

Notan

This Japanese art form literally means “light dark harmony.”

Explore the design principles of contrast, balance, repetition, rhythm, pattern, and white space.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Two sheets of different colored paper. Traditionally, white and black paper are used but feel free to use different colored papers.
- Scissors, or if you're older, an Exacto knife (be careful!)
- Pencil
- Glue (can be glue stick or liquid glue)

STEPS

1. Cut a square. It can be any size, but we like 5" x 5".
2. Lightly draw your design from each edge of the square in towards the center of the square. Think of the design as shapes that are interacting with one another. Be aware of the space between the shapes. It's generally best to extend your shapes from all four edges of the square.
3. Carefully cut out the shapes. It's important to handle the shapes you cut out with care. Do not throw anything away!
4. Once you've removed all the shapes, set what's left of your original square on the second sheet of paper and then place all the cut shapes back into the square. Check that you have all the pieces - it should be a solid square again.
5. Flip the shapes over and place them outside the box so they mirror the empty space they leave in the square. It's important to maintain the spacing of the pieces so that they look like they flipped from the edge of the square.
6. Step back and look at your design. You might decide to make some adjustments by adding new shapes. Lightly erase any visible pencil marks.
7. Once you have a design that you're happy with, glue all cut pieces to the paper. Start by gluing what remains of the original square first.

Note: if you only have a pencil and paper you can also generate a Notan by drawing the mirrored shape and filling in the dark areas where the shape was removed.

