Practice Drawing Tattoos: Linework, Contour and Shading Drills

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw five straight lines across a 4 cm by 3 cm box. Measure the width of each line at the start, middle and end with a ruler. Record the three widths in millimetres.

Answer: A valid result is five lines with widths that differ by no more than 1 mm at the three points, using a hypothetical example. The exact widths depend on your tool; record them consistently.

Reason: Measuring at three points checks pressure control along the whole line, not just at the start.

Check: Compare the three recorded widths for each line. If any line differs by more than 1 mm, repeat that line more slowly.

Task 2

Draw one large circle and one S-curve in separate boxes. Trace each three times without lifting the tool. Mark any point where the curve changes radius suddenly.

Answer: A valid result is three traces of each curve with no marked sudden radius changes, or with marked points that you then correct on the next trace. Clockwise and counterclockwise are both valid.

Reason: Tracing the same curve repeatedly builds consistency and reveals where control is lost.

Check: Count the marked sudden changes. If there are more than two per curve in a hypothetical example, repeat the curve once more.

Task 3

In three 1 cm squares, create light, medium and dark stipple tones. Count the dots in each square and record the counts.

Answer: A valid result is three counts that increase from light to dark, such as a hypothetical 10, 25 and 50 dots. Your counts may differ; the important part is a consistent increase.

Reason: Counting dots makes tone checkable and separates density from dot size.

Check: Compare the three counts. If the dark square does not have more dots than the medium square, adjust the density and recount.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Use a blank box to repeat one straight line and one curve without the guide band. Compare each unguided stroke with its guided version and write one specific change to try next time.

Answer: A valid result is a comparison that names one change, such as starting more slowly or keeping the eye on the far end of the curve. The change should be specific and checkable.

Reason: Comparing guided and unguided strokes turns practice into a feedback loop.

Check: Read the written change and confirm it can be checked in the next session, for example by measuring width or counting marked curve changes.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Line control: straight lines stay within the box and show consistent width at three measured points.
- [ ] Curve smoothness: curves have no sudden changes in radius and end at the intended point.
- [ ] Stipple consistency: dot density increases gradually from light to dark and is counted in a 1 cm square.
- [ ] Repetition: unguided strokes are compared with guided strokes and one specific change is noted.
- [ ] Convention use: the x-height band is used as a guide, and valid style alternatives are accepted.

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