

Welcome to Drawing from Line to Life: INTERMEDIATE



An introduction to creating drawings that rise above mere technical prowess; and choosing the right supplies to transfer your visions to paper

This tutorial has three sections:

- Drawing Above the Mundane
- Choosing and Preparing Pencils
- Paper and Other Supplies



As an Aside

In my opinion, *Staedtler* pencils are the best because they contain fewer impurities, the best consistency, and the widest physical value range. Any brand will do but do be wary of “sketching” pencils.

Drawing Above the Mundane

Welcome to a series of tutorials designed for artists who know basic techniques and are ready to push them a stage further – above the mundane.

As your skills progress, your hand and eye coordination will gradually improve until you reach the stage where you no longer have to focus entirely on techniques. At this stage, you can pay more attention to the message within your art – be it a simple story, a trigger for an emotional response, or just to emphasize the beauty of something.

Where you once saw a tree as merely a recognizable organic object, now you notice how the foliage forms three-dimensional rounded masses, and how the light shines through gaps to throw the internal structure into silhouette.

Figure 1



You aspire to have your visual thoughts travel down your arm, into your hand, and through your pencil to become a completed drawing.

Prepare to be challenged! There's little to be learned from always drawing what you know you can achieve. Embark on this phase of your learning journey with an open mind and a full box of pencils.

Figure 2



Choosing and Preparing Pencils

The five most important pencil grades for drawing range from the softest 4B grade through 2B, HB, and 2H to the hardest 4H grade.

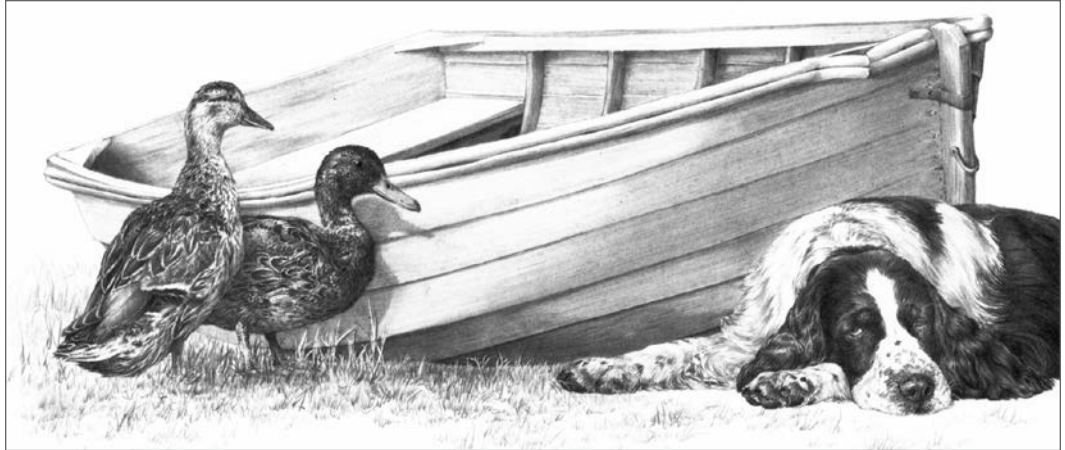
Each of those grades is perfectly capable of overlapping adjacent tones. So, HB applied with medium pressure can reproduce the darker tones of its neighbouring H grade, and medium pressure with 2H will supply the remaining lighter tones of H.



As an Aside

If you have completed *1.3.R1 Welcome to Drawing from Line to Life: Beginner* you may be familiar with the pencil grades discussed in this section. I use 2B, HB and 2H extensively. (I reserve the harder grades, such as 6H and 8H for special tasks.)

Figure 3



Grades softer than 2B tend to be too coarse for smooth shading.

Graphite pencils obtain their different grades (degree of hardness) by being mixed with clay – the more clay, the harder the grade and the lighter the achievable tones.

For example, 6B has a far greater graphite content than 6H, which contains much more clay. This means 6H has a very fine composition but 6B possesses large grains of graphite – too large for my purposes.



Caution!

