



Upper El



Middle School

Focus

Art

EXERCISE 12

Parent Objective

To learn how to draw what you see—versus what you *think* you see

Indirect Objective

To practice being an objective observer.

"The obstacles to [children's] development were obviously removed and means found to free their souls."

Dr. Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*



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Judy Laidlaw

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Maria Montessori's Education of the Creative Mind

Partner Contour Drawing

Materials:

- Drawing paper
- 2 pencils—or 1 pencil and 1 charcoal stick*
- 2-3 objects—ideally, neutral color without pattern

**Note: For the young artist who struggles with perfection, charcoal sticks can be very freeing. Willow and Vine charcoal, in particular, are sensitive to pressure and easily smudge. The inevitable messiness encourages a more relaxed approach to drawing. The charcoal stick will break—and that's ok.*

Preparation:



Have your child select 2 to 3 simple objects, such as fruit, mugs, bottles, vases, etc. Avoid pattern and decoration. On a designated surface (again, without pattern), have your child arrange the objects. At least 2 objects must be touching, and all must be close together.

Instructions:

1. Invite your child to do "partner contour drawing." You will initially serve as the "tracer" and your child as the draftsman.
2. Explain that a contour drawing is made entirely of lines (no shading). Unlike an outline, a contour also follows the line inside the form.
3. Explain that both of you are going to pretend that the tip of the tracer's pencil is also the tip of the draftsman's pencil (or charcoal stick).
4. The draftsman is to copy the movement and pace of the tracer's pencil as it moves around and across a still life object—but draw with their own pencil on paper.
5. There's ONE RULE: the draftsman can't look down at the paper when the tracer is moving their pencil. If the tracer stops, only then can he or she look down at the paper and adjust pencil placement.



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6. The tracer should try to maintain a consistent and continuous movement while lightly touching the object. Follow a line until it disappears, i.e., until you can't see it anymore from your fixed position. Then, stop, pause, and pick a nearby line to follow. MOVE AS SLOW AS YOU CAN.
7. When the child is ready, switch roles.
8. Enjoy!

Optional Extensions:

- A third child can also be invited to do the exercise. He or she serves as the "watcher," the person who lets the draftsman know when his or her eyes have wandered away from the still life to the paper.
- When your child feels ready, encourage him or her to try contour drawing without a partner.

