Name:

Pencil Shading Techniques: Tips to Bring Your Artwork to Life

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The main reason why artists use different shading techniques is to help make their work look more realistic. Through shading techniques you can add hard and soft shadows to your work, make it look as if light is reflecting off of it, and you can even give a solid ground or surface that your work appears on to give it more depth, so it doesn't just appear as if it's sitting on a piece of paper.

Shading is one of the fundamental aspects of art. It takes your creative work to the next level and it can visually add a new dimension to your art. With the knowledge of the various shading techniques, you can create a wide array of unique artwork. If you've only just begun drawing, you may run into some problems. Check out The Secrets to Drawing, which is a Udemy course specifically designed to help you improve your drawing skills.

The Importance of Shading

When you want to draw something that looks realistic, you have to understand how to create the illusion of depth. The best way to create this illusion is to use light and shadows.

There are several types of pencil shading techniques you can use, and you may even come up with your own at some point, but for now we will explore six different types commonly used for artists both professionals and beginners – crosshatching, smooth, stippling, contour, circulism, and slinky.

Crosshatching

Crosshatching is popular amongst artists – you may have even seen it in professionally done pieces. This method requires you to draw alternating sets of lines that cross over each other in a criss-cross pattern. One important thing to remember is that the closer together the lines are, the darker the shading will look. You can create highlights with the work as well by either increasing the space between the lines or by taking out certain lines completely.

Smooth Pencil Shading

Smooth shading involves very soft strokes. It is one of the most difficult types of shading to master, but it can also be one of the most effective, and can help you create the most realistic shapes and pictures. Smooth shading is done in a similar way that you would color using a crayon. You use a consistent amount of pressure and create a single layer of graphite. You apply more pressure as you press down on the pencil, and you can lean the pencil on its side to help create a larger effect. There is a special technique you can use to help blend the graphite. Take a piece of cloth or a piece of tissue and rub it against the graphite. This way you can create a smoother transition between the light and the shadow on your work.

Stippling Pencil Shading

Stippling, which is also known as pointillism, is a very common form of shading that people commonly use with pens. Stippling bears a strong resemblance to crosshatching, but instead of making lines that criss-cross, you create spots that are closer together and further apart. As you space the dots out you can create highlights or, similar to crosshatching, you can just leave out large amounts of dots to give the illusion of highlighting as well.

Slinky Pencil Shading

The slinky form of shading is quick and easy to use, even for beginners. You do this form of shading by using very fast back and forth motions with your pencil. You eventually create a line that looks resembles a slinky. This is an excellent method for creating sketches or if you are making pieces that don't need a lot of detail to complete.

If you want to create something that is more detailed or advanced, you may want to consider using a different technique that gives you more range.

Circulism Pencil Shading

Circulism is a form of shading where, as the name suggests, you create small circles to shade your work. Imagine creating curly hair on a character you drew; you would apply the same technique when you're doing circulism. As you create smaller circles the shading will be darker, but as you create larger circles the shading will appear lighter.

Contour Shading

Another form of shading that resembles crosshatching, contour is a shading type that follows the contour of a line, or the lines of the shape of your particular image. This form of shading works best when you are working with various types of circular images, such as an apple or orange.

Finding New Pencil Shading Techniques

Depending on your art style, you may find that this pencil shading technique works amazingly well or they may not work for you at all. There are tons of techniques that you can try, and you can master them all with a little bit of practice.

A great form of practice is drawing yourself and coming into your own style. The Udemy courses Portrait Drawing and Drawing with Confidence are both helpful ways to increase your artistic skills.

# Using Different Types of Tools for Shading

When it comes to shading your work, you aren't limited to one particular technique, you can use what works for you in order to get the best result. There are a lot of shading techniques you can use. Remember that shading isn't just a technique you can learn with any utensil.

Different pencils have different effects. The numbers on your pencils (such as 2B, 4B, 6B, 2H, 4H, etc.) indicate different levels of hardness and softness. Harder pencils, marked by H, shade much more lightly. Soft pencils, such as 2B, are softer and are darker for shading. The larger a number, the softer the pencil's lead is. Most artists use several pencils to diversify their shading to help make their work look even more realistic.

