

Tutor Script: Masters (Ages 10-12)

A Note:

In Classical Education, these children are entering the “Dialectic Stage” of educational development. They are able to connect more threads of the world than younger children, they are more willing to debate ideas (sometimes forcefully), and compare what they are learning now with what they’ve learned earlier.

In art, this age and stage falls under the “Transitional Stage” and the “Pseudo-Naturalistic Stage” of drawing development. Before now, children enjoyed the process of creating something more than they cared about each individual final product. But now, children are starting to use the five common topics naturally. They’re starting to ask and internally define “what is ‘good art’?” and will often be dissatisfied with their results compared to that semi-unconscious internal definition. They are comparing their work to the real world around them and to work done by others in their peer group. Children in this age are very self-critical of their work, especially as compared to their internal “how this should be” monitor and compared to one another. (In fact, if someone in their class or peer group appears to be able to draw better than the others, the other children will be more apt to abandon art as something they can’t do but the other person can.) These kids need more encouragement, and need to be reminded that art, even for professionals, is about the “Process, not the Product”.

Most people reach a decision point about drawing during this age, or soon after. If they find enough encouragement or satisfaction with their perceived progress or abilities, they will continue to draw, and likely make a breakthrough to their own style. At the very least, they will be able to use drawing as a tool for any later need, much like the ability to write clearly. If they decide they cannot draw, then their drawing skills will plateau here.

HOWEVER. It’s not too late. ANYONE can pick up art at any point in their lives, work their way through drawing and enter a whole new period of seeing the world differently.

Hey, if Vincent Van Gogh, fresh off yet another business and career failure, can pick up a pencil, a couple classes, and a few drawing books and force himself to learn to draw, then anyone can.

Tutor Script

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:

*“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:

“...[There is] a fundamental misconception that art classes are about learning to draw. In fact, they are about learning to see.”¹

Do you see any similarities between DaVinci and Catmull? What about the verbs they use?

<Most of the older kids are likely in Essentials, so hopefully, they’ll quickly identify “study”, “develop”, “see”, and “learn”. >

Is that something you can work with and practice, or something you just have or don’t?

Now, before we get started, I want to ask you something: do you think so-called “real artists” draw everything well, and like EVERYTHING they draw?

<PLEASE put “real artists” in air quotes, so the student understands that the term “real artist” is ironic. There are many types of artist, and these students, if they don’t already see themselves as “real artists” have the ability to grow into that term. Being an artist is as much a matter of choice as it is perceived skill.>

If an artist drew a ten works, do you think they’d like all of them?

¹ 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

<Probably not—I can tell you personally, my answer is nope!>

How many do you think he or she might like?

< a few, numbers might be small here. >

How many do you think he or she might dislike so much they will discard them, or never show them to someone else?

<numbers might be small here too. I'd be curious to know if they are higher than the "like" number.>

I want to show you something:

These are pages from the private sketchbooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo di Bounarroti (The Sistine Chapel painter) and Pablo Picasso. These sketches were private, and never meant to be seen by anyone other than the artist.

The Leonardo sketches are studies of a painting he never started, to be called, "The Christ Child with a Cat". Leonardo had to work in pen, since pencils, let alone erasers, had not yet been invented. I want you to look at that top right figure: what do you think happened to that figure there?

<it's been scribbled out—rather ferociously>

Do you think Leonardo liked that sketch, or drew it perfectly?

<No>

Here's Michelangelo, a study for the Libyan Sybil on the Sistine Chapel. How

WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH THESE QUESTIONS?

So many people have unspoken ideas about what drawing, or art, "should" look like. One of those myths that pops up a lot is: "real artists like what they draw." Complete Lie.

"Real artists" are like any other professional; there's a lot they do behind the scenes that they don't like, but which leads to things they do.

But all the public sees is the final product.

No one seems to think a musician walks into a concert and perfectly (magically) plays a piece they have never-before seen. We know there was a lot of practice, a lot of exercises, a lot of work and mistakes in a practice room somewhere for weeks leading up to this moment. It makes us appreciate their skill more.

But somehow, artists are seen differently. Many people think artists perfectly draw anything out of their head to their satisfaction every time they touch a pencil.

Except they're not.

And they don't.

These questions are meant to open the student's minds to the idea that, even a "great artist" like Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Picasso, make mistakes and re-draw, re-do, erase, and abandon work all the time. (All. The. Time. Da Vinci was infamous for abandoning work.)

