

What is punchwork?

Punchwork uses an embossing tool to press out a series of dots along the drawn pencil lines of a design. Rather than embossing in a straight line, punchwork follows the same line with carefully graded punch motions. The end result is simplistic and one of 'olde worlde' charm.

Traditionally punchwork patterns were worked on tin. Designs were often based on flower and vegetable motifs and popular in American Folk Art.

Punchwork: Step by step

You can incorporate two directions of punchwork in the same project.

1. Secure your design on top of your foil or pewter, front side down onto a backing board.
2. Decide which part of the design you want to look raised on the front.
3. Outline around the edge of your design to establish a defined edge. This will make it easier to line up your tracing for the second part of the punchwork process. Take your foil off the backing board.
4. Now lay your foil right side down onto duster and begin to punch the section you have selected in a red ball point pen.
5. When you have finished the parts you want raised, remove your tracing and turn your foil or pewter over to the right side.
6. Turn over your tracing, matching up the tracing lines with the edge you defined earlier. Secure with tape at the top.
7. Now select the area your second area for punchwork and emboss.
8. Remove your tracing. Your punchwork is complete. You now have a design with both raised and inverted design areas.

One of the projects in this workbook incorporates these traditional patterns. The finished designs look equally stunning adorning simple wooden – Shaker-style-boxes and as decorations for the festive Christmas tree. As a simple alternative to hand punching, use a dressmaker's tracing wheel.

Any design can be adapted to a punchwork pattern. Simply follow the drawn lines with a punch motion instead of a smooth embossed line. Look out for patterns in home decorating books and sources of stencil designs.