Salt Marsh Drawing: Creek Channels, Grass Clumps, and Tide Line

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

On a 12 cm by 18 cm area, draw one main creek channel that tapers from about 3 cm wide at the bottom edge to about 0.8 cm near the horizon. Add one branch that splits at a shallow angle and is narrower than the main channel at the split. These measurements are hypothetical; measure your own paper first.

Answer: A main channel with smooth paired edges narrowing from about 3 cm to about 0.8 cm, plus one branch that is narrower than the main channel where it splits.

Reason: The taper shows depth along the channel. The branch being narrower at the split reinforces the branching structure and keeps the channel hierarchy clear.

Check: Trace the main channel and confirm it narrows from bottom to horizon. Measure the branch at the split and confirm it is narrower than the main channel at that point.

Task 2

Draw five grass clumps in a row with gaps between them. Make the first two clumps larger than the last three. Use three to seven short angled strokes per clump. Do not draw creek channels or a tide line.

Answer: Five grass clumps with gaps, the first two larger than the last three, each built from three to seven short angled strokes fanning from a base point.

Reason: Size change is a depth cue: larger clumps read as closer. Gaps prevent the marsh from looking like a solid wall. The stroke count keeps the convention consistent.

Check: Count the clumps and confirm there are five with gaps. Compare the first two clumps to the last three and confirm the first two are larger. Count the strokes in each clump and confirm each has three to seven short angled strokes.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Draw a dashed tide line across a 10 cm wide area. Draw one creek channel crossing the tide line. The tide line must cross the channel without closing it. Use a consistent dash length and gap. These measurements are hypothetical; measure your own paper first.

Answer: A dashed tide line crossing a creek channel, with the channel edges still visible through the dashes and the dash length and gap consistent.

Reason: The tide line follows the ground contour and crosses channels rather than stopping at them. Keeping the channel edges visible preserves the channel structure. Consistent dashes maintain the convention.

Check: Trace the tide line and confirm it crosses the channel. Confirm the channel edges are visible on both sides of the tide line. Check that the dash length and gap are consistent across the tide line.

Task 4

Compose a small salt marsh scene on a 10 cm by 15 cm area with one main creek channel, one branch, three foreground grass clumps, three distant grass clumps, and a dashed tide line. Include at least one overlap between a foreground grass clump and a creek edge. These measurements are hypothetical; measure your own paper first.

Answer: A composed scene with a tapering main channel, a narrower branch, three larger foreground clumps, three smaller distant clumps, a dashed tide line crossing the channel, and at least one foreground clump overlapping a creek edge.

Reason: The composition combines taper, branching, size change, and overlap to create depth. The tide line crossing the channel keeps the convention consistent. Foreground clumps overlapping a creek edge adds a clear depth cue.

Check: Confirm the main channel tapers and the branch is narrower at the split. Count three foreground clumps and three distant clumps, and confirm the foreground clumps are larger. Trace the tide line and confirm it crosses the channel without closing it. Confirm at least one foreground clump overlaps a creek edge.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Creek channels have paired smooth edges that taper toward the horizon.
- [ ] At least one branch splits from a main channel and is narrower than the parent at the split.
- [ ] Grass clumps use three to seven short angled strokes fanning from a base point.
- [ ] Grass clumps vary in size, with larger clumps in the foreground and smaller clumps near the horizon.
- [ ] The tide line is a continuous dashed line that crosses at least one creek channel without closing it.
- [ ] At least one depth cue is present: overlap, size change, or placement.
- [ ] The line convention is consistent throughout the drawing.

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