

Doodling and Noodling

Generating and Transforming / Doodling / Noodling / Drawing With Letterforms / Inventing Icons / Mixing and Matching

Most of us doodle. While on the phone or in a meeting, we make squiggles or geometric shapes or sketchy images. The fact that we can do this while carrying on a conversation shows that doodles don't require much thinking. We move our pencils naturally and spontaneously, and we also don't worry a whole lot how our doodles look. This frame of mind — spontaneous, nonjudgmental, relaxed — is what runners and tennis players call “being in the zone.” This is *the ground state for creativity*. It is home for the creator.

In this chapter I introduce a two-step process that will help you unpack your natural creativity. I call it doodling and noodling or, more accurately, “doodling *and then* noodling.”

Think of the doodle as the first stage — the generating stage. To doodle is to get something on paper, no matter how rough, incomplete or simple.

The second stage, which I call “noodling,” is the transforming stage in which you tinker with your doodle. “Noodling” is an old illustrator's

expression. If an illustrator was particularly good at precise and detailed work, he or she would be called a “noodler,” as in “He can noodle like a madman,” or “Don't noodle it to death.” Noodling includes such operations as shading, silhouetting, reversing, repeating and many others. These operations refine, develop or radically change your original doodle.

By separating these two functions you discover that each involves different attitudes and different mechanics. You can actually feel a shift as you move from doodling to noodling. Doodling is pure play — often aimless and free. Noodling operations are more often rule-based, involving a set of discreet steps. The steps may be simple, but the results are often complex and surprising.

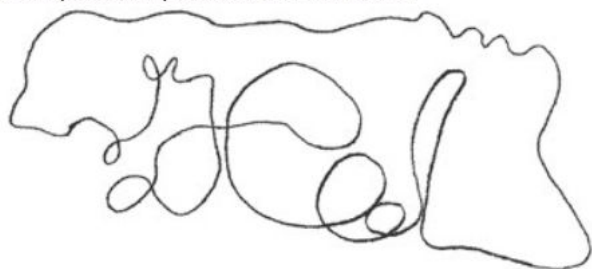
Principles of Doodling

1. Suspend judgment. Doodling isn't art. It's just doodling.
2. Vary your doodles. If you're like most people, you tend to doodle the same thing over and over. Now it's time to expand your repertoire.
3. Practice. Every new skill is first learned consciously. Then, over time, the operations are passed to the subconscious as they become automatic. That's when you're actually doodling.

4. Doodle on old envelopes and scrap paper rather than “nice” paper. You’ll feel freer and more willing to experiment.
5. Save your doodles in a large envelope. Now and then, go through them and pick out the most interesting or unusual ones. Put these in a second envelope. These may be source material for later work.

the two-step “doodling and noodling” process

Swiss artist Paul Klee sometimes began a drawing by moving his pencil in a free, semi-random manner that he called “taking a line on a walk.” Let’s start with a simple example based on that idea.



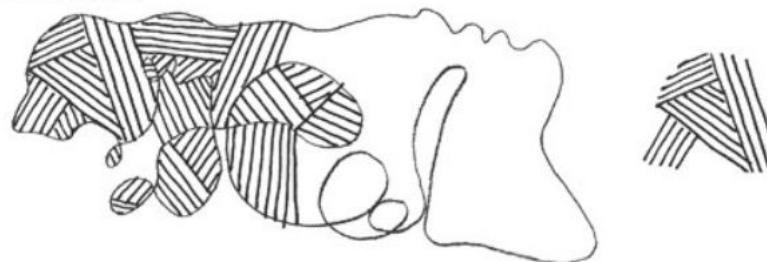
1 DOODLING

You begin by letting your pencil go in any direction it wants — but taking care to end up where you started, so that the line encloses a shape. A

doodle produced in this spontaneous way might look something like this.

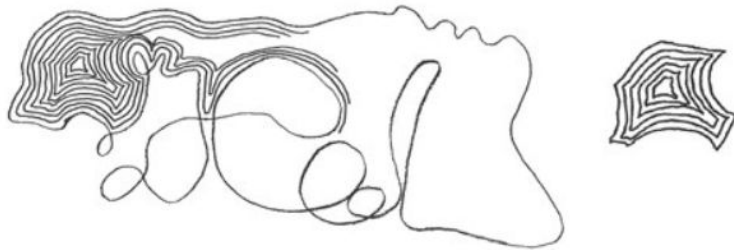
2 NOODLING

Next, you “decorate” your original doodling in a deliberate and controlled manner. A doodle can be transformed in any number of ways by various noodling operations, such as the examples shown here and on the next page.



PATCHES

Straight, parallel, evenly spaced lines laid down at different angles



CONCENTRIC

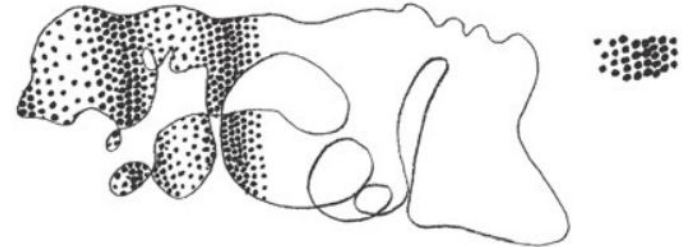
Lines are parallel to the outer edge of the doodle, creating progressively smaller concentric shapes.



UNDULATING

Semi-parallel lines are drawn widely spaced initially, in graceful curves; then they grow closer together as they turn sharply, creating a 3-D

effect.



DOTS

Dots with variable spacing are laid out in rows or other patterns.



PINWHEEL

Stripes radiate from a point on the edge of each shape; alternate stripes are filled in.