Tips for Layering Colors

Coloring books aren’t just for kids anymore. The term has been coined “adult coloring”, but is really just a way to describe coloring for mental and emotional benefits for people of all ages. If you don’t just want to color to distract your mind, but actually get better at it, it starts with learning how to layer colors with colored pencils. Here are some tips to follow if you want to learn how to do this.

**Start with Lighter Colors**

An important lesson in layering colors is that you always start with the lighter colors, and gradually add on darker colors. You can always add more later, but you can’t really take away colors. If you start too dark, there is nowhere to go. Get into the habit of choosing the lightest of the colors you intend to blend, and not only use those lighter shades, but color with a lighter touch. This is why a little planning goes a long way when you are layering colors.

**Layering Colors Takes Time**

It is also worth mentioning that layering colors might take some time, depending on how detailed you intend on getting. If you look at any object, it might look like one color, but the more you pay attention, the more you see different hues, shading, shadows, and almost always more than one color. This is what you are trying to accomplish with layering colors – coloring in a more realistic way, however subtle or detailed you choose to be.

**Darkest Colors are for Shading**

When you get to the darkest colors, like black, dark grey, or dark purple, those should be used for shading only. Most people will use a black or very dark grey for this purpose. They aren’t for typical shading, but more the shadows, which are done at the very end of layering your colors. When you shade with these darkest colors, the shading section is going to appear flat, so that is another thing to keep in mind.

**The Rules of Shading**

Always keep a light hand when you are shading, adding shadows, or layering colors. This is perhaps the number one rule of using colored pencils. It is easy to use more pressure to make it appear darker, but once you do that, no layering can occur. Colored pencils will gradually make a color darker and darker the more light layers you add, so there is no reason to use a lot of pressure to get the final look you desire.