

Line Quality

? What are we covering today?

Yesterday, we learned that breaking a subject down into simplified shapes makes it easier to draw and improves our drawing speed and accuracy.

Today, we'll explore the concept of line further and discuss how line can be used to communicate form and light through variety.

Variety is one of the eight principles of art. The elements of art - line, shape, form, value, texture, color, and space can be thought of as the ingredients that go into making a work of art. We use these elements to develop any work that we create. They are the basic building blocks for drawings, paintings, and sculptures.

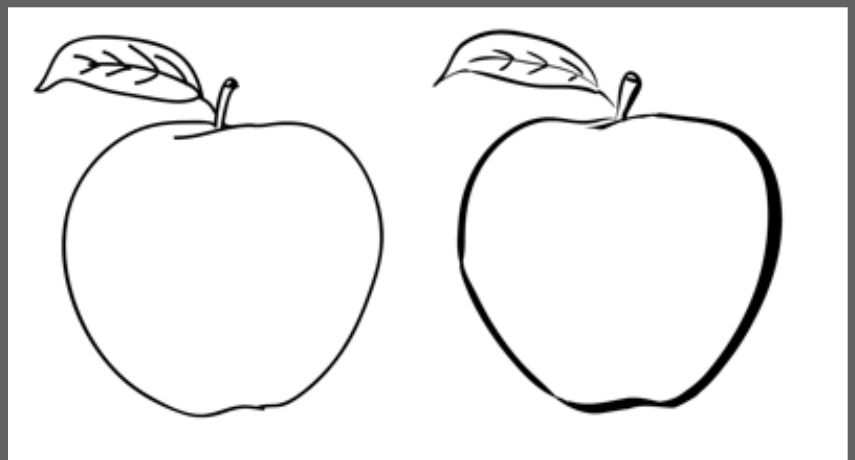
The principles of art differ from the elements. The principles of art deal with how the elements of art are arranged in a work of art. It's no wonder that folks sometimes get the elements and principles mixed up. But if we think of the elements as the ingredients and the principles as the recipe - it makes a bit more sense.

Variety, therefore is one of the principles of art. We create variety in a work by varying any of the elements. Varying the color, for example, produces variety of color. Variety often leads to added interest in a drawing, but if overused - it can make a work appear "busy".

Variety in line can do more than just add interest. It can also create the impression of form and help to indicate a light source.

An obvious method for creating variety with line is simply varying the thickness of the line. The thickness can be varied by applying additional pressure to our mark making tool or by consciously making a thicker line through repeated applications.

As we can see here, the second apple has more variety in the line used to describe it.



! Today's Mindset

The thickness or thinness of the line is referred to as “**line quality**”. Therefore, when we create a drawing made of lines, we should incorporate variety in the line through line quality.

And that's today's mindset...

“Line quality can be used to communicate form and the impression of light in a line drawing.”

Which Lines Should Be Thicker?

You may be wondering, “Which lines should I make thicker and which lines should be thin?”

The answer to this will vary depending on your subject and the location of your light source, but I can offer some advice. Generally, the outer contour of the subject will consist of thicker lines, while lines that define less important details inside of the outer contour may be thinner.

There may even be variance within the line itself. For example, a line may start with a thinner stroke, become thicker in the middle and then taper as it ends.

Lines may be thicker if the line defines an edge that is next to, near to, or within a shadow. The extra line weight will help to communicate the illusion of a light source.

Since we don't actually see lines on the subjects that we draw - we just see a contrast in tone that we perceive as a line - the decisions that we make concerning line quality are uniquely our's as artists. Five different artists will create five different contour line drawings with varying degrees of line quality. Each of these hypothetical drawings could all communicate the subject successfully even though they all would potentially handle line differently.