6B and softer grades blunt easily, crumble under pressure and usually fail to fill the tooth of the paper, unless burnished with a harder grade.

Figure 4



So, you have your 4B, 2B, HB, 2H and 4H pencils freshly sharpened to a good conical point?

That's a very common approach but there's a better technique for uninterrupted drawing:

Step 1: Hold your pencil vertically and place its point on a scrap of paper.

Step 2: Rotate your pencil in your fingers until the writing or grade mark is facing you.

Step 3: Lower the pencil until it's at your normal handwriting angle and rub the point on the paper.

You're attempting to wear a flat face to make a chisel point – which is exaggerated in Figure 6.

Figure 6



Figure 5



As an Aside

If you always pick up and hold your pencils with the writing visible, you'll know exactly where the flat face on the point is. I use the pocket clip on my clutch pencils (also called *lead holders*) in the same manner.

The advantages of using a chisel point are worth the effort. You now have a point that will:

- not snap (unless you apply really excessive force).
- allow you to apply flat tone without a hint of hard edge.
- permit the drawing of fine, sharp lines without constant re-sharpening.

All that without having to let go of your pencil!

As you draw, a slight shift in rotation from time to time will keep the edge sharp without breaking your concentration to reach for another pencil or sharpen the one you're using.

Using the flat face automatically sharpens the edge (Figure 7).

Figure 7

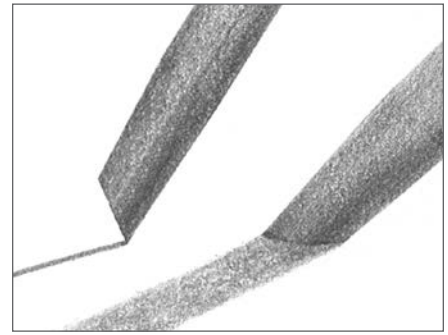
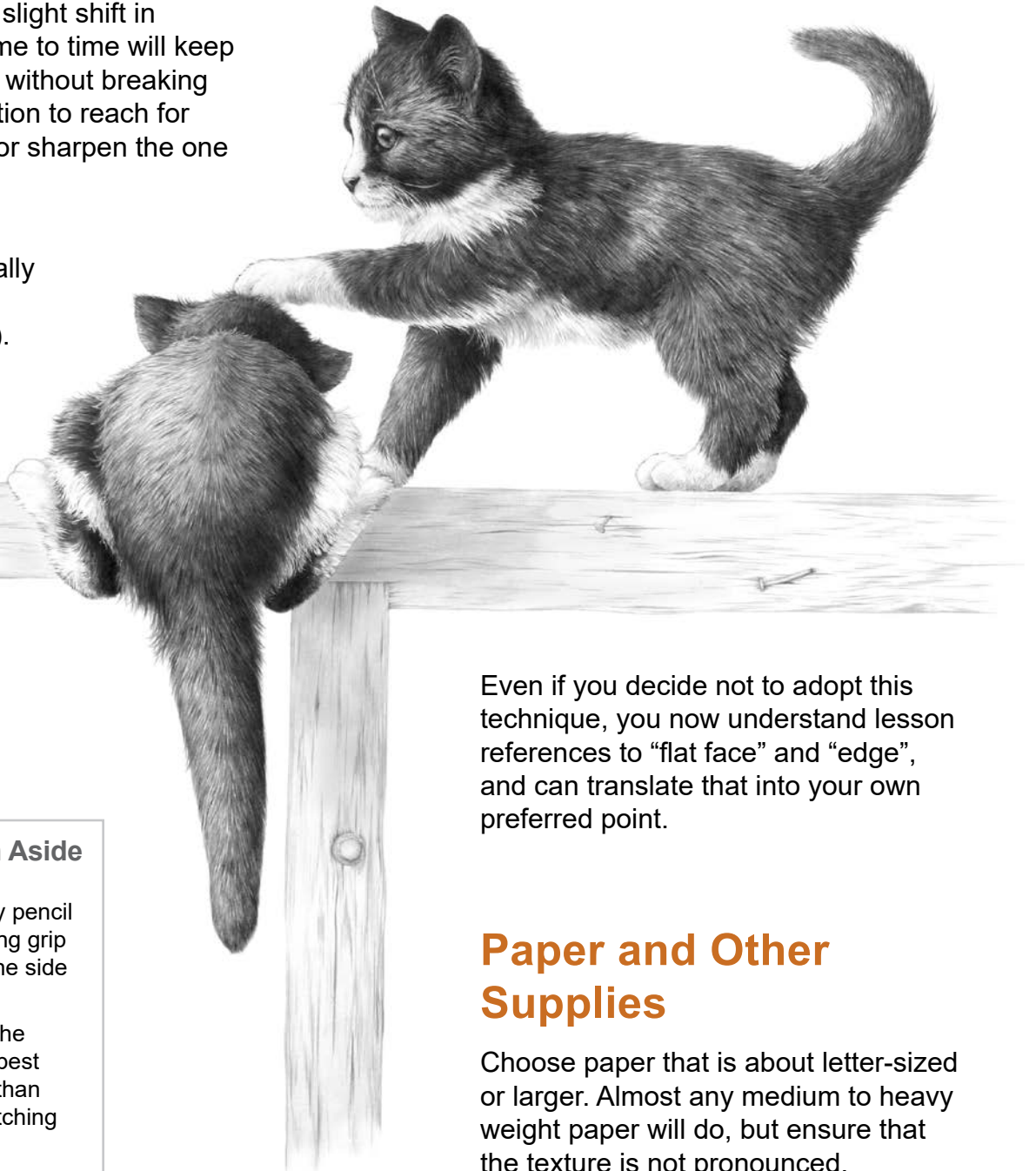


