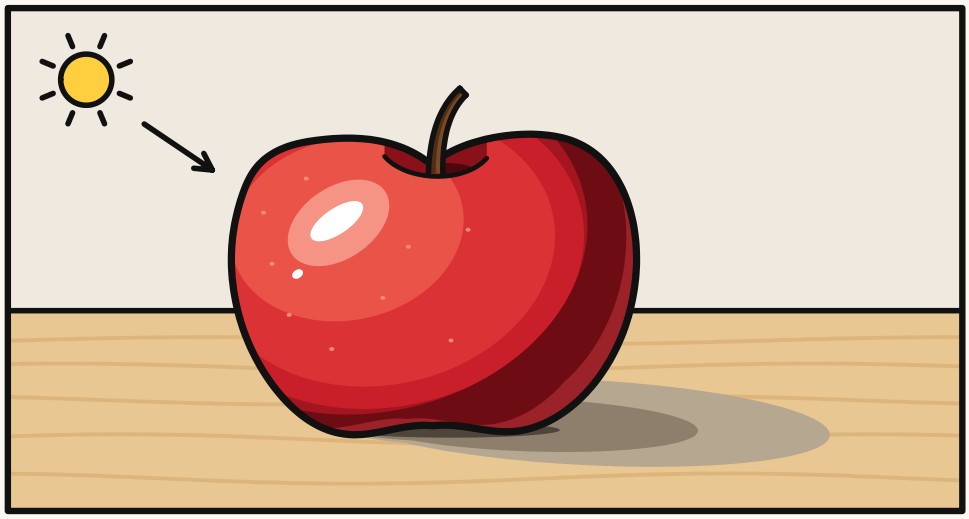
How to Draw a Realistic Apple

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

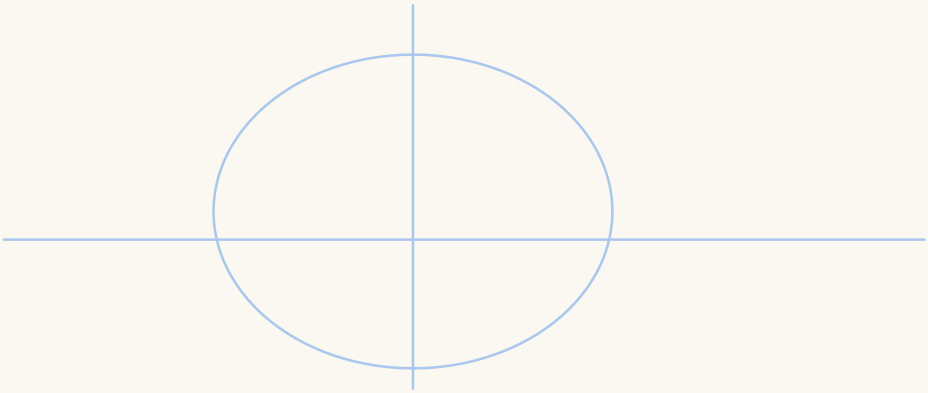
- An apple and a lamp (or a photo)
- HB, 2B and 4B pencils
- Smooth paper
- A blending stump or tissue
- A kneaded eraser
- Red and brown colored pencils

How to use this guide

New lines for each step are shown in **blue**; lines you already drew are gray. Draw lightly first, then ink and erase near the end.

Read the full tutorial online →

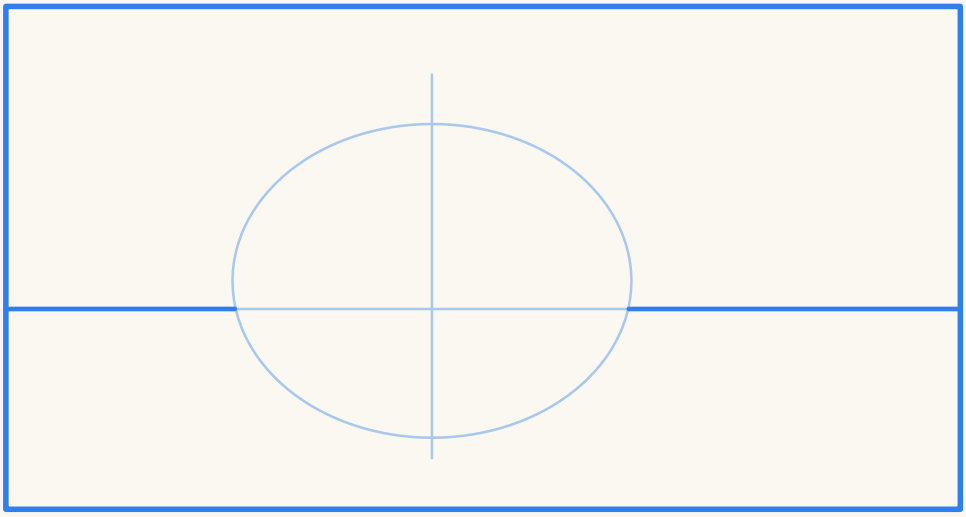
STEP 1 Sketch the oval, center line and table



