Negative-Space Tree Drawing: Branches, Gaps, and Canopy

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A tree outline is 12 cm tall from baseline to canopy top. The first fork is at 3 cm. You shade four branch gaps. Describe where to place the gaps and how to check proportion.

Answer: Place gaps at 2 cm left, 4 cm right, 6 cm left, and 9 cm near the top. Shade each gap fully. Check: baseline to midline is 3 cm; canopy top is 12 cm; ratio is 12:3 or 4:1. Confirm four gaps are visible.

Reason: Gaps spread from lower trunk to canopy edge create a readable silhouette. The ratio check uses simple arithmetic with consistent units.

Check: Measure baseline to midline and canopy top in centimeters. Count shaded gaps. Step back two paces to confirm the tree reads as positive space.

Task 2

Your shaded background accidentally covers a branch edge. The branch gap was 1 cm wide. Describe the fix and the check.

Answer: Erase the shaded area over the branch edge. Re-mark the gap width as 1 cm. Re-shade the gap, stopping at the branch edge. Check that the gap is still 1 cm wide and the branch is unshaded.

Reason: Correcting the edge restores the negative shape. The 1 cm width is a hypothetical example; measure your own gap.

Check: Measure the gap width with a ruler. Confirm the branch edge is clean and unshaded. Compare contrast from two paces.

Task 3

A canopy looks too solid. You have three gaps, each 0.5 cm wide. The trunk is 2 cm wide at baseline. Describe how to adjust and check.

Answer: Widen one or two gaps to 1 cm or add a fourth gap near the canopy edge. Keep gaps no wider than the trunk width (2 cm). Check that at least three gaps are visible and the canopy edge reads clearly.

Reason: Wider or additional gaps increase negative space, making the canopy less solid. The trunk width provides a simple upper bound for gap width.

Check: Measure each gap width. Confirm no gap exceeds 2 cm. Count gaps and step back to check silhouette.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

You want to check proportion using the baseline-to-midline convention. Baseline is 0 cm, midline is 5 cm, canopy top is 15 cm. Describe the check and one adjustment if the canopy looks too tall.

Answer: Measure baseline to midline (5 cm) and canopy top (15 cm). Ratio is 15:5, which simplifies to 3:1. Choose a target ratio before adjusting; for example, a target of 2:1 means the canopy top should be twice the midline height, so 2 × 5 cm = 10 cm. Lower the canopy top to 10 cm and record both measurements (15 cm before, 10 cm after). Re-check that at least three branch gaps remain visible and that the tree still reads as positive space from two paces away.

Reason: The convention gives a repeatable proportion check. Lowering the canopy top changes the ratio without altering the trunk or gaps.

Check: Measure baseline, midline, and canopy top in centimeters. Compute the ratio. Confirm at least three gaps remain visible after adjustment.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Tree reads as positive space from two paces away.
- [ ] At least three branch gaps are clearly shaded and visible.
- [ ] Background shading stops cleanly at canopy contour and branch edges.
- [ ] Baseline-to-midline convention is marked and measured.
- [ ] Canopy silhouette is readable without drawing individual leaves.
- [ ] Valid alternatives in branch style and gap placement are accepted.

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