

Keeping a Sketchbook

“My sketchbook is a witness of what I am experiencing, scribbling things whenever they happen.” – Vincent van Gogh

Keeping a sketchbook is a fantastic way of keeping track of creative ideas and getting in the habit of regular art making. It can also be a useful resource for large works when you are feeling short on ideas. Remember that not every drawing you do needs to be a work of art, though sketchbooks may also contain early versions of your most accomplished ideas. Here are a few helpful starting points for working in your sketchbook:

Simple drawing exercises:

Contour and blind contour drawings – Put your pen or pencil on the paper and draw an object **WITHOUT** lifting your pen or pencil from the paper. Also, trying doing this without looking at your paper.

Negative space drawings – Draw everything around an object. For example, if you are drawing a chair, draw the space between the legs and around the back, as well as the other parts of the background.

30-second rapid sketches

Jot down ideas.

Write as well as draw using your own ideas.
Add inspirational photos, clippings, or quotes.
Experiment with compositional possibilities.

Try out a new technique or material.

Draw a familiar subject so that you can focus on the new medium or technique.
Try combining a number of materials.

Record something that caught your attention.

Rapidly sketch a scene or idea.
Focus in on selected details.
Make color notes.

Collect and collage found objects.

Collect stickers, tickets, notes, photographs, letters, and other material from your life.
Incorporate collected material into drawings and writing as collage.
Add photocopies of different artists' works from books or magazines.