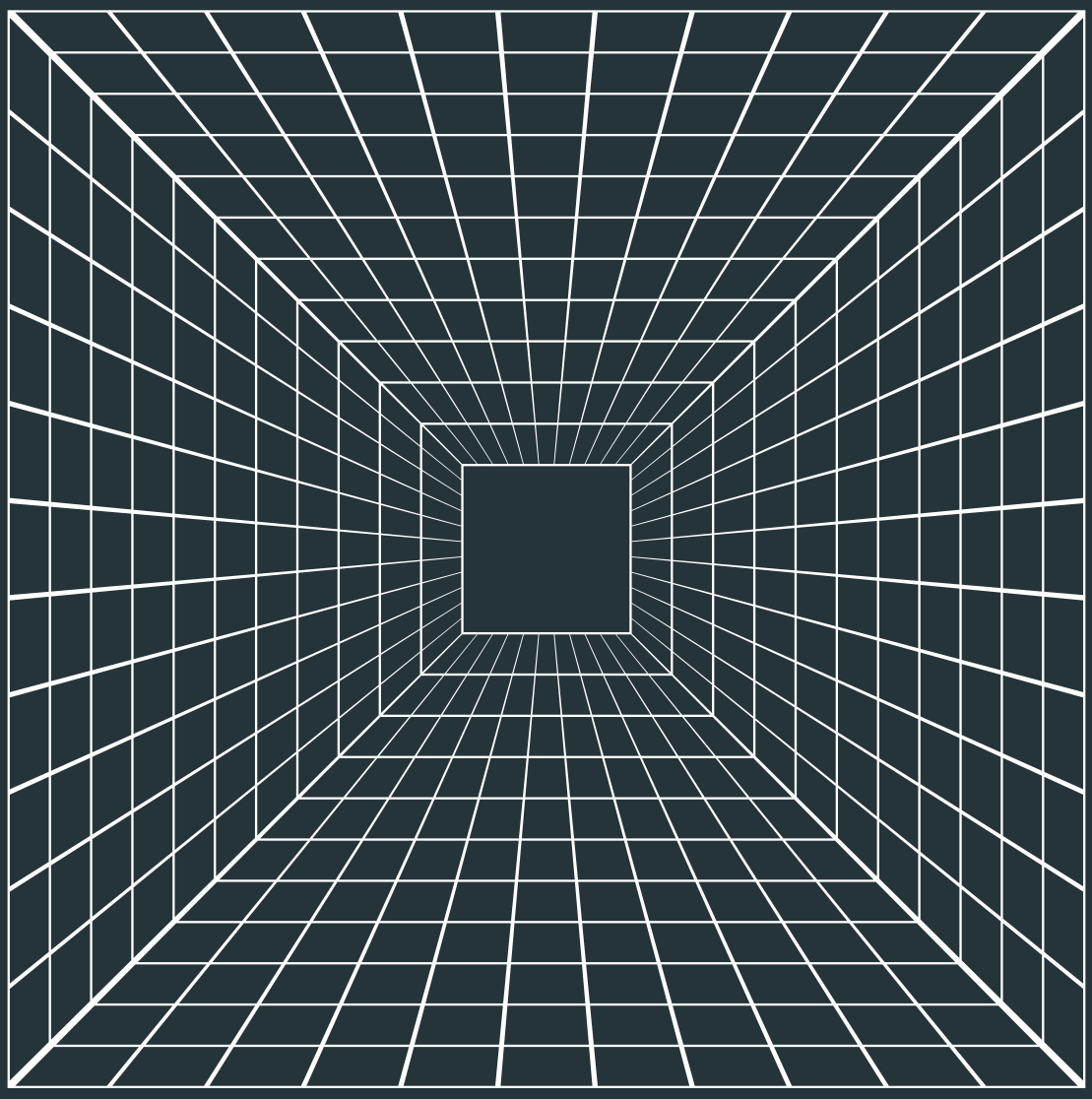
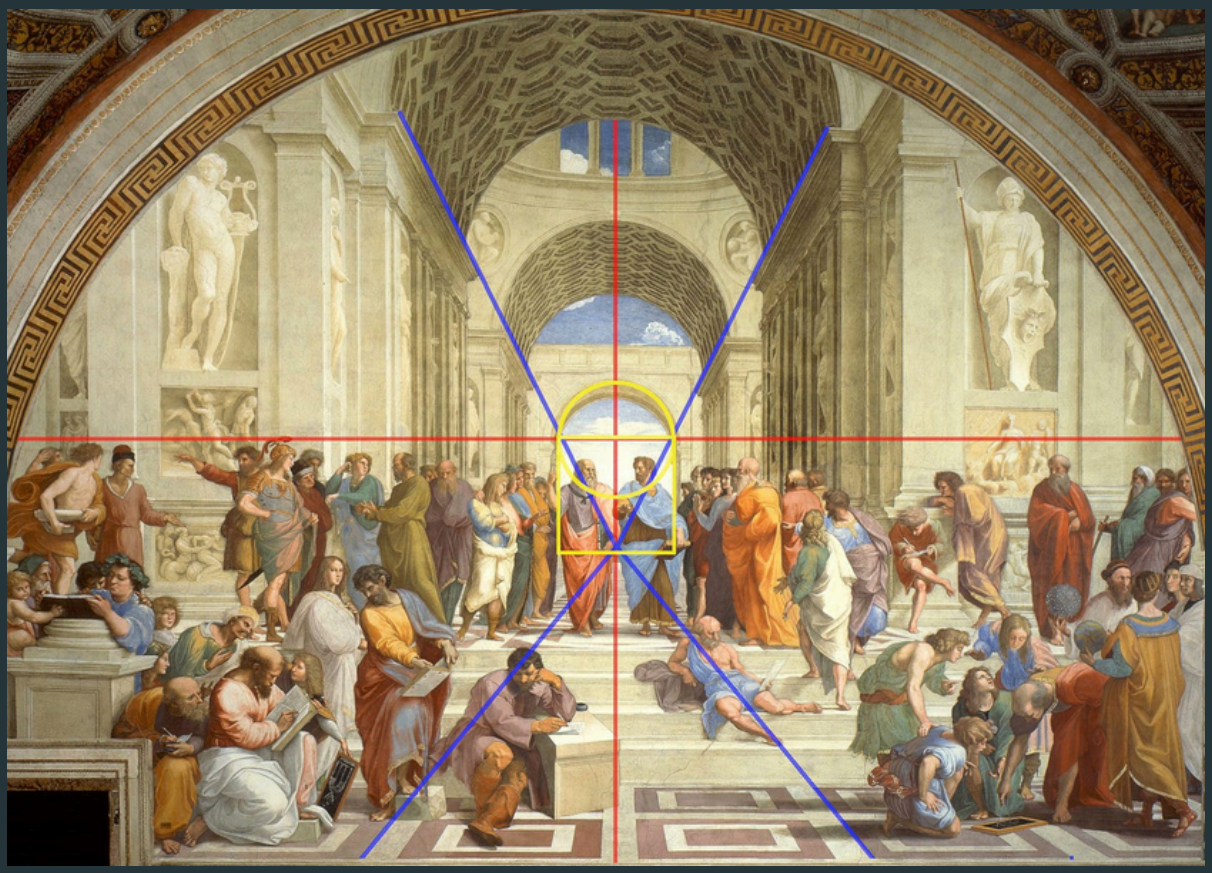
HOW TO DRAW ANYTHING



A Beginners Guide to One Point Perspective

Q: What is perspective?

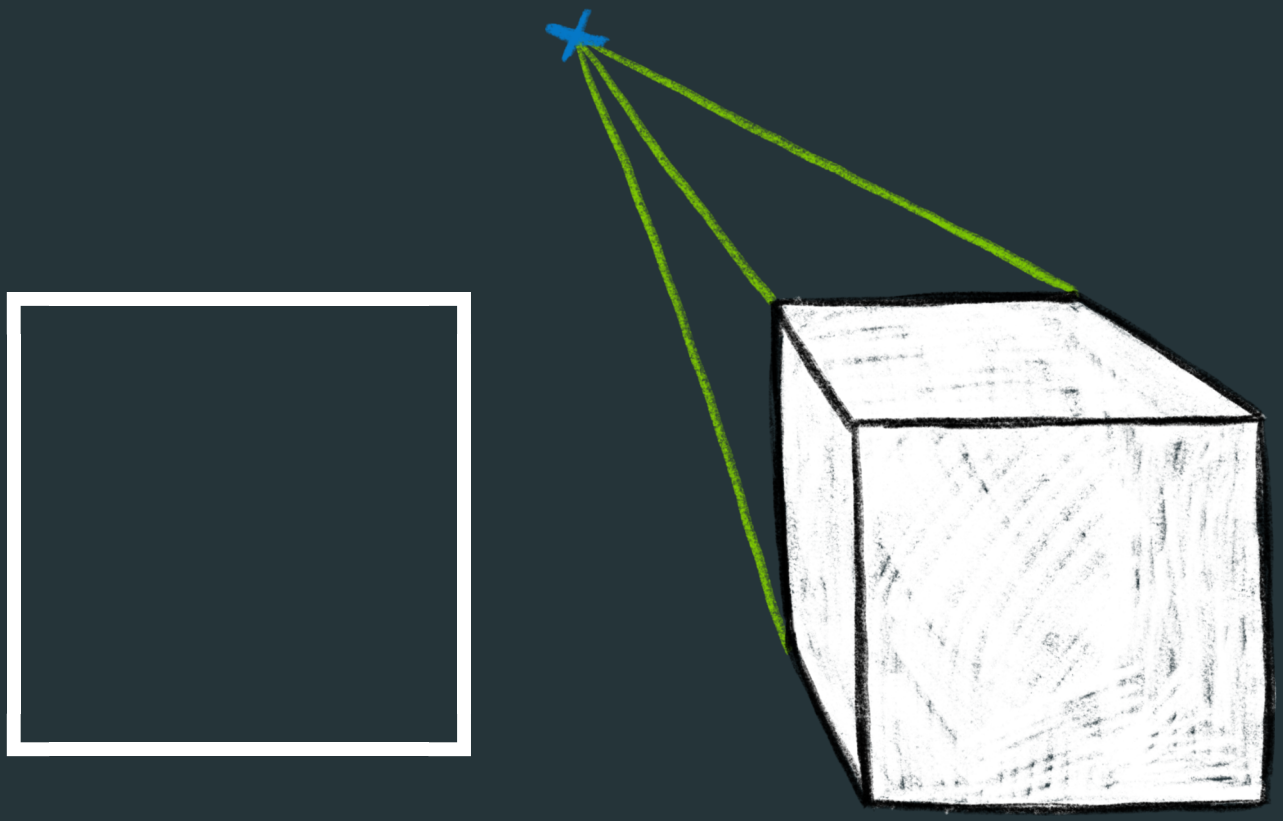
A system of drawing that allows you to accurately depict space by creating the illusion of 3 dimensional shapes on a 2 dimensional surface.



School of Athens - Raphael, 1511

Our main intention with perspective is to learn how to turn a 2D shape into a 3D form.

we are going to turn a simple square into a cube

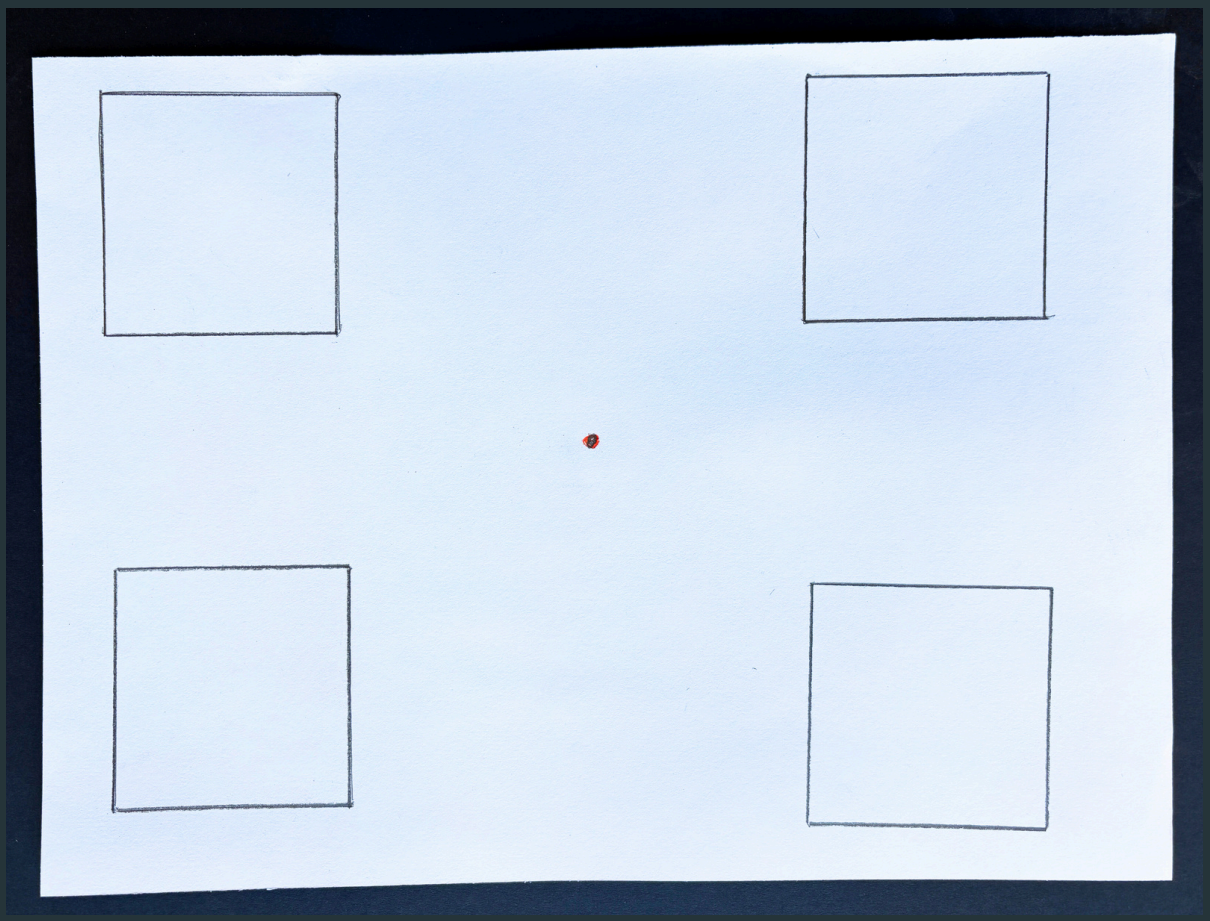


All you will need for this lesson is a pencil, an eraser and a piece of paper.

