

Art Techniques Student's Guides

Drawing



Curated by
Ms. Mila Vasconcelos



Introduction & Disclaimer

This guide is created to support IB Visual Arts students and educators. My goal is to organize essential drawing practices while acknowledging that drawing is a lifelong learning process. The resources, visuals, and tutorials included here are credited to the original artists and platforms. This guide is not a masterclass, but a thoughtfully curated journey meant to build both confidence and visual literacy in drawing.

I hope you all make good use of this material and all the resources shared.

Let's be creative today!

Ms. Mila Vasconcelos



Drawing Materials & Tools

Basic Tools You'll Need:

Graphite Pencils (2H to 6B)

For light sketching to dark shading. Harder pencils (H) = lighter lines, softer pencils (B) = darker, smoother strokes.

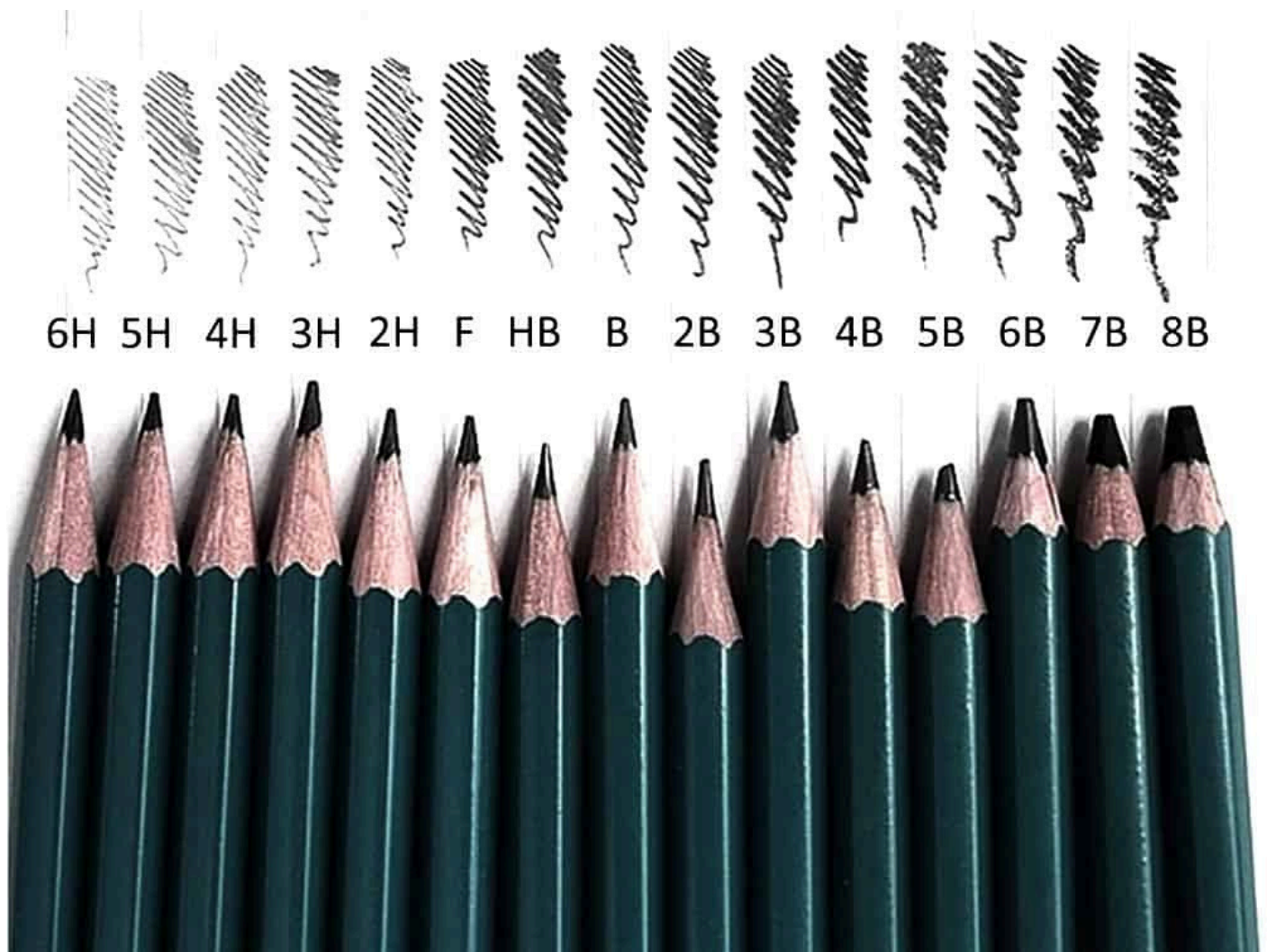


Image source: brightercraft.com

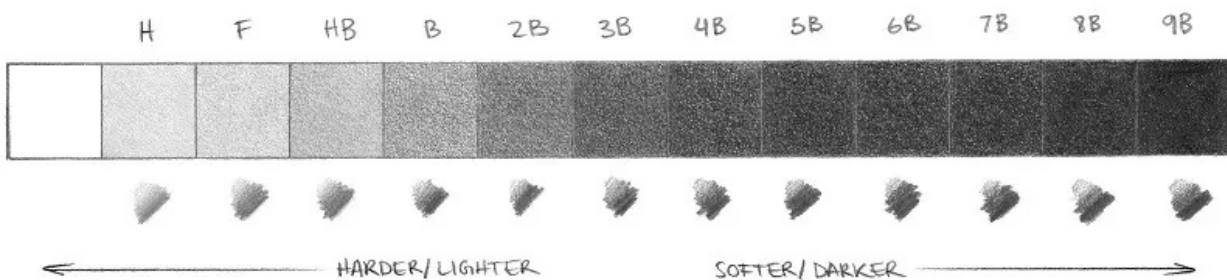


Image source: rapidfireart.com

RAPID FIRE

Erasers (kneaded & precision)

Lifting highlights, and correcting mistakes without smudging.

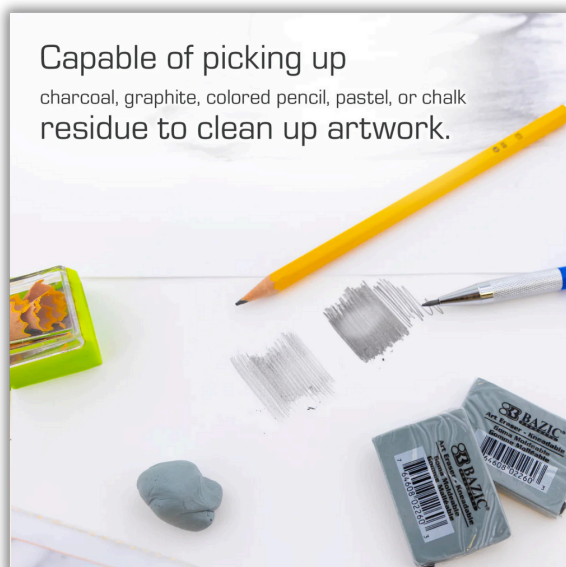


Moldable into various desired shapes and sizes

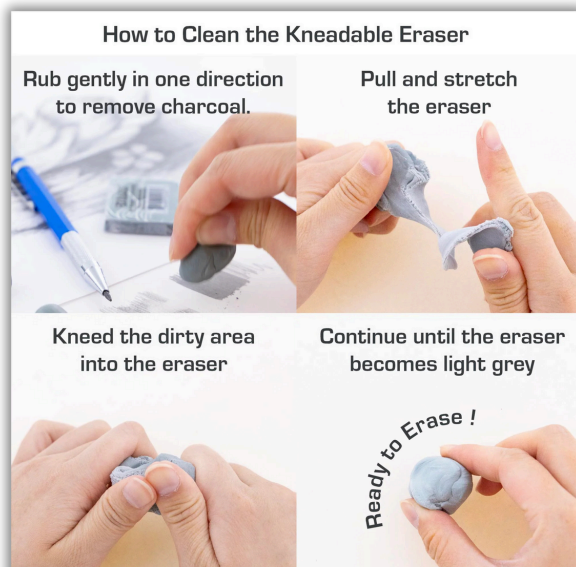


Can be shaped for precise erasing and detailed work

Image source:
bazicstore.com



Capable of picking up charcoal, graphite, colored pencil, pastel, or chalk residue to clean up artwork.



How to Clean the Kneadable Eraser

Rub gently in one direction to remove charcoal.

Pull and stretch the eraser

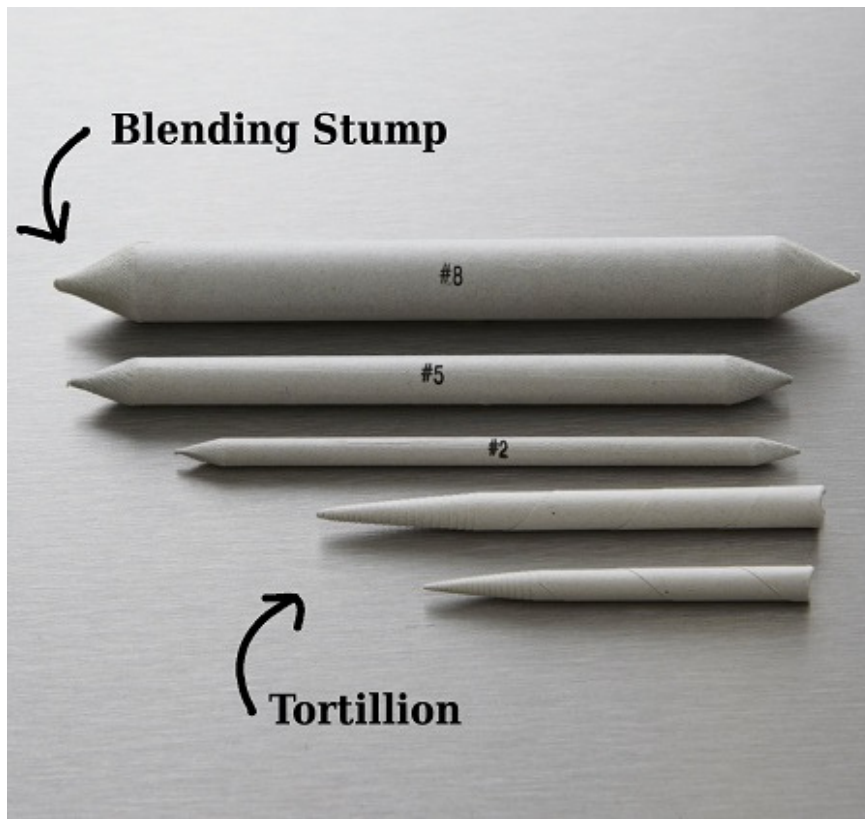
Knead the dirty area into the eraser

Continue until the eraser becomes light grey

Ready to Erase!

