

Using a value range

In nature, there is an unlimited number of values at play. We, as artists, have the liberty to use as many or as few values as we choose. How many should we use while sketching? Well, that's up to the individual. Somewhere around three to five is probably a good number. Each combination of values will produce a different mood. Consider a few of the options:

Lighest
light

Darkest
dark



Even two values can produce a variety of looks.



High key

High key painting uses two values that are close together and on the high end of the scale.



High contrast

High contrast painting uses two values that are far apart on the scale.



Low key

Low key painting uses two values that are close together on the darker side of the scale.

Three values are enough



Three values applied to our shapes – in any pattern – appear to be 3-dimensional. Notice that all the boxes are convincing. The lesson here is that the human eye "buys into" this illusion and makes three values sufficient to appear to occupy space.

Applying three values to shapes

