

SKETCHING FIGURES WITH LINES

Brenda Hoddinott

H-03 BEGINNER: FOCUS ON PEOPLE

Rough, gesture, or action sketches are usually rendered very quickly, sometimes in less than a minute. The benefits of making rough sketches are in the process, rather than the creation of a magnificent work of art. Hence, your only goal is to capture a mood, expression or gesture on your drawing paper.

This lesson provides basic information and helpful hints for rendering rough, gesture, or action sketches with simple lines and is divided into the following sections:

- ✿ **EXAMINING SKETCHES:** A few simple sketches demonstrate how lines can quickly and efficiently illustrate the important shapes and forms of a human body.
- ✿ **CHOOSING MODELS:** Models for sketching are easy to find when you know where to look. Consider sketching friends, family, yourself or non-living models, such as photos or sketches of people or manikins.
- ✿ **THE BASIC SKETCHING PROCESS:** In five simple steps, I take you through the process of sketching from life (or a good quality photo). I suggest sketching supplies beyond the basics, and share some techniques and helpful hints.

Suggested supplies include 2H, HB, 2B, 4B and 6B pencils, vinyl and kneaded erasers, a pencil sharpener, a sandpaper block, and good quality drawing paper.

9 PAGES - 11 ILLUSTRATIONS

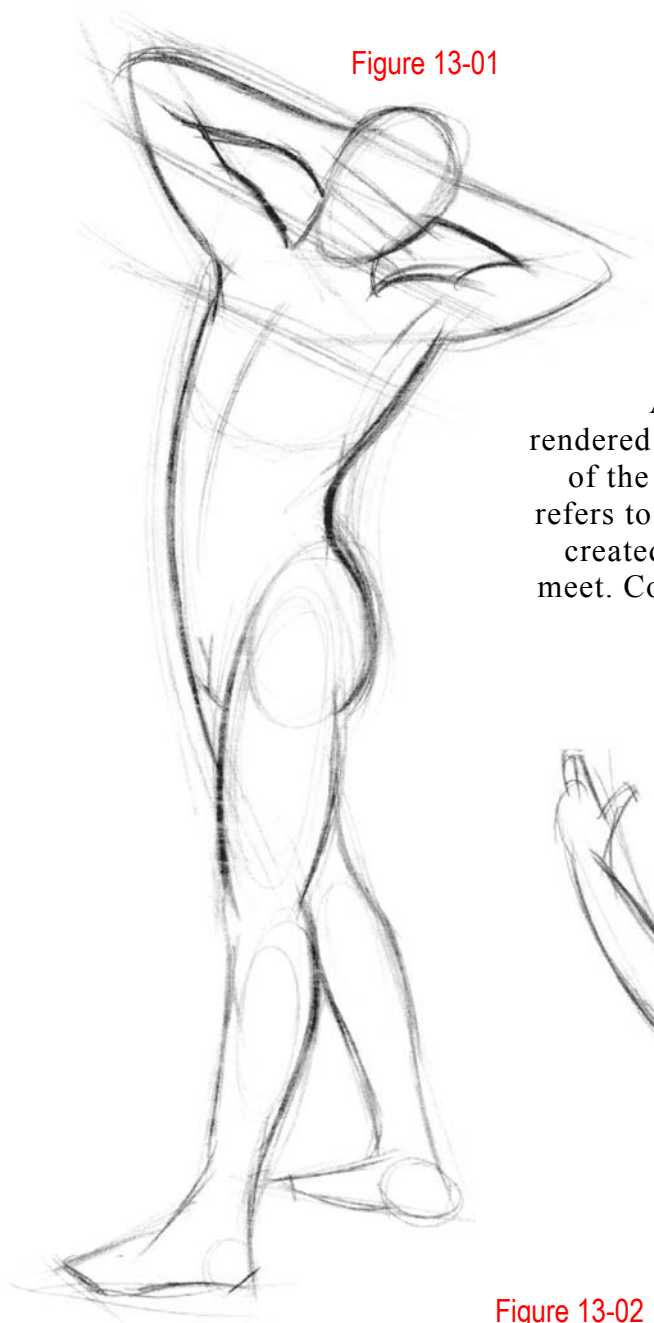
This lesson is recommended for all artists. The curriculum is easily implemented into instructional programs for home schooling, academic and recreational learning environments.

Both nude and clothed figures are illustrated; hence, the curriculum is recommended for mature artists. Artists under the age of 18 need permission from an adult before viewing.

