

# INSTRUCTIONAL MANUAL

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# SILK FLAG-MAKING KIT

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# SILK FLAG-MAKING KIT

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## PROCESS OVERVIEW

Thank you for purchasing a Silk Flag Making Kit! This kit is designed to guide you as easily and as thoroughly as possible through the silk flag making process. This process is the exact same one we teach in our workshops.

For photos detailing the process step-by-step, please see our website.

During this project you will:

- Design your flag
- Make a template
- Transfer the design from your template onto the silk
- Sew waste fabric onto the silk
- Build a frame
- Make the Primer
- Attach the silk to the frame
- Prime the silk
- Paint the silk
- Send the silk to us to dyeset in a commercial fabric steamer (or steam it yourself)
- Rinse the silk
- Sew your flag(s)

As you can see, it's no small undertaking! But the rewards are well worth it when you see your flag flying in the breeze!

This manual is designed to walk you through the entire process. Now that you know a little about what's involved, let's get started.

## EQUIPMENT & MATERIALS LIST

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You will need the following for this project:

- Silk (8mm Flat Crepe) **included in kit**
- Synthrapol (for rinsing) **included in kit**
- Standard Template **included in kit**
- Philip's Primer:
  - Powdered Egg Whites **included in kit**
  - Purified Water
  - Fresh egg yolks
- Jacquard dyes **can be purchased with the kit for an additional fee**
- Staple gun, staples, and pliers
- waste fabric
- Cotton/Poly sewing thread (and/or silk thread for final hem)
- Sewing Machine

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- Seam ripper
- Iron & Ironing board
- Graphite pencils
- Paintbrushes
- Removable Masking tape
- Cleaning supplies (rags, paper towels, hand soap, cups for paint/water, floor covering, etc.)
- ReDuRan(dye remover for hands) (*optional*)
- Rubber gloves (*optional*)
- Frame (recommended construction with 2x4s)
- Maul sticks (Wrist rests) (*optional*)
- Silk Weights (i.e. light coasters or fabric weights; we often use CDs) to keep silk from moving in the breeze if you are painting outside (*optional*)
- Access to a steamer (**steaming services are included with the kit**)
- Milsoft (for softening silk after the rinsing process) (*optional*) **included in kit**
- Ziploc® or other brand gallon sized waterproof and airtight baggie

## DESIGNING YOUR FLAG(S)

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### *Medieval Flags*

There is not a lot of concrete information on the specific construction methods and materials of medieval flags readily available to the public. For an overview on Medieval Flags in general, including methods of construction, please see our article “Medieval Painted Flags: A Study” located in the research section of our website.

Fairly detailed information on the specific *styles* of period flags, their general uses and evolution can be found in Herbert Norris's *Costume & Fashion, Volume Two 1066-1485*. Another invaluable resource is Colin Campbell's *Medieval Flags*. You can also review Compleat Anachronist # 50 Armorial Display.

Two excellent primary sources for Medieval flags are *Die Burgunderbeute; Inventar der Beutestucke aus den Schalchten von Grandson, Murten und Nancy, 1476/1477* by Florens Deuchler and *Die Banderia Prutenorum das Jan Dlugosz: eine Quelle zur Schlacht bei Tannenberg* by Sven Ekdahl. The *Burgunderbeute* is a catalogue of spoils from the Burgundian War of 1476 – 1477 and includes many, many flags, with invaluable descriptions and illustrations. *Banderia Prutenorum* shows the banners that were captured by the Polish army during the battle at Tannenberg against the Teutonic Order on the 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1410. A more available resource with good color examples of medieval standards is the Men-At-Arms Series, #145, “The Wars of the Roses”.

### *SCA Flags*

Like our medieval predecessors, we too carry flags into battle, or display them around our houses and encampments. Some people prefer making flags segmented with all of their fealties, starting from left to right, Kingdom, to their Barony, to their Household. Others

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prefer to put their primary charge on the standard and nothing more. Still others like a mixture of their heraldic elements that includes insignia of any awards they may have been given, like a laurel wreath, a harp argent, or a pelican. In other words, there is no standardized form of flags throughout SCA (although some kingdoms do have sumptuary laws for flags, so please look into rules and regulations specific to your kingdom prior to designing your flag). In most cases, you can use whatever elements you like, whatever best personifies you, as long as you do not use any insignias reserved for others (orders, awards, etc.). To my knowledge, flags in the SCA are not governed by the Herald's office, and neither are mottoes. The most important thing is to make the flag that you want to make and have fun in the process.