Blending Stumps or Tortillons

Smooth shading transitions and gradients.



Blending: Use a clean blending stump to push the graphite on your drawing back and forth lightly until the tones blend together. If you are scared to do this, use very little pressure (it will take longer to blend though).



Charcoal (vine & compressed)

- *Vine charcoal is more organic and delicate, perfect for expressive and subtle studies.*
- *Compressed charcoal is more graphic and bold, great for high-impact contrast.*
- *Start with vine charcoal, and finish with compressed for deeper shadows or definition.*



Image source: mysketchjournal.com

Type	Texture & Feel	Tone & Value	Control & Use	Best For
Hard Vine Charcoal	Light, dry, very soft on paper	Produces light to medium grays	Easy to erase and blend, very delicate lines	Light sketches, underdrawings, initial planning
Soft Vine Charcoal	Softer, powdery feel	Produces darker grays to soft blacks	Smudges easily, blends well	Shading, gesture drawing, tonal build-up
Compressed Charcoal	Dense, solid sticks or pencils	Produces deep, rich blacks	Less forgiving, harder to erase, creates bold lines	Final outlines, dramatic contrast, bold shading

Colored Pencils (optional)

We have a full guide presenting how to use different color pencil techniques. [Click here](#) to refer to the guide



Drawing Paper (sketchbook, smooth & textured)

Different surface affects the texture and quality of your marks.



Understanding Drawing Paper: Types, Textures & Uses

Key Paper Characteristics to Know:

Surface texture would come into play, especially if you plan to work in many layers. Once the surface tooth of the paper is filled, it is hard to layer any other colors on the surface. Picking a paper with the correct tooth or texture would help with that process.

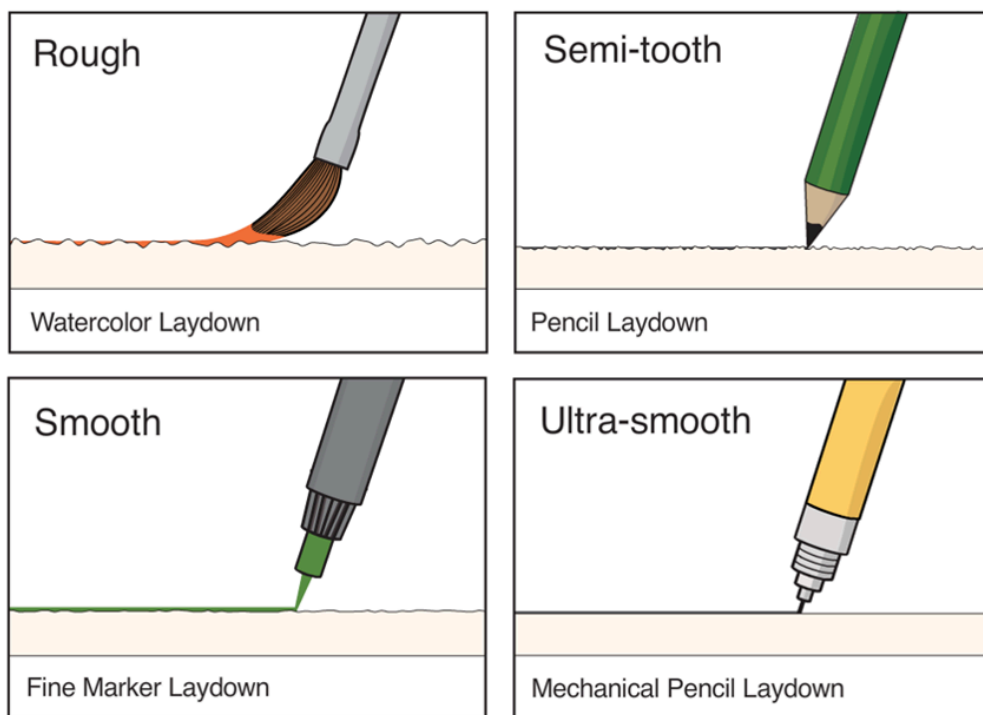
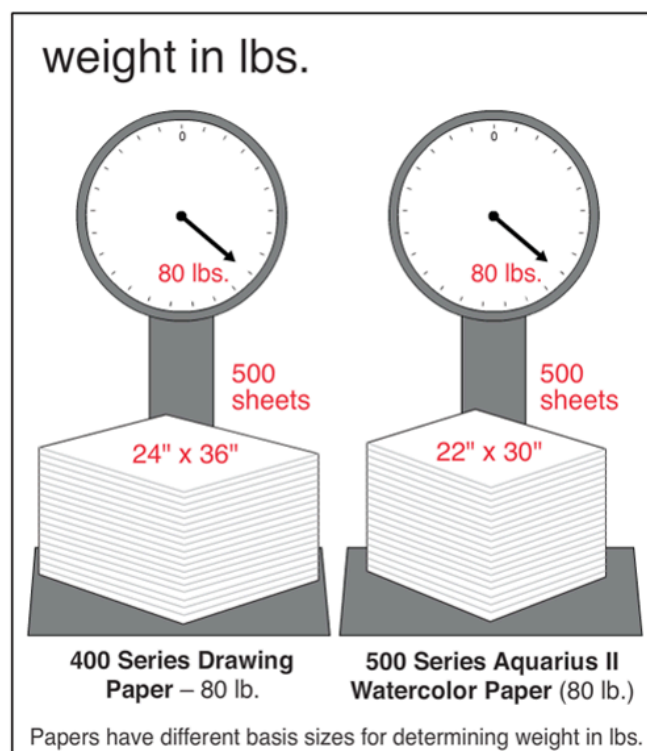


Image source: strathmoreart.com

Characteristic	What It Means
Weight (gsm or lb)	Heavier paper (e.g. 200gsm+) handles more media, like wet applications. Lighter paper (80-120gsm) is better for dry sketching.
Texture (Tooth)	The surface feel of the paper — smooth (less tooth) or rough (more tooth). Affects how media adheres and how blending works.
Color	White is standard, but toned papers (grey, tan) are great for highlights and contrast with white pencil or charcoal.
Acid-Free	Prevents yellowing over time — important for archival work and IB submission pieces.

Common Types of Drawing Paper

Paper Type	Texture	Weight Range	Best For	Notes
Sketch Paper	Light tooth	80-100 gsm (50-65 lb)	Quick sketches, warm-ups	Not ideal for final pieces; may tear with heavy media
Drawing Paper	Medium tooth	120-160 gsm (70-100 lb)	Pencil, charcoal, colored pencils	Good all-purpose surface for dry media
Bristol Paper	Smooth (plate) or vellum	200-300 gsm (100-140 lb)	Ink, fine lines, markers, colored pencils	Smooth = clean detail; Vellum = more texture for blending
Charcoal Paper	Rough tooth	120-160 gsm (70-100 lb)	Charcoal, soft pastels	Grabs powdery media well; ideal for expressive mark-making
Mixed Media Paper	Slight texture	160-250 gsm	Dry and light wet media (ink wash, watercolor pencil)	Great for experimenting across materials
Toned Paper (Grey/Tan)	Medium tooth	120-160 gsm	Charcoal, graphite + white pencil	Enhances highlights and contrast without using white paper



A heavier weight paper can handle more layers, water, and techniques than a lighter weight paper. The weight of the paper is not determined by the individual sheet but is determined by a ream of 500 sheets weighed together at the factory.

Source:

strathmoreart.com

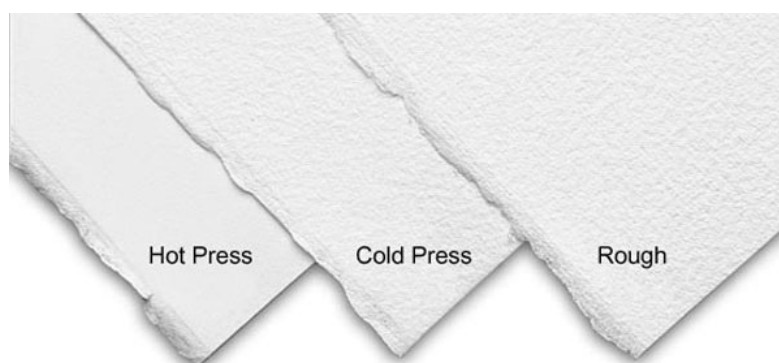
Selecting Your Drawing Paper:

Hot Pressed, Cold Pressed, and Rough Paper: What's the Difference?

These terms describe how the paper is made — specifically how it's pressed during production. The pressing process affects texture, absorbency, and how drawing or painting materials behave on the surface.

How to Choose:

- Choose Hot Pressed when you want clean outlines, crisp colored pencil work, or refined ink drawings.
- Choose Cold Pressed for an all-rounder — you can draw and paint on it, with good texture for blending but still able to handle detail.
- Choose Rough if you're going bold — with charcoal, pastels, or expressive line work and loose washes.



