



The Grid Technique

? What are we covering today?

Yesterday, we learned about positive and negative space and saw how recognizing the shapes made by the positive and negative elements help us to draw with greater accuracy.

Today, we'll look at another strategy that can be used to capture a subject accurately in a drawing when working from a photo reference. The method we'll explore today is called the grid technique.

The process of using a grid to aid in your drawing is fairly straight-forward. It requires a little prep work and perhaps a little math, but it is an extremely effective method for drawing the contours and even shapes of shadow and highlight on the drawing surface.

Some people erroneously argue that drawing with the aid of grid is somehow a form of cheating. I disagree with this argument since the drawing is still drawn through observation by the artist. The gridlines simply give us more opportunities to make comparisons between our reference photo and the drawing.

! Today's Mindset

Today's mindset is...

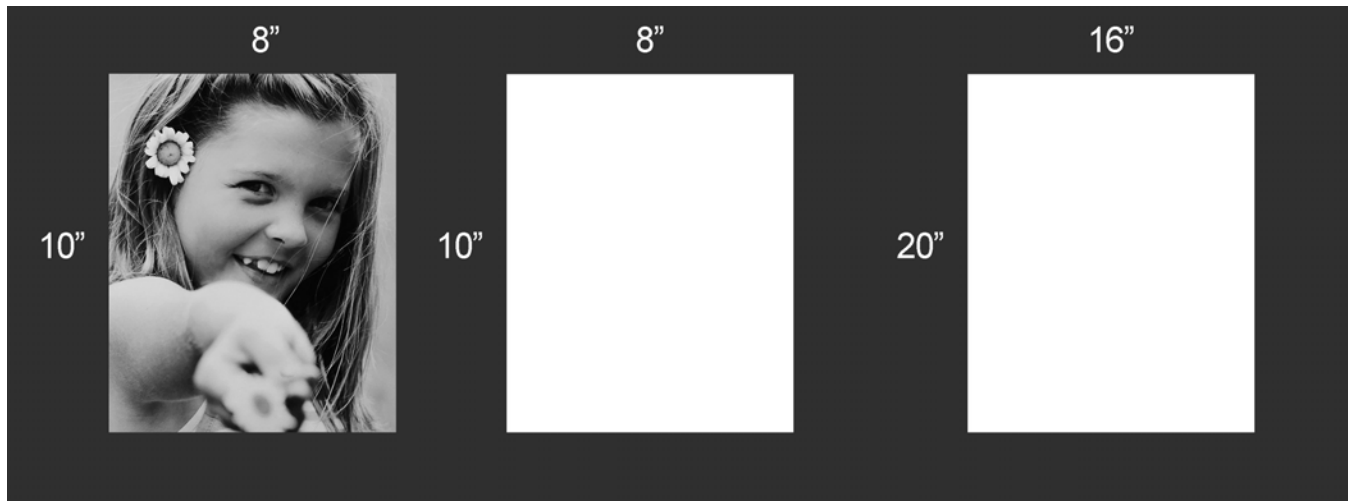
"We can use a proportional grid to help us accurately draw any subject that we wish when working from a photo reference."



Here's How The Grid Technique Works...

We'll first need a photo reference to work from. It's helpful, although not necessary, to find a reference that is proportional to your drawing surface.

