



Let's Get Sketchy AF

30 DAYS TO A DAILY SKETCHBOOK PRACTICE
BY ALICIA BRUCE

Welcome!



I'm Alicia - there I am living my best life in Morocco - an artist and illustrator from Virginia, and I'm here to convince you to pick up a daily sketchbook practice.

Why sketchbook? Because it's far less intimidating to create in a sketchbook than it is to make final pieces of art.

Intending to create on a single blank piece of paper feels so stressful, like everything has to be perfect or else it was a waste of time. And paper.

But a sketchbook is supposed to be messy. It's supposed to be imperfect and experimental. It's a safe place where you can practice techniques and spend as little or as long as you want on any given piece. Nobody has to ever see the inside of your sketchbook, so it can even be a visual diary of your life at any given time.

My sketchbook is a place where I can experiment and make terrible art alongside my best art. It's where I spend time when I need to decompress, or where I go when I need to keep my mental health in check. It's where I practice techniques I learned from other artists and where I get the hang of a new medium.

Through this 30 day challenge I'll guide you through exercises to get you more comfortable with your sketchbook. With just a bit of guidance, my hope is that you will find the same benefits from a daily sketchbook practice as I have.



Supplies

While it's perfectly legit to use stapled together scrap paper and a number two pencil, it's generally easier to stick to a sketchbook practice when you're excited to use your supplies.

Here are some of my personal favorite sketchbook supplies and mediums - but obviously feel free to experiment and see what you end up loving!

- [Strathmore Mixed Media Softcover Sketchbook](#)
- [Artist's Loft Hardcover Sketchbook](#)
- [Prismacolor Premier Colored Pencils](#)
- [Holbein Artist Colored Pencils](#)
- [Caran d'Ache Luminance Colored Pencils](#)
- [Caran d'Ache Neocolor II Wax Pastels](#)
- Watercolor ([Winsor + Newton](#), [Daniel Smith](#))
- [Holbein Acryla Gouache](#)
- [The Pigeon Letters Cruelty-Free Brushes](#)
- [TPL Monoline Pens](#)
- [Tombow Dual Brush Pens](#)

Other helpful items to have on hand include a water cup, a paint palette, old rags or paper towels, a pencil sharpener, and scrap paper for testing out techniques.

DO NOT feel as though you need to purchase all of these supplies to get started. I've collected my art supplies over years and started with the very basics. Most were purchased one or two at a time in colors I wanted most. Start with a sketchbook and pencils or markers and you can grow your collection from there.

Getting Started



It's not easy to start a sketchbook. Those blank pages can be intimidating and prevent you from ever getting started.

So let's start with an exercise. Grab a pencil and open up your sketchbook. It doesn't have to be nice or new or even an actual sketchbook - I actually use and love a lined notebook that my dog ate several chunks out of, so you literally anything works.

Now scribble on the page. Yeah, just do it! One nice big scribble.

Okay see? Now the page isn't so pristine anymore and nothing else you add to this sketchbook will be worse than this first page filled with one big scribble. Sign and date it - you've just made your first sketchbook art.

I use this technique sometimes before I begin a painting - you may even own one of my paintings that started with a big pencil scribble underneath all of the paint! It's helpful when you're stuck in the 'nothing I make will be good enough for this sketchbook or piece of paper' mindset.

Your brain is lying to you: whatever you put in this sketchbook IS good enough, even if it sucks. Because the sucky art is practice, and it's through practice where we eventually make art that we love. So embrace the suck.



Don't Forget...

- Nobody has to see what you put in your sketchbook. You don't have to share with your partner, your kids, your friends, your social media, or your grandma. It can be as personal and as private as you would like it to be.
- That said, if you're comfortable with it, sharing can be so rewarding for both yourself and other artists. I love seeing what my favorite artists create in their sketchbooks: often I see messy, imperfect art like my own and I absolutely love it. #SketchyAFwithAB
- Whatever you put in your sketchbook is worthy of being there. Doesn't matter if you used the wrong color pencil or smudged the pastel or the marker bled through the pages. It doesn't matter if you messed up drawing a butterfly and painted a tree on top. It doesn't matter if you sketched your best friend and she looks more like a creepy baby doll with a missing eyeball than herself. Each mark you make in your sketchbook is practice. The more you practice, the better your art will become with time.
- It's okay if your sketchbook art is totally different from page to page. I love looking back to see the time I was totally obsessed with drawing with just markers, and then how I transitioned to using more pencils and wax pastels. Some days I draw fine lines, and other days I fill in my entire page with color. This is all about experimentation and trying new techniques and styles so you can find which ones fit.
- Art isn't photography: you can change or alter whatever you'd like from your prompt or reference image! Ducks can be pink, trees can be blue, you can remove power lines or add windows or whatever your heart desires.