There are a lot of things that you can learn to properly utilize pencil shading techniques. You can find drawing tips to get you started. They won't just help you learn how to draw, but they will also help you come up with and explore new ideas when it comes to your creations.

The Udemy course, Pen and Ink Drawings for Beginners, is a go to resource for people that want to learn how to draw using tools outside of pencils, while still using similar techniques.
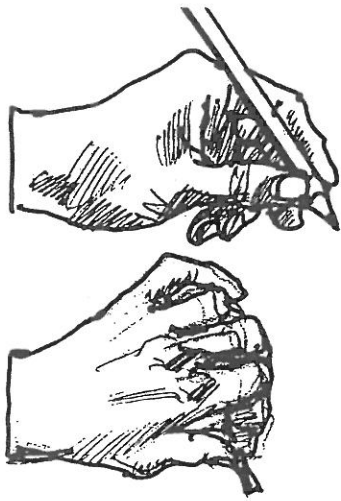
For the close grip, pencil is held down near the point. Fine muscles of fingers and wrist are employed.

Control handwriting

If free handwriting is the hare, control handwriting is the tortoise. It takes more time, but its leisurely pace is relaxing, and it's always there at the finish. Be prepared to spend some time concentrating on these projects. You'll be exercising your editing and fine motor skills to bring out the precise, subtle, careful, patient, and deliberate aspects of yourself. Keep these attitudes in mind as triggering words. For greater control, slid your hand down near the point of the drawing tool. You'll be making shorter, more accurate strokes. Keep your point sharp work slowly, and evaluate your progress periodically. These exercises were designed to improve dexterity and provide you with a measurable standard. You can judge for yourself whether you've graded the tone evenly, softened edges accurately, or recorded details faithfully.
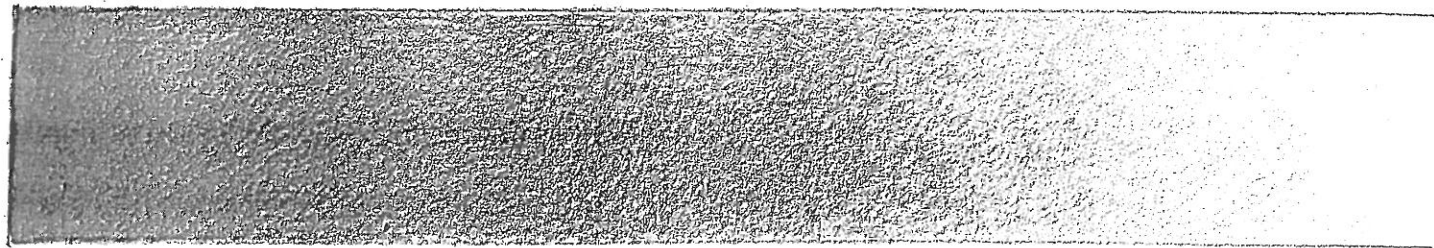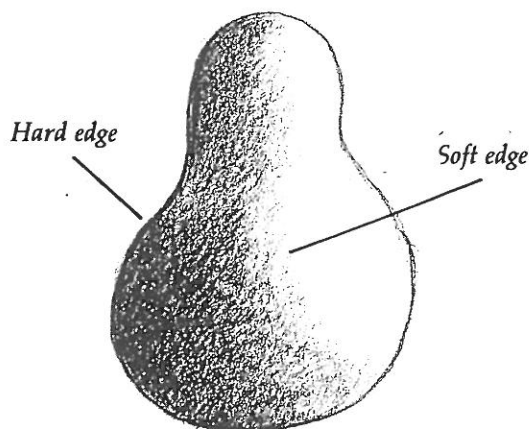

