

Enjoying this sample of The Mandala Guidebook?

Discover more creative inspiration, techniques, and step-by-step projects in the full book.

Learn more and order your copy at: www.truenortharts.com/book



1

THE FREEHAND METHOD

IF YOU CAN WRITE YOUR NAME, you can draw a mandala. In writing we have a variety of straight and curved lines. Just look at the curved, horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines in these letters: A, B, C, D, E, S. In mandala making, we use these same basic structures and organize them around a center point, working our way outward stroke by stroke. What I like the most about this technique is that you only need two things: a surface and something to make your marks. If you are feeling intimidated, pull out an ordinary lined notebook and a ballpoint pen. Follow the steps in this chapter to get the hang of drawing mandalas freehand. Pick up some inexpensive gel pens in funky colors and play like you did when you were a kid. Copying allows you to get a feel for a technique and style; this is a great way to get started. With each mandala that you draw, your own unique style will develop. I encourage you to play, trust your intuition and experiment. You will find, just as I have, how rewarding it is to design your own mandalas.

"... there are no wrong turns, only unexpected paths." —Mark Nepo

◀ **Mandala Art with Custom Frame** | Kathryn Costa
Markers and colored pencils on bristol board



How Imperfections Can Disappear

Start at the center and notice the shapes. Then move to the next row of petals. Start at the top of that row and again look at each individual petal. Are they the exactly the same size and shape? They are close but they are not perfect. What I love about this whimsical drawing style is that it is very forgiving. Add color and the imperfections seem to disappear. The trick is to go in and add lots of little details

Spring Flower Mandala | Kathryn Costa
Colored pencils on bristol board

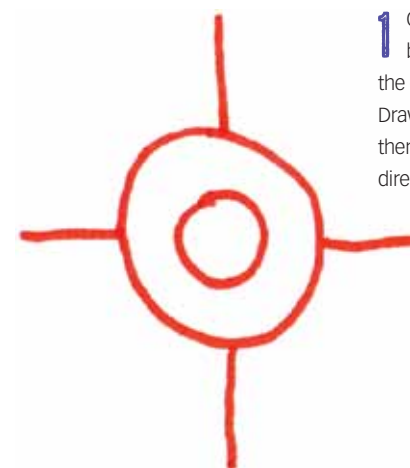
DEMONSTRATION

GROW A FREEHAND MANDALA

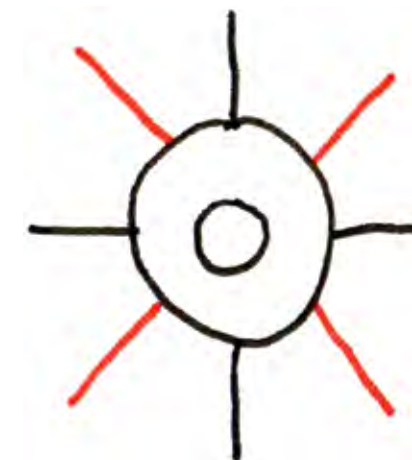
I'M A RECOVERING PERFECTIONIST. When I started drawing mandalas I struggled with making all my lines even and perfect. I tried using a ruler and stencils to create what I thought were perfect mandalas, but there was something missing and that was my unique style. After drawing many mandalas, I eased up on myself and began to really enjoy the process. The more I enjoyed drawing mandalas, the more my lines took shape in a way that was a reflection of me. Now when I look at the imperfect, wonky lines, I see a charm and spirit that was lost from my "perfect" mandalas. In this demo I show you how to grow a mandala by starting at the center and working outward, line by line. For your first mandala you may want to copy each step in this demo. Once you get the hang of it, have fun varying the shapes.

MATERIALS LIST

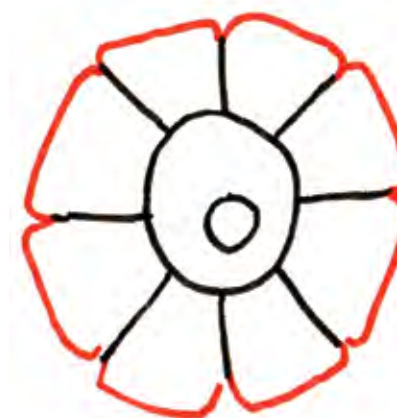
paper
pencil or fine point pen
colored pencils



1 Create the mandala's center by drawing a dot or circle using the drawing tool of your choice. Draw another circle around it and then four short lines, one in each direction.



