Textiles: Preparing for Higher Education

An Introductory Course
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before you start</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark making</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 0.1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks with conventional tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 0.2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 0.3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 0.4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks of your choice A2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part one</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 1.1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right hand, left hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 1.2</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous line drawing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 1.3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing blind and from memory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 1.4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final drawing selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment one</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part two</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 2.1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 2.2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block silhouette</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 2.3</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 2.4</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collage studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 2.5</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripes and spots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment two</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part three</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 3.1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching your theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 3.2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample ranges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise 3.3</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting your work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment three</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part four  **Sketchbooks**  55

- Exercise 4.1  Making a sketchbook  58
- Exercise 4.2  Customising a sketchbook  61
- Exercise 4.3  Collating a sketchbook  64

Assignment four  67

Part five  **Textile solutions**  69

- Option 1  Stitched line pieces  72
- Option 2  Fabric collages  76
- Option 3  Large-scale material manipulation  80
- Option 4  Textile sketchbook  83

Assignment five  87
Welcome to *Preparing for Higher Education Textiles: An Introductory Course*. This course will help you develop your visual skills and explore different ways of using materials and tools for creative textile projects. On completion of the five parts you’ll have an opportunity to submit your work to OCA for informal assessment to help you judge whether you’ve gained sufficient skills and enough confidence to go on to further study with the Open College of the Arts.

You’ll find more information about studying with OCA in your *Student Handbook* so keep this to hand as you work through the course.

### Course aims

The aim of the course is to introduce you to new ways of developing visual work appropriate for textiles through observation and using a range of media, techniques and approaches. Through this creative methodology, you’ll be encouraged to experiment and develop your own visual vocabulary to inspire future textiles work. You’ll also start to see your work in a broader context by looking at contemporary artists and designers who approach textiles in different ways.

By the end of the course you can expect to have:

- acquired new ways of working creatively
- developed your observation skills
- explored some manipulation techniques
- learned more about material properties
- gained an understanding of the creative design process
- extended your awareness of contemporary textile artists and designers
- developed textiles based on your visual vocabulary
- gained greater confidence in your potential for textile-related work.

This course has been written for new students studying on their own with support at a distance from a tutor. If at any stage you feel confused or stuck, you should find the answer in this course guide. If you continue to have problems, remember that your tutor is there to guide you.
Your tutor

Even though you’ll be studying from home you won’t be working in isolation. You’ll have the support of your tutor, who is your main point of contact with OCA. When you submit an assignment your tutor will comment and advise on your work and try to help with any questions that may have arisen, and will offer constructive criticism as well as encouragement to help you progress. Discuss with your tutor how you’ll submit work for feedback at an early stage in the course.

Your tutor will also help you to put the course projects and your own work into an appropriate context by making suggestions on texts to read, images to look at, places to visit and designers and artists to study.

You can also draw on the support of your fellow students. There are lots of other OCA students studying textiles. Use the OCA website forums as a place to meet them, share experiences and learn from one another. You may want to start by logging onto the forums and introducing yourself, perhaps find out who else is on the course and say hello.

Course structure

The course is split into five parts, each representing a particular project which you’ll tackle through a series of exercises. At the end of each part of the course you’ll gather together your practical work for these exercises to make up your assignment submission. You’ll then send this to your tutor for review.

The course comprises:

**Introduction: About textiles and warm-up mark-making**

Here you’ll be introduced to the nature and context of textiles and how this relates to the course. You’ll also do some warm-up exercises to help you loosen up and enjoy experimenting with a range of mark-making using conventional and unconventional tools in preparation for Part One: Line. The warm-up should help you to become more aware of the relationship between your perceptual and physical self when drawing.

**Part one: Line**

Part One aims to build on the mark-making techniques from the warm-up and introduce you to new ways of drawing which lend themselves to some of the more expressive ways of working in textiles. You’ll explore a variety of conventional and unconventional tools and media.
Part two: Collage

Part Two will introduce you to collage as a means of creative observational drawing for textile-based work using primary objects as a starting point. You'll creatively explore colour, form, line and tone using a variety of plain and patterned papers.

Part three: Materials

Part Three will help you discover the properties of materials using exploratory construction and manipulation techniques and will reinforce the importance of simple, design-led sampling as a basis for fabric ideas.

