

THE FIGURE TEST

On the following pages are a series of drawings of human figures. The drawings are not particularly detailed, nor necessarily intended to be realistic.

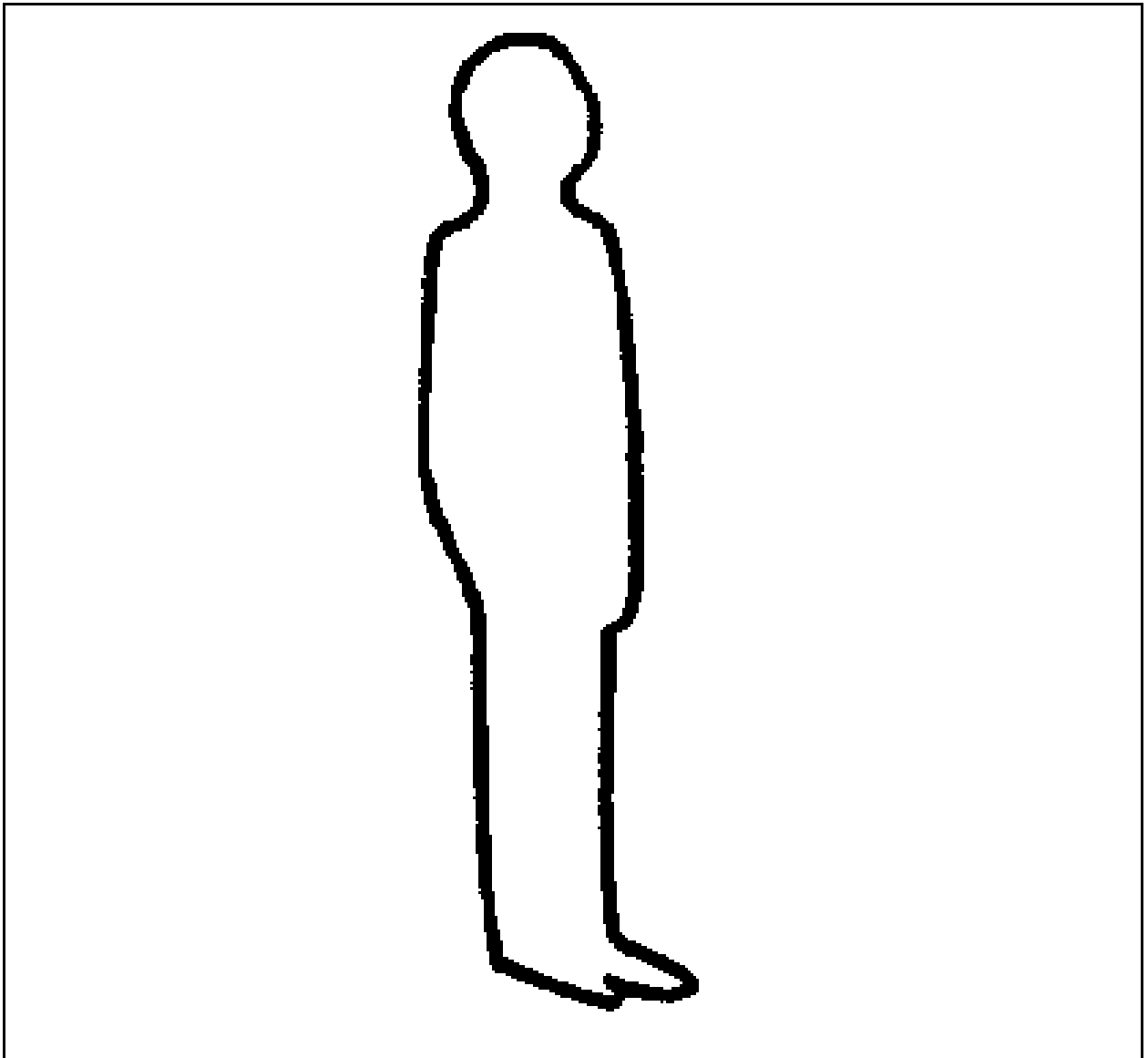
Your instructions for taking this test are to answer a single question for each figure, and to note your responses to that question on the paper beneath the figure itself.

The question is, "WHAT MIGHT THIS PERSON BE DOING?"

