

THE DRAWING WEBSITE PRESENTS

THE ART OF DRAW FU

Beginner Level



Luis Escobar

THE DRAWING WEBSITE PRESENTS

**THE ART OF
DRAW FU**

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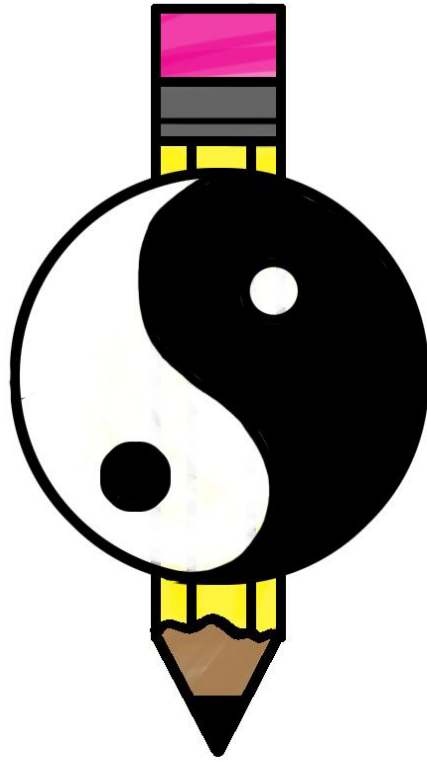
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: How Drawing is like Kung fu	1
BEGINNING LEVEL LESSONS	5
Choose Your Practice Weapons: What drawing equipment you need for now.	7
Lesson 1: How drawing is like writing – The A, B, Cs -Lines.	11
Lesson 2: How drawing is like writing – Sentences, Basic Shapes	18
Lesson 3: Basic design: Stick figure, WITH STYLE!	27
Lesson 4: The Secret of Tracing like a Pro – Basic under drawing techniques.	50
Lesson 5: Design Simple Cartoon Characters from Flat Shapes	65
BONUS LESSONS	77
Unicorn Style – How Simple Color Theory Helps Design.	79
Designing Super Basic Composition	91
Formulas – An Introduction to Drawing Shorthand	100
EXTRAS: THOUGHTS AND STORIES	107
The Mysteries of Drawing Talent Revealed	108
Stages of a Developing Artist	110



Introduction : How Drawing is like Kung Fu

The reasons you do not draw.



“I can’t draw a straight line.”

“I can’t even draw a good stick figure.”

“Artists are so lucky that they’ve got the talent to draw.”

I’ve heard all the excuses in the book on why you can’t draw.

I’m here to tell you right now, that that’s all they are, EXCUSES.

The truth is, you’re afraid. Afraid to fail. Afraid of being laughed at. Afraid of being mocked. Afraid of WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW.

Well guess what? Here, you learn what you don’t know. Here, you will be shown the steps. Here, you will discard your fear.

“But I have no TALENT for drawing!”

I’m here to tell you that talent, TRUE natural drawing talent, is only good for one thing:

Making you WANT to draw more.

But a person with less talent or no talent, can usually end up drawing better than someone with natural talent simply by working at it.

The Problem with Talent

Since drawing comes easy for the talented, they often rely on it like a crutch. Talent can often be a fatal drawing flaw. I've seen talented artists become stagnant and never improve because they rely on their talent too much.

Some talented people when confronted with a need to improve their skills, quit when they realize that it's difficult and requires work. They think they shouldn't HAVE to work at it. After all, they're talented.

Worse of all, some talented people think they're the BEST draftsmen out there, and when they come face to face with draftsmen who are better, they simply quit, rather than work at improving.

This is where a person with less talent or no talent has an advantage. They've never had it easy, so the work is part of the drawing experience. Something they take for granted.

The reasons you CAN draw

Drawing is a learnable skill. It's a skill with teachable methods that work. All you have to do is learn those methods, practice them and that's it.

Drawing is like writing, like playing an instrument, like learning to dance,...like Kung Fu.

Why Kung Fu is like drawing

The **Merriam-Webster** dictionary defines KUNG FU as:

“any of various Chinese martial arts and related disciplines that are practiced especially for self-defense, exercise, and spiritual growth.”



This is NOT the definition that I want to use here. The definition that best fits what I was taught when I learned Kung Fu is much more like the following one I found in **Wikipedia**:

*“Kung fu, gongfu, or gung fu (功夫, Pinyin: gōngfu) is a **Chinese** term referring to any study, learning, or practice that requires patience, energy, and time to complete, often used in the West to refer to **Chinese martial arts**, also known as Wushu.*

*...In its original meaning, KUNG FU can refer to any **skill** achieved through hard work and practice, not necessarily **martial**”*

THIS definition of Kung Fu sounds much more like drawing. Kung Fu can roughly be translated as “hard work”. This means, ANY skill that requires work in order to improve it, can be labelled Kung Fu.

You can learn all the principles of drawing very easily. To get good at it though, you need to practice them. Just like you did when you learned to write.

Conditioning

Conditioning your body is the first thing you do when you’re preparing to learn Kung Fu (the martial art). You prepare your body slowly in order to handle the physical skills you’ll begin to learn.

It’s no different when learning to draw. The conditioning only looks different. You condition your arm, wrists, hands, and fingers to do what you want them to do. This results in good hand, eye coordination. Which results in making you capable of getting the drawing results you want.

A Kung Fu master doesn’t teach you the most complex moves right off the bat. He helps you learn them in small digestible steps so that they slowly become internalized and become automatic.

Drawing is the same way. You practice the small basic stuff and those things slowly become part of how you think.

Drawing is easy

Enough talk, let’s draw!

Drawing is easy. Drawing GREAT is difficult and takes work. At this stage, you simply want to feel comfortable drawing. The lessons in this book will help you do just that. Never again will you feel like you don't know what you're doing when it comes to drawing.

So you can't draw a stick figure or a straight line? When you draw, does it look like a mentally deranged monkey made your pencil vomit on the page? Do you have to write what you're supposed to draw on DRAW SOMETHING? Do you want to hang your head in shame because the three year old sitting next to you is drawing circles around you?

Well you've come to the right place.

By the time you finish the lessons in this book, you will be able to draw appealing drawings and characters. You won't be Michelangelo (the artist not the turtle), but you're not TRYING to be.

You'll be able to draw for the first time ever! And that's all these lessons are here to teach you.

It's that three year old's turn to hang his head in shame!



So Let us Get Our Draw Fu On!

Beginning Level Lessons

Is there a right way to draw?

Is there a right way to draw?

The answer is, "yes and no."

It really depends on what your goals are.

If you draw for the pure joy and fun of drawing, then the answer is no. You can draw whatever and whichever way you want.

It's like writing. If you enjoy doing it. Enjoy writing in a journal or in a blog, just for fun, even if no one will read it, there is no wrong way to do it.

You do it, you enjoy it, that's it.
No right, no wrong, no worries.

BUT if there's a goal you're after. A special style you want to achieve. A certain level of skill you want to ascertain, or if you simply want to draw professionally, then yes, there is a right and wrong way to draw.

By right way and wrong way, I mean there are principles, approaches and methods that have been developed over hundreds of years that help get you the results you want. These tools, if used, provide ways to best express and communicate what you want to say with a drawing.

These principles and methods are, by no means, dogmatic absolutes.

Again, take writing as an example. There's a such thing as proper grammar that one must learn in order to write clearly in order to express ones thoughts. YET, there are many times when a author of a book writes sentence fragments for effect. Sometimes they misspells words, in dialogue, in order to capture dialects or slang.

They do this knowing they're "breaking" the rules of grammar, but they do it for a good reason.

That's what drawing is like. You learn the conventions of good draftsmanship and then you use and abuse them for effect. Knowing that you're "doing it wrong."

So is there a right way to draw? Yes there is...and no, there isn't.

Before we Begin, Choose Your Practice Weapons:

What drawing equipment you need in order to start drawing.

“The grace to be a beginner is always the best prayer for an artist. The beginner’s humility and openness lead to exploration. Exploration leads to accomplishment. All of it begins at the beginning, with the first small and scary step.” ~Julia Cameron

The Secret Weapons of Good Drawings



I know what you’re thinking, “To even start drawing, I have to have all those tools that artists have. I don’t even know what I need. What should I buy? How is it used? I don’t know about pencils and papers and pens. It seems so expensive. I don’t have the money to be able to learn to draw.”

Draftsmen walk around with, “The Arsenal.” You know the one. It’s a special little art box or bag where, when opened, you see all kinds of

strange pencils, markers, pens, brushes and even razor blades. These are weapons the draftsmen use to practice their art.

Not too far from that, is “The Tome.” You know it by it’s more common name, “The Sketchbook.” The book of secrets all artists carry around and whip out when the whim attacks.

Here, I will tell you the secret weapons that all draftsmen use to do what they need to do. You will learn the answer to what you should use to get good at drawing.

Behold the Ultimate Drawing Weapons

The mystery revealed.

Below is a list of ALL the tools you REALLY need to learn to start drawing

BEHOLD the super expensiveness of learning to draw. Here are the tools you need to buy:

1. **Regular Pencils**- Like the ones you used in school. Or just look around the house for ANY pencil you use to write with. It will be fine. If you have a mechanical pencil, that's fine too.
2. **Pencil Sharpener**- To sharpen your pencils with.
3. **An Eraser**- The pink kind will do for now. If your pencils have erasers, use those but sometimes they run down too fast. There are better erasers out there than the pink ones but really it doesn't matter for you right now. As long as it erases without smudging everything, it's cool!
4. **Some Ballpoint Pens**- The cheaper the better. They feel like pencils and control like pencils, but you can't erase. They're my favorite to sketch with. You really don't need anything fancy.
5. **Paper**-If it's blank it's good. If it's NOT blank, it's STILL good. Newspaper? Fine. Line Paper? Fine. Yellow notepads? Fine. Sticky note? Fine. Construction Paper? Fine. It doesn't matter. If you can draw on it. It's fine.

As you can see, I was being sarcastic when I said this was expensive. Whatever you have around the house that you use to write with, can also be used to draw with. You DON'T need fancy drawing supplies.

Use what you have on hand. You don't have to buy anything.

Okay, having said ALL THAT...I WILL be talking about color later on. This means you might want to get a hold of something to color with in order to do the exercises

What you might need is: Crayons, Water colors, or Color pencils.

None of those things should be very expensive to get (if you live in the U.S., you can get this stuff at a dollars store). Just make sure that they have the colors: Red, Blue, Yellow, Green, Orange and Purple.

I will mention Color pencils in the "tracing" lesson so, just a heads up. You don't NEED them but they are an option.

If you plan to take this serious and you're planning to do the stuff in the next Level book once you're done with this beginning Level, you can purchase the tools I recommend at THAT level. Be careful not to jump the gun!

There isn't a reason to, at this point.

The Myth of Tools

Here's the truth: *It's not the tools used that makes a good drawing- it's the skill of the draftsman.*

Give a great draftsman a box of crayons and his drawings will still be awesome.

My Kung Fu teacher once did a weekend workshop where he simply taught general, "less flowery" self defense. In that workshop we learned all kinds a very practical things. Including. how to protect ourselves with a rolled up magazine and how to use a pack of bubble gum as a weapon.

No joke.

Ever watch Jackie Chan movies? Ever notice that when he gets in a fight in those movies and doesn't have a weapon, he uses anything that's on hand? Chairs, decorative antlers, shopping carts, pool sticks, a refrigerator door, a rope with a horseshoe on it, an umbrella, a ladder...etc. Those aren't weapons until he uses them like one.

What did the great Renaissance masters have? Markers? Brush pens? Mechanical pencils?

No, they just had crummy brushes, paints they made themselves, quills and ink and rudimentary pencils. Yet, with these tools they did so much.

The point is, don't worry about the tools. Don't worry about getting the perfect set of really expensive pencils and a fancy sketchbook. The first thing you need to do is get used to making the pencils and pens do what you need them to do.

You can worry about getting better equipment once you feel comfortable enough with your drawing that you feel you're ready for more.

Your Exercise

Go around your home and look for any pens, pencils and paper that you can find. These are your drawing supplies. Use them to start drawing.

Pro Tip

ONLY buy expensive paper when you're actually going to use it for finished drawing. For the most part, find the cheapest paper you can find and draw on that. You're going to be drawing a LOT and none of it will be all that pretty. The more fancy the paper, the more precious you will become with what you do. Don't be precious. Simply draw and know you'll probably throw away that paper and your drawings when you're done.

You'll end up learning more when you're under less pressure to do something fancy on fancy paper.

Lesson 1: How Drawing can be as easy for you as Writing: The A, B, Cs.

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication” –Leonardo Da Vinci



There truly is no reason to be embarrassed about your drawing skills, especially since you’ve been drawing all this time and never knew it.

In this chapter, you’ll learn to become confident and control what you put down on a page.

Imagine you’re at the dinner

table and you pick up a napkin, take out a pen, and begin to doodle. Your dinner companions take a look at what you’re doing and are actually impressed:

“That’s cool, I can’t even draw a straight line!”

By the time you’re done with this lesson, you’ll be able to produce some pretty cool drawings and your friends will never even realize you’re practicing.

Won’t that be something? Are you ready to begin?

Let’s get to it.

Drawing is like Writing

Handwriting is basically drawing symbols on a page.

The art of calligraphy really makes this statement even more obvious.

You’ve been practicing writing for so many years that it’s become second nature. You put the symbols (a.k.a letters) on the page in order to create words, which are themselves symbols.

The truth is, just as words can be broken down into the letters that make them up, drawings can be broken down into the “letters” or symbols that create them.

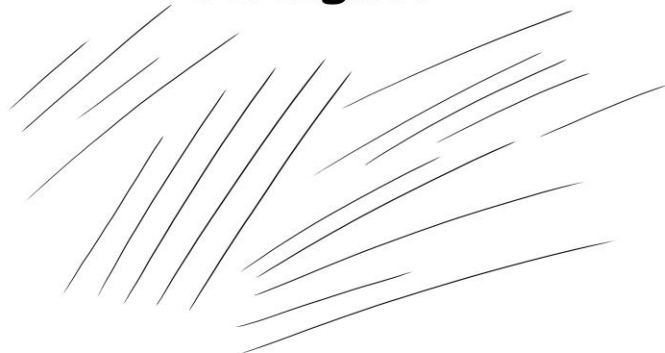
The symbols just happen to be much more elaborate which can make them look complicated, but all drawings can be broken down into much more basic components.

The simple A, B, Cs of Drawing

All good drawing is made up of three kinds of lines:

- Straights
- “C” curves
- “S” curves

Straights



“C” Curves



“S” Curves



You know how to do everyone one of these lines. You’ve been doing them for years without really noticing.

When you write a date with dashes or slashes, you’re drawing little straight lines. You even do it when you write a check after you hand write a dollar amount and put a straight line at the end.

Anytime you write a “C” you’re drawing a “C” curve.

The same goes with “S”s and “S” curves. The only real difference is the length or size of these lines.

The trick to drawing is simply deciding what line you're going to use and where.

When drawing a cartoon, when drawing from life, when drawing ANYTHING, before you put down any kind of stroke, consciously decide which line you're going to put down.

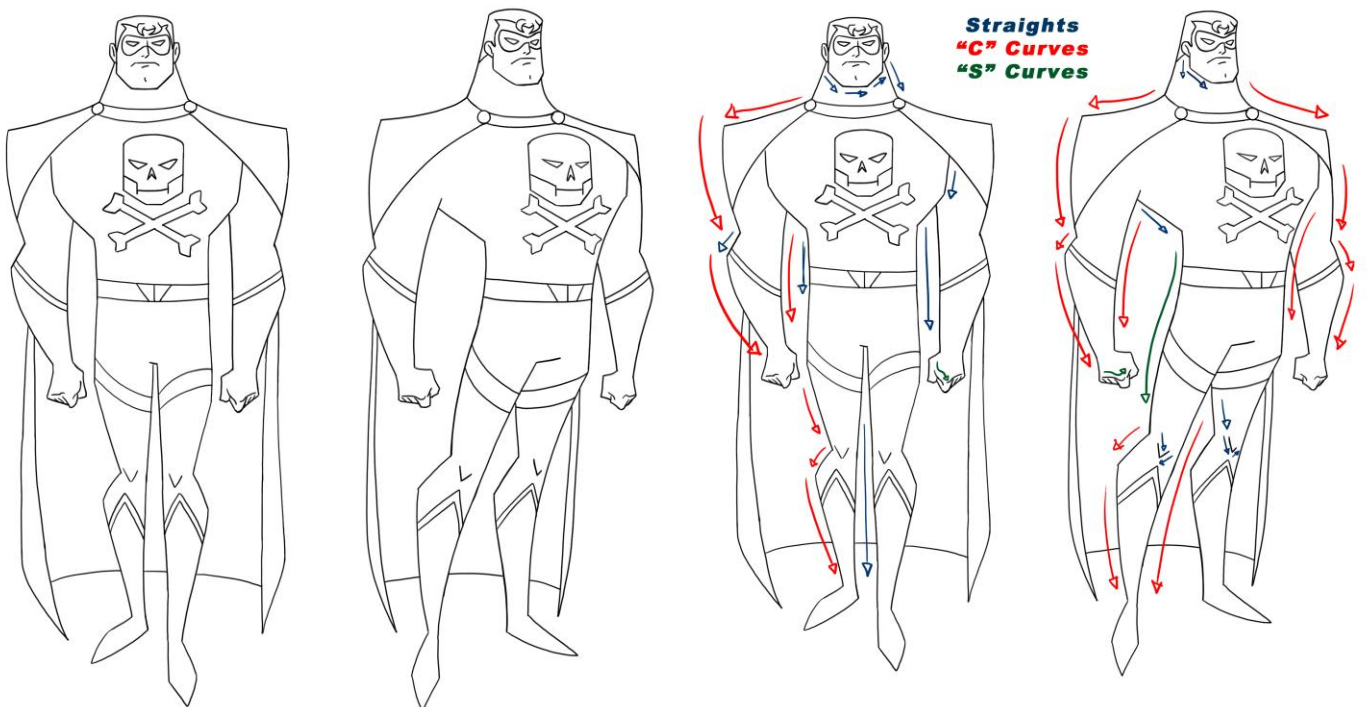
This is counter intuitive at first, but the point is to make you aware of it so that you can get used to it. Once you do this enough times, it will become second nature, just like when you write words.

An Example of How Lines are Used

Animated cartoons are some of the best ways to see these types of lines applied.

In the 90s, there were a few popular superhero cartoons that used what is now called the "Bruce Timm style". This style is one of the best styles to see the lines I've just mentioned applied.

Here's a sample of what the style was like and how the lines can be seen:



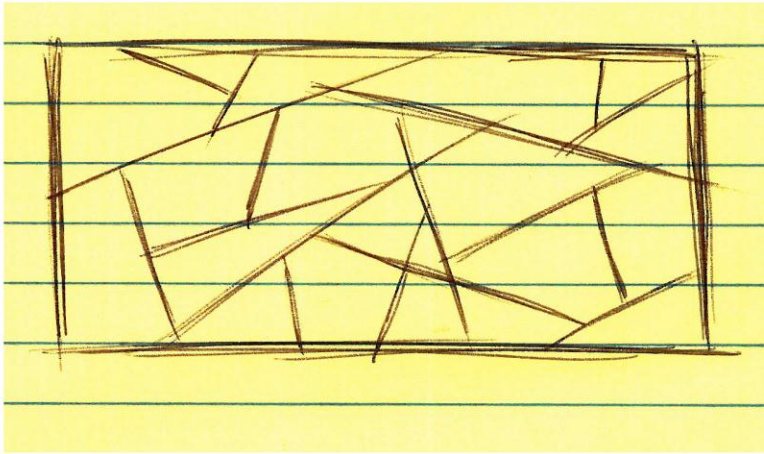
AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE ARE MORE "C" CURVES THAN OTHER LINES. THIS IS MOSTLY DONE TO AVOID AN ORGANIC CHARACTER FROM GETTING TOO MECHANICAL. STILL, IT HELPS TO SEE WHERE AND HOW THE STRAIGHTS AND "S" CURVES ARE PLACED

Because cartoons have to be simplified so much, they lend themselves to the study of lines.

Your Exercise

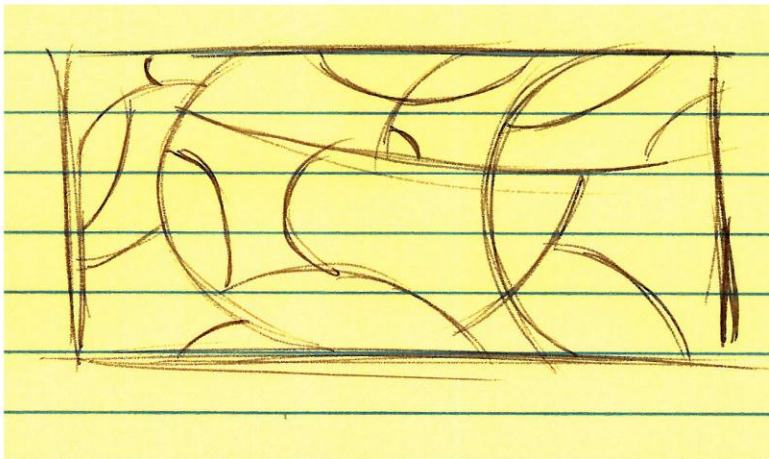
Here's an exercise you can do anywhere that will help you gain confidence and help you get the right hand-eye coordination.

Draw a box or a rectangle (really the shape doesn't matter), then simply draw straight lines inside the shape, in any direction you want. Do as many as you want.

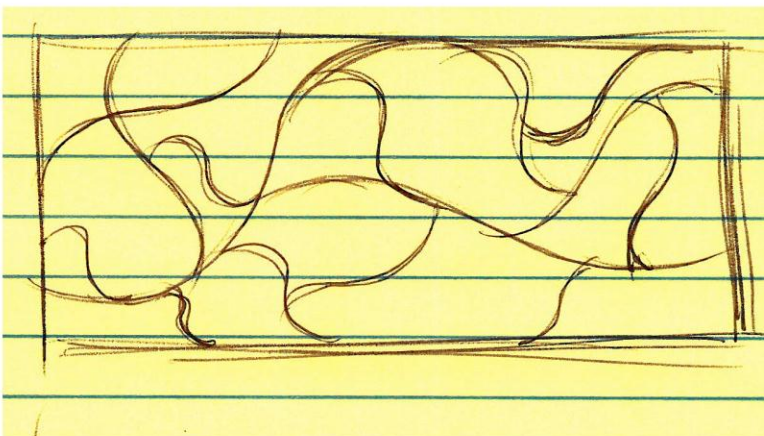


Something like the drawing here on the left

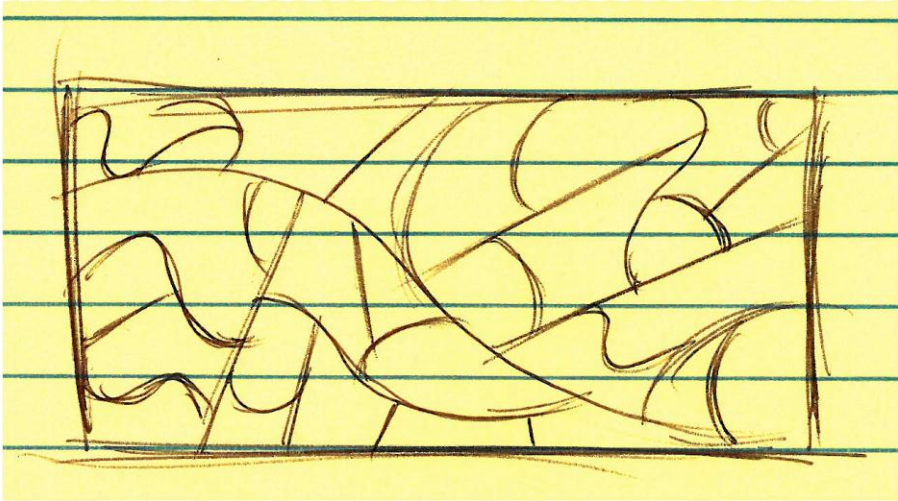
Looks like an abstract piece of modern art doesn't it?



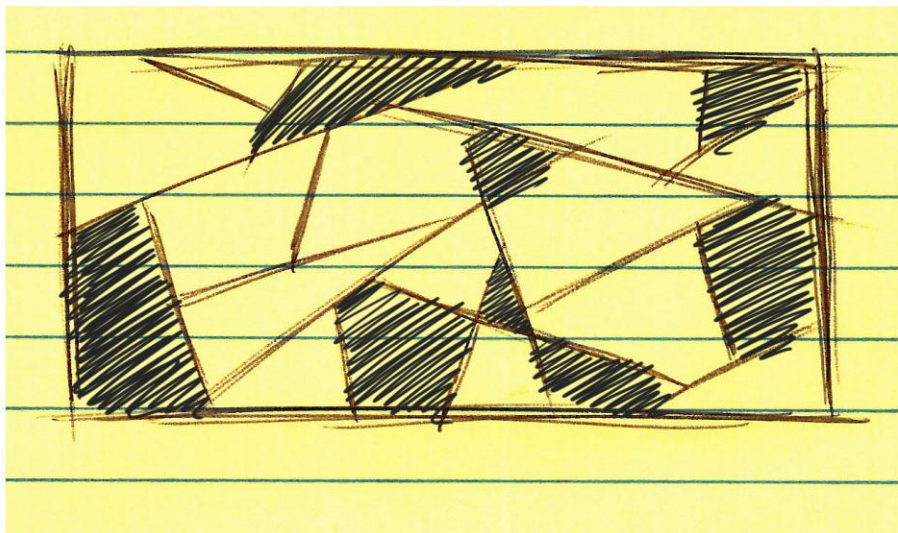
If you get tired of doing these, you can start doing it with the "C" curves.



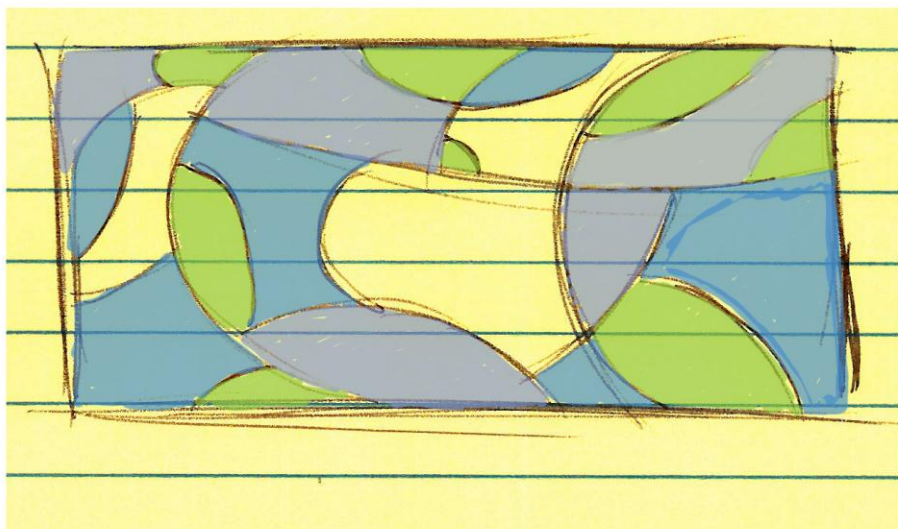
Or the "S" curves.



Hey, you can even use all three lines in combination.



Darken in some of the shapes.



Or even add color.

The point is to have fun while you get comfortable putting lines on paper and making them do what YOU want them to do. In the end, you even end up with some cool drawings. Drawings you can show off to your friends. It's a win, win.

The beauty of this exercise is that you can do it anywhere. During a boring meeting, at lunch, while you watch TV, when you're on the phone, during a boring class, while you're driving...well maybe not then but still, it's versatile.

There really isn't an excuse. It's easy and fun, so try it out.

Trouble?

Q: My lines looks all shaky and ugly. Your lines look nice. What am I doing wrong?

A: It's a problem of speed and confidence. When you write, do you have shaky lines? No, they just look like letters. It's because you're confident in your execution. The same goes with drawing. When you were little and learning to write, your letters looked just as shaky. The more you do it, the more comfortable you'll get and the faster you will allow yourself to draw the lines.

It's like doing push ups. At first you can only do so many, but the more you do it, the more you could do, and the better you are at doing them.

Pro tip

Pay very close attention to this exercise. It may very well be the key to unlocking the secrets of composition, in a more advanced level of drawing.

Are you an artist of a draftsman?

I don't know if you've noticed but I don't really use the term ARTIST in this book very often. Usually, when you'd expect me to use the term, I tend to use the term DRAFTSMAN instead.

Why do I do this?

There are two reasons.

1. You don't need to be able to draw to be an artist.
2. Using the term DRAFTSMAN takes away the "mystery".

Let me explain myself more clearly...

You Don't Need to be Able to Draw to be an Artist

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term ART as:

"4 : the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects; ALSO : works so produced"

Notice that drawing can be one of the skills, but it's not the ONLY skill that can make you an artist. You can be an artist and not be able to draw. A musician is as much an artist as a practitioner of Kung Fu.

This book is not here to teach you to be an artist. It's here to teach you the skill of drawing well. What you DO with that skill and how you USE it, will make you an artist.

Using the Term DRAFTSMAN Takes Away the "Mystery"

The term ART often has the connotation of something highbrow and transcendent.

When talking about a drawing or a painting as art, it creates a tone of mystery that seems unattainable by "mere mortals".

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term DRAFTSMAN as:

"3: an artist who excels in drawing"

I would modify that definition to:

"a PERSON who excels in drawing"

Drawing is a SKILL. A learn-able, teachable SKILL. The "art" is in it's mastery.

So I use the term DRAFTSMAN to call to mind the fact that you are indeed learning a skill, not some nebulous transcendent, unattainable thing.

My point is this: YOU can DO this. Skills are learn-able and teachable. Being a good draftsman is an attainable goal.

Simply keep that in mind and you shouldn't have any more trouble than you would learning any other skill.

Lesson 2: How Drawing can be as easy for you as Writing Part 2: Shapes are like Words.

“I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn’t say any other way – things I had no words for.” — Georgia O’Keeffe



Confidence is a huge factor in the quality of your work. A lack of confidence will show in your drawings. Confidence comes with practice, and at some point, drawing stops being scary, intimidating or embarrassing. You simply do it.

Let me tell you a little secret about drawing: you’ll never be perfect at drawing. You will simply be more practiced.

Those around you who are “less practiced” will see your work and think how perfect it is, but you’ll know that it took practice to get there—and you’ll need more of it to get even better.

Hopefully you’re feeling a lot more confident about your work after the last exercise. But I think it’s time to step it up a bit. It’s time for your drawings to become much more impressive.

The following lesson will increase your confidence when you draw. It will also serve as a slight introduction to design, which is the next lesson after this one.

Shapes are like Words

As all writing is made out of words, so all drawings are made out of shapes. Usually the shapes are modified versions of three basic shapes:

- Squares
- Circles
- Triangles

These shapes are as fundamental as the three basic lines I wrote about in the lesson 1.

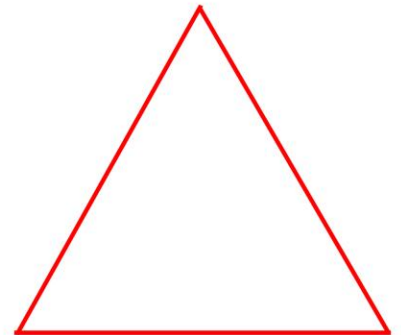
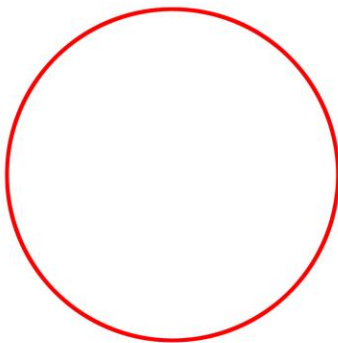
Though more advanced drawing techniques try to create an illusion of volume and form, that's all it is, an illusion. As artists, we work with flat, two dimensional shapes.

No matter what level of drawing skill you have, you'll be drawing some sort of modified version of these shapes. It's best to get used to drawing them now.

These shapes are also useful because of what they symbolize culturally. Depending on the culture, they tend to trigger certain subconscious feelings. Knowing what they are helps you choose what shapes to use in a drawing in order to get certain subconscious emotional reactions in your work.

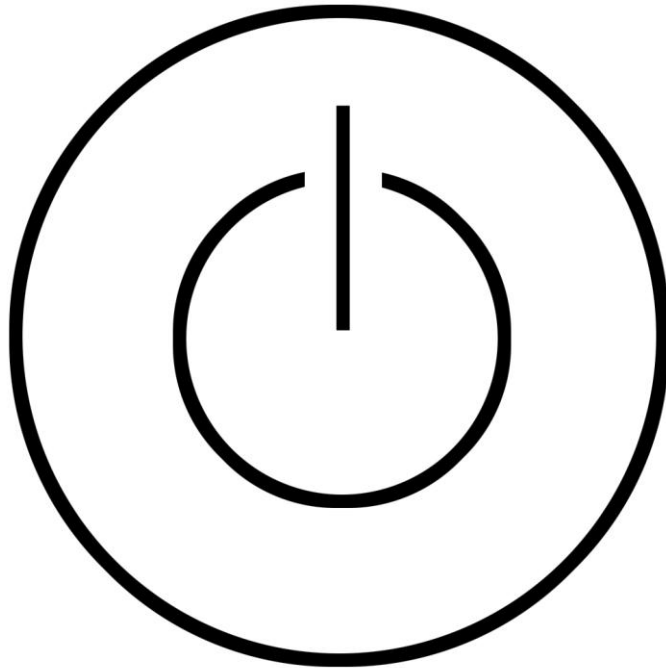
Here's a very quick rundown of SOME of their meaning in the western world. This is by no means an exhaustive list:

- **Squares symbolize** – Stability, honesty, order, rationality, formality, earthbound, dullness, conformity, peacefulness, solidity, security, equality.
- **Circles symbolize** – The world, the feminine, protection, endurance, softness, eternity, perfection, community, integrity, safety, connection, energy, power, comfort, sensuality, love, God.
- **Triangles symbolize** – Stability AND instability, action, aggression, law, science, religion, The Trinity, masculinity, direction, danger, dynamism, conflict, strength, motion.

