

# Script for Week 1: Introduction to Simple Shapes and OILS (APPRENTICE Script)

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VOCAB:

- Blocking

## Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Visual Sources for your children to draw from, either from this packet or your own selections

## Tutor Script

*(Apprentices, approximate ages 6-9))*

Note: Children of this age are in the “Pre-Schematic” and “Schematic” stages of drawing development.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean they cannot draw, but they will benefit from more step-by-step instructions and leading questions. Schematic children are already creating a very complex and individual internal catalog of important symbols (schema) of images to represent things (all pine trees, for example, will look similar, as will all deciduous trees, these two “schema” or “icon” patterns represent all trees in all their drawings, even though in real life, trees can look very, very different. ) This Blocking Tutorial can help them really “see” the individual building blocks of each item. In order to start “Breaking” that schema, we’re going to be looking at two classes of items (ice cream cones and birds) to see how even though something is “the same” or “similar”, drawing them can be very different. For instruction (not free draw) side-by-side drawing is very helpful. “Let’s draw...now you draw...”

**Tutor:** Who here likes to draw?

*<Wait for the hubbub to die down>*

**Tutor:** Did you know, when you draw, you can learn more deeply, remember more, and learn to observe your world more closely? But more importantly, drawing is FUN, right?

Did you know, all artists use simple shapes to “build” things in their mind? It’s called “blocking” *<Show “Blocking” vocab sheet (Pg. 8) here>*, because, like wood blocks or Lego blocks can be used to build a big structure, artists “build” their drawings on paper using simple shapes. If they like the overall shape of the thing, then they can add details to it. One way to remember these shapes is OilS: Ovals, dots, straight lines, angled lines, curves.<sup>1</sup>

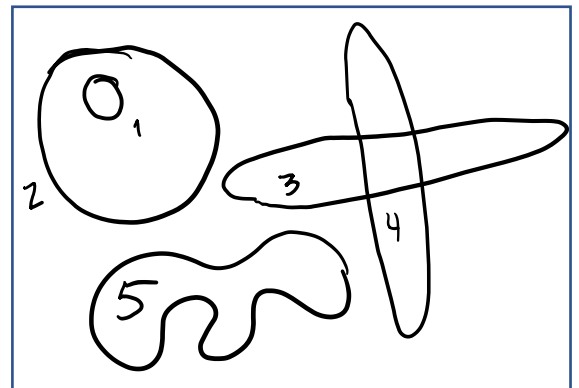
*<Show the OilS handout.pg 9 >*

- **Ovals** are any curved line that makes a closed shape
- **Straight lines** are just what they sound like: a line that starts, heads in one direction, and stops without curving from side to side.
- **Dots** are ovals that have been filled in.
- **Angled lines** are straight lines that take a sharp turn, and have a point somewhere.
- **Curves** are a line that smoothly turns back and forth, but doesn’t end where it starts.

*<Either hand out paper that’s been quartered ,hand out the blank paper on PAGE 10, or hand out blank paper and help the children fold the paper into quarters>*

**Tutor:** First, we’re going to practice our OilS. This is the first step in drawing anything you want. An “oval” is made by any line that curves around, then ends where it began. It closes a space that you could color in like a coloring book. Let’s try some.

- 1.) In this top square, can you draw a small circle, like the number 0 or the letter “O”?
- 2.) Can you draw a large circle around the small circle?
- 3.) Can you draw a long, fat oval?
- 4.) How about a tall, skinny oval?
- 5.) Can we draw a squiggly shape that closes like a circle?



*<With each of these questions, you draw these shapes on either your board, or your own paper. Have the parents watch and help the kids. (The kids don’t have to label or number their ovals, I just included them so you can see the type of oval I was talking about.) Ovals do not have to overlap or touch. >*

Can you think of any other types of Ovals? Draw a couple of your own!

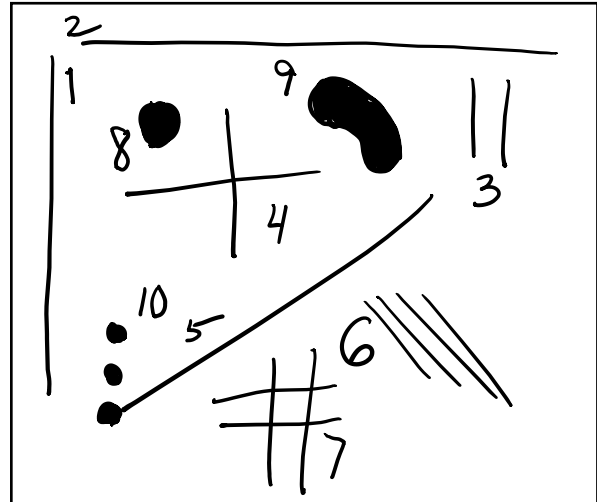
<sup>1</sup> Just as a note of clarification, in most drawing books and any upper-level drawing class, the basic shapes of blocking are cubes, spheres, columns, cones, and sometimes, pyramids. But you can make the case that these “simple shapes” are made of OilS too. Po-TAY-to, Po-TAH-to. But if you look at other drawing books and see the “cubes, spheres, columns...” list, and not OilS, that’s why. OilS is like step 0.5 of blocking.

Week 1: Blocking/Simple Shapes Tutorial; Cycle 2  
Apprentices

<You have a short period of time, so don't let this go on for more than 30 seconds or so. Kids at this age should be eager to "Do it themselves". After a few seconds or a shape or two, move on to the second section of the paper. >

**Tutor:** Let's tackle straight lines. In this second square, can you:

- 1.) Draw a long straight line going up and down?
- 2.) Draw a long straight line going side to side?
- 3.) Can you draw two lines side by side—like the start of a capital letter "H"?
- 4.) Can you draw a set of lines that cross over the center, like a lower case "t", "x", or a "+" sign?
- 5.) Can you draw a diagonal line?
- 6.) Can you draw a few lines side by side?
- 7.) How about a tic-tac-toe board?



