

# **JAILBREAKING**

## **THE COPIC COLOR SYSTEM**



## Introduction

When it comes to alcohol markers, Copic Sketch markers are the gold standard. With over 350 colors in the line, an artist with the full collection of colors enjoys the freedom to create infinite color blends from light to dark and color to color.

The catch, of course, is that Copic markers are expensive, averaging around \$8 per marker when bought individually, or hundreds of dollars for one of the larger sets. It's difficult for a new Copic artist to justify such a large expense on a new medium they are not sure will work for them.

What's needed, then, is a way for artists to explore the benefits this amazing medium has to offer before making the financial commitment of buying a large collection of markers. A sort of try-it-before-you-buy-it arrangement, if you will. The system explained in this e-guide is a good, cheap system for a new Copic user to have a lot of colors at their disposal. It allows the artist to explore a wide range of blending and coloring techniques without having to invest in a lot of costly markers. It's not as efficient as buying a full range of markers, but it's great way to discover what having a ton of colors can do for your work.

Using empty marker bodies, replacement nibs, blending fluid, and a few specific inks, you can unlock nearly half the full range of marker colors – close to 150 colors – for around \$80. That is significantly lower than the price of a 36-piece set, which retails for \$144 on Amazon.

## Getting Started

Before discussing the nuts and bolts of this technique, it may be beneficial to explain the alphanumeric system Copic uses to identify the properties of their colors. With this knowledge, the discussion of exactly how to jailbreak the Copic color system to unlock hundreds of colors from a few base colors will make more sense.

## Reading The Copic Cap

If you already have some experience with Copic markers and how their numbering system works, you can skip this page. If not, this quick note on how to read the Copic number system will make things much easier from here on in.



A Copic cap uses a system of letters and numbers to identify the color of each specific marker. For example, a purple marker may be labeled V09.

The letter stands for the color family, in this case V represents Violet.

The first number after the letter represents the color saturation or purity, with lower numbers representing cleaner, purer color and

higher numbers indicating a grayer or duller color.

The second number represents the specific value of the color (light or dark) – with lighter colors having a 3 or lower numeric value and darker colors showing a 6 or above. For example, V00 is Violet that is very pure and very light while E29 is an Earth color that is somewhat grayed and very dark.

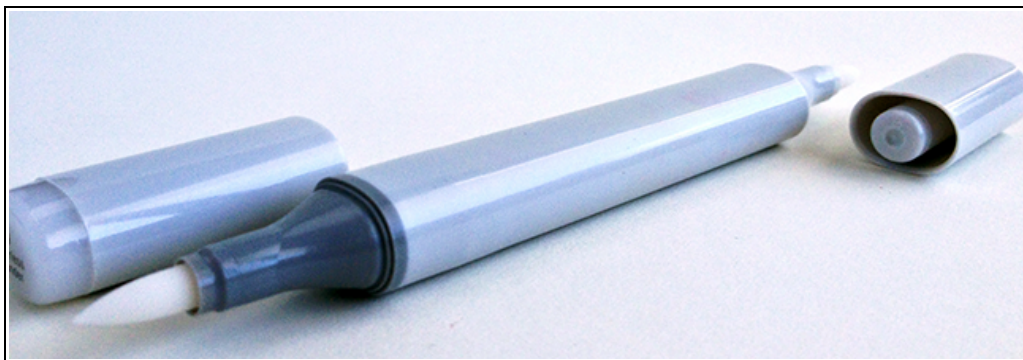
In the figure shown here, the cap says BG05. That indicates it is a Blue-Green color that is very pure and medium dark. Now you can tell at a glance exactly what color type the marker is, as well as how pure and how dark the color is.

Understanding this system also allows us to use shorthand when referring to a specific marker or color. So later, when I refer to Y08, for example, you'll know I'm referring to a yellow ink that is pure in color and relatively dark in value.