Type	Surface Texture	Absorbency	Best For	Notes
Hot Pressed (HP)	Smooth	Low absorbency	Fine detail, ink, pen, markers, graphite, colored pencil	Great for precise work and clean lines; paint can sit on surface longer
Cold Pressed (CP) <i>(also called NOT — "Not Hot Pressed")</i>	Slight texture / medium tooth	Moderate absorbency	Watercolor, charcoal, graphite, mixed media	Most versatile; good balance between detail and texture
Rough	Highly textured / coarse tooth	High absorbency	Expressive painting, dry brush, charcoal, loose ink work	Paper grabs pigment quickly; harder to do detailed linework

Practical Tip for IB Students:

*If you plan to combine media (e.g. watercolor underdrawing + pencil/ink on top), **Cold Pressed** paper gives you the best flexibility.*

Tips for Students Choosing Paper

- Use smooth paper for clean lines, details, and ink.
- Use textured paper for expressive strokes, blending, and charcoal work.
- Use heavy paper for wet techniques or multi-layered media.
- Always test your tools on the paper before starting a final piece.

Practical Tip for IB Students:

If you plan to combine media (e.g. watercolor underdrawing + pencil/ink on top), **Cold Pressed** paper gives you the best flexibility.



Landscape by Cornelis van Poelenburch, size 9×12 in, Public Domain



Here's a drawing on large size paper. Van Gogh, Road in Etten, size 15×22 in, Public Domain

Ruler, Compass, Tracing Paper, Grid Tools

Those tools will be used for proportion, perspective, and accuracy exercises.

How to Use Drawing Tools (3-Step Guide)

Ruler

For straight lines, angles, and precise measurements.

1. Align the ruler with the edge or reference point on your paper.
2. Hold it firmly with one hand to prevent movement.
3. Draw a clean line using even pressure — use a pencil for sketching or a pen for clean outlines.

Try this: *Use a ruler to draw the vanishing lines in a 2-point perspective scene.*

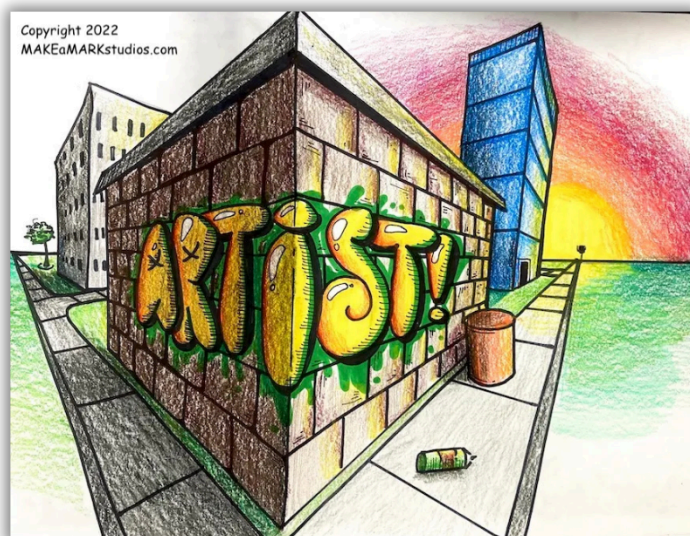


Image source:
makeamarkstudios.com

Compass

For drawing perfect circles, arcs, and geometric compositions.

1. Place the needle point on the paper where you want the circle's center.
2. Adjust the compass arms to your desired radius (measure it with the ruler if needed).
3. Rotate gently in a full circle, keeping steady pressure on the pencil tip.

Try this: *Create a radial design using overlapping compass-drawn circles.*

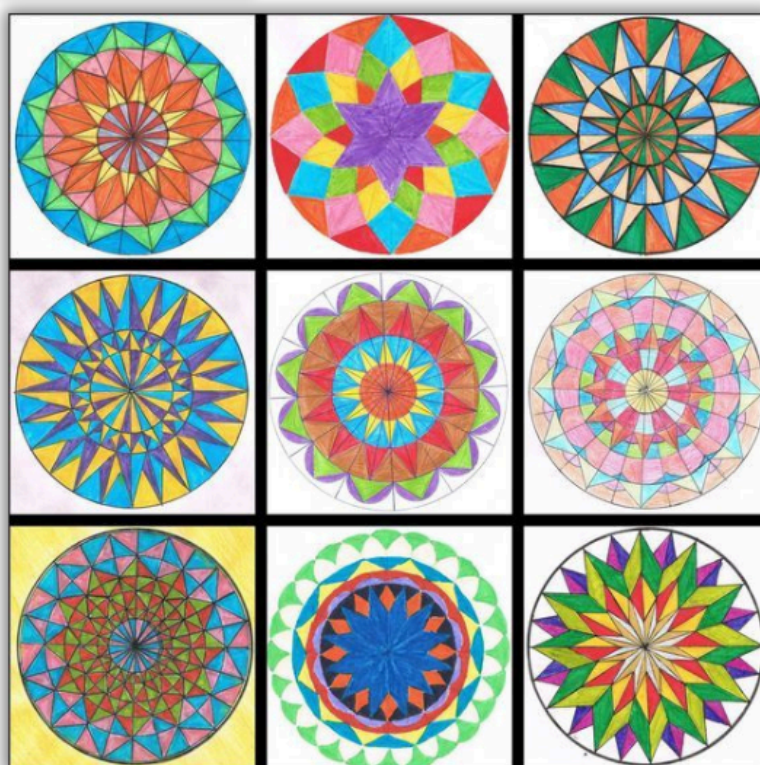


Image source:
pintarcrearpensar.blogspot.com

Tracing Paper

For studying outlines, improving proportions, and practicing repetition.

1. Layer tracing paper on top of your reference or sketch.
2. Trace the lines or forms lightly, focusing on proportions and flow.
3. Transfer or modify your drawing onto another surface, or overlay for refinement.

Try this: *Trace a face reference, then adjust the expression or hairstyle in your version.*



Image source: [@SpellboundBrush](#)
(Tiffany Toland-Scott)

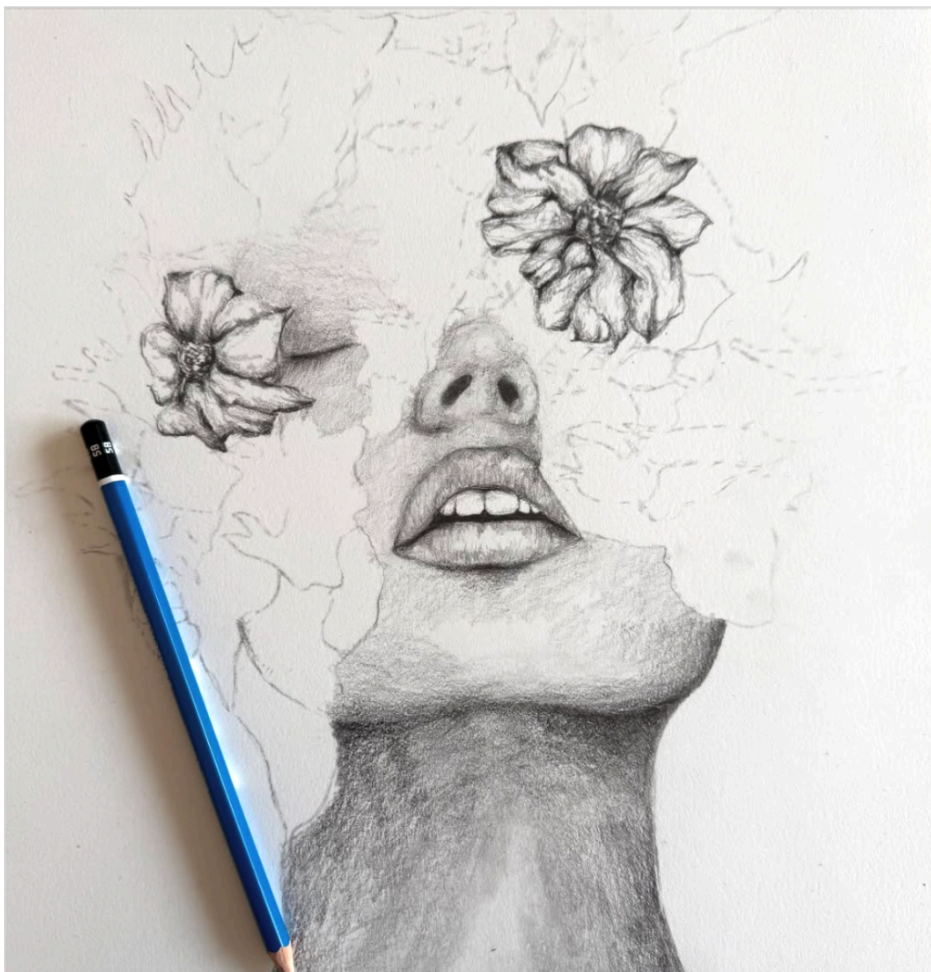


Image source: [@melanie_vankuyk](#)

Grid Tools

For enlarging, reducing, or accurately reproducing proportions.

1. Draw a grid over your reference image (e.g., 1x1 inch squares).
2. Create the same grid on your drawing surface (scaled if needed).
3. Recreate each square's contents individually, focusing on lines and shapes inside each box.

Try this: Reproduce a photo in a larger size by breaking it into 9-16 grid sections.

