

Drawing Techniques

Lesson One

Materials and Contour Lines

Materials

There are lots of different brands of materials and the best way to find out which ones you like is to try them. Over time your drawing materials will build up and you will start to notice that you have favourites. Do not worry about getting all the mediums at once, this will build up over time. For this course you will need lots of paper, preferably an A3 or A2 sketch book and

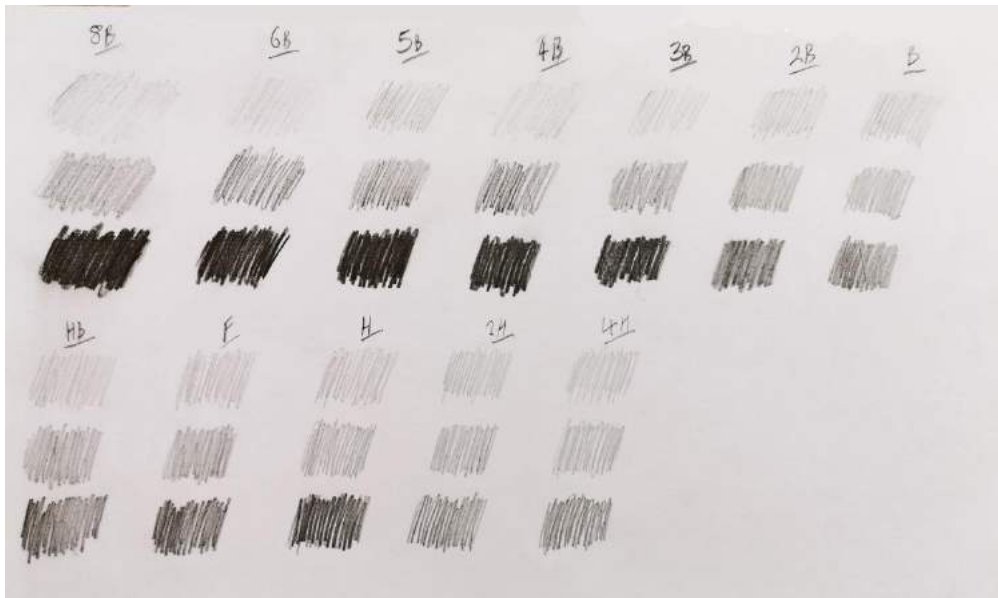


a selection of basic drawing materials – please see the materials list on the Drawing Techniques course homepage. However, this list is not exhaustive so do feel free to explore different materials. Above is an image of some of the recommended materials.

Exploring Materials

First, we are going to explore these art materials, making a chart of marks with each different drawing tool. This is a great way to discover what each medium can do and which ones you like, so will help to build up your drawing language. We will start with pencils; they are all graded with numbers and letters on them. The B stands for black and the graphite in these

pencils are soft. The higher the number the softer and darker the graphite.



H stands for hard and the higher the number the harder the graphite is.

Tonal Chart

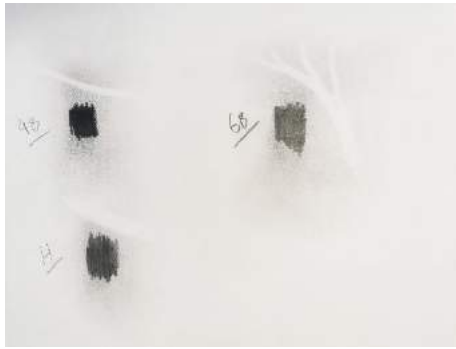
Go through your pencils one at a time and make 3 levels of tone with them – light, dark and medium. With the dark, press as hard as you can and with the light see how light you can go – the medium sits comfortably in between. Write down which pencils you use. This gives you a



very useful chart for future drawings, showing you the high key (light) and low key (dark) of each pencil.

Blending

Choose one pencil at a time and create a seamless blend from the darkest tone to the lightest tone across your page. Take your time with this – work backwards and forwards over



the tones, as you change the tones in response to other areas. Stop and evaluate regularly and if you see a jump from one to the next work back into it. This is quite difficult to get perfect but it a great exercise to practise your control of the pressure you are exerting. Do this with all your pencils, making note of which ones you are using.