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Figure 13-01



EXAMINING SKETCHES

A few simple lines can quickly and efficiently illustrate the important shapes and forms of a human body. *Sketching* refers to the method used for creating a quick, rough representation or outline of a planned drawing subject. In some cases, a sketch is considered a completed work of art.

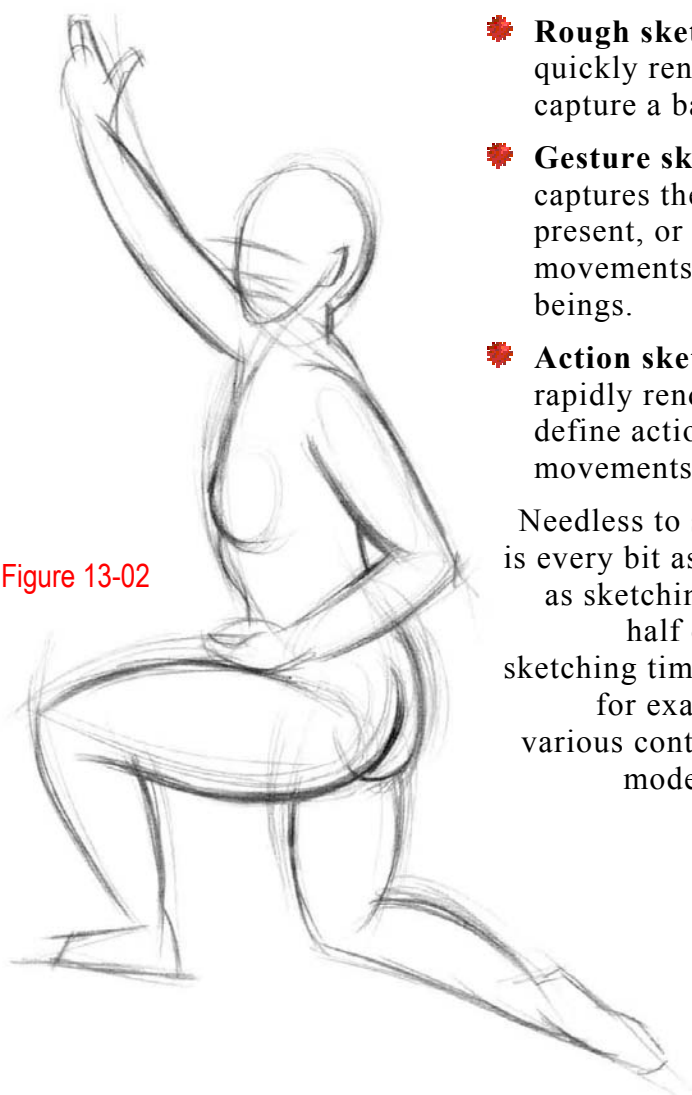
A *contour sketch* is comprised of several quickly rendered contour lines that define the edges of the shapes of the various components of a drawing subject. *Shape* refers to the outward outline of a form. *Contour lines* are created when the shared edges of spaces and/or objects meet. Contour lines can define complete objects or small sections or details within drawing subjects.

Contour sketches fall into one of the following categories:

- ✿ **Rough sketch:** is quickly rendered to capture a basic pose.
- ✿ **Gesture sketch:** captures the past, present, or potential movements of living beings.
- ✿ **Action sketch:** is rapidly rendered to define actions or movements.

Needless to say, seeing is every bit as important as sketching. At least half of my total sketching time was used for examining the various contours of the models' bodies.

Figure 13-02



Each of the sketches in Figures 13-01, 13-02 and 13-03 was rendered in less than 5 minutes. They have no intricate details, such as a face, fingers, or toes.

A fast sketch does not need fine details, accurate proportions, or anatomically correct forms. *Proportion* is the relationship in size of one component of a drawing to another or others. *Forms* are created in drawings by adding shading to transform a shape into three-dimensional structures, such as a circle becoming a sphere. A contour sketch can suggest form by outlining the shapes of the various anatomical structures.

Closely examine the faint lines and shapes underneath the darker ones in my sketches. These lines and shapes were used to establish proportions before making the bolder contour lines. The final sketch lines are not drawn directly over the initial sketch lines. Rather, by constantly examining the model as I worked, I continuously made adjustments.

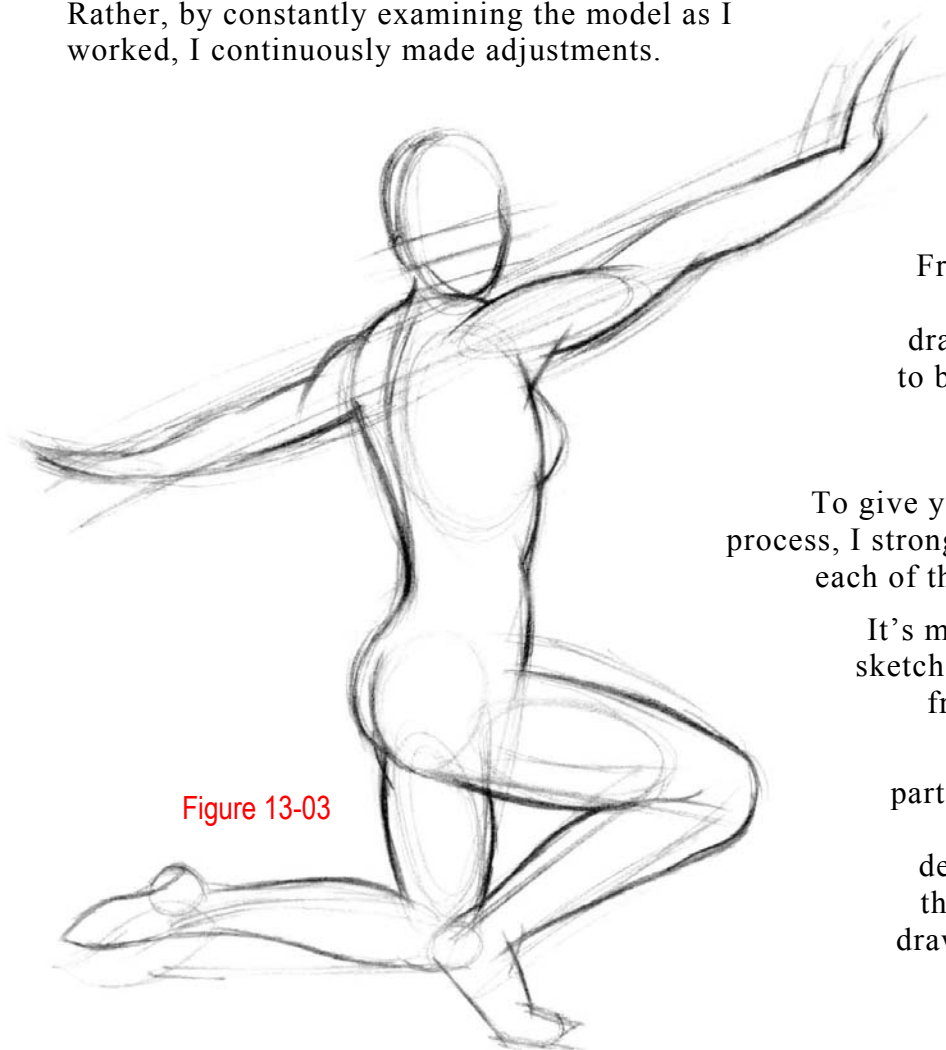


Figure 13-03

Sketching is an action word, and you can only learn this skill by sketching.

Frequently sketching people will improve your overall drawing skills and allow you to become more familiar with the shapes, contours, and forms of a human figure.

To give you a feel for the sketching process, I strongly encourage you to copy each of the sketches in this section.

It's much easier to learn how to sketch from another sketch, than from a photo or live model.

As you sketch the various parts of the body, your goal is to simply capture enough details to be able to identify the subject as human, not to draw a highly realistic figure.

CHOOSING MODELS

Consider sketching non-living models, such as photos or sketches of people, or manikins, until your skills become strong and your speed increases. Then, you can feel relaxed and enjoy the benefits of both speed and accuracy when you draw from life.

When you sketch relaxed persons you tend to feel more calm and comfortable in your sketching approaches. Family and friends tend to be quite honored when you ask to draw them. Sketches can make powerful visual memories. Consider sketching people as they watch TV, peacefully sit in front of the fireplace, or go about their daily routines.

Sometimes, you may want to spend an extra few minutes adding details to a sketch. The sketch of the young man seated in a meditative pose (Figure 13-04) shows a little more detail than the sketches in the previous section. While the hands are not rendered in detail, I found the facial expression especially compelling. This sketch took approximately 15 minutes.

