



**THE GUIDED SKETCHBOOK
THAT TEACHES YOU HOW TO**

DRAW!

ROBIN LANDA

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The guided sketchbook that teaches you how to DRAW!

Robin Landa

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Dedication

For my darling daughter, Hayley, and you, dear Reader. I hope you fall in love with drawing.

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“Drawing may be the most intimate and honest of all art mediums. Its lightweight materials enable artists to work almost anywhere and often give their efforts a truth-telling transparency that exposes the very nerve endings of their talents. Sometimes drawings function almost as a kind of signature, distilling an artist’s sensibility to its essence. Sometimes they express gifts visible in no other medium.”

—Roberta Smith, Co-Chief Art Critic, The New York Times

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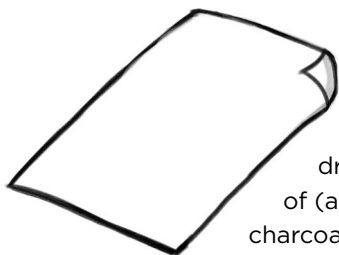
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Essential Materials and Tools

It's time to gear up. You'll need most of the following tools to do the exercises in this book.

Analog Tools



Paper

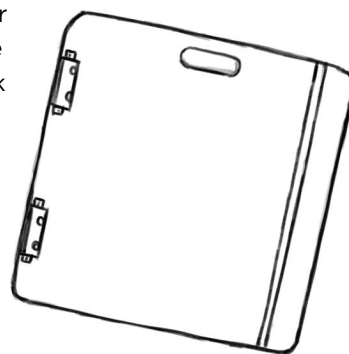
It's OK to draw in this book. I want you to! But to practice you should have additional drawing paper. Most drawing paper will do for beginners, such as a drawing pad of (acid-free) paper that takes pen and ink, pencil, crayon, charcoal, light ink washes, and markers. A handy size for most subjects (and laps) is 11x14- or 14x17-inches.

Or go with graph paper for use with pencil or marker, which provides a modular grid for visual measurement.

A couple of the prompts in this book call for heavier paper or art board, such as bristol board, which is a lightweight board with two working surfaces, front and back. Other prompts call for tan or gray toned paper, which you can purchase ready-made or make yourself. Using a big brush, you can hand-tone paper with cold black coffee, cold tea, or thinned ink or water-based paint.

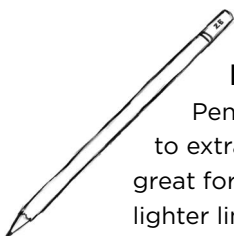
Drawing board

You can place your sketchbook on a table or on your lap when drawing, but you may prefer to use a drawing board. Inexpensive Masonite sketchpad boards afford a sturdy sketching surface. But such a board is optional.



Pencils

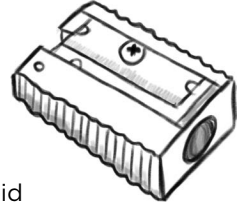
Pencils are available in varieties that range from very soft (8B) to extra hard (6H). Soft graphite pencils make darker marks and are great for quick sketching. Harder pencils retain a sharp point and make lighter lines; they're good for detail work and straight lines.



Get these: 6B; 2B; B; H or F; and 2H. (When I don't specify which pencil to use, try several to learn what each can do and which you prefer.)

Pencil sharpener

A hand-held, all-metal sharpener for standard size pencils (8 mm) works well for sharpening artist's pencils.



Cylindrical charcoal sticks

Vine and willow charcoal sticks are good drawing tools for rapid visualization and creating broad areas of tone, and they are easily removed with a kneaded eraser. Some artists prefer compressed charcoal for its strength. Charcoal is inexpensive so you can



experiment with different kinds. But you'll need to spray them with a nontoxic fixative for permanence (see next page).

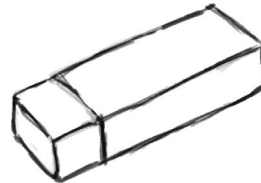
Black and White Conté crayon

Conté crayons are made from a blend of natural pigments, kaolin clay, and graphite, and are used for rapid sketching as well as shading on a variety of paper surfaces. These crayons are popular drawing implements. You can sharpen the crayon's tip to a chisel point (using a sandblock) for detailed work, or use its blunt tip or its broad side.

