Drawing On Right Side Of Brain

The Revolutionary Method That Changes How You See the World

Most people believe they simply cannot draw. They recall a childhood art class, a lopsided self-portrait, or a teacher who praised a classmate's work while they struggled to make a straight line. This belief is deeply embedded, but according to one of the most influential art instruction books ever published, it is entirely wrong. **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** is not just a book about learning to sketch; it is a manual for unlocking a different way of perceiving reality. The core premise is that anyone can learn to draw well by shifting from a dominant, verbal, analytical mode of thinking to a visual, perceptual, and holistic one. This article explores the science, the techniques, and the transformative power of this approach, showing you why

learning to draw is really about learning to see.

The Core Concept: Why Your Left Brain Keeps You from Drawing

The foundation of **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain**, pioneered by Dr. Betty Edwards in her landmark 1979 book, is rooted in the neuroscience of the brain's hemispheres. While modern neuroscience has moved beyond the simplistic pop psychology of "left-brained vs. right-brained people," Edwards' practical model remains incredibly effective. She argues that the left hemisphere of the brain is dominant for language, logic, symbols, and sequential analysis. When you try to draw a face, your left brain interferes. It says, "I know what a nose looks like. It is a symbol: a line with a curve." It then tries to make you draw that memorized symbol instead of the actual face in front of you.

The right hemisphere, by contrast, excels at spatial relationships, perceiving the whole, and processing non-verbal information. It sees the curves, the shadows, the negative spaces, and the angles without labeling them. The entire method of **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** is designed to help you temporarily suppress the left brain's verbal domination and hand control over to the right brain. This is not about becoming a different person; it is about giving yourself access to a cognitive mode that you already

possess but rarely use for visual tasks.

Key Techniques That Bypass Your Inner Critic

The exercises in the **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** curriculum are ingeniously designed to confuse or overwhelm the left hemisphere, forcing the right hemisphere to take charge. These are not arbitrary drills; they are scientifically informed strategies.

1. Upside-Down Drawing

This is perhaps the most famous exercise. You are given a line drawing by Picasso or another master, turned completely upside down. You then copy what you see, line by line, without knowing what the subject is. Your left brain, which relies on recognizing familiar objects, has no reference point. It cannot say, "That is a hand," because the hand is upside down and looks like an abstract shape. Freed from labeling, your right brain simply perceives the relationships of lines and curves. The result is almost always a shockingly accurate copy. This exercise proves, in a single hour, that the inability to draw is not a lack of talent but a lack of the right mode of perception.

2. Contour Drawing and Blind Contour

In pure contour drawing, you look at the edge of an object, such as your own hand, and slowly draw its outline without looking

at your paper. The goal is not a perfect picture but a perfect, slow, and patient observation. Your left brain gets bored quickly. It wants to finish the task and move on. This exercise trains you to stay in the present moment of observation. The **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** method emphasizes that drawing is 90% seeing and only 10% moving the pencil.

3. Seeing Negative Space

Instead of drawing the object itself (a chair), you draw the space around the object (the air between the chair legs and the floor). The left brain has no name for negative space. It is just empty air. But when you focus on these "un-labelable" shapes, your drawing becomes structurally accurate. This technique is a cornerstone of the approach in **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** and is used by professional artists to compose complex scenes.

4. The Vase/Faces Exercise and the "S" Curve

Edwards uses the classic optical illusion of two profiles facing each other that form a vase in the center. She asks students to carefully copy the profiles. The trick is that the profiles are drawn with a single, continuous "S" curve line. To finish the profiles correctly, the student must see the line simultaneously as the edge of a face and the edge of the vase. This causes a mental flip, a moment of true perception where the brain shifts from symbolic

processing to relational processing. This "aha" moment is the goal of the entire **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** system.

The Five Basic Skills of Drawing

Edwards identifies five component skills that, once learned, allow you to draw anything. These are not taught in isolation but woven into the exercises mentioned above.

1. **The Perception of Edges (Contour):** Seeing the line where one thing ends and another begins.
2. **The Perception of Spaces (Negative Space):** Seeing the shapes between and around objects.
3. **The Perception of Relationships (Perspective & Proportion):** Seeing how things relate to each other in terms of size, angle, and position. This is often called "sighting."
4. **The Perception of Light and Shadows (Value):** Seeing the gradations of light that give form and volume to objects.
5. **The Perception of the Gestalt (The Whole):** The final integration of all these skills into a unified, coherent image.

