

Value, Light, and Form

AP Drawing ■ Topic 2

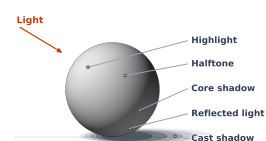
AP Drawing



Value, Light, and Form

What we will cover

- 1 The value scale
- 2 Light logic
- 3 Rendering form
- 4 Chiaroscuro
- 5 Tonal composition & notan
- 6 Toned grounds & subtractive drawing



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1 Value

Value, Light, and Form

↳ Value

The value scale – the backbone of drawing

Value 明度 is lightness and darkness. We see form as **light** before we see colour.

- a **value scale** 明度阶 runs white → greys → black
- **high-key** 高调 feels airy; **low-key** 低调 feels heavy and dramatic
- **local value** 固有明度 is the surface's own lightness – **keep it separate** from the lighting



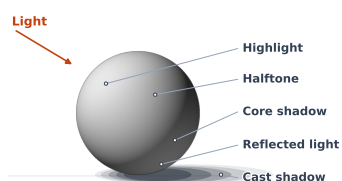
a 9-step scale – the classic control exercise

Most beginners draw **too light** and use **too narrow** a range. **Squint** 眯眼 at the subject – it removes detail and shows the big value shapes.

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Light logic – one source, six zones

One light source creates a **predictable** pattern. Learn it, and **any** form becomes drawable.



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highlight, light, halftone, core shadow, reflected light, cast shadow

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Reading the shadows

Reflected light 反光 bounces back into the shadow side – but it is **always darker** than any lit halftone

The **cast shadow** 投影 is **darkest and sharpest** where it meets the object – then softer and lighter further away

Hard edges mean a **sharp turn** or a cast shadow

Soft edges mean a **gradual turn**

Getting the **core shadow** and **reflected light** right is what separates students who understand light logic from students who copy photos.

2 Rendering

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Rendering form

Rendering 塑造 builds smooth, believable volume.

- every subject simplifies into **basic forms** 基本形体: sphere, cylinder, cube, cone – **render those first**
- work dark-to-light **consistently**; jumping around destroys the value structure
- a **blending stump** 擦笔 smooths values – but **preserved marks** often read stronger than over-blending

Keep the **lit side** and the **shadow side** clearly separated. Form collapses when halftones creep into the shadow.

A drawing of **white objects** (eggs, cups, cloth) is the classic test: **all** the value comes from light alone – no local colour to hide behind.

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Chiaroscuro and high contrast

Chiaroscuro 明暗对照法 uses strong contrast for drama – the language of Caravaggio and Rembrandt.

- a single strong light against deep shadow **pushes the subject forward**
- **tenebrism** 暗色调主义 is extreme chiaroscuro
- charcoal and ink wash reach **rich darks** quickly



Save the strongest contrast for the **focal point** 视觉焦点.

Tonal drawing: value models form under one light

3 Notan & toned grounds

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Notan – the design of light and dark

Notan 明暗构成 is the design of light and dark **shapes**. A drawing works or fails at **thumbnail size**, before any detail exists.

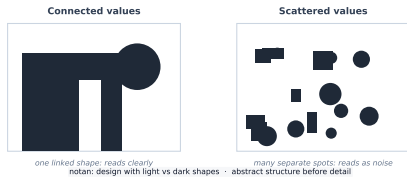
Reduce the scene to **2–3 flat values**. If the pattern still reads, the composition is strong.

Planning the value design before you commit

- thumbnail sketches** 小稿 5–8 cm – they let you **test** several value plans in minutes
- why so small** at that size you cannot draw detail, so you can only decide the **shapes**
- group your values** many small lights scattered everywhere feel noisy; connected value shapes feel designed
- the hierarchy** **one** dominant value, **one** secondary, **one** accent organises the whole page
- notan** reduce the scene to two or three flat values and check the design still reads
- a toned ground** 有色底 start from a mid value and work in both directions – adding dark *and* lifting light

The composition is decided in the thumbnail, not on the final sheet. Five minutes of thumbnails saves a drawing that cannot be rescued later.

Notan – the design of light and dark, in detail



connected shapes read; scattered spots are noise

A drawing works or fails at **thumbnail size**, before any detail exists.

Toned grounds and subtractive drawing

A **toned ground** 有色底 lets you draw in **both directions**: darker with media, lighter with an eraser.

- cover the paper with an even tone, then **lift out** 提白 the lights
- **subtractive drawing** 减法素描 treats the eraser as a **drawing tool**
- a **kneaded eraser** 可塑橡皮 moulds to any shape; a hard eraser cuts **crisp** lights

The mid-tone start **forces value decisions early** – nothing can hide behind white paper.

This process is visible **experimentation** 实验 with materials – **exactly** what the CED asks you to document.

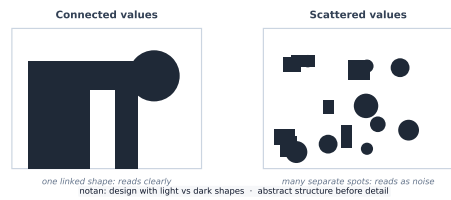
Worked example – why a white-object study scores

Include one white-object study in your practice images

Eggs, cups, folded cloth – all white. There is **no local colour to hide behind**, so every value in the drawing comes **only** from light. That makes it **unmistakable visual evidence** of the *light and shade* skill the rubric names.

Photograph dark drawings **carefully**: charcoal darks crush to a black mush in bad light. Recheck the value range **on screen** before submitting.

Check yourself, in detail



Reduce the scene to two or three values: connected value shapes read clearly; scattered spots read as noise

Exam tips

- **Full value range is a score signal.** Scorers see weak, grey-on-grey drawings constantly; a confident black-to-white range stands out immediately.
- **Get the core shadow and reflected light right** – they are what separates students who understand light logic from students who copy photos.
- **Include one white-object study** in your practice images: value control with no local colour to hide behind is unmistakable visual evidence of the *light and shade* skill.
- **Photograph dark drawings carefully.** Charcoal darks crush to a black mush in bad light; recheck the value range on screen before submitting.
- **Keep your notan thumbnails** and submit a page of them as a process image – planning evidence directly supports the Sustained Investigation rubric.

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Recap

Topic 2 – key takeaways

1 Full range

a confident black-to-white range
is a score signal

2 Light logic

six zones; reflected light is darker
than any lit halftone

3 Rendering

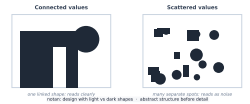
simplify to basic forms; keep light
and shadow separated

4 Notan

design 2-3 connected value shapes
at thumbnail size first

Check yourself

- 1 Can reflected light ever be lighter than a lit halftone?
- 2 Where is a cast shadow darkest and sharpest?
- 3 What does squinting help you see?
- 4 Why is a white-object study strong evidence?



Answers 1. no – never 2. where it meets the object 3. the big value shapes 4. all its value comes from light alone