Erasers

White plastic eraser

These erasers remove graphite marks cleanly and completely from paper, and they are my recommendation for working with pencil.



Kneaded rubber eraser

These knead into any shape, erase marks fairly cleanly, and pick up residue. They self-clean when kneaded and are excellent for use with pencil, vine, and willow charcoal.

Pink Pearl eraser

Soft and pliable, this eraser removes graphite marks and has beveled ends for better control.

Gum eraser

This is an all-purpose eraser, but it leaves a good deal of residue.



Markers

Many visual artists favor fine-point black markers (nontoxic) as sketching or drawing tools. Experiment with different brands; some have less drag than others. Markers are *not* easily erased. Consider their marks permanent.

Wide-nib black markers (nontoxic) are good for experimenting and drawing boldly as well as for fill-in work.

Nontoxic markers are available in packs of assorted colors in both fine-point tip and wide-nib. An inexpensive small assortment is fine for working in this book. Or you may prefer student-grade colored pencils.

Nontoxic workable fixative

This variety of fixative is workable (you can continue drawing on top of it after applying it) and nontoxic; SpectraFix Natural Casein Spray

Fixative brand is one example. Fixative protects your work. Even if you use a nontoxic fixative, be sure to use it in a well-ventilated room or outside.



Black India ink

Black India ink is highly pigmented, opaque permanent ink that can be diluted with water and used with most brushes.

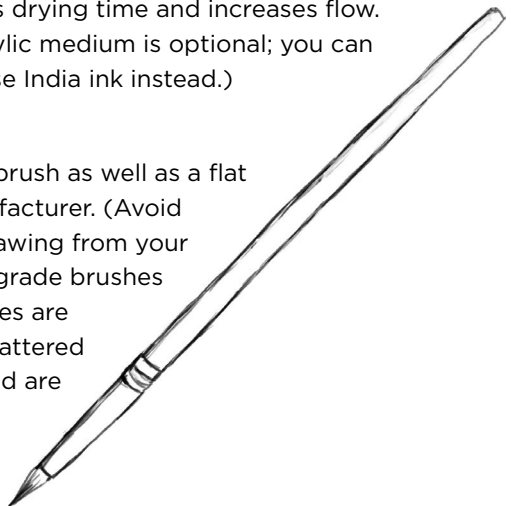
It's good for wash drawings and drawing experiments. For wet drawing media, I recommend it over black acrylic paint.

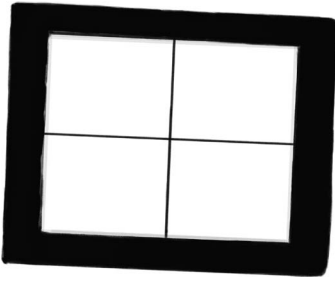
Black and white acrylic paint and acrylic medium

Acrylic paints are water-based, fast drying, and diluted with water or acrylic medium, which lengthens drying time and increases flow. (For the exercises in this book, acrylic medium is optional; you can dilute acrylic paint with water or use India ink instead.)

Brushes

It's good to have a round, pointed brush as well as a flat brush. Sizes of brush vary by manufacturer. (Avoid small brushes, which encourage drawing from your wrist rather than your arm.) Artist-grade brushes can be costly; student-grade brushes are fine for learning. (If you have old, battered brushes, those can be used, too, and are excellent for experimentation.)





Drawing aids (optional)

Viewfinder

A viewfinder is an artist's tool—a clear, lightweight plastic grid window for visualizing compositions in thirds or other modular unit grids. It allows you to isolate a section of a scene, or separate a scene or space into modules, which helps you determine where elements fall on the page. You can make a viewfinder with clear, hard plastic and a dry erase marker or purchase a readymade one. One brand is the QuicKomp Artist's Drawing Tool, whose side also can be used as a straightedge.

Rule of Thirds grid

The Rule of Thirds is an asymmetrical compositional plastic grid that you can use as a viewfinder to aid the positioning of a focal point in the composition. You'll learn more about it in Chapter 1. You can purchase this or make one by ruling the grid onto clear, hard plastic.

