

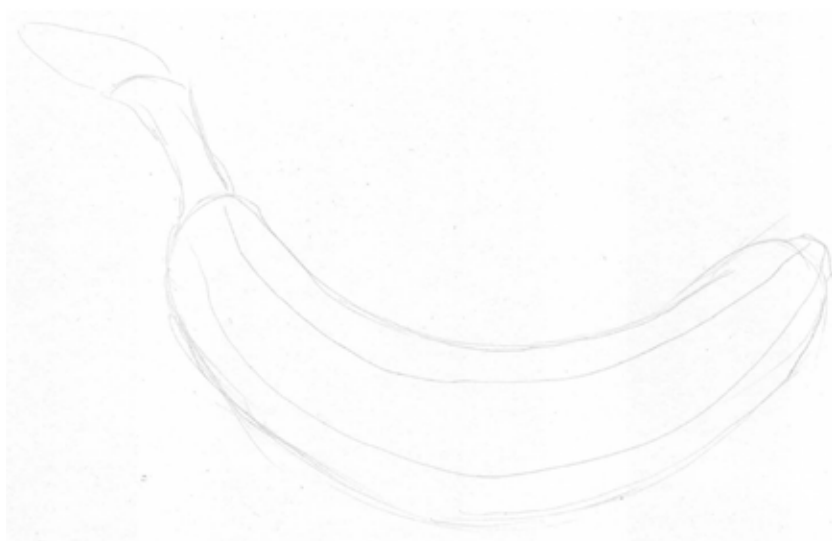
Learning to Draw for Beginners

If you've decided to take up drawing and painting as a complete beginner, you're probably looking for some tips to help you get started. But (unfortunately) there are no ultimate tips and tricks that can do the practicing for you. Ultimately, you can only learn a new skill through regular practice.

On this page, however, I'd like to offer some guidance so that you can practice drawing in a focused, rather than haphazard, way.

1. Don't be afraid of the blank page

Many aspiring artists convince themselves they aren't good enough and don't even dare to start. But every journey begins with a single step. So just start doodling—the result doesn't matter at first; it's the practice itself that counts. Who would have thought?



SKETCH

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SKETCH WITH SHADING

If you practice regularly, you'll get better over time. Of course, drawing is no different. But just like in sports, it's important not to always practice the same thing, but to take on new challenges and specifically work on what you can't do (as well) yet.

2. Motifs for beginners

“Choose an easy motif to draw” is good advice. But if you’ve never drawn before, it’s not always easy to tell what constitutes a simple motif and what might actually be harder to draw than you initially thought.

As a rule, subjects consisting of a few simple shapes with minimal detail are the easiest. Would you like some examples? Anything round is very easy to draw (a ball, an apple, a melon, etc.). Subjects with few details could include a banana, a TV, a lamp, or something similar.

Too many different subjects at once can also be a hindrance. So instead of a whole fruit bowl, try starting with a single piece of fruit.



X PRACTICING IN THE WRONG ORDER



CORRECT ORDER **✓**

When using a photo as a reference, this applies just as much as it does to subjects you have right in front of you or are trying to draw from memory.

3. Always make sure you enjoy yourself

If you have to force yourself to do something and aren’t having fun, you’re not putting your whole heart into it. So if you don’t enjoy drawing at all, you need to ask yourself honestly why you want to learn it.

If a stressful daily routine is dampening your enjoyment of regular drawing practice, then you shouldn’t force yourself to do it at all costs. Drawing should be a hobby that brings you joy and relaxation, not a tedious chore.

4. The Question of Materials

When you're a beginner looking to learn how to draw, the question of which materials you "must" use quickly arises. Is a ballpoint pen and a notebook enough, or do you absolutely need a proper artist's pencil and special sketch paper?

If you just want to see if drawing is the right hobby for you, you can use whatever you already have at home. However, if you're sure you want to draw more often and with ambition, specialized materials are certainly helpful

.You certainly don't need expensive, high-quality art supplies to draw good pictures. Even discount store items or budget brands guarantee satisfactory results. It's not the materials that make a drawing good, but the artist's skill. However, you shouldn't be tempted by overly cheap offers from the internet. Low-quality materials can very quickly spoil the fun of drawing and painting! You can find a list of established brands here—in German (<https://online-zeichnenkurs.de/materialien/marken-bei-kuenstlermaterialien-20971.html>).



It is definitely advisable to invest in good-quality paper. Sketching or drawing paper is definitely preferable to printer paper or college-ruled paper. Good-quality paper—such as <http://zeichnen-lernen.net/kuenstlermaterialien-stifte-farben/malgruende-196.html>—offers a completely different feel when drawing than paper not designed for that purpose.



