

gesture drawing

Foundation of the Figure

A
drawsh

Book

Written and Illustrated

by

Josh Reed

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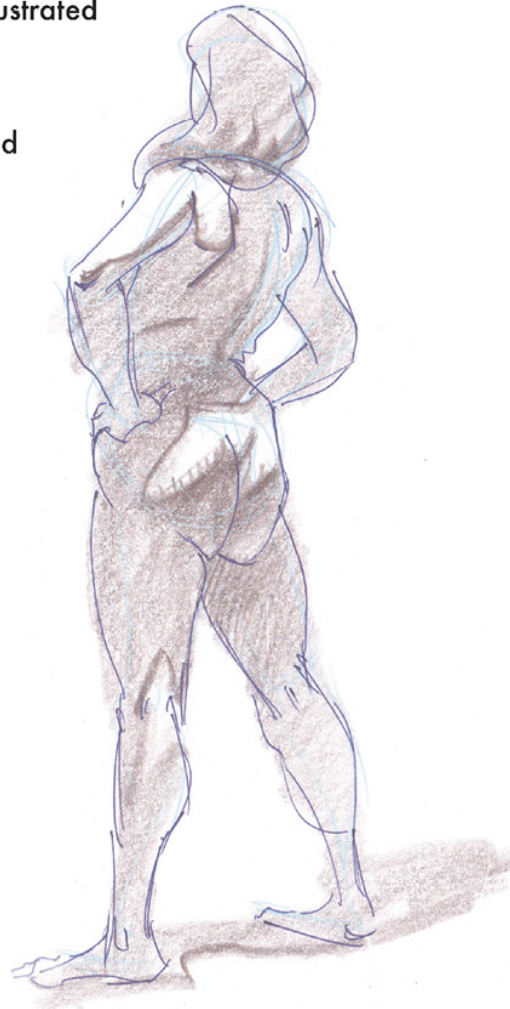


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To my wife and family for their constant and unwavering support.

And to Enrique, Ron, Marshall and Joe for their tutelage and friendship throughout the years.



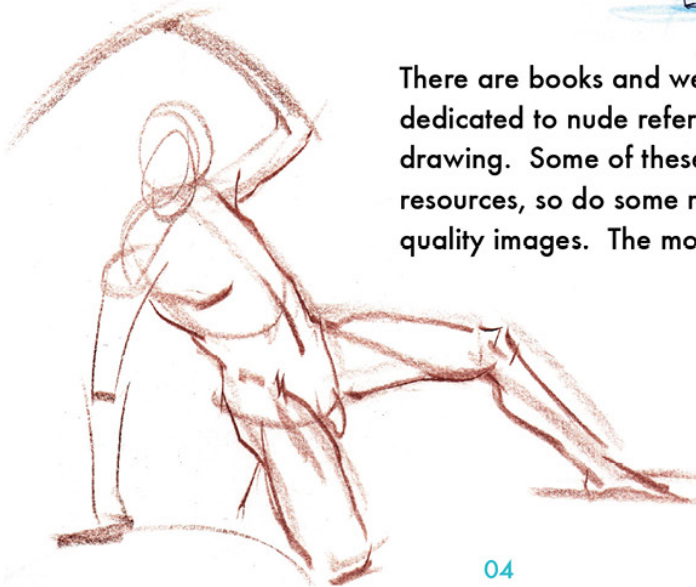
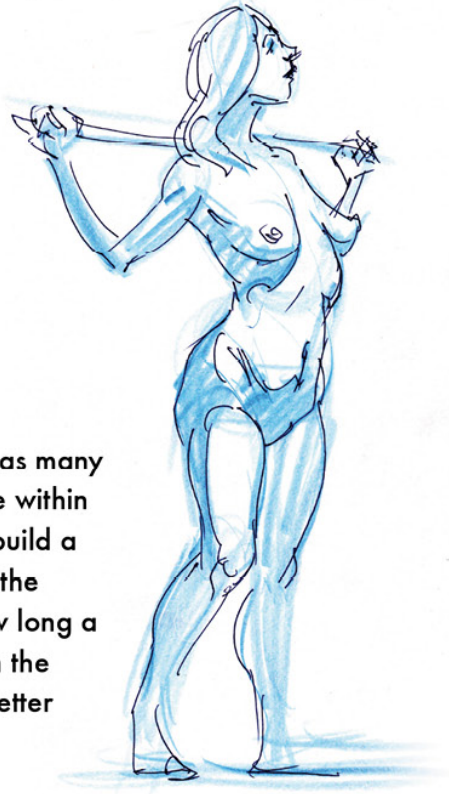
INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on a specific gestural process to help you learn and record the human figure. There are instructions on how to draw, tips and pointers to think about as you work, and exercises to help you practice specific ideas.

Each section builds on the previous one as a linear train of thought. If you are new to figure drawing, start at the beginning and move through the material faithfully without skipping sections.

If you already have some experience figure drawing, following the train of thought will reinforce your understanding of gesture and help you practice the foundational skills.

I would practice each exercise in the book as many times as you need to complete the exercise within the time constraints provided. You should build a slideshow of nude figure reference and do the exercises for 20 minute sets to simulate how long a model poses in class. Going back through the exercises again and again will make you better and faster.



There are books and websites specifically dedicated to nude references for figure drawing. Some of these sites are free resources, so do some research to find good quality images. The more poses the better.

Without further ado, lets get to it. I hope you learn and have fun in the process!

Josh Reed



1
GETTING STARTED

GESTURE: WHAT THE HECK IS IT?

Gesture is simply a term used to describe a quick sketch that captures the basics of your subject's action and mood. Gestures can be made with long flowing lines, short scribbles, large passages of tone, or anything in between. There are no absolute rules for gesture.

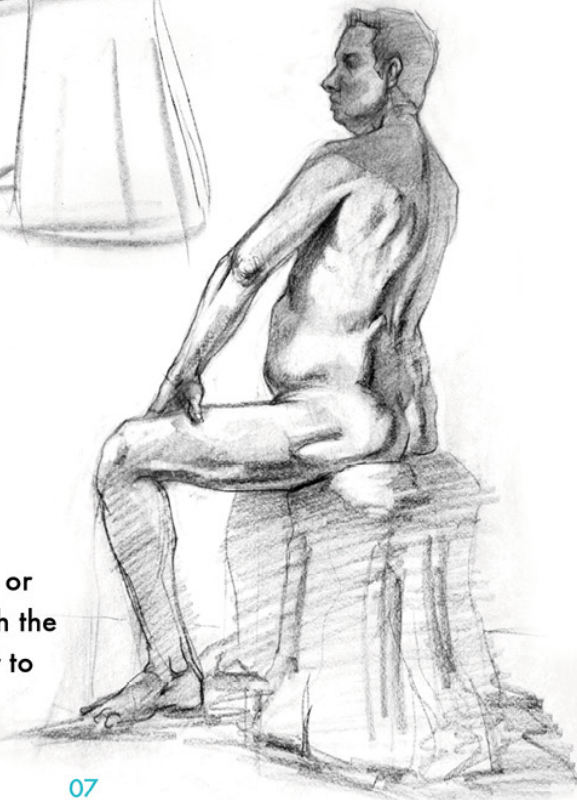


A gesture can also be a short stand alone drawing or the start of a multiple hour pose. In either case you may approach the gesture slightly different but they have the same goal: to quickly and efficiently capture the essence of the pose. Your first marks in both cases should be a few broad strokes that capture the whole figure as simply as possible.

A gesture can be a drawing that stands on its own containing contour, form, or light and shadow all together. This approach works best in a 2-5 minute pose.

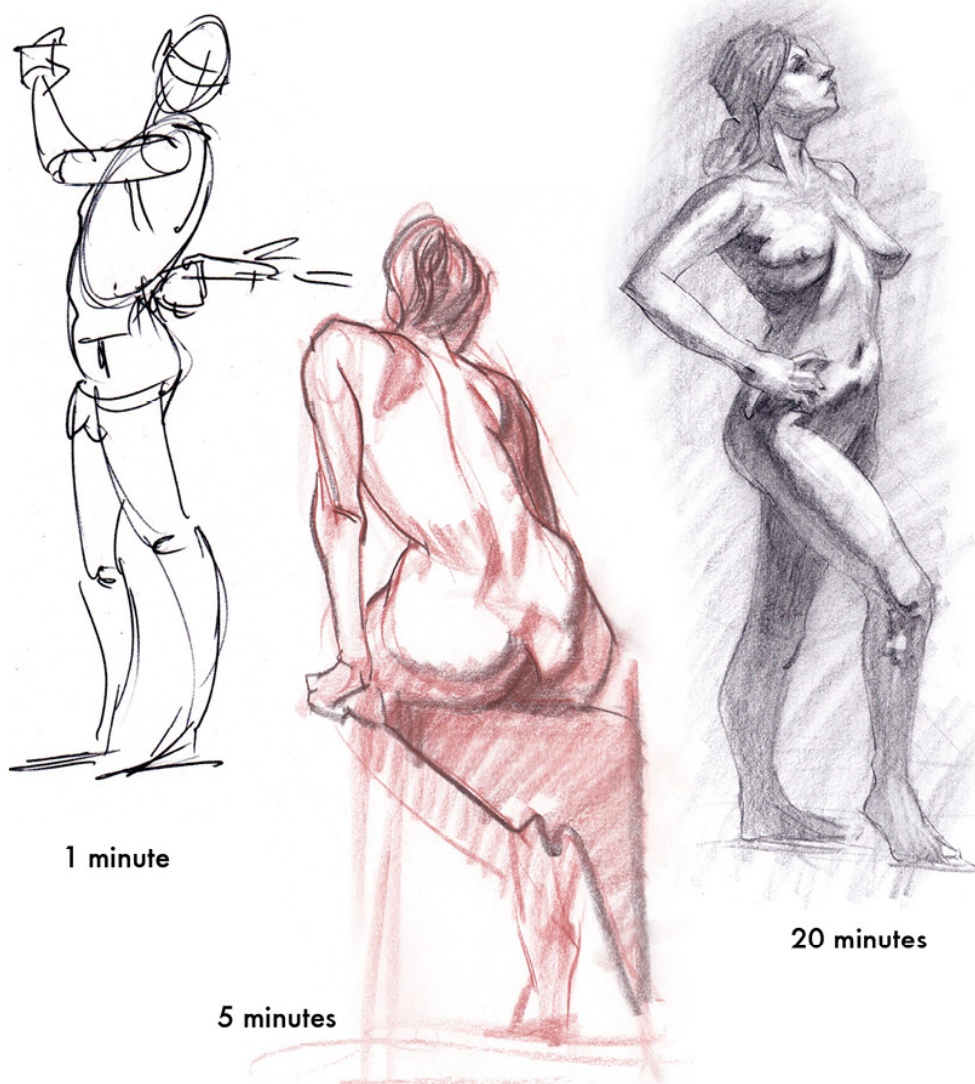


A gesture can also be a very simple light drawing so you can construct on top of it for a longer session.



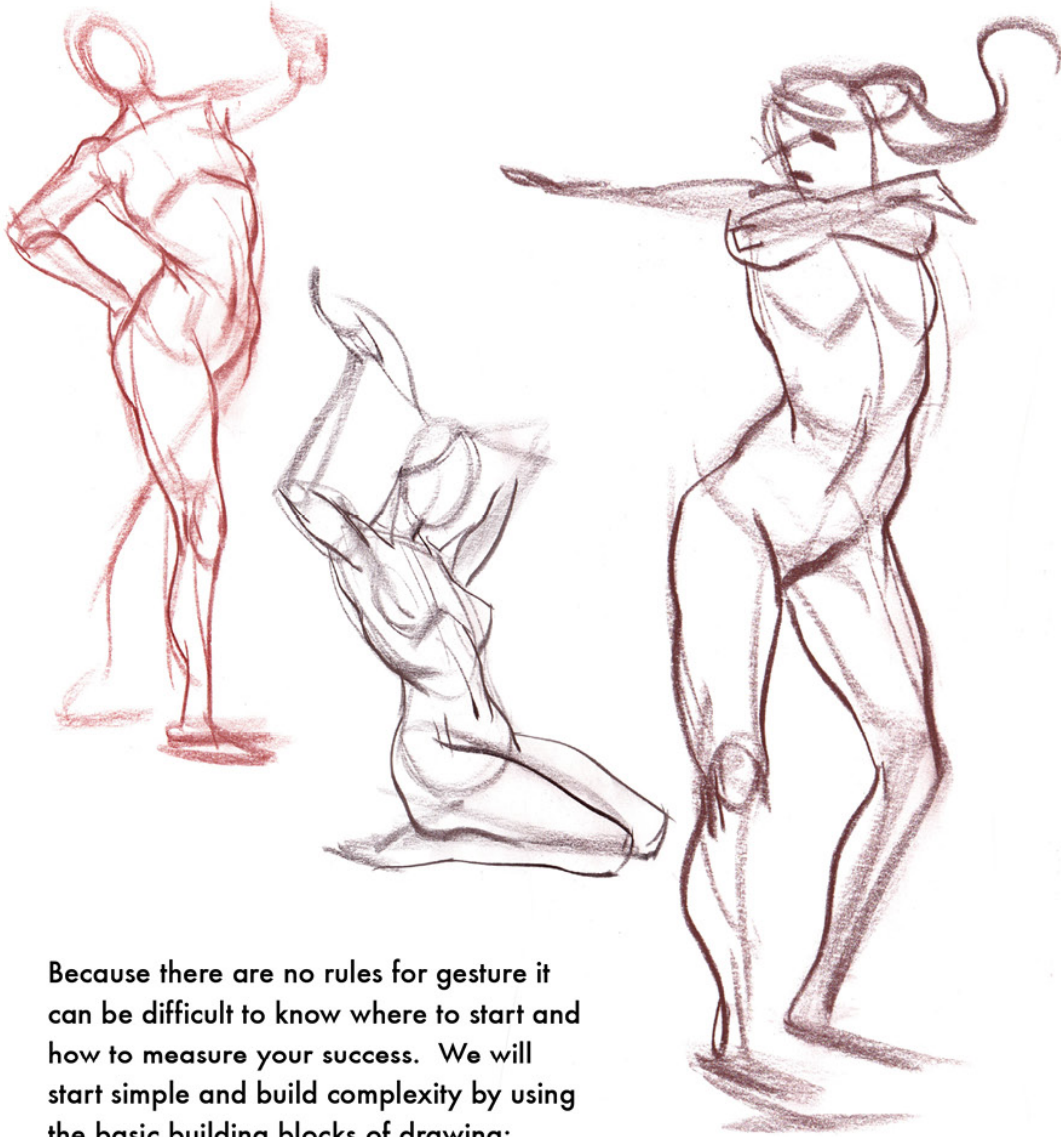
When you have 10 minutes or longer, it's best to approach the drawing lighter and simpler to allow yourself to build the drawing up to finish.

Do we always need a gesture? No, some artists approach drawing in a measured way. They may start with a vertical straight line to slowly measure proportion and angles, or a large outer "envelope" shape that they make more complex through careful and accurate measurements. In both these cases, the artist must work from observation and they are very slow approaches to drawing. A gestural approach, like we will discuss in this book, is a much quicker process, can be used to work from imagination, and helps us analyze the human figure. None of these approaches are "better" than the other, they are just different.



The gestural process allows you to create complete drawings in minutes.

To do gesture well, you must quickly analyze the complex components in front of you and find quick and effective ways to record them. This process will teach you about the figure and ultimately give you complete mastery over figure drawing where no pose is too hard to analyze. Over time you will even be able to create realistic human figures in complex poses from imagination, just like the great masters!



Because there are no rules for gesture it can be difficult to know where to start and how to measure your success. We will start simple and build complexity by using the basic building blocks of drawing: Lines, Shapes, and Forms. These building blocks have different properties so let's take a look at each of them.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF DRAWING

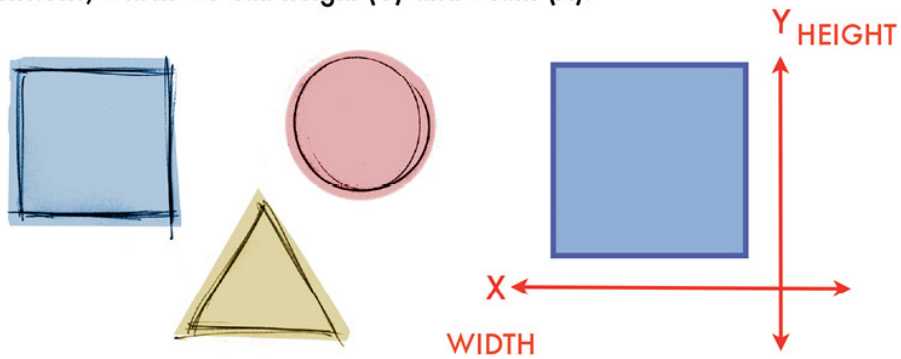
LINES:

Lines can be light or dark, thick or thin, hard or soft, straight or curved, or any combination of these. Lines are one dimensional. We say they have length, regardless of their position.



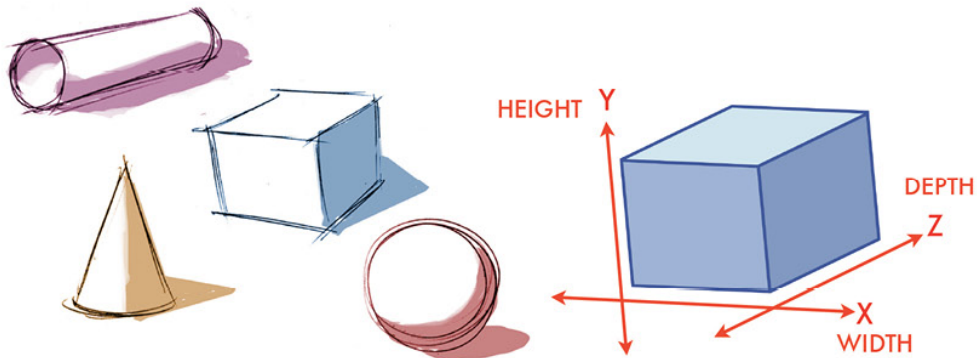
SHAPES:

There are 3 basic shapes, circle, square, and triangle. Shapes have two dimensions, which we call height (Y) and width (X).



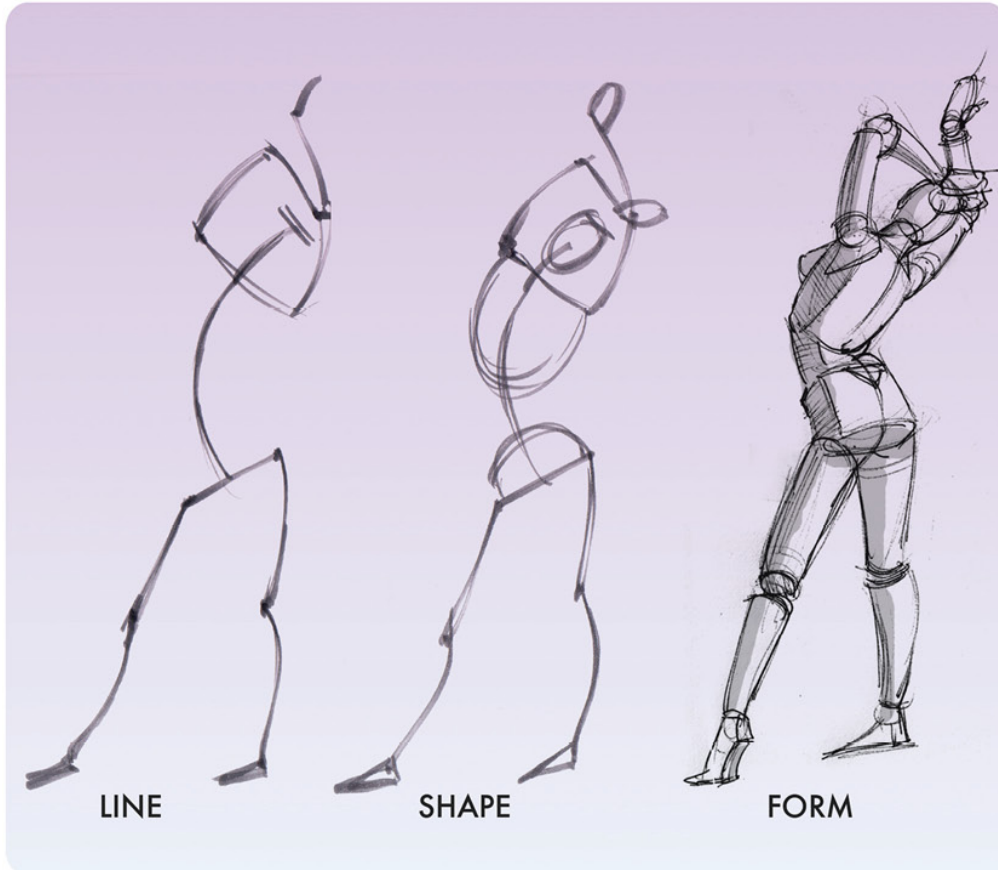
FORMS:

There are four basic forms, the cube, sphere, cylinder, and cone. We will also use wedge forms in parts of the figure. Forms have 3 dimensions, which we call height (Y), width (X), and depth (Z).



LINE, SHAPE, AND FORM: A METHOD FOR GESTURE

We will use the basic building blocks to understand and construct the parts of the figure accurately. We will use each building block as a simple and separate step that builds on the one before. I call this the Line, Shape, Form, or the L,S,F method.



“Why use three separate steps” you ask? Because drawing figure is a difficult task and simplifying the complexity into bite sized stages allows us to understand what each component gives us. At first this process may seem overly simple, but the beginner should stick with three separate stages. Later we will discuss how to combine these steps into your own personal approach. But whenever you get stuck on a difficult pose you can fall back on these simple steps to analyze and capture what’s in front of you.

Now, on to the L, S, F method!

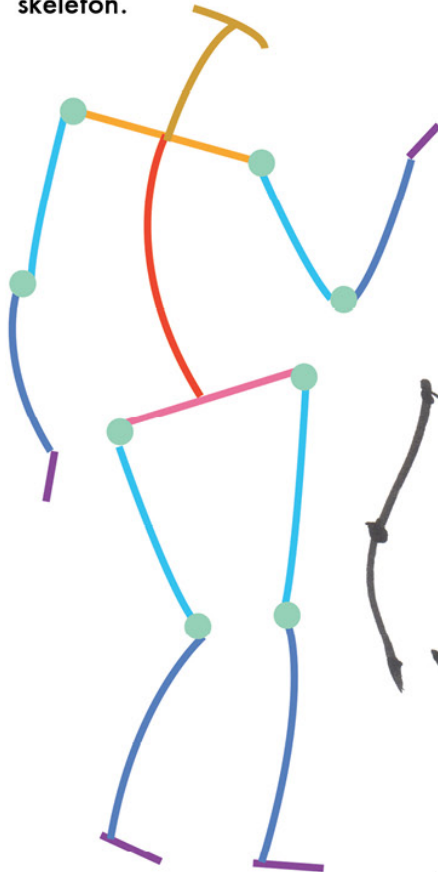


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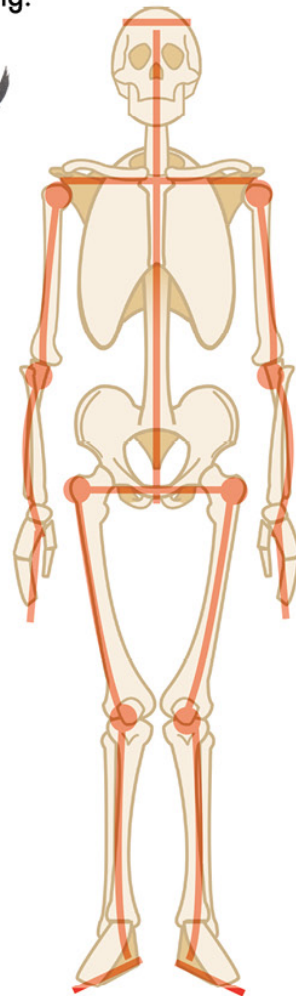
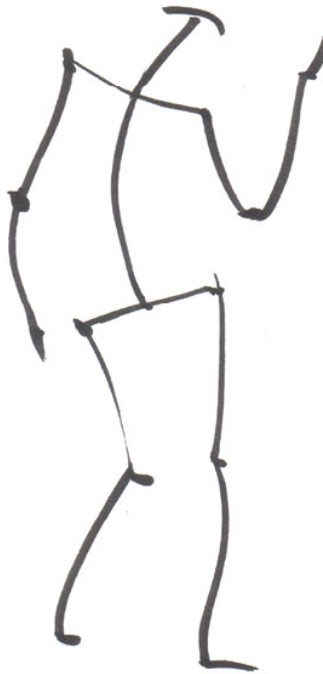
THE LSF METHOD: LINES

LINE: THE ARMATURE

First we will work only with lines. Working with lines only allows us to focus on the attitude of the pose looking at the angles, energy, and action. It also acts as the simplest "armature," or underlying structure that we will use to build the rest of our drawings on. This line armature also represents the basic skeleton.