Four-quadrant grid

A four-quadrant modular grid viewfinder, made of plastic or heavy acetate, allows you divide what you see into manageable, smaller parts. You can purchase this or make one by ruling the grid onto clear, hard plastic.

Wooden artist's model

This is a wooden, fully jointed and proportioned figure (available in various sizes), that you can pose to help you visualize form.

Digital Media

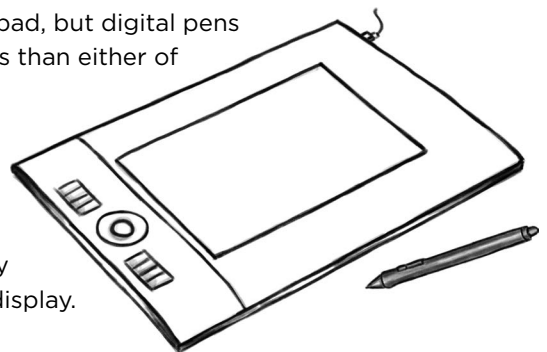
Digital pens and tablets

Some digital pens and tablets emulate the feeling of drawing on paper. Purchase the largest tablet you can afford. Some people are comfortable drawing with a mouse or trackpad, but digital pens and tablets offer better drawing experiences than either of these options.

Always check software needs and specifications before purchase of this equipment.

Pen-on-screen

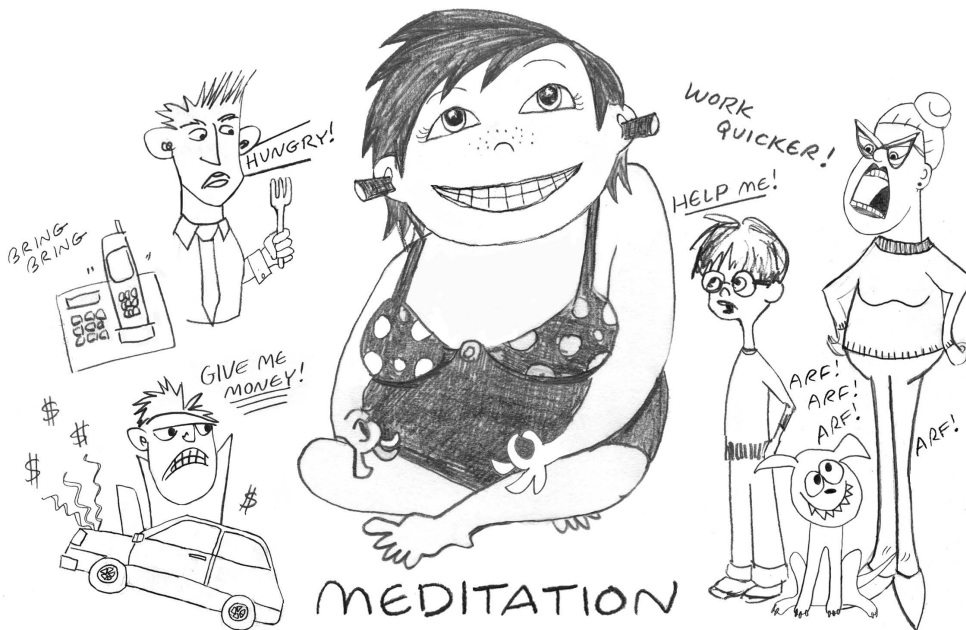
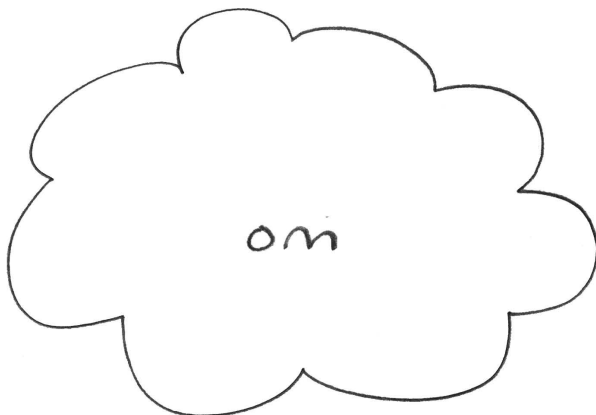
Some digital pens allow you to draw directly on the surface of a high-performance LCD display.



