

Art for Homeschooling

Michael Gannotti



Figure 1: Cover

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This illustrated edition is the teaching-manual of 31 August 2026. Endnotes run in one series. Chapter-opening images are original still-lives, not portraits of persons or children. Documents still constrain the facts.

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Welcome

This book exists because the studio hour at your table is the whole program. There is no art room down the hall and no specialist waiting after lunch. There is you, a student, paper, and today's idea — a line to try, a mug to look at, a lump of clay to pinch. That is enough, if you know what to do with the hour.

I wrote this for a capable, busy, willing parent. You may be teaching two ages at once. You may be fitting art between a job, a toddler, and a grocery run. You may have loved making things, or you may remember drawing as something other people did well. Many adults feel rusty when they sit down to draw. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict. We will move on from it. This book will make you fluent enough in today's idea to notice a stuck hand and ask a good question — without taking over the brush.

You do not need to be a studio artist. You do need to understand this week's idea well enough to see that a child is drawing the *name* of a mug instead of *this* mug from here. You need a session shape you can run on a Tuesday. You need a few sentences that actually help. That is the job. A path through making — from first-grade material play through a high-school sequence a stranger can read — is possible at a kitchen table. The path is not a personality trait, a gifted label, or a fridge picture. It is a sequence of ideas, practiced until they hold, with you in the chair.

About 3.4 percent of U.S. students ages 5–17 were homeschooled in 2022–23 — roughly 1.765 million children.¹ That figure is context, not a ranking. You are

¹Ellena Sempeles and Jiashan Cui, *Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2023*, NCES 2024-113 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, September 2024), Table A-6: 3.4 percent homeschooled, approximately 1,765,000 students, ages 5–17 with a K–12 grade equivalent, 2022–23. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2024/2024113.pdf>. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026. Latest federal count this book uses; not a 2026 national total. A neighboring 5.2

one of those tables. Homeschooling is legal in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The paperwork is not one load: Texas asks almost nothing of the state agency; New York asks for a written plan and regular reports.² There is no national homeschool diploma and no national art credit a registrar already files.³ In the last federal subject tables, art was taught that year to 53 percent of K–12-equivalent homeschoolers — common in the early grades, less so later. Among ninth- through twelfth-grade homeschoolers, 29 percent were being taught art that year.⁴ That is a picture of practice, not a scold. A family that takes Drawing, Painting, or Sculpture as a real high-school sequence is walking a path, not copying a typical year. The hour in front of you is the work.

percent received instruction at home (homeschooled or full-time virtual) and is a different bucket.

²Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling,” <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling>. New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>. Homeschooling is legal in all fifty states and D.C.; these two pages illustrate a light-process and a heavier-process pattern, not a national template. This book is not legal advice.

³Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling”: “The State of Texas does not award a diploma to students that are home schooled.” New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers”: a high school diploma “may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school.” NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Home_School_Toolkit.pdf, treats proof of graduation as a family- or umbrella-issued artifact. Art is not an NCAA core course.

⁴Jiashan Cui and Rachel Hanson, *Homeschooling in the United States: Results from the 2012 and 2016 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Surveys*, NCES 2020-001 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, December 2019), Table 9: among K–12-equivalent homeschoolers, art taught that year 53 percent overall (78 percent K–2, 63 percent 3–5, 50 percent 6–8, 29 percent 9–12). <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020001.pdf>. The 2023 First Look did not republish subject-taught tables.



Figure 2: A kitchen-table studio setup

What a good studio hour looks like

You sit down already knowing today's idea. The child warms up by looking: what is actually there on the table, not what they remember a mug looks like. You demo one move, short — a contour, a pinch, a wash. Then they try, and you wait. You ask one looking question — not “is it pretty?” but “What do you see?” Practice mixes the new move with last week's. The hour ends with one short piece they do alone: a drawing, a pinch, a page they can talk about. You stop talking sooner than feels polite. The child holds the tool. You hold the key — the setup, the time, the question. That is the hour. The next long piece of this front matter, *The Studio Hour*, will teach it in full. Later chapters will not reinvent it.

The hour is justified by looking and making. Visual art is not a reliable way to raise reading or math scores, and this book will not sell it as one.⁵ You put paper on the

⁵Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, Reviewing Education and the Arts Project executive summary, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34, nos. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 2000); reprinted in *NAEA Translations*,

table because the child needs to see, to choose a mark, to think through a material, and to have a folder a stranger can open. Those are the moves. The chapters will give you wording. The hour will stay this shape.

What you will actually get

Each teaching chapter does eight jobs, always in the same order, so you are never hunting for the move.

You will learn why this week's idea is worth the struggle — what it unlocks later. You will understand the idea yourself, in plain language, with one everyday picture and one precise picture, and with the stuck hands you should be able to notice. You will get a session you can run this week, including exact wording and named projects: materials, time, mess, the fun of it, the skill it builds. You will get practice that builds looking and making, not a pile of identical crafts. Your student will get a short section of their own. If it isn't clicking, you will get three diagnostics and a next move for each, with no shame in the room. Tools, including AI, stay optional and adult-side. And you will get a plain checklist for "done enough," so you can place by skill rather than by birthday.

The eight teaching chapters follow the work, not twelve thin grade labels: material play in grades 1–2; observation drawing, watercolor, and a first sketchbook in grades 3–5; proportion, space, and longer projects in grades 6–8; then high-school Drawing (or Art I), Painting, Sculpture, design and color, and looking plus a portfolio a stranger can open. Records and resources come last.

This week you can learn the session shape and today's idea well enough to notice a stuck hand. Today the child can look at one object and make one unaided mark.

What this book will not do

This book will not hand you 180 days of crafts. A year of photocopied projects is not a teaching method, and I will not pretend it is.

Winter 2001: 188 reports; no reliable causal link from arts-rich education to verbal and mathematics scores or grades; visual arts and reading a very small relationship that could not be generalized, and in reading readiness, not reading achievement. "Arts educators should never allow the arts to be justified wholly or even primarily in terms of what the arts can do for mathematics or reading."

It will not sell you a curriculum. Later, a short resources chapter names common programs by fit — parent load, process versus copy, religious versus secular, how they place a student, how they shape a high-school credit — so you can choose. Artistic Pursuits, How Great Thou Art, Atelier (the Arts Attack video program, which is not a classical sight-size atelier), Draw Write Now, Usborne how-to books, and a Davis *Discovering Drawing* path are tools. None of them is this book, and this book is not a catalog in disguise. A family may combine. Combining does not turn a brand into a course name. The transcript still says Drawing, or Art I, or Painting.

It will not promise talent, and it will not promise an AP score. There is no guaranteed “gifted” label, no guaranteed fridge picture that looks adult, and no guaranteed AP Art and Design number inside these pages. AP 2-D, AP 3-D, and AP Drawing are optional objects, named later, not this book. What this book can promise is a path: the ideas in order, at the skill the child actually has, until they can do the next idea unaided. National Core Arts Standards are a map you can steal clusters from. They are voluntary. They “have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods.”⁶ They are not a homeschool mandate and they are not a method. A publisher’s “grade 6” book is a scope, not a legal grade. Drawing is a body of skill, not a fourteenth-birthday present. Arts for all students, not only for those already labeled talented: that is the map’s own stance, and it matches the promise here.⁷

It is not an art-history survey. Looking at a work is a studio habit inside the hour — five minutes with one picture, a real question — not a 250-work course. AP Art History is a separate optional object. It does not live in the looking chapter as a dump.

And this is not a sequel. *Autonomous AI and Education* is another book. AI is a lane here: one studio-hour box in this front matter, then a short tools box in each teaching chapter. Image generators do not get the child’s project. Evaluation of a

⁶National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (2014), <https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework.pdf>: “Standards in the United States have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods.” Released 4 June 2014; voluntary unless a state adopts or adapts them through a formal regulatory process.

⁷National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning*, foreword: arts for all students, “not just those identified as ‘talented.’” The promise of this book is a path through making, not a talent label.

mark lives in the looking, not in a course titled AI Art.

This is not a book that lectures your child about you, or you about your character. The student is a person, not a percentile and not a talent score. When this book speaks to them, it speaks with respect. No baby-talk. No research sermon.

The promise

If you only remember one sentence, remember this: a path through making, not a talent myth.

The work is to take this child through art — material play, observation, proportion, drawing, painting, three dimensions, design, looking, a folder a stranger can open — without skipping looking because they are “creative,” and without parking them in a coloring page because a catalog printed a grade on the cover. You will sometimes slow down. You will sometimes skip ahead. Both are teaching. Birthday is not placement.

Three things have to hold. You understand this week’s idea well enough to notice a stuck hand. The child holds the tool and does the looking and the making. Any helper — including an AI agent — stays on your side of the table: a supplement you host and constrain, not a substitute for the child’s eye or mark, and not a school-safe product by default.

You can do this. You do not have to know next year’s idea today. You have to know this week’s idea well enough to sit still while they struggle, then ask one good question. Start here. Read *How to Use This Book This Week*, then the one-page list of five things, then *The Studio Hour*. After that, open the chapter that matches the skill in front of you. You will know more after one chapter than you know this morning. Your child will have something to try today. We can do this.

How to Use This Book This Week

Start at the skill in front of you, not on page one of Grade 1 because a catalog, a birthday, or a well-meant relative said so.

This book is a handbook you open to this week's band, not a novel you read cover to cover. The teaching chapters run grades 1–2 (material play), 3–5 (observation starts), 6–8 (proportion and longer projects), then Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Design and color, and Looking plus the portfolio. Records and resources come last. Grade labels are sequence anchors. They tell you where an idea usually sits. They do not tell you where *this* child sits.

This book does not replace the program already on the shelf. If Artistic Pursuits, How Great Thou Art, Atelier (Arts Attack), Draw Write Now, an Usborne how-to, or a Davis *Discovering Drawing* year is already working, keep it. Use this book to notice a stuck hand, to run the hour, and to name the credit a stranger can read. The transcript still says Art, Art I, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Photography, or Art History — never a brand.

Pick the chapter by skill, not by birthday

Open the chapter you think is right. Skip to **What “done enough” looks like** at the end of the *previous* chapter, or to **If it isn't clicking** in the one you opened. If the child can already do those checks unaided, you are too early. If the checks from two chapters back are still failing, drop back.

If they still live in material play — fat crayons, tempera, torn paper, a pinch of clay, short sits — they are still in chapter 1, whatever their age. If they cannot yet look at a mug and draw the ellipse they see, they are still in observation, whatever the transcript year. Put the mug on the table. Ask what they see. Wait.

If they can already look, mix a color, hold a longer project, and talk about a choice, and they are still in a “grade 4” book only because the cover says so, skip ahead. Instruction for a six-year-old need not be “first grade”; it should match what the student actually needs and already knows.⁸ A publisher’s “Level 4” is a scope, not a legal grade. A ten-year-old can sit in three different “grades” in three programs on the same morning. Use this book’s checklists, or a placement test from the program you own, and then teach.

Two children may need two chapters. That is ordinary. The session shape in *The Studio Hour* still holds; the idea on the table changes. You may run a twenty-five-minute material-play session with one child and a forty-five-minute still-life with the other. You do not need two personalities. You need two first problems.

How you use the parent half

Most of each teaching chapter is for you. Read it *before* the lesson, not over the child’s shoulder.

Why this matters tells you what this idea unlocks. You will teach with more patience when you can see the later door.

For the parent: understand it yourself gives one everyday picture, one precise picture, and the stuck hands you should be able to notice. Sit with those. If a child’s mug still looks like the word *mug*, that is the observation idea, and it is worth five quiet minutes now.

How to teach it this week assumes the session shape from *The Studio Hour*. It will not rebuild the hour. It will give you the first problem, named projects, the wording for *this* idea, and how to fade your help. Three to six real projects in a chapter is enough.

Practice that actually builds learning is a short blocked set of the new move, then mixed work so the child has to choose. Kitchen objects can motivate. They do not replace the unaided mark.

⁸New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>: instruction for a six-year-old need not be “first grade”; “instruction should be geared to the level appropriate to the student’s needs and previous level of achievement.” Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026. A placement test that ships with a program you already own is a tool for the same job, not a legal grade.

Tools, including AI is optional, short, and for the adult. The rules live once in *The Studio Hour*.

What “done enough” looks like is how you leave. You are looking for unaided work, not a perfect Tuesday. Placement is by skill, not birthday.

You do not have to read the whole chapter tonight. You do have to read the parent half of *this week’s* idea before you sit down with the child.

The five-minute parent warm-up

Make this a habit.

Five minutes. Child not yet in the chair. Phone face down.

1. Read today’s idea until you can say it in one sentence.
2. Do the move yourself, on paper. Look at an apple on the table — a real one — and try one contour. Stay off a photograph and off a generator until you finish. You are not producing a still-life for the fridge. You are learning what the hand feels when it follows an edge.
3. Glance at the stuck hands you should be able to notice. Name the one you would have given at fourteen.
4. Write one sentence you will actually say. Not a speech. Example: “What do you see?” Or: “Look at the edge, not the name.” Or: “Show me how the clay behaved.”
5. Close the book to the student page. You are ready.

That five minutes is how you stay out of their working memory. If you are learning the idea *while* they are stuck, you will talk too much or take the brush. Prepare first. Then sit still. You need today’s looking, not a seminar.

Mess and setup

Cover the table. Newspaper or a cloth is enough. That is teaching advice, not a statute.

Keep food and drinks out of the art area. Give only small amounts of paint or glue, so a spill stays small. Supervise. Wash hands when you finish.⁹ If a powdered or

⁹U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015: keep

dusty material needs mixing, you mix it, not the child.

Buy children's art materials labelled "Conforms to ASTM D-4236" and without a cautionary warning; products with a cautionary warning are not for children through grade 6.¹⁰ Read the current label. If this book has not sourced a safety rule, the label is the rule.

Oil, solvents, indoor kilns, and craft knives are later, optional, and labelled. Air-dry clay is the kitchen-table default. Children's scissors, labelled as children's scissors, are the default cutting tool. A kitchen table is not a ventilated kiln room.

How the student uses "For the student"

Every teaching chapter includes a short section written to the student, not about them: what the idea is, a tiny worked example, two tries, an "explain it back" prompt, and one challenge.

Hand them that section when it is time for their attempt — after your short demo, not instead of it. You stay in the room. The two tries are theirs. The challenge is optional that day. The student page is not something to send off with an unsupervised generator.

When to skip ahead

Skip ahead when this chapter's "done enough" checklist is already true *unaided*. Lingering past that is not thoroughness. It is boredom wearing a virtue.

Slow down when the same stuck hand repeats after a clear demo and a real attempt. **If it isn't clicking** will give you three likely causes and a next move. Missing

food and drinks out of the art area; give only small amounts; supervise closely; wash hands after using materials; adults mix powdered and dusty materials. Covering the table is teaching advice in this book, not a CPSC requirement.

¹⁰U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, and the Labeling of Hazardous Art Materials Act, 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8): purchase children's art materials labelled "Conforms to ASTM D-4236" and without cautionary warnings. Products with cautionary or warning labels "should not be used with children pre-kindergarten through grade 6." ASTM D-4236 is a labeling practice for chronic health hazards, not a guarantee of zero risk. If a safety fact is not sourced in this book, read the current label.

looking is a skill problem, not a character problem. Accelerate a child who has the prerequisites. Hold still for a child who does not. Both are the same kindness.

If you need a human teacher — a community studio, a class, a tutor — that is a normal high-school plan, not a failure of the kitchen.

For this week: pick the chapter by skill. Do the five-minute warm-up. Cover the table. Run the hour as *The Studio Hour* describes it. Let the student page be theirs. Stop talking sooner than you want to. That is how you use the book.

If You Only Remember Five Things

Keep this page. The chapters will add wording, pictures, and projects. They will not replace these.

1. The child holds the tool. You hold the setup, the time, and the looking question. Artistic literacy requires making with materials — charcoal, paint, clay — not only looking at pictures of them.¹¹ You demo one move. Then they try. You do not finish the drawing. Struggle before rescue: ask what they see, wait, hint, then a short demo.

2. Process is the skill. A fridge picture is not the skill. The load-bearing event is what making does to the child while they look and choose a mark.¹² A finished drawing can be real; a sample everyone must match is a different hour. Grades 1–2 default to open materials and no sample on the table. Later, a short demo of one convention, then a long stretch of their work, still counts as process. The product is evidence. It is not the point.

3. Looking and making grow together. Put the mug on the table. Ask “What do you see?” Wait. Copying a master as a study is allowed, and you name it as a

¹¹National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (2014): artistic literacy “requires that they engage in artistic creation processes directly through the use of appropriate materials (such as charcoal or paint or clay...).” <https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework.pdf>. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026. Creating is the child’s work.

¹²Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1964): “the effect of the creative process on the child and not the final product that is of decisive significance.” Bongiorno, “How Process-Focused Art Experiences Support Preschoolers,” NAEYC, 2014; Fernando-Smith, “What Will We Make? Process vs. Product in the Preschool Classroom,” NAEYC, 2023: process-focused work is choice-driven; product-focused work also has fine-motor value — they are not the same hour.

study: this week the plate, next week the onion.¹³ A year of only copying cartoon characters trains a schema, not an eye. Five minutes with one work — description before preference — is Responding inside the hour, not an art-history survey.

4. A path, not a talent myth. Observational drawing is a skill you can teach. Adults who “can’t draw” are often drawing the name of the thing instead of the look of this thing from here.¹⁴ The promise is this child through making, at the skill they actually have, until they can do the next idea unaided. A gifted label is not the path. Birthday is not placement. You will sometimes slow down. You will sometimes skip ahead. Both are teaching.

5. Generators do not make the project. The child looks and makes the mark. A tool may explain today’s idea *to you*, invent a still-life from kitchen objects, show a composition to look at together, or invent a sketchbook challenge the child will draw. It may not sit in the chair during the making, produce the still-life, or become the work you file as Drawing.¹⁵ The full rules are in *The Studio Hour*, once. Later chapters will point back rather than preach.

If this week needs a compass, this is it. Five things. Then sit down and teach.

¹³Charles Bargue and Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Cours de dessin*: plates are *modèles*, “good examples to copy,” to prepare students to draw from nature. Paul Duncum, “To Copy or Not to Copy: A Review,” *Studies in Art Education* 29, no. 4 (1988): copying is productive “in certain circumstances,” not as a universal law. Named as a study means you say the purpose out loud.

¹⁴Richard A. Salome, “The Effects of Perceptual Training upon the Two-Dimensional Drawings of Children,” *Studies in Art Education* 7, no. 1 (1965); Richard A. Salome and D. Reeves, “Two Pilot Investigations of Perceptual Training of Four- and Five-Year-Old Kindergarten Children,” *Studies in Art Education* (1972): instruction that directed attention to contours and critical intersections improved drawing. This book does not print an effect size from those studies.

¹⁵Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without guardrails can harm learning: Evidence from high school mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. That study is mathematics, not an art trial. The crutch still governs: fluent generated output is not the child’s mark. College Board AP Art and Design 2026–27: generative AI is prohibited in final submitted artwork; that exam is optional, not this book.

The Studio Hour

The hour has a shape. Learn it once. Later chapters will give you today's idea, today's first object, and today's wording. They will not rebuild this hour. When a chapter says "run the session," it means this.

You do not need a school bell. You need looking, a short demo, a real attempt, one good question, mixed practice, and an unaided piece. Younger children may finish in twenty-five minutes. Older students may need forty-five. The shape does not change. The idea on the table does.

This is pedagogical design for a kitchen table, not a national art-minute. Public-school elementary art, when it meets the National Art Education Association's own program conditions, is at least one fifty-minute class a week with a certified specialist. High-school art, in that same grain of salt, meets as often as other academic subjects. You do not have to simulate a district specialist. You need a repeating hour long enough for setup, making, looking, and cleanup.¹⁶

Sit down having already done the five-minute parent warm-up from *How to Use This Book This Week*. You know today's looking. The child has the tool. You have the key.

Cover the table. Food and drinks stay off it. Wash hands when you finish.¹⁷

¹⁶National Art Education Association, *Opportunities to Learn* standards for visual arts: elementary programs, at least 50 minutes weekly, all year, taught by a certified visual arts educator — a school program condition, not a homeschool statute and not a National Core Arts Standards performance. High-school OTL: as often and as regularly per week as other academic subjects. National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning*, Appendix A, names the traditional Carnegie unit of 120 hours as seat-time for one high-school credit, not an arts-specific minute mandate. This studio hour is pedagogical design. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

¹⁷U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015: keep

1. Warm-up looking

Three to five minutes. Looking they can already do. Mixed, not a page of the same cartoon. This is retrieval, not a test of character.

Say:

“We’re going to start with things you already know how to look at.”

“What’s on the table? Point with your words.”

“Show me yesterday’s page. What do you still see?”

If they already look without naming, you may add a short contour of an object they have drawn before. Say:

“You already know this mug. Follow the edge.”

If they do not already look, skip the timer and skip the contour. Warm up on seeing, not on speed. You are building retrieval, not an identity.

Keep this short. The warm-up is not the lesson. When you feel yourself teaching a new convention here, stop. That convention belongs in the demo.

2. Short demo

Five to eight minutes. One new move, visible. Then a second example with holes they fill. Then you stop.

New, dense material — first contour of a mug, first wash, first pinch that has to stand — is where a short demo earns its keep. A novice staring at a blank page spends working memory searching, not looking. Show the move. Then fade.

Say:

“Watch this one. I’ll look at the edge out loud.”

“I’m mixing this green so you can see it isn’t the tube. Then you’ll mix.”

“Hear how I pinch. Then you’ll try it.”

Then, on the second example:

food and drinks out of the art area; give only small amounts; supervise; wash hands. Covering the table is teaching advice in this book, not a CPSC requirement.

“Your turn to tell me what I draw next. I’ll hold the pencil this time. You do the looking.”

“I’m leaving this side blank. You follow the edge.”

Include one incorrect example when the idea is new, and ask:

“What did they look at? The name of the mug, or this mug from here?”

That question is worth more than another correct copy.

When they can already execute the move, stop showing full examples. Extra modeling after they can do it is noise. Fade: full example, completion, their own object. Then they work.

The demo is short on purpose. If you are still talking at minute twelve, you are giving a lecture. Close the demo. Hand them the first object.

Strong studio teachers were observed presenting, then leaving a long stretch for students at work, then talking about art, then showing it. They did not teach craft as a lonely drill. A five-minute demo then a long silence is the hour.¹⁸

3. Student attempt

This is the center of the hour. Eight to twelve minutes. Maybe longer for a still life or a pinch that has to dry enough to hold. The first problem is theirs.

Hand them “For the student” if the chapter has it, or the first project from **How to teach it this week**. Then you talk less than you want to.

Say:

“This one is yours. I’ll be quiet.”

Then be quiet.

If they stall, use this order: ask, wait, hint, then a short demo. Not the reverse.

¹⁸Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly Sheridan, *Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013), from a year of videotape plus monthly interviews in two arts-intensive high schools. Studio structures at elementary and middle: teacher presents, students at work, talking about art, showing art. Develop Craft was never seen taught in isolation. Transfer of studio habits outside the studio “must be demonstrated.”

Ask:

“Show me what you tried.”

“What do you see at the edge?”

“How was it working with the material?”

Wait. Count a slow ten in your head. The silence is the work. If you fill it, you took the problem back.

Hint, one hint:

“Look at the ellipse. Is it a circle from here, or flatter?”

“The trunk wants wire. Try that, then pinch again.”

“Cover that part with your hand. Draw only what is left.”

Then, if they are still stuck after a real try:

“I’m going to show you this one step. Then you take it from here.”

Show the step. Return the tool.

If they are missing a piece — they cannot yet hold a crayon, the still life is across the room, the brush is floppy — that is a hole, not useful struggle. Change the tool or the setup, then return to the task. Struggle on a well-posed new idea, with the pieces in place, is the lesson. Struggle on a tool that fights the hand is just being lost.

Keep your hands off their brush. Taking it feels kind. It teaches them to watch. Finishing the drawing for them feels kind too. Same lesson. If you feel the urge, put your hands in your lap and say the ask-sentence again. The child holds the tool. You hold the key.

When they are stuck on a mug, the prompt is “What do you see?” not “draw a better mug.” Looking remains the work.

4. One looking question

Two or three minutes. Not “is it pretty?” They will say yes. You will learn nothing. Preference reports the speaker, not the work.¹⁹

A good question makes them look again, in words or in a second try.

Say:

“What do you see?”

“Point with your words.”

“Look at all the yellow you put down.”

“This is already good: how might it be even better?”

One question. Maybe a follow-up. Then stop. This is not a seminar and not an MFA critique. You are checking that they have a picture — of the edge, of the clay, of the page — not collecting a speech.

If they cannot explain it back, they copied a step. Return to the move — the contour, the mix, the pinch — and give one more attempt. Copying is what a stuck novice does when the demo was too fast or the attempt was too short. Slow the demo tomorrow. Keep today’s tool theirs.

5. Mixed practice

Ten to fifteen minutes. First a short blocked set of the new move — four to six contours of the same mug, three pinches, two washes — so they learn to execute. Then mix. Yesterday’s line next to today’s ellipse. Last month’s color among new ones. A looking page among making pages. The new move sitting next to an old one so they have to choose.

Blocked practice teaches execution. Mixed practice teaches *when* to look that way. A page of twenty identical crafts feels like mastery at 9 p.m. It often is not still there in two weeks. Put today’s contour next to yesterday’s. Put an old object in this week’s still life.

¹⁹Terry Barrett, “Improving Student Dialogue About Art,” *Teaching Artist Journal* 2, no. 2 (2004): begin with “What do you see?”; “point with your words”; description itself counts as criticism; preference reports the speaker, not the work; for work-in-progress, “This is already good: How might it be even better?”

Say:

“These first few are today’s move. Get the feel of it.”

Then:

“These are mixed on purpose. First decide what kind of looking it is. Then choose.”

“You already know this edge from last week. Find it among the new ones.”

Keep practice short enough that attention holds. More pages are not more learning if the last ten are sloppy. Stop while they can still look.

A master copy, if this week uses one, is named as a study. “This week we copy this drawing to learn how the hatch turns the form. Next week you draw the onion in front of you.” A coloring-book dog is not that act. A generator still-life is not that act either.

6. Unaided piece

Three to five minutes, or a short sitting if the medium needs it. One short task. Book closed. No hints. No “For the student.” No generator. No looking at the worked example.

This is the check. Tonight’s helped practice, with you in the chair and a tool in reach, is not this check.²⁰

Say:

“One piece. I won’t help. That’s the point.”

“Wrong is useful. We’ll look after.”

“You don’t need a perfect drawing. I need to see what you can do alone.”

Draw this mug. Mix this green. Pinch this bowl. Tell me in a sentence what you see.

²⁰Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–99: current performance is “often an unreliable index” of learning. The unaided piece is the check this hour trusts. A generated still-life is performance. The unaided contour of the pear the next morning is the test.

Then you are quiet again. When they finish, you look. If the looking is there, you are done enough for today. If it is not, you diagnose — which stuck hand from the parent section is this? — and you note tomorrow's first move. You do not redo the whole hour. You do not punish. You find the picture that was missing.

An unaided piece that always needs you is not unaided. Fade until it doesn't.

Show the work somewhere honest: the fridge, a folder, a wall that includes drafts. Presenting is part of the hour, not only a pretty product. A stranger should be able to open the folder later.

When to stop talking

After you ask, wait. If you fill the silence, you took the problem back.

During the attempt, your job is almost nothing. Presence, not narration. If you hear yourself explaining while they draw, you have moved back into the demo. Stop. Let them look. Let them make the mark.

Instead of “this is the hard part” or “I was never good at drawing,” say today's sentence: “What do you see?” Or: “Show me the edge.” The first sentence fills their working memory with your feeling. The second sentence teaches.

Praise a clear look, a mix they made, a catch of their own error — not speed, and not “pretty.”

“You noticed the ellipse wasn't a circle. That's the looking I want.”

Stop talking when the next sentence would be a rescue. Hands in your lap. Count ten. Then one hint, or one step, and the tool goes back.

If you remember only one move from this page, remember that one.

The AI rules, once

Later chapters will point here in one sentence. They will not reprint this box.

Child first. You hold the key. AI is optional for the adult.

The child looks and makes the mark before any tool is in the room.

You keep the key — the setup, the time, the looking question. A generator does not sit beside them during the making.

Use a tool, if you use one at all, for four jobs: explain today's idea *to you* before the lesson; invent a still-life from kitchen objects; show a composition to look at together, then take it off the table so they draw from life; invent extra sketchbook-challenge prompts the child will *draw*.

Never say “make my child’s project.” Never turn in a generated image as their work. Never leave an unsupervised generator running while they make. Never upload a child’s face into a generator.

A high-school math study found that an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam; a hint tutor that withheld full solutions did not produce that drop. That study is mathematics, not an art trial. The crutch still governs the studio hour: fluent generated output is not the child’s mark.²¹

Hermes 4 is a chat model. Hermes Agent is a different runtime. Grok the assistant is not Grok Bot, and Grok Imagine is Grok-the-assistant’s image tool, not Grok Bot. Grok Bot has no education product and is not a school-safe tutor. If you use any of these, they live on your machine or your account. They are not the child’s studio buddy, and they are not a companion.

Detectors fail often enough that they are not a verdict on a child’s page or picture.²²

²¹Hamsa Bastani, Osbert Bastani, Alp Sungu, Haosen Ge, Özge Kabakçı, and Rei Mariman, “Generative AI without guardrails can harm learning: Evidence from high school mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Field experiment, nearly 1,000 Turkish high-school math students, GPT-4-0613: a ChatGPT-like tool raised assisted practice grades 48 percent relative to control, then cut unaided exam grades 17 percent; a hint tutor that withheld full solutions raised practice 127 percent and was statistically indistinguishable from control on the unaided exam (point estimate -0.004). GPT Base was correct on 51 percent of the practice set. The paper notes that math has objective scoring “which is unavailable in creative subjects such as writing.” This is a math RCT, not an art RCT; the transferable caution is the crutch. Author PDF: https://hamsabastani.github.io/education_llm.pdf.

²²Weixin Liang, Mert Yuksekgonul, Yining Mao, Eric Wu, and James Zou, “GPT detectors are biased against non-native English writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): 100779; average false-positive rate on human TOEFL essays 61.3 percent (61.22 percent in the preprint, arXiv:2304.02819). Shilin Yan et al., “A Sanity Check for AI-generated Image Detection,”

If a family sits AP Art and Design, College Board’s 2026–27 rule is plain: generative AI is not in final submitted artwork. That exam is optional. The rule still names the same split this hour already uses.

You can teach this entire book with no AI. Many families will. The hour still has the same shape.

If a product claims it “does 100 percent of the teaching,” treat that as advertising. You still need to notice a stuck hand. You still hold the key. Grok Bot can make game art if asked. That is the point, and that is why it stays on your side of the table.

A Tuesday, said plainly

Here is an illustration, not a reported family. A parent has spent five minutes looking at an apple and trying one contour. The child warms up by naming what they see on a mug. The parent demos one edge out loud, then leaves the far side blank. The child follows the ellipse, slowly. The parent asks, “What do you see?” Mixed practice: two new contours, one old line, one looking page. Unaided piece: “Draw this mug. I won’t help.” Right or wrong, the hour had a shape. Tomorrow’s first move is already visible.

On a clay day the same shape holds. Warm-up: two pinches they already know. Demo: one coil, thinking aloud. Attempt: they coil. Question: “How was it working with the material?” Mixed: yesterday’s pinch next to today’s coil. Unaided: one bowl, no rescue, generator off.

You can run that hour. You do not need a degree. You need today’s looking, a tool you refuse to take, and the willingness to stop talking.

Dose is not a 180-day script. Grades 1–2: large tools, short sits, no sample on the

arXiv:2406.19435: off-the-shelf image detectors largely fail on the Chameleon set (near chance). Hermes Agent: <https://hermes-agent.org/> (open-source agent runtime, February 2026). Hermes 4 is a separate chat/reasoning model family; Nous Portal docs state it is not recommended inside Hermes Agent. Grok Bot: xAI, “Introducing Grok Bot,” 11 August 2026, <https://x.ai/news/introducing-grok-bot>, and Grok Bot FAQ, <https://docs.x.ai/grok-bot/faq> — cloud computer; no education product and no FERPA claim on the pages opened 31 August 2026. Grok the assistant, Grok Imagine, and Grok Bot are different objects. College Board AP Art and Design 2026–27: generative AI may be used only in research, ideation, practice, experimentation, and revision; “Using generative AI tools to create final submitted artwork is prohibited.”

table. Grades 3–5: a short demo of one convention, then a long stretch of their work. Grades 6–12: a still life or a named master study can take a week. The hour is this shape. The minutes follow the child.

Later chapters will say: run the session as in *The Studio Hour*. That sentence is this page. The idea will change. The hour will not.

Chapter 1

Material play: the hand in the stuff



Figure 3: Fat crayons, tempera pots, torn paper, an air-dry lump, and a fat brush on a covered table. No child in the picture.

Why this matters

This year is not a waiting room until “real art” begins. The work of these years is the hand in the material: a crayon that fills a big page, a puddle of tempera that turns a second color, paper torn into shapes and glued, clay pinched until it stands, a cardboard tube that becomes something else. Line, shape, color, texture, and form live in that work. A pretty picture on the fridge is a souvenir. It is not the skill.

The sentence that surprises people is this one: talking about a picture is not the same as making one, and hanging a picture is not the same as having looked. The National Core Arts Standards, a voluntary map released in 2014, organize visual art in four processes: Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. Creating is conceiving and developing new work. Presenting is interpreting and sharing it. Responding is understanding how the work conveys meaning. Connecting is relating the work to a life and a world.²³ The map is not a homeschool statute and it is not a method. Its own framework says that standards in the United States have never been a monolithic set of rules for curriculum or teaching methods.²⁴ What it is good for is saying what the art *is*. Artistic literacy, in that same document, requires that a student engage in creation with materials — charcoal, paint, clay — not only look at reproductions.²⁵ A generator coloring page is not the day’s making. A reproduction on the table, looked at with a question, is Responding. Both can live in a week. They are not the same sitting.

Texas prints a different map: four equal strands — observation and perception, creative expression, historical and cultural relevance, critical evaluation and response — that “may be presented in any order throughout the year.”²⁶ Grade 1

²³National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (SEADAE), accessed 31 August 2026. Creating, Presenting, Responding, Connecting as defined in the Framework. Connecting is the NCCAS addition; the 1997 NAEP Arts framework did not define it.

²⁴NCCAS, *Conceptual Framework*: “Standards in the United States have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods.” Released 4 June 2014; voluntary. Map, not a homeschool mandate. The 2018 NCCAS report listed Texas with no public plan to adopt.

²⁵NCCAS, *Conceptual Framework*: artistic literacy “requires that they engage in artistic creation processes directly through the use of appropriate materials (such as charcoal or paint or clay...).”

²⁶19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105 (Art, Grade 1, adopted 2013): four strands of equal value, “may be presented in any order throughout the year.” Same sentence in later grades.

names elements including line, shape, color, texture, and form, and principles including emphasis, repetition, and balance. Grade 2 adds space, and movement or rhythm.²⁷ Value, as a required element, waits until Grade 3 on that map. You will meet it in the next chapter. Grade 1 already wants drawings, paintings, prints, constructions, and sculptures including modeled forms.²⁸ Drawing is in the must-master column from the first year. It is a recurring medium, not a high-school surprise. Collage belongs here as construction. A kiln does not.

Viktor Lowenfeld's stages name typical graphic behaviors — a tadpole person, a baseline, an X-ray house — as a map, not a diagnosis.²⁹ A seven-year-old still scribbling, or a nine-year-old already overlapping, is not “behind” or “gifted” by the chart. Then teach. The child in front of you needs large tools, short sits, and a looking question. Ellen Winner and colleagues described a U-shaped curve of appeal to certain adult eyes: inventive early work, a more literal stretch around eight to ten as children master rules, then, for some, a later willingness to break those rules.³⁰ The dip is later. This year's job is the material, not adult proportion.

What you are teaching is process: the effect of the making on the child. Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain put it this way: it is the effect of the creative process on the child, and not the final product, that is of decisive significance.³¹ Elliot Eisner later wrote that the arts teach students to think through and within a material.³²

²⁷19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105(b)(1)(B): Grade 1 elements including line, shape, color, texture, form; principles including emphasis, repetition/pattern, balance. § 117.108: Grade 2 adds space and movement/rhythm. Value arrives at Grade 3 (§ 117.111). Texas-named lists, not a closed NCAS list.

²⁸19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105(b)(2)(C): produce drawings, paintings, prints, constructions, and sculptures, including modeled forms. § 117.108(b)(2)(C): the same media list at Grade 2. Drawing is in the must-master column from Grade 1.

²⁹Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1964). Stages from scribble through adolescent art as chapter titles. Brittain: use the book “flexibly.” G. L. Sullivan (2015): original sample demographics were never recorded. A map of typical graphic behaviors, not a diagnosis.

³⁰Jessica Davis, “Drawing's Demise: U-Shaped Development in Graphic Symbolization,” *Studies in Art Education* 38, no. 3 (1997): 132–157, and Winner/Gardner restatements: inventive early work; a conventional stretch around 8–10; then, for some, a later break. The dip is rule-learning. Kindler and Darras: pictorial repertoires, not one realism endpoint.

³¹Lowenfeld and Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth* (1964): “It is the effect of the creative process on the child and not the final product that is of decisive significance.” They attacked stereotyped workbooks and coloring books, not the existence of a finished drawing. The 63 percent coloring-book-bird figure they report from Russell and Waugaman is their mid-century citation, not a 2026 meta-analysis.

³²Elliot W. Eisner, “10 Lessons the Arts Teach,” from *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (Yale

A sample everyone must match teaches following directions. That has fine-motor value; it is not this hour.³³ The hour is open materials, one question, the child's hand.

This band unlocks observation as a habit, watercolor, a simple print, and a sketchbook that is used rather than bought. Skip the material, and later "looking" arrives as a word with no stuff underneath. Skip the looking question, and later still life has nowhere to sit. Skip safety on the label, and the hour is a hazard rather than a studio.

You do not need to be a studio artist. You do need to hear "is this right?" as a product-hour question, not as studio talk, and a tadpole person as typical, not as a problem to erase.

For the parent: understand it yourself

Many adults feel rusty on what to say besides "that's pretty," and on which bottle belongs on a first-grade table. That is ordinary. Five minutes of this section, then the warm-up at the end, is enough for tomorrow.

Everyday picture. Two puddles of tempera on a covered table. A fat brush. The child drags yellow through blue and says "green." You did not mix it. You did not finish the page. The skill is what happened in the hand and the eye: color as stuff that changes, a line that goes somewhere, a sitting that ended while the child still wanted one more mark. The fridge picture, if there is one, is evidence that a sitting happened. It is not the grade.

Precise picture. Process is the making: choice, accident, another try, talk about what is actually on the page. Product is the object that remains. Both exist. Laurel Bongiorno, writing for the National Association for the Education of Young Children, described process-focused early art as having no sample everyone must match and no single right way; the child's language sounds like "Look what I

University Press, 2002), as reprinted by the National Art Education Association: "The arts teach students to think through and within a material." Purposes "are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity."

³³Loretta Fernando-Smith, NAEYC, 2023: both process-focused and product-focused preschool art have value. Laurel Bongiorno, *Teaching Young Children* (NAEYC, 2014): process-focused work has no sample everyone must match. Aimed at preschoolers; not a ban on teaching a convention later.

made” and “Can I have more time?” Product-focused work all looks the same; the language sounds like “Is this right?” and “Mine doesn’t look like yours.”³⁴ Loretta Fernando-Smith, also for NAEYC, is the honest second sentence: both approaches have value. Product-focused work can support fine motor and following a sequence. Process art is choice-driven.³⁵ This chapter’s default is process. A craft that exists only to match a sample can wait, or it can live in a different sitting you name as practice for the hand, not as the studio hour.

Line is a mark that goes. Shape is a closed or suggested area. Color is the stuff in the puddle and on the page, not a worksheet of names. Texture is how the surface would feel, or how it looks as if it would feel. Form is the lump that takes up space — the pinch of clay, the cardboard tube. Texas names those five as Grade 1 elements, in nature and in human-made environments.³⁶ You do not need those words on a quiz. You do need to be able to point to a mark and say “that line goes across,” or to a torn scrap and say “that shape is the one you chose.” Grade 2’s space is already in the collage: the gap between scraps is part of the page. Movement is the eye traveling the crayon path. Value — light and dark as a named building block — is next chapter’s work.

