

Apple in 3 Colors

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We all love the big boxes of colored pencils in every imaginable hue, but you can create vibrant, complex colors from just three pencils. By selecting specific versions of red, blue, and yellow, we are creating a triad of colors placed evenly around the color wheel and incorporating the secondary colors of orange, green, and violet.

It is intriguing to attempt photo-realism, but for this workshop, we are focused on just three ideas: mixing colored pencils like paint, developing a full range of values from light to dark, and creating a painterly expression of our apple. We won't use any other tools or blenders. Let's see what we can do with JUST the pencils!



MATERIAL LIST:

Three pencils: violet-red, green-blue, orange-yellow

Faber-Castell Polychromos:

Pink carmine (127)

Middle phthalo blue (15)

Dark cadmium yellow (108)

Prismacolor:

Magenta (930)

True blue (903)

Sunburst yellow (917)

Any other brand:

Red like a raspberry

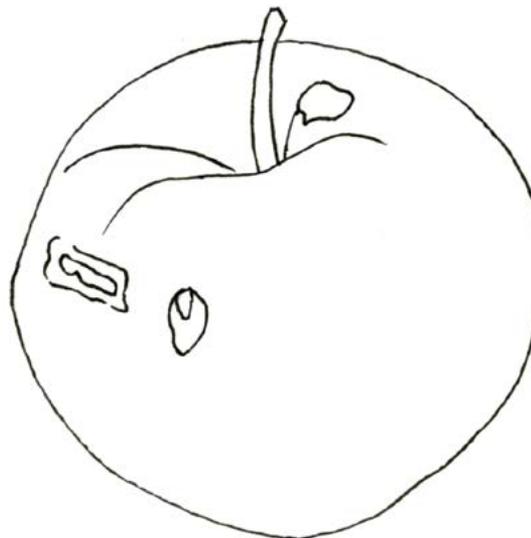
Blue like turquoise

Yellow like a school bus

- Paper: I suggest a Bristol vellum, which will accommodate lots of layers. Don't use a paper that is too rough or too smooth.

- Waxed paper
- Long point pencil sharpener
- HB graphite pencil

Photo reference & line art can be downloaded at:
www.coloredpencilworkshop.com

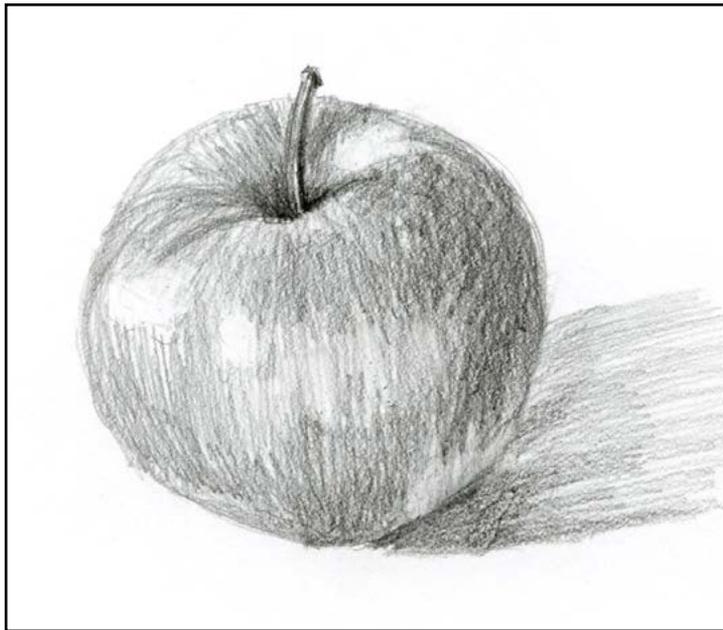
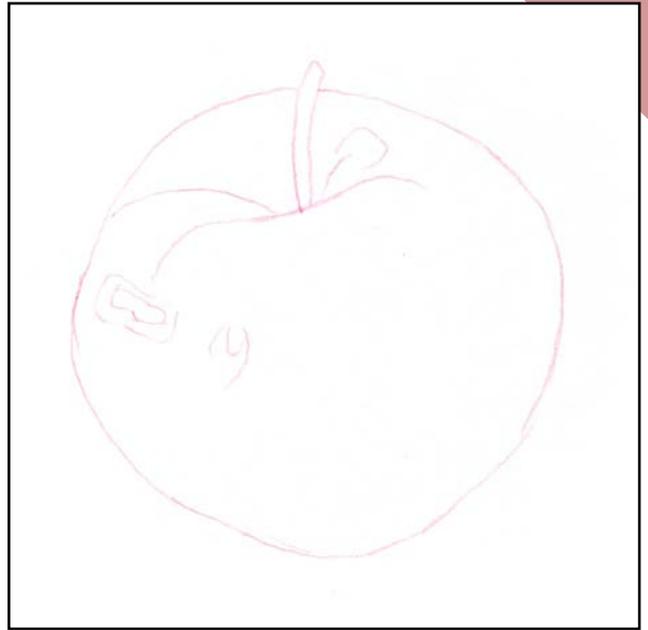


