



Cricut® Cutting Machine Guide

Table of Contents

Overview	1
Cricut Safety Brief.....	2
Cutting Preparation	2
Machine Set-Up.....	2
Cricut Design Space	3
Your First Shapes & Text.....	4
Sending Your Design to the Machine.....	4
Cricut Machine Layout	5
Tools.....	6
Loading the Carrier Sheet	6
Weeding.....	7
Transfer Tape	9
Cricut Software Warnings	11
Questions?	11

Overview

These general instructions support your self-guided use of the Cricut Explore Air 2 cutting machine located at Alton Branch's [MakerStation](#).

This guide covers the basics to get you started, but there's so much more to learn. We encourage you to explore beyond and do your own research to keep growing your skills. Learn more about Cricut features and cutting tools by visiting [Cricut tutorials](#) and the [Cricut help site](#).



Cricut Safety Brief

There are the potential hazards with Cricut machine use:

- Small blade inside the blade housing
- Small replacement blades

Cutting Preparation

File Preparation

The Cricut uses software called *Cricut Design Space*. This software offers both free and paid ready-made designs as well as the option to create or upload a custom design.

Custom designs can be created using CorelDraw or any other vector editing program. The higher quality of the file the better the result.

Artwork should ideally be vector-based (made up of points, lines, and curves) to provide the best results. The highest-quality raster-type image is the next preferred media type. Low quality and pixelated image will give the worst results.

Machine Set-Up

The Cricut Explore Air 2 needs to be connected to a computer loaded with specialized software using a USB cable.

The Cricut must be placed with at least ten inches of space both in front and behind the unit to ensure adequate room for the machine to operate.

When the machine is not in use, keep the Cricut cover closed to reduce dust build up.

Cricut Design Space

Cricut Design Space software is used to create a design, upload an image to be cut, adjust the location of your design and cut parameters, and save your design for future use.

A Cricut account is required to use the Design Space software. BPL has a Cricut Design Studio account that you can freely use for your general projects.

Cricut Design Space opens to a starting page (Discover page) that includes:

- Discover: This is your home page.
- Search: Can search existing free and paid designs.
- Inspire: A showcase of other people's creations
- My Stuff: Previously designed projects on this account.
- Cricut Access: A paid subscription service.
- Heat Guide: Links to the Heat Press Cricut web page.
- Shop: Links to the online shop (BPL does not provide access to paid content).

The Canvas Page

The *Canvas* tab, located in the top left corner of the computer screen on the Discover home page, opens the design editing portion of the program.

This layout has four major areas:

1. A grid in the centre of the screen that represents your carrier sheet.
2. A vertical tool bar on the left with options to guide your workflow or add in elements to your design, such as text or a monogram.
3. A horizontal tool bar across the top that contains tools for editing your elements.
4. A Layers and Colour Sync menu on the right-hand side. At the bottom of the right-side menu, there are also options to combine or cut shapes apart.

In the left-hand tool bar, the Text, Shapes, and Upload options are important:

- Text: Allows you to type in a word.
- Shapes: Allows you to pick from various shapes
- Upload: Allows you to upload your own design file and make it into a cut design.



Your First Shapes & Text

Making use of the left-hand tool bar, you can choose either the Shapes or the Text option. Here you will see either a text bar or a selection of shape types you can place.

After you place your shape or text, the upper horizontal tool bar will change and provide some different options. These options include font choice, font size, rotation, and size parameters.

There is also a drop-down menu called *Operation Mode* where you can choose between Cutting, Drawing, Foil, and Scoring modes. **This guide covers the Cutting mode only.**