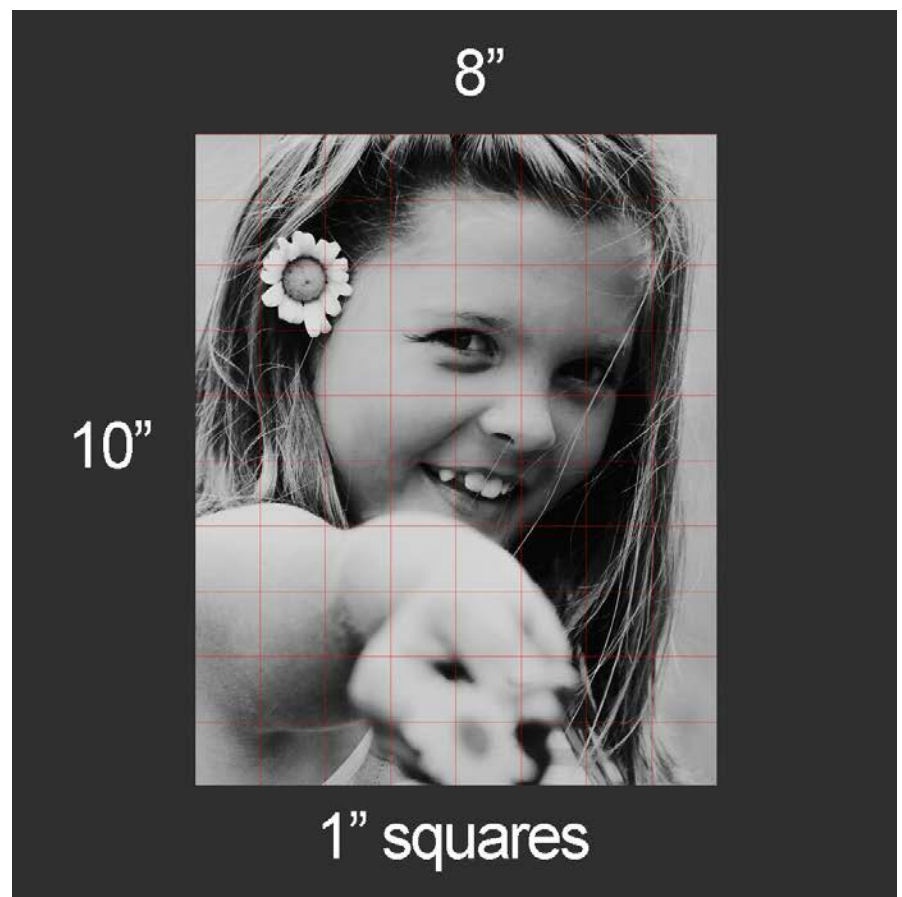
In other words, an 8" by 10" image will work nicely with an 8" by 10" sheet of drawing paper. Any proportional size will work as well. A 16" by 20" inch sheet of drawing paper is proportional to an 8" by 10" photo since it is twice the length and width.



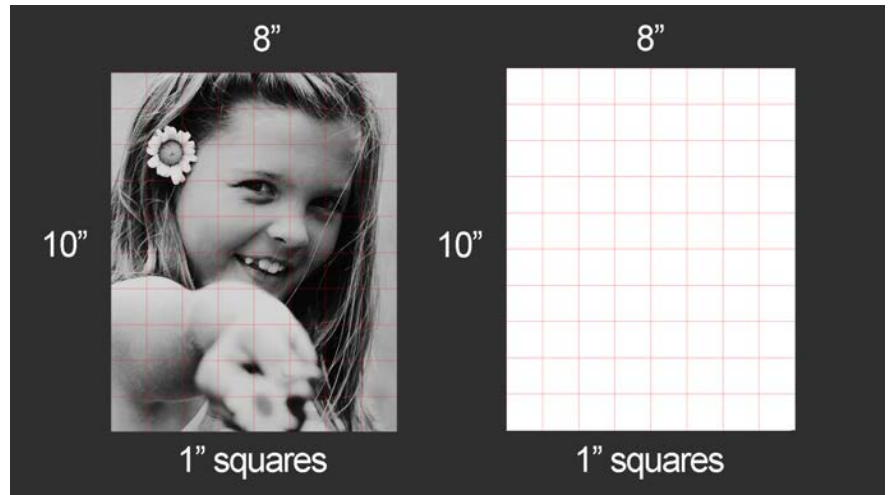
Once we have the photo that we want to work from, we can draw a grid over the photo. We'll grid the photo into manageable squares.

In this example, our photo measures 8" by 10". We'll create a grid that is made up of one inch squares.

This means that we'll have a grid that is made up of 8 squares across the width and 10 squares across the length.

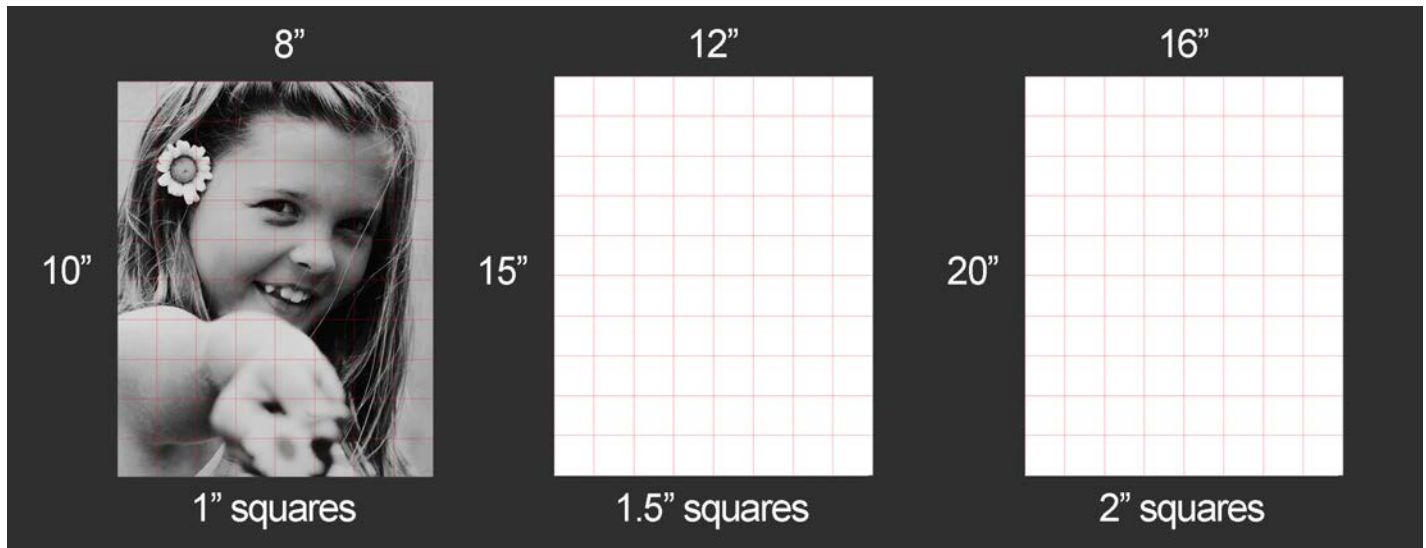


Next, we'll create a grid on our drawing surface. In this example, we'll create a grid that is exactly the same measurement as our photo. This means that our gridded paper will have eight 1" squares across the top and ten 1" squares down the side.

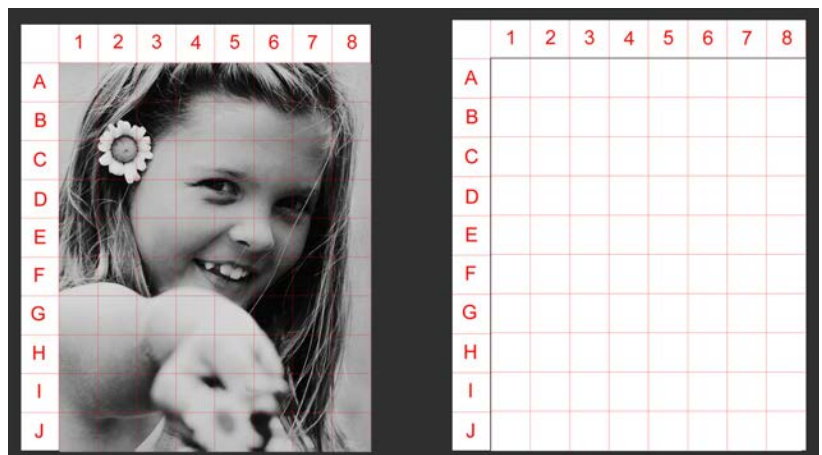


If so desired, we could create a larger drawing. For example, we can create a grid over a sheet of paper that measures 12" by 15" made up of 1.5" squares.

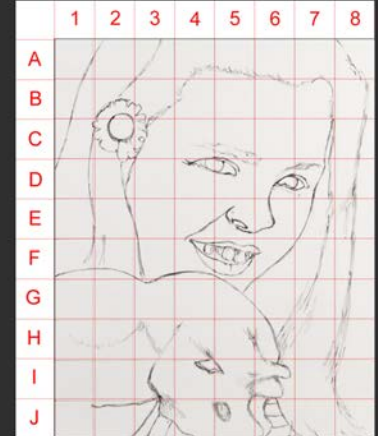
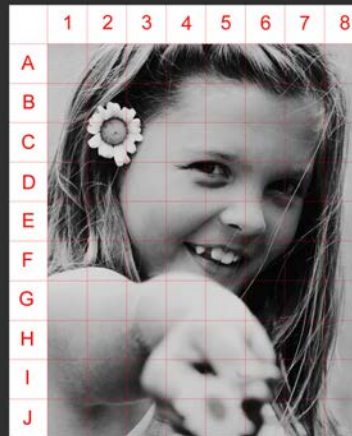
Or, we could create a grid on 16" by 20" paper that is made up of 2" squares. In both of these examples, we would still be left with 8 squares across the top and 10 squares down the side.



Since we'll be taking the drawing process one square at a time, it may be helpful to label the grid with letters and numbers. We may place numbers across the top and letters down the side. This way, if we get lost during the drawing process, we can easily find where we should be placing marks on the drawing surface.



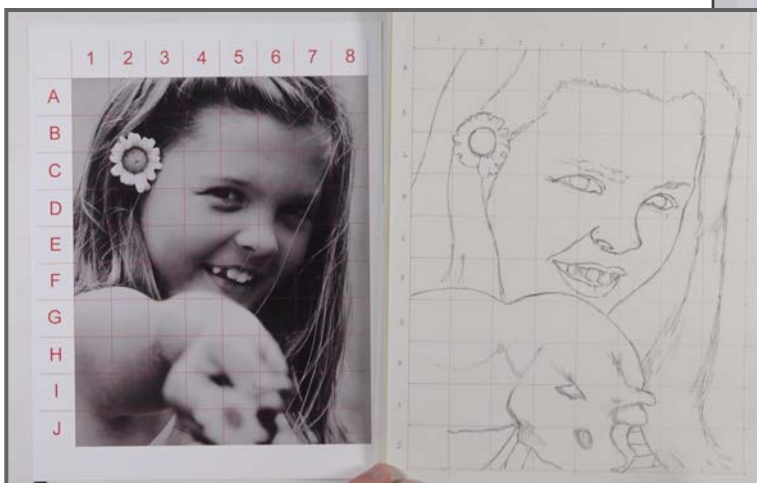
With our grid set up on both the photo and the drawing surface, we can simply work a square at a time transferring the visual information to the drawing surface.



Today's Drawing Exercise

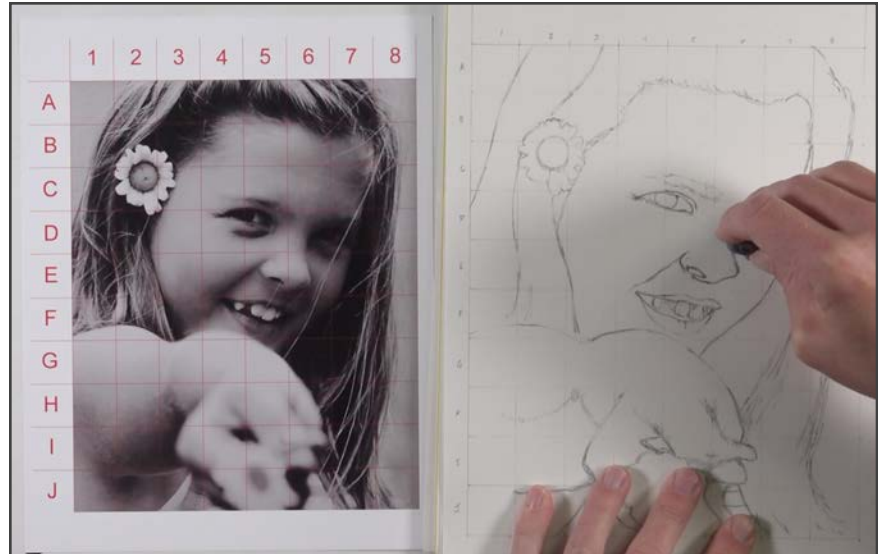
Now let's practice this concept with a sketch. We'll tackle a complicated subject and quickly add some loose shading to keep the drawing exercise to under one hour.

After we've created a grid over the photo reference, we can create a proportional grid on the drawing surface. In this example, the grid placed over the photo is made up of 1" squares. On our drawing surface, we'll create a grid with the same measurements. We'll also create a coordinate system by adding numbers to the top and letters down the side.



Now we'll simply pay attention to the visual information in each square on the reference and transfer this information to the corresponding squares on the drawing surface.

With the contour lines of the subject transferred, we can carefully erase the gridlines. In this example, an H graphite pencil was used to draw the grid with moderate pressure in order to make the grid visible. As a result, some of the gridlines are difficult to remove. It is advised to make very light marks when creating your grid so that the lines are easily removed.



We'll quickly and loosely add a range of value with broad strokes using a 2B graphite pencil. These applications are made quickly to keep the drawing exercise to around one hour. If you like, you can work slowly and fully develop the value and texture.



We'll work from the top to the bottom, adjusting the contrast and value relationships as we go.



We can erase any last remnants of the grid and adjust the value relationships to complete the sketch.



Today we learned that we can use the grid technique to accurately capture the contour lines of any subject in a drawing. This process works well, but is not without its drawbacks. Gridlines can be difficult to remove and some prep work is involved.

Tomorrow, we'll take a look at the basics of drawing the face and head, specifically facial proportions.