Make: Practice, Experimentation, and Revision

AP Drawing

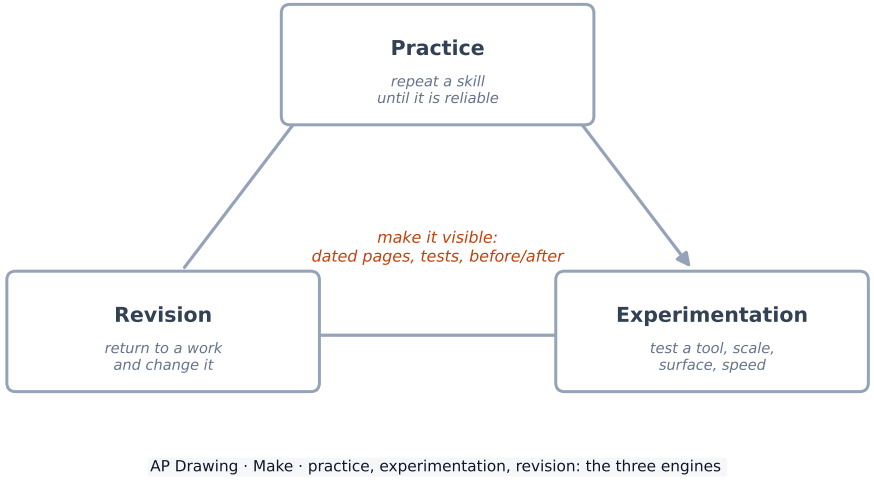
The Sustained Investigation

The **Sustained Investigation** is an inquiry-based, in-depth study of materials, processes, and ideas over time – CED Big Idea 2, and 60% of your AP score.

- It is a **body of work** – around 15 images – that grows from one stated question or idea.
- *Sustained* means over time: the works should show growth, not fifteen versions of the same afternoon.
- Plan a rhythm: make, document, reflect, revise, make again – every one or two weeks.
- The investigation is drawings *and* process: studies, tests, and revisions belong inside it.
- Depth beats breadth. One question pushed hard scores above ten unrelated good drawings.
- Start early in the year. A rushed investigation is visible at a glance.

Practice, Experimentation, and Revision

The CED names three engines of making: **practice** (repeat), **experimentation** (test), and **revision** (modify and reimagine). (CED 2.A)



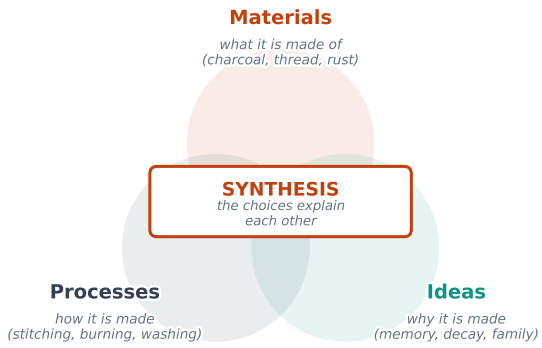
Three engines of making: repeat a skill, test something new, return and change

- Practice repeats a skill until it is reliable – the tenth ellipse, the fiftieth hand.
- Experimentation tests without needing success: a new tool, a new scale, a new surface, a new speed.
- Revision returns to a work and changes it on purpose: crop it, rework it, redraw it, or answer it with a new version.
- Show all three visibly across the portfolio – scorers must *see* them, not take your word.
- Keep the failures. An annotated failed experiment is stronger evidence than an unexplained success.
- A **revision pair** (first state and revised state, with one sentence on what changed) is classic AP evidence.

Michelangelo's figure study: practice and revision build drawing skill through repeated investigation

Synthesis of Materials, Processes, and Ideas

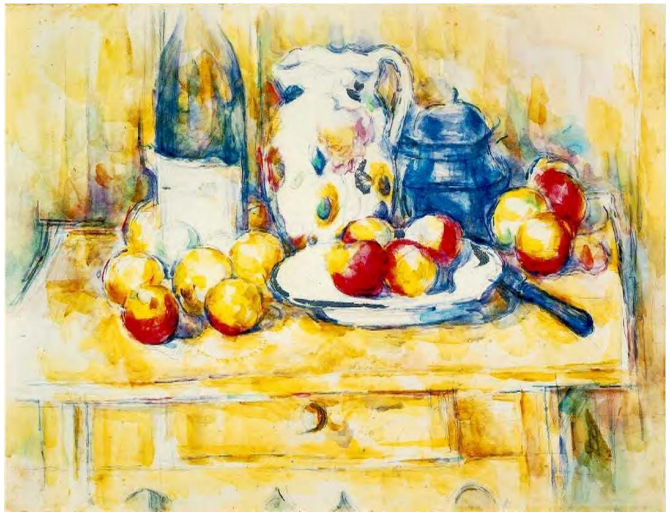
Synthesis means the three components fuse – the material and process choices *are* the idea. (CED 2.B)



