Watercolour Pencils

Did you know that watercolour pencils are an inexpensive way to learn to use watercolour in your artwork? This guide will teach you the basics for getting the most out of watercolour pencils. We will cover direct and indirect methods of applying colour, wet and dry methods of applying colour, using the pencils with stamped images, and tips and techniques for adding variety to artwork.

Getting Started:

Make a colour chart by colouring swatches of each watercolour pencil in small squares then blending them with water, preferably on watercolour paper. Label each colour with the name of the pencil. Use this chart when you want to see what the colours look like on paper at a quick glance. (Find a blank chart for your use at the end of this guide.)

Technique: Hold the pencil perpendicular to your paper, in order to use the side of the colour core rather than the tip. Colour one square per pencil, beginning on one side of the square with very light pressure, achieving a light tone of the colour. Work your way to the other side of the square, gradually applying more pressure, and achieving a darker tone of the same colour. Do this with all of the colour pencils, one colour per square. With a medium round waterbrush, apply water to the pencilled squares, from light to dark.

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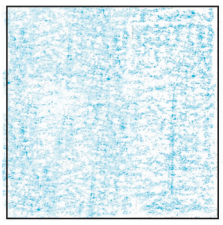
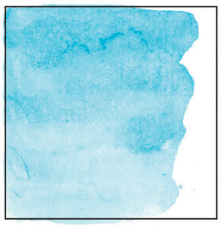
Methods

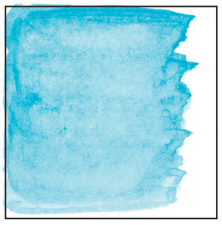
There are three basic ways to use watercolour pencils: dry, wet, and wet-on-wet. Draw and label four squares, preferably on watercolour paper, and try each of the methods as explained below. One of the methods will require two squares. (Find a blank chart for your use at the end of this guide.)



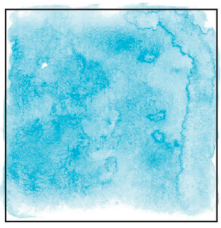
Dry Method



Wet Method



Wet Method



Wet-on-Wet Method

1. **Dry Method**. Apply colour directly to the project with the flat side of the pencil's colour core. Do not add water.

2. **Wet Method**. Wet the colour before adding it to your project. There are two ways of doing this. The first is by scribbling a bit of strong colour on a scratch piece of watercolour paper, then pick it up with a waterbrush for applying onto your project. The second way is by dabbing the wet bristles of a waterbrush directly onto the tip of the pencil to pick up the colour. Try both of these methods, one per square.

3. **Wet-on-Wet Method**. This method requires that you wet both the paper and the watercolour pencil before applying the colour to your project. Wet the inside of the last square with clean water, then add wet colour to the middle. Watch as the colour spreads out into the wet area.

Tips:

1. **Use a smooth watercolour paper** or cardstock.

2. **Test colours first**. Colours look different when wet.

3. **When colouring in images directly** (no water) use a small circular motion with the pencil to avoid creating harsh lines. (Watercolour pencils do not erase easily.)

4. **If you use straight lines to colour**, agitate the waterbrush as you paint over them to help the lines disappear.

5. **Layer colours** to create more vibrant and realistic shading.

6. When dry colouring (no water at all), **Artic White may be coloured on top of another colour** to even out the colouring. This does lighten the shade, but also acts like burnisher.

7. **Wet the pencil tip** for a more solid and vibrant colour.

8. **When blending, match pressure with sharpness**. The sharper you pencil is, the lighter the pressure you should apply when colouring. Using too much pressure with a sharp pencil could break the tip.

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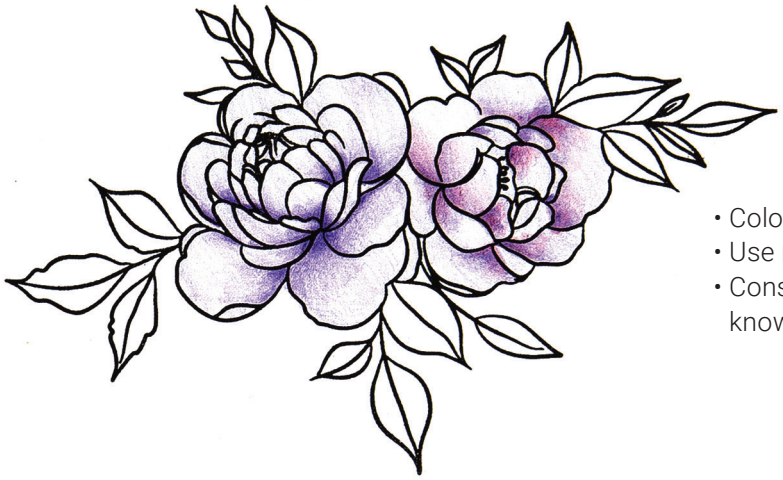
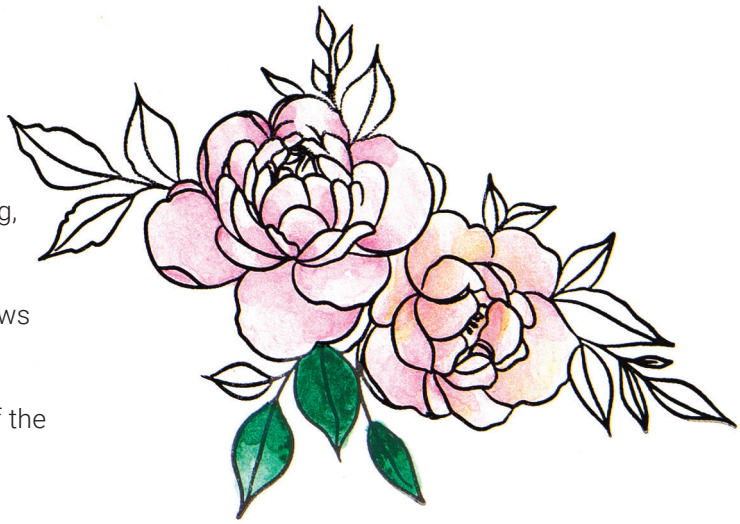
Dry Pencils



