



# The Stages of Drawing Development Reference Guide

## What's Inside:

1. Drawing Development Timeline
2. PDF for each drawing stage outlining:
  - Common Characteristics
  - An Example Drawing
  - Classroom Tips
  - A Big Takeaway



*"For children, art is a way of learning and not something to be learned." Viktor Lowenfeld*



# 10 Secrets for Decoding and Developing Students' Drawing Skills

## Drawing Stages

### Preschematic Stage

(3.5yrs-7yrs)

attempt at representation, tadpole man, floating objects, drawings tell stories, non-realistic colors

### Pre-realism (Gang) Stage

(8yrs-12yrs)

lose rigid symbols, detailed drawings, sky down to horizon, attempt to show depth

### Decision-making Stage

(14yrs-17yrs)

mastery of skills and media, use perspective correctly, make purposeful choices to add emphasis, feeling, and own interpretation

w/o instruction, students stop here

### Scribbling Stage

(18mo-4yrs)

random scribbling, purposeful scribbling, naming scribbles

### Schematic Stage

(5yrs-9yrs)

use symbols for people and objects, development of baseline, emphasize important features, show multiple perspectives at once, x-ray drawings

### Pseudo-Naturalistic (Realism) Stage

(11yrs-14yrs)

human figure more natural, attempt at perspective, interest in cartooning, awareness of depth



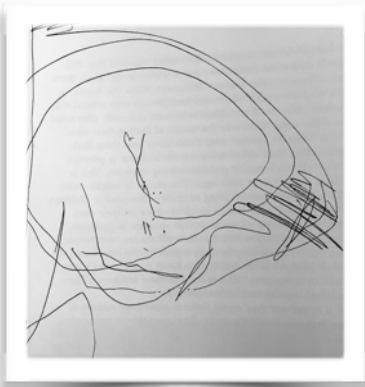
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Amanda Heyn: AOE Summer 2015 Conference



# Scribbling Stage

18 mo - 4 yrs



## In the Classroom

- Let students experiment
- Scribbling with an adult nearby is rewarding. Sit near working students.
- As students start to name scribbles, listen, but do not correct or judge.
- Provide materials that are easy to control. Ideas include:
  - thick tempera
  - unwrapped crayons
  - washable markers
  - chalk
- Refrain from asking students to copy shapes or draw specific items. Trying to copy is frustrating and confusing to students.

## Characteristics

- random scribbling
- purposeful scribbling
- naming scribbles

## The Big Takeaway

Scribbling is fun!  
Let them scribble!



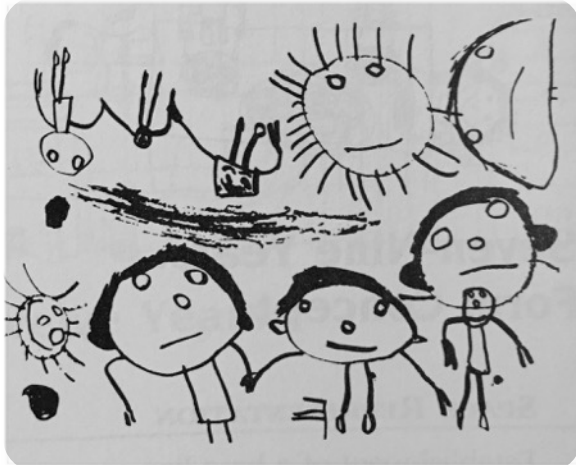
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# Preschematic Stage

3.5 yrs - 7 yrs



## Characteristics

- attempt at representation - recognizable forms
- tadpole man
- floating objects
- drawings tell stories
- non-realistic colors

## In the Classroom

- Students love to talk about their work. Have students share in partners or small groups rather than one large group. This way, all students have a chance to share.
- Craft lessons around their everyday lives with prompts like:
  - The first snowfall
  - Imagine you're somewhere new and exciting
  - I went to the store
- Develop looking skills by pointing things out: fall colors, interesting rocks, details on clothing, etc...
- Don't force or encourage students to draw above the stage they're in.

## The Big Takeaway

Help students explore personal experiences.



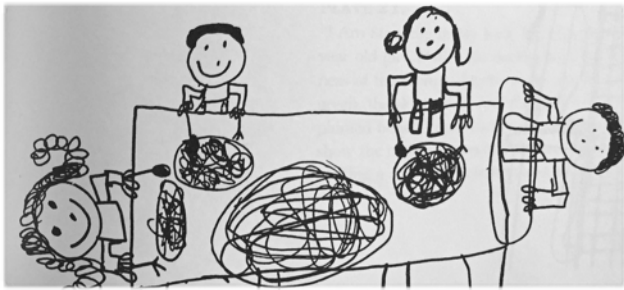
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# Schematic Stage

5 yrs - 9 yrs



## Characteristics

- use symbols for people and objects
- development of baseline
- emphasize important features
- show multiple perspectives at same time
- x-ray drawings

## In the Classroom

- Students are rapidly gaining perceptual skills. Help them discover the details in the world around them. Teach them to look carefully and observe.
- Don't worry too much about the baseline, skyline, or corner sun. Including those features makes perfect sense to students. They are not developmentally ready to draw differently.
- Resist correcting students' drawings- this can inhibit the development of their individual styles.
- Relate projects to everyday life.