Elizabeth Blazer

{ANIMATOR, DESIGNER, [HTTP://WWW.LIZBLAZER.COM/](http://www.lizblazer.com/)}

“Draw yourself doing the impossible.”



Introduction

Why People Draw

Drawing makes your brain happy.

When you draw, you are using multiple brain regions. Your frontal lobe kicks into action providing reasoning, planning, movement, emotions, and problem solving. Your parietal lobe provides movement and orientation, recognition, perception of stimuli; your occipital lobe delivers visual processing; your temporal lobe, perception and memory; and your cerebellum, additional movement.

When you draw, you are concentrating, allowing the rewarding neurotransmitter dopamine to flow. Some people report feelings of calm. Others say drawing allows them to keenly focus.

Drawing entertains many of us.

Drawing is a way to make sense of one's self in the world, a way to relate to others and to explore one's own identity. It allows you to explore what you see in the visible world and interpret what you see.

Drawing is a way to visually communicate ideas and feelings.

Drawing visually records people, places, things, memories, and events.

Drawing is a form of creative self-expression.

Drawing is visual thinking—a cognitive way to explore and understand ideas and experiences.

Drawing from observation entails interpreting and visualizing what you see. Or you might visualize what you think in a conceptual drawing, or you can visualize what you imagine.

As a child, tracing your hand was a magical way to replicate your hand. Instinctively you knew the drawing was a record of your existence. Now, drawing can be anything you desire: naturalistic, realistic, stylized, abstract, nonobjective, whimsical, satirical, flat, illusionistic, textural, colorful, expressionistic—anything.



This book introduces drawing topics in a logical way, allowing you to build technical and compositional skills and comprehension. Some techniques have comprehensive step-by-step instructions. Some instructions are short prompts that cue a creative action. Highly esteemed artists, designers, illustrators, architects, filmmakers, animators, cartoonists, educators, and other creative professionals contributed many of the prompts in this book.

There are many ways to draw. Portraying the world as we see it is only one way to visualize. This guided sketchbook will teach you how to draw what you see as well as encourage you to draw conceptually and experiment. So make your brain happy—draw!

B.E.S.T. Practice

When drawing, it's B.E.S.T. to:

Be patient. Breathe. Relax and enjoy yourself. Learning to draw takes time.

Erase. Feel free to make mistakes. All visual artists do.

Stay open to experimentation, which expands your vision and drawing vocabulary.

Toss out preconceived notions. Enter this experience freshly.

More Best Practice Tips to Remember

- Try to use “gist” thinking, or *big-picture thinking*, to think about the whole rather than parts. For example, when drawing a still life, don't render one object and then move on to the next. Rather, work the entire composition at the same time, cultivating spatial relationships.
- Play!
- Observe mindfully.
- Evaluate spatial relationships. Pay as much attention to the interstices—the spaces between forms—as to the forms themselves. Imagine that between each form in your drawing there is a stretchy band that creates visual tension.



Draw! Checklist

Have You S.E.E.N. It?

S = Spatial relationships. Consider the spaces between forms as much as the forms themselves.

E = Edges. Consider all drawn elements in response to the format's edges.

E = Emphasis. Consider emphasizing some elements and deemphasizing others. Create a focal point.

N = Negative shapes/space. Consider all negative space.

.....

- Does the page's orientation best suit the direction or emphasis of your subject matter?
- What kind of graphic or pictorial space do you want to create? (Flat or illusory? Near or far?)
- Have you created a focal point?
- Have you arranged the composition to guide the viewer through the pictorial space?
- Have you created a point of entry into the composition?
- Have you evaluated spatial relationships?
- Did you consider the negative shapes?
- Is the composition balanced? (If not, what expressive purpose does imbalance serve?)
- Have you drawn with as much specificity to each shape or form as possible?
- Have you used tools to their best advantage?



Diamond Rivera

{ARTIST}

“When starting off with an idea and a blank page you don’t need to tell every inch of the story. You need to include enough detail to allow the viewer to get an idea of what is going on.

