

FREE



# The Artists TOOLKIT



TIPS, TECHNIQUES & ESSENTIAL  
TOOLS FOR EVERY ARTIST

*Susan van Zyl*



PRACTICAL  
TIPS



PROVEN  
TECHNIQUES



ESSENTIAL  
TOOLS



CREATE WITH  
CONFIDENCE





## LEARN TO SEE LIKE AN ARTIST

### LESSON 6

# THE FORM DETECTIVE

Every object is a puzzle of simple forms.

Artists don't draw things. They discover the forms hiding inside them.

#### 1 BECOME A FORM DETECTIVE

Before drawing, ask:

- 🔍 What shapes do I see?
- 🔍 What forms do I see?
- 🔍 Which form is biggest?
- 🔍 Which form overlaps another?

Don't name it.  
Analyse it.

#### 2 THE BALLERINA MYSTERY

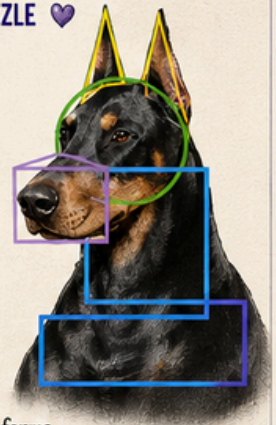
- Sphere = head
- Rectangle = torso
- Cylinders = arms & legs
- ▲ Cone = skirt



Even graceful movement begins with simple forms.

#### 3 THE DOG PUZZLE

- Circle = head
- Rectangles = neck & body
- ▲ Triangles = ears
- Box = muzzle



Animals are simply forms arranged in interesting ways.

#### 4 THE TEAPOT INVESTIGATION

- Sphere = body
- Cylinder = spout
- ▲ Cone = spout base
- Ovals = lid and handle



Complicated objects become simple when you break them apart.

#### 5 THE SCREW CHALLENGE

- Cube = head
- Cylinder = shaft
- ▲ Cone = tapered thread section



Nature and machines obey the same drawing rules.

#### 6 SHAPES BEYOND THE BASICS

Not every shape is a circle or square. Artists also look for:



These become part of your visual vocabulary.

#### 7 DETECTIVE QUESTIONS

Before drawing, ask:

- ✓ What form is it?
- ✓ Which form is biggest?
- ✓ Which form overlaps another?
- ✓ Can I simplify it further?
- ✓ What shape family does it belong to?

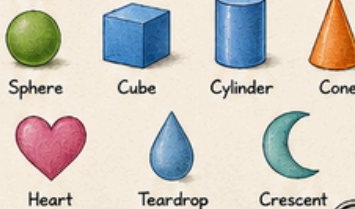
Complexity is often simple forms hiding together.

Observant eyes see more.  
Artistic eyes see forms.

#### 8 YOUR TURN

Look around your room.

Find:



No drawing required. Just observe.

#### REMEMBER

- ♥ Artists don't draw objects.
- ♥ Artists draw shapes.
- ♥ Artists draw forms.
- ♥ Artists draw relationships.



FIND THE FORMS. SOLVE THE PUZZLE.  
DRAW WITH CONFIDENCE.





## ♥ LESSON 12 ♥

# THE GRID METHOD

Turn one difficult drawing into many easy drawings.

What you  
do on one grid,  
you do on  
the other grid.



### 1 ENLARGE PROPORTIONALLY ♥

Place the reference on top of the drawing paper and align the corner and edges.

- 1 Align one corner and the top and side edges.



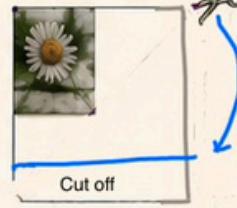
- 2 Place a long ruler from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner of the reference.



- 3 Extend the ruler across the drawing paper. Make a small mark where it crosses the opposite edge.



- 4 Draw the diagonal line from the corner through the mark. Trim off any paper you don't need or use it for notes.



#### ARTIST TIP ♥

The diagonal is the judge.  
Trust the diagonal. 😊

#### COMMON MISTAKES



### 2 GRID BOTH SURFACES ♥

The reference needs a grid.

The drawing paper needs the same grid.

Same rows. Same columns. Same proportions.

Reference (with grid)



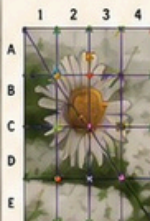
Drawing paper (same grid)



One grid is a map.

Two grids are a system. ♥

### 3 CROSSINGS ARE KING ♥



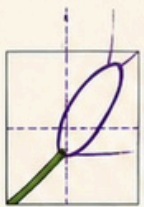
Look for:

- ★ Where the line enters
- ★ Where the line leaves
- ★ Where the line crosses

These crossings are your strongest reference points.

If the crossings are correct, the drawing is usually correct.

### 4 FIND THE HALFWAY POINT ♥



Ask:

- ♥ Above or below halfway?
- ♥ Left or right of centre?
- ♥ Before or after halfway?

The middle helps you measure accurately.

When in doubt, find the middle. ♥

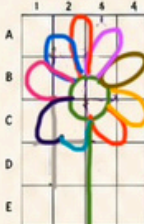
### 5 DRAW ONE SQUARE AT A TIME ♥

Don't draw:



Draw:

- ♥ The lines
- ♥ The crossings
- ♥ The shapes inside one square.

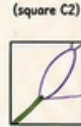


Ask yourself:

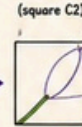
- ♥ Where does the line enter?
- ♥ Where does it leave?
- ♥ Where does it cross?
- ♥ Does it pass through the middle?

### 6 CHECK BEFORE COMMITTING ♥

Reference (square C2)



Your drawing (square C2)

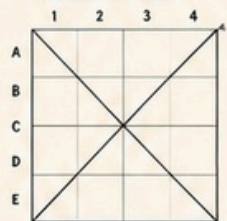


If something looks wrong:

- ✗ Don't keep going
- ✗ Don't guess
- ✓ Compare
- ✓ Correct
- ✓ Continue

Small mistakes grow.  
Small corrections save drawings. ♥

### 7 THE STAR GRID ♥



The star grid creates extra checkpoints. It helps you find:

- ♥ Centres
- ♥ Distances
- ♥ Alignment
- ♥ Intersections

Especially useful for portraits and complex subjects.

The star grid helps you find your way home when you get lost. ♥

#### WHY ARTISTS USE GRIDS ♥

- ✓ Enlargement
- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Reduction
- ✓ Complex subjects become simple
- ✓ Accuracy
- ✓ Better proportions

#### COMMON MISTAKES ♥

- ✗ Uneven grids
- ✗ Wrong proportions
- ✗ Ignoring crossings
- ✗ Guessing
- ✗ Drawing the whole picture at once



#### REMEMBER ♥

A grid does not draw for you.

A grid teaches you to observe more accurately.

The better you observe, the better you draw. ♥



WHAT YOU DO ON ONE GRID,

YOU DO ON THE OTHER GRID.