Materials have to match the hand. Lowenfeld wanted wax crayons, finger paints, large brushes, poster paints, large paper, and clay to pound for the early years; watercolor and sharp pencils restrict that movement.³⁷ Charlotte Schneck and Anne Henderson, watching 320 typically developing children from age three to just under seven, found mature pencil grips in 48 percent of the youngest group and 90 percent of the oldest. The study stops at 6 years 11 months.³⁸ A first-grader with a four-finger grip is not a verdict. Give a fat crayon and a big page. The CDC’s five-year picture includes paying attention for five to ten minutes during story time

³⁴Bongiorno, “How Process-Focused Art Experiences Support Preschoolers” (2014). Process language: “Look what I made!” “Can I have more time?” Product language: “Is this right?” “Mine doesn’t look like yours.” Tip: “Look at all the yellow dots you painted.”

³⁵Fernando-Smith, “What Will We Make?” (2023). When a plasticine trunk will not stay up, a peer’s offer of wire is the next move; the teacher asks how the material behaved rather than grabbing the work.

³⁶19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105(b)(1)(B).

³⁷Lowenfeld and Brittain (1964); 1957 materials language via Sullivan (2015): wax crayons, finger paints, large brushes, poster paints, large paper, clay; watercolor and sharp pencils restrict early movement.

³⁸C. M. Schneck and A. Henderson, *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 44, no. 10 (1990): 893–900. Ages 3;0 to 6;11; mature grips 48 percent of the youngest group versus 90 percent of the oldest. The study stops at 6;11.

or making arts and crafts; child scissors appear in a tip box, not as a movement milestone.³⁹ Short sits, then stop. A second sitting later in the week is better than a long sit that ends in tears.

Safety is a label, not folklore. Buy children's art materials marked "Conforms to ASTM D-4236" and without a cautionary warning. That statement is a labeling practice for chronic health hazards, not a seal that means "this is a toy" and not a promise of zero risk. Products with cautionary warnings are not for children pre-kindergarten through grade 6.⁴⁰ The Art and Creative Materials Institute AP seal is a certifier's mark — a toxicologist has certified the product as non-toxic when used as directed — not a federal seal. The CL seal is not for children in grade 6 or lower.⁴¹ If a safety fact is not in this book, read the current label. Air-dry clay is the three-dimensional default. A kitchen table is not a ventilated kiln room.⁴² Children's scissors, labelled, with you in the room, are the cutting tool. Food and drinks stay out of the art area. Give small amounts. Wash hands. Poison Control is 1-800-222-1222.⁴³

Talk is a looking question, not a compliment. Terry Barrett starts with "What do you see?" Description itself counts as criticism. Preference reports the speaker, not the work.⁴⁴ "Look at all the yellow dots you painted" names what is there.⁴⁵

³⁹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Milestones by 5 Years," *Learn the Signs. Act Early.*, page reviewed 15 May 2026, accessed 31 August 2026. Most children (75 percent or more) pay attention 5 to 10 minutes during activities, "for example, during story time or making arts and crafts (screen time does not count)." Child scissors appear in the activity-tip box, not as a 5-year movement milestone.

⁴⁰CPSC, Pub. No. 5015; 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8). Children's art materials: "Conforms to ASTM D-4236" and no cautionary warning. Cautionary-label products are not for pre-kindergarten through grade 6. ASTM D-4236 is a labeling practice for chronic health hazards, not a toy seal.

⁴¹Art and Creative Materials Institute AP seal: a toxicologist has certified the product as non-toxic when used as directed. CL seal is not for grade 6 or lower. ACMI is a certifier, not CPSC.

⁴²CPSC, Pub. No. 5015, ceramics: indoor use of ceramic kilns (electric or fuel-fired) requires mechanical ventilation to the outdoors. A kitchen table is not a ventilated kiln room. Air-dry clay is this book's default for the band.

⁴³CPSC, Pub. No. 5015: food and drinks out of the art area; small amounts; supervise; adults mix dusty materials; wash hands; Poison Control 1-800-222-1222. Avoid solvents with children. A fan with no source of clean air is not adequate ventilation. No dedicated scissors age in Pub. 5015 as extracted; labelled children's scissors, supervise, current package. If a safety fact is not sourced here, read the current label.

⁴⁴Terry Barrett, *Teaching Artist Journal* 2, no. 2 (2004): 87–94. "What do you see?"; "point with your words"; description counts as criticism. Work in progress: "This is already good: How might it be even better?"

⁴⁵Bongiorno, "How Process-Focused Art Experiences Support Preschoolers" (2014).

“How was it working with the material?” asks about process.⁴⁶ “That’s pretty” is preference. “That doesn’t look like a dog” is an adult schema landing on a child’s. “There are no wrong answers” is a pep talk Barrett does not give; he has heard wrong answers. An artist statement, as a written object, is Grade 5 language on the Core Arts map.⁴⁷ This year the child talks. You write nothing in their voice.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. *The child looks at your sample snowman, then at their page, and asks “Is this right?”* Product hour. The sample is doing the looking. Next sitting: no sample on the table. Two colors, a fat brush, “What do you see on your page?” If you wanted fine-motor practice from a sequence, name that sitting as practice for the hand, on a different day, and keep it short.
2. *The child draws a tadpole person — a head with legs — and you hear yourself say “people have bodies; let’s fix it.”* Typical form, not a deficit. Size and exaggeration in this band often follow what matters to the child, not optical proportion. Leave the figure. Ask what they see. Observation in preparation for making is already on the Grade 1 map; adult proportion is not.⁴⁸
3. *Twenty minutes in, the grip is a fist, the paper is a smear, and the voice is “I can’t.”* The sit is too long, or the tool is wrong. Next move: stop. Tomorrow, a bigger crayon, a shorter sitting, paper taped down so the other hand is free. Lowenfeld’s rule when a child says they cannot draw is to boost the experience, not the drawing: “Show me how you would pick them,” not “Yes you can.”⁴⁹
4. *The parent paints the last corner “so we can hang it.”* You finished the work. The child is a spectator. The fridge picture got prettier. The process ended when the adult hand arrived. Put the brush down. Ask one question.

⁴⁶Fernando-Smith, “What Will We Make?” (2023).

⁴⁷NCCAS, *Visual Arts at a Glance* (2014), VA:Cr3.1.5a: artist statements at Grade 5. Grade 1 uses art vocabulary while creating (VA:Cr3.1.1a) and talk, not a written statement.

⁴⁸NCCAS, *Visual Arts at a Glance*, VA:Cr1.2.1a: “Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.” Lowenfeld preschematic typical forms; Winner contrasts the tadpole person with precocious contour. Anna M. Kindler and Bernard Darras, and Dennie Wolf and Martha Perry (1988): pictorial repertoires, not one realism endpoint.

⁴⁹Lowenfeld and Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth* (1964): if the child says “I can’t draw,” boost the experience (“You don’t know how to pick flowers? Show me how you would pick them”), not the drawing.

Wait.

5. *A tablet on the table, a generated coloring page, the child filling someone else's contour.* Performance, not making. The skill to be learned is the child's mark and the child's looking. A fluent generated picture can hide a missing hand the way a fluent chatbot answer can hide a missing idea. Nicholas Soderstrom and Robert Bjork's point still holds: performance during the sitting is an unreliable index of learning.⁵⁰ The unaided page tomorrow, with the generator off, is the test.

A sixth you will also hear: every sitting must produce a displayable picture, or the hour "didn't count." That is product as the only evidence. Keep a folder that includes a smear, a pinch that collapsed, and a page the child can talk about. Eisner asked for an exhibition that tells what problem the child was addressing, not a gallery of only the prettiest.⁵¹ Presenting still exists: the child can say why this page, not that one, goes on the wall.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Do this before the lesson, with two crayons and a scrap of paper, no child in the room.

Minute 1. Fill a small page with one crayon. Press hard, then light. Say out loud: "The skill is the mark, not whether this looks like a house."

Minute 2. Read one bottle in the cupboard. Find "Conforms to ASTM D-4236." Find whether a cautionary warning is there. If the warning is there, that bottle is not this year's.

Minute 3. Imagine a tadpole person. Decide, without performing, what "let's give him a body" would mean if you said it. Decide what "what do you see?" would mean instead. You are installing the miss so you can hear it tomorrow.

Minute 4. Cover the table in your head. Two colors, not eight. A fat brush. Paper bigger than a copy sheet. Food off the table. That is the setup.

⁵⁰Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199. Current performance is often an unreliable index of learning.

⁵¹Elliot W. Eisner, on an educationally interpretive exhibition: tell viewers what problem the child was addressing; compare prior work with present work; do not only hang the prettiest. Reprinted discussion in NAEA materials drawing on *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* and related essays.

Minute 5. Write the sentence you will actually say: “What do you see?” Put the pencil down. That sentence is the lesson.

If you can do those five minutes, you are ready to sit down. The child holds the tool. You hear.

How to teach it this week

A good studio hour this week has a shape. The studio-hour chapter in the front of this book is the full version, including the AI rules. Here is the shape scaled to this band.

Warm-up (2–3 minutes, unaided). One already-known tool, one already-known move. A crayon line across scrap paper. A pinch of yesterday’s clay. No device. No sample.

Short present (3–5 minutes). One looking move, or one tool move, not both as a lecture. “The crayon can go to the edge.” “Two puddles can meet.” You talk for a few minutes. Then you stop.

Students at work (10–15 minutes, the longest block). The child holds the tool. You wait. Struggle before rescue: ask what they see, wait, hint, then a short demo on *your* scrap, not on their page. Large motor. If the sit is done at eight minutes, it is done.

One good question. Not “did you like it?” A question that names what is there: “What do you see?” “Where did the yellow go?” “Show me a shape you tore.” “How was it working with the clay?”

Talking about art (3–5 minutes). Description of the page in front of you. Point with words. One sentence from the child is enough. You are not assigning an artist statement.

Showing (2 minutes). The child chooses one page for the wall or the folder, and can say why. Drafts stay in the folder. The prettiest is not the only one that counts.

Cleanup (5 minutes). This is studio practice, not a chore you do for them: lids on, brushes rinsed, hands washed, table wiped. Safe and proper procedures are already on the Grade 1 map.⁵²

⁵²NCCAS, *Visual Arts at a Glance*, VA:Cr2.2.1a: “Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for

That shape is a practice you impose on whatever materials are on the table. It is not a 180-day calendar. Cover the table. That is teaching advice, not a statute. Food and drinks out of the art area. That is CPSC.⁵³

Exact wording you can say

On looking:

“What do you see?”

“Point with your words. What is on the page?”

“Look at all the yellow you put there.”

On the material:

“How was it working with the brush?”

“The crayon can go all the way to the edge. Try that.”

“Two puddles. What happens if they touch?”

On a stuck hand:

“Show me how you would pick them.”

“Your crayon. I’ll wait.”

“The sit can be short. One more mark, then we stop.”

On presenting:

“Which page do you want on the wall, and why that one?”

“This one stays in the folder so we can see what you tried.”

When you are about to take over:

“Your brush. I’ll ask a question.”

Then wait. Ten seconds of silence is teaching. Taking the brush is the high-help path. Prepare so you can hear “is this right?” Then leave the tool in their hand.

using materials, tools, and equipment while making art.” VA:Cr1.1.1a: “Engage collaboratively in exploration and imaginative play with materials.” VA:Cr2.1.1a: “Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design.”

⁵³CPSC, Pub. No. 5015. Covering the table is teaching advice, not a cited CPSC requirement.

Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly Sheridan named eight studio habits from two arts-intensive high schools, listed alphabetically because they are non-hierarchical: Develop Craft, Engage and Persist, Envision, Express, Observe, Reflect, Stretch and Explore, Understand Art Worlds. They never saw Develop Craft taught in isolation. They always saw it taught.⁵⁴ You do not need the poster. In this band, craft is how the crayon meets the page, how the lid goes on, how the brush is rinsed. Observe is the looking question. Stretch and Explore is the puddle that was not planned. Transfer of any habit outside the studio, they wrote, must be demonstrated, not assumed.⁵⁵ Name a habit in ordinary language if it helps you. Leave the eight-virtue chart off the fridge.

Named project: Fill-the-page crayon

Materials. Wax crayons (ASTM D-4236, no cautionary warning). Paper 12 × 18 inches or larger, taped at the corners so it does not skate. A covered table.

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes of making, then talk. Stop while they still have a mark left in them.

Mess. Low. Crayon on the table wipes. Tape on the corners saves the hour.

The fun. The page is big enough for the shoulder, not only the fingers. Color can be loud. There is no sample house.

The skill. Large-motor line. Filling a field. Color as a choice. Observe: what is actually on the page, not what a coloring book already outlined.

First problem for the student: one big page, one or two crayons, no drawing of a character to copy. Say: “Fill the page. The crayon can go to the edge.” Wait. If they make a tiny island in the corner, the skating-rink move is Lowenfeld’s: enlarge the experience of the page, not the object. “The whole page is yours. Show me a line that travels.” If they ask what it should be, you have not yet left the product hour. “It can be marks. What do you see so far?”

⁵⁴Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly Sheridan, *Studio Thinking 2* (Teachers College Press, 2013). Eight Studio Habits of Mind, listed alphabetically because non-hierarchical. Sample: two arts-intensive high schools. Develop Craft never seen taught in isolation. Elementary/middle structures: Teacher Presents, Students at Work, Talking About Art, Showing Art.

⁵⁵Winner: transfer “can never be assumed. It must be demonstrated.” Winner and Hetland, REAP, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34, nos. 3–4 (2000): no reliable causal link from arts-rich education to verbal and mathematics scores; visual arts and reading a very small relationship that could not be generalized (readiness, not achievement). Justify the hour by looking and making.



Figure 4: A large sheet taped at the corners, fat crayons, and a page filling with heavy crayon marks. No child.

Named project: Tempera puddle mix

Materials. Two or three bottles of tempera, ASTM D-4236, no warning. Fat brushes. Absorbent paper. A covered table. A small amount in a lid or cup — not the whole bottle. Water for rinse. A rag.

Time. A short present (two puddles can meet), ten minutes of making, cleanup that you do not skip.

Mess. High. That is honest. Cover the table. Sleeves up or an old shirt. Small amounts.

The fun. Color as stuff. Yellow through blue becomes a third thing nobody drew in advance. Accidents are the point of Stretch and Explore, not a mistake to wipe for them.

The skill. Color mixing in the material, not on a worksheet. Safe procedures: amount, rinse, lid, hands. NCAS Grade 1 already wants safe and proper procedures

while making.⁵⁶

Say: “Two puddles. What happens if they touch?” Then stop talking. If they ask for the “right” green, the sample is back in the room. “The green on your page is the one we have. What do you see in it?”

Named project: Torn-paper collage

Materials. Paper scraps (construction paper, magazine color fields, old drawings — not a character to copy). Glue stick with ASTM D-4236 and no warning. A base sheet. Optional: child scissors, labelled, for snips of strips, not interior snowflakes.

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes. Tearing is the default cut. Scissors are extra, supervised.

Mess. Medium. Glue on the table is the risk. Small glue stick, not a puddle of white glue.

The fun. Shapes appear without having to draw them. Arrangement is a choice: overlap, gap, pile, edge.

The skill. Shape and arrangement. Texas constructions. Grade 2 space is already here in the gaps. Emphasis is the scrap that sits on top or sits alone.

Say: “Tear three shapes. Put them on the page. You decide where.” After they work: “What do you see? Which shape did you put first?” Leave your own collage off the table as a sample.

⁵⁶NCCAS, VA:Cr2.2.1a; CPSC, Pub. No. 5015, small amounts, supervision, wash hands.



Figure 5: Torn colored scraps glued into a simple arrangement of shapes on a page. No characters, no child.

How to fade help

Day of a new material: you show the tool on your scrap — how the lid comes off, how the brush is held well enough, how tearing works. The child does the page. When they can start without asking “is this right?”, stop showing a finished example. Bring the demo back when a new tool arrives, or when clay first stands. Fading is for a working habit, not for a calendar date.

When to stop talking

After the question. After the hint. After the demo on a *different* scrap. If you hear yourself drawing on their page “just to get it started,” you have started doing the work. Stop. Point to the paper. Wait.

A child who fills the page and can say one true sentence about a mark that is on it has the hour in miniature. A child who produces a matching snowman with your hand in the last corner has a fridge picture. Your job is to hear which.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked, for a new move. The day you introduce fill-the-page, give a short set that is only that: one big sheet, crayon, edge to edge. The day you introduce puddles, two colors only. The day you introduce tearing, no scissors on the table. The day you introduce clay, one lump, no tools except the hands.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, yesterday's crayon page next to today's collage: "Which one used shape by tearing? Which one used line?" Mixing is the practice of noticing what the material did. A purchased craft kit that is one sample can still be mixed by you pulling yesterday's open page onto the same table afterward.

Brief retrieval of a move already known. Two minutes, unaided: "Show me a line that goes to the edge." "Show me two puddles touching." You listen. Overworking a page until it is "done enough to hang" has limited additional benefit compared with meeting the same move next week on a new sheet.

One incorrect example to diagnose. After the child has attempted fill-the-page, show a scrap with a tiny cluster of marks in one corner and a large empty field. Ask: "What did this person use the page for?" After a sitting that copied your snowman, show two identical copies and ask what the maker was matching. The child names the miss. You do not narrate it as a verdict on talent.

Kitchen, talk, and making. Talk in full sentences about what is on the page. Retell the sitting: first I tore, then I glued, then the blue went over. That talk is art vocabulary in use, which Grade 1 already wants, without a written statement.⁵⁷ A grocery bag turned into a collage is useful construction. It does not replace an unaided page at the table.

Named project: Looking at a daily-life picture

This is a Responding sitting, not a Creating sitting. One reproduction — a postcard, a library book open to a still life or a street, a painting of a kitchen, not a photograph of a child's face and not an upload to a generator. Barrett's question: "What do you

⁵⁷NCCAS, VA:Cr3.1.1a: "Use art vocabulary to describe choices while creating art." VA:Cr3.1.2a: "Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork." Texas Grade 1 sketchbooks appear in a "such as" collection list (§ 117.105(b)(4)(C)), not as a required object.

see?” Grade 1 on the map: select and describe works that illustrate daily life.⁵⁸ Five to ten minutes. Then stop.

Materials. One picture both of you can see. No worksheet of triangles to hunt unless the hunt serves meaning.

Time. Short. Looking dies if they cannot see the work; sit close.

Mess. None.

The fun. Noticing something the other person missed. “Thank you, I didn’t notice that until you said it” is Barrett’s sentence, and you may steal it.⁵⁹

The skill. Description before preference. Pointing with words. The beginning of Responding, which later chapters will grow into interpretation and judgment. This sitting does not replace making.

Named project: Air-dry pinch pot

Materials. Air-dry clay, ASTM D-4236, no warning. A covered table. A damp rag. A plastic bag or container to keep an unfinished lump from drying out, as the current package allows. No kiln. No glaze that you have not read.

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes of pinching. A later sitting to see what dried, not a week of waiting as the only art.

Mess. Medium. Clay on the table, clay on sleeves. Small lump, not a ten-pound brick.

The fun. Form. A lump becomes a pinch, a pinch becomes a bowl or a creature or a blob that the child can name. Collapse is information: the wall was too thin, the base too small.

The skill. Form as a Grade 1 element. Modeled sculpture, which Texas already includes.⁶⁰ Thinking through a material: clay remembers the pinch. When a trunk will not stand, Fernando-Smith’s next move is a question about the material, or a peer’s offer of a different support — not an adult who grabs the work and finishes

⁵⁸NCCAS, VA:Re.7.1.1a: “Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences of one’s self and others.”

⁵⁹Barrett, “Improving Student Dialogue About Art” (2004): “Thank you, I didn’t notice that until you said it.”

⁶⁰19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105(b)(2)(C), sculptures including modeled forms.

it.⁶¹ Wire can wait. A thicker pinch can happen today.

Say: “Pinch until it has a place inside. If it falls, we look at why, then pinch again.” If they say “I can’t make a pot,” boost the experience: “Show me how you would hold a bowl.” Then they pinch.



Figure 6: An air-dry lump pinched into a small pot, still on a covered table, with a damp rag nearby. No kiln, no child.

Named project: Repurpose a cardboard tube

Materials. One cardboard tube. Tape (read the current label; avoid solvent adhesives). Optional: paper scraps, a bit of clay as a base, child scissors for the tape. Grade 2 on the map already: repurpose objects to make something new.⁶²

Time. One sitting, or two if the tape fights.

Mess. Medium. Tape tangles. Keep the roll in your hand if that saves the hour.

⁶¹Fernando-Smith, “What Will We Make?” (2023).

⁶²NCCAS, VA:Cr2.3.2a: “Repurpose objects to make something new.”

The fun. Trash becomes a thing. A tube can be a person, a tree, a tunnel, a standing form. There is no sample robot.

The skill. Construction. Form in space. Envision: picturing a next step that is not yet on the table. Studio practice: leftover cardboard in a box for next time, not a lecture on recycling.

Say: “This was a tube. What can it be now? Your hands. I’ll wait.” If the standing fails, the clay pinch from earlier in the week can become a base. That is mixed practice, not a new craft of the week.

A weekly shape: day of a new material, a short blocked sitting. Same week: mixed noticing — which sitting was line, which was shape, which was form. Later this week: the looking picture for five minutes. Daily, if you can: a short unaided mark on scrap, even if the big project is tomorrow. You impose that shape on the cupboard you already have.

For the student

You are learning how stuff behaves. A crayon makes a line. Two paints can make a third color. Paper can be torn into a shape. Clay remembers a pinch. You hold the tool. A picture on a screen is not your mark.

The page can be big. The sitting can be short. You fill the page. You look at what is actually there.

Tiny worked example

A big sheet of paper, taped so it stays. One crayon.

Start at one edge. Push the crayon across. Go all the way to the other edge. Do that again, a different way. Press hard. Press light. The page begins to fill. That is the work. It does not have to be a house.

Check: look at the page. Point to a mark. Say one sentence about that mark — “this one is dark,” “this one goes to the corner.” That is looking. The fridge is later.

Two tries

1. Fill one big page with crayon. Go to the edges. Then say one sentence about a mark that is actually on the page.

2. Put two small puddles of paint on a covered table. Use a fat brush. Let the puddles touch. Watch. Then say what happened to the color.

Write nothing if writing fights the sitting. Talk the sentence. Your grown-up can remember it.

Explain it back

Tell someone at the table, in your own words, what you did with the material. Then point to the page and say what you see, not whether you like it. Then point to a picture in a book and say one thing that is in the picture.

Challenge

Some people wait for a sample and copy it. Some people make a tiny island of marks in the corner of a big page. What would those two moves mean? How do you fill the page instead? How do you look at what you made, in a sentence of your own?

You are allowed to struggle. You may use a fat crayon, a short sitting, paper that is taped. You hold the tool. If you get stuck, ask for a hint — not for someone to finish the page. Then try again.

A pinch of clay can fall down. That is the clay telling you the wall was thin. Pinch thicker. A tube can become something it was not. Tape is part of the work.

When you talk, a sentence about what is on the page is enough for today. You do not have to write an artist statement. That is later. Today you look, you make, you say one true thing.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics. Each one has a next move. None of them is a verdict on talent, and none of them is a reason to wait for a birthday.

1. The sitting collapses in a few minutes: fist grip, tears, “I can’t,” or a smear that feels like failure to them.

The tool or the duration is the fight. Next move: fatter crayon, bigger paper taped down, shorter sit — five minutes of making is a real sitting in this band. Stop while they still want one more mark. If the brush is floppy, change the brush. If scissors are the fight, tear. Schneck's grip study does not go past the start of this band;

an immature grip here is common, not a character flaw.⁶³ If a second-grader still cannot open and close labelled children's scissors with teaching and practice, that is a conversation with a pediatrician or occupational therapist, not a stage chart. Stay with large tools until the hand can meet them. Go ahead to a slightly smaller crayon when fill-the-page is easy and the sit can last a short block without tears.

2. Every page is a copy of a sample, a coloring-book outline, or your last-minute "fix," and the child asks "is this right?"

The product hour is the default. Next move: sample off the table. Two colors, one question, unaided page. After they attempt, one incorrect example (two identical copies) for them to explain. Slow down the displayable crafts until an open page can happen without the question. A child who can produce a matching holiday figure and cannot say what is on an open page is not ready to skip this. Go ahead once they can fill a page, pinch a lump, or arrange torn shapes without looking for your model. A tutor who will sit with materials and a looking question, not with a stack of printables, is a reasonable next step if you have tried open sittings and the hour has become a fight.

3. Looking is thin: the child will not look at their own page, or at a daily-life picture, and talk is only "I like it" or silence.

Description has not started. Next move: Barrett's question, then wait. You model one sentence that is actually about the page: "I see a heavy line to the corner." They try one sentence. Five minutes with one reproduction of daily life, then making. If "I can't draw" is the sentence in the room, boost the experience, not the drawing. Stay here until one true sentence about a mark is ordinary. A specialist is a next step when looking or making is unexpectedly hard given what the child can do in the rest of the day, and the difficulty holds after weeks of short, well-tooled sittings. This chapter does not diagnose anyone. A parent worried about a drawing as a window onto distress needs a clinician, not Lowenfeld.

When to slow down. Tool fight. Sample as the only way to start. Sits that always end in tears. Those are brakes. "Not ready" because of age is the brake this book will not use. "Not ready" because the crayon is too thin or the sitting is too long is a real brake.

When to go ahead. Fill-the-page is easy. Two puddles can meet without a crisis.

⁶³Schneck and Henderson (1990). McHale and Cermak, *AJOT* 46, no. 10 (1992): 30 to 60 percent of a school day in fine-motor activity, writing predominating.

A pinch stands or the collapse can be talked about. Torn shapes are arranged on purpose. One sentence about what is on the page is ordinary. Cleanup can happen with help. Then the next chapter's mug, watercolor, and sketchbook have somewhere to sit. Being "good at crafts" because a child can follow a sample is not a reason to skip material play. Being seven and still in love with the puddle is not a reason to stay here if observation of a real mug is already hungry to start — you can overlap a little. Birthday is not placement.

When to get a human tutor. You have run the short open sittings, the fatter tools, and the sample-free table for a stretch of weeks, and the same diagnosis is still the one in the room, and the hour has become a fight. A tutor is a release valve, not a failure of the sitting. Keep yourself as the person who can still hear "is this right?" and a tadpole person as typical. Outsourcing the hearing is the thing to avoid, not asking for help.

A child who will smear paint with joy and will not look at a picture is missing Responding. A child who will talk about a postcard and will not hold a brush is missing Creating. Hearing which is thin is enough. If the material is the fight, change the tool, then guided practice, then independent. If the material is easy and the task is looking, a short look at one picture, then back to the page.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you, the adult. The full rules live in the studio-hour box in the front of this book. This chapter is a pointer, not a second policy paper.

The short version: the child looks and makes the mark. The tool does not. You hold the setup, the time, and the looking question.

A tool may explain today's idea *to you* — why a fat crayon, why two colors, why a tadpole person is typical. It may invent a still-life or a collage prompt from kitchen scraps, which the child will then make by hand. It may show a composition for the two of you to look at together, after which the child works from materials, not from tracing the printout as the project. It may help you diagnose a page already made: what question to ask next.

Leave these out of the hour: "make my child's project"; turning in a generated image as their work; an unsupervised generator while they draw or paint; uploading a child's face. Grids and traces still pass through the child's eye and hand; they

are not this year's need. A generator skips looking and marking altogether.

A language model will happily outline a snowman and call it a lesson. Performance during that kind of help is not the same as learning. The unaided page tomorrow morning is the test. Unguarded solvers in a high-school math study raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam; that paper is mathematics, not an art trial. The crutch is still the sitting condition. If the tool produces the picture, the child is a spectator.⁶⁴

Hermes and Grok Bot, if you use them, live on your machine or your account. They are not school-safe products and not the child's studio buddy. Grok Bot can make game art if asked. That is the point, and that is why it stays on your side of the table.

Paper, a fat crayon, tempera, a glue stick, air-dry clay, and labelled children's scissors are tools too. Use them, then keep them at this size until the hand is ready for a smaller one.

What “done enough” looks like

Placement is by skill, not birthday. A “grade 1” art book is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade. Artistic Pursuits, Draw Write Now, a well-used Usborne how-to, and an open cupboard of materials can place the same child in different rooms, because they cut the grain differently.⁶⁵ Choose by fit. This book names those programs as options. It does not rank them. Combining them does not turn a brand into a course name. If you keep a record this early, the title a stranger can read is Art.

Checklist before moving on

- The child fills a large page with crayon, unaided, and can go to the edges without a sample.

⁶⁴Hamsa Bastani et al., *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Mathematics RCT: GPT Base +48 percent assisted practice, then -17 percent unaided exam. Not an art trial. The sitting condition is the mechanism. Soderstrom and Bjork (2015).

⁶⁵Artistic Pursuits, Draw Write Now, Usborne *Art Skills*, and similar programs named by fit, not ranked. Vendor placement language (Draw Write Now book numbers are not grade level; Artistic Pursuits “begin without prior knowledge”) is the publisher's. No homeschool-curriculum randomized trial comparing them was opened for the research behind this book. Transcript title: Art.

- Two or three tempera colors can meet on a page. The child can say what happened to the color, in a sentence.
- Torn-paper shapes can be arranged on a sheet. Gaps and overlaps are choices, even if the child does not use those words.
- An air-dry pinch can become a form, or a collapse the child can talk about. No kiln was required.
- A cardboard tube, or another leftover object, can be repurposed into a construction.
- One reproduction of daily life can be looked at for a few minutes. The child can say what they see, not only whether they like it.
- Talk is description: a mark, a color, a shape on the page. You did not write an artist statement for them. They did not copy one.
- Sits can be short. Tools are large. Cleanup happens with help: lids, rinse, hands.
- Materials on the table conform to ASTM D-4236 and carry no cautionary warning. You can read a label.
- You can hear “is this right?”, a tadpole person, and a parent-finished corner, and you can ask a good question, without taking the brush.

If most of that list is true, go on to observation of what is actually there, watercolor, a simple print, and a sketchbook used as a habit, even if the birthday says otherwise. If the birthday says “third grade” and the sample is still doing the looking, stay. The next chapter is the eye, with the hand still in the work.

A path through making is the promise. A gifted label is not.

Chapter 2

Observation starts: what you actually see



Figure 7: A mug, a graphite pencil, a pan-watercolor box, a foam plate, and a blank sketchbook on a covered table. No child in the picture.

Why this matters

Last chapter installed the hand in the material: a big crayon page, a tempera puddle, torn shape, pinch, a tube made into something else, one looking question. Keep all of that. This chapter is the bridge: from making with stuff to looking at a thing in front of you and drawing what you actually see, not the name of the thing you already had in your head.

The sentence that surprises people is this one: a child who “can draw” a cup from memory may still not be able to draw *this* mug from here. The memory cup is a schema — a stable, repeated idea. Viktor Lowenfeld called the schematic years the achievement of a form concept; by the gang-age window, looking often gets ahead of the hand, and “I can’t draw” appears because the child can now see the gap.⁶⁶ That sentence is a map, not a diagnosis. Then teach. Put the mug on the table. Ask what they see. Wait.

Observation is already on the Grade 1 Core Arts map: use observation and investigation in preparation for making.⁶⁷ This band makes the habit deliberate. Texas names the first strand “observation and perception,” and at Grade 3 it adds **value** — light and dark — as a required element, and asks students to discuss the elements as building blocks and the principles as organizers.⁶⁸ Value was not a Grade 1 requirement on that map. Teach it here, on a real object, not as a worksheet of boxes. The Core Arts map at Grade 5 wants practice across multiple techniques, and it is the first grade that names an artist statement as a written object.⁶⁹ Earlier grades in this band still talk. Grade 5 writes one or two sentences with art words about a

⁶⁶Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1964), Schematic Stage (seven to nine) and Dawning Realism / Gang Age (nine to eleven). Looking getting ahead of the hand is typical of that window, not a diagnosis. G. L. Sullivan, master thesis, Indiana University / Herron, 2015: original sample demographics were never recorded.

⁶⁷National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *Visual Arts at a Glance* (2014), VA:Cr1.2.1a: “Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.” Accessed 31 August 2026.

⁶⁸19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.111 (Art, Grade 3, adopted 2013): elements including line, shape, color, texture, form, space, and value; principles including emphasis, repetition/pattern, movement/rhythm, contrast/variety, balance, proportion, and unity; “discuss the elements of art as building blocks and the principles of design as organizers of works of art.” Value is not in the Grade 1 including list (§ 117.105). These are Texas-named lists, not a closed NCAS list. California 2019 is NCAS-based and does not enumerate that closed list in the Visual Arts Glossary.

⁶⁹NCCAS, *Visual Arts at a Glance*, VA:Cr2.1.5a: “Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.” VA:Cr3.1.5a: “Create artist statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in art-making.”

choice they actually made. That is not a Grade 1 assignment moved up.

Richard Salome directed fifth-graders' attention to contours and to critical intersections — angles, peaks of curvature, abrupt color change — and the drawings communicated, defined, and proportioned the image more clearly than controls. A later study with kindergarteners and a toy truck showed greater differentiation after the same kind of looking instruction.⁷⁰ This is a useful finding, not a promise that every home will see the same result, and this book will not invent a number for it. Then teach. Contour — a slow line that follows an edge you are looking at — is a studio move in that family. Betty Edwards packaged contour, negative space, and sighting as popular exercises; keep the exercises. The left-brain / right-brain cartoon that often travels with them is not current neuroscience.⁷¹ You do not need a hemisphere story to ask a child to look at the rim.

What you are teaching, as art, is observational drawing of what is in front of the eyes; value as light and dark on that object; a watercolor wash that behaves like water; a simple print that repeats a shape; a stitch or a craft that is a line with more control; and a sketchbook that is opened on purpose. A year of only copying cartoon characters trains a schema, not an eye.⁷² Copying a master as a study is allowed later and named as a study. This week the mug is the master.

This band unlocks proportion, overlapping, a longer page, and a sketchbook habit that can carry a still life for a week. Skip looking, and later “perspective” arrives as a trick with no ellipse underneath. Skip value, and later shading is coloring-in.

⁷⁰Richard A. Salome, “The Effects of Perceptual Training upon the Two-Dimensional Drawings of Children,” *Studies in Art Education* 7, no. 1 (1965): 18-33, as reported in later *Studies in Art Education* discussions: instruction on contours and critical intersections improved fifth-graders communication, definition, and proportion of an image. Richard A. Salome and D. Reeves, “Two Pilot Investigations of Perceptual Training of Four- and Five-Year-Old Kindergarten Children,” *Studies in Art Education* 13, no. 2 (1972): 3-9. Secondary report of the 1965 paper this pass; no effect size is invented here. This is a useful study, not a promise that every home will see the same result.

⁷¹Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1979 and later editions): contour, negative space, upside-down copying, sighting as perceptual exercises. Michael C. Corballis, “Left Brain, Right Brain: Facts and Fantasies,” *PLOS Biology* 12, no. 1 (2014): e1001767: polarities of left and right brain “owe more to the power of myth than to the scientific evidence.” Keep contour; leave the hemisphere cartoon.

⁷²Brent Wilson and Marjorie Wilson, “An Iconoclastic View of the Imagery Sources in the Drawings of Young People,” *Art Education* 30, no. 1 (1977): 4-11. Paul Duncum, “To Copy or Not to Copy: A Review,” *Studies in Art Education* 29, no. 4 (1988): 203-210: copying is productive “in certain circumstances.” A year of only cartoon copy trains a schema.

Skip the sketchbook, and later process is only the fridge.

You do not need to be a studio artist. You do need to hear a U-shaped cup with a C-handle, drawn without looking up, as a schema, not as observation, and “I can’t draw” as a looking problem you can set up, not as a talent verdict.

For the parent: understand it yourself

Many adults feel rusty because they draw the name of the mug too. That is ordinary. Five minutes at the end of this section is enough for tomorrow. Last chapter installed large tools, short sits, and “What do you see?” Keep all three. The sit can grow a little. The tool can be a graphite pencil. The question stays.

Everyday picture. A mug on the table, handle to one side, close enough to touch. If you draw the *word* mug, you get a U and a C. If you draw *this* mug from here, the rim is an ellipse — a squashed circle — because you are not looking straight down into it. The handle joins the body at two places you can point to. One side of the mug is lighter if a window is doing the work. The child who draws the U without looking up has not failed. They have drawn what they know. Your job is to notice that, and to put the looking back in the sitting.

Precise picture. Observational drawing is a perceptual skill you can teach. Adults who “can’t draw,” and children who suddenly “can’t,” are often drawing the name rather than the look.⁷³ Salome’s move is ordinary: attend to the contour (the edge) and to places the edge changes (a corner, a peak, a sudden shift from mug to handle). Spend as much time looking as drawing. The object stays put; if it rotates every ten seconds, the problem keeps changing. Contour in the studio sense is a slow line made while the eye travels the edge. Gesture is a faster, whole-shape line; it can wait for a later chapter. Value is how light or dark a surface is, independent of the color name: the same blue mug has a light side and a dark side. Texas wants that element at Grade 3. A five-step scale on a scrap can help the hand feel the range; the test is still the mug, not the scale.

Watercolor is a painting, which Texas already includes; the word *watercolor* is not a TEKS noun.⁷⁴ Pan watercolor that conforms to ASTM D-4236 and carries

⁷³Rebecca Chamberlain and Johan Wagemans, reviews of observational drawing: skill is linked to flexible attention to local and global levels. Adult art-student samples; not translated here into a grade-3 coefficient.

⁷⁴19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 117.111-117.117: produce drawings; paintings; prints; sculpture

no cautionary warning is still a children's material through grade 6.⁷⁵ It behaves like water: a wet wash moves, a dry brush does not, two wet colors run. That is thinking through a material, not a recipe for a sunset. A simple print — a foam plate, a found leaf, a cut potato if the current knife situation in your kitchen is one you will supervise — is pattern and repetition, which Grade 1 already named as a principle. Fiber and stitch are “such as” in elementary Texas and become “including” at Middle School 1.⁷⁶ A running stitch as a line is a craft that earns its keep because it teaches a design move. A craft that exists only to match a sample is still last chapter's product hour.

A sketchbook in Texas Grade 1 is an example in a “such as” list of collections.⁷⁷ This book starts the *habit* here: a pad that opens for a looking page, not a bought object that stays in the wrapper. Grade 5's artist statement is a few sentences using art words to describe a choice in the making.⁷⁸ Grade 3 and 4 talk that sentence. You do not assign a fifth-grade statement to a child who is still in last chapter's puddle.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. *The mug is on the table. The drawing is a U and a C, made while the eyes stayed on the paper.* Schema. The name of the mug did the work. Say: “Look at the rim. Is it a circle from where you sit, or is it flatter? Draw the rim you see.” If they look once and then invent, the looking has not started. As much time looking as drawing is the sitting condition.
2. *“I can't draw.” Eyes off the mug, pencil down, the hour over.* Looking got ahead of the hand, or last year's sample trained a match they cannot make from life. Boost the experience, not the character: the mug is close, the sit is shorter, the task is one rim, not a finished still life. Lowenfeld's flower sentence still works: show me how you would hold the mug. Then they

including modeled forms; other forms such as ceramics, fiber art, constructions, mixed media, digital art and media, photographic imagery. Watercolor is not a TEKS noun; paintings is.

⁷⁵U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015; 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8). Children materials: “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” and no cautionary warning through grade 6.

⁷⁶Fiber art is “such as” in elementary Texas TEKS and “including” from Middle School 1 (§ 117.202(c)(2)(C)).

⁷⁷19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105(b)(4)(C): compile collections of artwork such as physical artwork, electronic images, sketchbooks, or portfolios. Same “such as” list in Grades 2-5. A sketchbook is not required at Grade 1; the habit belongs here.

⁷⁸NCCAS, VA:Cr3.1.5a.

draw the hold they just did.

