



TURN YOUR
MISTAKES INTO
MASTERPIECES



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Coloured Pencil Troubleshooting Guide

An essential guide for coloured pencil artists

Coloured Pencil Troubleshooting Guide

A gentle reminder before we begin: Every artist, even the masters, faces challenges in their work. What we often call 'mistakes' are actually opportunities to learn and grow in our artistic journey.

In this guide I have chosen five common challenges we as coloured pencil artists come up against on a regular basis. Hopefully the solutions will help you overcome these challenges and allow you to enjoy your drawings even more.

Common Challenge #1: Wax Bloom

What you might see: A cloudy, whitish film appearing over your finished coloured pencil work

Why it happens: This is natural! It occurs when the wax binders in your pencils rise to the surface.

Solutions:

- Store finished artwork in a portfolio or frame with glass to minimize bloom
- Work in thinner layers to reduce wax buildup
- Consider leaving lighter areas with fewer layers
- Take a soft cloth if using smooth paper like hot press and gently wipe the wax build-up away
- Remember: This isn't a mistake – it's simply the nature of your materials showing through

Common Challenge #2: Uneven Colour Coverage

What you might see: Patches where the paper shows through or colour appears spotty

Solutions

- Build colour gradually in light, circular motions
- Use even pressure, try keeping your pencil on the paper whilst you're building up the layers
- Try alternating your pencil direction with each layer
- Use a lighter touch – sometimes pressing too hard can create resistance
- Remember: Even coverage often takes 3-4 layers. Take your time and enjoy the process

Common Challenge #3: Colour Looking Flat or Dull

What you might see: Your work lacks depth or vibrancy

Solutions:

- Start with lighter colours and gradually layer darker ones
- Try adding an unexpected colour (like a touch of purple in brown)
- Work in small sections to maintain colour intensity
- Layer complementary colours to create natural shadows
- Remember: Nature rarely uses just one colour – don't be afraid to experiment!

Common Challenge #4: Hard Lines or Streaks

What you might see: Visible pencil strokes that won't blend

Solutions

- Use tiny circular motions when applying colour
- Try layering lighter colours first, then darker ones
- Keep your pencils well-sharpened for better control
- Experiment with different paper textures to find what works best for you
- Remember: Sometimes visible strokes can add character to your piece

Common Challenge #5: Paper Damage

What you might see: Paper pills, tears, or excessive shine from too much pressure

Solutions:

- Use lighter pressure and build colour gradually
- Try a different paper weight or texture
- Take frequent breaks to rest your hand
- Test your pressure on a scrap piece first
- Remember: Gentle pressure often yields better results than forcing the colour

Mindset Matters

- Every mark is part of your learning journey
- Keep a "sample sheet" to test colours and techniques
- Date your work – you'll love seeing your progress!
- Remember: Art is about progress, not perfection

Remember: Every artist's journey is unique. These aren't "rules" – they're friendly suggestions to try as you develop your own beautiful artistic style.