

# Lesson 9: Learn How to Shade

By Darlene Nguyen - September 30, 2017

Let's cut to the chase! Here are some straight up steps for you to start shading right away. Keep in mind that there are many ways to approach shading. This is just one!

1.) Sketch your subject

2.) Add dark values

3.) Add a light values

4.) Add the midtones

5.) Draw cast shadows

6.) Define the highlights

7.) Final touchups

These are the tools I'm going to use (Find out where to buy them [here](#)):

- Kneaded eraser (you can use a hard plastic eraser too. It's just easier with the kneadable one)
- Pencils – HB, 2B, 4B (or you can use one pencil and vary the pressure for different values)

## Step 1: Sketch the Shape of Your Subject

This is my subject:



Use a hard pencil such as an HB to lightly sketch your subject.

I'm sketching darker than I should, so you can see it clearly. But you should keep the outlines as light as possible. We don't want outlines in our final piece – it takes away from the realism.



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## Step 2: Add the Darkest Values

Remember the shading techniques from [lesson 8](#)? Select a shading technique (or two) for the drawing. I'm using the hatching technique because I think it's the easiest and fastest way to shade.

Along the darkest areas of your subject, shade a medium layer of graphite. I'm using a 2B. Try to keep those edges fairly soft.



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If you're happy with how it looks, darken your shading further. Here, I'm using a 4B.

### Step 3: Apply a Layer of Lighter Graphite

Since the subject is fairly light, I'm going to define the highlights at the very end. If your subject is dark, use the [shadow-lining technique](#) to outline your highlights now and then shade around it.

Take a look at the reference photo again. Where are the highlights and what value are they?



**Answer:** The highlights are located on the right side of the body and the brightest areas appear to be **white**.

We cannot leave any other part of the drawing white because this value is reserved for the brightest point of each highlight.

I see a lot of beginners shade only the darkest values and leave the rest white – which is what I used to do as well. It makes the drawing look flat:



VS



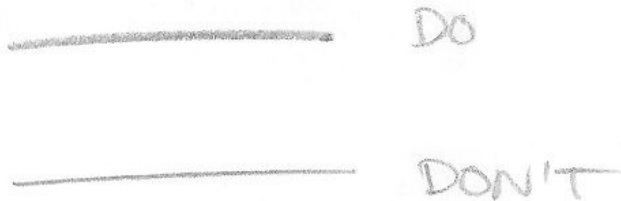
Don't be afraid to shade your drawing fully. It was a big obstacle for me and it took a lot to get over. It wasted a lot of my time... time I could have spent leveling up!



So use a light pencil such as an HB to shade a medium/light shade of grey over the entire drawing. Since the highlights appear along the outer edge of the subject, I shaded past the body so that later when we add the highlights, there will be a higher contrast between the subject and the background.

[fireArt.com](http://fireArt.com)

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Keep those lines thick and close together.

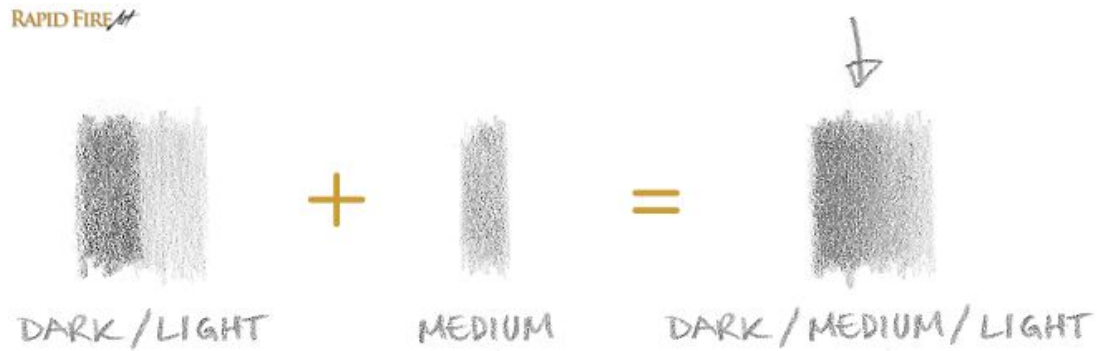


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Before we move on, I wanted to darken the facial features and hair so it looks more interesting :)