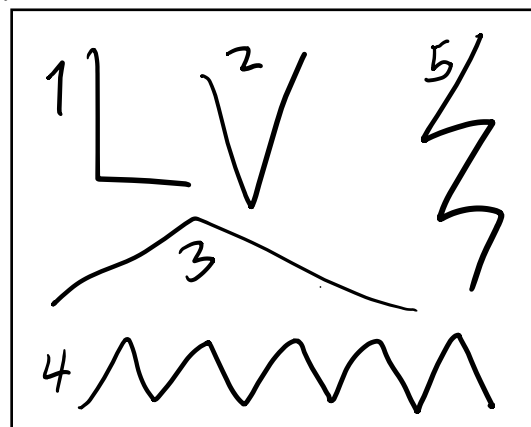
Can you think of any other straight lines?

<As before, model each of these lines as you describe them. Show the kids each line, and give them a moment to "do it themselves". The demonstration result does not need to look just like this sample, it's just to show the kinds of lines that "straight lines" can cover. After 30 seconds, or a couple new lines past the 7 in this demo, move on to dots. >

- 8.) Can you make a small dot? A dot, remember, is any oval, filled in.
- 9.) Can you made a dot that looks like a bean? A little curved, just like this?
- 10.) Can you made a series of three dots, like the buttons on a snowman?
- 11.) If you filled in any of the ovals in our first square, would that make a dot? <yes, yes it would>

**Tutor:** How about angled lines? In this third square, lets try some.

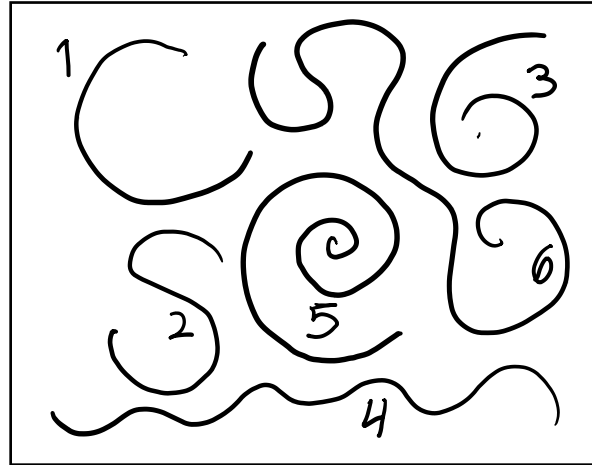
- 1.) Can you make square angled line, like the capital letter "L"?
- 2.) How about a narrow, or "acute" angled line, like the capital letter "V"?
- 3.) How about a wide or "obtuse" angle, like a distant mountain?
- 4.) How about a side-by-side zig-zag line, like a bunch of "M"s and "W"s stuck together?
- 5.) How about an up-and-down zig zag line, like a lightning bolt?



Okay, what's left with our OilS? <Curves!> Right! A curve is a smooth, squiggly line that ends in a different place than it begins, and doesn't cross over itself. You can't color in a curve because there's nothing to color in! Let's try some in our last square!

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Apprentices

- 1) Can you make a single curve, like the letter “C”?
- 2) How about a double curve, like the letter “S”?
- 3) How about a single curl with a tail, like the number “6”? (Don’t let the center touch the outside!)
- 4) How about a smooth, sliding, line, like a snake slithering by?
- 5) How about a spiral, like a snail’s shell?
- 6) Can you make a funny curved line, which doesn’t meet at the end?



*<Do it like before, demonstrate each line as you describe it, then let the kids do the lines one-by-one. If there’s time, let the kids draw a couple more curves, or even fill in some of the other squares on the paper. Time to move on, and draw something recognizable with these OiLS!>*

**Tutor:** When an artist draws something, they use shapes like these. Let’s look at an ice cream cone.


*<Show the ice cream cone. (PAGE 11) Pass out the blank paper, or have it available nearby.>*

**Tutor:** What do you see?

*<They’ll probably exclaim about the flavors of ice cream. If they do just keep going. >*

**Tutor:** What shapes do you see? if we traced the outside edge of the ice cream cone with our finger, right on top of the picture, what sort of line would we trace?

**WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?**

Because children between the ages of 6-9 are still developing hand-eye coordination and the ability to think, this step-by-step instruction checks a number of things: 1.) Can the children draw the shapes as instructed? If not, they may need to revisit what and OiLS is during the week. 2.) Show the children different types of OiLS by having them draw them one at a time. This allows them to see (and therefore use) a wider variety of OiLS than just “an oval” , when actually, there are lots of styles in the “oval” family. And the same is true for lines, dots, curves and angles. 3.) By doing this one at a time, you can more easily tackle the next section, and blocking in general—you can’t name something you didn’t see it thoroughly, and doing these different OiLS one at a time through demonstration and repetition, forces the brain to see each sample shape both alone, and as a class of shapes.

<An angled line—like a “V”>

**Tutor:** Can we draw that? Let’s just draw a nice “V” that’s about the same shape as the outside of that cone.

<Demonstrate, (Step 1, on the right) and then let the kids draw the “V” on their papers.>

**Tutor:** Now, if we traced the top ice cream scoop with our finger, what shape would that be?

<A nearly-circular oval>

**Tutor:** Let’s draw that, remember, since there is a bottom scoop of ice cream, we need to leave some space for the bottom scoop.

<Draw the top ice cream scoop on your paper, let the kids draw the top scoop>

**Tutor:** Great! Now, let’s look at what’s between them: if we traced the shape of the bottom ice cream scoop with our fingers, what OILS would that be?

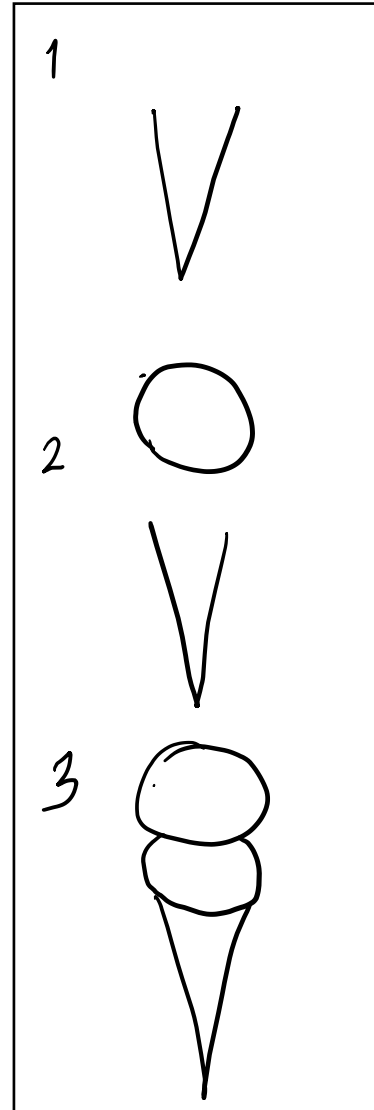
<A curved line—like a “C” and its mirror image>

**Tutor:** Correct, watch me draw that in, and then you can draw it on your paper.

<Do so.>

**Tutor:** How does that look? Does it look like an ice cream cone? Does it look like THIS ice cream cone, in our picture?