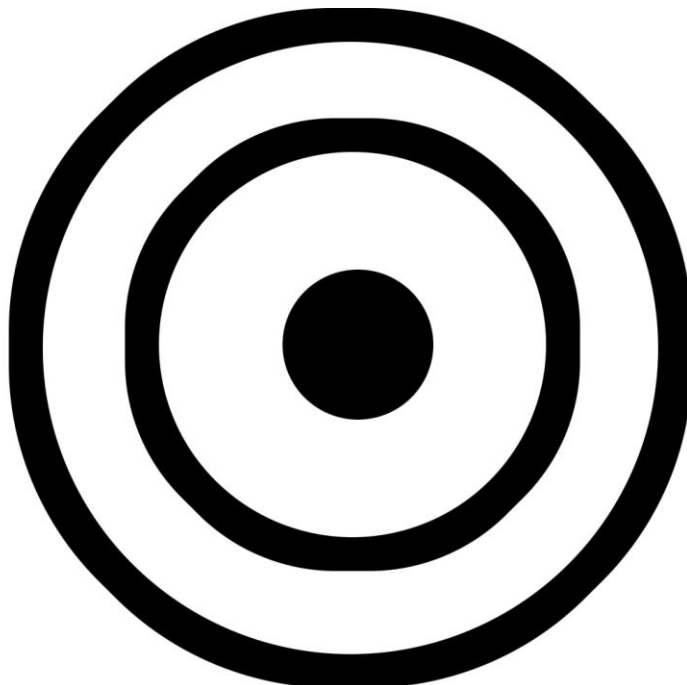


An Example of How these Shapes Used

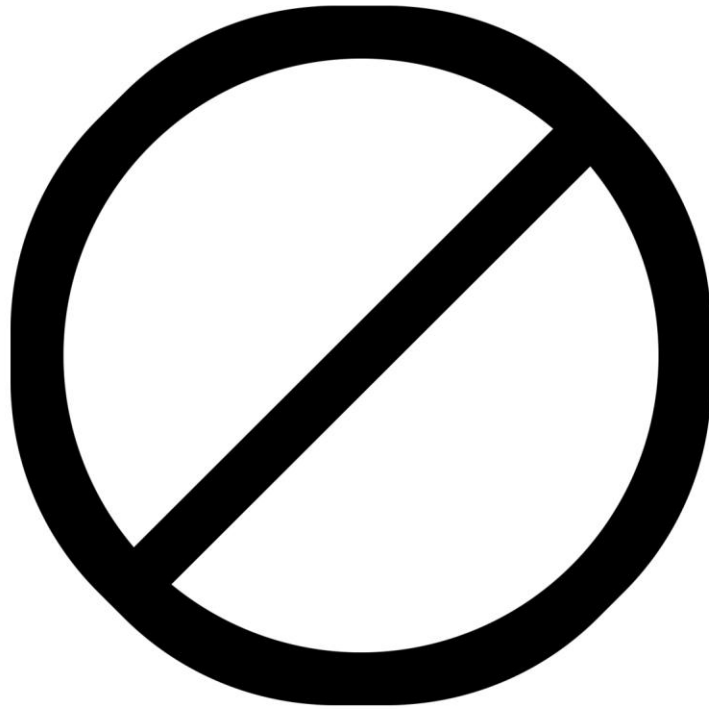
Examples of these basic shapes can be seen in all graphic design around you. A lot of good art can be done with these basic shapes alone. It's not about how simple the shapes are but how creative you can be with them.



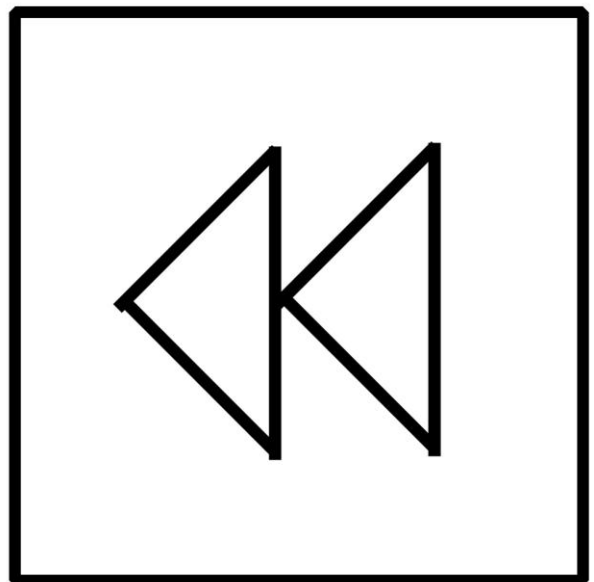
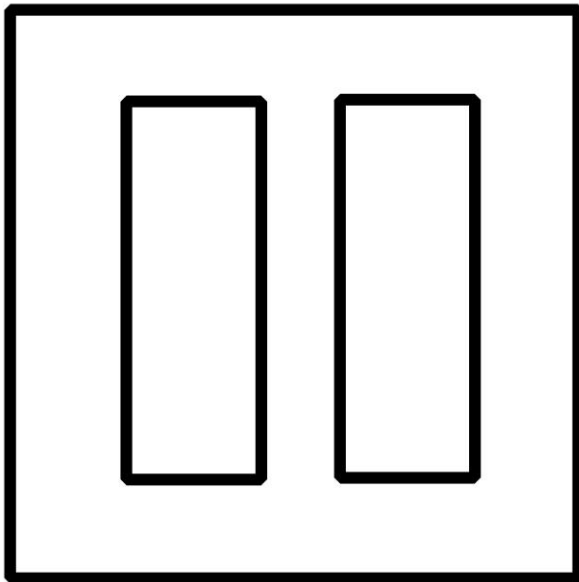
The power symbol is simply a circle with a gap and line going in it.



A target is just a bunch of circles.



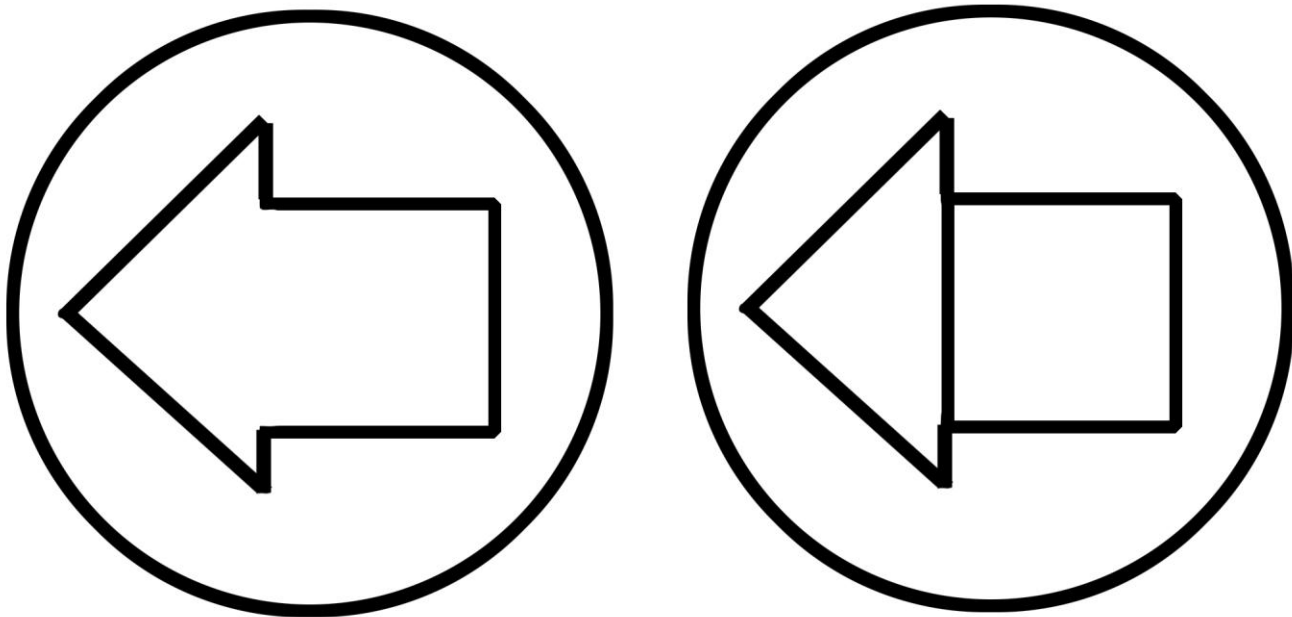
Simple circle with line going through it can say quite a lot.



You see these in certain kinds of devices. The pause button is a square with two rectangles (modified squares). And the rewind button is just a square with two triangles.



The Caution symbol is a triangle with an upside down triangle, and a circle. Notice it's a triangle and what triangles sometimes represent.



Here's a more "complicated" icon. An arrow. It's a square with a triangle next to it only the connecting lines are erased.

Big Mistake Beginning Drawing Students AND Drawing Teachers Make.

What would you think of a baking teacher who taught his students to ice a cake before baking it? What kind of bakers would he end up with?

Have you noticed that none of the beginning lessons on The Drawing Website teach rendering or shading?

That's because being able to render or shade something doesn't mean you can draw.

When I was in my high school art class, it was ALL about shading,

"Here's a still life. Draw it." Everyone would then spend minutes quickly drawing the shapes of the objects on their paper and then spend HOURS and even DAYS shading and shading and shading some more.

The people who shaded the best were considered the GOOD artists and everyone else...well...they just ended up with ugly smudged looking drawings .

Never mind the fact that, the "well rendered" drawings were, in fact, poorly drawn.

Rendering without being able to draw is like putting icing on an unbaked cake.

I've never understood why some drawing teachers insist on teaching beginning drawing students shading. Nor why some beginning drawing books immediately start you off, teaching you to shade.

Rendering doesn't make you a good draftsman. If you can't draw something to look three dimensional using lines alone, you should NOT be learning to shade.

Rendering has its place. Shading has its place, but it should NOT be something that is taught to beginners. It comes much later when your skills are good enough to realize that it's not about how noodley you can be with your drawings, but about what's needed and not needed to make it work.

So if you've been wondering why I don't teach rendering in this book, that is why.

If you happen to have some beginning drawing books that start you off rendering, try to hold back for now. It's best to learn to bake the cake and get that right first, BEFORE you put the icing.

Your First Exercise – Draw Patterns

You can either do this exercise first or the next exercise first. It doesn't matter. Do whichever seems most fun.

One fun way to practice drawing these shapes is, to not just simply draw them, but come up with fun patterns with them.

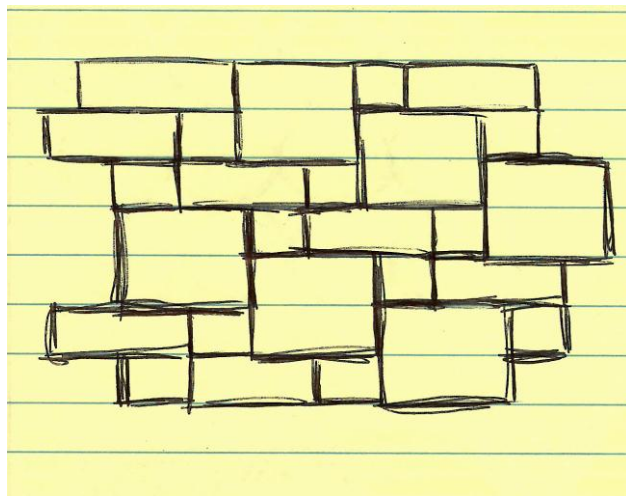
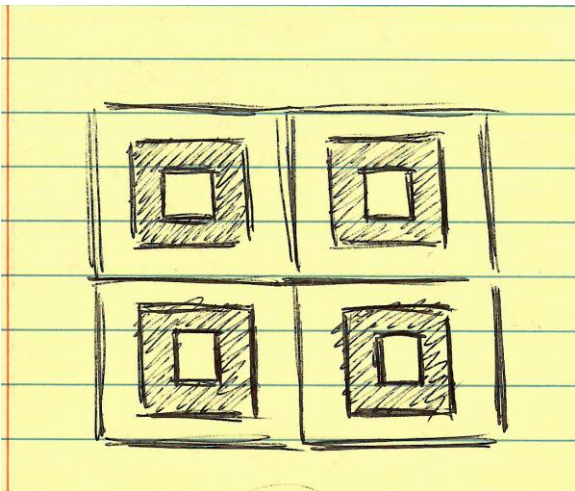
At first, you may not know what patterns to do. That's okay. You can go on the internet and Google up some ideas.

But don't worry, I've already done that for you. Here's me copying some patterns I found. Feel free to copy them. Once you've done that, you may try to find some yourself. Better yet, come up with some unique patterns yourself. Who know, maybe you can come up with one that might be sell-able.

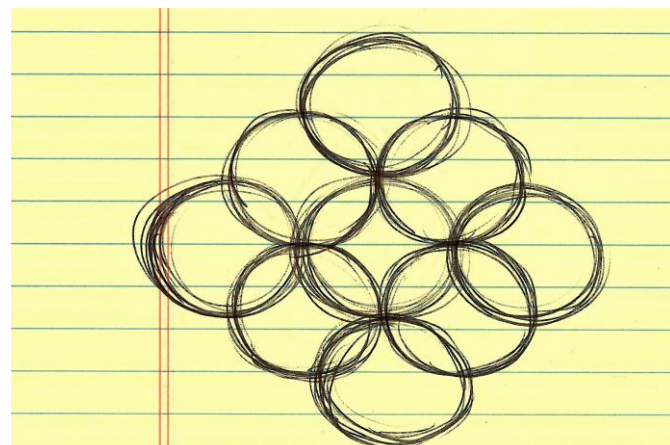
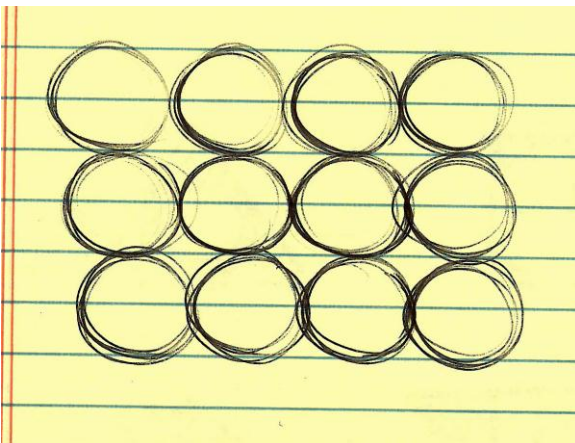
Pattern making is an art onto itself.

The idea here is to have fun while practicing.

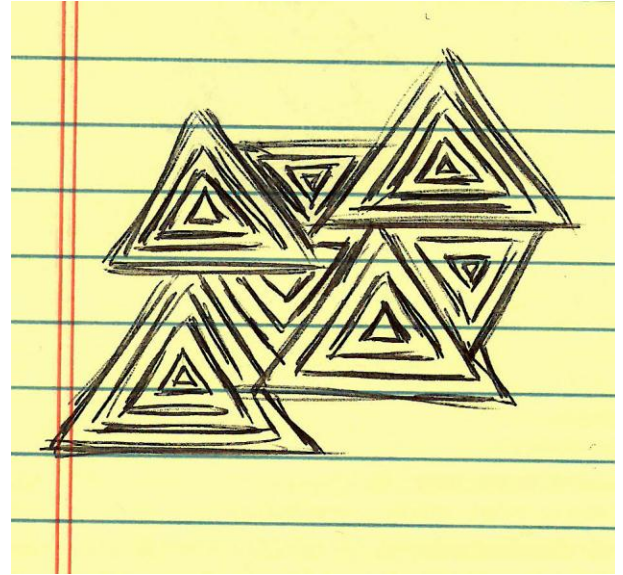
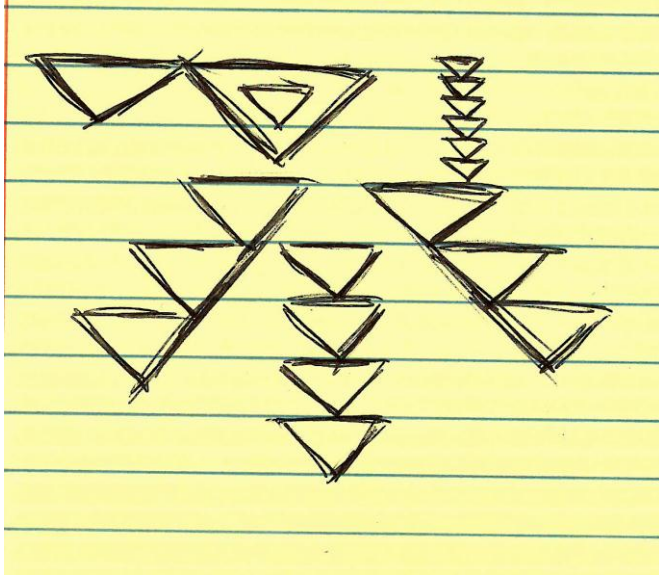
Okay, so let's begin with some squares (and rectangles). We can start with a plain old checker board or start off more advance, like this:



Then we can go on to circles:



We can try triangles next:



Just like the exercise in Lesson 1, you can practice drawing these patterns anywhere, as long as you have something to draw on and something to draw with.

Your Second Exercise – Create Symbols

Just like patterns, symbols are everywhere. In road signs, on cars, at church, on clothes, on superheroes,...EVERYWHERE.

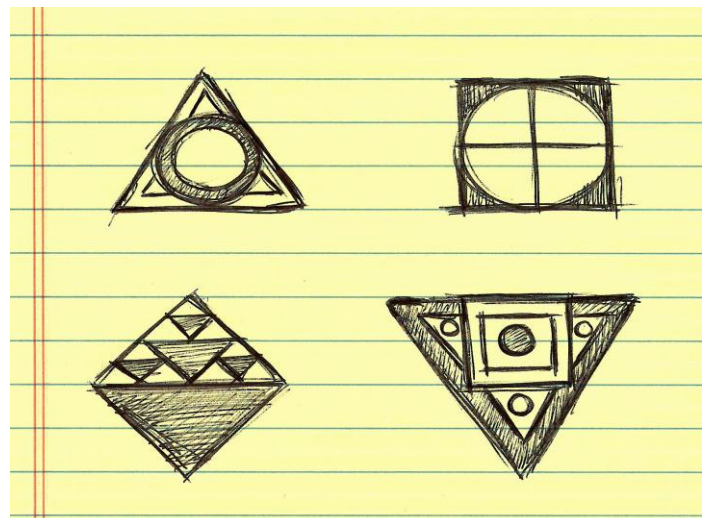
A fun thing to do is to look around for symbols that are made up of the basic shapes we're learning about and copy them.

Better yet, take the three shapes and create your own. Once you copy enough, the ideas kinda start coming on their own.

Just mess around and have fun.

Here's some examples I did. Feel free to copy them or modify them to come up with something new

These exercises are totally mobile. You can do them anywhere anytime, just for fun.



Who knows, you might come up with a great company logo messing around with these shapes.

Remember, doing these exercises is simply an excuse to practice drawing. The more you do that, the better, faster and more confident you get.

Trouble?

Q: My drawings are just not working. Nothing I draw looks like what I'm copying. Nothing I draw looks like what is in my head! What's wrong with me?

A: Let me tell you a secret. You'll never be perfect at drawing these shapes. You'll simply get better as you do them.

I don't know of any artist that is perfectly happy with any drawing he does. Our drawings never meet our more ambitious expectations. Now that you are becoming a draftsman, you will need to find that place of peace inside yourself that allows you to fail with joy.

It's okay to NOT draw perfect, enjoy the process. THAT is your reward. Eventually, your drawings will start to behave and you will begin getting what you want on the page more often than not. For now, relax, draw and have fun.

Pro Tip

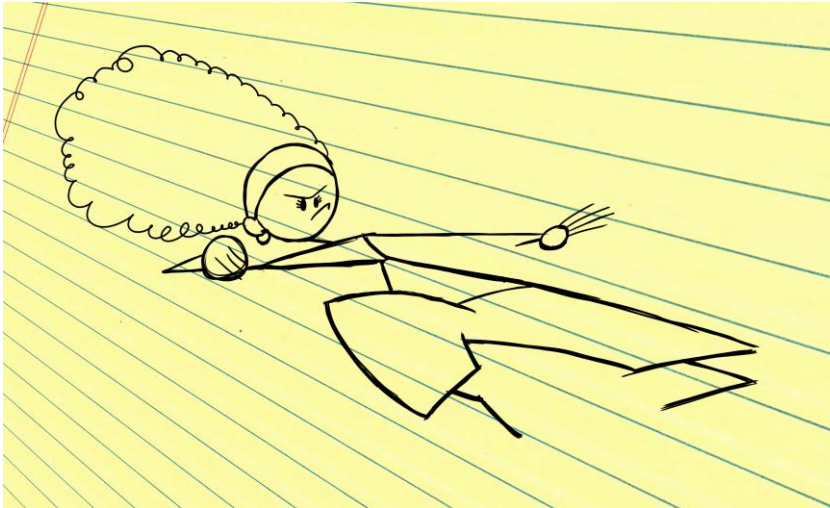
If you find yourself starting to get bored with these exercises, start drawing pictures with these three shapes. Draw faces on them, create environments, modify them to get the look you want, ...stuff like that.

These shapes and their more advanced "siblings", as they are or modified, are the foundation of pretty much every drawing you see.

Lesson 3: Stick figures, with style! Basic Design

There is no design without discipline. There is no discipline without intelligence.

— Massimo Vignelli



You know, it's one thing to make marks, it's a completely different thing to make those marks interesting to look at.

How do you make what you put down look pretty, attractive, cool, appealing?

Have you noticed that when you draw a stick figure, it looks like...well...a stick figure. But when a professional draftsman draws

a stick figure, it's kinda cool looking? Why IS that? What do they know that YOU don't?

That's EXACTLY the right question. They DO know something you don't.

Lucky for you I'M going to tell you exactly what it is.

It's not even that difficult to understand either.

It's design. Very basic design principles.

Design is a big topic and it means a lot of different things, to a lot of different people. I'm going to give you a small introduction to design as I was taught design.

This will be the view point of design, as it is seen from the eyes of the animation industry.

Once you learn these basic principles, you'll know enough so that when you draw stick figures or anything else from this point on, you will be able to do this with purpose — with a goal in mind by which you can judge your drawing.

You'll be able to look at your drawing and say, "It needs more 'this'", or, "a little more 'that'," or, "I think I should do 'this' and it will make it better," or, "Let me try 'this' and see what it will look like...ah yes, much better."

You'll also know enough so you will be able to look at, say, a cartoon character, and say,

“That’s a good design because of _____,” and you can actually learn simply by observing a good design.

You’ll ACTUALLY start seeing the world through the eyes of a designer.

Are you ready to begin? Let’s do it!

Harmonizing Contrast and Balance

Design is pretty much any purposeful drawing you put down on paper.

Usually, when the word DESIGN is used, that’s what is meant. This is fine. I’ll also use the term this way.

BUT what we’re interested with here, is not simply putting purposeful drawings down. We’re interested in putting INTERESTING and APPEALING drawings down on paper. In other words, GOOD design.

THE secret to GOOD design is harmonizing contrast and balance

What does that mean? It sure SOUNDS lofty.

Okay, let’s break it down.

WHAT IS CONTRAST?

When talking about drawing, contrast is:

- Dark against light values or lines.
- Straight lines against “C” curve or “S” curve lines
- Big against little shapes
- Uniform patterns against chaotic marks.
- A color against its opposite color on the color wheel (more on that in a later lesson)

Contrast is good because it adds interest and dynamism to a drawing. It gives a drawing tension that draws the eye. But it can also be unnerving and just plain ugly.

WHAT IS BALANCE?

When talking about drawing, balance is almost what you'd think it is:

- Making things seem even
- Placing things on a page so that it doesn't seem off kilter
- Making things uniform.

Our instinct is to make what we draw balanced and uniform. Balanced, uniform drawings are automatically appealing to us. A perfectly uniform and balanced drawing is often seen as an ideal. They can also be VERY boring and uninteresting.

Good design is when you deliberately take contrasting things, and you place them together in such a balanced way, that they seem like they BELONG together. In other words, you've managed to harmonize them. This causes them to not only be appealing, but interesting as well.

A good design works well when you end up with the appeal of balance, and the interest of contrast, without keeping the dullness of balance and the ugliness of contrast.

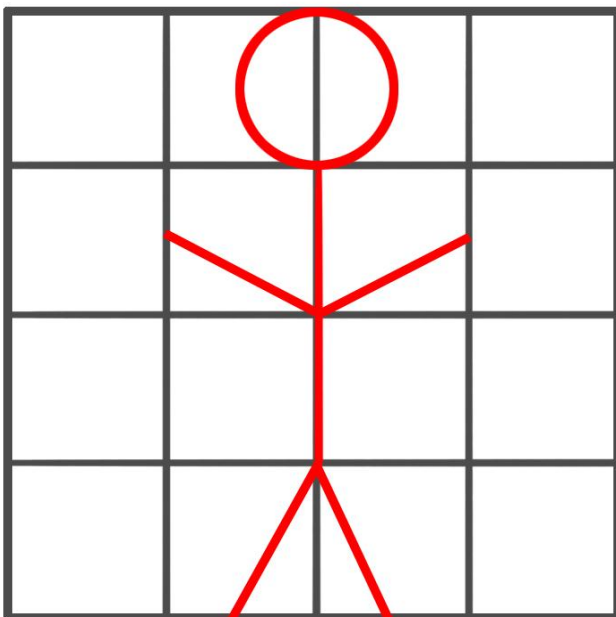
In music, the right balancing of tempo, high notes, slow tempo and low notes creates a harmonious piece of music.

In Kung Fu, the right balance of slow contained movement and stops next to quick snappy controlled action, creates the harmonious execution of a Form.

In order for this to make ANY kind of sense at all, I have to SHOW you.

Let's take for example, a stick figure:

Figure 1



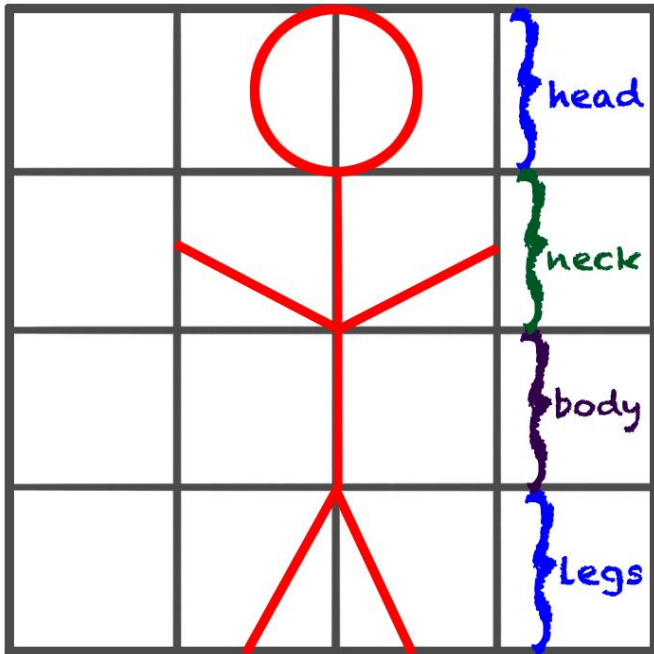
The stick figure design in Figure 1 is an "idealized" stick figure. This is the type of stick figure you will see if you Googled "Stick figure" online.

There is nothing wrong with it per se. It's a perfect "symbol" and it's got its own appeal in being a symbol.

It's also not very interesting as a design.

Why? Well, let's take a look:

Figure 1a



I drew these figures in a grid so I can clearly point out where the stick figures are balanced and where they are not.

As you can see here in Figure 1a, all the main parts of the figure are evenly spaced. The neck, body and legs are all the same proportion as the head.

The figure is all even, all balanced and all boring.

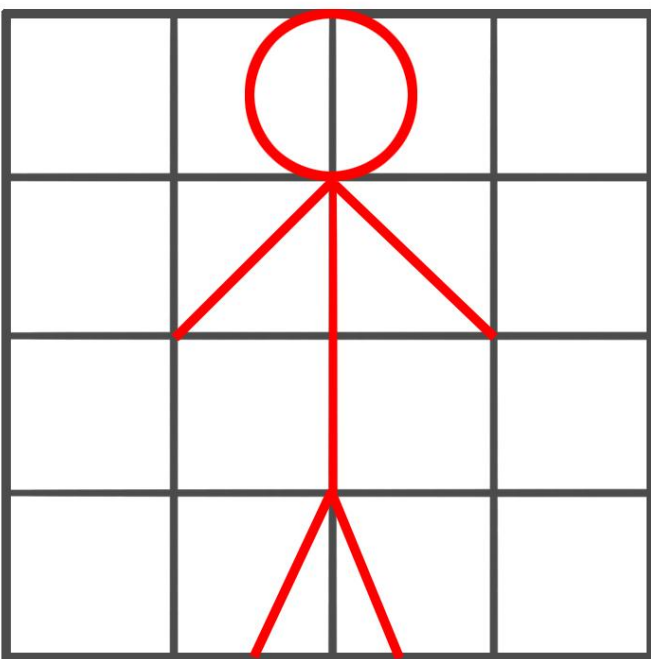
A very dull design.

As I mentioned before, as human beings, we tend to naturally go for the balanced and idealized. This is not a bad thing. There's a time a place for the ideal, but the ideal

doesn't always make for the most interesting designs.

Okay so let's take a look at a slightly better design:

Figure 2

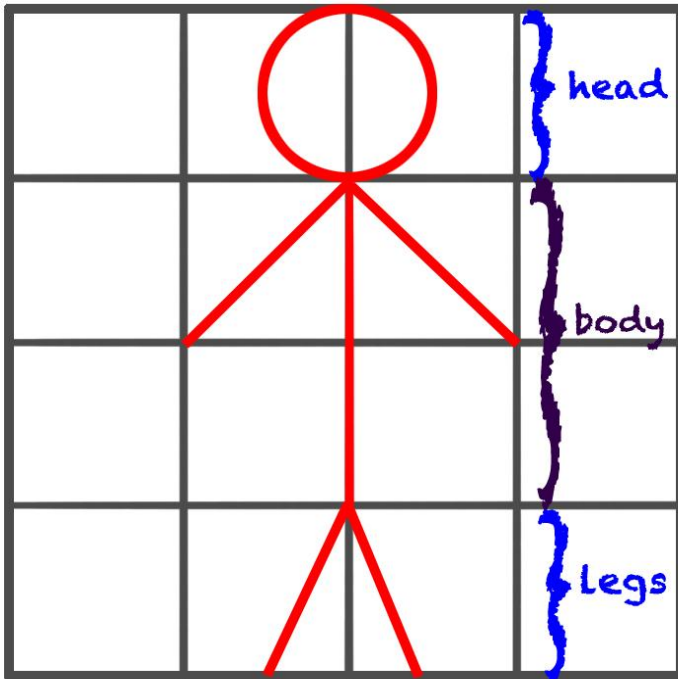


This design is much better than the first one. Again, this is another example of a stick figure that you might find if you Googled "Stick figure".

But why is this better than the Figure 1 version?

Let's take a look:

Figure 2a



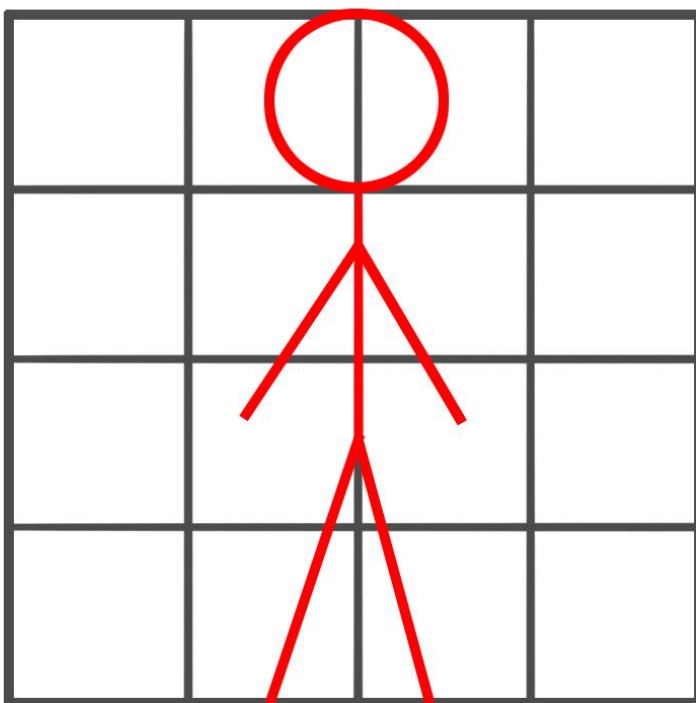
Notice that because the figure doesn't have a neck, and it's not split up evenly, The body portion is much longer than the head and the legs. The figure is much more interesting to look at than the one in Figure 1 because its parts contrast more.

I'm not too sure about its appeal though. It doesn't have a neck and the legs are still the same length as the head.

Still, do you see why one is slightly better than the other? This one has both Contrast and Balance, but it's not as appealing, which means that it's not very harmonious.

