

Step-by-Step Pastel Tutorial in the Style of Degas



Materials Needed:

- Soft pastels or chalk pastels
- Pastel paper or thick cartridge paper
- A pencil and eraser for sketching
- A tissue or blending tool (like a cotton bud or fingertip)
- Hairspray or fixative (with adult help)

Step 1: Sketch the Dancer's Pose

Use a pencil to lightly sketch a ballerina tying her shoe. Keep the lines loose and graceful, focusing on the pose rather than tiny details.



Step 2: Block in the Background

Use pale pastel tones like soft browns, greys, or greens to create a gentle, indoor background — just enough to suggest a rehearsal room or stage setting. Don't worry about fine details.

Step 3: Add Skin and Hair

Use peaches, creams, or browns for skin. Degas often used soft blending on the face and arms. Use browns or blacks for the hair, blending to make it smooth and natural.

Step 4: Colour the Costume

Degas often painted dancers in tutus of blue, green, or pink. Colour the bodice and skirt lightly, then add darker tones for shadows. Use a tissue or finger to gently blend the pastel.

Step 5: Add Shadows and Highlights

Add light grey or purple to shadow areas — under the tutu, around arms, or by the feet. Use white or pale yellow for highlights. Degas used light to make his figures glow.

Step 6: Add Texture with Bold Strokes

Add bolder pastel marks in places like the edges of the tutu, the floor, and hair. Use quick, hatched lines to mimic movement and energy — just like Degas!

Step 7: Blend and Refine

Use your finger or blending tool to smooth some areas, and leave other areas with visible strokes. Balance softness with boldness.

Step 8: Final Details and Fix

Add small final touches like a bow, shoe ribbon, or a mirror edge. Once you're happy, use spray hairspray or fixative to protect the picture.