<It should!>



**Tutor:** This is how artists see the world, they trace the shape of things using their eyes and their pencils. The basic building blocks of that ice cream cone are done, and now, if we wanted to add crosshatches on the cone, or the drizzle of syrup on the top of the cone, we can, because the overall shape is complete.

Now, here’s another question: if we want to draw another ice cream cone, can we use these shapes again?

<Probably say “yes”>

Are you sure?

<YES>

What if we want to draw this ice cream cone? Can we use those same shapes?

<Show the cake cone with chocolate soft-serve ice cream. See what they say...probably no.” >

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It's still an ice cream cone, right? But is it made of different shapes?

<YES!>

What shapes do you see this time?

*<This should be interesting. Cone is more like a rectangle whose top has been streeeeeeeched, and bottom Squished. The ice cream's outline is shaped kind of like a crooked, dented triangle with a oval tail to the left. If it helps, let the kids trace the outside ONLY with their finger, to see what shape they find. Make sure they are looking at the BIG shapes, don't get lost in the details>*

**Tutor:** So, even though it's the same object, different shapes can make them up, can't they? This is something artists do which a lot of people don't—the look at the ACTUAL shapes that make up an object, not what they THINK they object looks like.

Ever see a bird? Think you could draw a bird?

*<I wonder if they'll sense a trick question!>*

Most artists, but not all, believe the bird body is built using ovals, a big oval for the body and a smaller one for the head, and usually an angled or curved line for a beak. What do you think?

*<Show the photographs of the birds. See what they say>*

Here's how one artist "blocked out" these same birds. Do you see the big oval for the bodies? Do you see the small oval for the heads? Do you see any differences? Do you see any similarities? These drawings have been "blocked out" meaning, the artist quickly drew a few shapes to try and capture the overall size and shape of the bird—if she likes it, she can start adding details and erasing some of the lines (like where the neck meets the body) that won't be in the final drawing.

Drawing is all about the PROCESS of seeing these shapes and building the image. It doesn't always matter if the image we draw, the PRODUCT of our drawing, turns out "perfectly". We learn a lot just by looking to see "How WOULD I draw that, if I did?"

So remember, DRAWING IS ABOUT THE PROCESS, NOT ABOUT THE PRODUCT. Can you repeat that for me?

*<DRAWING IS ABOUT THE PROCESS, NOT THE PRODUCT>*

*<At this point you can pass out some of the reference images included in this tutorial—ice cream cones, the bird photos, the snail, the distant birds, the cartoon animals, and let the kids draw. Encourage their parent to draw alongside them. IF they get stuck, hand out the blocking sheets or the step-by-step instructions. If the child (or parent) gets stuck, ask them to trace outlines or big shapes with their finger first.*

*The Cartoon animals are another great place to start, the shapes are simplified compared to realistic animals and it can be easier for the children and the parents to see. Many children's books will have these styles of animals, but the best sources for simple-shape animals I frequently see are character go-fish decks, or 52-card decks that are themed for children.*

## Review:

Final 2-3 minutes (perhaps as kids are putting on final touches, putting pencils or crayons away, and papers or sketchbooks are collected:

**Tutor:** What did we learn today? We learned about Blocking—what is blocking?

*<Using simple shapes to draw something on paper>*

**Tutor:** What simple shapes can we use?

*<OILS: Ovals, straight lines, dots, angled lines, curves>*

**Tutor:** What is drawing about?

*<THE PROCESS, NOT THE PRODUCT>*

### THE PROCESS, NOT THE PRODUCT

This statement is almost more important for the adults to hear and repeat than the children at this level. As we age, we instinctively put increasing emphasis on having a good PRODUCT (the final drawing) than we do the PROCESS (how did we get here, what did we see while drawing, what did we learn?)

Yet, multiple studies have recently shown that drawing (or painting, or any other visual medium) helps deepen memory and speed memory retention, helps to more effectively understand difficult concepts, trains quick yet thorough observational skills, deepens and clarifies focus, increases mental self-regulation,=== and improves emotional stability.

And NONE of those wonderful effects of drawing have anything to do with how “good” the end product is. These side effects come through the PROCESS of just drawing—and being willing to do it.

### **WHAT ARE WE DOING IN THE SECOND SECTION?**

Demonstration used to be the dominant form of art education: the teacher would demonstrate how, exactly, to draw something step-by-step, and the student would follow. However, people can get caught up in the details of the object and forget to see the large shapes that “block” the object. By tracing the outside contours of the ice cream cone with our finger, we ask the students to (1.) ignore the details like the textures and colors and focus on the pure shapes. (2) This kinesthetic movement helps the student to “trace” the object without marring the picture. Kids can then do this with picture books, magazines, reference books, without damaging it, while still copying the picture onto another sheet of paper, if they want. Artists do this sort of tracing, with our eyes, all the time, but sometimes, using a fingertip can help force the brain to focus on the overall idea, rather than get lost in the details. Once you start to see the “blocks” of things quickly, you’ll rarely have to use a fingertip anymore.

### **IS THIS CREATIVE?**

Just like you cannot release an untrained person (regardless of age) in a fully stocked kitchen and expect a gourmet meal, so you cannot give a person a bunch of art supplies and expect them to know what to do. For centuries, artists were taught through demonstration and repetition. Art apprentices were taught to draw by drawing alongside a more experienced student, doing basic exercises, drawing casts and sculptures of various items, or copying finished art in their communities. Once they understood the basics of drawing (and painting) through these “uncreative” exercises, they began to branch out into their own styles; they became “creative” because they knew how to use the tools and techniques of art well.

