

Cross Contour Lines

? What are we covering today?

Yesterday, we learned that by incorporating variety of line quality in a drawing, we can communicate the illusion of form and light.

Today, we'll explore the concept of cross contour lines and their importance in understanding the form of a subject.

We have already learned that contour lines are the “outlines” that define the boundaries and details of a subject. We have also witnessed how adding variety to contour lines can help to create the impression of form and light.

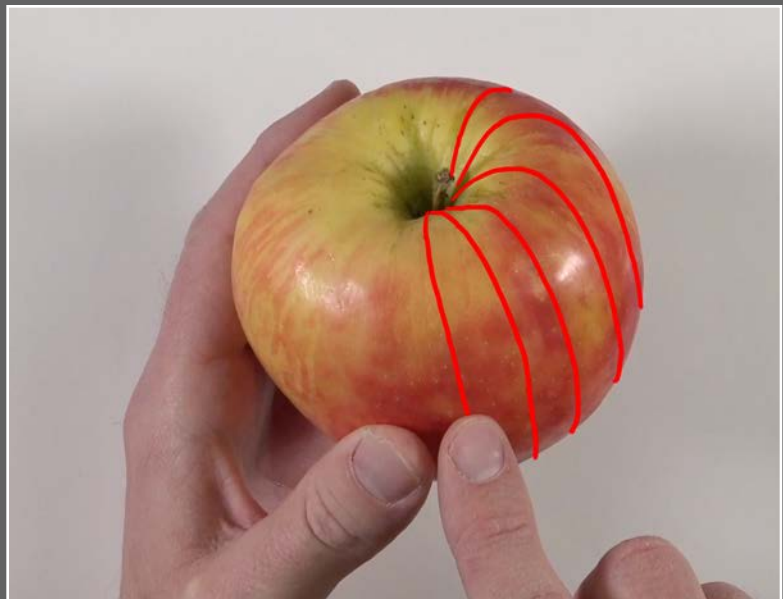
As artists, there are more lines that we should be aware of. Sometimes, these lines are visible on a subject, but often they are not.

These lines define the form of the subject in space and can be used to make decisions about directional stroking when shading a drawing.

These theoretical lines are referred to as “**cross contour lines**” since they cross over the contours of the form of the subject.

One way to think about cross contour lines is to imagine moving your finger around the form of an object. Imagine leaving a line as your finger moves over the surface. This line will change direction according to the form of the subject.

Cross contour lines can move in many directions, but in most circumstances, they flow either vertically or horizontally around the form.



! Today's Mindset

By understanding cross contour lines, we better understand the form of our subject. This is especially valuable because when we create a drawing, we are translating 3-Dimensional space into a 2-Dimensional rendering. Therefore, we must understand the form of our subject as fully as possible.

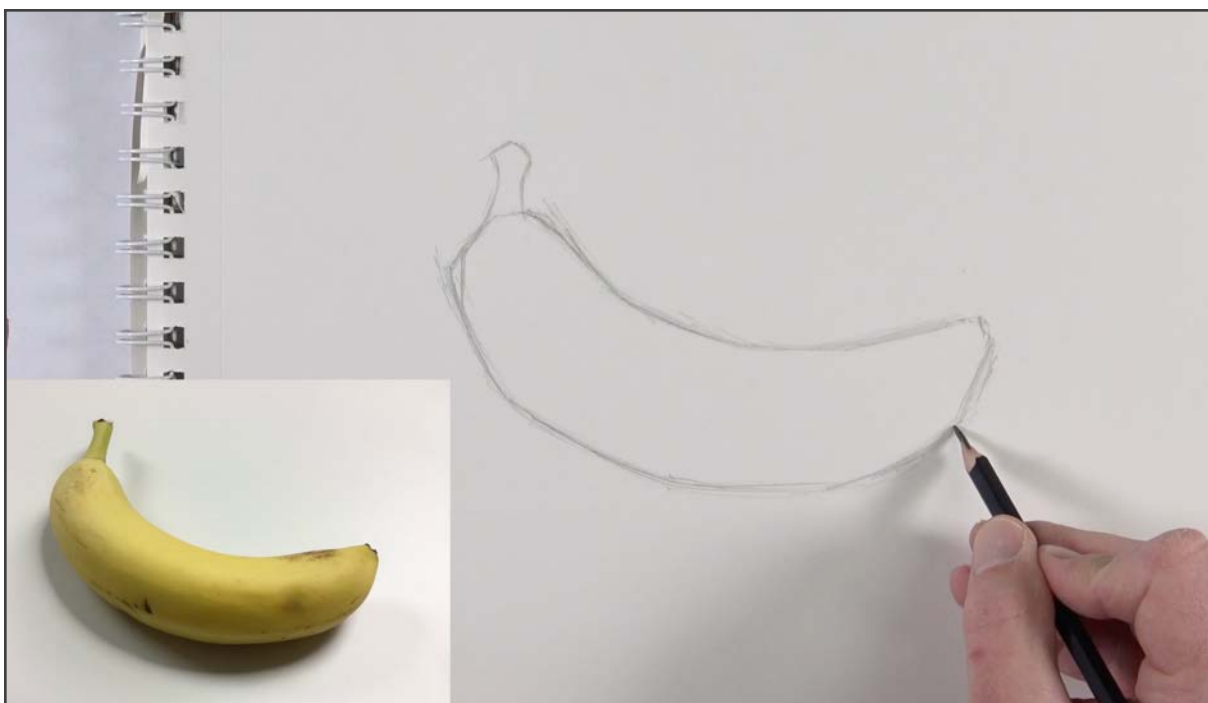
And that brings us to today's mindset...