2 Add four lines to the outer circle, here illustrated in red.



3 Connect the lines in a freehand flower shape. Refer to the design sampler sidebar on page 14 for some ideas on fun ways to connect your lines.



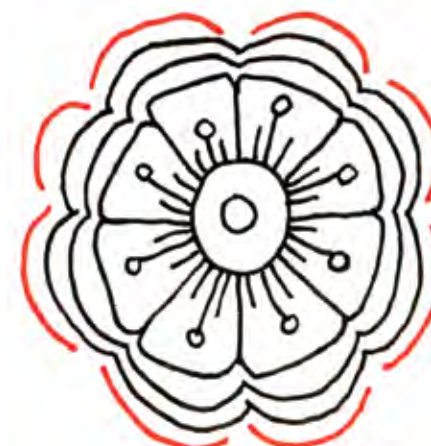
4 Add designs to each shape. As you build your mandala ask yourself, "What's next?" and "How can I connect these lines and shapes?"



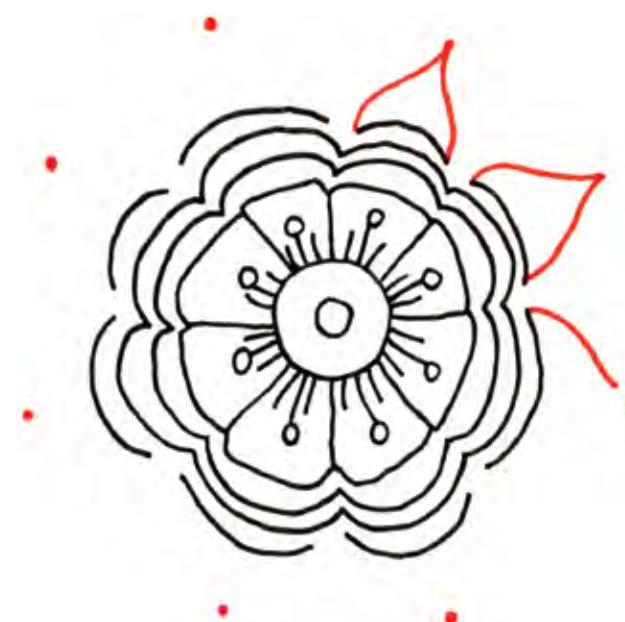
5 Outline the petals from the previous step. I chose to curve the lines but you could follow the same flat petal shape as well.



6 Outlining the shapes is an easy way to add another layer to the design to add fullness and interest.



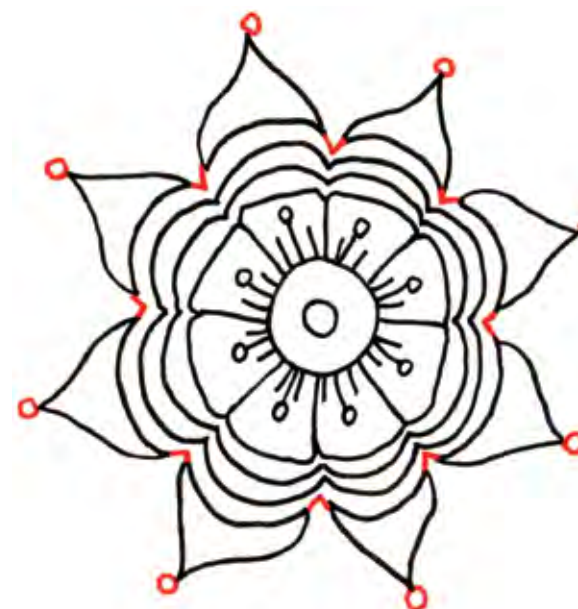
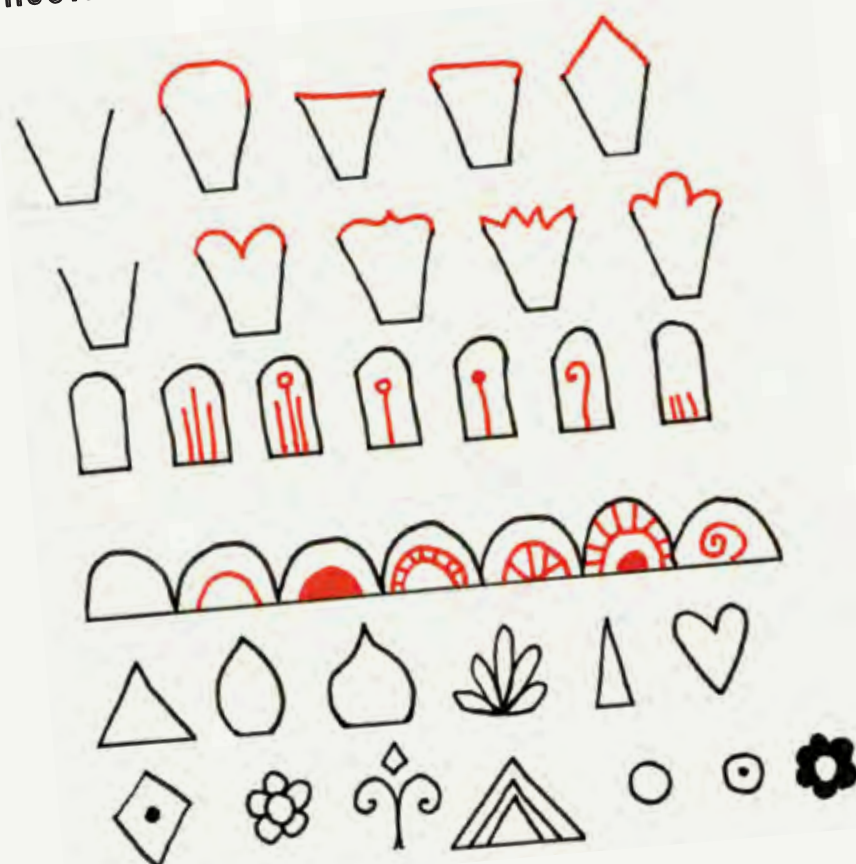
7 This time I outlined the shapes but didn't connect them as I did in steps 5 and 6.