"Real Artists", even the "great" ones, get frustrated with their work, erase lines, scribble out things, give up some projects, and even hide (or burn!) sketches so no one else ever sees them.

So we, and our students, (especially at this age when they are so harshly self-critical of themselves and their self-perceived abilities), need to give ourselves some forgiveness and grace as we practice our drawing too. You may hate some of your practice work. That's okay. They did too.

many drawings of feet—or toes—do you see?

<There's a foot and two extra toes in this sketch>

How many torsos do you see?

<there's two—the finished one, and the unfinished one to the left>

Do you see any other parts of the Sybil that he drew multiple times in this sketch?

<There's an extra face, and extra left hand, possibly an extra right arm>

Michelangelo also had no erasers, so when he started something that didn't turn out the way he wanted, he had to move to another part of the paper and re-draw. Do you think he just magically drew this Sybil perfectly the first time, or did he re-work his sketches of that model? (Because yes, he was drawing a model for this sketch)

<He obviously had to re-work his sketch several times.>

Did you know, shortly before his death, he asked a friend of his to burn hundreds of his preparatory sketches for his pieces. Some art historians think he didn't want people to see all the hard work that he had to put into his various works. Do you think, based on that idea, he liked everything he drew, or that he drew every idea perfectly from the beginning?

<Obviously not>

One more: This is a charcoal sketch done by Pablo Picasso, considered one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. He had erasers, so...how many eraser marks do you see?

<Lots: Nearly everything has been erased and repositioned>

He never developed this into a large project either. It was abandoned and found later among his possessions.

Do most people think DaVinci, Michelangelo, and Picasso are great artists?

<Yes>

After seeing these private sketches, did they always draw everything perfectly?

<No>

So today, if you draw something you don't like, does that mean you can't draw?

<No.>

Can you give yourself the same privilege and forgiveness these great artists gave themselves when their drawings didn't turn out—to start over, erase, and/or move on?

<Yes—this should be a relief. If the giants of the art world commonly made private mistakes, so can all of us!>

Does this mean you have to like everything you draw?

<NO>

Does this mean you might dislike something you draw today, or another day?

<YES>

Does this mean you might really like something you draw today, or another day?

<YES>

If you don't like something, what can you do?

<Erase, start over, move on, or even come back to it later (after all, most art projects are done over the course of several days...weeks...years...left unfinished while the artist fled....>

Okay, so today, we're going to cover Simple Shapes, or, as most artists call it, "blocking". Blocking is using simple shapes to draw the overall shape or form of a thing to check its shape, position, and proportion before adding details. It's a way to check that you've gotten the basic idea down.

Classical Conversations, based upon Mona Brooks's book, "Drawing with Children", categorizes simple shapes through OiLS: ²

O-Ovals/Circles

i – Straight lines and dots

YES, BUT THEY ARE REAL ARTISTS, AND I'M NOT!

Our own internal voice constantly screaming "You Can't Do THAT!", is very critical, and even after this line of questioning, you might still find some stubborn holdouts. Look at these examples of "real artists", who were also "real failures" (in some of their most well-known works!)

Michelangelo had to re-cast a statue when the first attempt only reached the subject's waist—the Pope was missing his head...and chest...and arms...oops. Later, when M painted the Sistine Chapel, he had to paint his first panel, The Flood, twice, because he didn't mix the plaster correctly, and it began to mold within days of completion.

Da Vinci tried a different wall painting technique which ended up melting and drizzling down the wall WHILE he painted it. His client, the City of Florence, was not amused, especially when DaVinci took off mid-way through his mess. Let's not even talk about the Last Supper: DaVinci tried yet another, different (new) technique, which was already flaking off before DaVinci finished it.

In 1908, Claude Monet set fire to dozens of his now-famous Waterlily paintings in his garden. He was disappointed with their quality—at least, in his opinion. He asked his daughter-in-law and assistant, Blanche, to destroy more after his death. Thankfully, she didn't.

Norman Rockwell once painted a man with three legs ("Common Touch", 1930, the man in the red shirt.) That one went to print, and once Rockwell saw the mistake, years later, he couldn't un-see it ever again.

Depending on how you define "fail", there's lots more examples! "Real Artists" screw up! In public, even! They just keep going anyway!

² If you pursue art further, you may find some classical drawing instruction books state the basic forms of blocking are the Sphere, Cone, Cube, Column, and sometimes, Pyramid. Of course, you can use OiLS to construct those objects, so it's just a lightly simpler way of looking at things.

