

DecoArt  
MADE FOR MAKERS™

# WATER MARBLING™

Frequently Asked Questions





## What is Water Marbling?

Water Marbling is a fun, fulfilling, and beautiful style of art that anyone can try. Water Marbling is sometimes referred to as “Hydro-dipping” as well. There is really no difference between the two terms. Water Marling and Hydro-dipping both describe the art of creating patterns on a surface of water and then transferring those patterns to another item by dipping, floating, or lightly dragging the object across the surface.

## What is the difference between Hydro-dipping and Water Marbling?

In short, nothing. Both art forms use water solutions and the art of creating designs and transferring them to another object. Hydro-dipping typically is done using chemical, solvent-based paints such as spray paint, or pre-printed films that activate in water. Traditional Water Marbling uses water based paint or inks. Water Marbling is an art form that has been practiced for centuries. Hydro-dipping is a more modern term.



## Can I use regular acrylic paint to water marble?

Regular acrylic paints are too heavy to float on the water and will sink. Some artists create their own mixtures through experimentation to find the right balance. DecoArt Water Marbling Acrylics were created to be ready to use for water marbling, with an ideal formula that allows the paints to float on the surface of a size with clean edges. They are also designed to be in balance and to spread at the same rate, so that one color doesn't “dominate” another.

## Can you Water Marble in just regular water?

In order to create water marbled art, water must be treated with a solution thickener that allows paint to float on the surface. There are different ways to do this, from materials made from actual seaweed to methylcellulose. Whichever method is used, the term for a water bath that has been treated in order to create Water Marbling Art is referred to as a size. Some believe the term for size is derived from



## What surfaces can I water marble?

Almost any porous, absorbent surface can be marbled. Some examples are paper, natural fibers such as cotton or silk, wood, MDF, leather, unglazed ceramics, bisque porcelain, terracotta, cork, feathers, and almost anything you can imagine!

Many non-porous and non-absorbent surfaces can also be marbled. Simply treat the surface with our Water Marbling Surface Prep before marbling. We encourage you to experiment, marble new things and see where your creativity takes you!



## **What paper can I use to water marble? Does regular paper work?**

Not just any regular paper can be used to create bold water marbling art. A paper must have good wet strength (Meaning: to be suitable for marbling, it doesn't fall apart when wetted.) The color of a paper as well as the material from which it is made and its thickness will impact how well it marbles and how vibrant the colors are. Some papers must be pre-treated with alum or DecoArt Surface Prep to prevent the colors from bleeding and running. It's always a good idea to test your paper to see if pre-treatment is needed.

## **What makes DecoArt Marbling Paper special?**

Our Water Marbling paper is created with a bright white, smooth surface and special color-locking technology perfect for capturing the vibrant colors from our Water Marbling acrylics. The composition, color, and thickness of our Marbling Papers help ensure you get the best print you can every time. No special preparation is required.

## **Can colors be mixed?**

Our Water Marbling Acrylics can be mixed together to create new colors. There are endless color varieties to be created.