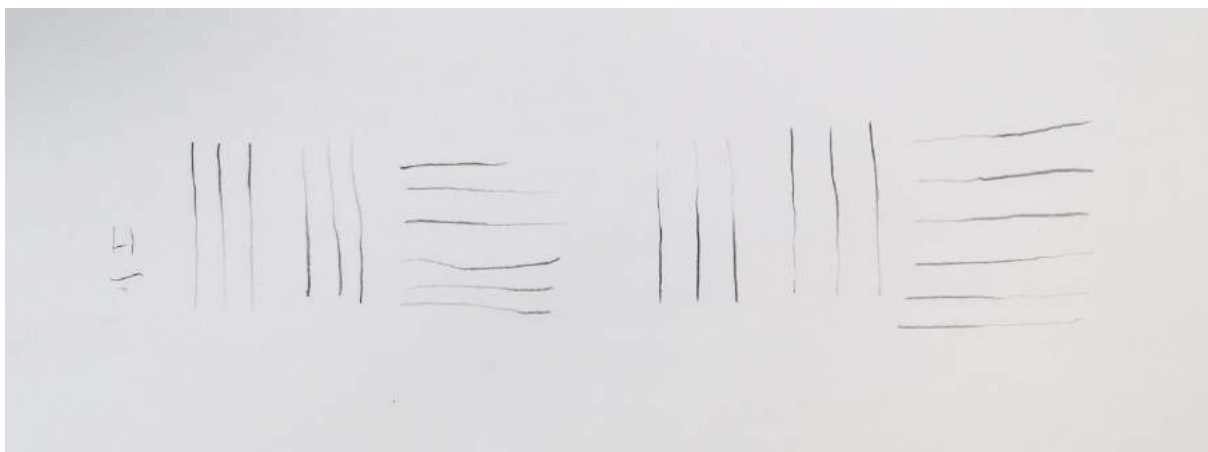
Smudging

Work each pencil hard into the paper and rub into it with your finger – make the smudge as big as you can – see how dirty you can get the paper. You get some beautifully soft tones with this technique. Draw lines in this smudge with your erasure – this is a fantastic way of drawing with white.

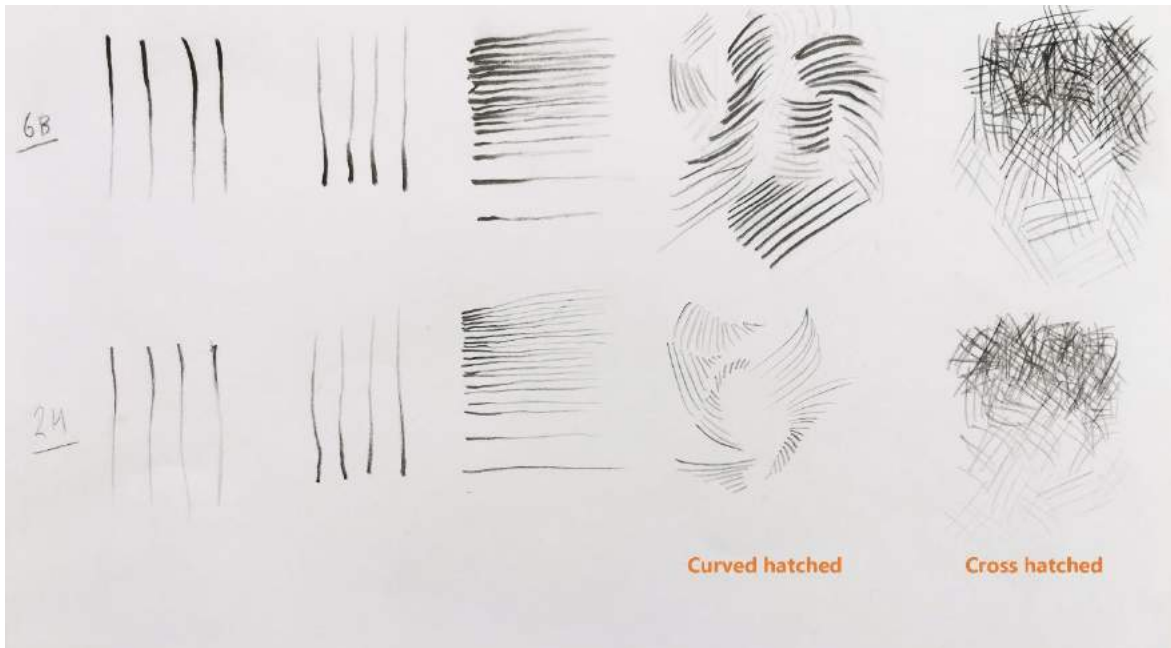
NOTE:

Take notice if you find any of these tones more difficult to create than others. You may have a strong hand and find it easy to make dark marks but more challenging to get the softer lighter ones. Conversely you may have a very light hand and find it challenging to make the heavier marks. Most of us find one easier than the other. There is no right or wrong in this, how you naturally make marks becomes a part of your visual language and part of what will make your drawings unique to you. I do ask that you take notice of any sticking points or comfort/uncomfort zones during this course as I will be encouraging you explore and push them to broaden your drawing style and capabilities.

Quality of Line



The next thing I would like you to explore is quality of line for each pencil. For this exercise I



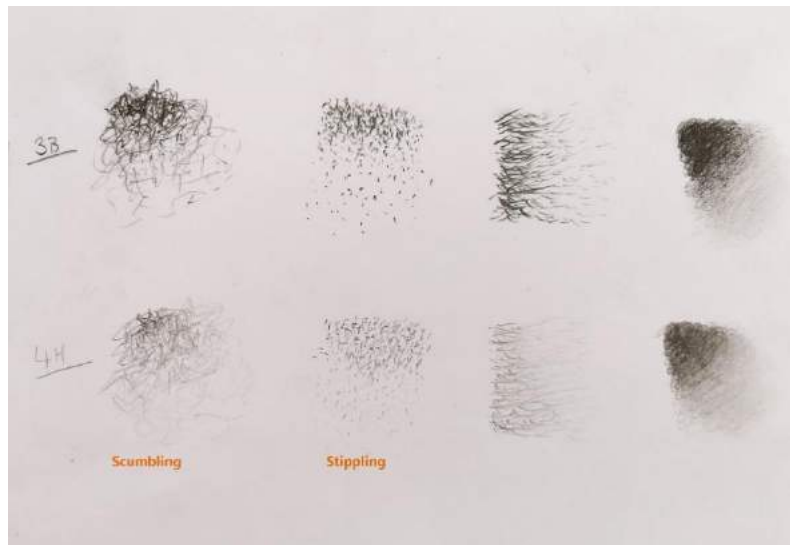
would like you to create linear marks going in one direction going from dark to light. Try this going in different directions – start from the top and draw down, start from the bottom and draw up. Try going from light to dark. Make a note of the pencils you are using and any observations about your experience of drawing like this.



Explore how this can be modified for different effects, the closer your lines are the denser the area, the further apart the lighter the marks. Lines can be curved and can also hatch and cross hatch. Play with these different marks, make up some of your own – keep remembering the main point is to create areas of light and dark.

Rembrandt was masterful at creating stunning drawings using line hatching. This image is a great example of how line can create tone. Copy this image to practise line drawing - and then have a go at creating a drawing like this from a photo.