Part four: Sketchbooks

Part Four will allow you to work in a variety of sketchbook formats and take inspiration from the work of other artists to prompt new approaches in conjunction with previous drawing techniques. You'll be encouraged to expand your visual vocabulary through drawing, collage and manipulation techniques.

Part five: Textile solutions

Here you have four options. Each option has a particular textile focus and will give you a feel for the ways in which you might work should you decide to enrol on the Textiles degree with the OCA. You'll be developing textile ideas based on your visual vocabulary and using a sketchbook to build creatively on a previous project of your choice.

You'll need to spend between 5 and 10 hours a week on your studies if you wish to complete them in under a year. Most of your time will be spent on practical work. This is because we recognise that, for some, the primary reason for doing this course is to build confidence and enjoy this way of working without fear of 'doing it wrong'. Acquiring visual skills and sensitivity, like any other skill, requires a lot of practice.

However, this doesn't mean that visual and textile development is a purely practical activity. It is also conceptual and theoretical. Artistic study means taking the time and effort to think, not only about your own work, but also about the work of others. It means reading and discussing what artists, designers, writers, historians, philosophers, critics and others do and say. This will help you to see your own work within a broader context, so that you can build on what you do in a critically aware as well as practical manner. If you plan to continue onto a higher level on completion of this course, it's important to start to engage with the theoretical aspect of textiles at this early stage.
Getting feedback

There are five projects, one for each part of the course and each culminating in an assignment. You’ll be advised what to send at the appropriate place in the course. Use the addressed labels provided and make sure that every piece is clearly labelled on the back with your name, student number, and the number of the exercise or stage.

Take note of the suggested date (on your tutor reports) for your next assignment but don’t feel pressurised. These course materials are intended to be used flexibly. Work at a pace that fits in with your life. If you feel you can complete a particular part of the course quickly, then by all means do so. If you feel you need a little longer, that’s fine. However, if there’s going to be a considerable delay (e.g. several months) between assignments, contact your tutor and let them know what’s happening.

Your tutor will send a report by email, commenting constructively on your work for the assignment and offering help and advice. They will then return your assignment work by post.

Your tutor will get back to you as soon as possible but this may take a couple of weeks or more. Continue with the course while you’re waiting.

Making a start

Skim through the whole course guide before starting to get a feel for the way you’ll work. Don’t feel you need to read every detail at this stage; this is just a chance to get your bearings. Once you’ve done this, look at the ‘What you’ll need’ list below, and the equipment lists for the individual projects, and begin to collect the materials and tools for the earlier projects. Work through the course in the order it’s written. Read the first part of the course thoroughly and ensure you have everything in place before starting. It’s a good idea to read each section several times before you start work so that you know exactly what you’re supposed to be doing.

If possible, set yourself a regular timetable. Allow a reasonable amount of time for each study session so you don’t have to keep stopping and starting. There’s no fixed time structure but try to spend at least five hours a week on your course work. Think carefully about how you can fit this into your week. You may be able to set aside the same day each week or you may want to fit your five hours into parts of days, evenings or the weekend.
Be realistic and don’t set aside weekends if you’re likely to be busy. It might be better to use a couple of evenings instead. Take into account everything you’re likely to need to do in a week, then decide as far as possible on the best time(s) to work with as little interruption as possible.

As a distance learner, you’re free to work through the course as slowly or as quickly as you like but bear in mind that leaving long gaps between sessions can make it difficult to pick up where you left off. If you find you need more time than you initially expected, don’t worry. Work at your own speed. There may be some periods in the year when you can spend substantial amounts of time on course work and others when you’re too busy and have to spend less.

What you’ll need

Try to set aside a quiet place to work, ideally a room with a table or desk where you can shut the door and work in privacy. You’ll need either a smooth wall where you can affix large sheets of paper, or a large board and easel.

