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# HOW TO DRAW HEADS

BY MITCH LEEUWE

EBOOK PACKED WITH EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO DRAW HEADS



**GIFT FROM MITCHLEEUWE.GUMROAD.COM**

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# HOW TO DRAW HEADS

**BY MITCH LEEUWE**



**Hi THERE!**

Let me introduce myself. I'm Mitch Leeuwe and am an illustrator from the Netherlands. I always drew a lot as a kid. I even had the childhood dream to become an animator at Disney. During my teenage years, I lost that dream. Luckily, I slowly started drawing more and more. When I was 19, I began to do some freelance work as a graphic designer, which made me consider picking up drawing again. I attended several drawing programs at schools but I learned most from online resources. Now, I'm a freelance artist working on visual development. This means I design characters, props and backgrounds for games, animation and toys. However, you probably know me from my Instagram where I release tutorials and more. My goal is to create a place where people can learn the things I wanted to learn when I started out.

## ABOUT THIS EBOOK

Did you know people are experts in judging faces? During the day we see many faces. It is unimaginable how many faces you probably will see in your entire life! Because we know faces so well, we notice the smallest details, especially when it's a little bit off. That makes drawing heads and faces so challenging.

This ebook focuses on drawing heads and faces. I'll teach you how to set up a head construction and turn that into a character's head design. To give you enough material

to practice with this, I packed this ebook with many examples of how I approach drawing heads. You can challenge yourself even more by altering the examples to create new variants. The possibilities are endless when it comes to heads and faces!

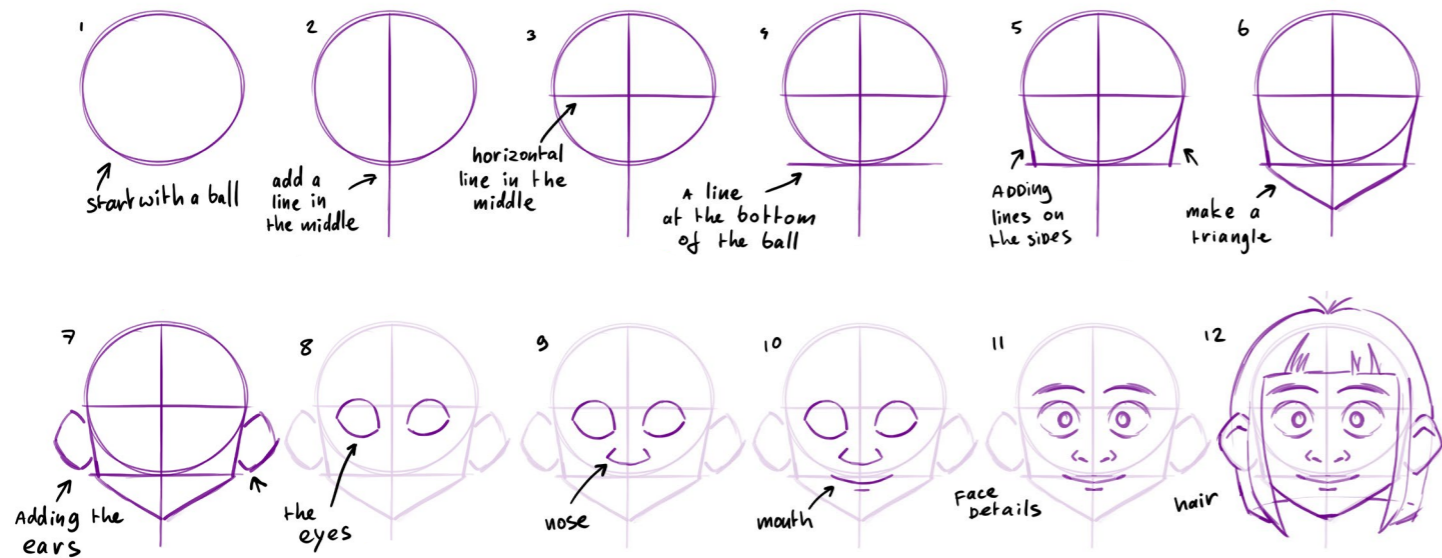
The best way to learn to draw from this ebook is to first copy all the steps and examples. Don't simply just copy it but also try to understand all the steps. See the text and videos for additional information.

You can participate in the tutorials by using pencil and paper, Procreate, Adobe® Photoshop®, or any other tool. It doesn't matter what you use to draw, as long it works for you. In the end, they are all just tools. When it comes to learning how to draw, I have a personal preference for pencil and paper. This is more basic, and you can use fewer tricks. It will force you to focus on the main principles of drawing.

Let's get started! And happy drawing!

## LEARN MORE!

If you'd like to learn more about drawing heads, I also created a special ebook about drawing the anatomy of the head specifically: *Anatomy: Heads*. That ebook gives you knowledge about anatomy and teaches you more in detail to set up the construction of the skull and facial details. It can be beneficial to learn this before starting with this ebook (*How to Draw Heads*). However, it is not essential.



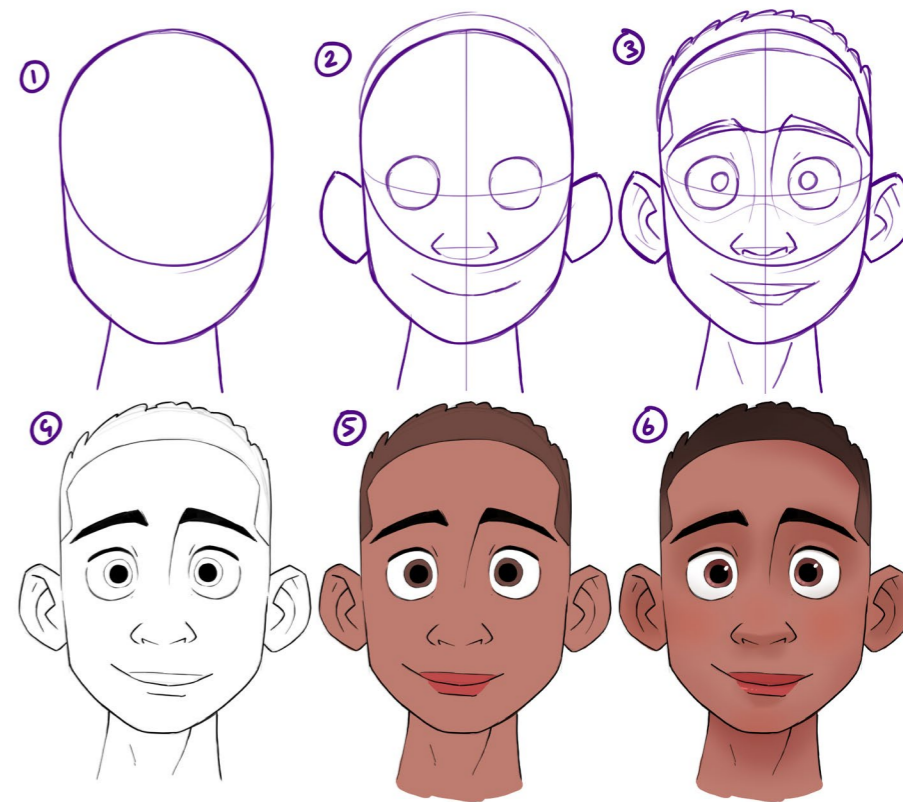
Let's begin by drawing a front view of the head. This is an excellent way to get familiar with drawing heads because there is no perspective. This way, you can really focus on drawing the construction right.

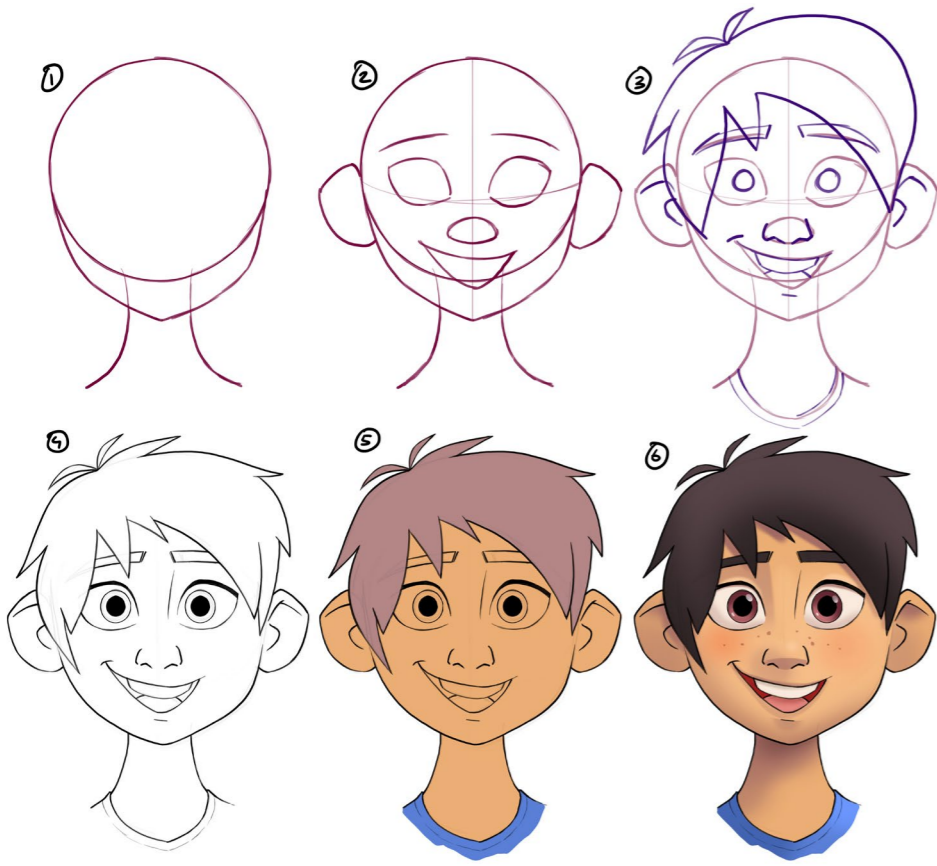
Follow these steps to learn how to draw the head and the face. You can play around with the proportions to create variations of this head.

In this tutorial, I've used fewer guidelines. When you get more experienced with drawing heads, you can skip some steps of the previous tutorial and approach it more like this one. By practicing the steps of the previous tutorials, your brain will memorize the steps. At some point, you will take these guides into account automatically. So, keep practicing!

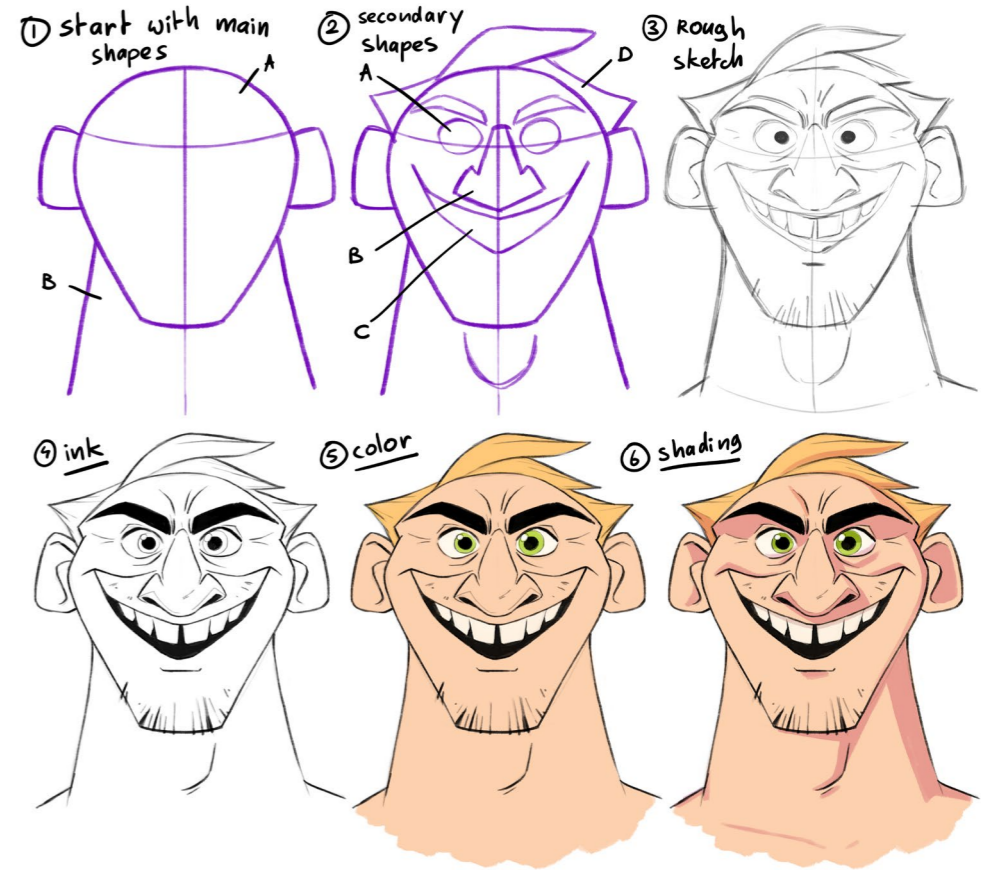
## EXERCISE

A good training with this head is to draw it with the help of the guidelines I've shown in the previous tutorial. Notice that this makes it easier to copy this drawing.





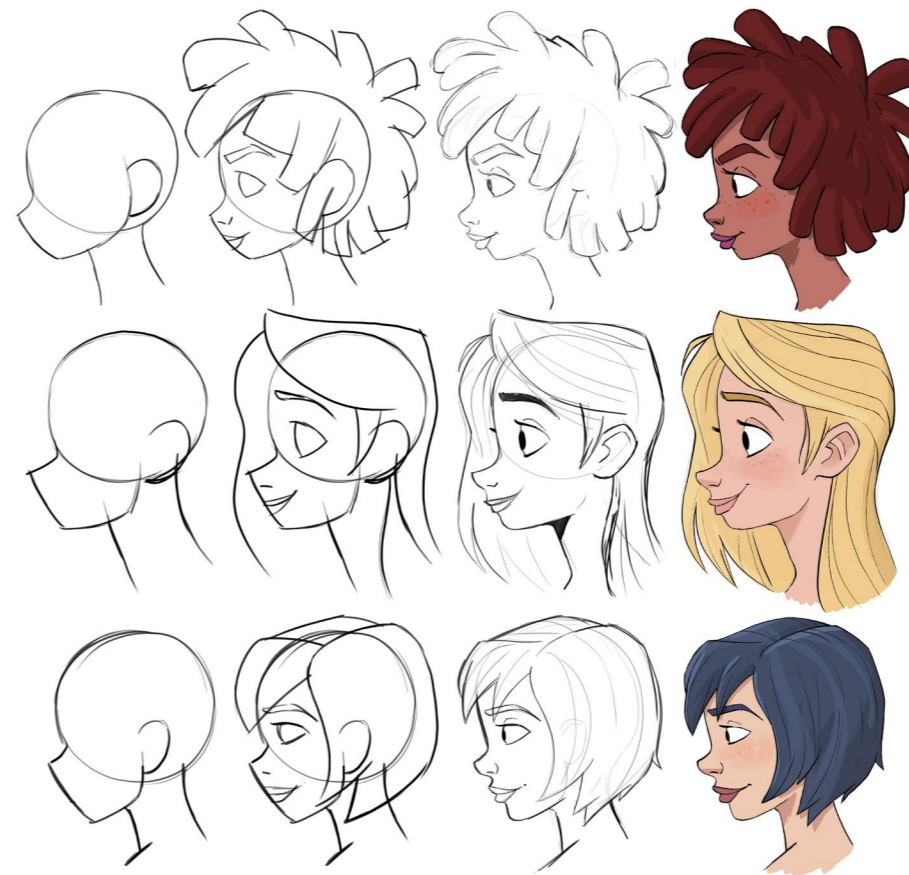
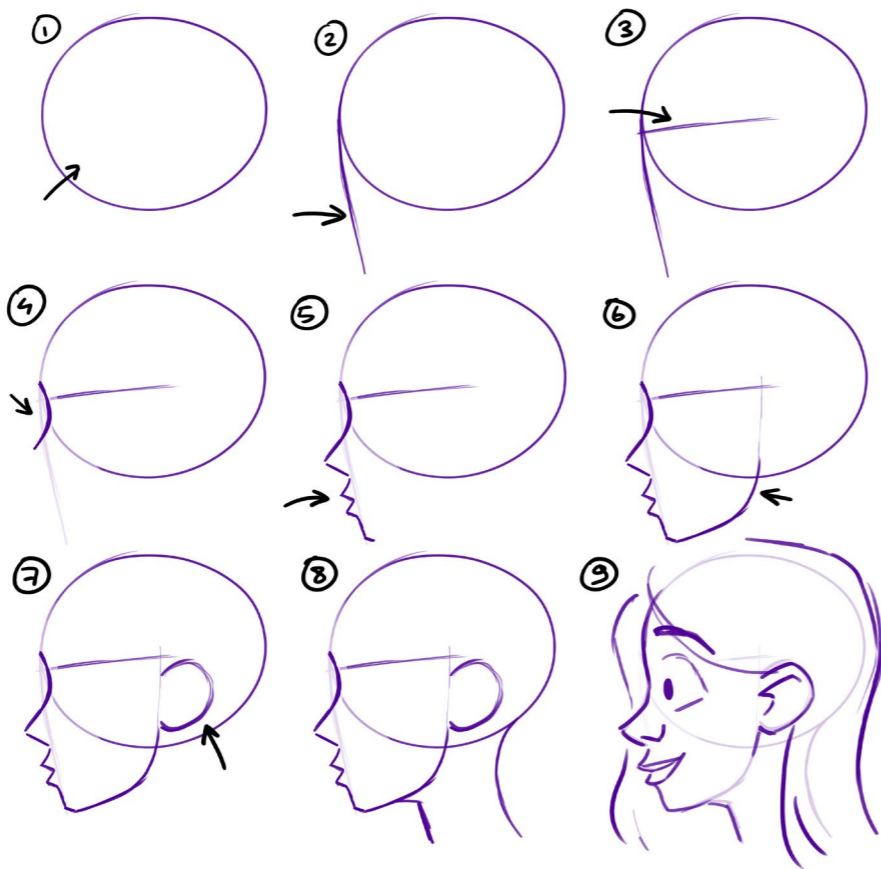
By following the same steps but change the proportions, you can create different designs. As you can see in this example, I followed the same steps as the previous tutorials, but the final design is different.