Whether you use a ballpoint pen, pencil, colored pencil, fineliner, or some other medium is entirely up to the artist's personal preference. Each medium has its own appeal and offers its own techniques and possibilities.

5. The Myth of Talent

There are talented people who find it easier to learn something new, and there are people who aren't so lucky. But talent isn't an absolute prerequisite for learning something—even when it comes to learning to draw, talent isn't a must. People who are supposedly untalented simply have to practice more and more often than those who are talented. That's all!

6. Unrealistic Expectations of Yourself

You are often your own harshest critic. But you shouldn't be too self-critical. Your expectations must be realistic in relation to your own abilities. A drawing is allowed to go completely wrong sometimes—only by allowing yourself to make mistakes can you learn from them.

7. The Right Learning Curve

Quite a few artists, when tackling new subjects, immediately dive into all the details and shading in an effort to draw a picture that looks as realistic as possible as quickly as possible. However, it's not uncommon for fundamental elements like perspective or clean outlines to fall by the wayside. That's why you should start in a logical order and gradually increase the difficulty.

Regularly increasing the level of difficulty is definitely helpful for learning. An example of such a progression might look like this—using a portrait as an example:

Instead of starting right away with the entire head, including the face, hair, details, and shading, you first practice drawing only the eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. Once you're confident with that, practice getting the correct head shape and placement of the facial features. Only then can you begin practicing hairstyles, and after that, you can work on drawing shading.

Another step up could be drawing from different perspectives and with distortions.

8. Develop an Artist's Eye (Seeing Correctly)

To the untrained eye, the image below is simply a photo of an apple. But the artist sees much more. What do you see as a beginner?



Anyone who draws regularly inevitably develops an eye for detail. But you can also train this skill specifically by becoming aware of everything you perceive and, consequently, what you can draw to make your sketch look realistic.

First of all, the apple isn't perfectly round. So it would be wrong to simply draw a circle and place a stem on top. The apple's shape tapers noticeably toward the bottom, and the indentation at the top—where the stem sits—is impossible to miss. On top of that, the apple isn't just green. If you look more closely, you'll notice the many light spots and darker areas, which alternate with highlights.

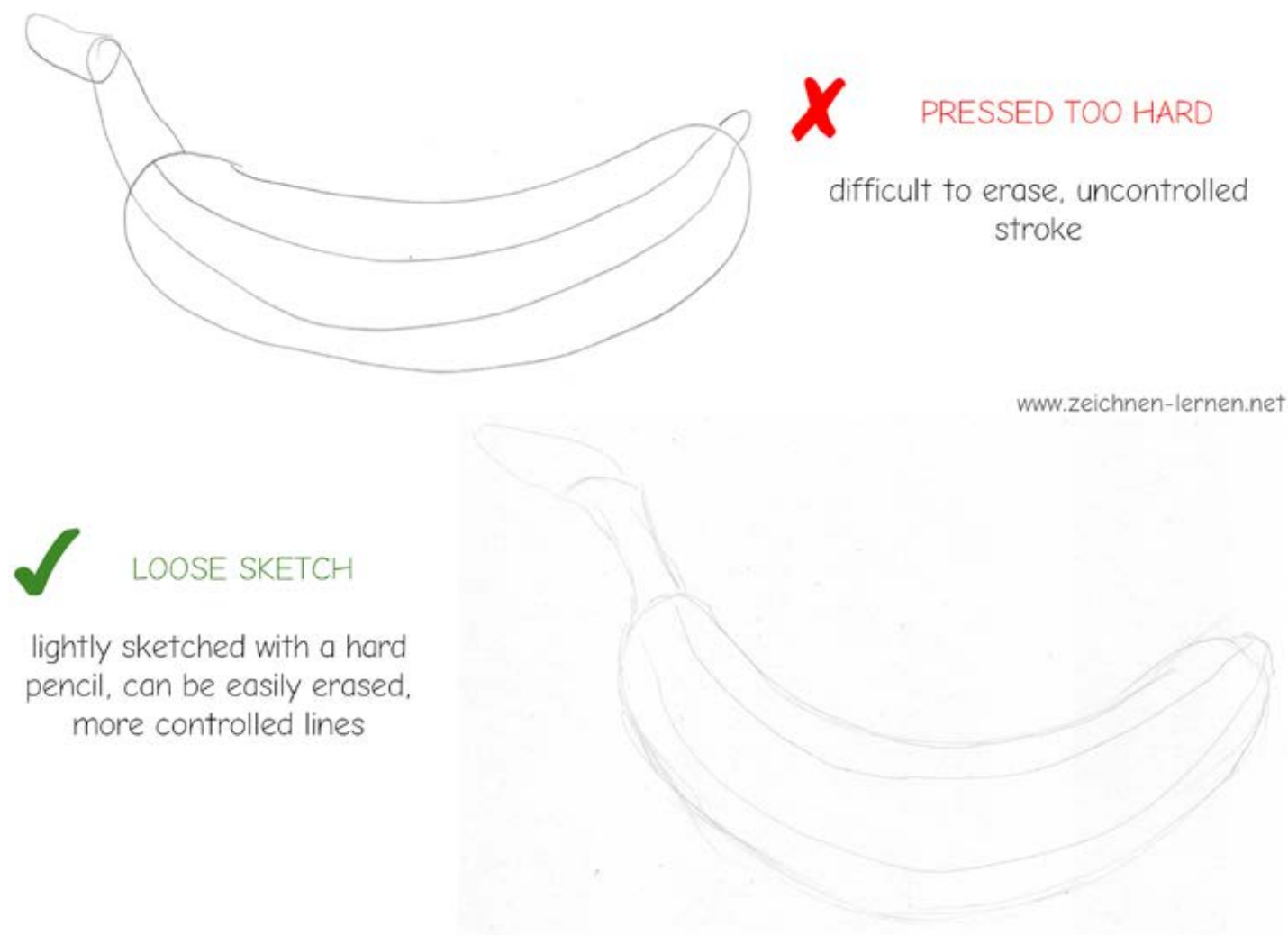
To give the apple a sense of depth in space, don't forget the cast shadow that has formed beneath it.