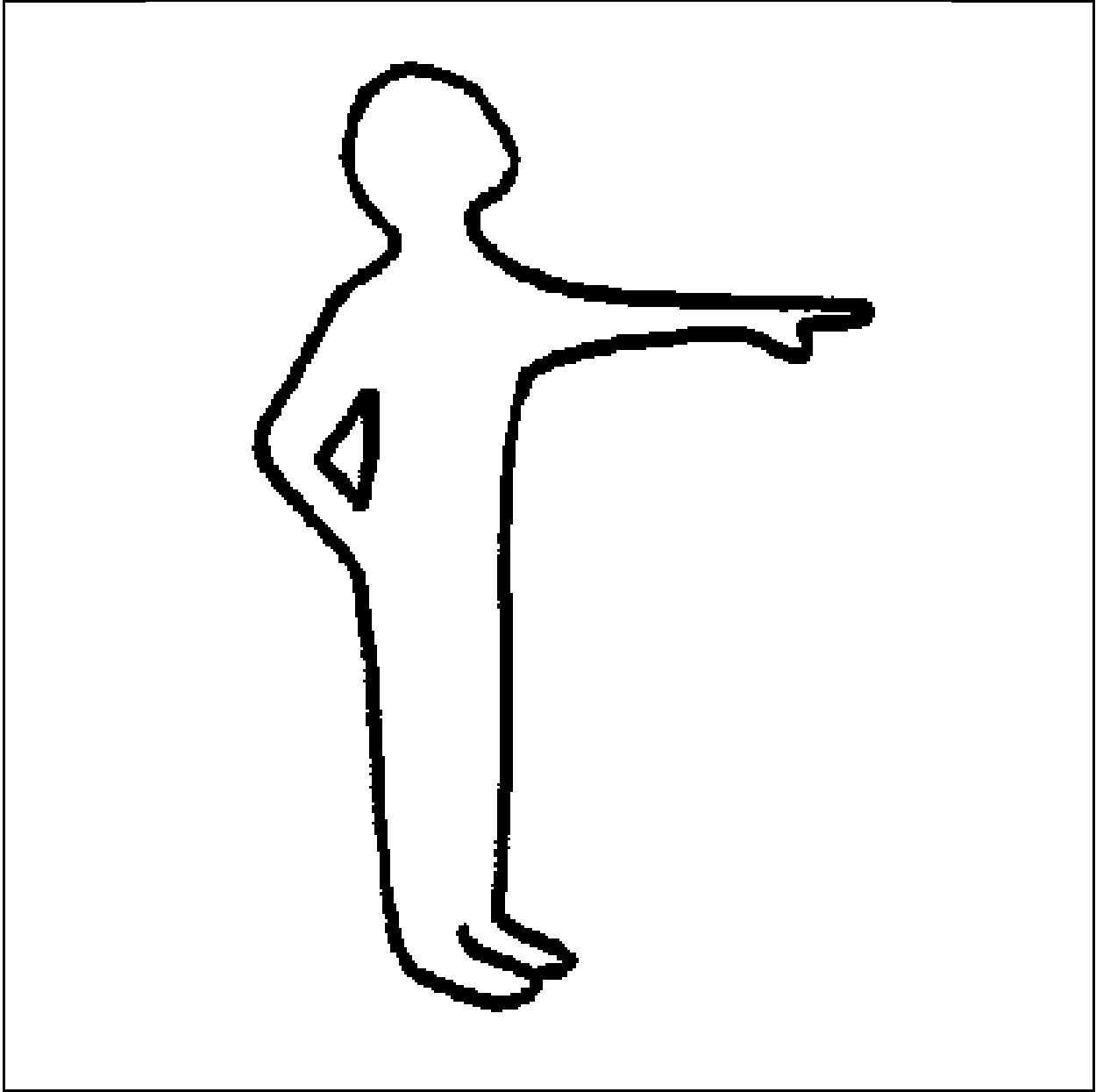
Please note the question is **not** who is this person, but "What might this person be **doing**?"

You are free to write as many or as few responses to each figure as you choose and to look at the figure from any angle that you choose. Once you begin, continue until you have finished. It will probably take you less than 20 minutes.

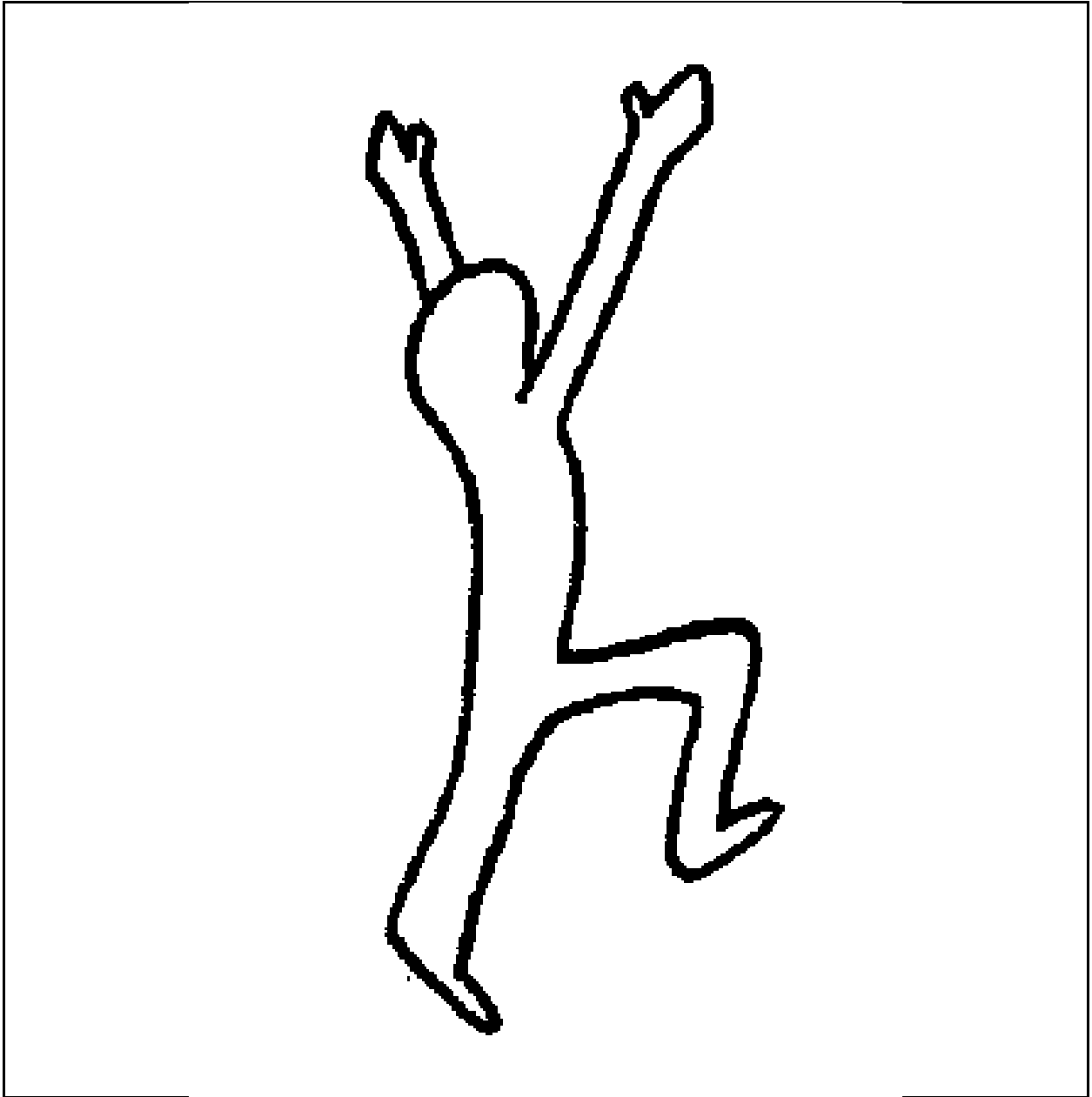
Do not look at the drawings until you are ready to work through the exercise. When you are ready, turn the page and begin.