- Colour lightly at first, leaving shading for later
- Use multiple colours to create depth
- Consider where your source of light is coming from to know where the darker parts should be in your image

Wet Pencils

- Dry colour your image first, including shading, before adding water
- With a waterbrush, add water to the lightest areas and pull into the darker shadows
- Wipe your bristle's clean before starting in a new area
- Achieve a denser colour by dipping the tip of the pencil in water before using



Colouring Stamped Images:

1. **Stamp images with an ink that will not bleed** when the watercolour is activated. We recommend our Intense Black Exclusive Inks™ stamp pad (Z4189).

2. **Achieve a "no-line" look with a dye-based ink**. Use a very light ink to stamp your image and it will not show through the watercolour when it is activated. We recommend our Linen Exclusive Inks™ stamp pad (Z2824).

3. **Stamp and heat emboss an image, then colour it in**.

4. **Add details with a dry pencil**.

5. **Mix colours**. Experiment mixing colours to create new unique colours. Label and save information on each colour you like to make duplication easy.

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Watercolour Pencil Techniques:

1. Splattering. Easily add splatters to artwork by shaving a few sprinkles of the watercolour pencil's tip (use a craft knife or the edge of scissors) onto a wet area of painting. Dry areas around it will not be affected. Inactivated pencil shavings can be brushed away after the wet area is dry.

2. Patterns. Draw a pattern on wet watercolour paper to see the effect.

3. Dip the tip of a watercolour pencil in water and draw on wet watercolour paper to see the effect.

4. "Shading" is a term used to describe the effect of going from a light to a dark colour. We typically "shade" working from the light to dark, as starting with the dark will give fill in the entire image with even colour but will not leave any highlights. Practice: Draw a square and add strong colour to one end then add a light colour in the middle. Starting at the end with no colour, use a wet waterbrush and paint up to the dark end.

5. Dry Pencil Shading. When a water-coloured image is completely dry, use a light or dark pencil directly on the image to add shadow, highlights, or detail.

6. "Bleeding" is a term used for adjacent colours running into each other when they are wet. If you don't want a colour to bleed into an adjacent colour, then allow the first colour to dry completely before adding the next one. Practice: Draw a square and apply two different colours next to each other. Paint one of the colours with a waterbrush, allow it to dry, then paint the other.

7. Blending Colours. Blending refers to melding two or more colours together smoothly. Practice: Draw a square and apply colour to one end, filling about a third of the square. Apply a second colour on the other end of the square, also filling in about a third of the space. The middle of the square should still be white at this point. Using a waterbrush, paint one end, gently carrying the colour a little bit past the middle. Clean the brush and then repeat with the other colour. Gently blend the two colours together in the middle.

8. Creating Shadows. Add shadows below or to one side of a stamped image using Elephant Grey. Use the wet-on-wet method.

9. Highlighting. Add a highlight or shine mark to a stamped image with Artic White. Use the dry method.

10. Achieve lighter and darker tones. Lighter colour tones are achieved by adding white. Darker shades are achieved by adding either Elephant Grey or Black. Add a little at a time as you work toward your desired colour.

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Arctic White

Bloom Pink

Bougainvillea Pink

Camellia Pink

Queen Purple

King Purple

Peacock Blue

Ocean Blue

Mediterranean Blue

Turquoise

Grass Green

Turtle Green

Tropical Yellow

Mustard Yellow

Sand Brown

Earth Brown

Lava Brown

Apricot Pink

Mandarin

Watermelon Red

Strawberry Red

Elephant Grey

Wood Brown

Jet Black

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Dry Method

Wet Method

Wet Method

Wet-on-Wet Method

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