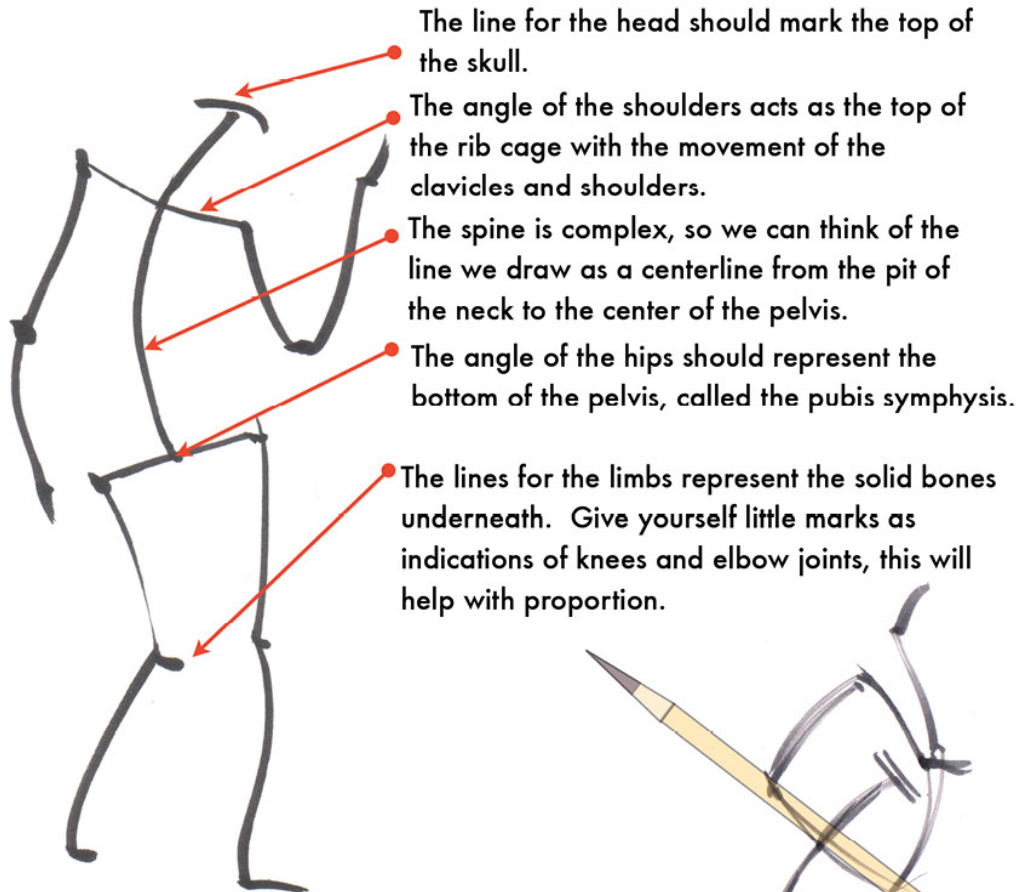


We look at each part of the figure and describe it with a simple line. Lines for the spine and limbs don't need to be perfectly straight. Bones and muscles always create some type of curve. Be aware of those subtleties and try to capture them in your drawing.



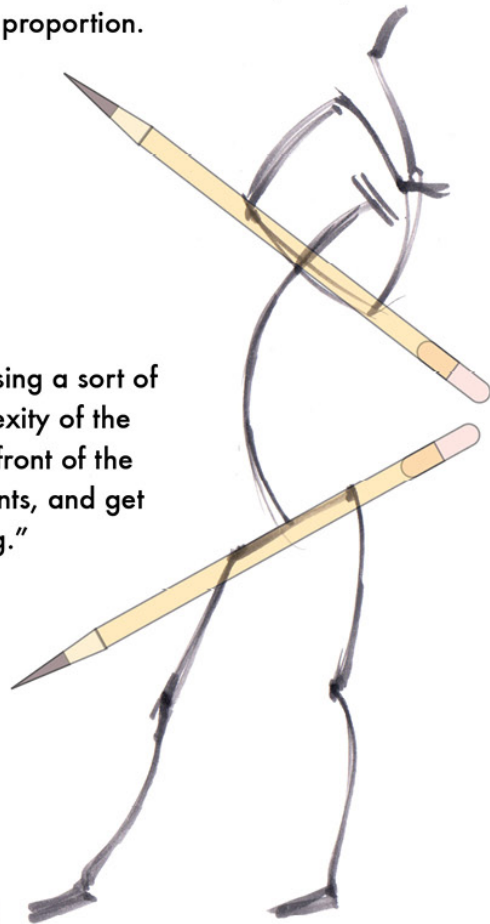
Make sure your line drawing addresses the action for the whole figure. Lines should be the broadest action you see. Limit yourself to a line for the **top of head**, **the neck**, **angle of the shoulders**, **spine**, **angle of the hips**, **upper arms**, **lower arms**, **upper legs**, and **lower legs**, and **hands and feet**.

These lines should not be arbitrary but represent specific parts of the anatomy.



First draw these lines simply by eye using a sort of x-ray vision to see through the complexity of the surface. Then hold your pencil up in front of the model and check the angles, alignments, and get measurements. This is called "sighting."

Check your armature lines with sighting and adjust the armature to make it more accurate. Over time this process of working by eye, sighting, and correcting will improve the initial accuracy of your drawings.



EXERCISE

30 seconds. Let's do some armature sketches. Draw the full figure and don't forget to put in marks for joints and hand/foot indications. Try it with a brush pen or felt tipped pen to keep you decisive. This is a great exercise to re-visit once you have a good understanding of proportion.

There is no rule where to start, however I find it best to start with the core of the body and work your way down the legs to ground the figure, then build arms, neck and head.



Sometimes it is helpful to start with the main action of the spine and build the shoulders and hips, then attaching limbs, and finishing with the head.



Other times it is easier to start with angle of the shoulders and drape the spine off of it. Then the hips, limbs and head. Choose what works best for the pose in front of you.



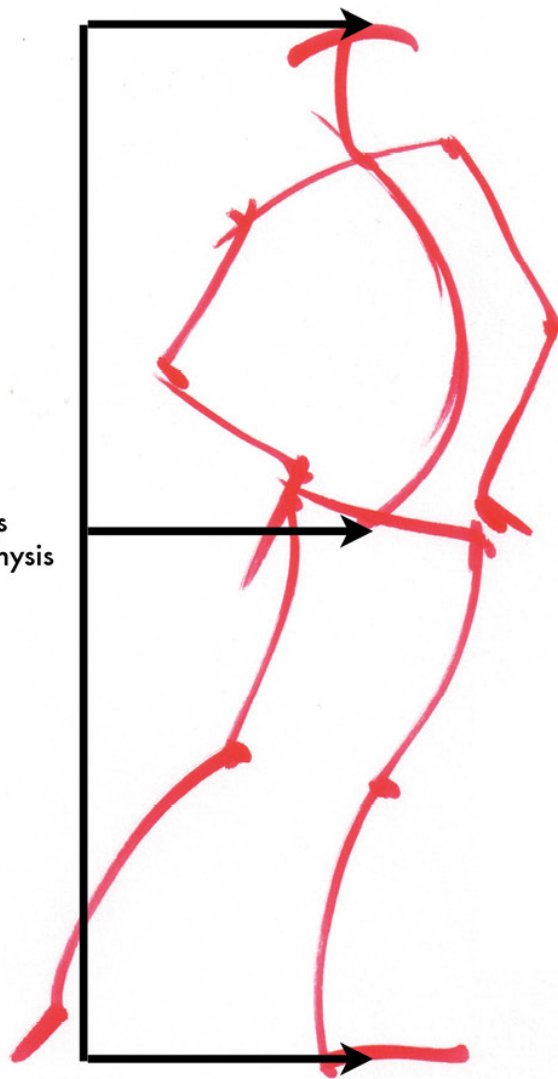
The figure below looks like it has very short arms, but in life the arms were foreshortened, so the lines are smaller to account for this. It looks strange in a simple armature, but it will be clearer when we build forms.



1/2 down is
pubis symphysis

In reality the spine is "S" curved, but for most your line drawings a "C" curve will capture the movement of the torso best. For these line gestures you are not really drawing the spine, but a center line describing action from the top of the rib cage to the pubis symphysis.

If at first the figures don't look right, it probably means your proportion is off. We generally use an 8 head proportion, so the bottom pelvis line (pubis symphysis) is the halfway point between the top of the head and the heels.

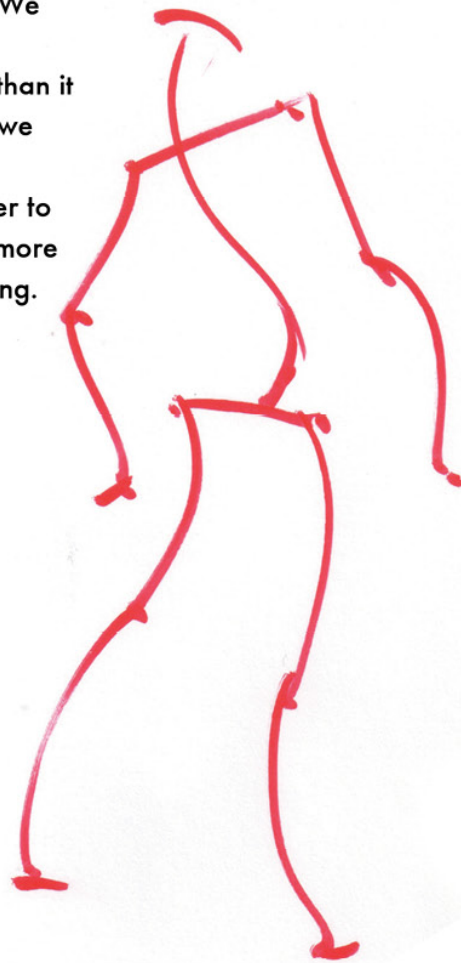


Keep these pointers in mind when approaching your gestures.



– Observe and draw at the same time. Position your paper so you can see it and the model (or reference) without moving your head too much. If you have to constantly turn your head back and forth to draw, there will be a disconnect between your brain and your hand.

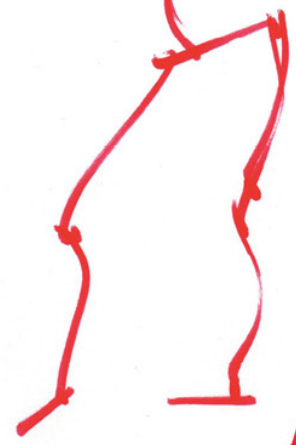
– Exaggerate! We tend to draw the figure more stiff than it really is. When we exaggerate, we actually get closer to life and make a more interesting drawing.



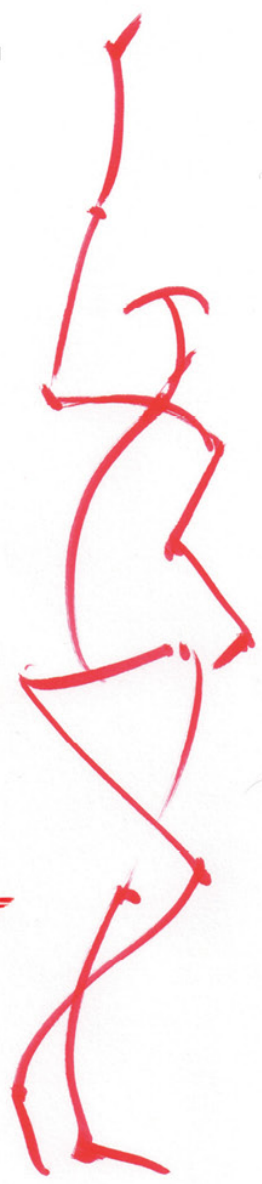
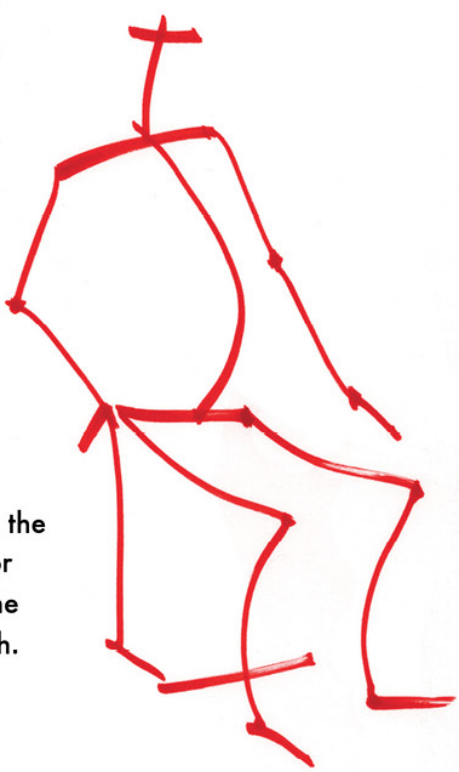
– Manage your time. Try to draw an indication of the full figure simply (head, hands, feet and all) even if it's a 30 second pose. Getting the whole figure lets you judge proportion more accurately and will improve your speed.



– Draw the big things first. Forsake small elements like fingers, noses, or detailed contours until the larger structures like the torso and limbs are working.



– Don't chop your figure. If you are doing a study of a portion of the figure avoid cropping at the joints.

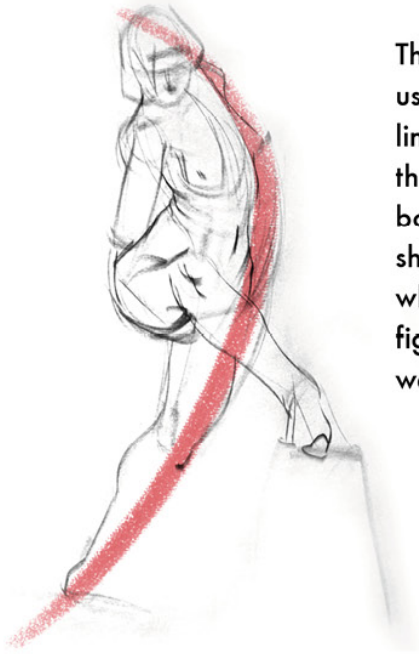


– Always indicate the chair, wall, pole, or other object that the figure interacts with.

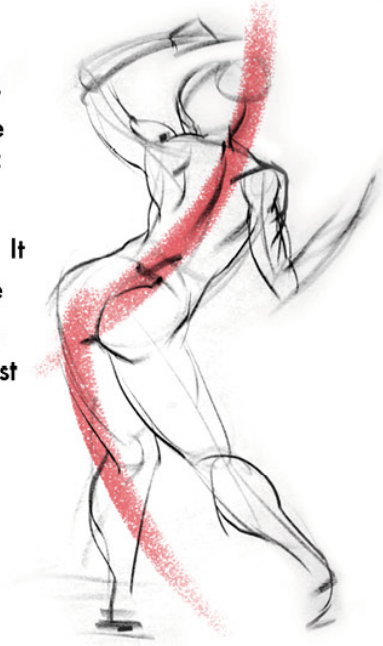
– Spend time looking. Analyze what you are seeing and plan your moves, even before you draw. This can make your actual drawing more focused and thoughtful.

THE LINE OF ACTION

The line of action is the longest simplest line you can see that describes the entire pose. Seeing a line of action helps you keep a continuity or flow in the figure and exaggerate the movement.



The line of action is usually seen as one line from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet. It should describe the whole action of the figure in the simplest way.

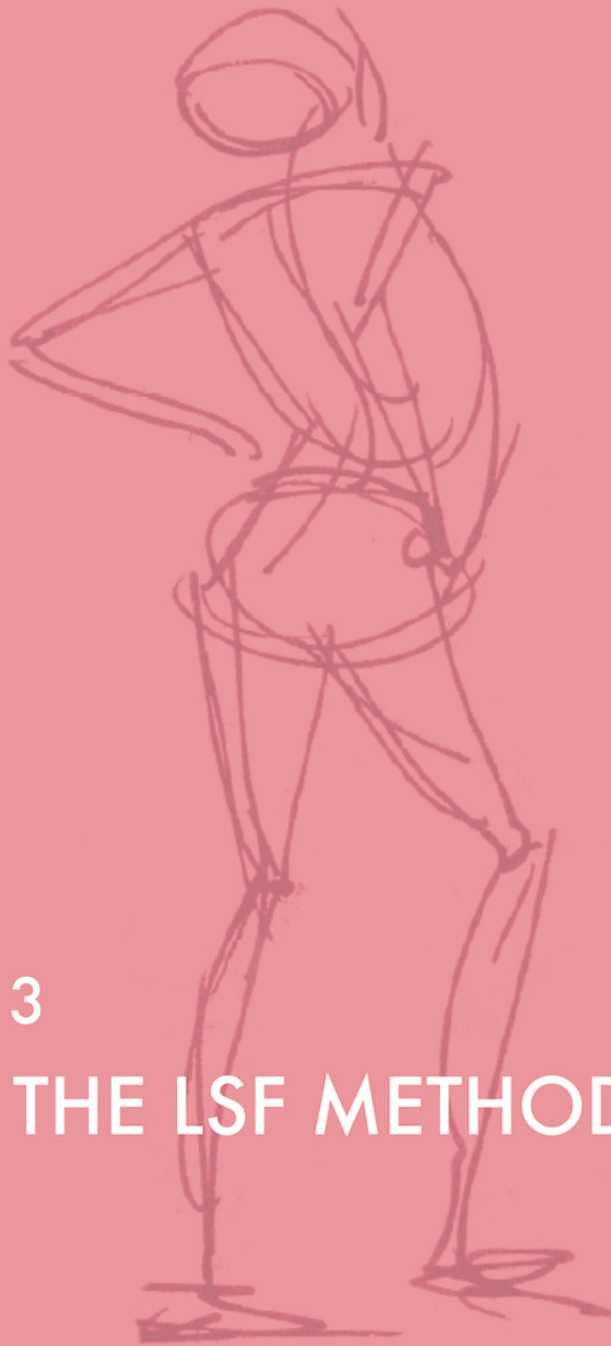


This is an abstract idea but you might be surprised by how movement in the figure connects through the line of action.



At times the pose may be more complex, and you can break the line of action into two connected sweeping lines.

The line of action can be too simple to construct on top of, but the principal is important to understand. Seeing an exaggerated line of action helps us see the essence of the pose and push our drawings to keep them from looking stiff.



3

THE LSF METHOD: SHAPES

SHAPES: ADDING MASS

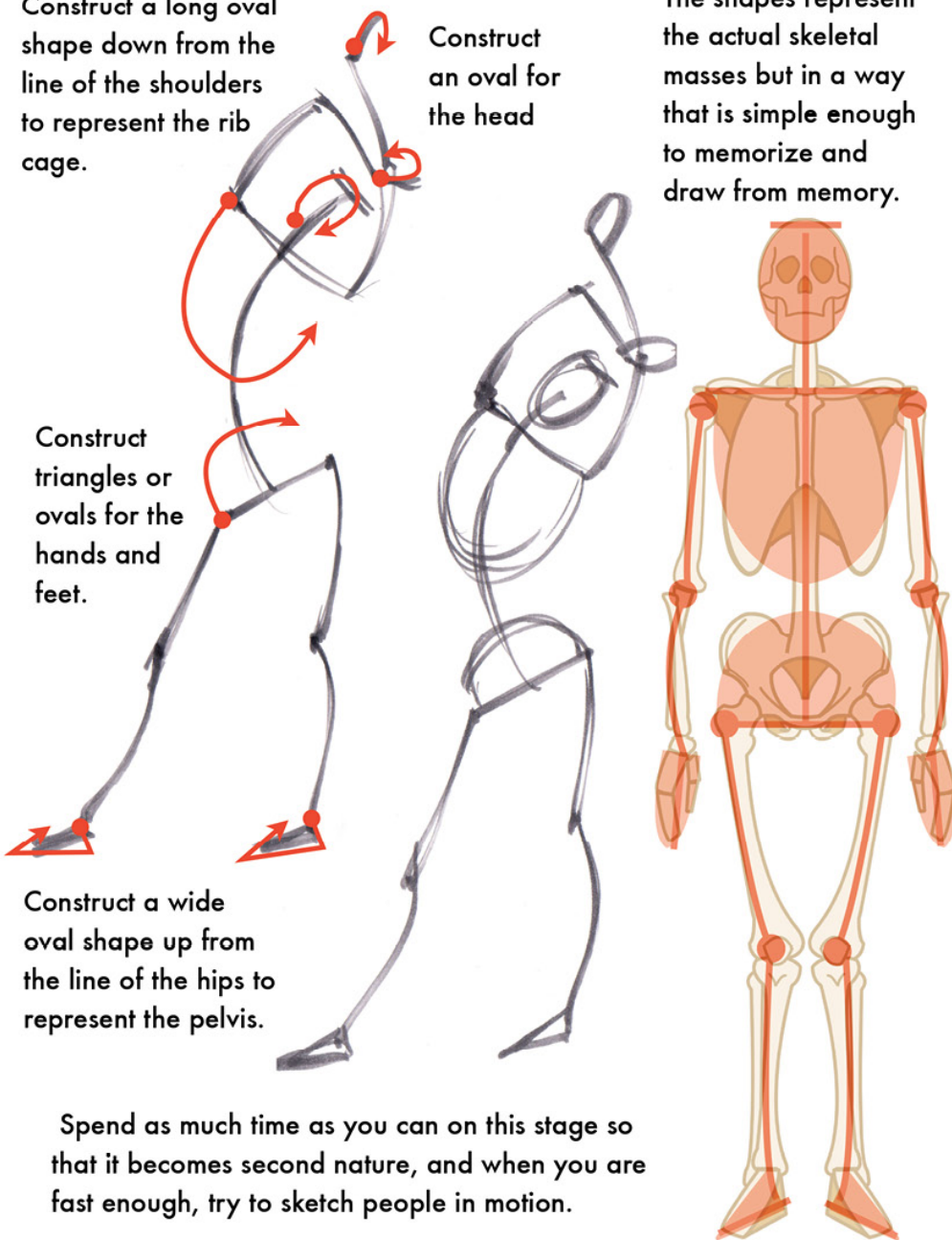
Our next step will be to build shapes on our line armatures. The shape stage addresses the mass of the figure and helps to flesh out the body.

Construct a long oval shape down from the line of the shoulders to represent the rib cage.

Construct an oval for the head

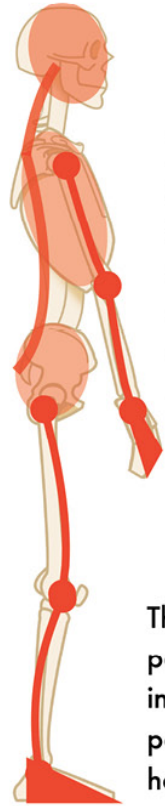
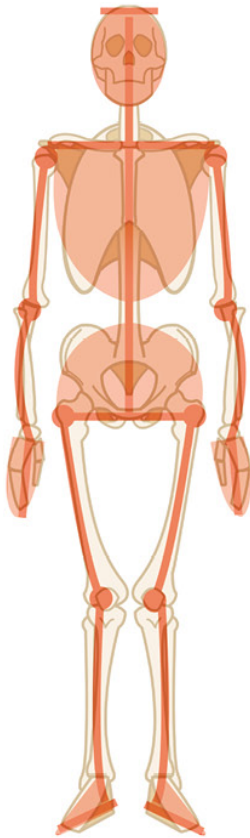
The shapes represent the actual skeletal masses but in a way that is simple enough to memorize and draw from memory.

Construct triangles or ovals for the hands and feet.



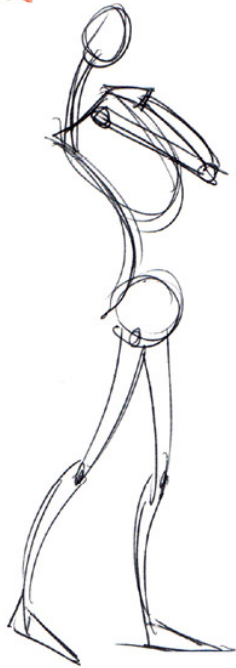
Construct a wide oval shape up from the line of the hips to represent the pelvis.

