

Introduction

Coloured pencil is a versatile medium—it can be used to replicate the look of oil, water colour, acrylic, and more. Although it has been used as a fine art medium for less than a century, its popularity has grown significantly over the last few decades. And it's easy to understand why more and more artists are attracted to coloured pencils—they are fairly inexpensive and convenient to transport. They are also nontoxic, readily available in art and craft stores, and combine well with other media.

Whether you choose to use coloured pencils for sketches or to create fully rendered drawings, you will find that these pencils are brightly hued and precise tools that are a joy to work with. There are many different approaches and techniques to discover in coloured pencil art—from layering and hatching to burnishing and blending. As you explore this art form, you'll discover many methods and materials that will help you realize the seemingly endless creative possibilities working with coloured pencil offers. The important thing is to have fun while you develop your own artistic style—and enjoy creating your own works of art in coloured pencil!



Tools and Materials

You don't need many supplies to get started drawing with coloured pencil, so you won't have to invest a lot of money in materials. All you need in the beginning are a few basic colours, an eraser, a sharpener, and some paper. Then, after you've become more familiar with the variety of effects you can create, you may want to purchase a few more specialized tools. You'll find that, as coloured pencil is rapidly becoming a more popular medium, many new products are being developed to aid the coloured pencil artist.

Pencils

Reeves offers several sets of quality coloured pencils that each provide a good starting palette for beginners. If you would like to purchase additional colours, many art stores sell coloured pencils individually as well. Once you've chosen your colours, make sure to store your pencils upright or safely in a container—and try not to drop them. Coloured pencil lead is very brittle, and the lead is likely to break inside the shaft if the pencil is dropped. You may not be able to tell by looking that the lead is broken somewhere inside the pencil, but such breaks eventually render the pencil useless.

Erasers

You'll want to use a kneaded eraser to correct your coloured pencil drawings. It erases the colour gently, whereas the friction between a rubber or vinyl eraser and the paper will melt the wax pigment and flatten the *tooth* (the grain) of the paper. To remove small amounts of colour, twist or pinch the eraser into the size and shape you want, and then press it lightly on the page to pick up the pigment. When the eraser gets "dirty" and is not as effective at lifting the colour, knead it (like dough) with your fingers to reveal a clean surface. Another option for removing colour is to use a small battery-powered eraser; it also erases without crushing the paper underneath.

Papers

The paper you work on—your *support*—can have a great impact on your artwork. Smooth paper has an even surface, and its lack of texture makes it ideal for creating glossy blends of colour. You can also purchase a variety of textured papers (including illustration boards and water colour papers) at art supply stores. The rough grain of textured paper "catches" the colour so it accepts more pigment than smooth paper does. And you may want to consider using coloured papers for your drawings. (For more on coloured supports and their effects, see "Coloured Grounds" - next page). In addition to purchasing paper for final pieces, you may want to buy a sketch pad or a sketchbook for practice sketches or for making quick studies when traveling or when drawing outdoors.

Sharpeners

You can achieve different effects depending on how dull or sharp your pencil is, but generally you'll want to make sure your pencils are sharpened at all times; a sharp point will ultimately provide a smoother and more intense layer of colour. Although a small handheld sharpener will suffice, an electric or battery-powered sharpener is better-suited for fine art purposes as it hones the pencil more cleanly. You can also use a sandpaper pad to refine the pencil points, but remember to sand them gently if you want very fine points.

Extras

In addition to the basic supplies already mentioned, you may want a dust brush to gently remove the pencil residue from your paper, a spray-on fixative to preserve your finished drawing, and a paper blending stump (also called a "tortillon") to create soft blends. A pencil extender is handy when the pencil gets too short to hold comfortably, and you may want a triangle for making straight lines and artists' tape for masking. It's also nice to have white gouache (opaque water colour-type paint) and a small paint brush on hand for adding tiny highlights.



SUPPLIES Since 1766, Reeves has been manufacturing excellent quality paints and brushes and has long been established around the world as a wonderful source of art material for beginners.

Colour Theory

Coloured pencils are transparent by nature, so instead of “mixing” colours as you would for painting, you create blends by layering colours on top of one another. Knowing a little about basic colour theory can help you tremendously in drawing with coloured pencils. The *primary* colours (red, yellow, and blue) are the three basic colours that can’t be created by mixing other colours; all other colours are derived from these three. *Secondary* colours (orange, green, and purple) are each a combination of two primaries, and *tertiary* colours (red-orange, red-purple, yellow-orange, yellow-green, blue-green, and blue-purple) are a combination of a primary colour and a secondary colour. *Hue* refers to the colour itself, such as blue or purple, and *intensity* means the strength or chroma of a colour (usually gauged by pressure applied or pencil quality in coloured pencil).

