

Beginner Instruction

Sometimes, we forget the beginner instruction that we were first taught when learning how to use a Colored Pencil tool to make quality artwork. This article will be a reminder

Our CPPG group was founded 2011 in The Villages by Nan Klein & Donna Caputo. They developed and taught a specific way to use the colored pencil tool to create excellent art paintings. Nan Klein cultivated the 3 main techniques and taught many “students” in The Villages, over the years. Many teachers have continued these basic steps and Artists have been brought forth who have exhibited excellent works of art!

1.) PRESSURE

2.) COVERAGE

3.) LAYERING

Pressure: One must use a “very light touch” onto the surface of the paper with the colored pencil. This requires making several marks to adjust your hand to realize the control necessary to make the “lightest mark” on the paper that you can see!

The purpose of this light touch, is to allow for the “many” layers of pigment that will build up to the correct color hue that you intend to show. Since these pencils are wax based (some with oil + wax), it is important to understand that the light pressure will allow a soft development of pigment on the paper as layers are added.

In my classes, I would ask students to think of their hand as an airplane, coming in for a landing — touch down on paper, then lift, then try again, until you see the faintest of a mark. This will be the light pressure desired.

The type of “mark” is referred to as an “Elliptical Oval/Circle”. By using a light pressure, and slowly coloring in a flat oval motion (pancake image) will begin the layering process.

(This is how “everyone” should color - even young children with crayons!)

Coverage: A “complete” coverage is necessary to fill in ALL SPACES within these elliptical ovals on the paper. The Colored Pencil **MUST** be sharpened to a very sharp point at all times. This helps keep the pressure light and will fill in the small spaces lightly with the circle motion of the coloring technique. I suggest beginning by coloring a very short length (1/4”) across, and check to see if all spaces are completely filled in. Always coloring in one direction - smooth coverage with the very light pressure.

Layering: The light pressure controls the amount of wax that is put down onto the paper surface. This is very important because of the number of layers needed to bring up the desired colors the artist is seeking to achieve. There could be 9 - 18 layers in one area of color! If the beginning layers of color are “dark” due to heavy pressure, then the wax will not allow any more layers to be added, making the artwork muddy.

Layering is also how the colors are darkened. Since all pressure is light - pushing hard with the pencil to make an area “dark” is not the correct application of a colored pencil! Instead, we use a light pressure to layer the different shades of color to develop the painting. (A Painter uses this layering in oil + acrylic painting, which is why we are called “Colored Pencil Painters” since we also use this layering technique. Colored pencil artists work from light to dark as it is easiest to see the values in these layers. It is a slow process and allows for relaxation of the mind when working!

Finally, I always ask beginners to hold their colored pencil as if they were “writing their name.” Since one has been doing this since they were young, it is the most comfortable position to begin using Colored Pencils. It does not matter if you are right-handed or left-handed. Hold the pencil the same way you sign your name - and your control will be easier, the pressure will be light, and you will be able to focus on the coverage and layering techniques much easier to create quality artwork!