Different Drawing Marks

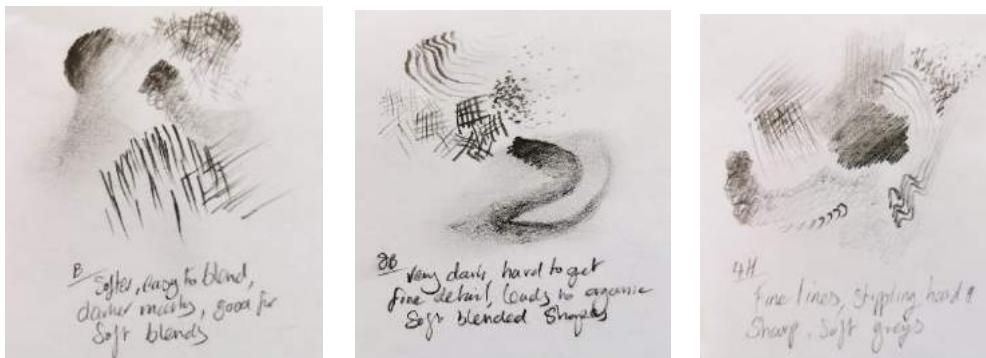


Some traditional ways of creating drawing marks include scumbling - scribbling in an ununiformed way and stippling - dots. These have been used a lot in etchings and along with hatching, form the basis of many traditional book illustrations. I have included two other techniques in the above example, alas without catchy names. The middle one is by dotting the pencil down and flicking it off in one direction and the other is by creating small circles or spirals. Make these marks in your sketch book using all your different pencils - and then see if you can come up with your own marks which explore tone. As you do this see if the marks suggest anything to you, any texture or object, it can be interesting to see what we connect these marks too and this can help us make choices of which marks we choose to use in our future drawings.



This drawing by artist Miguel Endara has 2.1 million dots made with a pen. This kind of process creates a drawing that is a real testimony to the passage of time and patience.

Start combining these marks to make interesting little compositions.



Once you have completed all these exercises, repeat them all using different materials. Work through them using charcoal, graphite stick, different types of pens . . . use any medium you may have. Take your time, really enjoy exploring these marks and build up a study of mark making. These exercises form a starting point for you so feel free to let your imagination and creativity take you in different directions. Just remember to keep a note of what medium you are using and to jot down any observations you have about the marks and your experience of creating them - have fun!

Contour Line

The contour line is a line that defines the edge of a form of an object. It is an outline drawing with no shading. For the first exercise choose a simple object and draw it multiple times on one piece of paper from different viewpoints.



Experiment with different drawing materials and start choosing different subject matter. Keep



your drawings simple and just focus on the contour line. Do not worry if your drawings don't turn out perfect, this is about the process of looking and drawing and not necessarily the end product.

The more you practise this the better you will get and the more you will enjoy it. Henri Matisse made some lovely contour line drawings, like this one of roses. Search online for contour line drawings and you will find some great examples.

Continual Line

Next, I would like you to look at continual line drawing - this is when you do not take the pen off the paper at any point during your drawing. You put your pen or pencil down and complete the entire drawing without taking the pen or the pencil off the paper. Whilst drawing you are aiming at moving your eye around the outline of the object and your hand in unison. This is great for your hand to eye coordination.

I decided to use a pen for this next drawing. Start with a simple object, I have chosen an apple, take your time drawing it using the continual line technique. Remember that these lines do not have to be limited to the contour of the apple but can also depict the contours of the shadows and highlights.

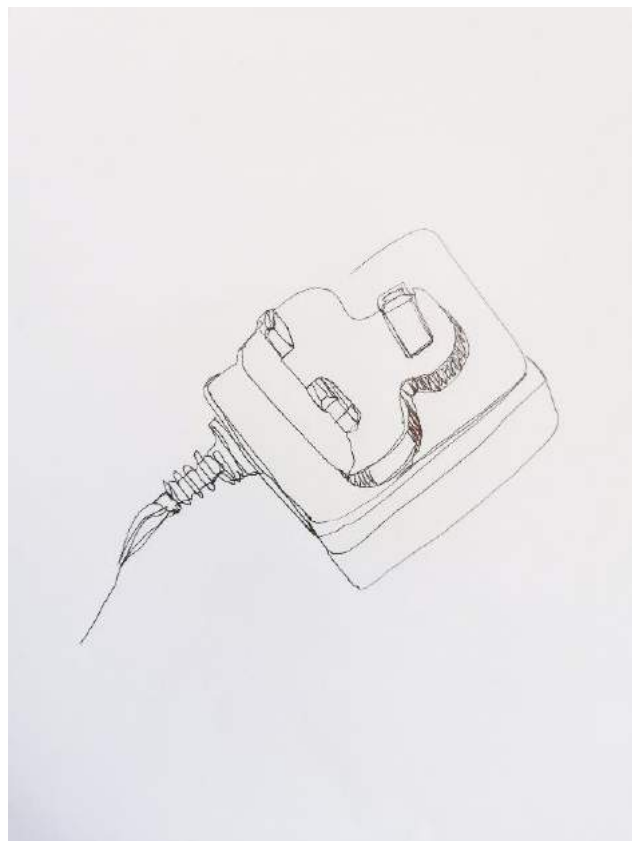
As you draw like this you will have to problem solve as you may find you want a line to go behind a previous line - how are you going to make this happen without lifting your pen from the page?