"Cross contour lines help to inform us of not only the form of the subject, but also how we communicate it in our drawings."

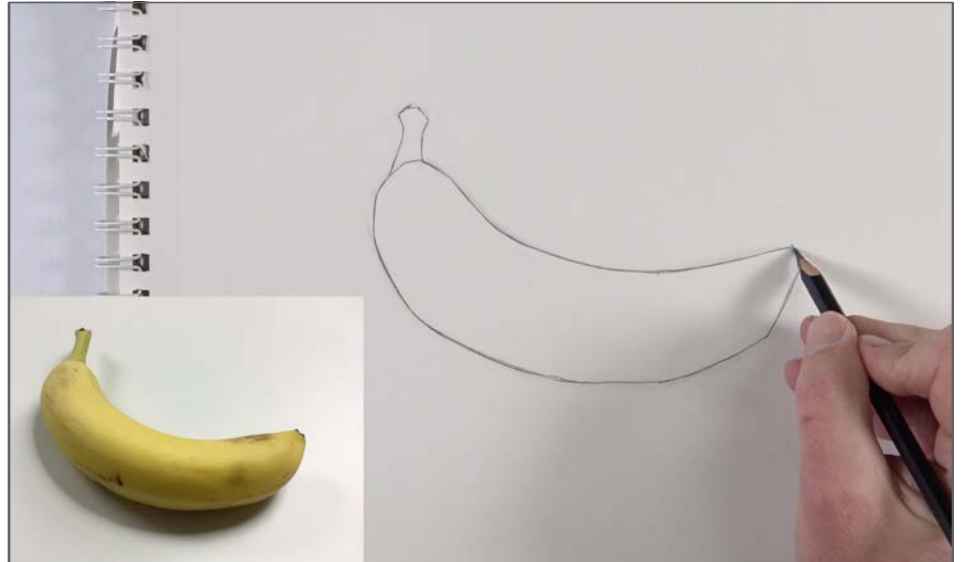
/ Today's Drawing Exercise

We'll explore the concept of cross contour lines with a simple subject. We'll first define the shape with loose marks. Then, we'll define the contour lines. After the contour lines are in place, we'll add the imaginary cross contour lines to better understand the form and the possible directional strokes we could make if we were to add shading.

We'll begin by addressing the basic shapes of the banana. We'll begin with loose marks with a light touch using our entire arm to make strokes. We'll use several strokes with the pencil to define the shape.



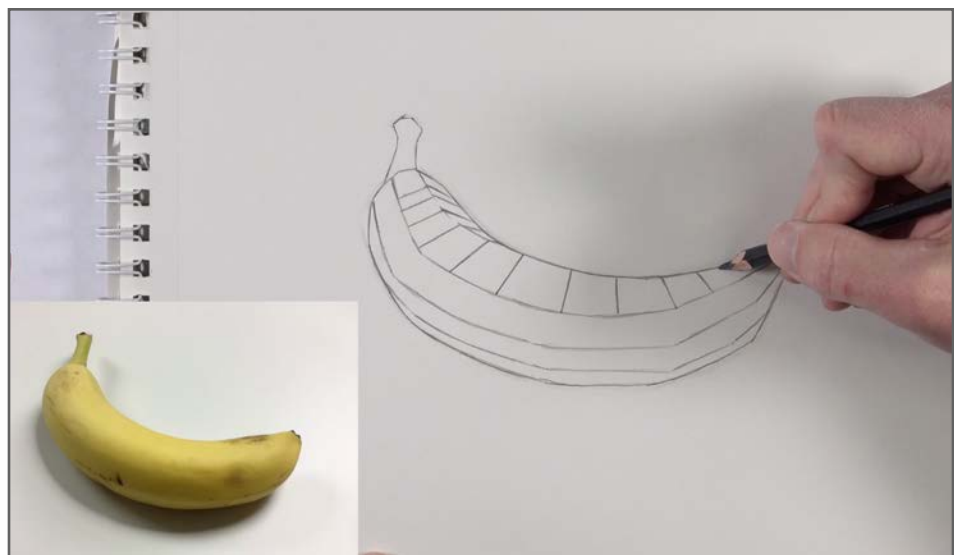
Next, we can “find” the outer contour line with a more defined line and erase all of the sketchy marks with an eraser.