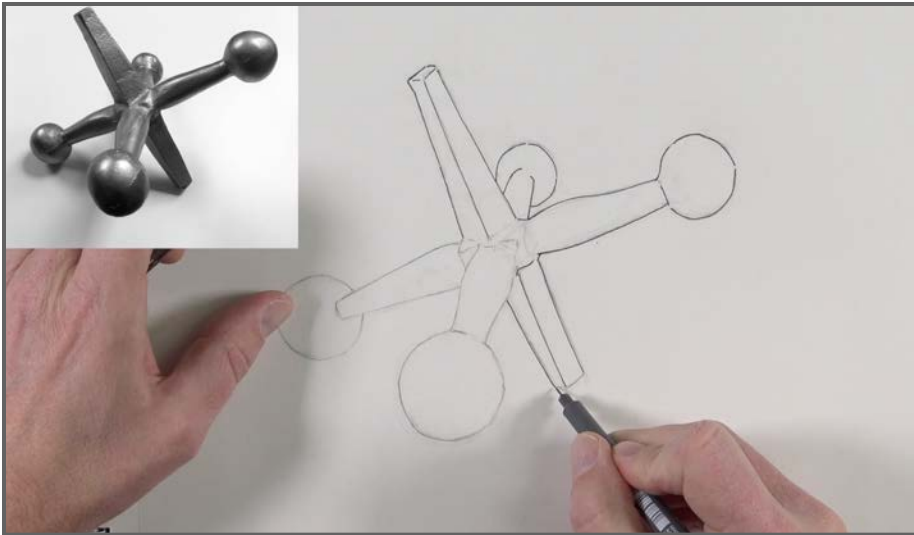
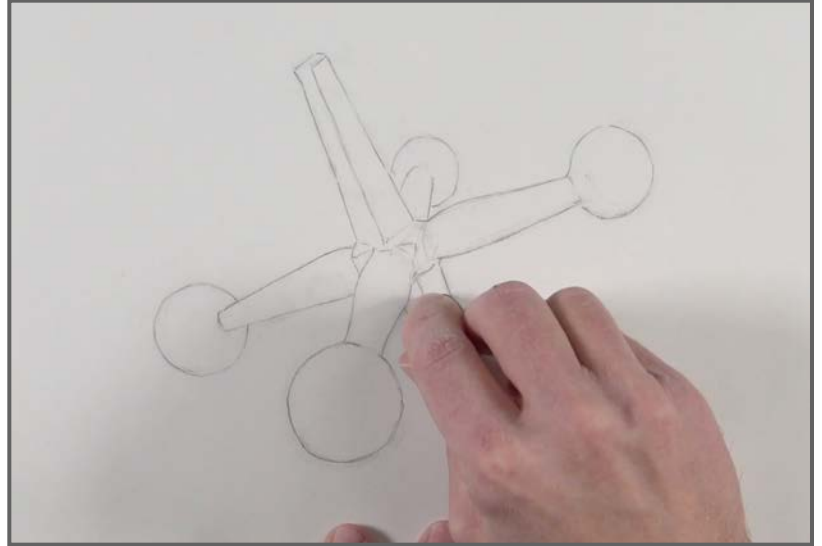
Today's Drawing Exercise

In today's drawing exercise, we'll apply the concept of line quality to the drawing that we began yesterday. We'll go back over the contour lines and enhance them by making them thicker in areas. To maximize contrast, we'll use technical drawing pens to develop the contours.

We'll make the line that defines the object slightly thicker in areas where the object itself is slightly thicker, around areas of shadow, and the outer most contours.

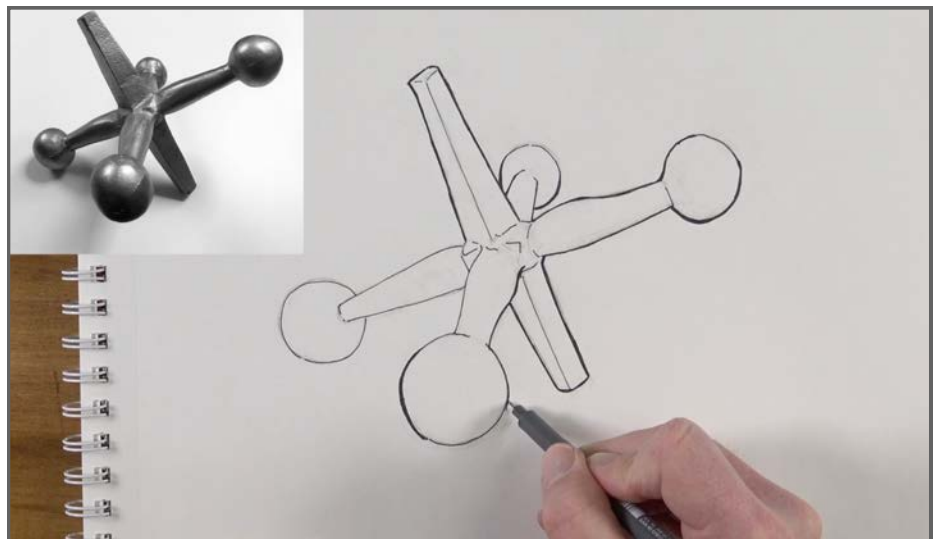
When we've enhanced the lines with ink, we can go back and erase any graphite (pencil) lines that remain, leaving a simple line drawing that communicates the form as well as the impression of light.