# SQUINT TO SEE VALUES

Squint your eyes. Simplify the scene. See what matters. 😊

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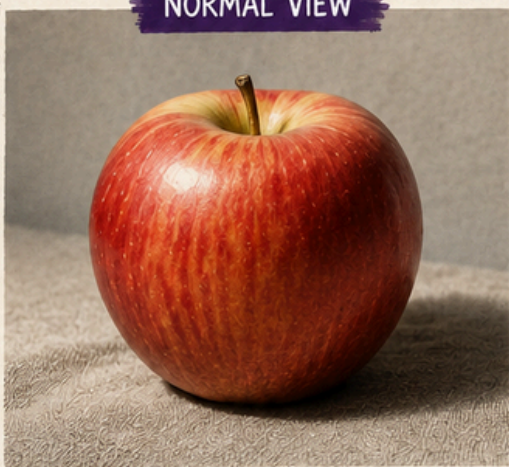


## WHY SQUINT?

- ✓ Details disappear.
- ✓ Values remain.
- ✓ Lights separate from darks.
- ✓ You see the big picture clearly.

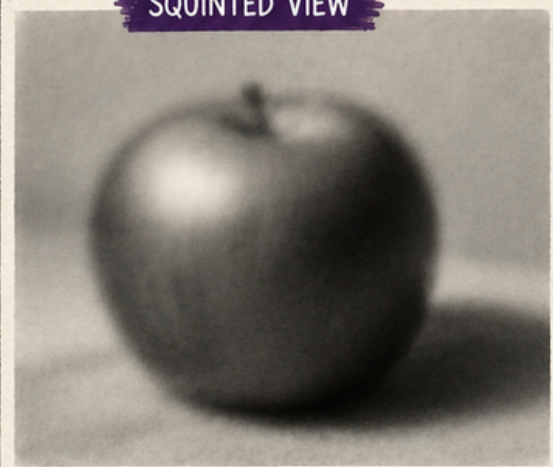


### NORMAL VIEW



Squint  
your  
eyes  
(or blur  
your  
vision)

### SQUINTED VIEW



## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SQUINT?

### 1. YOU SQUINT



Relax your eyes  
until the scene  
looks soft and blurry.

### 2. DETAILS FADE



Small details,  
textures and sharp  
edges disappear.

### 3. VALUES REMAIN



The relationship between  
lights and darks becomes  
clear and obvious.

### 4. SEE THE STRUCTURE



You can now focus on  
shapes, values and  
big patterns.

## TRY IT!



- ♥ Find any object.
- ♥ Squint your eyes.
- ♥ What do you see?
- ♥ Notice the lightest light.
- ♥ Notice the darkest dark.
- ♥ Everything else falls somewhere in between.



SQUINTING  
SIMPLIFIES  
COMPLEXITY.



## FOR ARTISTS

When you squint, you train your eyes to see what really matters in your drawing or painting:

- ♥ Big shapes instead of small details
- ♥ Value patterns instead of textures
- ♥ Structure instead of surface

That's how you create stronger, more accurate art.



## REMEMBER 😊

Your eyes are  
powerful tools.  
Learn to use  
them well.



OBSERVE. SIMPLIFY. UNDERSTAND. THAT'S THE ARTIST'S WAY. ♥





# LEARN TO SEE LIKE AN ARTIST

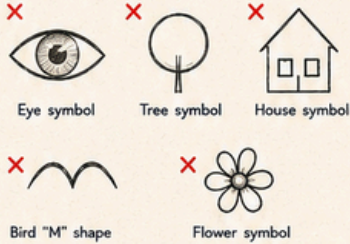
## DRAW WHAT YOU SEE, NOT WHAT YOU KNOW

YOUR BRAIN DRAWS SYMBOLS. YOUR EYES SEE REALITY. ♥

The brain loves shortcuts. Artists learn to ignore them. ♥

### 1 WHAT IS SYMBOL DRAWING?

When you were a child, your brain invented simple symbols. You still use many of them today. ♥



### 2 THE EYE MYTH

✗ SYMBOL (what you know)



- Football shape
- Circle iris
- 3 eyelashes

✓ OBSERVATION (what you see)



- Different eyelid shapes
- Different curves
- Different shadows
- Negative spaces
- Irregular lashes

Eyes are not symbols. They are collections of shapes, values and lines. ♥

### 3 THE TREE MYTH

✗ SYMBOL



✓ OBSERVATION



- Irregular branches
- Negative spaces
- Different leaf masses
- Varied values

Trees grow. Symbols don't. ♥

### 4 THE HOUSE MYTH

✗ SYMBOL



✓ OBSERVATION



- Perspective
- Different angles
- Different window sizes
- Overlapping shapes
- Value changes

Real houses obey perspective. ♥

### 5 THE BIRD MYTH

✗ SYMBOL



✓ OBSERVATION



Your brain says bird. Your eyes see wings. ♥

### 6 THE FLOWER MYTH

✗ SYMBOL



✓ OBSERVATION



- Different petal sizes
- Overlapping petals
- Curves
- Shadows
- Natural variation

Nature loves variation. ♥

### 7 HOW ARTISTS ESCAPE SYMBOL DRAWING

✗ DON'T ASK:

"What is it?"



✓ ASK INSTEAD:

- What shape is it?
- What angle is it?
- How long is it?
- How wide is it?
- What is beside it?
- What value is it?

### 8 TRY THIS CHALLENGE

Draw these objects from life. Do not name the object see. Do not name the object see.

YOUR SHOE



Describe: ✓ shapes

A COFFEE MUG



✓ lines

YOUR KEYS



✓ angles

A PLANT



✓ values

### ARTIST TIP

When you say, "This is an eye" you stop observing.

When you say, "This is a collection of shapes and values" you start drawing. ♥

### REMEMBER

Your brain stores symbols. Your eyes see reality. Great drawing begins the moment you stop drawing symbols. ♥

### SIDE BY SIDE: SYMBOL vs OBSERVATION



### BONUS REMINDER

Take your time. Look carefully. Measure with your eyes. Compare shapes. See the truth. Then draw it. ♥







LEARN TO SEE LIKE AN ARTIST

# FOLLOW *the* LINE

A line is a full stop that kept on walking.

TRAIN YOUR EYES TO FOLLOW DIRECTION, FLOW AND MOVEMENT.

Most drawing mistakes happen because artists stop looking at the line and start drawing what they think they see.

Your brain sees a person.  
Your eyes see lines.

Follow the line, not the object.

## 1 WHAT IS A LINE?

A line is simply a point moving through space.

A line can be:

Straight

Curved

S-curve

Hook

Y-shape



Every drawing begins with a line.

## 2 FOLLOW THE LINE

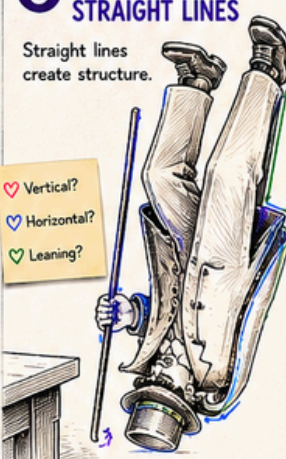
Don't draw the person. FOLLOW the line.



## 3 HUNT FOR STRAIGHT LINES

Straight lines create structure.

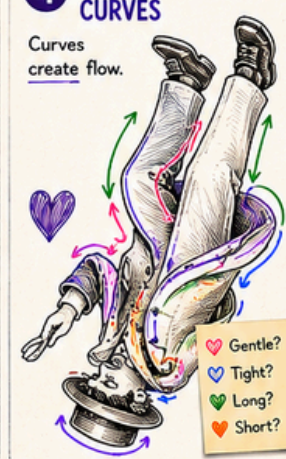
- ♥ Vertical?
- ♥ Horizontal?
- ♥ Leaning?



