

## How to make astronomical drawings

These are mainly my musings on how I draw in general, it's not an exhaustive list of techniques. If you find that another way works best for you, use it! Above all, remember to wrap up warm and have fun.

### Before:

You will need some paper and something to make a mark on it! Using a biro and an old envelope can be fine if you have nothing else to hand, but ideally use clean, white paper with very little texture and various hardnesses of pencils. Use harder pencils (e.g. 2H) for sharp, well-defined objects and softer pencils (e.g. 2b) for fuzzy things. You will probably need an eraser too.

Also, it is best to have a table or easel to rest your paper on, so you can easily control the telescope, but if you don't have one available you should be fine.

So you can see what you are doing without ruining your night vision, a red filtered torch is fairly essential.

### During:

Look at it!!! Spend a little while just looking before you pick up a pencil, get a feel for where things are in your field of view, how big objects are and how far they are apart, compared to each other and to the whole view. Always keep this idea of the whole view in your mind. Decide how much of your field of view you want to draw and stick to it; don't try to cram things in at the edges.

Next, start with the biggest, brightest things and carefully outline where they are and their sizes; don't worry too much about fine detail at this stage. Draw very softly so you can follow the lines later, but they won't show too much in the finished drawing. Now outline some smaller objects and fill in some of the fine detail in the larger objects. Remember, hard H pencils for well-defined things, soft B pencils for fuzzy things. Keep moving around the page, checking how it all fits together.

Remember, draw what you see, not what you think you should see!

It may seem odd, but a good way to draw stars in the dark sky is to draw the inverse. That is, where the stars are brightest, make the darkest marks and where they are dimmest make the lightest. Then the picture can be scanned into a computer and inverted, it saves you having to fill in the black sky! However, if you aren't happy doing this, just draw some of the sky around the object, you can always fill in the rest later.

Keep drawing smaller and fainter details until you are happy you have documented all you want to. If your pencil marks are a bit smeary, use an eraser to 'whiten' parts which have got too dark and neaten things up a bit.

### After:

Make sure you have a record of where and when you drew your picture, and what it is, and keep it filed with these details. If you are very proud of it, frame it and show everyone!

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