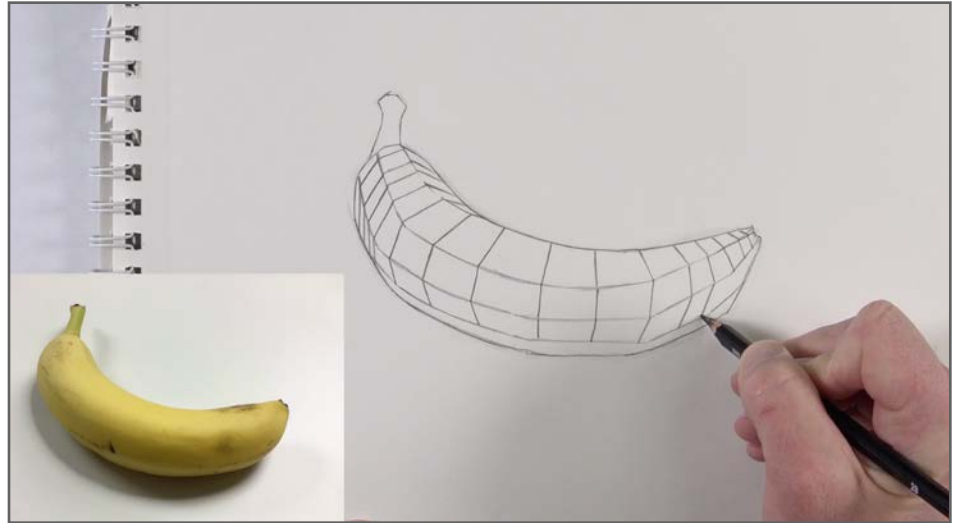
We'll define the planes of the banana with lines that flow down the body from the top to the bottom. These lines can be considered cross contour lines on their own, but we'll add some more descriptive cross contour lines in the next step.



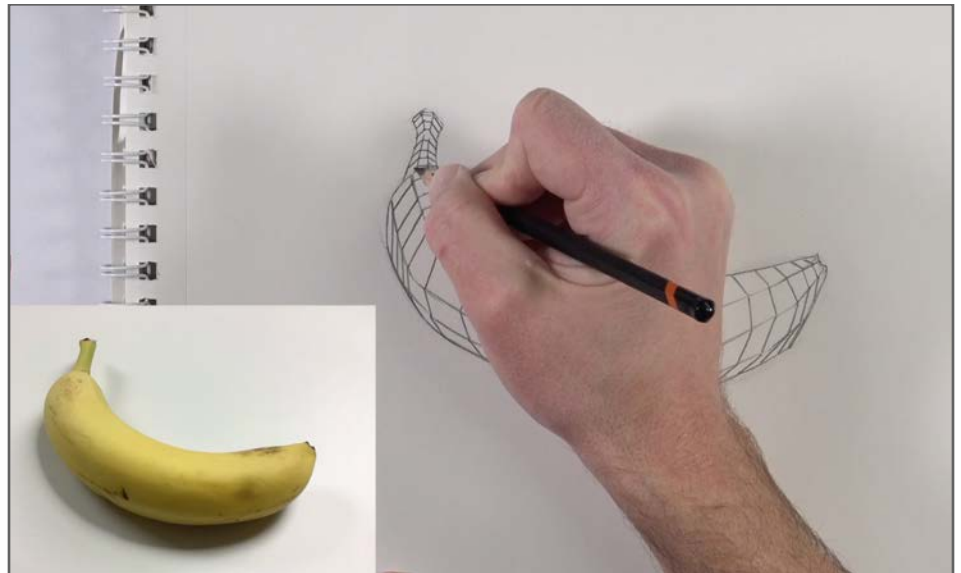
While considering the planes of the banana, we can begin to add cross contour lines that flow over the body from side to side. Notice how these lines change direction according to the observed angle of the plane that they are added to.



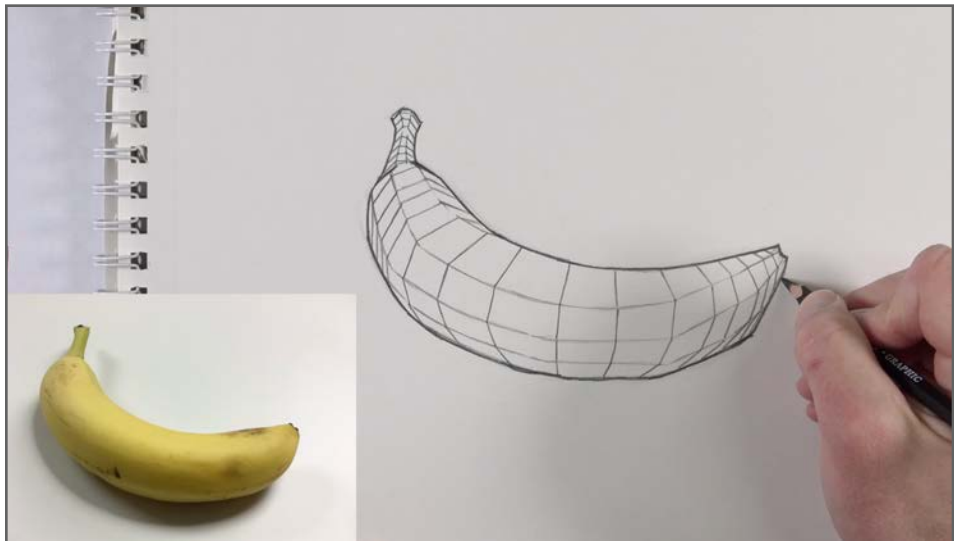
We'll continue working our way down the side of the banana, adding additional cross contour lines. Here again, the direction of these lines changes according to the plane in which they are added.



We shouldn't overlook the stem of the banana. Cross contour lines are added here as well.

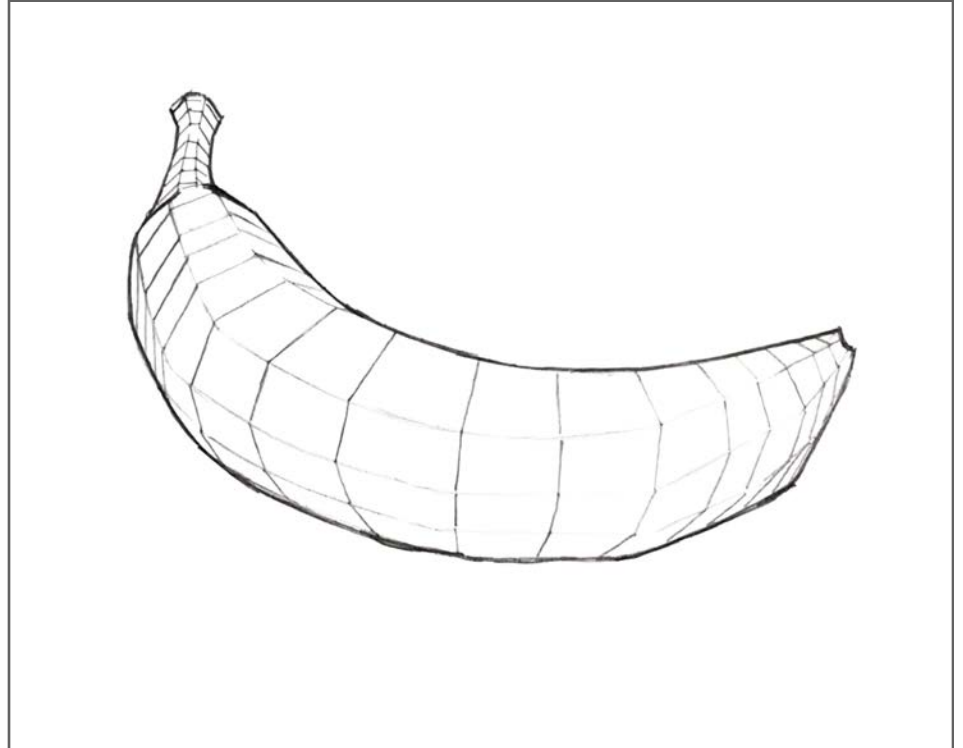


With cross contour lines added to the body of the banana, we have a better understanding of the form of the object. We can now go back and enhance the line quality around the outer edge of the subject.



Keep in mind that cross contour lines are theoretical lines that help us to better understand the form of the subject that we are drawing. Understanding them helps us to make better decisions concerning directional stroking when we add shading to a drawing.

In most cases, these lines aren't actually drawn on the subject, they are only used when making decisions concerning shading.



Today we learned that there are more lines that an artist should be aware of when creating a drawing. These less obvious lines are referred to as “cross contour lines” and help us to better understand the form of the subject.

Tomorrow, we'll see how cross contour lines play an important role in our decision making when shading a subject and why this concept is so important in communicating light and form in a drawing.