Even a 150 years ago, when students learned to draw in one-room schoolhouses, they would follow their teacher, step-by-step, before working independently.

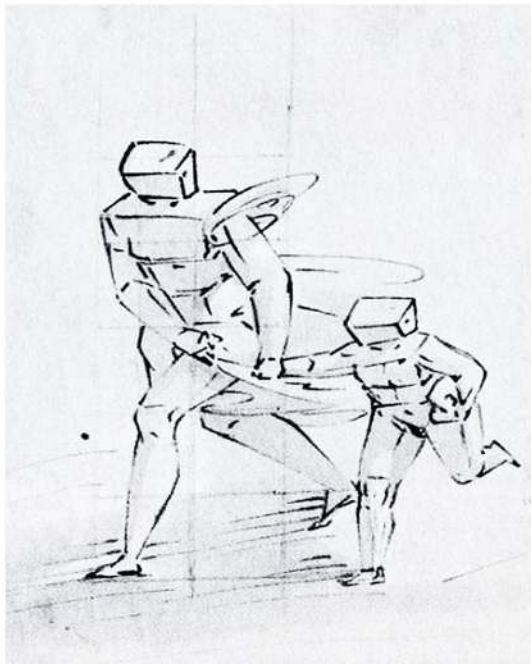
With only 30 minutes, hopefully, the parents will feel better equipped to try exercises like this at home, and as they, and their child, begin to “see” the shapes in their world, both will try new things on their own.

By the way, “creativity” and its link to “art”, or more specifically, “THE FINE ARTS” (like drawing, painting, ect.) is only a Victorian concept. Prior to this, creativity was linked to any number of skills, trades, ect, all of which require some learning about processes before one can be creative within that arena. So, just like a chef has to spend time cooking the same dishes over and over, or practice certain techniques over and over before he or she can begin to invent new dishes and be “creative” with their ideas, so simple, step-by-step exercises will come to foster “creativity” as we define it today.

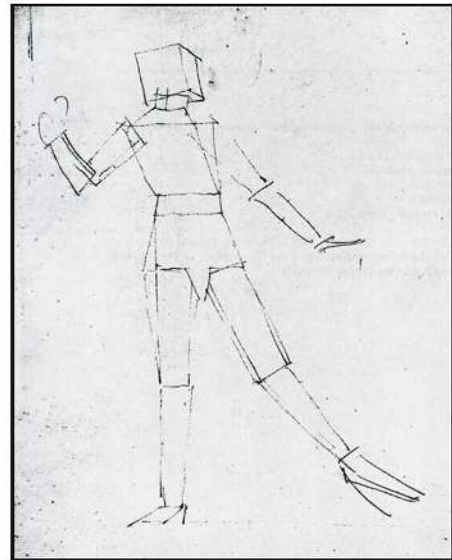


# Blocking:

Also known as “blocking in” and “blocking out”, this is the process of building the overall form and shape of a complex object using simple shapes. These shapes allow the artist to quickly gauge “is this the right size/shape/proportion/position” before adding details.



*To the left:  
blocking human  
figures using the  
“block method” by  
Luca Cambiaso;  
1527-1585 )*



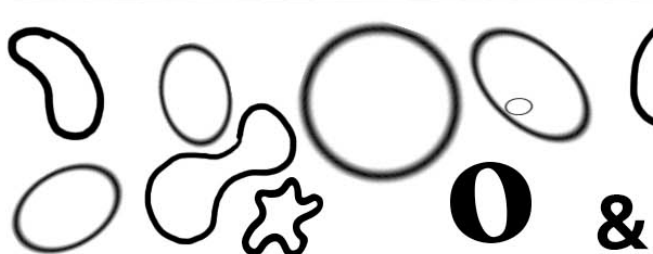
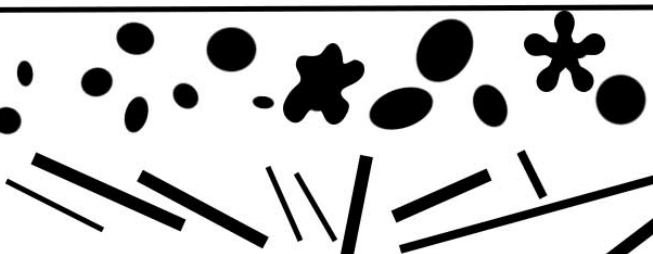

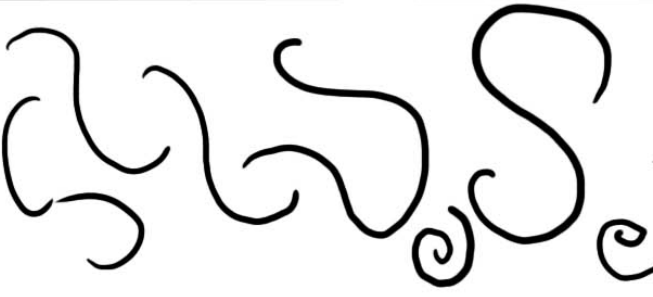
*To the right:  
the human figure  
blocked out by  
Albrecht Durer  
(1471-1528)*

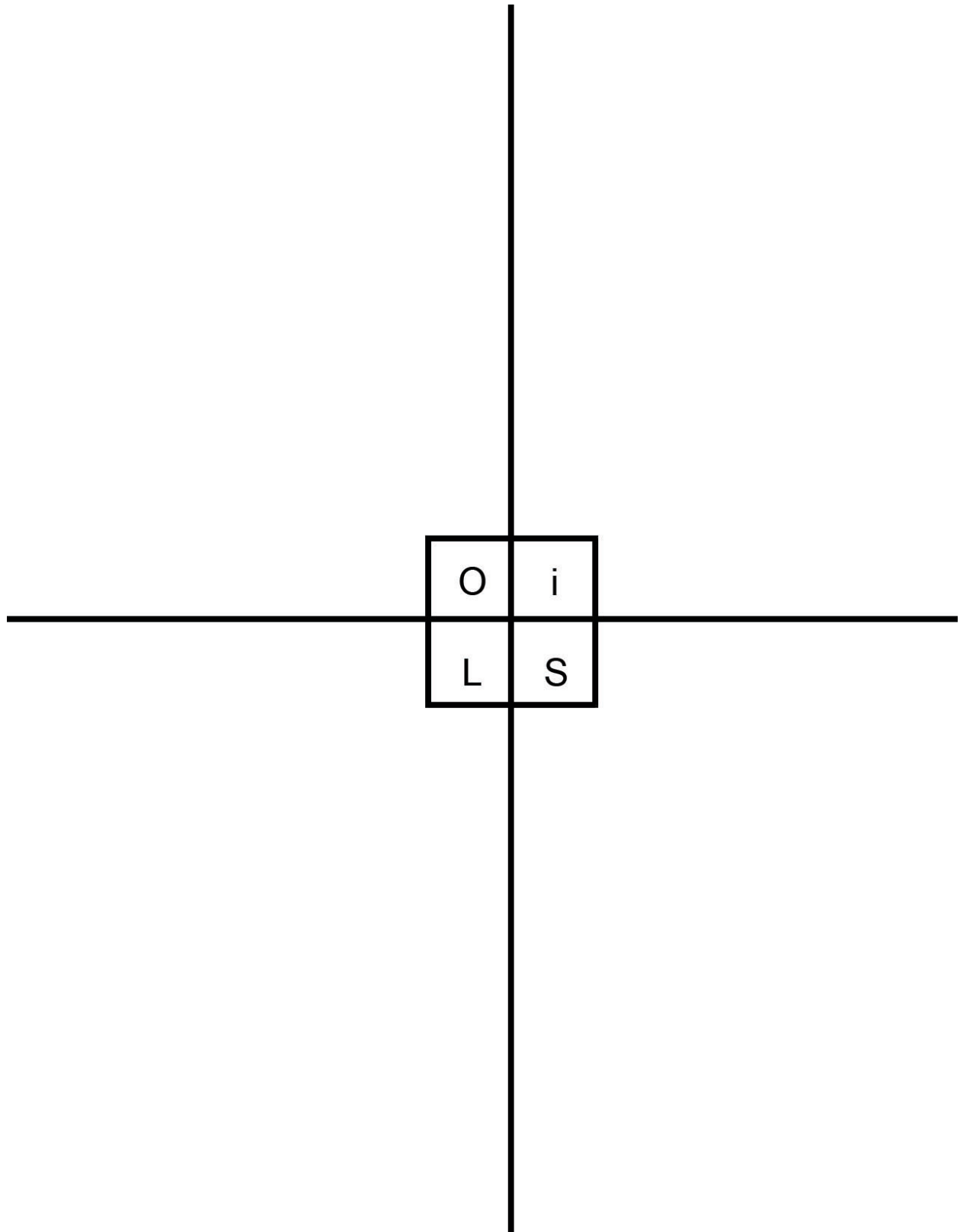
*Below: Animation  
blocking with  
ovals and curves,  
by Disney  
animator Fred  
Moore (1911-1952)*



Blocking marks are often done lightly on the paper, then covered over by final details later. They can also be erased after final lines are drawn.

# The “Parts” of Art

<b>O</b>	 <b>Ovals &amp; Circles</b>
<b>i</b>	 <b>Dots &amp; Lines</b>
<b>L</b>	 <b>Angled Lines</b>
<b>S</b>	 <b>Curved Lines</b>

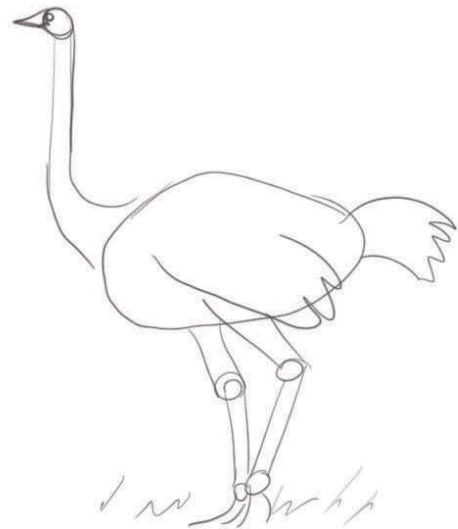
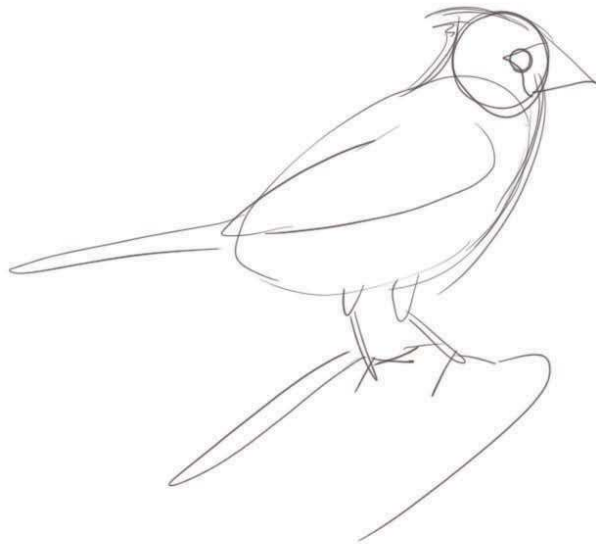


















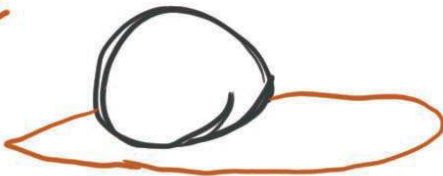
Look at your subject before you start: What big shapes do you see? What smaller shapes? The whole goal in drawing is to start with the largest shapes and gradually refine the drawing as you

1



There are two large shapes: the shell and the body. The shell is centrally located, so that's a good place to start. It's roundish, with a slight bulge on the right side.

2



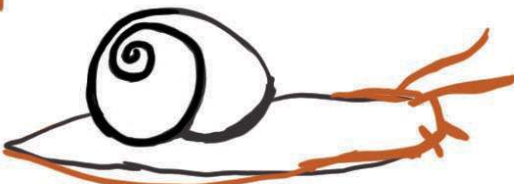
Next, the body: the tail is about half the length of the shell, and ends in a point. The head section is about the same length as the shell's width, and ends in a roundish shape.

3



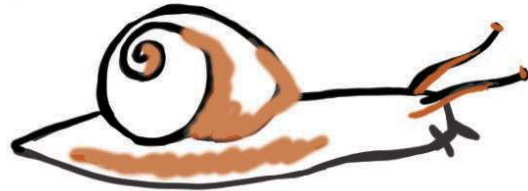
If you like the proportions, keep going. Add the spiral next. Use your pencil to mark where the spiral starts, then spiral out. If you want to adjust the shape of the shell, do so now.

4



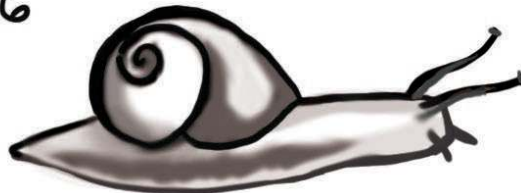
Clean up the shell by erasing any lines that don't work, then look at the body—is the shape of the head different? How about the edge of the body? Make adjustments if necessary. Clean up old lines.

5



If you like the overall shape, you can stop now with a good contour line drawing, or continue by creating shadows. Look at your reference image and decide where you see the darkest shadows.

6



Here, the shadows were blurred and paler shadows added..

7



Finally, if you want, you can add texture on the shell and the snail's body, using the reference photo as a guide.



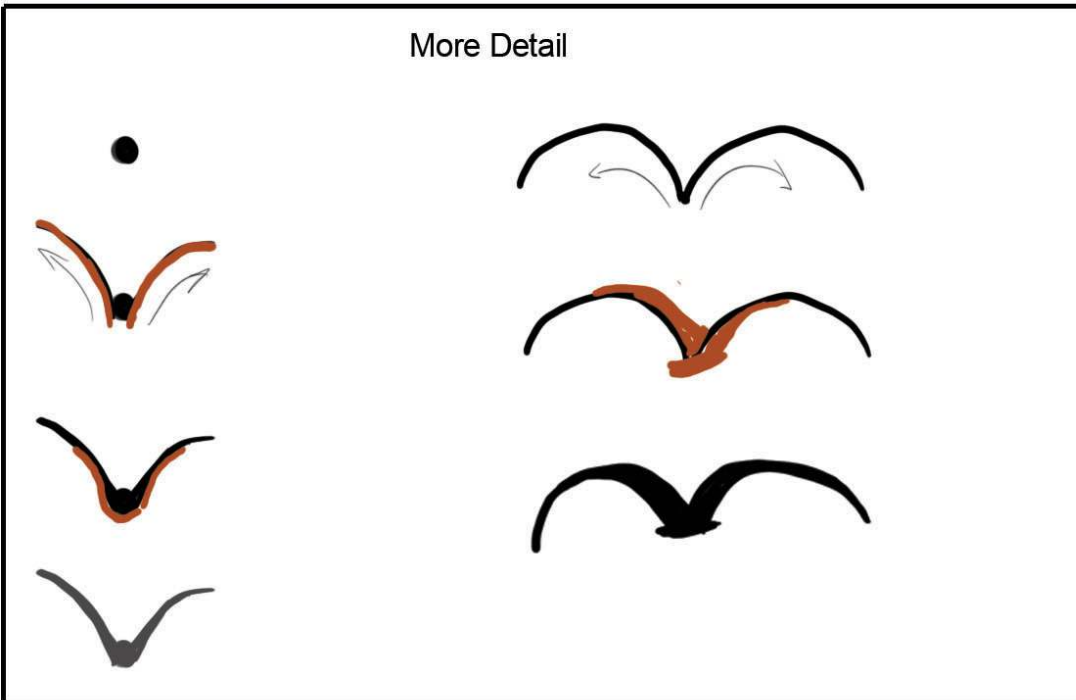
### Distant birds:

These are a pair of Great Blue Herons as they flew back to their nesting ground.

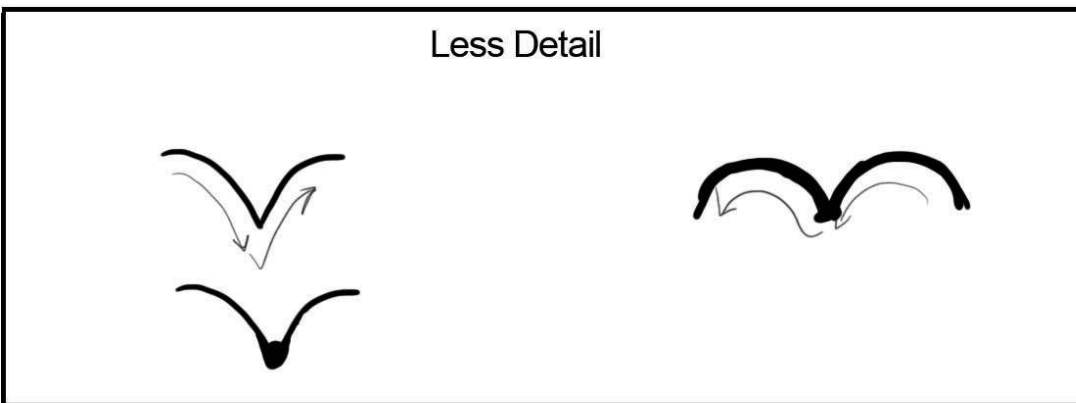
When you draw something like this, you can still look at how the birds are put together at this distance, and what details (feet, bill, feathers) have to go missing because the birds are so far away from us.

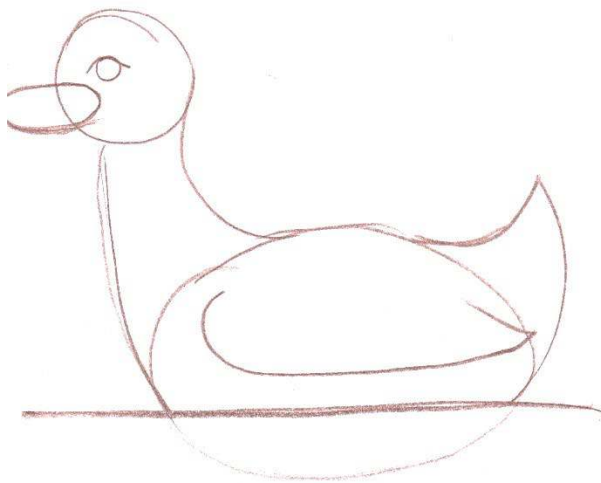
In addition, a simple little detail like this is easy to do, and fun to add to a larger work. Look at the form of the birds—it's a simple line, but the line has thin and thick places, which helps give the bird a feeling of "weight" or "form".

