

Other useful items:

- Pencil Sharpener
- Whiteout or gouache
- Erasing shield
- Ruler
- Triangles
- French curves
- Circle and square templates
- T-square
- Toothbrush for splatter effects
- Draftman's tape



Our first step in creating a cartoon is deciding what we want to draw. A large percentage of my cartoons are drawn from suggestions and ideas that people have given me, or concepts that clients have required for their use. When you are handed an open ended assignment giving you a bit of creative freedom, or just feel like creating a character for your own use, personalize it and make it unique. Find an unusual angle or pose for the character, or have him doing something off the wall. Take advantage of the whimsical nature of the art form and give him a reason to be a cartoon instead of a realistic illustration.

I start with a blank sheet of bristol board or heavy bond paper, an ordinary #2 pencil and block eraser, a soft bristle paintbrush for wiping away leftover eraser dust, a pen holder and nibs, and a bottle of waterproof India ink. If you are in the habit of using your hand to brush away eraser bits, break it. Not your hand, the habit. It smears your pencil work and transfers oil to the paper. Consider purchasing more than one type of nib, in various sizes and flexibility to experiment with an assortment of line qualities. A handy roll of paper towels is good for cleaning ink spills. French curves or rulers can be handy, but if you plan on bringing the finished artwork into Illustrator or Photoshop, the tools in these programs are more than adequate for helping create and edit perfectly straight lines or making smooth, elegant curves.

A comfortable chair, a sturdy, adjustable drafting table, and a good light source will all go a long way toward making your drawing sessions much more productive. The tension in your neck and back is helped by a good chair, the strain on your eyes is alleviated by bright lighting, and a steady table will help your lines go where you intend and (hopefully), keep that bottle of ink from tipping.

"A blank white canvas can be pretty intimidating if you don't know where to start."

One of the 'tricks' I've learned to make my cartooning easier is the same technique pro sports figures use before a game: visualization. Taking a bit of time to visualize and work out the image before you sit down at the drawing table can make the process much easier and faster. A blank white canvas can be pretty intimidating if you don't know where to start. But when you've thought about your project, arranged the composition and drawn the cartoon in your head prior to picking up a pencil, you'll already know where to start and shouldn't have any trouble with "artist's block", just draw what you see in your mind's eye.