Is it Live, or Memorex?

Early in this essay, we compared learning the mechanics of grammar as a foundation for becoming proficient in written communication, regardless of true writing talent, to learning the mechanics of drawing, of design, as a foundation for becoming proficient in visual communication, regardless of true artistic talent. As the best way for grammar stage children to become familiar with the mechanics of grammar and relationships of language is by copying great literature, so the best way for grammar stage children to become familiar with the mechanics of drawing and relationships of design is by copying great masterworks of art. Children are amazingly adept at imitation at this time in their lives. The masterworks to be copied are those studied in art history.

In the early years of the grammar stage (roughly grades 1-3) just allow them to copy what it is they see, as simply as they desire. Do not expect perfection and do not make them redo. Just the practice of it, the doing of it regularly, is training their minds and their abilities. Then in the later years of the grammar stage begin to introduce concepts: line, form, shape: the oval of a face, the circle of a sun, the triangle of an evergreen tree, the square of a building; the proportion of negative space (background space) to positive space (the space the subject occupies); and so on. Let them use rulers and compasses, and let them take measurements, if they desire, to make more exact copies. Encourage them to do neat and careful work, just as you would in penmanship.

When beginning a new copy, children may follow these steps to make it more manageable: draw simple outlines first, then go back and rough in more details, then go back and polish carefully the final copy. This is the progression we use in writing, as well: outline - rough draft - final copy. Color in using paints, colored pencils, pastels, or crayons. Train their eyes for attention to detail and nuances of color, as they get older. Expect greater detail and realism from older students.

Another aspect of copying masterpieces is copying from nature. Bring in subjects to practice on, such as a flower, leaf, or other object. Have them bring a sketch pad along on outings or field trips. Look at the drawings of accomplished naturalists. These can even be subjects for copying in art class. When copying from nature, begin with simple objects and progress to more complex. Keep a nature journal corresponding to the natural history you are studying in science class. The article, [Science in the Grammar Stage](http://classical-homeschooling.org/v2/index.php?page=59), contains more information about nature journals.

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