

MAKING AND USING A VIEWFINDER FRAME

Brenda Hoddinott

A-07 BEGINNER: GETTING STARTED



In this article I provide simple step-by-step illustrated instructions to show you how to construct your own simple viewfinder frame, with two adjustable L-shaped pieces of paper, cardboard, or matte board, held together with paper clips. A *viewfinder frame* is an adjustable, see-through drawing format, which allows you to examine a potential drawing subject from various viewpoints, and can be used for portraits, figures, landscapes, or any other drawing subjects.

This lesson is divided into the following three sections:

- **CONSTRUCTING A VIEWFINDER FRAME:** I show you how to make a viewfinder frame with some matt board or cardboard (preferably acid-free), a utility knife, a ruler, and two large paper clips.
- **FINDING AND FRAMING YOUR VIEW:** I show you two photographs and demonstrate potential cropping options found with a viewfinder frame.
- **THE PROCESS OF DRAWING FROM A FRAMED VIEW:** I demonstrate two drawing tools – a grid and a viewfinder frame. I began by setting up a grid on the photo and working out a pleasing composition. From there, I outline my drawing with simple lines, and then add realistic shading.

A viewfinder frame allows you to choose an ideal composition by eliminating clutter and unnecessary objects so as to bring your drawings toward powerful works of art. *Composition* refers to the arrangement of the various facets of your drawing subject within the borders of a drawing space. A strong composition brings the eyes of the viewer to what you consider to be the most important elements in your drawing.

This project is recommended for artists and aspiring artists of all ages, as well as home schooling, academic and recreational fine art educators.

7 PAGES – 12 ILLUSTRATIONS

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CONSTRUCTING A VIEWFINDER FRAME

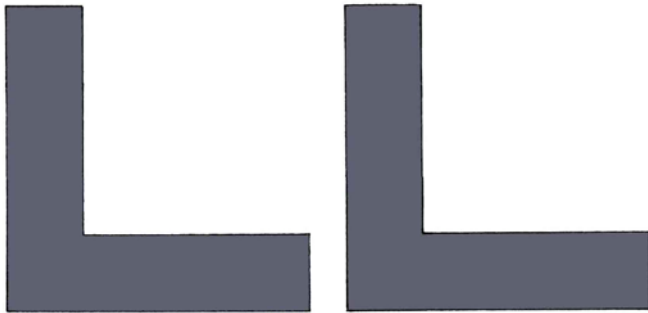
A viewfinder frame is an adjustable, see-through drawing format, which allows you to view a potential drawing subject from various viewpoints. It's an invaluable tool for planning a composition, and can be used for portraits, figures, landscapes, or any other drawing subjects.

You can easily make a viewfinder frame with some matt board or cardboard (preferably acid-free), a utility knife, a ruler, and two large paper clips. *Acid-free* describes a high quality, long lasting, and ph balanced paper that has had the acid removed from the pulp in the paper-making process. Drawings can be ruined when papers with acid deteriorate and turn yellow.

TIP

When buying matt board or cardboard, stay with neutral rather than bright colors. When using a brightly colored viewfinder frame, your eye is grabbed by the loud color and it's hard to concentrate on the view inside its perimeter.

ILLUSTRATION 07-01



Use a ruler and a utility knife to cut two identical L-shaped pieces of cardboard.

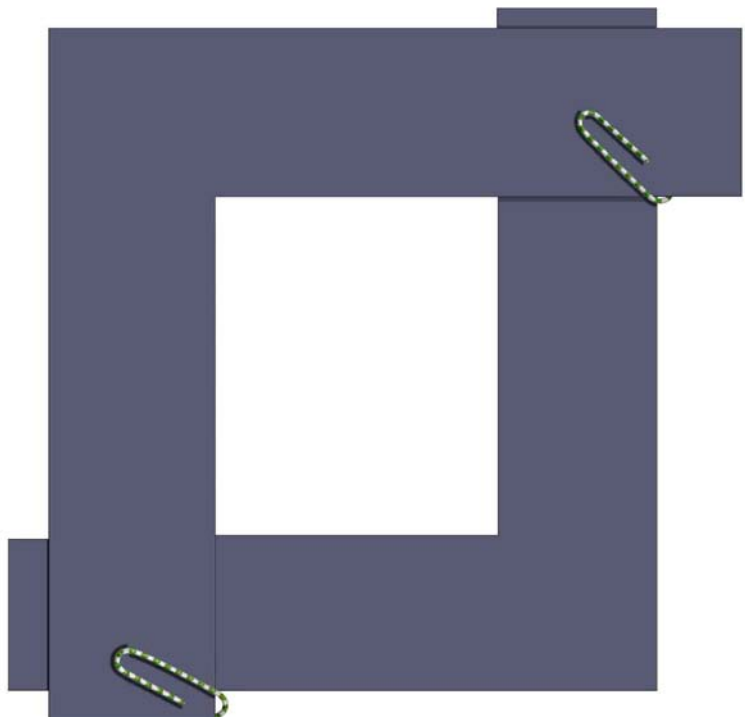
When choosing a size, keep in mind that the wider your frame, the more distracting unwanted objects are blocked from view.