Set the apple under a lamp so the light hits it from one side, and look at it for a minute. With an HB and barely any pressure, draw a slightly wide oval, a vertical line through its middle and a level line behind it for the table. An apple is wider than it is tall, so a perfect circle reads as a ball.

💡 **Tip:** Hold the pencil far back from the tip. It's almost impossible to press hard that way.

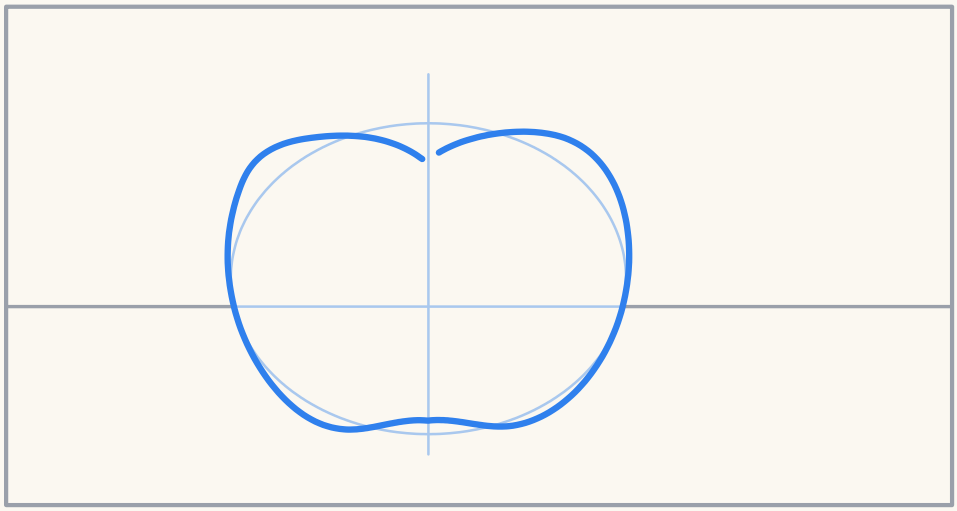
STEP 2 Draw the border and the table edge



A box around the drawing turns a floating fruit into a small still life. Draw the border, then firm up the table line. I place the apple a little left of center, because the cast shadow will stretch to the right.

💡 **Tip:** Leave more empty table on the shadow side than on the light side.

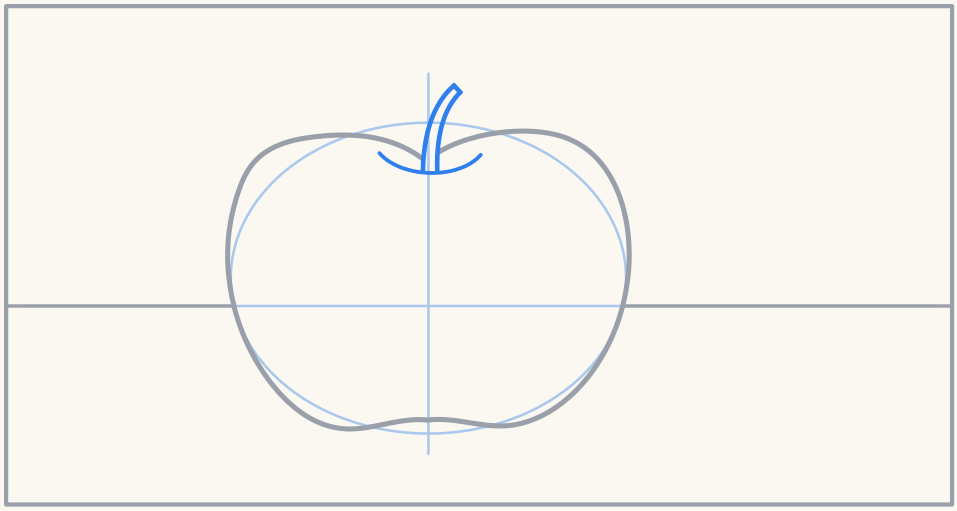
STEP 3 Shape the apple around the oval



Now reshape the oval into an apple. The top has two soft shoulders that rise a bit above the guide, with a dip in the middle for the stem. The bottom flattens with a gentle wave where it rests on the table. Keep this line light; it's a map, not the final edge.

💡 **Tip:** Look at your real apple's silhouette, not the apple you remember. No two are the same shape.

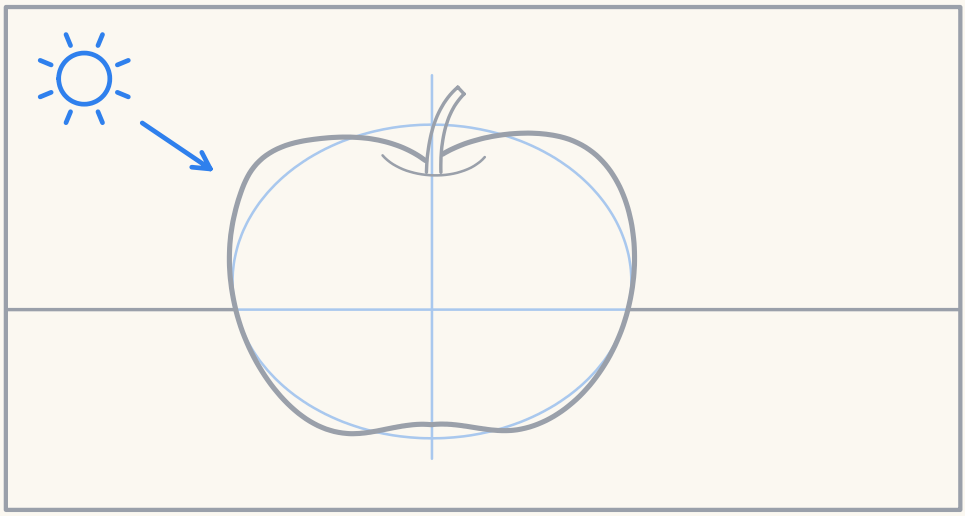
STEP 4 Add the stem and the dip around it



Draw the stem as two close lines that curve slightly to the right, with a flat cut at the end. Add a shallow curve under its base. That small curve tells the eye the top sinks inward, the first hint of depth.

💡 **Tip:** Make the stem thinner at the top than at the base. Even width looks like a stick pushed in.

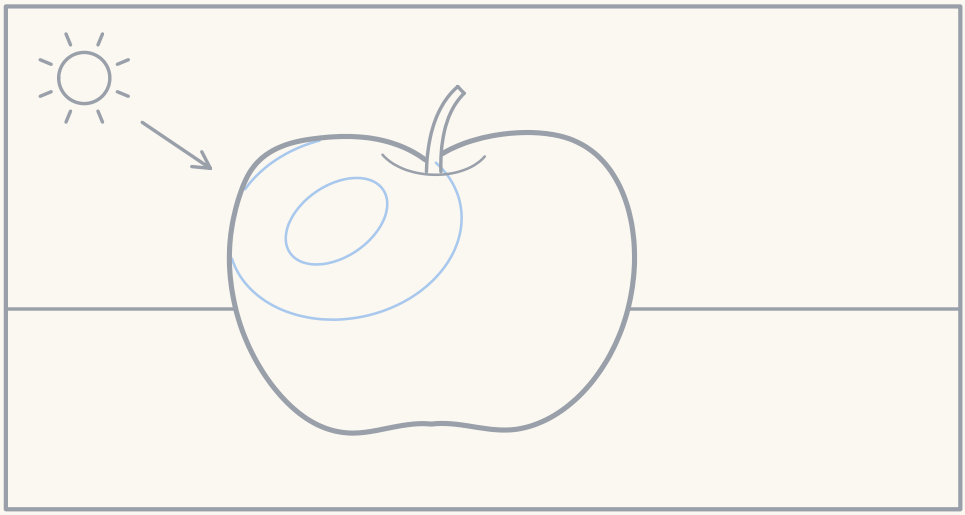
STEP 5 Decide where the light comes from



Mark a small sun in the corner and an arrow pointing at the apple. Every shading choice from here on depends on this direction. Ours comes from the upper left, so the upper left of the apple will be brightest and the lower right darkest. When I skip this, I end up with shadows on both sides.

