

TIPs for PEN and INK

DRAWING



With Dave Morley
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These are TIPS for drawing in Pen and Ink. They were gathered during several demo sessions during this month, and is not a comprehensive list. I've tried to fill in the details and clarify the meaning of each bullet, so each makes sense.

- ✍️ **KEEP THE ARM LOOSE** — by anchoring the arm or the wrist, there is a tendency of drawing everything in an arc. Letting the arm move not only adds to the fluidity of the drawing, but it removes some of the self-imposed restrictions. Be spontaneous.
- ✍️ **TURN THE PAPER** — at the end of the day, the viewer has no idea whether you did the drawing as they are viewing it, sideways, or upside down. Whatever you need to do, go for it; even if it means turning the paper to draw a vertical line as a vertical.
- ✍️ **TEST PENS** — check your pens before using them. If you have more than one kind, and are looking for a certain effect, test your pens on a scrap of paper, and get a feel for what each is doing. Segregate the pens you will use from the ones you won't.
- ✍️ **DON'T LOAN PENS** — as you use your pens, you impose your angle and your weight onto the nib. Everyone is different, so be aware to how things might change with your pen, if you choose to loan it.
- ✍️ **PROTECT THE DRAWING** — whether it is a drawing or a sketch, you may want to protect the artwork. With detailed drawings protect the drawing surface with another piece of paper, a designated cloth, or cheap painter gloves. Always wash your hands before each drawing session, and your sleeves.
- ✍️ **VARIOUS TIPS MAKE DIFFERENT LINES** — not all pens and sizes are the same. Even within the same brand there are different types and nib sizes. Understand what you have. Is it waterproof, or not?
- ✍️ **TAKE PHOTOS** — even if you are drawing plein air, take photos. Take lots of them and bracket your shot. First shoot the subject of your drawing, drill in on specifics, and pull back. Shot things on either side. You don't need to over-draw, but many times you need to understand what a specific item in the drawing is.
- ✍️ **DISCARD OLD PENS** — there are two places for old pens: the garbage, or for when you need pens for sketchy parts of a drawing. If a pen is totally spent, then get rid of it.
- ✍️ **USE WHAT YOU HAVE** — you don't need archival pens to draw in pen and ink. I've done a whole sketchbook with a ballpoint pen, and I've seen others document a cruise in an inexpensive notebook and using the complimentary pens from the ship.
- ✍️ **VARY YOUR GRIP** — first, don't hold your pens tightly. Loosen your grip and for different effects, consider holding the pen near the top. Experiment with it.
- ✍️ **DON'T WORRY ABOUT MISTAKES** — mistakes happen, but think of what you are doing in your drawing at that time. This will help minimize your opportunity for errors. Ink pens are less forgiving than pens like ball, nylon or fibre. In sketches, that's why it is in a sketchbook. In drawings, most times it can be incorporated into the drawing.
- ✍️ **CONSIDER THE END RESULT** — is your artwork going to be a fine drawing, or just a sketch. Each has different considerations, and is worth thinking about before you begin.
- ✍️ **CONSIDER YOUR PAPER** — the rougher your paper, the shorter the life of your pen. On rough papers, fibre and nylon nibs wear out far quicker. For fine drawings, use hot press paper or Bristol board. Sketchbooks can vary from a very smooth surface to ones that approximate cold press paper. Find out what best suits you.

- ⚡ DON'T NEED TO COMPLETE LINE — regardless of your medium, we've all heard that you don't need to put in too much details. With pen and ink, because it can be so specific, there is a tendency to think that all lines must be added, and all details must be completed. It's more like the other mediums. Lines do not need to be completed and contiguous.
- ⚡ USING PENCIL IS OKAY — in some cases it may be necessary to use a pencil to complete a very detailed drawing. For most drawings a rough sketch should be enough. Use a 2H or 3H pencil and do it lightly. With these pencils there is a tendency to press harder, but in good light, you can see the line. In addition, these line can be easily erased. Using H instead of pencils on the B side of the scale adds less carbon (graying agent) to the page.
- ⚡ ADD GUIDELINE — seldom are rulers used in drawings. If needed, yes, but drawings done with rulers look stiffer. For drawing using many parallel line, draw ruler guidelines about a cm apart. Once the ink has been added, remove the guidelines.
- ⚡ PRACTICE A LOT — like anything, it takes practice to gain confidence. Pen and Ink is probably one of the hardest mediums to master. Get a sketchbook and start drawing; relax and make mistakes; and find out what the pens can and cannot do. Make notes about your drawings, and record your thoughts. Look for opportunities to draw things you are good at. Keep a small sketchbook with you at all times and record interesting things and things that interest you. Use your camera to record those things you haven't got time to draw, but come back to them later – even if it is a photo. Learn to simplify.
- ⚡ MIX INK THICKNESS — varying the width of your lines within your drawing adds interest. Things up front may have thicker lines, and those in the back might require a smaller size nib. Use larger pens to darken areas that need it.
- ⚡ TEXTURE COMES FROM VARIOUS STROKE — the word 'DRAWING' on the title page illustrates seven different pen and ink strokes. There are others. Add texture and depth by using the various strokes.
- ⚡ WORK FRONT TO BACK — because of the nature of pen and ink, always work from the front of the drawing to the back. This is especially true for things like tree branches, where the back branches cross behind the front.