The information in this handout regarding medieval styles of flags and SCA derivatives is simply provided as a general guideline and is not comprehensive of all styles of medieval flags throughout the world. You do not have to make any of the styles of flags depicted in this manual. If your persona is Japanese and you want to make a Japanese style of flag be our guest! In fact, you don't even have to make flags. If you want to paint a veil, a dress panel, or a kite, then go for it. It's your piece of silk; what you paint on it is entirely up to you.

## TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR FLAG DESIGN

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### *Think Simple*

Cluttering your flag with too many elements will take away from its visual appeal. The best looking flags are those with simple designs and clean lines. Choose carefully what's most important to have on your flag, taking into consideration its size and how you will display it. Chances are, your flag will spend most of its time flapping in the breeze. People will likely only get fleeting glances at your design. The simpler your design, the easier it will be for people to recognize. Not only that, but take into consideration your time. How long will it take to finish that Celtic knot work border around your 9' standard? Do you want to be bent over the frame painting for hours on end? More importantly, will people be able to appreciate its intricacies when your flag is high up on a pole dancing in the wind? Not likely.

### *Think BIG!*

What's the point of spending so much time on a pretty banner if no one can see the design because it's too small? Remember that your flag will be displayed high upon a pole or pavilion. The bigger the flag, the bigger its pole needs to be, the bigger the design elements need to be in order for people to see them clearly. If you have very small elements on a large banner, people will probably not be able to see them or recognize them for what they are. For example, a 3" white rose on an 8' banner looks like a white spot when the flag is flying. A 6" rose however will be more easily recognizable. Incorporating large elements not only helps make your flag more recognizable, it also makes your flag easier and faster to paint which, believe us, you will come to appreciate after spending hours bending over your flag painting.

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## *Think Ahead*

Make extra templates from the original and put your designs on those. That way you can keep the original template intact for future flags. You may also want to make full-size cutouts so you can play with your layout without having to redraw elements.

## *Other Practical Tips*

There is no need to leave room for a seam allowance when designing your flag. If you use the recommended zigzag stitch, it will consume less than 1/4" of fabric.

Keep all major elements *at least* 1/2 " from the edges to make sure they are clearly visible after final sewing. This is not a seam allowance. It helps to make sure your elements will be visible when the flag is flying.

If you choose to add a pole sleeve, it can be a solid sleeve or cut into strips to make loops. If you choose to do the latter, mark where you are going to cut the strips on your template; it saves the guesswork later. You can also add a separate strip of fabric to be the pole sleeve.

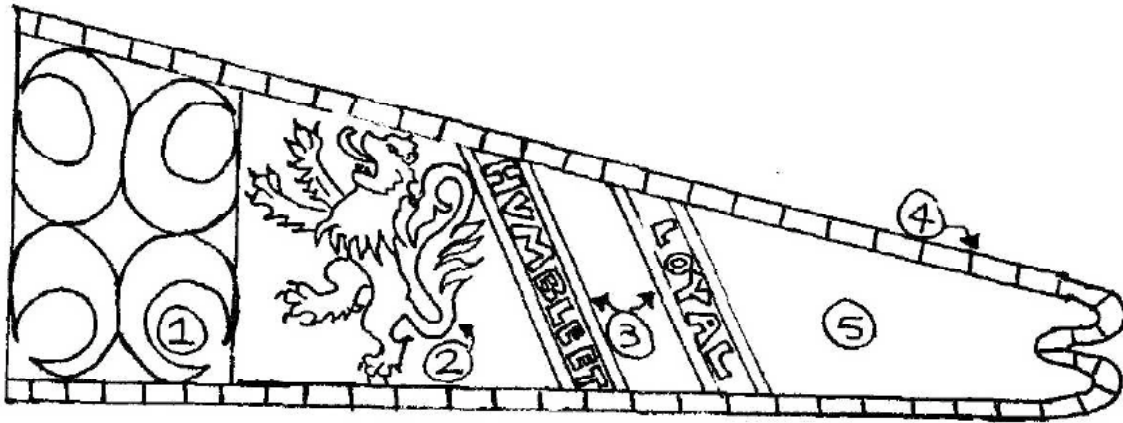
# SILK FLAG-MAKING KIT

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## SAMPLE STANDARD LAYOUT

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*Example modeled after historical design*