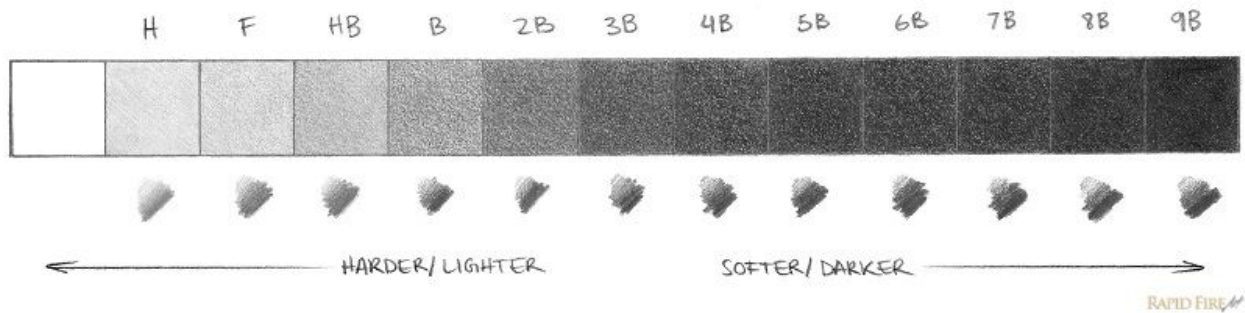
## Step 4: Add the Midtones



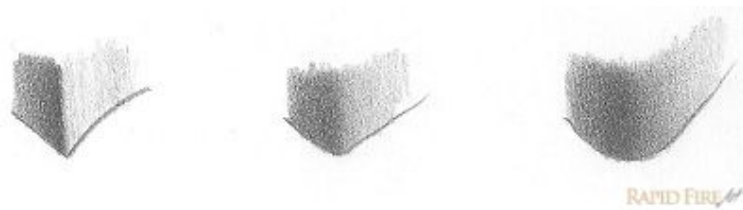
Now that we have dark and light values, we'll need to soften out the transition between the two by adding medium values in between.



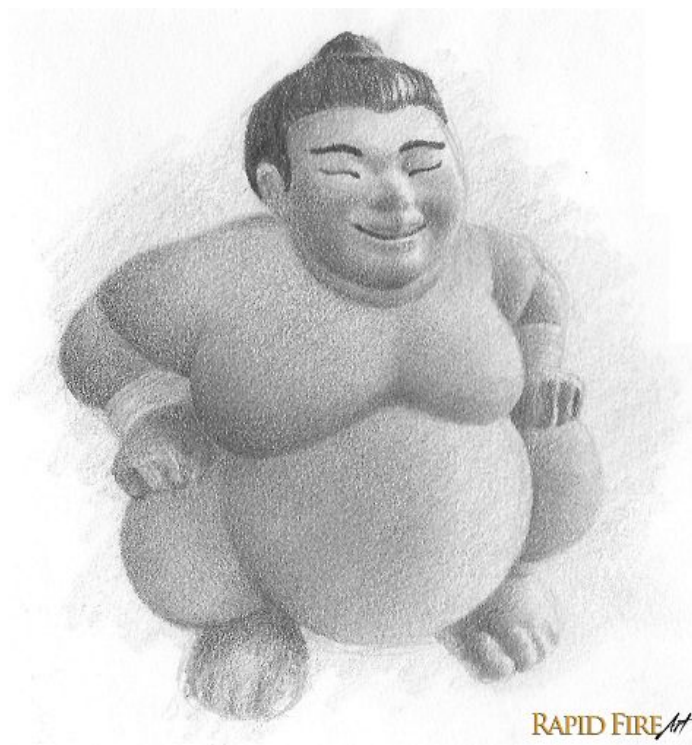
Shade a medium value in between the dark and light values to soften out your shading.



I'm using a 2B because it's between HB and 4B.



If you want to convey a round edge, avoid abrupt shading transitions. The more gradual your shading is, the more smooth your edge becomes.



