Implied Scales Mermaid Drawing: Torso, Tail, and Fin Construction

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw a mermaid torso and tail using the construction steps. Use a hypothetical torso length of 5 cm and tail length of 10 cm. Add three loose bands of suggestion strokes along the outer curve. Describe where you placed the bands and why.

Answer: A completed drawing with a 5 cm torso and 10 cm tail, hip oval overlapping the tail top, and three loose bands along the outer curve. Bands are spaced irregularly with gaps for shading.

Reason: The 10:5 ratio is 2:1, matching the hypothetical example. Three bands are enough to suggest texture without becoming rows. Placing them on the outer curve follows the tail surface.

Check: Measure torso and tail; confirm ratio near 2:1. Check that bands are loose, varied, and not complete rows. Squint to confirm texture reads as implied scales.

Task 2

A drawing has a hip width of 3 cm and a fin width of 4 cm. The tail has five complete rows of identical strokes. Identify two problems and give one fix for each.

Answer: Problem 1: fin is wider than hip (4 cm vs 3 cm). Fix: narrow the fin to 3 cm or less. Problem 2: complete identical rows are explicit scales, not implied. Fix: replace rows with loose bands of varied curved strokes and leave gaps.

Reason: The hip is the widest reference point; the fin should not exceed it. The convention forbids complete rows because they read as explicit scales.

Check: Measure hip and fin widths. Inspect strokes for row-like repetition; confirm bands are loose and varied.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Shade a tail with a light direction from the upper left. The tail curves to the right. State which side you shade darker and why, and describe the fin transition shading.

Answer: Shade the lower right (concave) side darker because it faces away from the light. Keep the upper left (convex) side lighter. At the fin transition, add a soft shadow where the fin meets the tail and lighten the fin tips.

Reason: Shading the side away from the light creates volume. A soft shadow at the joint shows attachment without a hard line.

Check: Squint at the drawing: the tail should look rounded, not flat. Check that the fin joint has a soft shadow and the tips are lighter.

Task 4

Design a shading and suggestion-stroke plan for a tail that curves left. Include a hypothetical light direction, two band placements, and one check you would use to confirm the tail reads as scaled but not explicit.

Answer: Light from upper right; shade the lower left concave side darker. Place one band near the hip and one near the fin transition, both following the left curve. Check by squinting: texture should read as loose suggestion, not rows.

Reason: The plan follows the tail curve and light direction. Bands near hip and fin are key transition areas. The squint check tests readability without counting scales.

Check: Confirm bands are loose and varied, not complete rows. Squint to see if the tail reads as rounded and textured. Measure nothing is needed beyond visual check.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Torso and tail connect smoothly at the hip with a clear taper.
- [ ] Implied scales use loose bands of short curved strokes, varied spacing, no complete rows or grids.
- [ ] Shading follows a clear light direction and shows tail volume.
- [ ] Fin transition has a soft shadow and readable attachment.
- [ ] Proportions are balanced: hip is the widest tail point and fin is not wider than the hip.
- [ ] Construction lines are light or erased; final drawing is readable.

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