Drawing the apple multiple times from different angles on one page makes a nice study of this technique and the apple.





Explore different subjects and different mediums using this technique. I have drawn this celery using a pencil. With pencil you can vary the pressure you apply to create a tone in your line – just like we practised earlier. Try different pencils to see how they work.



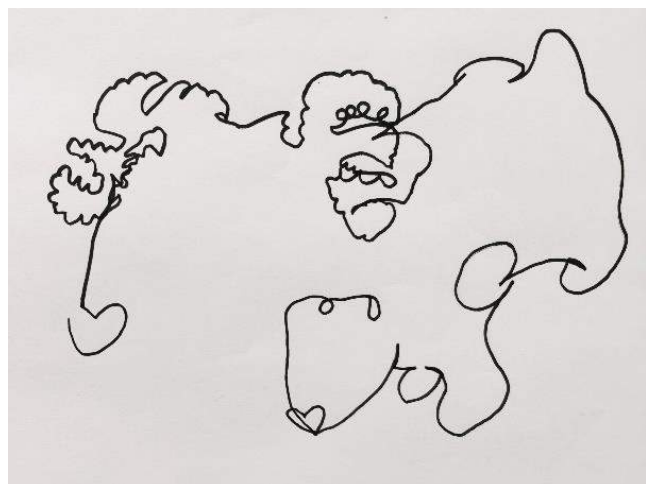
I created this drawing of a plug with a biro. I have made it obvious where the line starts and finishes. Moving from one plug pin to another I had to draw a line I did not see. I have created shading in this drawing by looping the line close together, going over it a couple of times to make the darkest bits whilst still maintaining contact with the paper.



Have a play with this technique, take your time – it's a slow, focused way of drawing. Notice how it feels to really look at the object, training your hand to move in unison with your eye. Create lots of different drawings using different mediums and subject matter being aware of things that you enjoy.

Blind Continuous Line Drawing

This next exercise is designed to really focus your hand to eye coordination – it is quite challenging and very fun – it is blind continual line drawing. For this, choose a simple subject matter and a medium to draw with and set yourself up in a way that you cannot see your



drawing as you are doing it. Drawing like this is a way to ensure that your full attention is on the object, that you cannot watch yourself draw so your eyes are trained on the form and textures of the object.



The drawings that come out of this can be very disjointed, looking odd or quirky. Do not get hung up on the finished drawing, the aim is to fully immerse yourself in the process, establishing a line of communication between your eye, your mind and your hand.

Take your time to explore these processes in lesson one. Drawing is about giving yourself time to lose yourself in the process. Change mediums and subject matter, play with scale and composition and don't forget to keep notes in your sketch book - the types of materials used, the process you are exploring and personal thoughts on how you feel and what you think about it. This way your sketch book will develop into a rich source of information and personal feedback as you take your drawings forwards.

Enjoy your first lesson!

Chat with your tutor Sarah Jane in the Drawing Techniques private Facebook group! This group has been set up exclusively for members of Drawing Techniques, offering a place to ask questions, get feedback on your work and share experiences, tips and advice with fellow students.