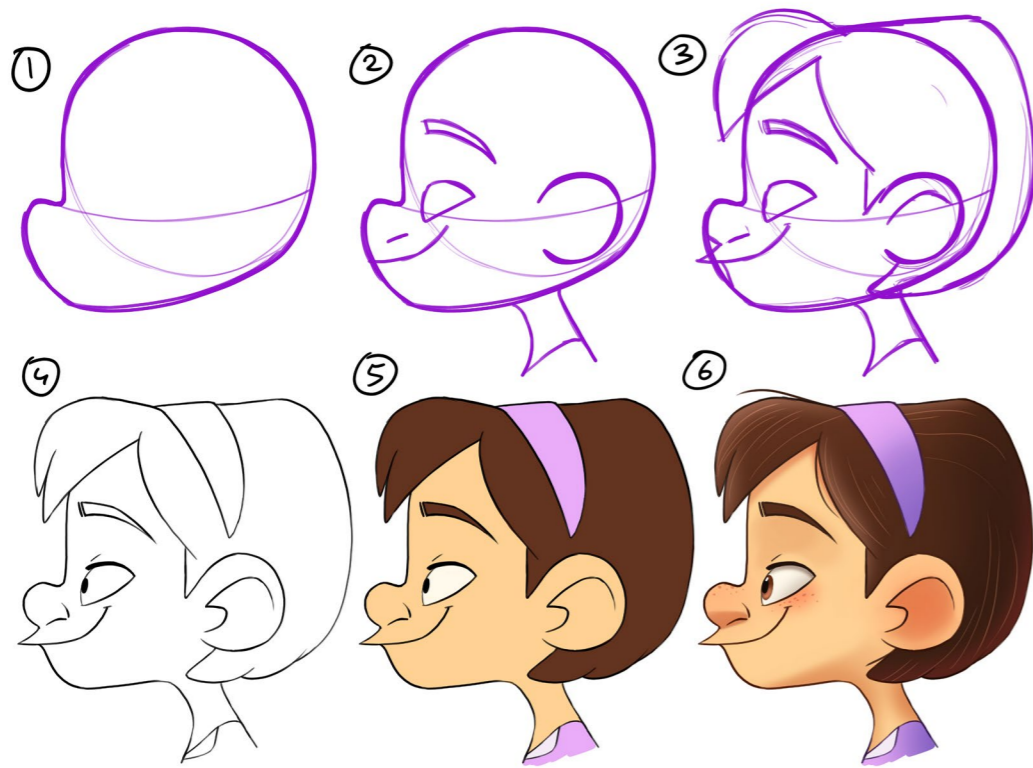
With this character, I pushed the shapes even more. It has the same basic shapes, but the contrast between them is way more extreme.

Now we've practiced drawing the front view of the head; let's turn the head a bit and draw the side profile. Look at the example to see how I approach this.

As go on to the following pages, you can see how I simplified these steps. Like with the front view, you can skip some steps when you get more experienced and memorize the steps. If you find it hard, you can always draw in the extra steps from this tutorial to make it more accessible.

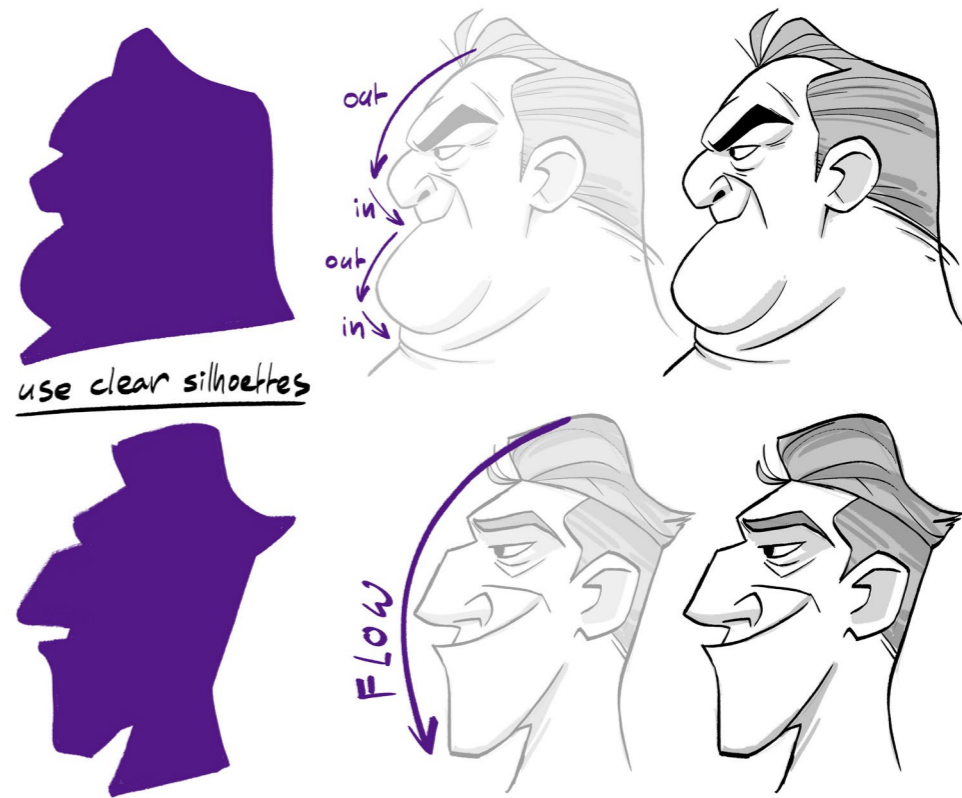


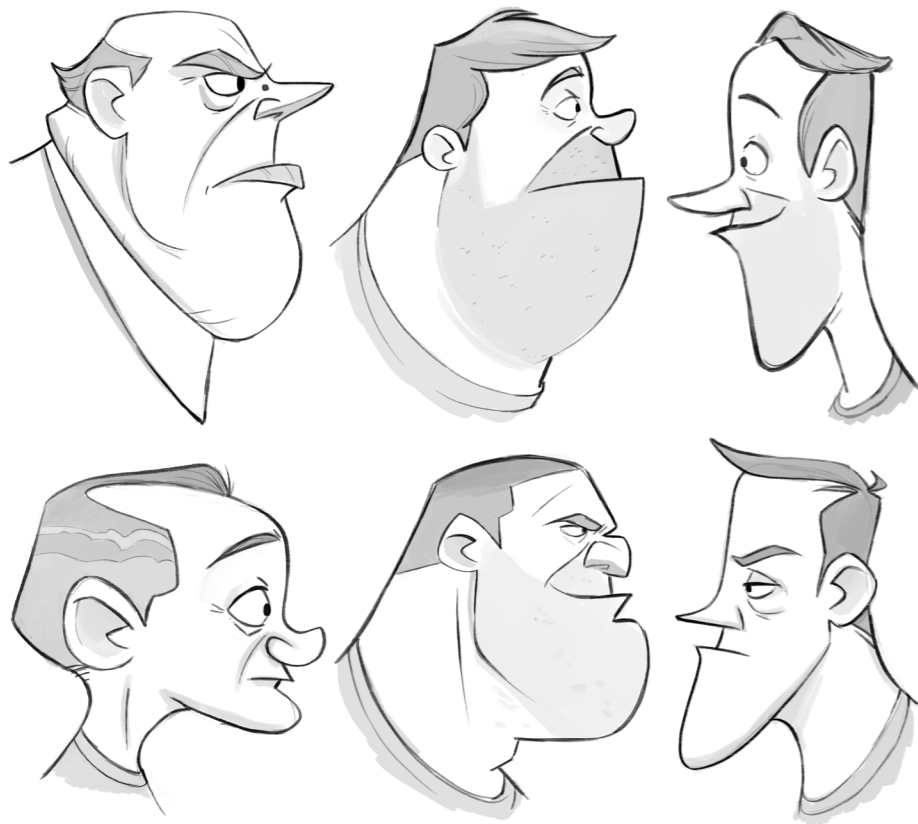
For these characters, I changed the proportions, but the steps to draw them are the same. Go practice drawing these heads. You can also make your own versions by changing the proportions. Don't be shy of using references. Look for a fashion magazine/website to get some inspiration for different heads and hairstyles.



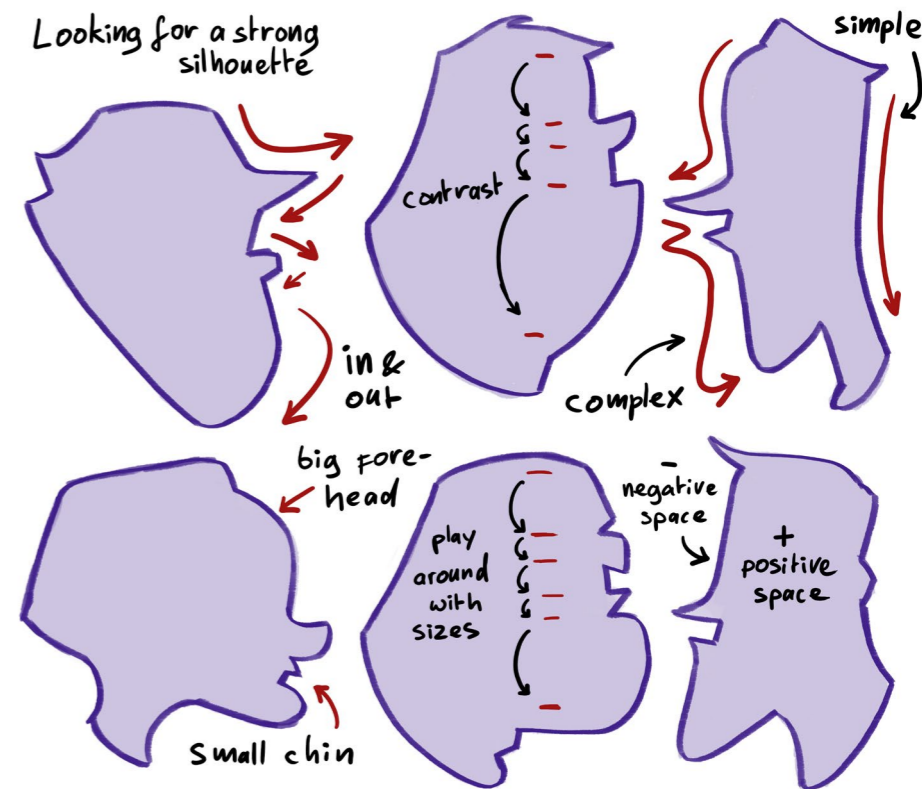
Here is a more cartoony version of a side profile. It's fun to play around with shapes and proportions. Go ahead and push the shapes even more to get more contrast!

Another way to come up with different side profiles is by drawing the shape first. Notice how clear the silhouette of the head is.

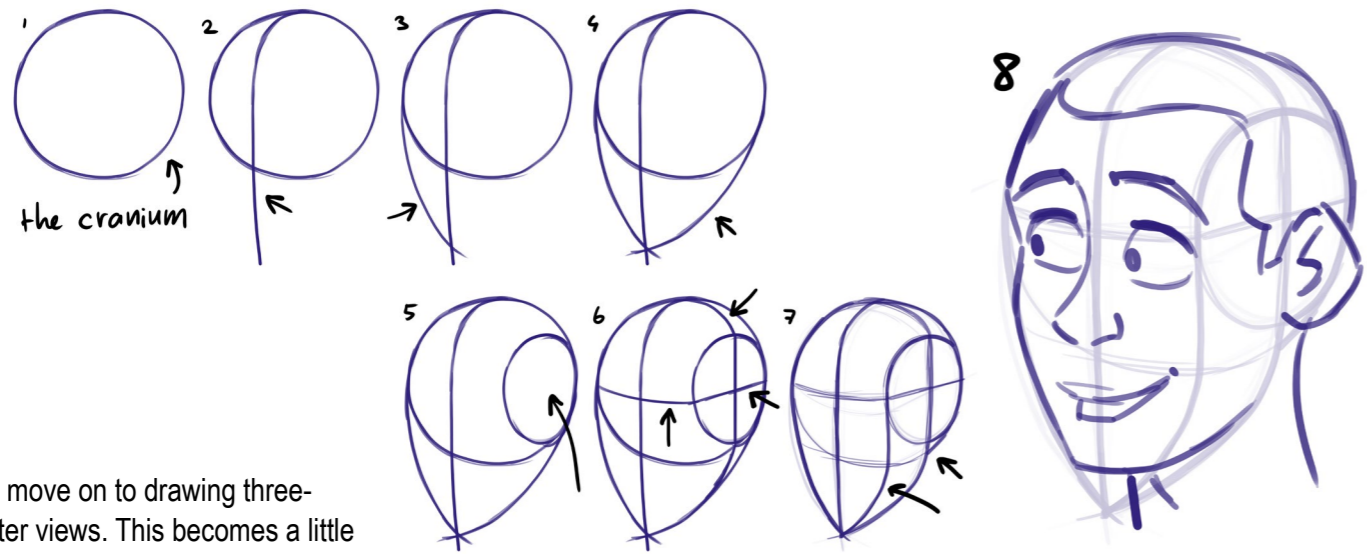




Some more designs of the side profile of the head. Here I played around with different shapes. Try to see if you can break them down to the construction, and after that, try to create some more variations.



Here are some notes on the silhouettes to show what I think about while drawing these heads. When you are learning to draw, it can also help to write your own notes as well. This will make you more continuous in your drawing process.

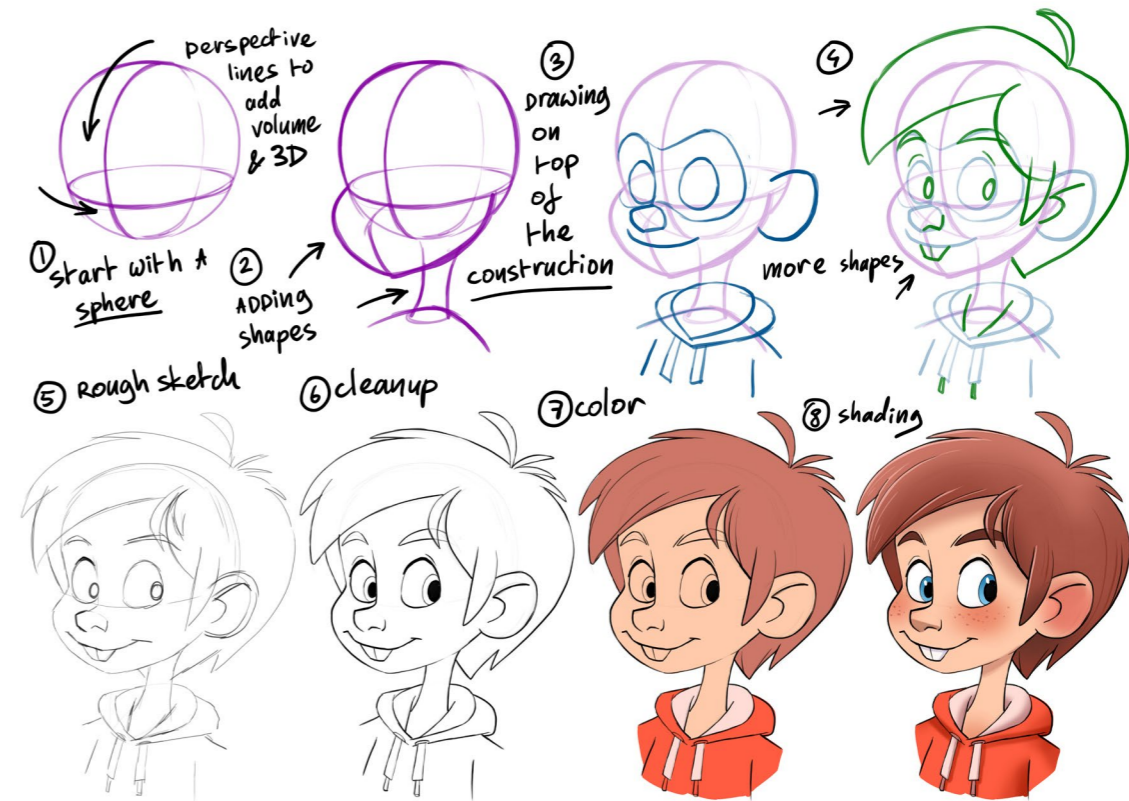


Let's move on to drawing three-quarter views. This becomes a little bit harder because you see both the front and the side of the head.

