GoalTodo

Draw every day: ten minutes to start, then learn to really look

Draw every day

10 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Feb 7

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Ten minutes of lines and shapes

Lines and shapes

- [ ] Pick one time and one place to draw each day, and leave a pencil and paper there

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Warm-up: fill part of a page with straight lines, circles and ovals. Hold the pencil loosely, further from the point than you would to write
  3 minutes

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Draw one simple object near you, such as a mug, a book or a box, as the basic shapes it is made of: a cylinder, a rectangle, a circle
  7 minutes

Done when: You've drawn for ten minutes on seven days in a row

Sticking point: Your drawings will look rough. That's expected: these are practice pages, not pictures to keep. Ten minutes done is a good day, whatever ends up on the page.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Blind contour: draw without looking

Learn to look

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Warm-up lines, circles and ovals
  2 minutes

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Blind contour of your other hand: pose it, then look only at your hand, never at the paper, and draw its edges in one slow, continuous line without lifting the pencil. Do one in 30 seconds, then longer ones of 1 to 3 minutes
  5 minutes

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Blind contour of a simple object, such as a plant, a shoe or a piece of fruit
  3 minutes

Done when: You've drawn for ten minutes every day this week, and done a 3-minute blind contour without peeking

Sticking point: The drawings will look strange, and that's the point. You're training your eye to stay on the subject. If you can't stop peeking, rest a sheet of paper over your drawing hand.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Contour drawing: fifteen minutes

Learn to look

- [ ] Warm-up: one 30-second blind contour of your hand
  1 minute
- [ ] Contour drawing of one or two simple objects: follow the edges slowly in one continuous line, looking at the object about 90% of the time and glancing at the paper only to check where you are
  14 minutes

Done when: You've drawn for fifteen minutes every day this week

Sticking point: Fifteen minutes can feel long at first. Slow your line down rather than filling the time with more drawings: a contour drawing is meant to be slow, following each edge as your eye moves along it.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Gesture: fast, loose drawings

Gesture

- [ ] Warm-up: one 30-second blind contour
  1 minute
- [ ] Timed gesture drawings of objects around you: start with 15 seconds each, then 30 seconds, 1 minute and 2 minutes. Draw through the whole object in a fast, loose line, keeping the pencil moving, rather than tracing its edge
  10 minutes
- [ ] A contour drawing of one of the objects you just gestured
  4 minutes

Done when: You've drawn for fifteen minutes every day this week, with at least five gestures on each day's page

Sticking point: Gestures look like scribbles and can feel clumsy at first. Keep the pencil moving and don't stop to fix details. Loosen your grip if your hand tires.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Measure and map the big shapes

Shapes and proportion

- [ ] Warm-up: five 1-minute gestures
  5 minutes
- [ ] Draw a group of two or three objects. First measure: hold your pencil at arm's length with your elbow locked, and compare the group's width with its height. Then lightly map the big shapes before any detail
  10 minutes

Done when: You've drawn every day this week and passed thirty days in a row

Sticking point: Details pull at you: the handle, the label, the pattern. Leave them out this week. Get the big shapes and their sizes right first; details sit on top of them later.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Three values, and twenty minutes

Light and dark

- [ ] Warm-up: three 1-minute gestures
  3 minutes
- [ ] Draw one or two simple objects lit from one side by a lamp or window. Map the big shapes, then squint and shade in three values: the white of the paper for the lightest parts, a middle grey, and your darkest dark
  17 minutes

Done when: You've drawn for twenty minutes every day this week, with three clear values in at least three drawings

Sticking point: If twenty minutes doesn't fit every day, keep it to fifteen. A short drawing you do every day is worth more than a long one you skip.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Take your drawing out

Draw what's around you

- [ ] Warm-up: one 1-minute blind contour
  1 minute
- [ ] Draw whatever is in front of you, wherever you are: a corner of a room, a view from a window, a bench in the park. Gesture first, then the big shapes, then contour
  15 to 20 minutes
- [ ] A longer drawing at home of anything you like, using everything so far
  20 minutes

Done when: You've drawn every day this week, at least three times away from your usual place

Sticking point: Drawing in public can feel exposed. Start somewhere quiet and keep the drawings small. Your sketchbook is for practice, not for show.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Long gestures, and choose your subject

Put it together

- [ ] Sustained gesture: start with a fast line gesture of one object, then keep going, adjusting and correcting, and finish with a contour line
  10 minutes
- [ ] Contour drawing of an object from a new angle
  10 minutes
- [ ] Choose the subject for your finished drawing: two or three objects you like, set up where they can stay for two weeks, lit from one side. Make three small sketches of different views and pick one
  20 minutes

Done when: You've drawn every day this week, and your subject is set up and its view chosen

Sticking point: Choosing can stall you. Pick simple objects with clear shapes, and avoid glass and shiny metal for now. You can draw a harder subject next time.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

Build the drawing

Your finished drawing

- [ ] Warm-up: two 1-minute gestures of your subject
  2 minutes
- [ ] Work on one drawing of your subject all week: measure and map the big shapes on day 1, refine the contours on days 2 and 3, then build up the three values
  18 minutes

Done when: Your drawing has its big shapes, contours and three values in place

Sticking point: Midway through, the drawing may look wrong. Step back, squint and compare it with the subject. Fix the biggest shape that's off first, not the small details.