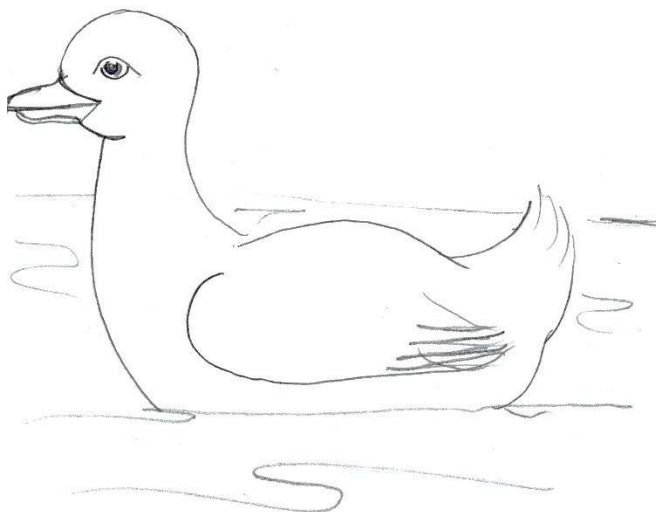
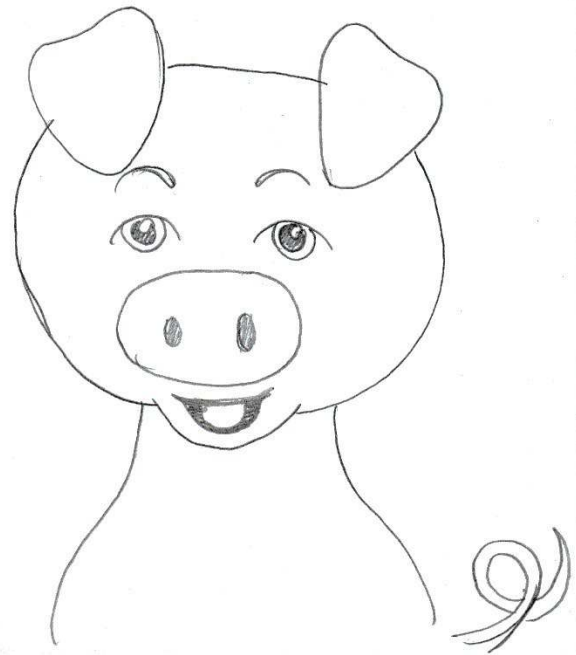
### More Detail

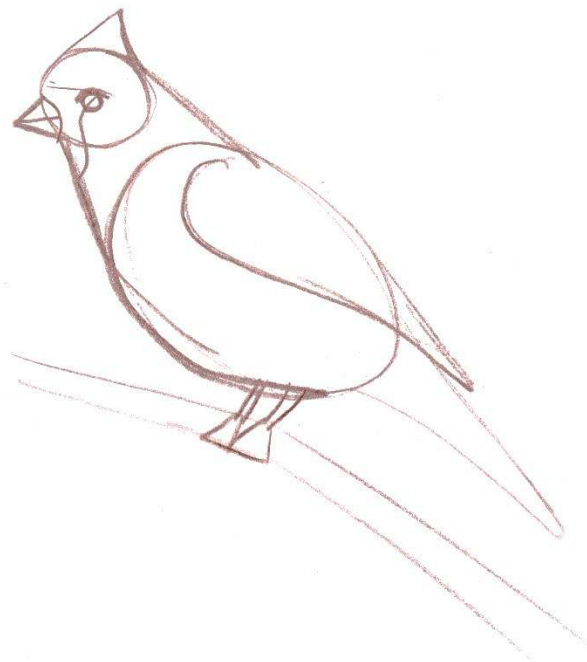
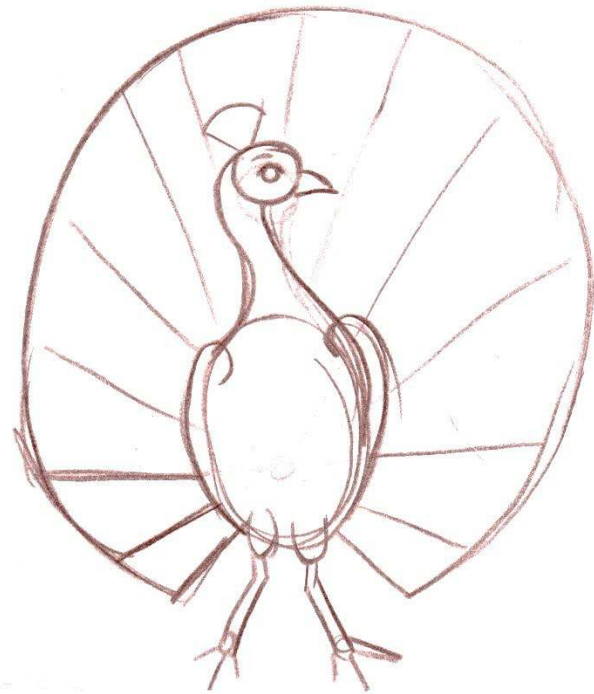
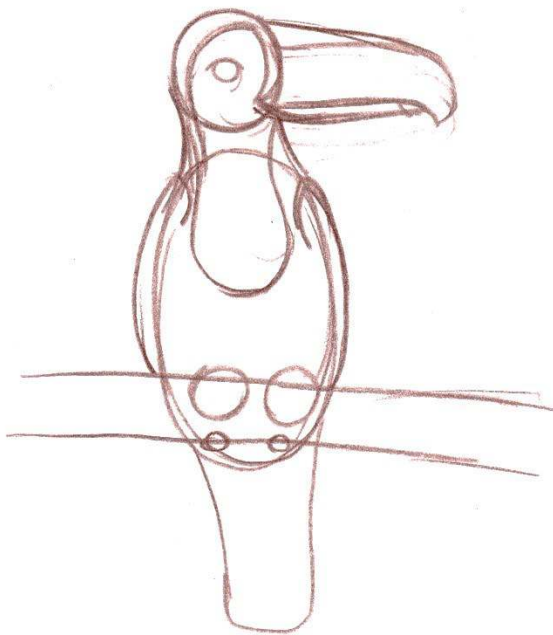


