

## How do you doodle?



*There's a lot more to all that seemingly random scribbling than meets the eye*

You're in a meeting, someone has been talking for half an hour about a subject that isn't relevant to you and, whoops – you've just covered your whole notebook page in scribbles. Or perhaps you didn't, even though you wanted to, because isn't that what schoolchildren do? Wrong. Doodling is good for you, even if you're an adult.

### What's in a scribble?

Doodling is what we do when we're not really thinking about what we're doing. According to graphologist Tracey Trussell at handwriting analysis firm [handright.co.uk](http://handright.co.uk), it can be categorised as 'unrefined drawings or scribbles which we create subliminally'. The urge to doodle often results from being bored and Tracey believes it's 'a type of proactive daydreaming – a way for the brain to find an outlet'.

It's thought the desire to doodle is innate. Experts believe that humans used drawings before developing language, so perhaps scribbling is hardwired into the brain. Despite all the technology available to our fidgety fingertips, even now we still feel the need to doodle. There's something tangible about putting pen to paper and, whether you're an artist or not, doodling is a form of expression on a different level to anything else.

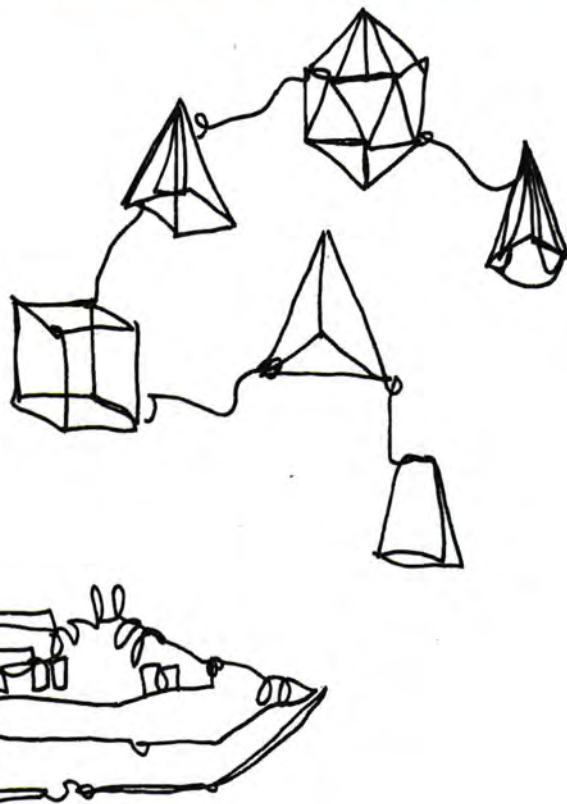
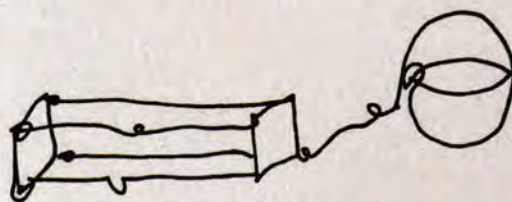
### True colours

Doodling is also pressure-free. It takes us back to that liberated state enjoyed as children, at a time in life when it's easier to try things out without wondering where they're going or worrying about wasting time on something fruitless.

This is all part of the magic, according to Tracey. 'Unlike handwriting,' she says, 'doodles are not composed for any particular recipient, which means they are unselfconscious, uncontrived and candid. However basic or mundane a doodle may appear, it has 100 per cent integrity.'

Perhaps that's why so many great ideas have been formed on the back of a napkin or on a sticky note. Many people are familiar with the pressure of the blank page, but when you're producing a seemingly throwaway creation and not worried about the final result, you're able to generate a pure form of expression. 'Doodling is also like a silent brainstorm device, helping us to drum up light-bulb moments and stimulate mental function for improved memory and mental clarity,' Tracey adds.

This is likely why doodles are so valuable when it comes to the way they affect the brain and what can be deciphered from them. Working as someone who is able to comprehend



these scribbles, Tracey reveals that 'if you can interpret the meaning of the shapes on the page, the insights are surprisingly far-reaching'.

### What are the benefits?

Doodling has the ability to take you from frantic head fuzz to a state of pure focus. It has the potential to bring a person into the present, all with only a pen and a piece of paper.

'Studies show that doodling is therapeutic,' says Tracey. She adds that it aids relaxation, gives us a moment to be mindful and it can help us to release tension and stress.

Tracey also often sees how doodling can act as a safety net for 'releasing negative feelings, allowing the brain to reset'. As a handwriting expert and doodle decipherer, Tracey has seen first-hand how our scribbles can act as a 'channel for expressing our repressed emotions'.

Doodles can also help you to work through worries and anxieties. One of their greatest values is their ability to provide an outlet during times when you can't find the words to aid or express what you might be going through. You're probably familiar with seeing artists pouring their hearts and souls onto the canvas, but did you know that the mere mortals

among us can do it, too? If you're dealing with trauma or having a difficult time, doodling can offer a release.

### Freudian scrawls

Doodling might even be a hard line into your psyche. Tracey explains that doodling is the 'language of the right brain'. She compares doodles to Freudian slips, because of their telltale glimpses into the subconscious. Even if you've drawn something you think looks mundane and everyday, it still signals what you're thinking and feeling, showcasing fears or concerns you might have and sometimes revealing your deepest secrets.

'You could say that doodles are like little maps that guide us in the exploration of people's psyches,' says Tracey. 'If you can translate and interpret the symbols on the page, you're getting inside someone's head.'

*Turn the page for inspiration on how to start doodling and try it out yourself in our scribble space on page 109*



## Do it yourself

*Traditionally seen as something we do subconsciously, deciding to doodle is different from doing it organically. However, this method is often used to reset the brain and rewire attitudes and emotions, so it can still help to improve wellbeing. Here are a few things you might try:*

Repetitive doodling can aid relaxation, so begin by drawing lines or basic shapes, such as circles, squares, triangles or combinations of them all. Don't worry about the complexity – this is just a starting point.

Take note of how the shapes make you feel. Try not to judge their appearance, go with your instinct and keep in mind Tracey's advice: 'a true doodle is drawn continuously, without lifting the pen from the page.'

Once you have some shapes, try shading them. Take note afterwards of the kind of pressure you've used, whether it's light or heavy and how that makes you feel. Tracy notes that shading is seen psychologically as tension release, stating that 'the firmer the pen strokes, the deeper the anxiety'.

Try letting the shapes evolve into something more. They might turn into recognisable objects such as flowers, clouds or faces, but they could also be abstract.

When you've spent enough time doodling, come away from your creation and look at what you have scribbled. Think about what emotions it provokes.

If you'd like to try more traditional doodling, keep a pen handy for moments when you're bored or daydreaming. You might be on the phone or waiting for someone – or you could be trying to work through something difficult. Let your thoughts guide your pen and see where it takes you.

Words: Laura Gabrielle Feasey





# *Scribble space*

Grab a pen or pencil and  
get doodling here