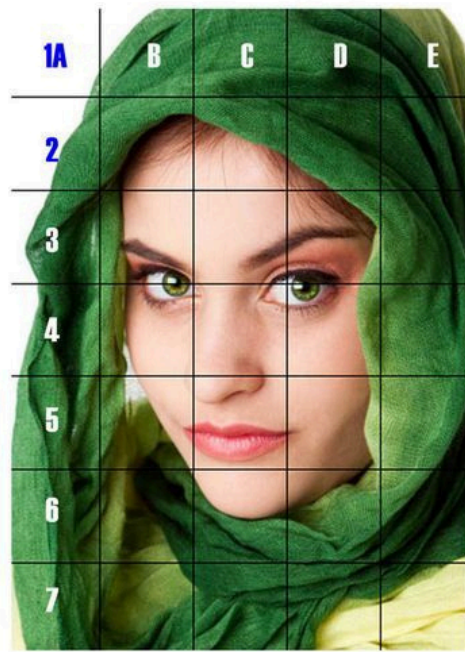
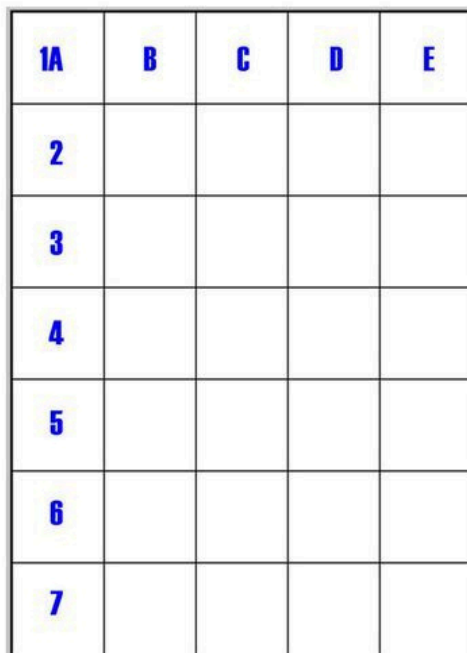


Image source: letsdrawtoday.com

A**B****C****D****E****1****2****3****4****5****6****7**

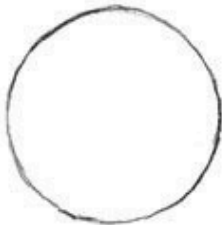
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1							
2							
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10							

Foundational Drawing Skills

Shapes & Forms

- *Begin with 2D shapes: square, triangle, circle.*
- *Transition to 3D forms: cube, cone, sphere, cylinder.*

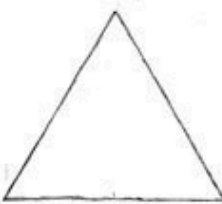
Shapes



Circle

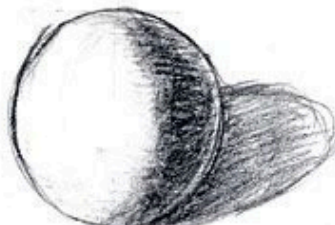


Square

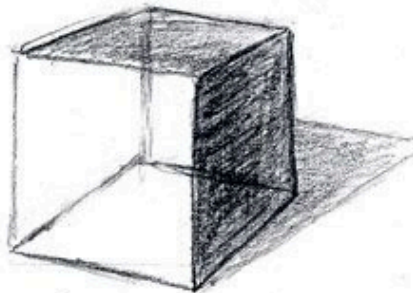


Triangle

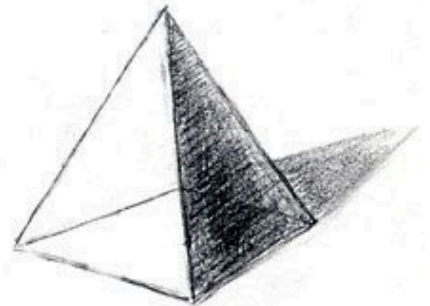
Forms



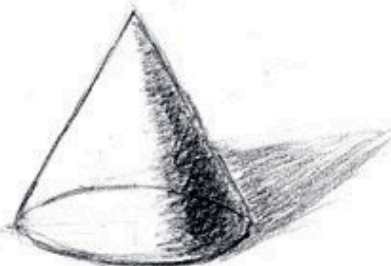
Sphere



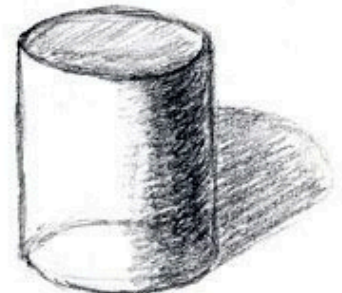
Cube



Pyramid



Cone



Cylinder

Shading Forms

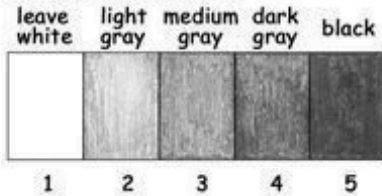
①. Value Scale

make a rectangle with 5 squares

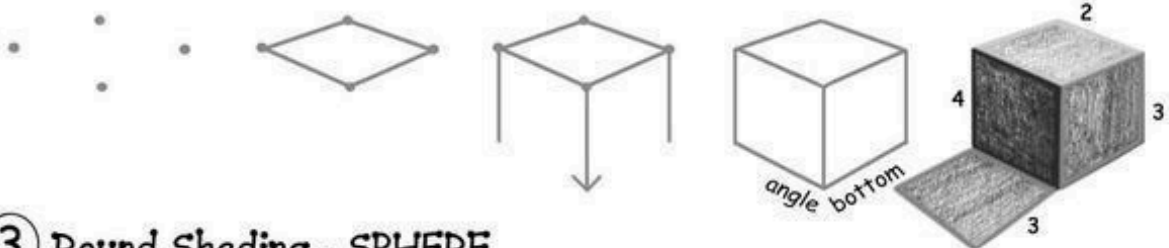


number them: 1 2 3 4 5

Shade the squares

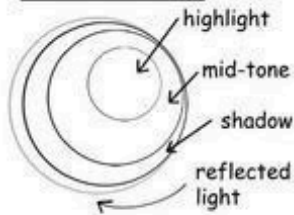
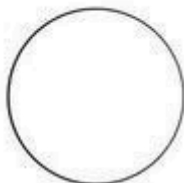