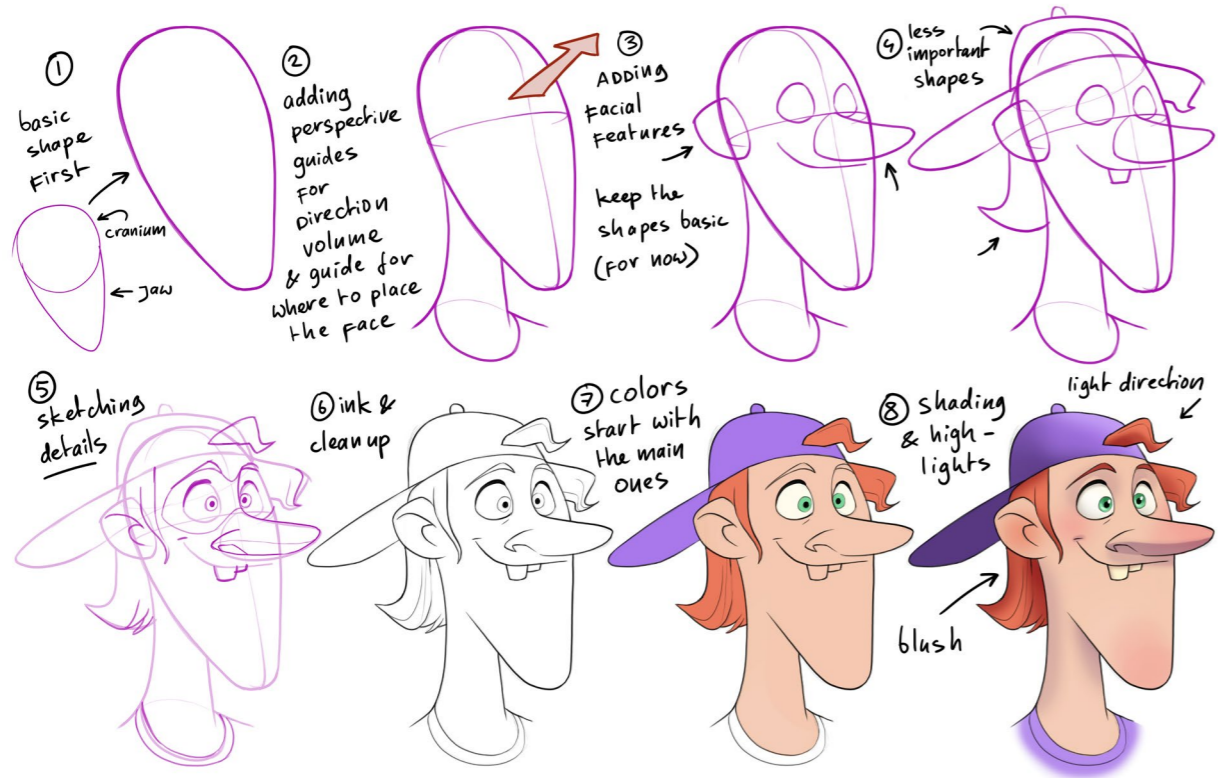
1. Whether it's a front view, a side profile, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  view; I always start by drawing a ball
2. On top of that ball, I draw a vertical line on  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the ball. This looks like  $\frac{1}{3}$  from this angle but actually is the middle

3. Adding the first line for the jaw of the face.
4. Adding the second line for the jaw
5. The sides of the head are flat, so in this step, I 'cut off' a piece of the sides of the ball
6. Adding some guides on the

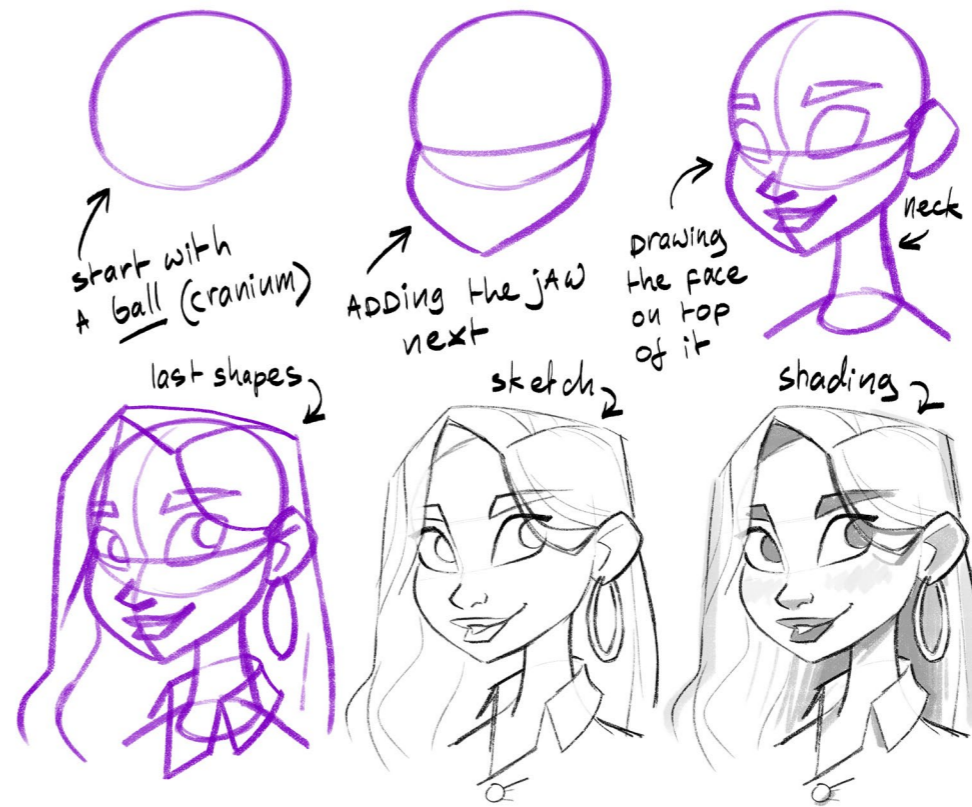
7. Shaping the head more with these additional lines
8. Finally, I use the guides to add the details.



Here you can see my approach with this more cartoony character. I basically follow the same steps but more simplified. The best way to learn this is by following these steps and practice it yourself.



In this example, I pushed the shapes more to create funny contrasts in the face. The chin and the nose are long, compared to his tiny cranium. Play around with the proportions to make fun distinctive characters.

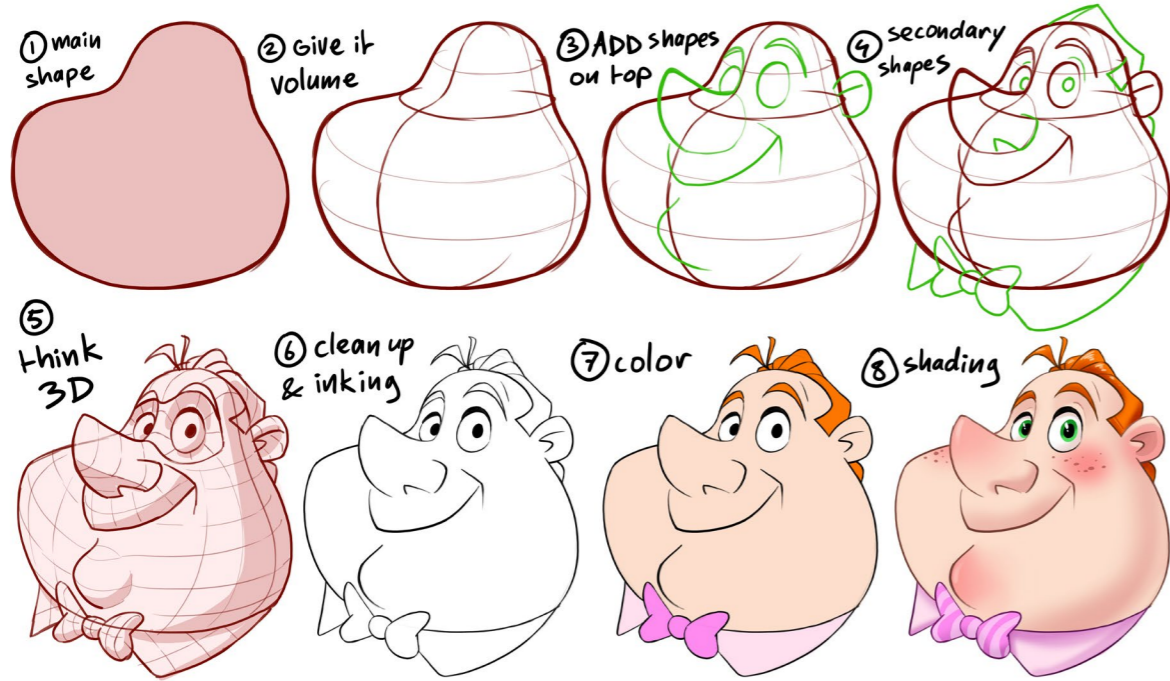


Here I simplified the steps, showing you don't necessarily need to draw every step each time you draw a head. Only draw them when you really need them or when you're unsure if you're doing it right.

## EXERCISE

The guides can also help you to turn the head around. Try this for yourself and draw this face from a different angle. For example a front view.

Here I started with a shape and added guides on top of it to create depth in the shape. You can copy this head for practice. After this, apply the same steps to different shapes to draw some fun characters.



Another example of drawing a character from a shape! After copying this drawing, you can use the same shape to draw a different character. There are endless variations possible.

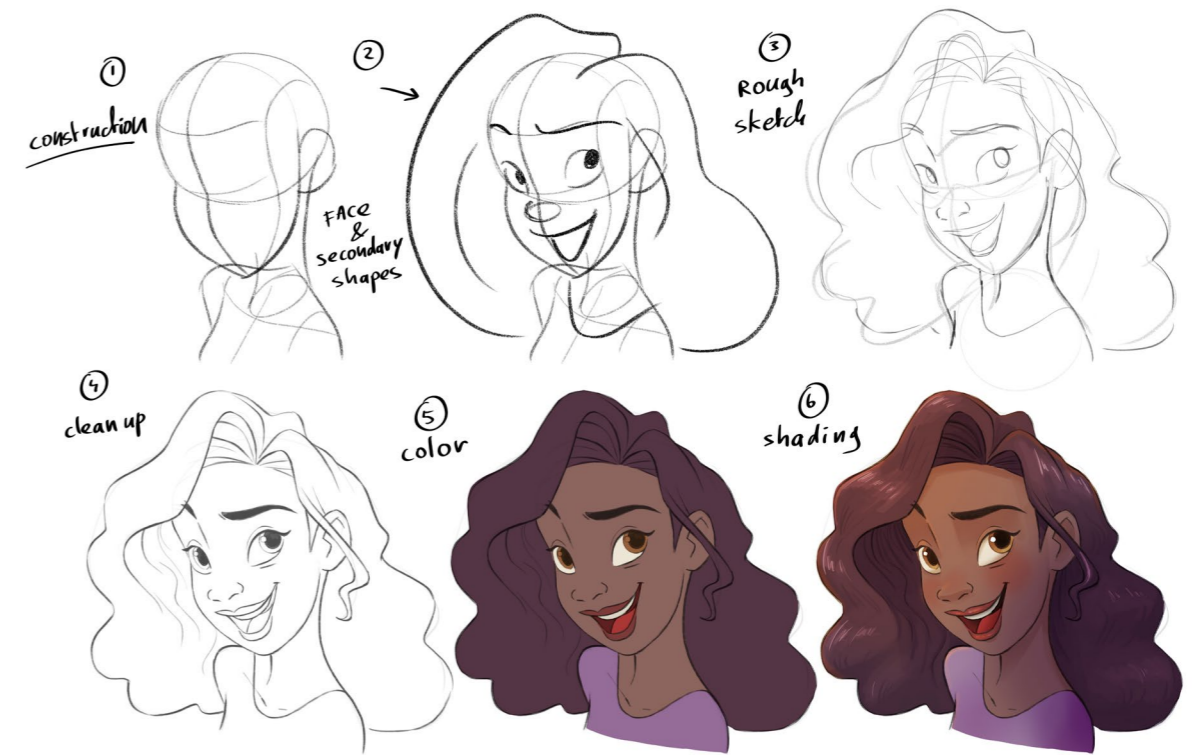




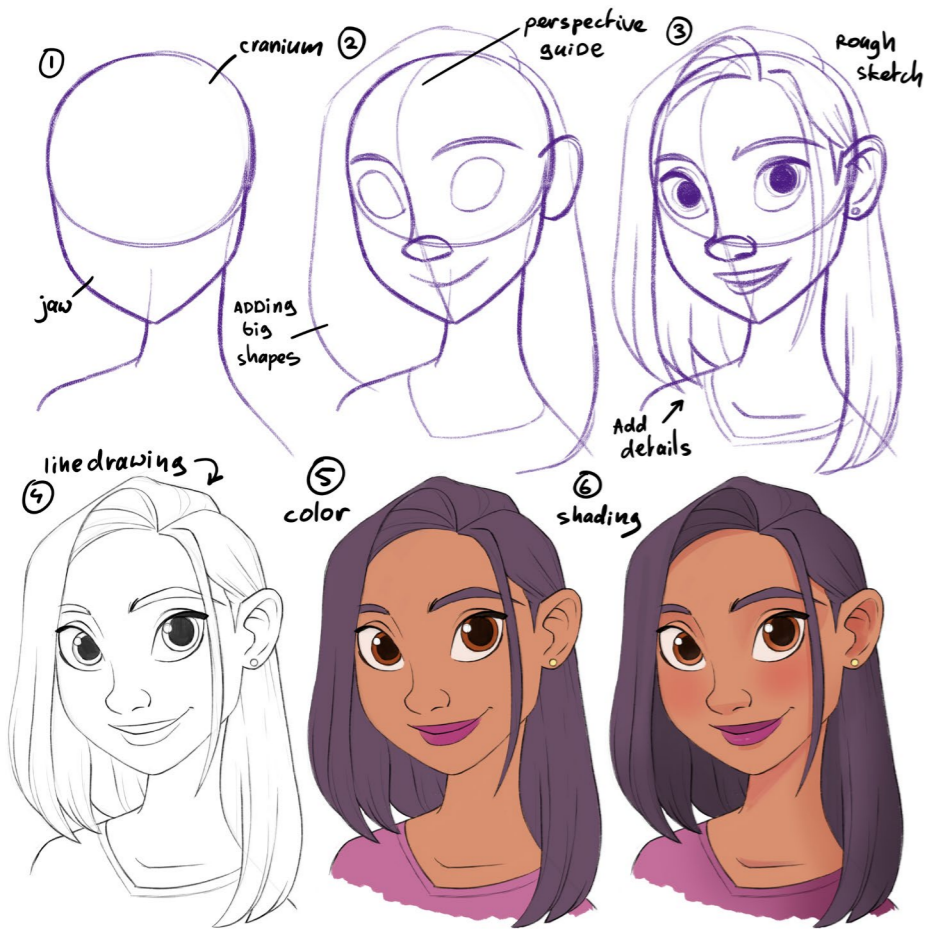
1. This is what I call the 'main construction'. I put down a solid base and draw the details of the head on top.
2. Here I add secondary, smaller shapes. Like, the base for the nose, ears, eyes, and other facial features. I try to maintain the 3D feeling of the construction.
3. Now, I start to draw more smaller shapes and details on top of it. Like the nostrils and pupils, don't

forget that these shapes need to follow the flow of the big shape.

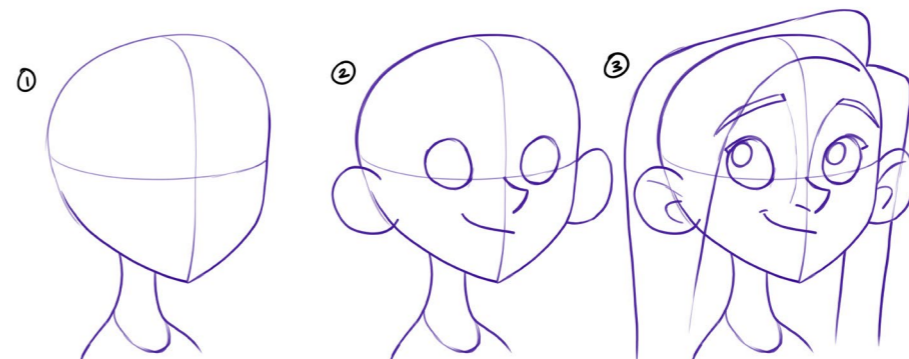
4. Time to clean up the drawing. I remove the construction lines. When I clean up the drawing, I make the most important lines the thickest.
5. Here, I'm adding the main colors
6. And finally adding the shadows, lights, and highlights. I also added some color details/nuances.



For this character, I followed the same steps as with the previous one. I only changed some of the angles of the head and pushed the expression some more to bring some more life to the character.



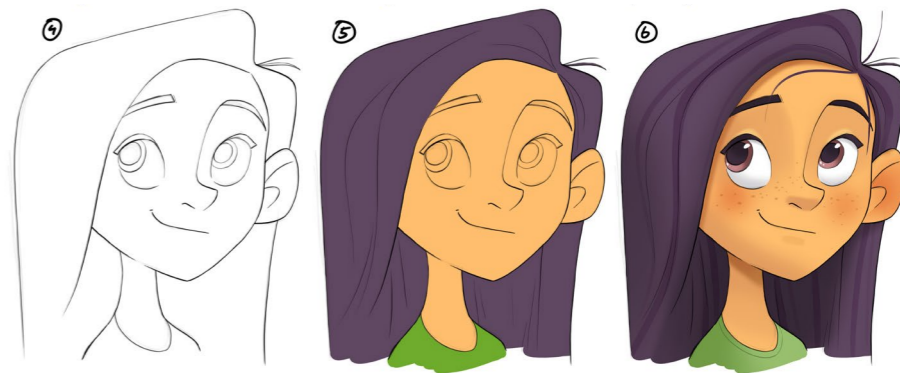
Another reason why I draw with these basic shapes is that it becomes easier to draw the head from different angles. If you're up for a real challenge, take this character and draw it in different angles. If you want to learn more about this, see the *Anatomy: How to Draw Heads* and the *How to Draw Expressions* ebook and videos.



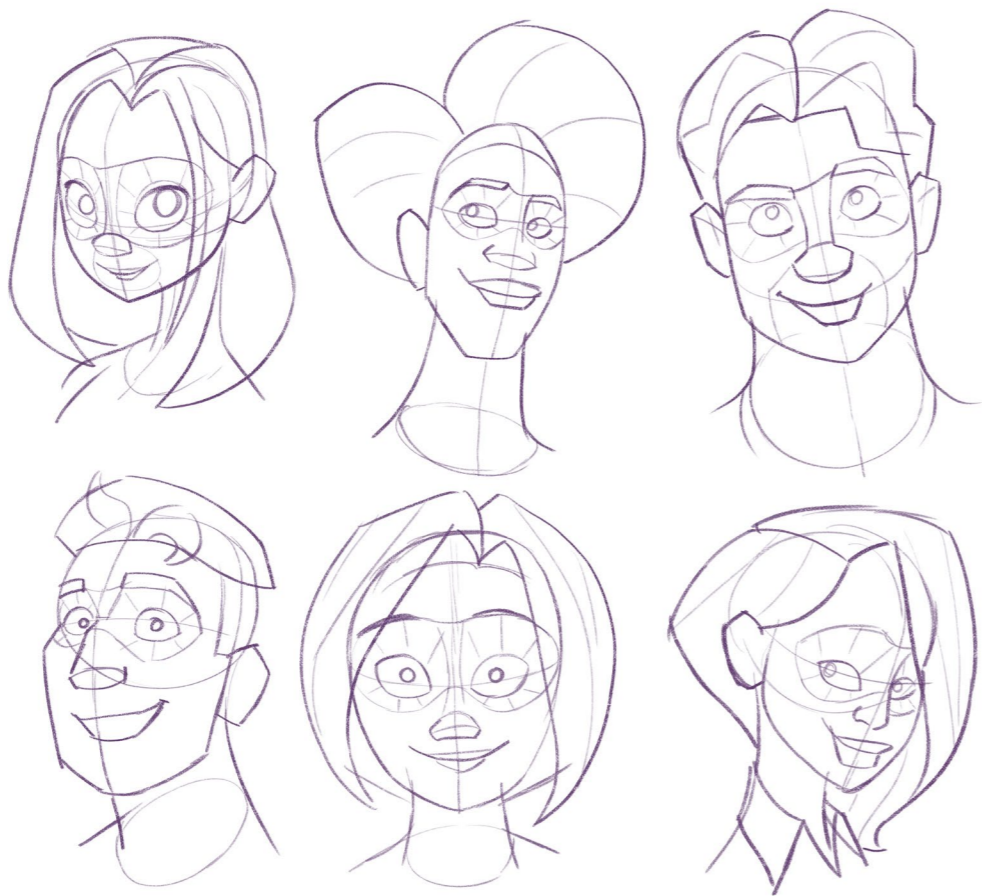
See step 1 for a super basic construction shape. When you want to draw this character in a different angle these guides can help you a lot! They help you to maintain the proportions but also to keep all the facial elements in place.

