



SEVEN CHAPTERS IN SEVEN DAYS

ILLUSTRATION:
A BEGINNER'S STARTING POINT



written by

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Welcome!

Welcome to the Free Illustration Course exclusive to Illustori subscribers. It's great to have you on board.

I am delighted to share with you, in seven chapters, the knowledge, tips and advice I have acquired over the years. In today's colourful and varied climate, illustration still thrives across the many forms of communication. The role of the illustrator is ever evolving. Through a series of 'chapters', you will get to explore with me all the basics tools and aspects of the business. It might inspire you to start a sketchbook, get out and draw in the great outdoors, discover a new medium or an exciting blog. You will gain a unique opportunity and discover new possibilities, which will take you on the next step of the 'illustrated road' to discovery.

CHAPTER ONE: Top Art Supplies You Can't Do Without

In this chapter, I will share with you the top supplies that I personally could not be without. I did not add brands because I will be adding links to a new **resources page on my website** so you will find all my recommended supplies very handily. I have joined a few select affiliate programmes, where I get a small commission on sales, but I only ever recommend art supplies that I personally LOVE to use and have brought me both joy and top quality results.

Top 7 Art Supplies for Illustrators Starting Out:

Art supplies are costly, no doubt about that. It is so easy to go into an art store, and become overwhelmed, and yet seduced by the choice. Those shiny new art supplies, gadgets and tubes of new paint beckon 'buy me', they say, 'I will come in handy'.

Then you part with your hard earned cash on stuff that you might try once and decide it doesn't suit your needs. Whether you paint in watercolours or acrylic, draw with graphite or charcoal, are a beginner or a pro, here are seven essential you don't want to be without.

1. Some Pens and Pencils

Most artists/illustrators own a 2B graphite pencil. I love Tombow and Blackwing pencils but to be honest a good old 2B Noris School Pencil will do the trick.

2B is good for general sketching and shading, a 6B is good for dark areas and shadows, and an H for lighter shading.

2. A Kneadable Eraser

Yes, you need a white eraser for rubbing out mistakes, especially if you want to start the sketch over. But you want a kneaded eraser too. These soft, pliable, putty-like blobs can be shaped in different ways so you can erase small details

or create subtle shading. Plus they also don't leave any annoying "crumbs" behind.

3. A Selection of Drawing Paper

Anything goes, from A4 printer paper for quick rough ideas to a cartridge pad in A4 or A3. Tracing paper comes in handy too

4. Paper Pads for Painting

Heavy paper stock is essential for painting. However, it depends on the type of paint you plan on using.

- a. For watercolours, gouache or ink there is the option to use a pre-stretched pad. Otherwise, you'll have to stretch your own heavy paper by soaking each sheet in water and then taping it with butchers tape to a board until it dries flat. This stops the paper from buckling and thus preventing the paint from pooling.
- b. For acrylics, you have a few good choices: heavyweight mixed media paper, (my personal preference), acrylic paper (slightly textured) or illustration board. Also, look at experimenting with painting on wood.

5. Palettes

A Stay Wet Palette: for acrylic or gouache paint. This paint dries very quickly and is therefore very wasteful if you plan on working for a few days, next morning your paint will harden to plastic. So you can either buy one or make one using an airtight container with a tight-fitting lid.

You will also need: Greaseproof Paper, Paper Towels and Water

Fold the paper towels and place into the bottom of the container. Add some water. Drain out excess. Cut greaseproof paper to size and place onto of the

soaking wet paper towels. Your paint will stay wet for a few days if you keep the lid **tightly on the container** when you are not using the paints.

Watercolours are fine to use on any palette or an old dinner plate.

6. Brushes

If you're painting in acrylics, these are your 'best bet' trio:

- A filbert for general painting and smoothing out details (a size 6 is perfect for medium size paintings).
- A flat wash brush (1 inch), mostly for painting backgrounds.
- A small liner brush for fine details.

For watercolours, your go-to brushes are:

- A medium or large sized flat brush, mostly for washes.
- A round brush (size 8, 10 or 14), for general painting.
- A liner brush (size 6), for smaller detail.
- Tiny brushes 2,3 or 4 for even finer detail.

7. Add Colour

Windsor and Newton designer gouache is popular with illustrators. Top artist quality paints are Golden fluid acrylics, QOR watercolours, Caran D'Ache Artist Quality Coloured Pencils or Polychomos Coloured Pencils. With paints, you don't need a ton of colours especially if you're a beginner. All you really need is at least one tube each of blue, red, brown and yellow. You can mix them to create new hues.

For example, you might just need:

- Phthalo blue

- Phthalo green
- Cadmium yellow
- Cadmium red
- Alizarin crimson
- Burnt umber
- Titanium Buff
- White

Titanium white is an opaque, bright white with a strong tinting power. Some manufacturers also sell a "mixing white", formulated to blend well with other colours.

