

“Translating Colors into Grayscale Values”

Course with Rogério Lupo - 2025

— Supplies list:

Below you find a list of the materials necessary for your practice as well as suggestions for specific brands and editions. All suggestions are based on my own experiences, so keep yourself open to subverting the list. If you already have a good set of supplies, it is not necessary to search for further variety just because of my recommendations.

1. Use a piece of parchment paper or paper towel under your hand to protect your drawing from your skin oils and humidity that can cockle the paper. Also, I recommend you avoid speaking over the paper before, during and after drawing, as invisible saliva sprouts can cause yellow spots of contamination in the long run.

2. Pencils:

2.1. Graphite – 2H, H, HB, 2B, 3B, 4B and 6B (7B if possible). My personal preference has lately become the Staedtler’s edition named Lumograph Mars Black, which I highly recommend. Unlike traditional graphite though, these pencils feel a little waxy like chalk or charcoal pencils and may seem unpleasant for many artists, hence this preference is quite personal. Their lead is thick and has a high proportion of carbon. They provide an intense shading with a mat finish, tending not to produce the undesired effect of glare, even after overlapping many layers. The range of gradations is limited though, being HB the hardest. Also, there is the novel edition from Faber-Castell named Pitt Graphite Matt, with pencils that allegedly avoid the effect of glare in a very efficient way. Though I have never tested those, I think it is worth it to try them, but according to some colleagues, they feel just like Staedtler Black mentioned above.

Regarding traditional graphite, keep in mind that different brands may present different standards, thus be alert not to purchase, without testing, for example HB and 2B pencils from different companies (or from different product lines of the same company) which might produce the same grade of shade. Good brands in order of my personal preference are Staedtler, Lyra, Mitsubishi, Bruynzeel, Faber Castell, Caran D’Ache, Cretacolor, Koh-I-Noor. Derwent is a good and soft pencil, but the ones I have tested may have their lead’s tip crumbling down while we work, thus leaving small pieces of graphite on the paper (that was long ago, this may have been improved lately). Do not take that into account, though, if you own and appreciate the Derwent pencils and want to use them, in which case you do not need to purchase new pencils.

I remark that rare has been the pencil, even among the best brands, which does not eventually present crystals that grit the paper while stopping to scribe. Some brands get

better from time to time, some worse, and even the most expensive pencils may disappoint us. We should then swatch constantly, rarely breaking relationships definitely with any brand.

Further information on graphite is provided by my guidebook on this technique (download it [here](#)) and by the video that complements it (watch it [here](#), enable English captions).

2.2. One light colored pencil (like ivory, cream, or white – preferably the former ones, as white is too cold), or any similar pencil. Brands can be Faber Castell Polychromos, Caran D’Ache Pablo or Luminance, Derwent, Holbein or any other of your preference, provided it’s easily erasable. This is used on toned papers to provide light values (highlights).

2.3. A mechanical pencil 0,2 or 0,3 mm with a B or 2B graphite to be used for contours and details is not indispensable but is welcome.

2.4. Grayscale colored pencils are an extra option, not mandatory though. Some brands present this scale of grays in a very diverse range, like Faber Castell Polychromos, with cold and warm grays going from I to VI, which can be complemented by Dark Sepia (for warm grays) and Payne’s Gray (for cold grays) plus Black (for both ranges). But one can use all the shades and types of gray usually present in sets of any brand (hopefully with 2 or 3 tonal values) and complement those with black, which is enough. The technical approach for colored pencils differs from graphite and will be briefly addressed in the course.

3. Soft white eraser: Sakura high-quality FOAM or Pentel hi-polymer SOFT. Avoid Staedtler Mars plastic, for it causes excessive friction, harms the paper and usually crumbles off in pieces.

4. Kneaded eraser: Milan, Sanford Design, Lyra, Cretacolor, Faber Castell, in order of my personal preference among the ones I know.

5. Paper: item 1.2 in section 'I - Materials' of my free guidebook on colored pencils (download it [here](#)) offers a discussion addressing various aspects to be taken into account before making decisions regarding papers. It is worth it to research whatever you have available in your country, swatch them, and learn about other artists’ experiences. Remember to test both sides of each paper for they often present different surfaces.

Toned papers suggested are Canson Graduate Multitechnique Gray or Canson Mi Teintes (the back face of both is smoother). Also Strathmore Toned Tan or Toned Gray, or any other toned paper of your preference. As for the white papers, please see more details in the guidebook mentioned and linked above.

6. Artistic Ball Burnishers (aka “embossers”): this is a tool that can be very helpful for grooving the paper with minimum damage. It is not essential for this course, as it can be replaced with a dry ballpoint pen or a polished dry metal tip, or even by a mechanical pencil without

graphite. But of course, the ball burnisher is quite specific and it is coined precisely for the kind of maneuvers we want to make on the paper.

7. Desk sharpener: I suggest Derwent, Derwent Super Point, or Rapesco. You can also opt for using a snap-off cutter blade, in which case I recommend watching [this](#) if you are not familiar with that use (enable English captions). But desk sharpeners are extremely efficient, safe and immensely time-saving.

Observation: We have plenty of stores selling good material, either via the internet or locally, and many artists share their experiences on websites and videos. Be careful though, because the experience of an artist with any given material can be thoroughly different from yours. Use their tips and advice, but trust only your own tests (that is, do question my own tips too). I have seen many artists definitely disappointed with excellent materials, myself included. Sometimes they have tested defective stuff or it is just that they do not find affinity with the results that some specific material provides. Different artists may either worship or curse the same exact material, thus do not be afraid of experimenting.