

Drawing Ellipses

? What are we covering today?

Yesterday, we began our look at using line in drawings. Today, we'll take a slight deviation and instead discuss a foundational drawing concept that is incredibly important to our success. Before we can continue and explore all that line is capable of, we must explore this concept which will lay the groundwork for our future exercises.

What we'll discuss today may seem simple. But simplicity doesn't necessarily mean easy. The concept that we'll discuss will require practice and an understanding that improvement will occur over time.

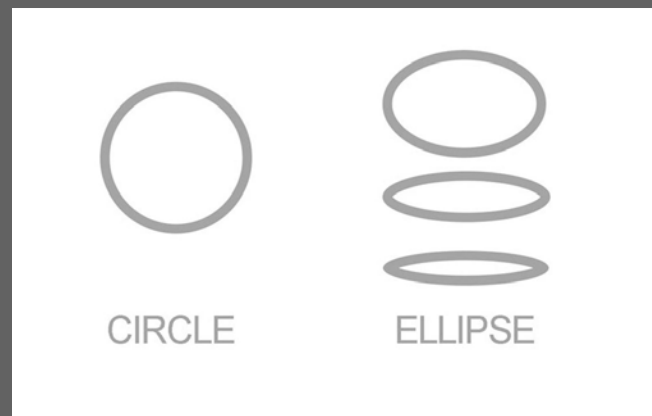
Today, we'll draw circles and ellipses.

Circles vs. Ellipses

Let's first determine how a circle and an ellipse are different.

We know that a circle is a basic geometric shape.

An ellipse is simply a circle viewed from an angle. Depending on the angle, the circle is distorted into the shape of an ellipse.



The world around us is filled with circles and more often, ellipses. Knowing how to tackle these basic shapes is important to our drawing success since basic shapes are the foundation when laying out a drawing. As we'll see in this course, drawing is heavily dependent on drawing basic shapes. So, we'll take on this challenging type of shape first.

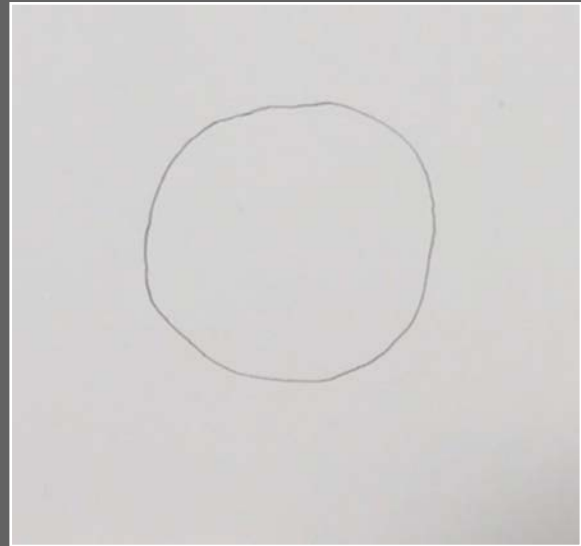
But there's more to today's concept than drawing simple circles and ellipses. The manner in which we draw these shapes is foundational to all of drawing. Drawing these shapes with accuracy requires a specific approach to mark making - one that we'll use with all of the drawings we create.

Drawing Exercise #1

Let's get started with today's first drawing exercise. First, draw a circle with one simple line. Try to make your circle as perfect as possible.

Now if you're like most of us, your circle is not perfect. And even though perfection is not our expectation, we can improve upon the manner in which we draw circles and ellipses and bring them to level that is closer to perfection.

The key to doing this lies in the manner in which we make marks on the surface. It is about loosening up. In fact, the key to accuracy in any drawing lies in looser mark making. And this leads us to today's mindset.



! Today's Mindset

Today's mindset is "Loosen up for accuracy."

When many of us draw, we rely on the movement of our wrist to make marks.

While this approach is perfectly acceptable for detail work, it can be a hindrance when we are laying out a composition.

By drawing with our elbow involved, we can extend the range of possible marks and actually have a bit more control.

However, if we also include our shoulder, then we have even more range and surprisingly even more control.

Drawing Exercise #2

Now, let's apply this concept to drawing another circle.

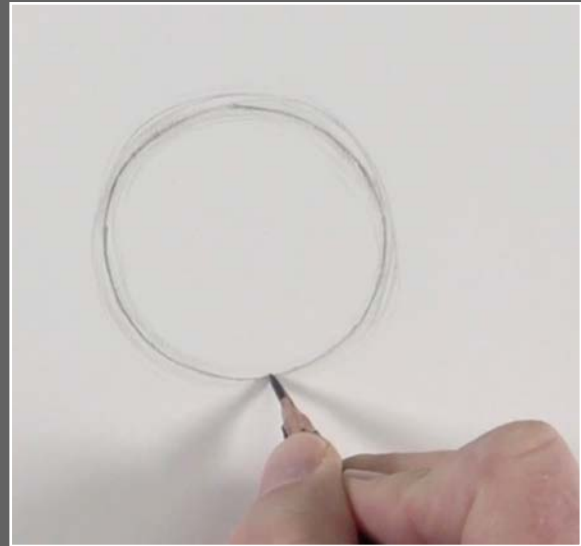
We'll draw another circle, but this time we'll begin with looser strokes, utilizing our entire arm - the shoulder, elbow and the wrist. We'll draw several loose lines and from those lines, we'll "find" a more perfect circle.

Drawing Exercise #2

This concept of looser drawing with multiple lines can be applied to any subject that you draw - not just circles.

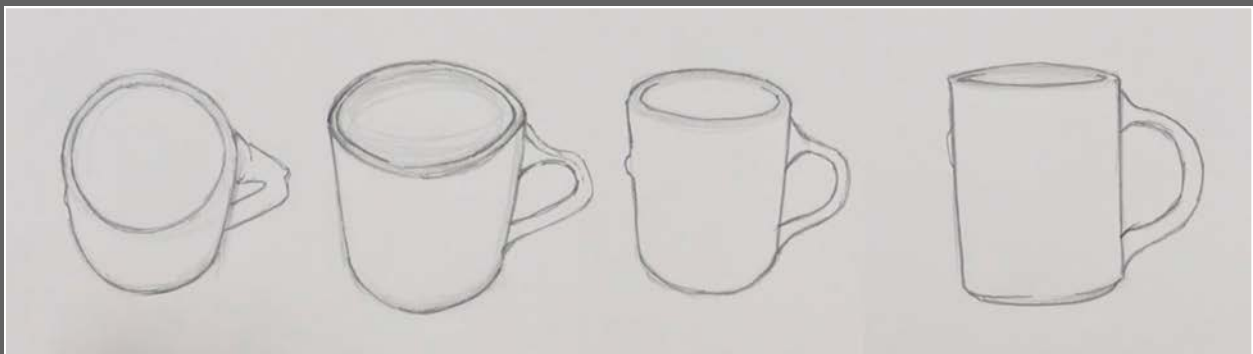
In fact, if we learn to loosen up a bit in the early stages of a drawing, we'll find that our drawings become more accurate.

Once we have the looser lines in place, we can become more refined and develop the details in our drawings. By starting loosely, we also improve the speed in which we can develop a drawing.



Drawing Exercise #3

Let's next draw a few ellipses using a few reference photos. We'll take the same approach - drawing loosely with multiple marks, utilizing the range of movement from our shoulders.



Granted, drawing circles is no easy task. Ellipses are an even greater challenge. But don't get discouraged if this exercise seems difficult. It gets a little easier over time, but the challenge still exists for even the most accomplished artists. The more that we practice these skills, the better we become at them.