

# Oil Pastel Introduction

Have you ever wanted to do some drawing in pastel, but you have never known what to buy or where to start? Well fear no more and read on...

Pastels are a wonderful medium to work in as you get bright, brilliant colors and an easy flowing feel to your drawings. The speed with which you can draw is also an excellent plus as you can make quick, yet detailed, drawing when outdoors. You then not only have a dimensional drawing of the scene to work from back at home, but you also have a reasonably accurate color reference to work from.

Let's first take a look at the average bag of tricks a pastel artist uses.





## Equipment used for pastel drawing

As you can see there are quite a few items, but they are all small. Popping everything, except the paper, into a small box is no problem. Starting from the top left we have the following items

A = Cloth for cleaning up

B = Fixative spray to fix the drawing when needed

C = Sponge for special effects

D = Toilet Paper for special effects

E = Set of Soft Pastels

F = Set of Hard Pastels

G = Sand Paper for textured / layered drawings

H = Bread for erasing mistakes

I = Surgical Gloves to protect sensitive skin

J = Charcoal Sticks for preliminary drawing

K = Soft Eraser for special effects

L = Ear buds for blending small areas

M = Craft Knife for special effects and trimming paper to size

N = Pastel Stick Holder

O = Pastel Paper (Smooth)

P = Pastel Paper (Rough)

Q = Brushes for blending and special effects

Most of these items can be bought from your local art supplier, the gloves from your chemist (drug store), the rest should be lying around the house already.

## What are pastels?

Pastels are made of pure pigment held together with a binder. You get three types of pastels – Hard, Soft and Oil. The difference between the three is only the binder, the pigment stays the same. With Soft pastels a water based binder is used to hold the pigment together. Hard pastels also have a water based binder, but more binder is added making them harder than soft pastels. Oil pastels have an oil based binder. This tutorial will only deal with Hard and Soft pastels as they are used together. Oil pastels will be shown in another lesson. Hard pastels are used for preliminary blocking in, Soft pastels are used for detail work.

You can tell the difference between the three by looking at them and by feeling them. Soft pastels feels and looks like regular black board chalk – soft with a round shape. Hard pastels are shaped square and are pretty hard and shiny. Oil pastels feel more like children's wax crayons and are also shaped round.

## How to choose a set of pastels.

There are many different sets of pastels available on the market, deciding which to choose is really quite easy. Pastels don't really like to be blended as the colors lose their vibrancy. You would then generally buy the biggest set you can afford, with the most amount of colors, to minimize the amount of blending you need to do.

Another point to look out for is the colors that have been grouped together in the various sets. Some sets have been put together with colors that would be used in a landscape, some are grouped for portraits, others for seascapes, some are general colors, etc. Buy a set with a color grouping to suit your subject taste.

## What paper to choose.

Pastels need a surface to grip onto, regular writing paper is too smooth to draw on. The roughness of the paper is called the paper's 'tooth'. Always use paper that has been manufactured for pastel work as you are then sure that the oil content and pH (acidity) of the paper is correct. Pastel papers are manufactured in different ways to give varying degrees of tooth and texture. Some are embossed, others have used less refined pulp which gives each paper it's own distinctive feel. The more tooth the paper has, the more you can layer and rework your drawings. One of the few papers which is not manufactured for pastel work, but lets you build up many layers, that I can recommend is regular sand paper. Experiment with papers which have varying tooth and textures until you find the ones you like best.

## Safety

Although there aren't really any dangers in using pastels, the powder of the pastels dries out the skin and the texture of the paper can be rough on your skin. If you use surgical gloves when working with pastels, you won't have this problem and you have the added bonus of your hands staying clean too. Do, however, avoid inhaling the pastel dust as this can be dangerous.

## Techniques

Great, we have our pastels and everything else we need, now we can start to look at some techniques we use in creating our masterpieces.

## Shading with Oil Pastels



Shading with Pastels

Shading is probably the most basic technique we will be using. There are a few ways to achieve our blending. You can lay down the colors you want to blend next to each other, then use your hands to blend them together, or you can use a soft hair brush too. The problem with blending in this way is that the colors seem to lose their vibrancy when you rub over them. There are two things we can do to overcome this. The first is to blend the colors with your hands or brush, then gently rub over them with the original colors to leave a thin vibrant layer on top of the blended colors. This works pretty well, but there is a better way.

