

Learn Pencil Drawing and Pencil Drawing Techniques:

Pencil art may sound simple, but it's an art form that can be used to create incredibly detailed and realistic compositions. To get started, you don't need many materials, but you can benefit from a foundational knowledge of pencil drawing techniques. Armed with these techniques, you will be able to add texture, detail, light, and shading to your creations.

Below, find a comprehensive guide to pencil drawing techniques, as well as everything else you'll need to get started, from basic drawing materials to a list of ideas for your next piece of pencil art.



Skillshare student Matej Jan used just two types of graphite pencils to create this ultra-realistic portrait.

Pencil Drawing Techniques

How to Hold a Pencil When Drawing

Before you get started, it's helpful to learn how to hold a pencil when drawing. There are several different grips you can use to achieve different effects. A traditional grip—the grasp you use when writing—is the most common and natural way to hold a pencil.

You can also opt to hold the pencil further away from the tip, but still with a traditional grip. This will give you a wider range of motion to make longer, looser marks. Or, you might grip closer to the tip of the pencil, using your index finger to press the point of the graphite onto the paper. This can give you leverage to quickly fill in areas of your drawing with dark marks.

As you practice, you'll find that different pencil grips will be useful for different pencil drawing techniques and types of compositions.

Now, with a pencil in hand, you can move on to foundational pencil drawing techniques.

Hatching

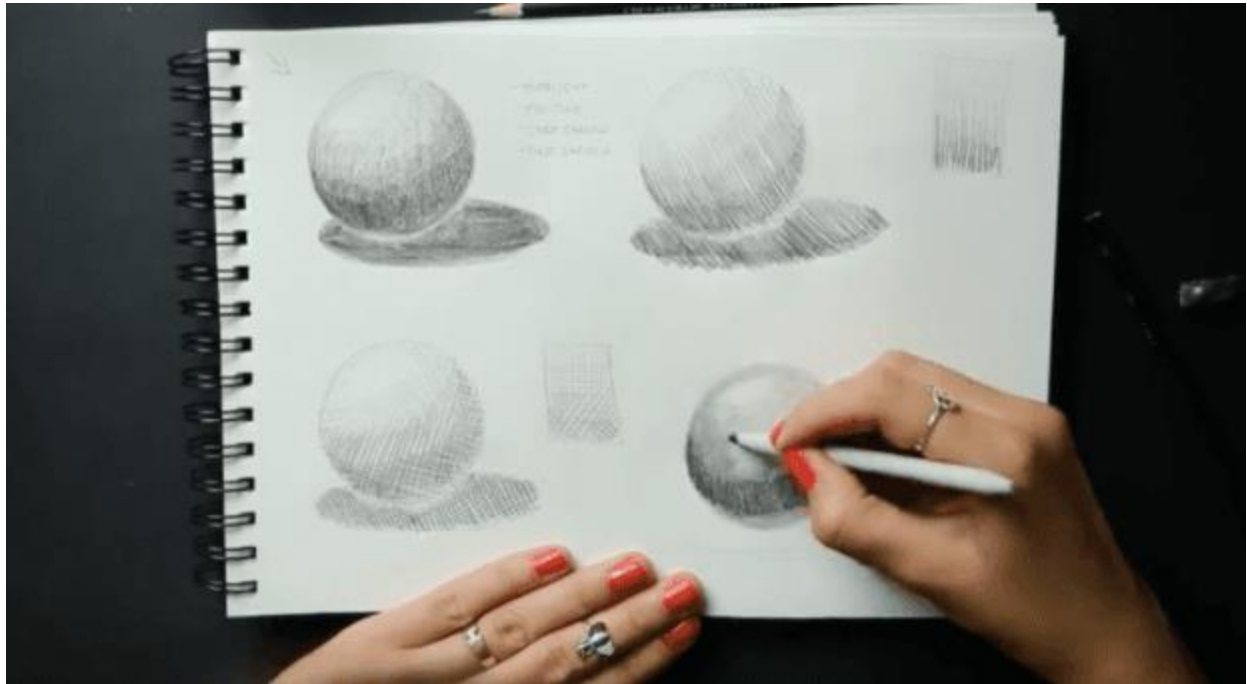


Skillshare teacher Alexandra Gábor demonstrates how to use the pencil drawing techniques of hatching (top right) and cross-hatching (bottom left) to create light and shade.

The technique of hatching consists of filling in areas of a drawing with multiple parallel lines to create the illusion of texture, shadow, and form. You can achieve a more intense effect by increasing the number of lines and their proximity to each other. In other words, the more lines and the closer you draw them together, the darker an area you'll create.

Hatching can be done in a variety of ways—vertical hatching, horizontal hatching, cross-hatching, or expressive—to achieve different effects.

Stumping



Skillshare teacher Alexandra Gábor uses a stump to smudge and blend the shadows of a sphere.

A technique used primarily for shading, stumping refers to the process of smudging elements of your drawing with a stump (a drawing tool made of paper tightly wound into a stick), a soft cloth, or even your finger. You can use this technique to create smooth, evenly blended areas of a drawing, or you can choose to incorporate more movement. For example, by smudging in small, circular motions, you can create a visually interesting texture for trees or shrubs.