3. *A year of only copying cartoon characters, or a tablet still-life the child traces as the project.* A week of a favorite character is a repertoire, and children already draw from popular imagery.⁷⁹ A year of only that is a program of other people's schemas. A generated mug traced as the work skips the looking-and-marking loop. Pair twenty minutes of the actual mug with whatever they draw for fun. Name which sitting is observation.
4. *A Grade 3 child is asked to write an "artist statement" about how the picture makes them feel, and the drawing hour shrinks to the paragraph.* Wrong grade, wrong object. Grade 5 writes about a choice in the making, with art words. Grade 3 talks: "I made the rim flatter because that is what I saw." Feelings can start a conversation. They are not the statement the map names.
5. *Value is a worksheet of six gray boxes, never an object, or it is skipped because "we already did color."* Color is hue. Value is light and dark. The mug has both. A scale can be a two-minute warm-up. The sitting is still the light side and the dark side of the thing in front of you.

A sixth, related: the child produces a fluent page with you naming every next mark — "now the handle, now the shadow" — and cannot start the next morning unaided. Help during the sitting was performance. The unaided contour tomorrow is the test.⁸⁰ Leave the pencil in their hand. Ask, wait, hint, then a short demo on *your* scrap.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Do this before the lesson, with a mug and a scrap of paper, no child in the room.

Minute 1. Sit. Look at the rim. Draw only the rim, slowly, looking more than drawing. Notice the ellipse. That is contour in miniature.

Minute 2. Squint. Which side of the mug is lighter? Shade that difference in two values, not six. Say: "Value is light and dark, not the name of the color."

Minute 3. Draw a U and a C from memory next to the looking drawing. Name which one used the mug. You are installing the miss so you can hear it tomorrow.

⁷⁹Wilson and Wilson (1977); Duncum (1988).

⁸⁰Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176-199.

Minute 4. Open the watercolor box. Read the label: ASTM D-4236, no cautionary warning. Wet one pan on a scrap. Watch it move. That is the material, not a sunset recipe.

Minute 5. Write the sentence you will actually say: “Look at the mug. Draw the rim you see.” Put the pencil down.

If you can tell a schema from an ellipse, and light-dark from the color name, you are ready to sit down.

How to teach it this week

A good studio hour this week has the same shape as last chapter. The studio-hour chapter in the front of this book is the full version. Here is the shape scaled to this band.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). A looking page already begun, or two values on a scrap, or yesterday’s rim redrawn in thirty seconds. Paper. No device. Mug stays put.

Short present (5 minutes). One convention, one picture of the convention. You draw a rim on your scrap while you look at the mug, out loud: “I am watching the edge. The line is slow. I look more than I draw.” Or: two values on the mug’s body. You talk for a few minutes. Then you stop. This is Teacher Presents, then Students at Work — a short demonstration of one convention, then a long silence.⁸¹

Student attempt (15–20 minutes). The longest block. Contour, or wash, or print, or stitch. The child holds the tool. You wait. Struggle before rescue. The object does not rotate. You do not finish the ellipse.

One good question. Not “does it look like a mug?” A question that names the idea: “Where did you look just then?” “Is the rim a circle from here?” “Which side is darker?” “What did the water do?”

Talking about art (5 minutes). Description of the drawing and of the mug. Point

⁸¹Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly Sheridan, *Studio Thinking 2* (Teachers College Press, 2013): elementary/middle structures — Teacher Presents, Students at Work, Talking About Art, Showing Art. Develop Craft never seen taught in isolation, always seen taught. Sample was two arts-intensive high schools.

with words. Grade 3–4: one spoken sentence about a choice. Grade 5: that sentence can be written, short, with an art word — *ellipse*, *value*, *wash*, *contour*, *print*.

Showing. Sketchbook stays the sketchbook. One page may be photographed or parked in the folder. Drafts count.

Cleanup. Pans closed, water dumped, foam plate rinsed or thrown, needle in a case you hold. Safe procedures are still the map.

Exact wording you can say

On looking:

“Look at the mug. Draw the rim you see.”

“As much time looking as drawing.”

“Where does the handle join? Point on the mug, then on the page.”

On value:

“Squint. Which side is darker? Show me that on the page.”

“Value is light and dark. The color name can stay blue.”

On a stuck hand:

“Your pencil. The mug is still there.”

“One edge. Not the whole mug yet.”

“Show me how you would hold it. Now draw that.”

On watercolor:

“Wet paper, wet paint: they run. Say what happened, then decide if you wanted that.”

On a statement, Grade 5:

“Two sentences. What choice did you make, and which art word names it?”

When you are about to take over:

“Your pencil. I’ll wait.”

Then wait. If you hear yourself drawing their ellipse, you have started doing the looking. Stop. Point to the rim of the real mug.

Named project: Contour of a mug from life

Materials. One mug, close. Graphite pencil. Paper or the sketchbook. A sit where both child and mug stay put.

Time. Five-minute present, fifteen minutes of looking-and-drawing, five minutes of talk. A second sitting the same week on the same mug from a slightly different seat.

Mess. Low.

The fun. The rim surprises people. The drawing does not have to be pretty. A wobbly ellipse that was seen is the win.

The skill. Edges and ellipse. Observation versus schema. As much time looking as drawing. Critical intersections: handle joins, rim meets wall.

First problem for the student: the mug, unaided, after your one demo on a *different* scrap. Say: “Draw the rim you see. You may look at the page to place the line. You look at the mug to find it.” Wait. If they produce the U, they used the name. If they stall, demo a *different* object — a spoon’s ellipse — fully, then a completion together on a cup you both look at, then return to their mug. That is fading: full example, then a bit together, then the item.

Later the same week, the diagnostic item: the same mug, generator off, no tracing of a printout. If the ellipse appears without the mug in the room, it may be a remembered trick. Put the mug back.



Figure 8: A mug beside a graphite drawing of its rim as an ellipse, handle joining at two places. No child.

Named project: Watercolor wash still life

Materials. Pan watercolor, ASTM D-4236, no warning. One fat and one smaller brush. Heavy paper or a pad that can take water. A jar of water. A rag. One or two objects (mug, apple, sponge). Covered table.

Time. One present on how a wash moves, fifteen to twenty minutes of making, cleanup you do not skip.

Mess. Medium. Water tips. Small jar, small puddle.

The fun. Color runs and makes a sky, a table, a side of fruit nobody outlined. Accidents are information.

The skill. Paintings as a must-master medium. Water as the material. Value can live here too: more water, lighter; more pigment, darker. Not a Grade 1 puddle with no object; not a high-school still life with a full palette.

Say: “Wet a field. Let it be the table or the air. Then look at the object and put one darker shape where the object sits.” If they ask for the right sunset, the sample is back. “The wash on your page is the one we have. What did the water do?”



Figure 9: A pan-watercolor box, a jar of water, and a simple wash still life of a mug and fruit. No child.

Named project: Simple foam or found-object print

Materials. A foam plate or tray, or a found object with a face (leaf, spool, cut vegetable if you are the one holding the kitchen tool). Tempera, ASTM D-4236, no warning. Paper. A covered table. A brayer is optional; a brush can ink the surface.

Time. Present how ink sits on the raised face, then a run of several prints from one block. Fifteen to twenty minutes.

Mess. Medium-high. Ink on sleeves. Small amount of paint. Hands washed before the rest of the house.

The fun. Repeating a shape without drawing it again. A pattern appears. Prints are supposed to be more than one.

The skill. Pattern and repetition. Print as a Texas must-master medium from Grade 1, still here.⁸² Press, lift, look. A second print that is lighter is value by accident — name it.

Say: “Ink the face. Press. Lift. Do it again on a new spot. What repeated?” Foam and found objects are this year’s plate. Later cutting tools wait for a package you have actually read.

How to fade help

Day of a new convention: you model one rim, or one wash, fully, on your scrap. The child explains what you did. A second object they complete with you. A third is theirs. When the unaided mug has an ellipse that was seen, stop showing full examples. Bring the demo back when value first has a name, or when the first print is inked.

When to stop talking

After the question. After the hint. After the demo of a *different* object. If you hear yourself saying “now a little shadow here” while their pencil is idle, you have started doing the work. Point to the mug. Wait.

A child who looks, draws a rim that is not a remembered U, and can say where they looked has the hour in miniature. A child who traces a generated mug has a performance. Your job is to hear which.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked, for a new move. The day you introduce contour, a short set that is only edges: mug rim, then a spoon, then a book corner. The day you introduce value, two values on one object, no color names required. The day you introduce a wash, one field of water, one object dropped in. The day you introduce print, several impressions from one face, no new drawing.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, contour and value on the same mug. A wash next to a dry graphite page of the same object. A print of a leaf

⁸²19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105(b)(2)(C) and Grade 3-5 creative-expression media lists: prints remain in the including column.

next to a contour of the leaf. Mixing is the practice of choosing a way to look. A purchased how-to that is almost all copy-the-cartoon can still be mixed by you putting the mug on the table afterward.

Brief retrieval. Two minutes: “Draw the rim you see” on yesterday’s mug. Or: “Which side is darker?” Cover any tablet. You listen. A perfect fridge still-life last night is not the same as this morning’s unaided ellipse.

One incorrect example to diagnose. After they attempt the mug, show a U-and-C drawing labelled “drawn from the word *mug*.” Ask: “What did this person look at?” After a wash that is actually a coloring-in of a pencil cartoon, ask what the water was for. The child names the miss.

Sketchbook as retrieval. Three looking pages a week is enough: a shoe, a faucet, a plant, five minutes each. The pad is for looking, not for keeping the house looking like a studio.

Named project: Sketchbook looking page

Materials. A bound pad or a stack of paper kept as a pad. Graphite. One object from the room.

Time. Five to ten minutes, several times a week, not a Sunday masterpiece.

Mess. Low.

The fun. A private page. No one has to hang it. The same plant on Monday and Thursday is a movie of looking.

The skill. Observe as a habit. Collection, which Texas already named as an example. Processfolio in miniature: drafts live here, not only best pieces.⁸³

Say: “Open the book. Draw what you see for five minutes. Date the page.” You do not grade it. You look with them once a week: “What do you see here that you did not see on Monday?”

Grade 5 artist-statement sentence

Materials. The work already made. A slip of paper or a sketchbook margin.

Time. Five minutes, after making, not instead of making.

⁸³Arts PROPEL (Project Zero / ETS): production, perception, reflection; the processfolio collects drafts and reflection, not only best pieces. Elliot Eisner: an educationally interpretive exhibition tells what problem the child was addressing.

Mess. None.

The fun. Being taken seriously. Words that name a choice, not a performance of feelings.

The skill. Core Arts Grade 5: artist statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in art-making. Two sentences is enough: I drew the rim as an ellipse because that is what I saw from my chair. I made the left side darker for value. Grade 3 and 4 say that out loud. A paragraph about creativity is not the object.

A weekly shape: day of a new convention, a short blocked set. Same week: mixed, contour plus value on one object. Later this week: a wash or a print so multiple techniques are in the year, which Grade 5 already wants.⁸⁴ Daily if you can: five minutes of sketchbook looking. You impose that shape on the mug and the box you already have.

Named project: Stitch as line

A running stitch is a line with more control than last year's tear. *Time.* One present, then fifteen minutes of making. *Mess.* Low. *The fun.* A line you can feel. *The skill.* Craft that teaches a design move: contour and pattern. Fiber art is illustrative in elementary Texas. Skip it if you wish; including it is not a textiles course. Say: Yarn makes a line. Follow an edge you draw first, or invent the line as you go.

For the student

You are learning to draw what you actually see. A mug has a name. This mug, from your chair, has a rim that may be an ellipse, a handle that joins in two places, a side that is lighter and a side that is darker. You look as much as you draw. You hold the pencil. A picture on a screen is not this mug.

Value is light and dark. The mug can stay blue and still have a dark side. A wash of watercolor is water plus color; it moves if the paper is wet. A print repeats a shape. Yarn can be a line you feel. A sketchbook is where looking lives between the bigger sittings.

Tiny worked example

⁸⁴NCCAS, VA:Cr2.1.5a.

A mug on the table. You sit. You look at the rim.

The rim is not a perfect circle unless you are looking straight down. From the side, it is flatter: an ellipse. You put your pencil at one place on the page. You look at the mug. You let the line travel as your eye travels the edge. Slow. If you look only at the page, the old U will come back.

Check: look at the mug, then at your line. Does your rim get narrower the way the real rim does? That is looking. Pretty is later.

Two tries

1. Draw only the rim of the mug, from life. Look more than you draw. Then point to the place on the mug where the handle starts, and mark that join on your page.
2. Squint at the mug. Which side is darker? Shade that side, in graphite or in a watercolor wash. Keep the color name if you want. Show the value.

Work from the mug in the room.

Explain it back

Tell someone at the table how you find a rim. Then say what value means, in your own words, with the mug as the example. Then open your sketchbook to a looking page and say what you were looking at.

Challenge

Some people draw a U and a C from the word mug. What would that move mean? How do you draw this mug from here instead? Draw it. Then, if you are in the later part of this band, write two sentences about a choice you made, using one art word.

You are allowed to struggle. You may look as often as you need. You hold the pencil. If you get stuck, ask for a hint — not for someone to finish the ellipse. Then try again.

The mug is still there. One edge is enough for today. When you paint, watch the water. When you print, press and lift and do it again. The sketchbook gets a date and a look, even on a short day.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics. Each one has a next move. None of them is a verdict on talent, and none of them is a reason to wait for a birthday.

1. The drawing is still the name of the thing after you have already taught looking at the rim.

The schema is doing the work. Next move: closer mug, slower line, one edge only. Demo on a different object. After they attempt, the U-and-C incorrect example for them to explain. Stay with rims and joins until an ellipse that was seen appears at least sometimes. Go ahead to a second object, and to value, once the rim can be found from life. A tutor who will sit with a still life and a looking question, not with a stack of characters to copy, is a reasonable next step if unaided looking still never starts and the hour has become a fight.

2. The page is erased to holes, or the child will only copy a character they already know.

Looking is ahead of the hand, or the product hour trained a match. Next move: shorter sit, smaller problem (the rim, not the room), boost the experience. A week of a favorite character can stay in the sketchbook as repertoire; the studio hour still has a mug. Stiffness and extra detail at eight to ten are often rule-learning; the next chapter will pick that up as a longer still life. Here, name the look, not the prettiness: you found the join. If erasing is the whole sitting, give a pen for one contour so the line has to stay, then back to pencil. Get a human tutor if the refusal holds after weeks of smaller, well-set problems and the table is a fight. Remaining struggle in this band is often the tool or visual-motor demand leftover from last chapter, not an invented age for a pencil.⁸⁵

3. Multiple techniques never leave the pencil, or the written statement eats the making, or value stays a worksheet.

The year is too narrow, or the map object is in the wrong place. Next move: one wash sitting, one print sitting, in the same month as the mug. Grade 5 writes two sentences after the work, not instead of it. Grades 3 to 4 talk. Put value on the mug. If watercolor is a mess crisis, smaller water, heavier paper, last chapter tempera as

⁸⁵C. M. Schneck and A. Henderson, *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 44, no. 10 (1990): grip study stops at 6;11. Kathleen A. McHale and Sharon A. Cermak, *AJOT* 46, no. 10 (1992): school days are fine-motor heavy. Remaining struggle in this band is often visual-motor integration or an ill-fitted tool, not an invented scissor age.

a bridge. Go ahead once contour from life, two values, and one other technique have each happened unaided. Slow down the statement until there is a choice on a page to name.

When to slow down. Schema still default. Tool fight leftover from last chapter. Sits that always end in erasure or tears. Those are brakes. Birthday is not.

When to go ahead. The unaided mug has a rim that was seen. Value can be pointed to on the object and shown on the page. A wash or a print has happened. The sketchbook has looking pages with dates. Grade 5 can write two sentences about a choice. Then overlapping, proportion, and a longer page have somewhere to sit. Being good at drawing because a child copies characters fluently is not a reason to skip the mug. Being nine and still hungry for the puddle is not a reason to stay if the ellipse is already easy — overlap the next chapter still life.

When to get a human tutor. You have run the close mug, the one-edge sits, and the sample-free table for a stretch of weeks, and the same diagnosis is still the one in the room, and the hour has become a fight. A tutor is a release valve. Keep yourself as the person who can still hear a U-and-C as a schema. Outsourcing the hearing is the thing to avoid, not asking for help.

A child who talks richly about a painting in a book and will not look at the mug is missing Creating from life. A child who will contour all morning and will not say what they see is missing Responding. Hearing which is thin is enough.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you, the adult. The full rules live in the studio-hour box in the front of this book. This chapter is a pointer, not a second policy paper.

The child looks at the mug and makes the mark. The tool does not. You hold the setup, the time, and the looking question.

A tool may explain today's idea to you: ellipse, value, why a schema appears. It may invent a still-life from kitchen objects for you to set up. It may show a composition for the two of you to look at together, after which the child draws from the objects. It may invent a sketchbook challenge the child will draw. It may help you diagnose a page already made.

A fluent picture from a model is performance. The unaided page tomorrow morn-

ing is the test. If the helper produces the picture, the child is a spectator.⁸⁶

The mug and the pencil are tools too. Fade the demo, not the mug.

What “done enough” looks like

Placement is by skill, not birthday. A grade-4 art book is a publisher scope, not a legal grade. Draw Write Now numbers are not grades; Artistic Pursuits can begin without prior knowledge, which is the publisher talking.⁸⁷ Choose by fit. Combining programs does not turn a brand into a course name. The title a stranger can read is still Art.

Checklist before moving on

- The child can draw a mug from life with a rim that is seen, not only a U from memory. Eyes go to the object.
- Value can be pointed to on a real object (lighter side, darker side) and shown on the page. A worksheet of boxes is not the only evidence.
- A watercolor wash has been made on an object or a still-life field, with the child watching what the water did.
- A simple print has been pulled more than once from one face.
- Optional: a stitch that is a line, with more control than tearing, without a sample everyone matched.
- The sketchbook has dated looking pages. It is used.
- Grade 5: two sentences about a choice, with an art word. Grades 3 to 4: that sentence out loud. Not a Grade 1 statement, not a feelings paragraph that replaced the making.

⁸⁶Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning,” *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Mathematics RCT, nearly 1,000 Turkish high-school students: GPT Base +48 percent assisted practice, then -17 percent unaided exam. Not an art trial. The sitting condition is the mechanism. Official DALL-E GPT retired 30 August 2026; current OpenAI consumer generation is ChatGPT Images.

⁸⁷Draw Write Now and Artistic Pursuits named by fit, not ranked. Vendor placement claims are the publisher talking. No homeschool-curriculum RCT was opened. Transcript title: Art.

- A stuck sitting can be answered with a smaller looking problem, not with you finishing the page.
- Materials still conform to ASTM D-4236 and carry no cautionary warning through this band, including grade 5 and the start of 6.
- You can hear a schema, a model-made mug used as the work, and a statement in the wrong grade, and you can ask a good question, without taking the pencil.

If most of that list is true, go on to proportion, overlapping, basic perspective as a studio move, mixed media, and a longer project, even if the birthday says otherwise. If the birthday says sixth grade and the U is still doing the mug, stay. The next chapter is space and a page that takes more than one sitting.

A path through making is the promise. A gifted label is not.

Chapter 3

Proportion, space, and a page that takes more than one sitting



Figure 10: A cardboard box, two overlapping bottles, mixed-media scraps, and an open sketchbook on a covered table. No child in the picture.

Why this matters

Last chapter installed looking: a mug from life, an ellipse that was seen, value as light and dark, a wash, a print, a sketchbook that actually opens. Keep all of that. This chapter is the first long stretch of art that looks like what a stranger means by a studio year. Proportion. Overlapping. A box that recedes. A page that mixes drawing, collage, and paint. A related set of three. Looking with a reason. The sketchbook as a habit, not a purchase.

The sentence that surprises people is this one: a sixth-grader who still draws the name of the mug is not “behind in perspective.” They are still in observation. Compacted acceleration into a high-school Drawing title on a schema-only foundation is the analogue of starting Algebra I on a broken fraction foundation. The box in front of you can wait. The looking cannot.

A stiff, detail-hungry drawing around eight to ten is rule-learning, not failure — Winner’s U-curve and Kindler’s repertoires name that dip as mastering rules, not as a fall from grace.⁸⁸ Then teach. Put two bottles on the table, one in front of the other. Ask which is bigger from here. Wait.

The Core Arts map at Grade 8 wants a willingness to experiment, take risks, and pursue meanings that emerge in the making; to apply criteria, reflect, and plan revisions; to evaluate a collection for presentation; to make a logical argument in support of an evaluation.⁸⁹ Texas Middle School 1 applies the seven elements and seven principles in personal work, names direct observation, and asks students to

⁸⁸Ellen Winner and colleagues on the U-shaped curve of aesthetic appeal to modernist Western eyes: inventive early work; a literal/conventional stage around ages 8-10 as children master rules; then, for some, a post-conventional willingness to break those rules. Jessica Davis, “Drawing’s Demise: U-Shaped Development in Graphic Symbolization,” *Studies in Art Education* 38, no. 3 (1997): 132-157. Anna M. Kindler and Bernard Darras, and Dennie Wolf and Martha Perry (1988): pictorial repertoires, not one realism endpoint. The dip is rule-learning, not failure. Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1964), as a map of typical graphic behaviors, not a diagnosis. Sullivan (2015): original sample demographics were never recorded.

⁸⁹National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *Visual Arts at a Glance* (2014), accessed 31 August 2026. VA:Cr2.1.8a: “Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing.” VA:Cr3.1.8a: apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions. VA:Pr4.1.8a: develop and apply criteria for evaluating a collection of artwork for presentation. VA:Re9.1.8a: create a convincing and logical argument to support an evaluation of art. NCAS is a voluntary map, not a homeschool mandate.

develop a portfolio. Middle School 2 wants a portfolio that demonstrates progress, and names copyright when appropriating imagery.⁹⁰ Proportion has been a Texas principle since Grade 3. Linear perspective is not a TEKS noun in the middle-school sections this book opened. Teach one-point as a studio move that serves space — a trick for a box — not as a statute.

Grade 6 is the last year of the CPSC bar: children's materials still mean ASTM D-4236 and no cautionary warning.⁹¹ After that, read the current label even more carefully. Oil, solvents, and a kiln still wait. Air-dry clay and cardboard still carry three dimensions.

What you are teaching, as art, is which object is bigger from here; overlapping as a way to show space; a vanishing point as a help for a box you can actually see; design in a page (emphasis, unity, a hierarchy a stranger can read); mixed media on purpose; a related set that shows progress; and looking that can describe, analyze, interpret, and judge without becoming a canon survey. A generator cityscape is not one-point perspective. The child who typed the prompt did not find a vanishing point with their eye.

This band unlocks high-school Drawing or Art I: gesture, contour, value, still life as a year, not a sitting. Skip proportion, and later figure and still life have no size. Skip overlapping, and later space is a recipe. Skip the collection, and later a portfolio is a scramble of fridge pictures.

You do not need to be a studio artist. You do need to hear two bottles drawn side by side, same size, as a size error, not as a style, and a vanishing point copied from a worksheet with no box in the room as a trick without a look.

⁹⁰19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.202 (Art, Middle School 1, adopted 2013): understand and apply the seven elements and seven principles as fundamentals in personal artworks; produce including drawings, paintings, prints, sculptures/modeled forms, ceramics, fiber art, photographic imagery, and digital art and media; direct observation among sources; develop a portfolio. § 117.203 (Middle School 2): copyright and public domain when appropriating imagery; portfolio that demonstrates progress. Critique method “such as describing the artwork, analyzing the way it is organized, interpreting the artist’s intention, and evaluating the success of the artwork.”

⁹¹U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015; 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8). Products with cautionary warnings should not be used with children pre-kindergarten through grade 6. Grade 6 is the last year of that bar. After that, read the current label. Indoor kilns still require mechanical ventilation to the outdoors.

For the parent: understand it yourself

Many adults feel rusty on perspective because a worksheet of cubes was the last time anyone named it. That is ordinary. Five minutes at the end of this section is enough for tomorrow. Last chapter installed the mug, the ellipse, two values. Keep all three. The sit can last. The page can take a week.

Everyday picture. Two kitchen bottles, one in front of the other, close to the page. From your chair, the near bottle is larger on the page and hides part of the far one. If you draw what you *know* — two bottles, both whole, both the same catalog size — you get a lineup. If you draw what you *see from here*, one overlaps the other and the sizes disagree. That disagreement is proportion. The hiding is overlapping. Neither is a personality trait.

Precise picture. Proportion is a size relationship: this compared with that, from this seat. Texas named it as a principle at Grade 3; this band applies it.⁹² Overlapping is one of the simplest ways to show space without a vanishing point: the thing in front covers the thing behind. One-point perspective is a studio convention for objects whose edges recede toward a single vanishing point on an eye-level line — a hallway, a road, a cardboard box turned so you see the inside or a face that goes back. It is not the only way to draw space, and it is not a TEKS vocabulary item in the opened middle-school cells. Teach it from a box you can see, not from a printed city. Design in a page means the elements (line, shape, color, texture, form, space, value) are organized by principles (emphasis, repetition, movement, contrast, balance, proportion, unity). Texas calls elements building blocks and principles organizers; California talks about formal elements without enumerating that closed list.⁹³ You need the ordinary words, not a poster of fourteen boxes to memorize.

Mixed media is drawing plus collage plus paint on purpose, which elementary Texas listed as “such as” and which a middle-school including-list of several me-

⁹²19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.111 (Grade 3): proportion among principles including; elements as building blocks and principles as organizers. Linear perspective is not a TEKS vocabulary item in the opened middle-school sections. Teach it as a studio move serving space.

⁹³Texas seven-and-seven as named in 19 TAC Chapter 117. California Arts Standards (adopted 9 January 2019) are NCAS-based and do not enumerate that closed list in the 2019 Visual Arts Glossary. NCCAS Conceptual Framework: standards have never been a monolithic set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods. Do not say all fifty states use NCAS; the 2018 NCCAS report listed Texas with no public plan to adopt.

dia already allows a student to combine.⁹⁴ A related set of three is the start of a collection that shows progress — Texas MS2’s portfolio sentence in miniature — not an AP sustained investigation of fifteen images.⁹⁵ Looking with a reason uses Barrett’s order, which sits near Feldman as Barrett summarized him: description, analysis, interpretation, judgment.⁹⁶ “What do you see?” still starts it. “This is already good: how might it be even better?” is work-in-progress talk, not an MFA roast. A six-year-old’s critique was talk about art. This band can take a criterion: the overlap reads, the sizes match the seat, the emphasis is findable.

The sketchbook is now a habit: early stages documented, which Grade 8 Creating already wants visually or verbally.⁹⁷ Date the page. Keep the ugly one. The processfolio is drafts plus a sentence, not only the best sheet.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. *Two bottles drawn side by side, same height, both fully visible, though one stands in front of the other.* Size and overlap not yet in use. Ask: “Which one is closer to you? Where does the front one hide the back one? Draw the hiding.” If they invent a gap so both can be whole, they are still drawing the name of two bottles.
2. *A worksheet of one-point cubes, then a generated city, then a claim that perspective is done.* The trick without the box. Put a cardboard box on the table. Find the edges that go back. A vanishing point is a help for *this* box from *this* chair. The printout is not the project.
3. *A stiff, careful drawing, lots of detail, the student miserable because it does not look “creative” like last year’s puddle.* Rule-learning. The U-curve dip. Name it once: the rules are being installed, which is the work. Then

⁹⁴Mixed media is “such as” in elementary Texas; middle-school including lists name several media a student could combine. California’s discipline definition includes mixed media.

⁹⁵College Board AP Art and Design CED © 2026: Sustained Investigation is 15 images of works and process; Selected Works 40 percent / Sustained Investigation 60 percent. That object is optional and later. Grade 8 Cr1.2 is an investigation, not a 15-image AP section.

⁹⁶Terry Barrett, “Improving Student Dialogue About Art,” *Teaching Artist Journal* 2, no. 2 (2004): 87-94. Begin with “What do you see?”; description itself counts as criticism; work in progress: “This is already good: How might it be even better?” Edmund Burke Feldman, as summarized by Barrett (1988): description, analysis, interpretation, judgment. A six-year-old critique is talk about art (Hetland et al., elementary Studio Structures).

⁹⁷NCCAS, Grade 8 Creating: document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally (glance PDF / Grade 8 Cr1.1 family). Arts PROPEL: processfolio of drafts plus reflection.

teach the next look — overlapping, a longer sit — rather than asking them to pretend they do not care about accuracy.

4. *An eighth-grader assigned a fifteen-image sustained investigation and a college artist statement because AP is the rumor.* Wrong object. Grade 8 investigates and revises; it does not sit the AP portfolio. A related set of three, a collection with a reason, a short written evaluation: that is this band.
5. *Every mixed-media page is a collage of printed characters and a wash, with no looking, or every image on the page was pulled from a search without a copyright sentence.* Making without looking, or appropriating without naming. Texas MS2 already wants copyright in view when imagery is appropriated.⁹⁸ A magazine color field as a shape is different from a living artist's drawing pasted in as the work.

A sixth: the student can talk about vanishing points and cannot say which bottle is bigger from here. Vocabulary without observation. Put the bottles back. The words wait.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Do this before the lesson, with two bottles or two jars and a scrap of paper, no student in the room.

Minute 1. Sit. Hold a pencil at arm's length. Compare the heights of the two objects from here. Say out loud: "From here, this one is bigger." That is proportion, not a catalog measurement.

Minute 2. Notice where the front object hides the back one. Draw only that overlap, as a shared edge. That is space without a vanishing point.

Minute 3. Put a cardboard box on the table, one face receding. Find the edges that go back. Imagine they meet at a point. You are not taking a test. You are installing the box so you can hear a worksheet cube tomorrow.

Minute 4. Write one looking question you will not ask: "Does it look real?" Write the one you will: "Which is bigger from here?"

Minute 5. Write the sentence you will actually say: "Draw the hiding." Put the pencil down.

⁹⁸19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.203, copyright and public domain when appropriating imagery.

If you can tell a lineup from an overlap, and a worksheet cube from a box in the room, you are ready to sit down.

How to teach it this week

A good studio hour this week has the same shape. The studio-hour chapter in the front of this book is the full version. Here is the shape scaled to this band. Sits can be longer. A project can span two or three hours across the week. The child still holds the tool.

Warm-up (5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday's overlap, or two values on a bottle, or a thirty-second box. Sketchbook open. No device.

Short present (5–8 minutes). One convention. You draw the overlap of two bottles on your scrap, out loud: "The front one hides this much of the back one. I am drawing the hiding, not two whole bottles." Or: the receding edges of a box. You talk for a few minutes. Then you stop.

Student attempt (20–30 minutes). The longest block. Still life, box, mixed page. They hold the pencil. You wait. Struggle before rescue. Ask which is bigger from here. Wait. Hint ("show me the shared edge"). Then a short demo on *your* scrap.

One good question. Not "does it look 3-D?" A question that names the idea: "Which is bigger from here?" "Where is the hiding?" "Where do those edges go?" "What is the first thing the eye hits on this page?"

Talking about art (5–10 minutes). Description, then one analysis (how it is organized), then one interpretation if the work will bear it, then a judgment with a reason. Work in progress: "This is already good: how might it be even better?" They may write a short evaluation. They may talk it.

Showing. A folder or wall that can hold a set of three, including a draft. Exhibition etiquette is already a Texas middle-school sentence: the work is presented on purpose.⁹⁹

Cleanup. Longer projects make more mess. Lids. Hands. The box stays for tomorrow if the sitting is not done.

Exact wording you can say

⁹⁹19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.202, exhibition etiquette among middle-school expectations.

On proportion and overlap:

“Which is bigger from here? Not in the cupboard — from your chair.”

“Draw the hiding. The back bottle is allowed to be incomplete.”

“Point to the shared edge on the table, then on the page.”

On the box:

“Find the edges that go away from you. Where would they meet if they kept going?”

“The vanishing point is a help for this box. It is not a city you invent.”

On a stuck hand:

“Your pencil. The bottles are still there.”

“One comparison. Not the whole room.”

On design:

“What is the first thing a stranger’s eye should hit? Make that the emphasis.”

“This is already good: how might the overlap read more clearly?”

On a collection:

“Keep this one even if you do not like it. Progress needs the earlier page.”

When you are about to take over:

“Your pencil. I’ll wait.”

Then wait. If you hear yourself drawing their overlap, you have started doing the looking. Stop. Point to the bottles.

Named project: Overlapping still life with proportion

Materials. Two or three kitchen objects (bottles, mugs, a box of tea). Graphite. Sketchbook or paper. A sit where the setup does not migrate.

Time. One present, twenty to thirty minutes of looking-and-drawing, talk. A second sitting the same week from the same seat, then a third from a new seat.

Mess. Low.

The fun. The back object disappears in part. Sizes disagree. The page starts to feel like space.

The skill. Proportion. Overlapping as space. Direct observation, which Texas middle school names. Last chapter's ellipse still lives on any rim.

First problem for the student: two objects, one overlapping the other, unaided after your demo on a *different* pair. Say: "Draw the hiding. Which is bigger from here?" Wait. If they produce a lineup, they used the catalog. If they stall, demo a *different* pair fully, then a completion together, then return to theirs.

Later the same week, the diagnostic: the same two objects, no chatbot, no printout. Name one size error out loud. That naming is the exit ticket.



Figure 11: Two kitchen bottles overlapping, with a graphite drawing that shows the front one hiding part of the back one. No child.

Named project: Cardboard-box one-point from life

Materials. One cardboard box, turned so a face recedes or so you can see in.

Graphite. Optional: a long straight edge the student uses as a sighting stick, not as a substitute for looking. Paper.

Time. Present the eye-level line and one vanishing point on *this* box. Twenty to thirty minutes of drawing. A second sitting if the first is only the front face.

Mess. Low.

The fun. The box goes back. Edges that felt parallel on the table meet on the page. It feels like a trick because it is a convention — and the convention is being used on a real object.

The skill. Space. A studio move, not a TEKS noun. Eye level. Receding edges. The Core Arts Grade 6 language of visual organizational strategies is nearby: organize the page so the box reads.¹⁰⁰

Say: “This box, from your chair. Find the edges that recede. They meet at a point on the line of your eyes.” If they copy a worksheet cube from memory, the box is not in use. Put a mark on the real box and ask where that mark sits on the page.

¹⁰⁰NCCAS Grade 6 VA:Cr2.3.6a: apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

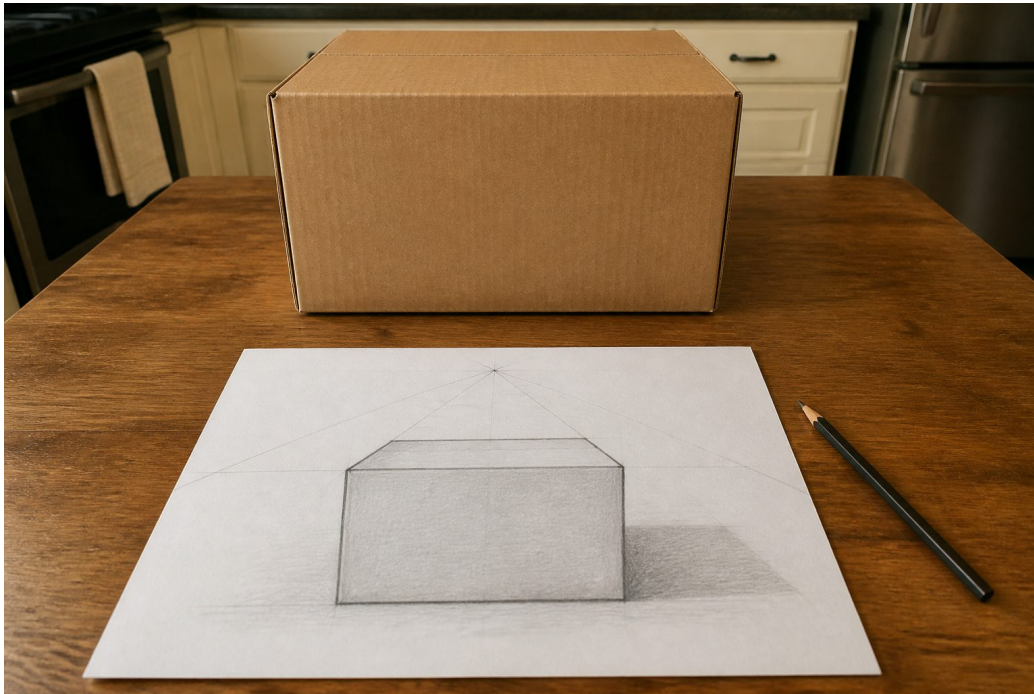


Figure 12: A cardboard box on a table with receding edges drawn toward a vanishing point on an eye-level line. No child, no cityscape.

Named project: Mixed-media page

Materials. Drawing (graphite or ink). Collage scraps (color fields, not a character to steal). Paint (tempera or watercolor, current label). Glue stick, ASTM D-4236 if the student is still grade 6; after that, read the label. Heavy paper.

Time. A page that may take two sittings. Present: one medium does looking, one does emphasis, one does field. Then they work.

Mess. Medium.

The fun. The page can be a poster, a still life, a map of a corner of the house. Materials argue with each other. Accidents stay if they serve.

The skill. Design in a page. Emphasis and unity. NCAS Grade 8 risk and revision: something can be added, covered, moved.¹⁰¹ Thinking through more than one

¹⁰¹NCCAS VA:Cr2.1.8a; VA:Cr3.1.8a.

material on the same problem.

Say: “The drawing looks. The collage can be the field or the emphasis. The paint can join them. What should a stranger see first?” If the page is only printed characters under a wash, looking left the room.

How to fade help

Day of a new convention: you model one overlap or one box fully. They explain. A second setup they complete with you. A third is theirs. When the unaided pair shows hiding and a size comparison, stop showing full examples. Bring the demo back when the first vanishing point is named, or when the first mixed page is designed.

When to stop talking

After the question. After the hint. After the demo of a *different* pair. If you hear yourself measuring their bottles for them, you have started doing the proportion. Hand them the pencil as a sighting stick. Wait.

A student who overlaps, names one size error, and can say where they looked has the hour in miniature. A student who traces a generated city has a performance. Your job is to hear which.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked, for a new move. The day you introduce overlap, a short set that is only hiding: two bottles, then a mug in front of a book, then a hand in front of a cup. The day you introduce the box, one box, one vanishing point, no city. The day you introduce mixed media, one page, three media, one still-life corner.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, overlap plus value on the same pair. A box next to a still life that needs no vanishing point — so they choose. A mixed page of the same bottles they drew in graphite yesterday. Mixing is the practice of choosing a way to show space. A purchased one-point workbook can still be mixed by you putting the cardboard box on the table afterward.

Brief retrieval. Five minutes: “Which is bigger from here?” on yesterday’s pair. Or: “Where is the vanishing point of *this* box?” Sketchbook closed over any tablet. You listen. Last night’s fluent page with you narrating every edge is not this morning’s unaided overlap.

One incorrect example to diagnose. After they attempt the bottles, show a lineup of two whole, same-size bottles labelled “drawn from the word *bottle* twice.” Ask: “What did this person look at?” After a city of worksheet cubes with no box in the room, ask where the looking happened. The student names the miss.

Sketchbook as habit. Several times a week, not only on project days: a corner of a room, a chair, a shoe overlapping a bag, five to ten minutes, dated. Early stages live here. Grade 8 already wants them documented.¹⁰²

Named project: A related set of three

Materials. The same still-life pair, or the same box, or the same corner of the house. Graphite or mixed. A folder.

Time. Three sittings across one or two weeks. Not three unrelated crafts.

Mess. Low to medium, matching the medium.

The fun. The third page knows something the first did not. Progress is visible without a speech.

The skill. Portfolio that demonstrates progress (Texas MS2). Engage and Persist as a studio habit in ordinary language: the same problem, another try. NCAS Grade 8: evaluate a collection.¹⁰³ Three is enough. Fifteen is AP, later, optional.

Say: “Same objects. New page. What will you try that last page did not?” After three: “Which one goes first in the folder, and why? Keep all three.”

Named project: Looking with a reason

Materials. One reproduction — a still life, a street, a box in a painting — on paper or in a book, not a child’s face, not an upload. The student’s own overlapping still life beside it if you want a pair.

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes of talk and a short written or spoken evaluation.

Mess. None.

The fun. Noticing something the other person missed. Being allowed to judge with a reason.

