



Using Cricut Vinyl Cutters in the Classroom

We think that the Cricut cutter, especially the Maker, is likely the most versatile, cost-effective tool that you could invest in for your maker space. For less than \$500, you can have a durable, kid-friendly tool that can cut vinyl, draw, etch acrylic, carve foam, create etching stencils, etc. . . . It does run from a proprietary software (Cricut Design Space) that is not accessible on the Chromebook - that might be perhaps its greatest limitation and, depending on your classroom set-up might require some special planning in order to create a classroom workflow solution. But we absolutely love this tool and so do my students - can't imagine our Creation Studio without several.

For this workshop, we can either use your equipment or STEM4Learning also has a set of Cricut Makers that we can bring to use with your teachers. Depending on your interests and needs, we can share the basics, which primarily is creating vinyl stickers that can become a making element of just about any subject area. Even something as simple as professional-looking words on a student poster can increase student commitment and engagement with any project.

Here are a few ways we've used Cricut in our Makerspace

- Using Google Draw or Adobe Express to create personal logos that help students explore personal identity. We often couple this with some writing or a video share telling the story of their logo that then becomes a sticker that lives and identifies their chromebook on the cover.
- Identifying areas of the classroom that, if labeled, would help everyone with set-up, cleanup, and overall classroom organization. This is a great year start-up that is both highly engaging and provides a teacher with the chance to teach the classroom systems that make for great classroom flow.
- Creating stencils that can be applied to glasses to do simple acid etching

- Adding personalization to many wood projects, including cedar pencil holders, pine tic tac toe boards, 8 Frogs on a Log games, operation circuit games, and microbit musical instruments. Once students know the basics, they will actively seek out ways to add vinyl to their projects.
- Cutting thin foam to create stamping blocks
- Using the engraving tool to etch designs into acrylic that is then used in a simple edge-lit LED light project.
- Using the pen tools to create gift cards - these can even be combined with cutting to make really unique cards with both cutouts and drawn words/designs.



We find the Cricut to be a great “anchor” tool - an ongoing, high-engagement project that can run simultaneously with projects that might require pretty close supervision, such as the early elements of a woodworking project or the introduction of multistep learning such as successfully creating a 3D cad design and moving it through the slicer steps to create a 3D printed product. We find most students can be fully independent very quickly with the Cricut, which can allow you to have the majority working on it while you are able to focus on small groups, assuring they are safe or clearly learning the steps. Our workshop will not only teach the basics of how to use the tool - but share these and other tips (such as classroom set-up, vinyl management, and design to production workflow) that can help it become a really high-use / low-stress tool in your maker space.