

FORAGER

crafts

TIPS, TRICKS,
& INSTRUCTIONS

WOOD BURNED COASTERS





WOOD BURNED COASTERS



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What is wood burning?

Wood burning (also called pyrography, or fire writing) is an ancient craft that plays on all the senses. Artists burn detailed designs onto wood, warmed by the heat of the tool and soft plumes of smoke. In the olden days, a wood burning tool would be heated over an open fire until red hot - much like a branding iron. Nowadays, we'll use an electric tool, which is safer, more accessible, and offers us more control.

Designs are endless, and can include logos, sketches, or words of wisdom - and the projects are flexible too. We recommend starting out with coasters or cheese boards, but frames, utensils, bird houses, and keepsake boxes are popular as well.

In the sections below, we'll go through some basic safety information and offer additional insight into the items in your kit and options for future projects. We'll talk tracing & design, then go step-by-step through the burning process. If you still have any questions, give us a shout at hello@foragercrafts.com and we'd be happy to help troubleshoot.

With all that said - let's get burning!

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Supplies in your kit

Our wood burned coaster kits include a reusable **wood burning tool**, complete with three favorite **tips** & a **stand** for safe burning.

Kits also include a set of four sturdy **hexagonal coasters**, a **practice coaster**, **graphite paper** for design transfer, **paper templates**, a **pencil** for sketching, **sandpaper** for a smooth finish, and a bottle of **mineral oil** for sealing your coasters with a sheen.

If you happen to have these items on hand (or something similar) feel free to follow along with this guide.

You'll need **access to power** for this kit - we recommend setting up your work station as close to a plug as possible, as you'll want the tool's cord to have plenty of slack while you work. A grounded **power strip** or **extension cord** can be helpful here.

If you'd like to switch out the tips in your kit, you may find it easier to do so with a set of **pliers** (be gentle!) or a **dish towel**. Please only ever change the tips on the tool when everything has fully cooled down, to prevent damage to yourself or your tool.

Lastly, a pair of **scissors** is helpful for cutting templates & tracing paper to size.

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Safety first! Hot tools at work

The electric tool that we include in this kit will reach 900°F / 480°C when fully heated - so please exercise the utmost of caution when using your kit, to prevent injury to yourself or damage to your work surface. The plastic sections are all safe to touch when hot - *all metal components are not.*

Because we're burning wood, you'll notice the smell of smoke as you go - a very nice scent that reminds us of campfires and cozy evenings! We encourage you to work in a well-ventilated area, but the smoky aroma is normal and otherwise a welcome part of the wood burning experience.

Once you plug in your tool, it's best practice to treat the tool & tips as if they're always fully heated - avoid grabbing the metal with your bare hands. It's easy to forget that a tool was left on during a past session, and the tool can reach unsafe temperatures much quicker than you might expect.

Please use caution with younger crafters (anyone under 16). It's helpful to think of it this way: if a hot glue gun is too dangerous for a child or teenager to use, a wood burning tool should definitely wait a few years.

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Getting to the point of it all

We include three wood burning tips – or nibs, or points – in your kit, to give you a variety of options to play with. They're listed below, along with their function. Each one is threaded, and is intended to be screwed into the top of your tool. If you'd like to experiment with other points, we recommend our friends at Walnut Hollow for even more interchangeable tips.



Flow Point: This versatile nib can create a wide range of lines and marks, including outlines, shading, fill, curves and dots - all with a broader line than the cone point. This is the tip that we ship your tools with - a great beginner tip, with an easy flow (as the name implies!)



Cone Point: Used to burn fine lines, dots, and curves. Excellent for lettering or the finest details! Our favorite point once you get the hang of the basics.



Universal Point: Chisel-shaped, great for fine, straight lines, cross-hatching, and details. On its side, it can create a broad dark line for shading. Not ideal for curved lines, but great for adding straight lines and especially fun for adding details along the edges of the coaster.