②. Flat Shading - CUBE



③. Round Shading - SPHERE

Add 3 more circles



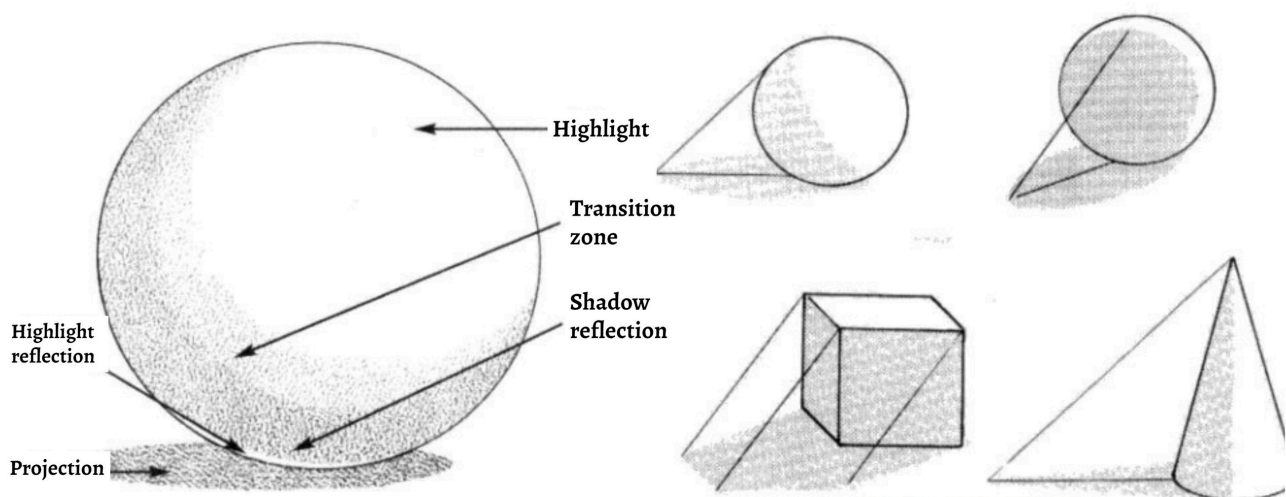
④. Cone



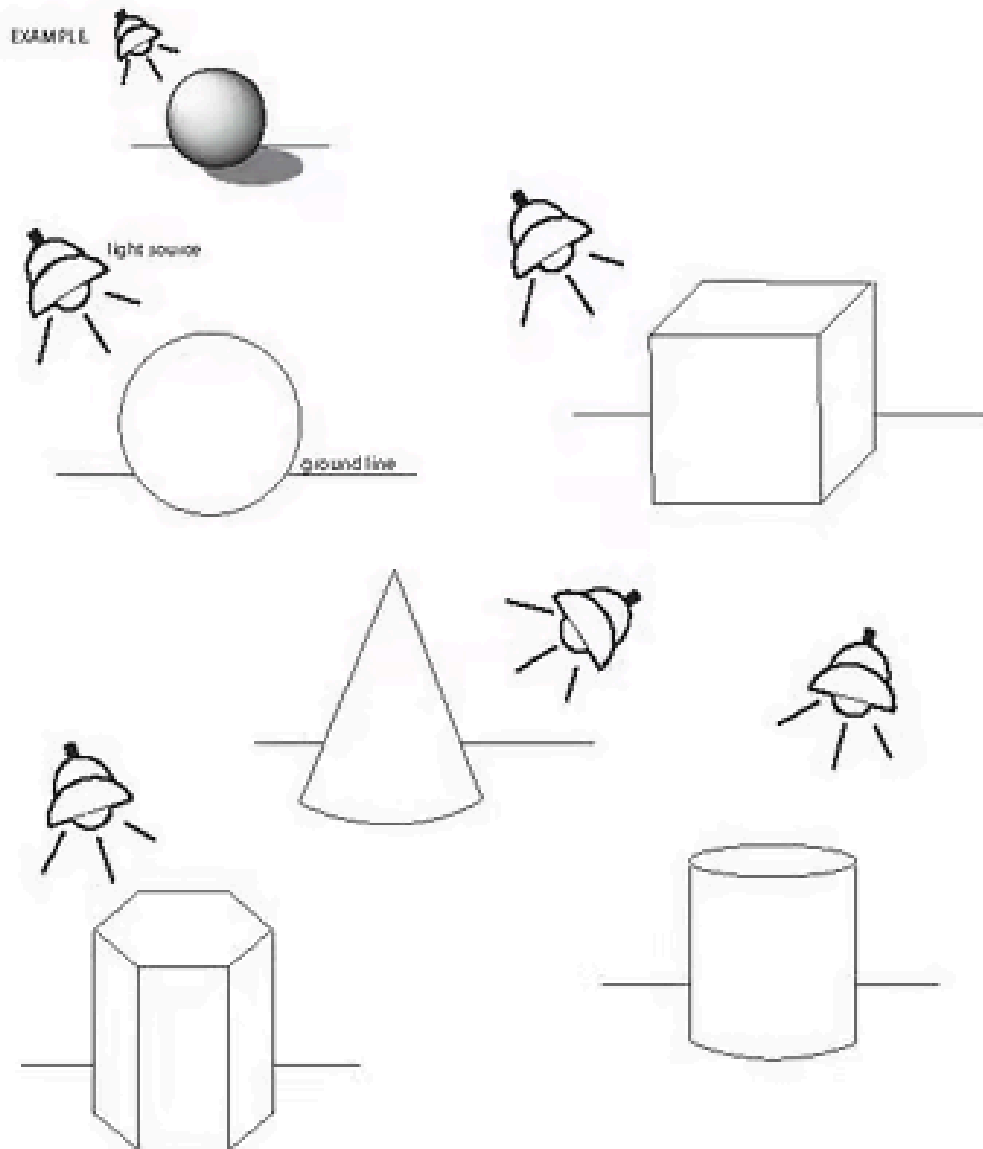
⑤. Cylinder



Light sources for shading:

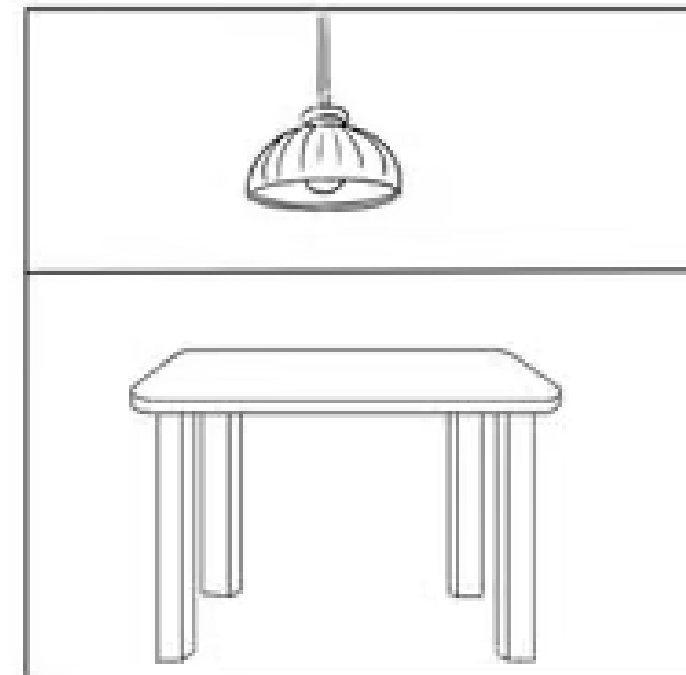
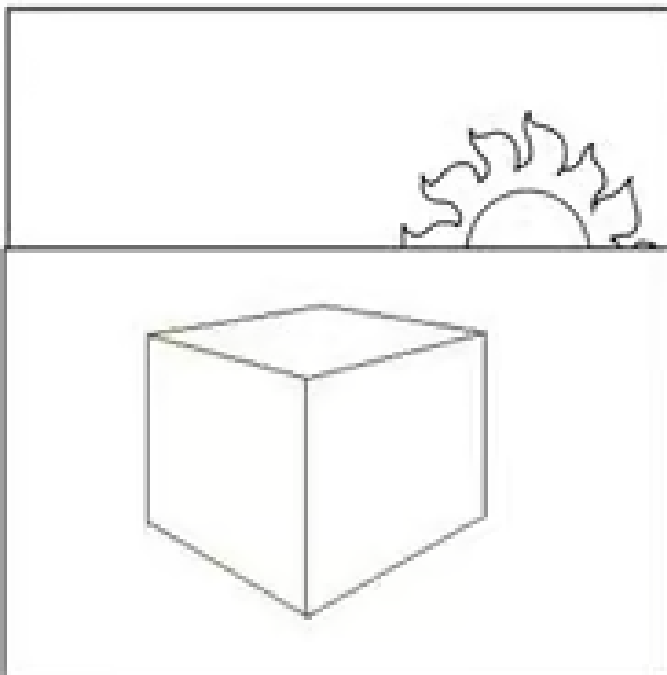
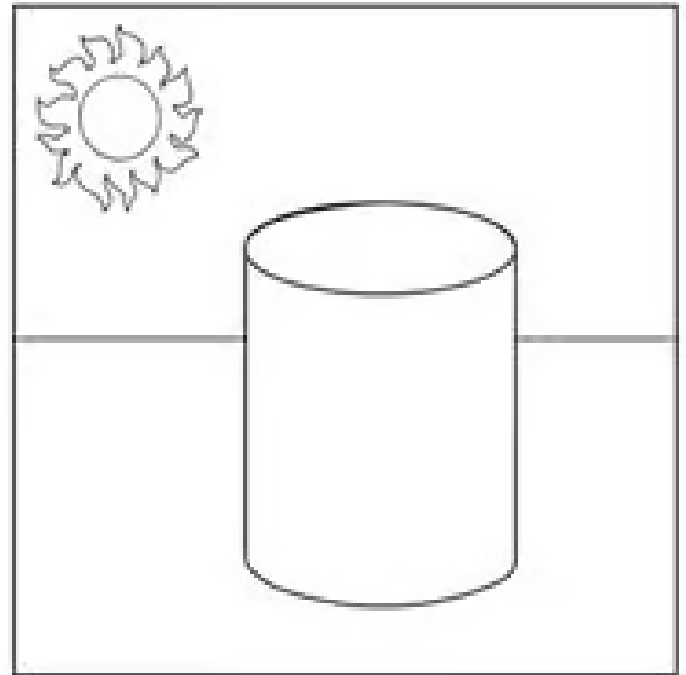
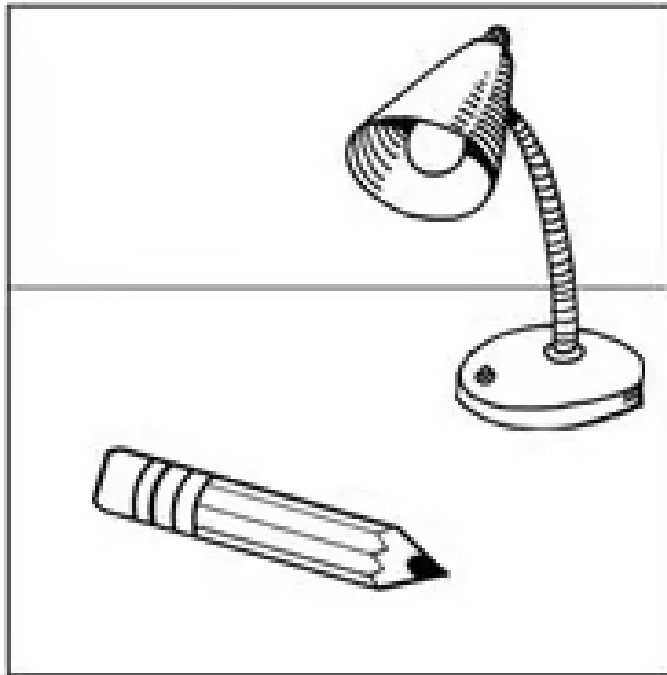


EXAMPLE



Light Source Values

In each box, draw the shadows where you think they would be hiding. Remember that shadows hide from light sources by staying behind or under objects. Shade with your pencil the dark-black to light-gray areas like you practiced in your value worksheet. Where are the darkest areas? Where are the lightest areas?

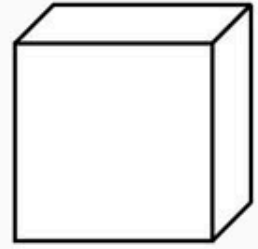
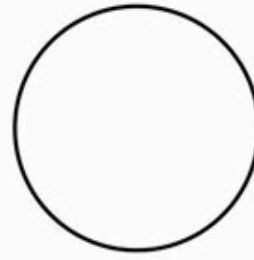


Shading Techniques

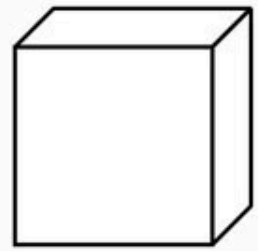
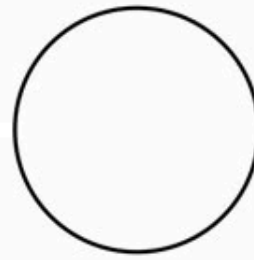
Try to do each of these shading techniques in the blank circle and box below!



