trays. You can create your own marbled paper with a few household items! Here's how:

Materials needed

· Nail polish
· Toothpicks or sticks
· Old container
· Paper (The heavier the better. Watercolor paper or cardstock work best, but this will work with computer paper too, if you are careful with Step 6.)
· Water

Recommended: Gloves

Step 1: Decide which color nail polishes you will use for your paper.

Think about how the colors compliment or clash with each other, and how they might interact on your paper.

Step 2: Put warm water in a container that is large enough that you can fit your whole paper into it.

This might mean you have to cut your paper. We would recommend using a container that you don't want to use again, because it is possible the nail polish will stain it.

Step 3: Get the toothpicks, nail polish, and paper ready – once you start this next step, you will need to move pretty quickly.

Nail polish is heavier than water and will sink to the bottom of your container if you wait too long!

Step 4: Put on your gloves and drop drips of polish into the warm water.

They can be as large or small as you like. Use one color or many colors, it's up to you. Then, using a toothpick, gently trace through the nail polish to create the marbled effect. Again, how you do this is up to you – be bold and experiment! But remember, move quickly because the nail polish will start to sink.

Step 5: Take one piece of paper and gently place it on top of the water/nail polish.

Push down gently everywhere you'd like to try to have marbling. If you see water seeping through the paper, stop pushing in those places. This step should take about 15–20 seconds.

Step 6: Gently lift up your paper.

> The nail polish should have moved from the surface of the water onto your paper.

Let your paper dry, and use it for whatever you'd like!

> You could make notecards and send people letters, create origami, use the paper in other projects, anything you can imagine!

When you're done with your project, take a picture and share it with us too! You can tag us on social media (**@designmuseumchi** on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) or email us at **info@ designchicago.org**. We're looking forward to seeing your work!