

The Artist's Top 5 Magical Tips and Techniques

By Paul Wagner

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Introduction

Art has been around for a very, VERY long time. And in that time, from mentor to student, thousands...no, millions...of tips and techniques have been passed down.

But as you could guess, some techniques outlived others, some were lost...and some were just of now value.

After MY years of training and practicing with great teachers, I've put together great techniques. The following are some of the most important and valuable. Learn and apply these 5 and you will simply be a better artist than you are now, whatever level you are at.

1. Side-by-Side

This is one of the easiest and most overlooked techniques that art has to offer. It has to do with making two images the same size (well, at least appear to be the same size).

So here you are, sitting on a stool at arms length between your eyes and the newsprint you're drawing on. Then there is the longer distance between your eyes and the object you are drawing whether those objects are on a table, a photo, or even a landscape.

As a beginner you should be attempting to make those two the same size as you are looking at them. That would make practicing easier.

But in real life you are likely changing the size—objects on the table like an apple and a cup will get bigger on the paper, and certainly the landscape will get smaller. Whichever is occurring, your brain gets “stuck” at some point...it fixates on what you have drawn and until you change your brain around you'll fail to see the “errors of your ways” ;-)

So...here's what you can do to change your “perspective”.

Get out of your stool, take the sketchpad off the easel and place it RIGHT NEXT TO THE OBJECTS ON THE DISPLAY TABLE.

Then sit back down on the stool.

Believe it or not you will see a totally different view of your work. That line on the left there will suddenly appear a little short. The pitcher body should be a little fatter. The apple is too small next to the cup. Even that head is a little small for the body.

I know, I know, it's a weird effect isn't it. But it does work. And it works very well. I've sometimes noticed when I'm working on a painting that I'll walk into the studio and glance at both the objects on a table and the image on the paper and instantly see what's wrong...just from the other side of the room. If you've ever seen an artist at work they use this technique.

And as you practice the other tips here and more in my class, you'll understand EXACTLY what it is that is wrong—instead of knowing “something” is wrong but not seeing what it is.

There is a small but useful spin-off effect from this technique. You get a chance to get up and stretch and that's good from sitting in the same place for too long.

2. Comparative Measurement

This is just a fancy term for seeing widths vs. height. When you are just beginning in art it's really hard to make see the small yet vital adjustments on your drawing to keep the drawing accurate (which is why Rapid Sketching is such a big lesson!).

Is that object among the others too tall or too short? At first the object seems fine, but, then, the more you look at it the more you can't stop feeling uncomfortable that it just doesn't seem ok.

Worse, when you're doing a more complicated drawing, lines that should be intersecting don't come near their intended points and making the “wrong” local adjustments begins to make your drawing appear like a Picasso (no offense, Picasso!)

The fixing begins of course in the beginning. Keeping on track through the whole of the drawing is just a function of using the right tool. Now mind you, this little secret tool has evolved for thousands of years through critical artistic and technological thinking to become it's most sophisticated and expensive form today...

The Wood Coffee Stirrer Stick!

It's actually quite perfect because it can be easily marked, it's just the right length, it's cheap (any office supply house), and if it becomes overused you dispose of it (yes, biodegradable!) and grab a new one. One bag will actually last you a lifetime (well, in truth you will get to the point where you won't need them anymore because you'll become so practiced at seeing the width vs. height in your dreams).

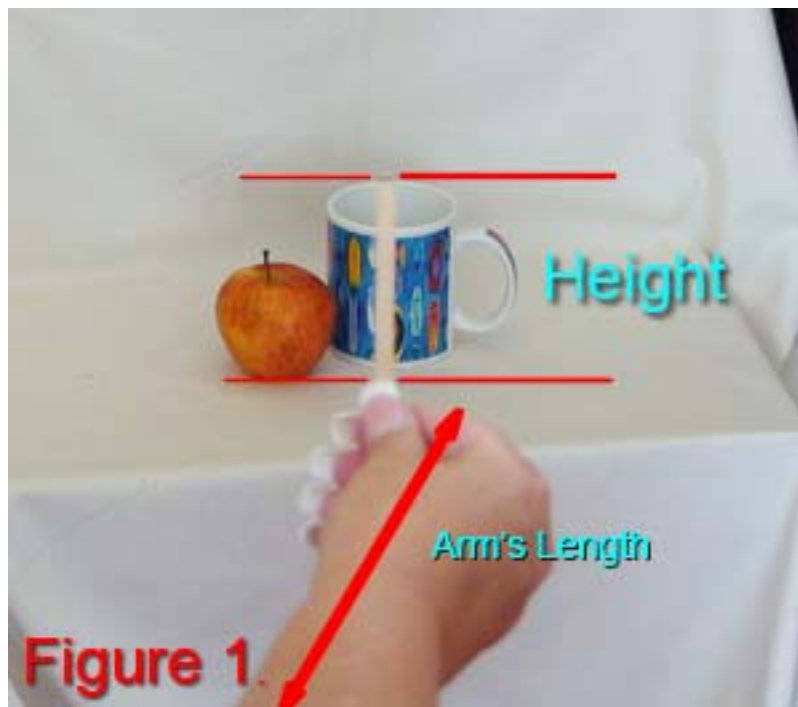
So how do you use it?

