

## Iznik tile

This activity has been designed as a starting point for looking, talking and doing together. The **Look** and **Think** activities should take 5 -10 minutes.

The **Do** activities might take longer depending on the task and how creative you are feeling!



**Iznik tile, Unknown maker/s, Turkey, 1575-1600 CE**  
**Buff coloured fritware, coated in a white slip and painted with red, green, blue and black glaze.**  
 21.8 x 21.9 cm, C.41-1924



### Look

Can you spot all the natural forms in the design?

A blue tulip, some red carnation flowers, and a jagged-edge leaf called a Saz?



### Think

Imagine you were making a set of these tiles to decorate a wall. How do you think the patterns would be repeated?

Colour in a repeated pattern using a tile in our collection. What colours will you use?

Or [watch this short film by the Khan academy](#) to find out more about geometry in Islamic art.



### Do

Make your own printed repeated pattern inspired by Iznik tiles in our collection, using the easy steps on the next page.

Find other examples of Iznik patterns in our [collection database](#).

### Tiny Tweaks

Cut a cardboard template of the carnation or tulip flowers shown in the tile above.

Draw around one, then rotate or flip the template and draw around it again.

Can you create a pattern using just one shape?



## Iznik tile

Ceramic objects with this type of decoration are known as 'Iznik' after the town in Turkey where they were first made between 400 and 600 years ago. The craftsmen of Iznik switched from making simple earthenware pottery to elaborately decorated fritware like this. Fritware is clay that has been mixed with quartz or ground up glass so that it goes white when it is fired.

Leaders at the Ottoman Court in Istanbul loved Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, and amassed a large collection of it. The craftsmen of Iznik developed this new style, combining traditional Ottoman patterns and colours with Chinese elements to suit their tastes. From the 16th century, many tiles decorated imperial buildings and mosques in Istanbul, where they can still be seen today. There was a fashion for floral imagery, such as the roses, tulips and carnations on this tile.

Islamic Art is a general term used to describe works of art and decorated functional objects made throughout countries where Islam has been, or is still a major religious and cultural force. Geometric patterns are a common characteristic of Islamic art. They are often made up of natural forms, as seen on this tile. The geometry is thought to help the believer reflect on life and the greatness of creation. For instance, circles and complex patterns that appear to be never-ending give an impression of the infinite nature of Allah. They also show that in the small you can find the infinite.

### **Do: make your own repeated printed pattern**

[Watch our video for a quick how-to.](#)

#### **You will need:**

Paper or card to print onto  
A print roller  
Printing ink  
A tray or flat dish  
Polystyrene foam  
A pencil  
A wooden spoon  
Newspaper to cover surfaces (optional)

#### **Steps**

1. Draw your design onto the polystyrene foam with the pencil - don't push too hard, it will go all the way through. Try a design that can be rotated and repeated
2. Squeeze out a little printing ink onto your flat tray or dish
3. Cover your roller evenly in ink
4. Using the roller covered in ink cover your designed polystyrene tile
5. Turn your tile over and print it onto the paper using the wooden spoon to smooth it down
6. Repeat steps 3-5 again rotating or repeating your pattern.

If you don't have polystyrene, you could try using Blu-tak instead, flattened into a tile shape.



