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The 30-Day Creativity Challenge

30 creative drawing PROMPTS to help you overcome creative blocks, let go of perfectionism, and discover your own artistic style.

What is this challenge about?

A collection of 30 creative prompts to help you overcome creative blocks, let go of perfectionism, and explore your own artistic style.

Why I created it?

A sketchbook should be a playground for experimentation, but after years of sketching, I noticed that instead of experimenting, I was just polishing every drawing to make it look realistic. Eventually, I stopped having fun and growing as an artist.

So, I started researching creative exercises to overcome perfectionism and "unleash" my creativity. I wanted to enjoy the process again and feel more freedom in my sketches.

For whom is this challenge?

- For perfectionists (regardless of drawing ability).
- For artists who are creatively stuck.
- For those looking to develop their own artistic style.
- For those who want to start sketching but don't know where to begin.

What do you need for it?

Materials that you already have will work just fine. The point is to be creative, so take what you have. I will list what I used, so feel free to take the same or adapt to what you have.

- Sketchbook (I have a Moleskine) or paper
- Graphite pencils
- Coloured pencils
- Pen (regular)
- Paints or any liquid medium (I had gouache and watercolour). Ink or acrylic paints will also work
- Brush
- Cardboard or any large paper (the back of a newspaper or an old poster will work)

How to do the challenge

Do one creative exercise each day. Order does not matter - feel free to change the order.

If you don't feel like doing a particular exercise, it might be the one you'll benefit from the most. Our brains tend to avoid things that push us out of our comfort zones, so it might be worth giving it a try.

The 30-day creativity challenge

30 days of drawing exercises

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 1	**Draw something you like** Choose any object you genuinely enjoy looking at and sketch it using your favourite materials.	**Why:** Starting with something you like makes drawing feel enjoyable rather than like another task you need to complete.
Day 2	**Non-dominant hand** Choose one or several objects you like and draw them using your non-dominant hand.	**Why:** When you lose control over your lines, you have little choice but to accept imperfection. **Tip:** Don't correct the drawing afterwards with your dominant hand. That would be cheating a little.
Day 3	**Draw with one line, no looking at the paper** Choose an object and draw it without looking at your paper or lifting your pencil. Keep your eyes on the object throughout. You can use any photo as a reference.	**Why:** This trains observation and helps you stop worrying about how your drawing looks.
Day 4	**Borrow an artist's pattern** Find a simple artwork or pattern by an artist who draws in a different technique and try recreating it. (For example, I draw realism in colour, so I chose a black-and-white pattern by Shina Choi, in a more primitivist style, because of its simplicity and use of black.)	**Why:** Studying another artist's approach can introduce you to new ways of simplifying shapes and using lines. **Tip:** Choose something simple. The point is to explore a different approach, not spend five hours making a perfect copy.

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 5	**A page of black lines** Take a flat brush (if you have one; otherwise, any brush will work) and black paint. Slowly pull the brush horizontally across the paper, from one side to the other. Repeat until the page is filled with horizontal lines. (I used black gouache.) Each line starts with rich black paint and gradually becomes lighter and drier.	**Why:** Repeating slow brushstrokes helps you relax, observe how paint behaves and enjoy the process without needing to create an image. The page looks cool in the end. **Tip:** Don't reload the brush halfway through each stroke. Watch how the paint gradually runs out.
Day 6	**A cat in 60 seconds** Find any reference photo of a cat, set a timer for 60 seconds and draw the entire cat using a regular pencil.	**Why:** A strict time limit forces you to focus on the overall shape instead of getting lost in details.
Day 7	**Try something unfamiliar** Choose an object from your home and draw it using a material or technique you don't feel confident with. (I used Procreate for digital sketching.) You could try a pen instead of paint, coloured pencils instead of ink, or something you've never used before.	**Why:** Experimenting outside your comfort zone helps you become less afraid of unfamiliar techniques and unexpected results. (For me, this Procreate drawing went viral on Pinterest, even though it was my first in this style and I don't draw this way at all.)

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 8	**Mix two materials** Choose any subject and create one drawing using two different materials. (For instance, I combined watercolour with a graphite pencil.)	**Why:** Combining materials encourages experimentation and helps you discover textures and effects you might not achieve with just one medium. **Tip:** Don't take materials you always combine - the point is to experiment.
Day 9	**Sketch somewhere inconvenient** Spend at least five minutes sketching in a place where you wouldn't normally draw: a bus, café, waiting room or somewhere else. (I drew during a Zoom meeting at the office, using a pen and a regular notebook.)	**Why:** Drawing outside your usual comfortable setting teaches you to create without waiting for the perfect conditions. And the results are ugly, so it also lowers your expectations to a minimum, ahaha.
Day 10	**Stress drawing** Fill a page with random lines, marks, shapes and colours. Press hard, scribble, overlap everything and stop whenever you feel like it. Do not use a reference photo, select any subjects or plan anything in advance. Though you can use some music.	**Why:** Letting yourself make a complete mess helps release tension and breaks the habit of trying to control every mark. **Tip:** Try doing this when you're annoyed or overwhelmed. You don't even have to pretend you're making art.
Day 11	**The ordinary stuff** Look around your home and sketch a few ordinary objects. (I drew a chair, a pillow and some boxes.)	**Why:** Drawing familiar objects helps you practise observation and find interesting shapes in things you usually ignore.

