

# GROUNDING SHADOWS IN COMPLEX OBJECTS

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Using the drop shadow command on a simple object like text or a photo frame makes it easy to give the illusion of depth but what happens when you use that same command on a more complex object like the insect at left?

In the bottom illustration the poor insect is left absolutely flat and high and dry with none of his legs seemingly touching the ground. To realistically give the illusion of depth and varying height, it's necessary to forgo the simple solution and do the shadow work in pieces to produce the right look. If you remember that the shadows for the parts that are furthest from the ground will be the most distant from the part that created the shadow, you should have a good idea of where the grounding shadow goes. Compare the shadows for the antennae for instance. In the top image, the antennae shadow is much further away from the feelers themselves than in the bottom illustration leaving the impression that this part of the insect is raised further than any other portion of its body.

It's also important to remember to keep the light direction in your drawing consistent! Spending hours creating the impression in your subject that the light is coming from the upper right is instantly blown away by the fact that your shadow shows the light source is originating from the lower left.

Your shadow should also include some degree of transparency and blur unless you're dealing with a very strong and coherent light source like a laser. Creating a realistic looking shadow can take almost as long as the art work itself.



**RIGHT**

*Leptocoris Trivittata*  
(Boxelder Bug)  
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Shadow should become one with the illustration where it touches the background.



**WRONG**

Standard shadow functions can leave things floating in mid air.