💡 **Tip:** If you work from life, don't move the lamp or the apple until you're done.

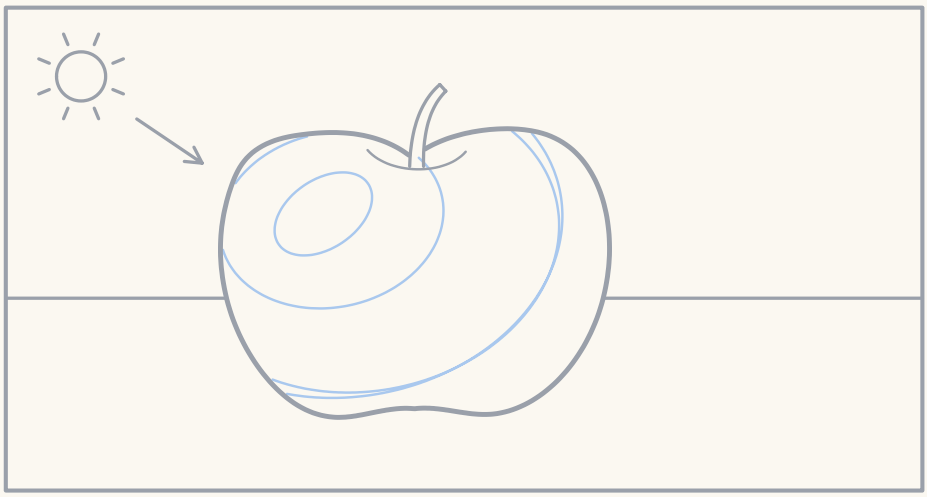
STEP 6 Map the light and the highlight



Erase the oval and the center line first. Then lightly outline two shapes on the side facing the light: a big rounded area where the skin is brightest, and a small slanted oval inside it for the shine. On a glossy apple the highlight is crisp and sits where the curve faces the lamp most directly.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the highlight smaller than you think. A big white patch reads as a hole or a sticker.

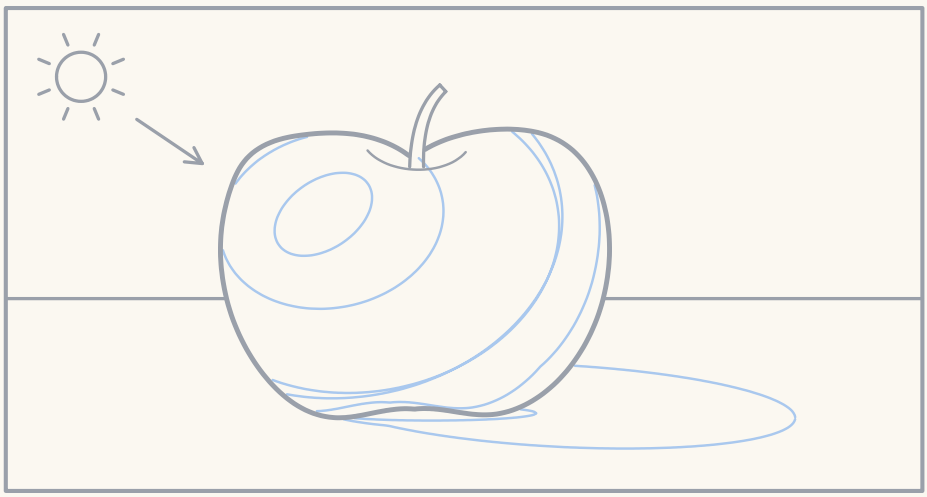
STEP 7 Find the core shadow band



The core shadow is the darkest band, where the form turns away from the light. Draw two curved lines on the lower right: an outer one where the half-tone begins and an inner one for the core. They curve like the apple, never straight across it.

💡 **Tip:** Squint at your apple. The core shadow is the dark band that's still visible with your eyes half closed.