AP Drawing · Make · synthesis: materials, processes, and ideas fuse

When material, process, and idea explain each other, the rubric calls it synthesis

- Ask of each work: could this idea exist in any other medium? If yes, the synthesis can go deeper.
- Charcoal drawings with burnt edges about wildfire; thread-stitched portraits about family ties – material as meaning.
- Process can carry meaning too: obsessive stippling for time passing, blind contour for the uncertainty of memory.
- Synthesis is the top row of the scoring guidelines – the discriminator between a 4 and a 5.
- It cannot be added at the end. It grows from experimenting early with materials that relate to the idea.
- One sentence of written evidence should name the link: "I used X because the idea needed Y."

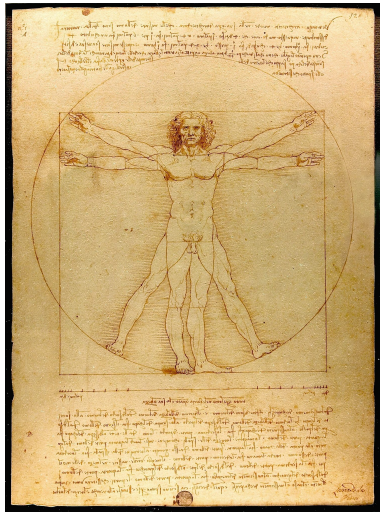


Cézanne still life: materials, processes, and ideas synthesise in composition and mark

Demonstrating Drawing Skills

The rubric names the **drawing skills** : mark-making, line, surface, space, light and shade, composition. (CED 2.C/2.D)

- Audit your portfolio against the six skills – every one should appear strongly somewhere.
- One work can carry several: a figure in a lit interior shows space, light and shade, and composition at once.
- "Good" portfolios show competent skills; a 5 shows *advanced* skills with **visual evidence** everywhere.
- A skill only counts if it is visible in the submitted image – photograph well or the skill disappears.
- Weak areas are fixable with targeted practice blocks – that is what the craft topics of this course are for.
- In written evidence, name skills with the CED's own words, so the scorer connects claim to image instantly.



Vitruvian Man: proportion and figure construction as foundational drawing skills

Composition and Craft in Making

Finished works are judged as made objects: composition designed, edges considered, surface controlled.

- Plan with **thumbnail sketches** and notan before committing – composition is decided before the first real mark.
- **Craft** means physical care: clean margins where you intend them, controlled smudging, flat unwrinkled paper.
- Damaged or dirty work photographs badly. Protect drawings with cover sheets and fixative.
- Treat **scale** as a decision: an intimate A5 and a commanding A1 are different statements of the same idea.
- Unresolved corners betray hurry. Finish them – or leave them raw *on purpose*, and let the writing own the choice.
- Craft is not fussiness: an expressive charcoal can be perfectly crafted expression.

Developing Ideas Over Time

Development – the furthering of an inquiry through in-depth exploration – is what "sustained" looks like in the images.

- Sequence matters: arrange the works so the investigation's growth is readable from image 1 to image 15.
- Development moves: change scale, change viewpoint, combine two earlier works, push one **variable** to its extreme.
- Series thinking helps – variations on one **motif** show deliberate exploration, not repetition.
- Mid-course turns are healthy when documented: "the shadows became the subject" *is* development.
- Compare your newest work to your first. If nothing changed – skill, idea, or ambition – push a variable.
- Scorers explicitly look for works that show development, not fifteen isolated performances.

Exam tips

- **Build the portfolio as a story**: image 1 states the question, the middle images test and turn, the late images answer with authority. Scorers read the sequence.
- **Submit process images on purpose** – two or three journal spreads, tests, or revision pairs among the 15 make practice, experimentation, and revision undeniable.
- **The 5-portfolios show synthesis**: pick materials that mean something for your question, and say the link out loud in the written evidence.
- **Audit against the six drawing skills at mid-year**, not in April – the gaps you find write your practice plan while there is still time.
- **Never pad with lookalikes.** Fifteen near-identical drawings read as one idea repeated; variations must each move a variable.