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Sandrine Pelissier

Sandrine Pelissier is a watercolor, acrylic and mixed media artist from Canada. She is inspired by the West Coast landscapes but also enjoys painting portraits and life drawing. While her paintings seem to be fairly realistic, she likes to experiment and add a touch of abstraction. She has been published in art books and magazines, including the *Splash*, best of watercolor series, the mixed-media book *Incite*, *The Artist’s Magazine*, *Watercolor Artist* magazine and *International Artist* magazine.

Paul Heaston

Paul Heaston was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. He received his BFA in painting from the University of Texas, San Antonio, in 2002 and his MFA from Montana State University in 2008, where he continued on as a faculty member. He is an obsessive sketchbook-keeper and spent 6 months between 2008 and 2009 meticulously drawing every building in downtown Bozeman, Montana, in a pocket-sized sketchbook. Heaston is a correspondent for Urbansketchers.org, an internationally known website showcasing visual journalism all over the world, and in addition maintains his own sketch blog, *Three Letter Word for Art* (http://paulheaston.blogspot.com/). He lives in Denver, Colorado with his wife, Linda, and their dog Freddie.
5 TIPS FOR DRAWING THE HUMAN BODY

By Sandrine Pelissier

Figure drawing is definitely an interesting and fascinating activity, but there are specific challenges. The human body is very complex — there could be foreshortening, capturing movement can be tricky, and hands and feet are notoriously difficult to draw.

Wondering where to start when it comes to drawing figures? Here are 5 tips to keep in mind:

1. Take some time to look.
   The initial reflex, especially when poses are short for gesture drawing, is to rush into drawing without too much planning and try to get every detail. If you actually take a bit more time to look, you can decide what is necessary and what can be omitted in your drawing.

   While you are looking at the model, you can also pay attention to the way the light is falling on the model as light and shade areas can be part of what you will choose to describe, even if it is a short pose drawing.

   One of the first decisions to make while looking at the model will be the orientation of your paper (landscape or portrait) — this will depend on your figure height and width. Then you will need to make sure your drawing fits onto your paper.

2. Make sure that your drawing fits in the page.
   A common and frustrating mistake when first learning how to draw figures is to start drawing the figure as a whole and then realize...
somewhere along the drawing process that there is not enough space to fit a hand or a foot.

Here are two techniques to use to ensure your drawing will fit on the paper:

- Draw an external envelope of the figure, you can see it as a block of stone you would use if you were to carve the figure. Make it large enough for the entire figure to fit in it, and then refine it step by step.
- Draw a quick sketch of the whole figure to help with getting the main proportions right, and then work on refining that quick sketch.

3. Get the proportions right.

Proportions can be challenging to get right, here are a few tips that can help with accuracy:

- Imagine a line for the shoulders, the pelvis and the knees and look at the angle of those lines on your model and draw those lines on your paper. Getting these angles right helps with gesture.
- Looking at the negative space can help, especially with complex poses.
- The length of the body is about 7.5 to 8 heads long — you can check this to make sure the head is the right size on your drawing.
- Instinctively, we often imagine that the hand is way smaller than the head, but actually the head is about the same length as the hand, and also about the same length as the foot without the toes.

4. Make it fun!

If you become frustrated or bored with your drawings, you can try changing medium, I noticed that for some life drawing sessions if I had trouble with a medium and switched to a different one, things seemed to flow easier after that. Changing mediums can also make the life drawing process exciting again by experimenting.

Here are a few mediums to try:

- Paint instead of drawing or add washes to describe the shadows.
- Use colored pencils, Conté crayons, charcoal or markers.
- Make a toned background with pencil or charcoal powder and carve out lighter areas with an eraser.
- Draw directly with the dropper of an ink bottle.
There are also simple exercises that you can try for the short poses that can actually produce very nice results:

- Try “blind drawing” or drawing without looking on your paper.
- Draw with a continuous line.
- Combine both.

5. **Ground your drawing.**

If the model is sitting on a stool or leaning on something, draw at least a few lines so the figure doesn’t look like it is floating in space. Another way to ground the model is to draw his shadow. In the Friedrich Overbeck piece seen below, the pedestal and shadow are grounding the figure.

