

Peter Clements Art Studios

How to Erase Pencil

Welcome to the mistake!

Erasing the Mistake

When any one talks of erase pencil the first thing that comes to mind is a mistake or correction. Unfortunately, mistakes are real, and we all make mistakes. But we can also learn from our mistakes. If the artist is prepared, a mistake is comparatively easy to correct.

Besides fixing mistakes the eraser can also be used as a tool to create textures, and enhance the quality of toning. Fig. 1 is an example of controlled erasing where the figure under sink was itched from a shaded background using different erasers.



Fig. 1

But first, let's look at how to fix that mistake, and what measures can be taken to make the job easier to fix.

- The first and fundamental rule in pencil art is to use a good quality paper. If the paper you are using is not the best you will be confronted with inherent problems that have no easy solution.
- When using a sharp or hard pencil, never apply excessive pressure that will either indent or damage the paper.
- Always be aware of the fact that that a harder pencil is harder to erase. Therefore, avoid using hard grades of graphite as a base layer. Rather start you tonal range a little in on the H or HB range then work to the 'darker' end. Thereafter, return to beginning and blend in those delicate tones at the start of the tonal range with the harder grades of graphite.

To erase pencil, be it a mistake or by design, will be make a lot easier if you follow these basic rules.

In the example below the first 'MISTAKE' was drawn with a hard 2H pencil. The second 'mistake' was draw with an HB pencil (Fig.2). Thereafter both where erased. But was that good enough? Because the 'Mistake' is no longer visible it does not mean that they will not affect the corrected application.

Thereafter, 2B hatching is added to see how effective the erasing is (Fig.3). Admittedly you are see this on a computer screen and the images can be enhanced. But, that is not the object of this demonstration. It is something you should try out on your own to see what the process entails.

But before you do erase pencil

Remember – use a good quality paper – no excessive pressure.

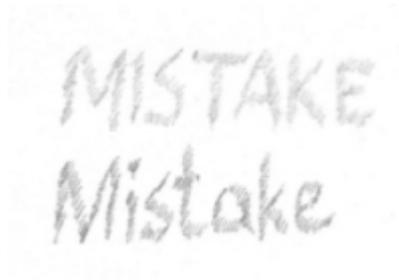


Fig. 2

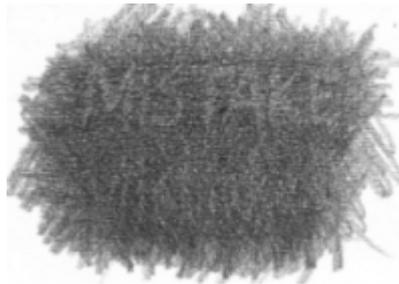


Fig. 3

As you can see the 'mistake' drawn with the harder graphite still affects the overlaying application, namely the 2B crosshatching. Whereas the mistake drawn with the HB has only a partial impaired the overlaying application.

So, how do you know if the 'mistake' has been totally erased? You probably can recall how parts of a pencil drawing tends to shine when seen from a particular angle. This graphite sheen is usually more obvious in those darker areas of a drawing. It is not because they darker but rather it is due to the fact that a greater percentage of graphite has been applied to those areas.

After you have erased the mistake, tip the paper to the light and see if you can see that graphite sheen of the mistake you have just erased.

In most cases that remaining residue should not affect the new application. However, if the correction is affecting your new application your will have to resort to a deeper erasing procedure. See erasing machine.

To erase pencil we have to ask, what about the erasing action? Okay, let's step back a little and review 'How to use an eraser'?

What eraser should be used? Frankly, the quality of brand name erasers are generally very good. In time an artist will probably collect and use an assortment of erasers for different reasons or purposes. But generally there are 3 types of erasers you should have. 1: The conventional 'block eraser'. 2: A sleeved eraser. 3: Erasing putty.

So, shop around and keep an eye on new developments and products that erase pencil.

