THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO DRAWING ACTION MANGA

A STEP-BY-STEP ARTIST'S HANDBOOK

SHOCO MAKOTO SAWA

TUTTLE

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If you've ever wanted to draw more realistic action characters in your manga, this is the book for you. Shoco and Makoto Sawa, two manga artists from Japan will teach you everything you need to know, from tips on proportions, perspective and anatomy, to detailed guidelines on a variety of action poses, including:

- running and jumping
- punching and kicking
- judo holds and high fives
- using swords, knives and other weapons
- reacting to an opponent

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ACTION MANGA

SHOCO
MAKOTO SAWA

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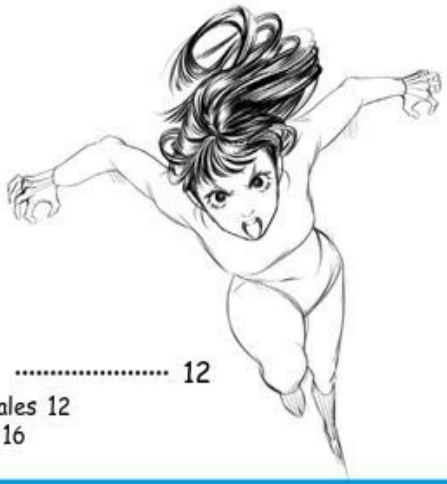

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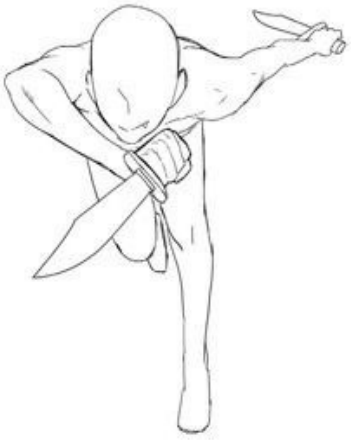

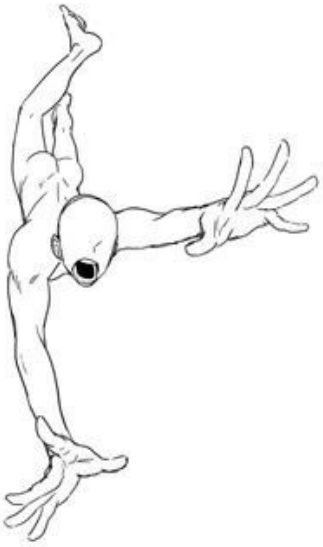

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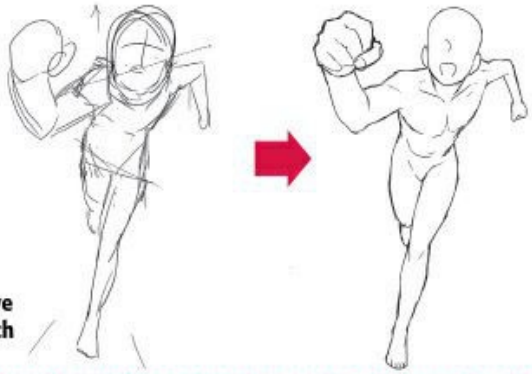
A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

While it's important to strive for accuracy when drawing fi gures, manga illustration gives you the freedom to break away from constraints and use exaggerated lines to depict dynamic characters. So, start by visualizing what you want to draw and let your imagination take hold.

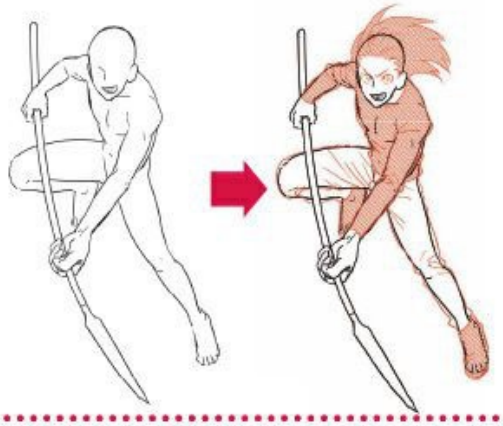
Little by little, challenge yourself with figures positioned at diffi cult angles. It won't be long before you start making progress and find you have noticeably broadened your range of drawing skills. We hope that this book inspires you to take on the challenge of drawing dynamic poses.

1 Focus on blocking-in at the rough-sketch stage



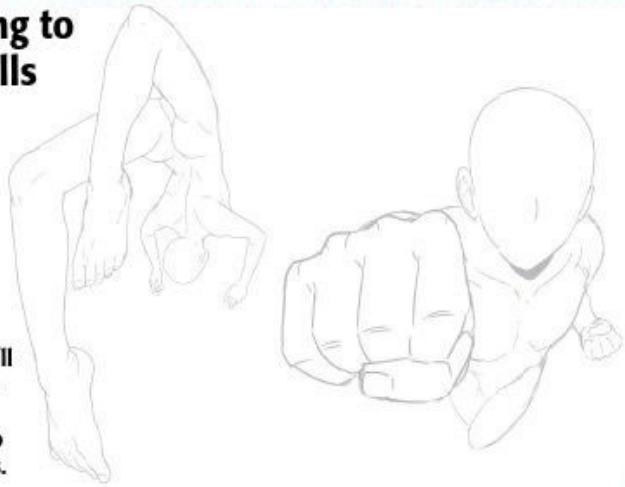
In every chapter we'll give blocking-in tips that will improve your drawing at the rough-sketch stage.

2 Create a detailed outline from your rough sketch



You'll learn how to add details such as facial expressions and clothing to your rough sketch, with advice on what kind of situation or scene various poses can be used in.

3 Practice tracing to hone your skills



At the end of every chapter you'll find sample sketches. Use them to practice tracing or to add in detail to create characters. Keep practicing to improve your skills.

CHAPTER 1
ACTION

CHAPTER 2
MARTIAL ARTS

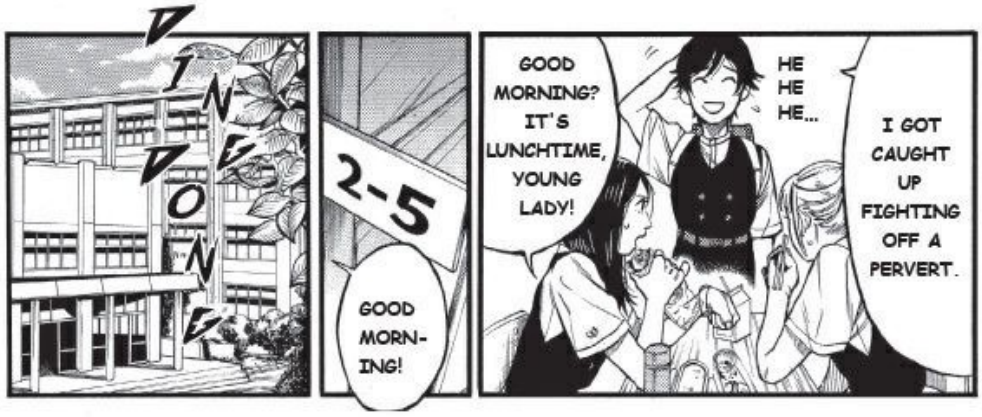
CHAPTER 3
INTERACTING

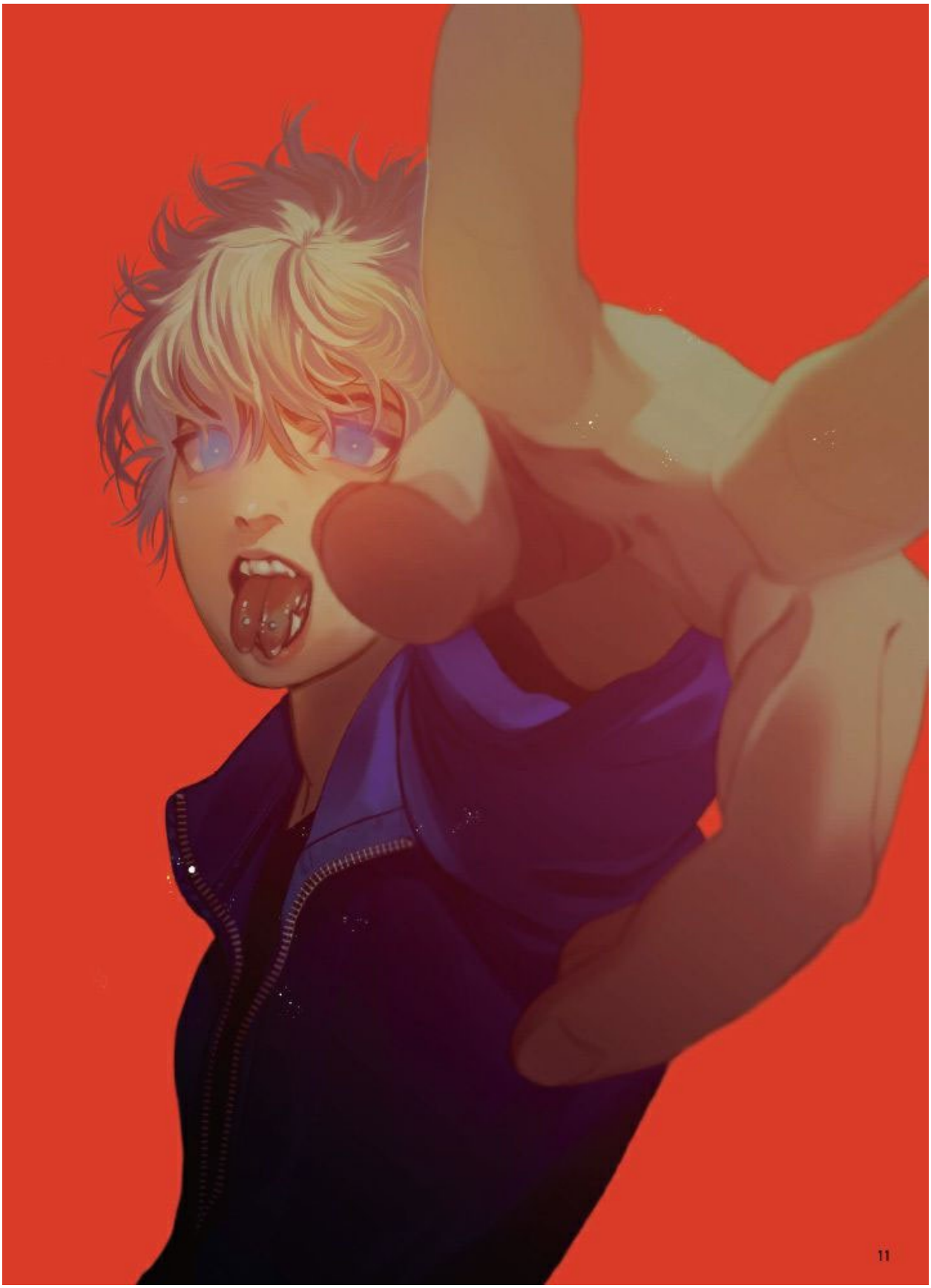
CHAPTER 4
WEAPONS

CHAPTER 5
REACTING

NO WAY!

STRONGER THAN YOU THOUGHT, HUH?





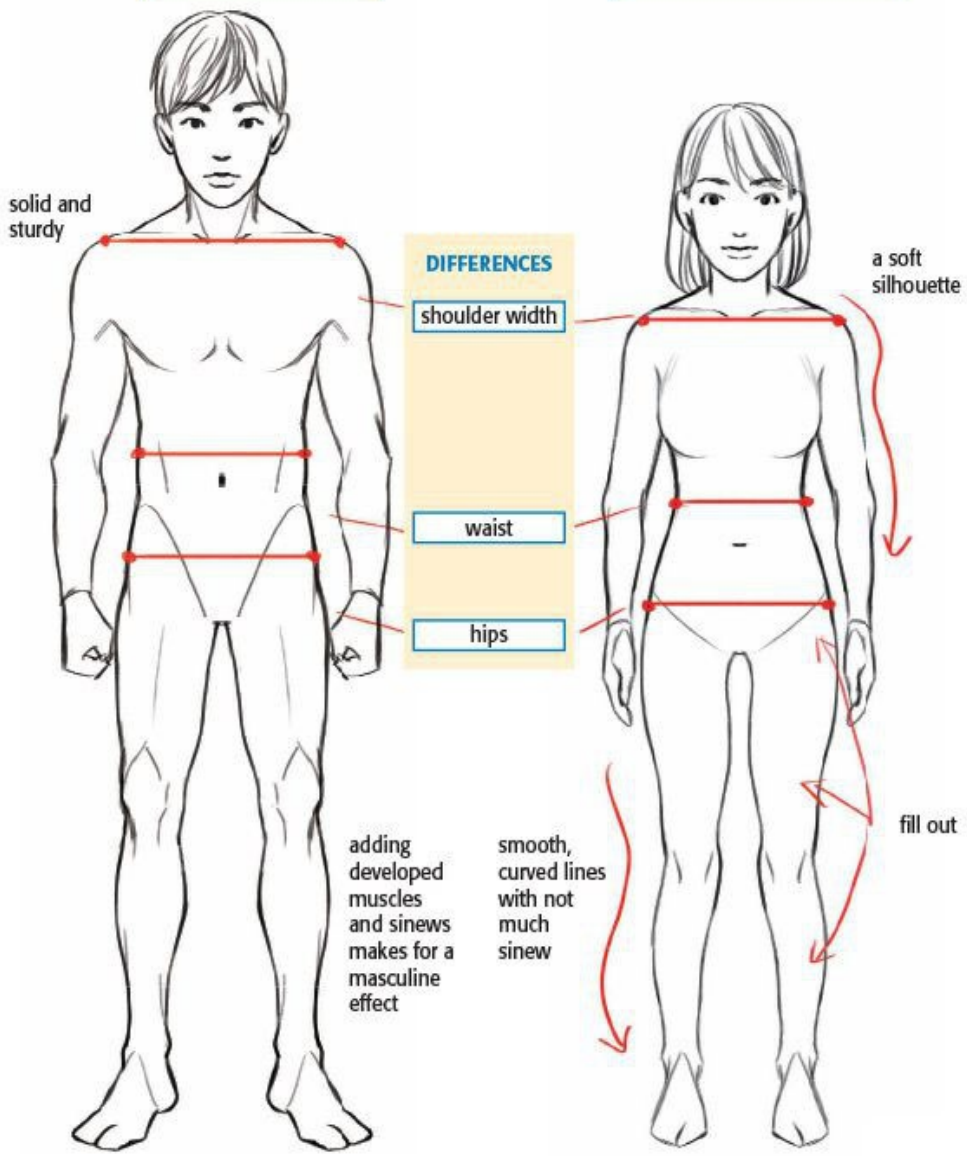
Drawing males and females

Here we show the differences to bear in mind when drawing men's and women's bodies. We'll look at how to view and draw skeletal structures, at flesh distribution, bone structure and so on.

Front

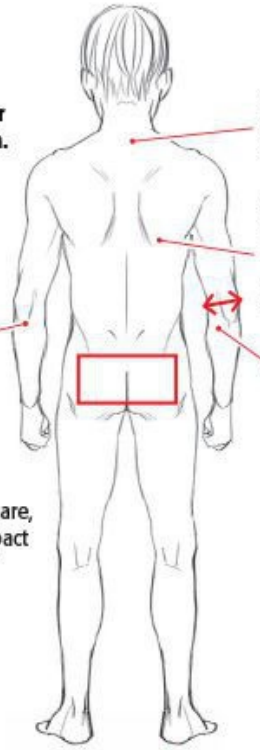
★ Tip
Male
Keep an angular, linear form in mind.

★ Tip
Female
Take care to create rounded, softly curved lines.



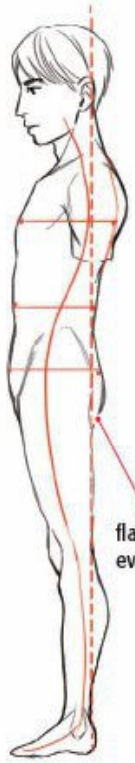
Back

Notice the differences in size and fullness of shoulder lines, shoulder blades, joints and so on.



Side

When drawing figures, it's important to have an understanding of how the spine looks.



Create fullness with the figure expressed in firm, straight lines. It's important to keep in mind the protrusion of joints and bones when viewing a figure from the side.

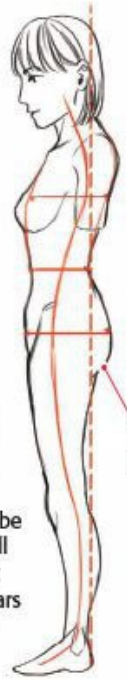
spine

The human spine is slightly curved.

chest

waist

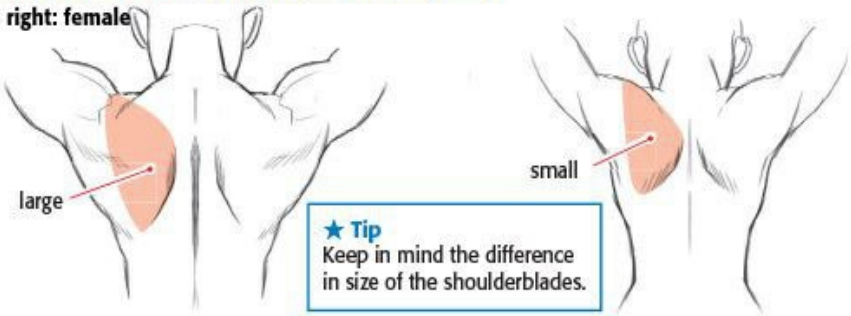
hips



Keep the figure at a narrow, slender width. Even when viewed from the side, there should be a curve at the small of the back so that the stomach appears to be the thinnest part of the torso.

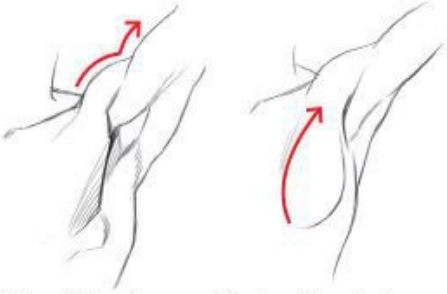
Movement in the back when raising arms

Left: male; right: female



★ Tip
Keep in mind the difference in size of the shoulderblades.

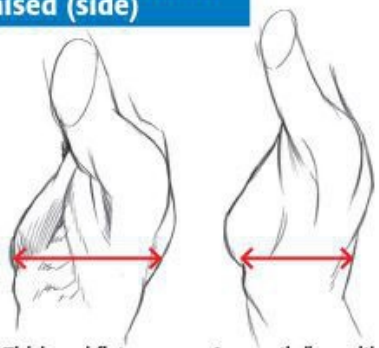
Underarms when arms are raised (front)



Depict the solidity of muscles and sinews as though they are a range of mountains.

The chest is pulled upwards in a delicately sinuous manner.

Underarms when arms are raised (side)

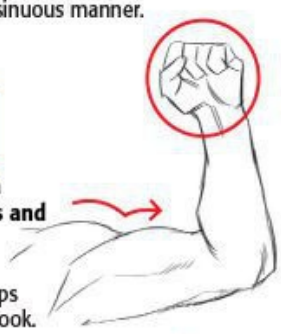


Thick and flat.

A smooth line with some swelling to it.

Differences when arms are bent

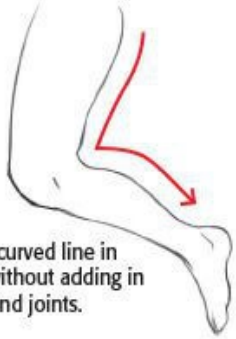
Illustrate difference through hand size, and the thickness and fullness of arms.



Draw flexed biceps with an angular look.

Slim, with joints that don't stand out.

Keep angular with muscles and bone shape in mind.



Keep a curved line in mind, without adding in bones and joints.

Hands

Observation is the key to improving. Don't try to draw everything perfectly straight away, but work in stages starting with a simple silhouette.

★ When the fingers are spread, the palm widens too. Don't draw all the fingers the same length; make the middle finger the longest.

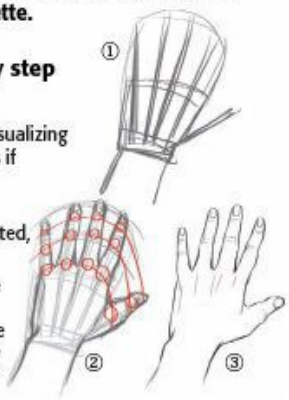
How to draw hands step by step

• Back of the hand

① Compose the bone structure, visualizing needles as you go. Add on flesh as if putting on a mitten.

② Make circles where the joints should be. When joints are connected, they will form an arch shape.

③ At this stage, make sure to have the thumb lying on its side. Make adjustments to form, and complete by adding fingernails and the bony sections of the joints.

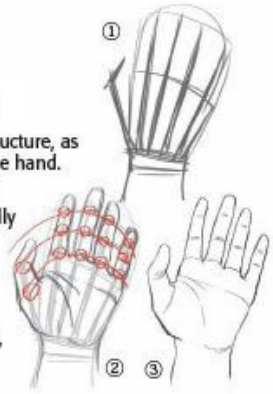


• Palm of the hand

① Start with the bone structure, as you did for the back of the hand.

② Once you are familiar with this, you can gradually simplify the blocking-in process.

③ Depict the palm's softness and creases. For more realistic creases, layer several lines one over the other.



• Nails

male

- Fingers are short and thick
- The back of the hand is large
- Nails are square or trapezoid

You may like to add veins, sinews and so on.

female

- Fingers are long and slender
- The back of the hand is small
- Nails are long and oval

For feminine hands, don't add too many wrinkles and joints!

• Hands viewed from various angles

Feet

How to draw feet step by step

As for the hands, first block in a simple shape, then gradually fill in details.

① Roughly decide on the shape of the foot, visualizing it wearing a sock.

② Think of the bone structure as if it flows from the top of the foot. Block in rough arches at the toe joints.

③ Divide the toes and draw flesh.

④ Fill in protrusions from bones and joints and adjust the shape to complete.

• Feet viewed from various angles

When on tiptoe, the sole of the foot forms a soft arc. Folds of skin form where the flesh gathers.

When viewed from front-on, the anklebone has a diagonal slant.

Draw the hollow in the arch of the foot. Observe which part curves and where the joints are.

START WITH THE BASICS

Mastering perspective

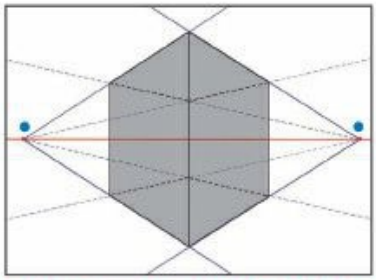
Perspective is the technique of depicting dimension in illustrations and spaces. It's slightly specialist knowledge, but simply having an understanding of it should dramatically expand your range.

Planning perspective

When deciding on perspective, first establish the eye level, which expresses height, and the vanishing point, which brings out depth.

Drawing in two-point perspective

This method of representing perspective uses two vanishing points. Using this technique brings dimension to human figures, scenery and so on.



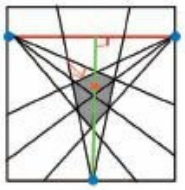
★ Close objects are large, while objects far away are small.
★ Imagine a straight, continuous road or long tunnel.

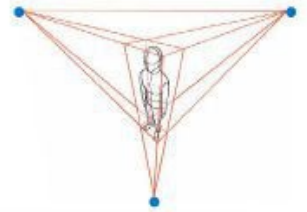
Remember these terms!
Vanishing point (blue dot)
Scenery and objects get smaller as they get further away, eventually becoming concentrated in one spot. This point, where objects disappear from view, is called the vanishing point.
Eye level (red line)
This is the height at which objects are viewed. It acts as the reference point when drawing perspective. The vanishing points for "width" and "depth" must be situated above eye level.

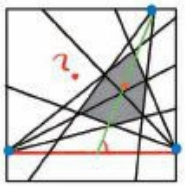
Overhead view and distortion

Use three-point perspective. The viewpoint fluctuates for overhead view and distortion so it is necessary to create a vanishing point for "height."

Overhead view: looking at objects from above; looking down over things.

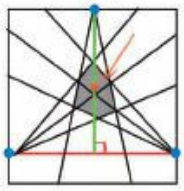


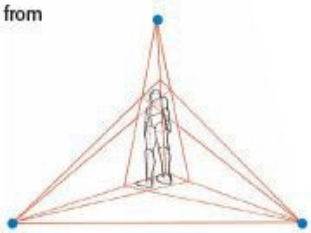


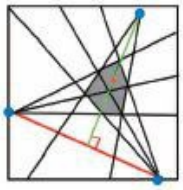


In three-point perspective, depth is created in three directions. Make sure to keep the center line perpendicular to the eye- level line that it crosses and that establishes height.

Distortion: looking at things from below; looking up.



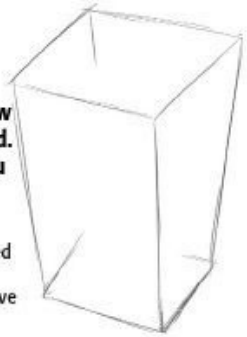




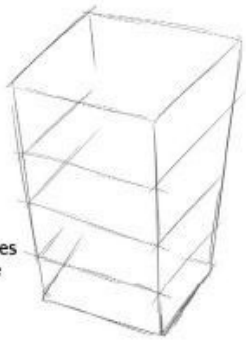
When tilting the composition, set the eye level on a diagonal. Simply tilting the image plane makes for a more dynamic appearance.

Bird's-eye view

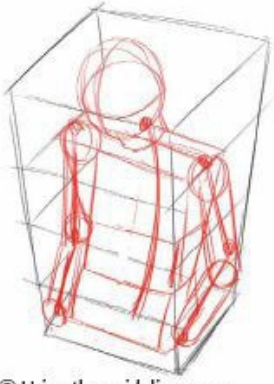
First visualize the pose you want to draw from an angle that is easy to understand. This will act as a reference for when you apply perspective.



① Draw a box viewed from above. The dimensions don't have to be accurate.



② Add guidelines to divide up the space.



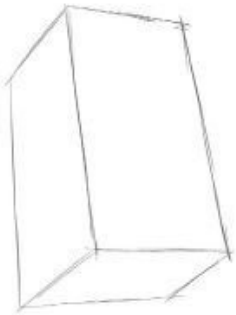
③ Using the guidelines as a reference, block in the figure. The point here is to create dimension by using cylindrical and box shapes to form arms, neck and so on.

Using the blocking-in as a base, add flesh to the figure.

