

Tutor Script: Journeyman (Age 8-10)

Note:

These children are deep in the Schematic stage of drawing development and entering “Dawning Realism” Stage.¹ They are drawing things they have experience with (even if that experience is limited to books and/or television and movies) and revealing what they think about their world around them. Once they settle on an “icon pattern” or “schema” for certain items, they will draw these things over and over again when the composition calls for them. (For example, the sun will often be drawn the same way, often in the same position on the paper, any time the child draws a sunny, outdoors scene.) They are adding more “realistic” details, like attention to color or the beginnings of shading. There is often, in outdoor scenes, a “sky line” and a “ground line”. Other things which are characteristic of this age includes “X-Ray”—where you can see through something you normally cannot, the roots of a growing plant, for example.

The caution with this stage is the schematic age child is still enjoying the act of making art for its own sake, but they are rapidly moving to the next stages when they will become self-critical. In a blended age class, or family, it is very easy for a couple self-critical voices to quickly spread. Watch how you talk about your own skills and self-perceived abilities, and how others talk about themselves or others. Try not to scold, but rather, re-direct. It is perfectly fine to identify where your drawing didn’t go the way you wanted it to, but that doesn’t mean you can’t draw, it means your drawing didn’t work THIS TIME.

No one, learning a musical instrument under instruction, is going to walk away after a bad note or two, so don’t walk away from your drawings here because of a bad sketch or several. Believe me, even professionals have bad days, but those of us who have gone ahead recognize that a bad sketch does not a bad draftsman make. You just erase, scribble out, or start over. Praise what works well! Instead of, “What went wrong?” or, “That doesn’t look good...” ask, “What did you learn?” or “What would you do differently next time/next draft?” Open the door to self-examination without self-criticism, if at all possible, and encourage draft-work. Just like papers will have a rough draft, a second draft, editing, and a final draft, so art projects often have rough drafts, edits, re-drawn drafts, and final copies. (The Sistine Chapel had hundreds, many of which were destroyed. Picasso’s Guernica painting had dozens of sketches, some in lurid color, some more “realistic” some more abstract than the final. If at first you don’t like the whole thing, keep what you do like, and re-do the rest.)

Tutor: Is drawing a talent you are born with, or is it a skill which can be learned?

<See if class has any answers, but don’t let it go too long!>

Here’s a quote from Leonardo DaVinci:

¹ For more information about what these stages are, what they look like, and how to encourage them, check out my mini series posts, [“Stages of Drawing, Part Two: Schematic to Dawning”](#)

<Show the quoteboard on pg. 6>

*“Principle for the development of the complete mind:
Study the science of art; Study the art of science. Develop
your senses- especially learn how to see. Realize that
everything connects to everything else.”*

Someone you might be more familiar with, Ed Catmull, who works on many of the Pixar movies, said this:

<Quoteboard on page 7>

*“...[There is] a fundamental misconception that art classes
are about learning to draw. In fact, they are about
learning to see.”²*

Do you see any similarities between DaVinci and Catmull? What about some of the words they use: “learn”, “study”, “develop”. Are these words we can DO?

<Yes>

Tutor: Believe it or not <at this point, be sure to include your parents in this statement>, drawing, like writing, is a learnable skill—anyone can improve their drawing skills through some instruction and deliberate practice. Learning to draw will help you become better observers, will help improve your memory, will help you better express yourself, and can even work as an international language. We’re going to start here with an artist secret trick. It’s called “Blocking”

² Here is that particular quote more in context: *“I want to add an important side note: that artists have learned to employ these ways of seeing doesn’t mean they don’t also see what we [people untrained in drawing and visual arts] see. They do. They just see more because they have turned off their minds’ tendency to jump to conclusions. They’ve added some observational skills to their toolboxes. (This is why it is so frustrating that funding for arts programs in schools has been decimated. And those cuts stem from **a fundamental misconception that art classes are about learning to draw. In fact, they are about learning to see.**)*

“Whether or not you ever pick up a sketchpad or dream of being an animator, I hope you understand how it is possible, with practice, to teach your brain to observe something clearly without letting your preconceptions kick in.” —Ed Catmull, Creativity inc., Chapter 6: Learning to See

<Show the “Blocking Vocab Paper, PAGE 8>

What do you notice about the top two pictures?

<They are people, but built of blocks>

What about the bottom one?