ILLUSTRATION 07-02

Use two large paperclips to join the two pieces of cardboard together to form a frame.

The frame can be adjusted so as to be wider or narrower. It can also be turned sideways to help you choose either a vertical (sometimes called "portrait") or a horizontal (called "landscape") drawing format.

Through the adjustable opening, you can examine and evaluate the relationships between the lines, values, and shapes of your subject.



TIP

Consider making several viewfinders in three or four different sizes. Smaller ones are great for planning compositions from photos. Bigger ones are ideal for finding a composition when you are outside trying to choose a subject for drawing or painting.

FINDING AND FRAMING YOUR VIEW

An entertaining aspect of being an artist is that you can make any changes you wish to a photo before you draw. Modifying an existing composition is easy with help from a viewfinder frame.

In this section I show you two photographs and demonstrate potential cropping options found with a viewfinder frame.

Place your viewfinder frame on your photo (or hold it up in front of your scene and look through it).

Continuously adjust both sections until you find a composition you like.

For example, the photo on the right was cropped with a viewfinder frame to find the below composition.

ILLUSTRATION 07-03



ILLUSTRATION 07-04



TIP

When you choose a composition you like, mark the four corners inside the viewfinder frame with a small dot so you know its location after the frame is removed.

The following composition is also selected with the help of a viewfinder frame.

