Creativebug Live: DIY Stickers with Courtney Cerruti

Chapter 1 - Creativebug Live: DIY Stickers

DIY Stickers

- Hi everybody, welcome. I'm Courtney. I'm an artist and author and editor-in-chief here at Creative Bug. And I wanna share with you one of my favorite ways of making image transfers. This is a way to make custom or DIY stickers and it couldn't be easier. And the materials are also something that you probably have lying around the house. For this technique, you're going to need packing tape. I've got two rolls here. They're both about two inches wide. One is a lightweight packing tape and the other one's the heavy duty and it comes on a roll. You'll need your images. We've provided a PDF that has really cute clip art for the season. You'll need to have a photocopy. So this is a laser or toner-based print. So not an inkjet print, not a standard photo, but a photocopy. So most photocopy machines print this way, you'll be good to go. But what's great about this transfer technique is that you can also just use magazines because this transfer does not reverse your image. So find a magazine or an old catalog. Things with glossy pages work best. You'll also need something to burnish. I've got a craft stick or a bone folder. I'll show you how to use this and explain a little bit about that tool, if it's new to you. A pair of scissors, if you happen to have the ones that have a non-stick blade, that's great. Glue stick. If your packing tape is not sticky, after the process, which I'll walk you through. You'll definitely need water. You can either use a spray bottle or I like to just have a basin of warmish water. That's mostly for the comfortability of your hands. It can also be cold water. And then I have a towel handy just for my hands as they go in and outta the water. So this technique, like I said, is very easy, very accessible. This is a process that I've done with kids of all ages. I usually do it when I travel. And at the end you'll have custom stickers that you can use anywhere that you would put a normal sticker. So you can put it on the back of your phone, on the back of your laptop, on a notebook, make a card out of it. I'll be showing some ideas for gift wrapping with it as well, and make sure to ask questions in the chat. I'll be answering those at the very end of the of the class. So let's get started. Here I have photocopies. This is a black and white photocopy. So this is, again, toner based. If you're not sure, if you just happen to have images lying around your house and you're not sure, sometimes you can kind of see a bit of shine on the ink itself that gets laid down. Or if you're not sure if your printer is a toner-based printer, if the paper comes outta the printer and it's warm, then you're good to go because the way that toner ink lays on the surface of the page is with heat, and it's that sort of like superficial laying of ink that allows us to release it for making these stickers. If you have an ink jet printer, it's not going to work. But like I said, you can also use a magazine. Let's start with one of these cute little ones. I've got the packing tape here. I like to work with it off of the roll, but it can be handy to have it in this little cutter so you're not constantly trying to find the edge of the tape. It is loud and I'm just gonna take a little piece of it. And let's see, let's do, I like this little mushroom. I could cut this out and preserve all of these little things around it. I could also cut the tape down just a bit, and that's where these Teflon scissors come in handy. And so I caught some of these other motifs. That's fine, I can cut those out later. So I've placed my packing tape down on the surface of whatever image I wanna make a sticker out of. The next step is to burnish it. If you forget this step, you may not get a great transfer and your sticker might be very pale or have missing little parts in it. So burnishing just means rub or rub really hard. You can use a craft stick like this. You can also use a bone folder, which is a bookmaking tool for folding and creasing and burnishing. Okay, that's plenty. Now I'm only

