Drawing Eyes in Pencil: Iris, Catchlight, and Lid Shading

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

On a blank eye outline, draw an iris circle and mark how much of it the upper lid should cover if the lid opening is 5 cm wide and 2 cm tall. Use the lesson proportion of about one fifth hidden.

Answer: The lid opening is 5 cm wide and 2 cm tall. One fifth of the iris height is hidden; if the iris is drawn about 2.5 cm tall, about 0.5 cm is hidden by the upper lid.

Reason: The lesson uses a lid opening about 2.5 times wider than tall and hides about one fifth of the iris. With a 5 cm by 2 cm opening, an iris about 2.5 cm tall hides about 0.5 cm.

Check: Measure the drawn iris height and confirm the hidden portion is about one fifth of it; check that the visible iris still looks circular.

Task 2

A light source comes from the upper right. Describe where to place the main catchlight and one subtle secondary reflection on an iris, and state how each should be edged.

Answer: Place the main catchlight on the upper-right side of the iris, crisp on the lit side and softer on the shadow side. Place a much smaller secondary reflection on the lower-left side, kept subtle and soft.

Reason: Catchlight placement follows the chosen light direction. The main highlight faces the light; a secondary reflection appears opposite and should not compete with the main one.

Check: Squint at the drawing: the main catchlight should be the brightest spot and clearly on the lit side; the secondary reflection should be visibly smaller and softer.

Task 3

Describe how to shade an upper lid so the crease reads as a fold rather than an outline. Include where the darkest tone goes and how the tone changes toward the lid edge.

Answer: Shade darkest at the crease and gradually lighten toward the lid edge. Soften the crease line with light pressure so it blends into the surrounding tone instead of forming a hard outline.

Reason: A fold reads as a soft gradient. A hard line flattens the lid and looks like an outline rather than a crease.

Check: Squint: the crease should be the darkest part of the lid, with a smooth transition to a lighter lid edge and no sharp outline.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Draw a tear duct at the inner corner of an eye. State its basic shape, how to shade it, and what small feature suggests moisture.

Answer: Draw a small triangular shape at the inner corner. Shade it lightly, darker toward the inner point, and leave a tiny highlight to suggest moisture.

Reason: The tear duct is a small recessed shape. Light shading with a tiny highlight reads as moisture without overworking the area.

Check: Check that the tear duct is small relative to the iris, lightly shaded, and has one tiny highlight; it should not be the darkest area of the eye.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Eye shape is almond-like and the lid opening is roughly 2.5 times wider than tall, or a deliberate alternative is clearly readable.
- [ ] Iris is partly covered by the upper lid, with about one fifth hidden or a consistent alternative proportion.
- [ ] Iris texture uses varied radial lines rather than a uniform sunburst.
- [ ] Main catchlight is placed consistently with a chosen light direction and lifted cleanly.
- [ ] Lid crease is shaded as a soft fold, not a hard outline.
- [ ] Tear duct is shaded with a small moisture highlight.
- [ ] Tonal order is clear: pupil darkest, crease next, catchlight brightest.
- [ ] Valid alternatives are accepted when proportions, light direction, and tonal order remain internally consistent.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?