Let's say we want to blend from left to right. Lay in the first color, e.g., left hand side by using the length of the pastel stick. Start from the left and work your way right. Block in to past the area where the two colors will merge. Now start with the other color, from right to left. When you get to the area where the two colors will merge, press lighter and lighter until the stick isn't touching the paper anymore. You may have to repeat the blending of the second color once or twice, cleaning the pastel on the cloth after each pass. You now have a perfect blending with bright vibrant colors throughout. Here is a practical example of blending :



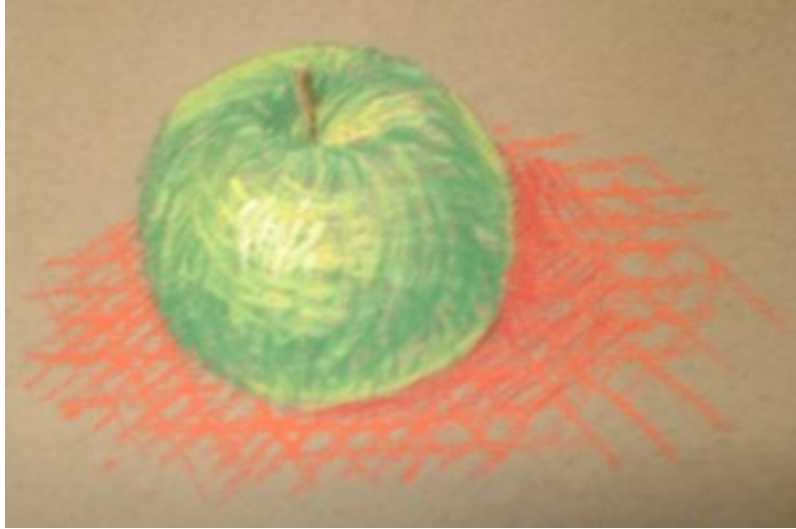
## Cross Hatching with Oil Pastels

Cross hatching is a striking method of optically blending colors together, yet many artists battle with this technique. The idea is that you lay down lines of color in different directions. The colors will then blend together when you stand back. The problem is that artists don't know which direction to let the lines run in. This is actually easy to work out and only takes a drawing or two to get the hang of it.

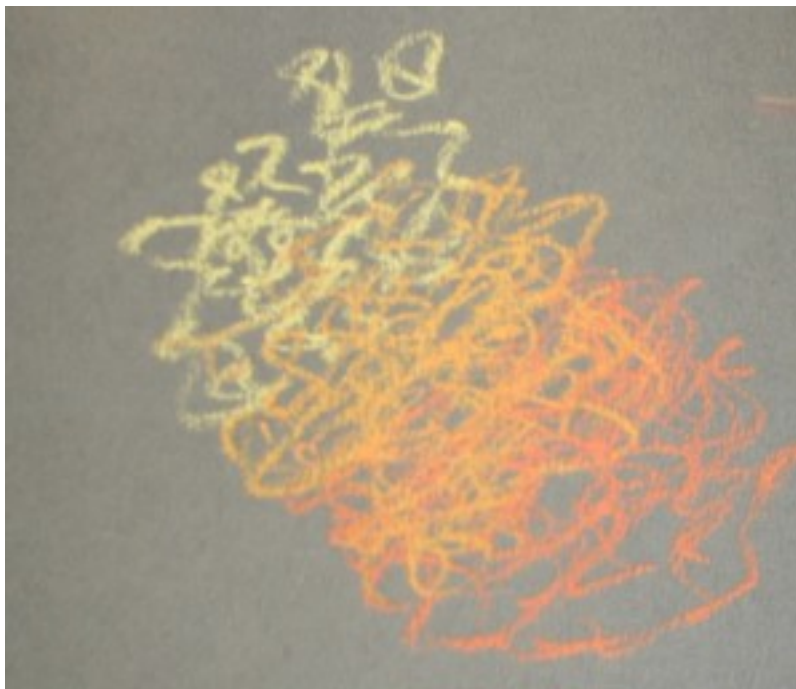


Cross hatching directions: Take a look at the picture above. Here you can see that the lines follow the curve of the apple from top to bottom and left to right. Each surface has two natural directions that it runs in. In the light green lines you can see how these line's angles gradually change as they move from straight in the center to the same curve as the outside of the apple. The same happens with the dark green lines – they change from a tight circle around the top of the apple to a bigger circle around the outside. Practice 'seeing' these lines when you look at objects and you will soon enjoy drawing cross hatched drawings

To shade using cross hatching, you simply reduce to number of lines of the one color and increase the amount of lines of the other color. Here is the completed apple :



## Scumbling with Oil Pastels



Scumbling close-up

Geek what a funny word! It is actually a pretty handy technique to learn though, especially when working with natural objects and scenes like landscapes. Anybody can scumble, all you do is scribble in a random fashion on the paper. In the picture above you can see how I have scumbled three colors next to each other, overlapping each other to form a shading. The big trick with scumbling is to scribble in such a way that you don't form a visible pattern.