- ① Primary fealty to which the standard owner bears is generally displayed as a badge nearest the hoist.
- ② The primary charge of the standard owner's device or badge is the largest element, and follows the fealty badge.
- ③ Mottoes were common, usually occupying the space of two stripes going horizontally from left to right, starting at the top. There are examples of motto, stripes that are blank, presumably placed there for the later inclusion of a motto. Having motto stripes and mottoes are not necessary, but they do had a nice medieval flair. Mottoes I have seen have been mostly in Latin and German. Use whatever language would be appropriate to your persona and liking. Choose whatever font style you wish, but it is a good idea to use a font that is easily recognizable and readable.
- ④ Standards could have borders or not have borders. Borders can be white, gold, any single solid color or *componée*, which is striped as above, i.e. one row of alternating squares of the owner's livery colors. Borders can also be cut to become fringe surrounding the flag.
- ⑤ The remainder of the flag's body displays the owner's livery colors and can be a single color or divided to better reflect the owner's heraldry, especially "per fess", and "per bend". Other elements of the owner's device and badge can be added in this space, usually smaller than the primary charge and replicated throughout the remainder of the space.

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## MAKING YOUR TEMPLATE(S)

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Now that you know how you want your flag(s) to look, make a paper template the full-size and shape of your flag(s). Draw your designs exactly as you want them on your flag(s). Use a dark pencil or sharpie-type marker (one that will not bleed) when drawing your designs on the template so that they are sharp and clearly visible. If you are planning on putting a sleeve on your flag for use with a pole, you may leave 8" on the widest end of the piece of silk flag template free of designs to be folded over and sewn to make the sleeve, or you may add an additional strip of fabric for use as the sleeve. It should be noted that the appropriate way for a flag to fly is left to right. That is, the hoist (the part closest to the pole) should be on the left-hand side of your flag. This means the widest side of your flag should be on the left-hand side.

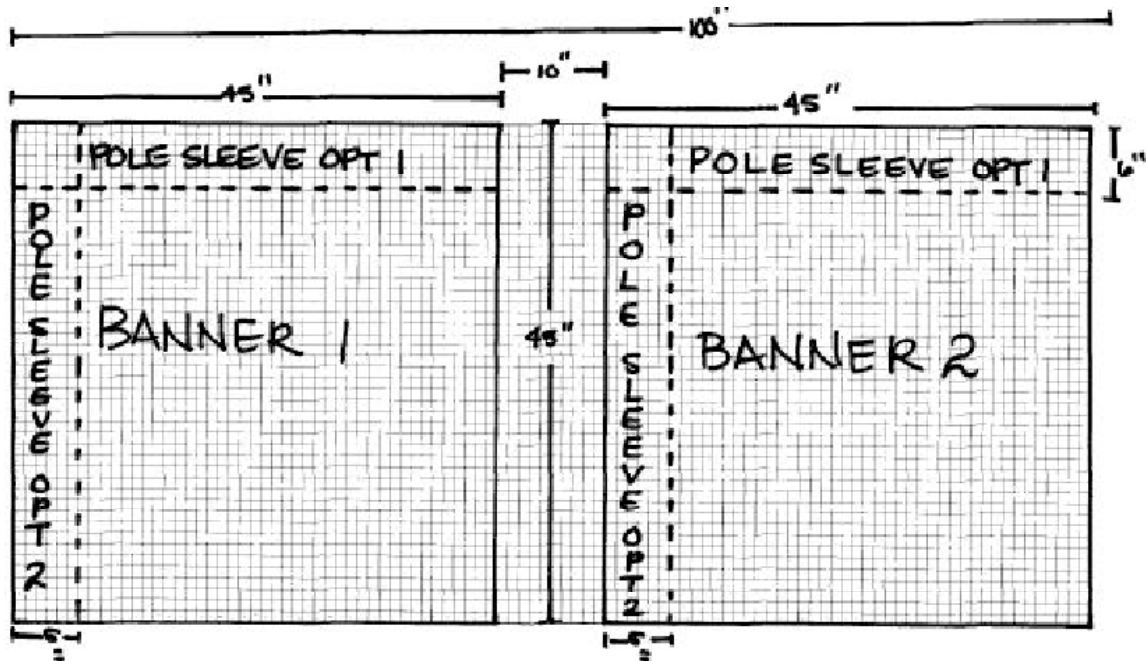
On the following pages are sample template layouts.