When you erase pencil:

- Never wet the eraser, as it WILL damage the paper.
- Ensure the paper is secured so it will not buckle as you erase.
- Don't allow the eraser to heat up. Rather do a little at a time and allow the eraser to cool down. OR, use a second eraser.
- When you are done, use a dusting brush to remove the debris.
- Never use your hand, it will smudge existing work and can leave fatty stains.
- Another option could be to use a compressor and an air gun.

Just one last tip! When making a correction to an area that it already heavily shaded use an erasing shield at the perimeter to prevent smudging. Thereafter

use erasing putty to 'tone down' the remaining so you can blend in the new application.

Erasing Machine

Using an erasing machine to erase pencil should be your last option. Despite that fact that you can fit different types of 'erasing plugs' they can damage the paper if you are not careful.

The Biggest problem is the 'plug' tends to heat up and when it gets hot it will eat holes in your paper. So, take your time, do a little at a time, allow the plug to cool down and continue when it has cooled.

Another thing you should be aware of is... When you fit a new plug check it on a scrap piece of paper to see if it does not shudder or bounce. If it does, it means that the plug is running off centre, and plug could come loose and even fall out. Then before you know it, there will be hole in your drawing.



Despite the hazards, the erasing machine can be used as a tool. Fig. 3 is a drawing of a nude seen through the show door. To get the effect of condensation on the glass I used an erasing machine. The plug was positioned a little off centre and the 'streaks of running condensation' were erased with the erasing machine bouncing across the paper. Thereafter I emphasised the result into droplets.

One final tip on using an erasing machine! During the manufacturing process of most papers a thin layer of laminate settles on the paper. If this layer is erased the paper becomes more absorbent and your tonal range will be darker.

Erasing Tools

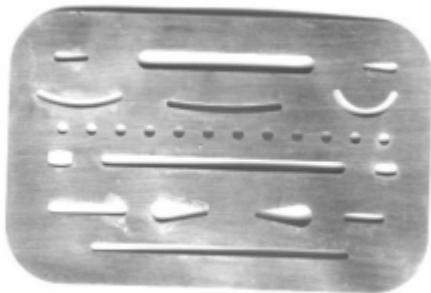


Fig. 5

The erasing shield is probably a must to erase pencil if you keen on producing detailed pencil art. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

It is just one of those tools that make you wonder how you could do what you do without it.

Etching with the Eraser

Besides erasing a mistake the eraser can be used to enhance detail and contrasts of your drawing.

With an erasing shield you can clean up those fuzzy edges, add highlights and the like.

A typical example being the highlights on the dolphins in Fig. 6.



The problem when using a conventional 'block' eraser to do highlighting, it tends to smudge those areas that have not been totally erased.

This is where the putty eraser has an advantage. Instead of using a toe & fro motion need to erase pencil with a 'block' or sleeved eraser, the putty eraser can do its job by dabbing the area to be erased. However it is not as thorough as the others and the process may need to be repeated several times.

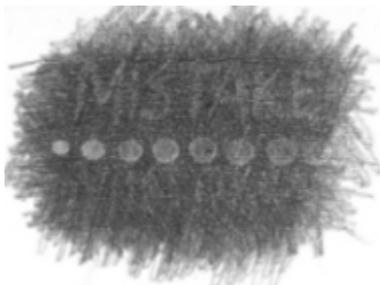


Fig. 7

In Fig. 7 erasing putty was used to erase a sequence of 'dots' from left to right. Each time the putty is used it picks up a little graphite. Consequently, it becomes less and less effective each time it is used.

To overcome this problem the putty must be remoulded to create a fresh point with on graphite on it.

The primary benefit of erasing putty is that it is a tool used to 'tone down' existing work. For example in Fig. 8 the putty was used to enhance the aggregate of a texture that resembles polished granite. In Fig. 6 putty was used to add ripple reflections on the dolphins.

So what else can erasing putty be used for besides etching and highlighting? When you do the initial layout of your study use an HB or B, it will be easier to erase later. Also use putty to tone down the layout.

The B range of graphite are softer, darker and tend to 'drop' more dust. Use putty to clean those blank areas of your study.

And forget the erasing shield!

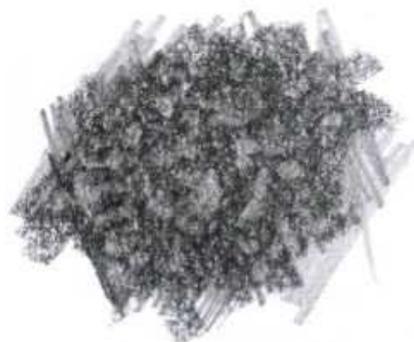


Fig. 8

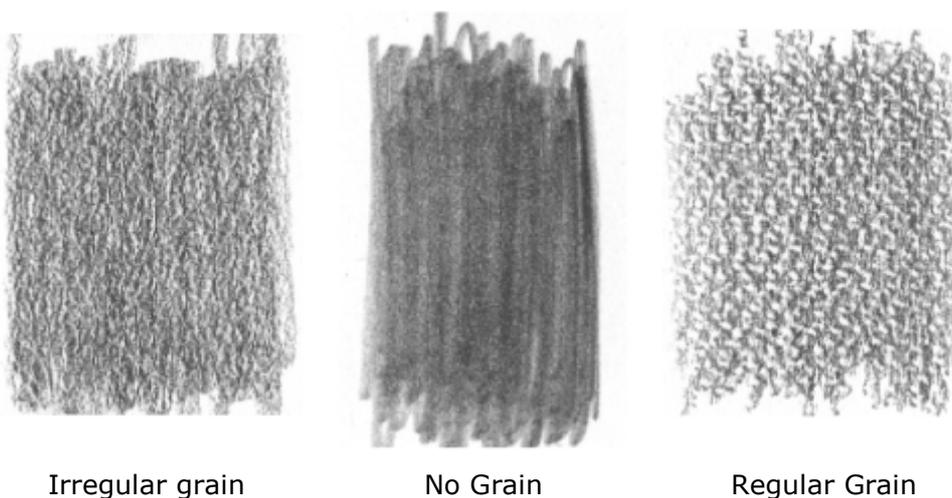
Graining

What is graining? It comes about in a number of ways. But the end result is an unwanted pattern, line or mark that becomes difficult to hide. As natural wood has a grain of its own and no matter how much it is sanded or polished the grain will remain. If you understand how graining comes about you can take measures to prevent it. Alternately, you could take advantage of it and use it to create something you want.

The two primary ways graining comes about. The first is due to poor drawing techniques or a lack of knowledge of the layering process and to a lesser degree the paper grain can play a part in the process.

To a lesser degree poor methods when you erase pencil can be a factor.

As you can see from the three examples below, the paper with no grain is more susceptible to graining. This is due to the fact that the base layer is usually denser, whereas the grain on the other two examples tends to break up the base layer. This leaves those 'little white spots' of exposed paper for the upper layers of graphite to bind to.



The above exercise of how to erase pencil or that mistake is typical example of graining. Where the work you are busy with is being impeded by a base layer that was drawn with harder graphite.

The only solution is to remove that base layer. If it is only a small area use an erasing shield an erasing machine.

The second most common causes of graining is drawing techniques. Fig. 9 is an example of how shading can create unwanted 'lines' that can be difficult to hind.



Fig 9

To see further information on the causes of, and how to prevent graining see: [Drawing Techniques](#)

There are other underlining aspects that also could 'produce unexpected results'.

- The paper surface could be damaged.
- The paper could be indented from a previous application.
- A Fatty stains or dirt.
- Poor methods used to erase pencil.
- The paper may have seam or indentation from been bent or buckled.
- There maybe a fragment of erasing debris or other behind the paper that is making an impress on it.

For further information on related topics, go to <http://www.peter-clements-art.com>