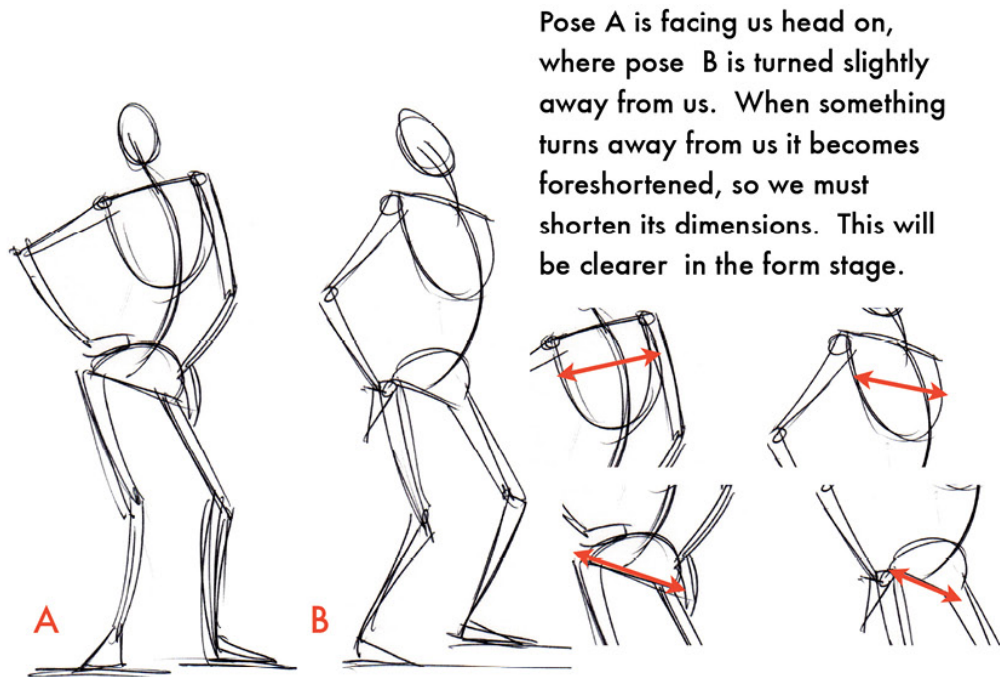
Spend as much time as you can on this stage so that it becomes second nature, and when you are fast enough, try to sketch people in motion.



From the front and back the spine is a centerline, but from the side the spine sits behind the rib cage and pelvis. From the side you may not see the angle of the shoulders and hips, but our approach doesn't change.

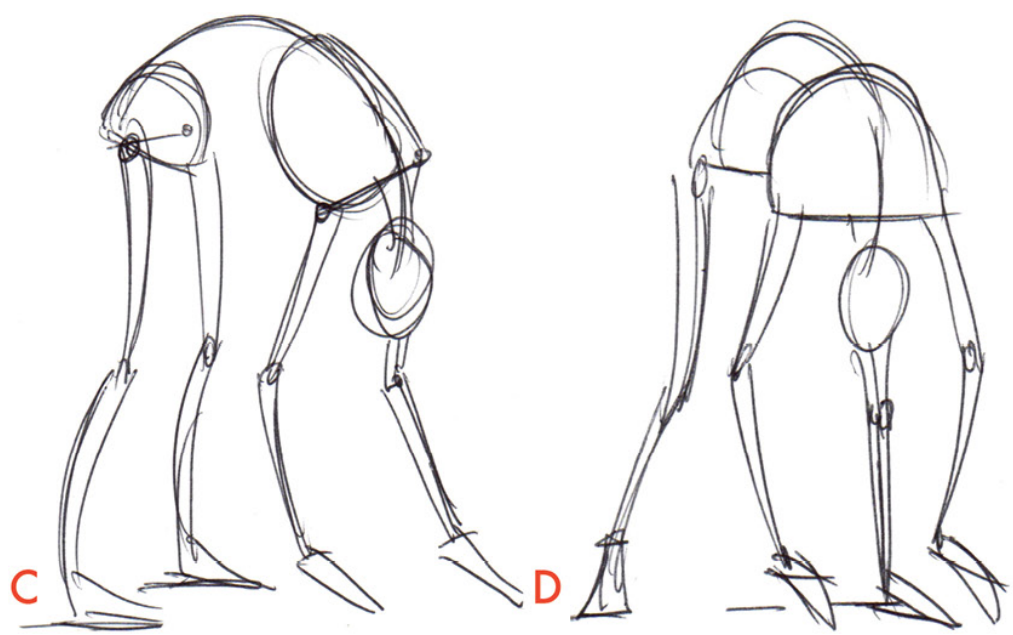
The rib cage and pelvis can move independent, so pay attention to how they are positioned.





Pose A is facing us head on, where pose B is turned slightly away from us. When something turns away from us it becomes foreshortened, so we must shorten its dimensions. This will be clearer in the form stage.

Pose C and D are the same pose, but pose D is turned towards us which creates some confusing overlap. Don't get frustrated with poses like this, just rely on the simple line-shape armature.

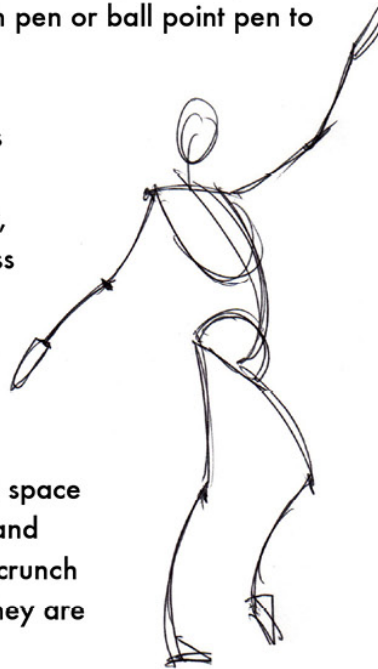


EXERCISE

1 minute. Lets try some of these line-shape armatures! Spend the first 30 seconds getting your line armature, then draw the shapes on top with the remaining time. Try this exercise with a brush pen or ball point pen to force you to make decisive marks.

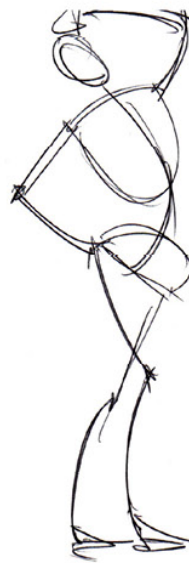
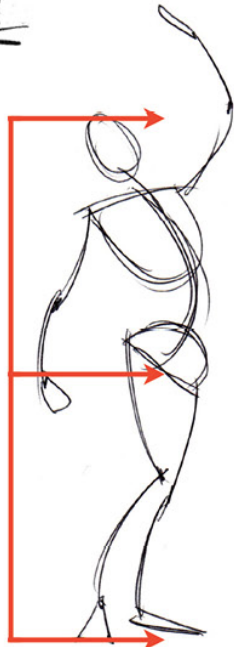


Begin these drawings the same way we discussed last chapter, but now build the mass directly on top.

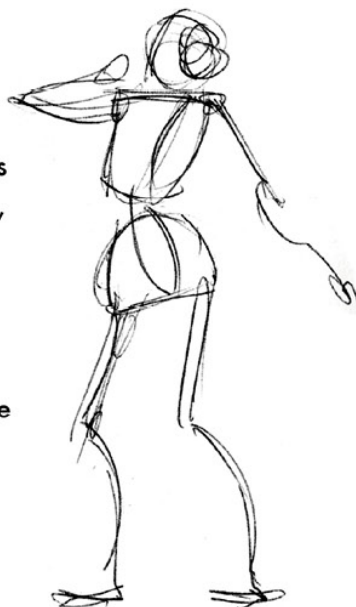


There should be a little space between the rib cage and pelvis shapes. Don't scrunch them together unless they are overlapping.

Don't forget about the basic proportion, the pubis symphysis is mid point between top of head and heels.



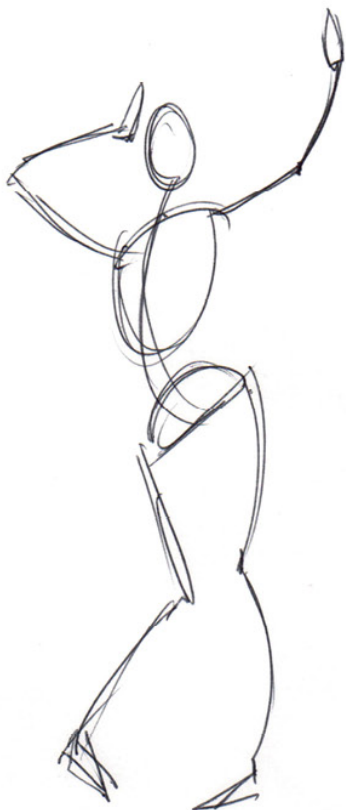
Exaggerate the angles of the rib cage, pelvis, spine, and limbs to create more energy. The model you are referencing is just the starting point, don't be afraid to push it!



OK



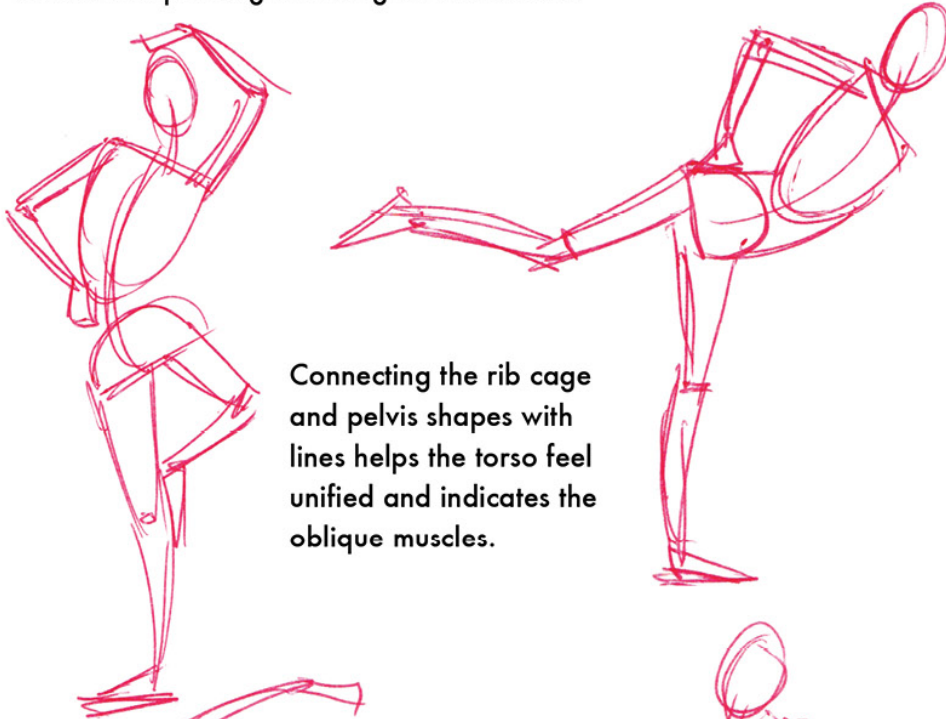
BETTER



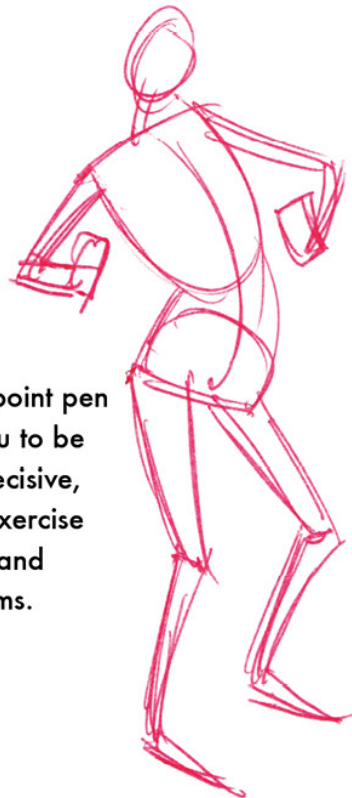
Make sure that the limbs are still attaching to the shoulder and pelvis lines. This keeps them simple but accurate skeletons. All the lines you draw should be purposeful.



At first you can just draw single lines for the limbs, but when are able to capture the whole figure easily in one minute you can begin to flesh out the limbs as shapes to give the figure more mass.



Connecting the rib cage and pelvis shapes with lines helps the torso feel unified and indicates the oblique muscles.



Again, ball point pen will force you to be quick and decisive, but try this exercise with pencils and other mediums.

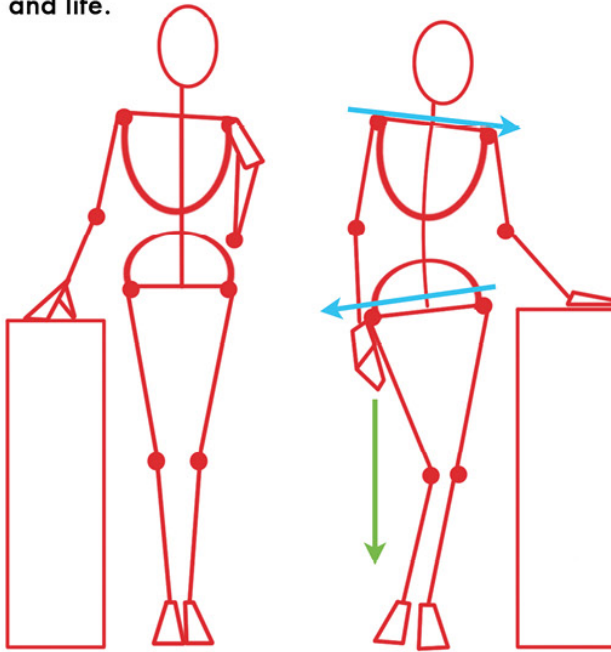
Practice this exercise as much as you can. Drawing an accurate line-shape armature will be one of the most important components in understanding and drawing the figure.



Copy these drawings as part of your practice and analyze what parts to draw first, second, and so on. This order may change depending on the pose.

BALANCE

It is important at this stage to address the balance of the figure. The human figure is constantly shifting positions to maintain balance. When you record these subtle shifts in your drawings, the figures will have more believability and life.

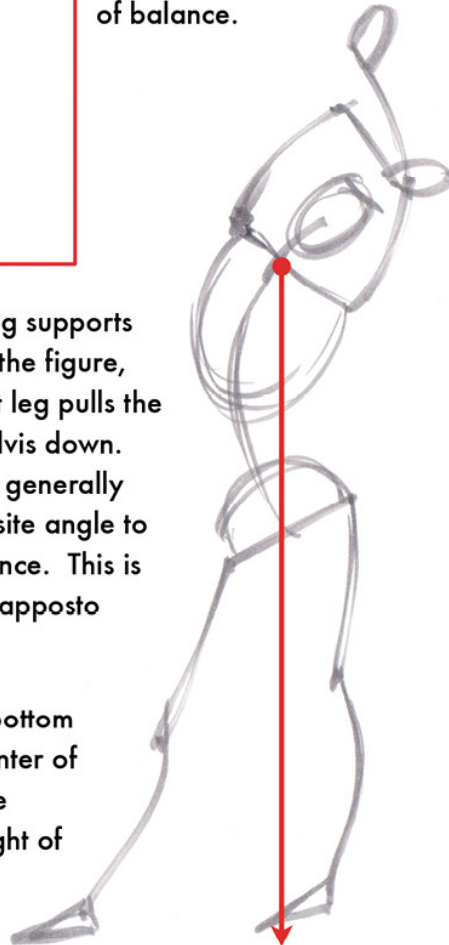


We rarely stand symmetrically with our weight divided evenly between both legs, like the diagram above. Instead, we usually stand with more weight on one leg, like the opposite drawing.

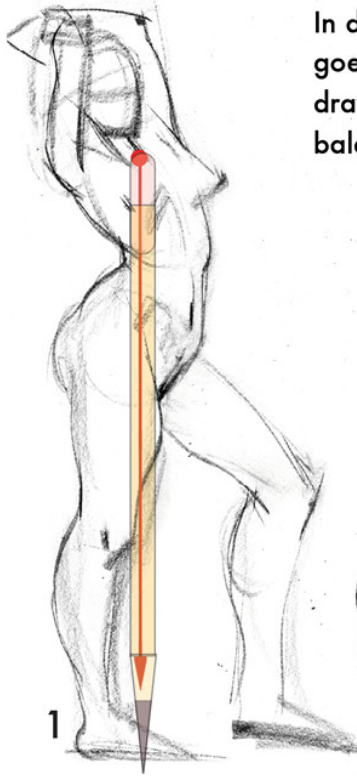
The straight leg supports the weight of the figure, while the bent leg pulls the side of the pelvis down. The shoulders generally take an opposite angle to maintain balance. This is called a contrapposto pose.

The pit of the neck is the depression at the bottom of the neck and top of the rib cage. The center of balance is the point in the body that must be directly over the area that supports the weight of the figure or else the person will fall over.

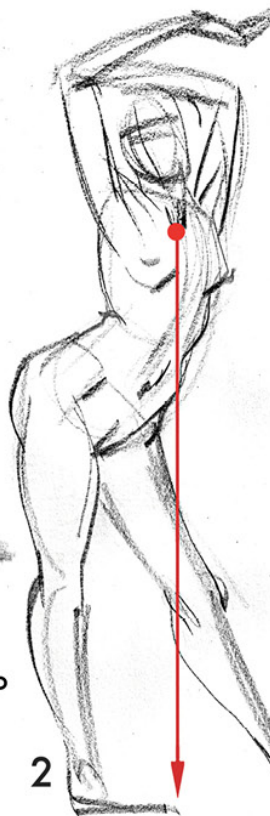
To check balance in the figure, we need to use a plumb line. A plumb line is a perfectly vertical line we use to check relationships and angles against. We fix the plumb line to the pit of the neck, which is the figures center of balance.



It is important at this stage to address the balance of the figure. The human figure is constantly shifting positions to maintain balance. When you record these subtle shifts in your drawings, the figures will have more believability and life.



In drawing 1, the center of balance (pit of the neck) goes through the front of the straight leg. If the drawing didn't reflect this, it would feel out of balance.



If the weight is split between two legs then the center of gravity will be between them, like we see in drawing 2.

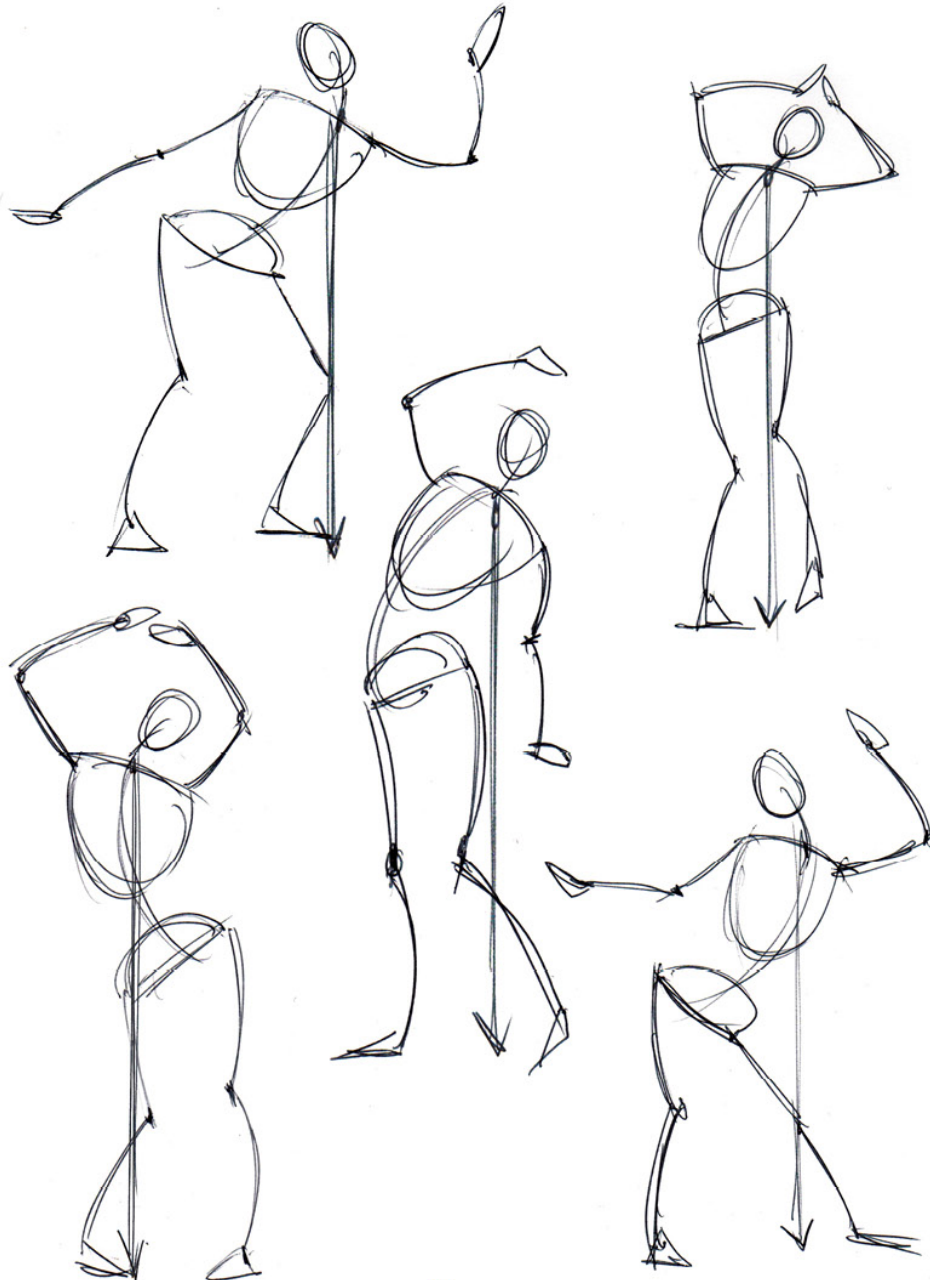
The center of balance also lands at the ball of the foot. The ball of the foot often carries our weight.

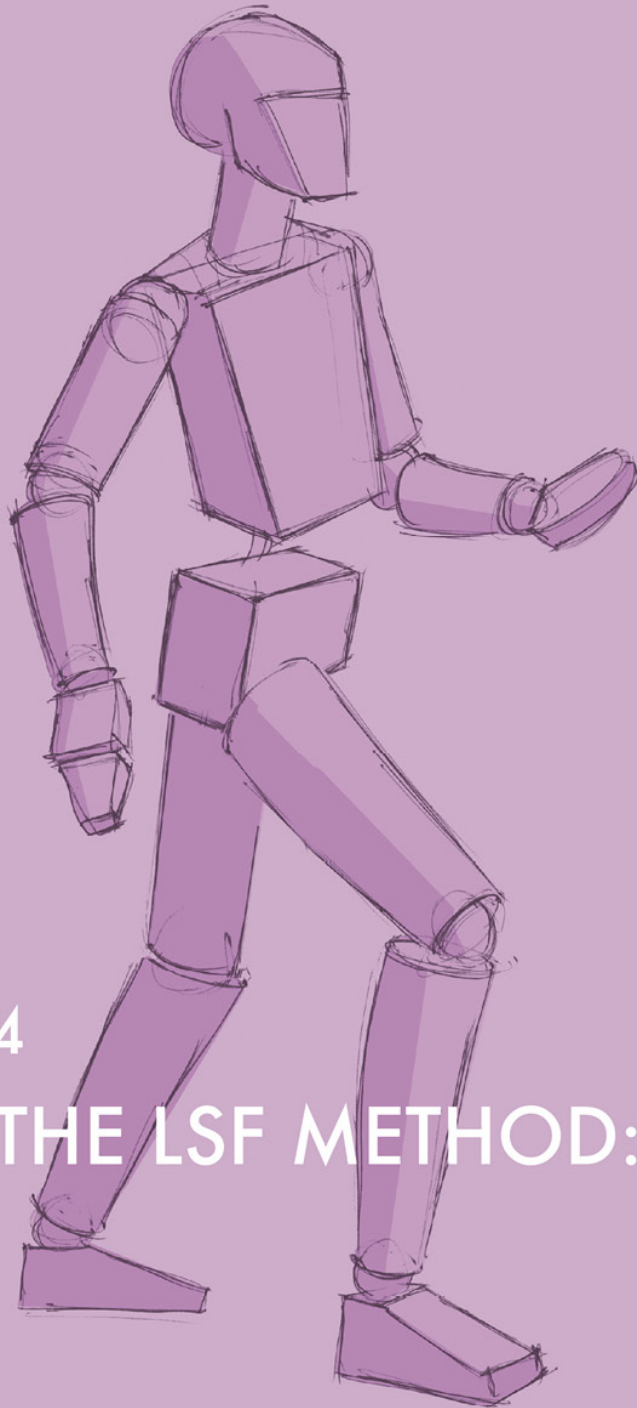
The farther forward the center of balance is, the more the body must extend to compensate. In drawing 3, the figure is leaning forward, so the center of balance goes through the knee and ball of the foot while the buttocks sticks out to counterbalance it.



EXERCISE

1 minute. You will practice the line-shape armatures again, but this time use your pencil to “sight” the center of balance and literally draw a plumb line from the pit of the neck down. Make sure the part of the body that holds the weight is under the center of the gravity and adjust if not.



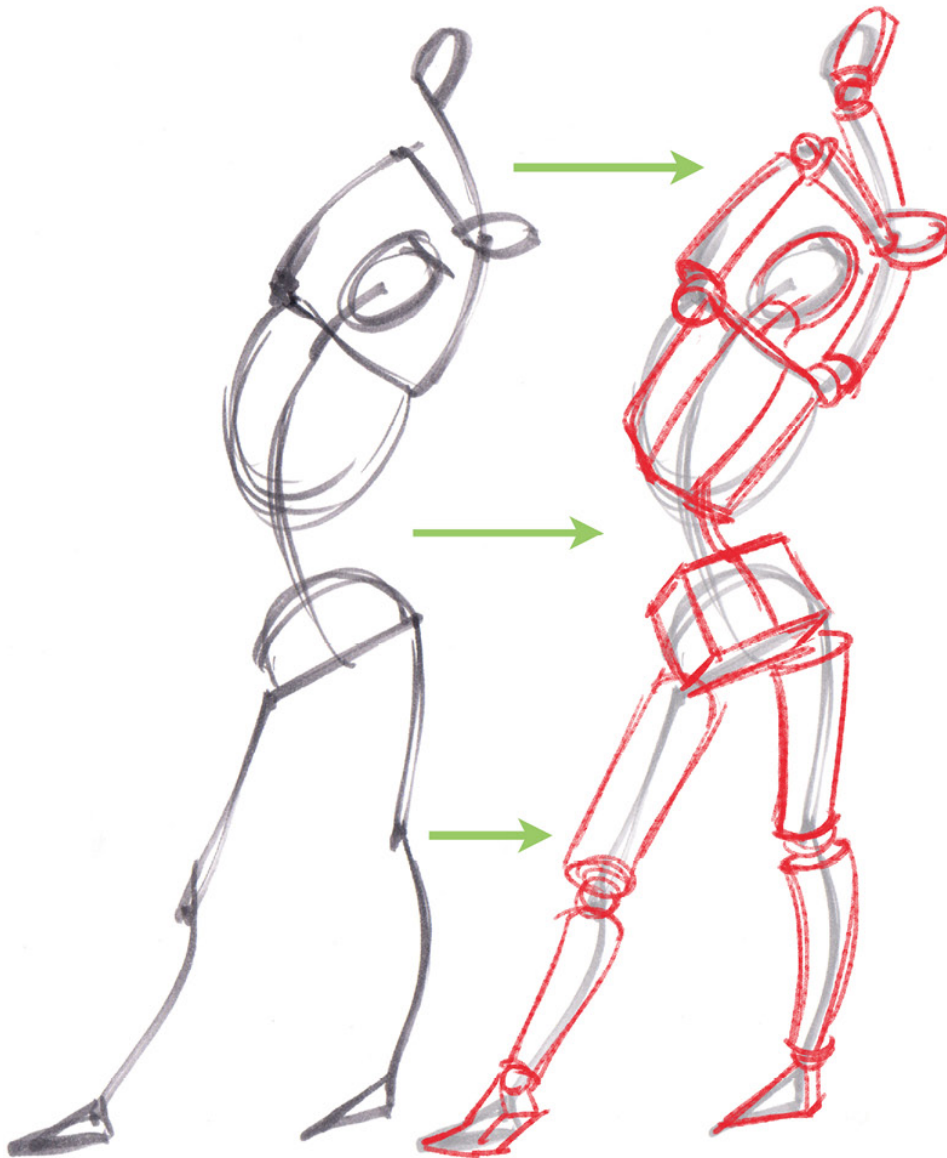


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THE LSF METHOD: SHAPES

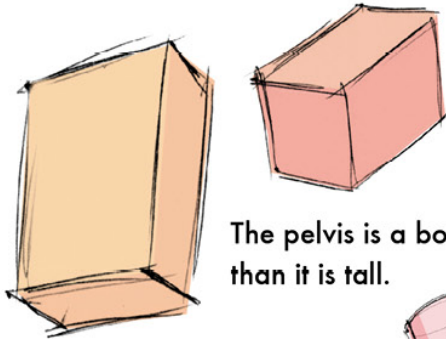
FORMS: VOLUME AND CONSTRUCTION

Now we will add form to our line-shape armatures. Remember, form has 3 dimensions so it addresses volume and the figures position in space. For the beginner, adding form will take some slow motion analysis. However, once you become adept at drawing forms in space, they will become a natural part of the gesture process.



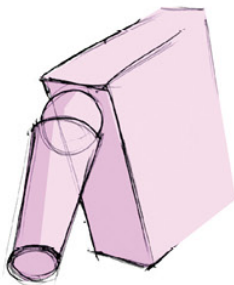
We may be most attracted to the surface details, but the drawing succeeds or fails based on the underlying structure. It is the basic forms that we build on our line-shape armature that gives us the solid and accurate illusion of a figure in space.

The torso is a box that is taller than it is wide.

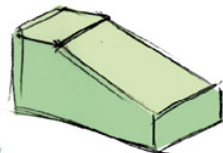
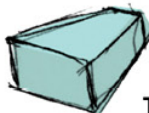


The pelvis is a box that is wider than it is tall.

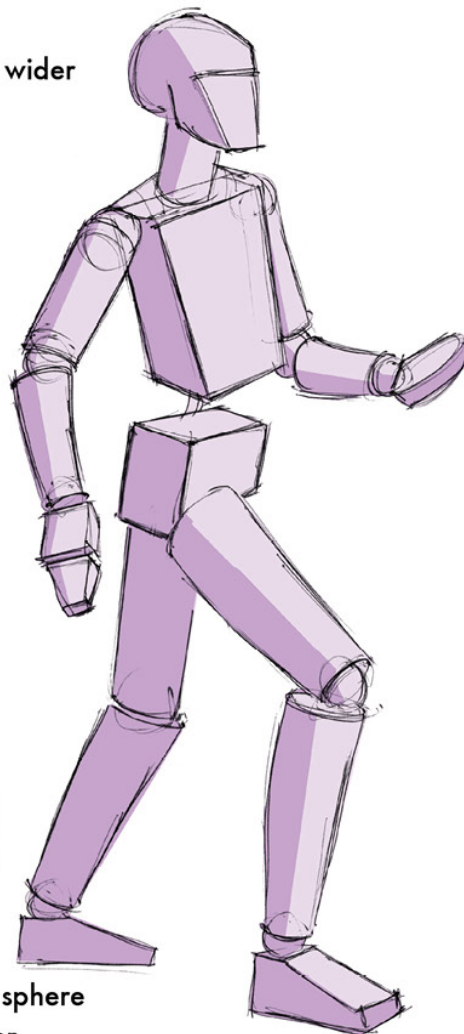
A sphere makes for a good shoulder joint between the rib cage and arm, as well as joints between the limbs.



Hands can be drawn as wedges or flattened egg shapes. Feet are blocky wedge shapes.

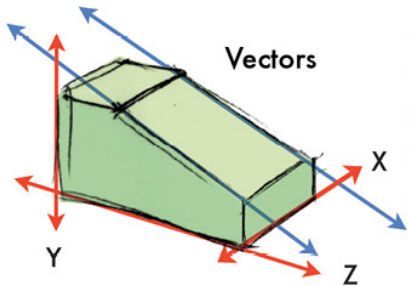
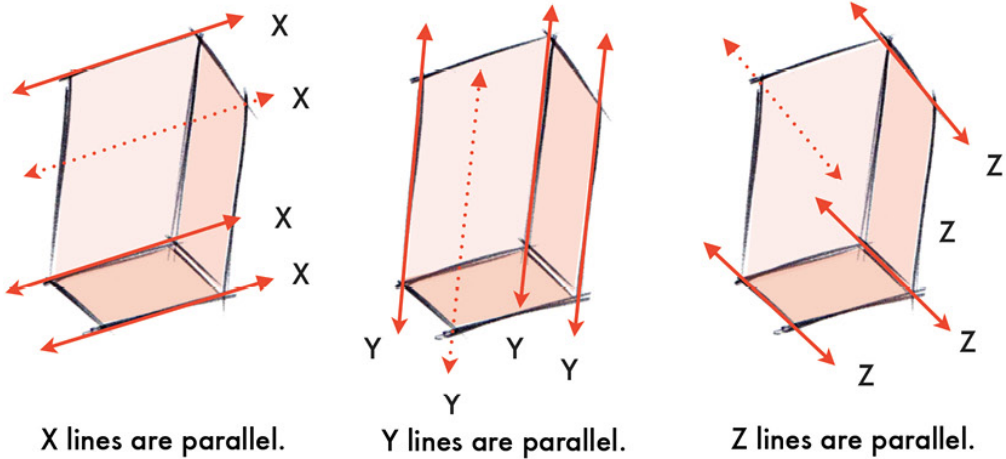


The arms and legs are cylinders that taper slightly the farther they get from the body.



The head can be an elongated sphere and the neck is a simple cylinder.

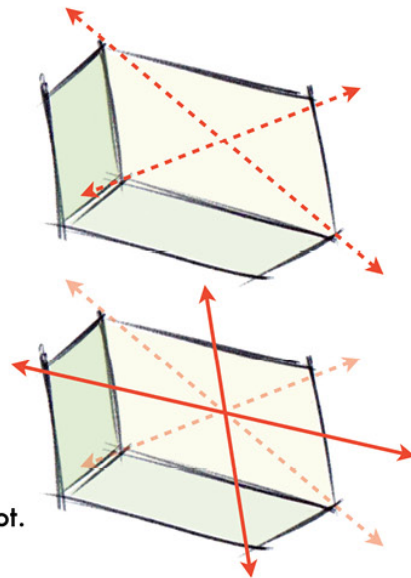
When we construct these forms in our drawings we want to use a simplified type of perspective called "isometric" perspective. I like to call it parallel perspective because within each form all X lines will be parallel with each other, all Y lines will be parallel with each other, and all Z lines will be parallel with each other. We use isometric perspective because it is much quicker than point perspective and keeps our forms looking solid and correct.



More complex forms like the wedge, have lines that travel in two of the X, Y, or Z directions at once; these are called "vectors." In Isometric perspective vectors going in the same direction will also be parallel to each other.

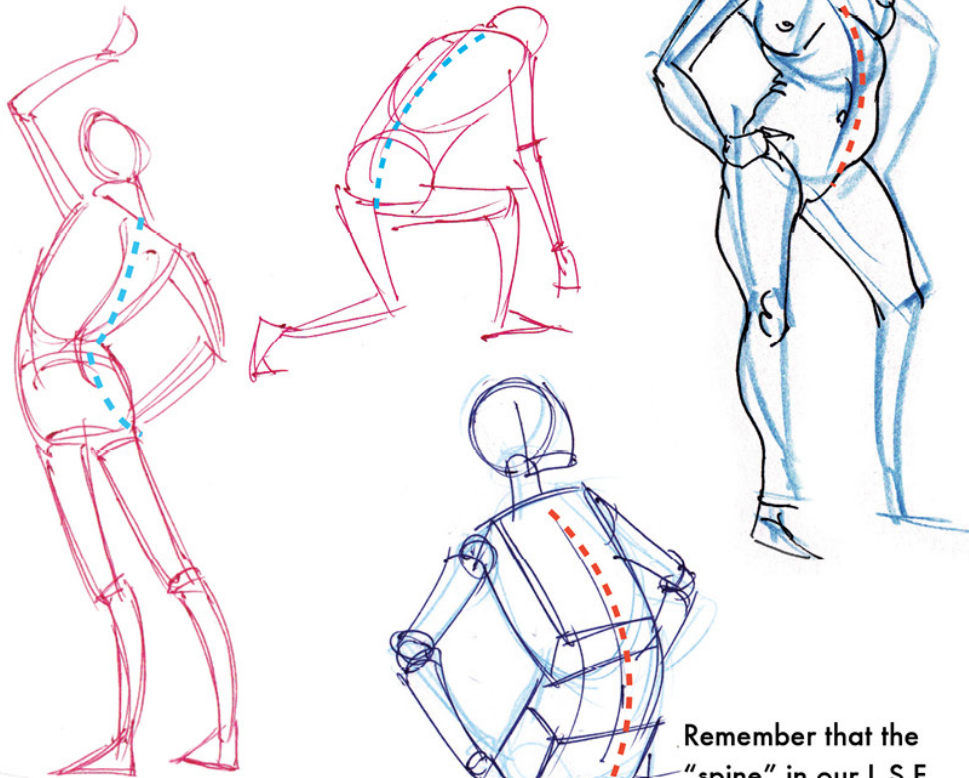
Forms are made up of flat surfaces called planes. When a plane is at an angle or in perspective, the center point is not in the middle but offset a little with more space closer to us. To find the center of a plane, first draw a line from corner to corner.

Where they cross in the middle is the center point, and now we can draw X and Y lines through them. This can help us divide our planes or attach other forms in the correct spot.



Being able to visualize center lines on the figure is important in the construction of forms and anatomy. This helps us know how the figure is turned in space and where important anatomical points attach.

Notice many of the gestures seen in this book have center lines drawn early on in the gesture to give a sense of solidity and make it easier to construct accurate details.



The point of this construction stuff is not punishment, it isn't the veggies you need to eat before your desert. They are tools for you to analyze and communicate the complexity of the figure and give you structure to build on top of. Put the information down as you need it.

Remember that the "spine" in our L,S,F armature represents a sort of center line, however you may need to adjust this on the surface when you start to construct solid forms since things like the belly button or furrow on the back will be on center lines.

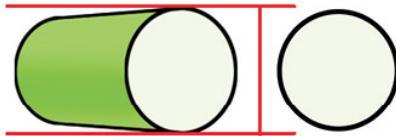
When cylinders turn in space they are foreshortened, and it is important to understand how to record this change in perspective.



A cylinder in profile is at its fullest dimension and does not show foreshortening.



When the cylinder is turned in perspective on its "X" axis it is foreshortened and appears smaller in its "X" dimension. We also see an ellipse appear on the side.

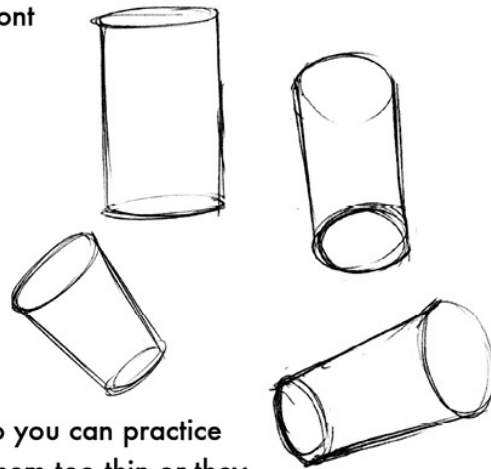
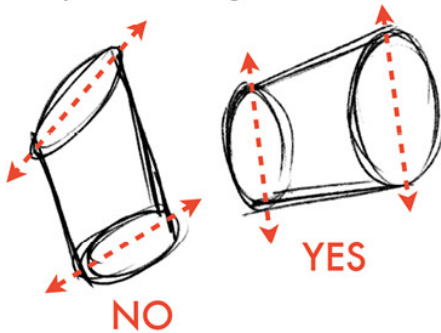


As the cylinder comes towards you the ellipse becomes more open, until it faces you directly and becomes a circle.

Notice the cylinder's "X" dimension has changed as the ellipse turns, but the "Y" dimension has stayed the same. The back ellipse gets slightly smaller because it's further away from us in perspective.

Foreshortening will impact the limbs in almost every pose, so practice drawing cylinders in space by changing how open or closed the ellipse is.

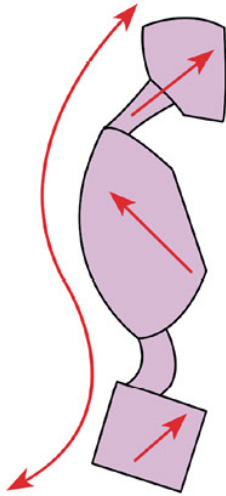
Make sure the back ellipse and the front ellipse are facing the same direction.



Limbs have a natural taper to them, so you can practice this in your cylinders but don't make them too thin or they appear fragile.

THE RIB CAGE AND PELVIS

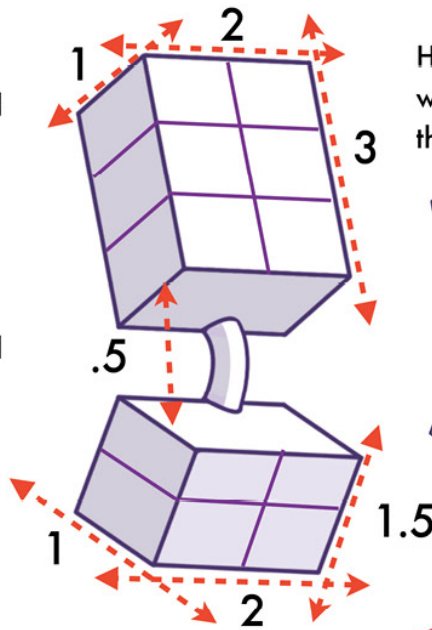
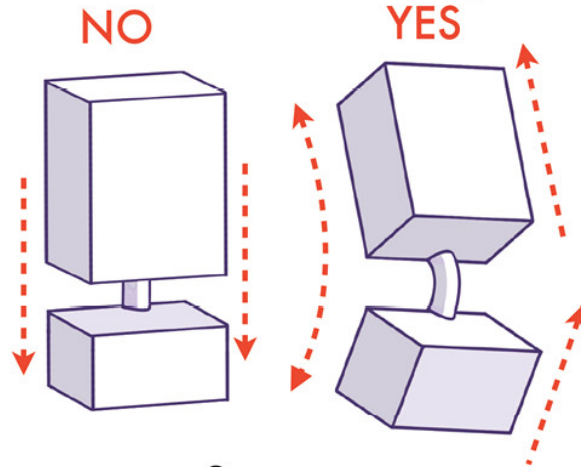
Because the spine is "S" curved, the rib cage and pelvis are never oriented straight up and down. Even in a straight standing pose the top of the rib cage tilts back and the top of the pelvis tilts forward. This means the forms can't stack on top of each other, but will have a natural contrasting angle.



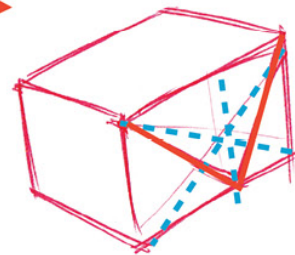
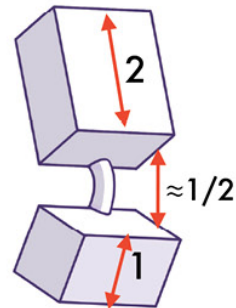
The torso can be measured by units which give us a proportional ratio. The rib cage is 2 units wide (X), 3 units tall (Y), and 1 unit deep (Z). The pelvis is 2 units wide (X), 1.5 units tall (Y), and 1 unit deep (Z).

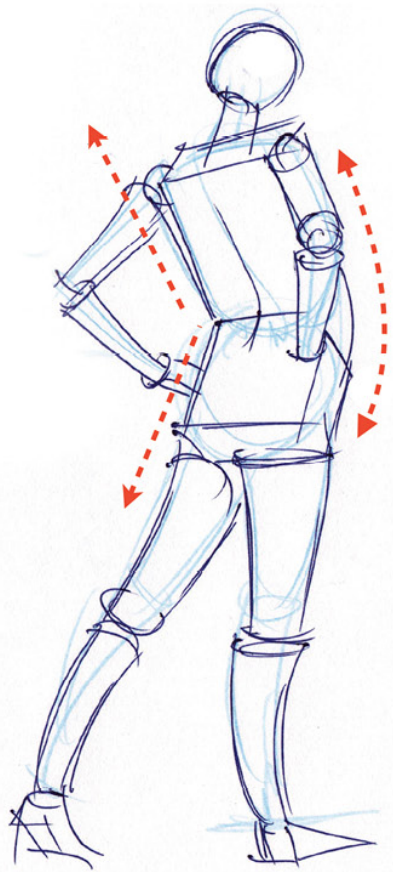
There is about 1/2 a unit between the rib cage and pelvis as seen from the side.

Constructing a "v" shape on the front of the pelvis can make it easier to understand how to place anatomy. Draw a line from corner to corner of the box to find the center point, then draw your "v". This acts as the natural opening of the pelvis.

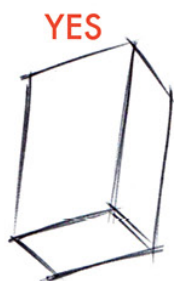
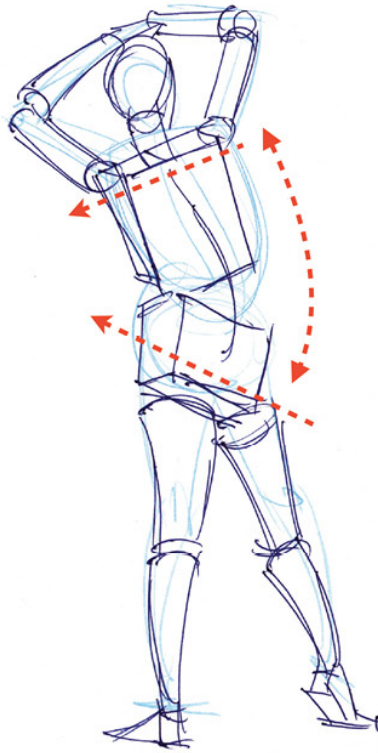


Here is a simpler way to look at these ratios.

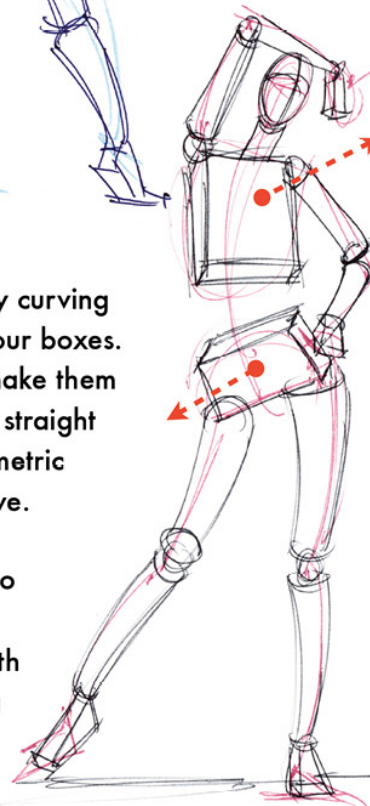




Try to find the alternating angles of the rib cage and pelvis to make the figure feel natural. Hold your pencil up as a sighting tool to check these angles.



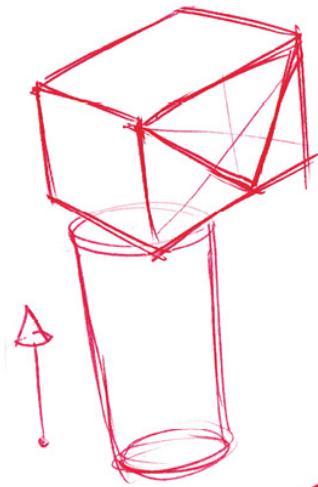
Avoid any curving lines in your boxes. Always make them solid and straight using isometric perspective.



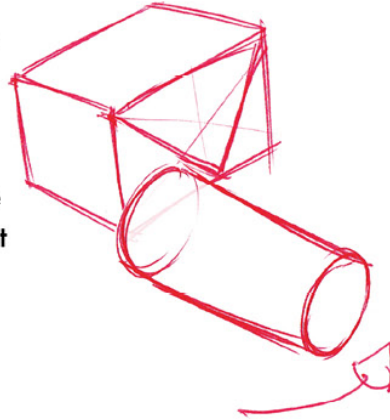
The rib cage and pelvis move independently, so they can be oriented in different directions. These twisted forms are difficult but starting with a line-shape armature then carefully analyzing the angles of the boxes makes it easy.

THE LIMBS

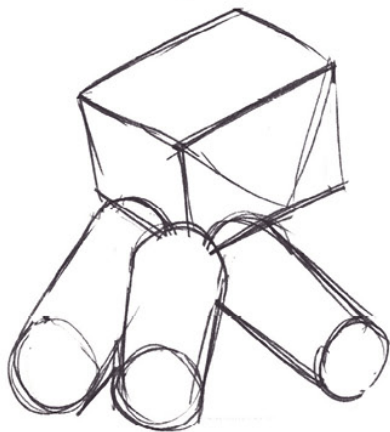
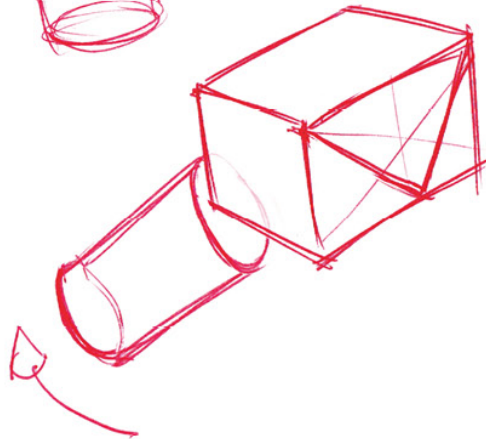
Limbs are best described by cylinders. The legs attach to the pelvis through a complex arrangement of muscles; but as a form it is much simpler. When a figure stands, the leg cylinder inserts into the bottom plane of the pelvis.



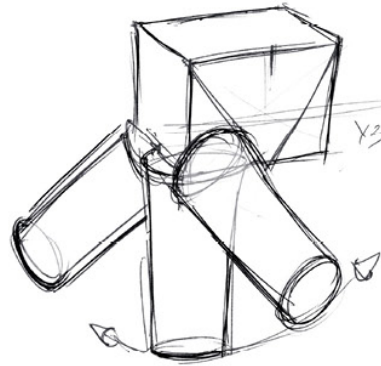
If the leg is pulled forward, it will move on an arc that brings it in front of the pelvis box. The form will overlap the lower 1/3 of the front plane of the pelvis.



If the leg is pulled backward it will overlap the back plane of the pelvis, but thick gluteal muscles limit how far the leg will move back.



