

A stack of several rolls of fabric with various patterns including hearts, flowers, stripes, and abstract shapes, set against a light wood-grain background.

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10 ways to
level up
your patterns

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10 INSIDER TIPS TO ELEVATE
YOUR PATTERN DESIGN

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A W O R D F R O M T H E A U T H O R

Mandy Corcoran!



As a surface pattern designer myself, I know firsthand the challenges that come with creating seamless patterns that stand out in a crowded market.

That's why I'm excited to share with you my 10 favorite ways to level up your seamless patterns and take your design skills to the next level.

As you work through these tips, you'll gain the tools and strategies you need to reclaim your time, streamline your workflows, and create stunning, unique patterns that get noticed.

Whether you're just starting out in surface pattern design or looking to take your skills to new heights, I'm here to help.

With my experience and expertise, I'm dedicated to empowering you to create your best work and build a successful design business.

So let's dive in and level up your seamless patterns!

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How to level up your patterns



STEP 1

Plan

There's an old saying, "Fail to plan, plan to fail." This is especially true when it comes to creating repeat patterns. If you don't take the time to plan your design, you'll likely end up with something that looks messy and unfinished. So, what goes into good design planning? Let's take a look!

The first thing you should do when planning your pattern is choose a theme. The theme will determine what assets, motifs, and the color palette you use. For example, you wouldn't make a spring flower pattern with orange, purple, and black (which are typically fall/halloween colors). You can find inspiration for your theme on Pinterest by creating a board and pinning any photos, illustrations, home decor, color palettes or images that go with your chosen theme.

Don't worry if you end up with a long list of potential items during your planning phase. The goal is to get all of your ideas down on paper (or on a Pinterest Board) so you can fine tune them later. And once you've gone through all of the steps in this process, you should have no trouble narrowing down your selections to create a pattern.

So what are you waiting for? Get started on your pattern planning today!

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STEP 2

Palette

People are often drawn to a design because of its use of color. Color can be used to evoke an emotion or create a mood. It can also be used to direct the viewer's attention to specific elements in the design.

When it comes to surface pattern design, color can be a make-or-break factor in whether or not the design is successful. It's vital for designers to have a firm understanding of color theory and how to use color effectively in their designs. Poorly chosen or clashing colors can detract from the overall aesthetic and may turn potential buyers away. On the other hand, harmonious and well-balanced color choices can enhance the impact and appeal of the design. It's worth taking the time to experiment with various color combinations and see how they work together in order to create attractive, marketable designs. In an industry where standing out is crucial, paying attention to color can make all the difference in achieving success.

When starting a new pattern design, it can be tempting to grab every color in your collection and start creating. The importance of a solid color foundation in pattern design cannot be understated. When selecting my initial palette, I always start by choosing 2-3 main colors that will make up the bulk of the design, followed by 3-4 secondary colors. I also make sure to incorporate 2-3 neutral tones, excluding white. This foundation allows for a balanced and cohesive look, while still leaving room for flexibility as the design process moves forward. And if more colors are needed, they can always be added later on. Starting with a solid base of 8-10 colors gives direction and structure to the design, setting you up for success right from the beginning. Trust me, it's worth taking the time to carefully consider your color choices before diving into the rest of the design process. Your patterns will thank you for taking the time to establish a color foundation. Give it a try next time you begin a new design project – you won't regret it!



STEP 3

Motifs

Now that you have your color foundation chosen it's time to start thinking about your motifs – the recurring subject, theme, or idea in your pattern.

The 70-20-10 rule is a guideline to follow when creating patterns. It suggests that 70% of the pattern should be composed of important motifs directly related to your overall theme, 20% should be made up of supporting motifs, and the last 10% can be filler items.

Let's pretend we are creating a pattern about coffee. Your main/prominent motifs could be mugs, kettles, and coffee machines. I recommend having at least 3-4 MAIN motifs that you can pull from for a pattern (you may not use them all, but it is good to have them). Next, you will have about 20% of your pattern made of supporting motifs. You can have as many as you want of these – the more you have, the more straightforward creating your pattern will be. Sticking with our coffee pattern theme, these would be coffee beans, spoons, steam, and pastries. Finally, the last 10% of your pattern should be filler items. These are not always motifs but can sometimes be dots, squiggles, words, or a texture.

With your Pinterest boards as inspiration, you should have no problem coming up with plenty of motifs for your pattern. Once you've identified your main, supporting, and filler motifs, it's time to get drawing! Don't be afraid to experiment with different ideas until you find what works best for you. Have fun!