How to use this guide



There are two parts to this guide: the first part is the exercise list. There are 30 different exercises which are meant to be done in order, but you can certainly jump around if you're into chaos.

The second part is the prompt list. I've pulled together more than 30 ideas for you to choose from if you're stuck coming up with your own ideas.

Some are specific (draw a pigeon) and others are more general (draw what you see to your left).

It's also a great practice to keep a tiny notebook around where you can jot down ideas as they come to you. So often I'm at my art desk with my sketchbook open and absolutely zero idea of what to create. Having this list helps me jump right in instead of spending 20 useless minutes scrolling Instagram for inspiration.

Work your way through all 30 exercises using whichever new prompt you'd like each day. You can even get creative with this process, like using the same prompt for a week of exercises to see how the result changes. There's no rule here besides just sitting down and putting something in your sketchbook every day for 30 days.

And honestly that's not even a rule. You're human so you might miss a day or two or ten. Don't feel guilty! Just jump back in when you can and let yourself enjoy the process.

Days 1-5

1: Color swatch all of your mediums.

2: Fill the page by mark-making. Scribbles, lines, shapes, dots, etc. Let them overlap and get messy. Switch out your mediums and/or colors. Let yourself get a feel for how your mediums interact as they're layered upon.

3: Create 10 different color palettes, each with no more than 5 colors.

4. Sketch today's prompt with one medium and only 3 colors. Set a 5 minute timer. GO!

5. Draw your prompt using only one single pencil, marker, or pen. Try mark-making to indicate details or shadows.



Days 6-10

6: Choose a prompt and draw it using one line that connects all the way through (i.e. pause and pivot, but don't lift your pen!)

7: Fill your page by repeating today's prompt over and over, but change it up each time. Color, style, medium, etc.

8: Sketch a prompt using your 3-5 most favorite colors, even if they don't go together.

9. Sketch a prompt using 3-5 shades of the same color (i.e. periwinkle, sky blue, ultramarine blue, indigo, and teal)

10. Use only cool or only warm colors for your prompt.

Hot tip!

Just use one medium at a time for these first 10 days (besides days 1, 2, 3, and 7). Let yourself play with each one and get a feel for how to use them in your art before combining them.



Days 11-15

11: Choose 3 colors in one medium, then choose similar colors in a second medium. Combine the two (i.e. markers and pencils) with today's prompt.

12: Set a timer for 15 minutes and create with with no other limitations.

13: Utilize negative space by outlining or filling in the space around the subject, but leaving the subject white. Add minimal details to the subject as needed.

14. Use one medium in a way that isn't typical. i.e. hold your pencils at the end, not near the tip.

15. Visit mapcrunch.com for a random street view. Set a timer for five minutes and sketch what you see.



Days 16-20

16: Draw three squares on your page. Using no more than 5 colors (i.e. 5 markers and the same 5 colors in pastels) and follow one of the prompts.

17: Sketch the outline and details of your subject with a dark pencil/pen/marker, then fill it in like a coloring book.

18: Sketch on location, whether it's a nearby city or your own backyard. Just leave your typical creative space.

19. Choose a famous work of art and sketch it in 15 minutes.

20. Fill a page with items from your home.

Hot tip!

When combining mediums (my usual go-to sketchbook combo is marker + colored pencil), try pulling out similar colors in each medium. I like to lay down color blocks in marker and use my pencils (in the same colors) for details.



Days 21-25

21: Visit mapcrunch.com for a random street view. Set a timer for 15 minutes and sketch what you see.

22: Choose 3 colors in one medium and up to 2 colors in a second medium before choosing your prompt. No cheating!

23: Lay down a base of random shapes and marks in light colors. Sketch your prompt on top using darker colors.

24. Fill a spread with 6 boxes and create a visual diary of your day using a color palette of 5 colors.

25. Sketch your prompt using only unrealistic colors for that subject. i.e. a hot pink and neon yellow bear.



Days 26-30

26: Choose a famous historical artist and try to create your prompt in their style or color palette.

27: Choose an object from real life to sketch from 3 different angles or sides.

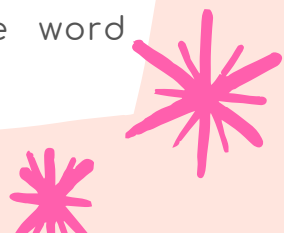
28: Tell a story with your prompt. i.e. if your prompt is 'breakfast', sketch the different stages of cooking an egg.

