

# Blind Contour Drawing



Enhance your observation skills by drawing objects without looking at your paper

**Resource:** 2.1.R2 Drawing Feathered and Continuous Lines

**Supplies:** several sheets of drawing paper, freshly sharpened pencils, a pencil sharpener, and tape

Blind contour drawing is simply an exercise to make the most accurate drawing you can without looking at your drawing paper.

Oh, and most drawings rendered with blind contour drawing look awful.

So why bother doing this activity?

Well, this activity has nothing to do with creating wonderful drawings right now, but everything to do with creating wonderful drawings in the future.

The process of blind contour drawing is a million times more valuable than the drawings themselves. By challenging your hand and eye to work as a team you learn to draw your subjects more proportionately correct.

There are two ways to have fun with this activity: drawing with one continuous line and drawing with several lines.

Sharpen several pencils and find objects to draw. Begin with simple objects (such as fruit or vases) and progress to drawing more challenging subjects (such as your hand or a flower).



## Challenge!

Make blind contour drawing into an “eye spy” game with your friends.

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil, and five minutes to draw anything in the immediate environment (including faces).

Everyone then guesses what the resulting pictures are. The person whose drawing has the most correct guesses wins!

## Contour Drawing with Only One Line

Use one long continuous line to draw a subject without looking at your paper.

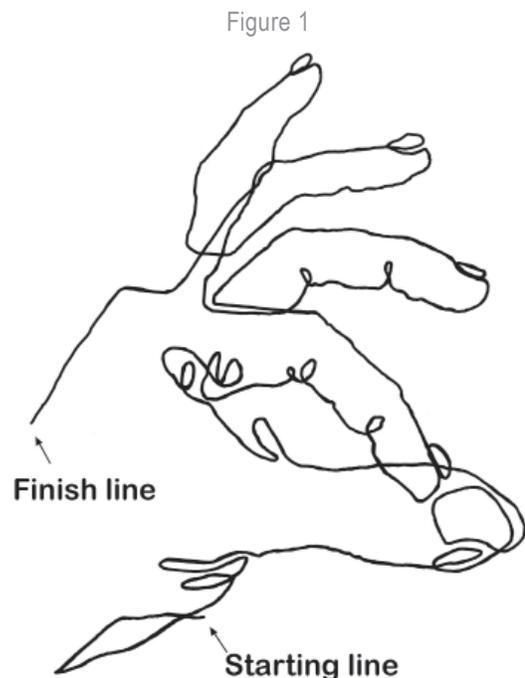
1. **Tape a sheet of drawing paper to a surface so it can't move as you draw.**
2. **Position yourself so that you are facing your subject but can't see your paper.**
  - If you're right-handed, place your subject on your far left. If you're left-handed, put it on your far right.
  - Or, cover your drawing hand and paper with a newspaper or cloth while you draw.
  - Some artists prefer to put their drawing hand and paper inside a large paper bag taped to a solid surface while they draw.

Resist the urge to look at what you are drawing. No cheating now!

3. **Rest your drawing arm on the table in a comfortable position.**
4. **Look at your subject and choose an edge as a starting point for your drawing.**
5. **Place the point of your pencil on your paper in a spot where you'll have lots of room to include the whole subject (without having to draw on the table).**
6. **Allow your eyes to focus on the chosen edge of the subject, and very slowly, visually follow the line created by this edge. At the same time, move your pencil very slowly in the same direction as your eyes.**
7. **As you draw, don't think about what the subject is. Focus on the shapes and spaces on either side of the line.**
8. **Keep your eyes and pencil moving together at the same slow, steady pace. Carefully notice each time the line on the edge of the subject changes direction. Allow your pencil to record every detail you are seeing.**
9. **Continue looking and drawing until you have drawn the entire subject.**

Repeat this activity (with the same subject or different ones) several times using the same process of drawing with one line.

This blind contour drawing (Figure 1) is a masterpiece compared to most! Don't expect your first few attempts to turn out as well.



## Contour Drawing with More than One Line

Once you are comfortable drawing with one line, try a challenging twist. Draw another subject in the same way, but occasionally lift your pencil as you draw. This is actually quite difficult because it's almost impossible to begin in the correct place again once your pencil leaves the paper.

Here is a blind contour drawing of the same hand as on the previous page (Figure 2), but this one was rendered by occasionally lifting the pencil from the paper.

As you can see, this activity is all about learning how to see as an artist: a drawing of three floating fingers won't be useful as a portfolio piece, but the practice greatly improves your ability to draw accurately.

Repeat these activities every chance you can. As you enhance your visual skills, your drawing skills will naturally improve.

Figure 2



### Challenge!

Create a few blind contour drawings in a photo imaging program (such as *Adobe Photoshop*) with a mouse as the drawing tool. If you'd like to try this, you can simply cover your monitor or computer screen as you draw.