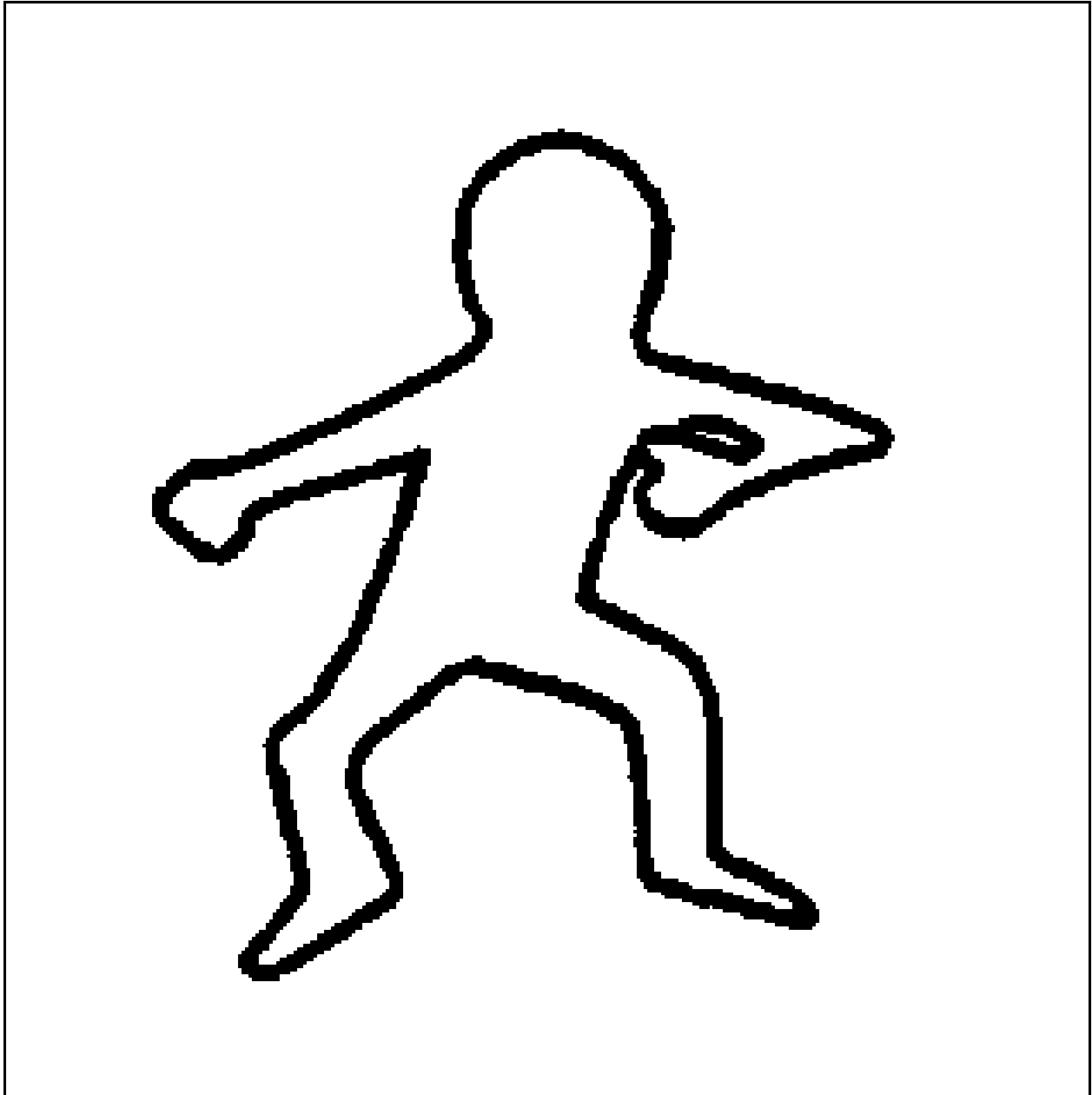
What might this person be doing?



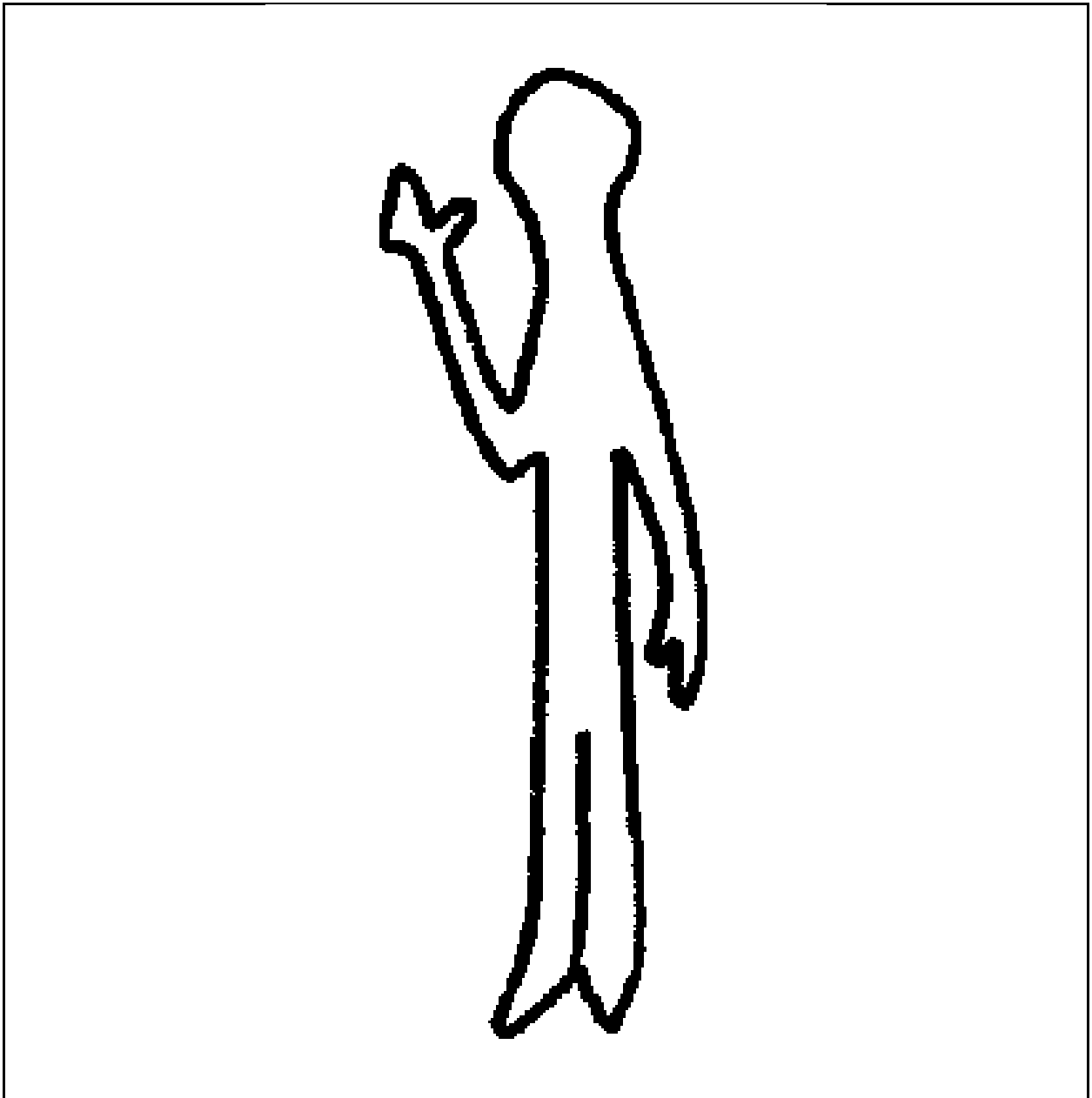
What might this person be doing?