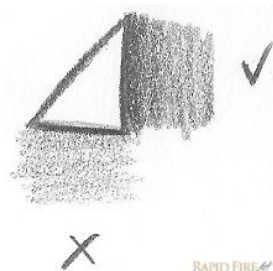
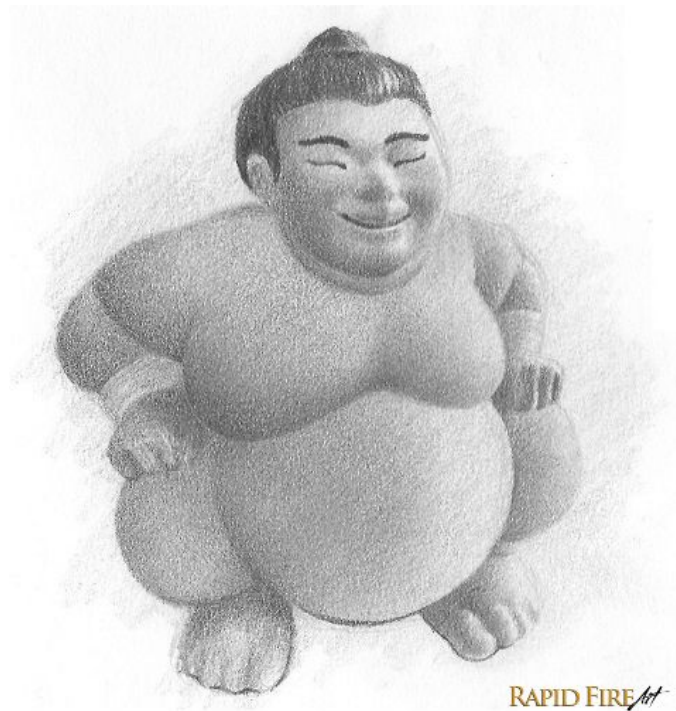


Take your time and work in layers to build the shading up slowly.

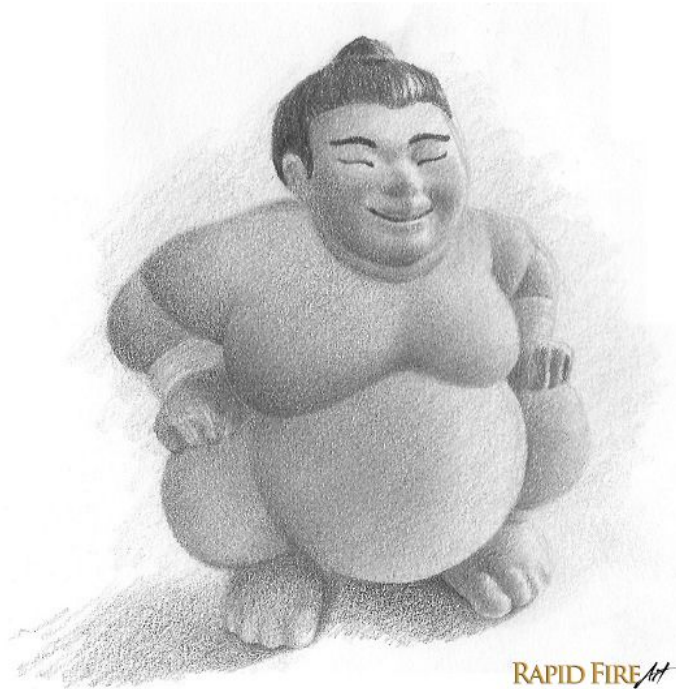
## Step 5: Add Some Cast Shadows

Where is the light coming from? Draw cast shadows to give the piece more contrast.

There are shadows on the ground around the feet. Define the boundaries between the feet, belly and ground by drawing outlines where appropriate. This will clean up the outer edges of the drawing.



Remember to draw the outlines no darker than the shadow itself.



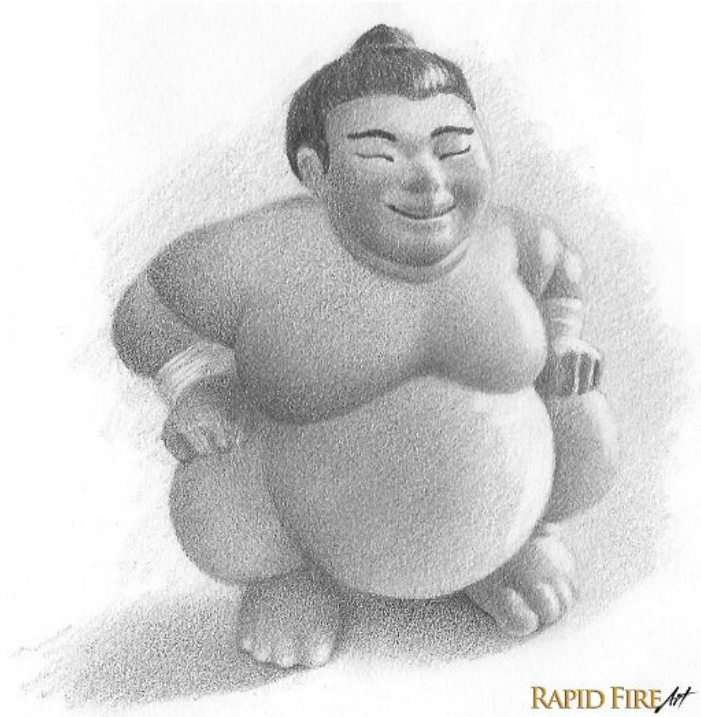
Make the shadow darkest where the subject touches the ground and lighter where the shadow stretches away and the edges soften out.

