

Colored Pencil Quick Start Guide

Follow the checklist to get started now!

✓ Photo

Pick a reference photo. Don't overthink it! Just pick a simple still life from what you have around the house. A piece of fruit or your pet. Anything. Need inspiration? Search on [Pinterest](#) for the subject you're wanting to draw and pin to your private board! OR you can always grab a free (and royalty free) photo from online.

Need more help finding images? [Here is a great resource listing over 50 sites offering free images, fonts and icons.](#)

✓ 4 Pencils

Choose just 4 pencils. If you're drawing purple grapes, then pick a good purple color and the opposite color, like yellow. Next you'll need a color for shadows and one for highlights. So pick white for highlights and use a good darker neutral tone for shadows. Use a color wheel or go online. [Here is a good resource to use.](#) It doesn't matter that much right now- just make the choice. You can learn color theory later as you progress.

Maybe you need help narrowing down the selection for that perfect blue to match the reference? Here's a tip; Pick about 5 to 10 blue pencil colors and then test on a separate piece of paper and pick the one you like the best.

✓ Eraser

Just use a kneaded eraser and maybe some magic tape to get started right away. Let's keep this simple!

✓ *Test Swatching*

It's the fastest and most effective way to figure out the right color combination! Here is a video of me testing for skin colors on a recent commission piece: [test swatching video](#)

✓ *Paper*

You will never find the perfect paper. It doesn't exist! Granted there are some papers with maybe perceived advantages over others, but just pick one and go with it! Remember to always have a test sheet of paper handy to test blending the colors you're using and always label your test swatches. This will take a lot of the guesswork out of your drawing. I [wrote about my goto paper here](#) and I recorded a podcast on [paper for colored pencil](#) here! Enjoy!

✓ *Keep Going!*

Don't stop when you hit a roadblock in your drawing process. Keep Going! Especially when you don't know what to do next- take the time to figure it out. If you're paralyzed with being stuck then reach out to a fellow artist that can provide some constructive help. Whatever you do, stay on task and finish this drawing! You learn a lot about the drawing process by moving forward through difficulty. You can do it!

✓ *Sign and Date it!*

Add your signature to the bottom (even if you don't feel like it) and put a date on it. You will be glad you did, because the next one is going to be even better! You will look back after a couple of months or so and wonder how you ever came from these modest beginnings.