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 12	**Add a colourful background** Draw an object as carefully as you can using a graphite pencil, leaving the background white. Then fill the background with one solid, bright colour. (I drew a bitten apple and added a red background using coloured pencils.)	**Why:** Comparing the drawing before and after adding colour shows how the background changes the way you perceive the subject. **Tip:** Take a photo before colouring the background so you can compare both versions. (This is also cool Instagram content.)
Day 13	**Four backgrounds for the same object** Divide your page into four equal sections (or rectangles). Draw the same simple object in each section, keeping its shape and colour as similar as possible. Then give each one a different coloured background. (I drew four red tomatoes, as identical as I could, with yellow, blue, green and pink backgrounds.)	**Why:** This exercise shows how surrounding colours influence the appearance and visual impact of an object. **Tip:** Choose a tomato, orange or apple - something simple enough that you won't spend the entire exercise redrawing it. The point is colour, not shape. They can even be simple circles.
Day 14	**Five minutes time limit** Choose anything from your kitchen, set a timer for five minutes and sketch it before the timer runs out.	**Why:** Working quickly trains you to identify important shapes instead of trying to make every detail accurate.

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 15	**Same idea, different medium** Repeat Day 12 with a new object. Draw an object in graphite pencil, but this time use a different material for the colourful background. For instance, if on Day 12 you used coloured pencils for the background, this time try ink, gouache, watercolour, pastels or even a regular blue pen. (I drew an orange in graphite pencil and used gouache for the background, while on Day 12 I used coloured pencils for the background.)	**Why:** Comparing different background textures helps you discover which materials and visual effects you personally prefer. **Tip:** Compare your drawings from Days 12 and 15 - reflect on what you prefer. For instance, I preferred the coloured-pencil texture, though all my life I had been filling backgrounds with liquid mediums. You might discover the opposite.
Day 16	**Look once, then draw** Choose an object and study it carefully for 30 seconds. Then turn away from it and draw what you remember without looking at the object or your paper. Look at the result only when you're finished.	**Why:** This shifts your attention from copying accurately to remembering the shapes that stood out to you. **Tip:** Don't have high expectations for this one - the results are ugly. (I was avoiding this one the most.)

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 17	**Negative space** Divide a page into six rectangles. In each one, quickly outline a different simple object using graphite or a black pencil. Instead of colouring the objects, fill in all the space around them, leaving the objects untouched. As a result, you will get six black rectangles with empty objects inside. (I used a coffee cup, apple, plant, bottle, chair and vase.)	**Why:** Working with negative space teaches you to see the shapes around objects, not just the objects themselves. **Tip:** Avoid complicated objects with lots of little details. Simple silhouettes work best. You can even try it with a regular circle and cube as objects.
Day 18	**One hour of details** Choose a more complex subject and spend one hour drawing it as carefully as you can. Add as many details as possible within that time.	**Why:** After all the quick and messy sketches, this gives you a chance to practise patience and observation.
Day 19	**Three bananas, three techniques** Draw a banana three times, using a different technique each time. (I drew three bananas using watercolour only; watercolour and liner; and watercolour and coloured pencils.) Start with a technique you already know, then experiment with less familiar combinations.	**Why:** Comparing different approaches to the same subject helps you discover which techniques you enjoy and which results you prefer. You can draw more if you have time.

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 20	**Consistent line** Find several reference photos of bitten apples and fill an entire page with drawings of them. Draw each apple, including its details, without lifting your pencil from the paper. It should be line drawing without measuring proportions. Just start making the line, shaping it towards your reference image. Do not lift the pencil (or pen) to draw the details inside the outline - just move to the detail without lifting. Only after completing one apple should you lift your pencil. (I used a red coloured pencil, but any solid medium like a pen, liner, graphite pencil or pastel would work too.)	**Why:** Continuous-line drawing improves observation, encourages confident marks and helps you stop correcting every little mistake. **Tip:** Choose a dry drawing material. Controlling one continuous line with wet paint would be considerably more challenging.
Day 21	**The most ridiculous object you own** Find the most ridiculous-looking object in your home and make a quick graphite sketch of it. Do not measure proportions; just draw what you see. (I drew a strainer from IKEA. It was surprisingly fun.)	**Why:** Drawing something silly reminds you that not every sketch needs an impressive subject or a serious artistic purpose. **Tip:** I'd love to see what ridiculous objects you find. Tag @marvelous_olsay on Instagram - I might repost yours!

