DRAWING BY BLOCKING IN

Developed by Bonnie Dillard
Teaching Artist Training
This lesson will demonstrate how we can use basic shapes: circles, ovals, squares, rectangles and triangles to “block in” drawings of the world around us. I have drawn up these examples over the years for my students, I hope one or two of them will work for you.

**Supplies**

Materials: Paper, pencils and erasers and a subject

1. Find a clear image (photo or drawing) of what you want to draw. Look at it carefully to see the basic shapes within your subject. You can also use an actual object.

2. Let’s look at this salmon:

Notice how the big shapes start as a foundation for the final fish. Try drawing your own salmon, starting with a long oval. Draw lightly so that you can erase if you need to. Then adjust your big shapes, erase the beginning lines and add details when you are happy with it all. Measure the head (including gills) and see that the fish is about 4 heads long. What else can you measure? Measuring helps you get the proportions correct.
3. Now we will try this horse. Look at the whole animal, then “block in” the main shapes. Be sure to MEASURE how large or small the shapes are in relation to each other.

Can you see where the big shapes needed to be adjusted? The head especially needed to be trimmed and the angle pulled in. What can you measure? The length of the head makes a nice measuring stick. Hint: look at the length of the sections of the legs.
4. Drawing a bear’s head – go step by step:
Notice that his nose is basically a square.
5. Find the big shapes: ovals for head and body, triangles for peak, wing and legs, rectangle for neck. Then measure, adjust, add and define.
6. Finally, let's look at a shooting star. It is more complex, you might need to ask for help! Can you see how the blown-up drawing of the flower looks like one large triangle with smaller triangles making up the parts? Block in your shapes...

Then adjust the edges and add details and lines for shading. Take your time, this is a complicated design!

Each of these exercises uses a slightly different approach to “blocking in”. See what works for you and try finding the shapes in a subject in your home or yard. Remember, start drawing shapes light and simple, then measure and add details last.