### Less Detail

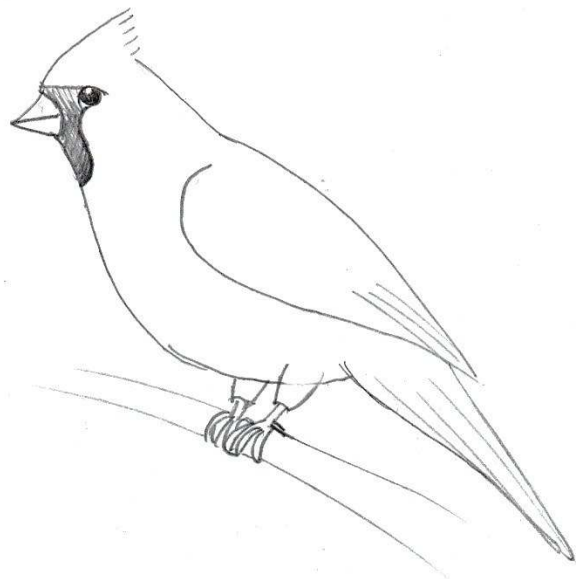
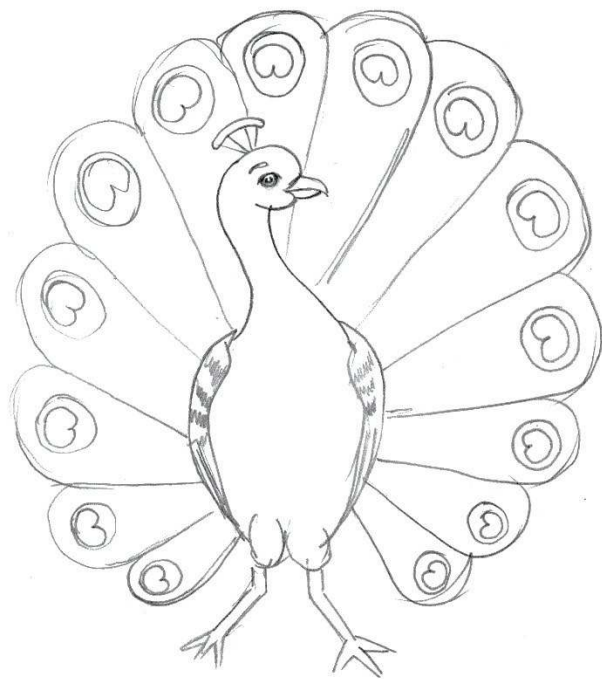
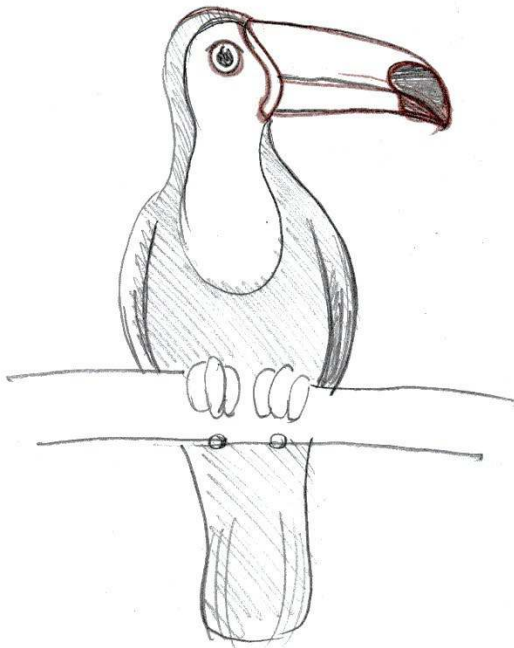












## IDEAS FOR THE HOME (ages 6-8)

“Blocking” is the basis of most drawings in an artist’s head. This week, check out books which use blocking for the basis of their “how to draw” series, and ask your child to draw a couple per day, or simply talk through what OILS they see.

Lee J. Ames, author of the “Draw 50...(animals, robots, flower, buildings, cars, ect.)”series is a great starting point. Ask your child to take a look and see what they see—do they see the OILS we covered in class today?

An older author is E.G. Lutz, who was the Lee J. Ames of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His books, like “What To Draw and How to Draw it” are in the public domain now. It was his methods of drawing, using blocking shapes, that inspired Walt Disney, in his late teens and early 20s to take up drawing more seriously.

Try to draw alongside your child a couple of times a week (modeling lead learner and continuous learner). Don’t worry if your drawing, or theirs, is “realistic”, at this age, training them to break down a complex object into its simpler shapes is the real goal. (This also increases problem solving and reading—training the brain to see that every complex problem (or word) has smaller, easier steps within it.)

If you’re out and about, and you see something interesting, ask them, “How do you think you’d draw \_\_\_\_\_?” (a piece of food, an insect, a sign) See what they say. Let them ask you. Build from the largest, most basic shapes before adding detail. This will get their mind thinking about how their world “fits” together and trains their mind to look for big, simple shapes inside complex ones.

Ask them what colors they see too. This helps them to start really LOOKING at things. (Are all apples uniformly red? How about Limes, are they uniformly green? Are green onions’ green?” What colors are in flowers? Insects? Bread? Favorite shirt/pajamas/socks? Favorite character in a book?)

Be alert for ideas that hint at “I’m not creative”, or “I can’t do this.” The switch from “I’m creative” to “I’m not creative/artistic”, has its roots in this age. Creativity is nothing more than problem solving—and any solved problem, from conflict resolution (with friends or siblings), math problems, building something new with Legos or blocks, telling a story to themselves with toys, making something “new” in the kitchen are all examples of creativity. ( My children were so proud of themselves for ‘inventing” sugar-cinnamon toast—I had to remind them that they DID invent it, they just weren’t the FIRST ones to invent it. )

DON’T PUSH. At this age, the two biggest things that will help a child learn to draw is to train the mind to see shapes and colors more clearly and to keep developing fine motor control. Keep things light, keep them fun!

