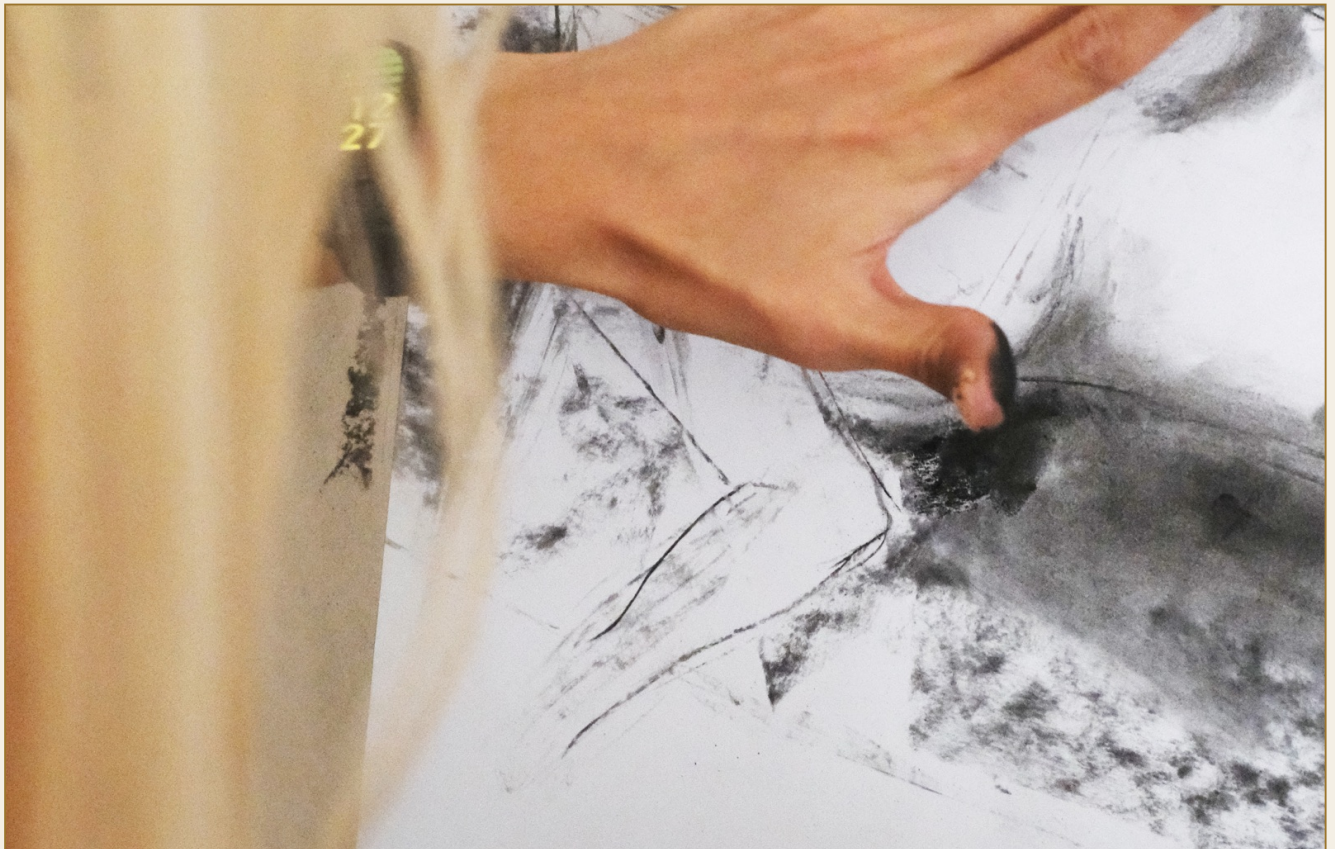


5 Charcoal Warm-Ups

Five short exercises for finding movement, weight, and presence before detail.