“You can let them fill in some blanks, too, which will keep the audience engaged for a longer period of time. And it’s OK if not everyone walks away with the same story.

“Crop your drawing to give it an interesting perspective.”





Visual Thinking

You can learn to draw more proficiently by being a keen observer. In this chapter, before you pick up a pencil, you'll learn how to take a closer look at the visual relationships all around you, and you'll start to see shapes you never noticed before. You'll be amazed at how sharp observation will improve your drawing skills and alter your perception of the world.

Think About the Page

Whether it's paper or digital, every page has a defined perimeter—its outer edges or boundaries—as well as the field it encloses. Consider what you're drawing and how the marks you make relate to the page's edges and outer shape.



Page Orientation Is Important

Paper and digital pages come in all shapes and sizes—rectangular, square, round, quadrilateral, and freeform. Orient your page to best suit the pictorial space you want to create and/or your subject matter. If you observe a vertical emphasis in the subject matter, position the page in a vertical orientation and vice versa.

Each element of your drawing will respond to the page's boundaries and shape. A page not only has all that white space ready to receive your first mark, but it also has edges that function as part of your composition.

If you draw a line parallel to one edge of a page, that line will echo the directional force of that side. Drawn lines that are *not* parallel generally are more visually active. For example, diagonal or curved lines drawn within a rectangle tend to be more active. If the shape of the page is elongated in one direction, lines parallel to the elongated side will be more forceful. If the page is circular, a curving line echoes the circumference, while horizontal, vertical, or angled lines differ from the round circumference, creating visual tension by moving in opposition to the circular boundary.

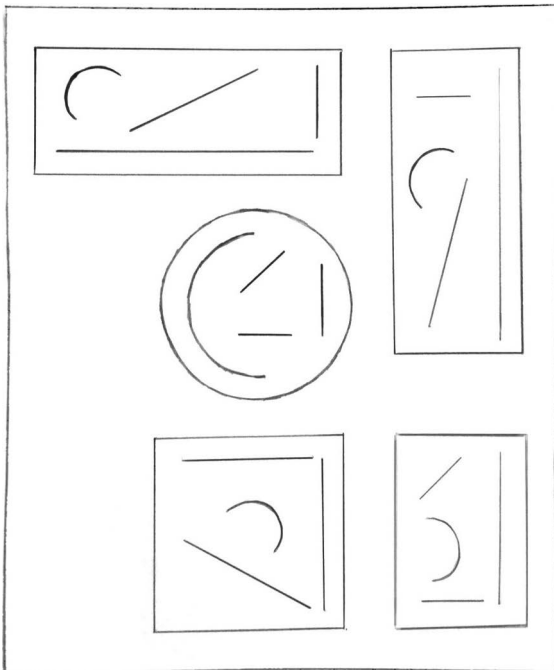


Diagram of movements in various shaped formats



A Page's Field Relates to Its Edges

As soon as you draw one mark on the blank page, you begin to build a composition within the internal graphic or pictorial space. (*Graphic space* and *pictorial space* can be used interchangeably, however, graphic space best describes nonrepresentational works and pictorial space best describes representational works.) Here are some things to think about as you start any drawing.

Closed and Open Compositions

A drawing can be closed (or tectonic) or open (a-tectonic). Let's start with a discussion of open composition.

When you draw, you can consider the page an *open* field. You can build a composition that seems to go on forever, defying and somehow dissolving the edges of the page, creating an *a-tectonic composition*.

Or you can consider the page's edges as hard and fast boundaries within which your composition is firmly contained or closed (*tectonic*). Echoing the edges of the page in the composition reiterates the boundaries. In a closed composition, the marks or imagery appear held within. Often, in closed compositions, elements parallel the edges. Internal drawn elements respond to the edges but all action stops at the edges.



Try this: Look straight ahead at an object in the actual room space in front of you. As you are looking straight ahead, consider how the space moves beyond your focus into the outer part of your field of vision, into your peripheral vision. The boundaries of your vision aren't hard and fast but instead go on beyond your focus. This is what an open composition simulates.

