

Drawing Materials List: Charcoal



I recommend the following materials for drawing students or classes where we will be using charcoal:

Vine or Willow Charcoal

Either vine or willow is acceptable, and I have no preference for brand or hardness or softness. It should be relatively thin with a maximum width of about 1/4". This type of charcoal comes in square or round varieties and is often an irregular shape.



Compressed Charcoal

This type of charcoal is dark and velvety, and is typically in a uniform cylinder or square shaped stick. I have no brand preference but I suggest getting medium or soft compressed charcoal rather than a hard one.



Charcoal Pencils

I strongly prefer General's charcoal pencils since they seem to get less sticky than other brands. Get medium (2B), hard (HB) and extra hard (2H) but skip the soft and extra soft pencils as they are more difficult to sharpen without breakage.



White Charcoal

Again I prefer General's brand white charcoal pencil to avoid stickiness.



Kneaded Eraser

Any brand, malleable gray eraser.



White Stick Eraser

I've always used Paper Mate's Tuff Stuff eraser, but it seems like they discontinued the product. Another brand is Tombow's Mono series of stick erasers that come in different sizes. Either way, you should get eraser sticks that look like the picture below, along with a matching holder.



Blending Tools

Some useful tools for blending and smudging include large, fluffy paint brushes or make-up brushes, paper towels, chamois, and blending stumps. Avoid tortillions as the ridges tend to burnish materials into the paper. Instead, go for a soft blending stump, sometimes called a stomp.



This is a tortillon. Leave this at the art store.

To the right is a blending stump or "stomp." Take this home with you!



Toned Papers

Just about any sturdy middle gray or tan paper will work. My favorite papers are Daler-Rowney Canford Card in Gunmetal Gray, and Canson Mi Tientes in Flannel Gray, Dark Gray, and Moonstone. It's better to choose large sheets that can be cut down as needed rather than a paper that is too small.



Drawing Board

I recommend getting an 18" x 24" smooth sheet of masonite/hardboard along with some clips or masking tape, rather than purchasing a drawing board with permanently attached clips and a handle, which tend to get in the way of drawing. I usually have plenty of these boards at the studio if you don't feel like hauling one back and forth to class.