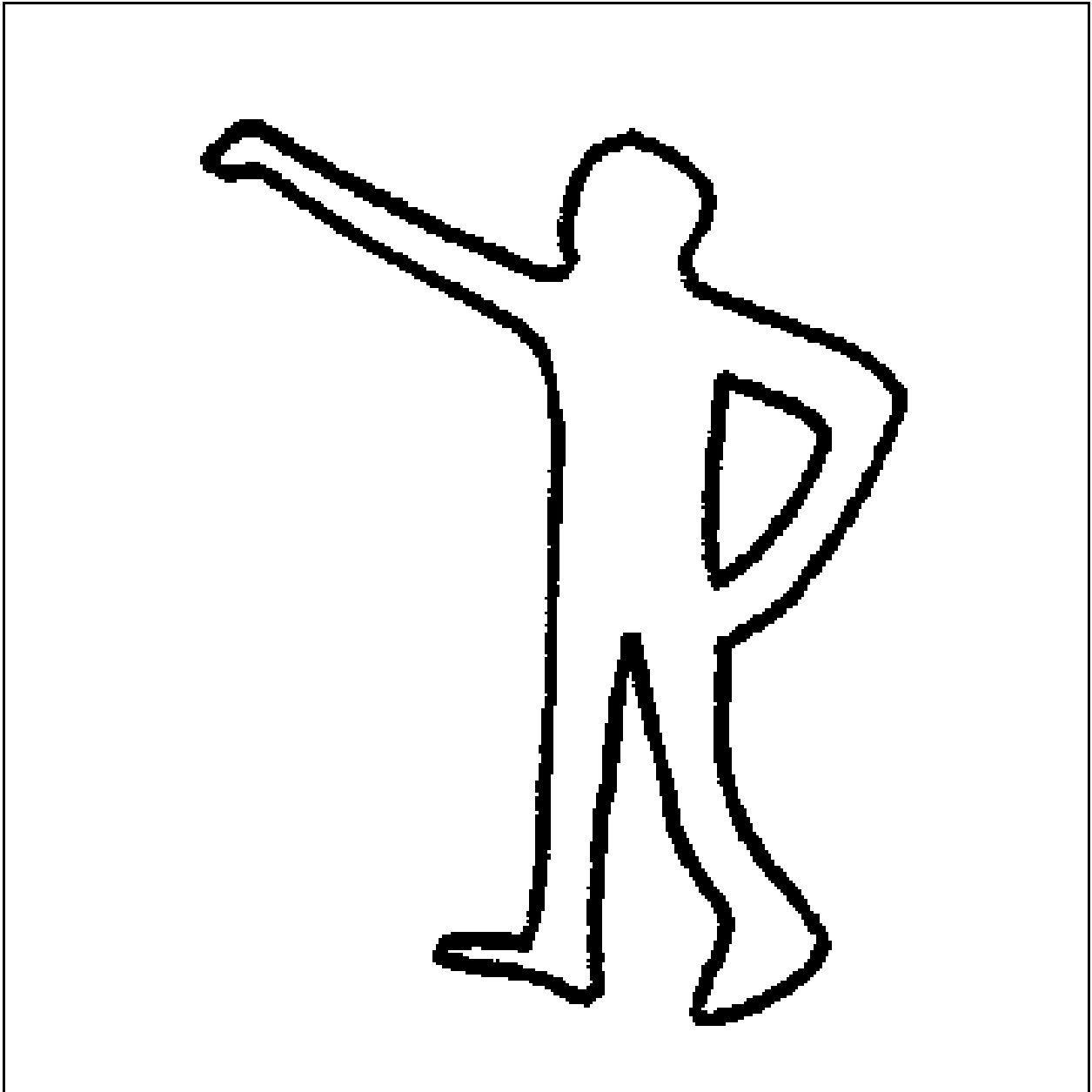
What might this person be doing?