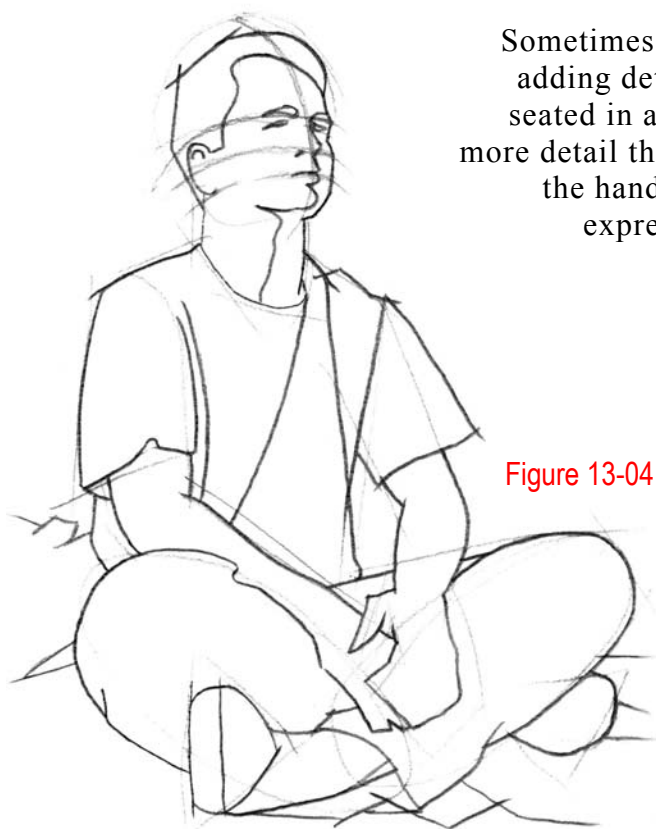


Figure 13-04

Examine the various contour sketches of my grandson Brandon in Figures 13-05 to 13-11. Each took somewhere between 15 to 30 minutes; I included basic facial features, fingers, toes, and the simple details of his clothing.

Sketching children is a lot of fun. Their poses and gestures are very natural and their bodies are surprisingly flexible. Some body parts easily bend in various directions, and others can bend, rotate, and/or curve. You may have a young child in your family or can borrow one from a friend to model for some sketches.

Most children don't like to stay still for very long, have a rather short attention span, and tend to be easily distracted; hence, they are challenging to sketch from life. Try following a young child around with a camera for a few minutes and you'll have enough reference photos for tons of wonderful sketches. Be patient, and be prepared to click that camera button often and quickly!

Also, try taking photos of any potential adult models you find appealing. Adults tend to become comfortable in front of a camera when they are focusing on posing rather than the fact that someone is following them with a camera.



Figure 13-05

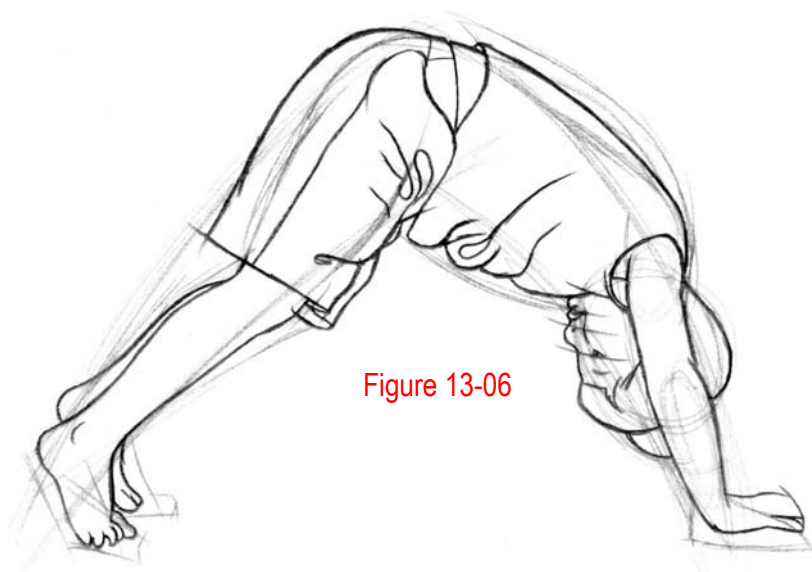


Figure 13-06

Most people are left-brain dominant and not used to working under the control of their creative right brains.

The process of sketching quickly isn't conducive to allowing your analytical left brain to kick in and begin analyzing what you are doing.

Your imaginative right brain likes to exercise its creative license and exaggerate certain areas of your subject. Hence, don't expect to like all your sketches. Thankfully, the more you practice - the faster your skills improve!

Do sketches of lots of different people. When you have no models, sketch yourself in a mirror. If you run out of people to draw, try sketching objects around you such as dolls, stuffed toys, birds, squirrels, and even the family pet! With each sketch you do, your drawing skills improve!

THE BASIC SKETCHING PROCESS

Throughout the following five steps, I take you through the process of sketching from life (or a good quality photo). I suggest sketching supplies beyond the basics, and share some techniques and helpful hints.