You’ll need to check for any specific requirements before starting each part of the course but here’s a general list of equipment that you’ll need throughout the course:

- sketchbook/s of your choice
- sheets of cartridge paper: A5, A4, A3, A2, A1
- graphite pencils (HB to 8B)
- coloured pencils (optional)
- black and white wax crayons
- selection of black pens, fibre tips, fine liners, brush pens, etc.
- coloured felt pens (optional)
- selection of drawing materials and tools for experimentation (graphite stick, dip pen, etc.)
- a range of soft and stiff brushes for ink
- PVA glue/glue stick
- black water-soluble ink
- small glass or plastic jars with lids
- pieces of stick, old toothbrushes, sponge, cotton wool, pieces of rag, old paint brushes, etc. for constructing drawing tools
• string, rubber bands for binding
• masking fluid
• small and large scissors
• hole punch (optional)
• scalpel (optional)
• an assortment of found papers
• an old book to customise – ledger book, diary, phone directory, exercise book, etc.
• gouache paints
• an A4 file (with loose plastic sleeves – optional)
• between 8–14 sheets of A2 thin white card (for presentation)
• needle and white/clear thread (for mounting)
• double-sided tape and masking tape (for mounting)
• fastening devices (tapes, paper clips, tags, pins, etc.)
• 1–2 metres each of two single-coloured or neutral materials.

Paper sizes
Throughout the course you’ll be using several different ‘A’ paper sizes. The dimensions of these are:

• A1 594 x 841mm
• A2 420 x 594mm
• A3 297 x 420mm
• A4 210 x 297mm
• A5 148 x 210mm
• A6 105 x 148mm

Note that two A4 sheets stuck together make A3, and two A3 make A2 (and so on).
Your learning log

Your learning log is a kind of research journal where you’ll record your progress through the course and your studies into other artists’ and designers’ work. Here you’ll write about why an artist/designer or a particular piece of work interests you, and why it’s relevant to a particular project, and to your own work. This is the place for questioning and analysing information. If you have questions about a theme, artist, movement, etc., you can work this through in your log, doing further study, looking for sources, asking questions. Your learning log is also the place to reflect on your drawing and design practice, jotting down problems, changes of direction, thoughts on future projects, techniques to try, etc.

Your learning log can take a variety of forms and be any size but, at the start of your studies, the simplest will be an A3 or A4 loose-leaf folder or ring binder. This format allows you to add and move information, including your tutor reports, your notes on texts you’ve read, documentation of visits and other material. Some students choose to post their learning log as an online blog on the OCA website. This allows your tutor to view your work as it develops. The choice is yours. At this early stage in your studies, your learning log should contain evidence of your developing interest in textiles past and present. Where artists or designers are referenced in the course guide, you should look these up and comment on their work, ideas, techniques, and so on. This is the start of your journey as a thoughtful and well-informed textile artist.

For more information on keeping learning logs, see the Introducing Learning Logs study guide on the OCA website.

Viewing textiles

You should supplement your practical studies with regular visits to exhibitions in museums and galleries. Seeing the work of other artists ‘in the flesh’ is an important aspect of art study and a source of inspiration, a way to pick up new and exciting ideas. Look online and make a note of exhibitions that feature textiles. Visit as many as you can. If you’re travelling some distance, plan your time carefully and try not to cram too much into your day. You should try to join us on OCA study visits too; look out for them on the OCA blog weareoca.com
Reading

It’s important to develop your broad academic skills if you wish to progress to a higher level of study in the arts, for example OCA Textiles 1: A Creative Approach, so make time to read about and review the work of textile artists and designers. This is also a good way of getting inspiration and advice for your practical projects.

At the end of this course guide you’ll find lists of references (full details of works cited in this course guide) and suggested reading. Try to look at the books in your local library before buying. Your library may be able to order them for you at a reasonable cost. You may not be able to read all the books in the list, but try to look at as many as possible. Read about contemporary artists as well as their predecessors in order to appreciate the depth of ideas that inspire and affect textiles today.

Good luck with the course!
Textiles: Preparing for Higher Education

Introduction

Nuno Corporation, Flower Basket, detail, 1997 (cotton)
About textiles

“Textiles are not just a pleasure to look at, they are a marvel to be experienced with all five senses: the feel of textiles in the hand or on the body, the periodic rustling sounds, even the taste on the lips.”

(Reiko Sudo, in Kawashima et al, 2002, p.85)

Textiles – both the commonplace and the extraordinary – are as central to our lives as they have always been; they are ‘part of the very rhythm and pulse of humanity’ (Gale & Kaur, 2002, p.3). From the most simple and practical item like a handkerchief to the most advanced, high-tech space wear, the diversity of textiles is immeasurable. There are many ways to look at textiles: a universal language; a history of mankind and history in the making; a necessity and a luxury; an individual concern and a global industry; something that is ever evolving.

