

# Making Metallic-Look Buttons

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Posted 2026 May 8

As you'll know from previous posts, I love playing around making things with my button machines: not only pins, but magnets, bottle openers, coasters, earrings, spintops, and bling of all kinds, including (of course) Christmas ornaments.

One of the great attractions of the button machine as a crafting tool is that you can put any image at all on your creations. If you can imagine it, you can put it on a button.

That is, unless you want a button with a metallic finish:

then you're pretty much out of luck. You can't print metallic colour on a home printer, nor can you print directly onto foil papers,

so if you're hoping for a

metallic effect, you'll probably be disappointed.

. . . . . Or maybe not.



As I'm sure you've already guessed, I've devised my own work-around for making gorgeous metallic buttons with nothing more than a home printer (and, of course, a trusty hobby button machine).

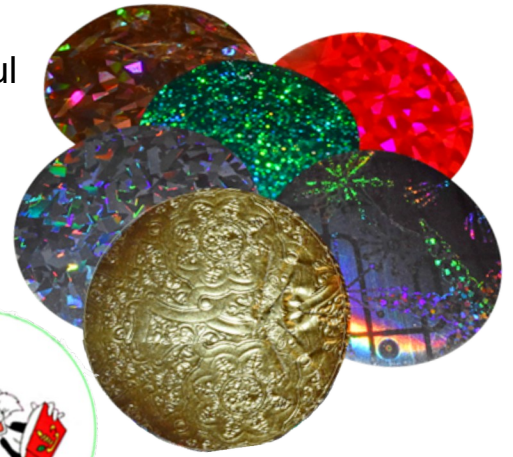


I made all of these metallic buttons using one or the other of two methods, one better for images, and the other for lettering. And if you like, you can combine both on a single button. Read on to learn how I made them.

Both of my techniques use specialty foil or prismatic paper, which is easy to find and comes in many beautiful colours. (Good-quality metallic gift wrap is ideal for this, but be sure to choose the paper kind, not the mylar.)

Method #1 is quite straightforward: a fussy-cut image is placed over a pre-cut metallic or prismatic paper circle.

I start by sizing the image to fit the button, then print it with a plain background on matte presentation paper.



At this point I would normally just make up the button with the white background: it's nice, but I want a metallic background for my design.



With scissors or a craft knife, I carefully cut the figure away from the background paper, trimming off all of the white background and leaving only the black border. (If you have one, this is the perfect task for a Scan & Cut or Cricut.)



From metallic foil or prismatic paper, I cut a circle to fit the button maker. In the example, I'm using a prismatic foil paper in red, to contrast with Marvin's green/yellow/black colouring.

A tiny touch of glue stick keeps the image from shifting out of place while the button is made up.



I press the button according to the instructions for my machine (for more on this, see my post from 15 September 2023). Done!



I made the Bugs Bunny and Grinch buttons in exactly the same way, using green prismatic paper in place of the red.

I don't think the photos fully capture how eye-catching these buttons really are. The figures look great against the prismatic background.



Fussy-cutting like that is great for full-colour images, but even with a cutting machine you can't cut out really fine lettering. Method #2 allows you to incorporate text and is perfect for silhouettes, and it involves no fussy-cutting. Using this method, I simply print the



images directly onto overhead transparency film, which then replaces the mylar on the button front. **NOTE: This method works best when the design is all black.**

To protect the delicate printed images, place the inked side of the transparency face down against the foil, sealing it inside. This means that the images will be viewed from the back of the

transparency, so **they must be printed in reverse.** Your printer can't print white, so any areas that look white on your computer screen will be blank on the transparency, allowing the foil to show through on the finished button.



You can style these buttons with black figures on a white ground, or white figures on a black ground. Both are effective, as you can see from the Calvin buttons at left.

Above, the gold moire foil provides a pretty backdrop to the "Nightmare Christmas" silhouette, and I love the way the star shapes on the "boldly go" button perfectly set off the spaceship silhouette.

The large lettering on the "Set Phasers" looks great in sparkling prismatic gold.