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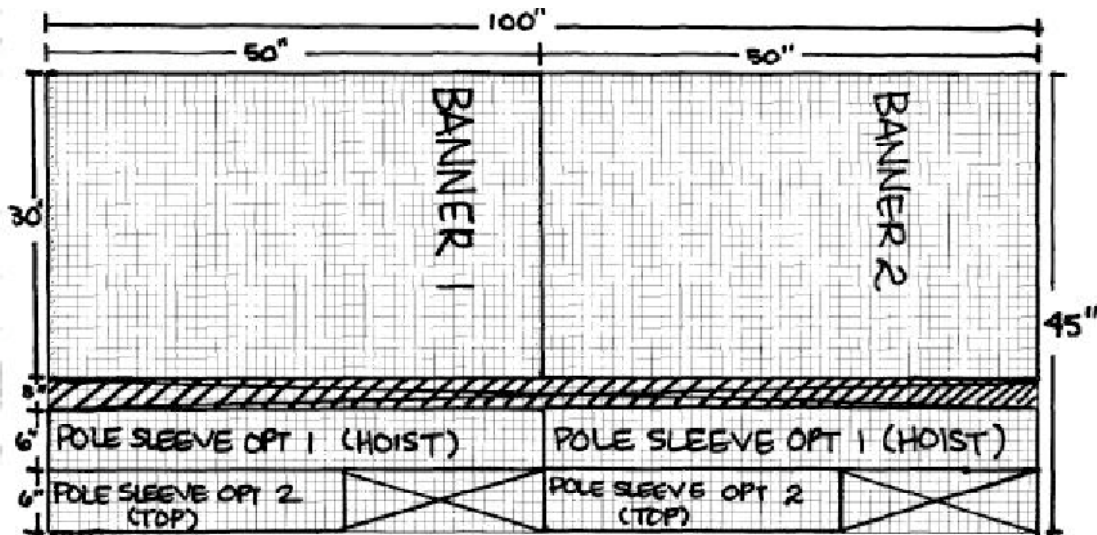
## SAMPLE TEMPLATE LAYOUTS

(TO SCALE)

Banners 45" x 45" (includes pole sleeves) *You have the option of choosing a horizontal pole sleeve across the top, a vertical pole sleeve at the hoist, or both.*



OR Banners 30" x 50" (excluding pole sleeves) *In this option, you also have the choice of pole sleeves, but the sleeves are attached separately.*



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OR Standards: design to your own specifications or use the Destrier Standard Template with dimensions, 33" x 102" (included in the kit), (2 per frame).

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## PREPARING YOUR SILK FOR DESIGN TRANSFER & PAINTING

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The silk you received in your kit is ready for painting as is. It has no chemicals or sizing. However, if in the future you obtain your silk from some source other than Destrier Silks or Dharma Trading, we recommend washing your silk to rid it of any dirt or organic residue that may inhibit the dye from taking.

When necessary, wash silk in Synthrapol. Use approximately 1/4 cup per washing machine load. Use cold water, regular setting.

Dry silk in dryer using mild to medium heat setting. Silk WILL shrink; shrinkage varies. Expect some minimum shrinkage if you wash your silk.

In either case, before transferring your design or painting, make sure your silk is as wrinkle-free as possible.

