

## Robert Price

102 Macdonell Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6R 2A2, Canada • 416.536.9989

EMAIL: robert@eggplant.org

WEBSITE: www.eggplant.org

# Compositional Forms

## What are the Forms

The compositional forms are drawing tools. The forms are straight lines, curved lines, angle lines, circles, and dots.

## Purpose

The purpose of learning the compositional forms is to develop self confidence with observing and drawing skills. Additionally the introduction is a superb method for developing direction skills and understanding many math concepts.

## Overview

- introduce one element at a time
- after mastering each element, add previously practiced elements
- fill in polygons &/or circles

## The Exercise

- use imaginary boards to initially model drawing elements
- draw in sand or act out the form
- find examples of the form in the room: elicit orally, list on word cards for vocabulary, use bridge maps to develop understanding
- when giving directions present them twice - if asked what you mean, present the same directions only modifying for the whole class if they really were not clear directions
- use paper and crayons or markers—would recommend each student creating a sketch book from newsprint with construction paper covers
- extensions include recognizing forms in art work, borders on index cards or creating the forms in a collage medium



## Suggested Vocabulary for Directions

edges, start, end, cross, touch, corners, opposite, same

## Suggested Resource

Drawing With Children - Mona Brookes

Drawing With the Right Side of the Brain - Betty Edwards

## Introducing the Forms

Regularity and consistency are important for understanding the different forms and for it to be an effective direction tool. It is suggested to spend 10 - 15 minutes each day on learning the forms. It is better to do regular short sessions instead of longer infrequent sessions. The directions below use pieces of paper—optimally the students would create a sketch book with newsprint and construction paper. This provides ownership and reference material that assists assessment.

## The Schedule

**Day 1**—define what a straight line is by drawing on imaginary boards, drawing in the sand, creating human examples, and finding examples in the room from seats and walking around.

**Day 2**—revisit straight lines in the room. Each student will get one blank paper and markers (or crayons). Define the vocabulary you will be using with the students. Suggested vocabulary includes edges, start, end, cross, touching, corners, opposite, and same. Keep the initial directions very simple—e.g. take out a green marker (*let the students get the markers out before continuing the direction*) and draw one straight line that starts on one edge and ends on another. It is very important to hold up and share examples that look different but are accurate based on the directions—this builds self confidence. The next direction would ask for another color and more lines (e.g. three lines).

**Day 3**—revisit straight lines in the room. With a new blank paper students will work with straight lines again. Directions can get more complex—e.g. with a brown marker draw five straight lines that cross another straight line.

**Day 4**—introduce curved lines similar to the introduction of straight lines. Initially have students draw on imaginary boards, draw in the sand, create human examples, and finding examples in the room from seats and walking around. Then go to the paper and marker pens and start with simple directions for curved lines. Share examples often to build self confidence.

**Day 5**—curved lines and straight lines together. Share an artwork and have the students find curved and straight lines in the artwork. Large poster size is best.

**Day 6**—introduce angle lines around us, then do exercises on blank paper.

**Day 7**—angle lines & curved lines. Share an artwork—ok to revisit the same one.

**Day 8**—angle lines, curved lines, and straight lines.

**Day 9**—introduce circles around us, then do exercises on blank paper.

**Day 10**—circles and angle lines.

**Day 11**—circles, angle lines, curved lines, and straight lines.

**Day 12**—introduce dots around us, then do exercises on blank paper.

**Day 13**—dots and circles.

**Day 14**—dots, circles, angle lines, curved lines, and straight lines.

**Day 15**—revisit all the forms with a different medium- e.g. paint, cutout/collage, etc.



## Suggested Phrasing of Directions

The following example directions would also include the directed color of marker to use. Marker direction could also state *pick the color of your choice* as a variation.

Suggested phrasing of directions:

- draw one straight line that starts on one edge and ends on another edge.
- draw two straight lines that start on one edge and end on an opposite edge.
- draw four curved lines that start on one edge and end on a neighboring edge.
- draw three curved lines that start on one edge and end on another edge and do not touch another line.
- draw two straight lines that start on one edge and end on another edge and cross another line.
- draw two curved lines that start on a (could be color specific) straight line and end on an edge.
- draw a curved line starting on one edge, taking a long walk and ending on the same edge.
- draw four angle lines that start on one edge, end on the same edge, and do not cross each other.
- draw three circles that touch each other.
- draw three dots that touch an edge.
- draw three straight lines that start on one edge, end on an opposite edge and do not touch any other composition forms (provided students know meaning of composition form).
- draw one straight line that starts at one corner and ends at an opposite corner.
- draw three angle lines that start at one corner and end at another corner.
- draw four curved lines that start at an edge and end at a corner.
- find three triangles and fill in with a (define color) marker.
- find two five sided polygons and fill in with a (define color) marker.

If a student asks a question about the direction repeat the original direction. Part of problem solving is listening and determining what is meant by the direction. As previously noted it is important to share successful examples that look different, but were both accurate to the directions. This will provide an opportunity for students to feel secure with their decisions.



## Music in Motion

This is a wonderful way to regularly share a variety of music genres while having the students draw what they hear. Highly recommend both music supplied by the teacher and students. With the music playing, students draw what they hear—this could be abstract reflect the rhythms and drawings of what one hears. Initially I would gather students in a circle and model first with the teacher drawing to a selection of music (abstract one time, specific images another time) and adding students to the modeling within the circle. All could continue in circles or in collaborative groups—it is important for students to have the opportunity to see others. During and after the session share varied student examples with the whole class.

## The Copy Shop

Using combinations of the five compositional forms provide a handout to the students to duplicate the provided images. Initially the forms to duplicate are created by the teacher, but as the students become proficient they can be the creators of the forms to duplicate. This provides ownership and assessment while building understanding.

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The box on the left would contain the image to copy and the other three boxes would be where the student practices.

## Mirroring

Drawing opposite sides of an object provide an opportunity to understand the concept of reversal while practicing compositional forms and developing problem solving skills. As with *The Copy Shop* initially the teacher can provide examples to mirror, then have students develop examples to practice with each other.

## Borders

Commercial borders for bulletin boards are out and student created borders based on learning the compositional forms are in. Student created borders are original and more vibrant while creating ownership and building self esteem. Use index cards or construction paper sized to build borders around a bulletin board. A suggested approximate size would be 4" x 8". With the 4" x 8" cards/paper follow directions for doing compositional forms. This would work well with only straight lines or any combination of forms. After an exercise creating the forms, provide directions to color in polygons within the forms. This is a great math lesson which they will continue to reference every time they view the borders.

Name:

Date:


Name:

Date:
