

INTRODUCTORY TECHNIQUES TO PORTRAIT DRAWING



Welcome!

Introductory Techniques to Portrait Drawing

What to expect from this lesson

If you've always wanted to learn how to draw, and capture the likeness of a face, this lesson is for you. You don't need any experience to begin, but you'll certainly have some experience when you're finished the lesson.

This lesson has 3 videos, notes to print, lots of practical drawing activities, group critique assessment, and some questions for you to fill in.

Video 1: Introduction to Portraits

How to start a portrait drawing from a photographic reference.

Video 2: Proportion in Portraits

Construction drawing of the face to understand the frontal planes and side planes.

Video 3: Techniques in Tone

Tone and Shading, using three different materials.

This lesson includes marking sheets for technical skills associated with elements and performance criteria of the Training.gov.au unit CUADRA301 - Produce drawings.

Printing the resources accompanying this lesson

[Click here](#) to download these print resources in PDF format. You can choose to view them on your screen, or save and print them out.

Materials used in this lesson

Willow charcoal, compressed charcoal stick, HB pencil, water soluble ink, kneadable eraser, dry brush.

Equipment used in this lesson

Paper, drawing board & clips, easel

Subjects used in this lesson

Photograph portrait with strong contrast
Bust/sculpture



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Video 1

Introduction to Portraits

How to start a portrait drawing
from a photographic reference

Materials used in this lesson

Willow charcoal, compressed charcoal stick, kneadable eraser,
dry brush.

Lesson Tips

1. Keep your early drawings light.
2. Don't underestimate forehead spacing.
3. Use straight lines early on to simplify your drawing.
4. Indicate shadows early in your drawing.
5. It's earlier to make changes earlier rather than later.
6. Use the side of your charcoal stick lightly when shading.
7. Resist the temptation of adding fine detail in the early stages of your drawing.
8. Use the brush to smooth shading and soften shadows.
9. Don't forget to take periodic breaks. They can give you a different perspective on your drawing.
10. The eraser is a very handy tool for creating some light in dark areas of your drawing.
11. Be patient with your drawing. Mistakes are a part of learning how to solve problems!
12. Compressed charcoal works well with the dry brush.
13. Squinting helps remove details of a drawing and view it in simple shapes.
14. Keep drawing in straight lines! The details will form simply with a solid base.
15. It's easy to get carried away adding details to eyes. Sometimes less is more!

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Video 1

Introduction to Portraits

How to start a portrait drawing from a photographic reference

Activity

Draw a charcoal portrait, from a photo. Your aim is to simplify the human face as much as possible, by accentuating the shadows, and don't put much detail into the eyes.

Extension

Ask a friend to sit, while you draw their portrait in charcoal. Use a strong light source, for example sitting close to a window.

Critique

Look at the work of three of your classmates and offer them constructive feedback on their work.

Describe two things they did well, and two things that need improvement. Always be helpful, and take care that what you say does not sound unkind.

Ask others to critique your work and make notes of what they say, so you next time you draw, you can try to improve in those areas.

Don't always use the same people to critique your work, mix it up with all the people in your class.

Try asking friends outside school or family for their feedback.

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Video 2

Proportion in Portraits

Construction drawing of the face to understand the frontal planes and side planes.

Materials used in this lesson

HB pencil, willow charcoal, compressed charcoal stick, kneadable eraser, dry brush.

Lesson Tips

1. Having a strong light source will help you with this exercise.
2. Draw lightly so you can easily correct a mistake with your eraser.
3. This exercise is about simplifying the shadows of the face. Keep it simple!
4. Too much detail in the ears and eyes early on can complicate the drawing. Keep using simple shapes!
5. Keep your lines simple and visible, it will be easier when you shade over them later.
6. Resist the temptation to add any detail to the face. You'll be adding details later!

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Video 2

Proportion in Portraits

Construction drawing of the face to understand the frontal planes and side planes.

Activity

Work from a photo, or have a friend sit for you. Draw the structural planes of the face, without getting bogged down into any detail.

Extension

Set up to draw your own face from a mirror. Consider the light source, is it strong enough?

Draw the structural planes of your face, working broadly in charcoal without too much detail.

Critique

Look at the work of three of your classmates and offer them constructive feedback on their work.

Describe two things they did well, and two things that need improvement. Always be helpful, and take care that what you say does not sound unkind.

Ask others to critique your work and make notes of what they say, so you next time you draw, you can try to improve in those areas.

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Video 3

Techniques in Tone

Exploring Tone and Shading,
using three different materials.

Materials used in this lesson

HB pencil, willow charcoal, compressed charcoal stick,
kneadable eraser, dry brush.

Lesson Tips

1. Keep the first layer of shading light, as you will build on it with heavier shading later.
2. Whether your hatching is light or dark - be sure to make your strokes consistent!
3. Charcoal covers more ground faster than a pencil. Be sure to adjust your shading accordingly.
4. The dry brush works well with charcoal. Try not to go too far unless you want a blurry drawing!
- 5.

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Video 3

Techniques in Tone

Exploring Tone and Shading,
using three different materials.

Activity

Draw a few Tonal Scales of your own, with the different materials you have on hand.

Extension

Draw a simple portrait using dark paper and a light chalk or pastel. Instead of blocking in the shadow, you will be blocking in the highlights.

First draw a Tonal Scale to help you appreciate your material, and to know how hard to push.

Critique

Look at the work of three of your classmates and offer them constructive feedback on their work.

Describe two things they did well, and two things that need improvement. Always be helpful, and take care that what you say does not sound unkind.

Ask others to critique your work and make notes of what they say, so you next time you draw, you can try to improve in those areas.

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