¹⁰²NCCAS Grade 8 documentation of early stages; Texas MS2 portfolio that demonstrates progress.

¹⁰³NCCAS VA:Pr4.1.8a; 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.203.

The skill. Description, analysis, interpretation, judgment. Responding. “What do you see?” then how it is organized, then what it might mean, then a judgment with a criterion (the overlap reads; the emphasis is findable; the space is a lineup). Not “that’s pretty.” Not “there are no wrong answers.” Barrett still starts with description; he has heard wrong answers.¹⁰⁴

Say: “What do you see? Point with your words.” Then: “How is it organized?” Then: “What do you think it is up to?” Then: “How is this a good work, or how might this one on the table be even better?” Connecting can be one sentence: a time, place, or reason people make this kind of picture. It is not a Western-canon unit.

A weekly shape: day of a new convention, a short blocked set. Same week: mixed — overlap plus value, or box plus still life. Later this week or next: the related third page, and one looking sitting with a reason. Daily if you can: a dated sketchbook look. You impose that shape on the bottles and the box you already have.

For the student

You are learning to draw space you can see. Two bottles have names. From your chair, one is bigger and one is partly hidden. That disagreement is proportion. That hiding is overlapping. A box has edges that go away from you. If you kept drawing them, they would meet at a point. That point is a help for this box, not a city you invent.

A page can take more than one sitting. Drawing, collage, and paint can share a problem. Three pages of the same objects can show what you learned. A sketchbook is where looking happens on the days between.

Tiny worked example

Two bottles. One in front. You sit.

Look at the front bottle. Draw its sides and its ellipse if it has a rim. Now look at the back bottle. Part of it is gone — hidden. Draw only the part you can still see. Check the heights from your chair: which one takes more of the page? That comparison is the work. Pretty is later.

Two tries

¹⁰⁴Barrett (2004). He does not give the pep talk that there are no wrong answers.

1. Draw two kitchen objects, one overlapping the other. Name, out loud, one size error you can still see, then sit one more minute and change it.
2. Draw a cardboard box from life. Find the edges that recede. Show where they would meet. The box stays on the table. The vanishing point is for this box.

Work from the objects in the room.

Explain it back

Tell someone at the table what proportion means, using the two objects as the example. Then say what overlapping is for. Then open your sketchbook to a dated page and say what you were looking at.

Challenge

Some people draw two whole bottles side by side because they know there are two bottles. Some people copy a city of cubes from a worksheet and call it perspective. What would those two moves mean? How do you draw the hiding, and this box, from here instead? Draw them. Then write three or four sentences that evaluate one page: what you see, how it is organized, and one way it is already good or could be better.

You are allowed to struggle. You may look as often as you need. You hold the pencil. If you get stuck, ask for a hint — not for someone to finish the overlap. Then try again.

A stiff, careful page is not a failure. Rules are being learned. The bottles are still there. One comparison is enough to start today.

When you mix media, decide what a stranger should see first. When you make a set of three, keep the first page. When you look at a picture in a book, start with what you see, not with whether you like it.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics. Each one has a next move. None of them is a verdict on talent, and none of them is a reason to wait for a birthday.

1. The drawing is still a lineup: same-size objects, no hiding, after you have already taught overlap.

The catalog is doing the work. Next move: closer setup, fewer objects, one shared edge. Demo on a different pair. After they attempt, the lineup incorrect example for them to explain. Stay with two objects until hiding and a size comparison appear at least sometimes. Go ahead to a third object, and to the box, once the overlap can be found from life. A tutor who will sit with a still life and a looking question, not with a stack of city worksheets, is a reasonable next step if unaided overlapping still never starts and the hour has become a fight.

2. Perspective is a worksheet trick, or the student is miserable because a stiff page does not look “creative.”

The convention is unhooked from a box, or the U-curve dip is being read as failure. Next move: one cardboard box, from the chair, receding edges only. Name the stiffness once as rule-learning, then give a longer look, not a lecture about talent. If they want manga eyes in the sketchbook, that is a repertoire; the studio hour still has the bottles. Get a human tutor if the refusal holds after weeks of smaller, well-set problems and the table is a fight. If observation never left last chapter schema, stay in last chapter. Birthday is not placement.

3. Every project is a new craft, never a set of three, or the looking sitting is a history dump, or mixed media is only printed characters.

The collection is not forming, or Responding became a survey, or looking left the mixed page. Next move: the same objects three times. One reproduction, Barrett’s four moves, twenty minutes. Mixed media from life, color fields not characters. Grade 8 can evaluate a collection; it does not need 250 AP Art History works. Slow down the vanishing-point city until the box in the room is easy. Go ahead once overlap, one box from life, a mixed page, and a set of three have each happened unaided.

When to slow down. Lineup still default. Box only from a worksheet. Sits that always end in erasure or a fight. Last chapter’s mug still a U. Those are brakes.

When to go ahead. The unaided pair shows hiding and a size comparison the student can name. A box from life has receding edges aimed at a point. A mixed page has a findable emphasis. A set of three exists in a folder. Sketchbook pages are dated. Looking can get past “I like it” to a reason. Then high-school Drawing or Art I has somewhere to sit. Being good at copying characters is not a reason to skip the bottles. Being twelve and still hungry for the mug-only sitting is not a reason to stay if overlap is already easy — overlap the next chapter.

When to get a human tutor. You have run the close pair, the one-box sits, and the sample-free table for a stretch of weeks, and the same diagnosis is still the one in the room, and the hour has become a fight. A tutor is a release valve. Keep yourself as the person who can still hear a lineup as a size error. Outsourcing the hearing is the thing to avoid, not asking for help.

A student who can recite vanishing points and will not look at two bottles is missing Creating from life. A student who will draw all morning and will not say what they see is missing Responding. Hearing which is thin is enough.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you, the adult. The full rules live in the studio-hour box in the front of this book. This chapter is a pointer, not a second policy paper.

The student looks at the bottles and makes the mark. The tool does not. You hold the setup, the time, and the looking question.

A tool may explain today's idea to you — proportion, overlap, why a vanishing point helps a box. It may invent a still-life from kitchen objects for you to set up. It may show a composition for the two of you to look at together, after which the student draws from the objects. It may invent a sketchbook challenge the student will draw. It may help you diagnose a page already made: where the lineup returned.

A fluent city from a model is performance. The unaided overlap tomorrow morning is the test. Unguarded solvers in a high-school math study raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam; that paper is mathematics, not an art trial, and this book will not treat a math result as a still-life coefficient. The crutch is still the sitting condition. If the tool produces the picture, the student is a spectator.¹⁰⁵

The bottles, the box, graphite, mixed scraps, and the sketchbook are tools too. Use them. Fade the demo, not the still life.

¹⁰⁵Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning,” *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Mathematics RCT: GPT Base +48 percent assisted practice, then -17 percent unaided exam. The paper notes that math has objective scoring unavailable in creative subjects such as writing. Not an art trial. No observational-drawing meta-analytic *d* is invented here. Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176-199. Transcript title: Art. Next course title a stranger can read: Drawing or Art I.

What “done enough” looks like

Placement is by skill, not birthday. A grade-7 art book is a publisher scope, not a legal grade. Atelier / Arts Attack is a video program, not a classical sight-size atelier; Draw Write Now numbers are not grades. Choose by fit. Combining programs does not turn a brand into a course name. The title a stranger can read is still Art. High-school Drawing or Art I is next if the checklist is true, not because a catalog printed a 9.

Checklist before moving on

- Two or three objects from life show overlapping. The student can say which is bigger from here and can name one size error.
- A cardboard box from life has receding edges aimed toward a vanishing point that belongs to this box and this chair. A worksheet city is not the only evidence.
- A mixed-media page has a findable emphasis and uses more than one material on purpose.
- A related set of three exists in a folder, including at least one page the student would not hang. Progress is visible.
- The sketchbook has dated looking pages and at least one early-stage note or drawing. It is a habit.
- Looking can describe, then say how a work is organized, then offer a judgment with a reason. Preference alone has receded.
- Grade 8 language — experiment, revise, evaluate a collection — is in use at the table, not as an AP portfolio.
- Materials: through grade 6, ASTM D-4236 and no cautionary warning still govern. After that, read the current label. Oil, solvents, and a kiln are still later.
- You can hear a lineup, a worksheet cube with no box, and a stiff page read as failure, and you can ask a good question, without taking the pencil.

If most of that list is true, go on to high-school drawing as a year — gesture, contour, value, still life — even if the birthday says otherwise. If the birthday says ninth grade and the U is still doing the mug, stay with last chapter or with this one. The next chapter is the through-line with a transcript title.

A path through making is the promise. A gifted label is not.

Chapter 4

Drawing



Figure 13: A kitchen-table still-life: a pear, a bottle, draped cloth, graphite sticks, charcoal, and a kneaded eraser. No people, no logos.

Why this matters

High-school drawing is the year the eye and the hand have to work on the same problem at the same time. The student looks at a bottle from *here*, not at the word *bottle*, and makes a mark that reports what is actually in front of them. That is not a personality trait. It is not a brand. It is work that is taught: a short model you can see, a sitting the student tries, then a sitting they do unaided.

That is worth the struggle because almost everything later hangs on it. Painting will ask the same looking, now with color that mixes and dries. Sculpture will ask it in three dimensions. A portfolio a stranger can open is, at bottom, a record of looking and making. A year that assigns “draw something” and never teaches contour, value, or a still life from life is drawing in name. Name the year by what was taught.

Drawing has been in the must-master column of a typical state map from Grade 1. Texas lists drawings among the media a first-grader is expected to produce, and never drops the medium.¹⁰⁶ The National Core Arts Standards do not title an elementary course Drawing. They do ask, already in Grade 1, that students “use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.”¹⁰⁷ That sentence is the through-line’s first official wording, not a ninth-grade invention. High school is where the same job gets a course name a registrar can read.

There is no national art credit and no national homeschool diploma.¹⁰⁸ Titles a

¹⁰⁶19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105 (Art, Grade 1, Adopted 2013), creative expression: produce drawings, paintings, prints, constructions, and sculptures, including modeled forms. Cornell LII copy, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/texas/19-Tex-Admin-Code-SS-117-105>, accessed 31 August 2026. Drawing remains among required media through later grades and Art I.

¹⁰⁷National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS), *National Core Arts Standards: Visual Arts at a Glance* (2014), VA:Cr1.2.1a: “Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.” <https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/Visual%20Arts%20at%20a%20Glance%20-%20new%20copyright%20info.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026. Rights administered by SEADAE.

¹⁰⁸Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling,” <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling>; the State of Texas does not award a diploma to students that are home schooled. New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>; a high school diploma may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school. NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*, treats proof of graduation as a family- or umbrella-issued artifact. Art is not an NCAA core course (English, math Algebra I or higher, science, social science, world language, comparative religion or philosophy). Accessed 31 August 2026.

stranger already knows include **Art I** and **Drawing**. Texas names Art I as Level I; Drawing I is a Level II title whose prerequisite, on that map, is one credit of Art, Level I.¹⁰⁹ A family may title this year either. The federal course codes already speak those names (05154 Comprehensive; 05156 Drawing).¹¹⁰ Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write “AI Art.”

The National Core Arts Standards are a map, not a homeschool law. They are voluntary, and “have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods.”¹¹¹ High-school performances come in three levels — Proficient, Accomplished, Advanced — because students can enter an arts course at any grade.¹¹² The honest finish line for most kitchen tables is Proficient. Advanced is a later aim. AP Drawing is a separate optional portfolio. It is not required for the title Drawing.

Observational drawing is teachable. Adults who “can’t draw,” and fourteen-year-olds who suddenly “can’t draw,” are often drawing the *name* of the thing — eye as almond, bottle as two straight sides and a circle — rather than the look of *this* thing from here.¹¹³ Instruction that points the eye at contours and at the places

¹⁰⁹19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.302 (Art, Level I) and § 117.303 (Art, Level II), Adopted 2013. Art I, Art Appreciation, and Art and Media Communications I are Level I titles. Drawing I, Painting I, Sculpture I, Ceramics I, Photography I, Design I, and listed others are Level II titles; the prerequisite for each is one credit of Art, Level I. Cornell LII copies, accessed 31 August 2026.

¹¹⁰NCES School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) identifiers as listed on a state COURSECODE codeset (Vermont Agency of Education), accessed 31 August 2026: 05154 Visual Art—Comprehensive; 05156 Drawing.

¹¹¹National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (2014), <https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026: “The new, voluntary National Core Arts Standards...”; “Standards in the United States have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods.” Released 4 June 2014. A 2018 NCCAS status report repeats that they become required in a school or district only if a state adopts or adapts them through a formal regulatory process.

¹¹²NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 111), high-school proficiency levels Proficient, Accomplished, Advanced, because “students’ selection of arts courses can occur at any grade.” This book treats Proficient as the default homeschool finish line unless a family is aiming at Accomplished, Advanced, or AP.

¹¹³Richard A. Salome, “The Effects of Perceptual Training upon the Two-Dimensional Drawings of Children,” 1965; Salome and D. Reeves, 1972. Instruction directing attention to contours and critical intersections improved fifth-graders’ drawings and kindergarten drawings of a toy truck. No effect-size coefficient is claimed here. Chamberlain and Wagemans (2015): observational skill and flexible local/global attention. Ostrofsky and colleagues: teaching that the eyes sit halfway

where an edge turns, an angle peaks, or a value changes, moves drawing. That is a named finding, not a promise that every kitchen will see the same result. Then teach.

Gesture, contour, value, still life, and figure are studio moves, not nouns a standard listed. Teach them as moves inside drawing. Figure is optional: no opened standard requires a nude, or even a figure course. A clothed person in a chair, or a credited photograph named as a source, is enough if you choose it. Ink is useful. It is not a required medium this book can source. Graphite and charcoal will carry the year.

This book will not sell drawing as a way to raise reading or math. A large review of arts-and-achievement claims found no reliable causal link from visual art to reading or math scores.¹¹⁴ Justify the hour by looking and making. A path through making is the promise. A “gifted” label is not.

Art is not an NCAA core course; the records chapter will handle the worksheet. One sentence is enough here: Drawing may appear on the transcript. It does not fill an English, math, science, or social-science slot.

The door is skill. Can the student look at an object for as long as they mark? Can they report an edge they actually see, not a symbol they remember? Can they put three values on a form so it turns, not so it is shaded because shading was on the list? If those three are fragile, stay there. The rest of this chapter teaches the course. This page names why the course is worth a hard year, and why the unaided mark — not a generated still life — is the work.

This week you can learn the difference between drawing the word *bottle* and drawing this bottle’s contour from here. Today the student can try one unaided contour and one five-minute gesture of a person in the house, with the generator off.

down the face improved novices’ portraits — a named effect, not a curriculum.

¹¹⁴Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, “The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows,” Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP) executive summary, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34, nos. 3–4 (2000) / NAEA *Translations* (Winter 2001), <https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/REAP%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>. No reliable causal link from arts-rich education to verbal and mathematics scores; visual arts and reading a very small relationship that could not be generalized, and in reading-readiness, not reading achievement. “Arts educators should never allow the arts to be justified wholly or even primarily in terms of what the arts can do for mathematics or reading.”

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a studio artist. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear a symbol offered as observation, and a generated pear offered as the student's drawing, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Ask someone to draw a mug from memory. Most people produce a U with an oval and a C for a handle — the *word* mug, in lines. Now set a real mug on the table, slightly below eye level, handle turned a little away. The opening is an ellipse, not a circle. The handle attaches at two places that are not where the cartoon put them. The far rim disappears for a moment behind the near rim. Drawing from life is reporting that mug, from this chair, in this light. The memory drawing was spelling. The second drawing is looking.

Precise picture. Three moves share a sitting and do different jobs.

Gesture is the global structure, fast. In a minute or two the student finds the action of a pose, or the big tilt of a bottle, with the whole arm. Kimon Nicolaïdes taught gesture and contour as studio ancestors of this work — a method book, not a trial.¹¹⁵ The point is not a pretty sketch. The point is to see the whole before the parts eat the page.

Contour is the local edge, slow. The eye travels the outline as if it were touching it. The pencil reports that travel. Betty Edwards's pure-contour exercise belongs here: often the student looks at the object, not at the paper, and draws the edge they are seeing.¹¹⁶ Keep the contour. The left-brain / right-brain cartoon that sometimes travels with those exercises is not current neuroscience. Polarities of left and right brain "owe more to the power of myth than to the scientific evidence."¹¹⁷ Inversion — copying a drawing upside down — is one perceptual trick among others. One experimental study did not find more accurate copies in the upside-down condition on its metrics.¹¹⁸ Inversion is a trick you may try. The contour is the load-bearing

¹¹⁵Kimon Nicolaïdes, *The Natural Way to Draw* (1941). Studio ancestor of contour and gesture practice, not a randomized trial.

¹¹⁶Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1979; later editions). Contour, negative space, sighting, and inversion as a perceptual-training package. This chapter keeps the contour exercises and does not use the hemisphere story as neuroscience.

¹¹⁷Michael C. Corballis, "Left Brain, Right Brain: Facts and Fantasies," *PLOS Biology* 12, no. 1 (2014): e1001767, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1001767>. Polarities of left and right brain "owe more to the power of myth than to the scientific evidence."

¹¹⁸Maria Pia Viggiano and colleagues, "The inversion technique in drawing from observation: An experimental study," 2017. Did not find more accurate copies in the upside-down condition on

move.

Value is light and dark as a scale, not as a decoration. Texas names value as an element from Grade 3, as a building block, not as a high-school surprise.¹¹⁹ A pear in a window has a light side, a dark side, and a term — a turning — between them. A cast shadow is a shape on the table, not a smudge under the pear “because shadows are gray.” Three values, placed on purpose, will teach more than a week of blending for smoothness.

A still life is the honest high-school problem: a few objects that stay, in light that stays long enough to be studied. The student returns. The ellipse that was a guess on Monday can be a report on Thursday.

A figure is optional. A person sitting in a chair, clothed, reading, is a figure problem: proportions, gesture, the head as a volume. A credited photograph, named on the page as a source, is allowed if a live sitter is not. Copying a master drawing as a *study* is allowed and should be named as a study. Charles Bargue’s plates were printed as *modèles* — good examples to copy — to prepare students to draw from nature.¹²⁰ If you use a plate this week, say out loud: “We copy this drawing to learn how the hatch turns the form. Next week you draw the onion in front of you.” That is a named study option, not a franchise. Sight-size with a trained instructor is a studio method; a plate in a kitchen is a plate in a kitchen. Neither replaces the onion.

A grid, a lightbox, or a projected enlargement still asks the child’s eye to follow a contour and the child’s hand to make the mark. Those tools can become a crutch if the student never looks at the subject — be honest — but they do not skip the looking-and-marking loop. A generator does. The model produces the picture; the student becomes a spectator. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam; students did not

the metrics used. Do not claim inversion has been proven.

¹¹⁹19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.111 (Art, Grade 3, Adopted 2013): value as an element (including); discuss the elements of art as building blocks and the principles of design as organizers of works of art. Cornell LII, accessed 31 August 2026. California’s 2019 Arts Standards name elements and principles as literacy and do not enumerate that closed seven-and-seven list in the Visual Arts Glossary opened this research pass. NCAS does not enumerate seven elements. This book uses the Texas-named lists as a widely used classroom vocabulary, not as federal law.

¹²⁰Charles Bargue and Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Cours de dessin* (late nineteenth century); modern English edition, *Charles Bargue Drawing Course*, introduction by Gerald M. Ackerman. Plates presented as *modèles* — good examples to copy — to prepare students to draw from nature. A named study option, not a homeschool franchise.

perceive the harm.¹²¹ That study is math, not a drawing trial. The same crutch is available here, and harder to hear, because a fluent generated still life has no answer key. Current performance on a page the model made is often an unreliable index of learning.¹²² The unaided contour of the pear the next morning is the test.

A year of only copying cartoon characters trains a schema, not an eye. Young people already draw from comics; copying can be productive in certain circumstances.¹²³ A coloring-book dog, a sample everyone must match, a parent “fixing” the child’s lines, and a generator making the project are not studies. A master copy named as a study, then the onion, is.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. The symbol wearing an observation hat. The student draws a bottle as two parallel lines and a circle, while the bottle on the table is a cone with an ellipse that tilts.

What it usually means. They are drawing the name of the thing. Looking has not yet overtaken the schema. This is information, not a verdict on talent.

What to say. “Point to the opening of the bottle. Is that a circle from where you sit, or a flattened oval? Draw the oval you see. We can put the word *bottle* away for ten minutes.”

2. Details before structure. Eyelashes, lettering on a label, a highlight like a star, and the big gesture of the pose or the tilt of the bottle never appeared.

What it usually means. Local looking arrived before global looking. Gesture was skipped, or felt embarrassing because it is messy.

¹²¹Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics,” *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. RCT, nearly 1,000 Turkish high-school math students, GPT-4-0613. GPT Base: practice +48 percent; unaided exam –17 percent. GPT Tutor: practice +127 percent; unaided exam indistinguishable from control. Mechanism for the studio hour, not a drawing RCT.

¹²²Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199. Performance during acquisition is often an unreliable index of learning.

¹²³Brent Wilson and Marjorie Wilson, “An Iconoclastic View of the Imagery Sources in the Drawings of Young People,” 1977. Paul Duncum, “To Copy or Not to Copy: A Review,” 1988: copying productive “in certain circumstances.” Architecture of this book: a master copy named as a study is allowed; a coloring-book sample everyone must match is not.

What to say. “Show me the one line that is the action of the whole thing. Sixty seconds. No eyelashes yet. If that line is wrong, the eyelashes will not save it.”

3. Shading as a recipe. Everything is gray. Or everything is blended smooth, and the form still sits flat.

What it usually means. Value was treated as a finish, not as light on a form. The student heard “add shading” the way a writer hears “add description.”

What to say. “Three values only today: light, middle, dark. Point to the lightest place on the pear. Point to the darkest. The turning is the band between them. Smooth is optional. Place is not.”

4. “I can’t draw.” The page stays blank, or the student erases a line ten times and stops.

What it usually means. Often the experience is thin, not the character. Lowenfeld’s advice, still usable: boost the experience, not the drawing. If a child said they could not draw flowers, the next move was “You don’t know how to pick flowers? Show me how you would pick them.”¹²⁴ At this age the cousin is: put the object closer. Change the light. Do a two-minute gesture instead of a finished page. Do not diagnose a “type.” Later editions of that developmental map softened the old visual-versus-haptic split; this book will not revive it as a kitchen label.¹²⁵

What to say. “We are not drawing a good bottle. We are reporting this bottle from this chair. Two minutes. Look more than you mark. I will not take the pencil.”

5. A fluent page the student cannot account for. The still life appeared in four minutes. The student cannot point to the ellipse they drew. The light in the picture does not match the window.

What it usually means. The page was outsourced. A generated image can hide a missing ellipse the way a chatbot paragraph can hide a missing warrant. You cannot hear it the way you can hear $7 \times 8 = 48$.

¹²⁴Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1964). Process on the child of decisive significance; if a child says “I can’t draw,” boost the experience, not the drawing. Stages name typical graphic behaviors, not a diagnosis. Original sample demographics were never recorded (Melissa Sullivan, 2015, archival secondary). Do not diagnose a student as a “haptic.”

¹²⁵Sullivan (2015), examining Lowenfeld’s theories; later Brittain editions, as reported there and in related commentary, softened or removed the visual/haptic split.

What to say. “Show me, on the bottle, the edge you drew here. If you cannot, we go back to contour, unaided. The picture a model made is performance. The contour you make tomorrow morning is the test.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Set a mug on the table. Draw it for three minutes, contour only. Look at the mug as much as the page. Do not shade.
2. Under that drawing, from memory, sketch the *symbol* of a mug — U, oval, handle. Star the first drawing. That star is the day’s idea.
3. Write tonight’s product goal in one sentence you could check with a pencil: “A five-minute gesture of a person in a chair, whole figure on the page, no face details,” or “A contour of this bottle’s opening as an ellipse from here.”

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear a symbol wearing an observation hat. That is the job. The student still holds the pencil.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year Drawing.

Looking as long as marking. Can the student keep their eyes on the object for a stretch, and only glance at the page? If every line is drawn while staring at the paper, contour has not started.

An edge that is this object, from here. Can they report an ellipse, a tilt, an overlap? If the page is still a column of symbols — eye, nose, bottle, apple — they are not yet in this course, whatever the birthday.

Unaided marks. Can they produce a short drawing with the object in front of them and the model closed? If every good page so far appeared after a generator pass, you do not yet know what they can do.

If contour is still a scribble that does not track an edge, the observation work in the middle-grade chapters of this book is the repair, not a pep talk. Then return. High school is a band, not a birthday.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model.

Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The studio hour at the front of this book already taught this shape. This chapter does not reinvent it. It fills the shape with drawing.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s move, not tonight’s new one. Two one-minute gestures. One blind contour of a hand. One “ellipse or circle?” on a mug. No tool. No audience yet.

Short model (5–8 minutes). One fully worked move on paper, thinking aloud. Name the product goal first. Then: “Here is the tilt of the bottle. Here is the ellipse of the opening, from where I sit. I am looking at the bottle more than at the page. I am not drawing the word *bottle*.” Keep it short. You are showing a schema, not delivering a lecture.

Fade as soon as you can. Second example: they explain what your line is doing. Third: you start the gesture, they finish. Fourth: they draw from the object, you are quiet. Include at least one incorrect example per new move: a circular rim on a mug seen from above-and-side; shading that ignores the light; a figure with a huge head and no action line. Ask “what did they think this line was for?” “They forgot to try” is not a diagnosis. “They drew the symbol for mug, so the ellipse never had a chance” is.

Exact wording you can steal.

On looking: “As much time looking as drawing. If you have not looked at the bottle in the last five seconds, you are decorating a memory.”

On contour: “Your eye is on the edge. The pencil reports the trip. If you peek at the page, peek — then go back to the edge.”

On gesture: “One line for the whole action. Sixty seconds. Messy is allowed. Tiny and careful is the wrong kind of careful.”

On value: “Where is the light coming from? Point. Now three values. The turning is a place, not a blend.”

On a study: “This plate is a study. We are learning how the hatch turns the form. Thursday the onion is on the table, and there will be no plate.”

On a grid: “The grid is a looking tool. You still draw the square you are in. A generator that fills the squares for you is not a grid.”

On fading: “I drew the first contour yesterday. Today you draw the twin from this

bottle. I am not going to talk during the attempt.”

First problem for the student, after the model. A contour, not a finished still life. Product goal on a sticky note: this object, from this chair, one slow contour, no shading. They look. Then they draw. You wait. Struggle before rescue. Ask, wait, hint, then model a line if needed. You do not finish the bottle.

One good question. After the attempt: “Which line on the page is an edge you can point to on the object, and which line is a symbol you brought with you?” The student generates the why. You do not narrate it.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short drawings of the new type, unaided, after the fade — not five finished still lifes. Then mix: yesterday’s gesture, last week’s ellipse, a three-step value scale, one “symbol or observation?” on a quick sketch.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One short drawing without a generator and without a parent line on the page. Object in view; model closed. You grade the unaided page. A generated still life is performance. The unaided contour the next morning is the test.

Every drawing the transcript will claim needs unaided making. That is the year, not a special integrity week. AP Art and Design, if a family sits it later, uses the same honesty in exam language: generative tools are prohibited for final submitted artwork.¹²⁶ The kitchen does not need AP to adopt it.

How to fade help. Complete model → student explains a second → shared start → independent contour → incorrect example named → student generates. When they can track an edge without your running commentary, put the scaffold away. Bring it back when value arrives, or when the symbol-bottle comes back.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. The pencil stays with the student. A parent who last drew a mug in middle school can still hear a circle where an ellipse belongs. Hearing is not the same as taking over the page.

¹²⁶College Board, *AP Art and Design Course and Exam Description*, Effective Fall 2026, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap-art-and-design-course-and-exam-description.pdf>; and AP Central, “Guidance for Artificial Intelligence Tools and Other Services,” 2026–27. Generative AI only during research, ideation, practice, experimentation, and revision; “Using generative AI tools to create final submitted artwork is prohibited.” Selected Works 40 percent / Sustained Investigation 60 percent in the CED (the Course Overview still prints a 50/50 table; this book follows the CED). No prerequisite course. Homeschool parents cannot order AP Exams; arrange at a local authorized school. AP is optional. Accessed 31 August 2026.

Charcoal dusts. Have a wet cloth. Graphite is quieter. Ink is optional: a dip pen or a marker that the current label allows, used for contour once the student can already track an edge in graphite. Read the label. Some inks and permanent markers are solvent-based; the children's safety guide tells families to avoid solvents with children.¹²⁷ High-school materials still get a label check. If the label warns, it is not a casual kitchen tool.

Project 1 — Gesture on newsprint

Materials. A pad of inexpensive newsprint or the back of printer paper; vine or compressed charcoal (or a soft graphite stick if charcoal is too messy this week); a wet cloth; a person in the house willing to sit, or a full-length photograph you credit on the page.

Time. Several 1- to 2-minute poses, then one 5-minute pose. A sitting of twenty minutes is enough. Mess: medium. Charcoal dusts; wipe the table; do not blow the dust around as if that were ventilation.

The fun of it. Speed takes the curse off “I can’t draw.” A two-minute drawing is allowed to be ugly. The ugly ones often have more life.

The skill it builds. Global structure. The action of a pose. Seeing the whole figure or the whole bottle before the parts.

How to run it. You sit first, or the student does, in a chair, weight on one hip. You model one sixty-second gesture out loud: “This line is the tilt of the spine. This is the weight on the right foot. I am not drawing a face.” Then they go. Several short poses beat one long, careful, dead drawing. If no one will sit, a credited photo of a clothed figure is honest. A generated “figure reference” is a picture of a picture; prefer a person in the room.

¹²⁷U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5015.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026. Children's materials: “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” and no cautionary warning through grade 6; avoid solvents with children (turpentine, paint thinner, some inks and permanent markers among the examples). Read the current label. Adequate ventilation means clean air toward the artist and contaminated air away; a fan with no source of clean air is not adequate ventilation.



Figure 14: A charcoal gesture on newsprint: a few long action lines suggesting a seated figure, no face, no brand marks.

Project 2 — Pure contour of a hand or object

Materials. Graphite (HB and 2B are enough); paper; the student's non-drawing hand, or a mug, a shoe, a plant.

Time. One 5-minute blind contour; one 10-minute modified contour (glances at the page allowed). Mess: low.

The fun of it. Blind contour looks like a wire that wandered, and students usually laugh. The laugh is useful. It means they stopped protecting a pretty page.

The skill it builds. Local edges. Eye and hand on the same trip. Edwards's contour stays; the hemisphere cartoon does not.

How to run it. Product goal: "Your eye stays on the edge. The pencil does not stop while the eye is moving." For the blind pass, tape a scrap of paper over the drawing hand if peeking is a sport. Then a modified contour of the same hand or

mug, glances allowed, still slow. Compare. The second drawing should be more proportioned *because more looking happened*, not because they “tried harder at being good at art.”

Project 3 — Value still life, three steps

Materials. Graphite or charcoal; a pear or an onion; a single lamp or a window; a piece of light cloth; a scrap of paper for a three-step scale (light, middle, dark).

Time. Twenty to forty minutes. Mess: low for graphite, medium for charcoal.

The fun of it. The pear starts to sit on the table when the dark side and the cast-shadow shape are placed. That click is the point.

The skill it builds. Value as light on a form. Texas’s element, now as high-school craft. Not blending as a personality.

How to run it. First the scale, three boxes. Then the pear: where is the light? Point. Light side, dark side, turning, cast-shadow *shape*. No star-highlight until those four exist. If they blend everything to oatmeal, take the stump away and ask for three values with the side of a pencil.



Figure 15: A three-step value scale beside a pear study in graphite, light from one side, cast-shadow shape on the cloth. No logos.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice a new move this week, with a model and a why. A stack of “draw a still life” with no contour, no value scale, and no looking question is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first tracks a contour, a short blocked set is honest: several slow contours of different objects, so execution can form. Same for a first three-value pear, a first five-minute gesture, a first ellipse of a mug.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, and next week, the new skill reappears between unlike jobs. A page that is only “draw bottles” teaches execution. A page that mixes “two gestures, one contour, a three-value onion, one ‘symbol or observation?’ on a two-minute sketch” teaches choosing.

Brief retrieval of moves already known. Yesterday's ellipse, last month's overlap, the product goal from Tuesday. A short mixed warm-up is enough: "Draw the mug opening from here. Now, from memory, the symbol. Which one matches the table?" Fluency here is flexible control of a move they can already get right — not a race to fill a sketchbook for its own sake.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a drawing whose rim is a circle while the mug is seen from the side, or a figure with no action line and a lot of hair, or a pear shaded everywhere except where the light actually is. Ask what they thought the line was for. Then an isomorphic drawing the student makes unaided.

Kitchen objects motivate and give a second picture. They do not replace unaided looking. A recipe card will not teach an ellipse.

A reader helps. At home the "peer" is often you, or a sibling, or a co-op partner. The job is to be a looker: "I cannot tell where the light is coming from." It is not to become a co-author. You do not grab the pencil. You do not finish the bottle.

Copying a master as a study belongs in the mix, named. Then the onion. A week of only plates is a week of plates. A week of only cartoons is a week of schemas. A week of unaided still life plus one named study is a drawing week.

Project 4 — Master study, named, then the onion

Materials. A public-domain reproduction of a simple drawing or a Bargue-style plate if you have one (a printed *modèle*, not a living illustrator's style to steal); graphite; an onion or a pear; two sheets.

Time. One sitting for the study; a second sitting, another day, for the onion. Mess: low.

The fun of it. The hatch on a good plate is a puzzle you can actually solve — how did that set of lines turn a cylinder? Then the onion refuses to be a plate, which is the joke and the lesson.

The skill it builds. Seeing how a finished drawing was made, then testing that seeing on nature. Duncum's "certain circumstances." Bargue as a named study option, not a franchise.

How to run it. Say the sentence: "This is a study." Copy a passage, not necessarily the whole plate — a cylinder, a nose in planes, a fold. Talk about hatch direction, not "make it pretty." Next sitting: the onion, same size on the page, no plate in

view. If the onion drawing is only the plate in disguise, they copied a schema twice. Put the onion closer. Change the light.

Project 5 — Still life from life, one week

Materials. Three objects that will stay (bottle, pear or onion, mug); a cloth; a corner that will not be tidied into a different problem every night; graphite or charcoal; the same sketchbook or a consistent paper size.

Time. Four sittings of 30–45 minutes across a week, or two longer ones. Mess: low to medium.

The fun of it. Tuesday’s ellipse can be corrected on Thursday because the bottle did not move. That is a pleasure adults forget.

The skill it builds. Sustained looking. Proportion between objects. Overlap. Value in a group. NCAS Proficient’s “without a preconceived plan” in kitchen language: they start, they see, they revise.¹²⁸

How to run it. Day 1: gesture of the group, then a light contour. Day 2: ellipses and overlaps; name one size error. Day 3: three values on the main object. Day 4: a pass on the cloth as a shape, not as “fabric texture.” Photograph the setup if you must move it — a working-camera snapshot as documentation, not as the thing to copy instead of the objects. A generated “same still life” is a different still life.

¹²⁸NCCAS Visual Arts at a Glance (n. 107), HS Proficient VA:Cr2.1.Ia: “Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.” VA:Cn10.1.Ia: document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas. There is no NCAS course titled Drawing.



Figure 16: Three objects and a cloth on a table, drawn from life in graphite: bottle, pear, mug, with overlap and a cast-shadow shape. No people, no logos.

Project 6 — Figure as option

Materials. A willing clothed sitter (reading in a chair is enough) or a credited photograph named on the page; newsprint; charcoal or soft graphite. No opened standard requires this project. Skip it if the house cannot support it.

Time. A few 2-minute gestures; one 15- to 20-minute seated pose. Mess: medium if charcoal.

The fun of it. People are more interesting than bottles, and more forgiving of a lively wrong line than of a stiff right one.

The skill it builds. Proportion as a studio move. Gesture under a longer look. The head as a volume, not a face to “get.”

How to run it. Start with gesture, always. Then one longer pose: the chair first, the mass of the torso, the head as an egg, the hands as shapes — not the eyelashes.

If you use a photo, write the source on the back. If you use a person, they are a sitter, not a portrait client; this book does not illustrate real children's faces, and the student does not need to either. A portrait that is actually a likeness can wait. Structure cannot.

For the student

This year your lines have to report what is in front of you, not the word for it. A *symbol* is the mug you can draw with your eyes closed — U, oval, handle. An *observation* is this mug, from this chair, in this light. Your job is the second kind of drawing.

Three moves will carry you. *Gesture* is the whole action, fast — the tilt of a person in a chair, the lean of a bottle. *Contour* is one edge, slow — your eye travels, the pencil follows. *Value* is light and dark as places on a form, not as gray scribbled everywhere because someone said “add shading.” A still life is just those moves, on objects that will wait for you. Figure drawing is optional. If you do it, start with the action, not the face.

Nobody is born knowing this. It is taught. You will watch a contour get made. You will try one. Then you draw one alone. The one that counts is the one you draw alone.

Tiny worked example. Object: a mug, handle to the right, sitting a little below eye level.

What I am *not* drawing: a U with a circle on top.

What I am drawing: the opening is an ellipse — a flattened circle — because I am not looking straight down into it. The near edge of the rim is a fuller curve; the far edge is a shallower one. The handle attaches at two places on the side, not at the rim. I look at the mug, make a line, look again.

That first ellipse will be wrong. Looking again is the work.

Try 1. Blind contour of your non-drawing hand, five minutes. Eye on the hand, not on the page. It will look like a wire. That is allowed. Then a second contour of the same hand, glances at the page allowed. Do not pretty it up. Name one place the second drawing matches a knuckle you can still see.

Try 2. A five-minute gesture of a person in the house — reading, washing a dish,

standing on one hip. Whole figure on the page. No face details. If no one will sit, use a credited photo and write the source. Then, unaided, a ten-minute contour of a bottle or a mug from life. Generator off.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone the difference between drawing the word *bottle* and drawing this bottle from here, and how you would check a drawing without asking whether it is “good.”

Challenge. Set three objects and a cloth. Draw the group for twenty minutes unaided: gesture first, then contour, then three values on one object. Tomorrow, without looking at yesterday’s page, draw the same setup again for ten minutes. Put the two pages side by side. Circle one thing that got more true. If nothing did, you decorated. Look more, mark less, try the ten minutes again.

You are allowed to struggle. A symbol wearing an observation hat is information, not a verdict. Point to the edge on the object. Point to the line on the page. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn’t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — looking has not started. The student stares at the paper. The mug on the table could be a different mug. Ellipses are circles. Handles attach at cartoon places. Blind contour is a scribble that does not track any edge you can find on the hand.

Next move. Pause the finished still life. Return to contour in short bursts: five minutes, object close, eyes on the edge. Sit beside them and do a contour of the same mug, quietly, then they try. A student who is calendar-grade 9 with observation still only a schema is not “behind a legal grade.” Stay at the door until a contour tracks an edge unaided. Then this course.

Diagnostic 2 — a procedure without a picture. The student can chant “shade it” and cannot point to the light. Can fill a worksheet of value scales and then grays a pear evenly. Can produce a finished-looking file after a generator pass and cannot redraw the ellipse in the morning.

Next move. Slow down on the new move. One conceptual pass: symbol versus this

object; gesture versus detail; three values versus oatmeal blend. Then a handful of short drawings, not a week-long still life. Put the object next to the drawing and ask them to match one edge. If they are already lost inside a first still life, start with a fully worked contour, not with “see if you can figure it out.” A missing looking skill is not a chance to discover talent. It is a fluency problem.

If the fluent page appeared in four minutes with light that does not match the window, treat it as an outsourced drawing, not as a gift. Go back to the object. They draw. You look at their lines.

Diagnostic 3 — choosing is the hole, not executing. The student can contour when the page says “contour,” shade when the page says “value,” and freezes on a mixed sitting, or draws every still life as a stack of symbols with a gray wash.

Next move. Keep going on new objects in short blocked bursts, and change the practice. Mix yesterday’s contour with last month’s gesture. Ask “which job is this?” before “is it good?” An unannounced mixed sitting once a month: one gesture, one contour, one three-value object. Choosing is a skill. Blocked pages will not teach it.