<Animated pig built mostly out of circles and curves>

These under-sketches are called “Blocking”. “Blocking” is the practice of “building” a complex object on paper using simple shapes, just like you see here. It allows the artist to quickly figure out if they like the overall shape-size-proportion of the complex object. If they do, they can add final lines and details. If they don’t, they can erase whatever isn’t working, or even start over.

Classical Conversations, based upon Mona Brooks’s book, “Drawing with Children”, categorizes simple shapes through OiLS:

O-Ovals/Circles

i – Straight lines and dots

L – Angled Lines

S – Curved Line

<Show the OiLS sheet here, if you want, Pg 9> ³

When we’re learning to draw, one thing that helps a lot is to draw from life, or, better yet, from photos (Photos don’t move). Practicing from drawing from a photo is like learning cooking from a recipe or playing an instrument from music; it gives us a guide to where to go.

Let’s look at some photos, blocking sketches, and final sketches. What do you see?

<Show the elephant and peacock pictures (Pages 10 &11) with their blocked counterparts. Encourage them to trace shapes with their fingers when they see them, this gives a tactile touchstone which doesn’t ruin the paper for other classes or other days.>

How about these photos and their blocking images—do you think the artist could easily add details or color now?

<Yes>

Let’s look at these series.

³ Most classical art texts and art schools classify these simple shapes as spheres, cones, columns, and boxes (sometimes, pyramids). You could make the argument that these shapes are made up of OiLS, so OiLS are like “blocking”, step 0.5. Po-TAY-to, po-TAH-to—both are good ways to organize your drawing.

< Show the chicken, crowned crane, owl transitions (Pages 12-14) . See what shapes the kids spot. >

Do you see how the artist first used OiLS to “block” the overall shape and proportions of the figure? And if he or she liked the figure, they could THEN add details without ruining the overall shape of the drawing?

So what we’re going to do is look at some pictures and try to block things out. Be aware, there is no single “Right way” or “Wrong way” to block. Look at this picture of the deer and four “schools” of blocking. How you see something, might not be how others see something, and that’s okay.

< Show deer blocking, Pg 16>

Don’t get discouraged. If you’ve ever seen any of these characters, you’ve met the works of this artist: Chuck Jones. <Show Chuck Jones Quote, PG 17

> He said:

“Every Artist has bad drawings within them. The only way to get rid of them is to draw them out!”

So don’t get frustrated; if you don’t like what you draw at first, you’re just drawing your bad drawings out! **Drawing is about the PROCESS, not the PRODUCT.**⁴ Repeat that for me please:

⁴ This will become a theme which the kids will repeat every week.

Why is it about the process, not necessarily the product? Several reasons. First, we now know that drawing links deeply to memory. When you draw something, even if the drawing is out-of-proportion and you dislike the final result, you will remember the object you drew in far more detail than if you only studied a photo or diagram of the object.

Secondly, each time you draw, you learn something about drawing itself. At first, it may be mostly patience and self-forgiveness of the process! But even after years of practice, I learn more about drawing by trying something (a new technique, a new tool, a different point of view of an object) than by reading about the same technique.

Thirdly, drawing helps us become more observant. If you’re drawing an animal, and you’re trying to make the drawing realistic, you have to really see how the animal is constructed, not how you think it’s constructed. How do the chicken’s legs connect to the body? How do the wings tuck against the torso of the chicken? If you spend the time drawing a chicken, you’ll learn more about how they are constructed than you thought possible, even if you never look at that drawing again. Many medical schools today are formally training their med students to draw and making them draw body systems, in a similar method to daVinci. This helps them observe the body and its systems more quickly (see the first point) and more thoroughly, than simply studying it visually through books or patients. This results in a doctor who may later be better equipped to spot unusual symptoms, because they’ve been taught to visually break down a complex object (the body and its systems) into something they can draw themselves. Imagine similar results for future teachers, engineers (who were, before CAD, formally taught to

DRAWING IS ABOUT THE PROCESS, NOT THE PRODUCT.

<at this point, hand out the references (Pgs 18-22, plus any other images in this tutorial,, or have references available for the students to choose and draw. Encourage the parents to draw alongside their child too! >

REVIEW (last 2- 3 minutes, just before (or during) clean up)

“What are the building blocks of all drawings?”

<OILS : Ovals, Dots, Lines, Angled Lines, Curves>

What is the process of quickly sketching the overall form and structure of something?

<BLOCKING! >

What is learning to draw about?

