

Getting Started with Colored Pencils

What You Need to Buy

by Carrie L. Lewis

Introduction

Do you know what you need to get started drawing?

I used to think I had to have all the best supplies in order to start drawing. Actually, I think that way about a lot of things, and started a lot of things late because of that notion.

While you *can* get all the best of everything before you start drawing, you don't need to.

In fact, all you really need is a pencil, paper, and a sharpener.

But that still leaves a lot of choices, doesn't it? Just look at all the different types of pencils and papers. Which one is best?

Don't Despair!

The following list includes the most basic basics for pencils, paper, and a few other tools. The list is set up so you can print it in a couple of pages and take it with you. I hope you find it helpful.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or for further explanations.

As always, best wishes and happy penciling,

Carrie

Basic Materials and Supplies

Drawing Paper

You don't need expensive drawing paper. An inexpensive sketch pad is perfectly acceptable. I recommend a spiral bound sketch pad because the pages can be folded back and the pad will lie flat.

Drawing pads come in a variety of sizes. 8x10 to 11x14 is your best option. The pages are large enough to let you draw more complex things, but also small enough to allow you finish things quickly.

6x9 inch drawing pads are ideal for sketching, and can be carried in a handbag, briefcase, or large pocket. I keep one in my field kit!

Strathmore makes quality drawing pads at reasonable prices that are available in many art or craft stores, as well as online.

Pencils

You don't need a full set of colored pencils to make good drawings. Most smaller sets contain enough colors to practice blending, layering, shading, and other basic techniques.

Most brands are available in sets of 12, 24, and 72. Some are available in sets of 36 and 48. If you're just getting started, I suggest a 24- or 36-pencil set to begin with.

Prismacolor and Derwent pencils are available in many art supply and craft stores. Prismacolor Premier and Derwent Coloursoft, Academy, and Procolor are all artist quality pencils.

Student and scholar grade pencils are also available almost everywhere you find school supplies, and they are a decent way to get started with colored pencil, but I don't recommend them. They simply don't perform quite as well as artist quality pencils, though you can learn basic techniques with them.

Sharpeners

A good sharpener is a must. Whether you use a hand held sharpener or opt for a battery operated or mechanical sharpener, find one that suits your working style and your budget.

Optional Supplies & Tools

You don't need these things to get started with colored pencil, but they are handy to have. If you're not sure about colored pencil, save this page of items until you are sure.

If you're pretty sure you want to give some time and attention to learning more advanced colored pencil techniques, then consider these items, too.

Handi-Tak/Sticky Stuff/Blu-Tack

Its stickiness and pliability make it ideal for colored pencil work. To use it, roll or work a small piece in the palm of your hand or between your hands to warm it up. Once it's warm, you can shape it however you need to lift small amounts of color or large areas of color. The best part? It's self cleaning. Just stretch it out and roll it again as often as you need to remove the color you've lifted. One caution—if you store it with your pencils, it will pick up color from the pencils. Store it in a separate container or wrap it in plastic to keep it clean.

Click Eraser

These pencil-like tools use an eraser “filler” that fits into a case you hold like a pencil. Click erasers are available in different hardnesses. I prefer a fairly hard eraser, which I use in small areas and/or for altering heavy applications of color.

Electric Eraser

If you can afford it, an electric drafting eraser is an excellent tool. Electric erasers are the best for removing the most amount of color, but you will have to exercise caution so you don't damage the paper surface.

Drafting Brush

A drafting brush (or any soft brush, so long as it's clean) is ideal for sweeping away pencil or eraser crumbs.