Feb 1–7
Week 10

Finish it, and set your routine

Make it yours

- [ ] Finish your drawing: add details last, and only where they matter
  20 minutes
- [ ] Draw anything you like, in any of the ways you've learned
  10 to 20 minutes
- [ ] Write down your time, your place and your length, and a five-minute fallback for busy days

Done when: You've finished your drawing, drawn every day this week, and written down how you'll keep going to day 100

Milestones

Mon, Nov 30	Draw for ten minutes
Sun, Dec 6	Seven days in a row
Tue, Dec 29	Thirty days in a row
Tue, Mar 9	A hundred days

How the plan works

You draw every day, at the same time and in the same place if you can. You start short and add a few minutes every week or two. If you haven't drawn since school, you begin with ten minutes and reach twenty by week 6. If you already draw a bit, you begin with fifteen.

Short and daily beats long and rare. Even five careful minutes help, fifteen is enough to warm up and take in one small lesson, and regular sessions of twenty minutes add up to real skill. If twenty doesn't fit your day, settle on ten or fifteen: drawing every day matters more than drawing long.

Each week adds one way of looking. You start with simple lines and shapes, then learn to look hard at what's in front of you with blind contour and contour drawing, then loosen up with fast gesture drawings. Next come measuring and big shapes, then light and dark. The last weeks put it all together in one finished drawing you work on over two weeks.

The milestones follow the steps on your board. Your first ten minutes is day 1, seven days in a row is the end of week 1, thirty days in a row lands in week 5, and a hundred days comes a month or two after the plan ends. After the last week there are no new tasks: you keep your daily drawing going.

Which level to pick

▪ I haven't drawn since school: you don't draw now, or only doodle. You start with ten minutes of lines and shapes, with 10 weeks to a finished drawing.

▪ I can already draw a bit: you draw now and then, perhaps from photos or memory, and want to draw from life and make it daily. You start with fifteen minutes of contour drawing, with 6 weeks to a finished drawing.

If you're not sure, pick the first level. It's easy to move on early, and ten minutes is easier to keep than fifteen while the habit is new.

Before you start

▪ Fix a time and a place. Leave a pencil and paper there, so starting takes no effort.

▪ Expect messy pages. Practice drawings aren't meant to be finished or accomplished pieces, and blind contours are meant to look strange. Favour practice over perfection.

▪ Draw from life. Every exercise here uses something real in front of you: your hand, a mug, a plant, a room. Looking at the real thing is the skill you're building.

▪ Hold the pencil loosely. A lighter, looser grip gives a more varied line and lets you draw for longer with less hand fatigue.

What you need

▪ An ordinary pencil and paper. The simplest materials are ideal. Printer paper or cheap drawing paper is fine for warm-ups and gestures.

▪ A sketchbook, if you like. You don't need one to start: loose sheets count too. A small one you can carry makes it easier to draw on the go.

▪ A timer, for gestures and timed blind contours. Your phone works.

▪ One lamp or a window to light your objects from one side in the light and dark weeks.

▪ A few simple objects: mugs, boxes, fruit, shoes, a plant. Skip glass and shiny metal at first.

The ways of drawing in this plan

▪ Blind contour: look only at the subject, never at the paper, and draw its edges in one continuous line. The result won't look like the subject, and that's fine. It trains you out of the habit, common in beginners and experienced artists alike, of not looking at the subject enough.

▪ Contour: the same slow, continuous line, but you can peek. Look at the subject about 90% of the time and at your drawing about 10%.

▪ Gesture: fast and loose, drawing through the whole object rather than around its edge. Start with 15-second gestures and build up. Two minutes is a typical length.

▪ Measuring and big shapes: hold your pencil at arm's length, elbow locked, to compare widths and heights. Then break what you see into simple shapes, drawn lightly, before any detail.

▪ Three values: squint to see the pattern of light, middle and dark. Leave the white of the paper for the lightest parts, then add a middle grey and your darkest dark, which can be a deep grey rather than black.

Common mistakes

▪ Judging every page. Most of your drawings are practice. The work is in the looking, not in what you keep.

▪ Peeking in blind contours. It defeats the exercise. Cover your hand if you need to.

▪ Starting with details. An eye or a label drawn first rarely ends up in the right place. Big shapes first, details last.

▪ Drawing from memory instead of looking. Draw what's actually in front of you, not what you think a mug looks like.

▪ Gripping hard and drawing small. Loosen your grip and use more of your arm, especially in gestures.

▪ Going long too soon. An hour on day 1 often ends in skipped days. Grow the length slowly.

Keeping it up to a hundred days

After the last week there are no more weekly tasks. Keep three things going:

▪ Your daily drawing, at the length you chose, at your set time. Mix the ways you've learned: a few gestures, a contour, a drawing with values.

▪ A five-minute fallback for busy days. One quick drawing of whatever is in front of you keeps the habit alive. It still counts.

▪ A new finished drawing now and then, with a slightly harder subject each time.

When you draw consistently, it becomes a habit, and a day without drawing starts to feel like something is missing. A hundred days is a milestone, not the end.

If you miss a day, draw the next day. Your count of days in a row starts again, but what you've learned to see doesn't disappear.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Missed a week, or most of one? Repeat that week. Don't make up the lost days with one long session. Your count of days in a row starts again from your next drawing.

Missed 2 weeks: Go back one week and drop to that week's length, for example from 20 minutes to 15, then build up again from there.

Missed 3 weeks: Start again at week 1 of your level. Look at what got in the way, the time, the place or the length, and change it before you start. If you were partway through your finished drawing, keep it and come back to it in the last weeks.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Start again at week 1 of "I haven't drawn since school", with ten minutes a day. Pick the shortest length you know you can keep, and add minutes only once you've drawn seven days in a row.

Sources

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“Both can help, but short regular sessions often build a stronger habit.”

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