Textiles encompass an enormous range of techniques that include using fibre, fabric, finishing and fashioning, all of which are respected disciplines in their own right. It covers everything from the traditional practices of weaving and lace-making to unconventional processes like laser cutting and three-dimensional printing. Textiles offer a versatile medium for creative expression through the exploration of colour, pattern-making, imagery, construction, surface embellishment, fabric manipulation, technique, process and product. It is an art form of engineering and aesthetics.

The landscape of textiles may be changing but the essential human instinct – and need – is to strive for both practical and aesthetic outcomes. Over the last 20 years or so, the boundaries between industrial and craft-based textiles have become blurred. Age-old crafts and the drive to re-create traditional techniques have inspired new technological developments within industry. Likewise, technological advances have inspired a new wave of artists, craft practitioners and designers. The availability of new materials, in particular, has had a huge impact on the development of textiles across the sector – and with it, a new textile vocabulary.
The nature of textile practice allows us to work directly with materials and make, manipulate and design with these in mind. It is mostly a tactile process which relies on our sensibilities to translate and capture what we see, think, sense and feel. The opportunity for re-invention, experimentation and visual expression for today’s textile practitioner is one full of challenge and excitement. Whatever our interests, passions or outlook, there is enormous scope within textiles for creative growth.

“Fabric tempts touch and touch prompts a bodily way of knowing and remembering. Whether produced as a commemorative cloth or existing as a fragment marked by time, fabric can be a powerful trigger activating individual or collective memories.”

(Caroline Bartlett, in Koumis & Theophilus, 2006, p.65)

The course

“The education of a young artist should always be a matter of the head, and heart and hand going together. Art and design must be produced by the subtlest of all machines which is the human hand.”

(John Ruskin, in ‘The Unity of Art’ from The Two Paths lecture series delivered 1858–59)

This course is for all those who, for one reason or another, want to develop their visual skills for textiles. The best way to begin is to immerse yourself in a range of activities that will take you out of your comfort zone and give you the opportunity to experience different ways of thinking and making.

Continual practice using different methods and materials means we gradually adjust our ways of seeing and begin to observe the world from the point of view of an artist. Looking, sensing and translating the world differently can lead to a new and exciting visual vocabulary. Close observation accompanied by deep thought and creative activity is at the core of every art form: the more we observe, the more we see. Developing a visual language by adopting new methods or techniques, and by communicating our ideas differently but confidently, is an essential part of being able to challenge your subject area through sensitive translation.
One important aspect of this course is experimentation and this requires an open-minded approach to visual development and thinking. In order to gain as much as possible from the projects, work through all of the exercises (except in Part Five where you have a range of options). This means trying things that may not at first make sense to you, but persevere and you’ll eventually be able to look back and understand why it was important to do a particular task.

The best way to start is to read through the whole course guide, slowly taking in the information and seeing how one part relates to the next. Working through the course in the order it’s written will enable you to gain confidence, and this will inevitably translate into your drawings.

The course author, Sarah Taylor, is grateful to the following artists and designers who have contributed imagery and illustrated practical visual skills for elements of the course:

- Grace Smith
- Reiko Sudo
- Lynsey Calder
- Maria Blaisse
- Clare Nicolson
- Louisa Douglas
- Fiona Hutchison
- Rachel Macleod
- Alice Kettle
- Jane McKeating
- Mia Cullin

Before you start on Part One of this introductory course, try some warm-up exercises which ask you to experiment with mark-making.

Marks made with conventional tools
Warm-up Mark-making
This warm-up section is intended to help you loosen up and enjoy experimenting with a range of mark-making using conventional and unconventional tools. Some things will work well, others may not, but you’ll be able to take the more interesting ones forward into Part One. The exercises are:

Exercise 0.1: **Mark-making with conventional tools**
Exercise 0.2: **Making tools**
Exercise 0.3: **Negative mark-making**
Exercise 0.4: **Marks of your choice A2 size**

You’ll need:
- A2 and A3 cartridge paper
- table, wall space.