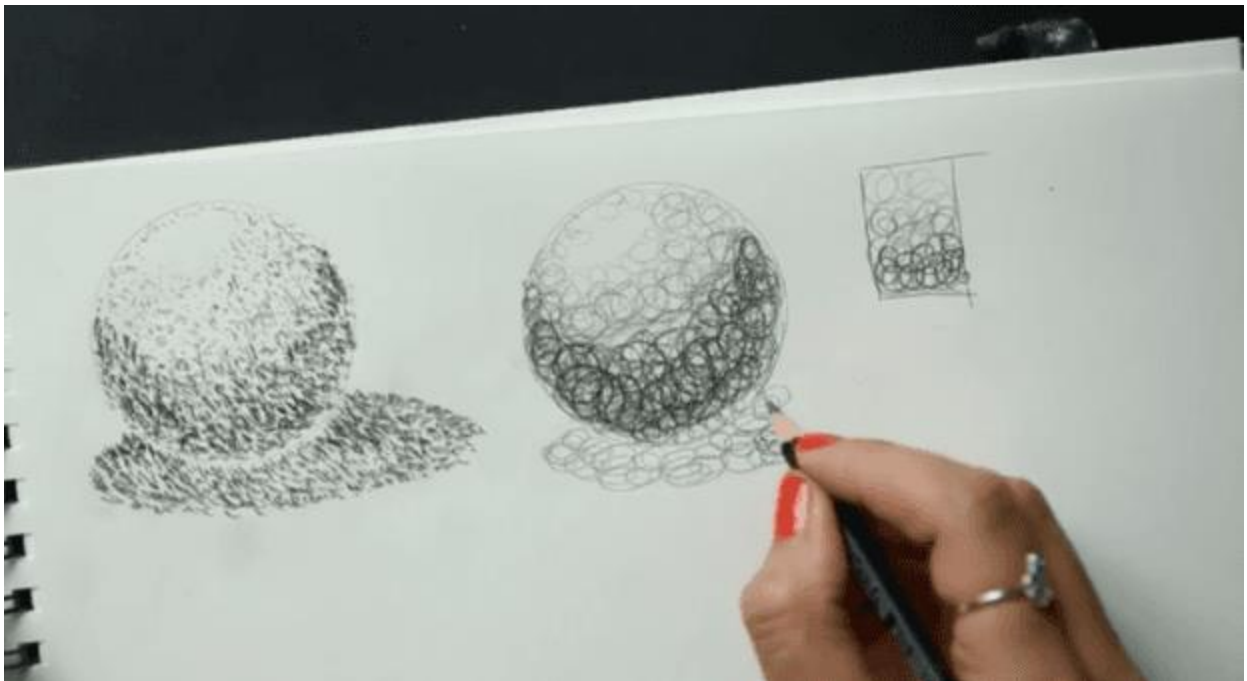
Stippling



When stippling, positioning more dots closer together can create the appearance of a shadow.

With stippling, you create texture or shadow by drawing a series of dots. Similar to hatching, the more and closer together the dots, the darker an area you'll create.

Scribbling



The pencil drawing technique demonstrated here is referred to as scribbling, or circulumism—a series of random marks to generate dark or shadowed areas or a drawing.

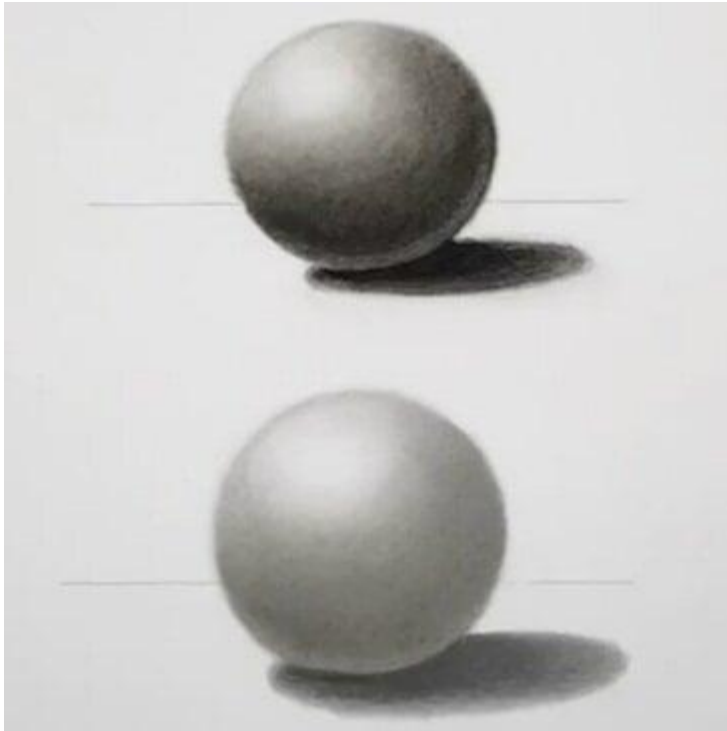
As silly as it may sound, scribbling is considered a pencil drawing technique. And it's just as free-form as what you are probably picturing. Scribbling, alternatively known as circulumism, simply consists of moving your pencil in random formations across the page. Like with the other techniques, the closer you make the marks, the more dense and dark of an area you'll create.

Contour Lines



This drawing was created with one continuous contour line.

In French, the word “contour” means “outline.” And that’s exactly what contour lines are: the outlines of an object. However, contour lines aren’t only found on the outer edges of an object. In pencil drawings, you’ll also find contour lines within an object, where it has folds or creases or where it changes color or shape.



Add Depth to Your Drawings

Charcoal & Graphite—Shading Techniques With Emmy Kalia

[Take the Course](#)

Pencil Drawing Supplies

If you are just getting started with pencil drawing, you're in luck—all the materials you need are easily accessible and affordable. Here's what you need:

Graphite pencils

Drawing paper or sketchpad

Erasers

Pencil sharpener



For pencil drawings, you will need drawing or graphite pencils, paper, and erasers. A pencil sharpener is also helpful to keep your tools in top condition.

Graphite Pencils

Drawing pencils, or graphite pencils, are graded on the graphite scale (or HB scale), which measures the hardness/softness of the lead. On the HB scale, B stands for black. The higher the number, the softer the lead—so the darker (or blacker) the mark. H stands for hardness. The higher the number that accompanies the H, the harder the lead and lighter the mark. A pencil rated HB would fall right in the middle of the grading system—theoretically equivalent to a No. 2 pencil.

However, there is no industry standard for the grades between different brands, so whatever brand of pencil you choose, it's important to get to know the individual drawing pencils in that set.

Drawing Paper or Sketchpad

You can certainly use plain printer paper for practice drawing. However, at some point, you may want to purchase paper or a sketchpad that's better suited for pencil drawing. A heavier weight paper, for example, can better handle more erasure and constant pressure from your pencil. A thinner paper—like printer paper—is more prone to tearing.

When it comes to texture, a smooth to medium texture is ideal for graphite pencil drawings. A more textured paper will pick up blacker marks, but will make it more difficult to add lighter, nuanced detail to your drawings.

Erasers

Most artists use gum erasers, kneaded erasers, or vinyl erasers. Gum erasers are the softest, while vinyl erasers are the most firm. The eraser you choose can depend on your personal preference, or it may vary by project.

Pencil Sharpener

You should also invest in a pencil sharpener to keep your tools in top condition. Whether you choose a manual or electric sharper, make sure it's a quality tool—a poor quality sharpener can damage your pencils or waste more material than necessary.

Pencil Drawing Ideas

Once you have your materials and a good knowledge of pencil drawing techniques, you'll be ready to get started. But do you need ideas for what to draw? Find some inspiration for your next composition from the list of pencil drawing ideas below.

Geometric Shapes

Practicing drawing geometric shapes can help you get a better feel for how to incorporate light, shadow, and dimension into your compositions.



Seemingly simple, this drawing of a sphere requires the techniques of shading and blending.

Landscapes

Drawing landscapes provides ample opportunity to incorporate light, shadow, and texture.



Drawing a landscape, either from real life or a photo, can help you learn how to recreate a realistic scene.

Animals

Choosing an animal as a subject can provide valuable practice in adding texture to your drawings.



Drawing the fur of an animal is a great exercise in creating texture by using pencil drawing techniques like hatching and blending.

Portraits

Drawing a portrait of a person can be intimidating—but once you understand correct facial proportions and how to light and shade on the planes of a face, you can produce beautiful portraits.



This portrait incorporates several pencil drawing techniques, including cross-hatching and smudging.

Feathers

The details and individual strands of feathers make them an ideal subject for practicing pencil drawing techniques.



Simple yet detailed, an image of a feather is an ideal subject for practicing pencil drawing techniques.

5 Incredible Examples of Pencil Art

A simple pencil can create beautiful, complex art. Below, we share some of the most impressive examples of pencil art. Can you believe these are made with just graphite pencils on paper?

Teresa Esgaio

Teresa Esgaio's detailed, photorealistic compositions, like this drawing of water, often play with textures and the contrast between light and shade.



Paul Cadden

Hyperrealist artist Paul Cadden creates drawings that are nearly indistinguishable from photographs. He incorporates the highest level of detail to, as he puts it, “create the illusion of a new reality not seen in the original photo.”



Armin Mersmann

As an artist, Armin Mersmann strives to understand and depict the deepest complexities and details, which you can see in this impressive pencil drawing of a human eye.



Michael Naumets

Ukrainian artist Michael Naumets creates photo-like portraits using graphite pencils.



Pierre-Yves Riveau

Also known as PEZ, Pierre-Yves Riveau creates pencil art; however, he's also a painter, graphic designer, and illustrator. Unlike some of the other artists featured here, he focuses on depicting traditional subjects in a more creative, non-traditional way.

