

About Charcoal Drawing

Charcoals lend themselves to quick studies, using varying degrees of lines and shading. Unlike other mediums, charcoals have no binders to bond with the paper, so the particles are held loosely in the mesh of the paper fibers, making them easy to smudge, blend and erase.

TYPES OF CHARCOAL

Like pencils, charcoals come in varying degrees of hardness, from very soft, to hard. Usually, a softer charcoal is preferred, but a hard charcoal is good for foundation drawing, harder edges and less blending. You can buy charcoals in stick or pencil. Pencils are cleaner to work with. Sticks can provide a larger surface edge for shading.

PAPER FOR CHARCOAL DRAWING

If you are into serious charcoal drawing, a charcoal or pastel paper is your best choice, although any paper with a tooth will work. Newsprint is an economical choice. Avoid smooth, shiny surfaces with no texture. It has no tooth to hold the charcoal particles.

OTHER HELPFUL SUPPLIES:

Sandpaper Pads are useful for sharpening charcoal sticks. For charcoal pencils, take care when sharpening them, since the charcoal can break quite easily. Often the best method to sharpen these is with an exacto knife.

Blending Stumps, also called tortillons, are made of rolled blotting paper. They're used to blend charcoal lines into softer edges. Your finger or a soft tissue can also be used for this.

Erasers are great for charcoal. Simply erase areas of your drawing to create highlights. On coloured paper white pastel can also be used for highlights, although more care must be taken not to "muddy" your work.

Fixatif, a form of spray varnish, is used to prevent the charcoal from smudging or powdering off. It provides a binder for bonding the charcoal to the paper. There are permanent and workable fixatives. A workable fixture will help to set the drawing, while still allowing you to work on it.

USING CHARCOAL

Experiment with the charcoal to get a feel for it. Use a light stroke to start, so that the individual strokes aren't so obvious. Use your finger, a stump, or soft tissue to smudge and blend your charcoal.

IMPORTANT TIPS:

Keep your fingers away from unworked areas. The oils on your skin, when deposited on the paper, make the charcoal uneven and smudgy.

You'll find that when you rework an area after smudging it, the effect isn't as fresh as the original. Whenever possible, avoid overworking your drawings.

When an area has been erased, the paper is roughened, resulting in an uneven texture when you lay a value over it. This effect may be desired for some subjects, such as wood posts and rough textures.

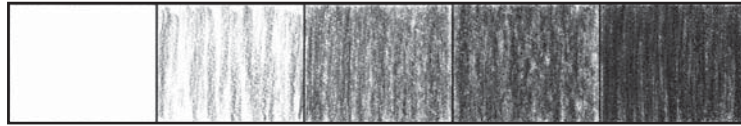
Always work clean, to avoid unwanted smudging. It is usually noticeable when you have had to erase an area to clean it up.



Charcoal Shading Assignment 1

Here are some examples of how to achieve the 5 values with pencil and charcoal.
Shade these value scales, using the techniques shown here.

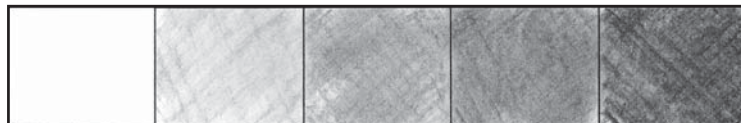
*Charcoal only,
vertical strokes:*



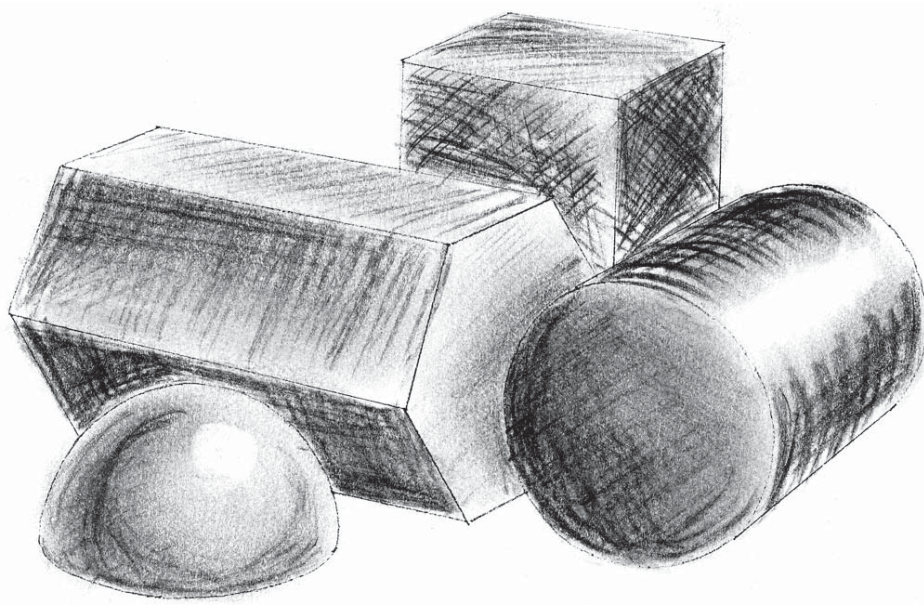
*Charcoal
blending
with finger:*



*Charcoal blending
with blending stomp
and varied strokes:*



Charcoal Shading Assignment



Here is a charcoal shading of shapes. Notice that the shading follows the contours of the objects.

Shade and blend this picture as the tonal drawing shown. Represent the 5 values and have a noticeable change from surface to surface.

Shade each object according to the shading technique and rules that apply to it.

