

# The Visual Thinker's "Back-to-School" Supply List

## Compiled by Brandy Agerbeck

Do you long for the days when September = brand new Trapper Keeper? Do you opine about the perfect pen? Looking to strengthen your visual thinking muscles?

Welcome to my suggested supply list for visual thinking, whether you are actually heading back to the classroom or not. I give you my tried and true options that I use for nearly all of my personal visual thinking.

It's easy to succumb to the siren song of the stationary aisle. I get it. I prefer fewer, simpler, more accessible, more adaptable materials; the ones you'll find on this list. They are easy to acquire and won't bruise your budget. I recommend steering clear of fancy materials that feel so precious that you scare yourself out of using it, lest you "mess it up."

The world needs your messy drawings made with simple materials. Messy drawing can create clarity.

This list is organized first by item, then with three columns of details. The second column is what to

avoid; sometimes for a physical reason, sometimes for a mindset shift. The next column is level 101 materials. Don't think of this as too basic, more like a very useful survey course. Nothing wrong with 101. Level 201, the last column, is for when you want to invest a little more money or get into a little more nuanced in your visual thinking.

Enjoy this list! And please share questions or comments with me at [brandy@loosetooth.com](mailto:brandy@loosetooth.com). To share this information with others, please point them towards the companion video at: <http://bit.ly/VTB2S>

	What to Avoid	101 Level	201 Level
<p><b>Plain Paper</b> Let's begin at the beginning with what you draw on --</p>	<p>Ruled paper! Ruled paper keeps us in linear-thinking mode. Skip the lines and go for the possibility of blank paper.</p>	<p>A ream of bright white letter/A4 paper. Having some white cardstock around is great too – it lets you make drawings that'll hold up to more wear and tear (like making a study reference, or an at-a-glance drawing of a big project).</p>	<p>Different colors of paper if color coding would be useful.</p>
<p><b>Binder</b> I am not a bound notebook gal, because they keep you stuck in one sequence. I prefer binders so I can very easily pull out exactly what pages I need and can rearrange drawings at will.</p>	<p>Using your binder in vertical, "portrait" mode. If your binder has a sleeve for a cover, print out an image in landscape mode to help you working horizontally and thinking spatially.</p>	<p>A couple binders in a few widths. I recommend having a thinner binder that is more portable to carry just what you need between work, home and school. Leave a giant binder in your main visual thinking location to keep archives, or pages you don't currently need.</p>	<p>A binder that encloses with a zipper can be quite handy if you are on the move a lot. Add a binder-designed pencil case to hold pens and small supplies together.</p>

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<p><b>3-hole punch</b> Make any paper “binder-able.”</p>	Wrecking your wrists with a single hole punch. Also avoid ones made from plastic that aren’t going to stand up to heavy use or can only punch a couple sheets of paper at a time.	A metal-bodied 3-hole punch.	A model that lets you adjust placement of the holes will be more adaptable. I have one, but I admit, I rarely need to adjust it.
<p><b>Sheet protectors</b></p>	Much-used drawings that get all schmutzed up.	If you have a drawing that you’re often referencing, slip it into a plastic sleeve to keep it useable for a long time.	Also useful to hold a few cards or other small pieces of paper in your binder.
<p><b>Plastic envelopes or Sleeves</b> When you don’t have a binder’s worth of paper, or you want to be more portable.</p>	Your papers getting banged up and lost.	A single pocket plastic envelope is slimmer than the slimmest binder and will keep your more immediate papers at hand.	Multiple projects? One sleeve per project will help you grab exactly what you need and go.
<p><b>Index Cards</b> Take this overlooked tool far beyond flash cards. Use <b>The Stack</b>* to take notes, write papers craft speeches. The modularity of index cards hold their magic.</p>	Ruled index cards. Lines are limiting.	Plain, unruled index cards. Choose 1 size and use it consistently. I opt for 3 inch by 5 inch cards.  Buy lots and lots and lots and lots of them. Once you get into the habit of <b>Stacks</b> , you’ll find more and more uses for them.	Different colors, if working on a complex project that could use color coding. You can also color code cards by coloring the edges or marking them with a dot.  *Learn about <b>The Stack</b> in The Idea Shapers, pages 73-86.
<p><b>Binder clips</b> Used to hold stacks of index cards together.</p>	Disorganized cards that go both willy and nilly.	Get a variety of widths to give you flexibility in organizing you cards.	
<p><b>Hair bands</b> Used to hold stacks of index cards together.</p>	Rubber bands that age and crumble.	I bought one package of soft, black knit hairbands back when I had hair, pre-2009. Those bands are still going strong!	