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 22	**A cup through someone else's eyes** Draw an ordinary cup in the style of your favourite artist. Think about how they use lines, shapes, colours and proportions.	**Why:** Exploring another artist's visual language helps you recognise different approaches and discover which elements appeal to you.
Day 23	**Draw whatever you want** No rules today. Choose anything you genuinely want to draw, using whichever materials you enjoy. Take as much or as little time as you like.	**Why:** After experimenting with unfamiliar techniques, it's worth remembering what made you enjoy drawing in the first place. And it's a small break from the tasks.
Day 24	**Go big** Find a large piece of paper or cardboard, take your biggest brush (or a dish sponge) and some paint, and write a phrase across it. (I used black gouache and a piece of cardboard from sofa packaging. My phrase was: 'What if it all works out?' It eventually became a visual for one of my Instagram Reels.)	**Why:** Changing from a small sketchbook to a large surface forces you to use your whole arm, make bigger marks and let go of precise control. **Tip:** Don't spend ages choosing a phrase. It can be motivational, ridiculous or completely meaningless - the point is to change the scale.
Day 25	**Sketch an animal in motion** Find a video featuring an animal and sketch it while the video plays. Use a graphite or black coloured pencil. Don't pause every time it moves. There is no time limit; it can be a quick sketch or a more complete drawing - up to you.	**Why:** Drawing moving subjects trains you to capture essential shapes quickly instead of relying on a perfectly still reference.

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 26	**Draw your socks** Find a pair of socks and draw them using whichever materials and technique you are most comfortable with. You can draw them folded, stretched, crumpled or however they happen to be lying around.	**Why:** It's kind of weird to draw socks, so you learn to select things that are not common. You also work with fabric, which can take any shape and form, compared to the previous day when we drew an animal, which has anatomy and is very easy to mess up.
Day 27	**One-minute moving animal** Repeat Day 25, but this time give yourself exactly one minute to sketch an animal from a video. Try to capture the entire animal within the one-minute time limit.	**Why:** The combination of movement and a short time limit encourages fast decisions and stops you from fixating on details. This exercise skyrockets your observational skills and teaches you to simplify. **Tip:** You can then try to draw people outside (in a café, on the street or on a bus) with the same one-minute limit.
Day 28	**Draw, cut and stick** Draw anything you like on a separate piece of paper, cut it out and tape (or glue) it into your sketchbook. If you're not using a sketchbook, stick it onto a larger sheet of paper or cardboard.	**Why:** Working with cut-outs and collage encourages playful composition and reminds you that a sketchbook doesn't have to contain only drawings made directly on its pages. **Tip:** Try a different paper texture from the one you usually use. The contrast can become part of the result.

Day	Drawing exercise	Why it helps and tips
Day 29	**Bright object on dark background** Choose a colourful object and draw it on white paper. Then add a solid black background. (I drew McDonald's French fries.) The materials don't matter, but make sure the object itself has some colour.	**Why:** Comparing the drawing before and after adding a dark background helps you explore contrast and understand how surrounding values affect colour perception. **Tip:** Compare this with Days 12 and 15, where you worked with graphite objects and colourful backgrounds.
Day 30	**Draw it again** Go back to Day 1 and draw the same object again. Do not look at the drawing from Day 1 until you finish. Use whichever materials, techniques and colours you enjoyed most during the challenge. Then put the two drawings side by side (or their photos). Reflect on your material choice, composition, the colours you selected and the feeling you had while drawing it.	**Why:** Comparing your first and final drawings helps you notice changes in your confidence, decisions and personal preferences - not just technical improvement. (I noticed more freedom in my second drawing and I added a background.)

So, what's next?

If you've made it through all 30 exercises, you probably have a sketchbook filled with some nice drawings, some questionable ones and a few that make you wonder what exactly you were thinking.

Good. That's the point.

You may have discovered a new favourite material, a colour combination you hadn't considered before or a technique you never thought you'd enjoy.

Maybe you've started noticing which kinds of drawings feel more like you.

And hopefully, you've become a little more comfortable with the idea that not every drawing needs to turn out well.

I still like beautiful sketchbooks. And I still want my drawings to look good. But I'm trying not to let that stop me from experimenting.

Keep the pages you don't like. They belong in your sketchbook too.

If you try the challenge, I'd love to see what you make (especially the ridiculous drawing).

Tag **@marvelous_olsay** on Instagram.

Tip: Don't judge which drawing is better. Ask yourself which one you enjoyed making more, what you did differently and what you'd like to keep exploring.