STEP 4

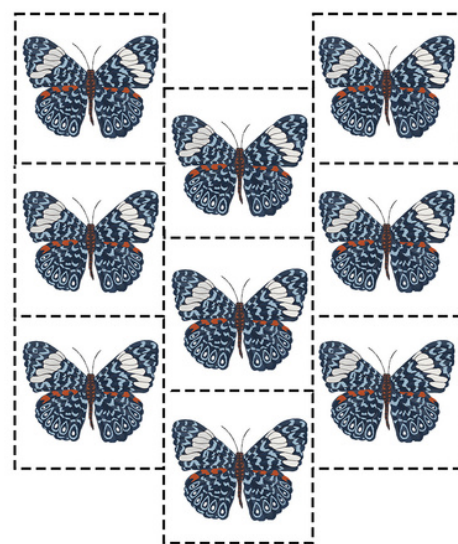
Repeat Layouts

When it comes to repeat patterns, there are a variety of layouts to choose from. However, as a surface pattern designer, you'll likely find yourself using the Full-Drop, Half-Drop, or Half-Brick layouts most often. A Full-Drop repeat means that each element in the pattern completely drops to the next row, creating a clean and uniform look. In contrast, a Half-Drop repeat features elements that are "dropped" halfway down the next row, creating a slightly more organic and random feel. The Half-Brick layout is similar to the Half-Drop, except that elements are shifted slightly to the left or right rather than dropped down. While all three layouts can be visually appealing in their own ways, step outside of your comfort zone and try incorporating a Half-Drop or Half-Brick repeat into your designs for added complexity and interest. Your pattern game will surely level up as a result.

Full-Drop



Half-Drop



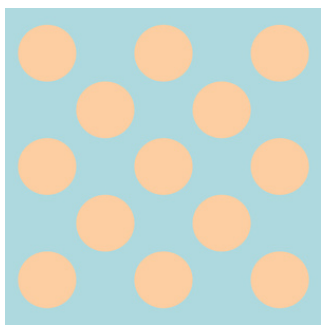
Half-Brick



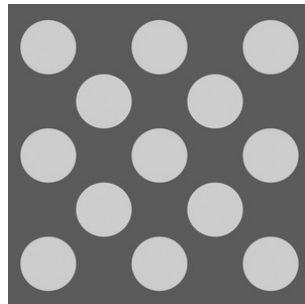
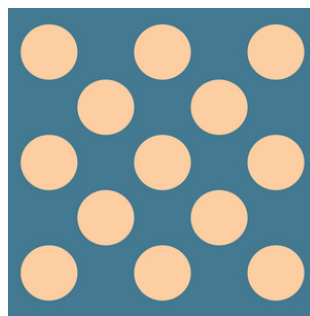
STEP 5

Contrast

When it comes to selecting colors for your pattern, contrast should not be overlooked. In fact, it can be even more important than the individual colors themselves. Contrast refers to the differences in lightness and darkness, and adding contrast can instantly elevate your design. Without enough contrast, your pattern may appear washed out or muddled. Fortunately, there is a simple way to check for sufficient contrast in your design – by viewing it in grayscale. If the colors still have a clear differentiation, then you've achieved good contrast. On the other hand, if the colors blend together in grayscale, try adjusting them to create more of a difference in lightness and darkness. Remember – contrast is key to a polished and professional looking pattern!



*Not
enough
contrast*



*Enough
contrast*



STEP 6

Flow

Have you ever wondered why some surface pattern designs just seem to "work" while others don't? One of the key factors is something called "eye flow." Eye flow is the path that your eyes take when looking at a piece of art or design. When a design has good eye flow, your eyes are naturally drawn from one element to the next in a way that is pleasing and easy to follow. When a design has poor eye flow, your eyes may feel "stuck" in one area or may dart around the design in a chaotic way.

Eye flow is important because it determines how easy or difficult it is for someone to understand your design. A well-crafted design will have an intuitive eye flow that leads the viewer's eyes around the design in a way that makes sense.

Now that we've gone over what eye flow is and why it's so important, let's take a look at some tips on how you can improve your own eye flow in surface pattern designs.

The first thing that you need to do is take a step back from your design and try to view it with fresh eyes. Ask yourself if the overall layout makes sense or if there are any areas where the eye gets lost. If you notice any areas that could use improvement, make sure to go back and make changes until you're happy with the results.

Another helpful tip is to use color strategically to draw attention to certain areas of the design. Pay attention to the scale of the elements in your design; using contrasting sizes will help keep the viewer's attention moving around the design.

Finally, pay attention to whitespace. Whitespace doesn't necessarily have to be white – it just refers to the empty space around your design elements. Giving your design plenty of breathing room will help keep things feeling open and airy while also making it easier for the eye to scan the design without getting overwhelmed.



STEP 8

Balance

A well-balanced design will feel visually complete and harmonious. Each element within your design should work together as a group. There are two types of balance: symmetrical and asymmetrical. Both types of balance can be used in surface pattern design.

