

HOW TO MAKE SILHOUETTE PORTRAITS



Supplies

- 8.5 x 11" Color Paper (construction or cardstock) in any color; black for a traditional look.
- 8.5 x 11" Cardstock in any color; white for a traditional look.
- Digital Camera or Smartphone
- Printer and Printer Paper
- Fine Tip Permanent Marker
- Glue Stick
- Scissors

Instructions

1. Take a photo of your subject standing sideways against a light-colored background.
2. Print photo on regular printer paper.
3. Using scissors, trim the picture to the general shape of the silhouette. Leave as much as an inch of space.
4. Use a glue stick to attach the image (face-up) onto the color paper.
5. Using a pencil, trace the outline of the subject directly on the printer paper.
6. Carefully cut the image along the lines you traced.

7. Flip the picture over so that the solid color side is facing outwards and glue the image-side to your cardstock. Pay special attention to placement for desired final look.

8. Using a permanent marker, add the name of the subject and the year that it was created to the bottom of the white cardstock.

Optional: Personalize your portrait further if you wish! Add cut-out images, stickers, glitter, fabric, etc.

Tips

- Have your subject look straight ahead with their chin up but not their head tilted upwards. Remember to include their shoulders in your image.
- Make sure that the camera is capturing as clear of an image of their profile as possible; do not tilt the camera down or up and keep your camera lens level with your subject.
- It is not recommended to have your subject smile.
- For subjects with longer hair, experiment with different hairstyles such as a bun or ponytail.

Historical Context

The silhouette portrait – a profile image in a single color, usually black against a light background – was a popular form of portraiture before the invention and common use of photography. During the 18th century, these images were referred to as "shades", "shadow portraits" and "shadow art", and later "profiles" during the 19th century.

Silhouettes often functioned as a more democratic form of portraiture, since the practice did not require extensive training or access to expensive materials. Painted silhouettes were produced on paper, plaster, ivory, and glass. Water-color paints were used on paper and sometimes Indian ink. Few artists used paper in the 18th century though it became more popular in the 19th century, especially after 1830 when more full-length silhouettes were created.



Raphaëlle Peale (1774-1825), *Thomas Jefferson*, 1804, Monticello, Thomas Jefferson Foundation Collection, Bequest of Charles, James, and John Eddy, 1962, 1972-1-26.



Augustin Edouart (1789–1861), *Enslaved Woman*, 1844, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Glenn Tilley Morse Collection, Bequest of Glenn Tilley Morse, 1950, 50.602.832.



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