

# First Responders T-Shirt

## Supplies:

- Black T-shirt
- Large stencil of an American Flag
- Fabric glitter spray
- Red fabric paint
- Blue fabric paint
- Tin foil or wax paper
- Paintbrushes
- Painter's tape



## Steps:

	<p>Step 1: Lay the clean, black T-shirt flat on a smooth surface. Place a large piece of tin foil or wax paper inside the T-shirt to prevent the paint from bleeding through to the back. Ensure the front of the T-shirt is smooth and that the foil or wax paper is flat and wrinkle-free inside the T-shirt.</p>
	<p>Step 2: Lay the American flag stencil on top of the T-shirt, ensuring the stars are positioned in the upper left-hand corner. This placement is the correct way to display the flag.</p>
	<p>Step 3: Tape the edges of the American flag stencil to the T-shirt. Make sure to apply the tape so that the corners are straight and squared off, as this will help create clean lines and the proper shape of the flag when spray paint is applied.</p>
	<p>Step 4: Read the directions on the glitter spray paint can. With the lid on, shake the can thoroughly. Before you start spraying, move to a well-ventilated area, such as near an open window or outside.</p>





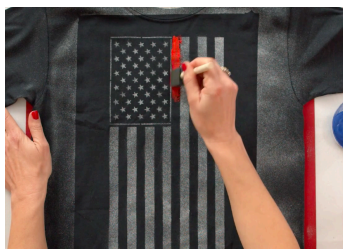
Step 5: Hold the glitter spray paint 6-8 inches above the T-shirt. Spray over the entire stencil area, applying only one layer for a slightly distressed look.



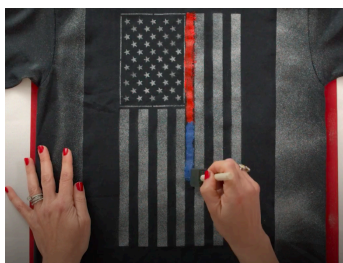
Step 6: Leave the T-shirt on a flat surface for 30 minutes to allow the spray paint to dry completely.



Step 7: Once the paint is completely dry, place one hand on the T-shirt to hold it firmly down. Using the other hand, carefully peel off the tape and stencil.



Step 8: Using the red fabric paint, paint the black stripe located directly to the right of the stars. Stop painting about halfway down the stripe. This is called the "thin red line."



Step 9: Using the blue fabric paint, paint the remainder of the black stripe starting directly below the red paint, or the "thin red line." Paint the blue line to the bottom of the flag. This is called the "thin blue line."



Step 10: Leave the T-shirt on a flat surface for a few hours to allow the fabric paint to dry completely. Once dry, the T-shirt will be ready to wear! Put on your T-shirt, and if you see a first responder, thank them for their service.

### **Why do we call police officers and firefighters first responders?**

First responders are the first trained people to arrive on the scene of an emergency. They stop the emergency from getting bigger. If someone needs help, they help them. Police officers and firefighters keep all of us safe and are our real-life heroes.

#### **Fun Facts:**

- The red paint represents the “thin red line,” and the blue paint represents the “thin blue line.” Red is used to show respect to firefighters, and blue is used to show respect to law enforcement.
- The phrase “thin red line” can be traced all the way back to the Crimean War in 1854 when the British were fighting the Russians. Over the next 100 years, the phrase was changed to “thin blue line” to be used in TV shows that were made about police officers, as well as in conversation and pop culture. People then started saying “thin red line” for firefighters.

#### **Extension Activity: Thank a First Responder**

While the T-shirts are drying in the final step, write thank you letters to first responders. Students can write two letters—one letter to a firefighter and one letter to a police officer. Facilitate a brainstorming session with students to reflect on the importance of first responders and what they do to protect our communities. Provide students with sentence starters and writing prompts to help them write their letters. Some examples include:

- "Thank you for..."
- "I am grateful for you because..."
- "Your bravery is inspiring because..."

Encourage students to write neatly and be sincere in their expressions of gratitude. Instruct students to include a drawing of the artistic interpretation of the U.S. flag to have a “thin blue line” and a “thin red line,” like the first responders T-shirt craft. Find a local fire station and police station to deliver the letters to. Alternatively, if possible, arrange for a representative from each station to visit the classroom to accept the letters and talk to the students about their work.