## EXERCISE

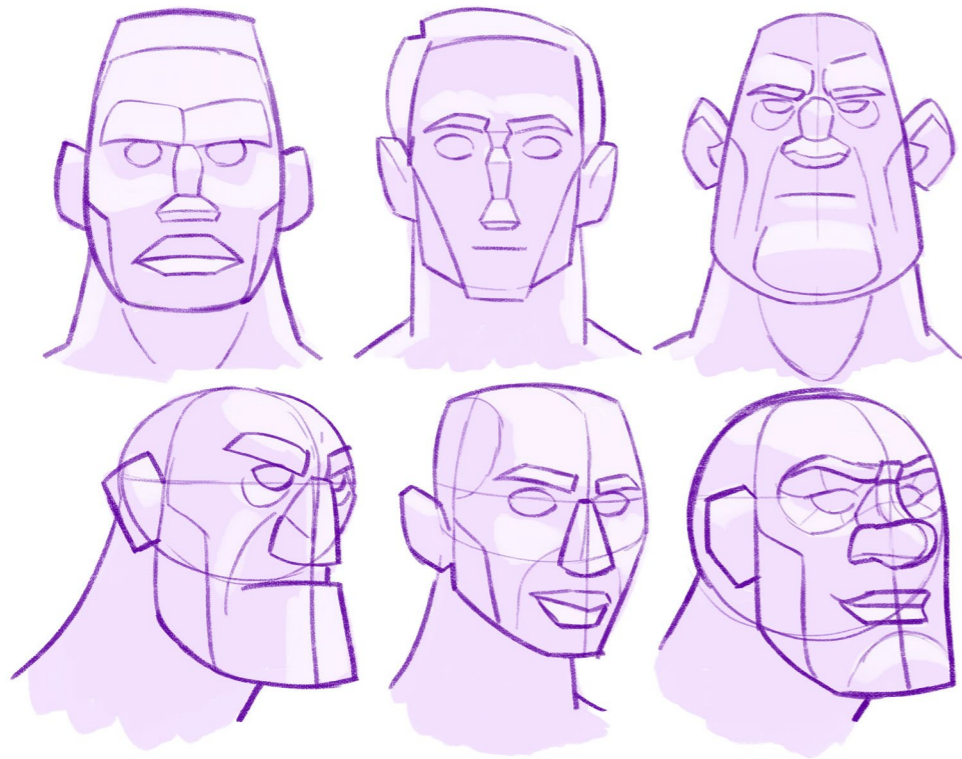
I would encourage you to take this drawing and try to make different versions of it. This could be as simple as changing the nose or the hair, or more difficult! Take small steps.



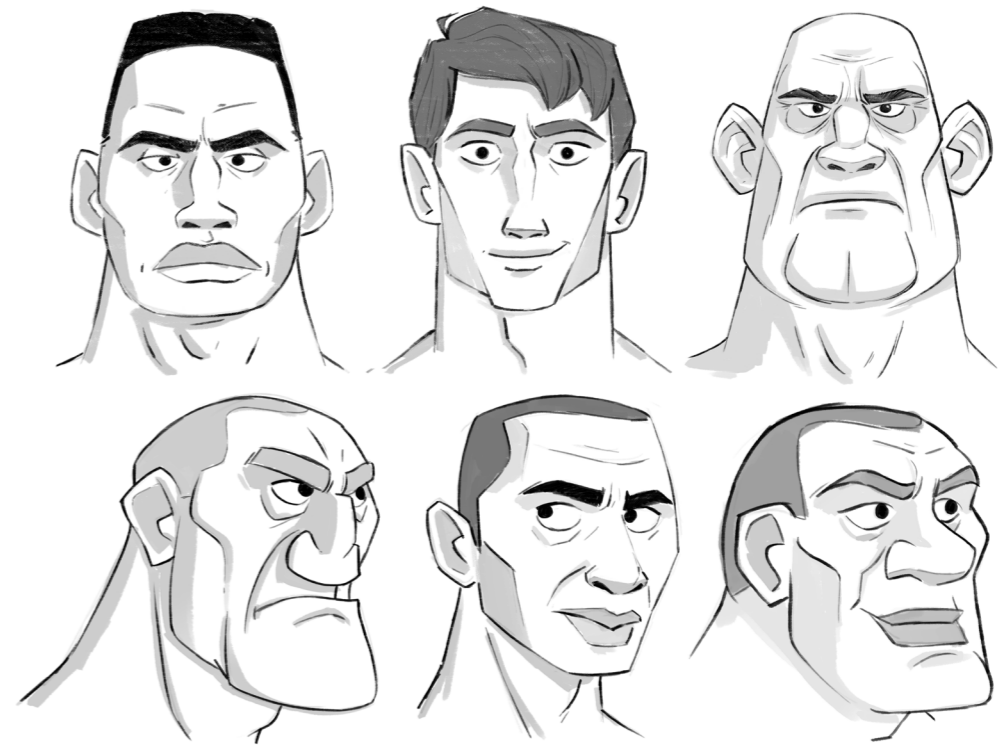
Some examples of head and face constructions. Look at the volume in these characters and how I created depth. Especially notice the mask around the eyes.



Final sketches. Often, I first make a rough sketch of the construction and draw on top of that. You can simply turn that sketch layer off when you draw digitally or erase it when you're working traditionally.



More construction! These are some bulky characters. Notice how angular the heads are. Also, see how I used sharp corners to make these characters look even more bulky/strong/muscular.



These are my final sketches for these constructions. Go ahead and try to draw your own versions of these characters. Maybe start with the front view to focus on the design first.



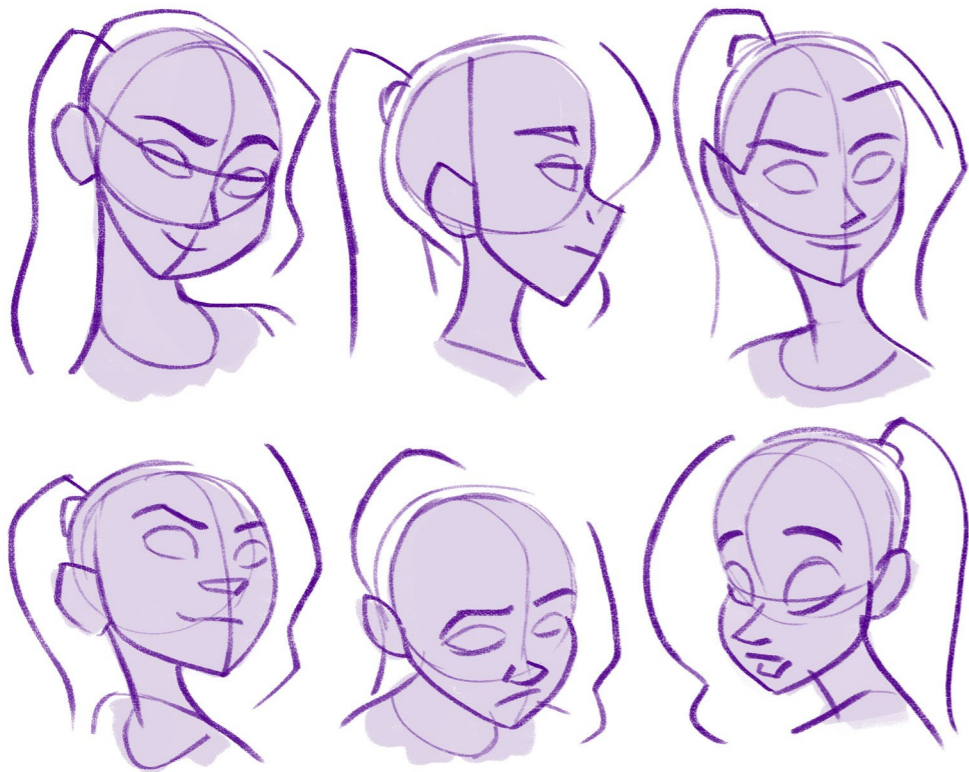
Some more angular head constructions. Notice the shapes I used. Depending on the style you want to achieve, you can really go extreme with these shapes.



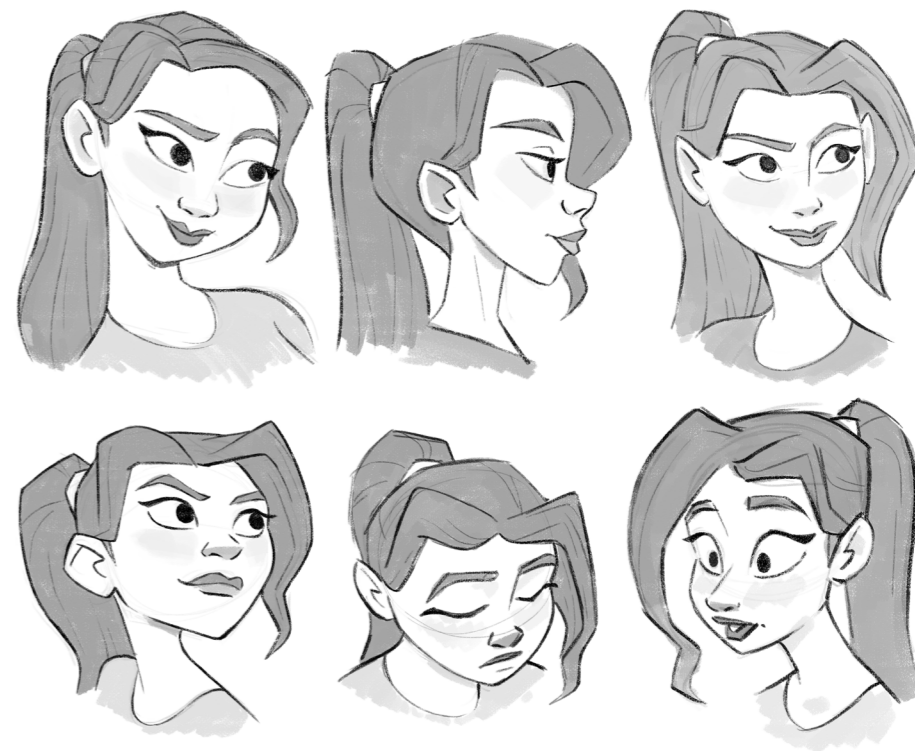
Sketches based on those previous construction shapes.

## EXERCISE

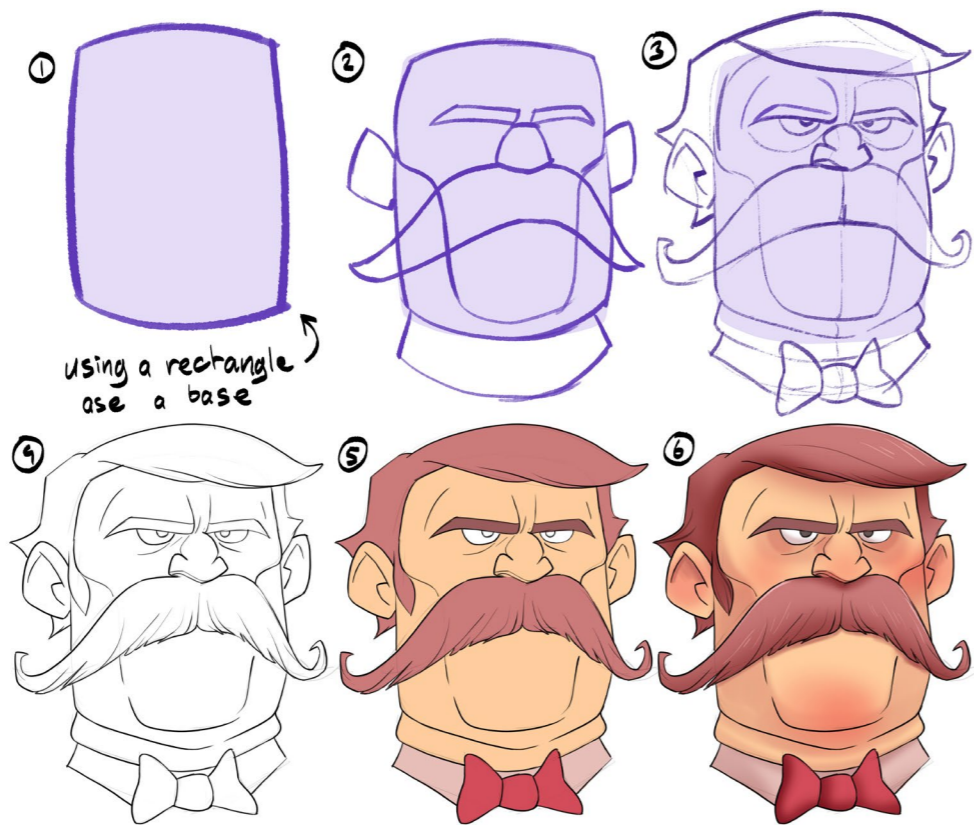
Go ahead and try to use these head constructions to draw your own characters.



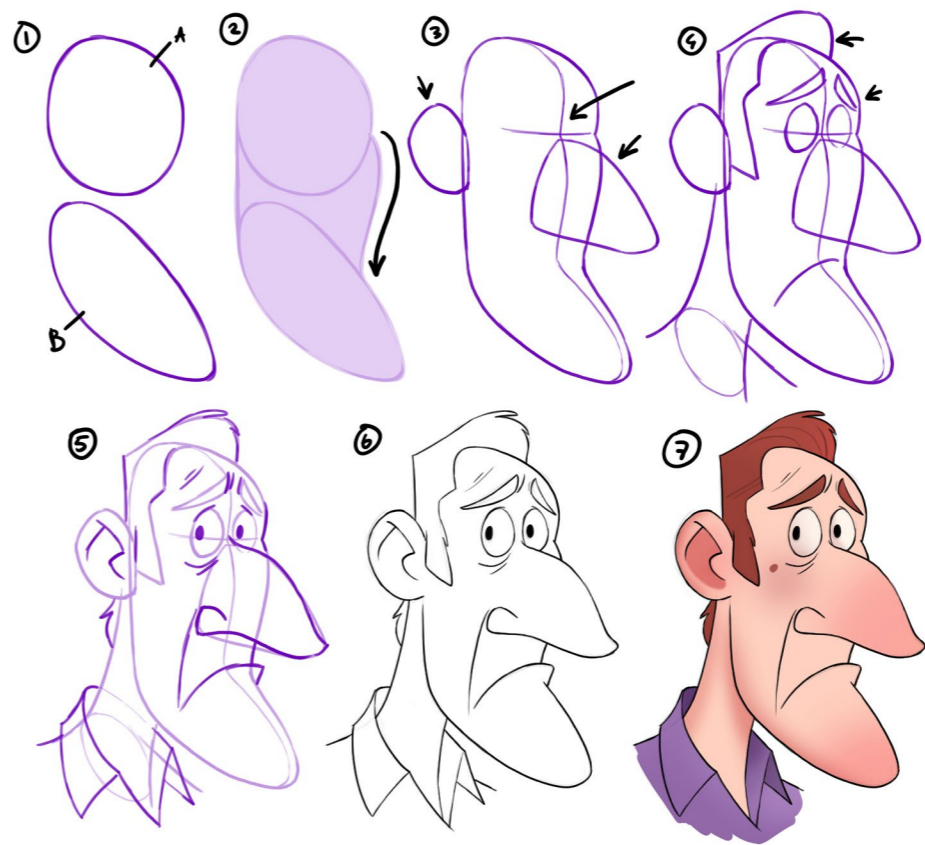
Earlier I already talked a bit about why I use construction to draw heads from different angles. In this example, I show some different angles of the same character's head. See how the same head construction looks different from different angles.



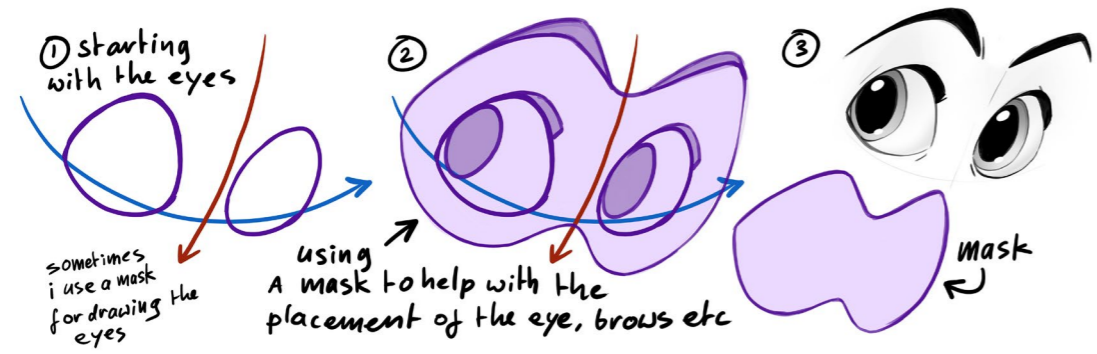
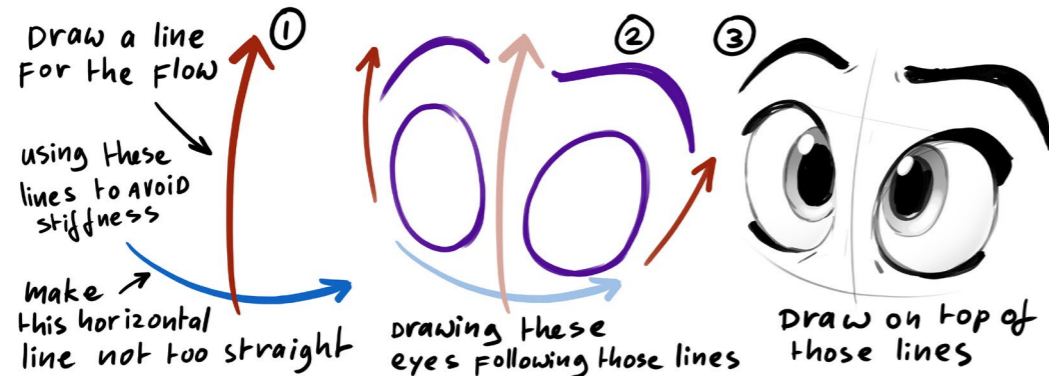
These are my final sketches from the previous construction drawings. For this kind of 'model sheet', I'm always looking for a nice balance between keeping the style and character consistent and making each drawing different enough that you clearly can see it has a different expression. You can use such a model sheet for your portfolio or when you draw a character for a client.



