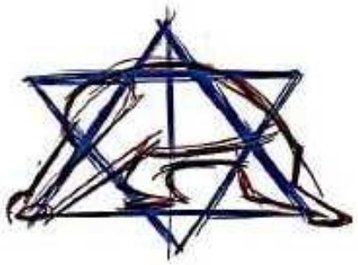
701S391

The Ingredients That Make or Break a Design

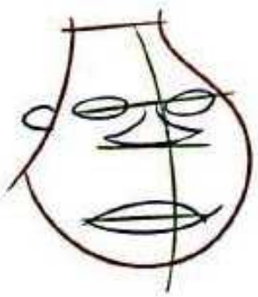
Now that you understand how to build a character's profile from a short description, let's talk design basics. There are many different ingredients that make up a solid character design. I have listed them below with my definition for each. Throughout the book I will be referencing these terms and how they come into play during the design process.



BALANCE
distributing weight symmetrically or asymmetrically, achieving a sense of stability that is pleasing to the eye

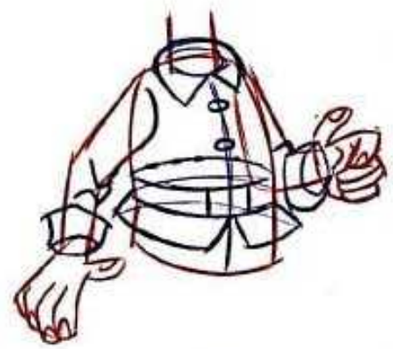
CARICATURE
exaggerating, distorting, de-emphasizing, or emphasizing features of a person or thing

COLOR
designing the scheme and the mood of the work

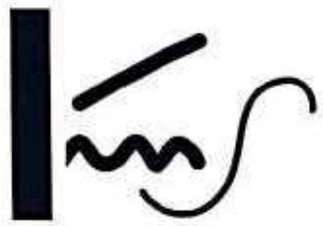


CONSTRUCTION
building forms and structure

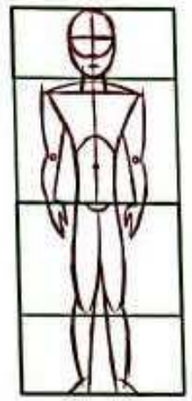
CONTRAST
opposing lines, angles, forms, and colors



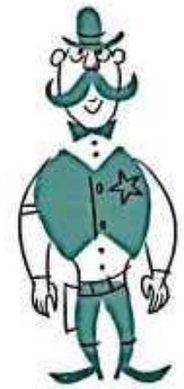
FORM
representing a shape or object with height, width, and depth



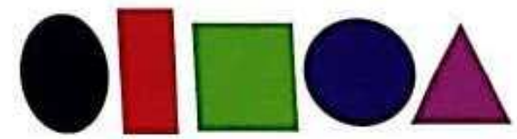
LINE
representing the directional movement of a character and determining thickness, boldness, and cleanup approach



PROPORTION
creating a proper relationship between parts

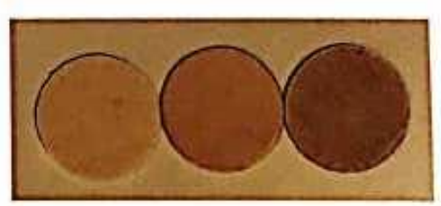


RHYTHM
developing a pattern of movement and flow

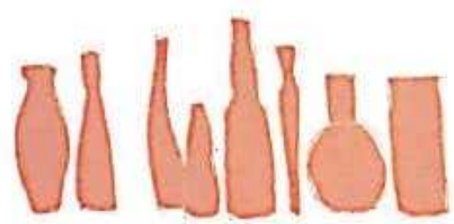


SHAPES
using basic shapes such as circles, squares, triangles, ovals, and the like in design

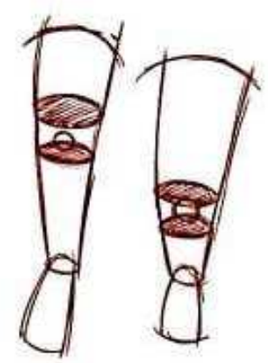
SILHOUETTE
creating clarity and readability using positive and negative space



UNITY
creating elements of design that feel cohesive, united



VARIETY
varying the sizes and shapes of elements



VOLUME
depicting the thickness of the forms

Sharpening Your Observation Skills

A very important practice as an artist is to constantly observe the world around you. What you gather will help inform your designs when you least expect it—as well as when you need it most! For example, take a quick walk with me and see what you can learn from one of the best sources of inspiration: nature.

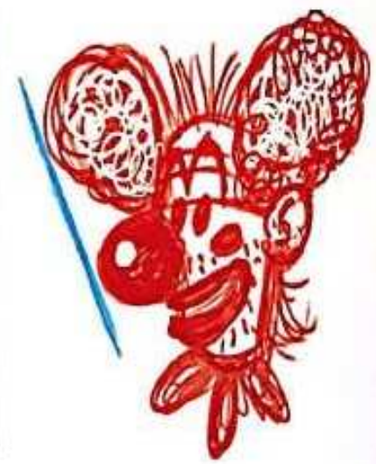
NATURE IS CHARACTER DESIGN

Look at nature to discover organic positive and negative space, variety, and contrast. Variety and contrast in shape adds appeal, though the grouping of elements and your point of view can affect how great the appeal is.

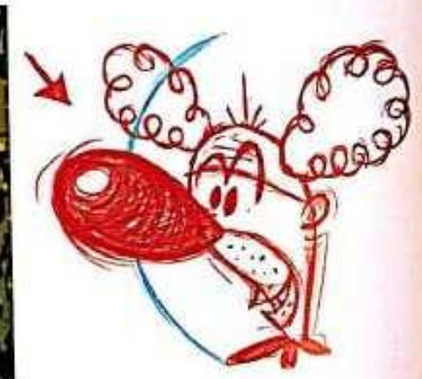
Look at the two images of cacti below. Is one more pleasing to you than the other? Using each to inspire a character, you can see the placement of the character's features is unclear in the one modeled after the cluster of cacti; the character's face is hard to read and chaotic. It comes down to spacing.

On the other hand, the single cactus image inspires a character with a sense of space, clarity, shape variation, and balance. The image itself, with its clearly defined negative space, gives the cactus a less busy appearance, with room to breathe. Notice the of arc of the face created by the second cactus; it leads the eye and creates movement.

Flat



Arcs



Now let's take a walk down this path. Which image do you think is more effective?

The first image is cut in half and unclear, especially since all the elements are grouped so closely together, while the second image is composed so one can easily see the trees; there's clarity. Remember how I opened this chapter: "Good design should be clear and informative."

THƯ VIỆN ĐẠI HỌC FPT
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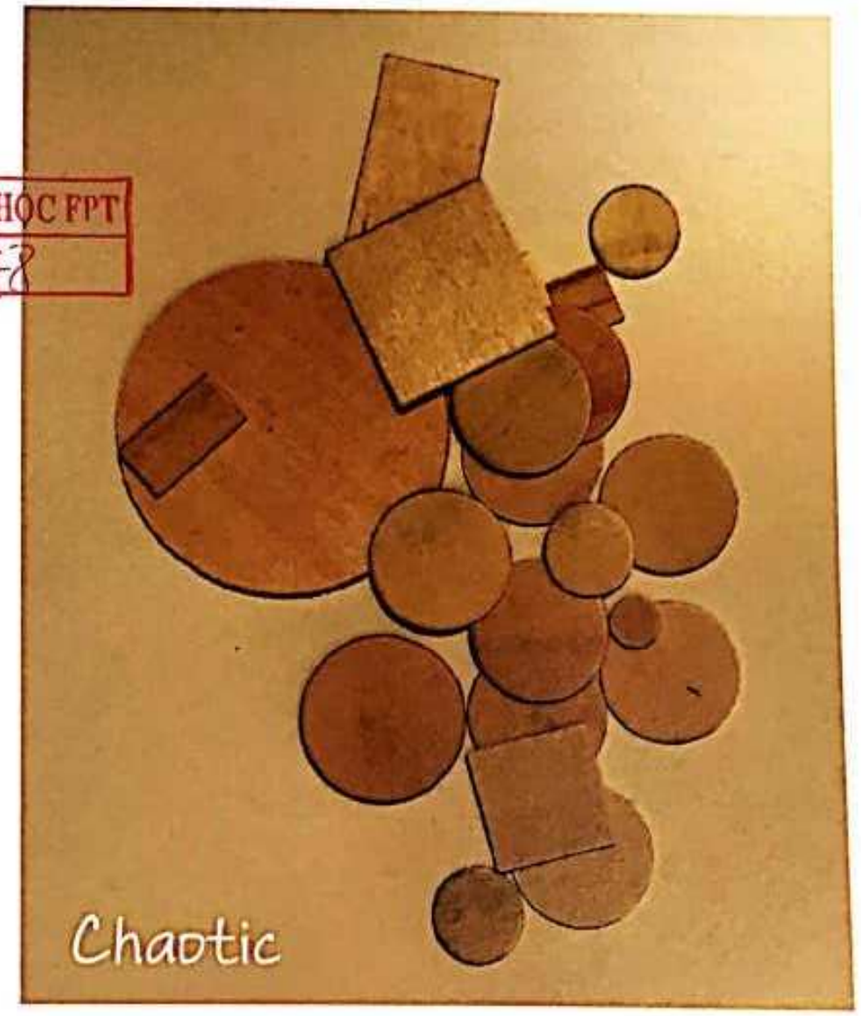
DESIGNING WITH WOOD CHIPS

Ready for another activity that has benefited me in my career that really emphasizes construction, shapes, variety, contrast, unity, and rhythm? Then it's time for a walk (or drive) to the closest craft store to buy a variety of wood chips in all shapes and sizes.

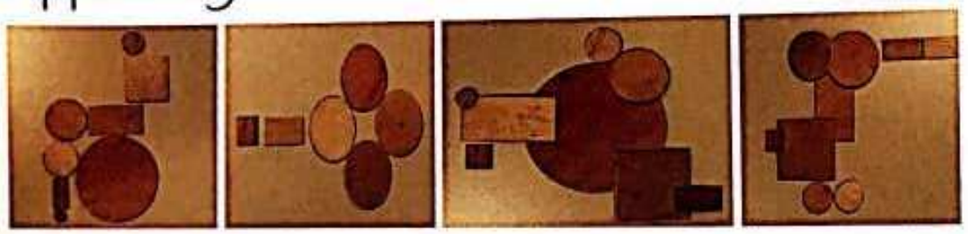
Try out the following to see what interesting shapes you create and observe with the wood chips to help guide future character design decisions.

1) Dump all the chips on a table and see how they fall. This is what I call unorganized chaos, leaving your eyes unsure where to look.



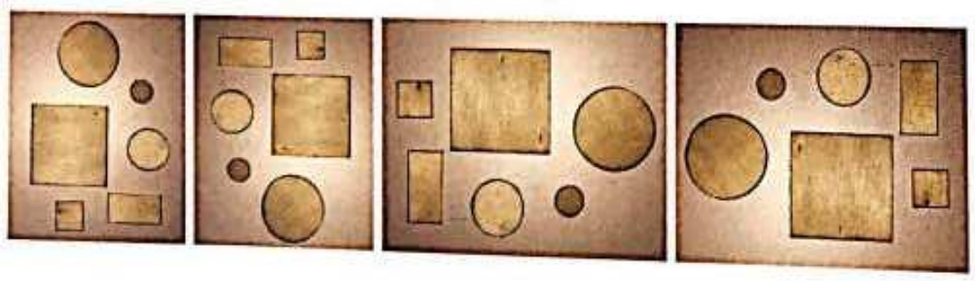
2) Now put the chips into different combinations. This is the organization of forms, making the composition easier to read and creating more appeal because of its simplicity.

Appealing



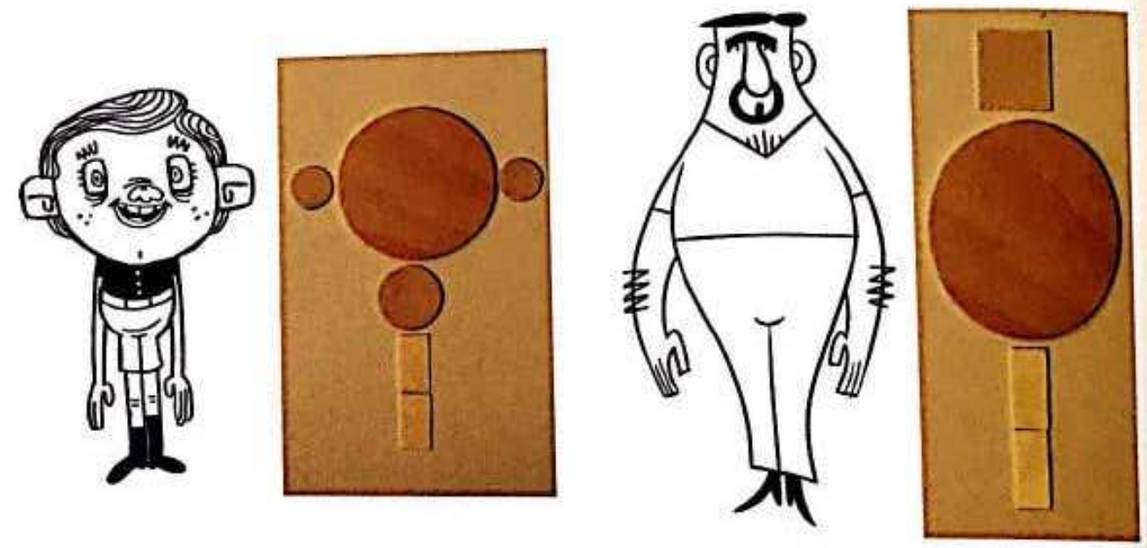
3) Take five to six of the chips of contrasting sizes and shapes and organize them into one combination. What you don't realize at first is that while it's one "design," if you move around the table to look at it, you'll see that the same combination viewed from a new direction creates a new perspective—and, with that, more possibilities.

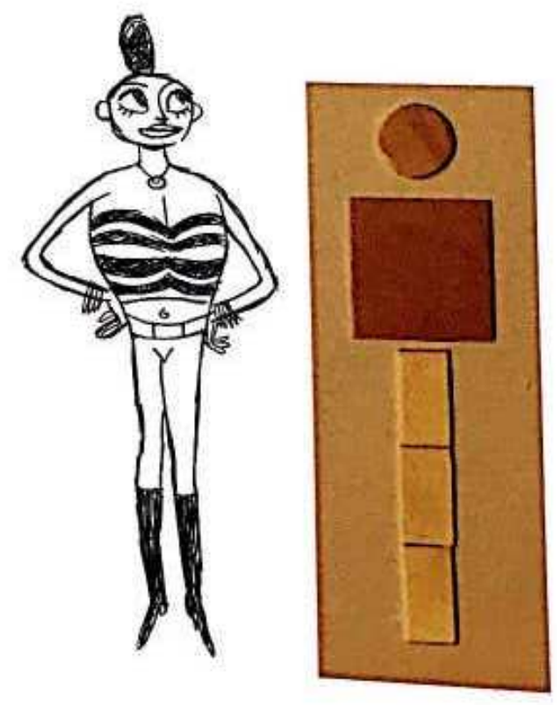
One design, four perspectives



4) Next, take select chips and see what interesting body shapes you can create. Photograph or sketch the shape formations you created to build characters from them in the future—or sketch away now.

Variety in forms





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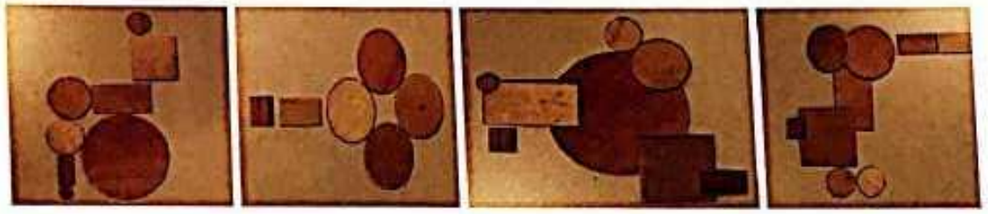
Appealing



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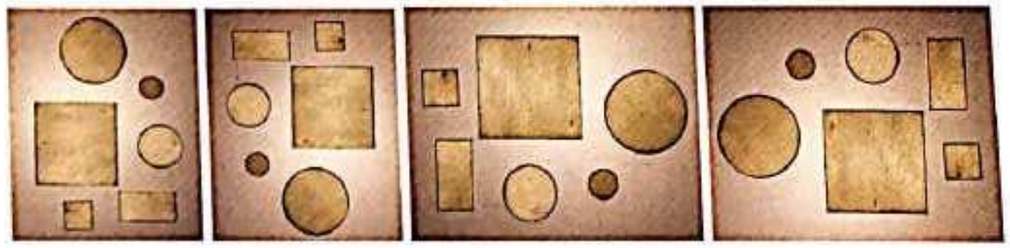

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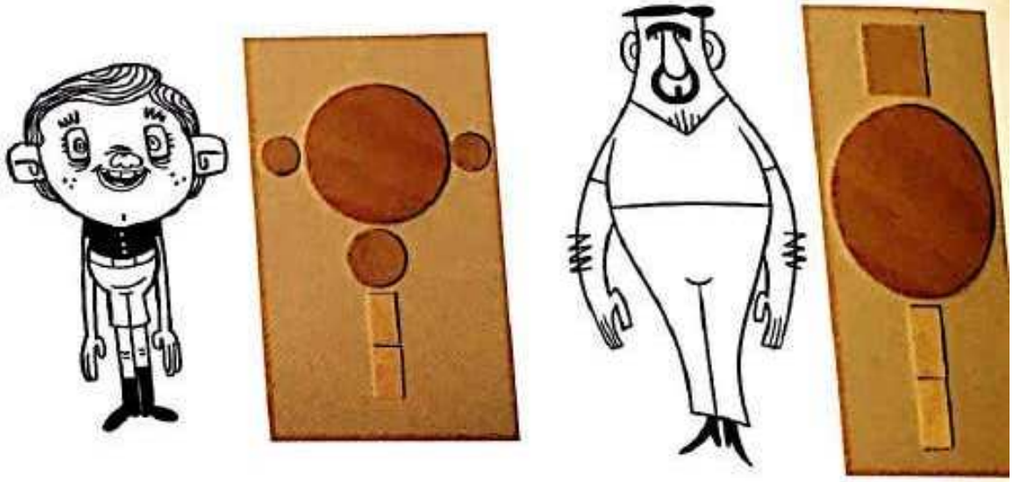
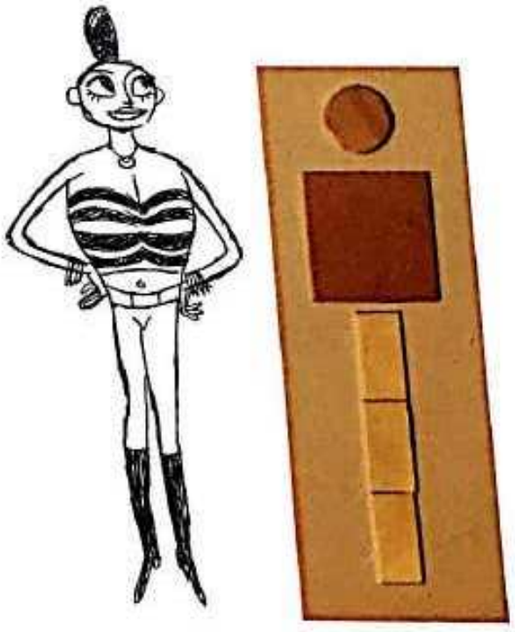


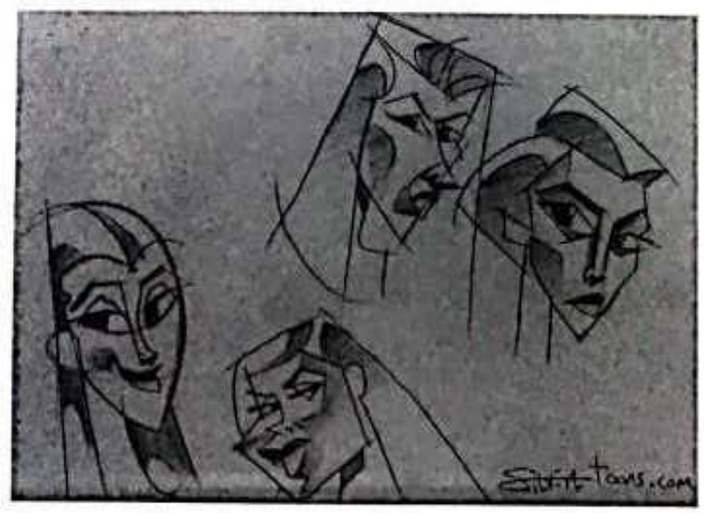


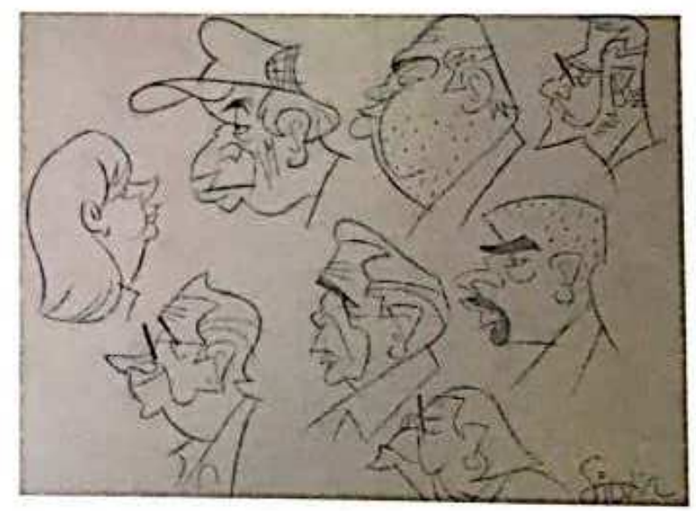
2 EVERYDAY SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

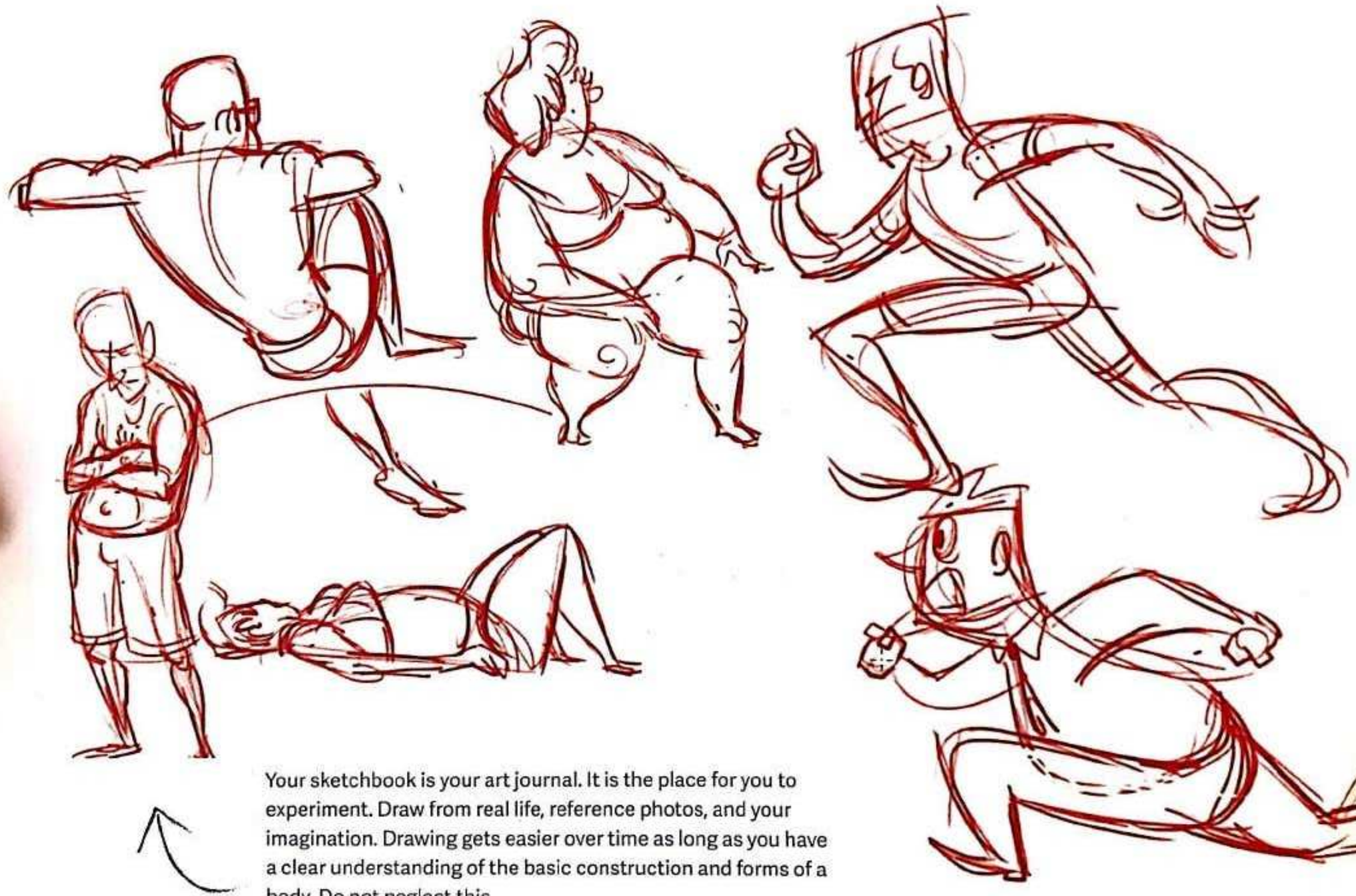
Anyone can do what I do. As I wrote in my introduction, it's all about the four P's: ***Passion, Practice, Persistence, and Patience!*** That means draw—every day. Drawing daily helps you hone your skills, explore new ideas, and learn from the world around you.

Capture what you see—whether it's outside your window, from a magazine, or in a video—or draw what you dream. In this chapter, I will share some drawing approaches that have helped my students get the most out of their daily drawing regimens.

> "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step."
>
> —Lao Tzu







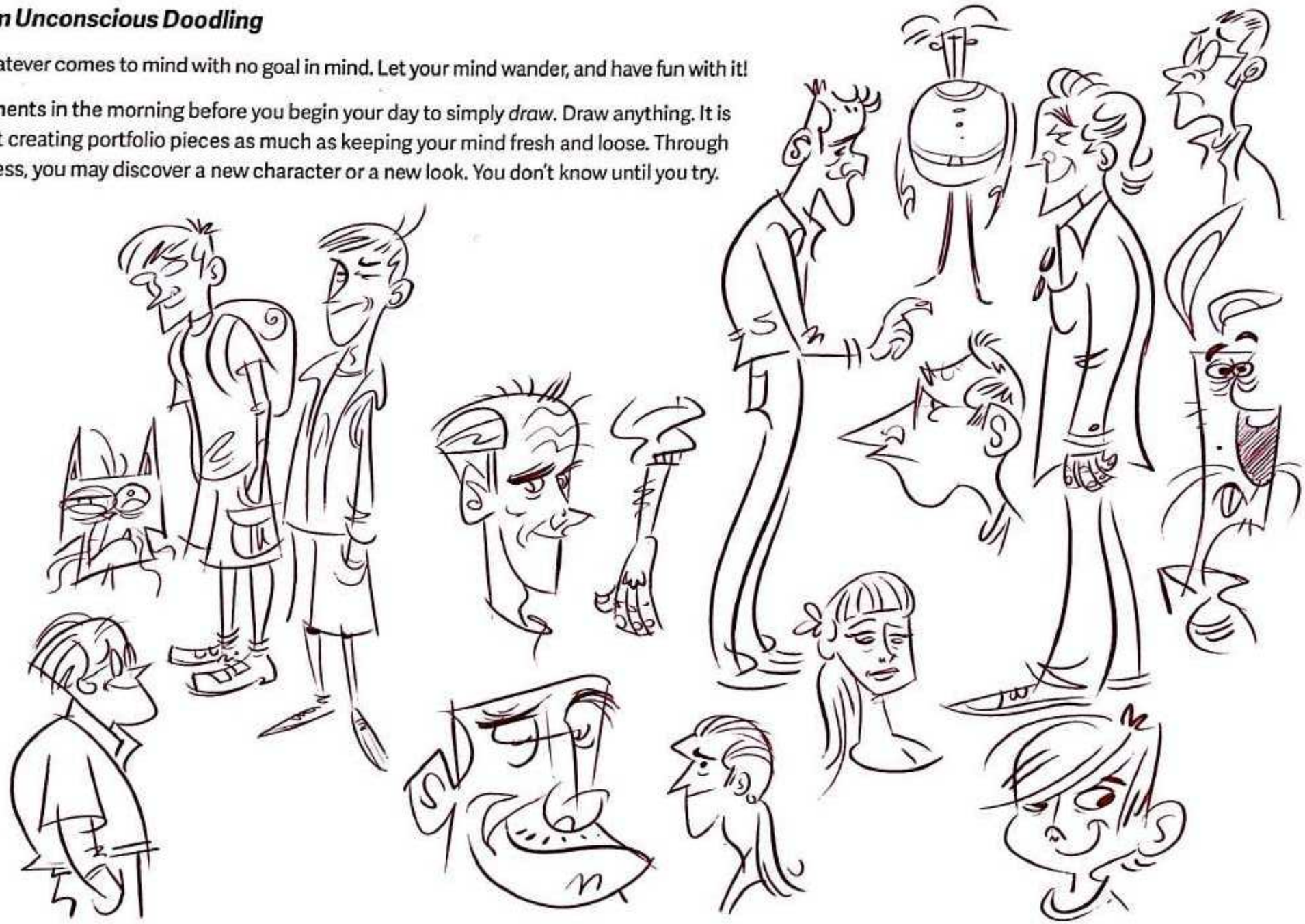
Your sketchbook is your art journal. It is the place for you to experiment. Draw from real life, reference photos, and your imagination. Drawing gets easier over time as long as you have a clear understanding of the basic construction and forms of a body. Do not neglect this.

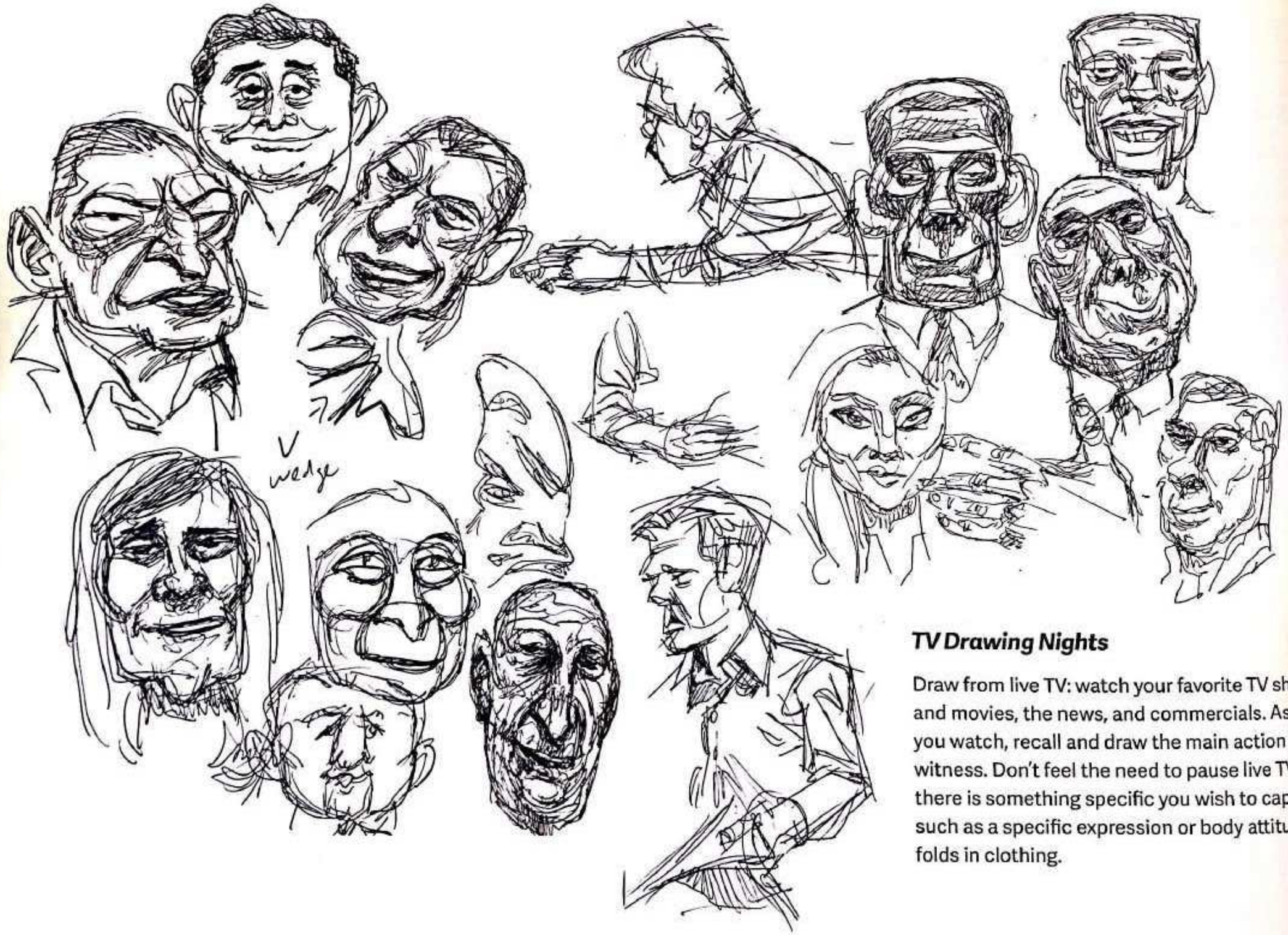
DRAWING EXERCISES

Random Unconscious Doodling

Draw whatever comes to mind with no goal in mind. Let your mind wander, and have fun with it!

Find moments in the morning before you begin your day to simply *draw*. Draw anything. It is not about creating portfolio pieces as much as keeping your mind fresh and loose. Through this process, you may discover a new character or a new look. You don't know until you try.





TV Drawing Nights

Draw from live TV: watch your favorite TV shows and movies, the news, and commercials. As you watch, recall and draw the main action you witness. Don't feel the need to pause live TV unless there is something specific you wish to capture, such as a specific expression or body attitude, even folds in clothing.

"Throwing Up on the Page"

While throwing up on the page is not the kind of practice I would literally encourage, figuratively it can be useful. Sketch freely; don't erase. I can't emphasize enough to keep your ideas loose when you sketch. The point is to get you drawing. This is your personal playground; it does not need to be shared on social media.

This throw-up practice is something I also do in my professional work. It is a place to make mistakes, because often those unconscious thoughts lead to new ideas and random shapes.

Draw from YouTube videos. This exercise will help loosen you up and give you a greater variety of twisting and turning that you may not find in a figure drawing class.

Do not worry about perfection the first few times sketching; that will come in your refinement process.

When creating design concepts for clients, their main concern is your ideas, not finished pieces of artwork. This is the throw-up phase. Let your ideas flow; don't erase. It will stop the organic zone you will be in. Also, be sure to number your images. This makes it easier for the clients to reference their favorites and even mix and match elements in each design.

Memory Sketching

Remember that childhood game "Memory," when you're shown a tray of objects briefly and whoever was able to recall the most items was the winner? Now try that with people. It's a win-win situation. Observe their characteristics and shapes, and then redraw what you recall. The best part about this is that you don't have to strive for perfection. Remember, you are capturing an idea to put in your memory bank of personal experience that will come out in your work in good time.

Memory sketching is an exercise done in order to increase your observation skills. Back when I worked at Sony Pictures Animation, we started a group doing this. How it worked was we would pick a subject we saw, wait until we walked back to our desks, and then drew what we remembered.

It was great to see what everyone in the group recalled, and it served as a great way to develop original characters based on pure observation.

Zone-Out Method

Most teachers would not approve of his students "zoning out," but I am encouraging you with this approach. The true benefit to this is merely to help you loosen up; avoid getting so tight in your work that the end result feels stiff. It will also help force new shapes that you would not otherwise draw when you are overly conscious of every line. I also recommend drawing with your other hand—force yourself to be uncomfortable—it will free you.

Here's an example of my Zone-Out Method in practice using the following guidelines:

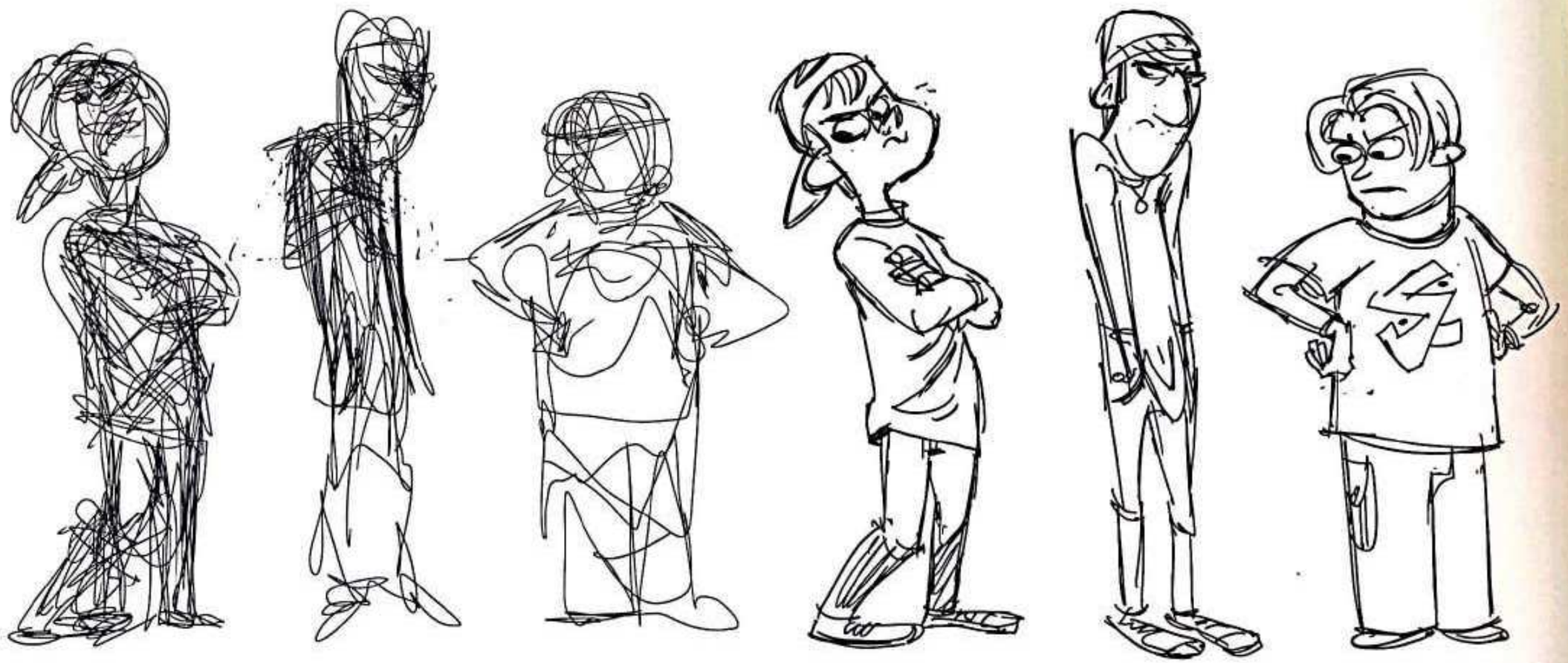
THE IDEA High-school kid

THE ACTION Standing

THE FEELING BEHIND THE ACTION? Annoyed

HOW TO "ZONE OUT"

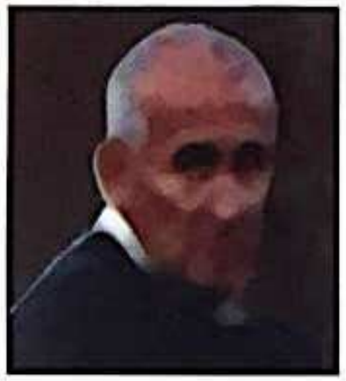
1. Begin by squinting or blurring eyes and sketching really loosely; zone out and do not think about style.
2. Try not to lift your hand during this phase.
3. Draw over loose sketch. Don't trace; redesign.



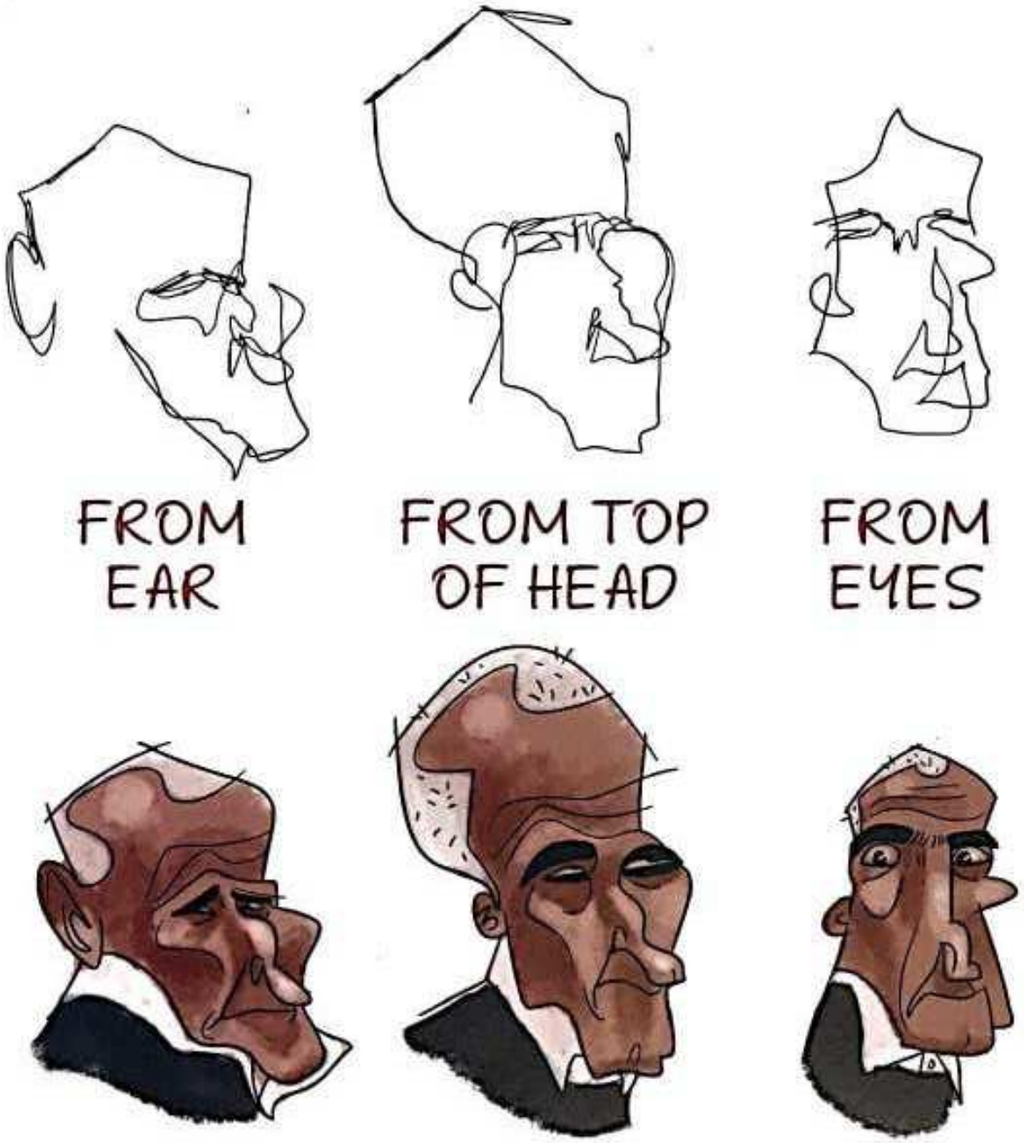
Blind Feeling Method

If you've ever taken an introductory drawing class, you know that blind contour drawing can produce surprising results. It teaches you to look and observe; and simply draw what it is you are seeing, not what you think you saw, and to help you avoid just drawing the same things you have drawn a thousand times before. I like to call my approach the Blind Feeling Method, because you are to focus on the feeling, movement, and exaggeration of the character, not just the outline contour that Blind Contour Drawing teaches—setting it apart from what your high-school art teacher told you to do. My method can result in some quite extraordinary characters.

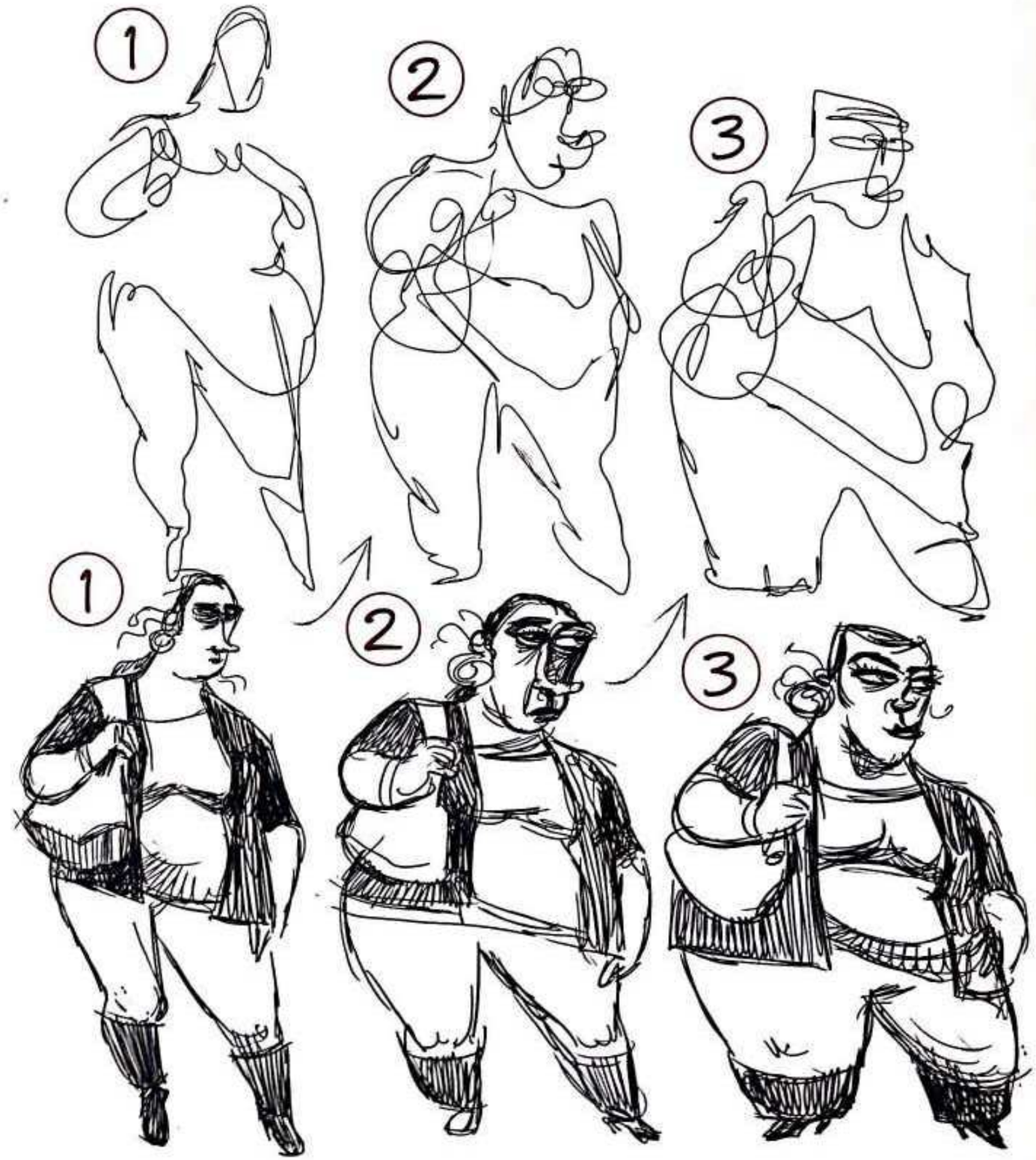
BLIND SKETCHING 101



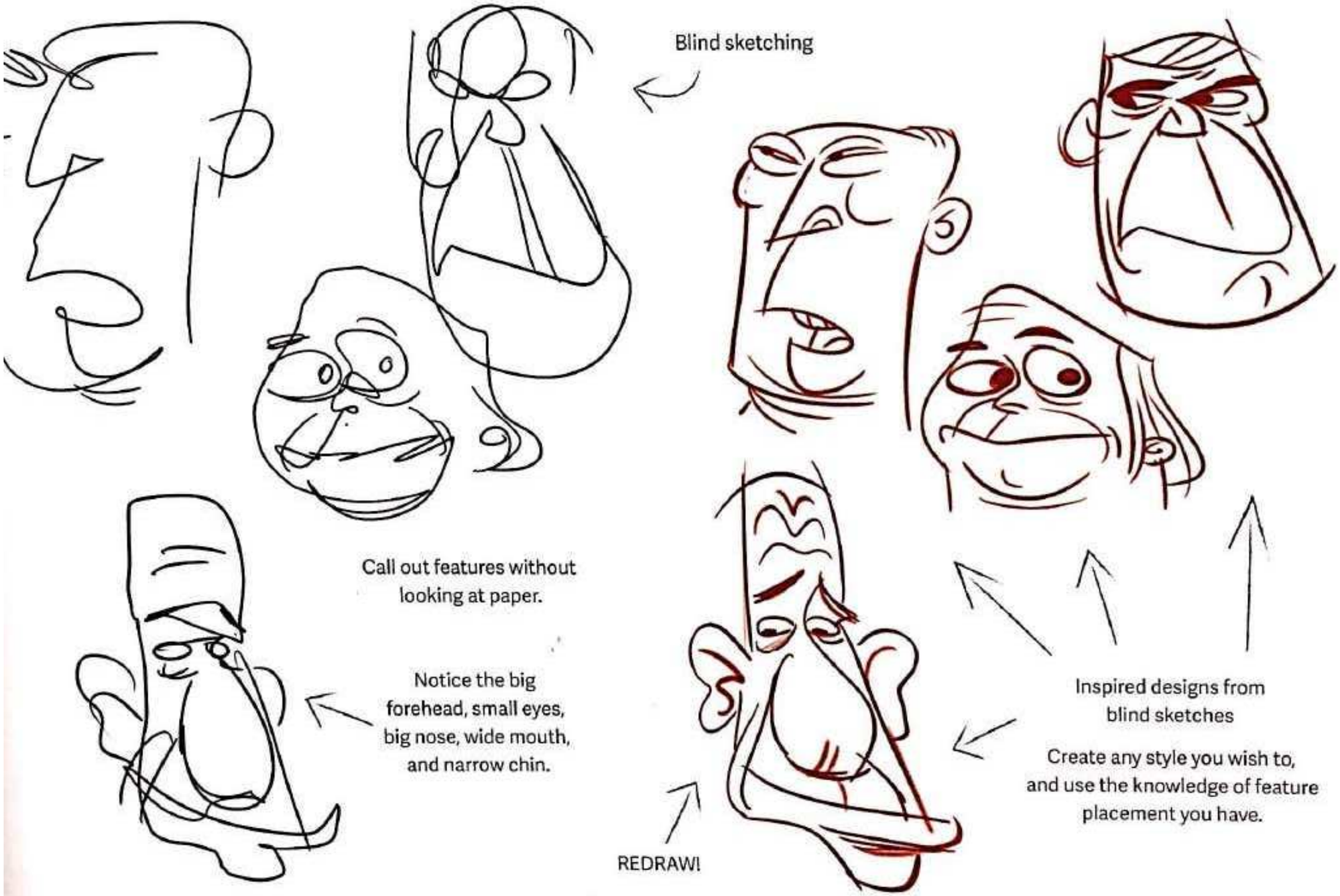
- Grab a photo of a subject, or observe from life.
- Do not look at what your hand is drawing; just look at the photo and call out in your mind each feature you're sketching.
- Do not lift up your hand. This first pass should take no more than 15 seconds.
- Draw as many times as you wish, but start each sketch from different locations, as shown.
- Design a character based on the shapes you created. Have fun, and don't feel that you need to match each line exactly from your blind sketch.



Just as with previous exercises, find a subject. Then, do your first blind sketch. Now, take it a step further: do your second blind sketch off your completed first design. Repeat this process many times, doing a blind sketch from the previous blind sketch. The last step is to develop a character from each blind sketch.



s an assorted cast of characters that came
one blind feeling sketch session.



Caricature Fun

What better models are there to use for your drawing exercises than yourself, friends, and family? And who doesn't enjoy having a caricature done? Caricature and character design are one in the same to me. If you learn how to caricature a face or body effectively, you will be a better character designer for it.

I would recommend that to help you understand caricature better, find about five good caricatures done of a celebrity you are familiar with. (This is important because you have a greater impression of that person.) Once you find the caricatures, grab photo reference, up to 10 images of them: sid view, front view, front 3/4 view. This will give you the ability to see all the quadrants explained below clearly. Yours truly is the model in this case as I break down how to do a caricature in three simple steps.

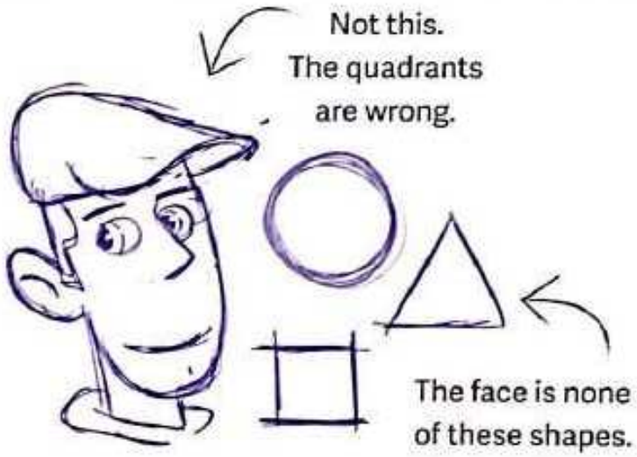
CARICATURE IN THREE STEPS

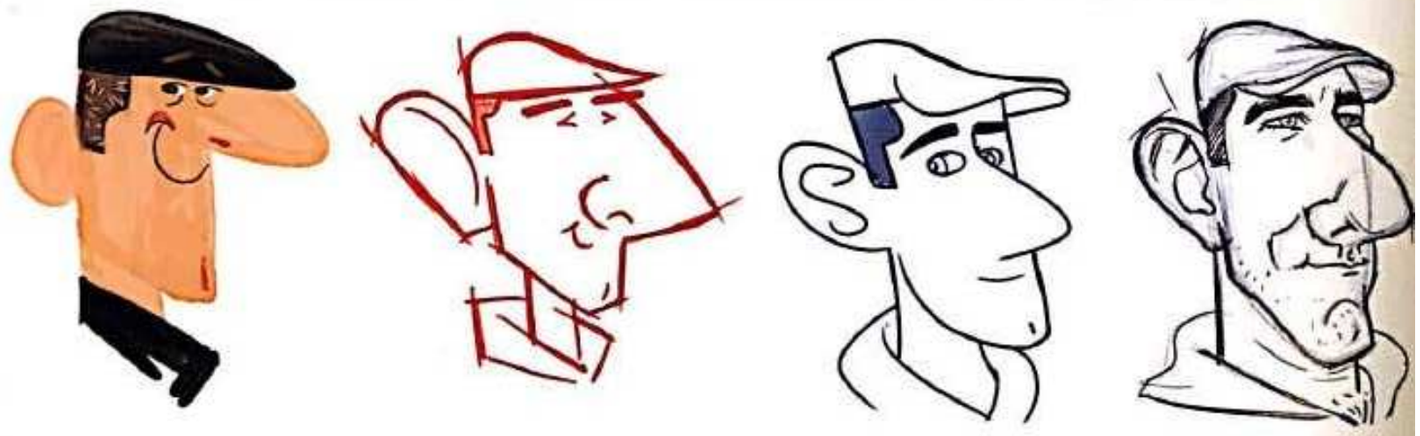
1 Identify the head shape.

2 Access the four quadrants.

1) forehead to eyes
2) eyes to nose
3) nose to mouth
4) mouth to chin

3 Determine the contrasting features.





Original Silver

Quadrant 1: too great
Quadrant 2: too short

Quadrant 2: too great
Quadrant 3: too short

Quadrant 3: too great
Quadrant 4: too short

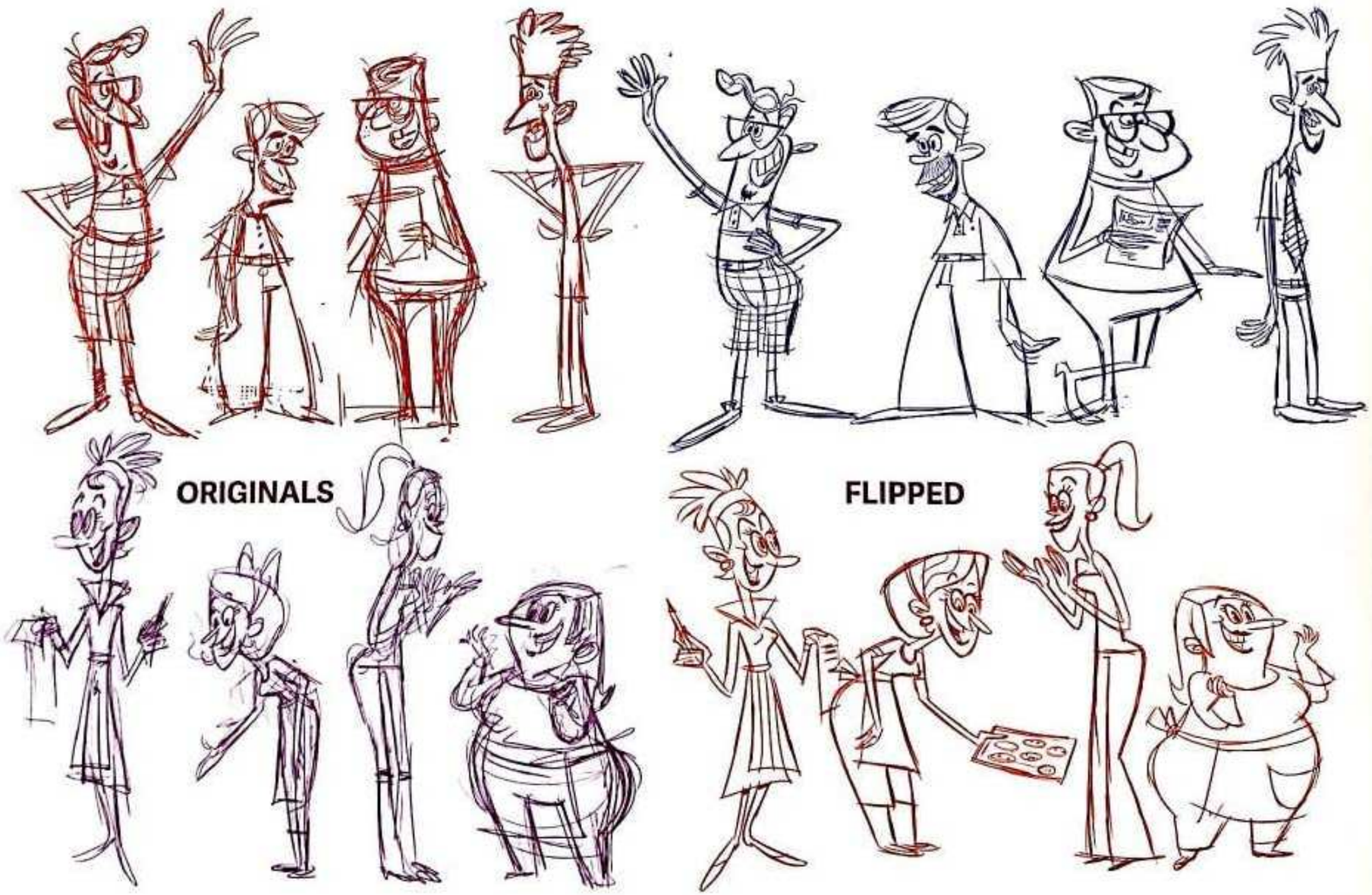
The three images to the right of the Original Silver are off in their quadrant relationships to each other. Observe the quadrants as your starting points of reference. If you have trouble seeing the distances, I have found that squinting your eyes, which blurs your vision, will help you see the spacial relationships better. You may also use the Blur Tool in Photoshop.

All three caricature interpretations are based on the spacing, not the details.

Flip-It Tip

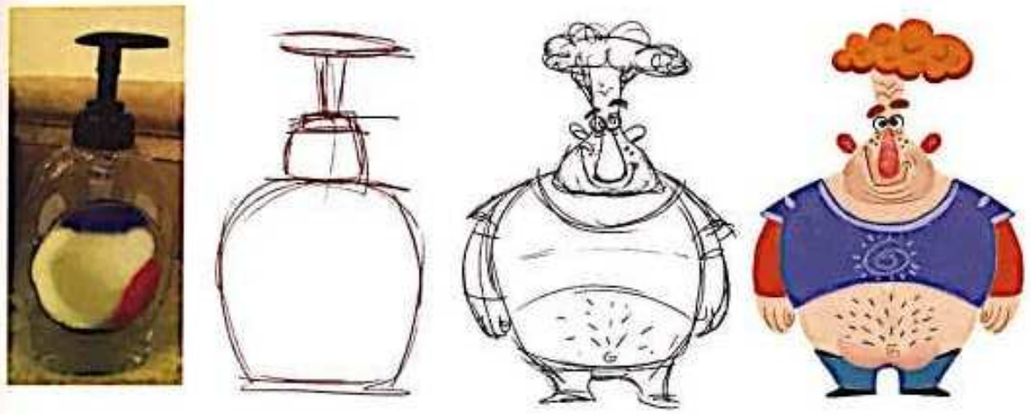
Get a new perspective on your initial sketch by simply flipping it! You will be able to improve your drawing with this easy exercise. It offers a new perspective: one that allows you to see balance and construction flaws. I have done this for my production design for years and still do it today. It not only pushes me not to settle on my first design, but it also gives me the opportunity to see where I can push, balance, and construct it better.

After you have created your initial sketch, flip your layer horizontally, add a new layer, and redraw It. This helps you balance, construct, and push your shapes more. It helps inform you to make different choices based off the same formula.



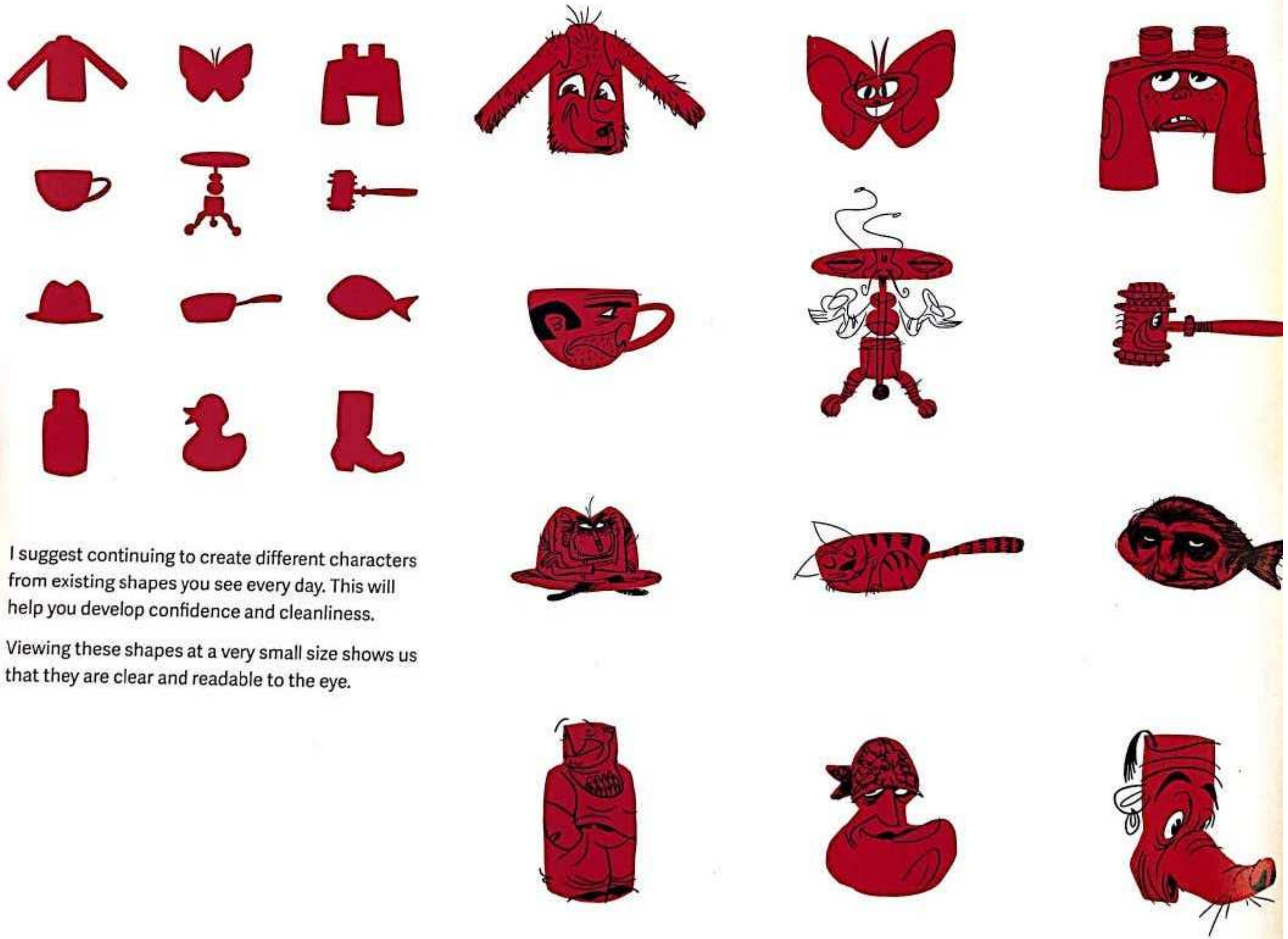
Bring Inanimate Objects to Life

If we've learned anything from the most popular animated movies of our time, the most lovable characters can start with something as everyday as a teacup—and especially a toy. Starting with the shapes of different objects in your home, see what potential characters you can bring to life.



Break down the shape of each object you choose. I'd suggest selecting three to four objects varying in size; this is good for analyzing contrast in any object. Everything is designed.

How many different characters can be created from one shape?



I suggest continuing to create different characters from existing shapes you see every day. This will help you develop confidence and cleanliness.

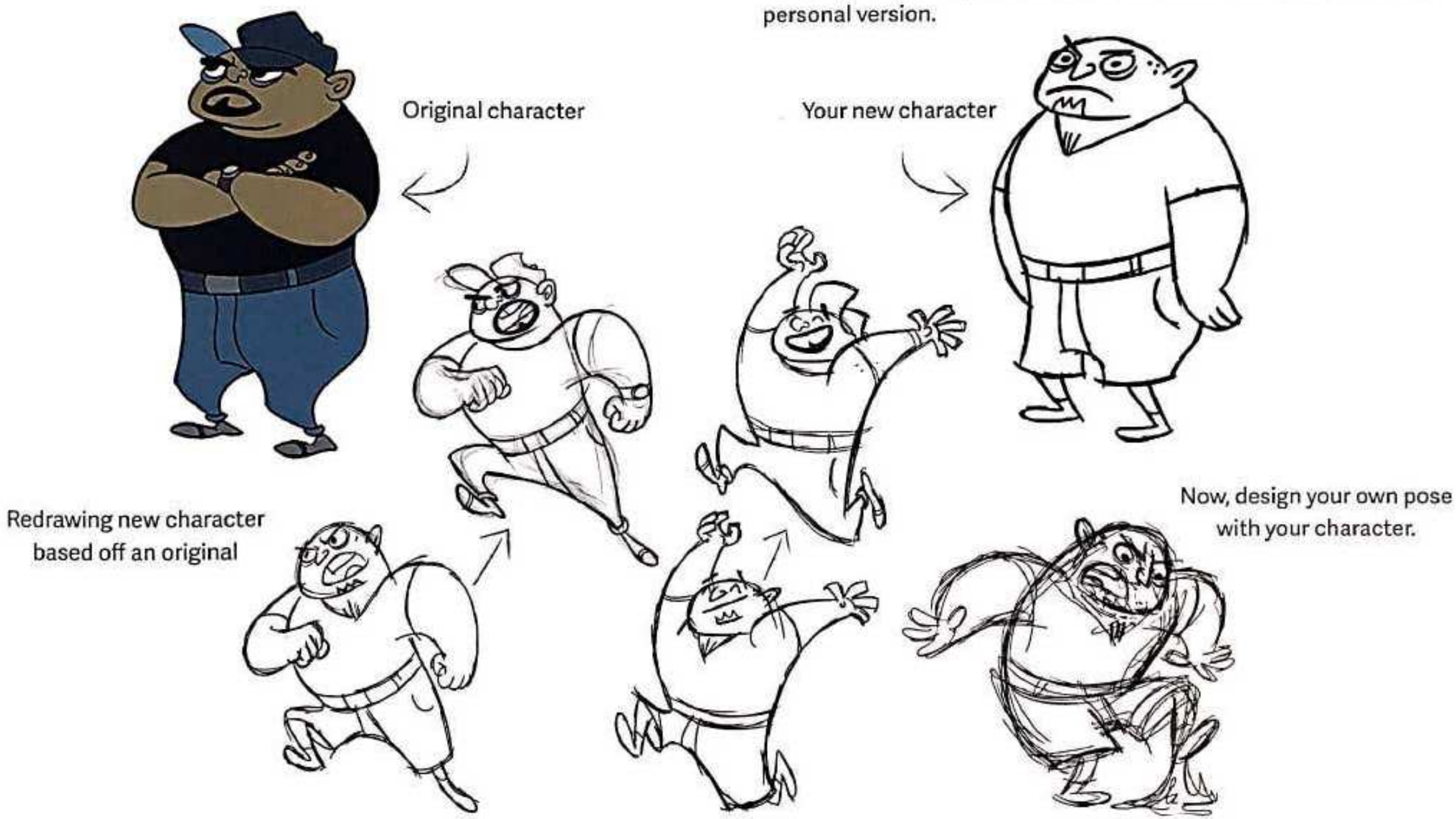
Viewing these shapes at a very small size shows us that they are clear and readable to the eye.

Generate Dummies for Practice

Never heard of the term *dummy character*? A dummy character is a generic character you are using simply for study; it could even look like a crash test dummy. Just as you brought inanimate objects to life in the previous exercise, you can create "dummies" by pulling different physical qualities and poses from existing characters to expand your shape vocabulary.

Find an existing character and change the outfit and some features, but maintain the body proportions. Find some poses of that cartoon character from the Web or animation stills in an action pose. What this does is help you discover and draw in different shape languages.

Do not place the copied characters in your portfolio, only your new personal version.



Change Mediums

Sketching the same character or cast of characters in a variety of mediums is a great way to explore possibilities. What I mean by this is that if you allow yourself to use different tools, it can provide a different effect, much like staging five different couches in a living room.

Each will result in a different mood and feeling even though they all offer the same function. Using a China marker, solid color shapes, or just a 2B pencil will create a new feel and style. The main idea behind the character below was to create a grumpy, old chef who lives in a fishing town.

Through every bad sketch you think you have, there will be a sketch that starts to feel good. Build upon it, and don't just settle. Becoming a professional in this industry requires focus and dedication to the craft. You will find that the majority of studios and clients are seeking one thing: your ideas. The finish will come at the end of the exploration.

Exploration and experimentation are key. Whether you play with mediums or brainstorm a character type, you will benefit from a daily drawing regimen.

Zookeeper variations:

1) Personality and story

2) Shape of body and features

3) Details

Take your time to really explore ideas in your sketchbook. You never know what characters will develop along the way. This array of character sketches was a result of one idea: a middle-aged scientist living in the 1950s.

Before you can reach the moon, you need to understand your mission, build your rocket, and train the astronauts.

This is no different than knowing what it is you wish to design and for what purpose. Train with intention, and build a portfolio that represents who you are and what you do.

3 THE FIVE PHASES OF THE SILVER WAY

Throughout my years of teaching design and performing portfolio reviews, I discovered that there was a pattern to what elements I felt to be missing from artists' works: designers were focusing too much on the details versus building a strong foundation for their characters at the onset. After repeating such feedback over and over again, I developed "The Silver Way": an approach to creating an effective, convincing character design that consists of the five phases below.

Story

Learn as much about your character and his or her story and world as possible—including what motivates your character and what effect you want the character to have on the viewer.

Gesture

Based on the character's profile, create a gesture or feeling that tells a story and gives a sense of the character's attitude. It comes down to depicting movement even though your character is standing still. Gesture gives art life. Is your character sitting because they are tired or hurt? Find that gesture.

Design

Develop the right ingredients for the design, starting with pushing shapes around in order to determine the ideal organization that represents the character. Also start to design the character's clothing, hairstyle, and accessories.

Form

Fully realize the character's form in this construction phase. Take your 2D shape language and *draw through* your shapes. Imagine your character living in a 3D world; get an understanding of volumes, depth, and perspective within your shapes.

Details

Take design to a final stage with cleanup lines, color textures, and additional elements, such as background elements or shadows you wish to add.

Let's bring back Salty from Chapter 1 and take him through each phase to give you an overview of how I take a character from a short description to final design. While there are mainly five phases to the Silver Way, each phase involves a great deal of thought and creativity.

Phase 1: Story

INITIAL PREMISE

When designers start on a project, they often are given very little character direction; it could be as short as a one-line description from a script:

> **Interior:** Salty Stagwater, a 60-year-old burly longshoreman walks into a cantina. He's a moody guy who has very little patience for anyone.

Having as much information about the character as possible will guide you on your project, whether the design will be used for animation, a comic strip, or book illustration. You need to understand your character's personality before you start to sketch.

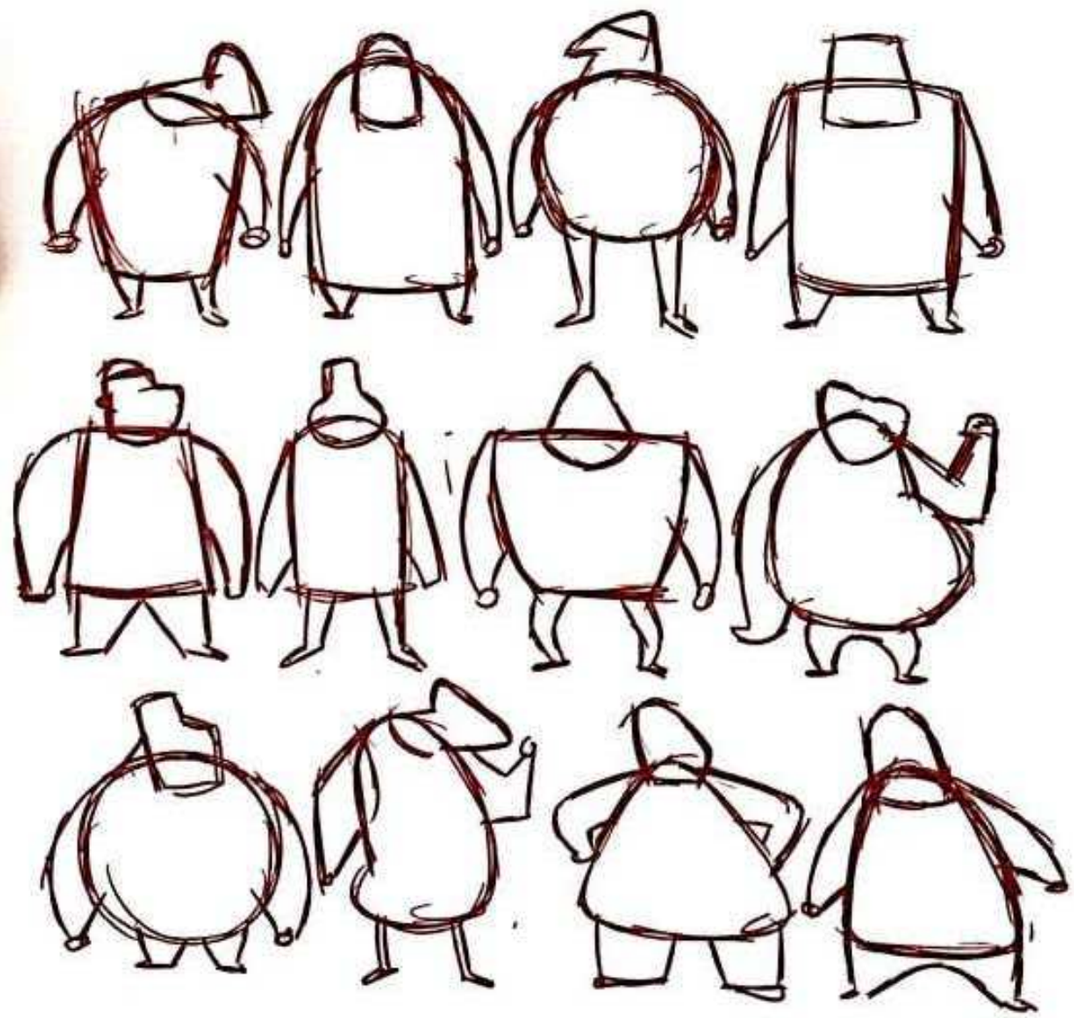
Recall some of the questions I mentioned in Chapter 1 to explore your character more: What is the character's name, occupation, place of residence, and attitude? And based on those answers, you can speculate more on what the character would look like, what a day in his or her life might be, and how he or she would interact with other people.

From the character breakdown I did earlier, what we know is that Salty doesn't lead the happiest life: he works early-morning hours at a job that is physically exhausting, especially for a man of his age. The work, and maybe other personal events, have hardened him, making him an unfriendly, unapproachable man who may or may not be a heavy drinker and likely smokes.

Phase 2: Gesture

THE THUMBNAIL PROCESS

The next step in the design process is to create thumbnails that capture who Salty is in possible shapes. I prefer to start off with this because it allows me to focus on the whole and not the individual parts just yet. At the same time, I have also focused on the form of the face to help me find the rest of the character's shape. Our goal here is to not commit too quickly. Allow time for the exploration of ideas, which come with repetition, not just by drawing one image.



Blocking in my concept shapes is similar to making silhouettes, but it is a quicker process. The goal here is *clarity* and *variation* of my three body parts: head, torso, and legs.

This first part of the process is not used on all characters in a production process, typically due to time restraints. When developing my main characters I will go through this process.

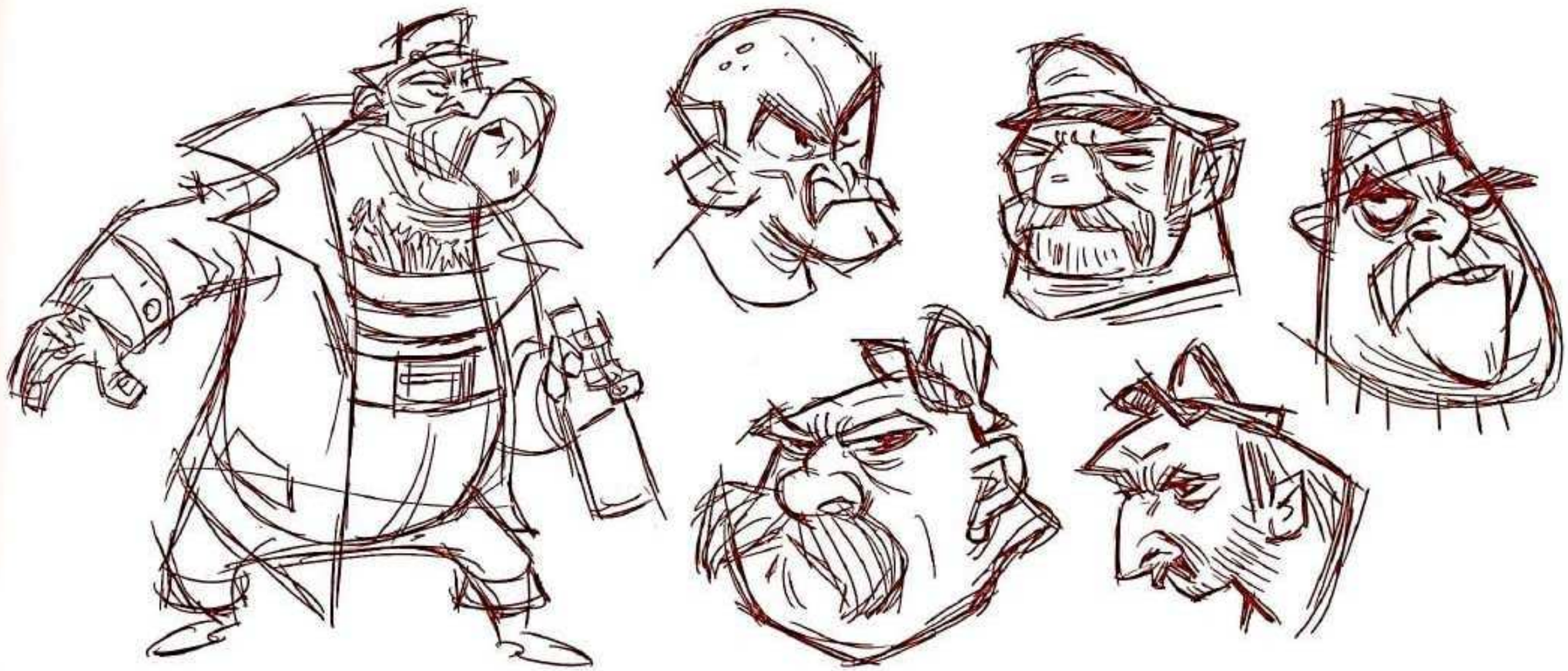
K.I.L. YOUR DESIGN. KEEP IT LOOSE.

Phase 3: Design

ROUGH REPRESENTATIONS

In the design stage, it is time to start playing with the different thumbnails and take them toward a rough representation. This could mean sketching more developed faces or several head-to-toe depictions (clothing and all)—any exercise to get closer to a strong design. And more questions could be posed at this point to further develop the design. Would Salty be wearing his work clothes? What would his hair look like? What does moody look like?

This stage will also require you to put all of the design ingredients of balance, rhythm, positive and negative spacing, and contrast into the design. Besides just blocking in your basic shapes with no detail, at this time you will also want to explore more specific character features. Know your character's personality before you begin this process in order for you to make best use of your pencil mileage. At this phase you are not trying to nail down a style as much as seeking concepts.



DO NOT JUST SETTLE ON YOUR FIRST IDEA OR SKETCH; IT IS YOUR OBLIGATION TO EXPLORE, EXPLORE, EXPLORE.

Rough Character Lineup

Now that I have blocked in my basic shapes, I will play around with the costume design aspect.

Knowing that my character is a longshoreman, I will seek photo reference to help me maintain that look.

You are exploring a variety of ideas here, and again, keep it loose knowing that you are not going to keep all the designs.

The client can see enough at this point in order to help guide your revisions.

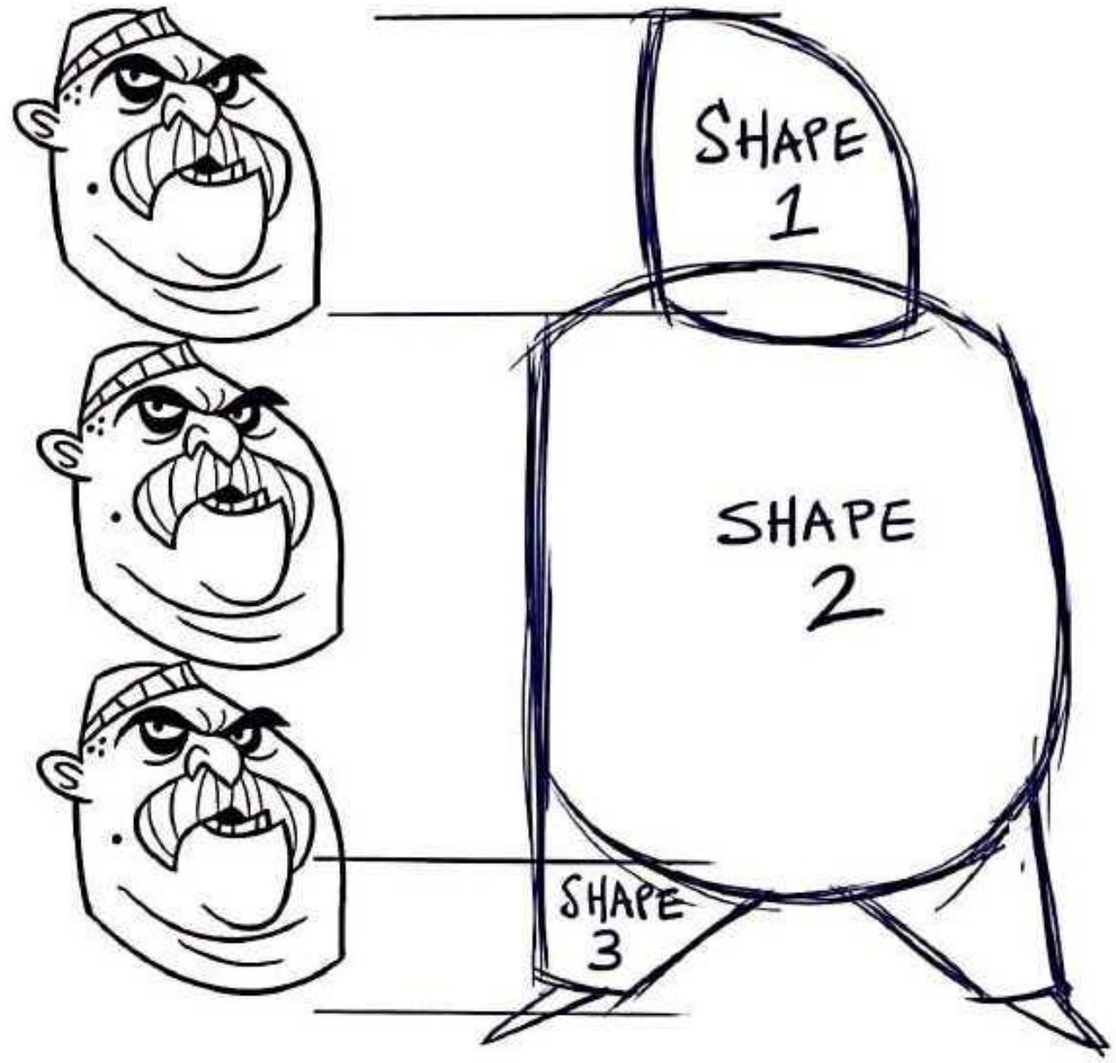
As mentioned before, it's smart to number your designs in order to make it easier for the client to "Frankenstein" images, which is taking various elements they may like on one character and mixing them with others.

Acting as my own client, I decided to take #12 to the next phase. I preferred the shape patterns within his face and also liked the idea of keeping him a bit rounder and stockier, a little bit more squeezable. I was also feeling more of a flow within the shape.

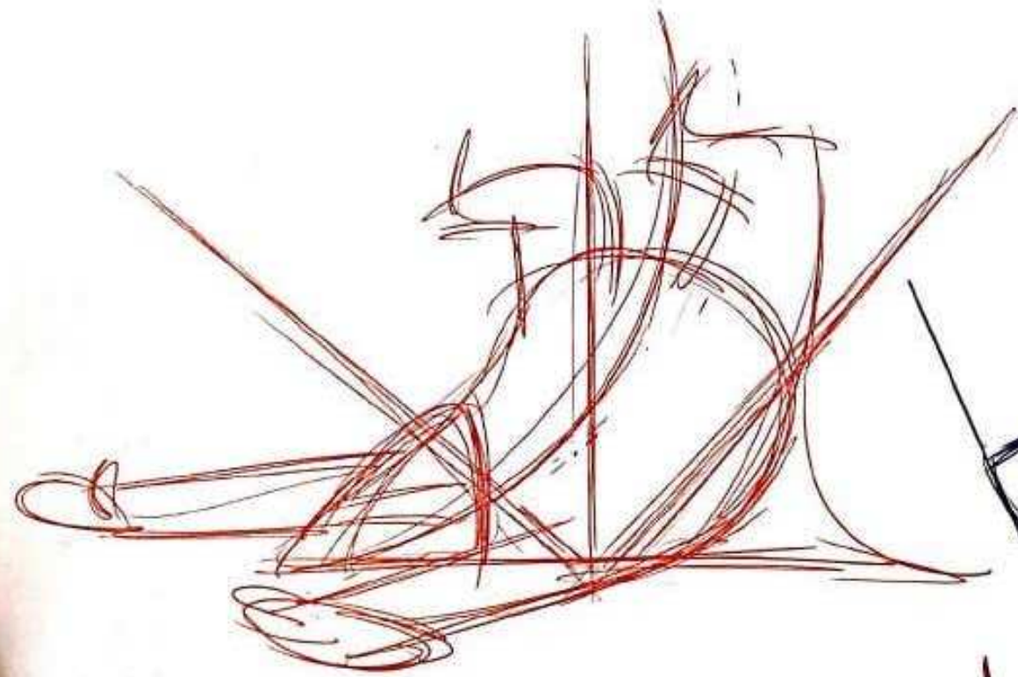
Establishing Proportions

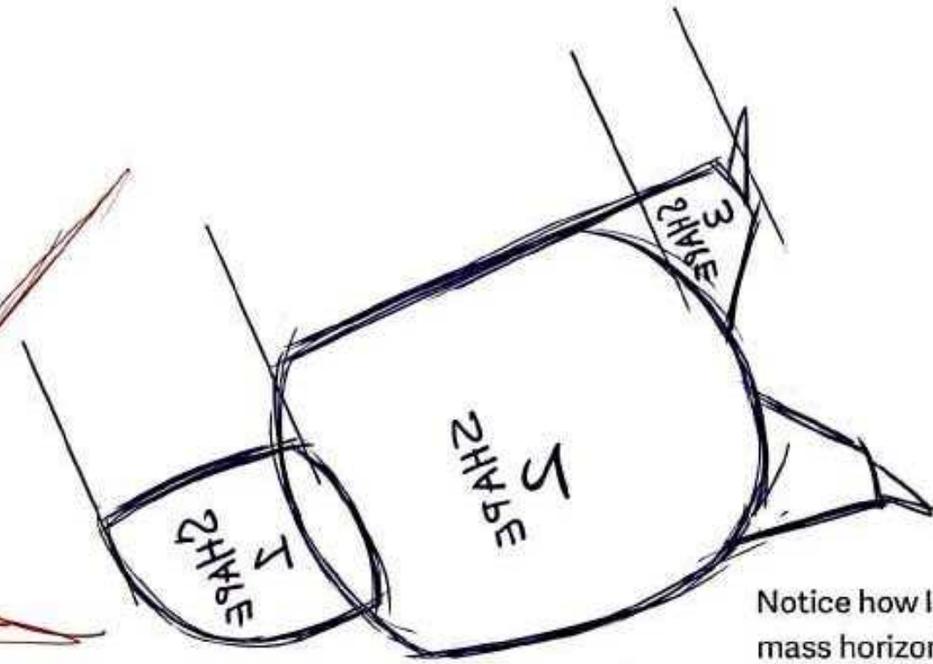
I like to break my shape into a simple shape mass. This gives me a clear sense of proportion and variation.

Use the head as a measuring device to help determine your character's general height and width.



It is important to refer back to this.
It takes practice, but eventually you will maintain the right character proportions: hand size to head size, and so forth.





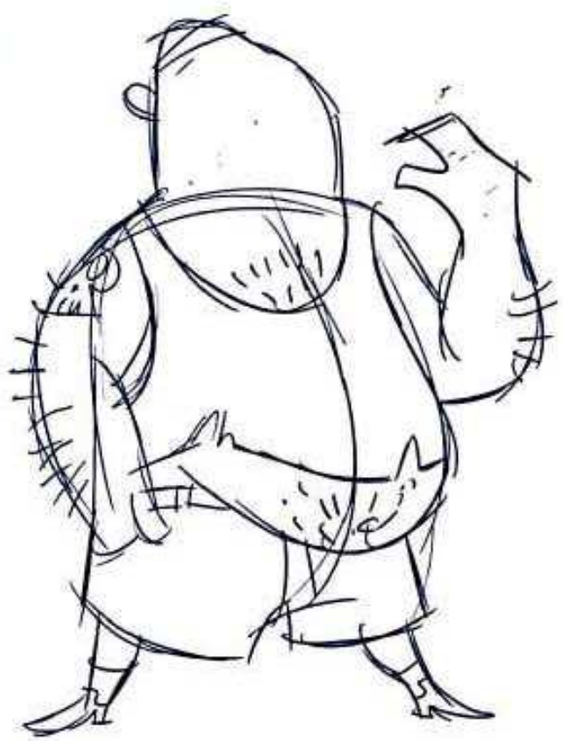
Notice how I just flipped the shape mass horizontally and then rotated it to develop an additional pose.

Posing Tips

For some poses, I will just use my shape mass.

My initial gesture simply acts as a guide and not an element to be just traced. You can see I still made adjustments to the second sketch.

Explore with different approaches. See what works best for you. Does it feel natural? On the following pages are step-by-step tutorials to try yourself.



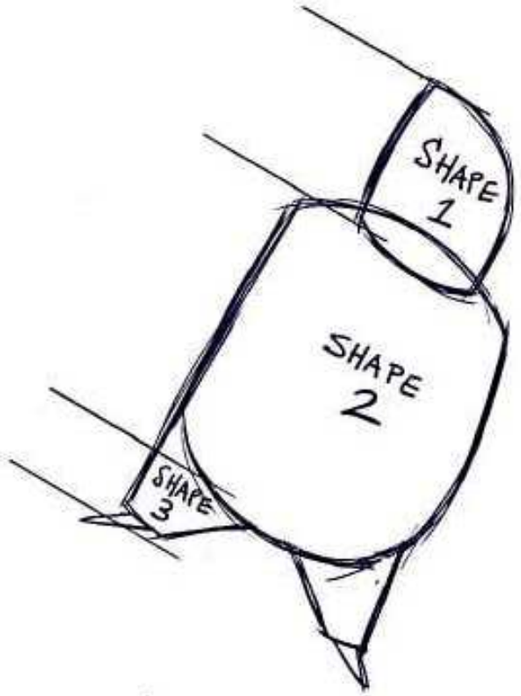
Costume Changes and Special Poses

One of the common tasks of the production designer is to make costume changes on your characters. They may be wearing a bathing suit or snow outfit; it all depends on what the script calls for.