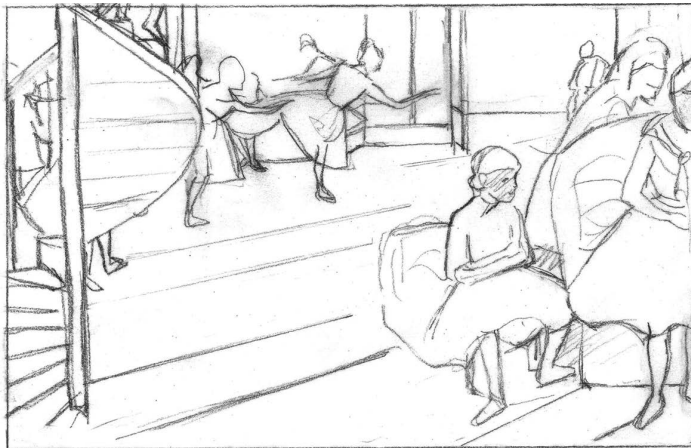
Now try this: Focus intently on one object. That focus keeps you from moving to the periphery of your vision.



The terms *closed* and *open* refer to the way the drawn elements of a composition relate to the edges of a page. Basically, if the major movements within a composition oppose the edges (think diagonals) or direct our eyes past the boundaries of the format, that composition is considered open. If the internal imagery or marks' directions echo the page's edges to a great extent *and* the viewer's focus is kept tightly within the format, that composition is considered closed.

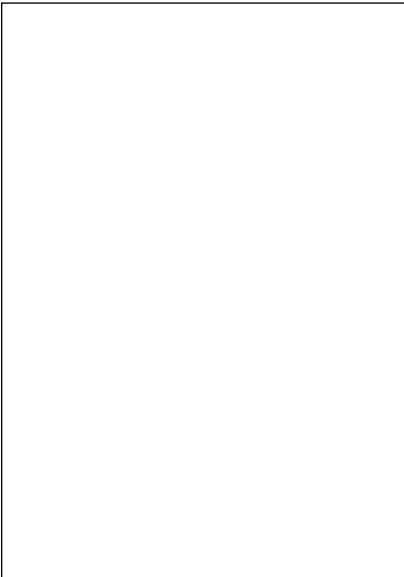


Closed and open compositions
after Edgar Degas



**DRAW!**

In these two rectangles, sketch a spiral or a rotating column that looks like a tornado. In one, compose a closed composition; sketch the tornado parallel to the vertical edges and keep the tornado clearly within the boundaries of the rectangle. In the other, compose an open composition by sketching the spiral so that it looks like the tornado is tilted and moving outside of the boundaries.



About Composition

If you've ever used a camera, you have composed a photograph. When you look through a camera's viewfinder, you compose what you see so that it is arranged aesthetically within the frame.

Drawing involves composing as well. You have to translate the three-dimensional space you observe or imagine onto a fixed two-dimensional surface. Most artists do not use a viewfinder to compose scenes from life, but some find it helpful. As you learn to draw from life, a viewfinder (a piece of clear acetate or plastic that is divided into a modular grid) is a handy tool, not just for composing a single composition but also for learning to see *the world within the confined format of a rectangle*. The edges of the viewfinder correspond to the edges of the paper, which allows you to see how the forms would be positioned in a composition. Some viewfinders are divided into modules based on the Rule of Thirds.

Rule of Thirds

The *Rule of Thirds* is a compositional technique often used by painters, photographers, and designers, although some never use it and still produce quality work. The technique uses asymmetry to create visual interest and balance. In practice, the aim of the Rule of Thirds is to prevent the placement of the focal point at the center of a composition or to discourage placements that divide the composition in half. Generally, placements that split a page in half act to divide a composition rather than create a focal point.

Here's how it works: A nine-module grid helps you to position the focal point or primary graphic elements of the composition along its grid lines, especially at the intersections of the grid lines. The focal point is placed at one intersection and a counterbalancing secondary pictorial element is placed at an opposing intersection. Also, a horizontal grid line could represent the horizon line in a landscape.

Although the intersections provide guidelines for the placement of primary elements, you still need to make judgments involving balance and counterpoint. After working with the Rule of Thirds as a guideline for a while, you will learn to compose with visual interest and can abandon this grid or a viewfinder.

