Drawing Lifelike Heads

## Instructor and author: Lance Richlin

This course is for everyone who would like the opportunity to be personally guided through an art instruction book with help from the actual author.

Lance Richlin is the author and illustrator of Drawing Made Easy: Discover Your Inner Artist as You Learn to Draw Portraits in Graphite, published by Walter Foster.

Course Outline:

The goal of the course is to draw realistic heads. This gives students a technique to follow so that his/her portraits are more natural and accurate.

Norman Rockwell said that good head drawing is a major part of a career. I believe it's the best place to start.
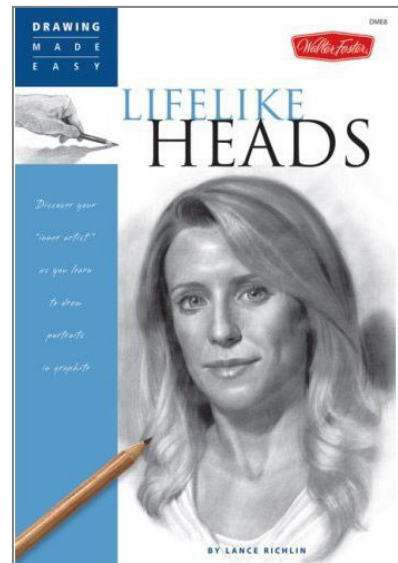
Week 1
Follow my directions to get the proportions for a man's head. (Here's where everyone makes their biggest mistakes and we learn to avoid them.)

Week 2
Adding shading to the head following classical rules. There is a tradition of how to shade accurately that goes back to the Renaissance.

Week 3
Here we add detail and attempt to refine the head. This is where we make it look like a real person.

Week 4
Now, having read my suggestions about your finished drawing, the student will get another week to perfect it. A little more elbow grease always helps. At the end of the week, you'll get a final word about the head.

Week 5
This week it's on to the female head. We begin again with proportions. Checking proportions must become a habit.

Week 6
Adding shading again - a variation in the order of shading so that you have a little flexibility.

Week 7
Now we will polish and refine the details. At the end of the week, I'll give you some final suggestions.

Week 8
You now have one last chance to perfect the drawing. At the end of week 8 you post your final result. You will be amazed at how useful it is to be able to draw an accurate portrait.
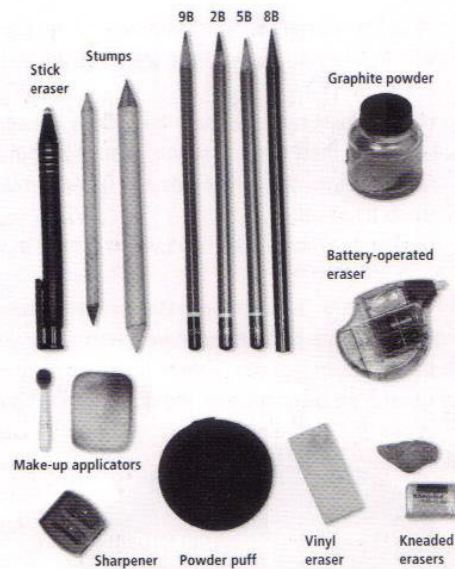
Materials:

All the drawings that you need to refer to ARE provided. However, you should buy the book. (I don't get royalties; it will just be better for you to understand as much as possible.)

MATERIALS & BASIC TECHNIQUES

Generally, graphite drawing requires a few simple tools, such as a pencil, eraser, and paper. However, my approach to this medium requires the small list of materials below. You don't need anything else to complete the projects in this book.

1. Woodless graphite pencils: 9B, 2B, and 5B
2. Staedtler® 8B pencil (to achieve matte blacks)
3. Stumps (smooth, not ridged)
4. A jar of graphite powder (store-bought isn't dark enough, so buy Design® Ebony Sketching Pencils (Matte Jet Black) and sand the tips into a jar; this will give you a powder that will create velvety blacks)
5. Powder puffs and eye make-up applicators for blending and applying graphite powder (you'll find they can be used for things stumps can't)
6. Kneaded, vinyl, and battery-operated erasers
7. A retractable, pen-shaped stick eraser
8. A knitting needle or ruler
9. Marker paper (at least 18 lb; thinner than this is too flimsy)
10. Bristol paper with a rough finish
11. A drawing board with clips to hold the paper or pad