**Conventional tools:**
- black Indian ink or dye & dip pen
- paint brushes (two or three sizes)
- graphite pencils (from H to soft B grades) and graphite stick
- black and white wax crayons
- permanent marker and fine liner.

**Unconventional tools:**
- pieces of stick, old toothbrushes, sponge, cotton wool, pieces of rag, old paint brushes, etc.
- string, rubber bands for binding
- masking fluid.
Exercise 0.1 Marks with conventional tools

Work on a table or board and use A3 sheets. Start by testing the graphite pencils and graphite stick. Make a series of lines, dashes, dots or squiggles or a combination of these across a section of the paper from one side to the other, about 15–20cm across the paper depending on whether you decide to work portrait or landscape (see illustration on p.16.). Use the words below to prompt different mark qualities.

- soft
- sharp
- heavy
- flowing
- delicate
- bold
- fast
- slow
- agitated
- steady
- fluid
- dry
- multiple

Essentially, you’re testing what each drawing medium and tool will do, so enjoy the different qualities, effects and capabilities. Refer to the list of words to prompt different approaches. There are many ways to make marks – soft and tailing, hard and sharp, flowing and jerky, ordered and unordered. It’s up to you how you want to test these and translate ideas. List the techniques on the sheets if you need to reference these.

Enjoy the physical act of mark-making and vary the grades of graphite. Think about how you hold your pencil. Try holding it near the tip (as you would if you were writing), pressing it down hard, holding it as lightly as you dare, or holding it near the end. Note down how this affects the marks you make.

Using a different tool, do the same on a new section or fresh sheet. Work your way through the list of conventional tools from the list (approx. 5 sheets).

Now reflect on what you’ve just done. Spend a bit of time comparing the various mark-making effects. Were there any surprises when using any of the media? Did the words prompt you to consider different approaches? Did the way you held your tools affect your mark-making?
Exercise 0.2 Making tools

Using the items you’ve collected, make a set of unconventional home-made tools. This will give you a whole new range of mark-making possibilities. Use simple binding techniques to attach parts onto sticks or old brushes. You could modify these brushes or make your own variations. It doesn’t matter how these look, it’s how they work!

Experiment with your home-made tools using black media on A3 worksheets as before. Aim to produce two or three sheets. Think about the marks you made in the last exercise. Are there qualities you might want to experiment with further or couldn’t achieve with the tools you had?

Exercise 0.3 Negative marks

This will allow you to test negative mark-making by working directly onto – or by creating – a black background. Use A3 sheets and aim to produce two or three sheets using the following techniques:

Masking fluid and black ink

Masking fluid will allow you to mask out areas; you’ll then remove it after you’ve applied an ink wash.

Use your masking fluid to create marks with any of the conventional or unconventional tools. When it’s dry and tacky to the touch, apply a black ink wash over your marks and then rub away the masking fluid. This will leave you with negative marks from the white paper. You’ll probably need...
to try several tools to see how best the fluid works with these. Don’t use your good brushes as the masking fluid can be difficult to remove afterwards.

Try experimenting with other black media to give you different background effects, for example using graphite.

You could also create the same sort of negative mark-making by using a white wax crayon and then applying a wash of ink over the top.

![Negative marks made with unconventional tools](image1)

**White ink on black ink**

Apply an ink wash onto your A3 sheet and use white ink to make marks. This will give you a more subtle effect compared to using black ink directly onto white paper. Use a selection of conventional or unconventional tools to create marks.

As before, reflect on what you’ve just done and the different marks achieved by the various methods. How was the experience of erasing positive areas to create negative marks? How did this compare to using white ink? Were you able to achieve the desired mark-making qualities using masking fluid?
Exercise 0.4 Marks of your choice A2 size

For this final exercise, choose some of the drawing tools you’ve particularly enjoyed working with. Join two A3 sheets together to make A2* and produce two to three test sheets of marks. Enjoy the possibilities of working at this larger size. It’s up to you how you organise the marks on the sheet. Again, use the list of words to prompt ideas.

Start your learning log by writing a few lines about your experience of these warm-up exercises. How did using the conventional tools compare with mark-making with unconventional tools? What have you learned? What comparisons can you make? Are there tools or techniques you would now like to draw with? You don’t need to write a lot, just a few paragraphs to try and put your thoughts into words.

