

How to Make a Professional-Looking Digital Illustration Using Gimp

(The Cheat-Sheet)
Prof. Kristen Palana

This cheat-sheet comes from an in-person course I did with children ages 10-17 at *Thalun International School* in Yangon, Myanmar. If you follow the steps like a recipe in Gimp while following along in this online course, you should have a really cool illustration by the end.



Student work from grades 6-10

- 1.) Find a photo that you took yourself or that is royalty-free (preferably).
- 2.) Open Gimp.
Choose in the menu: File-> Open -> (Choose your photo)
- 3.) Add a new layer. (It's the left button at the bottom of the layers menu.)
 - Give it a white background.
 - Change layer order so your new layer is under your photo layer.

4.) Now click on your photo layer.

-Drop the transparency a little. (So you can more easily trace over your photo and see what you are doing)

-Lock the photo layer down. (Click the button that looks like a paintbrush and the four arrows button next to it to lock the layer from being edited or moved.)

5.) Add a new layer. Make this one transparent.

-Move this layer so it's now the top layer. This will be our black and white line drawing layer.

6.) With your B&W line drawing layer selected, click the brush tool in the tool palette. Adjust size and color. Trace over your photo.

7.) If you want, change the fill color of your bottom layer. Turn the visibility off on your photo layer to see the emerging illustration.

8.) Add a new layer and put it under the B&W line drawing and over the photo. Use your brush to color your illustration in.

9.) Don't forget to save! Export as a .png or jpg file so you can use the image online or in a blog post.

Practice makes perfect! After you make your first illustration, try this recipe again and maybe try a different tool or setting or add your own ingredients to see what happens. The important thing is to have fun. Mistakes are encouraged and will make you a better artist as you also learn what NOT to do next time. :-)

Want to see more student work examples from my kid students? [Visit here.](#)



Digital illustration by Thora Thandar Aung -Grade 7