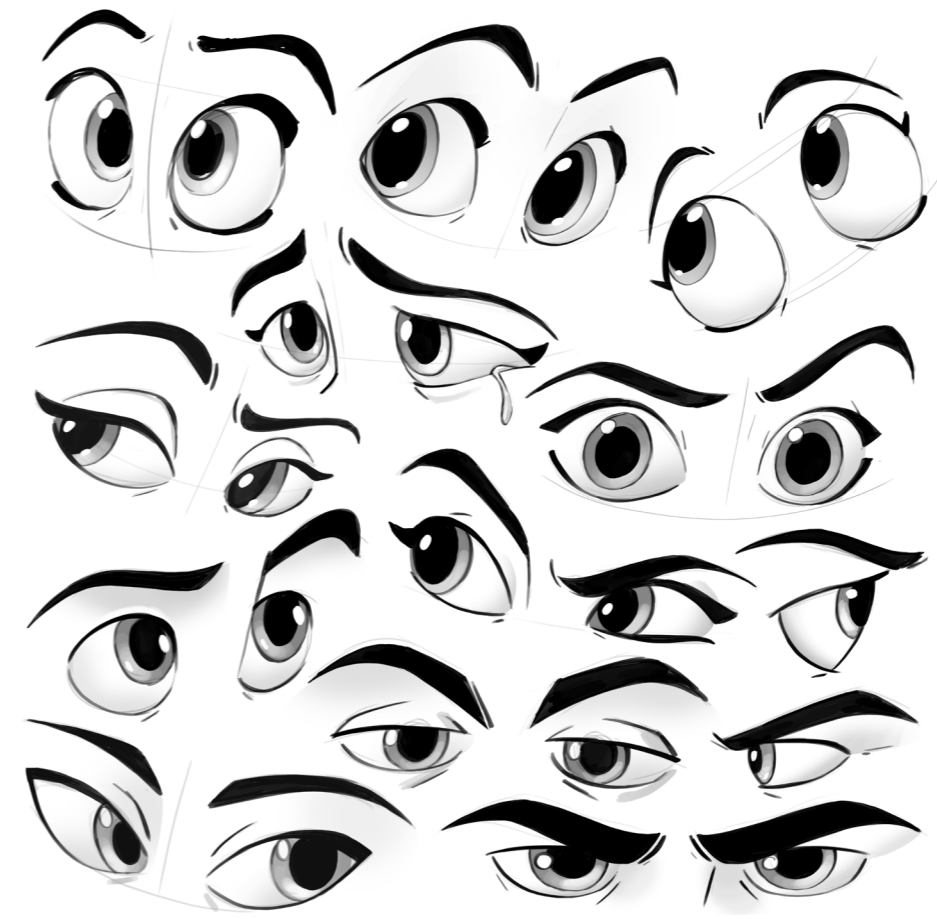
In this example, I started with a rectangular shape. I thought a square would be perfect with this stern character. Try to find shapes that fit with the character's personality.



Here I used a more complex shape to draw this character. I started with some spheres and combined them to create the shape for the head. In step 3, you can see how I gave depth to these flat shapes to turn them into a 3D shape.



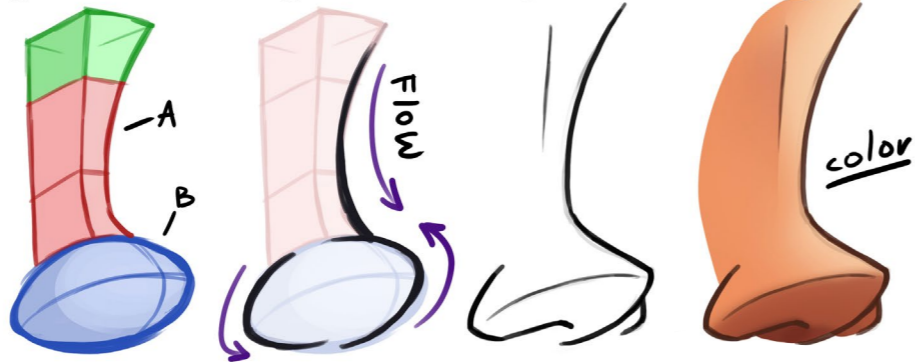
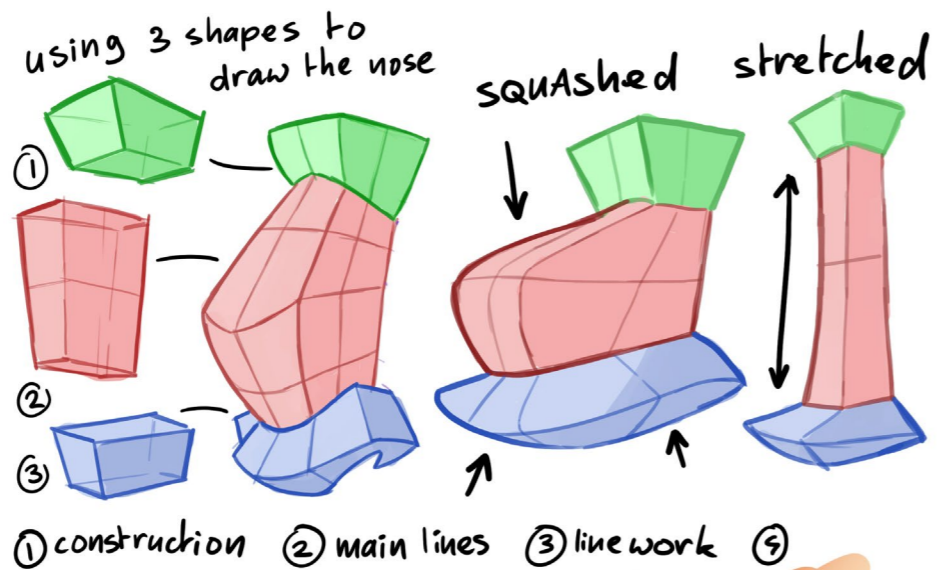
Masks can be handy to draw eyes. See how I used it to draw these eyes. Masks mainly help with the placement of the eyes. See the notes on the image for some tips.



## EXERCISE

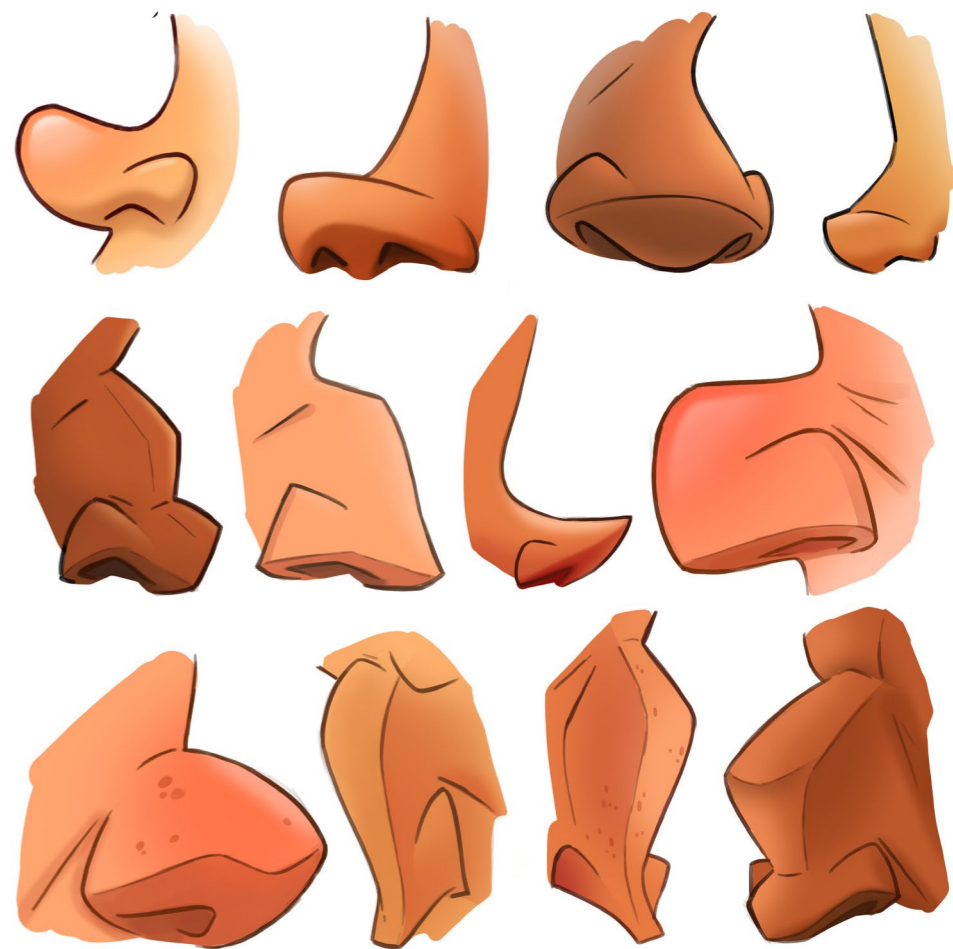
An idea to practice is to take a page and fill it with eyes. I tried to come up with many different expressions. You can try to draw these eyes by using the mask trick I explained in the previous image. Also, go ahead and fill a page with eyes.

Let's draw some noses! The nose becomes a lot easier to draw when you start with basic shapes. I like to divide the nose into three parts. As you can see in the example, you can vary with the shapes' length, width, and proportion to get different results.

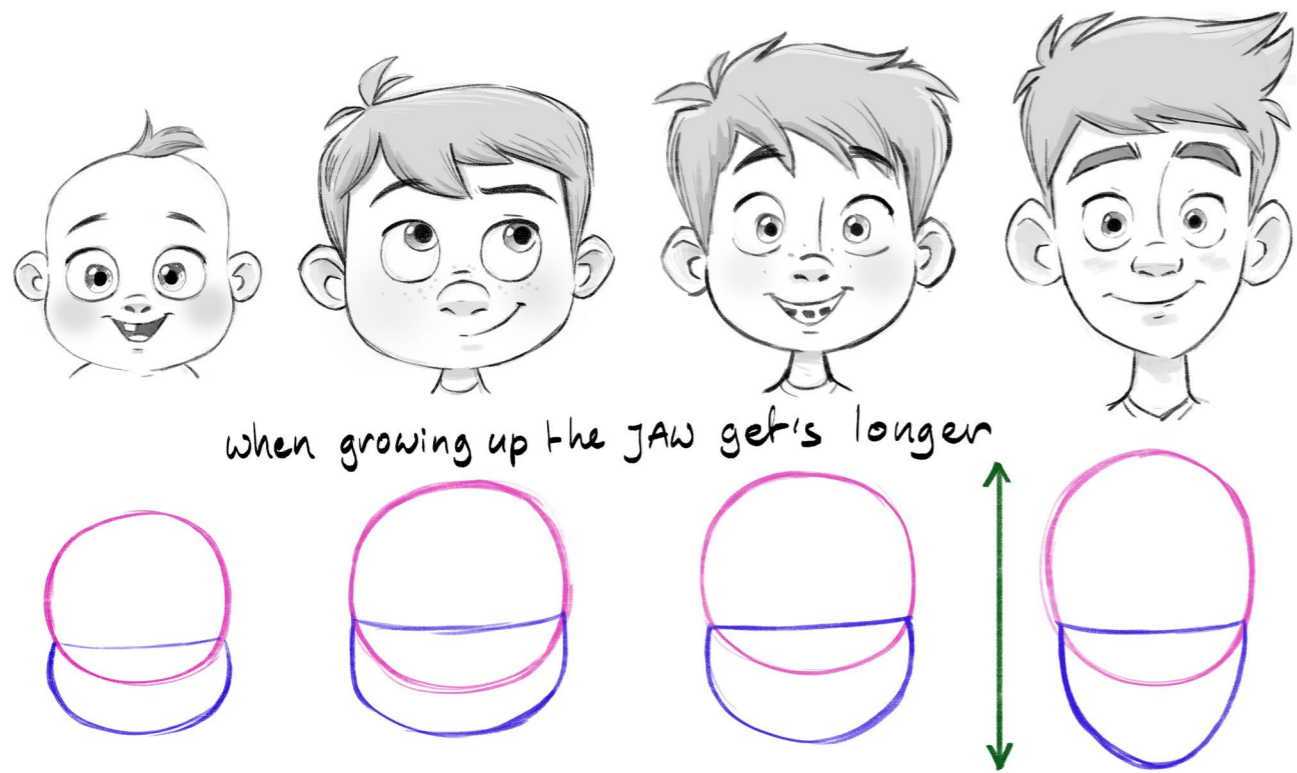


## EXERCISE

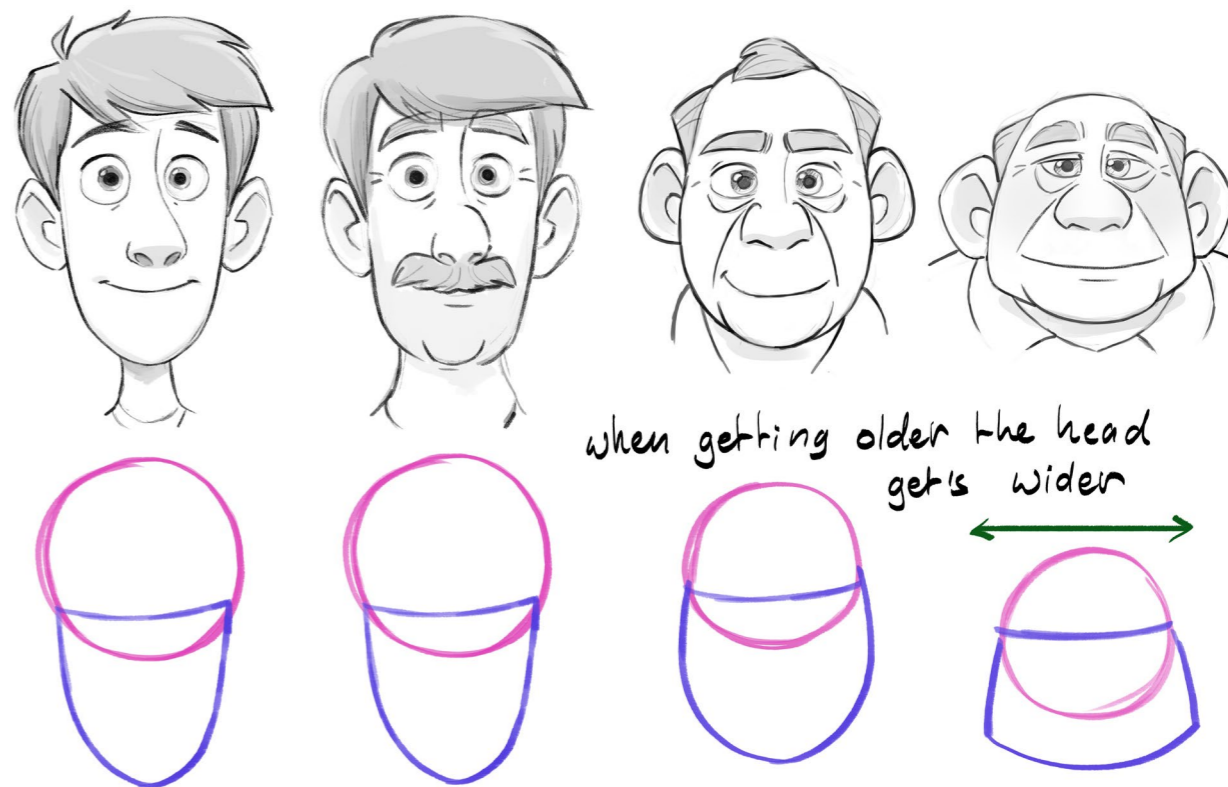
Examples of different noses. As I did with the previous image, you can take these noses and break them apart into three shapes. After you practiced that, go ahead and try to draw more noses for yourself.

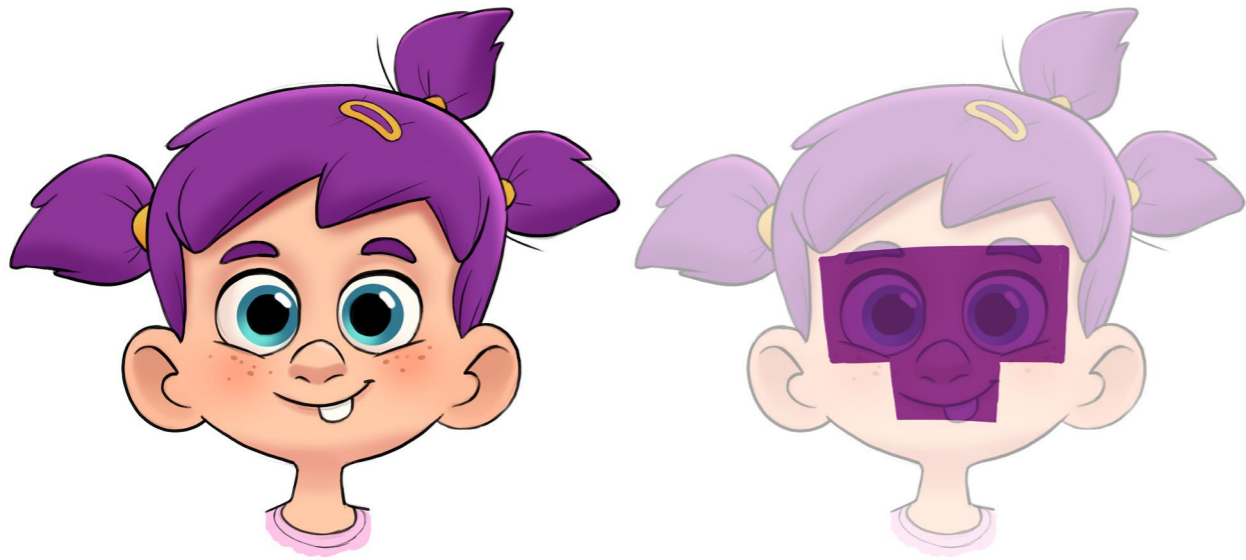


Let's draw aging characters. On these pages, I show how I draw aging characters. The main difference is that the jaw is getting longer/stretched. Also, with babies and younger kids, the overall shapes are more rounded. And when kids become older, the shapes become more angular, with sharper corners.