Figure 8



As an Aside

I usually hold my pencil in a normal writing grip and never use the side of the lead.

And, I hold it in the bottom third for best control – rather than high up in a sketching style.

Even if you decide not to adopt this technique, you now understand lesson references to “flat face” and “edge”, and can translate that into your own preferred point.

Paper and Other Supplies

Choose paper that is about letter-sized or larger. Almost any medium to heavy weight paper will do, but ensure that the texture is not pronounced.

Your choice of paper will also affect results, so choose your paper carefully. Any smooth paper, such as a Bristol board is suitable and plate-finish would be better.

You also need the following:

- Kneaded eraser or wall putty (preferably Blu-Tack, the original wall putty)
- Toilet tissue, and tortillons or blending stumps

Happy shading!

Cheers.....



As an Aside

I prefer a very smooth, plate-finish paper, with a hard, smooth surface beneath it. Other artists have a preference for Bristol board, the Strathmore series, or even watercolor paper.

I don't recommend watercolor paper because it has a coating that affects the amount of graphite it can accept, and a texture that will interfere with your drawing. So, choose a non-coated, smooth paper for best results.



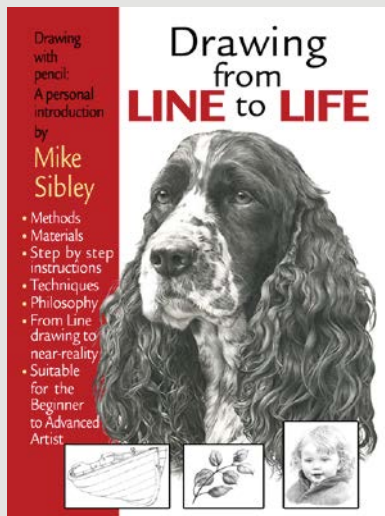
Challenge!

Refer to 3.3.A1: *Exercise Your Drawing Hand* to complete four exercises designed to get your current drawing skills in shape before you take on more challenging skills.



As an Aside

If you usually "work up" a drawing from light to dark, you may not have a full understanding of what you want to achieve. I employ and teach the reverse: I don't play around with line or tone. A decision is made; a line or mark committed to; and it's drawn – fresh, sharp and alive.



Drawing from Line to Life

by Mike Sibley

- Foreword by renowned Artist David Shepherd
- Over 280 pages of pencil drawing tips, tutorials, demonstrations and much more...
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- Tools, techniques, methods
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