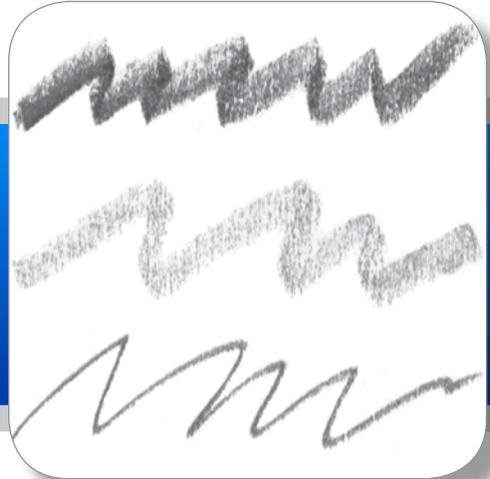


Take Your Pencils for a TEST DRIVE



Four exercises to demonstrate the values created by different grades of pencils and document your current drawing skills

Supplies: paper, 4H, 2H, HB, 2B, and 4B pencils

Resource: 1.2.R1 Welcome to Drawing from Line to Life

This activity has four exercises:

- Exercise 1: Draw a White Feather
- Exercise 2: Play with Pencil Points
- Exercise 3: Create Different Values
- Exercise 4: Shade Graduations of Values



Tip!

Don't let these exercises cause you any stress.

No matter what level you attain, you will always find work that exceeds your own.

Everyone begins at the same point, so just relax and take your own time to reach your full potential.

Exercise 1: Draw a White Feather

Keep this drawing as a record so you can see how you progress over time. You can then compare how you draw today to how you draw after you've acquired new skills.

1. Use only your memory to draw a white feather.

A 6 in (15 cm) wide rectangle as a drawing space should work well.



Tip!

Refer to *1.2.R1 Welcome to Drawing from Line to Life* to find out how to sharpen your pencils to a chisel point (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Exercise 2: Play with Pencil Points

Use the smoothest paper you have the first time you complete this exercise. Then, try this exercise on other types of paper so you can see how their different textures react to the various pencil points.

1. Draw five 2 in (5 cm) square boxes on your paper and mark the grade of each of your pencils (4H, 2H, HB, 2B, and 4B) above each box.
2. Take each pencil in turn to experiment with the different marks and lines it can make.

Remember: pencils with different points make different types of marks (Figure 2).

Sharpen each pencil to a chisel point and experiment with both faces.

Use a 4B pencil in the box you labelled 4B, a 2B in the 2B box, and so on. For example, examine the marks made with a 2B pencil:

- Figure 3: 2B flat face with normal pressure.
- Figure 4: 2B flat face with light pressure.
- Figure 5: 2B edge with light pressure.

How hard or lightly you press on a pencil (*weight*) can be used to produce a variety of effects.

For example, varying the weight as you begin or end a line to form tapers that fade to white.

Using a light pressure when applying a broad, soft-grade point will cause the pencil to deposit graphite only on the tops of the paper's tooth (*texture*) giving a soft-edged, misty line.



Tip!

Vary the pressure you apply to your pencil: variations in pencil pressure allow you to make dark, medium, and light marks with each grade.

Occasionally rotate your pencil: slight shifts in rotation keep the pencil edge sharp without breaking your concentration.

You won't need to continuously reach for another pencil or sharpen the one you're using.

Figure 2

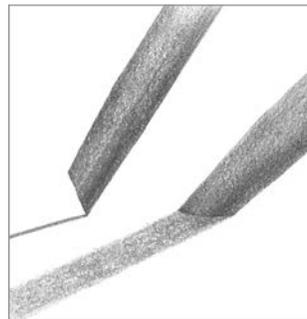


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Tip!

Sharpen your pencils at the start of work each day. Then, you only need to occasionally rub the tip on a scrap of paper to maintain both the flat face and sharp edge.



Tip!

Keep your completed charts as reference tools for choosing different pencil points and grades of pencils.

Applying a medium to heavy pressure to the same soft grade, such as 4B, will fill the tooth of the paper, producing deep, rich tones.

At the other extreme, drawing lightly with a hard grade pencil, perhaps a 2H or 4H, using just the weight of the pencil, will give you a line that is barely detectable but it is a great way of applying subtle tone with repeated shading.

Different grades of graphite produce differing qualities of line. A soft grade (B to 9B) draws a line with a soft edge. For really sharp lines with clean-cut edges, use a hard grade (H to 9H). These hard grades have increasingly finer grain structures with no detectable irregularities along their edges.

