

The background of the page is a vibrant marbled paper with swirling patterns in shades of red, pink, and white. A white rectangular text box is centered in the upper half of the page, containing the title in a serif font.

SECRETS TOLD: THE MYSTERIES OF MARBLING PAPER

The first paper marbler lived thousands of years ago in ancient Persia. From the beginning, marbling was a mysterious art and marblers, like magicians, did not reveal the tricks of the trade. But you can read on to learn some of those secrets, and then try your hand at this ancient art.

Just as no two fingerprints match, no two marbled papers are ever exactly alike. When you marble, there is always mystery in the making.

There are many ways to marble paper. Some methods are very difficult and take lots of practice. This way is quite easy, creates beautiful papers, and is fun to do alone or with a group.

YOU WILL NEED:

Large table covered with several layers of newspapers
Large aluminum pan at least 2 1/2" deep and about 12" x 15" around (An 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper must fit in it with a little room to spare. A turkey pan is about the right size.)

Water

Wallpaper paste

Small jars of oil-based model paint thinned with a little turpentine

Small paintbrushes, one for each jar of paint

Stylus (pencil, stick, wire, or nail)

Paper no more than 8 1/2" x 11" in size, such as newsprint, typing paper or scrap paper

Strips of newspaper about 2" wide and 15" long

Newspapers to spread on the floor

Wastebasket

1. Fill the pan with about 2" water and thicken it by stirring in a little wallpaper paste. Using a brush, carefully spatter paint onto the surface of the water, one color at a time. Because oil and water do not mix, the paint will float on the surface of the water. With your stylus, swirl the paint to make any pattern you choose. The design will look best if you use no more than three colors of paint.

2. Choose a piece of paper to marble and write your name in the corner on the back, so you will be able to find it later. Carefully lower one edge of the paper onto the surface of the water and slowly let the paper down onto the painted surface. Make sure all four corners of the paper touch the paint, then gently lift the paper off the water and put it paint side up to dry on newspapers on the floor.

3. Take a strip of newspaper and dip it into the pan to skim the leftover paint off the surface of the water. You are ready to add more paint and make a new pattern.

4. When your marbled paper is completely dry you can use it to frame a picture, cover a box, book or can, or wrap a small gift for a friend or relative.

5. You can marble other things besides paper. Try taping a piece of plain cloth to a board that will fit in the marbling pan. Add paint to make the design you want, then dip the cloth carefully into the paint, and set it aside to dry. See what happens when you try this way of painting on a piece of wood or a flat surface such as slate, or a boiled egg, or a balloon filled with air.

—Judy Kelly