## **How long does it take marbled paper to dry?**

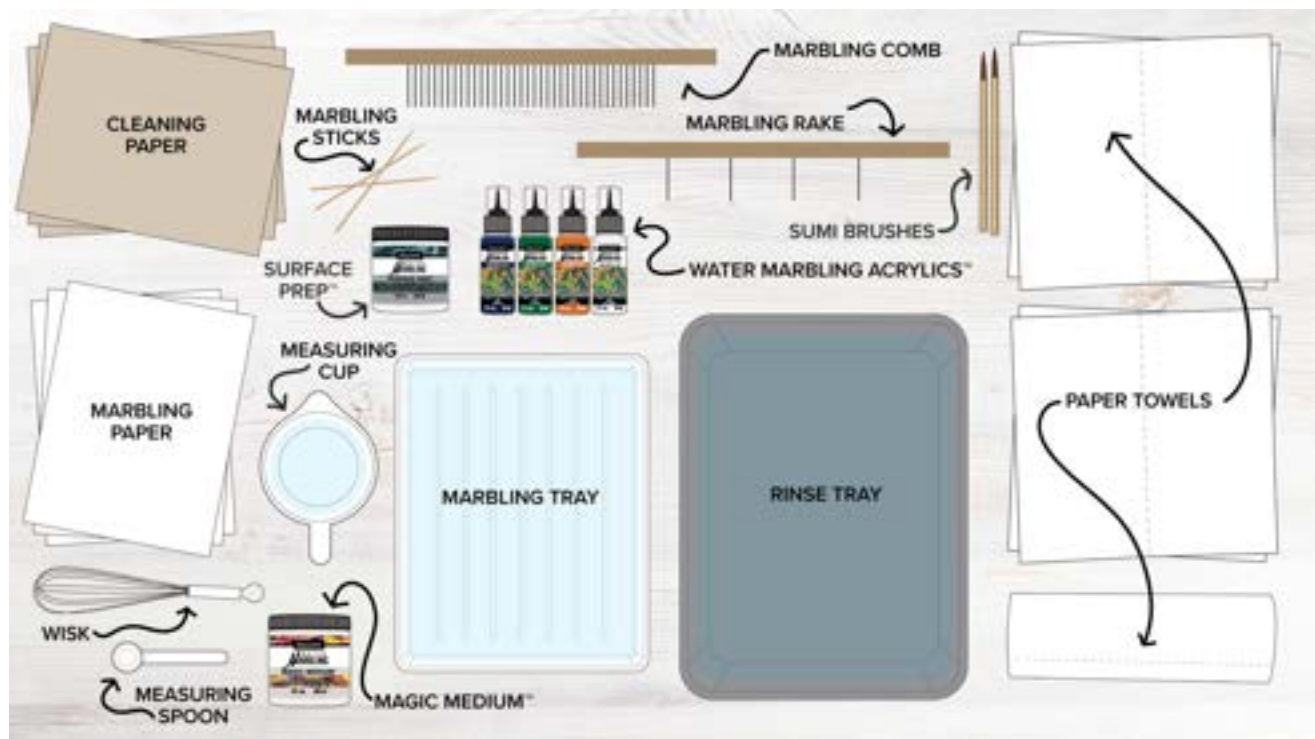
How long marbled paper takes to dry depends on several factors. Rinsing off the size can promote faster drying times, as can hanging up the piece rather than letting it lay flat to dry. The ambient humidity is also a factor. Typically though, papers will dry in 1- 2 hours. If desired, a hair dryer can be used to speed drying.





## How do I prepare the water for water-marbling?

DecoArt offers the Magic Medium product to use for creating the water marbling size. It works as a thickening agent to give water enough viscosity to allow paint to float on the water's surface and to have clean margins or edges that are smooth and do not mix into the other colors. Without size, the paints would be denser than the water and would sink. To make size for marbling, mix measured Magic Medium powder with measured hot water (hot water helps the powder chunks to dissolve faster) and mix thoroughly with a whisk in a clean container or Water Marbling Tray that will fit your desired amount of size. Once all the clumps have dissolved, the size is ready to marble. Do not marble until the mixture is at room temperature. The powder clumps create a clear gel that can accumulate on the sides or in the bottom of the tray, so give the size a stir just before marbling to make sure it is evenly mixed. (For specific measurements, follow the instructions included on the label of Magic Medium jar.)



## How do I prepare my surface for Water Marbling?

### ◆ Paper

Our DecoArt Marbling Paper does not need any preparation. A special color locking technology makes it ready to marble straight from the package; and the bright white, smooth surface gives beautiful and vibrant results.

With other papers, results will vary depending upon the paper type and surface. If the color runs or the edges of designs are fuzzy, pre-treat the paper with our Marbling Surface Prep and try again.

### ◆ Fabric

To remove any fabric treatments, pre-washing fabrics without fabric softener in the hottest water allowed by the fabric care instructions is always recommended. Preparing the fabric with our Water Marbling Surface Prep will promote color fastness and provide brighter, more vibrant prints. After marbling, rinse your fabric immediately in a plain water bath to gently remove any unabsorbed paint. Once dry, if the fabric allows, set with a hot, no steam iron. Otherwise you should wait 10-14 days before washing your fabric. You can care for your item according to the recommended care for that particular fabric. If machine washing is allowed you may do so, but the color will soften and lighten over time just like your jeans or a pigment dyed t-shirt. If you prefer to keep the most vibrant color, handwashing is recommended.