We'll first gently erase all of the graphite lines that are no longer needed with a kneaded eraser. We may also lightly erase the contour lines but leave enough information to use them as a guide.

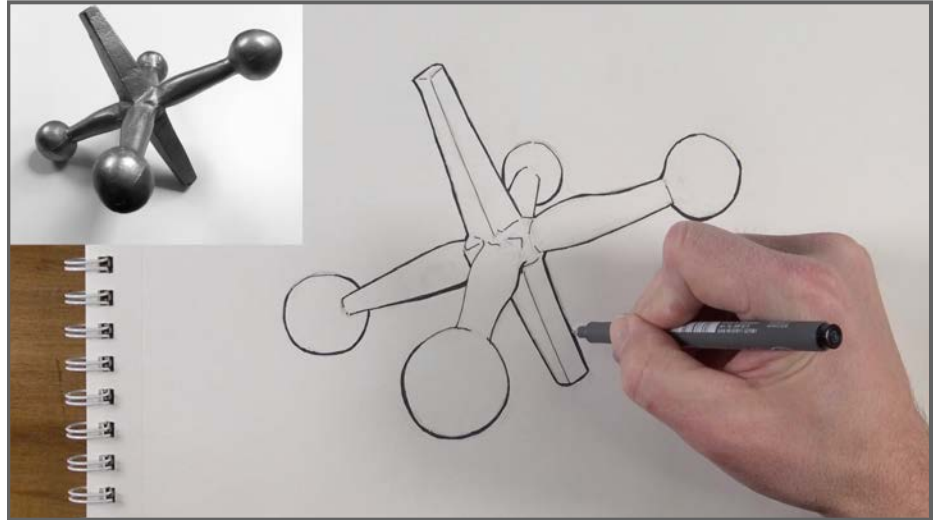


Next, we can simply use a medium to thin technical drawing pen to establish the contour lines. At first, we simply want to reinforce the contours with ink. We'll begin enhancing the line quality in the next step.

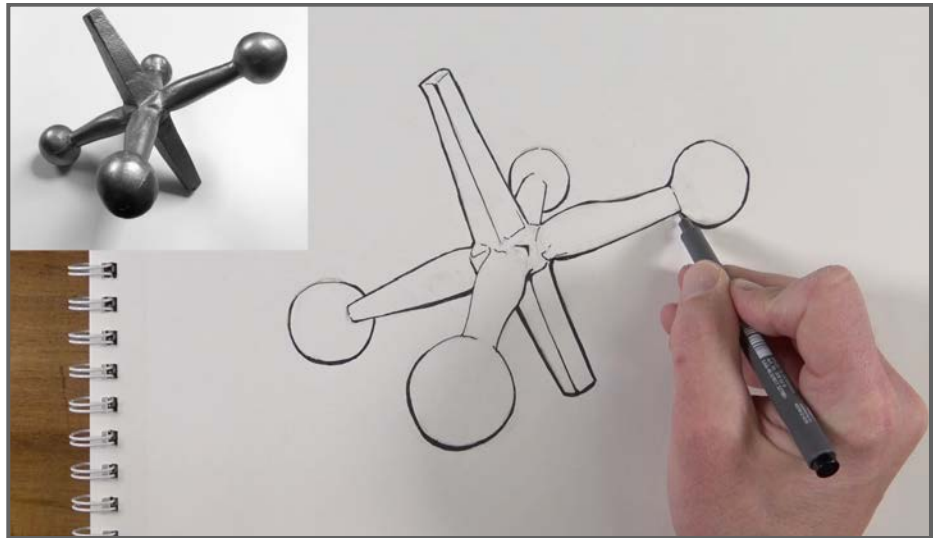
Now, over the top of our initial ink applications, we can begin the process of enhancing the line quality. We'll concentrate on the outer contours first, making the line slightly thicker.



