

Guide to coloured pencils



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Guide to coloured pencils

Coloured pencils have come a long way from the crayons used when we were children. They are fast becoming a recognised fine art medium particularly for the genre of realism as their fine core and subtle yet rich pigment lends itself to creating details.

Coloured pencils are all made from a mixture of oils and waxes, to say one is oil-based and one is wax based isn't strictly true, I tend to find using the words soft and hard and how they feel a better descriptor.

Everyone has their favourite, there is no 'best' pencil, just what is best for you and your work.

That being said, I have some general guidelines that for those starting out, will be useful.

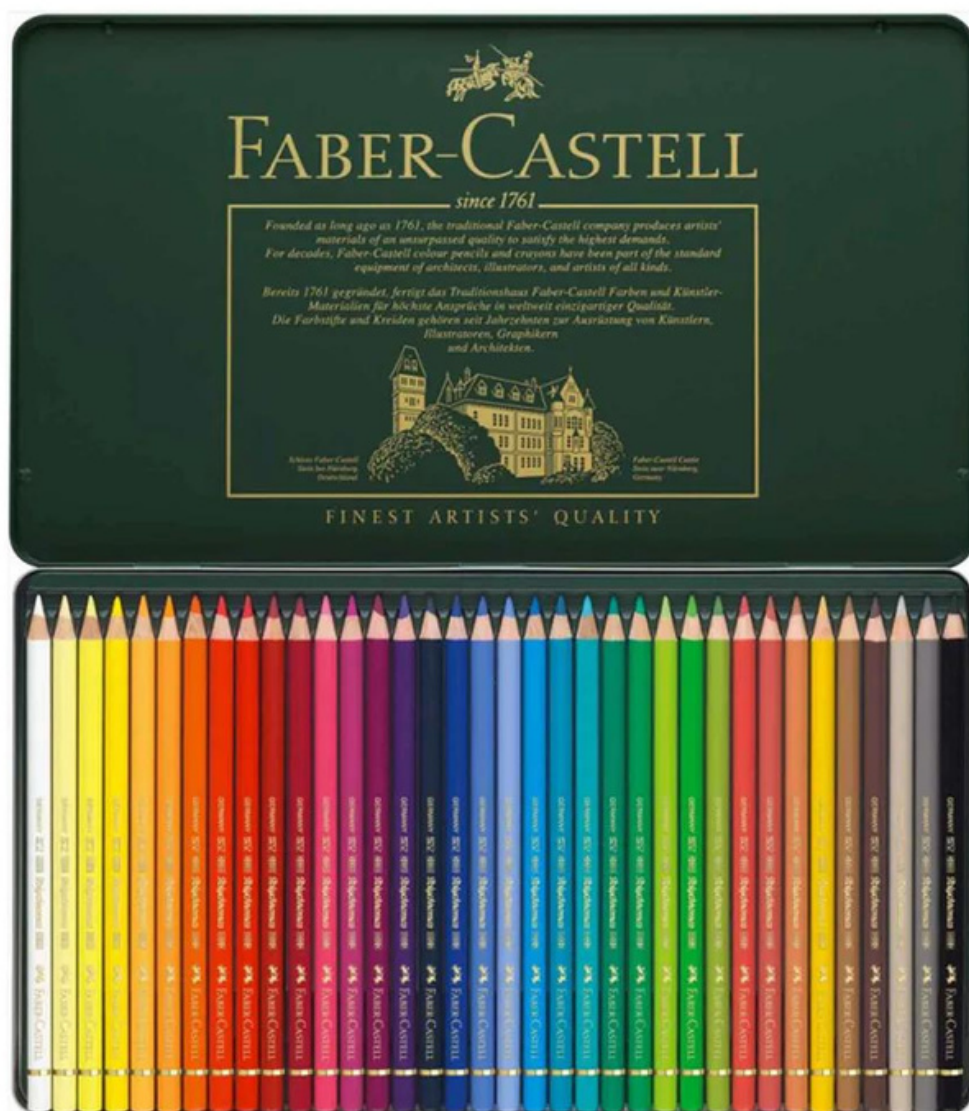
If you are on a budget then some of the artist-grade pencils may well not be something you can afford, however, you can purchase most brands of artist-grade pencils singly, so you don't need to pay for a whole set which can be very expensive. It's a good idea to use higher quality pencils as they are the ones that have been through rigorous testing for lightfastness and toxicity.

Read on to out about the pencils I use on a regular basis. I have purposefully left out the Derwent Studios and Artists due to the Studios being discontinued and the Artists colours changing slightly.



Faber Castell Polychromos

- Hard and dry marketed as oil-based
- 120 colours
- 102 *** Lightfast rating (Maximum Lightfast)
- 16 ** Lightfast rating (Very Good Lightfast)
- 2* Lightfast rating (Good Lightfast)
- Round solid coloured barrel
- Keeps a sharp point
- Less opaque than other brands
- Great range of greys
- Blends well
- I use many times as the first layer on pastemat
- I always use for eyes due to them being slightly more translucent



Caran D'Ache Luminance

- Soft and smooth, marketed as wax based
- 100 colours
- All excellent to maximum lightfast
- Excellent quality
- Round wooden barrel with colour coding at the end
- % colours which are very useful
- Traditional pigment names
- Blend beautifully
- Opaque
- Use as a base layer on traditional paper if you want to use the slice tool
- I use in later layers usually, but for skin I tend to use them straight away due to the colours



Caran D'Ache Pablo

- Hard and dry, feels velvety
- 120 colours
- 45 *** Lightfast rating (Maximum Lightfast)
- 68 ** Lightfast rating (Very Good Lightfast)
- 7* Lightfast rating (Good Lightfast)
- Hexagonal coloured barrel
- Vibrant colours
- Blend beautifully
- Opaque
- I use pablos a lot for smoothing on pastelmat
- I love pablos on darker pastelmat as they are very velvety and cope with the grain well



Derwent Drawings

- Very soft marketed as wax
- 24 colours
- All highly lightfast
- Fat round red barrel with colour coded end
- Natural earthy colours
- Blend beautifully
- Opaque
- I use the Ivory Black and Chinese White the most
- Ivory Black is the blackest black and highly opaque



Derwent Lightfast

- Soft and smooth marketed as Oil based
- 100 colours
- All highly lightfast marked as LF1 and LF2
- Round wooden barrel with colour coded end
- Beautiful range of classic pigments
- Blend beautifully
- Opaque
- Some fabulous colours not available in other brands - Mars Black, Nightshade, Oyster, Arctic
- I tend to use as very last layers or for specific colours



Holbein

- Soft and creamy
- 150 colours
- Apparently they have good lightfastness
- Round coloured barrel, very like polychromos
- Beautiful range of vibrant and pastel colours
- Blend beautifully
- Opaque
- They really are gorgeous
- I tend to use the pale colours to blend skin tones as I don't have the up to date lightfast ratings



If you'd like to continue learning new coloured pencil tips and techniques and keep developing your skills, these free tutorials are the perfect next steps...

[The 45-Minute Cat's Eye Challenge](#)

[The 40-Minute Dog's Nose Challenge](#)

[The 45-Minute Perfect Paws Challenge](#)

[3 Tips for Elevating Your Coloured Pencil Drawings](#)

[How to Layer with Coloured Pencils](#)

[How to Use the Subtraction Technique](#)

[How to Use the Indenting Technique](#)

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