

Lesson 1: The Standing Eagle – A 250th Anniversary Commemoration

Welcome to our Eagle Class! As we gather this week, the nation is celebrating a historic milestone: the 250th anniversary of American independence. To mark this moment, our first lesson is an unprecedented collision of East and West, past and present.



We are painting the Bald Eagle, but we are doing so by blending the ancient spirit of Chinese *Xieyi* (great freehand style) with the classic United States icon – the bald eagle.

This is a distinctly American vision, yet it breathes entirely through the quiet, traditional medium of literati ink and Xuan paper. Before we pick up our brushes, let us take a collective breath, leaving the noise of the outside world at the door, and prepare to capture this heroic spirit.

Step 1: The Paper Template & The Mental Scaffold

Before ink ever touches paper, we must understand the structure

beneath the feathers.

Please print and cut out the provided 3D eagle model template. Notice how one side reveals the skeleton while the other shows the feathered form. Folding this model will help you visualize the geometry of our standing pose.

[Template: Print the template on Page 2 on regular computer paper.]

MAKE A STANDING BALD EAGLE MODEL



VENTRAL & SIDE-PROFILE ASSEMBLY TEMPLATE

- Fold along red dashed lines
- Cut along solid lines



Look at your flat paper and visualize our foundational formula: **S + Dd + 77 = 0**

- **S (The Spine):** Imagine an invisible 'S' running from the head, down the neck, to the tail. This dictates the bird's posture.
- **Dd (The Body & Head):** Visualize a mirrored 'D' for the chest, and a top curve indicating the direction the bird faces.
- **77 (The Shoulders):** The shoulders sit high and broad, forming the shape of two 7s.
- **9 (The Wing Slant):** The folded wings angle gently downward like the leg of a '9'.

Step 2: The Beak and Talons



The true heroic spirit of the eagle rests in its sharpest features: the gaze, the beak, and the grip.

[Image: Detailed anatomy of the eagle's head and claws]

- **The Brush:** Select your small detail brush with a fine, responsive tip.
- **The Moisture:** Use dark, rich ink. Gently press the moisture from your bristles until the

brush feels "thirsty." This restraint gives you the control needed for crisp lines.



- **Guiding Tip for the Talons:** Guiding Tip for the Talons: It is a very natural tendency to draw the feet too large. To keep the eagle's proportions balanced, visualize a small, confined triangle where the foot will rest. Carefully define the sharp nails first within this invisible boundary before drawing the toes to contain the shape. Notice how the tops of the toes are drawn with straight, bony lines, while the undersides use softer, curving strokes to

capture the fleshy pads. Scales are added to indicate the rough texture.

- **The Golden Rule of Timing:** Stop here. Do not shade the eye yet. You must leave it entirely alone to dry. (**Next:** please print out the template on the following page on Masa paper or regular computer paper before continue to step 3.)



Step 3: The Calligraphic Wings

We will now use traditional calligraphic energy to build the heavy primary feathers, representing sonic aspiration and speed.

- **The Brush:** A stiff brush, utilizing both the tip and the belly.
- **The Moisture:** Dark ink. The brush must remain relatively dry, just as if you were writing calligraphy.
- **The Action:** Still working on dry paper, pull bold, solid, downward strokes to form the heavy folded wings, following the slant of your imaginary '9'. Because your brush is dry, the ink will not flood into a puddle. Instead, it will leave crisp edges and



beautiful, broken "flying white" textures that naturally mimic layered feathers.

[Image: Paint the bold, dry, calligraphic strokes forming the dark primary wings]

Step 4: The Soft Body Wash

Here, we contrast the sharp wings with the soft, downy feathers of the eagle's body.

- **The Brush:** Large wash brush, using the soft side or belly.
- **The Moisture:** Diluted, light-to-medium grey ink. *Crucial Rule:* Load your brush half with water and half with ink. Do NOT reload your brush again until it is completely exhausted.
- **The Action:** Sweep the wet wash over the back and the high '77' shoulders. As you pull this wet ink into the dry areas, the tones will overlap smoothly. Because you are not reloading the brush, the ink will naturally run dry as you paint, effortlessly creating the fuzzy, fading texture of soft, downy feathers.



[Image: Photograph showing the grey wash applied to the shoulders and back, demonstrating the wet-into-dry blending]

Step 5: The White Feathers and the Final Gaze

We finish our eagle by returning to where we started.

- **The Brush:** The fine tip of your wash brush, and your small detail brush.
- **The Moisture:** Very light ink.
- **The Action:** Use the very tip of your wash brush to draw loose, suggestive contour lines representing the white feathers of the head and the tail. Finally, look back at the eye. The dark ink from Step 2 should now have lost its shine, looking dull like the fuzzy skin of a peach. Now that it is safe, use a tiny amount of light ink to add soft shading around the eye, locking in that piercing, heroic vision.



[Image: The completed standing eagle painting, showing the finished light ink contours and the shaded eye]

When the ink wash is dry, you may add a yellow color wash to the beak and feet, and the iris of the eye.

Take your time with this process. Allow the ink to teach you patience, and enjoy the quiet space you have created for yourself today.