

Teaching Tip

Chops can be any size that you choose for your class. A one-inch square works well because it gives the student enough room to actually design and execute an image. This size is also close to that of an art gum eraser. Art gum erasers break down and crumble with continual use, so look for a material for printing that's easy to cut from your art materials supplier.

◆ Design Extension

A chop is frequently printed with red ink. For ease of identification, consider asking all students to place their chop mark at the bottom right-hand corner of the print, under and to the right of their signature. Use a chop record to keep track of student chops by class.

● Art History

A chop is also called a *hanko*. *Hankos*, or *personal seals*, are made from wooden, stone or horn blocks. They were introduced into Japan from China in 701 CE. Chops are also called *Jitsuin*, or “true seals,” because they are used as a signature to bind any and every legal contract in Japan. *Jitsuin* are registered with the local government. Many Japanese and Chinese artists use Kanji characters on their chops. Kanji characters are similar to letters in our alphabet except there are over 8000 of them and each character represents an idea instead of just a letter. Many Kanji characters may be used alone and can stand for traits such as peace, wisdom, love, and creativity. You might see these characters on posters, jewelry, and even tattoos.

How To . . .

Make a Chop

You can use a chop for your personal symbol to identify your artworks and to sign your prints. A chop is a small seal, stamp, or impression that identifies the artist and can be printed or embossed at the bottom of a print. Chops were introduced into Japan from China in 701 CE. A chop can be made from clay, wood, rubber, or linoleum. Chops may vary in complexity from just the initials of the maker to complex visual symbols.

A simple chop may just include your initials. The image becomes more complex if you consider your personality, likes, dislikes, beliefs, and interests. As you create your chop, think about what you want viewers to know about you. What images and symbols will represent you in your chop?

Think about images or symbols to express who you are. Consider your interests, cultural background, or talents.

1 Draw some sketches of your ideas. The size of the chop will be one inch square, so draw several one-inch squares on your paper and fill them in with sketches.

2 After you have explored the different ideas and have decided on your final design, use an ebony pencil to fill in the areas that will print. The unfilled areas will be cut away.

3 Use a square gum eraser as your plate, or stamp. A relief print is a *mirror image* of what is on the plate. When you transfer your drawing onto your eraser, you will *offset* it. In order for you to chop the print correctly, you will need to *offset* the ebony drawing onto the chop. Do this by pressing the chop onto the completed drawing. When you lift the chop the image will be on the printing surface.



4 Carefully draw over the offset image with a marker. The surface is now ready for cutting.

5 Now cut away the unfilled areas that will not print. When you have finished cutting, your chop is ready to use.

