

**DEEP DIVE**

# The Figure in Motion

*How the body distributes weight, shifts balance, and coordinates movement — the principles that make drawn figures feel physically alive.*

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Drawing figures in motion presents challenges that static poses do not: blur, instability, extreme foreshortening, and the need to convey a sense of time and momentum in a frozen image. The conventions for representing motion are largely invented rather than observed -- you cannot observe motion in a still drawing, so you must design it in.

## **MOTION LINES AND BLUR**

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The most obvious conventions for conveying motion are motion lines (speed lines) and motion blur -- trailing ghosted repetitions of the moving form. These are cartoon conventions that work in illustration and comics. In fine art and academic figure drawing, motion is conveyed through pose exaggeration, compositional forces, edge treatment (blurring fast-moving limbs), and value contrast.

## **ANTICIPATION AND FOLLOW-THROUGH**

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Borrowed from animation, anticipation means the body prepares to move by moving in the opposite direction first. Follow-through means body parts continue moving after the primary action stops. Both principles apply to drawn motion -- showing a pose in mid-anticipation or mid-follow-through makes motion more readable than showing the exact moment of action.

## **WEIGHT AND MOMENTUM**

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Motion implies momentum -- mass moving through space with inertia. Capturing weight in a moving figure means understanding where the center of gravity is relative to the base of support. A running figure's center of gravity is ahead of their feet -- they are falling forward and catching themselves. Drawing the center of gravity incorrectly produces figures that appear weightless or impossibly balanced.

## **EXERCISES**

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Day 1: Draw 20 gesture poses from sports action photography -- prioritize extreme poses mid-motion. Day 2: Draw a figure in five stages of a throwing motion, from wind-up to follow-through. Day 3: Take a still gesture pose and redraw it with deliberate exaggeration of the motion implied by the pose. Day 4: Draw a figure falling -- gravity must be visible. Day 5: From imagination, draw a dancer in mid-movement, prioritizing the sense of momentum over anatomical accuracy.