Let's start with the big picture...total width and total height

Sit down on your stool after you have drawn some small objects for practice (did I mention that there are really informative practice exercises in the \$27 [Video Lessons](#) on the home page? ☺)

Hold one end of the stick between your thumb and forefinger vertically (see Figure 1), turn the stick toward the drawing and extend your arm (yes, you can use your other arm to hold it steady if you need to).

Close one eye.

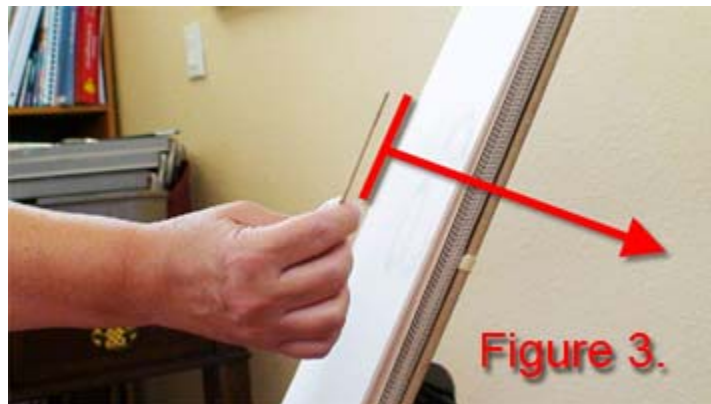


Move your pinched fingers up or down on the stick to gauge the height of all objects combined (total height). Open your eyes, and make a mark with your pencil at your thumbnail.

Next, (Figure 2) extend your arm again and this time we'll do the same exercise horizontally...only this time you won't need to mark the stick—your thumb is already on the width mark!



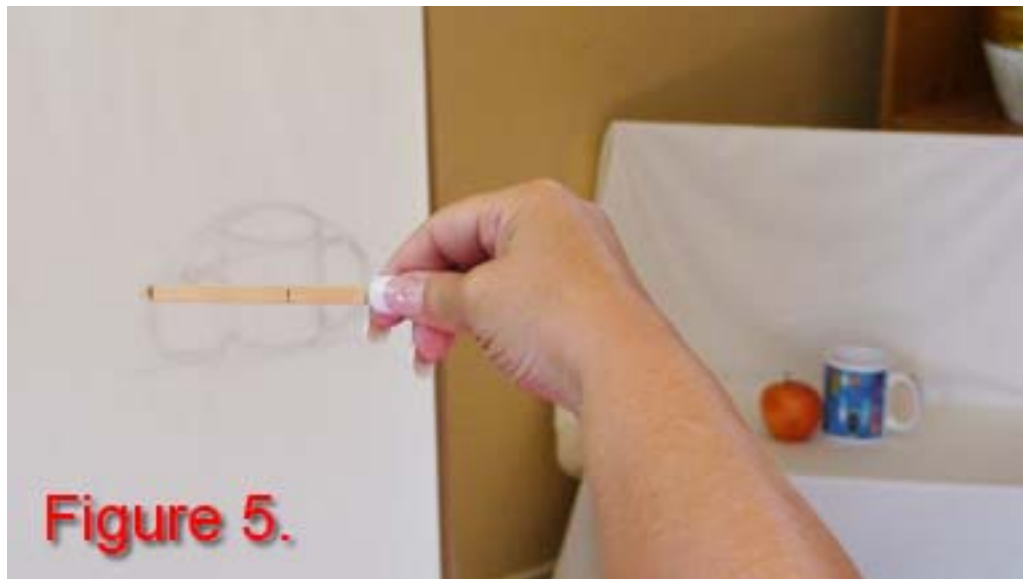
It's also important to notice that the stirrer measuring stick is not true vertical...it's perpendicular to the line of sight. (Figure 3)



Now, **get out of your seat**, walk behind it and face the easel again (see Stepping Back above). Close one eye again, **extend your arm**, then physically move and lean your body forward or backward to get the height (marked) to match the height of the image (Figure 4)



Still keeping the arm extended, carefully twist the stick 90 degrees moving it down to horizontal. The image width should match the thumbnail mark (Figure 5).