<THE PROCESS NOT THE PRODUCT!>

Artist Tip:

- Use the Simple shapes (OILS) to get the basic shape, size and proportion of your drawing the way you want it first. Before adding details and decoration to anything, make sure the overall shape and proportion are what you want.
- Don't be afraid to use your eraser. If a line bugs you, erase it and try again. Mistakes happen in art and drawing, even to professionals. But don't be obsessed with the “perfect” line. Look at the Disney pig on the “Blocking” definition page. Many artists have loose blocks—they scribble the shape over and over and on top of other lines until the OVERALL shape is what they're looking for, not necessarily one line.⁵
- Really LOOK at your subject. Don't just guess at how it fits together-look. Look at how lines and big forms connect in relation to each other. Where do they cross? Where to they start and end in relation to others
- Different students and artists will block using different methods. This is not a bad thing at all. Since Blocking is the method of sorting out the overall shape and details of an image, how you see an image, and how someone else sees it, might be different. But as long as the draftsman him or herself is satisfied with the final product, and their blocking helped them get there, then it works.

draw!), scientists, and other fields. But don't forget how drawing can help you in your own education-it gives you another tool of communication no matter what you learn.

⁵ When I'm drawing for myself or a client, my blocks are very loose. I've made them tight and clean for this tutorial to help show the various simple shapes clearly. Most artists block loosely, and often, to another person, blocking looks like a pile of scribbles—it's all good, as long as the artist gets their idea out of their head and gets the proportions they want. If they don't get the proportions they want, they try again, because they know bad drawings happen to everyone!



Principles to develop the complete mind: study the science of art; study the art of science. Develop your senses -especially learn how to see. Realize everything connects to everything else.

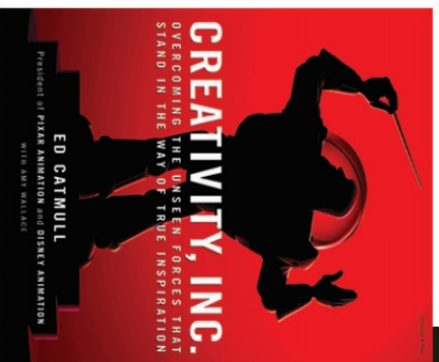
-Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)



“...[there is] a fundamental misconception that art classes are about learning to draw. In fact, they are about learning to see.”

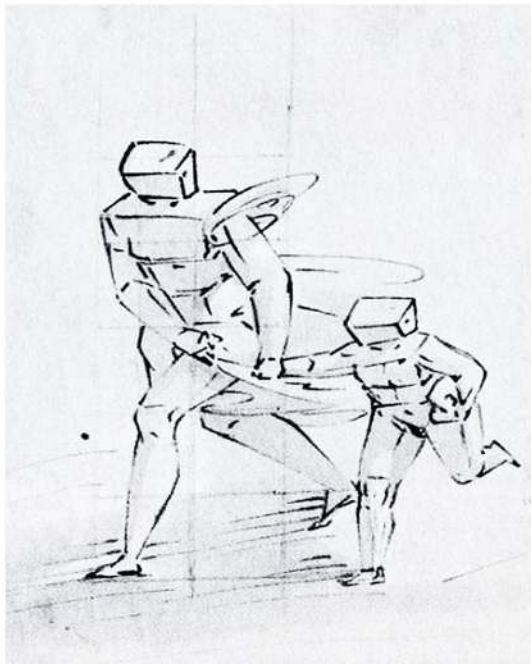
*-Ed Catmull, Computer Scientist
President and co-founder of Pixar*

*Quote from his book,
Creativity, Inc.*



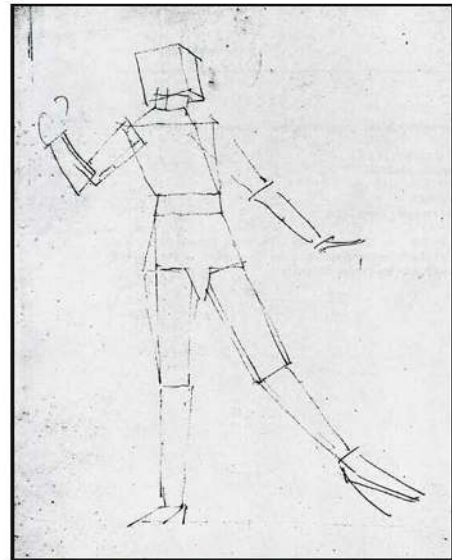
Blocking:

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)*

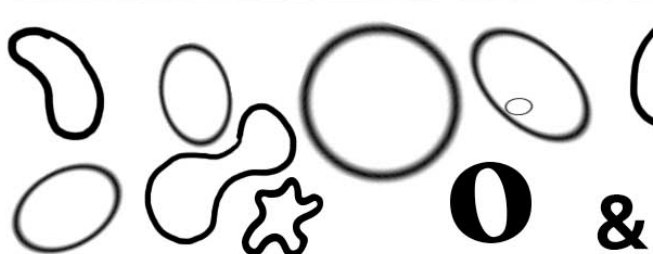
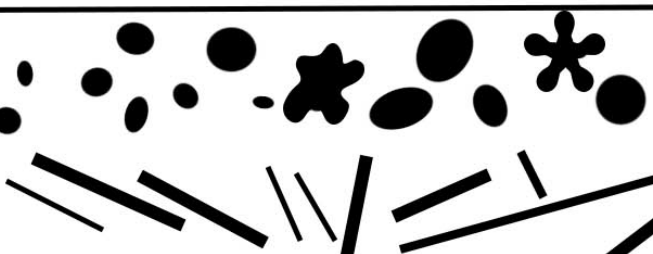

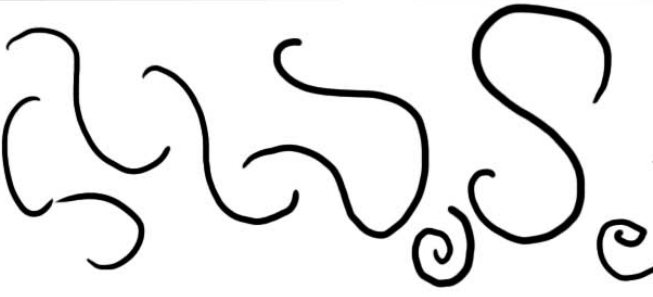


*Below: Animation
blocking with
ovals and curves,
by Disney
animator Fred
Moore (1911-1952)*



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

O	 Ovals & Circles
i	 Dots & Lines
L	 Angled Lines
S	 Curved Lines



Many natural forms are built on spheres and columns. Some columns, like the peacock's neck, can be curved, while others, like the leg segments, can be largely straight.

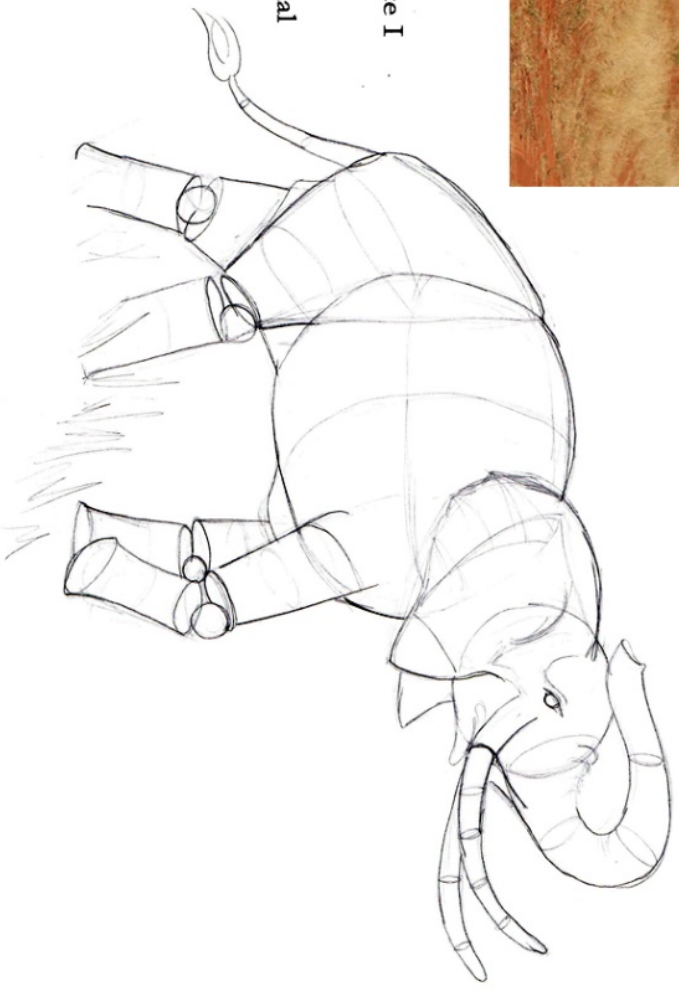


Peacock
Broken down into simple
forms.