## 4 HUNT FOR CURVES

Curves create flow.

- ♥ Gentle?
- ♥ Tight?
- ♥ Long?
- ♥ Short?



## 5 HUNT FOR S-CURVES

S-curves create movement and grace.



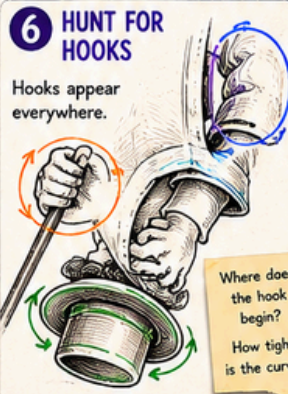
Look for the big flowing S's.



## 6 HUNT FOR HOOKS

Hooks appear everywhere.

Where does the hook begin?  
How tight is the curve?

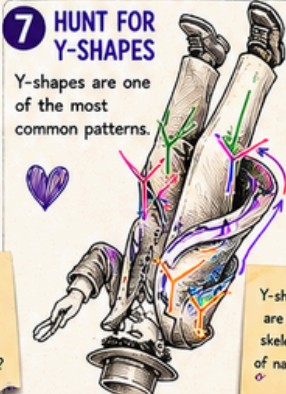


## 7 HUNT FOR Y-SHAPES

Y-shapes are one of the most common patterns.



Y-shapes are the skeleton of nature.



## 8 TRACE THE JOURNEY

Choose any line. Place your pencil on the start. Follow it slowly.

START

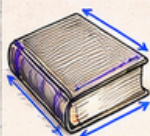
END

ASK YOURSELF:  
♥ Does it curve?  
♥ Does it straighten?  
♥ Does it split?  
♥ Does it hook?



PRACTICE: FIND THESE LINES EVERYWHERE!

A BOOK



A MUG



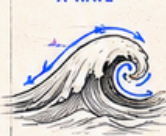
A TREE



A LADDER



A WAVE



A MERMAID



A SHIP



A LOLLIPOP



Straight lines



Curves



S-curves



Hooks



Y-shapes

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- ♥ Take your time.
- ♥ Look for lines before shapes.
- ♥ Don't rush.
- ♥ Compare often.
- ♥ Practice every day.
- ♥ Lines are your friends!



### CHECK YOUR DRAWING

Hold your drawing and the reference side by side.  
Do the lines match?  
Make 2 or 3 small corrections.  
Then continue.



REFERENCE



YOUR DRAWING

### COMMON LINE MISTAKES

- ✗ Too straight
- ☐ Too stiff
- N Too scratchy

- Follow the curve
- Allow natural bends
- Confident, smooth

CONFIDENCE = BETTER LINES

### PRACTICE CHALLENGE

Find in any scene:

- ♥ 5 straight lines
- ♥ 5 curves
- ♥ 3 S-curves
- ♥ 4 hooks
- ♥ 5 Y-shapes

The more you find, the better you see!

### REMEMBER

Good drawing is not about drawing objects.  
Good drawing is about following lines accurately.



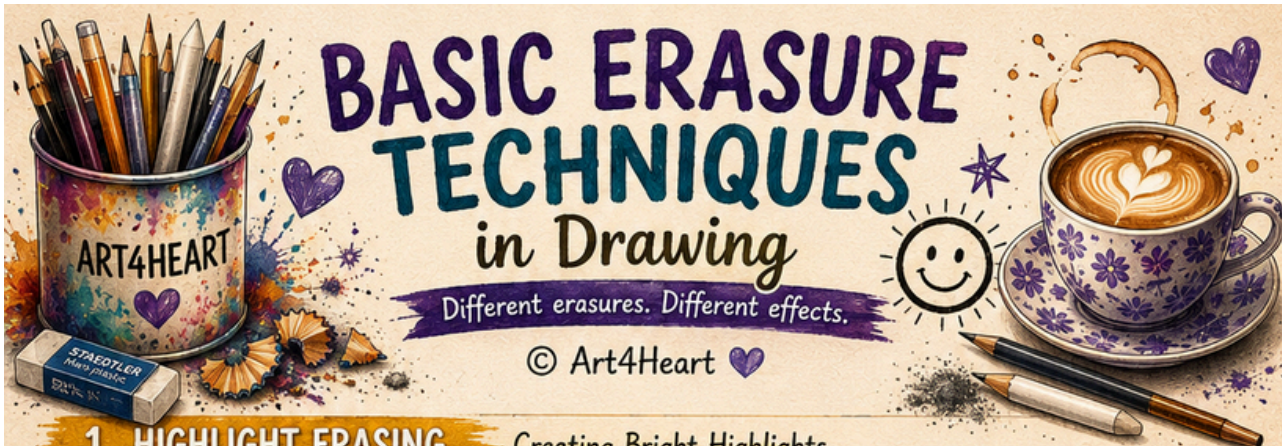
Art from the Heart.

STOP DRAWING THINGS.  
START FOLLOWING LINES.

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## 1. HIGHLIGHT ERASING

Creating Bright Highlights

Shining on Hair



♥ Lift to create shine and strands.

Glowing Light



♥ Erase to make light appear.

Reflective Eyes



♥ Lift small areas for realistic reflections.

Shiny Metal



♥ Create bright spots and reflections.

**TIP**

Use a kneaded eraser or precision eraser.



## 2. SOFT BLENDING ERASING

Smooth Shading Effects

Soft Clouds



♥ Lift gently for soft, fluffy forms.

Mist & Fog



♥ Erase lightly to create atmosphere.

Portrait Highlights



♥ Lift highlights for soft, natural light.

Hazy Landscape



♥ Lift to create depth and distance.

**TIP**

Use a soft kneaded eraser and light pressure.



## 3. PRECISION ERASING

Fine Detail Erasing

Sharp Details



♥ Erase tiny lines with control.

Whiskers



♥ Lift fine hairs for realistic detail.

Tiny Highlights



♥ Erase tiny spots for sparkle and depth.

Lettering



♥ Keep letters crisp and clean.

**TIP**

Use a precision eraser or erasing shield.



## 4. TEXTURE ERASING

Adding Surface Texture

Brick & Stone



♥ Erase lines and edges to create texture.

Fabric Texture



♥ Lift highlights for fabric realism.

Fur & Hair



♥ Erase to build natural strands.

Grass & Stars



♥ Lift tiny shapes for sparkle and depth.

**TIP**

Combine erasing with shading for the best results.



### BEST ERASERS



Kneaded Eraser



Precision Eraser



Vinyl Eraser



Battery Eraser

♥ Use the right eraser for the right effect.



### ARTIST TIP

Great drawings are not just about adding darks, but also about lifting lights.

Erase with purpose. Not by mistake.



### REMEMBER

- ♥ Lift, don't scrub.
- ♥ Work slowly and gently.
- ♥ Erasing is part of the drawing.
- ♥ Less erasing = more control.



ERASING ISN'T A MISTAKE. IT'S A TECHNIQUE. ♥





# 5 LINE QUALITY MISTAKES

BEGINNERS MAKE

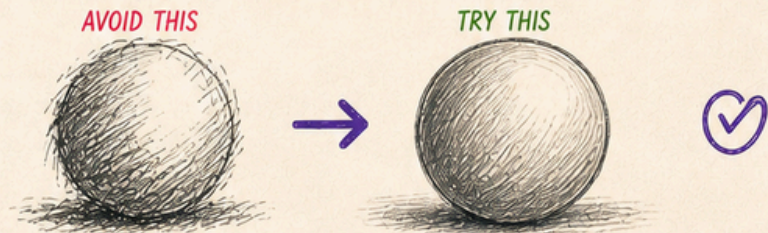


## 1 SCRATCHY LINES

- Too many short strokes

**FIX:**

- Use long, smooth strokes

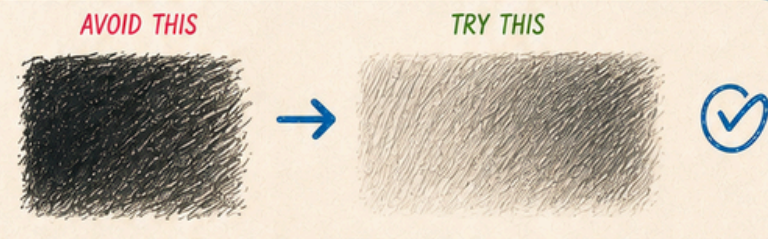


## 2 PRESSING TOO HARD TOO EARLY

- Lines dark & hard to erase

**FIX:**

- Start light, build later

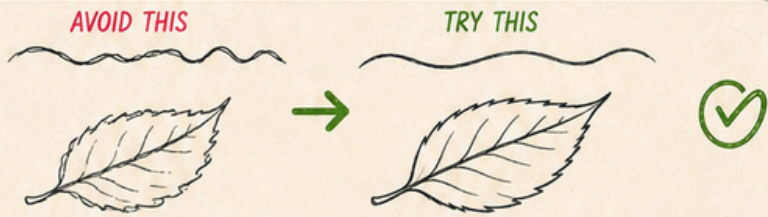


## 3 WOBBLY / HESITANT LINES

- Makes drawing look shaky

**FIX:**

- Draw with confidence



## 4 OUTLINING EVERYTHING EQUALLY

- No depth or focus

**FIX:**

- Vary line weight  
Thick → front  
Thin → back

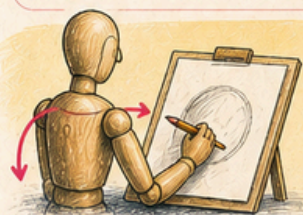
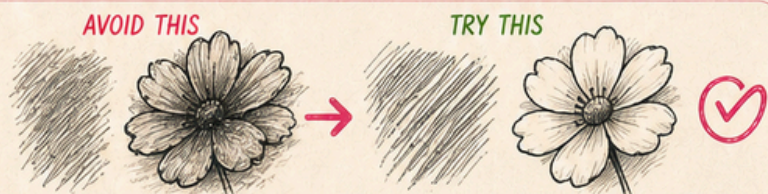


## 5 NOT LIFTING THE PENCIL

- Smudges & messy lines

**FIX:**

- Lift between strokes



DRAW FROM YOUR  
**SHOULDER,**  
NOT JUST YOUR WRIST!

**START LIGHT**  
→ **THEN COMMIT!**



BETTER LINES. BETTER DRAWINGS.  
PRACTICE. PATIENCE. PROGRESS.



YOU'VE GOT THIS!



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# LEARN TO SEE LIKE AN ARTIST

## LESSON 14

# THE GOLDEN MEAN & NATURE'S BLUEPRINT

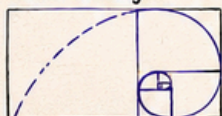
Beauty leaves clues.

Math,  
Music,  
Nature,  
Art.  
All connected.

### 1 WHAT IS THE GOLDEN MEAN?

A special proportion that appears again and again in nature, art and design.

Golden Rectangle



Golden Spiral

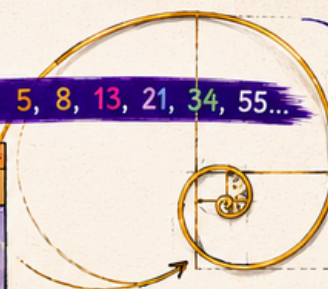


### 2 MEET FIBONACCI

A sequence created by adding the two numbers before it.

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55...

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 21 | 5 | 5 |
| 13 | 8 |   |



As the squares grow, a spiral appears.

### 3 NATURE LOVES SPIRALS

The same pattern appears at many different scales.



Sunflower



Shell



Succulent



Pine cone



Hurricane



Galaxy

### 4 THE SUNFLOWER SURPRISE

Count the spirals!

- Orange Clockwise
- Blue Counter-clockwise

Often these numbers are Fibonacci numbers.



### 5 THE SUCCULENT MYSTERY

Leaves grow in a spiral to maximise light and space.



### 6 THE HUMAN CONNECTION

The Golden Mean can often be observed in the human body.



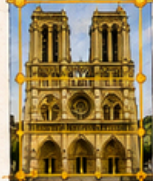
Nature designs for harmony.

### 7 ART & ARCHITECTURE

Artists use the Golden Mean to create balance and harmony.



The Parthenon



Natural proportions = pleasing to our eyes.

### 8 MATH, MUSIC & ART

Different languages. Same heartbeat.

1, 1, 2, 3,  
5, 8, 13 ...

Numbers



Rhythm



Pattern



Art

Everything connects.  
Everything has rhythm.  
Everything has design.

### 9 YOUR CHALLENGE

Find the Golden Mean in...

- A flower
- A pine cone
- A shell
- Your ear
- A succulent
- A building
- A galaxy

Sketch it. Trace the spiral.  
Become a pattern detective!



### ARTIST TIP

You do not need  
maths to enjoy the  
Golden Mean.  
You only need  
curiosity.

### WOW MOMENTS

- Math and music fit together.
- Nature and art fit together.
- Patterns repeat.
- Beauty follows rules.
- You already know more than you think!



LOOK FOR THE PATTERN. FIND THE WONDER.



Art from the Heart





## LESSON 2:B

Great drawings  
are built on  
understanding,  
not force.

# THE SECRET OF PAPER TOOTH

Why different pencil grades create better, smoother shading.

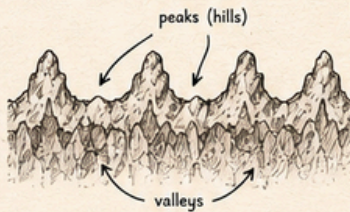


### 1 WHAT IS PAPER TOOTH?

Paper is not smooth.  
It has tiny peaks  
(hills) and valleys.

This texture is called  
"tooth" and it is what  
holds the graphite.

CLOSE-UP VIEW (MAGNIFIED)

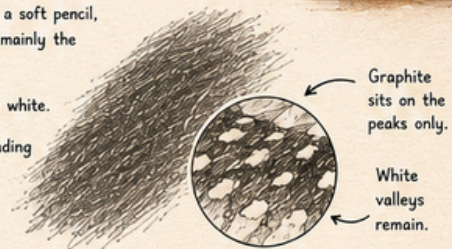


### 2 WHY WHITE SPECKS APPEAR

When you shade with a soft pencil,  
the graphite touches mainly the  
peaks of the paper.

The tiny valleys stay white.

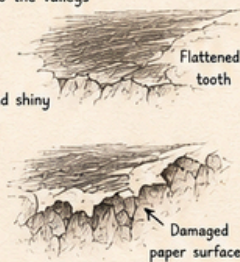
That is why your shading  
can look grainy or  
speckled.



### 3 WHY BEGINNERS PRESS TOO HARD

They try to force the graphite into the valleys  
by pressing harder. This causes...

- ✗ Paper tooth gets crushed
- ✗ The surface becomes smooth and shiny
- ✗ Harder to build more layers
- ✗ Erasing becomes difficult
- ✗ H pencils can tear the paper



### 4 HOW DIFFERENT PENCIL GRADES WORK TOGETHER

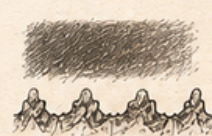
**STEP 1**  
**SOFT B PENCIL**  
Touches the peaks.  
Creates dark tone.



**STEP 2**  
**ADD H OR F LIGHTLY**  
Reaches further into the  
valleys. Reduces white  
specks.



**RESULT**  
Smoother, more even  
tone with less visible  
paper grain.



Different grades + light pressure = smooth, rich, beautiful shading.

### 5 LET THE PAPER DO THE WORK

Your job is to build layers, not to force the pencil.



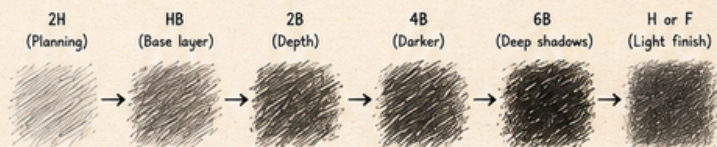
#### ART4HEART STUDIO TIP

Build your values with different pencil grades,  
not just heavier pressure.

- ♥ A softer pencil creates rich, dark values.
- ♥ A harder pencil can gently work into the paper tooth, helping to reduce tiny white specks without flattening the paper.

### 6 SMOOTH SHADING WITHOUT DAMAGING THE PAPER

Let the graphite build gradually.



The light finish with H or F gently softens the texture  
and reduces visible specks without destroying the tooth.

#### REMEMBER

We are not trying to fill every valley.  
We are aiming for a smoother, more even appearance.

### 7 THE LAYERING METHOD (STEP BY STEP)

- |                                                            |                                                             |                                                                     |                                                                        |                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. PLAN</b><br>Use 2H or H<br>for your light<br>sketch. | <b>2. BASE</b><br>Use HB or F<br>for a light<br>base layer. | <b>3. BUILD DEPTH</b><br>Use 2B or 4B<br>for mid to dark<br>values. | <b>4. DEEP SHADOWS</b><br>Use 4B-6B<br>where the<br>darkest areas are. | <b>5. REFINE</b><br>Use H or F<br>lightly over the<br>area to even<br>out the tone. |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Patience + the right pencil + light pressure = professional results.

### 8 COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Pressing too hard
- ✗ Using only one pencil
- ✗ Starting with a very soft pencil
- ✗ Going straight to 8B
- ✗ Rubbing or scrubbing with the pencil
- ✗ Expecting perfectly smooth tones from the start
- ✗ Believing more pressure = better value

#### ART4HEART STUDIO TIP

Let the paper do the work.  
Let the pencil do the work.  
You simply guide  
the process.

### 9 ART4HEART CHALLENGE

Create two shaded squares. Use the same time and pressure.

**SQUARE A - ONE PENCIL ONLY**  
Use 4B, pressing harder to get dark.



**SQUARE B - LAYER WITH GRADES**  
Use 2H → HB → 2B → 4B → 6B → H (light finish)  
Light layers only.



#### OBSERVE & COMPARE

- ♥ Which square looks smoother?
- ♥ Which has less visible grain?
- ♥ Which was easier on your hand?
- ♥ Which square would be easier to add details to?
- ♥ What did you discover?

#### ARTIST WISDOM

Master the texture.  
Honor the paper.  
The paper is your  
creative partner.

♥ UNDERSTAND YOUR PAPER. RESPECT YOUR TOOLS. ENJOY THE PROCESS. ♥

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- Art from the Heart



## LESSON 4

# UNDERSTANDING PAPER SURFACES

Great drawings happen when your paper and your pencils work together.

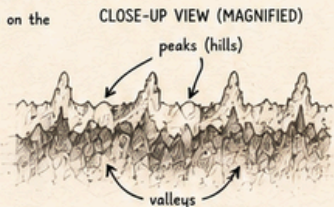
The texture of the paper shapes your drawing.  
Choose the right surface for the look you want to create.



### 1 WHAT IS PAPER TOOTH?

Paper tooth is the tiny texture on the surface of the paper.

It affects how much "tooth" (grip) your medium has and how your marks look.



As we learned in Lesson 2B, the graphite touches the peaks. Different surfaces have different size and shape of tooth.

### 2 THE 3 MAIN SURFACES

Every paper surface falls into one of these three categories.

#### SMOOTH (HOT PRESS)



Very little texture. The surface feels sleek and almost silky.

#### MEDIUM (COLD PRESS)



Moderate texture with small, even bumps. Versatile and balanced.

#### ROUGH



Pronounced texture with bigger peaks and valleys. Full of character!

The more texture, the more visible your pencil strokes will be.

### 3 HOW SURFACE TEXTURE AFFECTS YOUR DRAWING

Same pencil. Same pressure. Three different surfaces.

#### SMOOTH (HOT PRESS)



- Cleaner marks
- More detail
- Easy blending
- Great for fine lines and pen work

**BEST FOR:**  
Detailed drawings, portraits, pen & ink, technical work.

#### MEDIUM (COLD PRESS)



- Balanced texture.
- Good grip
- Better for layering
- Versatile for wet and dry media

**BEST FOR:**  
General drawing, graphite, mixed media, sketching.

#### ROUGH



- Bold, expressive marks
- More texture in your drawing
- Great for loose and artistic effects
- Holds more medium

**BEST FOR:**  
Expressive work, charcoal, pastels, watercolour.

### 4 WHICH MEDIUM LIKES WHICH SURFACE?

| MEDIUM          | SMOOTH | MEDIUM | ROUGH             |
|-----------------|--------|--------|-------------------|
| Graphite        | ✓      | ✓      | ✓ (for texture)   |
| Coloured Pencil | ✓      | ✓      | ✓ (light texture) |
| Pen & Ink       | ✓      | ✓      |                   |
| Charcoal        |        | ✓      | ✓                 |
| Pastels         |        | ✓      | ✓                 |
| Watercolour     |        | ✓      | ✓                 |
| Mixed Media     |        | ✓      | ✓                 |

Match the surface to your medium for the best results.

### 5 FEEL AND SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Look closely. Feel with your fingers.



- Feels smooth almost like satin.
- Magnified: very tiny tooth.



- Feels slightly bumpy.
- Magnified: small, even bumps.



- Feels noticeably rough and uneven.
- Magnified: bigger peaks and valleys.

Your fingers are a great tool. Train them!

### 6 COMMON MISTAKES

✗ Using smooth paper for charcoal or pastels.



Little tooth = poor grip and lots of smudging.

✗ Using very rough paper for fine detail.



Too much texture = loses detail and makes precise work difficult.

✗ Expecting watercolour paper for graphite.



Too much texture can tire your hand and wear your pencil.

✗ Pressing too hard on rough paper.



It damages the paper tooth and makes blending difficult.

Let the paper and the pencil work together, not against each other.

### 7

#### ART4HEART STUDIO TIP

There is no "best" surface. There is only the best surface for what you want to create.

- Smooth for control.
- Medium for balance.
- Rough for expression.
- Let your surface support your style.

### 8 STUDIO CHALLENGE

Draw the same simple leaf on all three surfaces using the same pencil.

Observe and compare:

- Texture
- Detail
- Blending
- Tone
- Erasing
- Overall feel

#### SMOOTH (HOT PRESS)



#### MEDIUM (COLD PRESS)



#### ROUGH



Which surface did you enjoy most? Why?

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Understand your paper. Respect your tools. Enjoy the process.



## LESSON 39

Blending is powerful – but knowing when NOT to blend is what creates impact.



# WHEN NOT TO BLEND

♥ PRESERVE. DEFINE. MAKE IT COUNT. ♥

Blending softens, but sometimes you need sharp edges, clean details, and texture. Knowing when to stop blending keeps your drawing strong, clear and intentional.

DIFFICULTY:

● = Foundation ● = Building Skill ● = Refinement ● = Mastery



Blending has its place – but not everywhere.

Knowing when NOT to blend protects contrast, detail and the story you want to tell.

### WHY IT MATTERS

- ♥ Keeps important areas sharp and clear
- ♥ Creates stronger contrast and depth
- ♥ Maintains texture and realism
- ♥ Draws the viewer's eye to what matters
- ♥ Gives your art focus and intention

### SITUATIONS WHEN YOU SHOULD NOT BLEND

#### 1. HIGHLIGHTS

Keep highlights clean and crisp to create contrast and realism.



#### 2. SHARP EDGES

Used for definition, structure and clear separation.



#### 3. FINE DETAILS

Details like hair strands, wrinkles, textures and small features.



#### 4. TEXTURES

Rough surfaces, fabric, bark, stone, metal – let the texture show.



#### 5. FOCAL POINTS

Keep the area you want attention on sharper than the rest.



#### 6. LINE WORK

Strong lines give structure, movement and clarity.



### EXAMPLES: BLEND vs DON'T BLEND

#### EYES

Blend around, not in the eye.



DON'T BLEND ✗ BLEND ✓

#### HAIR

Keep individual strands.



DON'T BLEND ✗ BLEND ✓

#### ROCK / STONE

Keep texture visible.



DON'T BLEND ✗ BLEND ✓

### OVER-BLENDING PROBLEMS

Blending too much can cause:

- ♥ Loss of details
- ♥ Mud and flat tones
- ♥ Lifeless drawings
- ♥ Weak contrast
- ♥ Confused focal point



### GOOD PRACTICE

- ♥ Blend with purpose, not habit.
- ♥ Protect your highlights.
- ♥ Leave texture exposed.
- ♥ Use a light touch.
- ♥ Step back and decide.
- ♥ Stop when it looks right!



### QUICK CHECKLIST

Before you blend, ask yourself:

- ✓ Will blending improve this area?
- ✓ Is this an area that needs to stay sharp?
- ✓ Will detail or texture be lost?
- ✓ Is this a focal point?

♥ If unsure – don't blend yet!



### THE GOLDEN BALANCE

Blend the background.  
Keep the subject sharp.



### DECISION GUIDE

Look at your reference or drawing.

Ask: What do I want the viewer to see first?

Keep that area sharp.

Soften and blend the rest.

♥ Lead the eye – don't lose it.

### BEFORE (ALL BLENDED)



VS.

### AFTER (DECIDE WHAT TO BLEND)



### ART4HEART TIP

Restraint is a skill.  
Knowing when to stop blending is what takes your art from good to outstanding.



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Art from the Heart

BLENDING IS AN OPTION, NOT AN OBLIGATION.  
KNOW WHEN TO SMOOTH – AND WHEN TO LEAVE IT ALONE.





## LESSON 34

The simplest tool you have is always with you. Use it with intention.



# FINGER BLENDING

SMOOTH. SOFT. EXPRESSIVE.

Finger blending uses the natural oils and warmth of your skin to soften charcoal, create smooth gradients, and bring life and atmosphere to your drawings.

### DIFFICULTY:



Your finger is a fantastic blending tool – but the how and when make all the difference. Control. Cleanliness. Light pressure. That's the secret to beautiful results.

### 1 WHY USE YOUR FINGER?

- Instant soft blending
- Great for large areas
- Creates smooth gradients
- Adds atmosphere
- Perfect for portraits and backgrounds



#### ART4HEART TIP

Use your finger like a brush – light, gentle and in the direction you want.

### 2 HOW TO FINGER BLEND

#### 1 APPLY CHARCOAL

Add charcoal to the area.



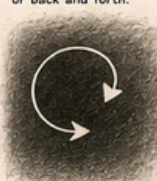
#### 2 PLACE FINGER

Use the side of your finger, not the tip.



#### 3 BLEND GENTLY

Use light pressure and small circular motions or back and forth.



#### 4 SMOOTH & REFINE

Keep blending until you reach the smooth, even tone you want.



Build in layers. Dark to light. You can always add more charcoal, but it's hard to take away.

### 3 WHEN TO USE FINGER BLENDING

#### LARGE AREAS

Backgrounds, skies, shadows.



#### PORTRAITS

Skin tones, soft transitions.



#### ATMOSPHERE

Fog, mist, glow and mood.



Great for soft, realistic, and expressive work.

### 4 BEST FINGER BLENDING TECHNIQUE

#### LIGHT PRESSURE

Start light. Press only as much as needed.



#### SIDE OF FINGER

Use the flat side (not the tip or nail).



#### SMALL MOVEMENTS

Use small circles or short strokes.



Control comes from pressure and movement.

### 5 CLEAN FINGER = CLEAN DRAWING

#### CLEAN FINGER ✓

Smooth, clean blends.



#### DIRTY FINGER ✗

Smudges, streaks and unwanted marks.



Wipe your finger often!

### 6 HOW TO USE YOUR FINGER CLEAN

- Keep a tissue or cloth nearby.
- Wipe often – especially when moving to a lighter area.
- Use a clean part of the tissue each time.
- For very light areas, wash your hands.



#### ART4HEART TIP

A clean finger gives you clean control.

### 7 FINGER BLENDING DO'S & DON'TS

#### DO

- Use light pressure
- Blend in layers
- Keep your finger clean
- Work with good quality charcoal
- Take your time

#### DON'T

- Press too hard
- Over-blend (loses texture)
- Use a dirty finger
- Blend too early
- Ignore the direction of light

Soft blends are built, not rushed.

### 8 EXTRA TIPS

- Use your finger for big, soft areas.
- Use stumps for small, detailed areas.
- Combine finger blending with stumps for the best results.
- Try blending in the direction of light for a natural look.
- Practice! The more you use your finger, the more control you'll have.



