

Guide to Constructing Iris-Folding Patterns

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After you've done a few iris folding cards and know the basics, you might be looking for the perfect pattern for your next card. Can't find it? Make your own!

1. Select the overall shape of your pattern (i.e. a circle), then decide how many colour segments you want to have converging on (or as I think of it, 'swirling' into) the iris centre. If you choose five colour segments, then draw a pentagon inside the circle so that the vertices of the pentagon touch the circle. If you want six, then you'd draw a hexagon etc.
2. Then draw a smaller pentagon inside the first, offsetting it a little. The vertices of the second smaller pentagon would touch the inner perimeter of the first one about 1 cm down each side. Then put a third smaller pentagon inside the second one etc. Each time you add another shape inside the pattern, offset its position by the same amount. This keeps the size of the folded paper that is seen on the finished card relatively even (until you get right near the middle).
3. Keep adding smaller and smaller pentagons until the inner part of the pattern is basically too small to add another. This blank middle is where the iris will be.
4. Numbering: You can follow around the segments in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction, writing the numbers in the spaces as you go. Alternatively, get a pencil and put a dot (or a cross or a star etc) in any of the outermost triangle-shaped areas (it's not really a triangle when one side is an arc of the circle, but I digress). Then put a dot on the next triangle closer to the centre than the first one. And again and again. Eventually you'll see that the triangles you're putting your dots in together form a spiral shape towards the middle.
5. Get a different coloured pen/pencil (or draw a different little symbol, a star instead of a dot, for example) and start again on the next spiral in towards the iris centre. Start at the outermost triangle, working your way inwards. By using a different coloured pen/pencil (or a different symbol) for each of the spirals, you can see where each of the colours of paper will go when you actually get down to doing the folding-and-sticking.

Notes about Numbering:

It's traditional to have numbering in iris patterns, and for scanned images, coloured dots aren't great. However, when making patterns at home, you might find that using the coloured dots and/or small symbols instead of the numbers enables you to see if you've made a mistake - the spiral will have a little hiccup in it and it's fixed easier than going back and renumbering. When you're actually folding-and-sticking the iris papers, you can just say to yourself that "Paper X needs to go in all the places where there's a green dot", rather than thinking "Paper X needs to go in numbers 1, 6, 11..."

Other Shapes:

For non-geometric shapes, things with arms and legs, like a cat pattern, I simply layer straight strips up the arms and legs and then begin the 'spiralling into the iris' part of the pattern once I reach the main part of the body. Alternatively, you can draw a large geometric shape around the outside of your irregular shape, then draw the pattern as outlined in the steps above. Erase any lines that are outside your desired non-geometric shape, and you have a complete pattern.