Quick Tip: Draw lightly because much of what you draw will need to be erased

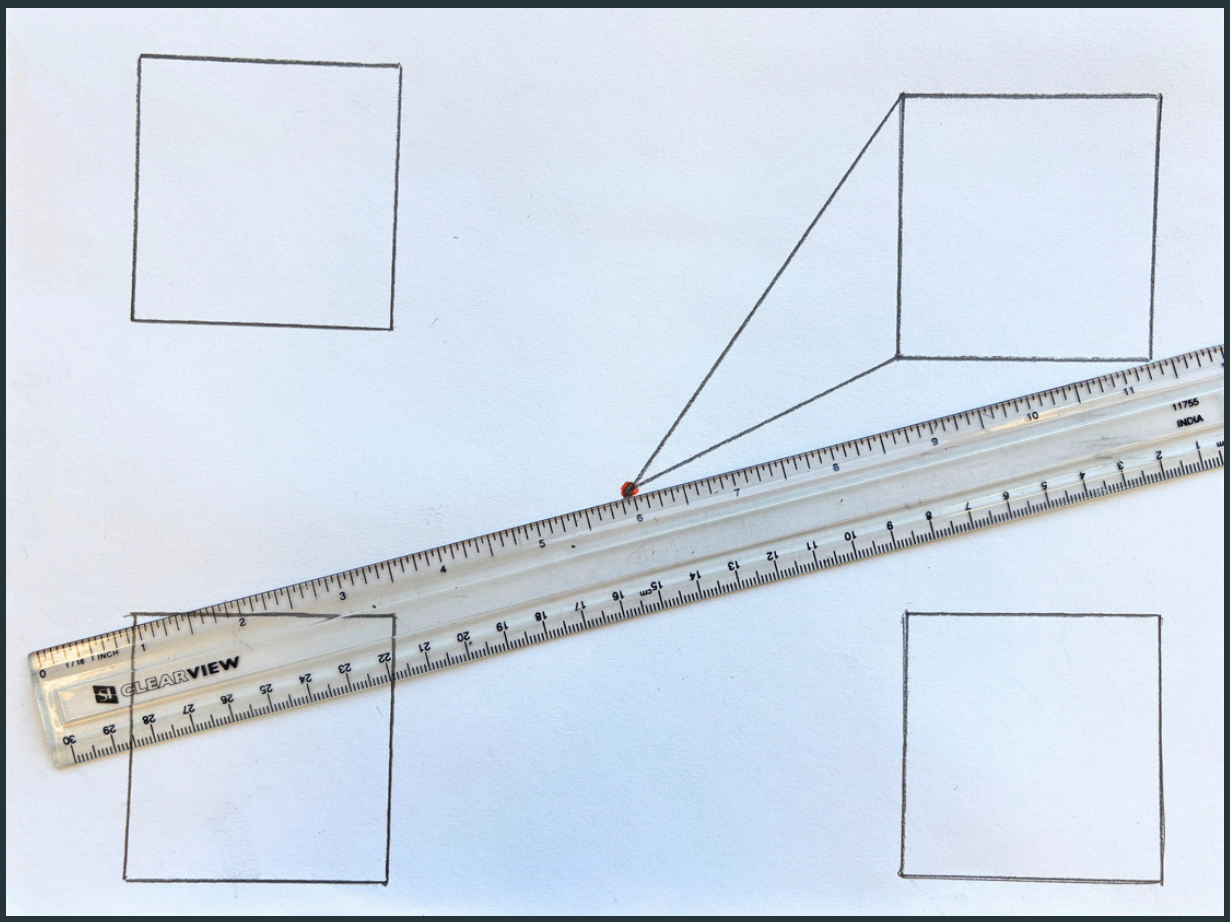
To get started, copy the image below and follow along step by step.

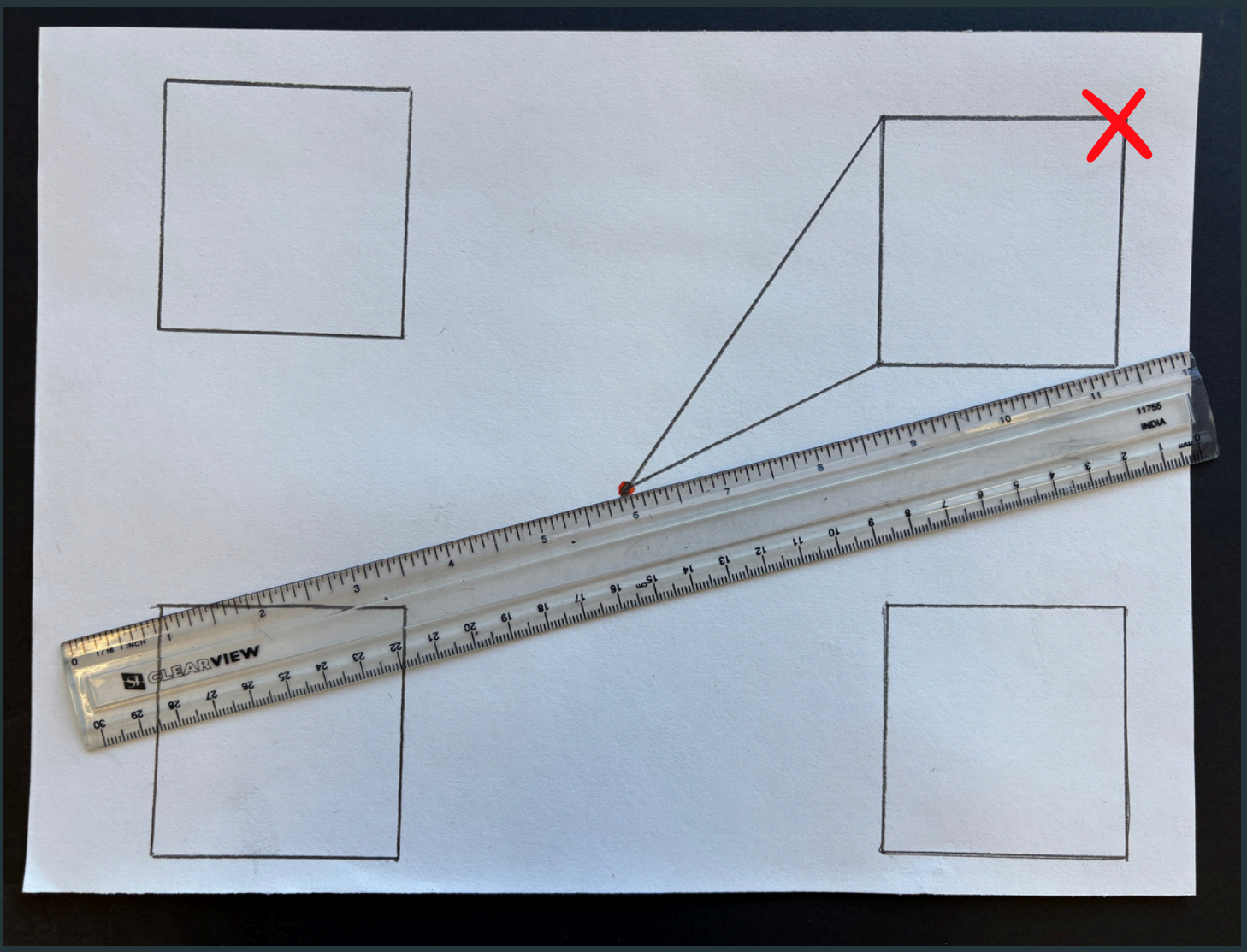
Begin by drawing a dot in the middle of the paper. We call this dot the Vanishing Point.



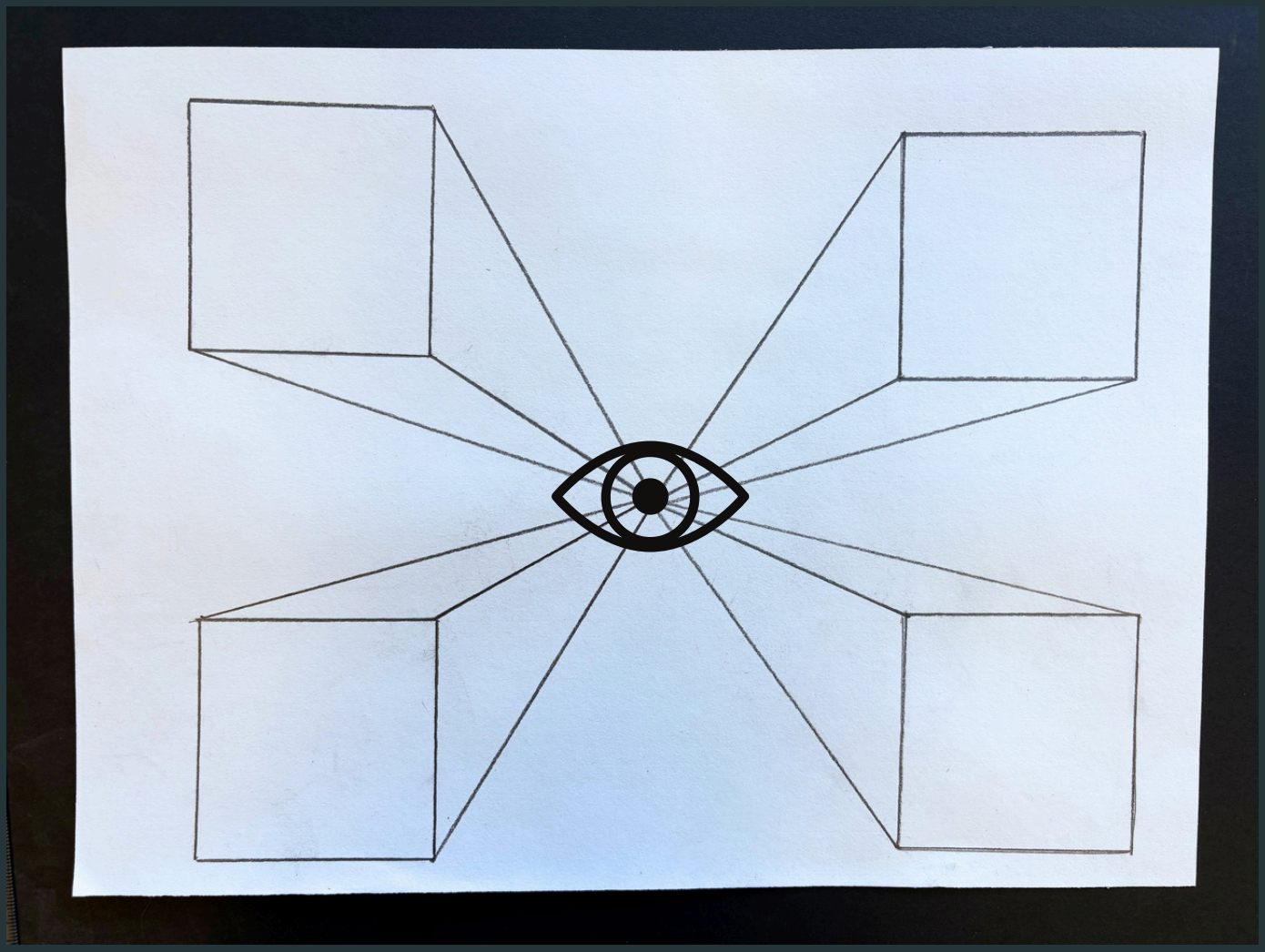
Next, draw four squares around the vanishing point like you see in the illustration here.

Now draw a straight line from the corners of each square to the vanishing point.





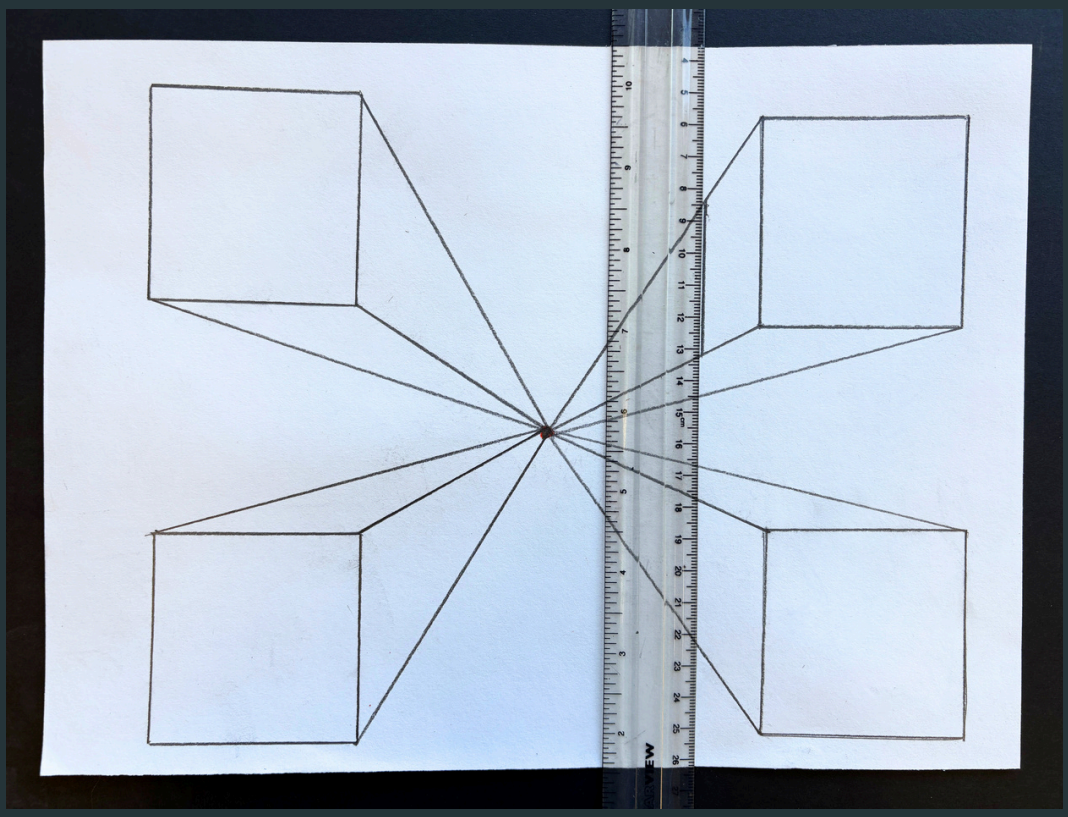
For each square, you will only connect the three corners that go directly to the point. Do not attach the far corners of the boxes.