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Templates & transferring designs

With wood burning, it's easiest to transfer a design with pencil onto the coaster and then go over it with the wood burning tool. You can always freehand designs onto the coasters if preferred, using the provided pencil – just note that it's hard to erase pencil marks on wood. For that reason, template transfers tend to be the cleanest method – putting lines right where we want them on the first try.

For transferring designs, we'll use the graphite paper included in your kit, along with the paper templates and pencil. We want the shinier, darker side of the graphite paper to be facing the coaster. It's helpful to use scissors to trim the sheet to size before you trace so you can make sure it's centered. We can then place our template on top & begin tracing with the provided pencil, using our other hand to keep both the transfer & template paper in place. Once you've traced the whole image, voilà! You'll have a perfect replica.

You can see these steps on the next page, followed by some helpful tips for further designs.

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TEMPLATES & TRANSFERS



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Templates & transferring designs (continued)

We include a variety of printed templates that are sized for your coasters, but you can create your own, or even trace over magazine cutouts or photos. For a printable template, we recommend simple designs or lettering, printed in black and white on regular old printer paper.

If you're having trouble keeping your template in place, a bit of masking tape or washi tape around the borders will keep everything still as you go.

Finally, feel free to use your graphite paper over and over - it's useable until it's been totally extinguished (meaning that there's no graphite left), or you start to get patchy transfers. And feel free to use the graphite paper on other surfaces as well - it makes beautiful artistic transfers for canvas paintings, paper cards, watercolor paper, and more!

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Preparing your tool & work surface

Your template is traced, you know the different points, and you're almost ready to go! Last steps - preparing the tool itself.

The metal stand that comes in the envelope with your points is important. It allows us to safely rest the tool on a tabletop without scorching our work surface or losing control of the tool. It's easy to open - simply flip one end over the other, and it'll pop right up.

Rest the stand on a table top (you can tape it in place if you'd like), and try laying your tool (cool and unplugged) onto the stand. You'll see where the notches on the tool line up with the stand. Try picking the tool up and placing it back down in the stand now, while it's cool, to get the hang of it. That'll make things safer once the tool is hot.

To protect your tabletop further, it may be helpful to have a trivet or scrap piece of wood or cardboard under your surface as you go. The stand is quite sturdy, but if you jostle or drop the tool, it may be worthwhile to have an extra layer of protection.

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Preparing your tool & work surface (continued)

For the tips, we recommend beginning with the **flow point**, which is very versatile & offers a smooth line. This is the point that we load your tool with before shipping. If you would like to change tips over the course of a project, turn the tool off and let it cool completely before changing tips.

The tips can jam or be damaged by changing them while they're hot. If the cooled-down tips are giving you trouble when it's time to switch, a gentle twist with pliers or a dish towel should do the trick. If you find that they're frequently sticking, try rubbing the threaded ends with the graphite paper gently. Graphite powder is a natural heat-resistant lubricant for metal on metal contact.

Once your tool is plugged in and resting on its stand, you can flip the switch to "ON." We'll let the tool heat up for 5-10 minutes until it's at full heat.

Now, it's finally time to burn!

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How to use your tool

We recommend starting on your practice coaster - which is distinct from the others due to its burned edge. Because it's made of the same type of wood (and has the same shape) it'll be a great way to practice the methods below before applying them to your set of four final coasters.

Holding the tool will come naturally to you - it's just like holding a chunky pen. Keep your hand and fingers beneath the protective plastic sheath at the top of the tool, and angle the tip of the tool toward the coaster just as you would a pencil. Just as folks use different grips for writing, you'll find that no two wood burners use precisely the same grip for burning - and that's okay!

To make a solid, dark line, hold the nib just at the surface of the wood. You don't need to press hard at all - just barely skim the surface. Move very slowly, much more slowly than you would a pen or pencil. You may want to gently rock your tool back and forth to get a darker line. It's helpful to imagine where your line is going to go before you press the point onto the wood.

For a thinner, lighter line, move your nib more quickly along the wood, without rocking it back and forth. Notice the difference?

