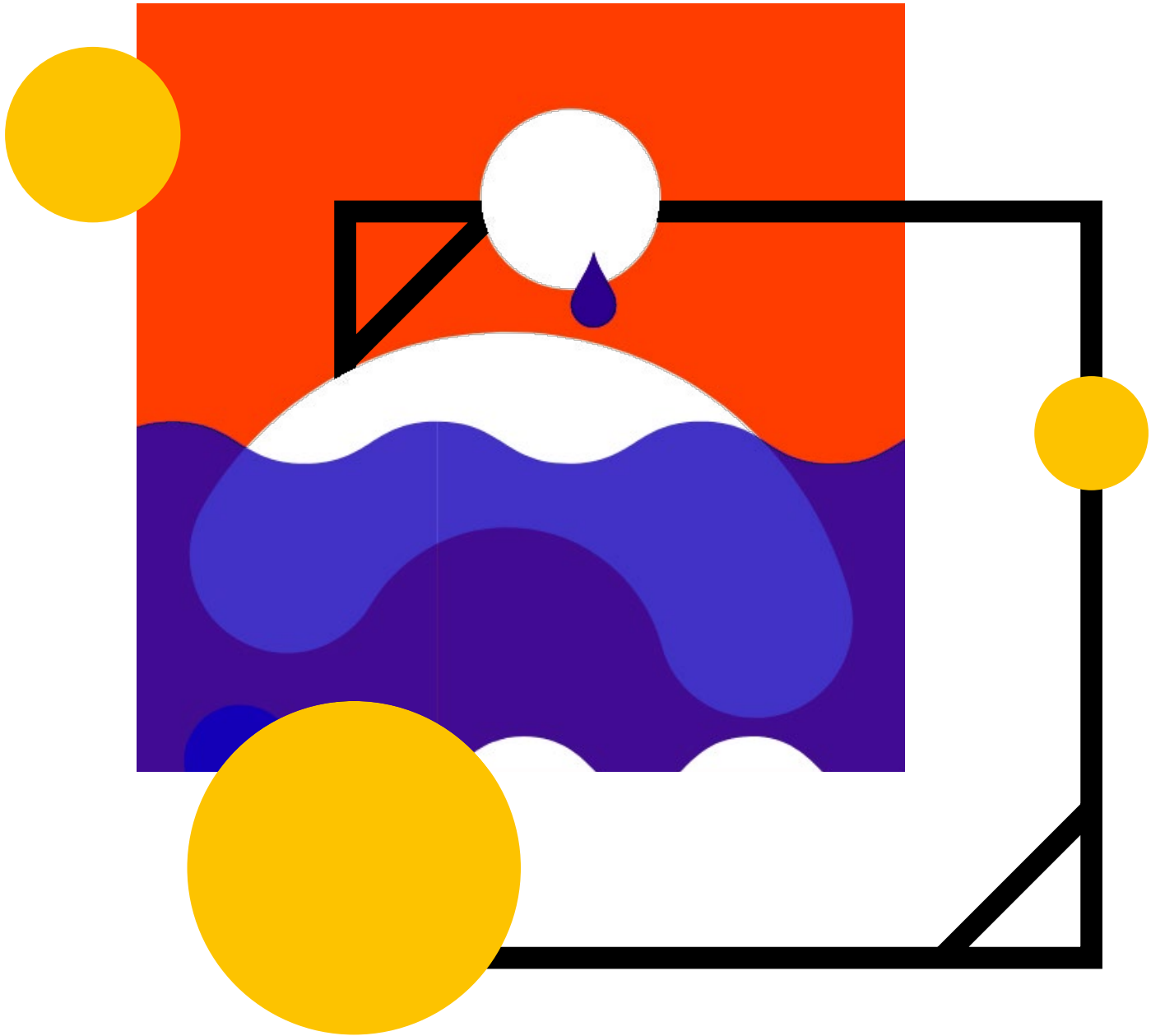


Create your own toolkit for art and design



So you want to study design?



In the ever changing world of visual communication design the idea of an essential toolbox can be overwhelming. There are some basics that you should have when starting any design course.

This guide will outline some recommended tools for any fledgling design student to consider.

This guide will help you with...

- Physical: a few physical tools that can really help the designer
- Digital: essential hardware and software that are useful for designers to have
- Research links: where to go online to keep up to date on the design world
- Portfolio: helpful portfolio advice

Top tips

Take photos of EVERYTHING that inspires you so you can refer to them later—this could be people on the street, shop windows, buildings, artwork etc. Take digital notes on your phone.