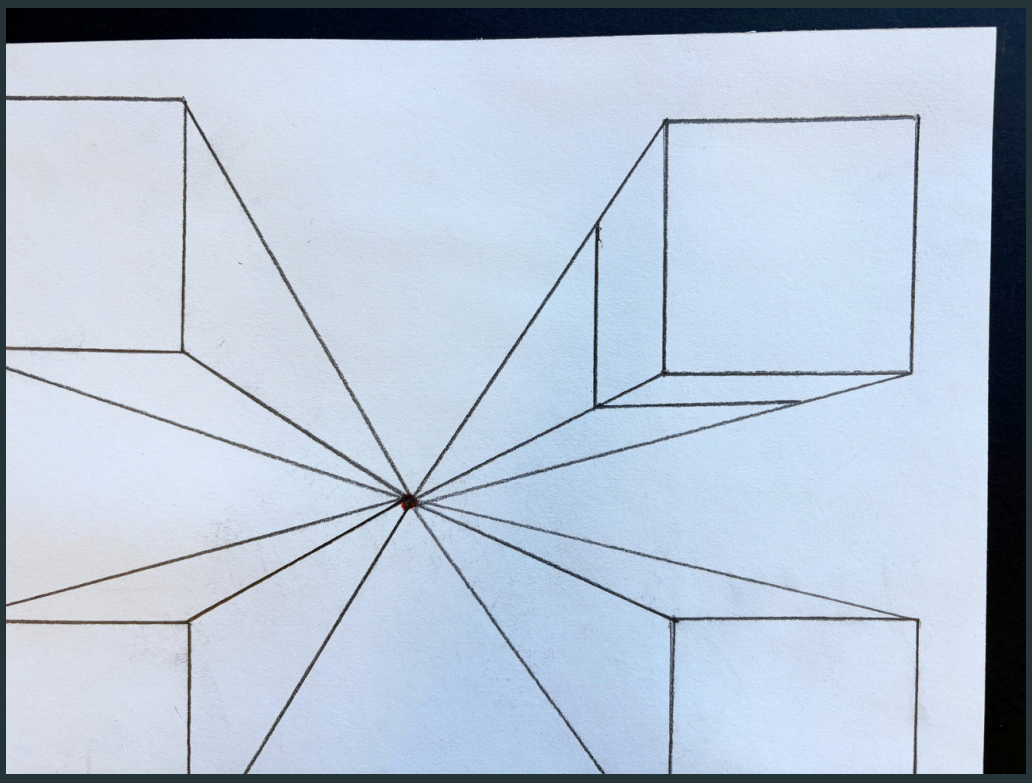
Remember that the vanishing point represents your point of view - Think of it as your eye.

If something is above the point it will look like you’re looking up at it and if it is below the point it will look like you’re looking down at it.

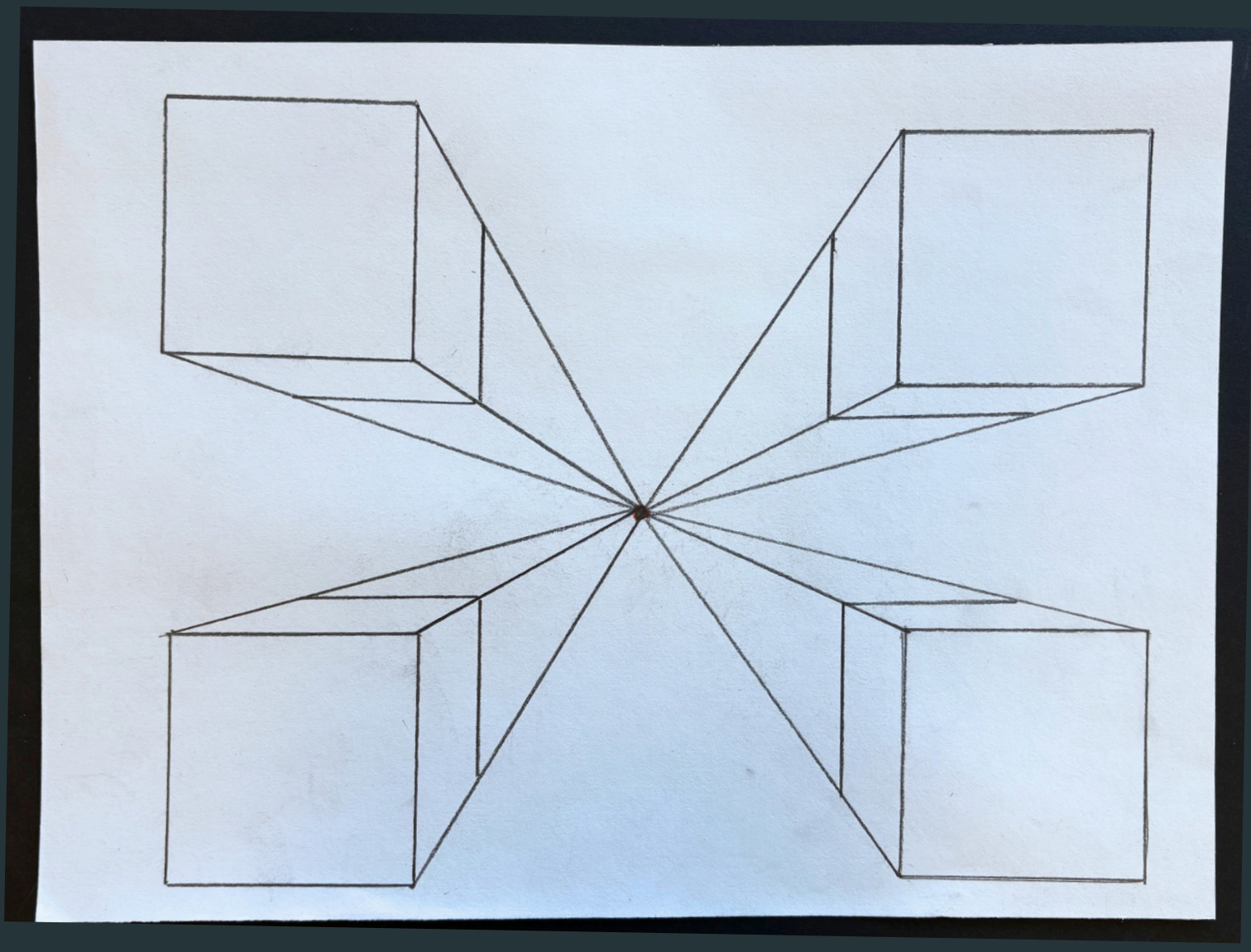
Now we want to close off each shape so that they become cubes.



To do this, you will be drawing lines that are perfectly parallel to the sides of your square.

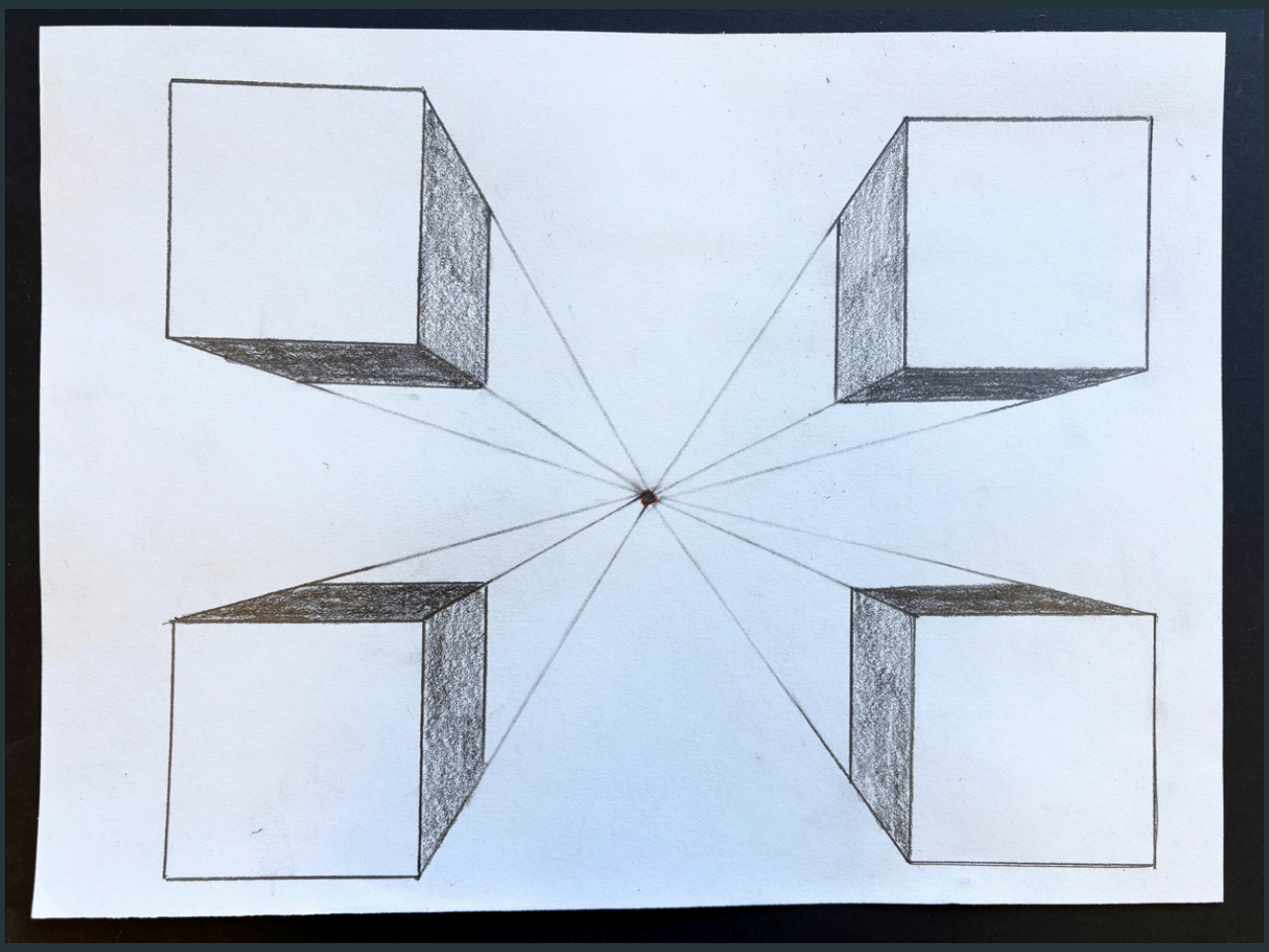


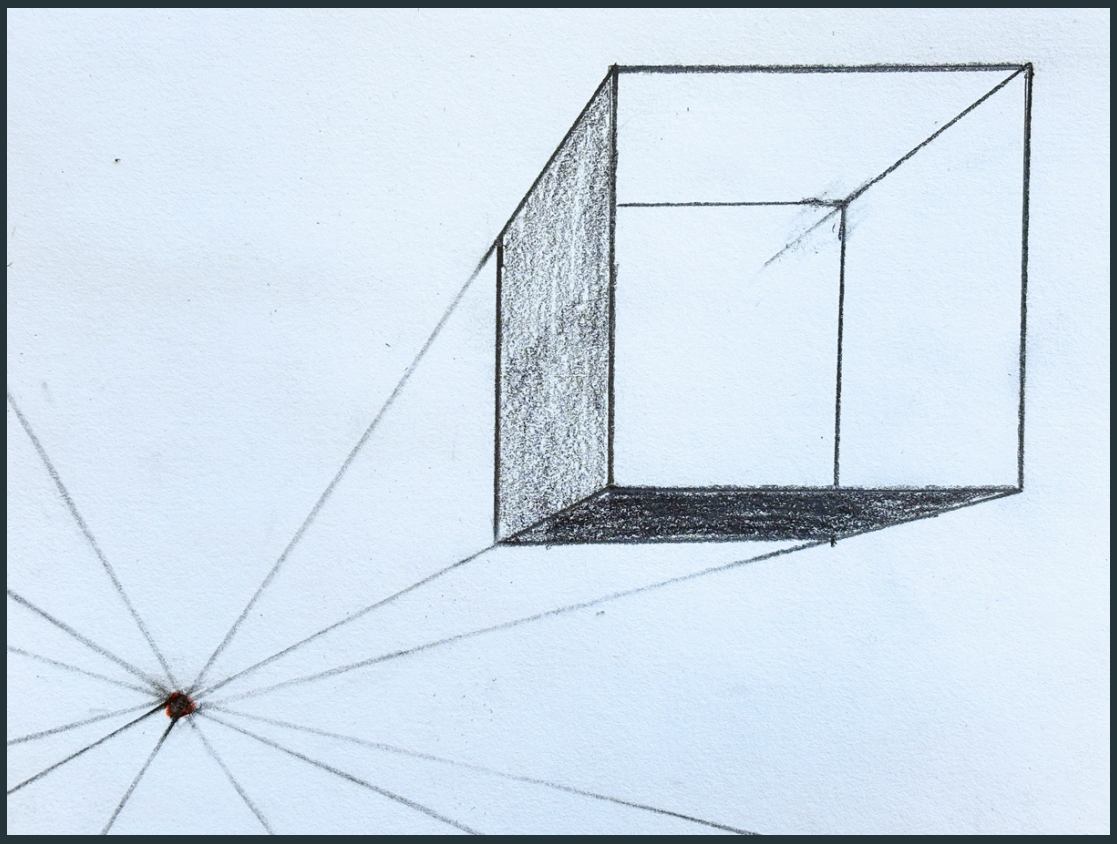
Now repeat this step with each of the 4 squares.