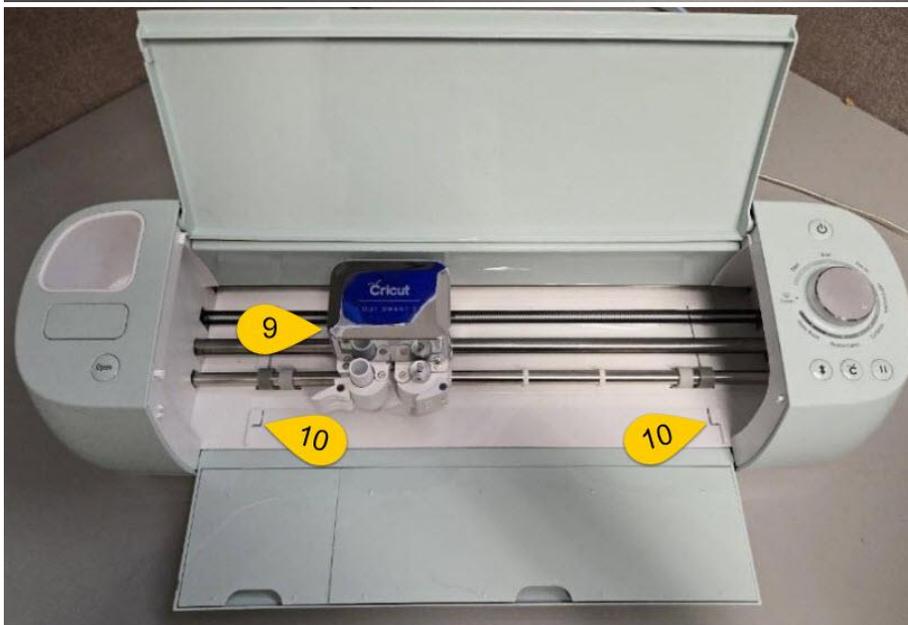
Sending Your Design to the Machine

When your design is ready, make sure the Cricut is plugged in, turned on, and connected to your computer with its USB cable.

1. Select the *Make* button at the top right of the Canvas screen. This will bring you to a page where you will select your carrier sheet size and project quantities.
2. Choose the 12 x 12 inch on *Mat Load Type* before selecting *Continue*.
3. The software will now connect to the Cricut device and guide you to make some selections on the device.

Cricut Machine Layout

1. Power button
2. Material type knob
3. Carrier sheet loading button
4. Run Job button
5. Pause Job
6. Tool holder
7. Expansion port (we do not need this)
8. Open Front and Top Panel button
9. Pen and blade carrier (located inside the device)
10. Alignment tabs



Tools

Useful production tools for your Cricut project.

1. Spatula
2. Weeding tool
3. Tweezers
4. Marker
5. Scoring tool
6. Scissors
7. Scraper
8. Blades
9. Cutting blade housing



Loading the Carrier Sheet

The vinyl or paper to be cut is placed on an adhesive sheet called the carrier sheet, so it can run through the machine. The carrier sheet wears out with use, so consider replacing the sheet if it becomes ineffective at holding the material.

Loading Step by Step

1. Remove the protective clear plastic from the carrier sheet. Make sure you save the protective plastic sheet as you will need it again.
2. Place the chosen material to cut on the upper left corner of the carrier sheet.

3. Line up the carrier sheet with the front of the machine and ensure that the left and right corner of the carrier sheet is below the alignment tabs. Carefully slide the sheet forward until it sits against the rubber roller bar (it should not go past this point).



4. Press the carrier sheet load button.
5. The machine will now pull the carrier sheet into position.
6. Press the Run Job button when you are ready to begin.

When using the Cricut machine, you will need to properly load the media, select the correct media type, and verify that the correct cutting blade is in the tool holder prior to starting the job.

Weeding

One important aspect of cutting vinyl is the ability to 'weed' or remove the unwanted vinyl. This prepares your vinyl for the application of the transfer tape. To ensure the best results, we recommend reviewing online videos on vinyl weeding and using transfer tape.

After your design is cut, you will see the cut lines on the vinyl. Weeding will not work properly if any section appears to have not fully cut through. If the cut is not fully complete, you can try to carefully cut with an X-Acto or other sharp precision knife.

If you have not cut a design on the whole sheet, use scissors to cut out just the section you intend to use, saving the rest of material for future use.



Both the weeding tool and the tweezers are useful during the weeding process.