When to get a human tutor. You are the ceiling on tonight’s idea, and the five-minute warm-up still leaves you unable to hear a circle where an ellipse belongs. Or weeks of faded models have not moved the unaided ticket off a symbol. A tutor, a co-op teacher, or a community-studio drawing night is a normal high-school plan. Stay the supervisor who can still hear a missing ellipse. Sight-size with a trained instructor is a real method; choose the instructor, and keep naming studies as studies.

When to go ahead. Contours track edges unaided. A three-value object turns. Gesture finds the whole before the parts. One medium — graphite or charcoal — is fluent and a second is in progress. The unaided ticket is mostly observation, including on mixed jobs. Then lengthen: a week-long still life, a named master study plus the onion, figure if you want it. Acceleration is a pathway choice, not a neighborhood race. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student attempts first. You hold the key — the setup, the time, the looking question.

AI box — Drawing

In a high-school math study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam. Drawing has no answer key, so a fluent generated still life is even easier to mistake for skill. The exit ticket is a drawing the model did not make.

Use a tool to explain today's idea to *you* (why an ellipse is not a circle from here; why three values turn a form), to suggest a still-life setup you will actually build, to show a composition you and the student look at together and then put away, or to write extra sketchbook prompts the student will *draw*.

The student draws tonight's contour unaided. No "make my child's still life," no tracing a generated pear as the project, no unsupervised generator during the attempt, no uploading a child's face.

A grid, a lightbox, or a projector still passes through the student's eye and hand. A generator skips looking and marking. Use the first kind, if you use a tool at all, as a looking aid — and still put the onion on the table.

A detector is not a verdict on a child's picture. Read the unaided page instead.

A published drawing text, a Bargue plate, or a library how-to can sit on the same table. They are tools, not the course name. The transcript still says Drawing or Art I.

What "done enough" looks like

A "grade 9 book" is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill. The National Core Arts Standards' default high-school finish line is Proficient, not Advanced.¹²⁹

Checklist before moving on.

- Looks at the object as much as the page, on purpose.

¹²⁹NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 111). High-school "done enough" in this book is Proficient unless the family is aiming at Accomplished, Advanced, or an AP portfolio.

- Distinguishes a symbol from an observation; hears a cartoon bottle wearing a still-life hat.
- Produces a slow contour that tracks an edge you can point to on the object.
- Finds the action of a pose or a group in a short gesture, whole on the page.
- Places three values so a simple form turns, and can point to the light.
- Completes at least one still life from life across more than one sitting.
- If a master copy was done, it is labeled a study, and a drawing from nature sits beside it.
- Produces unaided drawings with the generator closed; can account for a line by pointing at the subject.
- Has a folder a stranger could skim: dated sheets, not only the prettiest page.

What can still be thin: ink as a fluent medium; figure; linear perspective as a full system (the middle-grade chapter already treated a box as a studio move, not as a required noun); AP Drawing. Those can travel. The unaided contour and the three-value still life cannot.

Transcript. Write **Drawing** or **Art I**. If the spine was a publisher or a plate series, add a parenthetical a stranger can map: “Drawing (observation, still life, graphite and charcoal).” A year of cartoon copying that never reached an unaided still life is still work; name it honestly rather than printing Drawing on a folder of schemas. If the student sits AP Drawing or another AP Art and Design portfolio, put the exam score on a separate line. The kitchen course is still Drawing. AP is optional. It is not this book.

Authenticity is content, not a cover. A path through making is the promise. A generated still life, a percentile, or a brand is not.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know a symbol from an observation. I know what to say tomorrow. I know what a fluent page that is not theirs usually means. The student still does the looking. We can do this.

Chapter 5

Painting



Figure 17: Unbranded tubes, a palette, a water jar, brushes, and pan watercolor on a kitchen table. No people, no logos.

Why this matters

High-school painting is the year color stops being a name on a crayon and becomes a mixture the student made. The pear is not “green from the tube.” The pear is a dull yellow-green mixed from two colors, cooled toward the shadow, warmed toward the window. That is not a personality trait. It is not a brand. It is work that is taught: a short mix you can see, a sitting the student tries, then a sitting they paint unaided.

That is worth the struggle because looking from the drawing year now has to survive a material that moves. Watercolor is transparent and travels. Acrylic sits and dries fast. Oil, if you come to it later, stays open and brings solvents you have to respect. Eisner’s sentence is the whole course in eight words: the arts teach students to think through and within a material.¹³⁰ A generated oil painting of a pear is performance. Mixing the green is the skill.

Painting has been a required medium on a typical state map from Grade 1. Texas lists paintings among the work a first-grader produces, and keeps the medium through Art I.¹³¹ The National Core Arts Standards do not title a course Painting, and they do not specify watercolor versus acrylic versus oil.¹³² High school is where the same job gets a course name a registrar can read.

Titles a stranger already knows include **Painting** and, on a Texas-style list, **Painting I** as a Level II course after Art I.¹³³ The federal course code already speaks the name: 05157 Painting.¹³⁴ A family may title this year **Painting**. If the year is still

¹³⁰Elliot W. Eisner, “10 Lessons the Arts Teach,” from *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (Yale University Press, 2002), NAEA reprint, <https://www.arteducators.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/10-Lessons-the-Arts-Teach.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026. “The arts teach students to think through and within a material.”

¹³¹19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105 (Art, Grade 1, Adopted 2013), paintings among required production media; § 117.302 (Art, Level I): demonstrate effective use of art media and tools in drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, fiber art, design, and digital art and media. Cornell LII, accessed 31 August 2026.

¹³²National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (2014), <https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026. Voluntary map, not a method. Artistic literacy requires engaging creation processes directly through appropriate materials “such as charcoal or paint or clay.” No NCAS course titled Painting; no medium specified as watercolor, acrylic, or oil.

¹³³19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.303 (Art, Level II, Adopted 2013): Painting I is a Level II title; prerequisite one credit of Art, Level I. Cornell LII, accessed 31 August 2026.

¹³⁴NCES SCED identifiers as listed on a state COURSECODE codeset (Vermont Agency of

a mixed foundations year, **Art I** remains honest. Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write “AI Art.”

Color is an element from Grade 1 on the Texas list. Color mixing is not a named phrase in those standards.¹³⁵ This chapter owns paint as the tool that makes color physical. The next chapter but one owns the elements and principles as organizers — emphasis, balance, a poster with a hierarchy. Steal a word from that list when you need it. Do not turn tonight’s still life into a worksheet of primary colors as the only question.

The National Core Arts Standards remain a map, not a homeschool law. High-school “done enough” is still Proficient unless you are aiming further.¹³⁶ AP 2-D Art and Design is an optional portfolio, not a painting exam by that name. It is not required for the transcript title Painting.

This book will not sell painting as a way to raise reading or math. Justify the hour by looking and making.¹³⁷ A path through a material is the promise. A “gifted” label is not.

The door is skill. Can the student mix a color they cannot squeeze from a single tube? Can they keep looking at the pear while the wash is wet? Can they stop before the page turns to mud? If those three are fragile, stay there. The rest of this chapter teaches the course. This page names why the course is worth a hard year, and why the unaided mix — not a generated still life — is the work.

This week you can learn how to mix a dull green from two tubes, and how to see a premade squeeze. Today the student can mix three greens from two tubes and paint one pear, with the generator off.

Education), accessed 31 August 2026: 05157 Painting.

¹³⁵19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105: elements including line, shape, color, texture, form at Grade 1. Color mixing is not a named TEKS phrase in the sections opened this research pass. § 117.111 (Grade 3): elements as building blocks and principles as organizers.

¹³⁶NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 132), high-school levels Proficient, Accomplished, Advanced. This book treats Proficient as the default finish line.

¹³⁷Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, REAP executive summary, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34, nos. 3–4 (2000) / NAEA *Translations* (Winter 2001), <https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/REAP%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>. No reliable causal link from visual art to reading or math achievement.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a painter. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear a squeezed green offered as mixing, and a generated pear offered as the student's painting, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Cooking from a jar of sauce versus cooking from tomatoes, an onion, and a pan. The jar is convenient. It is also one note. Mixing on a palette is cooking from parts. The student who only ever squeezes "sap green" has never had to decide how yellow, how blue, how dull. The pear in the bowl is dull. The tube is often not.

Precise picture. Paint is color plus a binder plus water or oil, sitting on a surface that either drinks or resists. You do not need pigment chemistry for Tuesday. You need three practical differences.

Watercolor is transparent. Light comes through the wash, hits the paper, and comes back. A light is often the paper left alone. A dark is a second pass, not a squeeze of black. Watercolor rewards a plan and punishes fussing. Pan sets labeled for children, conforming to ASTM D-4236 and without a cautionary warning, are the kitchen default when the student is still in the grade-6-or-under band; high-school pans still get a label check.¹³⁸

Acrylic is, in student form, water-based while wet and plastic when dry. It can be opaque. It dries fast — teach that in one sentence, then paint: "If you want to blend, blend now; in ten minutes this patch will not move." Some acrylic mediums, varnishes, and sprays are a different product from the student tube. Read that label too.

Oil is an optional later medium. Read the current label; CPSC tells families to avoid solvents with children and to store oil- or solvent-soaked rags in a covered container that does not allow air in or vapors out, and the American Lung Association's VOC page (updated 13 January 2026) names arts-and-crafts products among indoor sources and tells you to add ventilation — open windows and a fan pulling

¹³⁸U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5015.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026. Buy children's art materials labelled "Conforms to ASTM D-4236" and without cautionary warnings through grade 6. Avoid solvents with children. Adults mix powdered and dusty materials. Keep food and drinks out of the art area. Wash hands. Poison Control 1-800-222-1222. Adequate ventilation: clean air toward the artist, contaminated air away; a fan without a source of clean air is not adequate ventilation.

indoor air outside.¹³⁹ That is the safety sentence. This book will not invent an age at which oil becomes legal, a rule that “odorless” means harmless, or a fat-over-lean law as if a safety guide had printed it. If the label warns, it is not a grade-6 material. If you cannot ventilate, you do not start.

A *limited palette* is a teaching tool, not a personality. Two yellows, one red, one blue, and white (for acrylic) will mix more of the visible world than a tray of twenty premixed “pear green” and “sky blue.” The mixing chart in this chapter is the fluency drill. The still life is the test.

Wash versus opaque is thinking through a material. The same mug, two days: Tuesday in watercolor, the lights left as paper; Thursday in acrylic, the lights painted. The mug did not change. The thinking did.

The studio structures from intensive high-school rooms still fit a kitchen: you present, they work, you talk, you show.¹⁴⁰ Develop Craft is a real habit — tools, materials, a convention such as color mixing — and it was never seen taught in isolation. Mixing without looking at a pear is a worksheet. Looking without mixing is a drawing year with wet brushes.

A generated painting can hide a missing mix the way a chatbot paragraph can hide a missing warrant. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹⁴¹ That study is math, not

¹³⁹CPSC Pub. 5015 (n. 138), oils: oil paints contain pigments, fillers, and sometimes solvents including paint thinner, turpentine, and mineral spirits; choose oils with few or no cautionary labels when possible; linseed oil or solvent-soaked rags can spontaneously combust — store rags in a covered container that does not allow air in or vapors out. American Lung Association, “Volatile Organic Compounds,” updated 13 January 2026, <https://www.lung.org/clean-air/indoor-air/indoor-air-pollutants/volatile-organic-compounds>, accessed 31 August 2026: arts and crafts products among VOC sources; add ventilation — open windows and a fan to pull indoor air outside; follow the manufacturer’s directions. This book does not invent a “no oil before age n” other than the K–6 cautionary-label bar and the avoid-solvents children’s guideline. Fat-over-lean is not a CPSC rule in the pages opened.

¹⁴⁰Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly Sheridan, *Studio Thinking 2* (2013); eight Studio Habits of Mind listed alphabetically because they are non-hierarchical (Project Zero Figure 1.2). Develop Craft includes color mixing as a convention. Transfer “must be demonstrated.” High-school studio structures: demonstration-lecture, students-at-work, critique, exhibition.

¹⁴¹Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics,” *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. RCT, nearly 1,000 Turkish high-school math students, GPT-4-0613. GPT Base: practice +48 percent; unaided exam –17 percent. Mechanism for the studio hour, not a painting RCT.

a painting trial. The same crutch is available here. Current performance on a page the model made is often an unreliable index of learning.¹⁴² The unaided pear tomorrow morning is the test.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. The squeeze wearing a mixing hat. The student needs orange and reaches for the orange tube, or needs a shadow green and reaches for black.

What it usually means. Color is still a name, not a mixture. The chart has not yet become a habit.

What to say. “Two tubes only today. Make me three oranges — a yellow one, a red one, a dull one. The dull one is probably closer to the pear.”

2. Mud as a personality. Every wash turns gray-brown. The student says “I’m just not a painter.”

What it usually means. Too many colors in the puddle, or a wet brush in a dirty rinse, or a third pass on a watercolor that wanted two. The material is teaching. The character is not the problem.

What to say. “Rinse until the water is actually clear. Two colors in this wash, not five. If the first wash is still shiny, wait. Mud is a recipe, not a trait.”

3. Filling in a drawing. A careful pencil still life, then paint as coloring, staying inside the lines, local color from the tube on every object.

What it usually means. The drawing year was never handed over. Paint is still a marker with extra mess.

What to say. “Light pencil, or none. Paint the big shapes of light and dark first. The label on the bottle can wait. If the paint is only coloring a drawing, we are still in Chapter 4 with a wet brush.”

4. “It dried the wrong color.” Acrylic went darker. Watercolor went weaker. The student chases it with more paint and loses the pear.

What it usually means. Drying time was not in the plan. Acrylic often dries a step darker; a watercolor wash lightens as it dries. That is the material, named in one

¹⁴²Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199.

sentence.

What to say. “Make a swatch, wait until it is dry, then match the pear to the dry swatch. We are not chasing a wet lie.”

5. A fluent page the student cannot mix again. The still life appeared from a prompt. The student cannot mix the shadow green on a scrap.

What it usually means. The page was outsourced. You cannot hear a missing mix the way you can hear $7 \times 8 = 48$.

What to say. “Mix that green on a scrap, now, from these two tubes. If you cannot, we go back to the chart. The picture a model made is performance. The mix you make tomorrow is the test.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on a scrap, no student in the room:

1. Squeeze a yellow and a blue (student acrylic or pan watercolor). Mix three greens: yellow-green, middle, blue-green. Star the dullest. That star is often the pear.
2. Paint a one-inch square of the dull green. Wait until it is dry. Look. Wet and dry are not the same color.
3. Write tonight’s product goal in one sentence you could check: “Three mixed greens on a chart, then one pear in the dullest green, paper left for the light,” or “The same mug, watercolor wash, lights left as paper.”

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear a squeeze wearing a mixing hat. That is the job. The student still holds the brush.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year Painting.

A mix they cannot squeeze. Can they make orange, purple, a dull green, a brown, from a short list of tubes? If every color on the page came from a matching tube, mixing has not started.

Looking while it is wet. Can they look at the pear, mix, look again, then touch the page? If they paint from the drawing or from a phone picture of a painting, they

are decorating a memory.

Unaided paint. Can they produce a short study with the object in front of them and the generator closed? If every good page so far appeared after a model pass, you do not yet know what they can do.

If the student cannot yet mix two colors on purpose, stay on the chart. High school is a band, not a birthday. If contour is still a symbol, the drawing chapter is the repair, not a pep talk with a bigger brush.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The studio hour at the front of this book already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with paint.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s mix, not tonight’s new medium. Three greens from two tubes. One “tube or mix?” on a scrap of last week’s pear. No tool. No audience yet.

Short model (5–8 minutes). One mix and one patch on paper, thinking aloud. Name the product goal first. Then: “Yellow plus a little blue. That is too bright for this pear. A speck of the leftover red to dull it. Swatch. Wait. Match the dry, not the wet.” Keep it short.

Fade as soon as you can. Second example: they explain what your puddle is doing. Third: you mix the light, they mix the shadow. Fourth: they paint from the pear, you are quiet. Include at least one incorrect example per new move: orange from the tube beside a mixed orange; a watercolor third-pass that turned to mud; acrylic blended long after it had skinned. Ask “what did they think this puddle was for?”

Exact wording you can steal.

On mixing: “Two tubes. Make three versions. Star the one that matches the pear, not the one that looks like the word *green*.”

On watercolor: “The light is the paper. If you paint the light, you have spent it.”

On acrylic: “It will not wait. Blend now or place a patch and leave it.”

On mud: “Rinse until the water is clear. Two colors in this wash. If it is still shiny, wait.”

On drying: “Swatch, wait, match the dry.”

On filling in: “Big shapes of light and dark first. The lettering on the label is not tonight.”

On fading: “I mixed the first green yesterday. Today you mix the twin and paint the pear. I am not going to talk during the attempt.”

First problem for the student, after the model. A mixing chart, not a finished painting. Product goal on a sticky note: two tubes, three mixtures, one swatch left to dry. They mix. You wait. Struggle before rescue. Ask, wait, hint, then mix a patch if needed. You do not finish the pear.

One good question. After the attempt: “Which green on this chart could you point to on the pear, and which green is the word *green*?” The student generates the why. You do not narrate it.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short studies of the new type, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday’s chart, last week’s contour of the same pear, a wash, an opaque patch. A purchased book of identical “paint this apple” pages can still be interleaved by you pulling yesterday’s mix onto the same week.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One short painted study without a generator and without your brush on the page. Object in view; model closed. You grade the unaided page. A generated still life is performance. The mix the next morning is the test.

Every painting the transcript will claim needs unaided making. If the family later sits AP 2-D Art and Design, College Board’s 2026–27 rule prohibits generative tools for final submitted artwork.¹⁴³ The kitchen does not need AP to adopt that honesty.

How to fade help. Complete mix → student explains a second → shared still life → independent pear → incorrect example named → student generates. When they can dull a green without your commentary, put the scaffold away. Bring it back when a new medium arrives.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. The brush stays with the student. A parent who last used tempera in elementary school can still hear a

¹⁴³College Board, *AP Art and Design Course and Exam Description*, Effective Fall 2026; AP Central AI guidance, 2026–27. Generative AI prohibited for final submitted artwork. Selected Works 40 percent / Sustained Investigation 60 percent in the CED. AP 2-D Art and Design is optional and is not a painting exam by that name. Accessed 31 August 2026.

squeeze wearing a mixing hat. Hearing is not the same as taking over the page.

Children’s materials through grade 6: “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” and no cautionary warning.¹⁴⁴ High-school watercolor and student acrylic usually stay in that family when you keep buying student-grade, water-based, unlabeled-for-warning products. Keep food and drinks off the table. Wash hands. Adults mix dusty powders. Poison Control is 1-800-222-1222. A fan that only blows room air around is not ventilation.

Project 1 — Color-mixing chart

Materials. Two or three student acrylics or pan watercolors (a yellow, a blue, a red — names on the tube are less important than the two you actually squeeze); a white plate or a cheap palette; water; a brush; a sheet divided into a simple grid the student draws.

Time. Thirty to forty minutes. Mess: medium. Cover the table. Small puddles, not lakes.

The fun of it. Orange happens. Then a second orange happens that is not the first. Students who “already know the color wheel” from a poster are often surprised by the dull one.

The skill it builds. Mixing as a studio skill. They mixed the orange; they did not squeeze it.

How to run it. Product goal: nine swatches from three tubes — each pair mixed light, middle, and dull if a third color can dull it — left to dry. No objects yet. Write the recipe under each patch: “yellow + a little blue.” The chart is blocked practice. It is not the still life. If they skip to a pear, the chart was the door they needed.

¹⁴⁴CPSC Pub. 5015 (n. 138). ACMI AP seal is a certifier’s mark (a board-certified toxicologist has certified the product as non-toxic when used as directed), not a CPSC seal. The CL seal is not for children in grade 6 or lower.



Figure 18: A hand-ruled mixing chart: yellow, blue, and the greens between them, recipes penciled under patches. No brand logos.

Project 2 — Watercolor still life

Materials. Pan watercolor with a label you have read; a round brush and a flat; watercolor paper or a heavy pad that will take a wash; a pear or a mug; a water jar; a paper towel; light pencil optional.

Time. Thirty to forty-five minutes. Mess: medium. Water will travel. A towel under the page is not fussing.

The fun of it. A wash that is left alone is often more alive than a wash that was “fixed.” Students discover that stopping is a skill.

The skill it builds. Transparency. The light as paper. Looking while it is wet.

How to run it. Light map in pencil or none. Wet the paper or work wet-on-dry — pick one for the sitting so the material is one problem. Mix the dull color on the palette, swatch, then a wash for the big shadow. Second pass only after the first is not shiny. Leave the light. If they paint every inch, they spent the paper.

Project 3 — Acrylic limited-palette still life

Materials. Student acrylic: yellow, red, blue, white; a palette; a jar; two brushes; a pear or a bottle on cloth; acrylic paper or a cardboard scrap primed with a cheap gesso if you have it, or a heavy pad.

Time. Forty minutes. Mess: medium-high. Acrylic on a shirt is a different problem from watercolor. An apron is sanity, not a costume.

The fun of it. Opaque paint can cover a mistake. That freedom is real. The cost is speed: the window for a blend is short.

The skill it builds. Opaque versus transparent. Drying time as a fact. A limited palette against a premade squeeze.

How to run it. One sentence: “If you want to blend, blend now; this patch will not wait.” Block in the dark of the cloth, then the object, then a mixed color for the turning. White is a tool for the light, not a way to make gray soup. Rinse. Recap tubes. Dried acrylic in a brush is a ruined brush.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice a new mix this week, with a model and a why. A stack of “paint a still life” with no chart and no looking question is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first mixes a dull green, a short blocked set is honest: several greens, then several oranges, so execution can form. Same for a first wash, a first opaque patch, a first “leave the paper.”

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, the new skill reappears between unlike jobs. A page that is only “paint pears” teaches execution. A page that mixes “three greens, a wash study, an opaque patch of the same mug, one ‘tube or mix?’ on a scrap” teaches choosing.

Brief retrieval of moves already known. Yesterday’s dull green, last month’s ellipse on the mug, the product goal from Tuesday. Fluency here is flexible control of a mix they can already get right — not a race to cover paper.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a pear painted with tube green and a black smear for shadow, or a watercolor polished until it is mud, or an acrylic

blend attempted on a dry skin. Ask what they thought the puddle was for. Then an isomorphic study the student paints unaided.

Kitchen fruit motivates. It does not replace the unaided mix. A grocery apple will not teach transparency if they only squeeze.

A reader helps. The job is to be a looker: “I cannot tell which green you mixed and which you squeezed.” You do not grab the brush.

Project 4 — Wash versus opaque, same mug, two days

Materials. The same mug, same seat, same light if you can; watercolor day one; student acrylic day two; two sheets the same size.

Time. Two sittings of thirty to forty minutes. Mess: medium, then medium-high.

The fun of it. The mug is a constant. The two pages will not look like twins, and that is the point, not a failure.

The skill it builds. Thinking through a material.¹⁴⁵ Watercolor spends paper for light. Acrylic paints the light. Same looking, different decisions.

How to run it. Day one: watercolor, lights left. Day two: acrylic, lights mixed and placed. Put the two pages side by side when both are dry. Ask: “What did watercolor make you do that acrylic did not?” If the two pages are identical, they colored a drawing twice.

¹⁴⁵Eisner (n. 130).



Figure 19: A watercolor pear study: transparent wash, paper left for the light, one mixed dull green. No logos.

Project 5 — Oil as optional later

Materials. Only if current labels allow; a ventilated room you can actually open to the outdoors; student oil or water-mixable oil as the label describes; a palette; rags you will store as CPSC says; an adult in the room. Not a grade-6 material if the label warns. Skip this project without guilt. Watercolor and acrylic are a complete painting year.

Time. A short sitting the first time — a three-value pear, not a landscape. Mess: high. Plan cleanup before you squeeze.

The fun of it. The paint stays open. A blend on Thursday can still move. That luxury is why people love oil. It is also why solvents and rags become a household problem.

The skill it builds. A later medium, named honestly. Not a badge. Not a requirement.

How to run it. Read the labels together. Open a window. Run a fan that pulls air out. Mix on the palette the same way you mixed acrylic: limited colors, a dull green, a pear. Cleanup as the bottle says. Rags in a covered container that does not allow air in or vapors out. You will not learn a fat-over-lean system from this book, because this book will not invent one. If you want that craft, a human painter can teach it with the products you actually own.

For the student

This year your color has to be a mixture you made, not a name you squeezed. A *tube green* is a word in paint. A *mixed green* is a decision: more yellow, more blue, a little of something else to dull it. The pear in the bowl is usually the dull one.

Two materials will carry most kitchens. *Watercolor* is transparent. The light is often the paper you left alone. If you paint every inch, you spent the light. *Acrylic* can cover. It dries fast. Blend now or place a patch and stop. Oil is later and optional. It is not the badge that makes this a real course.

Nobody is born knowing this. It is taught. You will watch a mix get made. You will mix one. Then you paint one alone. The one that counts is the one you paint alone.

Tiny worked example. Object: a yellow-green pear, window to the left.

What I am *not* painting: a squeeze of “light green” with a black smudge on the right.

What I am painting: yellow plus a little blue, then a speck of leftover red so it goes dull. Swatch. The light side is paler — more yellow, or paper left if I am in watercolor. The dark side is the same mix with more blue, not a dive into black. I look at the pear, mix, look again.

That first green will be too bright. Dulling it is the work.

Try 1. Two tubes only — a yellow and a blue. Mix three greens on a scrap. Star the dullest. Let them dry. Name, in one sentence, which patch could live on a pear and which patch is the word *green*.

Try 2. Paint one pear unaided, thirty minutes, from life. Use the dull mix. Leave a light. Generator off. Then, on a scrap, mix that shadow color again from the same

two tubes. If you cannot, the painting was a squeeze.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why a mixed dull green is a different skill from squeezing a green tube, and how you would check a painting without asking whether it is “pretty.”

Challenge. Same mug, two days: watercolor with the lights left as paper; acrylic with the lights painted. Put the dry pages together. Write one sentence about a decision the material forced. If you cannot name one, you colored a drawing twice. Try the watercolor day again, and stop sooner.

You are allowed to struggle. Mud is a recipe, not a verdict. Point to the mix on the palette. Point to the place on the pear. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — mixing has not started. Every object is a tube color. Shadows are black. The chart, if it exists, is a decoration. The student cannot mix orange from yellow and red on a scrap.

Next move. Pause the still life. Return to the chart in short bursts: two tubes, three mixtures, dry swatches. Sit beside them and mix the same three greens, quietly, then they try. A student who is calendar-grade 10 with color still only a squeeze is not “behind a legal grade.” Stay at the door until a mix matches a still-life color unaided. Then this course.

Diagnostic 2 — a procedure without a picture. The student can chant “red and yellow make orange” and cannot dull that orange to match a rust-colored mug. Can fill a color-wheel worksheet and then paints the pear from a tube. Can produce a finished-looking file after a generator pass and cannot remix the shadow in the morning.

Next move. Slow down on the new material. One conceptual pass: tube versus mix; wet versus dry; paper-as-light versus paint-as-light. Then a handful of small studies, not a landscape. Put the pear next to the page and ask them to match one patch. If the fluent page appeared in four minutes with light that does not match the window, treat it as an outsourced painting. They mix. You look at their puddles.

Diagnostic 3 — choosing is the hole, not executing. The student can wash when the page says “watercolor,” cover when the page says “acrylic,” and uses the same thick opaque recipe on both, or freezes when the sitting is mixed.

Next move. Keep going on new objects in short blocked bursts, and change the practice. Mix yesterday’s wash with last month’s mixing chart. Ask “which material is this, and what does it want?” An unannounced mixed sitting once a month: a chart, a wash, an opaque patch. Choosing is a skill. Blocked pages will not teach it.

When to get a human tutor. You are the ceiling on tonight’s idea, and the five-minute warm-up still leaves you unable to hear a squeeze wearing a mixing hat. Or weeks of faded models have not moved the unaided ticket off tube color. A tutor, a co-op teacher, or a community-studio painting night is a normal high-school plan. Stay the supervisor who can still hear a missing mix. Oil with a trained painter in a ventilated room is a real later path; it is not a video and a bottle of thinner on a closed kitchen.

When to go ahead. Mixes match still-life colors unaided. A watercolor study leaves paper for light. An acrylic study places a patch on purpose and respects drying. One medium is fluent and a second is in progress. The unaided ticket is mostly mixing and looking, including on mixed jobs. Then lengthen: a week-long still life, the two-day mug, oil only if labels and air allow. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student attempts first. You hold the key — the setup, the time, the mix question.

AI box — Painting

A fluent generated still life is easy to mistake for mixing. The exit ticket is a painting the model did not make, from a color the student can mix again on a scrap.

Use a tool to explain today’s idea to *you* (why a wash lightens as it dries; why two yellows behave differently), to suggest a still-life setup you will actually build, or to write extra mixing drills the student will *paint*.

The student paints tonight's pear unaided. No "make my child's oil painting," no tracing a generated pear as the project, no unsupervised generator during the attempt, no uploading a child's face.

A color-picker that names a pixel on a photo is not the same as mixing from the pear. If you use one, use it to talk, then put the phone away and mix from life.

A detector is not a verdict on a child's picture. Read the unaided page instead.

A published painting text or a library how-to can sit on the same table. They are tools, not the course name. The transcript still says Painting.

What "done enough" looks like

A "grade 10 book" is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill. The default high-school finish line remains Proficient.¹⁴⁶

Checklist before moving on.

- Mixes a color that cannot be squeezed from one tube, and can remix it on a scrap.
- Distinguishes a squeeze from a mix; hears tube-green wearing a still-life hat.
- Leaves paper for light in a watercolor study, on purpose.
- Places opaque acrylic in patches and can say what drying time forced.
- Completes at least one still life from life in paint, more than one sitting.
- Has a mixing chart that matches later pictures, not a wheel copied from a poster.
- Produces unaided paintings with the generator closed; can account for a color by mixing it again.
- Has a folder a stranger could skim: chart, studies, one longer still life — not only the prettiest page.

What can still be thin: oil; a full landscape vocabulary; watercolor wet-in-wet as a fluent craft; AP 2-D. Those can travel. The unaided mix and the painted still life from life cannot.

¹⁴⁶NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 132).

Transcript. Write **Painting**. If the year was still foundations, **Art I** is honest. If the spine was a publisher, add a parenthetical a stranger can map: “Painting (watercolor and acrylic; color mixing; still life).” A year of tube-color pages that never reached a mix is still work; name it honestly rather than printing Painting on a folder of squeezes. If the student sits AP 2-D Art and Design, put the exam score on a separate line. The kitchen course is still Painting. AP is optional. It is not this book.

Authenticity is content, not a cover. A path through a material is the promise. A generated still life, a percentile, or a brand is not.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know a squeeze from a mix. I know what to say tomorrow. I know what a fluent page that is not theirs usually means. The student still does the mixing. We can do this.

Chapter 6

Sculpture



Figure 20: Cardboard scraps, an air-dry lump, a coil, a length of wire, and a wooden tool on a table. No kiln in the picture, no people, no logos.

Why this matters

High-school sculpture is the year a form has to stand in the room, not only on the page. The bowl has a wall, a bottom, a weight. The cardboard figure has a front, a back, and a join that either holds or does not. That is not a personality trait. It is not a brand. It is work that is taught: a short model you can see, a sitting the student tries, then a sitting they build unaided.

That is worth the struggle because drawing and painting, for all their difficulty, still let a weak structure hide in a view. Three dimensions do not. A coil that is thinner than the wall it must become will crack. A trunk that has no armature will fall, and the next move is a tool — a wire, a thicker coil — not try-harder as character.¹⁴⁷ Eisner's sentence still holds: students think through a material.¹⁴⁸ Clay remembers every pinch. Cardboard remembers every cut.

Sculpture and ceramics have honest course names a registrar can read. Texas lists **Sculpture I** and **Ceramics I** as separate Level II titles after Art I.¹⁴⁹ The federal codes already speak them: 05158 Sculpture; 05159 Ceramics/Pottery.¹⁵⁰ A family may title this year **Sculpture**, or **Ceramics** if that is actually the year — kiln or no kiln, say what the medium was. A mixed 3-D year is still **Sculpture** if the work was form in the round, relief, and assemblage. Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write “AI Art.”

Texas asks for sculptures, including modeled forms, from Grade 1, and names ceramics as a must-master medium from middle school.¹⁵¹ The National Core Arts Standards ask Grade 2 students to repurpose objects to make something new

¹⁴⁷Lauren Fernando-Smith, “What Will We Make? Process vs. Product in the Preschool Classroom,” NAEYC *Teaching Young Children* (Winter 2023), <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/winter2023/what-will-we-make>, accessed 31 August 2026. When plasticine will not stand, wire is the right next tool; the teacher asks how the material behaved rather than grabbing the work. Used here as the armature lesson, not as a preschool script for high school.

¹⁴⁸Elliot W. Eisner, “10 Lessons the Arts Teach,” from *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), NAEA reprint. “The arts teach students to think through and within a material.”

¹⁴⁹19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.303 (Art, Level II, Adopted 2013): Sculpture I and Ceramics I are separate Level II titles; prerequisite one credit of Art, Level I. Cornell LII, accessed 31 August 2026.

¹⁵⁰NCES SCED identifiers as listed on a state COURSECODE codeset (Vermont Agency of Education), accessed 31 August 2026: 05158 Sculpture; 05159 Ceramics/Pottery.

¹⁵¹19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.105 (Grade 1): sculptures, including modeled forms. § 117.202 (Middle School 1): ceramics among including media.

— assemblage in kitchen language.¹⁵² Relief is not a noun in those opened cells. Teach it as a studio move: a form that hangs, with a front, and a back that can stay quiet.

The National Core Arts Standards remain a map, not a homeschool law. High-school “done enough” is still Proficient unless you are aiming further.¹⁵³ AP 3-D Art and Design is an optional portfolio (ten images, two views of five selected works). It is not required for the transcript title Sculpture.

A kiln is not the kitchen default. Indoor use of ceramic kilns, electric or fuel-fired, requires mechanical ventilation to the outdoors.¹⁵⁴ Air-dry clay will carry a sculpture year. Oven-bake polymer clay is a different plastic, allowed only as the current label allows, and it is not a kiln ceramic — say so if you use it. A community studio that will fire work made in a clay they accept is an honest later path. A hobby kiln on a porch without that ventilation is not a plan this book will teach.

This book will not sell sculpture as a way to raise reading or math. Justify the hour by looking and making.¹⁵⁵ A path through a material is the promise. A “gifted” label is not.

The door is skill. Can the student pinch a wall that stands? Can they join two parts so the join is a decision? Can they look at a fallen trunk and name a tool, not a character flaw? If those three are fragile, stay there. The rest of this chapter teaches the course. This page names why the course is worth a hard year, and why the unaided form — not a generated render — is the work.

This week you can learn that when the trunk falls, the next move is a tool. Today

¹⁵²NCCAS Visual Arts at a Glance (2014), VA:Cr2.3.2a, Grade 2: repurpose objects to make something new. Rights administered by SEADAE. Relief is not a TEKS/NCAS noun in the cells opened this research pass; taught here as a studio move.

¹⁵³National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (2014). Voluntary map. High-school levels Proficient, Accomplished, Advanced. Proficient is the default finish line in this book.

¹⁵⁴U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5015.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026. Indoor use of ceramic kilns (electric or fuel-fired) requires mechanical ventilation to the outdoors. Emissions named: chlorine, fluorine, carbon monoxide, metallic vapors, ozone. Hazards also include burns and infrared radiation; CPSC names protective clothing, gloves, and infrared goggles or a welding shield. Contact local or state authorities for proper installation. A kitchen table is not a ventilated kiln room.

¹⁵⁵Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, REAP executive summary (2000/2001). No reliable causal link from visual art to reading or math achievement.

the student can pinch a bowl, let it dry, and say one thing the clay did that they did not plan, with the generator off.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a sculptor. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear "try harder" offered as an armature, and a generated vase offered as the student's coil, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. A sandwich that will not stay stacked. More mayonnaise is not the fix. A toothpick is the fix — an armature, in kitchen language. Clay is the same. When a plasticine elephant trunk will not stand, a peer's offer of wire is the right next move. The adult asks how the material behaved rather than grabbing the work.¹⁵⁶

Precise picture. Three-dimensional work has mass, a join, and a view from more than one side.

Pinch is a wall made by opening a lump with the thumbs and squeezing an even thickness. *Coil* is a rope of clay stacked and blended. Both are modeled form — Texas's phrase from Grade 1. The skill is evenness and patience, not a wheel. Air-dry clay is the default: it hardens in the air; it is not fired; it is not dinnerware.

Assemblage is building from what the house already has: cardboard, tape, a tube, a box. Grade 2's "repurpose objects" is the ancestor. The skill is structure and join, then, if you want it, a painted surface after it holds.

Relief is a form that hangs. Clay or cardboard can make one. The front carries the looking. The back can be plain. It is a studio move, not a required noun.

Wire plus clay is the armature lesson. The wire is not a decoration. It is the reason the trunk stands. Read the wire package. This book will not invent a "safe at 10" or "safe at 14." If the package says keep out of reach of children, that is the rule.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶Fernando-Smith (n. 147). Linda Bongiorno, "How Process-Focused Art Experiences Support Preschoolers," NAEYC (2014), is the earlier process list; this chapter does not mash preschool "no sample" with high-school craft.

¹⁵⁷CPSC Pub. 5015 (n. 154) does not contain a dedicated scissors or craft-knife age. Children under 12 are less able to remember complex safety procedures and are more impulsive. Children's scissors, labelled, supervised, are the default. If the package says keep out of reach of children, that is the rule. Read the current label.

Kiln is optional and, for most kitchens, communal. CPSC names the emissions (chlorine, fluorine, carbon monoxide, metallic vapors, ozone), the burns, the infrared, and the ventilation: mechanical, to the outdoors.¹⁵⁸ Adults mix dusty materials. Glazes that might carry lead or cadmium are not a kitchen experiment; avoid unlabeled donated glaze; this book will not fake a food-safe claim for a bowl that dried on a table.¹⁵⁹

Oven polymer clay is a plastic that hardens in a home oven if the current label says so. It is not ceramics. If the year is mostly polymer, the transcript can still say *Sculpture*. It should not say *Ceramics*.

A generator can show a form. The student still pinches, coils, cuts, and joins. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹⁶⁰ That study is math, not a sculpture trial. The same crutch is available here. A fluent render of a coil pot is performance. The coil that stands on the table tomorrow is the test.¹⁶¹

Studio Habits still fit: Develop Craft is tools and care for the table; Engage and Persist is the bowl that cracked and was rebuilt; Envision is seeing the wall thickness before it dries.¹⁶² They were listed alphabetically because they are not a hierarchy. Transfer to other subjects is not assumed.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. Try-harder as an armature. The trunk falls. The student mashes it back on, thinner. It falls. They mash it again.

What it usually means. The material already answered. The next move is a tool, not character.

¹⁵⁸CPSC Pub. 5015, ceramics section (n. 154).

¹⁵⁹CPSC children's guidelines: avoid materials with lead, cadmium, and other heavy metals. This book does not invent food-safe glaze rules for unfinished or home-dried ware. Unlabeled donated glaze is not a kitchen material. 16 CFR part 1303 is a children's-product lead-paint ban (paints exceeding 0.009 percent / 90 ppm lead), not an art-history lecture on lead white.

¹⁶⁰Hamsa Bastani et al., "Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning," *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Math RCT; mechanism for the studio hour, not a sculpture trial.

¹⁶¹Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199.

¹⁶²Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly Sheridan, *Studio Thinking 2* (2013). Eight habits, alphabetical because non-hierarchical. Develop Craft never seen taught in isolation (Winner). Transfer must be demonstrated.

What to say. “The clay told you the trunk is too thin to stand. Wire, or a thicker coil, or a trunk that stays short. Which tool do you want?”

2. A drawing glued to a box. Four sides of cardboard with a picture on the front, no interior, no join worth naming, called a sculpture because it is not flat.

What it usually means. Two-dimensional thinking in a 3-D sitting. Assemblage has not started.

What to say. “Walk around it. What does the back do? What holds the top on? If the answer is ‘tape on the front,’ we are still in collage. Make a join I can see from the side.”