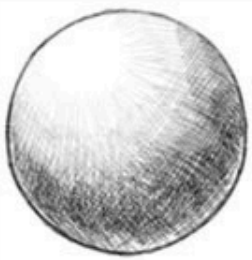
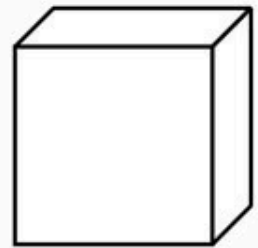
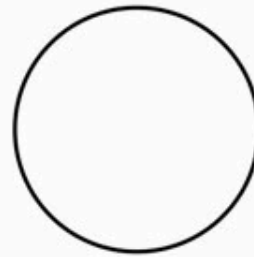
stippling



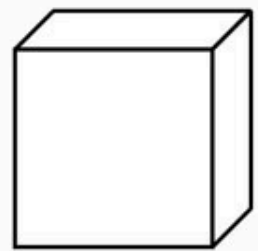
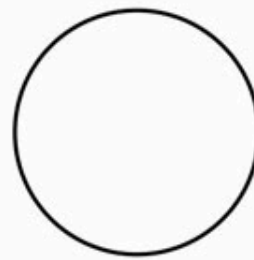
blending



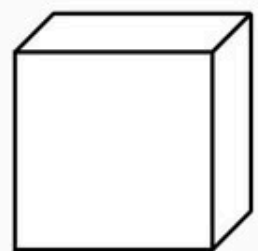
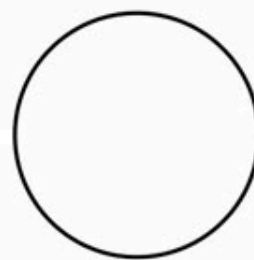
scumbling



cross-hatching



hatching



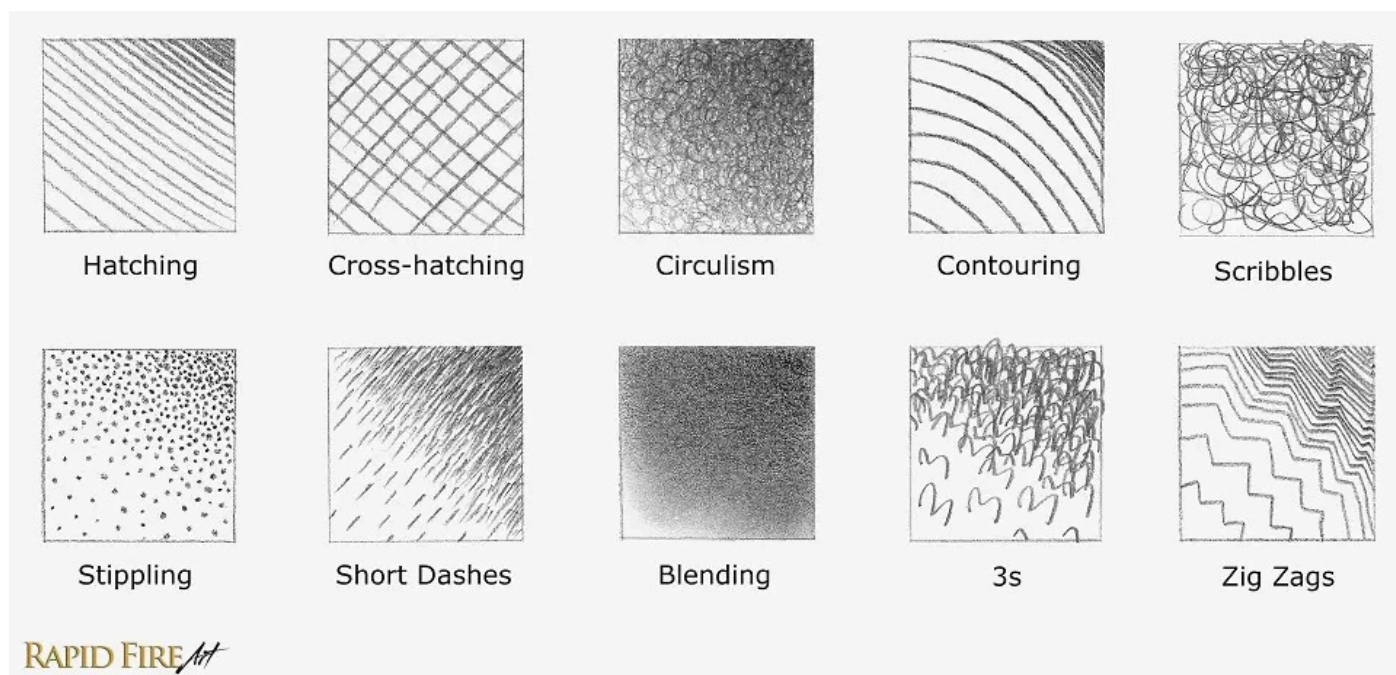


Image source: rapidfireart.com

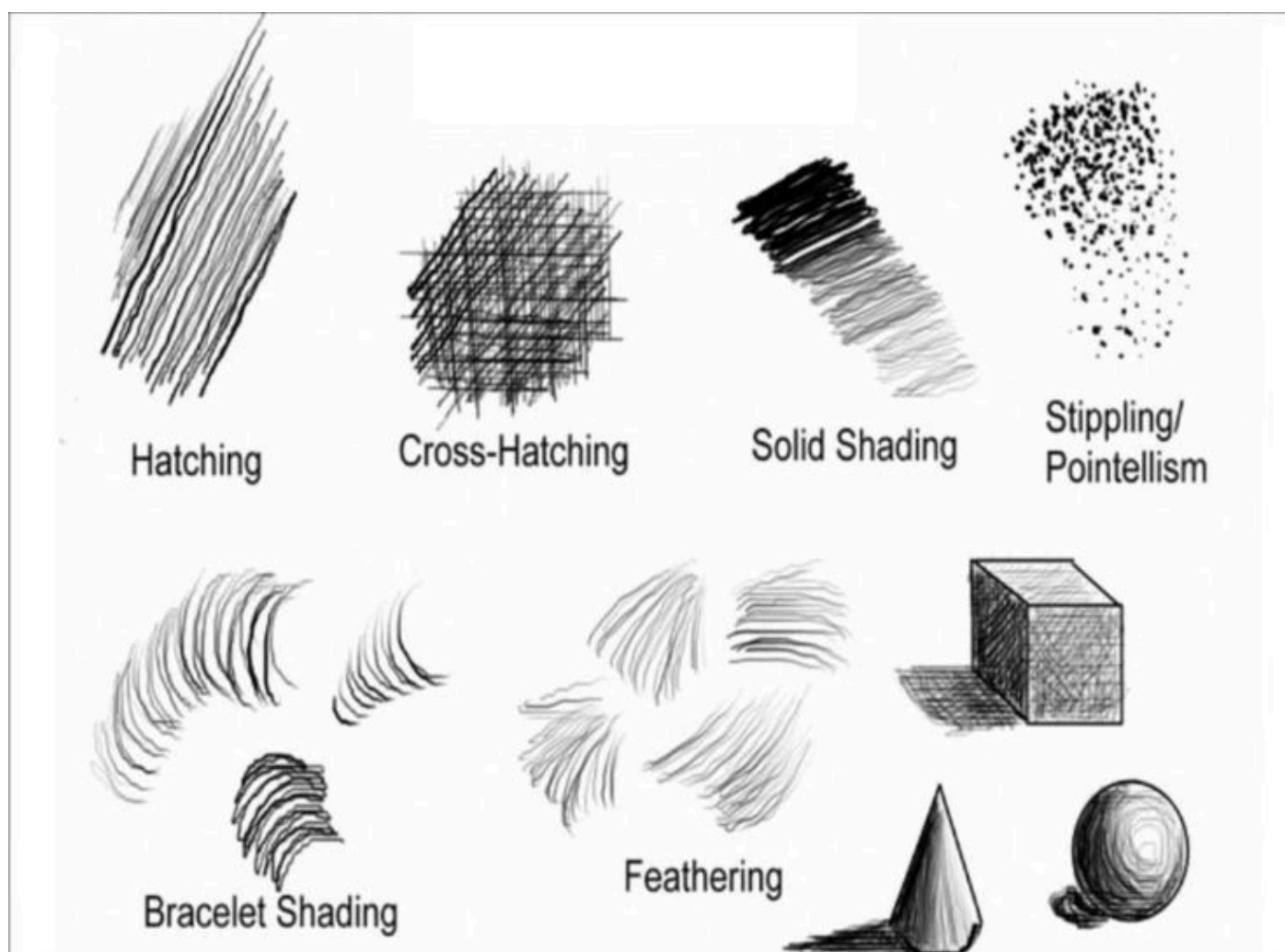
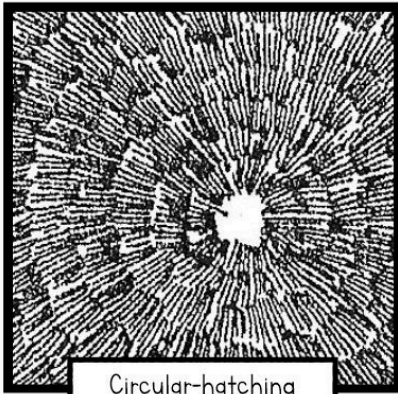
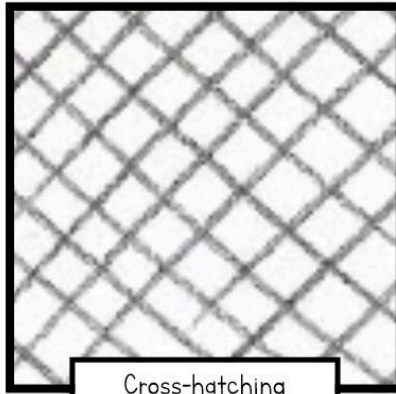


