Grayscale Shark Value Study: Tonal Drawing Guide

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw a value scale with five squares labeled 0, 2, 5, 8, and 10. Fill each square with a flat tone. Describe how you check that each labeled square is progressively darker than the previous one.

Answer: A completed scale with square 0 left white, square 2 light, square 5 mid-gray, square 8 dark, and square 10 darkest. Check by squinting and comparing adjacent squares; each step should look clearly different from its neighbors.

Reason: The scale trains your eye to distinguish five tones. The labels are ordinal guides: each square should be darker than the previous one, and perceived differences may vary, so the 0-to-2 gap can look subtler than the 2-to-5 gap.

Check: Place the scale under consistent light. Squint until details blur; the five squares should still appear as five distinct steps. If two squares merge, adjust the darker one.

Task 2

A shark's back is value 3 and its belly is value 7. A pectoral fin projecting from the side casts a shadow onto the body just behind and below it. What value should the shadow be? Explain your choice using the value scale.

Answer: The shadow should be value 8 or 9, darker than the surrounding back tone (value 3). A cast shadow is darker than the surface it falls on because it blocks additional light.

Reason: The back is lit (value 3). The fin shadow adds another layer of darkness on that lit surface, so it must be a higher number on the scale. Value 8 or 9 keeps the shadow distinct from the back while remaining darker than the belly (value 7).

Check: Compare the shadow patch to your value scale. It should match square 8 or 9, not square 3. If it looks the same as the back, darken it.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Sketch a simple shark side view using only three values: 3 for the back, 5 for the midline, and 8 for the belly. Do not draw an outline. Describe where you place each value and how you keep the shark's shape readable.

Answer: The back (top third of the body) is value 3, the middle band is value 5, and the belly (bottom third) is value 8. The shape is readable because adjacent values contrast: 3 next to 5, and 5 next to 8. Fins are shaded with value 5 on top and value 8 underneath.

Reason: Three values are enough to show a rounded form if they are placed in the correct order relative to the light. The contrast between adjacent bands defines the shark's shape without an outline.

Check: Squint at the drawing. The shark's silhouette should still be clear from the tonal differences alone. If any two adjacent areas merge, adjust one value.

Task 4

Your shark drawing looks flat. You have used values 3, 5, and 8, but the belly and the midline look too similar. What is one specific change you can make, and how will you check that it worked?

Answer: Darken the belly from value 8 to value 9, or lighten the midline from value 5 to value 4. Check by comparing the belly and midline patches side by side; they should now look clearly different.

Reason: Flatness often comes from insufficient contrast between adjacent areas. Increasing the difference between the belly and midline creates a stronger sense of curvature.

Check: Place your value scale next to the drawing. The belly should match square 9 and the midline square 4 or 5. Squint: the two areas should no longer blend together.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Value scale: five steps labeled 0, 2, 5, 8, and 10 are present, and each square is progressively darker in label order; the 0-to-2 step may be subtler than later steps.
- [ ] Shark form: the body shows at least three distinct values (light back, mid transition, dark belly).
- [ ] Light direction: the back is lighter than the belly, consistent with light from above.
- [ ] Edges: some soft transitions along curves and some hard edges under fins or at the tail.
- [ ] No contour outline: the shark is defined by tone, not a drawn outline.
- [ ] Valid alternatives: any five-step scale with clear light, mid, and dark tones is acceptable; exact numerical values may vary as long as relative order is correct.

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