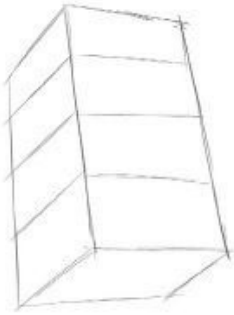
Finally, draw solid lines and neaten up the form.

Distortion

While the viewpoint for distortion and overhead view differs, the approach is the same. It's a good idea to start by repeatedly practicing drawing from a viewpoint that seems easy.



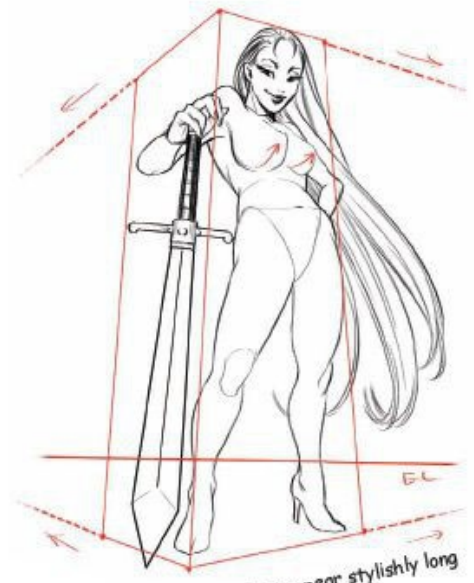
Draw a box viewed from below.

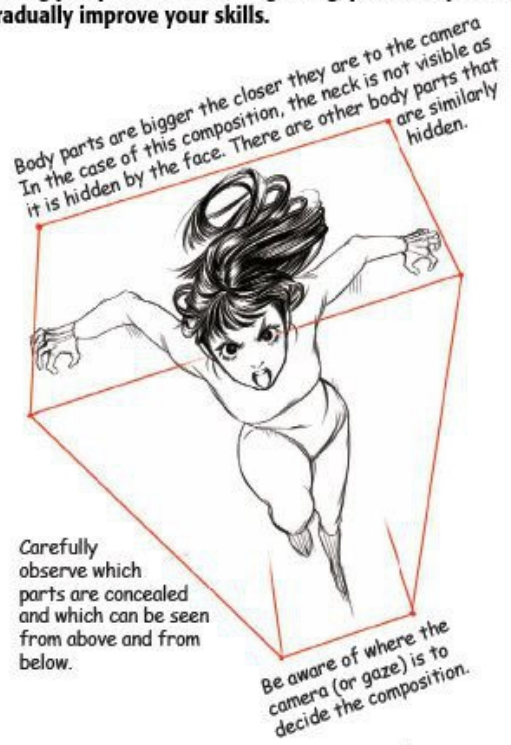


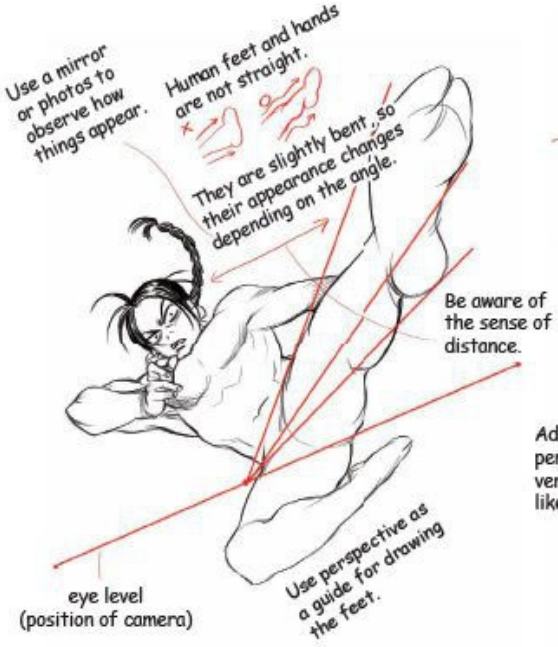
Be conscious of dimension if you want to give the face a realistic appearance.

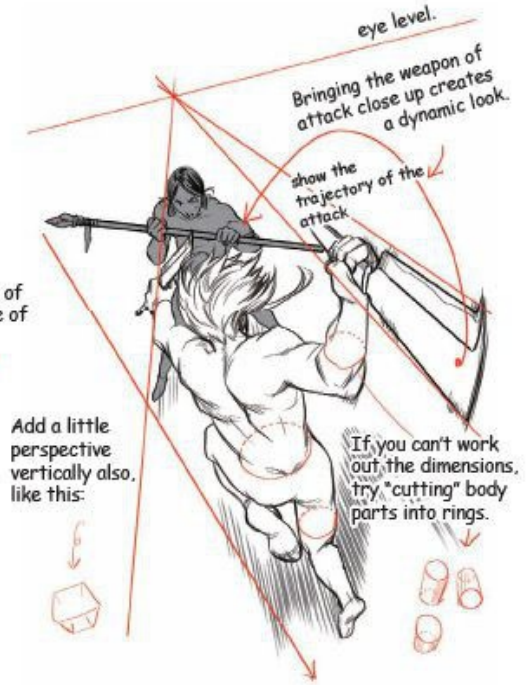
Examples of poses using perspective

With the pose you want to draw as a foundation, try adding perspective. In the beginning, practice by drawing characters inside boxes. Try various compositions to gradually improve your skills.









CHAPTER 1

ACTION

In this chapter, we'll start with how to draw basic movements. Then, we'll look at a range of techniques that will help you add dynamism to your action poses.

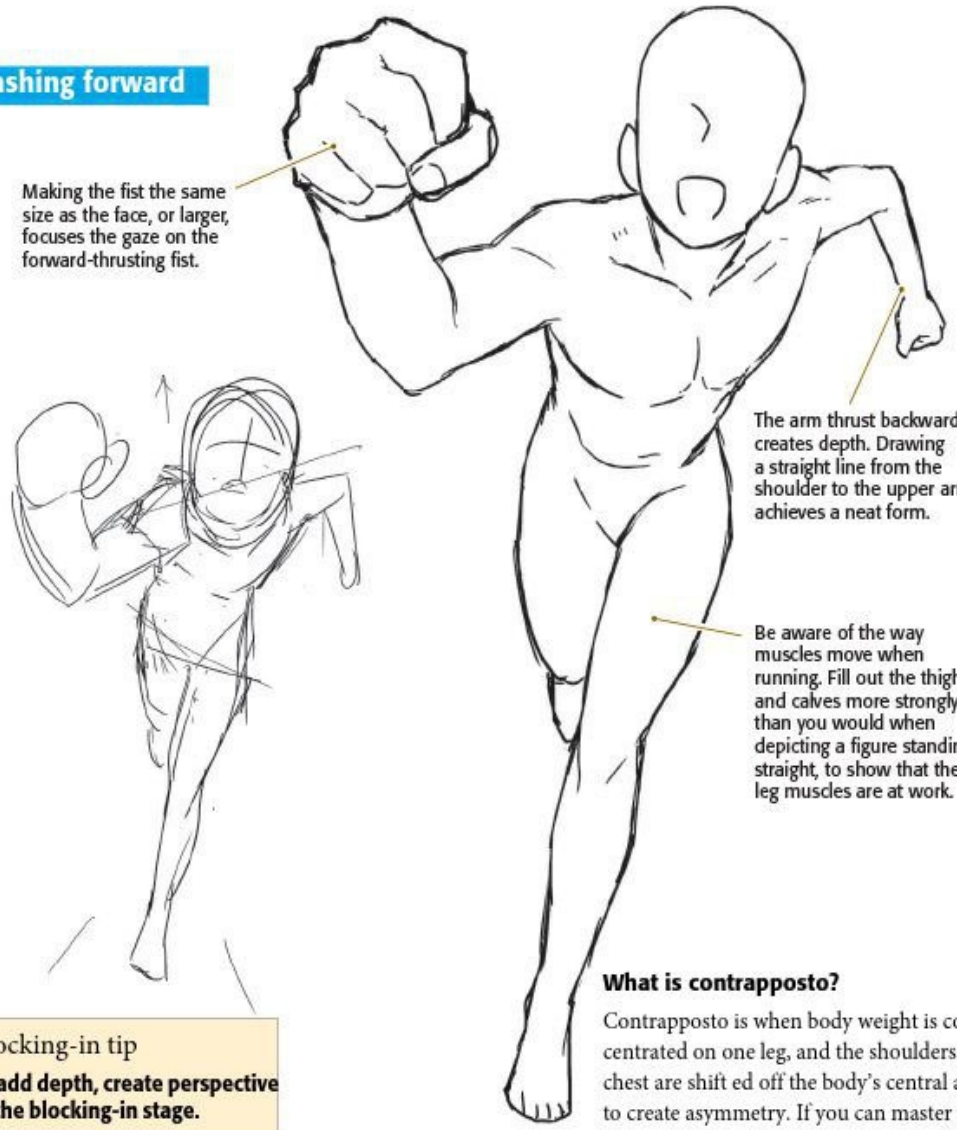
LET'S LEARN ABOUT ACTION

Paying attention to small details such as the angle of a hand or the way the body twists will bring life to your illustrations. Let's start with some basic actions.

Dashing and sprinting part 1

You can bring dynamic expression to the action of running by paying attention to the angle at which the arms are swinging and the body is leaning.

Dashing forward



Blocking-in tip

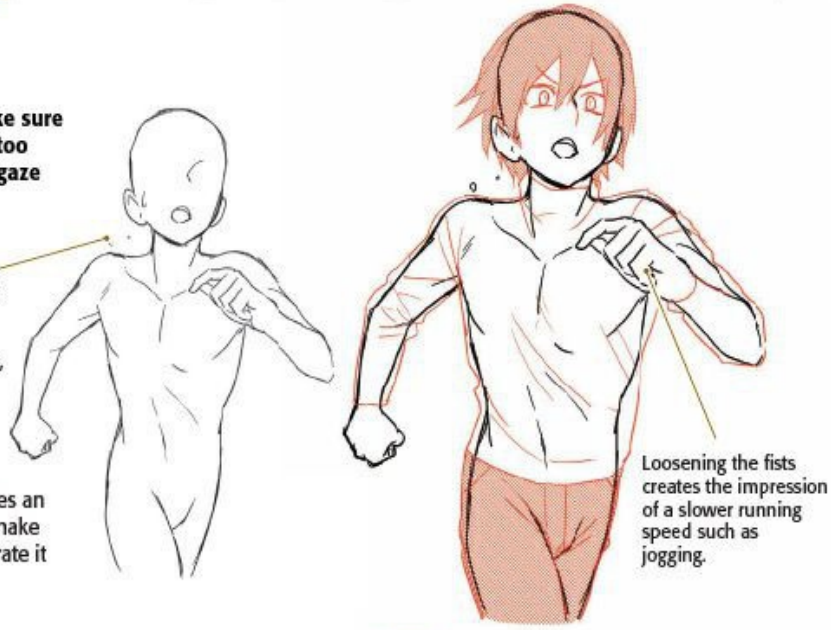
To add depth, create perspective at the blocking-in stage.

What is contrapposto?

Contrapposto is when body weight is concentrated on one leg, and the shoulders and chest are shift ed off the body's central axis to create asymmetry. If you can master this technique, your poses will look really cool.

Running

Unless it's a race, make sure not to raise the arms too much. Also, keep the gaze straight ahead.



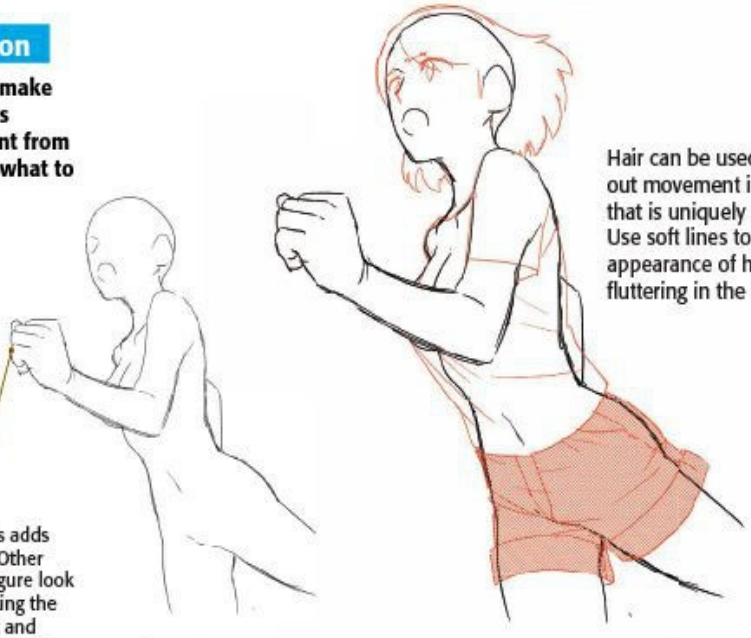
Flying droplets of sweat instantly give the appearance of movement. It's simple but effective, so give it a go.

Twisting the torso creates an attractive body line so make sure to actively incorporate it into your work.

Loosening the fists creates the impression of a slower running speed such as jogging.

Female version

Feminine touches make your female figures completely different from male ones. Here's what to focus on.

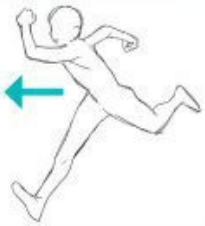


Hair can be used to bring out movement in a way that is uniquely female. Use soft lines to give the appearance of hair fluttering in the breeze.

Wrists facing outwards adds feminine expression. Other ways of making the figure look feminine include making the sides of the body taut and angling the legs inwards in a pigeon-toed fashion.

Key Point

The body leans forward naturally when running. Slightly exaggerate the forward lean to enhance the impression of speed. Pull the chin back toward the body slightly to give the look of a powerful running style.



Dashing and sprinting part 2

Let's tweak the angles. Here are some practical applications of running poses viewed from various angles.

Overhead view

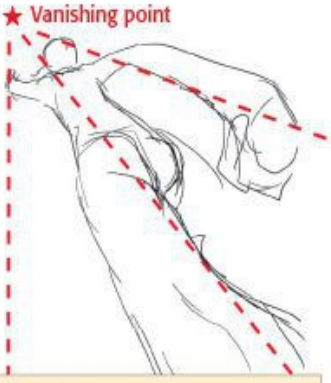
Keep in mind the parts of the body that can and cannot be seen when viewed from above.

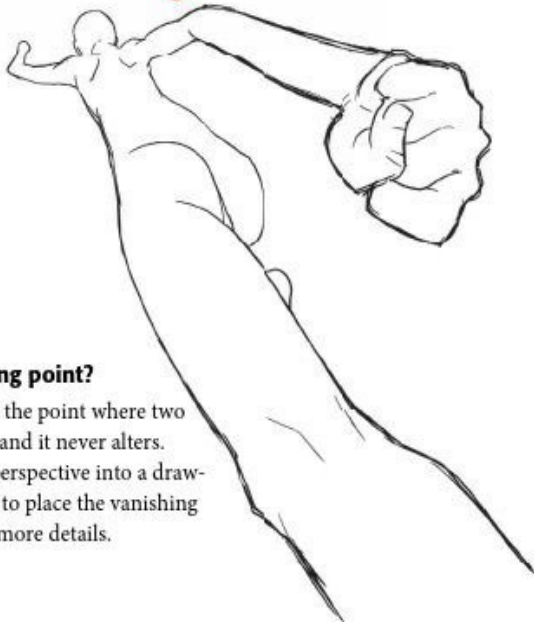
When the foot strikes the ground, the heel must be away from the surface. Ideally, the roundness of the heel to the ends of the toes should be slightly visible.

It's difficult to draw this in one take. Divide the body into parts—upper body, waist, legs—to make it easier to draw.

Rear view with perspective

When you want to add depth, establish the vanishing point. Be conscious of making the body parts in the foreground look large, slightly exaggerating appearances for a vibrant look.





Blocking-in tip

When incorporating distortion, make sure to firmly establish which sections of the body will be foreshortened.

What is the vanishing point?

The vanishing point is the point where two parallel lines intersect and it never alters. When incorporating perspective into a drawing, first decide where to place the vanishing point. See page 16 for more details.

Ninja running

This slightly peculiar form involves running with both arms stretched backward. This unique illustration form often appears in action manga.

This is a way of showing things from a bold angle. Set the eye level low to make the hands and feet stand out.

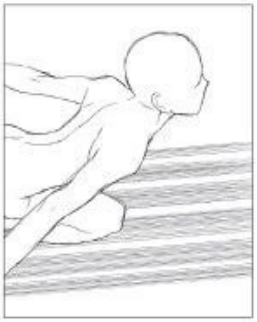
The term "ninja running" is sometimes used in Japan to describe the way marathon contestants run, but the pose being analyzed here is quite different. However, both are similar in that they involve running quietly without making big movements with the arms.

What is eye level?

Eye level refers to the height at which something is viewed. It refers not to the level of the character's gaze, but to the level of the gaze of the person viewing the illustration. See page 16 for more details.

Key Point

Lines can create a feeling of speed that cannot be communicated through the human figure on its own. There are different kinds of lines—so choose the right lines to suit the situation.



Dashing and sprinting part 3

When a figure is chasing someone ahead of them, pay attention to their running style, facial expression and gaze.

Chasing with intent

The object of pursuit is ahead, so show the desire to catch up in the figure's facial expression.

Depicting hands

For rounded fingers, imagine they are holding an egg.

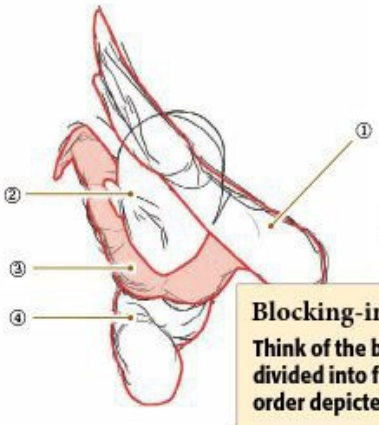
A tightly clenched fist.

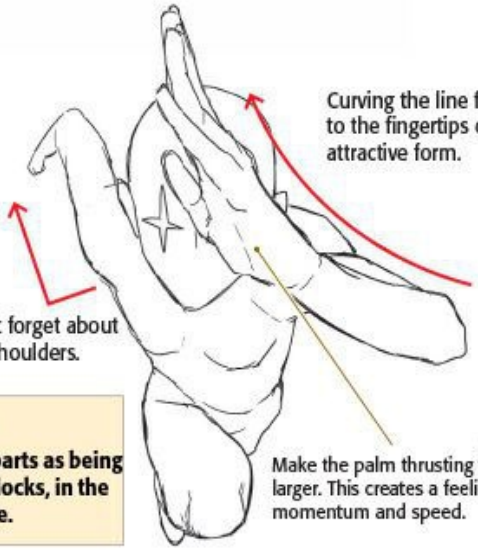
Alter the form of the hands depending on the situation. Clenched hands express strength and power.

A face that is screaming, or a strained expression, can help create a more vivid scene.

Chasing at top speed

Tweaking the facial expression can create a completely different impression.





Curving the line from the arm to the fingertips creates an attractive form.

Don't forget about the shoulders.

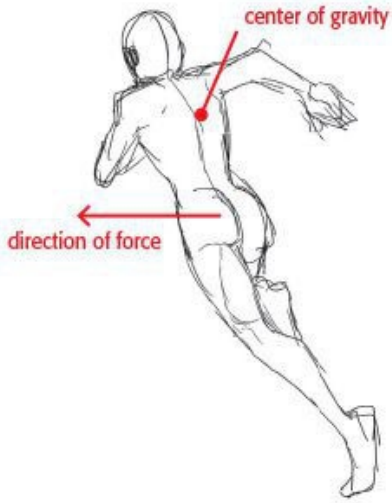
Make the palm thrusting forward larger. This creates a feeling of momentum and speed.

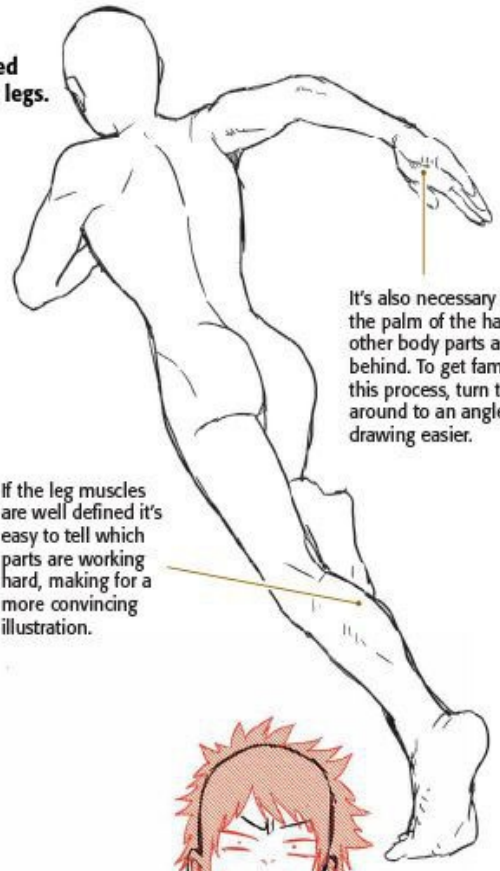
Blocking-in tip

Think of the body parts as being divided into four blocks, in the order depicted here.

Rear view

To bring out solidity in a running figure viewed from behind, express depth via the arms and legs.





It's also necessary to depict the palm of the hand and other body parts as seen from behind. To get familiar with this process, turn the paper around to an angle that makes drawing easier.

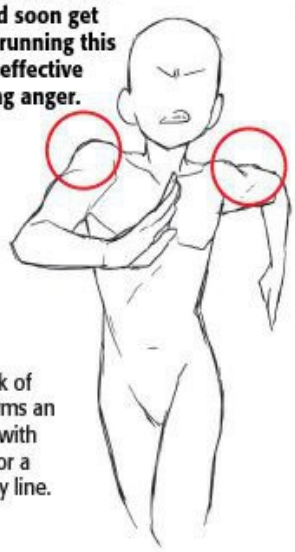
If the leg muscles are well defined it's easy to tell which parts are working hard, making for a more convincing illustration.

Blocking-in tip

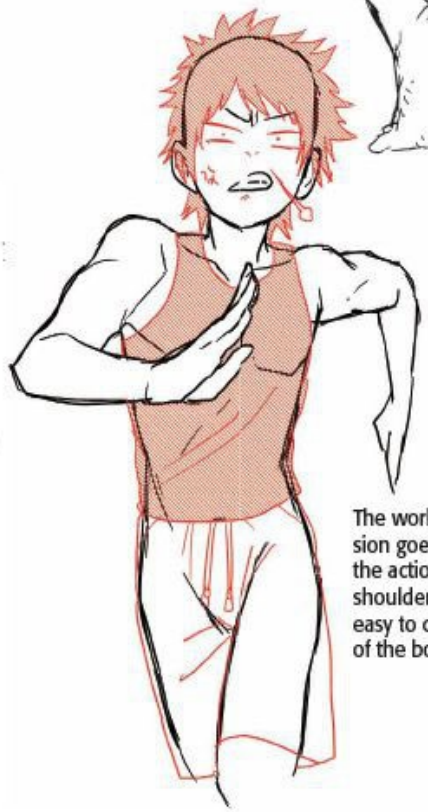
When little of the foot is in contact with the ground, weight is concentrated in the tips of the toes.

Angry running

This is a strained type of running with tension in the shoulders. You'd soon get tired if actually running this way, but it's an effective way of conveying anger.



Twisting the trunk of the body so it forms an inverted triangle with the hips makes for a cool-looking body line.



The worked-up expression goes well with the action. Leaving the shoulders bare makes it easy to convey the state of the body.

Dashing and sprinting part 4

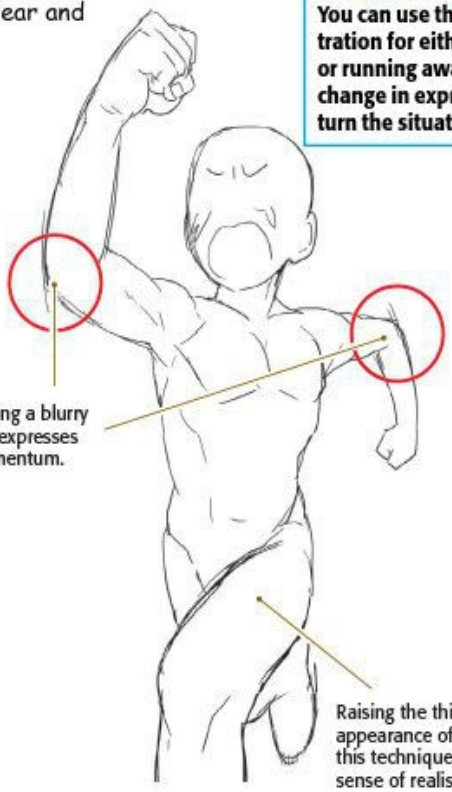
Set the scene by evoking a feeling of fear and panic from the figure being pursued.

★ Alter the expression

You can use the same illustration for either pursuing or running away. A mere change in expression will turn the situation around.

Running away at full speed

An arm raised higher than the chest makes a strong impact.



Adding a blurry line expresses momentum.

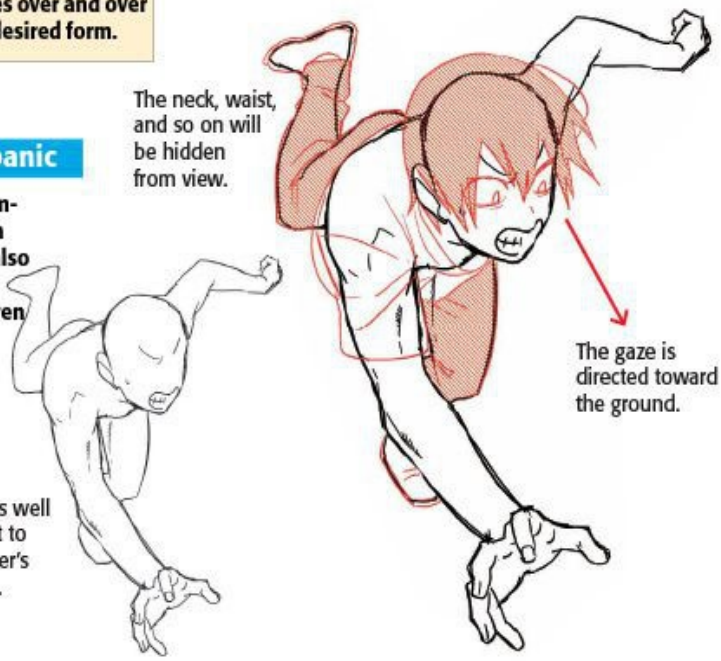
Raising the thigh creates the appearance of rushing. Use this technique to convey a sense of realism.

