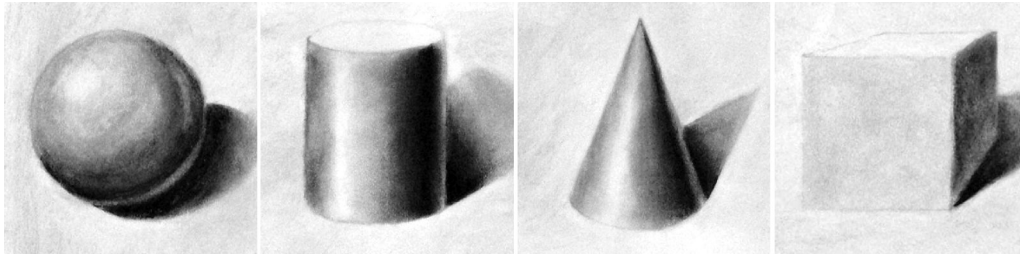


Here are my 6 tips to improve your landscape drawing skills. We can all write our own names on a piece of paper. This ability means we all capable of accurate drawing as well - the skills involve the same hand and eye co-ordination. Landscape drawing can be learned and it can give much pleasure.

1 Look for the basic, familiar shapes



Most things conform to a few basic familiar shapes (or combinations of familiar shapes) – circles, cylinders, spheres, triangles, pyramids, wedges, rectangles and boxes. Practice drawing and shading these simple shapes and look out for them when you are drawing and sketching.

2 Take measurements

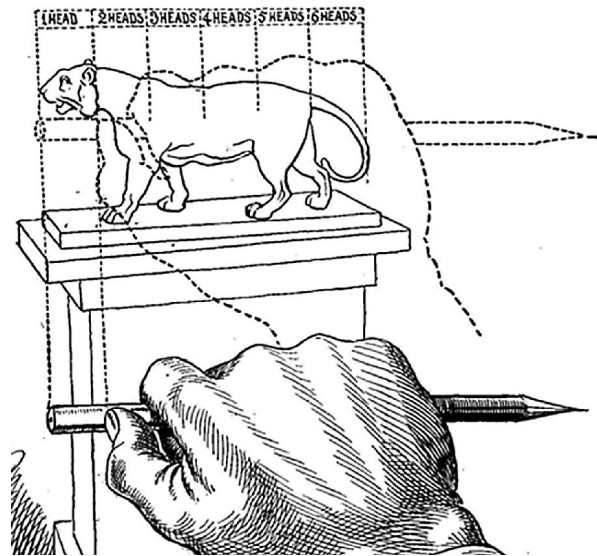
"How do I get the right proportions and angles" -
How many times is this said and thought?

There is a way to eliminate this. Using your pencil (or paintbrush) as a reference. By using this method you will start to train your eye.

For proportions select an important area or a clear line in the scene or object. Stretch out your arm as far as you can and then 'measure' the length along your pencil using your thumb. Hold that unit of measurement and compare it to other measurements to establish correct proportions. You can use this tip to establish the overall size of your picture before you start to ensure it will fit onto your paper! You will soon be able to estimate lengths and distances accurately.

For angles hold your pencil or brush in the manner shown (below right), keeping the back of your hand horizontal (parallel to the eye level). Keeping your hand level adjust the angle of your pencil until it runs along the angle to be measured. Lock your fingers and transfer to your drawing. Keep the back of the hand parallel to your drawn eye level and mark off the angle.

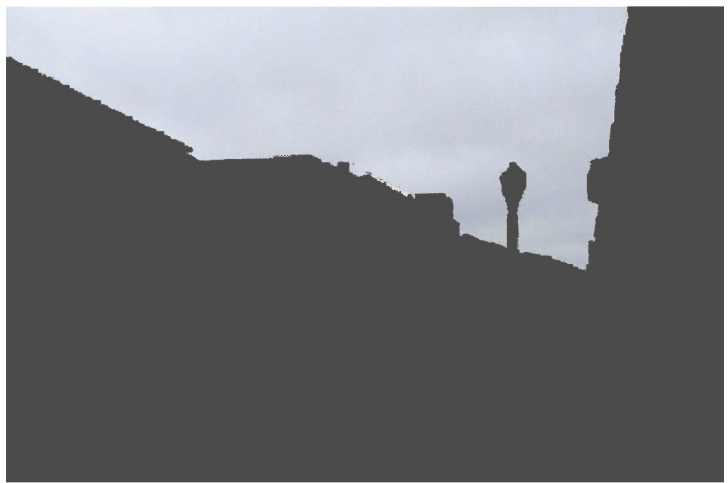
If you are right handed make your angle with your left hand and vice versa.



3 Drawing negative forms or space

Imagine you want to draw a town centre. Drawing negative forms means that you don't try to draw all the positive shapes (like the buildings), instead you look at the the outline of the empty space (sky) above the roofs.