ILLUSTRATION 07-05

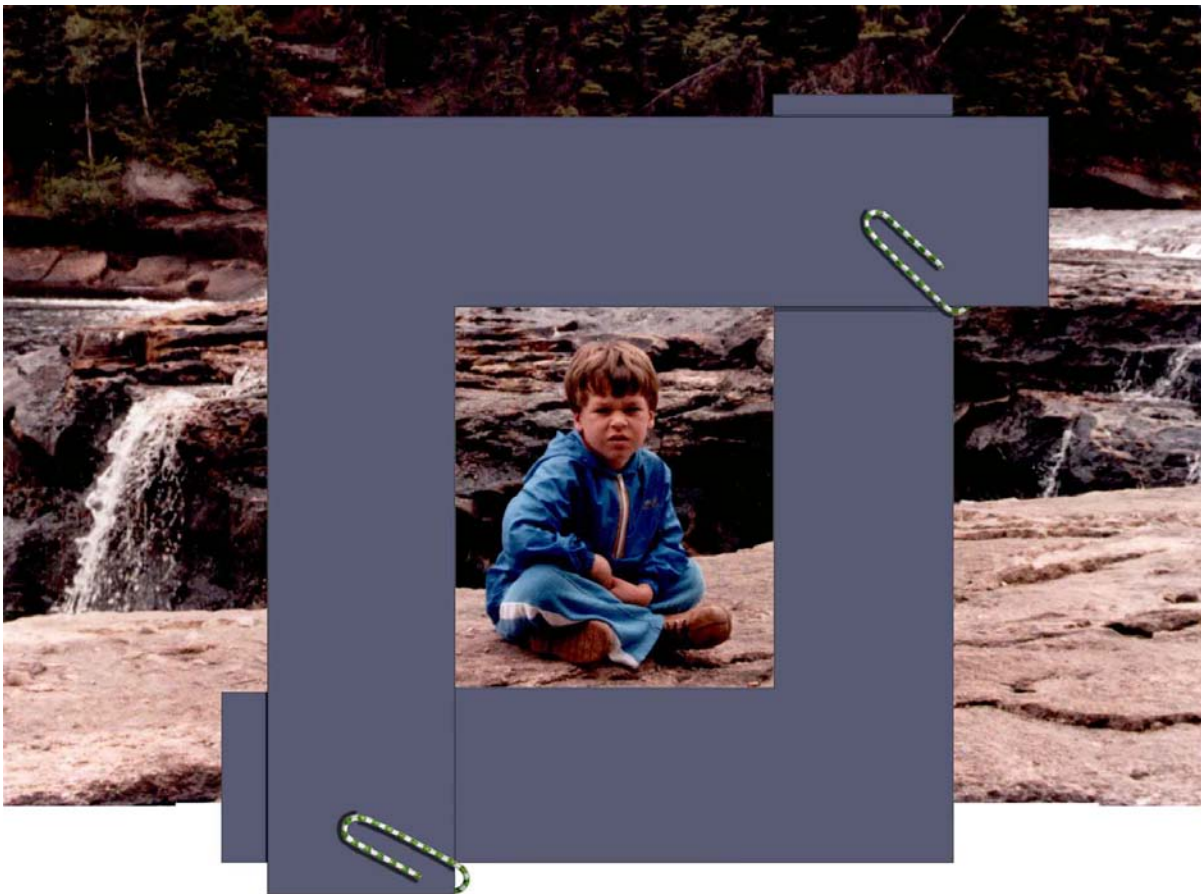


TIP

Keep in mind that the basic process for using a viewfinder frame with a photo is almost identical for viewing potential drawing subjects from life.

Drawing from life refers to the process of drawing from an actual person, animal or scene, rather than from a two dimensional photo or sketch.

ILLUSTRATION 07-06



THE PROCESS OF DRAWING FROM A FRAMED VIEW

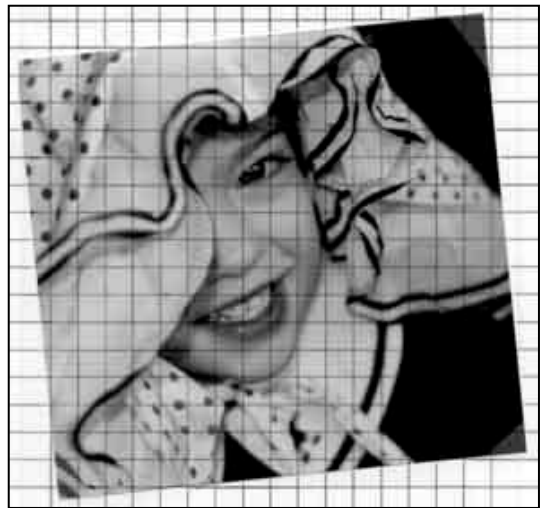
In this project I used two drawing tools – a grid and a viewfinder frame. I began by setting up a grid on the photo and working out a pleasing composition. From there, I outlined my drawing with simple lines, and then added realistic shading.

ILLUSTRATION 07-07



First of all, I tape my photo to a sheet of graph paper. I decide to tilt the photo slightly to make her adorable face even more expressive, and the overall composition more aesthetically pleasing.

ILLUSTRATION 07-08



With a fine tip ballpoint pen, I draw the horizontal and vertical grid lines by using the lines of the graph paper as guidelines. My graph paper has one quarter inch squares.

ILLUSTRATION 07-09



I place my viewfinder frame on the photo, and continuously adjust both sections until I find a composition I like.

ILLUSTRATION 07-10



I then mark the corners of the photo so I know how to identify the location of my composition after the frame is removed.

The final step before drawing is to add letters and numbers so I can keep track of where I am working as I work.