## How do I prepare my surface for Water Marbling?



### ◆ **Leather**

Leather may or may not need pre-treatment. For best results, testing a small piece prior to marbling is recommended. To prep with our Water Marbling Surface Prep, simply dissolve the Surface Prep in hot water according to instructions, then sponge the solution onto the surface of the leather. Allow the leather to dry completely before marbling. Do not rinse after marbling and lie flat to dry. Marbled leathers can be finished in the ways you would normally treat dyed leather.



### ◆ **Wood**

Wood is a fun surface that can be marbled easily. Smooth, sanded surfaces show off the patterns best. Raw, clean wood will absorb the marbling color and stain the wood in the pattern of your design. Wood can also be base coated with a flat paint (Such as our Chalky Gesso or Chalky Finish paint) to disguise the wood grain and allow brighter colors to show on the surface. If desired, when completely dry, marbled wood can be sealed with a varnish of your choice.

### ◆ **Glass**

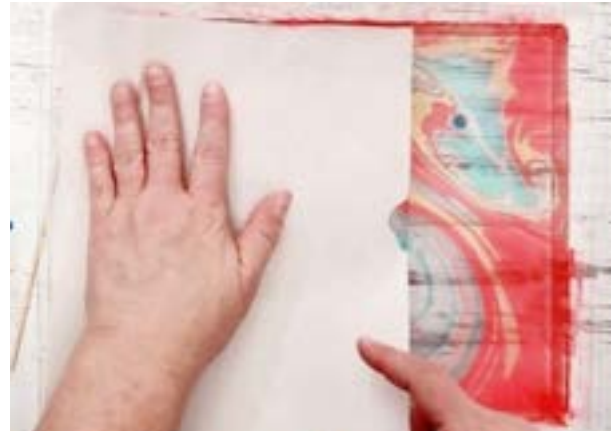
Glass items intended for decorative use can be pretreated with our Water Marbling Surface Prep. Simply dissolve the Surface Prep in hot water according to instructions, then spray in a fine mist on the glass object. Keep the mist light to avoid allowing large beads to form. Those beads may show in your final print. Once dry, apply a second coat and allow that to dry fully. You may apply a 3rd coat if desired. Once completely dry, you may marble as desired. Do not rinse your object after marbling. Do not touch the surface until dry. For a more durable surface, spray varnish or other sealers can be applied to the marbled object.

We do not recommend marbling surfaces that will touch food or drink. If marbling an object such as a cup or water tumbler, keep the areas touched by water or your mouth free of paint, or seal it with a food safe varnish



## What is the DecoArt Cleaning Paper?

The DecoArt Cleaning Paper is used to clean the surface of the water marbling bath between prints. Floating the cleaning paper onto the water's surface and dragging it across will absorb any floating colors left on the surface of the tray to prepare for your next design.



## How do I know if a fabric can be marbled?

The best way to know is to do a spot test on a small piece first. Natural fibers like silk or cotton work very well. If the fabric resists marbling or the marbling design bleeds, try treating the fabric with DecoArt Surface Prep before marbling.

## How to Use Water Marbling Surface Prep

### ◆ Paper or 3D Objects

Dissolve Marbling Surface Prep into hot water at a ratio of 1.5 teaspoons of Surface Prep to 2 cups of water. Lightly sponge on or use a fine mist sprayer to apply to surfaces. If using a mist on a non-porous surface, keep the mist light to avoid allowing large beads to form. Those beads may show in your final print. Once dry, apply a second coat and allow that to dry fully. Repeat if necessary to be sure the surface is evenly covered. Once completely dry, you may marble your object as desired. It is recommended to marble within 3 days. Do not rinse your object after marbling. Do not touch the surface until dry. For a more durable surface, spray varnish or other sealers can be applied once the marbled object is completely dry.