Stick eraser

Stumps

9B 2B 5B 8B

Graphite powder

Battery-operated eraser

Make-up applicators

Sharpener   Powder puff   Vinyl eraser   Kneaded erasers

Paper

The two papers I use must be handled differently. The 18-lb marker paper is the best paper for heads smaller than a fist and can be used for life-size heads. The rough Bristol paper should never be used for small heads; the *tooth* (or raised areas of textured paper) will obliterate the detail. Marker paper is essential whenever speed is an issue because it automatically looks smooth and requires very little blending. The Bristol paper is excellent for large, time-consuming drawings. It is much more resilient, and the tooth absorbs graphite, which results in marvelous darks and blends. Unfortunately, the tooth also makes it necessary to continually blend the graphite to achieve smooth gradations. Please try both papers.
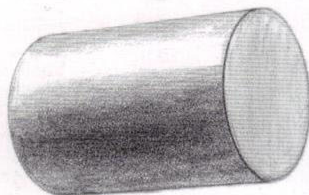
Shading

I always draw with the woodless 9B graphite pencil, switching to the 5B and 2B only for finer details. I respect using hatch lines for shading (see page 5), but I want my drawings to look a bit like black-and-white paintings—highly realistic. Therefore, I usually draw with the side of the graphite (A) and use the tip for fine detail and thin outlines (B).


A

B
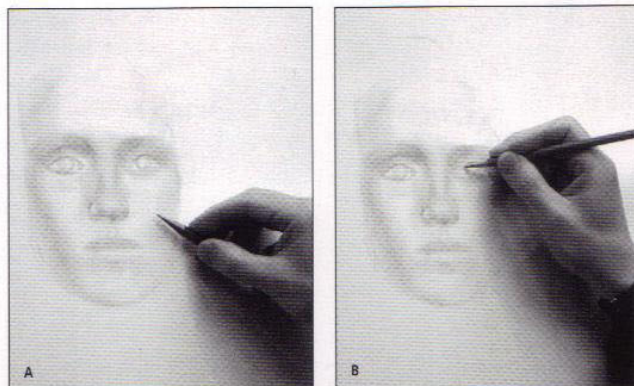
Below are a few methods for applying tone to your drawing, as well as examples of what to avoid when shading. Practice the recommended methods before you begin the projects so you can achieve clean, controlled tone in your drawings. Use whichever method adequately describes the form.
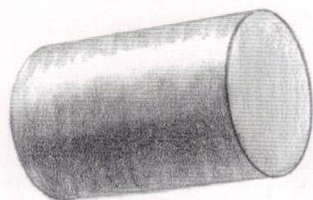
Shade Across the Form Create convincing form with pencil strokes that follow the width of the form.

**Shade Along the Form** You can achieve similar results by shading evenly along the length of the form.
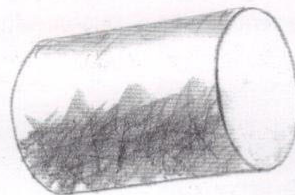
Don't Shade Chaotically Don't use several directions of shading over the form—this is messy and uneven.

Try Hatching This involves applying parallel pencil strokes close together. This method is common, but I don't use it.

Don't Leave Gaps When shading with the side of the pencil, overlap each stroke to avoid separate bands of tone.
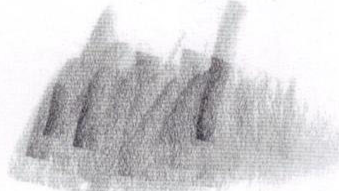
Avoid Using Uneven Pressure Shade with the same amount of pressure through an area—caress, don't slash.
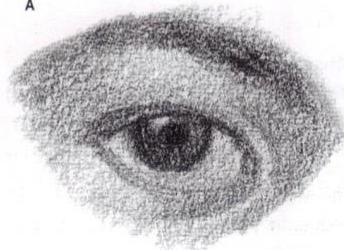
Stumping

After laying in a form's proportions, outlining it, and shading it (stages 1–5; see pages 28–33), switch to a stump or a make-up applicator to blend and deepen the tones of the shadows. When the stump becomes coated with graphite, you can occasionally use it as a pencil.