The disadvantage is that you may not be able to create the depth of tone that you desire, but using a combination of grades can overcome this problem.

Exercise 3: Create Different Tones

You don't need to be tidy – just concentrate on producing these tones in any way that suits you.

1. Draw a series of five boxes – about 1 in (25 mm) square will do, or bigger if you prefer – then label each above 4B, 2B up to 4H.
2. Draw another five boxes in a line directly below the first, so you have two 4B boxes one above the other and so on up to 4H.

You should now have a block of squares five wide by two high (Figure 6).

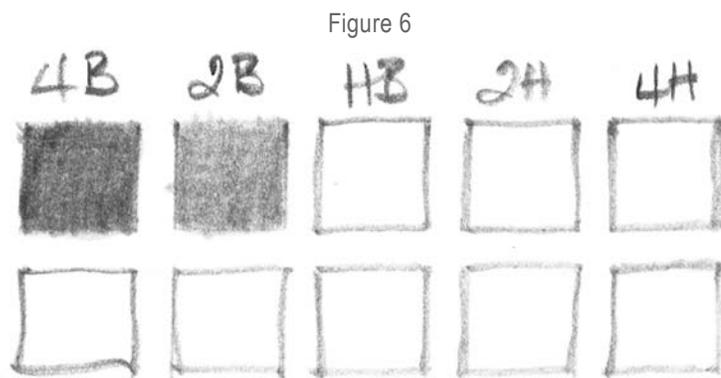
3. Fill the top left box with your 4B pencil – just draw as you normally do.
4. Continue until all the top boxes are filled with the corresponding pencil grade.
5. Repeat the exercise in the second row but this time draw as heavily as you can.

Press really hard without actually damaging the surface of your paper.

Your goal is to make as dark a mark as possible with each grade.

If you like, you can shade over top of each value again to make it even darker.

It's the result that matters, not how you achieved it.



Exercise 4: Shade Graduations of Values

1. Draw five boxes, one above the other, about .75 in (19 mm) high and 3 in (76 mm) wide, and with a gap in between them.

Use the same sheet of paper or a new sheet.

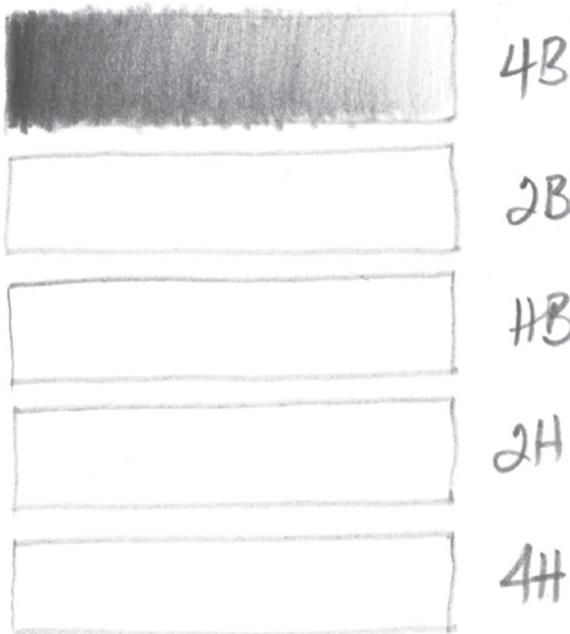
2. Complete the top box by using vertical strokes of your 4B pencil – rotate the paper if you find drawing from side-to-side easier.

Begin with a dense black at the left hand end of the box and then let the tone gradually fade to white as you progress to the right hand side. You do that by using less and less weight until your pencil is finally just grazing the surface of your paper.

3. Complete the other four boxes in order, using your 2B, HB, 2H and 4H pencils.

Try to achieve as smooth a finish as you can.

Figure 7



Compare each line with those immediately above and below. Note that each grade is perfectly capable of reproducing at least half the range of tones of the adjacent grades.

All that's required is an adjustment to the degree of weight applied. Notice also how the harder grades possess a smoother appearance than the softer grades above them.

Bear this in mind when choosing a grade to produce a particular tone – if smoothness matters, study your chart and choose the hardest grade that can produce that tone.

Happy drawing!

Cheers.....

Mike

Drawing from Line to Life (Book)

by Mike Sibley

Based on Mike's experience of over 30 years as a professional artist and graphite pencil specialist.

www.SibleyFineArt.com/pencil-drawing-book.htm