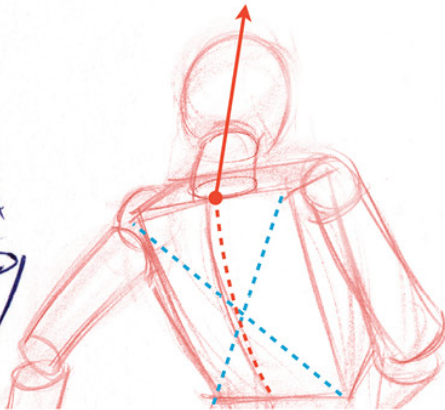
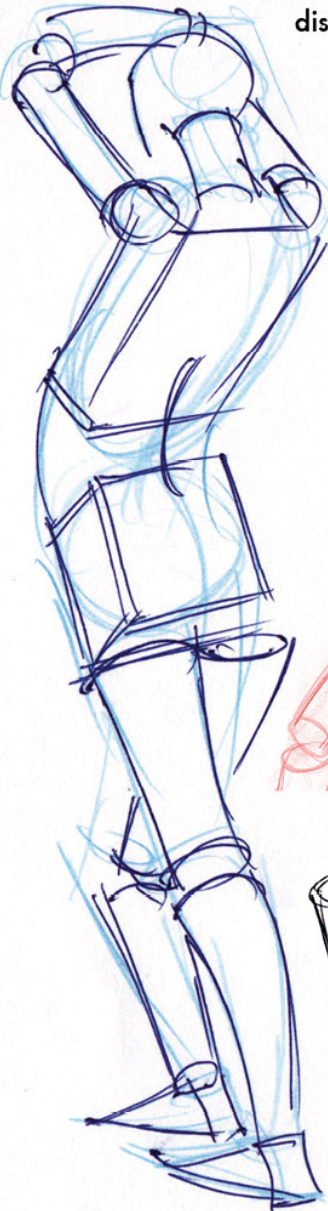
The leg has a back to front range of motion, as well as a side to side motion, in which case the leg form overlaps the side plane of the box.



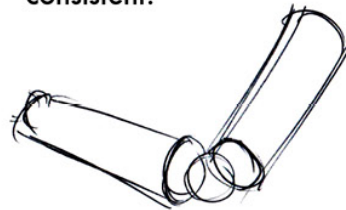
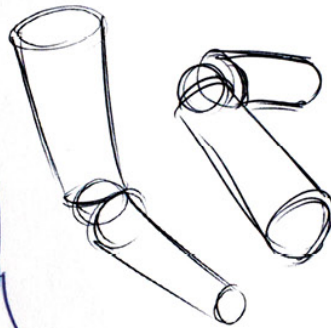
We can use small spheres for the shoulder joints. The shoulders can move independently from the rib cage, so construct a solid box first, then put the shoulders and arms on.

Lines between the rib cage and pelvis helps flesh out the anatomy and mass, and keeps the rib cage and pelvis from getting too disconnected.

The neck is a cylinder that pushes forward from the rib cage. The head is an egg or sphere that sits on top of the neck. Make sure you construct the neck from the center of the rib cage.

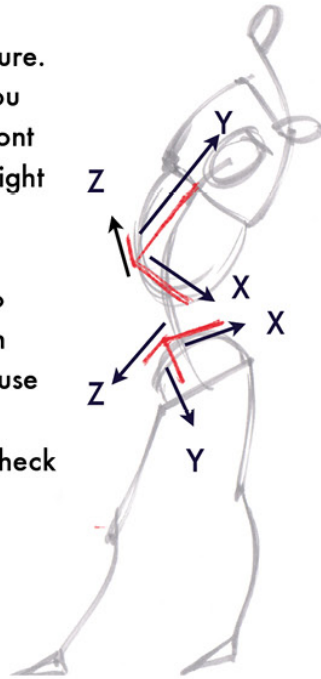


We can connect the limbs together with small spheres which helps keep proportion consistent.

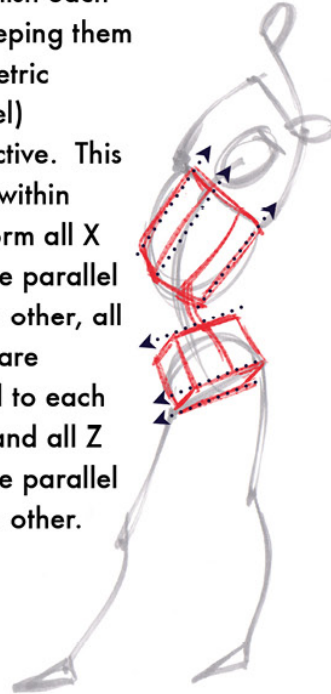


Starting with a line-shape armature, we need to add these solid forms on top.

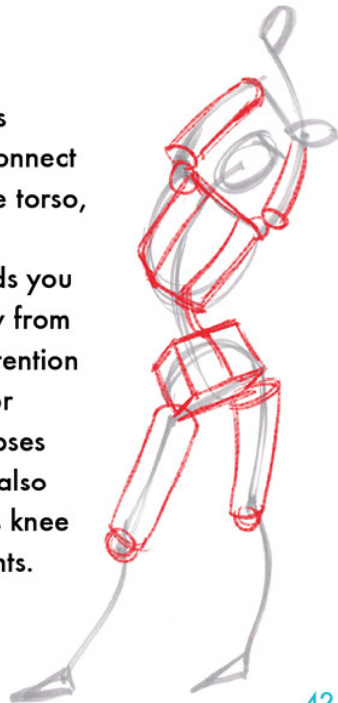
Draw your forms directly over the line-shape armature. Ask yourself if you are seeing the front or back, left or right side of the box forms. Draw the X, Y, and Z axis to orient the form in space. You can use your pencil as a sighting tool to check the angles.



Then finish each box keeping them in isometric (parallel) perspective. This means within each form all X lines are parallel to each other, all Y lines are parallel to each other, and all Z lines are parallel to each other.



Use spheres as shoulders to connect the arms to the torso, then cylinders coming towards you or going away from you paying attention to how open or closed the ellipses are. You can also use spheres as knee and elbow joints.



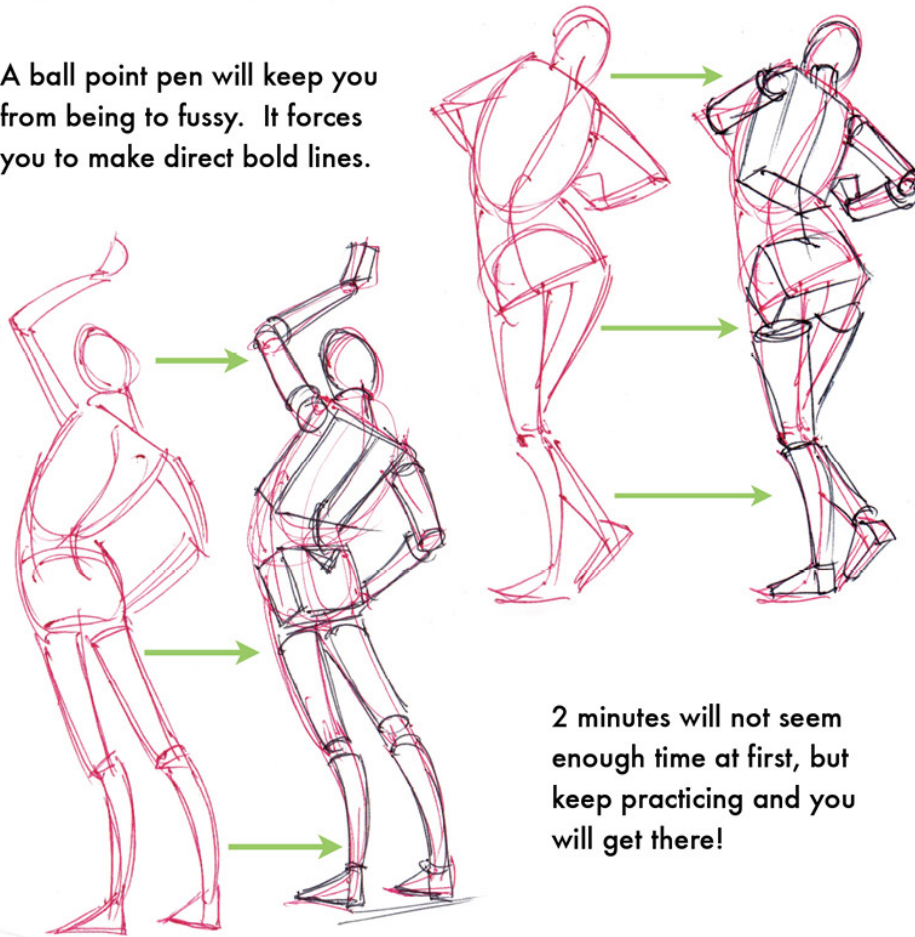
Use the wedge forms for hands and feet. Use a cylinder for the neck, making sure it attaches to the center of the torso, and an egg form for the head.



EXERCISE

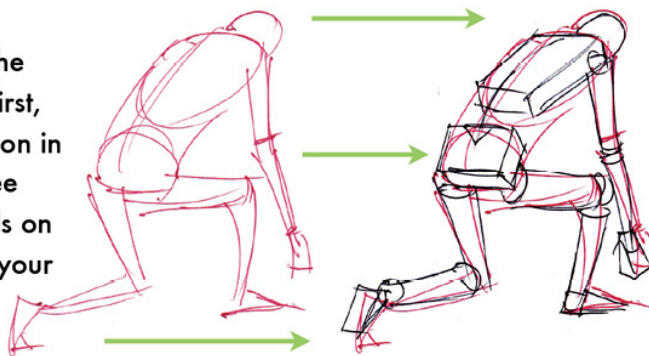
2 minutes. Quickly draw the line-shape armature, then begin to develop the 3 dimensional forms on top. Start with the rib cage and pelvis forms first, and build limbs, head, hands and feet.

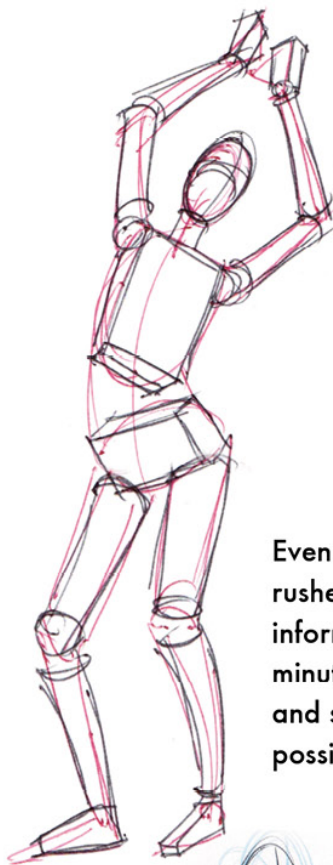
A ball point pen will keep you from being too fussy. It forces you to make direct bold lines.



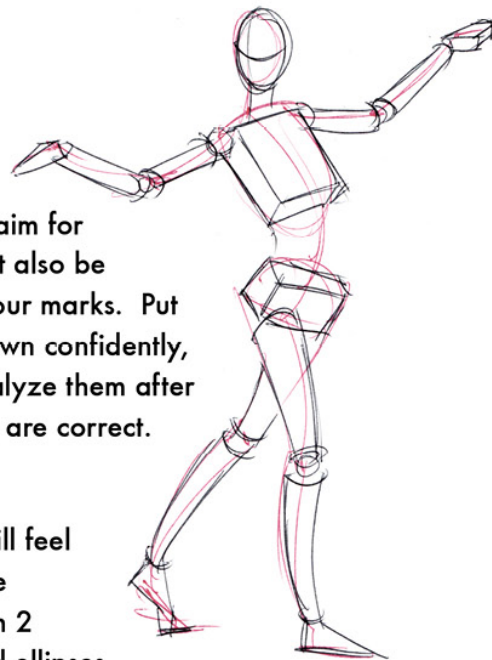
2 minutes will not seem enough time at first, but keep practicing and you will get there!

Using a red pen for the line-shape armature first, and laying the forms on in black will help you see how each stage builds on the other and clarify your approach.





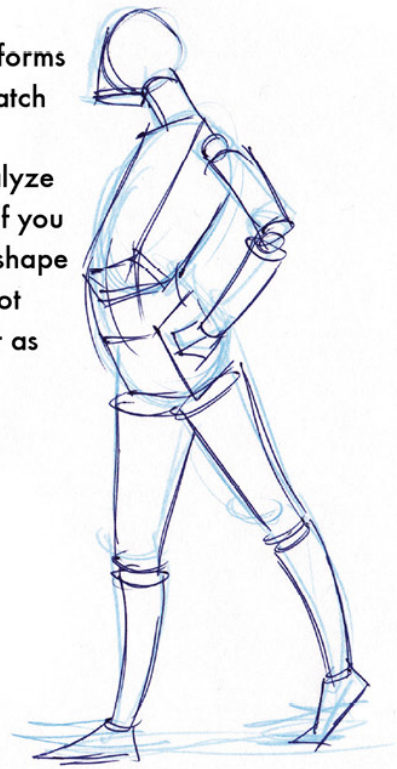
You want to aim for accuracy, but also be decisive in your marks. Put your lines down confidently, and then analyze them after to see if they are correct.



Even though you will feel rushed to get all the information down in 2 minutes, draw good ellipses and solid boxes as much as possible.



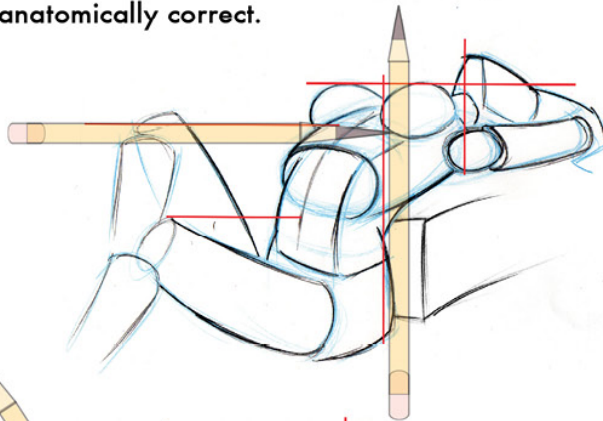
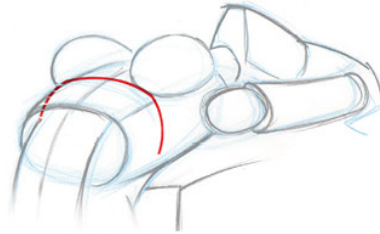
Notice that the forms don't always match the line shape armature. Analyze your work and if you realize the line-shape armature was not correct, adjust it as you go.



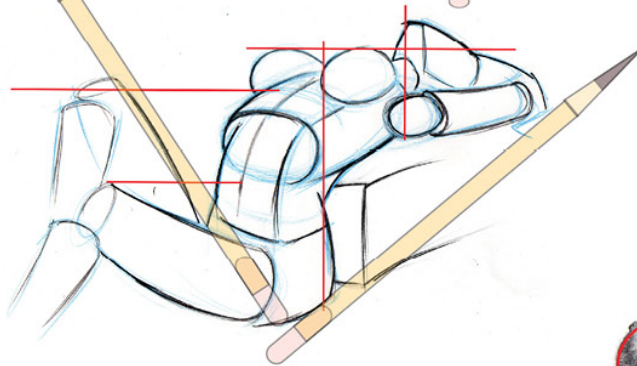
SIGHTING

Sighting is a method to aid in drawing from observation. You can hold your pencil up to check angles, get measurements, and see what parts of the body align with others.

Use construction lines and “draw through” forms to make sure their placement is anatomically correct.

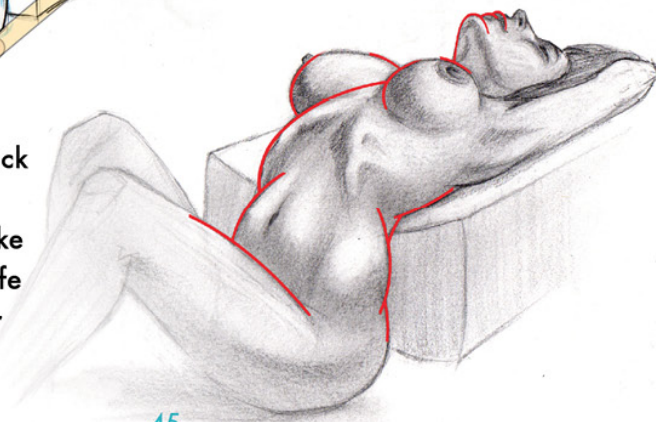


Hold your pencil up to see what parts of the body align with others. These alignments help us, especially on a foreshortened figure.



Overlapping is crucial to capturing foreshortening. It describes the spatial relationships of one form in front of another.

Sighting also helps us check angles, and better see negative shapes. We make these observations from life to analyze and adjust our drawings so they appear correct.

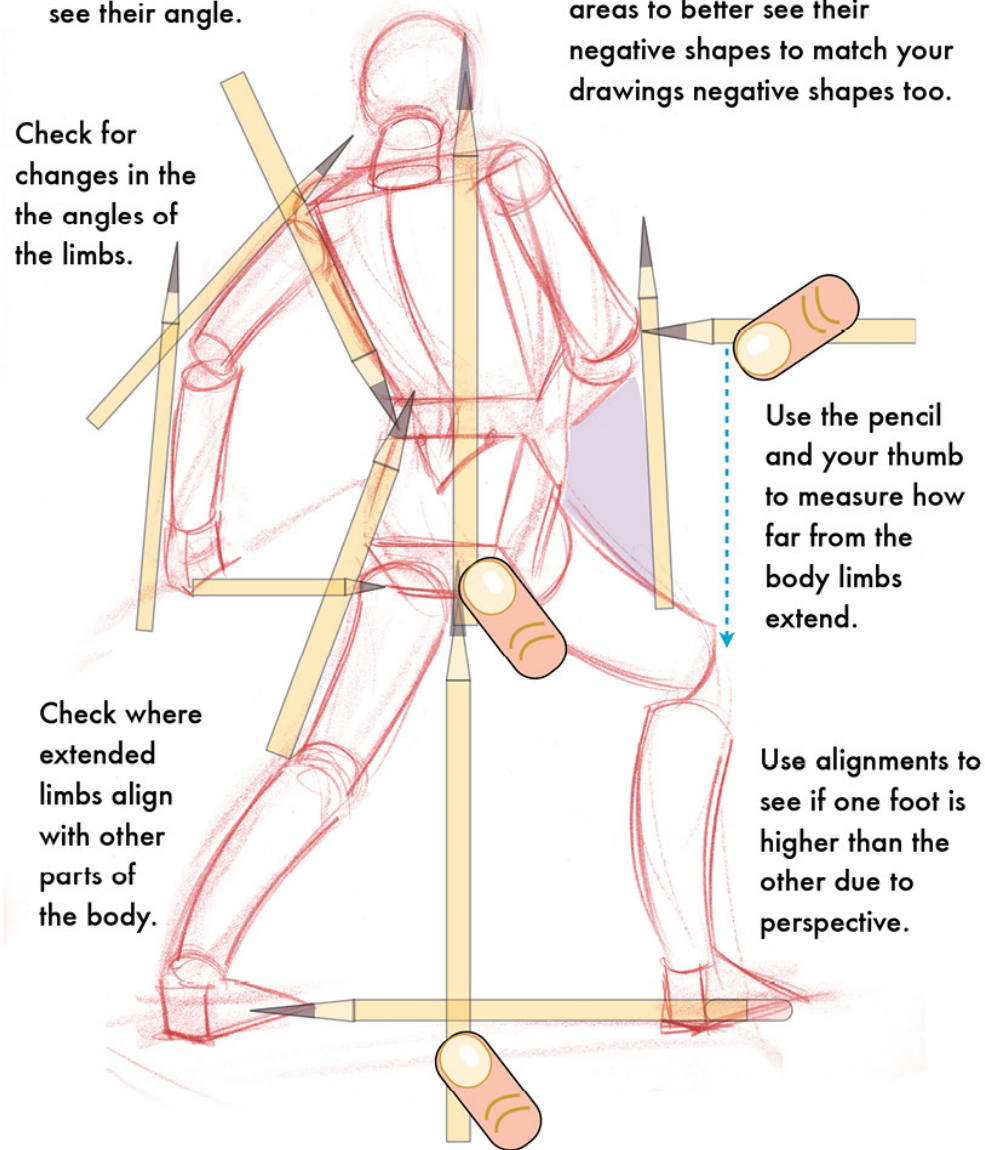


Use sighting in any way you need to, but these are common areas to check when constructing the figure.

Check the outer edges of the rib cage and pelvis to see their angle.

Use the pencil to close off areas to better see their negative shapes to match your drawings negative shapes too.

Check for changes in the angles of the limbs.



Use the pencil and your thumb to measure how far from the body limbs extend.

Check where extended limbs align with other parts of the body.

Use alignments to see if one foot is higher than the other due to perspective.

Check that the pubis symphysis is the half way point from the top of the head to the heels accounting for changes in the pose. Use your thumb as a measuring point on the pencil.

EXERCISE

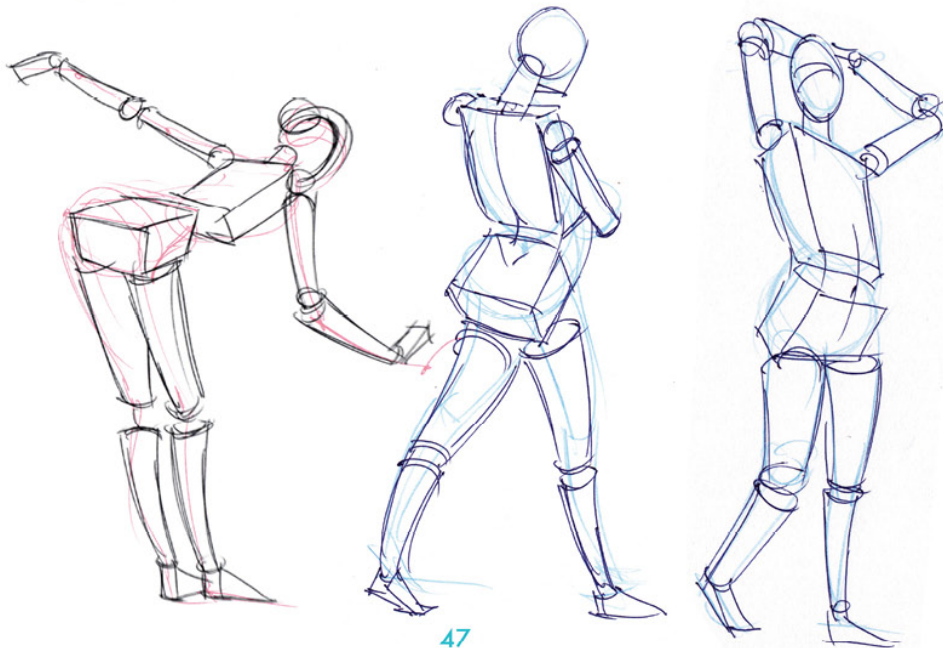
2 minutes. Do another round of practice with the L,S,F gestures, but spend time quickly sighting to check angles and alignments. The more you practice this, the faster and more accurate you will become.

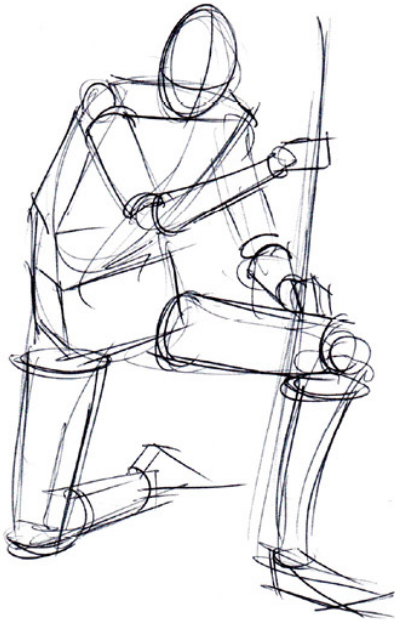


Pay careful attention to the subtle angles of the forms, especially between the rib cage and pelvis.

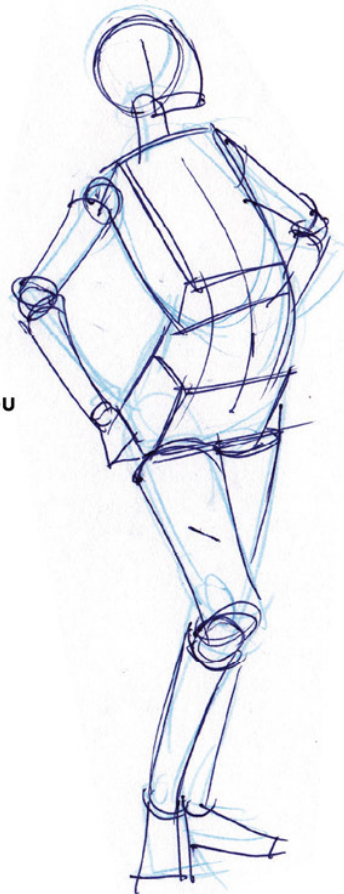


Always indicate any object the model uses or interacts with.





