

Learn How to Draw Step-by-Step MULTIMEDIA Lessons

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Lesson 6 Working with Midpoints

So far you are likely struggling with constant adjustment of your drawing—this is too big, that's too small; this is too tall, that is too short.

"What should I change first?"

"How much of that should I adjust without erasing everything?"

If you are feeling overwhelmed at this point, that's ok—most students do struggle in this period, as it all seems like such a balancing act trying to get everything on the paper to look right. But do know that this IS the most difficult phase of your learning how to draw, and your persistence and dedication WILL pay off, and rather handsomely and shortly. So just keep practicing.

It is time to introduce you to another technique that is a **more precise way of drawing** to make the balancing act easier. In this exercise, I am going to show you, using the measuring stick, how to break your picture down into more manageable units.

Look at the picture below. You'll notice several objects on the display table of varying sizes and dimensions. Although there are more points to relate (that's a good thing) there will still be a tendency to make them disproportionate—because the relating process becomes longer and more tedious.



So here's how to master the problem. We start by breaking the overall parts down into simpler pictures. And the first part to break down is literally dividing the arrangement in half. This is called finding the Midpoint.

The Midpoint is, of course, the halfway mark, **both** vertically and horizontally in the arrangement and on your drawing.

But between what and what?

Up until now we have been doing the One Big Shape, followed by Secondary Shapes, followed by the Details. It is the One Big Shape that begins the process of finding your **Frame of Reference**.

The Frame of Reference

In order to find a Midpoint, you obviously need a box of some sort around the objects you are going to draw. This is called a Frame of Reference.

Here's how to find and mark it:

- 1) Put your pencil on the paper and very loosely sketch around all the objects in a circular or oval shape (the One Big Shape). You already know that by using the One Big Shape you are defining and positioning the left- and right-most points and the top- and bottom-most points of the objects you are drawing.
- 2) Now work in your Secondary Shapes and VERY rough details
- 3) Draw a vertical line on both the leftmost and rightmost points (the red lines in the picture)
- 4) Draw a horizontal line through the top and bottom points.
- 5) You have created your Frame of Reference.



Now we can find the midpoint.

First, take a measuring stick and make a vertical line through the ends (it's easier to use the line rather than the rounded edge).

Grab a of paper and cut it to match the measuring stick end points, then fold it in half and use the half-way fold to mark the stick. Fold again to mark the 2 quarter points to either side of the midpoint on the stick.

You may even want to permanently mark the measuring stick and keep it with your drawing supplies for future use.

Using the Midpoint

Hold the measuring stick up to the arrangement and close one eye. The left end of the stick should hover over the leftmost point of your arrangement. The right end of the stick should hover over the rightmost point of your arrangement. (Move the stick up or down if you are hiding that point).

Once the 2 ends are correctly hovering, identify the horizontal midpoint in your arrangement.

Now repeat the process finding the vertical midpoint.

You may have to Step Back from your drawing to

It should be obvious now that both horizontal and vertical midpoints can be thought of as a single point, the **True Midpoint**.

Now begin checking the relationships of your arrangement against your drawing using the midpoint, the quarter points (there's 4 of them!) and of course, the Secondary shapes.

Now [go watch the video](#) and begin your practicing.

Other methods to Try

Using the **Horizontal Midpoint** and the **Vertical Midpoint** are not the only methods you have available to help you.

You can also use the **Radial Midpoints**. Take a ruler or straight-edge of some type and draw a line from opposite corners. The two lines will criss-cross at the midpoint. This can be helpful in some situations where there are more circular patterns in what you are drawing, like people. The only problem with this method is that it depends on accurate

corner positions, which are a little harder to place unless your vertical and horizontal lines are just that—accurately vertical and horizontal.

There is an old trick (that you probably used when you were a child or saw used) that involved making a small picture into a big picture, say, on the wall or a giant sheet of paper. It involved making **A Grid** on the wall matching a much smaller grid drawn over the picture that you wanted enlarged. You then simply "drew" the parts of the grid, one at a time on the wall. This may work well for wall-sized pictures, but it's slower, unnecessary and just quite not practical for most work.

Unfortunately, this (in my humble opinion) is not drawing; it's copying, and does not (for me) bring a sense of satisfaction of being an artist. It's more of an engineer's tool.

Lastly, one other tool is **The Ratio**. This is a calculation of the Length of the vertical over the length of the horizontal. You'll find this useful when you want to copy another painting and want it either larger or smaller, and you need to pick out a proportionately similar canvas. So, you can calculate the ratio of the drawing you want to copy and then find a matching ratio on a different sized canvas.

One Final Note

You may decide or not decide to try to make your pictures bigger now on the paper if you think you're ready. If not, then don't; just keep practicing on relating until you can make your pictures bigger on the paper.

That being said, go ahead and compromise between being relaxed and pushing yourself harder.

Remember, the butterfly cannot be released unless the caterpillar struggles to free itself from the cocoon.