L – Angled Lines

S – Curved Line

*<Show the OilS sheet here, if you want>*³

“Blocking” is the process of sketching out the overall form and structure of what you are drawing using simple shapes, or quick lines. This allows the artist to quickly gage “Is this the right size, shape, proportion, or position” of what I want?”. If it is, they will draw their final lines and add details.

<Show definition page (pg 16) if you like, with the work of Cabiaso, Durer, and Fred Moore>

Blocking is usually covered up in the final drawings, so be sure to work your blocking lightly so you can erase, or cover up, your blocking marks.⁴

Now, some people see different ways to “block” out their drawing. Some people draw simple stick figures or skeletons for people and animals. Some people see more rectangular shapes. Others see more oval shapes. Still others draw a big shape which surrounds the thing they are drawing, then add inner details as they work. Don’t get discouraged if how you see the thing you’re drawing isn’t the same as the way someone else draw the same thing.

<Pass out the Elephant, Peacock, lion, Owl, chicken, and crowned Crane examples (or pick a few that you like) See what shapes they recognize. Show the deer and the four styles of blocking, to show there is more than one way to block a drawing out.>

So Let’s look at some pictures and see if you can spot how the OilS can be used to block the shape of the figure in. Then we’ll draw a few. 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>*
He said:

³ Most classical 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.

⁴ The term “blocking” is also used in painting and theater. In painting, blocking means to lay down large sections of color, which help the painter to judge where the light is coming from, where the shadows will go, and the overall form of the painting. Only once they are satisfied, will they will add the details and blending to the painting. In Theater, “blocking” is the process of figuring out who moves where throughout a scene. Once that’s established, then the actors and directors can work on emotion, timing, ect., to increase the emotional impact of a scene. In all these situations, drawing included, “blocking” is the process of quickly establishing the overall look and feel of the artwork, then adding details once the artist or director and actors are satisfied with the basic look of the art.

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

So don't get discouraged; 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.**⁵ Repeat that for me please:

DRAWING IS ABOUT THE PROCESS, NOT THE PRODUCT.

Encourage your parents (and yourself) to draw alongside during the remaining time. Model the process of learning. Use the drawings and reference images as guides, try to block out a bird or some other image, then fill in the details.

If you make a mark you don't like, feel free to say, “Oh, that didn't turn out the way I was thinking,” or “Let's try that again.” Do NOT, under any circumstances, try to be self-deprecating and utter the words, “Well, I told you I can't draw”, or “Well, I can't do this-but you can!”, or anything like that. This will encourage the students, both adults and children, to dismiss their own efforts, and ultimately, give up. If you make a line or shape you don't like, state that: “Oh, I don't like how that turned out,” and draw over it, erase it, and try again. This will model the best way to persevere in drawing; decide whether or not you like something, or don't, and fix it if necessary, then keep going.

⁵ 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 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.

And if you like something, SAY SO! “Ooh! I like that shape!” “ I like how that turned out!” Be sure to model both sides of drawing, appreciation of the good and perseverance through the not-so-good.

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

“What are the building blocks of all drawings?”

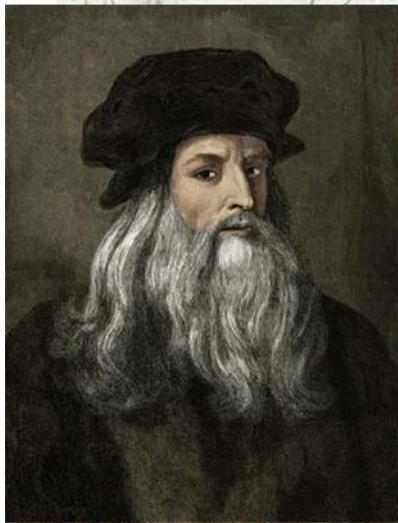
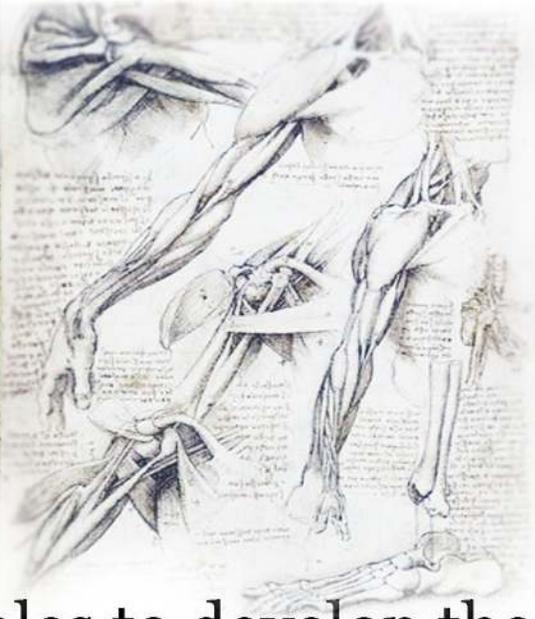
<OILS : Ovals, Dots, Lines, Angled Lines, Curves>