Tonal bar using pressure strokes.
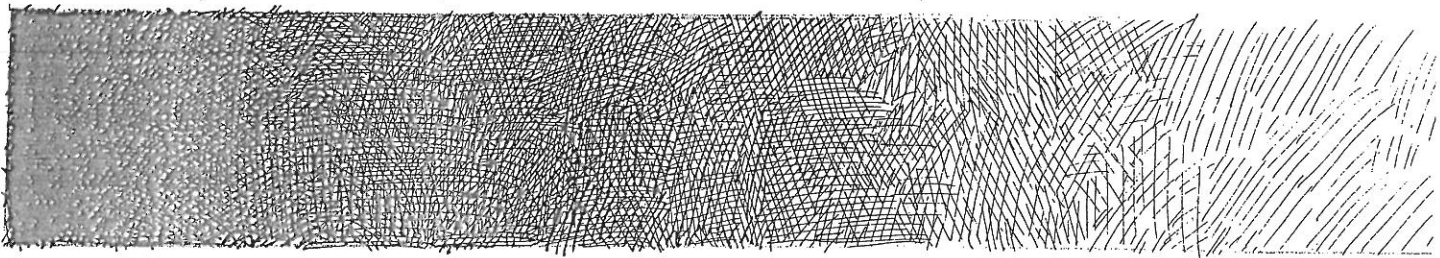
Tonal bar using hatching strokes.

Tonal bar

This exercise is valuable in controlling tone and is harder than it looks. Draw a 1 x 8-inch rectangle and create within it an evenly graded tone, moving from black at one end to white at the other. You can do this in any medium, but I recommend you try it in HB or B pencil first. Use the point or the side or both to get the results you desire. Build up to the tone slowly and watch out for the the common tendency to get too dark in the light half of the bar. Check your progress periodically by squinting and by stepping back. Your finished bar should move uniformly from dark to light. You can compare it with the examples above but don't be surprised if you do it better.

Hard and soft edges

Hard edge

Soft edge

A hard edge is one with a sharply defined border; a soft edge gradually disappears. Most tonal drawings mix hard and soft edges. In this exercise, lightly draw a simple pear shape within a rectangle. The pear should be dark on one side, gradually blending (soft edge) to white on the other. The outer edge of the pear should be crisply defined all around (hard edge). The background should be a middle gray. If you want a slightly more challenging problem, make the background dark against the light half of the pear and shift to light against the dark side

Shading Exercise

Name: _____

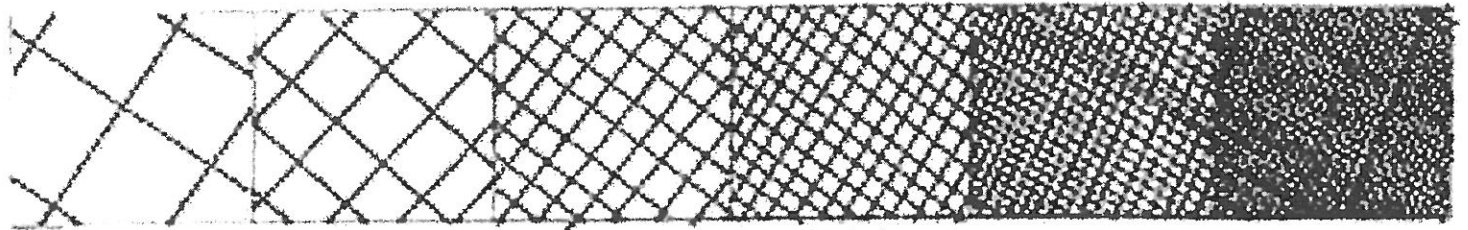Date: _____

Smooth Crosshatching Stippling Contour Line

Assignment: Each day, at least once, fill in one row of squares shading darkest to lightest using pencils or pens.
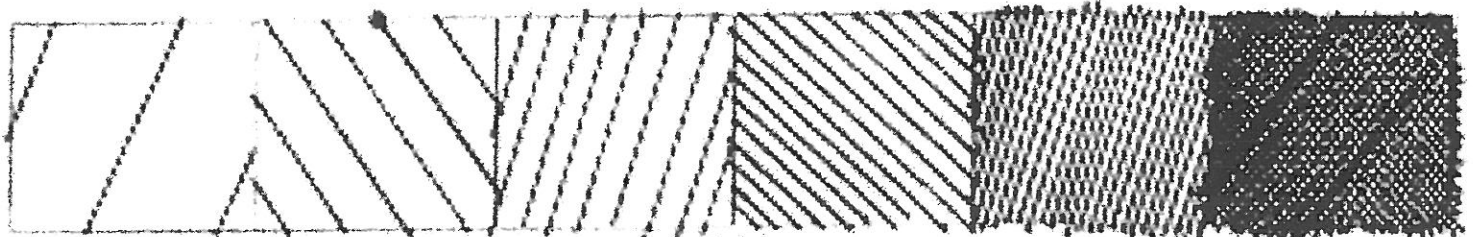
~Donna Young

