

My Favourite Glues

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I use a fair bit of glue in my projects, and there's no one kind that works for everything. As a result I have several different types of glue in my craft room, and I use them all. But there are some that I reach for more than others. Here are some of my favourites for the kind of crafts I do.



I'll start with the simplest task: gluing together two flat pieces of paper. At one time I did a lot of paste-up, and for this purpose, it's hard to beat a good-quality glue stick.

I still use glue sticks frequently, and I've tried several brands; of the ones I've tried, I find that I like UHU best. It has good tack and lasting hold, better than other brands I've tried, including Elmer's, Avery, and Staples brands, and far better than the dollar store ones, which seem to be particularly poor.

For general gluing on ornaments and other small projects, I've long used tacky glue as my go-to choice. It's great for adhering paper models together, gluing pictures to other surfaces, and adding trims or bows to ornaments. I'm not usually particularly brand-conscious on most issues, but I must say that Aleene's seems to be the best of the tackies I've tried: it's quicker to grab and doesn't go on as wet as some of the others. They all hold pretty well, but if your project needs fast grab, this is the one. It comes in a variety of types, but I've found that the original formula works well for paper, wood, and cardboard, and I now use it where once I would have reached for rubber cement.

Aleene's is not the cheapest tacky glue, but I find the quick grab to be so superior to other brands that the price difference is worth it.



For some of my projects -- for example, where I'm gluing metal to metal or adding embellishments to various surfaces -- I usually reach for a more robust, solvent-based adhesive. My favourite of these for many years has been GOOP. I have tried E6000 and I like how it holds, but I find that GOOP sets up just a little more quickly. I get a large tube in my Christmas stocking each year, and I find that for my level of usage, that's about right.



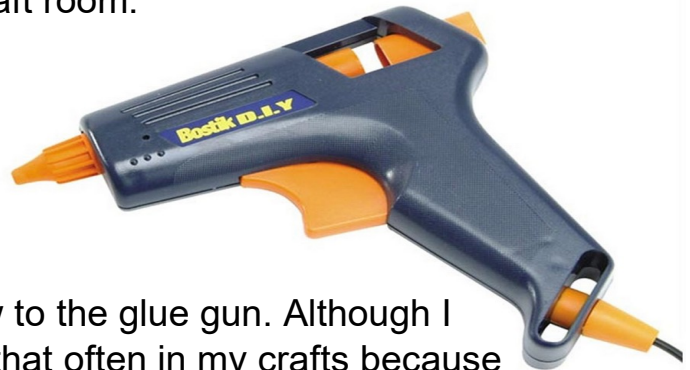
Years ago I used to use a similar product called Velcro Adhesive #40, but I have not seen it for some time and I suspect it isn't being made anymore.

For various reasons, neither tacky glue nor GOOP is suitable for gluing fabric to fabric or attaching acrylic embellishments and jewels to fabric or other surfaces. Aleene's makes several products that can be used in these applications, including "Jewel It", which is very good. I also recently discovered a line of adhesives by Beacon that I like, including Magna-Tac, Fabri-Tac, Gem-Tac, and 3-in-1. These adhesives have a very fast grab, and seem to hold well on things that tacky isn't so good for, like the embellishments mentioned above. So far too, the Magni-Tac seems to work for some items I would normally glue with GOOP. These glues are quite a bit pricier than the Aleene's tacky: \$18.99 for 8oz of Magna-Tac, compared to \$4.99 for the same size of Aleene's, so I wouldn't choose one of these where the Aleene's will work. But it's just over half the price of GOOP (\$17.64 for the 3.7 oz tube), so in cases where the Beacon products work (I'm still testing!), I'll likely choose those in place of the GOOP in future.





In general, I dislike using aerosols, so I don't use many spray glues, but there are two exceptions: 505 temporary spray adhesive for embroidery, and Aleene's Tacky Spray on rare occasions when I need that kind of product. Both are very good, and I do keep them on hand in my craft room.



Now to the glue gun. Although I own a few, I don't use them all that often in my crafts because I find that hot glue makes a poor initial bond, especially for nonporous materials such as metal or plastic, and doesn't stand up well over time to fluctuations in temperature and humidity. And then there's the issue of burns: because "hot glue" is actually not real glue but rather molten plastic, it is not only very hot, but also difficult to remove should it land on your hand or arm. Until it cools, it continues to burn into your skin, creating potentially serious burns. For this reason, it also isn't safe to use if there are kids around. Unless I'm making something for temporary use only, I usually leave the hot glue in the cupboard and reach for a liquid glue.

Of course there are other very good adhesives out there, and for obvious reasons this isn't a comprehensive list. I use others myself, including at times rubber cement, contact cement, Gorilla glue, Barge adhesive, and even super glue (though I've never had a lot of luck with it). The glues I've listed are simply the ones that over the years I've found myself reaching for most frequently in my craft studio. From time to time I discover a new one (such as the Beacon products I mentioned above) and I may amend my list in future, but for the most part these are the ones that have stood the test of time for me.

You might be wondering why I haven't mentioned the glue gun as one of my go-to choices for crafting. I certainly own one – several, in fact -- but to be honest I find that I don't use them all that often in my crafts because I find that hot glue makes a poor bond for non-porous materials such as metal or plastic.



Even more problematic for me is that it doesn't stand up well to fluctuations in temperature and humidity, so is not a good choice for creating heirloom items. The term "hot glue" is actually something of a misnomer, since this stuff isn't actually glue. Instead, it is a thermoplastic that melts and then re-solidifies. Unlike real glue, it does not actually cure, and it remains temperature-sensitive forever. Actual glue undergoes a chemical transformation as it dries, and it cannot be reconstituted as liquid glue after it has been allowed to cure.

And then there's the issue of burns: I don't know anyone who uses one of these things regularly who hasn't been burned, sometimes quite seriously. Because this glue is actually a molten plastic, it is not only very hot, but also difficult to remove if it drips onto your skin. Until it cools, it continues to burn into your skin, creating potentially serious burns. This is especially an issue if there are kids around.

There are many great adhesives out there, and you may have your own favourites that I haven't mentioned or haven't tried.