## Step 6: Add the Highlights

Use an eraser to add highlights to the lightest areas of the drawing to pull the subject **out** and **off** of the sketchbook. I suggest using a [kneaded eraser](#) for higher precision.

Darken the background even more to make the highlights pop out really well!





Use your eraser to remove small amounts of graphite from the right side of the drawing. The center of each highlight should be the lightest. If you're using a [kneaded eraser](#), roll it to a rounded tip and press the eraser onto the graphite a few times until you get a bright white.

To make the transition between highlight and midtone look more gradual, roll the [kneaded eraser](#) to a finer tip and press it along the transition zone while using a much lighter pressure..

This particular part isn't possible with a regular plastic eraser, so use your pencil to smooth out the transition instead.





If your highlights aren't popping as much as you'd like, darken the background further.

## Step 7: Anything Missing?

Do a final check to see if you missed anything. Can you see what's missing from my drawing?

**Answer:** Cast shadows on the body and the triangle of light beneath the belly. There are probably others, but these are the major ones.



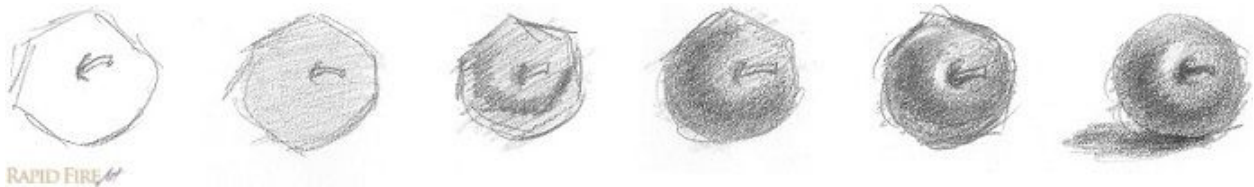




To get rid of the grainy look, you can blend the drawing so the graphite fills all the crevices on the paper. That's a topic for another tutorial!

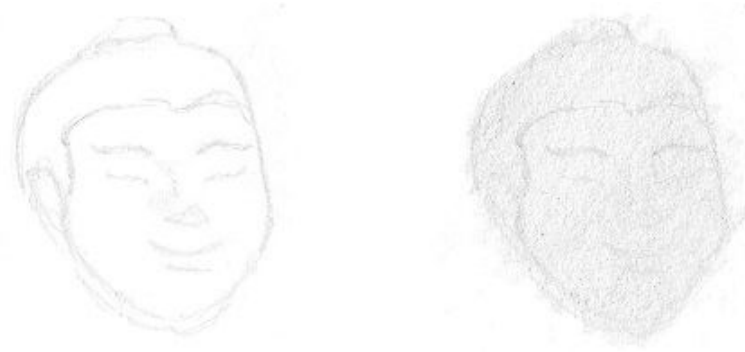
## Bonus

Here's a much simpler example of an apple:



The 2nd and 3rd step are switched: I shaded a base layer of graphite first and then added the darkest values because unlike the sumo, which is made up of a combination of basic geometries, the apple is made up of **one basic geometry**.

If I were to shade a base layer on the sumo before adding the darkest values, the outlines would all disappear – making it hard to redraw details like the facial features, fingers, toes, etc. Here's a small example:



## Homework Assignment + Challenge

Your homework assignment is to pick any subject and draw + shade it 3 times.

For the first drawing, set a timer for 3 minutes. The second drawing should be set to 5 minutes. For the final piece, set it for 30 minutes. Try to finish the entire drawing within the time frame given.

Feel free to share your artwork with me on Facebook under the Lesson 9 post. I'd love to see it!

If you want to challenge yourself further, draw it within 2, 1 or even 0.5 minutes. If you can do all six timed drawings and post your results on the [RFA Facebook page](#), I'll feature your artwork down below along with a link to your facebook page! I'll also be posting my left handed homework when I get around to it (I'm so far behind!).

I hope this tutorial was helpful to you! It's just an introduction but I hope it gives you a good starting point. If you want to learn more about shading and pencil techniques, visit this [detailed guide](#).



And as always, if you have any questions or think I could have explained something more clearly, please let me know in the comments below. Your feedback is always welcome!

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Read more:

<http://rapidfireart.com/2017/09/30/lesson-9-learn-how-to-shade/#ixzz4uBU0NQO8>