

TINY TREASURES

Gift Tags Project Video

A simple and fun project, using collage, painting, and other mixed media materials and methods to make small paper keepsakes such as gift tags or bookmarks. Take an afternoon and make a bunch, or gather friends or family, pool your supplies, get out the snacks, and make it a crafting party!



There are four videos in this project. Here are the links:

Part 1 Intro and review of materials 19 min 24 sec

<https://vimeo.com/727437023>

Part 2 The collage 23 min 28 sec

<https://vimeo.com/726605057>

Part 3 Mark making 29 min 34 sec

<https://vimeo.com/726888608>

Part 4 Embellishments and Finishing 11 min 8 sec

<https://vimeo.com/729426645>

Materials and Supplies

140 lb paper: watercolor paper or mixed media paper

Paper for backing, such as scrapbook paper, wrapping paper, or decorative paper

Images for collage: magazine clippings, wrapping paper, tissue paper, book pages, or images from other sources (if you print images on an ink-jet printer, before you use them in your collage, be sure to spray them with a fixative, such as Krylon Workable Fixatif, so the ink won't run)

Adhesive (I use Liquitex matte get medium) and an old, large, flat brush to apply it

A few acrylic paints (craft or artist quality - either will be fine) in colors appropriate for your images

Mark-making supplies, such as colored pencils, gel pens, Posca paint pens, metallic pens, stamps and ink, stencils, acrylic inks, alcohol inks

Ribbon (3/8" or narrower)

Embellishments such as lace, buttons, charms, beads, small tassels you can make from embroidery thread

Pencil, scissors, ruler, paper punch

Process:

Make the tag base

1. For the pattern, copy page 4 of this document onto cardstock and cut it out.
2. Lay the pattern on your watercolor or mixed media paper and draw around it with your pencil. Draw as many on the same piece of paper as you wish to make. Don't cut them out.

Add Collage and Paint

1. For each tag, select the major elements:
 - a. Focal image
 - b. Other collage elements, if desired
 - c. Coordinating and contrasting acrylic paint
2. Your images, especially if they're from magazines, will include the object you're interested in as well as background, or even over-lapping elements. You can either carefully cut them out, or tear them out, tearing close to the image, in which case you'll use paint later to cover the parts you don't want. Cut or tear the images, as appropriate, to remove unwanted material.

3. Arrange your collage pieces on the tag. Try several different arrangements until you're happy with your design. If it's complicated, you may want to take a photo so you can remember the placement.
4. Decide whether you want to paint the tag before you apply the images, and if you do, go ahead, then let it dry. (You can also add paint later.)
5. Glue your collage pieces in place. If any lie partially under others, glue the underneath ones first. Use a flat wide brush and the matte gel medium (the 'glue'). Apply the matte gel medium both to the tag and the back of the image. Lay the image in place, then brush more medium over the front. Start at the center of the image and work outwards, pressing firmly to squeeze out any bubbles.
6. Once you're done with the collage and the medium is dry, add paint for areas of color.

Add Writing or Decoration

NOTE: Be sure whatever marks you add won't smear if you apply more gel medium (or anything else water-based) over them. You can do this by testing on a piece of paper. I find some pens (particularly Sakura Micron pens) may bleed but are less likely to if I let them dry overnight before putting medium over them. Be aware if your mark making tools are water-proof or only water-resistant and proceed accordingly. If the marks bleed, you could try spraying them with Krylon Workable Fixatif.

1. Use your mark-making supplies to add decorative elements, as desired. I particularly enjoy making borders on the tags.
2. Optionally, add text. You can use text cut from magazines or books and glued on with the matte gel medium; you can write directly on the tag; or you can create text on your laptop, print it, fix the ink, then glue it on with matte gel medium.

Add a Backing

1. Carefully cut the tag out.
2. Cut a piece of backing material a little larger than your tag,
3. With the matte gel medium, glue the tag to the backing, wrong sides together.
4. Let the medium dry thoroughly.
5. Trim away the excess backing.
6. Use the paper punch to punch a hole in the top.

Final Embellishments

1. Cut a piece of ribbon about 16" long. Fold it in half and pass the folded end (a loop) through the hole in the tag, back to front. Pull it through an inch or so, then pass the two ends through the loop. Tighten the ribbon.
2. We've done a lot, but you may not be ready to stop! You can add embellishments! There are things you can glue on: flatback rhinestones, lace, appliques, buttons, and much more.
3. Or you can make drops to hang from the ribbon knot. Here's how! But first, in addition to the materials and supplies listed above, you'll need
 - a. Jewelry pliers: needle nose, round nose, and a wire cutter
 - b. Head pins

- c. A large, closed jump ring, or the ring part of a small toggle clasp
 - d. Your chosen beads or crystals
4. For each drop, thread your bead or beads on a headpin. Make a 90° bend in the wire between 1/16" and 1/8" from the last bead. Use your round nose pliers to make a loop just beyond the bend. The loop will be open. Push the loop over the large jump ring (or ring part of the small toggle clasp). Press the loop closed, then tightly wrap the end of the head pin around the wire just beyond the beads. Wrap as many times as will fit, then cut away the excess wire.
 5. Now attach the ring to the ribbon. Gently pull the ribbon ends back through the ribbon loop. Place the ring over the loop and push it close to the tag. Thread the ribbon ends back through the end of the ribbon loop. Pull the ribbon ends tight. The ring will now hang from the knot.

Final thoughts

I hope you've enjoyed this project. For me, it has a double benefit. First, of course, you end up with cute little tags or bookmarks which make great tokens of friendship, fillers to add to a gift bag, or a great scale-up for your gift wrap. But also, you get to hone your skills. You can practice your techniques, try out new products, and find homes for magazine images you just can't bear to throw away.

For a special experience, gather friends or family, pool your supplies, and have fun making tags. It's a party!