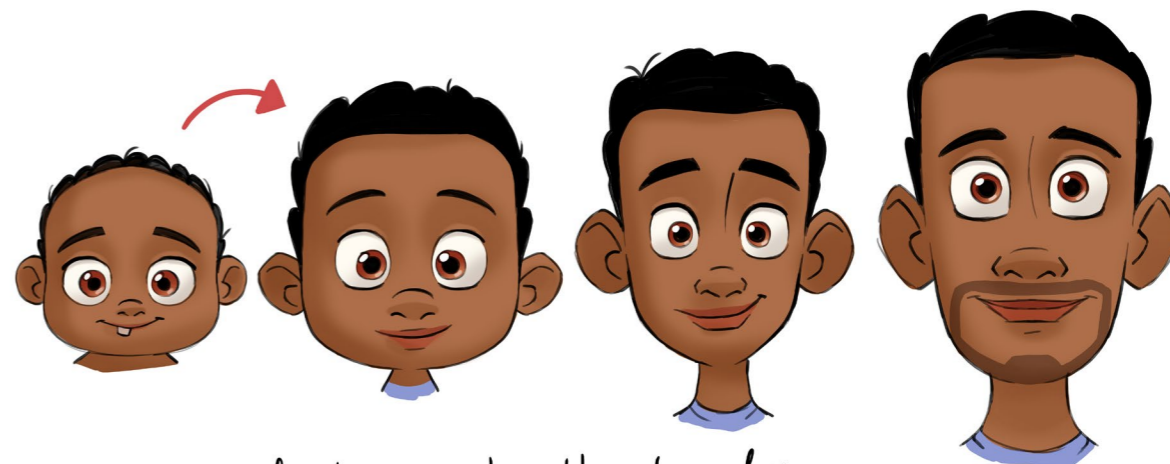
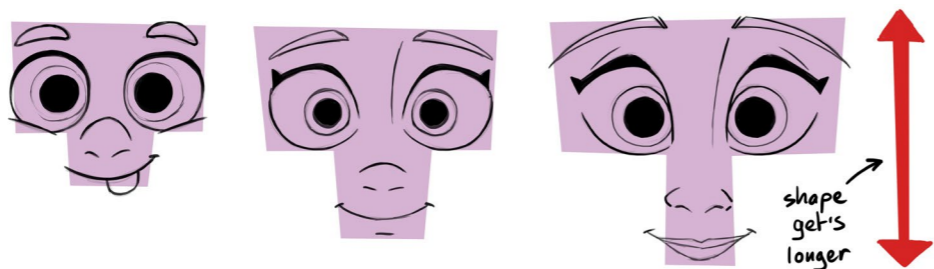


When we get older, it becomes easier to gain weight. When we get really old, our skin becomes looser because our skin gets pulled down by gravity. It almost looks like senior people get smaller.

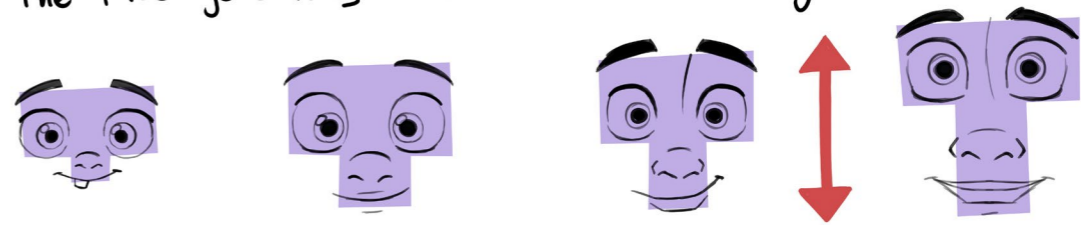




Here I'm showing how the face gets longer when we're getting older. See how the distance between the eyes and nose becomes bigger when the character gets older. Here I used this T shape to show this. The T shape is also handy to draw the eyes, nose, and mouth together.



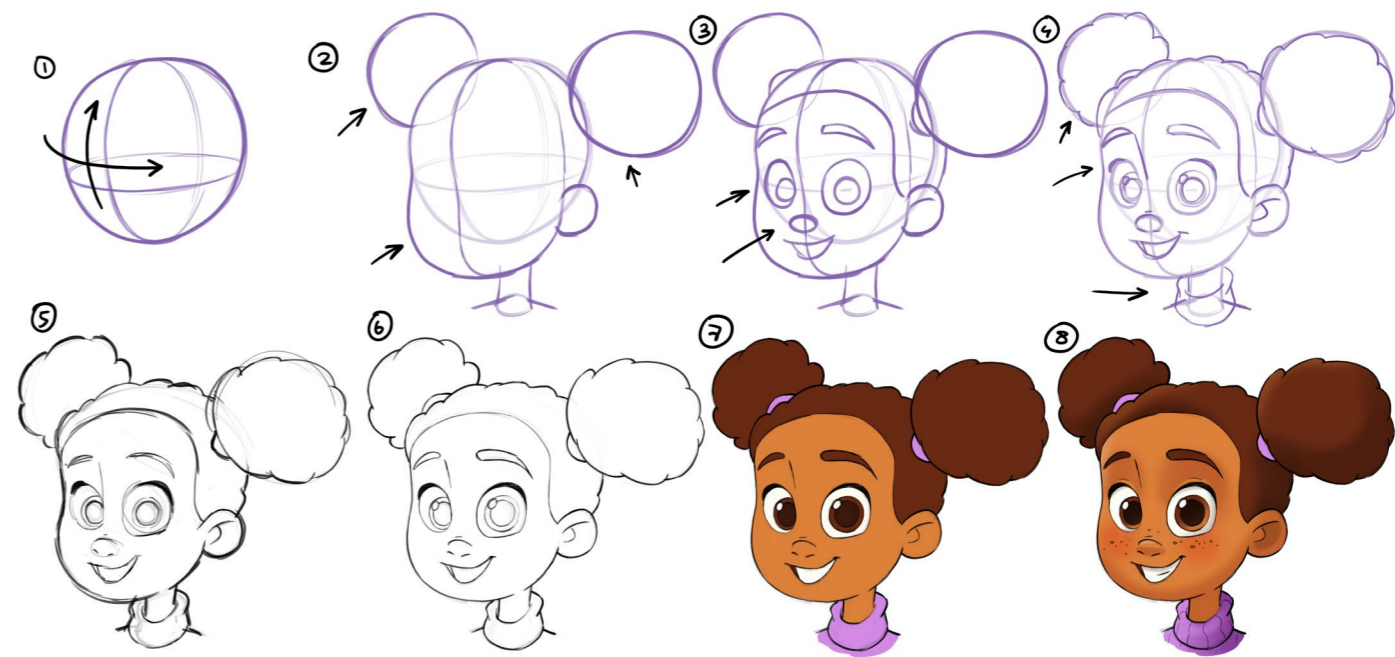
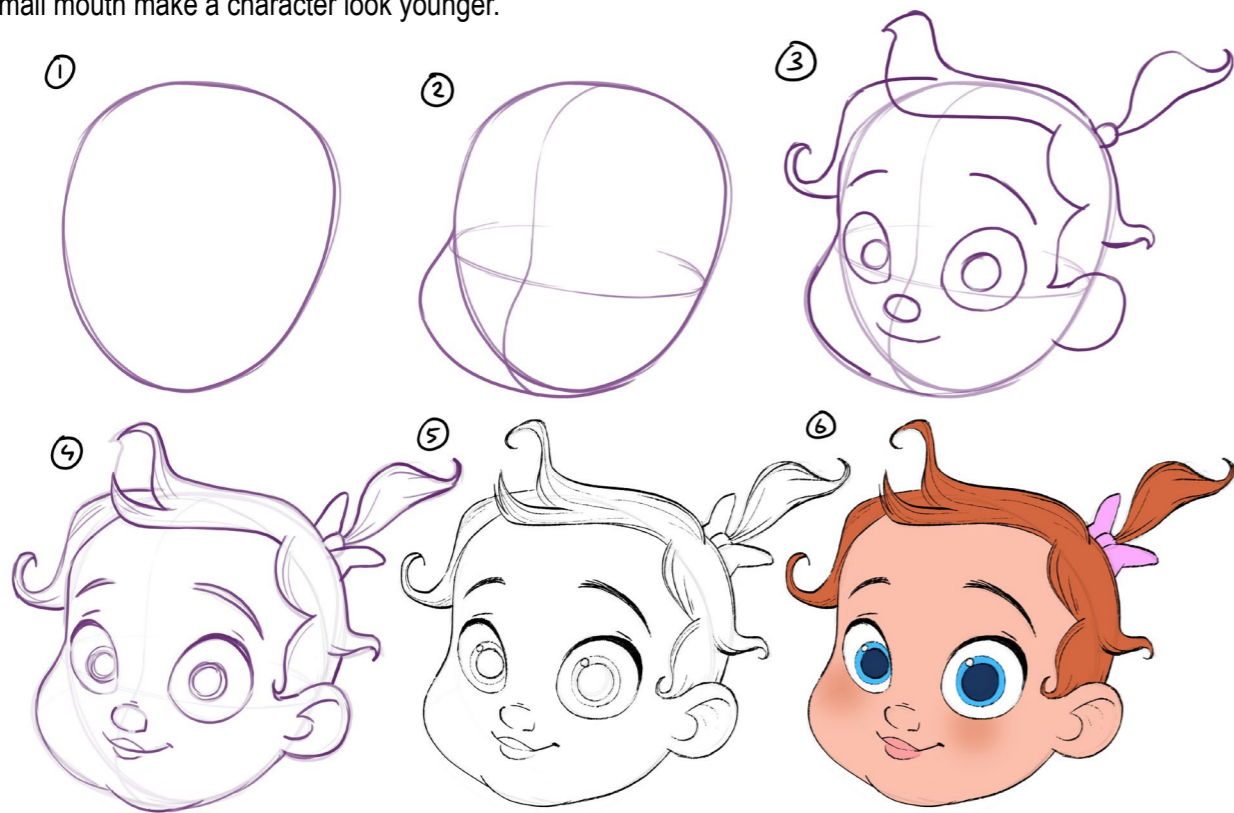
The face gets longer when the character ages



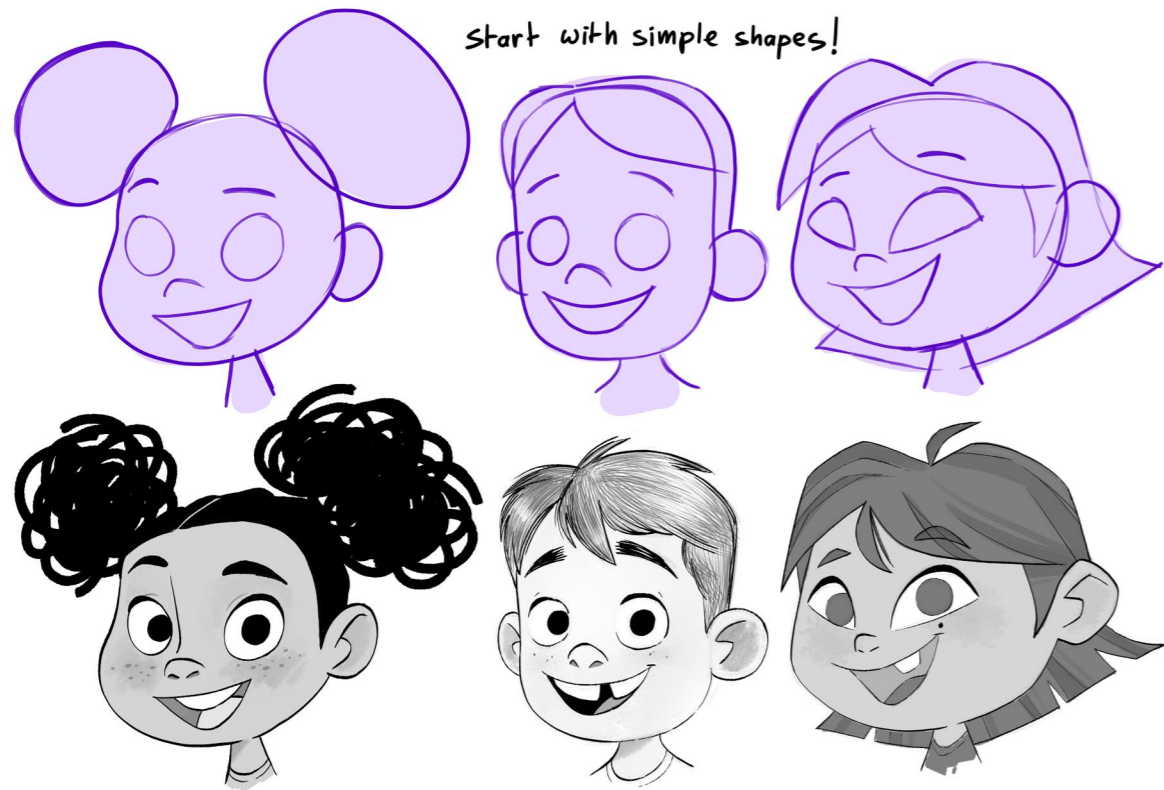
## EXERCISE

Go ahead and try to draw your own character in different ages. On the following pages, I'll go more in-depth on a couple of age groups.

See how many rounded shapes this young kid's head and face contain. Round shapes are often linked to youth. Also, big eyes, a small nose, and a small mouth make a character look younger.



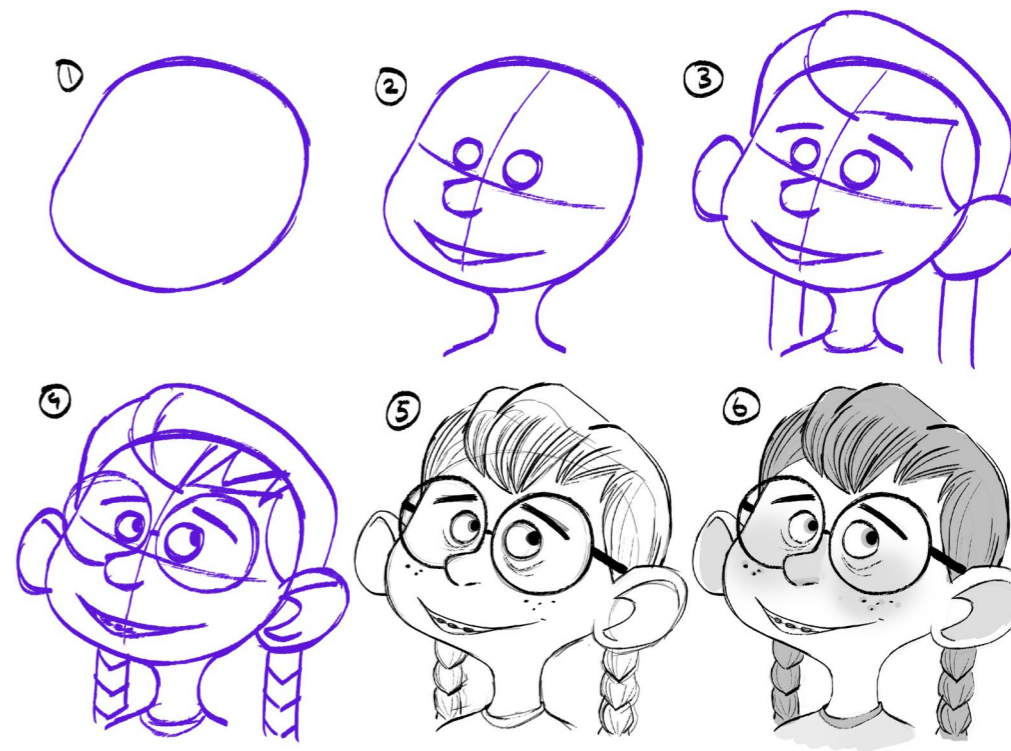
A preschool kid. See how some of the shapes are still very round. Big eyes and the nose and mouth are also relatively small. Young kids are often very energetic; I'm always trying to show the characteristics of the character.



I drew some more kids for you to experiment with constructions and simple shapes. See how I tried to keep the main shapes of the head as simple as possible. Try this for yourself!

A nice trick to make a portrait more interesting is to tilt the head a little bit. I also focused on contrast here. Look at the contrast between big and small shapes. For example,

the glasses versus the eyes and nose. This makes a character more interesting to look at.



Let's draw some older people. I really enjoy drawing older people because you can really push the shapes of their heads.

