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DGM – 4000

**How To**

Character design can be a fun, challenging, and engaging task. Although, it can be quite complicated, confusing, and often involves many steps. To simplify the process and make it approachable for beginners this how-to will follow the silhouette method of character design. With the use of this simple how-to I believe that anyone will be able to create an effective character regardless of skill.

For this task, you will need 20 sheets of paper, at least 5 pencils, a pencil sharpener, access to the internet or a library, and a quiet place to work. Each material has a purpose and will provide a better easier working environment for you. First, paper and pencil are a very versatile medium. It allows you to easily erase and draw things with little hassle. Second, the internet will provide you with countless resources for research and reference images. Lastly, finding a nice quiet well-lit area to work will increase your focus and make the result more accurate. With all that in mind let’s get started.

1. Take a single piece of paper and lay it down horizontally along a table or drawing board. Although this step is not required, doing this helps the brain to imagine the paper in a non-formal non-technical light such as writing.
2. Create a theme for your character. This can be an environment, specific place, specific creature, etc. ie. Ocean creatures, animals, bugs, etc.
3. With a theme in mind pick some attractive shapes that you might expect to match your theme. As an example, an ocean creature would be expected to have a very round set of shapes such as a whale or a fish. Once a shape has been picked, draw the shape in any corner so that it fits within a 2 by 2-inch square with a pinky fingers length between the paper’s edge. Note: each shape can be used any number of times with any varying size to create your drawing. Tip: pick elementary shapes to overlap your shape of choice. Doing this makes it easier to be quicker at drawing and reduces writer’s block. Similarly, while you draw imagine what each shape could potentially represent such as a leg, arm, head, or clothing.
4. Repeat step 3 working horizontally across the page. While doing so leave a pinky finger’s length between each drawing and the edge of the paper. Continue this step until the page cannot hold any more drawings. Note: the size recommendation for each drawing is a guide. It is to be expected that some drawings will vary in size and do not fit within specifications. Tip: this step should be fast and fun. Don’t get caught up in making perfect lines of thinking about what the character is yet. Simply create complex shapes that you think are fun or attractive.
5. Fill in each shape for each drawing created in steps 4 and 5 completely creating a silhouette.
6. Pick five of your favorite silhouettes you created. Tip: if you are struggling to decide which silhouette you should pick ask a friend for the advice of which ones they like.
7. Prepare six sheets of paper by breaking them up into 5 relatively equal spaces by drawing lines with your pencil. Tip: A good result can be achieved by diving the sheet in half and breaking each of these halves into three and two equal spaces respectively.
8. Redraw larger versions of the silhouettes you selected in step 6 on one of the sheets of paper you prepared in step 7 so that they fill most of each space.
9. On a blank sheet of paper evaluate each of the five silhouettes that have been chosen by what they look like or represent. Tip: this step can be likened to cloud gazing where you imagine what each cloud shape looks like. Does it look like a person, an animal, something in-between, or none of the above?
10. Once you have identified what each silhouette looks like or represents create a background for the drawing by answering these questions. Where would this character live? (i.e. do you see your character living in the ocean, a specific country, or something more fanciful like space?) How does your character survive in their environment? What would this character eat? What traits would this character exhibit? (i.e. are they stubborn, kind-hearted, flamboyant, etc.?) What kind of life does your character lead and why? (i.e. Did they struggle through life or were they filthy rich)?
11. Using step ten as a guide, research other similar characters that match your character’s description. i.e. If you thought the silhouette looked like a cowboy do some research into what cowboys looked like and wore. Note: this step can take some time and requires some access to information resources like a local library or the internet. Tip: creating a digital folder of the images and information you find is highly recommended.
12. Once you are satisfied that you have a deep background for your character (which can include stories about your character) create a list of what items the character may have or need including clothing. For our cowboy example, this list would include a cowboy hat, holster, boots, etc.
13. Using your information as a guide draw the outline of the silhouette in one of the spaces you created in step 7.
14. Next fill in the outline with simple elementary shapes that define both the character’s body and the items you identified earlier in step 12. Tip: break up each body part and item into their elementary component shapes. For example, a head can be a simple circle.
15. Add detail to each item by breaking it down into its elementary component shapes. For example, a belt buckle is often two overlapping rectangles.
16. After the desired amount of detail has been reached repeat steps 13 – 15 varying the placements and types of the items in step 12 of your character. Once this step is complete you should have 5 variants of each of the 5 characters you created.
17. Pick your favorite character out of the 25 and redraw the image on another sheet of paper filling it with about an inch of space on every edge the page using steps 14 – 16.
18. Erase any undesired lines from the character. Tip: if the line does not help you understand the more complex shapes they form it should be erased.

There you have it. If you followed each step in the process you should now have a character. If you are not satisfied with the result you can always improve on the design of the character by drawing more details or by creating a larger back story. Now you have a character that you can use for writing, hobbies, or anything that suites you fancy.