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How to use your tool (*continued*)

If you feel like your line is bumpy or that your nib is getting stuck in the wood, use less pressure - skim the surface of the wood. Timing is important - you'll find that if you linger in one spot too long, your tool will burn deeply, leaving a crater or dark spot on the wood. Consistent timing & pressure are key to smooth lines.

As you get the hang of making lines & moving smoothly along the wood, it's time to branch out into other techniques. To make **curves**, try turning your coaster with your non-working hand, rather than moving your tool - this keeps them consistent. To create **dots**, simply hold your tool down in one spot for a second. There! If you hold it down very briefly, you'll get a tiny dot - a little longer, and you'll get a larger, deeper one.

For lettering, you'll use a combination of the three techniques - turning the coaster for the curves of the letters, using your line practice to cross letters such as "t," and using the dot technique to finish off letters like "j" and "i"

With all the techniques listed above, practice makes perfect! It can be quite challenging at first, but the more you experiment, the easier it'll all become.

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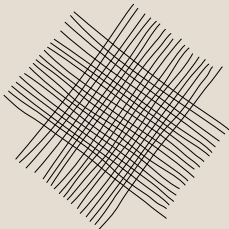
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Methods of shading

To fill in shapes, try making little tiny spirals with your tool, running over the area lightly multiple times to build up a nice dark layer of color. This allows us to create a consistent color without digging into the wood - it's a basic method of shading or filling that we can accomplish with any of the tips.



For **hatched shading**, create short lines parallel to one another. The closer together the lines are, the darker the shading.



For even darker shading, you can add perpendicular or angled lines on top of the first set - this will create **cross-hatched shading**.



Smooth shading is easiest with the universal tip - you can turn that tip on its side (almost like a paintbrush) and drag it along the wood smoothly for a dark, smooth patch of shading.

Not every design needs shading, of course! Simple line drawings or lettering might just call for a crisp outline. But as you begin to experiment with more detailed designs, you'll find shading to be useful for adding depth to each project.

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Sealing your project

Once you're happy with the design on your practice coaster or your finished projects, it's time to sand them to a smooth finish, then seal them up for use. If you'll be displaying the coasters as art - or if you're not that concerned about their longevity - you don't *have* to seal them, though sanding may still be helpful. Sealing will slightly darken the color of the wood, but will also make it more durable for regular use.

If you choose to seal your project, make sure that your design is complete and totally finished. Once a sealant has been applied, your wood is no longer safe to burn on (unless it's fully sanded back down to the original bare wood).

Our favorite way to seal a wood burning project is by rubbing the coaster with a few layers of the included mineral oil. Simply apply a few drops of the oil to the surface of the coaster, then rub it in circles with a kitchen towel. The wood will drink in the oil and become darker and shinier. After 30-60, you can apply a second coat - then a third or fourth if you choose. Even just one will add a lot of protection!

Other options for sealing include Mod Podge, wood varnish, or epoxy. Just make sure that the sealant you choose is food-safe if you're planning to use it around food or drinks.

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Types of wood & future projects

For future projects, the easiest woods to use are light-colored, soft, and have subtle rings or patterning- such as pine, balsa, basswood, or birch. More advanced woods include oak, maple, cedar, and sycamore, which tend to be darker & harder. We include a light-colored & medium-soft wood - **pine** - in your kit. We love pine for its ease of burning as well as its durability.

Because wood burning produces smoke, we need to exercise caution in the woods we choose. For future projects, please be careful to avoid particle board, chipboard, wooden pallets, sealed wood, treated wood, or aggregate wood (such as particle board). Wood laminate is becoming more and more convincing these days, but contains chemicals that we shouldn't be burning or breathing in. Foraged wood can work well, but make sure that the wood is fully dry and that you can **positively identify it** before beginning - we need to avoid hazardous woods such as oleander, hemlock, etc.



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Conclusion & contact information

And that's all there is to it! At least all there is for getting started. Keep practicing and experimenting, and you'll be amazed at the things you'll create.

For more information, troubleshooting, or any questions about sourcing or materials, please get in touch using any of the methods below - and feel free to tag us on Instagram - we'd love to feature your artwork!

We can't wait to see what you create!



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