Let's take a look at another figure:

Figure 3

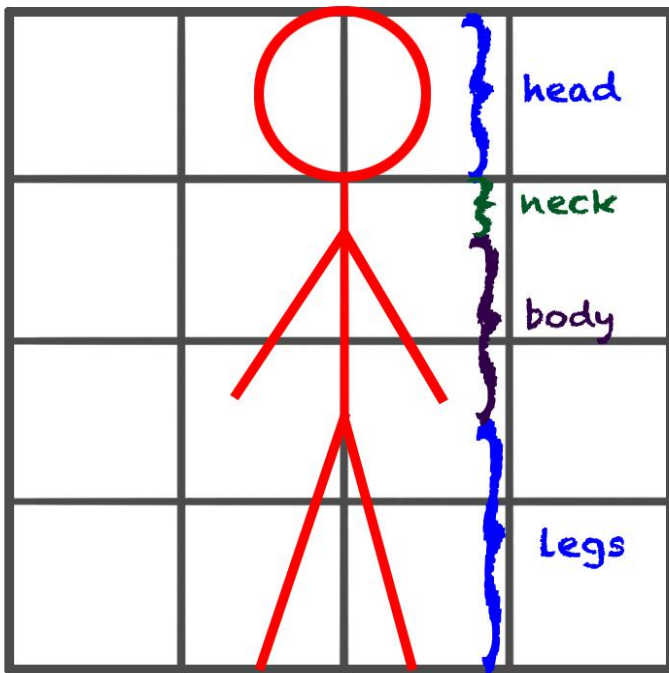


This figure is a LOT better. Sometimes you see this type of figure if you Google "stick figure."

This figure seems "right" somehow.

Let's take a look at its proportions:

Figure 3a



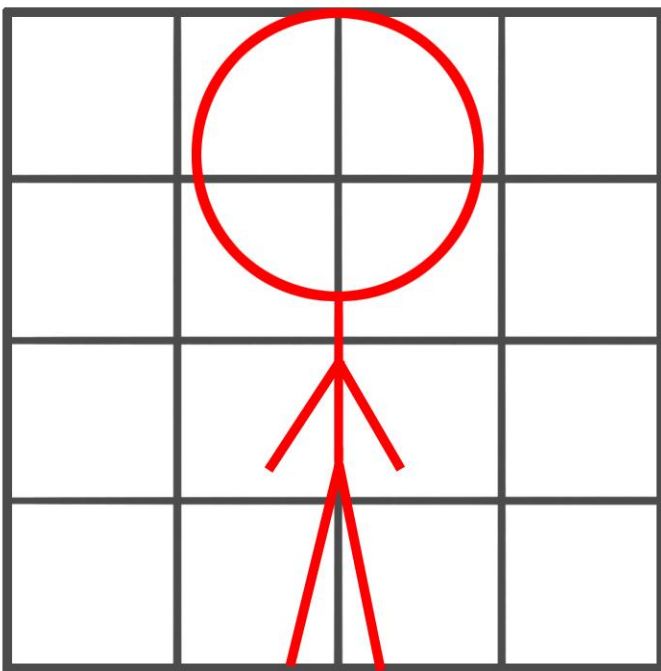
In Figure 3a you can see that every part of the figure is a different length. Although, to be honest, you can probably make the argument that the line of the body from the bottom of the head to the start of the legs, and the legs themselves are the same length. I wonder if that's why it also feels balanced.

In any case, it's a decent looking stick figure.

At this point, personal taste steps in. I'm looking for something even more interesting. I want to come up with something dynamic, so I'm gonna

start REALLY messing around with the proportions to see what happens:

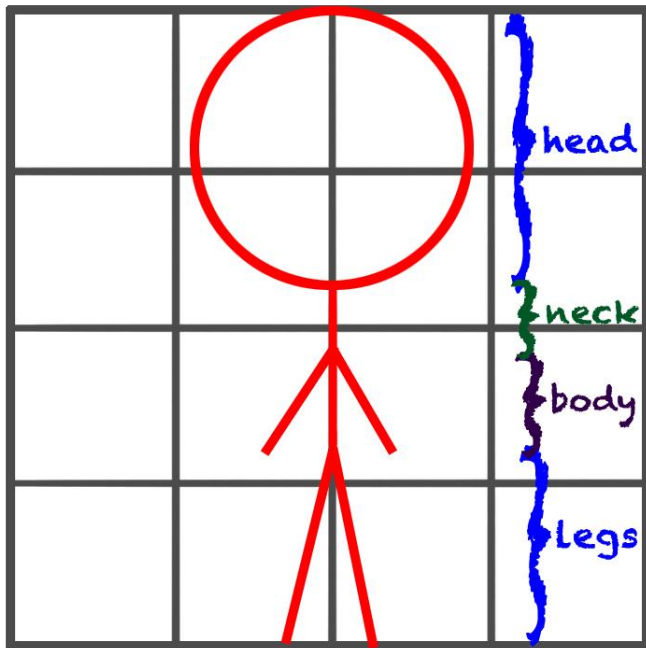
Figure 4



Right...uh...Figure 4 is a little top heavy. Not exactly what I was looking for, but interesting.

Let's see how it was broken down:

Figure 4a



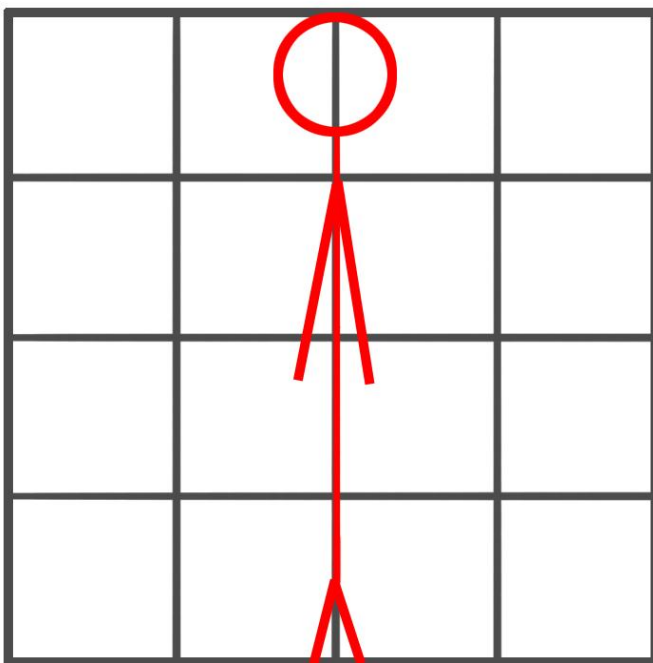
The head is not quite half the size of the rest of the body. The body itself is still bigger. The neck is short, the body is a little longer and the legs are longer still.

I like the body proportions but the head is too big. Perhaps it would have worked better if I'd thinned out the head into an oval.

Lots of contrast but not balanced.

Let's try something else:

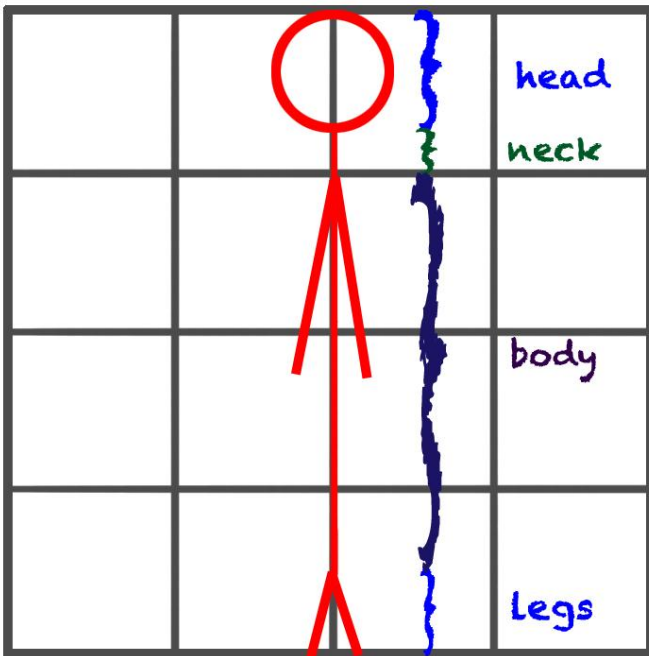
Figure 5



Okay, wow. Figure 5 can be an alien or a very skinny tall guy. Strange that I think of this as skinny since, IT'S A STICK FIGURE.

Let's take a look at the proportions:

Figure 5a

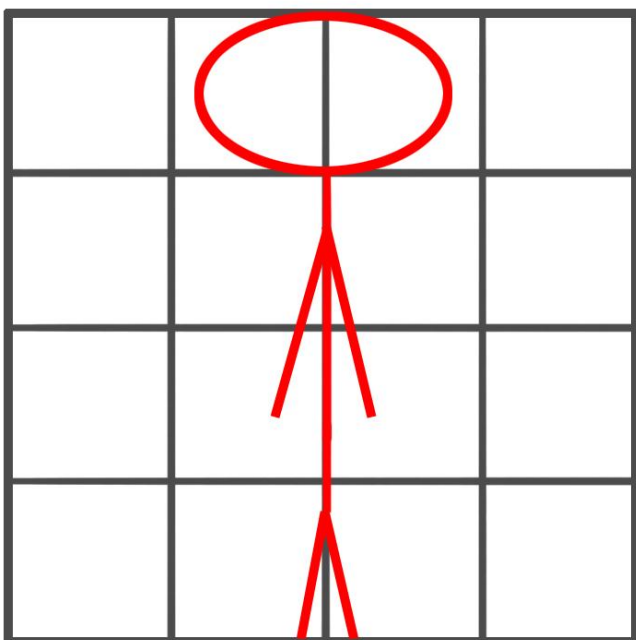


As we can see in Figure 5a, it has a very long body and everything else is small.

I'd have to play with the length of the arms. If you notice, they're exactly half the length of the body and it makes them look a little unnatural (if a stick figure CAN be natural looking).

Okay, last one:

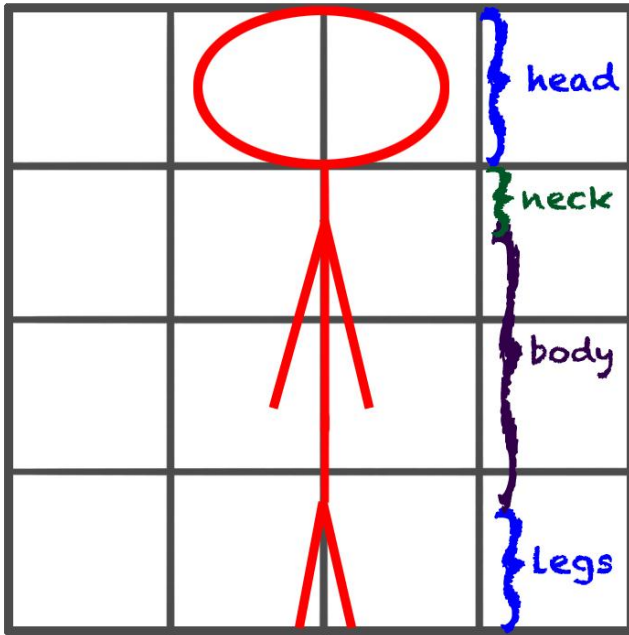
Figure 6



I thought I'd try a different head shape this time. I kinda like this one. It takes some getting used to though.

Let's check the proportions:

Figure 6a

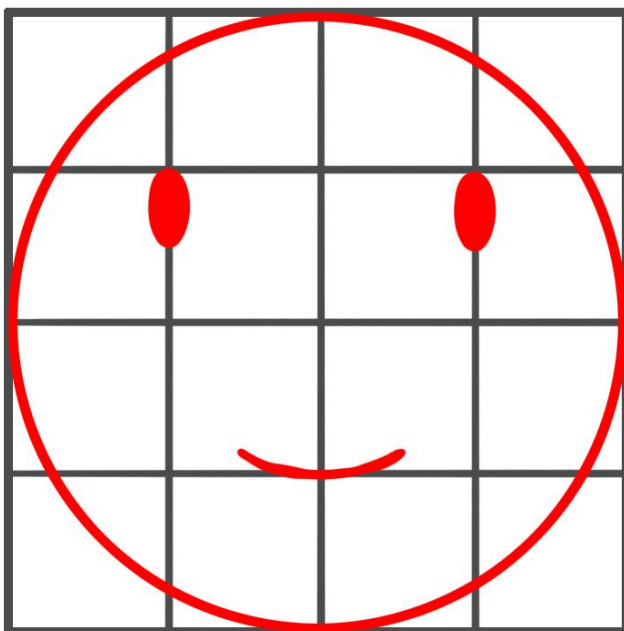


Yup, Figure 6a shows a nice variety of contrasting shapes. I'd still play around with it a bit. Perhaps raise the "shoulders" up a tad and reduce the length of the oval of the head a touch.

So you see, you can do a lot with a little if you only play around a bit.

You can use the principle in more than just body proportion. Below I'll show you how it can work on a simple happy face:

Figure 7

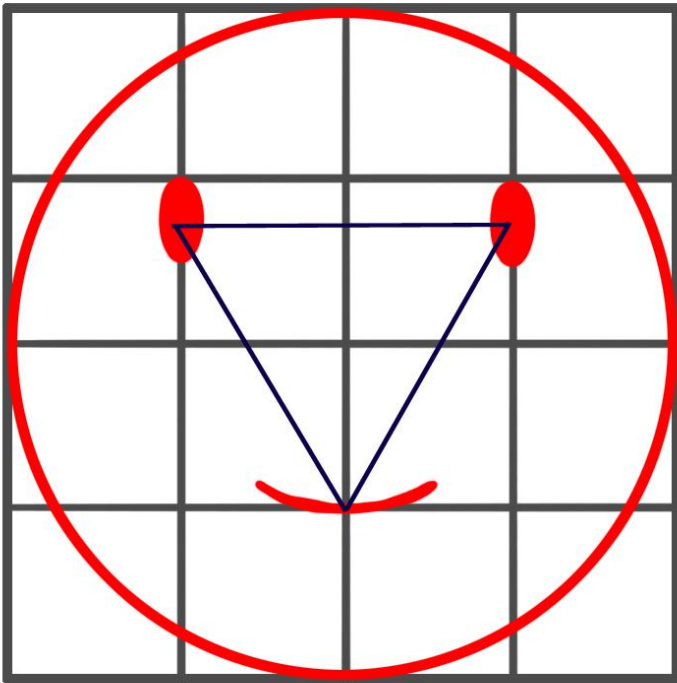


Here in Figure 7, we have a standard, well balanced happy face. Just like the stick figure in Figure 1 above, there is nothing inherently wrong with it.

It is in fact very appealing.

Let's take a look at why:

Figure 7a

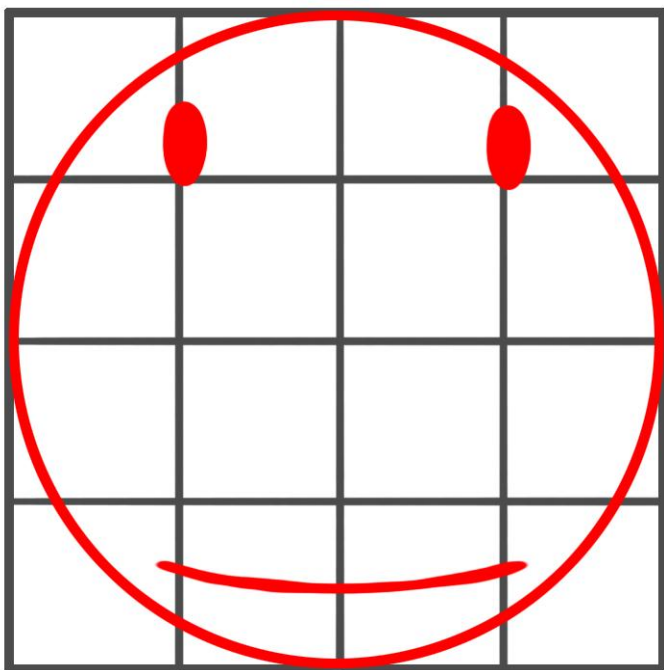


If I take a line and connect both eyes together and I take a line from each eye to the center of the mouth, we get an equilateral triangle. It's a well-proportioned face and completely balanced.

It's also REALLY generic.

But I want to play around and create a unique face. To that end, I'm gonna start messing with the spacing of the features.

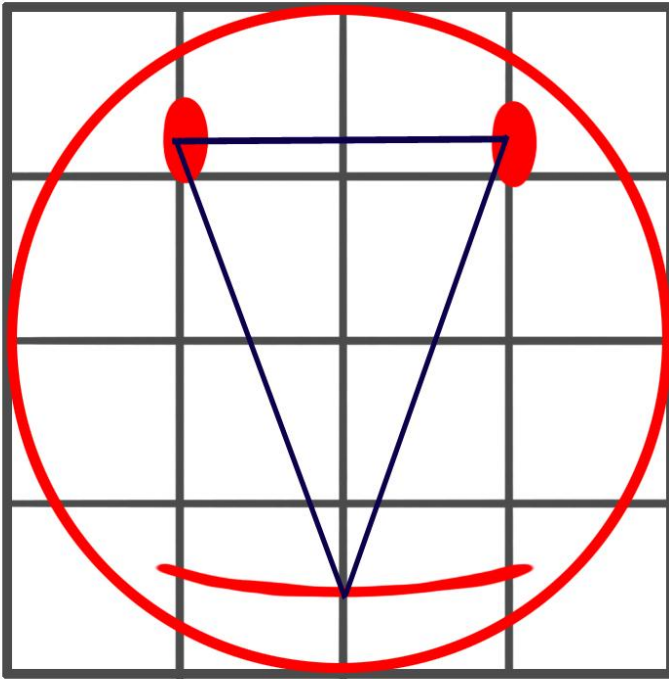
Figure 8



Ha ha, I like Figure 8. It makes me laugh.

I didn't really do too much with it and it's already interesting. Let's take a look at the spacing:

Figure 8a



Yeah, Figure 8a shows a far less perfect triangle.

Let's do another:

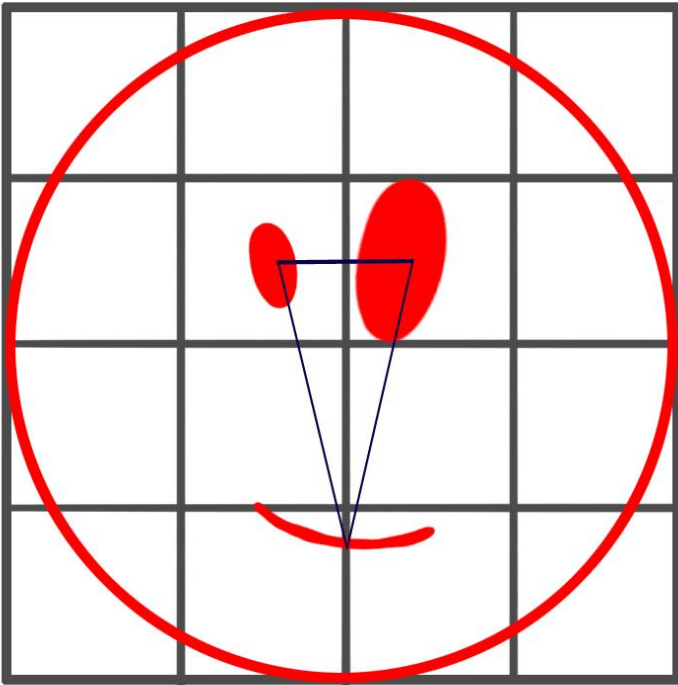
Figure 9



Okay! Trying to play more with the imperfections in Figure 9. Different eye sizes and a slanted mouth.

The eyes are not only closer together but they're also tilted and pointing to the mouth:

Figure 9a



In Figure 9a, we see the eyes point to the mouth. No equal spacing here and a whole lot of contrast.

Let's go a little crazy and change the head shape as well:

Figure 10

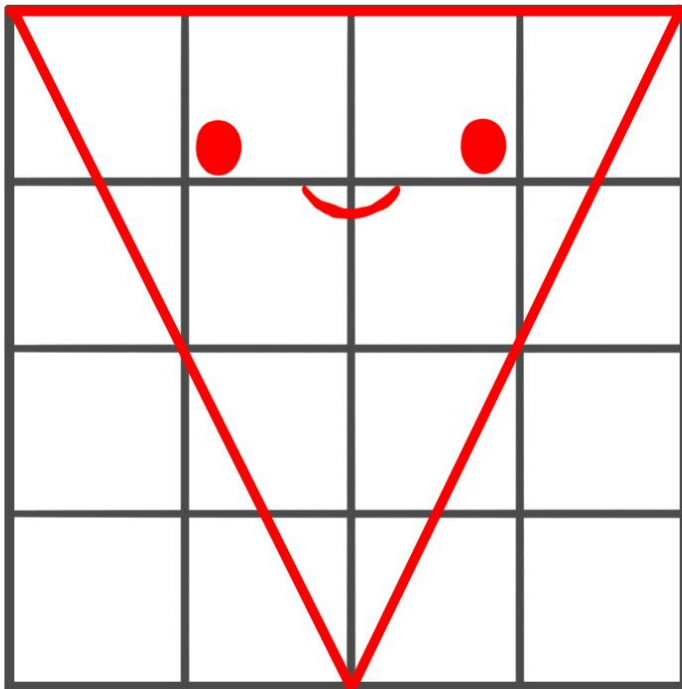


Figure 10 looks like a character that is in need of some "Adventure Time".

I did this, to show you that it's not just about doing things with standard shapes. You can play around and experiment.

Figure 10a

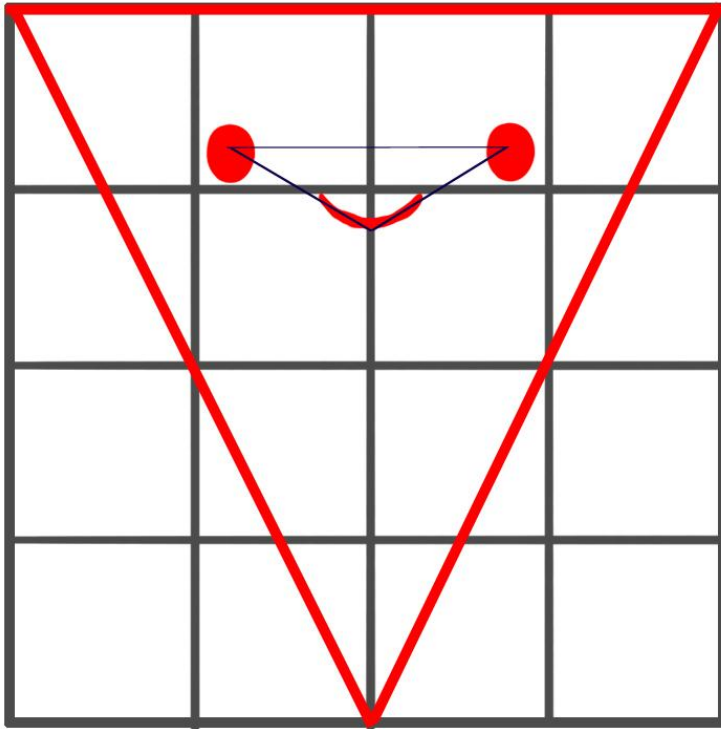


Figure 10a shows how extremely compressed the features are. And they are NOT in the center of the face but a little bit above center.

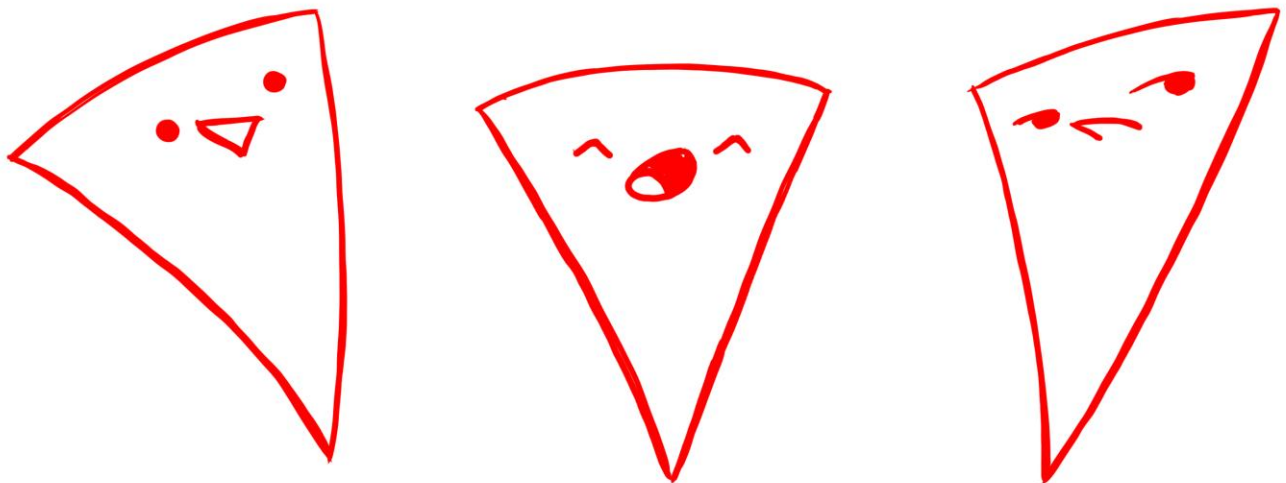
I liked ALL the faces I drew. They were all unique, full of contrast, balanced and appealing.

I think the stick figures needed a little bit more work, but I think you get the idea.

Besides, when it comes to the final design, the ultimate judge will be personal taste.

You take the principles of good design and you play with them, til you get something YOU like.

It's a little bit like a recipe that way.



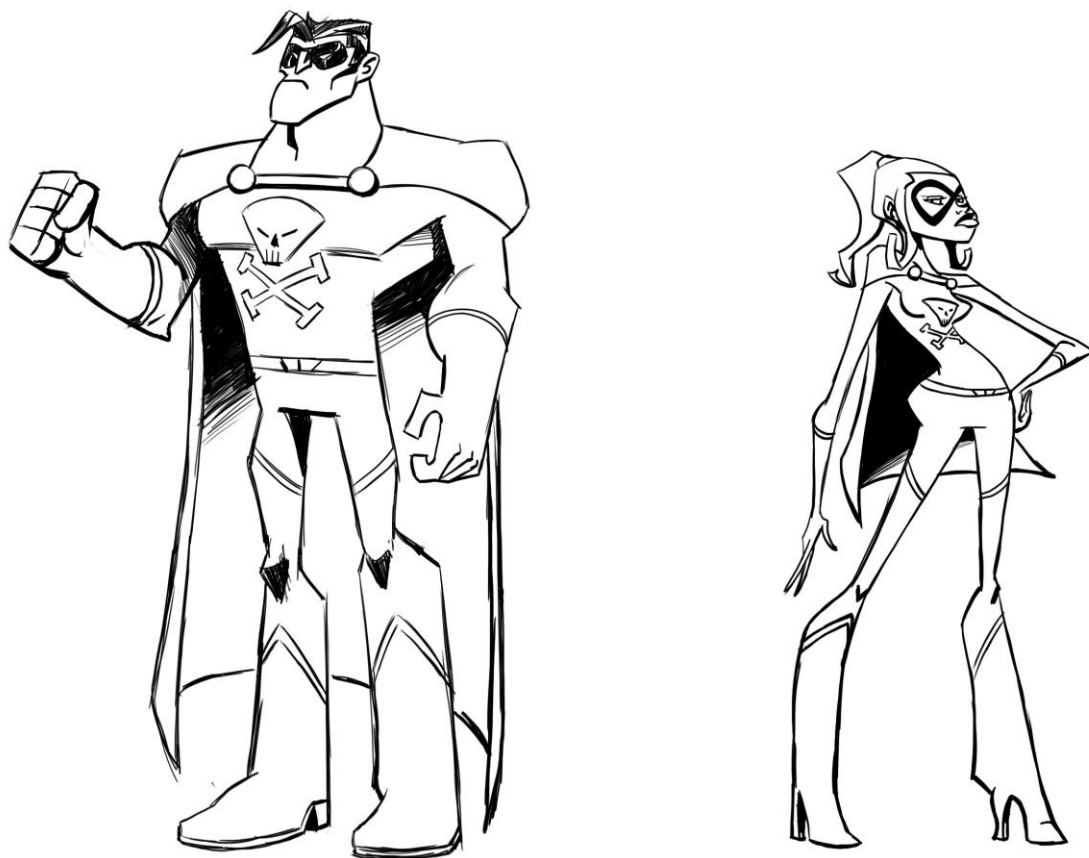
Here is an Example of These Principles in Action

There's this artist I'm aware of named **Robert Valley**. His work is really far out and can sometimes be very odd. He often draws "adult" things too, so beware when looking him up. That said, his designs are fantastic.

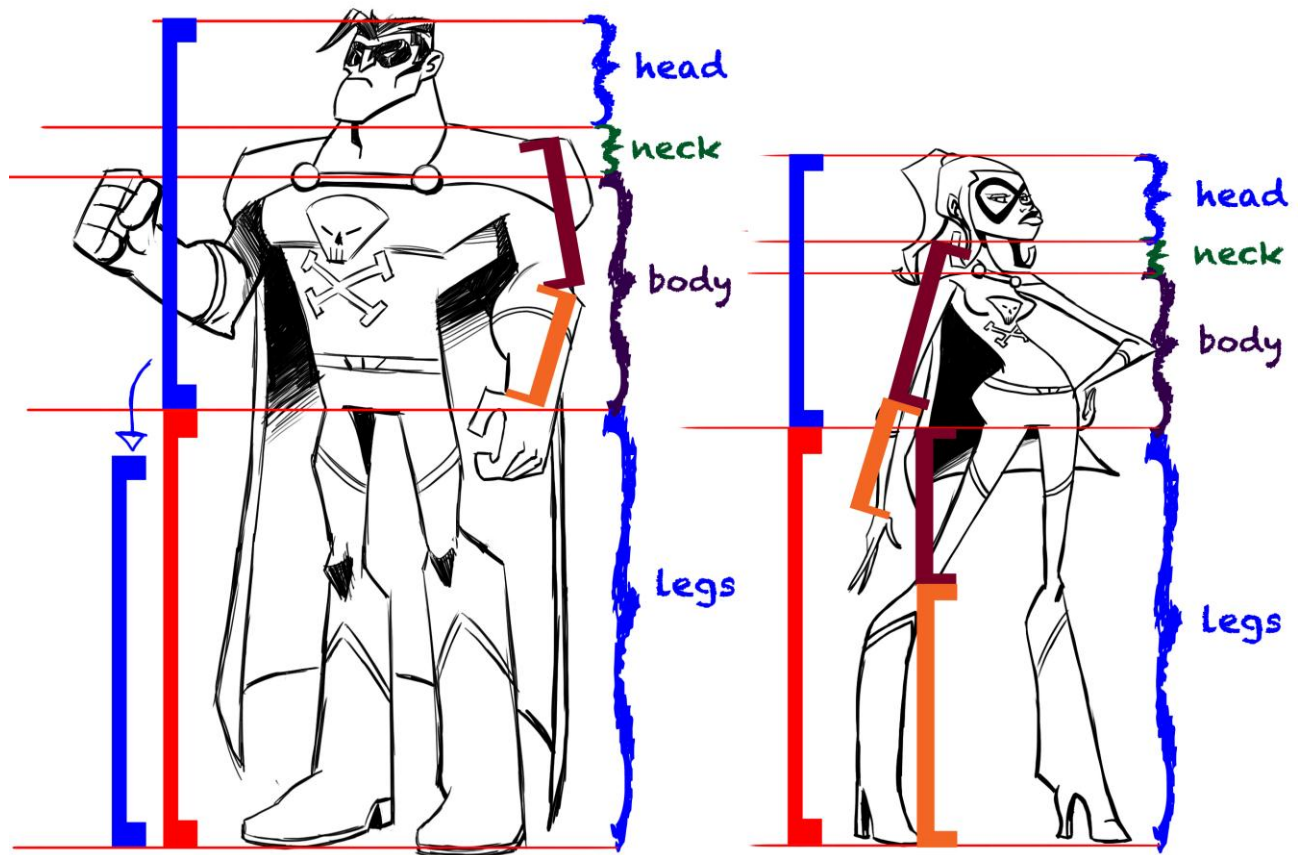
He's done a lot of work in animation as a designer and storyboard artist, but his influence has really been felt in two shows that have taken his style and used it as their "look": **TRON: UPRISING** and **MOTORCITY**.

Since I didn't license any of that art, I can't directly take the art from those shows and post them here for analysis.

What I CAN do is synthesize the style and break it down so you can see it in action. Which, perhaps, is even better:



Okay so here we have my Robert Valley style Black Terror and (my own creation) Lady Terror. This was really fun to draw. Robert Valley has a fun crazy style.



So let's take a look at the way these character's proportions are broken down based on what we've learned so far:

Okay so first, let's take a look at the red and blue brackets on the left of each character. Notice I didn't split the characters perfectly in half. The top half of the characters are smaller than the bottom half.

It was difficult to tell with The Black Terror's blue bracket so I made a copy and put it next to the red. We can see it's obviously smaller.

Next, we take a look at the head, neck, body and legs breakdown. See how none of them are the same length? All the proportions of these parts vary and contrast against each other.

Finally, let's take a look at the limbs. I've colored them dark red and orange.

Even the limbs are not evenly broken down. The Black Terror's upper arm is longer than his forearm. The same can be said with Lady Terror's arm.

Also, both characters have longer lower legs than upper legs.

You see? This is how these principles are applied in a more professional setting.

I hope this makes the importance of these principles clear.

How to Capture or Acquire a Style.

The more you draw the more confident you get and the more your ambition turns to "style."

