

## *How to Make your Own Custom Buttons*



Custom buttons are so easy and fun to make! You will use colored pencils on shrink plastic to make your buttons. If you aren't comfortable drawing, that is okay! You can trace your designs

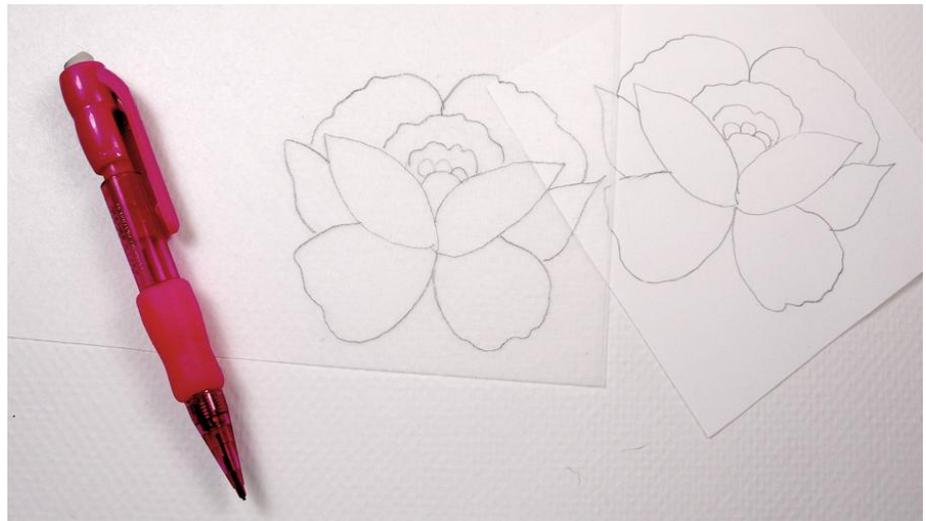
### **Tools & Materials You Will Need**

- Translucent Frosted Shrink Plastic such as Ruff n Ready by Shrinkydinks
- Pencil
- Colored pencils
- Sharp Scissors
- 1/8<sup>th</sup> hole punch
- White craft glue
- Small piece of felt or white ultrasuede

If you have never worked with shrink plastic before, you are in for a treat! (See the section at the end of this chapter for more information on working with shrink plastic.) All button designs follow the same procedure. In the following steps, I will show you how to make a flower button. You can use the template provided or create your own button designs!

Begin by tracing the template pattern onto the rough side of the shrink plastic with a pencil.

**Tip:** If your button is going to have a white background, color the white into the area before you trace the outline—this will help keep your white clean and reduce smudging.



Select 3-4 colored pencils to color your button design. I choose a light, mid and dark color. With the light color, color in the whole image. You can color lightly as the colors will become saturated when your button shrinks.



Now, using the darker pencil, outline your design and add little details such as the stripes and dots shown here. You can use a picture as a reference or just play with different shapes and patterns.



Finally, use your medium value to add some highlights and shading. Here I have highlighted the edges of the petals and the center. There really is no wrong or right way to color your design. Just have fun and play with it!



Pick up that lightest color again and add more highlights—here I have colored the center of the flower, and the middles of the two bottom petals.



Cut out your design with a sharp pair of scissors. With a 1/8" hole punch, punch 2 or 4 holes into the center of your design. The holes are a very important step as they are what make the design a button! Once your design is all cut out, shrink the plastic according to the manufacturer's instructions.



## How to Make Your Own Custom Buttons Workshop by Jessica Hamilton, [www.dollproject.com](http://www.dollproject.com)

Now your design is tiny and the colors are bright! Our button is still rather translucent at this stage. The translucency works for some designs, but for most you will want to add a white backing to help the colors pop. Here I have glued the button shiny side down onto white craft felt using white tacky glue. Make sure you thoroughly coat your button when gluing it down as the felt should be securely attached along all the edges.



Cut out your button leaving as little or as much white felt border as you desire. Your button is now ready to be sewn onto your project!

You can make buttons of all shapes and sizes in any color you desire. Here are some more ideas for designs you can create!



It is important to read the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations prior to using shrink plastic.

Most brands and models of plastic do not shrink at the same rate. If you use a ruler to draw a life size ruler onto the plastic and then shrink it, you will have a good reference point for the amount of shrink you can expect. Use your new shrunken ruler to determine how large to make your pieces at full scale.

Shrink plastic definitely has a grain—I usually work in portrait orientation with all objects at a 90 degree angle (straight up and down). The height will shrink at a different rate than the width, so if your object is not at a right angle to the edge of the plastic, it will probably come out distorted.

Keep a few wooden sticks or knitting needles beside your oven so you can reach in and move or tease items while they are baking. (This will help discourage you from using your fingers). If your item starts curling when shrinking, that is normal—give it time to flatten out on its own. If it appears to be finished shrinking, but is still folded or bent on itself, gently pull the piece out and use the sticks to gently pry the stuck pieces apart—then put them back in the oven to flatten out. Sometimes you have to do this a few times for the same piece.

Some things to consider if you plan to work with a lot of shrink plastic—I bake in a small convection oven on a piece of Silpat silicon mat—it works like a dream—the shrink plastic does not fuse, stick or get caught up on it while baking, so it helps the plastic shrink more evenly. The mat can be used over and over again, unlike papers, which will scorch if used too many times. I bought a large mat and cut it in half—I keep the other half outside the oven to flatten any curved pieces when they come out of the oven—again, the silicon won't stick, so your designs are safe even on the hot melty plastic. Any flat silicon mats should work.

Use good scissors when cutting shrink plastic. Sharper scissors will give you cleaner cuts and cause less cracking/splintering on the edges. I use a pair of Fiskars titanium nitride scissors (they were my 'nice' scissors before I got my Kai set a few years back). If you are working with the ruff 'n ready, it helps to remember that you can see through it (so you can flip it over for ease in cutting certain angles). For cutting any hollow designs into your shapes, a hand held blade works best. Punches work well too if you have the shape you need and the design is close enough to the edge.

bake—it can burn if left in too long or if the oven is hot. Once I spent several hours making tiny hands and baked about 40 of them at once—I left them in too long at 300 degrees and I came back to a blobby melted little grave yard. ;/

It is important to remember that any coloring or pigment you add to your piece is going to be highly concentrated once it shrinks. When I am applying the pencils and pigment, it may look very pale and sparse, but once the pieces bake, you will see the color really fills in. If you are unsure whether your pigments and/or markings will come out too dark or too faint, make some test marks on a small piece of shrink plastic and shrink it down to assess the colors before starting your project.

Lastly—sometimes you try everything and the shrinking just doesn't go as planned. Always have extra sheets for your project, just in case :].

## Design Pattern Example

