

LESSON 1

SUPPLIES

You'll need a few key supplies in order to create this map. If you don't have all these supplies at home, don't worry! I've listed suitable substitutions as well. An asterisk (*) denotes an affiliate link.

1. Watercolor Paper - I used Strathmore cold press [140# watercolor paper](#)* for this project. You could try using a different brand, but make sure the weight is 140# or less. Otherwise, you won't be able to see through the paper to trace buildings! I've also successfully created maps on [80# drawing paper](#)*. The advantage of watercolor paper is you get a bit more texture and less absorbency, but drawing paper is a great substitute! For this project, you should cut your watercolor paper to 5.25" x 7.25" (134 mm x 184 mm). Alternatively, you could make this project in a high-quality sketchbook. It's a bit tricky to work with a light box and a sketchbook, but it's doable!

2. Pencil - Any pencil will work, but I like to use a mechanical pencil with 0.7 mm lead. It's important to have a sharp pencil tip that draws accurate, thin lines!

3. Photoshop* - I rely on Photoshop to help me make the map layout and to prepare map files for professional printers (if I'm printing copies of my map, like for a wedding suite). If you don't have Photoshop and you don't plan to make multiple copies of your map, you could use a program like Microsoft Word or even Google Docs to make your map layout. As long as you can make a 5.25" x 7.25" rectangle and paste images inside it, your software will work for this project!

4. Printer - I use an inkjet printer to print off my digital map layout.

5. Light Box* - You don't have to own a light box to make this project, but it will make life much easier! If you don't want to purchase a light box, you can use a sunny window to shine the digital map layout up through your watercolor paper.

6. Dip Pen + Waterproof Ink - I use a [straight pen](#) and a [Nikko G nib](#) to make the illustrations for this map, and an [oblique pen](#) and a [Brause EF66 nib](#) to make the calligraphy/flourished components. You don't have to use two types of pens and two types of nibs; it's just my personal preference. Make sure you use a completely waterproof ink! [Ziller Soot Black](#) is my favorite for this project. Note that you *can* use a regular pen to make your map, but it has to be waterproof (I'd recommend [Muji](#)*), and you'll sacrifice a lot of stroke contrast.

7. Watercolors - I mostly use Greenleaf & Blueberry watercolors to create my maps. Their earth tones, in particular (Cassel Earth, Earth Green) are amazing for depicting backgrounds! That said, any watercolor palette will work. If you can, try to use an artist grade set. After all, this is a project that will take a lot of your time, so you might as well ensure that the result is vibrant and beautiful. Here are my top watercolor recommendations:

- [Greenleaf & Blueberry](#)
- [Daniel Smith](#)*
- [Winsor & Newton](#)
- [M. Graham & Co.](#)
- [Sennelier](#)

Why use artist grade? Artist grade pigments tend to be smoother, more vibrant, and easier to work with. Student grade paints -- like Winsor & Newton Cotman -- would be a decent substitute! If you're interested in learning about watercolors, see [this classic article](#) on The Postman's Knock.