Either you want to have a unique style of your own or you want to, at least, capture some essence of an artist's style that you really admire.

Well, there's only one REAL way to capture someone's style well or acquire a GREAT one of your own. But before I say what that is, let me share something about being an animator.

Most animators I know don't really have a style of their own. They aren't like comic book artists or most illustrators. They don't have a stylistic voice. Not unless they go out of their way to get one.

Our business is about being able to draw like EVERYONE. We are artistic chameleons. How is it possible for us to do this? What is it about our training that allows us to change styles at the drop of a hat?

We study and become good at using the fundamentals.

Being a good draftsman makes you infinitely versatile. A good draftsman can draw anyway he wants in any style he wants, whenever he wants because he's learned the fundamentals.

He can draw realistic one minute, then Looney Tune cartoony the next, and do a left hand turn and draw in anime style.

You see, style isn't about style at all, it's about applying certain short hand methods to the fundamentals principles of drawing.

After a while, you'll develop your own short hand. This will be your "style." It's the way you like to draw things, but style doesn't equal good draftsmanship.

There are plenty of illustrators, comic artists, and cartoonists that have a style. This is good. Their unique voice is often what they're hired for. But often, these artists aren't versatile beyond their style. If their style goes out of favor, they're out of luck.

If you don't want this to happen to you and if you want to transcend style, master the fundamentals.

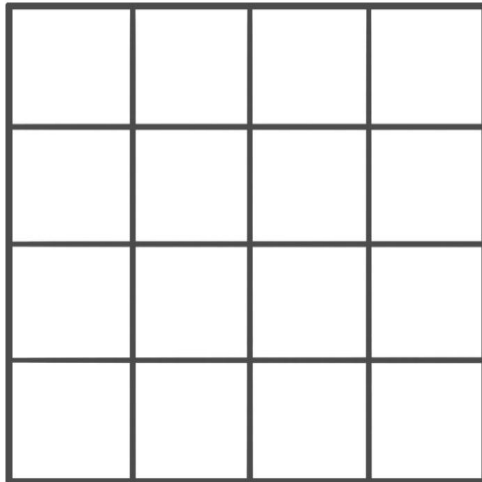
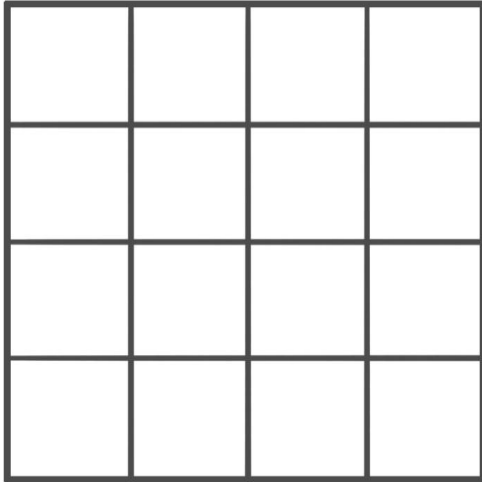
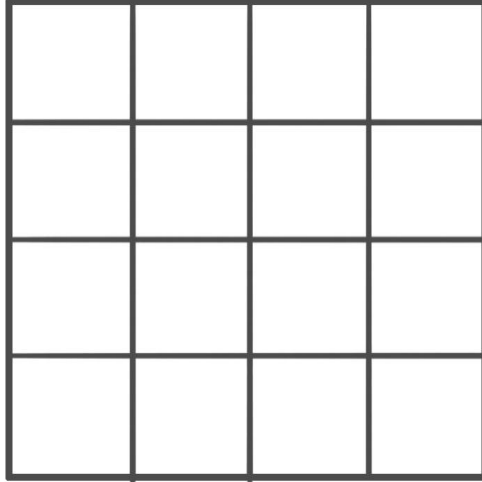
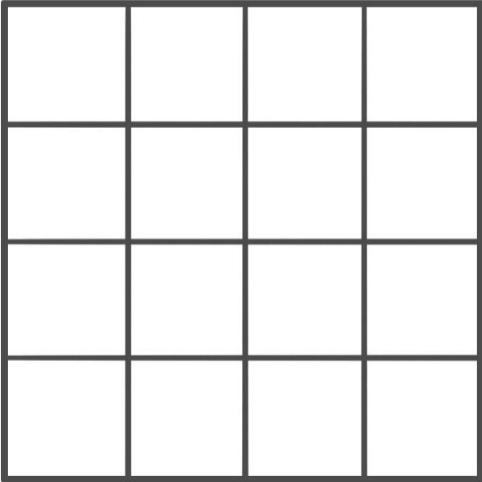
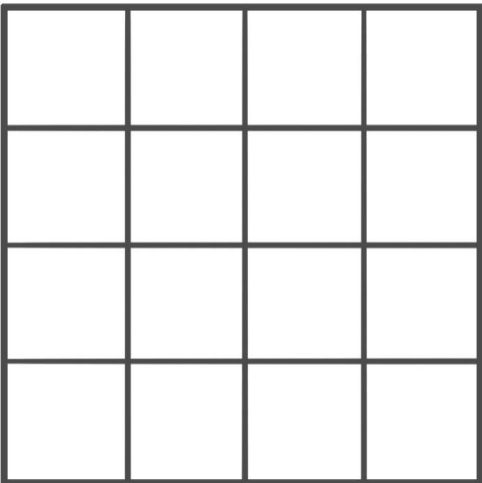
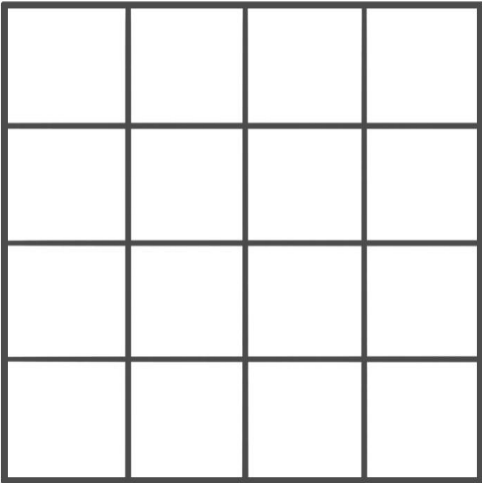
Style tends to "just happen," the fundamentals don't.

Now it is Your Turn

Exercise 1

Your exercise this time around is to simply come up with interesting looking stick figures using the principles explained above.

In order to make this easier, here's a blank version of the grid I was using:

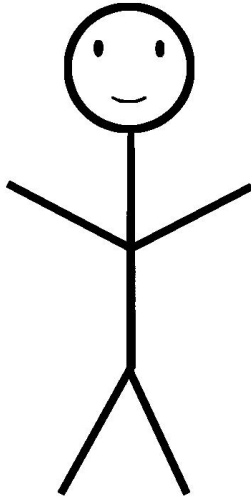


You can photocopy or trace it. You don't have to use it, but it helps.

That way you don't have to keep measuring things by hand to see if things are too even.

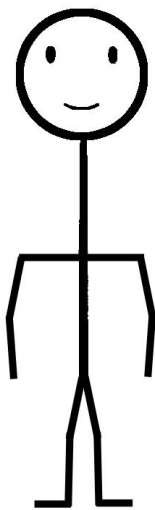
I've also created two stick figure "model sheets" for you to work off of:

Model Sheet 1



Model Sheet 1 is the stick figure from Figure 1 with a face.

Model Sheet 2

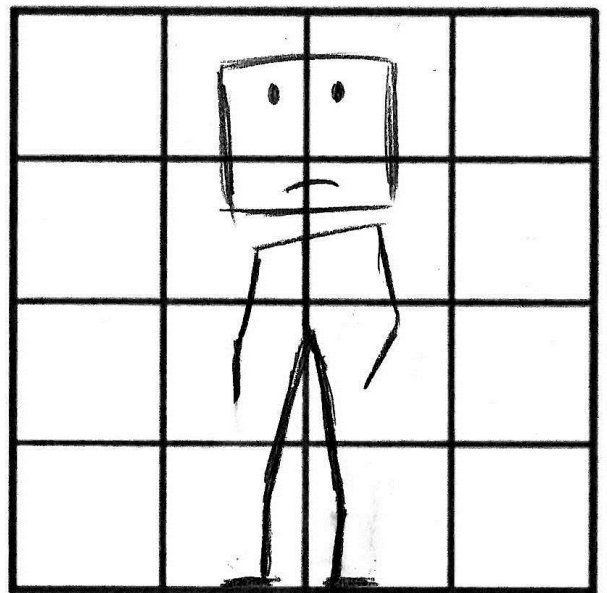
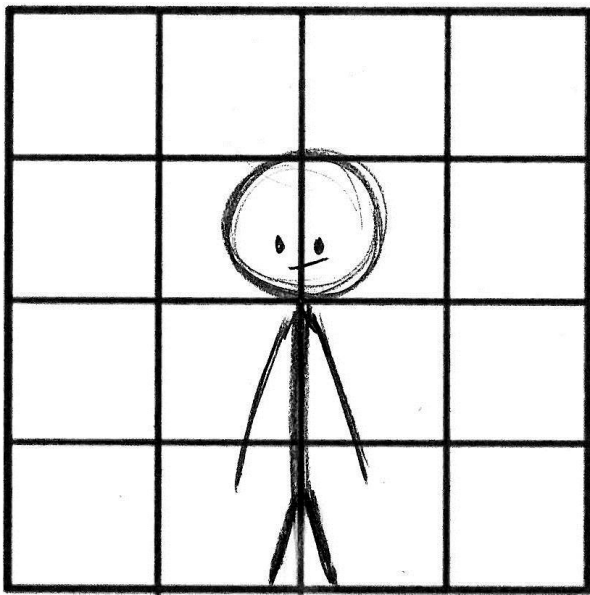


Model Sheet 2 has a more "advanced" stick figure design. I gave it shoulders and joints so you'd have more to "play" with.

Both stick figures are in fact DESIGNS, but they're boring. They're your standard, no contrast, dull, stick figures. Use the stick figures in the model sheets as your starting off point.

Take them and play with their proportions. Yank them, pull them, push them, as if they were made of rubber. Change their head shapes; make them a square, a rectangle, egg shapes, or triangles. Move the face features around. Like I did in Figures: 1 – 10.

You know, like this:

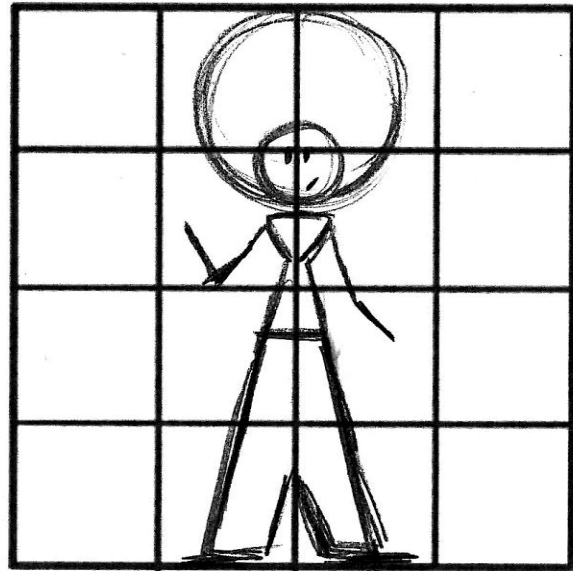
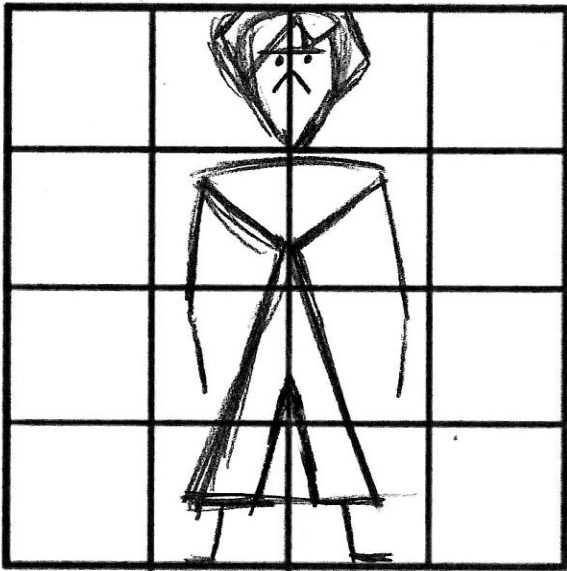


Make sure you have an eraser handy. If you're anything like me, you'll be doing a lot of small adjustments.

Have fun (because it is) and play with these things. See if you can find a way to push the contrast or its proportions and shapes but still end up with something that looks okay or interesting.

If you REALLY want to get ambitious, replace some of the body lines with shapes and see what happens. Make sure to use the same contrast and balance principles, if you do.

Like so:



It's very similar to doing the exercises in Lesson 2. You're simply putting shapes together in a type of pattern or symbol; only it has arms, legs and a face.

Remember, harmonizing Contrast + Balance = Good design.

Don't expect to like what you end up with the first time. Simply play and explore.

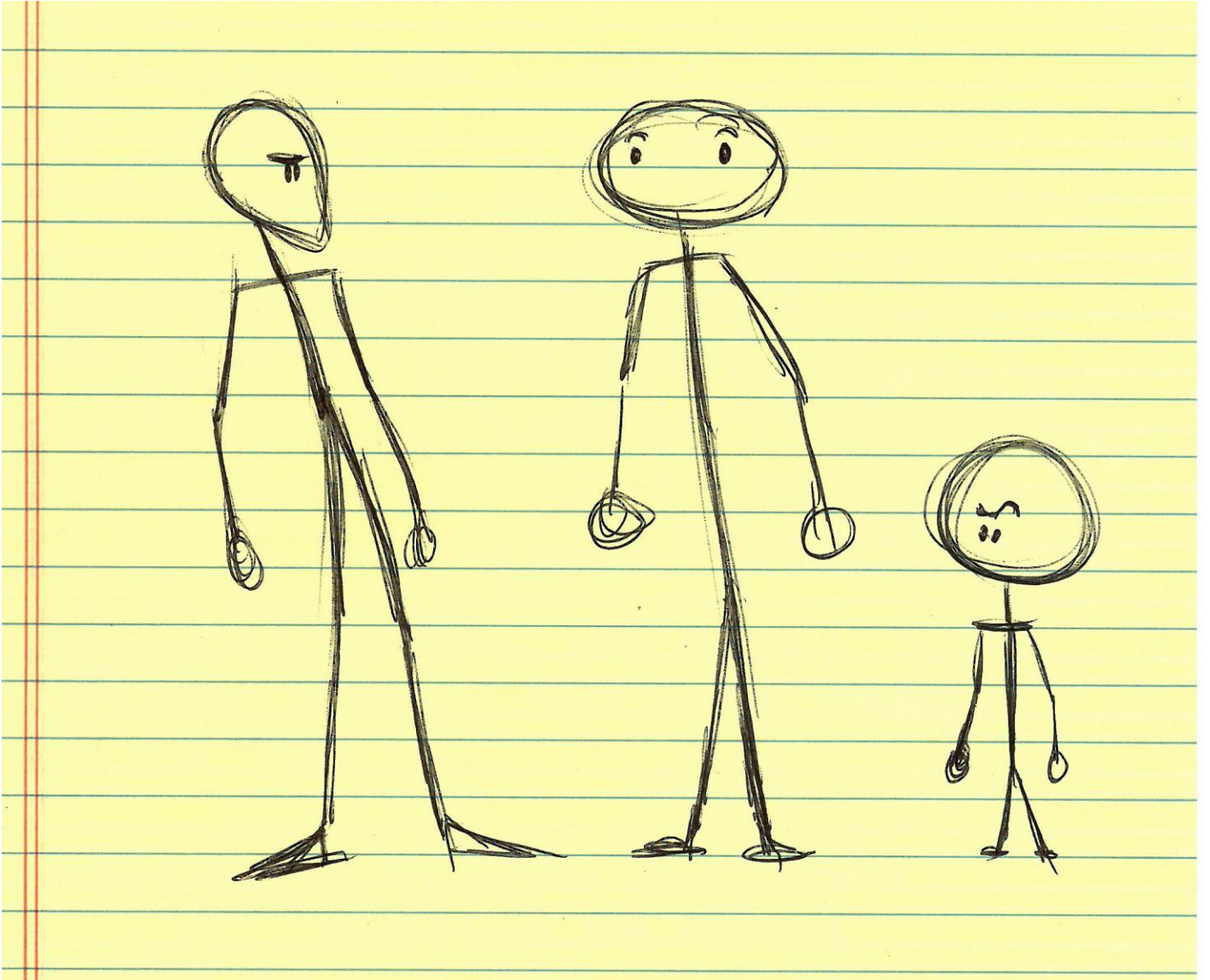
At some point, you'll hit that ONE drawing that seems to work. You'll know it when it happens. When it does, you'll be one step closer to being a professional character designer.

Exercise 2

Once you've done this, take the stick figure off the grid and draw it on its own. Have fun and play with it. Send it on adventures. Have it do your math for you.

Whatever you want.

Have fun.



Trouble?

Q: How do you measure proportions when you DON'T have a grid?

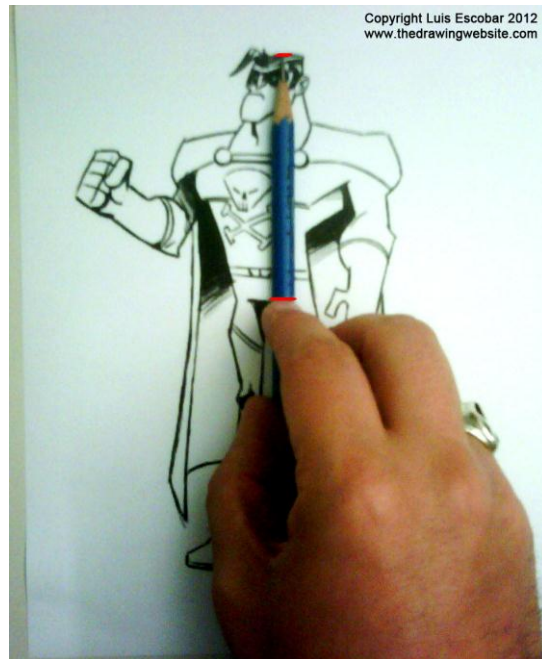
A: Okay, this is a good question because I do this all the time. I don't draw my characters in a grid.

So here's what I do. When I'm drawing and I need to check the proportions of parts of my character, I take my pencil or pen and place it on the drawing, just like the picture to the left:

I line up the top of my pencil (I marked it in red) to the top of what I want to measure. In this case the top of the head.

Then I take my finger and put it on the pencil to mark the length of the proportion I want to measure. In this case the crotch of the character.

Now I have the length from the top of the head to the crotch.

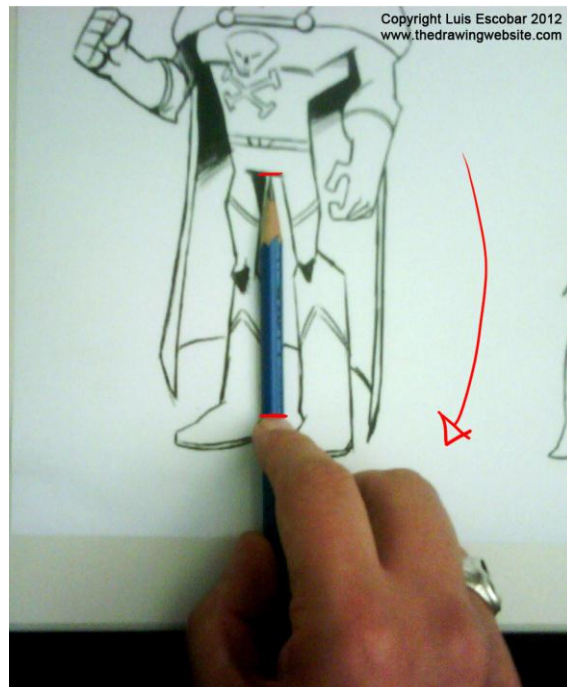


Next, KEEPING MY FINGER EXACTLY WHERE IT IS on the pencil, I move my hand down:

I then line up the top of the pencil to bottom part where I last measure my finger. In this case the crotch. Then I check where my finger actually lands.

Because I didn't move my finger on the pencil and only moved the pencil, I still have the actual measurement of the top proportion of the body.

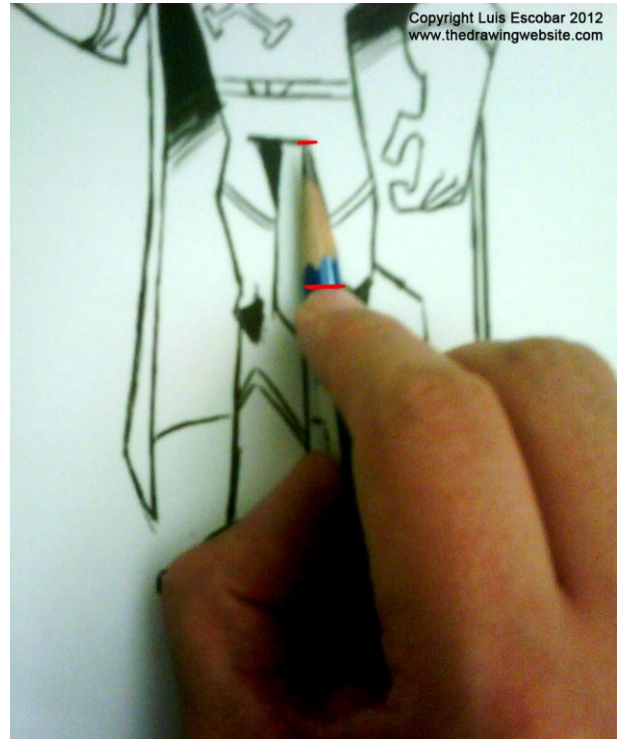
As you can see, it's not evenly spaced. My finger doesn't quite go to the bottom of the feet. This is what I wanted.



Here's another example:

I measure from the crotch to the top of the knee.

Then, without moving my finger from where I placed it on the pencil I move my hand down...



...and line up the pencil with the top of the knee and look at where my finger is. The measurement tells me, the upper leg is much shorter than the lower leg.

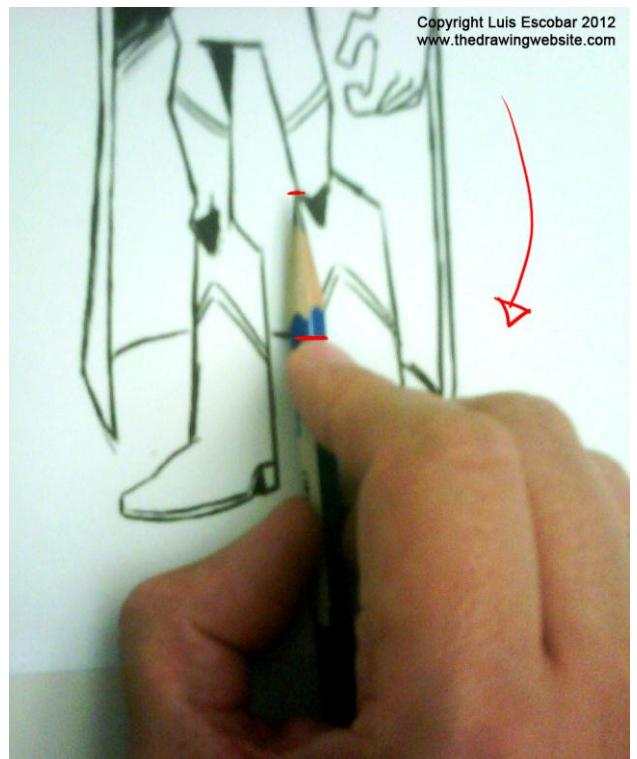
You can measure everything you want this way. This is how I check the proportions in my designs as I go.

I hope this is helpful. You got to learned something new and I got to write CROTCH a lot. Crotch crotch crotch crotch...

Pro Tip

This is IT! A lot of what I've written about here is foundational to good drawing. These principles will be applied over and over and over again in many different ways as you grow as a draftsman.

Get used to them. You'll get better at doing them and seeing them applied as you practice.



Lesson 4: The Secret of Tracing Like a Pro – Basic Under Drawing Techniques

“Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.” ~Scott Adams

Getting it Perfect the First Time



You can't seem to get it down the first time. You know what you want but you don't know how to get there.

You understand the concepts being taught. You're trying to apply them. You're doing the exercises but you're getting frustrated.

The truth is, when you put down a line to draw a face, a circle, or a stick figure body, you either don't know where it will end up when you're done, or you do know, but it just ends up somewhere else.

That blank page has no “foot holds”. You wish you had an “anchor” or SOMETHING to guide you, so that you know where to place your pencil as you draw.

Well, that's where tracing comes in.

What's that? You thought tracing was bad?

Well, it CAN be. It depends on how you use it.

In this lesson, you'll learn how to use tracing to refine your drawings and your control over what happens on the page. By the time we're done, you'll know how to set down the guides that will help you control the most complicated types of drawing.

How the Professionals Trace

I know of very few professional draftsmen who can just pick up a pencil, start in one corner of the page, and magically have a finished art piece in one pass. Those guys are the legends.

That's not us...at least...not yet.

The majority of professional, do what is called an "under drawing".

An "under drawing" is a rough pass, or trial run for a drawing. Like a rough draft in writing. It's not meant to be perfect by any means.

The purpose of the under drawing is to explore the direction you want to take the drawing and solve any problems the drawing asks you to solve. It's meant to be sloppy and imperfect. It's there so your final drawing looks good.

Most beginners never do this. Have you been doing it? I didn't think so.

So what does this have to do with tracing?

Well, once the under drawing is done, you then draw over your under drawing, either directly, or on top with another piece of paper, "tracing" the final lines of your drawing.

There are two kinds of tracing, the bad kind and the good kind.

- **The bad kind** is what most people do. They take, say, a drawing, put some tracing paper over it and mindlessly follow the lines of the original drawing underneath. The end product looks like a wobbly, ugly version of the original drawing.
- **The good kind** is what draftsmen do. They take that same drawing and the same tracing paper and REDRAW the original drawing underneath, using it as a guide and making confident line CHOICES. The result is a new confident drawing based on the original.

"Good tracing" is in fact, not quite tracing but redrawing. Since it's redrawing, you make conscious choices as you go. By doing so, you end up, not only refining your drawing but also your drawing skills.

When you redraw over your under drawing, you're actually choosing what final line you want from the rough mess of lines you've put on the page. The outcome SHOULD look like a drawing you finished effortlessly.

Let me show you what I mean.

Here is Some Examples From This Very Book

Okay, so remember this drawing from the introduction?:



Figure 1

This is how I approached the drawing.

First I drew a really rough gesture drawing of the pose (Figure 2). I'll explain gesture drawings in a later drawing level. The point is, the final Figure 1 drawing didn't just appear fully formed. I first drew the scribbly mess that is seen in Figure 2, to get it started:



Figure 2

Once I'd gotten all the shapes and lines approximately where I wanted them I refined the drawing by drawing over it. In Figure 3 you can see what I did. I recolored the rough from Figure 2 blue, so you can tell it apart from my more refined rough:



Figure 3

Having redrawn and refined the character, I decided it was time for the final line. I took the rough I drew in Figure 3 and drew over it:



Figure 4

Figure 4 is the result. Notice I was basically “tracing” or redrawing and refining my drawing in order to get the final result. At this point, it was more about what lines to choose and what to leave out than anything else.

Let's take a look at another example.

In Figure 5, we have the other drawing from the introduction:



Figure 5

But in Figure 6, we can see where I actually started:

As you can see in Figure 6, my first pass was a big mess. I was just scribbling, trying to get the shapes down where I need them to go.

Once that was done, I went and redrew on top of the scribbly mess, refining the drawing a bit more:



Figure 6

As you can see in Figure 7, I did a lot of adjusting and redefining. It's still rough and imperfect. I wasn't being "precious" with the drawing in anyway.

Once I was satisfied with what I had, I went in drew over the rough for the final pass:



Figure 7



Figure 8

Figure 8 was all about “tracing” or redrawing and refining. Once again, this process is about choosing the right lines to keep, while throwing out unnecessary lines.

“BUT...,” I hear you saying, “golly gee, it’s all swell and jolly to do that with your fancy pants drawing, but how does that apply to MY drawings? I mean, I’m only drawing stick figures here.”

That’s a good question. Take a look at Figure 9:

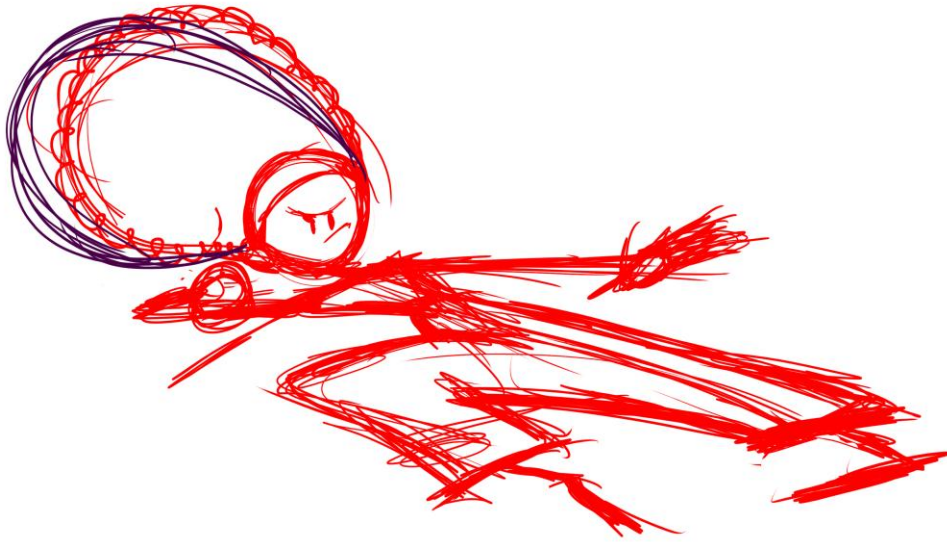


Figure 9

Yup this is the rough I drew for the STICK FIGURE drawing I used at the head of the “**Stick figures with style**” Lesson.

Even THIS drawing didn't come fully formed. I drew a rough under drawing for it so I could work it out. THEN I drew over it:



Figure 10

You can see in Figure 10 how I refine even a drawing as simple as a stick figure.

The result is the drawing in Figure 11:

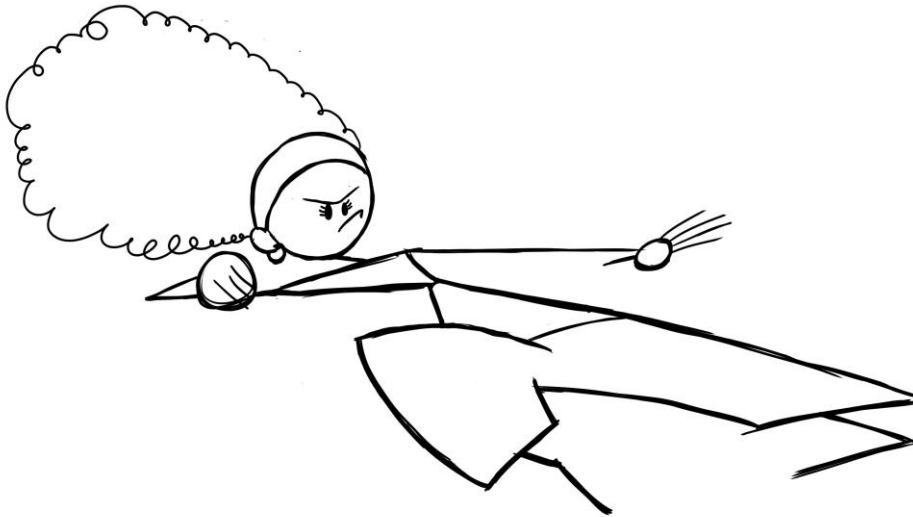


Figure 11

Had I not just shown you what I did, you would have thought I effortlessly drew it. I get paid to draw for a living and this is how I approach drawing.

You want more control over your final drawings? You want your drawing to start looking effortless? It's time you start putting down some under drawings.

Baby Steps

Your Exercise...

I know this seems new, and daunting and crazy...

Don't worry. Take a deep breath; we'll take this nice and easy. I've broken this down into steps.

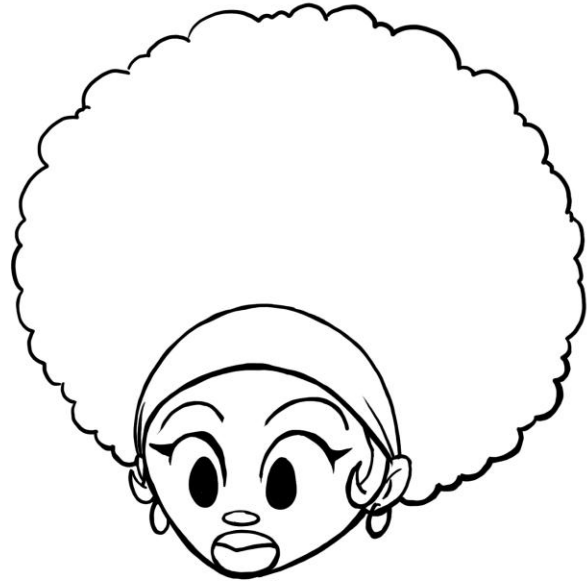
The goal of these steps is to get you to start drawing your own things this way. First you simply need to practice getting some control and learning to make good line choices:

- **Step 1.** Learn to do the “good” kind of tracing
- **Step 2.** Learn to make good line choices
- **Step 3.** Try it out on your own drawings

Step 1. Learn to do the *good* kind of tracing

Below I've posted three characters. Your exercise is simple:

Trace them.



