

Hatching & Texture Marks

BEGINNER

Hatching means drawing parallel lines to create the illusion of shadow or texture. Cross-hatching adds a second set of lines at a different angle to deepen the tone. Think of it like weaving: the more layers, the denser the fabric, the darker the tone. The spacing between lines controls the apparent value. Close lines equal dark. Spaced lines equal light. Start simple: outline a sphere, then shade one side using parallel lines, spacing them tighter as you move deeper into shadow.

HOBBYIST

The mistake most hobbyists make is drawing every line at the same angle regardless of the form beneath. Contour hatching — where lines follow the surface curve — is far more descriptive than flat parallel strokes. Lines wrapping around a cylinder tell you it is round; horizontal lines tell you nothing about form. Practice transitioning from light hatching to dense cross-hatching without a hard edge between them — the density gradient controls value. Also vary the line weight: beginning a stroke with more pressure and lifting off creates a taper that integrates naturally with the paper tone. Deliberate hatching systems like Rembrandt's overlapping arc hatches are worth studying carefully — each communicates form through a structurally different logic.

PROFESSIONAL

In pen-and-ink illustration, hatching is the primary method for building complete tonal ranges without gray pigment. Professional illustrators develop a personal hatching vocabulary — a consistent system of mark types that becomes recognizable as their style. At this level, the question is economy: can one layer of well-placed hatching say more than three generic cross-hatch layers? Almost always yes. Directional decisions are made in advance: form hatches for convex surfaces, shadow hatches for flat planes, contour breaks to imply edges. In editorial and comics work, hatching is constrained by reproduction scale — marks that read beautifully at original size may disappear or clump at 50%. Artists working in this context think about mark-to-negative-space ratio as a compositional element across the entire image.