value scales using line
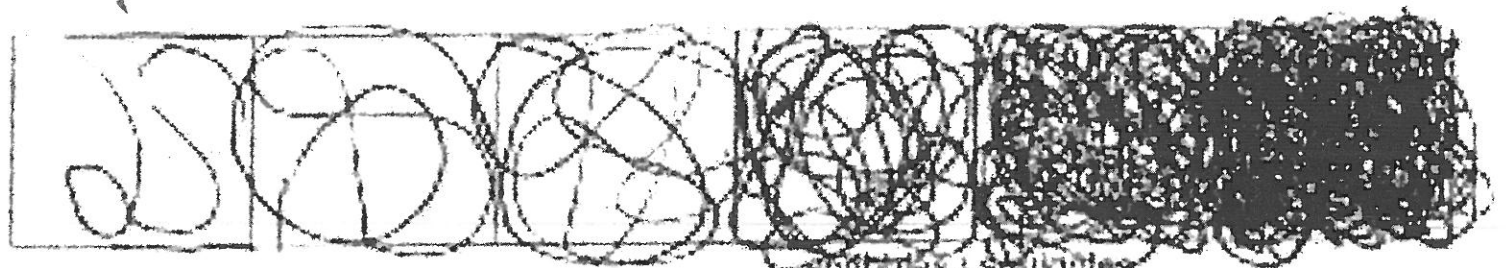

lightest (1)   example (cross hatching)   darkest (6)
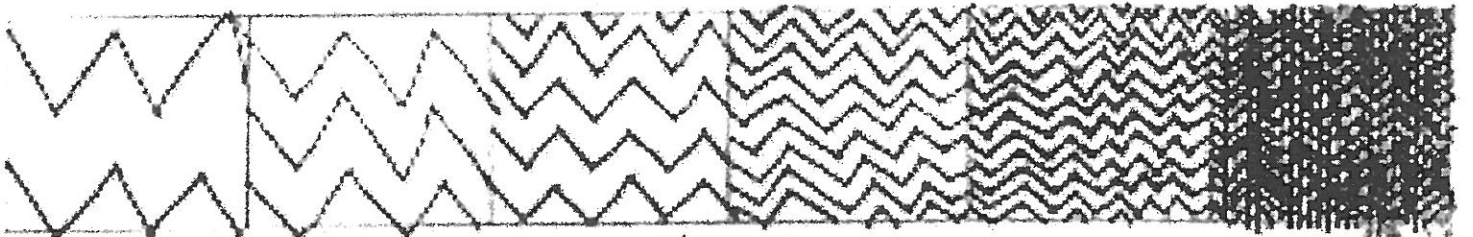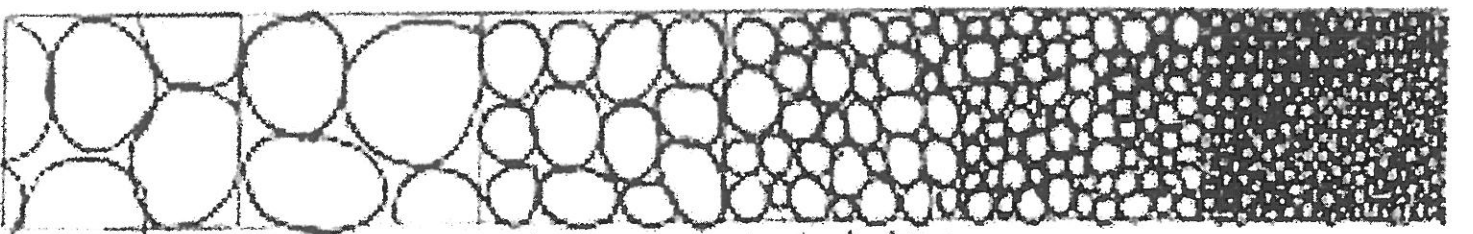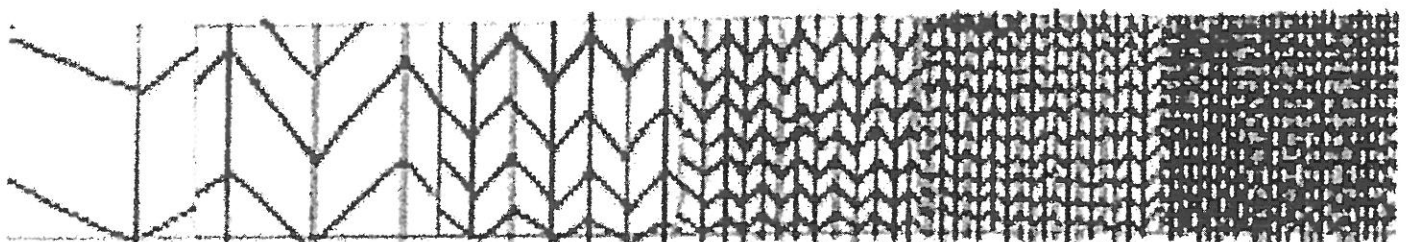
hatching

