

Inking Techniques — Workbook

This workbook turns the Inking Techniques course into ink on paper. Each section maps to one course module and mixes hands-on inking exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists. Work through it with your dip nib, a brush, a few fineliners, waterproof India ink, and smooth Bristol, or with Procreate or Clip Studio Paint, and finish by carrying one pencil drawing all the way from loose construction to clean, weighted, reproducible final line.

Tools, Setup, and Basic Line Control

Assemble and break in your toolkit, build a clean inking station, and drill the confident strokes that every later technique depends on.

Worksheet: Toolkit and Station Setup Sheet

Record the minimum kit you will use through the course and confirm your station is set up for clean, blot-free work before you ink anything.

Dip nib(s) and holder (e.g. Nikko G-pen, Gillott 303 crow quill)

Brush (e.g. Winsor and Newton Series 7 no. 2, or synthetic-sable equivalent)

Fineliners on hand (sizes, e.g. Micron 01 / 03 / 05)

Waterproof India ink brand (e.g. Higgins Black Magic, Speedball Super Black)

Paper (smooth or vellum Bristol, weight)

Board tilt set 10 to 20 degrees, ink on non-drawing side, test scrap taped beside (yes / no)

Exercise: Degrease, Load, and Test a New Nib

Break in a brand-new dip nib and load it correctly so it flows from the first stroke. A new nib carries an oily coating that repels ink until you remove it.

- Degrease the nib (saliva and toothpaste, alcohol, or a brief pass through flame) and confirm ink now sheets onto it instead of beading.

- Dip only to the vent hole, touch the underside to the bottle lip to shed the drop, and test on scrap before the drawing.

- Fill a page with loaded test strokes, re-dipping every few lines, keeping the page free of blots.

Exercise: Confident Line Bootcamp

Drill the core stroke vocabulary until your hand produces smooth, confident line. Ghost each stroke two or three times above the paper, then commit in one motion, rotating the paper so every stroke is a pull, never a push.

- Fill one page with parallel straight lines, then one page with parallel arcs, as steady and even as you can.
- Fill one page with pressure tapers: start thin, press to swell the middle, ease off to taper out.
- Ink ten small leaf or feather shapes using only tapered strokes, fixing your eye on each endpoint, not the nib.

Checklist: Setup and Line-Control Check

- New nibs are degreased so ink sheets on evenly instead of beading up.
- I dip only to the vent hole and shed the drop on the bottle lip to prevent blots.
- I wipe the nib on a rag periodically so dried ink never thickens the line.
- Every stroke is a pull toward me; I rotate the paper rather than pushing the nib.
- I ghost long strokes before committing, and fix my eye on the endpoint, not the tip.

Line Weight and Expressive Line

Drill the line-weight conventions, pick up the brush for dynamic line, and use line quality to inject mood and motion.

Exercise: Uniform vs. Weighted Line

Feel what line weight alone does by inking the same form twice. Choose a single light source first, then weight the second version to match it. No shading, only line.

- Ink a simple cube or apple with a strictly uniform technical-pen line and note how flat it sits.
- Re-ink it with a chosen light source: heavy on the outer silhouette, shadow side, and underside; thin on the lit edges.
- Thicken the line wherever one form overlaps another, and compare the two versions side by side.

Exercise: Brush Pressure and the Single-Stroke Form

Build brush control through pressure, then ink real textures with single tapered strokes. Re-point the brush on a scrap before every stroke.

- Draw a pressure scale: a row of lines from the lightest tip-touch to the fattest belly-press.
- Ink a lock of hair, a folded ribbon, and a tuft of grass using only single tapered brush strokes (thin to thick to thin).
- Wipe most ink from the brush and lay a dry-brush patch to feel broken texture for fur or wood.

Worksheet: Light-Source and Line-Weight Planner

Plan the weighting of a drawing on purpose before you ink it, so the line describes form and light rather than just tracing.

Light-source direction (e.g. upper-left)

Edges that get heaviest weight (outer silhouette, nearest object)

Edges that get heavy weight (shadow side, undersides, overlaps)

Lines kept lightest (lit side, interior detail, fine texture)

Mood I want the line quality to convey (energetic / calm / old-rough / delicate)

Exercise: Two Moods From One Sketch

Prove that line quality carries feeling. Ink one identical pose two different ways, changing only the speed and character of your strokes.

- Ink a running figure with fast, long, sharply tapered strokes and thin trailing speed lines so it reads as urgent motion.
 - Ink the same pose with slow, even, slightly wavering lines and no speed lines so it reads as tired or dazed.
 - Add an impact burst to an action drawing and note how the line itself sells the force.
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Rendering Value: Hatching, Crosshatching, and Stippling

Make gray out of black marks with hatching and crosshatching, render smooth tone with stippling, and balance the page with spotted blacks.

Exercise: Hatching Value Strip and Shaded Forms

Control value with spacing, not pressure. Build a tonal range from line, then wrap it around solid forms with contour hatching. Leave lit areas as bare white paper.

