Cross-Contour Nature Drawing: Leaf and Bark Studies

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

A bark section is 8 cm wide and 12 cm tall. It has one rounded ridge running vertically down the center and a shallow crack to the left. Describe how you would draw two cross-contour lines across this section.

Answer: Draw the first line about 4 cm from the top. It should bow outward over the central ridge and dip slightly into the crack on the left. Draw the second line about 8 cm from the top, with a similar bow but slightly tighter spacing near the crack because the surface is rougher there.

Reason: The ridge is rounded, so wrap lines bow over it. The crack is a valley, so lines dip into it. Varying spacing shows roughness.

Check: Apply the transparency test: imagine the lines continuing around the back of the ridge. If they would kink unnaturally, adjust the curve.

Task 2

A leaf is 6 cm long and 3 cm wide. It twists so that the left edge lifts up and the right edge dips down. Describe the direction of a cross-contour line across the middle of the leaf.

Answer: The line should start at the left edge, curve upward toward the midrib, then curve downward toward the right edge, following the twist. The line will look like a gentle S shape or a tilted arc, not a straight horizontal line.

Reason: The twist means the surface changes direction from left to right, so the wrap line must change curvature accordingly.

Check: Squint at the line: does it suggest a surface that lifts on one side and dips on the other? If it looks flat, increase the curvature.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

You are drawing a smooth, rounded bark bump about 3 cm across. Where would you place wrap lines, and how would they curve?

Answer: Place two or three wrap lines across the bump, spaced about 1 cm apart. Each line should bow outward over the bump, like a line crossing a sphere. The lines should be closer together near the edges of the bump where the surface turns away.

Reason: A rounded bump is like a small hill; wrap lines bow over it and tighten where the surface curves away.

Check: Check that the lines are not parallel; they should converge slightly at the edges of the bump.

Task 4

A leaf has a flat central area and a curled tip. You draw three wrap lines: one across the flat area, one at the start of the curl, and one at the tip. Describe how the curvature and spacing should differ.

Answer: The line across the flat area should be nearly straight with wide spacing. The line at the start of the curl should curve gently and be closer to the previous line. The line at the tip should curve tightly and be closest to the second line.

Reason: Flat surfaces need less curvature and wider spacing; curled surfaces need tighter curvature and closer spacing.

Check: Compare the three lines: curvature should increase from flat to tip, and spacing should decrease.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] At least three cross-contour lines are present on each study.
- [ ] Lines change curvature where the surface changes direction.
- [ ] Spacing varies with surface complexity.
- [ ] Lines cross the form rather than only tracing the outline.
- [ ] Lines are light enough to revise and darken selectively.

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