Colour Psychology

Colours are often referred to in terms of *temperature*, but the term isn’t meant to be taken literally. If you think of the colour wheel as divided into two halves, you can get a clear idea of the concept. The colours on the red side are considered warm, while the colours on the blue side are cool. Thus colours with red or yellow in them appear warmer, and colours with more green or blue in them appear cooler. Also keep in mind that warm colours appear to come forward and cool colours appear to recede; this knowledge is valuable when creating the illusion of depth in a scene.

Complementary and Analogous Colours

Complementary colours are any two colours directly across each other on the colour wheel (such as red and green, orange and blue, or yellow and purple). *Analogous* colours are those that are adjacent to one another (for example, yellow, yellow-orange, and orange).

Value

Value is the term used to describe the relative lightness or darkness of a colour (or of black). It is the manipulation of values that creates the illusion of form in a drawing, as shown in the development of the sphere at right. For more on value and coloured pencil, see “Pressure” on next page.



CREATING FORM Draw the basic shape or outline of the object. Then, starting on the shadowed side, begin building up colour, leaving the paper white in the area where the light hits directly.



VARYING VALUES Continue adding colour, gradually deepening the values to create the spherical form of the ball. Squint your eyes to blur the details, so you can focus on the value changes.



BUILDING DEPTH Add the darkest values last. As the sphere curves away from the light, the values become darker, so place the darkest values on the side directly opposite the light.



COLOUR WHEEL A colour wheel can be a useful reference tool for understanding colour relationships. Knowing where each colour lies on the colour wheel makes it easy to understand how colours relate to and interact with one another.



USING COMPLEMENTS When placed next to each other, complementary colours create lively, exciting contrasts. So pairing two complements in your drawings will make your subject seem to “pop” off the paper. For example, you could place a red cardinal in a green, leafy tree or depict a mixed bouquet of yellow daffodils and purple irises.

Coloured Pencil Techniques

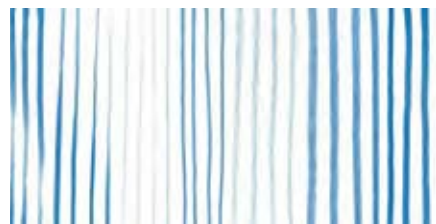
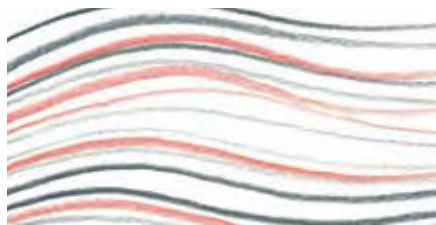
Coloured pencil is amazingly satisfying to work with, partly because it's so easily manipulated and controlled. The way you sharpen your pencil, the way you hold it, and the amount of pressure you apply will all affect the strokes you create. With coloured pencils, you can create everything from soft blends to brilliant highlights to realistic textures.

Strokes

Each line you make in a coloured pencil drawing is important—and the direction, width, and texture of the line you draw will all contribute to the effects you create. Practice making different strokes, as shown in these examples. Apply light, medium, and heavy pressure; use the side and then the point of your pencil; and experiment with long, sweeping strokes as well as short, precise ones. The more familiar you are with the wide array of strokes you can create, the easier it will be for you to re-create the textures and objects you observe.

STROKES AND MOVEMENT

Although a group of straight lines can suggest direction, a group of slightly curved lines conveys a sense of motion more clearly. Try combining a variety of strokes to create a more turbulent, busy design. Exercises like these can give you an idea of how the lines and strokes you draw can be expressive as well as descriptive.



Once you're familiar with the basic techniques, you'll be able to decide which will best enable you to capture your subject's unique qualities. There are as many techniques in the art of coloured pencil as there are effects you'd want to re-create—and the more you practice and experiment, the more potential you will see in the images that inspire you.