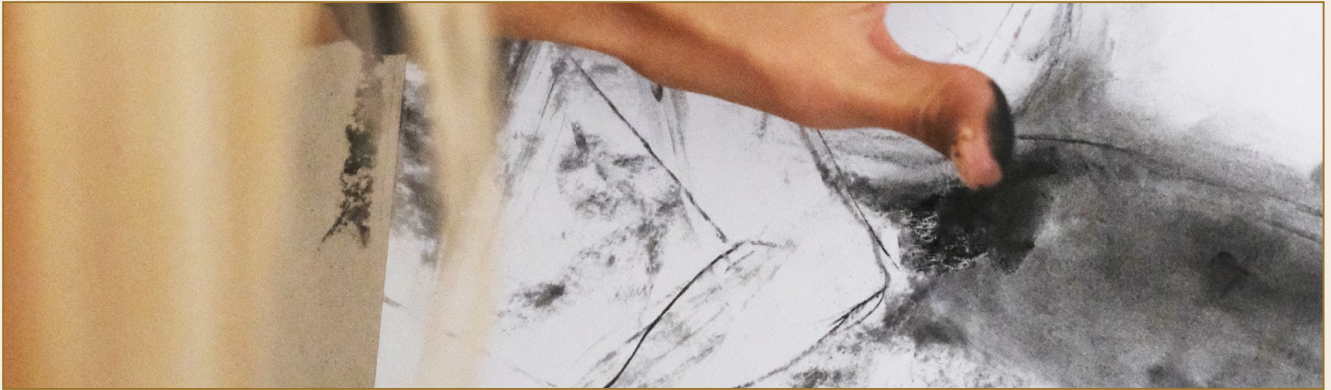
Work in order or choose the exercise your drawing needs today. Each page is designed to be printed, marked, and returned to.

No sign-up. No perfect result required. Bring charcoal, paper, and ten quiet minutes.

START WITH CARE

Before You Begin

A calm set-up protects the drawing, the room, and your attention.



MATERIALS

Soft or medium vine charcoal, drawing paper, a kneaded eraser, a scrap sheet for your drawing hand, and a lidded bin nearby.

SET-UP

Cover the work surface, place the scrap sheet under your hand, and keep food and drinks away from charcoal dust.

CHARCOAL SAFETY

Do not blow charcoal dust. Tap loose dust into a bin and avoid breathing it in. Wash your hands after drawing. If you use fixative or powdered charcoal, follow its label and ventilation instructions.

CLEAN-UP

Fold the scrap sheet inward before discarding dust. Wipe the table with a damp cloth rather than sweeping or blowing dust into the air, then store the charcoal dry.

1. Pressure Ladder

Learn the range already inside one stick of charcoal.



SET-UP

One stick of charcoal, one sheet of paper, and a scrap sheet under your drawing hand.

DO THIS

- 01 Divide the page into five loose bands.
- 02 Move from the faintest touch you can sustain to the darkest mark the charcoal will give.
- 03 Fill each band without polishing it. Let the texture of the paper remain visible.

LOOK FOR

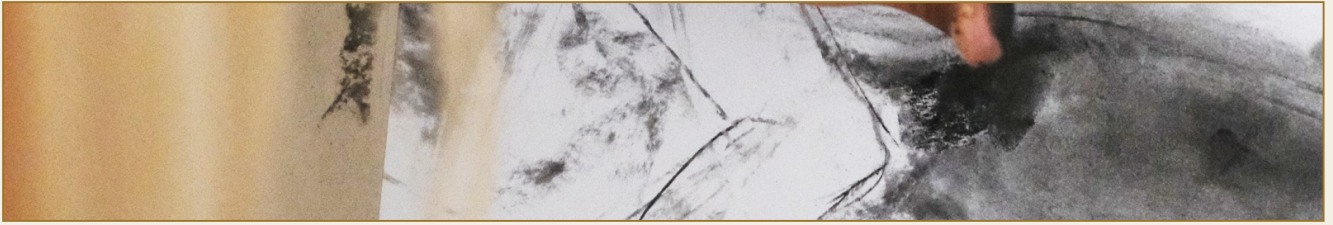
A clear difference between neighboring values, especially the two lightest bands.

