DRAWING ROCKS, STONES, PEBBLES AND JELLYBEANS ISN'T AS HARD AS IT SEEMS

Rocks/Stones/Pebbles/Jellybeans are some of the easiest subjects to draw for beginners -- and also among the best for learning to draw anything realistically. They are forgiving. You can get the shapes wrong and still come out with a pile of rocks that looks like a well drawn pile of rocks if you get the shadows right.

But if you do not know how to get light and shadow on a three-dimensional object, it is going to be tricky to get them to look like rocks instead of eggs or random ovals.

FYI: Colored pencils is the medium closest to general drawing that you can find, the difference is that you are adding color. You are "laying" several colors to achieve not just the VALUE (how light or dark) an area is, but the HUE (the color).

ROCKS ARE OFTEN GRAY OR BROWN

Neutral colors are very forgiving.

You can achieve them by combining complementary colors - the ones opposite each other on the color wheel. Or by using brown, gray and the more muted colors of colored pencils like that wonderful Peach Beige 1085 in Prismacolor or the brownish-gray French Grays (1068, 1069, 1070, 1072, 1074, 1076).

If you have a large set of Prismacolor, when you have different pencils to choose from, it is easy to pick out the pencils that come closest to the color of a particular area on a specific rock. But when you don't, it becomes necessary to layer different colors to get the effects you want.
FYI: Even very bright colors can be layer lightly to create browns and grays in complementary combinations.

Nine basic colors are used to create "basic" hues for rocks, pebbles and jellybeans.

Bright sunny yellow – Lemon Yellow 915 or Canary Yellow 916
Orange – Orange 918 or Poppy Red 922
Red – Scarlet Lake 923 or Crimson Red 924 or Crimson Lake 925
Purple or Violet – Dark Purple 931 or Parma Violet 1008 or Violet 932
Blue – True Blue 903 or Sky Blue Light 1086 or Copenhagen Blue 906
Dark Blue - Indigo Blue 901 or Violet Blue 953
Green – Spring Green 913 or Apple Green 912
Brown – Chocolate 1082 or Dark Brown 946 or Light Umber 941
Black – Black 935

MIXING BRIGHT COLORS

Mixing bright colors will give a richer result than using the brown or gray pencils in your set.

When using "muted" colors you will get a subtle glazing of colors layered over each other.

The principle still works even if the colors you're mixing are Grayed Lavender 1026 and Sand 940 rather than bright Dahlia Purple 1009 and bright yellow (Lemon Yellow 915 or Canary Yellow 916).

FYI: It is extremely important HOW you sketch your rocks – draw them in sunlight, the shadows on rocks will have the complement of the exact color of the light in addition to the local color of the rock.

If you have a bright white light, perfectly balanced like a Daylight lamp, you will see all local colors (the color the object is) exactly as they are. If the light is leaning towards the PINKISH side as it does at dawn or sunset, then the shadows will lean GREENER.

If the light is golden the way it is in late afternoon or early morning, then the
shadows will be more Violet.

REMEMBER: On top of that, objects next to the rocks will reflect color onto them. You can test this by setting a white or gray rock out on a table under your lamp. Then move a bright colored book or object near it, and look at it – you'll see color from your object reflecting its color bouncing off the rock surface. Even if the rock is brown, it'll still get sometimes a very strong color reflection from the nearest objects.

When composing your drawing, you HAVE to pay attention to the colors of the things around the rocks as well as the rocks.

On the other hand Jellybeans are a little translucent except for black – this will reflex their color into the "CAST" shadow.

JELLY BEANS

The above left-hand Jellybean drawing is hatch and cross-hatching only. The right-hand drawing used a Turpenoid (OMS) wash after all Jellybeans have been colored, dried, and then redrawn over.

Shadow is Indigo Blue 901 and Black 935. You'll notice the "depth" the wash adds to the drawing.

