Cross-Contour Bird Drawing: Wrapping Lines Around Form

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

A described bird body is 10 cm long and 6 cm wide. Plan four body cross-contour lines with hypothetical spacing of 1 cm, 1.5 cm, 2 cm, and 2.5 cm from chest to tail. Describe where each line starts and ends and how it curves.

Answer: Line one starts at left silhouette 1 cm from chest, curves around the chest, ends at right silhouette. Line two starts 1.5 cm farther toward tail, curves slightly less, ends opposite. Line three starts 2 cm farther, curves across belly with wider bow. Line four starts 2.5 cm farther near tail, curves gently. All lines bow toward the tail and imply wrapping around the back.

Reason: Spacing increases from chest to tail, suggesting the chest turns away more sharply than the belly. Curvature follows the egg shape.

Check: Measure spacing on your drawing with a ruler and confirm the four intervals match your plan; trace each line to confirm it implies continuation around the form.

Task 2

A described wing is a teardrop 7 cm long and 3 cm wide at its widest. Plan three cross-contour lines from leading edge to trailing edge with hypothetical spacing of 1.5 cm and 2 cm. Describe their curvature and where they stop.

Answer: Line one starts at leading edge 1.5 cm from wing base, bows slightly downward, ends at trailing edge. Line two starts 1.5 cm farther along leading edge, bows similarly, ends at trailing edge. Line three starts 2 cm farther, bows gently, ends at trailing edge. All lines stop at the wing edges and do not cross the folded edge.

Reason: Wing is flatter than body, so lines are straighter but slightly bowed to suggest camber. Spacing varies to show surface change.

Check: Confirm each line touches both edges without crossing them; check that spacing intervals match the plan and that curvature is consistent across lines.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

A described bird has a body 9 cm long and 5 cm wide. You draw three body lines with even 2 cm spacing. Explain why this may look flat and describe one adjustment using hypothetical values.

Answer: Even spacing gives no cue about which surfaces turn away, so the body reads flat. Adjust by moving the chest line closer: use 1 cm spacing near chest, 2 cm across belly, and 2.5 cm near tail. This creates tight-to-loose contrast that suggests volume.

Reason: Spacing contrast is the convention for volume; even spacing removes that cue.

Check: Compare the adjusted spacing pattern visually: tight near chest, wider on belly. Trace lines to confirm wrapping is still clear.

Task 4

A described bird body is 8 cm long. You plan lines at 1 cm, 2 cm, and 3 cm intervals from chest to tail. Check whether the total planned distance fits the body length and state a correction if needed.

Answer: Total planned distance is 1 + 2 + 3 = 6 cm, which fits within 8 cm, leaving 2 cm at the tail end. No correction is needed for fit, but you could add a fourth line at 2 cm from the last line to use the remaining space. Confirm spacing still communicates volume.

Reason: Simple arithmetic checks whether planned intervals exceed the drawn length. The remaining space can be used or left blank.

Check: Add the intervals and compare to measured body length; if the sum exceeds the length, reduce intervals proportionally and relabel them as hypothetical examples.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Lines wrap around the body and wing rather than lying flat or straight.
- [ ] Line spacing varies purposefully to communicate volume.
- [ ] Lines stop at visible edges unless continuing onto an adjacent visible surface.
- [ ] Body lines curve consistently with the form; wing lines share a coherent direction.
- [ ] No feather texture, shading, or edge-only contour is used.
- [ ] Line quality is clean and deliberate, with stray marks erased.
- [ ] Valid alternatives in line count, spacing values, and angle are accepted if the wrapping convention is followed.

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