

Summer of Drawing –

Elizabeth Whelan's favorite drawing materials

These are my favorites drawing materials and some of the supplies I will be using this summer. I will be using other drawing tools as well, and I want you to feel comfortable drawing with just pencil and paper while I demonstrate these techniques.

However, I know it is helpful to have recommendations if you do feel the need to add to your materials, and so please keep this list for reference.

I have provided links to the Dick Blick art supply site. These products can also be found at other online shops like Cheap Joes, Artarama, DEW Drafting Supplies, etc. The items with a star beside them are the ones I consider the most useful in each category.

I have included some of the prices as of today, April 23, 2021. And I do steer people towards the professional rather than student supplies, however, as the quality tends to be better.

Paper:

I do like [Fabriano Artistico Hot Press watercolor paper](#) for colored pencil, and when I am doing a special drawing in pencil or charcoal I will use [Rives Printmaking Papers](#).

Mostly I use quite inexpensive [ProArt sketchbooks](#) as well as the more pricey [Moleskine sketchbooks](#) (which can stand up to gouache paints) for general sketching. I am always trying new papers and I hope that you do the same, as every different combination of pencil and paper will lead to a different result and you will discover your own favorites.

But the one type of paper I highly recommend that you play with is toned paper, which is paper with a soft color to it. I use Canson Mi-Tientes paper in mid-range colors. This would be a good paper to try if, after you see how I use it, you would like to try this drawing technique yourself. I will note you can do this same technique on Kraft paper or a paper bag, or any mid-toned paper!

[Canson color packs \(pick the Fine Art, Muted, or Portrait set\)](#) 19 x 25", pkg of 10 \$22.73

Pencils (graphite)

- ★ 1. A good range of drawing pencils would include an **HB, 2B, and 4B pencil**. My favorite pencil brand is Tombow.

[Tombow Pencil Sets](#) 3 pencil set \$3.87

2. **Ebony Pencil:**
These are a very dark, smooth pencil, and with control, you can learn to use these to make a wide range of values. If you already have a set with a 4B pencil, then this is not a 'must have'. Note that it is easy to break the lead when you are sharpening these pencils. I sharpen them in my electric pencil sharpener or very, very carefully by hand.
[Ebony Pencils](#) pkg of 2 \$1.84

- ★ 3. **Mechanical Pencil:**
Over the years I have collected a lot of these, as they are hard to break and don't need sharpening! So they are convenient to carry around with you. I typically use the **0.5 lead size and HB hardness**, which is like a regular pencil.
There are a lot of different mechanical pencils types and lead holders – make sure you are buying the same size pencil or holder, and lead.
[Pentel Quick Clicker Mechanical Pencil 0.5](#) \$5.25
[HB 0.5 lead refills \(12/pk\)](#) \$1.20

Charcoal

- ★ 1. **Charcoal Pencils:**
Something like this kit, which has 3 black charcoal pencils (2B, 4B, 6B) a white charcoal pencil, and a kneaded rubber eraser, would work very well.
[General's Charcoal Pencil Kit](#) \$4.62
2. **A kit with charcoal pencils and other types of charcoal:**
Charcoal comes in a lot of different forms, shapes, and softness. I will be demonstrating using pencil and non-pencil types. If you're willing to get a lot messier and you want to work large, a charcoal set like this is a good place to start – it contains charcoal pencils, a white charcoal pencil, and sticks of soft charcoal (black and white) as well as kneaded erasers. Note that these sticks are not easy to use on smaller drawings.
[General's Drawing Charcoal Pencil Kit #15](#) \$12.28
- ★ 3. **White Charcoal Pencils:**
I will be demonstrating some interesting and simple effects that can be done on toned paper using white charcoal, conte, or colored pencils (they all work about the same.) You might want to consider adding one or two white charcoal pencils to your supplies (if you aren't getting a kit that comes with one).
[White Charcoal Pencil](#) \$1.38

Conte Crayon

Conte crayon is drawing medium composed of compressed powdered graphite or charcoal mixed with a wax or clay base. It comes in pencil and stick form. When we get to the 'Trois Couleurs' (three colors) drawing technique, I will be demonstrating using black, white, and sanguine (a brown earth, terra cotta-type color).

