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# Drawing from Life Helps You See Better

**KS3** Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

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## What Does Drawing from Life Mean?

**Drawing from life** means sitting down with a real object, person, or scene in front of you and drawing exactly what you see. You're looking at the actual thing—not a photo, not a memory—and putting it on paper.

Drawing from memory means trying to draw something you've seen before but isn't actually there anymore. You're relying on what you remember.

Think of it like describing your friend's bedroom. If they're standing right next to you, you can spot the exact colour of their walls, where the posters hang, and how messy it really is. If you try to describe it weeks later from memory, you'll probably get lots of details wrong!

## Why Is Your Memory Not Very Good at Details?

Our brains are amazing, but they don't record everything like a camera. When you look at something, your brain filters out lots of small details. It keeps the big ideas—like 'that's a round apple'—but forgets the exact shadows, the tiny highlights, and the precise angles.

When you draw from memory, you're drawing what you **think** something looks like, not what it **actually** looks like. This is why memory drawings often look flat, boring, or wrong.

## What Happens When You Draw from Life?

When the real object is in front of you, your eyes pick up hundreds of tiny details: how light falls on a surface, the exact shape of shadows, unexpected colours, and textures you'd never remember.

Think of it like learning to cook. Reading a recipe tells you the ingredients, but actually cooking and tasting the food teaches you so much more—the sizzle, the smell, how thick it gets, when it's ready.

Drawing from life forces your brain to really **look**. This is called **observation**, and it's one of the most important skills in art. You start to notice things you've never seen before, even in familiar objects.

## How Does Drawing from Life Make You Better?

Every time you draw from life, you train your eyes and hands to work together better. You learn how **perspective** works—why things look smaller when they're far away. You understand **proportion**—how to get the sizes of things right compared to each other. You see how light and shadow actually behave.

After lots of practice drawing from life, your memory actually gets better too! Your brain learns what to notice and remember. Then, when you draw from memory later, you'll have a much clearer picture in your mind.

## The Bottom Line

Drawing from life is like learning to see properly for the first time. It's harder than drawing from memory because real things are complicated. But that challenge is exactly what makes you a better artist. You're not guessing—you're discovering.