If you also notice that the stem isn't pointing straight up but is tilted toward the viewer, you've trained your eye well.

Recognizing so many details in a seemingly mundane subject like this apple requires a precise and patient gaze. In everyday life, we tend to perceive things superficially and are usually distracted. But anyone who intends to draw something must observe what they see much more intensely and expand upon it to include its basic form, perspective, and details.

9. Contours That Are Too Heavy

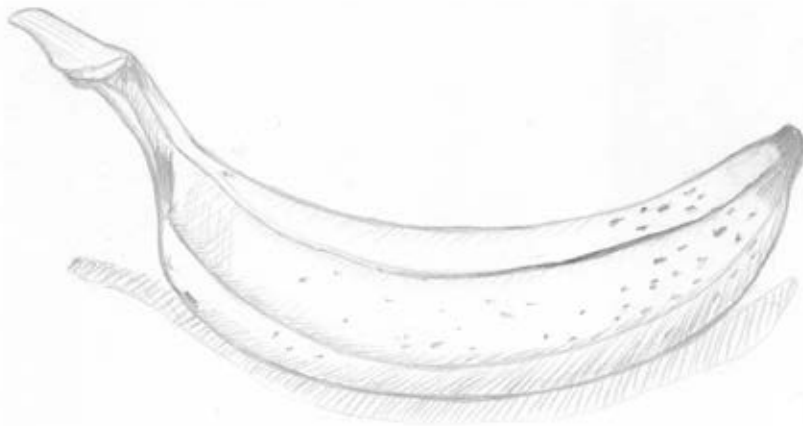
Especially as a beginner, you tend to draw contours that are too heavy. Either you press too hard while drawing, or you draw several lines right next to each other. It helps to do some warm-up exercises beforehand to practice drawing with a steady hand. In general, lines should be drawn loosely, lightly, and subtly at first. As you develop the sketch, you gradually increase the pressure.



To avoid applying too much pressure while drawing, it is important to hold the pencil correctly. See Tip No. 13 for more information.

10. A Common Beginner's Mistake: Not Enough Contrast

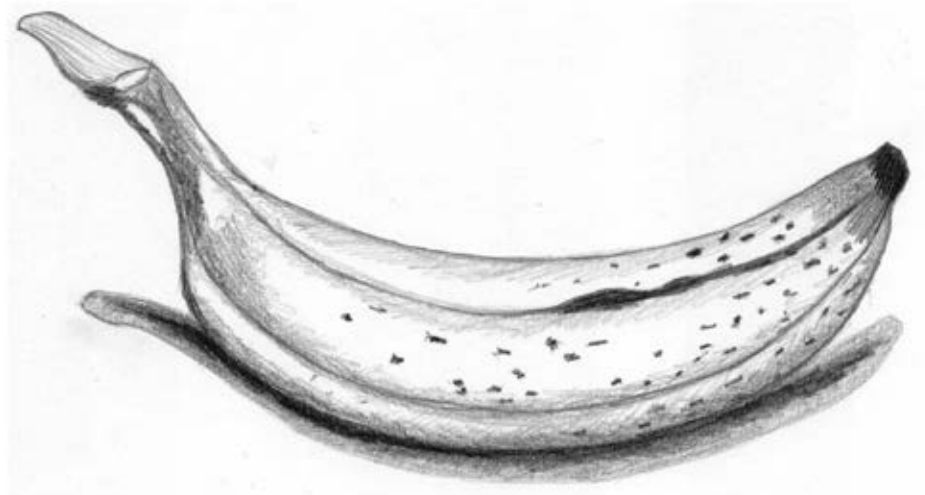
Beginners, in particular, tend to be very hesitant when it comes to shading. While they may apply shadows over large areas, they often lack gradation, resulting in a uniform gray. Stronger contrasts add more variety and depth to the image. Here, you should definitely feel free to make areas that are clearly in shadow truly dark.