Image source: mungfali.com

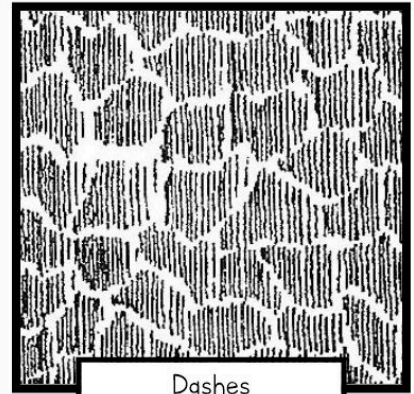
Texture Drawing



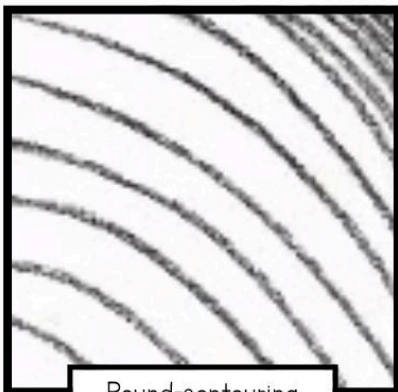
Circular-hatching



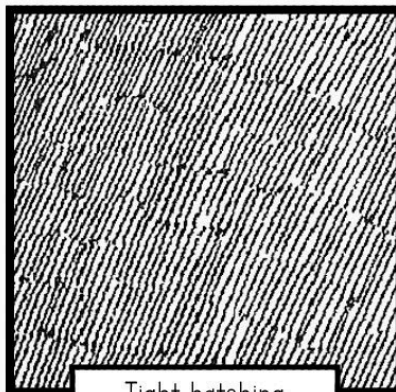
Cross-hatching



Dashes



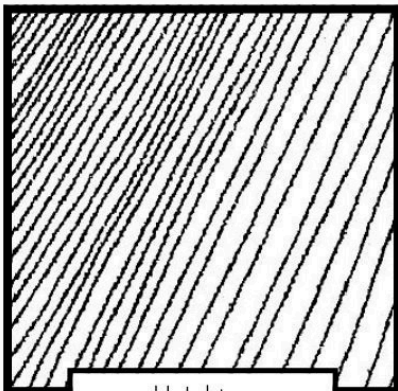
Round-contouring



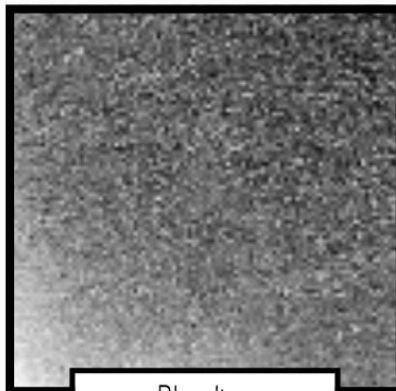
Tight hatching



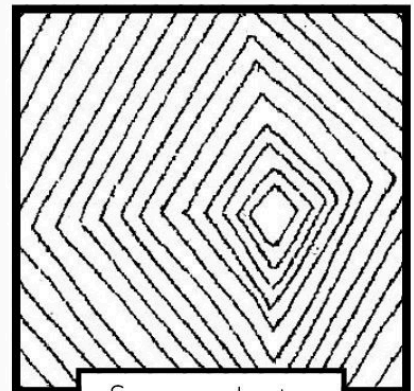
Scribbles



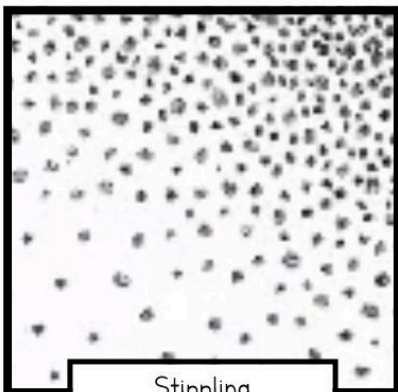
Hatching



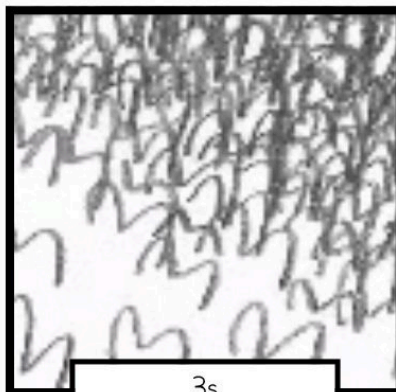
Blending



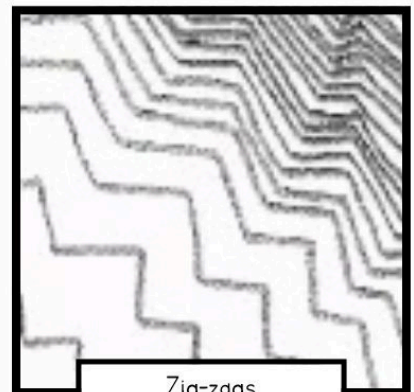
Square-contouring



Stippling



3s



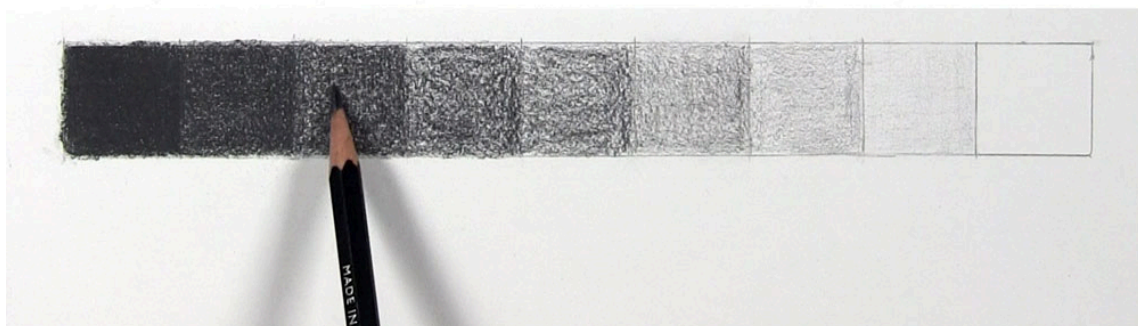
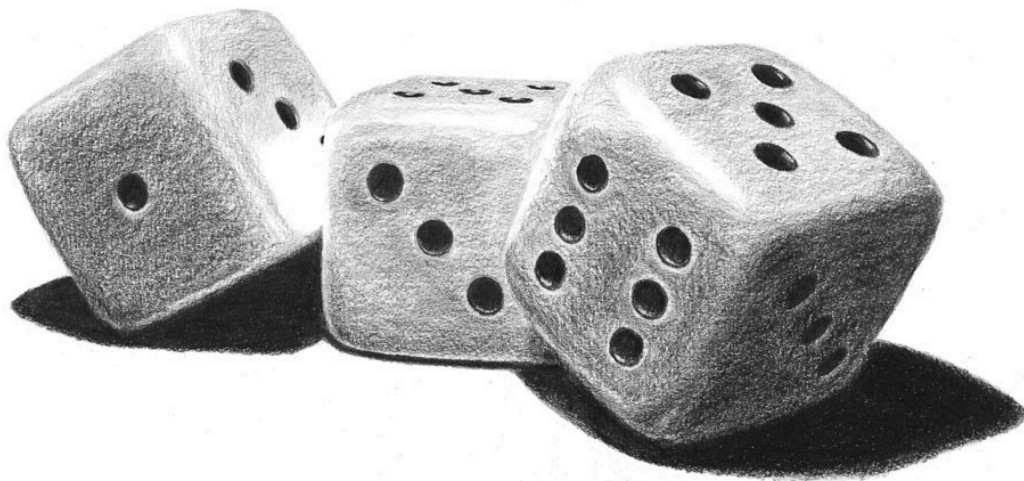
Zig-zags

Value & Grayscale

A value scale is a visual representation of a range of tones from white (lightest) to black (darkest), with a series of gradual steps or transitions in between.

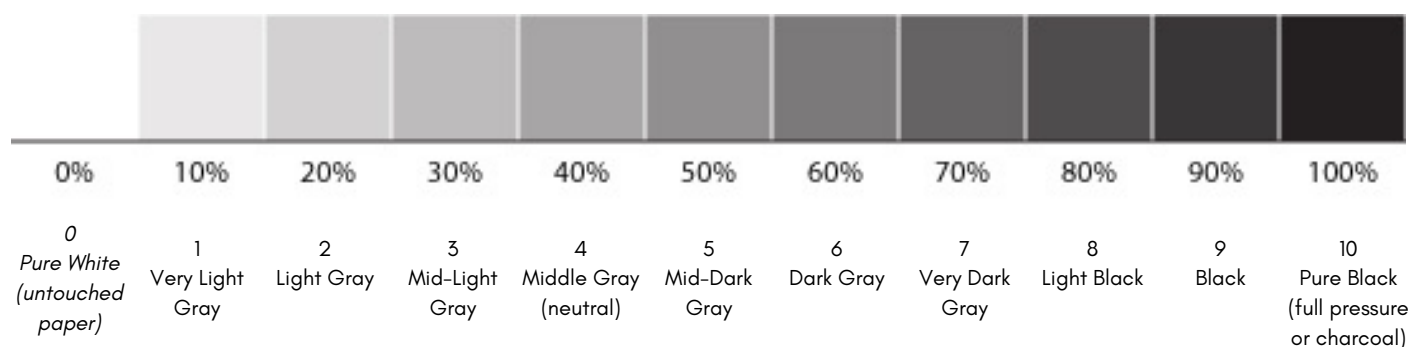
It helps artists learn how to:

- Create realistic form
- Suggest depth and dimension
- Build contrast and mood
- Control light and shadow in observational and imaginative drawing.



Images source: [letsdrawtoday.com](https://www.letsdrawtoday.com)

- IB emphasizes technical skill, and shading is a key indicator of artistic control.
- Understanding value is essential for drawing realistic objects, portraits, and environments.
- Helps you analyze how light behaves across surfaces.
- A clear value range improves your Process Portfolio pieces, showing artistic intention and growth.



