

Creative



Triggers

Value Exercises

Value is one of the most common problems that people face when trying to draw or paint realistically. I struggled with it myself for a long time before I found a practical and effective way to practice values.

The core skill required to produce good values is judging one value against another. In this series of exercises I hope to give you a practical, step by step way to stretch and develop that skill.

It's up to you to do the practice though. Simply reading through these exercises won't teach you anything. The *only* way to develop a skill is through practice. I've put together three exercises here that you can use as a basis for your practice. Practice often, and regularly, and I promise you: these exercises will help you to crack value once and for all.

If you have any questions about any of these exercises, please drop me a line at paul@learning-to-see.co.uk and I'll do my best to help you out.

The best place to start with values is with value scales. You might have played a little with value scales before. You might be tempted to skip this part. Don't. The value scale exercises are the foundation of the next two exercises, and you *will* struggle with those exercises if you don't spend some serious time getting good at value scales first.

Value Scales

Pencil Value Scale

Our first value scale may look simple. But like all the exercises on Creative Triggers, to do it well will take concentration and effort.

It's easy to dash off a quick scale and call it done. But to get the most benefit from this exercise, you will need to:

Make the steps from one value to the next as evenly spaced as you can. If you don't think they're right, do them again. Even if you do, do them again. Practice makes perfect.

Make each value block as even as you possibly can. Try to make it completely smooth - but don't use an estompe! That won't help your control of the materials develop.

Do it repeatedly. I can't emphasise this enough. You'll get limited benefit from only doing this once. Look at it as push-ups for your value-judging muscles. Train hard, and your skill will develop faster.

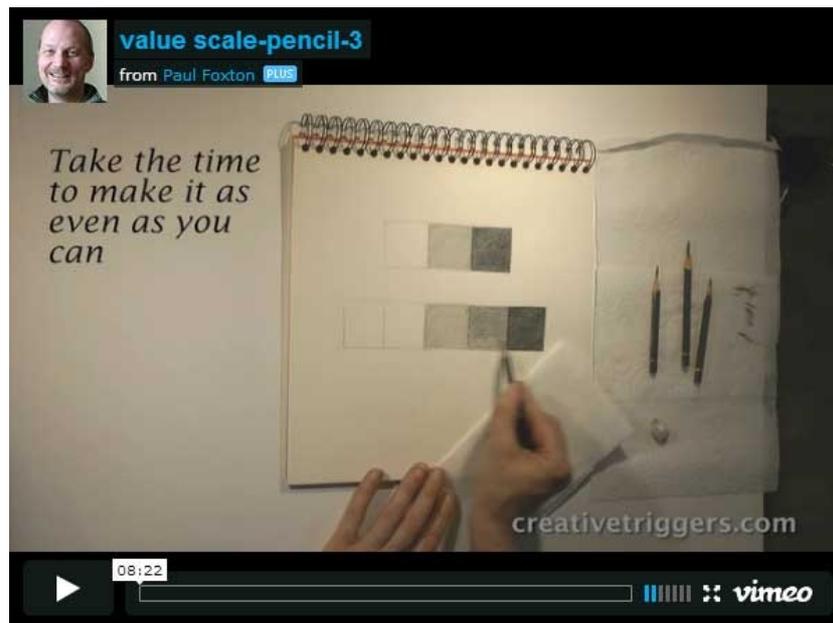
What You Need:

- A range of pencils - 3H, H, B, and 6B or 8B should be enough
- Sketch pad paper
- putty rubber for neatening up

- knife and sandpaper for sharpening

How to Do It:

First, click the image below to watch the video demonstration (about 8 minutes):



The main thing to bear in mind with this exercise is not to rush. Go over the squares as many times as you need to, filling in gaps and trying to get the value as even as possible.

You needn't do the whole thing in one go. Do one square one day, another the next if you like.

When trying to judge a value between two others, look at the edges where it meets the square either side. The jumps between one value and the next should feel about the same on each side.

When you get to the last two squares on the bottom row of values, you'll see if

your middle value was about right. Feel free to adjust if you need to.

Repeat this exercise until you can:

- Create a scale you feel is fairly even in the steps between each value
- Produce a fairly even value across the surface of each square

Paint Value Scale

Once you're quite comfortable producing pencil value scales, move onto doing the same thing with paint.

Since Paint has a wider value range than pencil, we can fit more steps into our scale without struggling too much.

What You Need:

- Oil or acrylic paint, ivory black and titanium white. You can use flake white, but titanium will go slightly lighter in value.
- A range of brushes
- A suitable painting support – canvas pads are fine for this

How to Do It:

These two videos will take you through making your own value scale in paint. Apologies for the sound quality on these videos – they were done some time ago with a cheap webcam.



Whilst you can use oil or acrylic paint for this exercise, I'd recommend oil because acrylic paint tends to change value more as it dries.

Once you're comfortable with these two types of value scales, pencil and paint, you can move on to the next exercise – Matching Local Values.

I hope you enjoy this exercise, and I hope it helps you. It's a part of a structured set of exercises from the Creative Triggers Art Practice Community, designed to help develop your core drawing and painting skills.

The most effective way to improve our art is to get into a daily practice habit of focused, effective exercises.

But it's not easy. Too often we practice in fits and starts, becoming discouraged and letting things slide. It's hard to know what to practice, where to start. Too many developing artists struggle to grow towards the artist they have the potential to be.

The value exercises that make up this short series will help you get more of a handle on value. But they will be effective in proportion to how often you do them, and for how long. It's much better to do a little every day over a long period than a big block all at once, then nothing for a while.

Creative Triggers is designed to help you get into a regular practice habit and then keep it going whilst you develop your core skills through exercises like these. There are exercises for design and composition, drawing accuracy, as well as value and, later, colour mixing and design.

<http://creativetriggers.com>

Best wishes,
Paul