Iron your silk using the appropriate setting for silk. If the wrinkles are not removed, you may use the highest heat setting with steam, but exercise caution and keep the iron moving continuously to avoid burning.

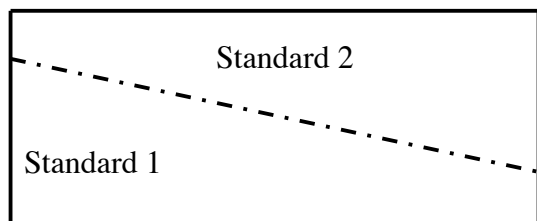
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## TRANSFERRING YOUR DESIGN ONTO THE SILK

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Once your template(s) is complete, transfer the design onto your silk.

Place your template on a clean, flat tracing surface. (If you are making Standards using the Destrier Standard Template, templates are on a piece of paper that is narrower than your piece of silk. You will have to cut out each standard template and place them in the position below.) Tape your templates down loosely. If possible, use removable masking tape.



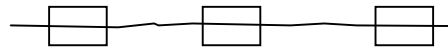
### EXAMPLE OF STANDARD/AUNCIENT LAYOUT

Now, carefully lay your silk over the templates. You may have to play with the silk and templates a little for everything to fit. Once you've got it right, tape down your templates as flat as possible to your work surface. Then try to tape your silk down as flat as possible **without stretching the fabric.** The tape is there only to hold the silk in place, not to

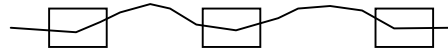
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stretch it. Make sure the silk is secure but not taut. If you see areas where the silk is scalloped, it is taped down too tightly:



Imagine the line in the drawing above the edge of the silk, and the rectangles are pieces of tape. Notice that the line is relatively straight. This is a good tape job.



In contrast, this example shows silk that is scalloped. This is because one, or the other, or both sides of the fabric are taped down too tightly and pulling on the silk. This is a bad tape job.

It is very important to make sure the silk is taped evenly and securely, or your design will be deformed from the tension.

Draw your design onto the silk using graphite pencils or fabric pencils. **DO NOT USE FABRIC MARKERS!** The primer is mostly water and will make your design disappear! If you use normal graphite pencils (i.e. a number 2 pencil), the marks cannot be completely removed from the silk; washable fabric pencils come out for the most part, but heavily marked areas will remain. **Trying to erase an error will damage the silk.** Pencil marks are not visible from as little as three feet away. Make sure the design is dark enough to be distinct and clearly visible, as it may fade with the application of primer.

Once your design is transferred onto the silk, you are ready to attach the waste fabric! If you are stopping here and continuing with your project at a later date, store your silk in a place where it will not get wrinkled or dirty until you are ready. The fewer wrinkles your silk has the easier this process will be.

## ATTACHING THE WASTE FABRIC

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“Waste fabric” is the fabric we sew onto the silk and staple onto the frame. It is just what its name implies. After the silk is painted and dry, we remove the waste fabric and simply throw it away.

We use waste fabric for several reasons. Firstly, it maximizes our use of the silk – since the silk is not touching the frame, none of the silk is spoiled by staple holes or by dye running along the frame and backstaining the silk. Secondly, it provides tight, even tension. The tight, even tension helps prevent dye from pooling and possibly running down your silk.

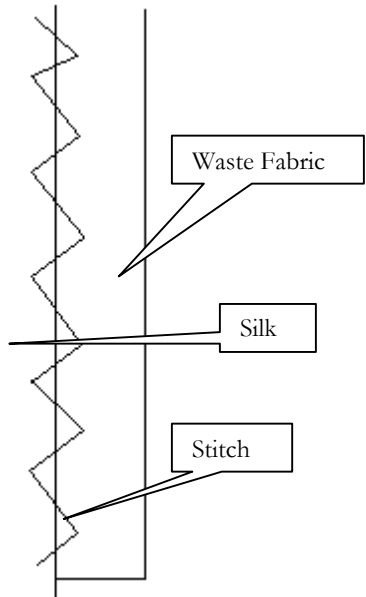
Any fabric can be used for the waste fabric, but something with natural fibers – like old cotton sheets, or a sturdy muslin is best because the natural fibers will soak up any excess dye that may spill and keep it away from your silk.

