

Fabulous Figure Drawing

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Fabulous Figure Drawing for Young Adults

When I survey my students at the beginning of each semester a majority of them list figure drawing as an area that interests them. We build in successful figure drawing for all students in Intro/Art and Drawing & Painting classes. Because young people are self-conscious around their peers it is important to build in success for them so they are willing to try. I often “guarantee” students that they will see improvement in just a few days if they do exactly what I ask them to do, the results have been amazing!

Students must realize that this unit takes concentration and confidence. Discuss the use of human image in the visual arts and show slides or look at examples before you begin the unit. This is a great time to tie in art history or art criticism.

Students model for one another and receive extra credit each time they model. (*I recommend that you not require every student model.*) It is important that you set the tone for modeling and I suggest that you model at times for your students. It is through your example that they will also feel free posing for the class.

The figure drawing schedule is different for each level. In our Introduction to Art classes we generally spend about 8 days, Drawing and Painting 10 - 12 days and in Advanced Drawing and Painting and A.P. art we spend several weeks building skill in figure drawing. As students progress we leave the choice of medium up to them.

Figure drawing unit

Day 1 *Introduce the concept of contour drawing* and **demonstrate** how to do a “blind contour” drawing. Students need three sheets of 12 X 18 newsprint paper either stapled together ahead of time or have students staple them before they hand them in. (Tell students not to write the name of the model on the paper as it is too confusing when grading). I model for the first two 2.5 minute drawings. Students who pose receive extra credit points each time they model.

Day 2 *Blind contours* - Hand back graded blind contours. I simply write “good”, “slow down” “v. good” etc. and give all students points for each drawing. They need to feel they can risk without hurting their grade. Students will need 5 sheets of 12 X 18 newsprint for 10 blind contour drawings.

Day 3 *Blind contours* - 6 sheets of newsprint. You may use some colored pens today for variety as students will be tiring of the contour drawing. I explain that this is the last day of blind contour. . .it’s like practice for football, swimming-get the eye, brain, hand coordination going.

Day 4 *Gesture drawings.* Students will need 2 sheets of 12 X 18 newsprint folded into quarters. **Demonstrate** the technique on the board or overhead. They will be happy to be going on to a new style of drawing and seem to like the gesture drawings a lot. The poses are 1 to 1.5 minutes and should all have strong action. Again, I start by modeling for two poses to set the mood and get everyone focused.

Day 5 *Sustained contour drawing/ demonstration.* Students will need one sheet of 12 X 18 newsprint and one sheet of 12 X 18 white paper. Start with two 2.5 minute blind contours. Have a student model seated for 15 - 20 minutes to allow students to do one sustained drawing. *If possible show examples of contour drawing by famous artists such as Picasso or Matisse.*

Day 6 *Two sustained contours* on 12 X 18 white drawing paper.
Do at least one blind contour for warm up. (one sheet newsprint)

Day 7 & 8 *Sustained drawing of a costumed figure* on white drawing paper.
Students are encouraged to continue with the sustained drawing method if they are feeling successful using it. They may look at their paper as often as they wish for this final drawing. All drawings should be complete including a background. This is the assessment piece of the unit. Make the criteria for grading this one very clear.

This unit could continue as long as you choose giving students much more practice if you have time. Vary the medium you are use, size of paper and length of time modeling.

We have had great success with:

- 18 X 24 colored paper and chalk or pastels
- 18 X 24 with 3 to 5 poses arranged into a composition
- 12 X 18 stick and ink drawings for a very spontaneous look
- 18 X 24 newsprint with wet compressed charcoal (3 to 5 min.)

This is one of the student's favorite units at Cascade High School. They are intent and totally focused throughout and discipline one another if anyone makes noise. It's quite magical really. The use of drawing boards so students can move around seems to make a difference as it distinguishes the format from any other class. Have fun!

The room is set up in a semi circle with modeling table in the middle. Students are allowed to sit on tables or on the floor if they choose. The drawing boards seem to enhance the ambiance of the "studio" as they add flexibility in student choices.

Notes: