Hello

I’m Zara Martina, a Surface Pattern Designer and I'm sharing my 7 lots of tools to get started in Surface Pattern Design. I’ve been meaning to post all my favorite tools as a Surface Pattern Designer and Blogger for some time now but the truth is my list keeps changing.

I’ll keep it simple and start with the tools I use for Surface Pattern Design today. I will do the blogging tools in another post. I’ll group them in terms of what I use them for. I’m not going into to detail with every individual product or brand..I’m not here to sell to you but I will link to the ones I love.

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PLEASE NOTE

These are the tools that I use, there are lots of other options to choose from. I’m just sharing my first hand experience. Please don’t feel you need all these things to begin with because I certainly didn’t.

LET'S GO...
You gotta learn the trade right? Either you go to Uni which is great but like me I already did but studied fashion! These are my two places I've used online to learn the ins and outs of Surface Pattern Design. There are many other places now online but I have first hand experience with these classes and absolutely recommend them.

**Skillshare**

"Is an online global community for creators."

**The ABSPD**

"Online courses specifically for Surface Pattern Design"
For those of you that don’t know; Skillshare is an online global community for creators, become a member and choose from thousands of online classes or even create one yourself!

The classes are presented in a way that you can learn at your own pace with bite size, high quality videos at affordable membership prices. There’s also the opportunity to meet other students, present your coursework for exposure and get feedback from the teachers.

There are a lot of courses related to Surface Pattern Design. As I’m a Skillshare partner, this link will give you your first month free and plenty of opportunity to try out different courses.

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LEARN NEW CREATIVE SKILLS

Get unlimited access to thousands of online classes.

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They offer courses from absolute beginners right through to advanced. The prices are premium in comparison to Skillshare, it just depends how you like to learn and what you want to pay.

I love the way they've built a whole community of designers around the course and many keep in touch and in some cases go on to work or collaborate together. I actually licensed some of my art not long after completing the last module. You can [find them here](https://www.makeitindesign.com) through my (affiliate) link.
"Inspirational tools are things I use to capture inspiration"

CAMERA
I mostly use my camera on my cellphone because it’s always there; I’m like a teenager actually, carry my cellphone everywhere! I also have another posh camera that I’ve just started using but totally unnecessary to begin with. I like to use the posh one for blog posts or product shots but to capture things like color, texture etc. I find my cellphone is fab! I don’t have an iPhone like a lot of designers, quite frankly the screen is too small for me. I have a Samsung Galaxy and it takes great photos.

PRINTER
It’s not a must-have but quite handy if you’re putting together a physical mood board for inspiration. I love to print off inspirational patterns, photos, color and put them altogether on my studio pinboard. My printer is nothing fancy but I would like to upgrade to an A3 all-in-one printer and scanner at some point. Very handy for scanning in larger images.

PINTEREST
I think we all know Pinterest, if you don’t then get yourself over there right now! You can start by following me if you like. A seriously great place to gather inspiration AND share your own work too.
"Drawing tools are what I use in the inspiration stages of a design."

Designers work in different ways. This is how I work but others will use different ways to put together their inspiration.

In general I will start out by doodling or sketching with pencils. Quite often I will draw motifs in lots of different mediums like charcoal, pencil, ink pens, fine liners or markers. Then I decide on the look I’m trying to achieve and continue in that medium.

**SKETCHBOOK OR PAPER**

Obviously one really. I have sketchbooks in all shapes and sizes. If I’m going out, sometimes I take a mini one with me and a pencil or pen and use it if I see something I want to capture. I don’t spend a lot of money on sketchbooks because a lot of the time I scan my drawings and doodles into the computer and digitize them. The only time I pay out for good quality paper is if I’m using watercolors or paints. Also, I like to use ordinary print paper by the sheet to sketch out ideas and do line work before bringing into the computer to work on.

**PENCIL OR MECHANICAL PENCIL**

Any pencil, it’s nice to have different ones, hard and soft to play around with different looks and shading etc. I usually buy them in sets like these (affiliate link). Also, I quite like a mechanical pencil which I keep in my bag if I go out, mainly because I don’t need a sharpener.
INK PENS

I love using all sorts of black ink pens; fineliners, thick markers, dip pens (affiliate). I love using dip pens lately which is why I’ve added the link for you to check them out. It gives a really lovely finish to line work. You can get dip pens pretty much anywhere and I also use a fountain pen if I’m out with my sketchbook so I don’t have to carry ink.

WATERBRUSH PENS

I’m in love with Pentel Aquash brushes! (affiliate). Literally, you can do so much with them! Lettering, painting, drawing.

They are also fantastic to take out with you because they have a barrel in the handle that holds your water or ink so you just take off the lid and begin. Simple!

"I'm in love with waterbrushes!"
Many designers work on color when they are at the digitizing stage of their design including me. I love to work like this too, however, I also like to work with colors and textures before going into the computer.

It’s very fashionable now to have a more handfinished look to your art and I find the best way to achieve that is by doing the work ‘old skool’. Yes, getcha paints out!

- Watercolors
- Gouache
- Color markers
- Oil pastels
- Crayons
- Watercolor pencils
- Acrylics

I could go on, the list is endless. Just get your colors out and explore. I often use cheap kids paints as I’m not actually selling my physical work, It’s going into a digital design. Please don’t feel you have to buy the best.
"At some point you are going to need to get your designs onto the computer. Manufacturers need a digital file to print from. You’ll need hardware and software for this"

**SOFTWARE**

**Adobe Illustrator:** I use this program for a lot of my vector work.

**Adobe Photoshop:** Photoshop is great if you’re looking for a more natural look in your work and using photography.

**Alternative software:** If you’re looking for alternatives, a quick google search brought up this link. You’ll have to do your own research too to find software alternatives to Photoshop or illustrator.

**Adobe CC:** This is full membership to all the Adobe products which I have. Just go to the Adobe homepage (affiliate link) and it tells you everything you get, it’s fully loaded and worth every penny. You get a free trial period to test the waters.
**HARDWARE**

**Desktop PC or laptop:** I would recommend one that has a good computer graphics card and good memory. Your design files will be quite heavy. Alternatively, you could store your files separately, which I do, in a personal cloud.

**Printer and scanner:** I have an all-in-one printer and scanner which I use to scan any work I’ve done and print out patterns to get a feel of how they’ll look. You can actually just take a photo of your work and upload it to your computer if you don’t have a scanner. There are also apps that scan your work now.

**Drawing tablet:** I absolutely swear by my drawing tablet. When I first started out I used the mouse, what was I thinking! Now I have a [Wacom Intuos Pro](https://www.wacom.com/en-gb/products/intuos-pro) (affiliate link). It’s the best investment I’ve made so far. I have total control over the pen and there are so many things you can use it for. It’s pretty cool and a good starter tool. There are amazing drawing tablets that are out of my reach and on ‘my wishlist’ so do the research to find the right fit for you.
SHOWCASING YOUR PORTFOLIO

"You will need to showcase your work somewhere online."

I use my website here and also a private portfolio page which is password protected. If you have Adobe CC membership you have a free portfolio site that you can use on its own. You can also password protect your pages in WordPress. Many buyers will not want work that has been seen by the public. So, here are a few places to set-up your home on the web.

**WordPress:** My website is a WordPress site. I love WordPress because I can make a lot of changes myself to the site to adapt to what I want. I initially started this site just to showcase my my art but now I enjoy sharing advice I’ve picked-up as an artist and helping others. I use [wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org) because all my content is owned by me.

**Squarespace:** This is another platform I’ve heard great things about. Very easy to set-up if you don’t want to get too complicated.

**Blogger:** This is a free platform and a good place to start if you don’t want to spend any money starting out. It’s also quite easy to migrate from to other platforms when you want to become more serious about blogging for example.
I use Bluehost to host my site and they have great start-up packages. This package with my link (affiliate) will get you up and running and includes a free domain name with it. Once you sign-up there’s an easy set-up with WordPress, just click and load. Also they include a free site builder if website building is not your thing.

There are lot’s of options to choose from. Take your time in choosing because it’s your home on the web. I should know, I’ve used a few before settling with WordPress and Bluehost.
Once you’ve set-up your website you’ll need to think about getting a newsletter together. You’ll find that some agents/buyers will actually join your newsletter just to keep informed of what’s going on. So don’t miss this vital opportunity to broadcast to those that really matter!

"You’ll find that some agents/buyers will actually join your newsletter just to keep informed of what’s going on."

This brings me onto email providers. You can easily send out newsletters from your Gmail or Hotmail accounts but with email providers such as Mailchimp and Convertkit you can automate everything! You will see your subscribers grow daily and need a provider to take care of that side of business.

Convertkit: is my choice of email provider. I’ve only recently crossed over from Mailchimp but I’m already seeing the perks of using them. You can find out more about Convertkit here. I also use it to provide email courses for my subscribers, without which I couldn’t possibly deliver those courses to all my subscribers.
"You need to get your work out there, it’s not enough to have a blog or website."

You need to be broadcasting and sharing your work everywhere to get seen. When I say share, please be careful to watermark your images to prevent copying or share it in a way that it can’t be copied.

I would suggest signing up for all the well known ones first and then focusing on one at a time to build a following. My favorite social media site is Instagram. I love Instagram to share my work in progress shots. Here are the links to all of mine to get you started and see how I use them.

- **INSTAGRAM**
- **FACEBOOK PAGE:** I’ve recently broadcast live from my page which is a great way to get seen too.
- **TWITTER**
- **PINTEREST**
- **PERISCOPE:** I’ve put Periscope but don’t actually use it. Well I use it but I haven’t scoped myself yet. Periscope is really good if you like to be in front of the camera and sharing your work. You could film your screen while working or yourself. It’s a great way for people to get a peek behind the scenes.

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I’m a licensed, Surface Pattern Designer which means I illustrate and create pretty patterns for all kinds of products, all over the world.

ZARA MARTINA

"Helping you take control of your artistic business"

If you struggle with presenting your art or knowing where to sell your art or anything else related to getting up and running with your art business, then let me help you today by giving you access to the FREE library of resources.

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