Once you have your waste fabric, cut it into strips about 8” wide.

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Set your sewing machine to make the widest zigzag and the longest run possible. Make sure to place your silk on top of the waste fabric and sew it (1 stitch on, one stitch off) to the waste fabric. It is not required to match up edges. As a matter of fact it is easier to stitch the edge of the silk to the waste fabric with about a 1" overlap (see image). Make sure that when you are finished, the penciled image faces up and the rough edge points to the ground.



If your stitch is too tight, your silk might pull causing larger holes in the silk and the waste fabric will be very difficult to remove. If your stitch is too loose (large), your silk might pull away from the waste fabric, causing sagging and uneven tension.

A note about corners. It is not necessary to “finish” the corners. You will get just as much tension from a frame that has waste fabric trailing off of each side by 5” or 6”.

Once the waste fabric is sewn onto your silk, you are ready to attach it to a frame.

## CONSTRUCTING THE FRAME

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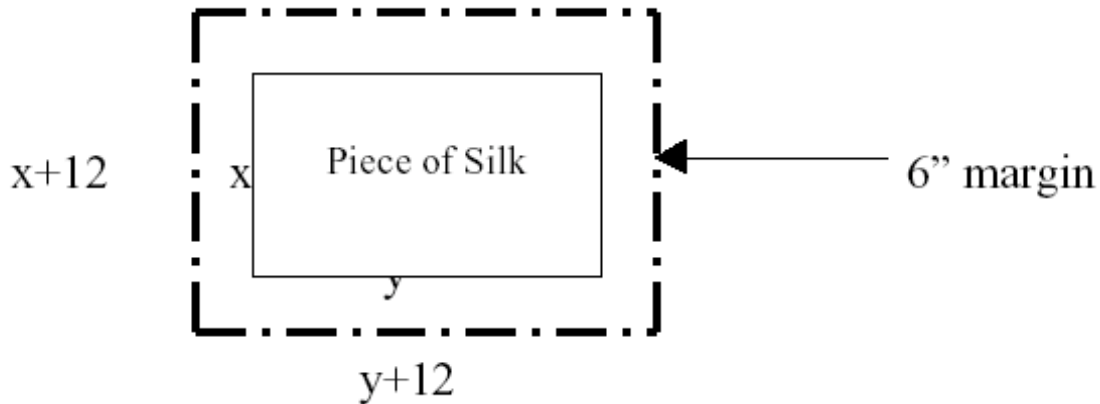
You will need to make a rectangular frame so that you can stretch your silk taught for painting.

We recommend using:  
2 x 4' lumber  
Plywood  
Screws and screwdriver

1. Take the dimensions of your piece of silk and add a 6” margin all the way around to accommodate the waste fabric. These should be the inside dimensions of your frame.

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2. Using 2x4s, construct a frame having the inside dimensions above (i.e. dimensions of your piece of silk + 6" margin). Use screws instead of nails for easy deconstruction.
3. Cut four right triangles out of plywood. Triangle sides should be approx. 6" – 8" long.
4. Reinforce frame corners with the triangular crosspieces *on the underside of the frame*. Screwing the plywood to the properly placed 2x4s with approximately 5 screws per triangle should be enough to stabilize your frame.
5. Balance your frame on four sawhorses, one at each corner, or support frame on two tables so that the frame hangs in between the tables. If you prefer, put legs on your frame to the height you find desirable. It is wise to have a chair-friendly frame height so that you can sit and paint. Frame legs, however, are often the least stable option.

### MAKING THE PRIMER

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Philip's Primer is made from purified water, powdered egg whites, and fresh egg yolk. Without the egg yolk, it would be a true medieval glair. Do not omit the egg yolk. Although it only requires a little, the egg yolk is necessary to keep the dye from running.

You will need to make the primer using the following formula:

2.5 cups **COLD** Water : 1 cup Powdered Egg Whites : 1 Tablespoon Egg Yolk

The above formula yields enough Primer to cover all of the silk in your kit. For custom projects, scale the proportions to meet your requirements.