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!>



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 daVinci (1452-1519)

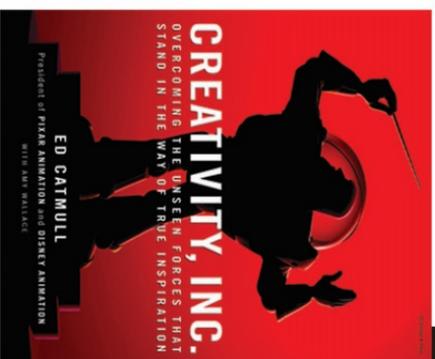


“...[there is] a fundamental misconception that art classes are about learning to draw. In fact, they are about learning to see.”

-Ed Catmull, Computer Scientist

President and co-founder of Pixar

*Quote from his book,
Creativity, Inc.*





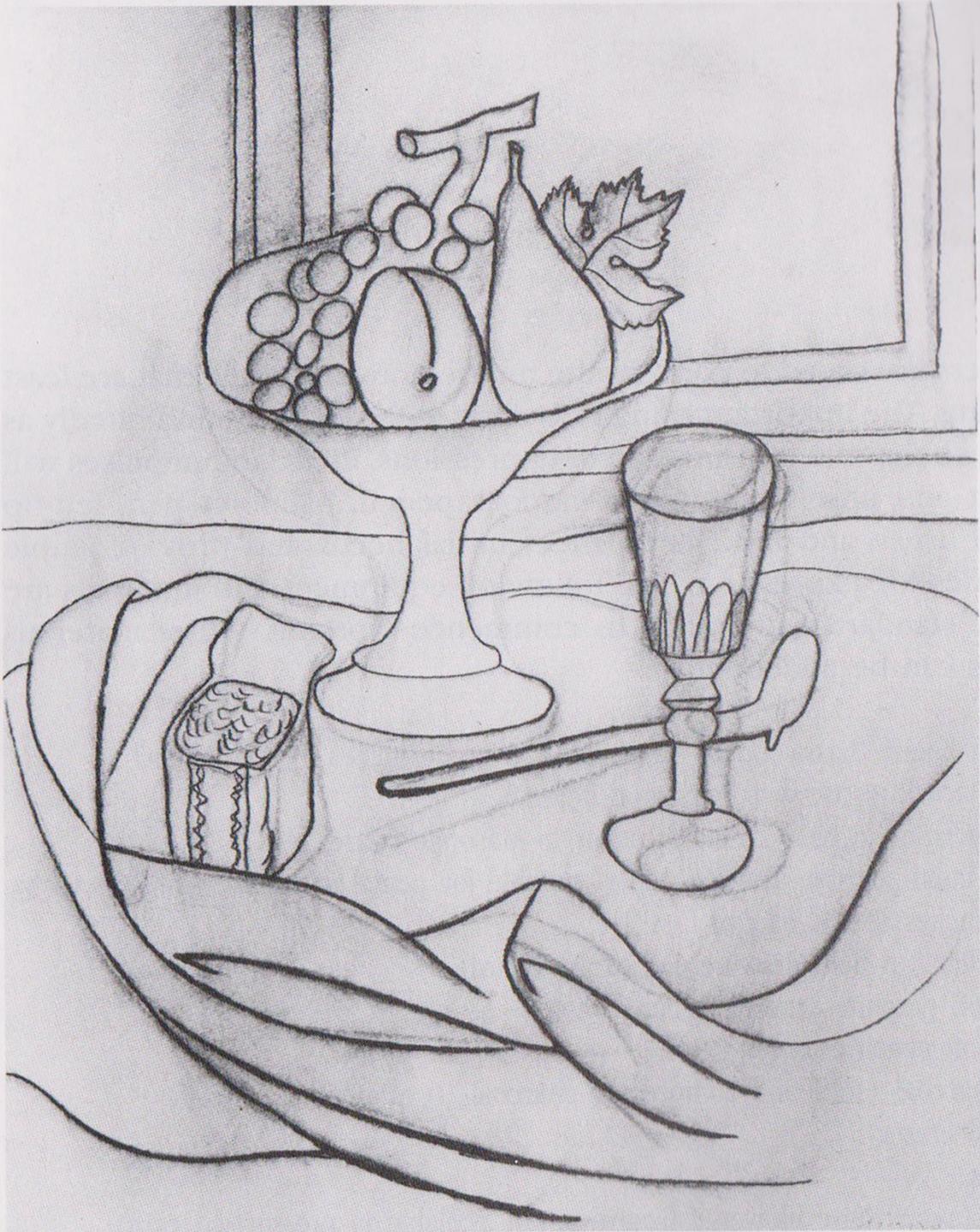
DaVinci, Leonardo (1452 - 1519)