Sketching these poses will help you understand how to construct your own drawings, but don't skip steps. The step by step method is there to help you fully understand and memorize this process of analysis and recording. Next we will combine steps together, but take your time here to make sure you can do each exercise in the allotted time.





5

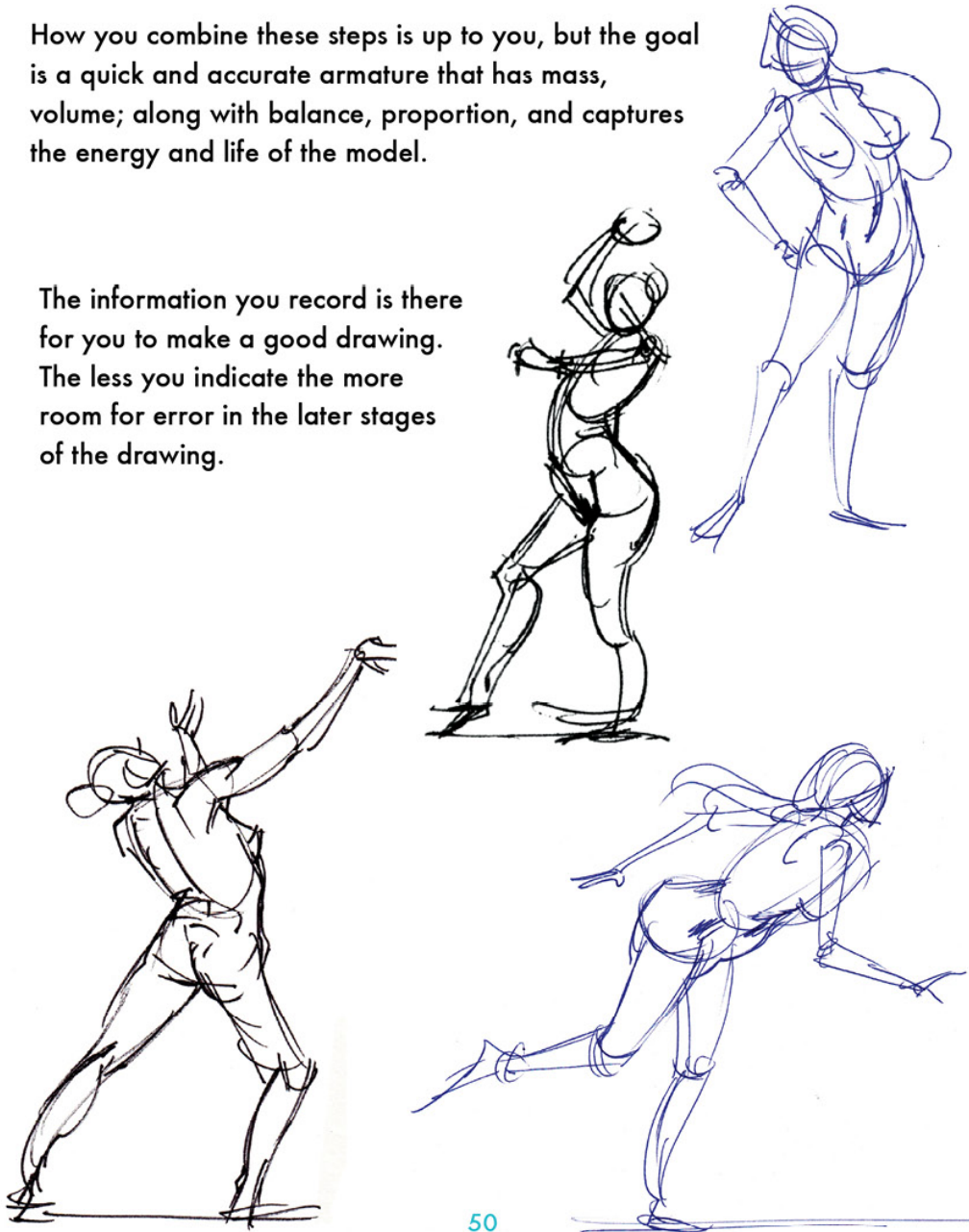
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

COMBINING THE L,S,F METHOD

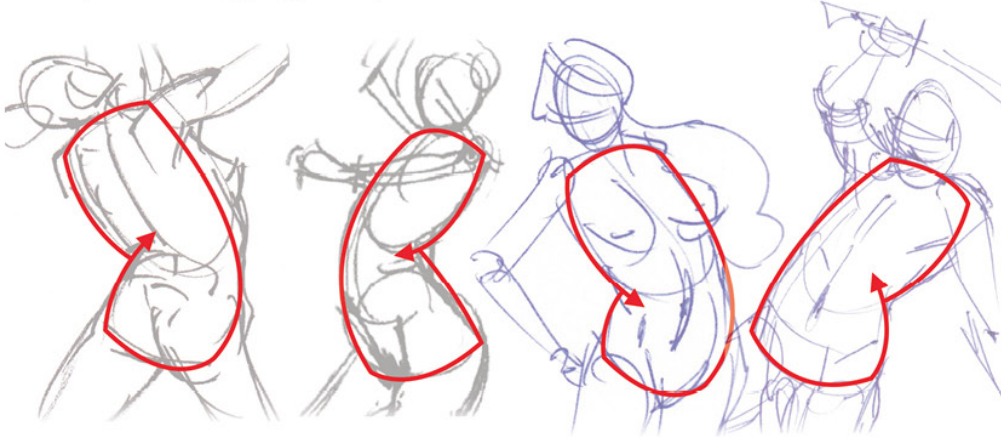
When you feel that you have explored the individual steps of the L,S,F method thoroughly, and you can quickly and accurately draw each exercise, you can begin to combine steps together into a single approach.

How you combine these steps is up to you, but the goal is a quick and accurate armature that has mass, volume; along with balance, proportion, and captures the energy and life of the model.

The information you record is there for you to make a good drawing. The less you indicate the more room for error in the later stages of the drawing.

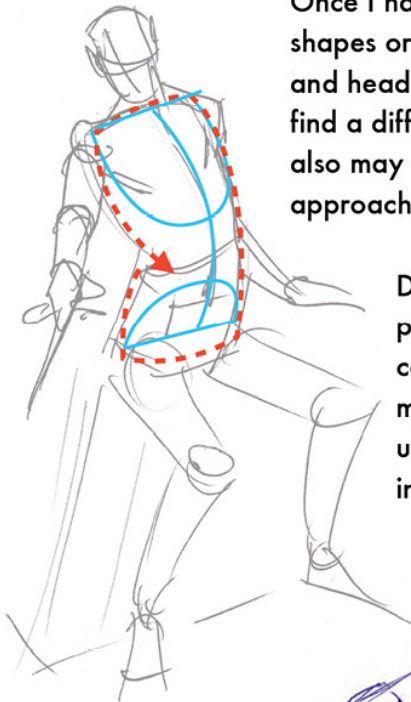


At this point in the process drawing the lines and shapes as separate components might slow you down. A simple way to combine them is with the bean shape. This acts as the rib cage and pelvis together, implies overlapping forms, and shows the movement of the spine.

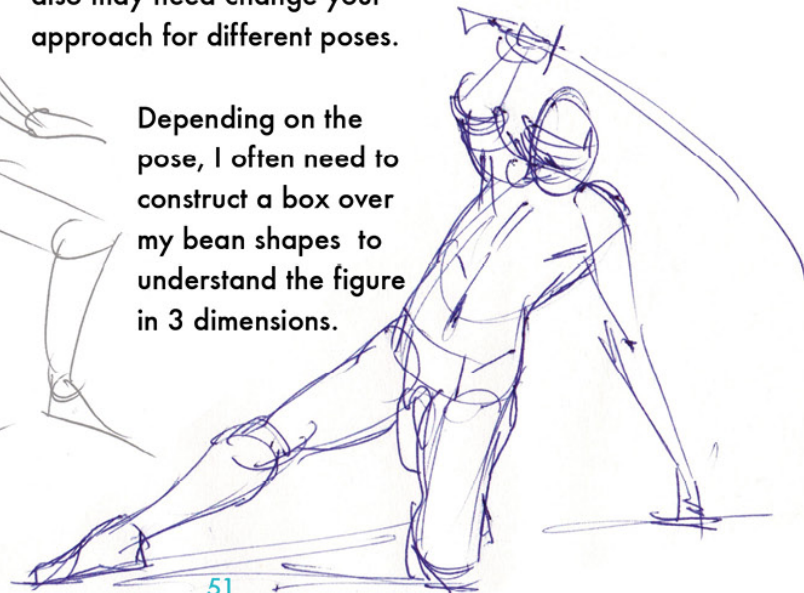


I usually keep the top of the bean relatively straight to act as the angle of the shoulders. This angle is often the first line I draw, then the rib cage shape, and last I build the pelvis to complete the bean shape.

Once I have the core of the figure, I then build shapes or forms for the legs, arms, then the neck and head. This order is not absolute, and you may find a different way that works better for you. You also may need change your approach for different poses.

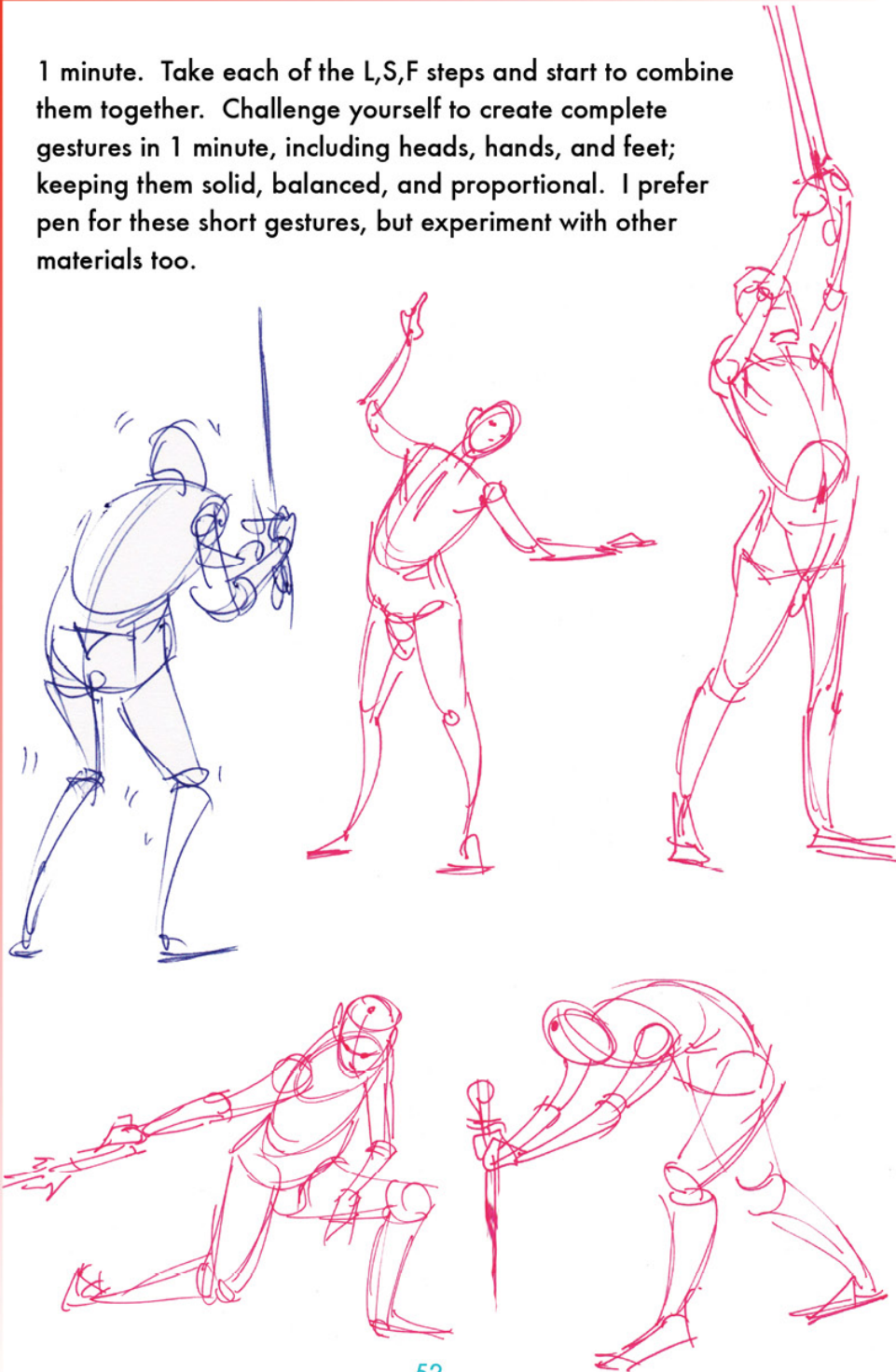


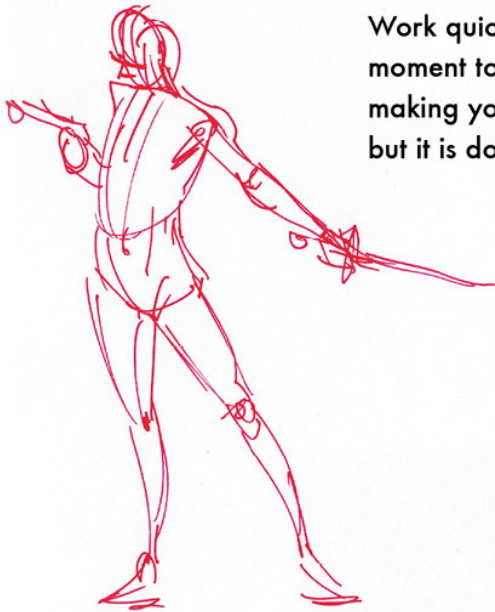
Depending on the pose, I often need to construct a box over my bean shapes to understand the figure in 3 dimensions.



EXERCISE

1 minute. Take each of the L,S,F steps and start to combine them together. Challenge yourself to create complete gestures in 1 minute, including heads, hands, and feet; keeping them solid, balanced, and proportional. I prefer pen for these short gestures, but experiment with other materials too.

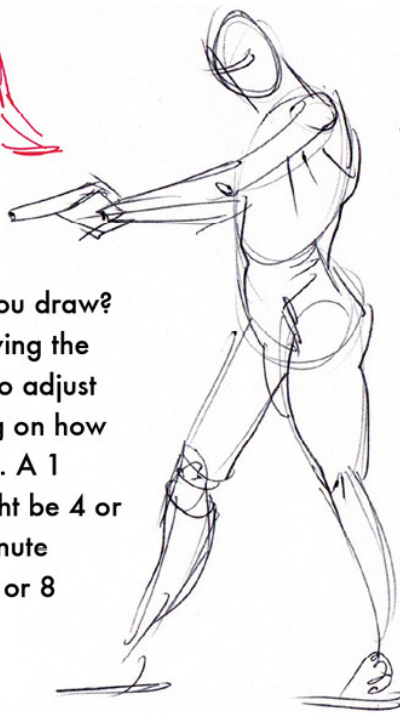




Work quickly, but not sloppy. Be focused, take a moment to look and analyze the figure before making your marks. One minute isn't a lot of time, but it is do-able!



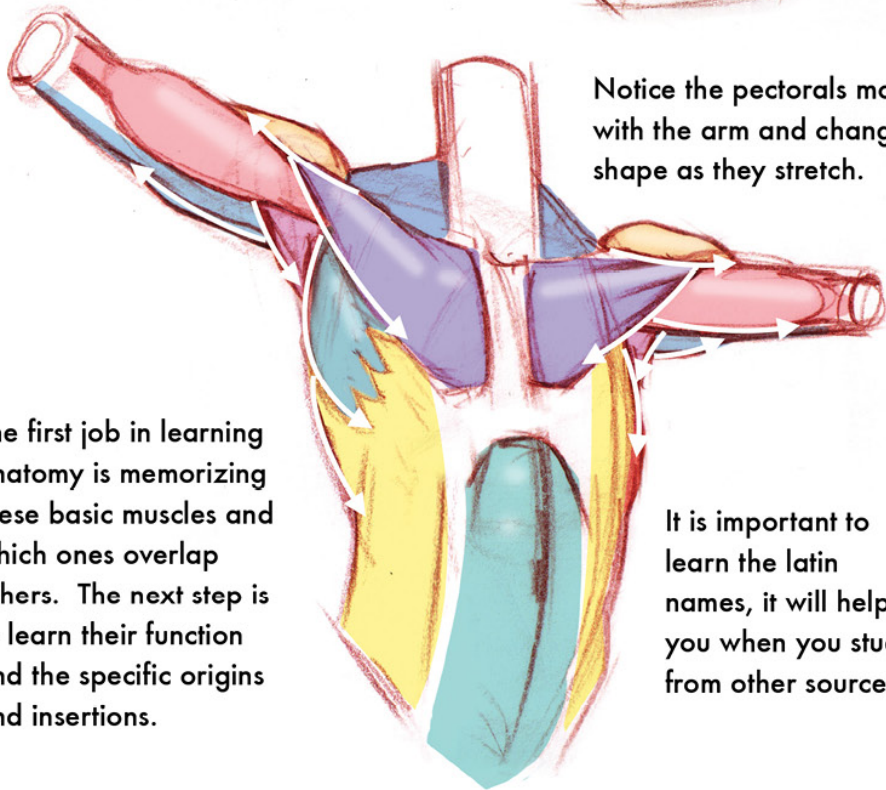
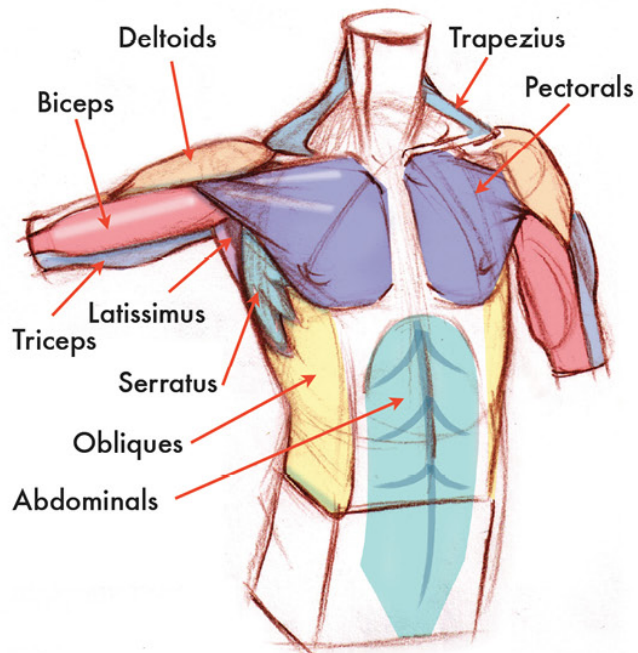
How large should you draw?
The bigger the drawing the more time it takes, so adjust your size depending on how much time you have. A 1 minute drawing might be 4 or 5 inches tall, a 5 minute drawing might be 6 or 8 inches tall, etc.



Experiment with the bean shape to help speed you up and capture information quickly.

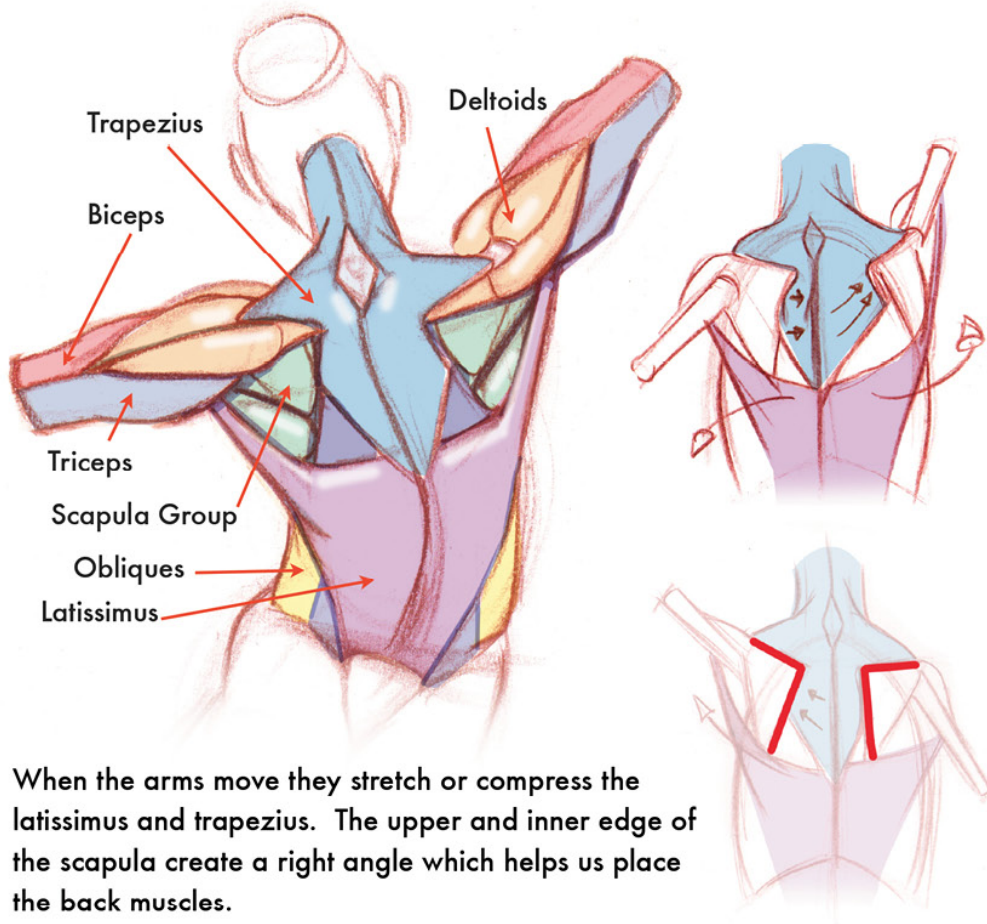
ANATOMY

The surface details are the result of the underlying bones and muscles. Anatomy is a complex and dense topic that requires a great deal of study, and much more can be said about it than we will get into in this book. The next few pages will break down the muscles and groups closest to the surface so you can get started drawing the contour and details.

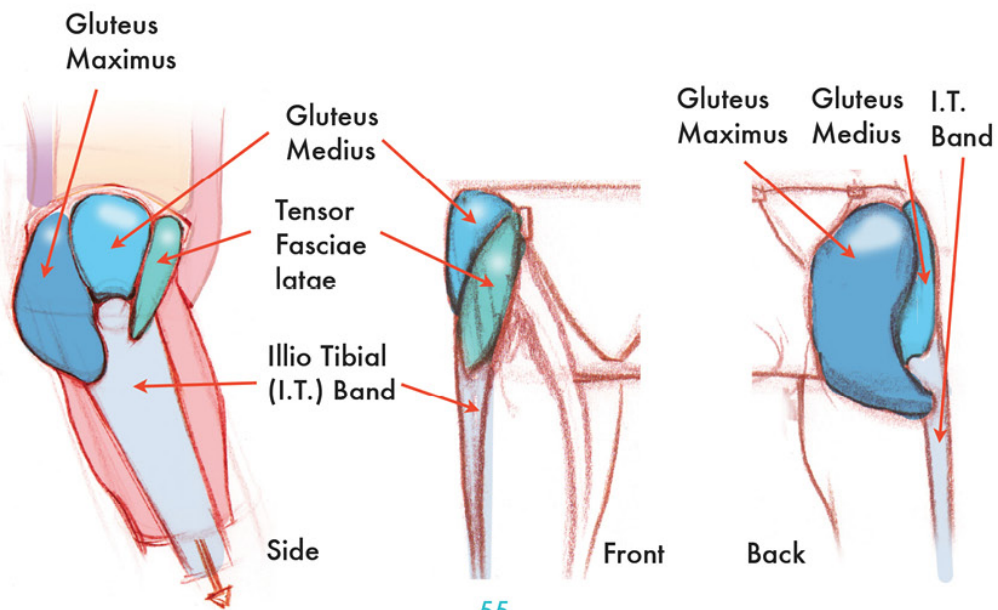


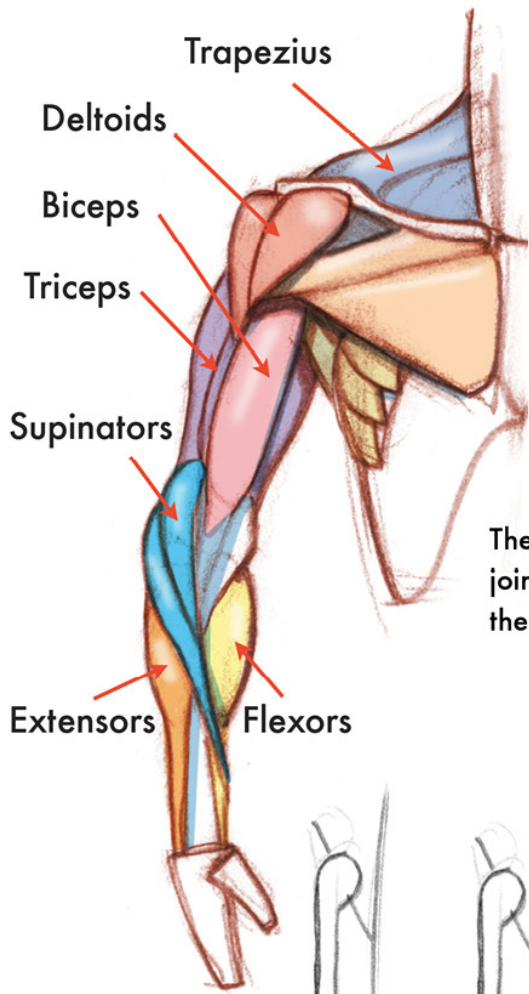
The first job in learning anatomy is memorizing these basic muscles and which ones overlap others. The next step is to learn their function and the specific origins and insertions.