<http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/view-image.php?image=124571&picture=peacock>



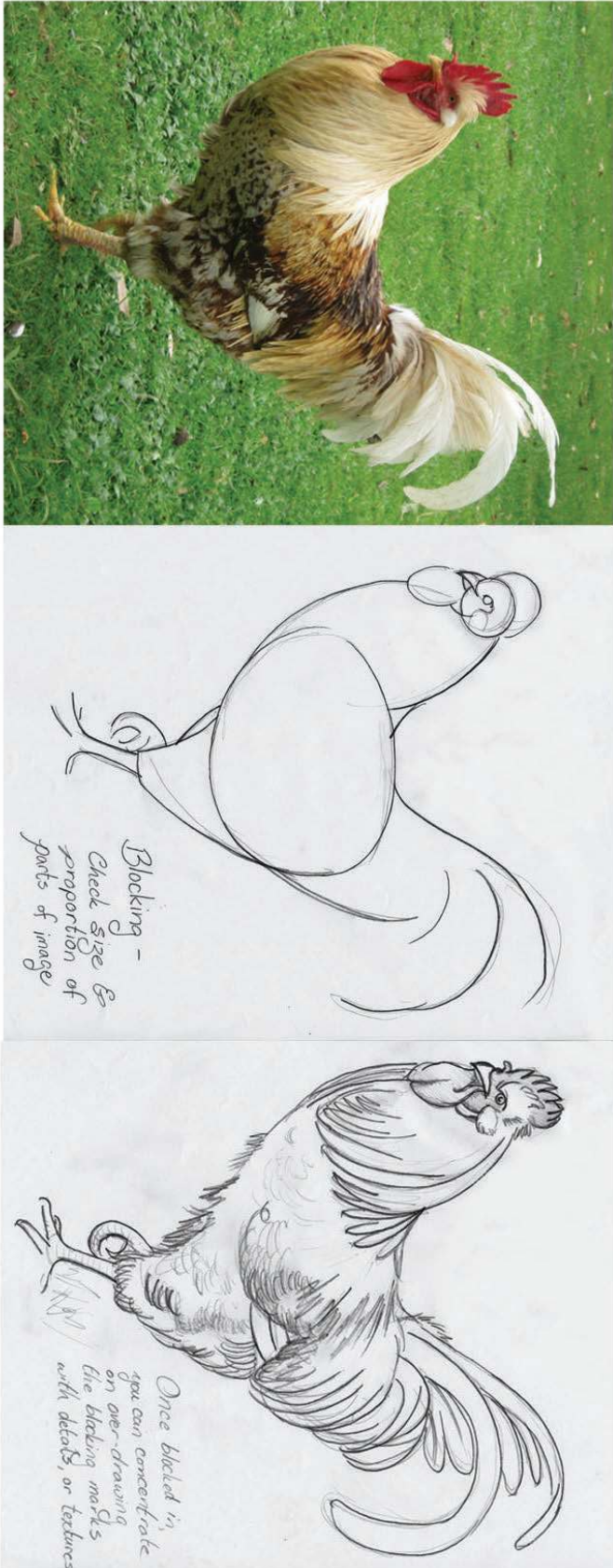
Elephant broken down to 3-D forms.



From the artist: Note the seeming reversal of a “knee joint” in the hind legs. When observationally breaking down a subject, I noted where a joint might be; but since I don’t know how the elephant skeleton is put together, I inserted the joint-ball to indicate where I saw some roundness that may be a joint. Since this is observational drawing, the ball acts as a reminder that there is a roundness there when I start to add details. Knowing anatomy is a key to good drawing, but observation can help before you learn each individual animal or subject.

Elephant photo from a public domain library.

