



snow city arts  
virtual  
learning

# VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

Workshop:

## **Introduction to Artist Pencils**

Learn how different artist pencils are used for various forms of mark-making. You will also be introduced to artist Armando Veve.

Teaching Artist:  
Allie Spicer

Workshop duration:  
25 - 45 minutes



# Transcript

Hi there! Thank you for letting Snow City Arts come into your room today. We might be the only people you can kick out of your room as well. If you want to take a break, or you want us to leave, just turn off this video. Your teaching artist today is Allie Spicer, using the pronouns, she, her, and hers.

Let's enter the IDEA Lab and start making art.

I'm going to teach you how to read and use artist pencils today. These are some of my favorite tools to use as an artist.

First, let's make sure you have the materials you will need. You are going to need three sheets of drawing paper, any size. One set of artist drawing pencils. And one smart device with an internet connection.

We are first going to learn how to read drawing pencils.

Every drawing pencil has a letter or letters: an **H**, a **B**, and **HB** or an **F**, on its side. Find this letter now on your drawing pencil set. HB is an average pencil, the most common American pencil used. **H stands for hard**. These pencils create a hard line and will usually leave an indent in the paper that you can actually feel. They are more difficult to erase because of this. **B stands for babies, and babies are soft**. So B pencils are softer. They create darker and fuzzier marks. **F stands for fine**, and usually falls between an HB pencil and an H pencil in terms of compression and mark making.

In addition to the letter, some pencils you will see also have a number. This is because the type of graphite inside the pencil covering has a weight assigned to it. This is due to the compression of the graphite. What this means is that in some pencils there are more particles of graphite being smushed together, making that pencil more compressed. Let me give you a real-life example that you may relate to.

Have you ever taken a standardized test in school? You know those tests you take once or twice a year, where you have to fill in small little dots with your answers. Think about it - if you can recall your teacher asking you to take out a **#2 pencil**, a specifically #2 pencil. Most American standard pencils are number 2HB pencils. The reason your teacher asked you to take out this type of pencil to use on a standardized test is because machines called Scan-Trons grade your test. I know, can you believe it? You spend all those times on those tests,

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and your teacher doesn't even grade them. Those machines are looking for a specific weight of pencil in order for it to read the answer you selected.

Now, let me introduce you to a contemporary illustrator, **Armando Veve**. Armando Veve has exhibited around the globe and has been awarded three gold medals from the Society of Illustrators before the age of 30. He creates these fantastical worlds, drawings of surreal scenes, and constructions that look magical- even though each element is rendered in realism.

Art that is **surreal** doesn't always make rational sense. Sometimes, it's strange and mysterious, and sometimes it's unconventional. It's not like an image you would find in everyday life. If you want to learn more about surrealism, check out our other video, where you create a surrealist drawing called *Exquisite Corpse*. Surreal art is like a magical world or a dream-like state.

In Armando Veve's drawings, we see his use of many different artist pencils to create many different types of marks. Some marks are fuzzy, and some are very linear. Some marks are darker, and some are lighter.

Armando uses different types of marks to convey meaning to his audience about his subjects. He uses them to make his drawings jump off the page. He also uses them to create great detail in his works. These are just a few reasons why it is important for us to know how to read and use artist pencils.

Let's move on.

You will now create your own guide or drawing tool reference sheet. Drawing pencils exist on a spectrum. We are going to draw this spectrum. Are you ready? Come on, you're going to draw along with me.

First, using any pencil you want, draw a horizontal line with an arrow at each of the ends. One of the arrows should be pointing to the right. And one of the arrows should be pointing to the left edge of your paper. Your line should be about eight inches long or longer.

Next, in the middle of the spectrum, draw a notch mark up and down. Do you see what I'm doing here?

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Below the mark, write the letters "HB." HB pencils exist in the middle of the spectrum chart, meaning the HB pencil is the most average pencil.

All right, now go ahead and find your HB pencil in your artist pencil set. With the pencil, I want you to draw one horizontal line, about five inches below your spectrum chart. And mark it with the letters "HB" to the right. We will use this line later for comparison.

If you're ready to move on, give me a thumbs up.

We're going to learn about B pencils now. Write the letter "B" to the right side of your right-sided arrow on your spectrum chart. Also, write what B stands for. I like to say B stands for babies, and babies are soft.

Between HB and your B arrow, make four notches of equal distance apart. It doesn't have to be perfect. Underneath each notch, label them: B, 2B, 4B, 6B, moving from left of center to the right edge of your paper. B pencils are less compressed and make darker fuzzier lines as you move up the spectrum from B to 2B, to 4B, to 6B, and on and on and on.

All right, now we're going to find our 4B pencil out of our artist pencil set. Did you find it?

With this pencil, we're going to make a line below the HB line to see and feel the difference between a 4B pencil and an HB pencil.