Light pressure



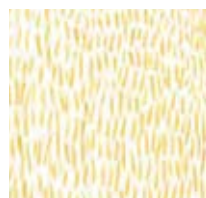
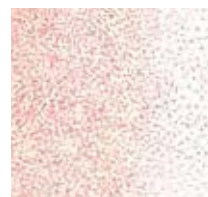
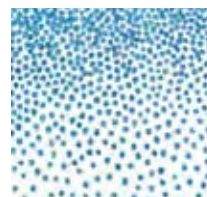
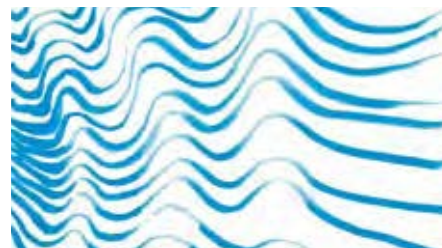
Medium pressure



Heavy pressure

PRESSURE Varying the amount of pressure you use on your pencil is an easy way to make transitions between values. Since coloured pencils are translucent, the colour of the paper underneath will show through. With light pressure, the colour is almost transparent. Medium pressure creates a good foundation for layering, and heavy pressure flattens the paper texture, making the colour appear almost solid.

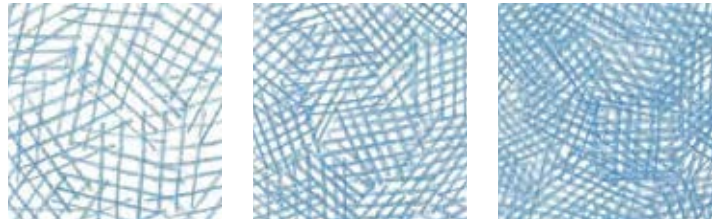
VARIED LINE Try varying the width and weight of the lines you create to add more texture and interest. These calligraphic lines can help create a feeling of dimension in your drawing.



STROKES AND TEXTURE You can imitate a number of different textures by creating patterns of dots and dashes on the paper. To create dense, even dots, try twisting the point of your pencil on the paper.

Hatching

The term *hatching* refers to creating a series of roughly parallel lines. The density of colour you create with hatch strokes depends on the weight of the lines you draw and how much space you leave between them. *Cross-hatching* is laying one set of hatched lines over another but in the opposite direction, producing a meshlike pattern. Hatch and cross-hatch strokes can both be used to fill in an almost solid area of colour, or they can be used to create texture, as shown at right.



CROSS-HATCHED SPACING Filling in space with cross hatch strokes in random directions creates the dense, haphazard texture shown above. For a smoother, more even texture, make cross hatch strokes in two directions only (left leaning and right leaning).

Handling the Pencil

Although there is no single "correct" method for holding the pencil, the way you do so will have a direct impact on the strokes you create. Some grips will allow you to press more firmly on the pencil, which will result in dark, dense strokes. Others hinder the amount of pressure you can apply, effectively

rendering your strokes lighter. Still others give you greater control over the pencil, allowing you to create fine details. Try each of the grips below, and choose those that are the most comfortable and create the effects you desire.



CONVENTIONAL GRIP For the most control, grasp the pencil about 1 - 1/2" from the tip. Hold it the same way you write, with the pencil resting firmly against your middle finger. This grip is perfect for smooth applications of colour, as well as for making hatch strokes and small, circular strokes. Try to relax and let the pencil glide across the page.



OVERHAND GRIP Guide the pencil by laying your index finger along the shaft. This is the best grip for strong applications of colour made with heavy pressure.

UNDERHAND GRIP When you cradle the pencil in your hand (as in either example shown above), you control it by applying pressure only with the thumb and index finger. This grip can produce a lighter line, but keep in mind that when you hold the pencil this way, your whole hand should move (not just your wrist and fingers).

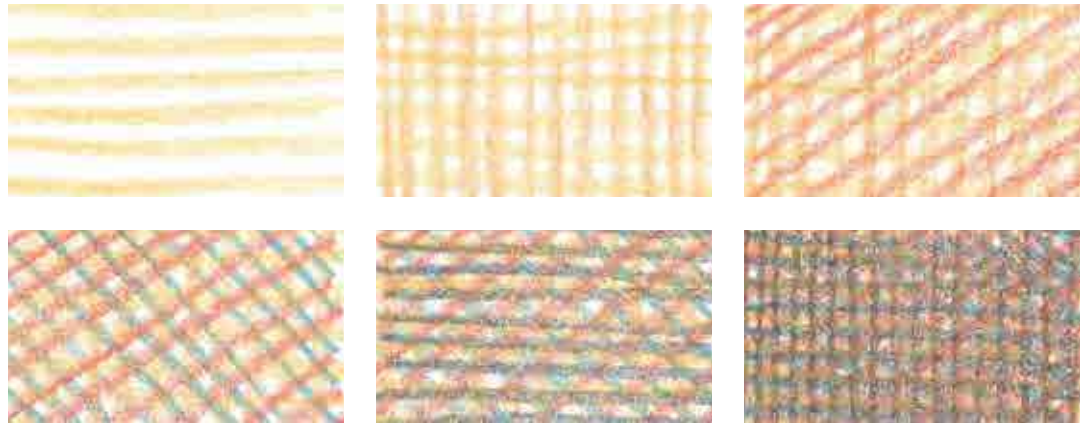
Layering and Blending

Because coloured pencils are translucent, artists use a transparent layering process to either build up colour or create new hues. This layering process is wonderful because it creates a much richer hue than you could ever achieve if you were using just