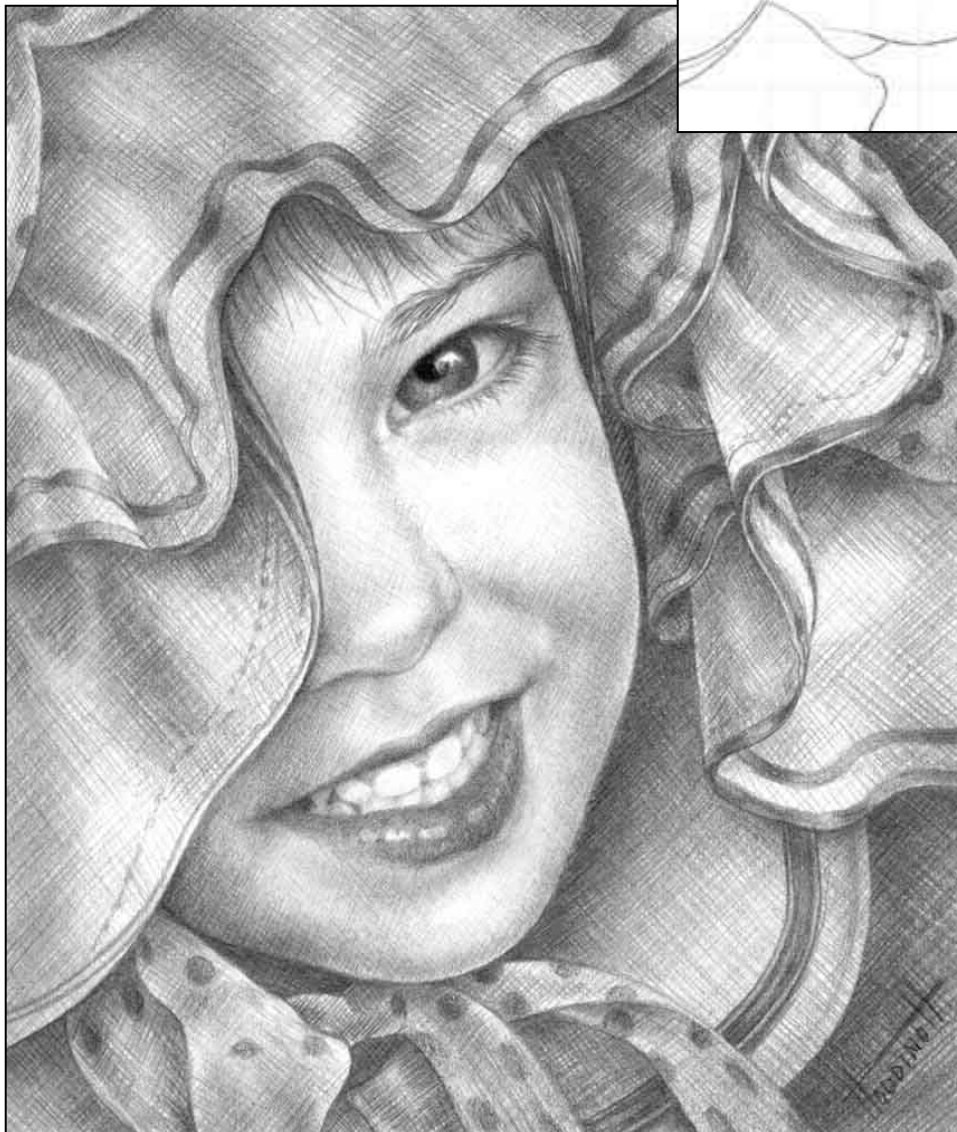
After choosing a vertical drawing format size, proportionate to the size of the photo, I drew an outline of my compositional space on my drawing paper. With my HB pencil, I very lightly drew the various sections of her face, clothing, and hat.

I found that the sharp contrast between the white and black of Karin's clothing in the photo seemed to detract attention from her face. Therefore, my goal was to use shading to make Karin's face the focal point of this drawing.

ILLUSTRATION 07-11



ILLUSTRATION 07-12



I began the shading with light values, and then layered the medium shading on top of the light. Finally I built up the darkest values on top of the medium.

It's now time for you to choose a photo or find a scene you love, and use a viewfinder frame to compose a drawing of your choice.

BRENDA HODDINOTT - BIOGRAPHY

As a self-educated teacher, visual artist, portraitist, forensic artist, and illustrator, Brenda Hoddinott utilizes diverse art media including graphite, technical pen, colored pencil, chalk pastel, charcoal, conté crayon, and oil paints.

My philosophy on teaching art is to focus primarily on the enjoyment aspects while gently introducing the technical and academic. Hence, in creating a passion for the subject matter, the quest for knowledge also becomes enjoyable.

>Brenda Hoddinott<

Born in St. John's, Newfoundland, Brenda grew up in the small town of Corner Brook. She developed strong technical competencies with a personal commitment to self directed learning, and the aid of assorted "Learn to Draw" books. During Brenda's twenty-five year career as a self-educated civilian forensic artist, numerous criminal investigation departments have employed Brenda's skills, including Royal Canadian Mounted Police and municipal police departments. In 1992, Brenda was honored with a commendation from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and in 1994, she was awarded a Certificate of Membership from "Forensic Artists International".

Her home-based art career included graphic design, and teaching recreational drawing and painting classes. As supervisor of her community's recreational art department, Brenda hired and trained teachers, and designed curriculum for several children's art programs. In 1998, Brenda chose to end her eighteen-year career as an art educator in order to devote more time to writing, drawing, painting, and developing her websites.

Drawspace <http://www.drawspace.com> incorporates her unique style and innovative approach to curriculum development. This site offers downloadable and printable drawing classes for students of all abilities from the age of eight through adult. Students of all ages, levels and abilities have praised the simple step-by-step instructional approach. This site is respected as a resource for fine art educators, home schooling programs, and educational facilities throughout the world.

LEARN-TO-DRAW BOOKS BY BRENDA HODDINOTT

- ✚ **Drawing for Dummies (2003):** Wiley Publishing, Inc., New, York, NY, this 336 page book is available on various websites and in major bookstores internationally.
- ✚ **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Drawing People (2004):** Winner of the Alpha-Penguin Book of the Year Award 2004, Alpha - Pearson Education – Macmillan, Indianapolis, IN, this 360 page book is available on various websites and in major bookstores internationally.