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HOMEMADE TRANSFER PAPER

Transfer Paper. Being a water-based paint, it's important in egg tempera to use a non-greasy transfer paper. Saral is a non-greasy brand of transfer paper that comes in gray, white, red, yellow, and blue. Some students have told me they've had problems with tempera paint beading up on Saral lines, but I've found it to work consistently well.

Homemade Transfer Paper. My preference is to use my own transfer paper. It's simple to make but a slightly messy project (cover work area with newspaper, wear gloves and a dust mask). It's helpful to have a range of transfer paper colors on hand so you can match the transfer color to the local color of the image being rendered. In other words, if you go to the effort of making transfer paper, create a rainbow of hues.

Instructions For Homemade Transfer Paper

Materials:

- Powdered pigments, however many colors you prefer
- Tracing paper, about 25# weight or less;
- 1 sheet (or more) per color
- Alcohol (isopropyl, grain or denatured)
- Small dish
- Inexpensive, 1- 2" hardware store 'chip' brush.



Top: Saral Commercial Transfer Paper.
Bottom: Selection of homemade transfer papers.

To make: Cover work area with newspaper, and don a N95 mask (or respirator) and gloves. Place a small amount (about 1 teaspoon per 8 1/2 x 11" sheet of paper) of powdered pigment in a dish. Add about an equal amount of alcohol. Use a chip brush to quickly and vigorously stir the two together, until approximately the consistency of milk. Next, **assertively** brush this mix onto a sheet of tracing paper, brushing back and forth until the alcohol evaporates and there is a thin film of dry pigment left on the paper – it should take just a minute or so. Next, use a clean, dry flat brush to *lightly* dust off (or cheesecloth, to lightly wipe off) excess pigment from the sheet; you want to leave behind a very thin layer of color. Place a heavy pile of books on top of newly made sheets for a few hours to ensure they lie flat. The first few times a fresh sheet of transfer paper is used it can be a bit messy, so use with care. With continued use it develops an optimal layer of color for transferring. I label homemade transfer papers with the date made and pigment used, and get many years use from each sheet.



Left: Materials to make homemade transfer paper. **Right:** I combined umber in powdered pigment form with alcohol to the consistency of about milk, then brushed it on using a chip brush. The lighter, matte appearance of the umber (see arrow) shows how quickly the alcohol evaporates, leaving behind a film of pigment. To use transfer paper to 'draw' lines in a painting, see the appendix "Whiskers and Other Fine, Precise Lines".