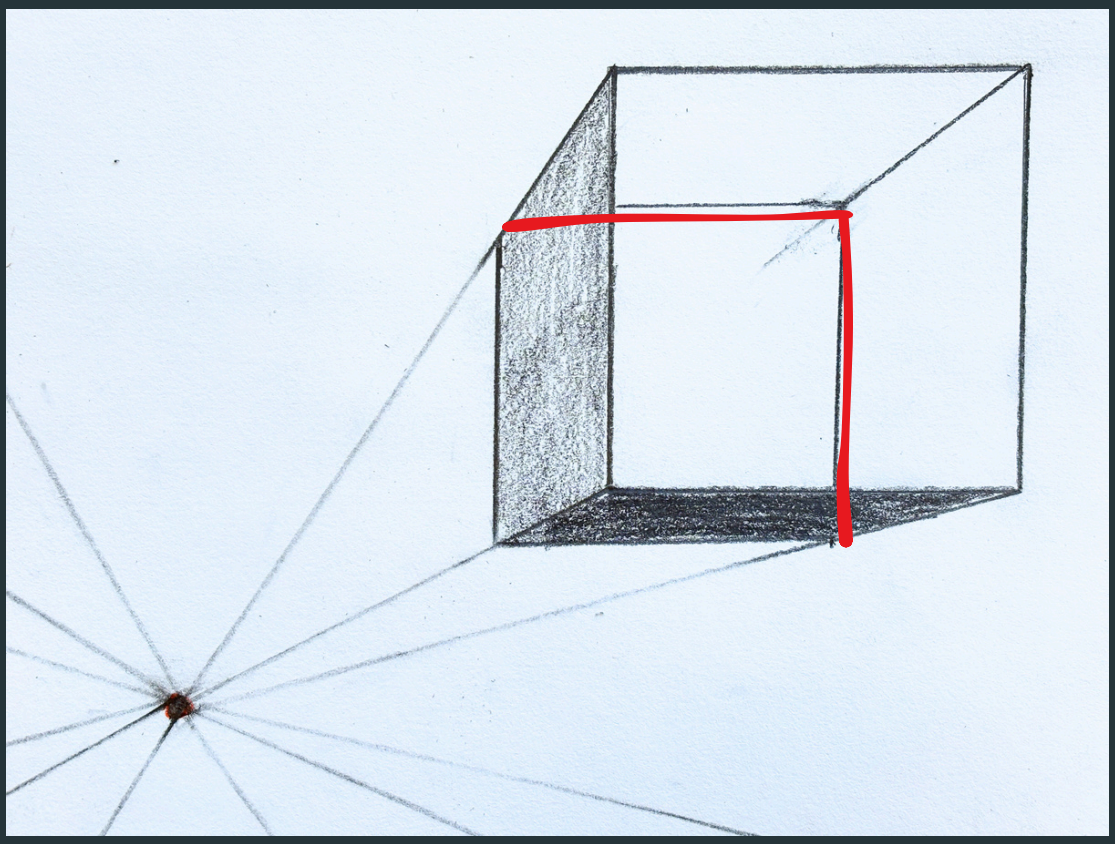
And erase the lines that you no longer need.

Now you can add some shading. Leave one side light, make one side dark, and make the third side a medium value.

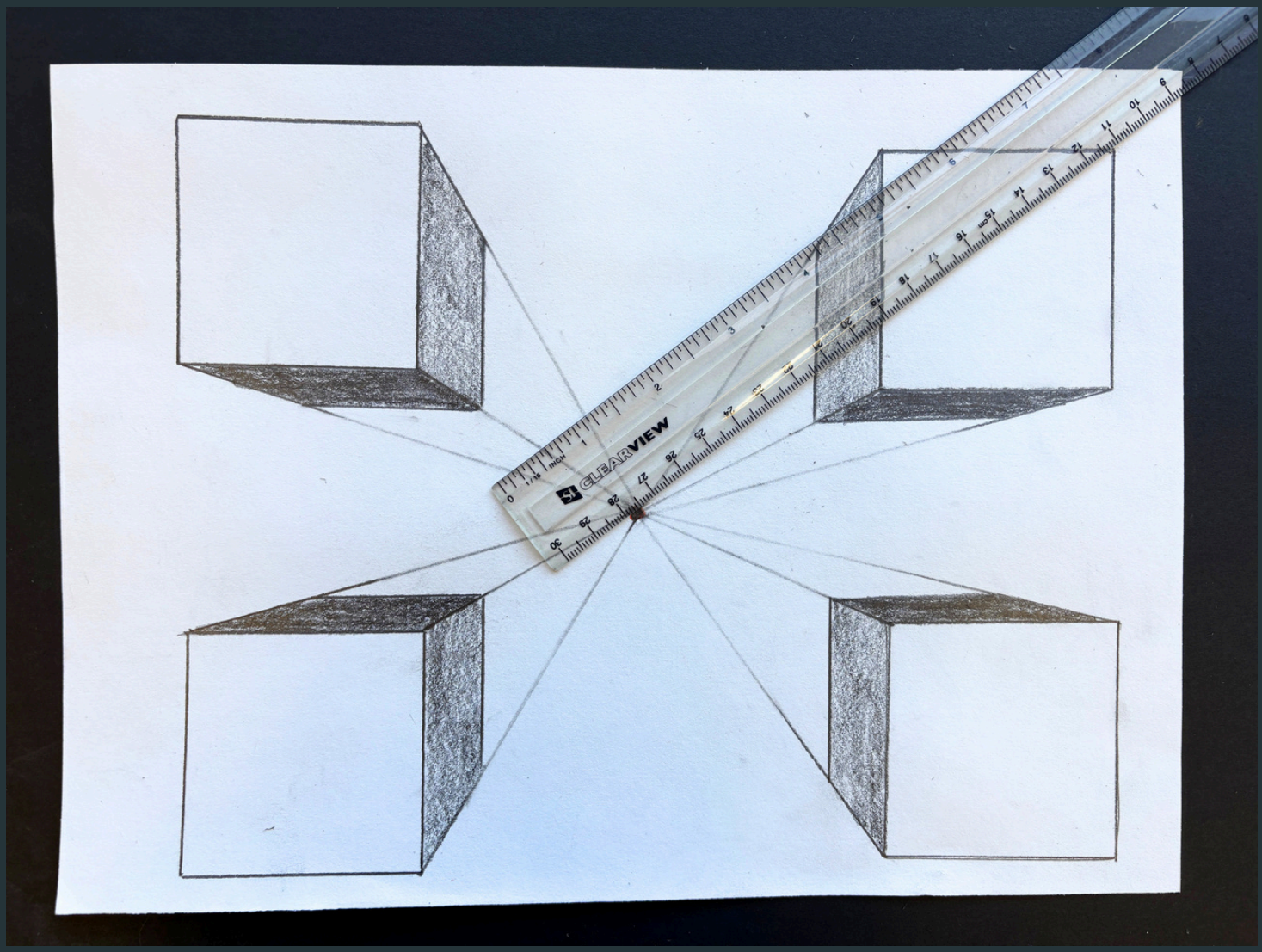




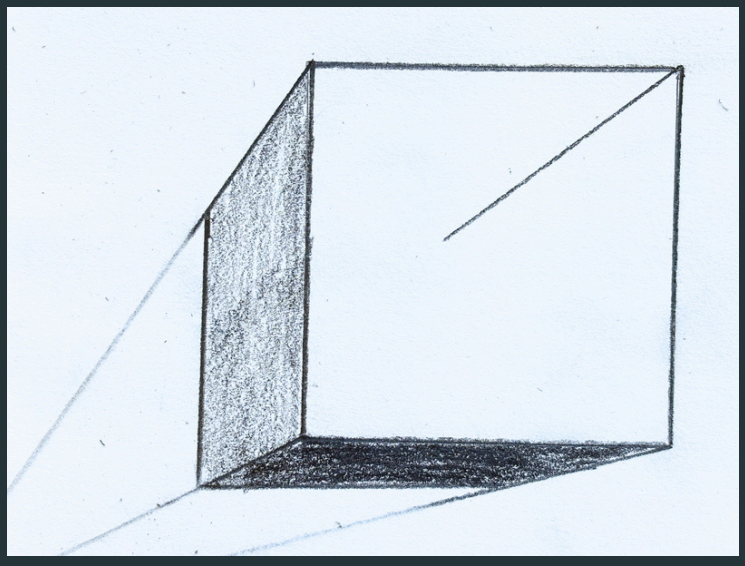
Close off the shape by drawing lines parallel to the other vertical and horizontal lines.
They should attach to the back corners of the box (red lines)to make the shape a consistent width.



Now we are going to make the box appear hollow.



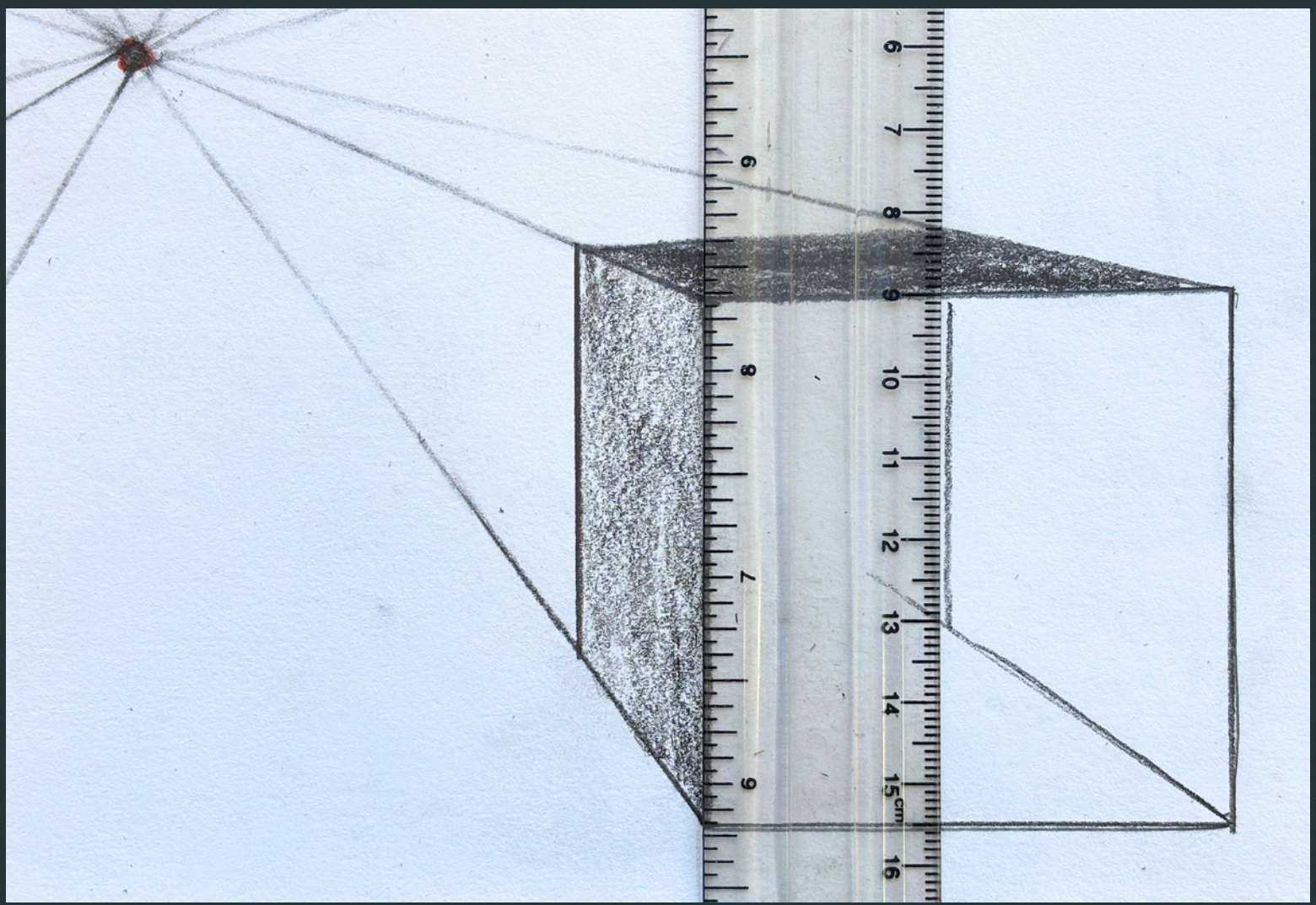
Attach the ruler and draw a line from the far corner where we did not attach a line at first.

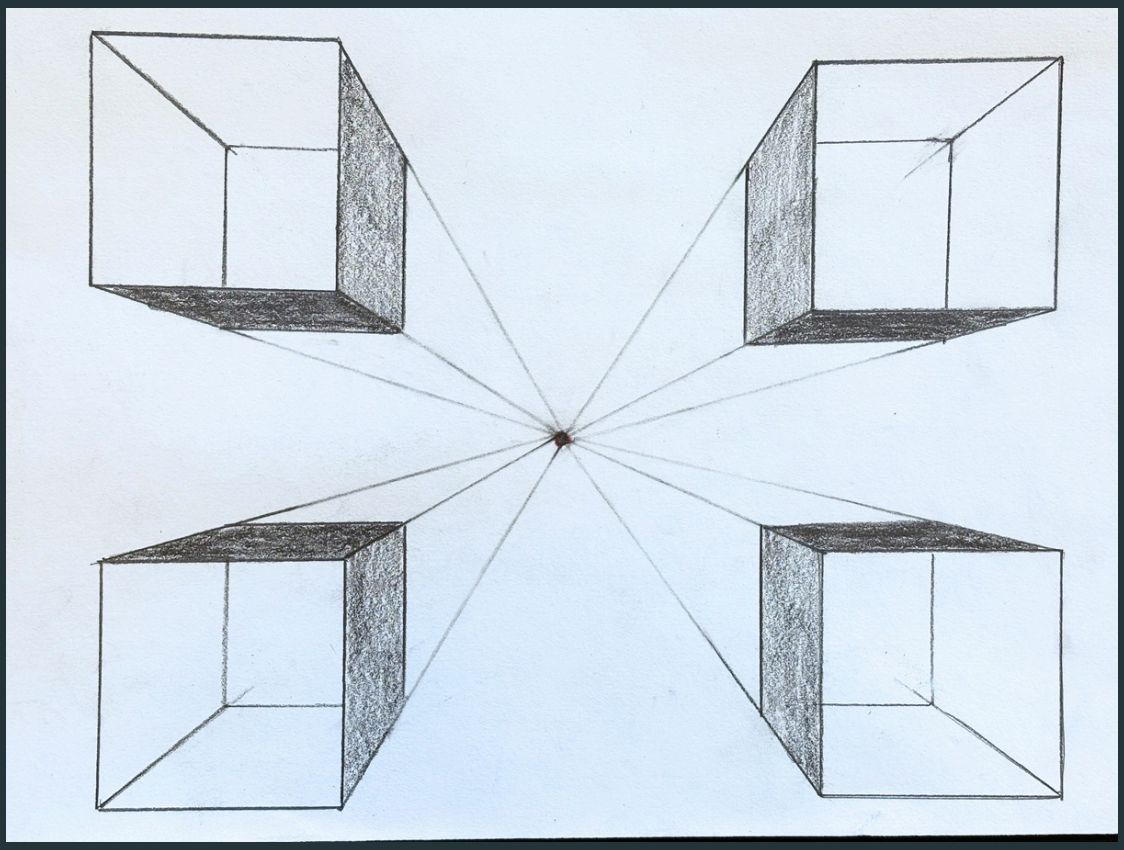


Continue on with the other boxes but make sure to attach the correct corner for each box.

