Human Form Volume and Shading Practice

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw a vertical cylinder 7 cm tall and 3 cm wide as a simplified limb. Light comes from the upper left. Shade it with three value groups and add a cast shadow to the lower right.

Answer: A light band along the left edge about 1 cm wide, a dark band along the right edge about 0.8 cm wide, and mid value across the front center. A cast shadow extends to the lower right on the ground plane.

Reason: The cylinder's curved surface receives the most light on the upper-left and the least on the lower-right. The mid value covers the front where the surface turns away from the light gradually.

Check: Squint at the drawing. The cylinder should still look round, with a clear light side and dark side. Compare the three values to a three-square value map.

Task 2

Draw a tapered cylinder 8 cm long, 4 cm wide at the top and 2 cm wide at the bottom, as a simplified forearm. Light comes from the upper left. Shade it and explain how the band widths change.

Answer: The light band narrows from about 1.3 cm at the top to about 0.7 cm at the bottom. The dark band narrows from about 1 cm to about 0.5 cm. The mid value fills the center and follows the taper. The order light-mid-dark stays the same.

Reason: As the cylinder narrows, each band occupies a smaller absolute width but keeps the same relative position on the curved surface.

Check: Measure the band widths at the top and bottom with a ruler. They should be smaller at the narrow end but in the same order. Squint to confirm the form still reads as round.

Task 3

Draw a rounded rectangular torso 9 cm tall and 5 cm wide, narrowing slightly at the waist. Light comes from the upper left. Shade the front, left side, and right side with three value groups and add a cast shadow.

Answer: The left side and upper front are light, the right side is dark, and the front center is mid. A subtle mid-value curve follows the waist indentation. A cast shadow sits under the lower-right edge.

Reason: The torso's front faces the viewer and receives moderate light, while the left side faces the light more directly and the right side turns away.

Check: Squint at the torso. It should read as a rounded block, not a flat rectangle. Check that the waist shadow curve follows the narrowing and that the cast shadow is separate from the form's shading.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Draw two simplified forms side by side: a sphere 4 cm in diameter as a shoulder and a cylinder 6 cm tall and 2.5 cm wide as an upper arm. Light comes from the upper left. Shade both consistently and add cast shadows.

Answer: The sphere has a light area on the upper left, a dark crescent on the lower right, and mid value between them. The cylinder has a light band on the left, a dark band on the right, and mid value in the center. Both cast shadows fall to the lower right.

Reason: A sphere and a cylinder curve differently, but the same light direction produces the same order of values: light on the upper left, dark on the lower right, mid between.

Check: Compare the two forms. The light side of both should face the same direction. Squint to confirm both read as volumes. Check that the cast shadows are consistent in direction.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Light direction is marked and consistent across all forms on the page.
- [ ] Each form uses three distinguishable value groups: light, mid, and dark.
- [ ] The light group is on the upper-left side and the dark group on the lower-right side.
- [ ] The mid value bridges the light and dark groups and describes the curvature.
- [ ] Shading bands follow the long axis of limbs and the rounded shape of the torso.
- [ ] Cast shadows fall to the lower right and are separate from the form's own shading.
- [ ] The squint test shows a round form rather than a flat shape.
- [ ] Valid alternatives are accepted if the light direction is consistently reversed or if a different but clearly stated convention is used throughout.

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