



**Utrecht Art Supplies**

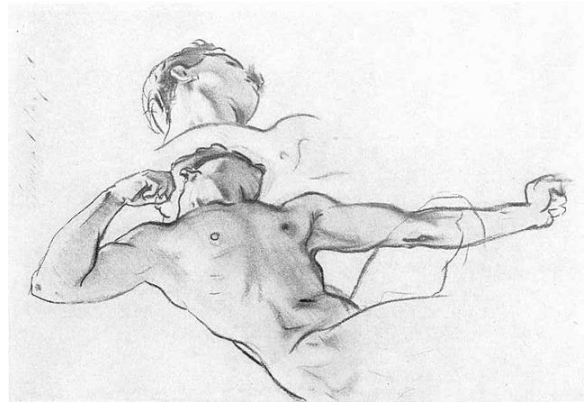
**Get a grip and improve your drawings**



Do you notice your drawings look too "tight"? Do you have shiny spots or embossed dents in dark passages? Are your curves choppy? These are telltale signs that you might need to change how you grip the drawing instrument.

Gripping a pencil close to the tip as though writing does give more control for fine details, but it also directs more pressure on drawing surfaces, reduces the range of movement possible and makes it almost impossible to create smooth curves and ellipses.

Holding the drawing instrument sideways between thumb and fingers offers several important advantages. It becomes immediately apparent that the medium retains its point longer, as the side of the point glides across the page. Arguably the most important advantage is the ability to use the arm, shoulder and body to create smooth, gradual ellipses. A sideways grip also helps give more control over pressure on the medium, and allows easy extension of the arm for visual measurements and comparisons between subject and drawing.



*John Singer Sargent, study for "The Archers"*

A great way to learn control over the pressure of the hand is by using vine charcoal. Delicate charcoal sticks are unforgiving of excessive pressure, and snap if the artist is too aggressive. A light touch is essential, especially when using graphite, which can emboss or indent the page, leaving shiny spots instead of dark passages.

After mastering the side grip on a drawing instrument, the control and sensitivity gained will improve the quality of fine work, even when using a writing grip.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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