INTRODUCTION

Drawing is a skill that, while difficult to master, is very accessible and easy to learn. Virtually everyone is capable of drawing competently with practice and a few fundamental skills. This class aims to provide you with the skills that you need to begin drawing with confidence.

STRETCHES

Take it from me, it is well worth the time to stretch your hands before you begin doing artwork. This will help prevent doing any damage when working long term of for prolonged periods of time. There are a number of simple stretches to do, and here are a few I use:

Take one hand and grab the tips of the fingers of your other hand.

Pull your fingertips slightly back towards the direction of your wrist.

You should feel it in your wrist.

Don't pull back so hard that you feel pain, very little force should be needed.

Do this for 10-30 seconds and then repeat for the other hand.

Place your fingers across the knuckles of your other hand, with that hand's wrist relaxed so as to let the hand hang.

Push against the knuckles.

Don't push so hard as to feel pain, just enough to feel a stretch in your wrist.

Do this for 10-30 seconds and then repeat with the other hand.

Finally, hold out your hands and spread your fingers. Then slowly curl the fingers of both hands one at a time, starting with your thumb and ending with your pinky. Repeat a few times.

This is a good habit to form early on, so incorporate it into your journey learning how to draw.

TOOLS

Let's start by reviewing your drawing tools. Most of these are everyday objects, but try to open your mind to thinking of them differently. A tool is all in how you use it after all.

Paper: Paper is literally the foundation of your drawing, and as such is a major factor in the success of a work. There is a wide variety of paper types which provide different levels of roughness (tooth), thickness, absorbency, and other factors, particularly acidity. Acid free paper will not become yellow and brittle as it ages in the way that paper made with acid will. You'll want to use different types of paper for different kinds of projects. Artist pads will often include information about what kinds of mediums pair best with the paper they contain.

Pencils: Pencils come in a wider variety than you may expect. Pencils differ by the hardness of the graphite they contain, and this can be used to achieve different effects.

A harder graphite will produce a light fine line that is resistant to smudging. A soft graphite will produce a dark bold line that is very easy to smudge. There are occasions where you'll want one or the other, and more occasions where you'll want both.

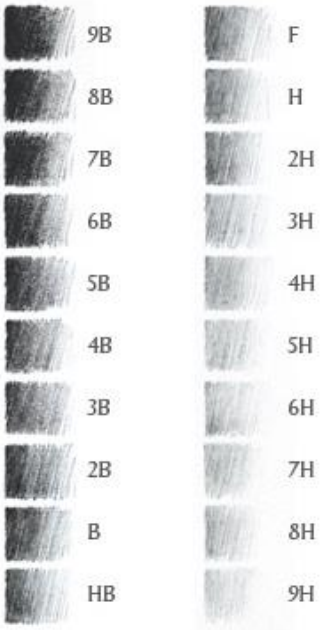
Graphite hardness is designated in **grades**, with a range from 9B, the softest, to HB, the middle ground, to 9H, the hardest.

B stands for "Black", F stands for "Fine" and H stands for "Hard."

The standard pencil you've conventionally used most of your life is a HB grade pencil.

We refer to the color produced by a pencil as **value**. 9B has a darker value than 9H. If you were to color an area with either, we'd refer to that as adding value to an area.

A set of artist pencils will contain a range of pencil grades.



Eraser: Erasers are valuable tools not because they remove mistakes but because they can remove value, also referred to as adding negative value. For instance, you can remove value from an area filled with value to suggest a reflection.

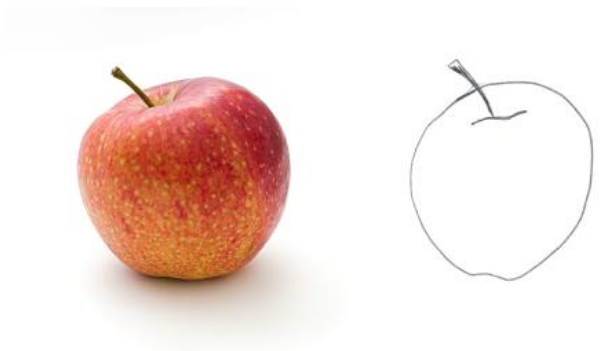
Learn to be very picky about your erasers! A hard eraser can smudge value more than remove it, leaving bits of itself on the paper or tearing it up altogether. You'll notice most artist pencils will not have erasers. I've personally never met an eraser on a pencil I've liked. Vinyl and kneaded erasers tend to perform the best.

Scrap Paper/Gloves: Your hands can smear your value, and this is something that is easy to do unintentionally as your hand rests on your work as you draw. Placing a piece of scrap paper under your hand is an easy solution to this problem. You may also want to consider wearing a drawing glove. This is a glove covering only the palm and pinky, the parts of your hand likely to rest on your work.