Rubbing and Adding Highlights

After outlining, shading, and stumping the shadows, rub the entire drawing with a powder puff, and pull out highlights with a kneaded eraser. (For pure white highlights, I gently use a battery-operated eraser.) Rubbing can be dangerous because artists tend to rub too early in the development of the drawing, which causes the drawing to look messy and lack precision. On the other hand, rubbing is almost indispensable for finishing a drawing on white paper. I've tried shading up to the highlights and stopping, but rubbing is more efficient. Here are the rules for rubbing: (1) Wait until the drawing is three-quarters of the way finished; (2) rub enough graphite over the light areas so you can see the difference when you pull out the highlights. (Don't be perturbed if you have to re-darken areas that become bland after they're smeared.)

A

B

Creating a Polished Look Stumping and pulling out highlights provide a smooth and realistic finish. Compare the eye before (A) and after (B) stumping and pulling out highlights.

5

SHADOWS & HIGHLIGHTS

Below is a diagram that demonstrates the breakdown of light and shadow across a form. All forms—from faces and clothing to hills in a landscape—feature the same elements. In graphite drawing, these elements are represented by *tone* or *value* (the lightness or darkness of a color or of black). The more accurately your tones reflect the shadows and highlights of a form, the more you will convince the viewer of its three-dimensionality.
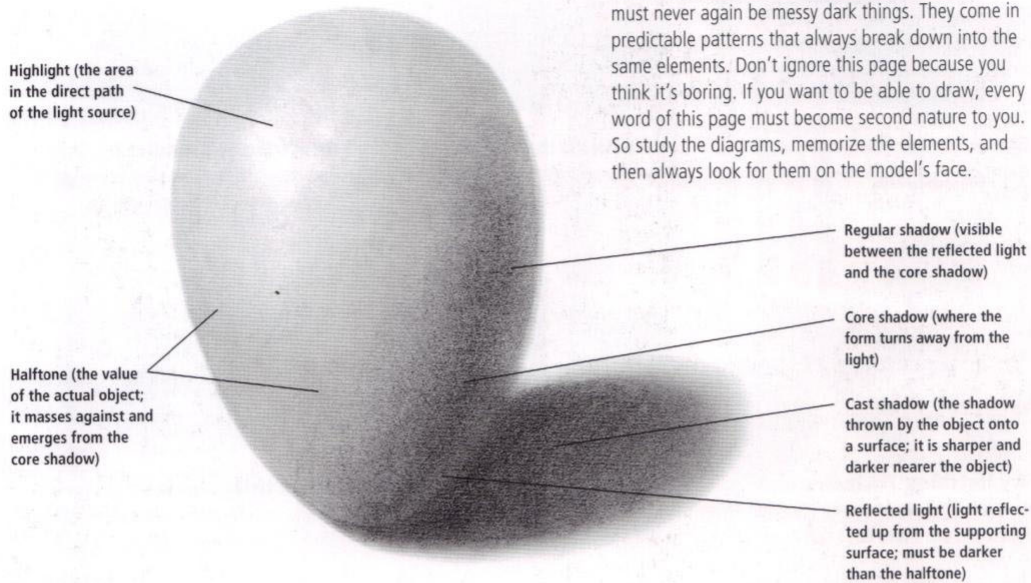
Basic Shadows and Highlights Shadows must never again be messy dark things. They come in predictable patterns that always break down into the same elements. Don't ignore this page because you think it's boring. If you want to be able to draw, every word of this page must become second nature to you. So study the diagrams, memorize the elements, and then always look for them on the model's face.

Highlight (the area in the direct path of the light source)

Halftone (the value of the actual object; it masses against and emerges from the core shadow)

Regular shadow (visible between the reflected light and the core shadow)

Core shadow (where the form turns away from the light)

Cast shadow (the shadow thrown by the object onto a surface; it is sharper and darker nearer the object)

Reflected light (light reflected up from the supporting surface; must be darker than the halftone)

Shadows and Highlights of the Head I deliberately kept this drawing in halftone (a middle value of graphite) so you can see the elements of shading more easily. Leaving out the darkest darks hurts me, so make my sacrifice worth it and study this diagram.

Highlight

Cast shadow

Highlight

Halftone

Highlight

Halftone

Core shadow
Reflected light
Cast shadow

Core shadow
Cast shadow

Halftone

Core shadow

Core shadow
Regular shadow

Core shadow
Reflected light

Core shadow
Regular shadow
Reflected light

Highlight

Core shadow
Reflected light
Cast shadow