Mastering these five skills is the tangible goal of working through the **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** curriculum. Once you understand them, you have a universal toolkit for visual representation.

Benefits That Extend Far Beyond the Art Studio

The lessons learned from **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** are not confined to art. The cognitive shift it teaches has profound implications for creativity, problem-solving, and even stress management. Learning to quiet the dominant, analytical, verbal mind and access a more holistic, intuitive mode is a valuable life skill.

- **Enhanced Creative Problem-Solving:** Many complex problems cannot be solved by logical, step-by-step analysis alone. They require seeing the "big picture" and recognizing patterns that are not verbal. The right-hemisphere mode fostered by this method is directly linked to breakthrough thinking and innovation.
- **Improved Observation Skills:** After practicing the exercises in **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain**, you will find yourself noticing details you previously overlooked: the way light falls on a building, the specific curve of a friend's smile, the color of shadows on snow. This heightened awareness enriches everyday experience.
- **Reduced Performance Anxiety:** The left brain is full of judgment: "Is this good? Is this right? What will they think?" The right brain simply processes. By learning to bypass the

critic, many people report a sense of calm and flow while drawing. This "flow state" is a powerful antidote to stress and overthinking.

- **Increased Confidence:** The single most common result of working through the **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** method is the destruction of the myth "I can't draw." This newfound belief in one's ability to acquire a complex skill often spills over into other areas of life, from learning new software to tackling a home renovation project.

Modern Perspectives and Neuroscience

It is important to address the scientific nuance. Critics correctly point out that the brain does not work in strict hemispheres for creativity. The left hemisphere contributes to art, and the right hemisphere contributes to logic. Modern fMRI studies show that drawing activates a wide network across the entire brain.

However, the utility of the **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** model is not invalidated by this complexity. As a pedagogical tool, the left-brain/right-brain dichotomy provides a memorable and effective metaphor for overcoming a very real psychological barrier: the dominant, symbolic, labeling system that interferes with seeing. The exercises still work, regardless of whether the exact neural mechanism is a "hemisphere switch" or a

"network rebalancing." The value of the book lies in its practical results. For millions of people, it has delivered on its promise, and modern brain science continues to explore exactly *why* these specific exercises are so effective at blocking verbal interference and enhancing visual perception.

How to Begin Your Journey with the Method

You do not need to take a costly workshop. The full curriculum is laid out in the book **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain**, now in its 4th edition. The recommended approach is to follow the chapters sequentially. Do not skip the pre-instruction drawing (a self-portrait and a hand) that serves as a "before" benchmark. This is crucial. When you complete the course and draw the same subjects again, the tangible progress you see will be your own proof of the system's power.

You will need basic supplies: a pad of drawing paper, a No. 2 pencil, a sharpener, a kneaded eraser, and a felt-tip pen for some exercises. The most important supply, however, is patience and a willingness to trust the process. When you attempt the upside-down drawing, it will feel strange. Your left brain may complain. This is a sign that it is working. Push through the discomfort. The shift into a new way of seeing is the reward.

Furthermore, consider the community aspect. There are countless online forums and local groups dedicated to **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain**. Sharing your "before and after" drawings can be incredibly motivating. The journey is not about becoming a professional artist, though that is possible. It is about unlocking a part of your perception that has been dormant. It is about learning to truly see the world, not just name it.

In conclusion, **Drawing On Right Side Of Brain** offers far more than drawing lessons. It provides a proven, practical pathway to a different state of mind. By learning to suppress your internal verbal critic and engage your visual, spatial, and holistic perception, you gain a powerful tool for creativity, problem-solving, and mindfulness. Whether you are a complete novice or a seasoned artist stuck in a rut, the exercises in this method will challenge your assumptions and expand your capabilities. The pencil is not the tool; your brain is. And this book teaches you how to use the right part of it to see the world not as a collection of labels, but as a landscape of lines, light, and relationships waiting to be explored. The skill of seeing is a gift you give yourself, and the journey begins with a single, conscious line.