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<p><b>11"x17"/A3 paper</b> Handy for larger scale drawings</p>		<p>Double your drawing area with this size paper. Fold your drawing in half and you can still easily pop it into a binder, folder or wherever letter sized paper lives.</p>	
<p><b>Felt Tip* Pens</b> – Onto what to draw with.</p> <p>*This is a personal call. I cannot stand the feel of ballpoint pens, so I only use them for writing checks. You better believe I own one really nice ball point pen to make that task delightful.</p>	<p>Alcohol-based markers. They bleed through paper and they can suck for chemically-sensitive folks.</p>	<p>Paper Mate Flairs. These are a classic that never goes out of style or out of favor.</p> <p>My only exception to my alcohol ink ban is Sharpies. Even though I don't like the fumes, I keep a couple black fine point Sharpies around for when I want thicker lines, like drawing titles across the top of my index cards.</p>	<p>Go for more fine line widths with something like Sakura Pigma Microns or Faber-Castell's Pitt Artist pens.</p>
<p><b>Pencil</b></p>	<p>Cheapo pencils with waxy leads.</p>	<p>My go to are Paper Mate Mirado Black Warrior pencils. Good fell, fantastic line.</p>	<p>Palomino Blackwing Pencils have a smooth, sexy line and also have erasers that are replaceable.</p>
<p><b>Pencil sharpener</b></p>	<p>An "open" pencil sharpener that will leave messy shaving all around, or force you to interrupt your thinking to throw them out.</p>	<p>Get one that will catch shavings in an enclosed container. Make sure it doesn't open too easily accidentally.</p>	<p>Boy howdy, if you sharpen A LOT of pencils, knock yourself out with an electric sharpener. Not necessary and not so portable.</p>
<p><b>Eraser</b> We all make mistakes.</p>	<p>Forget pink erasers that get all dry and crumbly with age.</p>	<p>Go for a white polymer eraser. Gentler on your paper and doesn't get all dry and crumbly with age.</p>	<p>Pentel Clic Erasers are a polymer eraser "lead" in a retractable plastic case. Small size is easier to control and the case keeps your eraser clean when not in use.</p>
<p><b>Mailing labels</b> Another kind of eraser</p>		<p>Cover up mistakes in ink simply by tearing off a piece of plain mailing label and covering it up.</p>	

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<b>Highlighters</b>	Regular markers that'll smear your writing when used as a highlighter.	Smear-proof highlighters.	Are you a highlighter zealot? Search for "Kokuyo beetle tip highlighter" and prepare to have your mind blown.
<b>Pen/pencil case</b>	Going case-less and never having your tools organized and easily at hand.	A zippered case with ample room for a good selection of pens, pencil, sharpener, eraser, a few clips and bands. Could be the binder-ready flat kind with grommets. Could even just be a plastic Ziploc bag. Go for a size and style that brings you joy.	Having different size cases, depending on what you are traveling with.  Or different cases for different functions. For a short time, I carried one case for my black pens, and one for other colors. Quickly shifted to fewer options in one case.

## Now would you like the best mindset shifts and methods to go with these materials?

I've created these visual thinking resources to help you reclaim drawing as your best thinking tool.

### The Idea Shapers: The power of putting your thinking into your own hands

In this book, I walk you through a five-step process that holds 24 "idea shapers." Each idea shaper is a single, concrete, accessible visual thinking concept.

Buy your copy on Amazon or hop on over to [TheIdeaShapers.com](http://TheIdeaShapers.com) for more information.



### The Agerbeck Method: Your 90 day visual thinking transformation

This on-demand, video-based online course is the companion to the book. While The Idea Shapers gives you all 24 concepts at once – The Agerbeck Method leads you through them "brick-by-brick." Daily video lessons lead you through nine modules, ten days each, building the foundation of your lifelong visual thinking practice.

Designed to strengthen your visual thinking skills through daily practice, the videos are released daily. You can watch at the pace that fits best in your life, and you have lifetime access. **Details and registration at [TheAgerbeckMethod.com](http://TheAgerbeckMethod.com)**