Green

Greens can be tricky to mix with consistency. You need to be meticulous enough to note the colours and proportions you use and with time it gets easier, promise

CHAPTER TWO: Bothersome Illustration Drawing Problems and How to Fix Them.

If I knew how to 'fix' all these issues with a magic wand I would try! However, forewarned is forearmed. In today's chapter, I have added a list of common problems that I have come to recognise in my course participants work over (as well as my own in the early days!) of the past 20 plus years of teaching.

Poor Drawing Skills.

This includes figures with awkward proportions. In books that require continuity, for example, picture books, characters that are inconsistently drawn or painted, from page to page, is a BIG one!

Poor perspective is a problem for those who wish to draw in a *realistic* rather than *stylised* style.

Solution: There is really no substitute for learning to draw well. Spend an intensive year putting in the time to really get your skills rock-solid. And keep them fresh by drawing from life if possible. For a particular drawing that you have problems with, turn it upside down, or hold it up to the mirror to see if you can see what's wrong with it. Keep sketchbooks and draw from observation MORE than you draw from your imagination. After a while, you will notice that your imaginative drawing will also improve.

Garish Colours.

With beginners, colours may be too garish, too weak and diluted, or not diluted enough as in watercolours. The use of black is often problematic. Artists mix black from multiple colours rather than using a tube of black paint. This creates a harsh, dead area. Instead, learn to mix a few good blacks from the three primaries: equal parts of red, yellow, and blue paint mixed together on a palette. You can also mix complementary colours like yellow and purple, blue and orange, red and green. Mixing blue and brown can also result in a wonderfully deep black.

Solution: Get a workbook, on colour theory. Learn to use complementary colours for darkening and shading (green shadows on a red sweater, etc.). Study illustrators whom you admire, and make your own colour combinations. Keep a colour swatch notebooks for your own reference. Create combinations that you think will work together. Look at fashion

designers, interiors, nature, gift wrap – anything where colour inspires you and make note of the combinations.

Incorrect Use of Medium.

Sometimes the medium controls the artist rather than the other way around!

Solution: Practice with a new medium until you're confident and fluid with using it. Study other illustrators who use this medium skilfully.

Or, switch from your usual medium to find one that's better for your approach. Practice is the ONLY way.

Hesitant Faltering Hand.

Some artists create very delicate work with great authority. Others look like they just aren't sure what they're doing.

Solution: Do the drawing multiple times until it feels familiar to you and you can reproduce it with confidence. Use tracing paper to do drafts over and over until you can really say what you mean. This is especially true with character studies and consistency in body movement and expression.

Static, Stiff Drawings.

In some cases, even though you may have drawn figures quite accurately, there is no movement in the piece at all. Characters look like wax dummies! This is often a result of a rigid observance to photo references.

Solution: Move away from *depending so heavily* on photos and Google images. Sketch the subject or setting from life where possible. Then and only then stylise to your style. If you have to use a photo or a Google image, sketch it first. Then do the illustration from your sketch, not from the photo.

CHAPTER THREE: Where And How To Draw On Location

Here we are almost halfway through at chapter three. Over the past twenty years of teaching at DIT, guest lecturing, Visual Art Boot Camps, as well as my newly formed **iLLUSTORi Academy**, I have found the BEST places in Dublin to draw. I Apologies to those outside of the BIG SMOKE, but all my courses are in Dublin (for now!)

1. The Natural History Museum, Merrion Square:
2. The Museum of Decorative Arts and History
3. The National Print Museum
4. The Botanical Gardens
5. St. Stephens Green
6. Heuston Station
7. Bewley's Grafton Street

Here are some tips on drawing at these places and what you will need in your Art bag. Having the right tools can enhance the experience and make it even more enjoyable. Urban Sketching is drawing or painting on location, indoors or out, capturing what is seen from direct observation. It's important to select the right type of paper for the right types of mediums. Initially, don't get overly bogged down on this as it may lead to procrastination!

Over time you can build up a better 'kit' and I promise it will make a huge difference in the outcome and quality of your work. For example, if you use watercolour on a sketch paper, the sheet will buckle and curl and won't hold the colour properly since the paper isn't manufactured to handle that type of media. Sketch paper is generally too lightweight for watercolour and doesn't have the proper surface strength to hold lots of water. If you start matching the right papers with the mediums you're using, you're already going to be one step ahead with your art.

1. Sketch Pads

Sketch pads are great for capturing a scene quickly with dry media and drawing pens. They come with lots of sheets so you can practice, over and over, and make lots of sketches in one affordable pad.

2. Mixed Media Paper

If you like to make ink lines then add watercolour, this is the paper for you. It combines the characteristics of watercolour paper with the finish of a drawing sheet, creating the ultimate paper for combined mediums.

