

Making a Negative Sandwich in the Darkroom: How to print two different negatives at the same time to create one image.



Sandwiching negatives is the process of taking two different negatives and stacking them up together before placing the film in the enlarger to be developed. This allows the enlarger to cast through the two negatives and project the new, stacked image onto the photo paper.

This technique has its advantages and disadvantages: it allows for some play in the darkroom but it also requires a way of backwards thinking and long exposure times in the darkroom when enlarging.

When I say thinking backwards, I'm referring to the exposure of the negative. In order for something to show through another negative, there must be empty space on the negative that will allow light through. Simple enough, but then you must think of how negatives and exposures work. Because the negative is the opposite of the image you are printing, things that are black in the image will appear clear on the negative to allow the enlarger to expose the paper to more light. So, in order for sandwiched negatives to work, you must have the correct balance of black and white and realize that the second image will be cast into the darkest areas of the first only.

That being said, it may be fun to just experiment and see the results you come up with by playing with random negatives or placing two negatives that were shot with different intent together and seeing the juxtapositions that occur by chance.

The sandwich print has a dreamy quality to it. I've always been a fan regarding the way this technique invites a different kind of creativity in the darkroom process. It is however, about the negative selection here and how the two images **fit** together. Consider it like a collage, with proper layout, and then consider how the tones will appear on the final print.

PREPARATION TIPS:

Prepare chemicals in darkroom choose two negatives you want to sandwich together. **Really think about the sandwich here.**

TOOLS:

Darkroom, Negatives, Negative carrier, Scissors, tape.

HOW TO:

To get started you will need two pictures that you think will work well together. Personally, I like to combine interesting backgrounds (trees, windows, sidewalks fields, etc.) with simple portraits (side views, silhouettes, body parts, etc.). After you've chosen your two images, you load both of them into the negative carrier like you normally would, except they are stacked on top of each other. Tape the corner of the negatives gently but securely to ensure that they won't move around. You will probably have to adjust and open up the aperture to be able to see both images. After focusing as usual, you will make test strips to find the best time for the picture.*

*You will most likely have to use longer increments of time than you normally would.

Dodge and burn accordingly. Due to the fact that you are working with two images, dodging and burning may take more time than usual.

That's it! Very easy process, it just takes a little patience and effort to get a really cool, unique image.