- Ink a five-step value strip from light to dark using only wider-to-tighter hatching spacing plus crosshatch layers.
 - Shade a sphere, a cylinder, and a cube with contour hatching that curves to follow each surface.
 - Grade one smooth gradient by gradually changing the line spacing from far-apart to packed-tight.
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Exercise: Stippling and Matching Mark to Texture

Render tone with dots and learn to choose marks for materials. Hold the pen vertical, tap clean round dots, keep them even in size and randomly placed, and darken by adding dots, not enlarging them.

- Stipple a five-step value strip and a rounded object (fruit or shell), keeping dots even and random with no rows or grids.
 - Render one small subject choosing a different mark for each texture: stipple smooth areas, flick fur or grass, scribble rough bark or stone.
 - Keep a swatch sheet testing how stipple, flicks, scribble, and hatch each read for a given surface before committing.
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Worksheet: Black-Spotting Plan

Decide your solid blacks on purpose before inking. Treat the blacks as their own abstract shapes that balance the page and lead the eye.

Light-source direction and the hard shadow shapes it creates

Major solid-black areas (shadow side, fold interiors, cast shadow)

Where the blacks lead the eye / what they frame (the focal point)

Balance check: are darks spread across the composition or clumped in one corner

Fill plan: outline edges with nib, flood interiors with brush belly

Checklist: Value and Black-Balance Check

- [] Hatching value comes from spacing and crosshatch layers, not from pressing harder.
- [] Contour hatching curves to follow the form so it describes volume, not just flat tone.
- [] Stipple dots are even in size, randomly placed, and darkened by density with no visible rows.
- [] Solid blacks were planned as shapes on the pencils and balanced across the page.
- [] A squint or shrink test shows a clear, balanced pattern of black, white, and gray with an obvious focal point.

Cleanup, Finishing, and Digital Inking

Erase pencils and fix mistakes cleanly, prepare line art for reproduction, set up Procreate or Clip Studio Paint, and reproduce every technique digitally.

Exercise: The Complete Traditional Finish

Take a fully inked piece to a clean, reproducible finish. Patience first: let everything, especially solid blacks, dry completely before any eraser touches the page.

- Let the ink dry fully, then erase all pencils with a soft white vinyl or kneaded eraser in gentle even passes; brush crumbs away, do not wipe.

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- Deliberately make one blot, correct it with opaque white paint, let it dry, and re-ink cleanly over it.

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- Scan at 600 dpi or more and adjust levels so the paper goes pure white and the ink pure black; compare raw vs. corrected scan.
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Worksheet: Digital Inking Setup Sheet

Configure Procreate or Clip Studio Paint so the digital tools stand in for your physical kit and corrections stay trivial.

Program (Procreate / Clip Studio Paint) and stylus

Canvas: 300 dpi, short edge ~2500 to 3500 px

Sketch layer opacity set ~20 to 30 percent under a fresh ink layer

Brushes mapped to nib (G-pen / Studio Pen), brush (round / Dry Ink), uniform liner

Stabilization / Streamline amount, and canvas-rotation shortcut confirmed

Separate layers for line art, blacks/tone, and color (yes / no)

Exercise: Reproduce Every Technique Digitally

Prove the craft transfers to pixels. Over a faint imported sketch, reproduce weighted line, spotted blacks, and line texture using layers and program tools.

- Ink a form with the G-pen brush using full weight variation, heavy outside and on the shadow side, light on interior detail.

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- On a layer beneath, bucket-fill the spotted blacks and expand the fill a pixel or two so no white halo shows.
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- On another layer, add contour hatching and a patch of stipple, then squint or zoom out to confirm the page balances.
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Checklist: Finished-Piece Quality Check

- Ink (and all solid blacks) dried fully before erasing; no smear haze on the page.
- Errors were corrected with opaque white and cleanly re-inked, and strays were cleaned off.
- Line art, blacks/tones, and color sit on separate layers (digital) so any one can be revised.
- Bucket fills are expanded so there are no white halos betraying digital blacks.
- Exported a layered master plus both a web PNG and a 300 dpi high-contrast print file.

Your Action Plan

1. Choose one pencil drawing to carry through the entire workbook from construction to finished ink.
2. Assemble and break in your toolkit, degrease a new nib, and set up a tilted, blot-proof station.
3. Warm up every session with parallel lines, arcs, and pressure tapers, rotating the paper to pull each stroke.
4. Plan a single light source and weight the line to match it: heavy outside and on the shadow side, thin in the light.
5. Ink the expressive passages, hair, folds, textures, with single tapered brush strokes for organic line.
6. Render the mid-tones with contour hatching that follows the form, and stipple the smooth, soft areas.
7. Plan your solid blacks as balanced shapes on the pencils, then outline and brush-fill them and squint-test the page.
8. Let everything dry, erase the pencils cleanly, correct any errors with white paint, and re-ink as needed.
9. Scan at high resolution and adjust levels so the line reproduces as pure black on pure white.
10. Reproduce the same piece digitally in Procreate or Clip Studio Paint on separate layers, then export a web PNG and a 300 dpi print file.