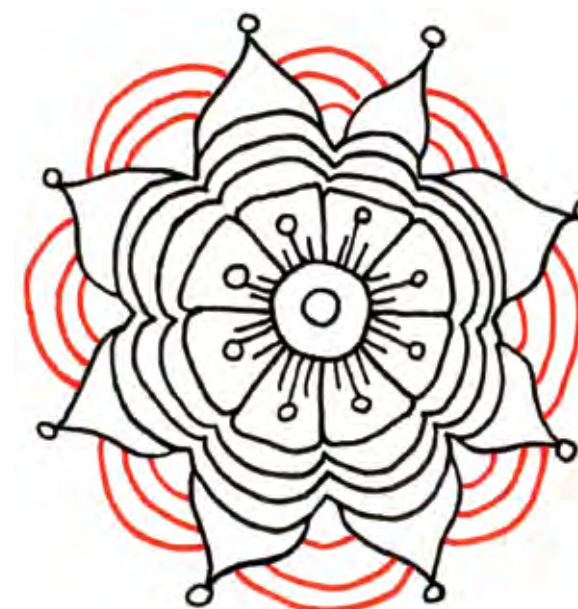
8 Draw a dot centered above the lines drawn in step 7. Connect the bottom of each curved line to the dot to create a petal.

IDEAS FOR CONNECTING YOUR MANDALA SHAPES

Have fun changing the shapes in this tutorial. In the first two rows, start with the same base and connect the top using different shapes. The next two rows are examples of the types of details you can use to fill the shapes. The last two rows are some additional shapes to consider when you draw your next mandala.



9 Connect the curved lines with a V-shape. Add a little circle to the top of each petal.



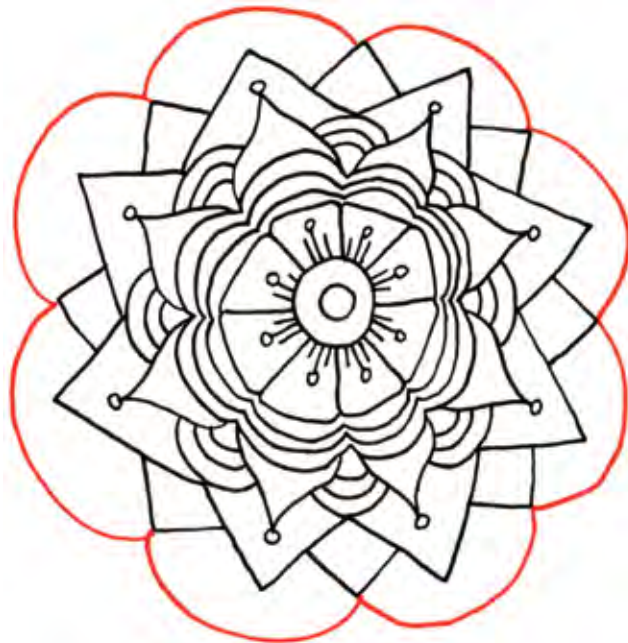
10 Draw three arches connecting the petals.