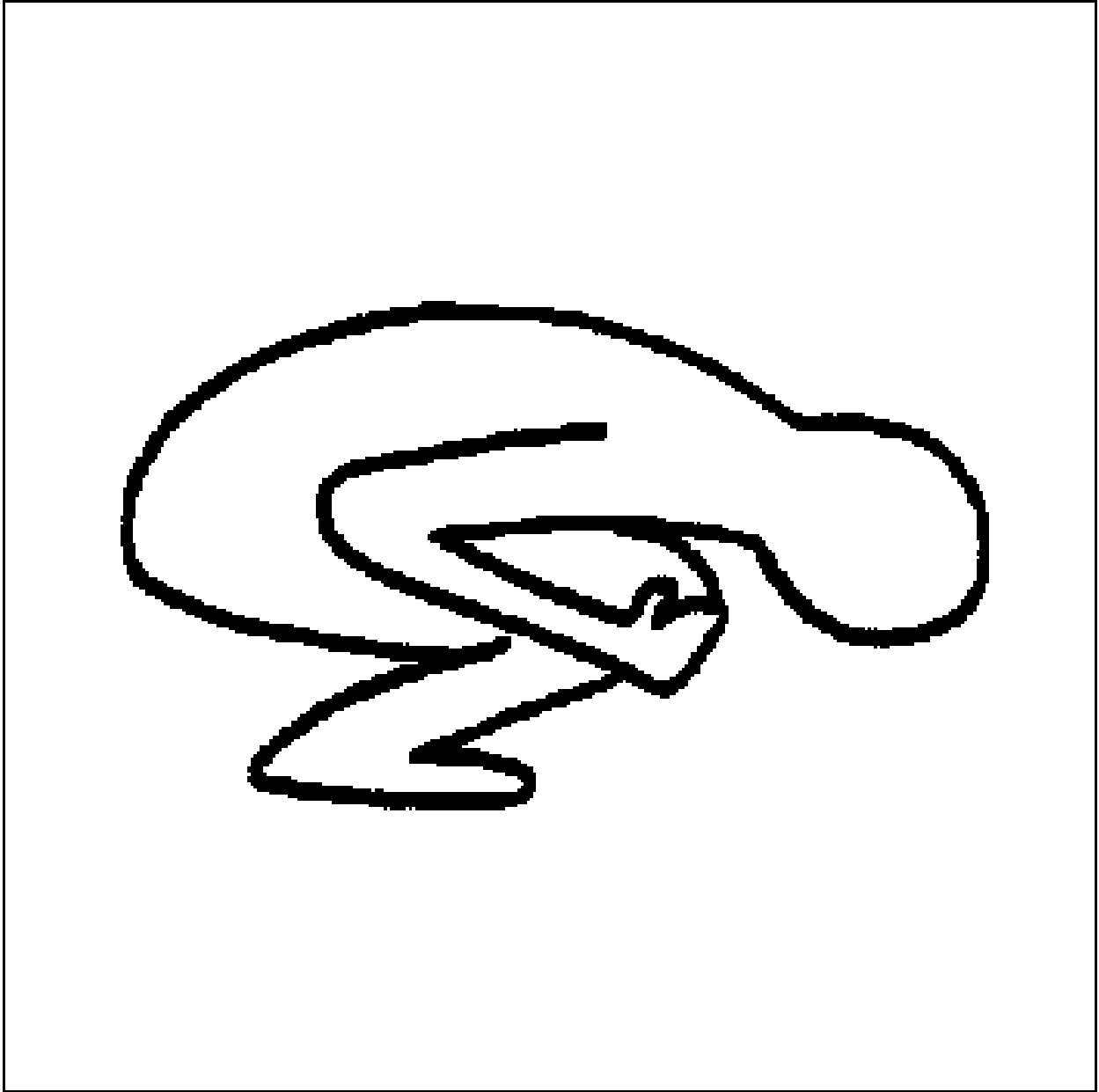
What might this person be doing?



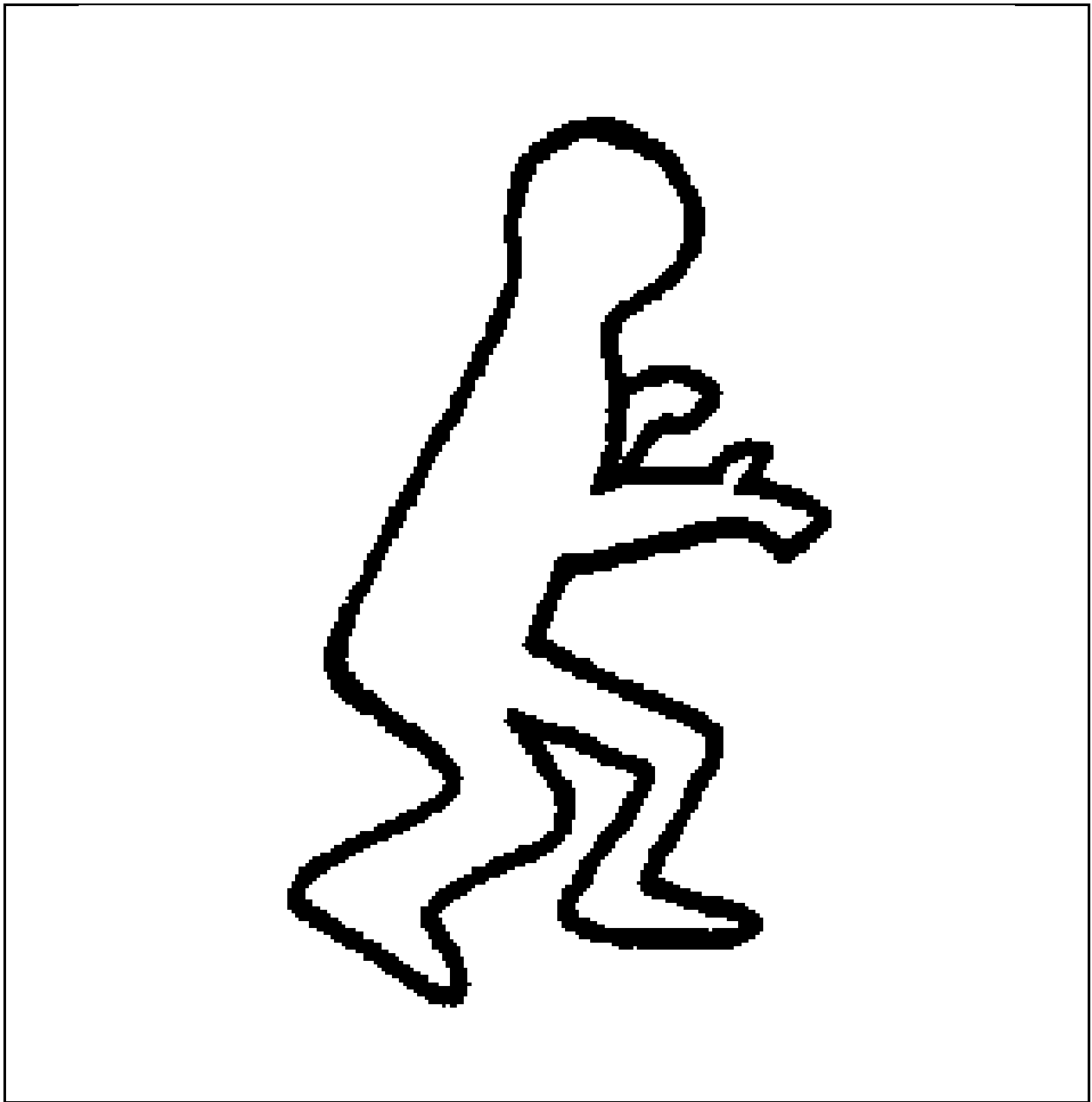
What might this person be doing?



