

Learn How to Draw Step-by-Step MULTIMEDIA Lessons

By Paul Wagner, Art Training International

Lesson 14 Loosening Up Techniques (Relaxation)

It MAY go without saying, but I'm here to tell you if there is any doubt...

You cannot draw well unless you are relaxed.

You might be thinking “I **am** drawing for the *sole purpose of relaxing*”. In that case, it's still a win—the techniques I'm about to show you will help you relax even more.

We'll break our techniques into 3 groups which you can practice before and during your drawing sessions:

- 1) Physical Loosening UP Techniques (used anytime)
 - a. Warming Up Exercises
 - b. Elbow vs. Wrist
 - c. Stand Up
 - d. Loosen Your Hold
 - e. Changing Workplaces
 - f. Dancing
- 2) Focusing Techniques
 - a. Stepping Back
 - b. Breaking From Your Session
- 3) Confidence Building Techniques
 - a. Clearing Your Mind
 - b. What Others May Say or Think
 - c. Start Paying Attention to Visual Detail in Life
 - d. Not a Masterpiece (Yet!)

Warming Up

To warm up we're going to do circles and figure-eights (also called infinity symbols). Take your pencil and holding it at an angle (like you always do), begin to ever-so-slightly draw circles and figure-eights. Keep your pinkie finger resting on the paper at all times as you move across on the page—that will act as a rudder on your sea of paper. Keep moving until you are comfortable and into the “flow of it”.

Elbow vs. Wrist

When drawing, use more of your elbow and less of your wrist. This forces you to use wider (and faster) strokes and keeps you from falling into the habit of holding your pencil like you are handwriting. Really, *really*, try to avoid that pitfall.

Additionally, using your elbow more than your wrist forces you to keep more distance between you and your overall drawing, giving you a better birds-eye view.

Stand Up

OK, this is real change, but you're ready for it now. Take that easel of yours; lengthen the legs and try drawing standing up. The real advantage to this is that you can step back more easily and frequently. You've come a long way and already understand that you have to keep your eye in one place so “returning” to that place is likely comfortable for you now. That is the key though to keeping perspective in check.

Loosen Your Hold

At any time while you're drawing, I should be able to walk over to where you are sitting and pluck that pencil right out of your hand—it should be THAT relaxed.

If it is NOT that loosely held, begin reading this document over again! ☺

If you are still holding your pencil it as if you are writing, break that habit now. (refer back to Lesson 1).

OK, as with most “rules” there are always exceptions and here's one to remember. It is ok to use that technique for final refinements (when you are almost done with your drawing).

Changing Workplaces

Go ahead and experiment! Take your sketching pad, pencil and eraser to another room. In fact, don't stop there! Take your pad with you wherever you go...to the beach, to the park, to the doctor's waiting room, to the coffee shop or library and draw everything.

Getting a different perspective by changing location allows you to relax in ways where nothing else comes close.

Dancing

This might seem odd at first but it certainly does work. Put on some of your favorite upbeat music and start to dance. Now, don't get me wrong—this is NOT about dancing while you draw. This is about helping you loosen up your body, much like shaking out your tensions. After you put the music on, go back to your drawing but do NOT put all of your attention to the music—focus only on the beat, not the words.

Also don't let the music take over your emotions (we'll save that for the painting course). You'll find dancing establishes a rhythm and helps you loosen up.

NOTE: Always remember to come back to the same sitting position where you began so your eyes can see the lines of what you are drawing in the same perspective before you got up.



Stepping Back

This is absolutely necessary. Frequently during your drawing session, get out of your seat, take a few steps back and lean down, putting your eye at the same angle as it was while you were seated (it will obviously be higher up to account for the steps back you take).

Breaking From Your Session

Learn to know when you need breaks. The best time to break is when you find you have been working on one section of your drawing (like getting the perspective correct for a corner of the cube done in the last Perspective Lesson 14). You'll know it when you "got it", and you can move on. Congratulate yourself and walk away for a moment feeling the pleasure of your win. This self-encouragement becomes extremely valuable (and offsets the negative voices telling you can't do it).

Remember that great artists are not rewarded for how long it took them or how fast they did it. We only see their results.

I'm just talking about short breaks here. This could be a full session break, a cup of coffee, even walking out of the room for a moment and doing a stretch will help before returning.

Clearing Your Mind

Learning to keep a clear and open mind is an important step towards loosening up. If your mind is filled with the clutter and pressure of business and living, or if it is working hard on your mental calendar, or personal issues, or whatever...then you'll need to let go. This is YOUR time. YOUR personal space.

The art of drawing is a process very akin to Yoga. When you enter your studio or when you start a project or when you start a lesson think of entering your temple—where nobody else will come in to disturb you. This is your present to yourself and you deserve it. Shut the world off outside. All else dissolves. You become one in your focus of the object or arrangement or subject that is before you or that you have put in front of you to draw.

What Others May Say or Think

It could be recommended that you not show others your work until you are done—at least in your early development. That really depends on how sensitive you are about criticism.

Although there is a general life principle that states "only ask a question when you're ok with the answer", creating art *is*, by its very nature, designed to help you share your thoughts and feelings with others—your drawings are destined to invite the viewer to have an opinion, regardless of what it is.

Many people don't like Picasso's work. But what mattered was that he pursued what he loved to do, regardless of what others thought. He went on to become a great contributor known to practically every person on earth.

Here's the point. Consider that as you continue to define *who you are* as an artist—you will find your own style that is not a function of what others think. Period.

Simply be kind and supportive to yourself.

Start Paying Attention to Visual Detail in Life

Artists look carefully at the detail of *everything*. Start practicing!

For example, below are 3 Christmas trees that, to an artist, are all *quite* different.

The Douglas Fir grows thicker and more uniform with very little negative space.

The Balsam Fir, on the other hand, has very long spreading branches with more negative space (there's more black shadows).

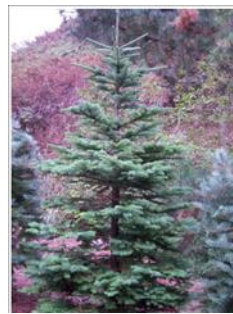
And the Noble Fir has branches that hang downward near the bottom and upward near the top with the greatest amount of overall negative space.



Douglas Fir



Balsam Fir



Noble Fir

Not a Masterpiece (Yet!)

Don't get caught up in perfection. You are a student and it takes time and practice to become a master (even Michelangelo did much practice).

You will need to practice, practice, practice. It won't happen overnight. BUT, see improvements. Just look at your earlier drawings and you'll see just how much you have improved.

And you will have the grandest sense of jubilation and fulfillment. Trust me!

Keep up the good work!

One more lesson to go and then you graduate!

Oh, I almost forgot your homework assignment.

Grab your pad, go out somewhere other than your regular drawing spot. Make a new drawing while all of this is in the back of your mind. Warning: don't do this on a date!

(There is no video with this lesson...it's pretty self contained above).

Paul Wagner

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