

Overview

Think of this overview as a **map** defining areas of exploration on one's artistic journey, the many pieces of a **puzzle**, the core **skills**. It is designed to help you see the whole (not to overwhelm you) before focusing on one thing at a time as it applies to what you want to do. Learning each of these fundamentals is a progression, like any skill. When you **feel lost** in your journey, take a look at this **map** to re-orient yourself and reset your focus, or consider if you're missing a piece of the puzzle.

These fundamentals are laid out in a general order of progression; you will always be working on all of these, but over time your focus will glide increasingly downwards to the more intangible, advanced concepts as your mastery of the earlier ones grows. Don't wait till you're "good" to create the stuff that excites you. You don't "get good" *and then* create; you improve *by* creating ([Drawabox](#); [Zapata](#)).

Preliminary / Basics

- **Pen-control** - hand-eye coordination; ability to make the marks you want to make ([Drawabox](#)); increases confidence and beauty of line quality; loose, smooth, fluid → accurate ([Sinix](#)); draw from elbow and shoulder, lock wrist for majority of time; 4 kinds of line: SICO ([Lemen](#))
- **Proportion** - ability to see accurately and discern the relationship of the size and position of 2D shapes (and later 3D forms) to each other ([Edwards](#))

Core Fundamentals

- **Form** - 3D volumes; you need to be able to think visually in 3D to represent form convincingly and really take control of drawing; basic forms are cube, sphere, cylinder, cone, and pyramid
- **Perspective** - rules about how we see the physical world; vanishing points, grids, "camera lens," etc.; directly connected to basic forms
- **Anatomy** - this is the construction (compound forms) of whatever you're drawing, literally how it is built and how it works; you can only draw what you know; you learn by observing and studying; everything has anatomy, not just people; it could be the anatomy of plants, animals, humans, vehicles, buildings, tools, clothing, environments, etc.
- **Value** - how forms are lit and how different materials react to light; local value, form lighting, shadows, etc.; value range is a scale of light to dark
- **Colour** - local colour; how light and materials affect colour; colour theory and design
- **Texture** - material recognition; rendering light and colour over form

Advanced / Nebulous

- **Composition** - how to design a pleasing image; mainly the design of colour and light using shape, value, edge/line, and texture; this is arguably THE MOST important skill of all ([Fowkes](#)); line/shape direction; creating with metaphor ([Vandruff](#)); rather subjective, but has many objective principles to learn; **start working on this early**
- **Technique** - one's ability to control the medium he uses, e.g. pencil, markers, ink, paint, digital, etc.; medium-dependent skills; closely related to rendering texture; execution skill
- **Story** - the message your art communicates; narrative art engages the audience by introducing the element of human experience and emotion; gives your artwork meaning/purpose
- **Process** - the steps you take to make an image; putting it all together into a creation cycle; style flows from process; developing a simple, reliable process will give you confidence and make you more dependable; you can have multiple processes depending on medium and desired style; thumbnail, rough, reference, construct, clean drawing, flat colour, render and polish ([Mcburnie](#))

Mindsets / Lessons / Concepts

- **Growth** - drawing is long-term skill like learning a language; you can always improve, but you have to apply yourself, be intentional, and actively engaged in the process; follow the map ;)
- **Production** - “Finished, not perfect” ([Parker](#)); create something today; don’t wait till you think you’re “good enough”; be a master of your current level; make stuff and show people
- **Passion** - make time to draw what you love; strongly held desires, beliefs, or interests; energizes you; obsessions
- **Intention** - your artistic goals; how you define success; applies both to your overall artistic journey as well as the current image; the subject and style of art you strive to create, the medium you use, the response you wish to evoke, how you want to feel during and after creating, etc.
- **Instruction** - be teachable; learn from as many people as you can, but find the ones you resonate with; keep a record of teachers you discover and the wisdom they share; express appreciation and share what you learn with others
- **Inspiration** - what you love to see; fills you with awe; moves you to create; can come from nature, photography, entertainment, art poetry, anything; keep records of what inspires you and what you aspire to create/become/achieve; influence map, goal images ([Mcburnie](#)), etc.
- **Individuality** - as valuable and inspiring as it is to learn from others, don’t forget to find and use your own voice; it will feel natural, satisfying, and something you may have never seen from anyone else ([MacKillop](#))
- **Difficulty** - the difficulty level of drawing something depends on the permitted margin of error before it looks incorrect; organic, random, imperfect things can allow for great inaccuracies while still looking okay; precise, familiar things allow for less error before the viewer can more easily tell if it’s wrong; to maintain motivation while developing coordination, gradually increase the difficulty of your subject matter; here is scale from easy to difficult: rocks, trees/roots, skulls/bones, destruction, loose clothing, antique vehicles/trains > medieval architecture/interiors, unfamiliar animals (alligator, elephant) > modern architecture, familiar animals (cats, dogs), modern phones and products > sports cars, horses, human figures and faces ([Zhu](#))