

How to Marble

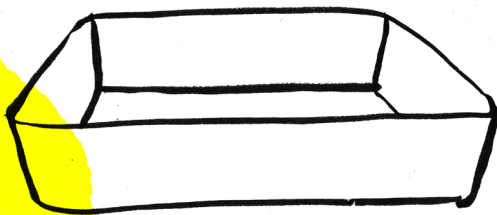
Produced for RA Family Studios by Florence Shaw, March 2016.

You will need:

- A4 paper of various colours / *Fairly thick absorbent paper is best. Water-colour paper works well.*

- Newspaper

- A marbling bath / *This should be a transparent or light coloured container that is watertight, big enough for your A4 paper to lie flat inside, and at least 6cm deep. It is easier to marble in a fairly shallow container.*



- A measuring jug

- Teaspoon

- Toothpick or wooden kebab stick

- Hand whisk

- Pebeo marbling inks / *These instructions are specific for this brand of inks.*



- Pebeo marbling thickener

- Somewhere to hang your marbled paper to dry / *eg. a washing line, clothes drying rack or plastic sheet.*

- Marbling comb / *An old wide toothed comb will work well.*



- 1 synthetic or human hair

- Pipette

- Drinking straw

NB. If your marbling inks don't come with a dropper in the lid, you'll need a pipette or a small brush for each colour of ink you use. Marbling instructions will vary for different brands of ink so check the bottle.

Step 1

Set up close to a sink. Put plenty of newspaper down underneath your marbling bath and your drying area. Marbling is very drippy.

Step 2

Please note: Children should not handle marbling thickener as it is toxic, an adult should mix it up.

In a measuring jug, using a whisk, mix 1 litre of cold water to 3 teaspoons of marbling thickener. Add the thickener a little at a time as you stir the water rapidly, taking care to avoid creating too many lumps. To get rid of any big lumps, squish them against the side of the jug with a spoon.



Fill the bath with this solution until it is roughly 2cm deep. Leave it to stand for 2 hours.

Step 3

Once you begin it's important to work fairly quickly, so put your paper within reach of the marbling bath.

Shake up your bottles of ink. Using the dropper in the lid of the bottle or a pipette, drip ink into the water and observe how it spreads across the surface. Add different colours and numbers of droplets to the bath to create a composition that you like. Once the surface of the water is full, use the different tools to manipulate the inks.

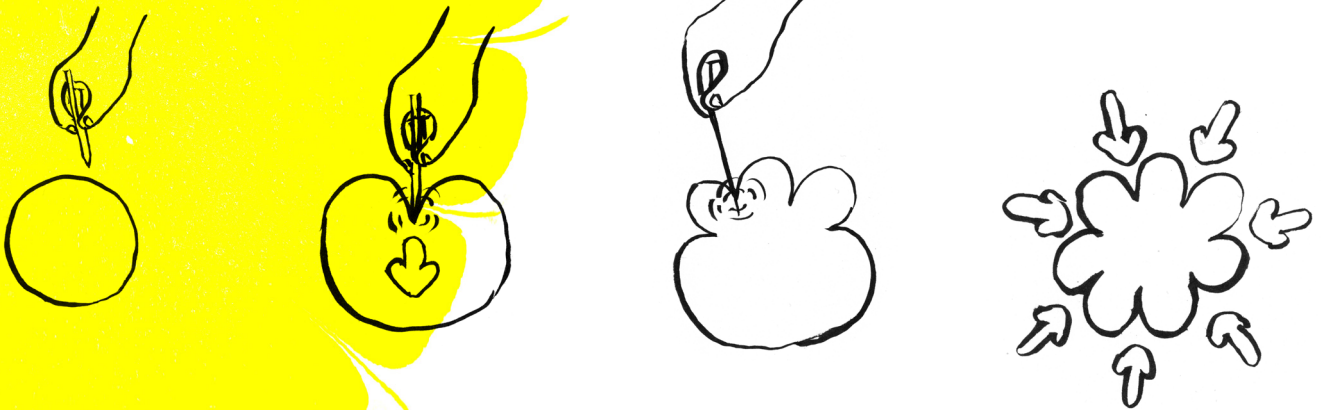
Comb: Dip just the tips of the teeth into the solution, and drag them fairly quickly and steadily through the ink. This creates a stripy, peacock feather effect. You can drag the comb across the surface in several different directions to create a more and more fragmented effect.



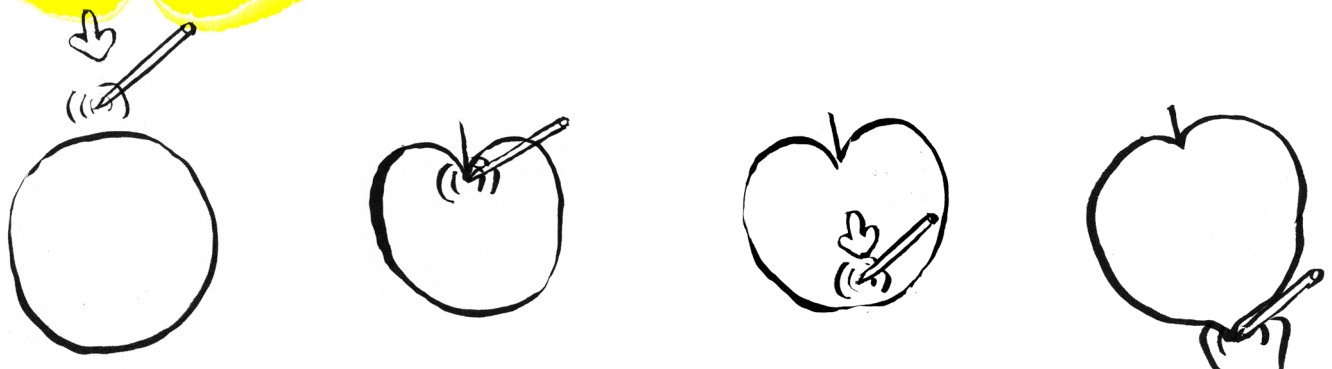
Straw: The straw can be used to blow on the surface of the water with some precision, in order to move and spread the inks around.

Toothpick/Kebab stick: A stick can be used to pull ink around and add detail. For example, by tracing a line into the centre of an area of ink, one can create a simple flower shape, or by tracing a line in the opposite direction, a leaf shape.

Flower:



Leaf:

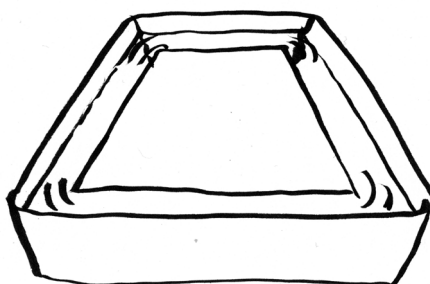


Hair: A hair can be dragged across the surface of the water to slice and interrupt the ink.

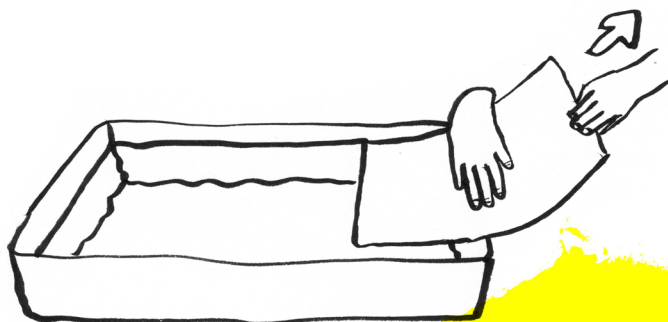
Pipette: Droplets of water can be added to the bath with a pipette to create spots of negative space in the ink; blank areas where the colour of the paper will show through.

Step 4

Once you are happy with your design, take your paper and gently drop it face down onto the surface of the water, so it floats. If any of the edges curl up considerably, smooth them down gently with your hand.



As soon as you are confident the paper has come into contact with the water, lift it out of the bath. You can smooth the paper down against the edge of the bath with one hand, as you pull it out with the other. This helps to scrape off any excess ink or solution. Don't worry – your print will not be affected!



Once it's out of the bath, run it under a little cold water, and then leave it to dry.

Repeat the process starting at step 3 to create another print. The same solution can be used for the next 24 hours.

Troubleshooting

Your first few prints might be a bit slimy, or the ink might not be very cooperative. Don't worry too much. Most problems iron themselves out after a few tries.

Marbling thickener forms lumps: *If your solution forms lots of lumps, add a smaller amount of thickener at a time. Make sure you sprinkle it in a very thin layer over the surface of the water, and keep rapidly mixing all the time.*

The inks sink to the bottom, rather than spread out: *Try adding some water if your solution seems too thick, or some more thickener if it seems too thin. Be sure to give your inks a good shake before using them.*