

Line and Mark-Making

AP Drawing ■ Topic 1

AP Drawing



What we will cover

- 1 Line quality
- 2 Contour drawing
- 3 Gesture drawing
- 4 Hatching & cross-hatching
- 5 Stippling & alternative marks
- 6 Texture & surface
- 7 Expressive mark-making

Hatching **Cross-hatch** **Cross-contour**



parallel lines



layered angle



follows the form

Stippling



dots build tone

Scribble



fast tangles

Broken marks



dashes and ticks

AP Drawing · Line and Mark-Making · six mark systems that build tone



Line quality – judged at a glance

Line quality is how a line looks and feels. The rubric names **mark-making** first among the drawing skills.

Confident lines come from the **shoulder and elbow**, not only the fingers.

Line quality – judged at a glance, in detail

Even line

same width all the way



Weighted line

thick and thin with pressure



Lost-and-found-line

fades out, comes back



Expressive line

fast, energetic, personal



AP Drawing · Line and Mark-Making · four line qualities compared

the same edge drawn four ways

Line quality is how a line looks and feels – and the rubric names **mark-making** **first** among the drawing skills.

Direction carries feeling



calm

horizontal



firm

vertical



active

diagonal

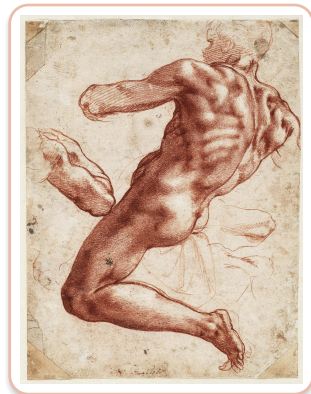
Examiners read line quality **instantly** – practise until your lines look **decided**, not timid. Warm up before every serious drawing.

Contour drawing – slow, careful looking

A **contour line** traces the edges of a form – outer **and** inner edges of folds and overlaps.

- match the **speed** of your eye to the pencil
- **blind contour** : draw **without looking** at the paper
- **cross-contour** describes **volume**, not edges

Overlapping contours create **instant depth**.



Michelangelo contour study: slow careful looking

Gesture drawing – energy before detail

Gesture drawing captures energy, movement and weight in **seconds**.

- 30 seconds to 3 minutes; draw the **whole** subject
- find the **line of action** first
- ask **what the subject is doing**, not what it looks like

Energy → structure → detail. Photograph daily pages as practice evidence.



Seurat gesture: action in a few lines before detail



Hatching and cross-hatching

Hatching builds tone with parallel lines;
cross-hatching layers a second set at a new angle.

Closer, darker lines read as darker **value** . Keep **one angle per plane**.



Dürer: value built only from line density

Beyond hatching – a vocabulary of marks

Stippling

tone from **dots** –
dense reads dark
slow, but very
controllable

Scribble

fast tangles of line
good for fur, fo-
liage, energy

Dashes & broken marks

suggest texture **without**
outlining every detail

Marks are **additive** (putting material on) or **subtractive** (lifting it off with an eraser). A classic experimentation page: **one subject in four mark systems**.

Line quality, and building tone by hatching

a weighted line

changes thickness along its length – **press harder where a form turns away** or where a shadow begins

lost-and-found lines

fade out and come back; **the viewer's eye completes the missing edge**

why that works

an implied edge reads as air and light, where a continuous outline reads as a cut-out

hatching

parallel strokes; **each cross-hatched layer deepens the tone step by step**

the discipline

build darkness gradually – one heavy layer cannot be lightened

direction matters

strokes that follow the form describe it; strokes that ignore it flatten it

Line weight and lost edges are what separate a drawing from a tracing. Both are decisions the scorer can see.



Texture and surface

Surface is a **named** AP drawing skill: the physical texture of the drawing and the drawn **illusion** of texture work together.

- **actual texture** – rough paper, layered charcoal, collage
- **implied texture** – a drawn illusion
- **frottage** rubs real texture **into** the drawing

Paper **tooth** changes **every** mark – the same pencil reads differently on smooth and rough paper.

Build texture with the **logic of the material**: short strokes for fur, long for hair, broken marks for stone. Contrasting smooth skin against rough cloth makes **both** read more strongly.

Expressive mark-making – marks carry emotion

The same subject drawn with **angry**, **calm** or **nervous** marks tells three different stories.

- **expressive lines** exaggerate speed, pressure and direction to **communicate feeling**
- Käthe Kollwitz's heavy charcoal, Egon Schiele's tense contours – the **marks themselves** carry the meaning
- **distortion** is a legitimate decision when it **serves your intent**

“Accurate” is **not** the only goal. A personal mark vocabulary is part of your **voice** – examiners look for it across the **whole** portfolio.

Choose the mark to match the idea: soft graphite for quiet subjects, aggressive ink for conflict.

Worked example – linking marks to meaning

Written evidence: one sentence that scores

“Scratchy graphite lines echo the anxiety of exam season.” It names the **mark**, and links it to the **idea**. That link is what scorers reward – a description of the picture alone is not evidence of thinking.

Photograph marks close up: a detail shot of your best passage **proves** a skill that a full view only suggests.

Check yourself, in detail

Even line

same width all the way



Weighted line

thick and thin with pressure



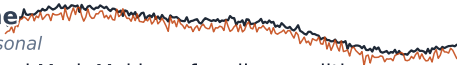
Lost-and-found-line

fades out, comes back



Expressive line

fast, energetic, personal



AP Drawing · Line and Mark-Making · four line qualities compared

The same edge drawn four ways: an even line, a weighted line, a lost-and-found line, and a fast expressive line

Exam tips

- **Line quality is judged at a glance** – one page of confident, varied strokes tells a scorer more than an hour of timid rendering. Warm up before every serious drawing.
- **Show the systems, not just the results:** a portfolio image of hatching, stippling, and cross-contour studies is direct visual evidence of the *mark-making* skill the rubric names.
- **Photograph marks close up.** A detail shot of your best passage of marks proves a skill that a full view only suggests.
- **Blind contour and gesture pages belong in your process images** – they show observation and practice, exactly what the Sustained Investigation rubric asks to see.
- **Match marks to meaning in your written evidence:** one sentence like “scratchy graphite lines echo the anxiety of exam season” links technique to idea, which is what scorers reward.



Topic 1 – key takeaways

1

Line quality

judged at a glance – weighted,
lost-and-found, decided

2

Contour & gesture

contour is slow looking; gesture is
energy first

3

Mark systems

hatch, cross-hatch, stipple,
scribble – density is value

4

Voice

match the mark to the meaning;
distortion can serve intent

Check yourself

- 1 What do cross-contour lines describe – edges or volume?
 - 2 In pen and ink, where does value come from?
 - 3 What do you look for first in a gesture drawing?
 - 4 Additive or subtractive: lifting charcoal
- Even line**
same width all the way



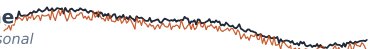
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Answers 1. volume 2. line density 3. the line of action 4. subtractive