



Make a Roman-Style Mosaic!

A **mosaic** is a picture or pattern produced by arranging together small colored pieces. The oldest mosaics were made from pebbles. The ancient Romans used *tesserae*, which were uniformly cut cubes of colored stone. You can make your own Roman-style mosaic at home!

STEP 1: Collect Materials

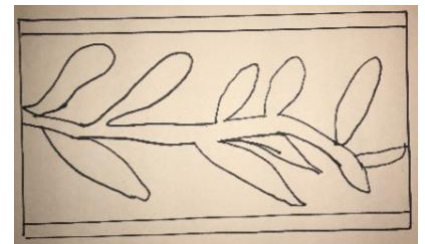
- Colored paper (can use magazines, food labels, construction paper, etc)
- Scissors
- Marker or pencil
- Glue
- White or brown cardboard or paper (for backing)



STEP 2: Create Your Design

For inspiration, you can google “ancient Roman mosaic patterns” and look at some from the Penn Museum’s collection [here](#). Or you can take inspiration from objects and patterns you see in your own life!

Once you have chosen a design, use your marker or pencil to draw the outline of the design on your cardboard or blank paper.



STEP 3: Prepare Your Tesserae

Cut your paper into small square shapes. They don’t have to be perfect – it’s OK if some are slightly different sizes and shapes. With smaller pieces, it will take you longer, but your design can be more precise.



STEP 4: Glue Your Tesserae and Display Your Mosaic

Glue your colored paper tesserae to fill in your design. When you are done, share on social media (tag @pennmuseum) and/or hang on your wall for all to admire!



Roman-Style Mosaics

Pro-Tips and Extensions



Start Small

These projects can take longer than you might think. We recommend starting with a small (i.e. 4 inches x 4 inches) design to try it out and see if you like it.

Choosing Tesserae Material

If you want your mosaic to look like it's made of real stone, we recommend using magazines and food labels instead of construction paper. A red shirt or blue sky from a magazine ad will have natural variations in hue that mimic the imperfections you would see in stone.



Connect to Ancient People

Remember that ancient mosaics would have been made of stone cubes and were mostly used as floor covering. Some were very large, maybe as big as your whole living room! Think about how your process might compare to a craftsman 2,000 years ago. What would be the same? What would be different?

Wonder, Research, Experiment

What kinds of questions do you have about ancient mosaics? Perhaps you want to know what stones they used to get all the different colors, or how long it would take to mosaic your entire kitchen floor. Maybe you want to know how much ancient craftsman were paid or how much stone mosaics weigh. Some questions can be answered with some internet research, others might require you to test a theory and use some math. Follow your natural curiosity!