You'll notice 4B pencils are darker and create a fuzzier mark than the HB pencil. You can feel over this line and notice that 4B pencils do not leave an indent usually on the paper.

Next, you will learn about H pencils. Write the letter "H" to the left of your left side arrow. Also, right when H stands for. H stands for hard. Between HB and your H arrow, make four notches of equal distance apart. Again, it doesn't have to be perfect. Underneath each, moving from right to left this time, you're going to label them: H, 2H, 4H, and 6H.

H pencils are more compressed. They make a lighter and finer mark. And they also will leave an indent that you can feel on your paper.

This effect increases as you move up the spectrum from H, 2H, 4H, to 6H. And

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on and on and on.

Now, try making a line with the 4H pencil below your spectrum chart and below the 4B line to see and feel the difference.

Do you see the difference of the 4H pencil? The 4H pencil is indeed lighter. It's also finer. And, if you feel over it, you can feel the indent that the 4H pencil leaves in the paper.

You should now observe the difference between the HB, 4H, and 4B pencils by looking at the three lines you've created. Compare and contrast these three. While you're doing that, make observations of their differences and similarities.

You also now have an understanding of what it feels like in your own hands when you use these different tools making different marks.

Take a moment now, pause this video, and experiment with just making different marks.

Experiment with each of the pencils in your set. Definitely do not limit yourself just to the ones that we've already played with. Try using both the tip and side of your pencils, too. Does that make a different mark?

Experiment with making lines, shapes, squiggles, marks. See how many different types of marks you can make with each of the different pencils.

**[Pause the video here to experiment with your pencils.]**

All right, welcome back. Now that we've played around a little bit, we should learn about how to determine which pencil to use, and when.

If you are drawing from observation, start off by thinking about the surface type of the object you are drawing, and match the pencil to that surface type. For example, if you are drawing a building with a hard surface, you will want to use an H pencil. Try this out with me. First, use an H pencil to draw a tall rectangle. Then, add a profile view—or a side view—by drawing two parallel angled lines, same length, from the top corners and the bottom right corner. Connect the bottom right corner and angled line to the top right end of the angled line, creating a parallel line to the right side of the rectangle. Many

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architects and engineers use H pencils to create their schematics—that means their plans.

HB and B pencils are more commonly used in sketching drafts because they are easier to erase, not leaving an indent on your paper. If you are drawing a soft surface, like the rind of an orange, you will want to use a B pencil, probably.

Try this one out with me, too. I like to use sketch lines to create a circular shape. Then, add a line at the top crossing over the circle line. Add some dot-like marks to create the divots of an orange peel, and maybe a leaf at the top. I should add—HB pencils are also commonly used when sketching out ideas, just like B pencils. HB pencils are also pretty easy to erase, and they don't leave an indent on the paper.

Now that we know a little more about how to use drawing pencils. Let's play a guessing game to see if we can identify which pencils Armando Veve used to create the marks in one of his drawings.

Let's look at this specific piece called *Alchemy*.

I am going to point to a line and let you guess what pencil he might have used. Are you ready? Are you sure? Okay, here we go.

What pencil do you think he used here? The line is very fine, very light, and has a strong contour, meaning a well-defined line.

Let's pause here for you to really make an educated guess. So it's okay to look back at that spectrum guide that you just created. That's your reference sheet.

Did you guess an H pencil? If so, you are right.

Now, let's look at these marks here. What pencil do you think he used here to create this shading and gradation? These marks are fuzzier, softer looking, darker, and more loose. Go ahead and pause this video again so that you can take your best guess. And remember, you can use your reference guide. It's not cheating.

Did you guess a B pencil? If so, you are correct.

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You have an option now: you can continue playing this game with yourself to test your knowledge of how to guess artists' pencils with other artists' drawings after this lesson is complete. Or, you can continue on with me

Playing this game with any artist's drawing is a good way to learn drawing techniques and identify different marks that you can make.

Finally, let's review why it's important to know how to read and use artists' pencils.

Each pencil makes a different mark. Artists' pencils will help you achieve greater depth and details in your illustrations. Refer back to Armando Veve's work if you want to learn about more advanced techniques. Looking and observing the way that he has used pencils will help you.

By the end of this workshop, you have now created your own reference guide to help you if you get stuck on practicing your own drawing skills.

I encourage you to check out part two of how to draw with artist pencils. This will teach you about tool pressure, gradation, shading, rendering, and other mark-making techniques.

It's been fun spending time with you today.

Thanks for letting me stop by to make art with you today. Maybe I will see you again soon. Until then, keep creating!

**If you are interested in receiving school credit**

for the work you have completed in this workshop, or if you would like to have your work **displayed in a Snow City Arts exhibition space or virtual gallery:**

Visit <https://snowcityarts.org/consent-releases/> to learn more.

**Contact us at [programs@snowcityarts.org](mailto:programs@snowcityarts.org)** if you have questions, would like to offer feedback, or would like to continue working with us virtually.



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