**The Do’s and Don’ts of Gelli Plate Printing**

By Nicole Tinkham

[](https://keetonsonline.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/gelli-plate.jpg)

**Paint**

DO use acrylic paints. Any brand will work, so pick one that you’re comfortable with! If using craft paint, be sure to work fast – these paints tend to dry quickly. To slow down drying time, feel free to use a retarder or other medium (see our [GOLDEN mediums](https://keetonsonline.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/the-various-golden-mediums-explained/) blog for more info). Golden Open Acrylics are ideal for more pigment and a longer working time. For monoprinting, Liquitex Basics are recommended.

DO use printmaking inks. Water-soluble printmaking inks work best. Try Speedball or Daniel Smith!

DO use fabric paints like Jacquard Lumiere or Speedball screen printing ink. Silk paints, like Dye-Na-Flow, are very watery and end up beading up on the plate so try to avoid these. Feel free to use Golden Gac 900 to heat-set the fabric paint.

DON’T use dyes and rubber stamp inks UNLESS you don’t mind a little staining on your pad. These dyes won’t do any harm to the Gelli plate performance but they will change the color.

DON’T use watercolor paints as they are very thin and watery which causes beading on the plate. Gouache may be a better solution but we suggest experimenting with it first.

**Paper**

DO use just about any paper that is not glossy. Basically, it comes down to personal preference so experiment and see which you like using best. Computer paper, cardstock, Bristol, and printmaking paper are all wonderful choices. Wax paper (or deli paper) is great for collages with its thin, translucent properties. For more detailed prints, use a smooth-surfaced paper.

DO use fabric. Gelli printing is great to do on fabric, especially tight-weave fabrics.

DON’T wet your paper. Printing with a Gelli plate is best done with dry paper so there’s no need to mist it with water first!

DON’T use any type of glossy coated paper! This type of coating can stick to the Gelli plate, thus damaging the plate.

**Proper care**

DO let paint dry on your Gelli plate if you want to create unique textures. When fresh paint is applied over dried paint, printing may pull off some of that dried paint creating unique textures. However, when finished printing, you should clean your plate so it’s ready for the next use.

DO clean your Gelli plate after each use. Just spray with water and wipe down with a paper towel. You can also use hand sanitizer or clean with dish soap and warm water.

DO wipe your plate down with baby oil to remove any stains. Remove the baby oil with dish soap and water.

DON’T cut Gelli plates down to smaller sizes with a craft knife. With the flexibility of the plate, using a knife becomes too difficult. Instead, cut them down using scissors.

Alright, you took all of our advice and something still goes wrong. What do you do?

**What to do if..**

**Your paper is sticking to the Gelli plate**: Add a bit more paint. Most of the time when a print sticks to the plate, there either isn’t enough paint or the paint is starting to dry. If your plate starts to feel tacky, wash it thoroughly with dish soap.

**Your paint is beading up on your Gelli plate**: Wash the plate thoroughly with dish soap. This will remove the film of oil that develops on the plate. If this doesn’t solve the problem, you may need to use a thicker paint.

**Your paint is drying too fast**: Add some retarder to the paint. This will slow down the drying time, allowing you more time to work. You can also try using a heavier paint application. Many will want to spray the plate with water but this does not usually help.

**Your Gelli plate becomes cloudy**: Nothing. This is normal and does not affect the use of the plate.