BUT, don't simply trace them, try to redraw them. Recreate them as you trace over them.

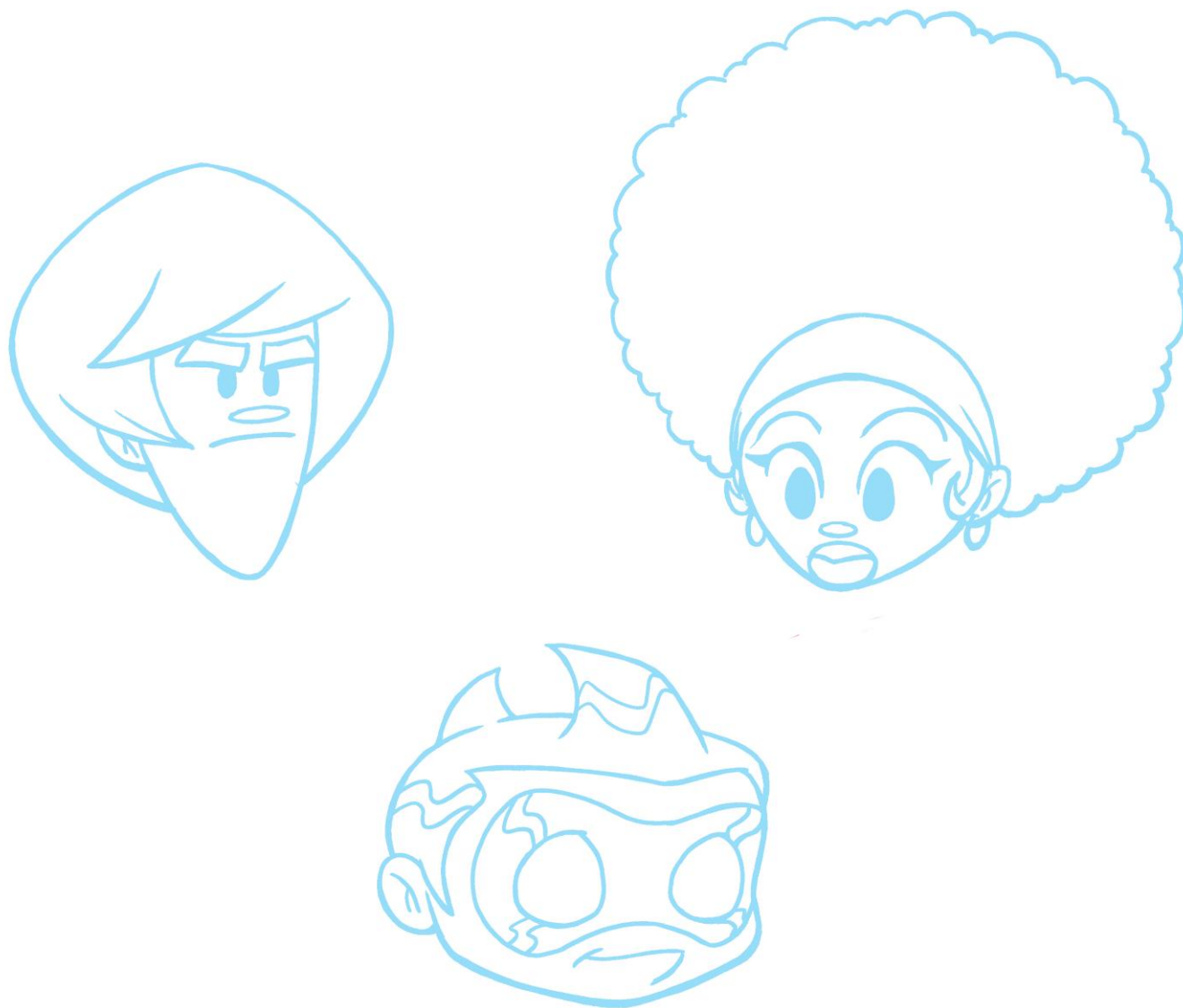
In order to do that, here's what I want you to do..

Get some REALLY low quality printer paper (they are very transparent) and trace over the drawing.

I posted an example video of the tracing process on printer paper at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

BUT I'VE GOT THICK PAPER I CAN'T SEE THROUGH, SO I WANT TO USE TRACING PAPER OR BETTER YET NO TRACING PAPER!

Okay, that's what's why I also made THIS set of images:



These characters are specifically designed so you can simply draw over them directly.

Here's how you do it:

1. Trace over it using tracing paper or...
2. Make a color copy and trace directly onto the printed image.

I posted an example video of the tracing process on tracing paper at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

If you want, you can draw directly on the color copy you made. I posted an example video of the tracing process directly on the color copy at: <http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

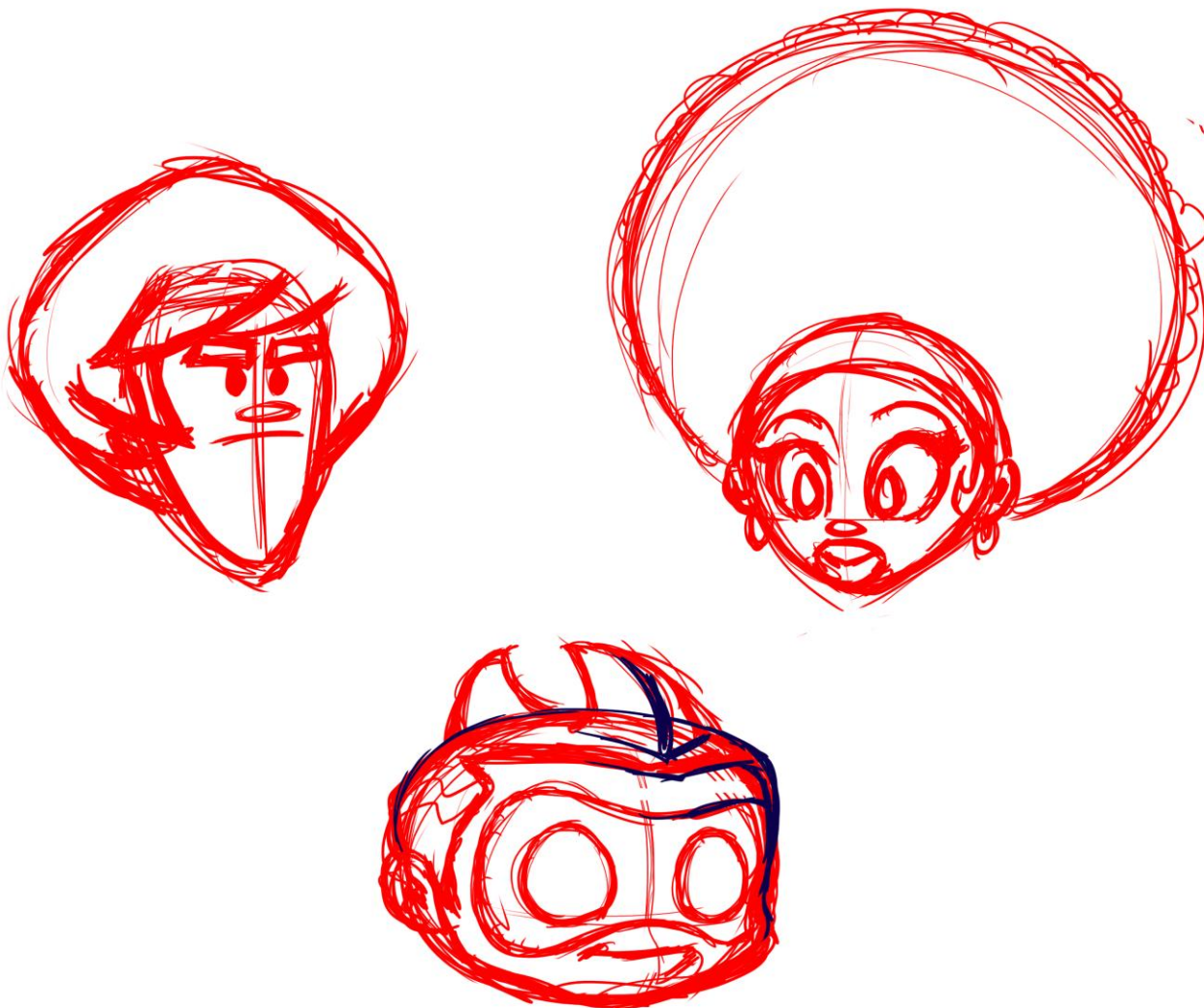
Once you've done this, find other things to trace. Coloring books or comic books are best but anything you find is good. Practice not simply tracing but redrawing the drawings you are tracing. Use the drawings as a guide more than anything else.

Step 2. Learn to make good line choices

These next set of images are the actual under drawings that I used to make the cleaned up characters in the previous pages.

You've gotten a chance to practice your lines, now it's time to test what you've learned.

Draw a final clean drawing from the rough drawings below.



This exercise is meant to help you learn to make line choices. It doesn't need to look like what I drew above; it has to look like what YOU want it to look like.

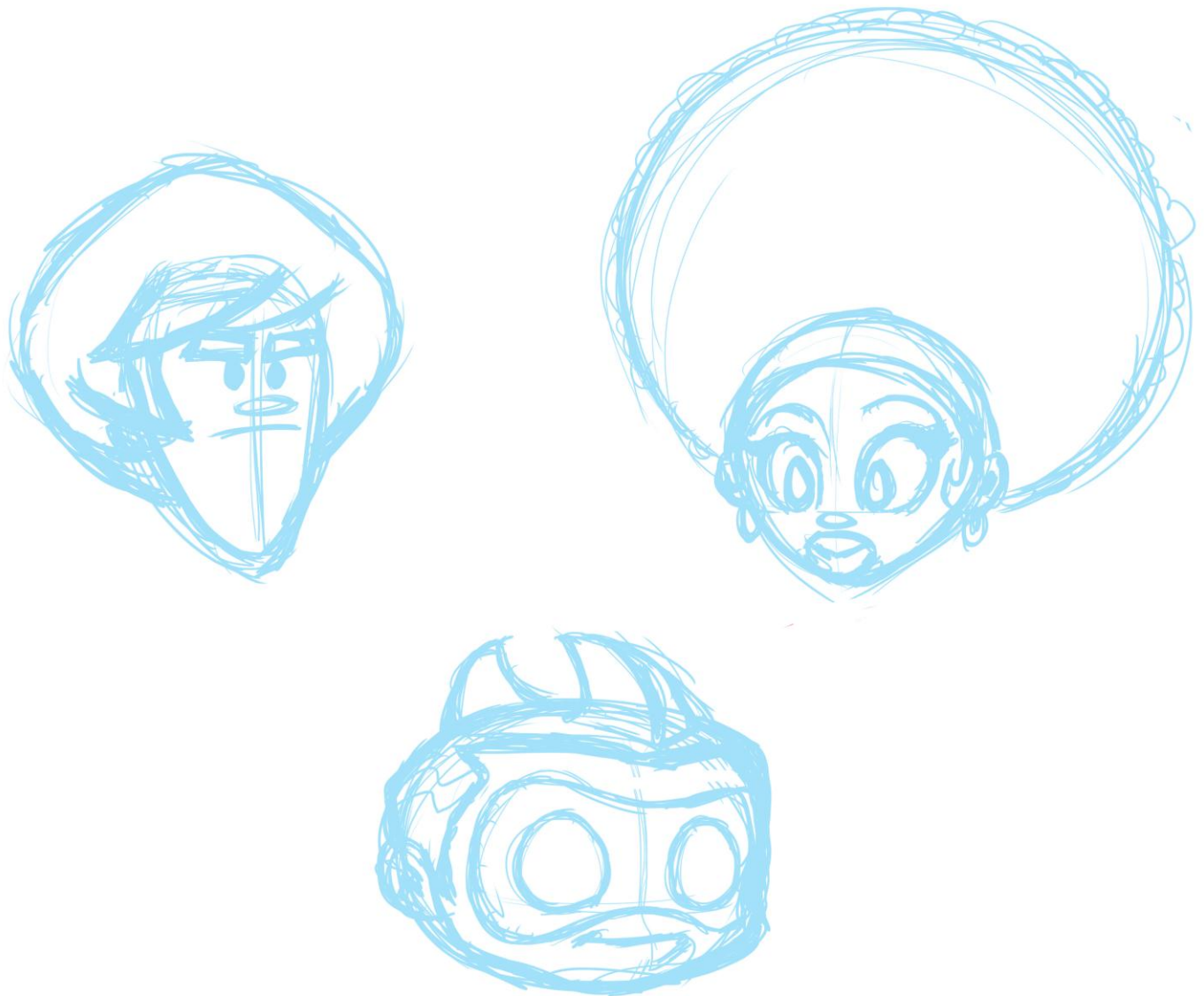
Choose a line to make. See how it turns out. It's okay if it ends up looking odd. The point of the exercise is to learn to make line choices.

Okay so here what you do:

Get some REALLY low quality printer paper (they are very transparent) and trace over the drawing.

I posted an example video of the clean up process using printer paper at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

Just like in Step 1, I also created a version you can use tracing paper to draw on:



To work with the drawing you can:

1. Trace over it using tracing paper or...
2. Make a color copy and trace directly onto the printed image.

I posted an example video of the tracing process on tracing paper at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

And, I posted an example video of the tracing process directly on the color copy at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

You can try cleaning the roughs up, over and over to practice if you want.
Ultimately, what you want to end up doing is...

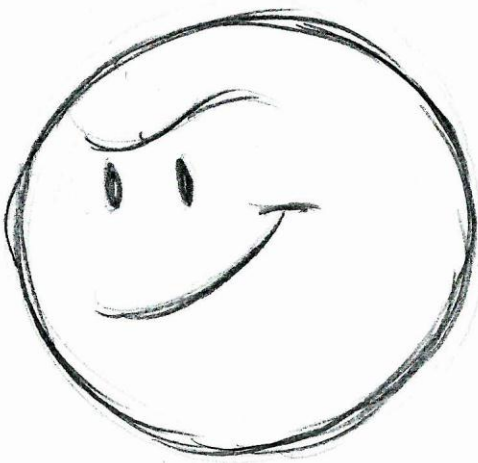
Step 3. Try it out on your own drawings

Take everything you've learned so far and apply it here. Draw some rough stick figures and clean them up.

Go crazy and get messy. Remember, an under drawing is NOT the final drawing, it's simply a stepping stone that guides you to the final drawing.

Here's some tips on how to practice doing this.

Tip 1:



Draw your under drawing, VERY lightly onto your paper. Be messy but put very little pressure on the pencil.

Once you have the under drawing the way you want it, go back in and pick out the lines you want by making darker "final" lines over your under drawing.

I posted an example video of the how to do this at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

:

Tip 2:



If you're having trouble drawing a LIGHT under drawing, then simply draw the under drawing as dark as you want to.

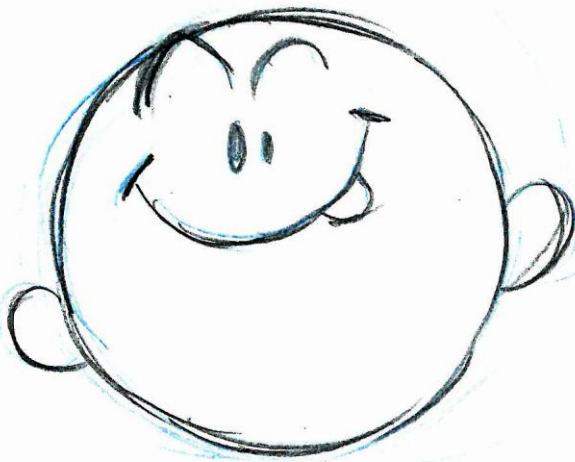
When it's time to do the "final" line, use a ball point pen.

The drawback to doing it this way is that if you make a mistake with your final line, you won't be able to erase it.

The good thing about doing it this way is that, once you're done, you can erase the under drawing and you'll end up with a nice, clean final line.

I posted an example video of the how to do this at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

Tip 3:



This is what most pros do.

Get a **Col-Erase Colored Pencils** and draw your under drawing using that. **Col-Erase Colored Pencils** are special colored pencils that you can erase. You don't NEED one right now. I'm just presenting it as an option here in case you happen to have some around.

Once you've got the under drawing the way you want it, draw over the color lines with a regular pencil.

If the color line is too dark, get an eraser and "dim down" the lines a bit

so they aren't so dark.

I posted an example video of the how to do this at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

So there you have it.

This is new and different. It will take a while for you to get used to it. The more you do it, the easier it will get. Once you're used to it, you'll wonder how you could have done without it.

Trouble?

Q: Yeah, I can't get a clean line. It's all wobbly. I know what I want and can almost get it but it's just not coming out right. Any way you can help me out?

A: Here's a little something I learned from a friend of mine who did clean up at Disney. Work WITH the natural pivots of your body, not against them. Here's what I mean:

Your wrist is a natural pivot point. It's like a limited compass. Your elbo is ALSO a natural pivot point.

Knowing this you can then position your PAPER and your drawing in such a way that when you make a mark, you're working WITH those natural pivots. You'll find that your lines will come out looking better for doing so.

I posted an example video showing you how at:
<http://www.thedrawingwebsite.com/Tracing>

Don't be afraid to move your paper around.

Pro Tip

Professional draftsmen are obsessed with seeing other professional's rough drawing. Most of us would rather see that than their finished work.

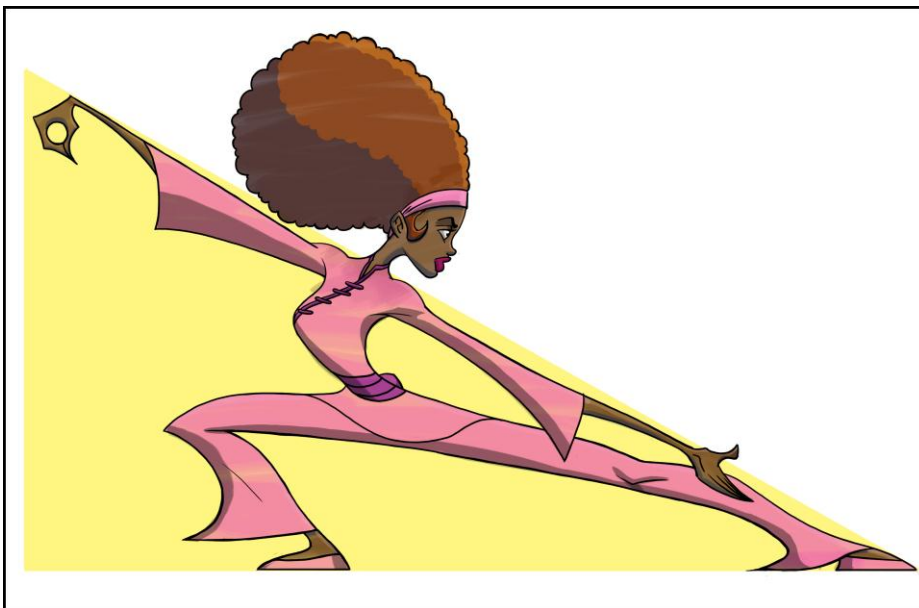
An under drawing is a window of how a draftsman solves drawing problems. By seeing those rough drawings, we hope to get tips and tricks WE could use to solve OUR drawing problems.

Now that you know what you know, you might want to start paying more attention to rough drawings as well.

Lesson 5: Design Simple Cartoon Characters from Flat Shapes

“An essential aspect of creativity is not being afraid to fail.” ~Edwin Land

You have made it to the finish line!



So you're tired of drawing stick figures and you want to draw something that's...well, more interesting.

You want to start doing "real" drawings that LOOK like something.

Well, I've got good news for you. If you've stuck with it and made it this far, you're ready to start drawing stuff you didn't think you'd be able to before.

Here's where all your time and work pay off. By the time you're done with this lesson, you'll be able to create your own drawings and characters, just like I promised...IF you've put some **Kung Fu** into the process, and have been practicing.

You've got almost all the knowledge you need to do it. All you need to know now is what I tell you in this Lesson.

So let's get to it.

Flat Shapes are Foundational to Drawing

EVERYTHING that you will EVER draw, can be broken down into a flat, two dimensional shape.

EVERYTHING.

Beginning drawing books often start you off drawing Spheres, Cubes, and Cylinders. ALL those things are good things to know how to draw, but not yet.

Why?

Because each one of those “three dimensional” shapes are made out of TWO dimensional shapes. In fact, they AREN’T “three dimensional” shapes at all, they are STILL two dimensional shapes that SEEM to be “three dimensional.”

Let’s call a Spade a Spade here. Our drawings are always going to be two dimensional. We can only give the illusion of three dimensions.

Mastering control of flat 2d shapes will help you out immensely.

The Magic of Flat Shapes

Flat shapes are very versatile even without being three dimensional. You can do wonders with them alone.

Careers have been made by artists who don’t go beyond working with flat two dimensional shapes.

It’s impossible for me to show you ALL the ways they can be used in drawing, SO I’ve chosen ONE way to use them in this post.

For now, let’s concentrate on how to make fun cartoon characters using flat shapes.

Shapes and Design

Remember in Lesson 3 when I wrote about the harmony between Contrast and Balance? Well, when it comes to creating characters with flat shapes, this principle still applies.

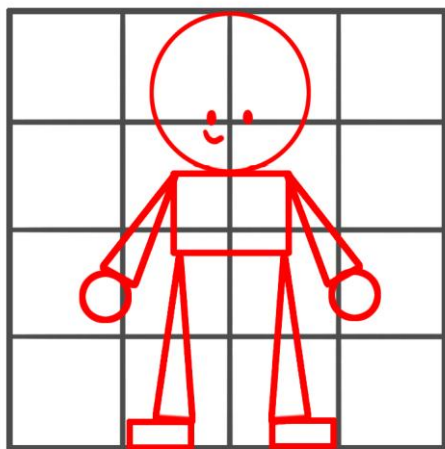
If you've forgotten what I wrote or if you've simply skipped the ahead, I recommend you go back and read or reread it. The following is an extension of that lesson.

Remember the shapes we practiced drawing in Lesson 2? Well, it's time to use them again.



Just like with the stick figures, when we create a character from these three shapes, it's all about creating contrast with the spacing of the proportions.

Figure 1.



BUT, now that we have shapes, there are two more elements to think about:

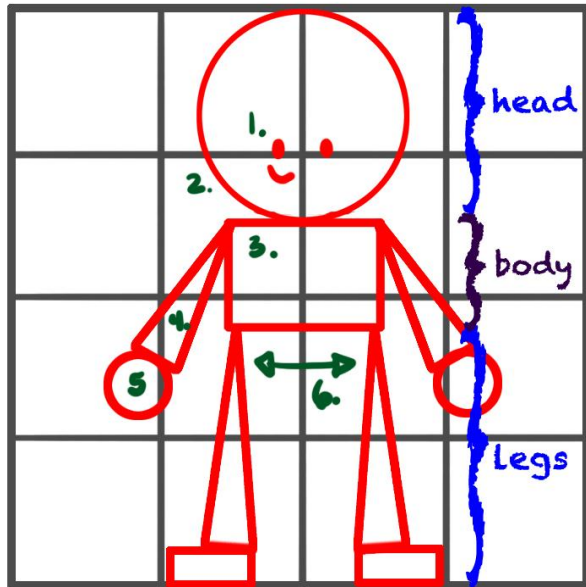
1. Spacing contrast and
2. Size contrast.

SPACING CONTRAST – Means you make sure you space out the shapes in interesting ways. Trying to avoid spacing that is too balanced which would make the design dull.

SIZE CONTRAST – Simply means you're trying to put shapes of different sizes next to each other to create interest.

So let's break down all the components including the two new ones:

Figure 2.



In Figure 2 we can see on the left how the proportions break up in a balanced yet contrasted way.

In point 1, the face favors the bottom half of the head shape and is not perfectly centered. Also even the mouth itself favors one side of the face to another. All the features are also very close together rather than being spaced evenly apart.

In points 2 and 3 we see an example of size contrast. The size of the circle shaped head is larger than the rectangle of the body which it's connected to. The body is not only proportionally smaller; it's also smaller in width.

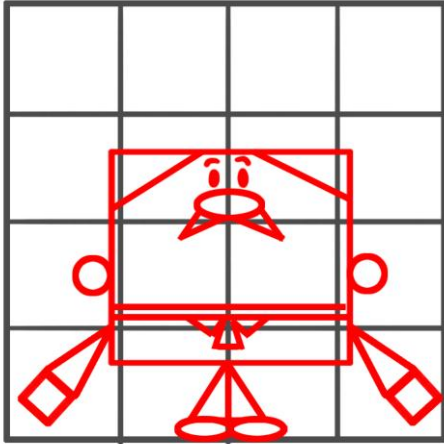
Points 3, 4, and 5 also contrast. Notice the length of the arm and hand are longer the body, and obviously thinner.

Point 4 and 5 contrast, not only in size but also in shape. Now, this isn't something that is done all the time but sometimes, a round shape next to a hard edged shape is a good mix and contrasts well.

Point 6. The spacing of the legs here is something well worth pointing out. They are NOT evenly spaced out. By which I mean I favored the outer part of the body to attach them to rather than where the green arrows are actually located. The reason for this is, again, to add interest.

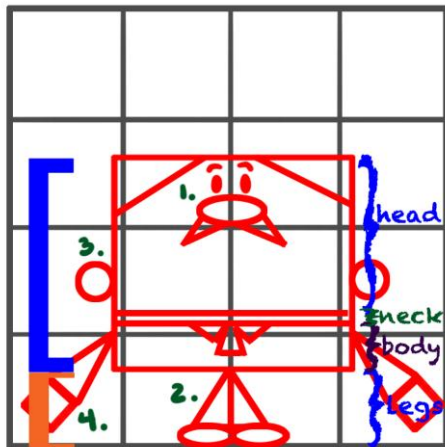
Alright now let's take a look at yet another example:

Figure 3.



Let's break this guy down:

Figure 4.



In Figure 4 we see how the head, neck, body and legs, are broken down and contrast against each other by seeing the break down on the right.

On the left, we see how the square shape of his face and body proportions contrast with the leg proportions.

In point 1, we see how his face favors the top of the head and his features are all in a very concentrated space.

Points 2, shows us the interest that is caused by not only making sure the legs are proportionally shorter but that they're also much smaller in width. The

contrast is large shape vs. small shape.

In point 3, we see that the ear is not placed right in the middle of the side of the head but favors being slightly lower.

Now, in point 4 we see the hands and arms but unlike the hands and arms on Figure 1, it's a triangle and a square. I kinda don't like the way it looks. I prefer the triangle and circle combination. Perhaps it's because the hand shapes in Figure 1, sharp edge shape vs. rounded shape, contrast more than two hard edged shapes in Figure 3. This might be a matter of personal taste though.

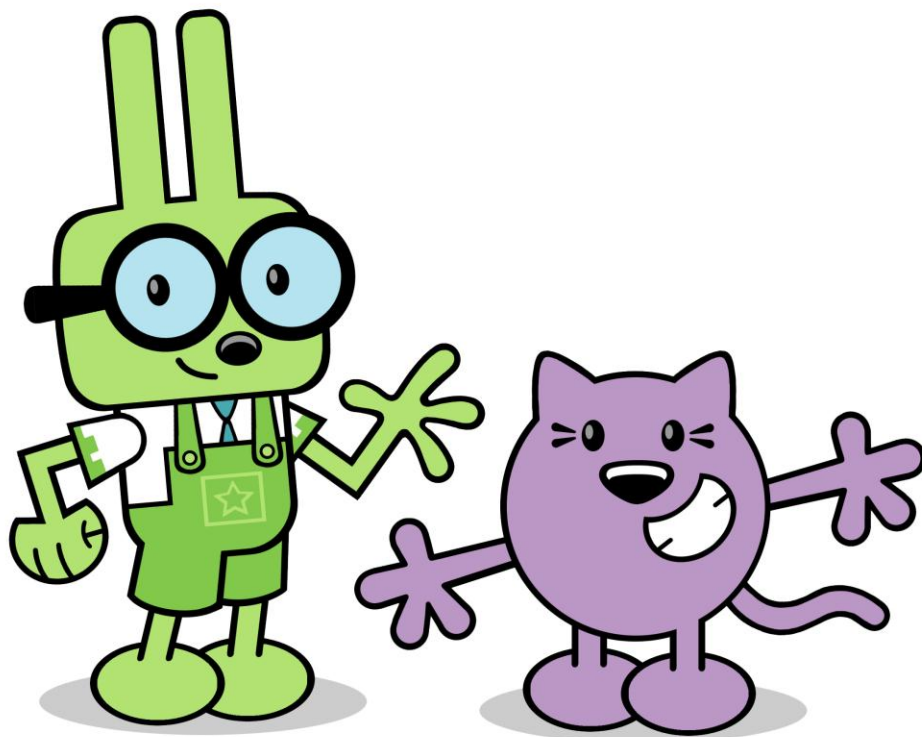
An Example of These Shapes in Real Productions

I asked fellow artist Evan Lewis to help show you examples of how these shapes have been used in actual animated productions.

There was a little kid's show called WOW WOW WUBZY. The characters were very appealing and they were all made of basic shapes.

Here's some designs Evan made up, using the "Wubzy style":

Figure 5

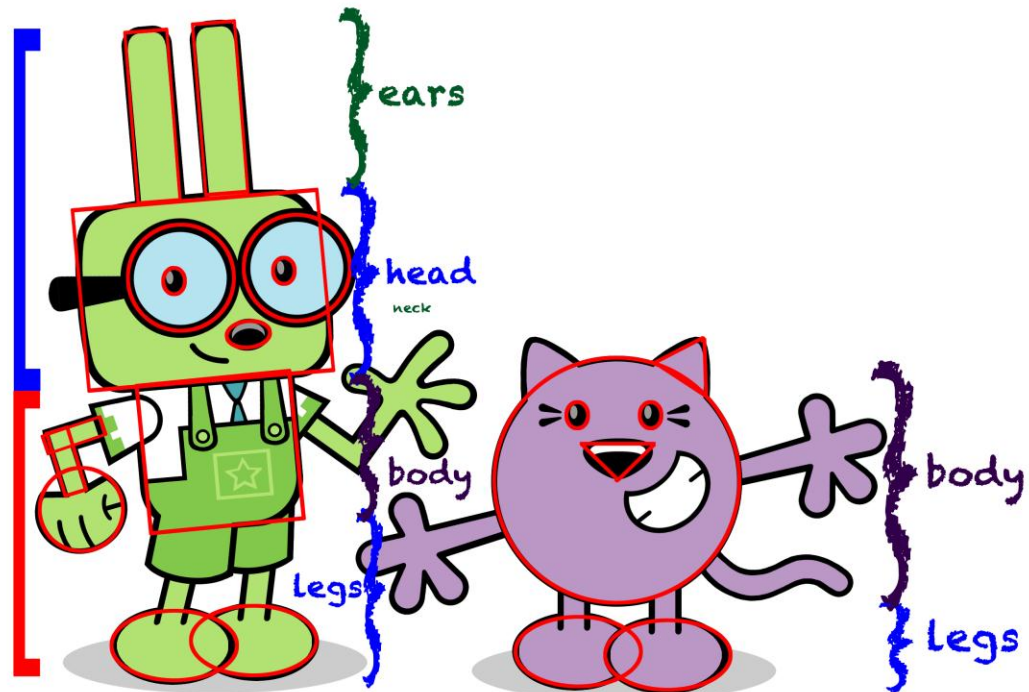


Copyright Evan Lewis 2012
www.thedrawingwebsite.com
<http://evanlewisanimation.blogspot.com/>

As you can see in Figure 5, the characters are flat, two dimensional, and cute.

Let's break them down to their component parts:

Figure 6.



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www.thedrawingwebsite.com
<http://evanlewisanimation.blogspot.com/>

In Figure 6, you can see BOTH characters are made out of basic shapes. The one on the left is made mostly of squares and rectangle with the edges rounded off while the character on the right is mostly circle and ovals.

The character of the left's proportions are subtly different. While the main overall length from the top of the ears to the neck are more clearly contrasted to the rest of the body down to his feet.

The character on the right is even clearer. Large body length and short feet length. Large body shape, small legs and feet size.

Evan Lewis' work can be found at: evanlewisanimation.blogspot.com

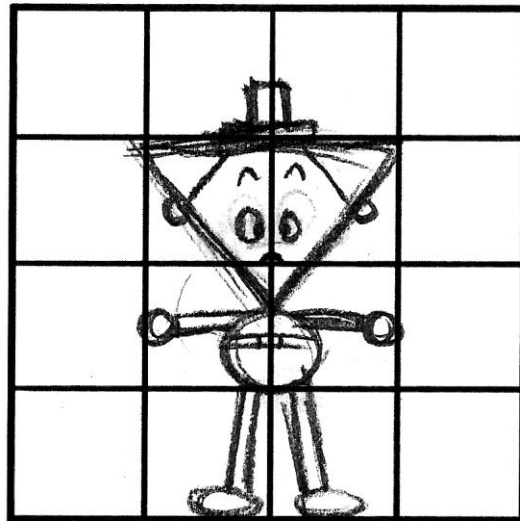
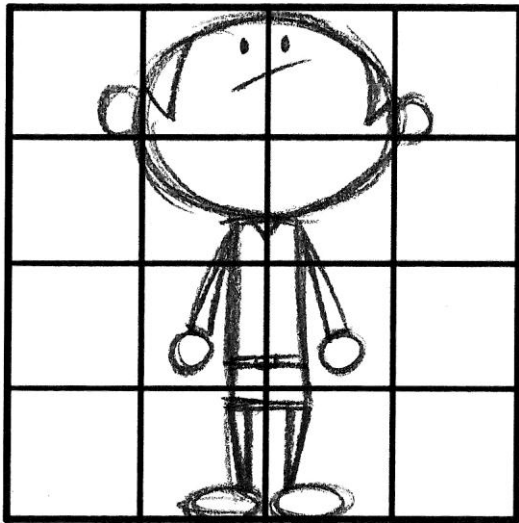
Now it is Your Turn

Your exercise is simple, draw some characters.