Symmetrical (mirror) Balance

One way to achieve balance within your design is to create a symmetrical composition. This means that the left and right sides of your design are mirrored images of each other. Symmetrical balance is often seen in traditional or classical designs. To achieve symmetrical balance, you'll need to use the same elements on both the left and right sides of your design. You can use the same colors, shapes, sizes, and patterns – as long as they're arranged in the same way on both sides.

Asymmetrical Balance

If you're looking for a more organic or natural feel, you might want to consider creating an asymmetrical composition. This type of balance is achieved by grouping elements together in a way that feels balanced, even though the left and right sides are not exact copies of each other. To achieve asymmetrical balance, you'll need to use different elements on each side of your design. This could mean using different colors, shapes, sizes, and patterns – or simply arranging the elements in a different way.

Repeating certain elements throughout your design will help create a sense of balance and harmony. You can also use shape, color, and texture to create visual balance within your design. Placing light colors next to dark colors or rough textures next to smooth textures can help create visual interest and depth. Experiment with different combinations until you find a pleasing result!



STEP 9

Scale

As a surface pattern designer, it's important to consider the size of your motifs and how they work together as a whole. Sometimes, by simply changing the scale of the elements within your design, you can create more interest. Try making some elements larger and some smaller.

One reason why scale is so important in design is that it can help to create a sense of hierarchy. By making some elements larger than others, you can draw the eye to certain parts of the design. This can be especially useful if you want to highlight a particular motif or design element.

Additionally, playing with scale can help to add interest and variety to a design. If all of the elements in a design are the same size, it can start to look monotonous. But by introducing different sizes, you can add another level of visual interest.

Finally, scale can also be used to create a sense of balance within a design. If one element is too large or too small in comparison to the others, it can throw off the entire composition. But by paying attention to scale, you can ensure that everything works together harmoniously.

Scale is an important consideration for any surface pattern designer. By thoughtfully varying the size of your motifs, you can create more interest, add visual variety, and achieve balance within your designs. So next time you're working on a new pattern, take a step back and think about how changing the scale might enhance your overall composition.



STEP 10

Depth

As surface pattern designers, one of the fundamental elements and tools we can use to create intriguing and appealing patterns is depth. By incorporating various levels of depth into our designs, we can add visual interest, dimensionality, and a sense of movement.

One way to add depth to a surface pattern design is by creating layers. When layering different design elements on top of each other, it's important to consider the order in which they will be seen. For example, you might place a light-colored shape behind a dark-colored one, or a small element behind a large one. By doing this, you create the illusion of depth and give your design a sense of movement.

Another way to add depth to your patterns is by playing with positive and negative space. Negative space is the area around and between the elements in your design. Positive space is the area that contains your motifs. You can use positive space to create the illusion of depth by making an object appear closer than it actually is. For example, if you have a flower in the foreground of your design and leaves in the background, coloring the leaves in a lighter shade will make them appear further away than the flower. Alternatively, you could color the flower in a darker shade to make it appear closer than the leaves. Negative space can also be used to create depth; for example, by adding a drop shadow to an object, you can make it appear raised off the surface on which it's sitting.

Another way to add depth to your patterns is by using perspective. This is achieved by drawing objects so that they appear to recede into the distance. Objects that are closer to you will appear larger than those that are farther away. This effect can be used to create patterns with a sense of movement or directionality.

Depth is an important tool that surface pattern designers can use to add interest, dimensionality, and movement to their designs. By incorporating layers, playing with positive and negative space, and using perspective, we can create patterns that are eye-catching and visually appealing. So next time you're working on a surface pattern design, keep depth in mind!

Thank You!

W A N T T O L E A R N M O R E ?

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Congratulations on completing the '10 Ways to Level Up Your Patterns' eBook! Now that you've learned these essential techniques, imagine how much more amazing your patterns will look when you take them to the next level. If you're ready to unleash your creativity and make your patterns truly stand out, I invite you to check out my '[Procreate Patterns Unleashed](#)' course.

In this comprehensive course, I'll take you step-by-step through the entire process of creating stunning patterns in Procreate. But that's not all – I'll also show you how to use the techniques you've just learned to make your patterns truly unique and eye-catching. With '[Procreate Patterns Unleashed](#),' you'll learn everything you need to know to create patterns that will grab attention and leave a lasting impression.

As a special thank you for reading my eBook, I'm offering you an exclusive coupon code for 10% off your enrollment in '[Procreate Patterns Unleashed](#).' Use the code **LEVELUP10** at checkout to get your discount.

So, what are you waiting for? Sign up now and start creating patterns that truly stand out in a crowd! Don't forget to use your catchy coupon code, **LEVELUP10**, to get 10% off your enrollment.

ENROLL NOW!

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