

HOW TO MARBLE

While marbling is a complex art form, a little basic knowledge and you'll be exploring the possibilities. Some patterns may require a little practice, but you'll soon amaze yourself making gorgeous marbling.

EQUIPMENT

Marbling tray	Alum (aluminum sulphate)
Carrageenan (size)	Towels or paper towels
Stick	Broomstraw brush
Combs & rakes	Sponge & Gloves
Skimmer foam	Plastic for table or floor
Acrylic paint	Plastic trays
Marbling gall	Water tub

TREAT YOUR PAPER, CLOTH

Mix marbling alum to hot water and let it cool.

Watercolor paper: use 2 tablespoons per quart.

Paper treated with acrylic or other impervious surfaces: use up to 4 tablespoons (1/4 c) per quart.

Wear gloves to keep your skin from drying out.

Write your name on the back of the paper.

Wipe alum water across your paper using a small sponge. The paper should be just damp, not completely wet. But make sure to cover the entire sheet — any gaps and the paint will not stick there. Lay flat to dry - flat paper marbles better.

Cloth: Launder until all sizing is removed. Mix 1/4 cup alum in 1 gallon water and soak cloth. Air dry.

PREPARE A MARBLING TRAY

Add a layer of carrageenan water (size) to a tray about 1/2 inch deep. Skim the surface to break the surface tension and remove any bubbles.

APPLYING PAINT

Stir the paint each time before you apply it.

Always start with Black unless you want pastel colors. Shake your broomstraw brush or tap it on the edge to remove heavy drops. Then tap your brush with your finger over the tray (or vice versa) to release a spray of small droplets. Use enough paint to make a medium grey.

New applied colors will not mix with the existing paint. The black will condense between the other colors, making them appear darker and richer. Red is the second color to apply, if you want red in the mix. Applying red or black later, they will often sink to the bottom of the tray.

Add even coatings of several colors. Keep adding more paint until the whole surface is coated.

The goal is for your paint to float on the surface of the carrageenan size. Paint that sinks is wasted but won't hurt the marbled pattern on the surface and submerged paint makes it harder to see the pattern in your tray. Large drops are more likely to sink! If your paint is sinking, it may be too thick. It might benefit from a bit of water or gall water, which helps paint spread. But too much gall and your paint spreads too far.

PRINTING

Lay the paper flat over the surface of the tray, without trapping air bubbles. Hold a sheet of paper with the top right corner in your right hand and the bottom left corner in your left hand, over the tray. Lower until the top left corner touches the surface. Continue to lower the paper as evenly as you can, releasing the corners just before they hit the size. Run your finger around the perimeter to be sure all edges contact the paint. Printing can be challenging and may take a few tries to master.

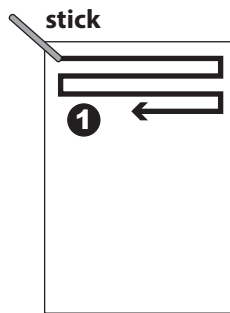
RINSING THE PAPER

Immediately lift the paper with your fingertips or nails on the bottom corners and lay it face up on a plastic tray to carry to the water tub. Don't let it drip back onto the tray to keep extra alum out of your size. Carry to the water tub and submerge your sheet in water. Gently pour water over the paper to rinse away the carrageenan size. It takes less than a minute. If you rub too hard, some paint may come off. It's OK if the paint is still a bit slimy, but don't touch the surface except on the two corners as the wet paint will smear. Hang it on a line, or for thin papers, lay over cardboard or flat over a tube to dry. Take care that no two sheets touch or they may not come apart. If you accidentally printed your pattern on the non-alumed side, all the paint will wash off! This happens to everyone sooner or later.

SKIM YOUR SIZE

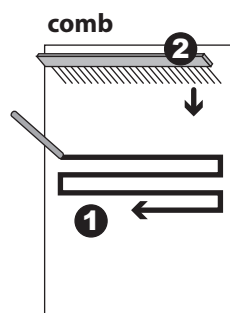
Clean the surface of the tray with a foamcore skimmer, then wipe away collected excess paint and alum residue onto a newspaper or paper towel. This is especially important after marbling fabric or papers that absorb more alum.

MARBLING PATTERNS



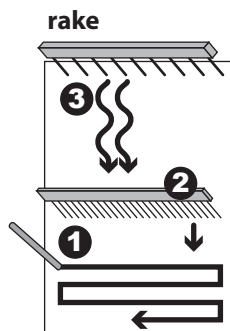
MAKING A GEL-GIT

After you've applied paint to the size, use your stick to cut through the surface, turning dots of paint into long, thin strands. Start 1/2 inch from the back and drag the stick in a straight line across the tray. Slide it along the side of the tray a half-inch toward you and cut again in the opposite direction. Continue until you're at the front. Gel-git is Turkish for to-and-fro. It's an essential, though time consuming, step.