I use 300 Series Mixed Media Pads

It contains a 90lb (190gsm) medium weight paper that is great for sketching. It comes in a wire bound sketchbook format with lots of sheets, making it ideal for urban sketching.



3. Toned Sketch Paper

Starting your artwork using mid-range paper allows for unique sketching & drawing possibilities by providing the middle value that would otherwise need

to be rendered by the artist. A wider range of values from light to dark can be used, and the middle tone makes it easier for the artist to deliberately place shadows and highlights.

Keeping the value of the paper as one of the values in the drawing not only saves time but allows the artist to use graphite or other dark media to push darker values and white pencils or other light media to add highlights, making sketches and drawings pop.

Strathmore makes a range of toned papers that are suitable for Urban Sketching:

400 Series Toned Sketch Pads in Tan & Gray

This 80lb (118gsm) sketch paper in mid-tone tan and grey is perfect for pen and ink, coloured pencil, or dry media urban sketching.

400 Series Toned Sketch Art Journals

If you'd prefer a book format versus a wire bound pad format, we also carry the Toned Gray and Toned Tan paper in hardbound and softcover books. The Smyth-sewn binding allows them to open wide and lay flatter.



Toned Mixed Media Paper

This paper is in the same as the Toned Sketch, but comes in a heavier weight and is also designed to handle wet media. It comes in mid-tone grey, tan and blue, and has a vellum drawing surface. The 400 Series Toned Mixed Media Pads

The Toned Mixed Media paper is 184lb (300gsm) and is available in multiple pad sizes, including a handy 6"x8" size.

4. Landscape Watercolor Art Journals

I recommend 400 Series Watercolor Hardbound Art Journal

Weight: 140 lb. (22" x 30" x 500 sheets) 300 g/m² Surface: Cold press

Media Applications: Watercolor, gouache and acrylic

This watercolour paper has a strong surface that is ideal for watercolour, gouache and acrylic. The natural white colour and traditional cold press surface allow for fine and even washes, as well as lifting and scraping applications. Acid-free.

OTHER MUST HAVE SUPPLIES:



Mechanical Pencils, Pencils, Coloured Pencils and Erasers

Some people prefer mechanical pencils as they don't need to be sharpened. The sharpener is one less thing to pack and you'll always have a fine point without messy pencil shavings. If you prefer wood-cased pencils then a

Here are a few samples of graphite pencils that artists use in sketching. Top to bottom:

Permanent Ink Pens

You can make very fine details with small tip sizes and bolder, thicker lines with a larger tip. A good rule of thumb is to bring 3 pen sizes: fine, medium and thick. Sakura Microns are a top favourite of mine they give the crisp clean lines.

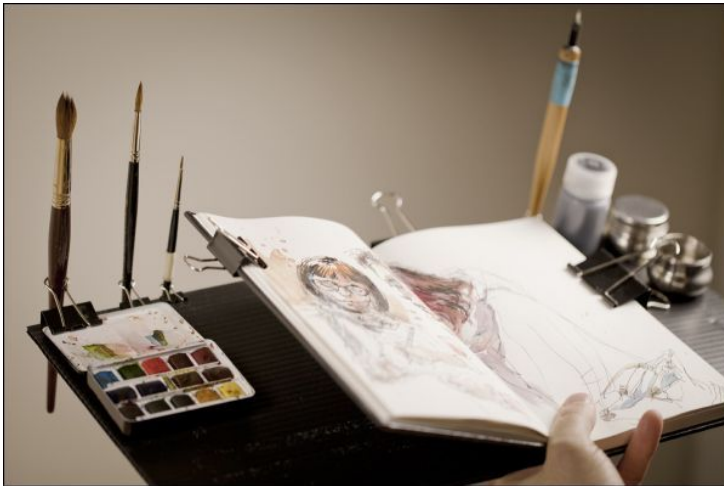
Watercolour can be added over the top or you can start with watercolour and add ink lines once it's dry.

Travel-size Watercolour Set

These are portable watercolour sets that come with a pan of watercolour paints, a refillable water brush, and a small mixing pan. They are small and sleek and can easily fit into travel bags.

Binder Clips

Binder clips come really in handy. They keep your pages from flying in the breeze and can also be used to clip your pens and pencils to your pad for easier storage.



Stool

Depending on the type of travel, a stool is an excellent accessory to bring if possible. It can be super handy for setting up your sketching station and prevent you from having to sit on the ground for hours.



BASIC STOOL



FANCY CHAIR

TIP:

it's important to remember sunscreen, a hat, lots of drinking water, and potentially bug repellent if the weather is hot!

