

Activity title

Printing with Moveable Type – now we can print any text we want

Time required

30 mins - 1 hour

Activity summary

Printing with moveable type.

By the end of this activity, you will be able to:

Print different text using the same set of characters.

What's this all about?

How long would it take you to write one book by hand? Six hundred years ago, every book in Europe was written that way. A rich person may have owned just a couple of books.

The development of block printing meant that books could be printed much faster than writing. However, making the printing blocks for each page took a long time – and if there was just one slip of the hand while carving the material, they may have to start over again. This meant that books were still very expensive.

Then someone had a brilliant idea. Rather than carving a whole block, you could put lots of separate letters together to make a page of text. This meant you didn't need to carve new letters every time. Also, you could quickly change pages. This invention was called moveable type.



Individual letters
ready for use

The first printing press in Europe to use moveable type was the Gutenberg press. This was invented in 1450. This technology allowed an explosion in the number of books. Within 50 years, the total number of books in Europe increased from a few thousand to over 9 million!



A copy of the
original
Gutenberg press



A page of moveable
type ready for printing



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What equipment will you need?

- Cookie letter stamp kit
- Rubber letter stamp kit

If printing on modelling material:

- **Modelling material**, such as plasticine or play dough
- **Rolling pin**

If printing on paper:

- **Ink pad or paint**
- **Paper** (to print on)

Letter stamps can be bought from many sites online, or from craft shops.

Now try this

1. Cookie Letter Stamp

Cookie letter stamps are used to stamp words on biscuits.

You could use these to make letters on modelling material:

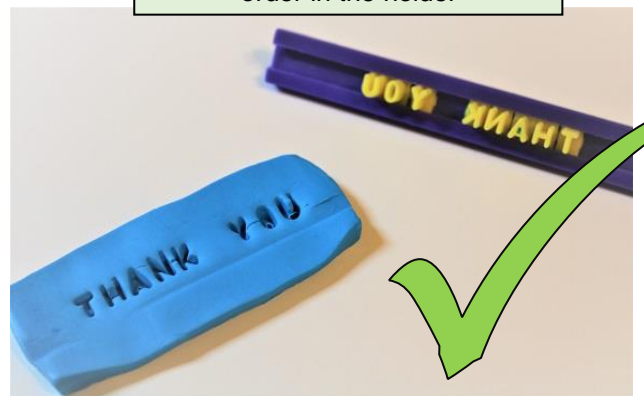
- Using a rolling pin, roll out the modelling material to make a flat surface.
- Insert the letters in the holder to make up the message you want. Remember to write the message back-to-front, so that the printed message will be the right way round.
- Write the message 'backwards' for the,
- Press the stamp into the modelling material, then carefully lift the stamp to remove it.

You could print your message on paper instead, using an ink pad or paint.

WRONG – letters in normal order in the holder



CORRECT – letters in reverse order in the holder



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2. Rubber Stamp Set

Rubber letter stamps are often used for hobby activities:

- Choose the letters to make up the message you want.
- Gently press each letter stamp into the ink pad or paint, then press it against the paper. Remember to make sure the letter is the correct way round!
- Repeat step b) for each letter in the message.

*Printing can be messy!
Wear an apron.
Use scrap paper to cover the surface that you are working on.*

Rubber letter stamp set



You could also

Create a birthday card and print your own message inside it.

The following websites can be used for additional background information:

- YouTube – How a Gutenberg printing press works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLctAw4JZXE>
- YouTube – The machine that made us: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQ88yC35NjI>

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What results are expected?



With thanks to Hawthorns Primary School, Worthing, for sharing these resources which were created as a series of activities to celebrate 150 years of the IET.