1. Have your favorite Sketching Supplies handy

While the essential needs of sketching are drawing paper and pencils, you have many other options. A hardcover sketchbook is an ideal surface for figure drawing.

Sketchbooks come in many sizes, colors and types. If you work from a model, you may want to try using a size at least 16 by 20 inches. A sketchbook can be set up on an easel, but you have to make sure it stays securely in place, so the easel doesn't tip over and dump your sketch on the floor.

If you prefer to use sheets of paper rather than a sketchbook, a drawing board is a great alternative. You can buy one in an art supply store or if you (or someone you know) are handy with tools, you can make your own. Just cut a piece of thin plywood any size you prefer and sand it until it's smooth.

Figure 13-07



Most art supply stores carry special tapes, or clips specifically designed for securing the paper to your drawing board. I prefer clips because tape can damage the paper.

Sketching on large sheets of paper enhances your sketching skills by allowing you the freedom of drawing from your shoulder rather than your wrist.

Soft pencils or sticks work best for figure sketching. Consider any B pencils from 2B to 8B.

2. Set up your drawing supplies and get comfortable

You need lots of paper, several freshly sharpened pencils, and any non-living object, or living being to serve as a model!

Practice rough sketches while using a timer to increase your speed, improve the fluidity of your lines, and strengthen your observation skills. Start with several one-minute (or less) sketches, and slowly work your way up to five minutes.

- ✿ Find a quiet place with minimal distractions.
- ✿ Arrange your drawing supplies so you can easily reach them.
- ✿ Put your sketching subject in front of you and get comfortable.

3. Examine the proportions of your subject

With lots of practice and patience, sketches become quick and easy. Seeing your subject well is integral to sketching.

- ✿ Set your timer.
- ✿ Close your eyes, relax, and take a deep breath for a few seconds before you start.
- ✿ Look closely at your model and observe the basic pose and the overall proportions.
- ✿ Identify specific shapes and visually measure the proportions.
- ✿ Take note of the areas where parts of the body bend, twist, or are extended or outstretched.
- ✿ Observe parts of the body that are at an angle, such as when one shoulder is higher than the other.

