

# Materials in Practice

## Digital illustration

Check out the  
video series here



### Materials and equipment

- Adobe Photoshop
- Computer
- Mouse
- Reference image

Teachers, you can find more information about how to access Adobe Photoshop at [Technology 4 Learning](#).

### Techniques

Digital illustration offers a versatile way to create drawings, using different graphic types. There are 2 types of graphics: **raster graphics** use pixels and are better for painting and textures, whereas **vector graphics** use mathematical equations and are ideal for scalable, refined work.

Consider what style you would like to achieve in your drawing and experiment with a few brushes and a limited colour palette that aligns with your vision. Select reference material such as sketches, photos, videos and observations of light, to guide your vision.

When beginning to work in digital drawing, use a limited brush set and colour palette as well as reference images which are crucial for maintaining proportions. Place reference material as the bottom layer for easy tracing. **Opacity** adjustments help with visibility while drawing.

When adding detail and making adjustments, you can use **guidelines** to help achieve facial symmetry. Simplifying details can help enhance clarity and improve your animation style. Once it's time to add colour, create a new layer for base colours and choose a skin tone using the colour wheel.

### Shortcuts

| Tool                             | Shortcut                |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Brush tool                       | <b>B</b>                |
| Eraser tool                      | <b>E</b>                |
| Undo                             | <b>Z</b>                |
| Duplicate                        | <b>Ctrl + J</b>         |
| Transform                        | <b>Ctrl + T</b>         |
| Eraser                           | <b>Y</b>                |
| Zooming                          | <b>Ctrl + + or -</b>    |
| Reset zoomed screen to full view | <b>Ctrl + 0</b>         |
| Remove or replace guidelines     | <b>Windows Ctrl + ;</b> |
| Eyedropper tool                  | <b>I</b>                |

### Safety

- Take regular breaks to avoid fatigue.
- Locking layers prevents accidental edits.
- Save your work regularly.



# Materials in Practice

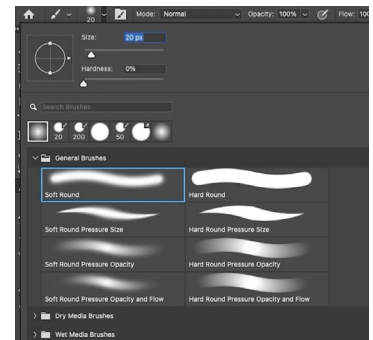
## Digital illustration

### Processes

#### Setting up a new project in Photoshop

Open Photoshop and create a new file by selecting **File > New**.

- Choose the **Film & Video** preset and select 4K video as the starting format.
- Name the file to keep track of work.
- Adjust dimensions if needed.
- Press **Create**.



Brushes

#### Layers

The layers panel can be found on the right-hand side. Naming layers helps to organise work efficiently. Select the plus icon at the bottom of the layers panel to create a new layer. The opacity can be adjusted which is helpful when referring to the reference image. Hiding layers will help you to isolate and focus on one layer at a time as you build your drawing up.

Locking layers prevents accidental edits and you can hide layers by selecting the eye icon to **toggle** visibility.



Initial sketch over a reference image layer

#### Sketching

Lower the opacity of your reference image and create a new layer on top. Choose a suitable sketching brush and colour, then trace the main lines and features, adding any necessary guidelines that you may wish to establish. Depending on your style, you may choose to simplify or stylise details as you trace. Once the initial sketch is complete, reduce its opacity, add another layer, and refine the drawing further on the new layer in a new colour.



Stylising and refining the second layer in another colour

#### Adding colour

Create a new layer and choose a colour from the **swatches panel** or use the **eyedropper tool** to select a colour from your reference image. Selectively apply colour with a brush or fill large, closed areas with the **paint bucket** or **magic wand** tools.

#### Top tips

- Plan your reference images and embed them for ease of access as you work on your drawing.
- Name your layers as you create them.
- Grouping colours on different layers will allow for easy navigation.



Colours built up on separate layers

# Vocabulary list

## Digital illustration

| Term                     | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Brush tool</b>        | A tool used for painting, drawing and creating texture in both static and animated artwork. It allows for various effects by adjusting size, opacity, flow and hardness                                                                 |
| <b>Duplicate layers</b>  | Creating an exact copy of a layer, which can be useful when you want to preserve an original while experimenting or making changes in animation.                                                                                        |
| <b>Eyedropper tool</b>   | This tool allows you to select a colour from an image or any Photoshop document by simply clicking on the desired colour.                                                                                                               |
| <b>Guidelines</b>        | Reference lines that help align and position elements accurately within a composition.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Magic wand tool</b>   | A selection tool in Photoshop that selects pixels based on tone and colour.                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Opacity</b>           | Refers to the transparency level of a layer or an element, determining how much of the underlying layers are visible. It is measured in percentages, with 100% opacity being fully visible and 0% opacity being completely transparent. |
| <b>Paint bucket tool</b> | This tool allows you to fill a closed area with a solid colour or pattern.                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Raster graphics</b>   | Images made up of a grid of pixels, where each pixel holds colour and detail information.                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Resolution</b>        | The amount of detail an image holds, typically measured in pixels per inch (PPI). The higher the resolution, the more detail is visible, making it suitable for high-quality printing or digital use.                                   |
| <b>Swatches panel</b>    | This tool stores and displays a collection of preset or custom colours for quick access. It allows you to select, organise and save frequently used colours.                                                                            |
| <b>Toggle</b>            | Refers to switching between 2 settings, typically by pressing a specific key or button. It allows you to quickly enable or disable a tool, feature or view mode.                                                                        |
| <b>Transform tools</b>   | This tool allows you to modify the size, position, rotation and perspective of a layer or selection.                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Vector graphics</b>   | Images created using mathematical paths instead of pixels, allowing them to be scaled infinitely without losing quality.                                                                                                                |