

# Drawing

## Understanding Artists' Tools: Curves and Templates

Have you ever walked through an aisle at the art supply store and wondered what all those interesting curvy, swooping and swirling plastic and metal templates are used for? What is a French curve? An irregular curve? A flexible curve? Ellipse templates? Architectural templates? Well, now is your chance to find out just what they are and how they might assist you in any rendering.

French curves come in a variety of sizes and are usually made of translucent and very thin (about .08" thick) plastic. As you might assume, their purpose is to assist in drawing curves. With a set of French curves, you will be able to re-create virtually any curve in a perfect and proportioned arc. The templates are designed to be used for both outside and inside curves and often include a variety of sizes. These come in handy when drawing mechanical objects where symmetrical smoothness is required.

Irregular curves are made of transparent plastic and often have double edges to facilitate ink work. The double edge elevates above the ink line so that there is less likelihood of smearing. Within the body shape of the irregular curve templates there is often a collection of smaller shapes that can be utilized for many projects. These templates are used most often when the perspective being drawn or the object being rendered is not symmetrical along its curved edges.

A flexible curve is a unique tool that is adjustable to any curve or contour. It is constructed of lead wrapped in steel ribbons, encased in flexible plastic. The lead is easily adjusted to conform to a desired shape that will hold until re-formed. This tool has an inking edge to elevate it slightly above the paper, enabling an ink line to be drawn without fear of distortion or smearing.

Ellipse templates--usually made of thin, translucent, flexible plastic--come in several sizes. Each includes a collection of slots cut at various degrees (usually 15, 30, 45, 60 degrees plus more). Ellipse shapes can be drawn with ease in proper proportions and alignment. There are also sets that include several ellipse configurations to cover every need.

Architectural templates are set up on a specific scale, usually 1/4-inch equaling one foot. Included are openings that mimic a variety of square, rectangle, domed and round shapes useful in creating architectural renderings. These sets usually include directional arrows, "N" to indicate northern elevation and shapes that represent fixtures/doorways/windows, as well as other useful adjustable curves. These are indispensable when creating floor plan drawings, room renovation ideas and reproductions of current structures. One sheet or sets of sheets are available in transparent plastic for the best positioning and visibility.

So remember these templates and how they can help you. They're fun and easy to use.