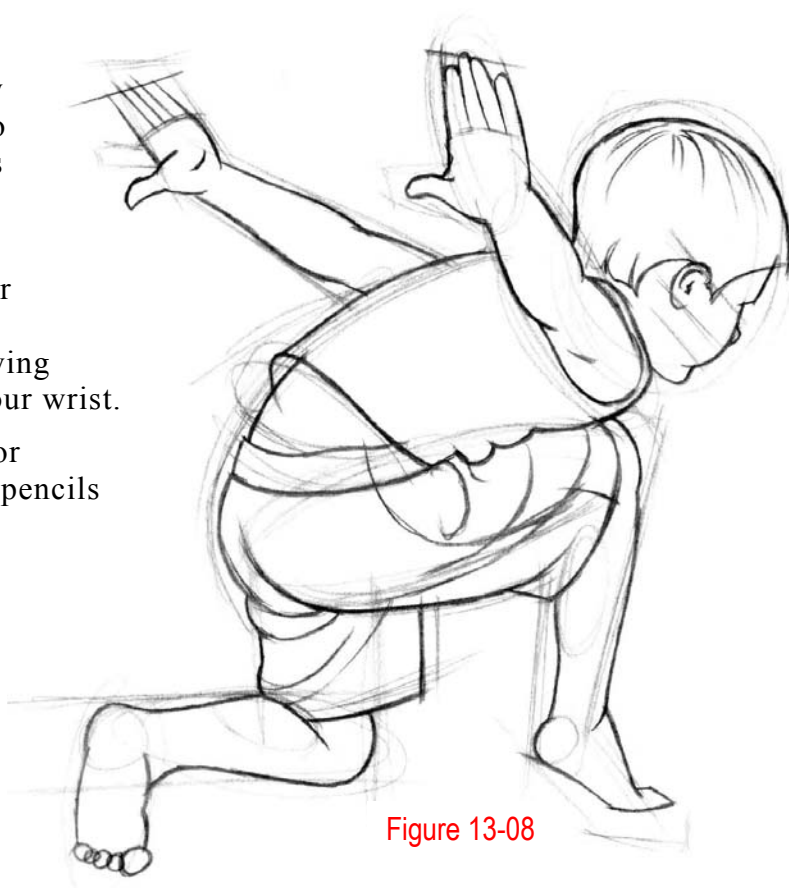
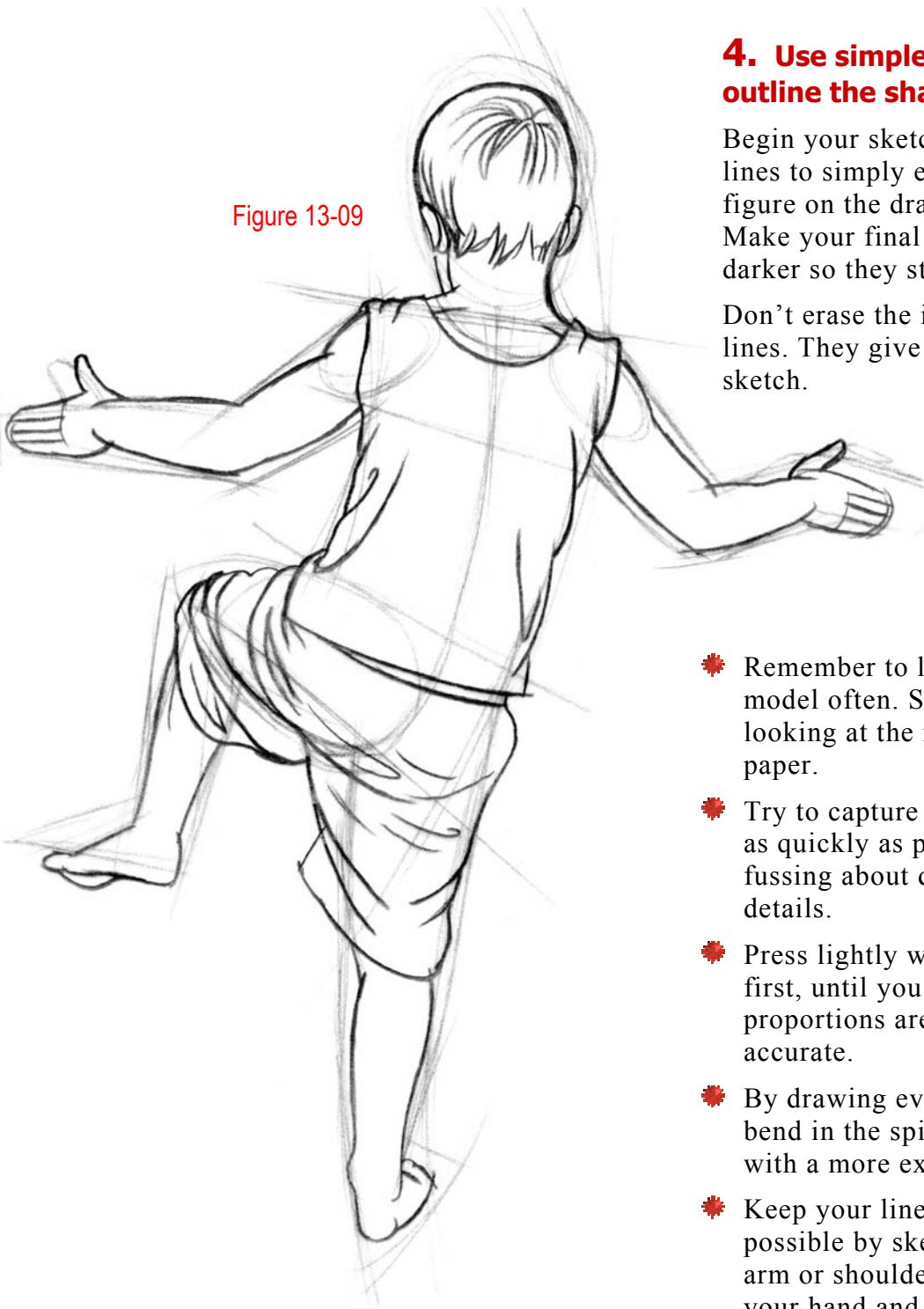


Figure 13-08

Figure 13-09



4. Use simple lines to outline the shapes you see.

Begin your sketch with very light lines to simply establish the figure on the drawing paper. Make your final lines a little darker so they stand out more.

Don't erase the initial sketch lines. They give character to the sketch.

Practice sketching with a pen so you won't be tempted to erase any lines.

- ✿ Remember to look at your model often. Spend more time looking at the model than your paper.
- ✿ Try to capture the overall pose as quickly as possible without fussing about drawing fine details.
- ✿ Press lightly with your pencil at first, until you feel that the proportions are reasonably accurate.
- ✿ By drawing even the slightest bend in the spine, you'll end up with a more expressive sketch.
- ✿ Keep your lines as loose as possible by sketching from your arm or shoulder, rather than just your hand and wrist.
- ✿ Sketch long flowing marks in one continuous movement rather than teasing the lines with a series of short broken lines.
- ✿ Keep in mind that almost all lines used to draw a human figure, such as the curve of a back, need to be rendered with curved lines.
- ✿ You can sketch several loose lines for sections that are moving, or show potential movement, to give life to gestures and actions.