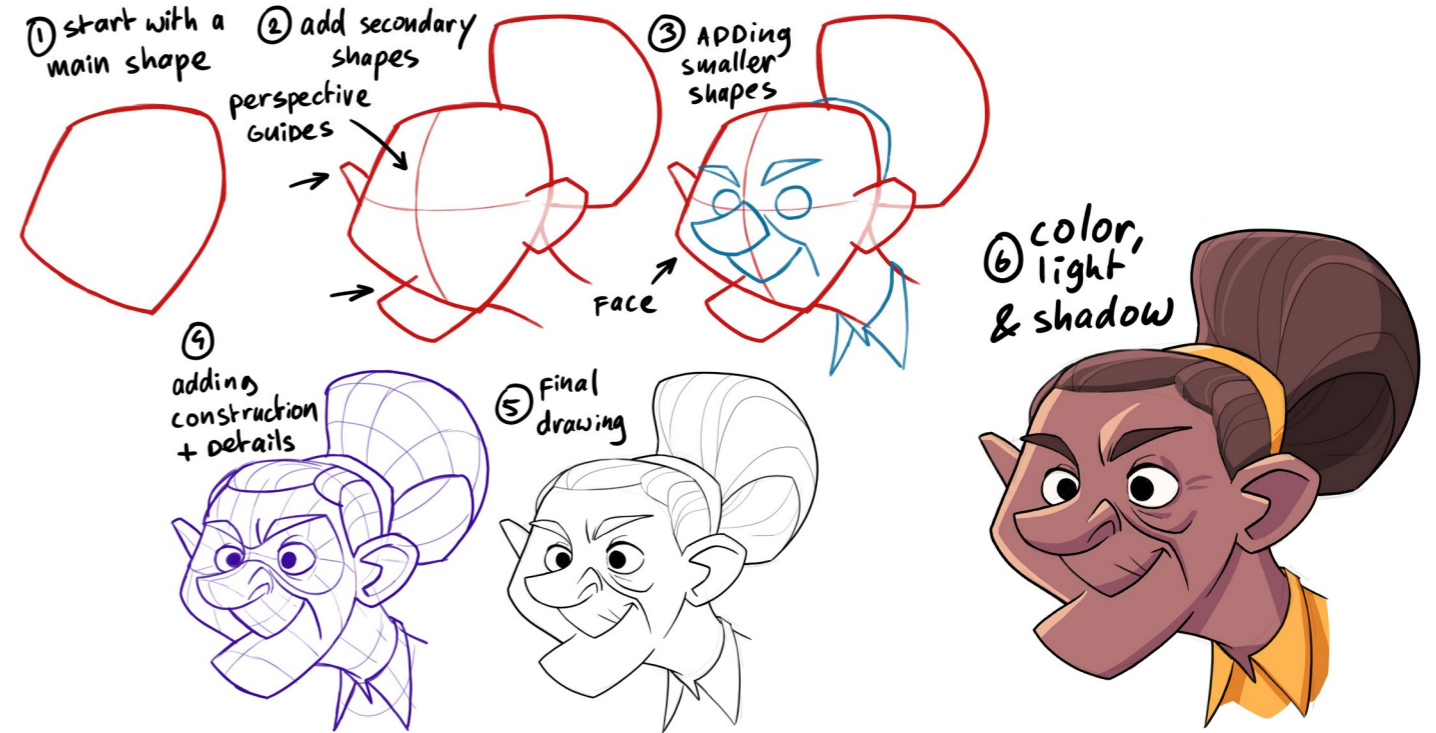


Do you see how diverse the main shapes (the purple line) of these characters are? They're entirely different shapes. When drawing multiple characters, try to come up with a variety of main shapes to give each character their own personality.



When you're drawing elderly, pay extra attention to wrinkles. Especially around the eyes and mouth, which are typical places for wrinkles because the skin on these places is thinner than the rest of the face. When someone is really old, the skin on the cheeks will start to hang too, because the skin becomes thinner on these places too.

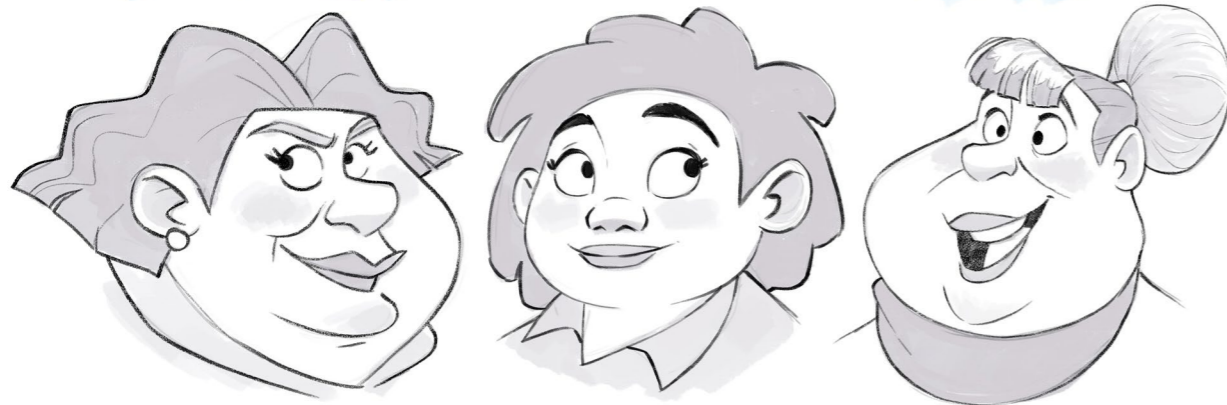
These three characters have basically the same design, but by tweaking the shapes, you can get variation. This would be good to suggest some different options for a possible client.



Here is a step by step drawing of this granny. Did you know that the nose and ears are some of the few body parts that keep growing your entire

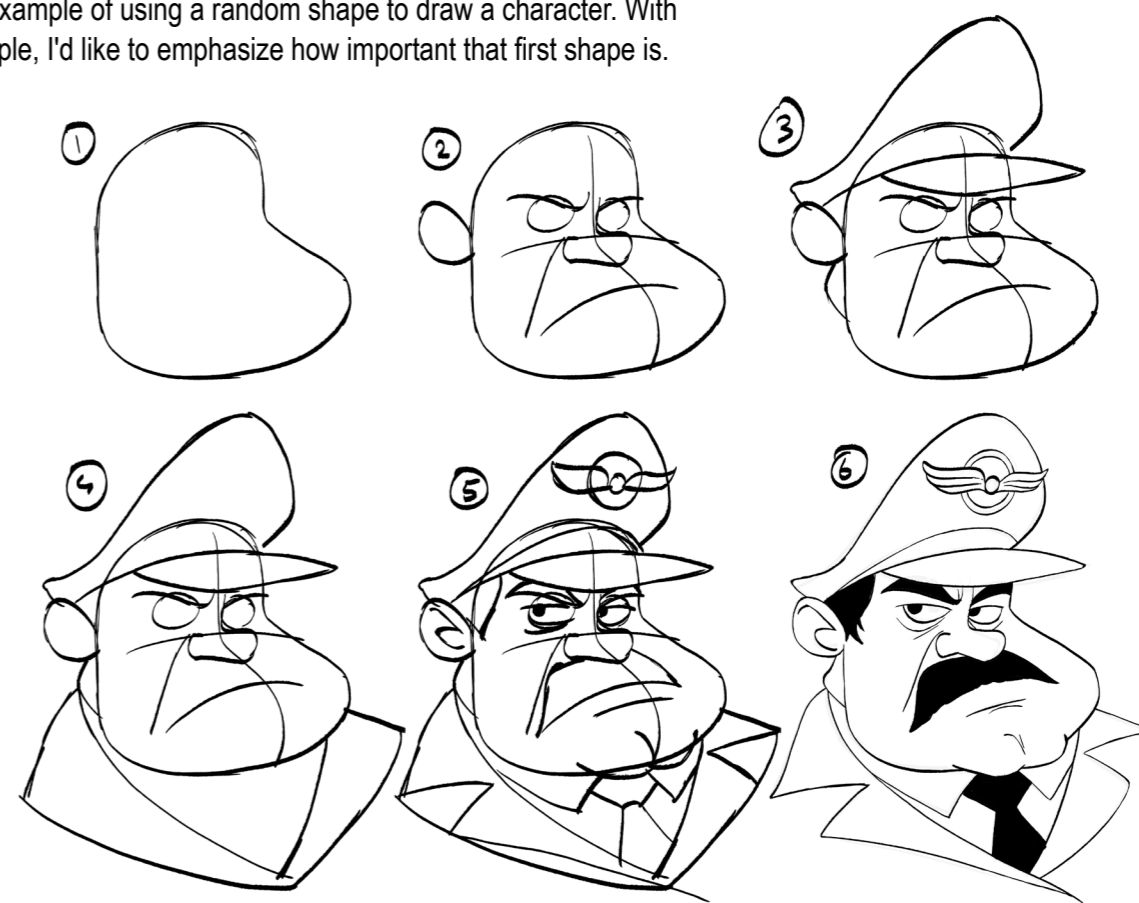
life? So, to emphasize that this is an elderly person, give the character a big nose and ears. Drawing a more prominent chin also works very well.

You can also try to draw this character but instead use a different shape to begin with. This way, the final design will be completely different.



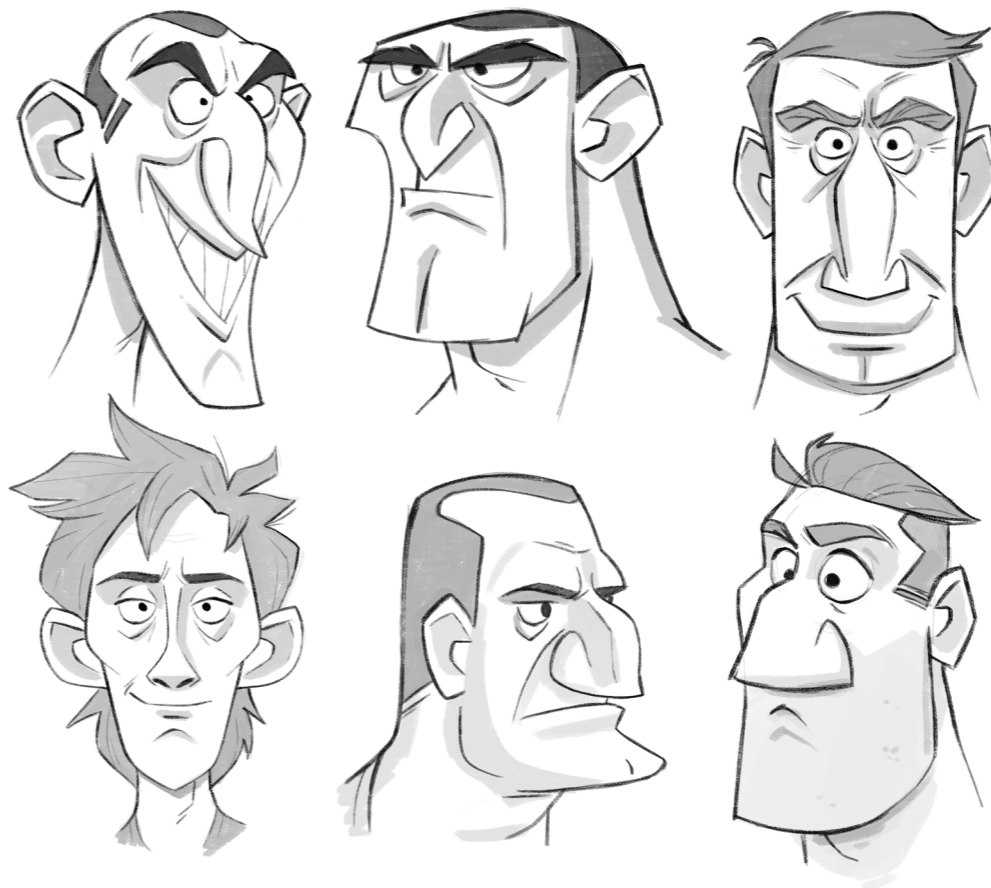
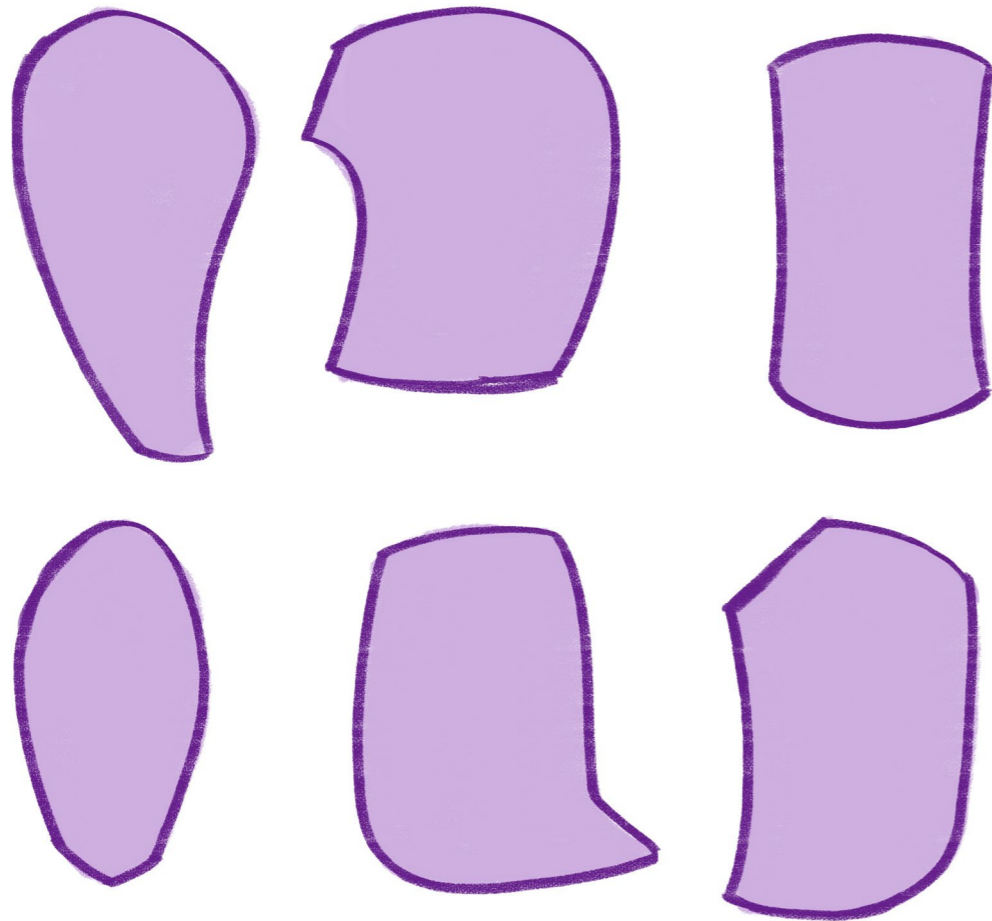
Some more characters breakdowns. See again how I use different shapes to create totally different characters. Feel free to use the main shapes to draw your own characters for practice.

Another example of using a random shape to draw a character. With this example, I'd like to emphasize how important that first shape is.



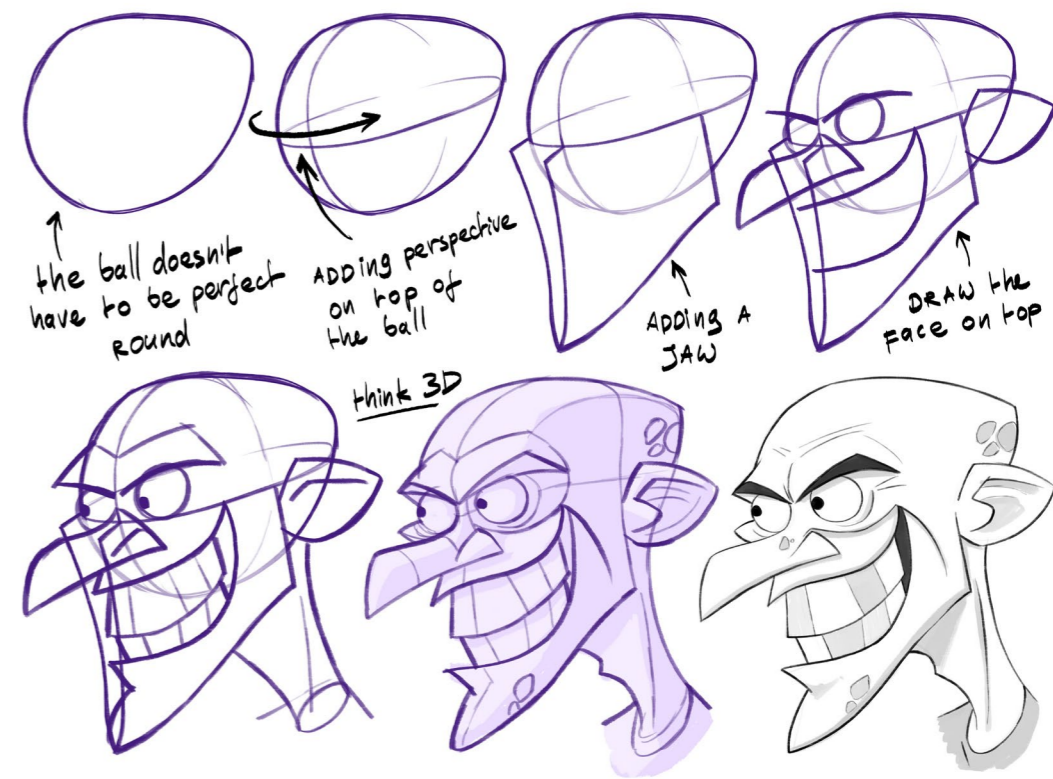
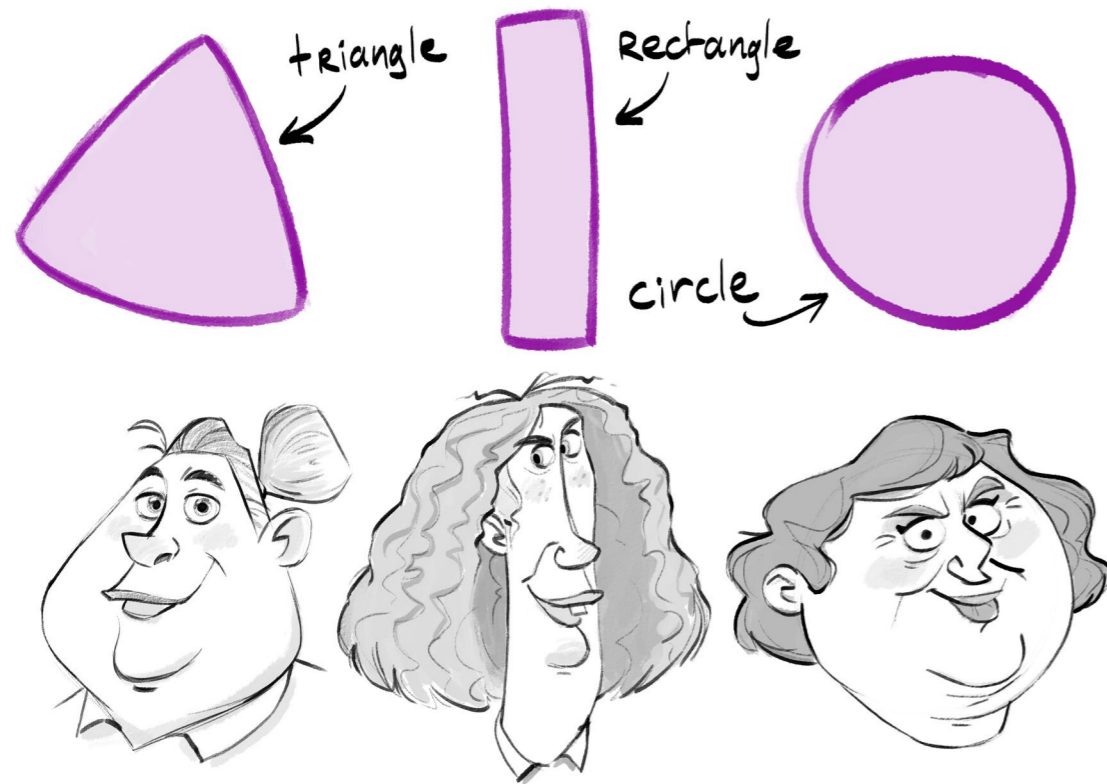
## EXERCISE

Here are some shapes you can use to draw your own characters.