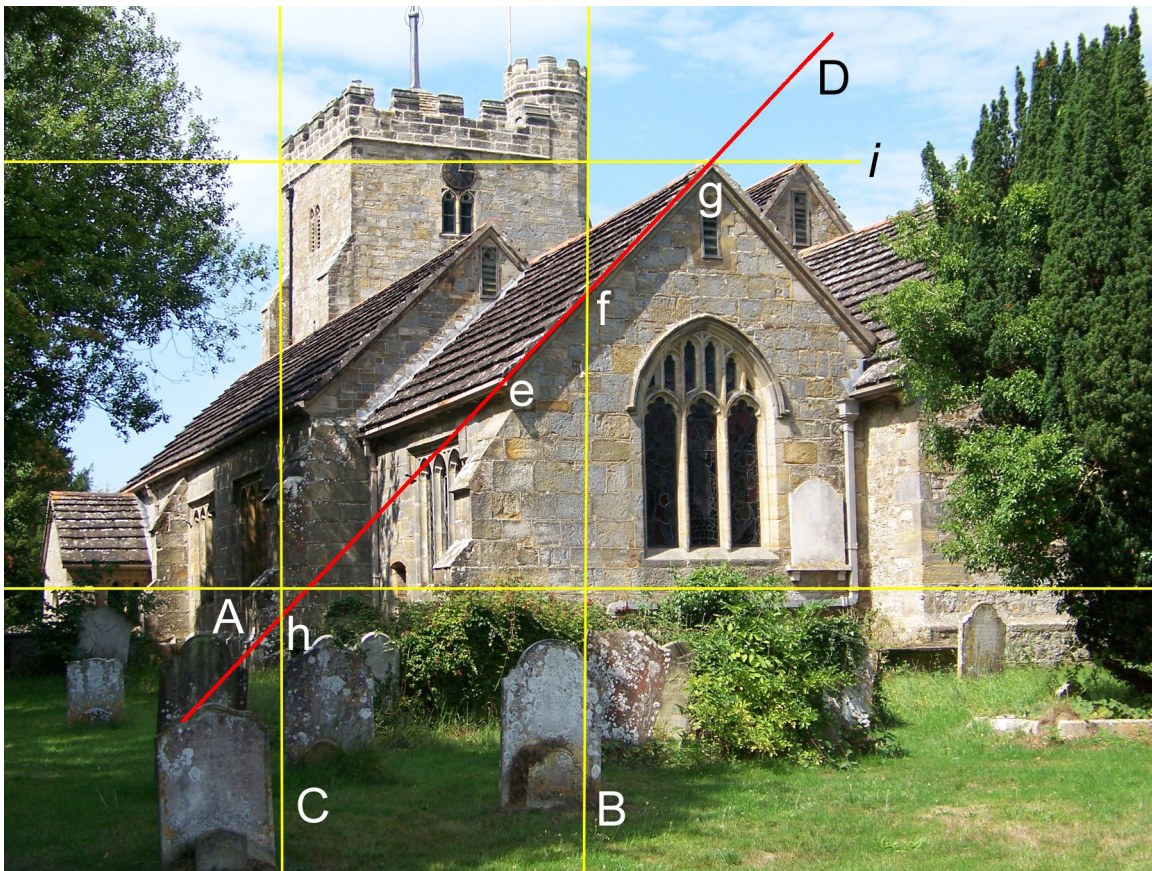
Negative forms can be seen almost everywhere. Drawing negative spaces often makes things easier than following the complicated outlines of many objects. Drawing negative shapes helps develop stronger observations skills.



4 Squinting to see values and simple forms

By squinting with your eyes it is easier to see the different tonalities, the patterns of dark and light forms, the contrast between light and shadows in the scenery in front of you. Squinting also removes the clutter of detail. Paradoxically this allows you to see the main shapes more clearly.





5 Use construction lines

Construction lines are *imagined* connections between 2 points. It can also be an elongation of a line. We will use the example of the church picture, the problem is to draw roof angle and length (line e to g) correctly.

Horizontal line A is the eye level or horizon line - you should already have this in your drawing.

Assuming you have the position and height of the tower established, extend a vertical construction line (B) and, use your pencil (tip 2) to 'measure' the position (f) where the roof crosses line B. Then, using your pencil (tip 2) gauge the angle of the roof, draw the line D using your found angle, making sure it passes through point f.

The roof angle now should look correct. If you are not sure then extend another line (C) from the other side of the tower. Note it crosses line D *below* the eye level. If it does not then adjust the angle of line D through point f.

Can you see how another construction line (I) establishes the top of the roof (point g)? The distance between f and g is greater than the distance between e and f, enabling an estimation of placement of point e. Check with a vertical construction line through e and see that it passes through the tower correctly.

6 Regular exercise !

If you want to improve your skills repeated exercise is the key. Similar to sports it is better to practise every day, even if it's for just 15 minutes.