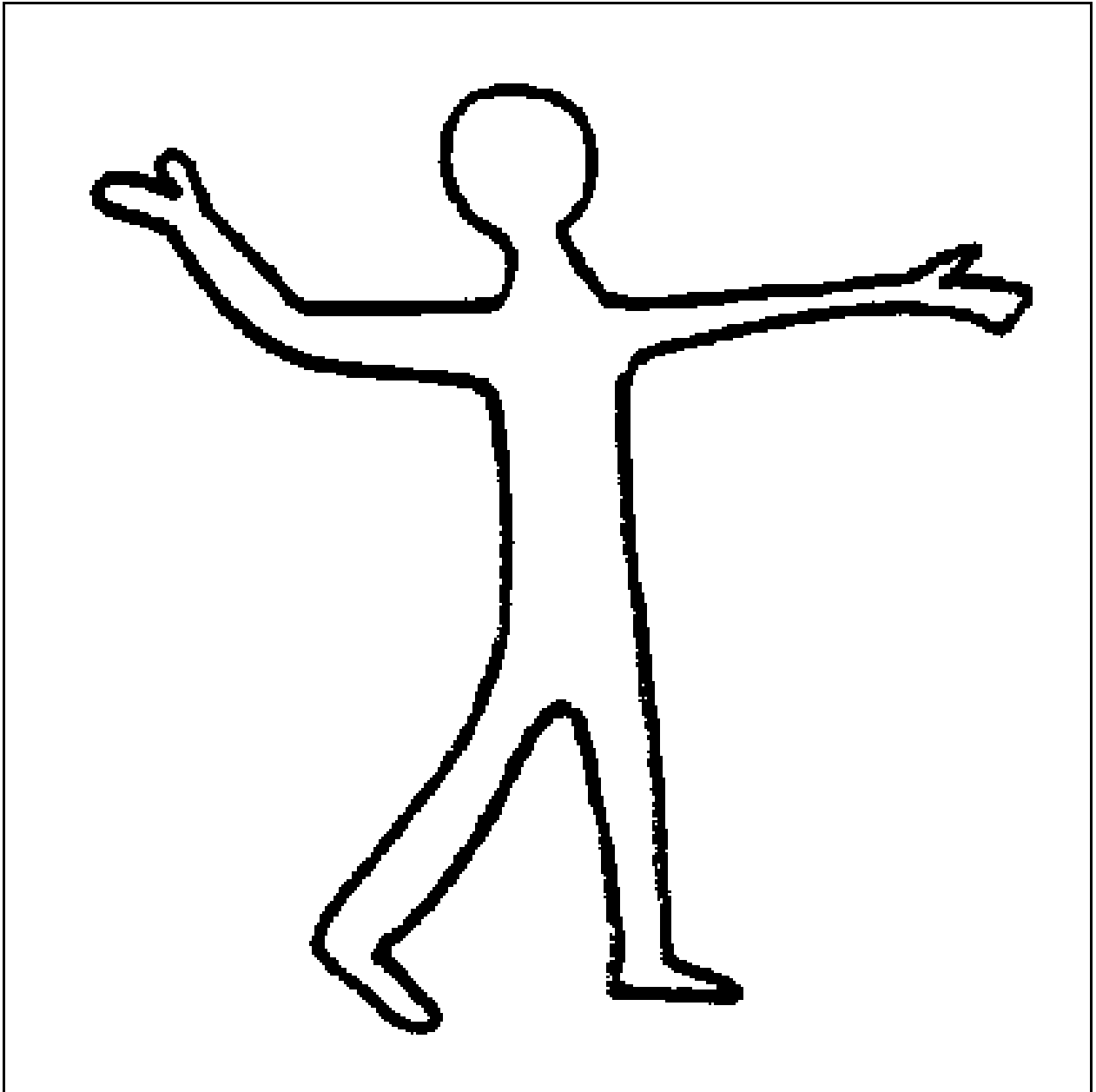
What might this person be doing?



What might this person be doing?



What might this person be doing?



What might this person be doing?

We have shown you a variety of human figures. There were many other figures that we might have shown you but did not. Think about some other figures that we might have shown you. Do not draw these figures, merely imagine them, and then note at the bottom of the page your responses to the question,

WHAT MIGHT THESE OTHER, IMAGINARY PEOPLE BE DOING?



This completes the Figure Test. Before you go on to the interpretation below, write your reactions to this test in your Feelings Record. How did you feel about it? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not? What were you thinking as you took the test?

SCORING AND INTERPRETING THE FIGURE TEST

NOTE: Do not read forward until you have completed the data generation above.

The Figure Test employs a series of ambiguous outline drawings of human beings. These pictures are intentionally ambiguous for a number of reasons. First, they allow one to ask an open-ended question, namely, "What might this person be doing?" so that the respondent is able to, with a minimum of direction, choose an answer that reflects his or her orientation. In other words, by keeping the structure of the figure and of the question to the minimum, the respondent is allowed to project meaning onto that figure in response to the question. The underlying theory is that people will project meanings that are relevant to and characteristic of themselves, in fact, that people can **only** impart meaning that comes out of their experience and set of beliefs. Secondly, by keeping the forms ambiguous, the respondent, in some ways, is able to identify him or herself with the figure. In other words, in addition to projecting meaning on to the figures, in some ways we see ourselves in those figures. And therefore the meaning which we project is personal meaning.