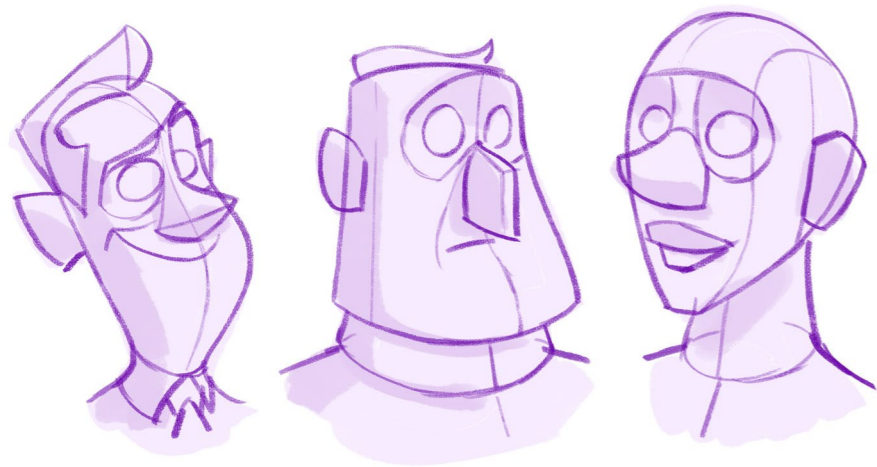
These are the characters I made using the shapes on the other page.

You can also use very basic shapes like triangles, rectangles, and circles to draw heads. I use this technique also to draw full-body characters. Don't feel limited by these shapes; by combining them, you can draw anything you want.



I already showed these steps many times, but you can see how much variation you can create by changing the construction shapes.

A fun idea for your portfolio is to create a series of characters, like a bunch of office co-workers. This could also be something else like a family, a group of construction workers, or a soccer team.

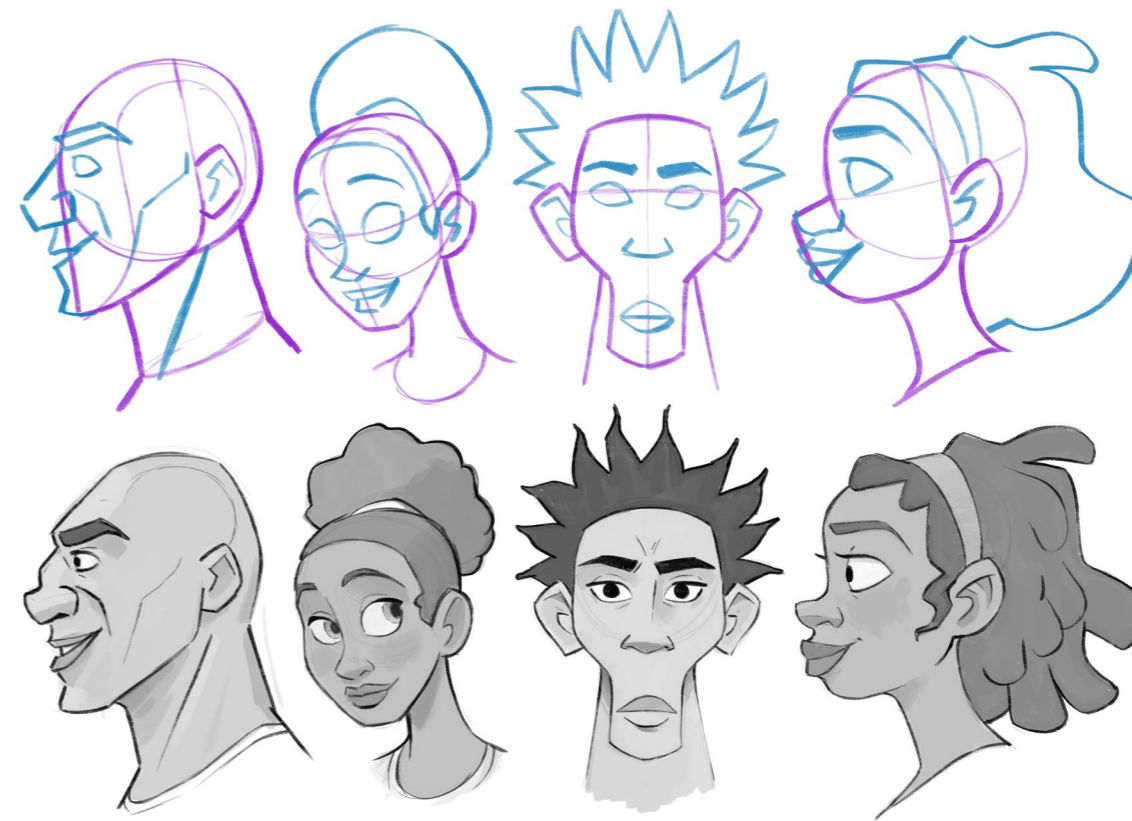
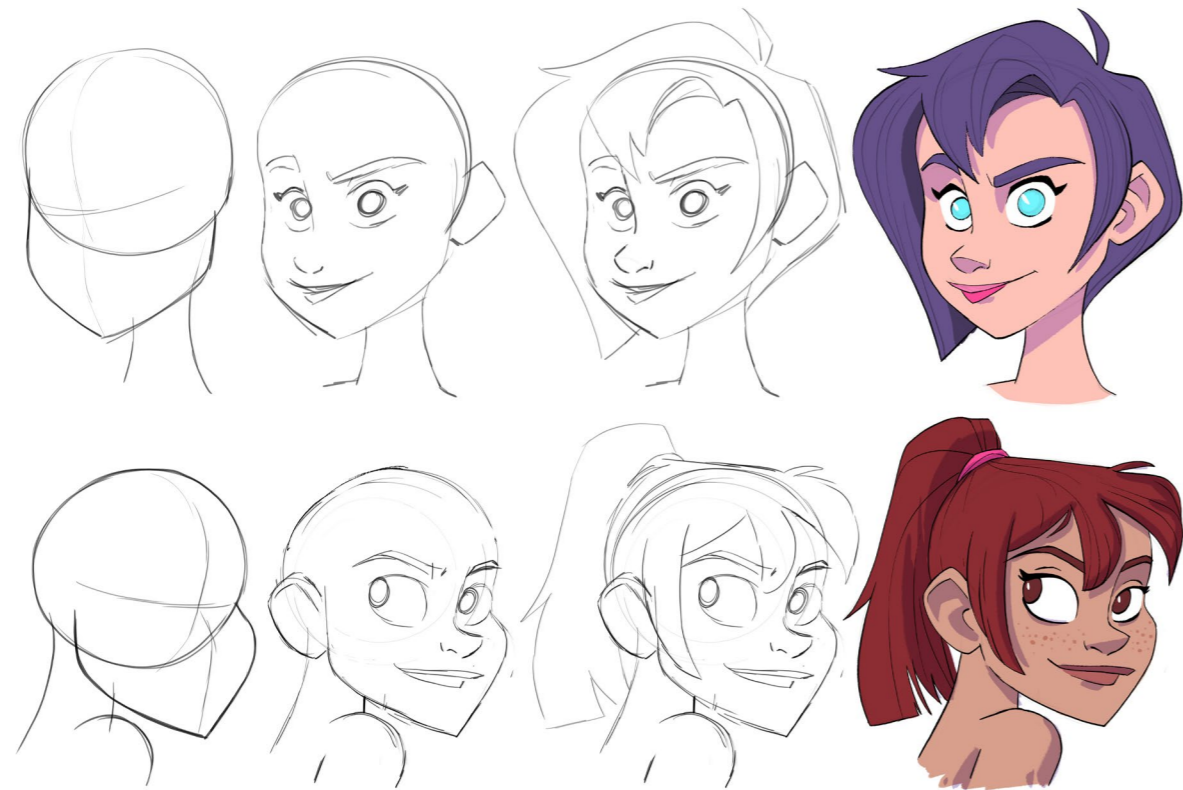


These are the breakdowns of the characters on the next page.

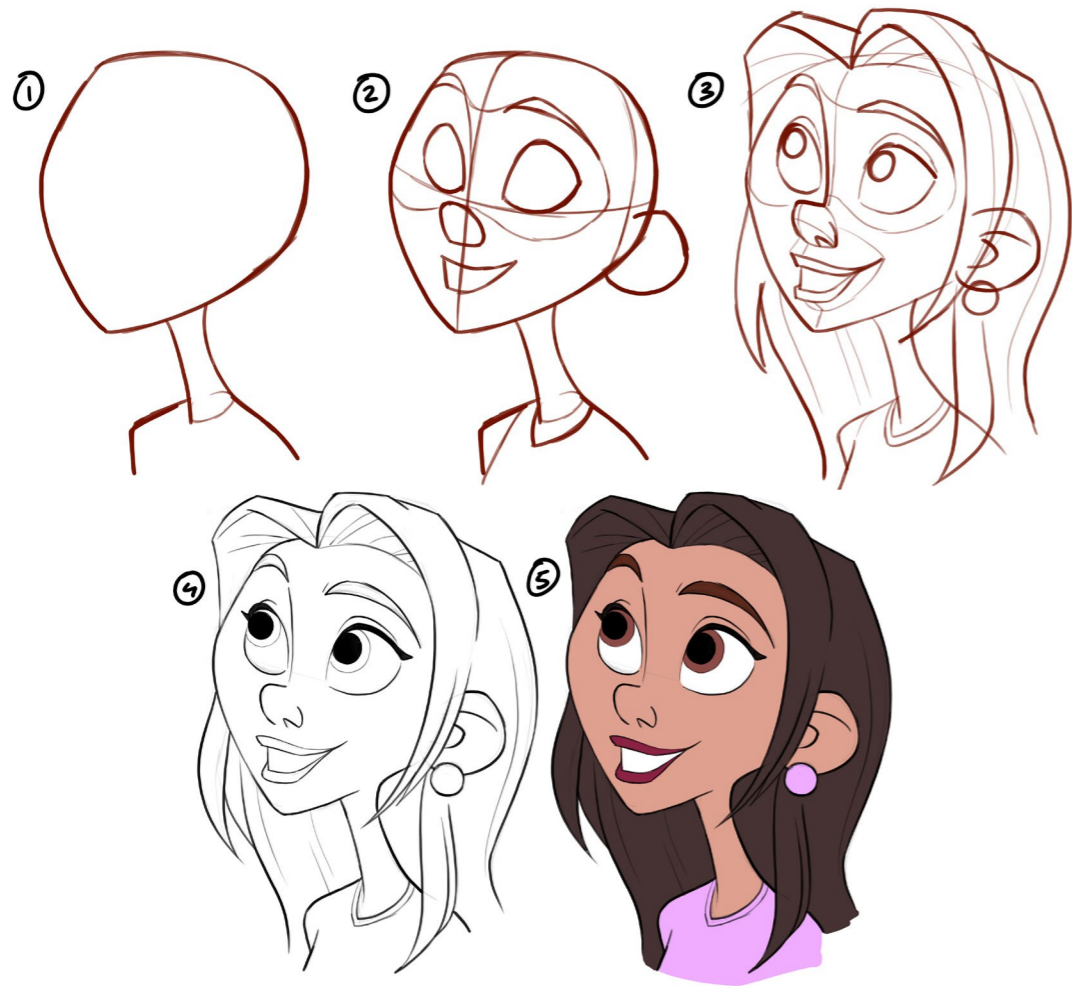


I gave each character their own personality. Can you tell what kind of person each one of them is?

When you're out of ideas, you can always draw some random people! I already mentioned it before: using reference, like fashion websites or hairdresser photos, is a great inspiration.



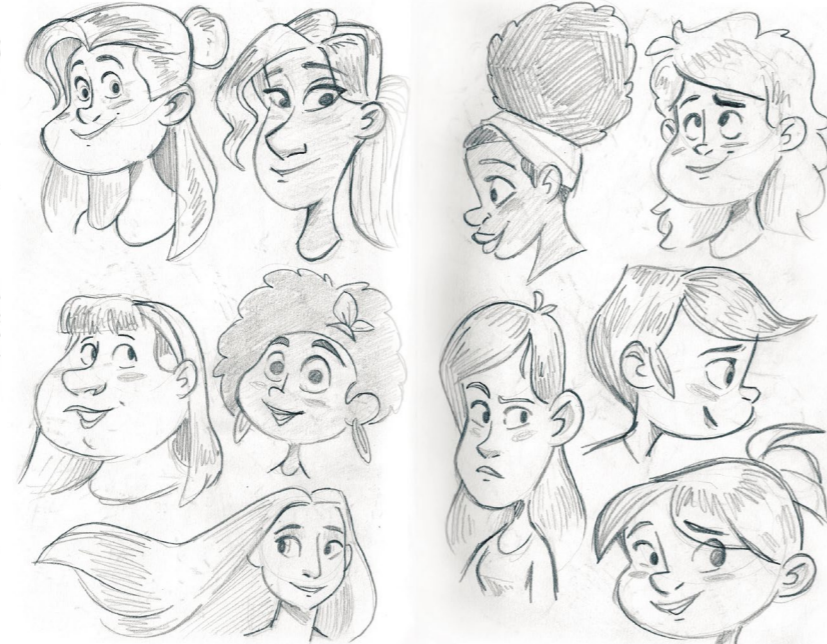
For these characters, I looked up some references on the internet. I never simply copy one photo but always combine multiple images or change some facial features to create something unique.



Last one. Let's summarize the steps!

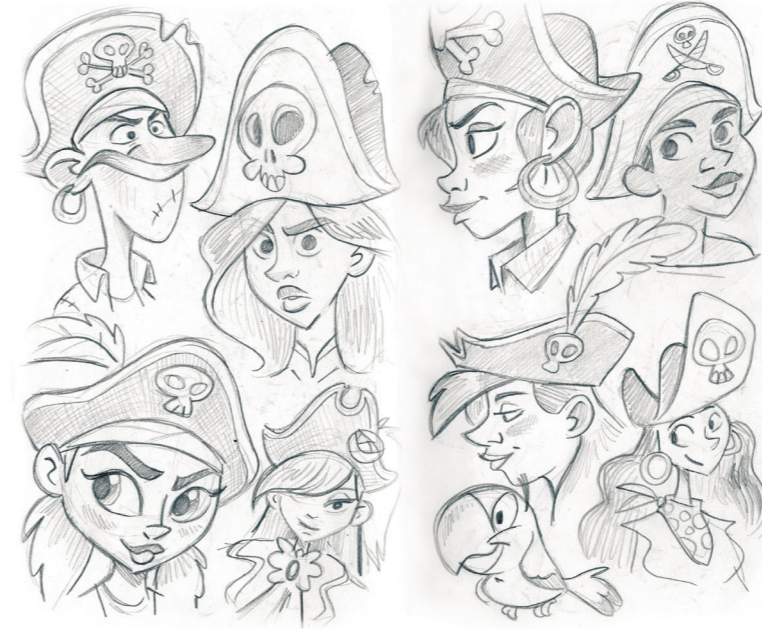
1. Start with the main shapes first; keep it simple. Try to find shapes that represent the character you want to draw.
2. Now add the construction lines. Or sometimes I call them perspective lines. These lines add depth to the construction and make it more three-dimensional. Also, notice the mask for the eyes.
3. Time to draw the details on top of the construction. Many people ask about details, but details are less important than most people think.
4. When you have your sketch done, you can clean up your drawing. When working digitally, you can just use a basic brush for this. When you draw traditionally, you can use a fine liner. My rule of thumb for the line weight is to give the most important lines the most weight, and the less important lines are the thinnest.
5. Let's do some coloring! The first step is to color block the drawing. I simply fill the shapes with a flat color. This makes it easier to find a nice color composition.
6. Once we picked all the colors, we can add some details and, of course, the shadow and light effects, including some highlights on the eyes.





## PICK UP YOUR SKETCHBOOK

Finding your own style takes a lot of time (and pencils). A sketchbook is great to experiment with shapes and designs. So grab your sketchbook and scribble, draw, and experiment as much as you can, to figure out new styles and designs.



Having a sketchbook with you is an excellent way of getting that drawing mileage because you can bring it with you wherever you go in your daily life. This allows you to draw whenever you feel inspired with real-world references all around you!

Drawing expressions by using references from your favorite TV show or movie can also be fun! For bonus



points, draw your roommate, family, friends, or partners (trust me, they love it!) when they are around. You can also take your sketchbook to a public place and see if you can find some interesting expressions from the people around you. Whatever you choose to do, remember to pick up your sketchbook regularly as a practice is the only way you're going to become the illustrator you want to be. Have fun with it and let the creative juices flow.

CONCLUSION  
*and* THANK YOU

**THAT'S IT!**

Thanks for reading my ebook. I hope you had fun practicing and learning to draw heads.

I get many questions about where to get inspiration from or how to come up with fun characters. My best advice for this is: reference is your friend. Don't be shy of using reference! Life is the best source of inspiration. The best way to practice this is by going to a library, café, park, or any other public place and just draw people. I used to draw many people on the train going to work. You don't

want people to notice you're drawing them, so what worked for me was to pick people who were further away. And if they look at you, just look past them, so they will think you are drawing them. At least that worked for me. Like I mentioned, I would advise you to take the examples from this ebook and study them. Follow along with each step and finally compare your drawing with mine. Figure out what you can learn from the differences and try to understand why it's different. It's important to learn to recognize the point you can grow on as an artist. Also,

remember that learning to draw takes time. People overestimate what they can do in a small amount of time but underestimate what they can do over a more extended period. So don't give up, keep going and have fun!

Best,  
Mitch Leeuwe



