

Drawing Materials:



CHARCOAL

Burnt wood. An ancient medium. Discovered, no doubt, by one of our hominoid ancestors soon after fire. Today drawing charcoal is still made of burnt wood, and there are two main types you should be aware of:

- 1) Vine and Willow Charcoal
- 2) Compressed Charcoal

Vine and Willow Charcoal. Some manufacturers call it "vine" others use "willow." They are essentially the same thing. It is made by burning, or carbonizing, sticks of wood, usually willow. Pictured here is [Coate's Willow Charcoal](#). You can see that it comes in different sizes: thin, medium, thick and extra thick.



Other manufacturers like [Grumbacher](#) offer different degrees of vine charcoal: hard, medium, soft and extra soft. Hard will give you the lightest line and extra soft the darkest.



I should mention here that vine and willow charcoal break easily, especially the thinner sizes. That's okay. You'll want to break the sticks into smaller pieces when you start drawing. Just keep it off the class room floor.

Compressed Charcoal. Compressed charcoal is not carbonized wood straight out of the oven. Actually, it is made by mixing charcoal powder with a gum binder and compressing it into stick form. Compressed charcoal gives a heavier, darker line that is harder to erase than vine and willow charcoal.



Compressed charcoal comes in different degrees, which will vary somewhat between manufacturers.



Compressed charcoal is also used in the core of charcoal pencils.

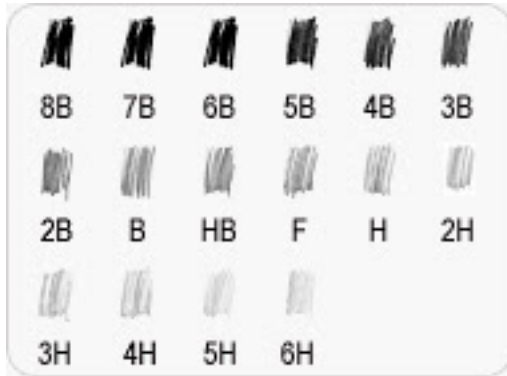
GRAPHITE



If you have ever used a regular No. 2 pencil, you are already familiar with graphite. It is in the core of standard pencils and sometimes, inaccurately, referred to as "lead." Graphite pencils are, in fact, a mixture of graphite and clay in a wood casing. The amount of clay determines the degree of hardness or softness. The main thing to be aware of is the range of degrees.

There are "H" pencils and "B" pencils. "H" pencils are hard and the higher the number, the lighter the line. A 6H pencil, for example, will produce a much lighter line than a 2H pencil. "B" pencils are soft and the higher the number, the darker the line or mark it will make. Generally it is the "B" pencils that are used for drawing.

This chart of [Staedtler Mars Lumograph](#) pencils shows the full range of degrees. "HB" is the middle of the scale and "F" stands for either fine or firm.



Other Forms. Two other forms of graphite you may find on your supply list are: woodless pencils and graphite sticks. Woodless pencils (as you can guess) are graphite without the wood casing. They are made for sketching and drawing and usually on the "B" side of the scale. General's makes woodless graphite in HB, 2B, 4B, 6B and 8B. Again, different manufacturers offer different degrees.



Graphite sticks are handy for large drawings and covering big areas quickly. They also come in different degrees and some manufacturers like [Caran d'Ache](#) (pictured below) make different sizes.



Additional Information:

Graphite is a mineral, a crystalline allotropic form of carbon. In the 16th century a large deposit of graphite was discovered in Cumbria, England. Initially it was thought to be a form of lead and was called *plumbago* (lead ore). Today the graphite core of pencils is still referred to as "lead."