#### BEFORE BLENDING



VS.

#### AFTER FINGER BLENDING



#### REMEMBER

Great art isn't about avoiding your fingerprints. It's about using them with purpose.



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YOUR FINGER IS JUST ANOTHER BRUSH IN YOUR ARTIST TOOLBOX. USE IT. LOVE IT. MASTER IT.





# HOW TO HOLD YOUR PENCIL

## *When Sketching*

### TIP 1

Start at the **back end** of the pencil shaft.

This helps with light lines that can be easily erased. It also reduces the urge to press too hard.



Hatching and shading can be started this way.

( Sketching Mode – Light & Loose )



### TIP 2

When outlining was done, hold pencil in the **middle** of the shaft.

Shading is not forced and harshly done.



( Shading Mode – Balanced & Controlled )



### TIP 3

When you need to do more detail in your drawing, hold pencil **near the point** for more control and precision.



( Detail Mode – Precision & Control )



### TIP 4

**Keep pencil point sharp.**

This ensure your drawing lines are clear and secure.



( Sharp Point – Clear, Clean & Confident )



**TIP:** Do not drop your graphite pencils.  
Keep them safely in a container or box.



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## LESSON 8

Great art is not about the brand you use, but how well you use it.

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT GRAPHITE PENCIL BRANDS

The best pencil is the one that fits your drawing style and budget.



### 1 PROFESSIONAL QUALITY

These brands are known for their excellent consistency, reliable grading, smooth layering and long-lasting performance. Ideal for serious drawing and long-term learning.



### 2 BUDGET-FRIENDLY BRANDS

Affordable, reliable and perfect for practice, classrooms and beginners.

A great place to start if your budget is limited.



### 3 DOES EXPENSIVE ALWAYS MEAN BETTER?

A skilled artist can create beautiful work with almost any decent pencil.

Better pencils make the process easier, not the artist better.



Drawn with a budget pencil | Drawn with a premium pencil

### 4 WHAT WE USED IN THE ART4HEART STUDIO

Most lessons were taught using:

- ♥ Derwent
- ♥ Faber-Castell
- ♥ Koh-i-noor



For younger children and beginners on a budget we often used:

- ♥ Mont Marte
- ♥ Staedtler
- ♥ Lyra

Because pencils get dropped, lost, borrowed... and sometimes even chewed! 😊

### 5 HOW DIFFERENT BRANDS FEEL

#### DERWENT

- ♥ Smooth
- ♥ Rich graphite
- ♥ Excellent layering



#### FABER-CASTELL 9000

- ♥ Consistent
- ♥ Clean point
- ♥ Excellent control



#### KOH-I-NOOR HARDTMUTH

- ♥ Dark values
- ♥ Traditional feel
- ♥ Great for realism



#### MONT MARTE

- ♥ Good value
- ♥ Softer wood
- ♥ Excellent for practice



#### STAEDTLER

- ♥ Reliable
- ♥ Slightly firmer feel
- ♥ Great for technical work



#### LYRA

- ♥ Comfortable
- ♥ Smooth writing and drawing
- ♥ Good student pencil



♥ Try a few and see which one feels right in your hand! ♥

### 6 A NOTE ABOUT VERY SOFT PENCILS

Some very soft pencils from certain brands can feel slightly waxy or oily.

This isn't a fault - it's simply how that particular graphite formula behaves.

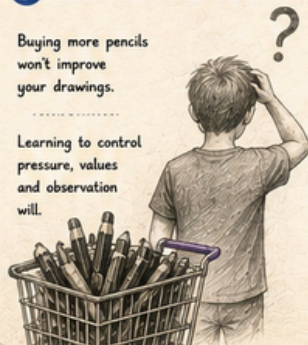
Try different brands and choose the one that matches your drawing style.



### 7 DON'T CHASE BRANDS

Buying more pencils won't improve your drawings.

Learning to control pressure, values and observation will.



### 9 CHALLENGE: BRAND COMPARISON

Draw the same sphere using three different brands.

Compare:

- ♥ Darkness
- ♥ Smoothness
- ♥ Blending
- ♥ Point retention



Then decide which one feels best in your hand. ♥



Art from the Heart

THE RIGHT PENCIL.  
THE RIGHT PRACTICE.  
THE RIGHT YOU.  
THAT'S WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS.

### 8 ART4HEART STUDIO TIP

Take care of your pencils!

- ♥ Your pencil may look perfectly fine on the outside...
- ♥ ...but one drop can fracture the graphite core inside.
- ♥ A damaged core often snaps every time you sharpen it, making the pencil frustrating to use and wasting perfectly good graphite.
- ♥ Treat your pencils with care and they'll reward you with longer-lasting, cleaner points.



♥ Store your pencils in a pencil tin, roll or case when travelling. A little protection goes a long way.

### ARTIST MYTH vs ARTIST TRUTH

#### MYTH ✗

"My sharpener is broken."



#### TRUTH ✓

Sometimes the sharpener isn't the problem... the pencil has been dropped, and the graphite core has fractured inside.



Know your tools. Love your art. Create from the heart. ♥ - Art4Heart Academy -





## WATCH AND LEARN

- Videos can teach you so much
- Learn techniques and tips



**WATCHING GIVES KNOWLEDGE**



## VIEWING IS NOT ENOUGH

- Viewing does absolutely nothing alone
- Knowledge without action stays theory



**WATCHING WITHOUT DOING CHANGES NOTHING**

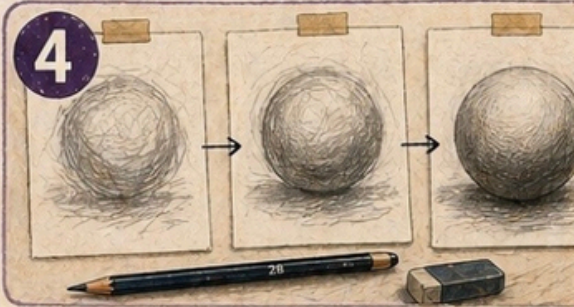


## DO THE TIME

- You have to put in the hours
- Build muscle memory



**SKILL TAKES TIME**



## PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

- Try and try again
- Progress comes through repetition



**REPETITION CREATES IMPROVEMENT**



## HONEST PRACTICE CREATES MASTERY

- Nothing replaces honest practice
- This is how mastery is built



**PRACTICE MAKES PROGRESS**

**HOW TO LEARN TO DRAW**

*Talent helps. Practice transforms.*

**TIP:**





# HOW TO GET BETTER AT DRAWING



1  START WITH  
BASIC SHAPES



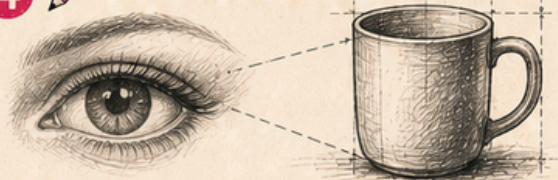
2  PRACTICE DAILY  
20-30 MIN A DAY



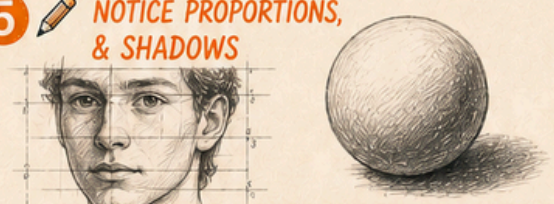
3  USE REFERENCES



4  LEARN OBSERVATION

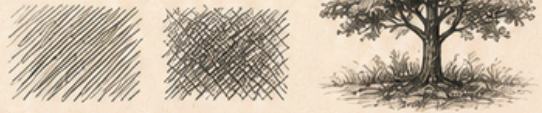


5  NOTICE PROPORTIONS,  
& SHADOWS



6  LEARN SHADING

- Hatching
- Cross-Hatching



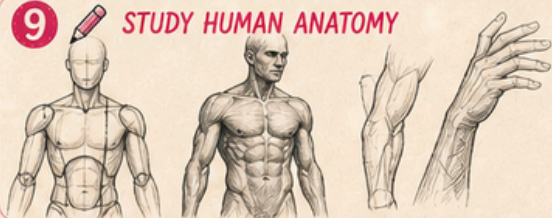
7  LEARN PERSPECTIVE  
1-POINT & 2-POINT