Remember the grid from page 43? Time to use it again just like you did then.

It's time to make another copy of it and start drawing on it.

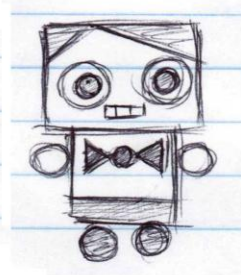
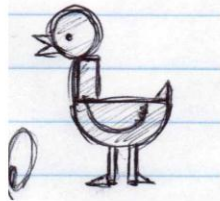
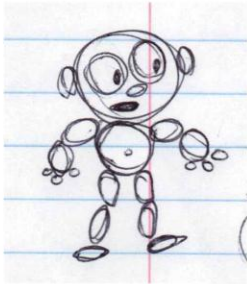
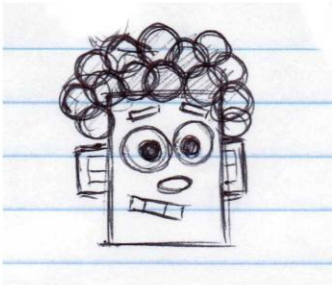
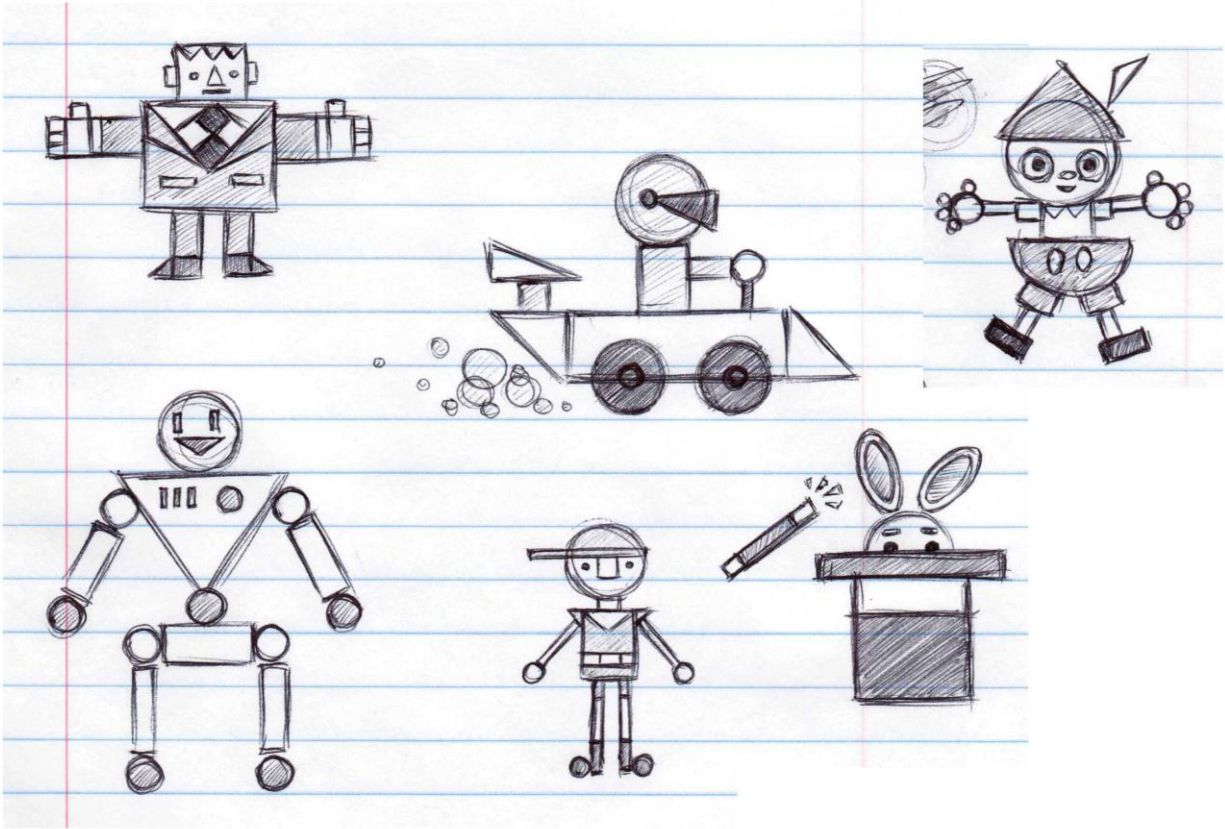
Like this:



If you don't want to use the grid, that's okay. Just remember to keep track and measure your proportions the way I showed you in the "Pro Tips" on page 48.

Here are some examples of what you might come up with. Instead of me, doing the example, we can see how another draftsman approaches the exercise.

Here's what Evan produced doing this exercise:

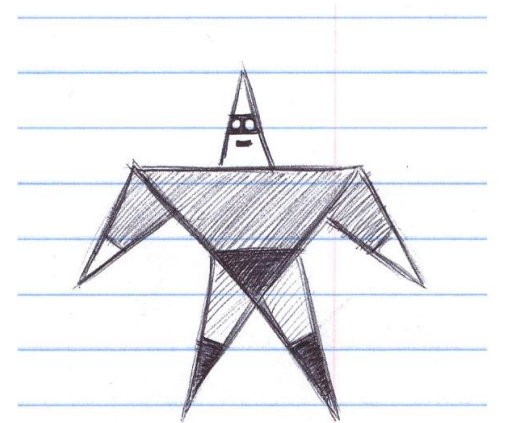
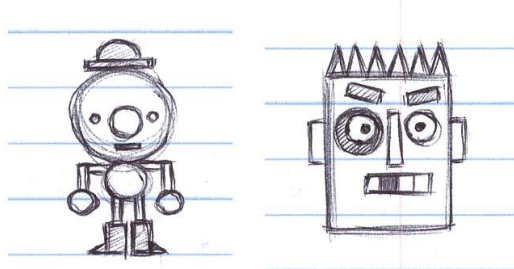
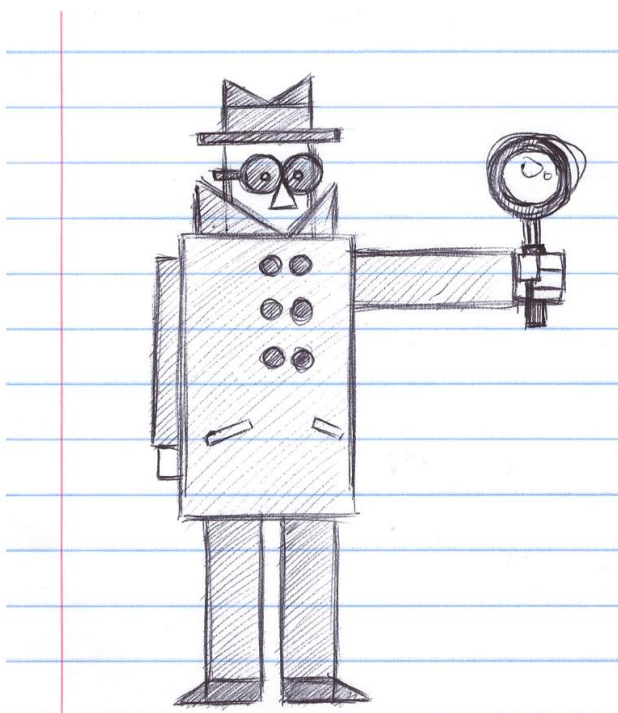


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Notice how Evan drew it all in ballpoint pen on regular line paper.

You can do this anywhere.

Also notice that you can see he did some light under drawing with the pen before he committed to putting down a dark final line.



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At this point, you can draw! Better than most of the people you know!

Have fun.

Enjoy your new ability.

Trouble?

Q: YEAH! You said I'd be able to draw by this point but everything I do STILL looks crumby! You haven't helped me at all!

A: How much time did you spend on each exercise? Ten minutes? Thirty? A week? Do the exercises until you get it. Don't just do lip service to them. That's how you fail. If you aren't being serious enough about getting it, you won't. You aren't putting in the Kung Fu.

Frequency is key. Do these things until they become second nature and then, suddenly, people will say to you,

“Wow, you're SO talented!”

Which will probably make you want to slap yourself upside the head. If they only knew.

Pro Tip

Let's get a bit ahead of ourselves here.

When I was in high school, I made a discovery during Summer School that changed the way I designed my cartoon characters. I discovered the secret behind making my designs go from amateur designs to professional looking designs.

Here it is, for you to take advantage of. Are you ready?

Do everything I wrote about above; only...make up the shapes.

That's it. Simply make up some interesting shapes. Suddenly your cartoons will look like they've jumped to the next level. Because they have.

I will write more about this in a later Level. For now, that's my tip for you. Give it a try.

Bonus Lessons

A drawing lesson from Superman

There was a Superman storyline in the comics a few years ago called WORLD OF NEW KRYPTON. It told the story about how the shrunken city of Kandor was restored to its original size.

Kandor was a Kryptonian city which was shrunk and put into a bottle by the villain Brainiac. It held the last surviving Kryptonians and Superman had liberated it from Brainiac.

He had put it in his Fortress of Solitude, and for YEARS tried to figure out how to restore the city and its people to their original size.

In the WORLD OF NEW KRYPTON storyline, not only do the people of Kandor get restored and liberated, but an event occurs which causes the creation of a new planet moving around Earth's orbits, directly opposite the Earth on the other side of the Sun. It's dubbed, "New Krypton," and all the Kryptonians move to that planet.

But here's the thing... Superman gets his powers from the effects of our yellow sun. ALL Kryptonians exposed to the yellow sun get these powers. This meant that EVERY Kryptonian in New Krypton had Superman's powers.

This brings up the very interesting question that the story begins to investigate: When everyone has Superman's powers what makes Superman special?

And I personally think the storyline did an admirable job of answering the question.

Now, I'm sure you're saying,

"That's very interesting and all BUT what the blazes does this have to do with drawing?!"

Every kid who is "the artist" in his school, family, community is like Superman. He's got "special powers," everyone labels "talent."

These "special powers" sometimes makes the kid want to pursue a career in art. So he goes off into the world and goes to an art school or gets a job drawing and suddenly...he finds himself in New Krypton.

EVERYONE has the same "powers." EVERYONE is "talented."

When everyone is talented who's actually talented? What makes YOU so special?

Work, drive, dedication, and discipline. KUNG FU.

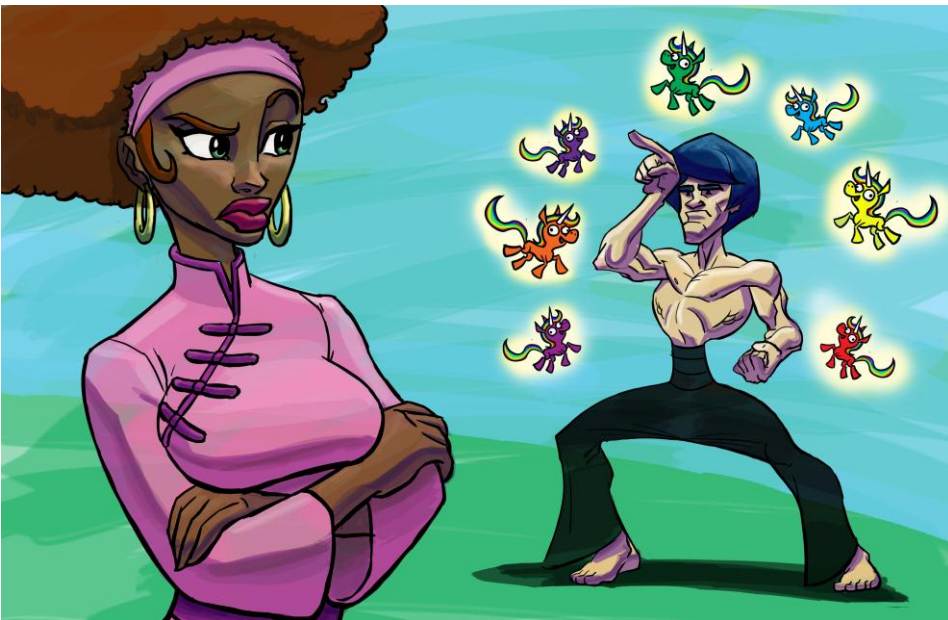
In New Krypton you find out real fast who has the heart, and who is just going through the motions.

Getting better at drawing requires action. Sitting on your hands won't get you anywhere. So it's best if you're like Superman, and do what needs to be done and take the road less travelled. You'll find yourself improving faster than the people you though had stronger "powers."

Bonus Lesson 1: Unicorn Style – How Simple Color Theory Helps Design.

“The whole world, as we experience it visually, comes to us through the mystic realm of color. Our entire being is nourished by it. The mystic quality of color should likewise find expression in a work of art.” – Hans Hofmann

Why Color?



If you're into fashion, you know color is important.

If you're into interior design, you know that color is important.

If you study paintings, you know that color is important.

If you're not really into any of that stuff you're saying to yourself,

“Color? So what?”

You'd be surprised how a little color knowledge could change the way you see the world around you. Everything is in color and those colors have an effect on your mood, thoughts and actions.

Color is a very powerful force and lots has been said and written about it.

In this post, we'll start at the beginning. We'll simplify it down to its most basic principles. The foundations of what you need to know about color.

You've been taught about basic design and the decisions you make when applying those principles to a drawing. But all those principles apply to color as well. Knowing the basics of colors will give you the foundations for choosing colors that will make your drawings sing.

The Color Wheel

Color theory is a theory for a reason. None of this is an absolute. There are many theories of color. The theory I'll be writing about is the one most beginning artists learn at first.

It's the basic theory that all the other theories tend to compare themselves with.

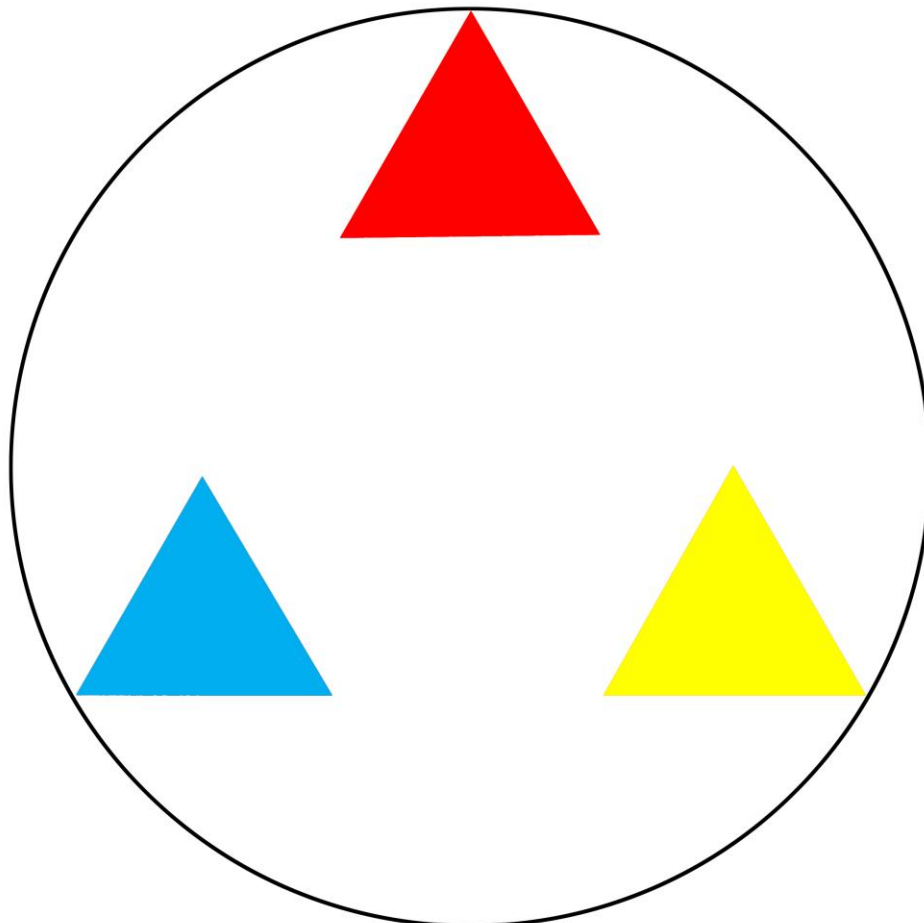
The color wheel is the standard way most artists use to understand color and it will become clear why as we go. So let's begin:

Primary Colors

The theory of primary colors is that these three colors are the main colors that all other colors stem from. The idea is that these three colors cannot be created using other colors. These are THE colors.

The Primary colors are: Red, Blue, and Yellow.

Primary Colors



Secondary Colors

Mixing the three primary colors together get you the secondary colors.

Here are the mixing formulas and the secondary colors they create:

- Red + Yellow = Orange
- Yellow + Blue = Green
- Blue + Red = Purple

Neutral Grey is in the middle of the wheel because if you mix all the colors (or all the primaries) together, you end up with neutral Grey.

Secondary Colors



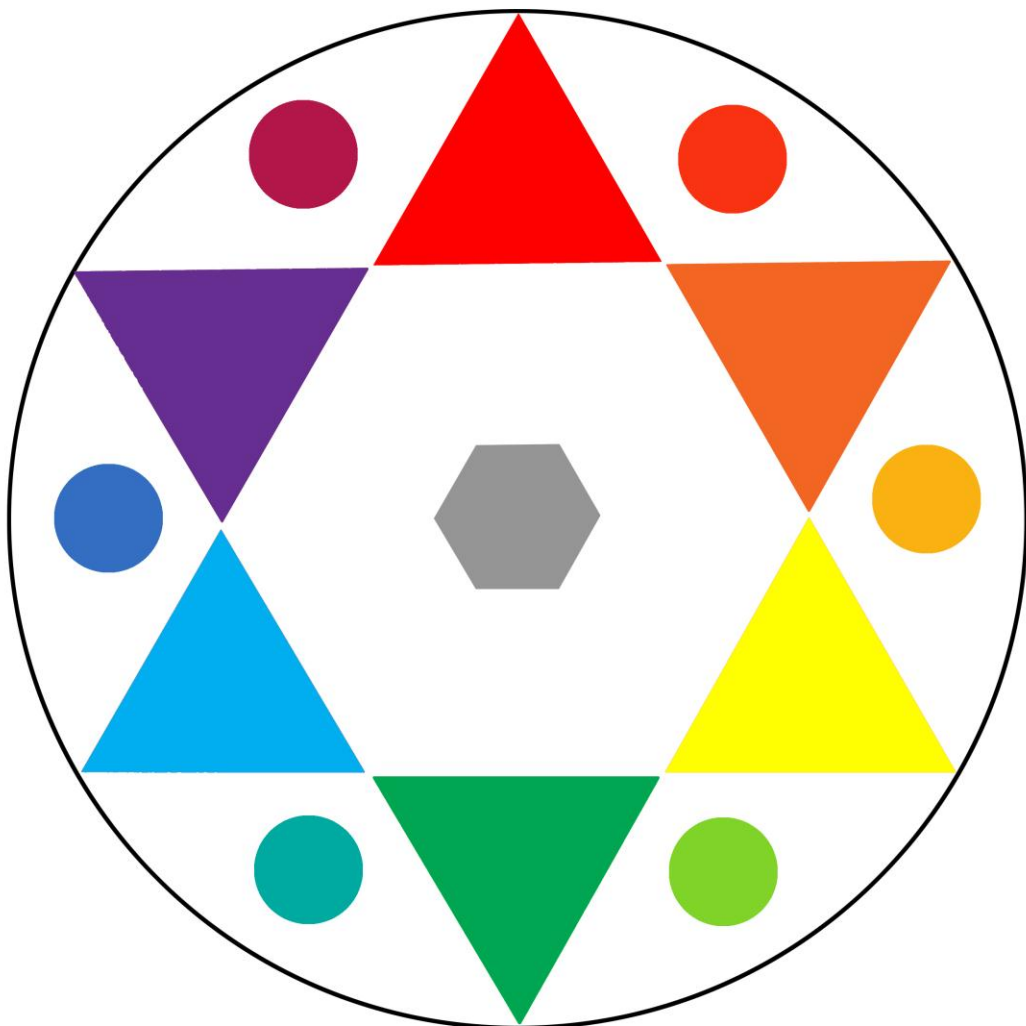
Tertiary Colors

Tertiary colors are the offspring of the Primary and the Secondary colors.

They often have very generic names that give away what was mixed to get the color. Here they are:

- Red Orange
- Yellow Orange
- Yellow Green
- Blue Green
- Blue Purple
- Red Purple

Tertiary Colors



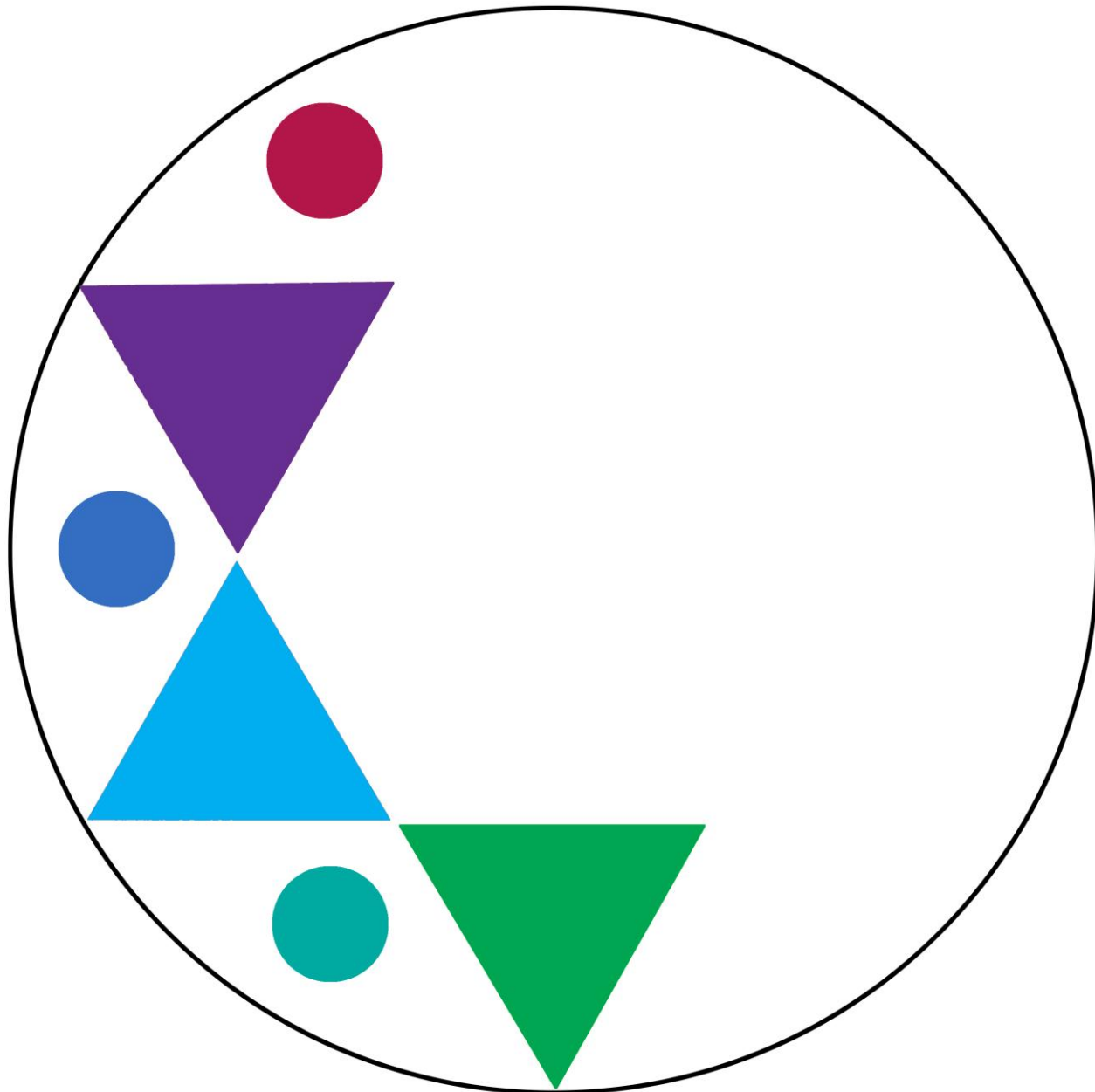
Color Divisions

Colors are often divided into two types: Cool Colors and Warm Colors.

Cool Colors

Cool colors are mostly dominated by the Primary color blue. The feel of these colors are often soothing and calm. These colors often tend to recede in space.

Cool Colors

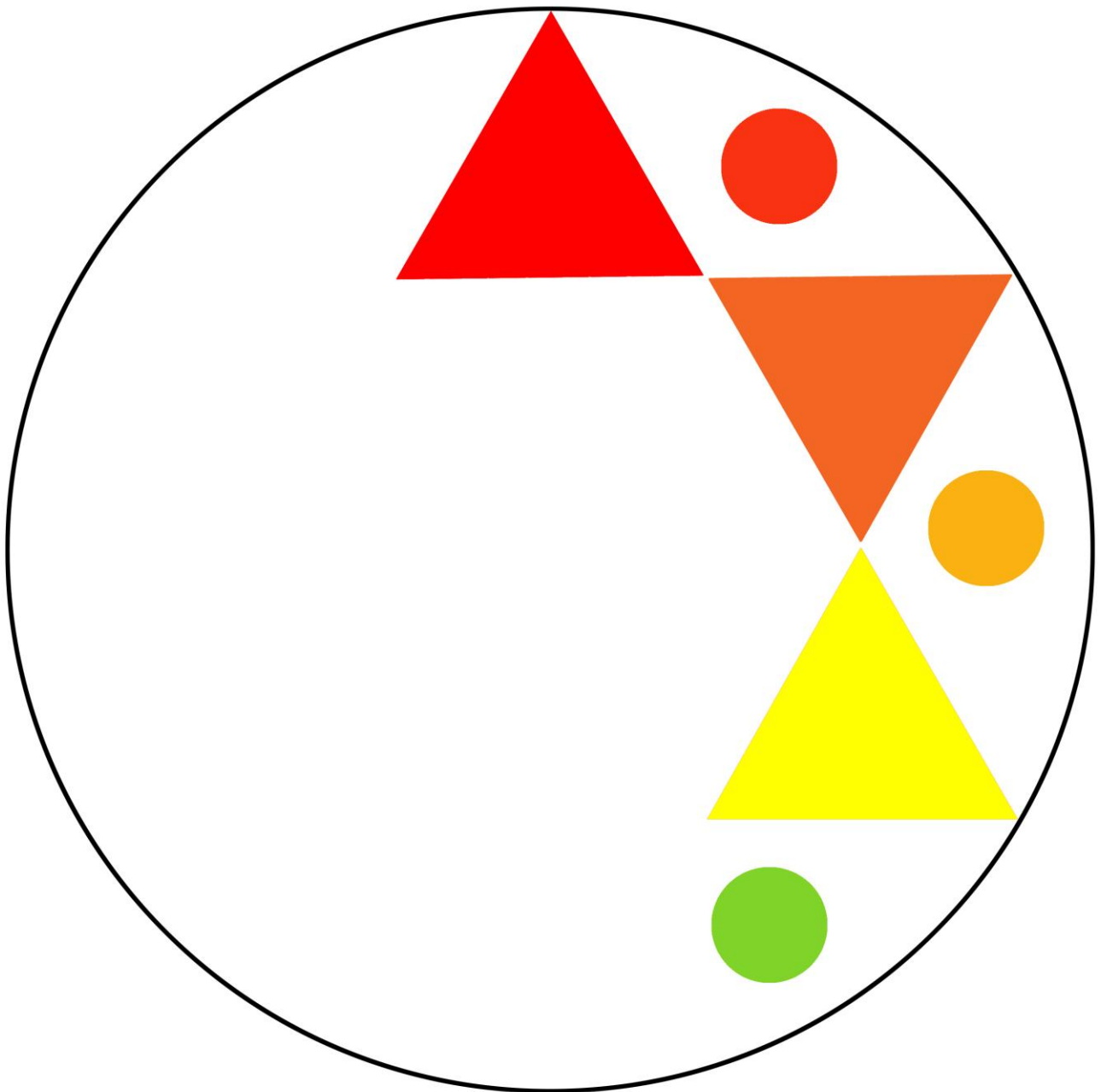


Warm Colors

Warm colors are often dominated by the TWO Primary colors Red and Yellow. This causes them to have a higher range than cool colors.

Warm colors often have a lot of energy and pop out more than cool colors.

Warm Colors



Color Harmonies

Color harmonies are exactly what you think they are, colors that work harmoniously together. Knowing what they are, will give you short cuts to color combinations you would like to use.

The trick with color is NOT to use ALL the colors in one drawing. Instead, it's best to limit the colors you use. Limit colors to a small group that work well together and experiment from there.

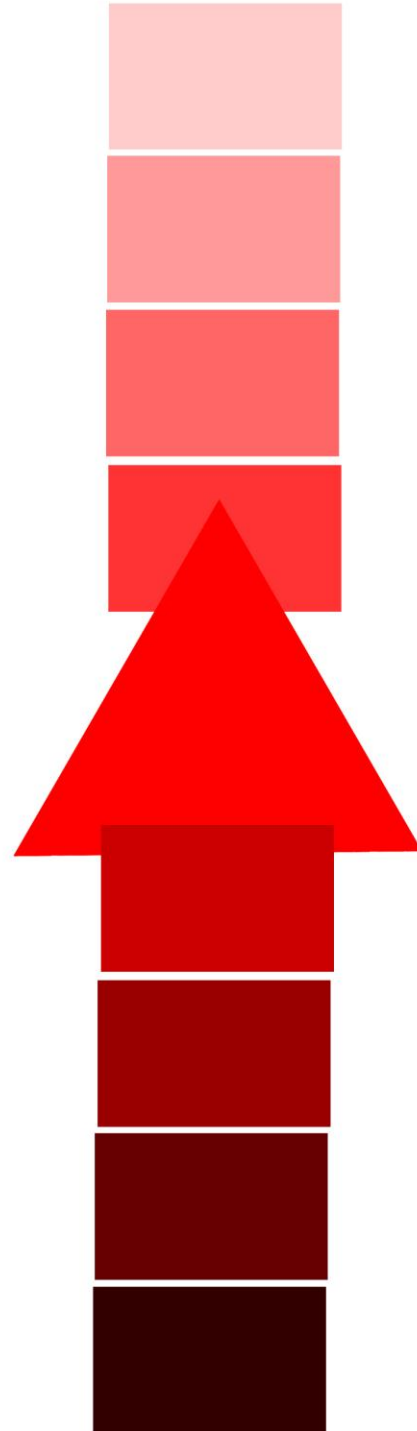
Monochromatic Color Range

First, let's talk about simply using ONE color.

Simply by tinting or darkening a single color you can get a great value of colors. This is the ultimate harmonious color scheme. All the colors in this group are guaranteed to look good together.

Just be aware that, as far as coloring something goes, it can be a tad dull.

Monochromatic Colors



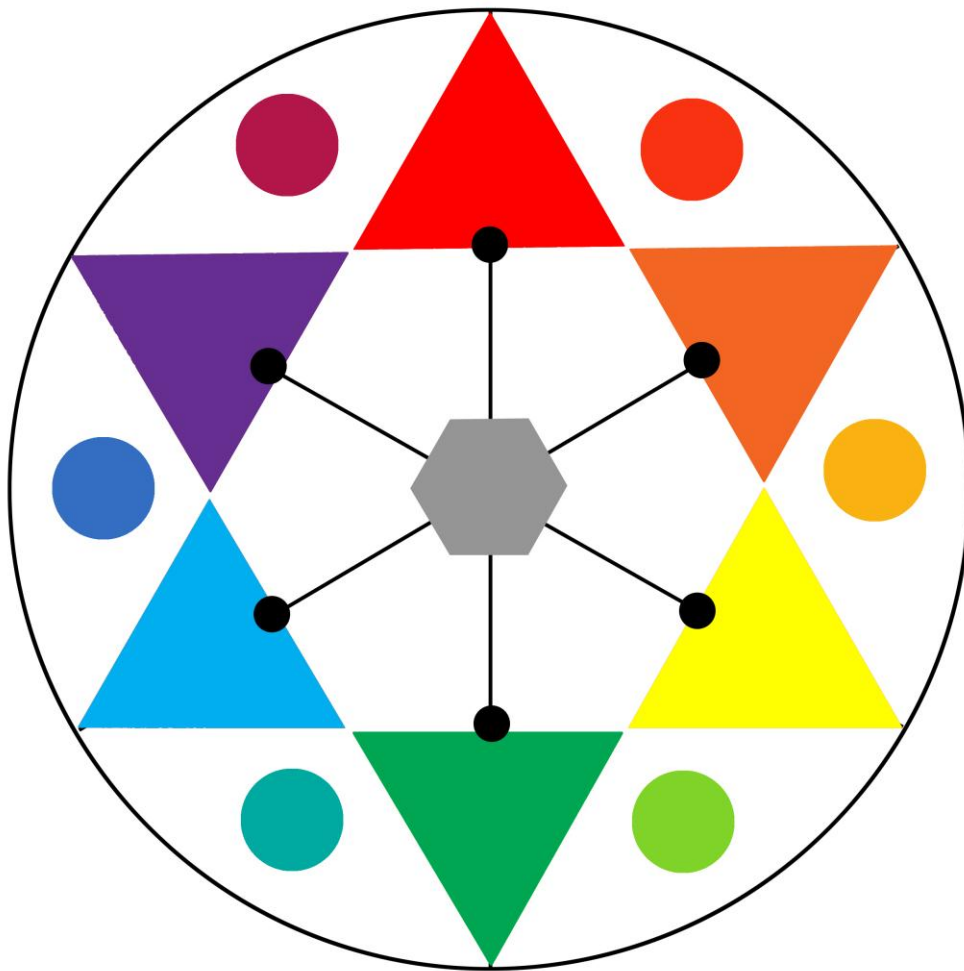
Complimentary Colors

Complimentary colors are opposite each other on the color wheel.

