

Field Sketching

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Tools

The easier they are to carry, the more likely you'll use them!

- Water-brush pen
- Watercolors: warm and cool of each primary color
- Pens: Water-soluble and waterproof

Techniques and Warm-Ups

- Blind-contour: continuous line drawing without looking at your paper
- Modified contours: Same as above, but this time occasionally looking at the paper
- Gestures: Quick drawings, (5 to 30 seconds), capturing the big idea and rhythm of a subject
- Diagrammatic sketches: Small sketches with notes and observations
- Memory drawings: Sketches made after observing a subject
- Thumbnail sketches: Small, simple drawings focusing on the big shapes/values of a subject

Zoom In: Critters and Natural Objects

Sketching animals, bugs, and natural objects from life is great fun and a wonderful means to learn about different species and habitats. Gesture sketches are particularly useful for drawing quickly and looking for the big shapes of a subject (circles, ovals, triangles, etc...). Contour and diagrammatic sketches are great for immobile objects. It is also helpful to draw critters and plants from pictures or guidebooks to better understand their forms.

Challenges:

- How many critters can you find and sketch right now?
- How many species of plants can you identify?
- What signs of animals can you find? *Tracks, nests, scat, etc...*

Zoom Out: Landscapes

With limited time, gestures (quick) and thumbnail (small) sketches are helpful in recording observations of landscapes. Try squinting your eyes and focusing on what big shapes you see. When time is limited for painting, practice using a color shorthand, adding notes to your sketch. You can add the color later.

Challenges:

- 360° Sketches: Draw thumbnail views, rotating 90° for each one.
- Value Studies: Try coloring a thumbnail sketch with just three shades of grey: light, medium, and dark.
- How many colors can you name in the world around you?
- Explore your "palette of place" by just mixing and painting the colors you see on a page