

MATERIALS

Over the years of practicing this wonderful art form, you will build up a considerable amount of tools and materials. If you are anything like me, I have a whole ex-wardrobe, shelved out with all my personal supplies! This section will provide you with an ideal list of everything you may need at some point in the future. I am not suggesting that you need all of it at outset! Most of these materials are available from my web shop.

Paper

Parchment paper should be either 140 or 150 gsm. It needs to be a good quality - some cheaper brands may crack when folded or break when embossing. Vellum is the lighter paper and is usually used for backing, or display imaging.

Tracing

You will definitely need a white pencil. Personally I use a propelling pencil and put 5 mm white leads in it. Any make of pencil will do, but get the finest white replacement leads for best results. Tracing is one of the first skills you will need to learn and as you progress you will still use your pencil, probably more and more.

Also a pen and ink will be needed. You need a mapping pen, which has a very fine nib. I keep several, one for each coloured ink: gold, silver, white and other colours. However if you are not confident enough to use a mapping pen, you can buy very fine nib pens, my favourite is a drawing pen - a Copic Multiliner 0.05, which I keep in stock. At the moment only available in black; but a Rotring Isograph 0.1 is available and the drawing inks come separately, and in white, which is rare. You will find both these by searching on the internet.

Embossing

Shader Tools: PCA® have a great range of shader tools (photos can be seen in the embossing section), they come in five different sizes and are a thick wire loop shape, from the largest (soft shader) to the smallest (micro shader). Since their introduction many experienced parchers prefer these to the traditional ball tools, although I admit, I still use both, as I do think it is horses for courses.

Ball Tools: There are again, five sizes, ranging from the largest (Mega) to the smallest (micro), and they are what they say, ball shaped tips on the steel barrel.

Scribers: There are two scribe tools, a single pointed tool used for very fine embossing detail; and the twin, which I use for both outlining frames and also for embossed greetings to enhance the text giving it a look of fine calligraphy.

Sun tools: I love these tools. There are four in the range: mega, large, small and micro. They are great for enhancing the look of lacework and for adding detail to flower displays, to add “baby’s breath” for example.

Mats: there are various mats available; but my personal favourite is a flat rubber one, because it is more forgiving and I find that the paper responds more favourably with this

rather than with a deep mat where sometimes you can break or buckle the paper, which is most disheartening and very annoying.

Perforating

Tools: there are a huge number of perforating tools in the PCA® range. There are the BOLD range and the FINE range. Which ever you find easier to use, will be the best one for you. Using the bold tools will give you a less fine result, but will still be beautiful and may initially be easier for you to work with, especially if you have problems seeing the finer detail. In this course, you can use either set of tools, as is your preference. There are more fine tools in the range than bold.

In the annex to this document (near the back) I have provided you with the latest tool chart from PCA® which outlines the look of each tool. Some you will use all the time, others you will use occasionally.

Perforators: I would suggest that you start off with a basic kit comprising of:

- Uni (one needle) F1001/B2001*
- Twin (two needle) F1002/B2002*
- Quad (four needle square) F1005/B2005
- Oct (eight needles octagonal) F1009/B2006
- Slot (2 rows of 4 needles) F1010/B2009
- Grid Square F1012/B2011

All of the above can be used with the grids, which I will talk about later. Also if you are really on a tight budget, you can manage with just the first two tools*, but be aware that the others will save you a lot of time and effort. You can always add to your tool collection with time. There is a whole new range of perforators to be collected, so please refer to the tool chart to see each shape. Also available is a tool called the PCA® Easy Cross; it is easy to use to cut crosses. However as you become more experienced you may wish to get used to cutting your own by use of the quad tool plus scissors.

Cutting/Edging: The first in this range of perforators are the stamp edge tools and these are excellent for helping you cut straight picot edged lines; they are available in both Bold and Fine and in two or four needle. I find that the two needle stamp edge is great, because it can get you into the tightest little turns (F1003/B1003).

Then there are the scallop shaped cutters; again in both Bold (one size) and Fine (small, medium, large and arc edge). Again I use the fine range most of the time, but occasionally I use the Bold when I want a special wave cut around the edge of cards.

Finally, there are the V shaped cutters, which give you a zigzag picot edge.

Scissors: you will need a pair of scissors or very fine pointed curved snips to snip between the perforated holes where you are not using the cutting/edging tools.

HINT: Keep your scissors sharp by cutting into kitchen foil, from time to time.

Grids: there are nine grids in the PCA® range: Fine and Bold in each of the following:

- Straight
- Diagonal
- Circle
- Oval
- The wider spaced straight grid (fine only).

Some exams require you to complete your grid type lacework without grids. I think this leads to inaccurate work and I do believe in taking the path of least resistance, so where indicated please use the grids!

Grid mats: always use a suitable mat under your grid, or you will ruin your tools. If you buy the double pack from PCA®, they come with a free mat.

Grid work produces some of the most fantastic results and is by far, my most favourite procedure in parchment crafting! So don't be surprised if you see a lot of enthusiasm in that section.

Colour Work

There are many ways to colour on parchment paper, but with wet mediums the secret is not to let it get too wet – your paper will buckle and your piece will be ruined, so take good care to use many layers, or light applications.

Inks: there are many different brands of inks in many colours available. But you need to make sure they are waterproof. If you have water based inks to outline a pattern and then use a wet medium to paint, it will run and smudge. You can also paint with inks. As a starter kit, I suggest you start off with white, black, gold and silver. **Paints:** Acrylic paints work well with parchment and can be “watered” down if required.

Oil pastels: there are again several brands available, but avoid the really cheap pastels as sometimes they crumble as you apply them to paper, but a medium priced range will work well. Use white spirit, lighter fluid, or some of the branded products like “zest it” to blend.

Oil/wax based pencils: the most popular brands are Polychromo by Faber-Castell and Primacolour. Again, use the same blending medium (more will follow on this subject).

Watercolour pencils: most brands work well, I have the Faber-Castell, but some of the cheaper brands are fine.

Felt-tip pens: choose a range that are “juicy”, you will usually water the colour down on a tile or saucer, so the more juice in them the longer they will last. I have a range of colours from Marvy Plume II which I have had for years and they are still going strong. However, to start with, you can buy any water based felt tips.

Brushes: I really only use one brush for the majority of my painting, that is No 2 round brush. Don't buy cheap, because the hairs can come adrift and spoil your work. It is worth

spending about £5/6€ on a good brush, and if you look after it will last you years. A lovely friend gave me a Kolinsky Red Sable by Da Vinci, which I look after lovingly!

Other materials:

- tweezers with a point;
- a plain white tile or saucer;
- a water jar (with lid);
- a small jam jar (the type you get in boats, planes & hotels) about 5cms tall with screw top; 2 pieces of sponge (one to put in the small jam jar to squeeze your blending fluid on) and (one to use with your painting to keep you brush at the right humidity);
- low tack tape;
- silicone glue;
- wooden cocktail sticks;
- very fine double sided tape;
- needle and white or invisible thread;
- pencil sharpener,
- clear ruler;
- A4 flat cardboard;
- Cut 'n Dry nibs (for blending pencils);
- magnifier on stand,
- daylight lamp or bulb;
- a roll of kitchen paper and last but very importantly,
- a dry tumble drier sheet (Bounce is good) to help your tools glide across the paper!