Drawing a Desert Landscape: Dunes, Horizon, and Cactus

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

On a 24 cm tall paper, place the horizon at 12 cm. Draw two dune ridges: a far ridge from 13 cm to 15 cm and a nearer ridge from 16 cm to 18 cm that overlaps it. State where the far ridge stops.

Answer: The far ridge stops at the crossing with the nearer ridge, which occurs where the nearer ridge curve intersects it.

Reason: Overlap is the depth cue; the nearer ridge is drawn continuously and the farther ridge is interrupted at the crossing.

Check: Trace the nearer ridge with a finger; confirm the far ridge line does not continue through it.

Task 2

A cactus stem is drawn from 17 cm to 21 cm on a 24 cm tall paper. The nearest dune ridge is at 16 cm. Does the cactus overlap the ridge? Explain.

Answer: Yes, the cactus base at 17 cm is below the ridge at 16 cm, so the stem crosses the ridge line and reads as foreground.

Reason: A foreground object should overlap a ridge; the stem spans the ridge position.

Check: Mark the ridge height and the stem base; confirm the stem crosses the ridge line.

Task 3

You draw three ridges at 13 cm, 15 cm, and 17 cm on a 24 cm paper. Which ridge should be darkest, and which lightest?

Answer: The 17 cm ridge is nearest and should be darkest among ridges; the 13 cm ridge is farthest and should be lightest.

Reason: Contrast hierarchy supports depth: nearer elements are darker, distant elements lighter.

Check: Compare line weights; confirm the lowest ridge has the strongest ridge contrast.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

A learner draws a barrel cactus with vertical ribs instead of a stem with arms. The silhouette is closed and overlaps a ridge. Does this meet the convention?

Answer: Yes, it is a valid alternative because the silhouette reads clearly as a single foreground cactus and overlaps a ridge.

Reason: The convention allows valid alternatives; the key criteria are a clear silhouette and foreground overlap.

Check: Check that the outline is closed, the form reads as one cactus, and it crosses a ridge line.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Horizon is present and placed in the middle third.
- [ ] At least two dune ridge lines are drawn with smooth curves.
- [ ] Overlaps show nearer ridges crossing in front of farther ridges.
- [ ] One cactus silhouette is placed in the foreground and overlaps a ridge.
- [ ] Contrast hierarchy is visible: cactus darkest, nearest ridge medium, distant ridges light.
- [ ] Valid alternatives such as barrel or single-arm cactus are accepted if the silhouette reads clearly.

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