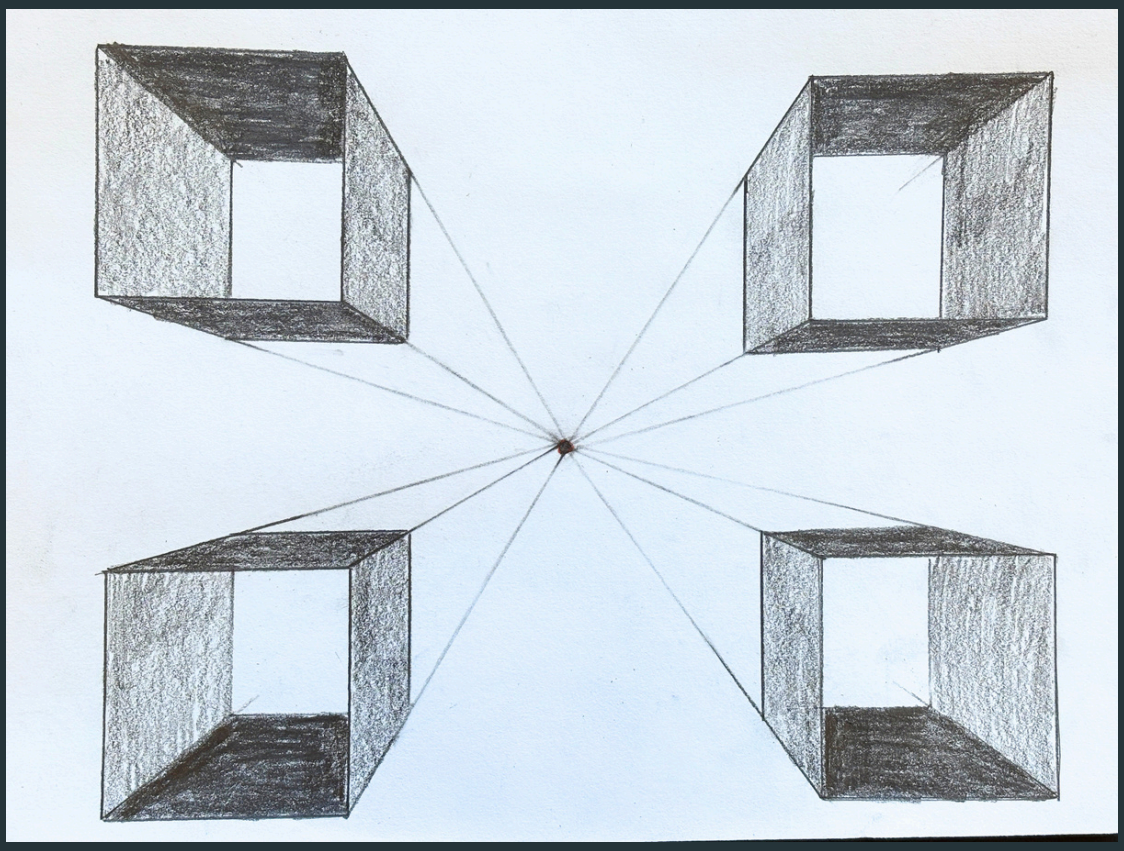
For the top right box you will attach the top right corner (above).

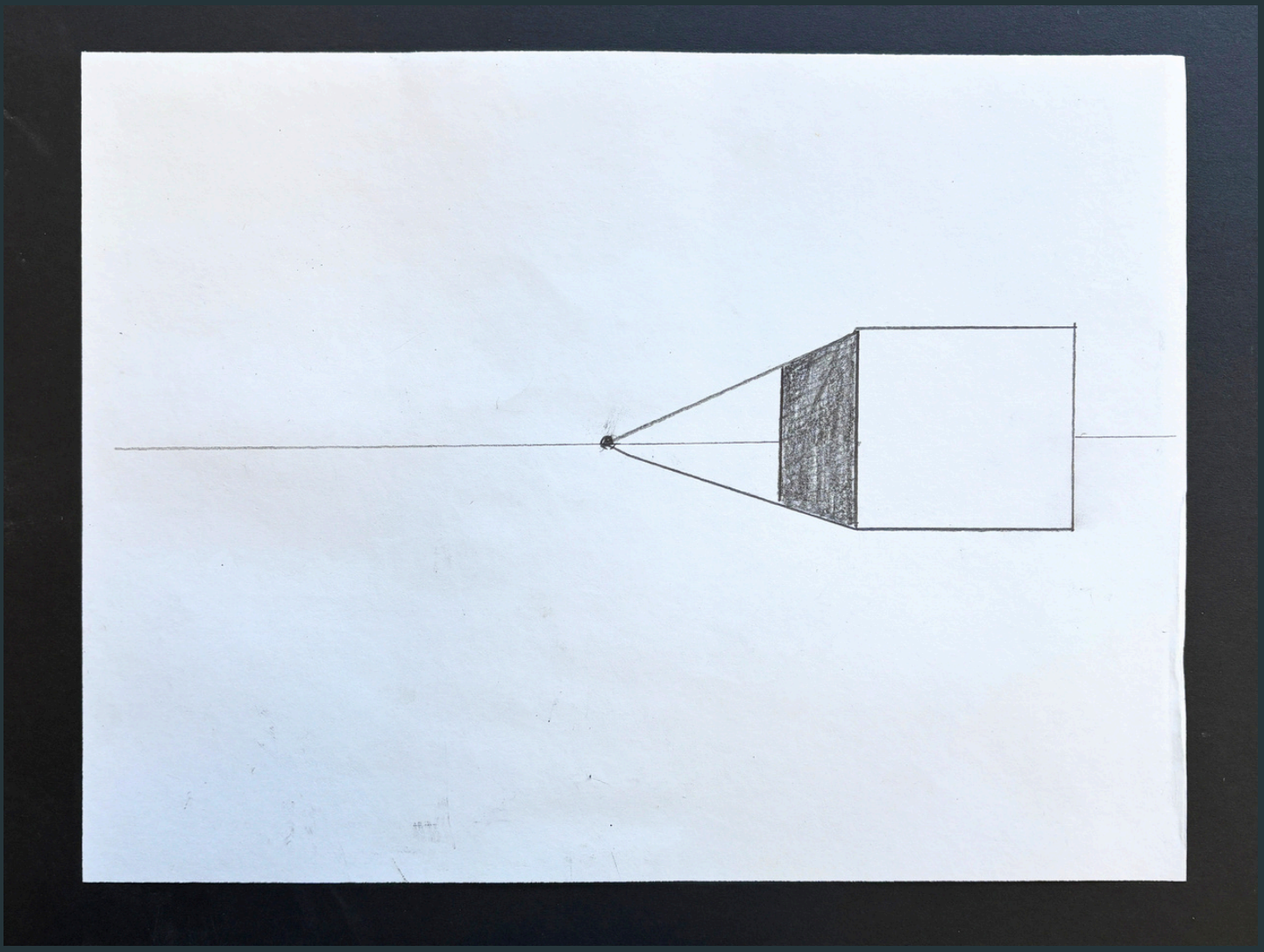
For the bottom right box you will attach the bottom right corner (below).





Once the lines are connected, add shading to the inside of the boxes.

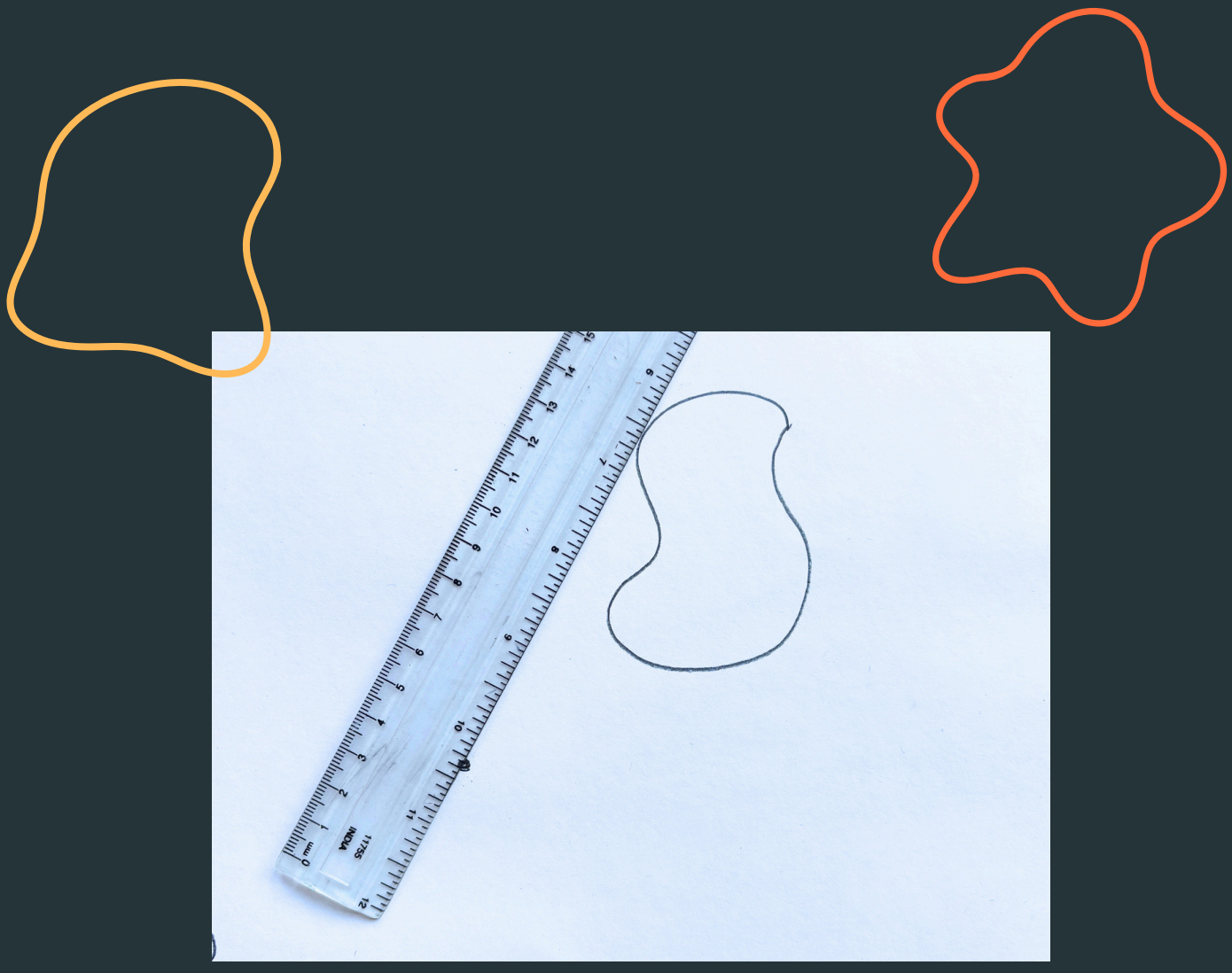




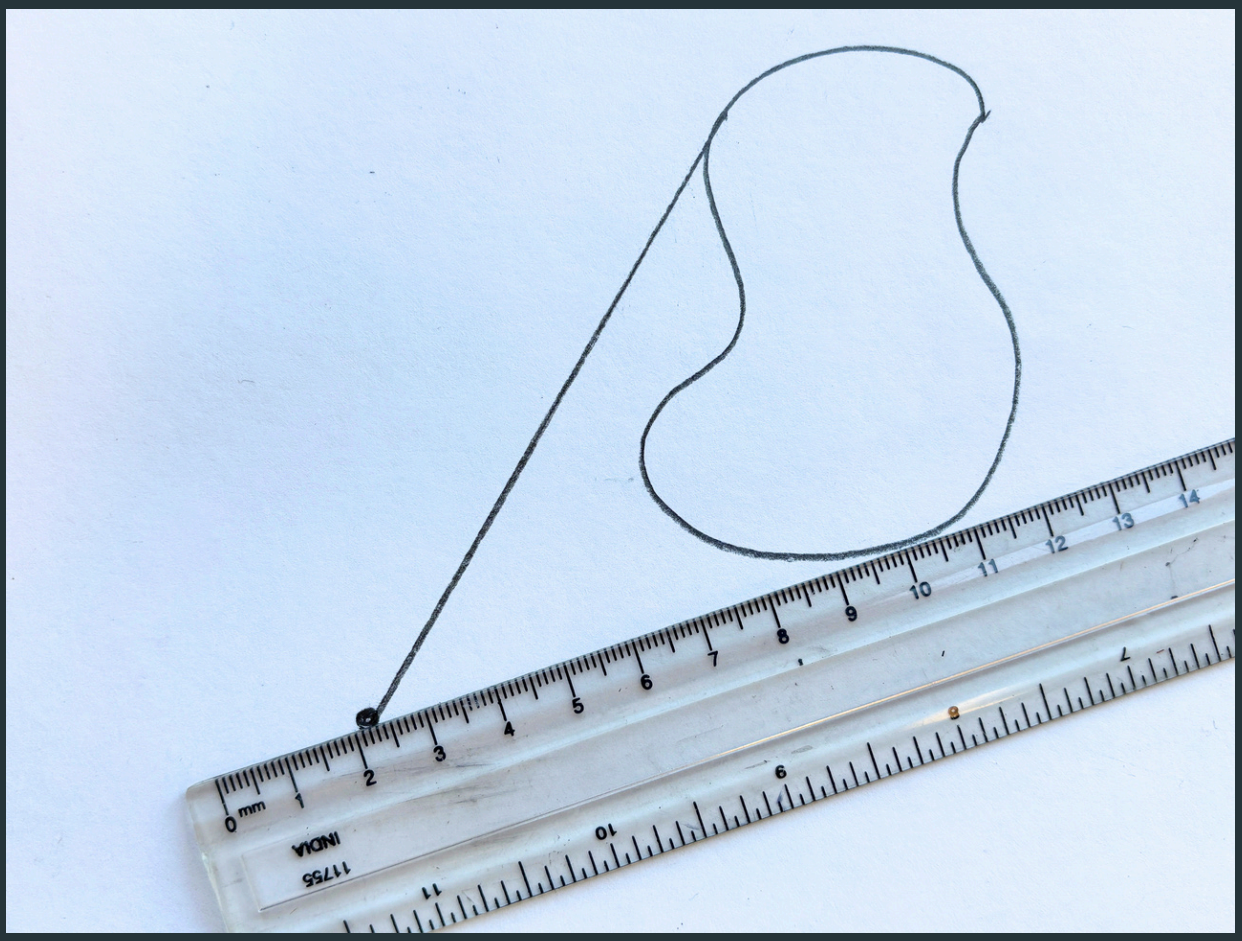
Keep in mind that if you are drawing a square that falls on the horizon line, that means that it is even with your eye level. In this case, you will not see the top or bottom of the shape.