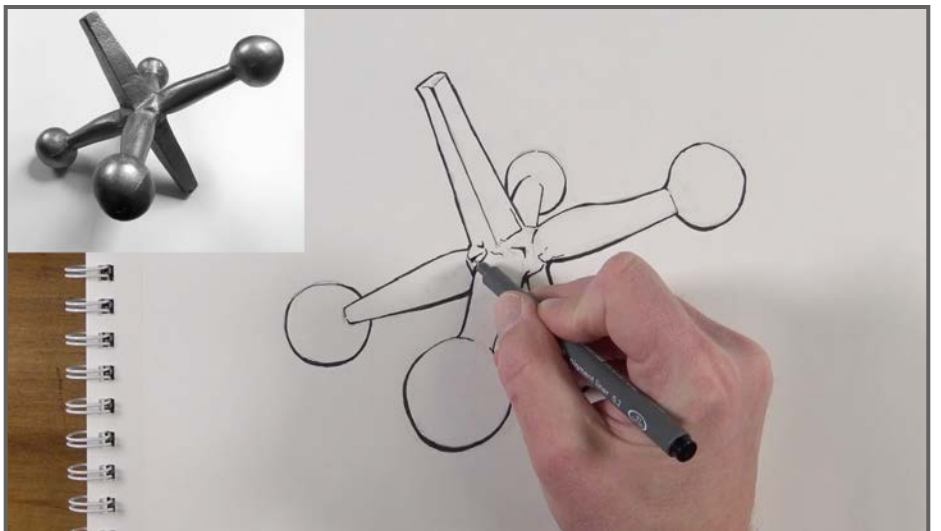
We can develop a slight illusion of light by making the line slightly thicker underneath the object. This means that the line may be slightly thicker on the parts of the object that face the surface, since the light source originates from above.



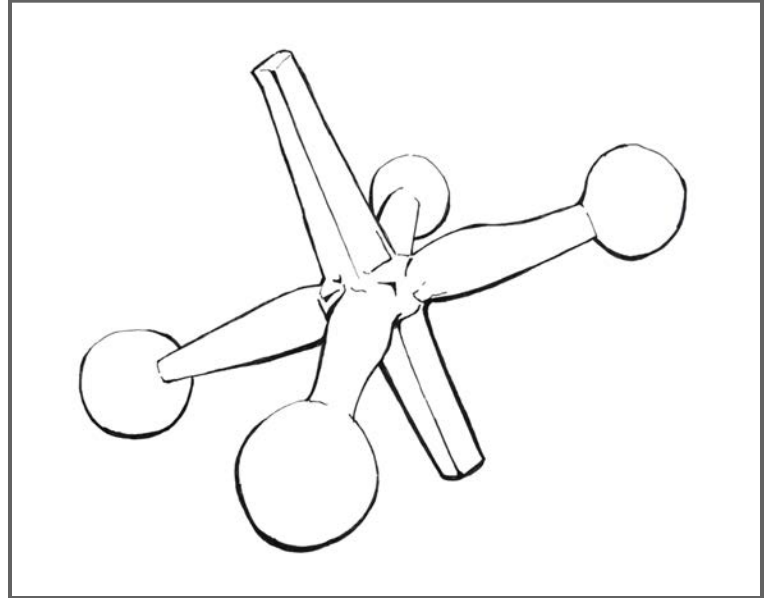
We'll add a bit of variety to the lines that exist within the outer contours of the object as well. In this case, these lines remain thinner than the lines that define the outer contours, but variety in line is essential here as well.



We'll continue this process, looking for lines to add or enhance.



The completed drawing communicates the form of the drawing and a subtle impression of light. Most importantly, the drawing is made more interesting by varying the thickness of the line.



Today we learned that variety is the principle of art that deals with variance within the elements. Variety adds interest and when used with line, it can also communicate form and light.

We learned that line quality is the thickness or thinness of line and by varying line quality, we can ensure variety in our line drawings. We also saw how effective line quality can be in communicating form in a simple line drawing.

Tomorrow, we'll explore the concept of cross contour lines. On the surface, this concept may seem irrelevant but you'll see just how important it is to stroke making and describing the form of a subject in a drawing.