You’re now ready to begin work on Part One.

* This will allow you to post the work as A3.
Part one Line

Grace Smith, Trinkets Design, 2009
“Drawing is where everything creative stems from.”
(Barbara Brown, in Safer, 2010, p.14)

Part One aims to introduce you to new ways of drawing which lend themselves to the more expressive ways of working in textiles.

The various stages will:

• encourage you to use a variety of conventional and unconventional tools and media
• help you to develop observational skills in expressive, non-representational drawing
• introduce you to a variety of drawing techniques and approaches using primary sources as a starting point.

A line drawing traces the outer edges of a form and uses distinct straight or curved lines with minimal use of shading to represent two- or three-dimensional objects and forms. It may be a simple description of an object’s shape or employ more detailed contours of line within that shape. This may seem a world away from textile design but line drawing is frequently used for image-making within textile practice; you’ll have the option to try this for yourself in Part Five.

There are many approaches you can take and the following exercises will help you explore these ways of working.

Tip

Always carefully observe and concentrate on what is actually there rather than what you think is there.
“Good old drawing, because no matter how many times you draw something you notice something different and entracing every time”.

(Chloe Cheese, in Holder & Hodgkinson, 2012, p.47)

You’ll need:

• objects relating to one of two themes (see below)
• table or wall space
• black media as used in the warm-up exercises
• A3 sheets of cartridge paper (Attach two x A3 sheets with masking tape to make up A2 sizes).

Choose a selection of interesting objects to draw from one of these themes:

• Kitchen utensils: sieves, whisks, garlic crushers, graters, mashers, straining spoons, etc.
• Handbags, purses and shoes: choose examples with interesting features such as handles and straps, clip fastenings and buckles, surface decoration, etc.
Exercise 1.1 Right hand, left hand

Stage 1

Before you start to draw, tape the corners of your A2 sheet to a flat surface. This will allow you to draw with ease and prevent the paper from moving. Place an object in front of you against a plain background. Use graphite media to draw two to three objects on one sheet with your dominant hand. Think about the marks you tested previously and choose pencil grades that will work well. Remember, this isn’t about creating tone. Use line to depict the object’s shape, form and key details. Do you need to convey something solid or open, decorative or textural, two- or three-dimensional? Don’t spend more than 30–45 minutes on each drawing.

Stage 2

Now using your other hand, continue using graphite and draw the same objects on another sheet. It will feel awkward unless you are ambidextrous, and you’ll need to concentrate more, but do persevere as this will allow you to draw from a different perspective. Keep to the same time frame as before.

Stage 3

Repeat the last two stages using one or two of the other conventional media to draw with. Again, choose two or three objects to work from but this time don’t spend more than 10 minutes on each drawing. Refer back to the list of words in the warm-up exercises to prompt different drawing approaches. Some of these may help to suggest the particular characteristics of the objects or simply inspire you to draw in a certain way. Enjoy the various drawing approaches and working with the different permutations of media.

Stage 4

Finally, choose one or two of the unconventional media or tools. Select one object to make a large-scale drawing on an A2 sheet and decide which hand you wish to draw with. You might want to work against a wall or use an easel; this will give you greater freedom to draw using the movement of your arm rather than your wrist. Limit yourself to a maximum of half an hour per drawing and stick to this. If you need to re-test any of these tools, do so using another test sheet. Remember to note the techniques you use and specify what type of drawings, as before.
You might want to do a few thumbnail sketches to help you scale up to see how the object will fit the space, or you could mark the main points of the object’s shape on the sheet beforehand. However, don’t get too bogged down with the technicalities and enjoy the different way of working at this size. Aim to do two or three A2 sheets.

Look back over your work and consider the different approaches you’ve used. Were there significant differences? How did it feel to draw with the ‘wrong’ hand? Where have you made good use of your observational skills? Which outcome and approach do you prefer?
Exercise 1.2 Continuous line drawing

“A line is a dot that went for a walk.”


As its name implies, a continuous line drawing is an unbroken, drawn line where the pen or other drawing instrument remains in contact with the paper until the drawing is done. It’s a great way to kick-start observational work and generate fluid, expressive and abstract representations.