one pure colour. To deepen a colour, layer more of the same over it; to dull it, use its complement. If you want to blend your strokes together, you can also use a colourless blender, as shown at the bottom of the page.

LAYERING WITH HATCH STROKES

In the examples at right, yellow, orange, red, and blue were layered on top of one another with cross-hatch strokes to demonstrate one way of creating a new colour. To avoid getting a hue that's too dark, begin with the lightest colour and work up to the darkest. This way you can tell if the mix is getting too muddy or deep before it's too late.



BUILDING UP COLOUR Here is a simple still life rendered with layers of hatch strokes. The forms of the fruit were built up by layering different values of the same colour; then they were dulled a bit with a touch of their complements. Notice that the shadows under the fruit are blends of many different colours; they are never just gray or black.



COLOURLESS BLENDER This special marker dissolves the pigment, creating a smooth, solid colour. Apply it over the pigment, as shown here, or on the blank paper before you add colour.



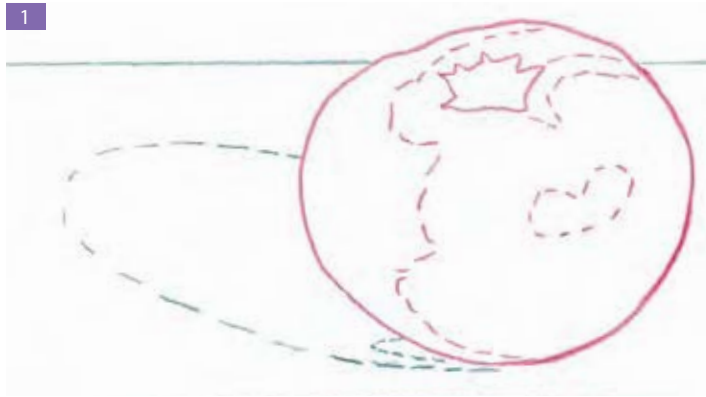
USING A COLOURLESS BLENDER The example at left shows a quick study created with coloured pencils. In the second version at right, a colourless blender was used to blend the pigments. Notice how much smoother the strokes appear after blending. The surface of the paper also becomes a little slick after using the blender, so any colours you add over the blended layer will glide easily on the page.



Burnishing

Burnishing (or opaque layering) is a blending technique that requires heavy pressure to meld two or more colours, which also flattens the tooth of the paper. Usually a heavy layer of white (or another light colour) is applied over darker colours to create a

smooth, shiny blend, as shown in the example below. Try not to press too hard on the underlayers of the area you intend to burnish; if you flatten the paper too soon, the resulting blend won't be as effective.



STEP ONE Begin with a line drawing in the *local* colour (the actual colour of the object) so the outline won't be visible when you're done. Press lightly so the outlines aren't impressed into the paper surface, creating dents. Here the solid lines indicate where hard edges will be, and the dashes or broken lines denote areas for soft edges and shadows.

STEP TWO As you fill in the outlines with layers of colour, keep the pencils sharp. Apply light to medium pressure as you slowly build colour from light to dark. Use short, controlled strokes for a smooth tone, gradually lessening the pressure at the edges to make them soft. Here the darkest areas are created with green, the complement of red.



STEP THREE Next layer the different values of red and green, using heavier pressure. Be sure to fill in any highlights with white; this will act as a sort of barrier against saturation from the other colours.

STEP FOUR Finish with a semi-sharp white pencil and circular strokes to burnish first the highlights and then the rest of the object. You may need to burnish over the same areas more than once to get an even blend.



EFFECTS OF BURNISHING Here various colours and techniques were used to burnish over the same red hue. At far left is the original, untouched colour. To the right of that is shown the effect of burnishing with white, with blue, and with yellow, in that order. At far right, a blending stump was used to burnish the colour. There are also colourless (without pigment) blending pencils available that many artists prefer—they are nontoxic and easy to use.

