Introduction to Drawing Workshop

Workshop Notes
Identify and select tools and materials required for the production of drawings
Safe drawing practice
Setting up your drawing space

Practical Exercises
Drawing simple shapes on various papers with a variety of pencils

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MATERIALS AND WORKSPACE

Whether you are working in a dedicated studio at home, a hired studio space, a workplace or in a small space you have set aside at home, you need to keep an organised and safe working environment. There are several reasons for this. The first and most obvious is safety. At the completion of these elements you should be able to identify your work space, set it up safely and store and be able to identify how to care for your tools for drawing.

There are other reasons for have an organised workspace, such as ease of access. When you want to get on with a drawing the last thing you need hindering you from getting on with it is trying to find a particular piece of equipment. Storing equipment properly will also lengthen their life and keep them supplying you with the best opportunity to do your best work. You can not produce quality with poorly maintained tools.

To the left you will see some samples of work space tools and materials for both working on a table top for ease of portability or lack of space, as well as for a more dedicated work space such as a studio.

In every case you will see that the easels and surfaces for drawing are adjustable so that a safe seating posture can be maintained. The storage devices can be closed off and if they can be locked as well that is preferable.

These storage devices allow for pencils and brushes to be stored flat. Contrary to popular belief your pencils and brushes are best stored laying FLAT and not up ended in a jar or cylinder. The plastic trays used for cutlery in a kitchen drawer are very good for this. They can be placed in a drawer near your work space and different grades of pencils kept in their own space. The small spot in the front is ideal for erasers or blades for sharpening.

Larger drawers or containers can be used for storing paper, card and board. These are best kept in a stable environment out of light and away from moisture. Paper will curl and deteriorate if not stored properly.

Storing your paper will also help keep it dust free and clean. Good quality paper is expensive and worth taking care of.

For helping to keep your tools clean a plastic bin of spare soft rags is useful. I use old singlets, pyjamas, sheets and flannel shirts. Blades can be cleaned with methylated spirits, or anything you would use to clean a regular knife. Make sure that you seal the bottle and store it and any rag you may use out of reach of children. It is best used in a well ventilated area.
WORKSPACE EASEL/TABLE SET UP

Pictured below are samples of how you need to approach setting up your seating for your workspace.

Note the posture of the figure below. The figure on the left is in the incorrect position for drawing. It is a poor position for their health and also for ability to draw from a point where they can see both what they are doing and the object they are drawing.

INCORRECT POSTURE

CORRECT POSTURE

Drafting tables and easels are set up to be adjustable. This allows for the artist to place the angle at the ideal position to help prevent neck and back strain.

Note also that the chair has foot rails to help keep strain off the knees and lower back. It also has lumbar support and is adjustable to suit the person using it.

The floor area is clean and clear of obstacles and the area is well lit.

Lighting most often recommended for artists is 5000K which is also called “daylight”. It is closest to a neutral light, neither too warm (yellow) or cool (blue or green). When producing coloured artworks having a neutral light will help you select, mix and use the correct colours for your work.
CARE OF YOUR MATERIALS AND TOOLS

A good workman always takes care of their tools. Many of us may remember seeing a garage or workshed with a peg board marked out with where every tool is to go. Everything in it’s place, cleaned and ready to be used.

Even gardening programs now spend time teaching people how to take care of their gardening tools to get the best use out of them for the longest amount of time.

It is no different for artists. Materials and tools can be expensive and a good pencil, eraser or brush will last you many years if cleaned at the end of each use and carefully stored.

I have an eraser that I bought over thirty years ago and blades from about the same time, as well as several brushes.

PENCILS

1. Have a flat storage place for pencils. Do not pile too many of them in together on top of each other, lay them in the same direction and if the lead is worn down give them a sharpen before you put them away. Make sure you do the sharpening over a rubbish bin and keep the dust and shavings well away from your work and storage area. Do not breath in the dust.

2. If you have a dedicated studio and can safely leave your materials out for your next session, make sure that pencils are left well away from the edge of your table and lying flat.

3. Pencils for drawing are best sharpened with a blade not a regular pencil sharpener, which is OK for writing with a pencil but not drawing. A blade allows for your to shape the lead and have more opportunity to experiment with the different effects you can get.

4. Make sure the blade for sharpening is clean and sharp. Some can be broken off in stages as they become blunt, or may need replacing. You will get several uses from a blade so clean them after each use with a soft rag.