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concerned with making good contact where there's ink, the white of the paper, there's no white ink. When a photocopy is made or an image is printed, it just relies on the white of the paper itself, and so there's no white ink that's gonna transfer. You'll actually get a clear background here. The next step is to put this whole thing into water. And I don't need to put this whole piece of paper in the water. I'm just gonna rough cut this out. I can refine the shape of the sticker after, and we're gonna place it in the water. Let's do one more before I rub off the paper backing. Let's see, stick with this tape. And here. Now if I have an image that's wider than my tape, I can actually line up two pieces of tape and I'll show you that in a little bit. But let's just stick with this one. I can tear that out, burnish it to make good contact between the ink on the paper and the packing tape. Oops. And then just throwing that here in my tub of warm water. So to make your custom stickers, you're gonna need to do this for every single one. You're removing the paper backing and depending on your tape and image combo. So whether or not you're working with a photocopy or a magazine paper, sometimes the paper can really just slide off like this. I would say that's pretty rare. Sometimes you'll get lucky. Most often when you're working with a magazine page, you're gonna have to work a little bit harder. So I am just removing the paper backing with my thumbs. And if you can see here, these little white fuzzy bits, that's the paper. It's still there. This is a very tactile process. It may look as if all of the paper is gone, but when you feel it, if it feels fuzzy, that means you need to do a little bit more work. Don't use your fingernails, you don't wanna remove your image. We're almost there. If you make this transfer, the sticker, and it dries and you see little fuzzy things on the back, that means you didn't get all the paper and you can just put it back in the water. You're not gonna hurt it. All right, so there's our transfer. I usually just give it a little squeegee with my fingers, and this is where my towel comes in handy. So let's place it face down, so sticky side down and just wipe away the water so you can really see all of that detail. I lose very little detail, if any. Get a really crisp, clean image and it doesn't reverse the image, which allows you to use something like a magazine or text in its original orientation. You can see I picked up a little bit of the magazine where I put the tape, so I can just trim that off. And you can cut this down to any size. If you wanna make a really small sticker, you're gonna want to do the transfer process. So put down the tape, burnish it, and then remove the paper backing and then trim it. I like to say that the packing tape is very indestructible except for when you start to cut into it and it can be kind of brittle. I think that's the best way to describe it. So before you rub off the paper backing, you don't wanna have an irregular shape, you just wanna work with it as is. But this is cute. We're gonna save it on our wax paper. You can also save it on like a plastic file folder. Anything that's a non-porous surface, if you put it on paper, it's going to stick. So if you're ready to use it to make a card, put it on your notebook or wrap a gift, that's fine. You can just place it like you would a sticker. But if you wanna save it, that's what the wax paper is for. Let's do one from a magazine and every magazine combination and tape combination is a bit of a an experiment, so you may not know exactly how it's gonna turn out, but that's part of the surprise and delight. This is a Basquiat image and I love this. So I thought maybe we would just transfer that. So I have a larger piece of tape here. I'm gonna do my best not to get any bubbles or ripples while I'm placing the tape. If you do, don't worry. You can always burnish them out or attempt to burnish them out. Any place that you have a ripple or bubble will just cause a skip in the image, so you'll have a little blank spot. I'm gonna cut this off so I don't need to worry about burnishing that part. And then I wanna save this part of the paper too for maybe another transfer. I don't need to have all of this, so I'll just trim that with my scissors and then it can go into the water. Let's tape up a few different images and then we'll do the paper removal all at once. You can also use photocopy. So this is a photocopy of a vintage kids book that has some imagery I like. I love this little aquarium.

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We could do that. Place it as best I can here to avoid picking up any texture from the table. I do like to have either another magazine or a book or some kind of padding below me when I burnish. And what I love about the image transfer process or this process of making these stickers is that I can use a photocopy. So if I have photos of my family, but I don't wanna ruin or destroy the original photo, I can just make a photocopy, so that'll go in the water. I also really like these "Crap Hound" magazines, or you might be familiar with "Dover Clip Art" books. They're full of copyright free imagery, usually in black and white, although "Dover" also makes them in color. And these are really nice for making transfers and stickers. You'll wanna make a photocopy of these so you can save your original pages. And I have some photocopies here. Do the star. This is from a "Dover" book. Why don't we do this one, and I'll show you how to do two pieces of packing tape. (packing tape screeching) There. Hopefully you can see this. Watch any little bits of hair or fibers. I like to overlap my packing tape by just a scant, I don't know, one 16th of an inch. It's maybe hard to see, but it's just very slightly overlapped and overlapping your tape is much easier than trying to line it up perfectly. So I recommend a slight overlap. And then I'm actually gonna trim this down because this part is so small. Don't forget to burnish, find ourselves a little padding, burnish, burnish, burnish. Again, if you forget this step, you'll still probably get a transfer, but you may be losing a little bit of detail or saturation in the color. Okay, so here's a good one where I've got a very irregular sort of blocky edge. When I wanna go to use this sticker, I'm probably gonna want something a little bit smoother, but I'm not gonna cut it to that shape right now. I'm actually just gonna cut around and make the transfer first before I start to cut into any of the packing tape. All right, so that's also gonna go into the water. All of these have just been soaking, so we're ready to remove some paper. This is one of the mushrooms that we started with. Ooh, that just slipped right off. That's so nice. I love it when that happens. I find that the photocopies sometimes work better for the paper removing quickly, and sometimes the magazines are stick a little more, and that probably has to do with the printing process. So I'm feeling with my fingers, it looks pretty good. It doesn't feel too fuzzy. I'm gonna do the little squeegee. Let's place this on the table. If you're working on a surface that has a paper down, you don't want to just put your sticker right there because it will stick as it dries. You can see how great the detail is there. Let's try our photocopy of the vintage kids book. So again, removing the paper backing. And you can see that the paper likes to stick where there's ink. So here in these open spaces where just the white of the page was showing through, the paper is not sticking, it's slipping right off. This part of the process can take a few minutes. That's why having the warm water is nice for your hands. And if you're doing this with a group, let's say, of kids or students or family, sometimes it's nice to set up two little tubs of water. You can do this in a sink, in a bathtub, you can... I like these dish washing tubs. They're just a few dollars and you can get them like at a Target and they work really nicely. You can just do it in a bowl of water. So again, squeegee as best you can, place that down and you can see how vibrant and saturated that color is. All right, let's try the Basquiat image. A reminder, because I'm using a magazine page, there is something on the back that is not going to transfer. You will sacrifice whatever's on the back. It's only where the packing tape is touching the image that you will get a transfer. Just something to keep in mind. So this is already... I can tell I've just removed only the back part of this paper. This is still full of paper fibers and I can tell from this magazine, it's gonna take a little bit longer to remove that paper backing. So you can start to see here it's very foggy. Still a lot of paper fibers. Here I've done a good job removing the paper, and I think this is gonna be one of these images as well. Sometimes there's a white coating on the page, and as you remove the paper, you also remove this white coating. So yeah, this is one of them. If you look at it here, it's still a little foggy, but if I touch it, you just have to

