Die-Cutting System Face-Off

Cricut Explore™: How does it match up against traditional die-cutting systems?

DIY crafters can choose from three methods for cutting shapes out of materials: punches, manual die-cutting machines, and electronic cutting machines.

**Victorian-era technology lives on**

Die-cutting came of age during the Industrial Revolution. Sharp steel dies and punches made it possible to produce goods on a greater scale. By the early 1900’s, manual die-cutting machines allowed application of greater force and widened the scope of materials that could be cut.

Eventually, scaled-down versions of professional punches and die-cutting machines found their way into homes and schools.

Easy to use and precise, punches and manual die-cutting machines remain fixtures on the DIY craft scene.

Capitalizing on the popularity of scrapbooking, the Fiskers® and Martha Stewart Crafts® brands dominate the punch market. Consumers who want more than a few cutouts of a specific shape can choose a manual die-cutting machine such as Cricut Cuttlebug™, Spellbinders®, and Sizzix® Big Shot.

But these traditional tools lack versatility. Metal dies cut shapes of a fixed size only. Getting new images means purchasing more dies—an expensive proposition over time. And a crafter’s creative options are limited to the imagery a manufacturer chooses to offer.

**Digital technology arrives**

In the early 21st Century the digital revolution spawned a
challenger—the electronic cutting machine. The new device tantalized the crafting community with the promise of versatility that wasn’t possible with the Victorian-era technology of punches and manual die-cutting machines. By allowing the use of digital imagery, electronic cutting raised expectations for a new creative freedom that would take DIY crafting to the next level.

Unfortunately, the digital renaissance stalled at the start line. Consumers were intimidated by numerous controls and buttons that made the new machines difficult to use at first. As crafters became more computer savvy—and hungry for new features—vendors added options that often increased complexity.

Promise kept: Cricut Explore™
Cricut Explore™ delivers on the early promise of electronic cutting and in the process, reinvents the DIY crafting experience.

The Cricut Explore™ machine offers DIY crafters the best of all possible worlds—the core simplicity of punches and manual die cutters with unmatched versatility and easy access to a wealth of images.

Cricut Design Space™ software reinvents the user experience by promoting effortless interaction that breaks down creative barriers and brings back the simple delight of crafting.

The dream machine comes to life
The development of the Cricut Explore™ machine included interviews with hundreds of users and detailed research into what motivates crafters. We listened to the DIY community and gave them what they wanted.
## Feature showdown: Cricut Explore™ vs. traditional die-cutting systems

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<th>Feature</th>
<th>Punches &amp; die-cutting</th>
<th>Cricut Explore™</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Image sizing</strong></td>
<td>Paper punches and dies come in specific sizes. Your size of the die determines what you can cut.</td>
<td>Scale digital images to almost any size—as small as ¼” by ¼” and as large as 11 ½” by 23 ½”.</td>
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<td><strong>Personalization</strong></td>
<td>A punch/die is a fixed image; you can’t modify or personalize it.</td>
<td>Manipulate images by hiding cuts, removing segments, and merging.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Image acquisition</strong></td>
<td>You have access to only a few hundred images the vendor offers.</td>
<td>Choose from over 50,000 images in the Cricut® library, or use your own.</td>
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<td><strong>Layering</strong></td>
<td>Most dies/punches are limited to one or two layers.</td>
<td>Add more layers to give your projects an extra dimension.</td>
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<td><strong>Materials capability</strong></td>
<td>Punches and die-cutting machines can handle a limited number of thicker materials—largely determined by the force a user can apply.</td>
<td>Cricut Explore™ easily cuts through thicker materials including chipboard, magnet backing, and fabric.</td>
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<td><strong>Drawing, writing, scoring</strong></td>
<td>Both punches and dies are cut-only. Die-cut machines can also emboss.</td>
<td>In addition to cutting, Cricut Explore™ draws shapes, writes text, and scores.</td>
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<td><strong>Precision</strong></td>
<td>Precise cuts, limited by punch and die dimensions.</td>
<td>Brings a new level of scalable precision to materials cutting.</td>
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Cricut Design Space™: the digital difference-maker

At the core of the Cricut Explore™ experience is Cricut Design Space™—elegant web-based software that simplifies the design process while providing seamless access to a library containing tens of thousands of images.

Cricut Design Space™ brings a new, activity-based approach to the crafting process that makes even the most challenging project easy to complete. The software also provides access to a large number of Make it Now™ projects that get users to their first cut in just a few mouse clicks.

DIY mastery: the price is right

The initial cost of a sophisticated electronic design-and-cut system such as the Cricut Explore™ is higher than a manual die-cutting machine or a set of paper punches. But in a very short time the versatility of Cricut Explore™ makes it the most attractive option.

The imagery you use to cut shapes with a punch or manual die-cutter is a hard good—similar to the type in an old-style printing press. If you want to use a different image, you have to purchase another punch or die. You end up paying dearly for the inflexibility of Victorian-era technology.

With an electronic cutting system, digital imagery takes up virtually no space, is easy to resize or duplicate, and can be purchased instantly.

In the first year of owning a manual die-cutting machine, a prolific crafter who purchases 36 die cuts and 6 alphabet sets will spend...
$1,740.00. A crafter using punches will spend about $760.00 on the same number of punches and alphabet sets. “Hard” imagery is expensive.

A Cricut Explore™ user enjoys instant and unlimited access to over 25,000 images in the Cricut® Library for a yearly subscription fee of $99.00. (A subscription also provides access to hundreds of Make it Now™ projects.)

In just the first year of ownership, the Cricut Explore™ owner spends $360 less than a person using paper punches, and $1,340 less than an individual who relies on a manual die-cutter.