![Male Nude Sitting on a Pedestal](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

*Male Nude Sitting on a Pedestal* by Friedrich Overbeck via Wikimedia Commons
DRAWING THE HUMAN ANATOMY: Hands

By Paul Heaston

Hands are one of the most intimidating parts of the body to draw. Drawing hands that look right can be a challenge, particularly because they are deceptively simple in construction. Five fingers and a palm can be shown in so many positions that it helps to understand a bit of the basic anatomy and proportions before beginning.

Here’s a basic guide to drawing hands that will help you master this tricky body part.

The great thing about drawing hands as opposed to faces is you always have a live model ready and willing to pose for you, and you don’t even need a mirror. But even when drawing your non-dominant hand, it helps to know some basics.

To begin, familiarize yourself with where the hand moves.

One human hand has 29 individual joints and 34 different muscles! Each joint is a point of articulation – an area where individual bones can move independently of one another.

For drawing, it helps to think of the hand as having just a few major areas of articulation: the wrist, the base of the thumb and the individual knuckles. The thumb has two knuckles and the rest of the fingers have three.
The drawing to the right shows the locations of these points of articulation.

While it might appear from looking at your own hand that the center of the palm contains a joint, what you are really seeing is the inside of the first knuckle joint at the base of the fingers. When all of the fingers move as a unit, it can seem like the palm bends in the middle. But if you hold up one finger, you can see that it’s not the palm at all, but the knuckle that is flexed.

The other major thing to consider when drawing the hand is the proportions, both within the hand and between the hand and the arm.

First, let’s look at just the hand. While your fingers might seem long and spindly, in fact, your palm is almost always longer than your fingers. It’s also important to note just how far from the rest of the fingers the thumb really is. Even when held flat alongside the rest of the hand, the thumb only comes to about the base of the other fingers. This is because the base of the thumb is at the wrist, not the palm.
While this might sound like it’s intuitive information, thinking about this specifically whenever you have to draw a hand sight unseen can be very helpful.

Some other interesting tidbits about hand proportion:

When you spread your fingers, your hand is wider than it is long. In fact, its width is about the same as the distance between the inside of your elbow and your wrist.

While the hand is often bigger than we think it is, in length it’s only about two-thirds the length of the distance from the elbow to the wrist, and about one-quarter the length of the entire arm.

As with any subject, the most effective approach is observation and repetition. Learning about proportions is one thing, but applying that knowledge takes the most work. Take advantage of looking at your own hands, as well as resources like the works of the masters. There is no substitute for actually drawing when it comes to learning about art.
DRAWING THE HUMAN ANATOMY:
The Torso

By Sandrine Pelissier

Drawing the human torso can be difficult. As an artist, it helps to know the major muscle groups and bones that are visible on an average model, but you don’t need to take an anatomy class before mastering how to draw this part of the body. Memorizing all the bones and muscles by name and knowing their exact location just isn’t necessary. With a few helpful tips, you can get it right without memorizing a single flashcard.

Here are some helpful tips for drawing the human torso

1. Know the differences between male and female torsos

Even though every individual has a uniquely shaped torso, there are some differences between male and female that apply in general:

- Males usually have longer torsos than females.
- Females have a bit more subcutaneous body fat. Accordingly, their shape is rounder, and the muscles are less defined.
- Female hips are wider, and their waist is usually a touch higher than in males.
- Shoulders are typically wider in males.
- Usually the length of the spine is a bit shorter in a female than in a male.
- Male nipples are further apart than female nipples, which are more centered.

“Anatomy Study” by Roberto Osti, instructor of the Craftsy class
Figure Anatomy for the Artist
2. Consider the angles

Angles are an important part in rendering a realist drawing of the human form. Each shoulder is located the same distance from the spine (middle of the torso). You can draw a line in the middle of the torso to help with symmetry.

The angle of the shoulders should counterbalance with the angle of the hips, so if one goes up, the other goes down.

3. Take your measurements in “heads”

The front torso has roughly a “three-heads” length:

- 1 head from the chin to the base of the nipples
- 1 head from the nipples to the navel
- 1 head from the navel to the pubic arch

4. Know the back muscles

The human back holds 14 main muscles masses. On an average model, the back muscles typically won’t be visible, but a very athletic model may show more defined muscles.