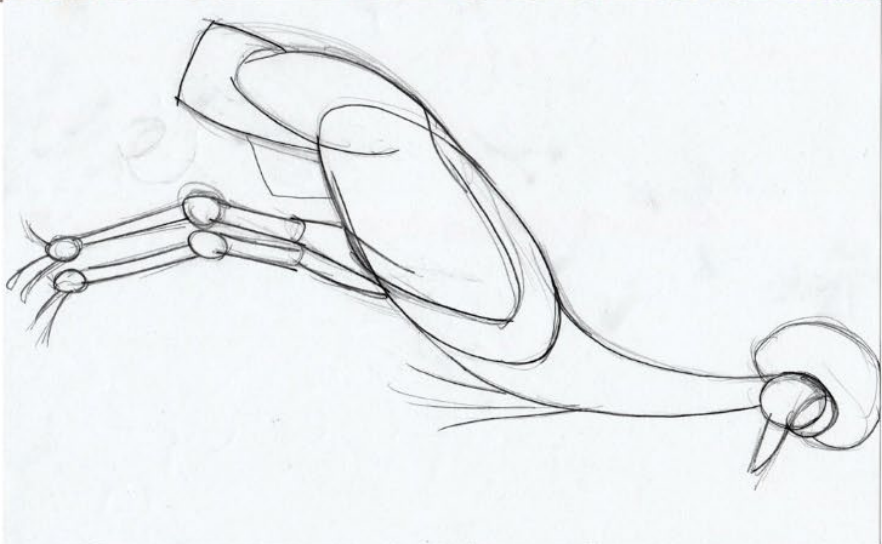
Week 1: Blocking, Simple Shapes Tutorial Journeyman Level



Original Image: "Old Farm Rooster" by Mogan Clasper. Digital photo, cropped. Public Domain from publicdomainpictures.net



Original Image



Blocking Stage

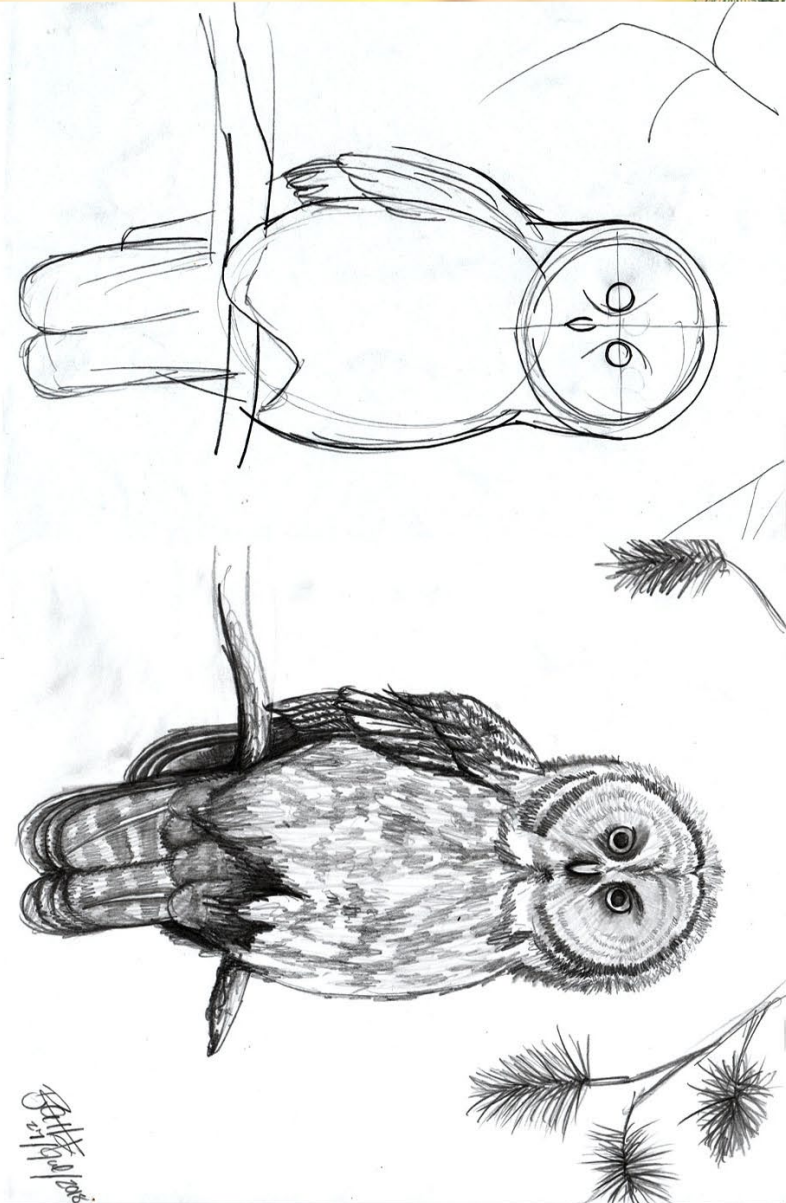


Details Added

Many drawings begin with blocking out the desired image in simple shapes until the approximate shape and proportion of the image is satisfactory to the artist. Then details can be added, with the blocking marks gradually erased or obscured by the darker details.