Blocking-in tip

The energy of the line is important in a sketch. Draw the lines over and over until you achieve the desired form.

Stumbling in a panic

Let's try drawing a stumbling scene. In addition to the figure, you can also show the cause of the fall: gravel, stairs, uneven ground, etc.



The neck, waist, and so on will be hidden from view.

The gaze is directed toward the ground.

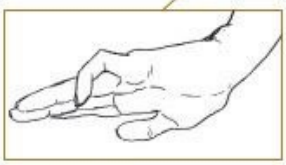
This pose works well when you want to show a character's careless nature.

Glancing behind

This establishes a scene where the character is running while worrying about being pursued from behind; it could be by a bear or a monster or a great big round rock. As you draw, think of the character's reaction to the thing pursuing them.

★ Use hands to depict a state of mind

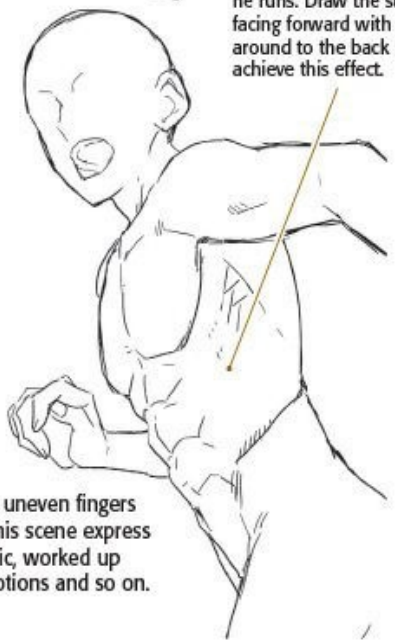
- **The right hand is closed, demonstrating the will to run.**
- **The left hand is loosely open as if to ward off whatever is approaching.**



Close-up
Carefully observe what the hand and fingers look like and familiarize yourself with different angles.

Weight is centered on the right leg. The body is leaning forward with the left leg raised, giving the impression of instability.

The character's body is twisting as he runs. Draw the stomach muscles facing forward with the chest pulling around to the back in order to achieve this effect.



The uneven fingers in this scene express panic, worked up emotions and so on.

Blocking-in tip

Sketch straight lines or lines with a slight arc to create a feeling of speed.

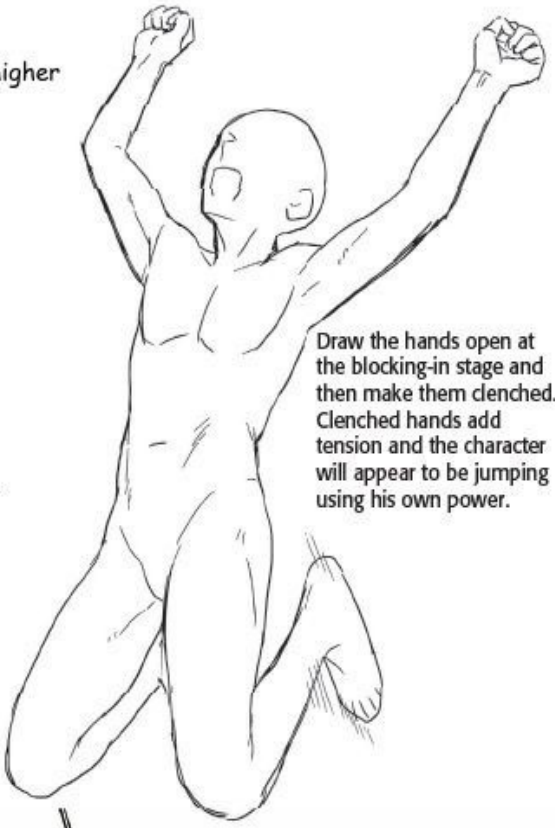
Jumping part 1

Practice depicting characters jumping higher by using springing power.

Jumping high

Opening out both arms makes for a relaxed looking jump.

Slightly lifting the face upwards creates the appearance of having jumped higher.



Draw the hands open at the blocking-in stage and then make them clenched. Clenched hands add tension and the character will appear to be jumping using his own power.

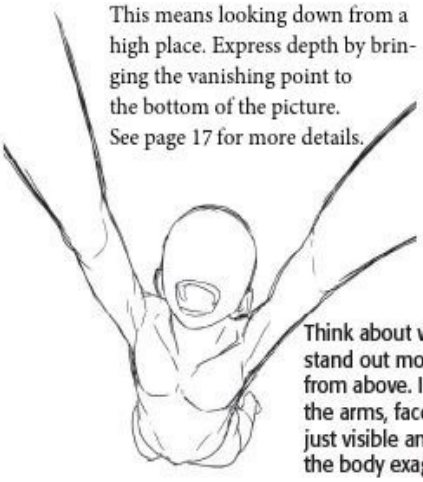
Blocking-in tip

Draw soft arcs to curve the body.

Viewed from above

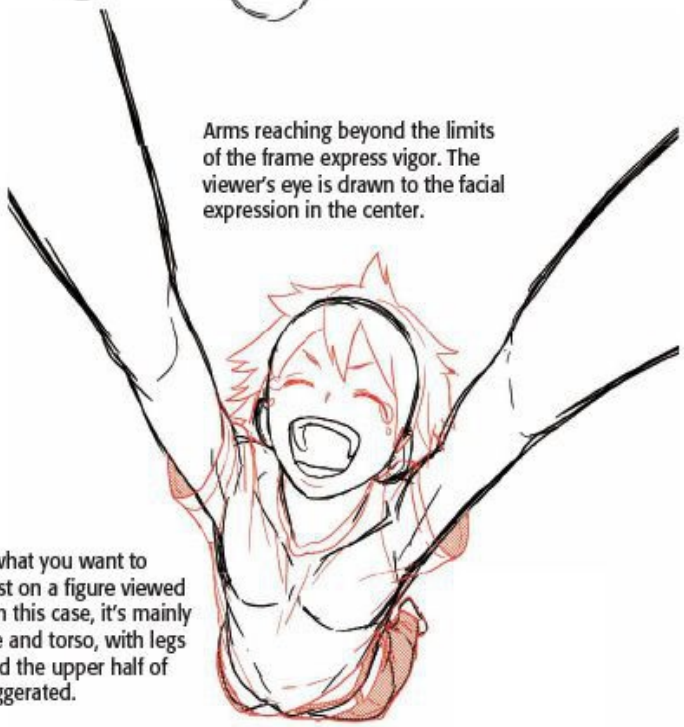
Bird's-eye view

This means looking down from a high place. Express depth by bringing the vanishing point to the bottom of the picture. See page 17 for more details.



Think about what you want to stand out most on a figure viewed from above. In this case, it's mainly the arms, face and torso, with legs just visible and the upper half of the body exaggerated.

Arms reaching beyond the limits of the frame express vigor. The viewer's eye is drawn to the facial expression in the center.



Female jump (from front-on)

Just as for running, add feminine touches. Rather than depicting the effort of jumping, bring out a floating feeling.

Tauten the armpits and open out the arms. Having the wrists facing outwards immediately conveys femininity.

★ How to differentiate females from males

- **Keep the legs together.**
- **Give the waist a firm and shapely outline to create a more feminine appearance.**

Blocking-in tip

With the image in mind of a figure floating in space, use more curved lines than straight ones.

Female jump (from the side)

It is easier to portray dimension from the side than from front-on.

Hair fluffing out around the head depicts descent.

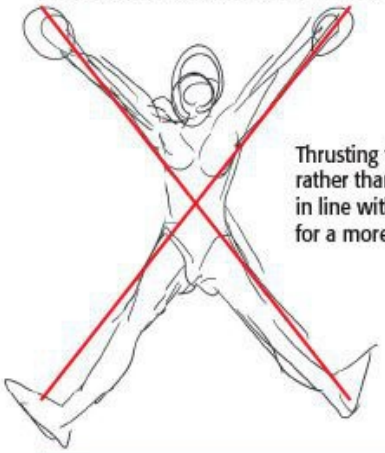
Bringing the legs up to meet the buttocks gives the appearance of a higher jump and enhances the floating feeling.

Jumping part 2

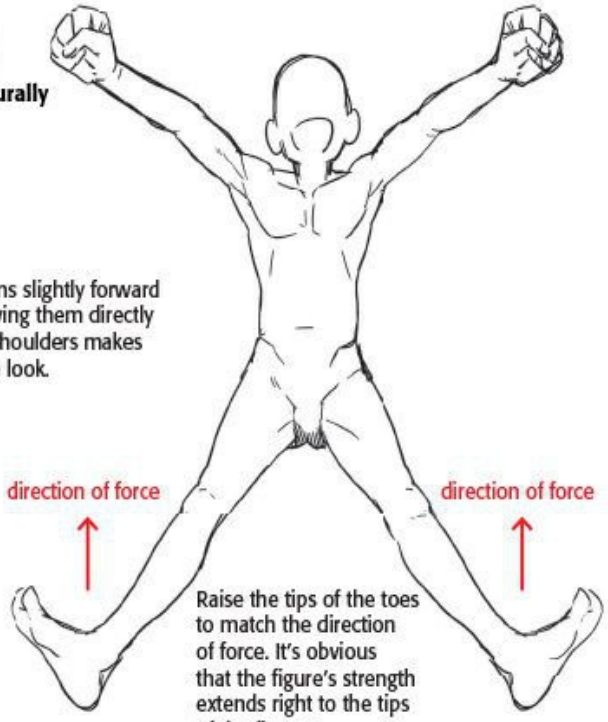
A jump with the arms and legs opened out wide expresses boldness and vigor.

Jumping with limbs spread

Spreading the arms and legs out wide naturally creates a joyful pose that's full of life.



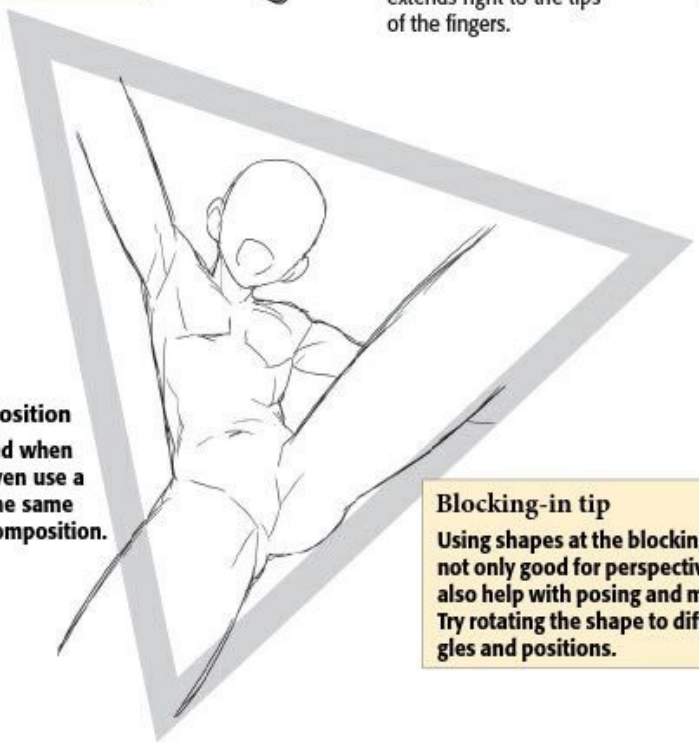
Thrusting the arms slightly forward rather than showing them directly in line with the shoulders makes for a more active look.



Raise the tips of the toes to match the direction of force. It's obvious that the figure's strength extends right to the tips of the fingers.

Blocking-in tip

Start with a cross, adding slight curves as you round out the figure.



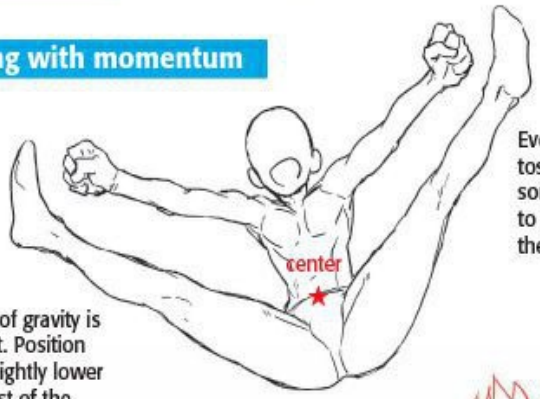
Use shapes for composition

Triangles are often used when blocking in. You can even use a triangle and circle at the same time, to create a fun composition.

Blocking-in tip

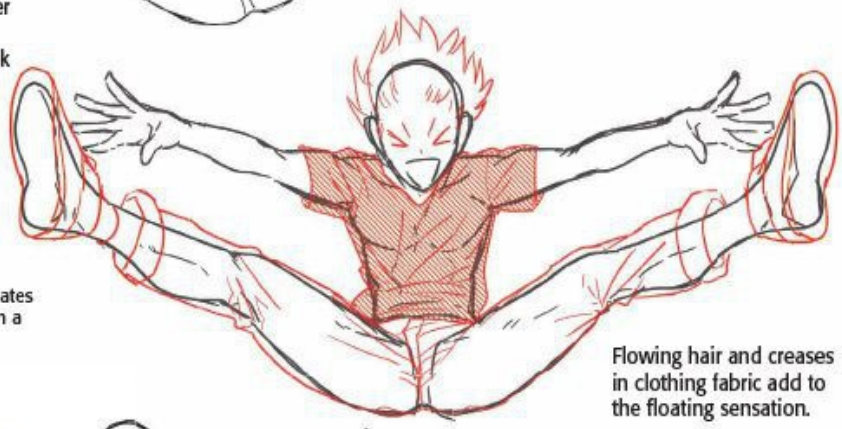
Using shapes at the blocking-in stage is not only good for perspective but can also help with posing and movement. Try rotating the shape to different angles and positions.

Jumping with momentum



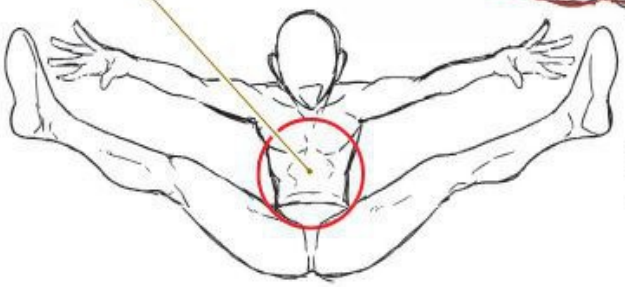
Even if the character is tossed into the air by someone else, the will to jump naturally causes the tips of the toes to lift.

The center of gravity is in the waist. Position the waist slightly lower than the rest of the body so it doesn't look unnatural.



Flowing hair and creases in clothing fabric add to the floating sensation.

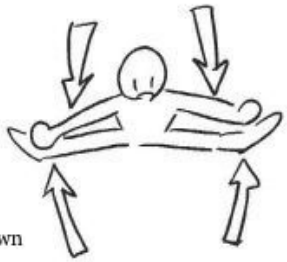
Bending forward creates a stooped effect with a concave stomach.

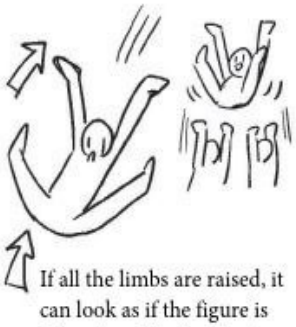


This type of pose, with the hands spread attractively, can also be used for gymnastic competitions.

Key Point The force of movement in mid-air

When jumping using one's own power, the arms and torso drop in reaction to the legs lifting. It may help to imagine a figure jumping over a vaulting horse.





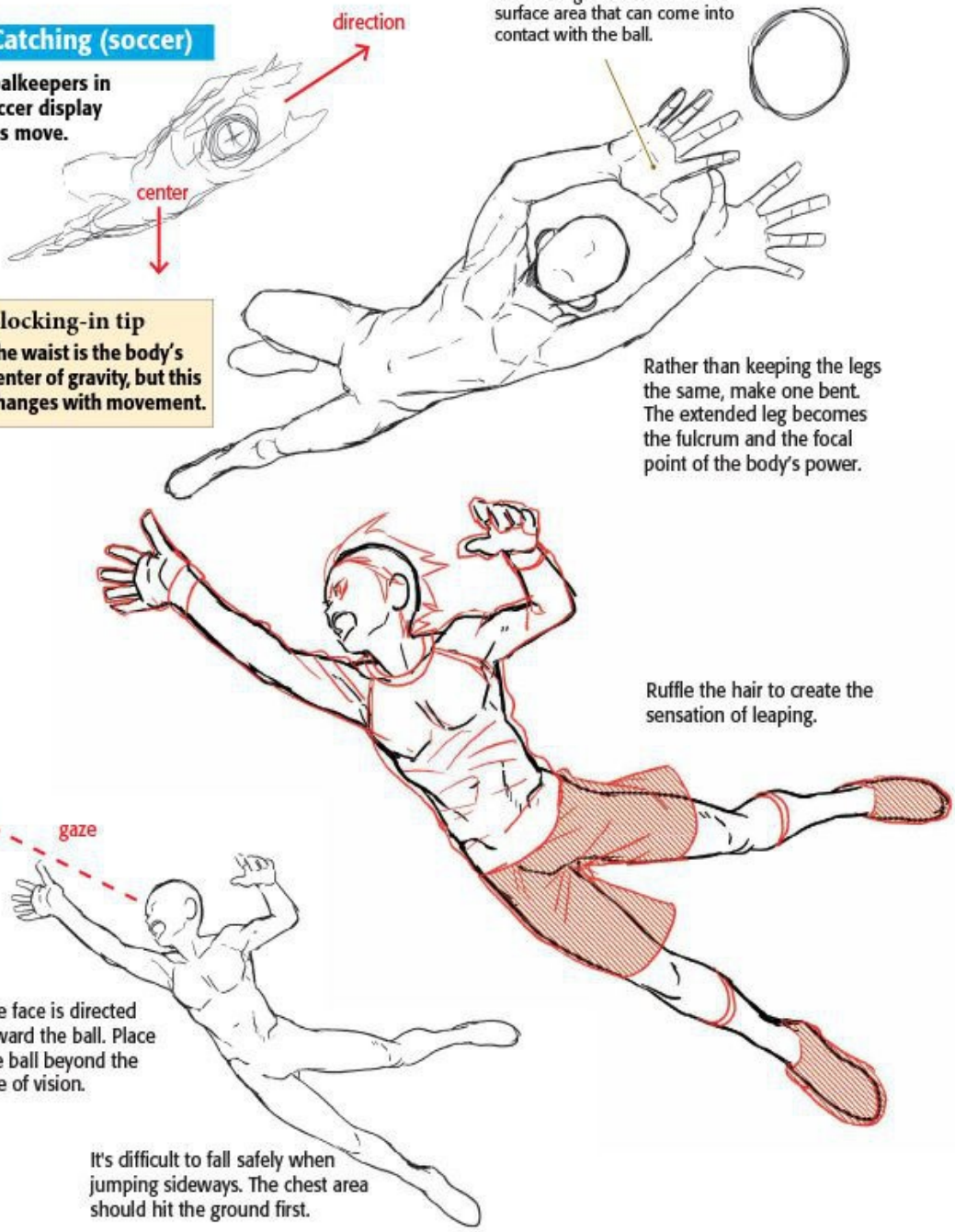
If all the limbs are raised, it can look as if the figure is being tossed in the air. It can also work in a scene where the figure is falling.

Jumping part 3

Jumping to the side is a movement often seen in sport.

Catching (soccer)

Goalkeepers in soccer display this move.



Open out the hands and stretch out the fingers to increase the surface area that can come into contact with the ball.

Blocking-in tip

The waist is the body's center of gravity, but this changes with movement.

Rather than keeping the legs the same, make one bent. The extended leg becomes the fulcrum and the focal point of the body's power.

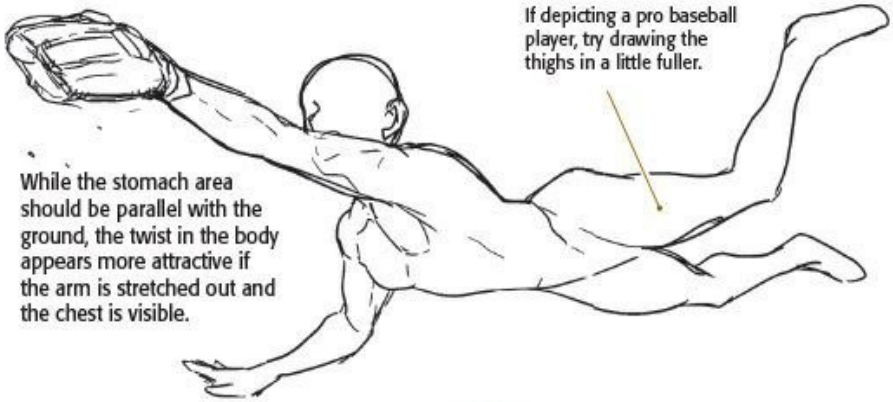
Ruffle the hair to create the sensation of leaping.

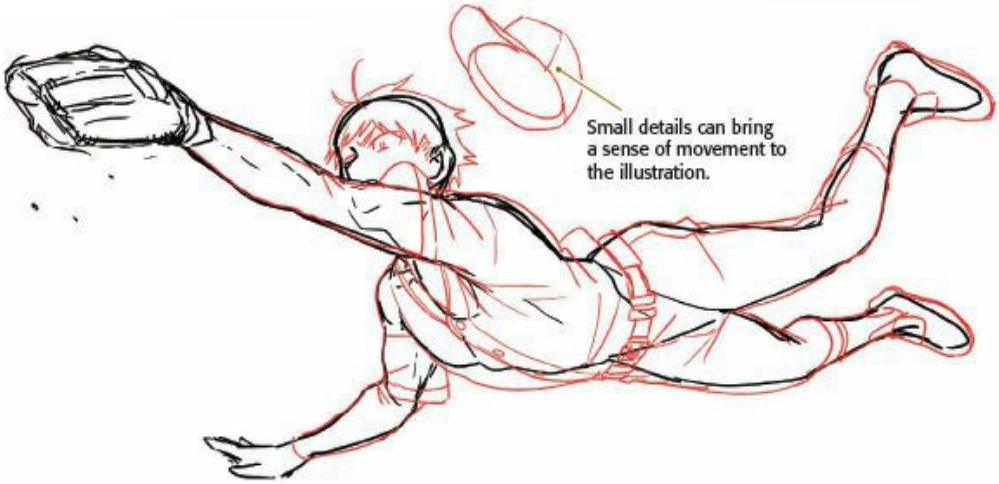
The face is directed toward the ball. Place the ball beyond the line of vision.

It's difficult to fall safely when jumping sideways. The chest area should hit the ground first.

Catching (baseball)

This is a diving-catch scene. Imagine the roar of the crowd as they cheer for this great play!

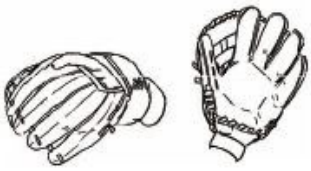




Key Point

Equipment used in sport

Balls used in various sports diff er in size and material. It's important to know if they are smooth or rough, etc., as well as knowing about gloves, rackets and other accessories, so you can improve your illustrations. Start by carefully observing these objects to get an understanding of their construction and use, and these observations will help you produce better drawings.



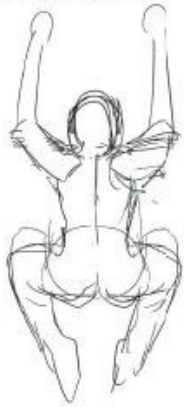
Sports equipment design differs between manufacturers. Observe several versions to decide which one to draw. Th e way the equipment is held depends on who is using it and its position.

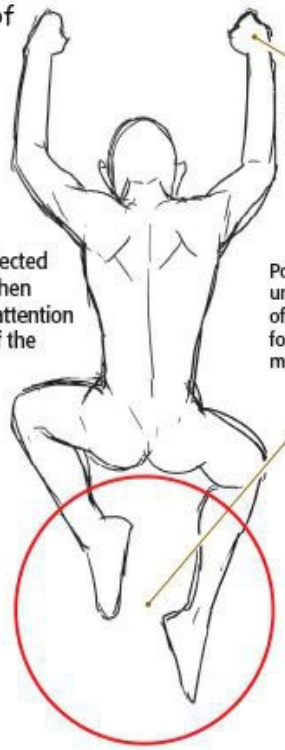
Falling

Let's look at the difference between falling of one's own free will and being forced to fall.

Jumping down

The height from which the figure is jumping can be established via the position of the raised arms.

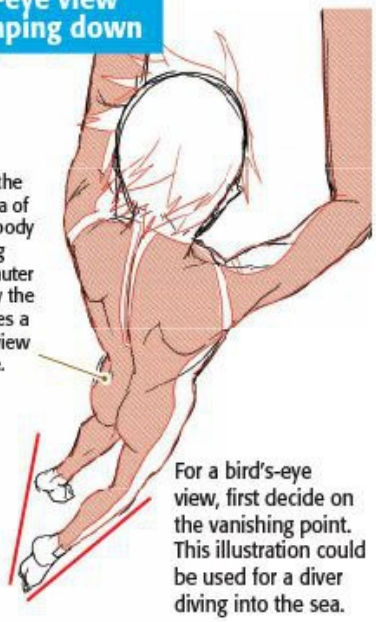




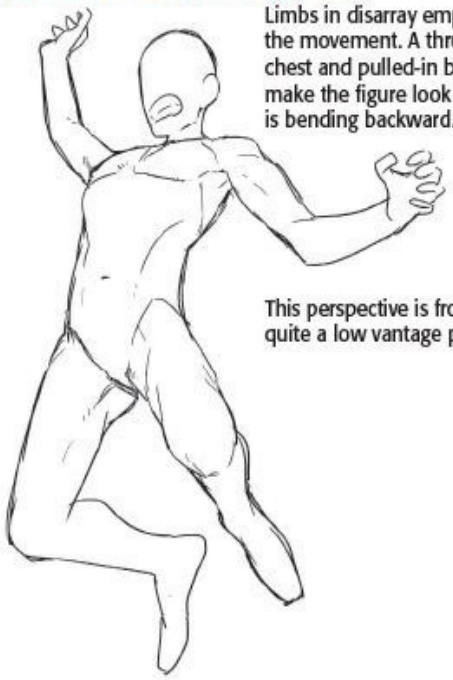
Blocking-in tip

For the rear view of a figure, block in shoulders, waist, joints and so on.