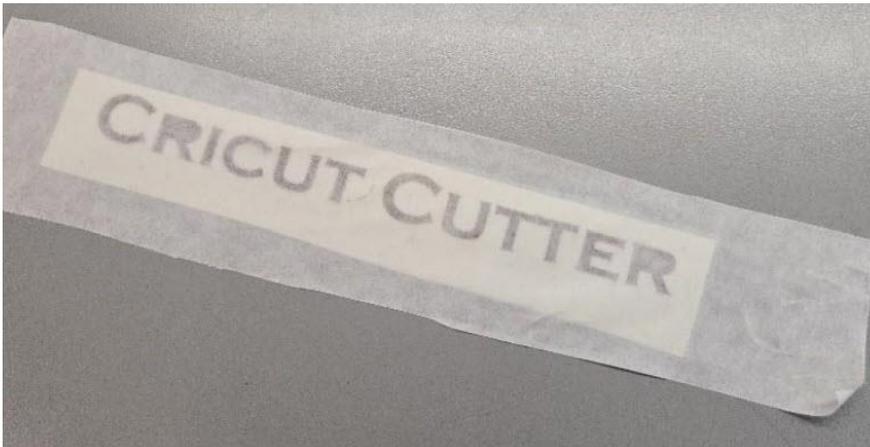
Using the weeding tool, carefully remove the unwanted vinyl. If a letter comes up as you are removing the surrounding material, you can often place it back into position by laying the vinyl down and holding the letter as you pull away the material.



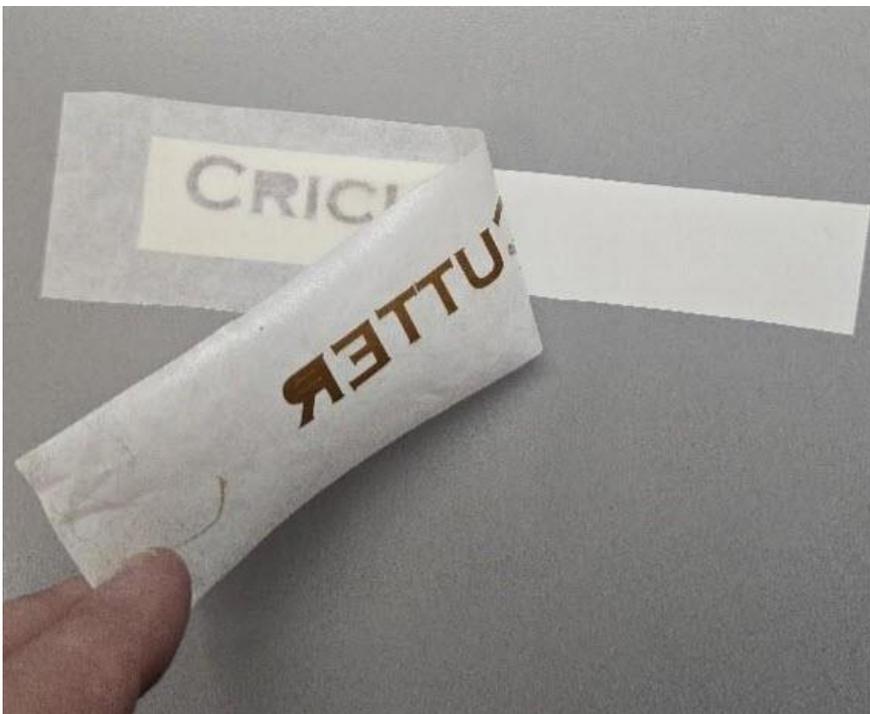
Important! The vinyl is sticky on one side; do not let it touch another section of vinyl. If it gets stuck on another part of vinyl, you can try to carefully separate the layers; however, it may be best to recut and start over.

Transfer Tape

Transfer tape is like masking tape. In this process, you want to cover your freshly weeded vinyl with the tape. This allows you to remove the vinyl from the backing and transfer it to your chosen adhesion location while keeping alignment and layout.