If you see this icon it means the link is clickable, this will take you to a video tutorial or website needed for the workshop

Physical toolbox



When you start any design project you should begin with making notes, quick sketches and a lot of experimentation. To help with this you will need to reach for your physical toolbox. This section suggests a few items that could really help.

Sketchbook

The sketchbook is probably the most important bit of kit in your physical toolbox. It is where all your ideas, experimentations and creative growth happens.

Make sure you buy a sketchbook that has good quality paper at around 150gsm. You want a paper that can withhold a variety of different media.

Pencils

A good set of pencils are a must have for any designer. Try and get as much variety of lead strengths as possible.

Colour Pencils

Bring a little colour into your work with a simple set of colour pencils. Make sure you get colour pencils with a soft lead so that they can be blended.

Physical toolbox

(continued)

Top tip

There are a lot of pencils on the market with varying degrees of quality. A few brands to lookout for:

- Faber Castell
- Derwent Prismacolor
- Caran D’Ache
- Stabilo
- Staedtler
- Lyra

Types of colour pencils:

- Water colour: good for light washes
- Oil: harder core and last longer
- Wax based: great for blending

Rubbers

Rubbers can be use for more than just getting rid of mistakes. For example if you buy a putty rubber you can blend heavy leaded drawings to create interesting tonal qualities.

Physical toolbox

(continued)

Scissors

Make sure your scissors are up to the job of cutting a variety of different paper sizes and materials.

Ruler

If you can, try and get a metal 30 cm ruler. Metal is more sturdy and you can use it to get straight lines when cutting with a cutting knife.

Cutting Knife

A good cutting knife opens up a world of possibilities when it comes to experimentation. Cutting up different materials with precision.

A good cutting knife to start with is one with disposable blades that attach to an aluminium handle.

Cutting knives also double up as a pencil sharpener.

Physical toolbox

(continued)



Paints

- Acrylic: Mix with water or straight from tube.
- Water colour: Mix with water
- Gouache: Opaque colour & water soluble.

Paint brushes

Buy brushes depending on what paint you are using. For example watercolour brushes tend to be softer than acrylic brushes. Also, make sure you get a variety of sizes for small-to-big and shapes from round-to-flat.

Top tip:

Paint can be expensive and buying every colour of the rainbow is unnecessary. To save money learn how to mix colours using only the primary colours: red, blue and yellow as well as white and black.

You'll be amazed at how many colours you can create!

Digital toolbox



Design is now very much a digital profession. The digital age has made the design process much faster as well as creating the opportunity to reach a much wider audience.

Here are a few things to consider when building your digital toolbox.

Laptops

If you can, it's always preferable to have your own laptop. Though you don't need to rush out and buy one for thousands of pounds. Here are two things to consider:

Space/RAM: Your laptop is probably going to have to use a number of softwares that can create very large files. So make sure you get as much RAM as you can afford.

CPU: Make sure you also get a laptop with a good Central Processing Unit (CPU). That will make sure your computer can run a few things at once without crashing.

Apart from these two things everything else like screen quality and laptop size is an added extra so don't spend your money on them if you can't afford it.

External Hard drives: Buying a good external hard drive is a great idea. Remember always back-up your work!

Digital toolbox

(continued)

Top tips

Ravensbourne does have laptops you can borrow while you're in the building. So if you can't afford your own laptop straight away you can always borrow one until you buy your own. They do go fast though so make sure you get in early!

Tablets and stylus

Tablets are great for drawing and animation software like Procreate or flipaclip. Drawing with a stylus has come a long way. If you are an illustrator or love to sketch then think about getting yourself one for your tablet.

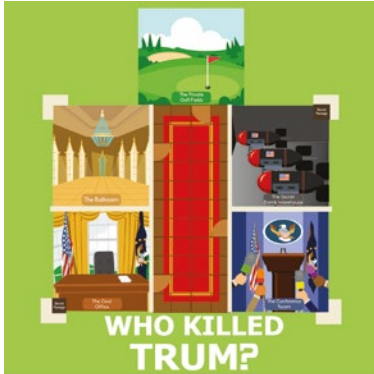
Camera

Unless photography is at the centre of your creative practice then you don't need to buy an expensive digital camera. Your smartphone camera is capable of some amazing things, just use that!

Top tip

Ravensbourne has a wonderful resource called The Kit Store where you can borrow a lot of these things. For example if you want to take some really nice photos with a camera that is a bit more hi spec than your camera phone then you can borrow a DSLR camera from The Kit Store for free, easy peasy!

Software



Adobe Photoshop

This software allows you to manipulate your drawings or photographs and is an essential tool for any designer.

Photoshop allows you to make quick changes to your ideas and to clean up more finished visual outcomes to a professional standard. The variety of things you can do in Photoshop is endless.

