

Learn More about Paul Keene: "Tune Up" Your Drawings

Paul Keene was known for his work with color and design, but in order to be an accomplished artist, he still had to know how to draw. Try these drawing warm-up activities. If you do them all in a regular basis, you will notice a definite improvement in your drawing skills in every medium.

Blind Contour Drawing

Carefully study a simple object, like a vase, a book, or a bottle. Holding your pencil in one hand, look at the object you are about to draw. Place the point of your pencil on the piece of paper that is in front of you. Without taking your eyes off the object, and without lifting your pencil from the paper, draw the object. Let the pencil follow all the curves and bends of the object. Do not lift your pencil off the paper or peek until you are finished. Take your time. What does your final drawing look like? Can you see elements of your drawing that look like the actual object? As you practice this type of drawing, you will notice a definite improvement. Continue to practice blind contour drawings with increasingly difficult subjects, including fruit, shoes and faces.

Contour Drawing

Choose another simple object. Holding your pencil in one hand, look at the object you are about to draw. Place the point of your pencil on the piece of paper that is in front of you. Without lifting your pencil from the paper, draw the object. Use your eyes to go back and forth from the paper to the object and back again, but don't pick up the pencil until you are finished. Let the pencil follow all the curves and bends of the object. Take your time. What does your final drawing look like? As you practice this type of drawing, you will notice a definite improvement. Continue to practice contour drawings with increasingly difficult subjects.

Timed Drawings

As a warm-up activity, draw your shoe. First, try to draw it in one minute. Then try two minutes, and then five minutes. Then, give yourself all the time you need. Compare all four of the drawings. How did the quick sketches help you when you attempted a longer, more finished drawing?

Shadow Drawings

Now that you have spent a lot of time with lines, try some drawings that focus on shadows. Hard boil an egg (or have a grown up at home do it for you). Place the egg on a table in front of you, and shine a flashlight on it. Look carefully at the shadows on the egg and on the table. Using the side of your pencil, draw only the shadows you see. Do not use lines.* Where you see extremely light areas, leave the paper white. Where you see extremely dark areas, use your pencil to make the area really dark. Press a medium amount on the pencil for the in between areas. You may also find it helpful to smear some of the pencil shadows with your finger to create a softer, more blended effect.

* Not using lines is really hard! Try to stick to it for a more real looking egg.

Two-handed Drawings

Unlike all the other "tune ups" listed here, this drawing is not based on observation. Instead, it is based on controlling your hands. For a two-handed drawing, it helps to have a fairly large piece of paper. Hold a pencil or pen in each hand. Starting at the middle of the paper, hold both pencil points in the exact same place. Move your hands slowly away from one another in a mirror image manner, trying to have the lines on one side of the paper be an exact match for the lines on the other side. Make the drawing as complicated as you can. It is even a good warm-up if you decide to make the drawing abstract as long as you keep making sure that both hands are working together to mirror one another!



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