Studies of the Christ Child with Cat; pen and ink over sketches with stylus; ca 1478-1480.

Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, London



Michelangelo di Buonarroti (1475 - 1564)
Study for the Libyan Sybil (of the Sistine Chapel)
Red and white chalk on paper, ca. 1510 - 1511
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



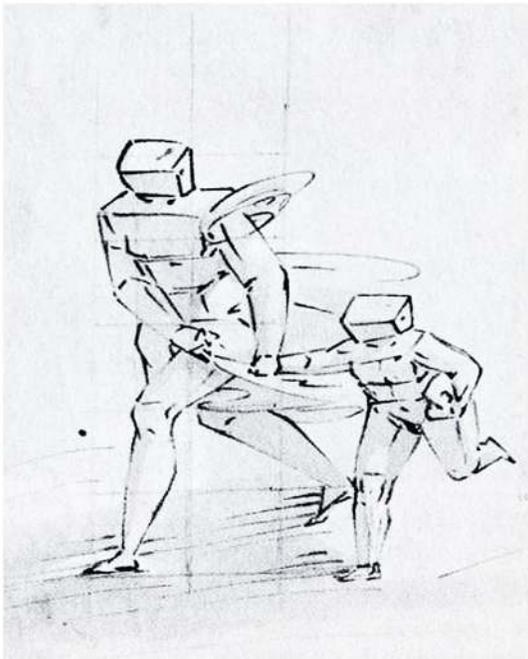
Picasso, Pablo (1881 - 1973)

Still life; Charcoal on Paper

Private Collection

Blocking:

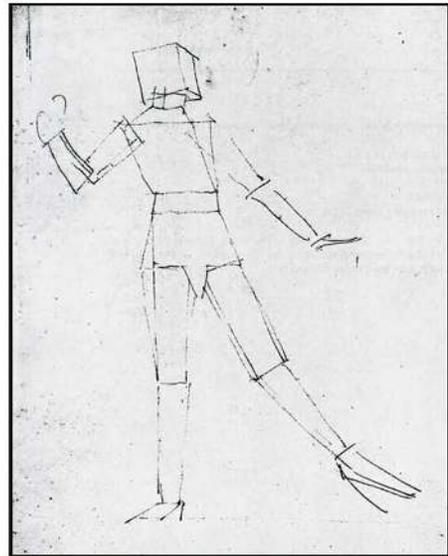
Also known as “blocking in” and “blocking out”, this is the process of building the overall form and shape of a complex object using simple shapes. These shapes allow the artist to quickly gauge “is this the right size/shape/porportion/position” before adding details.



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

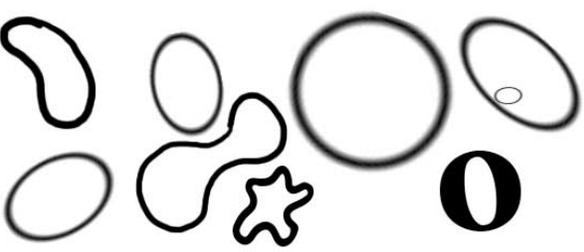
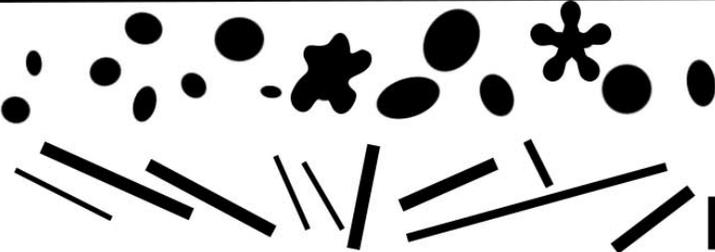
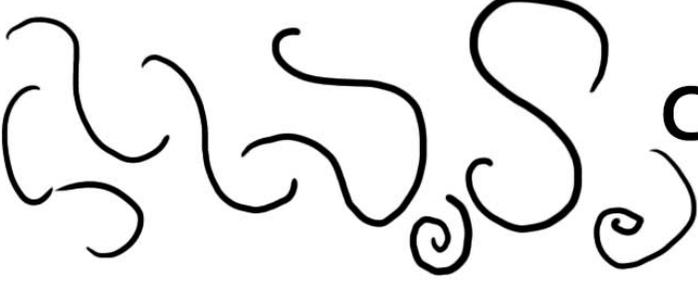
*To the right:
the human figure
blocked out by
Albrecht Durer
(1471-1528)*