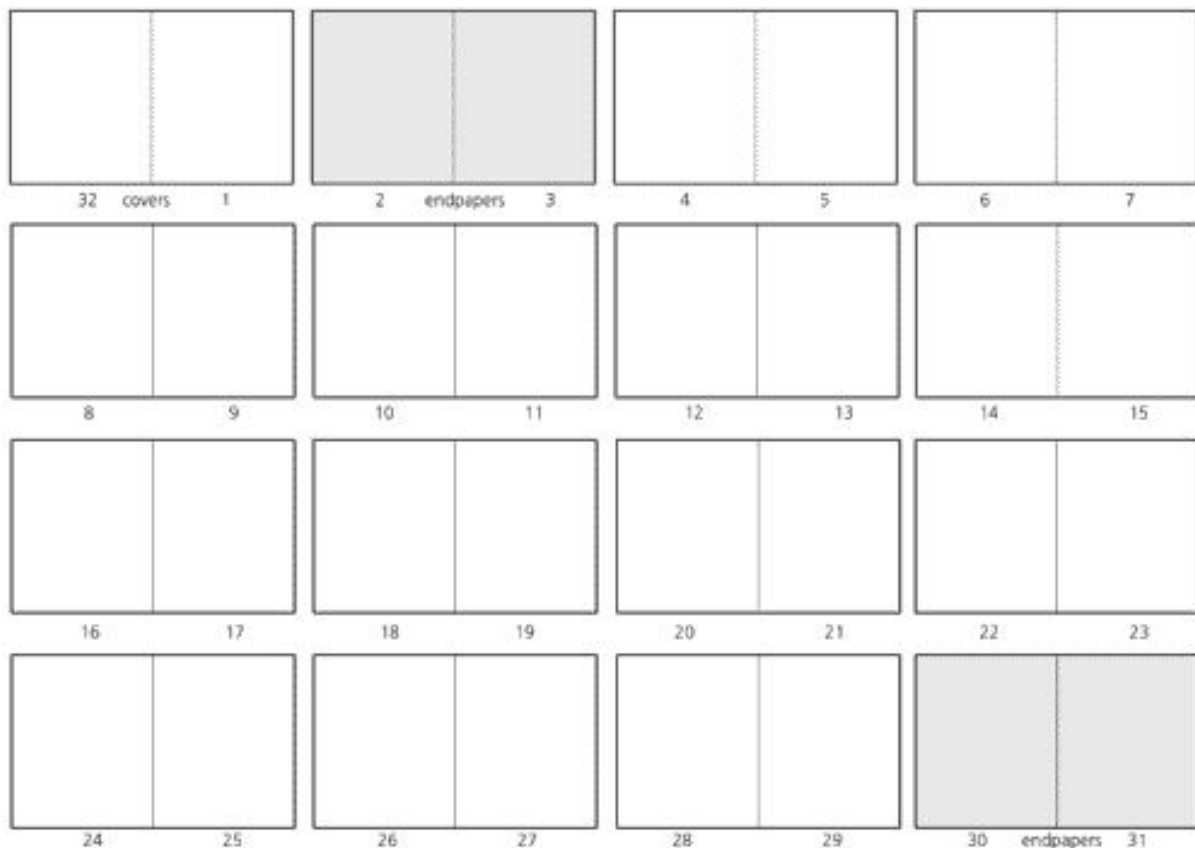
CHAPTER FOUR: Picture book art, storyboarding and planning.

This subject is arguably the most popular subject, but not one to take 'lightly'. In other words, what looks like a 'walk in the park' has proved to be as mind-bendingly gratifying as it is head-wreckingly challenging! Here we walk you through the first steps of where to start. It is by no means a comprehensive guide, but rather a starting point in a world of 'information saturation.' Once you know the basics you can go from there.

So, this is a typical layout for a 32-page picture book.

Page 32 and page 1 are in fact the back and the front cover.

Page 2 and 3, 310m and 31 are what are called endpapers (patterned themed paper designs) front and back of the book. Page 4 is usually the half-title page for copyright information etc and page 5 is usually the Title Page: Book title and may be illustrated in some way. This gives you 12 DOUBLE pages or 24 single pages or more usual, a mix of both to work with



A SIMPLE FORMULA...

A good picture book story almost always has a character with a conflict. He resolves the conflict (on his or her own) and in so doing changes or grows in some way, and learns a lesson.

However, the lesson must be subtle and not told in a didactic or patronising way. Most picture books are made up of approx 12 double page spreads. A "spread" is both pages of an open book. A picture book should have about 2-3 characters and one main strong character. Allow your settings the scope to give the illustrator good opportunities and create a mood. There are usually two endings to a picture book: physical and emotional.

1. What did the characters go through?

2. What is their response?

The 'physical resolution' means the solution to the puzzle, and so the plot is resolved. The 'emotional resolution' means:

1. How did the characters feel as they went through this experience?
2. How has the experience changed them? E.g. At the beginning they might have felt worried; at the end, relieved or happy.

SO TO BEGIN.....