Special Effects and Techniques

As you're working in coloured pencil, you may sometimes need to go beyond the basics and use some specialized techniques and materials, like the ones shown here. For example, you may choose to use black paper to provide a dramatic

backdrop, lift off colour with tape to reveal highlights, or make impressed lines to create texture. There are literally hundreds of possible special techniques, so feel free to invent your own!



IMPRESSED LINE To resist colour with an impressed line, draw a design on tracing paper. Place it over your drawing paper, and trace over it firmly to leave an impression on the paper underneath. (You can also press lines directly into the paper with your fingernail or a stylus.) Then lightly shade over the impressions, using the side of the pencil to avoid filling in the lines completely.

USING STENCILS For a stylized pattern, cut out a stencil and draw the shape repeatedly on your paper. For the pattern above, randomly fill in the shapes with a variety of colours.

USING TRANSPARENT TAPE TO ERASE For soft highlights, such as the light line shown on the pencil at right, place transparent tape over the area. Then use a stylus to draw over the tape where you want to remove colour. Carefully lift off the tape; then repair the spots where too much colour was lifted. Try testing this on your paper before drawing, since some papers could be damaged by this technique. And if the tape removes too much colour, stick the tape to your clothing first (to remove some of the tack)



USING INK Using a fine-tipped, permanent marker is an interesting way to create dark values, as in this leaf. When you layer translucent pencil over the ink, the ink will show through, creating a darker value than you'd get with pencil alone. Just be sure to use a smudge-proof marker so the ink won't smear on your drawing paper.



MASKING WITH TAPE You can use artists' tape or masking tape to create clean lines and simple borders, as shown above. Just place the tape where you want it, apply colour over it, and then remove it to reveal clean lines underneath.

FROTTAGE Rubbing over a textured surface, like the leaf at right, with the side of a pencil is a technique called "frottage." This creates an impression of the object (and its texture) on your paper.





Watersoluble Pencils

Watersoluble, or water colour, pencils offer the same amount of control and detail as regular coloured pencils do, but they have the added versatility of being similar to painting tools as well. When you blend them with a brush and water, the artwork you create will have a softer and more painterly look. You can also use watercolour pencils to create a base coat or underpainting for your coloured pencil drawings.



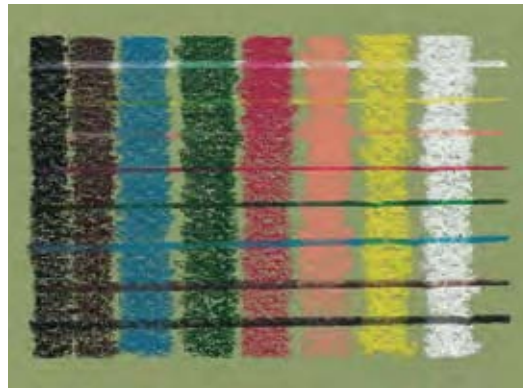
WATER SOLUBLE PENCIL You can blend water-soluble pencils with a wet brush (see example at top left) to create soft blends. This effect is also shown in the example above, in the sky, in the hills, and on the road. The rest of the scene was created with regular wax-based colored pencils.

Special Papers

You can also use any of a number of coloured grounds, multi-media panels, illustration boards, and specialty papers (such as velour, sandpaper, or mylar) for your coloured pencil drawings. Each type of support will give you a different result—some

offer more texture or provide an undercolour, and others are better suited for mixed-media projects. When choosing paper, make sure you select one of high quality, and test out the pencils and techniques you plan to use ahead of time.

COLOURED GROUNDS If you choose a coloured support that shares a dominant hue in your drawing, you can create harmony among the colours in your drawing and save a significant amount of time—the paper provides a medium value to build colour on (see example at far right). Make a test sheet first on the back of your paper (or on a scrap piece of paper, as shown near right) to see how the colours in your palette will be affected by the coloured ground you choose.



BLACK PAPER The contrast of light colours on black paper creates a sense of drama. Bright, colourful subjects appear even bolder over a dark ground. For the most brilliant hues, apply a layer of white before applying colour over it.



SANDED PAPER “Sanded paper” has a gritty quality to it that lends an interesting texture to coloured pencil art. The rough surface will sand off the point of your pencil, though, so make sure to keep a dust brush handy to sweep away the residue.



ROUGH TEXTURE Paper with a heavy tooth adds a rough texture to your work. Because the deep grain “catches” the pigment, you can get very rich, deep dark values.