For example:

- Red and Green are complimentary.
- Purple and Yellow are complimentary
- Blue and Orange are complimentary

Complimentary Colors



Complimentary colors are to each other what Black and White are to each other, opposites. They are called “complimentary” because, just as putting a white dot in a black background would make the white dot stand out; the equivalent can be done with complimentary colors.

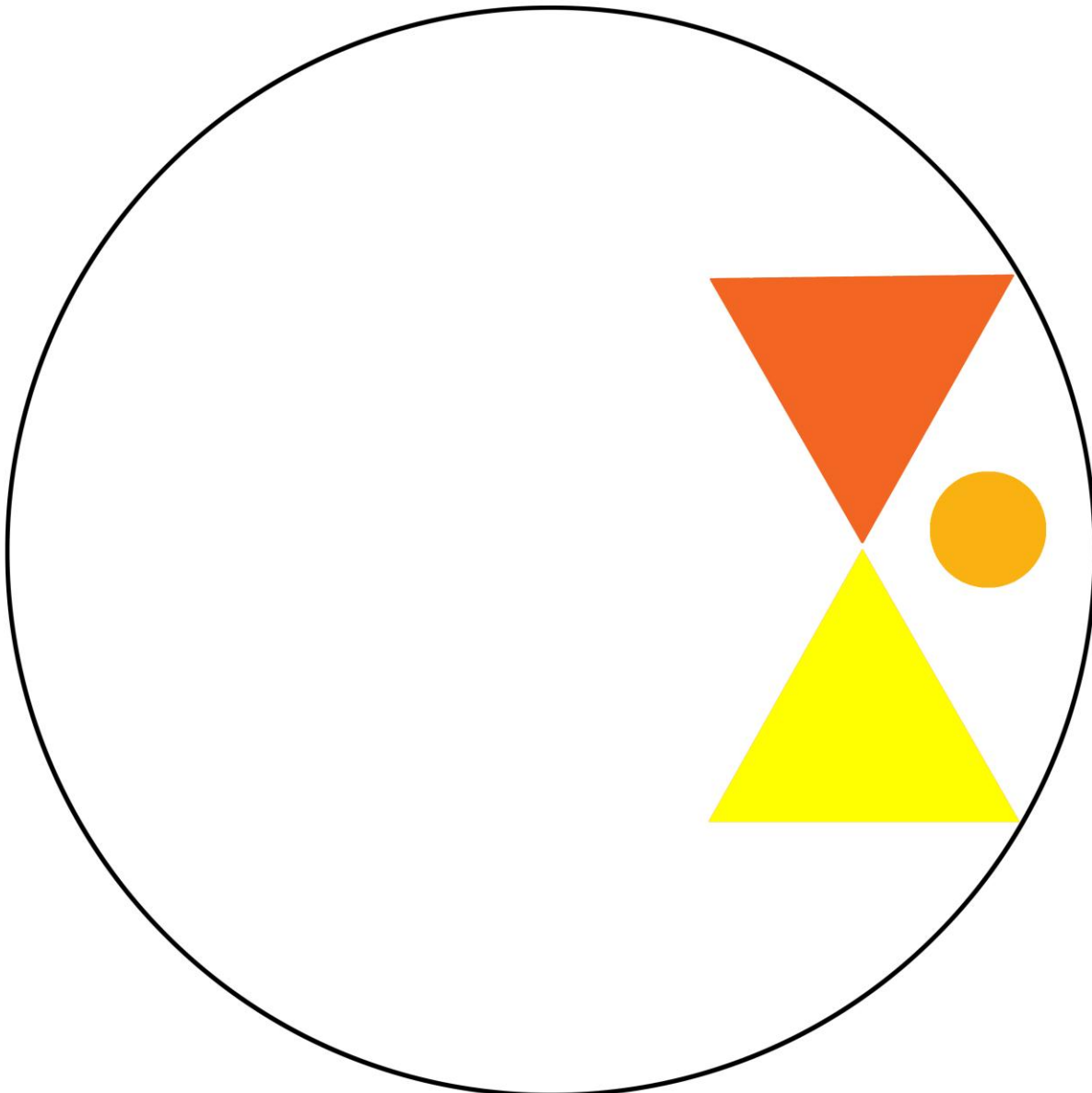
Just to clarify: COMPLIMENTARY COLORS ARE OPPOSITE COLORS TO EACH OTHER. THEY MAKE EACH OTHER STAND OUT.

These colors are often used in moderation in a picture where you want the audiences' eyes to go.

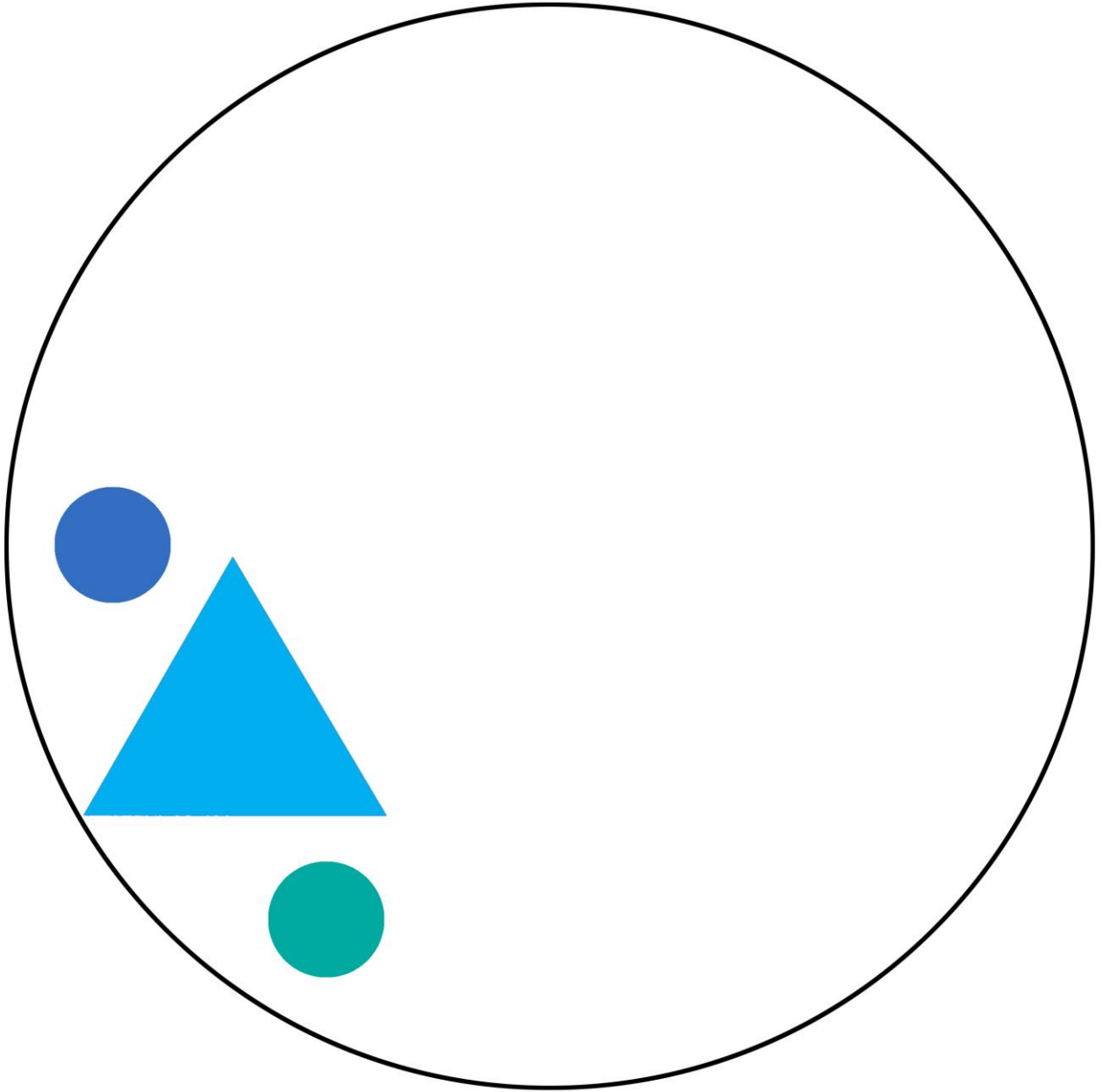
Analogous Colors

Analogous colors are colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. These colors are used when you want a larger range of colors but still want the unifying feel of the a monochromatic colors scheme.

Analogous Colors



Analogous Colors



Example

Here's a sample of a drawing I did a long time ago:



Notice how the whole picture is mostly Monochromatic, with a touch of Analogous colors in order to unify the picture. But when it comes to the protagonist in the middle, he's wearing a red shirt, which is complimentary to green, in order to draw the eye.

Experiment

Color is tricky to wrap your head around if you don't use it. The best way to start getting a handle on it is to start coloring stuff.

So here's what I think you ought to do: when you doodle or draw your characters as I've shared with you how to do, color them.

Experiment.

Try to color your characters monochromatic or by using analogous colors.

Color your characters using only primary colors or secondary colors. What are the results like?

Mess around, play around. See what happens.

It's the best way to learn.

Trouble?

Q: What's the best tool to use to color with?

A: This is really up to what you feel most comfortable with or quite frankly, what you have around the house. But here is my suggestion, if you really need an answer:

Color Pencils.

They are easy to control. They don't give you the brightest and best colors, but they get the job done and you can experiment with them all you want and feel comfortable doing it.

Pro Tip

Limiting your palette is the best way to go. Don't use every color you've got. Think about design. Remember the whole: **HARMONIZING BALANCE AND CONTRAST** thing from Lesson 3?

What you want to do is, get a group of colors that work well together like monochromatic colors or analogous colors (Balance) and then pick a few places in the drawing to stick in some complimentary colors (Contrast). Doing this just right will result in a well-designed color scheme.

Bonus Lesson 2: Designing Super Basic

Compositions.

"I find a single focus in the scene and then play everything off that one thing." – Kenn Backhaus

What is Missing?



So you've learned the basics of design and you're drawing fairly decent looking cartoons.

Then you try actually drawing a picture and it looks like something a five year old drew. You haven't got the slightest idea why. The answer is very simple.

Composition.

It's not enough to design the characters

on the page; you also have to design the page. This might seem like a very odd statement but it's in perfect keeping with what I've shared with you so far about design.

This time, I'm going to share with you how to use those design principles and other principles, to compose a picture that looks cool.

This is going to be REALLY basic. This topic, like color, is HUGE. There's far too much to write about here. In this post, I'm only going to give you a tiny taste of how you should be thinking about designing composition to get you started.

What is Composition?

The way I see it, composition is all about directing the viewer's gaze where you want it to go within the picture. To do this you have to DESIGN the space in such a way, that the viewer's eyes go where you want it to. So composition is in fact, all about design.

And what is the secret to good design?

THE secret to GOOD design is harmonizing contrast and balance.

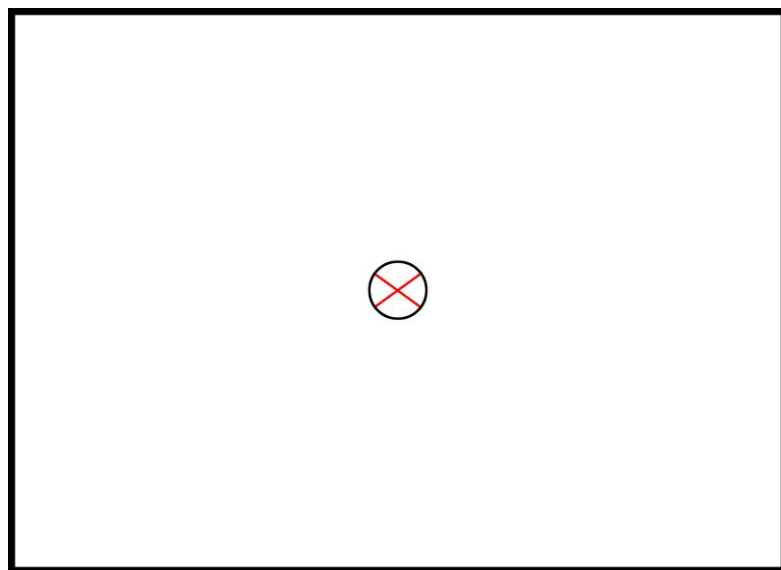
Breaking up Space

Our gaze naturally goes to the center of the page. It is the easier type of compositional placement you can create. But this may cause problems. I will get to that in a bit.

As human beings, when we're drawing something, our natural tendency is to try to make everything symmetrical. Just like it was with the stick figures in Lesson 3. We want everything to be spaced out evenly and made to look exactly the same.

This has its place. If you look at icons, symbols and early paintings, they are very symmetrical. There's something appealing and beautiful about the balance in symmetry. The apparent "perfection" in symmetry.

There's nothing really wrong with that. The problem is when symmetry is used when it shouldn't be.



For example, our natural tendency is to put the center of interest in our drawing or even our photographs, right smack in the middle of the frame. Like the frame to the left.

When we're beginning draftsmen, we do this. We split the page in half and put the center of interest right in the middle.

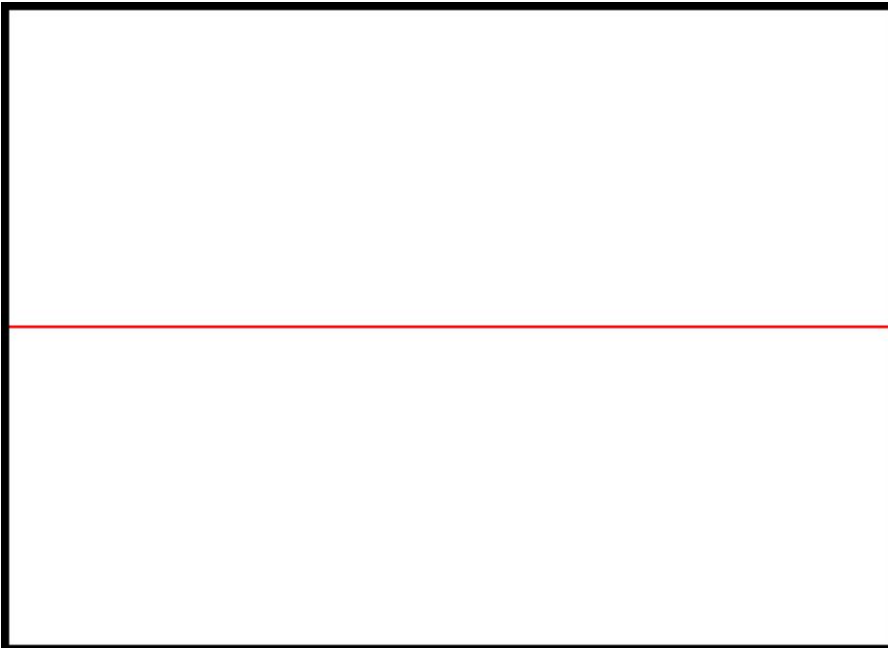
This is just our natural tendency,

but the problem is that, just as a perfectly balanced designs with no contrast tend to be boring, so are most drawings composed this way.

Introducing Contrast

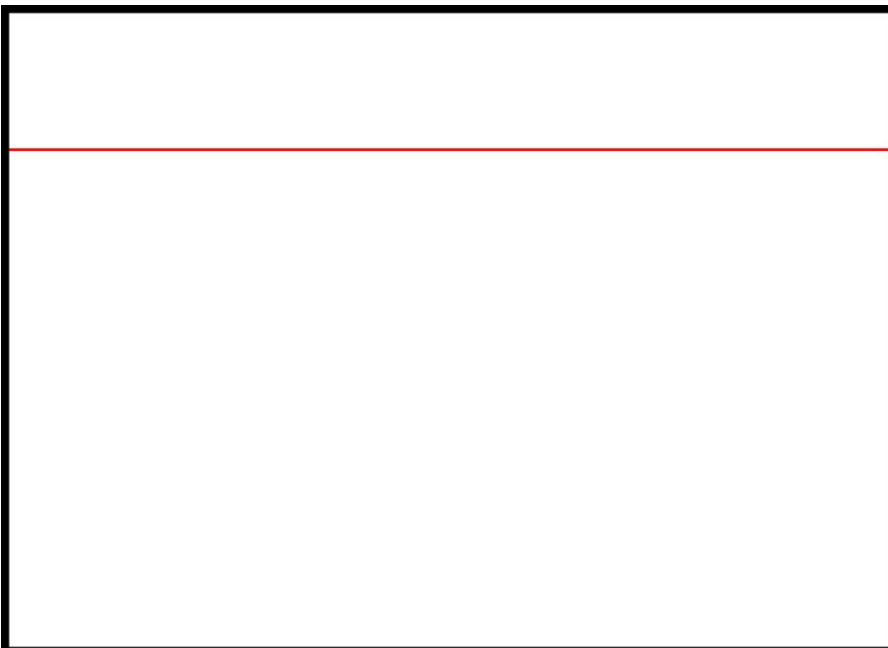
This all gets fixed by introducing a bit of our old friend, contrast.

Let's take for example a very basic drawing where you're going to draw a line for the ground. Where do you usually put it? Right smack in the middle, splitting the drawing in half.



Boring.

Instead, let's start by playing favorites.



Let's put the line either above the mid-point...

...or below the mid-point:



Now you have contrast. One side dominates. It's bigger, while the other side is much smaller. You have now created interest.

Breaking Up the Space with Shapes

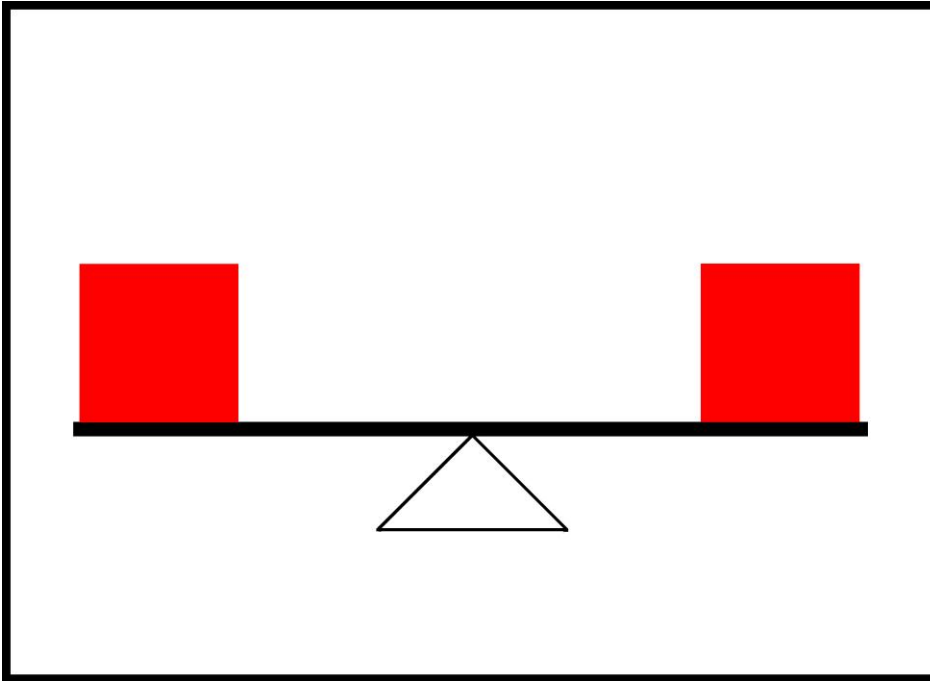
So if you don't put your center of interest (the thing you want people to look at) in the middle, where do you put it?

Well...off center.

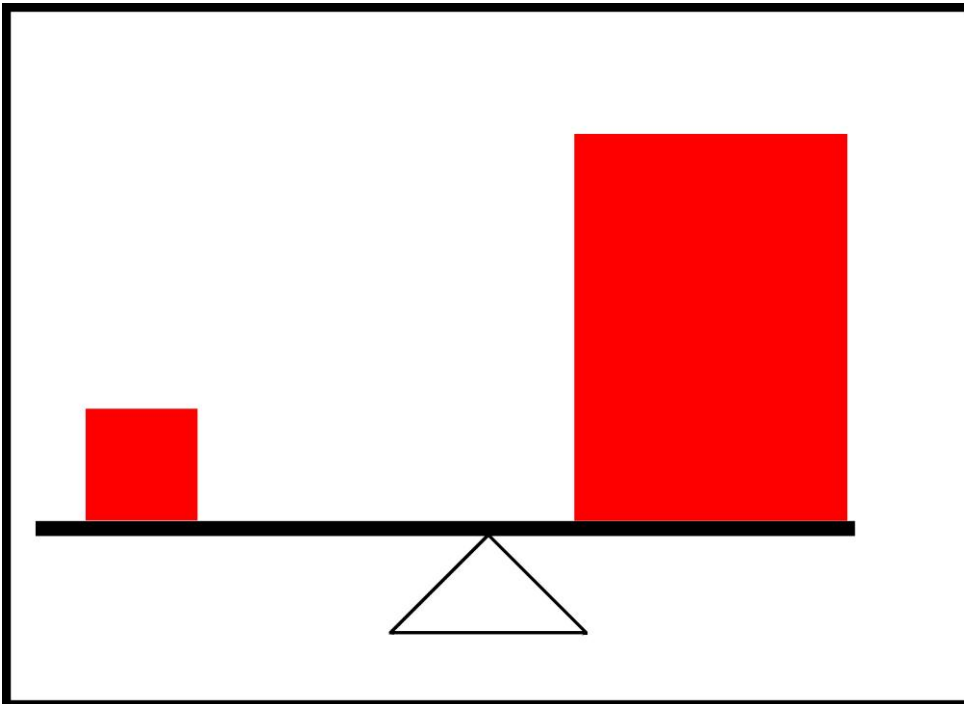
Depending on how big or how far off center you move the center of interest though, it can become off balance. If it's off balance, it will feel strange to the viewer and be dubbed ugly.

So for example, if you put the center of interest on the left, then you have to have something on the right to balance it out. Whatever you use to balance the drawing will often be around the same size and distance away from the main center of interest.

Very much like a scale with the center of the picture acting like a fulcrum:



If the center of interest is going to be larger in the shot or smaller, you'll probably need to balance that as well. You do this by placing the objects in such a way that, if they were to be put on a scale, they would balance:



The big object above is closer to the fulcrum while the smaller needs to be further away to balance it out.

Here is Balancing in Action

So here's what it would look like with actual drawings. I took these drawings from a BLACK TERROR KID comic I did for fun a few years ago.

In Figure 1 below, we have a low horizon and the two characters in the shot are both off center but are balanced:

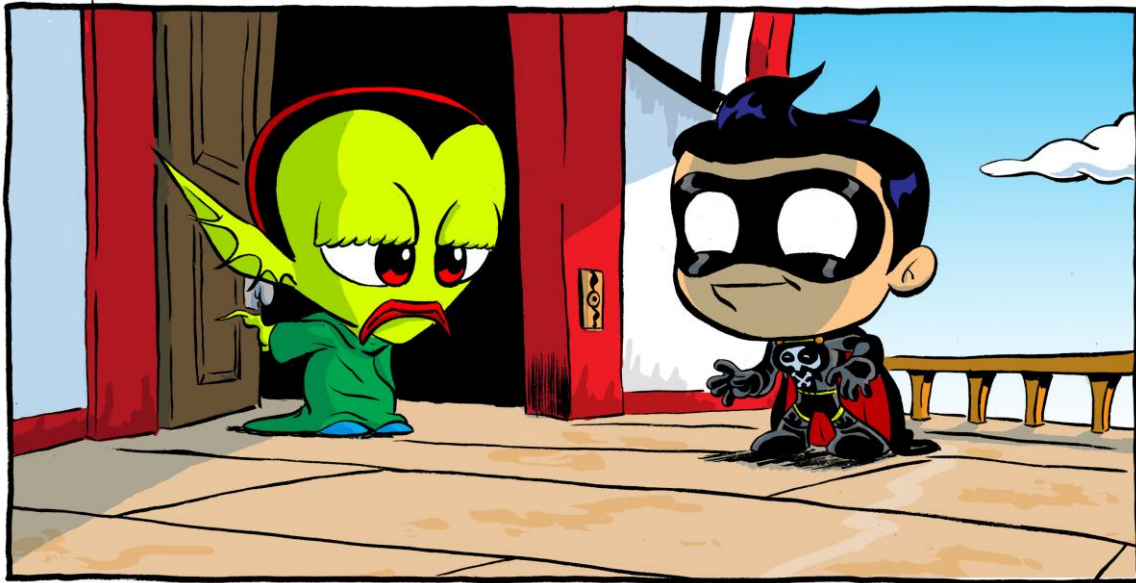


Figure 1

Figure 2 below shows how the scales balance the picture out:



Figure 2.

Figure 3 below is a much more dynamic angle. One character is closer to the camera making him bigger while the other is further way, making him smaller.

In order to balance out these two contrasting sizes, I had to place the characters in different places on the “scale:



Figure 3.

Figure 4 below shows the example of the scale and how the sizes balance out on them.

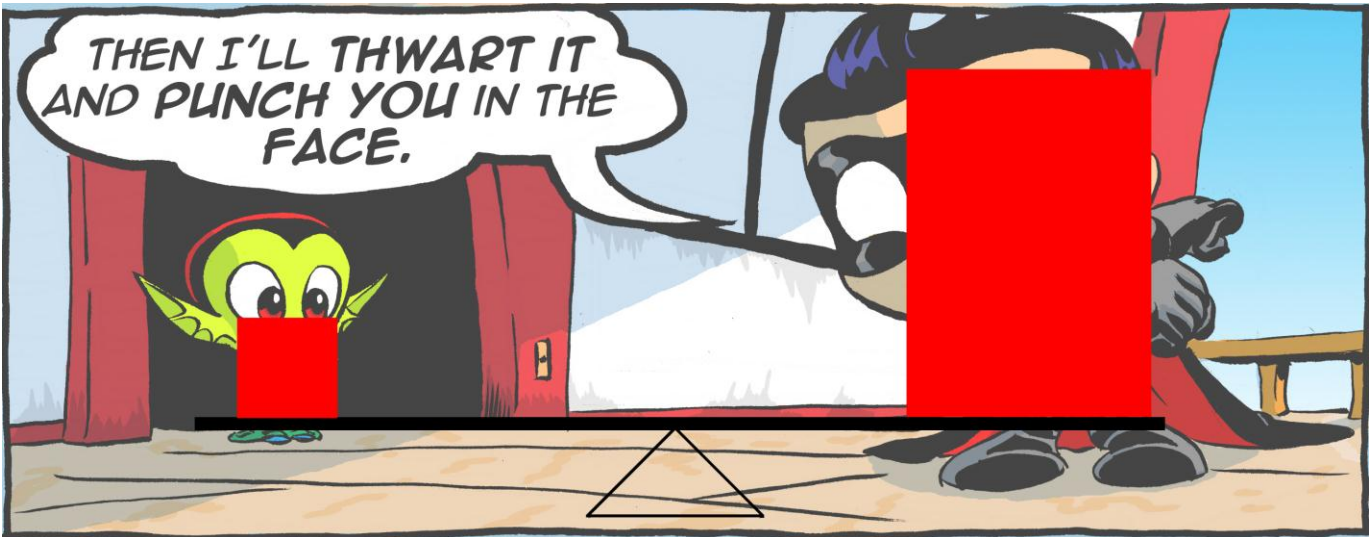


Figure 4.

Your Exercise

I'm sure by this point, you're drawing all kinds of things in margins, and any kind of sheet of paper you can find.

Simply what I want you to do is, when you're drawing environments or places with ground planes, DON'T split the picture frame in half.

Practice putting the center of interest somewhere other than the center of the frame and find ways to balance it with some other object in the picture.

I'm sure at this point, you're having all kinds of fun messing around with drawing pictures.

Trouble?

Q: I'm not sure about the whole using a "scale" thing. Does that mean I have to draw a scale every time I draw something?

A: No, the scale was simply an illustration of the thinking involved when you're attempting to balance a composition. Most of the time, adjusting the balance of a composition is done intuitively.

Also, the objects that are put in balance do not have to be the same kind of object. If you draw a character as one object, the balancing object doesn't have to be another character, it can be a house, a tree, a chair, ...whatever. As long as the objects FEEL like they're balancing each other.

Pro Tip

This is not even the tip of the iceberg on Composition. The subject is too vast. I HAD to pick at least ONE thing to share with you about composition.

Here's another, very quick tip. See the picture on the next page of my Kung Fu Character Pen Grier? Notice there's just a bunch of arrows in the drawing pointing to her face? Even her finger is pointing at her face. That's another way to think about composition



Every element in the drawing should point to the center of interest. Not so obviously as I did in this picture. I drew it that way to make this point (no pun intended).

If you're subtle about it, you can have everything in a drawing harmoniously point, like a bunch of arrows, to where

you want the viewer to look and no one will even notice.

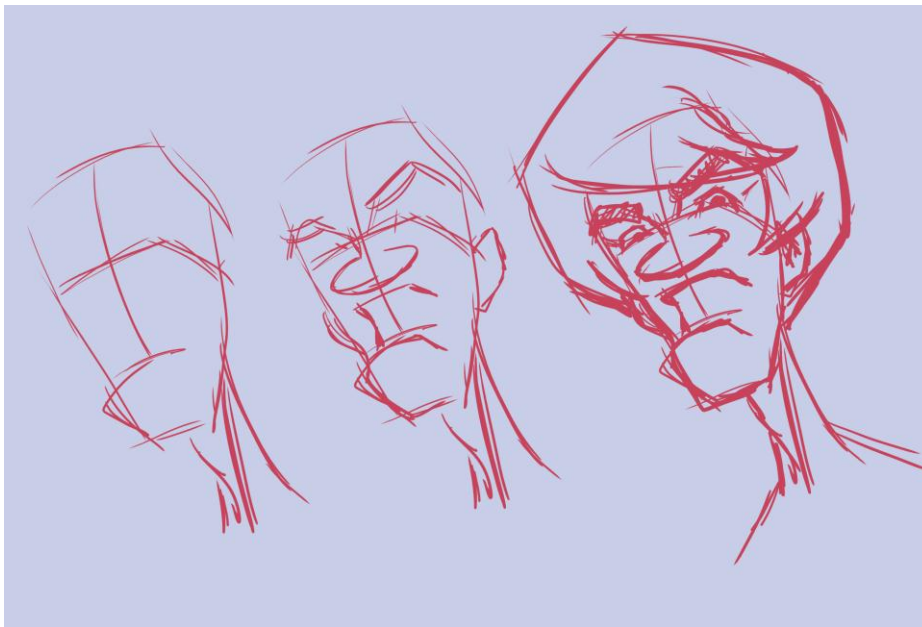
For example, take a close look at this picture. See if you can find all the "arrows" pointing at the character in red:



Bonus Lesson 3: Formulas – An Introduction to Drawing Shorthand

“The number one benefit of information technology is that it empowers people to do what they want to do. It lets people be creative. It lets people be productive. It lets people learn things they didn’t think they could learn before, and so, in a sense, it is all about potential.” ~Steve Ballmer

The Secret Of Ease.



Some draftsmen are really good at drawing fast. They sit down and just crank their drawings out.

Watching them draw is like magic, especially when they have a special style they draw in.

When you watch those draftsmen draw, it’s like a performance. Why is that?

Well, for one thing it’s practice and experience. It comes from drawing, experimenting and making lots and lots of mistakes.

BUT, there’s something more— something that I’ve never actually heard anyone mention and I don’t know why.

Perhaps it’s because no one has ever bothered to articulate it the way I’m about to.

You see, after you’ve been drawing for a while, and you learn from teachers and books, after you’ve done your experimenting and begin to get more and more confident, you start developing what I call a “shorthand.”

What's shorthand? It's what I'm going to be writing about in this chapter. So let's get to it.

What a Shorthand Is

Simply put, a drawing "shorthand" is the simplification of a "drawing formula."

What's a drawing formula?

A drawing formula is the solutions a draftsman has come up with, that solve a drawing problem.

At first, drawing is difficult because you have no solutions to drawing problems. The more you draw the more solutions you develop. Often, times teachers or books give you pre-packaged solutions.

In Kung Fu, you learn what are called "forms." A series of consecutive movements that make up martial moves. Drawing formulas are like that.

You learn these pre-packaged solutions and it speeds up the drawing process. You end up drawing better, faster. The better you get at using those solutions, the better you're drawings will be.

Once a formula is repeated so often that it becomes almost an instinct, you begin to skip steps in the drawing formulas you use. Your mind makes a type of "short hand" out of it. You are still thinking about the steps but are not necessarily drawing all the steps.

If you have multiple teachers or read multiple books, you end up learning MANY formulas and lots of different solutions to drawing problems.

The trick with these solutions is to find the ones that work best for you. The ones that solve the worst drawing problems fastest. This is done through trial and error, as well as implementation of the formulas, learning the formulas well, and using them.

When you do this long enough, something interesting starts to happen. If you've learned multiple problem solving formulas, your mind begins to mix them up. You begin to combine them, meld them into something new that works even better for you.

Suddenly, you've developed a new shorthand unique to you, based on your experiences with drawing and the formulas you've learned over the years. Someone watching you draw can't really figure out what part of what formula you're using. It looks like magic.

This creates YOUR formula, your shorthand, your voice, your style. You have a pre-packaged solution that helps you speed up the drawing process and helps you solve whatever new drawing problem comes your way.

You now know the secret to drawing. The thing that will help you take the fastest steps forward.

Learn the solutions to drawing problems that great artists before you have discovered. Practice them, apply them, assimilate them, and make them your own.

Stand on the shoulders of giants.

Who to Learn From

I was talking to a buddy of mine at work and he brought up the question,

"Whose formulas should I use? Who do I copy?"

Yeah, those are the questions aren't they.

To be honest the answers aren't absolute. The answer is... "it depends."

Who do YOU want to draw like? What are your drawing goals? Do you want to draw cartoony? Do you want to draw realistic? Both?

How serious are you about this? Are you learning to draw for fun or because you want to make this a profession?

Depending on your answers is where you should start.

Here's what I suggest for now, gather the artwork you like. Either digitally, in books, comic books, magazine or newspaper clippings...whatever is easy for you.

You'll begin to see the direction you want to take your drawing.

If what you gather is all over the map in styles and types, create categories. Then choose one to start with.

When I first started, I copied the art I gathered in this way. It was fun and gave me confidence.

If the artists you copy have written "how to" books, you're in luck. Pick them up. If they didn't, find someone who draws in a similar way.

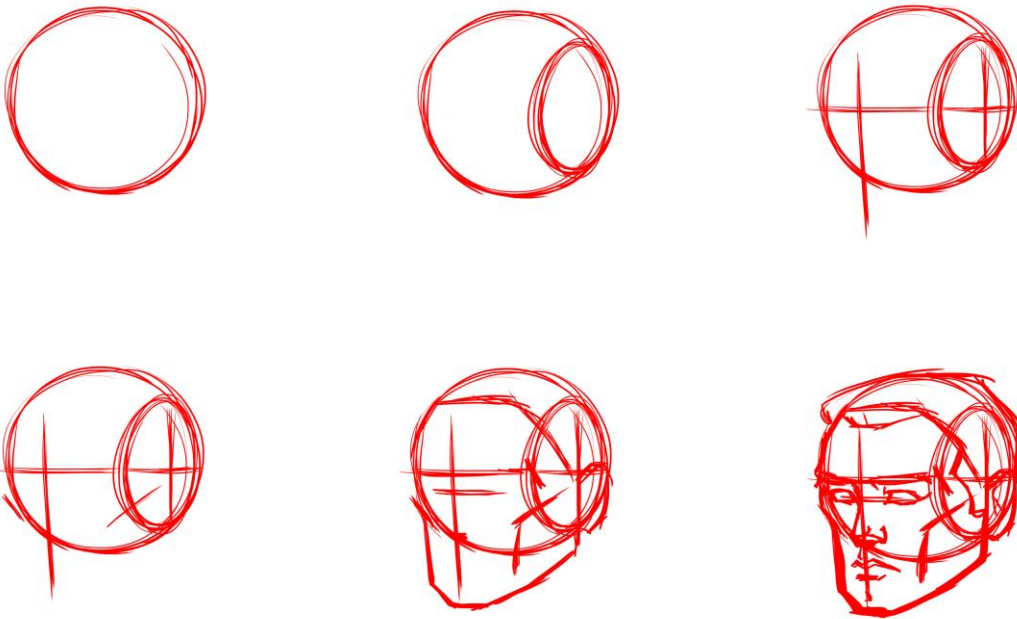
This is how I did it.

The next lessons I will share in upcoming books, will be about getting your skills to the next level so that this sort of self-study will become easier and easier.

Examples Formulas and Short Hand

Here's an example of head formulas. You often see this sort of thing in drawing books.

The first example is a head drawing formula from Andrew Loomis, from his book *Drawing the Head and Hands*:



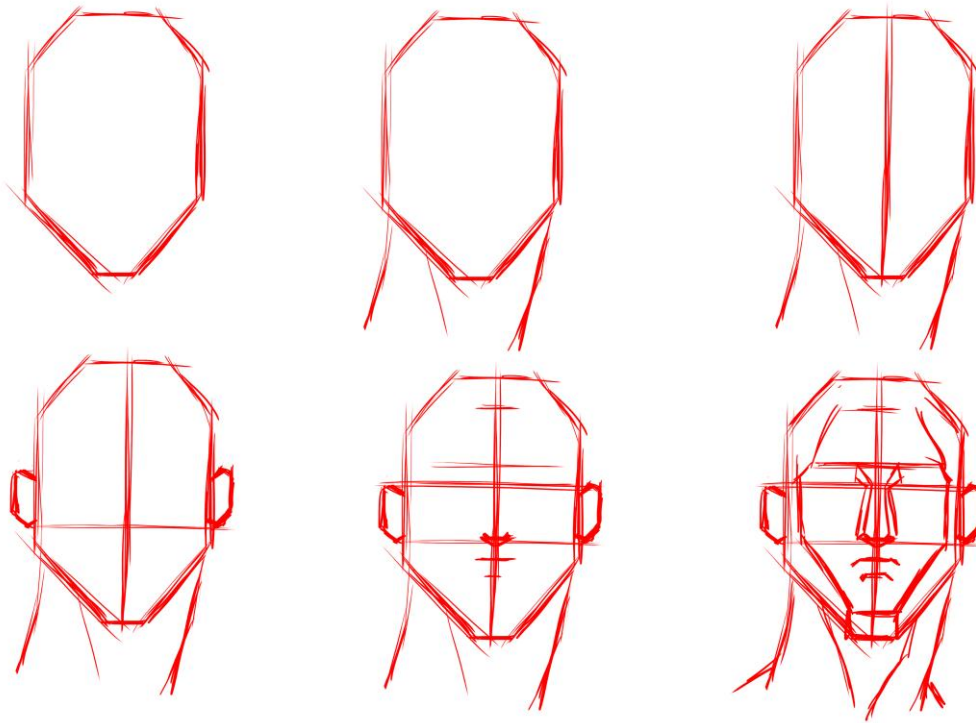
There are quite a few steps here. If you use this formula enough and begin to assimilate it, you end up developing a short hand from it.

It may end up looking something like this:



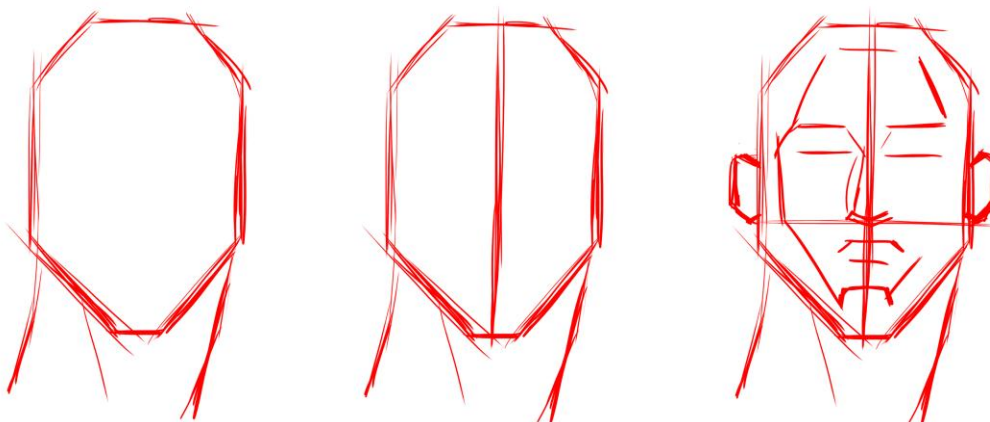
All the steps are there in my head, I just didn't draw them all out.

Here's another example of a head drawing formula. This one comes from George Bridgman's book *Bridgman's Complete Guide to Drawing from Life*:



This formula is different in that the head is made out of straight lines.

Once you master his formula, you might end up with a shorthand that looks like this:



Once again, all the steps are still there in my mind, they just aren't there on paper.

I must emphasize that you shouldn't rush to shorthand.

Always work through the full formula until it becomes part of you. You'll find the shorthand will simply begin to happen.

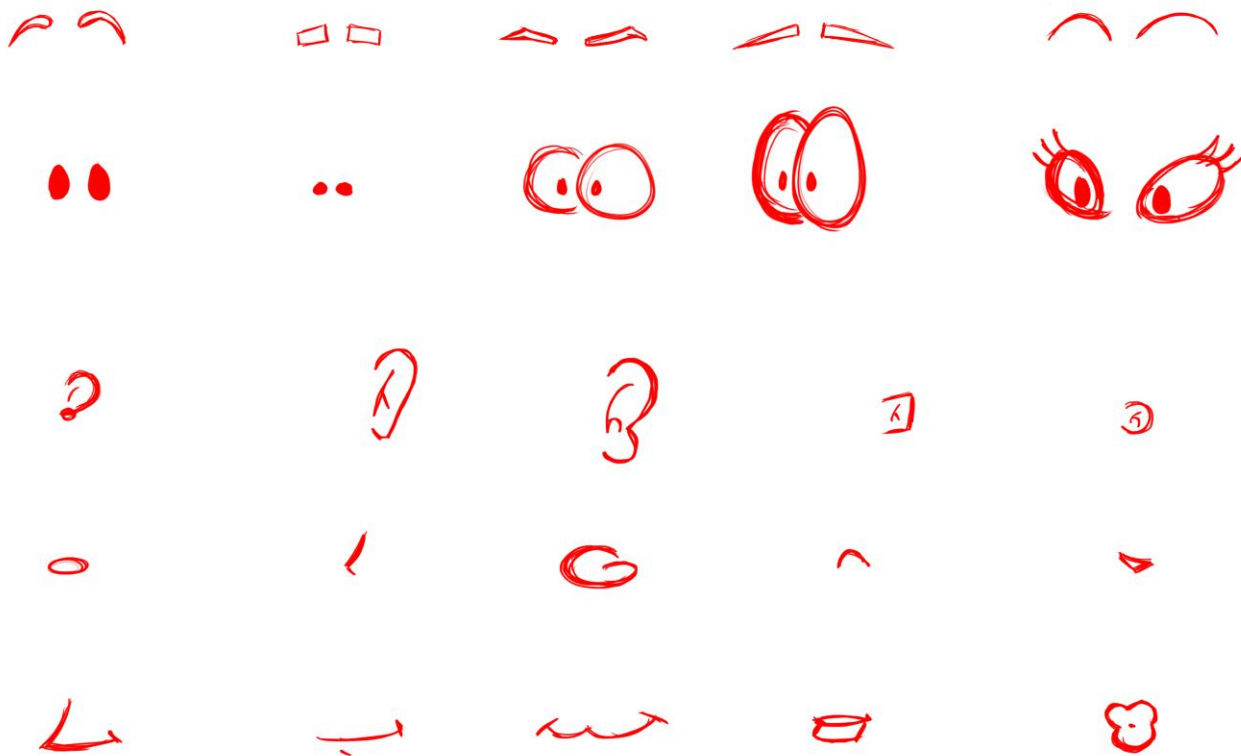
If you rush and don't learn the formulas well, your drawings will always seem off. They won't have a solid foundation at their core.

What You Should Pursue

There is no need to get as complicated right now as the examples above. My advice for you, right now, is simply to look at cartoons and characters you like and try cataloguing their body parts.

Copy them. Make a note of their eyes, mouths ears...etc. What strange shapes do they make? What are they made of?

It should look something like this:



They don't have to be perfect. Simply get used to copying. Get the hang of it.

Begin to create a library of your favorite cartoon drawing solutions.

Why do this? Formulas tend to get complicated. Simply copying and learning features and small body parts help you achieve "small victories" that will motivate you to move forward. You will be training your eyes to "see" better by copying and you'll be training your hands to draw what you're seeing.

There's no better way to learn these things than copying. From this point on, you'll be doing a lot of it.

Trouble?

Q: You talked a lot about formulas but you didn't actually teach us any. What gives? I thought you were teaching us to draw!

A: I am, but I want you to learn to teach yourself first. Observe. Become independent. Experiment.

Beginning lessons will be all about formulas. This final Bonus Lesson was written to prepare you for what's to come.

Pro Tip

Quite honestly, my best pro tip at this point is to copy.

Copy, copy, copy.

Learn to see. Learn to make judgments. Try to find formulas.

There will be a special copying chapter in the next book but begin now. You won't regret it.

Extras
Thoughts and Stories

The Mystery of Drawing Talent Revealed

I've been thinking about drawing and talent a lot.

I had a talk with a friend of mine and he told me he doesn't think drawing talent exists. I thought that was very interesting because a few days before, a popular cartoonist podcaster friend of mine ALSO told me he doubted that drawing talent existed.

Personally, I have a theory on drawing talent. It stems from my experiences as a draftsman, and observing my four children draw, as well as stories from other draftsmen.

I think this is what happens:

When we were kids, we drew. We drew and it was fun. It didn't MATTER if it was the greatest drawing ever, the sheer pleasure of drawing was enough.

BUT something happened. At some point, we suddenly became conscious of the act of drawing. Most likely around the age of 7 (the age of reason). Not only did we become aware of the act of drawing, we started to become critical about it. Or perhaps self-conscious about it.

Okay, so here's where my theory really comes in.

Around this time, something also starts happening. Some of us start figuring out how to control the marks we make on the page. This is to say, we begin making much more deliberate lines. We make the lines do what we WANT them to do.

Now here's the thing.

EVERY one of us, would EVENTUALLY get to this point. Some sooner, some later. JUST LIKE WHEN WE LEARNED TO HANDWRITE but...some of us, BEFORE we got to that point, simply quit. Perhaps out of frustration, fear, self-doubt, jealousy...whatever the reason, we quit before we got to the point where we figured out how to be deliberate about controlling the lines we put on paper. We WOULD have figured it out, but we quit.

Those who stuck to it and figured it out were then labelled "artistically talented", and the rest where the "untalented".

We human being, with our capacity for abstract thought, are incredibly good at getting in our own way, and screwing ourselves up. Who needs other people messing us up when we're messing OURSELVES up just fine?

My point is this. YOU are your own worst enemy when it comes to learning how to draw. No one anywhere has told you CAN'T do it. YOU have. Stop it.

And if someone else HAS told you, you can't, don't listen to them, they're jerks.

Will you be Michelangelo once you start? No. No one is, and no one HAS been. Only Michelangelo was Michelangelo. You will draw like you.

Everyone who is good at drawing eventually draws like they draw. It's an extension of who we are. You will get BETTER. More practiced. You will learn all kinds of tools of the trade that you will use to make things happen on the page, but it will still be how YOU do it.

My role is to inform you of all the tools and drawing conceits that will make you get there faster.

The rest is all about you having a good enough time doing it, that you improve as time goes by.

Stages of a Developing Artist

So I thought it would be fun if I was to go back in time and show you my history with drawing comics.

Why? Is it because I was such a master artist from the get go?

On the contrary, it's because I was so average, or even below average. You be the judge.

A lot of the time people say,

"You're so talented". This phrase while, often used as a compliment, actually under minds the years of hard work I've put into my craft. My view of talent is this:

"Talent is only good for making you want to continue doing a thing. It doesn't make you good at it."

What makes you good at it is frequency. Practice and hard work makes you better at something.

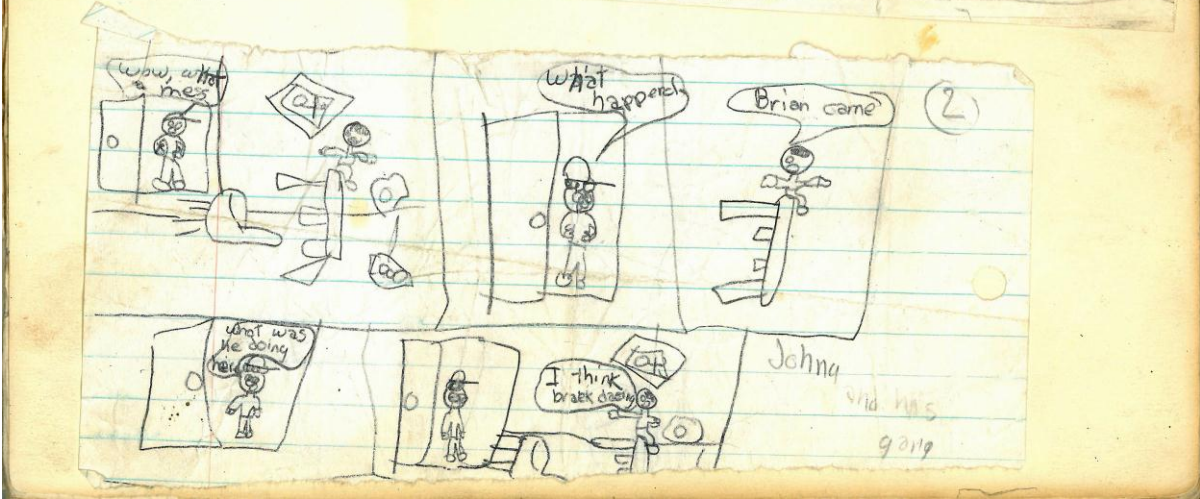
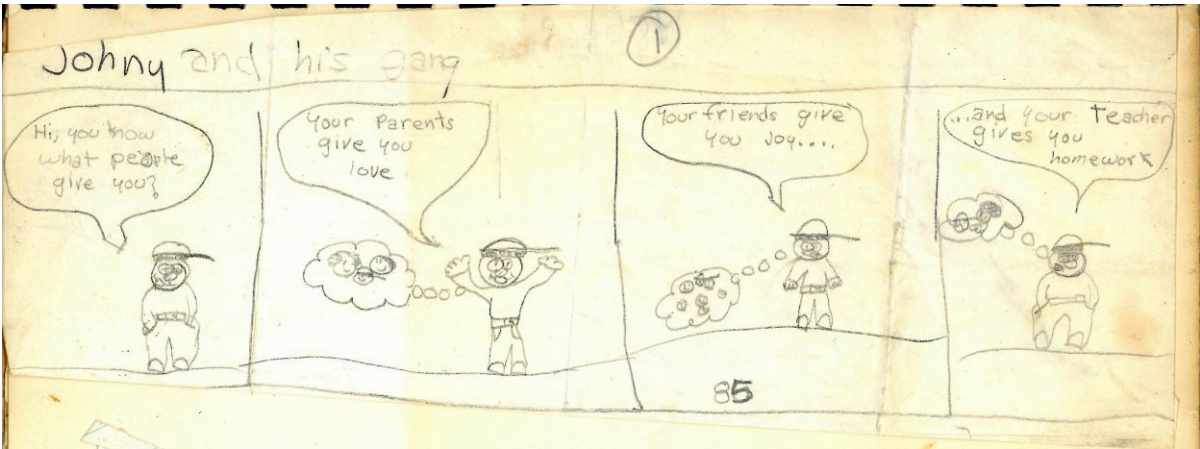
I know of artists who were less "talented" than me who are now much better artists because they worked harder than I did at getting that way.

Sometimes, "talent" is a draw back. If you rely on it too much, you might not improve as fast as you could.

One day, on the way home from elementary school I got an idea for a comic strip. Unfortunately, I don't remember how old I was when this happened. It also may have happened at night as I was going to sleep.

I was either in 3rd, 4th or 5th grade at the time. This would make me about, 8, 9, or 10 years old.

The strip I came up with was the one labelled "1" on the following page. I've also put the four strips that followed soon after:



They didn't stop at four. I continued to do more from that point on.

I kept all my strips from that time in my life in a scrapbook so I have all of my early strips.

I'm showing you these first five strips, not to show off or show you how funny they are (they aren't).

The reason I'm showing you these is so you can note how awful they are.

Remember, I was around 8, 9 or 10 years old around this time. I'm sure you know plenty of kids that age who draw better than this.

I would NOT accuse me of having "talent." I found drawing fun and I loved doing these strips. THAT was my edge. I was playing, and playing is fun and motivating.

The fastest way to learn to draw is not to practice to get better. The best way to get better at drawing is to make it play. To have the process itself be fun. That way, you're practicing, without it FEELING like it's practice.

As you'll see in the following page, it's interesting to see the development of the jokes and the clarity of the art as well as the development of the designs and the draftsmanship.

I will take the time to note, that while I drew these comics, I also did a lot of non-comic strip related drawings. The comics were just one of the many things I drew growing up.

I bring this up so that you don't think I only got better at drawing from drawing comics.

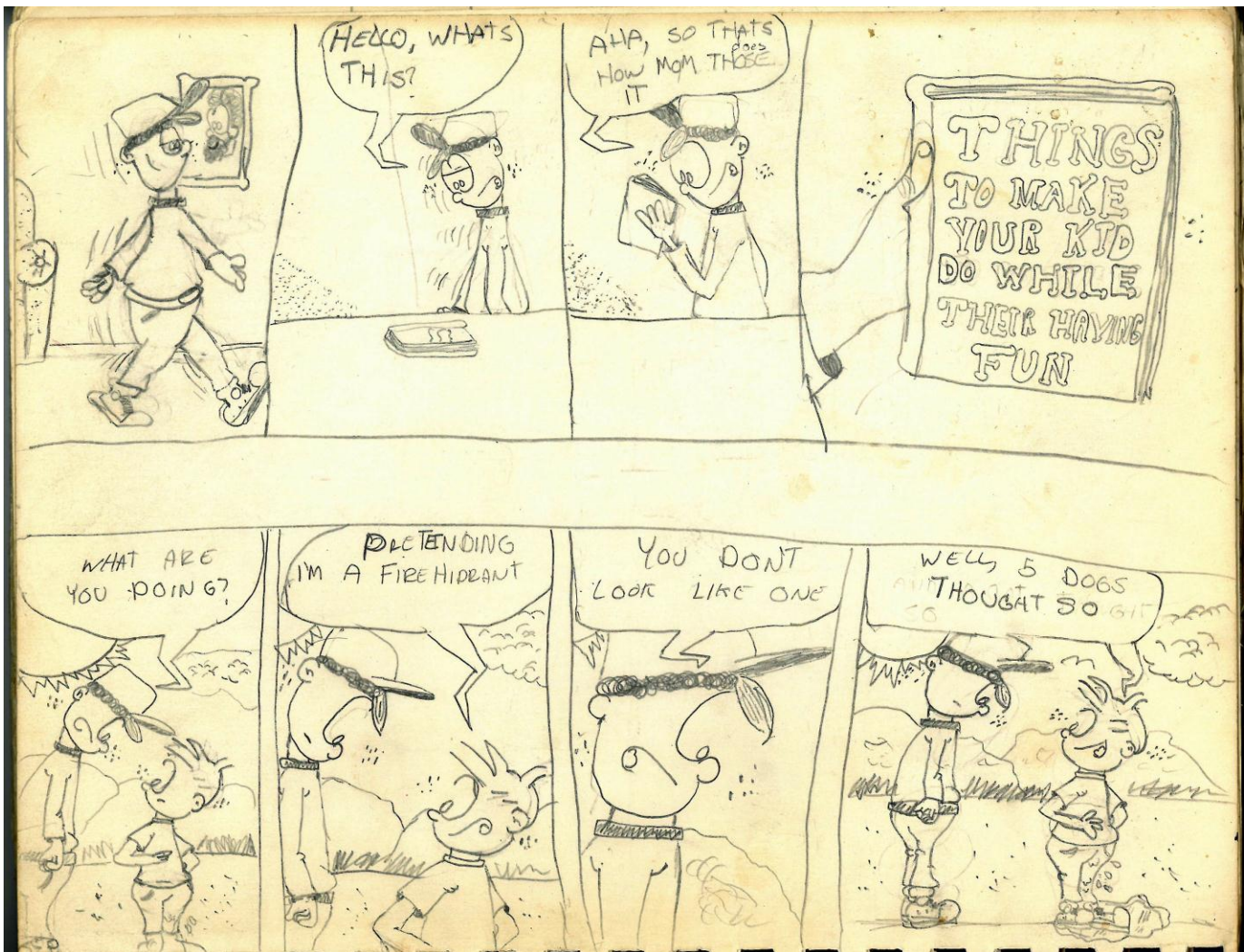
79 comics (I counted them) and about two to three years later, when I was 12 or 13ish, my style had gone through a nice jump.

I used to copy other comic strips. I used to read them obsessively. I had art books that taught drawing.

I stole styles from my favourite artists. I would read their advice and completely ignore them. Especially when they told me that I should learn to draw realistic in order to learn to draw cartoons.

I was teaching myself. No mentors.

I'm sure my work would have improved much faster if I'd had a teacher who took me under their wing.



As you can see I was improving, but I still wasn't all that great.

Like many artists, I was under the impression that style was everything. I know now that style gets you noticed, but good draftsmanship comes first.

It's like being a writer who knows his grammar, and writing principles. He can communicate his ideas much better than a writer who has a unique writing style and good ideas but can't spell, can't write clear sentences, or good paragraphs.

How is anyone going to understand what he writes?

My parents gave me ink and a crow quill that year, so I began to experiment with my first "grown up" art supplies.

Somehow the tools didn't magically make my stuff look any more professional:



My comic was originally called, *Johny and his Gang* but then I realized that the Bazooka Joe comics were called *Bazooka Joe and his Gang*. Not only that, but Bazooka Joe wore a hat and so did my character Johny. I thought I was going to make a living off of my comic (I was in Junior High and delusional) so I changed the name of the comic to *Johnny B. Goode*.

I drew a dozen or so of the *Johnny* comics after that and kinda retired the character. Still in Junior High (about 13 years old) I started some new comic ideas. This was one of them:



The comic in the previous page was colored in marker. I had found my dad's markers and started using them to color my drawings. The comic didn't go anywhere. I think I only did two comics strips with both those characters. I drew a lot during this time but I don't think I drew very many comics.

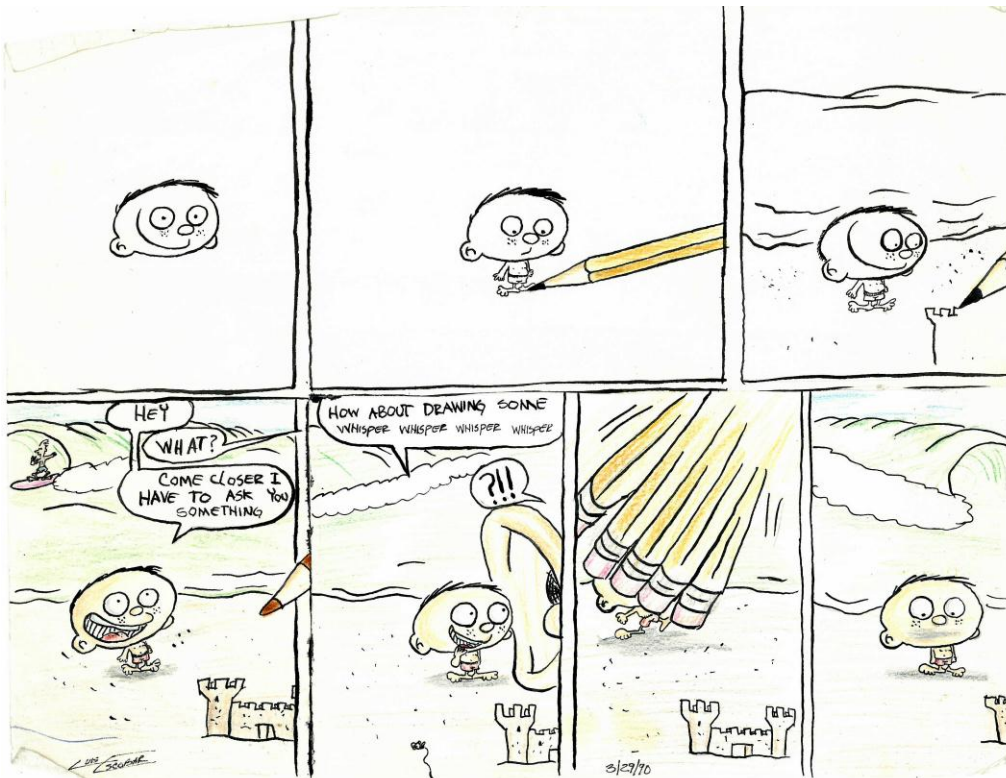
As a freshman in High school (about 14 years old), I got the itch to do more strips, which I thankfully dated. I took the sidekick character from the strip in the previous page, because I liked writing him, and made him the lead of my new comic strip:



And so my *Paul* comics began. This would be the character I would draw comic strips of, for the rest of High school (sorta). I got rid of the markers (which I

couldn't control) and replaced them with colored pencils.

I still used a quill to ink the drawings. I did a LOT of experimenting too.

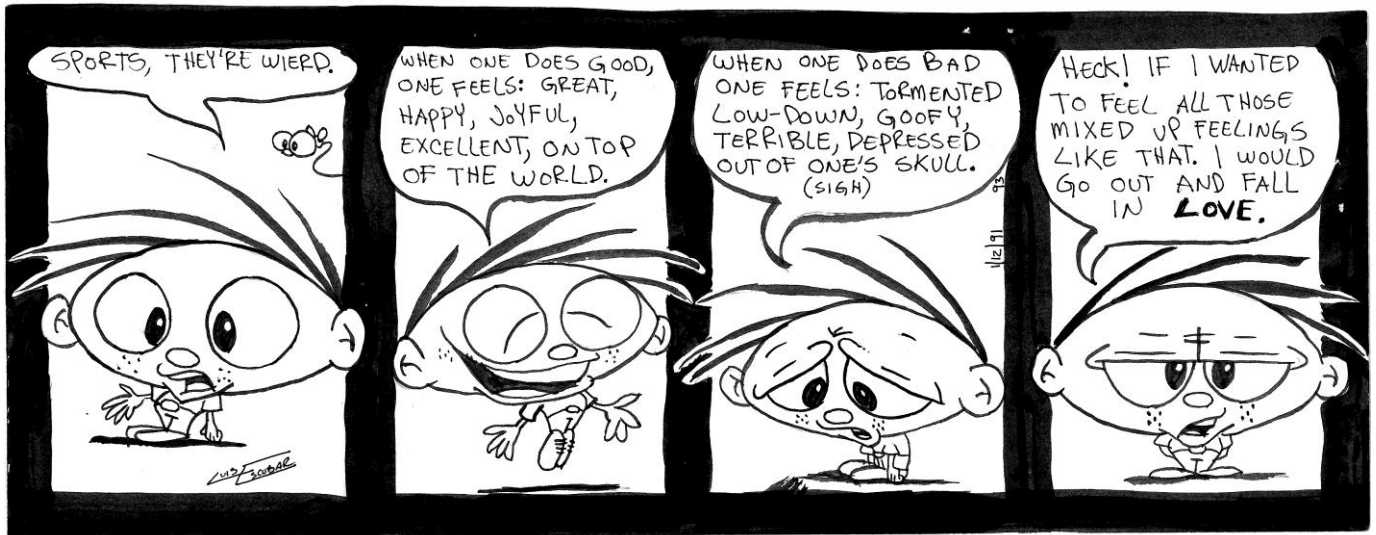


By my sophomore year (about 16 years old), I had “graduated” to using a brush to ink my strips.



I drew about thirty to forty strips with my character Paul in total.

Somewhere along the way I just kinda ran out of juice. I was trying to develop my drawing in other ways. I had a good art class that opened my eyes to other things. Not only that but once I hit senior year, I was studying animation and that took all my creative energy. Below is one of the last comics I drew in my senior year (I was 18). It was a remake of a strip I drew when I was a 15 years old, which is why it has two dates:



I began work on The Simpsons the year I drew the strip above.

Since my life had changed so much, I didn't really have time for creating comics. My skills were not up to the level I needed them to be in order to keep my job at the studio and I had to get my skills up fast.

Five years later, in 1998 I attempted to draw my own comic for the first time in a long time.

This time instead of just a comic strip I was going to attempt a comic book story. By this time I had a few Simpson Comics under my belt and I just wanted to try my hand at doing my own.

I drew a 21 page rough of my story, fully intending to do another pass to flesh out the character designs and the drawings.

Pg 2

I just wanted to run it by some people to see if it was "working".

I decided to use my character Paul from my comic strips only redesigned and all "grown up":

I didn't finish it. For the full story as to why, as well as a chance to read what I DID do, Got to:

www.luisescobarblog.com/7it

I've put up the rough pages of that comic, with more legible digital lettering.



In 2010, twelve years after my last attempt, I finished a eight page gag comic. It was a blast. You can read it at: www.luisescoobarblog.com/btk1



The irony is that THE BLACK TERROR KID looks a lot like that original version of Paul I drew when I was 13. I've come a long way and yet I'm still drawing the same stuff in the same way. I don't know whether I should laugh or cry.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Storyboard artist on *The Simpsons* television show. He's been on the show for 20 years.

Drew *Simpsons comics* on the side for 12 of those years.

Married to the wonderful, beautiful Alesha L. Escobar. Father of four fun loving kids.

Loves comics, animation, board games, table top role-playing games, books and movies.

Has co-workers who take embarrassing pictures of him sleeping, during the production of *The Simpsons Movie*.

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Are you ashamed of the way you draw?

This book is here to help.

If you can't draw a straight line, if you can't even draw a stick figure, this is the book for you.

20 year animation veteran Luis Escobar, Storyboard artist for The Simpsons Television show has structured this book in a very unique way.

Using the model of a Kung Fu class, he takes absolute beginners from the most basic drawing conditioning to a competent level of drawing. Focusing on drawing cartoon characters.

In this book you'll learn:

- How you may already be drawing and don't know it.
- The dirty secret of drawing talent.
- How learning to draw basic shape can let you draw anything.
- How to draw stick figures with style.
- What professionals know about tracing correctly.
- How to draw basic cartoon characters...and much more

Most "how to draw" books always assume you have some level of competency. This book doesn't. It helps you from the ground up.

Draw as if you've been born to. Amaze your friends. Have fun drawing again, like you did when you were little.

It's time to learn some Draw Fu!