



## Stencil Art Quick Glossary

**Stencil** — A cut-out template used to apply paint/ink through open areas to create a repeated image.

**Positive Space** — The cut-out parts that receive paint (the “image” area).

**Negative Space** — The material left behind (the “background” that defines the image). In stencil art, negative space often *is* the design.

**Mask** — A stencil used to *block* paint rather than apply it (protecting areas from color).

**Bridge / Tab** — A thin connector that holds “floating” interior shapes in place (like the center of an O, A, or P).

**Island** — A detached interior piece that would fall out without bridges (again: the middle of an O, eye shapes, etc.).

**Cut Layer** — One stencil sheet in a multi-layer stencil set—usually representing one value or one color.

**Layering** — Building an image with multiple stencil passes (each pass adds another color/value).

**Registration Marks** — Small alignment marks (ticks, crosses, corners) cut into each layer so you can line up multi-layer stencils accurately.

**Keyline** — An outline layer (often the darkest) that “locks” the image together and adds crisp definition.

**Value** — Lightness/darkness. Multi-layer portrait stencils often use values instead of “colors” first.



**Overspray** — Spray paint mist that lands outside the intended cut areas. Can be a mistake—or a style choice.

**Bleed** — Paint creeping under the stencil edge, causing fuzzy lines. Usually controlled with pressure, adhesive, or dry-brush technique.

**Stencil Adhesive / Repositionable Spray** — A light tack adhesive that helps the stencil stick flat to reduce bleed (especially on walls).

**Burnishing** — Pressing the stencil edges down (with a finger, card, or tool) to seal contact and prevent bleed.

**Stippling** — Applying paint with a dabbing motion (sponge/brush) to avoid forcing paint under the stencil.

**Dry Brush** — A brush with very little paint; good for crisp edges and texture without bleed.

**Roller Application** — Using a small roller for fast coverage; works best with light pressure and minimal paint to avoid bleed.

**Mylar** — A durable plastic stencil material used for repeatable, clean cuts.

**Acetate** — A thinner plastic sheet used for stencils; flexible but can warp with heavy paint.

**Vinyl Stencil** — Adhesive-backed or cut vinyl used for extra crisp edges and fine detail.

**Weeding** — Removing the cut-out pieces from a stencil (common with vinyl or intricate designs).

**Heat Warp** — When thin stencil material deforms from heat (sun, hot lights, heavy spray).

**Ghosting** — Residual paint left on the back of a stencil that lightly transfers onto the next print.

**Edition / Run** — A set of repeated stencil prints made from the same stencil(s), often numbered like print editions.