Thirdly, we all see ourselves and those around us behaving every day. We see in ourselves and in others thousands of bits of behavior, in which the individual is doing things, picking up things, meeting people, talking with them, and so on. In essence these people are relating to the environment around them. Perhaps they relate to their surroundings in characteristic ways. The use of ambiguous figures allows us to project our observations and conclusions onto the figures and in so doing examine the ways in which we characteristically relate to our environment.

Identifying Patterns in Figure Test Responses

We might ask then what are the characteristic patterns that emerge from an individual's interactions with his or her environment and which we believe to be reflected in the responses given to the Figure Test. The first question we would ask is "Do the figures seem to be relating or interacting with physical things in the environment?" If so, and this is a pattern, we might conclude that the person typically takes an active, thing oriented position versus his or her environment.

On the other hand a person might relate more to people in their environment rather than to things. This person probably looks for social interaction rather than working with objects, and so we might conclude that they are people oriented. Further, others might take a relatively passive role towards the environment, waiting rather for it to act on them or simply being most of the time rather than doing. This person we might say takes a more passive role in the environment. Finally, some responses may not seem to relate to either people or to things. Examples might be a person resting, a person being sick or a person smiling. These responses we might characterize as "Other" in that they are not clearly in relationship to either

things or people in the environment. Let's explore these concepts more carefully now.

Types of Environmental Responses

To refine our look at the distinctions between object oriented and people oriented responses, we may also look at some subcategories of responses within each of these two areas. Within environmental responses, for instance, we might look at whether or not the figures were actively involved with the environment or passively involved with the environment. **ENVIRONMENT-ACTIVE** responses include things like hitting a ball, pushing a button, reaching up to grab something, pressing down on a button, and so on. **ENVIRONMENT-PASSIVE** responses, however, relate to inactive behavior as it relates to things in the environment, lying on a couch, for example, or sitting in a chair, and so forth. In these responses, there clearly is an environmental object involved, but the actor is taking a passive role towards it.

Types of People Responses

Within the set of people oriented responses, we can discern an even greater variety of subcategories. People can relate to others in many ways and in those relationships, they express a variety of motivations or emotions. We might consider, for instance, that relationships often include motivations or feelings of affection, dependence, communication, exhibition, or aggression. If we define these categories broadly, virtually all of the people-related responses can be categorized into one of these subcategories. Consider the following definitions.

PEOPLE-AFFECTION includes all responses that involve an exchange or the giving of pleasure, affection or friendly feeling. Friendly greetings, shaking hands, patting someone on the back, kissing, dancing, and giving comfort would all be included in the affection category.

In **PEOPLE-DEPENDENCE** we include all responses that express one person's reliance on another for help or support. People asking the nurse to help, praying, hitchhiking, pleading, surrendering, begging, and asking permission can all be characterized as dependence responses. Now the question sometimes arises, "Does it make a difference if the figure is being dependent or being the recipient of the dependent feeling?" Actually it doesn't matter since the underlying conceptual structure of the relationship, as pictured in one's mind and reflected in their response is the dependence of one person upon another. This contrasts to the underlying concept of the direction category described below in which one is guiding another.

The **PEOPLE-COMMUNICATION** subcategory involves the giving of or the exchanging of information. Here the main motivation is the sharing of knowledge or data. Such responses might include giving a speech, making a point, signaling for whatever, using sign language, and teaching.

PEOPLE-EXHIBITION refers to the displaying of one's self either for approval or to call attention to oneself. People with this tendency like to be the center of attention. Standing up or presenting one's self in front of a crowd in whatever form are included in the exhibition responses. Showing off muscles, holding out a hand to be kissed, etc. are also exhibition responses.

The **PEOPLE-DIRECTION** subcategory reflects the figures which are influencing the activities of others by dominating or directing them. A policeman stopping traffic, a teacher sending a child to the principal's office, a sergeant barking an order, leading an orchestra or a quarterback calling signals are examples. Note, too, that there is a distinction between this and communicating information. Giving directions (for example, "It's three blocks down and turn to the left"), is an example of a communication response. A direction response would be "You must go immediately to the principal's office."

PEOPLE-AGGRESSION responses include those which show hostility or present a situation that would give pain to another person. A punch in the nose, pushing someone off a cliff, boxing, and scaring someone are examples of aggressive responses.

This gives us a total of eleven categories, two within the Environmental area and nine within the People area. Exhibit 1 summarizes these basic Figure Test scoring categories.



Scoring Your Own Responses

Using the scoring structure that we have introduced and the accompanying scoring sheet, score your own responses. First, go back to the test itself and write down the category (e.g., ENV-ACT) beside each response on the page that you wrote your response. Be sure to write down your categories on the test. This will help you later if you wish to reexamine your scoring. Then tally each of your responses on the scoring sheet shown in Exhibit 2. When you have finished tallying your responses, calculate the percentages for each category so that they all total 100%.

Be careful not to use too many "Other" responses. Usually no more than 10% of all responses will fall into the "Other" category. If you find that considerably more than 10% of your responses go into the "Other" category, go through your scoring more carefully or seek some assistance.

Some of your responses may seem ambiguous. In order to score them you may need to reflect carefully on your intent in giving the response. Think back to what you had in mind when you wrote your response. Shaking hands, for instance, might be scored as an example of people communication, the intent being to say "Hello, how are you?" It might also be scored as an example of people affection in the sense of the handshake being an expression of affection and deep friendship. It even may have been "aggressive" in your intent. While it may not always be easy to distinguish, do your best to think back on your intent when you wrote the responses and score them accordingly.

Interpreting Your Scores

The interpretation of your scores involves drawing some relatively conservative and tentative inferences about what the scores might mean. Remember that the underlying assumptions connected to this test are that, given an open-ended and ambiguous situation, you will project a meaning onto that situation that reflects something characteristic about yourself. If you note, for instance, that your scores show 75% people orientation and 20% environmental responses, one tentative inference from this data would be that this person tends to be "people oriented" rather than "thing oriented." Of course, this tentative inference could, and should in the course of one's self-assessment process be checked out with additional sources of information.

