Still Life Drawing: Shape Blocking and Tonal Shading

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

An arrangement has a tall bottle 10 cm wide and 20 cm tall, a short cup 6 cm wide and 7 cm tall, and a flat book 14 cm wide and 3 cm tall. The paper is 30 cm by 40 cm. Plan a frame with 3 cm margins and describe the blocking order and approximate shape sizes.

Answer: Frame area is 24 cm by 34 cm. Block the book first as a rectangle 14 cm wide and 3 cm tall, then the bottle as a rectangle 10 cm wide and 20 cm tall behind the book, then the cup as a rectangle 6 cm wide and 7 cm tall in front. Mark midlines and check that all objects fit inside the frame.

Reason: Blocking the largest footprint first establishes the base, and the tall bottle is placed behind to preserve overlap order. Margins are subtracted from paper dimensions to get the drawing area.

Check: Measure the frame margins with a ruler and confirm each is 3 cm within 1 cm. Confirm the overlapped group fits inside the 24 cm by 34 cm drawing area and that no object crosses the frame.

Task 2

Using the five-step value key where 1 is white and 5 is near black, assign base and shadow values for a box lit from the right, a mug lit from the right, and a fruit lit from the right. The box is medium grey, the mug is light, and the fruit is dark. State the values and where highlights go.

Answer: Box base 3, shadow 4; mug base 2, shadow 4; fruit base 4, shadow 5. Highlights go on the right side of each object, left as paper white. Shade the left sides darker.

Reason: Light from the right means the right side is lit and the left side is in shadow. Base values reflect the object's overall tone, and shadow values are one or two steps darker.

Check: Compare each assigned value to the key and confirm the shadow value is darker than the base value. Confirm highlights are on the side facing the light.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

A drawing shows a mug overlapping a box, but the box is drawn in front of the mug. The margins are 2 cm on the left and 5 cm on the right. List two specific corrections and one check to confirm each correction.

Answer: Correction one: redraw the overlap so the mug is in front of the box, matching the arrangement. Check by comparing the overlap order to the arrangement. Correction two: adjust the frame or object placement so left and right margins are equal within 1 cm. Check by measuring both margins with a ruler.

Reason: Overlap order and equal margins are explicit rubric items. Each correction targets one failed check and is verified by a measurement or comparison.

Check: After correction, measure both margins and confirm they differ by no more than 1 cm. Confirm the front object's outline crosses the back object's outline.

Task 4

You have a 20 cm by 30 cm paper and three objects: a jar 7 cm wide and 12 cm tall, a plate 15 cm wide and 2 cm tall, and a lemon 5 cm wide and 5 cm tall. Plan margins of 2 cm, state the drawing area, and describe how to block each object and assign values if the light comes from above. The plate must fit inside the frame with at least 1 cm clearance on each side, so state how you will scale it.

Answer: Drawing area is 16 cm by 26 cm. The plate is 15 cm wide, which leaves only 1 cm total slack, so it cannot keep 1 cm clearance on both sides at full size. Scale the plate down to 13 cm wide (a hypothetical example) so it fits with about 1.5 cm clearance on each side. Block the plate first as a flat rectangle 13 cm wide and 2 cm tall, then the jar as a rectangle 7 cm wide and 12 cm tall behind the plate, then the lemon as a circle 5 cm wide in front. Light from above means tops are lit and undersides are shadowed. Assign plate base 2 shadow 3, jar base 3 shadow 4, lemon base 3 shadow 5, with highlights on top surfaces.

Reason: The plate has the largest footprint and is blocked first. Light from above changes highlight placement to top surfaces. Values follow the five-step key with shadow values darker than base values.

Check: Measure margins to confirm 2 cm within 1 cm. Confirm the drawing area is 16 cm by 26 cm. Confirm the scaled plate stays inside the frame with at least 1 cm clearance on each side. Check that each object has a highlight on its top surface and a darker underside.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Frame margins are equal within one centimetre on all sides.
- [ ] Three to five objects are blocked as simple shapes before detail.
- [ ] Overlap order matches the arrangement.
- [ ] A five-step value key is present and labelled.
- [ ] Each object shows at least two distinct values from the key.
- [ ] Highlights are left as paper white.
- [ ] Labels use a legible style with x-height measured from baseline to the top of a lowercase letter such as x, excluding ascenders and descenders; alternative styles are accepted.

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