

Art Techniques

Crayon

Crayons are marvelous things, vastly underutilized in and out of the classroom. They are versatile, with a vast range of colors, and there are many techniques that can be created by using them.

Crayon Resist: Color a design heavily with crayons, using pressure. Once the drawing is complete, wash watercolor over the crayon drawing. Using a brush dipped in watercolor start at the top of the page and slowly and gently pull the brush from one edge of the paper to the other. Lay the next line of color in the same way but just touching the previous line of color. Repeat until the bottom of the page is reached. Do not worry about the crayon drawing, just wash over it. The crayon will resist the water because it is based with wax. Use light paint over dark crayons and dark paint over light crayons. Paint with one color or several. Keep the paint thin so it will easily flow across the paper.

Hint: For a different effect, try painting on wet paper. Immerse the paper/drawing in a water bath and drain, then wash color over paper. Another interesting effect is to use white crayon to draw. Then, when the watercolor wash is applied, the drawing appears almost like magic. Working over a pad of paper made of newsprint will make it easier for your students to apply the crayon with more even pressure.

Crayon Etching: Completely coat a sheet of sturdy drawing paper or tag board with different colors of crayons (lighter or brighter colors work best; avoid black). Remember to firmly press the crayons as you work. Brush away crayon flecks. Then, add a tablespoon of liquid soap to a pint of black tempera thinned to the consistency of milk. Lightly apply it over the top of crayon. Dry it overnight. Draw a picture by etching or scratching through the black layer of crayon. An “engraving tool” might be a paper clip, nail or other found tool. Oil pastels can be added for a richer effect.

Hint: Pre-test the tempera over crayon before using it with your students. If it is too thick, the tempera can crack. When applying the colors, lay down the color in one direction, and then switch and lay it down in another. This will ensure a solid layer of color. Working over a pad of paper made of newsprint will make it easier for your students to apply the crayon with more even pressure.

Crayon Encaustic: Melt small broken pieces of crayons. Place in a muffin tin set in water over a warming tray. When crayons are melted, paint can be applied with cotton swabs designated for each color. Work over a sketch made on white cardboard and apply melted colors. Encourage students to take their time, layering their work with colors into a thick impasto. When layers are built up, the work can be embellished by scratching through the upper layers to those below (as in the Crayon Engraving Technique above).

Hint: Keep a careful eye on the melted crayons. If they get cool they will be frustrating to use. Water must not be allowed to boil away. Don't crowd work stations.

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Printmaking

Printmaking involves a variety of techniques from simple stamping to more technical processes.

Although some printmaking lessons can be completed in one session, others work best if divided into separate sessions: designing/making the plate and printing.

You will need:

newspapers or magazines
Plexiglas or Formica
brayers

water soluble printing ink
paper for printing
spoons

General Printing Procedures:

Before any printing occurs, demonstrate the printing process completely. Emphasize that everyone needs to keep work stations clean. Group students into teams of 4-6 and choose one of the students to be a monitor. The monitor will be the only student who may apply ink.

Printing Stations: Each printing station should be stocked with enough tools and supplies for a team of approximately six students. Any exposed surface should be covered in newsprint or brown paper. Ink travels quickly – it is as if it has a mind of its own. Because of this, it is VERY IMPORTANT to keep all surfaces clean and neat at all times. There are four basic work areas at each printing station. They are:

Ink Reservoir

Arrangement: There should be a thin piece of Plexiglas or Formica on which to ink the brayer. The brayer should have a “home” on the Plexiglas or Formica with the handle positioned away from the ink. Ink should be nearby.

Activity: The monitor should squeeze an inch or two of ink onto the surface. Each student then rolls the brayer into the ink, side to side, forward and back until the roller is smoothly coated with ink.

Inking the Plate

Arrangement: Next to the ink reservoir, arrange a pile of newspapers or magazines so that the pages can be easily turned over as each student prints their work.

Activity: At this station, the student places the printing plate or block on a fresh sheet of newsprint, and taking the ink-loaded brayer, rolls the ink onto his block until the entire surface is covered. When the block is completely covered, the student will carefully move the block to where it will be printed. Before the student leaves, he or she should remove the dirty sheet of newsprint for the next printer.

Printing

Arrangement: Set up another stack of newspapers or magazines the same way as the first. Place the clean printing paper on the side of this newsprint pile the furthest away from the ink. Tools such as spoons and brayers used for printing (these need to be kept clean) should be easily at hand. Make sure there is a nearby trashcan.

Activity: Here the student will put a clean sheet of paper on their plate or block, and using their hands, the bowl of a spoon or a clean brayer, they will rub the paper into the ink on the plate or block. To use a spoon, slip your index finger firmly into the bowl of the spoon and rub using the rounded bottom of the spoon. This allows more control, and prevents tearing. The student then "pulls" the print from the plate or block and places it on a clean piece of newsprint that he or she will use to carry the print to the Drying Station.

Drying Station

Arrangement: This can be a clothesline, with clothespins, strung across part of the classroom. Near the clothesline should be a clean surface so that the student can lay down the work for a moment to collect clothespins. The newsprint under the print can then be recycled back into the process. If you have a flat surface for the drying station, prints should be laid down to dry with their newsprint support. A place for blocks or plates to dry should be designated as well.

Activity: The student either hangs or lays his print to dry. If he or she hangs the print, the newsprint that has been used to carry the print should be recycled. Once the print has been taken care of, the printing plate should be collected, taken to the drying station and allowed to dry.

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Watercolor

Watercolor can be difficult to master. Yet each year watercolor paint-boxes are on just about every back-to-school list. The difference between a successful watercolor experience and a frustrating one is taking the time to learn some of the necessary skills. It is an art form that improves over time. Kids should have repeated experiences, and should be encouraged to experiment, try out new ideas and have fun. Don't worry about creating masterpieces the first time out. Take time to demonstrate basic skills. Show wet on wet, wet on dry, washes, brush stroke techniques, and mixing colors.

You will need:

watercolors (if you can, tube watercolors work best)

water containers (wide base)

watercolor brushes (of varying and different sizes)

damp cloth towels

damp sponge

paper (watercolor paper is best, but any good paper that will hold water without too much wrinkling)

two-large buckets (one for clean & the other for dirty water)

chalk, crayon, pencil, felt tip pen and charcoal (optional for trying different techniques)

General Watercolor Procedures

Before getting started, set up a work station for 3-4 students. Each station should include 2-3 different sized brushes, water in a wide-based container (to prevent spilling) and paper. A half cup of water is sufficient. Once work has begun, students should remain at their stations.

Ideas for Learning About Watercolor

Experiment with the Brush: Encourage students to try thin lines using the very tip of the brush or thicker lines using more of the side of a brush. Suggest that they try going from a very thin line to a thick one in the same stroke, and vice versa. Try making dots with a brush – small, larger, and larger still. Draw a simple object with the brush using thick and thin lines.

Experiment with Color: Mix colors. For example, what happens when warm colors mix with cool colors; two primary colors are mixed; and so on. What happens when you mix several colors? Apply a color and after it dries, apply another one to see what happens.

Experiment with Water: Moisten the paper with a sponge – apply some color and see what happens. Lay one very wet color down next to another wet color and see what happens. Try a very wet brush full of color on top of a very dry color. Paint a section of the paper one color and before it dries sprinkle some water onto it with your fingers to see what happens.

Experiment with Mixed-Media: Paint a wash of color over crayon or chalk. Draw with charcoal, ink or felt tip pen over a dried color wash. Draw a picture with a pencil and then lay transparent washes (water-thinned paint) over it so that the lines can still be seen.

Some General Rules:

To create white, leave the paper white.

Mixing all the colors together usually results in a very dirty mud color.

Work from light to dark (correcting a dark mistake is harder).

Cleaning-Up:

Give a 5-minute warning before it is time to stop.

One student collects the brushes, another the dirty water with a bucket and a third the paint.

Allow paint boxes to dry before cleaning later with a few drops of waters to save pigment.

Brushes should be cleaned and then stood up on end to dry.

Paintings can be left on desks to dry or carefully carried to a place where they can dry flat.

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