## How to Use Water Marbling Surface Prep

### ◆ Fabric

Pre-wash fabrics without softener. Dry completely. Iron if needed. (Heavy creases can prevent consistent absorption in the next steps). In a container that allows fabric to be fully submerged and float freely (do not crowd) combine hot water and Marbling Surface Prep. There are two methods for calculating the amount of powder and water to use. Prepared fabric can be stored in an airtight container and should be marbled within 2-3 months of prep.



For the volume method: Combine at a ratio of 1.5 teaspoons of surface prep to 4 cups of water. Make enough solution to allow your fabric to float freely. For larger quantities of Marbling Surface Prep, the ratio is 2 tablespoons per gallon. Stir the powder into the water until completely dissolved. Submerge the fabric into the solution, releasing any trapped air bubbles and making sure the fabric is completely covered with the solution. Leave the fabric to soak for 20 minutes. Do not wring. Hang to drip dry. Marble when dry, then rinse gently in a clean water bath. Do not wring. Hang to dry. Iron with no steam.

For the weight method: Weigh your dry fabric using a bakers scale and then multiply the weight by 0.15.

(Weight of dry fabric x 0.15 = Weight of surface prep powder)

Use the resulting number as the weight measure for your surface prep powder. You do not need to measure the water for this method, but be sure that you add enough water to your container to allow your fabric to float freely without crowding. Stir the powder into the water until completely dissolved. Place fabric into solution, releasing any trapped air bubbles and making sure the fabric is completely covered with the solution. Leave the fabric to soak for 60 minutes, stirring gently every 15 minutes. Do not wring. Hang to drip dry. Marble when dry, then rinse gently in a clean water bath. Do not wring. Hang to dry. Iron with no steam.



## How do I care for my marbled fabric?

Pre-wash fabrics without softener. Dry completely. Iron if needed. (Heavy creases can prevent consistent absorption in the next steps). In a container that allows fabric to be fully submerged and float freely (do not crowd) combine hot water and Marbling Surface Prep. There are two methods for calculating the amount of powder and water to use. Prepared fabric can be stored in an airtight container and should be marbled within 2-3 months of prep.

## Can I marble canvas?

Yes, canvas objects such as canvas fabric, sneakers, or tote bags can all be marbled. It is recommended to first wash them to remove any factory coatings and then to pre-treat with our Water Marbling Surface Prep before marbling according to the recommended instructions.

Since they are not absorbent, surfaces such as stretched canvas and canvas boards will likely need to be pre-treated.



## Can I marble T-shirts, Socks, Hats...?

Yes, although it is recommended to treat them first with our Water Marbling Surface Prep. To ensure a clear print, items like socks and tees should be stretched over a rigid support to create a flat surface. Hats can be stuffed with paper to allow the best contact with the marbling surface. Natural fibers such as cotton or silk will work best when marbling fabric.

## Can I marble paper mache?

Marbling paper mache works best if the surface is first base coated with a matte paint like our Chalky Gesso or Chalky Finish paint. Marbling directly on brown paper mache works as well, but the colors will not be as vibrant and the print won't be as clear as it would be on white paper.

## Can I marble glass or metal?

Glass or metal items intended for decorative use can be marbled if they are pretreated with our Water Marbling Surface Prep. Simply dissolve the Surface Prep in hot water according to instructions, then spray in a fine mist on the object using 2-3 light coats. Allow to dry between coats. Once dry, marble as desired.

We do not recommend marbling surfaces that will touch food or drink. If marbling an object such as a cup or water tumbler, keep the areas touched by water or your mouth paint-free, or seal them with a food-safe sealer.



## **Do I need to rinse my marbled object in a second bath of plain water after marbling?**

It depends on the surface being marbled. When marbling with our Marbling Paper or another paper treated with our Surface Prep, it's recommended to rinse every print to remove any unabsorbed paint and to rinse away the size. This ensures crisp and clear colors, and an even finish.

Fabrics that you treated with our Surface Prep should also be rinsed in order to remove excess paint and keep the fabric soft.

Hard surfaces like wood, bisque, terracotta, glass, or even canvas do not need to be rinsed.

Since there are so many surfaces that can be marbled, we recommend inconspicuous testing to discover what works best for you and your project.

## **How can I marble larger items?**

How large an item you can marble is determined by the size and depth of your water marbling bath. Any waterproof container can be used.