If you like, you can use the transparency method in combination with fussy-cutting, as I did on Sylvester-Tweety design. (I love this embossed gold wrapping paper).

If you should decide to print some colour on your transparency, try your image against various papers before you select the background, to ensure that it doesn't overwhelm the design.



In most cases, plain silver or light gold will show off printed lettering and colour better than darker colours or prismatics. The design on my "Keep Calm" ornament shows up clearly on the silver, but would be lost if placed on a busy background.

When selecting a design to print on an overhead transparency, bear in mind that white will not print on the transparency, so if your image has a lot of white, the fussy-cut method is preferable.

However, if the design has only a small amount of white, you may use the transparency method, as I did for my Daffy and Ho3 designs.



These designs look good on the transparency: Daffy is largely black, and I like the prismatic effect showing through the holly on the Ho3. But Daffy's eyes and Santa's hat trim need to be white, without the metallic background showing through.

My remedy was to cut small pieces of thin white paper to the exact shapes I needed, to serve as backing for the eyes and the hat trim. I made sure that the paper covered only the relevant areas, then held it in place with a teeny bit of tape while I made up the button.



Voila: Daffy's eyes and Santa's hat trim are now both white against the metallic background, and there's no white showing where it shouldn't.

Since I came up with these hacks, I frequently use metallic and prismatic papers on my buttons, especially when I'm making Christmas ornaments, such as this fussy-cut Sylvester Junior one. I love the way he pops against the vibrant green prismatic paper. (The "Merry Christmas" motif is a spangle.)

Although the fussy-cutting is more time-consuming than making a straightforward printed button, being able to achieve a metallic foil effect makes the extra work worth it, even without a cutting machine.

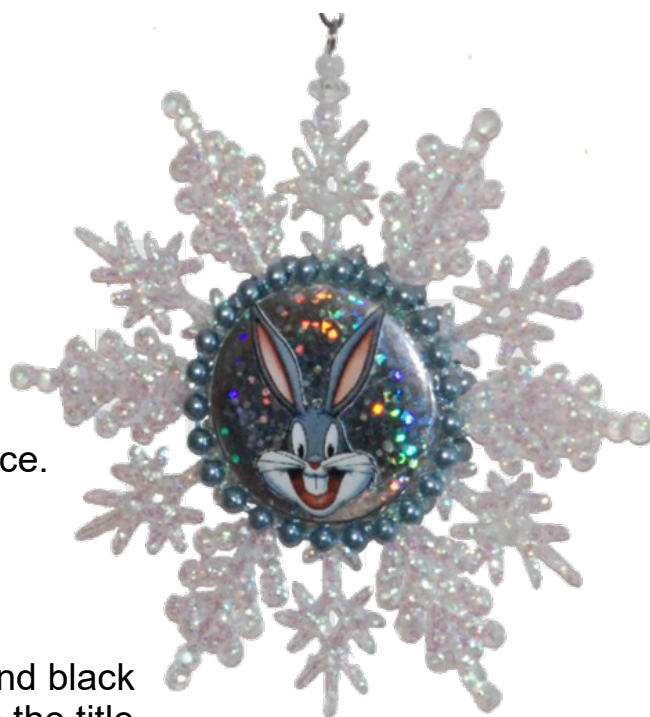


You can see some samples of my ornaments on the next page.



Both Taz images were fussy-cut. I used prismatic paper on one side and plain gold foil on the other. This is one instance where a cutting machine would have been welcome.

This snowflake ornament gains lots of visual appeal from its multiple textures: snowflake, beading, prismatic silver, and Bugs' printed face. Beautiful!



The red and black print on the title side of this Bully for Bugs ornament is a transparency, backed with silver foil paper. (The image side with Bugs and the bull was printed on regular 24lb printer paper).

This sparkly ornament – one of my favourites – involved a lot of delicate fussy-cutting, but I really like the way the iridescent paper catches the lights on the tree.



I love a good crafting hack! I also get a thrill from coming up with new innovations for my button-making, and I'm delighted with how gorgeous these metallic and prismatic finishes are. Time to get the machine out again so I can get to work on this year's collection!