



## **SCOTTISH SPONGEWARE – some background information**

Spongeware is created using a sponge with a pattern cut into it. The sponge is dipped in paint and is applied to the item to create the desired pattern, a bit like doing potato prints.

Spongeware was decorated using specific techniques or a combination of them. These include things like hand painting, spattering, dabbing or sponge printing. The most common colours used to create spongeware were black, blue, red and various shades of green. Purple and brown became popular in Scottish spongeware, and later on, yellow, pink and other colours were introduced, but these colours were not as popular.

**Hand painting or brushstroke decoration** – this technique was carried out by someone a little more skilled at applying spongeware.

**Spattering** – this technique was used to add block colour and was achieved by blowing a powder onto the item using a pipe. Because it was costly and required someone more skilled, it was often replicated by applying the colour with a regular sponge.

**Dabbing** – this technique was used to apply colours and patterns using a regular sponge.

**Stick spatter, or sponge printing** – this technique was used to stamp a pattern onto the item using a piece of cut sponge on a stick.

Unlike printed designs, using these techniques gave spongeware unique imperfections and characteristics like smudges and blemishes. As the pottery industry evolved, manufacturing processes took over from hand printing of spongeware, and it was done via machinery.



## Make your own patterned plate

Here is an easy way to make your own patterned plate at home. Make sure you read the suggestions at the end too, to give you more ideas.

### You will need:



A paper plate or a piece of thick paper big enough to draw round a plate, plus the plate

A potato or piece of sponge

Paints – acrylic are best

Paintbrush

Scissors if you are making a plate template

A small sharp knife for the potato, or scissors for the sponge

### First:



If you are using paper, draw round a plate or other round object that fits your page. Carefully cut it out.

**Next:**



**You may want to ask a grown up to help with this bit.**

Cut your potato in half and dry it off with a piece of kitchen paper.

Decide on the pattern you would like to have on your plate and mark it onto one half of your potato. You can do this with pencil or pen.

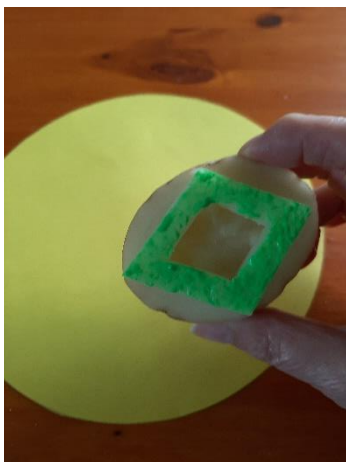
If you are using a piece of sponge, felt pens will work well for drawing your design.

Keep it simple!



Ask your helper to cut away the extra bits of potato or sponge so only your design stands out. It's easier if you stick to a simple design. Your design should be about 3-4mm clear of the rest of the surface.

**Then:**



Using the paintbrush, put a layer of paint onto your design. Don't make it too thick or you won't get a clear print. You might want to practise on a spare piece of paper first.

When you are ready, decide where your pattern is going on your plate – will it be round the edges or in the middle?

Gently put the painted side of the potato or sponge down on your plate and press down. Lift it off again carefully so you don't smudge your print.



Remember you can use the other half of your potato to add a different design and a different colour. You can even use the bits you cut off.

If you want to use the same pattern again in a different colour, just wash the surface of the potato and dry it again before applying your new colour of paint.



And now you have your own plate!

**Suggestions:**

*You can print with lots of things. Why not try using different vegetables or things you can find lying around your classroom? Bits of cardboard or polystyrene packaging will also work and you can cut your own shapes into them.*

Whatever you make, have fun, and DON'T EAT THE POTATO AFTERWARDS! 😂