Pencil Owl Drawing: Graphite Layering and Feather Stroke Practice

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

On a spare sheet, draw three rows of feather strokes with spacings of 1 mm, 2 mm, and 4 mm. Use a 2H pencil and keep strokes tapered. State your measured x-height and explain how it guided the spacing.

Answer: Three rows with fine, medium, and broad spacing; strokes taper and follow one direction. Example: x-height 4 mm, so fine row 1 mm, medium 2 mm, broad 4 mm.

Reason: Spacing practice builds control and connects measurement to stroke width. Tapering improves feather realism.

Check: Measure row spacings with a ruler and confirm they match the stated values within 1 mm. Check that strokes lift at the end.

Task 2

Draw a simple wing shape about 8 cm long. Apply a 2H pass, then an HB pass on the outer edge, then a 2B pass in the feather gaps. Describe the direction of your strokes and the order of passes.

Answer: Wing shape with three passes in order; strokes run from shoulder to tip. Outer edge is darker than the inner wing, and gaps are darkest.

Reason: Ordered layering creates depth without pressing hard. Directional strokes describe feather growth.

Check: Squint at the wing: the outer edge should read darker than the inner area, and the gaps should be darkest. Confirm pass order in your notes.

Task 3

Draw an owl eye about 3 cm wide with a pupil, catchlight, and a ring of short radiating strokes. Use 2B for the pupil edge and 4B only for a small accent. Explain where you placed the catchlight.

Answer: Eye with clear pupil, small white catchlight, and radiating strokes around the iris. Catchlight placed at the upper left of the pupil.

Reason: A catchlight gives life and prevents a flat dark eye. Radiating strokes suggest facial feathers.

Check: Check that the catchlight is unpainted paper and that the pupil edge is sharp. Confirm 4B is limited to a small accent.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Draw a perched owl outline and add a cylindrical perch shadow. Use a 2H pass for the body, HB for the wing edges, and 2B for the perch shadow. Measure your x-height and use it to set one stroke spacing. List the pass order and one value check.

Answer: Owl outline with body in 2H, wing edges in HB, perch shadow in 2B. Example x-height 4 mm, body strokes 4 mm apart. Pass order: 2H, HB, 2B. Value check: squint test shows wing edges darker than body and perch shadow darkest.

Reason: The exercise combines blocking, layering, and shadow placement. The x-height gives a personal spacing guide.

Check: Verify pass order in your notes, measure one stroke spacing against your x-height, and confirm the squint test separates the three tonal zones.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Tonal order is visible: 2H, HB, 2B, then small 4B accents.
- [ ] Feather strokes follow body and wing direction consistently.
- [ ] Value separation is clear between face, body, wing edges, and perch shadow.
- [ ] Eye has a pupil, catchlight, and radiating strokes.
- [ ] Guide lines are erased and edges are clean.
- [ ] Valid alternatives such as dashes or stippling are accepted if direction and tonal order are maintained.

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