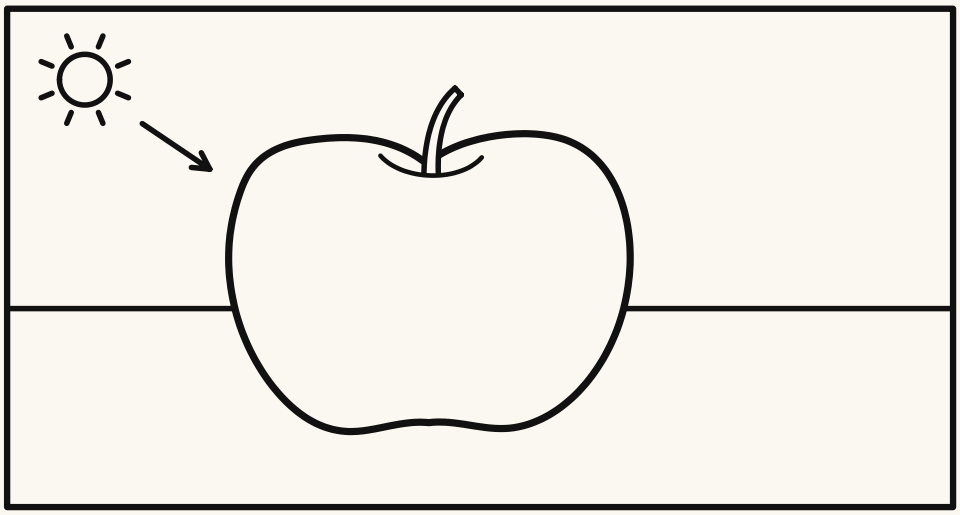
STEP 8 Mark the reflected light and cast shadow



Light bounces off the table back onto the apple, so draw a thin rim along the lower right edge. It's lighter than the core shadow but never as bright as the lit side. Then outline the cast shadow, a long oval stretching away from the light, plus a narrow sliver right under the apple.

💡 **Tip:** The cast shadow always points away from the sun mark. Check the arrow before you draw it.

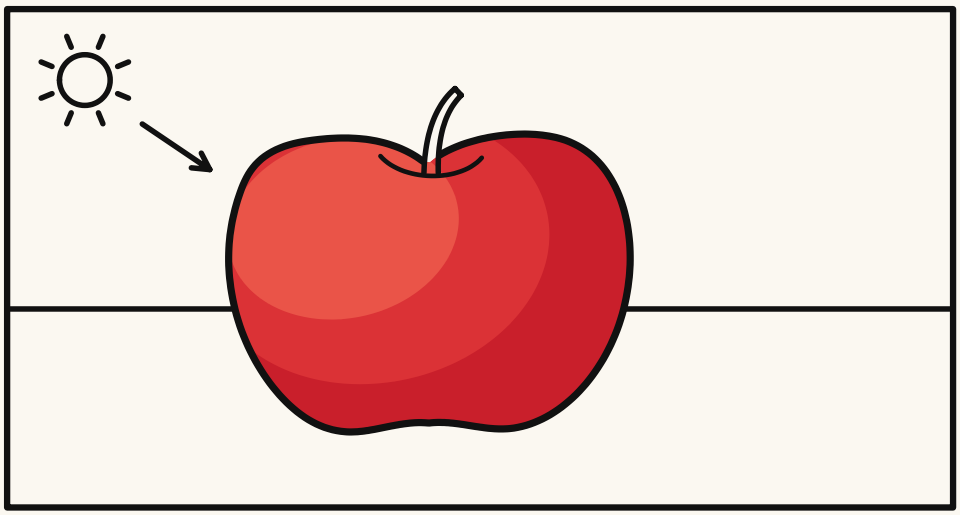
STEP 9 Firm up the edges and clean up



Go over the apple's edge, the stem, the dip, the table line and the border with a firmer line. Then dab the mapping lines with a kneaded eraser until they're only just visible; I keep them faint so I don't lose the shapes. Real objects have no outlines, so on a pencil version keep this edge soft.

💡 **Tip:** Roll the kneaded eraser to a point and press, don't rub. It lifts graphite without smearing.

