



Figure Drawing

? What are we covering today?

Today, we'll take a look at drawing the human figure. We'll explore a few basics regarding proportion, explore a four-step approach to observation, and create a few gesture drawings.

The human figure is a difficult subject. The body can be positioned in an infinite number of ways and every figure is different. For this reason, there isn't a true formula for drawing the figure.

However, there is a four-step approach to observing the figure that can help us make better decisions regarding the marks that we make.

Using this four-step approach, we can draw the figure in any position. We'll explore this four step approach in today's drawing exercise.

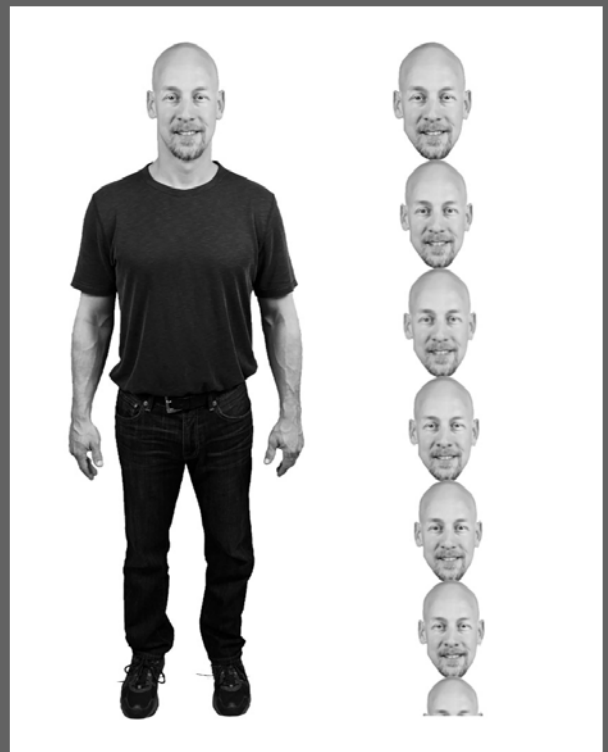
But before we dive into today's drawing exercise, let's first take a look at a few generalizations regarding the figure.

We must remember that every figure is different and our proportions change over time. A young child clearly has different body proportions compared to an adult. Even then, proportions vary greatly, even among adults.

With this in mind, we can consider a few proportional relationships that we can use to help evaluate the proportions of a figure in a drawing.

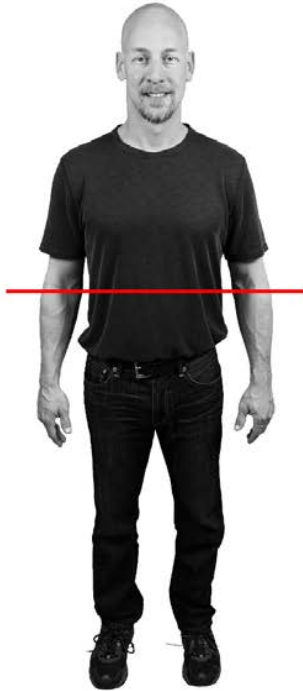
Let's first look at the height of the human figure. We'll measure the average height of a person based on the length of the head. Most people stand at a height that is around 7 "heads" tall. Some people can measure as few as 6 "heads" tall, while some are closer to 8.

As we can see here, our subject measures 6 and 1/2 "heads" tall.

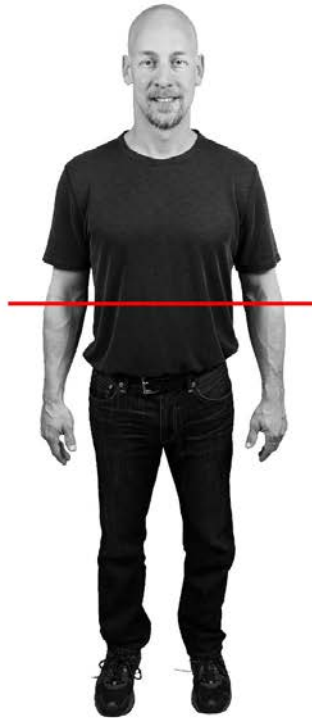


We can also look for specific locations on the figure that coincide with other prominent locations on the body to make comparisons.

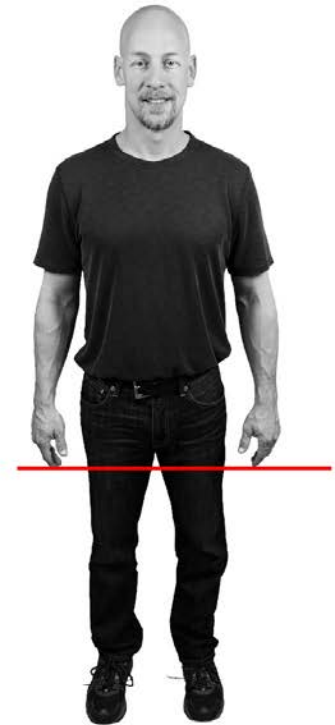
For example, the navel generally lines up with the elbows.



The hips generally align with the wrists.



The fingers, when extended, generally align with the middle of the thighs.



While it helps, simply knowing and recognizing these general relationships is clearly not enough to create accurate drawings of the figure.

We learned at the very beginning of this course that loosening up can lead to greater accuracy in our drawings. This is true for figure drawing as well.

It's common practice to create looser and quicker drawings when approaching the figure. This looser approach to drawing is called gesture drawing.

Although a gesture drawing can be created from any subject, the term is mostly used to specifically describe figure drawing.

Gesture drawings are created quickly and are usually made by making many dynamic lines. We can create a gesture drawing that is very descriptive and includes details. Or, we can create a gesture drawing from only one or two lines.

The goal of a gesture drawing is simply to capture the proportion and weight of the figure as quickly as possible.

! Today's Mindset

Today, we'll create several gesture drawings from photo references that are provided.

Today's mindset is...

"We can draw the human figure with a level of accuracy using a four-step approach of observation and loosely plan out the proportions through gesture drawing."

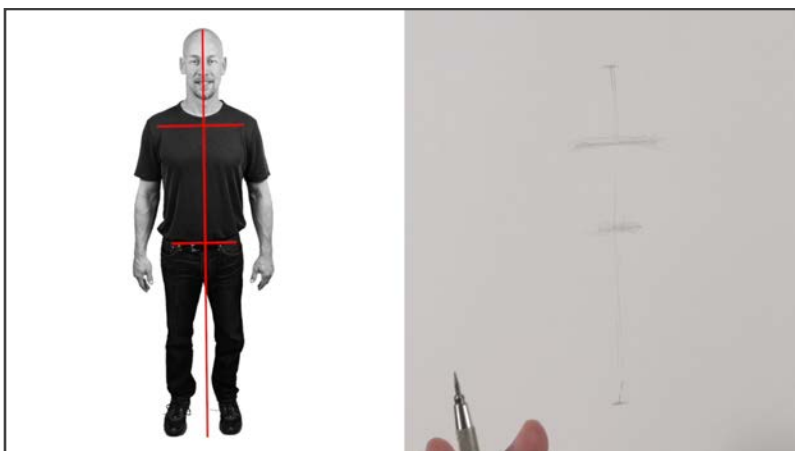
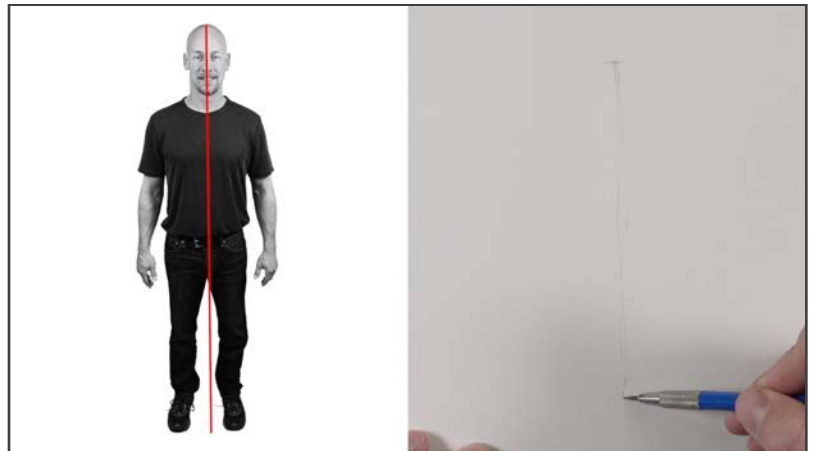
/ Today's Drawing Exercise

So now let's practice gesture drawing and take a look at the four-step approach that you can apply to your figure drawings.

We'll begin by looking at the four-step process of observation. We'll create several timed gesture drawings before developing a more finished sketch without a time constraint.

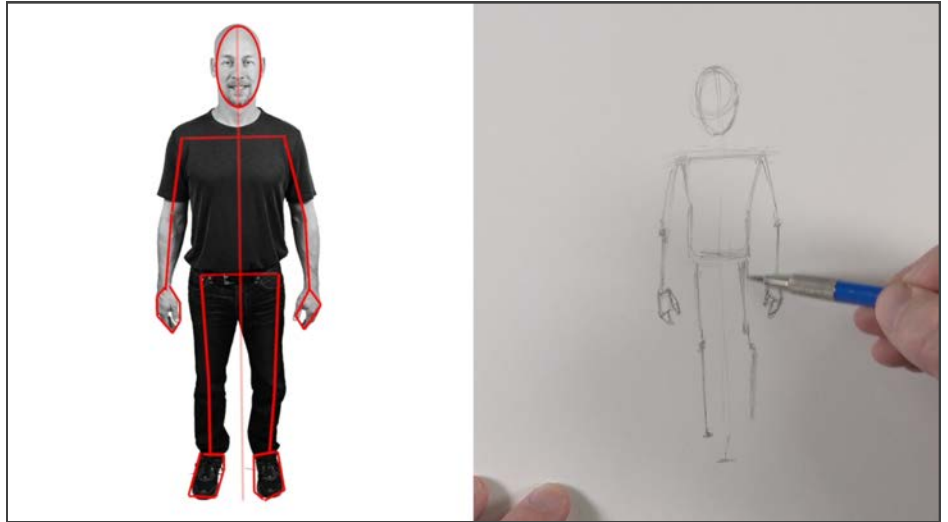
The Four-Step Process

We'll first draw a line from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet. This ensures that we get the entire figure on the picture plane and provides us a starting point to add the subsequent marks.

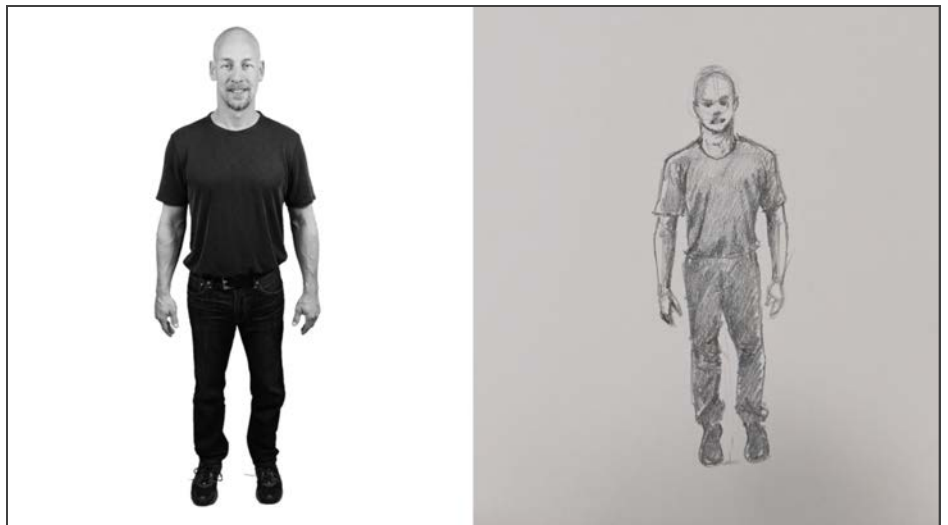


Next, we'll locate a line for the shoulders and one for the waist and mark them. In our first example, these lines are relatively straight. Depending on the position of the body, these lines may be diagonal.

Now, we can consider the bone structure and draw a “stick figure”. Shapes are also drawn for the torso, head, hands, and feet.



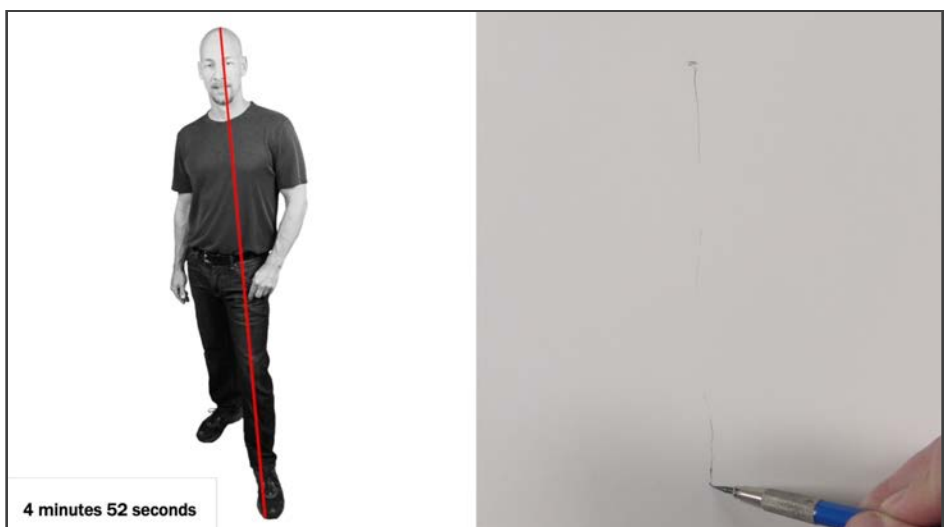
With the structure of the figure in place, we can concentrate on the contour lines and loosely fill in the details of the figure.



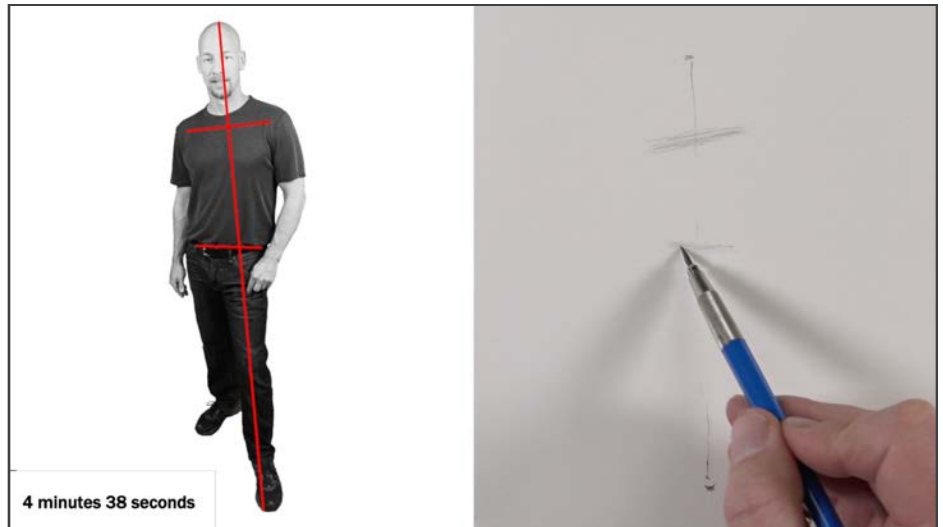
Timed Gesture #1

Now we'll practice this concept by creating several timed drawings - each five minutes long. This will increase our speed and help us become familiar with the process.

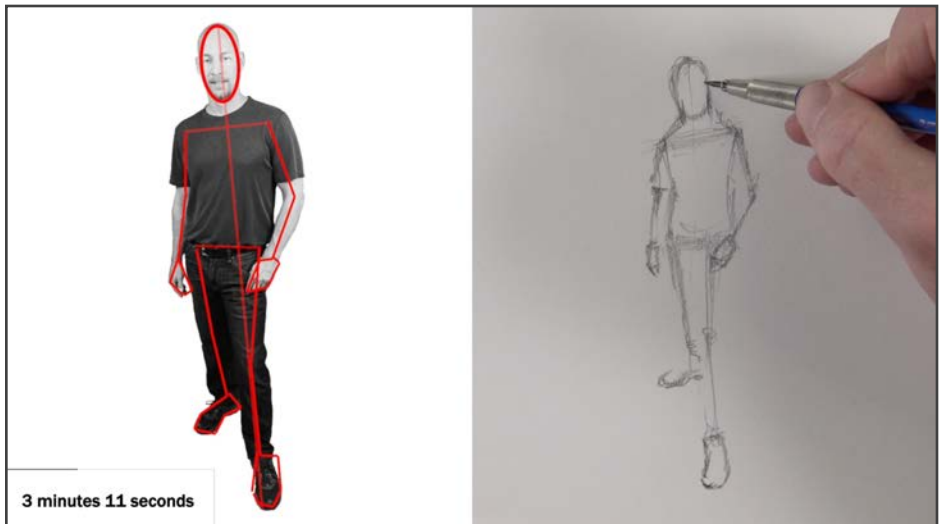
Again, we'll start with a line from the head to the feet.



Again, we'll look for a line for the shoulders and the waist. This time, our lines are at a slight diagonal.



Then we can look at the bone structure and draw it loosely using our shoulder line and waist line for reference. In this case, we need to pay special attention to the location of the feet. The weight of the figure rests on the back foot which is substantially higher on the picture plane.



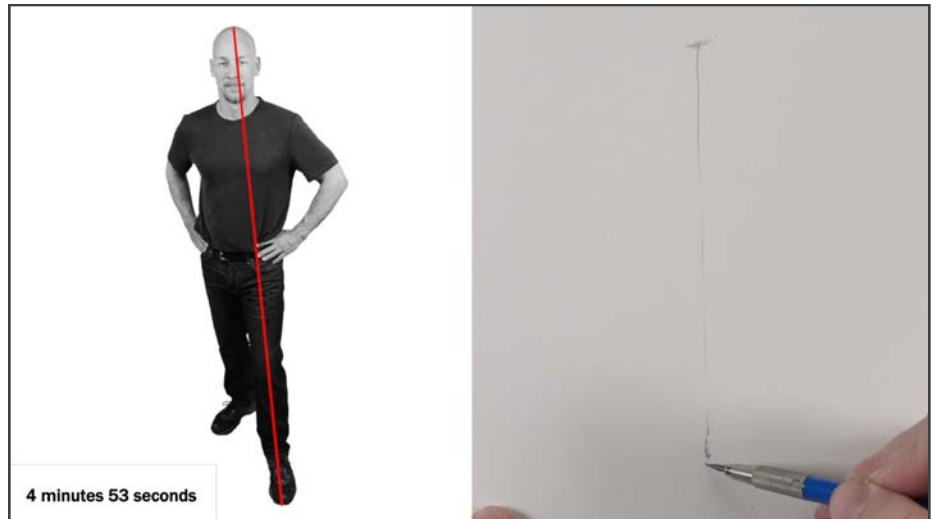
Quickly, we can fill in the contours and add a touch of tone to complete our first timed gesture.



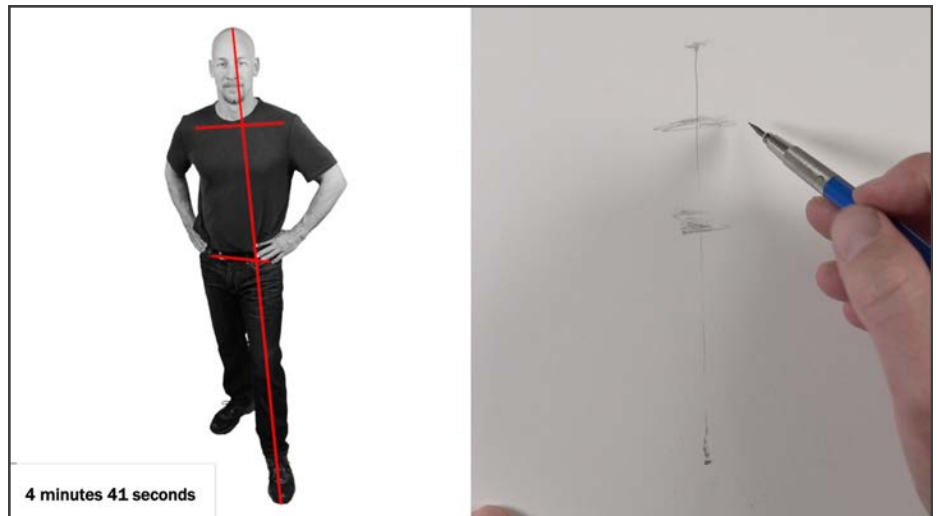
Timed Gesture #2

Let's go through the process again with a slightly different pose. Again, we'll spend five minutes on the sketch.

Here again we'll start with a line from the head to the feet.

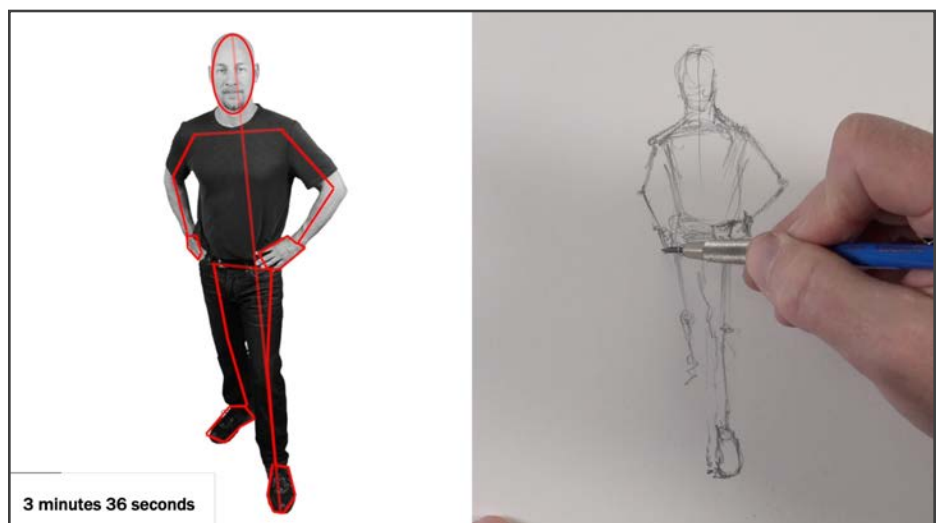


Then we'll look for a line for the shoulders and another for the waist.

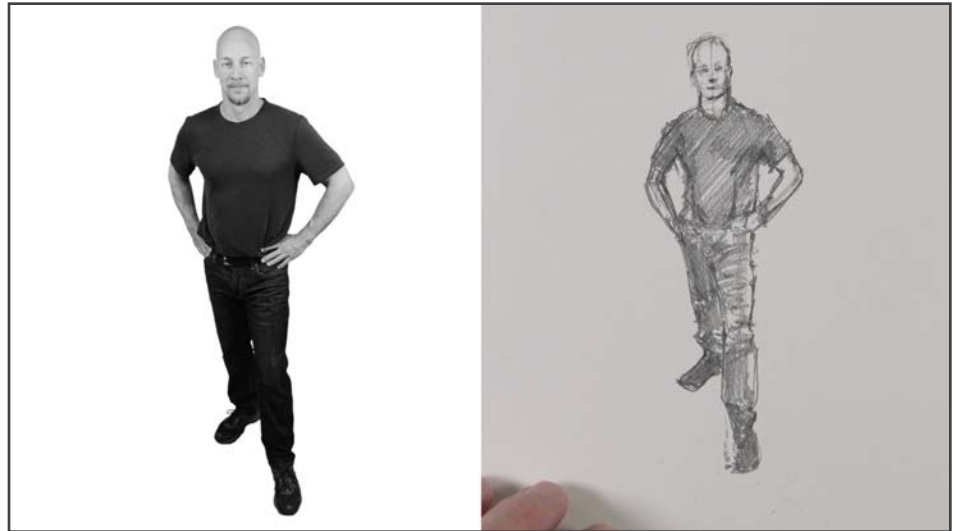


Then we'll draw in the bone structure using loose marks, keeping our hand and arm moving.

Again, basic shapes are added for the head, hands, and feet.



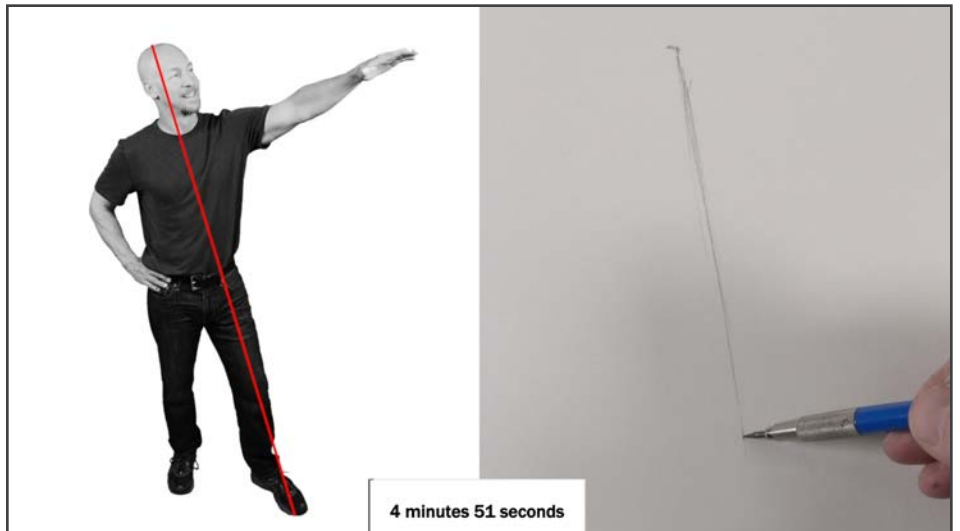
With the bone structure in place, we can quickly fill in the contours and some shading to finish our second gesture drawing.



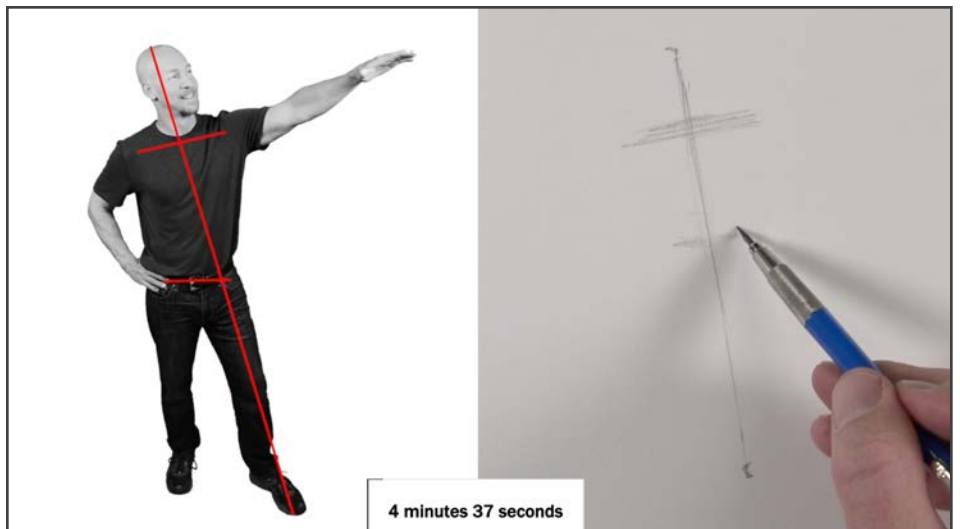
Timed Gesture #3

By now, the process should be becoming more familiar. Let's do another quick sketch with five minutes on the timer.

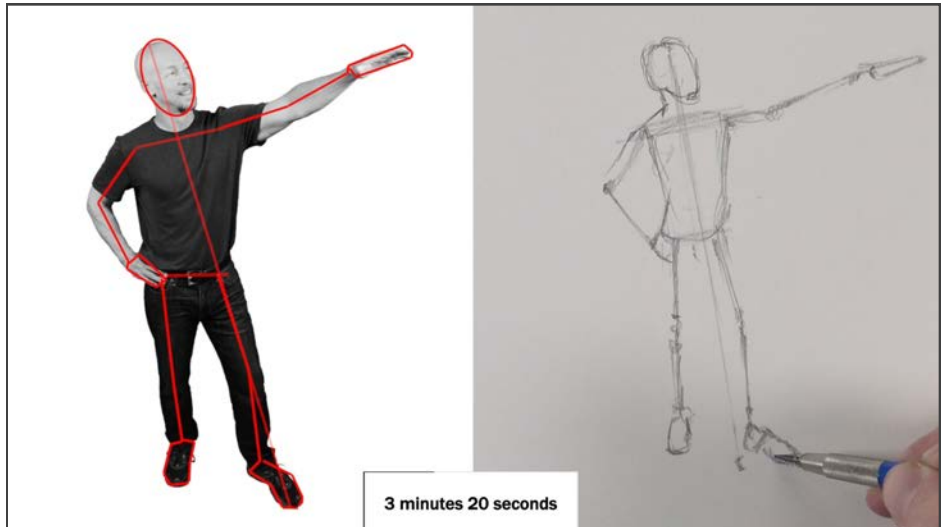
This time, we see that the line from the head to the feet is a diagonal line.



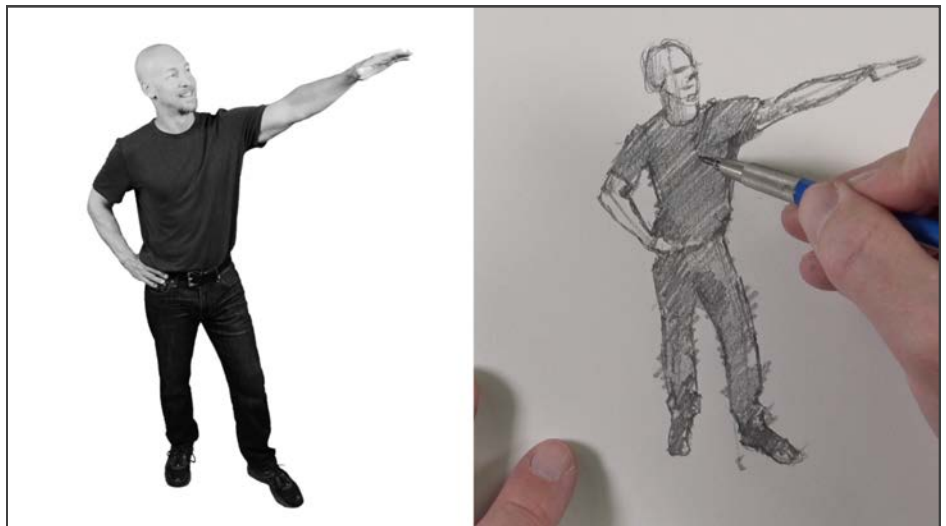
The lines for the shoulders and the waist are also positioned at a slight diagonal.



From the shoulders and the waist, we can build out the structure of the figure. Again, shapes are drawn for the head, hands, and feet.



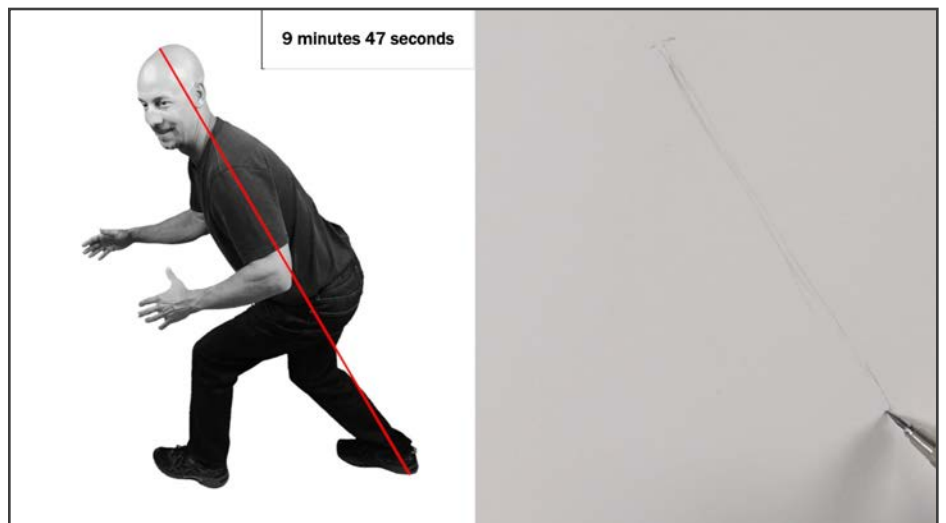
Staying loose, we'll quickly add the contours and shading to complete our third gesture drawing.



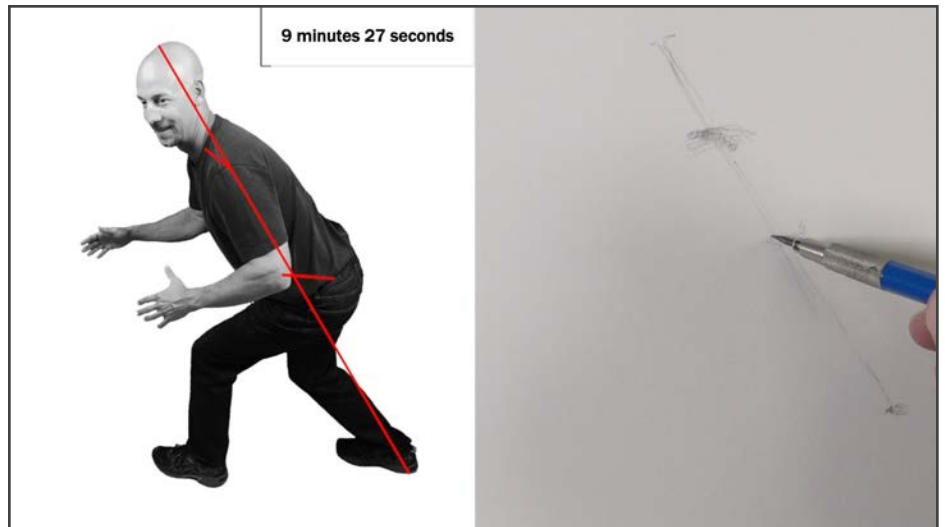
Timed Gesture #4

Now that we've had some experience with drawing the figure with a four-step approach, we'll create a fourth timed drawing. This time, we'll spend ten minutes.

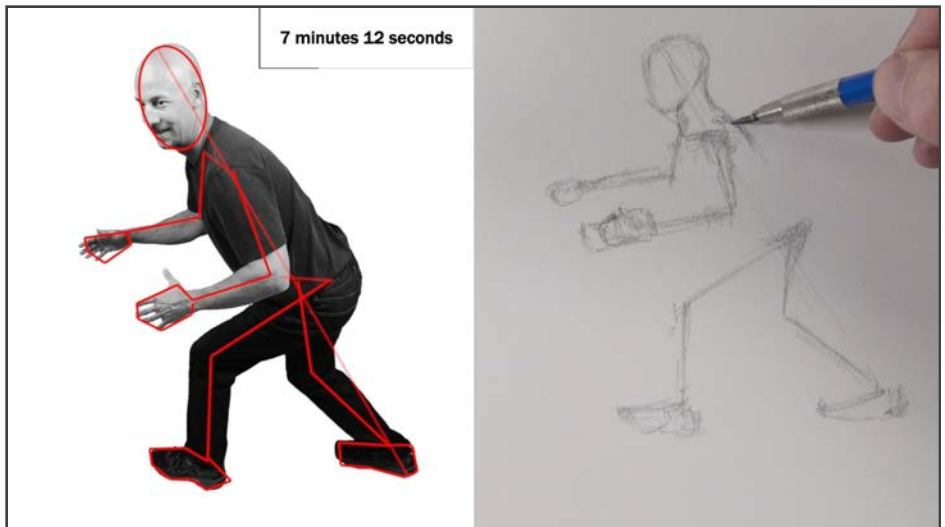
The process remains the same. We'll start with a line from the head to the feet.



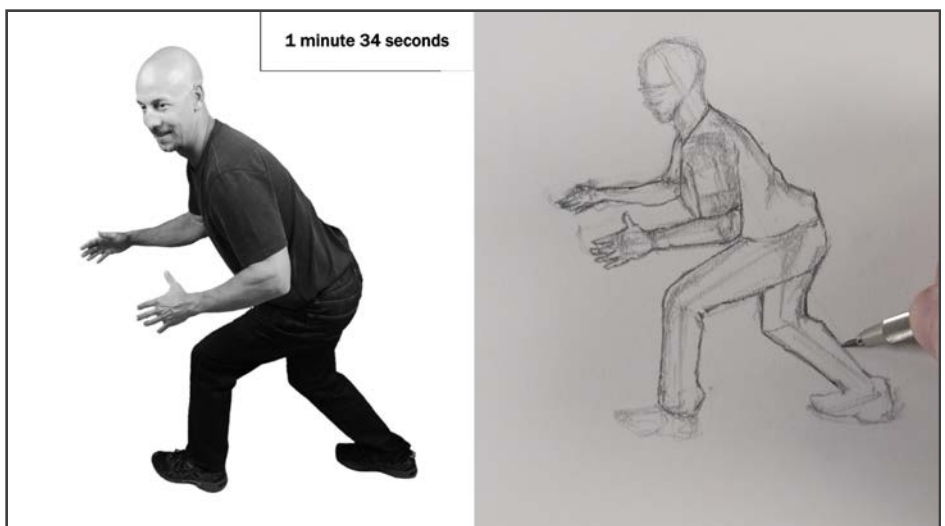
We'll look at the positioning of the shoulders and the waist. In this pose, the lines for the shoulders and the waist are short since they extend towards the viewer. This is called foreshortening.



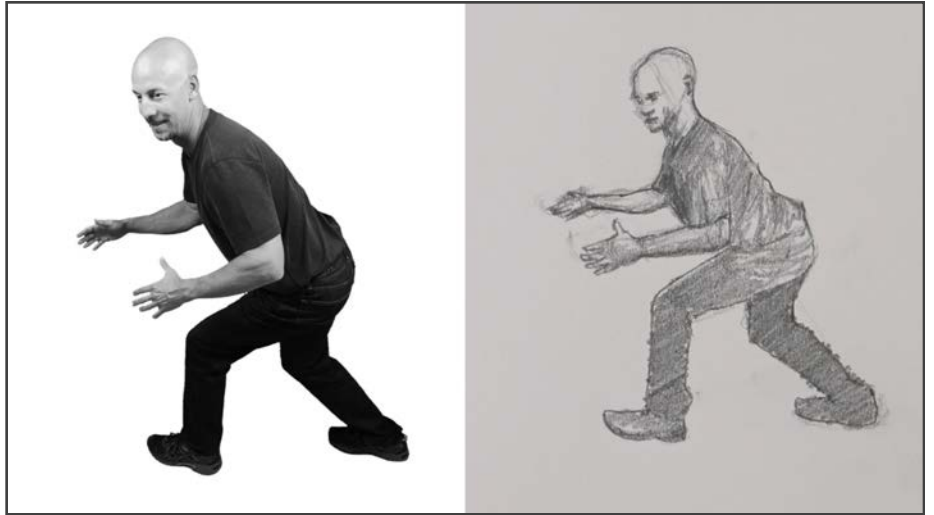
Next, we'll define the bone structure and make visual comparisons as we do.



With the bone structure in place, we'll add the contour lines. As the contours are added, we'll pay special attention to the wrinkles and folds of the fabric since this influences the illusion of the form of the figure.



With the time that remains, we'll add a bit of loose shading, completing the gesture drawing.



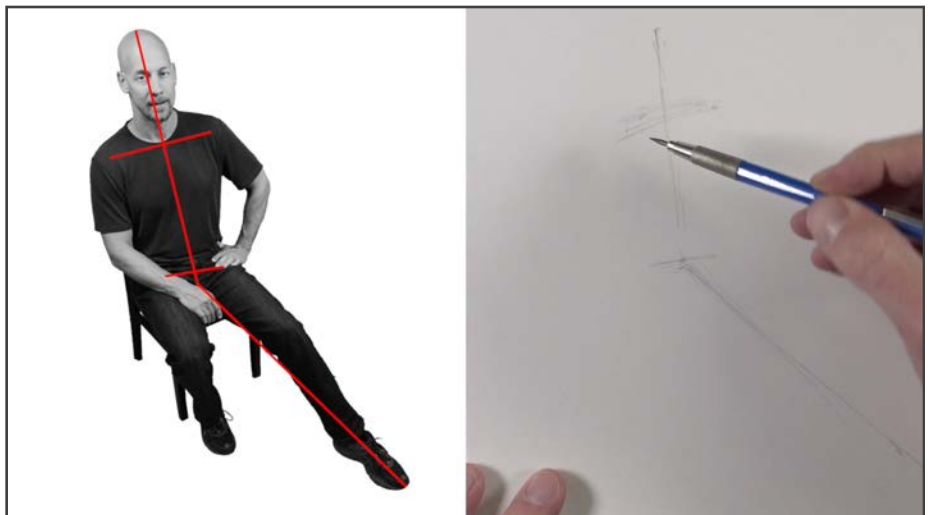
A Finished Sketch

For our last pose, we'll lose the timer. We'll follow the same steps, but work a little slower.

For this pose, our line from the top of the head to the feet bends at the waist.



Lines are then added for the shoulders and the waist. In this pose, the lines are slightly diagonal.



As we have before, we'll add the bone structure with loose and light lines. Since we are no longer under a time constraint, we can work slower and closely evaluate relationships through visual comparisons.



Using the bone structure as a guide, we'll draw the contour lines, again paying special attention to the folds of the clothing.



We'll add a bit of shading to complete the sketch.

Today we learned that we can loosely lay out the proportions of the human figure through gesture drawing. We also learned that although a formula for drawing the human figure doesn't exist, we can use a four-step approach of observation that helps us to find the proportions - no matter the positioning of the figure.



Tomorrow, we'll take a look at reverse drawing, the challenge it presents, and how practicing it can improve our drawing skills.