What about curves?

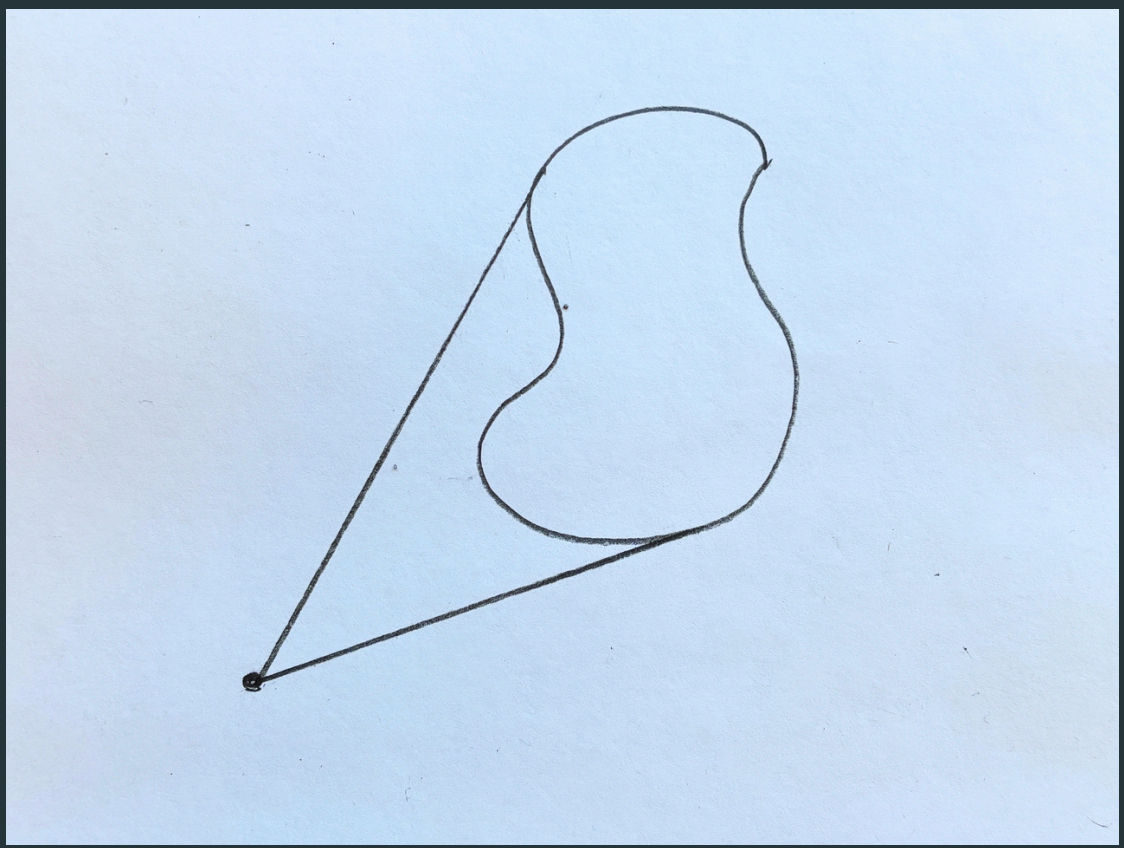
Now that you have learned how to connect corners on geometric shapes we can apply the same ideas to organic shapes that do not have defined corners.

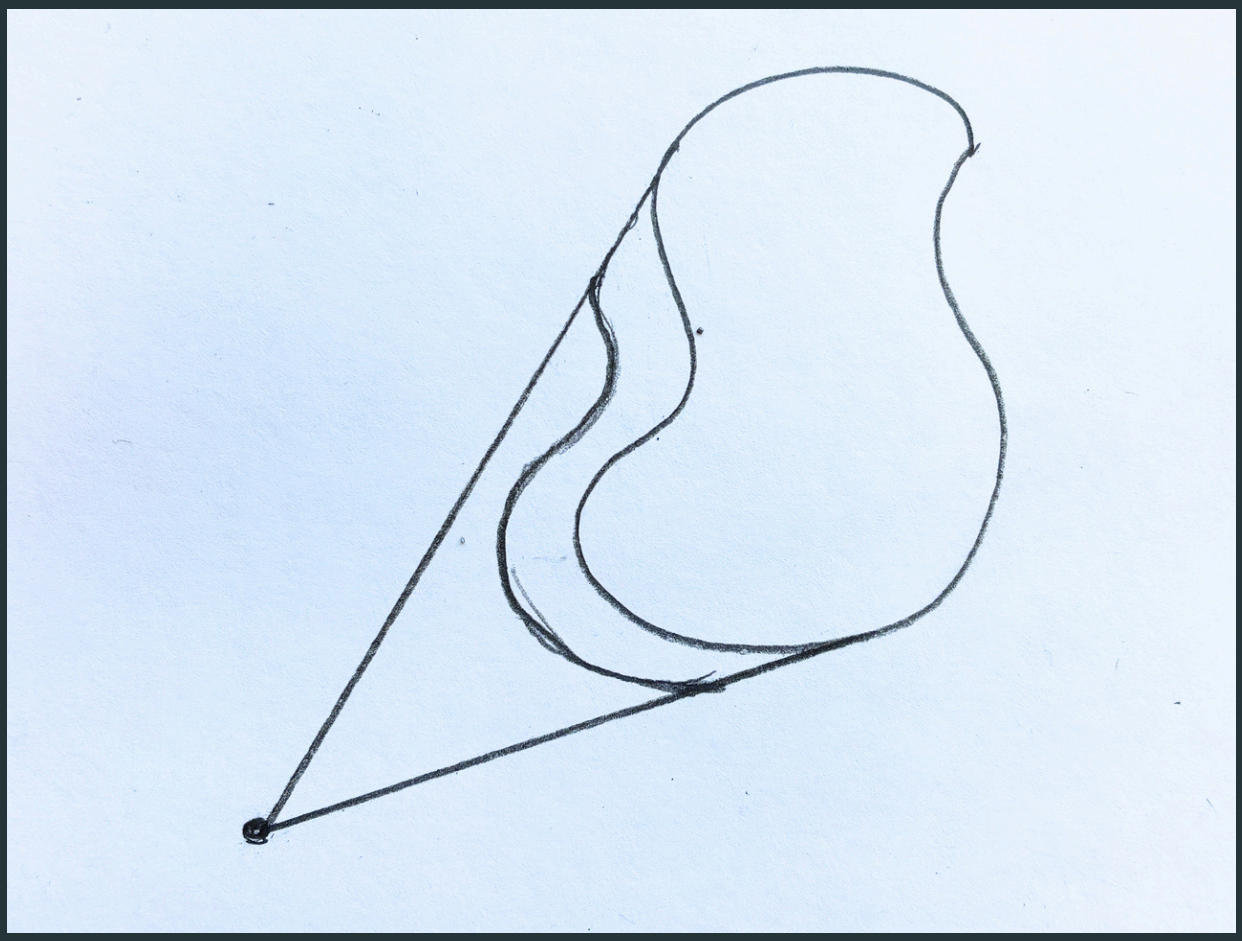


Start by attaching your ruler to the vanishing point and rotating the other end toward the shape.
As soon as you touch the shape, stop there and draw a line.



Repeat this step on the other side of the shape.

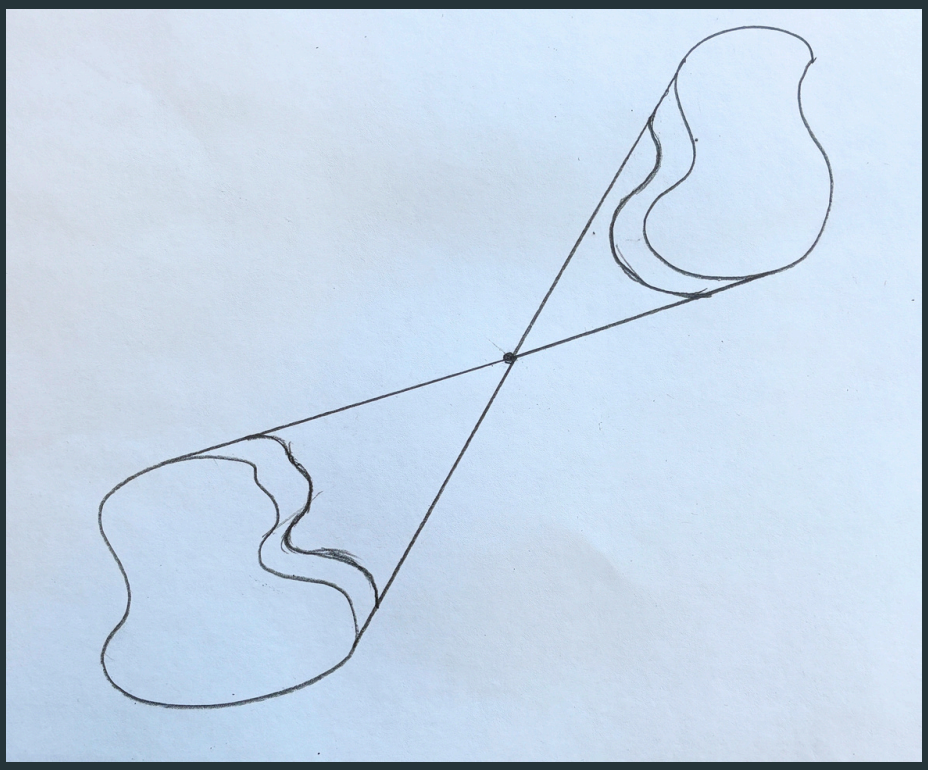




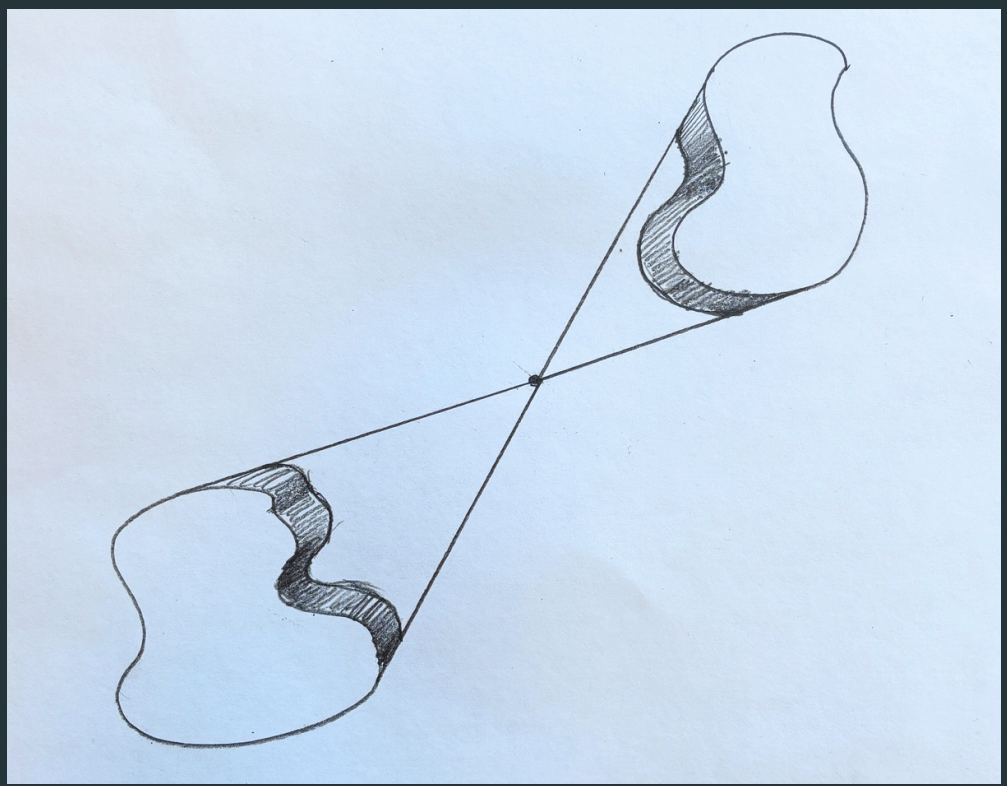
Now close off the shape with a curved line that stays even with the side of the shape.