ERASERS

1. Keep your eraser clean. It is easy to transfer dust from an eraser to areas of a drawing by not cleaning in between uses. Wiping with a clean damp cloth should keep your eraser clean. Before storing after each use, give your eraser a wipe so it is ready for the next use.

2. Store your erasers separately to your pencils and blades. This will also help to keep them clean.

BLADES

1. Store your blades with the cutting edge retracted if it allows for it.

2. Store blades in their own area away from pencils and erasers. Place them with all the sharp ends pointing the same direction. If the blade is not retractable an old eraser can be used to push the blade into as protection when picking it up out of storage.

3. Clean your blades after each session and before storing. They will last longer and be easier and safer to use. This only requires a quick wipe on most occasions.

CHEMICALS

1. Store all chemicals in a safe place. They need to be out of the reach of children, using childproof locks if necessary. Read the storage and user instructions carefully for any solvent or cleaner you intend to use in the studio. Talking to your art supplier will also help you in understanding how to use and store these materials. Make sure you put that caps on properly, many chemicals evaporate and some dry out. You will get longer and more use from them if you store them properly.

2. Make sure that when you are using chemicals or sprays that the area is well ventilated. Read the instructions for every chemical or spray before you use them. Another reason for this is that you or others in the studio may be allergic to them. This also needs to be checked before you use any of these in the studio. If you are sharing studio space talk to everyone before you use a chemical or spray. (for example some people are allergic to fumes from Methylated Spirit)
PAPER

Selecting your materials will depend on what your drawing subject is and the overall look you want to achieve in your drawing.

There are MANY different types and brands of papers and pencils out there and I won’t touch on all of them. In the end, the paper you choose is totally up to you. The best advice I can give is to try them yourself and see if they are to your liking.

When we have completed this element you will be able to discern differences between types of papers and brand names of paper and different types of lead pencils.

On a personal note; I didn’t know the differences when I first started and I am still learning as I experiment with various mediums and talk to my art supplier about which paper may be more suitable for what I am trying to achieve, so I encourage you to talk to your art supplier and research.

TIPS ON CHOOSING PAPERS

Paper is made from fibers pressed into sheets. The more expensive paper will be 100% rag fibers, cotton or linen; less expensive are only part rag, and part chemically treated wood pulp. Paper can also have a clay content.

There are three common types of pressed paper, hot-press, cold-press and rough.

Hot press paper has a smoother finish and comes in various weights. Smooth paper will allow fine detail work as well as softer blending, but doesn’t have enough grain or ‘tooth’ to hold pastels, colored chalks or charcoal.

Cold-press and rough paper have a coarser finish. Papers with more grain, or “tooth” will give you darker values because they will hold more graphite, and are ideal for pastel and charcoal drawings.

The paper’s weight will generally determine its thickness and density. Using a heavier 300gsm weight or more will usually allow more tolerance for repeated erasing and will accept some wash work without buckling the paper. Paper we use daily in laser printers is usually around 80gsm in weight a lot less than 300gsm.

Using an acid-free archival paper will ensure your drawings will withstand the test of time.

Do not use your good paper for sketching out your ideas. Use newsprint or lesser grade drawing pads for this. Reserve your good paper for your final drawings.

PAPER TYPES

1 Smooth Papers:
Often called hot-pressed paper. Great for ink and graphite drawings. Provides good surface for contrasts, light and shade effects. Great paper for drawing portraits.

2 Fine Grain Paper:
Suitable for graphite, wax and colored pencils. Works well for smoothness of shading and tonal blending.

3 Medium Grain Paper:
Suitable for pastels, colored chalk, crayon and washes such as watercolor and inks.

4 Course Grain Paper:
Mostly used for watercolor work. Detailed areas are difficult to achieve on this surface.

IMPORTANT MEANING OF TERMS REGARDING PAPER

Acid Free (Neutral pH):
Papers that are without acid in the pulp. Acid free papers have a pH of 7.0. If prepared properly, papers made from any fiber can be acid free. PH levels can go from 1.0 to 14.0, very acidic to very alkaline. The best number to look for is in the middle (neutral).

Archival Paper:
A paper with long-standing qualities, acid free, lignin (material commonly in plants) free, usually with good color retention.

Cold Pressed:
A paper surface with slight texture produced by pressing the finished sheet between cold cylinders.

GSM - Grams per square metre:
The gram weight of a hypothetical square metre of a particular type of paper, a good comparative measure because it does not vary with sheet size. It tells you the “weight” or thickness of the paper.
Hot Pressed:
A paper surface that is smooth, produced by pressing a finished sheet through hot cylinders.

