

DRAWING WITH PASTELS

Mastering Pastels: 7 Essential Tips for
Stunning Drawings

Choose the right pastels

Tip 1: Not all pastels are the same! Soft pastels, hard pastels, and oil pastels each have their own characteristics. Soft pastels provide rich color and are great for blending, while hard pastels allow for finer details. Oil pastels, on the other hand, give a buttery texture and work well for layering. Experimenting with different brands and types will help you find the pastels that best suit your artistic style. Some artists prefer using a combination of different pastels in a single piece to achieve a variety of effects.

Use the right paper

Tip 2: Pastel paper comes in different textures and colors. Textured paper, such as sanded or velour paper, helps pastels adhere better and allows for more layers. Toned paper can also add depth to your artwork and reduce the need for excessive background coloring. When choosing a surface, *consider* how much blending and layering you want to achieve. Some artists also use watercolor paper or even canvas for unique effects. Experimenting with different papers can help you understand how they interact with pastels and influence your final artwork.





Layering and blending techniques

Tip 3: Build up color gradually by layering light applications of pastel. Use your fingers, blending stumps, or soft brushes to blend colors smoothly. Avoid over-blending, as it can muddy your colors. Try different blending techniques, such as feathering, scumbling, and cross-hatching, to create texture and depth in your work. For a vibrant look, experiment with layering complementary colors before blending. You can also use erasers to lift off some pastel to create highlights and details.

Experiment with different strokes

Tip 4: Try different strokes to create different effects—side strokes for broad coverage, hatching for texture, and stippling for a unique touch. Holding the pastel stick at different angles will also impact the way the pigment is applied. A light touch will give soft shading, while applying firm pressure can create bold, striking marks. Combining different strokes and techniques will help add character to your artwork. Don't be afraid to mix techniques in a single piece to create dynamic textures and visual interest



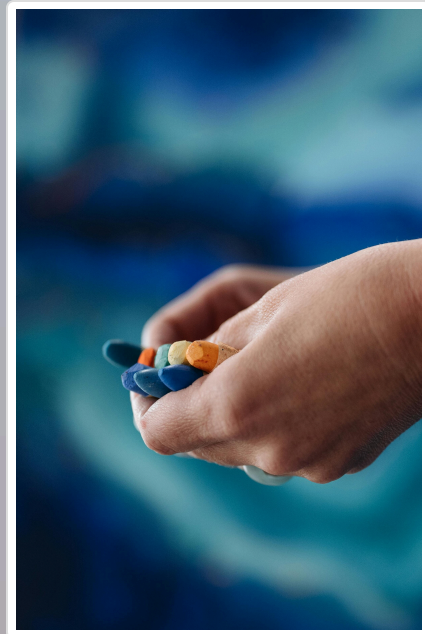
Protect your work

Tip 5: Pastels are delicate and can smudge easily. Use a fixative spray to set your artwork, but apply it lightly to avoid darkening the colors. Store pastel drawings under glass or in a portfolio with glassine paper to prevent smudging. If you plan to frame your work, consider using a mat to keep the glass from touching the pastel surface. Taking these precautions will help preserve your artwork for years to come. Some artists prefer using fixatives sparingly or not at all, as fixative sprays can alter the vibrancy of colors.



Working from dark to light

Tip 6: Work from Dark to Light Unlike other mediums, pastels work best when applied from dark to light. Start with your darker shades and gradually build up to highlights. This technique enhances depth and contrast in your artwork. When working on landscapes or portraits, defining the darkest areas first can help create a sense of form and structure before adding details. Remember that you can always add more highlights, but it's difficult to bring back dark tones once too much pastel has been applied. Some artists use a light underpainting in watercolor or diluted pastel to establish values before adding more pigment.

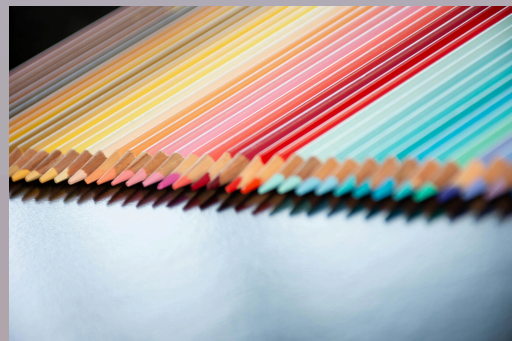


Tip 7: Keep Your Hands and Workspace Clean Pastels can be messy, so keep a damp cloth nearby to clean your hands and avoid smudging your work. Taping the edges of your paper can help keep the borders clean for a polished look. Using gloves or placing a clean sheet of paper under your hand while drawing can also prevent unintended smudges. Additionally, investing in a simple air purifier can help reduce airborne pastel dust in your workspace. Cleaning your pastels by rolling them in rice or using a soft cloth can also keep them free from dust buildup, ensuring clean and vibrant application.

Try Mixed Media Approaches

Bonus Tip: Try Mixed Media Approaches While pastels are fantastic on their own, they also work beautifully when combined with other mediums. Watercolor washes, ink, and charcoal can enhance pastel artwork by adding new textures and depth. Some artists use pastels over acrylic or gouache backgrounds for a unique mixed-media effect.

Experimenting with different approaches will help you discover exciting ways to expand your pastel techniques.



The joy of pastel art

Pastels are a dynamic and rewarding medium that allows for expressive and vibrant artwork. By following these seven tips, you can improve your pastel drawing techniques and create beautiful, lasting pieces. With practice, patience, and a willingness to experiment, you'll discover the full potential of pastels and develop a unique artistic voice. Whether you're working on bold landscapes, delicate portraits, or abstract compositions, pastels offer endless creative possibilities.

Embrace the unpredictability of the medium, and don't be afraid to take risks—sometimes the most unexpected color combinations or techniques yield the most stunning results. Keep experimenting, learning, and refining your skills, and most importantly, have fun with your art!

Keep practicing and enjoy the journey of mastering pastels! **Happy drawing!**