CONTOUR DRAWING

A contour drawing articulates the edges of an object. We are basically tracing the shape of an object as we perceive it. This tends to be the first method we employ to draw, but has a number of flaws when unaccompanied by other techniques such as:

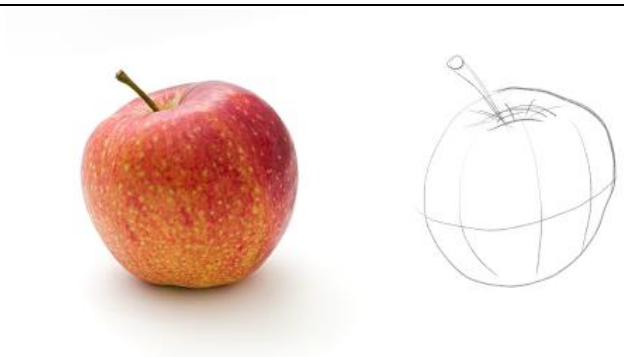
- Lack of detail
- Lack of depth
- Lack of texture
- Lack of accuracy
- Difficulty depicting elements that are not edges



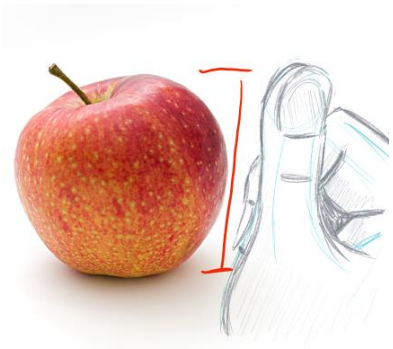
A contour drawing of an apple

STRUCTURE DRAWING

A structure drawing breaks on object down into basic shapes in order to establish a foundation to articulate more refined details. Structure drawings go a long way to improve the accuracy of our work. You should perform a structure drawing as your first step, and articulate every element this way. There's nothing worse than articulating a full figure only to realize that the scale or something of that nature is off, and you need to start over.



Just about any object can be broken down into an arrangement of one or more basic shapes, a square, a circle, or a triangle, or their three dimensional counterparts, a cube, a sphere, or a pyramid.



You'll also want to measure at this step. Now, it isn't efficient to take measurements you normally would when drawing. This is because your perspective should ideally remain consistent as you work, and you'll likely need to measure things frequently. Instead you'll want to take relative measurements by comparing the size of one object to another.

A common what of doing this is by comparing the relative size of an object with your thumb or pencil. Fully extend your arm (so the distance between your eyes and your hand remains consistent) and close one eye. Compare the length of the object you measure to your thumb or pencil. Now you can compare your thumb or pencil to other objects or parts of the same object and compare sizes.

In the example above the apple is roughly to size of the artist's thumb. The artist can then compare their thumb to the width of the apple. They find it is the same size, and so they know to draw the width of the apple equal to the height of the apple.

Think of structure drawing as your notes. They aren't part of the finished product, and are intended for your eyes only. Use a very light value, like the highest H grade in your kit. Many people fear doing a structure drawing because they don't want the lines present in their finished product. In most cases your structure drawing will be masked as you implement contour lines, value, and texture but you can always erase them.

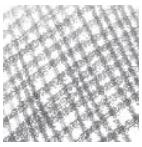
TEXTURE

Adding texture allows you to suggest weight and depth to your drawing. It also allows you to articulate elements in an object that aren't edges, like a bump. There are 6 basic textures:

Tonal: Fill an area in with value, much like coloring with a crayon. Tonal is optimal for articulating areas filled with solid value, like a shadow.

Stippling: Tap out a series of dots. Useful in depicting a rough or porous surface, like a road or a sponge, often used to depict something like hair or stubble as well.

Hatching: Draw a series of parallel lines. A good alternative to tonal for filling in an area with value, and useful in articulating the texture of clothing.



Cross Hatching: Draw a series of perpendicular lines. Produces a deeper value than hatching. Very effective at articulating round objects if lines follow the curvature.

Scumbling: Draw a series of wild marks, scribbles almost. Effective at articulating a wild, non-uniform substance, like grass or hair.

Smudge: Use tonal to fill in an area with value and then intentionally smudge it with something like your thumb. Useful in articulating a glossy surface, especially when value is removed to suggest a reflection.

No one texture method is superior to the other, and no one method is the only correct answer in articulating any given substance. Experiment, and find what you feel works best!

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

In short, practice. Lots and lots of practice. There are a few reasons that you'll want to practice drawing so much. The most obvious reason is to become better acquainted with fundamental techniques. Over time they will become more familiar to you, easier to pull off with better quality, and easier for you to determine when to employ them. This is a good seqway into the second reason you'll want to practice a lot.

In a way, a lot of art is solving little problems. How do I depict a 3D object on a flat piece of paper? How do I depict the color red only using shades of grey? I assure you the conundrums will only become more quizzical as you tackle more subjects. Finding solutions to these puzzles is a major part in developing a "style", a personal way in which you draw. A voice.