*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	 <p>Ovals & Circles</p>
i	 <p>Dots & Lines</p>
L	 <p>Angled Lines</p>
S	 <p>Curved Lines</p>



*Blocking -
Check size &
proportion of
parts of image*



*Once blocked in,
you can concentrate
on over-drawing
the blocking marks
with details, or textures*

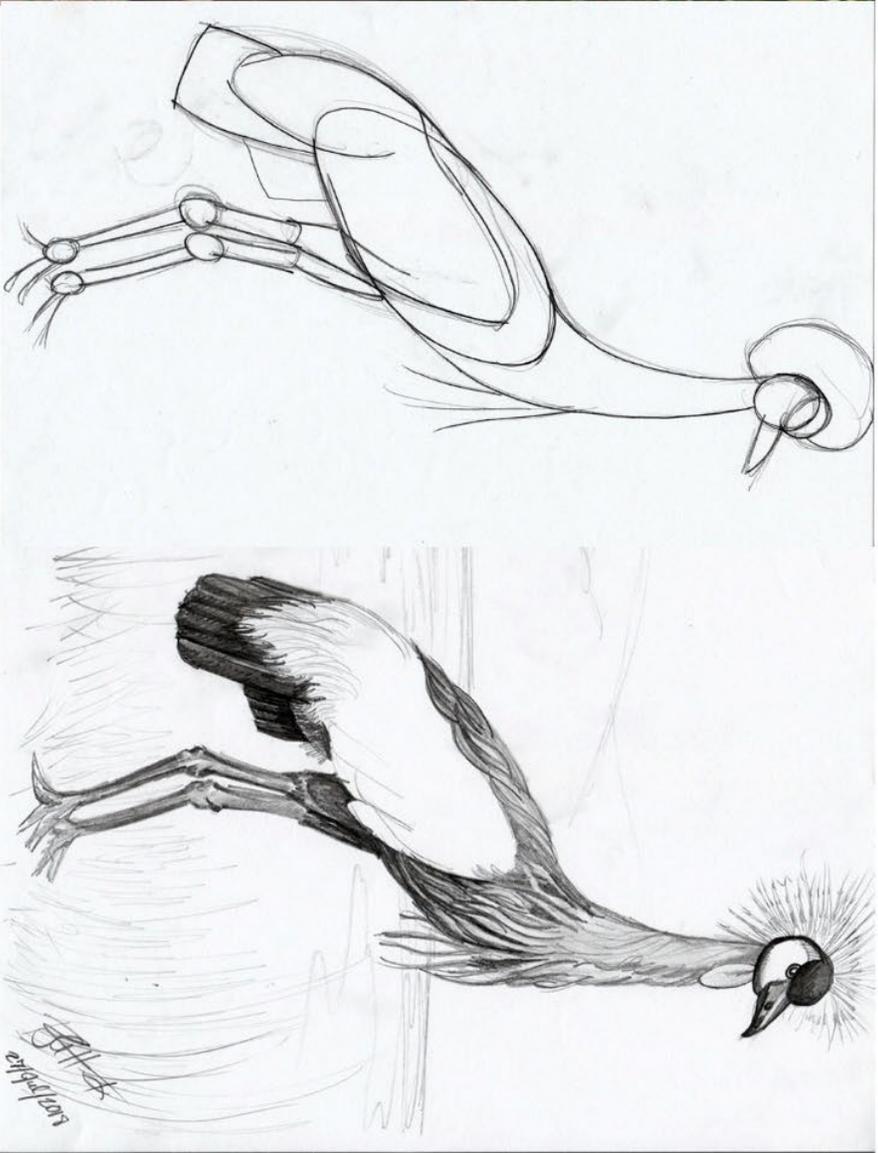
Most blocking starts with the area of the largest shape or mass. For most animals, or even humans, this is the rib-cage area. Starting with the largest mass allows the artist to (mostly) avoid the "drawing is running off of the page!" problem. If you're not sure which is the largest mass, start with the largest mass which is most centrally located. EX: The American Buffalo, whose massive head and neck are nearly the same visual size as the rib-cage area, pick whichever is closest to the center.

