

Life Drawing Class: Measuring Up

Introduction

"Measuring up" is a foundational skill in life drawing that helps artists maintain accurate proportions and spatial relationships. This handout introduces three key techniques:

- **Sighting**
- **Using a pencil or charcoal stick for proportion**
- **Comparative measurement**

1. Sighting Technique



Sighting helps you capture angles and alignments.

How to do it:

Hold your pencil at arm's length.

Close one eye.

Align the pencil with a part of the model (e.g., the tilt of the head or limb).

Use the pencil to gauge angles and transfer them to your drawing.

2. Using a Pencil or Charcoal Stick for Proportion



This method helps you measure and compare lengths.

Steps:

Hold the pencil or charcoal stick vertically.

Use your thumb to mark a length (e.g., the height of the head).

Compare this unit to other parts of the body (e.g., how many head lengths tall is the figure?).

3. Comparative Measurement

This technique focuses on relative sizes.

Example:

- Compare the width of the head to the width of the shoulders.
- Observe how many times one feature fits into another.

Practice Tips

- Keep your arm straight for consistent measurements.
- Use a consistent unit (e.g., head length).
- Sketch lightly so you can adjust proportions.
- Practice regularly to improve accuracy.

Conclusion

Mastering measuring techniques enhances realism and accuracy in life drawing. With practice, these methods become second nature and improve your observational skills