Bird's-eye view of jumping down



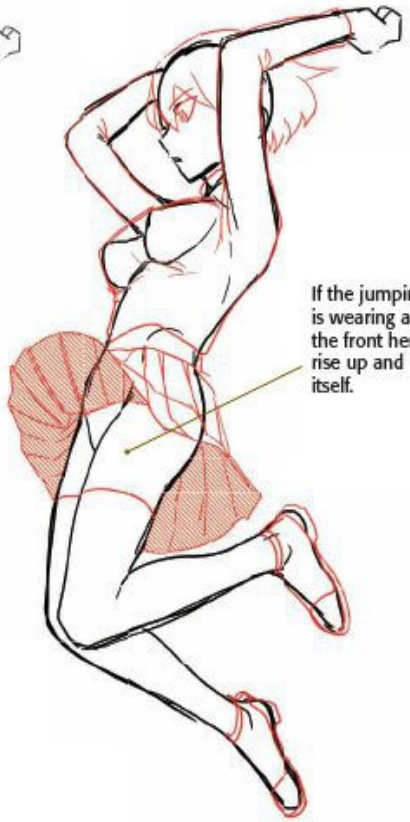
A fall viewed from below



Jumping down from a high place

Rather than tautening the armpits, slightly raise them for a pose that would look good in an action scene.

Focus on feminine suppleness.



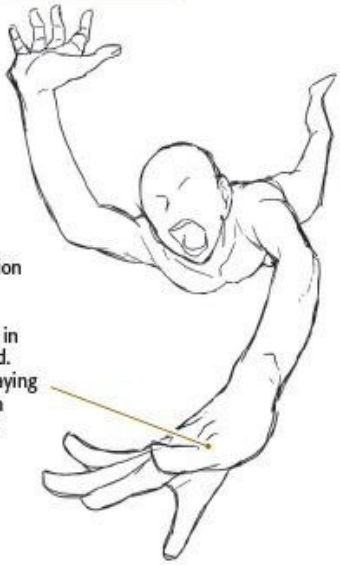
If the jumping figure is wearing a skirt, the front hem will rise up and back on itself.

A sudden fall

This depicts a fall from quite a high place.

Blocking-in tip

Position the vanishing point in the upper section of the frame to play with perspective.



This composition makes use of perspective, with the hand in the foreground. Randomly splaying the fingers can express panic.

Key Point

Arm position reveals intent

When dropping down of one's own free will, the arms follow the gravitational pull. In a forced fall, however, hands and arms are instinctively brought up in front of the face, creating an impression of resistance. Use this knowledge to incorporate drama into your work.

Free will

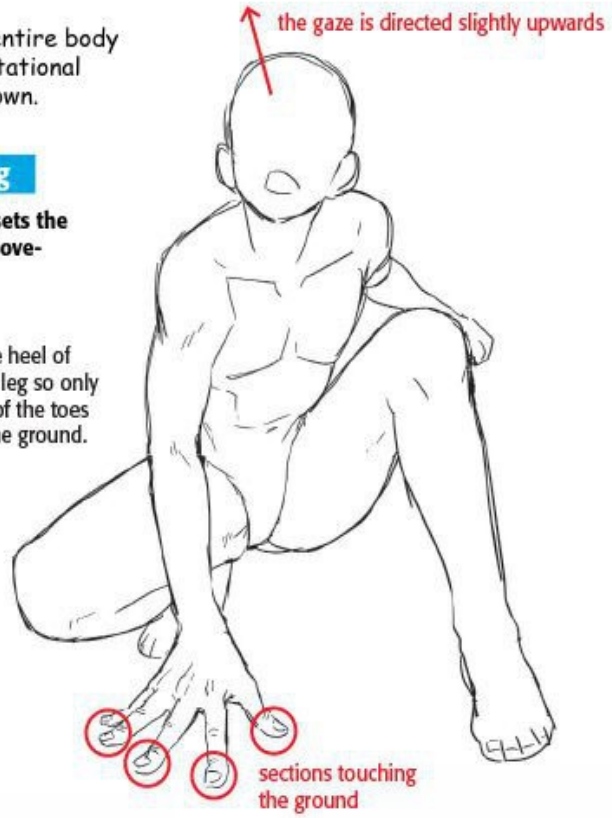
A forced fall

Landing

In a safe landing, the entire body works to prevent gravitational force from pulling it down.

Three-point landing

An accomplished landing sets the character up for smooth movement into the next scene.



Three-point landing with one leg extended

Rather than keeping all the limbs straight and parallel, the figure will look cooler if one arm is turned backward.

The right hand, toes of the right foot, and arch of the left foot touch the ground. The left arm balances the body.

Female version

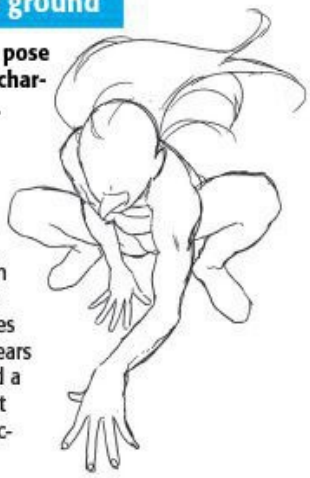
Long hair can be used to bring movement to your illustration. At the moment of landing, the hair stays up in the air, dropping down after a delay.

Blocking-in tip

Gravity affects the hair after the rest of the body. Use this to incorporate a sense of the passage of time into your story.

Landing with both hands on the ground

This unhuman-like pose is good for enemy characters and the like.



Leaning forward with both hands and feet on the ground creates movement that appears far from human. Add a facial expression that brings out the character's personality.

Landing too quickly

This happens when there is too much momentum and a neat landing is not possible.

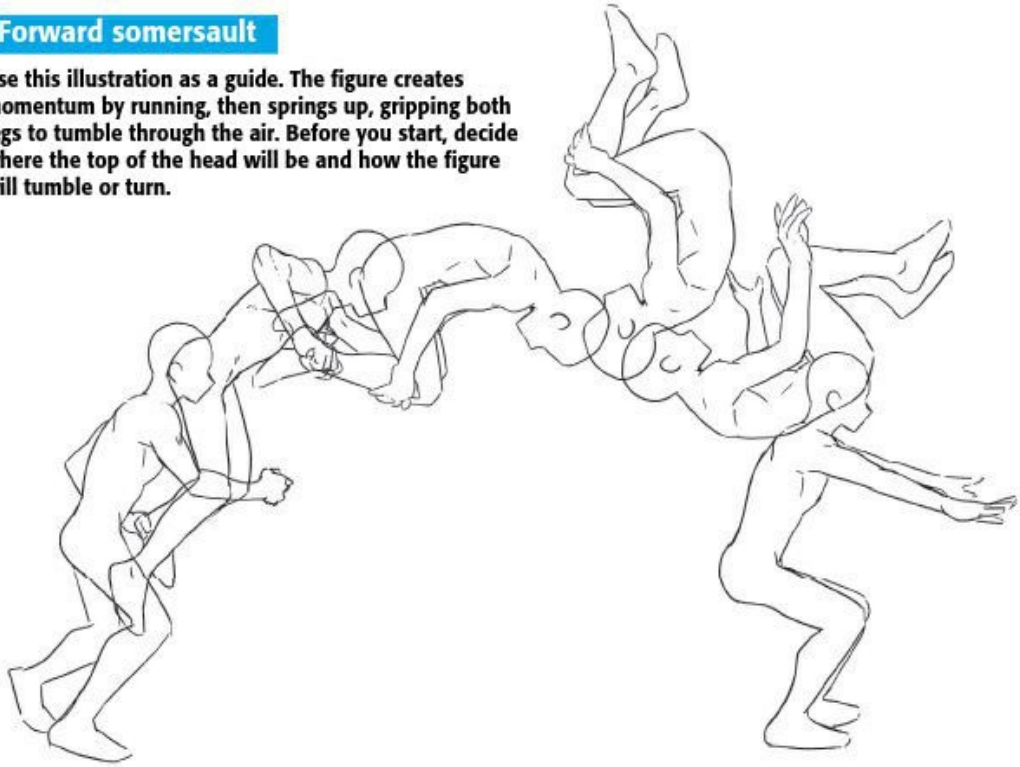
Make sure to convey the instability of being off-balance. You could add bounce marks in as effects too.

Turning

Create a sense of vibrancy by focusing on the exertion required on the limbs to suspend the body in mid-air.

Forward somersault

Use this illustration as a guide. The figure creates momentum by running, then springs up, gripping both legs to tumble through the air. Before you start, decide where the top of the head will be and how the figure will tumble or turn.



Step-by-step analysis

❶ Focusing only on the turn detracts from the jumping power, so make sure to depict the run-up to the forward somersault as well.

❷ The legs power the spring from the ground. Lift the elbows and visualize the momentum from the arms lifting the body off the ground.

❸ Turn the body in mid-air, creating a seated pose with the hands gripping the knees. Bring the legs closer together.

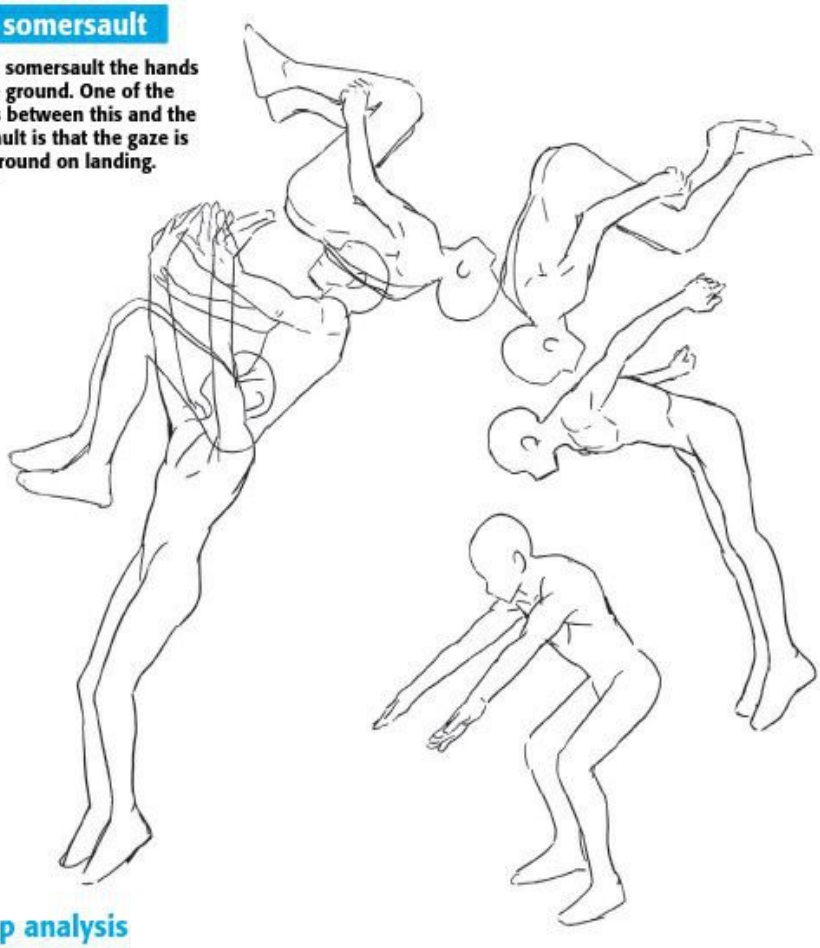
❹ For most of the time that the body is flying through the air, the hands will be grasping the knees. If the back is leaning in, the somersault will go past the point where the turn is meant to happen.

❺ Add the motions preparing for landing. The hands come away from the legs at this point.

❻ Make the figure land on both legs. Aligning legs and arms neatly at this final stage makes for an attractive appearance.

Backward somersault

In this backward somersault the hands do not touch the ground. One of the main differences between this and the forward somersault is that the gaze is directed at the ground on landing.



Step-by-step analysis

❶ Swing up the arms and spring up on a slight diagonal. The power of the arms alone will not be enough for the turn, so when jumping, stretch the body backward out of a crouched position.

❷ The momentum of the arms causes the legs to bend.

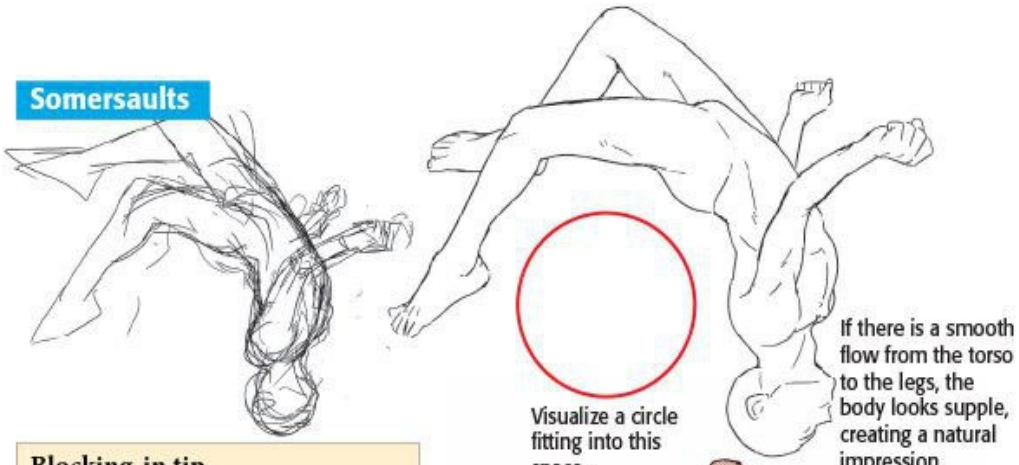
❸ Visualize the head already starting to face the ground. The body descends back to the ground, tumbling as it goes.

❹ The angle of the legs remains unchanged. Or you may want to change the angle of the legs in ❸ to prepare for a particular scene to follow.

❺ Having the arms swing backward looks good, or you can make the arms follow the rest of the body.

❻ A perfect landing might be difficult, but lining the legs up neatly looks really cool.

Somersaults

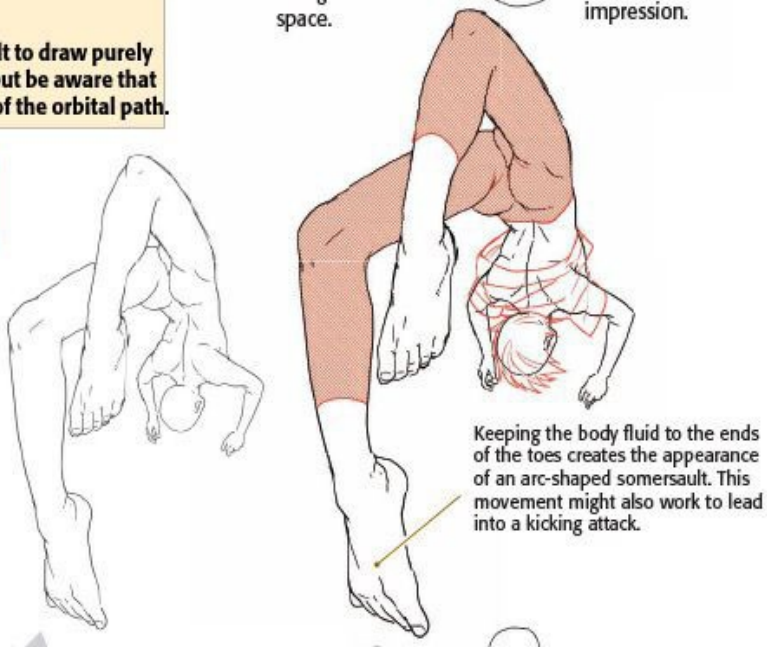


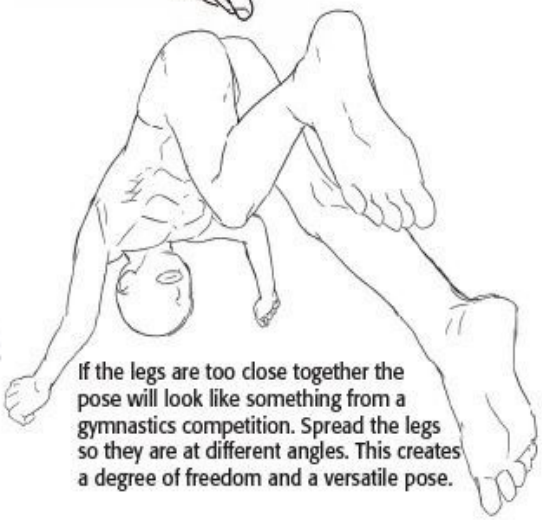
Blocking-in tip

Somersaults are difficult to draw purely through visualization, but be aware that the head is at the start of the orbital path.

Viewed from below the feet

A smoothly curving body makes for an elegant, supple-looking jump.



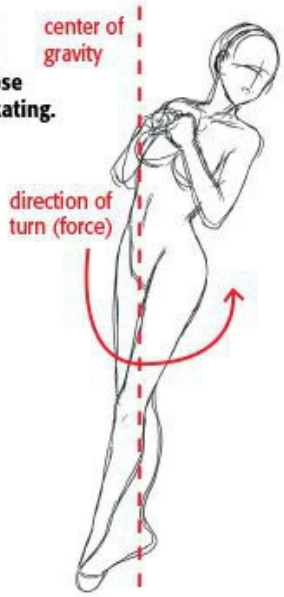


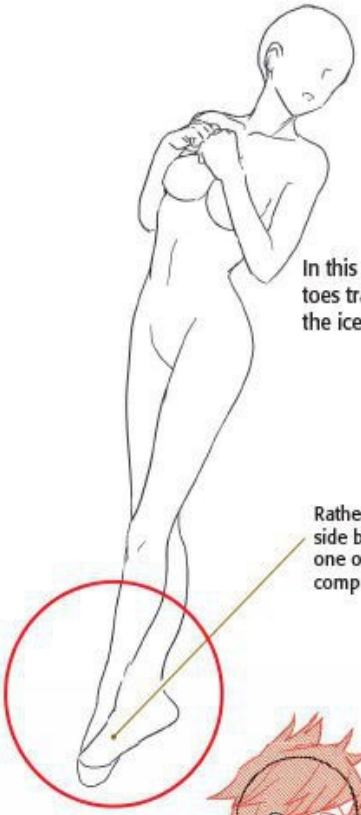
Blocking-in tip

Use a triangle when blocking in to help you get the proportions right.

Spinning

This spinning pose depicts figure skating.





In this pose, the tips of the toes trace the surface of the ice while spinning.

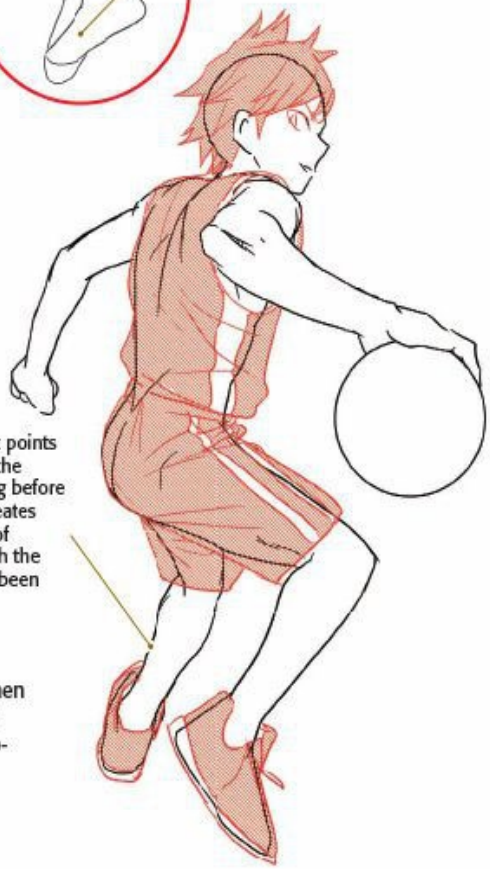
Rather than keeping the legs side by side, position them one over the other for a competition-style look.

Blocking-in tip

Decide on the center of gravity and the direction of the turn. The body should lean in the same direction as the turn.

Pivot

This is a move used in basketball. With one leg forming the pivot in the center, the player turns from side to side.



The planted foot points in the direction the player was facing before pivoting. This creates the impression of momentum, with the turn having just been completed.

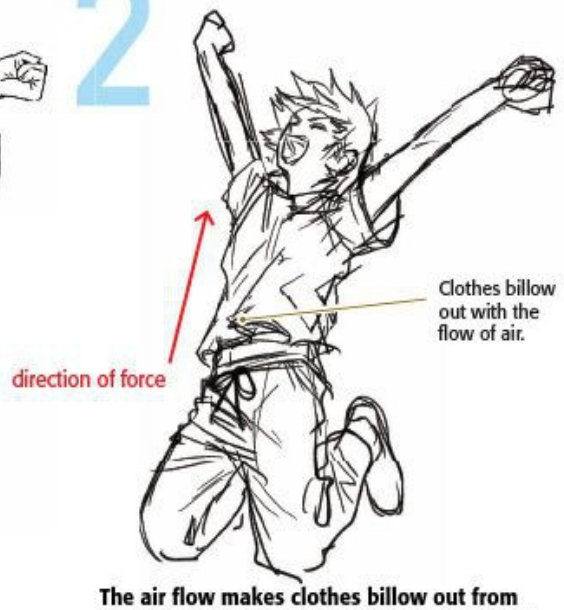
A pivot is not very effective when the opponent is far away. Use this technique when the opponent is drawing closer.

ILLUSTRATING IN COLOR

1 Rough sketch

Here, we'll create the jump illustration from page 28 in color. The rough sketch acts as the foundation for the illustration. Once you're happy with the sketch, start to fill in more detail.

2 Draft



The air flow makes clothes billow out from the body, revealing the stomach. At this draft stage, roughly fill in fine details such as the facial expression and areas of clothing where wrinkles gather or where fabric hangs loosely.

4 Base Color

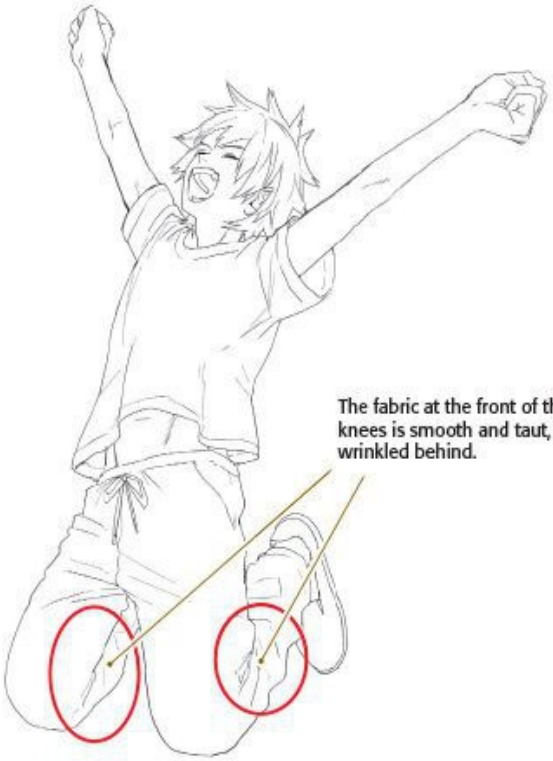
Skin color affects the impression a character makes, so choose a shade that suits the character. Color in clothes and hair too.

5 Add Shadow

Adding shadow dramatically improves the feeling of dimension in an illustration. Decide on the position of the light source and fill in shadow in the parts that are out of the light.

3 Line Drawing

At this stage, make changes and corrections to the draft lines. You want a drawing that is the finished product in terms of lines, so check that everything you want to include has been added and take the time necessary to make sure all the small details are in place. In particular, the facial expression, hair, and the cut and finish of clothes play a major role in the integrity of an illustration. The fabric of the sweatshirt is thick and soft, so gathers in wrinkles in places where the body bends or curves. This is the stage at which the lines are finalized before adding color.

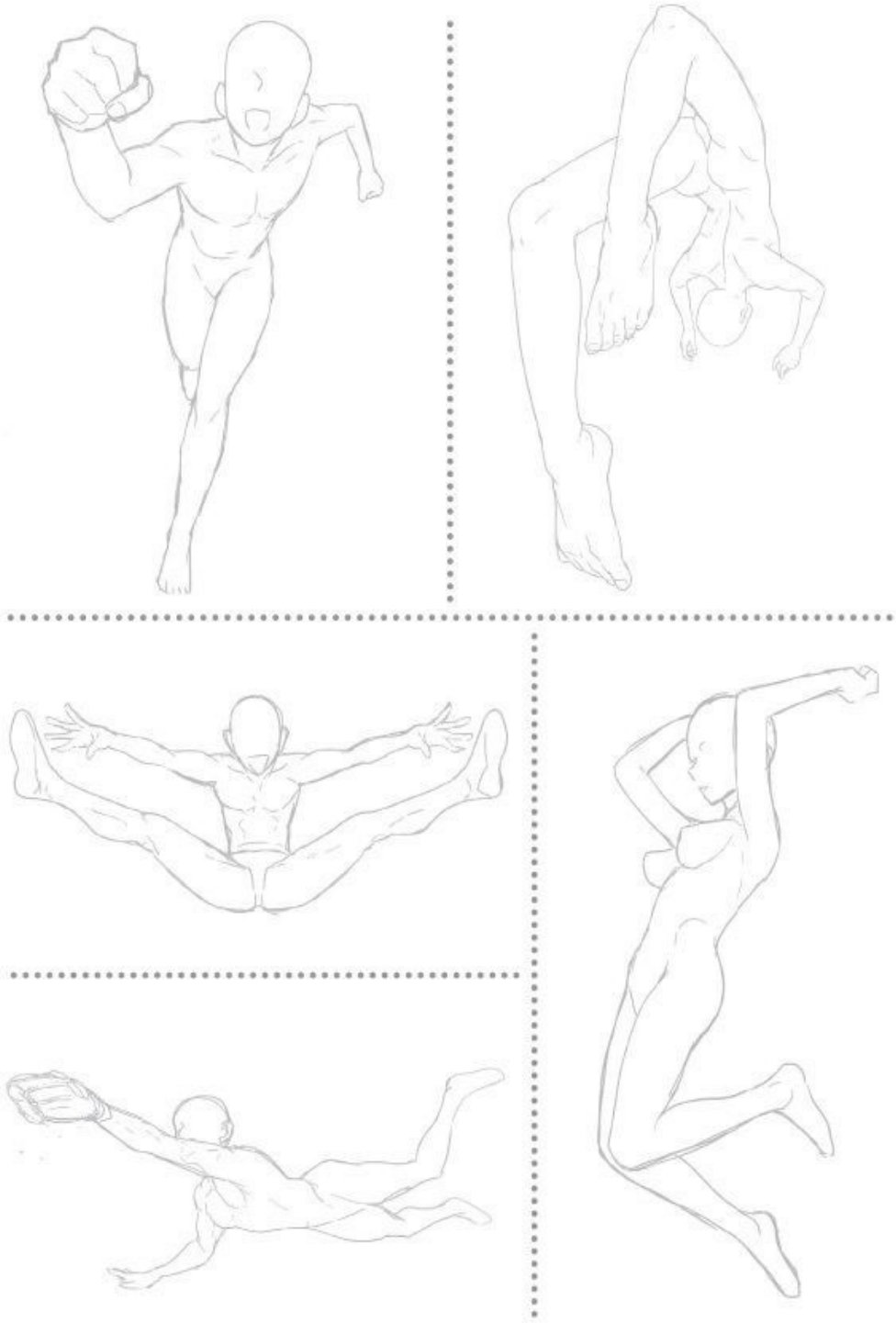


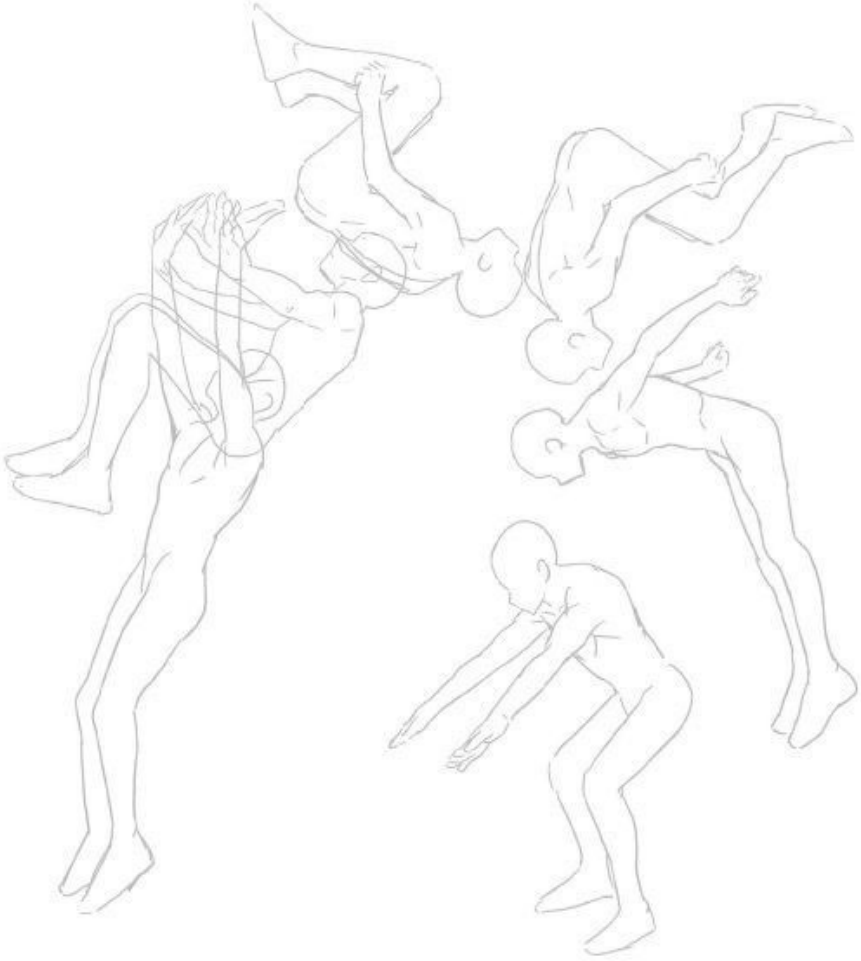
6 Effects and Highlighting

Use highlighting to add shine and bring out contrast. The gradation used here creates notable depth compared to the previous illustration. Experiment with various techniques and effects.

7 Completion

TRACING PRACTICE





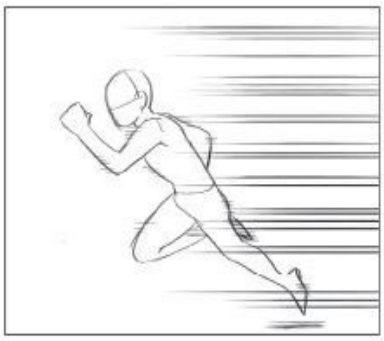
Spotlight

GETTING SPECIAL EFFECTS RIGHT

Think about characters' movements and what it is that you most want to show. Illustrations can change dramatically through the use of lines and other special effects.

Speed lines

Draw speed lines to guide the gaze in the desired direction. Adding blurred lines around the figure to match the perspective contributes to the sense of speed.



The direction of the lines changes the viewer's impression

There is no right answer when it comes to the direction of effect lines. Focus on what you most want to show, then have a go at drawing lines for greater effect.

In terms of perspective, it's fine to have the character in the center of the frame, but positioning the figure to match the perspective of the scenery can create a different and more dynamic impression.

where the background's vanishing point and the focus lines meet

Lines are drawn to align with the perspective, which is placed at ground level.

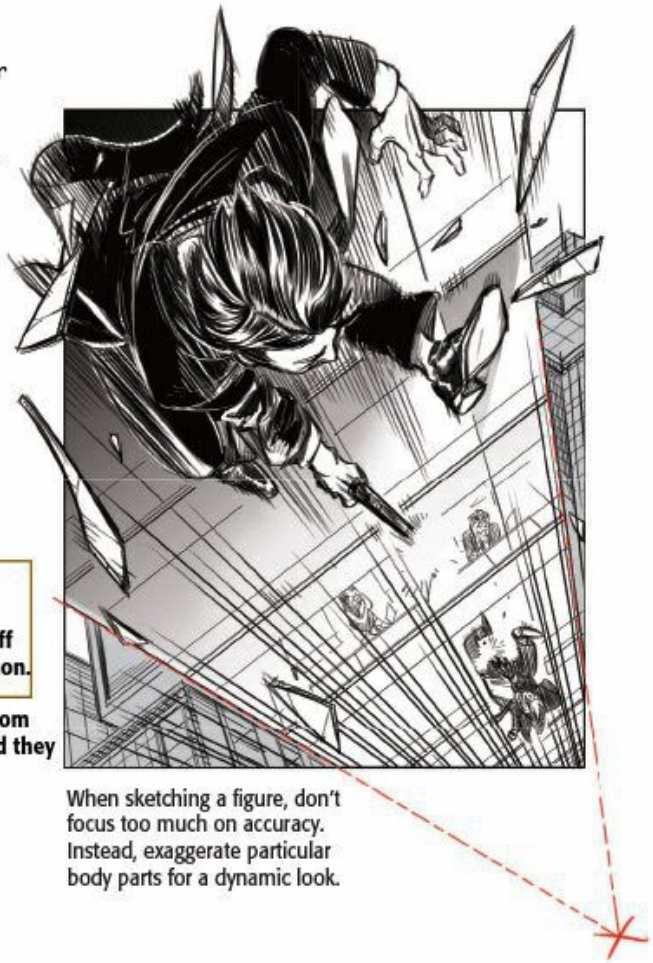
Setting the eye level on the diagonal creates a sense of instability, resulting in a more powerful illustration.

Focus lines

Draw lines that lead to the center of the point where you want to focus the gaze. This evokes a force similar to the sudden, close flash of a camera

★ TIP
Look for different ways to draw effect lines to suit the composition and set off what you want to show in the illustration.

On the right, lines are drawn from bottom to top, but drawn the other way around they would create a different impression.



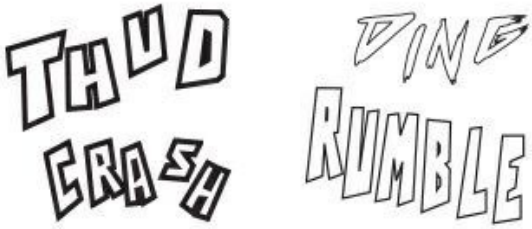
When sketching a figure, don't focus too much on accuracy. Instead, exaggerate particular body parts for a dynamic look.

Sound effects

1 Use perspective
Perspective can enhance a sound effect.

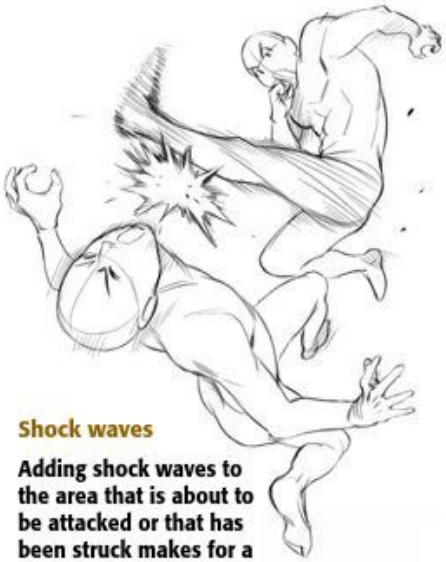
Focus the source of the sound at a central point to heighten the sense of presence.

2 Be aware of sounds
Create lettering to match the scene's composition.



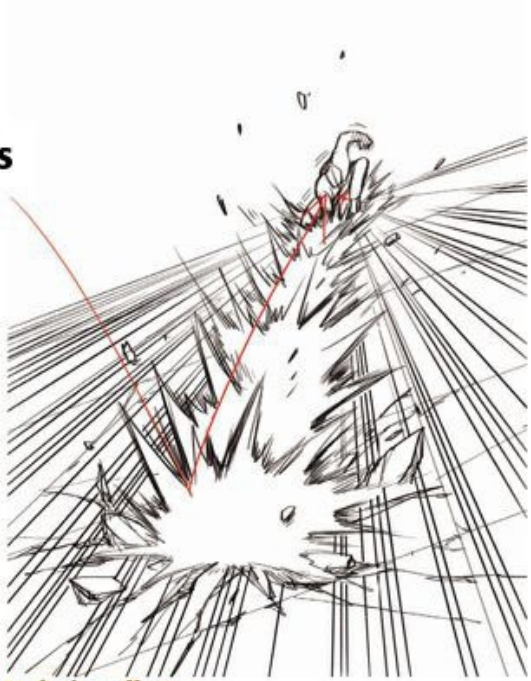
Listen carefully to the pitch and characteristics of sounds and practice visualizing them as sound effects. There are various ways of using them, including as effects for an attack or to complement scenery.

Shock waves and effects



Shock waves

Adding shock waves to the area that is about to be attacked or that has been struck makes for a more powerful illustration.



Explosion effects

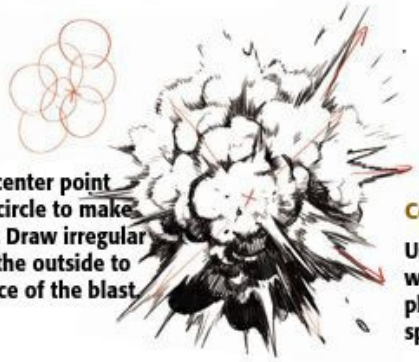
Combine shock waves with focus lines to depict force.

Effects to express spinning

Imagine a whirlwind as you gradually build circular lines into solid form. You could place a fi st in the center to depict a rotating punch or other lethal move.

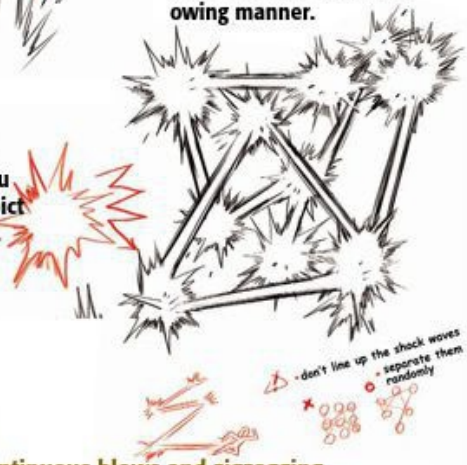
Slashing and sustained attack

Layering lines to form after-images allows for the expression of speed and momentum. Make sure you are comfortable when creating them; energy is important here so draw them in an unrestrained, freefl owing manner.



Bomb effects

Decide on the center point and block in a circle to make drawing easier. Draw irregular spikes around the outside to express the force of the blast.



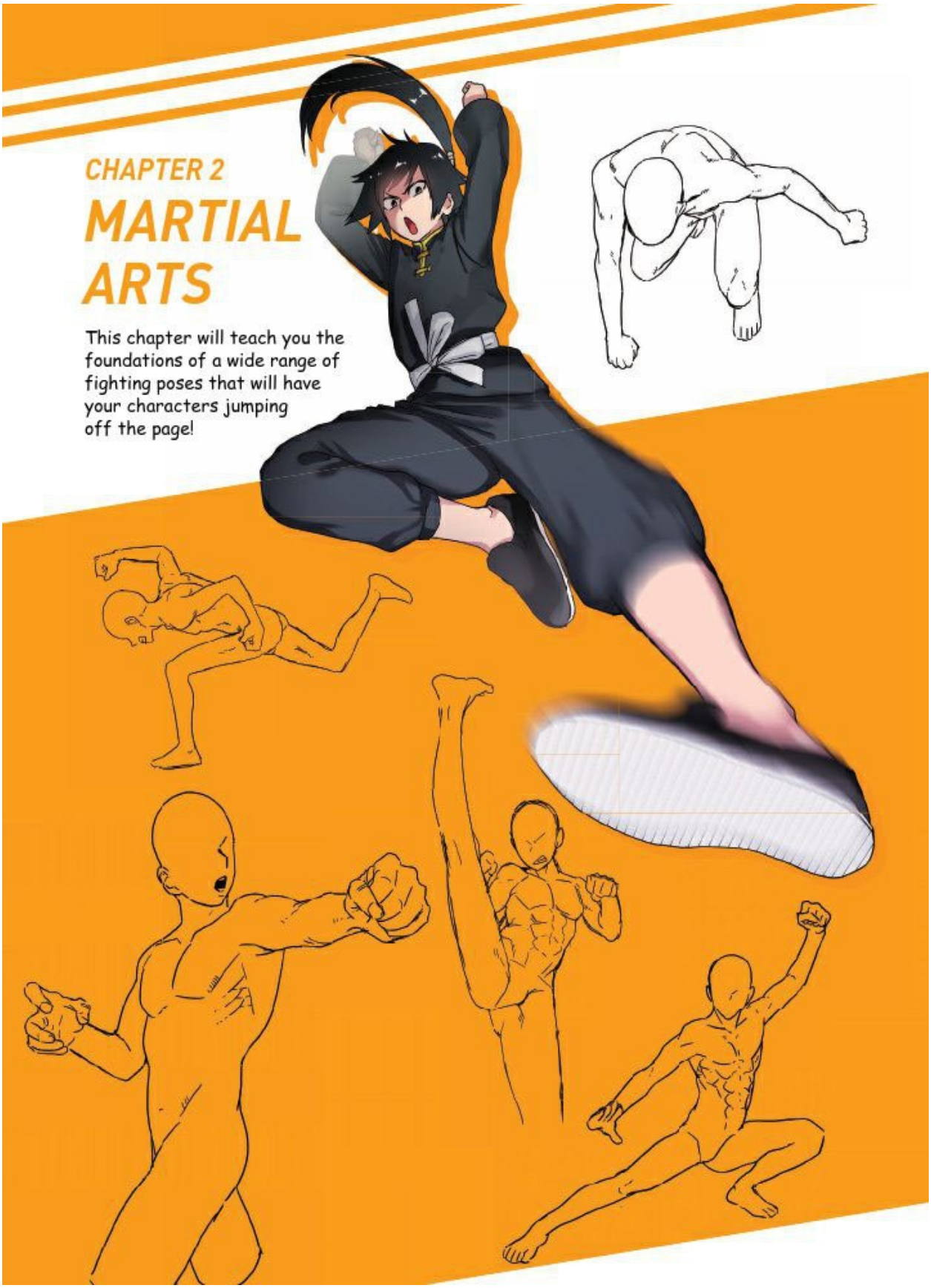
Continuous blows and zigzagging

Use irregularly positioned and incomplete shock-wave shapes to express zigzagging from place to place at a blistering pace, launching an ultra-high speed attack and similar situations.

CHAPTER 2

MARTIAL ARTS

This chapter will teach you the foundations of a wide range of fighting poses that will have your characters jumping off the page!

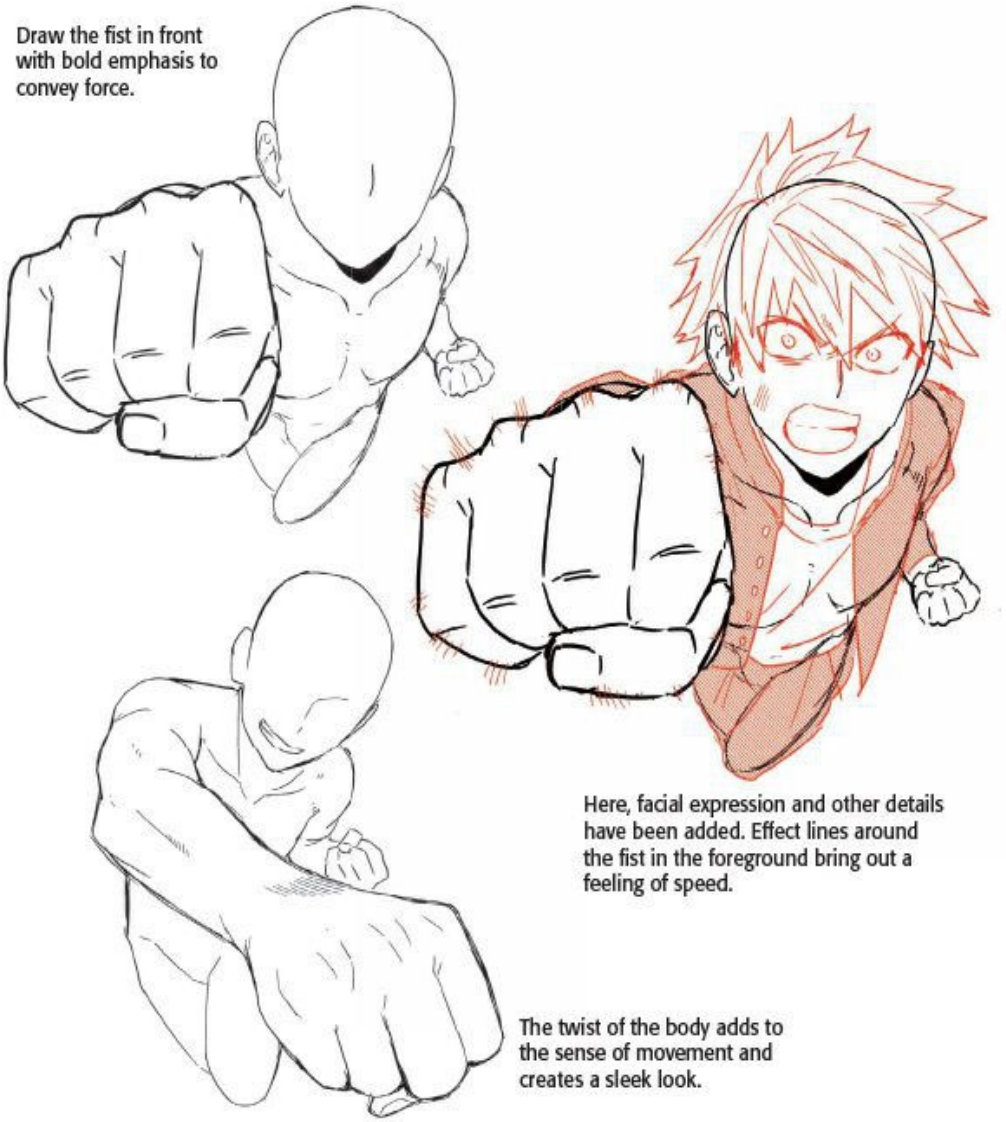


ACTIONS USING ARMS

Starting with punching—a basic action move—let's look at various techniques that involve the bold use of arms.

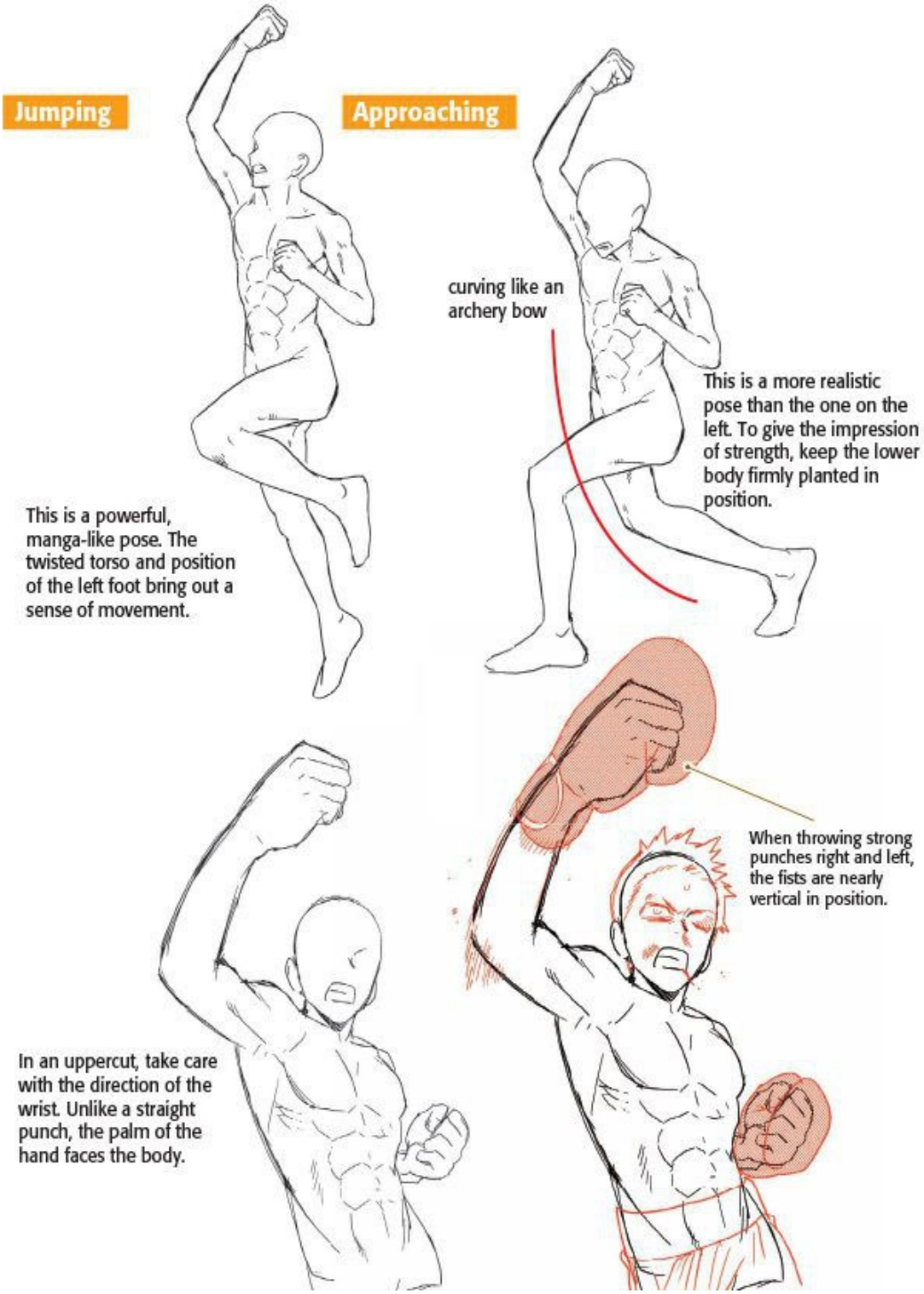
Superman punch

Work plenty of movement into this powerful pose that could be struck by a gallant hero.



Uppercut

This popular boxing technique involves punching upwards with the elbow bent.

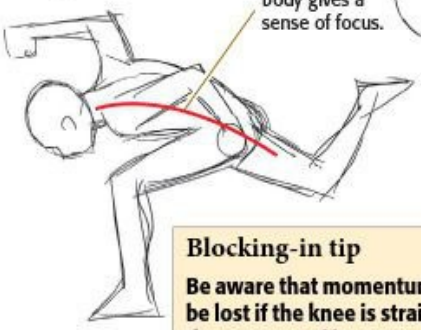


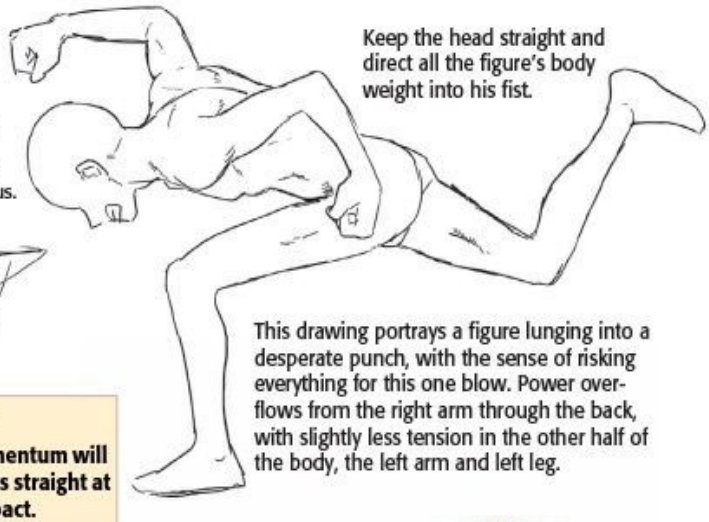
Crouching punch

This is a deadly blow delivered with all the weight of the body. Exaggerate the form to convey force and power.

In profile

Note the collapsed posture with the head inclined toward the ground.





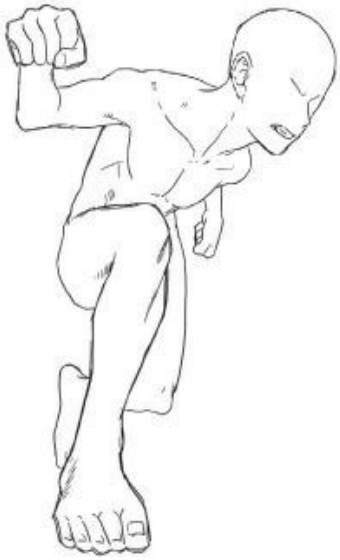
This drawing portrays a figure lunging into a desperate punch, with the sense of risking everything for this one blow. Power overflows from the right arm through the back, with slightly less tension in the other half of the body, the left arm and left leg.

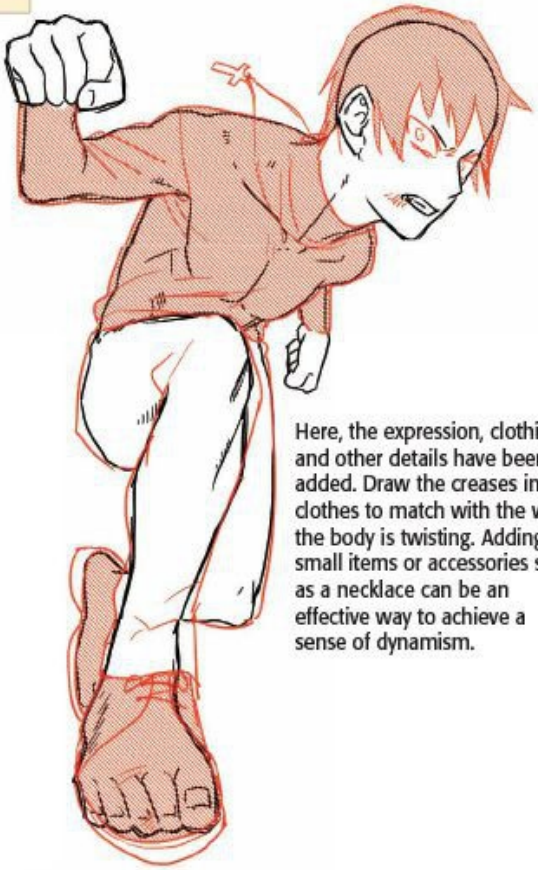
Blocking-in tip

Be aware that momentum will be lost if the knee is straight at the moment of impact.

Front-on

This angle shows the pose just before the punch is released. Make sure the back leg is in contact with the ground.

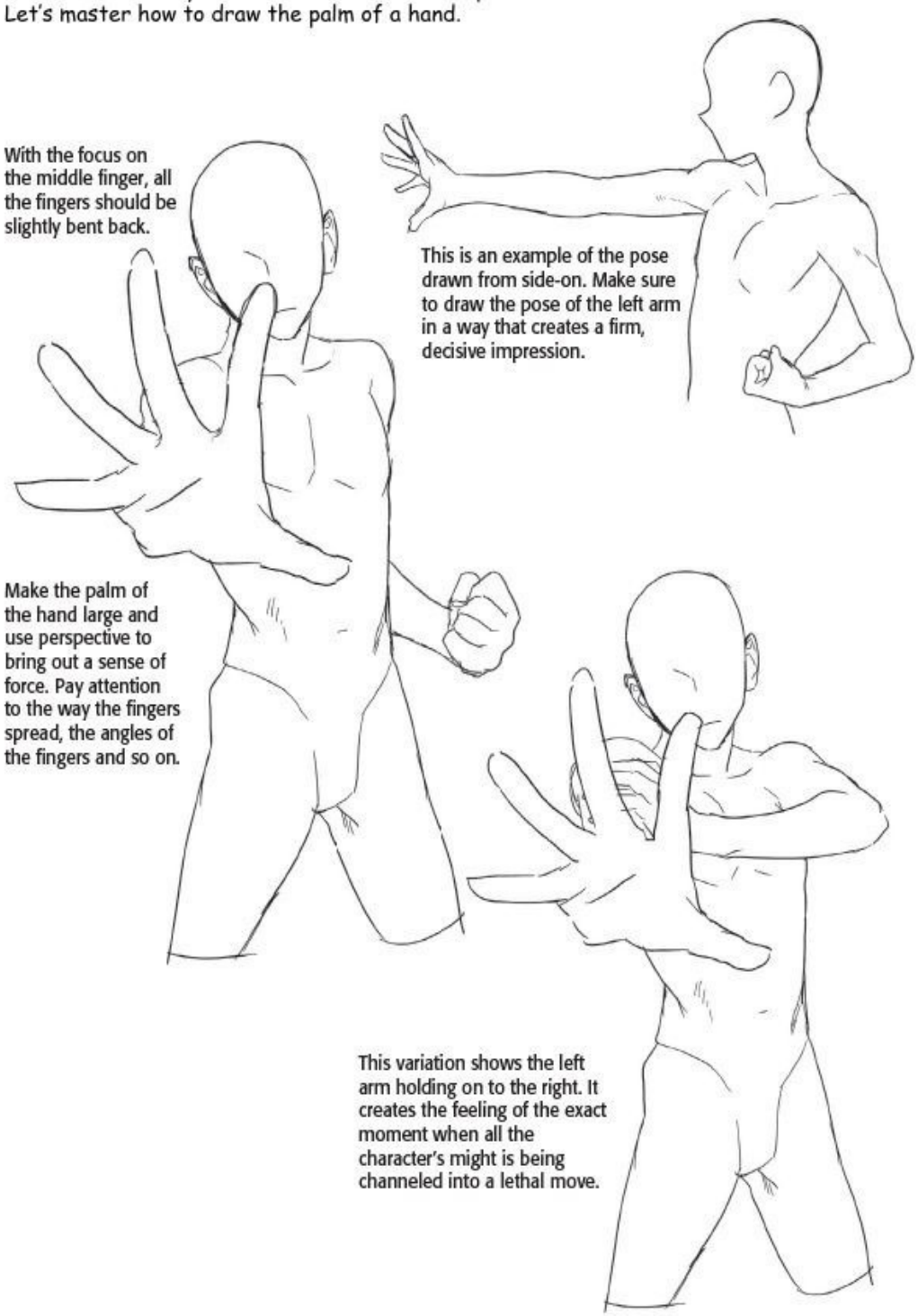




Here, the expression, clothing and other details have been added. Draw the creases in the clothes to match with the way the body is twisting. Adding small items or accessories such as a necklace can be an effective way to achieve a sense of dynamism.

Palm thrust

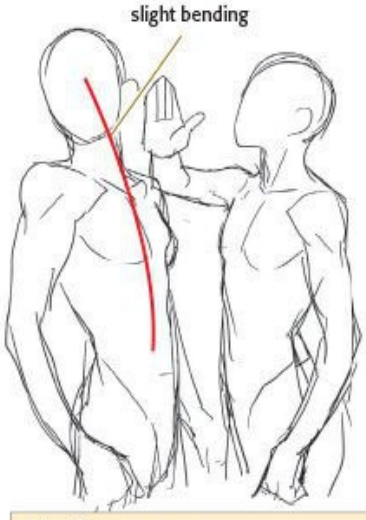
This is another royal standard in the realm of poses! Let's master how to draw the palm of a hand.



Face slapping

This is a pose that is used frequently in both comical and serious scenes.

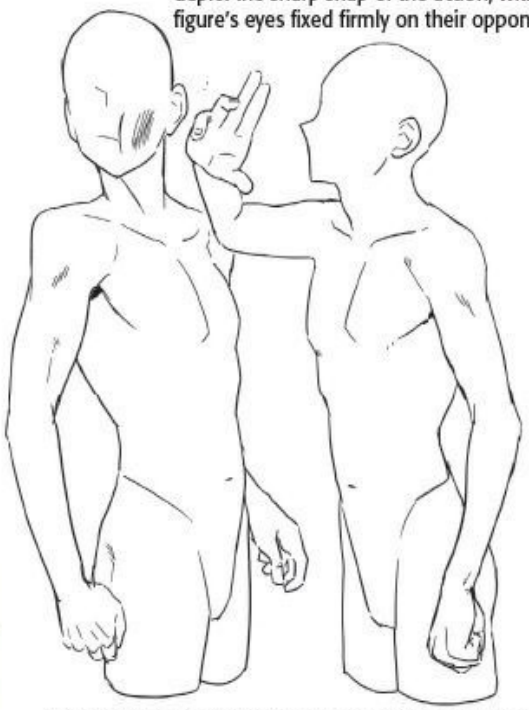
The figure being slapped bends slightly backward from the shock of the slap.



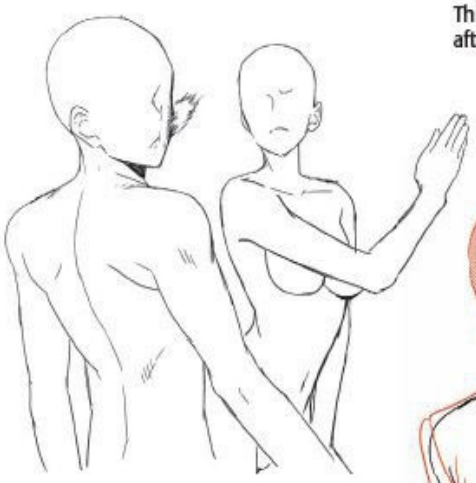
Blocking-in tip

Pay attention to the distance between the figures, taking care not to make the scene look excessively violent.

Draw the hand of the slapping figure to depict the sharp snap of the action, with the figure's eyes fixed firmly on their opponent.



This scene shows the follow-through of the slapping hand after the slap, and the reaction of the figure being slapped.

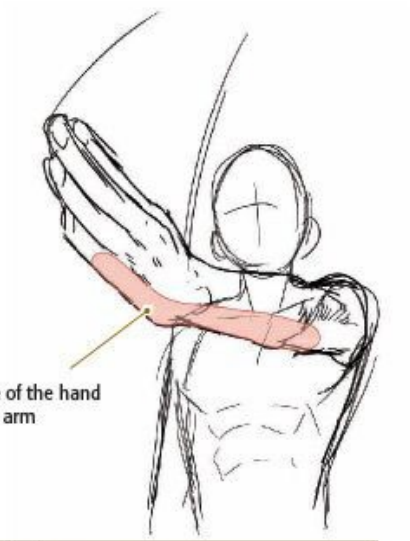


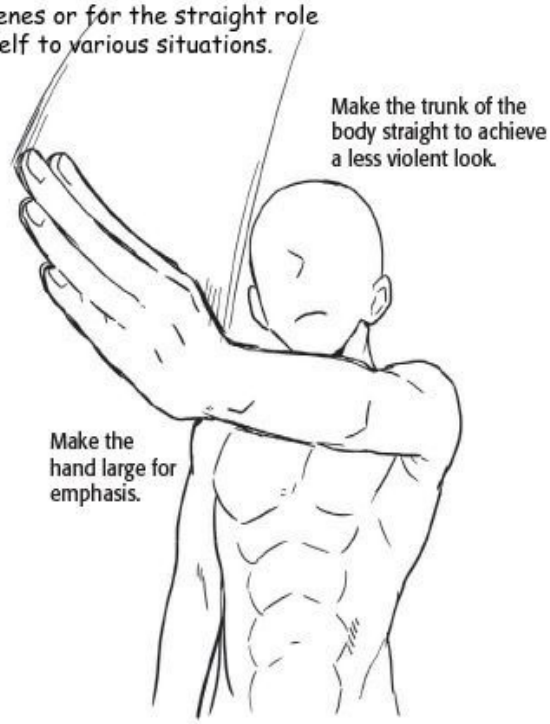
Show the face of the figure doing the slapping from front on to clearly express emotion.

This pose suits a female. Turning the body of the slapping figure to the side brings life to the scene.

Knifehand strike

This motion is perfectly suited to action scenes or for the straight role in a comical scene. It's a pose that lends itself to various situations.





Blocking-in tip

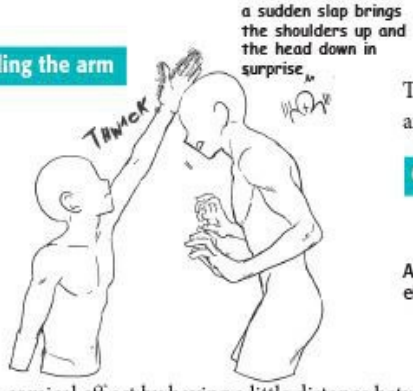
The torso and left arm are straight, with a sharp, linear look.

Key Point

When to use the knifehand strike

This strike can be used in various scenes. Tailor it to fit, and try adding other elements of performance.

Extending the arm

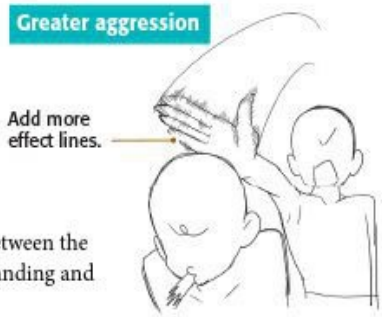


Create a comical eff ect by having a little distance between the two figures, such as a diff erence in height or one standing and one sitting, etc

Light scolding

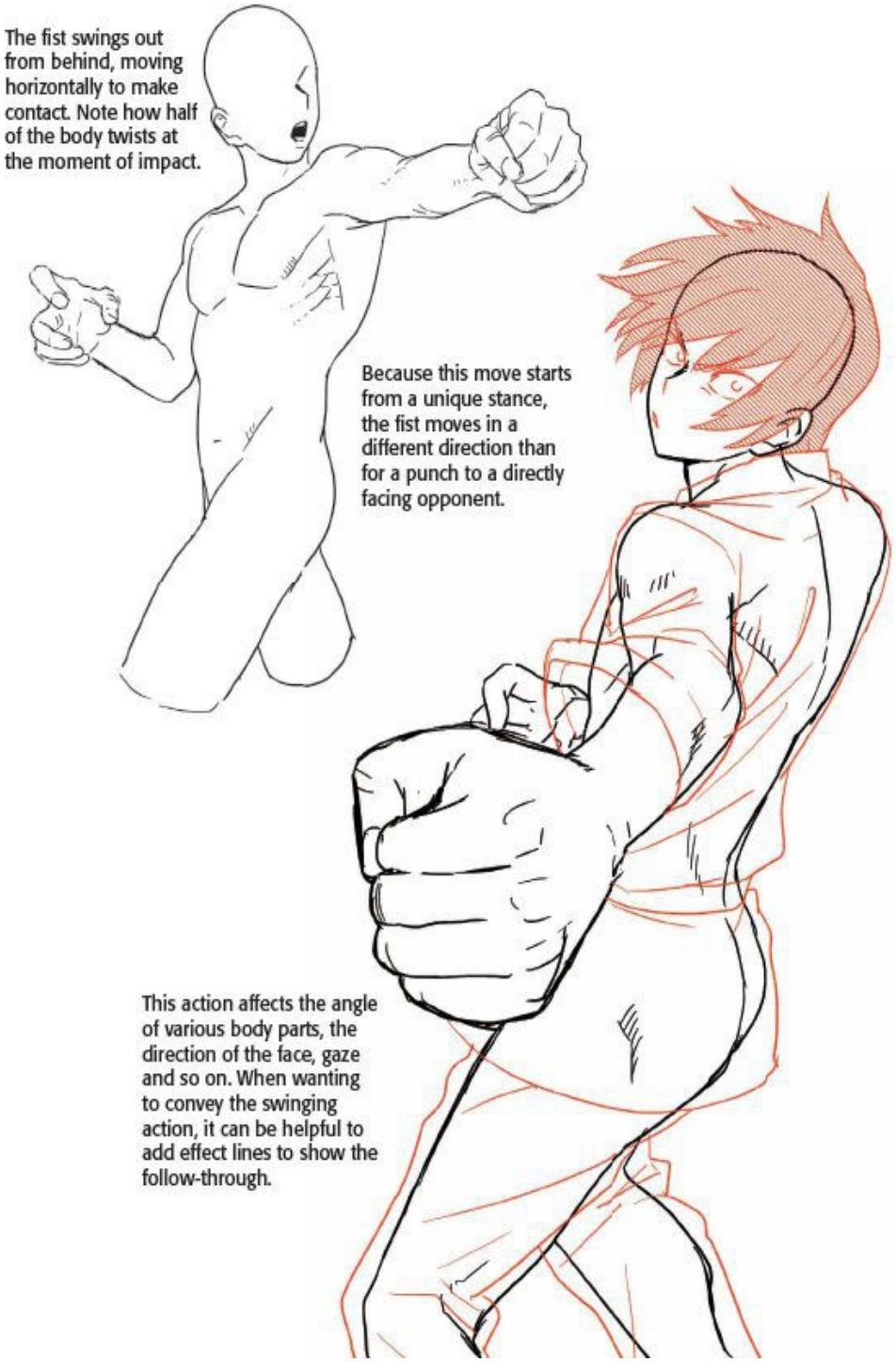
This is just a light strike with little force in the arm, so the figure being struck is relatively calm.

Greater aggression



Back-fist punch

This is a tricky style of attack. Let's get a grasp of the unique posture involved in its execution.

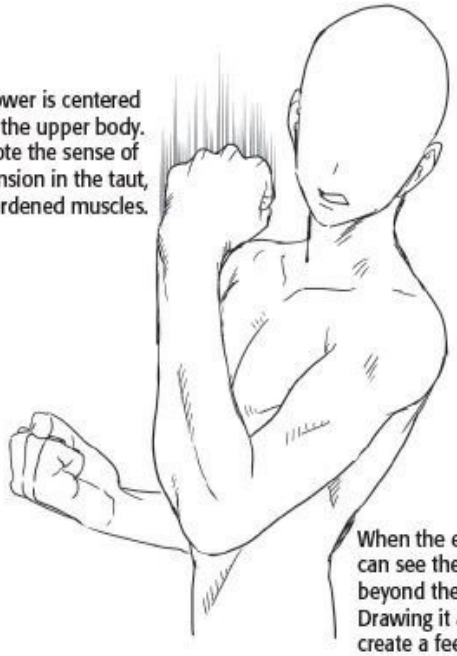


Punching from the elbow

This is a move suitable for actual fighting. Because it is a technique used at close range, it allows for dramatic expression of the blow.

Striking down vertically

Power is centered in the upper body. Note the sense of tension in the taut, hardened muscles.



When the elbow is bent, you can see the ulna projecting beyond the elbow joint. Drawing it accurately will create a feeling of force.

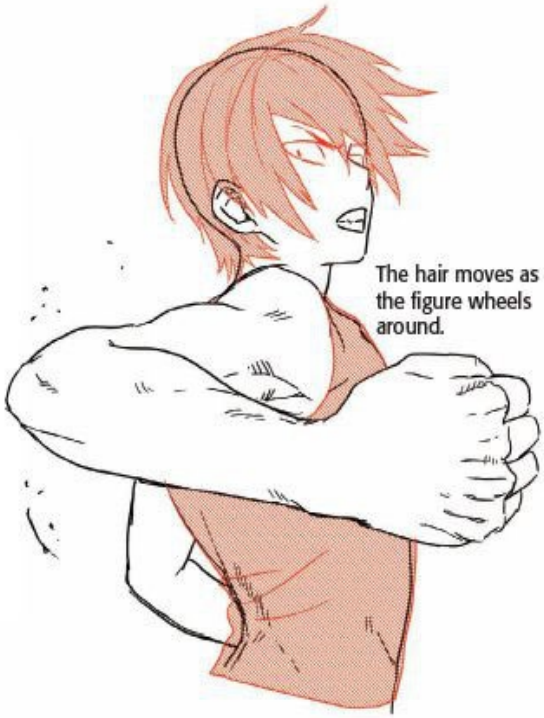
Blocking-in tip

It's important to convey power and a strong impression of violence.

Elbowing

This elbow action is used against opponents who grab the character by the arm, who approach from behind and so on.

The area that comes into actual contact with the opponent is the bony, prominent part of the elbow. Draw the forearm boldly for emphasis.

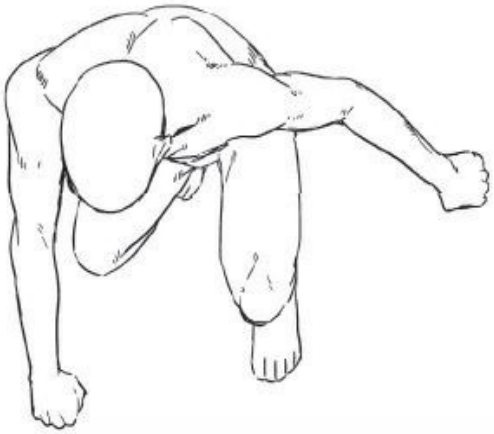


The hair moves as the figure wheels around.

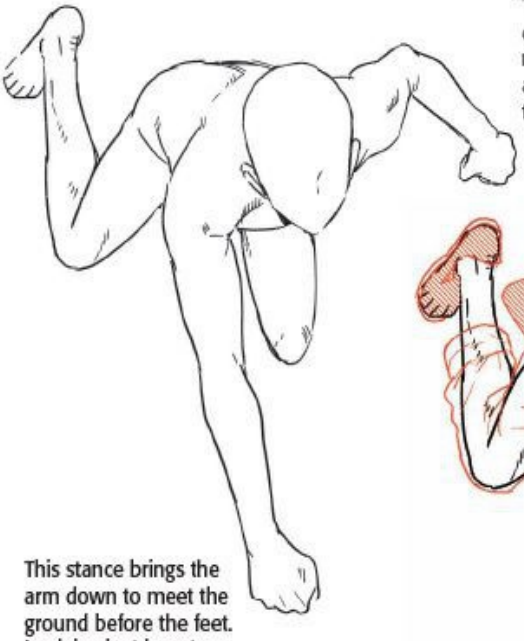
Punching the ground

This is a popular pose often found in fantasy and action stories.

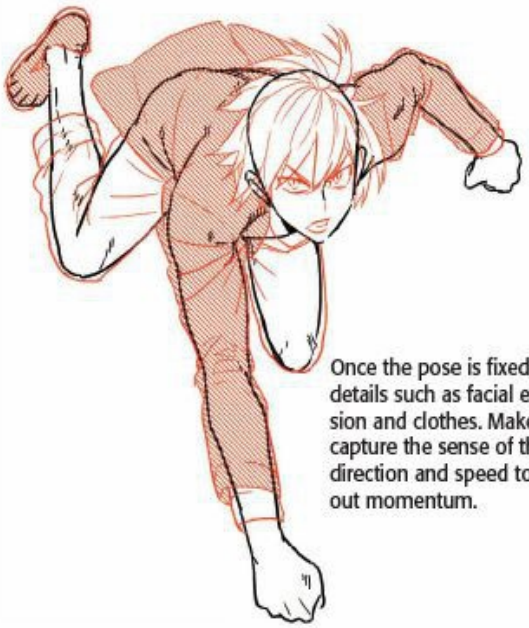
Bringing the hand in the foreground down to meet the earth creates a feeling of vigorous energy.



This is an example of a bird's-eye view composition. Raising the arm which is not striking the ground (the left arm) up and back brings force and momentum to the entire body.

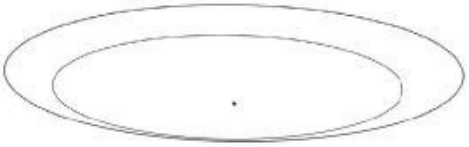


This stance brings the arm down to meet the ground before the feet. Look back at how to draw different types of punches for reference.

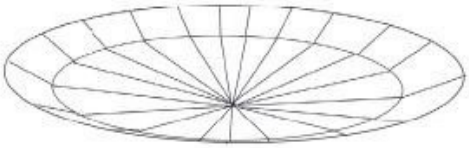


Once the pose is fixed, add details such as facial expression and clothes. Make sure to capture the sense of the wind direction and speed to bring out momentum.

Drawing cracks

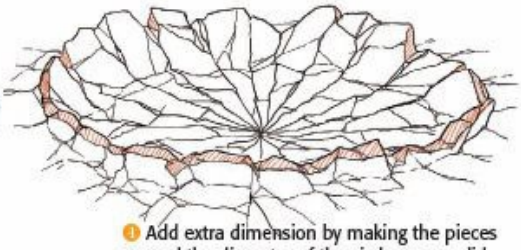


1 Picturing cracks developing in a concentric circle makes things easier to understand. Decide on the spot where the fist will make contact with the ground and sketch two concentric circles around it.



2 Next, draw straight lines radiating out from the center, as if dividing a pizza into triangular slices.

3 Randomly break down the lines and add details to give the appearance of the ground splitting up into rubble. This is already enough to create a realistic look.



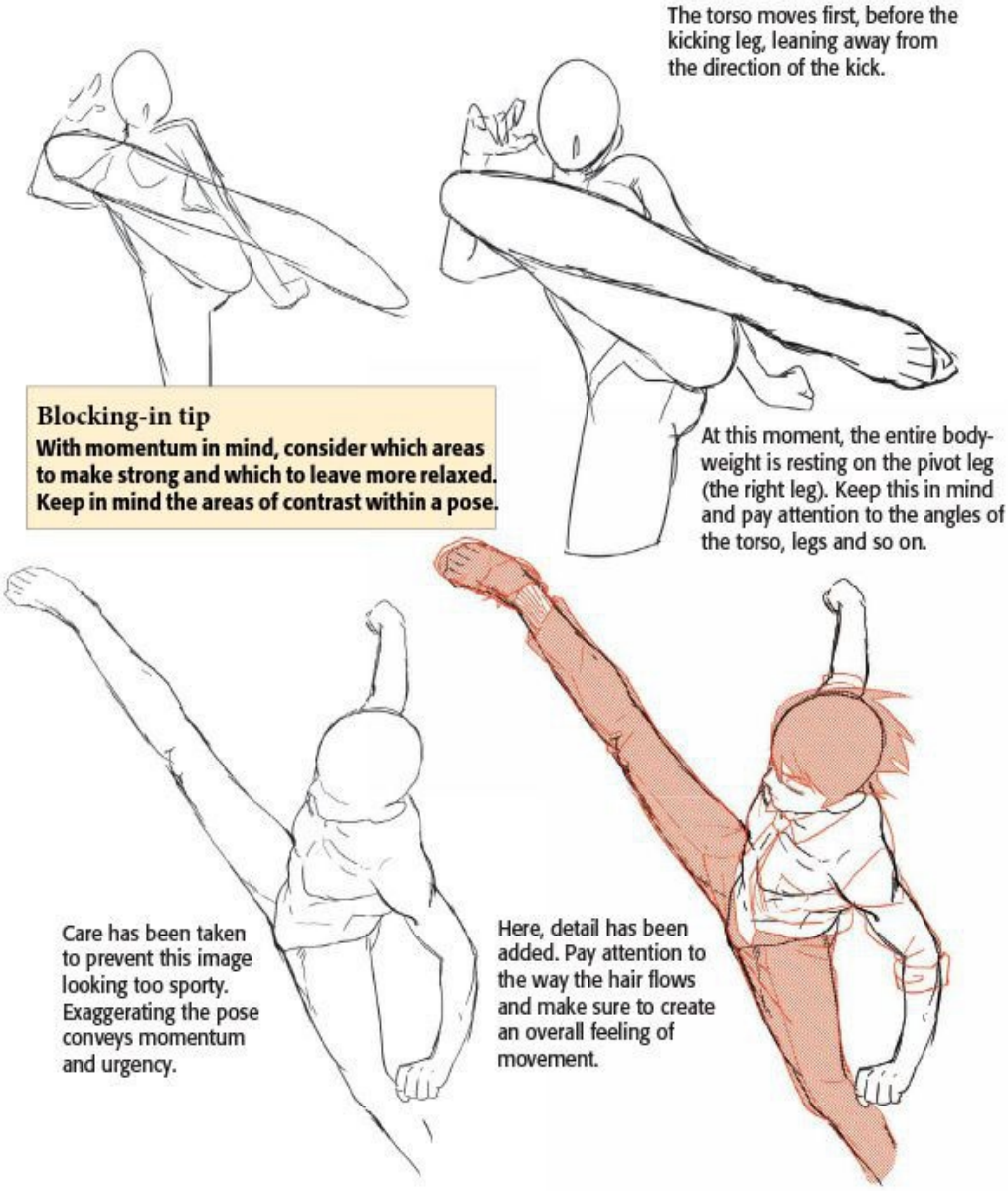
4 Add extra dimension by making the pieces around the diameter of the circle more solid looking. Creating an irregular, uneven surface enhances the effect of the drawing.

ACTIONS USING LEGS

Here, we look at various leg techniques, such as types of kicks. Extremely powerful kicks bring an action scene to life, so make an effort to master them.

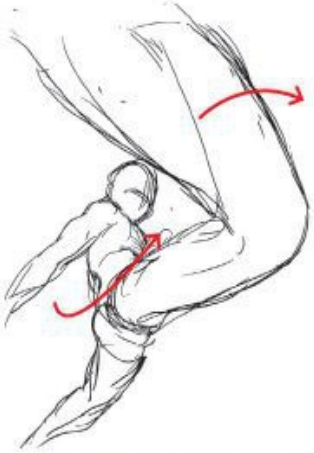
Roundhouse kick

This action requires bolder action than a punch, and uses the whole body. Paying attention to the small details will make your kick convincing.

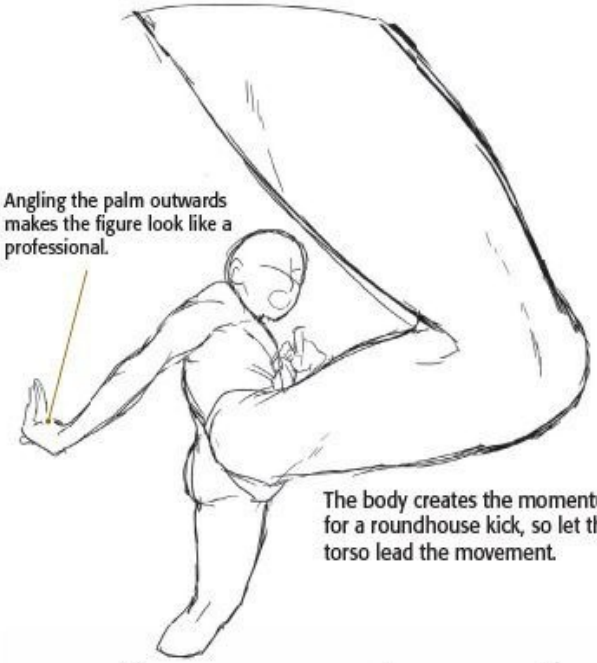


Blocking-in tip

With momentum in mind, consider which areas to make strong and which to leave more relaxed. Keep in mind the areas of contrast within a pose.



Angling the palm outwards makes the figure look like a professional.



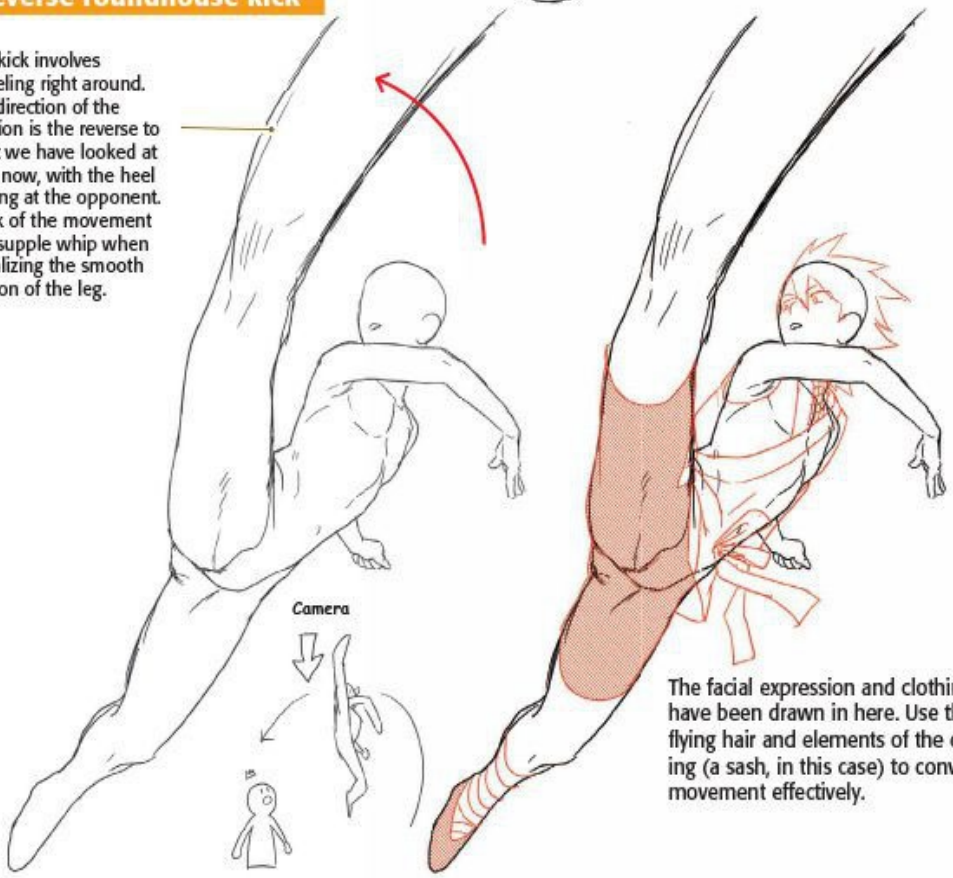
The body creates the momentum for a roundhouse kick, so let the torso lead the movement.

Blocking-in tip

Boldly draw in the calves. Directing attention to minor areas adds interest.

Reverse roundhouse kick

This kick involves wheeling right around. The direction of the rotation is the reverse to what we have looked at until now, with the heel striking at the opponent. Think of the movement of a supple whip when visualizing the smooth motion of the leg.



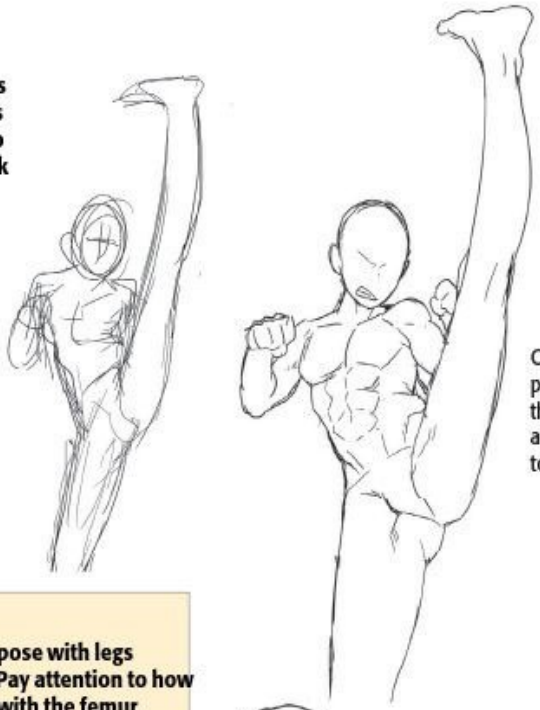
The facial expression and clothing have been drawn in here. Use the flying hair and elements of the clothing (a sash, in this case) to convey movement effectively.

High kicks

Any kick where the leg is raised creates a sensational impression. Study the points below so that your character will make a strong impact.

High kick

This is one of the forms used in taekwondo. It's a technique that is also employed in the ax kick in karate.



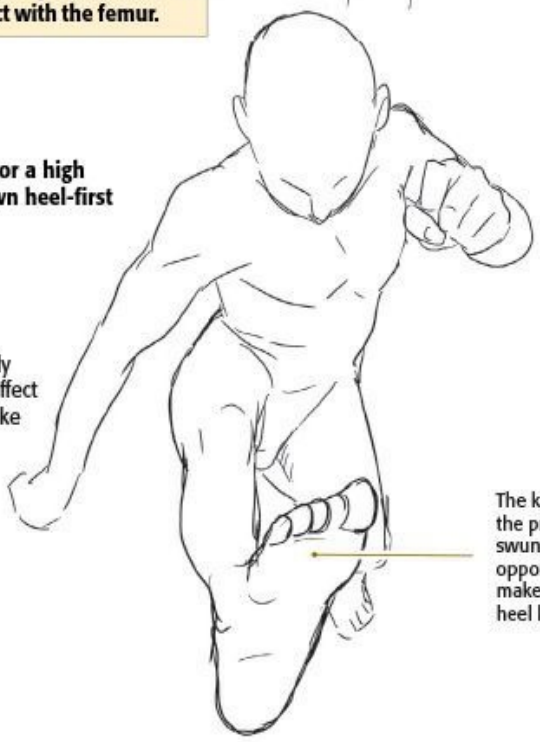
Clenching the fists makes a powerful impression. Giving the face a tense expression allows the whole drawing to be in sync.

Blocking-in tip

The composition of a pose with legs spread wide is tricky. Pay attention to how the buttocks connect with the femur.

Ax kick

The leg is raised, as for a high kick, then swung down heel-first into the opponent.

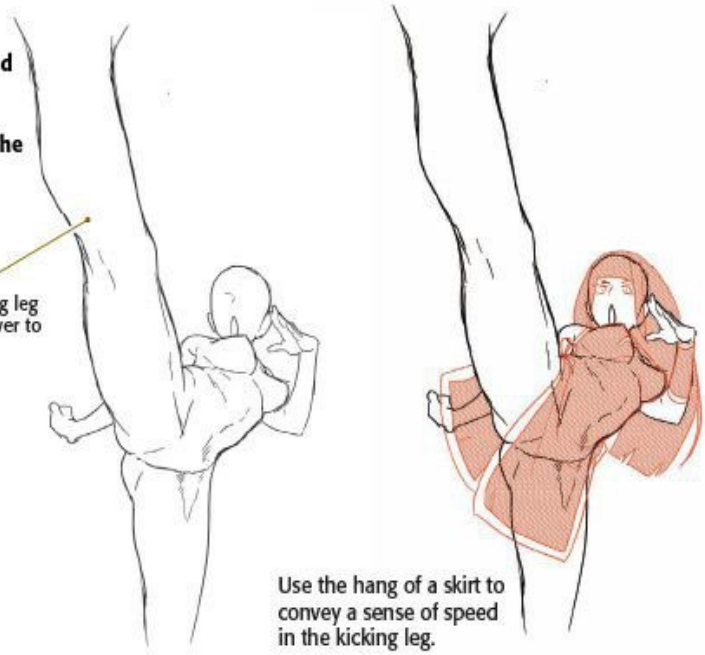


This sequence of actions is extremely unique. Drawing effect lines may help make things clearer.

The kicking leg is brought up to the protagonist's eye level, then swung down heel-first onto the opponent's head. Take care not to make the direction and angle of the heel look unnatural.

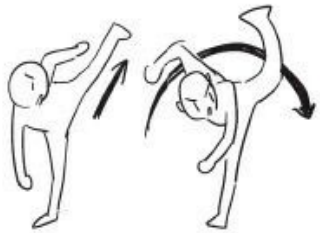
Side kick

This side kick is frequently used in martial arts. The transfer of power in a side kick is linear, with both the kicking leg and the pivot leg kept straight.



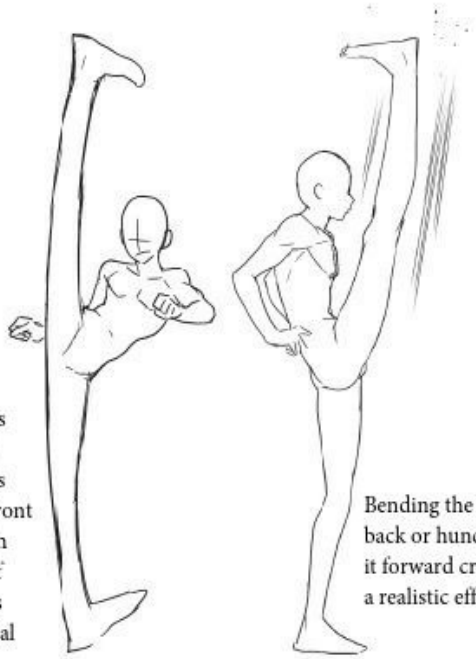
Key Point

Depicting different kicks



In a side kick, the straight leg swings into the opponent, while an ax kick makes a completely diff erent impression. Make your work more convincing by paying attention to the orbit of the kicking leg.

This pose shows the kicking leg raised as high as possible from front on. Th e smooth straightening of the knee creates a slightly comical impression.

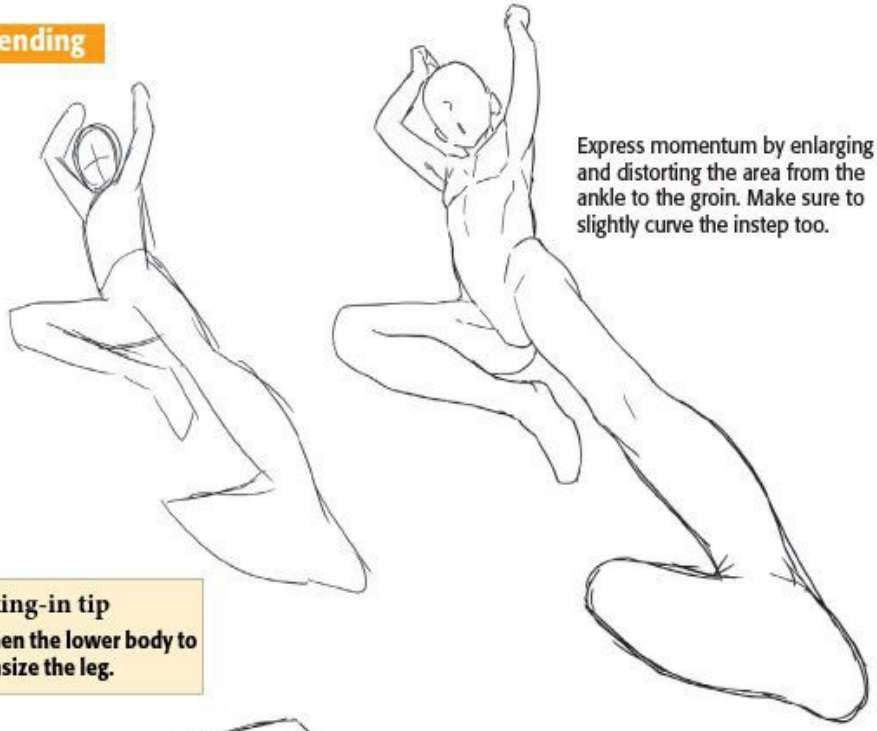


Bending the torso back or hunching it forward creates a realistic eff ect.

Flying kick (one leg)

This is ideal for depicting footwork that can kill with a single move. Keep perspective in mind to evoke power and a sense of flying through the air.

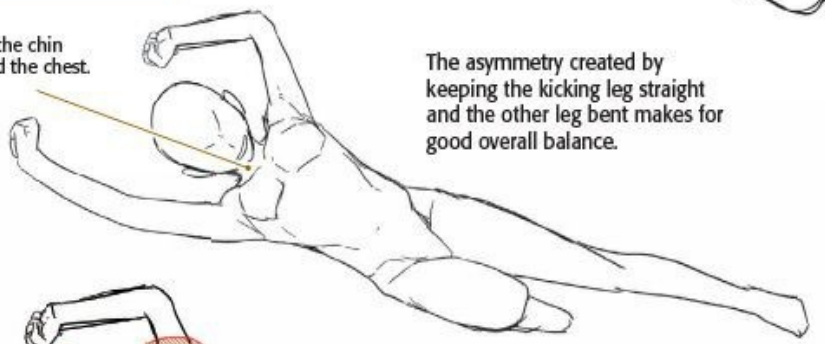
Descending



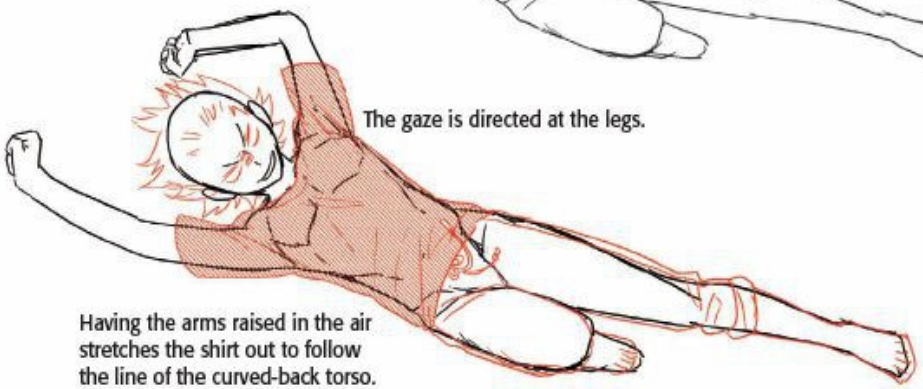
Express momentum by enlarging and distorting the area from the ankle to the groin. Make sure to slightly curve the instep too.

Blocking-in tip

Lengthen the lower body to emphasize the leg.

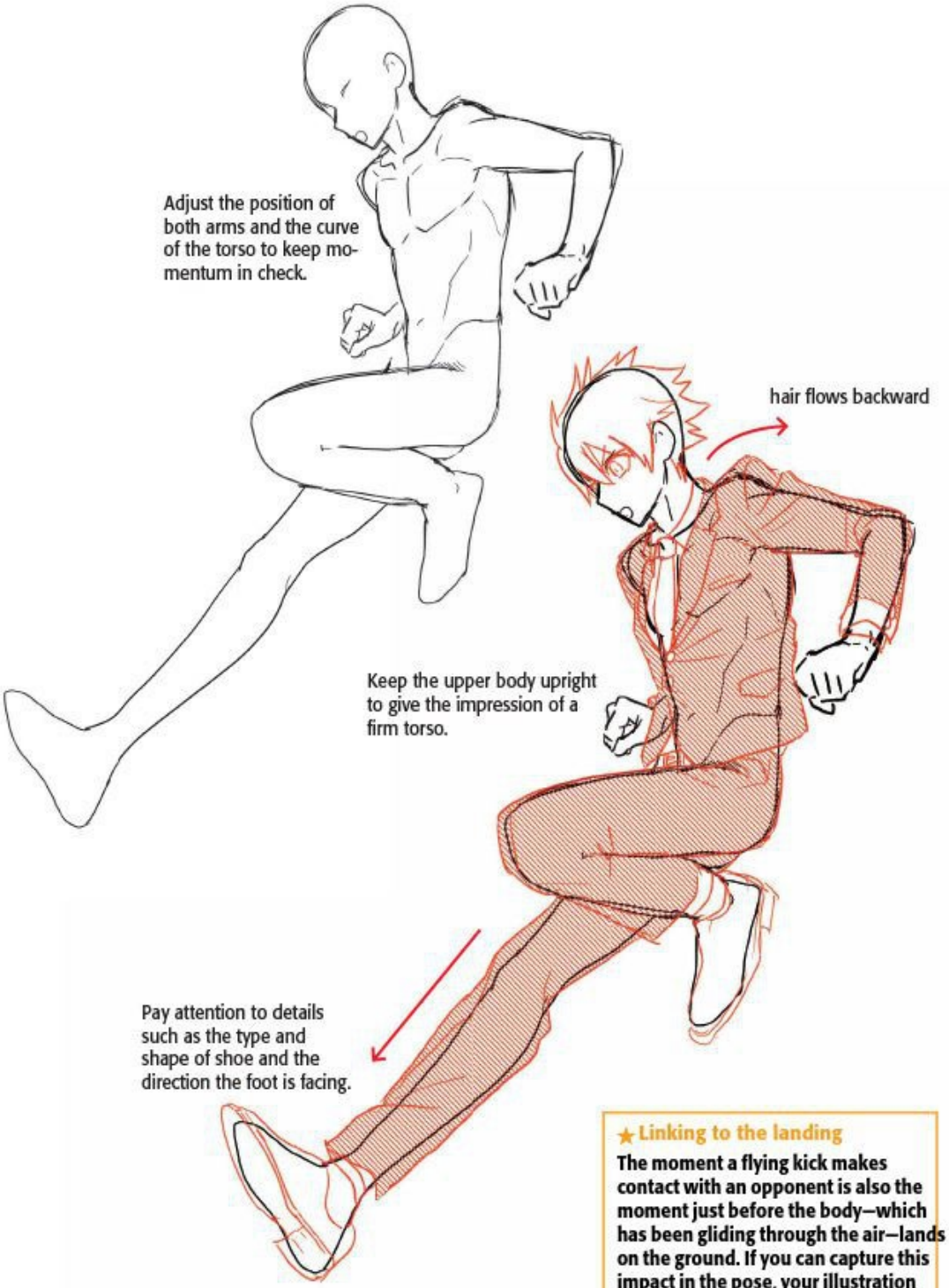


The asymmetry created by keeping the kicking leg straight and the other leg bent makes for good overall balance.



The gaze is directed at the legs.

Having the arms raised in the air stretches the shirt out to follow the line of the curved-back torso.

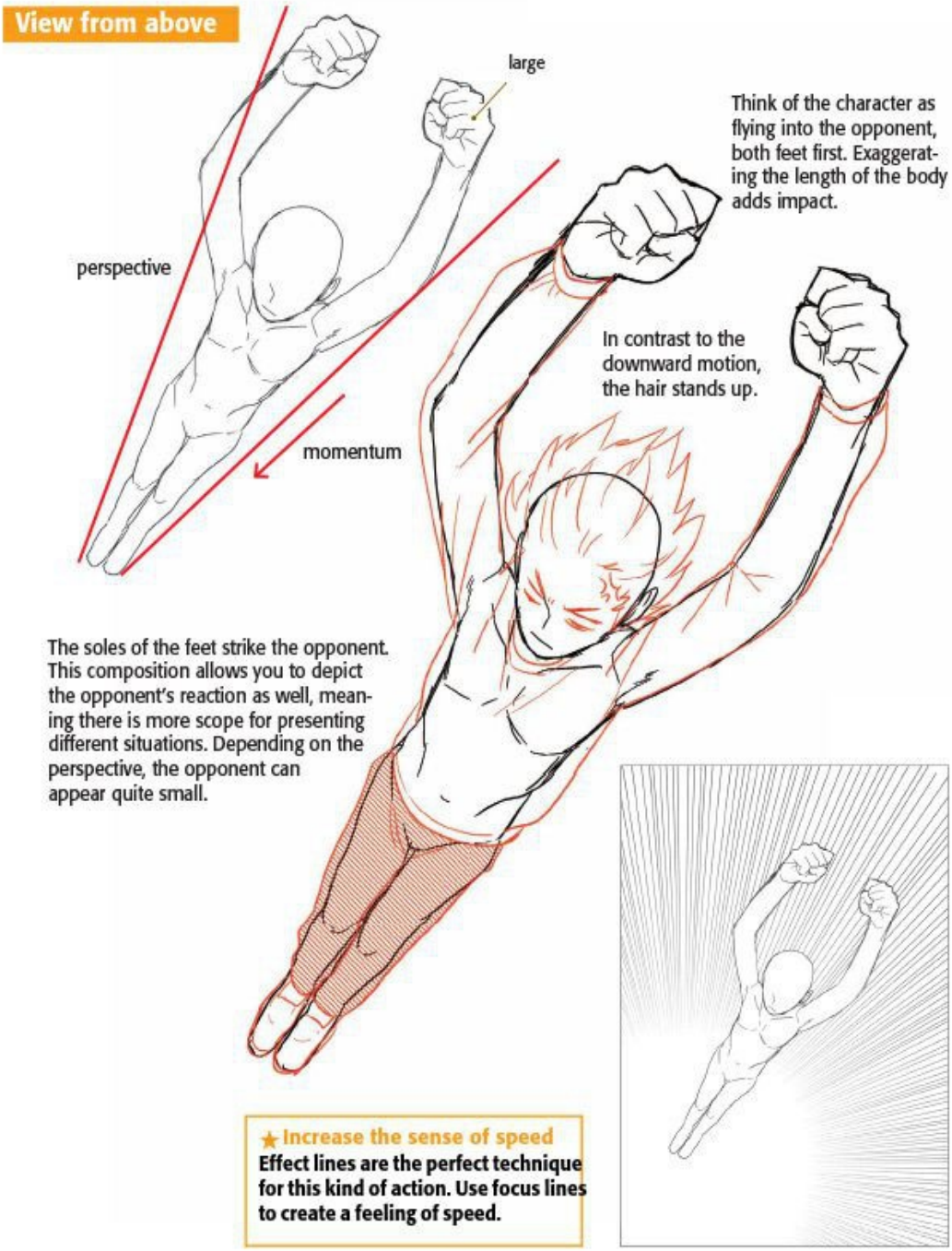


★Linking to the landing

The moment a flying kick makes contact with an opponent is also the moment just before the body—which has been gliding through the air—lands on the ground. If you can capture this impact in the pose, your illustration will be more realistic.

Flying kick (both legs)

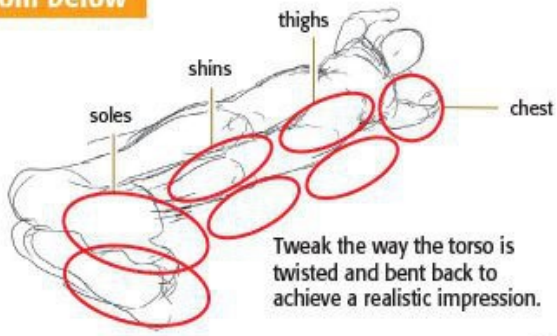
The dropkick in pro wrestling is a typical example of this move. It's a very versatile action that can also be used in comical scenes.



★ Increase the sense of speed

Effect lines are the perfect technique for this kind of action. Use focus lines to create a feeling of speed.

