


## DIY - Making a stencil using AppleWorks by Cindy O'Hora


My son's football team is doing exceptionally well this year 11-1. Someone in the community proposed that we show our support by decorating our homes to honor the school's teams. It was also close to Halloween. I decided to make "[gravestones](#)". I wanted one for each team they had beaten. I also planned to post a banner that would read "Hit'em hard, Seals." ([My son is a tackle.](#)) The tricky part would be to nicely letter each sign. My spouse suggested making stencils. I tackled doing it with AppleWorks.

One annoying fact I soon discovered was that AppleWorks can only increase a font to 255 pt. This meant that the letters could only be about 2.5 inches tall. That was acceptable for my gravestones, but the banner needed to be larger. That's when I remembered all those letter images that I had gotten in those clip art collections. Finally, I've found a use for them!

### **For a large stencil with a font no larger than 2.5 inches.**

1. Open a new drawing document.
2. Go File ... Page Setup. Set the Orientation to horizontal (landscape/sideways).
3. Go Format ... Document. Set the number of pages across as needed. I suggest you make it at least 2. You can increase or decrease it as your project progresses. Also adjust the margins to be the minimum your printer will tolerate. Consult the owner's manual for those numbers.
4. Click on the text tool (letter A).  Click one time on the page. Type the first word of your stencil in the text frame.
5. Highlight the word by multi clicking in the text box. Adjust the font, style and size settings to your satisfaction. To set the font size use Other and enter a number. Or repeatedly choose Smaller/Larger for small changes.
  - I set the font style to Outline. I only need a line to cut along. This saved me volumes of ink when I printed the large letters.
  - I used a font called Capitals. I liked the serif appearance. It also let me make the first letter of the names a larger capital letter than the rest (holding down the shift key).

- I made each word in the sign a separate text frame. This allowed me more control over spacing between words. I simply clicked on the original box and went Edit ...Copy. Each time I needed a new text frame, I Edit ... Pasted. This box already had my font, style and size settings. I highlighted the word in the frame and replaced it with the text I desired.

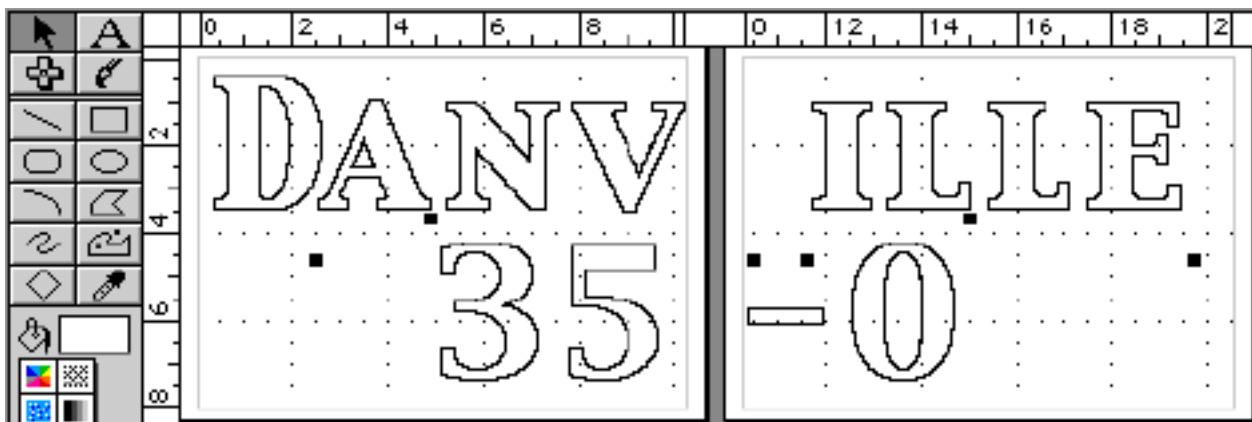
6. I reduced my view to 25 percent. Click on the smaller mountains . This does not change the actual size of your project. It only reduces your view. It is just like when you back up while looking through a camera's view finder to get everyone in the picture. (It is extremely difficult to work on a large document in 100 percent view.)

7. Go View ... Page View. You now see where the edges of the paper will fall when you print the stencil. You've probably discovered that some of the letters are split across the pages. Separate text frames allowed me to adjust for page breaks by moving the text boxes using the arrow keys or mouse.

Click on the text box to get the handles. Hit the appropriate arrow key to move the box in the desired direction. I also shut off the Autogrid. Options ... Turn Autogrid off. That gave me smaller steps when I hit the arrow keys and greater fine tuning control of spacing.

### Spacing between letters in a word.

In several cases, I put a single letter in its own text box. This allowed me to reduce the white space between it and the next letter in the name. This is called kerning. I have used kerning to reduce the space between the D and A in the illustration.



## **Alignment -**

Multiple text boxes can present an alignment challenge. To assure that all the words align precisely:

1. Select the text frames you want to align by clicking on each of them while holding down the shift key.
2. Go Arrange ... Align Objects. I chose to align all the words in one row of the stencil using the Top to bottom box: Align bottom edges.

## **Centering -**

You can also use the Align Objects dialog box to align one text box centered above or below another. Select both boxes and Go Align Objects: Left to Right .. Align Centers.

## **Proofing -**

I printed the first stencil on plain, cheap paper to verify that things were going to go as I had planned. This can save you lots of sorrow and cash.

## **Several choices of media -**

1. You could print your stencil on plain paper. Depending on how you plan to paint it this may be adequate. Purchased a sticky glue spray that allows you to stick and restick. (Can be found in craft and home improvement stores.)
2. I chose to print on to sheets of label paper. You can get label paper that is one full sheet without any smaller labels stamped on it. They are 8.5 by 11 inches which is just right for an inkjet printer. (Avery 8165. I paid \$9.95 for 25 sheets.)
3. When I made 18 - Go Seals! signs I made one stencil on label paper. I stuck it to light weight cardboard and cut through both to make a sturdy stencil. I used the above glue spray to make it sticky.

## **Cut out -**

Get a lap sized 1/2 in. thick piece of scrap wood or heavy plastic to serve as a base to cut on. It will get scratched so choose accordingly. A small ruler can help steady cutting long straight lines.

I used a wallpaper trimming knife (the kind you snap off the used blade) to carefully cut along and remove each letter. Sometimes I opted to not cut an area so that the shape of the letter would be preserved better when I removed the backing. The number 8 is a good example. Leave a bit of paper there to help hold the circle's shape.

### **Using the stencil -**

Remove the backing of the label sheet to reveal the sticky back. Carefully position the first sheet. Use the edges of the first to guide placement of the second sheet. Be sure the stencil adheres to the sign surface on the inside edges of the letters. Mask off generously with old paper around the stencil to prevent over spray from spoiling the project. Spray the desired color.

### **Graphic Enrichment -**

I used the football image in the Libraries to create a football stencil. We cut out all the dark areas and carefully saved the laces. Think before you cut!

### **Save the letters -**

I saved all the cut out letters. I can use them to do a reverse painting by sticking on the letters and then spraying the background. When I peel off the letters I have contrasting words. Use a T square, plumb line or yard stick to align the individual letters. It can help to make an extra lower case letter l. Use it to aid in spacing between words.

"Your work may be finished someday, but your education, never." Alexander Dumas

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