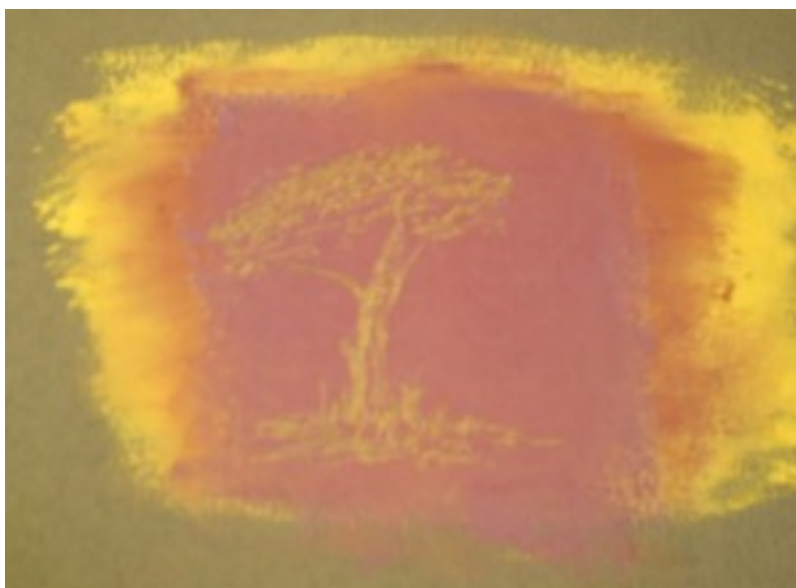
Here is a palm tree scene drawn on location using only the scumbling technique.



Palm trees drawn using the scumbling technique

## Scratching, Oil Pastels

Often you would like to add some fine detail to your drawings. One way to do this is to trim the stick using your knife so that you get a sharp point. Another way is to use the knife and scratch in some fine detail. You can even do entire drawings using only scratching. Below is an example of scratching where I have laid down two contrasting colors and scratched out the image. The amazing thing about this technique is that the bottom color shines through and not the paper color as one would expect. This means that you need to lay down the color you want to show through before the main drawing is done. Here is a tree done in this way:



Tree drawn using the scratching technique: Here you can see how I have scratched in the birds and some grass in a section of one of my drawings. In this drawing I didn't lay down a special color at the bottom first so you have the dark paper showing through making the birds appear darker.



Stippling with Oil Pastels



Stippling with pastels

Stippling is not as fancy as it sounds, but the effects are great. Dot the pastel down onto the paper as though you are making a full stop. This gives you rocks and leaves, etc.

Here is a thumbnail landscape with the rocks added with stippling. See if you can recognize any other techniques we have discussed.



Landscape drawn with pastels

# Oil Pastel Worksheet

Remember if you get stuck or don't know how to do one of the numbers ask someone around you for help, or look at the example on the board.

1. In the boxes below create a value scale.

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2. In the boxes below take 2 primary colors and blend in the middle box to create a secondary color.

Primary #1	Blend	Primary #2

3. In the boxes below choose one color to create a tint and shade

Color Choice	Create a tint (add white)

Color Choice	Create a Shade (add black)

4. In the boxes below choose a primary and secondary color and blend them together to create an intermediate/tertiary color.

<b>Primary</b>	<b>Intermediate/tertiary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>

5. In the boxes below experiment with layering colors. You may add black & white but do not count as layer colors.

<b>2 colors</b>	<b>3 Colors</b>	<b>4 Colors</b>

6. In the boxes below experiment with technique listed above box . .

<b>Add Baby oil to colors</b>	<b>Blend colors with blending tools</b>	<b>Add the complement to a color</b>

7. In the space below using the pastels draw and shade the basic forms: cone, cube, cylinder sphere. Utilize what you know to make it look as realistic as you can.