

Digital Painting - Procreate - Workbook

This workbook turns the Procreate course into real reps on your iPad. Each section pairs with a course module and mixes guided exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists so you build an actual finished illustration, not just notes. Work through it with Procreate open and your Apple Pencil in hand - the value is in the canvases you create and the settings you write down so you can repeat them.

Setting Up Procreate and Your Canvas

Configure your device, gestures, and a correctly sized canvas before you paint anything ambitious.

Exercise: The Size-Versus-Layers Test

Create three new canvases on your device: 3000 by 3000 px at 132 DPI, an A4 at 300 DPI (about 2480 by 3508 px), and one deliberately huge canvas (such as 6000 by 6000 px). Note the maximum layer count Procreate reports for each at creation. This shows you the real memory trade-off on your specific iPad.

- How many layers did each canvas size allow on your device?

- At what canvas size did the layer count drop too low to work comfortably?

- Which single canvas size will you use most, and for what output (screen or print)?

Worksheet: My Canvas and Hardware Setup

Record your gear and your default canvas presets so every new project starts correctly. Decide DPI and color profile by the final destination of the art.

iPad model and RAM (affects layer count)

Apple Pencil generation (1st / 2nd / Pro)

Default screen canvas (px and DPI)

Default print canvas (px and DPI)

Color profile choice (sRGB / Display P3 / CMYK) and why

Matte screen protector installed? (Y/N)

Checklist: Gesture and Interface Warm-Up Checklist

- Two-finger tap (undo) and three-finger tap (redo) are automatic
- Pinch-to-fit, zoom, and rotate done ten times without thinking
- Sampled an existing color with touch-and-hold eyedropper and painted with it
- Set Apple Pencil double-tap to Eraser (or my preferred toggle)

- Configured the QuickMenu with my six most-used commands
- Confirmed DPI and color profile set correctly before creating the canvas

Brushes, Pencil Control, and Mark-Making

Drill Apple Pencil control and lock in a small, reliable brush set before painting whole pieces.

Exercise: Pencil Control Drill Page

On one canvas, complete four drills: pressure ramps (fade a line invisible to full and back), parallel hatching (evenly spaced lines in a box), a field of freehand ellipses, and long single confident strokes around a large shape without lifting. Then redraw a shape using QuickShape and compare it to your freehand version.

- Where did your pressure control break down - the start of the stroke, the end, or the middle?

- How even was your hatching spacing, and did slowing down help?

- How close were your freehand ellipses to the QuickShape versions?

Exercise: StreamLine A-B Test

Pick your inking brush, double-tap to open the Brush Studio, and ink the same curved line three times at low, medium, and high StreamLine. Then do the same with a sketchy brush. Observe the trade-off between smoothness and lag/control.

- At which StreamLine setting did your line look most confident?

- Where did high StreamLine hurt you (lag or loss of precision)?

- Which StreamLine value will you keep for clean linework versus loose sketching?

Worksheet: My Six-Brush Working Set

Lock in the small brush set you will paint with, using the built-in library before downloading anything. Note what each brush is for so switching becomes a deliberate decision.

Sketch brush (e.g. 6B Pencil) - used for

Ink/line brush (e.g. Studio Pen) - used for

Block/paint brush (e.g. Round or Old Brush) - used for

Texture brush (e.g. Nikko Rull / bristle) - used for

Soft shading brush (e.g. Soft Brush airbrush) - used for

Detail brush (small hard round) - used for

Checklist: Mark-Making Mastery Checklist

- Controlled a pressure taper at both ends of a stroke
- Used QuickShape to snap a clean line, circle, and rectangle
- Adjusted brush Size and Opacity from the side sliders without looking
- Duplicated a stock brush before editing its settings
- Built tone in layered low-opacity passes instead of one heavy stroke
- Smudged only at value seams and avoided muddy gray blends

Layers, Masks, and Painting Non-Destructively

Build a clean, flexible layer stack and start a real painting - sketch, line, and gap-free flat color.

Exercise: Clipping Mask vs Alpha Lock

Paint one flat shape (such as a simple character's face or a leaf) on its own layer. Shade it once using Alpha Lock on that same layer, then undo and shade it again on a separate Clipping Mask layer above it. Compare how editable each approach is afterward.

- When did Alpha Lock feel faster, and when did it limit you?

- What could you change on the clipped shadow layer that you could not change with Alpha Lock?

- For your finished piece, which method will you use for shadows and lights, and why?