Original Image



Blocking Stage

Details Added

Many drawings begin with blocking out the desired image in simple shapes until the approximate shape and proportion of the image is satisfactory to the artist. Then details can be added, with the blocking marks gradually erased or obscured by the darker details.



Can you see
OiLS in this
drawing?





Different ways to Block

Different people will block and draw in different ways.

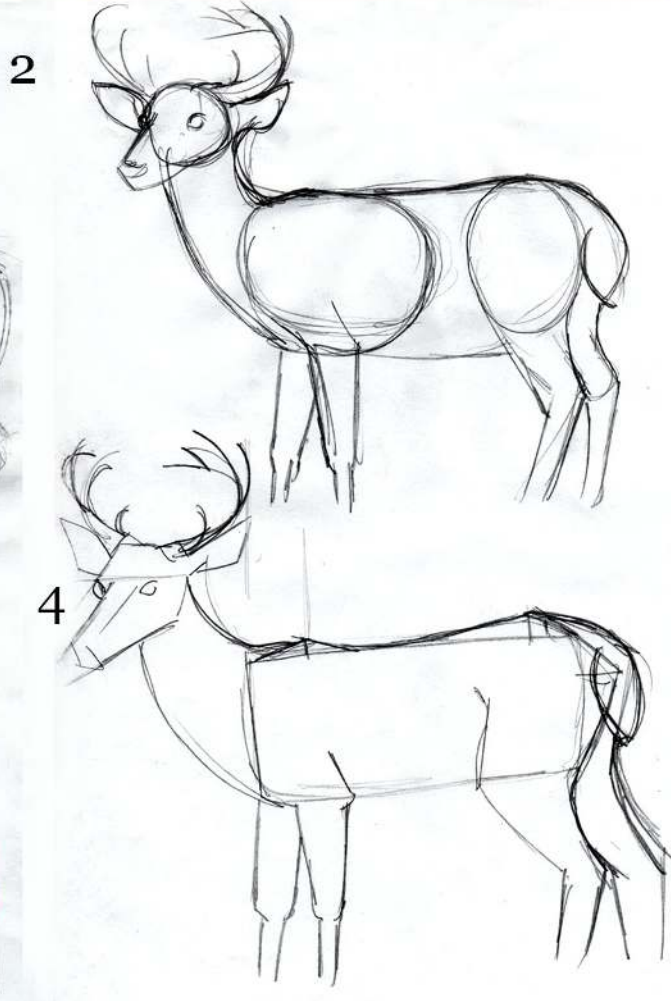
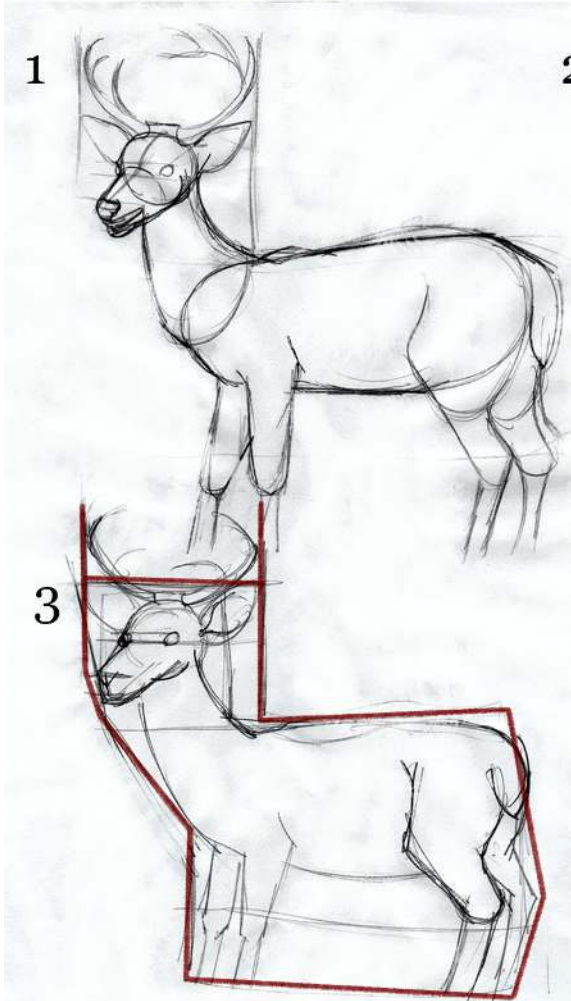
- Deer #1 has been blocked in with mostly ovals and lines.