Stage 1

Before you start to draw, tape the corners of your A2 sheet to a flat surface, as before. Place an object in front of you against a plain background. Use a felt pen or pencil; hold it slightly higher than you would for writing and aim to draw the object several times on one sheet. Find the outermost edge of the object and start to draw with one, long continuous line. Don’t lift your pen or pencil off the sheet until you’re done. Do the same again using a different medium that will give you a constant mark.

If you have inner sections or separate spaces within the object, you can draw the outlines of these in the same way or simply continue to link these together as one line. Repeat with a different medium.
Stage 2

Now try using some of the words from the warm-up stage. Refer back to your test sheets to prompt new interpretations of the continuous line drawings. Aim to do about two or three sheets with either several drawings or one large-scale drawing.

- soft
- sharp
- heavy
- flowing
- delicate
- bold
- fast
- slow
- agitated
- steady
- fluid
- dry
- multiple

Note down your observations about these drawings. Consider the different media you’ve used. Were there significant differences when using fluid and non-fluid drawing tools? Did this hinder or enhance your observational skills? Which outcomes and approaches do you prefer overall?

Andrea Dezso, Drawing with left hand while riding on the New Jersey Turnpike
(Brereton, 2009, p.80)
Exercise 1.3 Drawing blind and from memory

Drawing is very much about observation and trying to reproduce things you’ve seen in reality; inevitably this will be your own particular interpretation. Working with your eyes closed is a good way to exercise your mark-making without fear of ‘getting it wrong’.

Stage 1

Select a sharp pencil or fine line pen and choose one object to draw. Tape down an A2 sheet of paper and draw the object several times on one sheet without looking down at the paper. Fill as much of the sheet as you like. Give yourself five minutes. Don’t worry about overlapping images or going off the edges of the paper. Don’t think about detail. Simply concentrate on looking at the object and experiencing the movement of your hand across the paper as it describes the shape of the object before you.

After five minutes, look at your drawing and reflect on how closely it resembles the object and how you felt when working ‘blind’.

Drawing blind and from memory (2 minutes)
Stage 2

Sit at a table with the object in front of you. Look closely at it and try to take in all its features and characteristics, the shapes that come together to create its form, different edge qualities, detailing, and so on. After one minute’s close scrutiny, remove the object from sight and give yourself five minutes. Now draw the object from memory using the same drawing tool as before.

Again, after five minutes, look at your drawing and reflect on how closely it resembles the object and how you felt when ‘drawing from memory’.

Consider the two different approaches to this object and make notes in your learning log. How did it feel to draw each one? Which outcome and experience do you prefer? Why?
Exercise 1.4 Final drawing selection

Before you begin the last part of the project, lay out all or as many of your drawings as possible on a floor or wall. Step back from them if you can and have a good look. Now reflect on how your work has changed from the start of Part One and think about which techniques, approaches and tools you might use for the next stage. Do you want to combine any of these or use them on their own? What will best allow you to creatively capture the object or objects based on what you’ve discovered?

Use these drawings and test sheets to prompt a series of drawings which imaginatively capture the object or objects through line. Produce three to five sheets of A2 drawings. You’ll need to consider the number of objects you wish to draw within the series, the number of drawings per sheet, and your approach, as well as the type of drawing tools and media. Will they all be different interpretations or will they be linked in some way, for example?

Observe carefully; this is especially important now that you’ve become more familiar with the object(s). Continue to draw what you see, not what you think you see! You should be feeling more confident and inspired about exploring drawing through line, so enjoy this opportunity to consolidate your work so far.

Finally, reflect on your work on this final exercise in Part One and make notes in your log. Begin by stating your ideas for the drawing series, making reference to previous work where appropriate, and note where you feel you’ve made good observations and why you think this is. You don’t need to write a lot, just a few paragraphs to try and put your thoughts into words.
Assignment one

Send a selection of work from the exercises in the warm-up and Part One to your tutor for review, together with your notes and any questions you may have. Some of your work may be sent by email provided you’ve agreed this with your tutor in advance.

Put your name, student number and exercise/stage number on the back of each piece of work. Include a selection of pages from your learning log (or blog url). Don’t worry if you haven’t got much in your learning log yet – it will still be useful for your tutor to see how it’s developing.

Your tutor may take a while to get back to you so carry on with the course while you’re waiting.

Well done, you have now completed the first part of the course.