8  COPY GOOD DRAWINGS



9  STUDY HUMAN ANATOMY



10  WATCH TUTORIALS  
YOUTUBE & ART COURSES



11  DON'T FEAR MISTAKES



12  PRACTICE & LEARN



PRACTICE DAILY → GET BETTER



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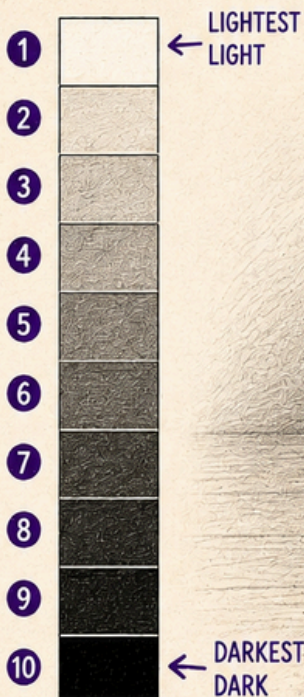
# COMPARE VALUES



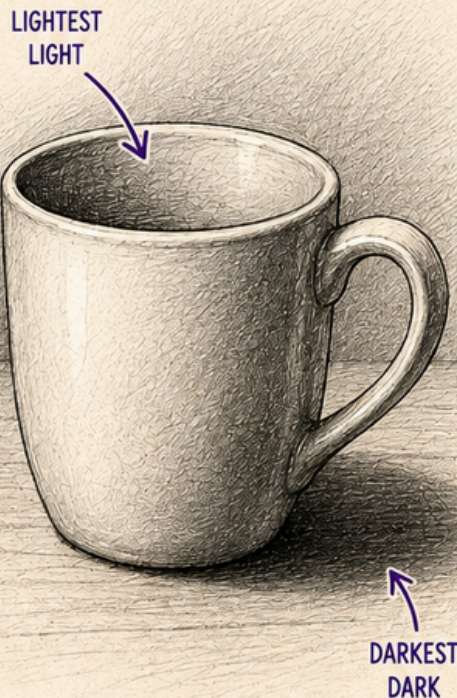
Great drawings are not about detail.  
They are about correct values. 😊

© Art4Heart ♥

## THE VALUE SCALE



## EXAMPLE: SIMPLE OBJECT



## HOW TO COMPARE VALUES

### 1 FIND THE LIGHTEST LIGHT



Locate the lightest area in your subject. This is your reference point.

### 2 FIND THE DARKEST DARK



Locate the darkest area in your subject. This is your other reference.

### 3 COMPARE EVERYTHING ELSE



Now compare all other values to these two extremes. Where do they fit on the scale?

## THE KEY IDEA

Don't guess.



Compare.

Don't assume.



Compare.

Don't rely on memory.



Compare.

## TIP



Squint your eyes to see the big value relationships more clearly.



# EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE.





COURSE 1  
LESSON 2



# HARD VS SOFT GRAPHITE PENCILS

Choosing the right pencil for the job.

"The best pencil isn't the darkest one. It's the one that solves today's problem."

1

## MEET THE TWO FAMILIES

### HARD PENCILS (9H-H-F)

- Light values
- Sharp point
- Clean edges
- Less smudging
- More control
- More clay



Hard point →

### SOFT PENCILS (B-9B)

- Dark values
- Softer point
- Rich shading
- Blend easily
- Smudge easily
- More graphite



← Blunt soft point

2

## WHAT HAPPENS ON THE PAPER?

Same pressure. Same paper. Different pencil.

2H



HB



2B



6B



8B



LIGHTER VALUES

DARKER VALUES

3

## THE POINT TEST

Freshly sharpened

2H



HB



2B



6B



8B



After drawing for a few minutes



Keeps its point



Wears gradually



Wears gradually



Wears quickly



Wears quickly

### ART4HEART STUDIO TIP

Every pencil can be sharpened to a fine point.

The difference is how long it keeps that point.

Hard pencils contain more clay, making the graphite stronger and more resistant to wear.

Soft pencils contain more graphite, so the tip wears down faster as you draw.

Use the pencil that suits the job, not the one that happens to be sharp.

4

## WHICH PENCIL WINS?

### HARD PENCILS

- ✓ Construction
- ✓ Perspective
- ✓ Measuring
- ✓ Fine detail
- ✓ Light guidelines
- ✓ Architecture



### SOFT PENCILS

- ✓ Portraits
- ✓ Animals
- ✓ Landscapes
- ✓ Deep shadows
- ✓ Backgrounds
- ✓ Atmosphere



5

## SMUDGE TEST

Shade → Blend with finger or stump

2H



HB



2B



6B



8B



Hard pencils hardly move.

Soft pencils blend beautifully.

6

## ERASER CHALLENGE

Shade → Erase with a normal vinyl eraser

2H



HB



4B



8B



- ♥ Hard graphite lifts easily.
- ♥ Soft graphite usually leaves a stain.

This teaches students why planning matters.



7

## PRESSURE MYTHS

Pressing harder is not the answer.

### LIGHT PRESSURE ✓

- Graphite sits on the paper surface.
- The paper tooth remains open.
- More layers can be added.
- Easier to erase and adjust.



### HEAVY PRESSURE ✗

- Flattens the paper tooth.
- Can score or damage the paper.
- Makes smooth layering difficult.
- Creates shiny graphite patches.
- H pencils can indent or tear the paper.



### ART4HEART STUDIO TIP

If you need a darker value, change the pencil before changing the pressure. Let the graphite do the work.

### HB + HEAVY PRESSURE



damaged paper.

### 4B + LIGHT PRESSURE



Jusk, shiny, but soft, rich and blendable.

8

## ART4HEART STUDIO

My students usually start with HB.

Then we add a 2H for planning.

A 2B for general shading.

A 6B for the deepest shadows.

Those four pencils can create almost any realistic drawing.



9

## MINI CHALLENGE

DRAW ONE APPLE ONLY USE HB



NOW DRAW IT AGAIN USING 2H • HB • 2B • 6B



Ask yourself:

- ♥ Which drawing has more depth?
- ♥ Which was easier?
- ♥ Which gave smoother transitions?



### ARTIST WISDOM

It isn't about owning more pencils. It's about knowing when to change them.

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