

Converting Rubber Stamps from Wood Base to Acrylic Block Use¹

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A. WHY do it?

- (1) Storage: Storing just the rubber part of the stamp reduces the amount of storage space required by a HUGE amount and makes the stamps more easily transportable to crops. I was able to easily fit over 200 stamps in a three inch 3-ring binder!
- (2) Easier to Use: Using a clear acrylic block allows you to see exactly where the image will end up on the page.
- (3) Easier to Stamp Words: Many words can be spelled out at once on an acrylic block, thus making it faster and allowing you to align the letters easily.

B. What does it involve?

- (1) Pulling off the thin rubber part with the image.
- (2) Removing any residue left on the back of the rubber image.
- (3) Applying a new "sticky" layer to the back of the rubber image so that it will adhere to the acrylic block AND can be stored on a plastic sheet.
- (4) Labeling the stamps on the plastic sheet so you know where to return your stamps after use.
- (5) Purchasing acrylic blocks, plastic sheets (page protectors work great), one or more 3-ring binder(s)

C. First Step: Pulling off the thin rubber part from the mounting and the wood.

- (1) This part is the easiest: Locate the layer between the wood and the red rubber image part (I call it the mounting) and start to pull at it. Simply peel the rubber image layer off the mounting. It's not necessary to remove the mounting from the wooden part unless you plan to use the wood for some other purpose.
- (2) Note that some companies use a red mounting that is identical in color to the red rubber of the stamp. Looking carefully, you should be able to see the thin line showing the separation of layers. This particular mounting is prone to tearing and you may fear that you're tearing your stamp... but you're not. The rubber stamp is very hardy! The torn parts are the mounting which is still stuck to the rubber stamp. Sometimes Undu will help remove this residue.
- (3) Note also that sometimes the rubber stamp is glued directly to the wooden base; very rare, but I had a few like this. I didn't have any

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problems just peeling them off, but if any are sticking, Undu may help in this case, as well.

- (4) The SU stamps have normally already been cut around the actual image, but I had some other brands that were rectangular or square, although the image was not. So, I cut off the rubber around the image, which makes it easier to know exactly where you're stamping that image. NOTE: be careful you don't have a reverse stamp or a stamp with a border and thus has parts that you do NOT want to trim! THINK before you CUT! 😊

D. Second Step: Removing any residue from the rubber image

One of four things will happen:

- (1) The rubber stamp will come off clean and you have nothing more to do (I noticed the SU alphabets were great about peeling off clean... maybe because they are so small).
- (2) A gray residue will be on the stamp, either in parts or totally covering the stamp. This needs to be removed and you simply need to roll it off using your thumb. If it's totally covering the stamp, you may need to pick at a corner or edge to get it started.
- (3) A clear, evenly distributed, very sticky surface remains. If it's smooth and consistent across the surface, simply leave it alone and it's ready for the next step.
- (4) A clear, inconsistent, sticky surface resembling glue dots spread randomly and thinly on the stamp. In this case, again use your thumb to roll off the glue. This is the worst case as the adhesive is VERY sticky and somewhat difficult to rub off, but persistence works! (See Note (3) at the very end!)
- (5) For any stubborn residue, try Undu, but I recommend waiting until all else fails. While Undu worked great in a few cases, I found it mostly ineffective on these kinds of adhesives and sometimes made the situation "gummier"! One particular kind of stamp that had a black foamy mount, however, readily responded to the Undu and a toothbrush! Again, just try different things and see what works best in each situation!

E. Third Step: Applying a new sticky layer

- (1) Once you have your rubber stamp image separated from the mounting and clean, there are several products available to make that surface sticky enough for storage and for sticking to an acrylic block: EZ Mount and Aileen's Tack it Over and Over. I've only tried the Aileen's product which I purchased at a Michael's store in their adhesive aisle.
- (2) Spread out a large sheet of wax paper on a table and then cover it with rubber stamp images, backs facing up.
- (3) Pour a small amount of the Aileen's Tack it Over and Over onto a paper plate. Then use an inexpensive craft paintbrush to brush a THIN layer of the glue evenly over the surface of each stamp.
- (4) For stamps that want to shift around on the paper (small ones, in particular), I held a toothpick in my left hand and pressed down on the stamp while I brushed the glue on with the paint brush in my right hand. This worked really well.

- (5) Don't worry about any glue that adheres to the sides even if it's a bit thick. After drying you can peel off any large lumps just like rubber cement. If it's sticky along the sides, it doesn't matter.
- (6) Allow to dry most of the day or overnight. The stamps should be VERY sticky, but not leave a residue on your finger when touched.
- (7) Here is a web site showing the use of EZ Mount. These are foam sheets which attach to your rubber stamps and then you cut out the stamp again. The two disadvantages I see is that I'm sure it's the more expensive choice and the stamps won't be as thin as just storing the rubber part. Still this may be more preferable to you than using Aileen's Tack It Over and Over.

<http://www.sundayint.com/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWCATS&Category=13>

F. Fourth Step: Labeling the Sheets

- (1) I used page protectors and placed the labels on regular white paper to slide inside the page protector.
- (2) You have several choices for the labels:
 - (a) remove the existing label from the wood block (I found the alphabets and most labels could be removed easily by simply using my fingernail to peel up along one edge and then carefully pulling the label off the wood; but some more stubborn labels needed Undu) OR
 - (b) stamp each image onto the paper OR
 - (c) just describe the image: "Happy Birthday" or "cake" or whatever. This would be REALLY fast but not show the stamped image itself. I didn't try this one at all.
- (3) Before doing this, look at the rubber stamp itself. Some are easy to tell what they are and I knew that my stamp could cover the label. On others, especially phrases in script fonts or detailed images, it was more difficult to know what the stamp was, thus I left spaces beneath each label where the stamp would reside so that I could see the labels above the stamps. (See Photos at the very end.)

G. Finishing Up

- (1) Once a sheet is labeled, slide it inside the page protector.
- (2) Then just place each rubber stamp on the OUTSIDE of the page protector, either covering the label OR filling the space beneath the label. You might want to number your pages and have an index or something. I plan to do that so I can quickly look up stamps by theme or type.
- (3) That's it! (I think! Lol)

H. Extra Notes:

- (1) You may not want to remove EVERY stamp from its block. For example, I have several very large "background" stamps that I have left on the wood since there are no acrylic blocks large enough to accommodate these stamps.

- (2) Don't convert stamps you're never going to use again! Donate them to your local elementary school! ☺
- (3) It has been suggested at other sites to try microwaving the rubber stamps for about 10 seconds to aid in removing the residual adhesive. I tried this and had no success at all. I found it to either not help at all or to make it more gummy and difficult. Maybe I missed something? So, go ahead and try it, as you wish! You may have great results with heating them.
- (4) How long does it take? It took me 8 days, working a couple of hours a day to convert 5 alphabets and another 200+ miscellaneous stamps. I'm THRILLED with the results. The only downside was that it was hard on my thumbs and my various fingernails. They are your major tools and they take a beating. So don't start this project with a professional manicure! ☺

Photos:

This shows how I left spaces between the labels (on the inside of the page protector) so that, on the outside page protector, the rubber stamp would fill that space and I could see above each stamp what the message says.



In the next photo, I did NOT leave a space because alphabets are fairly easy to make out since the letters are stored alphabetically and visually you can figure out which letter is which!