To make Philip's Primer, pour the water in a blender, and add the powdered egg whites a little at a time to blend smoothly. Add egg yolks last. Mix until well blended, then let sit for at least an hour in the refrigerator. After the mixture separates, strain to remove foam and

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any lumps, leaving only the liquid. This is the primer. The Primer can be made ahead of time and keep for several days in the refrigerator. Just don't forget, it is egg and will spoil.

**WARNING:** Make sure you make the primer using cold water. Forgetting and using warm water may result in scrambled eggs.

What happens if you get the formula wrong?

- Too much water will result in the dye feathering.
- Too little water will result in very stiff fabric and many, many white crackle lines.
- Too much yolk will stain the fabric much darker.
- Too little yolk will result in the dye feathering.

## ATTACHING THE SILK TO THE FRAME

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Now that you've got the silk, primer, and frame ready, it's time to attach the silk to the frame. Staple silk to the frame along the waste fabric using the staple gun. Make sure that your design is facing up. Keep the tension even, stretching the silk to make it taut. Make sure that no part of the silk is touching the frame. If the silk is touching the frame and you paint the silk, the dye will soak into the wood and will spread along the wood grain, causing bleeding and/or watermarks on the silk. Do not worry if your designs look distorted. This is due to stretching the silk onto the frame. Do not try to correct for distortion while painting. In reality your design is correct, trying to straighten lines it will actually warp it.

## PRIMING THE SILK

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Prime your silk using Philip's Primer. Using broad strokes, apply evenly, making sure to get total coverage. Try to brush it on slowly so you don't make bubbles on the silk's surface. Primer may pool on the underside of the fabric. Brush along the underside to remove any pooling. Let the primer dry completely. Test a small insignificant area on your silk by touching it with your fingers to make sure it is dry. It is important to try not touching the silk during the priming or painting process when the silk is still wet; your fingers will absorb some of the liquid primer/paint and may leave permanent fingerprints on your silk!

## PAINTING THE SILK

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If possible, paint indoors. One of the reasons we love silk flags so much is how easily they flutter in the breeze. Unfortunately, fluttering in the breeze when we are trying to paint is very annoying! Painting inside minimizes silk movements and the possibility of something blowing onto your wet fabric, like dirt or leaves.

Wear comfortable clothing that you won't mind staining, and supportive shoes when you are painting.

Start with an insignificant section so that you can get the feel for the brush and the dye. It is recommended that you do not water the dyes down in any way – this just makes the colors

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fade faster and can cause the dye to spread despite the primer – unless you are trying to achieve a lighter color.

Use the wet-on-wet method: Try to keep the area on which you are painting wet with dye until you have completely painted that area to minimize watermarks. In other words, start at one corner and work outwards. The objective is to paint all the little sections first until all you have left are large areas to cover. This should minimize watermarks but remember that some watermarks are inevitable. Plan logical places for them to be; lessen their effect so that they do not take away from your design (unless watermarks are the desired effect or are unavoidable). Begin applying dye a few inches away from any border. As your brush dries (contains less dye) you can proceed toward the borders. This process will also spread excess dye on the silk and smooth your fields of color. Outlining your designs with color and then going back and filling the spaces later will create clear watermarks.

If you have watered down the dye for a lighter color, blot your brush before starting to paint so that you don't overload the fabric with liquid.

To give you an idea of how much dye to use, it takes about 8-10 oz of dye to cover all the silk in your kit.

**SPECIAL CAUTION:** It is easy to supersaturate your flag when using black or yellow. Though the dye will eventually dry, it will also cause bleeding in the steaming process, potentially ruining your flag. Use these colors cautiously, drawing the dye out as much as possible.

**Remember that mistakes happen!** If you make a mistake, be creative! And if you can't fix it, don't dwell on it. Art has a life of its own. But that's what makes it original. Relax and enjoy yourself. Besides, most minor errors, including splatters of dye, are unnoticeable when your flag is dancing in the wind 10 feet above the ground. Trust us.

Let the dye dry completely. Wait to paint an adjacent area until you are certain the dye is dry. Do a touch test if you are unsure. If you are in a hurry, you can quicken the drying process by blow-drying the silk with a hair dryer (use a low setting and broad, sweeping motions).