It is important to learn the latin names, it will help you when you study from other sources.

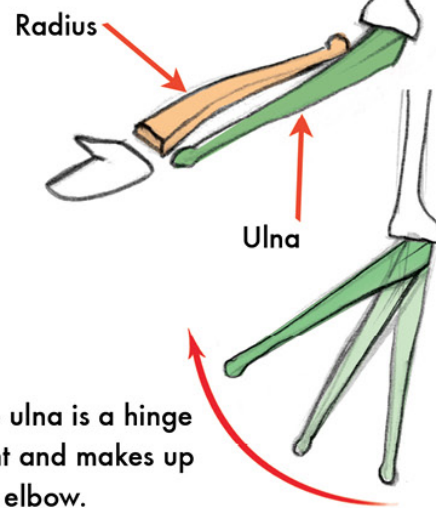


When the arms move they stretch or compress the latissimus and trapezius. The upper and inner edge of the scapula create a right angle which helps us place the back muscles.





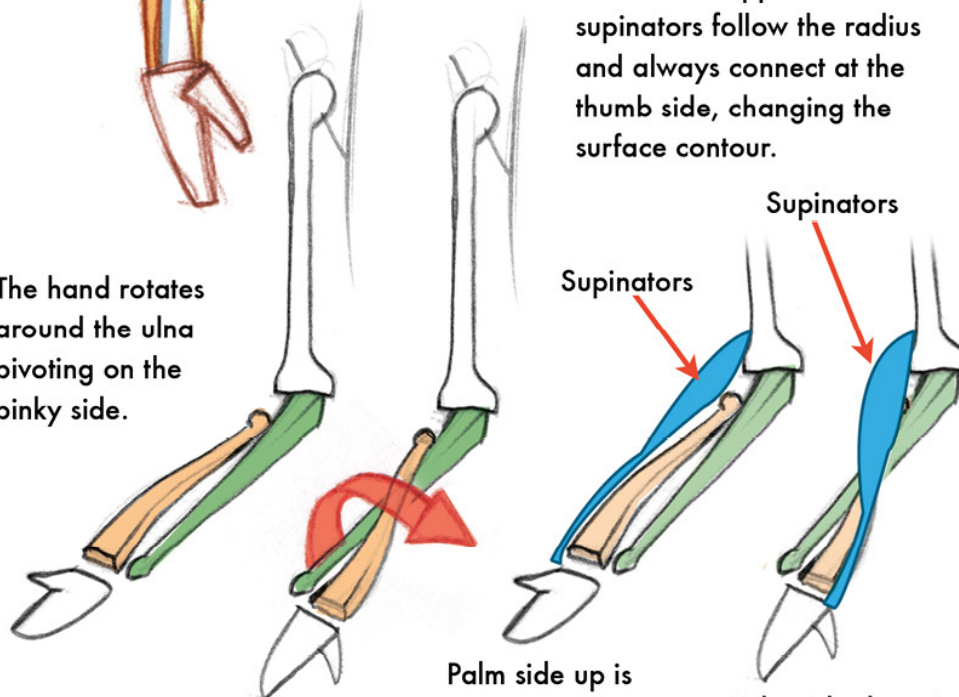
The radius and ulna are the two lower arm bones.



The ulna is a hinge joint and makes up the elbow.

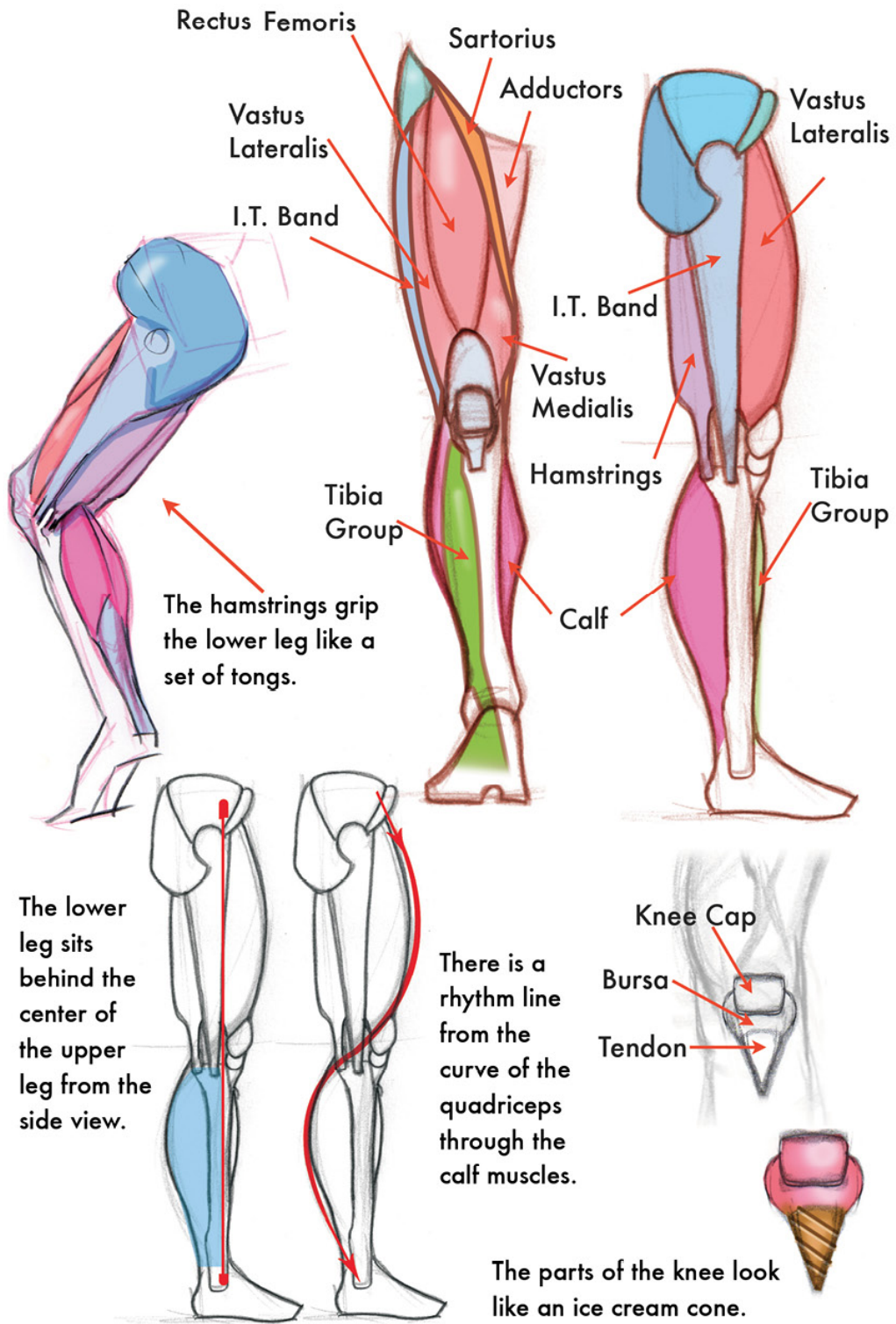
When the hand rotates, the radius flips over the ulna. When this happens the supinators follow the radius and always connect at the thumb side, changing the surface contour.

The hand rotates around the ulna pivoting on the pinky side.



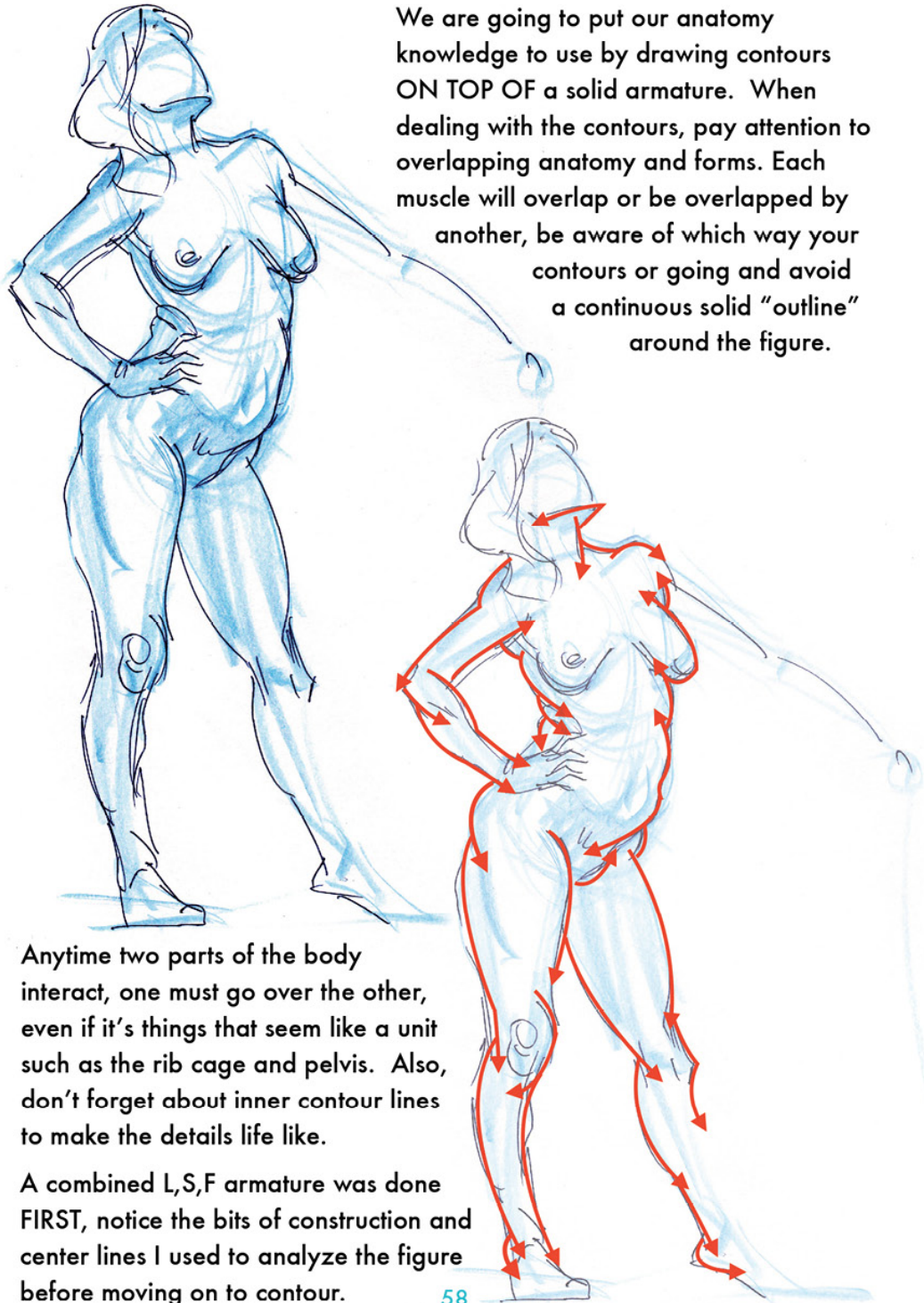
Palm side up is called supination.

Palm side down is called pronation.



CONTOUR AND DETAILS

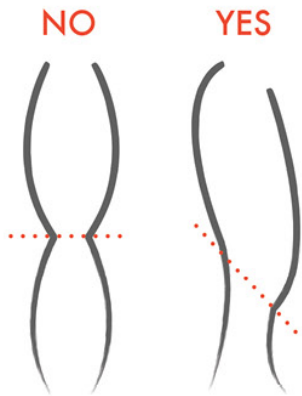
We are going to put our anatomy knowledge to use by drawing contours **ON TOP OF** a solid armature. When dealing with the contours, pay attention to overlapping anatomy and forms. Each muscle will overlap or be overlapped by another, be aware of which way your contours are going and avoid a continuous solid "outline" around the figure.



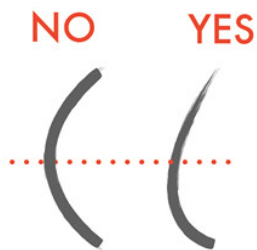
Anytime two parts of the body interact, one must go over the other, even if it's things that seem like a unit such as the rib cage and pelvis. Also, don't forget about inner contour lines to make the details life like.

A combined L,S,F armature was done **FIRST**, notice the bits of construction and center lines I used to analyze the figure before moving on to contour.

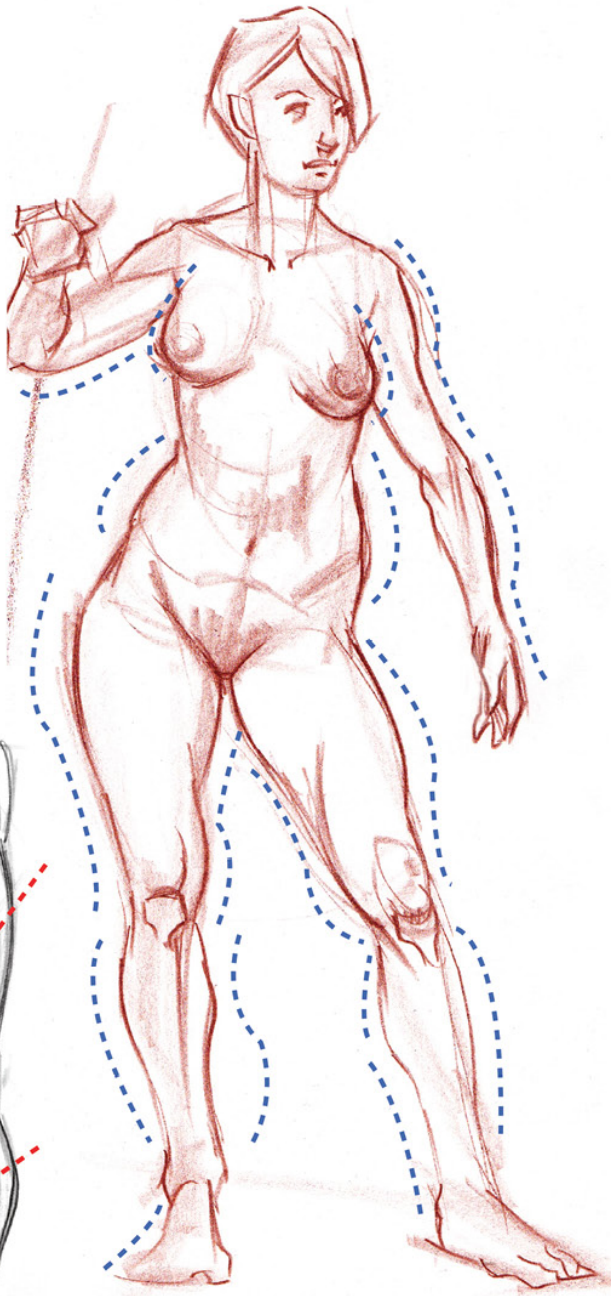
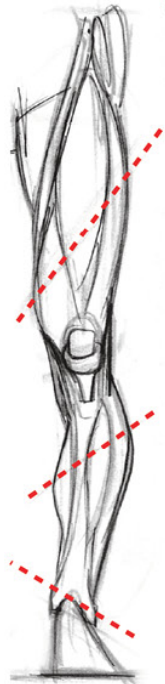
In the figure forms rarely have symmetrical "sausage link" sections. Instead, there is a beautiful alternating rhythm you need to be aware of.

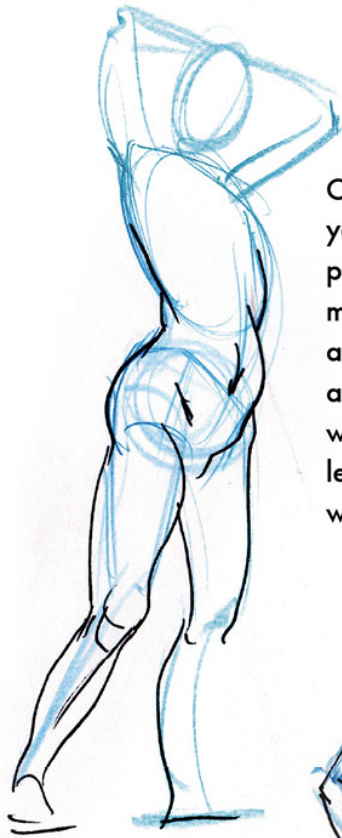


Curves are also rarely symmetrical. The peak of a curve is usually off center, not in the middle.

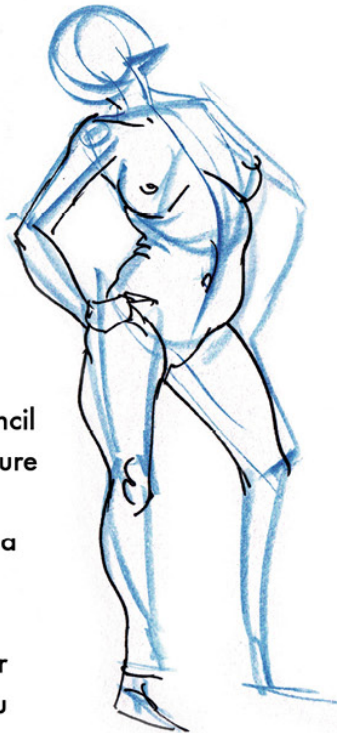


The leg is a good example of these alternating rhythms and asymmetrical curves.



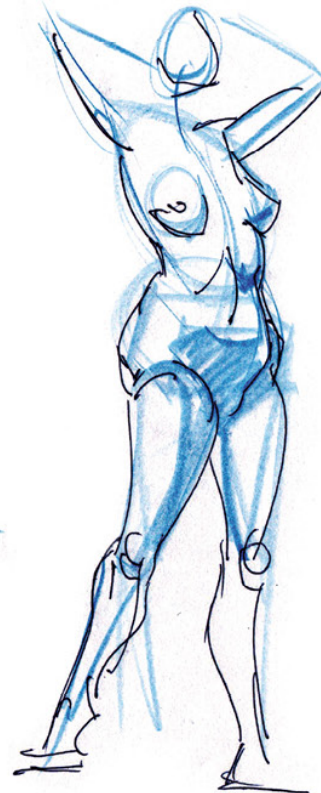


Once you are comfortable with your L,S,F method from the previous exercise, you will want to move past the simplified armature and draw gestures with anatomy and details. However, we don't want forget the lessons we learned in the previous chapters, we just add the fun bits on top.



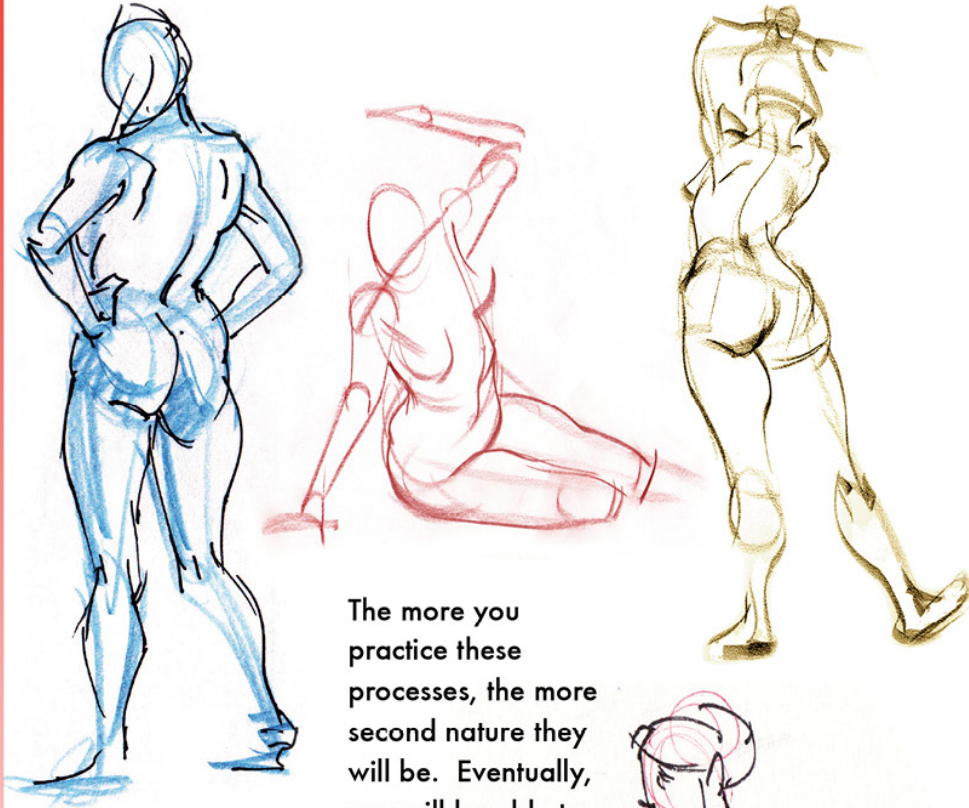
I used a light blue pencil to do my initial armature so you can see my process. Then I used a pen on top to create anatomy and details. This is a great way for you to practice so you can refine your process.

Take note of the basic armature used, a simple rib cage / pelvis bean shape, and shapes or forms for the limbs, neck and head.



EXERCISE

2 minutes. First draw your combined L,S,F armature, then build contour and details on top. You can use a light colored pen for the armature, and a dark one for the details, but you should also practice using light pencil lines for the initial gesture and dark lines for the details.

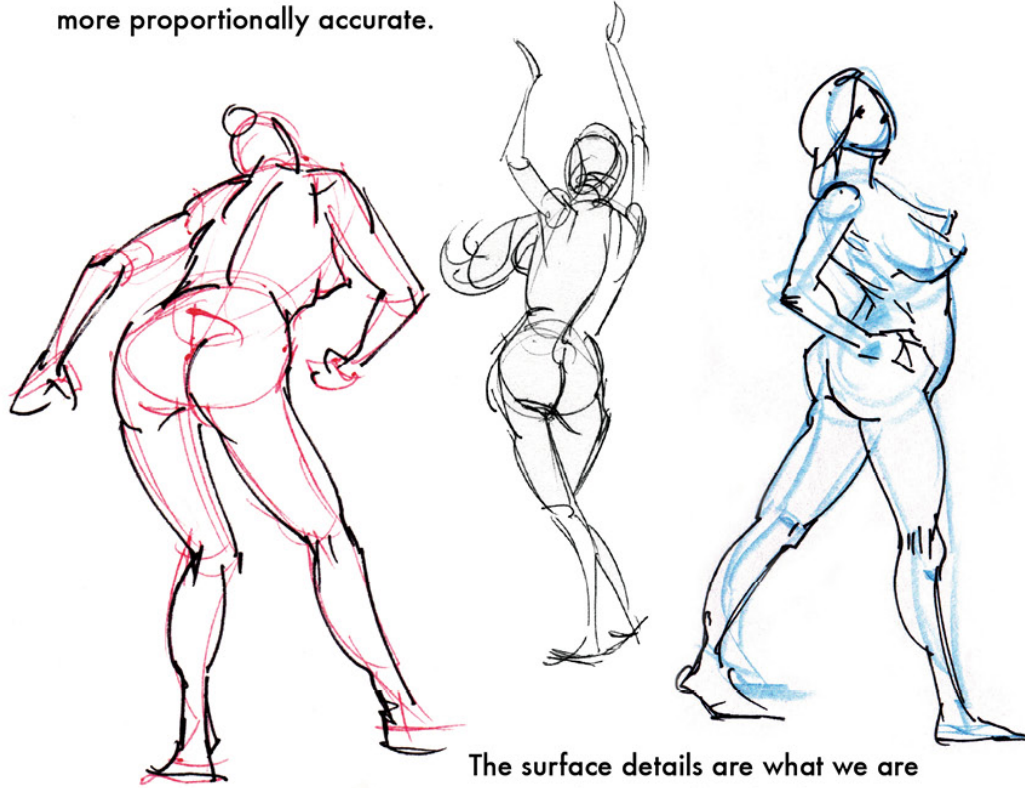


The more you practice these processes, the more second nature they will be. Eventually, you will be able to create a complete gesture in a few minutes.

