

Block-In & Straight Lines

BEGINNER

Instead of drawing the curves of a face or figure directly, try to capture the same shape with straight lines first. The straight-line version of a curved arm is like a polygon approximating a circle — not exactly right, but structurally close. Because straight lines are much easier to judge for proportion and angle than curves. Once you have got the proportions correct in straight lines, converting them to curves is easy and natural. Think of it like a sculptor roughing out a block of marble.

HOBBYIST

The block-in is where the drawing is made or lost. All the important proportional decisions — gesture, major angles, size relationships — are set during the block-in phase. What comes after is refinement, not decision-making. This is why experienced artists spend more time on the block-in than on the finish. The straight-line block-in forces you to commit to angles rather than vague curves. A straight line can be measured and compared; a soft curve is much harder to evaluate accurately.

PROFESSIONAL

The block-in principle extends into painting, sculpture, and digital work — anywhere the artist needs to establish proportional relationships before committing to surface detail. In painting, the big shapes phase is the block-in. In 3D modeling, the low-poly base mesh is the block-in. The common principle is strategic: solve large-scale problems first, before time and effort are invested in small-scale details that will need to be discarded if the structure is wrong.