- Have a focus! You need to ask yourself: "What is my book about?" State your idea in one sentence. If you cannot explain your book in one sentence, it's too complex and unfocused.
- What is the situation at the beginning of your story? Put it into one sentence.
- What is your character's problem? Stick to one problem for a picture book.
- What will be resolved by the end of the story?
- Don't preach! Are you trying to teach a lesson? If so, reconsider...
- Is the central theme of your story childlike, or does an adult solve the character's problem? If so, reconsider.

IF YOU GET STUCK use this successful formula, it applies to the majority of picture books written today:

1. Create your character with a fault, problem or dilemma that makes him/her likeable or appealing. A character that evokes warmth, compassion, humour...
2. Put lots of obstacles in the way. E.g. he/she has to do something extremely hard, scary, or even something he/she normally dislikes, but something that he/she really WANTS or NEEDS to do. Or he/she really

wants something more than anything else in the world...how will she get it?

3. Set him/her on the right path to do it, but with more and more obstacles (funny, silly, brave, etc) in his way...
4. Finally let him/her achieve it, BUT in the most spectacular way!

For your PICTURE BOOK submission pack to an agent of a publisher you need the following:

1. A sketchbook showing progress and development of your work as a children's book illustrator, and including your project 's evolution.
2. A PDF picture book dummy, ready for submission to include FINISHED pencil drawings, fully worked out pages and double page spreads plus placement of type. This will amount to approx 12 spreads (24 pages) plus endpaper designs and mock-up cover if possible.
3. Two fully realised double page spreads or a mix of double spreads and single page illustrations. These will be in full colour in a medium of your choice.
4. Manuscript and cover letter.

Best of Luck!

CHAPTER FIVE: Sketchbooks, practice and motivation

When I was a kid, I use to draw things upside down, intentionally from the age of three to five. I know this because I lived with my family at my grandmother's house until I was five. She kept old newspapers under the couch. I drew on every spare column and advertisement that had blank bits to draw on. At times I cut up her old newspapers and magazines with her kitchen scissors and made 'pictures' with them. I didn't know I was making collages. The upside down pictures were created to challenge her, my favourite was a pram. My sister was born when I was four so this was my favourite new thing to draw...upside down: 'What's this Nana? I'd say. I remember her saying 'Oh gosh, I have nooooo idea, is it a banana? Or perhaps an elephant?' I knew she was feigning bewilderment, but I indulged her as it made us both giggle.

I needed nothing but my imagination, my limited material resources only served to increase my inventful mind. I would ask, "What shall I draw today?" A monster she would say, or a bear with a sore head. Then I would giggle at the thought of it and would draw a bear with a sore head. Easy peesy right?

So, how do we go from *that* confidence and joy of creating to fear? Fear of rejection, fear of not making anything good enough to 'share', fear of messing up a new, expensive sketchbook gift? Fear of finding out we suck at drawing, fear of discovering we are good at drawing (then what!?) fear fear fear.

I hold up my hands I have had the 'fear' bug too. On and off for years.

So I created a self-project, to hold myself accountable, and start a sketchbook not to share but just for ME. When I feel ready I might start to share, but initially, it is best to just start with a cheap sketchbook of medium weight cartridge paper

1. Pick an Area of Interest:

- a. A Bone of Contention (we all have one!)
- b. A Field of Inquiry (something to take apart visually and discover more and more about it.)
- c. A Family Photograph (as a starting point to discover more, either real or imagined) i.e. that picture of you aged two sitting in a biscuit tin, your cousin smiling to the camera wearing only one shoe, your mother in her youth on holiday. Each moment in time tells us a tale or allows us the freedom to elaborate and make it up as we go along.

You may come up with your own versions of the above but, allow the kind of possibilities that push you past the easy, low-hanging fruit. Keep going...YOU are the director of your project. When you feel excited, then go a bit further, then stop. When you stick with the same subject for long enough, you are forced to explore ALL options.

2. Keep a Schedule

The key to success is to keep at it, all the way to the end. Use a big wall calendar, and each day that you works on your sketchbook, put a big red X over that day in the calendar. The act of X-ing out each day is not only rewarding, but it creates a visual line of unbroken red X's. Creating real or imagined deadlines can be a strong motivator. Do it every day for 21 days...it apparently takes 21 days to form a habit...are YOU ready?

3. Share Your Work When You Are Ready

Beyond getting noticed, sharing your work is a way to find a community of other like-minded artists, a way of feeling connected to others because if you are not in art college or on a course, you probably spend a lot of your time drawing in isolation. Even if you are in further education, build up confidence through practice and open an Instagram account. If time is an issue, post once a week.

4. Don't Overthink It

A self-project does not have to be a daunting notion at all, on the contrary. Start with a pencil and a sketchbook and let your imagination take you back to that place, where fear was running out of space to draw, or a wasted purple marker!

So why not **Pick an Area of Interest** then set some deadlines for yourself and start posting!

