Fish Contour Drawing: Single-Line Outline Practice

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

A fish reference has a body length of 10 cm, a tail length of 3 cm, and a pectoral fin that starts 4 cm behind the mouth and is 2 cm long. Describe the order of a single-line contour that includes the body, tail, and pectoral fin. State how many genuine self-crossings occur under the lesson convention.

Answer: Use this routing: start at the mouth, draw the back edge 10 cm to the tail base, draw the tail loop 3 cm and return to the tail base, then draw the belly forward toward the mouth. The pectoral fin attachment is 4 cm behind the mouth (equivalently 6 cm forward from the tail base). Draw the pectoral fin loop there, extending 2 cm and returning to the belly edge, then continue 6 cm along the belly to the mouth. Under the lesson convention, shared fin attachment points and the tail base are not counted as crossings. The described routing therefore has zero genuine self-crossings.

Reason: The body outline is the largest continuous edge. The tail is a closed loop at the tail base. The pectoral fin is a loop on the belly edge. Shared attachment points are not crossings under the stated convention.

Check: Verify that the body length is 10 cm, tail length is 3 cm, and the pectoral fin starts 4 cm behind the mouth and is 2 cm long. Count two attachment points for the pectoral fin. Confirm the pencil never lifts and that no genuine self-crossing is counted.

Task 2

A fish reference shows a dorsal fin that overlaps the back edge. Measured from the mouth along the back, the visible fin edge runs from 5 cm to 8 cm and rises 2 cm. Explain how to draw this overlap in contour line without drawing hidden parts.

Answer: Draw the back edge from the mouth to 5 cm, then draw the visible dorsal fin edge rising 2 cm and returning to the back edge at 8 cm, then continue the back edge to the tail base. Do not draw the part of the fin that is behind the body. The fin loop touches the back edge at 5 cm and 8 cm.

Reason: Contour line shows only visible edges. The overlap edge is where the fin meets the body. Hidden parts are omitted.

Check: Check that the fin loop starts at 5 cm and ends at 8 cm on the back edge and that no line is drawn inside the body outline for the hidden fin.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

A blind-contour warmup of a fish takes 90 seconds. The pencil stays on the paper for the whole time. The resulting drawing has a body length of 14 cm on paper while the reference body length is 12 cm. The lesson convention is that a blind-contour warmup is successful if the pencil stays on the paper and the drawer does not look at the paper; size accuracy is not required. Is the warmup successful? Explain using the lesson convention.

Answer: Yes, the warmup is successful because blind contour is judged by continuous looking and pencil contact, not by matching size. The 14 cm versus 12 cm difference is acceptable in a warmup. The convention rewards continuity and observation, not a single correct shape.

Reason: Blind contour trains hand-eye coordination. Size accuracy is not the goal. The rubric allows valid alternatives in shape and proportion for warmups.

Check: Confirm the pencil stayed on the paper for 90 seconds and that the drawing was made without looking at the paper. Compare size only as a note, not as a pass or fail.

Task 4

A single-line fish contour must include the body, tail, dorsal fin, and pectoral fin. The body is 12 cm, the tail is 4 cm, the dorsal fin is 3 cm high, and the pectoral fin starts 5 cm behind the mouth and is 2 cm long. List a drawing order that uses one continuous line and state how many genuine self-crossings occur under the lesson convention.

Answer: Order: mouth, back edge to tail base, dorsal fin loop (3 cm up and back to the back edge), tail loop (4 cm) returning to the tail base, belly edge forward toward the mouth. The pectoral fin attachment is 5 cm behind the mouth (equivalently 7 cm forward from the tail base). Draw the pectoral fin loop there, extending 2 cm and returning to the belly edge, then continue 7 cm to the mouth. Under the lesson convention, shared fin attachment points and the tail base are not counted as crossings. The described order therefore produces zero genuine self-crossings.

Reason: Each loop returns to the body edge, so the continuous line does not lift. Shared attachment points such as the tail base and fin attachments are not crossings under the convention, so the count is zero.

Check: Trace the stated order and confirm the pencil never lifts. Count only genuine self-crossings, where the line passes over itself; do not count shared fin or tail attachment points. Verify lengths: body 12 cm, tail 4 cm, dorsal fin 3 cm, pectoral fin 2 cm. Confirm the pectoral fin attachment is 5 cm behind the mouth (equivalently 7 cm forward from the tail base). Confirm the crossing count matches the stated convention.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Contour continuity: the main outline is drawn as one continuous line with no unintended gaps.
- [ ] Edge decisions: fins and tail are attached to the body outline at two points each.
- [ ] Overlap handling: visible fin edges stop at the body line; hidden parts are not drawn.
- [ ] Proportion check: body length, tail length, and fin height match the reference within 1 cm on a 12 cm body.
- [ ] No texture: no scales, shading, or anatomy detail beyond a simple eye contour.
- [ ] Valid alternatives: a different drawing order or a slightly different fin shape is acceptable if the edge logic and continuity are clear.

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