Step One:

LINE DRAWING

Looking at the photo reference, be sure to note the position and size of the shiny highlights, the shape of the darkest shadows, and the location from which the stem emerges from the apple. Copy the line drawing to your working paper using your red pencil and a very light touch.

Tip: The light red line will be absorbed into the colors of the drawing, eliminating the risk of a darker graphite line around the apple.



Step Two:

VALUE STUDY IN GRAPHITE

This quick plotting of the light on form will be your guide as you build light and shadow in color. Remember that an apple is basically a sphere, so all of the highlights and shading will follow that form. I sketched in the cast shadow at this point, but decided to leave it off in the color drawing. You can choose to add the shadow if you like.

Tip: Don't skip this step! It is easy to confuse color with shading, and this process will help you to see the difference.

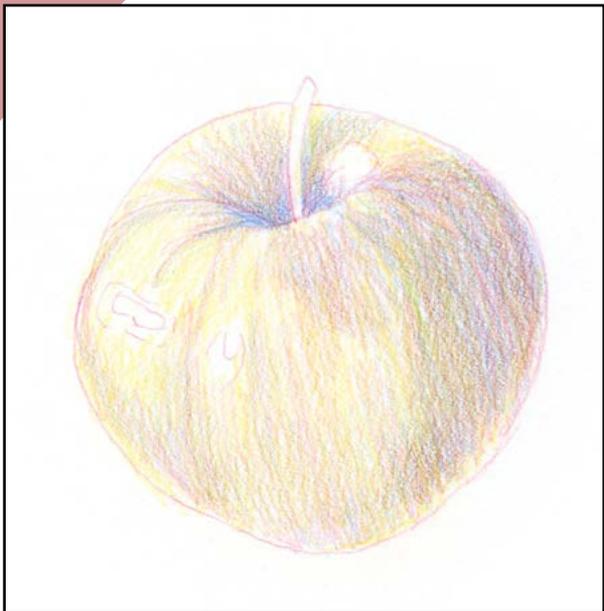
Step Three:

UNDERPAINTING

In this step, you'll recreate your value study in a slightly shorter range of values, establishing light and shading before you really build color. Use a combination of your red and blue to create a violet, the perfect shading color for a red apple. Add light layers one by one, taking care not to press too hard. This method will allow the colors to blend and reflect light. Can you see the color emerging from the mix?

Tip: Let your pencil strokes follow the curves of the apple, working between the stem end on top and the blossom end underneath. Keep your pencils very sharp and move your grip back on the pencil for a light touch—no harder than you would draw on the back of your hand. The pencil point will be at about a 45-degree angle from the paper.





Step Four:

LOCAL COLOR

What color is an apple when you bite into it? Pale yellow. That local color underlays and informs all of the other color on the fruit. Lay down a couple of light layers of yellow over the whole apple, including the shaded areas you have created, but avoiding color in the brightest highlights. This color will peek through the red and add depth and volume to the color.