11 Draw a straight line from the center of the arch to a midpoint above the neighboring circle to create a triangle. Draw a second straight line down to the center of the next arch. Repeat around the entire mandala.



12 Draw a triangle in between each of the triangles drawn in step 11.



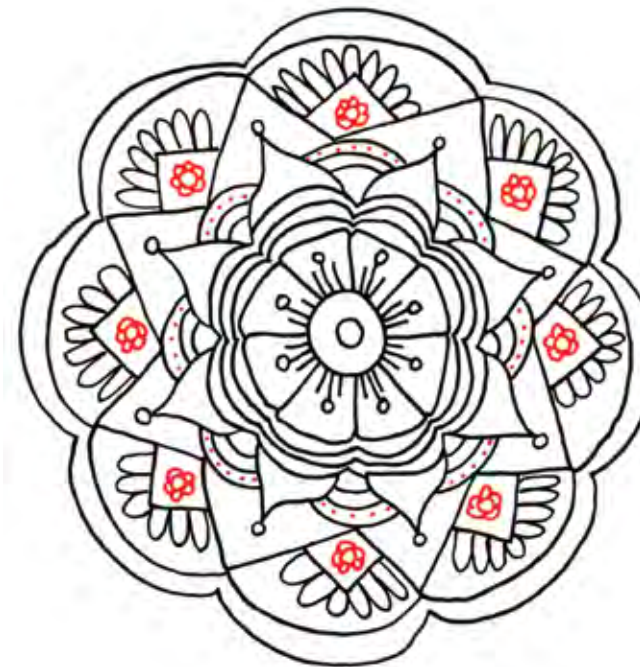
13 Draw an arch that connects the tops of every other triangle.



14 Outline the arches drawn in step 13.



15 Fill in large areas with doodled patterns. This helps to hide uneven lines and makes the mandala more interesting.



16 Add a few final details and embellishments like little dots following the lines of the arches and sweet little flower doodles. When you are satisfied with your mandala design, color it in! I used pink, orange and green colored pencils. See page 12 for the finished colored version and page 10 for a framed variation of this freehand mandala.

DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE!

Relax into each mark that you make on the page. Feeling tense? Try playing soft, gentle music. My favorites are classical guitar, Native American flute and *Zen Moments* meditation music.

ROTATE AS YOU WORK

You don't have to be a contortionist to draw a mandala. Rotate your paper as you work. This will help you to draw repeating shapes more consistently.

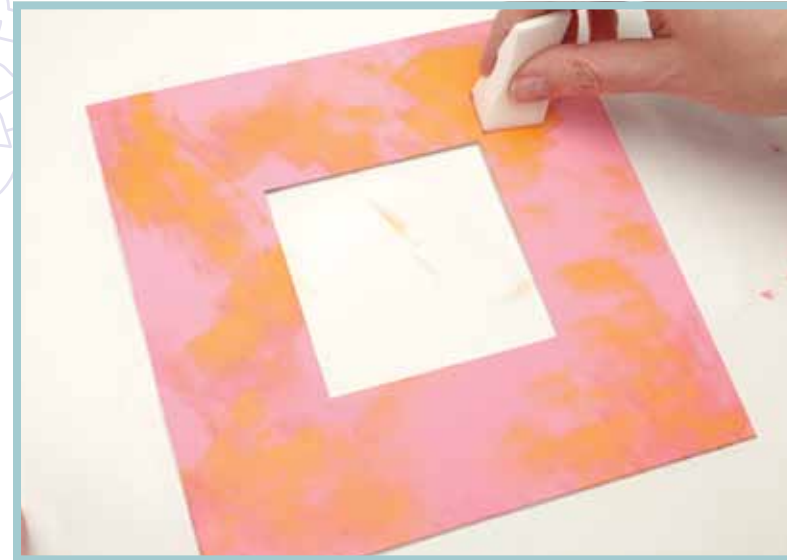
DEMONSTRATION

create a MIXED-MEDIA MAT

SOMETIMES A PLAIN WHITE MAT WILL NOT DO! Here is a quick way to create a custom mat to match your mandala.

MATERIALS LIST

mat board for framing, white
makeup sponge
craft acrylic paint
fluid acrylic paint
ink sprays
stencil
stiff bristle brush
paper towel



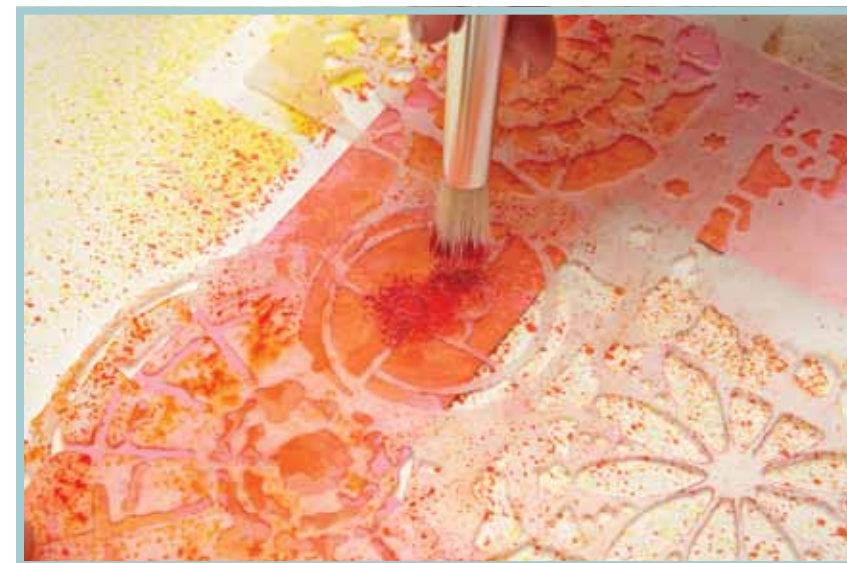
1 Use a makeup sponge to apply a basecoat of pink acrylic craft paint to cover the mat board. Let dry and apply orange acrylic paint with a makeup sponge.



2 Once dry, position a stencil over the mat and spray with two colors of ink spray. Here I alternated between Ranger's Dylusions Tangerine Dream and Lemon Zest. If too much ink pools up, gently blot with a paper towel. Allow the ink to dry completely. Move the stencil around to various parts of the mat until you have filled the mat.



3 Tap a dry paper towel on the mat to remove any excess ink or paint during the painting process.



4 Tap a stiff dry brush into magenta craft paint. Try shifting the stencil over to one side to offset the image and add a drop shadow effect. Tap the paint from the brush over the stencil. Turn to page 10 to see my freehand mandala from this chapter framed with the completed mixed-media mat.



mandala YOUR WORLD

EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS including black paper, brown paper bags and sheet music. Use white, silver and gold gel pens on dark paper.

Try This!

1. White gel pen on black paper
2. Silver gel pen on black paper
3. Draw outside the circle
4. Black and white pens on a paper bag then cut out
5. Draw on sheet music



Winter Mandala

Maria Mercedes Trujillo A.
Watercolor and acrylic ink on watercolor paper



From My Journal to Stone | Maria Mercedes Trujillo A.

Watercolor and acrylic ink on watercolor paper, and acrylic ink on a beach stone



Mandala Mug

When you get the hang of creating mandalas freehand, the possibilities of where you can draw a mandala are endless. Sharpie and Posca paint pens are ideal for adding mandalas to various surfaces like this mug.

ORGANIC SHAPES

EXAMPLES OF ORGANIC SHAPES FOUND IN NATURE. All shapes fall into two categories: organic and geometric. Organic shapes have a natural, flowing and curving appearance. These forms are typically irregular or asymmetrical. Organic shapes are associated with the natural world, like plants, animals, clouds and seashells, and are considered a feminine form. A mandala composed of primarily organic shapes may appear soft, calming and peaceful.



GEOMETRIC SHAPES

GEOMETRIC SHAPES ARE MAN-MADE. Circles, rectangles, squares, triangles and hexagons are all examples of geometric shapes typically created by humans using tools. The only perfectly geometric shapes found in nature are crystals. Geometric shapes are easily placed in symmetrical layouts and are considered masculine. The straight lines in geometric shapes can create a sense of rigidity. Mandalas composed primarily of geometric shapes can also have a sense of order and balance. Try mixing organic and geometric shapes within the same mandala.