The spine supports the head and the rib cage. On the spine, the seventh vertebrae is the limit between the neck and torso. Despite all these muscles in the back and shoulders, there are only a few muscles and bones that will be visible on an average back:

- The seventh vertebrae (it protrudes and is usually visible)
- The spinal column
- The rib cage on thinner models.
- The spine of the scapula (shoulder blade)
- The end of the lower latissimus dorsi muscles (see picture on the next page)

5. Know the muscles at the front of the torso

Here is what you might see on an average model:

- The chest muscle (pectoris major)
- The sternum (flat bony plate situated between the ribs and between the chest muscles)
- The clavicle (think about it like an upside down coat hanger)
- The acromion process (it is the bony prominence on top of the shoulder, part of the scapula)
- The rib cage, on thinner models (we have 12 pairs of ribs)
- The navel, situated halfway on the abdomen
- In very athletic person you might see the serratus anterior muscles that cover the rib cage and the rectus abdominus (this is more commonly known as a six-pack)
- The muscles on the side are the external oblique (better known as “love handles”)
Latissimus dorsi muscle group highlighted in red via Wikimedia

Gray’s Anatomy front torso via Wikimedia
DRAWING THE HUMAN ANATOMY:

Feet

By Sandrine Pelissier

In addition to the hands and the torso, drawing feet can also be quite challenging. There are so many details! But, as with everything else in drawing, it helps to know what to look for in terms of shapes, and also how to place them in the right position on the paper.

Here are a few tips to help you draw feet accurately:

1. **Know the anatomy of the foot.**

   There are three main parts on the foot: tarsus, metatarsus and phalanges.

   **Tarsus:** This includes the heel and back of the foot.

   **Metatarsus:** It is the middle part of the foot, made of five bones next to each other. As you can see on the picture on the left, the bone on the big toe side is the biggest. This group of bones also includes the ball of the foot, which is the little fat deposit under the foot situated where the toes are joining. The front part of the foot (toes and ball) is wider than the back part (the heel). The front view of the foot is a bit more difficult to draw because there is so much foreshortening.

   **Phalanges:** They form the toes, all toes have three phalanges except the big toe, which has only two.

2. **Be familiar with the relative proportion of the foot.**

   We might not intuitively guess this, but did you know that the foot is about the same size as the height and width of the head or the inside of the forearm? Be sure to draw the foot using these proportions.

3. **Simplifying the shape.**

   The foot from the side can be roughly simplified as a wedge with two curved blocks: one for the toes and one for the heel. Once you get a simple outline of the foot shape, you can add the masses, details and shading.

   Also, remember that the heel extends beyond the back of the leg. And, the tibia and the fibula are the two bones that you can see at the ankle:
The tibia is on the inside and the fibula on the outside. If you look at the foot from a front view, the tibia is situated higher than the fibula.

4. **Shape perfect arches.**

The sole of a foot is not entirely in contact with the ground, as any footprint will show you. On the big toe side, a large portion of inside side of the foot is not touching the ground (this is the medial arch) while the outside side is almost completely touching the ground (this is the lateral arch). The round shape on top of the foot also forms an arch called the transverse arch. Shaping these carefully when drawing the foot will help you create a more realistic rendering.

5. **Shape those little piggies!**

The toes are tricky to draw as there are so many intricacies. Paying attention to these details will help you draw them more accurately:

- The toes are not straight; they are bent towards the ground, except for the big toe. It can be more or less horizontal.
- The big toe, little toe and the one next to it also have a small bend inward.
- On most people the second toe is the longest, although you can find all different foot shapes.
- There is some extra padding after the little toe on the side of each foot.
- Toes seem to be longer when seen from the top of the foot compared to when seen from under the foot.
- There is a bigger space between the big toe and the second toe than between the rest of the toes.
- The toenails are wider rather than longer, and their length is about half the last phalange of the foot.
- If the foot is viewed from outside, you can see almost all the toes.
PERFECTING PROPORTIONS

By Sandrine Pelissier

Drawing the human figure has been part of artists’ classical training since antiquity, and for good reason, it’s an excellent way to improve your hand-eye coordination, and it is believed that if you are able to accurately draw the human figure, you will be able to draw almost everything.

But, if you have already been to a life drawing class, you have certainly noticed that one of the most challenging parts of figure drawing is getting all the proportions right.

**Check out these tips on how to draw human proportions to improve not only your figure drawing skills, but also your overall artistic abilities.**

The Vitruvian Man & classic proportions

This Leonardo da Vinci drawing is accompanied by notes that give a series of ideal measurements for the human body, based on the calculations of the Roman architect Vitruvius.

For example:

- The length of the outspread arms is equal to the height of a man, hence the square that surrounds the figure.
- The length of the hand is one-tenth of the height of a man.