If they don't fit the same dimensions (accuracy here is important!), then you can choose which one (width or length) to fix. Be careful to look over your drawing again and see WHICH object you will need to fix. If you are still unsure, you'll need to go back to the website and get [The Ultimate HOW TO DRAW Video Lessons](#) e-book. There you'll learn in Lesson 2 a special technique call "Sensing" that will *dramatically* change the way you draw and measure.

Lastly, if it wasn't obvious in the exercise, let me point out that if the objects you are drawing are *higher* than they are *wide* (Portrait vs. Landscape in printer terms) you can simply reverse your steps—simply do the longest width or height first to allow you to see your physical pencil mark and your thumbnail. You'll catch on quickly enough with a little trial and error here.

3. Upside Down

Although this technique is only good for picture, photos, and advertisements...anything on paper that you'd like to draw...it still has an amazing quality of testing your work.

How?

Here's the normal problem going on in your brain. When you look at a picture, your left brain instantly recognizes the objects—a cup, a chair, bottles of wine, a telephone. The problem with this “instant” recognition is that you will automatically start copying your pre-conceived notion about those objects.

That's not the best approach because you've already laid down lines in your head and are simply going to follow them. You are not truly drawing what you see.

So here's a method that will also improve your work.

If you turn the picture upside down and THEN draw it, your left brain simply gives up trying to recognize those preconceived shapes and guess what? Yep, the right brain kicks in and presents simple shapes that you can now easily copy without prejudice. You'll be forced to see circles, triangles, ellipses, squares, and trapezoids only...and THAT'S what you'll be drawing. And your drawing is going to improve significantly.

Go ahead. Try it. I think you'll impress yourself. (you can prove your work using #2 above).

4. Seeing in Reverse

Ever hear the phrase “Always get another point of view.”? That’s what this handy-dandy technique is all about. Since we’ve already discussed what Upside Down can do for you in terms of “seeing” a drawing differently, this is another take on that.

Go out and purchase a small mirror (4 inch x 6 inch) that you can hold in one hand.



Here’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to look at both the drawn image and the objects we are drawing at the same time, but using the mirror to see the mirror-image of both simultaneously.

This is a great technique for again suppressing those fixed prejudices in your brain by allowing you to instantly see “a whole other drawing”. You will have done a “head fake”.

So here’s how to do it.

While remaining seated on your stool, turn 180 degrees around and face the opposite direction. If you are right handed and have the set up that I use (see complete instructions in [Lesson 1](#)) then hold the mirror in your left hand and raise it to about shoulder height so that with one eye you can see both the drawn and real images. Move your body and head slightly to the right and put the mirror in the same place that your eye would be if you were drawing while facing directly.

What you will see will actually astound you.

You will see small nuances in your drawing that you didn't see before. The lip might not be level, or lopsided, or the apple just a little too big, or that angle a little too sharp.

Make your corrections and check again.

Also recheck your Width and Height.

You'll see now that your drawing is becoming more accurate. You should now be willing to admit how easy it is to get trapped into those preconceived prejudices and how fast they form in your left-brain. Right-brain to the rescue!

Feels good and accomplishing doesn't it!

5. Shrinking the Drawing

This technique is in the same vein as the others. Again, you are just changing your perspective one more time by making the drawing look different.

Enter the Reducing Glass (see picture on next page)

The reducing glass works the opposite of a magnifying glass. It shrinks your drawing down so that you can see more of drawn objects in a smaller size.

You can get one at any art supply house.

Holding the glass perpendicular to the paper, move the glass forward and backward over your drawing and then compare what you see against the objects you are drawing.

Again, you'll likely notice small errors in your drawing that you hadn't seen before. That's because, once more, we've turned off the expected results of the left brain and are letting both halves "see" for the "first" time.



It's a Wrap!

The toughest part of your drawing is getting it to be an accurate copy of the objects you are drawing. But you have noticed by now that you can change many aspects of your “view” without violating perspective. In other words, when you are drawing, your eye pretty much has to remain in the same place while you draw...you can't move it left, right, up, or down. You can move a little closer or further away but the closer you get the more radical the changes of what you are trying to capture become.

However, we have seen various tools and techniques that you can use right away **WITHOUT** changing your basic eye position. Very cool.

Finally, just as in any profession, we both know that there are so many of these techniques available (I've only scratched the surface) and I am only giving you a small (but truly powerful) small set of new techniques.

But I've been doing this for years and I just can't wait to help you discover all the golden nuggets of information and techniques that I've learned. **THESE** are available through the e-book “The Ultimate HOW TO DRAW Video Lessons”, the complete video lessons that are designed to be a step-by-step approach to getting you into this fun, natural, easy and proven methods of dramatically improving your drawings.

The Ancient Masters of Art await you!

[Click here now.](#)

To the Aspiring Artist within you,

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, sweeping tail on the 'l'.

Paul Wagner, founder of Art Training International.

www.how-to-draw-online.com