3. The kiln as a badge. The student (or the parent) believes it is not ceramics until it is fired, and the year stalls waiting for a studio that has not been arranged.

What it usually means. Firing was mistaken for the skill. Modeled form is the skill. Firing is a later process with a ventilation requirement.

What to say. “Air-dry is sculpture. If we get a community firing, that is extra, and the studio’s clay rules win. We are not waiting on a porch kiln.”

4. “It cracked, so I failed.” A coil pot splits at the join. The page of the year is treated as ruined.

What it usually means. Drying was faster than the wall could stand, or the join was not blended, or the bottom was too wet. Process is the load-bearing event. A cracked pot that the student can explain is a better record than a pretty one they cannot.¹⁶³

What to say. “Point to the crack. Was the wall thinner there, or was the join only a smear on the surface? We make the next one with that sentence in mind. The cracked one stays in the folder.”

5. A fluent render the student cannot build. A beautiful coil pot appeared from a prompt. The air-dry lump is still a lump.

What it usually means. The object was outsourced. You cannot hear a missing wall thickness the way you can hear $7 \times 8 = 48$.

¹⁶³Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 4th ed. (1964): the effect of the process on the child is of decisive significance. Arts PROPEL (Project Zero / ETS): the processfolio — drafts plus reflection — not only a portfolio of best pieces.

What to say. “Build a coil two inches high, now, from this lump. If you cannot, we go back to pinch. The picture a model made is performance. The bowl on the table is the test.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, at the table, no student in the room:

1. Pinch a small bowl from air-dry clay, two minutes. Feel the wall. Thin spots will crack. That feeling is tonight’s idea.
2. Roll a coil. Stack one ring on a pinch base. Blend the join with a thumb. If it looks like two parts stacked, the join is not done.
3. Write tonight’s product goal in one sentence you could check: “A pinch bowl with walls I can pinch without collapsing, set to dry, one sentence about what the clay did,” or “A cardboard animal that stands, join visible from the side.”

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear try-harder wearing an armature hat. That is the job. The student still holds the clay.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year Sculpture.

A wall that stands. Can they pinch or coil a form that holds overnight? If every form is a pancake with a name, modeled form has not started.

A join that is a decision. Can they blend a coil, tape a cardboard seam so it takes weight, or wrap clay around a wire on purpose? If parts only sit next to each other, assemblage has not started.

Unaided building. Can they produce a small form with the generator closed and your hands off the lump? If every good object so far appeared as a render, you do not yet know what they can do.

If the student cannot yet pinch an even wall, stay on pinch. High school is a band, not a birthday. Large-motor clay play from the early chapters is allowed as a warm-up. It is not the course.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model.

Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The studio hour already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with form.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday's move. One pinch. One coil. One "will this stand?" on a scrap of cardboard. No tool that makes the object for them. No audience yet.

Short model (5–8 minutes). One form, thinking aloud. Name the product goal first. Then: "I open the lump with two thumbs. I turn. I feel for a thin spot. I am not making a perfect bowl. I am making a wall that can dry." Keep it short.

Fade as soon as you can. Second example: they explain what your wall is doing. Third: you start the coil, they blend the join. Fourth: they build, you are quiet. Include at least one incorrect example per new move: a trunk mashed on thinner after it fell; a box with a drawing on the front and an open back; a join that is only a smear. Ask "what did they think this join was for?"

Exact wording you can steal.

On pinch: "Turn the lump. Feel the wall. A thin spot is a crack waiting."

On coil: "Blend until I cannot see the rope. If I can pick the ring off, it was stacked, not joined."

On the fallen trunk: "The clay answered. Wire, thicker coil, or shorter trunk. Which tool?"

On assemblage: "Walk around it. The back is part of the work. The join has to hold from the side."

On relief: "It hangs. The front carries the looking. The back can be quiet."

On drying: "Slower than you want. A bag over a wet piece overnight is patience, not cheating."

On fading: "I pinched the first bowl yesterday. Today you pinch the twin. I am not going to talk during the attempt."

First problem for the student, after the model. A pinch bowl, not a figure. Product goal on a sticky note: walls that stand, set to dry, one sentence about what the clay did. They pinch. You wait. Struggle before rescue. Ask, wait, hint, then pinch a wall if needed. You do not finish the bowl.

One good question. After the attempt: “Where is the wall thinnest, and what will that do overnight?” The student generates the why. You do not narrate it.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three small forms of the new type, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday’s pinch, a coil ring, a cardboard join, one “tool or try-harder?” on a fallen scrap. A purchased kit that is only “follow the sample” can still be interleaved by you pulling yesterday’s pinch onto the same week — or set aside if it is only matching.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One small form without a generator and without your thumbs on the lump. You grade the unaided object. A generated vase is performance. The bowl on the table is the test.

Every sculpture the transcript will claim needs unaided making. If the family later sits AP 3-D Art and Design, College Board’s 2026–27 rule prohibits generative tools for final submitted artwork.¹⁶⁴ The kitchen does not need AP to adopt that honesty.

How to fade help. Complete model → student explains a second → shared join → independent bowl → incorrect example named → student generates. When they can feel a thin wall without your commentary, put the scaffold away. Bring it back when wire arrives, or when the trunk falls again.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. The clay stays with the student. A parent who last made a pinch pot in grade school can still hear try-harder wearing an armature hat. Hearing is not the same as taking over the lump.

Air-dry clay is dusty when sanded; adults do dusty work, or skip sanding. Children’s scissors, labelled, are the default for cardboard. Craft knives later, optional, as the package says — this book will not invent an age.¹⁶⁵ A cutting mat and a conversation beat a hero shot of a blade. Keep food off the table. Wash hands.

¹⁶⁴College Board, *AP Art and Design Course and Exam Description*, Effective Fall 2026; 2026–27 AI guidance. AP 3-D Art and Design: ten digital images / two views of five selected works; Sustained Investigation fifteen images. Generative AI prohibited for final submitted artwork. CED Selected Works 40 percent / Sustained Investigation 60 percent. AP is optional. Accessed 31 August 2026.

¹⁶⁵CPSC Pub. 5015 (n. 154, n. 157). Adults mix powdered and extremely dusty materials. Keep food and drinks out of the art area. Wash hands. Poison Control 1-800-222-1222.

Project 1 — Air-dry pinch or coil

Materials. Air-dry clay; a mat; a small bowl of water; a wooden tool or a popsicle stick; a plastic bag for slow drying. A few pounds of clay is a catalogue object, not a kiln.

Time. Thirty to forty minutes to build; drying is overnight or longer. Mess: medium. Clay on grout is a regret. A mat is cheaper than a fight.

The fun of it. A bowl appears from a lump with no drawing required. Students who “can’t draw” often relax. Then the drying tells the truth about the wall.

The skill it builds. Modeled form. Evenness. Patience. Texas’s including-modeled-forms, now as high-school craft.

How to run it. Pinch first, even if coil is the goal this month. A pinch base plus one blended coil is a better first pot than a tall coil tower. Write the product goal. When they finish, they say one thing the clay did that they did not plan. That sentence is Responding, not extra credit.



Figure 21: A blended coil rising from a pinch base, wooden tool beside it, water in a small bowl. No kiln, no logos.

Project 2 — Cardboard assemblage

Materials. Cardboard from the recycling; masking tape or packing tape; optional paint after it holds; children's scissors as labelled; a cutting mat. Optional: a cardboard tube to repurpose.

Time. Forty minutes to an hour. Mess: medium. Bits everywhere. A box for scraps is part of Develop Craft.

The fun of it. The house is the supply closet. A creature, a building, a machine — as long as it stands and has a back.

The skill it builds. Structure. Join. Repurposing as a studio move, not as a craft-of-the-week sample everyone must match.

How to run it. Product goal: it stands, the join is visible from the side, the back is a decision. Tape structure first. Paint, if any, after it holds. If all the objects

look like the parent's sample, you ran a product hour. Name it honestly or put the sample away.¹⁶⁶



Figure 22: Cardboard assemblage: boxes and a tube joined with tape so the structure stands and the back is a decision. No paint-over yet, no logos.

Project 3 — Relief in clay or cardboard

Materials. A slab of air-dry clay on a board, or layered cardboard; a simple subject from life (a leaf, a key, a spoon); a way to hang it later (a hole, a loop of tape on the back).

Time. Thirty to forty minutes. Mess: medium for clay, low-medium for cardboard.

¹⁶⁶Bongiorno (2014) and Fernando-Smith (2023): process-focused work is choice-driven; product-focused work that all looks the same can still support fine motor. A still life or a form the student can talk about is a process hour that also has a product. A sample everyone must match is a product hour — name it honestly.

The fun of it. It is a picture that throws a real shadow. Students who miss flat work can return to looking without abandoning form.

The skill it builds. Front and back. Depth as shallow form. A studio move that hangs.

How to run it. The object is in front of them, not a cartoon. Press, cut, or build up. Walk to the side and look at the edge. If the “relief” is a drawing on a slab, it is still a drawing. Push a form out.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice a new join this week, with a model and a why. A stack of “make a sculpture” with no wall, no join, and no looking question is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first blends a coil, several rings on scrap bases are honest. Same for a first cardboard join that takes weight, a first relief edge, a first wire wrap.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: a pinch, a coil join, a cardboard stand, one “tool or try-harder?” A page of only coil pots teaches execution. A mixed sitting teaches choosing.

Brief retrieval of moves already known. Yesterday’s wall thickness, last month’s overlap from drawing, the product goal from Tuesday. Fluency here is flexible control of a join they can already get right.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a trunk mashed thinner after it fell, or a box with a drawing on the front, or a coil sitting on a base with a visible rope. Ask what they thought the join was for. Then an isomorphic form the student builds unaided.

Kitchen recycling motivates. It does not replace unaided building. A cereal box will not teach a join if they only decorate the front.

A reader helps. The job is to walk around the work: “I cannot tell what holds the head on from this side.” You do not grab the clay.

Project 4 — Wire plus clay

Materials. Air-dry or oven polymer as the label allows; a length of wire the package allows this student to use, with you in the room; tape or pliers as the package allows; a base (a lump, a cork, a cardboard stand).

Time. Forty minutes. Mess: medium.

The fun of it. The trunk stands. That click is the whole armature lesson.

The skill it builds. Tool as the next move, not character. Fernando-Smith's wire, now at high-school scale.

How to run it. Read the wire package together. Build a small standing form — an animal, a figure, a tree — armature first, clay as flesh. If the wire is not allowed, a thicker coil is the honest substitute. Skip the blade. Skip the invented age.

Project 5 — Community kiln, optional

Materials. Only if a community studio, school, or co-op will fire work made in a clay they specify. Their clay, their drying rules, their glaze rules. Not unlabeled donated glaze. Not a porch kiln without mechanical ventilation to the outdoors.

Time. Weeks, not an afternoon: make, dry, fire as the studio schedules. Mess: at their sink.

The fun of it. Fire changes clay in a way air-dry does not. That change is worth seeing once if you can arrange it. It is not the badge that makes the year real.

The skill it builds. A later process, named honestly. Ceramics as a transcript title only if this was actually the year.

How to run it. Call before you make. Work at home only in the clay they accept, or work on site. This book will not offer a food-safe shortcut for a mug that dried on a table. If the year is air-dry and cardboard, the transcript says Sculpture, and that is enough.

For the student

This year your work has to stand in the room. A *drawing of a bowl* is a view. A *bowl* is a wall, a bottom, and a weight. Your job is the second kind of making.

Three moves will carry you. *Pinch* opens a lump into a wall. *Coil* stacks ropes and blends them until they are one thing. *Assemblage* builds from cardboard and joins so the back is a decision. Relief hangs. Wire is a tool for a form that will not stand on its own. A kiln is optional. Air-dry clay is sculpture. Oven clay is a plastic; call it what it is.

Nobody is born knowing this. It is taught. You will watch a wall get made. You will pinch one. Then you build one alone. The one that counts is the one you build alone.

Tiny worked example. Lump of air-dry clay, size of a small apple.

What I am *not* making: a pancake with a name.

What I am making: two thumbs in the center, turn, pinch a wall that feels even. A thin spot is a crack waiting. I set it down. I do not mash a handle on as a noodle. If I want a handle, I blend it as if it grew there.

The first bowl will slump. Thickening the bottom and keeping the wall even is the work.

Try 1. Pinch a bowl. Set it to dry. Write one sentence about something the clay did that you did not plan — a crack, a slump, a thumb print that became a texture. That sentence is part of the work.

Try 2. Cardboard assemblage, forty minutes: it stands, the join shows from the side, the back is a decision. Generator off. Then, unaided, one coil ring blended onto a pinch base.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why “try harder” is the wrong next move when a trunk falls, and how you would check a sculpture without asking whether it is “cool.”

Challenge. Build a small standing form that needs a tool — wire, a thicker coil, or a cardboard brace. Write the tool on a slip. Tomorrow, without the slip, tell someone what would happen if you removed it. If you cannot, the tool was a decoration. Put it in for a reason and try again.

You are allowed to struggle. A crack is information, not a verdict. Point to the wall. Point to the join. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — the wall has not started. Every lump becomes a pancake or a snake. Pinch collapses. Coil is a pile of ropes. The student will not wait for drying.

Next move. Pause the figure. Return to pinch in short bursts: a wall the size of a thumb-bowl, evenness as the only goal. Sit beside them and pinch the same size, quietly, then they try. A student who is calendar-grade 10 with form still only a pancake is not “behind a legal grade.” Stay at the door until a small bowl stands overnight. Then this course.

Diagnostic 2 — a procedure without a picture. The student can chant “coil pot” and cannot blend a join. Can follow a sample everyone must match and cannot decide a back for an assemblage. Can produce a finished-looking render after a generator pass and cannot pinch a wall in the morning.

Next move. Slow down on the new move. One conceptual pass: wall versus pancake; join versus stack; tool versus try-harder. Then a handful of small forms, not a figure. Put the cracked pot next to the new one and ask them to point to the difference. If the fluent object appeared as a picture, treat it as outsourced. They build. You look at their joins.

Diagnostic 3 — choosing is the hole, not executing. The student can pinch when the page says “pinch,” tape when the page says “cardboard,” and uses the same pancake recipe on both, or freezes when the sitting is mixed.

Next move. Keep going on new forms in short blocked bursts, and change the practice. Mix yesterday's pinch with last month's cardboard join. Ask “which material is this, and what does it want?” An unannounced mixed sitting once a month. Choosing is a skill. Blocked pages will not teach it.

When to get a human tutor. You are the ceiling on tonight's idea, and the five-minute warm-up still leaves you unable to hear try-harder wearing an armature hat. Or weeks of faded models have not moved the unaided ticket off a pancake. A tutor, a co-op teacher, or a community-studio night is a normal high-school plan. Stay the supervisor who can still hear a missing join. A kiln with a trained technician in a ventilated room is a real later path; it is not a video and a porch.

When to go ahead. Pinch walls stand overnight. Coils blend. Assemblage has a

back and a join. One material is fluent and a second is in progress. The unaided ticket is mostly form, including on mixed jobs. Then lengthen: a related set of three, relief, wire, community firing if you can arrange it. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student attempts first. You hold the key — the setup, the time, the join question.

AI box — Sculpture

A generator can show a form. The student still coils, slabs, and cuts. The exit ticket is an object on the table, not a render.

Use a tool to explain today's idea to *you* (why a thin wall cracks; how an armature works), to suggest an assemblage from materials you actually have, or to write extra construction problems the student will *build*.

The student builds tonight's bowl unaided. No "make my child's sculpture," no 3-D print of a generated vase as the project unless you name that process honestly as a different medium, no unsupervised generator during the attempt, no uploading a child's face.

Kiln schedules, glaze recipes, and solvent questions stay on the product label and with the studio technician, not on a chatbot.

A detector is not a verdict on a child's object. Look at the join instead.

A published ceramics text or a library how-to can sit on the same table. They are tools, not the course name. The transcript still says Sculpture or Ceramics.

What "done enough" looks like

A "grade 10 book" is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill. The default high-school finish line remains Proficient.¹⁶⁷

Checklist before moving on.

¹⁶⁷NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 153).

- Pinches or coils a wall that stands overnight, and can point to a thin spot before it cracks.
- Distinguishes a join from a stack; hears try-harder wearing an armature hat.
- Builds an assemblage that has a back and a join you can see from the side.
- Makes at least one relief that hangs, from life or from a simple object in the house.
- Names a tool (wire, thicker coil, brace) when a form falls, rather than mashing it thinner.
- Produces unaided forms with the generator closed; can account for a crack or a slump in a sentence.
- Has a folder plus objects a stranger could skim: dated photos of process, one cracked piece kept on purpose, one finished form — not only the prettiest.

What can still be thin: kiln firing; wheel throwing; glaze chemistry; AP 3-D. Those can travel. The unaided wall and the honest join cannot.

Transcript. Write **Sculpture**, or **Ceramics** if that is actually the year. If the spine was a publisher or a co-op studio, add a parenthetical a stranger can map: “Sculpture (air-dry modeled form, cardboard assemblage, relief).” A year of craft samples that never reached a join is still work; name it honestly rather than printing Sculpture on a box of identical kits. If the student sits AP 3-D Art and Design, put the exam score on a separate line. The kitchen course is still Sculpture. AP is optional. It is not this book.

Authenticity is content, not a cover. A path through a material is the promise. A generated vase, a percentile, or a brand is not.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know when the next move is a tool. I know what to say tomorrow. I know what a fluent render that is not theirs usually means. The student still does the building. We can do this.

Chapter 7

Design and Color



Figure 23: Unbranded color swatches, a stamp, a light pencil grid on poster paper, a length of thread, and geometric shapes on a table. No trademarks, no people.

Why this matters

High-school design is the year a page has a job. One shape is the emphasis because someone decided. A poster has a headline a stranger can find from across the room. A print repeats a stamp on purpose, not because the paper was full. That is not a personality trait. It is not a brand. It is work that is taught: a short model you can see, a sitting the student tries, then a sitting they design unaided.

That is worth the struggle because drawing, painting, and sculpture already made marks and forms. Design asks those marks to *organize*. Texas's Grade 3 sentence is the one to keep, in ordinary language: the elements are building blocks; the principles are organizers.¹⁶⁸ A year of coloring-in-the-wheel worksheets with no made work is design in name. Name the year by what was taught.

When this book names elements and principles, it uses the Texas-named lists. They are widely used in U.S. classrooms. They are not a law of nature, and they are not a closed list the National Core Arts Standards printed.¹⁶⁹ California names “formal elements of art and principles of design” as literacy and does not enumerate that seven-and-seven in the 2019 Visual Arts Glossary opened for this book.¹⁷⁰ Steal the vocabulary. You do not have to steal a logo, and you do not have to treat Texas as federal law.

The Texas elements, built grade by grade: line, shape, color, texture, form (Grade 1), plus space (Grade 2), plus value (Grade 3). The principles: emphasis, repetition/pattern, balance (Grade 1), plus movement/rhythm (Grade 2), plus contrast/variety, proportion, unity (Grade 3).¹⁷¹ That is seven and seven. This book

¹⁶⁸19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.111 (Art, Grade 3, Adopted 2013): “discuss the elements of art as building blocks and the principles of design as organizers of works of art.” Cornell LII, accessed 31 August 2026.

¹⁶⁹National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (2014). Voluntary map, not a method: “Standards in the United States have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods.” NCAS does not enumerate a closed list of seven elements. Do not say “the National Core Arts Standards list seven elements.” Do not say all fifty states use NCAS. Texas had “no public plan” to adopt the 2014 arts standards as of the 2018 NCCAS status report.

¹⁷⁰California Department of Education, *California Arts Standards for Public Schools, Prekindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (adopted 9 January 2019). Names formal elements of art and principles of design in the literacy paragraph; the 2019 Visual Arts Glossary does not enumerate Texas's closed seven-and-seven. Four artistic processes “are addressed linearly in written standards, but are envisioned to occur simultaneously for students in the actual practice of visual art.”

¹⁷¹19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 117.105 (Grade 1), 117.108 (Grade 2), 117.111 (Grade 3), Adopted

will not invent an eighth element. Value arriving at Grade 3 is why the drawing chapter waited to treat it as high-school craft rather than as a first-grade word.

Color mixing as a studio skill already lived in the painting chapter — two tubes, a dull green, a pear. This chapter uses color as an organizer: warm against cool, a limited set that pushes one object forward. A generated poster is not Design. The student still decides the hierarchy.

A simple graphic poster still sits in visual arts. Media arts is a separate national discipline as of 2014.¹⁷² You may make a poster with collage letters and a light grid. You are not required to run a media-arts course to do it. Texas names **Design I** as a Level II title after Art I.¹⁷³ A family may title this year **Design**, or keep **Art I** if the year is still mixed. Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write a company logo into the assignment.

Craft earns its keep when it teaches a design move — emphasis, pattern, form. A craft of the week whose only job is to match a sample is a product hour. Fine motor has value; this book will not pretend that hour is composition.¹⁷⁴ Name it honestly, or pick a different project.

The National Core Arts Standards remain a map, not a homeschool law. Grade 6 already asks students to use visual organizational strategies.¹⁷⁵ High-school “done enough” is still Proficient unless you are aiming further. AP 2-D Art and Design is optional. It is not this chapter.

This book will not sell design as a way to raise reading or math. Justify the hour by looking and making.¹⁷⁶ A path through organizing a page is the promise. A

2013. Elements including: line, shape, color, texture, form (G1); space (G2); value (G3). Principles including: emphasis, repetition/pattern, balance (G1); movement/rhythm (G2); contrast/variety, proportion, unity (G3). “Including” is must-master; “such as” is illustrative. This book uses the Texas-named lists as widely used classroom vocabulary, not as federal law, and does not invent an eighth element.

¹⁷²NCCAS (2014) treats media arts as a separate discipline. A simple graphic poster in this chapter remains visual arts / Design.

¹⁷³19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.303 (Art, Level II): Design I is a Level II title; prerequisite one credit of Art, Level I.

¹⁷⁴Linda Bongiorno, NAEYC (2014), process-focused preschool art; Lauren Fernando-Smith, NAEYC (2023), both process and product-focused hours have value — product-focused can support fine motor. A sample everyone must match is a product hour. Name it honestly.

¹⁷⁵NCCAS Visual Arts at a Glance (2014), Grade 6 Creating: visual organizational strategies (VA:Cr2.3.6). HS Proficient remains the default finish line in this book.

¹⁷⁶Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, REAP executive summary (2000/2001). No reliable causal

“gifted” label is not.

The door is skill. Can the student point to the emphasis and say why it is the emphasis? Can they repeat a unit on purpose? Can they put a headline where a stranger will find it? If those three are fragile, stay there. The rest of this chapter teaches the course. This page names why the course is worth a hard year, and why the unaided page — not a generated poster — is the work.

This week you can learn to hear “it is in the middle because I did not decide” as a composition problem. Today the student can make one page where one shape is clearly the emphasis, say why, and leave the generator off.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a graphic designer. You do need to understand today’s idea well enough to hear “I just put it in the middle” offered as a composition, and a generated poster offered as the student’s hierarchy, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. A kitchen counter with one bowl of apples and a scatter of mail. You see the apples first because they are larger, redder, and grouped. That is emphasis, contrast, and unity in a room that was not trying to be a lesson. Design is making that kind of decision on purpose, on a page.

Precise picture. *Elements* are the stuff: line, shape, color, texture, form, space, value. *Principles* are what you do with the stuff: emphasis, repetition and pattern, balance, movement and rhythm, contrast and variety, proportion, unity. Building blocks and organizers. You do not need a quiz. You need to hear, on Tuesday, that the pear is lost because everything is the same size and the same red.

Composition is the arrangement. Centered-because-I-did-not-decide is a composition. It is just a weak one. A light grid is a looking tool: it helps you place a headline, a margin, a repeated stamp. A generator that fills the grid for you is not a grid.

California’s glossary language for visual organizational strategies is useful for a poster: hierarchy, consistency, grids, spacing, scale, weight, proximity, alignment, typography.¹⁷⁷ In kitchen words: what do I see first, what is the same on purpose,

link from visual art to reading or math achievement.

¹⁷⁷California Arts Standards (2019) Visual Arts Glossary, visual organizational strategies: hierarchy, consistency, grids, spacing, scale, weight, proximity, alignment, typography — used here

where are the edges, how big, how heavy the line, what sits together, what lines up, and what do the letters do. You do not need the glossary as a worksheet. You need two or three of those words in a product goal.

Print here is a stamp the student cuts or a found object dipped in paint: a repeat, a pattern, a rhythm. It is not a printshop. The skill is the repeat as an organizer.

Poster is a page with a message. Hierarchy is the skill. The headline is larger, higher, or heavier than the rest. Collage letters are enough. A light pencil grid is enough. A living artist's style as a prompt is not the assignment. A brand logo is not the assignment.

Warm and cool is color as organizer, not a recitation of primary colors. A still life in which the emphasis is warm and the rest is cool (or the reverse) is a design sitting that happens to use paint.

Studio Habits still fit. Develop Craft was never seen taught in isolation.¹⁷⁸ An elements worksheet without a made work is isolation with a poster on the wall. Mix the word with the page.

A generated poster can hide a missing hierarchy the way a chatbot paragraph can hide a missing warrant. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹⁷⁹ That study is math, not a design trial. The same crutch is available here. Current performance on a page the model made is often an unreliable index of learning.¹⁸⁰ The unaided emphasis page tomorrow morning is the test.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. Centered because no one decided. The object sits in the middle, same size as last week, same empty border, and the student calls it balanced.

What it usually means. Default placement, not a principle. Balance can be sym-

as poster language, not as a closed federal list.

¹⁷⁸Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly Sheridan, *Studio Thinking 2* (2013). Eight habits, alphabetical because non-hierarchical. Winner: Develop Craft was never seen taught in isolation. Transfer must be demonstrated.

¹⁷⁹Hamsa Bastani et al., "Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning," *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Math RCT; mechanism for the studio hour, not a design trial.

¹⁸⁰Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199.

metrical. It can also be a large shape on the left held by a small dark shape on the right. The middle is allowed. It is not the only chair in the room.

What to say. “Did you choose the middle, or did the middle choose you? Move the pear off-center. Add one small dark thing that holds it. Now tell me which version has a decision.”

2. Everything is the emphasis. Five objects, five bright colors, five textures, a headline and a subhead the same size.

What it usually means. Contrast and variety without an organizer. Unity never arrived.

What to say. “Point to the one thing I should see first. If you cannot, we take two things away. Emphasis is a choice, not a pile.”

3. The craft of the week wearing a design hat. Twenty identical snowflakes, or a kit whose box photo is the assignment, called Design because scissors were involved.

What it usually means. A product hour. Matching a sample can train a hand. It does not teach emphasis unless you name a move and let the results differ.

What to say. “What design move is this teaching — pattern, emphasis, form? If the answer is ‘it looks like the box,’ we pick a different project, or we keep this as fine-motor practice and we do not write Design on the folder.”

4. The color-wheel recitation. The student can name primary and secondary and cannot make a still life in which warm color pushes one object forward.

What it usually means. Vocabulary without organizing. Mixing already had its chapter. This chapter wants color to do a job.

What to say. “Warm on the emphasis, cool on the rest — or the reverse. One sitting. If the wheel is on the wall and the page is still all tube-red, the wheel was a poster, not a tool.”

5. A fluent poster the student cannot account for. The hierarchy appeared from a prompt. The student cannot say why the headline is where it is, or the type is a living artist’s lettering the model invented.

What it usually means. The page was outsourced. Treat model quotes and “as-

Ruskin-wrote” lettering as untrusted if a tool offered them.¹⁸¹

What to say. “Cover the picture. Tell me, from memory, what I am supposed to read first. If you cannot, we go back to collage letters and a grid you drew. The poster a model made is performance. The hierarchy you make tomorrow is the test.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Draw three shapes. Make one clearly the emphasis — larger, darker, or isolated. Circle it. Write five words: why that one.
2. Move the same three shapes so the emphasis fails (all the same size, all in a row). Write five words: why it failed.
3. Write tonight’s product goal in one sentence you could check: “One still life in which the bottle is the emphasis and the rest is quieter,” or “A poster whose headline I can read from the kitchen doorway.”

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear the middle wearing a decision hat. That is the job. The student still holds the tool.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year Design.

An emphasis they can point to. Can they say which shape is first, and why? If every object shouts, organizing has not started.

A repeat on purpose. Can they stamp or draw a unit more than twice with a rhythm, not a fill? If the page is only “more,” pattern has not started.

Unaided hierarchy. Can they make a poster or a page with the generator closed? If every good layout so far appeared from a prompt, you do not yet know what they can do.

¹⁸¹No named 2026 evaluation of consumer chat on art-historical citation was opened as a primary this research pass. Working rule: treat model-invented titles, quotations, and “in the style of” lettering as untrusted. The student places their own letters.

If the student cannot yet choose an emphasis, stay on one still life and one question. High school is a band, not a birthday. If they cannot yet mix a color, the painting chapter is the repair for that skill; this chapter will still let them organize with collage and graphite.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The studio hour already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with organizing.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s move. Three shapes, one emphasis. One “middle-by-habit or middle-by-choice?” on last week’s page. No tool. No audience yet.

Short model (5–8 minutes). One page, thinking aloud. Name the product goal first. Then: “This bottle is first because it is larger and darker. These two fruits are quieter on purpose. I am not filling. I am organizing.” Keep it short.

Fade as soon as you can. Second example: they explain what your page is doing. Third: you place two objects, they place the emphasis. Fourth: they arrange, you are quiet. Include at least one incorrect example per new move: everything centered and the same size; a poster with three headlines; a stamp scattered with no rhythm. Ask “what did they think this shape was for?”

Exact wording you can steal.

On emphasis: “Point to what I should see first. If you need more than one sentence, it is not yet the emphasis.”

On the middle: “Did you choose the middle, or did the middle choose you?”

On pattern: “A unit, repeated. Rhythm is the space between as much as the stamp.”

On a poster: “Read it from the doorway. If I cannot find the headline, it is not a poster yet.”

On a grid: “The grid is a looking tool. You still place the letters. A generator that fills the squares is not a grid.”

On craft: “Name the move. If the move is ‘match the box,’ we are in a different hour.”

On fading: “I made the first emphasis page yesterday. Today you make the twin with a different object first. I am not going to talk during the attempt.”

First problem for the student, after the model. An emphasis still life, not a poster with ten jobs. Product goal on a sticky note: one object first, the rest quieter, one sentence why. They arrange. Then they draw or collage. You wait. Struggle before rescue. Ask, wait, hint, then move one object if needed. You do not finish the page.

One good question. After the attempt: “If I covered one shape, which cover would ruin the page?” The student generates the why. You do not narrate it.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short pages of the new type, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday’s emphasis, last week’s still-life contour, a stamp rhythm, one “headline from the doorway?” A purchased book of identical “color the wheel” sheets can still be interleaved — or set aside.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One short designed page without a generator and without your hand on the arrangement. You grade the unaided page. A generated poster is performance. The emphasis they can point to is the test.

Every design the transcript will claim needs unaided making. If the family later sits AP 2-D Art and Design, College Board’s 2026–27 rule prohibits generative tools for final submitted artwork.¹⁸² The kitchen does not need AP to adopt that honesty.

How to fade help. Complete model → student explains a second → shared arrangement → independent page → incorrect example named → student generates. When they can name the emphasis without your commentary, put the scaffold away. Bring it back when type arrives, or when everything starts shouting again.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. The arrangement stays with the student. A parent who last made a poster for a garage sale can still hear the middle wearing a decision hat. Hearing is not the same as taking over the page.

Children’s scissors, labelled, for collage. Foam or found-object stamps with tempera or student acrylic as the labels allow. A craft knife for a linoleum block is

¹⁸²College Board, *AP Art and Design Course and Exam Description*, Effective Fall 2026; 2026–27 AI guidance. Generative AI prohibited for final submitted artwork; embedded generative fill/expand treated as generative. Non-generative crop, exposure, and color correction of student-made work may be used if they enhance rather than generate. CED Selected Works 40 percent / Sustained Investigation 60 percent (the Course Overview still prints a 50/50 table; this book follows the CED). AP is optional. Accessed 31 August 2026.

later and optional, as the package says — no invented age.¹⁸³ Read the current label. Keep food off the table.

Project 1 — Emphasis still life

Materials. One large object, several small (a bottle and two fruits, or a mug and keys); graphite or collage paper; a sheet. Mess: low.

Time. Thirty to forty minutes.

The fun of it. Moving one object an inch changes the whole page. Students who thought composition was “talent” can feel the click.

The skill it builds. Emphasis as a Texas principle from Grade 1, now as high-school craft. Decision versus default.

How to run it. Arrange from life. The large object is a candidate for first, not a rule — a small dark object can win. Draw or collage the arrangement. Write one sentence: why that one. If they center everything “to be balanced,” run the five-minute parent warm-up with them as the student.

¹⁸³U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015. No dedicated craft-knife age in the pages opened. Children’s scissors, labelled, are the default. Read the current package. Children’s materials through grade 6: ASTM D-4236 and no cautionary warning.



Figure 24: An emphasis still life in graphite: one bottle large and dark, two smaller fruits quieter, off-center on purpose. No logos.

Project 2 — Repeat print / pattern

Materials. A stamp they cut from foam or a found object (a spool, a leaf, a cardboard edge); tempera or student acrylic; paper; a pad of newspaper. Mess: medium.

Time. Thirty to forty minutes.

The fun of it. The second stamp is a surprise. The tenth is a rhythm. Hands get inky. That is allowed.

The skill it builds. Repetition and pattern. Movement and rhythm as the space between.

How to run it. One unit. Practice on scrap. Then a page of repeats with a planned interval — rows, a grid they drew, a rotation. If the page is a muddy pile, they filled. Try again with more space. They cut or found the stamp; a generator pattern is not this project.

Project 3 — Poster with a message

Materials. Paper, collage letters or hand letters, a light pencil grid, one image they made or a public-domain still-life scrap, not a brand logo, not a living-artist style prompt.

Time. Forty-five minutes to an hour, or two sittings. Mess: medium.

The fun of it. A real message — a family concert, a lost-cat notice, a co-op bake sale, a sentence they believe. The doorway test is funny and fair.

The skill it builds. Hierarchy. Visual organizational strategies in kitchen language. Presenting, not only making.

How to run it. Product goal: I can read the headline from the doorway; the next line is quieter; margins exist. Grid as a looking tool. Letters they cut or draw. If a tool suggests slogans, you may borrow an idea and then put the tool away. The layout is theirs.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice a new organizer this week, with a model and a why. A stack of elements worksheets with no page that uses them is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first chooses an emphasis, several small pages that all want that move are honest. Same for a first stamp rhythm, a first doorway headline, a first warm/cool split.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: emphasis, pattern, a poster thumbnail, one “middle-by-habit?” Choosing is the skill.

Brief retrieval of moves already known. Yesterday’s emphasis sentence, last month’s three values, the product goal from Tuesday.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a page where everything shouts, or a poster with three headlines, or a stamp pile with no interval. Ask what they thought the shape was for. Then an isomorphic page the student makes unaided.

Kitchen messages motivate. They do not replace the unaided hierarchy. A bake-sale poster will not teach emphasis if a model laid it out.

A reader helps. The job is to stand in the doorway: “I cannot find what to read first.” You do not grab the letters.

Project 4 — Warm/cool still life

Materials. Limited color: two warm, two cool, graphite or paint already in the house; a still life with one object that will be the warm (or cool) emphasis.

Time. Thirty to forty minutes. Mess: low to medium.

The fun of it. Color does a job. The pear comes forward because it is warm, not because it is in the middle.

The skill it builds. Color as organizer. Not a worksheet of primary colors as the only question. Mixing, if it happens, is in service of the push-and-pull.

How to run it. Name the emphasis object. Warm there, cool elsewhere — or the reverse. If they squeeze a rainbow, take two tubes away. The painting chapter already taught dulling. This sitting wants the split.

Project 5 — Craft that teaches a move

Materials. One stitch, fold, or weave: paper weaving, a simple running stitch on scrap cloth, a folded repeat. Texas names fiber as “such as” in elementary and as including from middle school; this is enough.¹⁸⁴

Time. Thirty to forty minutes. Mess: low.

The fun of it. Hands doing a rhythm. The page or cloth is a pattern they can point to.

The skill it builds. Pattern, or form, or rhythm — named out loud. If it only matches a sample, it is a product hour. Name it honestly or pick a different project.

How to run it. Product goal names the move: “a woven page with a wide stripe as emphasis,” or “a stitch line that is the movement.” No brand pattern packet required. If you use one, change one variable so the results cannot all match the box.

¹⁸⁴19 Tex. Admin. Code: fiber art “such as” in elementary sections opened; “including” from Middle School 1 (§ 117.202).



Figure 25: A repeat print: one found-object stamp in a planned rhythm across a page, interval visible, no trademark.

For the student

This year your page has a job. An *element* is stuff — line, shape, color, a texture you can feel, a form that takes up space, the gap around things, light and dark. A *principle* is what you do with the stuff — make one thing first (emphasis), repeat a unit (pattern), even or uneven weight (balance), a path for the eye (movement), difference (contrast), size that makes sense (proportion), belonging (unity). You do not need to chant seven and seven. You need to point.

Composition is the arrangement. The middle is allowed. It is a problem when it is the only arrangement you have.

Nobody is born knowing this. It is taught. You will watch a page get organized. You will organize one. Then you make one alone. The one that counts is the one you make alone.

Tiny worked example. Three objects: a bottle, an apple, a spoon.

What I am *not* doing: lining them up in the middle, same size, same darkness.

What I am doing: the bottle is first — larger, darker, a little off-center. The apple is closer to it than to the edge (they belong). The spoon is small and points toward the bottle (movement). I can cover the spoon and the page still works. If I cover the bottle, the page has no job.

That first try will still wander toward the middle. Moving the bottle is the work.

Try 1. One page, three shapes, one emphasis. Write one sentence why. Then make a second page where the emphasis fails on purpose. Name the failure.

Try 2. A poster with a real message, collage letters, a grid you drew. Read it from a doorway. Generator off. Fix the headline, not the decoration.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone the difference between “it is in the middle because I did not decide” and “it is in the middle because I wanted a formal balance,” and how you would check a poster without asking whether it is “cool.”

Challenge. Warm/cool still life: one object forward because of temperature, not because of the middle. Then a stamp page whose rhythm you could tap. If both pages are “more stuff,” you filled. Take things away and try one of them again.

You are allowed to struggle. A centered page is information, not a verdict. Point to the first thing. Point to the quiet things. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — no one decided. Every page is centered, same size, same border. Emphasis is a word on a worksheet. The student cannot ruin a page on purpose.

Next move. Pause the poster. Return to three shapes. Sit beside them and move one object, quietly, then they try. A student who is calendar-grade 11 with composition still only a default middle is not “behind a legal grade.” Stay at the door until they can point to an emphasis unaided. Then this course.

Diagnostic 2 — a procedure without a picture. The student can chant seven elements and cannot organize a still life. Can fill a color wheel and cannot make warm push an object forward. Can produce a finished-looking poster after a generator pass and cannot place collage letters on a grid in the morning.

Next move. Slow down on the new move. One conceptual pass: emphasis versus pile; pattern versus fill; headline versus decoration. Then a handful of small pages, not a campaign. Put a shouting page next to a quiet one and ask which has a job. If the fluent poster appeared in four minutes with type they cannot account for, treat it as outsourced. They place. You look at their hierarchy.

Diagnostic 3 — choosing is the hole, not executing. The student can stamp when the page says “pattern,” center a bottle when the page says “still life,” and uses the same recipe on a poster.

Next move. Keep going on new pages in short blocked bursts, and change the practice. Mix yesterday’s emphasis with last month’s print. Ask “which job is this?” An unannounced mixed sitting once a month. Choosing is a skill. Blocked worksheets will not teach it.

When to get a human tutor. You are the ceiling on tonight’s idea, and the five-minute warm-up still leaves you unable to hear the middle wearing a decision hat. Or weeks of faded models have not moved the unaided ticket off a default center. A tutor, a co-op teacher, or a community design night is a normal high-school plan. Stay the supervisor who can still hear a missing headline.

When to go ahead. Emphasis can be pointed to. Pattern has a rhythm. A poster passes a doorway test. One organizer is fluent and a second is in progress. The unaided ticket holds on mixed jobs. Then lengthen: a related set of posters, a craft that names its move, a page that uses warm/cool and emphasis together. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student attempts first. You hold the key — the setup, the time, the hierarchy question.