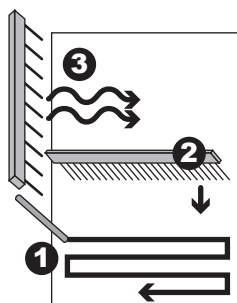
MAKING A NONPAREIL (nohn-pa-RAY-yuh)

First make a gel git. Place a comb 1/2 inch from the back of the tray, with teeth into the size. Then with the comb touching one side of the tray, drag it straight down to the front of the tray. Make sure the comb's teeth do not leave the size and the board does not touch the size as you drag. Don't fret if your pattern is irregular, nonpareil is French for unique pattern.



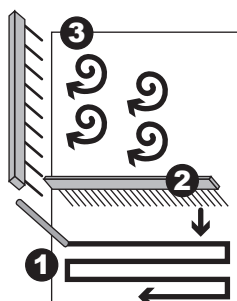
THE SWIRL*

Make a nonpareil. Put the rake across the back of the tray with nails touching the bottom (some nails might be hanging outside the tray). Pull the rake toward you making gentle S curves until reaching the front.



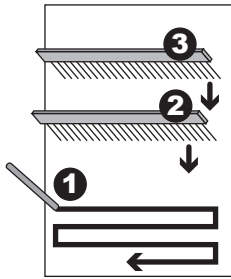
FEATHER PATTERN*

Make a nonpareil. Place the rake along one side of the tray. Holding both ends, move it across to the other side making shallow waves. Three waves are plenty with a small tray. You can also make this pattern on a Chevron.



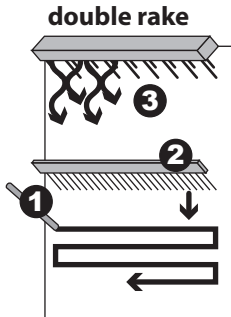
THE FRENCH CURL*

Make a nonpareil pattern. Holding the rake in both hands, positioned vertically near the left side, move it in a spiral pattern. Place it about 2 inches to the side and make another spiral. Continue until you reach the other side. This looks best if you space the swirls far enough apart to leave some pattern. You can also make this on a Chevron or uncombed tray. It's one way to hide blemishes in a pattern.



DOUBLE COMBING

For a finer non-pareil pattern with more detail, use this technique. First make a normal nonpareil. Then place the comb to the back as before, placing the comb to one side so the teeth are between the lines you just made, then pull it to the bottom of the tray as before. You'll have twice as many loops.

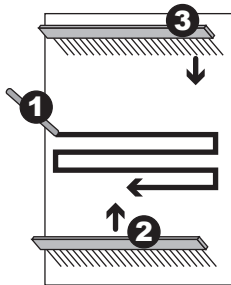


double rake

THE PEACOCK

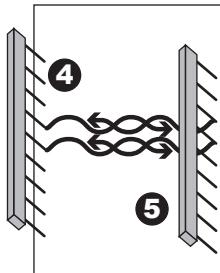
You'll need a double rake that fits widthwise across your tray. Make a nonpareil and place the double rake across the back of your tray. Pull it slowly toward you, making shallow wavy curves. Watching the BACK row of nails, see that they touch but do not overlap the pattern made by the front row.

If you move the comb from the FRONT of the tray instead of the back when making your nonpareil and then use the double rake from back to front as above, you'll have another variation called the FROG FOOT.



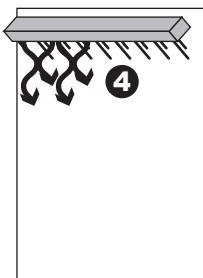
THE CHEVRON

First make a gel-git pattern. Using a wide spaced comb, put it at the FRONT of the tray with the end touching one side and slowly move it to the back. Then instead of lifting it, move the comb a bit to one side so the teeth are between the lines you just made. Then very slowly drag it to the front of the tray.



THE BIRDWING

Start with a chevron pattern. With the rake on the left side of the tray, move it across the tray in a shallow wave pattern, then across again to make a pattern of shallow figure 8s. This also works on a nonpareil instead of a chevron. Using a wide spaced comb gives you a more jagged pattern.



THE THISTLE

This pattern is just like the Peacock except you begin with a chevron pattern. Then put a double rake at the back of the tray and pull it toward you in the same S-curve you used on the Peacock pattern.

* The Feather, Swirl and French Curl patterns can also be made on a CHEVRON pattern.

STONE MARBLE

Drop several colors onto the size that will become the vein color, once compressed. Then choose the color you want to cover 80 percent of the surface. Pour 2-3 teaspoons into a different container. Add one drop of gall and stir. Sp after a good quantity of small drops over your vein color. Small drops look better than large. Having less paint on the brush and tapping it harder will give you smaller drops. Then add another drop of gall to what remains and stir. Drop that on top and it will be a paler shade. Then add a third drop of gall, stir and add to the tray. All this paint will compress the vein color.