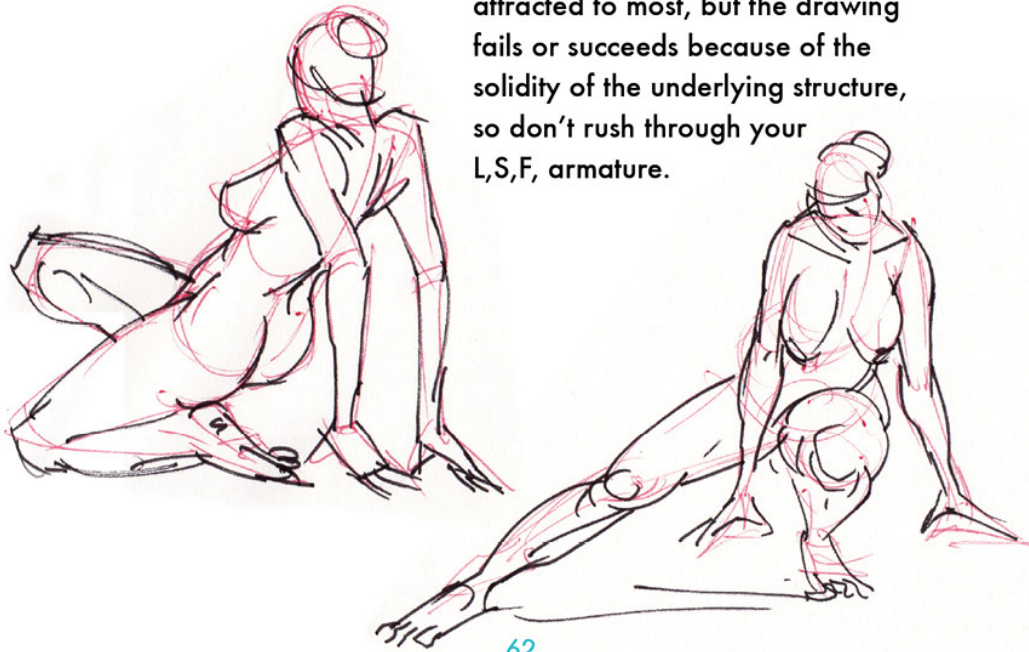
Explore different materials. You may find that you are faster or more accurate with different drawing tools. Try colored pencil, graphite, charcoal pencils, conté, brush pens, and ball point pens.



Don't be afraid to adjust your drawing as you go. Notice in the blue drawing that the back leg was lengthened from my initial gesture to be more proportionally accurate.



The surface details are what we are attracted to most, but the drawing fails or succeeds because of the solidity of the underlying structure, so don't rush through your L,S,F, armature.





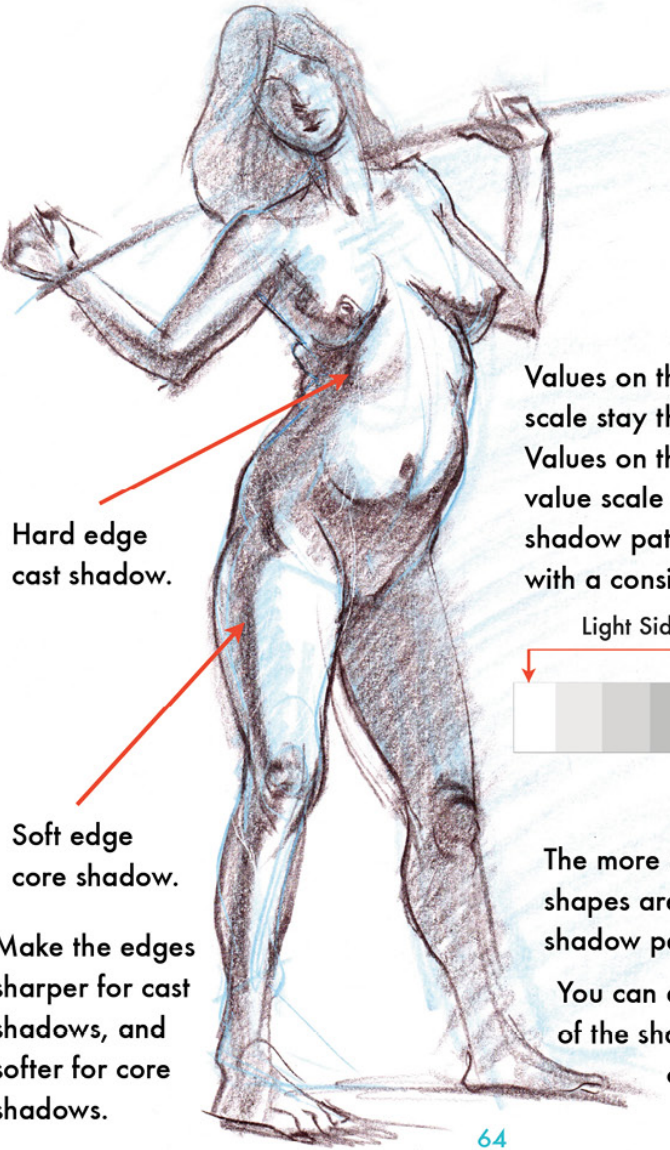
Some poses take more analysis, so you may not get as much information down as others. Make sure your initial armature captures the whole figure so the drawing feels complete at every stage.



LIGHT AND SHADOW

When dealing with light and shadow, first make sure the model (or reference) is lit with a single, strong light source in a clear direction. This will make for the best lighting in a gesture, but there are many different ways to light your subject.

Squint to see the basic light and shadow pattern. Draw this pattern by blocking all of the shadows in as single value.

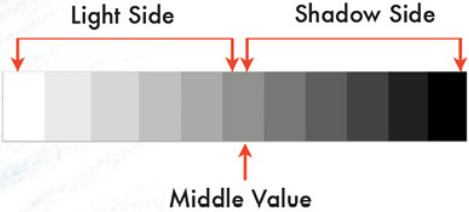


Hard edge cast shadow.

Soft edge core shadow.

Make the edges sharper for cast shadows, and softer for core shadows.

Values on the light side of a value scale stay the white of the paper. Values on the shadow side of the value scale group together into the shadow pattern. Fill this pattern in with a consistent middle value.

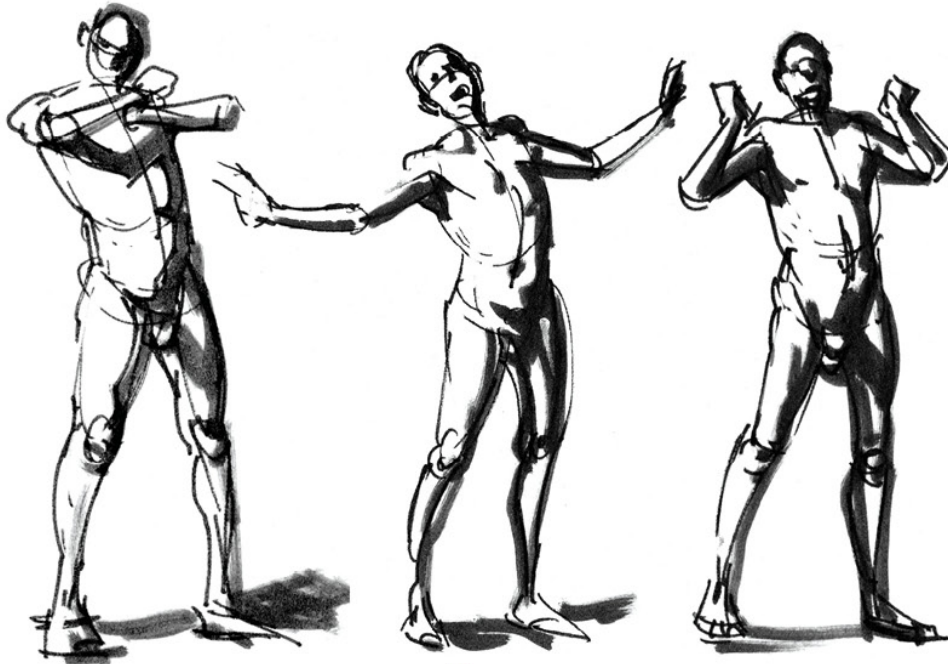
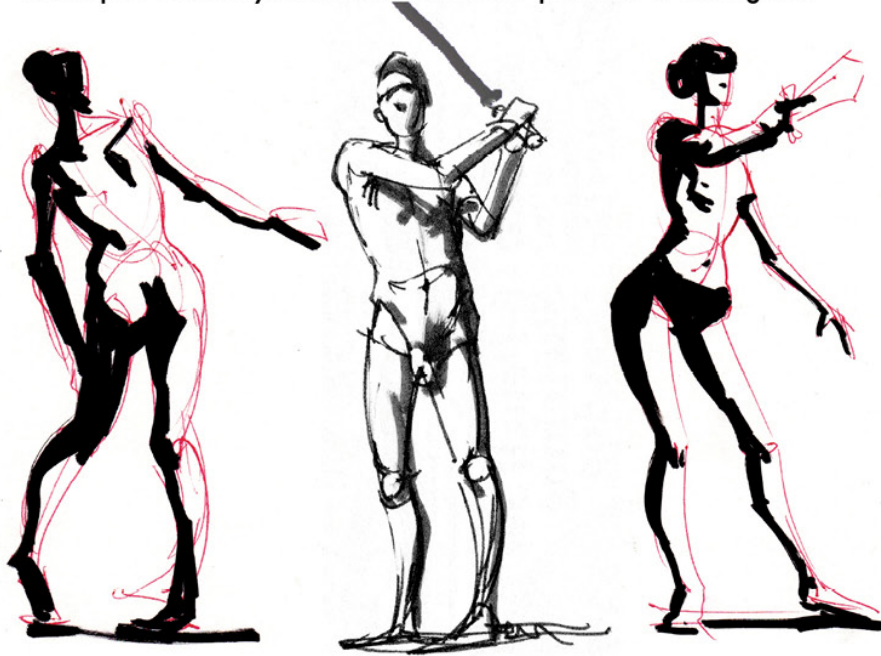


The more specific the shadow shapes are, the more realistic the shadow patterns will seem.

You can darken the leading edge of the shadow pattern to create a core shadow affect.

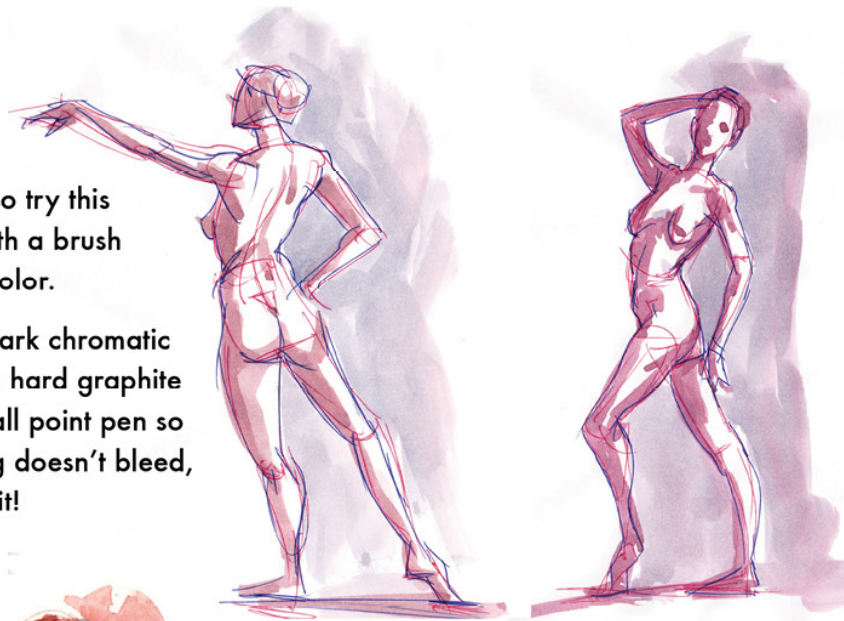
EXERCISE

5 minutes. Use a ball point pen to create a quick 2 minute L,S,F armature with details. Then spend the rest of the time using a brush-pen to solidly block in the shadow patterns of the figure.



You can also try this exercise with a brush and watercolor.

Pre mix a dark chromatic color, use a hard graphite pencil or ball point pen so the drawing doesn't bleed, and go for it!

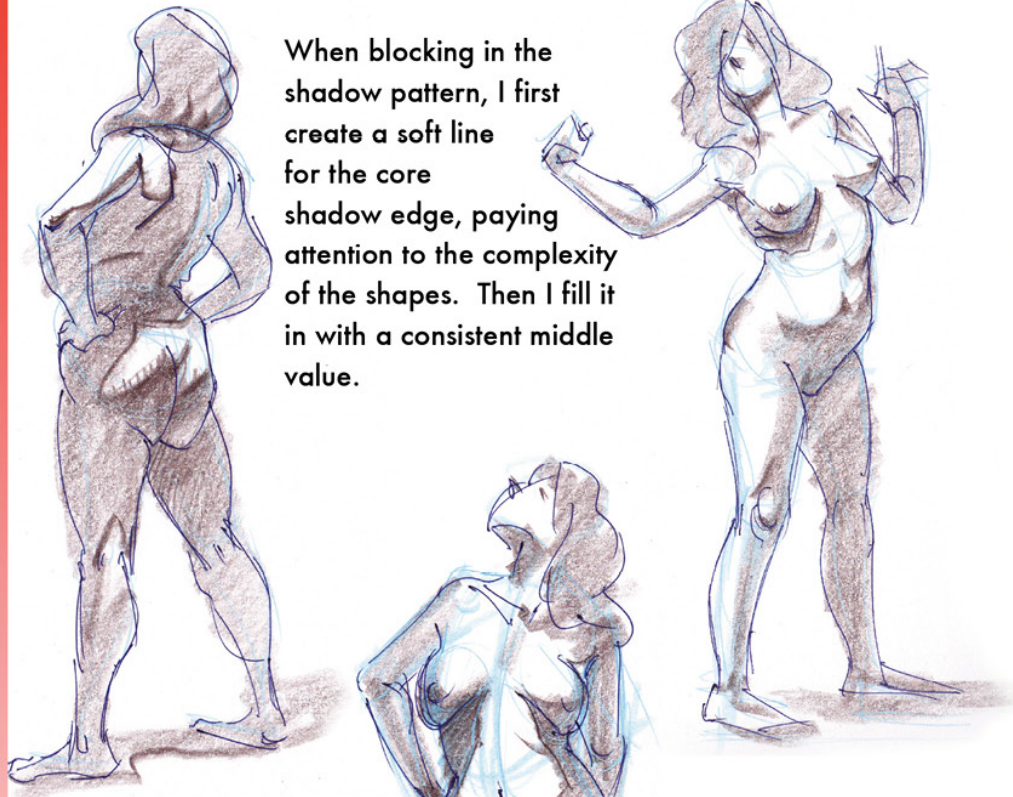


A background value on the light side helps make the figure pop out.



EXERCISE

5 minutes. Start with your combo L,S,F armature then put contour, details, and value on top. You can use pen for the gesture, but practice with a pencil to define the shadow patterns using a middle value.



When blocking in the shadow pattern, I first create a soft line for the core shadow edge, paying attention to the complexity of the shapes. Then I fill it in with a consistent middle value.

At first it may be difficult to get the structure, proportion, balance, anatomy, and shadows indicated in only 5 minutes.

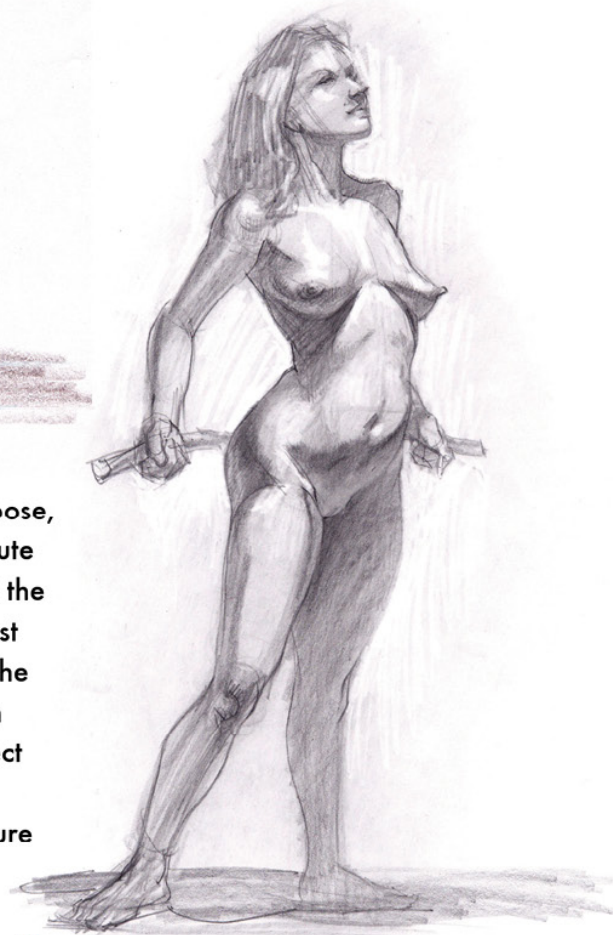
But, if you keep practicing in the step by step manner, you will get faster and faster and you will be surprised how much you can accomplish in a short time.

EXERCISE

EXERCISE: 10 minute +. Use your L,S,F method and sighting to accurately create beautiful figure drawings drawings with details and value.



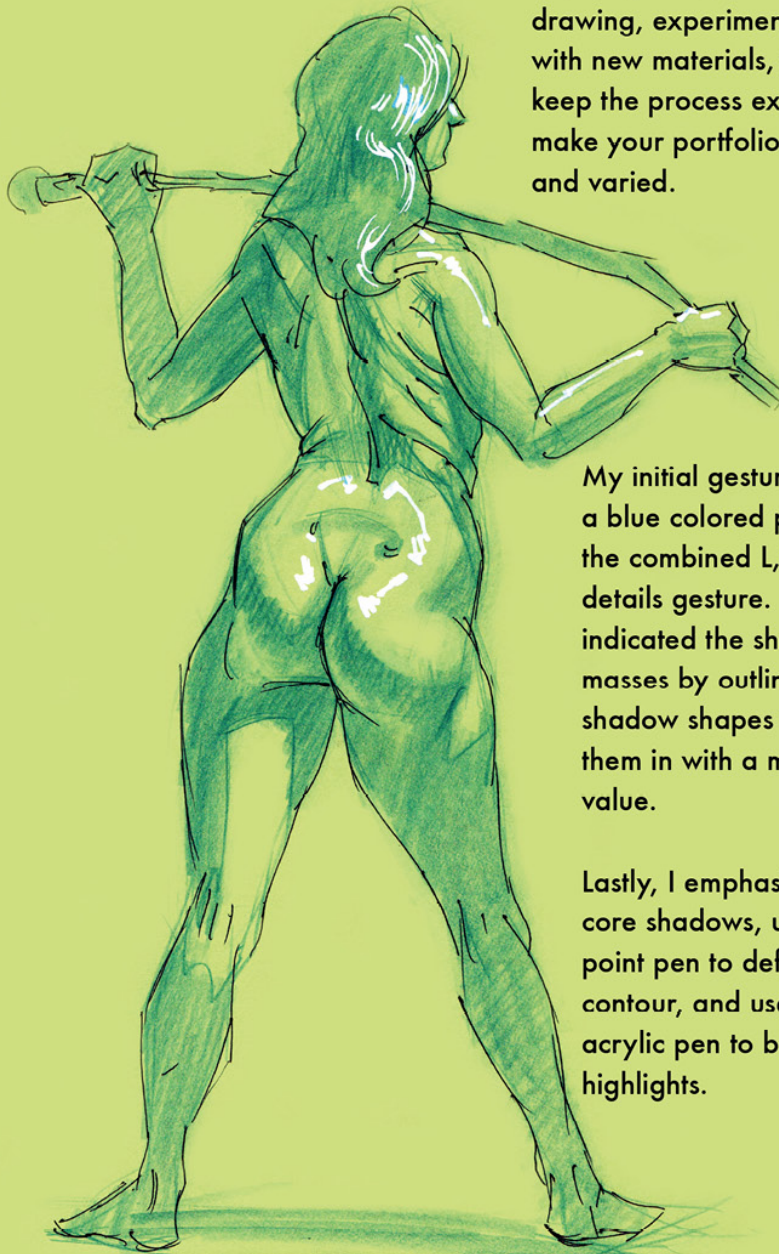
Your combo L,S,F approach may change and evolve the more you practice these techniques, but they will be a part of your drawings not matter how long you spend on them..



The figure above is a 10 minute pose, the figure to the right is a 20 minute pose. In both cases, a version of the L, S, F method was used in the first one or two minute of the pose. The remaining time was taken up with sighting and construction to correct proportion and alignments, then building anatomy over my armature and indicating the light and shadow values.

This figure is a 20 minute pose done on colored printer paper. Working on color or toned paper lets you add white marker or white charcoal on top to create interesting light and shadow effects.

In your journey through figure drawing, experiment and play with new materials, this will keep the process exciting and make your portfolio interesting and varied.



My initial gesture was with a blue colored pencil using the combined L,S,F and details gesture. Then I indicated the shadow masses by outlining the shadow shapes and filling them in with a middle value.

Lastly, I emphasized the core shadows, used a ball point pen to define the contour, and used a white acrylic pen to bring out the highlights.



This 20 minute pose was done with a 6b graphite pencil using a soft cloth to smudge the layers. The process used was the same we have discussed during this book: starting with a simple line, shape, form armature to get started, using sighting to check proportion and angles, and placing contour on top.

Building values started by blocking in the complex shadow shapes as a consistent middle value, then smudging with the soft cloth to smooth the tones, and creating darker core and cast shadows. Lastly, I used a white eraser to pull out the highlights.

By going through the techniques in this book you have taken a huge leap forward in making accurate and beautiful drawings. If you get frustrated at any point, take your time and focus on the simple steps, eventually they will become second nature.



No matter what, keep practicing, and have fun!

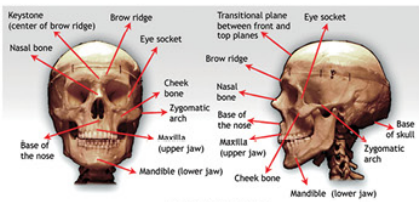
drawsh

an artists resource

Thank you for taking the time to look through this book. If you found it helpful, more information on figure drawing, and many other topics can be found at www.drawsh.com.

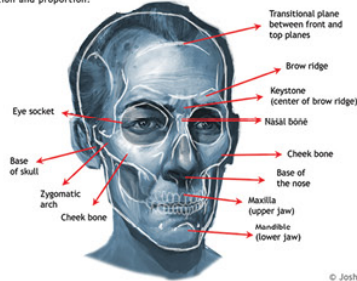
the head

Parts of the Skull



Bony Landmarks

The bony landmarks of the head are clearly evident on the surface and form the basis for construction and proportion.



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perspective

Perspective can be daunting to many artists because it is so technical and analytical. But perspective is the key to invent objects and space with absolute authority and to draw anything you can see.

The 5 Laws
Perspective is like the grammar of drawing, it is a system of rules to organize lines, shapes, and forms to create the illusion of 3 dimensional space. The rules are based on how our eyes perceive the world in front of us, and are summarized in the 5 laws.

- 1. The Law of Diminution:**
This law states that as objects get farther away from us they appear to get smaller.
- 2. The Law of Overlap:**
This law states that when one object is in front of another, it will cover it and describe their spatial relationships.
- 3. The Law of Foreshortening:**
This law states that when an object turns away from us, it appears to get shorter. Objects under extreme foreshortening can appear distorted, making the area that is closer appear out of scale with the rest of the object.
- 4. The Law of Convergence:**
This law states that as parallel lines go away from us, they appear to converge, or meet, at a point. We can also say this in reverse: When parallel lines come toward us, they diverge, or get farther apart.
- 5. The Law of Atmospheric Perspective:**
This law describes the properties that affect an objects appearance as it moves away:
A: Light and dark values get closer the mid range, creating less contrast.
B: Colors get less saturated.
C: Colors get cooler, shifting towards blues and purples.
D: Edges gets softer.
E: We see less detail.

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planar drawing

Planes are flat surfaces, and everything can be drawn as simple planes. We use planes to understand how objects are constructed or to memorize a simplified version of the object so we can draw it from memory, like this planar head.

It would be impossible to memorize all the complexities of the human head from every position, but not impossible to memorize this simplified planar head, and be able to draw it in any position from imagination. This is what draftsmanship masters have been doing since the Renaissance.

But how many planes should we draw? How many planes depends on the complexity of the object. It also depends on how many we CHOOSE to draw. The more planes we draw, the more it will resemble the original object, but may get complicated to benefit us. Too few planes and we may not be describing the original object accurately. A good rule of thumb is draw as FEW planes as you can to describe the essential elements of the object.



Lets start with a cylindrical object and try to turn it into planes. When drawing a planar object, it is best to use only straight lines.

The simplest set of planes we could use would be to turn it into a box form. But this doesn't describe the cylinder's curved nature.

If we add another set of planes to show round corners, it is still much simpler than the original, but describes the essential form.

Practice planar drawing on objects around your house. At first start with simple objects like this soap dispenser. When they get too easy, try harder objects like this mammal skull, working from life whenever possible. Work in isometric perspective or challenge yourself in 2 point perspective.



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Account for every plane, making sure every section is connected to another by a plane. Think of it like a puzzle where all the pieces must fit together.



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5 properties of light

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The 5 properties of light will remain consistent whenever light hits a form.

However, these properties might appear slightly different depending on if the form has hard or soft edges. Pay careful attention to how light affects each of the four basic forms to be able to mimic these patterns in your drawings.