## Materials Needed

6 Copic Empty Marker Bodies	If you have empty 0 colorless blender markers or 000 markers in any of the color families, you can use those as long as they are good and dry. If not, Copic sells empty marker bodies on their website. I'll show you how to prepare these markers in a later section.
6 Super Brush replacement nibs	I'll show you how to replace the chisel nib with a Super Brush nib to turn a single marker into a multicolor tool.
1 refill bottle of Copic Various Ink 0 Colorless Blender Fluid. (Hereafter referred to as OCBF).	I'll show you how to add varying amounts of OCBF to make a range of lighter colors from your darker base colors.
Copic Various Ink refill bottles of the colors listed here.	<div>E29 (Burnt Umber)</div> <div>Y08 (Acid Yellow)</div> <div>B06 (Peacock Blue)</div> <div>V09 (Violet)</div> <div>R29 (Lipstick Red)</div> <div>110 (Special Black)</div>
A package of wide-based tattoo ink caps. (Available on <a href="https://www.amazon.com">Amazon.com</a> )	These caps hold all the colors you will use. Cheap and disposable, their small size and clear plastic construction are perfect for holding the ink, and their wide base prevents them from tipping over when dipping markers into them.
Scissors	Quality scissors sharp enough to trim the replacement nibs
Brushes	Small, cheap, soft brushes with a sharp tip for adding inks in drops
Scratch paper	Paper for testing mixtures to see if they need adjusting

## STEP ONE: The Marker Hack



To get the most bang for your buck, you will need to alter the standard Copic marker so you can color both light and dark values with each marker you have.

Copic Sketch markers come standard with a Super Brush nib on one end and a chisel nib on the other. You're going to replace the chisel nib with one of the replacement Super Brush nibs. Simply remove the cap, grab the nib at its base with your thumb and forefinger, and pull.

Now take a look and compare the **non-coloring end** of the chisel nib to the **non-coloring end** of the replacement Super Brush nib. Notice they are different shapes, and the Super Brush nib is longer. It won't fit all the way down in the marker barrel on the chisel side of the marker. With the scissors, trim the Super Brush nib at the **non-coloring end**, about 1/8" from the bottom. Now when you load it into the marker, it will push into place perfectly. It may not touch the ink reservoir inside the marker, but that's okay.

**You won't be filling these markers with ink anyway.**

Finally, pop the color-coded top off the cap on the chisel end of the marker. You'll use this end of the marker for coloring all your darker values, and with the color-coded top removed, you can easily tell which end is the light color and which is the dark color. Do this with each of the empty marker bodies to prepare them for the coloring process. Once you do that, go ahead and label each marker with one of the color families. Simply label them RO for reds and oranges, BG for blues and greens, YG for yellows and LIGHT yellow greens, V for violet, E for earth tones and CW for cool and warm grays.



## STEP TWO: Mixing Colors

I've chosen the recommended colors carefully to get the most variety possible. You'll notice that all of them are dark. By starting with dark colors, it's easy to add various amounts of OCBF to make many lighter colors. Let's take a look at the colors you have and what you can do with them.



### E29 Burnt Umber

The E, or Earth range of the Copic spectrum, has more colors than any other color family. They range from pale skin color (E00 Skin White) to earthy green (E87 Fig) to dusty pink (E04 Lipstick Neutral) to a nice dark brown (E18 Copper).

That's a pretty big color range in a single family. It's so big you can't actually get all those colors with the six base colors you have, but you can get a wide and very satisfying range of skin colors and darker browns. E29 is a very dark brown. To use it for skin colors, add small amounts of it to much larger amounts of OCBF. For example, take a tattoo ink cap and add 30 drops of OCBF, then use the tip of a clean paintbrush to add a little bit of E29. You just mixed a great, light skin tone.

To make it rosier, using the tip of a small paint brush, pick up a tiny bit of R29 and add it to your skin tone in the ink cap. This yields a color remarkably close to E00. To make it warmer, using the tip of a small paint brush, pick up a tiny bit of Y08 and add that to your mixture as well.

For the darker browns like E18, add a drop of R29 to two drops of E29 then lighten with the OCBF as you see fit.