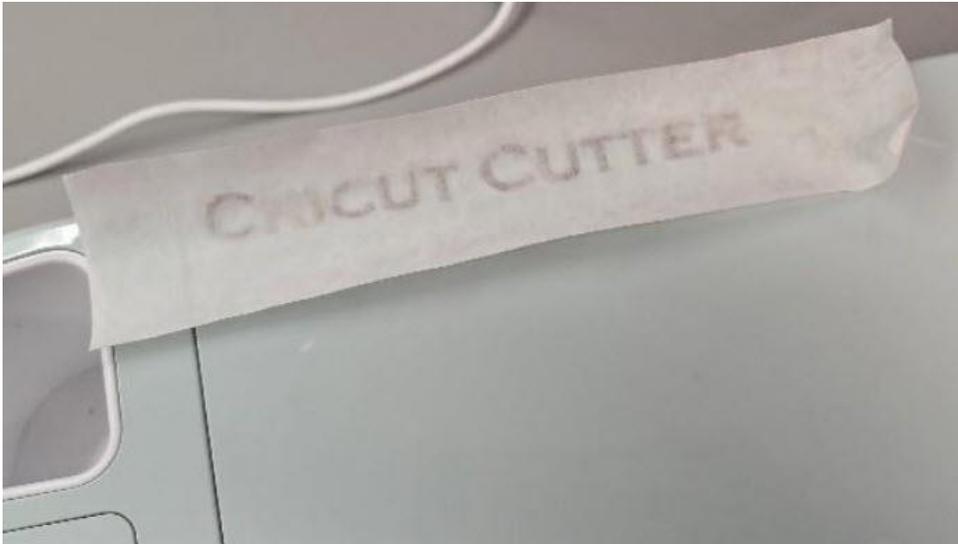
The transfer tape can stay on the vinyl and its backing for easier transport and can be separated later.



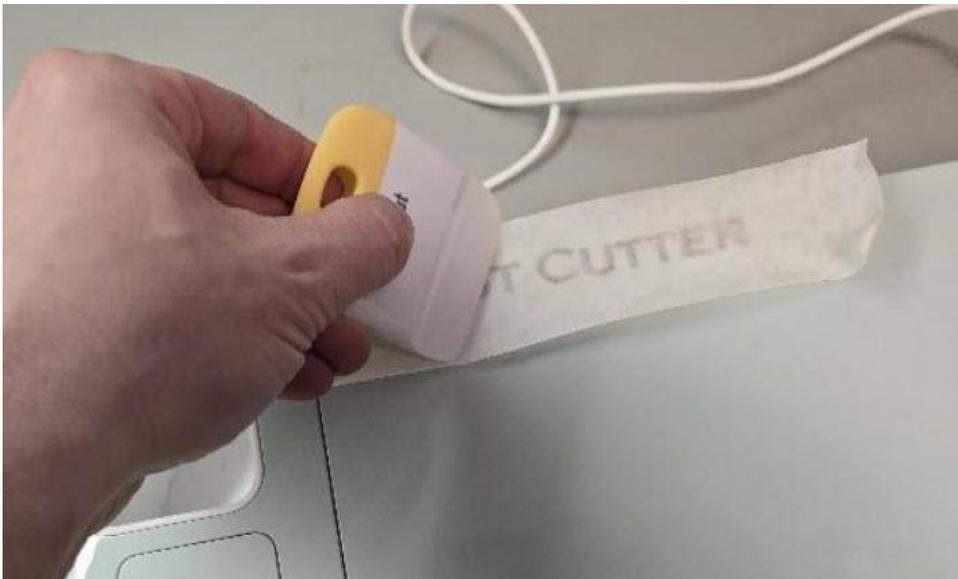
Using Transfer Tape Step by Step

Successfully placing and removing the transfer tape takes lots of practice!

1. Place the transfer tape down—working from the middle or one side—and press firmly with the scraper tool for good contact. When ready to apply the vinyl design, carefully pull up the transfer tape, transferring the cut vinyl with it.



2. At this point, you can place the transfer tape and the vinyl on the desired location and press down with the scraper in a squeegee-like motion.



3. Once done, carefully remove the transfer tape, leaving behind the vinyl.



Cricut Software Warnings

Cricut provides the software free of cost; however, many features and pre-design elements of Cricut Design Space have purchase costs attached. To keep costs for our users as low as possible, BPL does not use any of the paid features.

Cricut Design Space will let you design with paid options but will lock you from printing/putting until you pay for the design.

Questions?

If you have questions about using the equipment, please talk to branch staff or email us at makerspace@bpl.on.ca.

Central MakerSpace: [905.639.3611](tel:905.639.3611) extension 1302

Alton Branch: [905.634.3686](tel:905.634.3686)

- Date: July 22, 2025
- Amended Dates:
- Associated Documents: