

Paper Doll Coloring Tips

Colored Pencils

Artist grade wax-based colored pencils like Prismacolor and Derwent are my old standby favorite way to “paint” paper dolls. They come in just about every color, and if you work in layers – one thin color over another – you can get any color you want. Better yet, because you can sharpen the pencils to a point, you can get great control for the tiny areas we work with.

Some colors smear worse than others, so it’s a good idea to start with light colors and work toward darker ones. Cover the parts of the paper that you’re not working on with a clean sheet of paper to protect it from smears, oils from your hands and flakes of color. Be sure to use your sharpener away from your work surface. I’ve spoiled any number of things by sprinkling them with colored sharpener dust.

Watercolor Pencils

Artist grade watercolor pencils by the same quality makers of the wax-based pencils (above) are a fairly new love for me, but they have been more than worth the time and monetary investment to learn to use them. I was first attracted to them because I hoped they would give me a way to get a large, smooth area of color more quickly than I can do it with wax-based pencils. They are useful for that purpose, but they are useful for a hundred other purposes as well. I use them often for shading delicate, semi-transparent fabrics, for skin tones, and more. In addition, for facial and other fine details, I often scribble a heavy area on scrap paper with dry colored pencil, dampen it and pick up color with a tiny brush. In essence, I’m using the watercolor paint exactly like dry pan watercolors but without the trouble of pulling out an additional set of art supplies.

Verithin Pencils

Verithins are thin, hard colored pencils by Prismacolor. They don’t come in an enormous variety of colors, but they are wonderful for small, delicate areas.

Markers

I don’t use markers except the tiny .005 micropoint liners for eyelashes and other small details. However, it’s possible to get a finer, more delicate line with a brush and paint, so I only use the markers when I’m feeling lazy or the job is fine, but not too fine.

Highlights

Highlights can be tricky. My first choice is to plan carefully and leave the highlights white in first place. I always plan to use masking fluid for highlights when I’m using watercolor pencils, but I don’t use it often enough, so it goes globby on me, and I get disgusted with it. Other artists swear by it. It works beautifully when it works, but it doesn’t work often for me. So I have to have Plans B, C and so on. My favorite Plan B is thinned out acrylic paint. I just use the paint in the little bottles from the craft section – pour out a few drops and add a drop or two of water, stir with a toothpick and test it. Nothing very mysterious about that. Plan C is fix my mistakes with Photoshop on my computer – doesn’t help the original much, but the copies can be much improved. These days, Plan C is becoming my plan of choice more and more often.