



Cyanotype Tips and Troubleshooting

Tips

- Use distilled water if your tap water is hard.
- The stock solutions are stable long term and can be used to create the cyanotype sensitizer whenever you are ready to coat a substrate.
- Mold growth may occur in the Ferric Ammonium Citrate solution (STOCK SOLUTION B) over time. This will not affect the performance of the chemistry. Skim off any mold or decant the solution through a coffee filter before use.
- Sensitized paper or fabric may be stockpiled and stored. Use within 6 months for best results. Store in a cool, dry environment, preferably in a sealed bag to avoid oxidation.
- Coated paper and fabric may darken over time. If it appears dark, it is not necessarily expired; test it—it may just require a longer rinse in hotter water.
- Cyanotype prints are archival. However, yellowing may occur if prints are exposed to phosphates or high pH solutions. Cyanotype printed fabrics should always be laundered in cold water using non-phosphate detergents. Use care while handling cyanotype prints, as sweat and hand oils may also cause discoloration.
- Do not wet fabric or paper before or during exposure. Make sure your hands are dry when handling the sensitized fabric or paper. Make sure the printing surface and objects used are dry.
- Cyanotype fabric can be ironed before exposure—just make sure to use a dry iron that does not spit or leak water. Iron the backside (not the print side) and use care while handling.

Troubleshooting

Blurry or out of focus photographic prints:

Using a film negative to make cyanotype prints is a contact printing process. The film must be flush on the print surface for optimal resolution and detail. Otherwise, the print may appear out of focus or blurry. The easiest way to ensure good contact is to print on a flat surface and place a heavy piece of glass on top. Prints should also be facing the light source perpendicularly during exposure—if the sun is not directly overhead, this may make it necessary to use binder clips to hold the substrate, film and glass together.

Dark blue or blown out prints:

The dark areas of the film may not be dense and opaque enough to block the light adequately. To achieve good contrast on the print, the negative must be dense enough that it completely blocks the light in its darkest areas. Stacking two negatives may be the best solution—this will double the opacity and contrast. The print may also be over-exposed. Try reducing the exposure time.

Pale or low-contrast prints:

The print was probably not exposed long enough. The light source may not be intense enough. Or the negative may be too dark. Over-washing can also result in pale prints.

Water spots:

The print may become splotchy if you touch it with damp hands. Sometime leaves or design elements can produce moisture during exposure. You may also have splashed or dripped on the print prior to washing. Make sure when you submerge the print in water, you do so swiftly and without splashing.

Discoloration to brown or yellow:

Discoloration may occur if the print is exposed to phosphates, soap or dirty objects. Make sure the drying line/surface and clothespins are clean. Make sure the washing tub or tray is clean and free of soap. Only handle prints with clean hands.

Prints darken during drying:

The print was probably not thoroughly washed. Make sure the water runs clear before hanging to dry. Do not dry in direct sunlight.