5. Further Thoughts to Consider:

Keeping a sketchbook is a great way of keeping track of creative ideas and getting in the habit of regular drawing. Most artists keep sketchbooks in which they experiment with ideas and collect drawings of their environment. Sketchbooks are like visual diaries for artists. Artists often use them for planning and developing their work. Remember that not every drawing you do needs to be a work of art. Fill yours with doodles, words, writing, photographs, found images, experiments with colour etc.

Before you sit down to draw, decide what your intention is for the session. While trying something challenging is usually worthwhile, in the beginning, simple subjects can often be rewarding. Try to find something that reflects your own interests and taste.

6. A Look at The Past:

- The most famous artist's sketchbooks are those of Leonardo da Vinci. They are filled with drawings, diagrams and written notes of things he saw and ideas he came up with.
- Picasso produced 178 sketchbooks in his lifetime. He often used his sketchbooks to explore themes and make compositional studies until he found the right idea and subject for a larger painting on canvas.

- Henry Moore, a British sculptor, filled one of his sketchbooks with drawings of sheep that often wandered by the window outside his studio.

7. Sketchbooks Are Your Friend:

Carry your sketchbook around with you whenever you can. Look for things to record in it. Remember that as an artist/illustrator, you have to look closely at things. If you are researching for a book, you may have to do some location drawing. You may find it difficult at first to stand still and draw something outside, especially if there are people around. Don't mind them or any comments they might make. And don't worry if some of your drawings don't turn out like you want them to. You can make mistakes in your sketchbook and you'll get better with practice. Drawing requires courage!

Try to fill one page of your sketchbook every day. Getting started is always difficult, especially when you have a new, empty book. If you don't know where to start, try one of the following ideas. Once you've completed your first sketchbook, others will be easier to do.

- Many artists choose a theme to follow in their sketchbooks. For example, you might draw scenes around your neighbourhood or you might decide to focus on portraits of family and friends in your first sketchbook. Or, you might draw views you see when looking out windows (something that Henri Matisse, a French artist, liked to do).
- Some people have collections of things. A collection can make a good theme for a sketchbook. If you have a collection of old toys or cameras (whatever) draw pictures of them in your sketchbook. (Did you know Andy Warhol liked to draw pictures of toys?) You can also draw pictures of shoes, old hats, tools, kitchen utensils, or other items found around your house.
- Your sketchbook can be a place to invent new characters

- If you have a dog or cat as a pet, try drawing pictures of it in your sketchbook. Don't worry if your pet moves before you finish your drawing. As you get to know your pet better by drawing it, you'll probably be able to go back and finish any uncompleted drawings of it later on.
- Drawing things from unusual points of view is good practice for an artist. For example, try drawing trees while sitting directly underneath them.
- If you go on a family trip or holiday, take your sketchbook along to draw. It can become a record of your journey and the things you saw.
- You don't have to draw things you see in your sketchbook. It can be a place to make designs and experiment with different types of lines and shapes.

CHAPTER SIX: Where and how to find inspiration and visual referencing.

'Inspiration' is such an elusive word. In this chapter, I will attempt to answer: | 'Where do you find it?' I am often asked this question by my students. And I don't blame them. It is as if 'inspiration' lives in an enchanted forest, (I wish) and that you could take the 47A bus there, or better still, travel to it on a magic carpet. Of course, once you got there you gathered your 'inspiration' in a wicker basket and skipped off, delighted with your magic 'compound' ready to sprinkle like fairy dust onto your blank sketchbook or canvas.

Of course, I jest. But inspiration is a reference point that jump-starts the creative process. It is a starting point for producing captivating, and hopefully thought-provoking solutions in response to either a given brief, a commission, a self-assigned project or developmental work.

To be honest, it is often a mystery, so don't sweat; hence the 'magic compound' reference! It can be a rare moment of joy, a sporadic thought, a fleeting spontaneous feeling, irregular as gold dust and then BOOM!! and after a 'dry spell,' several 'five star' ideas arrive simultaneously, all fighting for your attention. Familiar?

I'll almost certainly spend the first half of the day lost for good ideas. A voice will say things like 'boring'...or 'that's total crap' or 'so hackneyed!'

No, I'm not someone who wakes up feeling inspired by the world each day
— I wish I was. The reality sometimes looks like this:

OK, Adrienne, you have a book illustration to start. (starting is the worst) The first one you did was was good, can you surpass it? Then my voice might continue... 'but **was** the first one good?' Should I redo it? Or maybe do the second piece and then see? OK, but first I need that new brush pen I saw online somewhere, that will help for sure. And those amazing watercolours that are trending on Instagram. Great value! I'll order them on Amazon or see if my local art supplier has them in stock. Then I go online and get sucked into the vortex....more time lost. Then my other activities, emailing, running a small art school, workshops, website issues, appointments, dog walking, cooking, cleaning, shopping EAT my day like a selfish monster. On good days, time flies and I cannot leave my desk. I forget to eat and the dog misses her lunch. I am in the 'magic zone' and it feels like nothing on earth.