Lightfast:
The speed at which a pigment or colored paper fades in sunlight. This will tell you whether the paper will hold its colour and that of the drawing over time.

pH:
pH is a measure of the concentration of hydrogen ions in a solution. The pH scale runs from 0 to 14 and each number indicates a ten fold increase. Seven is pH neutral: numbers below 7 indicate increasing acidity, with 1 being the most acid. Numbers above 7 indicate increased alkalinity. Paper with a pH below 5 is considered highly acidic.

Rice Paper:
Commonly used to describe Oriental papers. There are, however no papers made from rice, although rice starch was traditionally used to size papers made of mulberry plant.

Rough:
A heavily textured paper surface produced by placing wet sheets of paper against textured blankets or air drying (or both).

Tooth:
A very slight surface texture of paper (or canvas) preferred for dry media such as charcoal and pastel.

Watermark:
The translucent design or name easily visible when a sheet is held to the light. A design is sewn onto the papermaking screen with raised wire. When the sheet is formed, the pulp settles in a thinner layer over the wire design. It usually shows the paper manufacturer's name or logo.

**PAPER BRANDS**

**Ingres Paper**
Ingres paper has a ribbed or woven laid finish and has been around for over a 100 years. A medium weight paper, with some tooth, excellent for charcoal, Conte pastels, good for ink and graphite.

Heavier weight Ingres was one of Van Gogh's favourite papers for watercolours. Available in many colours and weights, Ingres is made by many manufacturers.

**Canson Colored Papers (Mi-Tientes):**
A brand-name paper. Mi-Tientes has a 65% rag content, it is very strong and allowing repeated reworking in a variety of media. The Mi-Tientes sheet has two distinct surface textures, one side smooth and the other grainy, providing a good texture for charcoal, pastels, coloured pencil and Conte crayons. Because the colour goes all the way through the paper, you don't have to worry about rubbing it off. The colour is also lightfast, to ensure the test of time.

**Arches Paper**
A brand name paper. An all round good paper that has a smooth and rough side. Using the smooth side will give you the ability to create fine detail work as well as holding a moderate amount of graphite to render some darker values. The coarser side is suitable for watercolour, pastel, charcoal and Conte. 300gsm will accept a wash without excessive buckling.

**COMMON BRANDS AVAILABLE IN AUSTRALIA**
Arches, Canson, Fabriano, Colourfix
PENCILS

Selecting the right pencils will also depend on what your drawing subject is and the overall look you want to achieve in your drawing.

Early pencils were made using cut pieces of raw graphite dug from the earth. The hardness or softness of these pencils was dependent on the quality or purity of the graphite, and so was difficult - or impossible - to control. Different methods of refining and mixing of graphite were experimented with over the years, but it was not until about 1795 that a Frenchman, Nicolas-Jacques Conté, developed a process for making pencil leads that is still in use today.

If any of you have done pastel drawing the Conté name will be familiar. They are the name of artists’ pastels that are wide use today, very good quality, beautiful colours and yes I do use them!

The process, known as the Conté Process, involves the mixing of finely powdered graphite with finely ground clay particles and shaping and baking the mixture. By controlling the ratio of clay to graphite, varying degrees of hardness can be obtained, as well as fairly consistent and reproducible quality from batch to batch.

Many people are not aware that pencils come in a far wider variety that the old HB. They have been manufactured for many years and are still being added to with such inventions as pastel pencils which can be used long with pastels for great finish, and water colour pencils which can be wet down to create a water colour painting effect and used with water colour paint.

PENCIL VARIETIES

We are going to look at what is commonly called lead pencils which are in reality made up of mostly graphite mixed with clay.

Around the beginning of the twentieth Century, a combination letter-number system was established and was in use by nearly all European pencil makers, and was also used for some American-made pencils. English pencil makers began using a letter designation for varying hardness. Softer leads were designated with ‘B’ (for black), harder leads with ‘H’ (for hard). This system is still in use today, and provides for a wide range of grades, usually consisting of the following series:

For Example: Hardest 9H, 8H, 6H, 4H 2H, H, HB, B, 2B, 4B, 6B, 8B, 9B Softest
9H is the hardest, 9B is the softest.
9H-2H more commonly used for drafting/technical/plans, 2H-9B for artists.

The common HB grade pencil in the middle of the range, is considered to be the preferred grade for general purpose writing. Harder pencils are most often used for drafting purposes, while softer grades are usually preferred by artists.

You may end up with a basic set of pencils for various uses, which is what I have. Drawing in the outlines for a painting may suit a harder and lighter lead such as a HB. You may wish to do a whole drawing in pencil. You could start with a 6B for your darkest areas and work your way through to a HB for the details and lightest areas. Which pencil you choose and how you use it is up to you and your style.

Note though that certain pencils will suit some papers better than others. A very hard lead on a very grainy and soft paper will possibly tear into the surface so you need to experiment and consult with your art supplier.

PENCIL MANUFACTURERS

A quick look on the web and you will see various manufacturers of black or graphite and coloured pencils. Many are only suitable for students or kids so it is important to find artist quality if you are serious about the final results or archiving your drawings.

CONTÉ

Sketching pencils come in three basic colours. Black, Sepia and white. They can handle blending, will go on coloured paper nicely and are suitable for landscapes through to portraits.

DERWENT

Many people’s favourite, I have used them for many years. The colours available or many and vibrant and you can get a finish not too different to a good pastel drawing with them.
FABER CASTELL
Faber-Castell pencils have a reputation for excellent quality, and are considered by most colored pencil artists to be one of the very best brands.

PRISMA COLOUR
These artists’ quality coloured pencils are ideal for every level of expertise.
Created with high grade pigments for rich colour laydown, these coloured pencils are designed for superior blending and shading.

These are only a sampling of manufacturers but I have used most of these or have knowledge of them. Make sure when you are looking for and purchasing pencils (or indeed pastels or any other art materials) that you check for artists’ quality. They may come in more than one grade from lower to highest quality, try to get the best you can afford. Cost cutting on materials will only give you inferior results and frustration in trying to achieve a good result in your drawing.

SHARPENERS
Many people use standard pencil sharpeners for sharpening their pencils, and I have done so in certain circumstances. It is however, not the only way to sharpen a lead or even a coloured pencil.

For one thing you are restricting the various ways you can use it. A good scalpel or a blade can be used to bevel the edge of the lead and give some interesting finishes when drawing. Sharpening to a point can restrict the uses of the pencil.

If you can, try purchasing a blade or scalpel from your art supplier and experiment (carefully, as scalpel blades are VERY SHARP) with the various ways you can shape the lead and what sort of effects you can get from them. This is especially the case with softer leads.

Remember that having safe shoes on when using these is very important. These sharp instruments can do a lot of damage to human skin.

ERASERS
As with any tool used by you it is important to test drive them for awhile to get used to them as different erasers work in different ways. Here are a couple which I have used regularly over the years and have found very useful.

KNEADABLE ERASER (ALSO CALLED KNEADED ERASERS)
The kneaded eraser is the primary type of eraser that most graphite/charcoal artists use. It picks up the graphite without smearing or damaging the paper. It can be moulded to various shapes to use in conjunction with drawing to get blends and various affects in your art as well as for erasing.

DUST FREE
Best when used on a sturdy, smooth paper. It is very useful for pencil, charcoal and pastel. If used gently it can be used to help soften and blend colours and shades.
LINE DRAWING TECHNIQUES

curved hatching
curved cross-hatching

TONAL DRAWING TECHNIQUES

TRY BOTH METHODS FOR THE ONE SUBJECT
9H-2H leads are commonly used by draftsmen and architects as they have a hard lead for fine detail. 2H-HB can be used by artists for line drawings as they do not require shading. Softer leads, for example 2B-9B, may be applied to give the impression of a thicker line or darker area but are at their best when used for tonal drawings. When you have experimented with several pencils for a while you will discover the ones that best suit your drawing style and technique.

Try this drawing on a sample of hot press paper and a sample of cold press paper.
Much of drawing is measuring.
Look at your subject and notice what is parallel what lines up with other things, what basic shapes can be used to help make up your subject. The average human body can be divided into eight segments. The human head on average has the eye in the middle, so the head can be divided in a grid to help get a realistic look. These building blocks can help to achieve a proportional and realistic drawing.
TONAL DRAWING
DRAW A BALL

TONAL RANGE FROM LIGHT TO DARK

HOLDING YOUR PENCIL

TONAL BALL IMAGE

DIRECTION OF LIGHT
(LIGHT SOURCE)

REFLECTED LIGHT

HIGHLIGHT

SHADED AREA

SHADOW FROM THE BALL

Try this drawing on a sample of hot press paper and a sample of cold press paper.