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imagine. And trust me, if I touch it, it's not fuzzy. So this is that white film I'm talking about. I can rub harder and remove that, but you may lose a little bit of saturation in your final image. When you put it on white, you can tell that it doesn't do anything. If you're putting this tape down on like a darker piece of paper, you might get some distressing in your image, and that is just part of the image transfer process and making these custom stickers. Okay, so we're moving the paper. I'm gonna let that one soak a little bit longer. Let's move on to this one where we use multiple layers of tape. And you can see actually that paper is coming off really easy. That's so great. They're not always like that. But again, in these places where the ink is dense, there's more rubbing to be done. As you're rubbing these bits of packing tape that I overlapped, they may come apart in the water. That's not a problem. You'll wind up with individual stickers. You just wanna realign them when you place your sticker in its final home. So on a card, on a notebook, et cetera. But you can see how pretty and detailed an image you can get with this transfer method. This is definitely, I would say the most forgiving of the image transfer methods. Yeah, wow, look at that. I am sad you all can't be here with me in my studio because I'm missing all the gasping noises when I normally do this for the first time for someone. Super detailed, so pretty. Okay, let's put these on our wax paper so we can hold onto them and we'll move that aside. I've also made photocopies of my toddler's drawings, and I thought these would be fun to make transfers with just for gift wrapping. So I've placed my packing tape, I've burnished it, and I'm just gonna put them in the water to soak. And I have some other stickers I've already made hanging out on wax paper and I'm just gonna talk you through them. So here's a black and white photocopy that I made into a transfer or sticker. Here's a little bunny from our PDF. Again, you can see there's a little bit of rippling that happens. That's when the packing tape is pretty wet. So if your wax paper starts to get a little bit rippled, you can always take off your packing tape and transfer it to a new sheet of wax paper so that you don't get as much rippling, but it doesn't affect the transfer too much. Again, from a magazine, here's a rainbow. You can see that the text didn't reverse at all, which is one thing I love about this and some more images from our clip art. So let's go ahead. I'm gonna just remove the paper backing for these last ones, and then we'll place these. So this is from a magazine and I started the transfer earlier. It's been soaking. I'm just removing the rest of the paper backing. Give it a little squeegee. Grab your towel. Now, there is a lot of water sort of around in this process. You wanna make sure that your photocopies don't get wet, because if they get wet, then the paper won't stick and you'll get a skip in your image or a blank spot. Okay, so let's say I just wanted this word hope. Like I said earlier, I don't wanna cut the tape into an irregular shape until after I've made the transfer because that's how you can get these sort of brittle tears that happen in the tape. Now is when I can go in and cut this out a little bit more finely, maybe I wanna keep that little bird. So now I have this custom sticker that says "Hope," and I can put that on. Here's a packing tape transfer that I made a long time ago. It's been hanging out on this tub, and it was from a magazine. It had that white film I was talking about. So here's a little bit of white film that is actually paper fiber. If I want to go back in with just a wet finger and remove that paper fiber, I can, but you can also see that it has that milkiness I was talking about. And if we look at the front, I get a more distressed image in those parts where that white coating has been removed. I would say this is like one in every 10 transfers if you're working with just magazines that this happens. So it's good to know what it is because then you know how to troubleshoot it. You wanna just feel to make sure that you remove the paper. But once you've got it down to this layer, there's no need to remove the white film unless you aesthetically like that. And you can see this is also two pieces of tape. Now, that white film does cause your image not to be sticky. All of these other packing tape stickers will be sticky once the packing tape is dried like in 30 seconds to a