- ★ 1. [Set of 6 Conte pencils](#) \$11.67 or individual White, Black (Pierre Noir HB) and Sanguine pencils are about \$2 ea
- 2. If you are working large, or find you really like the feel of Conte, you can try the sticks as well:
[Conte set of 4 sticks](#) \$3.51

Pen & Ink

Although I will be demonstrating with a 'crow quill' pen, brush, technical pen, etc., I would suggest if you want to try pen and ink that you start off with something like the following:

- ★ 1. For casual sketching this Pilot pen is an easy pen to draw with on most papers. It is my favorite for writing and sketching. I prefer it to a marker as there is less drag. This pen is for rough sketches, notan, etc., especially urban or plein air sketching. Like a mechanical pencil it won't give you great variety of thickness, but it is low-mess and reliable, easy to carry around.
[Pilot Precise V5 Pen - Extra Fine, 0.5 mm, Black](#) \$2.43
- 2. When you are at home/studio and you want to get a little more serious about pen & ink, start with a nib holder (dip pen) and a nib, and some ink that you dip into. This will give you a finer finish than the Pilot pen, and more variation to your line. It is also messier and not really portable, which is why I recommend it for home use.
[Speedball Crow Quill dip pen, nib, and ink](#) \$4.40
If you like how it works, you can then branch out into different sizes of nibs.

Colored Pencil

Prismacolor colored pencils are my favorite, and I have been drawing with them for decades. However, most colored pencils will do the trick as long as they aren't super-cheap – those ones will have lots of wax and not much pigment, and for that reason are hard to use.

You can do a certain amount of mixing of colors by layering, but typically colored pencil artists have a lot of pencils. If you want to try colored pencils but don't have any, I recommend starting out with a 24-color set, or if you want to try one of the fancy smaller sets (like Botanical colors or Landscape colors) I highly recommend you buy in addition a **Tuscan Red**, and an **Indigo Blue**, pencil, if they don't come in your set. I will be demonstrating techniques that use those two colors as an underlayer.

★ [Prismacolor 24-assorted color pencil set](#) \$24.82

[Tuscan Red Prismacolor Pencil](#) \$1.35

[Indigo Blue Prismacolor Pencil](#) \$1.35

[All the Prismacolor colored pencils sets and individual pencils](#)

Other Useful Tools

Erasers:

★ [Kneaded Rubber Eraser](#) \$0.93

[Staedtler Mars Block White Eraser](#) \$1.62

Blending stumps (can be used for pencil, charcoal, and Conte crayon):

[ProArt 2 large blending stumps](#) \$1.99

Pencil extenders:

[Koh-i-noor Pencil lengthener](#) \$4.99

Electric pencil sharpeners are useful if you do a lot of drawing, and this sharpener is gentle on colored pencils and other leads that are prone to break.

[Bostick Classroom pencil sharpener](#) \$30.94

Silverpoint

Silverpoint is a drawing technique worked on a surface prepared with a ground. The initial marks of a silverpoint stylus appear grey but 'when exposed to air, tarnish to a warm brown tone. The oxidation becomes perceptible over a period of several months.' Thankfully silverpoint is becoming more popular and materials are easier to find and a lot cheaper than when I first dabbled in this drawing medium a few years ago! However, getting yourself set up is costly.

Of all the drawing media I will be using this summer, this is one where I highly recommend that you WAIT until after the class to try it. I will be showing you the preparation with the ground, and alternative papers to use to help you make your decision. If you decide to give it a try, here are some materials that are a good starting point.

[Silverpoint Drawing ground](#) \$13.36 (you will need to brush this onto the surface you are drawing on – note that you need to shake this very well!)

[Cretacolor Silverpoint Pencil](#) \$13.53

Or [various silverpoint starter sets from Natural Pigments](#)

You have some choices about the surface you use, but it does need to be smooth and heavy. Glossy or rough paper will not work. And each different paper or board will give you a different result. In class I will be able to show you how different surfaces worked out.

My favorite is to use a heavy weight HOT pressed (smooth) illustration board.

If you can buy a larger sheet (15 x 20") and cut it into smaller pieces for experimenting, that would be ideal. For that you would need a box cutter or Xacto knife, and a metal ruler.

If cutting it down will be a nuisance, then you can buy pre-cut packages of smaller pieces, such as 5x7. These come in 40 pc sets which is rather a lot of illustration board, although it can be used for pen and ink and other types of drawing.

[Crescent Hot Press Illustration board](#) \$3.88 for a 15 x 20" sheet / 40 sheets of 5 x 7", \$20.61

My second favorite is to have a sketchbook with good paper, where I can prep a few sheets with ground and then use them when I am out and about. You will want a heavy smooth paper, and I use these

[Hahnemühle Watercolor Books 5 x 8"](#) \$20.76