scribbles / squiggles

zig zags

invent your own technique

combination of 2 or more techniques (from above examples)

Name:_____

Assignment: Tonal or Grey Scale

Smooth Tonal Scale:

_____Advanced (3)– Excellent technique, 9 distinct tones represented

_____Proficient (2) – Adequate technique, 7 or more distinct tones represented

_____Needs Improvement (1) – Weak technique, less than 7 distinct tones

Cross Hatch Tonal Scale:

_____Advanced (3)– Excellent technique, 9 distinct tones represented

_____Proficient (2) – Adequate technique, 7 or more distinct tones represented

_____Needs Improvement (1) – Weak technique, less than 7 distinct tones

Stippling Tonal Scale:

_____Advanced (3)– Excellent technique, 9 distinct tones represented

_____Proficient (2) – Adequate technique, 7 or more distinct tones represented

_____Needs Improvement (1) – Weak technique, less than 7 distinct tones

Choice Tonal Scale 1:

_____Advanced (3)– Excellent technique, 9 distinct tones represented

_____Proficient (2) – Adequate technique, 7 or more distinct tones represented

_____Needs Improvement (1) – Weak technique, less than 7 distinct tones

Choice Tonal scale 2:

_____Advanced (3)– Excellent technique, 9 distinct tones represented

_____Proficient (2) – Adequate technique, 7 or more distinct tones represented

_____Needs Improvement (1) – Weak technique, less than 7 distinct tones

Total Score on assignment:

_____/15_____

Tonal matching

The challenge in this exercise is to accurately match the tones and edges in a black and white photograph. First trace or copy a light outline of the face below. Then place your outline drawing next to the photograph and duplicate as closely as possible each tone and edge. By building up patiently and squinting frequently, you'll be able to get a good match of dark, light, and middle tones. Be particularly sensitive to the hard edges, the soft edges and those edges in between. From time to time, step back and compare your drawing with the photograph. This exercise requires at least 15-20 minutes.

Copy or trace the outlines of the essential shapes in the photograph. Lay the two side by side and try to match the tones of the photo.

Project 2 - D — Make a Tonal Bar

Make a 1½x8-inch panel and create within it an evenly graded tone from black to white. Use a soft pencil and build up the tone deliberately and patiently, squinting from time to time to check your progress. Strive for a smooth transition between tones and watch for "spots" of light or dark. The middle tone (50% black) should be in the center of your bar. Allow yourself 30 minutes.

If you are interested in pen and ink, try a second tonal bar using the crosshatch method. The tones will be slightly coarser than your pencil version, but when you step back, the overall effect should be the same. To create the light areas, the pen strokes must become gradually less numerous and farther apart. You may want to use the examples shown here as a general guide for both bars.

Project 2 - E — Match the Tones

As carefully and accurately as you can, match the tones in this photograph. You may want to lightly trace the main shapes first before laying the paper alongside to duplicate the tones. Build up the strokes slowly and patiently and pay particular attention to the hardness or softness of the edges. Squint frequently to compare your work with the photograph. Use a soft pencil and allow yourself 30 minutes.

Howard Search

The precision patch

This is an exercise in tonal accuracy and fine detail. The challenge is to make a precise drawing of some small, insignificant area — perhaps a section of machinery, or a door hinge. Work slowly and strive for a meticulous rendering. Hold the drawing tool near the point and keep it very sharp.