Once you are finished painting and the dye is dry, remove the silk from the frame by using a seam ripper to separate it from the waste fabric while it is still on the frame. Remove any thread still hanging onto the silk from the waste fabric.

### SETTING THE DYE

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**The dye must be steam set.** Take your silk and fold it into a square. Place it in a Ziploc plastic bag, or any similar water and airtight bag. Make a copy of your receipt and sign the disclaimer on the bottom, then send the bagged silk and signed receipt copy to us.

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We will steam your silk in a commercial steamer. To ensure color fastness we steam your silk for over three hours. Colors will become even brighter and deeper during the steaming process.

While we try to return your silk as soon as possible, please allow 3 – 4 weeks for delivery.

If you prefer to try steaming it on your own, you can build a stovetop steamer! Directions for making a stovetop steamer can be found at:

<http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/208832-AA.shtml>.

### RINSING THE SILK

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Now that your dye is steam set, you have reached the last big step in the process. Rinsing is important because it helps ensure that any EXCESS dye, especially yellow and black, is removed before your flag(s) comes in contact with water.

Although the dye is set into the fibers, the fibers can only hold so much. As such, there is often excess dye that sits on top of the fibers. If your flag gets wet this excess dye may run and backstain your flag if it is not first removed by a series of rinses.

Before embarking on the rinse, you will need the following: a sink (preferably a kitchen sink with two basins) or two tubs/buckets and a constant source of water and Synthrapol. The Synthrapol helps to prevent back staining during the rinsing process. You may wish to wear rubber gloves. While not strictly necessary, the gloves keep you from coming in contact with the detergent and from getting scalded during the rinsing process.

Fill one side of your kitchen sink with cold water. Add no more than one half teaspoon of Synthrapol. Place your flag in the water and agitate with your gloved hand. Squeeze the silk gently to get the water flowing through the fibers. DO NOT TWIST the flag! This can damage the silk. Your water may turn dark with dye. Do not panic. This is normal. Continue to gently squeeze and agitate the silk for a few minutes.

Remove the silk to the other basin. Empty the cold rinse bath and refill the sink with warm water. You no longer need to add Synthrapol. There is still plenty of Synthrapol in the flag, adding more now just means it will take longer to rinse all of the soap out. Continue to rinse the silk as you did previously.

Remove the silk again to the other basin. Empty the warm rinse bath and refill the sink with very hot water. Continue to rinse the flag as you did previously. Repeat the hot rinse bath a second time if the water is still very dark.

Continue to rinse the flag in the same fashion, now using only cold water. Empty and refill the sink as often as it takes until the water runs clear. This is a long process, but take your time so that you don't damage the silk.

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Once the water runs clear, squeeze out any excess water.

To help restore softness to the silk, fill a sink with very hot water and add about a tsp. of Milsoft. Agitate by hand for 10 minutes. Rinse in warm water and line dry. You can place your flags to dry in the dryer as well but we do not recommend it.

## SEWING YOUR FLAG(S)

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Finally, the last step! Once the silk has dried after the rinse process, iron the silk again if necessary.

Cut out your flags(s).

Hem your flags. We recommend using a small, tight zigzag stitch to sew the edges. The sewing process will naturally clean up less than straight edges and is much stronger than a rolled hem stitch or surging. You should sew the zigzag stitch such that every right stitch is off the silk while every left stitch is on. This will gather the silk to make a strong edge. Expect the silk to gather into your zigzag stitch slightly. This will actually aid in the longevity of your flag. Add fringe if you desire.

If your design allowed for pole sleeves, sew those now by taking your 8" area and folding it over, creating a loop with a 4" diameter. If your design did not include a sleeve, sew on your tie strips.

**Congratulations! Your flag is complete!**

We look forward to seeing your flags flying very soon!

If you'd like to share pictures of your flags and your project in progress, send us electronic copies we will happily add them to our website!

## CARE & FEEDING OF YOUR NEW FLAG(S)

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When your flag(s) gets dirty, simply hand wash it in Woolite or similar detergent for delicates, and line dry.