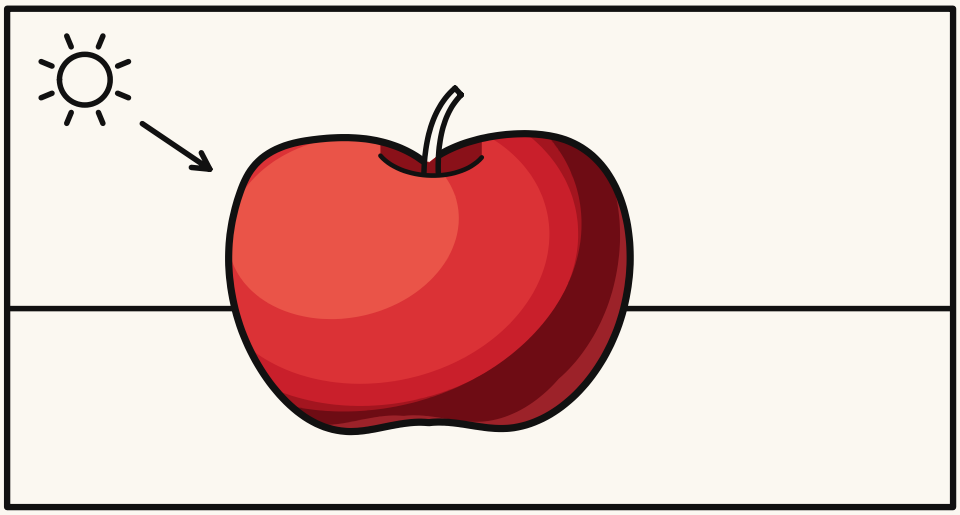
STEP 10 Lay in the base tone and lit side



Shade the whole apple with one even, light layer, leaving the highlight untouched. Add a second layer over everything except the big lit area, so the bright side starts to glow. Use small circles or short strokes that follow the curve. Several light layers blend far better than one heavy one.

💡 **Tip:** Protect the highlight from the start. Untouched paper stays whiter than any spot you erase later.

STEP 11 Build the core shadow and the bounce

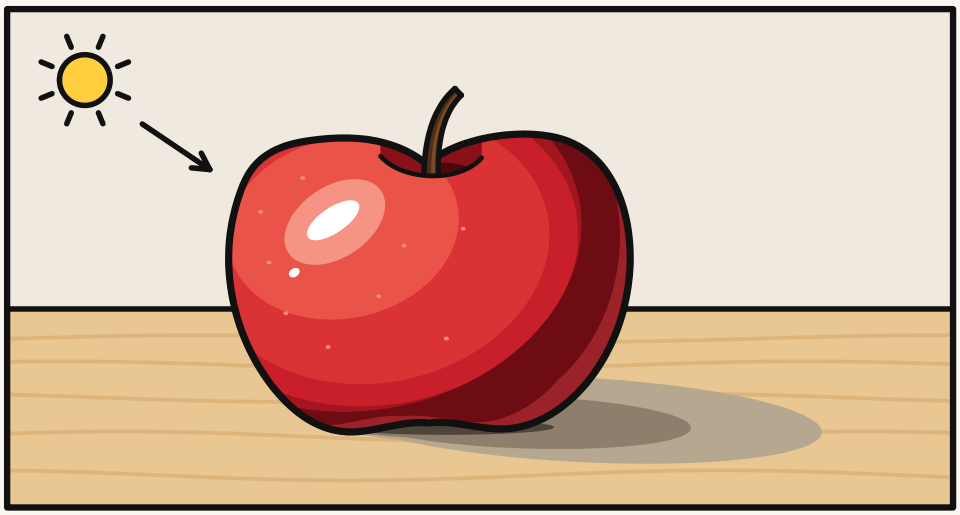


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Switch to a 2B or 4B and darken the half-tone band, then press a little more for the core shadow inside it. Keep the reflected rim a step lighter than the core. Blend each band into its neighbor with a stump or tissue, moving along the form. The dip around the stem gets a dark touch too.

💡 **Tip:** Blend from light toward dark, never the reverse, or you'll drag gray into the bright side.

STEP 12 Lift the highlight and drop the shadow



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Clean the highlight edge with a pointed eraser and add one tiny second shine below it. Darken the stem's right side. Last, shade the cast shadow: darkest right under the apple, then lighter as it moves away. That dark contact line makes the apple sit on the table instead of hovering.

💡 **Tip:** Press hardest in the thin sliver where apple meets table. It's the darkest spot in the whole drawing.