X NOT ENOUGH CONTRAST
very bright, uniform gray

✓ GOOD CONTRAST

Various shades, clearer shadows, more distinct details



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11. The Issue of Erasing

Especially those who are just starting to draw and have a specific image in their mind's eye tend to erase too quickly and too much. You also have to be able to let lines stand as they are, especially when your current skills aren't sufficient to improve them. Here, the advice applies once again: Have the courage to allow for mistakes!

Problems with erasing usually arise when you've pressed too hard or used a pencil that's too soft. Beginners typically draw with HB pencils, which correspond to a medium hardness and, depending on the brand, can already be quite soft and dark. Sketches and preliminary drawings are best done with F-grade pencils, or even better with pencils in the H series (as a beginner, lower H grades such as H, H2, and H3 are sufficient—up to a maximum of H4).

Unfortunately, softer pencils or firm lines leave dark residue, and in the worst case, indentations in the paper.

Another problem with erasing is crumpled paper. The types of paper commonly found in households (printer paper, notepads) weigh only 80 g/m², so they are very thin and tend to crease more easily. Most drawing papers intended for hobbyists and students are only slightly thicker (90–110 g/m²). Particularly sturdy papers are those with a weight of well over 110 g/m². These are significantly more expensive than standard printer paper, but they're worth the investment because they offer a completely different drawing experience.

12. Don't compare yourself to others

(Supposedly) unattainable role models can be a major motivation killer. In general, it's good to seek out role models whom you admire, who can inspire you, and whom you might even want to emulate.

However, especially when you're just starting out, you should remember that even role models didn't learn to draw well overnight. Even the artists you admire sometimes took years to hone their skills and acquire knowledge and experience.

13. Drawing Without Hand Pain

For years, my hand would cramp up while drawing, and I was in real pain. This was partly due to the pressure I put on myself to perform well, but mainly because I was holding the pen incorrectly.



With writing instruments (fountain pens, ballpoint pens), we're used to holding our fingers as far down on the pen as possible, close to the paper. The pressure we apply to the pen—and thus to the paper—is significantly greater than when we hold the pen higher up. Logically, this causes the hand to hurt more quickly.

Another drawback of holding the pencil at the bottom of the shaft is that you block your own view of the paper. As a result, it was not uncommon for students to hunch over the paper to see past the pencil. This also contributes to back pain and poor posture.

Ideally, the pencil should rest loosely in your hand, and your hand should wrap around the entire length of the pencil. Your thumb and index finger shouldn't be at the same level on the pencil; instead, your thumb should rest slightly higher up. For a bit more precision when drawing, your thumb and index finger can move a little closer together.



To keep your hand from smudging your drawing, you can place a piece of paper underneath or wear a special drawing glove.

14. Don't throw anything away!

Last but not least, here's a crucial tip for beginners: Keep all your sketches and drawings—you must NOT throw anything away. Only by looking back at older drawings can you see how much you've improved. Plus, older drawings can serve as a great source of inspiration.

The challenge of redrawing an older picture every few years to see how your skills have improved over time is also a popular practice that you can see quite often on social media.

Extra Tips from Other Artists

I asked a few other artists what advice they would give to beginners:

1. Use reference photos, even as a beginner—trying to draw subjects entirely from memory really slows down your progress.
2. Tracing is perfectly fine, especially when you're starting out—it trains your fine motor skills and your sense of form, and it also helps you recognize which lines are essential to a subject and which ones you can leave out.
3. Acknowledge your mistakes—just put the eraser down for a moment and keep drawing anyway. In other words, here's a tip: Draw features like the nose, eyes, etc., more often (with light strokes). You'll automatically recognize which lines are correct because you've seen people so many times. Then trace those lines with a heavier stroke. Instead of trying to get it "perfect" the first time and starting over on a new sheet of paper, just sketch lightly several times and then highlight the correct lines.