

HOW TO... *DRAW* *A MANDALA*



Drawing and gazing at mandalas can bring amazing peace and tranquillity. Artist **Louise Gale** shows you how to create these ancient spiritual symbols for yourself, step by step

Colour-your-own mandala books have soared in popularity in recent years, with the relaxation craze being used as an antidote to modern-day stress.

The name 'mandala' comes from the Sanskrit word for 'circle', and they were originally used by Hindus and Buddhists as a tool for focused meditation. Staring at the intricate details within the mandala can induce a trance-like state.

Most commonly, mandalas take on a circular shape with a central point made up of motifs

and patterns that flow outwards in a symmetrical design.

Artist Louise Gale, who runs mandala-drawing workshops, says creating these symbols for yourself can help bring stability and order to a busy life by focusing your mind. 'Drawing a mandala will centre you

and offer a sense of peace and calmness. Many see the process as a meditation in itself,' she adds.

With Louise's guidance, find out how you can draw your own mandalas with two simple methods, which you can use as a foundation for all your mandala designs.

GETTING STARTED

To create your mandala, you will need:

- Sheets of plain A4 paper
- A small plate, to draw around
- A pencil
- A rubber
- A fine-nibbed black pen
- A set of coloured pens or pencils
- A ruler
- A compass

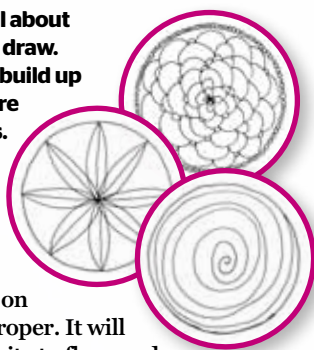
Before you start, create a space for yourself which feels comfortable and inspiring, then sit down and take a few relaxing deep breaths to clear and calm your mind. Now you're ready to begin.

METHOD 1: Freehand

This method is all about exploring as you draw. Start simple and build up to larger and more complex designs.

STEP ONE

This step is a kind of practice run before you start on your mandala proper. It will help your creativity to flow, and you'll start to notice which motifs or shapes you're intuitively drawn to as you doodle inside these circles.



Take three sheets of paper, and draw a circle on each one by drawing around your small plate with a pencil. Now start in the centre of the first circle and begin to draw a shape that flows from the middle towards the circle's edge. For example, you could draw a spiral, a star or the petals of a flower.

Once this circle is full, move on to the next circle and draw another shape inside it.

STEP TWO

If you study mandalas in detail, you'll see that they're made up of repeated motifs and shapes. Find inspiration by choosing a few of your favourite mandalas from books and the internet, and look around you for patterns you're attracted to. They may appear in the design of a fabric, wall tiles, a slice of an orange, the heart of a flower or

a delicate sea urchin that you found on the beach. Next, take a blank sheet of paper and use these ideas as a starting point to design your own motifs. Try to create at least five interesting shapes that you can use in your mandala. Here are some of my favourites that feature in many of my own designs:



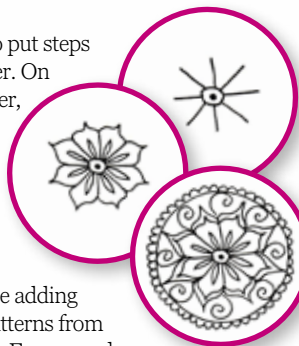
STEP THREE

Now you're ready to put steps one and two together. On a sheet of blank paper, draw around the plate with a pencil to create a circle.

Still working in pencil, draw one of your motifs in the centre, then continue adding more shapes and patterns from the centre outwards. For example, you could start with a dot, then draw a circle round the dot, add lines spreading out from this inner circle, then join them up to create petals, and so on.

As you add more and more shapes, you'll see your mandala start to grow outwards. Remember to keep your design symmetrical.

Once you've filled your circle and you're happy with it, you will have a completed mandala. You can then trace over your pencil lines with a fine-nibbed black pen. It's now ready for colouring.



METHOD 2: Structured

If you don't feel ready to doodle freehand, then the following method is a great way of breaking down the process and making each stage more structured.

STEP ONE

Start by drawing a circle on a sheet of paper using your plate and pencil. Next, use a ruler to divide the circle into eight equal segments.

Then, using a compass, mark out a series of concentric, ever-increasing circles in pencil within this grid, to form a guide as to where your different motifs will sit. You can add as many circles as you want, depending on how simple or

intricate you would like your mandala design to be.

STEP TWO

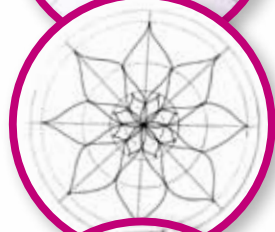
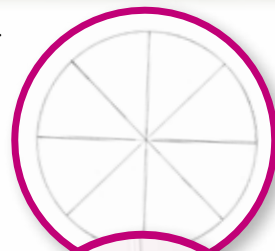
You are now ready to start designing your mandala. Choose a simple motif to begin with – for example, a dot in the centre of the main circle – then begin to work outwards. For instance, you could then draw petals reaching out to fill all eight segments, up to the first inner circle you have drawn.

Once this section is filled, move on to the next, taking your design up to the edge of the next inner circle, making sure it flows and connects together.

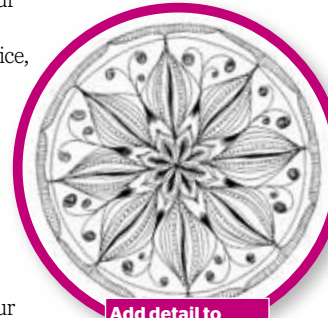
Continue to fill each section and segment, being mindful to keep your design symmetrical, until you reach the edge of your main circle.

This is the basic design of your mandala. Now you can add further embellishments if you wish, such as more lines, dots or swirls. Let your intuition guide you as you draw, adding beautiful detail or colour to your design.

With repeated practice, you'll gain more experience and more confidence in your creative skills. Over time, you'll find yourself relying on the guidelines less and less, until eventually you're able to draw your mandalas freehand.



Breaking down the process makes it easier



Add detail to your basic design

For inspiration, look at other mandalas



WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

For further information about Louise Gale's work and her online mandala classes, visit louisegale.com

How to use your mandala in meditation

Now you've learnt how to create these beautiful symbols, they can help you in your meditative practice. Try this exercise for five minutes, and gradually build it up to 15.

- Sitting comfortably in a quiet room, take your handmade mandala and place it at eye level.
- Take a few slow, deep, relaxing breaths to still your mind while gazing at your mandala. Don't strain your eyes, face or neck muscles – it's important to do this in a relaxed state.
- As you look at the mandala, take in its shapes

and patterns. If distracting thoughts start to enter your head, let them drift away and return your focus to the design of the mandala. Feel the calm, balanced energy that radiates from your design.

- When you're ready, slowly bring your attention back to the room around you.