

Suggested Materials

Art materials can be expensive and we are living in straitened times so I have tried as far as possible to keep this list fairly basic. Some things are essential but others are optional extras and I will try and suggest substitutes for these where possible. If you're buying new, look at WHSmith. Their own brand stuff is decent quality and reasonably priced. Rymans do some student ranges that are also reasonably affordable. The Works have a big range and are quite cheap. Not bad for regular sketchpads but steer clear of their watercolour paper which is rubbish and the quality of their paints is also not great. That said, here goes with the essentials:

- Sketchbook** I'd recommend A4 or A3, with paper at least 130gsm (150 gsm if possible so it will take paint and glue). Bring it with you every week. You'll need it for ideas, testing things out and general playing. Don't be precious about it - it's the place where you try things to see what you like so it will have hits and misses in it!
- Pencils** Drawing pencils range from 'B' to 9B. The 'B' stands for black and the higher the number the softer, and blacker, the pencil. I'd recommend a 2B, 4B and a 6B to start with. You'll also need a decent sharpener or a craft knife to keep them sharp. I can demonstrate how to sharpen with a craft knife if necessary.
- Eraser** I'm very strict about not rubbing out 'mistakes'. Where possible, overdraw more firmly and the bit you don't want will recede as the drawing develops. The main reason for an eraser is to lift out highlights as you're working and to clean up grubby areas once the drawing is finished. Get a putty rubber as well as a standard eraser as this can be used with charcoal as well. (blu-tac or similar works as a putty rubber)
- Brushes** Get the best you can afford - a few good ones that you look after well are better than lots of cheap ones. Acrylics need stiffer bristle brushes whilst watercolour brushes are much softer. Sizes 4, 6 and 8 round brushes will give you a decent range to start with and you can add to them later.
- Palettes and waterpots** These can be makeshift - plastic trays and yoghurt pots, though The Works have some decent size, inexpensive palettes if you prefer. If you're using acrylics then lidded plastic takeaway containers make great palettes as the lid helps to keep the paint fresh.

Pens

Pens are very nice for drawing with and useful for pen and wash techniques. They can be either permanent or non-permanent (ie. they will run in water) If described as washable they are non-permanent. Standard bios are fairly permanent. I find Berol Handwriting pens from Rymans nice to draw with and they are non-permanent. Gel pens are good for drawing. Test them out for permanence by running some water over them.

Charcoal, compressed charcoal and charcoal pencils

These are all slightly different. Charcoal is very light and brittle and wears down very quickly. Compressed charcoal comes in thick black sticks and has been mixed with clay to make it slightly more robust and blacker. It is more difficult to rub out than charcoal. Charcoal pencils make a similar mark to compressed charcoal but you can make finer lines and they can be sharpened. They're a good choice if you don't like getting it on your hands! All of these make very soft black marks and are easily smudged. For drawing purposes I'm happy for you to use whichever you prefer.

Soft Pastels

These are a similar consistency to compressed charcoal but come in a range of colours. They're very versatile and easily blended. More controllable than paints. They can be bought in sets or as individual pastels from the art shop on Park Lane. You can get a reasonably cheap set from The Works to try them out and then upgrade if you find you like them. Pastel pencils are another option, especially if you don't like the feel of them on your hands.

Hairspray

Both charcoal and pastels need fixing to stop them smudging. Cheap hairspray does this perfectly well. You'll need to do this at home as we can't use aerosols in the hall. You might want to bring some flimsy paper to protect your masterpiece as you get it home!

Paints

For most work, can be either acrylics or watercolours - I will adapt our projects to suit either. Get the best you can afford. A student set from Rymans or WHSmith is probably the best value. Watercolours come in tubes or pans. Tubes can be easier for large areas but tend to get used up more quickly! Pans give good practice in getting the right consistency and it's easier to see the colours without having to squeeze them out. Once watercolours have dried up on the palette you can re-activate them by adding water. This is not the case with acrylic so it can be wasteful if you put too much out. They also tend to dry out quite quickly as you're using them. That said, they can be used thickly like oil paints for some lovely effects and you can paint one colour over another once it's dried which doesn't generally end well with watercolours. For the pulled paste project after half-term you will need acrylics but they don't need to be best quality so get some cheap ones from The Works.