

01 / NOTICE + SWITCH

40 MINUTES

Positive space, negative space, figure and ground

LEARNING INTENTION		SUCCESS	PREPARE		ASSESSMENT FOCUS		
We are learning how positive and negative space affect what becomes the figure and what recedes into the ground.		The learner can: • identify positive and negative space • explain figure and ground • test two arrangements • explain one intentional visual decision	Faces and vase image, young woman / older woman image, one black paper square, white backing paper, scissors, glue stick, one worked example, camera and consent documentation.		Record conceptual understanding separately from cutting skill.		
TIME	TEACHER + PROMPT		LEARNER	LOOK FOR	IF STUCK		
0–5 NOTICE	TEACHER Show the faces and vase image without explanation. ASK “What do you see first?” “Can you find the other image?” “What do you already know about positive and negative space?” <i>Activate prior knowledge and diagnose the learner’s starting point.</i>		Describes what they see and attempts to switch between the two readings.	Existing vocabulary, ability to switch and signs of uncertainty.	Trace one shared contour and ask the learner to look at the enclosed white space.		
5–10 NAME	TEACHER Explain: “Positive space is the occupied shape.” “Negative space is the shape around or between forms.” Ask the learner to point to each space and trace one negative shape. <i>Explicit instruction introduces unfamiliar concepts in manageable steps.</i>		Identifies and traces positive and negative space.	Whether the learner treats negative space as an active shape rather than unused background.	Use the everyday terms “object shape” and “surrounding shape”, then repeat the correct terminology.		
10–15 SWITCH	TEACHER Return to the faces and vase image. Explain: “The figure is what we notice as the subject. The ground recedes around it.” Briefly show the young woman / older woman image. ASK “Which figure do you see?” “What changes when your attention switches?” <i>Reuse a familiar example to limit unnecessary cognitive load.</i>		Identifies the current figure and attempts to switch to the alternative reading.	Whether the learner distinguishes figure and ground from positive and negative space.	Keep using positive and negative space during the making activity. Do not force all four terms at once.		
15–20 MODEL	TEACHER Demonstrate one complete cut while thinking aloud: “I cut from an edge.” “I keep both pieces.” “I flip the cut piece outward.” “I look at the new white shape.” “I test the position before gluing.” <i>Modelling and a worked example make the hidden decision-making process visible.</i>		Watches, predicts where the cut piece will go and identifies the resulting white shape.	Whether the learner understands cut, keep, flip and test.	Repeat only the step that was unclear.		
20–25 TRY TOGETHER	TEACHER Guide the learner through one large, simple cut. ASK “Where is the negative shape created by your cut?” <i>Guided practice supports the learner’s first attempt.</i>		Cuts, keeps both pieces, flips the cut piece and identifies both spaces.	Conceptual understanding separately from control of the scissors.	Simplify the cut or help physically while keeping the conceptual question unchanged.		
25–30 COMPARE	TEACHER Ask the learner to test two positions before gluing. ASK “Which position makes the negative space more noticeable?” “What becomes the figure?” “What changed?” <i>Comparison and questioning provide formative evidence of understanding.</i>		Tests two arrangements, compares them and selects one for a visual reason.	Prediction, comparison and explanation rather than an unsupported preference.	Ask the learner to point to what changed.		
30–35 CONTINUE	TEACHER Invite the learner to make two or three further cuts. Wait before helping. Use one brief cue only if needed. <i>Fade support as the learner demonstrates readiness.</i>		Plans, cuts, flips and tests with greater independence.	Independent sequencing, self-correction and attention to both black and white shapes.	Reduce the number of cuts and return to the last successful step.		
35–40 EXPLAIN	TEACHER ASK “Show me the positive and negative space.” “What did you change deliberately?” “How did your decision affect what the viewer notices?” “What helped you learn?” “What remains confusing?” <i>Retrieval and reflection reveal what has been learned and inform the next lesson.</i>		Explains the completed work and identifies one intentional decision.	An independent explanation connecting a visual decision to its effect.	Allow the learner to point and explain orally. Do not judge understanding from the neatness of the cutting.		
EVIDENCE FOR LESSON 02		Concept understood:	Practical skill: _____	Prompt that helped:	Point of confusion: _____	Support needed next:	Video timestamp: _____

ITALIC TEXT = BRAIN AND LEARNING PRINCIPLE IN ACTION Prior knowledge · explicit instruction · cognitive load management · modelling · guided practice · formative assessment · fading support · retrieval · reflection

SOURCES Visual Arts content: Greenwood (2023); Guthrie (2017); VCAA (2022). Studio process: ArtJohn (2019). Brain and Learning: Bloom (1968); Deans for Impact (2015); Kirschner et al. (2006); Martin and Evans (2018); Sweller et al. (2011).