In making these tentative inferences, keep in mind some simple but important principles:

1. Use specific data.
2. Draw conservative inferences that are "reasonable" given the data.
3. Consider the inferences to be "tentative" and not firm "facts." Be prepared to look at many more sets of data and keep your mind open to assimilate new data as it comes in.

Remember, too, that there is a lot of variation that can be introduced in the scoring and in the interpretation of a projective instrument like the Figure Test. This points up again the value of using a variety of instruments to develop a multifaceted self-assessment.

Now with regard to interpreting your scores, consider, for instance, the People response. A person who gave a lot of Affectionate responses probably sees the world in terms of warm giving and taking, and others are likely to see him or her as a warm and friendly person. It is likely that such a person finds social exchanges satisfying and engages a great deal of time and effort in developing and maintaining personal relationships. A person who gave a lot of Dependent responses may have a need to receive support and encouragement from others or may perhaps be willing to exchange subordination and obedience in return for care and guidance. High Exhibition scores may reflect strong tendencies toward a socially acceptable exchanges of recognition or accolades for performance such as in the entertainment industry or, perhaps, the "spoiled demands of the prima donna."

With regard to the Direction category, we may expect that all of us have a certain need to direct the activities and to be of influence in the lives of others. And yet, very high scores may reflect a stronger tendency to see the social world as a large chess game in which one must control and direct the activities of others. Likewise, there is a variation of responses within the Aggression category, from those who feel a determination to be persistent and independent in a world that is filled with competition, to people who are concerned only for their own welfare to individuals who are very angry and desire to hurt other people. In other words, all aggression may not necessarily be anti-social. It could include responses ranging from mere stubbornness to outright violent crime. Again, the tone of the responses and the intent of the respondent aid our interpretation.

Having scored your own Figure Test, you may wish to compare results with other people. Use the information given in Exhibit 3 to compare your results with 7 classes of second year M.B.A. students at the Darden School, University of Virginia. You should know that these people all voluntarily participated in a Career Management course (like the one described in this book) or in a Career Management seminar held one day in the spring, so there may be some characteristics of those groups that would distinguish them from M.B.A. students generally. Plus, Virginia M.B.A. student responses do not necessarily reflect other MBA students nor the rest of society.

As you compare your scores with the scores in Exhibit 3, you might ask yourself what differences seem to appear between these M.B.A. men and women, and whether or not those differences fit your expectations. You might also ask yourself how your scores differ from those in the figure and why the might be.

Practicing Drawing Inferences

Look at the attached case, Tom Wilson's Figure Test. Wilson was a student at the Darden School and took the test which you have just completed. Note how he scored his test. See what inferences you can draw from his profile. It might help you to begin if you phrase each inference beginning with "This is a person who . . ." and then make your conclusion. Feel free to state the obvious. We often overlook the obvious even when it is significant. Just make sure that your inferences are closely related to the data. Once you have completed this exercise and begun to feel comfortable in drawing some conservative, simple, and tentative inferences about Tom Wilson, then turn to your data and do the same. Be sure to write them down for later reference.

If you are working on this exercise with someone else, you may wish to discuss not only the career implications of this data, but also what it may mean for your relationship. Note in particular how your PEOPLE responses may reflect characteristic ways that you relate to each other.

You are developing skill through this practice. A conceptualization of what needs to be done is very different from the ability to do it, something which can only be derived from doing. This requires some practice. The amount of practice that is required before you have a

skill depends on you and the rate at which you learn. So, we encourage you to go carefully at the outset and write down your inferences always.

Exhibit 2
THE FIGURE TEST
 BASIC FIGURE TEST SCORING CATEGORIES AND WORK SHEET

CATEGORIES	TALLY OF RESPONSES	TOTAL #	PERCENT
<u>ENVIRONMENT</u> ACTIVE PASSIVE			
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT			
<u>PEOPLE</u> AFFECTION AGGRESSION COMMUNICATION DEPENDENCE DIRECTION EXHIBITION			
TOTAL PEOPLE			
<u>OTHER</u>			
<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>			100%

TOM WILSON FIGURE TEST

Tom Wilson gave the following responses to the 10 figures:

Responses to Figure 1

- Thinking
- Looking Up
- Singing in a chorus with hands at side

CATEGORY

ENV PAS
ENV PAS
PEO EXH

Responses to Figure 2

- Giving directions to others
- Pointing something out ("They went that away")

PEO DIR
PEO DIR

Responses to Figure 3

- Catching a pass (football)
- Tumbling exercise for gymnastics (floor exercise)

ENV ACT
ENV ACT

Responses to Figure 4

- Karate position (stance)
- Archery (left-handed) position

ENV ACT
ENV ACT

Responses to Figure 5

- Hitching a ride
- Saying hello, possible salute

PEO DEP
PEO AFF/PEO DEP

Responses to Figure 6

- Acting like a teapot
- Dancing with someone twirling
- Resting (leaning on an object) and talking to someone

PEO EXH
PEO AFF
PEO AFF

Responses to Figure 7

- Ready to perform a somersault
- Position for someone to leap frog over

ENV ACT
PED AFF

Responses to Figure 8

- Fencing
- Shaking the hand of small person

PEO AGG
PEO AFF

Responses to Figure 9

- Opera singer
- Possibly, speech

PEO EXH
PEO COM

Responses to Figure 10

- Bowing to a crowd
- Sitting at a desk
- Walking, running, jumping
- Standing on one leg

PEO EXH
ENV PAS
ENV ACT
ENV PAS

SCORING AND ANALYSIS

<u>CATEGORIES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
<u>Environment</u>		
Active	6	24
Passive	<u>4</u>	<u>16</u>
Total Environment	<u>10</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>People</u>		
Affection	5	20
Aggression	1	4
Communication	2	8
Dependence	2	8
Direction	1	4
Exhibition	<u>4</u>	<u>16</u>
Total People	<u>15</u>	<u>60</u>
Grand Total	<u>25</u>	<u>100</u>