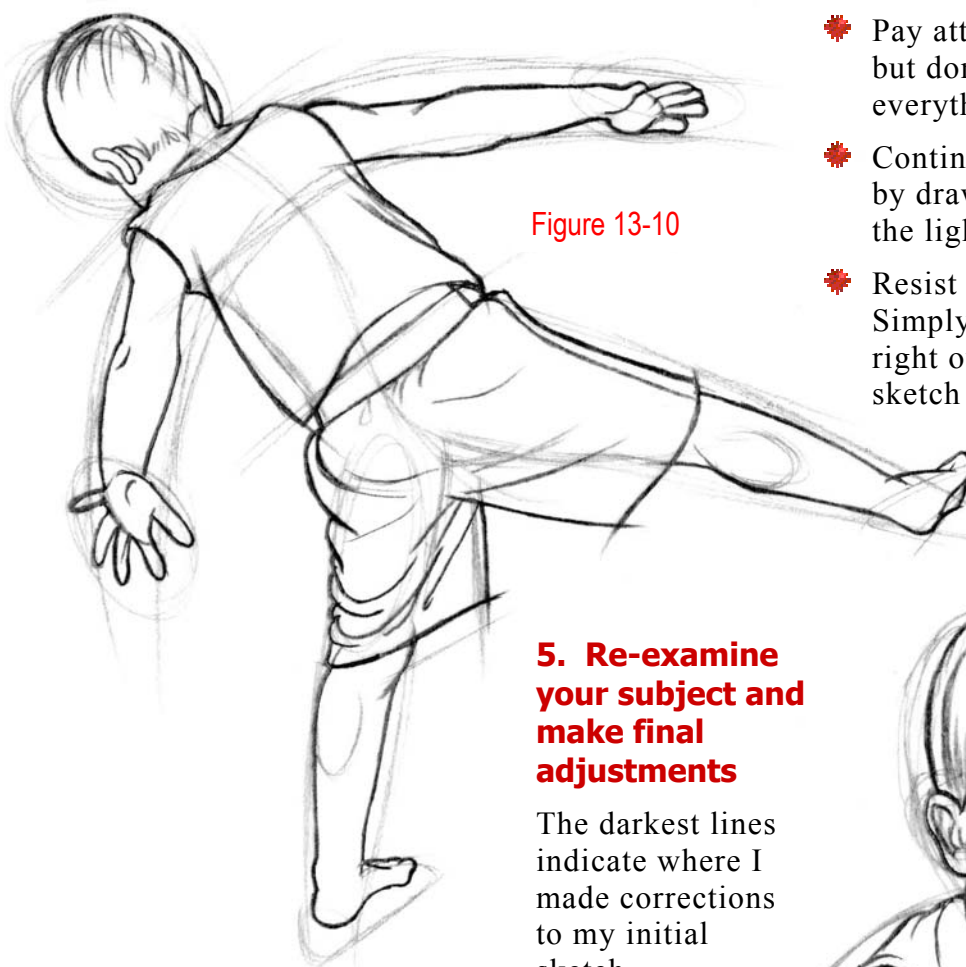


Figure 13-10

- ✿ Pay attention to proportions, but don't fuss about getting everything perfect.
- ✿ Continuously adjust your lines by drawing darker lines over the lighter ones.
- ✿ Resist the urge to erase. Simply draw corrected lines right over or beside the initial sketch lines.

5. Re-examine your subject and make final adjustments

The darkest lines indicate where I made corrections to my initial sketch.

- ✿ Check your proportions and adjust your drawing until the timer goes off.
- ✿ Grab another sheet of paper (or turn to a new page in your sketchbook) and do another sketch of your model at a different angle.

CHALLENGE

Draw each of the seven sketches of Brandon in your sketchbook or on large sheets of paper.

Sketch 5 sketches a day for a month. If you run out of models, find some photos of figures in action, such as dancers or athletes. However, try to sketch from life for at least half of the sketches. You may even enjoy sitting in a public place, such as a park, and sketching a few of the people around you.

