

INTRO: GRAPHITE ON DRAFTING FILM

MY FAVORITE TOOLS



THE MAGIC OF DRAFTING FILM



I struggled with drafting film when I first started practicing with it. Many artists were using color pencils on it, and I just couldn't get it to work. I put my pad in a drawer and forgot all about it. Until one day I caught a creative bug and went searching through my treasure troves of art supplies for something new to do (you know how that goes). I took out the forgotten pad and decided to try my trusty mechanical pencil on the surface. AH! Yes, now we're talking. I've been practicing just over two years now with lots of failures, and some successes, and I'm always learning. I hope by sharing what I have learned along the way, I can spark a creative bug in you too.

PAN PASTELS



SLICE CUTTER TOOL



MONO ZERO ERASER



POWDERED GRAPHITE



MR. CLEAN MAGIC ERASER



KNEADED ERASER



PENCIL SHARPENER



SOFFT TOOLS KNIFE WITH NO. 3 OVAL COVER



SOFFT TOOL MINI APPLICATOR



BLENDING STUMP



MY TRUSTY MECHANICAL PENCIL



WOOD PENCILS



CHEAPIE MAKEUP BRUSHES



CHEAPIE MAKEUP BRUSHES



WATERCOLOR BRUSH



THE LIST

Borden & Riley Multimedia
Drafting Film, 14"x17"

Strathmore Bristol Pad,
Plate Surface, 14"x17"

Tracing paper, wax paper or glassine

Mechanical Pencil with 0.5 HB lead, or
2B wood pencil (I like the fine point of
a mechanical pencil)

Additional pencils: 3H, 4H, 8B - this set
has served me well.

Powdered Graphite

Assorted brushes, such as
makeup brushes

#4 Sable Filbert or Shader Watercolor
Brush

PanPastels: the Gray Scale Set will get
you everything you need. If you don't
want a set, I mainly use Neutral Gray
Extra Dark 820.1, Neutral Gray Extra
Dark 820.2 and Black 800.5

PanPastel Sofft Tools: Knife with
No.3 Oval cover or No.1 Round cover,
Mini Applicators, and the Applicator
with Replaceable Tips

Slice Cutter Tool

Mono Zero Eraser, round

Kneaded Eraser

Blending Stump, firm

Mr. Clean Magic Eraser



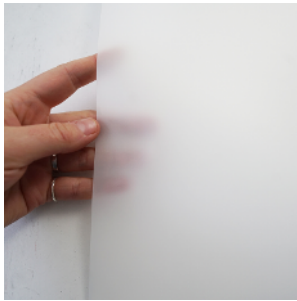
THE WHAT & WHY

When I began working on drafting film I didn't have nearly as many tools as listed above. The more I get to know this unique surface and play around, I continue to add new tools. If you're just getting started, the [14"x17" pad of drafting film](#), a 2b or HB pencil (wood or [mechanical](#)), a [kneaded eraser](#), [powdered graphite](#), and a variety of brushes you already have on hand is all you need.

If you intend to move on to my step-by-step tutorials, I urge you to purchase my preferred [brand of film](#). Not all brands behave the same. If you are using a different brand during the tutorials, you may get frustrated for not achieving similar effects.

The following explains the tools I use and why. In the next Intro tutorial I will go into detail about my methods and techniques.

DRAFTING FILM - WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO HANDLE IT



Drafting Film is a polypropylene substrate typically used by draftsmen and architects. It is translucent with a very smooth matte surface and just enough tooth to hold onto graphite and color pencils. You can also use markers, inks and water-based paints.

There are many different film brands, but I really enjoy the [Riley & Borden Denril Multi-Media Vellum Drafting Film](#). I find it makes my graphite look inky, with results I've never achieved on traditional paper. Graphite erases well enough, though with my techniques, it can sometimes create some issues, which I'll explain further when I introduce the various eraser tools.

I have found drafting film has some quirks. One of which, and possibly the most frustrating, is fingerprints. When the powdered graphite is applied, the "dust" of the graphite will adhere itself to the grease of the fingerprint, and you'll have a crime scene situation going on. A tough thing to rectify, so try to avoid it. Best way to do that is to carefully handle your sheets of film on the very edges. You'll also want to place a piece of [tracing paper](#), [wax paper](#), or [glassine](#) under your working hand to keep from smudging and leaving the oils from your fingers and hands on the film.

And finally, and this is not crucial, but I like to put a piece of [Bristol Plate](#) paper under my work, as the film can inadvertently pick up the texture of whatever is under it.



THE TOOLS

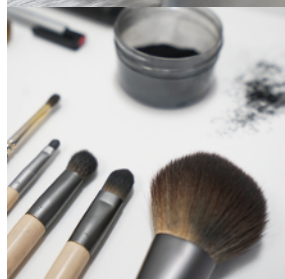
PENCILS: The number one tool is, of course, your pencil. My favorite is my mechanical pencil. I love the always-sharp point. I have a [Pentel Graph Gear 500 0.5 mm](#) mechanical pencil which I fill with [Pentel's Hi-Polymer HB lead](#). I can use this pencil for nearly all my drawing needs. Along the way, I have added a [set of 22 degree wood pencils](#), but I lean most on the 4H & 3H for when I want a really light touch with fine details. I also use the 8B for the darkest of dark areas.