Step Five:

BUILD COLOR

Working with the red, blue, and yellow, build the apple color gradually in light layers, working more blue into the shadows and more yellow into the lighter areas. Reinforce the shadows you laid down in Step 3 by adding more layers of blue and red. You are making the apple red at this stage.

Tip: Take your time. Add layers of color one by one rather than trying to speed the process by pressing hard. You will love the nuanced colors that emerge.



Step Six:

TEXTURE AND DETAIL

Let's pause and establish a few texture notes before we finish. The dark stem will be a combination of all three colors to make a rich brown. You are calling on the complementary colors inherent in the triad, mixing red with green (your blue and yellow combined) to create a brown. Pull out the dots on the apple by using waxed paper and sharp graphite pencil. Lay the waxed paper over the area and, using a light touch, draw the shape you wish to lift with a sharp graphite pencil on top of the waxed paper. The waxy layer in contact with your work will bind with the color on the page and gently lift that area. Add some yellow back into the dots you have created.



Tip: Keep a light touch with the graphite pencil on the waxed paper. If you press hard, you will force the color into the paper – the opposite of the desired lifting effect.



Step Seven:

FINISHING TOUCHES.

Using your red pencil at a slightly steeper angle of about 70 degrees and with a bit more pressure, work in a small elliptical pencil stroke to polish the apple and make it red. Clean up the apple edges with a very sharp red pencil and color back to the new edge as needed. Use a plastic eraser to remove any smudges from the paper around the apple.

Tip: Work on the edges from within the shape, rather than from the outside. You will be able to see the edge and can stay much closer to your original lines.

Bonus:

Ready for another challenge? Try the same colors and render a green apple or a pear. None of your pencils are green, but you can create beautiful green and all the shading you'll need from the same three pencils.

Wanting more? Draw the same apple with another triad of red, blue, and yellow. This time, use orange-red, violet-blue, and green-yellow. You will be surprised to find that with the secondary colors carried in with different primary colors, you'll get a remarkably similar result!

Faber-Castell Polychromos:

Light cadmium red (117)

Delft blue (141)

Yellow glaze (104)

Prismacolor:

Poppy red (922)

Ultramarine (902)

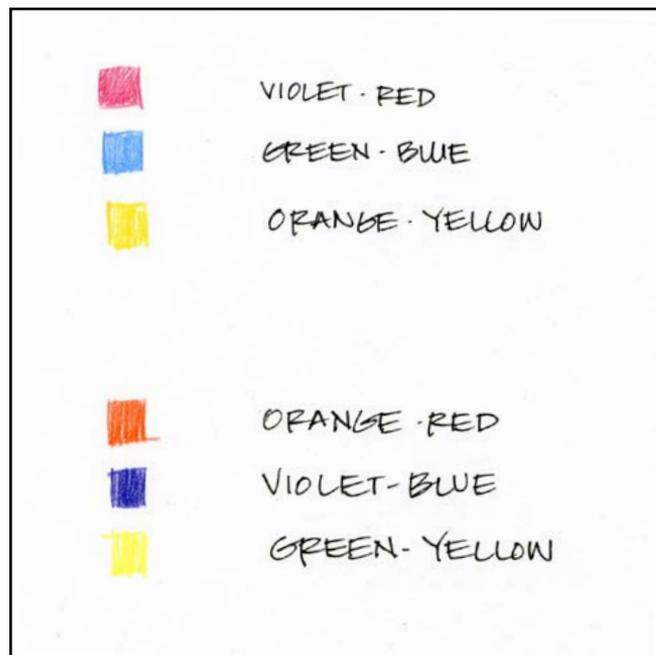
Lemon yellow (915)

Any brand of pencils:

Red like a tomato

Blue like lapis lazuli

Yellow like a lemon



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www.coloredpencilworkshop.com