

1. Desire: First you must have a desire to draw well. ( Or make art well.) Drawing is a skill that can be learned. One person is responsible for your improvement – you. You must take the responsibility for your progress as no one can do it for you.
2. Practice: Drawing is a skill. Like any skill it is learned with practice, practice and more practice. Draw from the masters or artist that you admire and feel are good at their craft. Draw from life or photo references. Drawing from memory is not a good practice. Draw every day.
3. Observation: Drawing is 50% observation. Look at the object when drawing. The brain uses symbols to simplify life and creates symbols for everything. Drawing from memory will only result in recreating the symbols that are stored in the brain. Draw from objects. Notice the relationship between shapes and spaces and “draw what you see”.
4. Research and Resources: If observation from life is not possible gather photo references. When working from photos, use several in order to create a unique product. Look for copyright free materials.
5. Value: Use at least five values to create depth and volume. Creating the illusion of form requires values from light to gray to dark. (Highlight, mid tone, core/body shadow, reflected highlight, cast shadow) Understand where the light is coming from. Have a light side and a dark side.
6. Look for and compare shapes: Try to find basic shapes that make up the object. Draw the shapes then concentrate on the contour or outline of the object.
7. Look for and compare spaces: Look at the spaces between shapes and lines. Compare them to your drawing.
8. Draw upside down: If a photo is used, turn it upside down.

9. Check your drawings: Check the accuracy of the drawing by turning it upside down or looking at it in a mirror. Since the brain fills in familiar things, mistakes in proportion, shape or space will show up when the eye sees the reversed image.

10. Draw the negative: If the positive image is too complicated, draw the negative spaces and shapes.

11. Use a grid: Draw a grid over a photo and copy the image square by square. Grids are also used to enlarge original images. Working square by square is like the old saying: How do you eat an elephant? One piece at a time.

12. Use a viewfinder: A viewfinder is a card with a square cut out that is divided in half or thirds. The window allows space and shape comparisons within the image.

13. Measure: There are two methods used by artists to measure on the go.

A. Site size: The object is placed side by side with the drawing surface. The drawing will be the same size as the object.

B. Comparative Measure: Finding comparative measurements within the object. Compare one part to another part. Example: Using the eye to plot out the face.

Exercises to improve drawing skills.

1. Contour drawing:

A. Blind contour drawing:

B. Modified contour drawing:

2. Gesture drawing: A fast observation drawing that captures the essence of the object.

3. Draw upside down.

4. Negative space drawing

5. Vase/Face drawing

6. Use a grid.