Worksheet: Layer Stack Plan

Plan the layer stack for your illustration before you build it, bottom to top. Name every layer now so you can clip shadows and lights to the right base later.

Background layer(s)

Subject base-color layers (named: skin / hair / clothing / etc.)

Shadow layer(s) and their blend mode (e.g. Multiply)

Light/highlight layer(s) and their blend mode (e.g. Add / Screen)

Line-art layer (locked?) - or painterly, no lines

Top adjustments/effects layer to toggle on and off

Exercise: Sketch-to-Flats Run

Take a piece from a low-opacity thumbnail sketch, to a refined sketch over it at ~20 percent opacity, to clean flat base colors. Block each element as a solid shape, use ColorDrop for large areas, and close every gap. Check for holes by toggling a bright color layer behind the flats.

- Did ColorDrop leak anywhere, and how did you fix the gap (close outline / adjust threshold)?

- When you toggled a bright background layer, where were the transparent holes?

- Squinting, do your flats already read as a clear light/mid/dark value structure?

Checklist: Non-Destructive Setup Checklist

- Sketch, line, and flats each live on their own named layers
- Used a Multiply or other blend mode intentionally on at least one layer
- Grouped related layers (e.g. all character layers) and renamed them
- Confirmed flat color shapes have no transparent gaps
- Locked the line-art layer to avoid painting on it
- Duplicated the whole file as a clean-flats backup before rendering

Light, Color Rendering, and Exporting a Finished Piece

Render form value-first, light the scene with blend modes, and export the finished illustration for every destination.

Exercise: Value-First Sphere and Form

On clipped layers over a flat shape, render a sphere (or a simple form from your piece) value-first: block shadow on a Multiply layer, add mid-tones, then lights, with one consistent light direction. Squint and zoom to fit to confirm the value read before adding any color.

- Which single direction is your light coming from, and is every shadow consistent with it?

- Where did you keep edges hard, and where soft, to show form turning?

- Squinting, does the form read in value alone before color?

Worksheet: Lighting Plan: Key, Fill, Rim

Plan your scene lighting before painting it, borrowing three-point lighting from film. Decide each light, its color, and the blend mode you will paint it on.

Key light direction and color (e.g. warm, upper-left) + blend mode (Add/Screen)

Ambient fill color for shadows (e.g. cool bounce) + blend mode (Multiply/Color)

Rim/back light placement and color + blend mode (Add)

Glow source(s) to blur (Gaussian Blur) and how strong

Global color-grade tint (warm or cool) + opacity

Where ambient occlusion / contact shadows go for weight

Worksheet: Export and Backup Log

Record exactly how you exported and backed up the finished piece so you can reproduce it and never lose the master. Flatten copies are created on export - the layered file stays intact.

Canvas DPI confirmed for destination (132 screen / 300 print)

Flip-canvas error check done? (Y/N)

Export 1: web (PNG or JPEG, long edge px)

Export 2: print (PNG/TIFF at 300 DPI; CMYK converted? Y/N)

Layered master kept (.procreate and/or PSD)? (Y/N)

Time-lapse video exported (full / 30-sec social)?

Checklist: Finished-Piece Checklist

- [] One consistent light direction across the whole image
- [] Key, fill, and rim light each painted on appropriate blend-mode layers
- [] Values still read clearly when the image is viewed small or squinted
- [] Focal point wins with the hardest edges and strongest contrast
- [] Flipped the canvas to catch drawing errors, then cleaned stray marks
- [] Exported correct web and print files and kept the layered master
- [] Saved the time-lapse video alongside the final image

Your Action Plan

1. Set up your device: confirm Apple Pencil, set the Pencil double-tap and QuickMenu, and run the gesture warm-up.
2. Create your default screen and print canvas presets at the right DPI and color profile.
3. Run the Pencil control drills and the StreamLine A-B test until your lines feel confident.
4. Lock in your six-brush working set from the built-in library and note what each is for.
5. Plan and build a clean, named layer stack for your illustration.
6. Take a piece from thumbnail sketch to refined sketch to gap-free flat colors.
7. Render form value-first on clipped Multiply layers with one consistent light direction.
8. Light the scene with key, fill, and rim using Add/Screen/Multiply layers, then add glow with Gaussian Blur.
9. Do a finishing pass: flip the canvas, clean stray marks, color-grade, and confirm the value read.
10. Export correct web and print files, keep the layered master, and save the time-lapse to share.