Whatever the shape does between the lines should just be repeated

Try a few random shapes of your own above and below the vanishing point

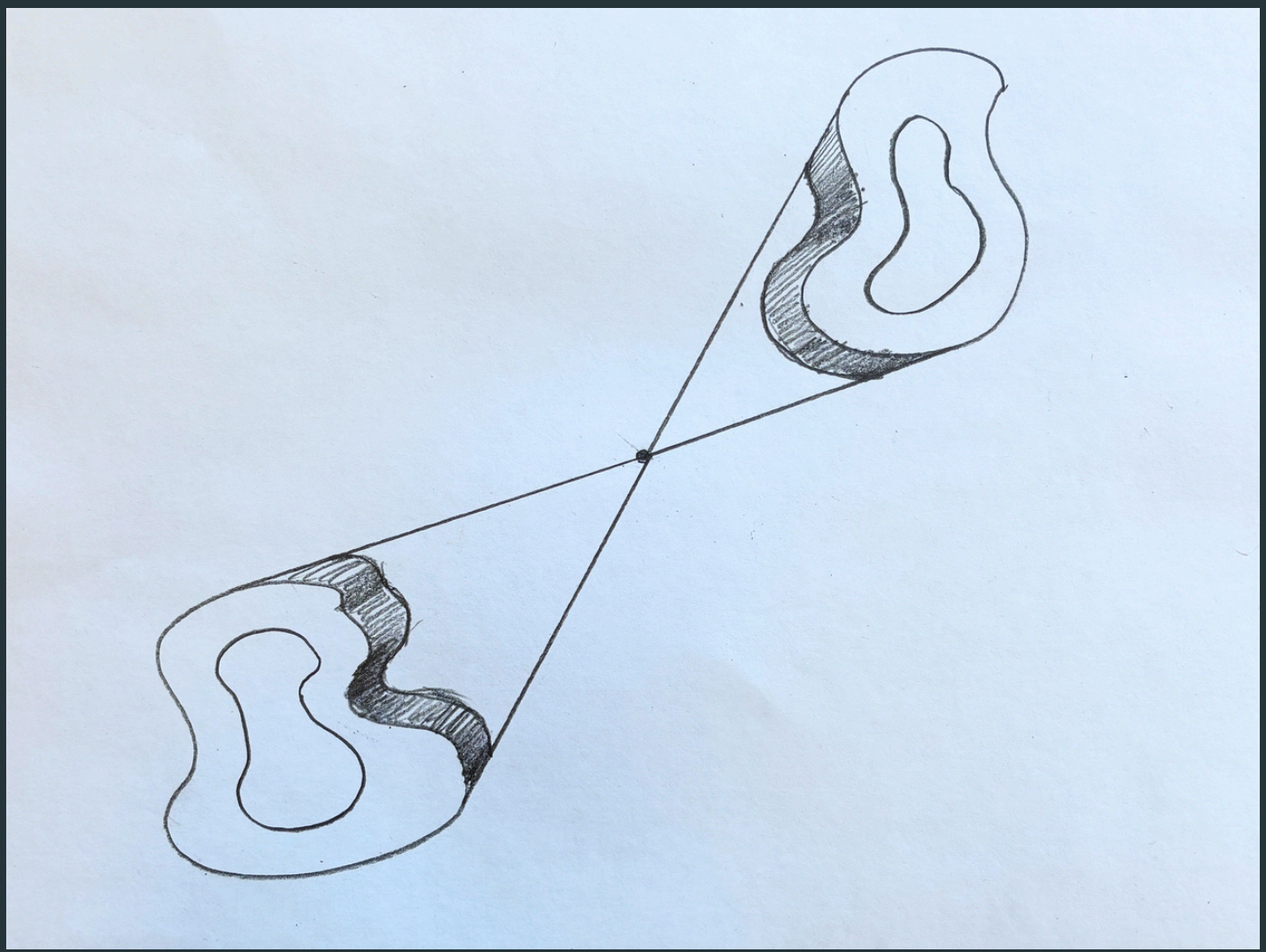


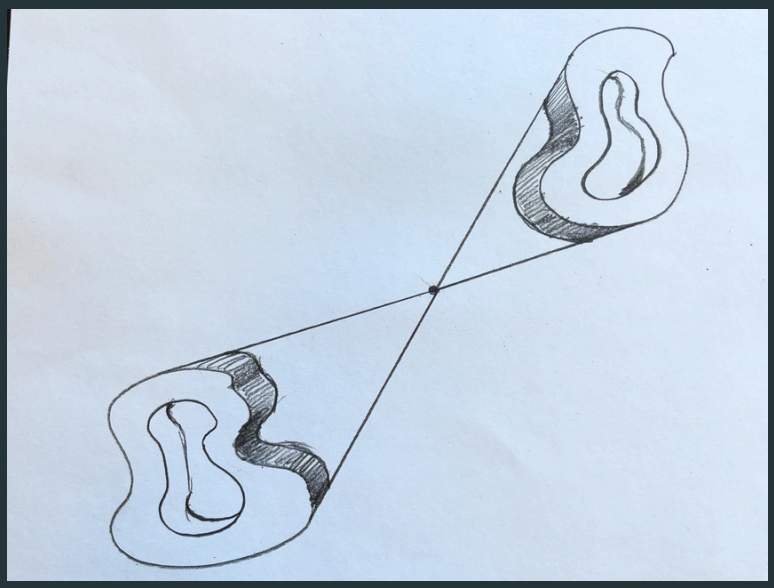
Add shading when you are ready



We can also give these forms some windows.

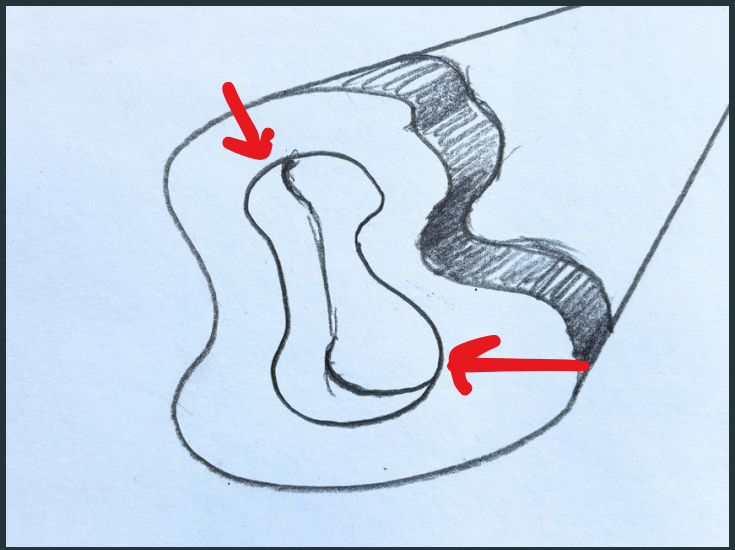
On the inside of the form, make a shape similar to the outline shape that you started with.

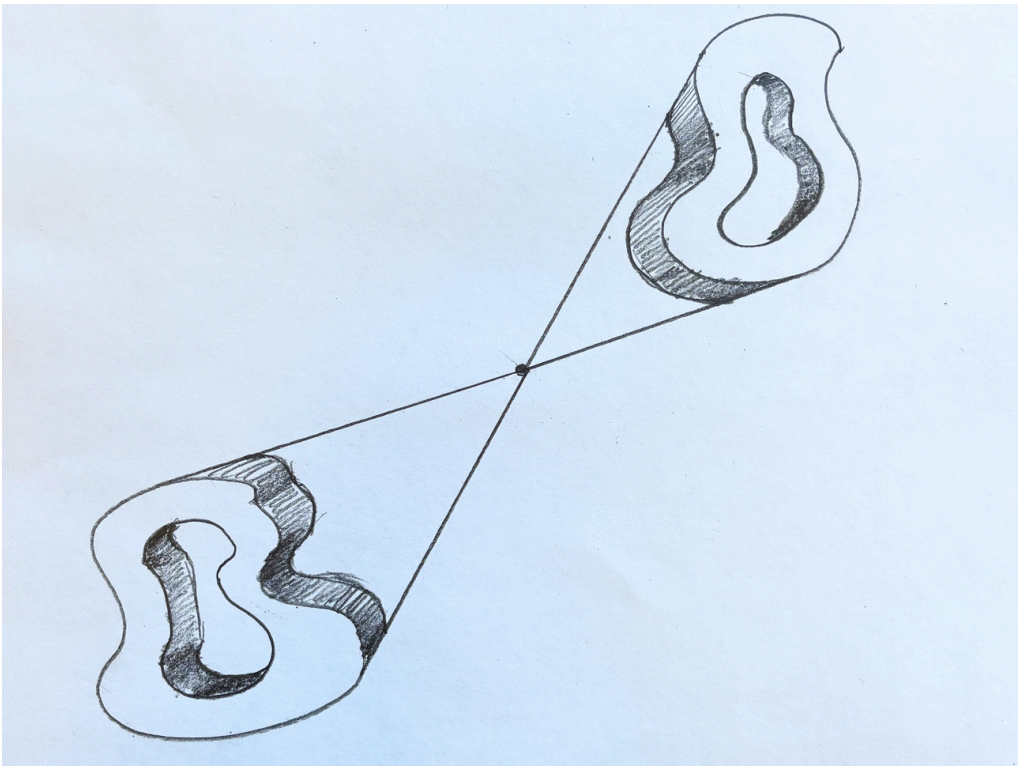




Next, you want to echo the shape of the inside curves. There is often confusion on where to start and stop the inside of the form.

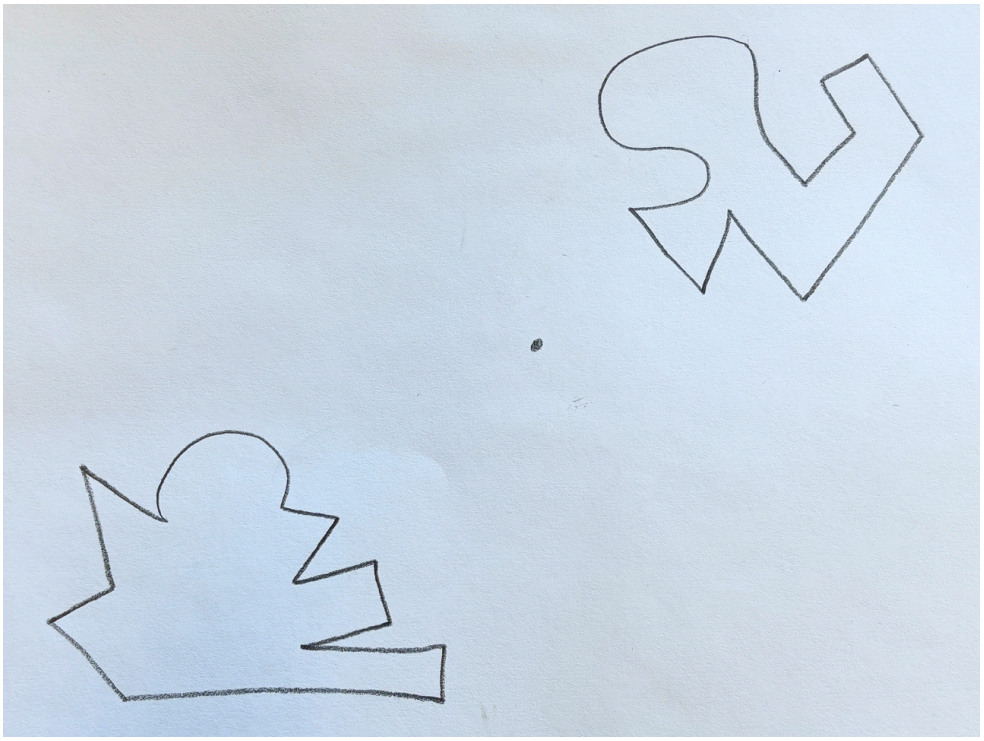
Remember that you can only see one side of an object at a time. Wherever your straight line touches the shape, the outside of the form disappears.
Just cross over to the inside at that point because that is where it will reappear.

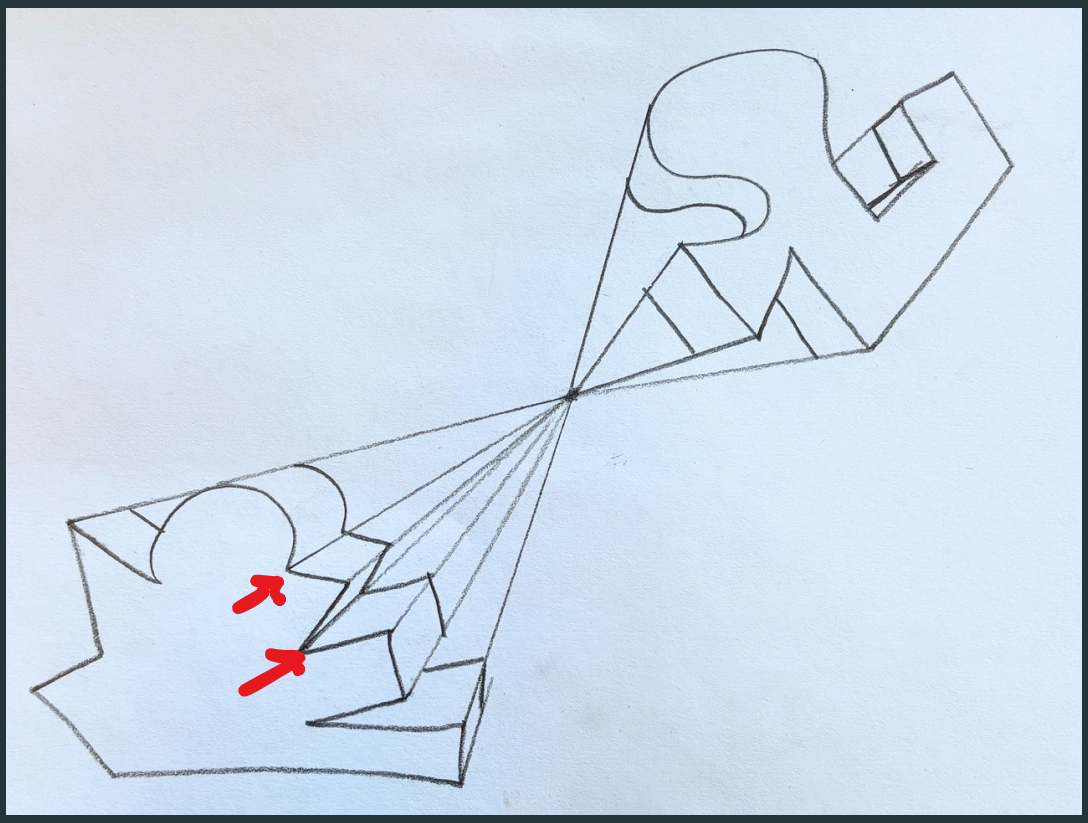




Shade the inside of the shape to give it even more form.