For yellow browns similar to E97, five drops of Y08, two drops of R29 and two drops of E29 will do the trick. As you can see, between the E29, the Y08, and the R29, the core colors of the E color family are well within your reach. By adding different proportions of ink and blender,

you can create an enormous range of skin colors from light to dark and from pinkish to peach-ish in no time at all.

### R29 Lipstick Red

R29 is a very dark, pure red that leans toward the cool side of the red family. By lightening this color with OCBF, you can get the full range of red-violet from 9 to 000. If you add a bit of Y08 to R29, you get a base for the yellow-red colors. By adding very little R29 to a larger proportion of OCBF, as you did for the E29, you can create beautiful cool light skin tones as well.

### Y08 Acid Yellow

Y08 is a very pure dark yellow. By adding varying amounts of OCBF to the Y08, you can produce a wide range of lighter yellows all the way down to Y000. It also acts as the base for an amazing array of greens and blue-greens when mixed with B06. For deeper yellows, rather than adding black (which can make yellow look greenish) add OCBF and a bit of the E29 to the Y08.

### B06 Peacock Blue

B06 is a clean, mid-value blue that, when combined with various amounts of OCBF, acts as your base for all the blues, right down to a B0000. If you want to push it toward the blue-violet family, just add a bit of V09. A mixture of B06 and Y08 in equal proportions will result in a beautiful, fully saturated green. By adding various amounts of OCBF to this green, you get all the lighter greens. By adding additional drops of Y08, the yellow-green family becomes available to you too.

### V09 Violet

V09 is a very dark, very pure purple. Technically, you could mix your violet colors with B06 and R29, but mixed purples are never quite as pure or vibrant as the actual pigment, so it's a really nice color to have. By adding various amounts of OCBF, the full range of violet colors is available to you. A tiny amount of V09 added with the tip of a paint brush to 20 drops of OCBF produces a color so similar to V000 that you'll never know the difference.

## 110 Special Black

A wide range of warm, cool, neutral and toner grays is essential to a complete set of markers. You can create the full range of cool grays by adding varying amounts of OCBF to 110. You can also mix 110 with E29 in a 50/50 mixture and add various amounts of OCBF to get the full range of warm grays. If you add a drop of each of the other recommended inks to a drop or two of 110, you get a base for the neutral grays.

110, when used with blender fluid and combined with the other recommended colors, creates over 35 different gray colors.

### NOTE:

*The base colors are very powerful and will quickly overwhelm the OCBF if you're not careful.* It is important to only add small amounts of the various ink base colors to comparatively large amounts of OCBF.

## STEP THREE: Using Your Custom Colors



So now you know how to add hundreds of colors to your Copic collection without buying hundreds of markers.

You simply mix colors by adding small amounts of ink to varying amounts of OCBF. The tattoo ink caps act as containers for all the colors you mix. Rather than fill the marker with ink, you fill the ink caps instead and dip the

dry marker nibs into the mixed colors. The tip of the marker absorbs enough ink to cover an area approximately two inches square. When the marker starts to run out of ink, simply re-dip. Because you have six marker bodies at your disposal, you can easily change from one color family to the next or layer one color over another.



By using one end of the marker for the dark values in a color family and the other end for the light values, and by using a different marker for each color family, the tips never get contaminated.

Finally, since you are still working with Copic markers and inks, all the coloring and blending techniques you already know work perfectly.

## Conclusion

For a new user who isn't sure if Copic markers are right for them, this system offers access to hundreds of colors for a very low entry price. For an experienced user with a lot of markers in their collection, it opens the door to custom color blends unique to every drawing.

This system is less efficient than just reaching for the color you need from a collection of hundreds of markers, so in the end there really is no substitute for a large Copic collection, especially when you start selling your art. When you sell your work, you want your studio time to be as efficient as possible. You want to instantly grab the color you want when you want it, and you only get that with a large collection of markers.

Bottom line, get as many markers as you can, as soon as you can. You'll be happy you did. Until then, use this system to get a lot of colors for a fraction of the cost. Make art with those colors, and sell that art so you can buy more markers.

- Christopherkerry

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