When drawing the figure, it is easier to refer to a unit of measurement that allows you to compare the length of the different parts. The most commonly used unit of measurement is the height of the head, from top to chin.

The classic proportions guidelines date back to the Roman-Greek era and were also used again during the Renaissance period. These proportions were based on an height of 8 “heads tall” for the figure — this is an idealized model. In reality, very few people are 8 heads tall: An average adult is likely closer
to 7 to 7 1/2 “heads tall.” Anyway, this measurement of the height gives a good starting point. Take note of variations from these classic proportions to help make your drawing closer to the model likeness.

One of the first things you can try, if your model is standing, is determine how many heads tall the model is. This can be done by holding your pencil at arm’s length. Many people will differ quite a bit from the ideal proportions, so you will notice, if you are practicing life drawing, that there is a great deal of variations in body shapes. Also, human proportions will change with age, as children have a much larger head-to-body ratio than adults. These differences in body shapes and types are what makes figure drawing both interesting and useful.

These proportions are a basic guideline to place key elements on your drawing:

- As you can see on the Michelangelo drawing, the pelvic bone attaching the legs is situated on line number 4.
- The knees are situated on line number 6.
- The arms are three heads long, and if they are hanging down, the tip of the finger will be situated at about the middle of the upper leg, and the elbow is situated more or less at the waistline.
- The navel is at an equal distance from the nipples and the crotch.
- The shoulders are three heads wide for the male and a bit narrower for the female.

Differences between male and female:

There are a few differences between male and female bodies. In particular, the female body has a higher ratio of fat/muscle, which is
why female bodies are usually a bit more curvy. The hips are also wider in the female than in the male model, and the chest is slightly lower in the female. The thighs will be wider in the female body and feet will be proportionally smaller than on the male model.

**A word about foreshortening:**

You can try to draw the eight heads divisions before drawing your figure and place a few strategic marks, like placing the waist in section 3 and the knees in section 6, but this will only work if the model is standing. If you are drawing a more complicated pose with foreshortening, then it will change the relative proportions of the figure. Every part that is closer to you will appear larger.

Foreshortening can be intimidating at first but you might come to enjoy it, as it sometimes makes you draw more accurate drawings because you don’t have a preconception of what the body should look like.
Attending a figure drawing session is one of the best ways to learn how to draw. Figure drawing offers the chance to sharpen your observational acuity and hone your skills in a variety of media, all while working from a real live person. You can explore line, value, space and anatomy, all in one session. Best of all, you can also learn how to sketch quickly because poses last different lengths of time. Learning how to draw accurately in a short period of time is an important skill for any observational artist because it opens up a world of sketching opportunities.

Figure drawing comes in two different flavors: short poses—typically 5 minutes or less—and long poses—that can last up to several hours at a time. These different durations allow you to focus on different skills.

Many figure drawing sessions begin with a series of very short poses, ranging from 30 seconds to 1 minute. This is a great calisthenic exercise for warming up your drawing hand and eyes, and for thinking gesturally. A good tip to consider during these very short poses is not to worry about anatomy or light and shadow, but rather focus on the things you can sum up quickly in a fast, scribbly “gesture drawing.” Here, you want to capture very rough proportion and the model’s energy and movement. Plus, these quick poses allow the model to get in dynamic positions that are difficult to hold for long durations.

For 1 minute gesture drawings like the above, try and establish as much of the shape and movement of the figure as you can in the time allotted. Some people draw stick figures that follow the curves and
angles of the body, instead of the contours, just to capture the essence of the pose.

In 2 to 5 minute poses, you have a little more time to work on things like line quality, proportion, and briefly address light and dark. These two sketches emphasize line quality and the subtlety of the contours of the figure.

The figure on the left was drawn using vine charcoal, while the one on the right was done with a dark soft pencil (in the middle “B” range) on toned paper. A good tip for doing sketches like these is to **let your hand follow your eye as it traces the contour of the figure**. Where your eye moves, so should your hand. You can **try varying line quality** where the edge of the figure is more dynamic—try adding more line weight along the underside of curves in the figure to suggest the illusion of volume.

The 5 minute drawings below are starting to introduce value into the figure. As economically as possible, **try scribbling the location of the shadows** on the figure, and even those around the figure, which help to define its shape.