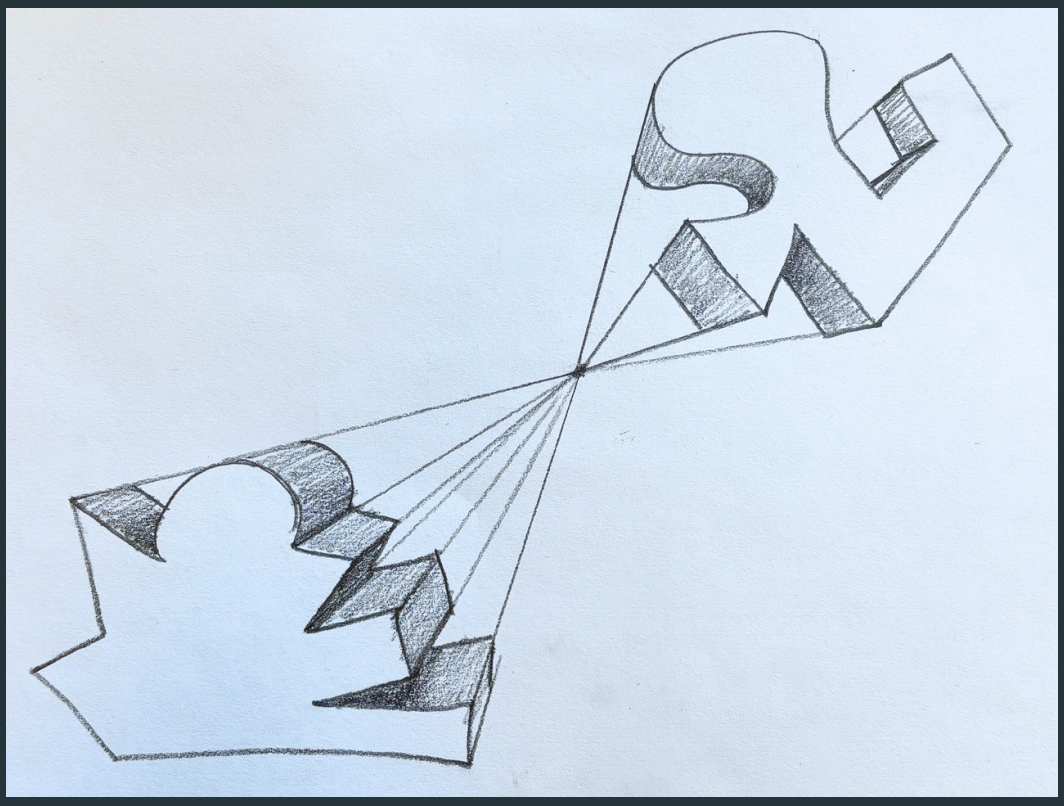
Try some more complex using a combination of curves and straight lines.

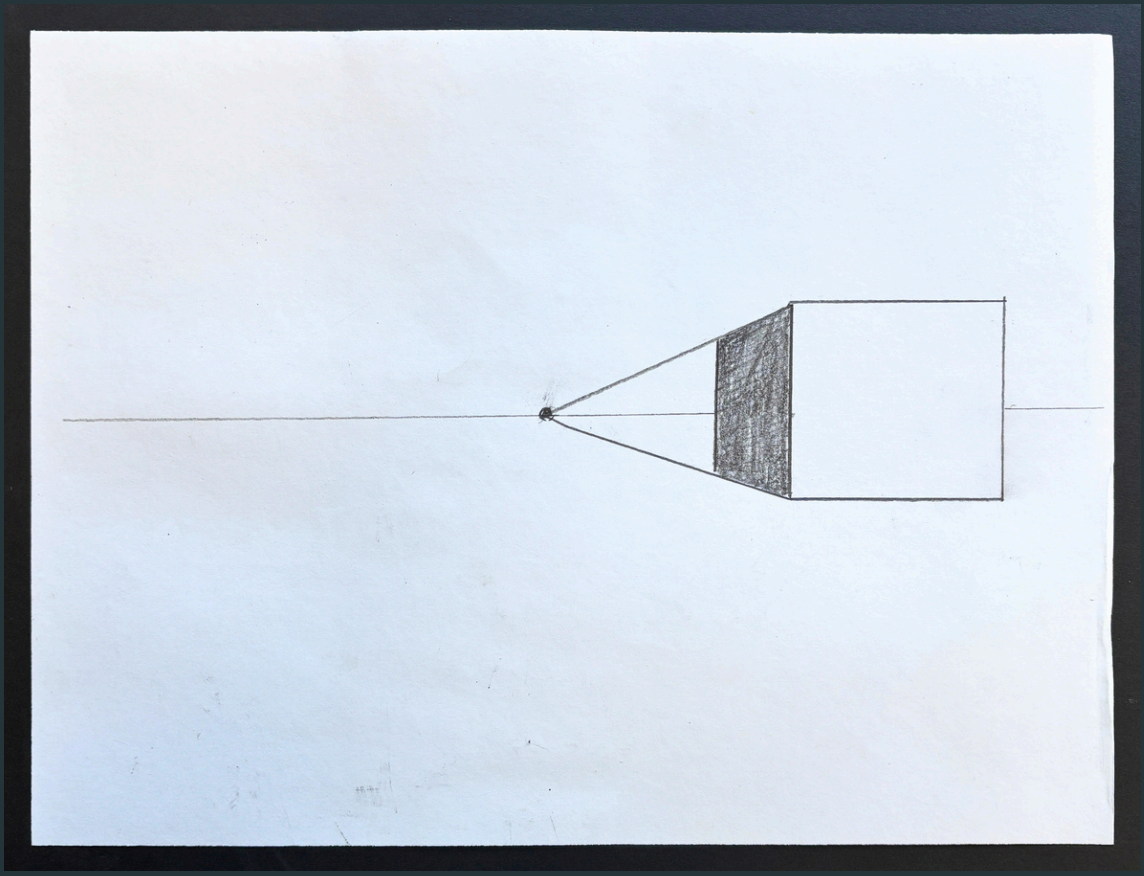




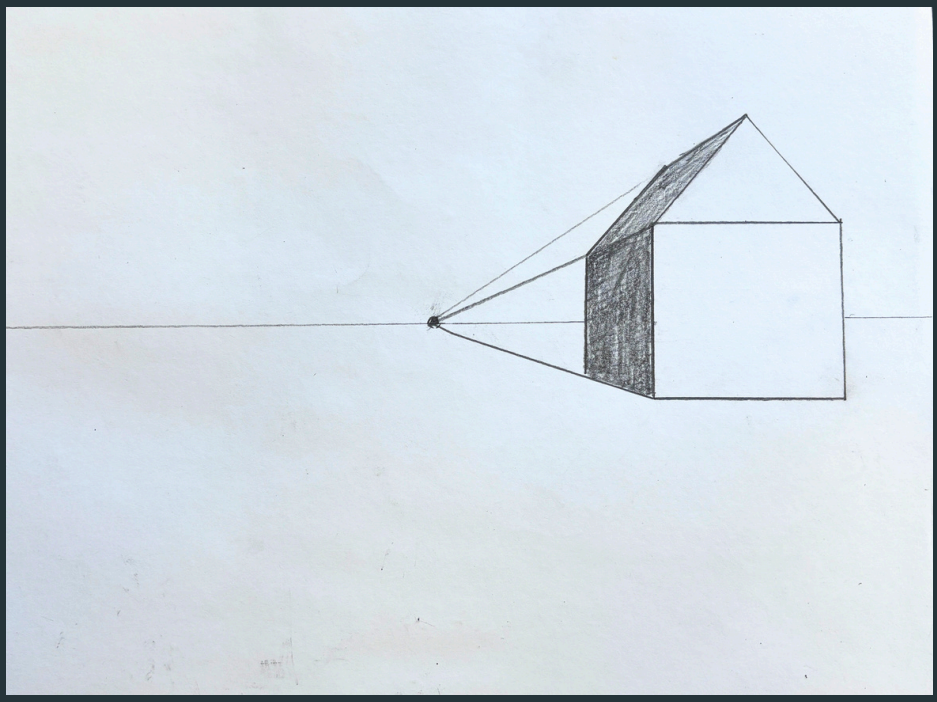
Don’t forget your inside corners

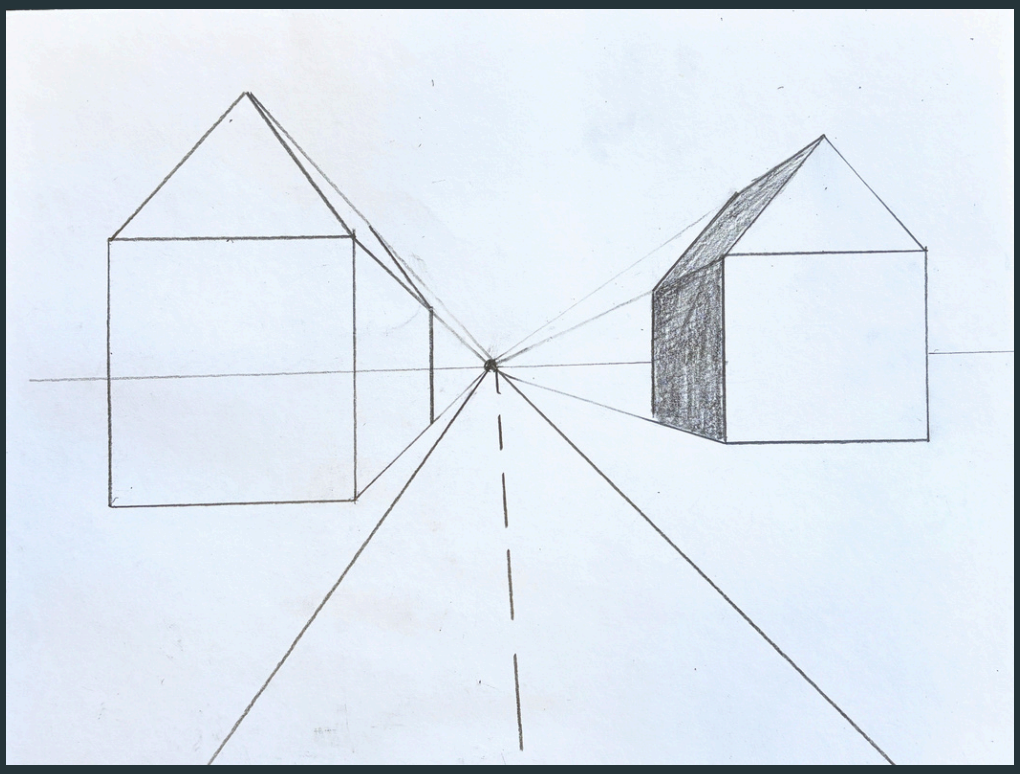
Shade them accordingly and feel free to add even darker shadows where it will help to pronounce the shape.



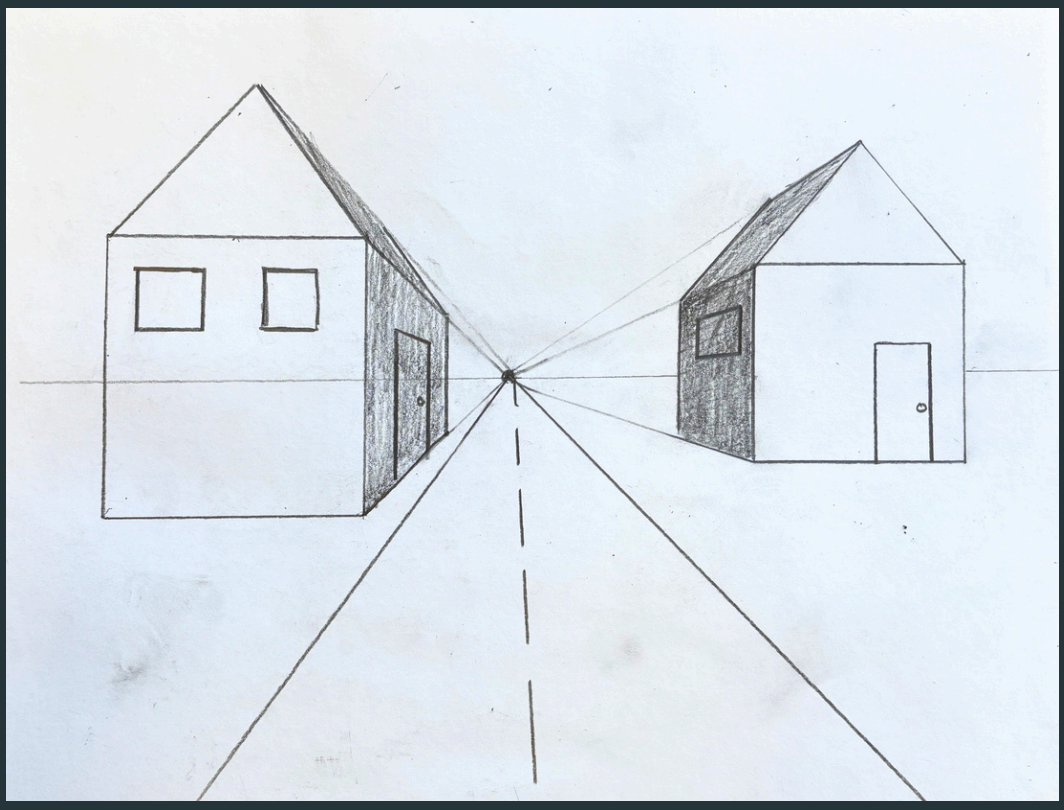


Revisiting our eye-level cube from before, we can see how easily the shape can be transformed into something more complex.





With just a few extra elements you can take all that you have learned so far and create a fully developed landscape scene.



More on that in the complete 1 and 2 point perspective guide.