



Marbling is the process of floating fabric paints on the surface of a thick cellulose solution (called "size"), somewhat like oil on water. The floating paints are swirled into patterns. Then you capture your design by laying a treated piece of fabric or paper down on top of the paint to transfer the swirls to the fabric. It is that easy!

Things you might need:

Fabric, scarves, ties or other items to marble — silk, mercerized combed cotton, broadcloth, etc.

-[Alum](#)

-Size, I like to use [Carageenan](#)

-Waterbased Paints: the NEW [Jacquard Marbling Colors](#) are the very best, but any of the following can be used: [JMC2](#), [DNF](#), [SETA](#), [JABI](#), [SETT](#) and [SETOP](#), [LN](#), golden liquid acrylics.

-Rakes, combs, implements for pulling the paint:

-Make your own with cardboard and bamboo skewers

-Wide tooth hair combs

-Tooth picks

- foam board strips

-Wine corks with toothpicks

-Newspaper strips or paper towels

-Synthrapol

-[Eye Droppers](#)

Size

Carrageen (Blender type): make 24 hours before it is going to be used. Use 2 tblsp per gallon of warm water, slowly add to the water through top hole in blender lid. Blend until it's fully dissolved, make as many batches as you need to fill your tray or frame.

Refrigerate for 24 hours to obtain the best viscosity and to allow trapped air bubbles to rise to the surface.

Before use it needs to be warmed to room temperature.

Reusing the size

The "size" can be used over and over again. It can be kept for 3 to 4 days at room temperature before it begins to mold and must be discarded. To keep it longer, refrigerate. (Mark and tape the container clearly so it is not eaten.) Warm it to room temperature before using. If the "size" has been sitting awhile, clear the surface of tension and dust with strips of newspaper before using.

Preparing the fabric

Pre-wash the fabric with Synthrapol or regular fabric detergent and dry. This will wash out anything that is likely to prevent the paint from sticking.

For Fabric: 8 tblsp (4 oz) Alum in one quart water

Dip the fabric into the alum solution or if necessary, such as for paper, sponge it on very thoroughly. Lay it out flat to air dry, stretched if possible to avoid wrinkles.

The fabric must be treated and must be dry before it is marbled. It is best to use the treated pieces within 24 hours. If you can't, then wash out the alum and try again another time. Careful! Too much Alum or too long of exposure weakens the fabric! Weakened fabric can shred when pulled on or even during sewing and washing, and sometimes doesn't become obvious until it has been washed more than once.

Caution - Ironing the fabric to remove wrinkles once the fabric has been treated is not recommended, as alum plus heat can weaken the fabric too, or even scorch. Small wrinkles will not affect the print.

Floating the paints

This used to be the hardest part! Within every recommended brand of paint, every color used to be different, and some, you could never get to float, others simply spread too much. With other paints, you may need to thin them some before they will float.

With an eye dropper, lay the paint on the surface of the "size" as gently as possible. The drop should spread out to a circle 2-3" in size. As the paint spreads out on the surface some may sink to the bottom - it's ok as long as most of it stays on the surface. If too much seems to be sinking, thin the paint a bit more. If the drop spreads out too far, thicken the paint by adding a bit from the bottle.

Keep adding paint to the surface until they seem intense or you are happy with the proportion of the colors

The order in which you drop the paints directly affects the look of the finished piece. As you add new colors, the ones added previously will intensify as they are pushed together. You can add new colors next to, or on top of, the ones already there. If you are working with anything other than the Jacquard Marbling

Colors, some paints will spread faster and push others out of the way more, you should keep notes if you want to repeat effects. The colors don't mix, but rather stay separate. You can remove the paint and start over by laying newspaper on the surface to pick up all the paint from the surface. Paper towel can be used also.

Applying the paints to your fabric

Lay the middle of the fabric down first and let the ends roll out onto the surface so no air is trapped underneath. Leave the fabric down for 2-5 seconds before lifting it off. Try to "peel" the fabric off the surface so it doesn't fold onto itself.

Dash to the sink or have a bucket handy and gently rinse with cold water to remove the alum and excess size. Now lay flat or hang to air dry. Don't wring or squeeze as the paint will not be 100% set until it has dried and been ironed.

When the item is completely dry, heat set according to the heat setting instructions for the brand of paints you are using.

After each "printing" you can either add more paint or clear the surface with newspaper and start a new design.

Cleaning Up

Skim the surface of the marbling base with a strip of newspaper. If you're planning to reuse it soon, cover the paint mixture with plastic wrap or airtight lids. The size is usually good for more than one session.

If you're not using your size again pour it down the toilet or run lots of hot water with it down the drain to avoid clogs.

Rinse the marbling tools in lukewarm water without soap. Soap residue on tools can contaminate future prints.

Rinse the tray thoroughly in a sink. Again, do not use soap.

All the information was compiled from Dharma Trading Company. Please go to their website dharma trading.com for more information.