

What is Gyotaku?

Gyotaku (say it like “gyo-tah-koo”) is a special kind of printing that started in **Japan** over 100 years ago. The word gyo means “fish” and taku means “rubbing” or “printing”. So it’s a way of making art by printing with real fish!

A Bit of History

- A long time ago, Japanese fishermen used Gyotaku to **record the size and type of fish they caught**.
 - Instead of taking a photo, they would **cover the fish in ink**, press paper onto it, and make a **print of the fish’s shape and details**.
 - This helped them keep a memory of their biggest and best catches!
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Gyotaku Today

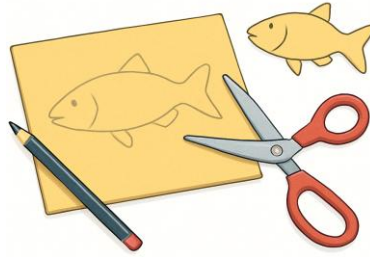
- Today, artists all around the world use Gyotaku not just to record fish, but to create **beautiful sea-themed artwork**.
 - Some people still use **real fish**, while others use **rubber models** or make their own from **foam or clay**.
 - Gyotaku is also used in **schools and museums** to help children learn about fish, nature, and Japanese culture.
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Step 1: Draw and Cut Out Your Fish Shape from Foam

To start your Gyotaku-inspired print, you’ll need to make a fish shape to print from.

1. Take a sheet of thin craft foam.
2. Use a pencil to lightly draw the outline of a fish — try to make it look like a real fish you might find in the sea (such as a trout, mackerel, or goldfish).
3. Once you're happy with your fish drawing, carefully cut it out using scissors.

This foam fish will be used like a stamp in later steps!



Step 2: Add Texture and Details to Your Foam Fish

To make your foam fish look more realistic—like the ones used in traditional Gyotaku—you'll need to add some texture:

1. Use a blunt pencil or the end of a paintbrush to gently press details into your foam fish.
2. Add scales by drawing overlapping curves, a line down the side to show the spine, and small lines for fins and gills.
3. Be careful not to press too hard—you want to make indents, not cut through the foam.

These details will help your print look more like a real fish when you ink it later.



Step 3: Ink and Print Your Foam Fish

Now it's time to make your first Gyotaku-inspired print!

1. Squeeze out a small amount of block printing ink or acrylic paint onto a flat tray or palette.
2. Use a sponge or roller to evenly dab a thin layer of ink onto the textured side of your foam fish. Make sure the ink covers all the details.

3. Carefully place a piece of paper (preferably rice paper or cartridge paper) on top of your inked foam fish.
4. Gently press and smooth the paper down with your hands, making sure to touch all areas.
5. Slowly peel the paper off to reveal your fish print!



Step 4: Create a Collagraph with Multiple Fish and Seaweed Shapes

Now that you've made one fish print, let's take your artwork further by turning it into a collagraph—a layered print using several shapes!

1. Cut out more fish shapes from foam sheets—try different sizes and types of fish.
2. Create seaweed shapes by cutting long, wiggly strips from green foam or card.
3. Arrange your foam fish and seaweed onto a piece of cardboard or thick paper in a sea scene layout.
4. Glue them down gently and let them dry completely.
5. Once dry, use a sponge or roller to ink up the entire surface with your chosen colours.
6. Place your printing paper on top and press down evenly.
7. Peel back the paper to reveal your collagraph sea scene!



More Cool Ideas with Gyotaku

- Print not just fish — try **seaweed, shells, or coral shapes**.
- Add a background to make an **underwater scene**.
- Use **bright paints or metallic colours** for a more modern look.
- Try printing on **fabric or canvas** for a cool display!