If marbling a flat item on one side only, the bath does not need to be very deep, but the surface area does need to be bigger than the item you are marbling - enough for the entire surface to come in contact with the surface of the bath with a little additional room to allow for positioning. Paper and fabric can be marbled in a very shallow bath (approximately 1" deep). It is helpful to have a deeper bath for rigid items, like wood, so that the item can be eased onto the surface at an angle to avoid trapping air and ruining the print.

Items like hats and shoes can be marbled in plastic totes deep enough to fully submerge the item.

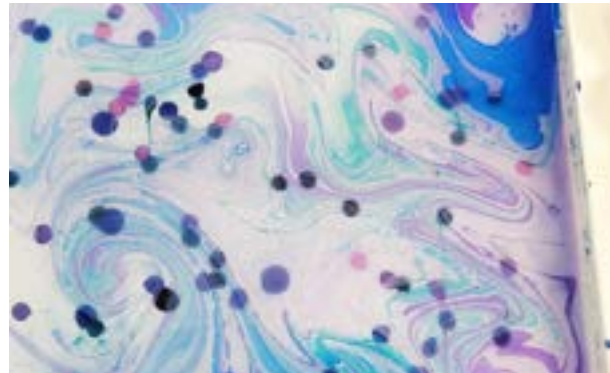
Three dimensional holiday ornaments or other small objects can be marbled in a bowl. It works best if the diameter of the bowl is twice the size of the diameter of your ornament, and it is deep enough to fully submerge the ornament.

Be sure to allow enough room in your container for the water displaced by submerged items to not overflow off the sides.

## How do I clean the marbling pool between prints/dips?

Lightly skim the water's surface with strips of our Water Marbling Cleaning Paper until the excess paint is removed. Repeat until the paper comes off clean.

If you see drops of paint that have fallen through the surface to the bottom of the tray, don't worry! It will not affect your next print, only the surface needs to be clean.



## Can I reuse the size/water for another marbling session? How long will it last?

Yes, you can reuse it. To save and reuse your size, after your last project is marbled, clean all the paint from the surface. Then cover your water marbling tray with plastic wrap (or a plastic trash bag if it is a larger container). When you are ready to marble again, skim the surface with the cleaning paper to break the surface tension, and then continue marbling.

You can also clean all the paint from the surface and transfer the size solution to a separate, lidded container. Be sure the container is clean and has no soapy or oily residue, as soap will interfere with the marbling process.

You may notice some paint has settled in the bottom of your tray. Try not to transfer that to your container, but if a little ends up in the saved size, do not be concerned.

When you are ready to marble again, pour the saved size back into your marbling tray slowly to minimize air bubbles. You may want to let the size "rest" for a few minutes to allow bubbles to come to the surface. Then skim the surface with cleaning paper to break the surface tension and pop any bubbles, and continue marbling.

When made with tap water, the marbling pool can be stored at room temperature for up to 5 days. When made with distilled water, the size can last for weeks.

You will know the size needs to be replaced when the paint no longer spreads well, or if you notice the edges of the stones (drops of paint) become ragged.

## What is special about the DecoArt water marbling tray?

The Water Marbling Tray is lightweight and a good size for most substrates you would wish to marble.



## **Why don't you offer more colors?**

Water Marbling is a new art program from DecoArt, and we selected the colors to start with that we felt would be the most useful. Colors can be blended to create more colors. We also selected using the highest quality of pigments available in a very specific, lightweight formula.

## **Why are there no brown, pastels, or metallic colors?**

We are exploring more colors to add to our water marbling collection and hope to offer more options in the future.

## **Can I add a varnish on top of something marbled?**

You may add varnish to water marbled items. Be sure to use a varnish that is appropriate for the surface you have marbled. DecoArt DuraClear varnishes are an excellent option for paper or soft surfaces. DecoArt TripleThick gloss glaze is an excellent option for hard surfaces.

You must wait until the marbled ink is fully cured on the surface before adding any sort of topcoat varnish. We recommend waiting a full 48 hours after marbling.

## **Where can I learn more about water marbling?**

Visit our Water Marbling Glossary, or our YouTube Channel series, to learn more about common terms, tools, and techniques used in this wonderful art form.