the RCSherriff Trust
advancing the arts in Elmbridge

Rosebriars Art Group

Eye Studies Project

You will need:

A pencil (2B or softer work best as you can get more range, but an ordinary pencil would work too, you could make your lines darker using a black biro over the top)
Pastels / paints / inks (if you have them)
A rubber/eraser
A mirror

Eyes are often referred to as 'the windows to the soul' – many famous paintings feature striking representations of eyes; Van Gogh's self portrait has vivid, feverish eyes flecked with green, Leonardo's Mona Lisa has calm, composed eyes painted in subdued tones.

There are three parts to this project – the first is a basic tutorial on how to draw an eye.

The second is a challenge – try drawing both eyes – mirroring left and right.

The third is a free choice – try drawing a sheet of eyes using different mediums or use the template attached to create a large detailed image of an eye using any medium you would like – this could include brush & ink (as in my example below), paint or even collage. Or try drawing your own eye, as I did using pastels (below)

How to Draw Eyes: A Step by Step Guide

1. Start by drawing the outline of an eye – this is usually an oval / almond shape. You can look at your own eye in a mirror, or use one of the examples enclosed to draw from. Add some rough lines above & below as eyelids.

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2. Next draw the iris, this is a circle shape but the top and bottom are usually partially hidden by the eyelids. This position changes depending on whether you are looking up or down, have a look in the mirror to see.

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3. Now draw the pupil – the dark circle in the centre of the iris – leave gaps for where the light catches the eye – this is often a rectangular shape at the top of the pupil, there are often smaller highlights, these can be added later.

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4. The iris has very detailed patterns radiating from the pupil outwards, you can draw these as tiny broken lines, or dots & dashes, make some lighter and some darker.

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5. Fill in the pupil with dark shading but leave at least one large highlight & one smaller 'spec' of light.
6. Add some more lines for the eye lids and eye lashes.

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7. Now, using the side of your pencil to shade the whole eye area with a light shading. Next make the top part of the shading darker (where the eyelid casts a shadow over the eye).

8. Add some lines for eyebrows and try smudging your pencil to create shadows around the eye area.

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9. When you are happy with your shading you can use the side of a rubber to make the highlights in your eye stand out more, you could also try using a white pencil if you have one to add some more specs of light.

Now try drawing two eyes, following each stage above step-by-step, on each side of your page, trying to mirror the image. This is a great brain-training exercise!

Artist's Examples

Van Gogh

Mikayla Moris

Stefan Pabst

Leonardo da Vinci

Dino Tomic

Lucian Freud

Pablo Picaso

Frida Kahlo

Cath Riley

Elizabeth Peyton