How to Create Your Own Value Scale (Graphite or Charcoal)

1. *Draw a rectangle divided into 9 equal squares.*
2. *Start from the right (darkest) and apply maximum pressure for pure black.*
3. *Gradually decrease pressure and layer to achieve smooth transitions toward white.*
4. *Blend with a tissue or blending stump if needed (avoid fingers to keep clean).*
5. *Label or number the steps to track your range.*

Drawing the Human Figure

Understanding Proportion, Balance & Movement in the Body

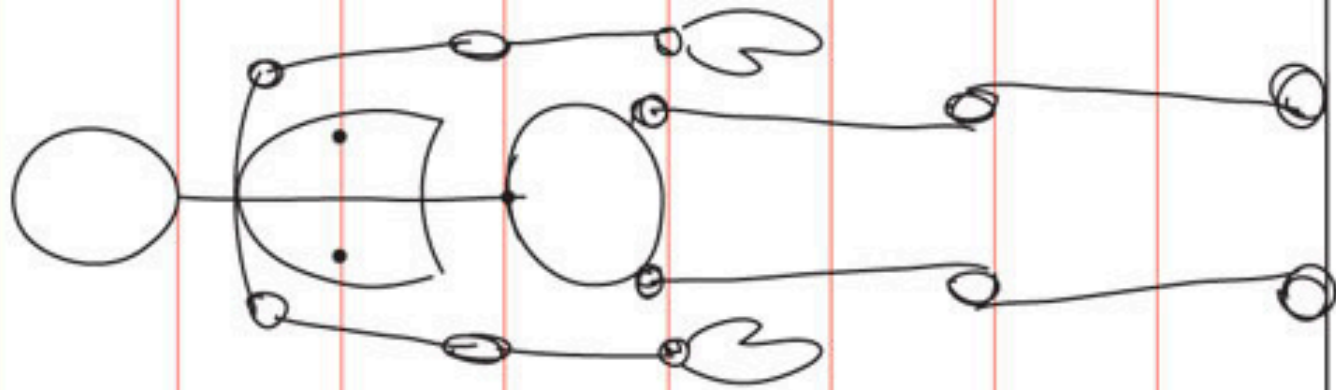
The human figure is one of the most expressive subjects in visual art — from classical anatomy to modern stylization. Learning to draw the figure requires attention to proportion, form, gesture, and structure.

The “8-Head” Rule: Classical Human Proportions

This method breaks the human body into eight equal parts, each roughly the size of the head. It’s a guideline — real people vary, and this system is just a starting point.

Note: Children are usually 4–6 heads tall. Stylized figures (like in fashion or comics) may exaggerate proportions.





1. Chin

1.5 Shoulders

2. Nipples

3. Belly button, elbow

4. Hip joints, wrists, crotch

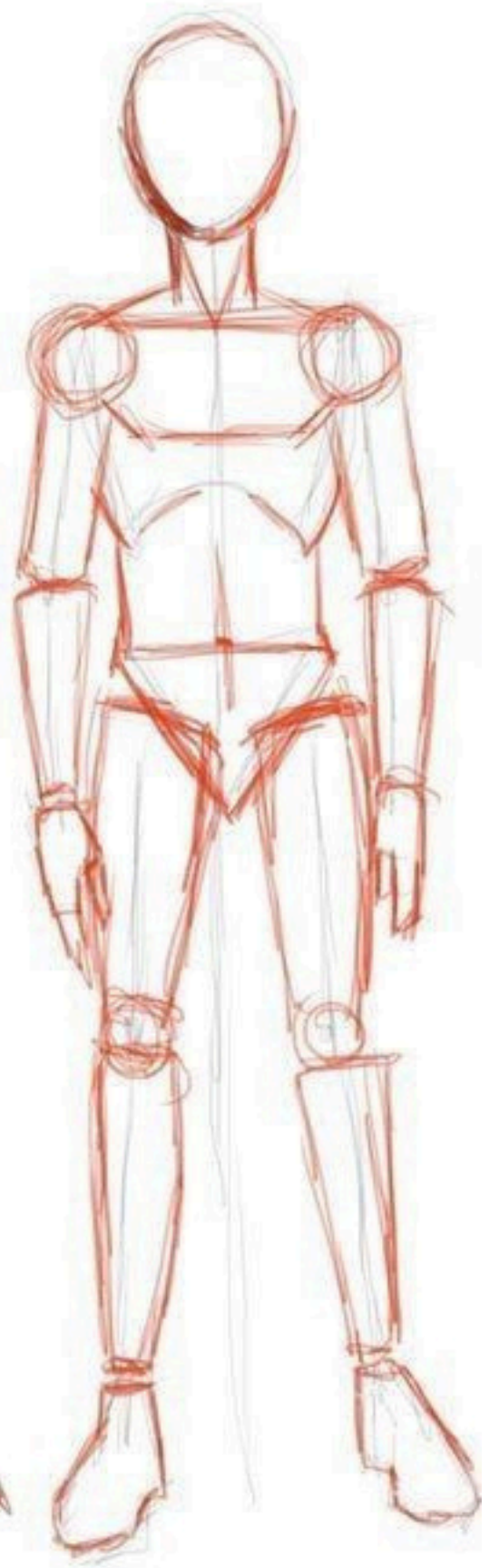
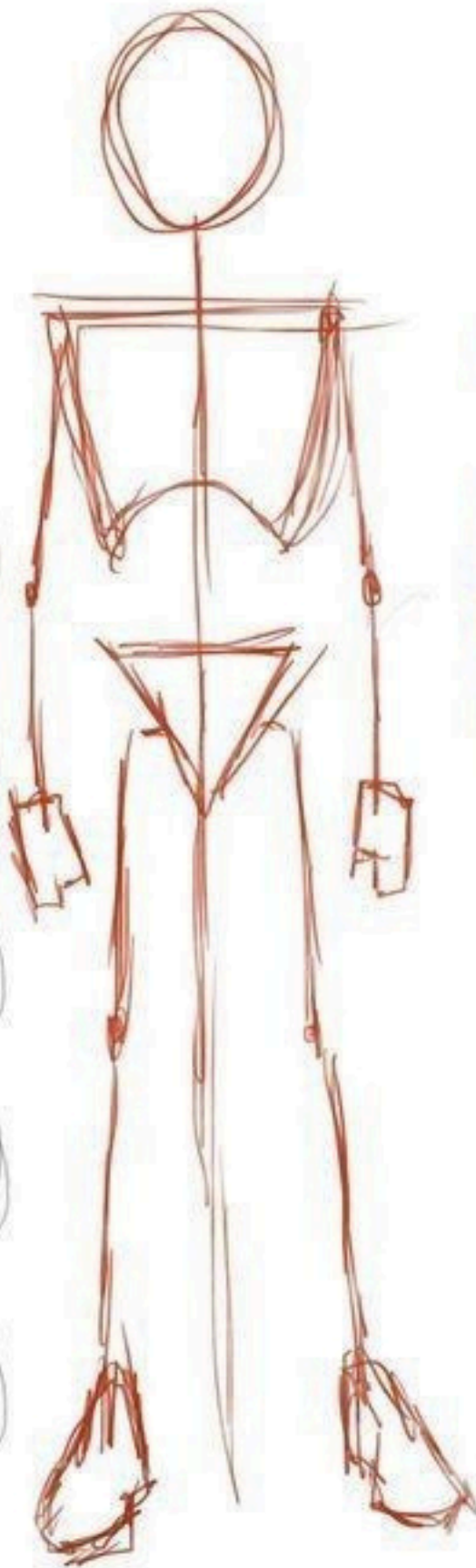
5. Fingertips (stretched), mid-thigh

6. Bottom of knee caps

7. Bottom of calf muscles (for later)

8. Soles of feet = ground





Gesture Drawing: Capturing Movement

Before detailing, practice gesture sketches to show movement, weight, and energy.

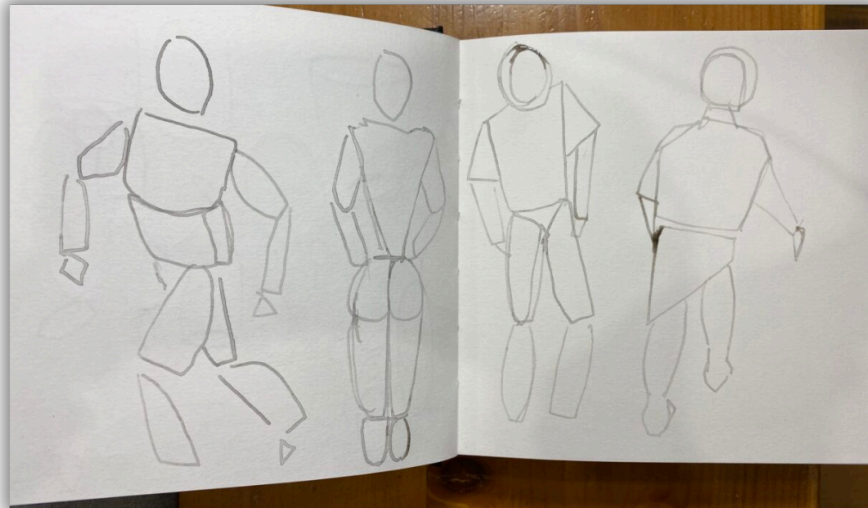
- *Use loose lines to capture posture.*
- *Don't worry about anatomy – focus on the “flow” or action line of the pose.*

Breaking the Body Into Shapes

To simplify anatomy:

- **Head** = oval or sphere
- **Torso** = box or egg shape
- **Pelvis** = triangle or trapezoid
- **Limbs** = cylinders
- **Joints** = circles

Image source:
emilysnotebook.co.uk



This geometric breakdown helps with:

- *Pose building*
- *Foreshortening*
- *Perspective in the figure*

Gesture Drawing: Capturing Movement

Before detailing, practice gesture sketches to show movement, weight, and energy.

- *Use loose lines to capture posture.*
- *Don't worry about anatomy — focus on the “flow” or action line of the pose.*

Practice Exercise: *Use online pose tools or photo references and draw 5 gesture sketches. Time yourself: try 30-second, 1-minute, and 2-minute gestures.*