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minute. And in that case, you can use more tape or you can just use a glue stick. So I would just glue stick the back, place this where I want it to be. And then if you're being really super thorough, you could give it a slight little burnish with a craft stick or a bone folder. All right, let's check out, oh my gosh, this is like a dream. So look, this is just like sliding right off. This doesn't, oh no, that's another transfer. I thought that was sliding. It's still really nice. There's still a lot of paper fiber on this, so I'm gonna put it back in the water. And this is coming off pretty easily. If you've never worked with image transfers before, like I said earlier, this is the most forgiving image transfer. If you're not really interested in image transfers, you can just think of these as custom stickers. You can make photocopies of your own drawings letters to a friend. It could be nice if you have, let's say a favorite recipe from a grandma in her handwriting. You can make a photocopy of that and then make a cool transfer to make a piece of art or a mixed media piece or use it for gift wrapping. Like I said, I love too that these are translucent because we're just transferring the ink. We're not transferring we paper. So squeegee. And then let's put it down. I love how that looks. And this is a fun way to take just an element of a drawing or a pattern that you like. You can see here there's a little skip in my image, and that's because there was a wrinkle that I couldn't burnish out all the way, but that's just part of the distressed beauty of an image transfer. So I'll also save that. Try to wipe away your water. Okay, let's put that here. All right, I wanna show you some ideas for using these transfers or stickers. We'll move our water away. So wipe off our table. I forgot to do that one. Isn't that one cool? This is a photocopy from a book on collections, and this is a collection of like little sugar skulls. I'll throw that in the water and make a transfer of it later. So here are some images from the PDF we're gonna provide you. I made a little bookmark, so I just made the sticker using the packing tape. I wanted the figures to be very vibrant. And because the ink is translucent, if I had put it directly on this dark color, I'll show you, you wouldn't see it that well. So let's flip this over so you can see, I mean you can see it, but you don't get that vibrancy. If it's on the white paper, then you can see it. So I just layered this and then added a little tassel to make a bookmark here, you just take a white box. And then these are two images from the PDF to make a cute little gift. Can see this one someone's handwriting. And then I made a little packing tape transfer and used it to wrap a gift. Here's another one with our little bunny friend on a white paper bag. So if you're doing like class treats or baked goods, this is a fun way to just make the packaging cute because it is essentially just packing tape. It can go on glass. And this is one of the few image transfers that can go on glass. So if you are gonna do like a spice nut or make something that you're gonna put into a glass jar, then you can make a custom label and photocopy it and have a bunch of repeat ones. Or use a cute little graphic like the bunny and put that directly onto the glass. You can see here is another transfer I did a long time ago, and this is actually a votive holder, so I can put the votives right in it and it's not gonna melt or change. And if I want to change them for the season, I can literally just pull this tape off and change the image of my transfer on the glass, which I really like. Here is just on a notebook. I think you get the idea right? You can put a sticker anywhere. So you can put these image transfer stickers anywhere your heart desires. And this is actually a technique from my first book playing with image transfer. And I just wanna show you some other ideas for using these transfers in art making outside of gift wrap. So we'll flip through here. So this is a project called a Polaroid, and this is where I just took white pieces of paper and then added the packing tape transfers on top to make it look like an old school Polaroid. Now you can get Polaroid film again, but what I like is the contrast of glossiness of the packing tape transfer and the white border. Here, just a black and white transfer on a colored piece of paper, little ATCs or artist trading cards. And they work really well because they layer nicely with paper. They're already sticky. Or like I said, you can use a glue stick.

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Here are some postcards. You can play with the type. So I've cut the type up and made it more just abstract shapes slip through the book here. Like I mentioned earlier, it's one of the few transfers that you can use on glass. So I showed you the little candles. This is actually a microscope slide necklace where I did a transfer that has a landscape and then some other little ephemera added. On jars for labeling or gifting. Gift wrap, which is one of my favorite ways to use image transfers, especially the packing tape transfer. And this is just like a little favor bag. So I made black and white photocopy transfers using packing tape and then put them on these colored dots for a little kid's birthday. And then these two, these transfers have been around for like 10 years. They're a little bit ripply now because I've had them in my studio for so long. But I still think they're a fun application. The packing tape is so accessible and sort of like utilitarian, but then turning it into mixed media art is a really fun way to use these stickers. So this is packing tape of a photograph and then I put it on just white acrylic paint. And these are old "Reader's Digest" book covers, so it's a nice way to reuse materials. These packing tape transfers or custom stickers are really fun to play with. They're a great way to customize your art, customize your notebook, your phone case, your laptop. You can take your drawings and start to layer them or combine them with friends images and make stickers out of them. And they're really good for gift wrapping as well.

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