

GESTURE DRAWING

Misconception

Often, we associate scribbling with negative habits: It's out of control, childish, messy, sloppy or wasteful. But it's also fun. And, as a drawing instructor, I can tell you that scribbling is one of the best ways to improve your drawing skills.



Everything Has Gesture: In this gesture drawing of a statue, I worked loosely, keeping the marker gliding over the paper. I responded as naturally and automatically as possible, recording my understanding of the energy “trapped” in the statue.

Scribbling with Purpose

The type of scribbling I'm talking about is part of a technique called “gesture drawing.” Its purpose is to help you capture a subject's unique quality or its “gesture.” It's often hard to describe gesture drawing without resorting to almost mystical terms, because gesture drawing records your impressions, thoughts and feelings about your subject, and these things aren't well suited to verbal (left-brained) expression. But once you get started it will all come together.

Tools

Gesture drawing can be done with a lot of different materials. Drawing tools that make decisive marks rapidly are the best. I recommend that your first gesture drawings be done with a soft (6B) graphite stick, but later on you can try other drawing implements. (Keep in mind that you don't have to spend a lot of money to get started.) Here's what you'll need:

- Pencil or graphite stick (6B or 4B)
- Charcoal
- Large sheets of paper
- Black India ink and Q-Tips
- Crayons
- Markers

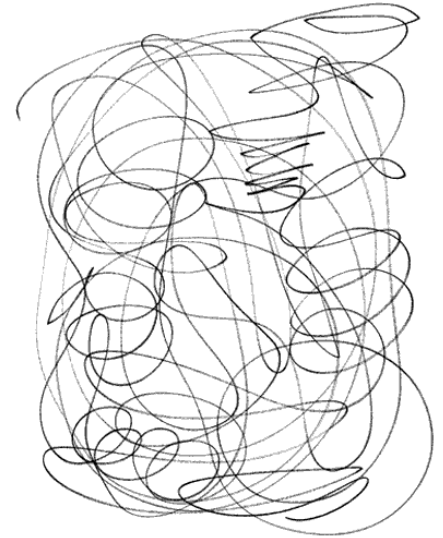
Playful Drawing

Take a large sheet of paper and a soft graphite stick or marker and cover the paper with scribbling. Make big swirls, tight curls, loops and zigzags until the paper is covered.

Ready, Set, Scribble!

Before we get into the nuances of gesture drawing, let's have some fun. Place a large sheet of paper on an easel or table, and grab your soft graphite stick. Now cover the paper with scribbling as in the example above, right. Make big swirls all over the paper. Draw from your shoulder, not from your wrist. Don't stop your hand and don't lift the graphite from the paper. Make some tight curls; then make some jagged zigzags, loops, coils and points.

Notice how this process feels. Do you feel any resistance in your muscles? Do you feel that there's something slightly wrong with scribbling? Do you feel the need to have permission to let go? Or is it liberating and fun? However it feels, do it! Ignore any residual bad feelings about scribbling or any resistance from the left side of your brain. Give yourself permission to let go. Scribble until the page is dark with marks.



Gesture drawing is similar to scribbling in that you should never lose the loose, almost unrestrained quality of scribbling. But there are a few simple and important differences between the two that will help you improve your drawing.

The Spirit of Scribbling

Drawing gestures of people can be one of the most exciting and rewarding ways to draw. Just remember that when drawing the figure, gesture wells up from the core—it's the "spirit" of your subject, it's in the muscles and bones, not on the skin or clothing.

Keep in mind that your first gesture drawings might not look like anything at all—at least not like anything you might want them to look like—and the experience might not be all that satisfying. That's because the left side of your brain may be uncomfortable with the whole notion of gesture.

But keep drawing them and do as many as you can. Experience, not the finished product, is your goal. With enough good experience, all your drawing—gesture and otherwise—will become interesting, expressive and satisfying.

Step by Scribbly Step

- 1.** Make a scribble that's the initial gesture impulse and makes up your entire subject. You should know after five seconds whether it will fit on the paper.
- 2.** As you continue rendering your subject, keep the graphite stick or marker moving and don't pick it up. Work in a rapid, flowing style. Let it happen. Gesture is an image of action, or implied action.
- 3.** Draw what your subject feels like as well as what it looks like. Draw what it is as well as what it's doing.
- 4.** Finally, as you add smaller forms and details, keep them in the context of the large, all-encompassing gesture

Answer the following questions in relation to the text.

1. What is the main idea of this text?
2. What is a common misconception about gesture drawing?
3. What is a gesture drawing and what will you need to create one?
4. What does the author of the text suggest to do before attempting an actual gesture drawing?
5. Explain key steps to creating your own gesture drawing?