## The Big Takeaway

Embrace the  
corner sun.  
It will pass.



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# Pre-Realism Stage

8 yrs - 12 yrs



## Characteristics

- loss of rigid symbols
- detailed drawings
- still somewhat symbolic
- sky down to horizon
- attempt at depth
- can't grasp shading
- care what peers think

## In the Classroom

- Students at this age are frustrated by the fact that they can perceive things that they cannot yet transfer to drawing. Demonstrations are helpful.
- Students are obsessed with realism. Instead of trying to free them up, give them opportunities to practice realistic drawing.
- Be mindful not to force students to share their work in a group setting.
- Students understand art is expressive. Encourage them to express themselves in their work.
- Students can't yet grasp perspective. Wait to teach it!

## The Big Takeaway

It's a mental  
crisis, people.  
**MENTAL. CRISIS.**





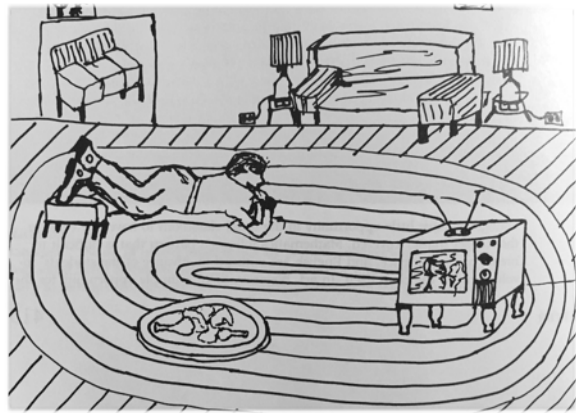
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# Pseudo-Naturalistic (Realism) Stage

**11 yrs - 14 yrs**



## Characteristics

- attempt at perspective
- human figure more natural
- interest in cartooning
- awareness of depth
- attempt at perspective
- critical of own work

## In the Classroom

- Students continue to feel frustrated and are apprehensive to share their work.
- Support students' individuality and allow them to explore emotions in art. Projects about student identity and interests will be winners.
- As students are transitioning from child to adult, self-portraits can be stressful and difficult.
- You can try and teach perspective now, although not all students will be ready.
- Students will be eager to explore new, challenging materials.

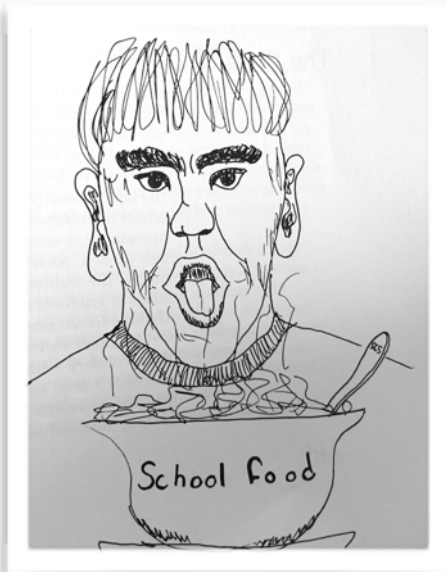
## The Big Takeaway

Center class on student identity and interests.



## Decision-Making Stage

14 yrs - 17 yrs



### Characteristics

- choose to master skills and media
- can use perspective correctly
- make purposeful choices to add emphasis, feeling, and own interpretation to artwork

### In the Classroom

- Remember most students will not be working artists. Show how they can use art in their everyday lives.
- Integrate art history, design thinking, criticism, and analysis into studio classes to give a well-rounded experience.
- Allow student voice to shine through in work. When possible, allow students choice in projects, media and timelines.
- Painting can be especially worthwhile for H.S. students.
- Be aware that kinesthetic learners will draw differently than visual learners.

### The Big Takeaway

Art class isn't  
only for talented  
students.



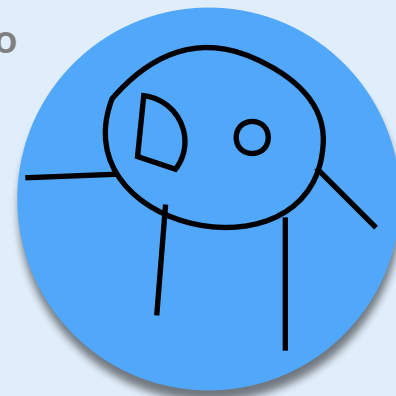


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## References:

- Edwards, Betty. *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain. Definitive, 4th ed.* New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2012. Print.
- Lowenfeld, Victor, and W. Lambert Brittain. *Creative and Mental Growth.* 8th ed. New York: MacMillan, 1987. Print.
- Wimmer, Michal. *The Complete Guide to Children's Drawings: A Practical Handbook to Children's Emotional World.* San Bernardino, 2014. Print

\* Images from *Creative and MentalGrowth*, 8th ed.



“We know that learning to draw, like learning to read, is *not* dependent on something called “talent,” and that, given proper instruction, every person is able to learn the skill.”

- Betty Edwards