POWDERED GRAPHITE: The next best is the [powdered graphite](#). It actually took me a few drawings before I discovered how very helpful this material is. However, I have discovered that my favorite brand (General's) is no longer making it! Eek! The link above is the next best thing. I'm glad it comes in a giant bucket, If I can manage to not spill it, that is! Which is a good time to make a suggestion: once you open your package of graphite, I strongly urge you to pour a small amount into a manageable vessel that can be resealed.

The powdered graphite can be added to the film with a variety of brushes. Simply dip your brush into the powder, knock off the excess, then you can "paint" it onto the surface. This can help you cover larger areas with a single value. (Also how your fingerprints can quickly become visible!) There are lots of benefits and techniques using the powdered graphite.

BRUSHES: I have found that a set of [makeup brushes](#) have been the best investment - affordable and practical. *Powder/Blush brush* - mainly used to gently clean your work surface. A soft mop brush can also be used. It's best not to blow on your work for fear of sending a glob of spit onto your work, which can present a unique challenge. It's also best not to use your hand or fingers to brush away the graphite dust or eraser shavings as that will not only smudge your work, but will also transfer oils from your hands to the surface. *Shading Brush* - soft like the blush brush but much smaller. Aids in applying soft layers of the powder. *Concealer brush* - with stiffer bristles, this can blend the graphite from your pencil, or can apply the powder with more force, creating darker tonal values. *Detailed Lip Liner* - a small and stiff-bristled brush, one of my most used tools, as it does much the same as the concealer brush but for smaller areas. And finally a [Size 4 Sable Filbert or Shader Watercolor brush](#) - the first brush I started using and can be used for a wide variety of techniques because it is somewhere between the softness of a mop brush and the firmness of the concealer brush.

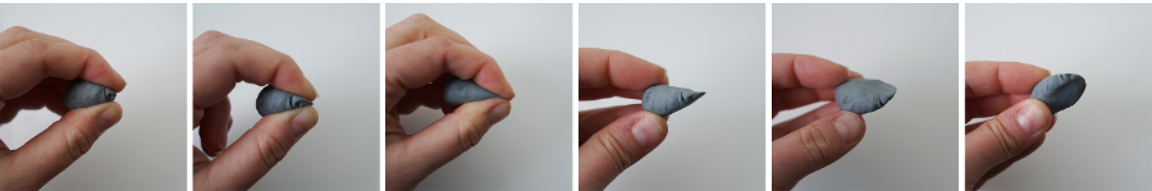
PANPASTELS & SOFFT TOOLS: This is a relatively new discovery for me. The [Neutral Grays](#), which I found are the closest to the color of graphite, and Black, can be applied to the film with PanPastel's Sofft Tools [Oval Knife](#) to add a solid, rich tone, and fill larger areas quicker. The powdered graphite can also be applied with the Sofft Tools, but I have found it doesn't quite have the opaque qualities of the PanPastels.





SLICE PEN CUTTER - because of its unique rounded tip, you can use [the cutter](#) at an angle to gently scrape away a very thin layer of graphite to reveal the white of the drafting film to add highlights and fine details. This will be discussed further in the next tutorial.

ERASERS: I primarily use two different erasers. the [Tombow Mono Zero Eraser](#), and a [kneaded eraser](#). Each is used more for mark-making than to eraser mistakes. The Tombow Mono Zero Eraser can be used to lift the graphite off with long strokes much like you would with a pen or pencil. The kneaded eraser I shape in my fingers to make a sharp edge, which I then use to lift the graphite off the surface to make fur-like textures.



BLENDING STUMP: I use a tightly wound [blending stump](#) that I sharpened one end with an [exacto knife](#). I use the stump infrequently - mostly I dip the sharpened end into the powdered graphite and use it like a pencil to make soft marks when the fine, sharp precision of my mechanical pencil is not desired.

MR CLEAN MAGIC ERASER (ORIGINAL): So this might sound like a strange one, but once I discovered [this tool](#), I could no longer live without it. The next guidebook will go into greater detail about the different ways to use it, but I mostly use it to remedy mistakes (like an eraser! Ha!), and to soften areas I have made too dark.

TRACING PAPER: (Or [wax paper](#) or [Glassine](#)) This one isn't for tracing - you'll always want to [put something](#) under your working hand to protect your drawing underneath. Wouldn't want to smudge!

Please share this guidebook! There's more to come!

The next issue will go into detail on exactly how I use each tool in my drawing practice. Until then, play around and get to know each of the tools I have suggested here. I believe there are many things that make a successful artist, and one is knowing and understanding your tools. Just play! And have fun!



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