AI box — Design

A generated poster is easy to mistake for hierarchy. The exit ticket is

a page the student can account for, with letters they placed.

Use a tool to explain today's idea to *you* (why a default center reads as undecided; what hierarchy means on a poster), to suggest messages for a poster the student will *lay out*, or to write extra emphasis drills they will draw.

The student designs tonight's page unaided. No "make my child's poster," no living-artist style as the assignment, no brand logo to copy, no unsupervised generator during the attempt, no uploading a child's face.

A grid they drew is a looking tool. A generator that fills the grid is not.

A detector is not a verdict on a child's page. Stand in the doorway instead.

A published design text or a library how-to can sit on the same table. They are tools, not the course name. The transcript still says Design or Art I.

What "done enough" looks like

A "grade 10 book" is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill. The default high-school finish line remains Proficient.¹⁸⁵

Checklist before moving on.

- Points to the emphasis on a page they made and says why in one sentence.
- Hears "the middle because I did not decide" as a composition problem.
- Repeats a unit with a rhythm, not only a fill.
- Makes a poster whose headline a stranger can find from a doorway.
- Uses color as an organizer at least once (warm/cool, or limited color pushing one object).
- If a craft was done, can name the design move it taught.
- Produces unaided pages with the generator closed; can account for a placement.
- Has a folder a stranger could skim: emphasis study, print, poster — not only the prettiest page.

¹⁸⁵NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 169).

What can still be thin: typography as a craft; a full graphic-design software year; media arts as a separate course; AP 2-D. Those can travel. The unaided emphasis and the doorway headline cannot.

Transcript. Write **Design** if that was the year, or **Art I** if the year was mixed foundations. Add a parenthetical a stranger can map: “Design (composition, print, poster; elements and principles in use).” A year of identical crafts that never reached a named move is still work; name it honestly rather than printing Design on a folder of matched samples. If the student sits AP 2-D Art and Design, put the exam score on a separate line. The kitchen course is still Design or Art I. AP is optional. It is not this book.

Authenticity is content, not a cover. A path through organizing a page is the promise. A generated poster, a percentile, or a brand is not.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know a default middle from a decision. I know what to say tomorrow. I know what a fluent poster that is not theirs usually means. The student still does the arranging. We can do this.

Chapter 8

Looking and the Portfolio



Figure 26: An open unlabeled folder of abstract process pages, a public-domain still-life reproduction, and a viewing card on a table. No readable UI, no people.

Why this matters

High-school looking is the year a work of art has to survive a question. Not “do you like it?” First: *What do you see?* Then: how was it made? Then, with a limit: what might it be saying? Preference is allowed. Preference is not a criterion.¹⁸⁶ That is not a personality trait. It is not a canon survey. It is not a course titled Critical Thinking 101. It is work that is taught: a short look you can model, a sitting the student tries, then a sitting they look and speak unaided.

That is worth the struggle because making without looking is a bag of fridge pictures, and looking without making is a slide show. The National Core Arts Standards put four processes on the same map: Creating, Presenting, Responding, Connecting.¹⁸⁷ A family that never selects work or talks about it has not covered Presenting, even if they have a pile of drawings. A family that never asks what is on the page has not covered Responding, even if they have visited a museum. Connecting is relating the work to a life and to a world — not a dump of two hundred and fifty required images.

Presenting, in kitchen language, is a folder a stranger can open. The standards’ cornerstone language calls for “a resume of demonstrated accomplishments rather than simply a transcript.”¹⁸⁸ Arts PROPEL named the honest version: a *processfolio* — drafts plus reflection — not only a portfolio of prettiest pieces.¹⁸⁹ Eisner asked for an educationally interpretive exhibition: tell viewers what problem the student was addressing; compare prior work with present work; do not only hang

¹⁸⁶National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *Visual Arts at a Glance* (2014), Responding Anchor 9 essential question: How is a personal preference different from an evaluation? Rights administered by SEADAE. Accessed 31 August 2026.

¹⁸⁷NCCAS, *National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning* (2014), <https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework.pdf>. Voluntary map. Four processes: Creating (“Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work”); Presenting, for visual arts (“Interpreting and sharing artistic work”); Responding (“Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning”); Connecting (“Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context”). Connecting is the NCCAS addition; the 1997 NAEP Arts framework did not define it. “Standards in the United States have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods.”

¹⁸⁸NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 187), model cornerstone assessment language: a resume of demonstrated accomplishments rather than simply a transcript.

¹⁸⁹Arts PROPEL (Project Zero / Educational Testing Service; Ellen Winner, ed., handbook series, 1990s): production, perception, reflection; the processfolio (drafts plus reflection), not only a portfolio of best pieces.

the prettiest.¹⁹⁰ California’s glossary is plain: a portfolio is a collection demonstrating growth and artistic literacy.¹⁹¹ Texas wants a portfolio and a critique method such as describing, analyzing organization, interpreting intention, and evaluating success.¹⁹² Steal the cluster. You do not have to steal a logo.

AP Art and Design is optional. It is not this book. If a family sits it in 2026–27, three facts from the Course and Exam Description, not from a rumor: there is no prerequisite course; Selected Works are 40 percent of the score and Sustained Investigation 60 percent (the Course Overview still prints a 50/50 table — follow the CED); generative AI may be used only in research, ideation, practice, experimentation, and revision, and is prohibited for final submitted artwork.¹⁹³ Homeschool parents cannot order the exam. Arrange it at a local authorized school. Safer transcript practice: **Drawing, Art I, Painting, or Photography**, with “AP 2-D Art and Design portfolio, score *n*” as a separate line.

AP Art History is a different optional object: about two hundred and fifty works, ten units, a three-hour exam. It is a looking-course you may choose. It is not this

¹⁹⁰Elliot W. Eisner, “10 Lessons the Arts Teach,” from *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), NAEA reprint. Interpretive exhibition: tell viewers the problem the child was addressing; compare prior work with present work.

¹⁹¹California Department of Education, *California Arts Standards* (2019), Visual Arts Glossary: portfolio as a collection demonstrating growth and artistic literacy.

¹⁹²19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.302 (Art, Level I, Adopted 2013): portfolio; critique method such as describing, analyzing organization, interpreting intention, and evaluating success. Middle School 2 names a portfolio that demonstrates progress. Cornell LII, accessed 31 August 2026.

¹⁹³College Board, *AP Art and Design Course and Exam Description*, Effective Fall 2026, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap-art-and-design-course-and-exam-description.pdf>; AP Central, “Guidance for Artificial Intelligence Tools and Other Services,” 2026–27. Three portfolios: AP 2-D Art and Design, AP 3-D Art and Design, AP Drawing; no prerequisite course; prior making supports success. Selected Works 40 percent / Sustained Investigation 60 percent in the CED. The Course Overview still prints a 50/50 table; this book follows the CED. Selected Works: five digital images of five works (2-D and Drawing) or ten digital images / two views of five works (3-D). Sustained Investigation: fifteen digital images of works and process documentation. Generative AI only during research, ideation, practice, experimentation, and revision; “Using generative AI tools to create final submitted artwork is prohibited.” Embedded generative features (object creation, generative fill/expand, background replacement) treated as generative. Non-generative editing (exposure, contrast, color correction, cropping, minor cleanup of student-made work) may be used at all stages if it enhances rather than generates. Disclose any AI use. Use is optional, not mandatory. Homeschool parents cannot order AP Exams; arrange at a local authorized school; AP coordinator enrolls in an exam-only section. Do not freeze portfolio due dates from an old student page. Accessed 31 August 2026.

chapter. This book will not dump the image set here.¹⁹⁴ Transcript that year, if you run it, as **Art History**, plus the score if they sit the exam.

This book will not sell looking as a way to raise reading or math, and it will not sell a Western canon as the meaning of Responding.¹⁹⁵ A path through looking and presenting is the promise. A “cultured” label is not.

Among homeschoolers in the last federal subject table this book uses, art was taught that year to about half of students overall and to 29 percent in grades 9–12.¹⁹⁶ A high-school looking-and-portfolio year is a real path. It is not the modal 2016 year. That is a fit fact, not a scold. You are here. The folder is the work.

The door is skill. Can the student describe what is on the page before they interpret? Can they tell preference from evaluation? Can they put dated drafts in a folder a stranger could skim, with one true sentence about a choice? If those three are fragile, stay there. The rest of this chapter teaches the course. This page names why the course is worth a hard year, and why the unaided look — not a model-invented Ruskin quote — is the work.

This week you can learn three questions — what do you see, how is it made, what might it be saying — and how preference is not a criterion. Today the student can look at one reproduction, mark one new notice, and put yesterday’s draft in a folder with today’s, book open, model closed.

¹⁹⁴College Board, AP Art History Course Overview, © 2026, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-art-history-course-overview.pdf?course=ap-art-history>, accessed 31 August 2026. About 250 works, ten units, no prerequisite, 3-hour exam (80 multiple-choice / 6 free-response), two-semester equivalent — from the Course Overview. Full CED not opened this research pass. This chapter does not dump the image set.

¹⁹⁵Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, REAP executive summary (2000/2001). No reliable causal link from visual art to reading or math achievement. Anchor 11 is relating artistic ideas to personal meaning and external context, not a Western-canon survey.

¹⁹⁶National Center for Education Statistics, *Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2019* (NCES 2020-001), PFI 2016 subject tables: among K–12-equivalent homeschoolers, 53 percent were being taught art that year (78 percent K–2, 63 percent 3–5, 50 percent 6–8, 29 percent 9–12). Among 9–12-equivalent homeschoolers, 65 percent had ever been taught art during home instruction. The 2023 First Look (NCES 2024-113) did not republish subject-taught tables. Home-school rate in 2022–23: 3.4 percent / approximately 1.765 million (NCES 2024-113); 5.2 percent is instruction-at-home (homeschooled or full-time virtual), a different bucket.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be an art historian. You do not need a memorized canon. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear "I like it" offered as a critique, and a chatbot paragraph offered as an artist statement, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Two people look at the same kitchen table. One says "that's pretty." The other says "the pear is cut by the mug; the cloth is a triangle of dark; the light is from the left." The first sentence reported the speaker. The second reported the table. Looking is the second kind of talk. Barrett's classroom move is the one to steal: begin with "What do you see?" Point with your words. Description itself counts as criticism.¹⁹⁷ He often outlaws "like" because preference reports the speaker, not the work. A responsible judgment needs an appraisal *and* a reason, and better, a criterion. In studio talk about work in progress: "This is already good: how might it be even better?"

Precise picture. Feldman, as Barrett summarized him, ordered the talk: description, analysis, interpretation, judgment.¹⁹⁸ You do not need those four words as a chant. You need their jobs.

Description is what is there: objects, colors, placements, sizes. No why yet. If the student cannot describe, interpretation will be a story about themselves.

Analysis is how it is organized — the design chapter's organizers, now used on a made work or a reproduction: emphasis, pattern, balance, the path of the eye.

Interpretation is what it might be saying, with a limit. "Might" is the word. A still life of a bottle and a pear might be about waiting, or about breakfast, or about nothing but looking. The limit is the work. If the interpretation cannot point back at something visible, it is a mood.

Judgment is evaluation against a criterion you name: "This contour tracks the

¹⁹⁷Terry Barrett, "Improving Student Dialogue About Art: A Report from the Field," 2004, <http://terrybarrettosu.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Barrett-2004-Improving-Student-Dialogue.pdf>. Begin with "What do you see?"; point with your words; description counts as criticism; preference reports the speaker; a responsible judgment needs an appraisal and a reason (and better, a criterion); in-progress studio talk: "This is already good: How might it be even better?"

¹⁹⁸Edmund Burke Feldman, as summarized by Terry Barrett, "A Comparison of the Goals of Studio Professors Conducting Critiques and Art Education Professors Teaching Criticism," 1988: criticism as informed and organized talk — description, analysis, interpretation, judgment. Feldman volumes were not line-read this research pass; Barrett's summary is the opened source.

ellipse of the mug from here,” not “this is good.” Preference can sit in a different sentence: “I would hang this. My reason for *evaluating* it is the ellipse.” Anchor 9’s essential question is the whole sitting: How is a personal preference different from an evaluation?¹⁹⁹

An *artist statement* is Grade 5 and up in the national map — a sentence about a choice, not a Grade 1 assignment.²⁰⁰ Earlier grades talk. High school can write one true sentence, then a short paragraph. A page of borrowed loft from a chatbot is not a statement.

A *processfolio* is the folder: dated drafts, one finished piece, a note. A stranger can open it and see growth, not only a cover. Photographing the work is documentation, not a photography course. A working camera, even light, a neutral wall, are enough. This book will not invent a megapixel rule.²⁰¹ Non-generative crop and exposure of a photo of the student work are documentation. Generative fill of the drawing is not.

Copying a master as a study remains allowed and named. PROPEL could use a Rembrandt for a lighting problem — a study, not a canon.²⁰² Chronological art history as a separate year is a choice. This book keeps looking inside the studio years.

A language model will invent titles and “as Ruskin wrote.” Treat model quotes as untrusted.²⁰³ In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.²⁰⁴ That study is math, not a looking trial. The same crutch is available here, and harder to hear, because a fluent paragraph about a painting has no answer key. Current performance on a page

¹⁹⁹NCCAS Visual Arts at a Glance (n. 186), Anchor 9.

²⁰⁰NCCAS Visual Arts at a Glance, Grade 5 Creating VA:Cr3.1.5: artist-statement language. Not a Grade 1 assignment.

²⁰¹Sallye Mahan-Cox, *Discovering Drawing*, 3rd ed. (Davis Publications): handbook material includes photographing work — named here as documentation practice, not as a required text and not as a photography course. Many phone cameras are working cameras. No megapixel rule is claimed.

²⁰²Arts PROPEL (n. 189). Architecture of this book: looking inside studio years, not a canon dump. A master used for a lighting problem is a study.

²⁰³No named 2026 evaluation of consumer chat on art-historical citation accuracy was opened as a primary this research pass. Working rule: treat model-invented titles, quotations, and artist-persona dialogue as untrusted.

²⁰⁴Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning,” *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Math RCT; mechanism for the studio hour, not a looking trial.

the model wrote is often an unreliable index of learning.²⁰⁵ The unaided sentence, pointing at the work, is the test.

Artist-persona chat — “talk to Van Gogh” — is a companion wearing a dead painter’s hat. Keep looking on the reproduction, in the room, with you. No unsupervised persona. No child’s face uploaded to a generator.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. “That’s pretty” as the whole critique. Or “I don’t like it,” with no pointing.

What it usually means. Preference wore an evaluation hat. The work was not yet described.

What to say. “What do you see? Point with your words. We can like it or not in a different sentence. First the cloth, the pear, the dark.”

2. Interpretation with nothing visible. A long story about the artist’s feelings, or a moral, and nothing on the page can host it.

What it usually means. The student skipped description. Looking became creative writing.

What to say. “Put your finger on the part that lets you say that. If you cannot, go back to what you see. Interpretation has to pay rent to the picture.”

3. The prettiest-piece folder. Five finished pages, no dates, no drafts, no sentence about a choice. A stranger cannot tell what was learned.

What it usually means. Presenting was collapsed into “hang it on the fridge.” Process never entered the record.

What to say. “Yesterday’s contour goes in with today’s. Write the date. One sentence: what you were trying. The cracked bowl stays. Pretty is not the criterion.”

4. Canon as looking. A list of names to memorize, or a generated “as Ruskin wrote,” offered as the year’s Responding.

What it usually means. Survey wore a studio hat. This chapter is one work, well looked at, many times. Art History, if you want that year, is a different title.

²⁰⁵Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199.

What to say. “One picture on the table. What do you see that you did not see last time? We are not collecting names this sitting.”

5. A fluent statement the student cannot read aloud as theirs. Diction jumped. They cannot point to the choice the paragraph describes. The draft folder does not match.

What it usually means. The page was outsourced. Go back to one true sentence.

What to say. “Read this out loud. Stop at any sentence you would not have written. We are going back to one choice you can point to. You write the sentence. I will look at *your* words when you are done.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, with one reproduction on paper (not a phone scroll), no student in the room:

1. List five things you see. No “like.” No why.
2. Circle one. Write how it is made — a wash, a hatch, a join, a collage edge.
3. Write tonight’s product goal in one sentence you could check: “Three notices on this still life I could not have said from the caption,” or “Yesterday’s draft and today’s in the folder, dated, with one sentence about a choice.”

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear preference wearing an evaluation hat. That is the job. The student still does the looking.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the folder a portfolio.

Description before interpretation. Can they say what is there? If every sentence starts with “it means” or “I like,” looking has not started.

Preference named as preference. Can they split “I would hang this” from “this contour tracks the mug”? If the two sentences are one sentence, Anchor 9 has not started.

A stranger could open it. Is there a dated folder with drafts, not only covers? If the record is a pile, Presenting has not started.

If the student cannot yet look for two minutes without a phone, stay on one paper reproduction. High school is a band, not a birthday. If they cannot yet make unaided work, the drawing and painting chapters are the repair; this chapter will still teach looking on a reproduction.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The studio hour already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with looking and presenting.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s notice, not tonight’s new picture. One reproduction, already seen. “What is here that you did not say last time?” No tool. No scroll.

Short model (5–8 minutes). One look, thinking aloud. Name the product goal first. Then: “I see a cloth in a dark triangle. The pear is cut by the mug. I am not yet saying what it means. I am not yet saying I like it.” Keep it short. You are showing a schema, not delivering a lecture on a century.

Fade as soon as you can. Second example: they explain what your sentence is doing. Third: you describe, they analyze. Fourth: they look, you are quiet. Include at least one incorrect example per new move: a judgment with no description; an interpretation that cannot point; a statement that could fit any picture. Ask “what did they think this sentence was for?”

Exact wording you can steal.

On looking: “What do you see? Point with your words.”

On preference: “That sentence is about you. Give me a sentence about the work. Then you may have the first sentence back.”

On interpretation: “Might. Finger on the part that lets you say it.”

On work in progress: “This is already good: how might it be even better?”

On a statement: “One true sentence about a choice you can point to. Not a biography of a feeling.”

On the folder: “Date it. Drafts stay. Pretty is not the criterion.”

On a model quote: “If the tool wrote it, we do not trust it until we can point at the work. You write the sentence.”

On fading: “I looked first yesterday. Today you look. I am not going to talk during the attempt.”

First problem for the student, after the model. One reproduction on paper. Product goal on a sticky note: five notices, no like, no why yet. They look. You wait. Struggle before rescue. Ask, wait, hint, then point at one edge if needed. You do not finish the description.

One good question. After the attempt: “Which of your sentences reports the picture, and which reports you?” The student generates the why. You do not narrate it.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short looks of the new type, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday’s still-life drawing, a reproduction, one “preference or evaluation?,” a date on a draft. A purchased art-history survey can sit on the table as a source of reproductions. It does not become this chapter by being assigned as a list.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One short look, or one sentence for the folder, without a generator and without your words on the page. Reproduction in view; model closed. You grade the unaided sentence. A chatbot paragraph is performance. The notice they can point to is the test.

Every statement and every selected image the transcript — or an AP score — will claim needs unaided making and looking. College Board’s 2026–27 rule is the same honesty in exam language.²⁰⁶ The kitchen does not need AP to adopt it.

How to fade help. Complete model → student explains a second → shared description → independent look → incorrect example named → student generates. When they can describe without your running commentary, put the scaffold away. Bring it back when interpretation arrives, or when “that’s pretty” comes back.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. The looking stays with the student. A parent who last took an art-history survey in college can still hear preference wearing an evaluation hat. Hearing is not the same as delivering a lecture.

Time-box the sitting. One work, well looked at, beats ten works scrolled. Paper on the table beats a phone. If you use a screen, one image, full, no feed.

²⁰⁶College Board 2026–27 AI guidance (n. 193).

Project 1 — Looking session on one work

Materials. One reproduction on paper — a public-domain still life, a postcard, a library plate — not a phone scroll, not a child’s face, not a generated “in the style of.” A viewing card with three prompts: What do you see? How is it made? What might it be saying?

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes, time-boxed. Mess: none.

The fun of it. People notice a second thing. The third notice is often the one they are proud of. Looking becomes a sport with rules.

The skill it builds. Description before interpretation. Preference not a criterion. NCAS Responding, in a kitchen.

How to run it. Put the caption away for the first five minutes. Notices first. Then how it is made. Then one “might,” with a finger on the work. Then, if they want it, “I would / I would not hang this, because...” — two sentences, split.



Figure 27: A paper reproduction of a public-domain still life on a table, a viewing card beside it, no phone, no UI.

Project 2 — Processfolio folder

Materials. A cheap folder; dated drafts; one finished piece; a slip of paper for a one-sentence note; a pencil.

Time. Twenty minutes to set up; five minutes at the end of each studio sitting after that. Mess: none.

The fun of it. Tuesday's ugly contour makes Thursday's ellipse visible. Students who thought they "got worse" can see a line of work.

The skill it builds. Presenting. Texas's portfolio. PROPEL's processfolio. A stranger can open it.

How to run it. Date everything. Keep a cracked bowl as a photo if the object cannot live in the folder. One sentence per sitting: what you were trying. Not a diary of mood. If the folder is only best-five, it is a show. Name it honestly, then add two drafts.

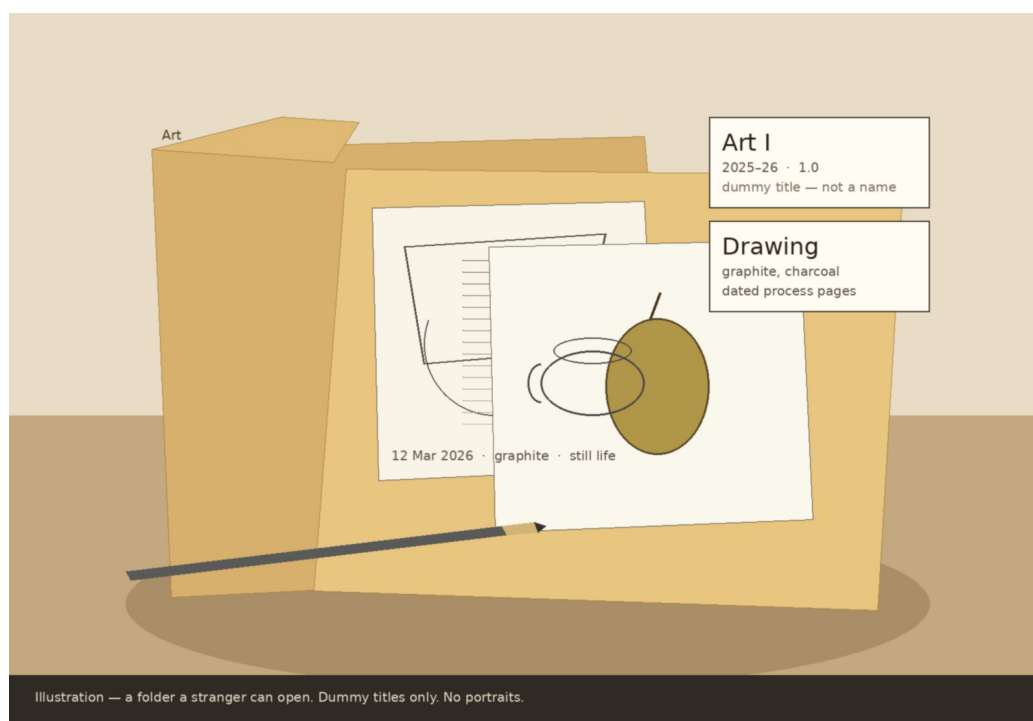


Figure 28: A processfolio spread: dated abstract process pages in an unlabeled folder, one finished still-life study, a one-sentence note. Dummy titles only, no real names, no logos.

Project 3 — Photograph the work

Materials. A working camera (a phone camera is a camera); even light; a neutral wall or large paper; a way to keep files named by date. No generative fill. No readable UI in the picture you print for the folder.

Time. Fifteen minutes once the wall is set. Mess: none.

The fun of it. The work looks like it counts. That is not vanity. That is Presenting.

The skill it builds. Documentation. Not a photography course. Crop and exposure of a photo of the student-made work are allowed as enhancement. Generative expansion of the drawing is not.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷College Board 2026–27 AI guidance (n. 193), non-generative editing versus generative fill.

How to run it. Straight on, fill the frame, no clever tilt that lies about proportion. For 3-D, two views. Write the title the transcript uses — Drawing, Painting, Sculpture — on the file name, not a brand. If you later sit AP, read the current portfolio specifications; this book will not freeze a due date.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice a new looking move this week, with a model and a why. A stack of “write about art” with no picture on the table is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first splits preference from evaluation, several short looks that all want that split are honest. Same for a first five-notice description, a first one-sentence statement, a first dated folder entry.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: a look at a reproduction, a look at yesterday’s drawing, one “preference or evaluation?,” a photograph of the work. Choosing the job is the skill.

Brief retrieval of moves already known. Yesterday’s five notices, last month’s emphasis, the product goal from Tuesday.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a paragraph that interprets with no description, or a folder of only covers, or a statement that would fit any picture. Ask what they thought the sentence was for. Then an isomorphic look or sentence the student makes unaided.

Museum days and library art books motivate. They do not replace the unaided look at one work. A gallery visit will not teach description if the only sentence is “that was cool.”

A reader helps. The job is to be a second pair of eyes: “I cannot tell what you saw, only that you liked it.” You do not finish the paragraph.

Project 4 — Artist statement, age-fit

Materials. One work from the folder; a page; a pencil. Grade 5+ language; high school can write a short paragraph. Earlier: talk.

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes. Mess: none.

The fun of it. A sentence that is actually true is a relief after years of “I like to draw because it is fun.”

The skill it builds. Reflection. One choice, pointed at. NCAS artist-statement language, used honestly.

How to run it. Product goal: one true sentence about a choice you can point to — “I left the paper for the light on the pear,” not “I expressed myself.” Then, if that sentence holds, three more that stay on the work. Read aloud. Stop at any line that could fit a different picture.

Project 5 — Optional AP overlay, named not taught as the book

Materials. Only if the family has decided to sit AP Art and Design. The current CED; a local AP coordinator; the processfolio you already have. Not this chapter as a substitute CED.

Time. A year of inquiry, practice, experimentation, and revision — not a spring crash. Mess: the studio’s mess.

The fun of it. A sustained question can be genuinely interesting: how cloth turns, how a join holds, how a poster speaks from a doorway. That question is studio work you were already doing.

The skill it builds. The AP objects: a sustained investigation guided by questions; materials, processes, and ideas synthesized; writing that articulates. Selected Works: five digital images of five works (2-D and Drawing) or ten images / two views of five works (3-D). Sustained Investigation: fifteen digital images of works and process. Score weights: 40 / 60 in the CED.²⁰⁸

How to run it. Read the current College Board pages. Generative AI is not in final submitted artwork; disclose any allowed use; non-generative crop and exposure of student work may enhance. Embedded generative fill is treated as generative. Use is optional, not mandatory. Arrange an exam-only section through a school. Do not freeze a due date from an old student page. Transcript still says Drawing, Art I, Painting, Sculpture, or Photography, plus the score line. If you wanted AP Art

²⁰⁸ AP Art and Design CED (n. 193). Instructional goals: sustained investigation through practice, experimentation, and revision, guided by questions; skillfully synthesize materials, processes, and ideas; articulate in writing.

History instead, that is a different optional year — two hundred and fifty works, ten units, a three-hour exam — and it still is not this chapter.

For the student

This year your looking has to report the work, not only your mood. *What do you see?* is the first question. *How is it made?* is the second. *What might it be saying?* is the third, and “might” is honest. *I like it* is allowed. It is not the criterion.

A *processfolio* is a folder of drafts plus a note, not a shrine of prettiest pages. A stranger should be able to open it and see what you were trying. An *artist statement* is one true sentence about a choice you can point to, then a few more if they stay true. AP is optional. It is not the reason you date a page.

Nobody is born knowing this. It is taught. You will watch a look get made. You will try one. Then you look alone. The look that counts is the one you can point at with the model closed.

Tiny worked example. Reproduction: a still life, bottle and pear, dark cloth.

What I am *not* saying yet: “This is peaceful.” “I like the colors.” “The artist felt sad.”

What I am saying: “The cloth is a dark triangle. The pear is cut by the mug. The light comes from the left; the right side of the bottle turns. The bottle is larger than the pear and sits nearer the center.”

Now a might: “It might be about ordinary waiting — fruit and a bottle left on a table.” Finger: the empty space, the still objects. If I cannot point, I go back to the cloth.

Try 1. One reproduction, five notices, no like, no why. Then one “how it is made.” Then one might, with a finger. Then, if you want, a preference sentence that you label as preference.

Try 2. Put yesterday’s draft in the folder with today’s. Date both. Write one true sentence about a choice. Generator off. Read it aloud. If a line could fit a different picture, cut it.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone how preference is different from evaluation, and how you would check an artist statement without asking whether

it sounds smart.

Challenge. Photograph one work on a neutral wall. Write a three-sentence statement. Tomorrow, without the statement, point to the three choices on the work. If you cannot, the sentences were decoration. Rewrite from the work, then look again at the same reproduction from Project 1 and add one notice you did not have yesterday.

You are allowed to struggle. “That’s pretty” is information about you, not a verdict on the work. Point. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn’t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — description has not started. Every sentence is like or meaning. Notices are captions remembered from the wall label. Two minutes on one picture feels impossible.

Next move. Pause interpretation. Return to listing. Sit beside them and say three visible things, quietly, then they add two. A student who is calendar-grade 12 with looking still only a preference is not “behind a legal grade.” Stay at the door until five notices are unaided. Then this course.

Diagnostic 2 — a procedure without a picture. The student can chant description-analysis-interpretation-judgment and cannot point. Can write a long statement after a tool pass and cannot read it as theirs. Can memorize names from a survey and cannot look at yesterday’s drawing.

Next move. Slow down on the new move. One conceptual pass: report the work versus report yourself; might versus mood; draft versus cover. Then a handful of short looks, not a research paper. Put a chatbot paragraph next to their pointed sentence and ask which one needs the picture. If the fluent page appeared in four minutes with diction they do not own, treat it as outsourced. They look. You look at their pointing.

Diagnostic 3 — choosing is the hole, not executing. The student can describe a reproduction when the page says “look,” date a folder when the page says “portfolio,” and writes the same “I like art because” on every statement.

Next move. Keep going on new works in short blocked bursts, and change the practice. Mix yesterday’s look with last month’s still life. Ask “which job is this — describe, present, or evaluate?” An unannounced mixed sitting once a month. Choosing is a skill. Blocked worksheets will not teach it.

When to get a human tutor. You are the ceiling on tonight’s idea, and the five-minute warm-up still leaves you unable to hear preference wearing an evaluation hat. Or weeks of faded models have not moved the unaided ticket off “that’s pretty.” A tutor, a co-op teacher, or a museum educator for a short series is a normal high-school plan. Stay the supervisor who can still hear a missing notice. Dual enrollment in a college art-history survey, where a family can arrange it, is a college course with a college transcript — an option, not a default, and not a substitute for the folder of the student’s own work.²⁰⁹

When to go ahead. Five notices come unaided. Preference and evaluation can split. The folder has drafts a stranger could skim. One true sentence holds. Then lengthen: a short interpretive paragraph, a photographed set, AP only if you choose it. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student attempts first. You hold the key — the reproduction, the time, the pointing question.

AI box — Looking and the portfolio

A fluent paragraph about a painting is easy to mistake for looking. Language models invent titles and quotations. Treat them as untrusted. The exit ticket is a sentence that points at the work, with the model closed.

Use a tool to explain today’s idea to *you* (why preference is not a criterion; what a processfolio is for), to suggest public-domain still lifes you will print, or to write extra “what do you see?” prompts the student will answer from a paper reproduction.

²⁰⁹Azim Shivji and Sandra Wilson, *Dual Enrollment: Participation and Characteristics*, NCES 2019-176: about 34 percent of the HSLs:09 cohort took some college-credit course; no visual-arts breakout. That figure is students taking, not to be mashed with NCES 2020-125 (82 percent of public schools with grades 9–12 *offered* dual/concurrent enrollment). Dual enrollment is an option, not a homeschool default.

The student looks and writes tonight unaided. No “write my artist statement,” no generated image as a Selected Work, no unsupervised artist-persona chat, no uploading a child’s face.

Non-generative crop and exposure of a photo of student work are documentation. Generative fill of the drawing is not.

A detector is not a verdict on a child’s paragraph. Read the unaided sentence, with the work in view, instead.

A library art book, a postcard, or a published survey can sit on the same table as a source of reproductions. They are tools, not the course name. The transcript still says Art, Drawing, or Art History — never a brand, never “AI Art.”

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 12 book” is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill. The default high-school finish line remains Proficient.²¹⁰

Checklist before moving on.

- Describes what is on the page before interpreting.
- Splits preference from evaluation; can name a criterion.
- Offers an interpretation that can point back at the work, with a “might.”
- Keeps a processfolio a stranger could open: dated drafts, one finished piece, a note — not only prettiest pieces.
- Photographs work as documentation (even light, neutral wall), without generative fill.
- Writes one true sentence about a choice, and can read it aloud as theirs.
- Produces unaided looking and writing with the model closed.
- If AP was sat, the score is a separate line; the kitchen title is still Drawing, Art I, Painting, Sculpture, Photography, or Art History.

What can still be thin: a full AP Art History image set; museum-quality photography; MFA-style critique. Those can travel. The unaided notice and the stranger-readable folder cannot.

Transcript. Write **Art, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, or Photography** for the

²¹⁰NCCAS Conceptual Framework (n. 187). High-school “done enough” in this book is Proficient unless the family is aiming at Accomplished, Advanced, or an AP portfolio.

studio year, with looking inside it. Write **Art History** only if that looking-course was the year. If the student sits AP Art and Design or AP Art History, put the score on a separate line. Never write a brand. Never write “AP Studio Art” as if it were still the 2013 Texas string when you mean the current College Board names: AP 2-D Art and Design, AP 3-D Art and Design, AP Drawing, AP Art History.²¹¹ Art may appear on the transcript. It does not fill an NCAA core slot; the records chapter owns that worksheet.

Authenticity is content, not a cover. A path through looking and presenting is the promise. A generated statement, a canon list, a percentile, or a brand is not.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know preference from evaluation. I know what to say tomorrow. I know what a fluent paragraph that is not theirs usually means. The student still does the looking. We can do this.

²¹¹19 Tex. Admin. Code § 117.304 still uses older “AP Studio Art” portfolio titles (Adopted 2013). College Board 2026 names are AP 2-D Art and Design, AP 3-D Art and Design, and AP Drawing. Use current College Board names for the exam. NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*: art is not a core course. Core-Course Worksheets are not required for non-core courses. The records chapter owns the worksheet.

Chapter 9 — Records

The art on the table can be as serious as any school's. The *credit* is a family claim until a stranger can use it — a college admissions reader, an NCAA staffer, a public-school counselor placing a transfer. That stranger will not have sat at your kitchen table. They will have a page, and they will have a folder.

This chapter is how you make both. It is not a law office. It is not a fifty-state encyclopedia. It is the export of the work you already taught: titles a stranger can file, a description that names the media and the making, a folder a stranger can open, and a signature that means you checked.

This week you can take last year's art folder and write one course line a counselor would recognize. Today the student can date three pages and write the materials on the back.

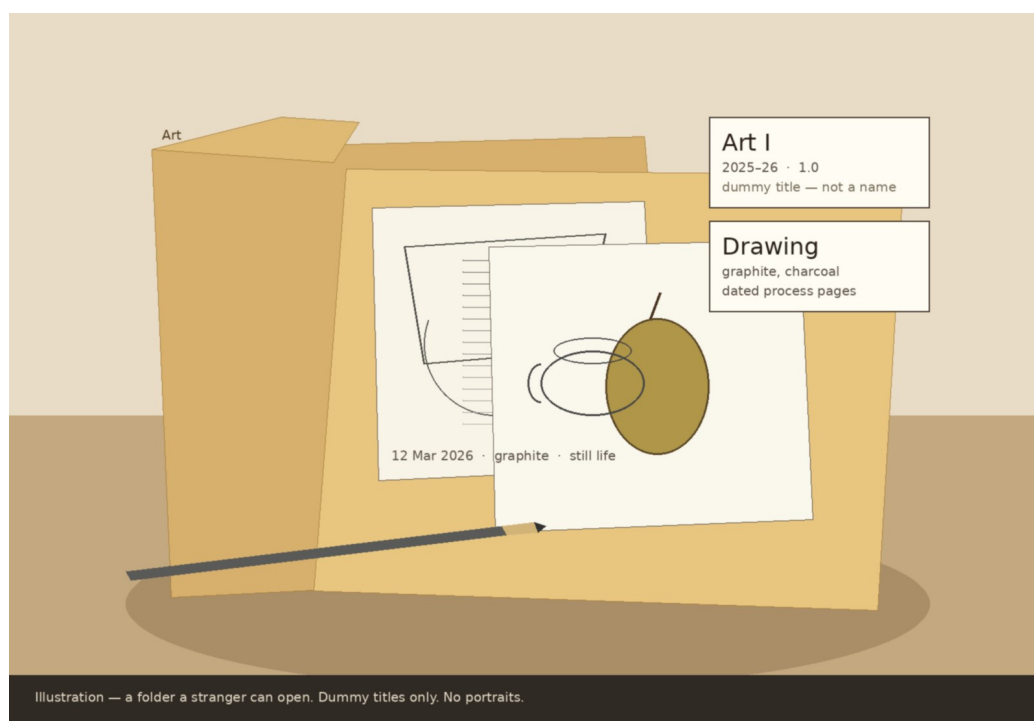


Figure 29: An open folder of dated process pages with dummy course titles Art I and Drawing.

Illustration. Dummy titles only. No portraits.

What you are making

You are making a record of art, not a national diploma.

There is no federal homeschool diploma and no national art credit a registrar already files. The Texas Education Agency says the State of Texas does not award a diploma to students who are home schooled.²¹² New York’s education department says a high school diploma may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a

²¹²Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling,” <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling>. “The State of Texas does not award a diploma to students that are home schooled.” The Agency “does not regulate, index, monitor, approve, register, or accredit” home-school programs. Bona fide written curriculum: reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and a course in good citizenship. Art is not named.

registered secondary school.²¹³ The NCAA Eligibility Center treats proof of graduation as a document the family or an umbrella school issues.²¹⁴ A parent-issued diploma can be a real piece of paper. It is not a registrar's national art credit.

Pennsylvania has its own statutory path: a supervisor-issued diploma on a department form, or a diploma from an approved organization, after the listed graduation courses.²¹⁵ That is Pennsylvania. It is not the law in Texas or New York, and it is not a U.S. Department of Education diploma.

Four other objects get mixed with the transcript and should not be. Dual-enrollment studio art lives on a *college* transcript. AP Art and Design is a digital portfolio exam. AP Art History is a sitting exam. A state-compliance packet — a Pennsylvania evaluator letter and creative materials, a Virginia evidence-of-progress file, a North Carolina test score kept on hand, a New York quarterly — is what your statute asked for. A college that wants a transcript and a folder of work is asking for a different envelope. Keep the envelopes honest.

Titles a stranger can read

Use titles a counselor already has a slot for:

Art, Art I, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Photography, Art History.

Those are the names this book uses. They travel. NCAA's own sample home-

²¹³New York State Education Department, "Home Instruction Questions and Answers," <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>. A high school diploma "may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school." Instruction "should be geared to the level appropriate to the student's needs and previous level of achievement."

²¹⁴NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit* 2025–26, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Home_School_Toolkit.pdf. Proof of graduation is a family- or umbrella-issued artifact (Item D). Hawaii and New York: Eligibility Center cannot accept a homeschool-issued diploma.

²¹⁵24 P.S. § 13-1327.1; Pennsylvania Department of Education, Home Education Program BEC, <https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/HomeEducationProgram.aspx>. Art at elementary and secondary; two years of arts and humanities for homeschool graduation (d); creative materials in the portfolio (e)(1); supervisor or approved-organization diploma (d.1) is Pennsylvania-specific. Affidavit by 1 August; evaluator by 30 June; tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 (reading/language arts and mathematics). 22 Pa. Code § 11.31a: district approval is not required once paperwork is filed.

school transcript uses ordinary high-school titles — English 9, Geometry, Music Appreciation — not a publisher’s level. The Core-Course Worksheet says the course name on the worksheet should be the same as the title on the transcript.²¹⁶ That is good practice even if no one in the house will ever play college sports.

