

Learn How to Draw Step-by-Step MULTIMEDIA Course

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Lesson 9 Symmetry and Ellipses

[\(Watch the Video\)](#)

An interesting problem for many artists is trying to get "things" even on both sides if the thing in question is "symmetrical". Symmetrical objects are those objects that have identical (or semi-symmetrical) left and right half sides.

Examples of objects that are symmetrical are round vases, bottles, cups (minus the handle), glasses, saucers—just about anything that when you look at it you know you can split it into 2 opposite but identical shapes.

Here's some examples of objects I'm talking about:



What becomes most obvious is that you can draw a vertical line down the middle of each of these objects you see that the right and left-halves are identical as your eyes move down that vertical line.

And while it can be somewhat of a nuisance to get both "sides" correct, there are actually simple methods for getting both sides equal.

Once you have completed One Big Shape and Secondary shapes, and **you are ready for working the detail level**, here is when you use this following trick.

If the object you are working on IS symmetrical, then one of the easiest ways to accurately work the detail of it is to use The Ellipse.

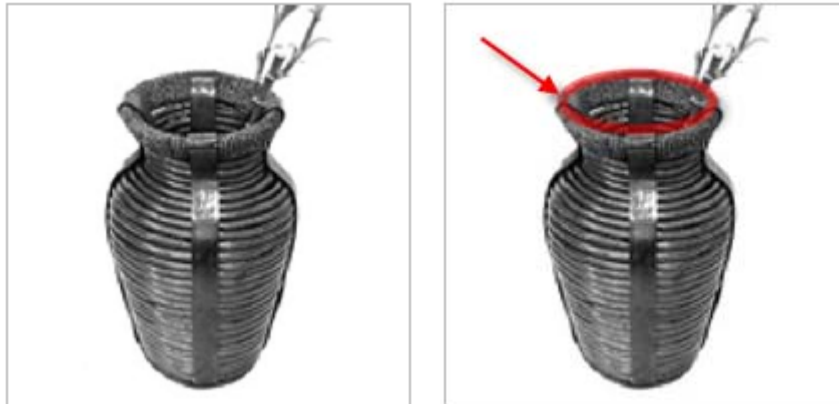


Here are examples of ellipses.

Notice that an ellipse can be long, short, at any angle in which it works, and even a full ellipse (which we all call a circle!)

An ellipse has two wonderful features.

One, an ellipse is the form you can use to draw the ends of a cylinder or vase that you are trying to show at an angle, like this:



Two, because the ellipse is so powerful, you can use it often as a Non-Stop Line (Lesson 8) to get the form you are after, like this:



Further, if you are drawing a simple vase like this one, you could always check the evenness of your side points (distances A and B below) by literally drawing a vertical midline and checking to make sure the distances are the same:



It probably goes without saying that not all vases are round and using an ellipse to manufacture one on paper may be a tad trickier, or may not even worth the effort.

Here's one that you could use an ellipse for but could be tricky if used (can you see the ellipses?) (even the roundish one for the flower—ah-ha!)



And just because part of a vase is non-symmetrical still means that part of it is and then you can use your ellipse techniques where it applies. Can you see where the ellipse does NOT apply?



Of course, right where you would expect it, near the top!

And here's some vases for which an ellipse would not serve you well at all for pretty obvious reasons:



So where do you go from here?

You guessed it. Practice, practice, practice.

Just take sheets of paper and start drawing all kinds of ellipses...start with horizontal flat ones but also try ones at an angle and vertical.

Then go on and take a vase setup on your display stand and try your newfound technique. You'll be amazed at how much easier this will make quick work for you.

Also look around for *parts* of a picture that are symmetrical.

Here's your last tip. Even though you might think that **people** are symmetrical, I would advise NOT drawing them that way—people and animals are just too dynamic in how they sit, stand, walk, run and so on...even the sleeve on one side won't match the other. Don't worry though; we'll have great tricks in that lesson.

Keep up the good work. If you are practicing, you are seeing results. If you are NOT seeing results, simply go back to a lesson you think you may have missed or didn't get it and review it again—and practice the lesson until you got it.

If you don't have or can't get your hands on a vase, or you simply want to get a clear shot of the vase I'm using, you can download it here:

[\(vase for ellipses.jpg\)](#)

And...if you've not watched the video yet, you can do so here:

[\(Watch the Video\)](#).

You are growing, my fine artist!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop on the 'P' and a long tail on the 'l'.