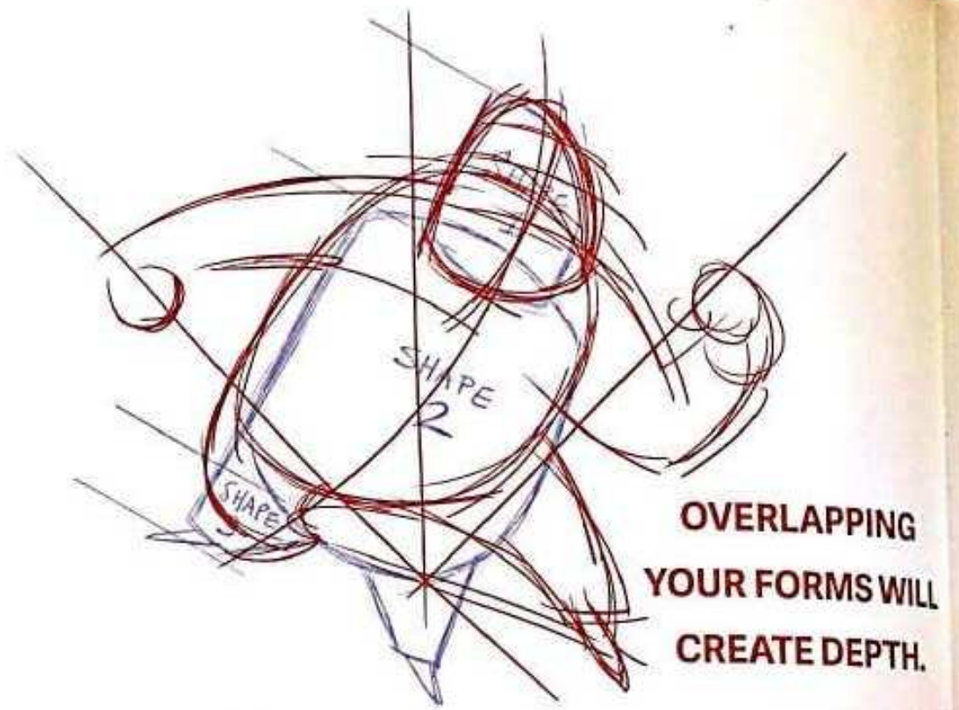
This is what is called a special pose. It also entails you putting your characters on model from the storyboards, which means making sure you are accurately addressing the expressions, proportions, and likeness of your intended character.

This is done in order to help the animators understand a possible rough shot. It may also introduce a new feature on the character that has not been referenced or painted yet, like the inside of a mouth.

Take your front 3/4 view and create a layer on top. This ensures the correct proportions of your character. Add the desired outfit on your character.

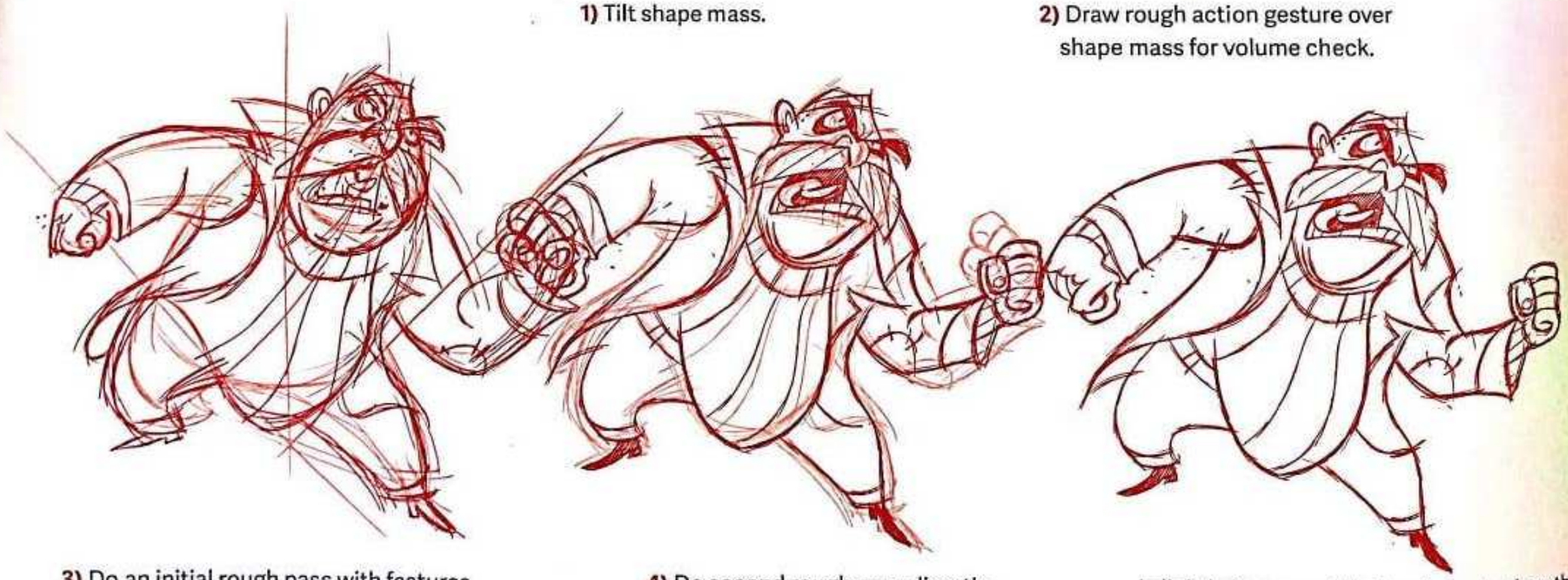


1) Tilt shape mass.



OVERLAPPING YOUR FORMS WILL CREATE DEPTH.

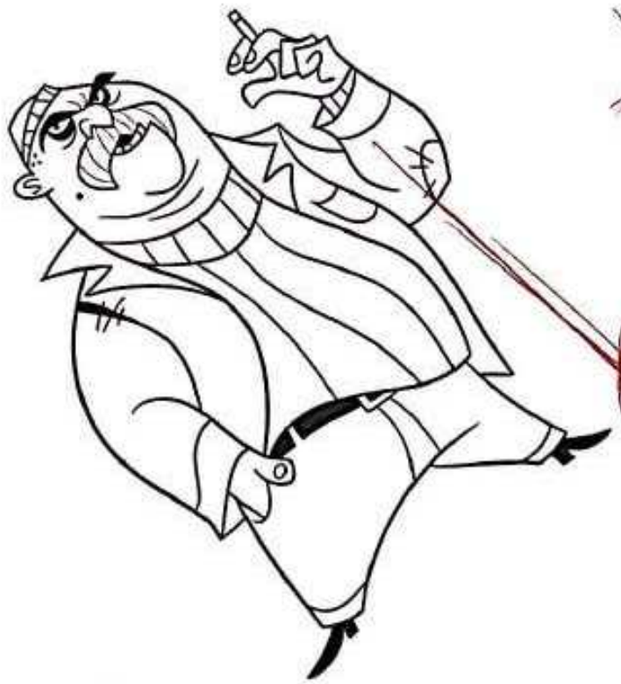
2) Draw rough action gesture over shape mass for volume check.



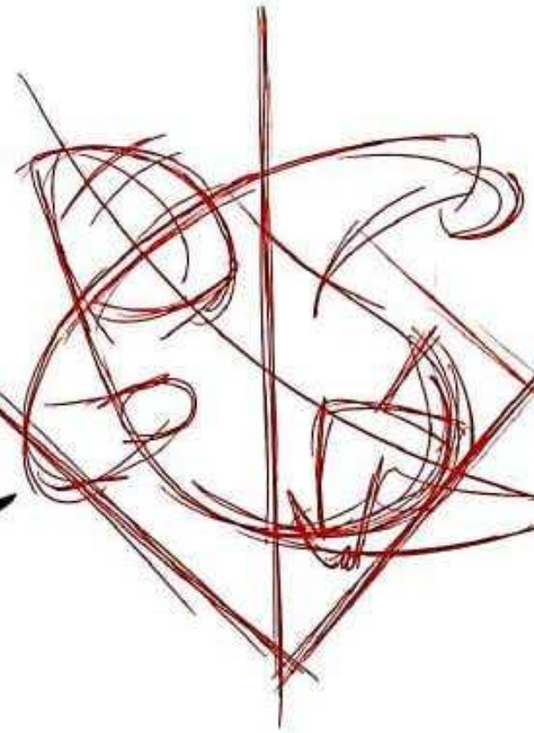
3) Do an initial rough pass with features.

4) Do second rough pass directly over first one, but refine more.

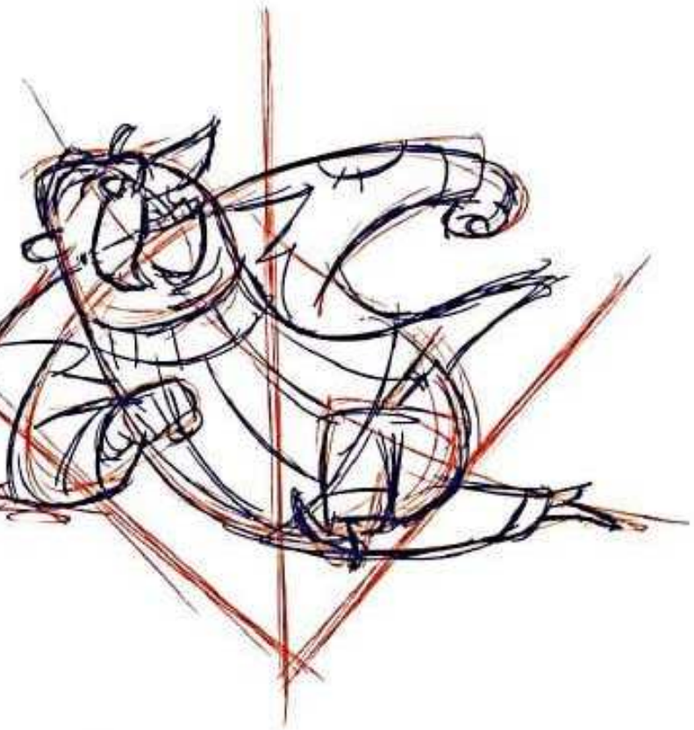
I slightly increased the head size to show the character moving closer to the viewer.



1) Tilt your character in the angle you want the action.



2) Add your volume gesture.



3) Add your design elements and connect your forms.

4) Never just settle. As you move onto your second or third rough, you may find that you want to keep pushing it. I ended up stretching him out more. An easy way to do this is to use the transform function in Photoshop.

The character will squash and stretch, but be sure to keep your proportions of the elements as close as possible in order to keep your character on model.

Phase 4: Form

MODEL-CONSTRUCTION BREAKDOWN

With the 2D character design set, it is time to give Salty more dimension; think of volume, depth, and perspective. This stage of the design process is about refining your character and includes "*drawing through*" your shapes, in other words, drawing from one side all the way to the other.

The goal is to provide a solid understanding of your construction: how parts connect to each other in order to create a model-construction breakdown. This includes "turnarounds"—five views of a main character: front, front 3/4, side, back 3/4, and a straight back view of the character.

Seeking different attitude poses will also help bring your character to life. At times, many productions will just call for the body to be straight with the arms at rest by the side. In most instances, you won't want to place a prop in the character's hands since that will be the prop designer's responsibility to design and submit.

Once you find the pose you wish to design, be sure to *draw through* your shapes even if the style appears flat. This will just add to the overall understanding of your character and will help you move him later.

Turnarounds

The most essential pose in the animation production process is your front 3/4 view.

With this view, you can draw all your other views.

The primary task here is to block your masses and establish all your horizontal landmarks.

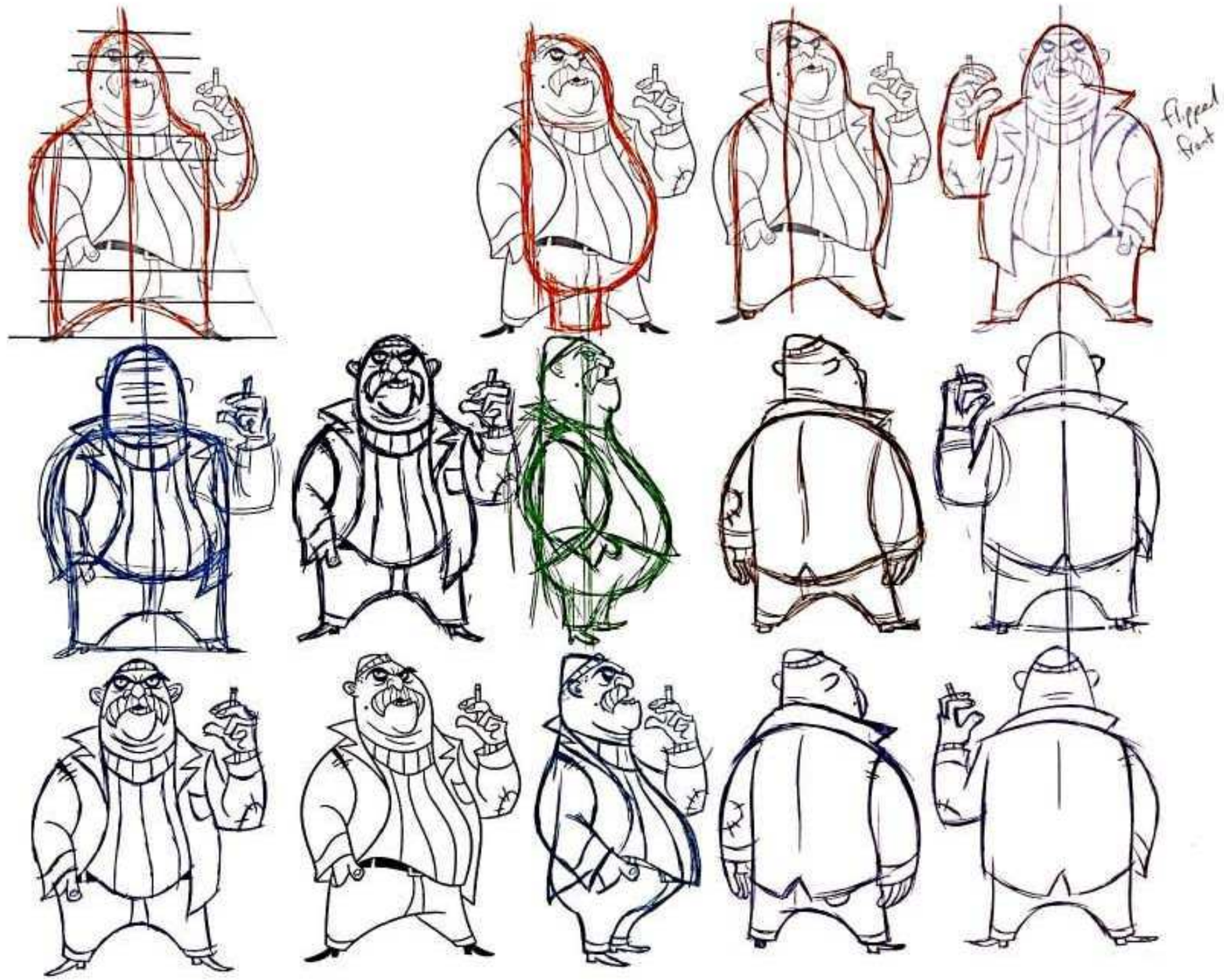
You can see by using my front 3/4 as a template, I am able to create all the views needed.

Keep it loose until you feel you have your volumes and proportions correct, and then you can begin to add the details.

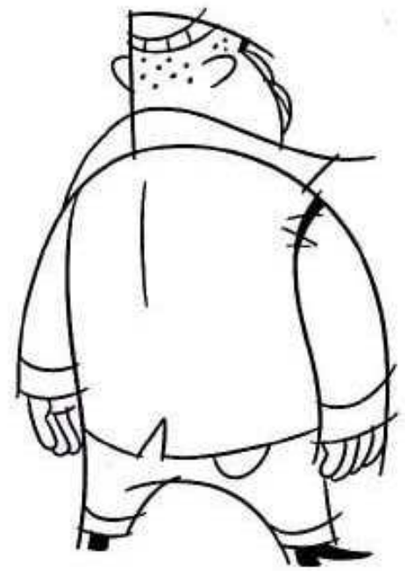
For the straight back view, you will want to trace over your front view.

The goal for the turnaround is to provide useful information for the storyboard artists and animators.

Each angle is not always required to have the same pose.



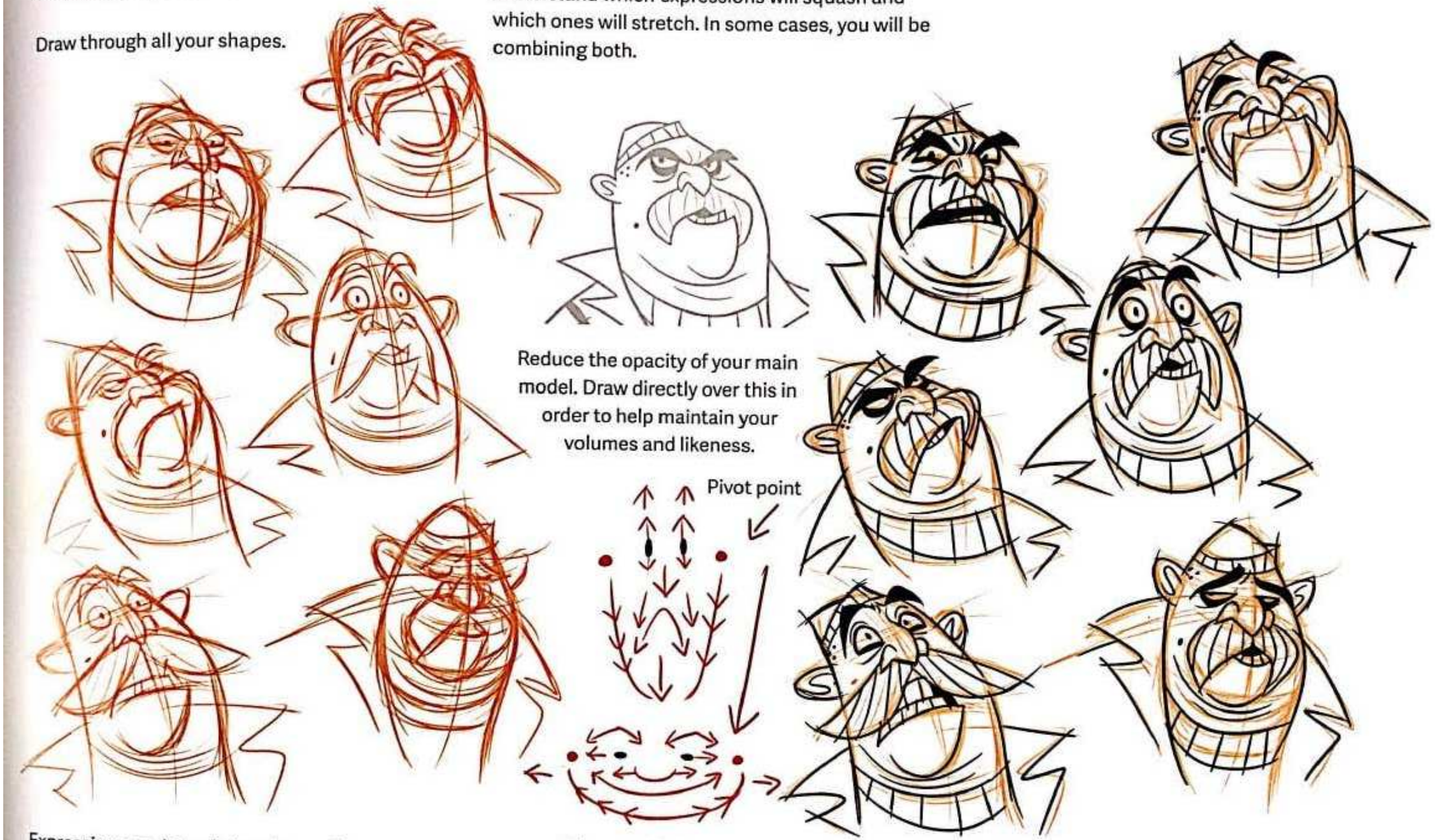
As I mentioned, the production turnaround is usually a five-point turn, which consists of a front view, front 3/4, side view, back 3/4 view, and straight back for the main characters. For incidental characters, you may be asked to design a three-point turn, which will consist of the front 3/4, side view, and back 3/4 view. Your front 3/4 view will be the most common angle in which to create all your incidentals.



Developing Expressions

Draw through all your shapes.

Understand which expressions will squash and which ones will stretch. In some cases, you will be combining both.



Reduce the opacity of your main model. Draw directly over this in order to help maintain your volumes and likeness.

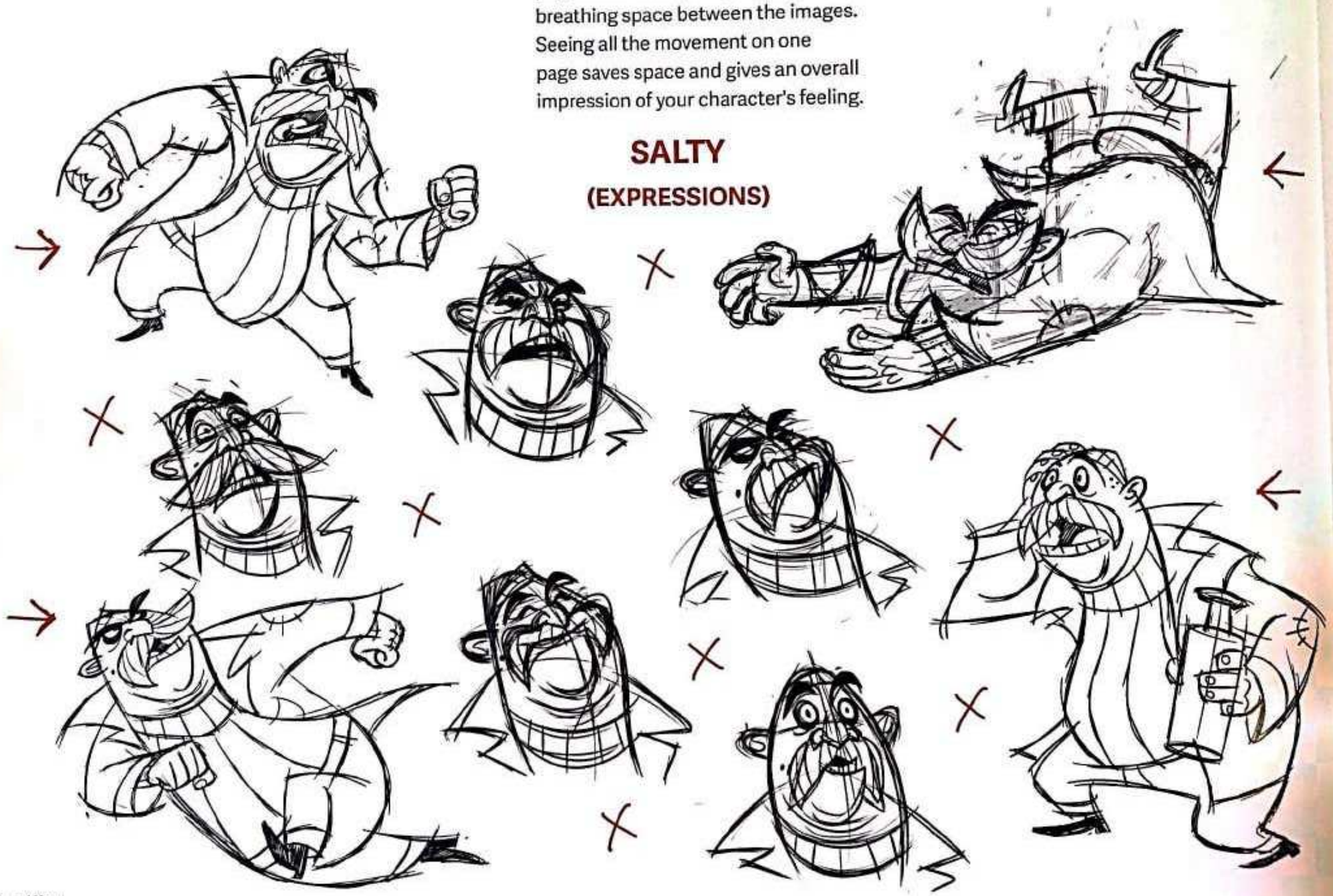
Expression consists of: structure, volumes, energy, squash and stretch, muscle pulls, non-symmetry, contrast, and variation.

The stretch starts at the pivot point.

Do not worry about putting your first rough pass on model; you are creating a template. On the tighter roughs, start implementing the true model.

In this stage you will have to lay out an expression page. The drawings on the left and right side should have your characters facing inwards towards the page. Don't overcrowd your page; give breathing space between the images. Seeing all the movement on one page saves space and gives an overall impression of your character's feeling.

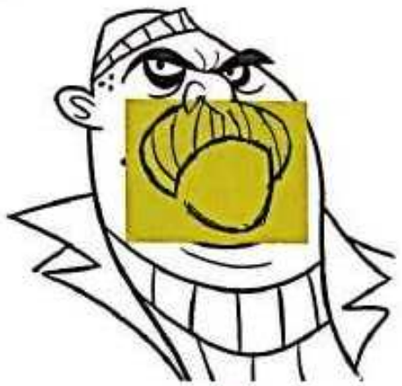
SALTY
(EXPRESSIONS)



Every production I have worked on has its own way of creating mouth charts. It is usually made up of eight variations. Your job is to work with your director to create the shapes needed. I have seen so many varieties: whether to show top teeth, bottom teeth, or teeth added if they have very few teeth on the main model. You may have to create a neutral, happy, and angry set.

STEP 1 Take your clean front 3/4 face and use as your template.

STEP 2 Place either a layer or Post-it Notes on top and draw the shapes. Cleanup comes last.

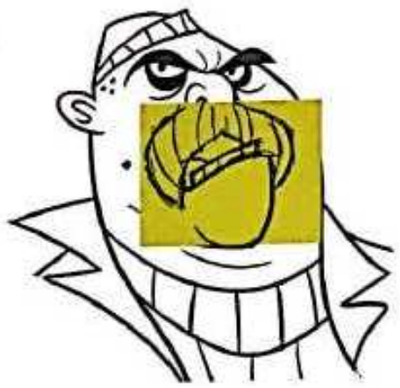


A
Mouth closed

B
Closed mouth, showing teeth

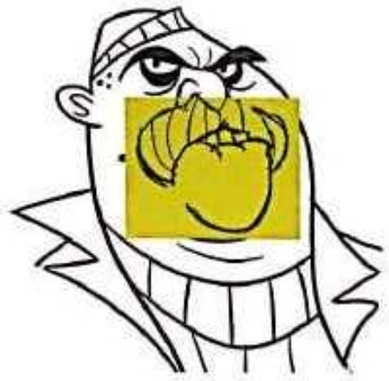
C
Mouth open, showing slight tongue

D
Same as C, pose is to the maximum talking open position



E
Mouth open to C position, just bending bottom lip

F
Open and rounded, but no teeth or tongue



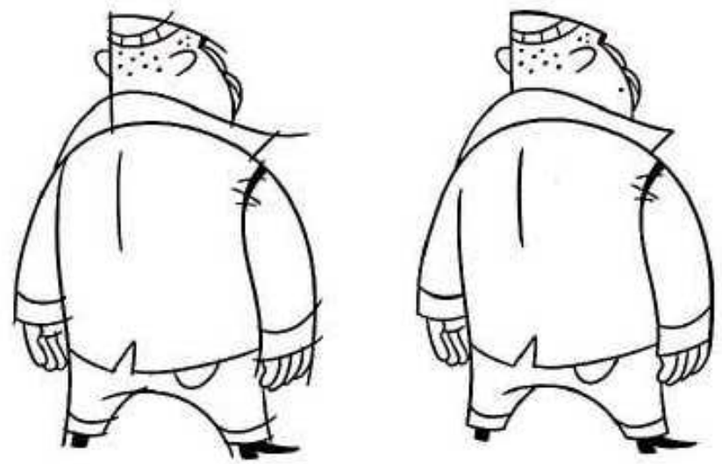
G
B mouth shape, biting bottom lip

H
Open as wide as D shape, but tuck the tongue under top teeth

Phase 5: Details

CLEANUP AND COLOR

The best way to think about the details stage of character design is like putting a cherry on a finished cake. You have gone through the design process, and now it is time to clean up your line, determine what line style, or add the color. I have found that if you are always in a rush to get to the color and cleanup, you will discover that your design is lacking. It's not a race—make definite decisions and then add the final touches.



Cleaning up my images, I *draw through* my shapes and erase after.

This is just a quick look at the Details phase, which will be explored further in Chapter 7.

When choosing what colors to use for Salty, I literally was thinking blue because it represented sea life to me. I also wanted saturated colors to make the mood feel a little darker.

THE SILVER WAY EXERCISES

1) In the Chapter 1 exercise, I asked you to do character breakdowns. Now revisit those characters and choose one to explore further. Rough out three to five gestures and shapes, design the character and clothing, check your construction, and then clean up.

2) Seek out illustrators who inspire you, and see if you can break down the five phases within their work. Norman Rockwell is one of my favorites to do this with. I also look at Ronald Searle and Tom Oreb for a nice variety.

HOW ANIMATED STORIES GET MADE

The Production Process

An essential part of understanding what goes into drawing effective characters is also learning how animated stories get made in the industry, and the character designer's role in that production process. First and foremost, the design process begins with the client. The job of a character designer is to fulfill the client's needs. A client can consist of your director on the project, or a business owner seeking designs for a business. It may take a day, weeks, or many years to develop.

Most feature films take up to four years to finish, and along the way need many concepts designed. It is important to understand that when hired to develop characters, you are working *for* and *with* somebody else who has specific needs. It is your job to make the clients happy, plain and simple. If they aren't convinced that the look is right, that is okay; it's what we call "back to the drawing board."

I am a firm believer in developing one's own projects, greeting cards, books, comics, animation, and so on, enabling you to be the one who is in full control and calling the shots. Nevertheless, understanding the basic responsibilities of a character designer, and the order in which they generally occur, will help guide you.

FREELANCE CHARACTER DESIGNER FOR THE EVERYDAY SMALL BUSINESS

You may never work for a studio or even want to. Working as a freelance artist means working from home or in your own personal office. It means having to promote yourself, ensuring people become aware of your skills, and, most importantly, keeping track of getting paid. Many artists, including myself, make a living working as a freelance character designer for a variety of clients: a real-estate agent, a mom-and-pop restaurant, a school, you name it. Everyone needs an artist.

Here are the basic responsibilities of a freelance character designer, followed by what to expect if you're an in-house designer. Which is the best fit for you?

1) Receive concept synopsis/breakdown: the designer is given a script and brief character descriptions to become acquainted with the characters, a sometimes has a quick in-person meeting or conference call with the clie

2) "Rough out" initial first-pass designs: the designer explores a variety of ideas, from full-body thumbnails to quick face sketches, and then develops them further to give the characters more personality. Establishing the style of the main character or characters will determin what the rest of the characters will look and feel like. I personally like to create just one character to begin with, and, once approved, I know the shape language all the others need to follow.

3) Revise elements based on director/client notes: once the designs are ready to be shown to the director, it is up to him or her at that point to make suggestions, such as bigger head, longer legs, different style, etc. And then it comes back to the designer to make those adjustments. Th revision process can happen once, or as many as 50 times. When worki with clients on a freelance basis, I usually limit my revisions to just two passes before they have to pay an additional fee.

4) Clean up and color final approved image: sometimes this will be the designer's choice; other times the designer will be given specific directio

In animation, when I am done developing the characters for that particula show or project, my designs will be given to the storyboard artist so he or she has a character to design from, along with the model pack. This pack is put together by production artists showing construction of characters, character lineups, expressions, attitudes, and turnarounds to help the arti understand the character in order to bring it to life. The pack is also given the animators to equip them with as much information as possible. Many times new character roughs and poses are drawn by the storyboard artist that will then come back to me (the production character designer) to put the style of the show or put on model, which means making it look and fee just like the cleaned-up, finished designs on that particular show.

IN-HOUSE PRODUCTION CHARACTER DESIGNER FOR TV

1) Design new characters based off a script, usually a front 3/4 view.

2) Create a full, four- to five-point turnaround of the main characters and usually for the incidentals (secondary characters that appear in the backgrounds), including a front 3/4 and back 3/4, and (sometimes) a side view.

3) Clean up designs if necessary. Not all productions will have the character designer do his or her own cleanup line; some productions have a separate cleanup department as it can be a whole other job in itself. On *Kim Possible*, I had to clean up my own characters with pen and ink, but on *Danny Phantom* it went to the cleanup department that used the program Illustrator.

4) Design special poses, like a character screaming or a distinctive pose, and even a difficult angle that does not appear in the model pack. These poses are determined by how the storyboard artist draws them on his or her boards. This will also include costume changes.

5) Create mouth charts to show the animators how the mouth will open and close in conversation. There can be a neutral mouth position, angry, and sad. These tend to vary according to each show.

Design, turns, attitudes, and expressions are the four required skill sets for any character designer to have.

IN-HOUSE PRODUCTION CHARACTER DESIGNER FOR CG FEATURE FILM

1) Design a variety of concepts showcasing personality based off film premise or script.

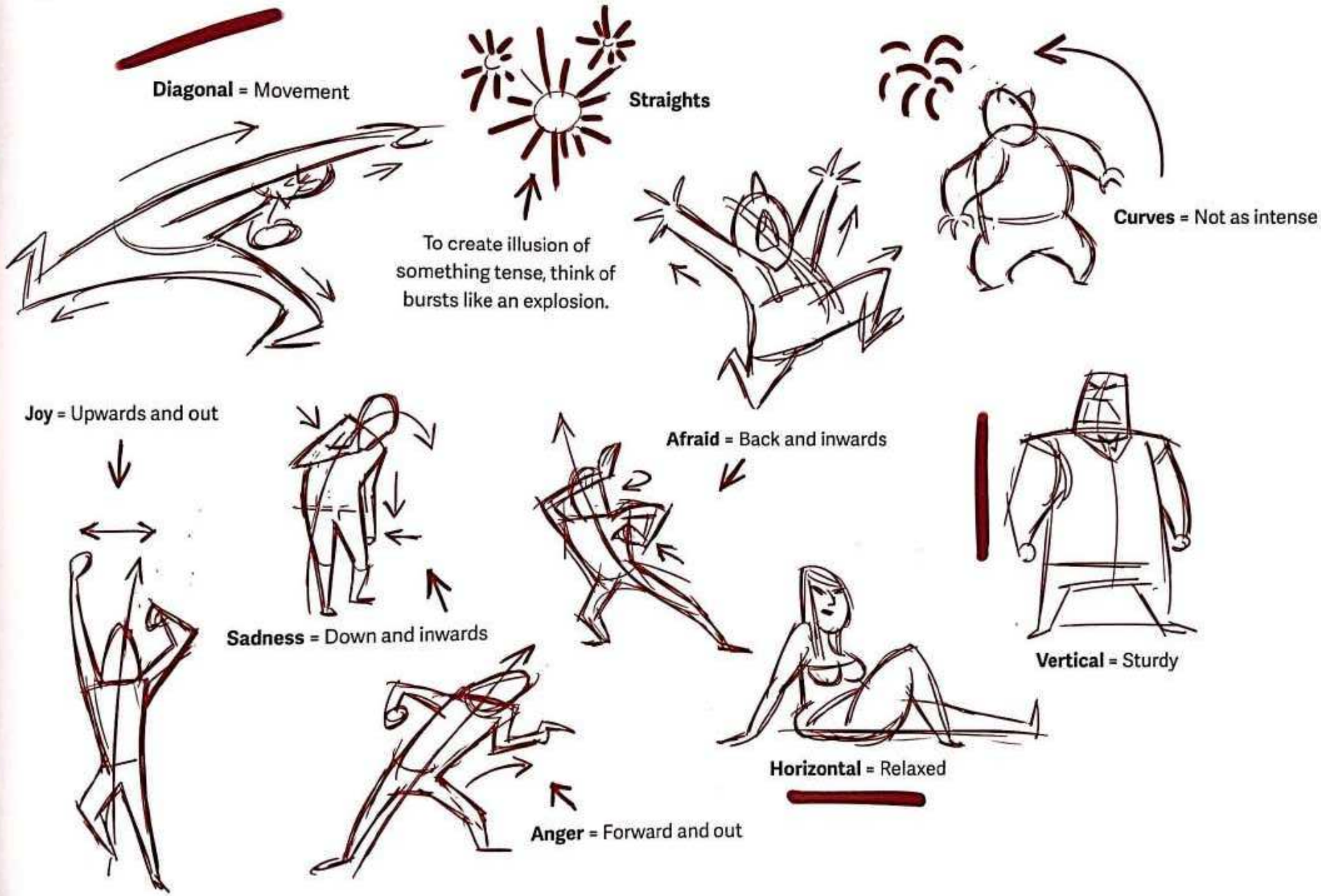
2) Tighten up approved concepts, which does not necessarily mean cleaning up with a nice line or painting; it just gives a clearer idea of the design concept. Most feature films are CG (computer generated) today, so making the image as tight as a TV production drawing is not as necessary, due to the fact that it is not the final look.

3) Create turnarounds: Oftentimes for CG, a T-pose turn will need to be created. This entails drawing a character standing with arms extended out to the side. The turn will be given to the CG modeler, so it does not need to be super clean but should provide enough information for the modeler to understand what shapes to build.

4) Create attitudes and expressions much like what is needed on the TV side in order to help the board artists and animators. The order is different from TV because you have more time to develop, and most of the work does not need to be so tight.

5) Create character breakdown of construction and features, such as how the hands work and different mouth charts. This process may involve a bit more because it is being built and reaches different depths from character modeling (building the character in 3D with no mechanical working parts) to character rigging (adding all the mechanics to the model so it is ready to be animated).

And when working with video games as a designer, the role will be much the same as the criteria above and may even require the designer to color or build the CG model.


Diagonal = Movement
Straights
To create illusion of something tense, think of bursts like an explosion.
Curves = Not as intense
Joy = Upwards and out
Sadness = Down and inwards
Afraid = Back and inwards
Vertical = Sturdy
Horizontal = Relaxed
Anger = Forward and out

Observation is Key

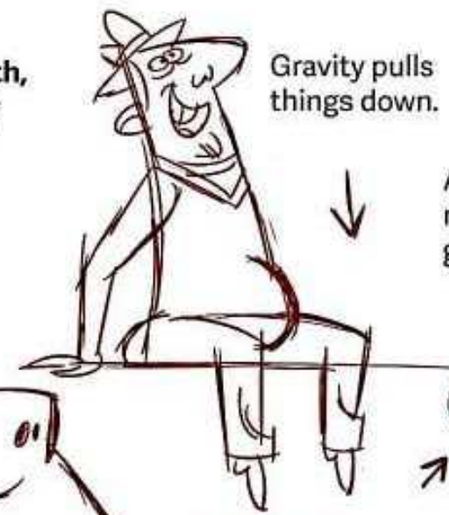
The body language of a character can reveal a range of emotions: fear, happiness, anger, you name it. When trying to express one of these feelings in a design, think about what body positions express what you want to capture.

Where do you place the hands and head if the character is angry? Do the feet point inward or outward if the character is startled? How would the head tilt if the character were sad? If a body is reacting, so does the head, and vice versa. These are things to be conscious of as you develop the right pose for your character to support the story.

= Action

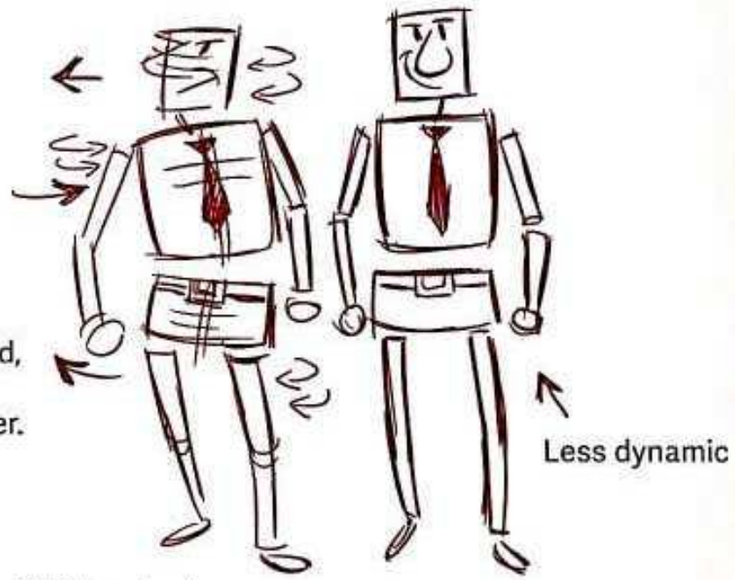
= Strength, solidity

= Rest, calm



Gravity pulls things down.

Alternating twists of head, rib cage, and pelvis will give more life to character.



Less dynamic

Solid contact

Not so grounded

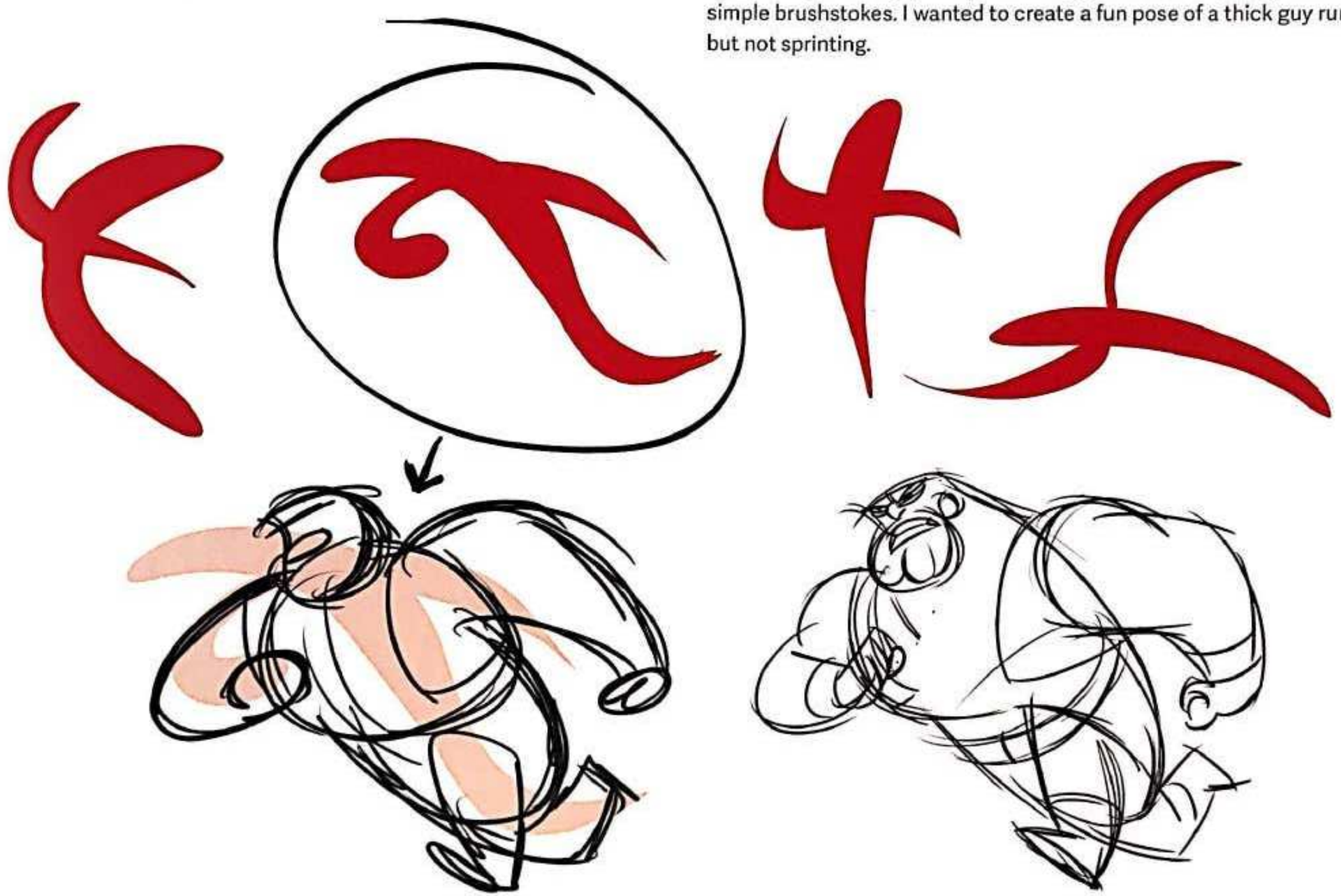
Appeal can come from opposing overlaps.

Keeping things flat on bottom can achieve an illusion of weight.

Left arm

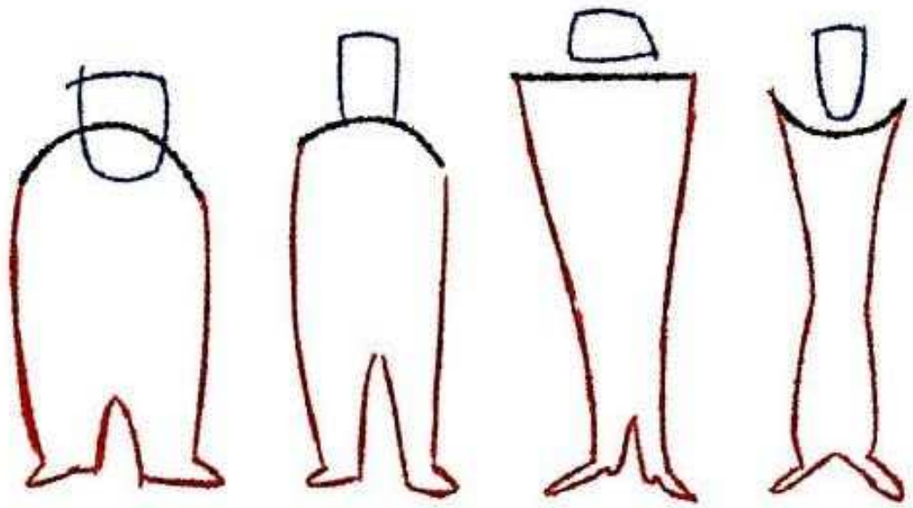
Right foot

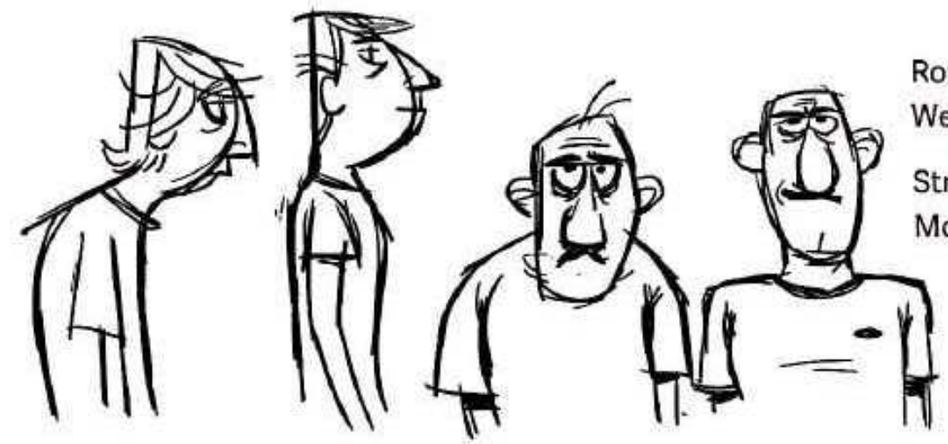
You can capture very quickly the energy you're seeking in a pose with simple brushstokes. I wanted to create a fun pose of a thick guy running but not sprinting.



A shoulder line and head position, depending on its angle, can reveal a type of character without showing any type of other details.

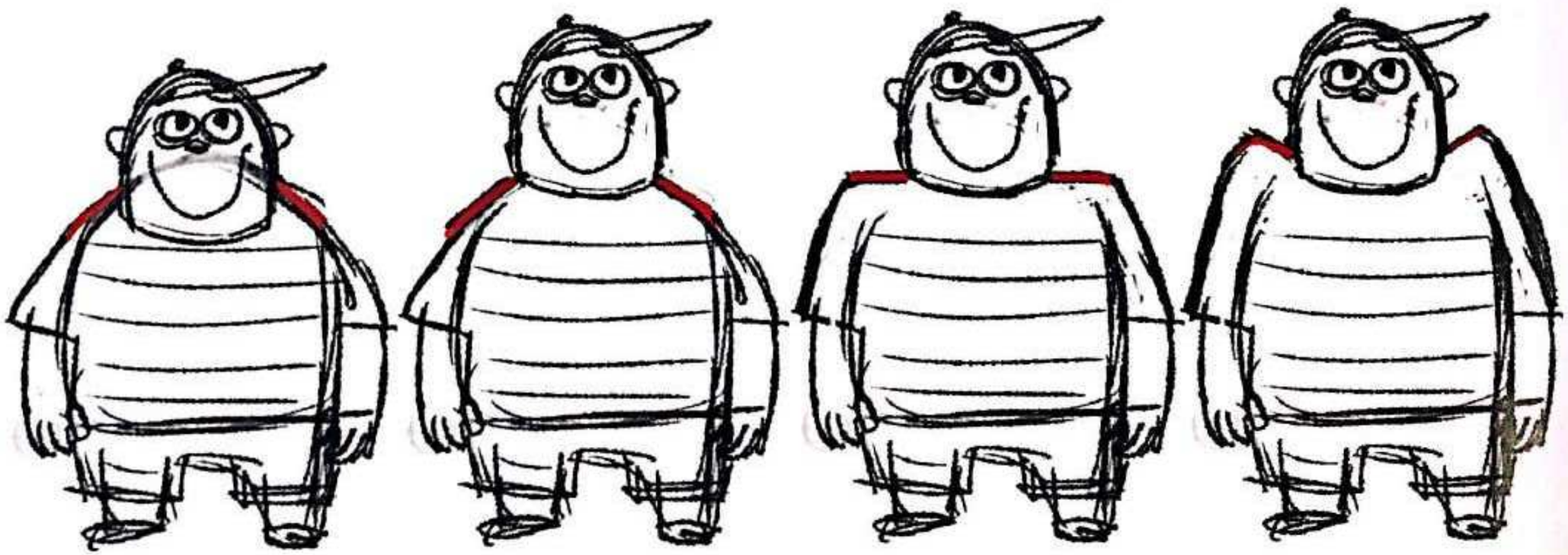
Always consider the feeling of your character; this will help you define to the audience the type of character he or she may be without the use of words. Gesture is a visual form of communication.





Rounded shoulder = Weight of the world

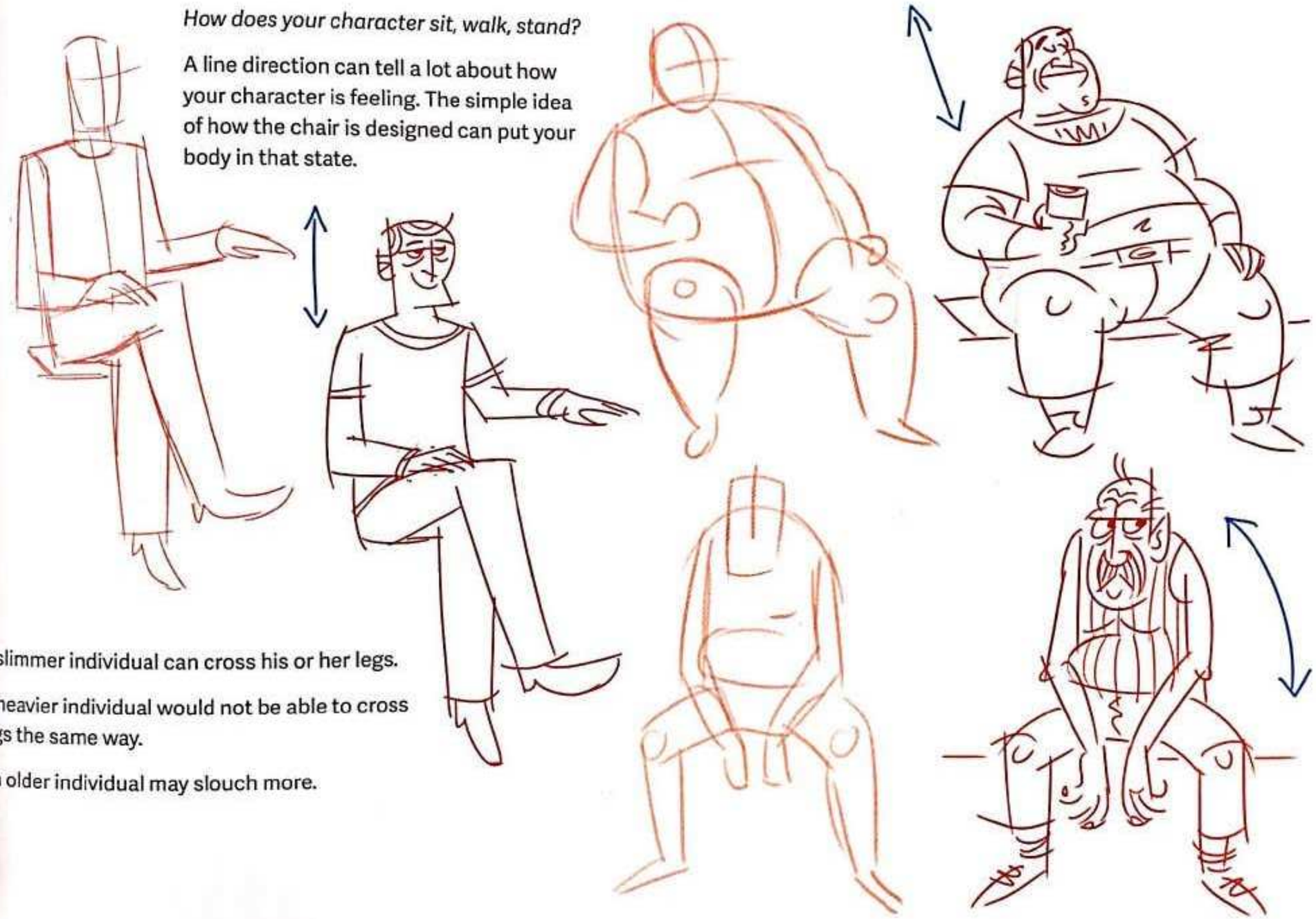
Straight shoulders = More confidence



Many elements are at work when creating an effective gesture. In addition to thinking about what attitude you're trying to depict, you must also take into account gravity, how real bodies move—as well as their clothes. Pay attention to the world around you. Observe and recall. Then depict.

How does your character sit, walk, stand?

A line direction can tell a lot about how your character is feeling. The simple idea of how the chair is designed can put your body in that state.



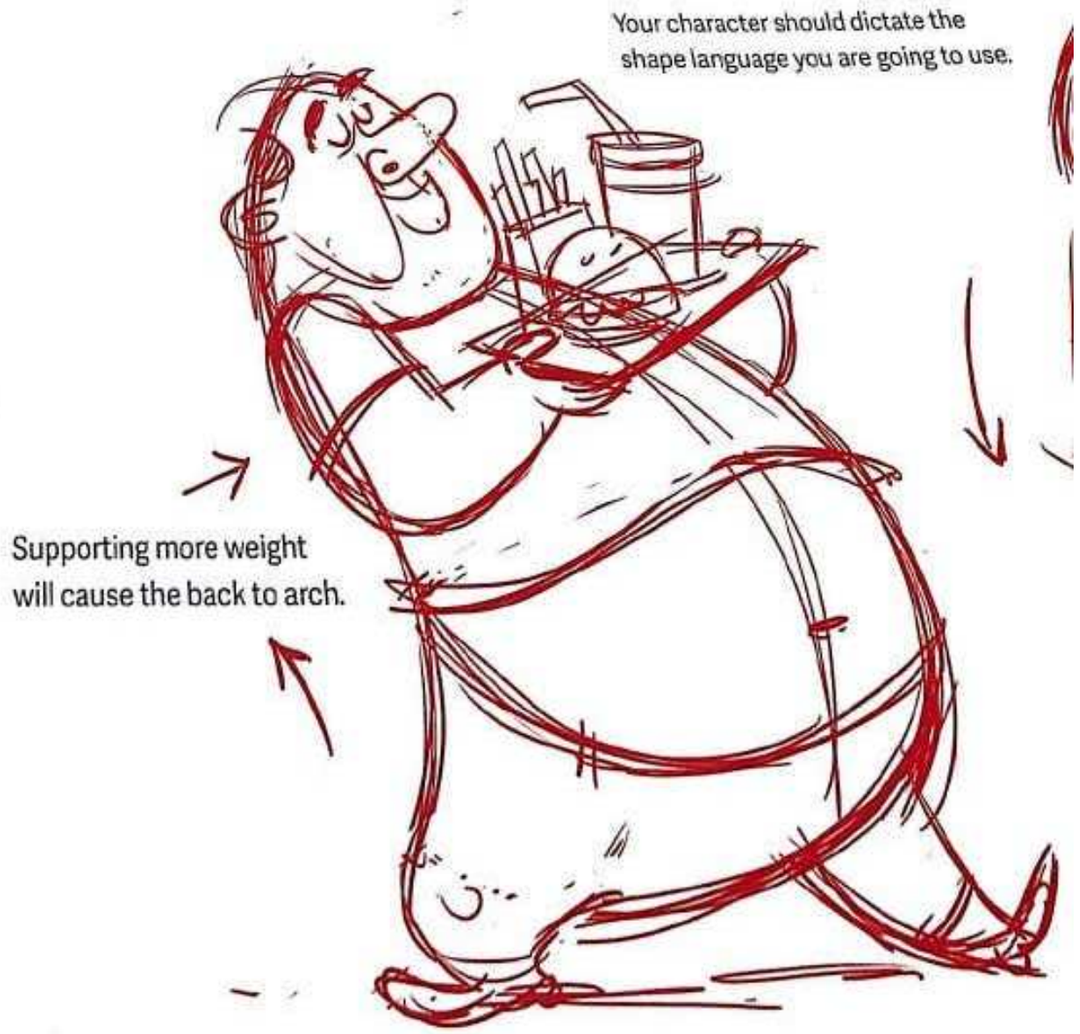
A slimmer individual can cross his or her legs.

A heavier individual would not be able to cross legs the same way.

An older individual may slouch more.

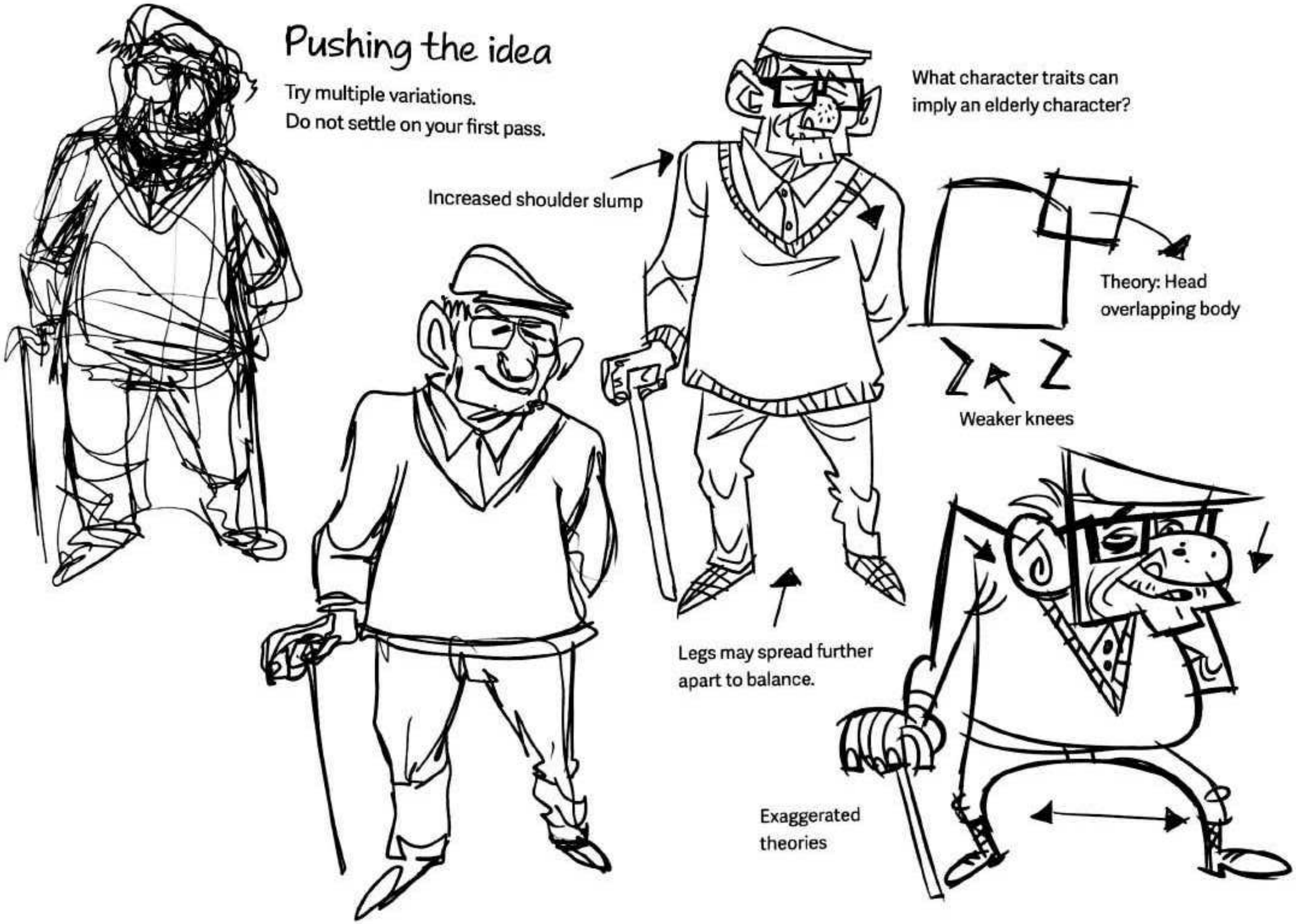
Observation from Life is a Key Ingredient to Your End Result.

A heavyset person may not have as much flexibility as a skinnier person. The tray and arms would rest closer to the body and not have as much room to move.



Pushing the idea

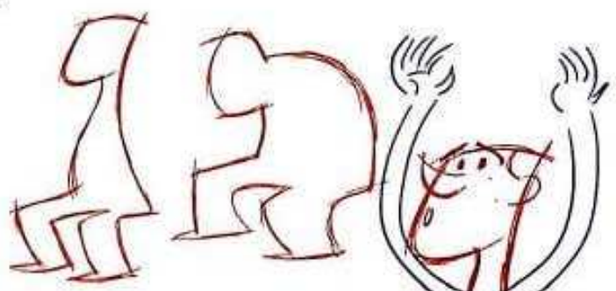
Try multiple variations.
Do not settle on your first pass.



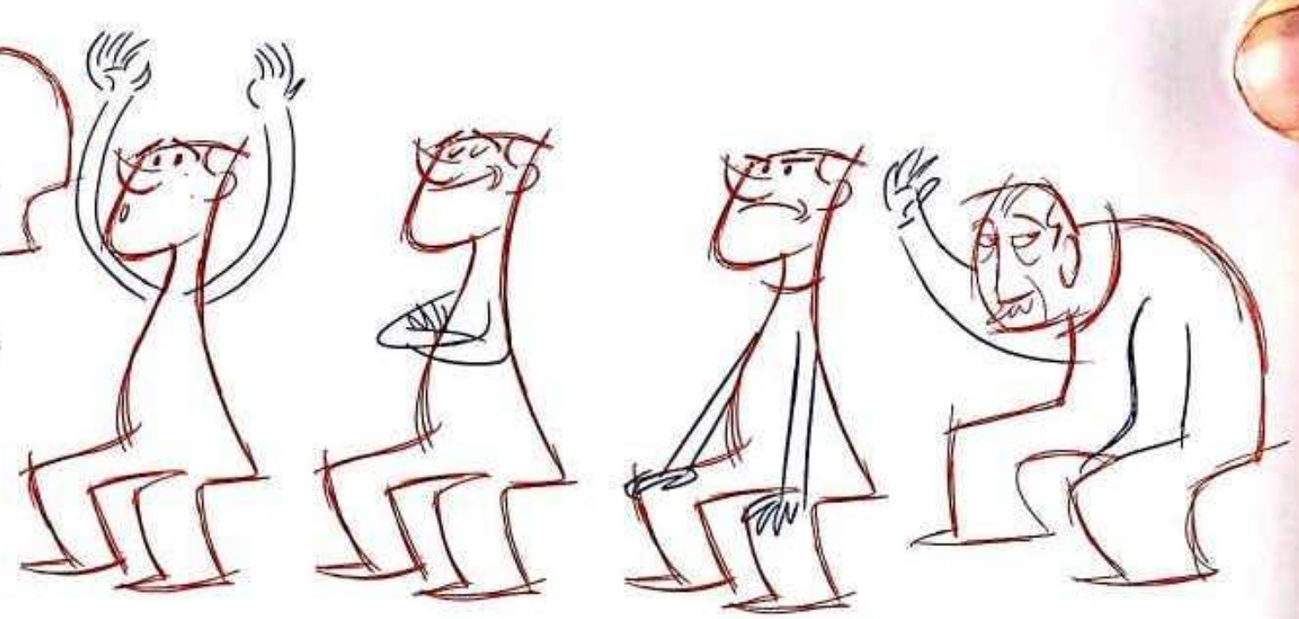
THE STORY:

- **NAME?** Jerry Loomy
- **AGE?** 65
- **YEAR?** 2015
- **OCCUPATION?** Used-car salesman
- **CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY?** Sleezy
- **OTHER TRAITS?** Missing finger, patch over one eye, short and stocky, ill-fitting salesman clothes

The body mass indicates a confidence and sense of authority.



The body shape should convey the feeling before any details. The age may also be apparent. The body mass is 75 percent of the feeling; the arms can be placed anywhere and tell a different story with each arm action and facial expression.



Observe where clothes may hang.

Find the simplest lines at first to determine your pose.

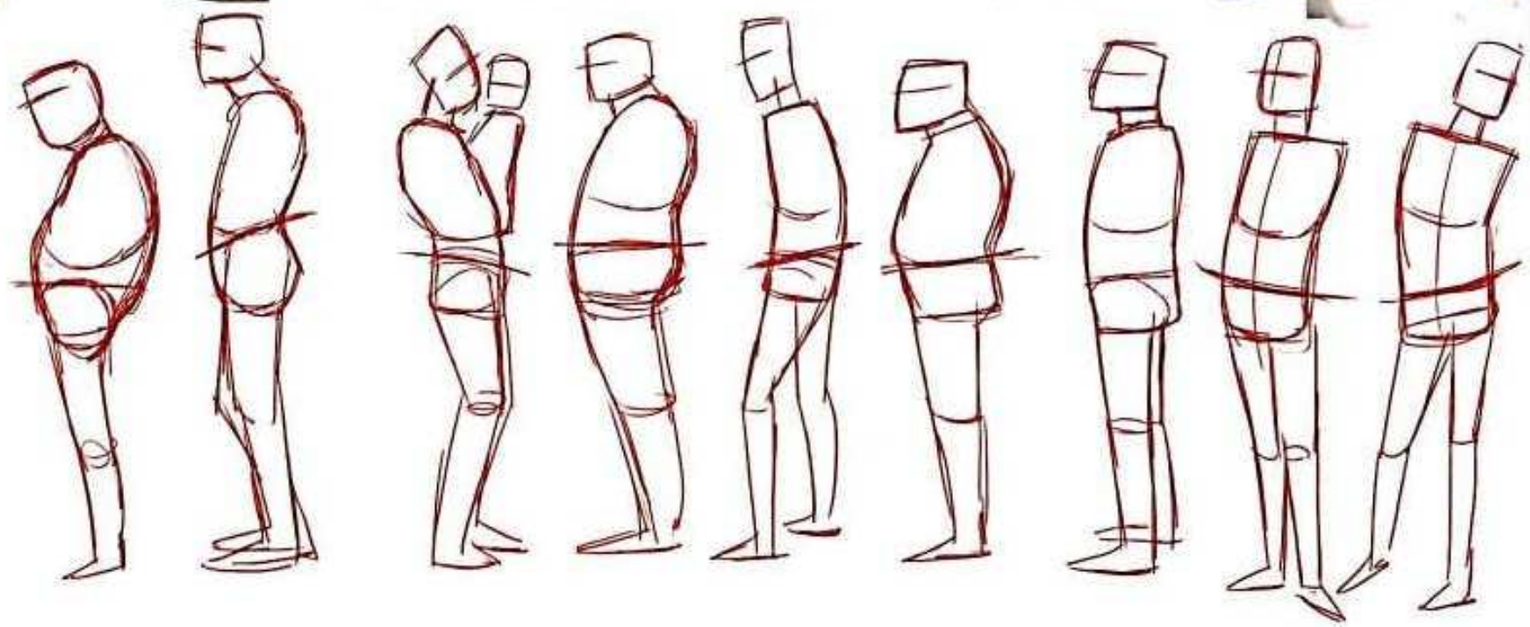
Look for the main tilts.

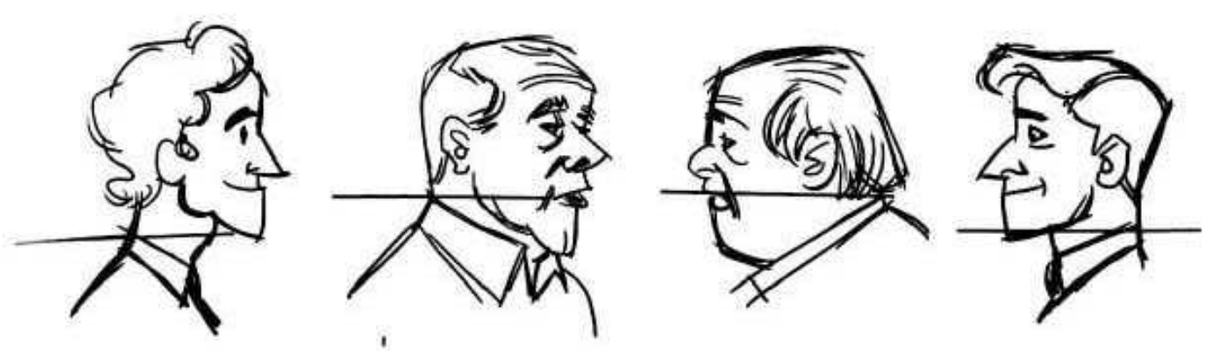
What is happening underneath the clothing?

You can find the face direction with a box shape. No matter how simplified your drawing may be, take into consideration the basic forms underneath.

All these subjects have one thing in common: they are waiting. This is a stationary action. The body is at rest and all have the same vertical line of action of stability. Every pose tells a story, and this is what needs to be observed.

Take some photo reference and draw overlays on top to discover the *basic* shape.





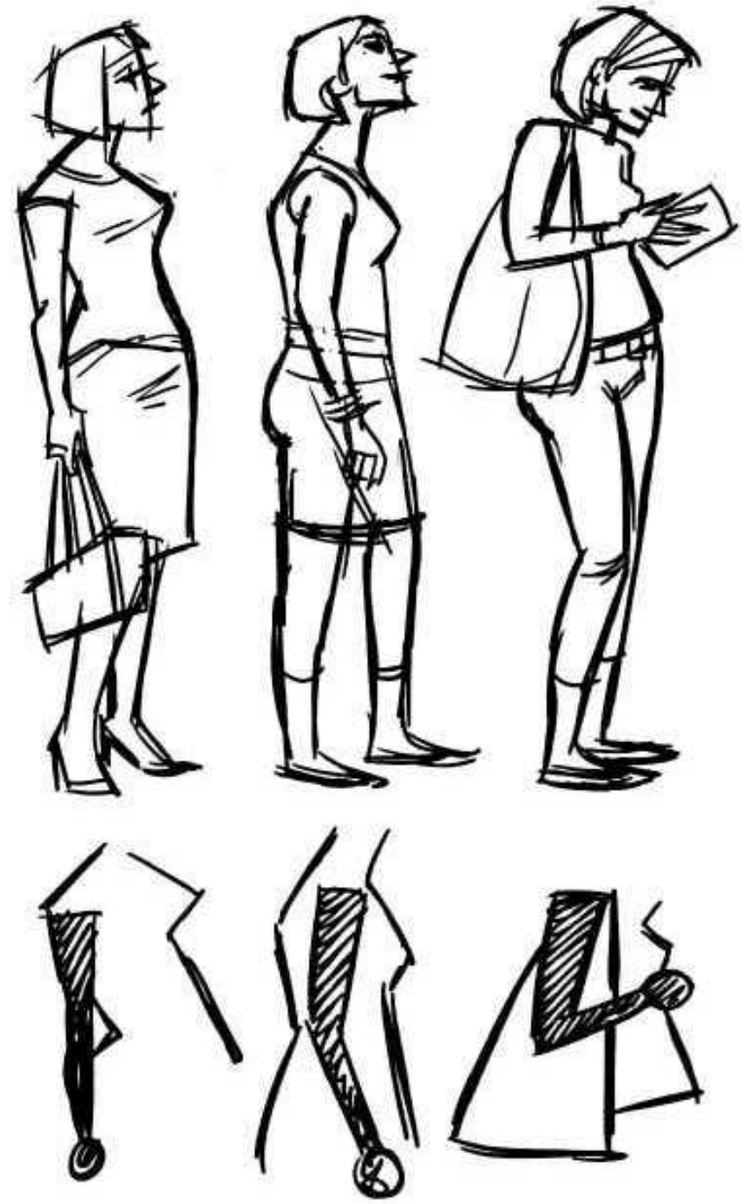
Age may affect where placement of the collar on shirts may be. Observe it.

Stiff; mug is a tangent.

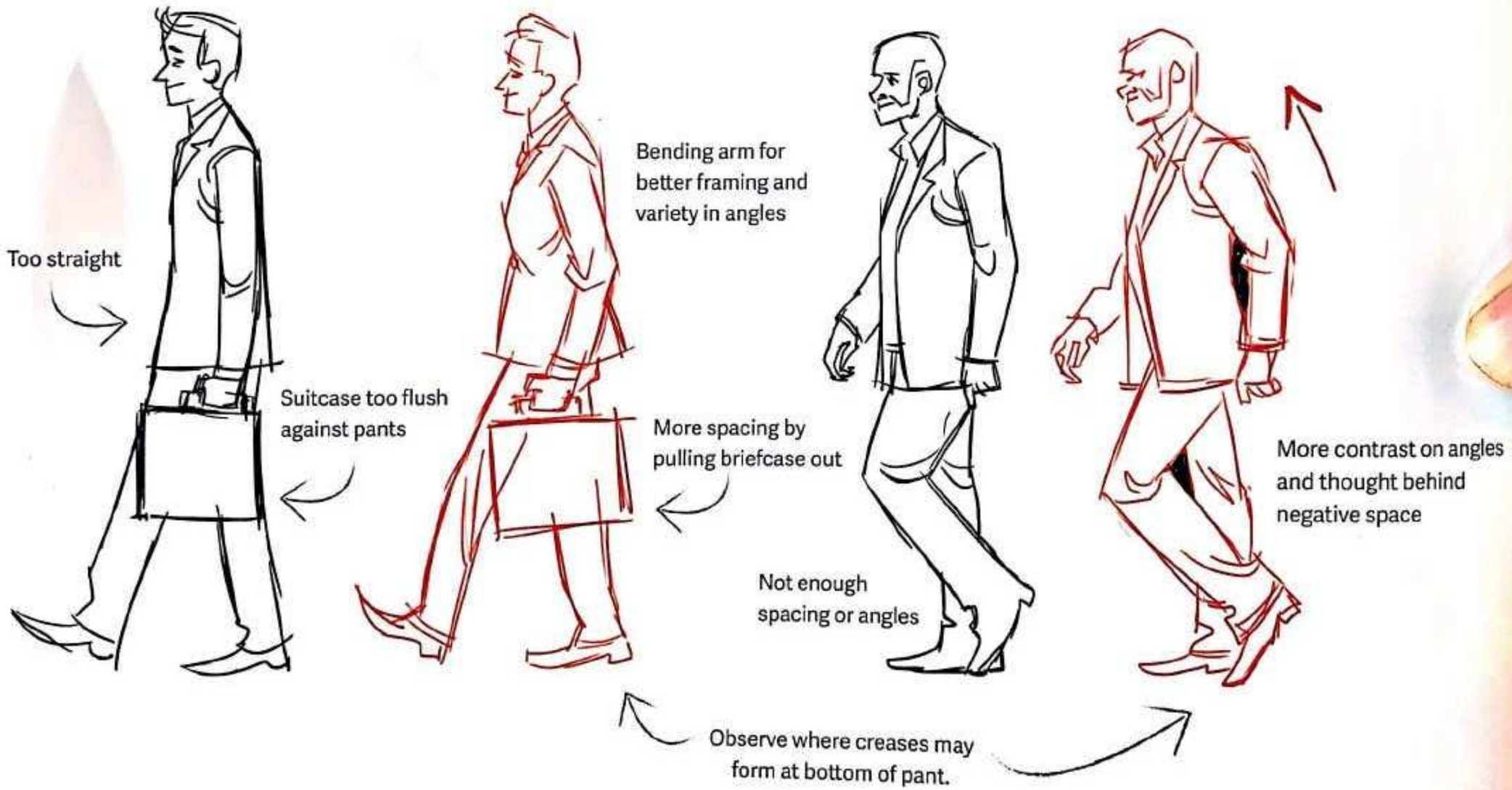
More life by contrast in angles

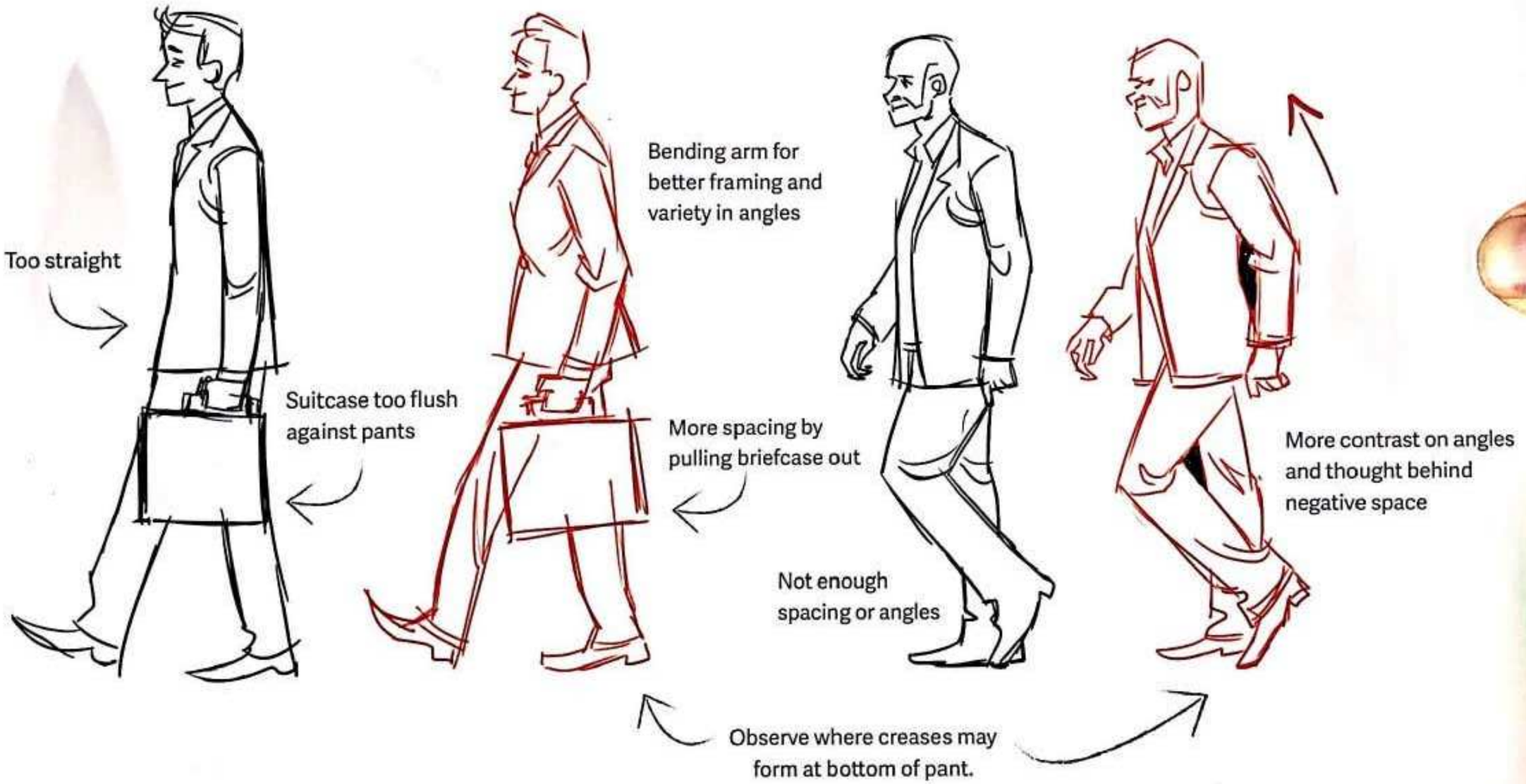
Stiff, even placement of objects; too straight

Better due to tilts, clarity, framing, and variation



More life and movement in a standing pose is created by angle variation and framing of elements within shapes.


Too straight
Suitcase too flush against pants
Bending arm for better framing and variety in angles
More spacing by pulling briefcase out
Not enough spacing or angles
More contrast on angles and thought behind negative space
Observe where creases may form at bottom of pant.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Not enough spacing or angles
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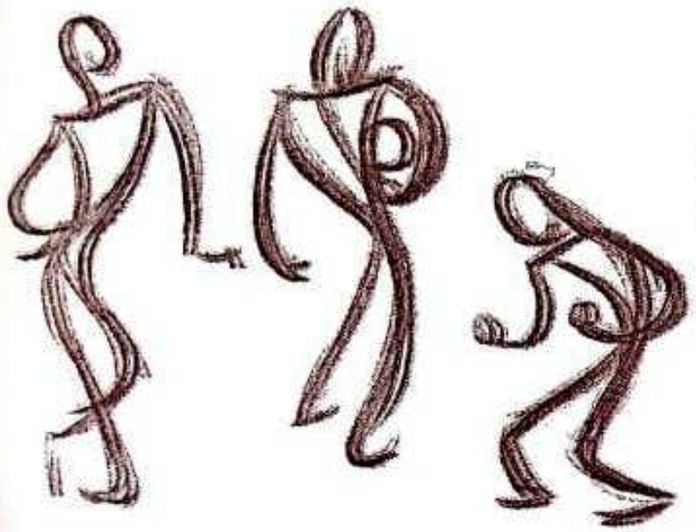
Observe where creases may form at bottom of pant.

Be Loose and Clear

Your goal is for the viewer to see the image as quickly and clearly as possible. If it is cluttered, it is confusing. The best way to check this is to reduce your image to as small a size as you can see it on your screen. Ask yourself: Is it clear? Does it read?

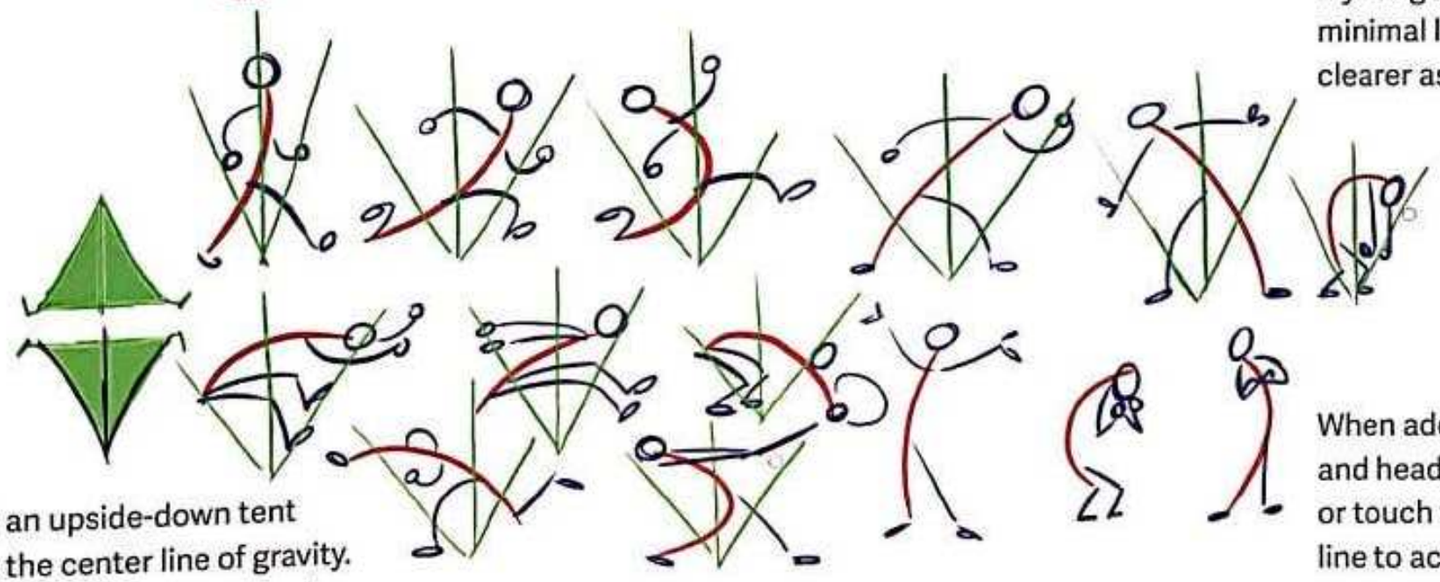
A great lesson I learned from the great animator Shamus Culhane and *Mad* magazine artist Mort Drucker is to practice by drawing with a pen; it builds your confidence and ensures that you won't stop and keep erasing, thereby blocking your creative flow. Keep it loose in order to capture a relaxed feeling and give you the time to explore other ways of expressing the idea.



My theory is if you can't draw your character as a readable *stick figure* expressing an emotion, then you can't draw it at all.

Using the long P:
Think of the letter P as a tool to find the flow and direction.

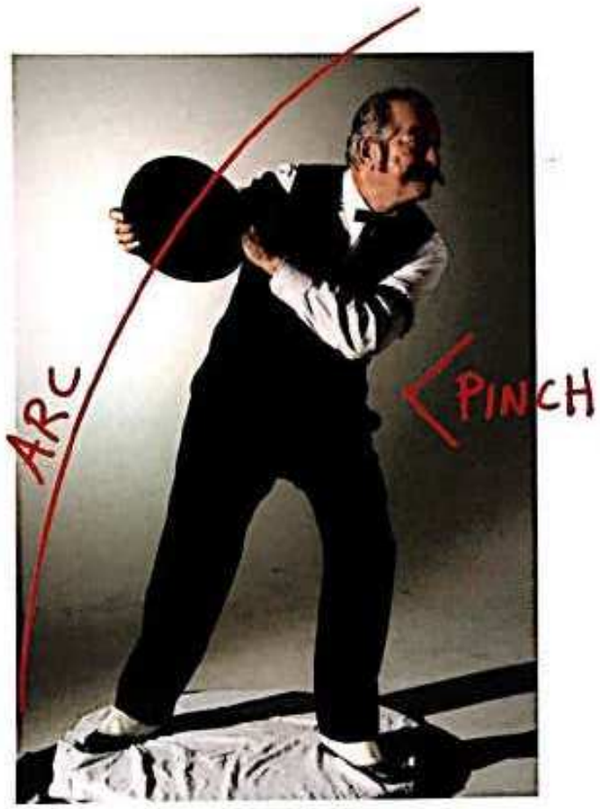
If your gesture doesn't read with minimal line, it won't become clearer as you add detail.



For action poses, begin with an upside-down tent shape. This will help you see the center line of gravity. It is helpful to consider the rib cage crossing over the line going one direction and the pelvis crossing in the opposite direction for more dynamic poses.

When adding the appendages and head, be sure to go beyond or touch the edges of the tent line to achieve pushed balance.

Your goal in the beginning is simply to draw as loosely as possible. *Do not* focus on refining a drawing on the first pass. This comes in time through the process of refining your idea.

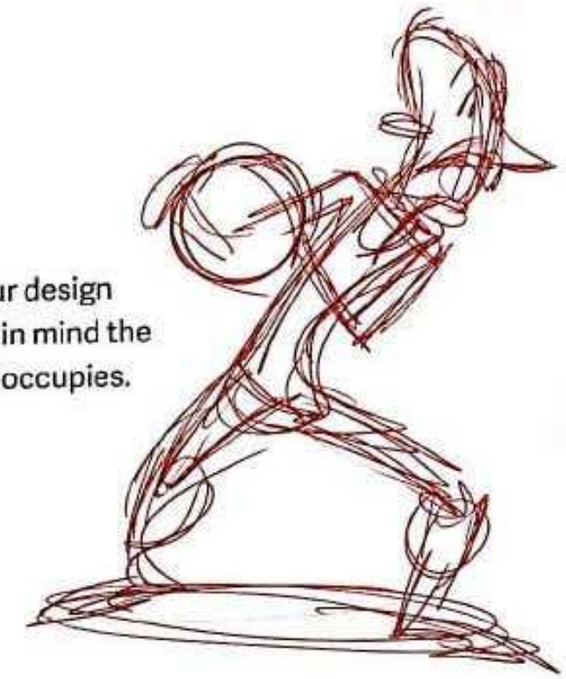


Model: John Tucker

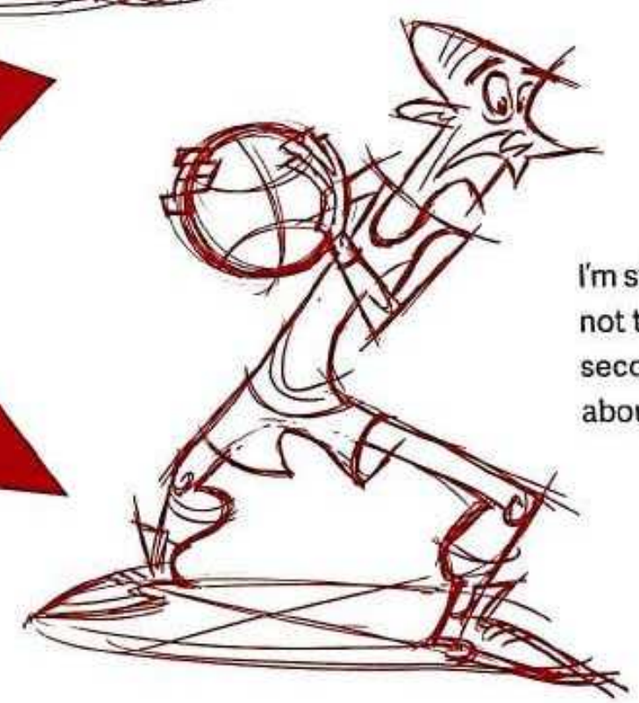
Using my *PoseBook* by Silver app (see page 103 for more info), I grabbed a photo and can now use that as a launching point to design a whole new character. The goal here is to find an image that evokes a feeling and has a strong gesture to reference.

Draw the feeling of the pose. You are looking to achieve story and gesture here. Try not to lift your hand off the page.

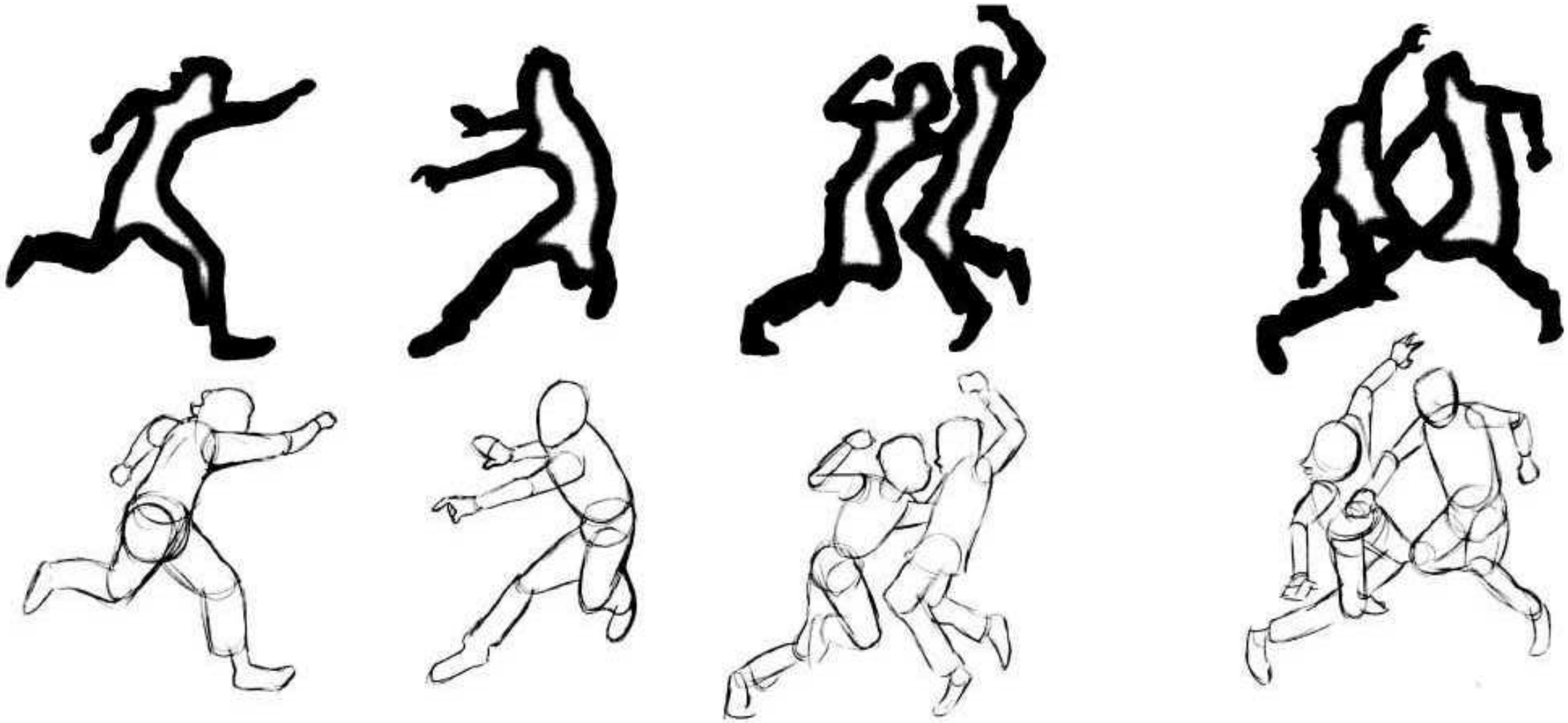
Now, begin to add your design and your forms. Keep in mind the space your character occupies.



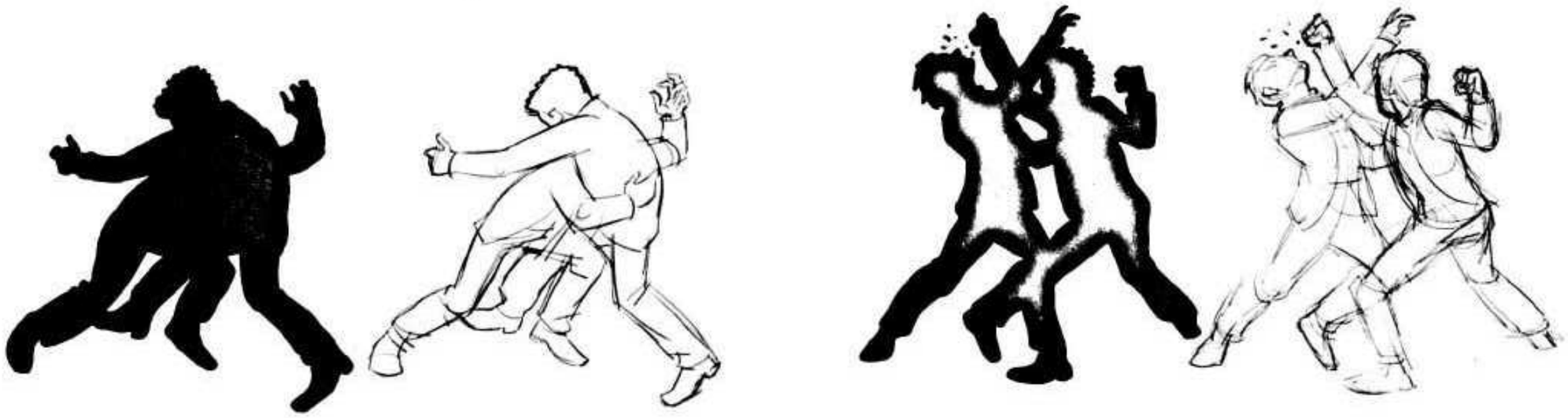
Any physical action will always follow this rule.



I'm still adding to this character but not tracing exactly what I did in the second sketch. Draw first, and worry about the style after.



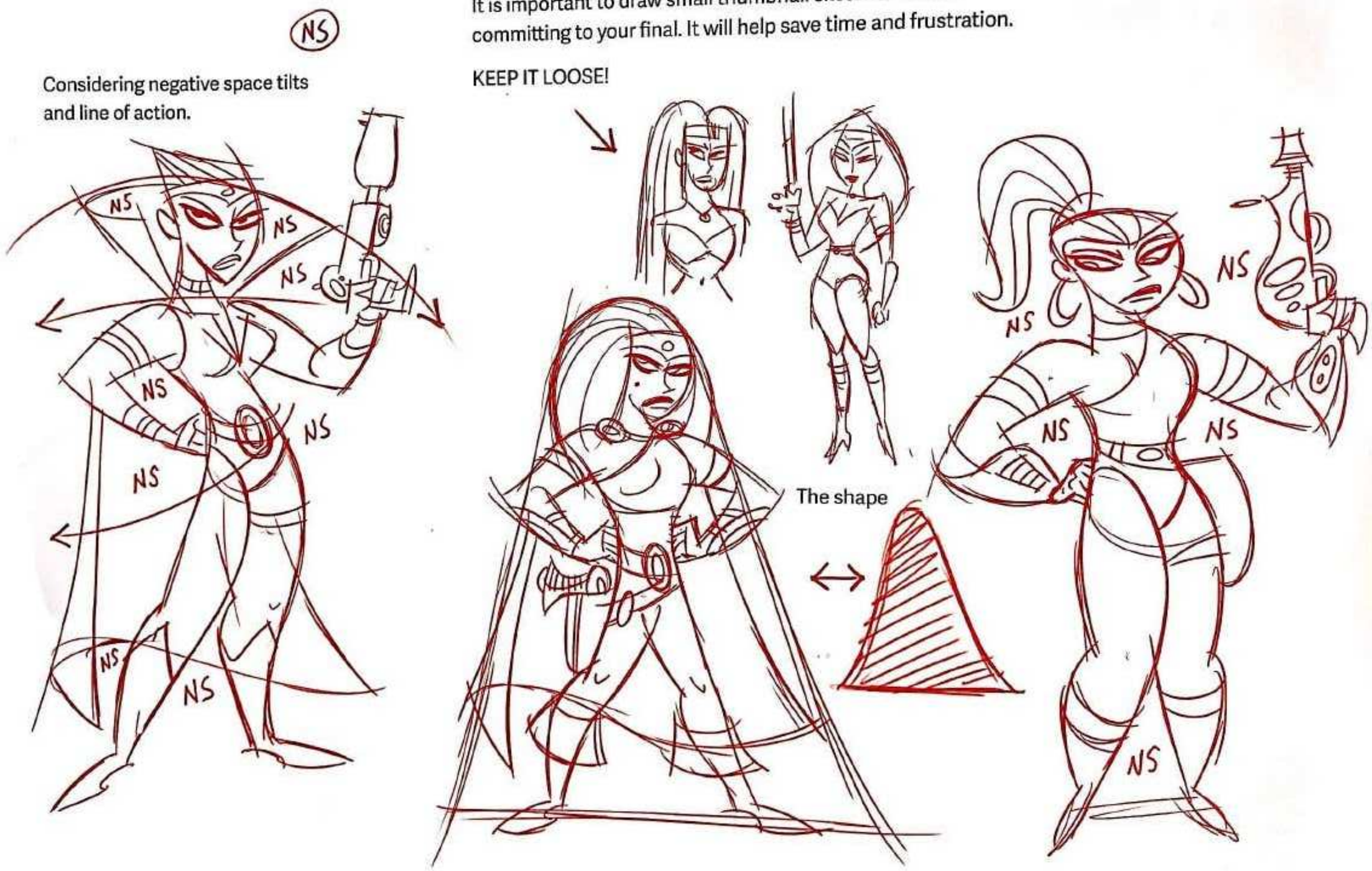
Clarity is the key ingredient when creating your silhouettes. Understand and draw the forms before you commit to just random blobs. Your goal is organization.

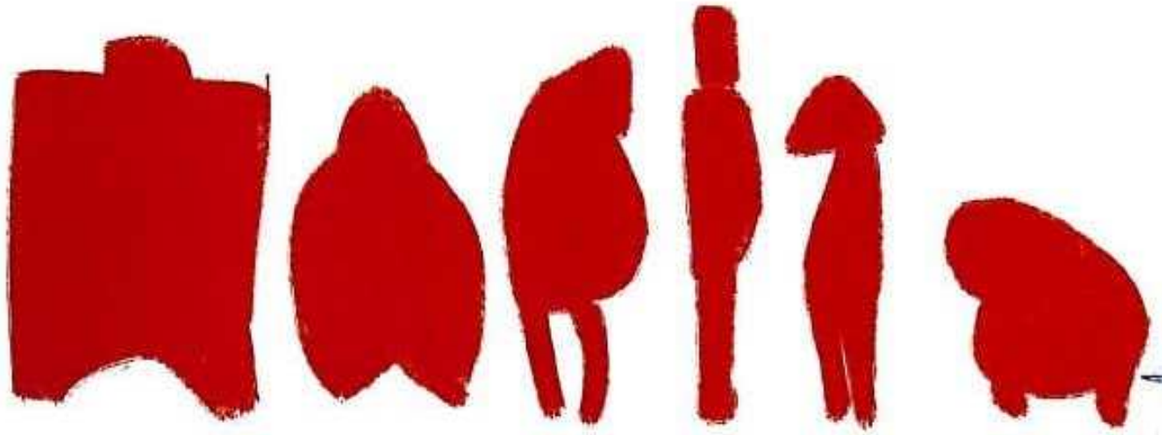


It is important to draw small thumbnail sketches before committing to your final. It will help save time and frustration.

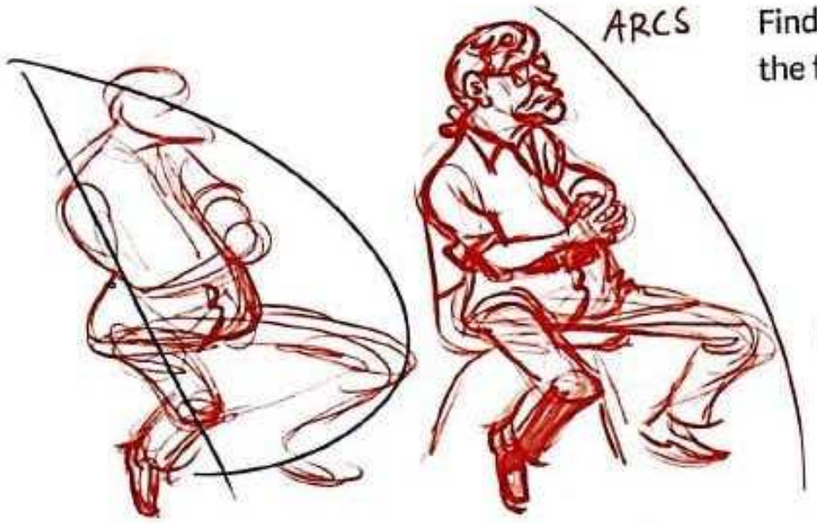
KEEP IT LOOSE!

Considering negative space tilts and line of action.



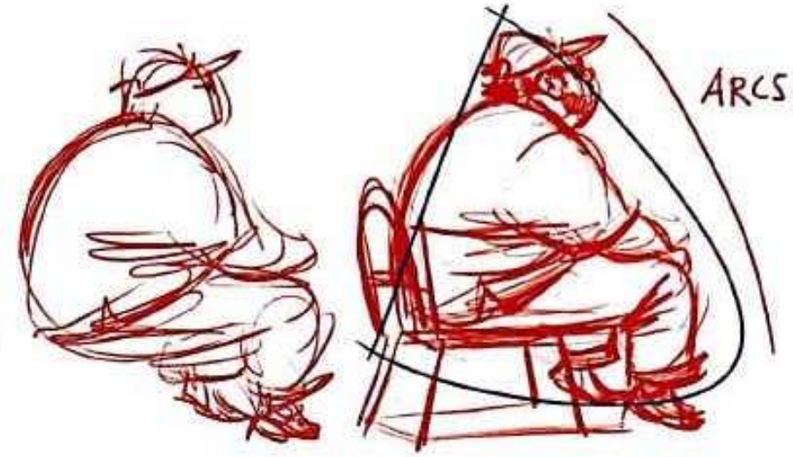


If you think simply, then you can think clearly. These styles are slightly varied as I am trying to develop the look and feel of the character. The style should never outweigh concern for clarity, and clarity is defined by shape.

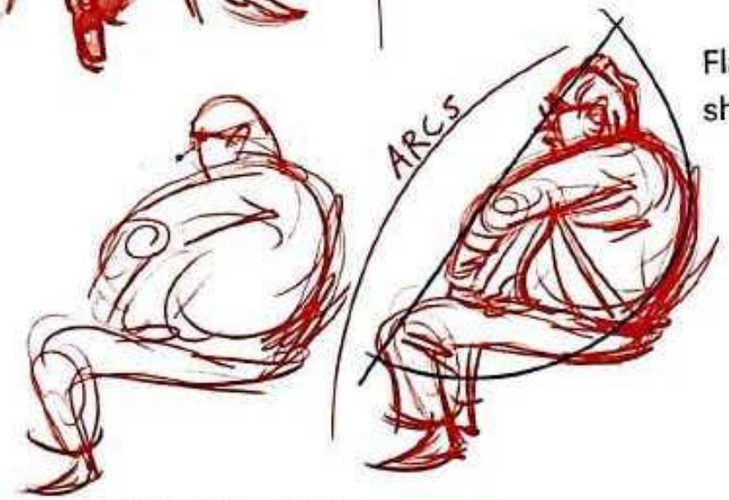


Find your quick gesture within the first 10 seconds.

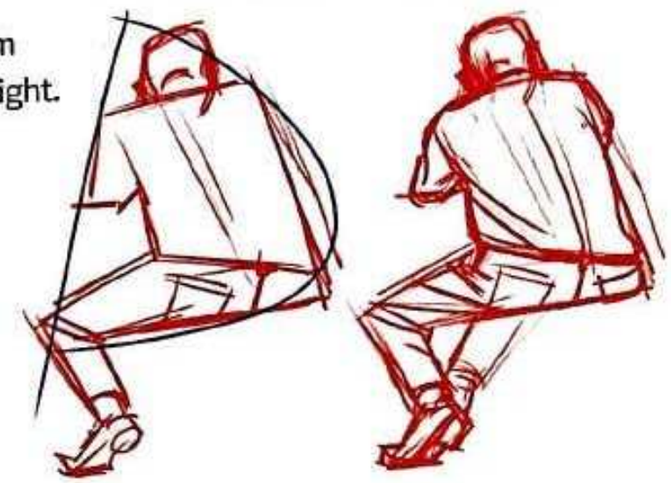
Every sitting position tells a different story. What is it?

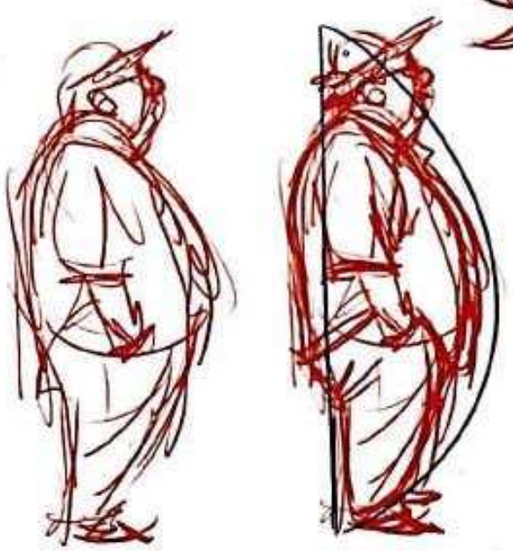


Block in your shapes. Create the story with as few lines as possible. Does it read?

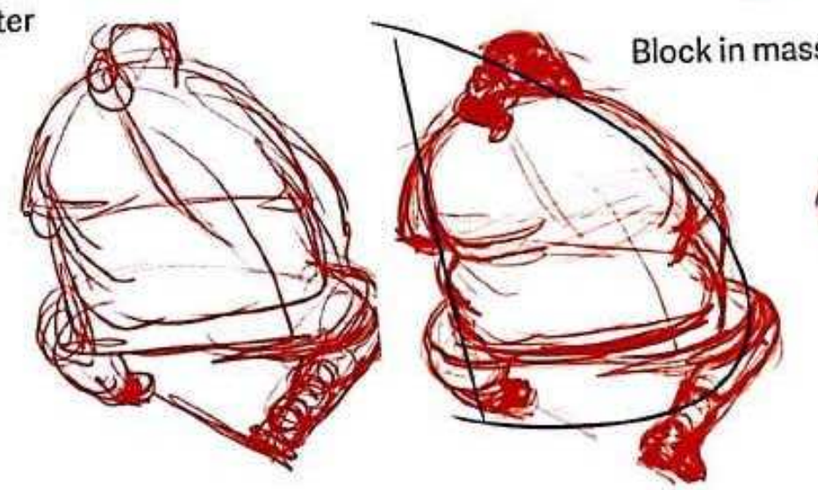


Flattening the bottom shows a sense of weight.

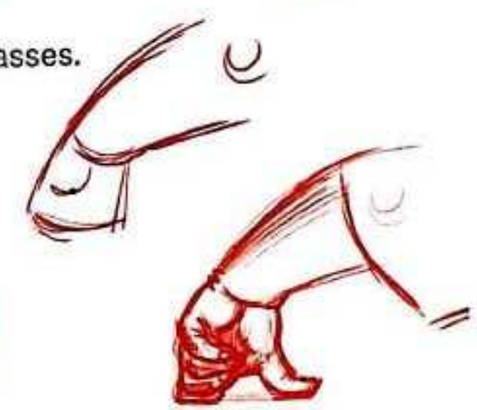




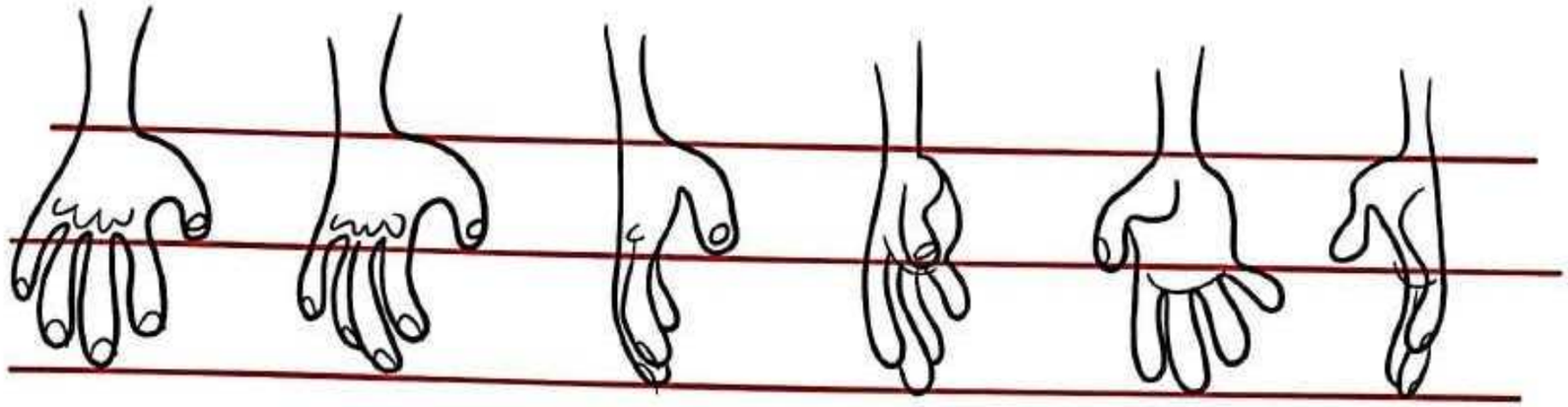
Think of the letter D.



Block in masses.



Negative space and variety



Front of palm passes the halfway line.

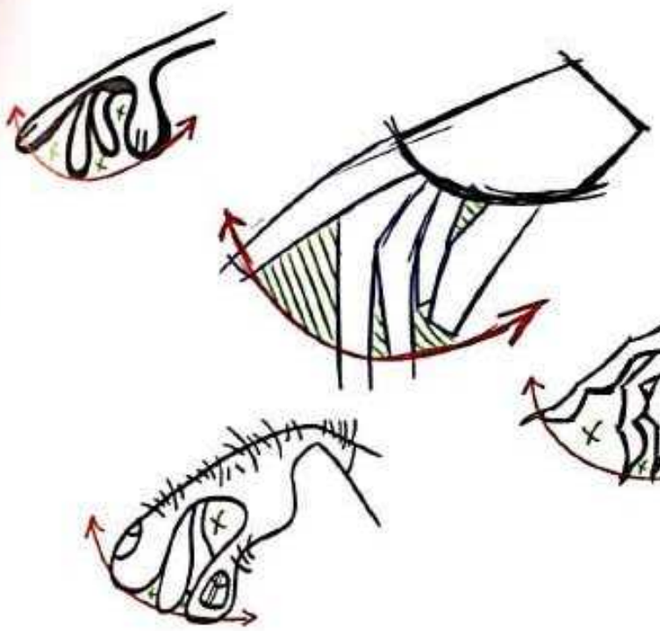
The secret to drawing the hands is all in the spacing.

1) Draw in the palm block.

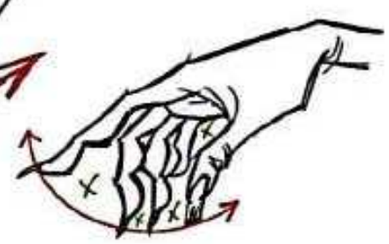
2) Find your arcs.

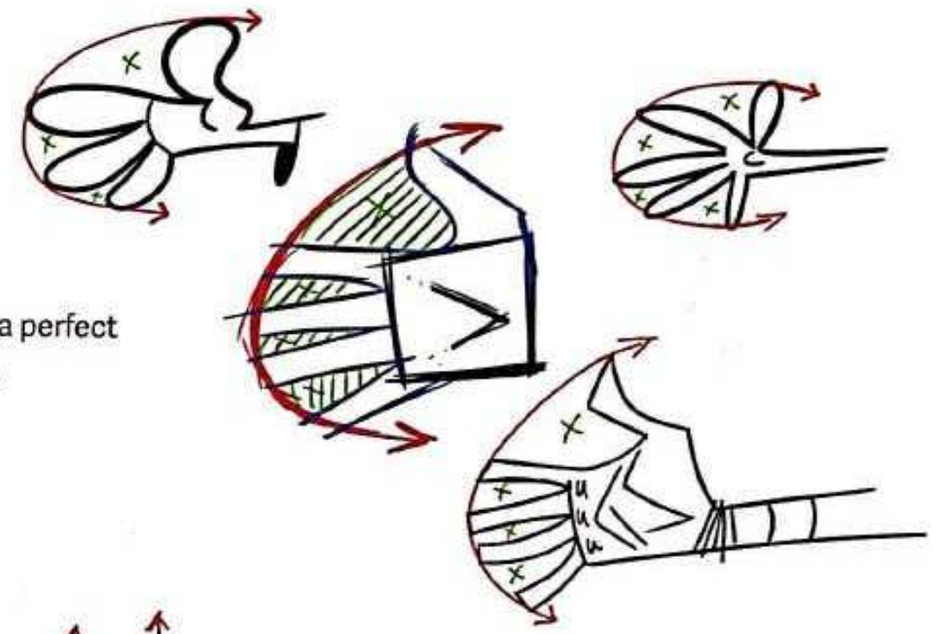
3) Block in your negative spacing.

4) *Avoid symmetry!*

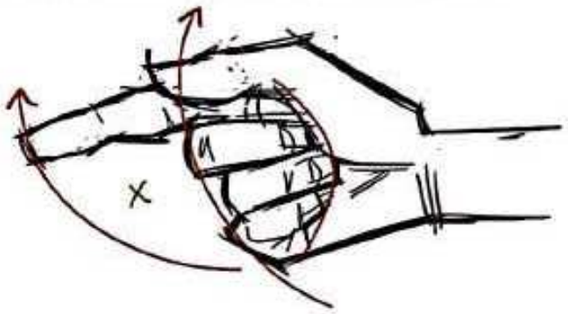


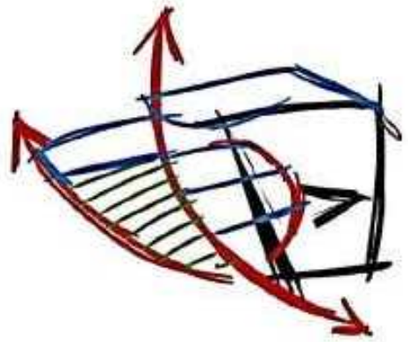
Avoid making the palm a perfect square. Give it contrast.

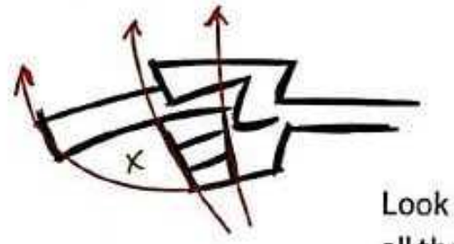




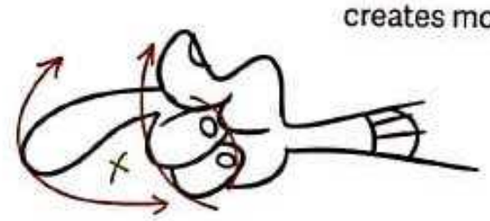
Break up the negative space between the fingers; alter the length and thickness of the fingers.





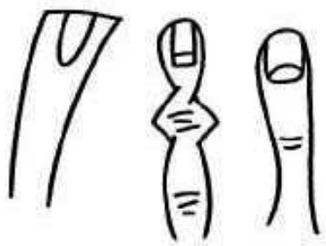


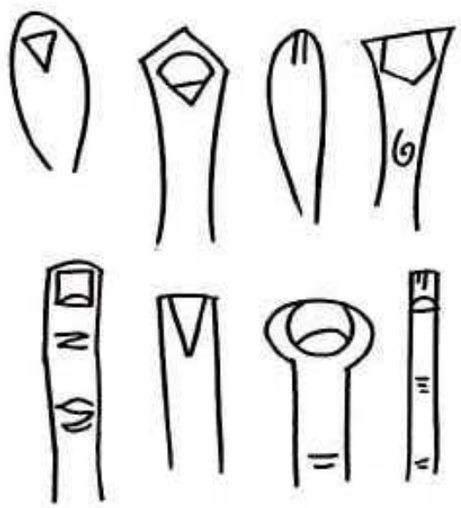
Look at the variety of all the finger shapes; it creates movement.



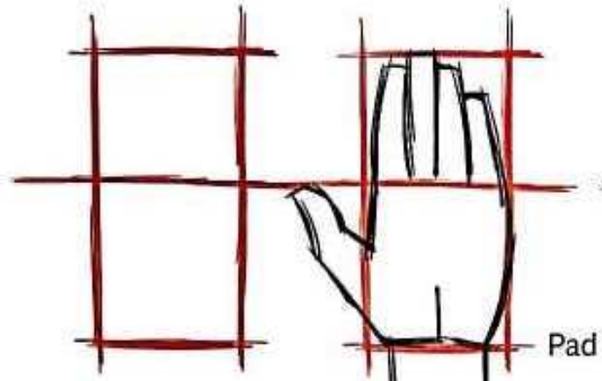
Avoid Road Mapping

Road mapping is simply unorganized, squiggled lines, with no design or intended shape.

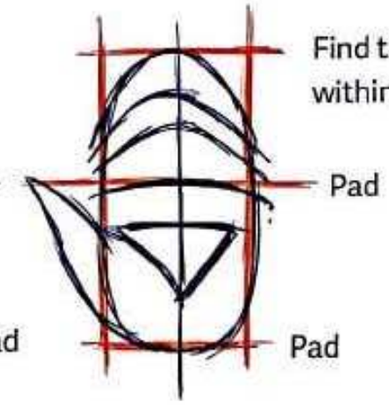




Think of a variety of ways to draw fingers and fingernails: flat, round, square, triangle, etc.



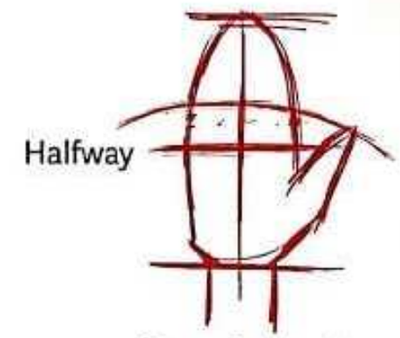
Palm side



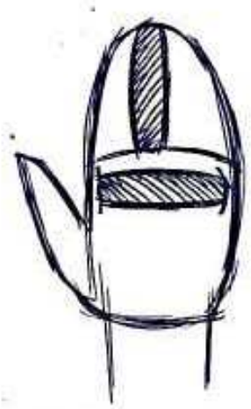
Find the arcs within your hand.

Padding surrounds a triangle formation and helps define the center of the palm.

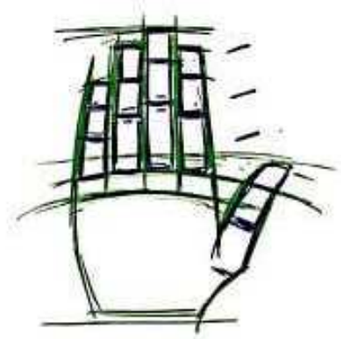
Thumb extends past the halfway line on front and back.



Back side



Middle finger almost width of palm



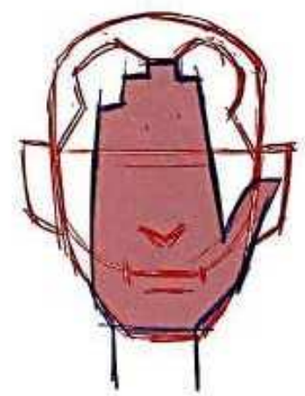
Small

Medium

Large

Broken into

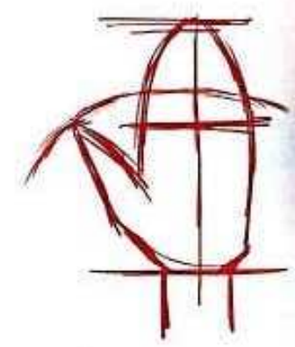
Golden ratio



On average, your hand is about the size of your face and will tell you where your original hairline rests with the bottom of the wrist placed at the bottom of the chin.

Knuckle halfway

Golden ratio



Palm side

Now let's put verbadjectivity into practice.
Develop the idea for a pose: it begins with an action (verb), "he is yelling," and then add the emotion (adjective), "he is angry."

This action tells a story but feels stiff because it lacks movement. It's too straight up and down.

This pose expresses yelling but feels a little relaxed and stiff because it doesn't possess enough angles to emote the true action.

This pose, because of its angles, gives us a sense of movement and action. We feel the anger in all parts of the body, not just one place. Any facial expression or body movement should be congruent, meaning in agreement, corresponding and harmonious with each other. No part acts alone.

Consider the space your character occupies.

The more angular and dramatic, the more vitality your image will have.

Not as exciting or dramatic

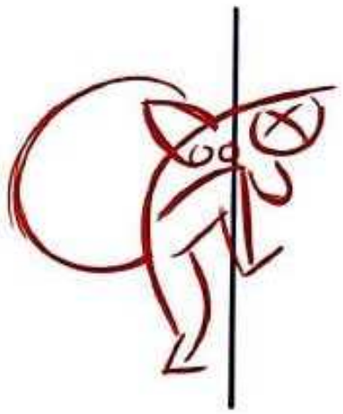
Check your geometric shape *after* you have roughed out your character.

Consider the fact that a line of action can appear not just in the mass of the body, but also the face.

The line of action here does not represent the spine as much as the feeling of movement.

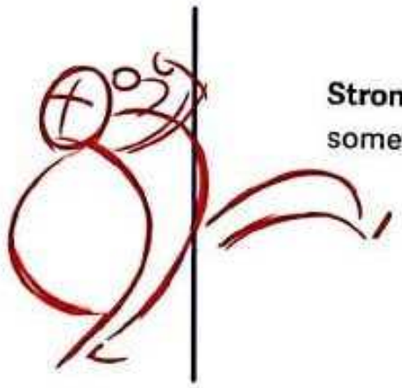
Less thrust to the line of action and maintaining too many straight lines will also result in stiffening up movement regardless of how well it's drawn.

How many ways through observation and action can you create the same intention? The answer is many. It is your responsibility to not settle on just one idea, and this is the importance of keeping sketches loose and clear.



Strong: Because I feel he is being sneaky and feel what is happening.

Weak: Because I don't know the true feeling behind the pose.



Strong: Because I feel he is really going somewhere as well as feeling a weight.

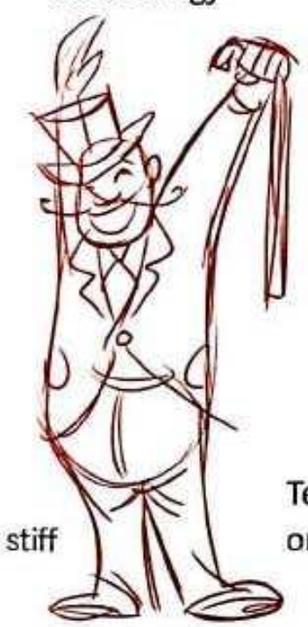
Avoid the Ladder

An important lesson that will be repeated throughout this book is to avoid the ladder. A ladder is parallel, stiff, and even. This is not our goal in designing characters and creating visual movement. I developed the Ladder Theory in order to have my students check their work. By drawing over your work, you can see if your character becomes too evenly proportioned, which can take away from the intended appeal, unless your intention is to design it that way.

Too symmetrical

Negative space too parallel; loses energy

Angles are more dramatic.

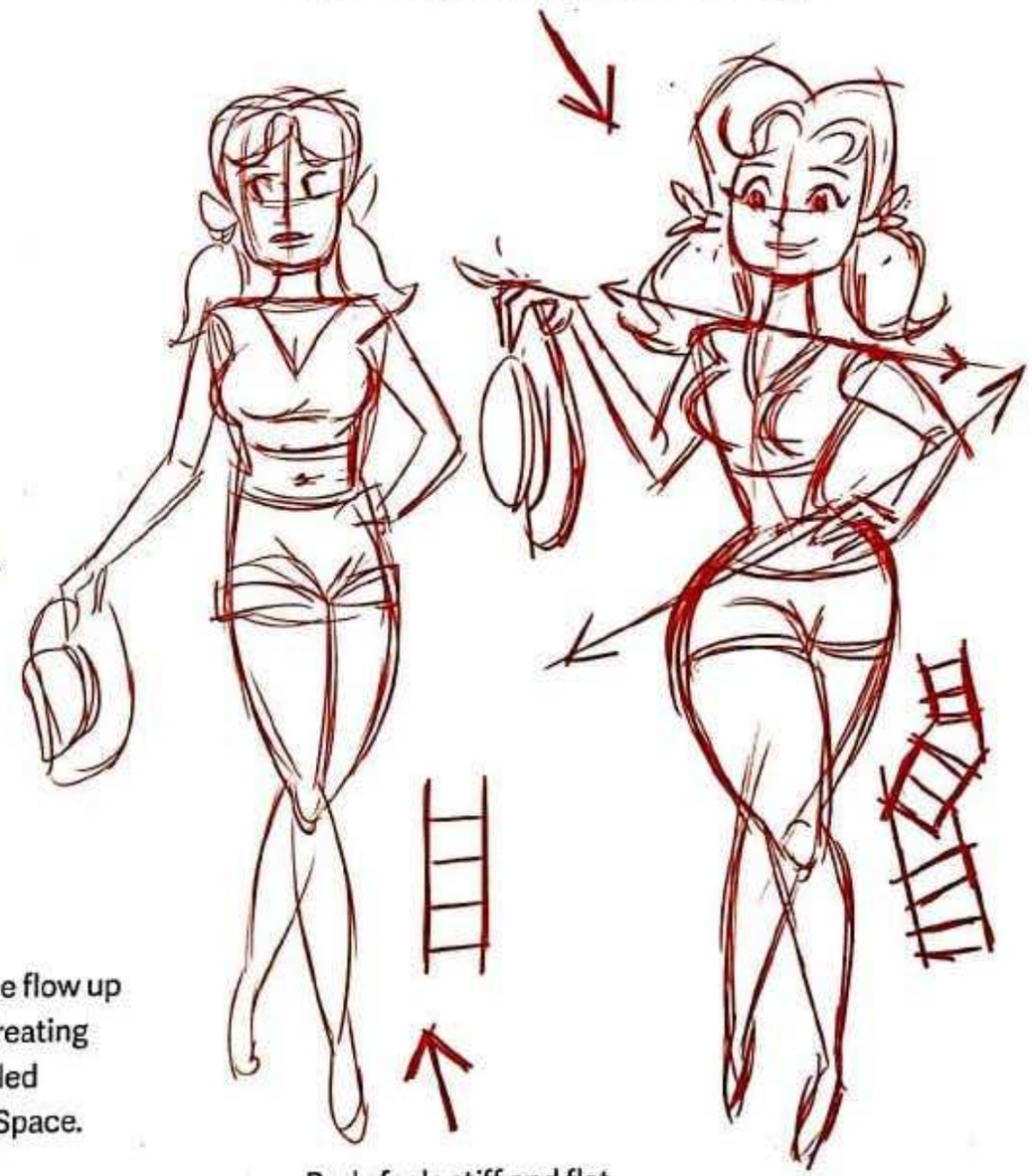


Too stiff

Tension on bends

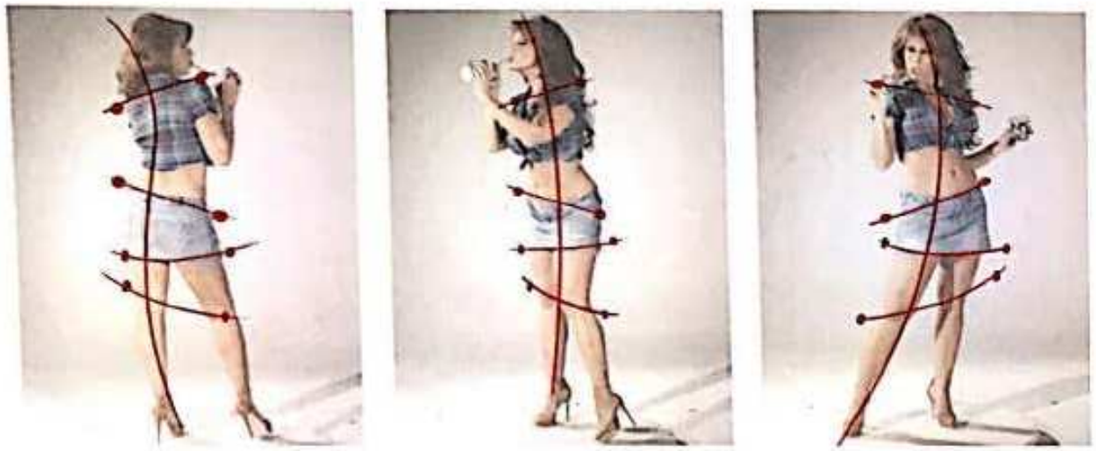
Pushing the flow up and out. Creating what is called Breathing Space.

Contrasting shoulders and hips, along with shape variety and twists, will add feeling.



Body feels stiff and flat due to lack of angles.

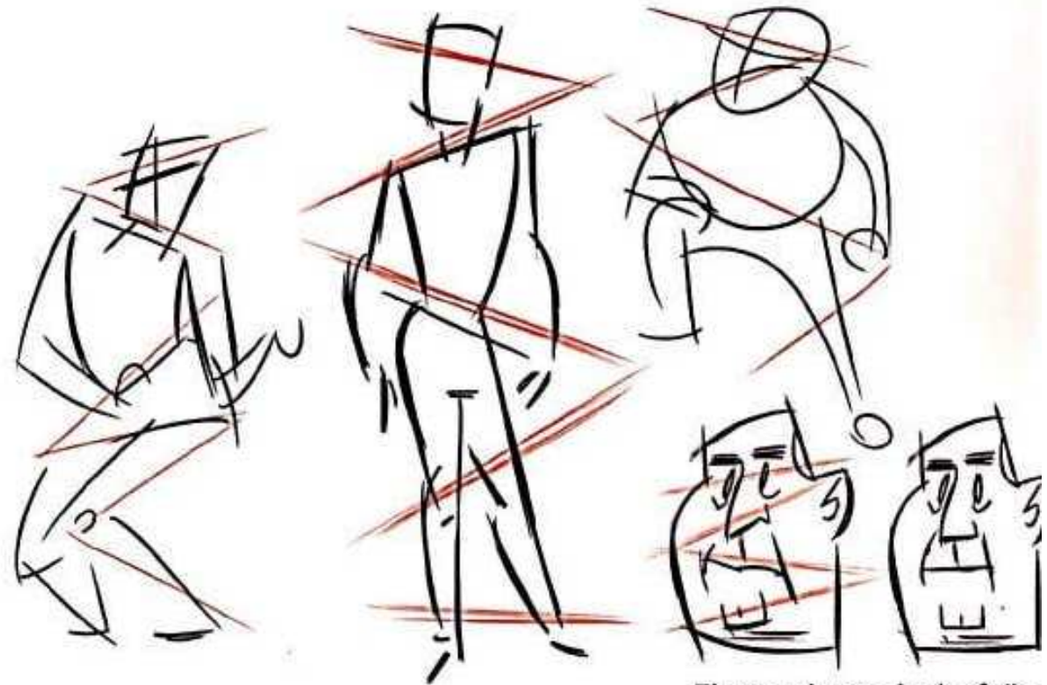
thereby avoiding the ladder) you can generate more interest and appeal. I feel it works this way because everything we see in nature possesses this type of organic feel, so it feels natural to the human eye. And once again angles show movement, whereas straight lines stacked evenly on top of each other feel like the image is flat and grounded.



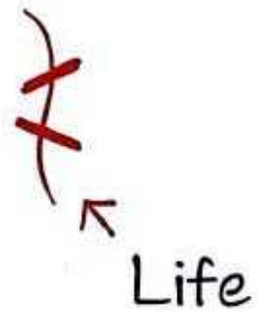
Model: Stacy E. Walker

Main two tilts occur at the shoulders and the hips.

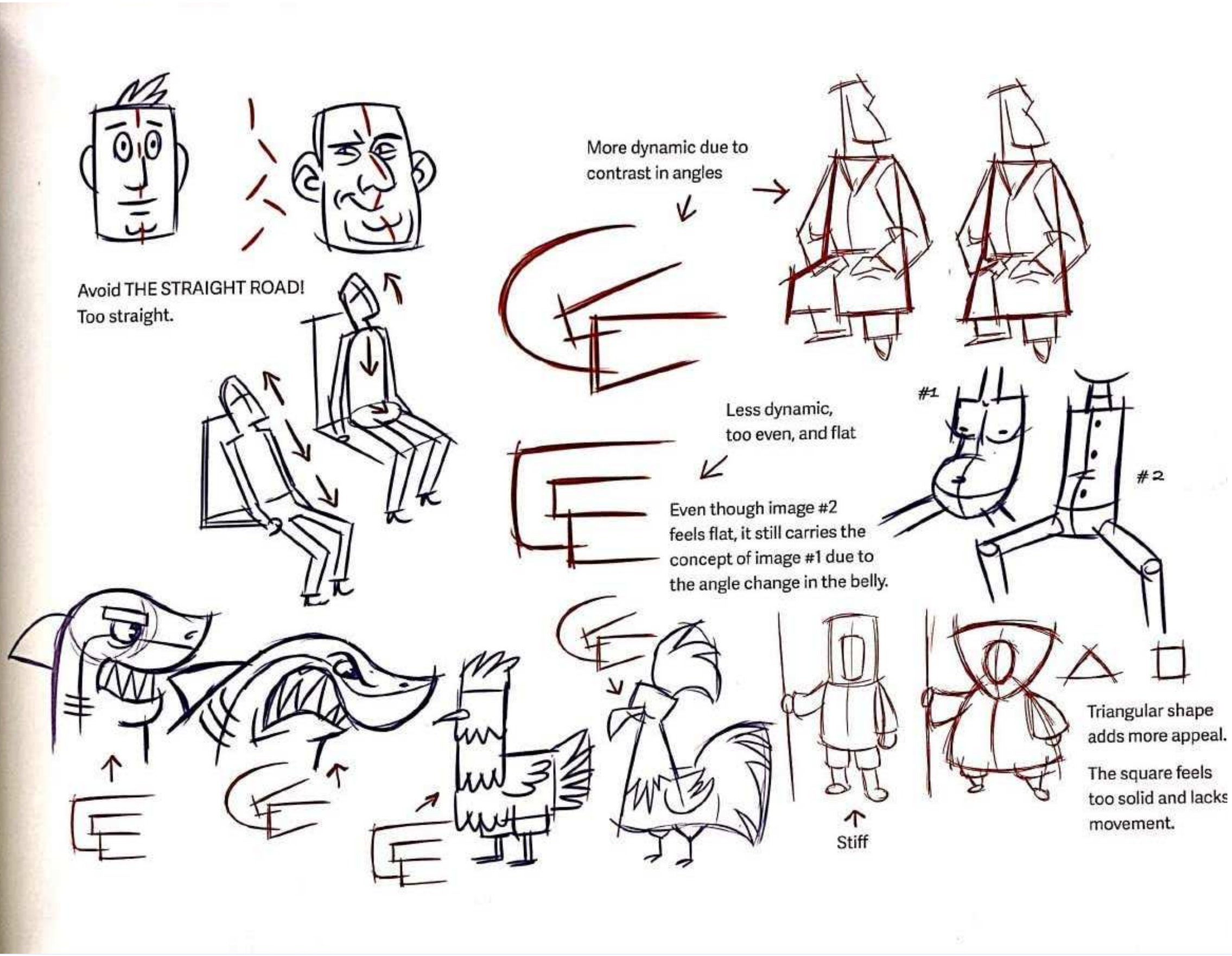
using the *zigzag* approach. You will find and observe that the more angles within a pose, the more movement it will generate.



Flatter due to lack of tilts



Draw your character nude before adding details. This will give a clear understanding of your construction.


Avoid THE STRAIGHT ROAD!
Too straight.
More dynamic due to contrast in angles
Less dynamic, too even, and flat
Even though image #2 feels flat, it still carries the concept of image #1 due to the angle change in the belly.
#1
#2
Stiff
Triangular shape adds more appeal.
The square feels too solid and lacks movement.

When placing characters next to each other, think about how their angles contrast each other.

Arcing one side can provide visual contrast.

How to Strike a Balance

What does "balance" mean in character design? It means ...

1) *Equal distribution:* even weight on both sides of the character. No one element feels that much greater than the other.

2) *Equal visual weight:* some large shapes will balance out with a smaller grouping. Think of a 10-pound gold bar against 10 pounds of bullet shells.

3) *Balance by proximity:* the balance of your character can also be determined by how similar elements are grouped, thereby giving your character breathing space. We don't want to smash all our elements together; it can make your character feel off balance.

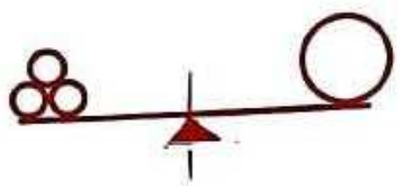
Balance can have

Equal Distribution

This is all balanced with equal visual weight.

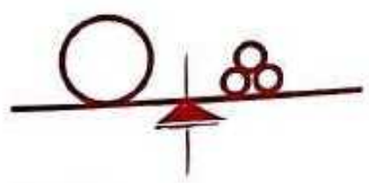
or

Equal Visual Weight

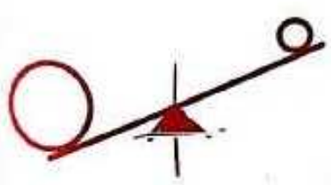


or

Balance By Proximity



It will feel balanced to the trained eye.

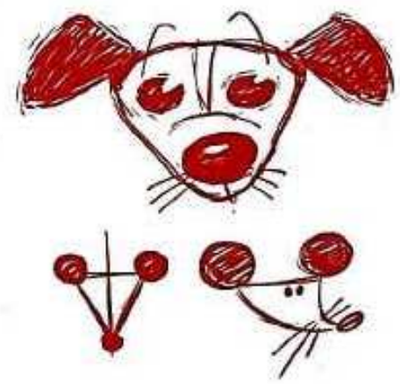


This is unbalanced, creating an asymmetrical balance, drawing my eye right away to the heavier side.

Ask: is this your intention?

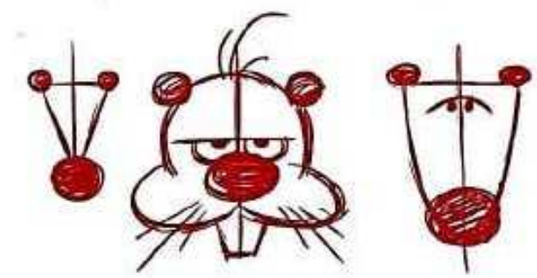
Why is balance important? Balance is important in order to help the viewer understand the intended action. I have seen many students design characters that look like they are going to fall over. When I see this, it shows a lack of understanding balance. Mastering balance will strengthen your overall design and will show the viewer that you know what you're doing. If your goal is to intentionally throw your characters off a gravitational balance, then you may achieve this by putting them in an action that looks as if they are about to fall. The closer to real life the pose is, the more audiences will respond to it. With the mouse below, I am playing more with the idea of equal visual weight.

Equal Balance

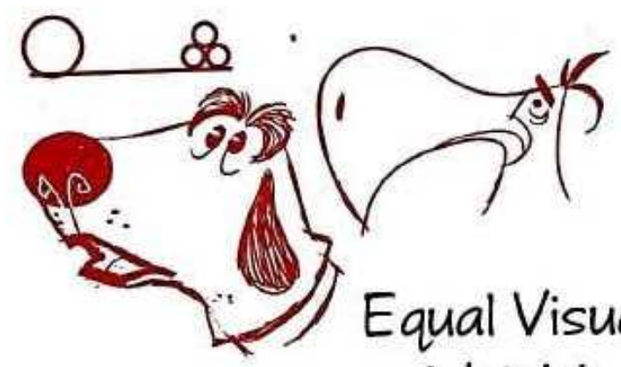


Unbalanced but feels safe

Equal Visual Weight



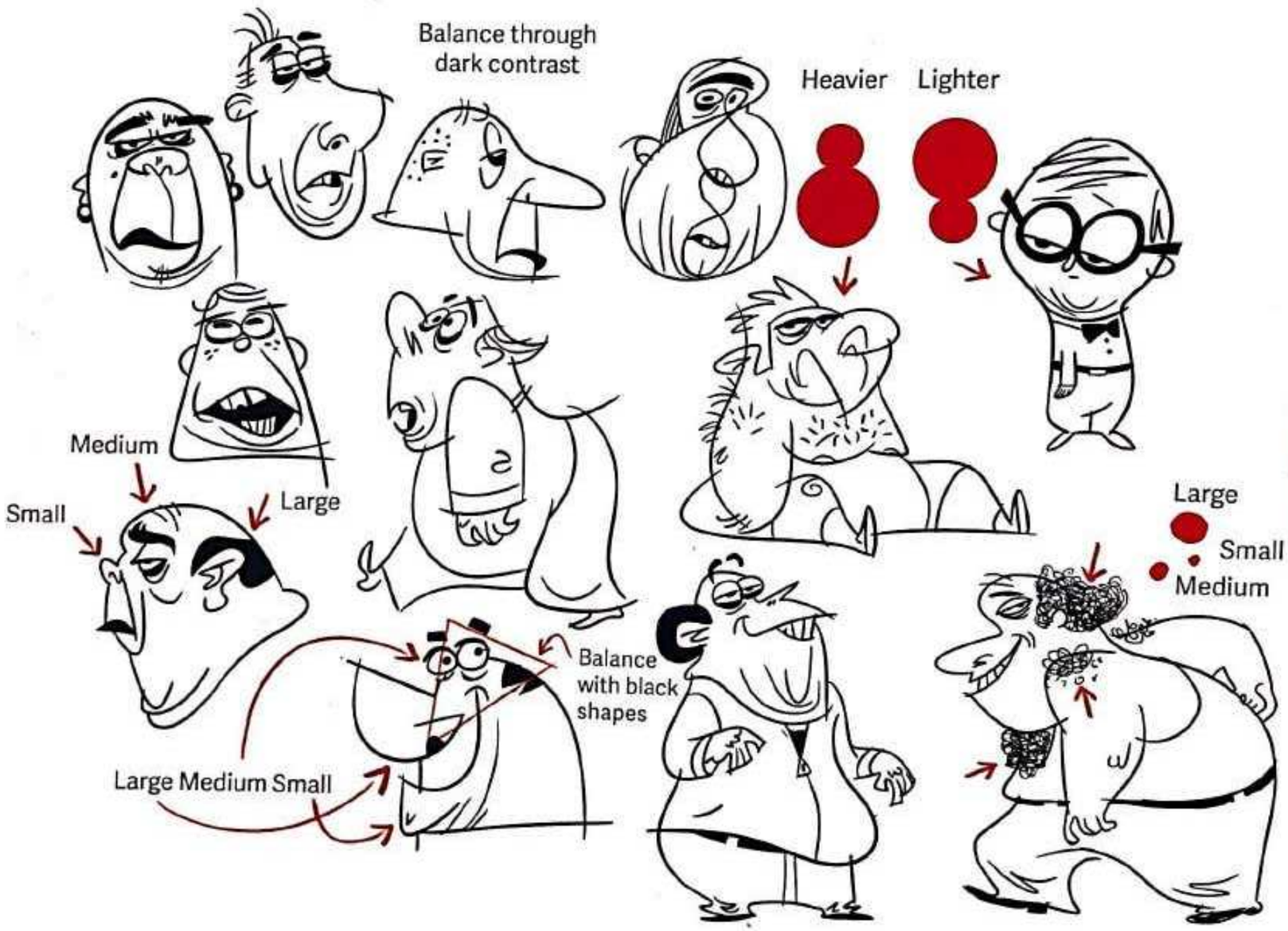
Balance by proximity



Equal Visual Weight

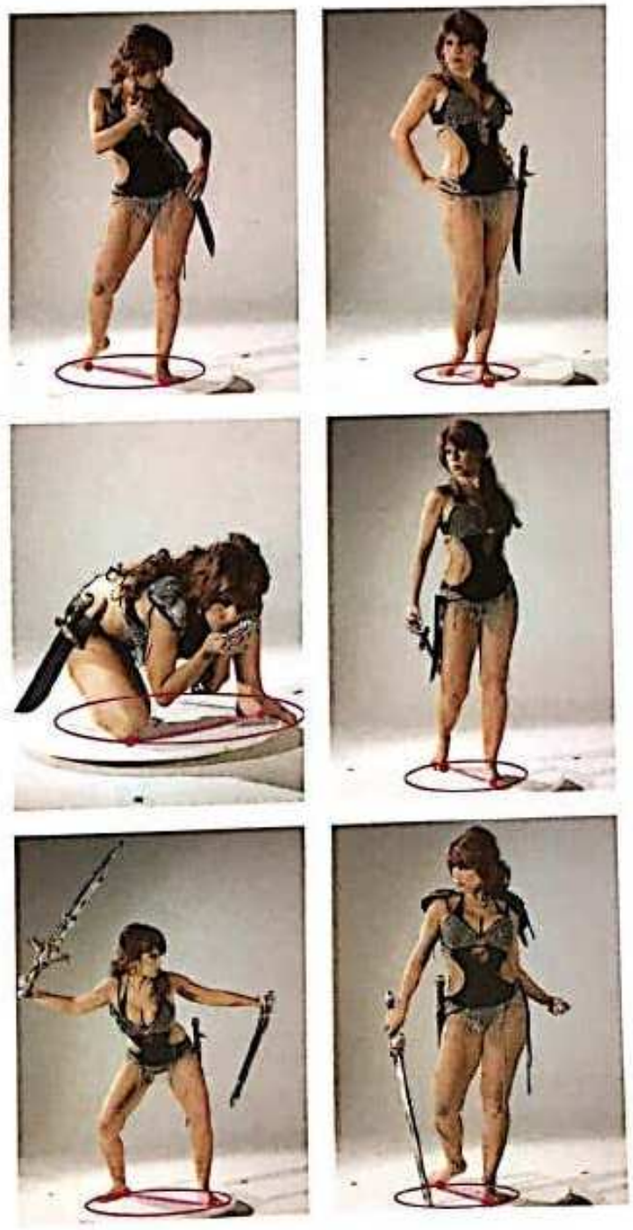
How do you achieve balance? There are many methods to help you strike a balance (or lack thereof) with your character by simply using basic shapes and lines:

Circle: Take this man seated below. I used different-sized circles to construc his face and body to achieve a better understanding of his visual weight. Does he feel solid? As you can see, I am again playing with equal visual weight and contrasting those elements using small, medium, and large shapes in order to avoid static repetition of shapes. Have you really looked a a snail and seen how beautifully the shapes contrast each other and offer a nice visual balance?

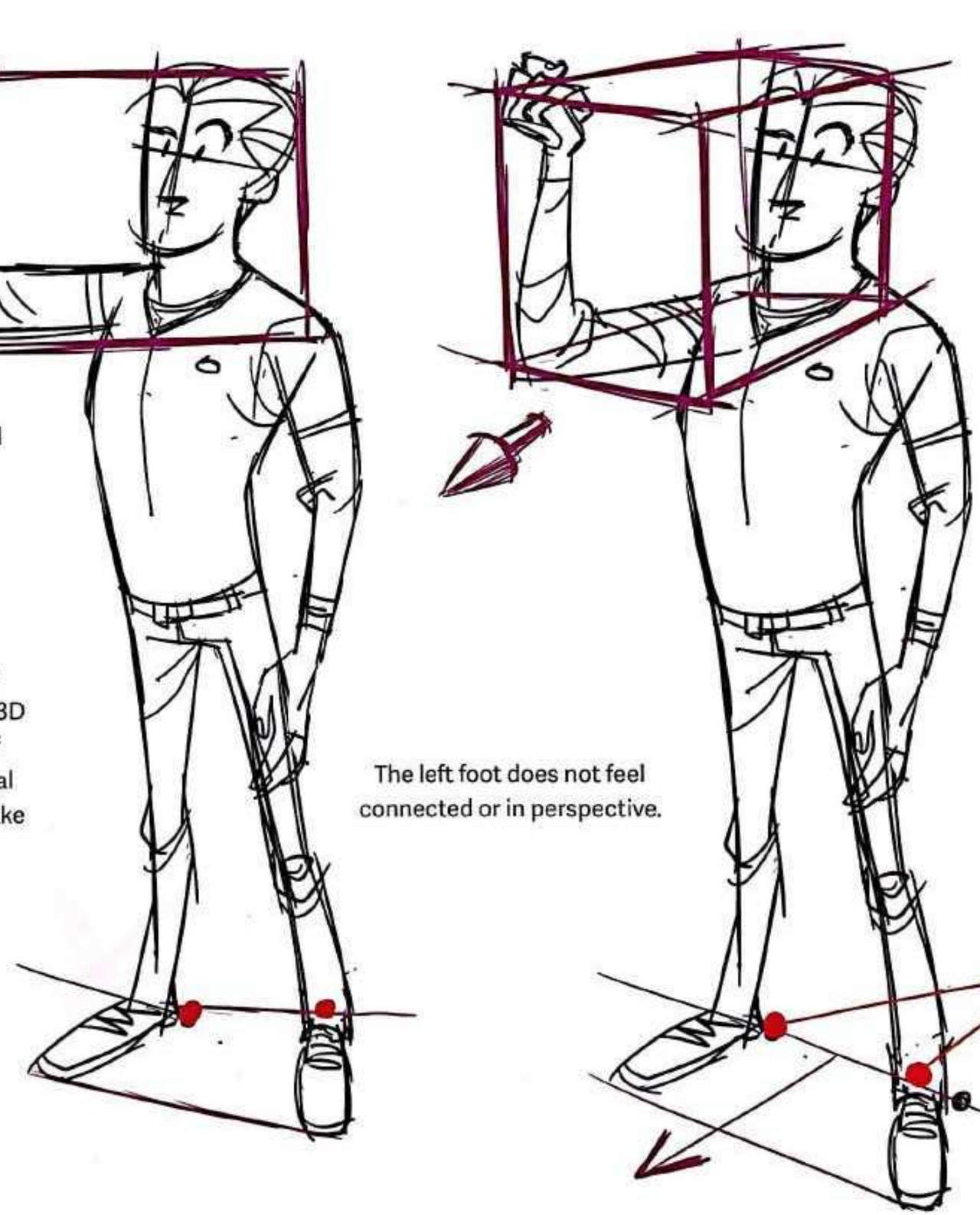


Oval: Placing a perspective oval on the ground of your character can also give you a better understanding of a figure's balance. It also gives you the ability to understand the plane your character is standing on while adding a sense of depth.

Model: Stacy E. Walker



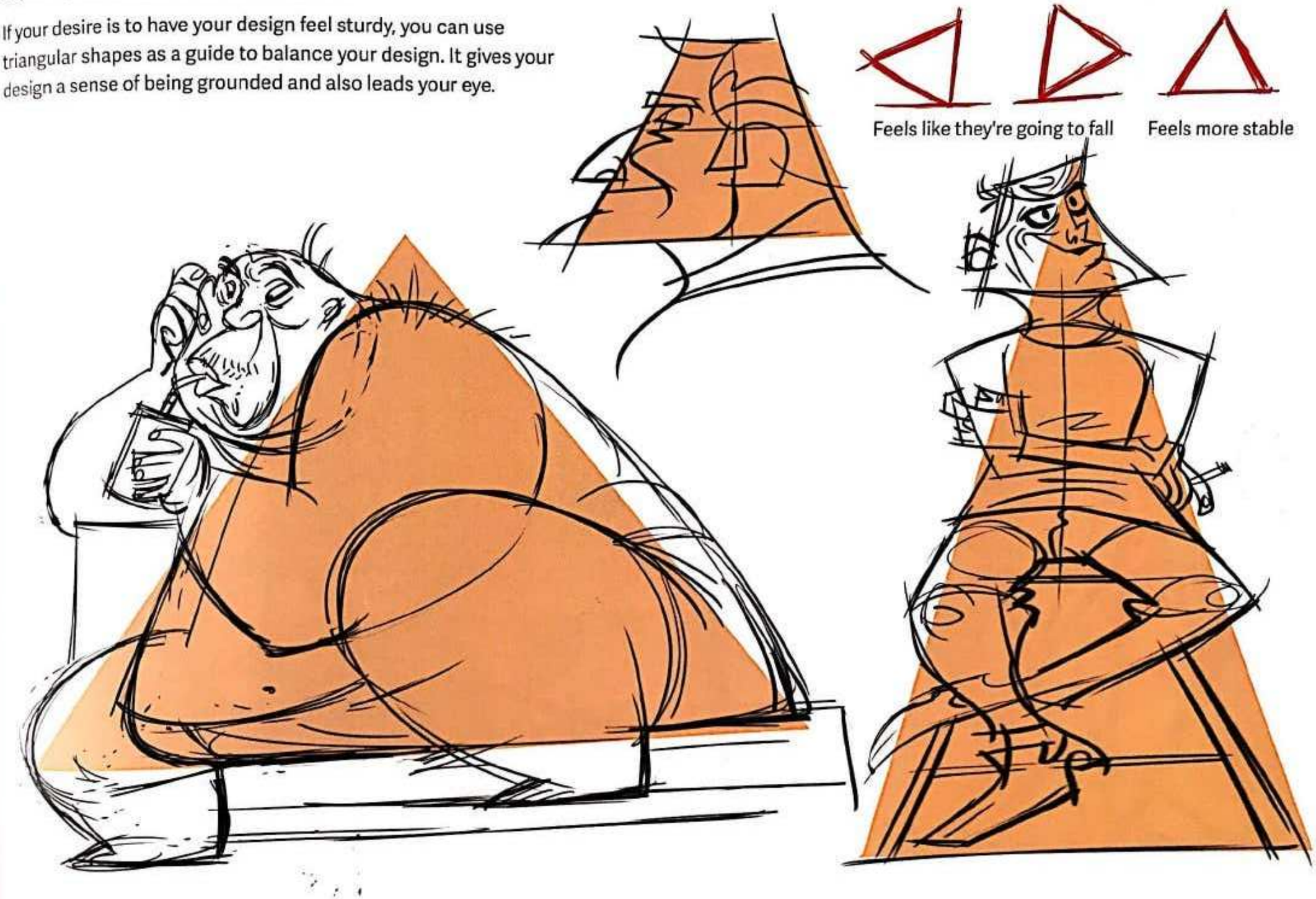
Find your perspective oval before you lay in your characters. This will establish a better sense of ground plane and placement of limbs, thereby giving your drawing a greater feeling of forms in space.



3D box: Much like the perspective oval—which will help you in understanding your spacing, depth, and forms—thinking of a 3D box will help you visualize the direction of where limbs may be in a three-dimensional space. If you don't consider this, it will make your drawings appear flat and stiff due to lack of foreshortening and overlaps.

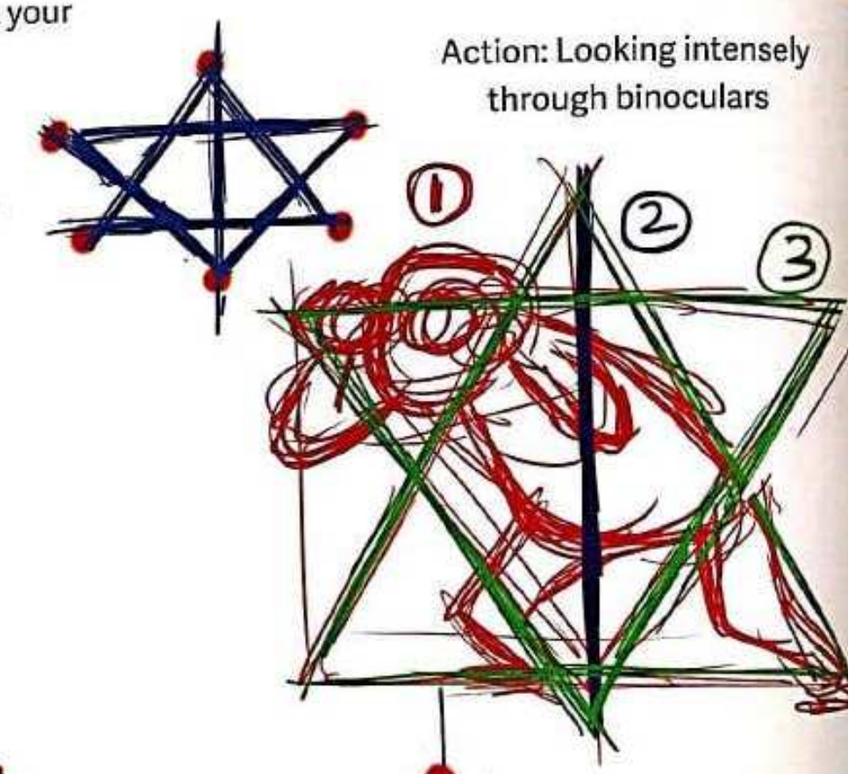
Triangle: Triangular shapes are useful as guides if you're looking for stability in your design, whether you're drawing a face or depicting a character in a seated position.

If your desire is to have your design feel sturdy, you can use triangular shapes as a guide to balance your design. It gives your design a sense of being grounded and also leads your eye.

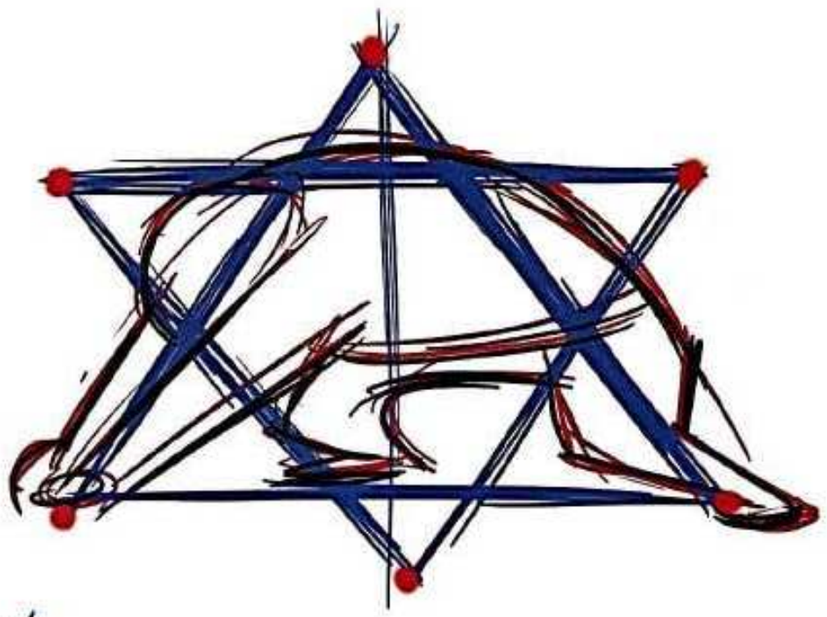


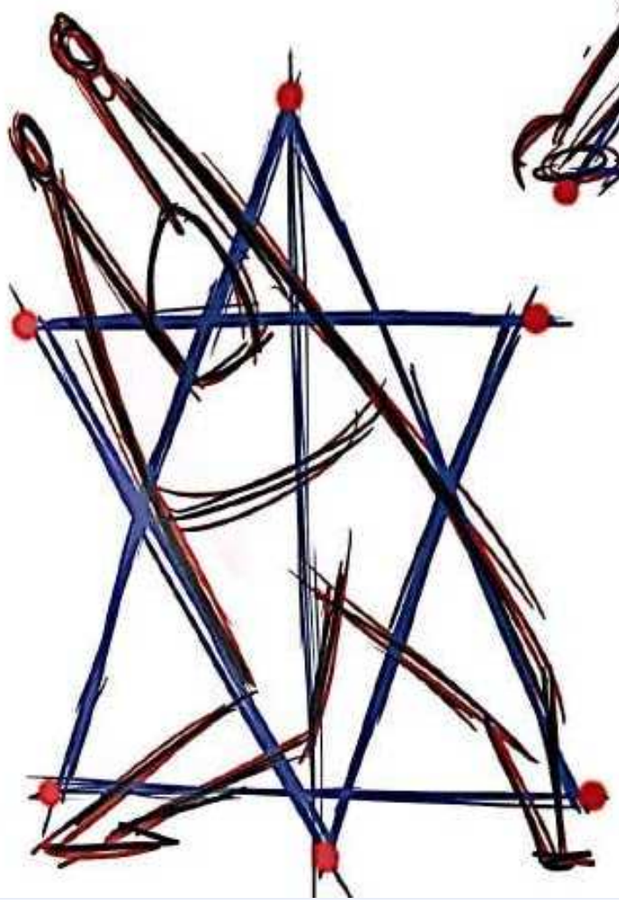
Hexagram + vertical line: A great way to achieve balance in an action shot is by checking the drawing against a hexagram, a shape that is essentially composed of triangles. The more you practice this exercise, the more skilled you will become at drawing a figure in realistic poses.

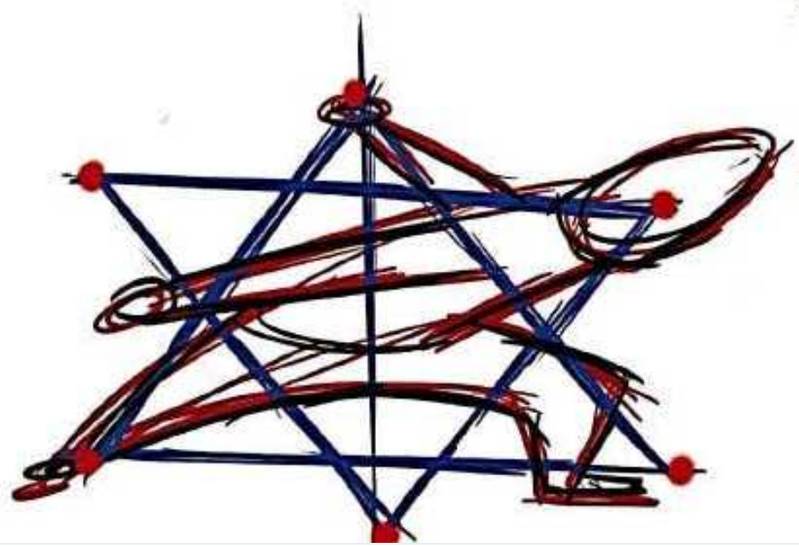
What you want to achieve when using a hexagram to find your balance is having the points be your guide as to how far you may go on each side. Create the action in your mind, and then sketch out your figure. Place a vertical line through the belly button, and place your stretched hexagram shape over it as a balance checker. Eventually you will not have to do this because you will have a better understanding of balance.

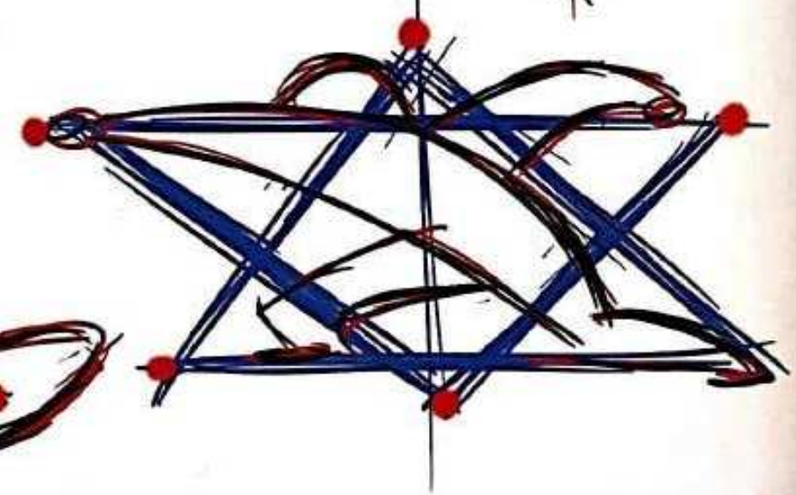


Action: Looking intensely through binoculars



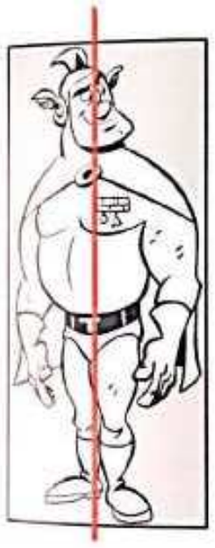


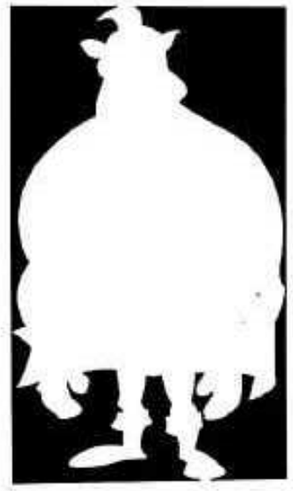




Rectangle + vertical line: Using what I call the doorway method, place your character in a box and evaluate the negative space. Adding a center, vertical balance line will help you further assess your drawing. Vertical and horizontal lines help us see balance.

How would your character look standing in high contrast in a doorway? Does the negative space feel good?

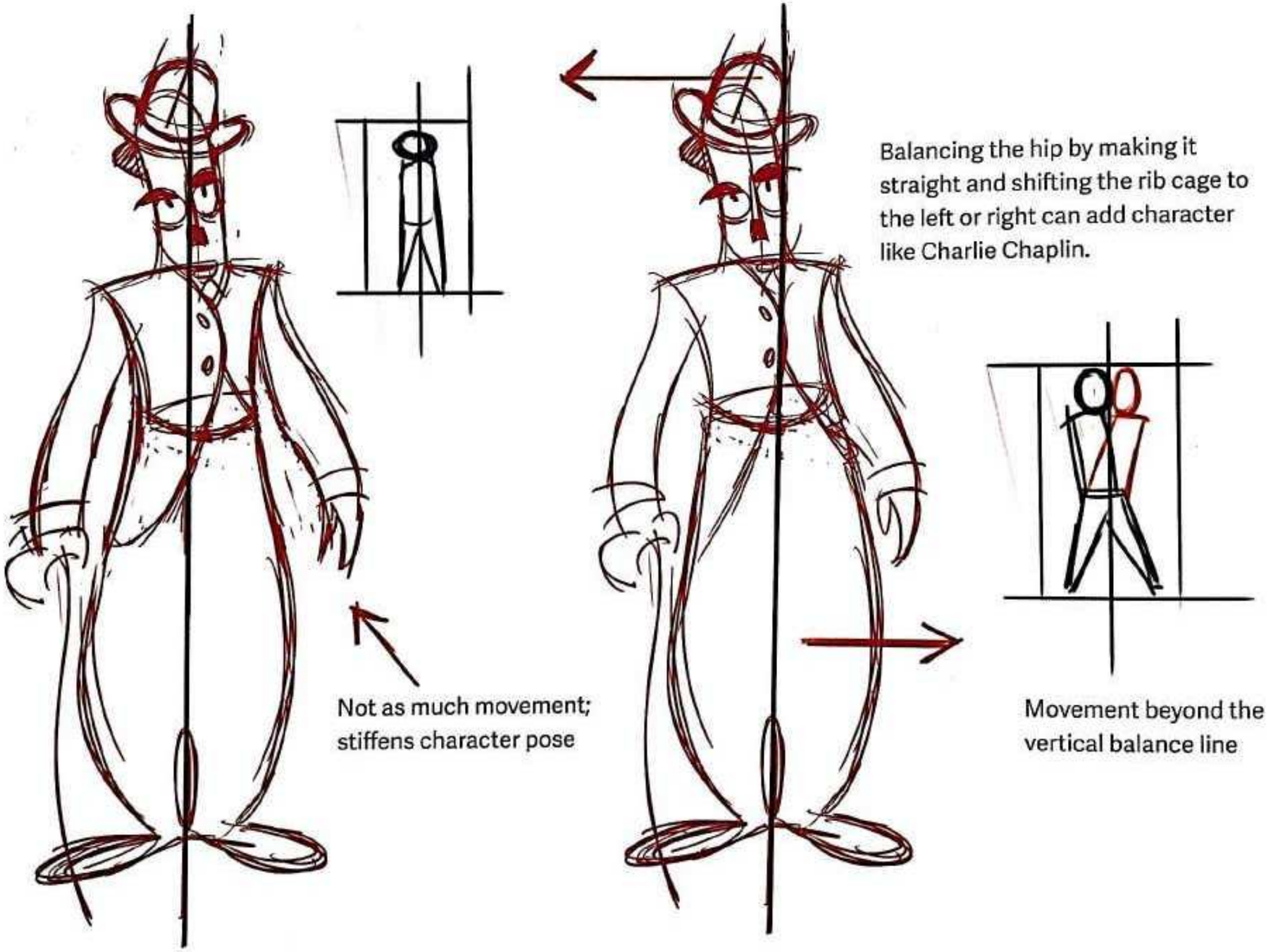




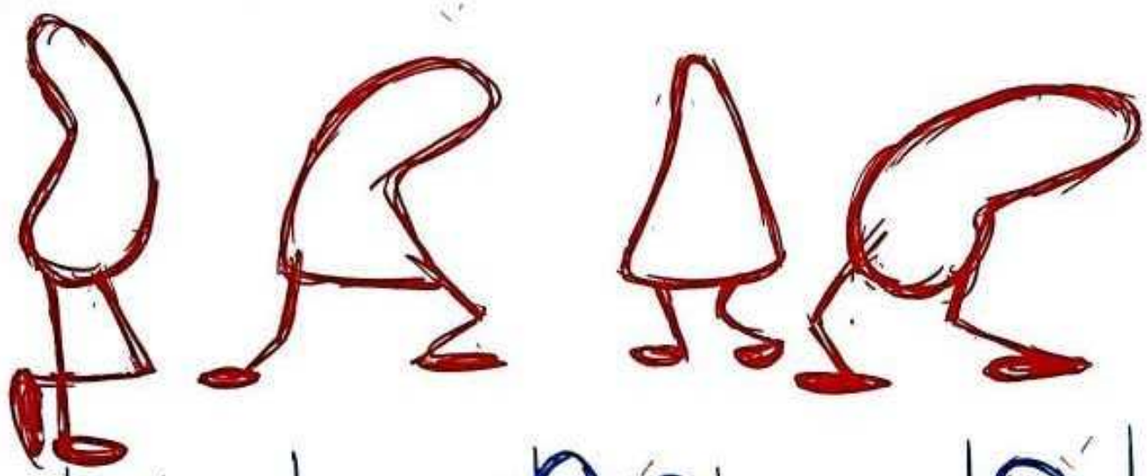
Shape Format

Are your shapes readable? Do you get a sense of body type? Have you considered your negative space?

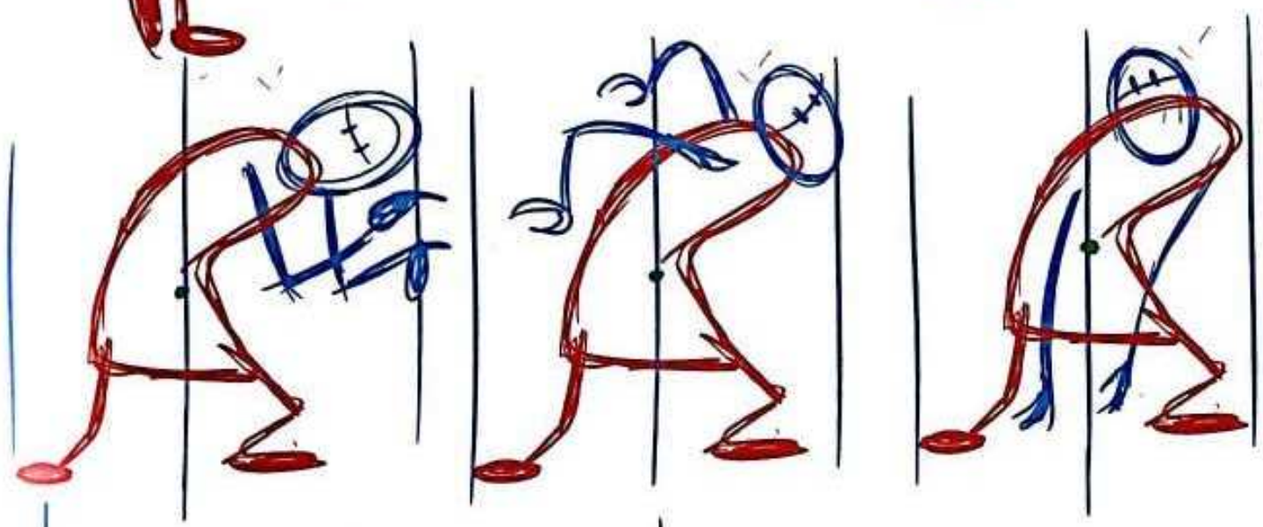
Lines: In the previous examples, you can clearly see how vertical and horizontal lines can assist you. They offer a visual to the space around your character. Just working with one vertical line can help you add character to a design.



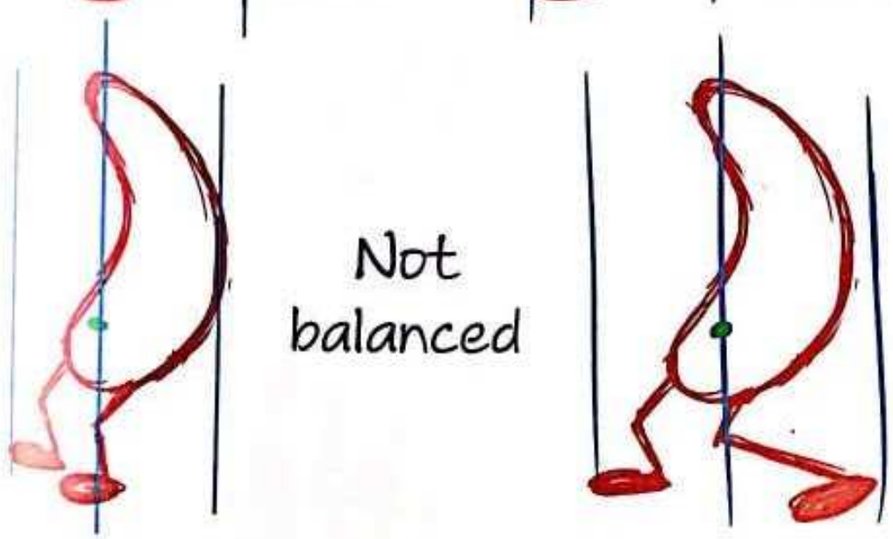
Three vertical lines, and a little help from the belly button, can also assist you with placement of different body parts, whether you're drawing a human or an animal.



If your character does not feel in balance with just the torso and the legs, which give you your support, then you need to rethink your drawing.

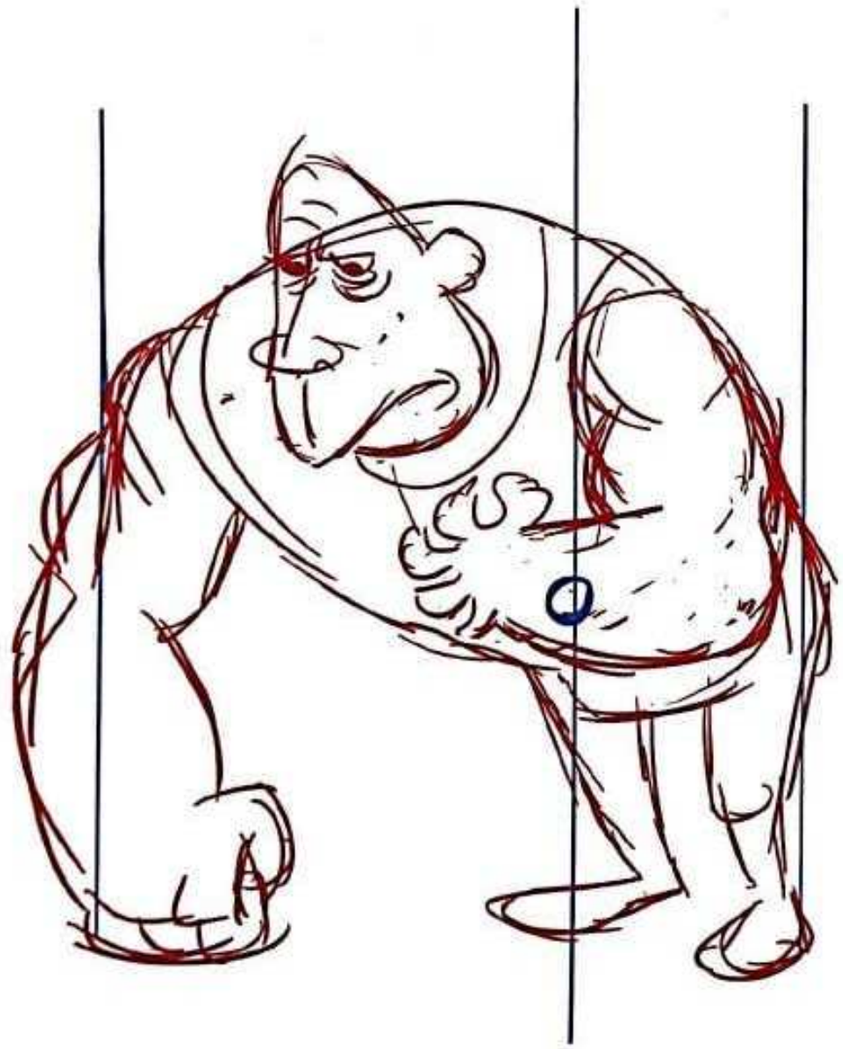


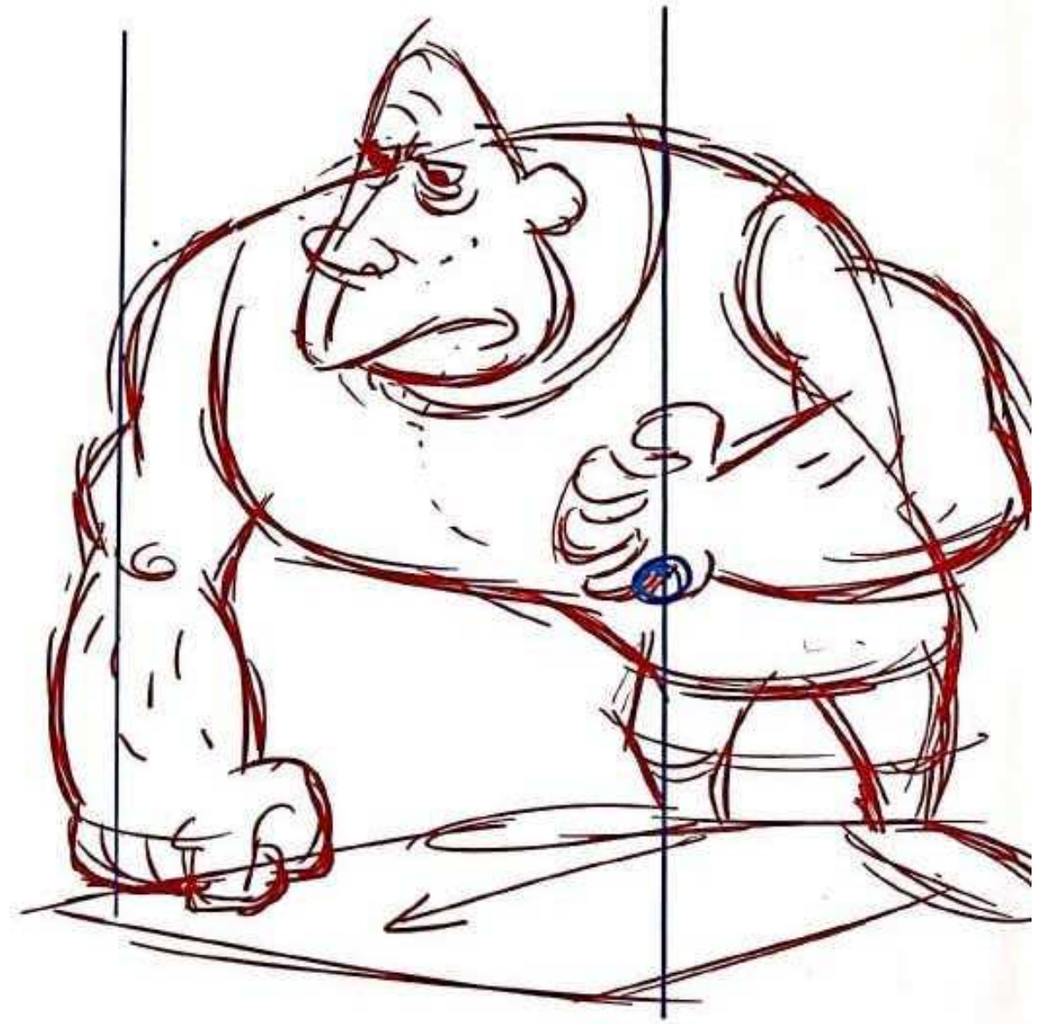
With the same torso shape and leg placement, I can place the head and arms anywhere within reason.



The belly button is a good central point to find your balance.

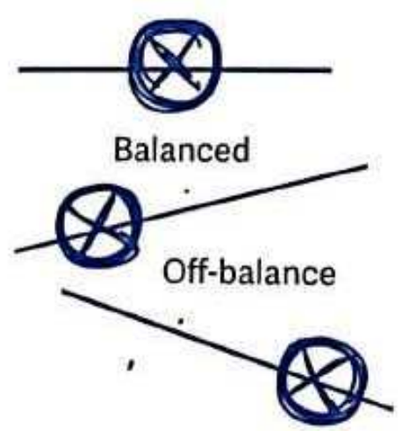
By pulling the leg out, I have now balanced my design.





The intention here is to draw my front 3/4 character, who has big arms, standing.

This does not feel as grounded and balanced. The center balancing area is roughly where your belly button is. Think of this as your *center*.

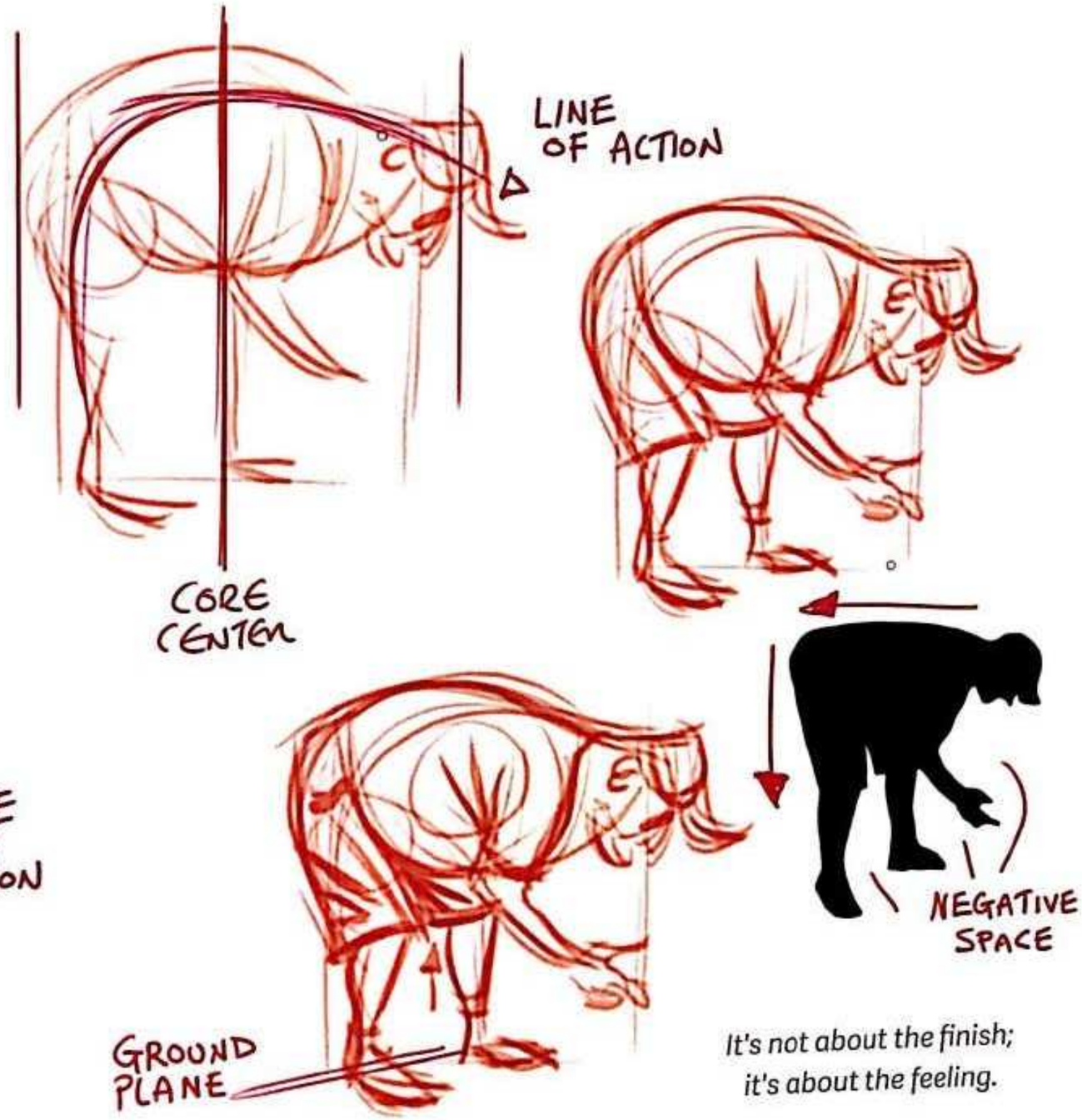


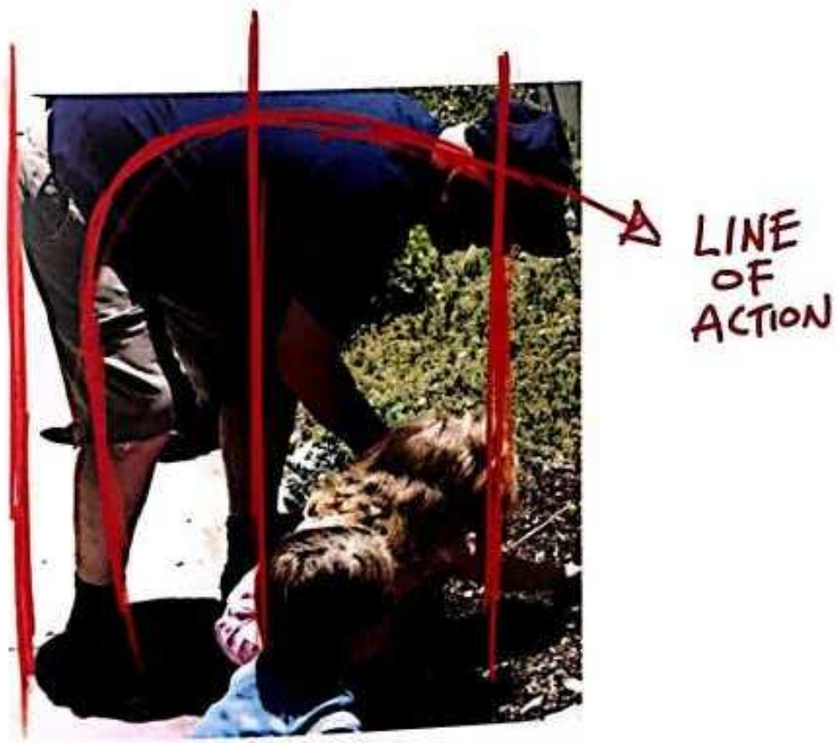
By placing the arm in front of the foot, my character feels like he's occupying a sense of space. His other arm pulled out as well as his foot will help balance my pose. And a slight tilt to the character's head can add more character.

approach can also help with your intended character balance.

The character in the first sketch feels off-balance and more like he is having a stroke, mainly due to the fact his front arm is parallel to his feet, and the majority of the weight is greater on the left.

button is, you will often find equal weight to the left and right. Try tracing over action photos and see for yourself.





It's not about the finish; it's about the feeling.

In real life, we observe balance, ground planes, lines of action, and positive and negative space. A great observational exercise is to grab a photo, find the center, and observe the weight and line of action. Also be sure to observe why the character reads in the first place. This is caused by the clear negative space and angles surrounding the form.

Now redraw what it is you have just observed; this is the best way to learn this. In the images of the person sitting, I am taking all these aspects into consideration. No matter what the weight of your character is, start with the largest mass, which is typically the full torso that includes the rib cage and pelvis.

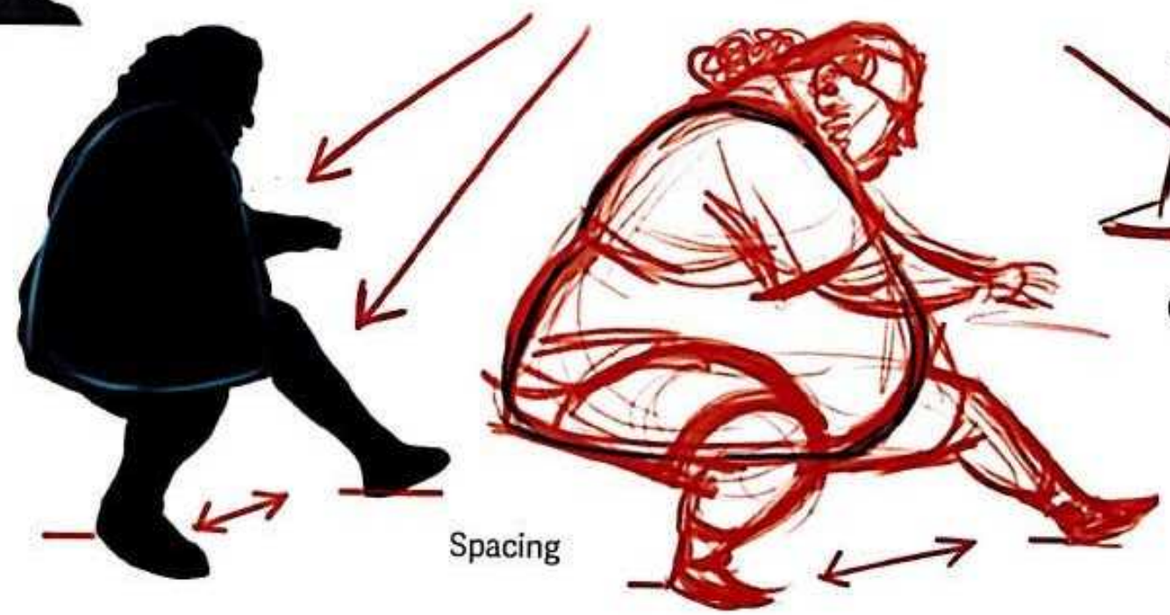
Start with basic weight shape in mind.

Consider negative space.

Broader bottom will flatten and achieve weight.

A narrower one appears lighter and not grounded.

Consider the ground plane for spacing.



Spacing

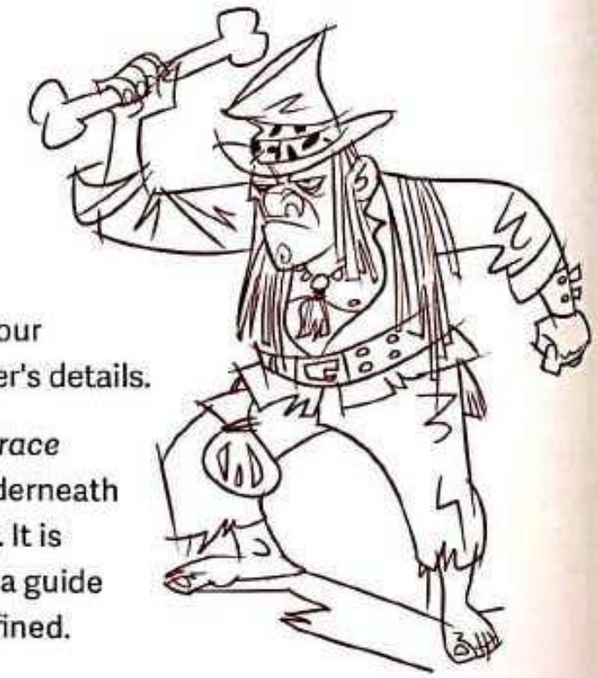
How do you use PoseBook? Here's an example of how I used one pose from my app and took it from initial sketch to final character design.

Step 1

Find the shape and action.

Step 2

Block in the character elements.



Step 3

Refine your character's details.

Do not trace your underneath drawing. It is more of a guide to be refined.

Model: John Tucker

Observe how I pushed the action of the pose more by squashing his body.

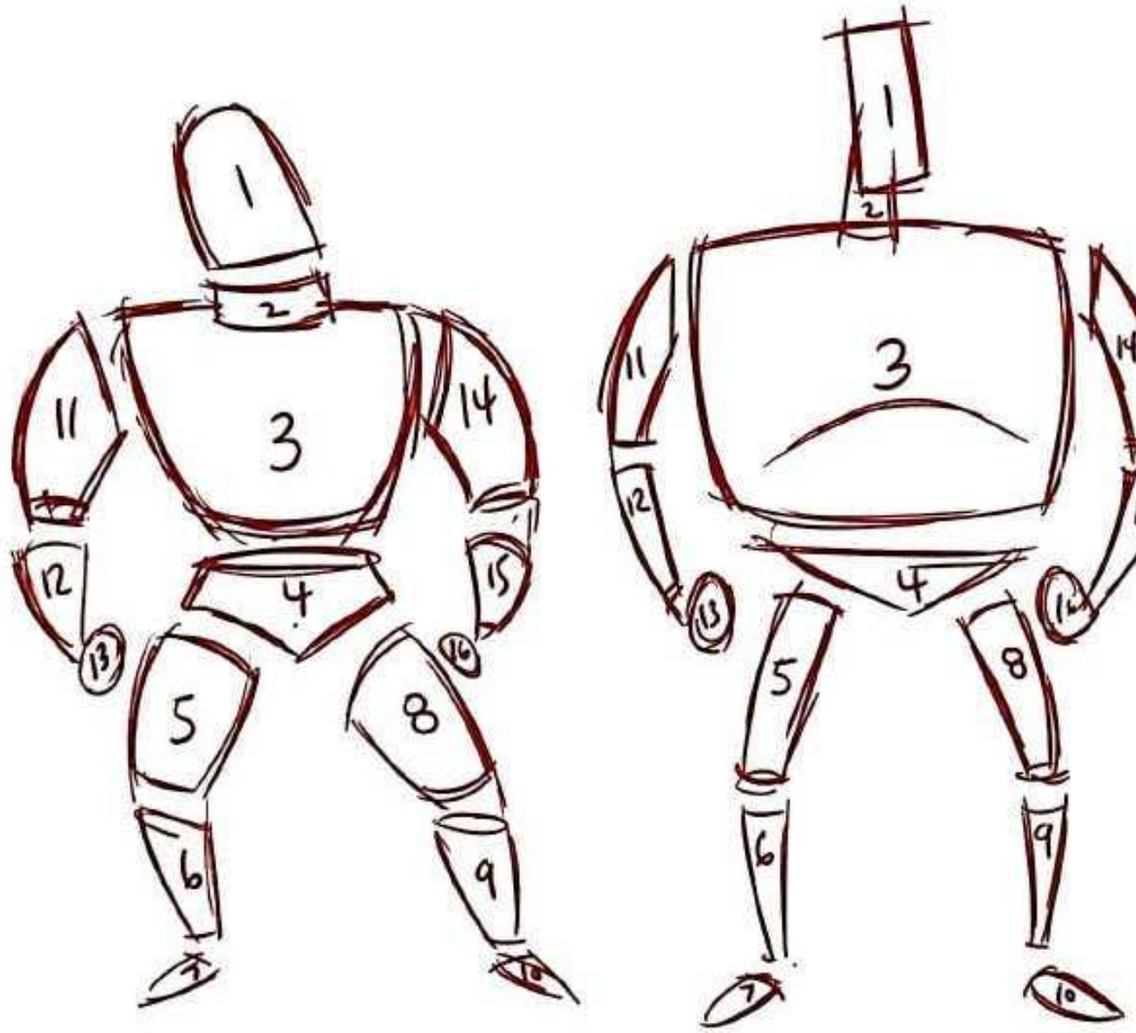
Step 4

Block in your color palette.

Step 5

Add in your desired shadows.

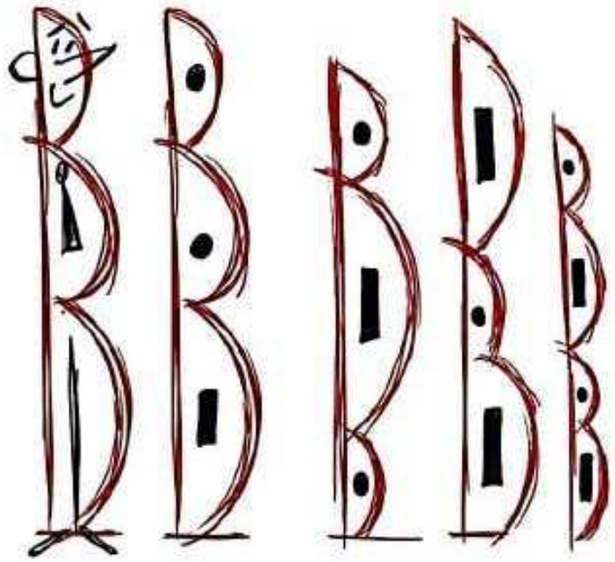
These are body shapes for treating the rib cage and the pelvis as one shape. And now we have 15 shapes to explore.



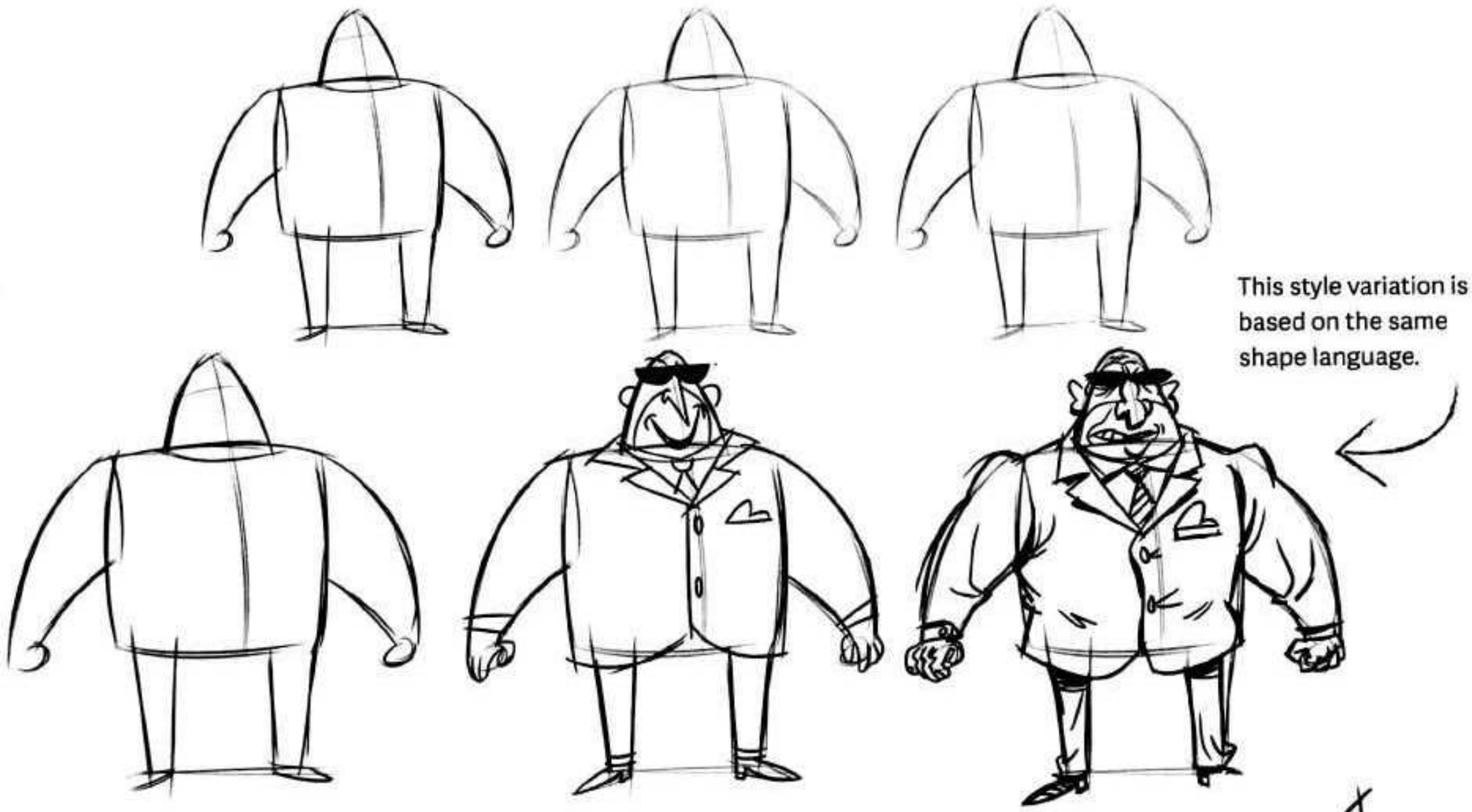
The human figure can be broken up into just 16 shapes. If you keep this in mind, you are able to treat each shape independently. And by considering contrast in our shapes, we can create an unlimited amount of variation. How many different ways can you vary the 16 parts?

Think of design in terms of Morse code: if you maintain the variety, harmony, and rhythm, you will be saying something.

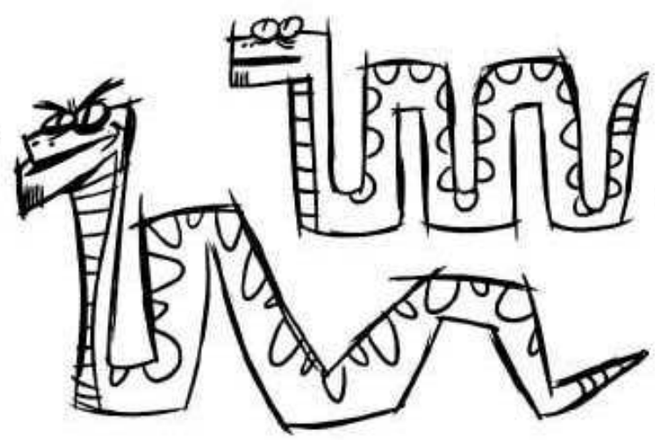
A • –
B – • • •
C – • – •
D – • •



Use the same concept as Morse code when breaking up the relationships within your characters.

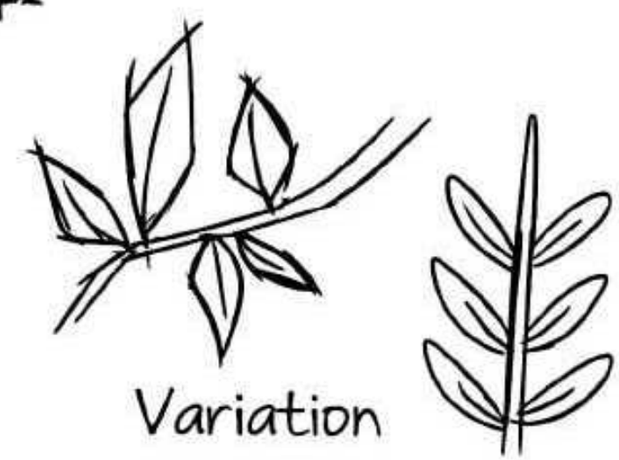


This style variation is based on the same shape language.



Too much evenness loses life.

More thick to thin shapes have been added here to provide contrast in the negative space.



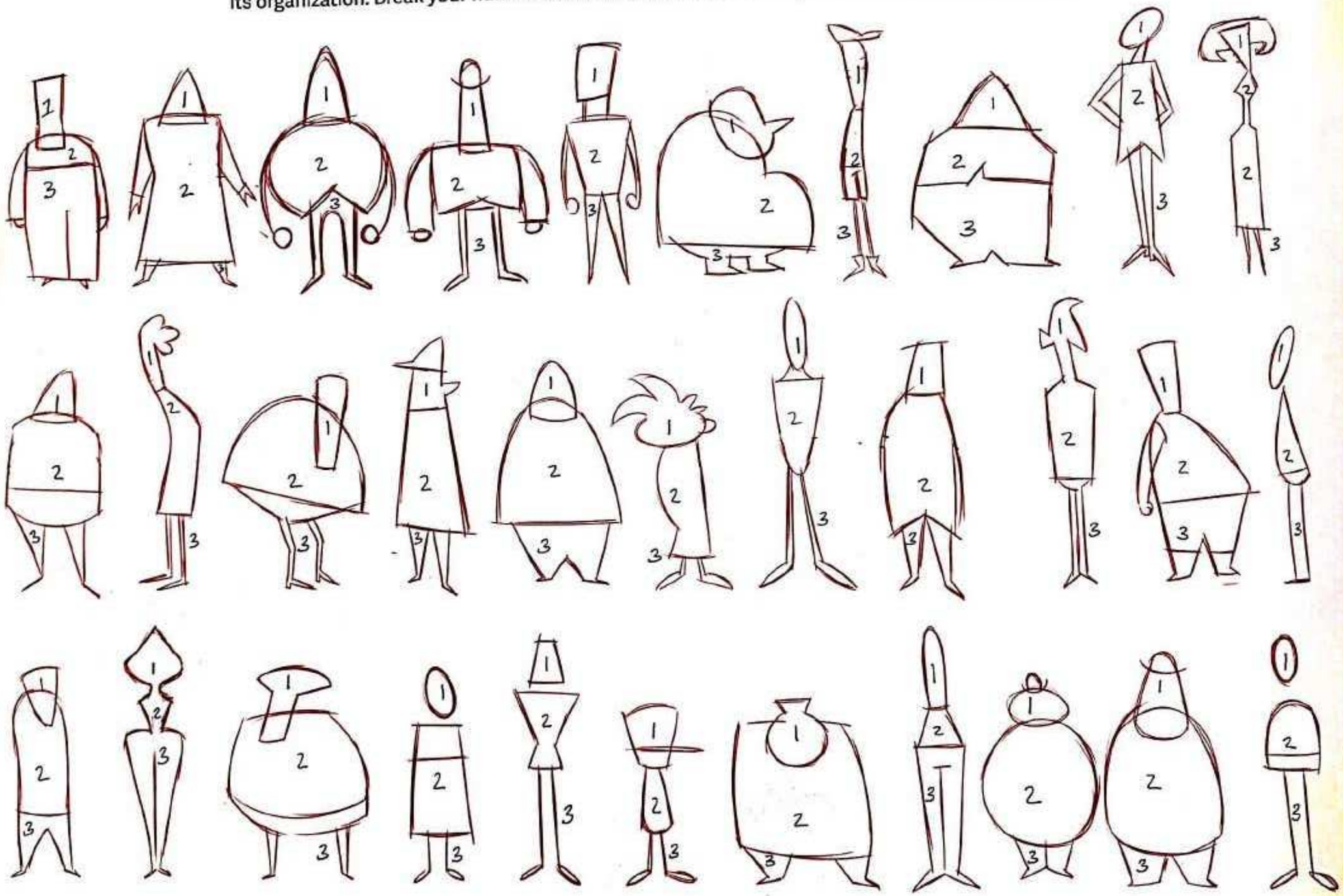
Variation

A good exercise is to draw from plants; they offer a lot of variety and shape variation.

Does your drawing still read when it's really small?

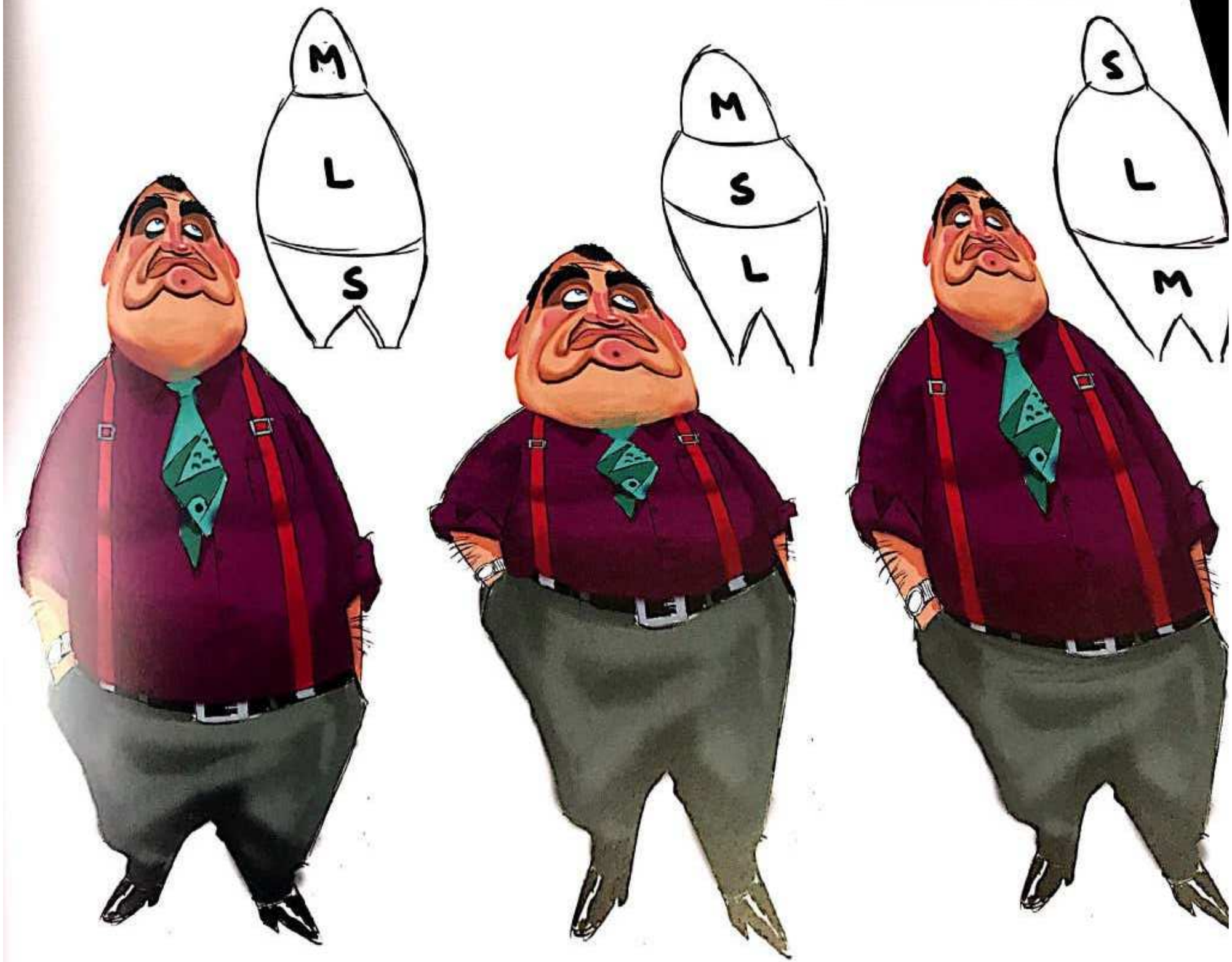
The most important thing you should do as an artist is to let your mind wander. You never know where your drawing will wind up. It starts with the idea, and then play, play, play. Let it flow, or you'll never know.

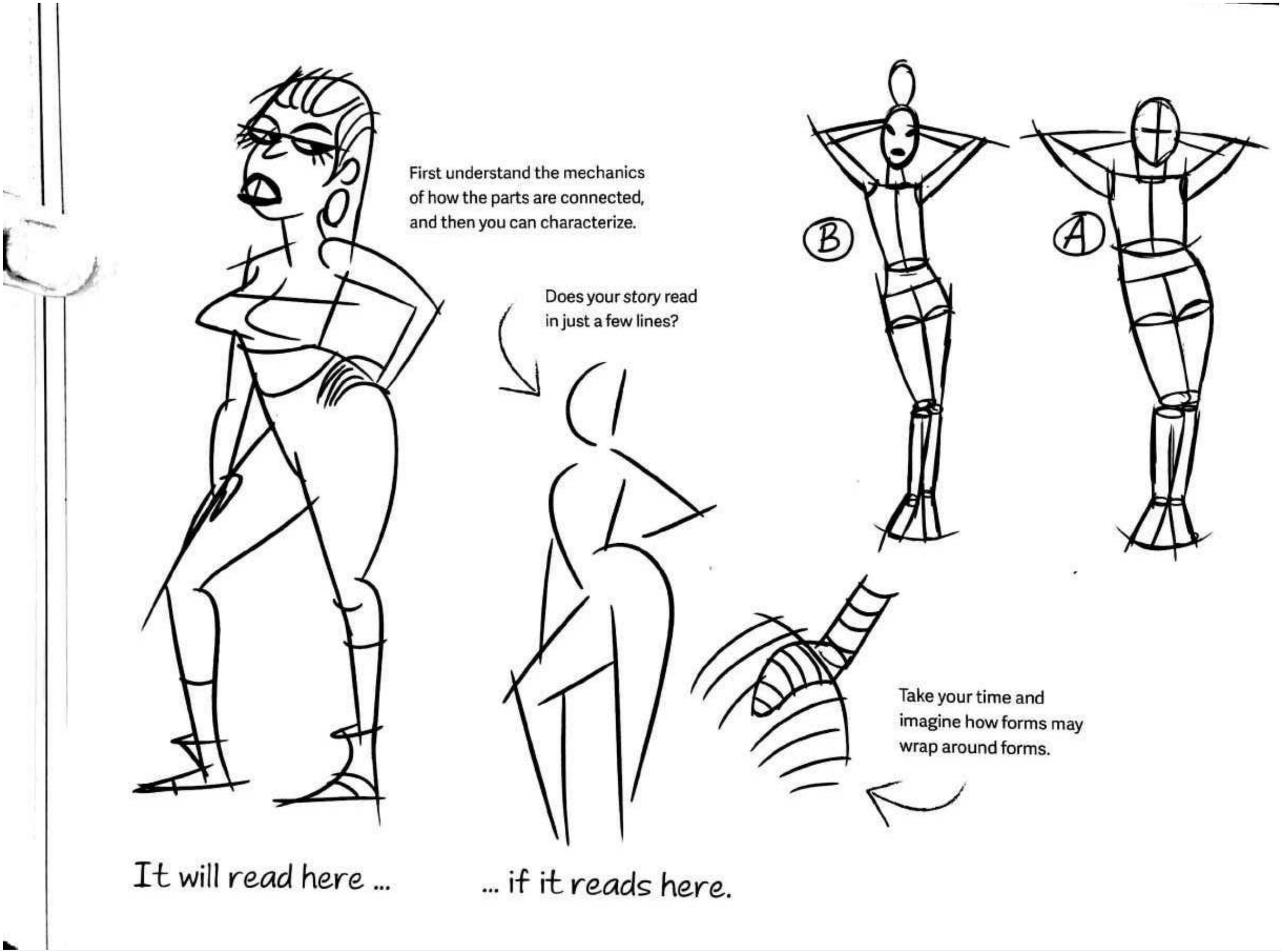
Shapes are unlimited; it simply comes down to the most important ingredient in design, which is its organization. Break your human character shapes into three parts: head, full torso, and legs.



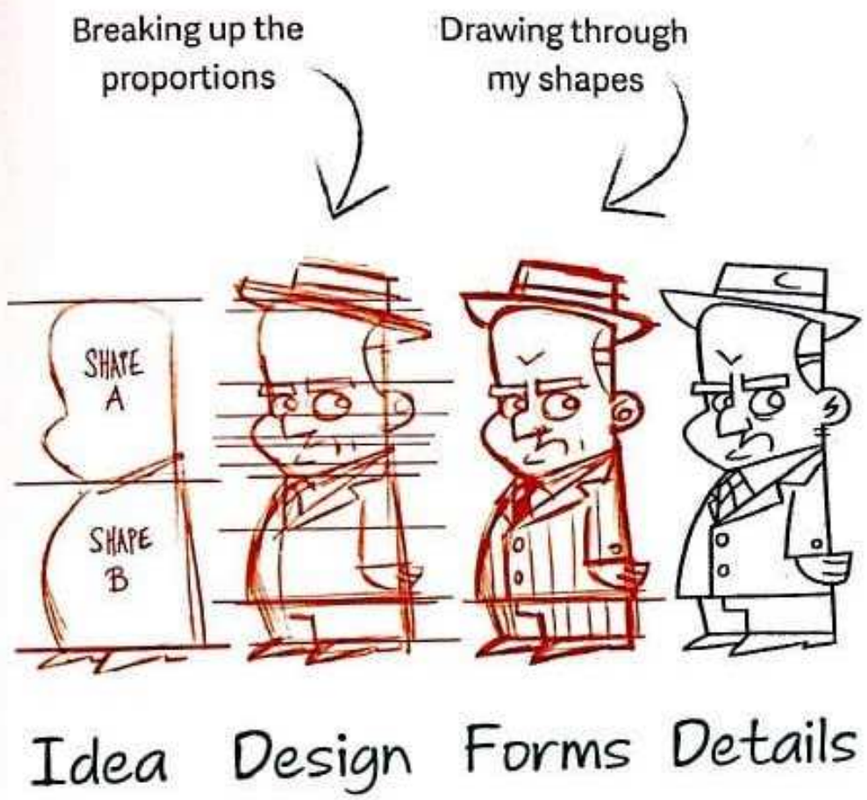
Breaking your character into three parts is a great way to instantly see shape variety on your largest masses. Remember the Silver Way: details last.

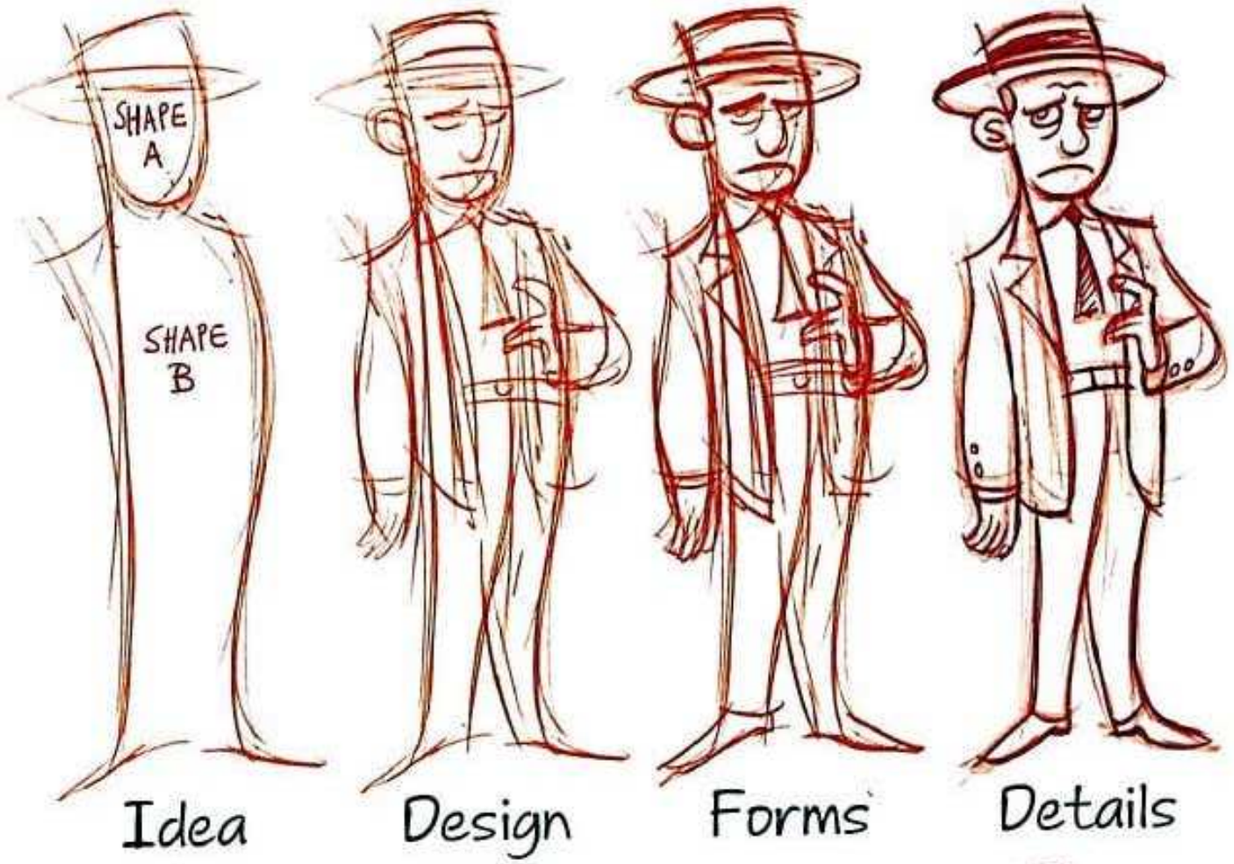
Proportions make a big difference. The character's feeling is all the same below, but the style of how he would appear in would be different in each case.

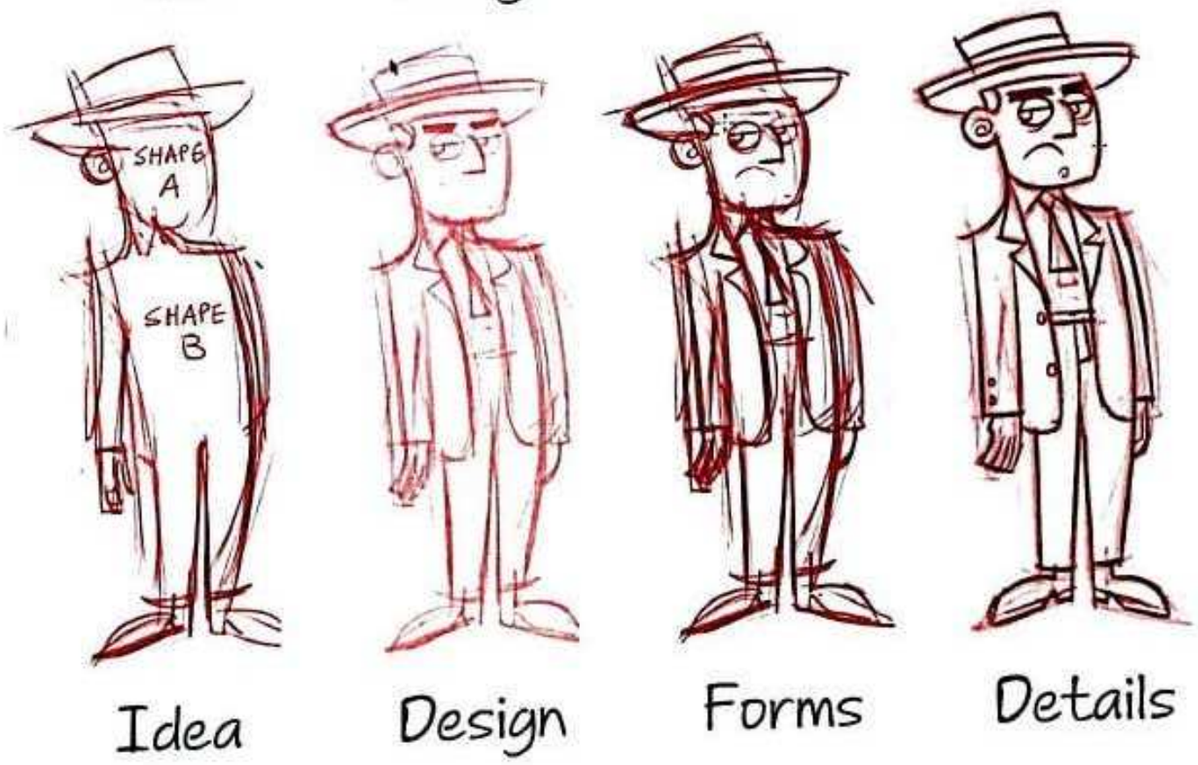



First understand the mechanics of how the parts are connected, and then you can characterize.
Does your *story* read in just a few lines?
B
A
Take your time and imagine how forms may wrap around forms.
It will read here ...
... if it reads here.

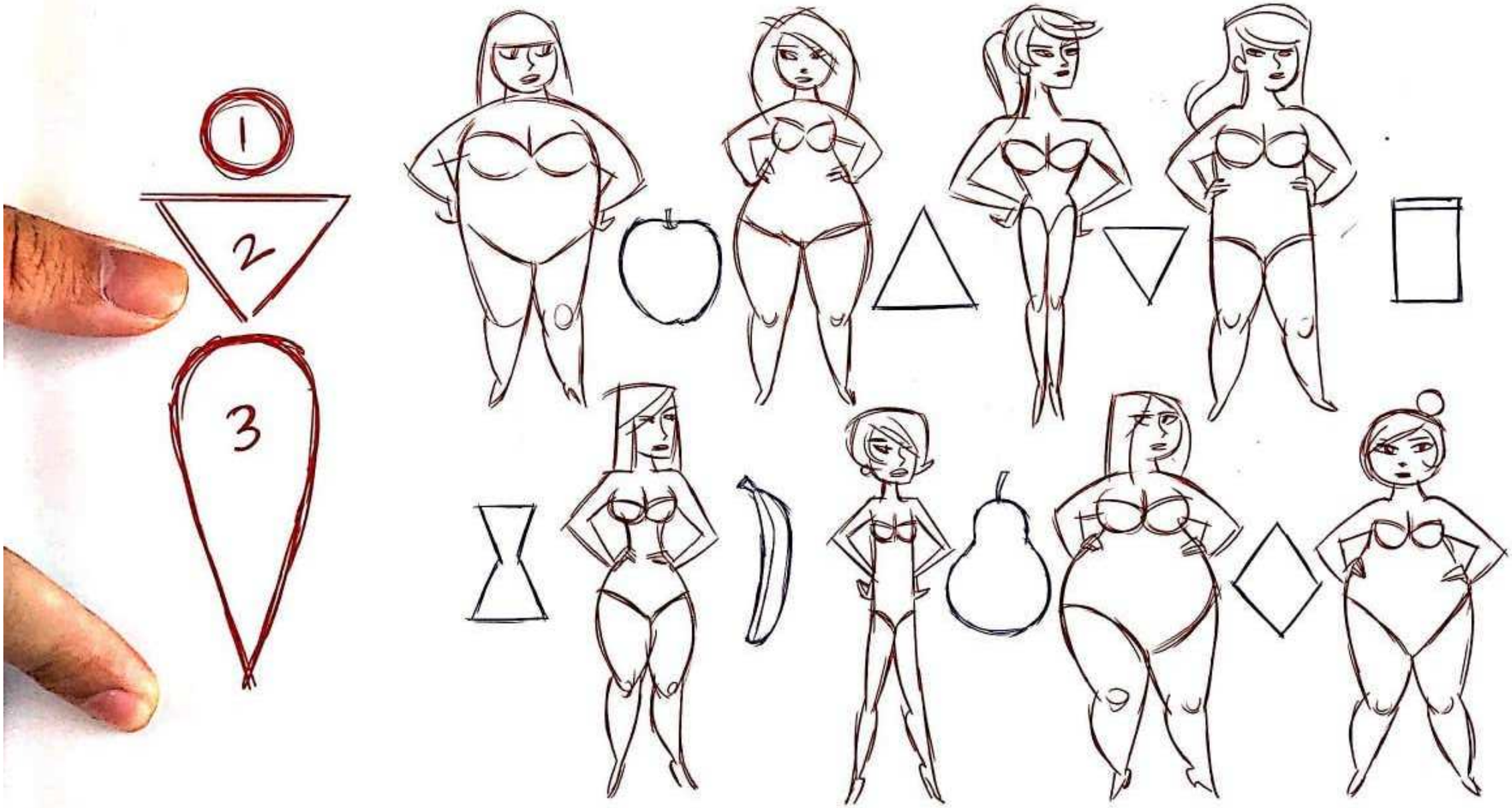
Here I am again emphasizing the Silver Way and showing how I am taking the same idea of the character; but by varying the shapes and proportions, I am developing three different styles.







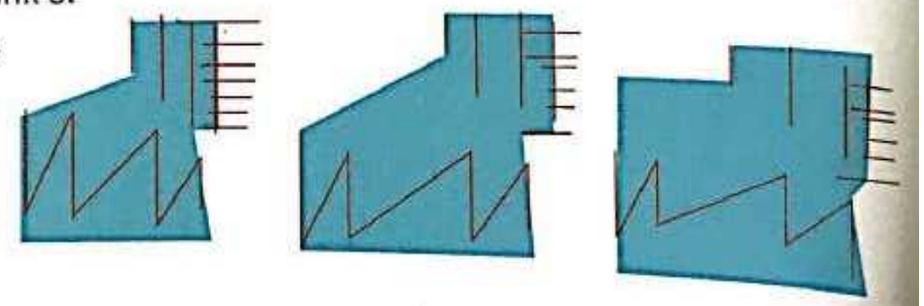
The exclamation point method is a great construction tool and was created for my students during our life-drawing sessions. It was a way for me to explain how to block in shapes effectively and easily. I found it gives a character a solid feeling; and even though it's represented here more graphically, it works well on detailed anatomy. The exclamation point represents the ribs and the pelvis. See how many ways you can alter those two shapes and instantly create variety.



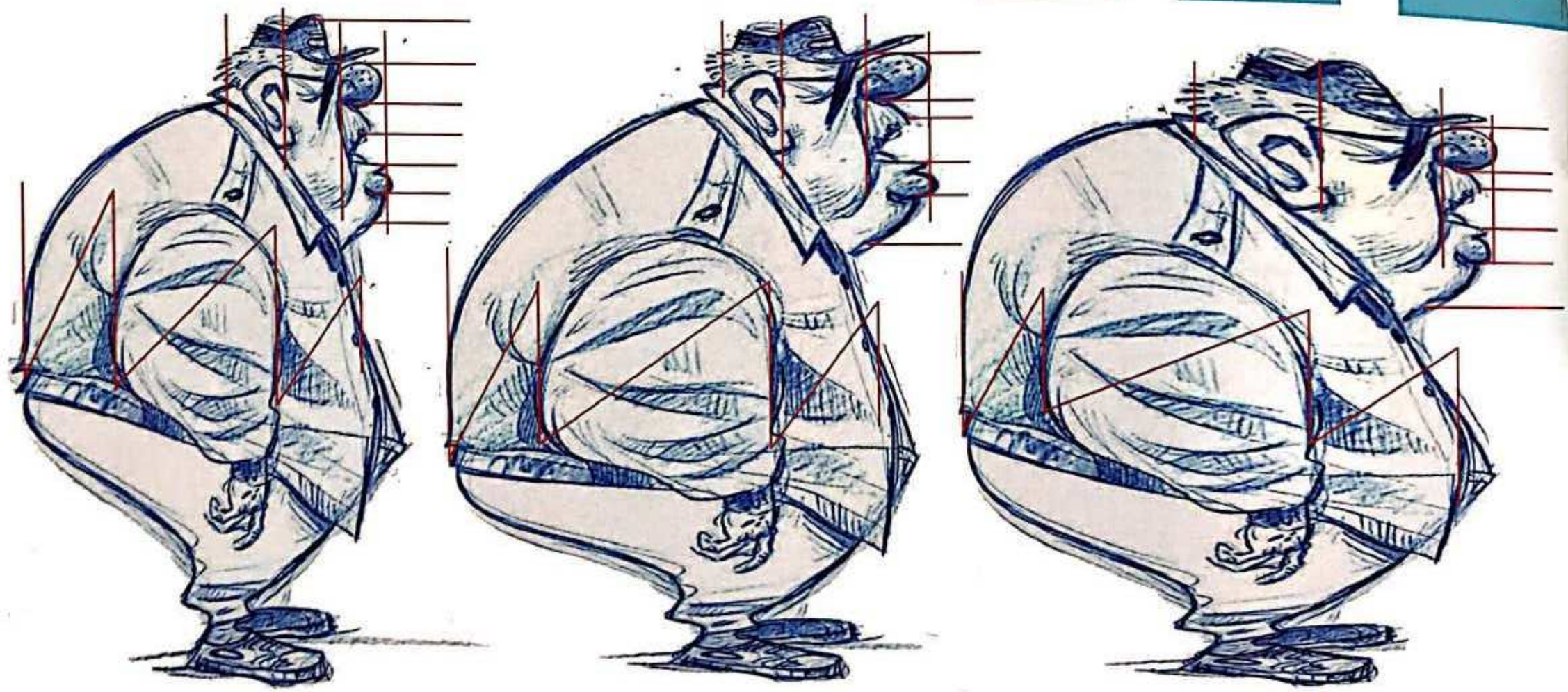
Think simplicity in body shape.

A variety of body shapes can be created by using fruit shapes, triangles, rectangles, etc. You will discover many body shapes through real-life observation and capturing it within your sketchbook. Visit shopping malls and airports; this will open your eyes to the variety of shapes in women.

exaggerate a bit more. You can always pull it back if it gets too crazy. Some shows will require a greater push in the characters model pack, which will include pushed expressions and poses. I like to think of this in terms of a flexible straw; notice how each time I pull it out, the variety in the zigzag differs.



What it means to PUSH.



This character could work. It represents a feeling of an old man slouching, but stops there. There are some even shapes happening, and my desire is to push and contrast more. Using the Warp Tool in Photoshop allows me to test this without having to draw from scratch every time.

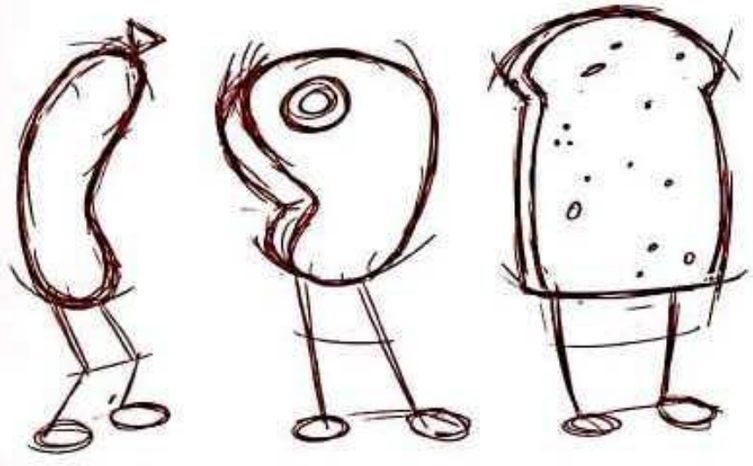
Pulling the body shape wider makes the head a little lower and bigger and avoids the ladder.

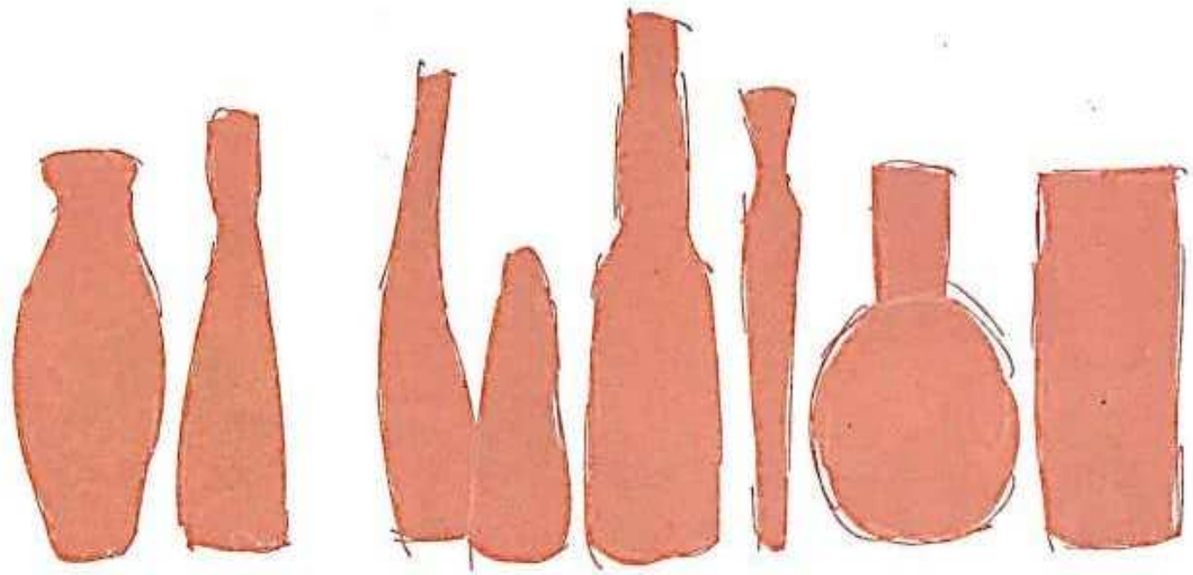
Now I have added more weight by raising the shoulders higher, thereby giving the appearance of the arm hanging lower. I also pulled the head out and squashed it.

Fragile like a sausage

Confident like a steak

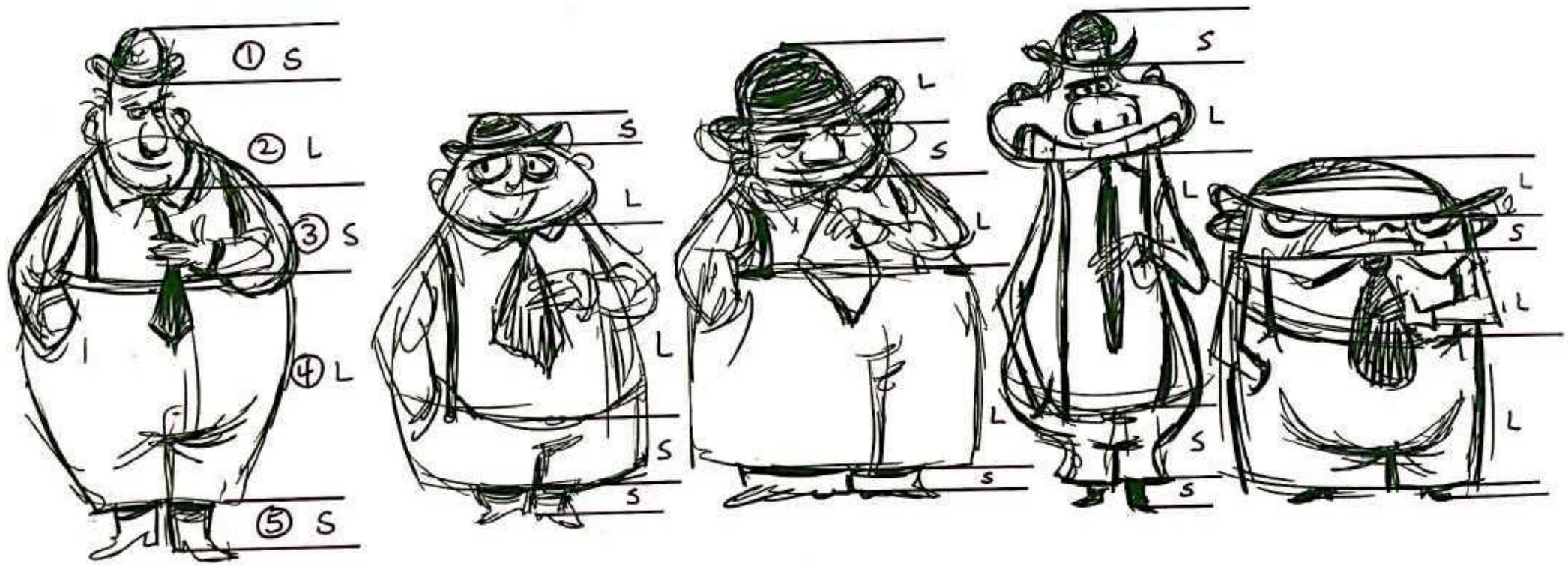
Sturdy like a piece of toast





These are no different than bottle shapes.
Let this inspire variety and contrast in your shapes and sizes.

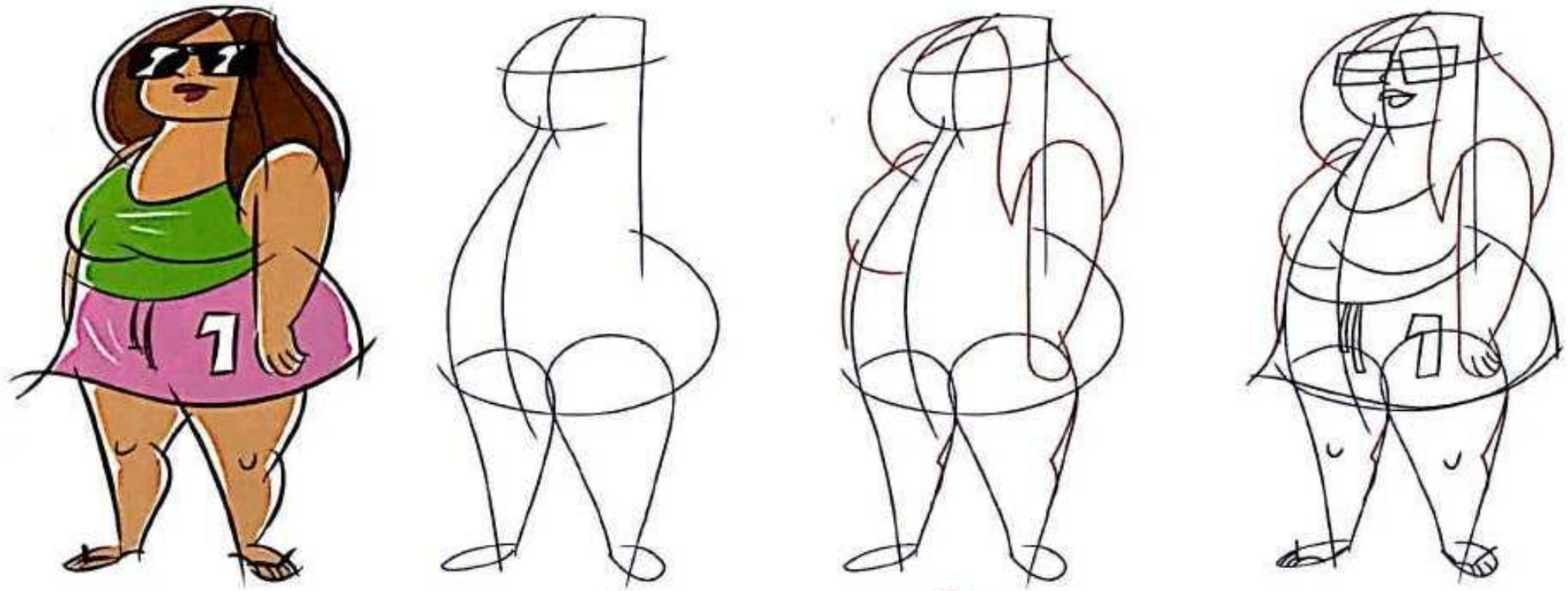
When thinking about your characters, you may simplify them down to common textures and durability.

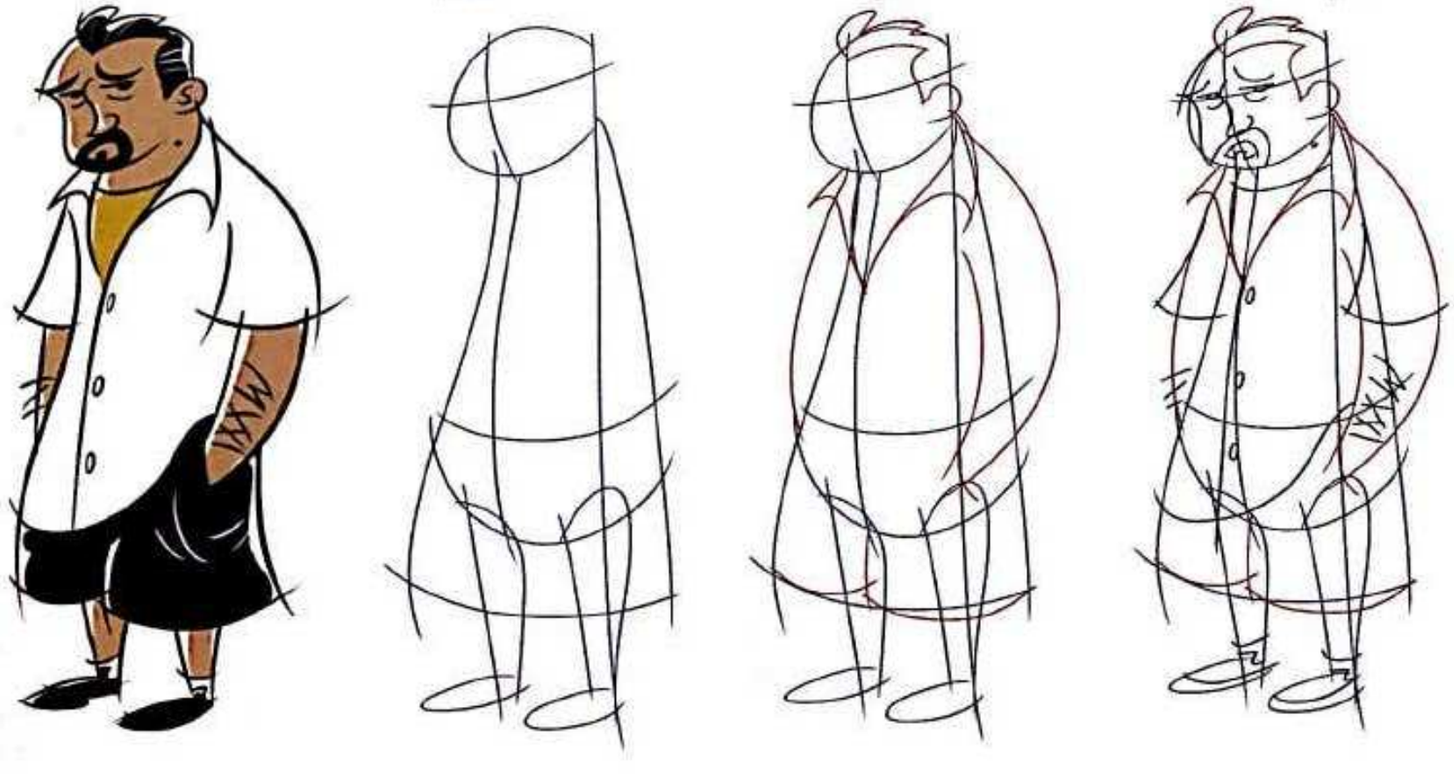


Here's a fun exercise to explore a character more.

- Start off with an initial sketch.
- Contrast each identifiable shape between small and large.

Contrast in your construction is the character designer's greatest weapon. See where you are able to push and pull.

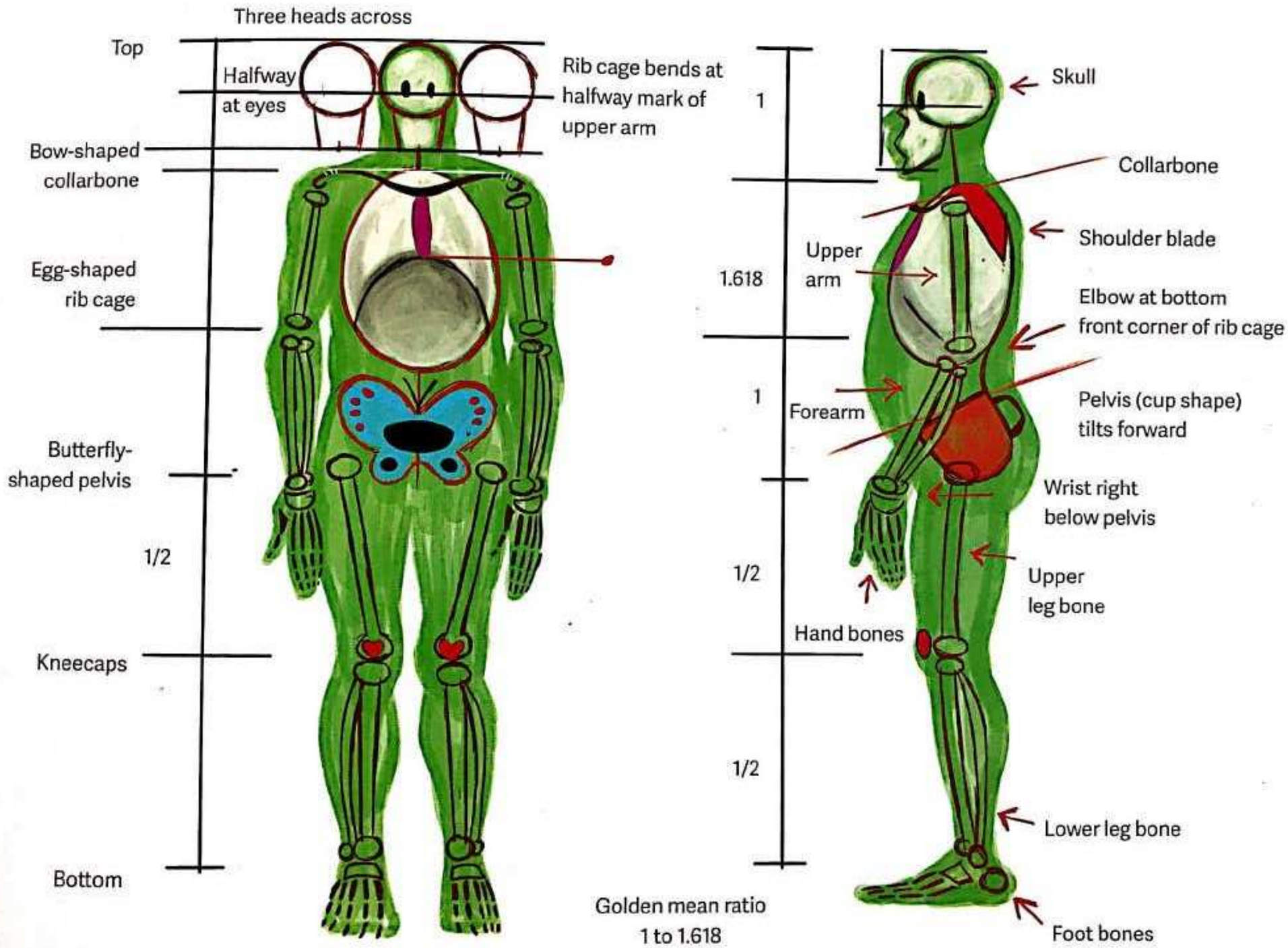


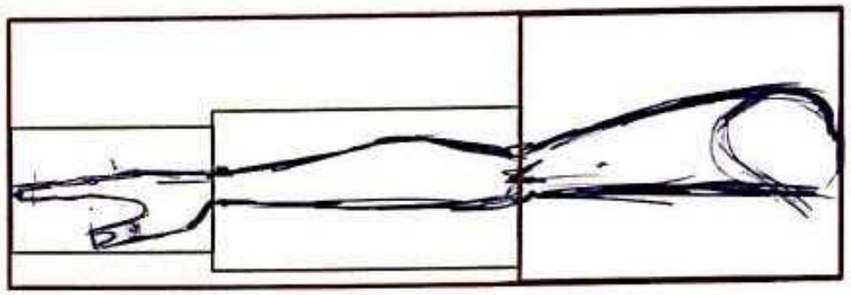


Another good practice to become more familiar with construction is to break down the construction from character model sheets. Place a layer on top of the artwork. Even though the final image may not appear to be properly constructed, it is your job to discover it.

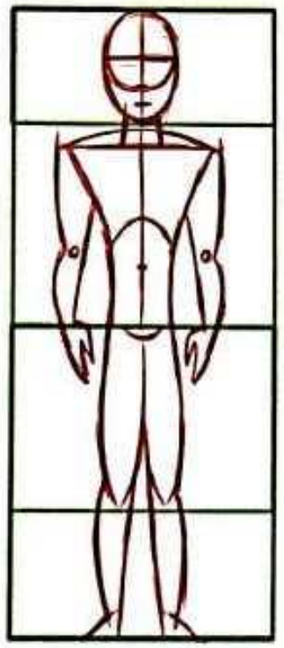
The Real Basics

(understand this and you will be on your way)

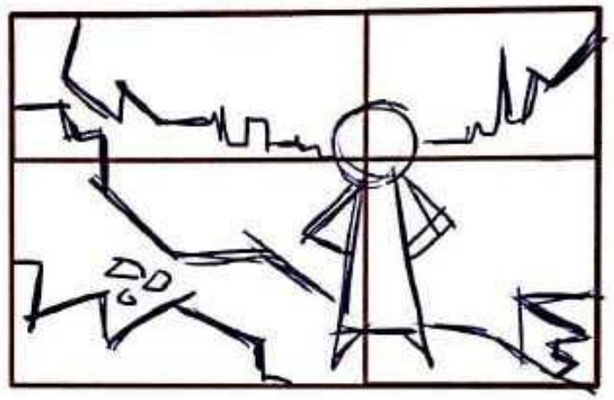




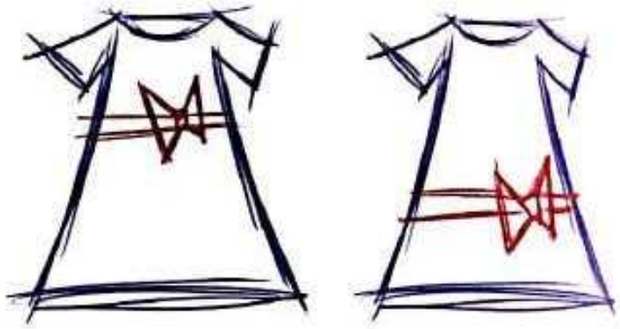
The golden ratio appears throughout the arm and your fingers.



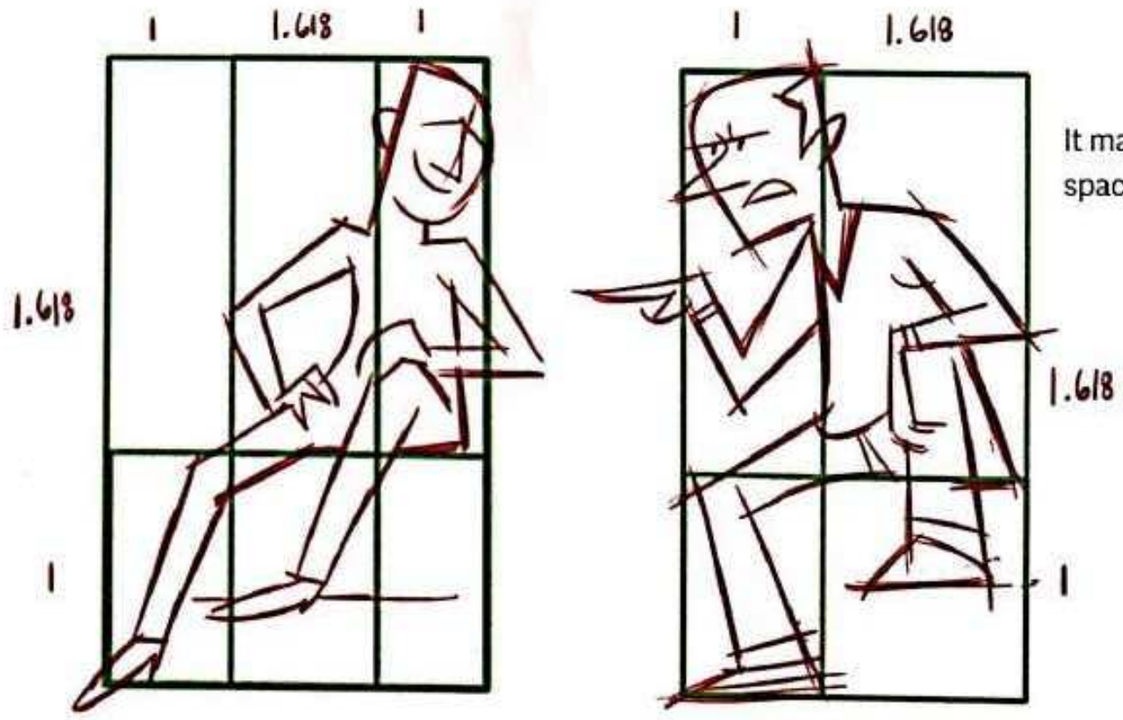
It will help you simply break up proportions.



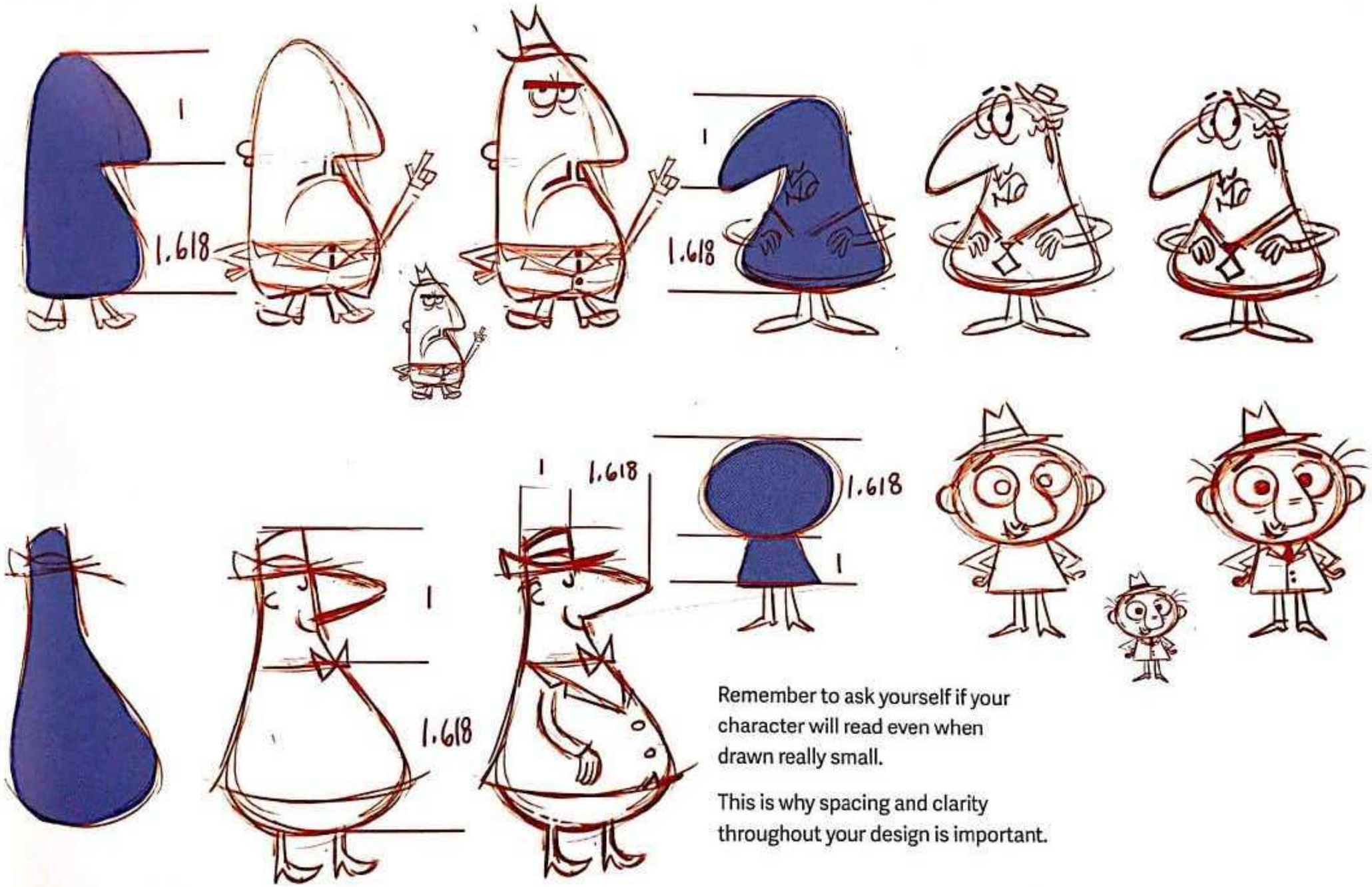
It will help you place an image you want attention on.



It can help guide the placement of elements on clothes or objects.



It makes me aware of my spacial surroundings.



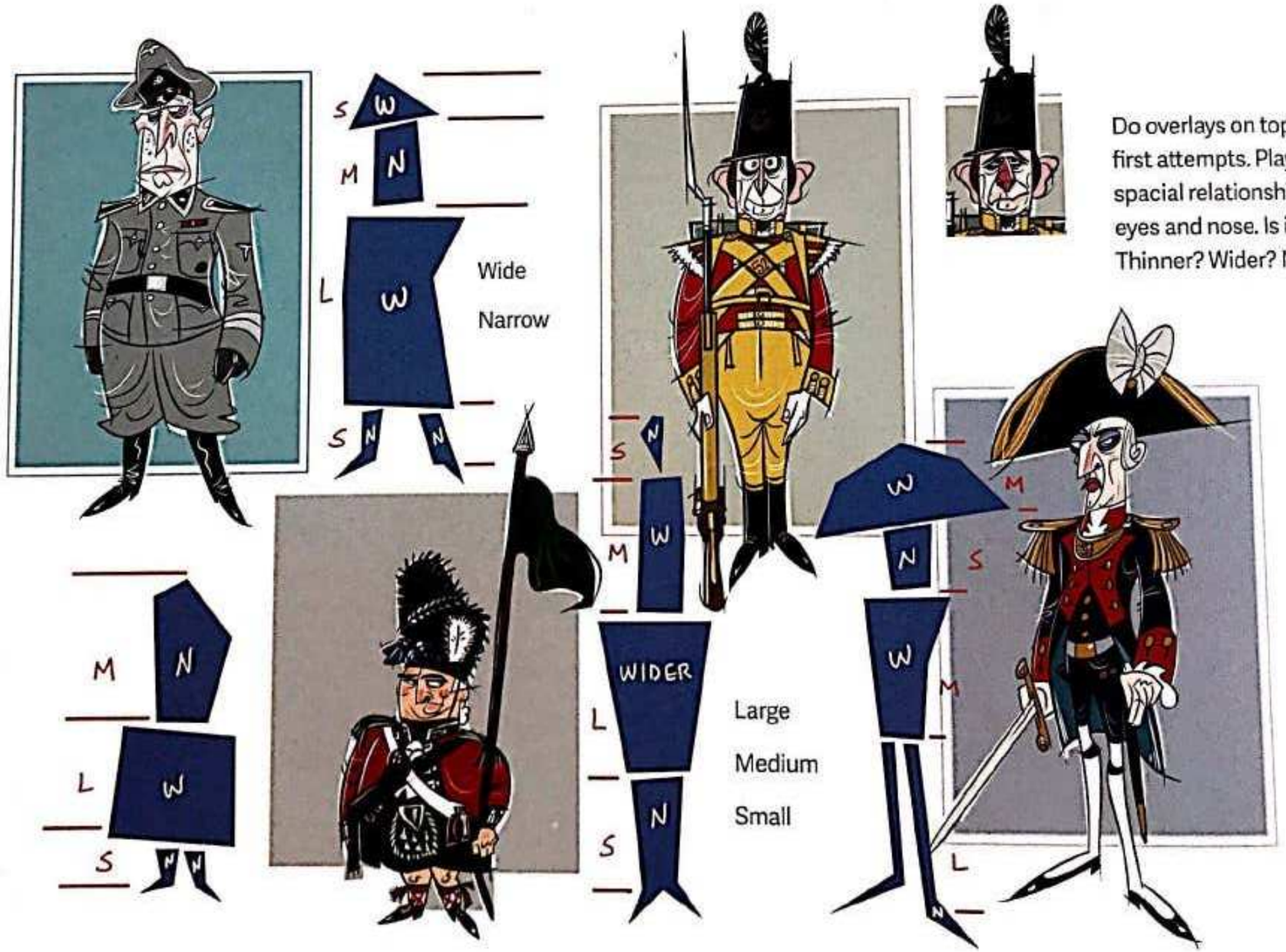
Remember to ask yourself if your character will read even when drawn really small.

This is why spacing and clarity throughout your design is important.

Look for Rhythm

Rhythm gives movement to your eye. Imagine looking at a solid white fence, each piece of wood being the same width and height. Your eyes would not really move; you would be seeing it just as one big shape. Now take that fence and alter the spacing, height, and width of each piece of wood. Your eyes would be working and moving.

This is how rhythm will work in your design. It builds visual interest, avoids monotony, and offers the contrast we are seeking. We can create rhythm by varying wide vs. narrow, large vs. small, thin vs. thick, dark vs. light, straight vs. curvy, tall vs. short—all these relationships will help add the directional flow we are seeking.



Do overlays on top of your first attempts. Play with spacial relationships of the eyes and nose. Is it thicker? Thinner? Wider? Narrower?

Rhythm in design is caused by repetition.
Some ways of finding rhythm in your design:

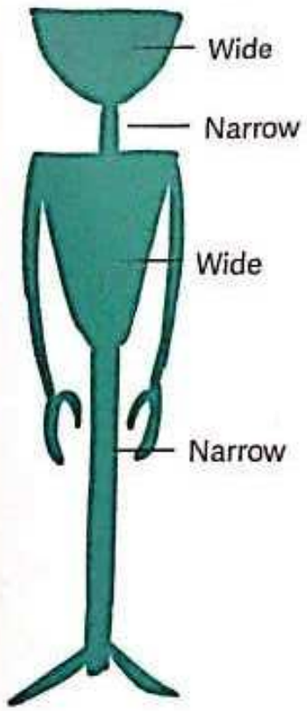
1) Wide, narrow, wide, narrow, etc.

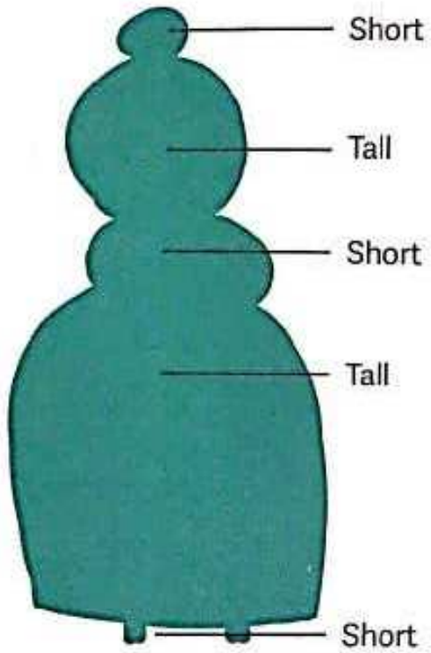
2) Thick, thin, thick, thin, etc.

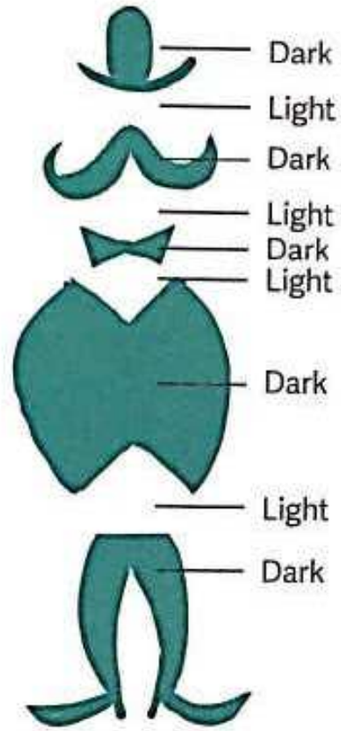
3) Light, dark, light, dark, etc.

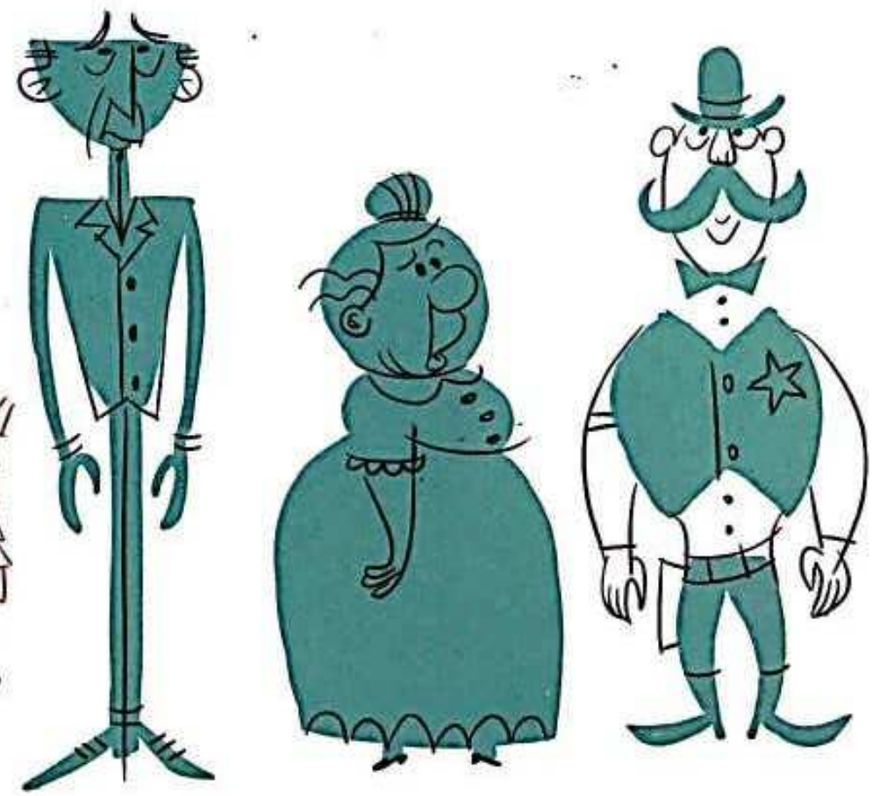
4) Tall, short, tall, short, etc.

5) Straight, curve, straight, curve, etc.

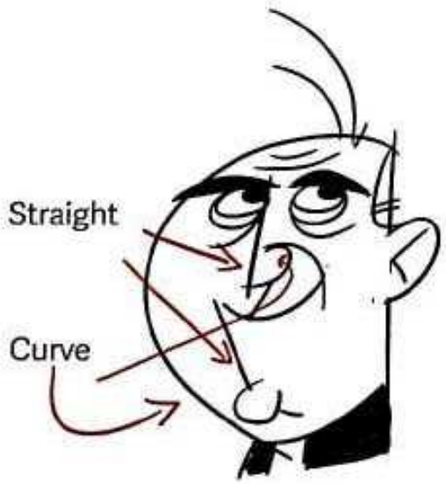


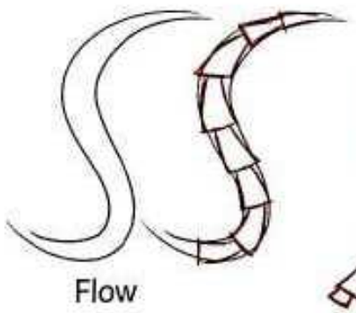


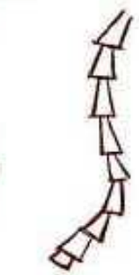




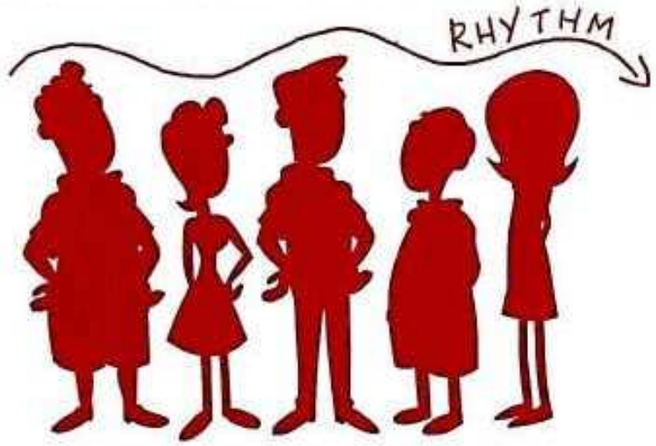
Flow, like rhythm, should lead the eye in a specific direction. It should feel smooth.





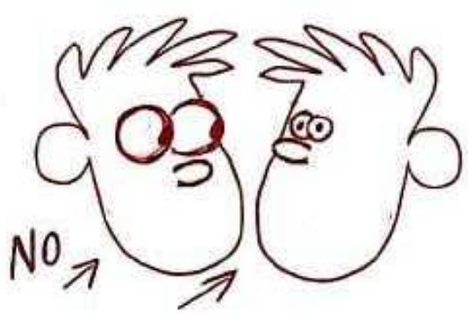


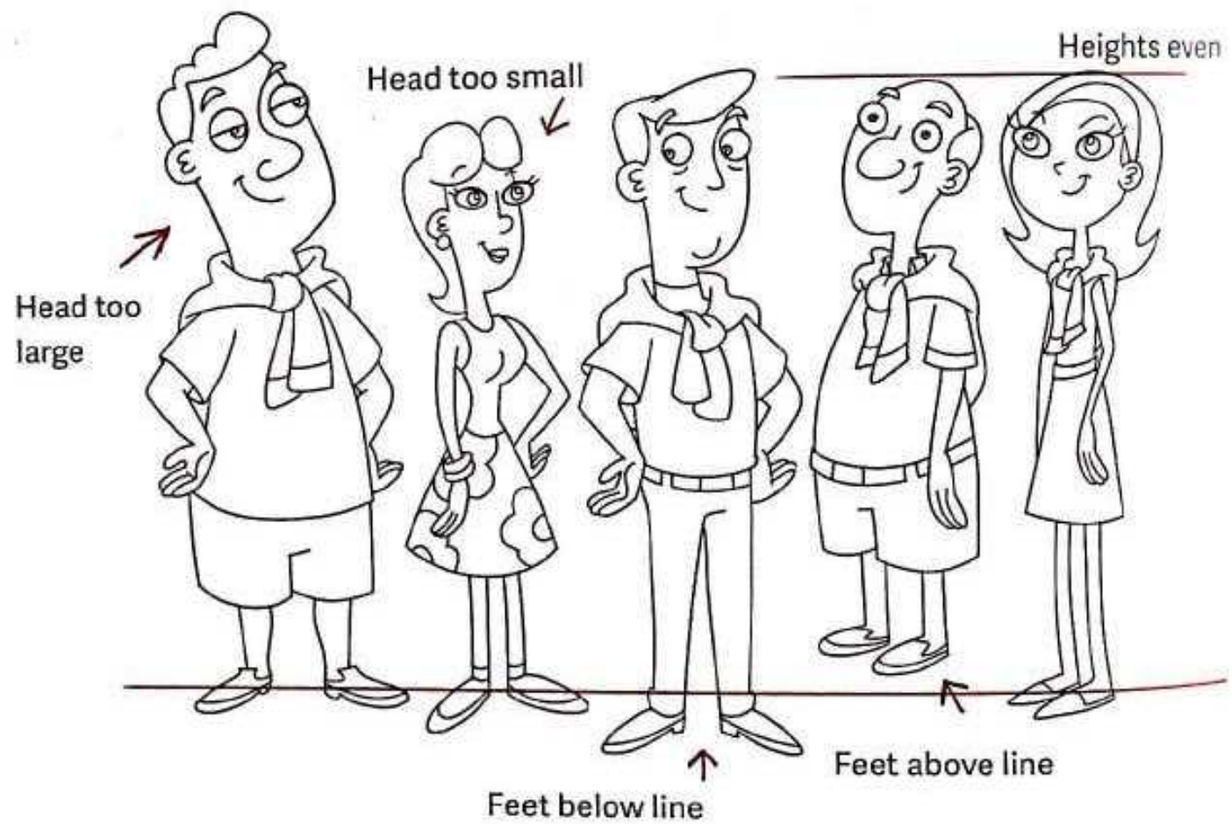
When doing lineups, create a horizontal ground plane and place each character's furthest foot back heel there. This will help you see their true size comparisons, and if you need to alter the head you can make the adjustment in Photoshop. You are not to be concerned with the ground perspective for this.



For variety and rhythm purposes, when creating a lineup of characters, try making them different heights: one up, one down, etc. You can play with body thickness too.

Make sure that the head sizes work well with the characters who are interacting with each other. If one head feels way too large in contrast to another, it looks strange, especially if they are the same age. A helpful way to determine if the heads are relatable and will work together on-screen is if the eyeballs are somewhat similar in size. Of course this does not apply if it is intentional due to specific character types, such as creatures, giants, etc.





Maintaining Volumes

Another issue I have noticed as an instructor is that students do not understand the vital importance of maintaining the volumes within the character. They may draw a character's forearm or angle as one thickness, but the other a different size. What it does is make the drawing appear to not be well-thought-out.

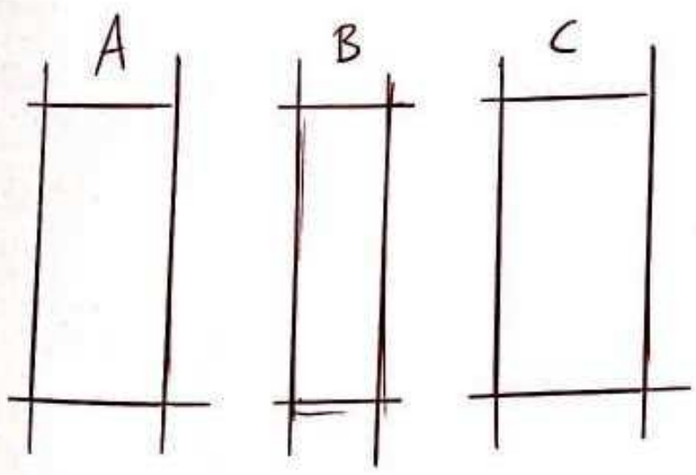
Keep in mind that as forms come closer, they will appear bigger; and as forms recede, they feel smaller. That said, try not to confuse that when you are making a front 3/4 view. Notice in my example how the bottom tubes are maintaining the same volume even though one is clearly larger and in the foreground. You will get better at this the more you put it into practice.

This is what it means to watch your volumes.

Volume A = Volume C,

Volume B ≠ A or C,

it is thinner.

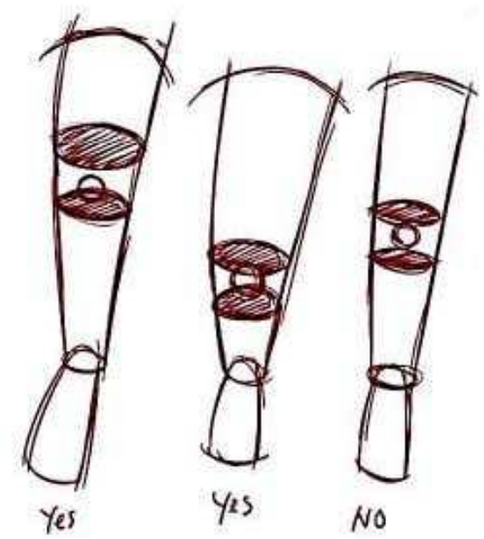


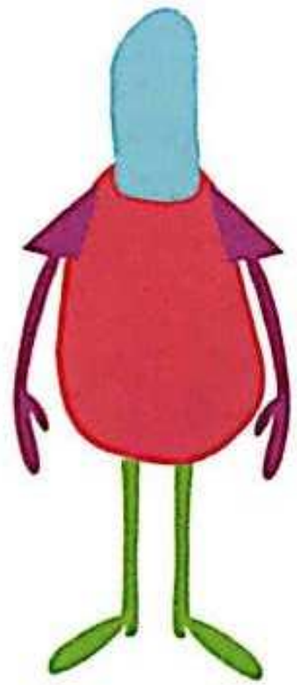
The volumes here are dissimilar.

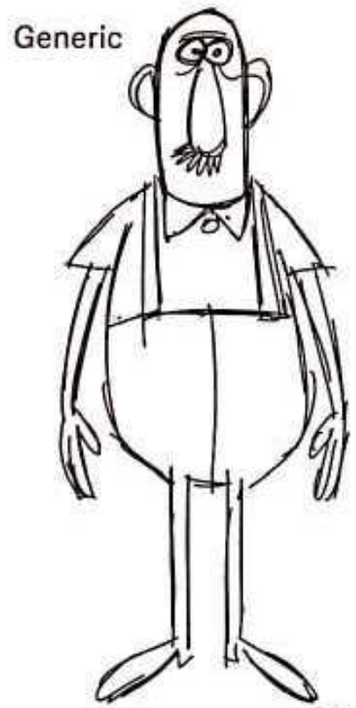
The top tubes are different, while the bottom two are similar but in perspective.

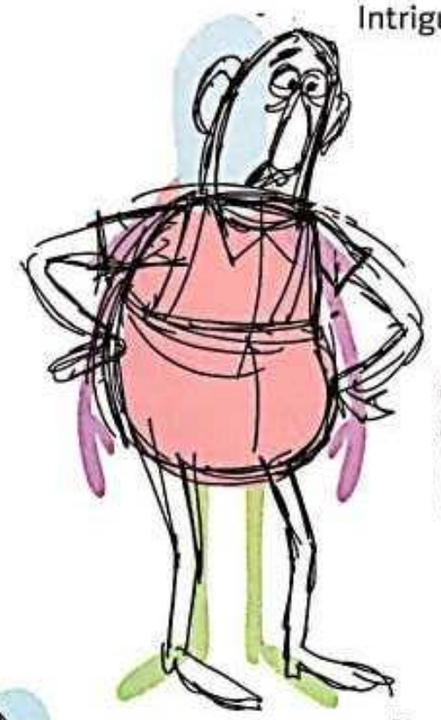
Volumes here are similar even though shorter.

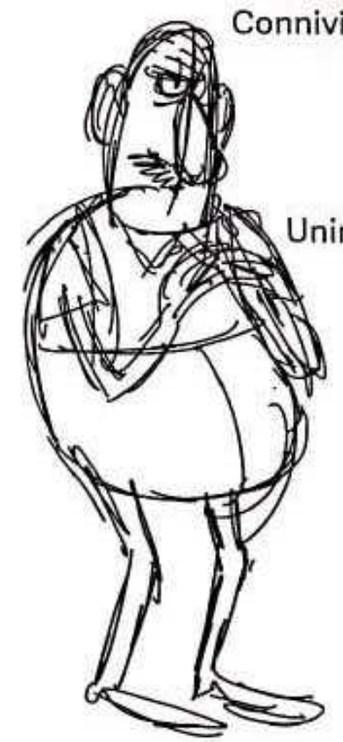
Volumes need to be considered when creating foreshortening. In order to do it effectively, make one size of a leg or arm longer or shorter.

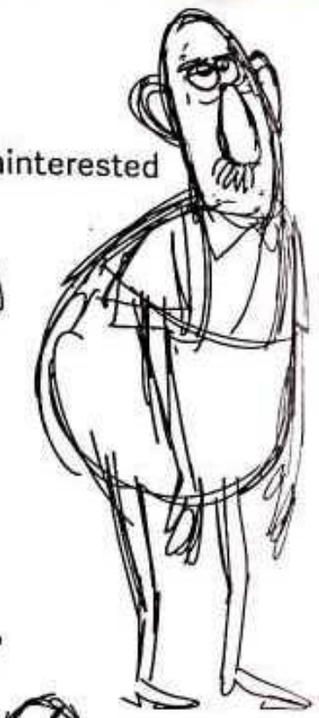


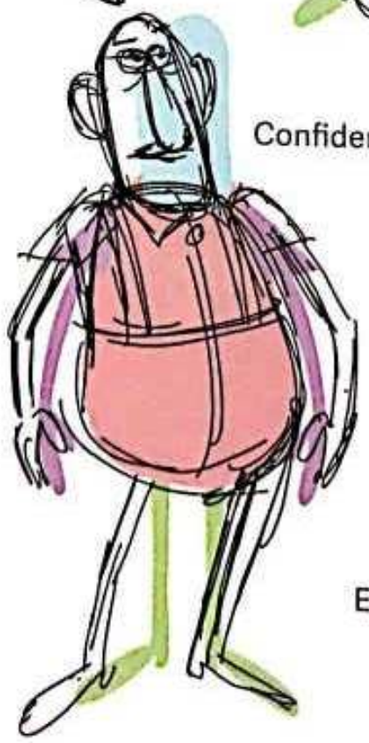


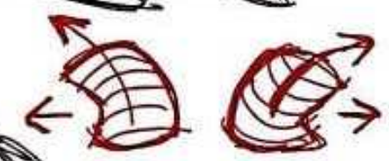










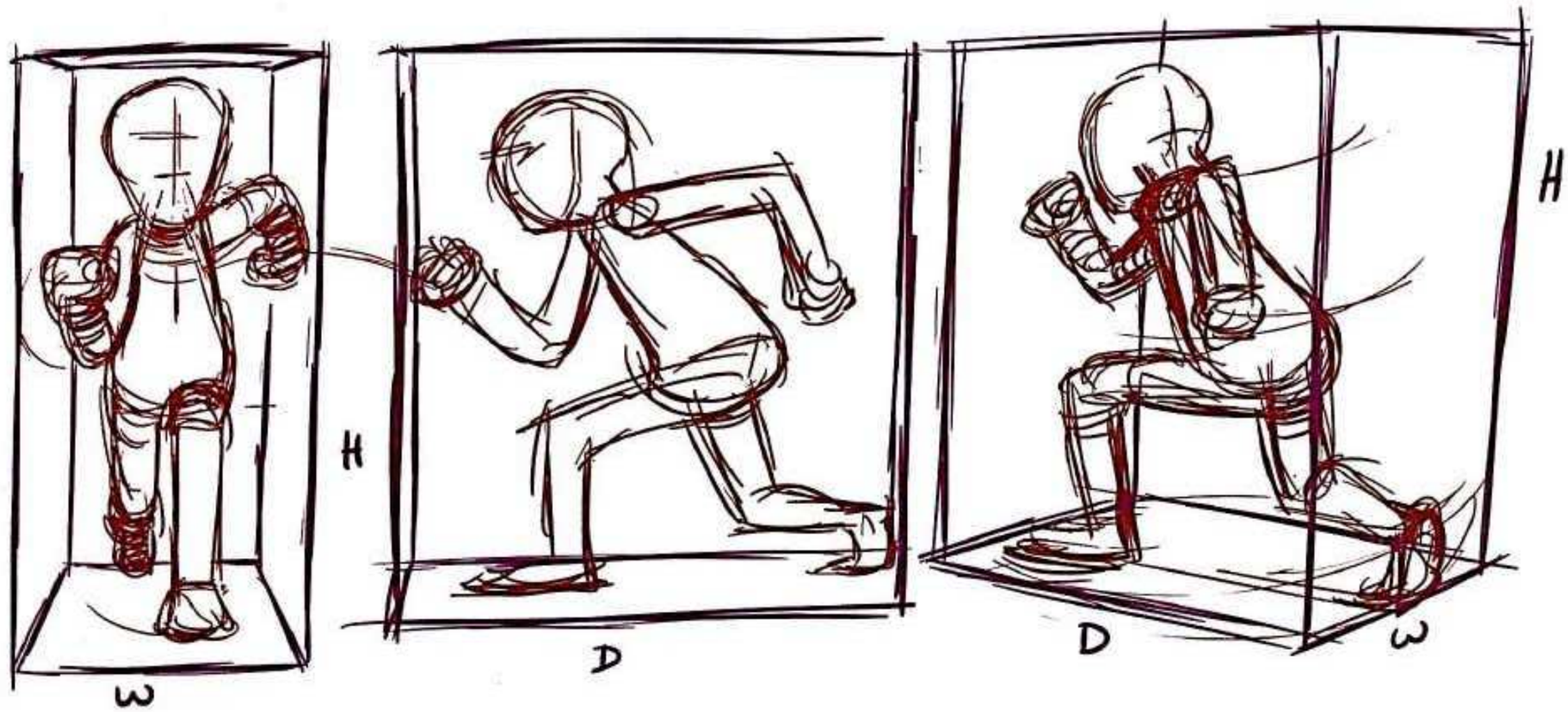


Maintaining the volumes of your character can be established by making a generic body-shape template. Now avoid getting lost in too many details, and break it down to simple shapes. Place a new layer above the template, and rough in the pose.

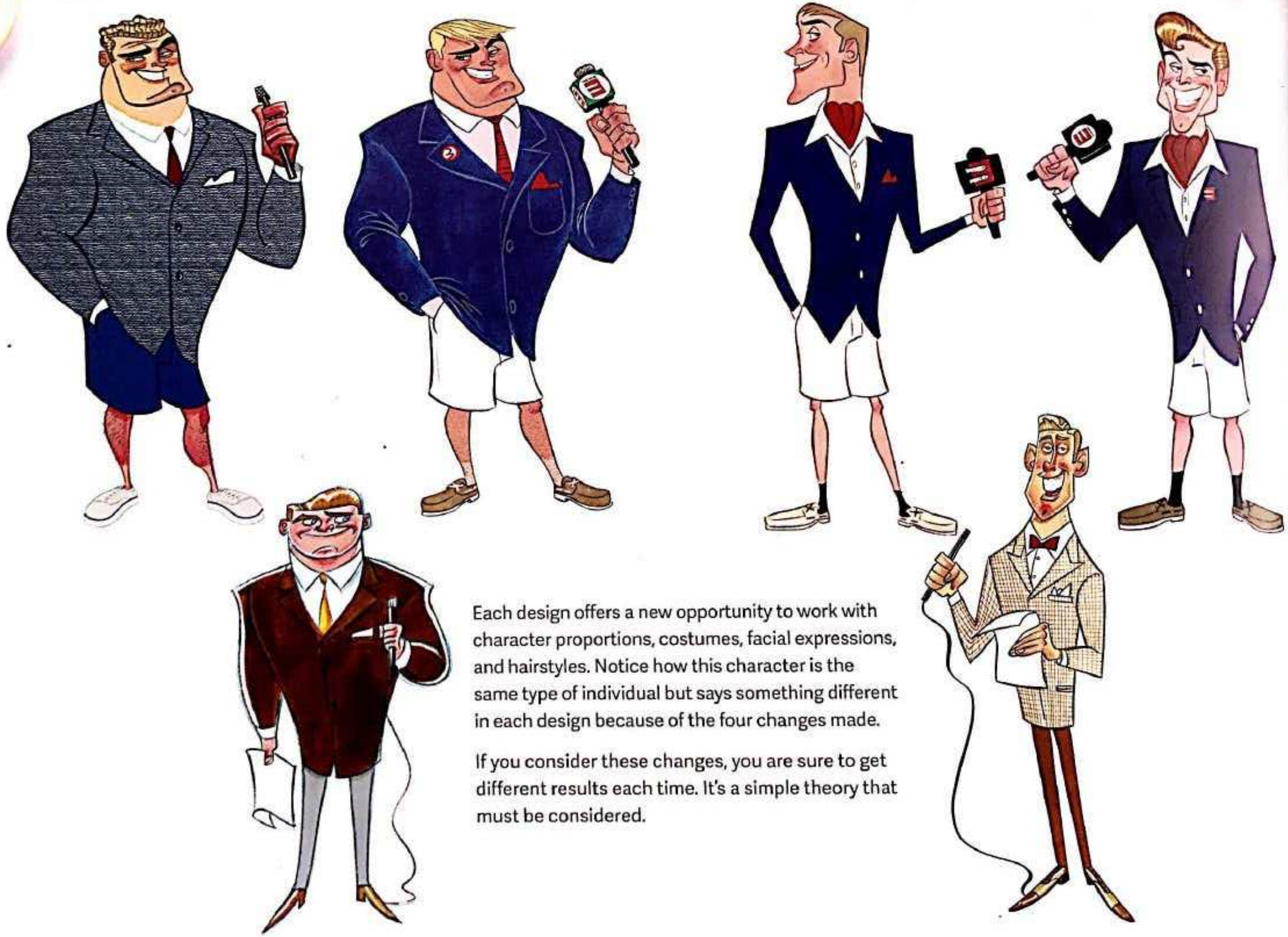
If the goal is to develop personality in your character and not keep too generic of a pose, then start to understand who the person is, act it out, and infuse it into your drawings.

The torso will only go five ways: forward, backward, straight, and side to side.

Always keep in mind the importance of overall construction. By slowing down, reworking your drawings, tracing over real photos, and blocking in your construction masses, you will have the ability to showcase to the client that you know what you're doing and are prepared to take on the job, no matter what style it is to be in. Your goal is to improve and be noticed. Have great ideas, appealing shapes, and solid construction in order to accomplish this!



When creating any type of character, it is important to think about the height, width, and depth. All forms occupy a space; and if you're conscious of this, it will give your drawing a sense of placement no matter what angle you put them in.



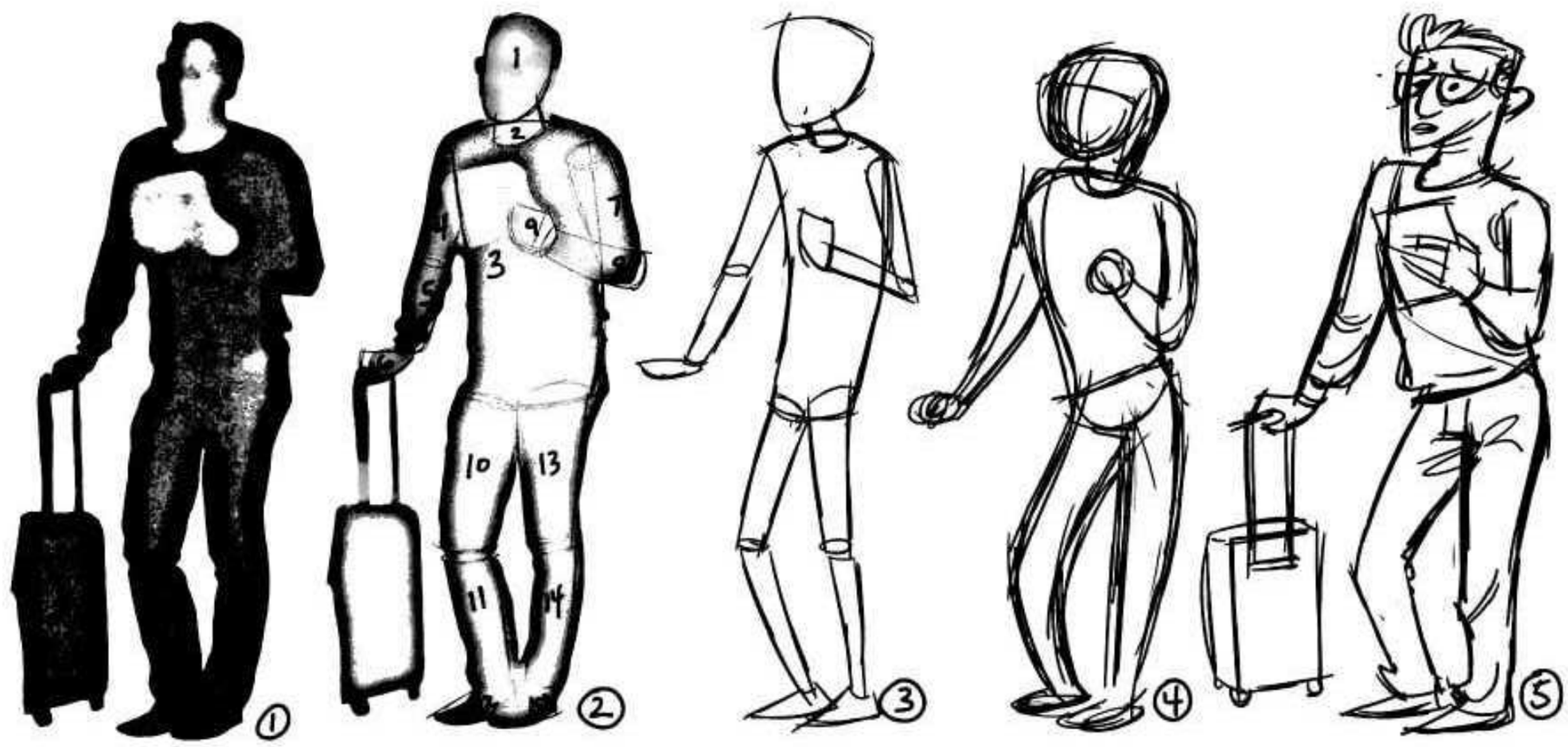
Each design offers a new opportunity to work with character proportions, costumes, facial expressions, and hairstyles. Notice how this character is the same type of individual but says something different in each design because of the four changes made.

If you consider these changes, you are sure to get different results each time. It's a simple theory that must be considered.

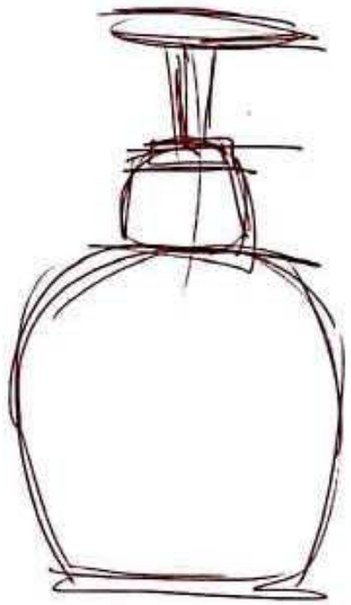
CONSTRUCTION EXERCISES

1) Building blocks: In order to build up your shorthand drawing skills, which means drawing something quick and loose without applying all the construction lines, you *must* understand the basic construction building blocks. Without knowing this, your artwork will suffer and just feel unstructured.

For daily practice, take a photo and lay a piece of tracing paper or Photoshop layer on top, and only find the tube shapes. Below I've identified 15 shapes as I've combined the rib cage and pelvis to form one shape. Then, redraw those same tube shapes (#3), varying the shapes. Now you can draw a loose gesture with the construction still in mind, but keep pushing the action. Now you can add your design in a shorthand way because you understand the basics.



2) Object drawing exercise: Break down your basic shapes; you may have anywhere from three to four. This is good for analyzing contrast in any object. Everything is designed. How many different characters can be created from one shape?

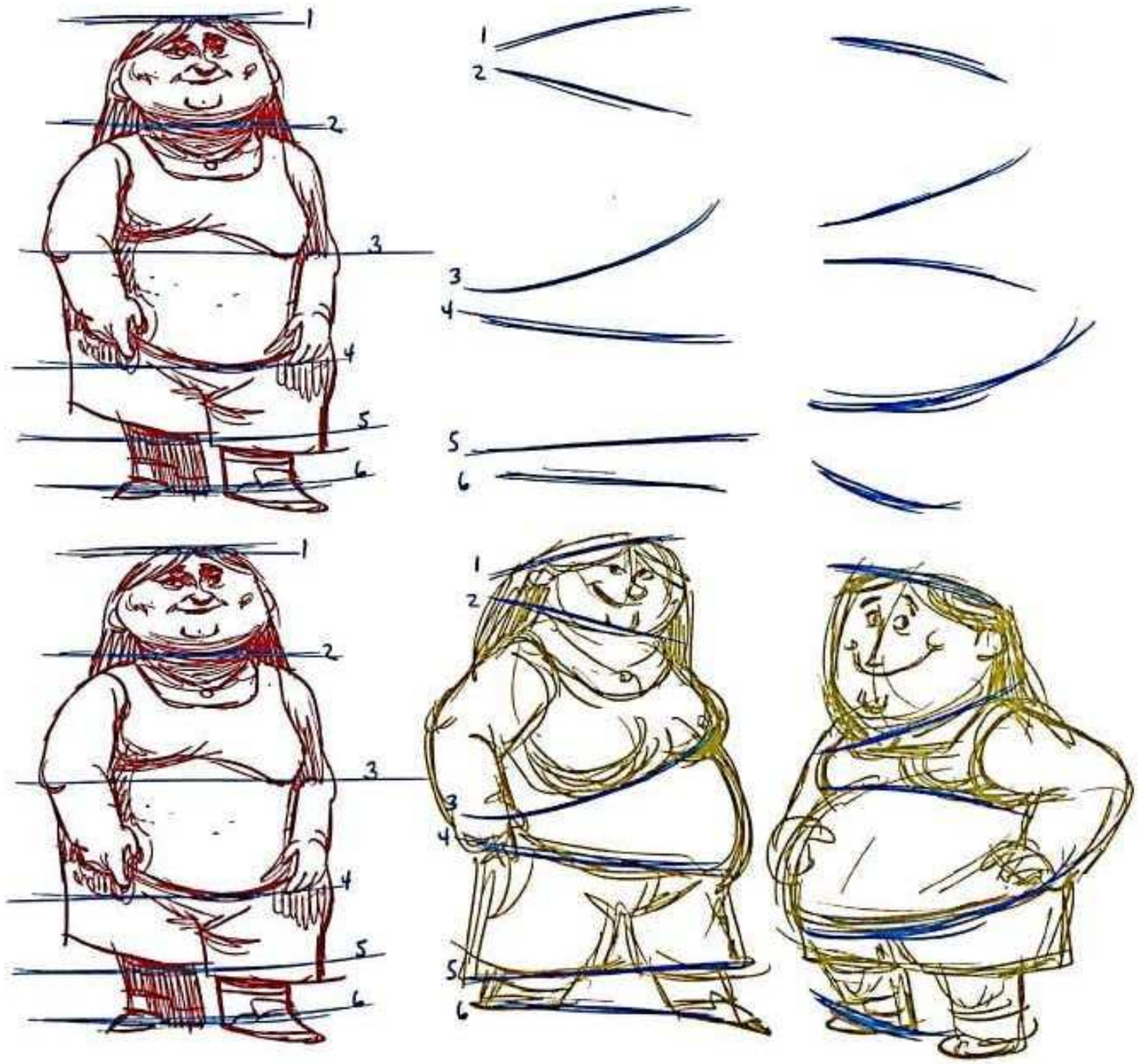


3) Zig then zag: Create a character from your imagination or from a photo.

Now use horizontal lines to isolate the main shapes in your sketch.

Create zigzag lines, and then redraw your character following the guide you established.

This will get you in the habit of creating contrast and variation.



6 ABOUT FACE—AND HEAD

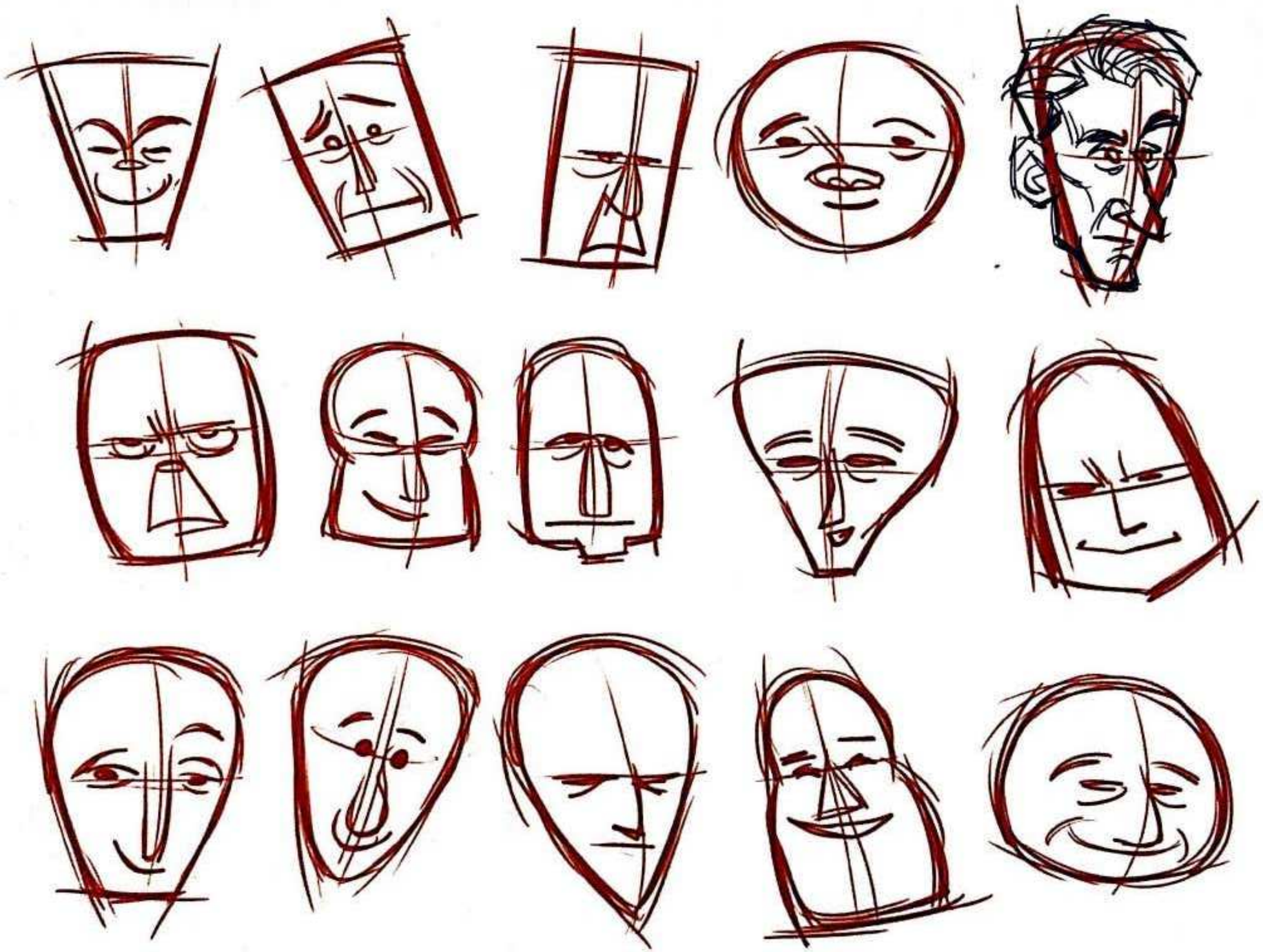
I have always found the face to be the most fascinating part of the human figure. It tells so many stories: age, emotion, ethnicity, culture, humor, beauty, and so on. My first job as a professional artist was as a live caricature artist at SeaWorld in San Diego, California. I found my greatest weakness was that I did not understand basic construction of the head, and ever since then I have made an effort to improve. The first aspect of the head when I take a glance is the overall shape, and then I hone in on the details of the face. When caricaturing, your objective should be to capture a feeling of that face more than just an individual part.

In this chapter you will see how I break down what I see, the order and process, and that the bottom line is to experiment. See what method may work for you, what you discover about the face. I will say that building a light construction and varying the angles of a character's features will bring life to your heads no matter what style. I have found that when the head does not feel cohesive or constructed well, it just simply feels and looks wrong, maybe because we inherently know what a face is supposed to look like. Well-constructed distortion, such as caricature, will work and feel right, but an unconstructed caricature will just look wrong.

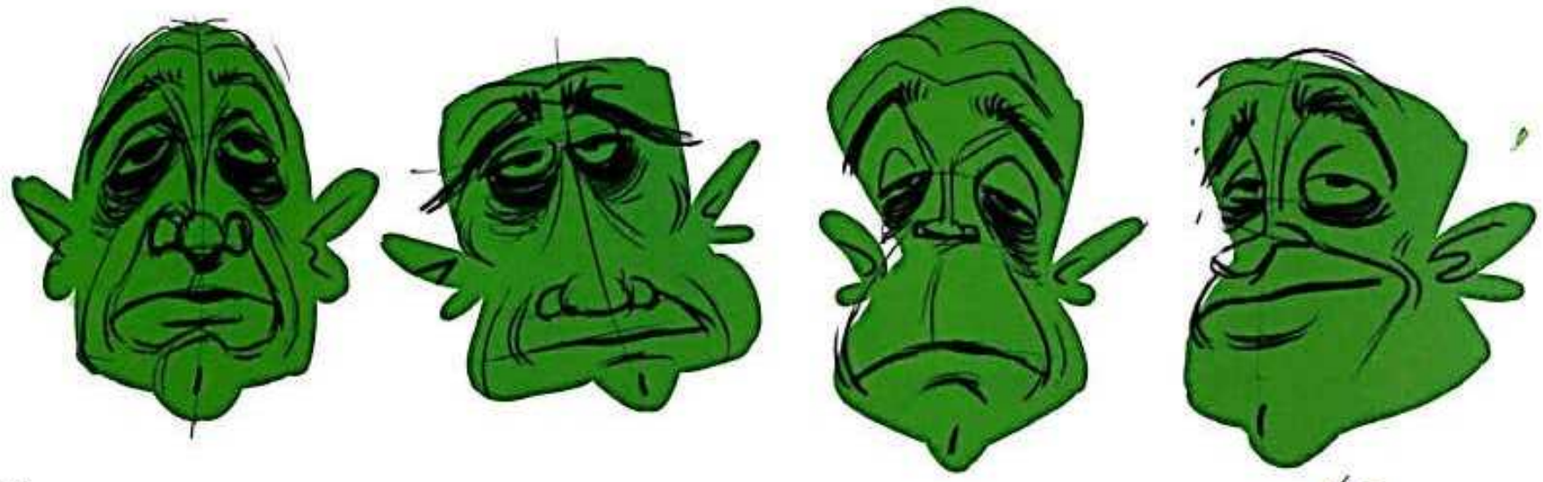
The Dos and Don'ts

Drawing heads and faces can be intimidating to some, and it shouldn't be. There are basic guidelines to follow that can make this part of the character-design process not just easy, but also fun. Just follow these lessons that I've shared with my students over the years.

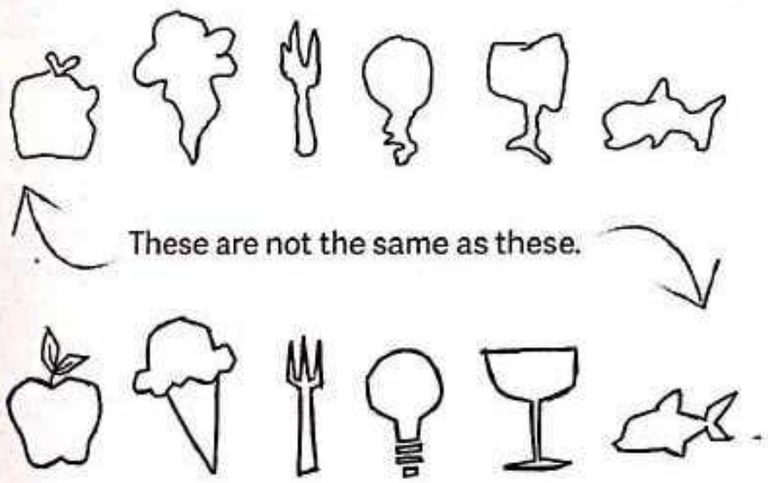
intended style. Keep it loose.



DO AIM FOR CLARITY.



The goal when developing a face shape is not to make random blobs, but to think about definitive shapes.



The more you allow yourself to define the actual shapes you observe, the faster you will be able to develop your draftsmanship skills and create more appealing designs.

Practice observing and drawing objects. Ask yourself: Is it clear? Does it read well?

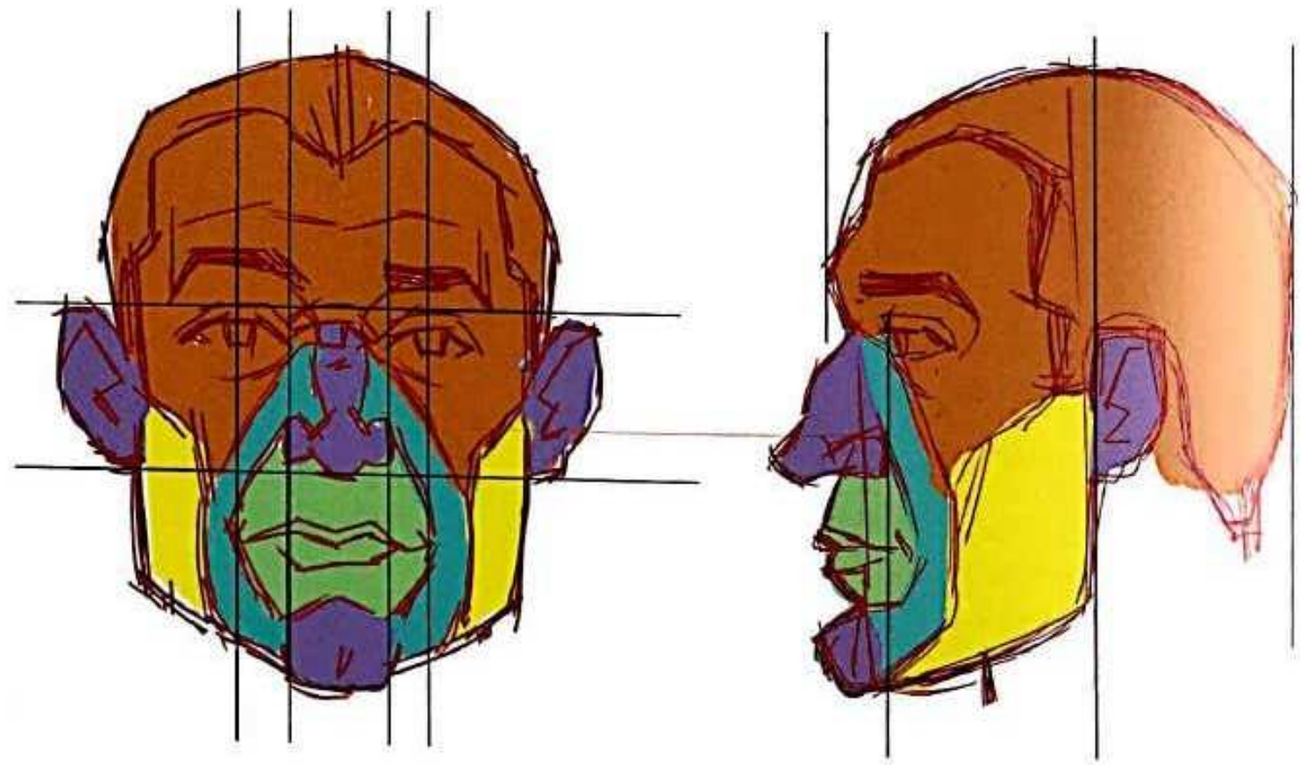
My approach to the face is to keep things simple; I break down the face into just five zones:

- Bone mask
- Cartilage
- Cheekbone rim
- Muzzle
- Cheek sack

And I apply the basic rules of an average head, bearing in mind that, in caricature and cartoon exaggeration, I can and will break these rules:

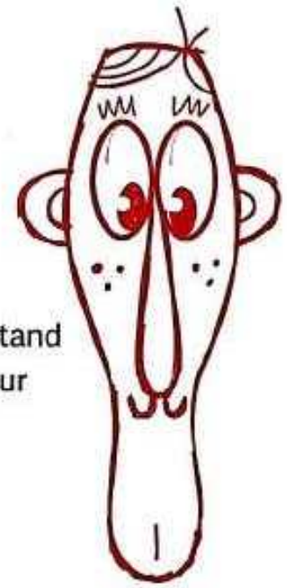
- The top of the ear lines up with the top of the eye—the bottom, with the bottom of the nose.
- The inner corner of the eye lines up to the side of the nostril.
- The outer corner of the mouth lines up with the center of the eyeball.
- The space between the eyes is approximately the width of one eye.
- The ear will fall along the centerline of a profiled head.

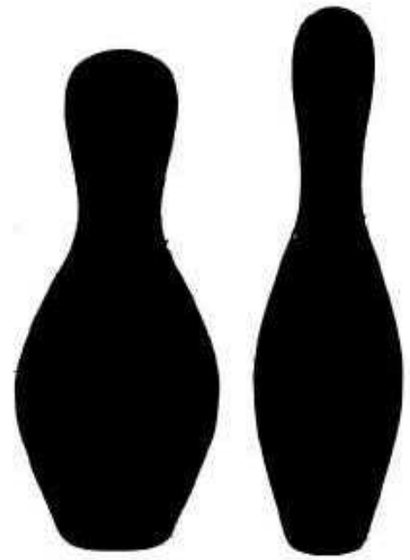
By applying these methods when exploring your own characters, you can create more of a realistic cartoon face that is noticeably caricatured.



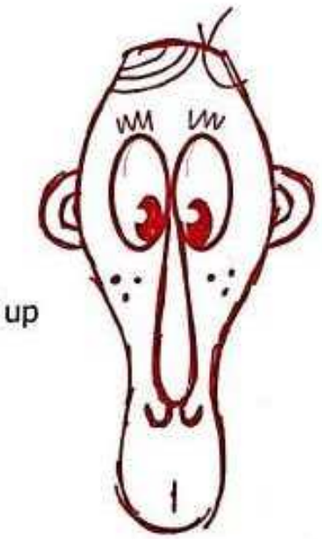
When creating your characters, besides the personality, feeling, and style, be aware of the volumes to ensure the spacial relationships within the face and body are consistent. For instance, if you don't take into consideration that the shape you are working with is a standard bowling pin shape, then every time you go to draw it—whether you are drawing expressions or working on a storyboard—your drawings will be inconsistent. The squashing and stretching of the face is not a factor here; the spacial relationships are different from our original: longer chin, wider skull, and slightly larger forehead.

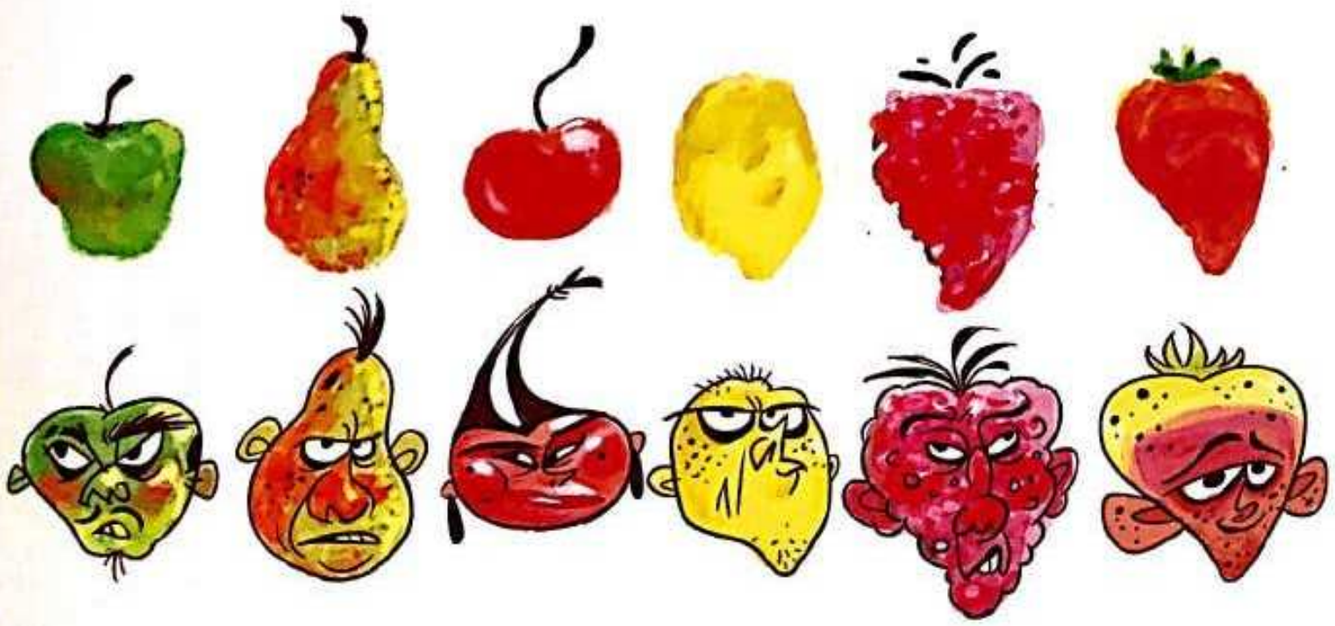
If you don't understand that the form of your shape is this ...





... then you'll end up creating this.

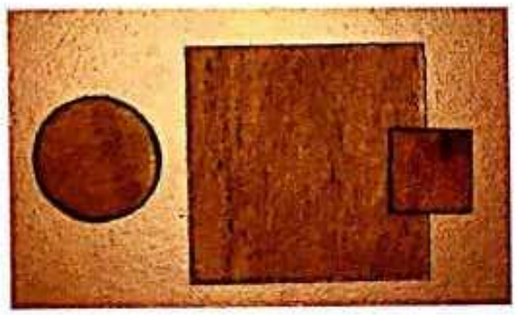


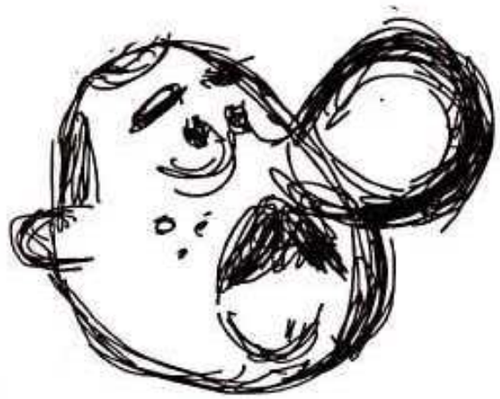


"The Fruit Club Gangsters" is an example of using objects you're familiar with to a create a feeling. The taste of each fruit helped create a personality, such as the sour lemon.

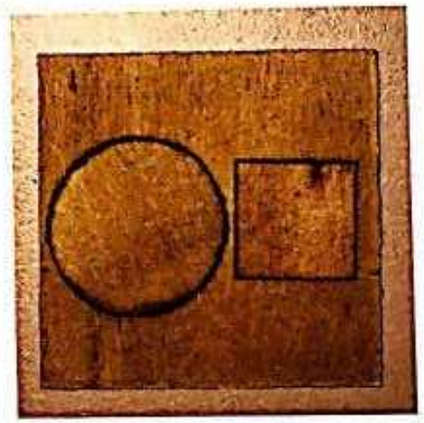
DO PLAY WITH FACIAL FEATURES TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES.

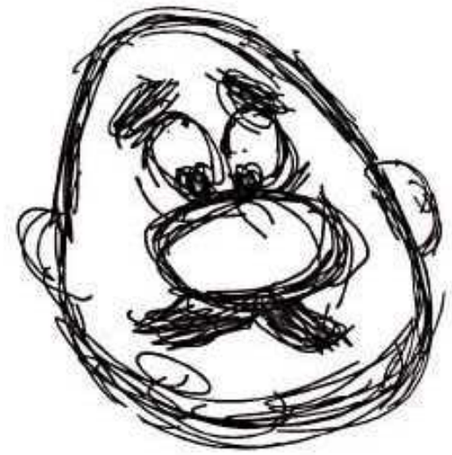
Here the circle is separated, thereby leading my eyes to that shape first.



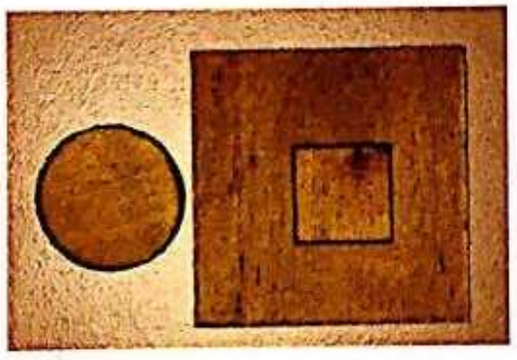


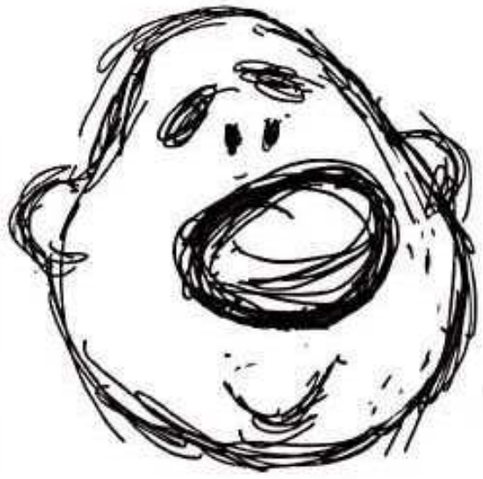
My eye sees all three shapes at one time due to the placement of smaller shapes within the larger one.



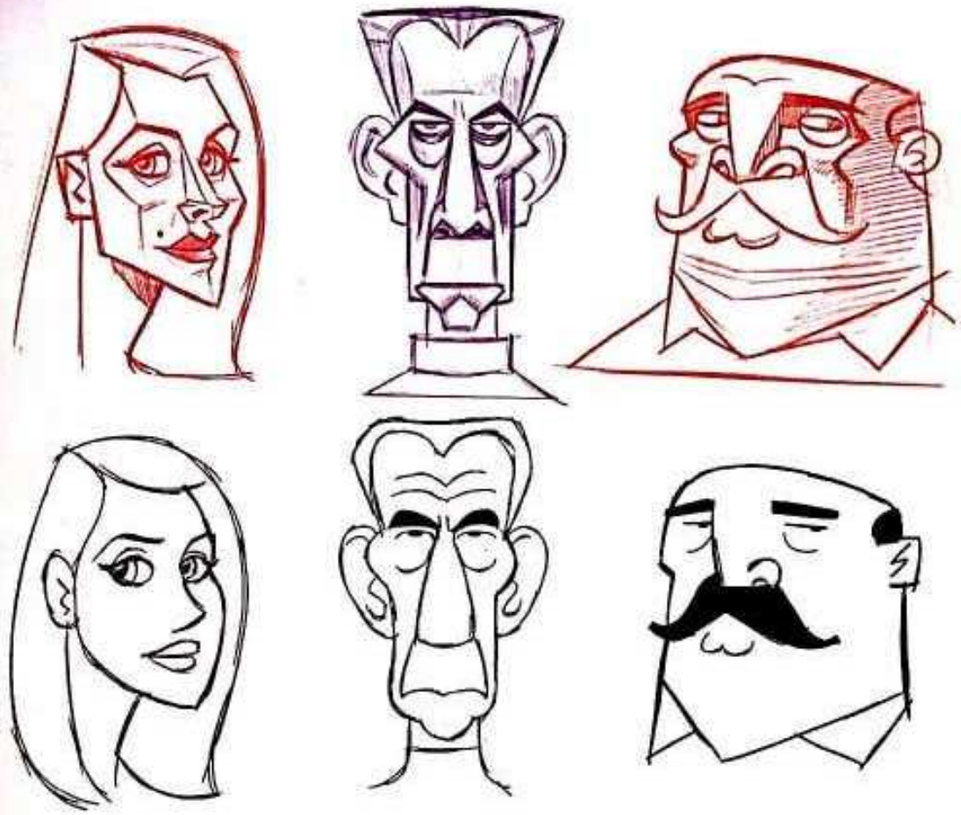


Now my eyes go to the small square because it has the greatest contrast.





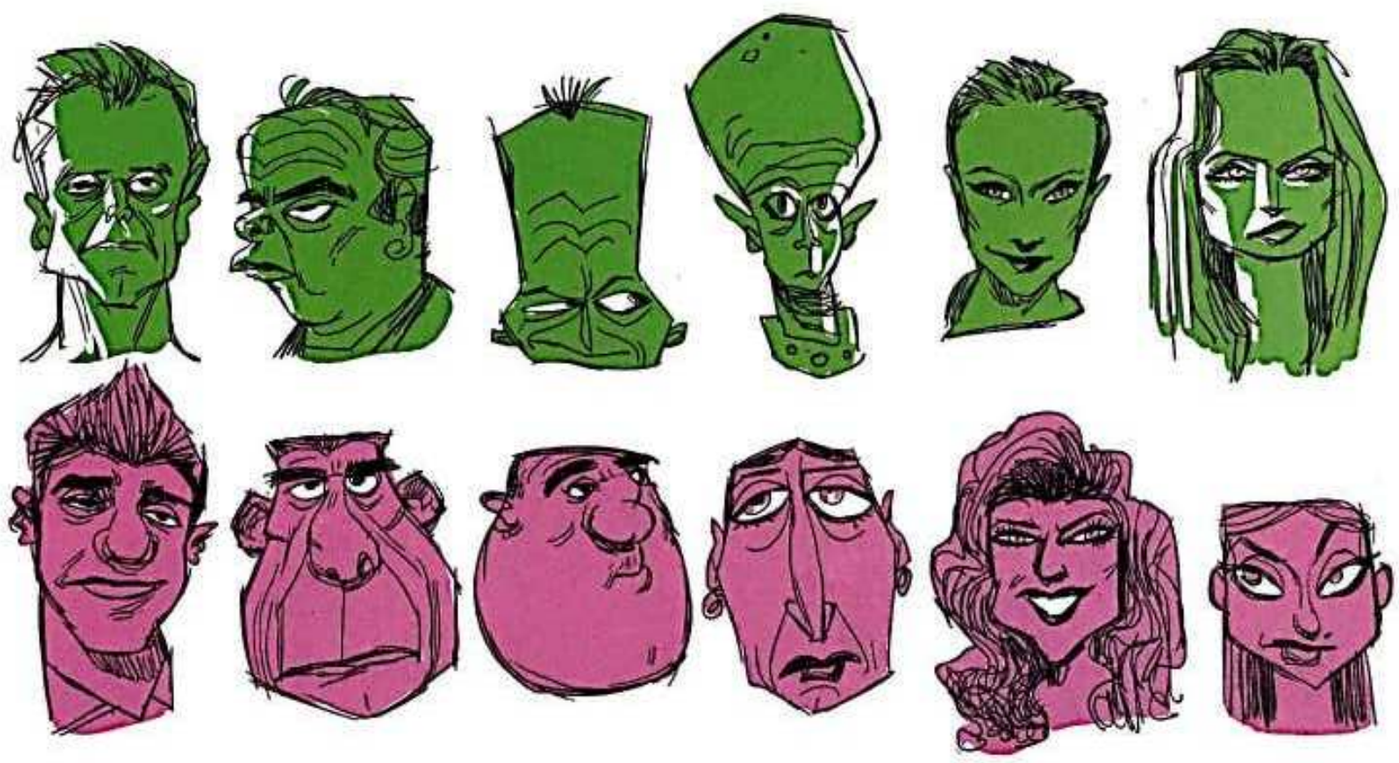
Where do you want your eyes to go?



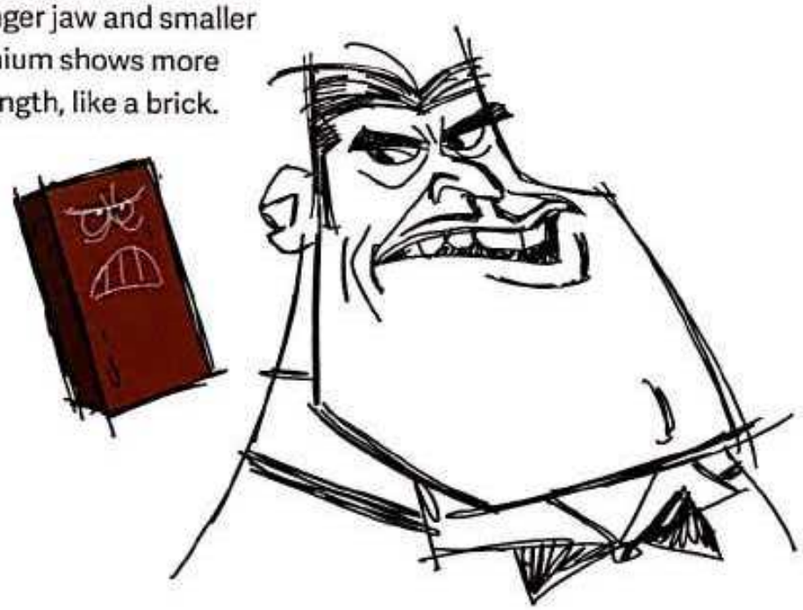
Take the time to discover and explore.

Regardless of the final style, I think about the planes of the head inside my mind. Structure will play a large role in whether your designs will ultimately have appeal or not.

Placement matters in faces, specifically if you want to convey a type of person in an instant. Giving your character a larger forehead or cranium versus a smaller one can give the character a whole different feeling. Experiment with a variety of sizes.

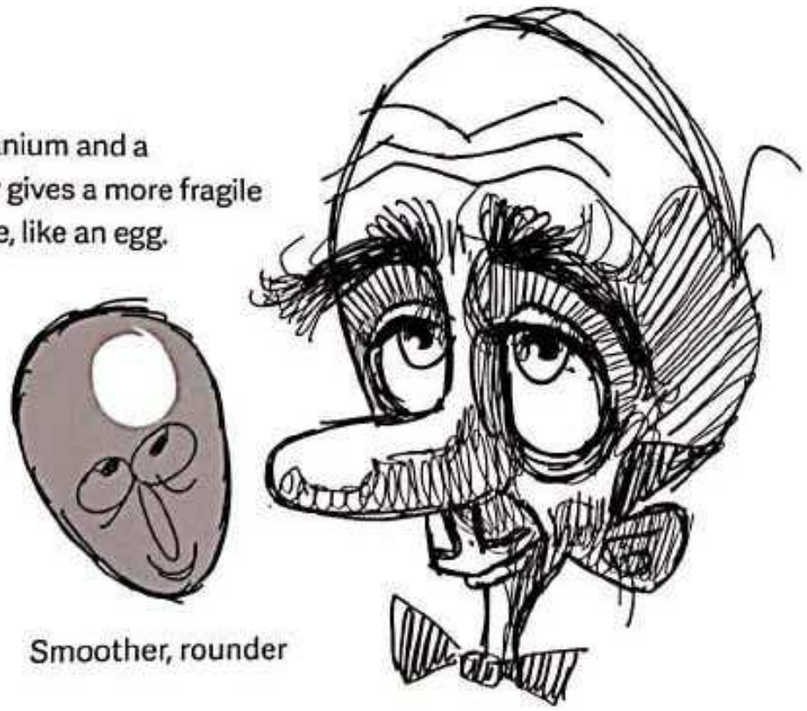


A stronger jaw and smaller cranium shows more strength, like a brick.



Rough, hard, sharp edges

A larger cranium and a smaller jaw gives a more fragile appearance, like an egg.



Smoother, rounder

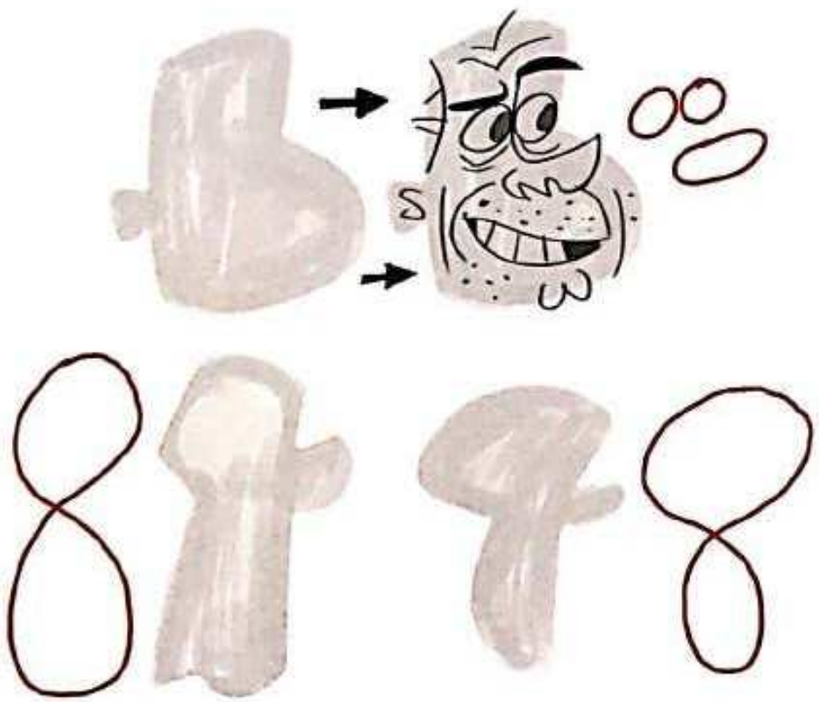
For more energy and appeal,
vary the size of facial features.

Variety in contrast happens when you vary form to form, feature to feature: big eyes and small nose, wide nose and small mouth, etc.

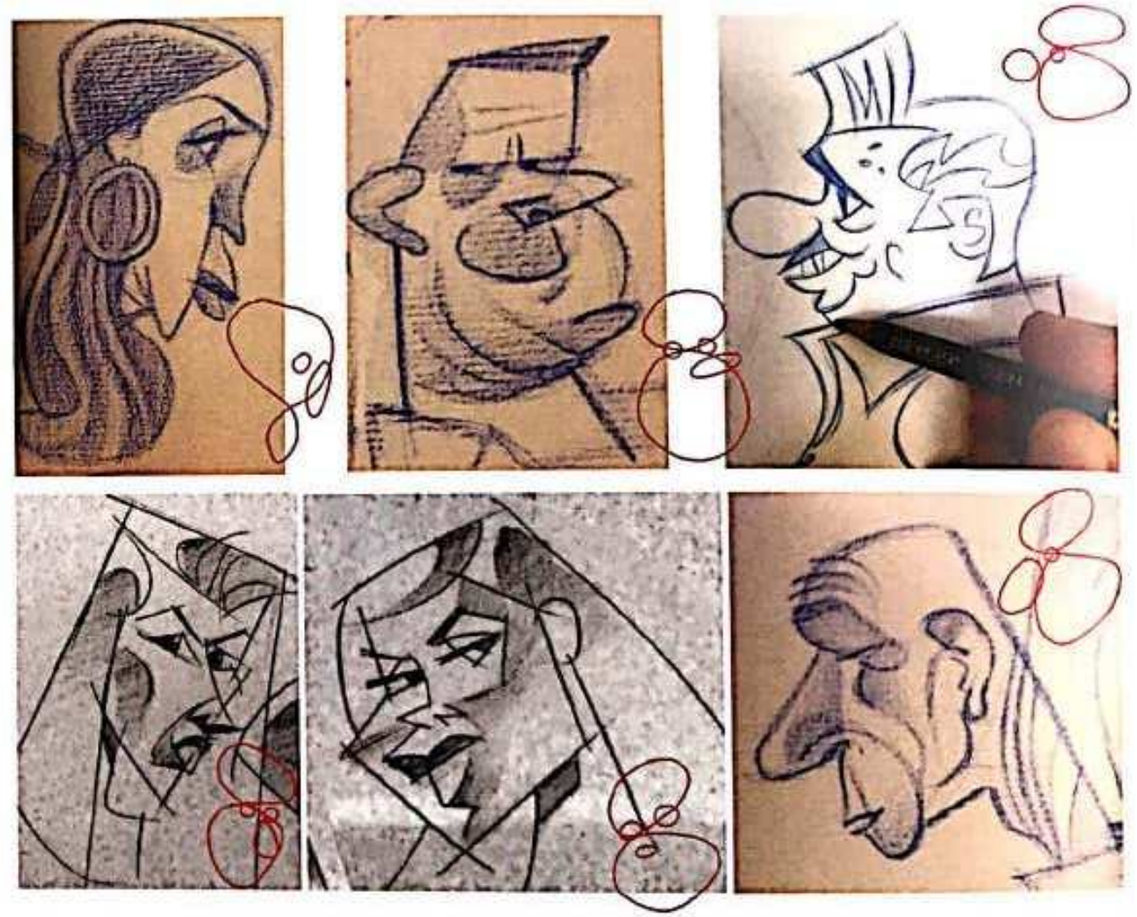
Which nose is bigger? They are actually both the exact same size, but due to the contrast of shapes around it, it makes the one on the left appear bigger.

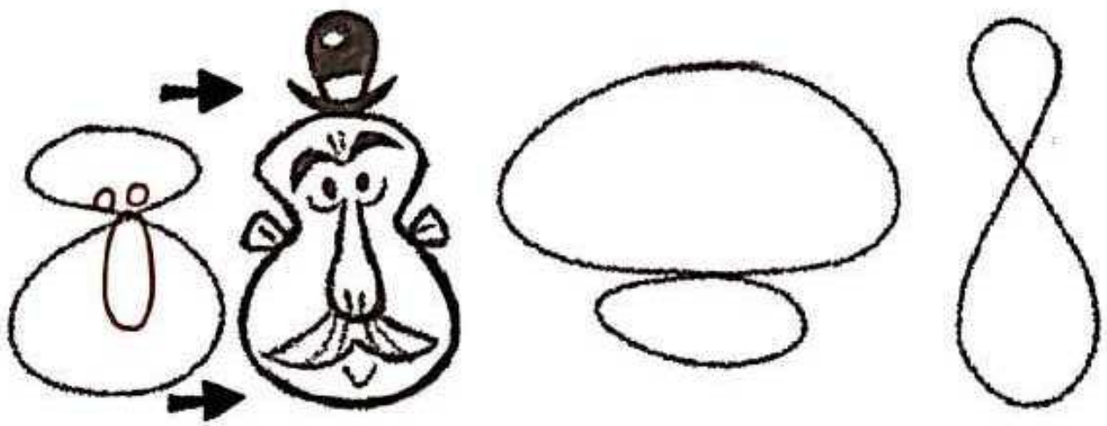
Too ordinary;
we want to *push*.

DO AVOID THE LADDER AND THE BOWLING BALL.

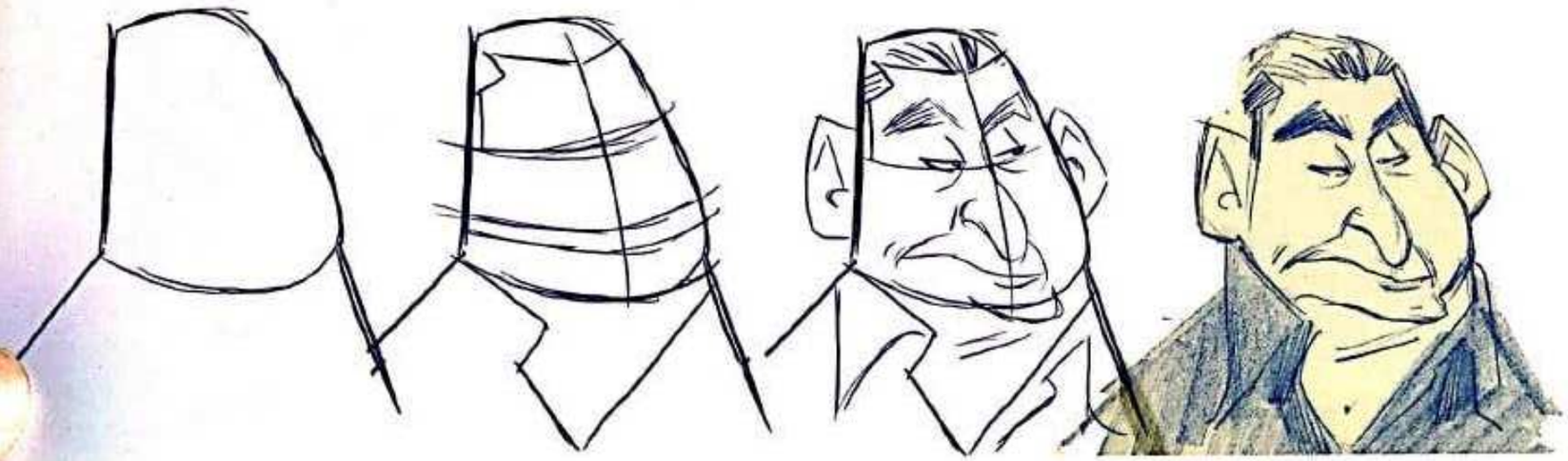


Avoiding the ladder and avoiding the bowling ball become essential ingredients through the design process.





Consider these factors if your goal is to achieve variety. Style will evolve through the finished piece, but appeal begins in the first stages of thought. The figure eight represents infinity, and through this technique you can instantly break up your proportions so that things don't appear so even.



Clear shape

Avoiding the ladder

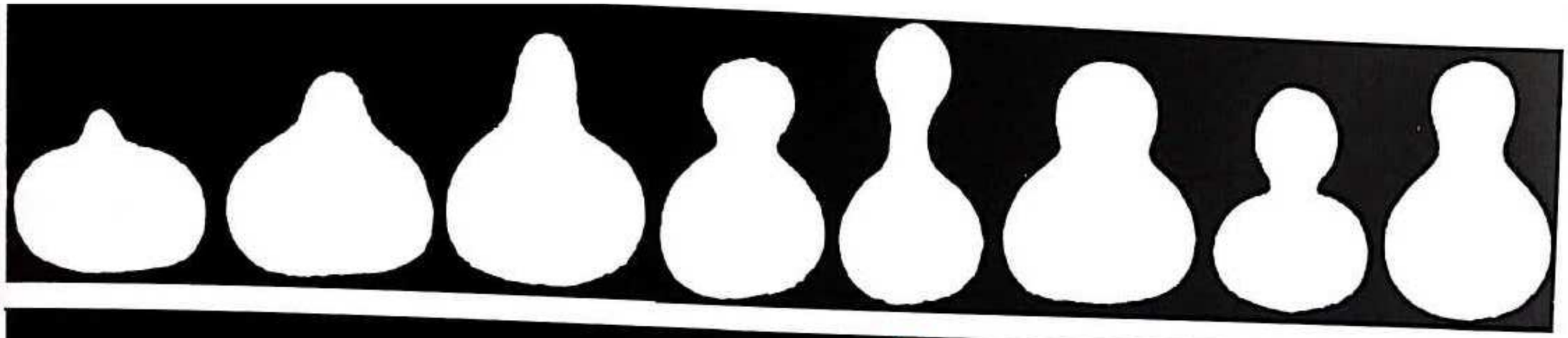
While observing, which you should be doing constantly even if you don't have a pen in your hand, play with your contrasting elements: large against small, wide against narrow, straight against curve, avoiding the bowling ball.

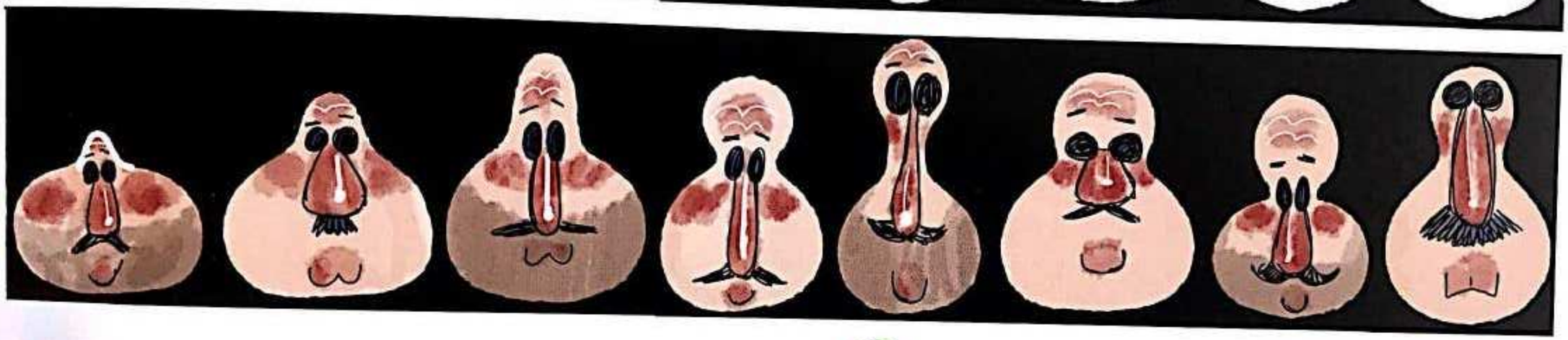
These feel stiff and boring.

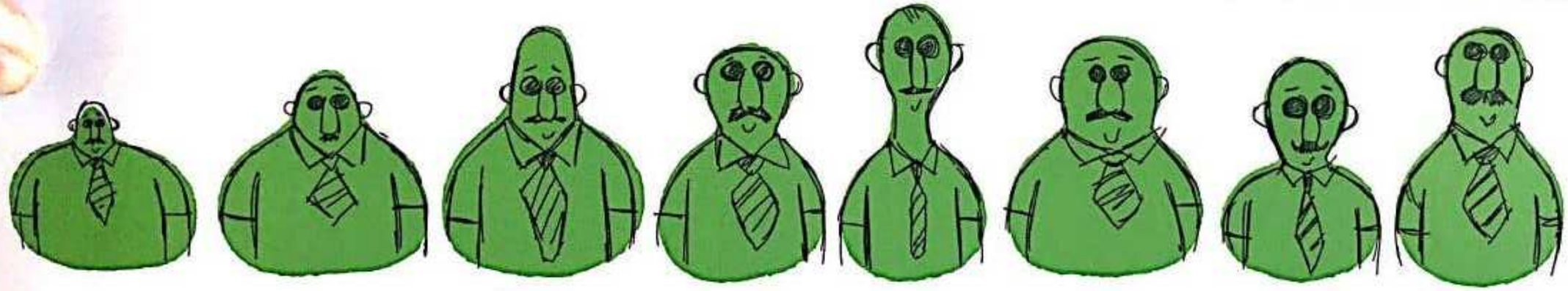
Avoiding the bowling ball is a great way to create instant contrast within your subjects.

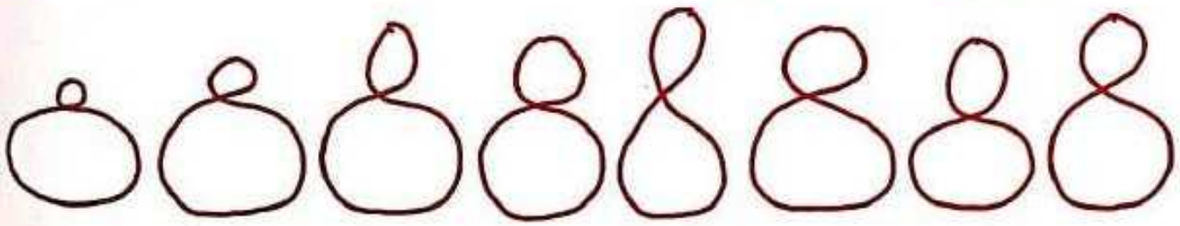
There is no rule or limitation to the size you make the eyes and nose. The concept is to add appeal.

Eyes can be placed farther apart or closer together. Remember, contrast is key. Your eye will always be drawn to the dominant shapes, so you need to ask: where do I want the viewer to look?









Create a variety of white shapes against a black background, keeping in mind the use of the figure eight. The goal here is to push the forms and create variety.

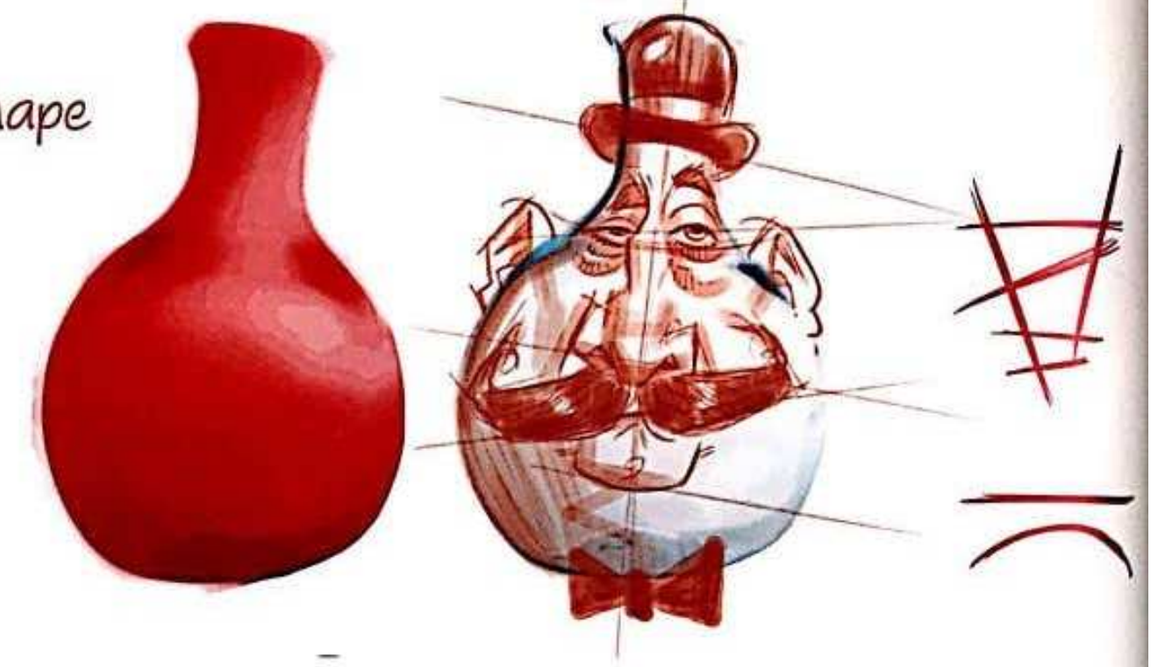
Use the figure eight for head shapes as well as body shapes. It all begins with the idea.

Model: John Tucker
The PoseBook App

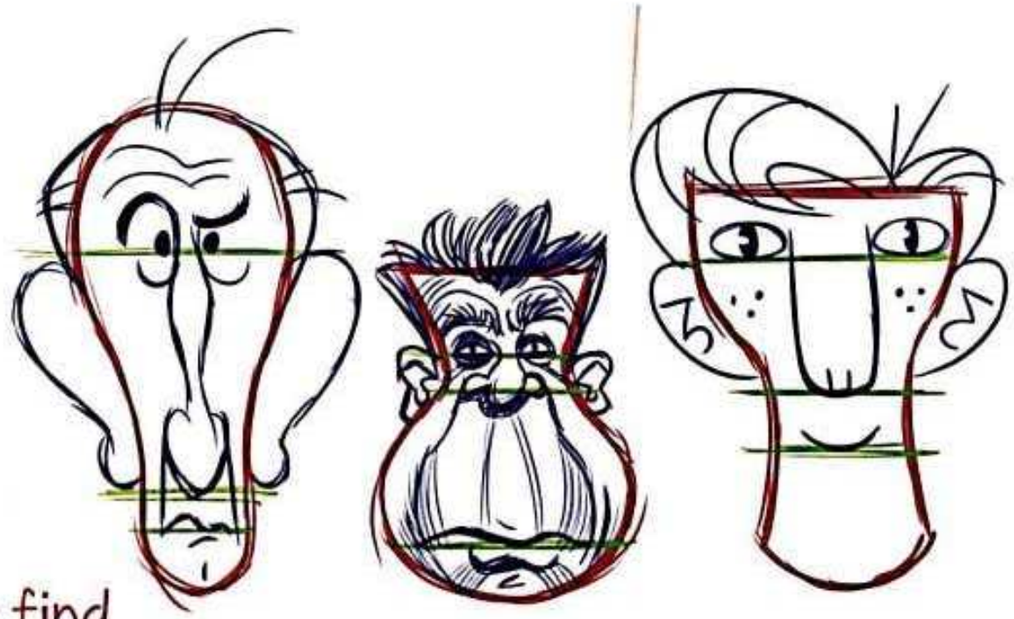
The reference

The shape

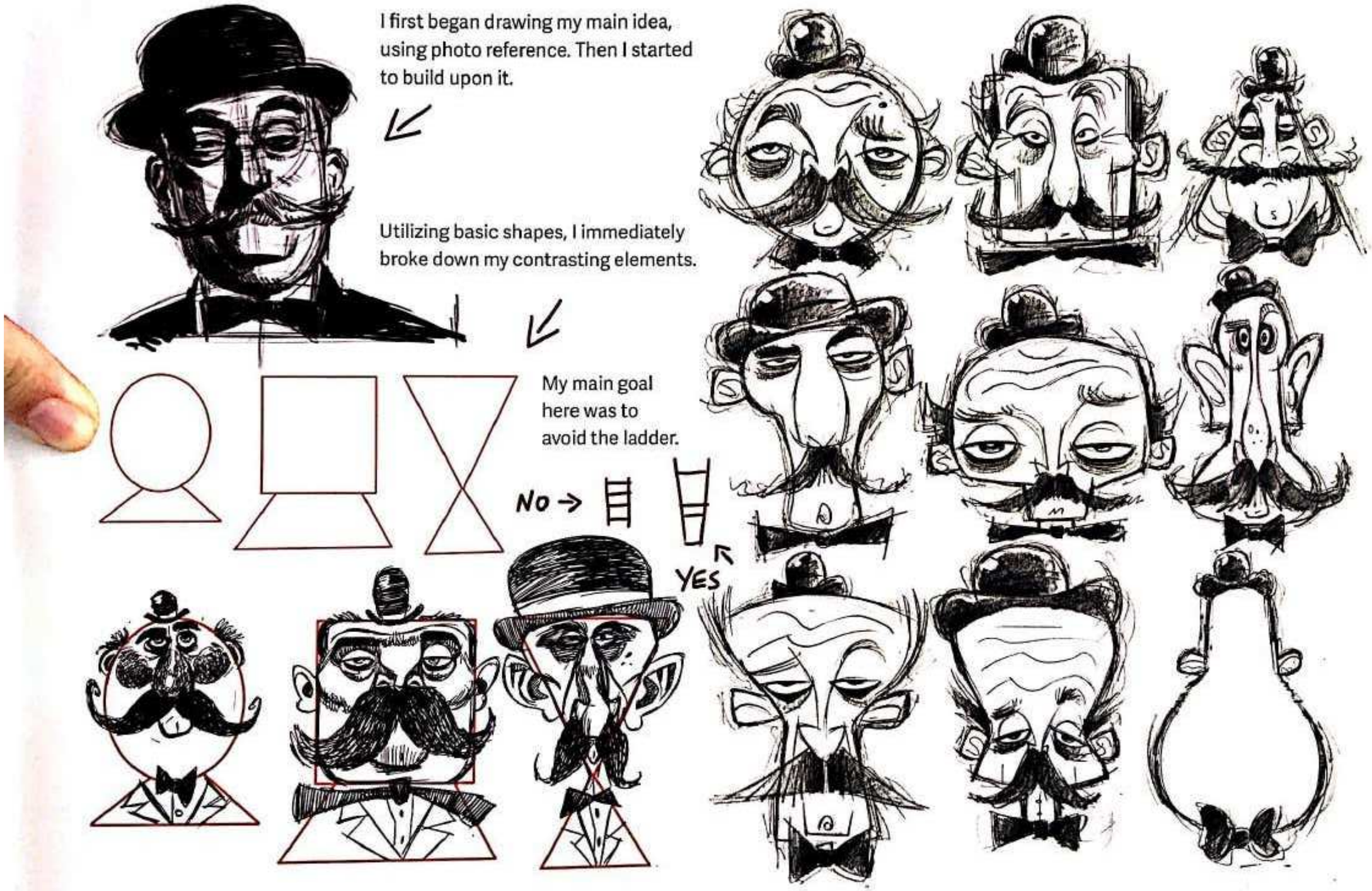
The design



Seek out objects to find new shapes.



Consider contrasting angles, avoiding the ladder and the bowling ball.



Take one shape and contrast it with another.

Keep playing with your shapes.

Jaw

Chin

Centerline

Find your shape, find your centerline, contrast your features, avoid the ladder, and avoid the bowling ball.

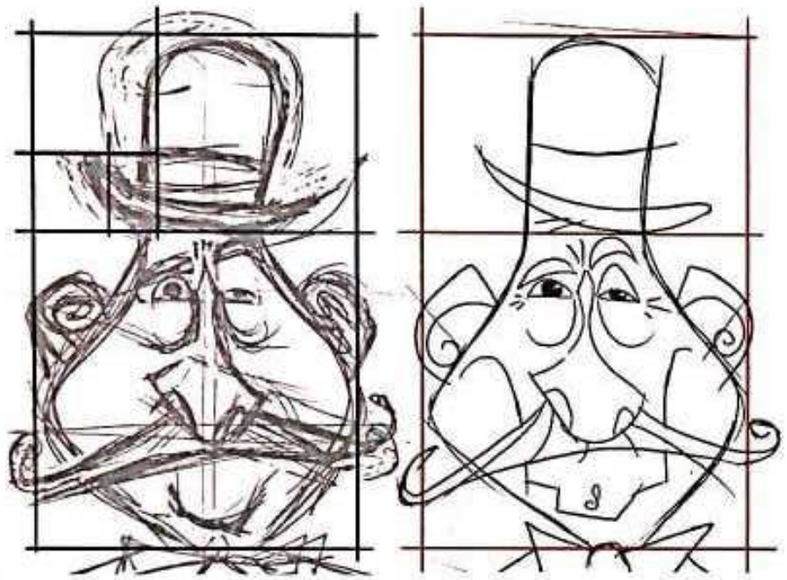
Cheekbone

Block in feature shapes.

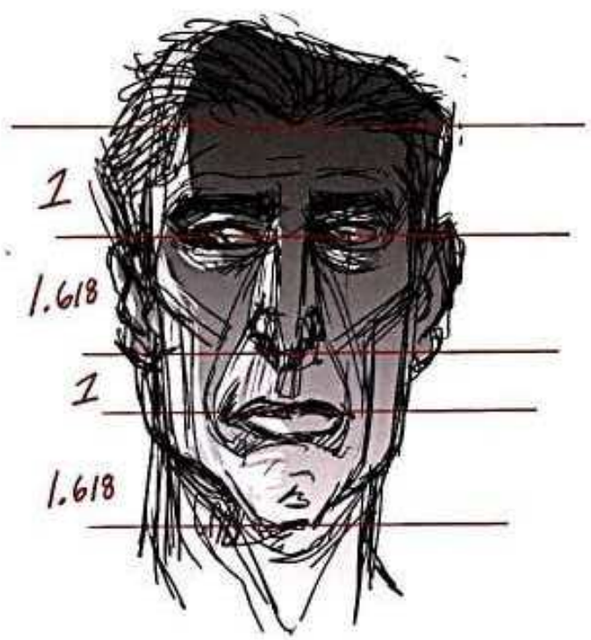
Identify specific parts of the face. Don't lose control of your structure and placement of the line. Always think things through.

Colored pencil and marker

DO APPLY THE GOLDEN RATIO.



Take the time to understand the golden ratio. it can help your design. Refer back to it in greater detail in Chapter 5.



On a handsome man's face, you may find the golden ratio can help you identify feature placement.

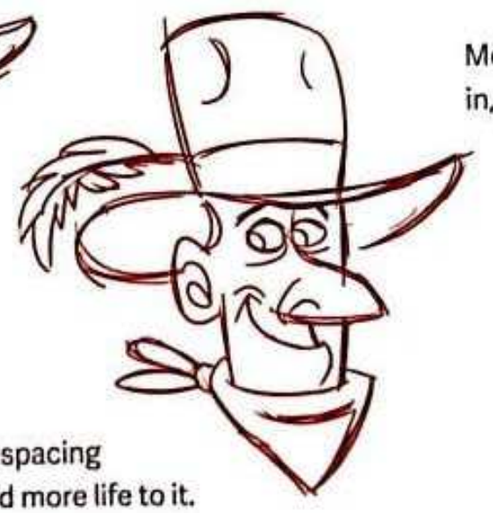
DON'T IGNORE NEGATIVE SPACE.

Define your shape format. Is it a circle, oval, square, triangle, rectangle, or organic? Consider the negative space.

This face does not offer enough breathing room and negative space, thus, cluttering the design.

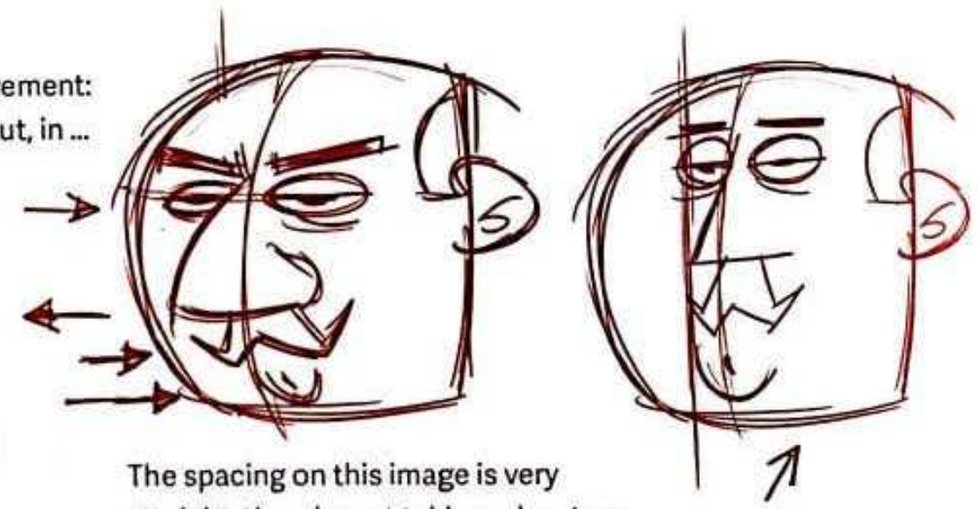
X = negative space

Try and think of every space within your image as a separate element. Playing with your negative space and shaping it is just as vital within the whole image as the positive shapes.



By considering my negative spacing throughout this face, I added more life to it.

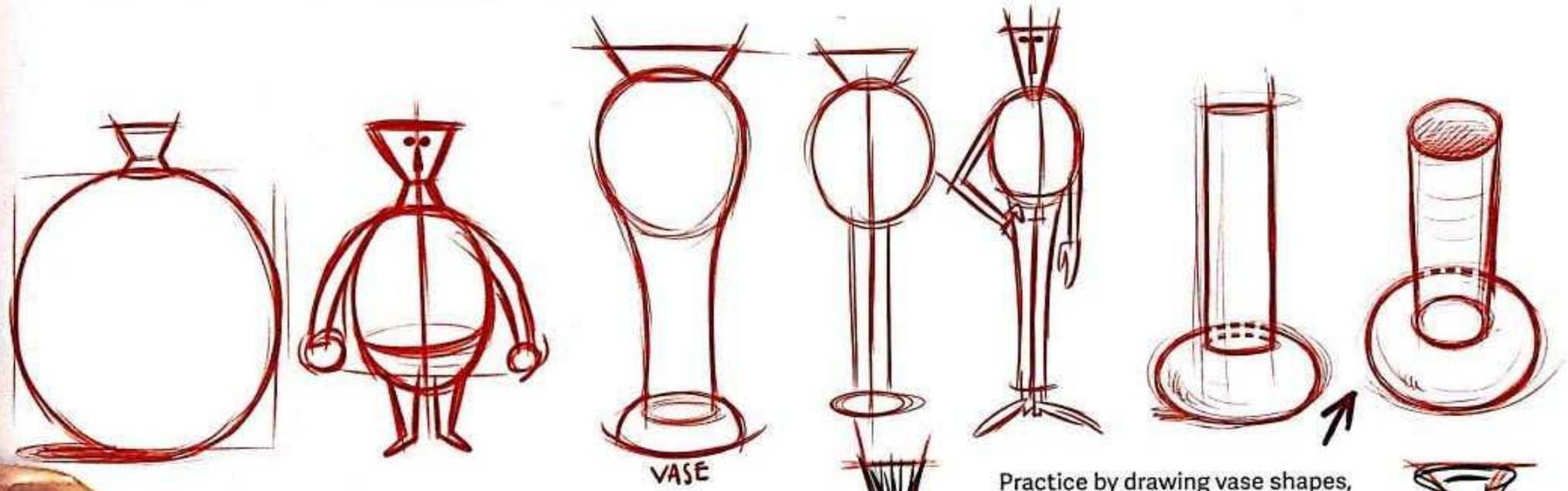
Movement: in, out, in ...



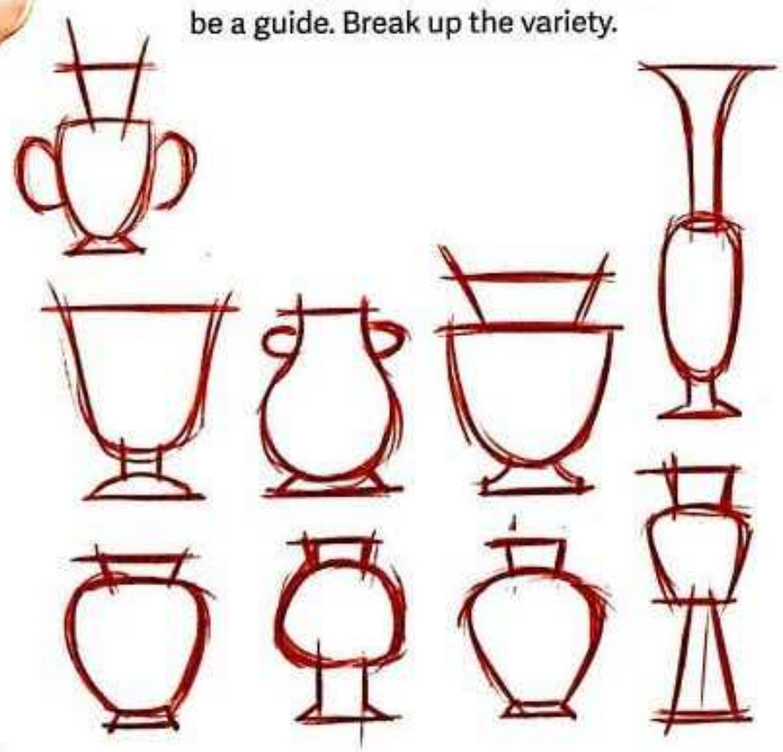
The spacing on this image is very straight, thereby not taking advantage of the rhythm in the negative space.

Stiff

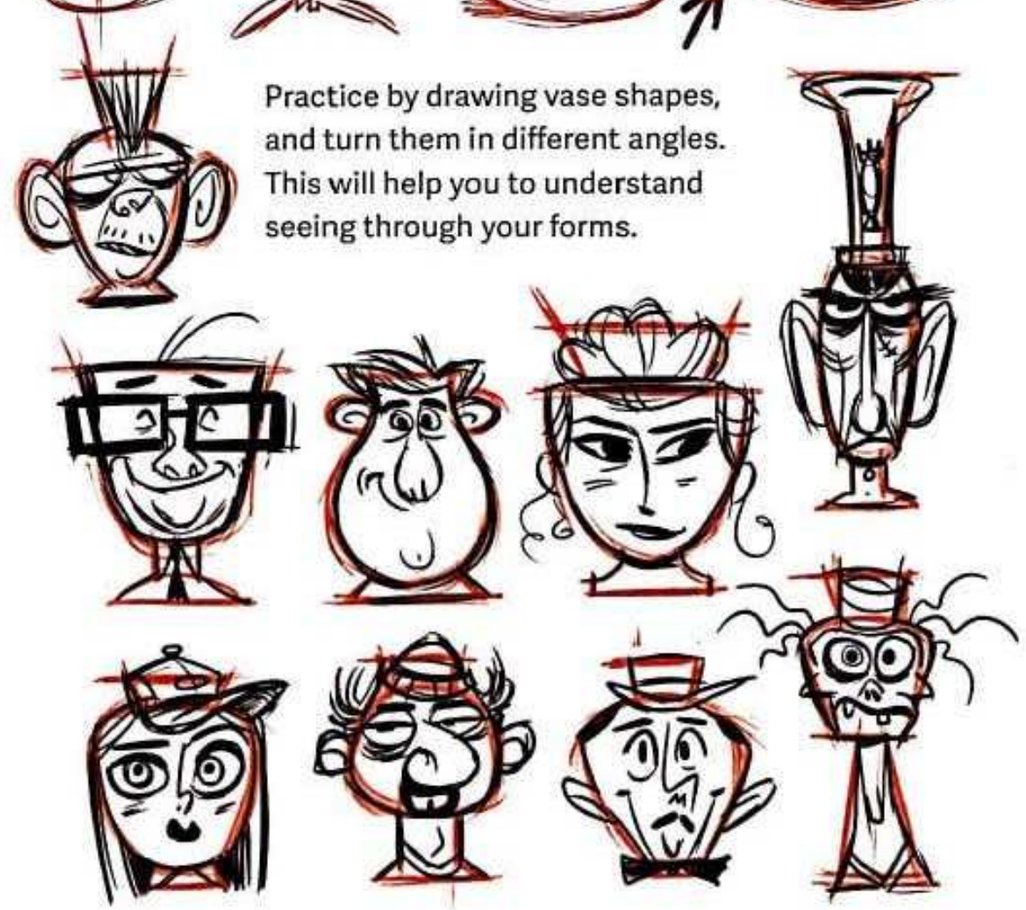
DO PUSH YOUR SHAPES AND ANGLES.



These shapes have form—let them be a guide. Break up the variety.

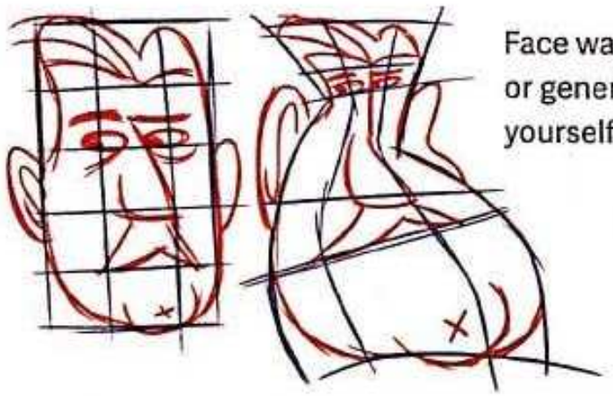


Practice by drawing vase shapes, and turn them in different angles. This will help you to understand seeing through your forms.

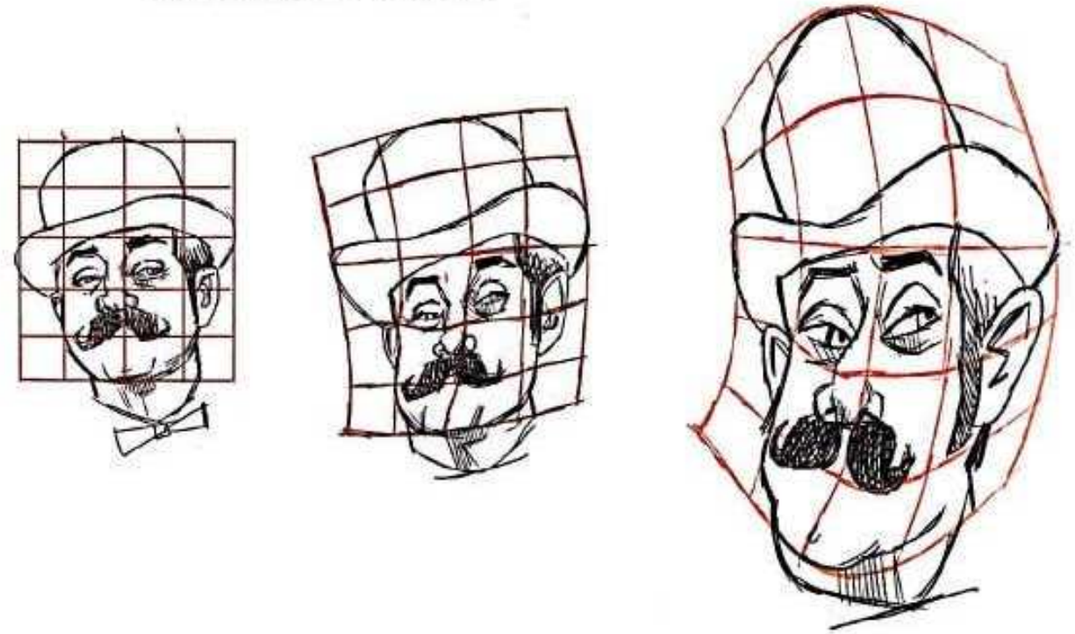


Using a technique that the "old masters" developed called the grid method gives you a chance not only to take a small image and enlarge it, which is what the method was intended for—but a great exercise is to stretch and squash your image by warping the corresponding squares you make.

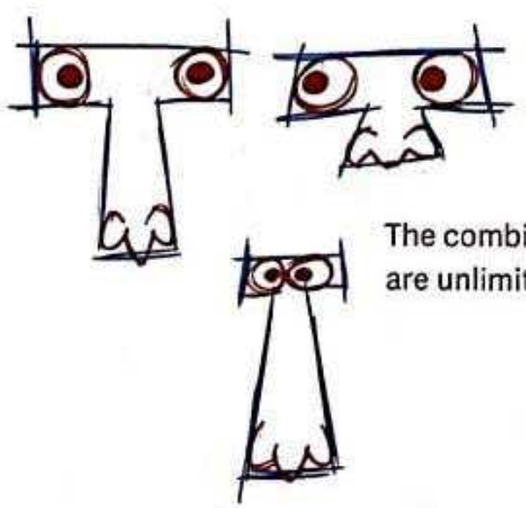
The idea is to draw your squares evenly over your photo or drawing and then draw the same amount of squares; then do your best to match the two up. This will not always work out if your intention is a true caricature, but it will work if you have trouble pushing shapes around. This can be done with full bodies too.



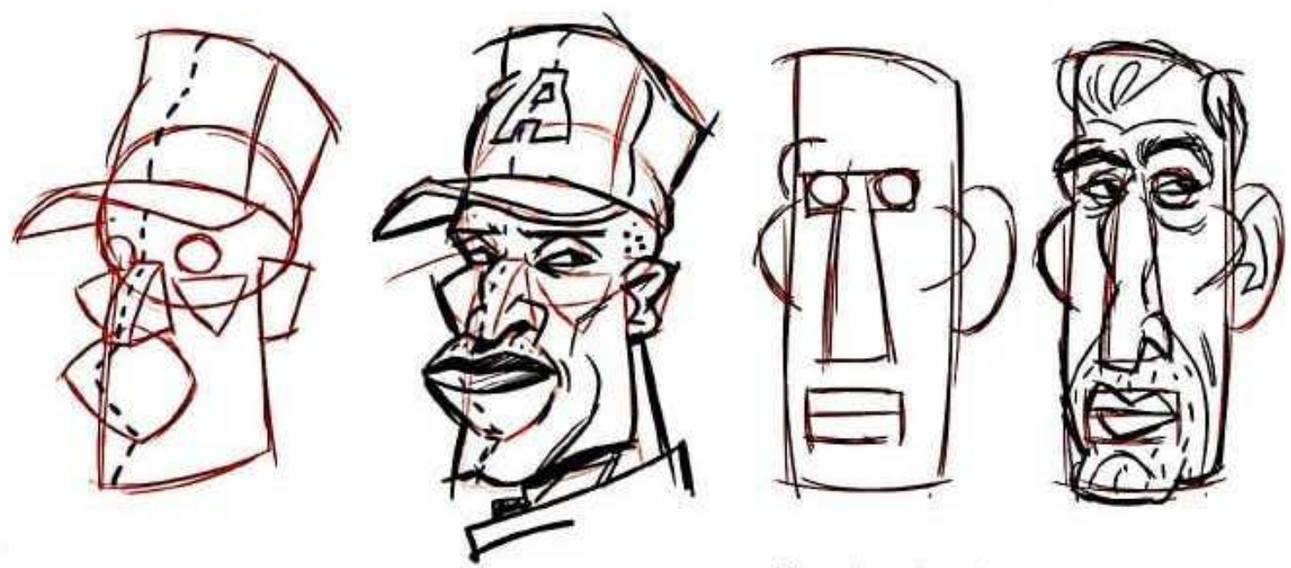
Face warping: take a photo or generic face and force yourself to push.



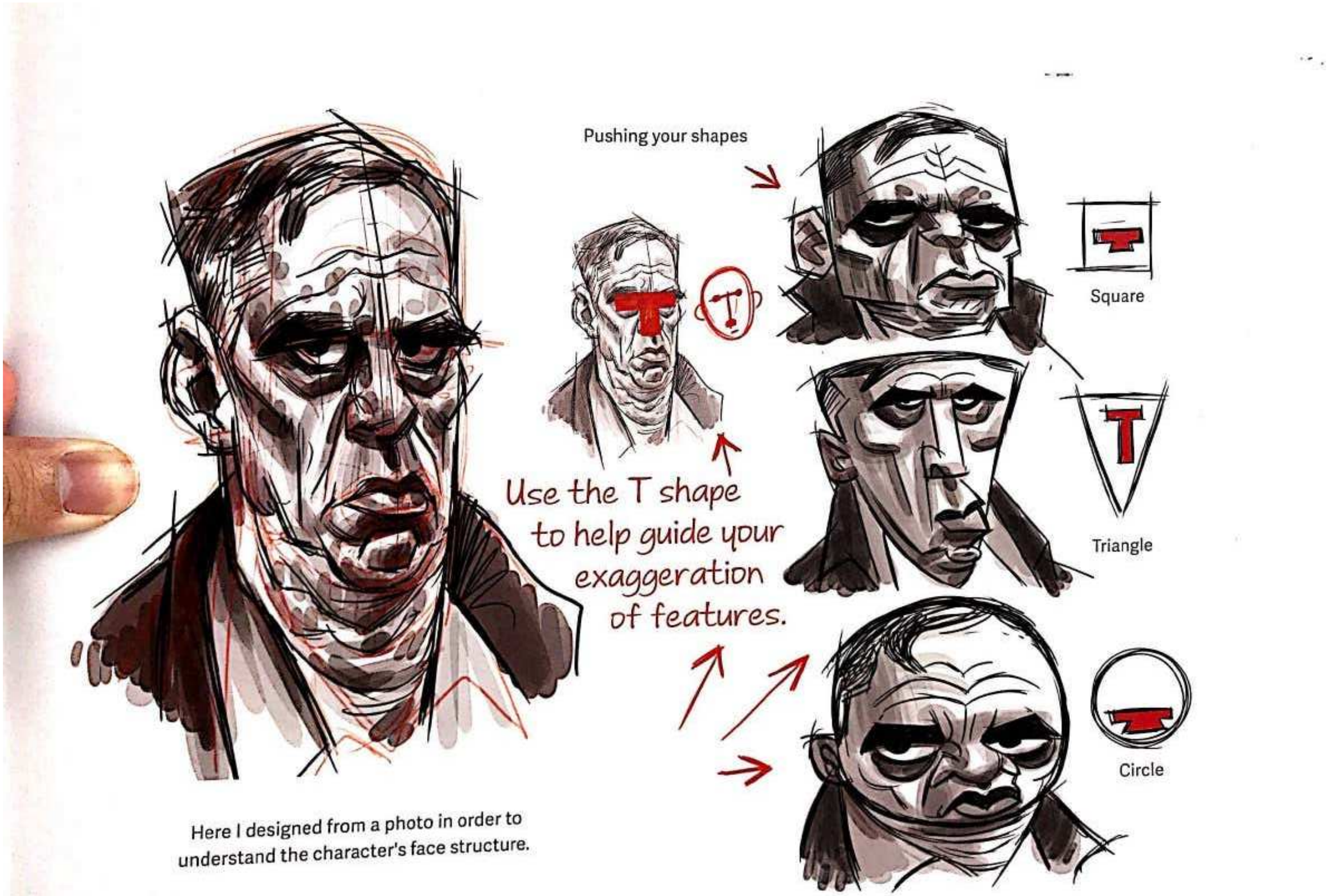
Try the grid method to push your faces.



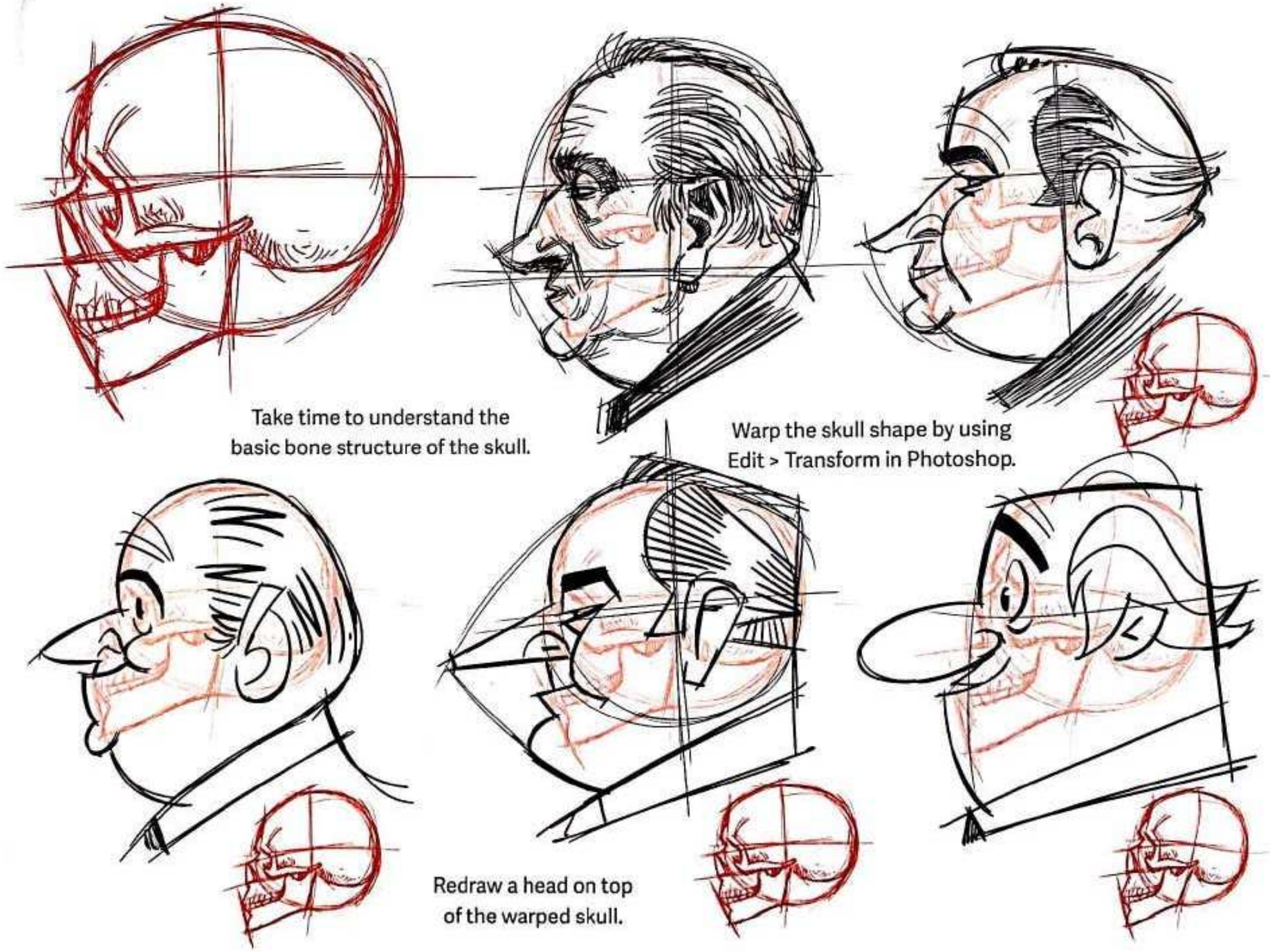
The combinations are unlimited.



Here I am breaking down my forms and arranging the distance before I begin with my details.



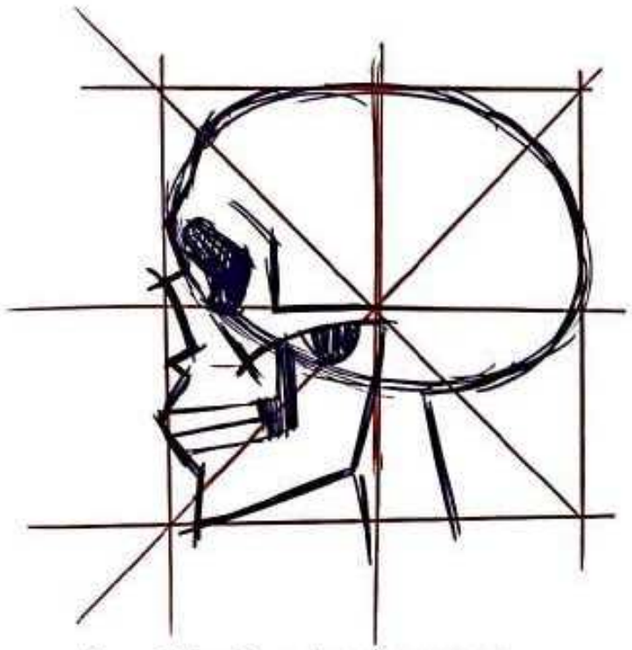
Here I designed from a photo in order to understand the character's face structure.



Take time to understand the basic bone structure of the skull.

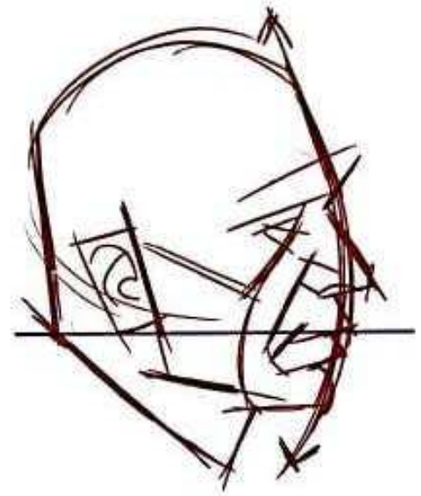
Warp the skull shape by using Edit > Transform in Photoshop.

Redraw a head on top of the warped skull.



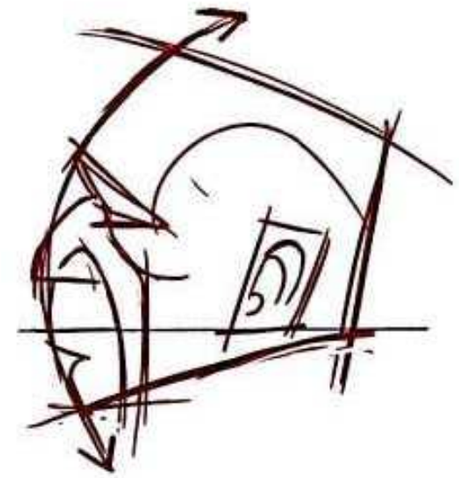
Everything in nature has some form of design. You can establish a good structure when you organize the shapes around the face.

The *face flow* can also be established by simply drawing an arc in the front of the profile.

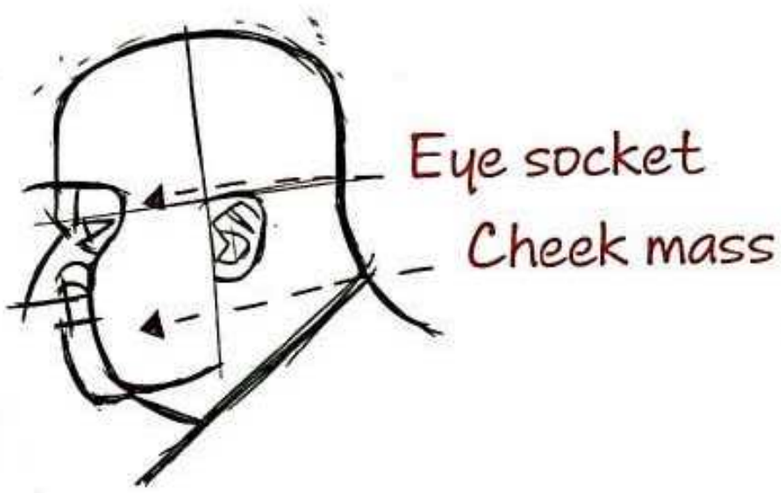


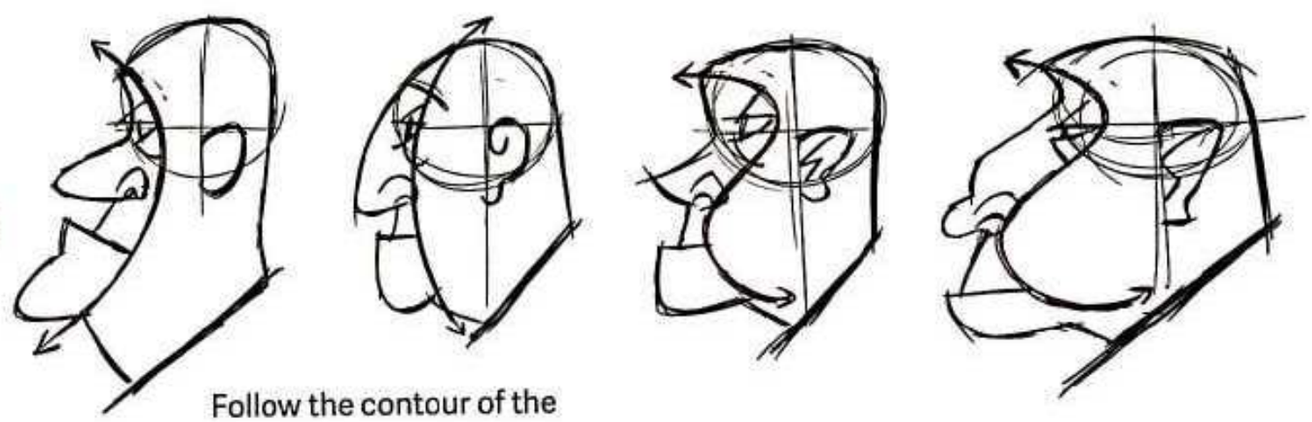
A variety of side views can be created by simply finding the *face flow*.

You may find on many subjects that the top of the neck collar lines up with the mouth.



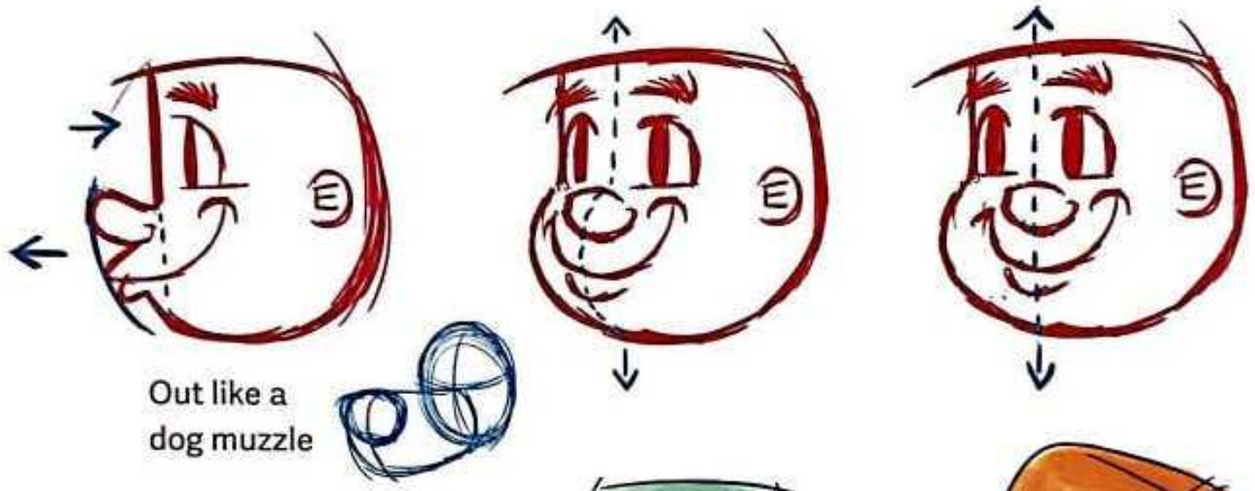
Eyes, noses, and mouths can be arranged in any size. Variety is the key ingredient.



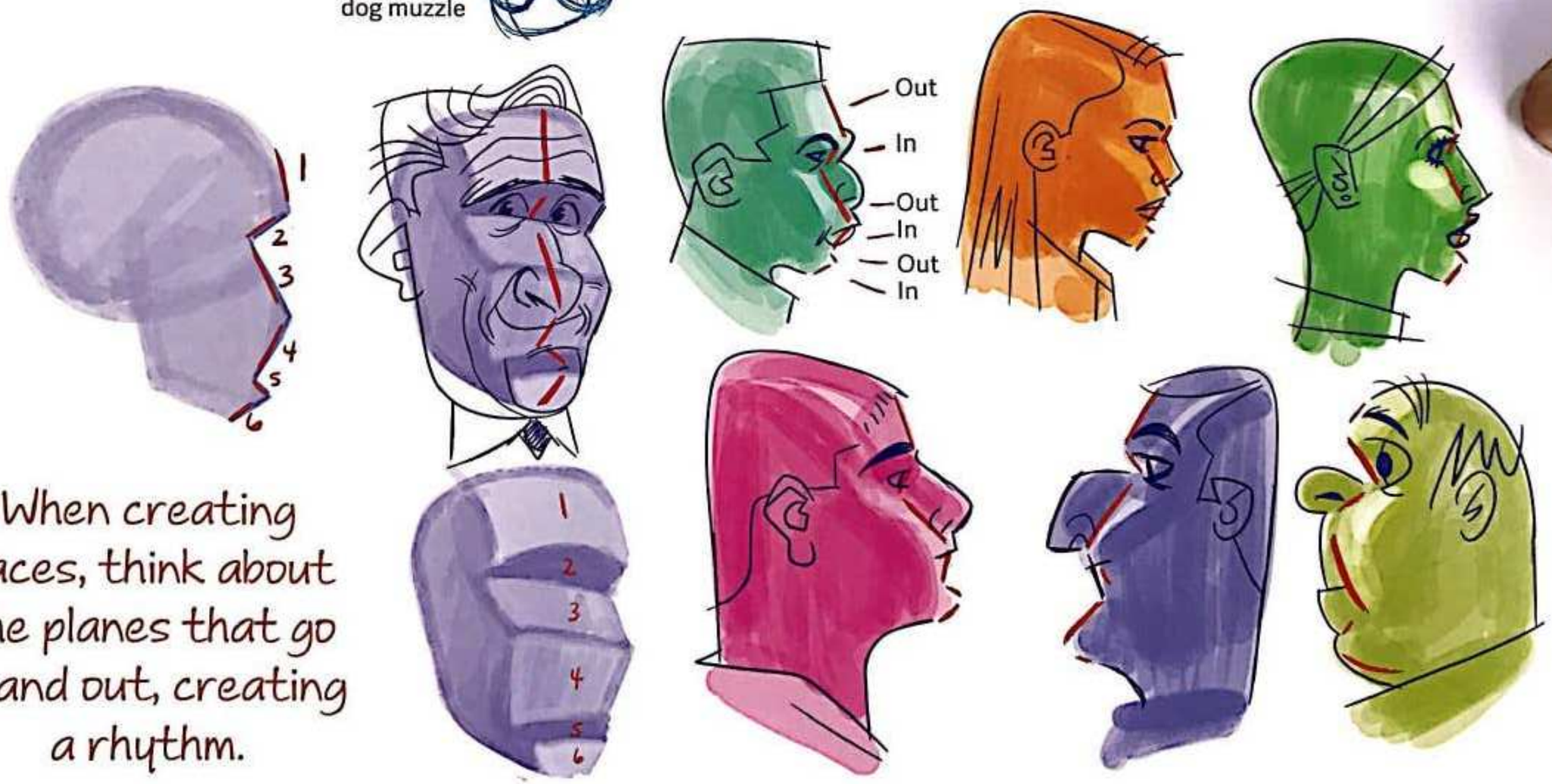


Follow the contour of the red line that you create to attach the features.

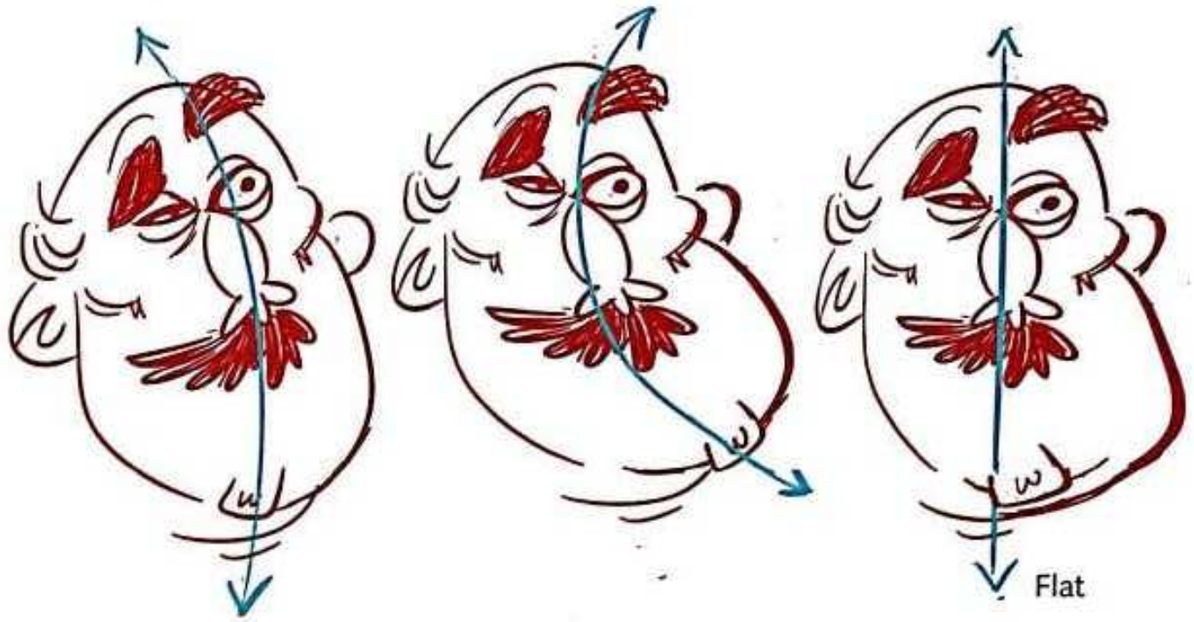
DO EMBRACE RHYTHM.

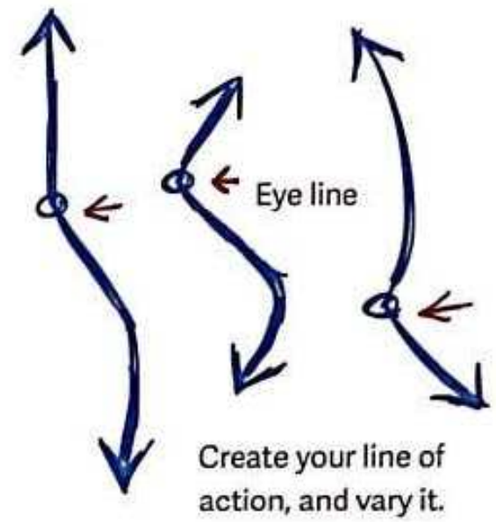


A common mistake is to make the face feel too flat unintentionally. Try finding the arc within the face.



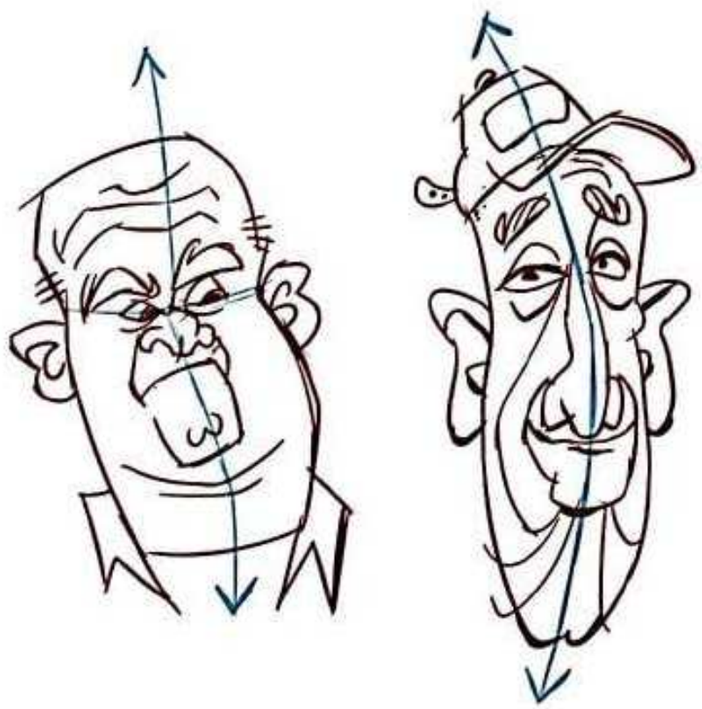
When creating faces, think about the planes that go in and out, creating a rhythm.

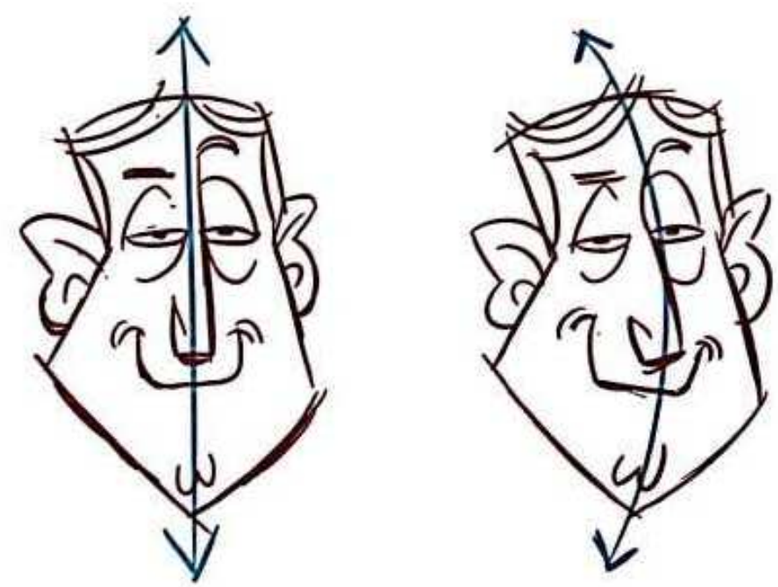




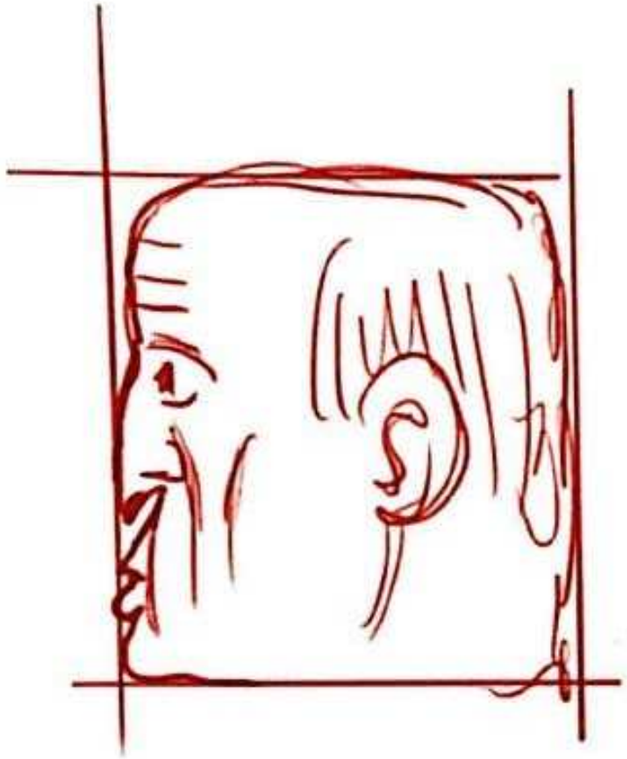
Incorporating an arc either forward or backward will create movement. Balance this with contrast in your angles.

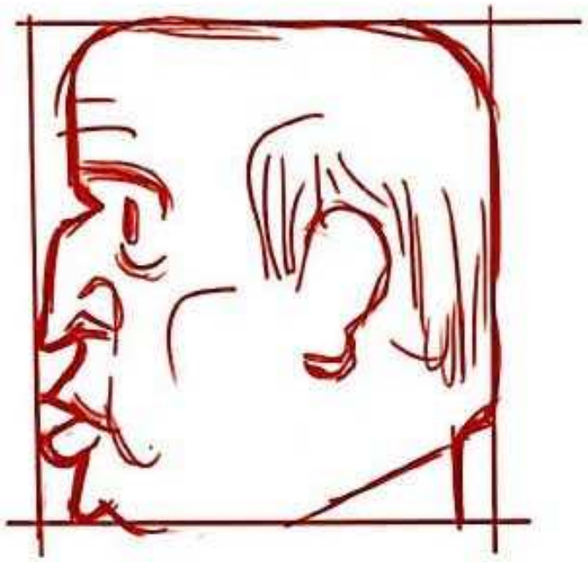
This sketch below can work if intended to feel flat, but you can see it does not have as much feeling.





If your intention is to push, then arc and contrast your angles more.

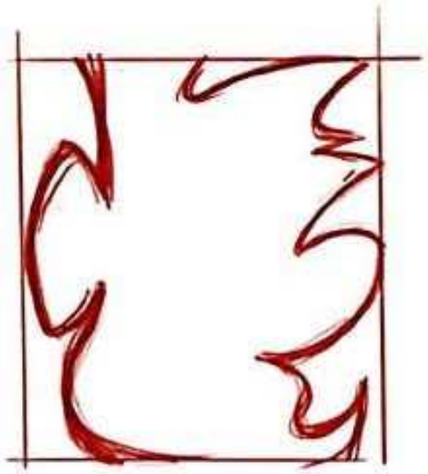


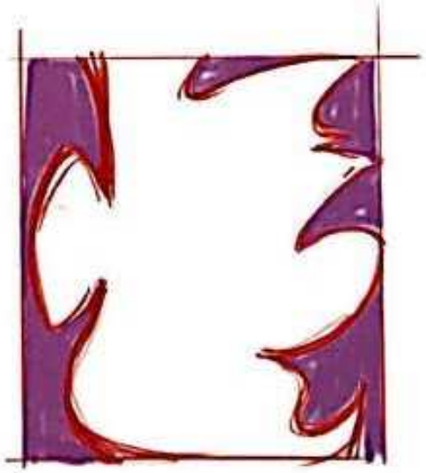


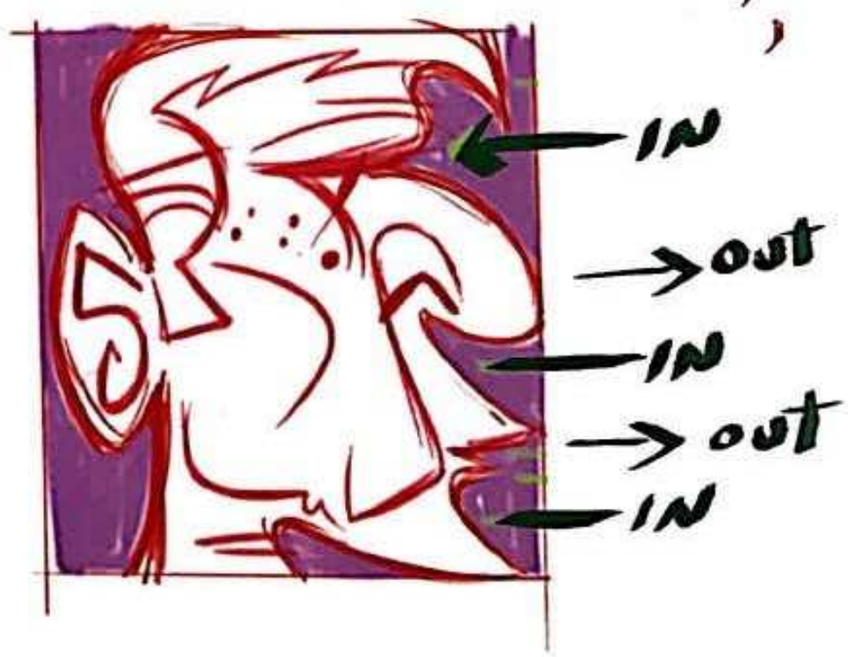
Imagine a boundary box around your subject. This will clearly help you see if you are creating breathing room around your figures.

Are there ways you can incorporate *rhythm* into your design?

Rhythm is caused by repetitious movement and equal spacing.

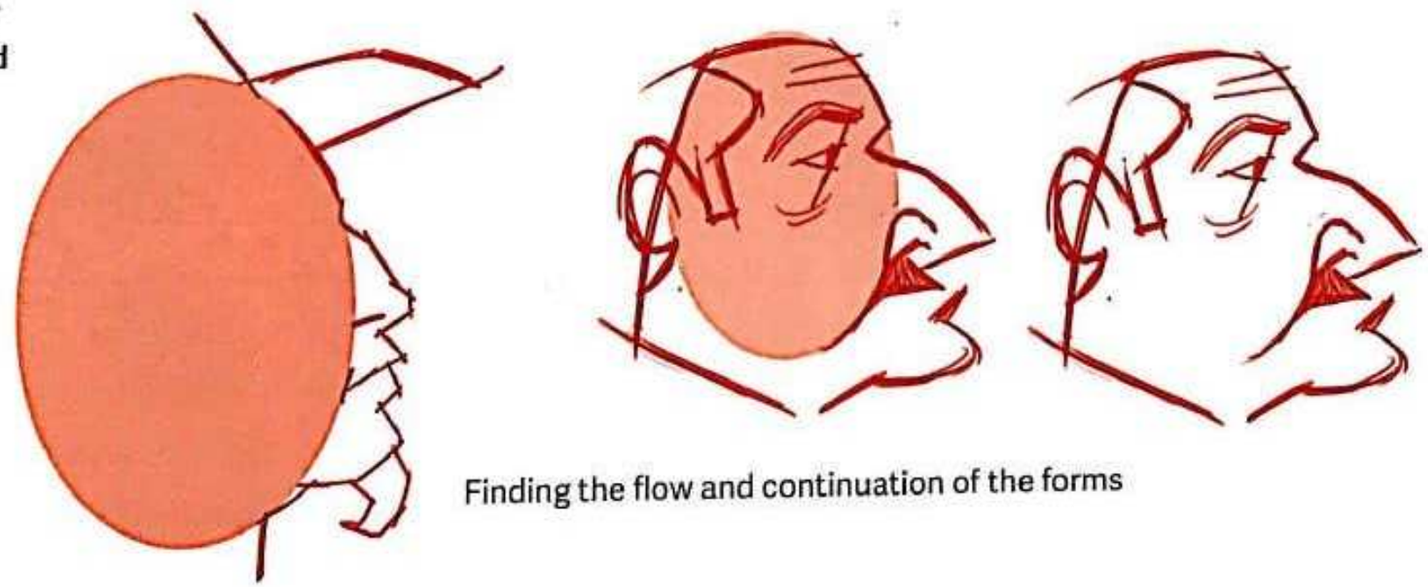






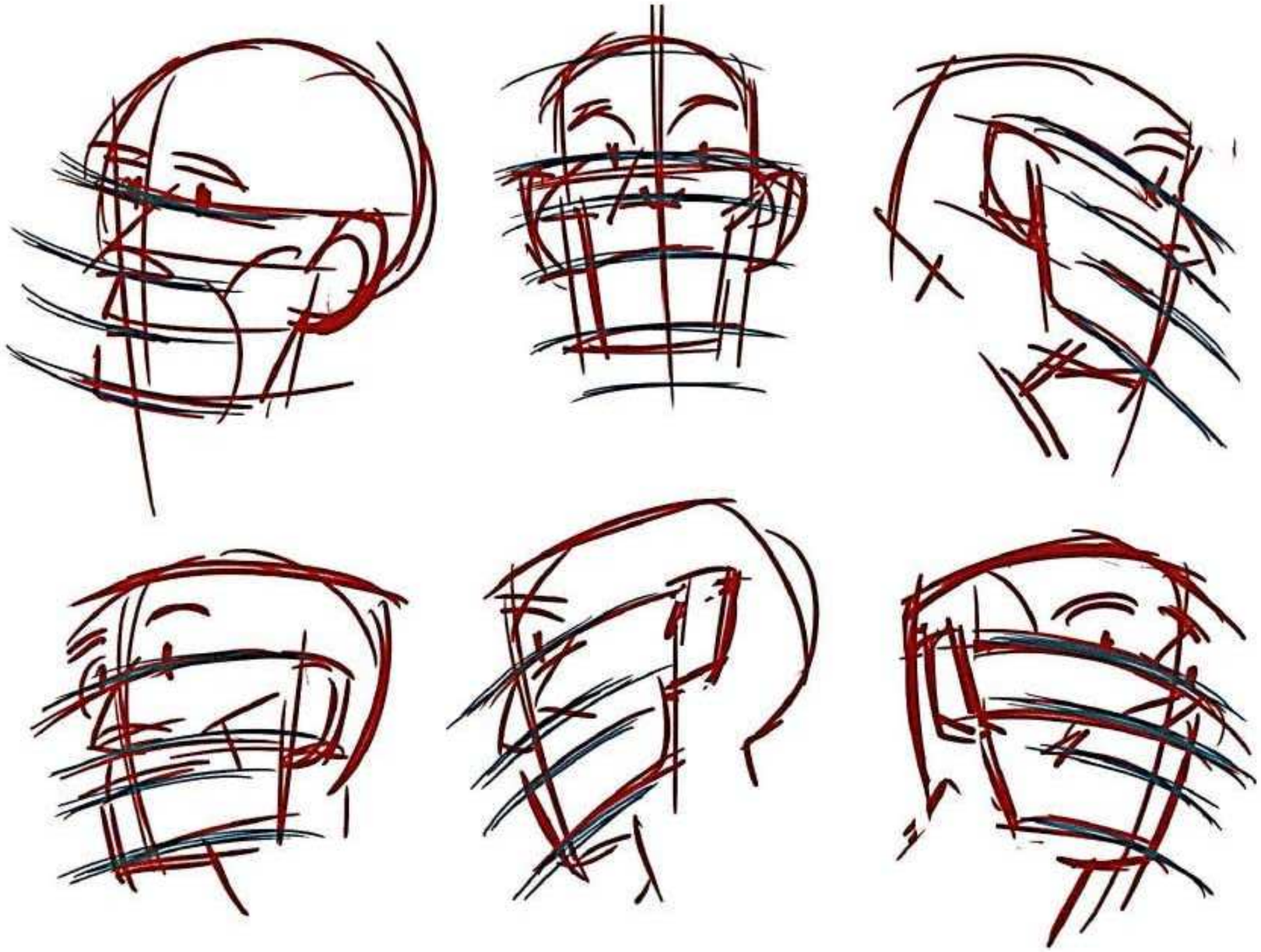
Turn your drawing upside down; it is a great way to see it subjectively and discover if you can pull in or out your line.

Through shape continuation, your eye will fill in the missing gaps; it will feel cohesive and connected.



Finding the flow and continuation of the forms

DO PAY ATTENTION TO HOW HEADS MOVE IN REAL LIFE.

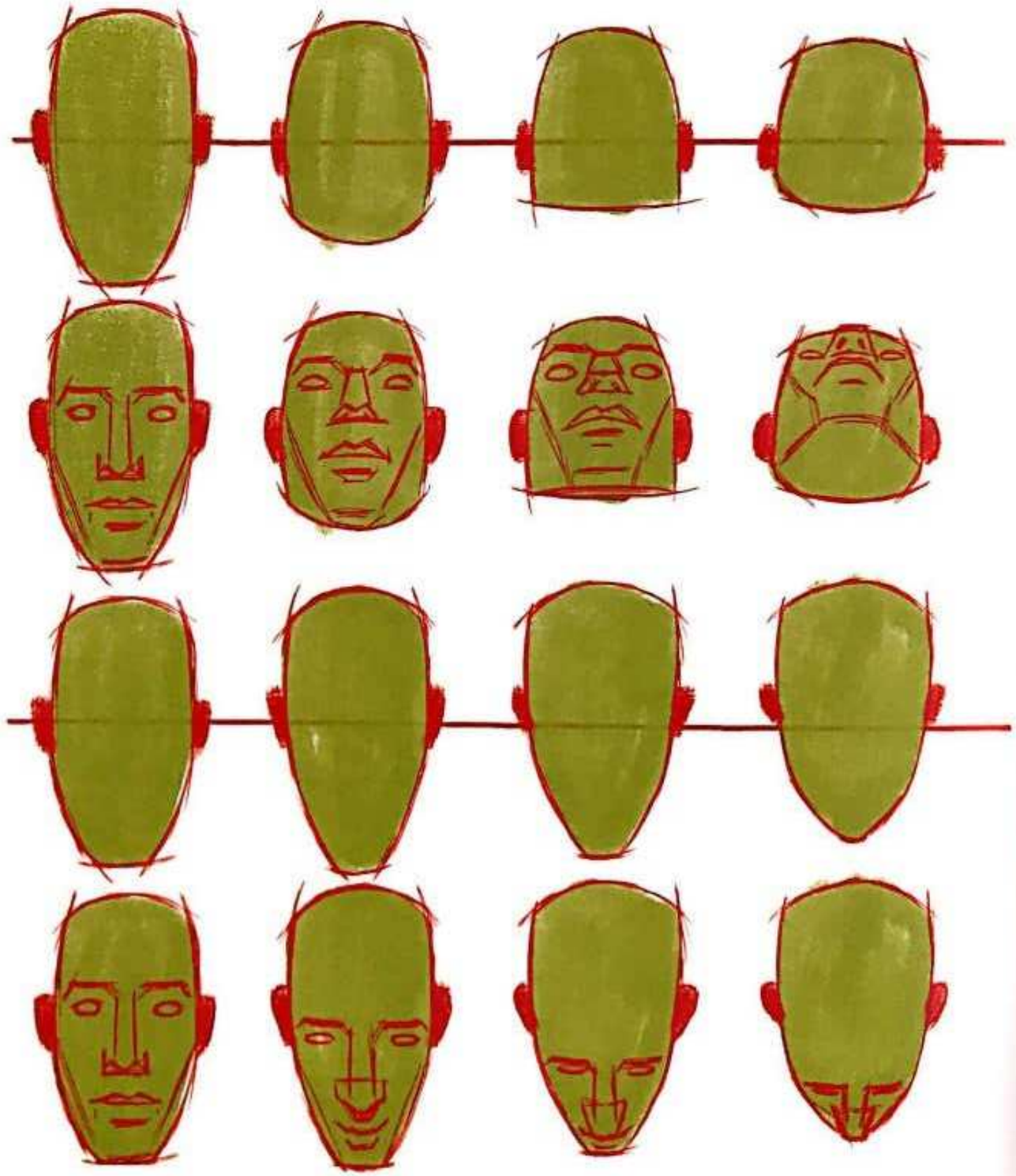


When drawing various angles of the head, find the direction and angle of the eye line, and then make sure your nose, mouth, and chin line follow the same angle.

Observe that on a head tilt the ears are the real anchor and appear not too altered far up or down. As the head tilts up, the ears appear to move down because the other features move up.

On a head rotation, maintaining the width volume is more noticeably important than the height volume, as shown. Also keep in mind that the eye distance will *always* be the same unless the head is turning at an angle, which is more noticeable in a left or right motion. Keep in mind that an expression will alter the width and length.

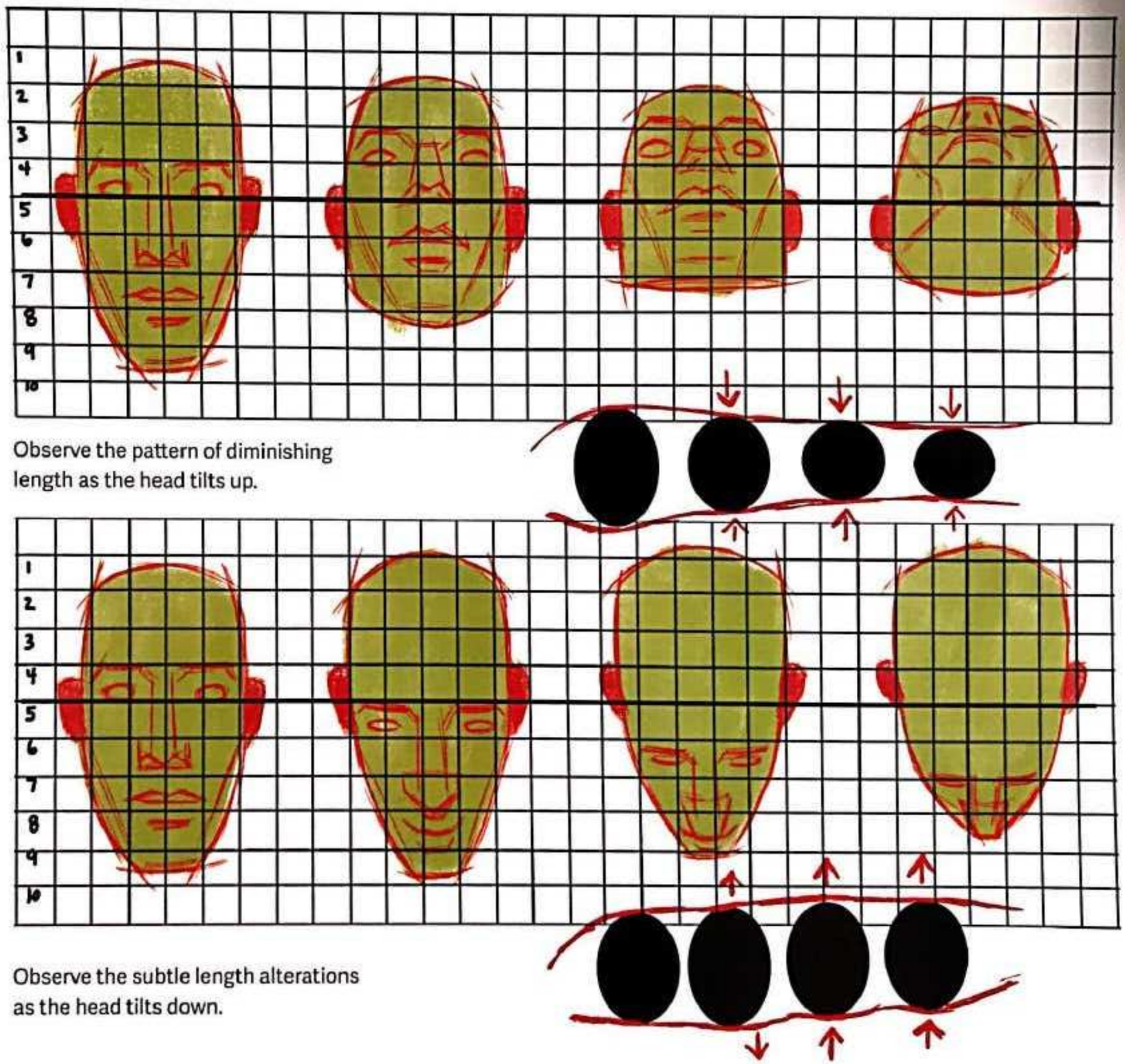
As the head tilts down, the ears appear to move up because the other features move down.



Use a grid to help you see feature placement. Look what happens when you place the eyes above or below different grid number lines. Redraw this.

Observe how the forehead gets shorter and the mouth appears closer to the nose.

Eyes, nose, mouth and chin all rest on grid line #5 on the head tilted up.

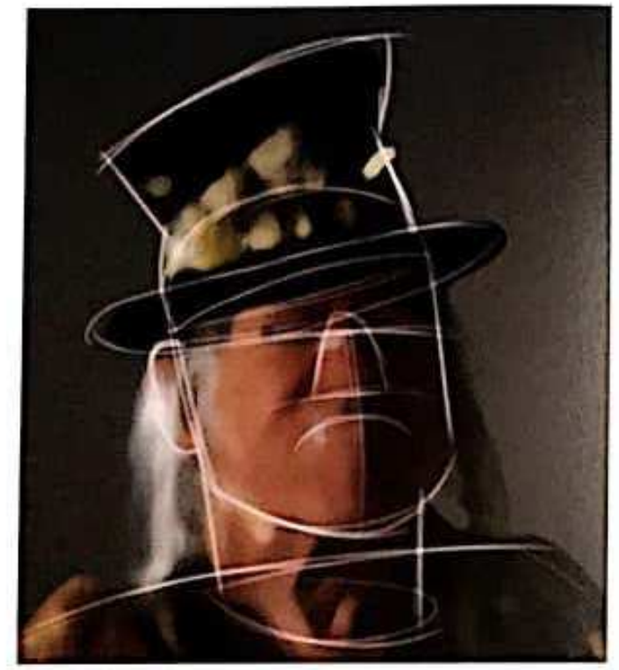


Observe the pattern of diminishing length as the head tilts up.

Observe how the forehead appears longer, and the eyes, nose, and mouth get closer together and will begin to overlap.

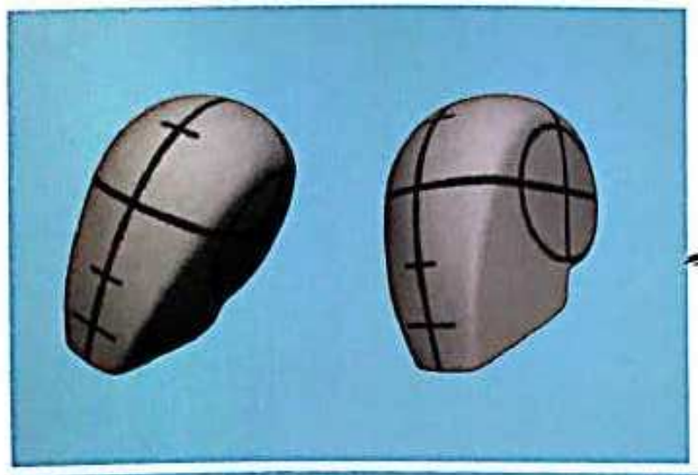
The eyes we can drop down one grid length each time, depending on how much you wish to angle the head.

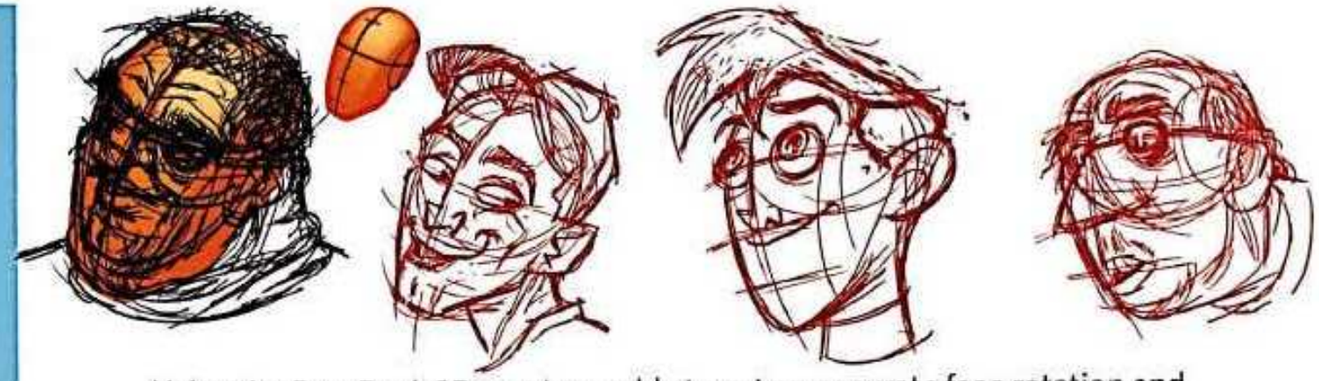
Observe the subtle length alterations as the head tilts down.



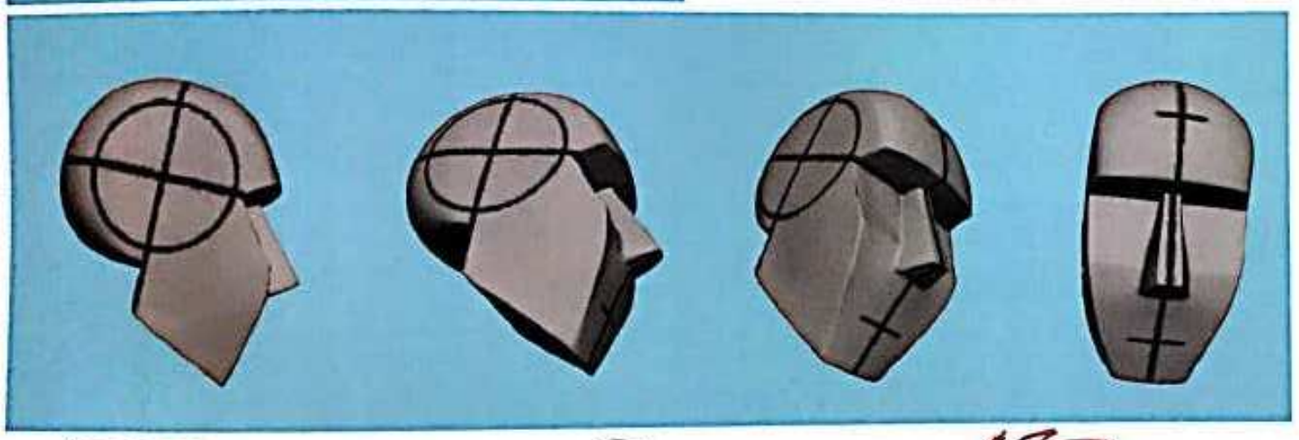
Trace over real photos to find construction grids.

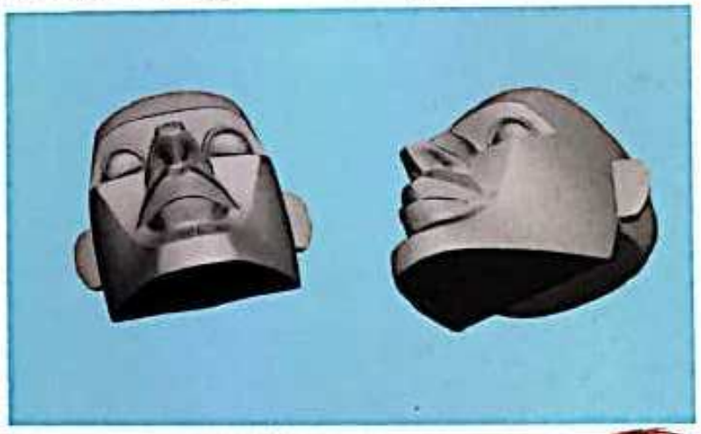
Then use the grid as a starting point to develop your design. Always remember to *draw through* your shapes. This will inspire the angles and shapes to reference.



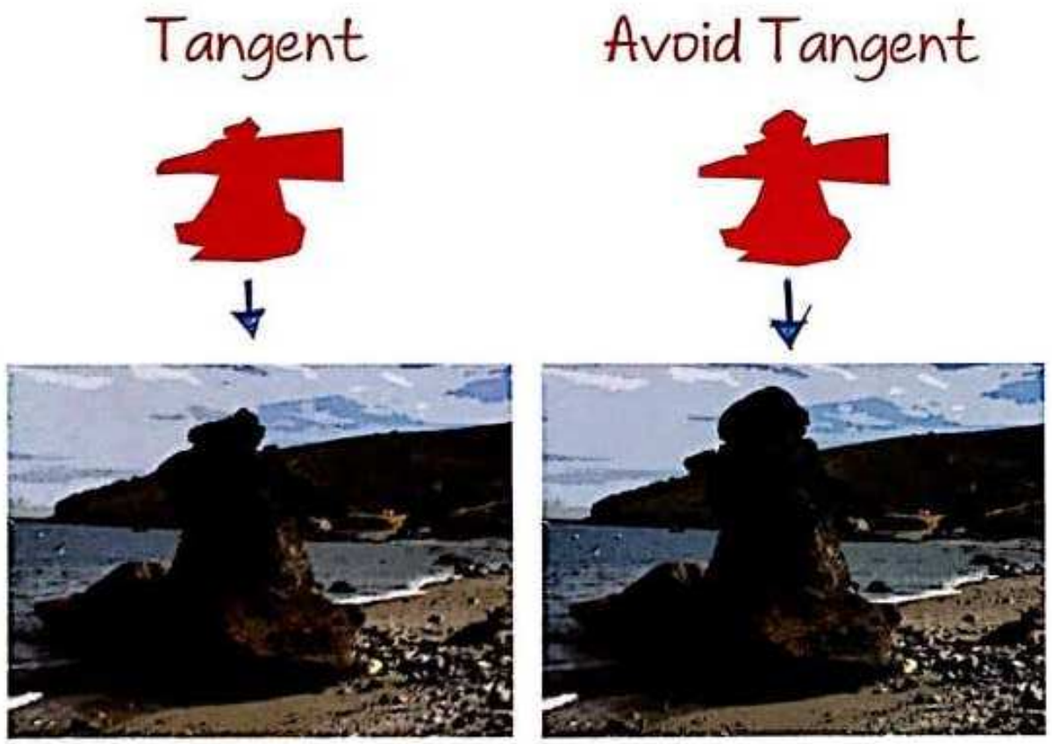


Using the *PoseBook 3D* app, I was able to get an accurate face rotation and then design a variety of character faces, following the same angles.

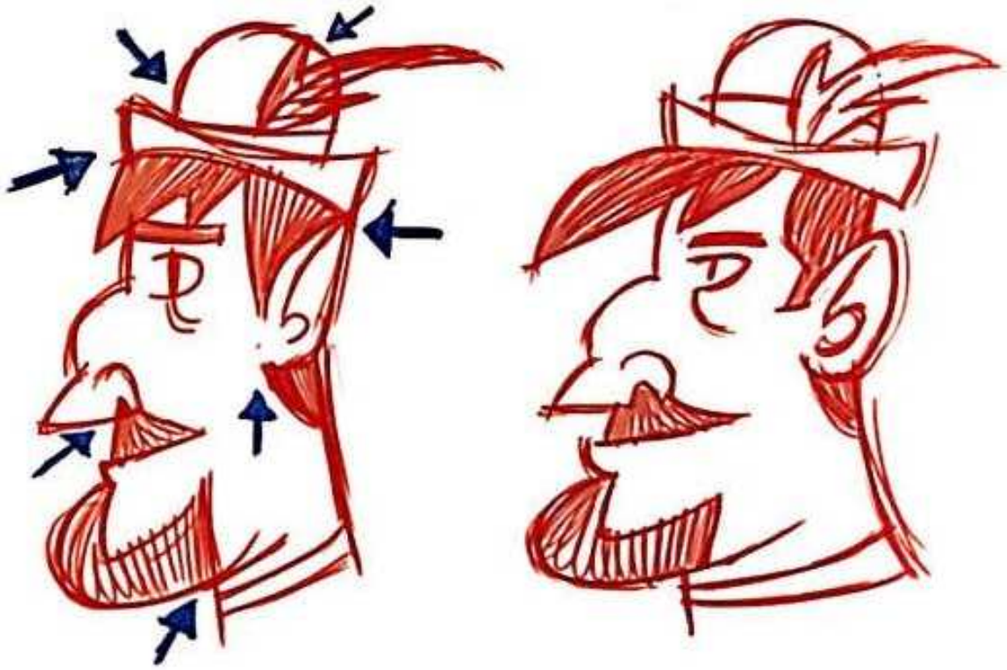




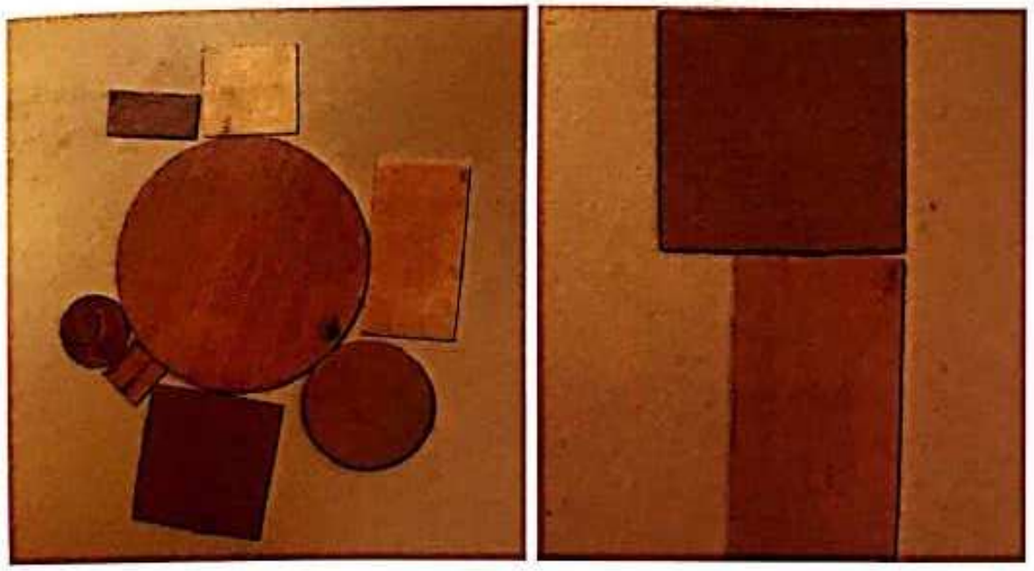
DO BE AWARE OF TANGENTS.



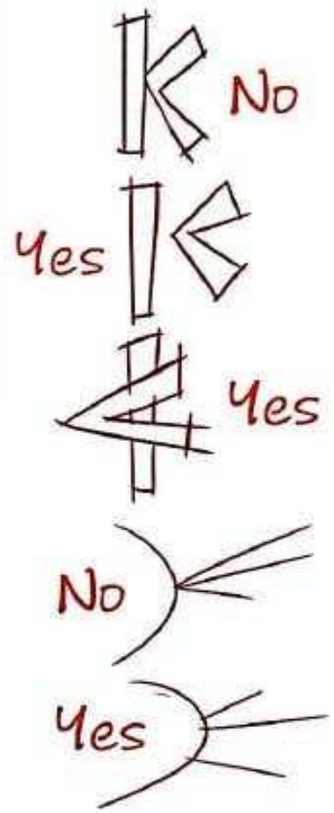
Tangents occur when lines or elements collide at a common point, confusing the viewer of their spacial relationship.

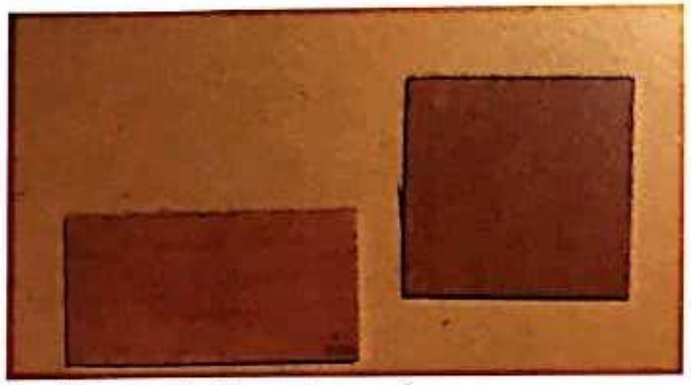


Can you spot the last major tangent?

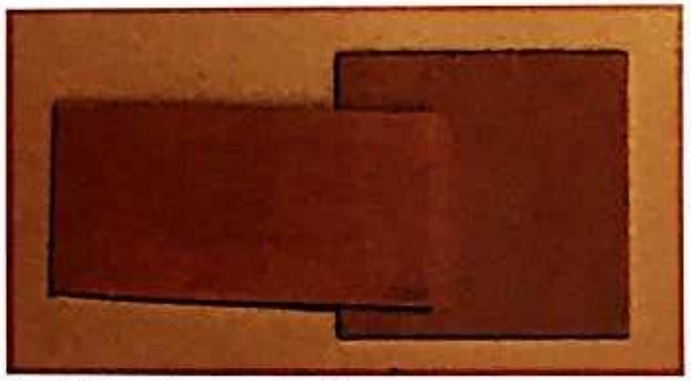


Not all tangents are bad, as long as you are making it part of the style and it is consistent throughout all your designs.

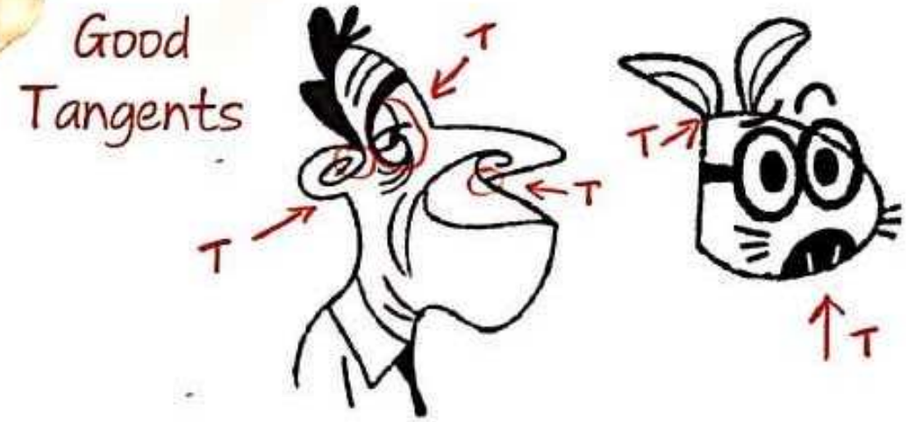




Avoid tangents through spacing.



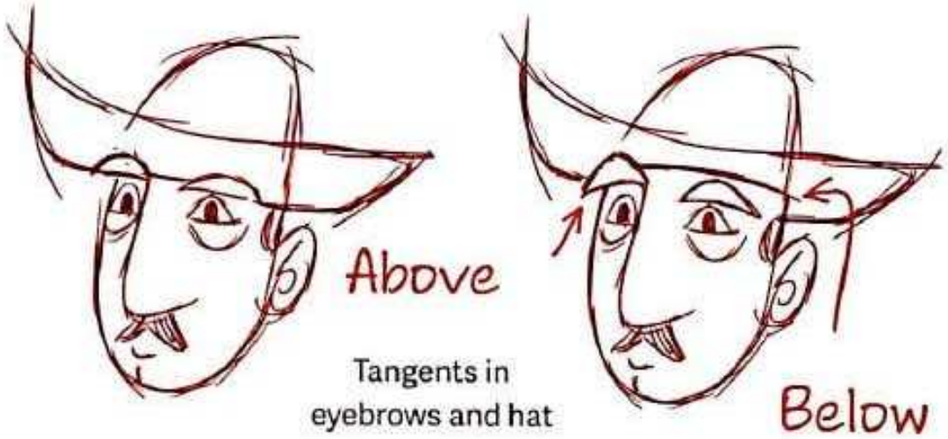
Avoid them by overlapping.



A tangent confuses the eye into seeing maybe just one shape as opposed to a variety of shapes overlapping or separated.

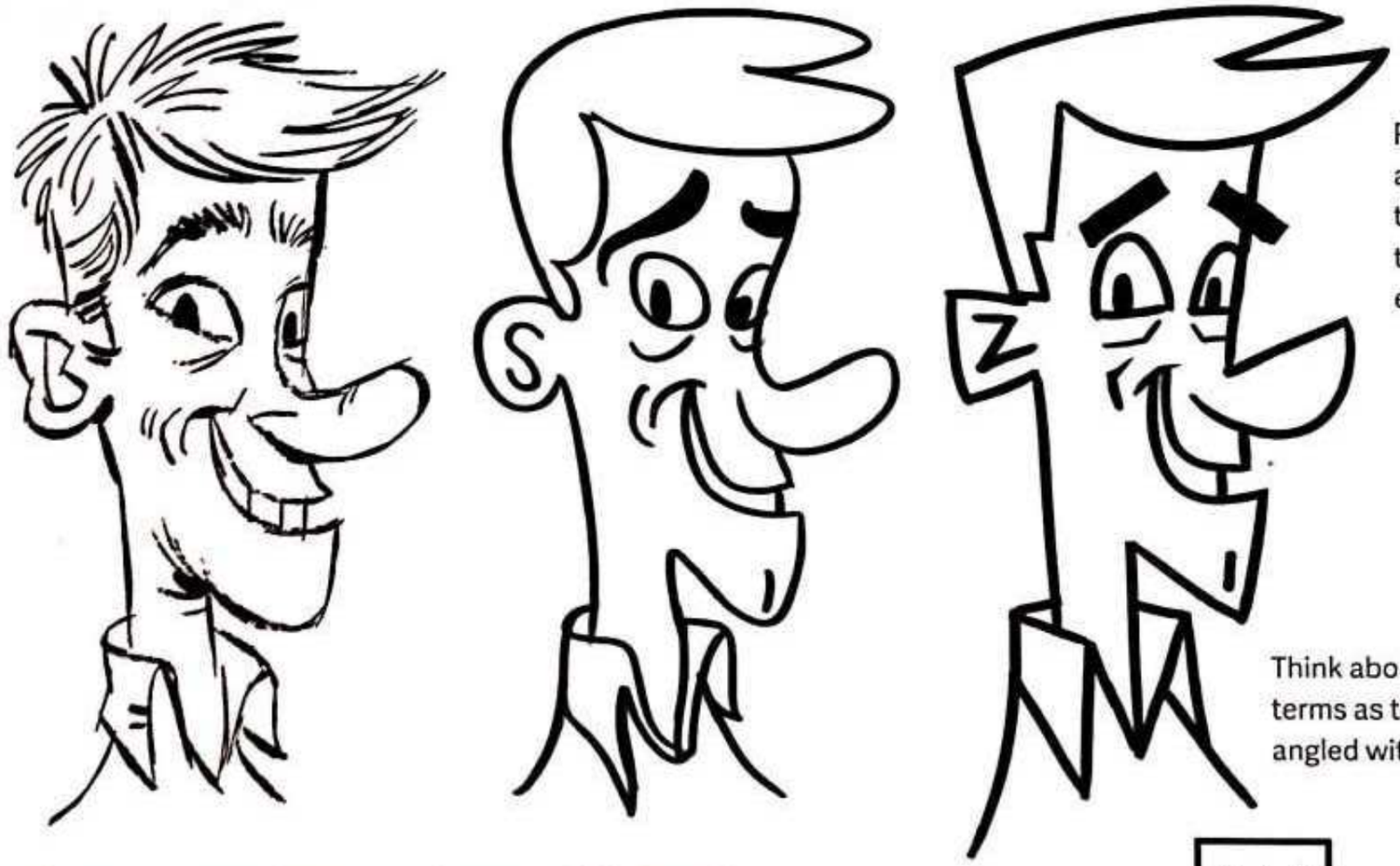
We simply want to cross our forms through overlap and spacing.

This tangent can work as long at it is intentional; it may be a stem to a leaf.



Tangents in eyebrows and hat

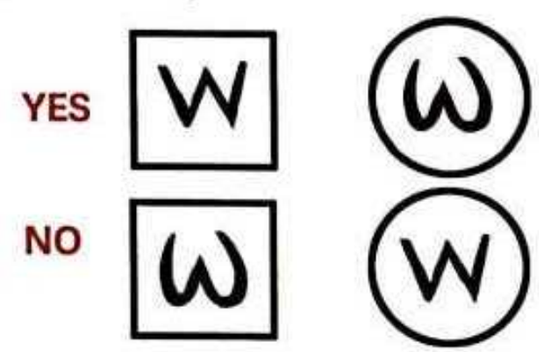
DO AIM FOR HARMONY.



Rules are made to be broken as long as you are aware of the rules. And in instances like this, breaking the rules can evolve a new style.

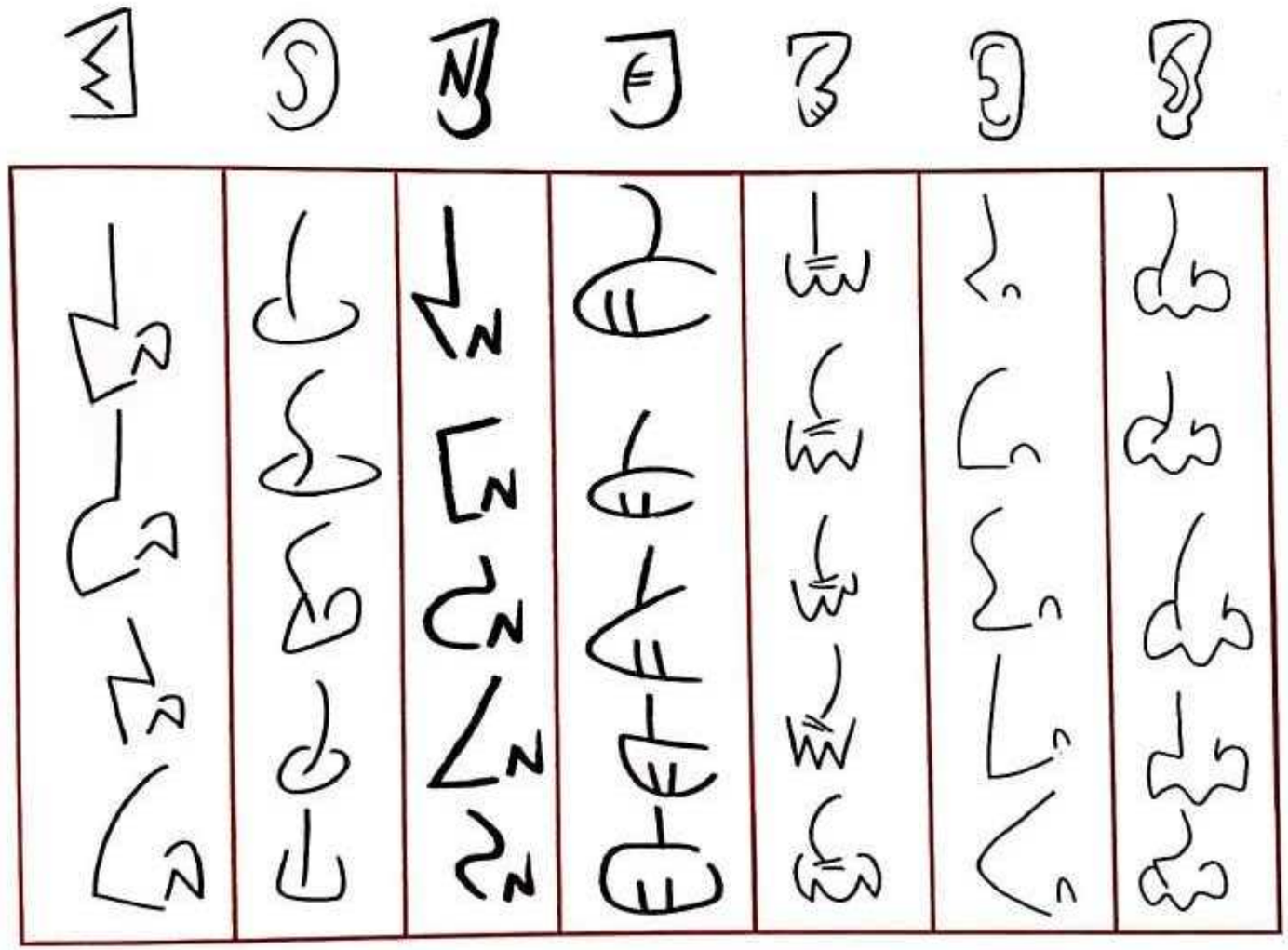
Think about harmony in as simple terms as this: curved within curved, angled within angled.

When creating a style, our goal is to create *harmony* within the style. Harmony is created when two or more elements become repeated throughout the design, thereby unifying your drawing. Notice how a sketchy, loose line is created throughout the first design. Repeated curves are applied in the second one, and repeated angles throughout the third.



Yes, the round W in the square can offer contrast, but it is technically not harmonious.

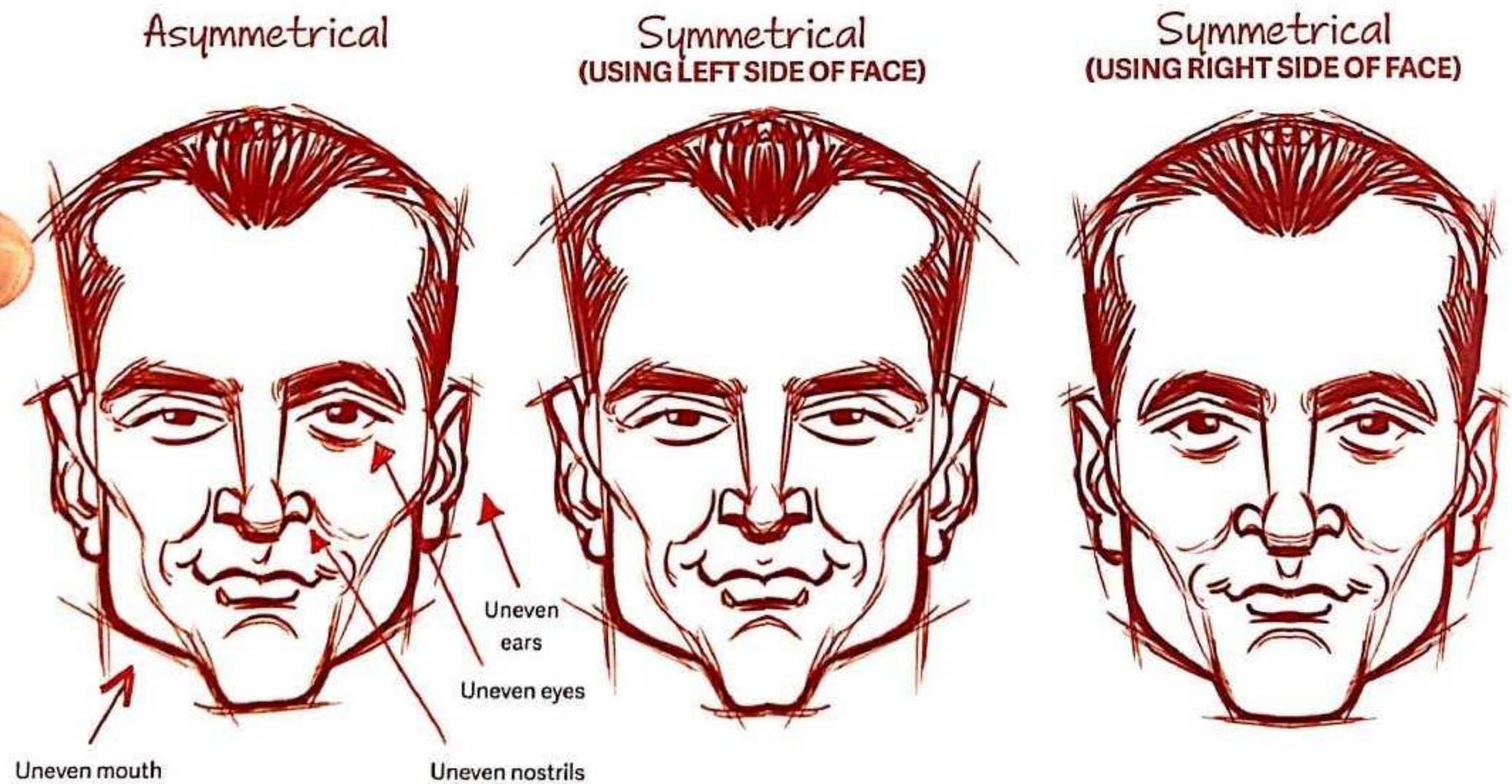
Other ways to unify your design can be through specific facial features, for instance, the ears and nose. Notice all the possibilities using different curves and angles.



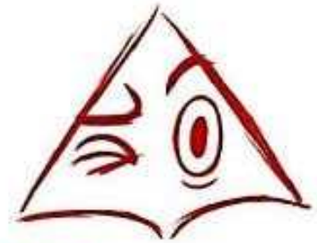
In creating unity and variety we are creating *harmony*: the key ingredient to creating a consistent show style.

DO SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF.

Something to consider when designing any character is keeping both sides of the face slightly uneven. This can add additional life to your character and avoid appearing mannequin-like if that is not your intention.

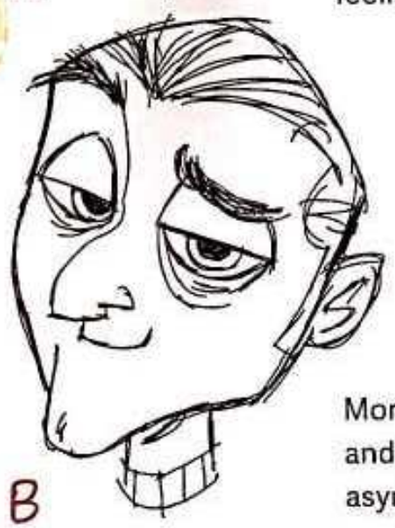


Using Your Dominant Eye



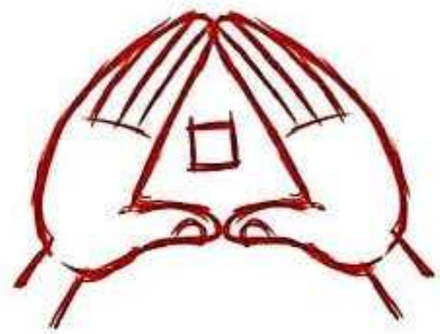
A

Eyes are too symmetrical and even, feeling flat and dead.

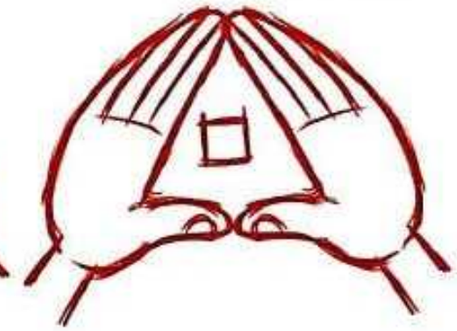


B

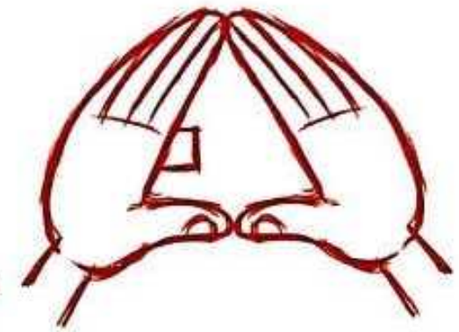
More character and feel due to asymmetry of eyes.



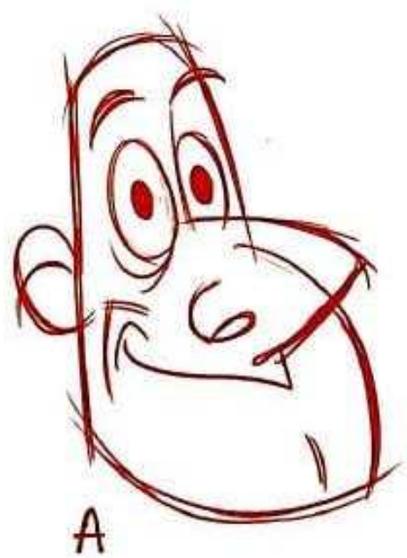
To find your dominant eye, find an object in the distance, keep both eyes open, and center object.



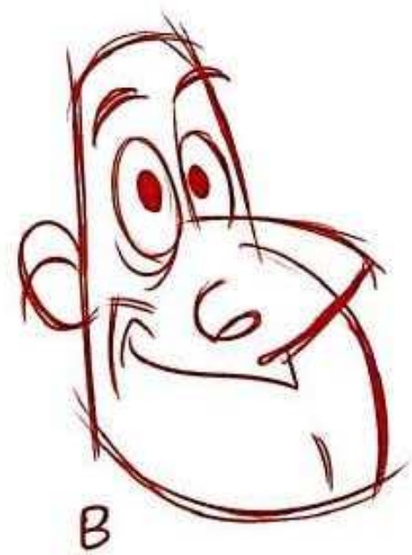
Close either your left or right eye and if the object is still in the middle, that eye is your dominant eye.



If the object disappears or is shifted, that is your weak eye.



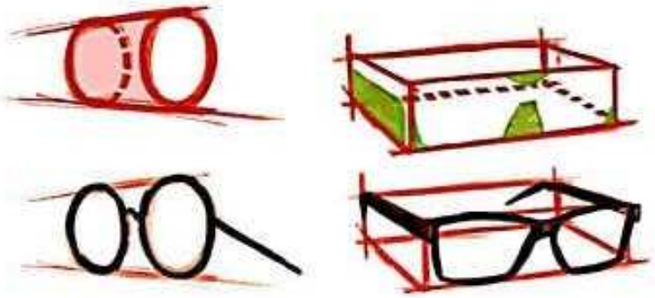
A



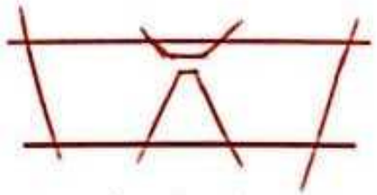
B

So how does it apply?

In figure A, the eyes are the same size and both fall through the center of the eyeball. In figure B, we can see that by slightly shifting the eyes so they are not even in shape or placement, it adds more life; and we get the feeling that the eye on our left is the dominant one.



Start off with a strong shape for glasses, whether a cylinder or a block.



Define the shape.

When drawing glasses, create them as one shape and then erase to help you achieve a stronger sense of perspective.

Hair?

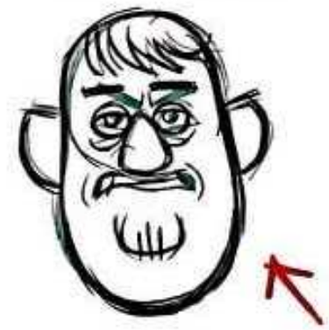
There are endless patterns to create with hair. Notice how it hangs and comes from the pattern you create on the forehead.

Facial Expressions

Just as a character's posture tells a story, the face, on its own, expresses a multitude of feelings, depending on the position of everything from eyes to mouth to chin, and more. The eyes are the window to the soul, therefore it is important to understand how all parts of the human face are connected; when you shift one thing—the eyes, for instance—take into consideration how it affects another part of the face.

These expressions are based on Charles Darwin's and Paul Ekman's findings of recognizable expressions worldwide.

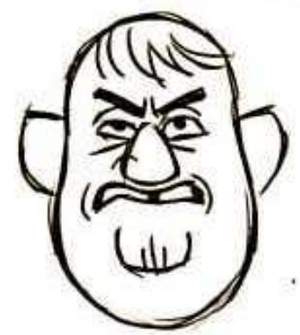
Neutral



Neutral

Maintain volumes of your character by simply doing an overlay on your main design.

Angry



eyebrows down and pinched, lips tight, eyeballs tense

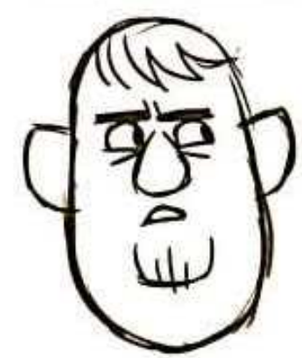
Fear

eyebrows pinched and raised, mouth widened and tightened

Contempt

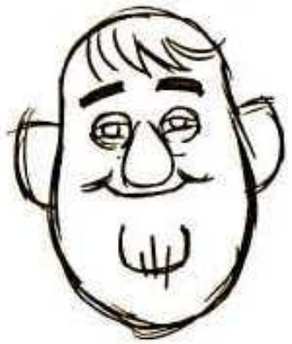
mouth and eyebrow raised on one side

Confused



eyeballs tense, eyebrows pinched

Happy



eyes squinted, mouth stretched

Happier

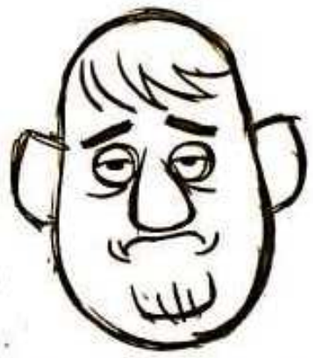
More Fear

eyebrows pinched and raised, mouth widened and tightened

Surprised

eyebrows raised, no pinch, eyes and mouth open

Sad



eyes droop, eyebrows tilt, mouth down

Disgust

brows pinched, nose wrinkled, mouth raised or tongue out

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CHARACTER ON MODEL

1) Keep eyeballs the same distance from each other unless the eyeballs intentionally pop in an expression.

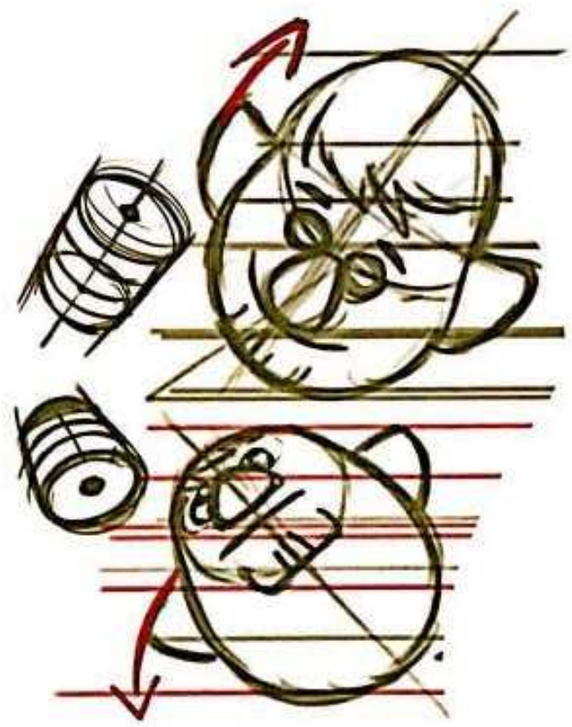
2) Forehead height and chin length are more dramatic on tilts.

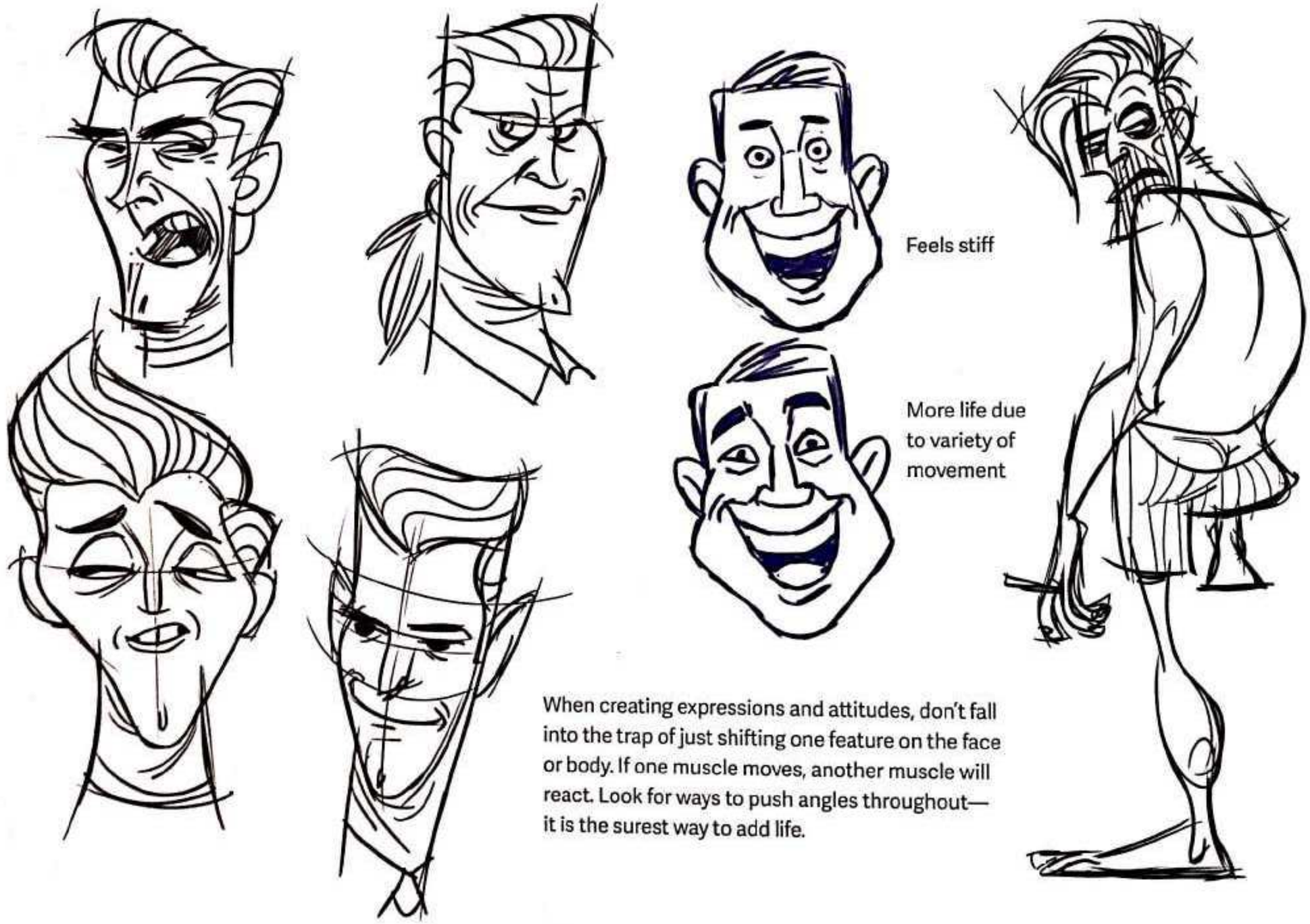
3) The skull does not change volumes; focus on the cheek mass.

4) Maintain volumes on the ears, nose, and chin. The eyes and mouth can vary.

Play with your distances on angles with tilts; features will appear to shrink and elongate. Just be sure to maintain the width of features.

On tilts: When head tilts up, ears drop down. When head tilts down, the ears go up. Follow your perspective lines.





When creating expressions and attitudes, don't fall into the trap of just shifting one feature on the face or body. If one muscle moves, another muscle will react. Look for ways to push angles throughout—it is the surest way to add life.

Your initial face sketches should be drawn pretty fast and loose; you will not get it perfect straight away, and that is not your goal. The goal is to constantly refine like music, a script, a dance. Do not settle on your first idea.

Cultural Features

First, I wish to state that the observation of different ethnicities is essential and will vary person to person. This portrait is extreme in order for me to make my point. When designing characters, think about the region they may come from. Study a variety of people from different lands; it will give you a better sense of authenticity. When you know who your character is and where he or she lives in the world, take the time to research those cultures further.

Even though we are all human, we are different. Our faces represent years of evolution, of different groups mixing with others. You can easily pull your audience out of the character if you don't find the subtle nuances that make up a face from a specific region. In my illustrations, I chose to exaggerate certain features in order to make my point; the minute you look at the face—you instantly see a distinction from one to the next.

Let's say you had to design a group of French tourists visiting the United States, or your production takes place in London. These images below are considered stereotypical examples—oversimplified ideas of what each ethnicity looks like. These are not meant to express that every person in each ethnic group looks like this, but it gives a recognizable feeling. These are sketches from observation when I visited these countries. The real heart of making your designs great is through experience. Be conscious of hairstyles and clothing too.

French person

Heavier eyes, thicker lips, skinnier face, cheekbone revealed, larger nose, darker eyes

Italian person

Heavier eyelids, pronounced nose, thicker lips, dark hair, cheekbone more visible, dark eyes, eyes may be angled more, stronger jaw

British person

Lighter hair , droopier eyes, nostrils revealed more, thin lips, weaker jaw, lighter eyes, upper lip not so present

Dutch person

More pronounced brow, lighter eyebrows and hair, lighter and more rounded eyes, smaller nose, fuller lips, thinner face, smaller forehead

German person

Smaller upturned nose, lighter eyes, lighter hair and brows, greater distance from nose to mouth, fuller bottom lip, more wrinkles, cheekbone visible, pronounced brow

The Female Face

My whole career I have had to design women, from drawing caricatures in theme parks to designing female leads and background characters in multiple shows. The one lesson I have learned over and over is to make the female look "good" and don't make her grotesque. It simply does not sell. My caricature subjects didn't like it, nor do the clients unless it is intended.

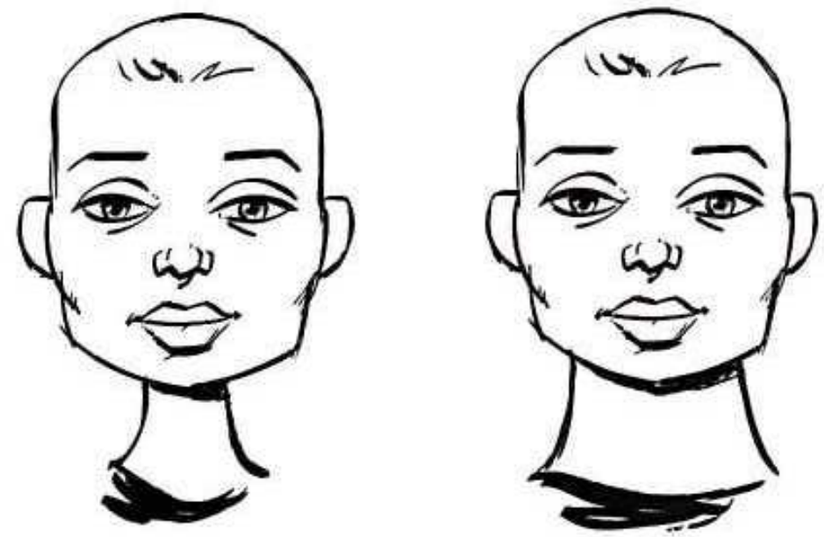
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The Greeks defined beauty within their sculptures and held true to maintaining certain proportions in order to achieve that visual beauty. Throughout the ages within art, the ideal female has been drawn for advertising to pinup. Surgeons, when reconstructing the female face in surgery, use the same breakdown as I am elaborating on within this section. Style is not a consideration but placement of features always will be. If the elements are warped and stretched too much, we can lose the subtle beauty.

Remember, design is beauty, and design is the organization of shapes. For the many cartoons that I have had to design, the girls especially needed to be appealing. They will appear on products, posters, and toys. If the image does not feel pleasant or charming, unfortunately, it turns people off. Beauty within the face is not about an exact angle, such as within a nose, an eye, or jaw. It just comes down to contrast and placement. An older women in her 80s can still feel beautiful even though there will be more wrinkles. Bottom line is, understand the intention of your character and know why she is supposed to look the way she does.

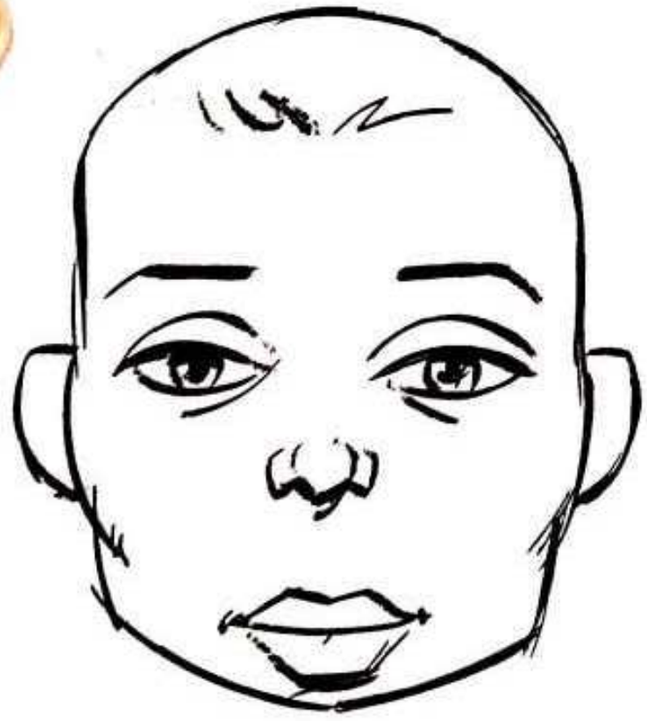
Explore variety by playing with distances of the facial features and hairstyles.

FEATURE PLACEMENT

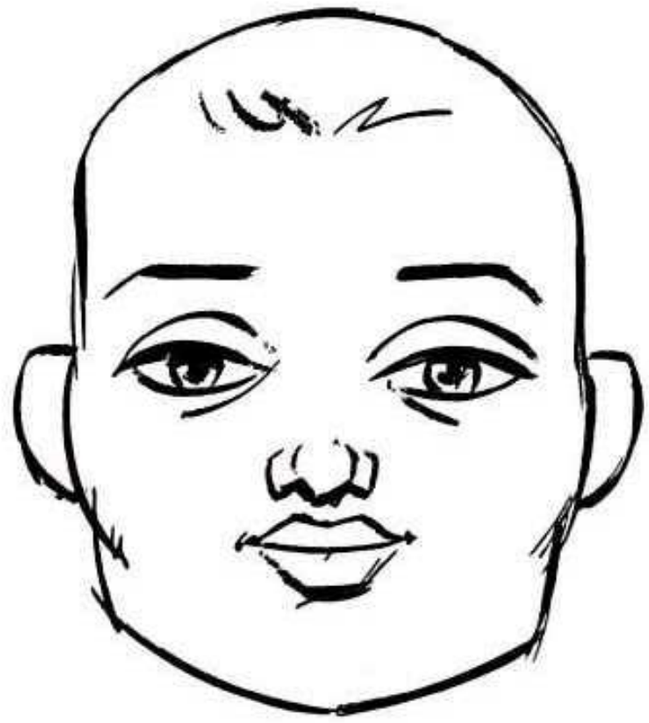
The following is a series of breakdowns in order to help you achieve a better understanding of feature placement on the female face. No matter what the age or style, it is your responsibility to constantly observe and record your findings. Redraw the same character face like I have shown below, and then alter the length and width and see how it alters the face. Look at the golden ratio section in Chapter 5 and see how the proportions can help you create more appeal.



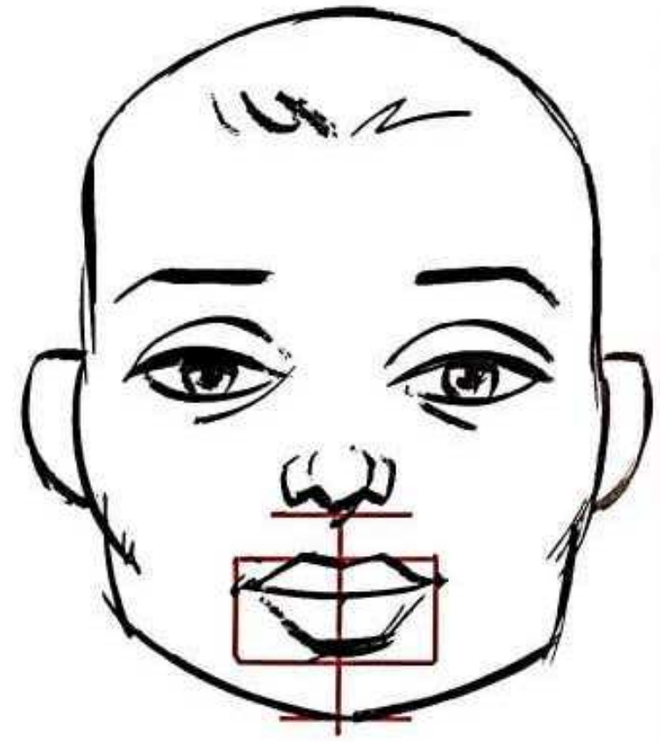
A thinner neck can make your female character appear younger. A thicker neck can age her.



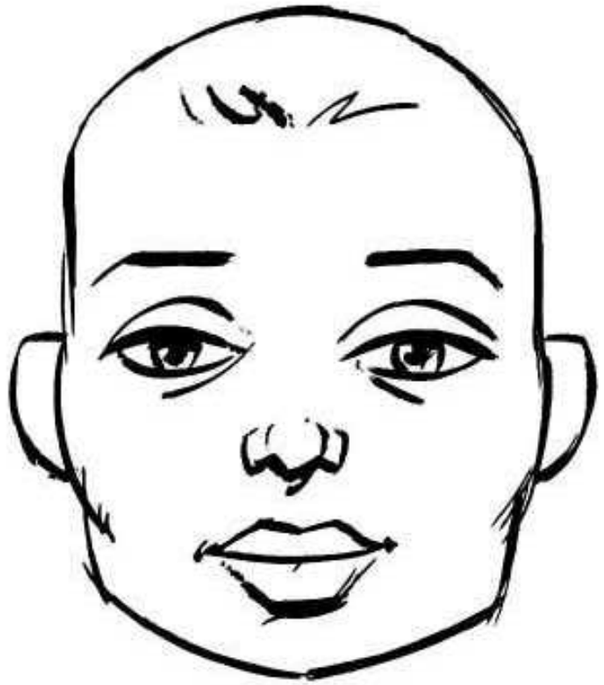
Lowering the lips too close to the chin can diminish the strength and stature of your female.



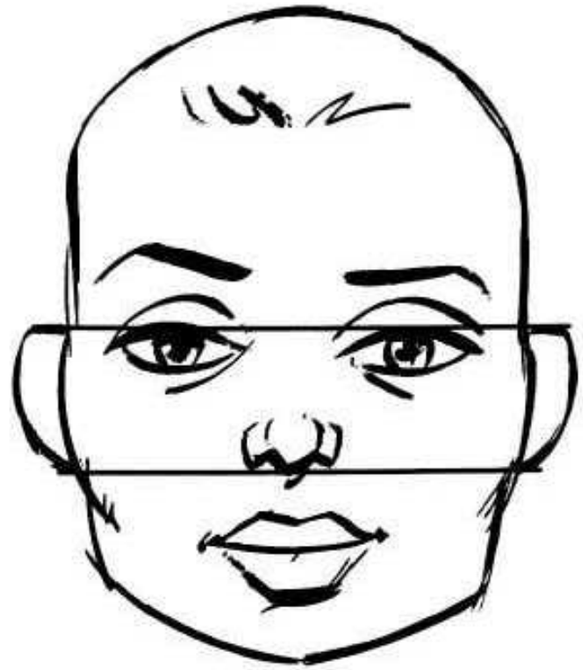
A larger chin will give a more masculine feeling to the character.



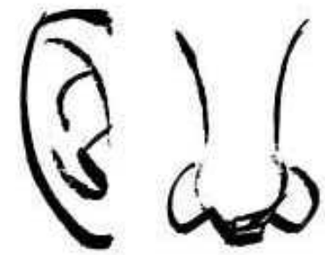
Keeping the lips centered between the bottom of the nose and the bottom of the chin will create more of an ideal "cute" proportion.



Static symmetrical eyebrows will give more of a mannequin feel.



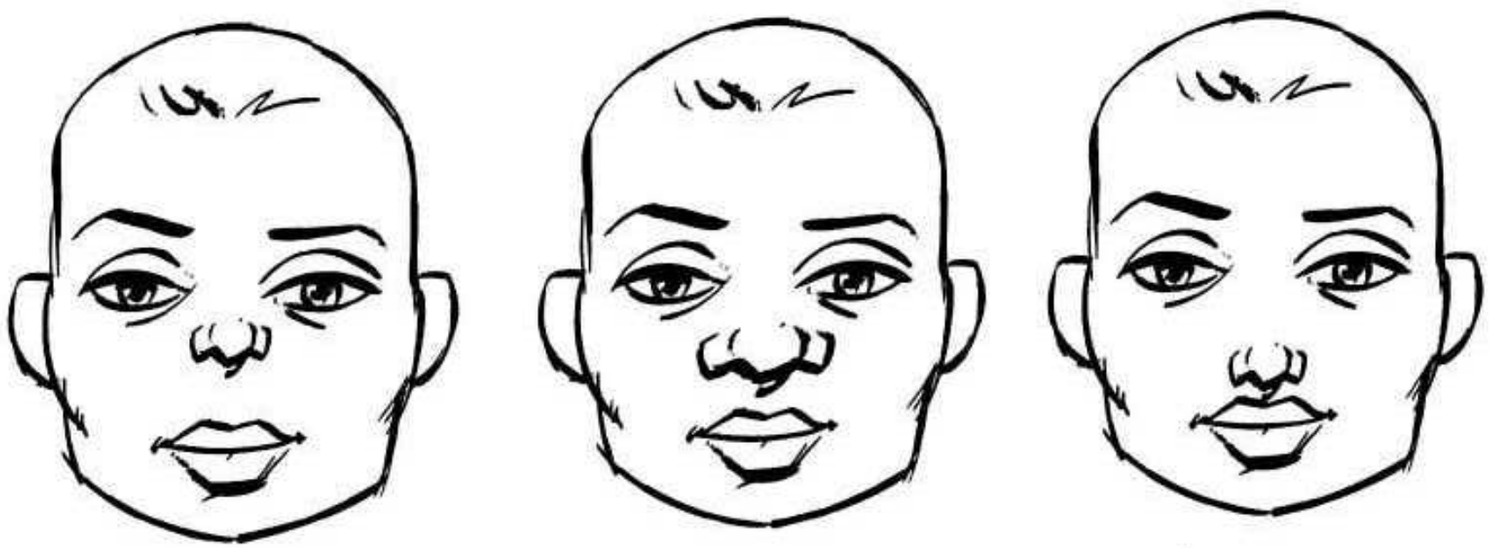
Varying the thickness and angle of eyebrows can add a more human quality to your design.



On average, your ear and nose are the same length as I noted earlier in the chapter.

If our goal is to create a softer, cuter character, nose size and placement can play a large role.

Look what happens when I just adjust the nose. I have shifted nothing else, and it creates a whole new feeling to the character.



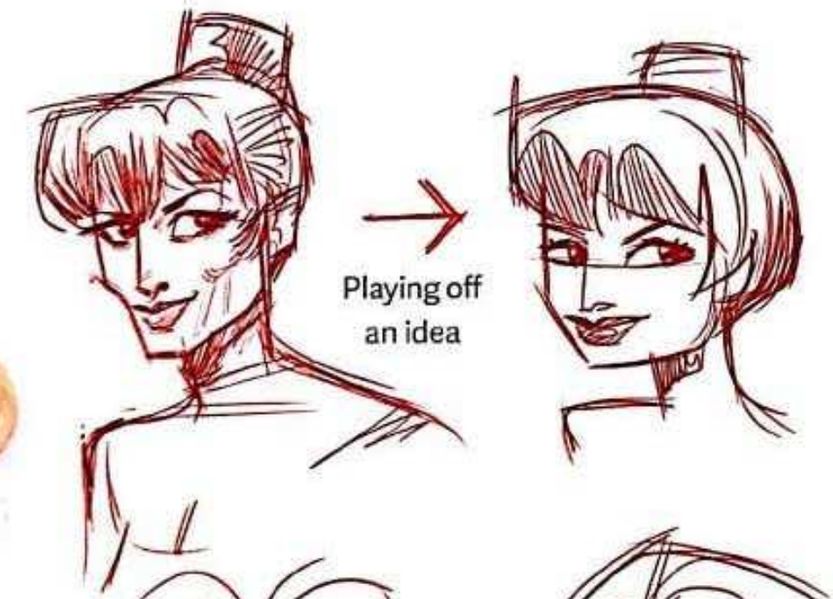
Shorter

Wider

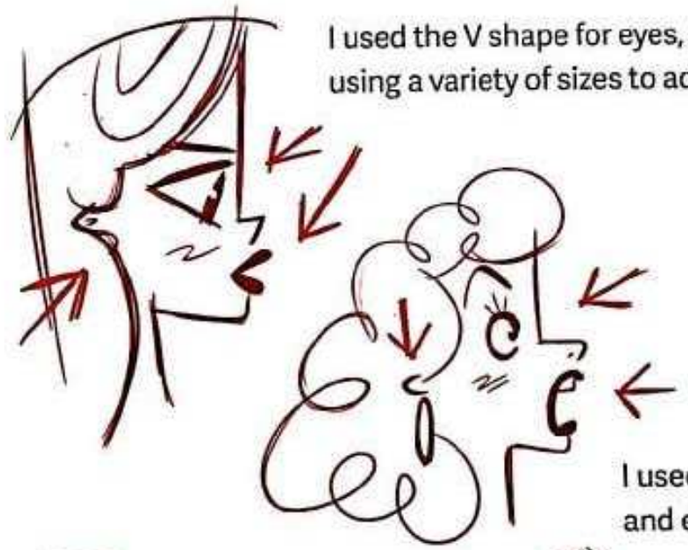
Longer

The Kite Approach

When I teach, I discover easier ways to break things down because I need to explain it to my students. The kite approach came from needing to know where to place the forehead, eyes, and chin in my initial rough sketch, when my goal *was* to draw the face of a cute girl.

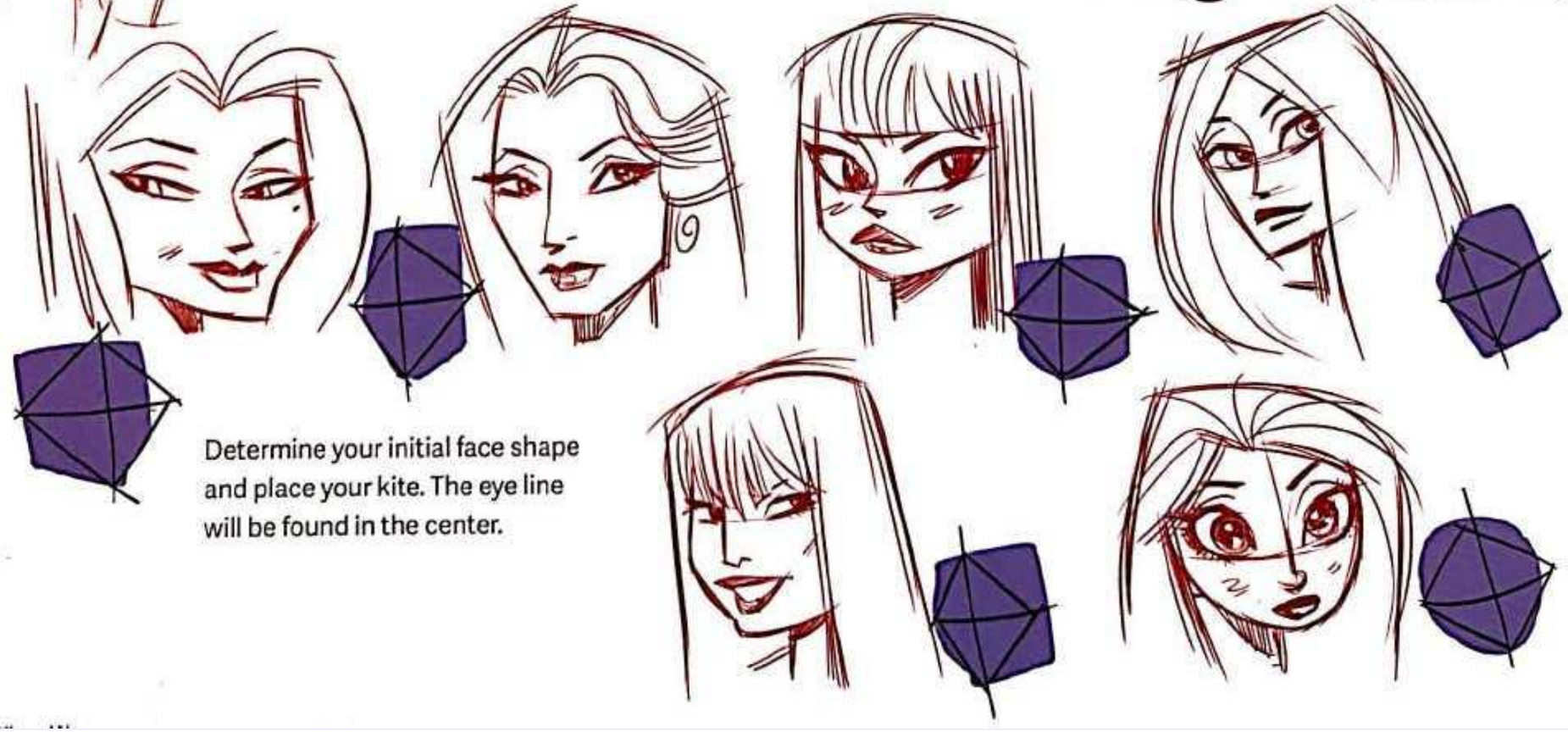


Playing off an idea

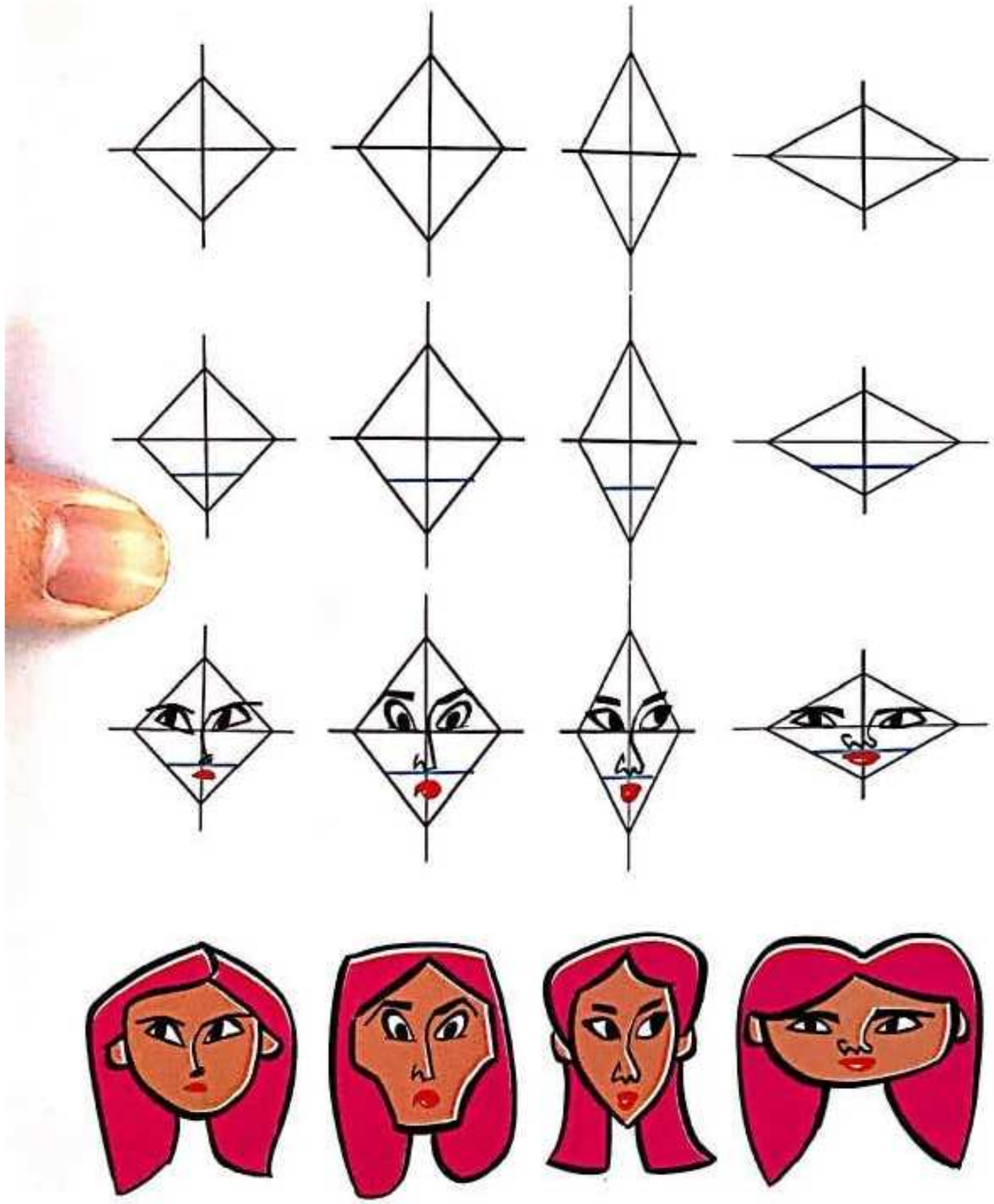


I used the V shape for eyes, mouth, and ears, using a variety of sizes to add interest.

I used the C shape for mouth, eyes, and ears as a unifying element.

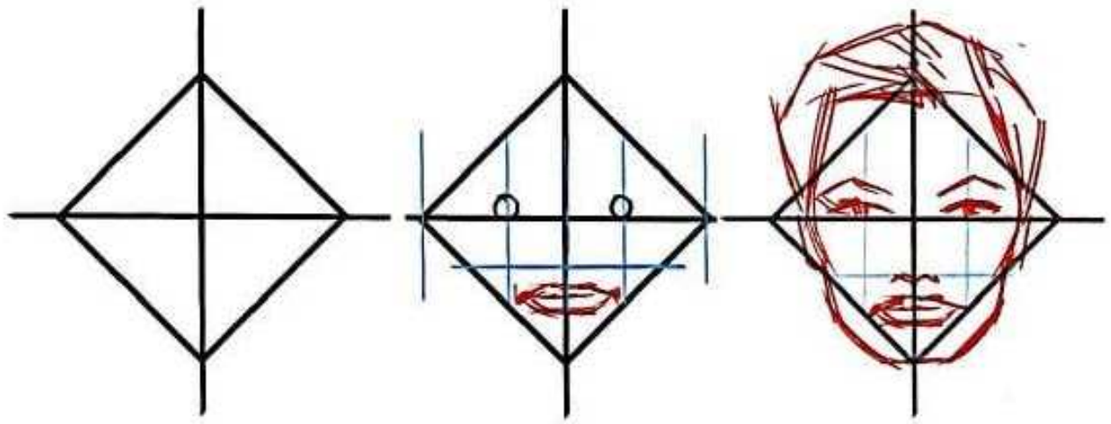


Determine your initial face shape and place your kite. The eye line will be found in the center.



Here's how to use a kite as a starting point to draw a pretty face:

- Bearing in mind that the head is not in a drastic tilt, draw vertical lines to place the eyeballs.
- Halfway down from the eye line place the bottom of the nose.
- The corner of the lips may line up with the center of the eyeball.



You will find the triangles of the kite to be almost even for the conventional pretty face.

Face and Head Exercises

DRAW AN ATTRACTIVE GIRL:

Drawing a cute girl face is all about placement and proportions. Here is another effective way for you to practice drawing an appealing face:

1) On lined paper, draw four lines, skipping every other line.

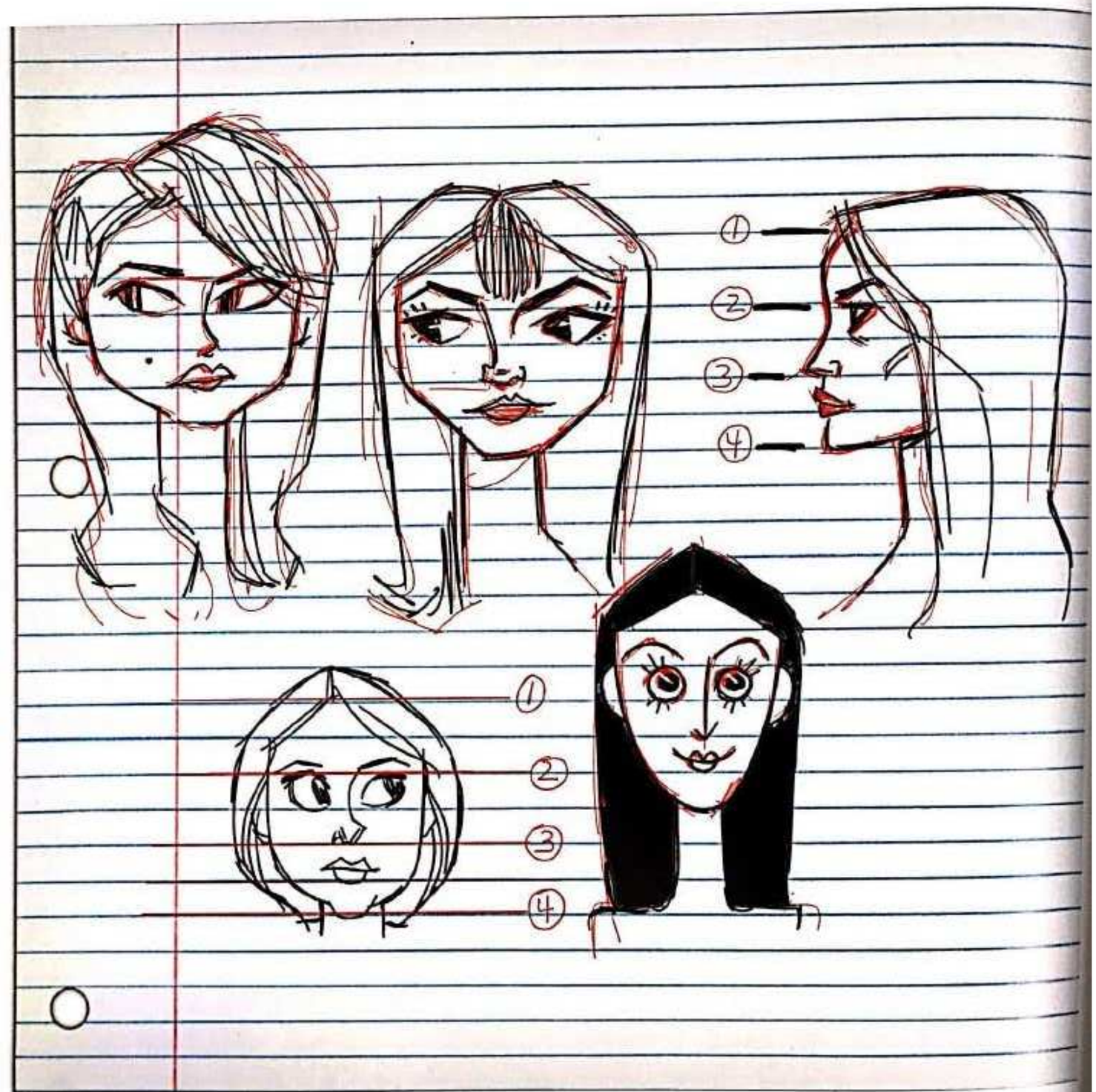
2) Place your inside hairline on line #1.

3) Place your eyes *below* line #2.

4) Place your nose *above* line #3.

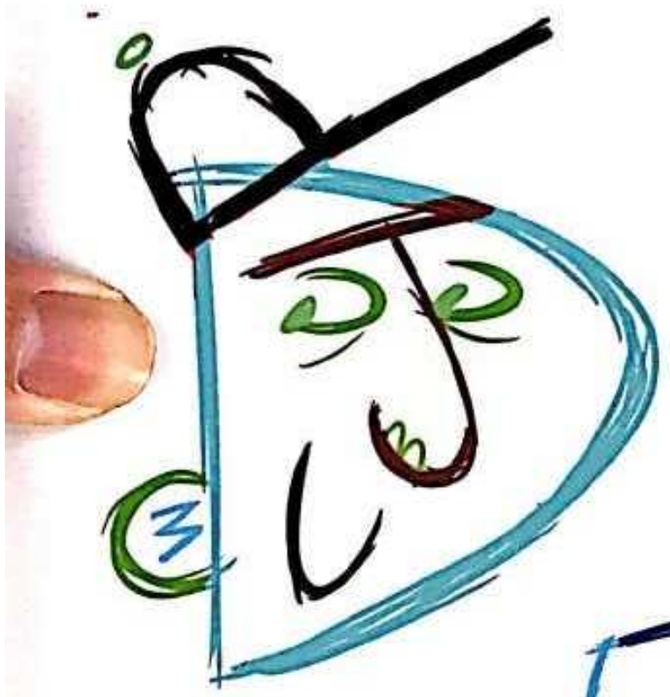
5) Draw your chin *above* line #4.

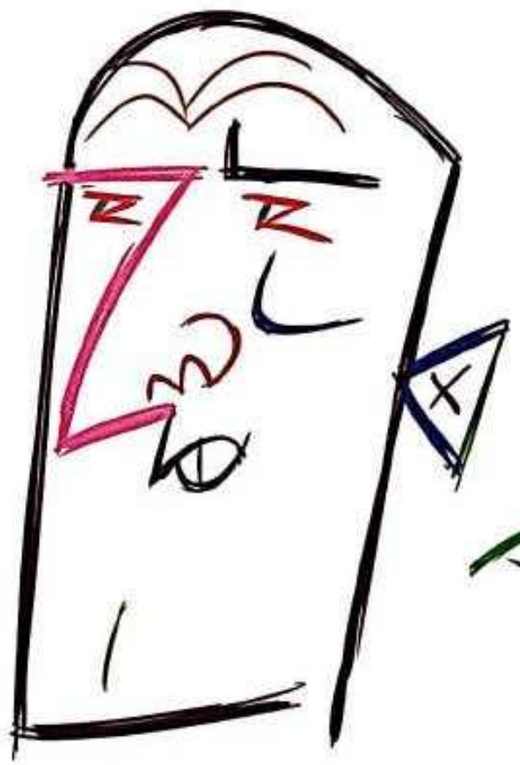
6) Place your bottom lip *between* lines #3 and #4.

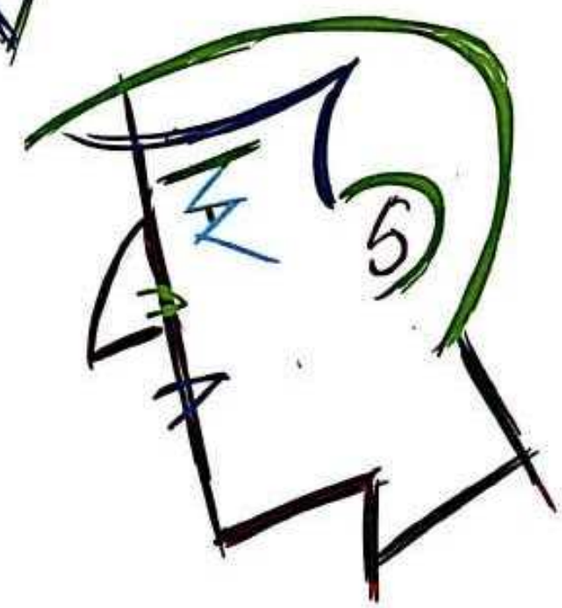


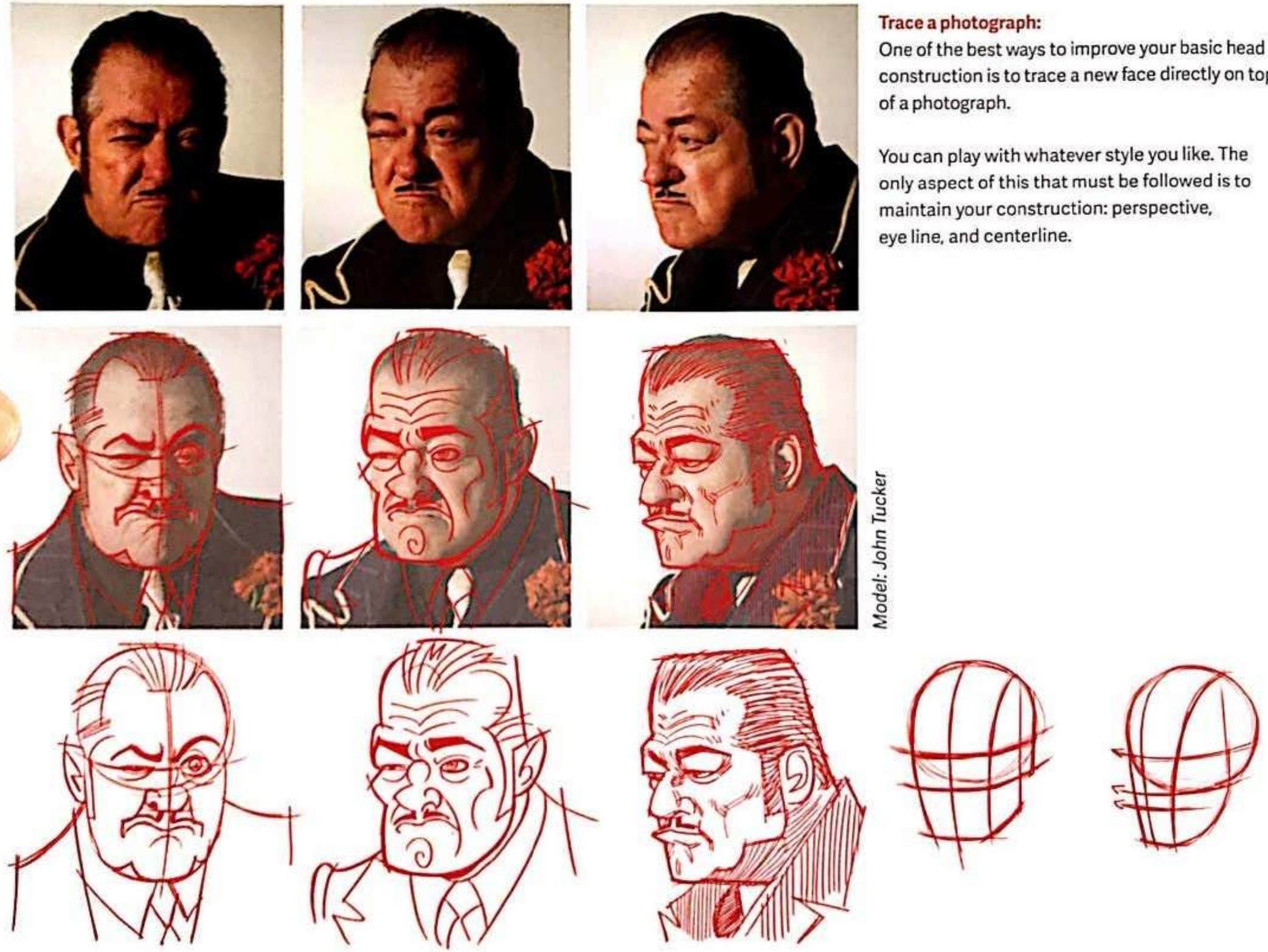
Practice the alphabet:

Being familiar with shapes of the English alphabet will act as a guide to help inspire designs. Use a combination of letters to create a variety of characters. Each color of the alphabet coordinates to the shapes on the faces. Try arranging these letters and be sure to contrast the sizes so that you can create clear definite lines.







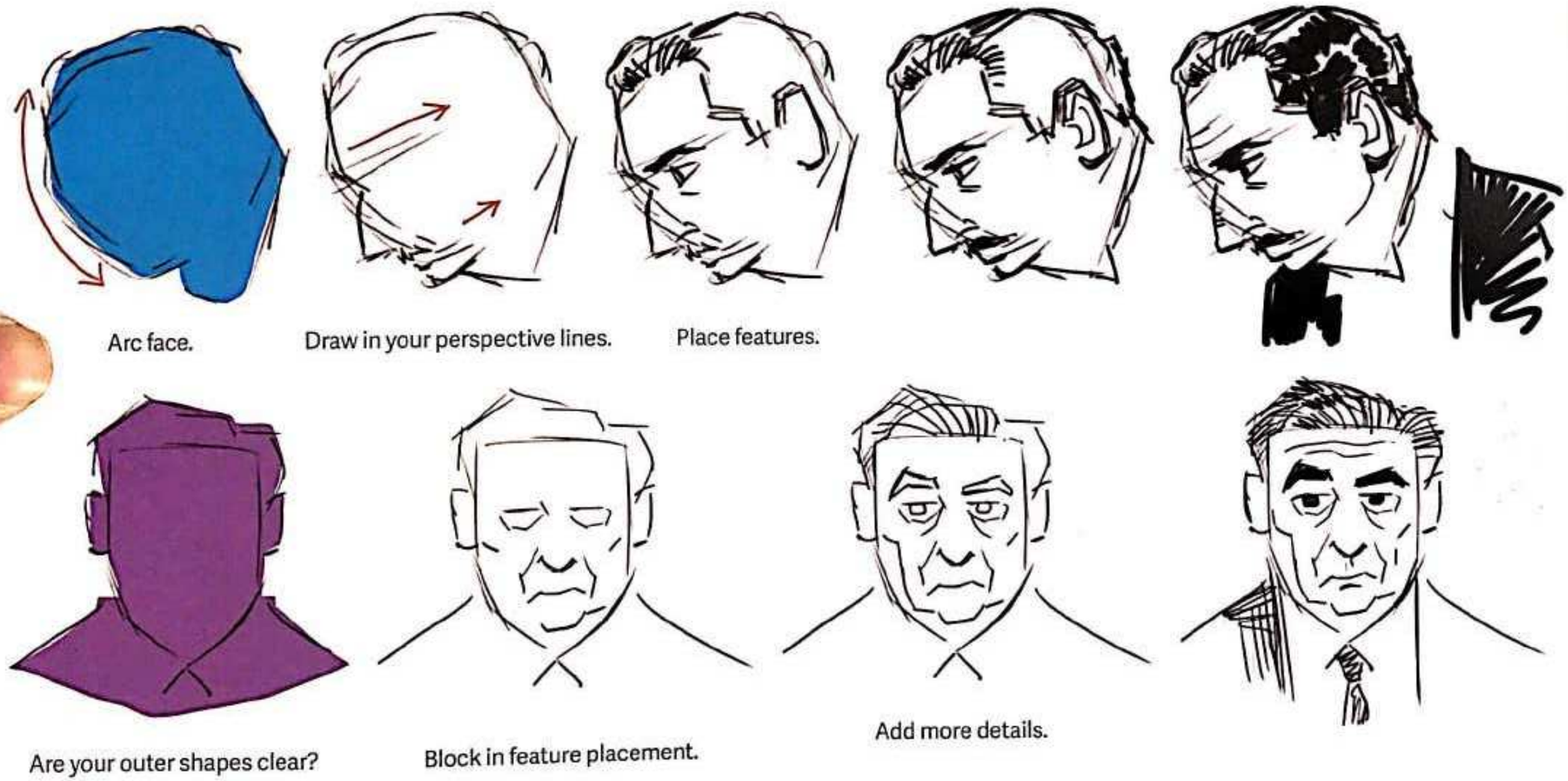


Model: John Tucker

Trace a photograph:
One of the best ways to improve your basic head construction is to trace a new face directly on top of a photograph.

You can play with whatever style you like. The only aspect of this that must be followed is to maintain your construction: perspective, eye line, and centerline.

Draw from the outside in:
Drawing with this approach will help you develop the habit of blocking in your masses and not attacking the details right away.



Draw out rough sketch. Remember to *draw through* your shapes.

Decide the line thickness; this was cleaned up digitally using a thin brush. Now reduce your roughs opacity and create a new layer, or place a sheet over it on a light table. I like to draw all the way through my lines, as you can see. It helps me make a more dynamic, clean line.

Now erase the excess lines on your character.

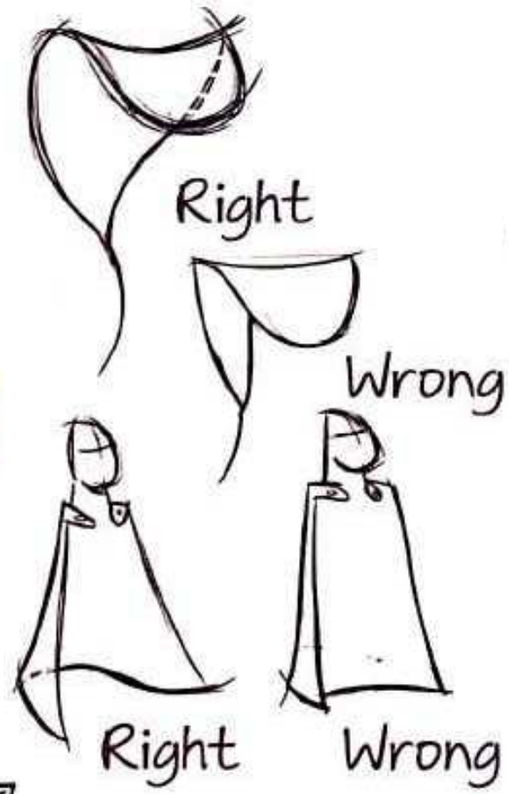
This cleanup I did with more of a thick and thin line involved. It takes practice, but be sure to keep your line weight consistent.

Here I chose a thick
the outside and a t
one on the inside. T
cleanup line was d
through and then e
like the third drawi

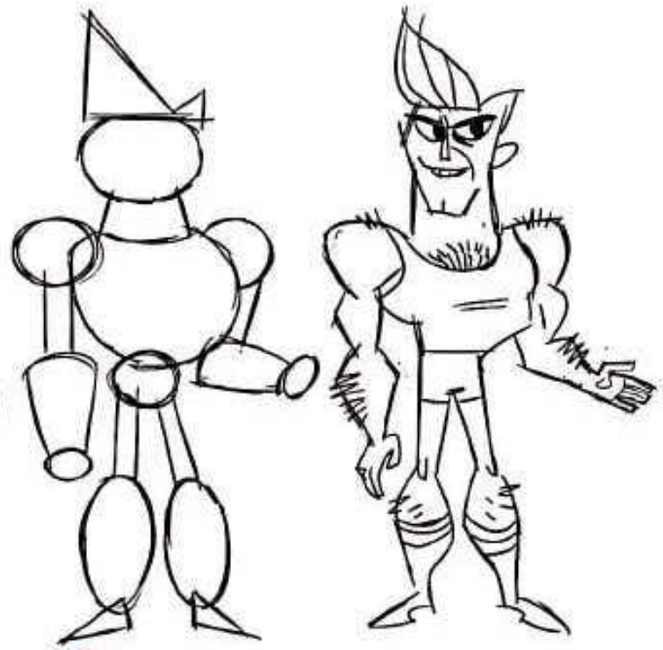
Drawing Through

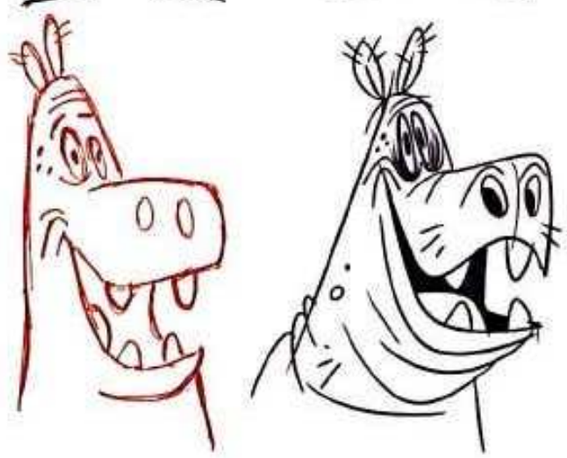
This concept was the one thing I wish I was aware of at a younger age. I did not know or understand this concept, and, because of it, my drawing fell apart in appeal and construction. By observing and practicing the techniques ahead, you will find that it will eventually become habit.

I encourage you to trace over real-life images; it will help you discover the arcs and forms of many subjects, and you will then apply these concepts to everything, thereby improving your skills.

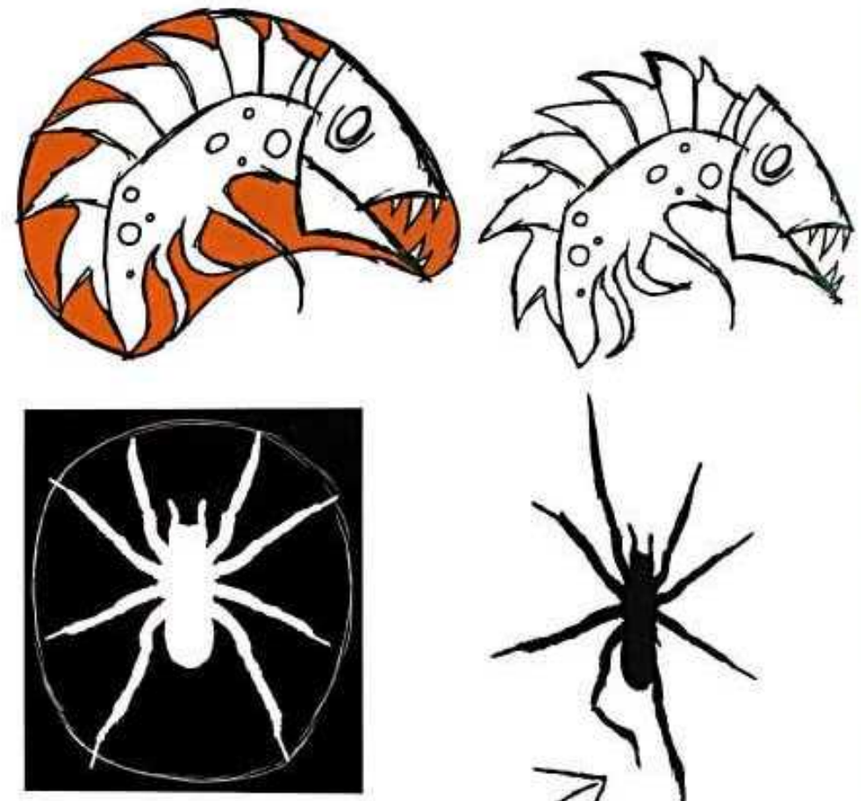


Overlapping
When drawing fabric, such as a cape or a flag, be sure to *draw through*.





Not drawn through
Shapes that are not drawn through lack construction and appeal. The sketch on the left appears flat and lacks life.

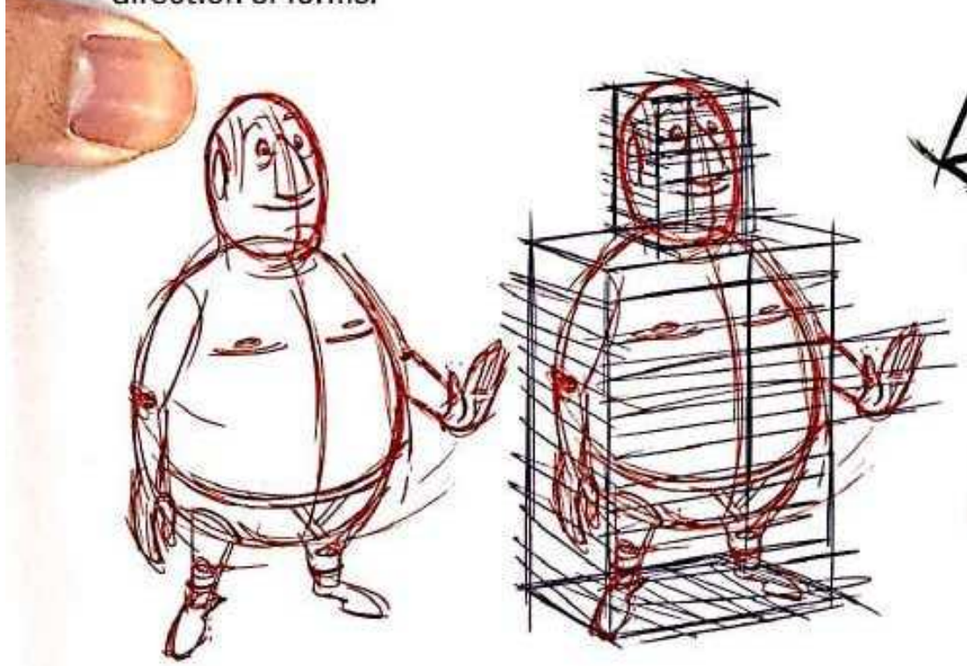


Shape blocking
A spider is a perfect example of seeing a continuous rhythm from one element to the next.

This one is still a spider but doesn't feel as well designed.

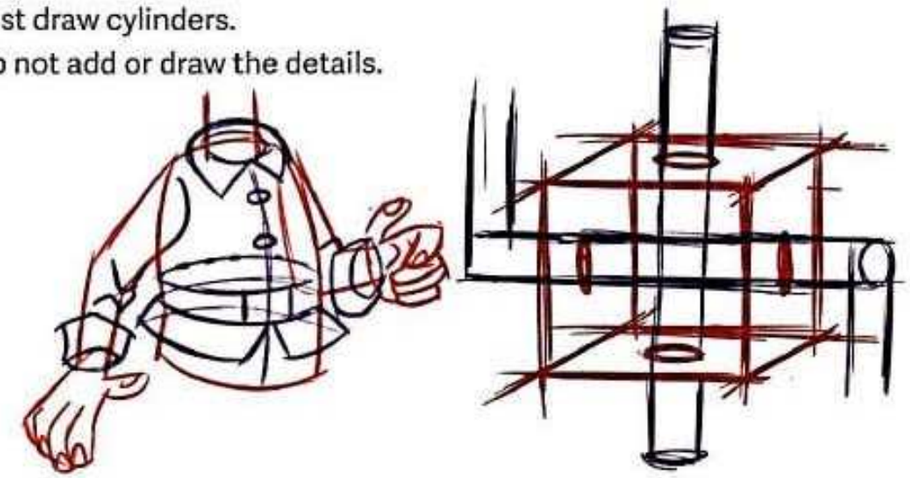
Model: John Tucker

One of the greatest ways you can practice, in order to get a better understanding of forms, is to trace over a photo showcasing some form of action. You will discover through overlap and foreshortening the direction of forms.

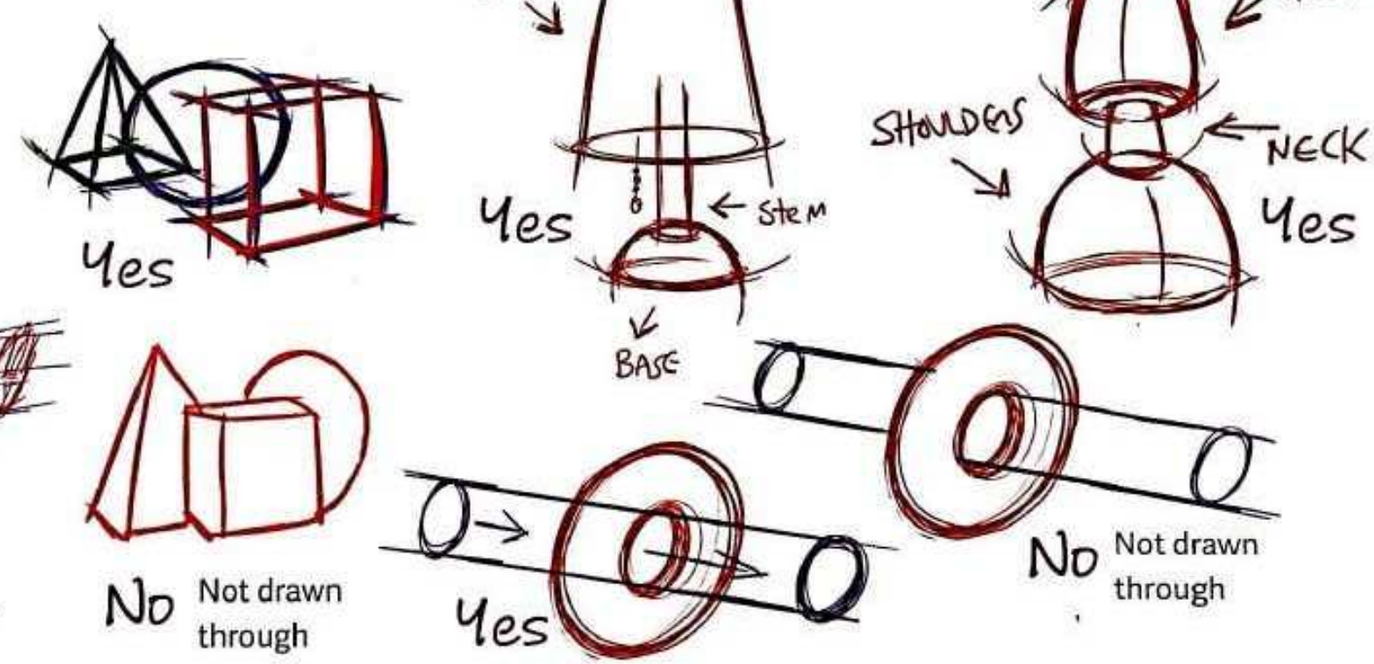


Drawing through your shapes will give you a greater understanding of your character in perspective.

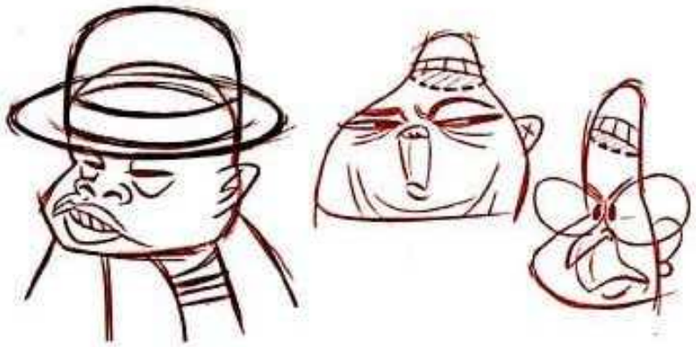
Just draw cylinders.
Do not add or draw the details.



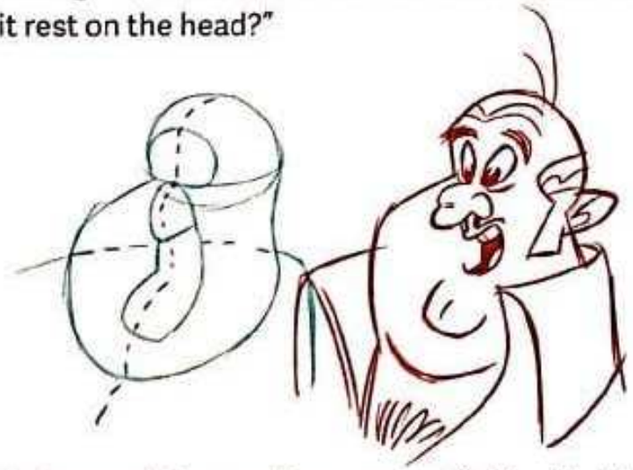
Draw Through



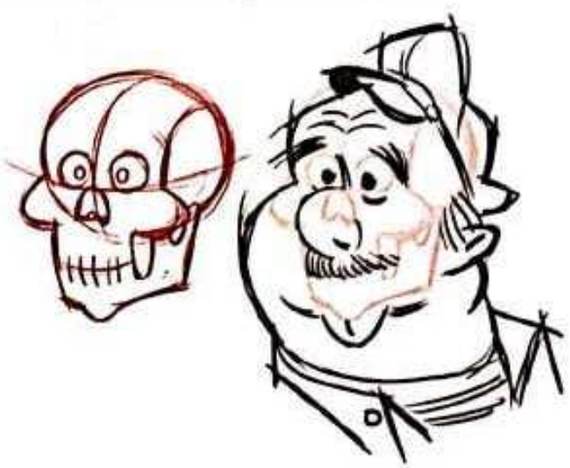
Think of a donut and a tube. How would you *draw through* the donut hole? The tube would not shift.



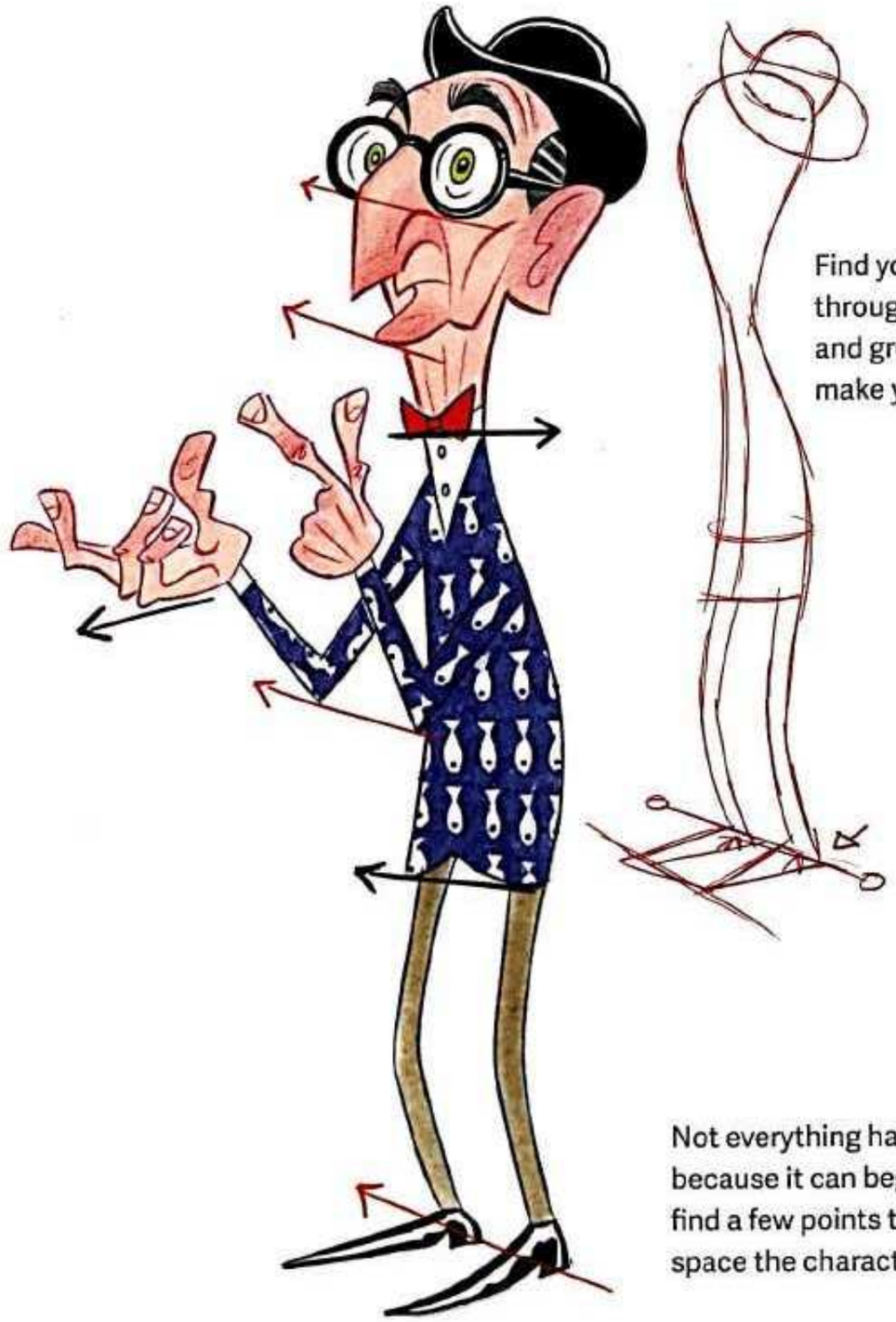
Drawing through your shape is as basic as simply asking, "What is underneath the hat, and how does it rest on the head?"



Follow each form as if you were stitching it right through the center of each shape.



What is underneath the skin and muscles?



Find your shape. Draw all the way through. Establish your perspective and ground plane if you don't wish to make your characters appear too flat.

Not everything has to face in the same direction because it can begin to lose some appeal. But find a few points that at least give us a hint of the space the character is occupying.

When drawing a hat on your character, the same principles apply: draw *all the way through.*

In this example, the characters are wearing baseball caps. Notice the two shapes to consider.

Shape 1) The cap itself fits the form of the skull.

Shape 2) The bill of the cap will curve in a certain way.

Curved

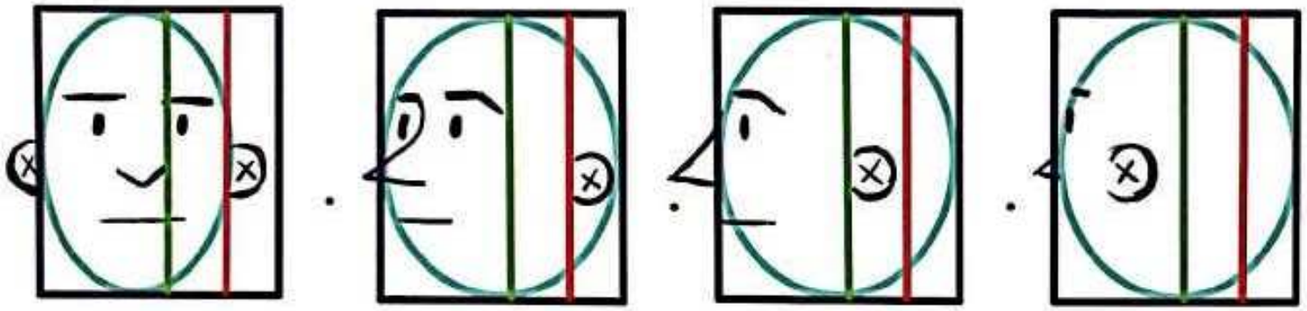
Flat

Think of a duck's bill.

Turnaround Tips

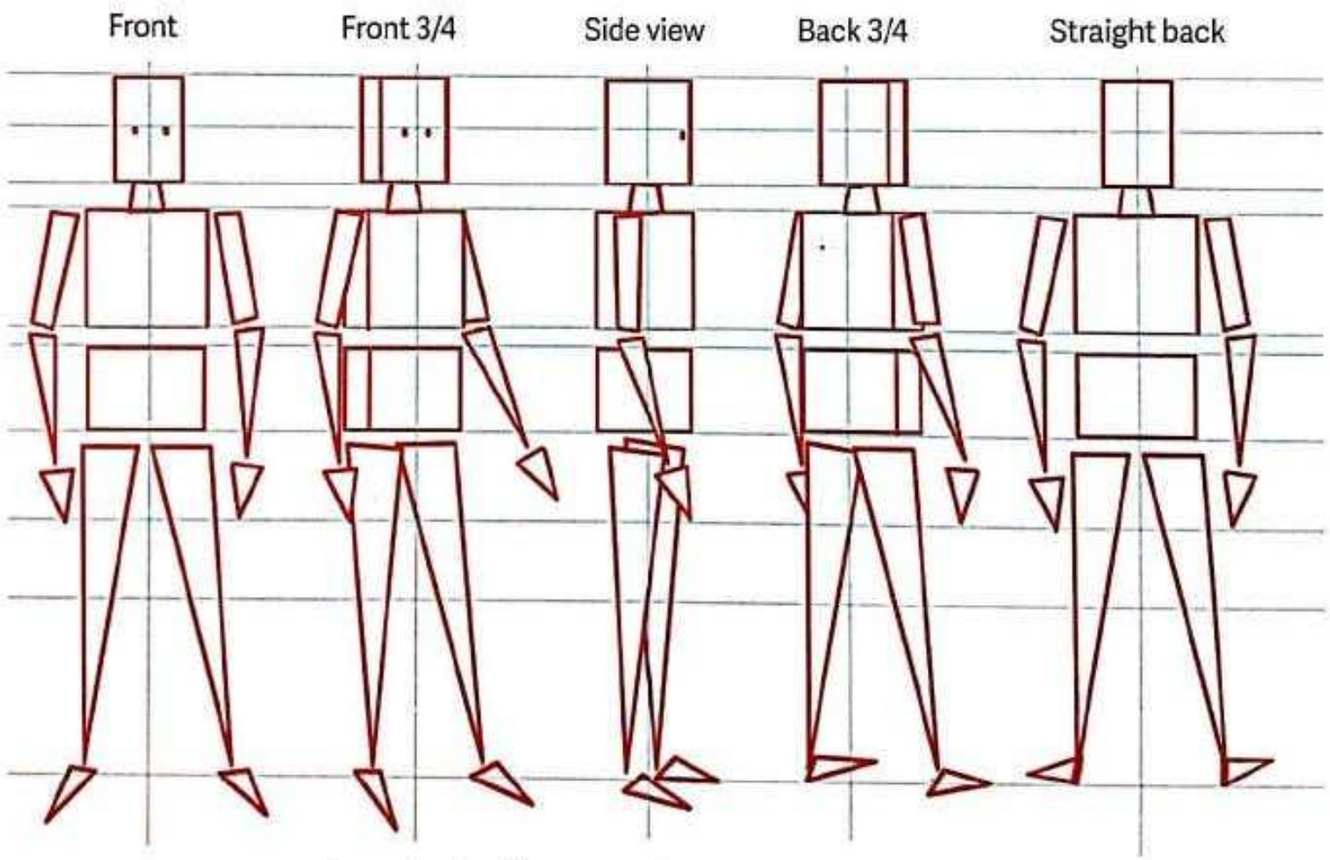
Turnarounds are essential to the production pipeline; they also offer up great reference if you wish to animate or illustrate your own property. Turnarounds are created to answer questions—to understand what information is needed from all views.

This will help the storyboard artist and the animator make good, informed decisions. In the following illustrations, you will see my approach to them, as well as discovering some shortcuts and how to make the correct choices.



Maintaining your volumes is the most essential ingredient in creating your turnaround. In real life, the volume of the head shape will appear thinner in volume on the front view.

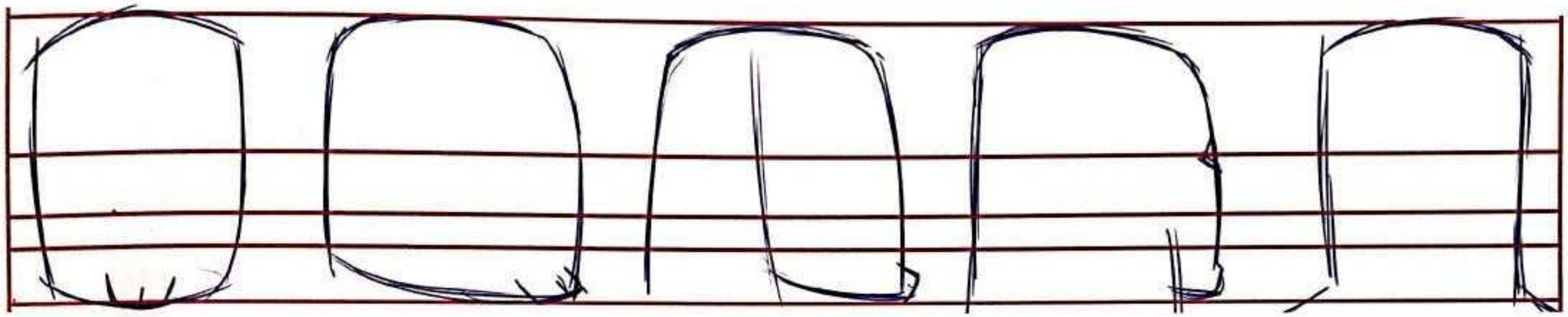
Before you begin your turn, establish your ground plane. This is where the back heels rest in all the angles. On the side view and the back 3/4, place the back leg heel along the ground plane.

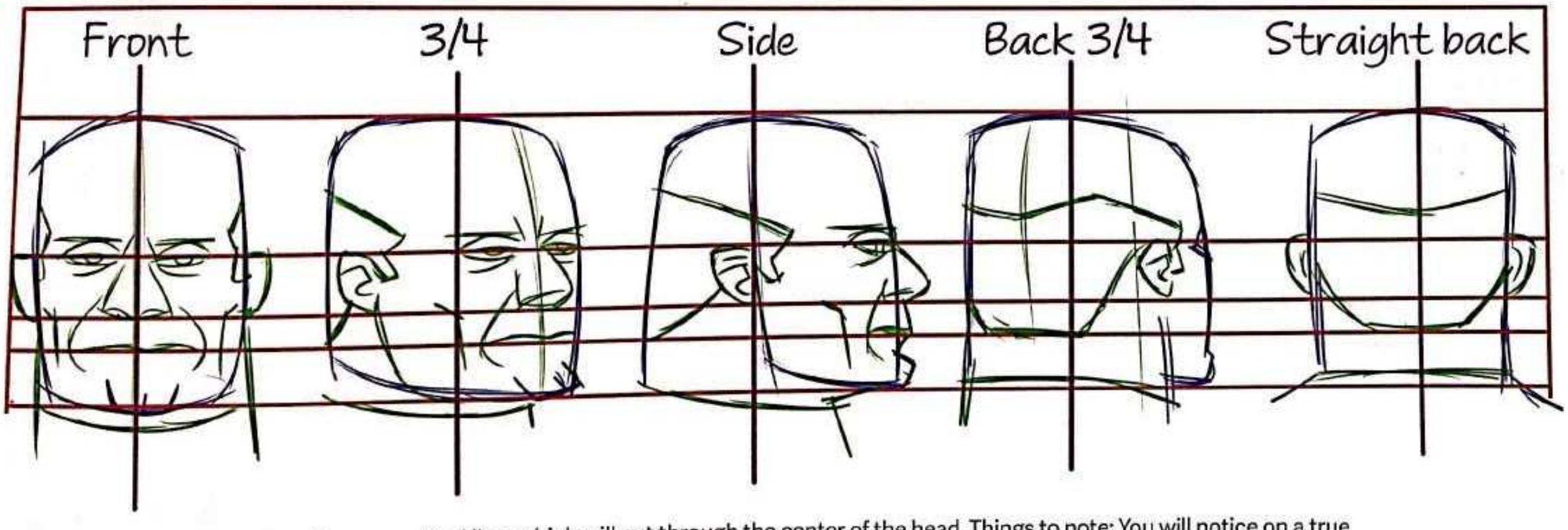


This is called the five-point turn. If you are called upon to create a three-point turn, you do the first three, and four-point: the first four.

In understanding your volumes, you simply want to keep your shapes similar throughout the design.

With head turnarounds, first establish the volumes of the head itself. Find your eye line, nose line, and mouth line through horizontal lines.



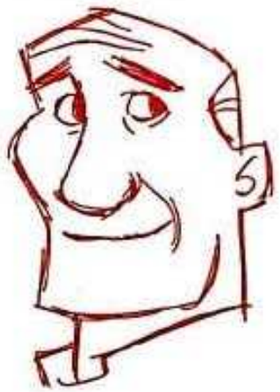


Now draw in your vertical line, which will cut through the center of the head. Things to note: You will notice on a true 3/4 view that the corner of the eye will butt up against the center line. On the side view it will be in line with the ear.

Use real photos to help you learn *truth*. The head can be roughly measured in all angles as the same shape box to maintain your volumes.

The front view will be a little thinner. The side view may appear a little longer. Notice in the 3/4 eyes that they don't maintain the same distance; this is simply due to perspective.

Model: John Tucker



Finding my profile off the front 3/4 view.

Copy eyes, nose, brow, mouth, and jaw.

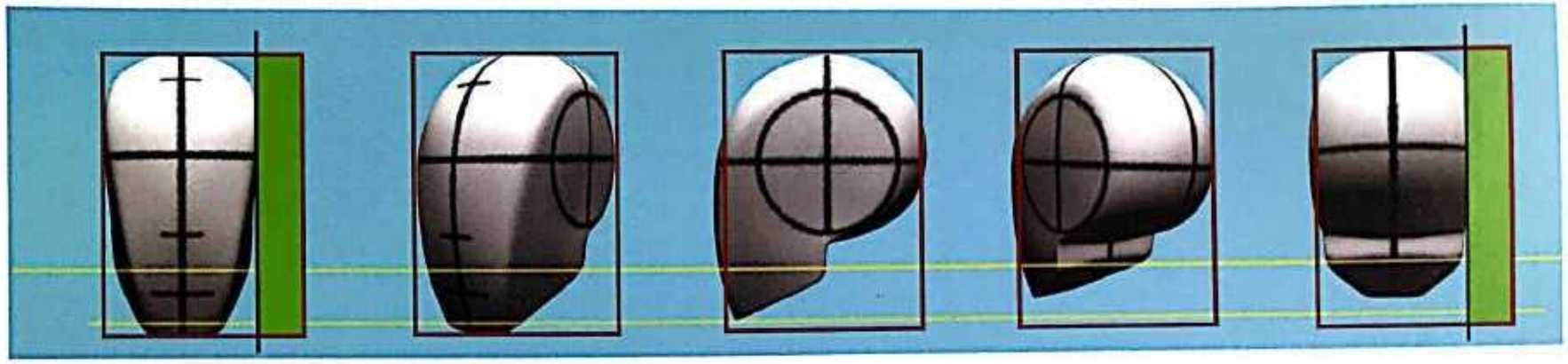
Drag nose bridge to edge of front 3/4 view.

Erase elements and add elements to create the starting point.

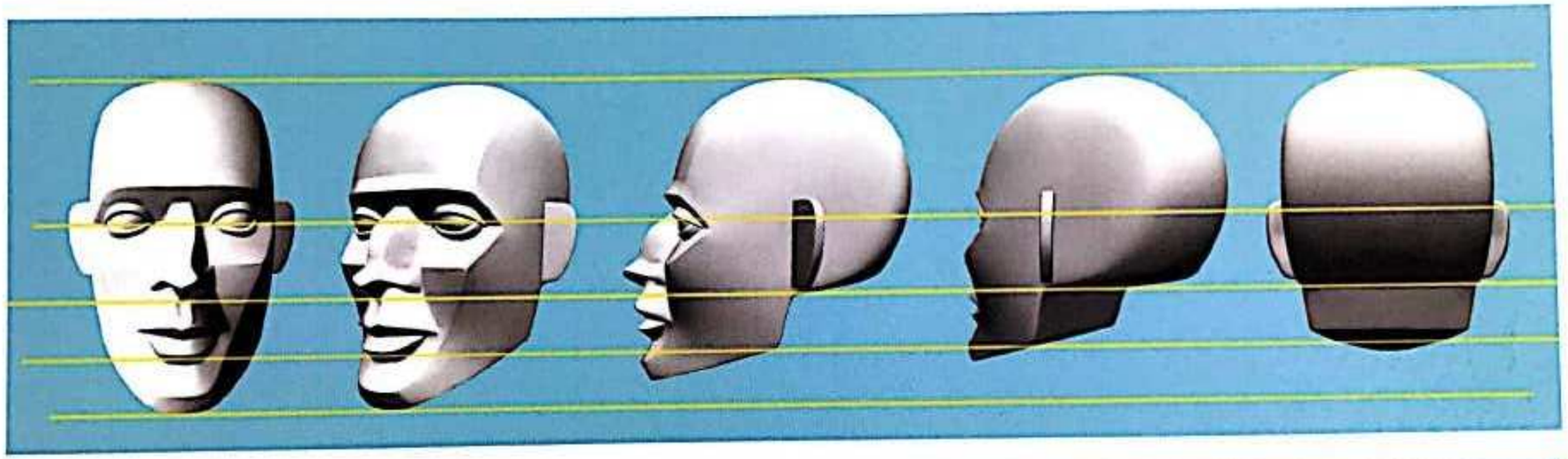
Original profile

Slight changes move the eye forward and keep more of a V shape in the eye. Move cheek line and sideburn forward. Pull out back of head to match length of front 3/4 view.

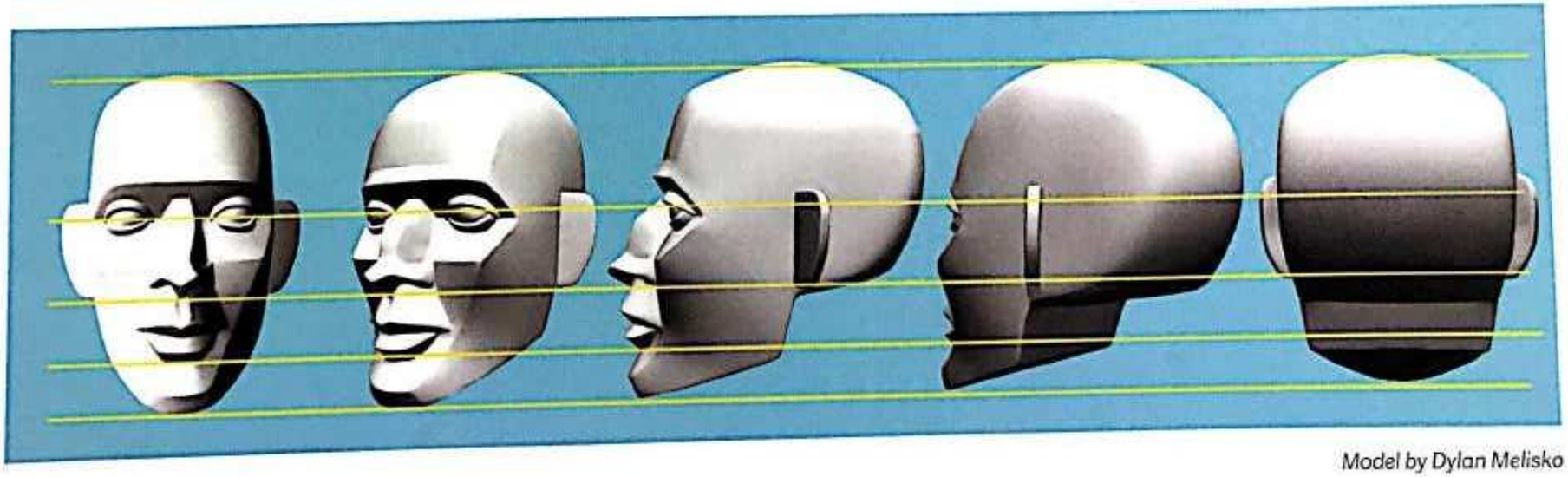
Looking at a real form in space, we see again how the front and straight back get thinner. Also note how the chin will diminish due to perspective of depth.



Perspective is making the chin feel shorter.

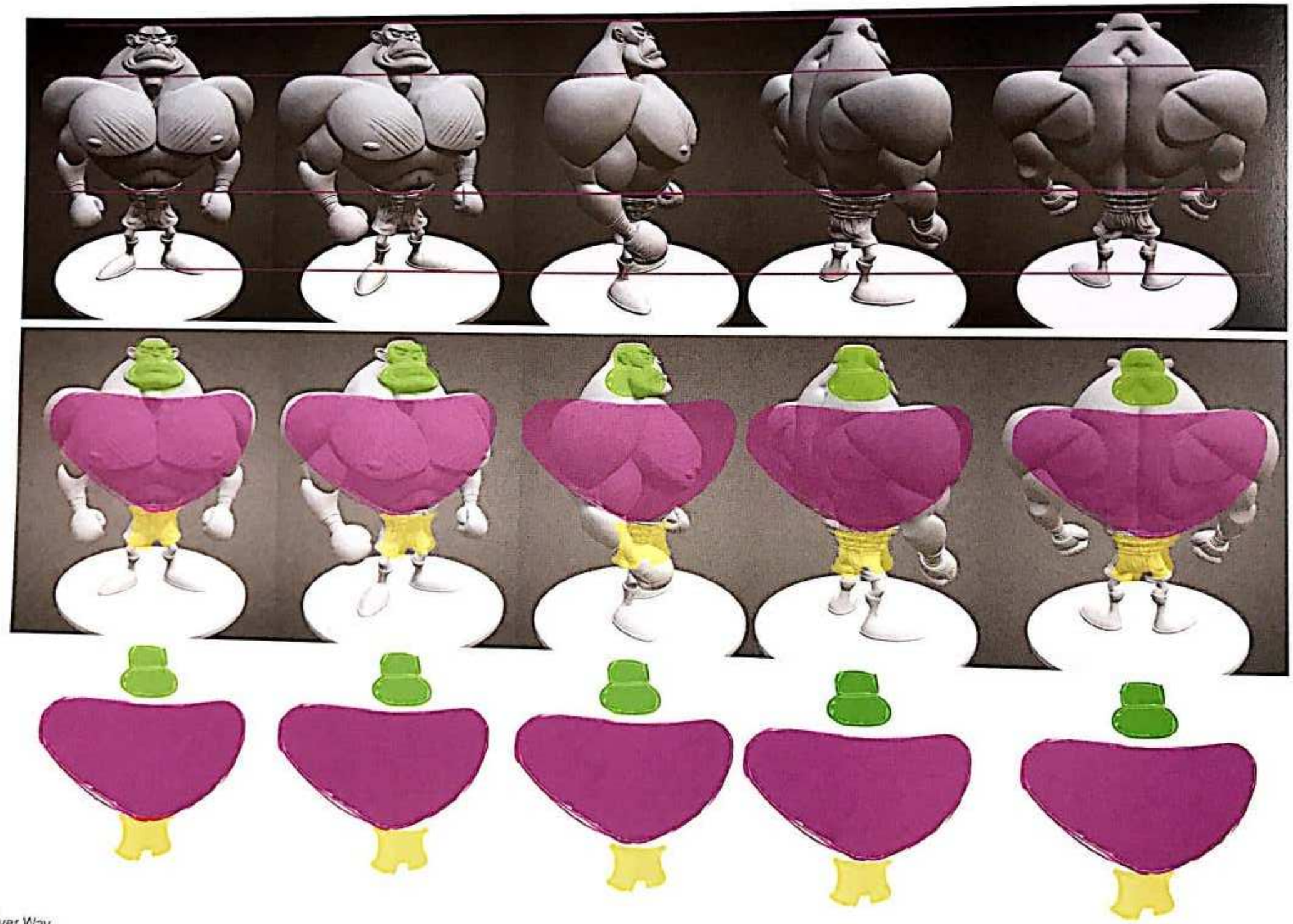


For an animation head turnaround, we want to do what is called a "cheat" in the industry. Here I made the side view, back 3/4, and back view a little larger in order to keep my horizontal landmarks.



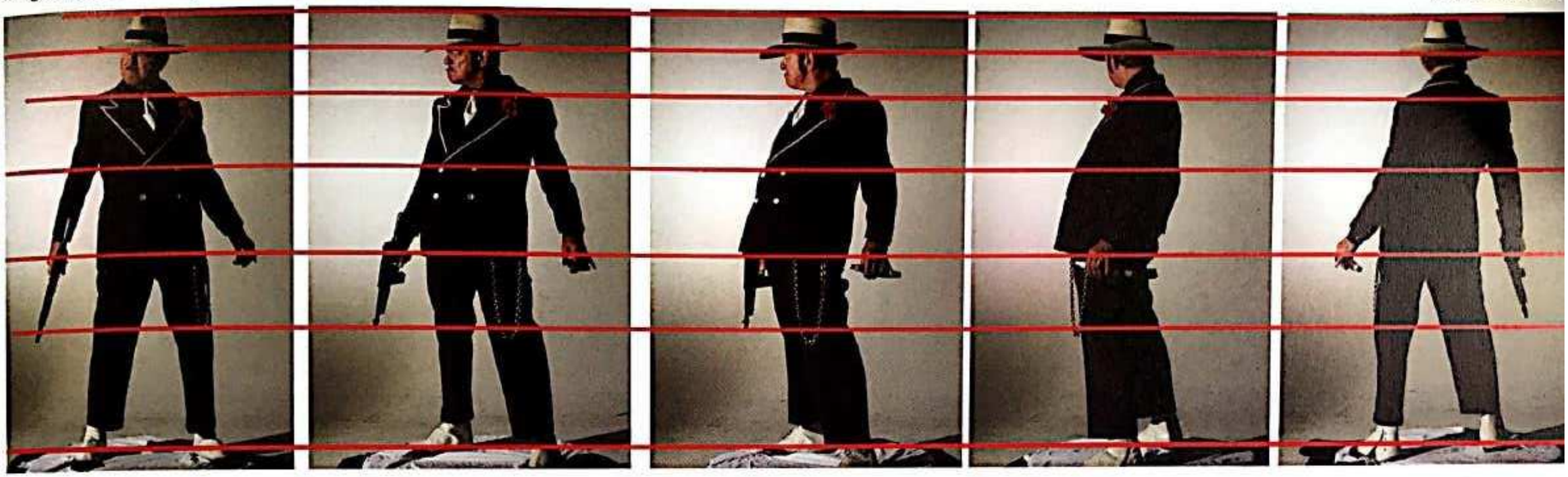
Model by Dylan Melisko

For any turnaround, remember to find your horizontal landmark points. You can have as many as you need, depending on the complexity of your character. You will never go too far astray within your turn if you make your volumes comparable in size.



Images from *PoseBook by Silver* smartphone app.

Model: John Tuc



Using a real, full-body, turnaround photo reference, I am able to observe how volumes are effected in a *true* turnaround. We can observe through the green torso zone that they are pretty consistent. On the blue leg zone, we see where to maintain the thickness of the legs as they turn in space in this particular pose.

In addition to having photo reference, it is useful to have a toy or sculpture that you can turn around in space, allowing you to see and explore all angles in reality.

Here we have another example of maintaining volumes. We can see that the head fits nicely within each circle, and the body's mass fits within the square.

Let There Be Color

Color is approached in many different ways. I feel there is no right or wrong way as long as the end result clearly expresses what it is you are trying to achieve. If your goal is photo-realism, make sure you fully understand the principles behind that. The understanding of light would be a necessity. I feel the best practice to consider when coloring is much like the design formula: block in your shapes and detail it later.

The goal for coloring your character is to help clarify a design palette as well as to offer a finished look for print.

My choices for color come from reference, especially if I'm indicating a specific time period or any type of uniform. In terms of easy tips, here are a few: the brighter you make the color, the more it pops, and more saturation can add mood. If I want to convey something that feels dark, gloomy, and evil, I will go deeper in tone; and for happy, friendlier types, I will keep it brighter. These are not firm rules by any means. One trick that helps me with my color palette is to look at tropical fish. The colors are balanced, serve a purpose, and complement each other.

Cleanup line

On new layer underneath line art, block in base colors.

Create a new color layer, bucket fill with color of choice, and set layer to multiply above base colors.

In this section I will take you through step-by-step examples to demonstrate the different ways you can approach the coloring process. Try each on your own, combine steps from various ones, and have fun with seeing the results you achieve!

Blue layer is now on top of base color layer.

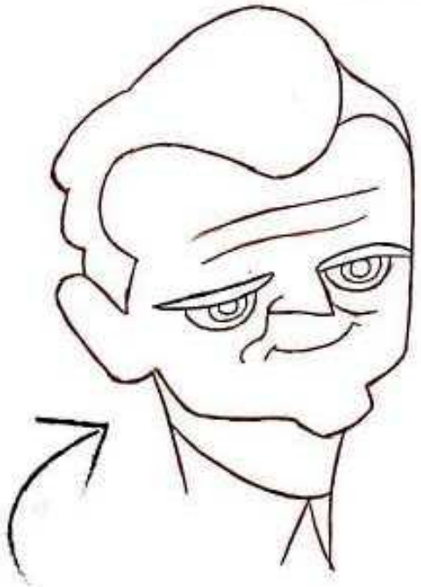
Erase areas you don't want.

Add background color.
Watch your values so they don't compete.

TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Coloring traditionally with marker and colored pencil is one technique you may use, but it is in your best interest to find many ways and explore.

Begin with a light, rough sketch using a pencil that erases. I prefer Col-Erase pencils.



Now take a regular colored pencil of your choice that does not erase, and draw directly over your blue line sketch; and then erase the blue line. I do this because sometimes I will lose the energy of a sketch if I try to trace it onto another paper. Finally, lay in your flat marker colors of choice.

And then, with a red, Col-Erase, erasable pencil, add shadows. You can use a white colored pencil to add desired highlights.

DIGITAL APPROACHES

The Three-Layer Technique

Layers

Rough image	Cleanup line	Color

Rough out your character. Clean up as loose or as tight as desired. This will all depend on whether you are going to make your illustration appear more painted or more line-based for animation, comics, etc.

Perspective oval

This is the color with top layer line removed. Your complexity will determine your layer count. I typically have just three layers unless I am doing my shadow layer.

Be sure to contrast any background layer so your values don't clash and your character doesn't get lost in the background.

The Four-Layer Technique

Layers

Line art	Main color	Shadow color	Background

Step 1

Create your cleaned-up art.

Step 2

Block in your colors, and remove your cleanup line.

Step 3

Duplicate your color layer. Darken the hue/saturation, and then erase your desired highlights.

Step 4

Add a background element to pop out your image.

To Achieve Texture

Texture on your design is not always required or necessary—what it can do is add a little more feeling or substance, and three-dimensionality, versus a flat, polished look with simple, bold colors like you may find in primetime, animated shows.

1) Color each character using one layer with Photoshop brush of choice. Here I used watercolor brushes.

2) Duplicate color layer in Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation, and colorize to choice.

3) Reduce colored layer two opacity, and erase where needed using the watercolor brush.

The real goal is to experiment; try things nobody has ever shown you. Art is about seeing and creating new ways.

These silhouettes are not 100 percent readable. They do not have to be as long as you are seeing a clear, iconic shape or pattern. The goal is *clarity*. I have made certain to arrange the height and width of each character to feel different. This involves body language (posture) in order to give us a distinctive feeling to each character.

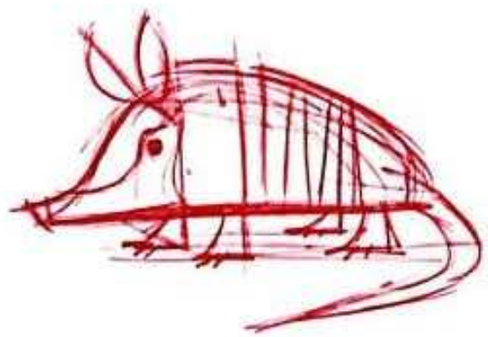
Making such color choices as the good guys slightly lighter and the bad guys a little darker can give an instant read of your characters.

You can create an arrangement of colors by adjusting the hues.

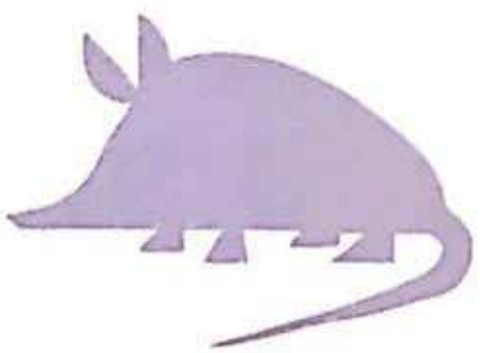
HYBRID APPROACH

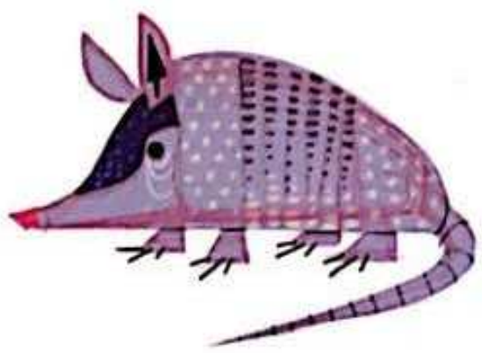
This approach is achieved when you take your traditional artwork, scan it into your computer, and start adding the color. It also comes from cleaning up your work in one program and importing your lines to the next for color. I personally will always begin with my line before I add color, mainly because I want to know what the character is already.

Begin with a base shape for your concept.



Is the image clear? Does it read?





I have now created the patterns desired within the shape in order to design the armadillo.

With that said, I will also block in the colors first and then build the character off those shapes, which is also an effective way. Remember, art is about experimentation, trial and error, and the discovery of what technique feels natural to you. If it is painstaking every time, don't do it. I use the approach I do because I don't consider myself a color guy, and I'm always looking to simplify my process but create an appealing effect.

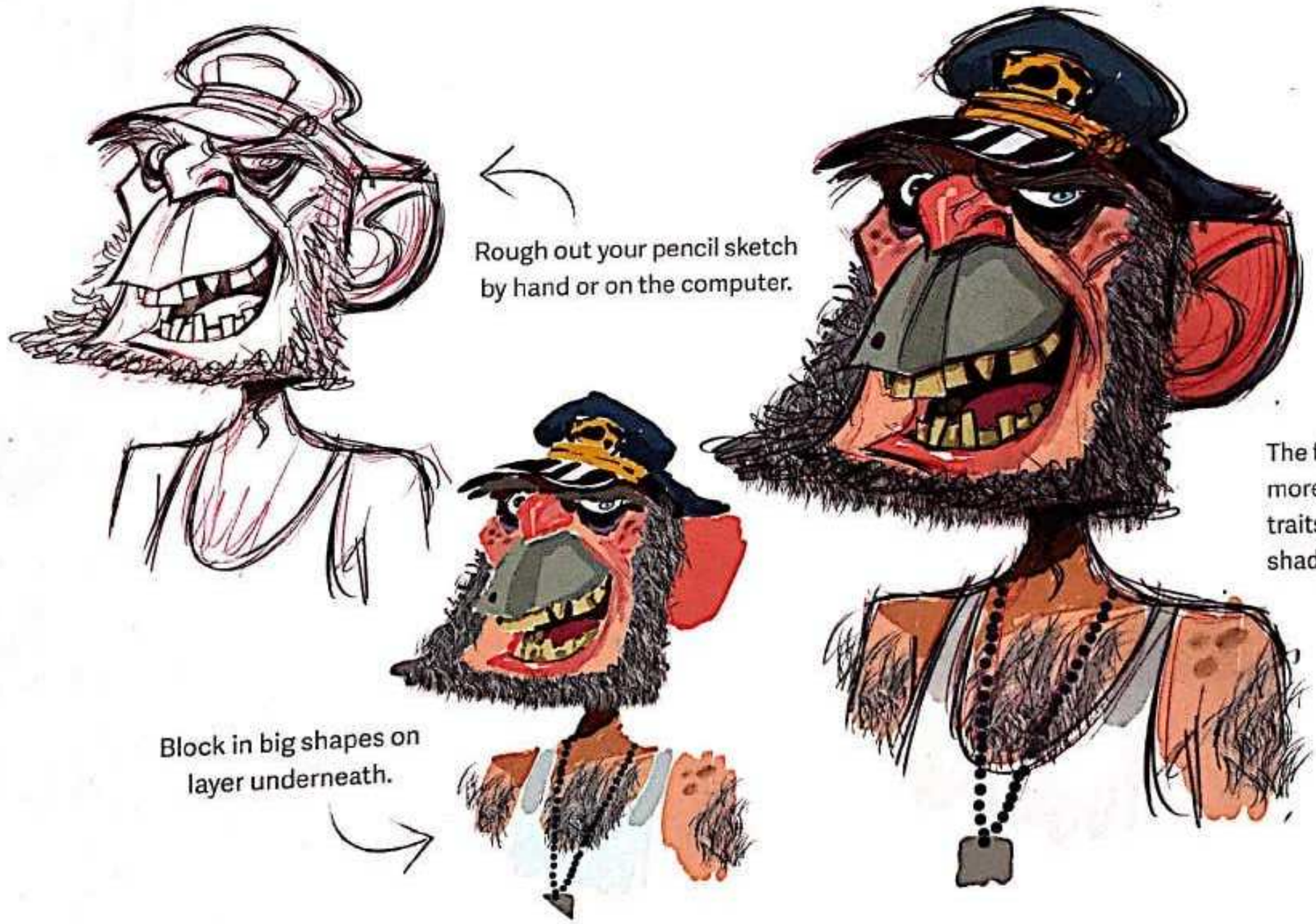
Using color to develop your design is a technique that should be used because you understand *how* to draw and now wish to develop it in color—not because you can't draw or design in your pencil phase.

QUICK COLOR CONCEPTS

This approach is simply about speed; it does not or should not devalue your work, but offers a quick, loose pass so you can move on. It is a way to quickly access your character's color palette.

When creating these, I am using just two layers: the top one, which is the sketch, and the bottom one, which is just the color with slight shading to give the drawing some texture and form.

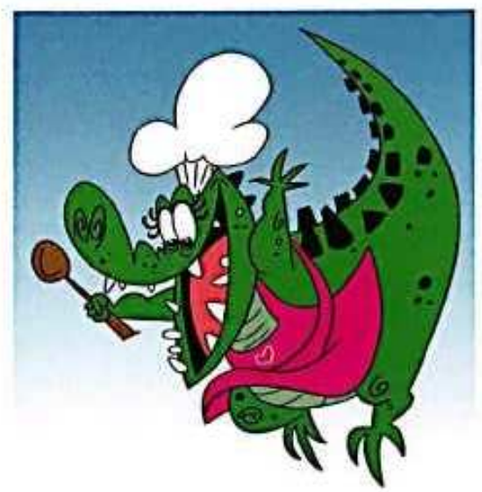
When working on a production and designing the characters, if time allows, I will color them in, just as a concept that the color stylist can choose to follow or ignore. I do it mainly to see if I can help balance the image further through placement of color. I have also found that sometimes when I focus on color in the beginning, and not just show the client my drawings, they get more focused and distracted by the color and forget to discuss the design, which is more important.



To Color or Not to Color?

Students often ask if their designs should all be colored in a portfolio. The answer is no: You want to show variety, and if your color isn't strong, it will affect your drawing. Maybe you are better at color than designing. That is perfectly okay. This means you can get a job coloring other designers' work.

These would be considered color concept roughs. They are still somewhat loose in idea and finish. I typically use this approach once the clients have seen some roughs. It is true that color adds a design element that may not be seen in a black-and-white sketch and may be required to get your point across.



Color, texture, and shape proportions are among the elements that can instantly determine the style of a show, which is necessary if you hope to make the look of a show distinctive from other shows. This is why showcasing a variety in your portfolio will be essential. What style comes down to is individual expression. You may have the opportunity to create your own that you will use on all projects, or you will be required to draw a new style on every project. Keep all this in mind when developing one.

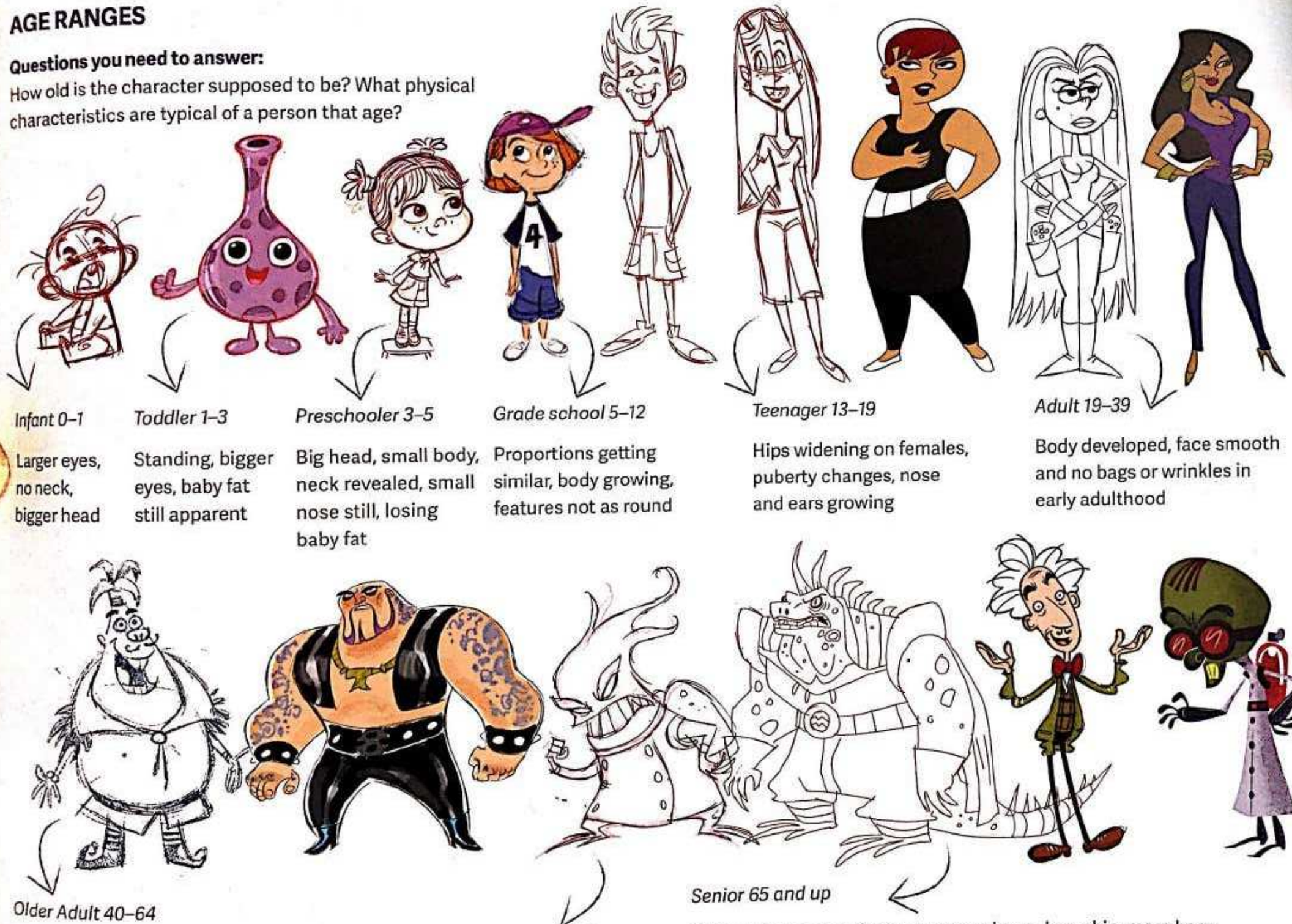
Wrapping up our section on color, here are some helpful reminders: Be sure to keep your values clear, and don't over render. Color can help lead the eye, and it is for this reason we don't want to overcompensate by making every color stand out. Observation plays a large role in color; keep your eyes open and observe so that when you next need to use an idea you saw, you can apply it.

CLEANUP AND COLOR **EXERCISES**

- Find a cleaned-up character of any style. Make a very light copy of it so you can just about see it. Place the original by its side, and try to copy the cleanup line.
- Pick an artist's line you love and grab some tracing paper, and trace directly over a cleaned-up design. Then try it again on your own design. What did you learn?
- Watch animated shows, and copy some of the color palettes.
- Seek out artists' works, and observe their color choices and use of textures.
- Grab images of tropical fish, and use their color palettes on your design.
- Experiment, experiment, experiment.

AGE RANGES

Questions you need to answer:
How old is the character supposed to be? What physical characteristics are typical of a person that age?



Infant 0–1

Larger eyes, no neck, bigger head

Toddler 1–3

Standing, bigger eyes, baby fat still apparent

Preschooler 3–5

Big head, small body, neck revealed, small nose still, losing baby fat

Grade school 5–12

Proportions getting similar, body growing, features not as round

Teenager 13–19

Hips widening on females, puberty changes, nose and ears growing

Adult 19–39

Body developed, face smooth and no bags or wrinkles in early adulthood

Older Adult 40–64

Hair loss, weight established, facial hair, bags, and wrinkles

Bushier features, slouching of body

Senior 65 and up

White hair, less hair, larger noses and ears, less chin, more bags under eyes, more bone structure revealed

Here, the girl is around two to three years old, with no neck and a higher waistline.

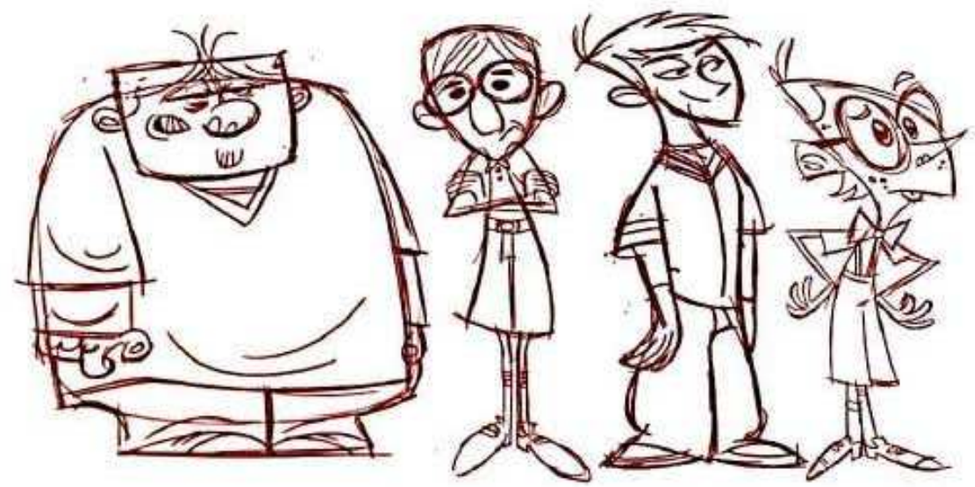
Here, the girl looks older due to a revealed neck, elongated body, smaller head, and lower waist.

Observe how sensitive placement can be in regards to aging a character. A larger forehead, fuller cheeks, and more or less of a chin will affect your character's age.

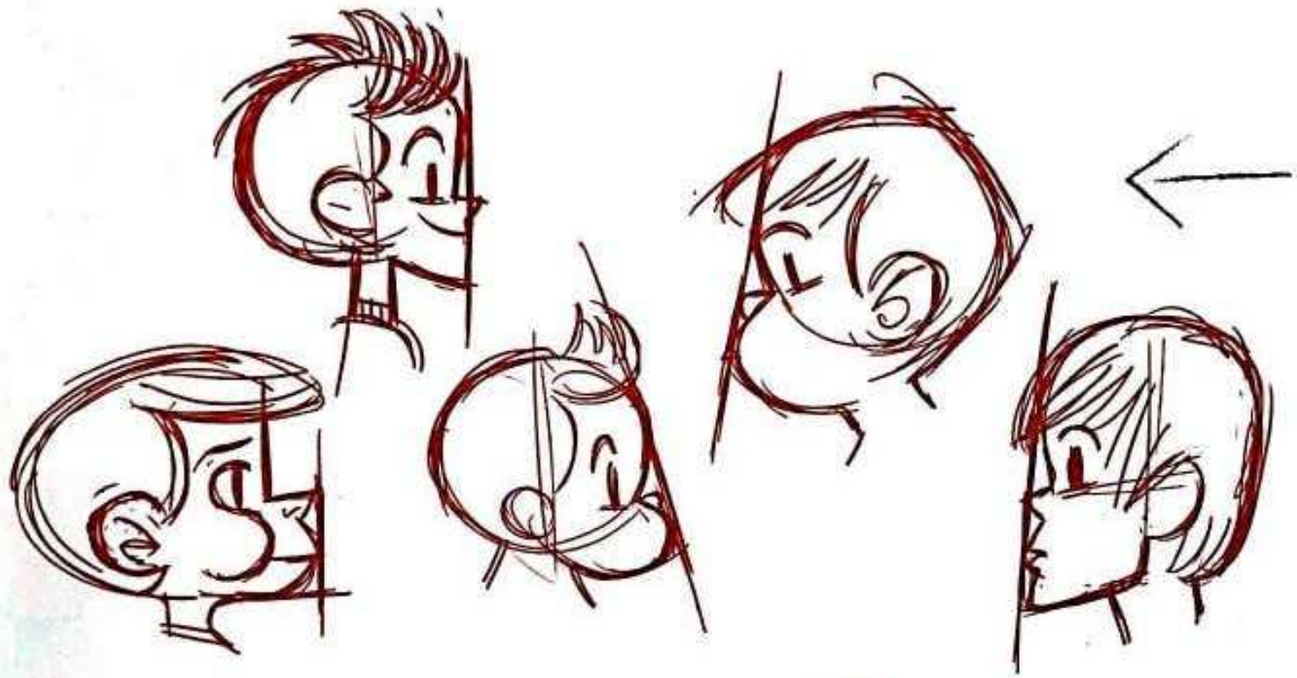
Rounder features indicate youth.

Sharper features add age.

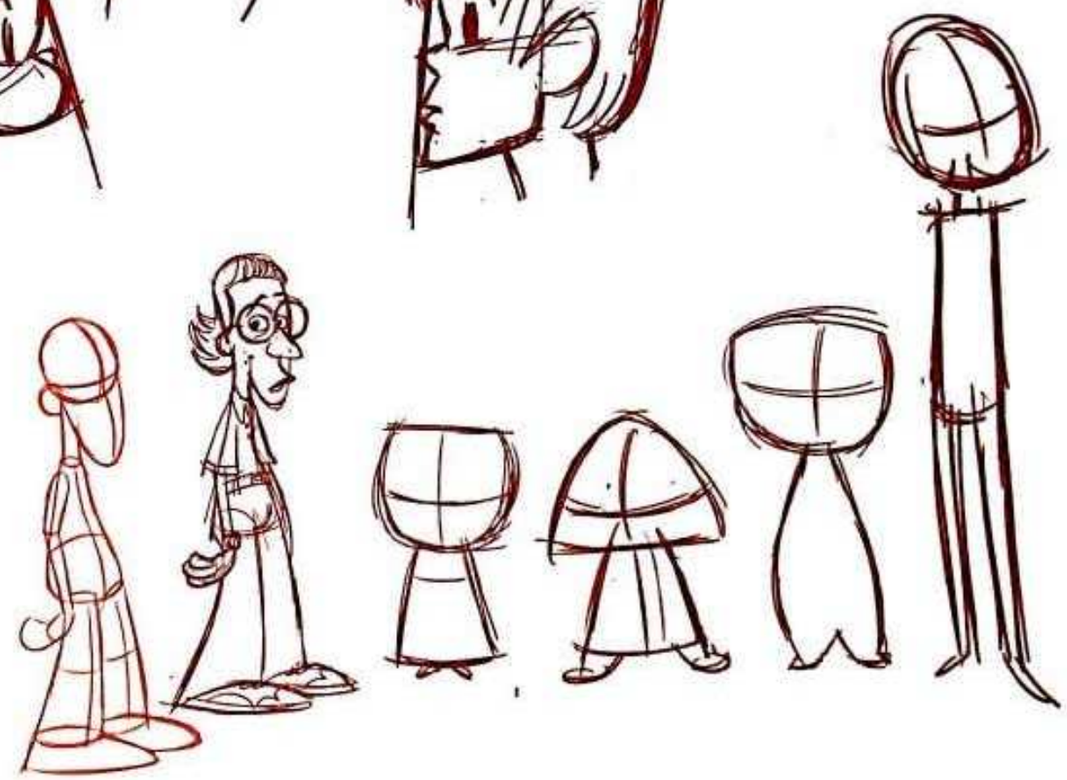
If my task is to design an 8- to 11-year-old lion, I need to consider head-to-body proportions, show a neck, and keep eyes larger.



What types of body language might a kid convey? Dumpy, insecure, or confident.



Pulling the cheeks out can keep your face feeling younger, showing baby fat. Flattening the face can add age, showing the skin clinging more to the skull, with less baby fat.



Start out with drawing the simple shapes of a body, and notice how thinning out and lengthening the neck ages the character.

Always consider what your forms are built of, regardless of style.

THE THREE KID FACTORS

Once you have the child's basic face and body set, it's time to think about what other important factors make a kid a kid: clothing, gestures, and hairstyles. Having kids of my own, I know the importance of having the right clothes. Kids dress like their friends and want to fit in—not all, but the majority. The clothing makes a statement as to what they're interested in, whether it's skateboarding, a specific fashion trend or music genre, or a video game. It is up to the designer to know who the kid is, and clothing is a great way of identifying that.

Kids are more flexible and more open and expressive with their gestures than grown-ups, especially when playing. These kid-like actions can add to the design. When drawing a kid in action, think "kid things": activities they enjoy (jumping on rocks, throwing sticks, hide and seek, splashing around, sports) and characteristics they exhibit (playful, curious, shy, adventurous).

Hairstyles are important too. They can tell us what the kid is into, if they are trying to be cool, or maybe they don't care. You can drastically change the appearance of a kid just by altering a child's hairstyle: shape, length, and color.

What makes kids ... kids?

1) Kids clothing

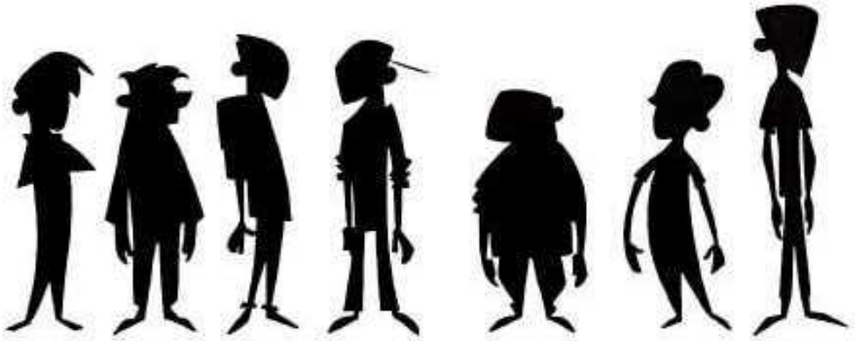
2) Kid-like actions

3) Kid hairstyles

9–13 years old

5–7 years old

No matter what the show style may be, aim for variety: kids come in all shapes and sizes. Also take into account head sizes in comparison to each other. You can see it more clearly when you see your silhouettes. Remember clarity and shape variation.



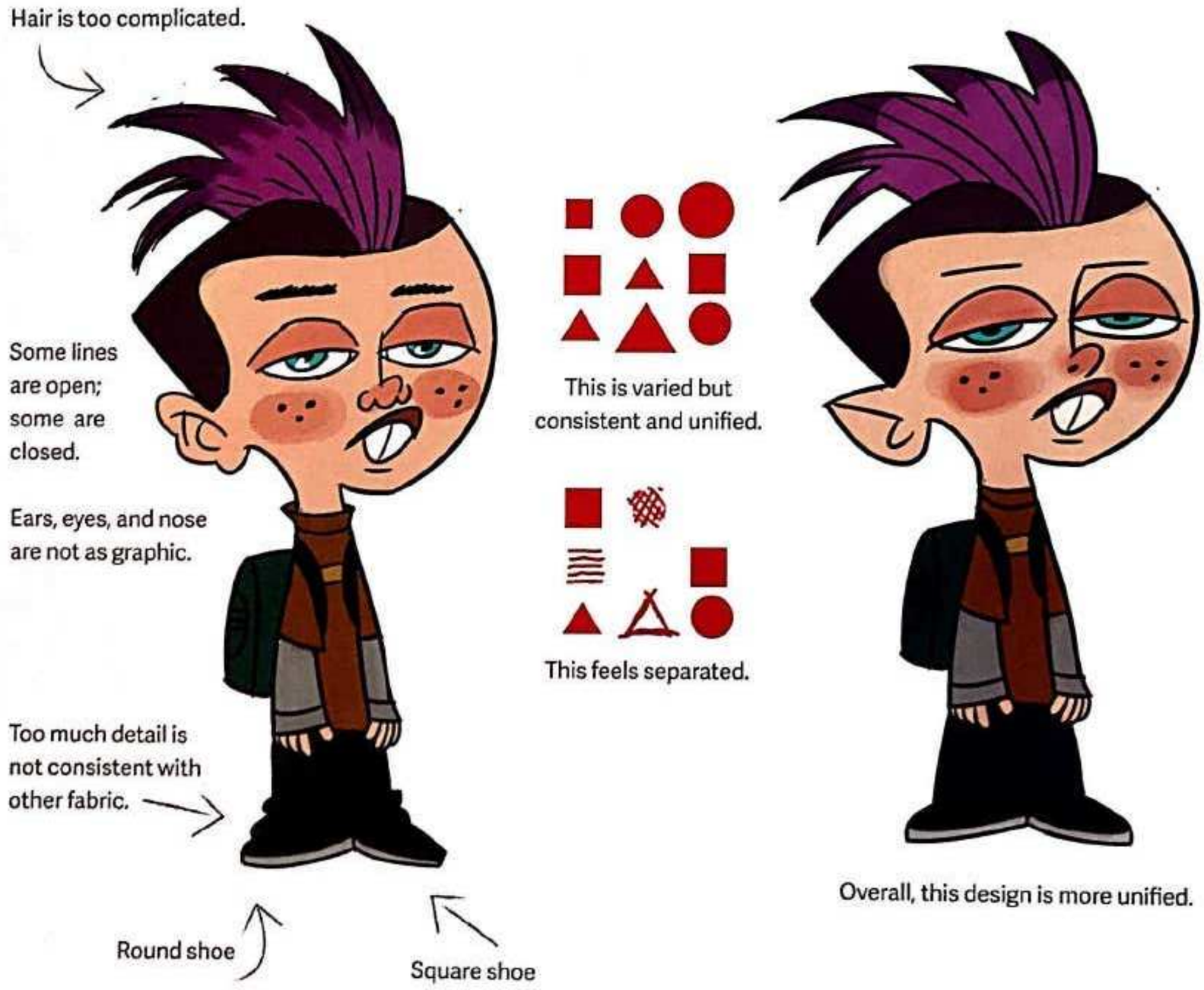
When designing kids, it is essential to seek out the clothing styles of the decade you are designing for.

Clothes change constantly and so do styles. This also includes hair. When I was designing *Kim Possible,* one thing I knew was that kids always wear jeans and T-shirts, so I could go with those for sure.

Keeping the eyes larger and foreheads and noses smaller help in giving a youthful look. The images above represent 14- to 16-year-olds. My secret weapon to adding life to a character that is just standing is shifting the pupils to the side.

STYLE COMPARISON

Being consistent with your style of choice is important.



Animal Life

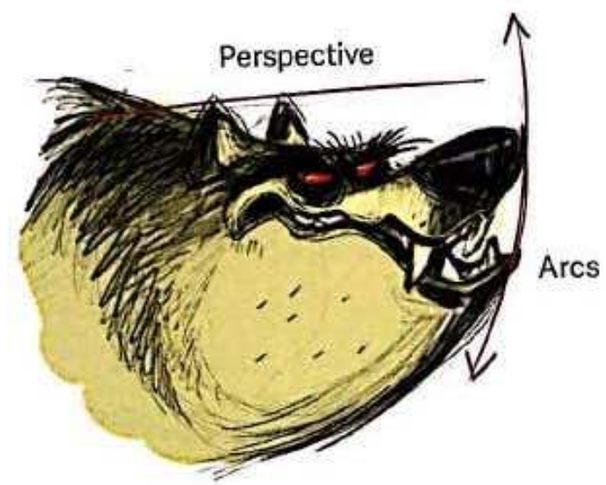
Designing animals is no different than drawing humans, other than there being additional anatomical considerations you need to make. We can design animals on all fours or make them even more humanlike by making them what is called anthropomorphic.

I recommend that before you start designing any animal, you give yourself the opportunity to draw the real animal first. This will give you an understanding of the animal's physical features.

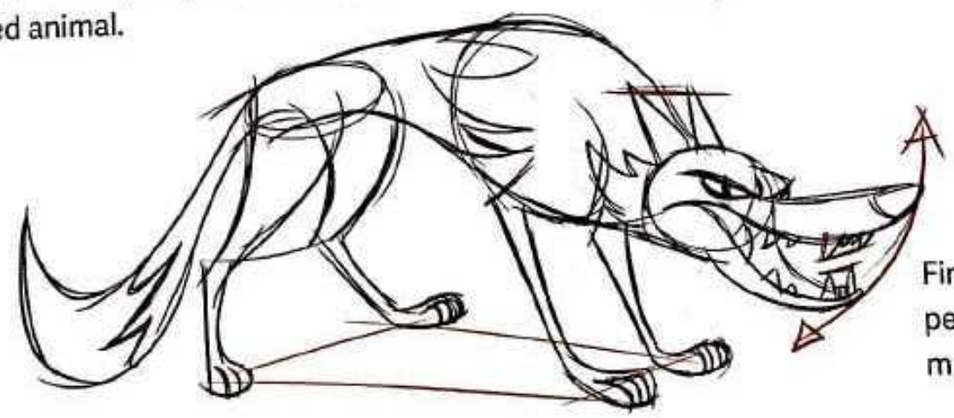
One suggestion I often make to my students is to not pretend you know what an animal looks like. Grab the reference, find as many pictures and angles as you can, and break it down. What makes a mouse look different than a rat? What makes a donkey look different than a horse? You guessed it: proportions.

For many years before the Internet, I would go to the zoo to draw, but that became frustrating for me when I was trying to draw the moving animal. In hindsight, it is better to observe and do this. I decided at that time to record them so I could pause the motion, frame by frame. Now with YouTube, Netflix, and all the other online platforms, our research library is unlimited. I encourage you to watch videos featuring real animals and pause them for closer observation. You can do this with animation as well.

If you have to design a specific animal, grab the real reference, draw from that first, and resist looking at other cartoon versions, because it may influence you too much.



Tip: Draw a box on the ground to help you define the perspective of a four-legged animal.

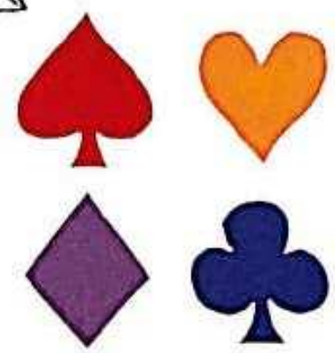


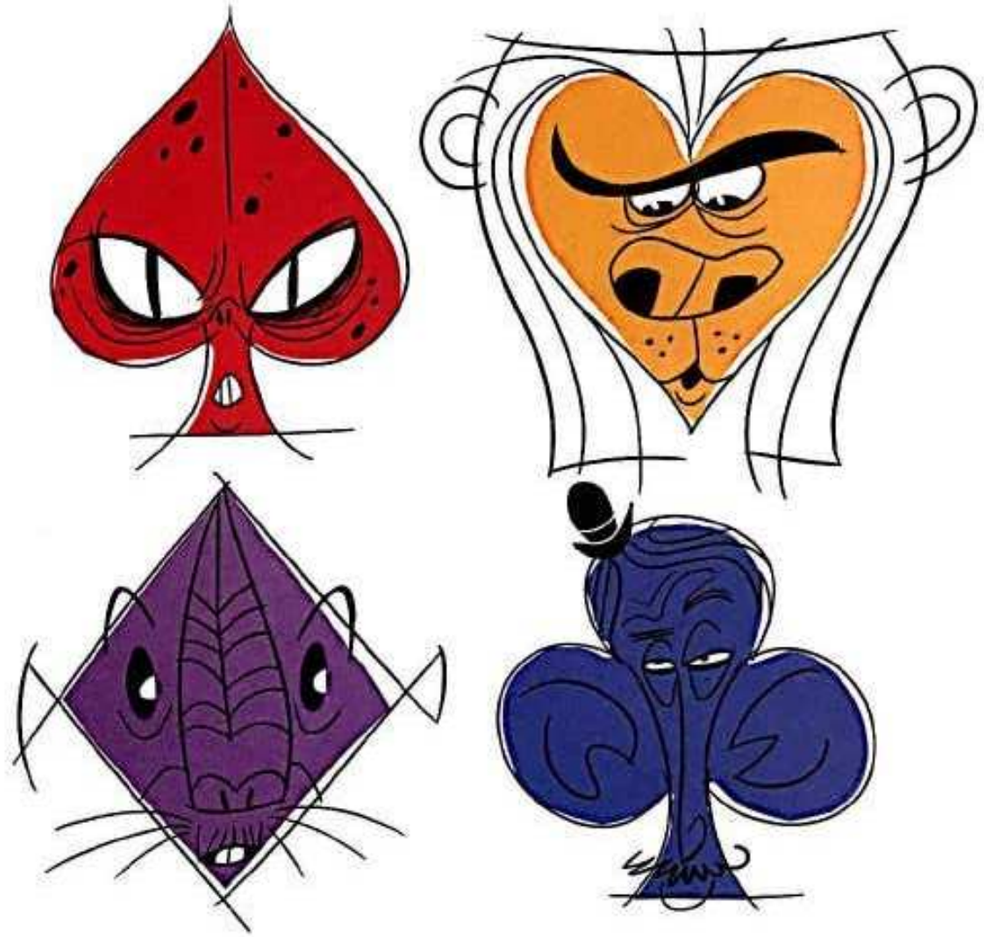
Find the arcs and perspective in the muzzle shapes.

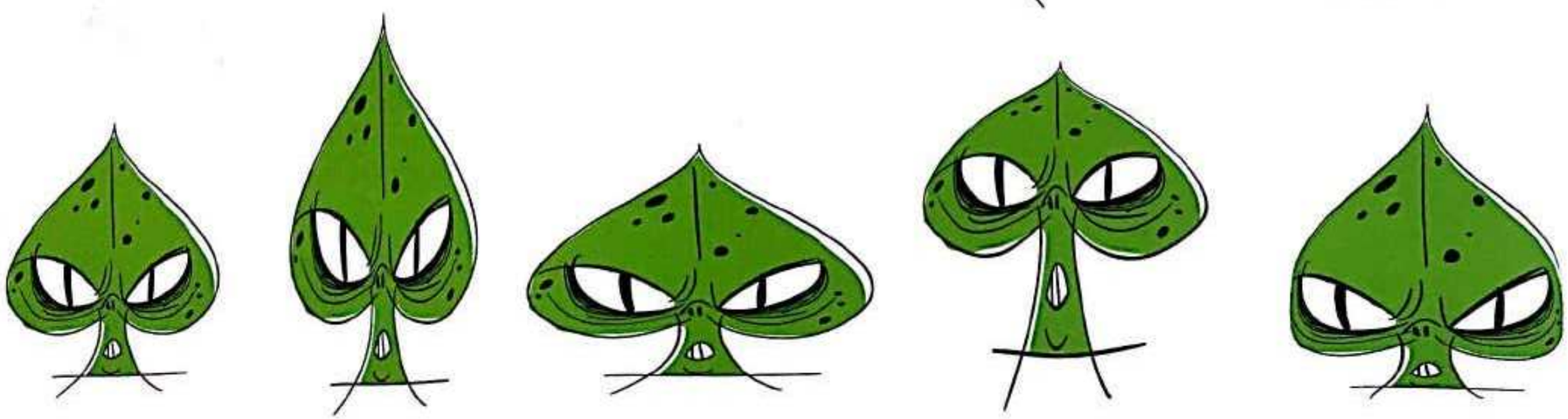
VARIATION EQUALS APPEAL

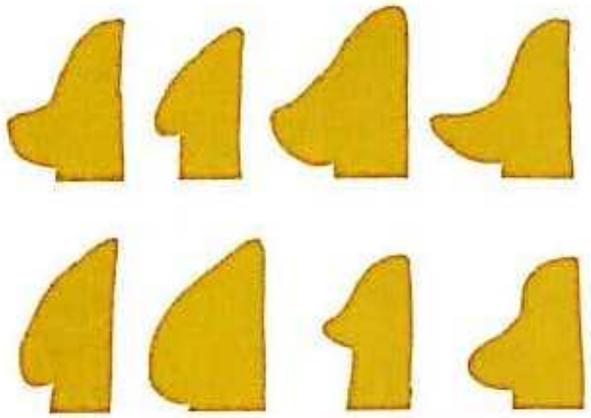
Just as with people, think about the shapes you employ with animals, and the importance of variety in making a design that is appealing. Observing shapes, all kinds—random objects, or even patterns you may find in carpets or drapes—should all be part of your inspiration tool kit to stretch your imagination and achieve variety.

As I've mentioned before, try designing with a shape language you are already familiar with. Card suits are iconic and clear to read. Let it be a starting point; you can always add to it as well as push and pull the shapes horizontally and vertically. Look at how many alien heads I can create from one idea.

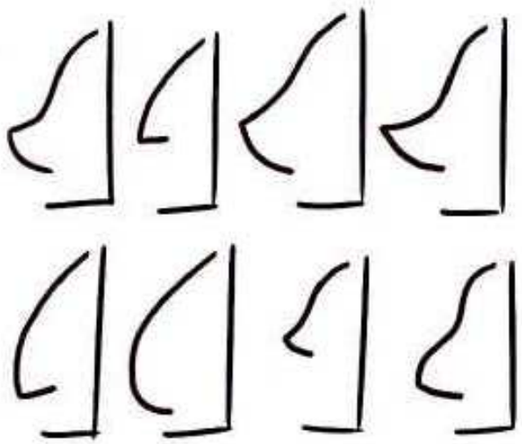




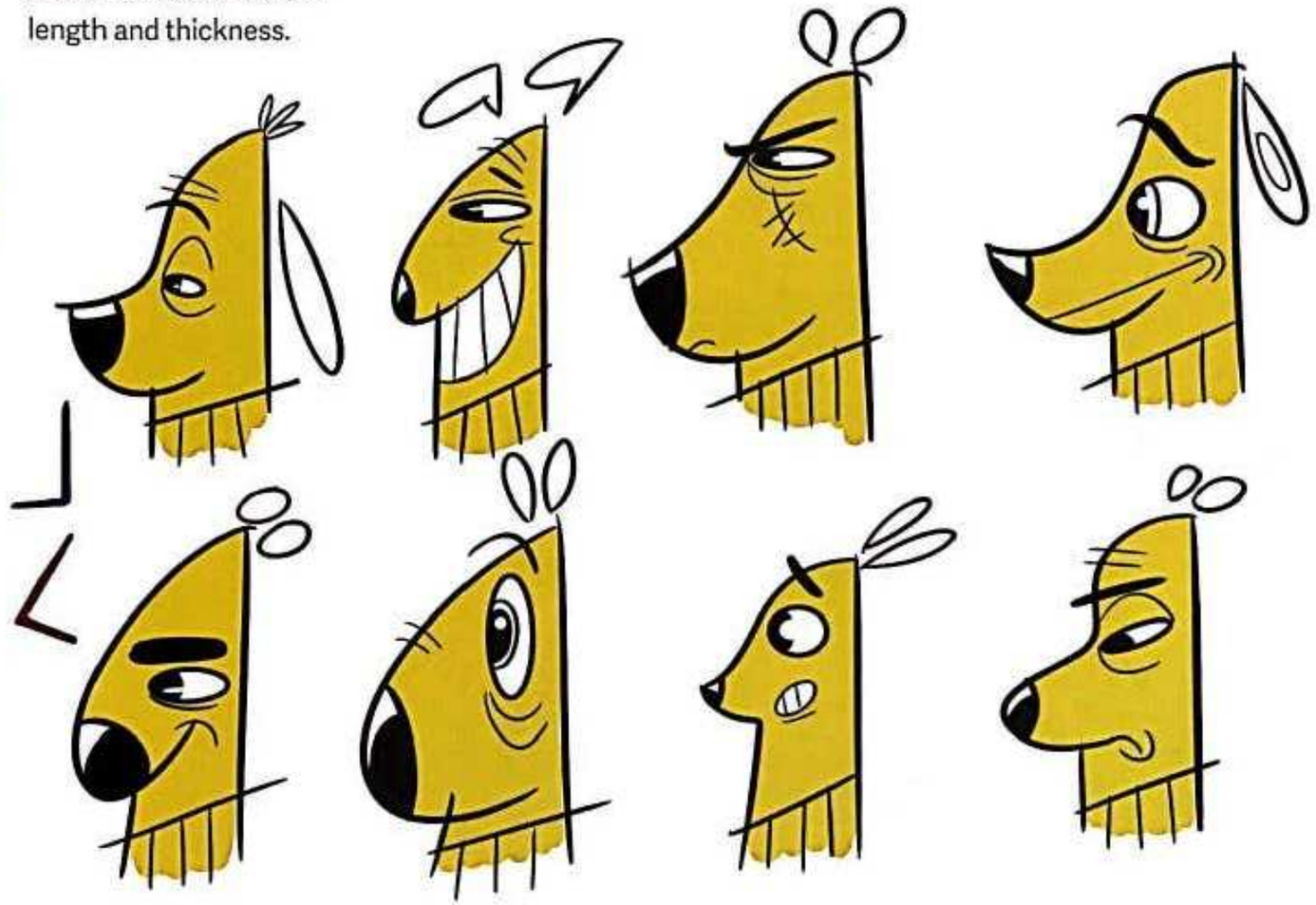




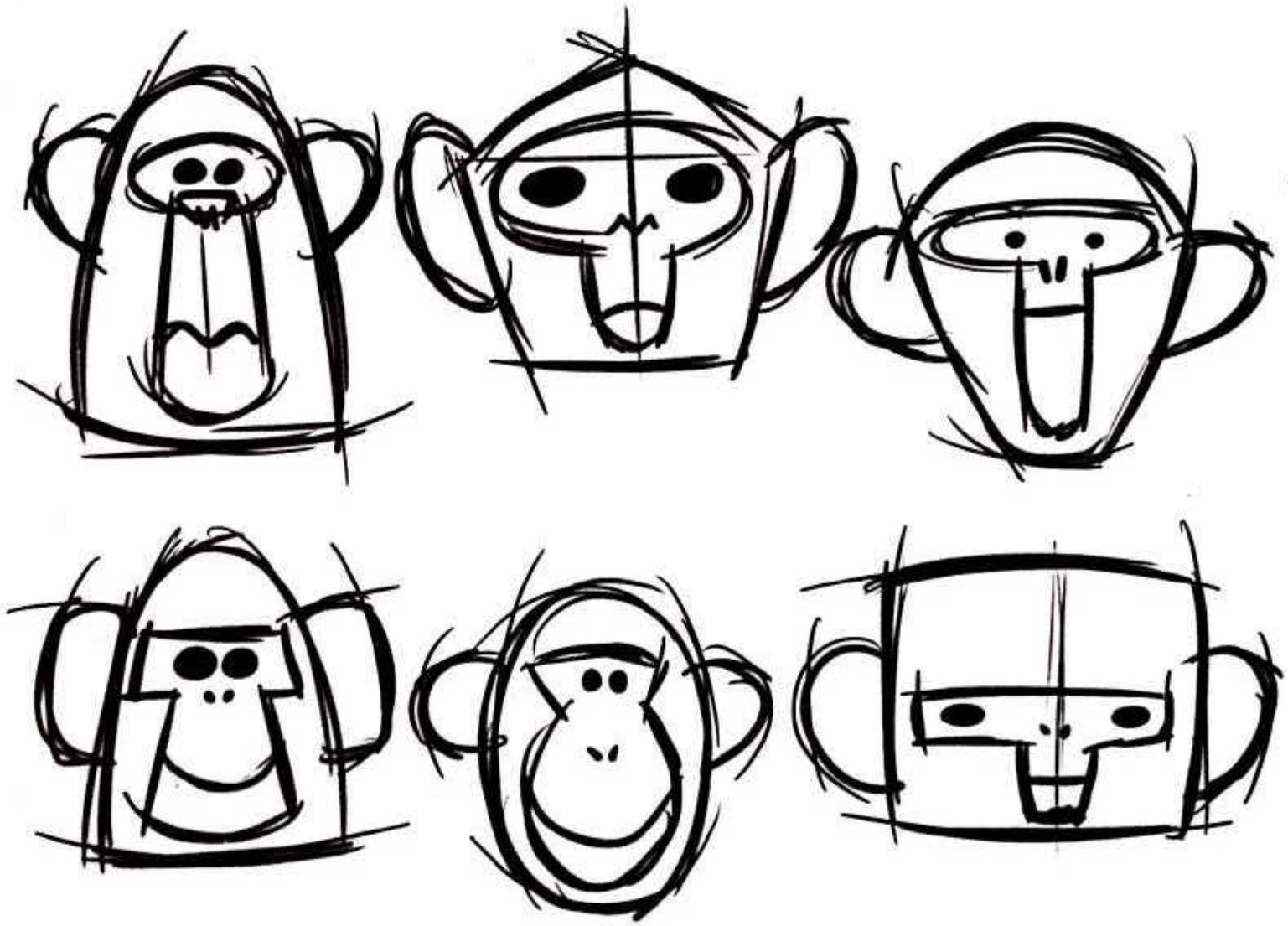
Notice the shape variation created by altering the distance of each nose in length and thickness.



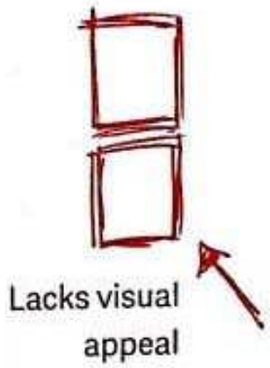
Using a backward L shape and an organic forward L shape, we can instantly create variety: straights against curves, pointy noses and round noses.



Keep in mind to play around with the variety of inner features as well: try small, medium, large, straight, curve, narrow, wide, thin, and thick.

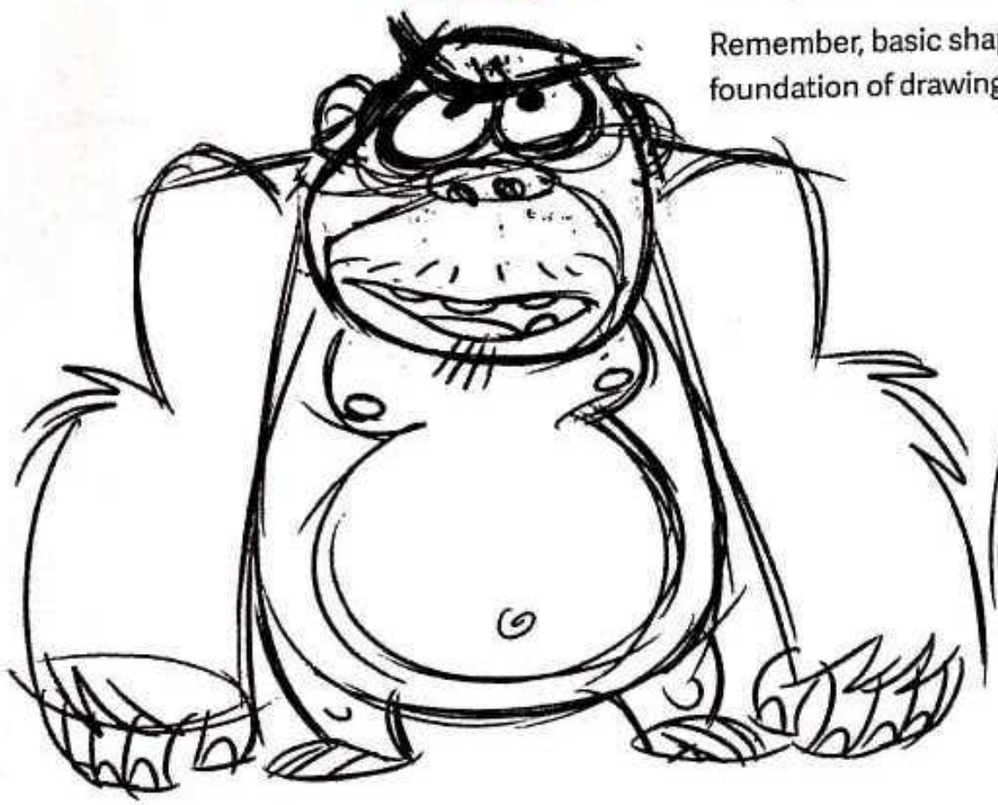


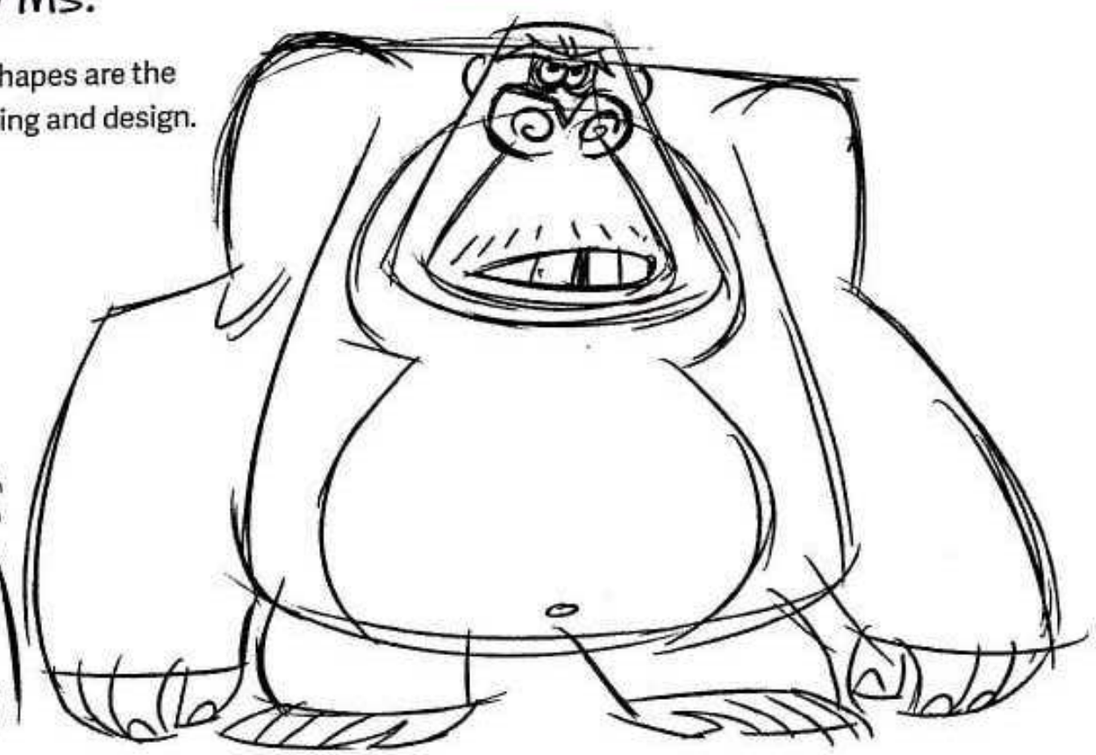
Applying The T-shape formula can be used in creating simple icon styles too. Vary distances from shape to shape, and do not overcrowd your design with too much information. The goal is to achieve a quick read.

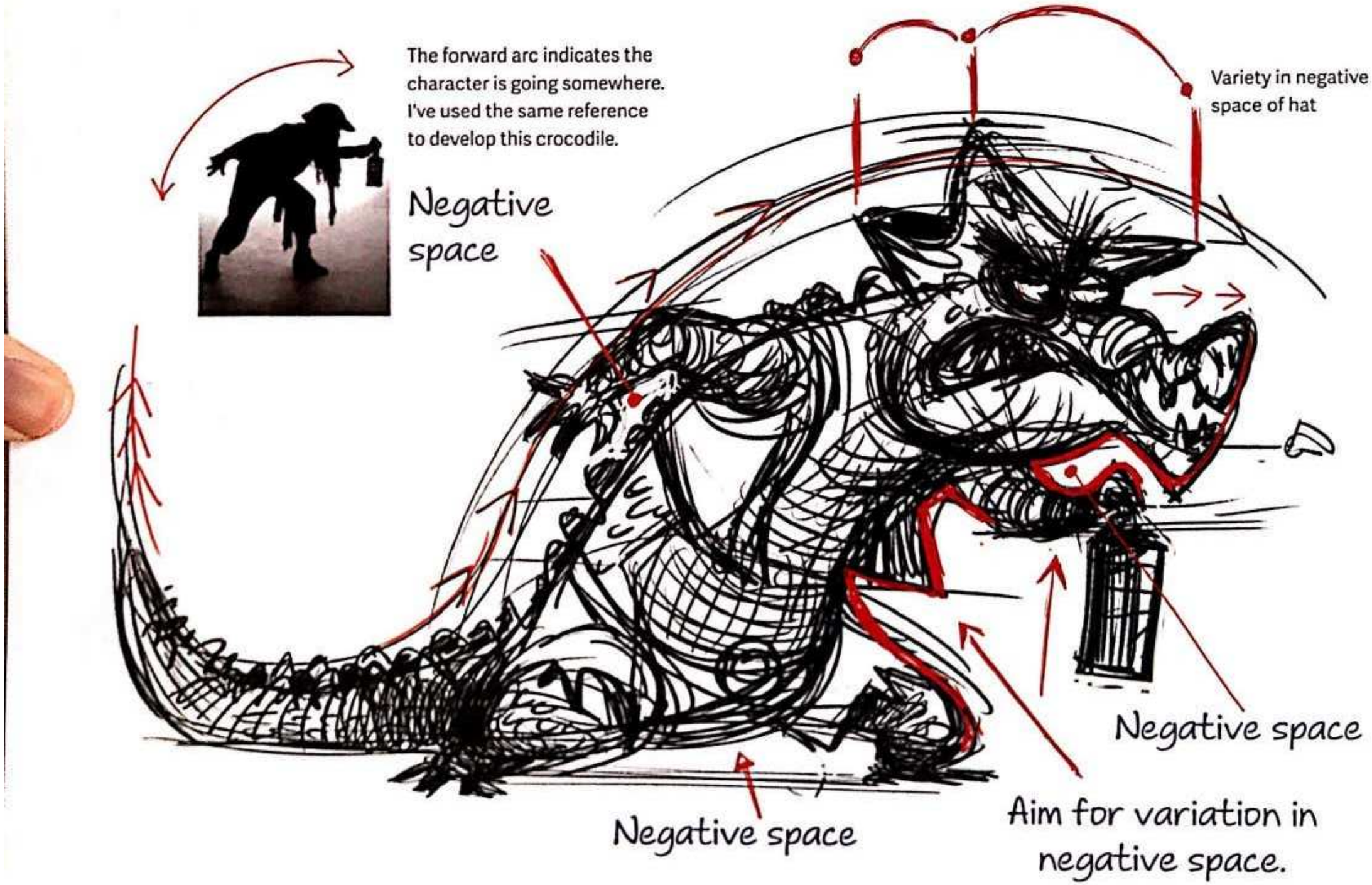


Establish variety in your forms.

Remember, basic shapes are the foundation of drawing and design.

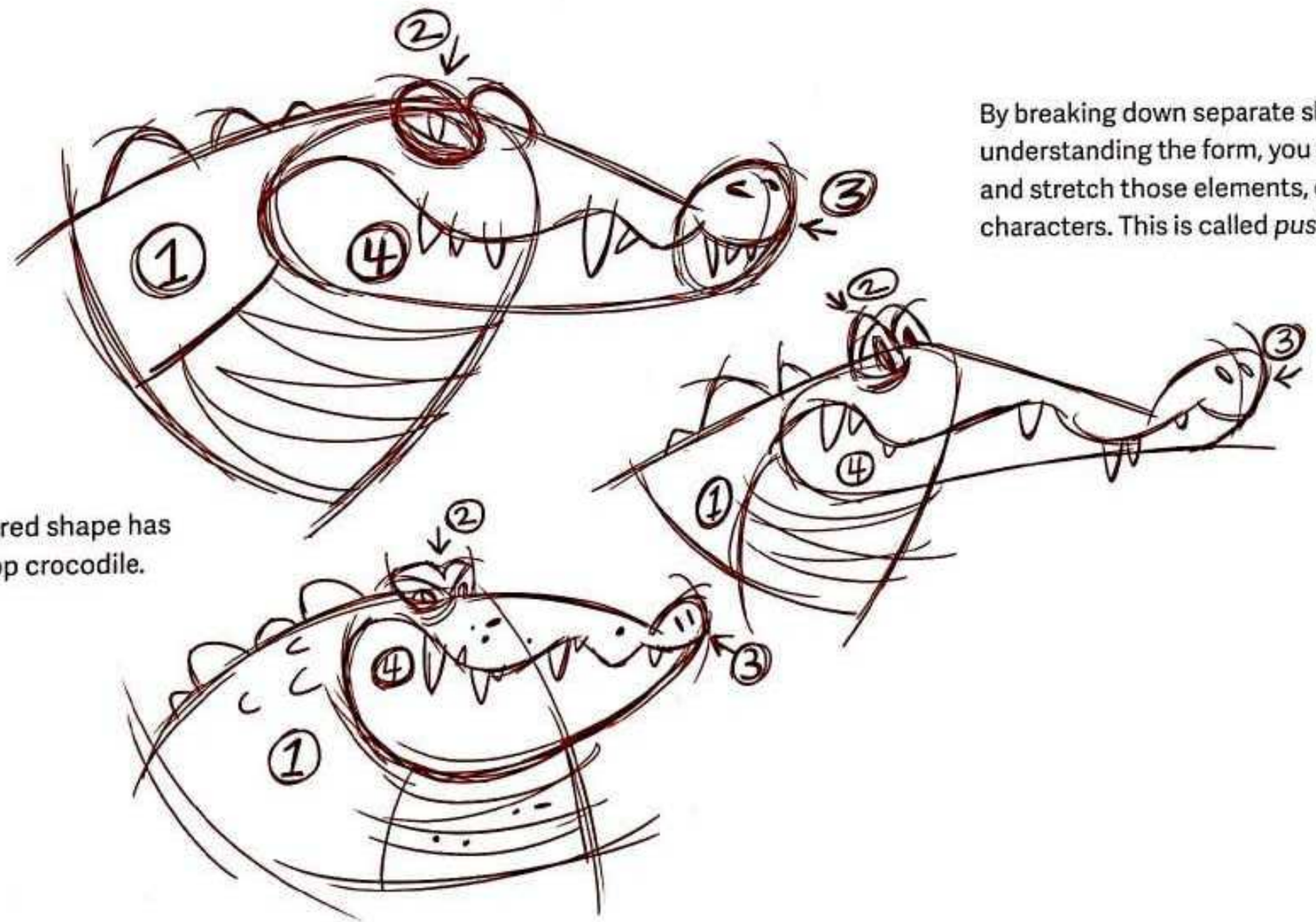





The forward arc indicates the character is going somewhere. I've used the same reference to develop this crocodile.
Negative space
Variety in negative space of hat
Negative space
Negative space
Aim for variation in negative space.

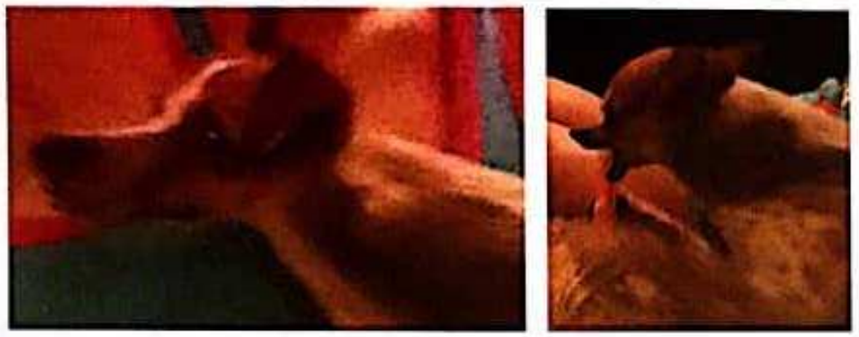
GO WILD

Choose dynamic over static poses, and never settle on just one pose. Try many thumbnails, push your shapes, and explore different ideas. And, of course, use the golden ratio to strengthen your proportions. All animals will have dominant aspects that make them unique to their species. What are they? Ears, nose, tail, scales, eye shape, etc. Determine what those dominant features are, and reorganize them in terms of size. Think small, medium, and large.



By breaking down separate shapes and understanding the form, you can start to squash and stretch those elements, creating a variety of characters. This is called *pushing*.

Notice how each numbered shape has been pushed from the top crocodile.

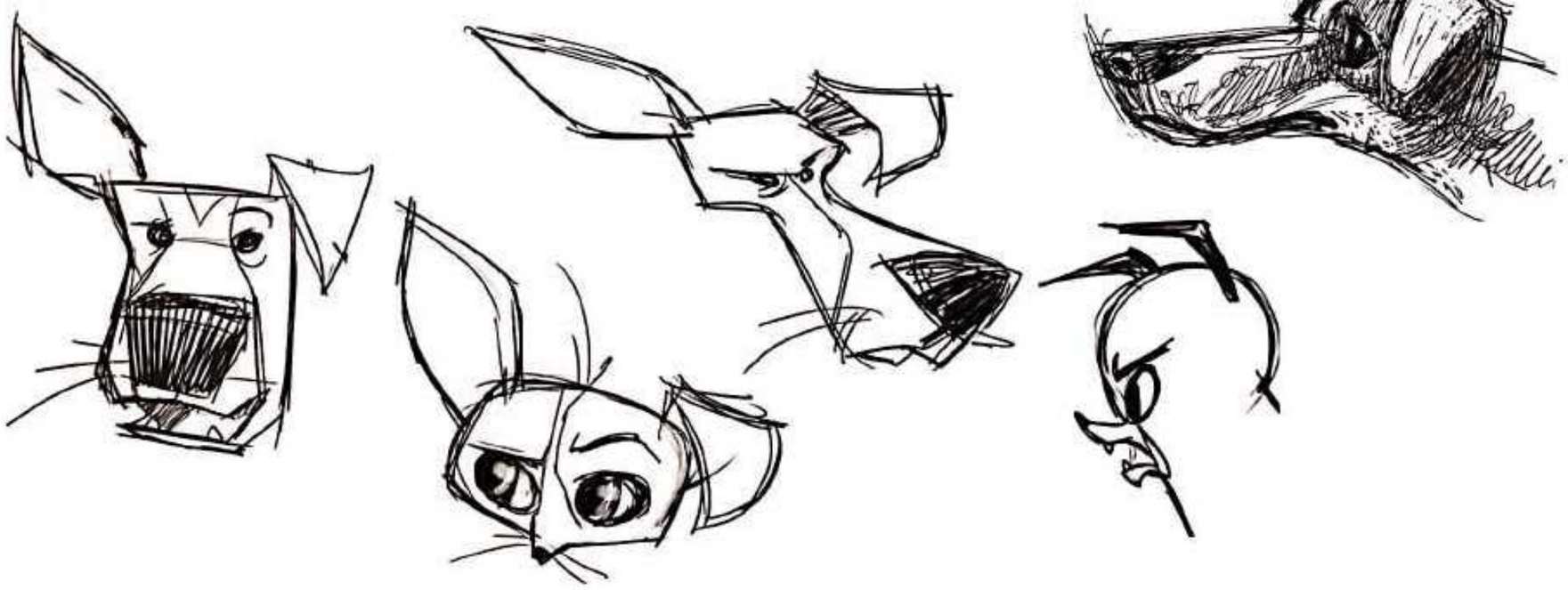


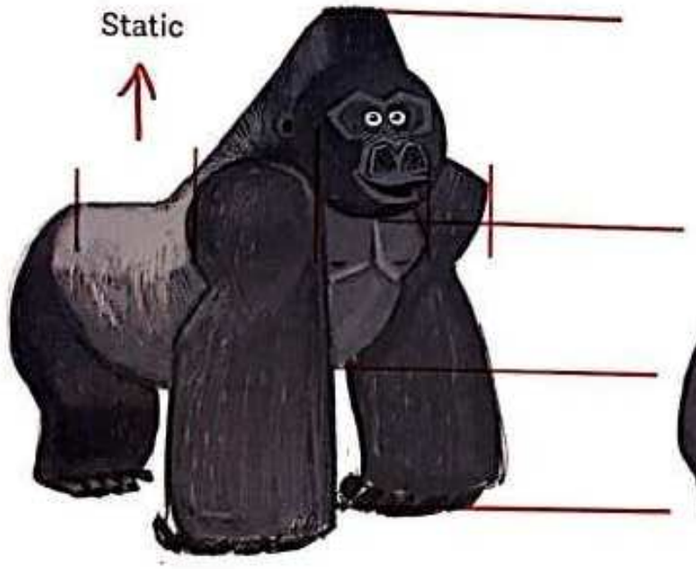
PUSHING YOUR ANIMAL SHAPES

If you ever need ways to push your shapes and even a specific species of animal, use a photo booth app on your device to warp real animals, as well as pictures of animals. It opens up your eyes to what the word *push* means.

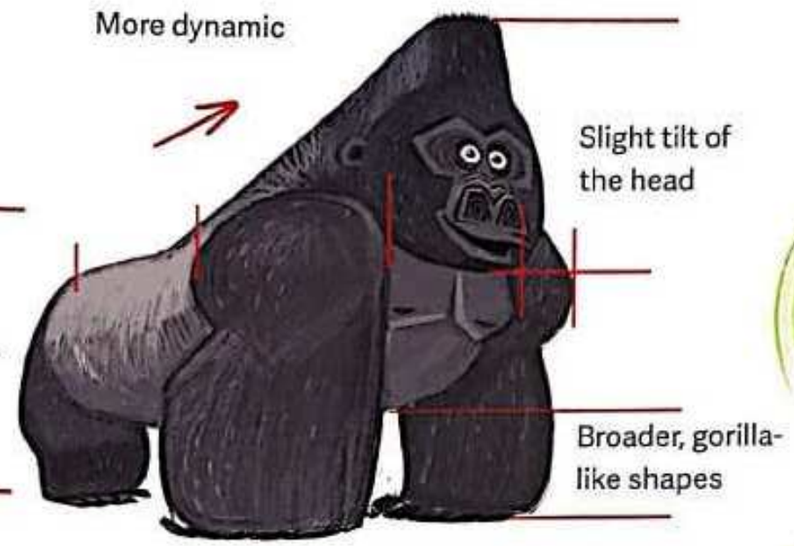
This practice has inspired designs, giving me a variety of ideas in terms of contrast, balance, and shape.

The original subject



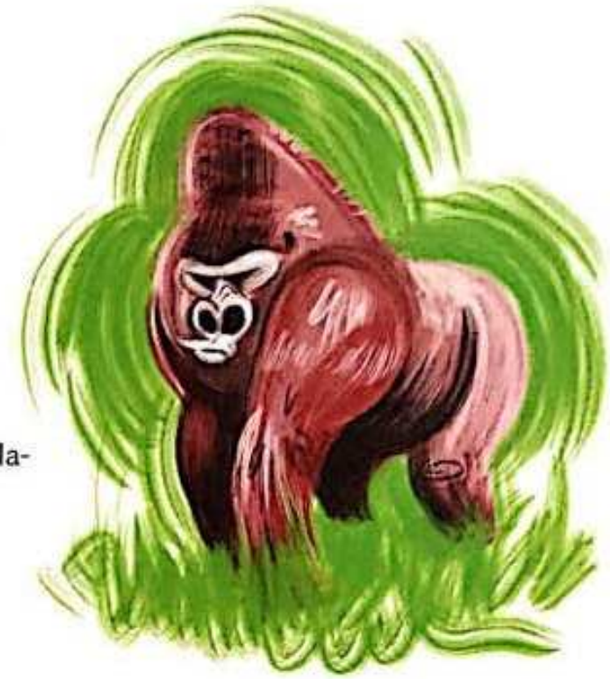


How can I push individual elements just a little more?



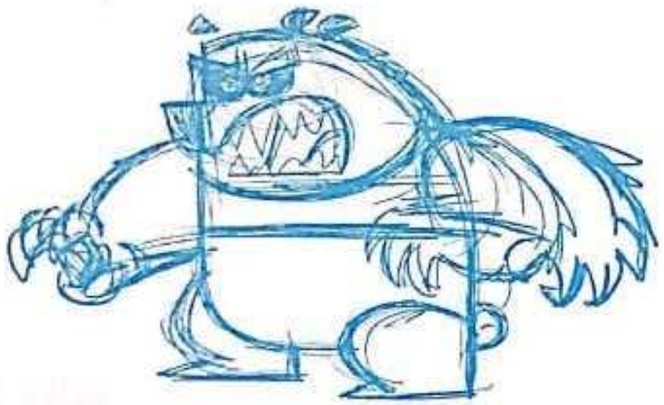
Greater distribution of horizontal and parallel lines

Better perspective

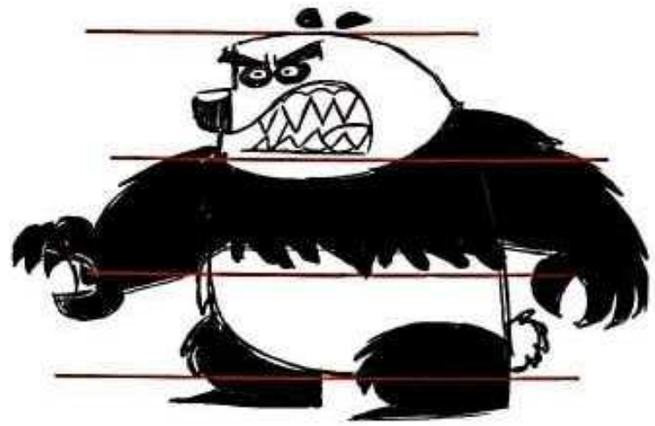


Think of the masses, broad arms, head, and torso.

You will never know how capable you are of pushing a design until you draw the same thing more than once.



The first idea:
angry panda rough



He is too stiff and laddery, and the arms mirror each other, which causes it to be too symmetrical and stiff.

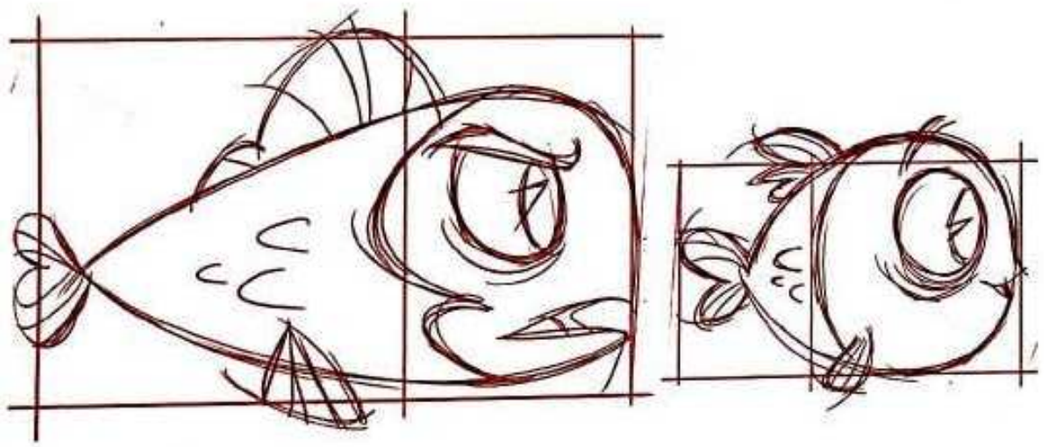
Increased line of action

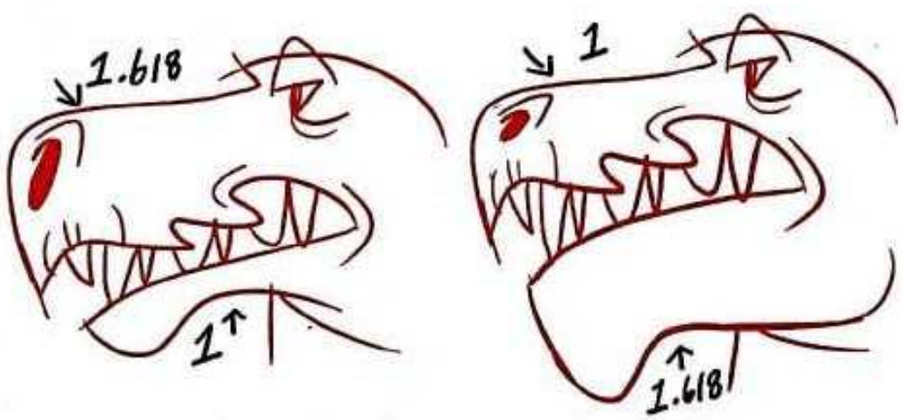
Finding the line

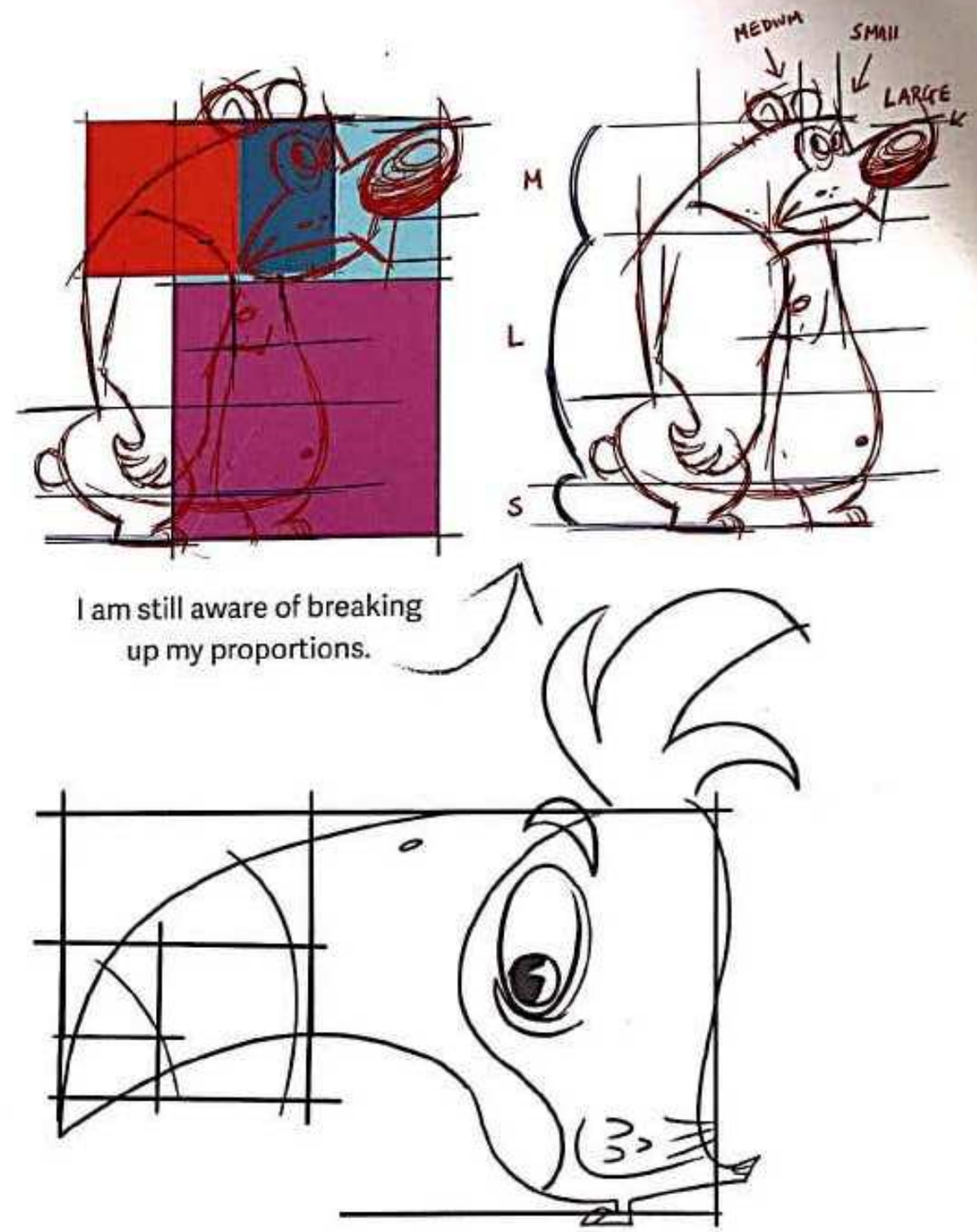
Try identifying just the shapes. This will help you discover harmony and rhythm, which is repetition, such as dark, light, dark, light, dark.

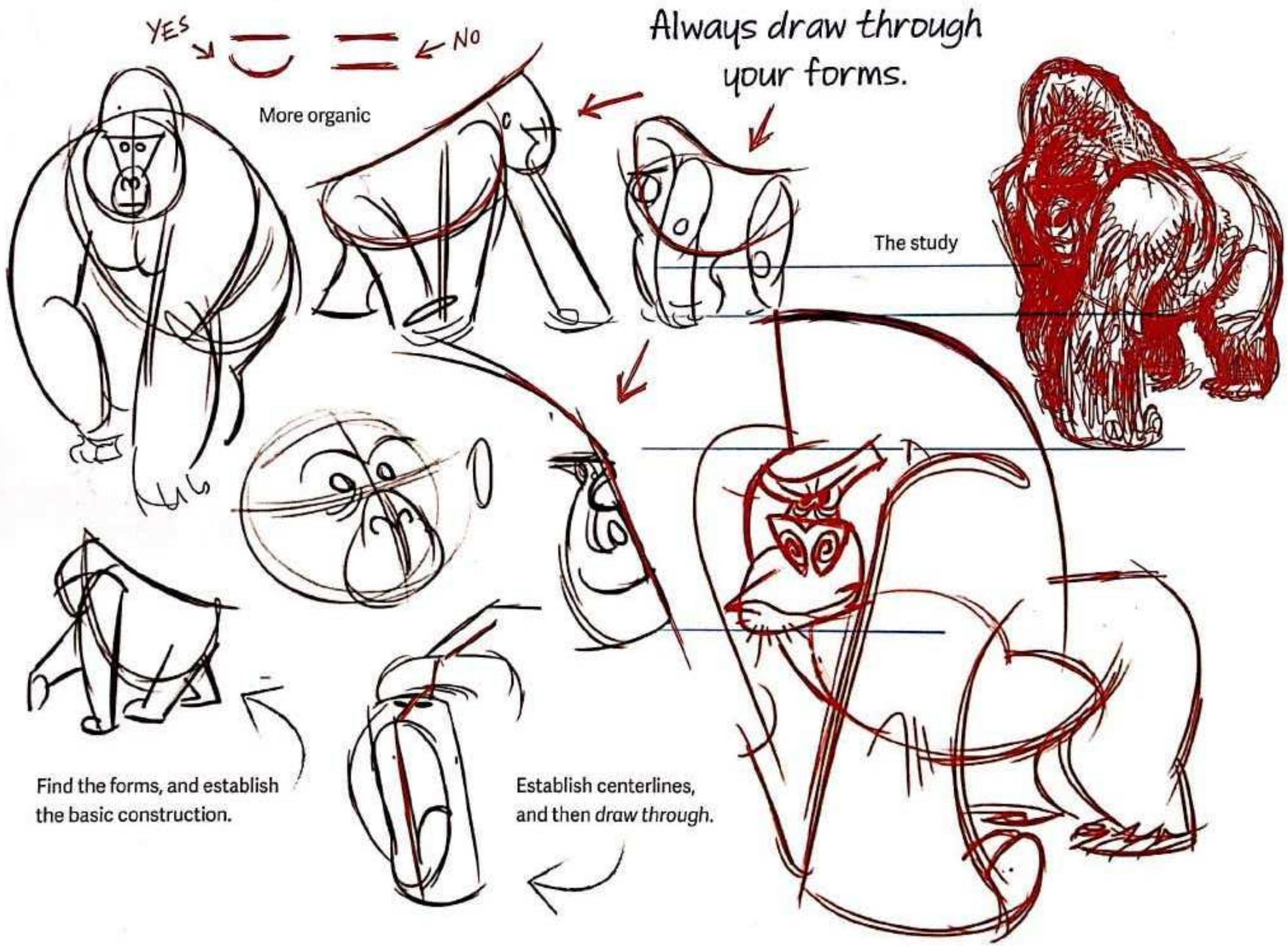
Notice how the nose, eyes, eyebrows, ears, and teeth all have varied, contrasting shapes.

This golden ratio can help guide your animal design in many ways.

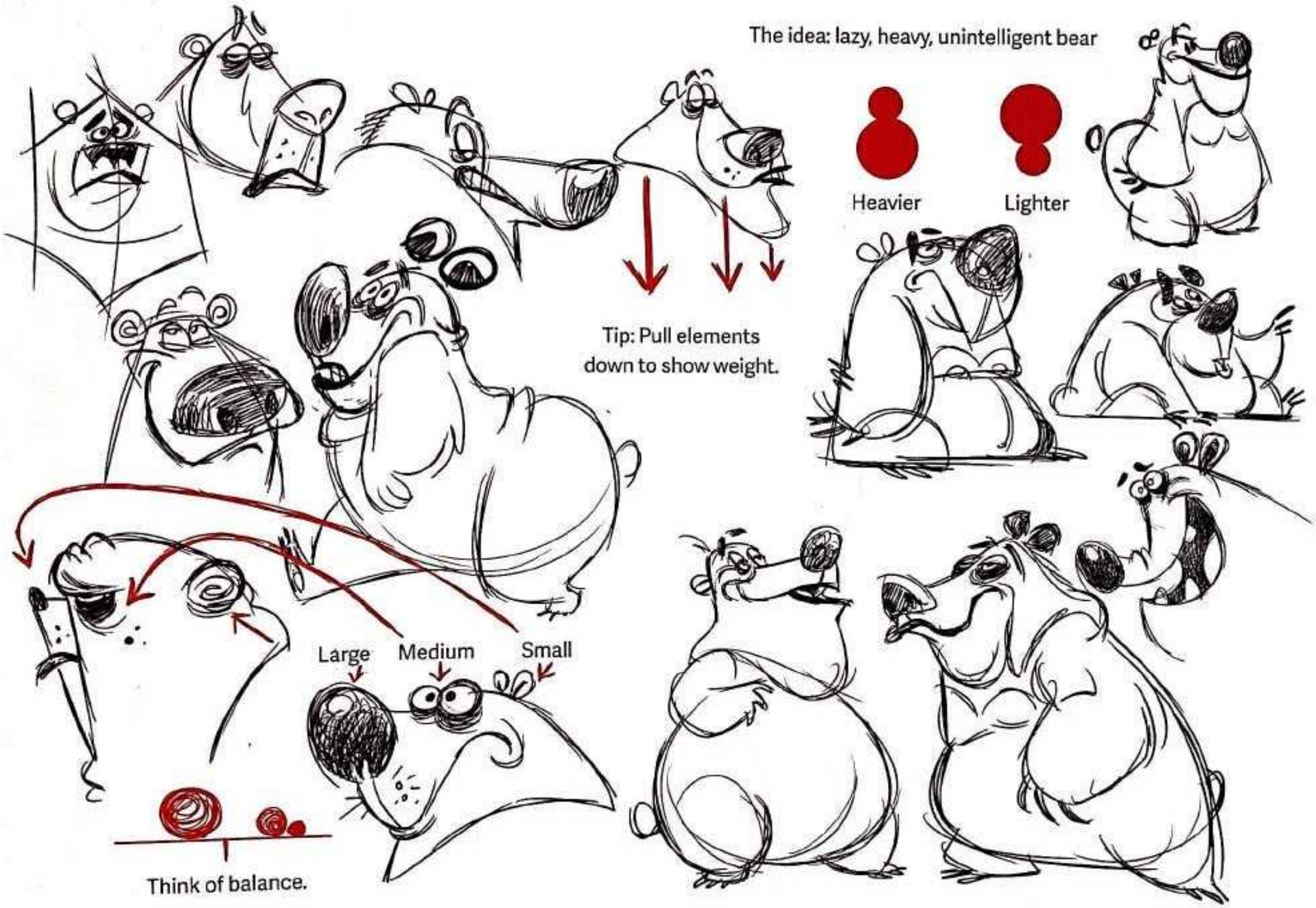







YES
NO
More organic
Always draw through your forms.
The study
Find the forms, and establish the basic construction.
Establish centerlines, and then *draw through*.

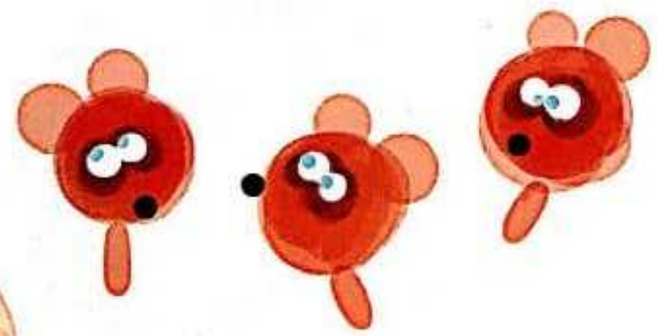
Things to always remember when you are developing animals: grab reference as a starting point, and then explore your shape variety. Don't forget to add some personality; you want to give a quick sense of the character. Bigger features, such as eyes, can make your character appear cuter, while smaller, beadier eyes can make your character look older and wiser.



HOW TO MAINTAIN AN ANIMAL'S VOLUMES

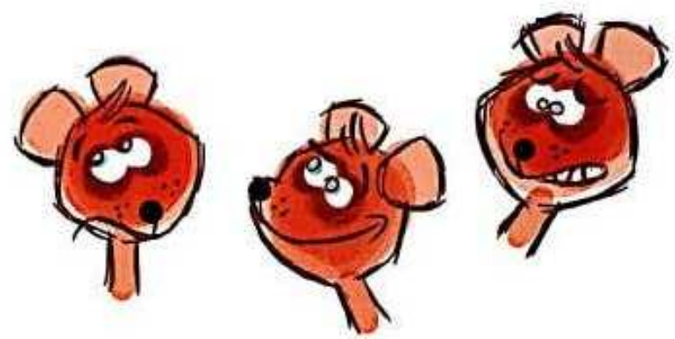
Step one

Block in a shape with a specific size brush, and create the multiple heads and features at one time. This ensures that you maintain the character's volume.



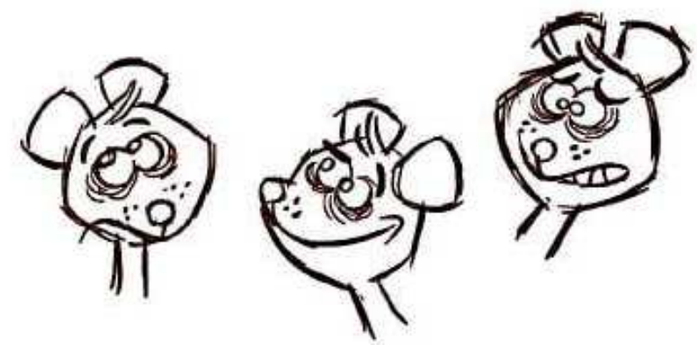
Step two

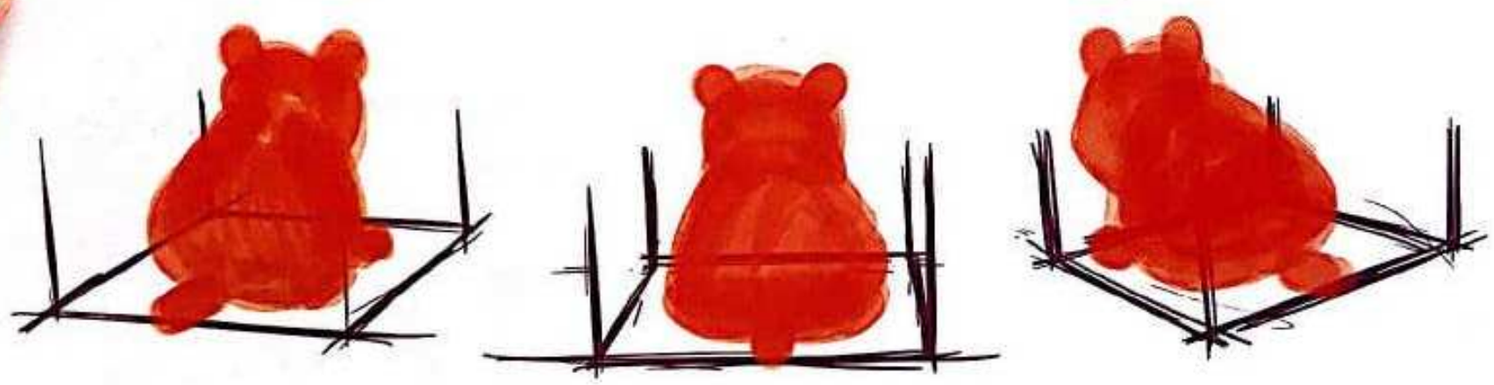
Now you can create any shape and angle around the volumes you created, and create the style you're looking for.

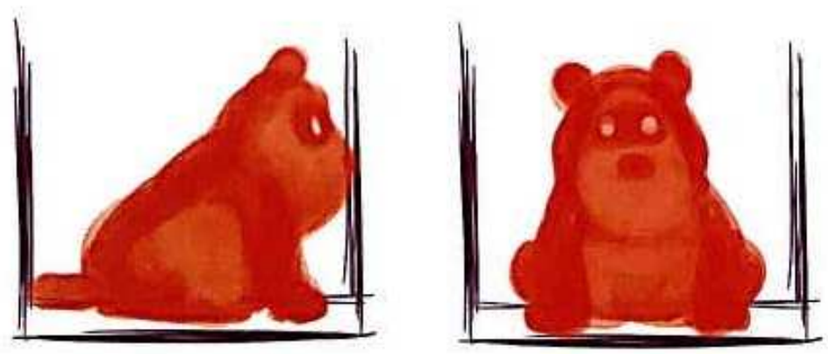


Step three

Remove the background shapes in order to give you a consistent volume of proportions in your line drawing, if that is what you're aiming for.







As with any character, human or animal, think about the height, width, and depth. Being aware of the space your character occupies will give your drawing a sense of placement, regardless of the animal's angle.

Put your character in a box by drawing the box in loosely to serve as a guide.

CLEANING UP YOUR ANIMALS

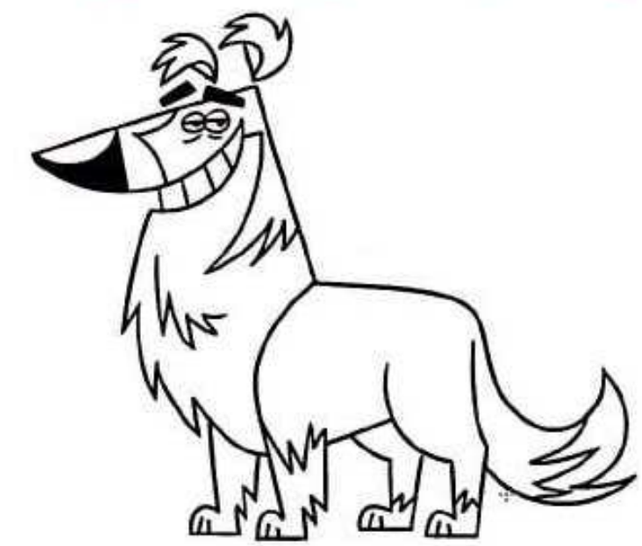
When cleaning up your characters, there are just a few things to keep in mind:

Cleaning up digitally, I pull my brush all the way through other lines, as you can see, and then I erase any unwanted lines.

Tapered Line

Flat Line

Lines can be straight, angled, or curved.



1) Ask what type of cleanup line is needed?

Thin line:

Thick line:

Thick to thin line:

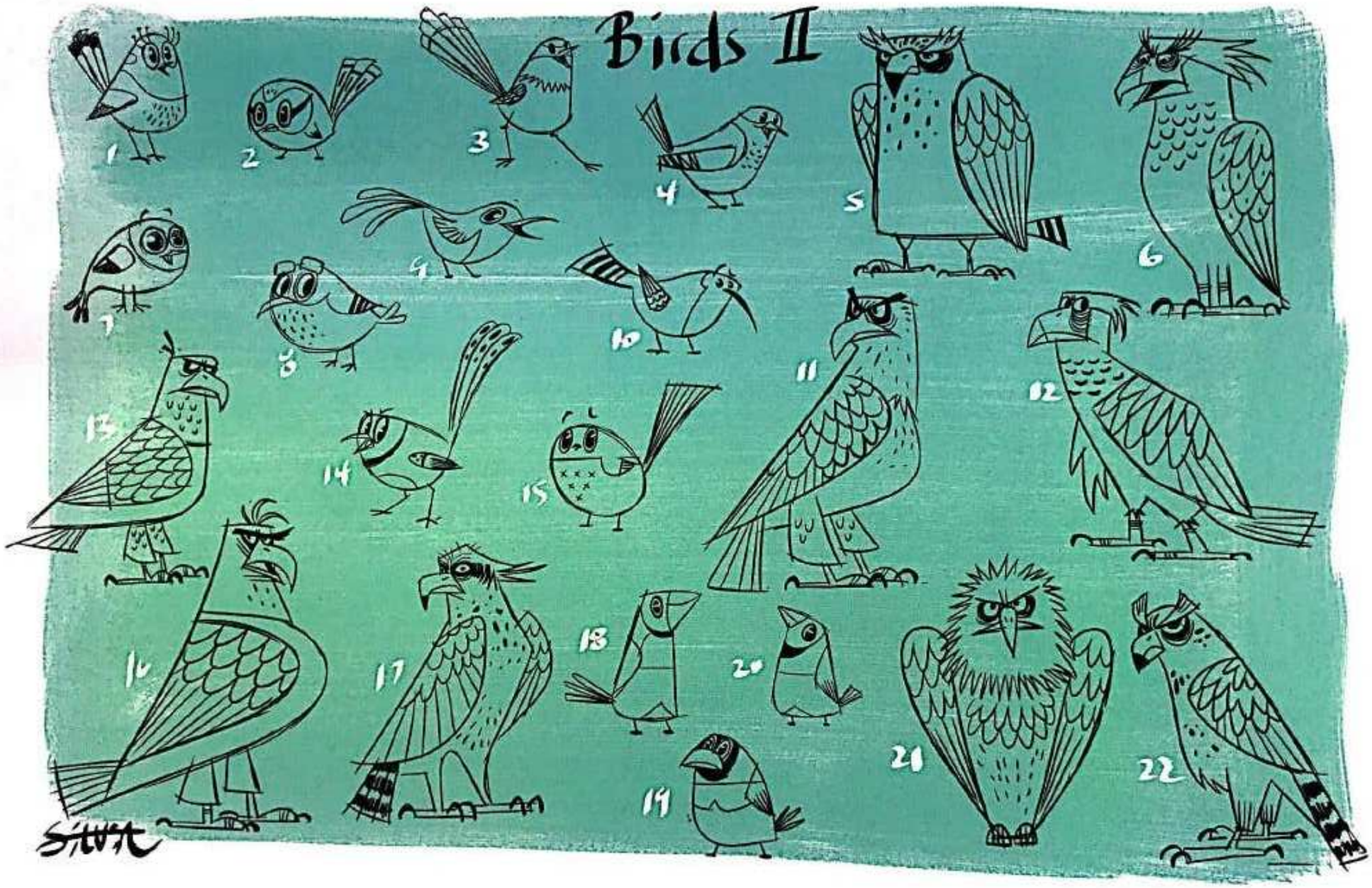
2) Be sure to close off all your lines so there are no open gaps when dropping in color.

3) Keep your lines consistent throughout, so you don't have thin lines on one part of the body and thick on another.

4) Don't feel the need to trace the rough exactly. You can make line adjustments in order to define or make better judgments on the cleanup.

5) Keep clear of tangents.

6) Observe other cleanup styles and mimic them. This is the best way to learn a new technique.



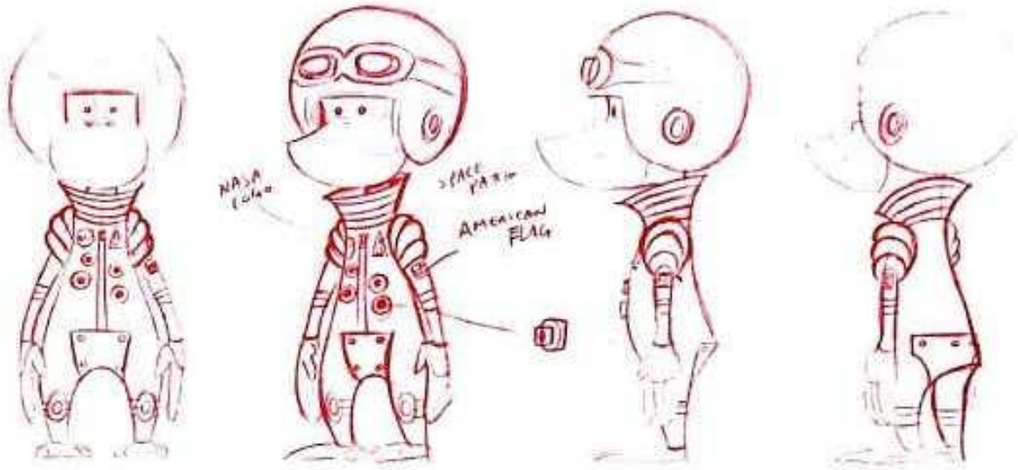
Animals can be challenging to draw, and that's okay. The name of the game is to have fun and see where your ideas can take you. Drawing is experimenting. Not every sketch will be a success, but as long as you are putting thought into it, considering construction and proportions, you will be well on your way.

KID AND ANIMAL EXERCISES

- **Look to the clouds:** This is a concept using pareidolia, which is a helpful tool to inspire new ideas. Looking at clouds, images on rugs, stains on walls, and rock formations can lead us to see random patterns of organized shapes that may be something recognizable. What do you see when you look up at the clouds? Draw the different kids or animals you observe.
- **Tracing encouraged:** Trace basic shapes over animal and kid photos to become more acquainted with proportions.
- **Simple practice:** Watch a scene featuring kids or animals in a movie and draw your impression afterward; do not just pause a frame.
- **Be a stylist:** Draw a kid with no hair, and then create several hairstyles for him or her, like building a paper doll, to see how each style shapes the character.
- **Play dress up!:** Now draw another kid (or animal) in different costumes to create different personas. Have some fun, and go to a Halloween costume site for ideas.

ABOUT
the ARTIST

Photo credit: Keith Acedera



STEPHEN SILVER
Character Designer and Teacher

Born in London, England, Stephen Silver aspired to be a professional artist at an early age. Knowing that drawing would be his vocation, he got his start drawing caricatures at SeaWorld in San Diego, California, in 1992. Since then, he has designed characters for Disney Television Animation, Sony Pictures Animation, and Nickelodeon Animation, designing the style of such shows as *Kim Possible, Danny Phantom,* Kevin Smith's *Clerks: The Animated Series,* and many more.

Silver continues to work as a freelance character designer in the entertainment industry, while dedicating most of his time to educating others in the craft as the owner of Silver Drawing Academy in Los Angeles, and as an instructor for Schoolism. In addition to *The Silver Way,* he has authored seven books on the art of sketching, character design, caricature, and life drawing.

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