29. What prompt have you been avoiding this whole time? Sketch that. (For me it's always people!)

30. Illustrate yourself in whatever style you'd like. Always wanted pink hair? Go for it. Underneath write your name and the word "artist".

Hot tip!

I love using mapcrunch.com to see random street views when I want to practice travel sketching. I also frequently use unsplash.com for royalty-free reference images of objects or locations I don't have my own photos of.





Prompts!

- Birds
- Houseplants
- A weird dream you've had
- A location you've never visited but want to
- Your favorite vacation spot
- Your partner
- A friend
- An animal on roller skates
- Your pet(s)
- Ducks
- Garden tools
- Seashells
- A lighthouse
- Trees
- Seed packets
- Bouquet of flowers
- Mushrooms
- Animal on a skateboard
- Lava lamp
- A cool chair you wish you owned
- The perfect bookshelf
- Vegetables
- Croissant
- Beach with chair and umbrella
- Pumpkin with fall flowers poking out the top
- Favorite cocktail
- A school of fish
- Stamps
- Vintage canned vegetables
- Vintage tea canisters
- Unique packaging
- Roller skates
- Mountains
- A mid-century modern house
- Pots of herbs
- Moroccan rugs
- The night sky
- Sunrise
- Astronaut
- The beach
- Seagulls in flight
- Hot air balloon
- View from an airplane window
- A unique drink bottle
- Succulents
- A park bench
- Camper van in the desert
- Vintage radio
- Dinosaurs
- Vintage dishes/Pyrex
- Favorite toys from childhood
- Bottles of perfume
- Glass jars
- Jewelry
- Ornate pottery
- Someone skiing
- A fictional storefront
- A house from a movie (Iris' cottage in The Holiday, anyone?)



Prompts!

AT HOME

- View from your window
- Your desk
- View from your front door
- Your house
- Backyard
- Plants in your garden
- Bookshelf
- Favorite spot to sit
- What you see to your left
- Outfit you love to wear
- Favorite shoes
- Most used art supplies
- Ingredients to your favorite recipe
- Houseplants
- Your pet's favorite toys
- Special ornaments
- Heirlooms
- A collection you own
- The last item you used
- Daily grooming supplies
- Your bar cart

OUT AND ABOUT

- View from a café
- Your meal
- Someone interesting
- A plant you've never seen
- An interesting building
- Current landscape
- Bridge crossing a river
- Street musician
- A cute house in town
- A church
- A cool door
- Downtown scene
- An old house
- Unique looking signage
- A landmark
- A hotel lobby
- A local mode of transportation (taxi, bus, tuk tuk, etc)
- Your hotel room
- A seasonal window display
- Purchased souvenirs

Hot tips!

- Your local library is a great resource for reference imagery.
- Carry a small sketchbook and a few pencils with you whenever you're out - you never know when you'll see something interesting!

OMG you did it!



Well hey there fellow sketchbook artist! How does it feel to have 30 sketchbook pieces complete?!

I'm guessing that when you started this challenge, you felt a bit nervous or filled with doubt. You were convinced your sketches would be terrible, not worthy of taking up space in a blank sketchbook. You might have even avoided starting altogether, that is until something made you dive in.

But now here you are! You've spent 30 days working on a sketchbook practice, carving out a portion of the day just to sit and create. You got messy, you discovered new color combinations, and you learned to play with new mediums. You may have even experimented with new ways to use old mediums which is always something fun to do in a sketchbook.

I hope you continue your sketchbook practice in the weeks and months to come. As you learned through this challenge, you can create something in just 5 minutes if that's all you have, so I encourage you to try to sketch something each day no matter how busy it is.

If you choose to share your sketchbook pieces, please tag me in your stories or use the hashtag #SketchyAFwithAB

I'm so proud of you!
HIGH FIVE!



Now what?

Just because the challenge has ended, that doesn't mean our time together has to! Here's how you can keep up to date on new challenges, free tutorials, and everything I've been working on:

Instagram: [@thealiciabruce](https://www.instagram.com/thealiciabruce)

Website: www.thealiciabruce.com

Blog: www.thealiciabruce.com/blog

Shop: shop.thealiciabruce.com

Patreon: patreon.com/thealiciabruce

Share your work!

If you're open to sharing your sketchbook art with others, please be sure to tag me in your post or use the hashtag #SketchyAFwithAB - I'd love to see what you're creating!

Let's Get Sketchy

Don't want the sketchbook fun to end? Join my Patreon where I'll be posting even more exercises, challenges, and videos for anyone who wants to keep up with their sketchbook practice.

Sign up or learn more right here:
patreon.com/thealiciabruce