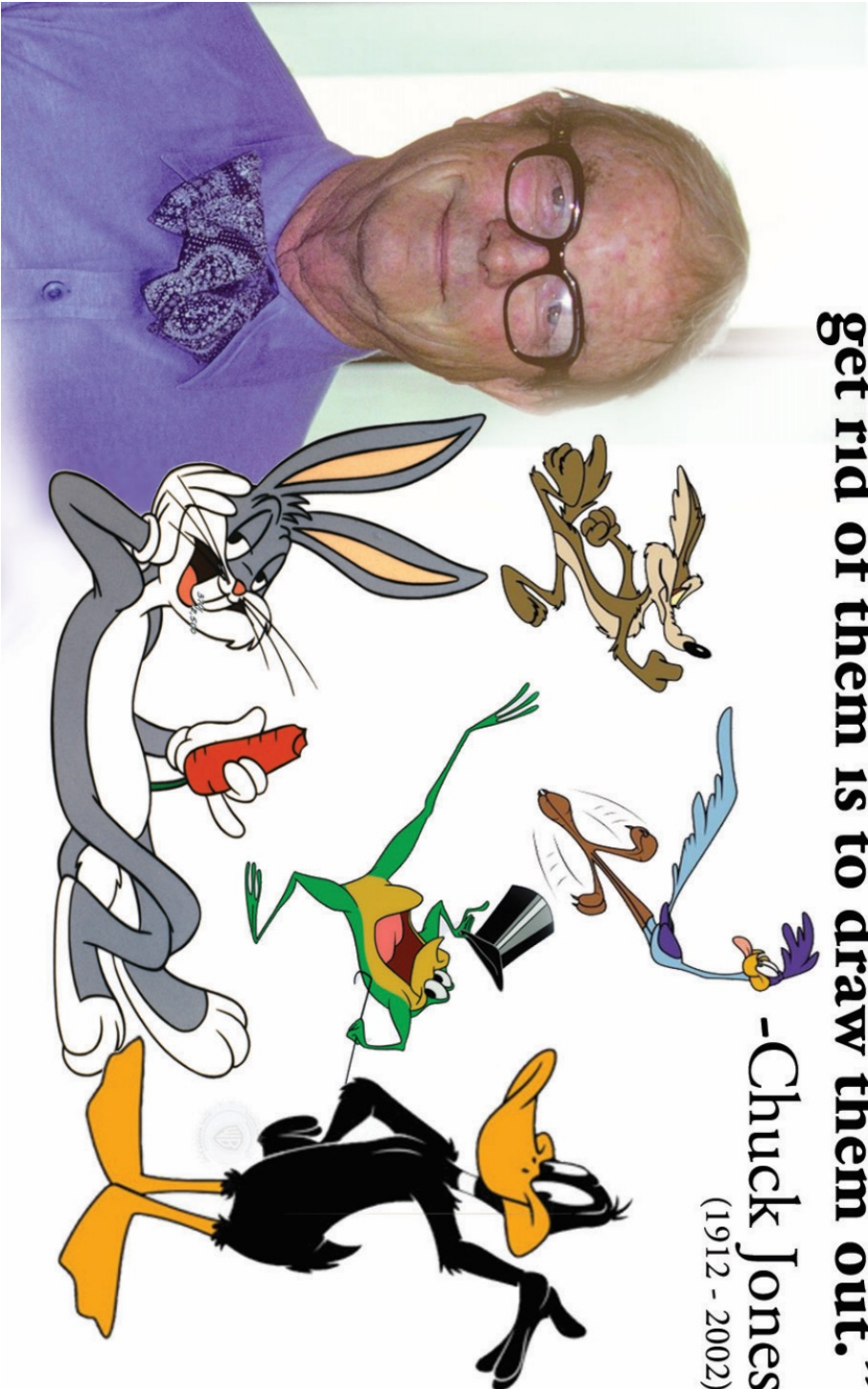
- Deer #2 was created using a simplified skeleton.

- Deer #3 was created using the "envelope method" (the red outside envelope was created first, and the deer "deducted" from that).

- Deer #4 was drawn using squares, triangles, and some curves.

Since blocking is about finding the overall shape off a subject, different people will arrive at that final shape through different methods.





-Chuck Jones
(1912 - 2002)







<https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=231068&picture=owl>