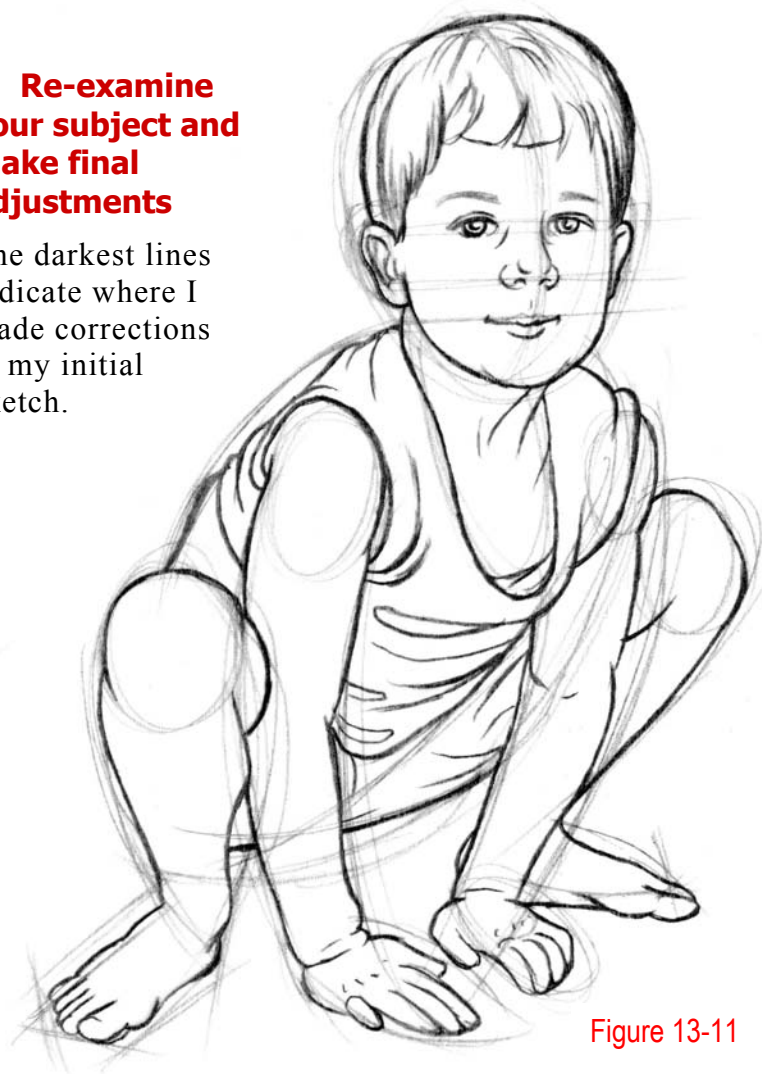


Figure 13-11

Brenda Hoddinott

As a self-educated teacher, visual artist, portraitist, forensic artist, and illustrator, Brenda utilizes diverse art media including graphite, technical pen, colored pencil, chalk pastel, charcoal, conté crayon, and oil paints.

My philosophy on teaching art is to focus primarily on the enjoyment aspects while gently introducing the technical and academic. Hence, in creating a passion for the subject matter, the quest for knowledge also becomes enjoyable.

Brenda Hoddinott

Biography

Born in St. John's, Newfoundland, Brenda grew up in the small town of Corner Brook. She developed strong technical competencies with a personal commitment to self directed learning, and the aid of assorted "Learn to Draw" books. During Brenda's twenty-five year career as a self-educated civilian forensic artist, numerous criminal investigation departments have employed Brenda's skills, including Royal Canadian Mounted Police and municipal police departments. In 1992, Brenda was honored with a commendation from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and in 1994, she was awarded a Certificate of Membership from "Forensic Artists International".

Her home-based art career included graphic design, and teaching recreational drawing and painting classes. As supervisor of her community's recreational art department, Brenda hired and trained teachers, and designed curriculum for several children's art programs. In 1998, Brenda chose to end her eighteen-year career as an art educator in order to devote more time to writing, drawing, painting, and developing her websites.

Drawspace <http://www.drawspace.com> incorporates her unique style and innovative approach to curriculum development. This site offers downloadable and printable drawing classes for students of all abilities from the age of eight through adult. Students of all ages, levels and abilities have praised the simple step-by-step instructional approach. This site is respected as a resource for fine art educators, home schooling programs, and educational facilities throughout the world.

Learn-to-draw books

Drawing for Dummies: Wiley Publishing, Inc., New, York, NY, this 336 page book is available on various websites and in major bookstores internationally.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Drawing People: Winner of the Alpha-Penguin Book of the Year Award 2004, Alpha - Pearson Education – Macmillan, Indianapolis, IN, this 360 page book is available on various websites and in major bookstores internationally.