Live Contour Portrait Drawing: Timed Observation Practice

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

In a 30-second box, draw only the head outline of a live model. Use the checklist for skull top, sides, jaw, and chin. Do not draw neck or shoulders. After drawing, count unintended line breaks.

Answer: A single continuous line around the head outline, with at most one unintended break. The line starts at skull top, goes down one side, around chin, up jaw, and back to start.

Reason: The 30-second limit forces you to capture only the most important edges. The checklist ensures you include skull, jaw, and chin. Counting breaks gives a simple continuity measure.

Check: Compare your line to the checklist: does it include skull top, sides, jaw, and chin? Count breaks; a score of 0-1 unintended breaks is good for 30 seconds.

Task 2

In a 60-second box, draw the neck edges of a live model. Focus on the front throat line and back neck line. Use a baseline-to-midline comparison: mark baseline at chin bottom and midline at mid-neck. Note the distance. After drawing, check if the two neck lines connect to the head and shoulders.

Answer: Two lines representing front and back neck edges, each connecting to the head outline and shoulder top. The baseline-to-midline distance is noted as a simple mark (e.g., one pencil width).

Reason: The neck is often neglected. This exercise isolates neck edges and uses a consistent measurement convention. Connecting to head and shoulders tests continuity.

Check: Verify both neck lines touch the head and shoulder edges. Check that the baseline-to-midline mark is consistent with your notation. Valid alternatives include dotted lines for soft edges.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

In a 2-minute box, draw the full contour of head, neck, and shoulders of a live model. Use the checklist. After drawing, self-review using the rubric: score continuity, edge accuracy, and proportion consistency from 1 to 3. Write one improvement.

Answer: A complete contour drawing with continuous lines for head, neck, and shoulders. Self-review scores: continuity 2, edge accuracy 2, proportion 3. Improvement: check shoulder tip placement against neck edge.

Reason: The 2-minute limit allows more detail but still requires timed observation. The rubric provides structured self-review. Writing an improvement makes the practice actionable.

Check: Use the rubric descriptions to assign scores. Check that all checklist edges are present. Confirm the improvement is specific and checkable.

Task 4

Compare your 30-second and 2-minute drawings from previous exercises. Identify one edge that improved in continuity and one that did not. Describe a needed diagram in text: a simple head-and-shoulders outline with labeled edges (skull top, jaw, chin, neck front, neck back, shoulder top). Use this description to check your drawings.

Answer: A written comparison noting, for example, that the jaw edge improved from broken to continuous, while the shoulder top edge remained broken. The described diagram lists six labeled edges.

Reason: Comparison across time limits reveals learning. Describing a diagram in text makes the check self-contained without an image. Labeled edges provide a reference.

Check: Read your description and verify it includes all six edges. Check your drawings against the described labels. Confirm the improvement and non-improvement are specific.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Line continuity: 1 = many unintended breaks; 2 = some breaks but readable; 3 = mostly continuous with intentional breaks only.
- [ ] Edge accuracy: 1 = several checklist edges misplaced; 2 = most edges close; 3 = all checklist edges accurately placed.
- [ ] Proportion consistency: 1 = inconsistent baseline-to-midline comparisons; 2 = mostly consistent; 3 = consistent baseline-to-midline comparisons.
- [ ] Valid alternatives: dotted lines, varied line weight, and simplified edges are accepted if intentional and explained in self-review.

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