But more often we need inspiration from somewhere!

For me, inspiration doesn't strike at a heaven-sent moment, so whenever I come across something I love, I'll add it to my Google Photos, categorise it and forget about it. [Google Photos](#)

I also use [Pinterest](#), and categorise by boards. I keep a lot of these in 'secret' mode as I don't want to clutter my page with random stuff I am working on. If it is time sensitive, I will delete the board when I am finished. At the moment I

am co-writing and illustrating a Young Adult novel based in Dublin and Brazil. So I have a lot of references for that. It is a trilogy so I will have this board for a long time!

In an instant, I can browse the paintings, photographs, objects or illustrations that have grabbed my attention over the years, from contemporary to historical artists, from famous to unknown, and let my mind just wander.

My ever-growing and my ever-evolving process is a curated resource that is perfectly bespoke to my tastes and interests, one that I can dip into when I need it most. This, along with my life long collection of art and design books, has been a lifesaver. Of course, gallery visits are of enormous benefit, but they are more elusive and can be ambiguous in their application to a particular project. To me, they serve more as a 'memory bank', that over time, seep into the crevices of my 'mind-map', serving as a kind of 'scaffold', a 'prop' that allows me the artistic licence to be brave, find courage or to chance a new approach. A hoist to pull me up from the doldrums of banality towards the elation of fearless experimentation.

I save weird off-grid stuff, sometimes incongruent to the work I do, but it sparks ideas. Images that suggest, for example, interesting colour choices or perhaps allude to a style that reminds me of a bygone era. This deliberate act of surreptitiously looking at other sources outside of my 'area' other disciplines,

other industries, photographs, music, fashion etc bring about something unique to my work.

I highly recommend that you try to look outside of your own industry bubble.

Engross yourself in the achievements and work of other artists, creative industries and absorb their creative excellence.

The following is a list of sites I recommend, I encourage you to find a few of your own favourites and share them with your artistic community!

[Skillshare](#) -online learning community with thousands of classes in design, business, tech, and more.

[Creativebug](#) - pride themselves in bringing the latest in art and craft education to their members, they work with renowned artists to do just that.

[Juxtapoz](#): - Art & Culture

[Contemporary Daily Art](#): - just as it says on the tin!

[Booooooom](#) -launched in 2008 by Vancouver-based artist Jeff Hamada. Over the last decade, Booooooom has established itself as an authoritative voice in the new contemporary art scene, highlighting emerging talents, and launching the careers of many young artists internationally.

[This isn't Happiness](#)—Art, photography and design

[Colossal](#)—Art, design, and visual culture

[It's Nice That](#)—Graphic design and visual culture

[Friends of Type](#)—Typography

[IllustrationMundo](#): A well-known website that supports the illustration community showcasing various artworks.

[Illustrationage](#) Created by Illustrator Thomas James, ILLUSTRATION AGE is a blog and professional resource for Illustrators. We regularly feature hand-picked resources such as Online Classes, Digital Tools, Art Director Contacts, Competitions, Books And Podcasts

[Design of the Picturebook](#) - just as it says on the tin!

[Grain Edit](#) Grain edit is focused on classic design work from the 1950s-1970s and contemporary designers that draw inspiration from that time period.

[Brown Paper Bag](#) is an illustration-loving blog that celebrates the field in its many forms...more than just interested in editorial images you'd see in magazines, they chronicle embroidery, illustrated products, and beyond; the all important parts of our visual culture!

[IllustrationFriday](#): is a weekly illustration challenge. A topic is posted every Friday and then participants have all week to come up with their own interpretation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Stay connected, how to avoid artist's isolation

In this final chapter, I discuss Isolation.

It can cause terrible distress, but only if it is unwelcome or brings continual loneliness. Make no mistake, freelancing can be lonely.

The common notion of an idealised figure; the eccentric starving artist has existed as a cultural icon for as long as there have been artists. From 18th-century literature to modern movies, the isolated artist is presented as someone to envy, desire, love, or hate. Envied because of their unique abilities or unique talent, desired because of their mysterious aura or perhaps a certain aloofness, loved when their art is in demand and hated when it's not.

This figure does not have to be an acclaimed figure, a celebrity artist. It is more often an artist, of any discipline, who because of the freelance nature of their work, becomes more and more isolated and withdrawn. Forgets how to socialise and avoids cultural events, openings and gatherings as they have 'forgotten' how to make small talk.

If this sounds like you, what can you do? It is a BIG part of your self-care.

When you work for yourself, you're often based at home and therefore alone. Who do you bounce ideas off? Where do you get reassurance from? What you do to make your art business healthy and successful - this is 100% dependent on you. It can leave you feeling totally overwhelmed. I have been there. It is about lessening those time as they will realistically never 100% go away!

