Drawing a Female Arm Pose with Foreshortening

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A female arm points away from the viewer. The upper arm is 5 x-heights and the forearm is 3 x-heights. The wrist is angled outward. Describe the overlap and taper.

Answer: The forearm is shorter (foreshortened) and, per the prompt, angled outward. The upper arm overlaps the forearm because the forearm points away. The upper arm tapers toward the elbow; the forearm tapers toward the wrist, which is smaller.

Reason: Away-pointing forearm is foreshortened, so it is shorter. The farther part is overlapped by the closer upper arm. Taper follows the limb width: the upper arm narrows toward the elbow and the forearm narrows toward the wrist.

Check: Count x-heights: 5 and 3. Confirm forearm is shorter and outward. Confirm upper arm overlaps forearm.

Task 2

A female arm has a forearm pointing toward the viewer. The upper arm is 7 x-heights and the forearm is 5 x-heights. The elbow bends inward. List three checks to confirm the drawing reads correctly.

Answer: Check that the forearm is shorter than the upper arm, that the forearm angle matches the described pose, and that the wrist end overlaps the upper arm. Also confirm the elbow has a small bend curve.

Reason: Toward-viewer forearm is foreshortened and closer, so it is shorter and overlaps. The inward elbow bend is a pose feature to reproduce, not a foreshortening rule.

Check: Measure 7 and 5 x-heights; compare angles to paper edge; confirm overlap at the wrist crossing.

Task 3

A student draws a female arm with both segments 6 x-heights and parallel edges. The pose says the wrist points toward the viewer. Identify two mistakes and give fixes.

Answer: Mistake one: equal lengths ignore foreshortening. Fix: shorten the forearm to reflect the toward-viewer foreshortening (any amount that clearly reads as shorter, e.g., one or more x-heights depending on the pose). Mistake two: parallel edges hide depth. Fix: taper the upper arm toward the elbow and the forearm toward the wrist, and add overlap.

Reason: Toward-viewer forearm should be shorter. Taper and overlap communicate depth.

Check: Recount x-heights after the fix; confirm the forearm is shorter and the edges are not parallel.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Design a quick check for a female arm pose where the elbow is bent and the forearm points slightly away. Use only a ruler and your x-height unit. State the steps and one acceptable alternative style.

Answer: Measure the upper arm and forearm in x-heights. Confirm the away-pointing forearm is shorter. Check that the upper arm overlaps the forearm at the crossing. An acceptable alternative is a smoother, more rounded tube style, as long as the length and overlap checks pass.

Reason: The check uses measurable length and overlap, not a single visual style. Alternative styles are valid if the checks pass.

Check: Record both x-height counts; confirm shorter forearm and correct overlap; repeat with the alternative style.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Shoulder, elbow, and wrist points are clearly marked.
- [ ] Upper-arm and forearm lengths are recorded in the same unit.
- [ ] The foreshortened segment is shorter and angled consistently with the pose.
- [ ] The elbow shows a bend, not a sharp corner.
- [ ] Tube shapes taper and overlap to show depth.
- [ ] Valid alternative styles are accepted if the angle, length, and overlap checks pass.

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