Tackle the next-largest mass next. Personally, I (R. J. Hughes), tackle the neck and head second because, emotionally, the face is where our mind tends to focus first (yes, even in a chicken). After that, the next largest mass might be, in this composition, the tail or the legs. Once the entire chicken is roughly blocked out, I can make adjustments (you can see erased lines in the middle picture), and once I'm satisfied, I can start adding details like the feathers, eyes, and textures.

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



Original Image



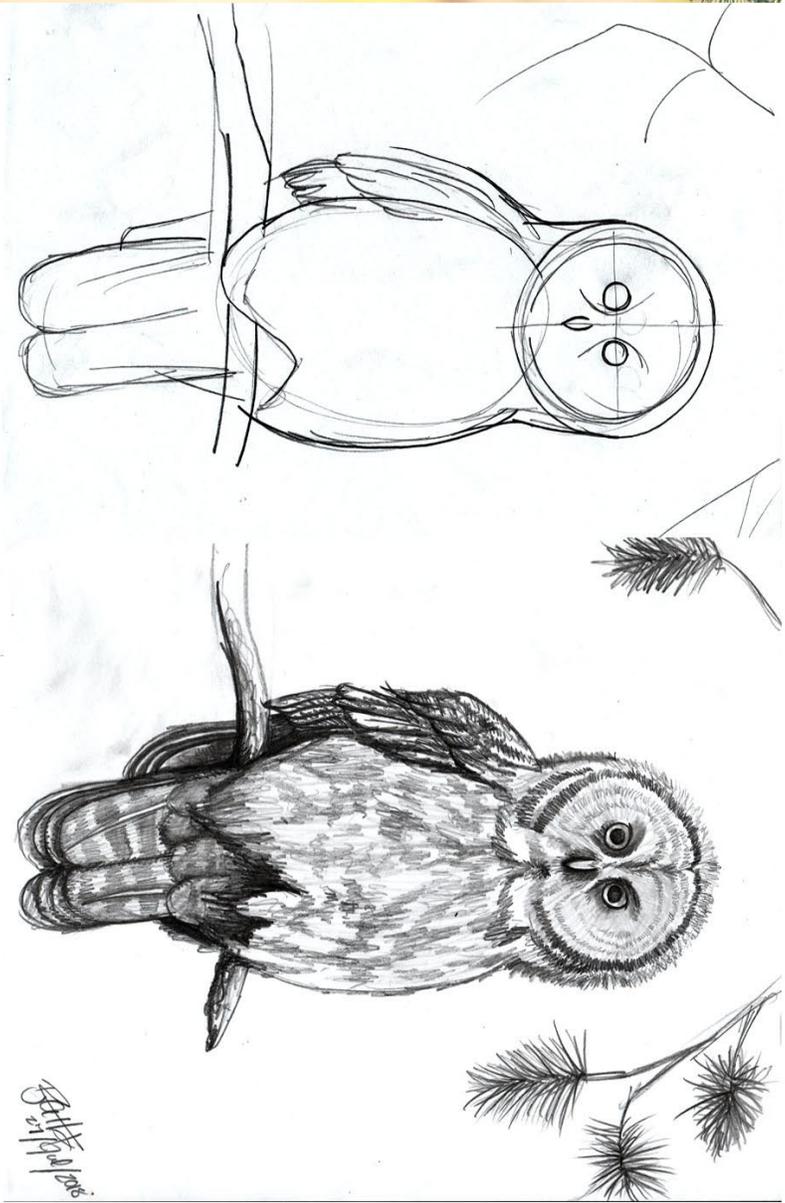
Blocking Stage

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

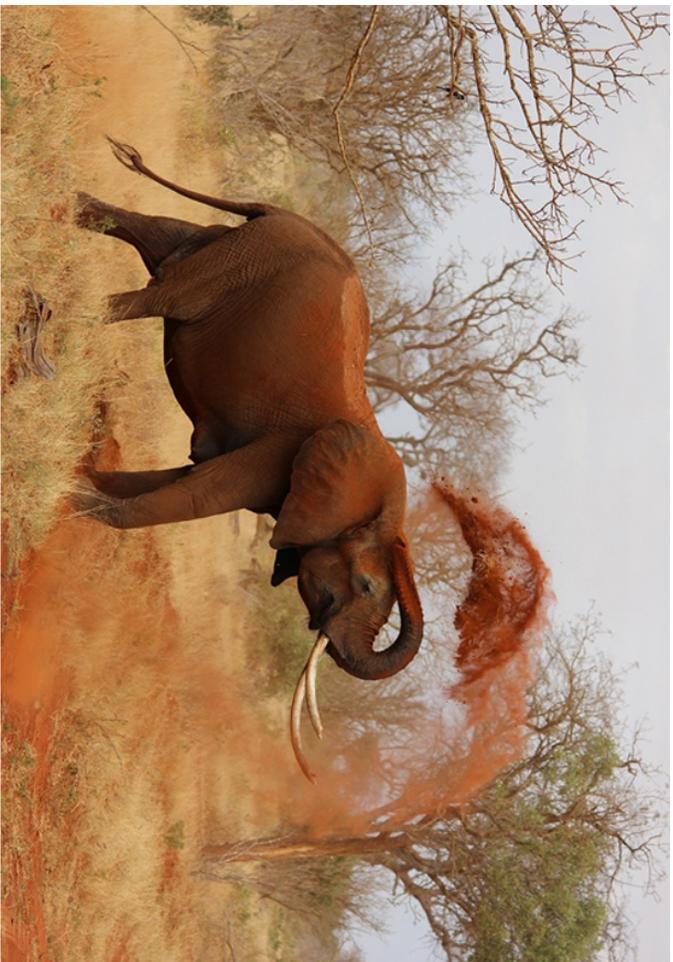
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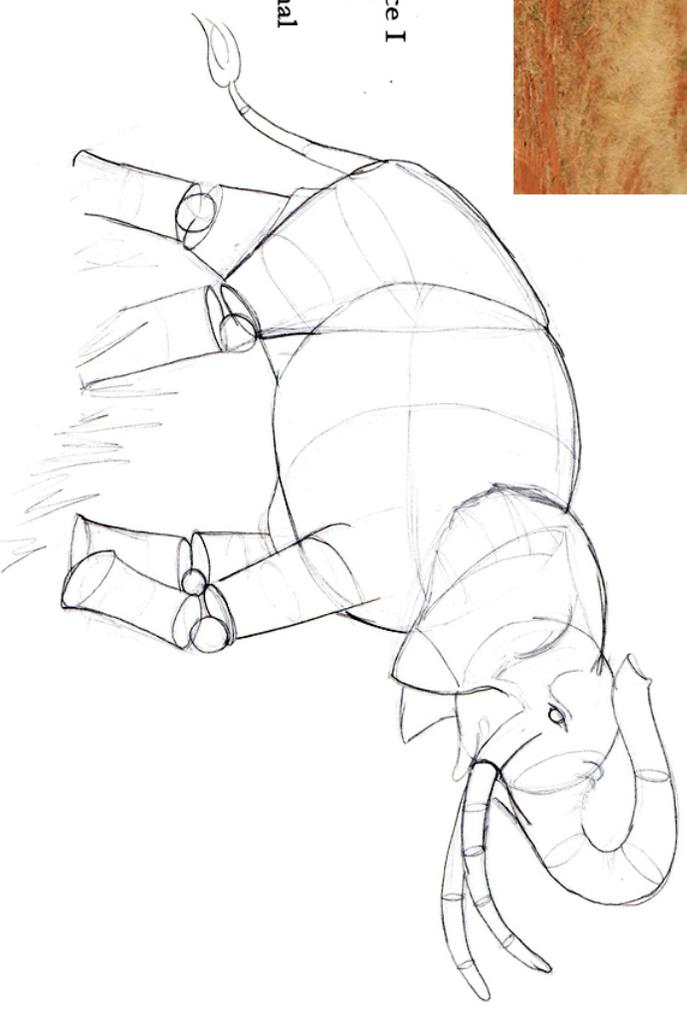
Many natural forms are built on spheres and columns. Some columns, like the peacock's neck, can be curved, while others, like the leg segments, can be largely straight.

Peacock
Broken down into simple
forms.





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.