REFLECT

Which pressure level feels least natural to your hand? Repeat only that band once.

2. Line of Action

Find the movement before you describe the edges.



SET-UP

Use the process photograph as a reminder to draw through the whole arm, not from the wrist alone.

DO THIS

- 01 Choose a pose from observation or memory and ignore the outer contour.
- 02 Place one continuous line through the head, ribcage, pelvis, and supporting leg.
- 03 Repeat the same movement three times, changing only speed and pressure.

LOOK FOR

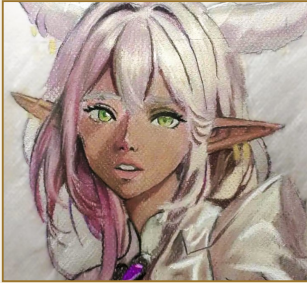
A line that carries direction and energy before it carries detail.

REFLECT

Which version feels most alive: slow, medium, or fast? Circle it and note why.

3. Mass Before Contour

Build the figure from weight-bearing forms.



Begin with the whole mass.

Broad masses can carry character before a contour becomes descriptive. Use this study as a visual reminder, then work from your own observation.

SET-UP

Begin with the side of the charcoal. Keep the point away from the paper for the first four minutes.

DO THIS

- 01 Block the head, ribcage, and pelvis as simple weighted shapes.
- 02 Connect them with broad masses for the limbs. Let forms overlap.
- 03 Add only the contours that clarify balance, direction, or proportion.

LOOK FOR

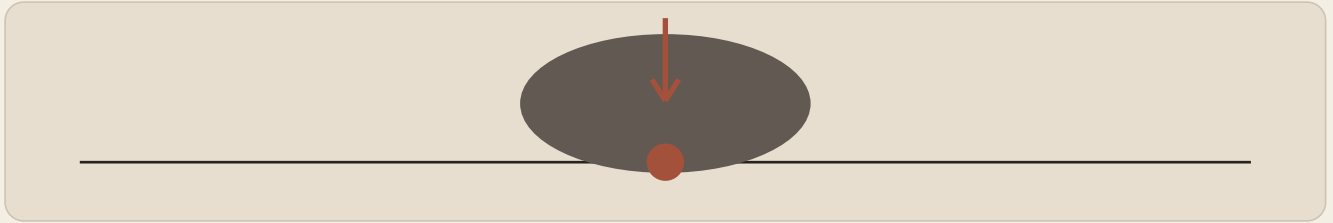
The pose should read from across the room before any small feature appears.

REFLECT

Cover the contour lines with your hand. Do the masses still describe the pose?

4. Weight and Contact

Show where the body meets the floor, chair, or wall.



SET-UP

Choose a pose with one obvious point of contact: a foot on the floor, a hand on a table, or a body against a chair.

DO THIS

- 01 Mark the ground, wall, or chair with one decisive line.
- 02 Darken the contact point and widen the form just enough to show pressure.
- 03 Let marks become lighter as they travel away from the point carrying weight.

LOOK FOR

The body should feel supported rather than floating on the page.

REFLECT

Where is the weight going? Draw one small arrow beside the pose to make the direction explicit.

5. Lost and Found Edges

Choose where the drawing speaks and where it breathes.



SET-UP

Start from a simple portrait or clothed figure. Squint until the strongest value shapes become obvious.

DO THIS

- 01 Choose three edges to state clearly with a dark, deliberate mark.
- 02 Soften three other edges by rubbing, lifting, or letting neighboring values meet.
- 03 Leave one passage almost unresolved so the viewer completes it.

LOOK FOR

Attention should travel toward the sharpest, darkest edge instead of stopping everywhere.

REFLECT

Did your edge choices guide the eye toward what matters most? Move one edge if they did not.



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[Charcoal materials guide](#) / [Commission Luna](#)