Below colors are listed in order of lay-down

**Pink Jelly Bean**

Blush Pink 928
Pink 929
Neon Pink 1038
Magenta 930
Mulberry 995
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

**Green Jelly Bean**
Yellow Chartreuse 1004
Chartreuse 989
Spring Green 913
Apple Green 912
Dark Green 908
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

**Orange Jelly Bean**
Sunburst Yellow 917
Orange 918
Pale Vermilion 921
Neon Orange 1036
Magenta 930
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

**Purple Jelly Bean**
Lavender 934
Pink 929
Lilac 956
Purple 931
Black Grape 996
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

**Red Jelly Bean**
Pink 929
Poppy Red 922
Neon Red 1037
Scarlet Lake 923
Crimson Lake 925
Black Cherry 1076
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

**Yellow Jelly Bean**
Cream 914
Lemon Yellow 915
Canary Yellow 916
Yellowed Orange 1002
Mineral Orange 1033
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

**Black Jelly Bean**
Parma Violet 1008
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

**ROCK SHAPES ARE DEFINED BY THE SHADOWS**

In drawing rocks, look for the:

CAST SHADOW - This shows where your light is coming from – usually the
opposite angle to the cast shadow. If the rock is at all shiny, it will have a bright highlight like jellybeans at the opposite side from the cast shadow.

MODELING SHADOWS - This is where the surface is darker because less light falls directly on it.

CORE SHADOW - This is the darkest shadow on the rocks' surface (usually right below the modeling shadows).

REFLECTED LIGHT - This is a "thin" area of reflection shadow on the surface the rock is sitting on, especially if the surface is white or lit surface.

PENUMBRA SHADOW - Between the modeling shadow and the lit side there's also a blurred area or partial shadow. Around the edges of cast shadows will usually be a penumbra that's not as dark as the shadow or as bright as the area around the shadow.

FYI: On a colored object, the penumbra is the most likely to be the pure local color of the object. The lit side will be faded and tinted by the light color; the shadow side will be darkened and tinted by the complement of the light color.

REMEMBER: Still life objects look better with odd numbers of objects.

STONES REFERENCE MATERIAL AND DEMONSTRATION

TEST: You own reference - find different stones, each a different color and size, then arrange them in a pleasing asymmetrical pattern on a white surface and take a picture for your photo reference – download the pictures to your computer.

Below is a reference photo I found I'm using for this demonstration, pick out several stones to draw.

(FYI: If you have a photo manipulation program you can grab from this document and place into a file)
SKETCHING THE OUTLINES OF ROCKS AND CAST SHADOWS

1. If you are "freehand" drawing of the stones take your "hot-press" paper and lightly sketch the chosen stones using Dark Brown 946. If you decide to trace from the reference shot – find several stones and "outline" on tracing paper, use a #2B pencil with a sharp point.

2. Then "flip-over" the pencil drawing, use Dark Brown 946 and cover the drawing like in photo below. Why use a dark colored pencil instead of graphite?
FYI: Graphite pencils will work to transfer the drawing onto your hot press paper, but remember using graphite will MIX with your colors and look "muddy".

3. Lightly take your kneaded eraser or Dry Cleaning Pad over the sketch to "knock" back the drawing lines, by doing this the lines can easily be incorporated into a tonal area of the drawing.
4. Don't worry about any blurriness. As mentioned earlier, you don't have to get the shapes exact. Just get close. REMEMBER: The more practice you have drawing irregular rock shapes true to their proportions, the easier it is to start doing things like human faces or cat heads accurate to their proportions.

FYI: Indigo Blue 901 is one of the most useful sketching colors along with Tuscan Red 937, Dark Brown 946 and Dark Green 908.

LAYING DOWN COLOR LAYERS

Be careful to go lightly on this stage.

In the order of color lay down - Mix/layer (cross-hatch)

Begin building your stone shapes, peaks & valleys, shadows going from light to dark. REMEMBER: You cannot mess stone color – just keep light pressure and develop the stones colors – alternate light color stones and dark color stones – always use odd number stones for better composition.

Peach Beige 1085
Rosy Beige 1019
Clay Rose 1017
Peach 939
Goldenrod 1034
Beige Sienna 1080
Greyed Lavender 1028
Salmon Pink 1001
Burnt Ochre 943
Sepia 948
Cool Grey 10% 1059
Cool Grey 30% 1061
Cool Grey 50% 1053
Cool Grey 70% 1065
Pale Sage 1089
Jade Green 1021
Terra Cotta 944
Magenta 930
Indigo Blue 901
Black 935

Barely touch the paper. Always keep your pencil point sharp while drawing. This way you can sketch in and darken any light patches within a smooth area without losing the white specks that show the paper still has tooth.

We will be doing many layers on this drawing even though it's a tonal drawing rather than a burnished painting, so don't press hard and use up the paper's tooth.
On the cast shadows, very carefully fill them in the way you see them using Indigo Blue 901 and with a "touch" of Black 935.

Very lightly after shading the cast shadows, blur around them with hardly any pressure at all for a slight distance to suggest the PENUMBRA. Then just that lightly goes into the CORE SHADOWS on all stones and touches them with the Indigo Blue 901 to cool those core shadows. Core shadows are the deepest darkest parts of a modeling shadow. It's that curving line above the reflected light on the smallest stone and the darkest part of the shadows on the biggest rock.

BUILD COLOR, CREATE CONTRAST AND DRAMA WITH YOUR MUTED COLORS - THEN BLEND.

Build the shape of the stones through color Value and Hue technique (Start with the lightest VALUE and the lightest HUE combo and work though darker combos). Build your shadows with Indigo Blue 901 using a "hatch" technique.

Now it's time to start modifying your drawing by applying the OMS wash (Turpenoid) with a watercolor brush.

CAUTION: Do not saturate paper with Turpenoid; use a "dry" brush technique when blending your color. Let dry completely.
CONTINUING WITH YELLOW

It's easy to see now how much the yellow is needed. The rock at the top looks very pinkish, the light one also looks pink and even the greenish mineral one that's so pale needs some more color -- but not much yellow. We will go back with green again after the yellow stage.

Glaze a layer of yellow over the large rock and the small round rock. On the greenish pale crystalline one, don't cover all the white areas, leave patches of it white. Some white areas need to stay white, especially in the highlight area. Glazing is doing a smooth tonal layer over everything.

I left some white patches exposed on the rock on the back because it has pale patches, these got light yellow glaze over them so they're not pure white contrast. Now let's see how it looks again.

DARKEN AND REFINE EVERYTHING

Using all the colors we used before, darken and refine everything to look closer to the photo reference or the true color of the rocks. The reference doesn't show quite how greenish that crystalline rock is, so look at my drawing as well as the reference for its true color and value. All of them are a lot darker than the white background.

The background in the photo appears darker because of the lighting and that it's my phone camera. In person the white paper the rocks are on is very bright, much brighter than the highlights on the green crystalline rock. So I'll come somewhere in between and keep some of those highlights bright white too.

This is still a tonal drawing, not a fully burnished colored pencils painting. If I were using Prismacolors I would start getting out the odd colors for this layer. I'd be using French Gray 10% or 30% here and there to establish value, then combining various muted colors over what's there in order to get the texture and hue just right. But let's keep it simpler than that and just use this limited palette for a good tonal drawing.

The rocks should stand out more. All of them should be about as dark again as they are against the background.

At the very last when everything's darkened, use Black. Crisp up the tiny cracks and holes in the farthest-back rock, enhancing texture with black details. Go under all three of the rocks with Black hard for a tiny core
shadow where hardly any light gets in right under the edges of the rocks, then fade that out into the cast shadow. On the light green crystalline rock, only do this where the dark shadows touch the bottom edge -- it's different because light is coming through its translucent body.

If you like, burnish over these rocks with a colorless blender for a smooth painted look, then refresh the dark details where they're blurred. Use White over the crystalline green rock if you do burnish and then just touch up the darker areas. I prefer to leave mine as a drawing rather than burnish it as a painting and try to create a detailed background.

Set out some rocks of your own -- pebbles, polished stones, anything. If you use a highly polished rock, be careful to go around the shape of its bright white highlights carefully. That's what shows the shine, the shape of the reflecting highlights.

You can mask them with masking fluid or Frisket film if you want, just be careful not to draw right to the edge of the mask or you might move it with your pencil.

Enjoy! Rocks are challenging but rewarding -- and you can mix any color you like just from a small well-chosen handful of pencils.