The title is the genre. The program you bought is the method. Artistic Pursuits, How Great Thou Art, Atelier, Draw Write Now, an Usborne how-to, a Davis studio text — those may appear in a description or a parent log. They are not the course name. “Art I — How Great Thou Art” will not be honored as Art I by title magic. “AI Art” is not a course. A tool is not a title.

Close analogues a stranger can also file: Art Appreciation, Printmaking, Design, Digital Art and Media.²¹⁷ Optional AP names, if the student actually sat the exam: AP 2-D Art and Design, AP 3-D Art and Design, AP Drawing, AP Art History. Safer practice is still a locked title plus the score on its own line. Until you have confirmed how a home course may carry the AP title, write **Drawing** or **Art I**, then “AP 2-D Art and Design portfolio, score *n*.”

You have two honest high-school shapes, and both map.

One is a foundation year, then a medium: **Art I**, then **Drawing** or **Painting** or **Sculpture**. Texas public-school lists put Art I at Level I and Drawing I, Painting I, Sculpture I, Ceramics I, Photography I at Level II after one credit of Art, Level I.²¹⁸ If you want a transcript that looks like that sequence, Art I first is the match.

The other shape is a single medium year that is the work: **Drawing**, or **Painting**, or **Sculpture**. Either is mappable. **Art** is the usual elementary and middle-school title. The work is real. The high-school credit clock has not started.

²¹⁶NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. A core course is English, math (Algebra I or higher), science, social science, world language, comparative religion or philosophy. Art is outside that list. Core-Course Worksheet not required for non-core. Course name on the worksheet matches the transcript title. No course more than 1.0 unit. IB Visual Art “do not meet NCAA core-course legislation and will not be approved.” Sample transcript uses ordinary titles (Music Appreciation as a non-core line).

²¹⁷NCES School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) visual-arts titles, confirmed on a state codeset: 05151 Art Appreciation; 05152 Art History; 05154 Visual Art—Comprehensive; 05156 Drawing; 05157 Painting; 05158 Sculpture; 05159 Ceramics/Pottery; 05167 Photography; 05170 Art Portfolio. Vermont Agency of Education COURSECODE, <https://datacollection.education.vermont.gov/Codesets/COURSECODE/>.

²¹⁸19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 117.302–117.303 (Art, Level I and Level II, Adopted 2013). Art I is Level I. Drawing I, Painting I, Sculpture I, Ceramics I, Photography I, Design I are Level II titles whose prerequisite is one credit of Art, Level I.

A photography year is **Photography** if that is the work. A generator year is not Photography and not Drawing. If a high-schooler studies generative tools as a media-arts inquiry, name the year **Media Arts**, document the student's role, and leave Observation Drawing for the unaided mark.

The portfolio is the record

The transcript is a map. The folder is the land.

Arts PROPEL, a Project Zero and ETS studio project, collected drafts and reflection together and called the collection a **processfolio** — not only a portfolio of best pieces.²¹⁹ That is the useful object at home. A stranger who opens the folder should see:

- **process pages** — contour starts, value studies, failed coils, a wash that went muddy;
- **a few finished pieces** the student will stand behind;
- **dates** on the work, not only on the transcript line;
- **materials** named on the back or in a one-line caption: graphite, pan water-color, air-dry clay.

A garbage bag of fridge pictures is a memory. A dated processfolio plus a small set of finished works is a record. Pennsylvania already asks for “creative materials” in the annual compliance portfolio.²²⁰ That is a state object, not a college admissions art portfolio, but it is the right *habit*. Hang a draft next to a finish. The story of the year is in the pair.²²¹

Photograph the work in even light against a neutral wall. Crop and exposure of a

²¹⁹Arts PROPEL (Project Zero / ETS; Winner ed., 1993): production, perception, reflection; the processfolio collects drafts and reflection, not only best pieces.

²²⁰24 P.S. § 13-1327.1; Pennsylvania Department of Education, Home Education Program BEC, <https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/HomeEducationProgram.aspx>. Art at elementary and secondary; two years of arts and humanities for homeschool graduation (d); creative materials in the portfolio (e)(1); supervisor or approved-organization diploma (d.1) is Pennsylvania-specific. Affidavit by 1 August; evaluator by 30 June; tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 (reading/language arts and mathematics). 22 Pa. Code § 11.31a: district approval is not required once paperwork is filed.

²²¹Elliot Eisner, “10 Lessons the Arts Teach,” NAEA reprint. An educationally interpretive exhibition tells viewers what problem the child was addressing and compares prior work with present work.

photo of the student’s own painting is documentation. Filling in the drawing with a generator is not. An artist statement is Grade 5 and later talk, in one true sentence about a choice. Earlier grades: talk. “What do you see?” is enough.

What belongs on the art line

For each high-school art course, write:

- the **title** from the list above, or a close analogue (Art I, Drawing, Painting);
- the **year**, and the grade equivalent you actually used;
- the **credit** — commonly 1.0 for a year-long course; NCAA’s sample treats 1.0 as the maximum on a single line;²²²
- the **grade** you assigned, and the scale somewhere in the packet (A = 90–100, or whatever scale you truly used);
- a **brief description** of media, looking, and making — not a brand;
- **who taught and who graded**;
- your **signature** and a date;
- **the folder itself**;
- **external artifacts** when they exist: an AP score; a college transcript from dual enrollment; a state-required test or evaluator letter.

The description is the part a stranger actually reads. Name the media. Name whether the work was from observation, imagination, or a master study labelled as a study. Name how the grade was determined. A sentence that says only “Artistic Pursuits” is a brand, not a course. A sentence that says “graphite and charcoal observational drawing; thirty finished sheets; weekly sketchbook; two master studies labelled as studies, then the onion from life” is a course.

Here is an illustration, not a reported family:

Drawing · 2025–26 · 1.0 credit · Grade: A (A = 90–100, B = 80–89)

Graphite and charcoal observational drawing from still life; weekly sketchbook; two public-domain master studies labelled as studies,

²²²NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. A core course is English, math (Algebra I or higher), science, social science, world language, comparative religion or philosophy. Art is outside that list. Core-Course Worksheet not required for non-core. Course name on the worksheet matches the transcript title. No course more than 1.0 unit. IB Visual Art “do not meet NCAA core-course legislation and will not be approved.” Sample transcript uses ordinary titles (Music Appreciation as a non-core line).

then the same subjects from life. Looking: one reproduction discussed each month. Grading: 60 percent unaided finished work, 30 percent dated process pages, 10 percent looking notes. Instructor: [parent name]. Signature: _____ Date: _____

Change the media to the media on *your* table. Change the count of sheets to the sheets in the folder. The shape stays.

One **credit**, in ordinary U.S. high-school language, is a Carnegie unit: about 120 hours of seat-time for a course that meets every day for one period over a school year.²²³ Homeschools are not bound to that clock. If you want a stranger to read “1.0,” it helps to know what the word meant in the school that taught the stranger. A studio hour that actually happened, logged honestly, is the claim. There is no national art-hour and no national art credit. The National Art Education Association’s elementary figure — at least fifty minutes weekly, taught by a certified visual arts educator — is a school-program condition, not a homeschool statute.²²⁴

The law is a pattern, not one form

U.S. homeschooling is state law plus compulsory-attendance exceptions. There is no federal art office. Typical moving parts look like this: whether a state agency regulates homeschooling at all; **notice** to a division or a superintendent; whether someone reviews a plan; an annual **test**, **portfolio**, or **evaluator** in some states; and **who issues the diploma** — commonly the parent or an umbrella, not the U.S. Department of Education.

Art is rarely a separate statutory homeschool subject in the light-regulation examples opened for this book. It is named in some heavier-process states. That is a pattern of *kinds of objects*. Dates, ages, subject lists, and exemptions change. Read your current department page and the statute it cites. A color-coded chart on

²²³National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, *National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning*, Appendix A footnote vi, pointing at the Carnegie unit (120 hours of study) as used in the NCES Secondary Course Code book: seat-time rather than a measure of attainment. <https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework.pdf>.

²²⁴National Art Education Association, *Opportunities to Learn Standards: Elementary Visual Arts Education*. At least 50 minutes weekly, all year, taught by a certified visual arts educator — a school-program condition, not a homeschool statute.

a membership site is not your statute.²²⁵

Five official-page examples show the range. They are examples. They are not your homework unless you live there.

Texas. The Texas Education Agency does not regulate, index, monitor, approve, register, or accredit home-school programs.²²⁶ Parents follow a bona fide written curriculum that includes reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and a course in good citizenship. Art is not on that list. Texas does not award a homeschool diploma. A public-school transfer is treated like a transfer from an unaccredited private school; the district may assess for placement or credit.

North Carolina. Notice of Intent to the Division of Non-Public Education. Operate on a regular schedule at least nine calendar months. Each year, a nationally standardized achievement test that includes English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics; keep the scores and show them if asked.²²⁷ The division does not prescribe your art books. The annual test does not include art. The home school, not the State, issues the diploma. A five-hour school day is a *recommendation* on that page, not the statute.

Virginia. Notice of intent to the division by 15 August, a list of subjects, and evidence that the parent meets one of four qualification options. By 1 August after the year of instruction, evidence of progress: a composite score in or above the fourth stanine on a nationally normed test, **or an equivalent score on the ACT, SAT, or PSAT**, or an evaluation or college transcript the superintendent accepts.²²⁸

²²⁵Official department pages illustrate a pattern, not a fifty-state code. This chapter is not legal advice. A membership organization's chart is not a statute.

²²⁶Texas Education Agency, "Home Schooling," <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling>. "The State of Texas does not award a diploma to students that are home schooled." The Agency "does not regulate, index, monitor, approve, register, or accredit" home-school programs. Bona fide written curriculum: reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and a course in good citizenship. Art is not named.

²²⁷North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, "Starting a Home School," <https://www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/non-public-education/home-schools/requirements-recommendations> (last modified 3 August 2026 when fetched). Annual test must include English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics. Five hours a day is a recommendation, not law. Diploma issued by the home school.

²²⁸Virginia Department of Education, "Home Instruction," <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-parents/home-instruction>; Code of Virginia § 22.1-254.1, <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14/section22.1-254.1/>. Notice by 15 August; evidence of progress by 1 August; SAT/ACT/PSAT as one test-option equivalent. Curriculum description is a list of subjects; art is not named as required.

The Code asks for a *list of subjects*. It does not name art as required. Virginia's SAT/ACT option is evidence of progress, not an art score.

Pennsylvania. Before you start, and each year by 1 August, a notarized affidavit or unsworn declaration to the district superintendent, with an outline of objectives by subject. District *approval is not required* once the paperwork is filed. Each year, an evaluator's report by 30 June.²²⁹ Art is on the required-course list at elementary and secondary. Graduation minimums in grades 9–12 include **two years of arts and humanities**. The annual portfolio includes samples of writings, worksheets, workbooks, or **creative materials**. That is Pennsylvania arts-and-humanities law, not a national art credit.

New York, as a heavier-process illustration: a letter of intent, then an Individualized Home Instruction Plan the superintendent reviews, quarterly reports, and an annual assessment. Home instruction does not yield a local or Regents diploma.²³⁰ Commissioner's Regulation **100.10** names visual arts in grades 1–6, art as one-half unit in grades 7–8, and art and/or music as one unit in grades 9–12.²³¹ The “and/or” means music alone can fill the high-school arts slot. Instruction for a six-year-old, New York says, should be geared to the student's needs and previous achievement — placement by skill, not by the birthday that triggered compulsory attendance.

If you live in none of those states, you still have a department page. Open it. Your filing date lives there. This book will not pretend four pages are fifty.

²²⁹24 P.S. § 13-1327.1; Pennsylvania Department of Education, Home Education Program BEC, <https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/HomeEducationProgram.aspx>. Art at elementary and secondary; two years of arts and humanities for homeschool graduation (d); creative materials in the portfolio (e)(1); supervisor or approved-organization diploma (d.1) is Pennsylvania-specific. Affidavit by 1 August; evaluator by 30 June; tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 (reading/language arts and mathematics). 22 Pa. Code § 11.31a: district approval is not required once paperwork is filed.

²³⁰New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>. A high school diploma “may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school.” Instruction “should be geared to the level appropriate to the student's needs and previous level of achievement.”

²³¹8 NYCRR 100.10, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/new-york/8-NYCRR-100.10>. Visual arts grades 1–6; art one-half unit in 7–8; art and/or music one unit in 9–12.

If they transfer

Transfer into a public school is a local placement problem. Texas districts commonly assess mastery and treat the student like a transfer from an unaccredited private school. New York leaves grade placement to the principal, as with any transfer. North Carolina’s division *recommends* asking the local school, before you start, how they would place the child on return.²³² None of those pages promises that a brand in the title column will be read as Art I. Another reason the title should already look like Art I. The folder helps. A dated processfolio plus a few finished pieces is evidence a counselor can look at.

AP is optional, not the book

College Board offers three Art and Design portfolio exams — AP 2-D Art and Design, AP 3-D Art and Design, and AP Drawing — and a separate AP Art History exam.²³³ None of them is this book. None is required for a serious high-school art sequence.

No prerequisite course. Prior making supports success. Two sections, from the Course and Exam Description effective Fall 2026: **Selected Works, 40 percent** (five works; for 3-D, ten images of five works, two views each) and **Sustained Investigation, 60 percent** (fifteen images of works and process). Digital submission. Credit is set by each college.

Parents cannot order AP Exams. Homeschool students arrange to test at a local authorized school. The AP coordinator enrolls them in an “exam only” section in My AP. Portfolio due dates move. The parent reads the current AP calendar rather than a date printed in a book.

For 2026–27, College Board’s published rule is plain: generative AI may be used only during research, ideation, practice, experimentation, and revision. **Using**

²³²TEA, “Home Schooling”; NYSED Q&A; North Carolina DNPE, “Starting a Home School.”

²³³College Board, *AP Art and Design Course and Exam Description*, effective Fall 2026, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap-art-and-design-course-and-exam-description.pdf>. Selected Works 40 percent / Sustained Investigation 60 percent (the Course Overview’s 50/50 table loses). No prerequisite. Homeschool mechanics: parents cannot order AP Exams; local authorized school; exam-only section. AP Art History Course Overview © 2026: 250 works, ten units, 3-hour exam — a separate optional object. Full AP Art History CED not opened for this book.

generative AI tools to create final submitted artwork is prohibited. Embedded generative features — object creation, generative fill or expand, background replacement — count as generative. Non-generative editing of student-made work (exposure, contrast, crop) may be used if it enhances rather than generates. Disclose any AI use.²³⁴ Use is optional, not mandatory.

AP Art History is a looking-course exam: about 250 works, ten units, a three-hour sitting. It is not a dump into the studio year and not a substitute for Drawing. Put the score on its own line. The kitchen method is still looking and making.

SAT and ACT are not art measures

The SAT and the ACT are college-admissions tests. They do not score a contour, a value scale, or a coil. SAT Reading and Writing and ACT English and Reading speak to other work in the house. They do not speak to art.

Virginia will take an SAT, ACT, or PSAT score as *one* evidence-of-progress option.²³⁵ That is Virginia compliance. It is not a national rule that “homeschoolers take the SAT instead of a diploma,” and it is not a drawing grade.

A review of arts-and-achievement claims found no reliable causal link from visual art to reading or math scores.²³⁶ Justify the studio hour by looking and making. A high SAT with an empty art folder is a score, not a Drawing course.

A community-college Drawing I on an official college transcript is a different object again: a college course taken during high school. Access, cost, and age rules

²³⁴College Board, AP Central, “Guidance for Artificial Intelligence Tools,” 2026–27, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/exam-administration-ordering-scores/administering-exams/exam-policies/artificial-intelligence-tools>. Generative AI prohibited for final submitted artwork; disclose. Use optional, not mandatory.

²³⁵Virginia Department of Education, “Home Instruction,” <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-parents/home-instruction>; Code of Virginia § 22.1-254.1, <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14/section22.1-254.1/>. Notice by 15 August; evidence of progress by 1 August; SAT/ACT/PSAT as one test-option equivalent. Curriculum description is a list of subjects; art is not named as required.

²³⁶Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP), executive summary, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34, nos. 3–4 (2000). No reliable causal link from arts-rich education to verbal and mathematics scores; visual arts and reading, very small, not generalizable, readiness not achievement.

are local.²³⁷ Map the course to Drawing or Art I, with the college named in the description. The college’s own transcript is the credit-bearing object.

NCAA, if athletics are in view

If Division I or Division II sports might be in the picture, English, math, science, and social science planning starts in ninth grade. **Art is not an NCAA core course.**

A core course, in the 2025–26 Home School Toolkit, meets high-school graduation requirements in English, math (Algebra I or higher), science, social science, world language, or comparative religion or philosophy.²³⁸ Art sits outside that list. Music Appreciation appears as a non-core line on the sample transcript. A Core-Course Worksheet is **not required** for non-core courses. Art may still appear on the transcript. It does not fill English, math, or the additional-core bucket. Painting is not “the fourth additional core.” IB Visual Art, the toolkit notes, does not meet NCAA core-course legislation and will not be approved.

Division I asks for **four years** of English inside sixteen core courses, a 2.3 core GPA, and the 10/7 rule: ten of the sixteen, including seven in English, math, or science, before the seventh semester. Division II asks for **three years** of English inside sixteen core courses and a 2.2 core GPA.²³⁹ CLEP and credit-by-exam are not NCAA core.

Hawaii and New York: the Eligibility Center cannot accept a homeschool-issued diploma; a district or state letter, or a state-recognized equivalency exam after the class graduation date, is the toolkit’s stated path. That is a graduation-proof rule, not an art-credit rule.

²³⁷Dual-enrollment access is local. NCES 2019-176 defines dual/concurrent enrollment as post-secondary credit during high school, excluding AP/IB — not a homeschool-specific rate and not an arts breakout. NC DNPE, NYSED Q&A, and VDOE pages as in notes 224, 213, and 225.

²³⁸NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. A core course is English, math (Algebra I or higher), science, social science, world language, comparative religion or philosophy. Art is outside that list. Core-Course Worksheet not required for non-core. Course name on the worksheet matches the transcript title. No course more than 1.0 unit. IB Visual Art “do not meet NCAA core-course legislation and will not be approved.” Sample transcript uses ordinary titles (Music Appreciation as a non-core line).

²³⁹NCAA Division I and Division II initial-eligibility pages, <https://www.ncaa.org/eligibility-center/initial-eligibility-requirements/division-i/> and <https://www.ncaa.org/eligibility-center/initial-eligibility-requirements/division-ii/>. Fetched 31 August 2026.

If athletics are not in view, the same titles and the same folder still serve colleges and transfers. The honesty is the point either way.

Place by skill, not birthday

A publisher's "Level 4" is a scope, not a legal grade. New York's home-instruction page already says instruction should match the student's needs and previous achievement.²⁴⁰ Draw Write Now's own pages say book numbers do not equal grade level.²⁴¹

For art, two questions do most of the work. Can the child look at a mug and draw the ellipse they see, not the word *mug*? If not, they are still in observation, whatever year the transcript shows. Can they persist with a material long enough to revise? If not, they are still in a making year, not an AP year.

High-school *titles* can still be Drawing while the description tells the truth about supports. A title that matches a fourteenth birthday and not the work helps no college.

In the last federal subject table, art was taught that year to 53 percent of K–12-equivalent homeschoolers, and to **29 percent** of the 9–12 band.²⁴² A book that treats high-school Drawing, Painting, and Sculpture as a real sequence is describing a path many families skip. That is a fit fact. The path is still open.

A template, a signature, and the truth

A tool, including an AI helper on your side of the table, may draft a **template**: blank lines for title, year, credit, grade, media, looking, making, grading basis,

²⁴⁰New York State Education Department, "Home Instruction Questions and Answers," <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>. A high school diploma "may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school." Instruction "should be geared to the level appropriate to the student's needs and previous level of achievement."

²⁴¹Draw Your World, Draw Write Now books, <https://www.drawyourworld.com/books>. Company copy: book numbers do not equal grade level.

²⁴²National Center for Education Statistics, *Homeschooling in the United States* (NCES 2020-001), PFI 2016, tables 8–9. Art taught that year: 53 percent overall; 29 percent in 9–12. Among 9–12-equivalent homeschoolers, art ever taught during home instruction: 65 percent. The 2023 First Look (NCES 2024-113) did not republish subject-taught tables.

signature. That is a form. It is not a record until you fill it from the folder.

You read every line. You check the titles against the locked list. You check the media against the shelf. You check the sheet count against the dated pages. You check the hours, if your state asks for hours, against the log you actually kept. Then you sign.

Hours that were not taught are a false statement, not a kindness to the file. A generated still-life named as the student's Drawing is not the student's Drawing. The signature means you stand behind the page.

The tool may format. You attest.

For the student

Your transcript is a picture of work you did. You looked. You made the mark. You dated the page.

When a parent asks you to list what you finished this year, that list is not busywork. It is how a stranger will understand your art. Name the media. Name two pieces you will stand behind. If a line on the page is not true, say so before anyone signs.

You do not have to enjoy filing. You do have to own the work the file describes.

What “done enough” looks like

You can hand a stranger one page per high-school art course and a folder they can open. The title is from the list a counselor already knows: Art, Art I, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Photography, Art History. The description names media, looking, and making, not a brand. The folder holds dated process pages, a few finished pieces, and the materials written down. Your name is on the page, and you would still sign it tomorrow morning.

State-compliance objects, if your state asks for them, sit in their own envelope. AP scores sit on their own lines. SAT and ACT scores, if they exist, sit with the rest of the academic file — they are not an art grade. If athletics might be in view, art is on the transcript and off the core list. The folder matches the page. That is enough.

Chapter 10 — Resources

This chapter names programs families actually use. It does not rank them. It does not sell them. It is a fit list so you can match a stack to the table you already have: how much script you want to read, whether the child copies a model or looks at the mug, whether the pages are religious or secular, whether the company describes a high-school credit shape, and how the program places a student.

A “grade 6 art book” is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade. Placement is by skill. The transcript, as Chapter 9 said, still says Art, Art I, or Drawing. Combining two honest programs does not authorize a franken-title.

This week you can name *why* the books on your shelf fit this child. Today the student can draw one page from a book that is actually in the house.

How to read a program

Five questions do the work.

Parent load. Is the lesson open-and-go — gather materials, read or play, make? Or are you the teacher of a studio method you first have to learn — a high-school drawing text, a still-life setup, a year’s looking list?

Process versus copy. Does the child look at their own environment and make an original mark? Or do they follow a step-by-step drawing in the book, or a video of someone else’s project? Both can teach a hand. They teach different things. A master copy named as a *study* is a third object: copy this drawing to learn how the hatch turns the form, then draw the onion in front of you.

Religious or secular. Some spines are written as Christian art education. Some are school texts or trade how-to books. Fit includes whether the language on the

page is the language you want in the hour.

High-school credit shape. Does the company describe a year that could honestly be Drawing or Art I — a load of finished work, a medium, a looking habit? Or is this an elementary drawing-plus-handwriting book? The company’s “full credit” sentence is the company’s. The transcript still uses a title a stranger can file.

Placement. Book numbers equal grade? A placement test? “Begin without prior knowledge”? “Don’t be governed by age range”? Skill first.

Where a company makes a strong claim — independent work from grade 4, a high-school drawing credit in a bundle, twenty minutes, right-brain drawing — that claim is the company’s. This chapter reports what the page said. It does not certify the slogan.

Artistic Pursuits

Brenda Ellis’s Artistic Pursuits is a PreK–12 spine of books plus video. On the company’s pages, every lesson ends with a unique work of art created by the child; the child chooses a subject from their own environment rather than copying one way to draw a tree. The company calls the lessons open-and-go. From about fourth grade up, the pages say students can work independently without parental instruction. High School Book One (*The Elements of Art and Composition*, 3rd ed. 2013) is sixty-eight lessons in graphite and charcoal; the company describes completion as a full credit.²⁴³

On 31 August 2026 the book listed at \$57.00 and the matching supply pack at \$119–\$122; both were out of stock that day. A snapshot, not a locked price. The pages opened for this book are secular in the ordinary sense: not marketed as a Christian curriculum.

Fit. Parent load is low to moderate at elementary if you sit for the video and the materials; independent-work language from about grade 4 is the company’s, not

²⁴³Artistic Pursuits Inc. (Brenda Ellis), homepage and High School Book One product page, <https://artisticpursuits.com/product/263109-high-school-book-one-the-elements-of-art-and-composition>. Open-and-go; original observation; independent-work language from about grade 4; Book One, 3rd ed. 2013, ISBN 978-1-939394-08-8, 68 lessons, company “full credit” language; book \$57.00; supply pack \$119.00 / \$122.00 on related listing; both out of stock 31 August 2026. Company copy, not an independent efficacy study.

a trial. Process versus copy: original observation is the point the pages argue. High-school credit shape: the company uses “full credit” language for Book One.

Transcript. Art in the elementary and middle years; Drawing or Art I in high school. Not “Artistic Pursuits High School One.”

How Great Thou Art

Barry Stebbing’s How Great Thou Art describes itself as art education with a Christian perspective. Texts and DVDs, preschool through adult. Named lines on the company’s homepage include *I Can Do All Things* (ages 6–9, beginning drawing, colored pencils, markers, painting); *Lamb’s Book of ART* I and II (ages 8–11); How Great Thou Art I and II (ages 12 and up: intermediate drawing, pen and ink, perspective, anatomy, portraits); *Feed My Sheep* (age 10–adult, a three-year comprehensive); and *God and the History of Art*, a four-year survey “with a Godly perspective.” The I and II texts-plus-DVD-plus-supplies bundle listed at \$59.95 on 31 August 2026; the company calls it an all-in-one package for high-school drawing credit, and says the student can learn independently from the videos.²⁴⁴

Fit. Parent load is low once the texts and DVDs are in play; the pages court the non-artist parent. Process versus copy: step-by-step drawing and painting exercises, more directed than Artistic Pursuits’ choose-your-subject language. Religious versus secular: explicitly Christian. High-school credit shape: the company uses “high school drawing credit” language on the I and II bundle.

Transcript. Art; Drawing; Art History only if the year’s work actually matches that title — a looking-and-history year, not a brand. Never “How Great Thou Art II.”

²⁴⁴How Great Thou Art Publications (Barry Stebbing), homepage and I & II texts+DVD+supplies bundle, <https://howgreatthouart.com/product/how-great-thou-art-i-ii-texts-dvd-supplies-bundle/>. “Art Education with a Christian Perspective.” Bundle \$59.95: company “high school drawing credit” and independent-learning claims. Other company prices on the homepage 31 August 2026: many texts \$16.95; *I Can Do All Things* DVD bundle \$85.95; *Feed My Sheep* bundle \$117.95; *God & the History of Art* \$56.95.

Atelier / Arts Attack — and a classical atelier, which is a different object

Two things share a word. They are not the same purchase.

Atelier from Arts Attack (homeschoolart.com) is eight levels of video-based art instruction, each described as a full year, ages 4–16. The company’s instruction is: gather materials, play the video, watch the student work. “No art background? No problem.” The pages name elements and principles, art history, multicultural projects, observational drawing, and “right-brain drawing techniques.” Testimonials on the page describe co-op use because the video does the teaching.²⁴⁵

Fit. Parent load is low: materials plus press play. Process versus copy: the video models a project; students watch other children. More directed than a choose-your-subject book, less like a room of easels and plaster casts. High-school credit shape: the company’s ages go to 16; the pages opened for this book did not claim a Carnegie-unit high-school credit. If later levels are the year’s work, the transcript still says Art or Art I.

A classical atelier — sight-size, cast drawing, Bargue plates as *modèles*, a trained instructor in a room of easels — is a studio tradition, not that video. This book did not open a currently sold homeschool Bargue package it is willing to name. A family that wants that kind of observational drawing can use a high-school drawing textbook, a life-drawing class with a human instructor, or a local atelier, and say so. Copying a master as a study is allowed in this book and should be named as a study. It is not the same as buying “Atelier” the video.

The looking drills inside a video hour can be useful. A hemisphere cartoon — left brain, right brain — is not something this book will certify as neuroscience.²⁴⁶

Transcript. Art or Art I. Not “Atelier Level 6.”

²⁴⁵Arts Attack, Atelier homeschool curriculum, <https://homeschoolart.com/curriculum>. Eight video levels, ages 4–16; gather materials, play the video; company names “right-brain drawing techniques.” Distinct from a classical sight-size / Bargue atelier, which was not opened as a named homeschool package this research day.

²⁴⁶Michael C. Corballis, “Left Brain, Right Brain: Facts and Fantasies,” *PLOS Biology* 12, no. 1 (2014). Polarities of left and right brain “owe more to the power of myth than to the scientific evidence.” Contour and looking drills can stay; the hemisphere story is not current neuroscience. Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, is a named perceptual-training package, not a neuroscience warrant.

Draw Write Now

Marie Hablitzel and Kim Stitzer’s *Draw Write Now* is eight books of step-by-step drawing plus short sentences for handwriting. The company gives ages 5 to 9 and notes multi-age use. Book numbers do **not** equal grade level. The books are not workbooks: children draw and write on their own paper. Start with Book 1 if the child lacks drawing confidence. On 31 August 2026, individual books listed at about \$13.25; the boxed set of books 1–8 at \$97.75.²⁴⁷

Fit. Parent load is low: sit and draw. Process versus copy: explicitly copy-the-drawing, plus handwriting. Not a Christian curriculum on the pages opened. High-school credit shape: none. This is elementary drawing-plus-handwriting, not Art I.

Transcript. Art, or Language Arts if you are counting the handwriting. Not “Draw Write Now Book 3.” A year of these books does not become Drawing on a high-school transcript.

Usborne and the library how-to

Usborne *Art Skills* (Fiona Watt, Art Ideas series) listed at US\$12.99 on the U.S. store: over 120 ideas for painting, drawing, printing, and collage; watercolor wash, spatter, oil-pastel resist; “no need for complex materials.” Age 7+ on that page. Related looking-and-how-to titles exist in the same trade line.²⁴⁸

Fit. Parent load is low. Process versus copy: project ideas the child may follow or adapt — the company’s description. Secular trade books. High-school credit shape: none.

Library copies of this kind of book sit on a real federal finding: in 2016, 66 percent of homeschoolers used the library as a curriculum source.²⁴⁹ A library drawing

²⁴⁷Marie Hablitzel and Kim Stitzer, *Draw Write Now*, *Draw Your World*, <https://www.drawyourworld.com/books>. Eight books; ages 5–9; book numbers do not equal grade; \$13.25 per book; boxed set \$97.75. Company copy.

²⁴⁸Fiona Watt, *Art Skills* (Usborne Art Ideas), ISBN 9781805319948, June 2023, <https://usborne.com/us/art-skills-9781805319948>. Over 120 ideas; US\$12.99 on usborne.com/us 31 August 2026. Company copy. Library how-to path, not a sequenced high-school credit.

²⁴⁹National Center for Education Statistics, *Homeschooling in the United States* (NCES 2020-001), PFI 2016. Table 6: library 66 percent. Table 3: mother main provider 78 percent; any co-op/group 31 percent; any tutor 23 percent.

book is a real path. It supports elementary Art. It does not become high-school Drawing by sitting on a shelf.

Davis *Discovering Drawing*

Families who want a school-shaped studio text use a current one, a used one, or a district leftover. A currently sold example, opened 31 August 2026, is Davis Publications *Discovering Drawing*, 3rd edition, by Sallye Mahan-Cox. The company’s catalog describes observation and expressive drawing — still life, landscape, built environment, figure, portraits, animals — and a handbook that includes instruction on photographing student work. Student book \$86.95 on catalog.davisart.com that day (a classroom price, not a homeschool kit); teacher edition \$116.95.²⁵⁰ Davis marketing on the opened PDF is classroom marketing. Homeschool use is possible the way any high-school textbook is possible.

Fit. Parent load is high if you run it as designed (teacher edition, studios, assessments), moderate if you use it as a student-facing drawing text and skip the apparatus. Process versus copy: studio investigations plus master examples — more “school Art I” than a craft calendar. Secular school text. High-school credit shape: this is the *shape* of a Drawing year. Placement: the publisher’s high-school label, which is a scope, not a legal grade.

An older Glencoe *ArtTalk* occupies the same fit slot if a used copy is already in the house. This book did not confirm a 2026 in-print McGraw Hill edition. Name the book you hold.

Transcript. Drawing or Art I. Not “Discovering Drawing 3e.”

Combining honestly

A family may combine. Honest combinations follow the products’ own jobs: Draw Write Now in the early years; Artistic Pursuits or How Great Thou Art in the middle; a Davis year or an AP portfolio later; library how-to anytime. Classical

²⁵⁰Sallye Mahan-Cox, *Discovering Drawing*, 3rd ed., Davis Publications, <https://catalog.davisart.com/Products/668-3/discovering-drawing-student-book-3rd-ed.aspx>. Student book ISBN 978-1-61528-668-3, \$86.95; teacher edition ISBN 978-1-61528-669-0, \$116.95, catalog.davisart.com 31 August 2026 (classroom price). Observation and expressive drawing; handbook instruction on photographing work. Company / classroom catalog copy.

cast-drawing, if you want it, is a human instructor, a textbook observation chapter, or a local atelier — and you say so.

The child who still lives in material play is still in the early chapters of this book, whatever the birthday. The sixth-grader who draws the word *mug* instead of this mug from here is still in observation, not a high-school emergency.

Combining does not mint a new course title. The transcript still says Art or Drawing. The description may say “elementary step-by-step drawing; later observational graphite; two master studies labelled as studies.” A stranger can file that. A kitchen nickname is a kitchen nickname.

A starter kit, and the label

You do not need a branded supply pack to begin. The kitchen-table default in this book is ordinary and small:

paper (drawing and a little watercolor paper); graphite pencils; colored pencils; crayons; tempera; pan watercolor; student acrylic; air-dry clay; children’s scissors; school glue or glue sticks.

Buy children’s art materials labelled “**Conforms to ASTM D-4236**” and **without cautionary warnings**. That is the federal consumer rule of thumb through grade 6: products with cautionary or warning labels should not be used with children pre-kindergarten through grade 6.²⁵¹ ASTM D-4236 is a labeling practice for chronic health hazards. It is not a seal that means “this is a toy,” and it is not a promise of zero risk. An industry “AP” seal on a bottle means a certifier’s toxicologist has signed off when the product is used as directed. It is a second look at the label, not a federal stamp.²⁵²

Keep food and drinks out of the art area. Give small amounts. Supervise. Wash

²⁵¹U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5015.pdf>; LHAMA, 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8). Buy “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” without cautionary warnings for children through grade 6. Indoor ceramic kilns require mechanical ventilation to the outdoors. Poison Control 1-800-222-1222. Food and drinks out of the art area. Read the current product label.

²⁵²Art and Creative Materials Institute (ACMI), AP and CL seals, <https://www.acmiart.org/materials-safety>. Industry certification aligned to ASTM D-4236 / LHAMA, not a federal seal. CL seal is not for children in grade 6 or lower.

hands. If something is swallowed or in the eye, Poison Control is 1-800-222-1222.²⁵³ Cover the table because you eat there — teaching advice, not a statute.

Oil, solvents, kiln firing, and craft knives are later, optional objects. Read the current label rather than this book inventing an age. Indoor ceramic kilns need mechanical ventilation to the outdoors.²⁵⁴ A kitchen table is not a ventilated kiln room. Air-dry clay is the 3-D default.

This book will not invent a grocery-store dollar figure for a year of paper and pencils. Curriculum-specific supply bundles on catalogue pages opened 31 August 2026 sat in the \$136–\$200 range. Those are kits for named programs, not a required purchase.²⁵⁵

Public-domain looking

Looking is part of the studio hour. It is not a canon dump and not an AP Art History year unless you choose that exam.

A reproduction of a work whose copyright has expired is a looking object you can put on the table. Many museums publish those images for looking. A library art book does the same job. Print one still life or one figure. Ask what you see. Point with your words. Preference is not evaluation.

That hour is Responding. It does not replace Creating. The child still holds the tool. A printout to look at together is not the project, and it is not a Drawing credit by itself. Copying a public-domain master as a *study* is allowed and should be named as a study: this week we copy the hatch; next week you draw the onion.

²⁵³U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5015.pdf>; LHAMA, 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8). Buy “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” without cautionary warnings for children through grade 6. Indoor ceramic kilns require mechanical ventilation to the outdoors. Poison Control 1-800-222-1222. Food and drinks out of the art area. Read the current product label.

²⁵⁴U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5015.pdf>; LHAMA, 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8). Buy “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” without cautionary warnings for children through grade 6. Indoor ceramic kilns require mechanical ventilation to the outdoors. Poison Control 1-800-222-1222. Food and drinks out of the art area. Read the current product label.

²⁵⁵Rainbow Resource Center catalogue snapshot, 31 August 2026, <https://www.rainbowresource.com/>. Crayola air-dry clay 2.5 lb listed \$6.25 after savings on the opened clay page. Grade-level curriculum supply bundles on opened pages in the \$136–\$200 range. Grocery-store unit prices were not locked; this chapter invents no kit-year dollar figure.

A generator “in the style of” a living artist is a different act, and not the assignment. Upload no child’s face.

When to get a human teacher

You do not have to be a studio artist. You do need this week’s idea well enough to notice a stuck hand. When that noticing is not yet available for this year’s medium, extra help is ordinary. In 2016, 23 percent of homeschoolers had any tutor and 31 percent had any co-op or group instruction. Mother was still the main provider for 78 percent.²⁵⁶ The kitchen is one adult, sometimes supplemented.

Three jobs often want a human in the room who is not you.

A community studio, especially for a kiln. Indoor kilns need mechanical ventilation to the outdoors; emissions and burns are real hazards on the consumer safety page.²⁵⁷ Work made at home in a clay the studio accepts, then fired there, is the honest ceramics path. A hobby kiln on a porch without that ventilation is not a shortcut this book will bless.

Figure. No opened standard requires a nude or even a figure course. Figure is an option: a clothed person in the house, a credited photo named as a source, or a life-drawing session with a human instructor who sets the room. A generator figure is not looking from life.

A classical drawing studio. Sight-size, casts, Bargue plates as studies — those live with a trained instructor more honestly than with a homeschool video that happens to be named Atelier. If that is the year’s work, say so in the description. The transcript still says Drawing or Art I.

A weekly community class with a named instructor, a named medium, and a grade the instructor assigned is easier to describe on a transcript than a year you are not sure how to narrate. You still sign as administrator unless an umbrella school does.

²⁵⁶National Center for Education Statistics, *Homeschooling in the United States* (NCES 2020-001), PFI 2016. Table 6: library 66 percent. Table 3: mother main provider 78 percent; any co-op/group 31 percent; any tutor 23 percent.

²⁵⁷U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Art and Craft Safety Guide*, Pub. No. 5015, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5015.pdf>; LHAMA, 16 CFR § 1500.14(b)(8). Buy “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” without cautionary warnings for children through grade 6. Indoor ceramic kilns require mechanical ventilation to the outdoors. Poison Control 1-800-222-1222. Food and drinks out of the art area. Read the current product label.

When the stuck hand is the *tool* — a floppy brush, paper too large, clay that will not stand — change the tool first. When the stuck hand is the *looking*, a short demo from a human who can draw the ellipse, then a long silence, is the hour.

What “done enough” looks like

You can say, in one sentence, why this year’s art stack fits *this* child: parent load you can actually carry, a process-or-copy match you chose on purpose, religious or secular language you can live with, a high-school credit shape only if the work earns Drawing or Art I, and placement by skill.

The programs have names. The transcript has titles a stranger can read. The two lists are not the same list. The folder still holds the dated pages.

A Note on Sources

Studies named in the chapters are listed in Notes, in one series at the back. That is where the full citations live, so the teaching pages can stay a teaching voice.

Some items the research behind this book did not open stay out of the teaching voice. I did not invent a coefficient, a statute, or a product feature to fill a hole. If a study is in the chapter, it is in the notes. If we could not open it, it is not used as a finding here.

Program prices and credit claims in the resources chapter are taken from the companies' own pages. Access date 31 August 2026.