

# Blind Contour Drawing



## What is a contour drawing?

Contour drawing is a drawing technique that focuses on rendering a subject entirely through its *outlines*, capturing its form and shapes without incorporating any shading, texture, or tone. It requires artists to focus on the subject, and analyze its form, volume, and space it occupies.

When you are drawing from life, do you look more at the subject or at the drawing? A common mistake many artists make is to look away from the subject for too long and instead relying on their mind's simplified image of the subject rather than on what it looks like in reality, resulting in an inaccurate drawing.

## What is blind contour?

Blind contour is a drawing technique where the artist draws the contour of a subject without looking at their paper or lifting their drawing utensil.

Instead of creating anxiety, blind contour drawing is meant to help artists practice their observation skills. It can even be a calming exercise for some because it takes away the analytical approach to drawing and relies solely on input from our senses.

## How to do blind contour?

1. Give yourself a set amount of time to draw: Set a timer for 10 or 15 minutes.
2. Find a point in space to begin and set the tip of your pen or pencil down onto your page.
3. Once the tip of your utensil and your line of vision are anchored together, begin following the contours of the subject you're observing.
4. What "contour" means will change—it could be the outline of a body, the edge of a harsh shadow, or the crease in a shirt.
5. As you draw, feel free to shift from one subject to the next. For example, if you're drawing a friend in a classroom, don't be afraid to slip from the collar of their shirt to the window pane behind them—but

remember to not lift your pencil (or pen).

6. Most importantly, make sure your eye, hand, and mind are working in unison.
7. Resist the urge to look at the page: It will not be worth breaking the unique line of communication that blind contour drawing creates.

Even if you followed the instructions to a T, the chances of making a realistic drawing are very slim. On your paper, there is likely a complex and usually barely discernible suggestions of forms made from odd squiggles and lines. But that's okay, because the whole point of the exercise is to learn from the process rather than about producing a perfect, finished piece of artwork.



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