For poses longer than 5 minutes, allow yourself some time to **establish and block out the rough proportions** of the figure. Then, try
to introduce more value, and fine-tune the contours and proportions. **Use different approaches to mark-making;** hatched and scribbled lines in different densities can be used to describe dark values. The edge of a piece of charcoal, Conté crayon or even a sharpened pencil can also create effective dark tones without a scribbly quality. Beyond that, use the tip of your finger or a paper stump to soften and smooth out dark values laid out in charcoal or pencil.

Notice above how dark values in the negative space around the figure can also describe its form and shape. In the image on the right, even the dark values on the back serve as negative space to depict the model’s left arm.

For very long poses, **toned paper is a great way to explore value in-depth.** Many pastel and charcoal papers come in neutral shades that provide an intermediate value so you can use both light and dark media to sketch the figure. In the drawings below, the dark values are created with hatched ink lines, though Conté, charcoal, pastel and pencil can also be used. The light values were created with a white gel pen, but any opaque light media will work well. Intermediate values within the figure can be created simply by leaving them alone.

Many communities have drop-in instructed and uninstructed life drawing sessions that allow you to draw the human figure on a regular basis. If you know someone willing to pose for you, you can draw from life anytime. And of course, the model does not have to be nude!
TIPS FOR FINDING AND WORKING WITH A MODEL

By Sandrine Pelissier

Working from life with a model is a unique and irreplaceable experience, but if you never had to work with models before, organizing a session might seem a bit intimidating. Here are a few tips for finding and working with a model.

1. Finding a model

- The easiest way is to look for art schools or art associations that are offering a life drawing program in your area. They usually keep a list of models and should agree to give you a few names and contacts or even share their list with you.
- You could also post an ad on the Internet, asking for a few references of places the model did work at before. When asking for pictures, ask for clothed pictures.
- When the model has been booked a few weeks in advance, it is always a good idea to confirm a few days before the session, so you have enough time to book someone else if the model you hired is no longer available.
- So there is no misunderstanding, it’s best to agree on the terms of the session before: How much is it paid? How long will the poses be? Is it clothed or unclothed? How many artists will be in attendance?

2. Setting up your studio

- First you have to make sure your place will be comfortable and private, if the model is undressed, you will want to make sure there are curtains or blinds on the windows.
- The temperature should also be high enough so the model is not cold. If needed, set up portable heaters on a chair to keep the model warm.
• For life drawing, a platform is usually necessary, especially for reclining poses, as it makes it easier to see the model. You can make one out of milk crates and a piece of plywood.

Here is a list of what you might need:
• A blanket or duvet for padding the platform
• Black/white sheet on top
• Lights (you get interesting shades if the light comes from a unique source)
• Small portable heater(s)
• A stool for the model to sit
• A few cushions
• Background music (it makes the session more enjoyable and relaxed)

3. Working with a model
• You can consider joining a life drawing group in your area and attend a few sessions to see how it usually works if you never had the opportunity of working with a model.
• Professional models are very good at finding poses that will engage the whole body and that usually involve a bit of twisting. They should also remember to rotate so that everyone can work from different angles and get a foreshortened view. The model should also alternate standing, sitting and reclining poses.
• It is important to make the model feel comfortable, and treat him or her respectfully, as you want to work in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. If the model is posing for a group, it’s a good idea to introduce the model to the class by his/her first name when he/she first comes in, then indicate the location of a private room or washroom for the model to change.
• When asking for something, always do so in a nice way and say please, and never touch the model.
• If a long pose is interrupted, tape can be used to mark the placement of the feet, for example.
• If taking a picture to complete a drawing or painting at home, always ask for the model’s permission first.
• It’s better if there’s not too much chatting going on during the poses, as it can be disruptive for the model and for the artists.
• A typical life drawing session will include poses that get longer as the session progresses: 10×1 minutes; 5×2 minutes; 2×10 minutes; 2×15 minutes; break; 4×15 minutes or 2×15 minutes; and 1×30 minutes.
• For a 3-hour session, a break is usually welcomed by the model and the artists alike. In the life drawing class I go to, we always include the model in our breaks where tea and chocolate have become a staple.
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Enjoy a FREE class! Dive deeper into the art of drawing the human body when you sign up for Craftsy’s FREE online class *Figure Drawing: An Essential Guide*, and gain instant access to easy-to-follow instruction from renowned artist Patricia Watwood. You’ll enjoy success as you progress from a simple block-in sketch to a gestural drawing to a polished piece with depth and dimension. [Click here to sign up for free today!](#)

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