Adobe Illustrator

Allows you to create digital imagery very quickly. It works on vectors not pixels, which simply means you will not lose resolution the bigger you make your image. It is also very useful if you want to create designs for laser cutting.

Adobe Indesign

This is a layout software that has become very useful for designers interested in typography and layout design.

Adobe After Effects

A vital bit of kit for any motion graphic and UX/UI students. This software will make your images move!

Software

(continued)



Procreate

If you love to draw then this app is brilliant. The only catch is you need to have a tablet and preferably a stylus. For digital drawing its unrivalled and it's cheap!

FlipaClip

Like Procreate you need a tablet and stylus to for this. It allows you to create hand drawn animations. Best of all it's really simple to use.

Stop Motion Studio

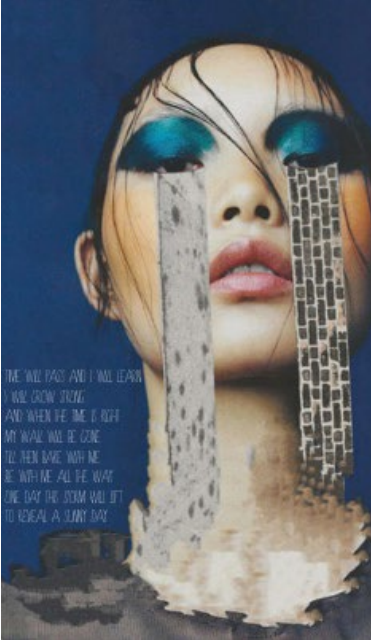
So simple but so useful! This app allows you to make stop frame animations. And... it's free!

Top tip

If you are interested in animation and can't afford a tablet then download Stop Motion Studio for free. Get some tracing paper make stop frame animations instead.

You'll also learn a lot about how animation was made before fancy technology came along.

Research links



Primary Digital Research

Being able to research effectively is central to being a great Designer. There are lots of ways to do this; the best, easiest and most personal way is to use your phone and record everything that inspires you. Take clear images and videos when you are out and about then keep them for when you need them—,you might record type you like, shapes of buildings, colourful objects, advertising billboards and interesting colour combinations. Remember to be broad in your interests.

Secondary Digital Research

Museums and galleries around the world now offer you a chance to explore their archives online, meaning that you can get up close to a 15th century dress in Japan or a Picasso masterpiece in America without ever having to leave your home. This is great because it allows you to expand your knowledge and also to develop colour and detailing ideas, we have listed a few great sources below but start to gather your own 'go to' list



creativereview.co.uk

designmuseum.org/design

tate.org.uk

Graphic design links



Adbusters
adbusters.org

Booooooom
booooooom.com

Creative Review
creativereview.co.uk

Design Museum
designmuseum.org/design

Design Week
designweek.co.uk

St Bride Foundation
sb.org.uk

Tate
tate.org.uk

It's Nice That
itsnicethat.com

Wired Magazine
wired.com/magazine

Top tip

Follow your favourite designers on social media. That way you can keep track with how they work as a professional. You will see how they use their social media platforms and what kinds of jobs they take on.

Preparing your portfolio



Nowadays many Universities are requesting a digital portfolio when you apply to their courses.

It's a great idea to produce one because you never know when you might meet someone within the industry who might like to look at your work, having a digital portfolio makes that very easy.

There are lots of free portfolio template websites available.



[squarespace.com](https://www.squarespace.com)

[wix.com](https://www.wix.com)

Recording process

It is very important to record your creative process—it allows you to build a resource for future reference. It also means you have a back-up in case your original work goes missing or is damaged

- Take good photos of work you have created physically, this should include sketchbook work, as well as textile samples and photoshoots.
- Keep organised digital folders of references and research that you can use in future projects

Preparing your portfolio (continued)

Top tip

Instagram continues to be the number one way that professional designers show their work to others, it allows customers, brands, influencers, stylists and magazines to access your work, in an industry where profile is key, a great Instagram page can help you get work.

Set up a page focused on your design work—show a range of work including your process and final outcomes.

Images by students:

- Renata Miranda Antello
- Ella Chick
- Sophie Clarke
- Tolu Dada
- Bryony Jones
- Zainab Khan
- Morag
- Antek Paramothayan
- Alva Skog
- Olympia Zignoli

Ravensbourne Outreach tutors and students have produced a new series of online projects and courses to help you stay creative at home

If you'd like to find out more please visit our website makeit.ravensbourne.ac.uk or email us at outreach@rave.ac.uk

Instagram: [@raveoutreach](https://www.instagram.com/raveoutreach)

Twitter: [@ravensbourneWP](https://twitter.com/ravensbourneWP)

#letsmakeitcreative