But try not to pine away! There are thousands of freelancers just like you, in exactly the same boat. You are not a weirdo oddball! It is a common workaday predicament for any freelancer. Here I have gathered some helpful tips to help you tackle isolation, welcome it at times and become a happier freelancer...

Network groups

Networking is a great way to meet other freelancers and make friends locally. Just arm yourself with plenty of business cards and go along to relevant events in your area. After trying a few networking groups, I have found [The Biscuit Factory](#) to best meet my needs, The Biscuit Factory is an Online

Membership Community for Creative people who want to make a living from what they do and feel proud of what they put out there. There are so many questions when Starting, Running or Growing a business, any business BUT when you are a Creative, those questions tend to be different. We are so emotionally connected to our work that mindset, confidence and getting to grips with the 'business' world seems like something for 'Business People.' There are plenty of other events and regular meet-ups out there, so make the most of them.

Meet at least one other freelancer.

Start connecting with other people, especially in your neighbourhood. Google for other local freelancers and send a friendly email inviting them to with you for a coffee and some industry gossip, ask if they know of any good networking events. Yes, you may well come across some people who will be wary of you or competitive, but don't let that put you off! You just have to be bold and prepared to make the first move. If you find this too painful, then ask one creative friend to join you for the first meet up, after that, you will be flying.

Sort out your workspace.

Ensure workspace is a place you WANT to be, clean (ish) comfy and filled with your books and inspirations., Allow plenty of natural light. Isolation is magnified worse if your work environment is shite! I created a 'chill zone' in mine with a sofa bed for 40 winks and a back of collaged old books to cover an ugly wall. You will then be more tempted to invite other freelancers to perhaps join you for a creative day, and they may return the favour - it could become a monthly thing!

Start your own meet-up

If you can't find any decent networking opportunities in your own region, then why not start your own? I've organised a few myself simply by tweeting to other freelancers and asking if they want to meet in a local pub. It worked! Nothing is stopping you from doing the same.!

Get out with your laptop

Make your work 'virtual' so that you can work remotely and from anywhere' I frequent lots of local dog-friendly cafes to start my day. Sometimes bringing my laptop and power bank and other times just my diary, a sketchbook and my phone to get through 'shorter emails'.

By having access to all my work via the cloud and setting myself up so that I receive my emails or calls wherever I happen to be, means I can work wherever I like, meaning I can you can get out of my studio whenever cabin fever or a doggie walk beckons.

Get some office space

Renting a workspace is another overhead, I agree. And many of you could not afford this. However, these dedicated spaces have many other freelancers and small firms which means you won't be working alone. Plus separating your work life from your home life might be just what you need. Just make sure to make an effort to get to know other people in your building, otherwise, what is the point?

Hot-desking

Hot-desking is a flexible way to get out of your home office or studio and meet other people. There are quite a few popping up in Dublin and other cities in Ireland, including at business centres and at private offices You don't have to

rent a desk seven days a week – just hire something every now and again, if you can.

Social network

Twitter, Facebook... can keep you in touch with friends, and other freelancers. A supportive tweet or a Facebook update or the ability to throw questions out there when you need help with something shouldn't be underestimated. I mean, sometimes you just need to chat with people who are in the same position as yourself, and there is nothing wrong with that as long as you don't go into a social media vortex!

Join a local group

Every creative industry field has an organisation. Example: Illustrators Ireland, Visual Arts Ireland, Creative Meet Up groups, Children's Book Ireland, The Irish Writers Centre for courses, Community Festivals, Bite the Biscuit. Find out what's on your own doorstep and sign up as a member. Get involved and help out if you can. Go along to any events, workshops or conferences. I can't stress enough how important it is to get out there and *meet* real people.

Collaborate!

It is not uncommon to end up collaborating with other freelancers on certain projects. You might be a writer who is co-writing a book, web developer needing a web designer, a graphic designer seeking an illustrator or photographer looking for a copywriter. Building relationships this way could be the start of something magical.

I hope you will find at least ONE solution from my above suggestions to aid any period of isolation may encounter. Remember, above all that you're not alone!

Thank You



I hope you enjoyed the seven lessons, taking a deeper dive into the challenges we all face as artists; anything from isolation, confusion over materials, and where to find the best resources. I am curious to know your favourite or most helpful one.

I really enjoyed putting this together, a chunk of the inside information and knowledge I've gained over the past 25 years as a writer, illustrator, lecturer, coach, mentor and entrepreneur. It served as a refresher for me too!

As a gift to you, I have put together this e-book of the course for you to keep for further reference. As you can see, each chapter demonstrates how I can help you increase your knowledge in a particular area of the business of illustration.

In the meantime, [let me know if you have any questions.](#)

Best,

Adrienne

For more information on Adrienne's Illustration course material and to book a place, visit;

<https://adriennegeoghegan.com/illustration-courses-ireland/>