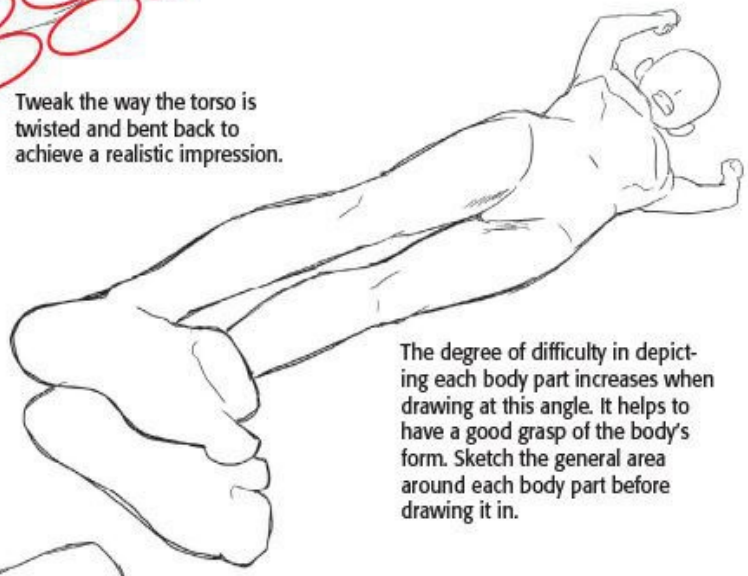
From below



Tweak the way the torso is twisted and bent back to achieve a realistic impression.

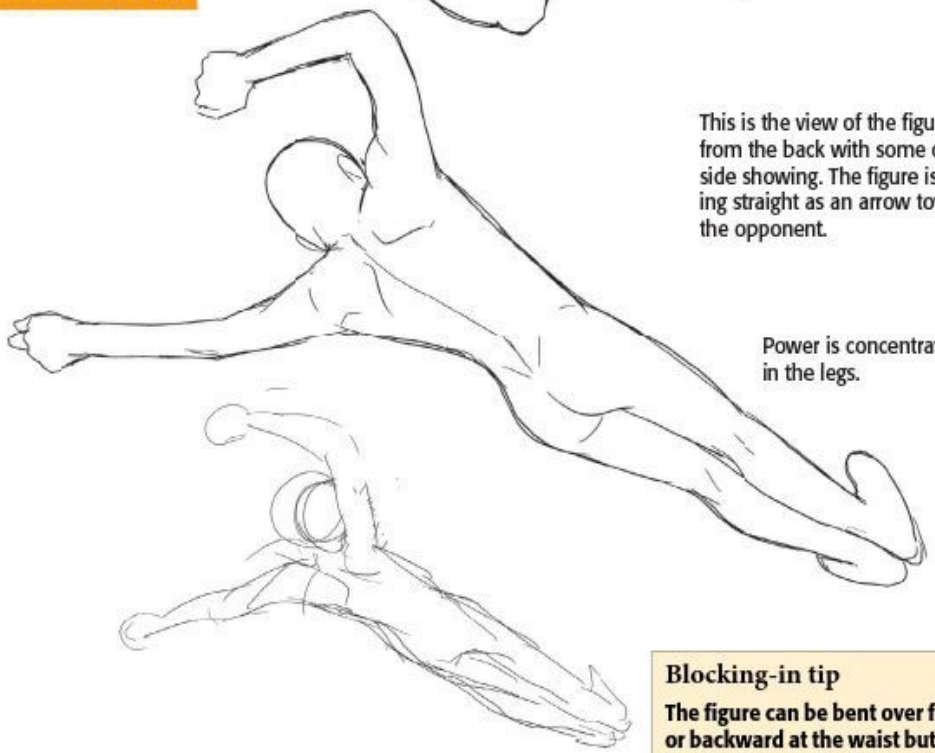
Blocking-in tip

Draw the figure as if it is lying down, but take care with the positioning of the limbs and make sure they do not appear relaxed.



The degree of difficulty in depicting each body part increases when drawing at this angle. It helps to have a good grasp of the body's form. Sketch the general area around each body part before drawing it in.

From the back



This is the view of the figure from the back with some of the side showing. The figure is flying straight as an arrow toward the opponent.

Power is concentrated in the legs.

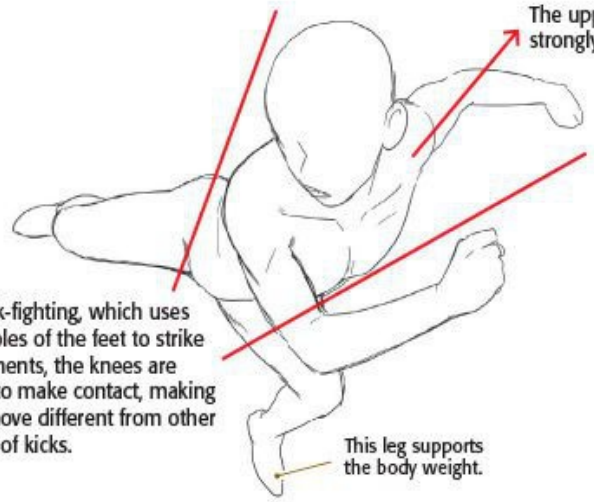
Blocking-in tip

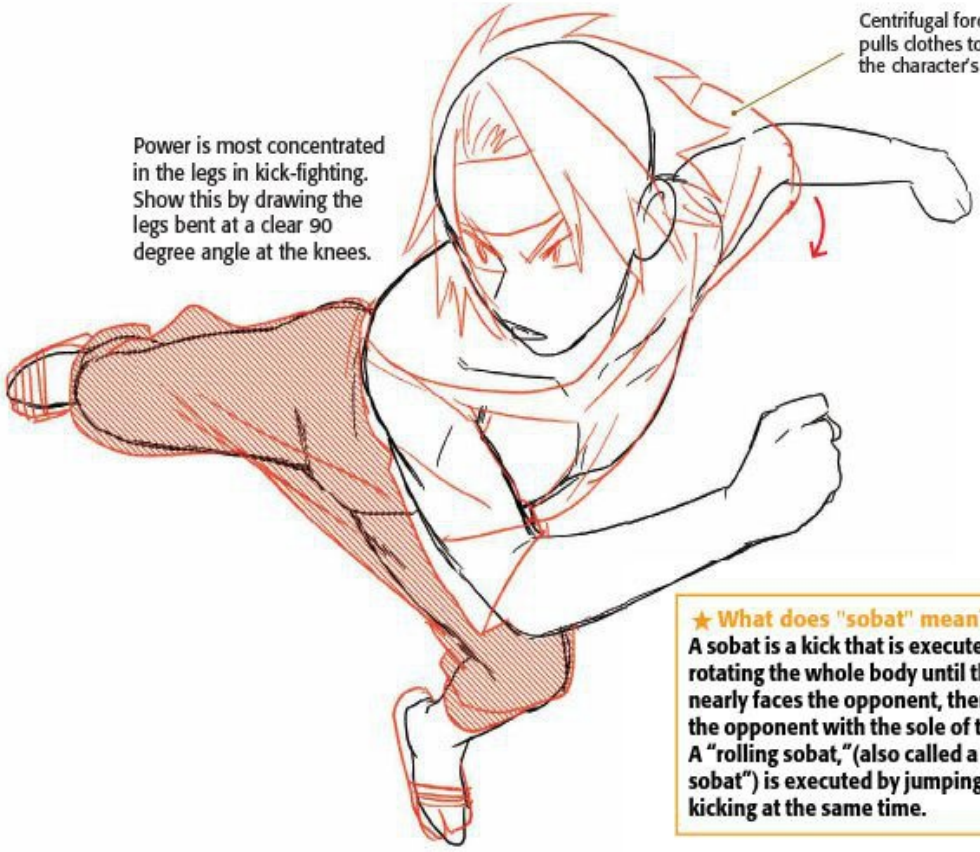
The figure can be bent over forward or backward at the waist but make sure to keep both legs straight.

Kick-fighting (sobat kick)

Known as "sobat" in Japanese, this form of fighting has tricky movements, cool footwork and unique poses that set it apart from other kinds of kicking techniques.

Front view



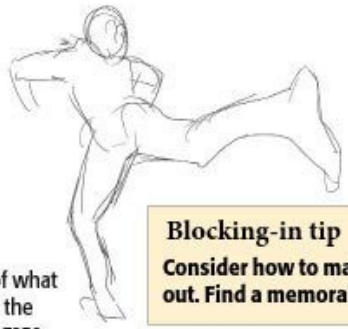


★ What does "sobat" mean?

A sobat is a kick that is executed by rotating the whole body until the back nearly faces the opponent, then striking the opponent with the sole of the foot. A "rolling sobat," (also called a "jumping sobat") is executed by jumping and kicking at the same time.

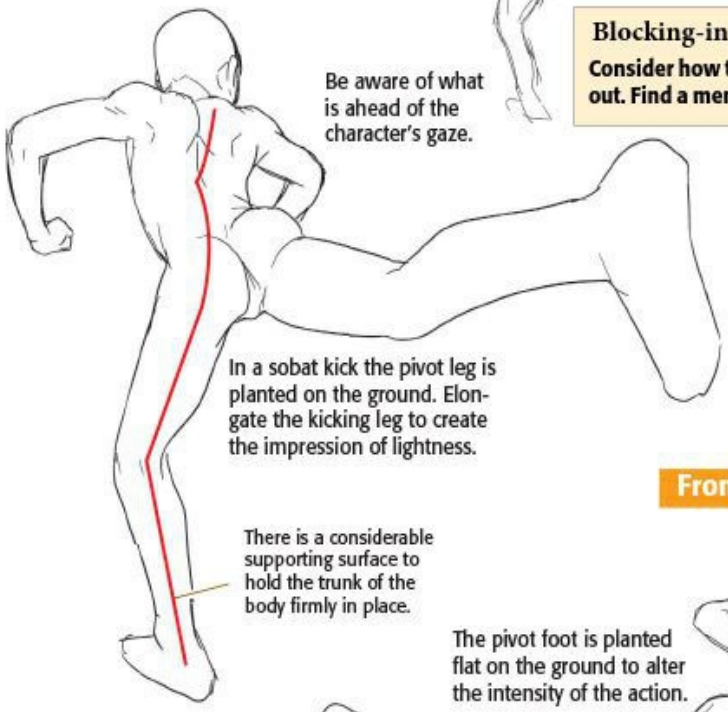
Back view

This composition has a higher degree of difficulty than a front-on view. Pay attention to which parts of the body are tensed for action and so on.

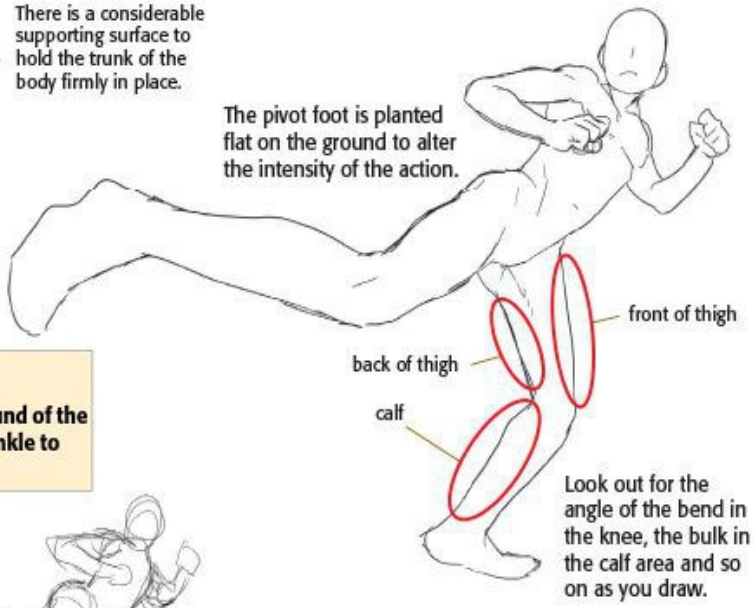


Blocking-in tip

Consider how to make the back leg stand out. Find a memorable composition.



Front view from below



Blocking-in tip

The knee is in the foreground of the drawing. Emphasize the ankle to convey a feeling of power.

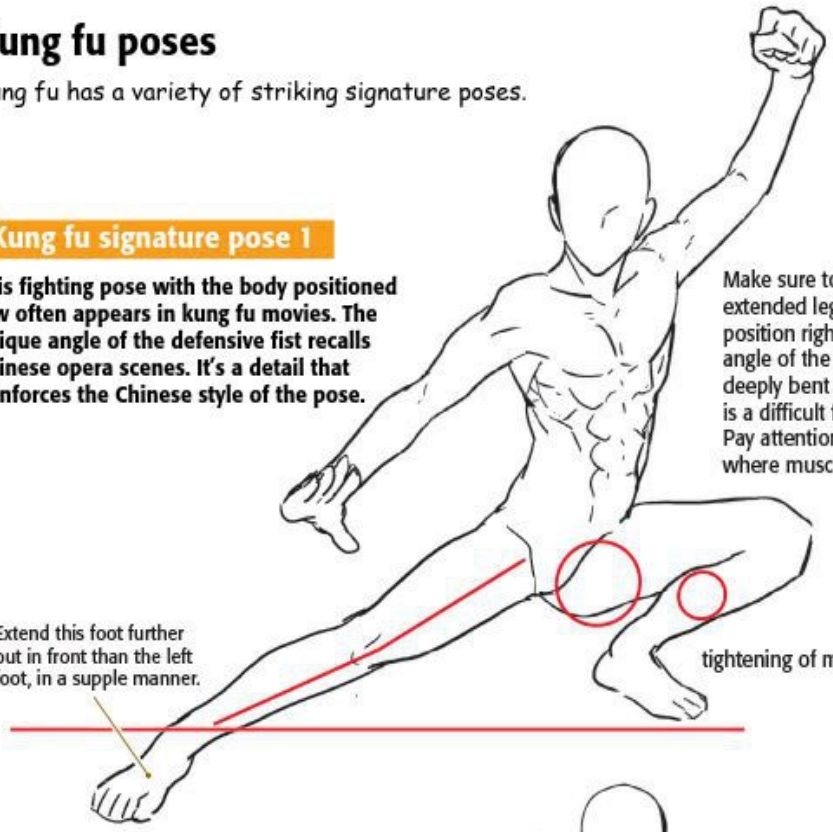
It's possible to use effect lines to enhance a turning motion. Draw them in to convey how each body part twists or bends.

Kung fu poses

Kung fu has a variety of striking signature poses.

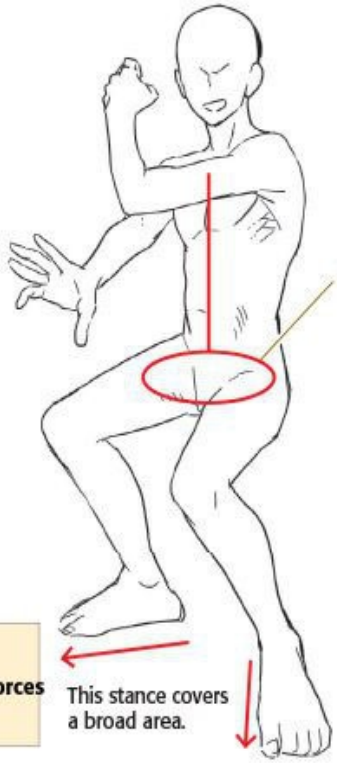
Kung fu signature pose 1

This fighting pose with the body positioned low often appears in kung fu movies. The unique angle of the defensive fist recalls Chinese opera scenes. It's a detail that reinforces the Chinese style of the pose.



Kung fu signature pose 2

This pose is also often found in martial arts. Evoke the dignity of a kung fu master.



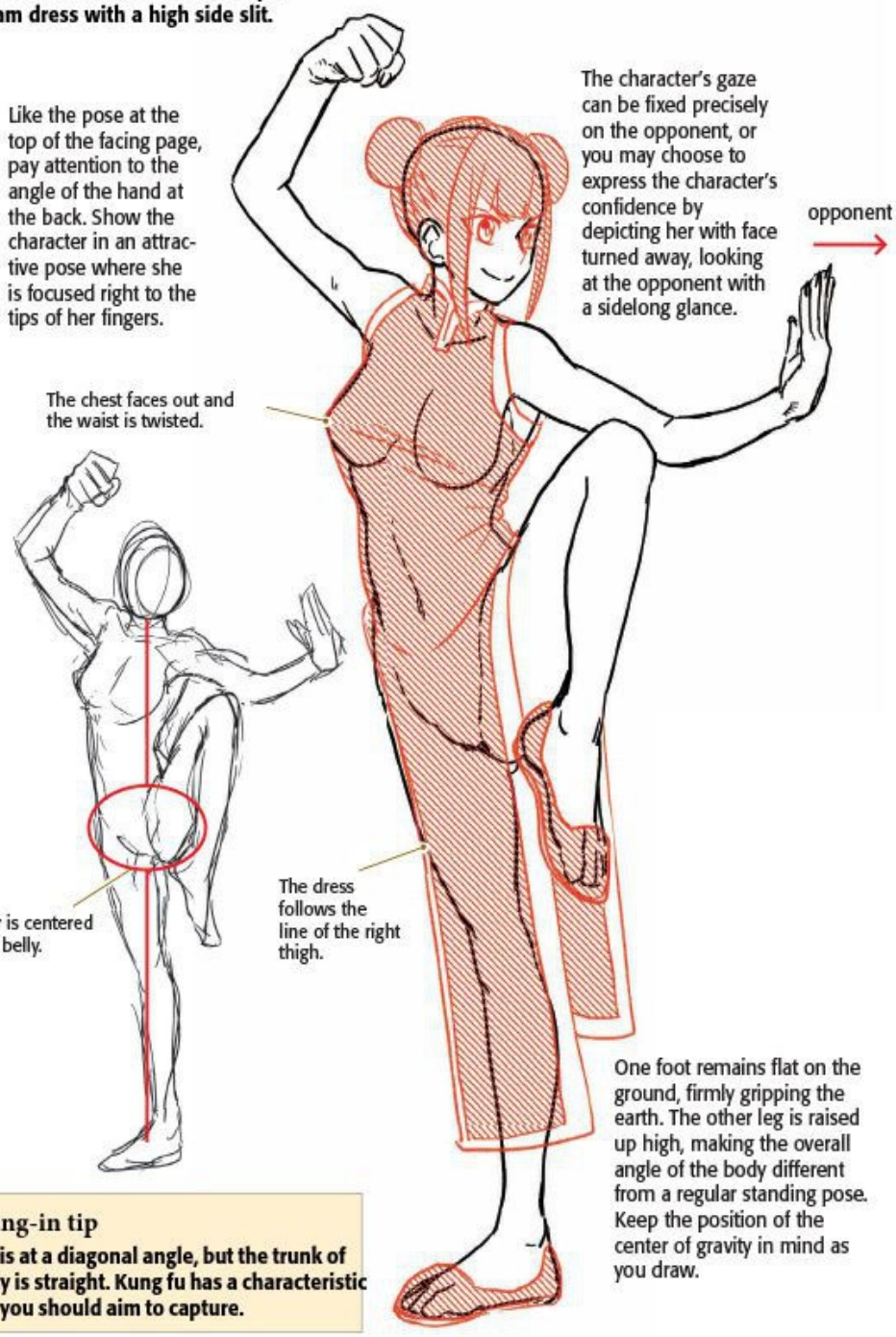
Kung fu and martial arts are not merely ways of fighting, they also involve a quest for spirituality. Be aware of the graceful and systematic movements as this is the trick to improving the overall impression conveyed by the drawing.

Blocking-in tip

Drawing the trunk of the body upright reinforces the sense of a master kung fu practitioner.

Kung fu signature pose 3

This composition suggests an imminent kick. It's a stance that is enhanced by a cheongsam dress with a high side slit.

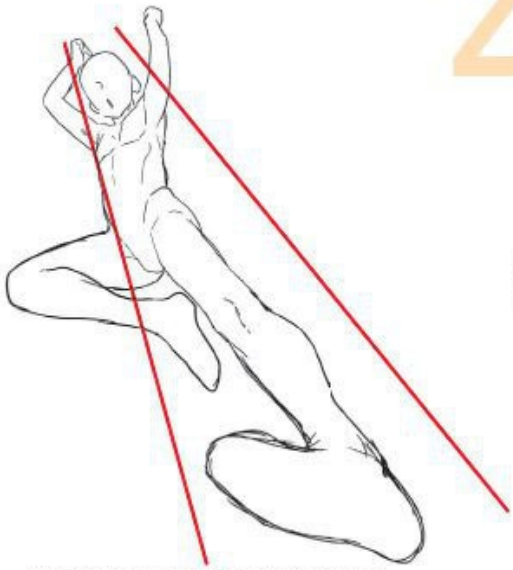


Blocking-in tip

The leg is at a diagonal angle, but the trunk of the body is straight. Kung fu has a characteristic air that you should aim to capture.

ILLUSTRATING IN COLOR

1 Rough Sketch



When trying to create the look of a foot approaching, make it large and bold in an overexaggerated way.

2 Draft

The hair pulled back and flying behind the head creates a sense of speed. Showing the hair loose conveys a sense of floating.

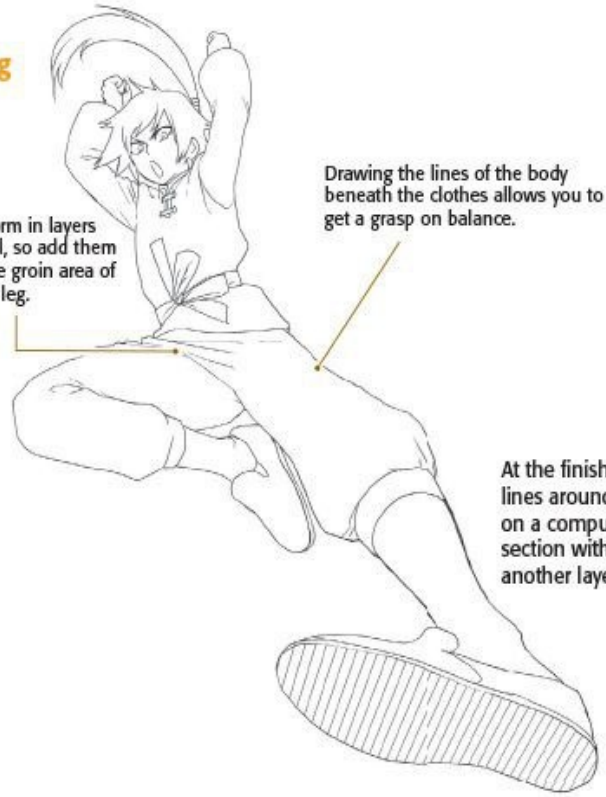
4 Base Color

Instead of using only a mix of black and white for the gray-based clothing, add a little blue or green. This prevents the drawing from looking too flat.

5 Add Shadow

In an illustration where an action is impending, position the light source in front or behind (rather than to the right or left). The purpose of this illustration is to make the character stand out, so the light source is in front.

3 Line Drawing



Creases form in layers of material, so add them around the groin area of the raised leg.

Drawing the lines of the body beneath the clothes allows you to get a grasp on balance.

At the finishing stage, blur the lines around the leg. If working on a computer, separate the section with the kicking leg into another layer.

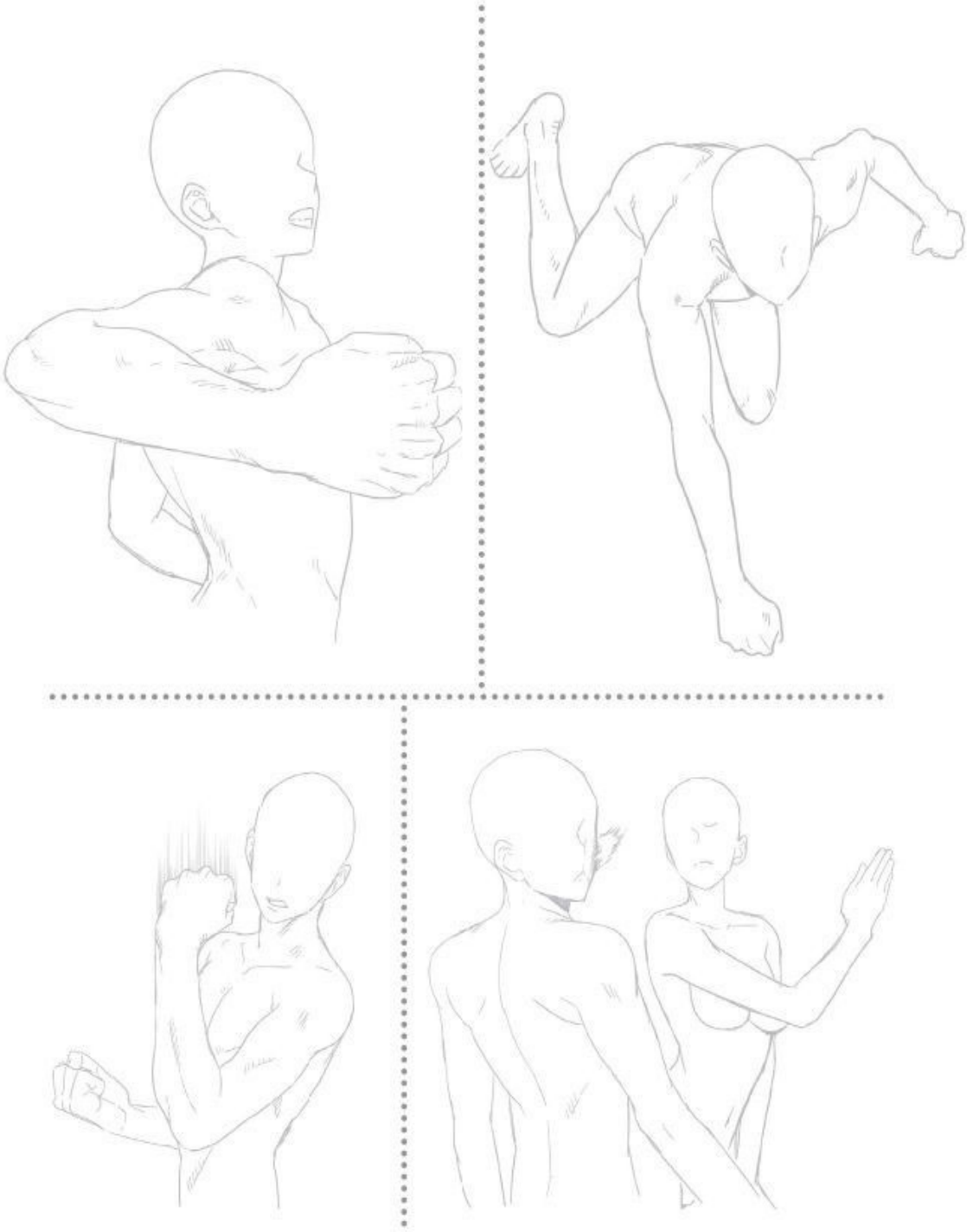
6 Effects and Highlighting

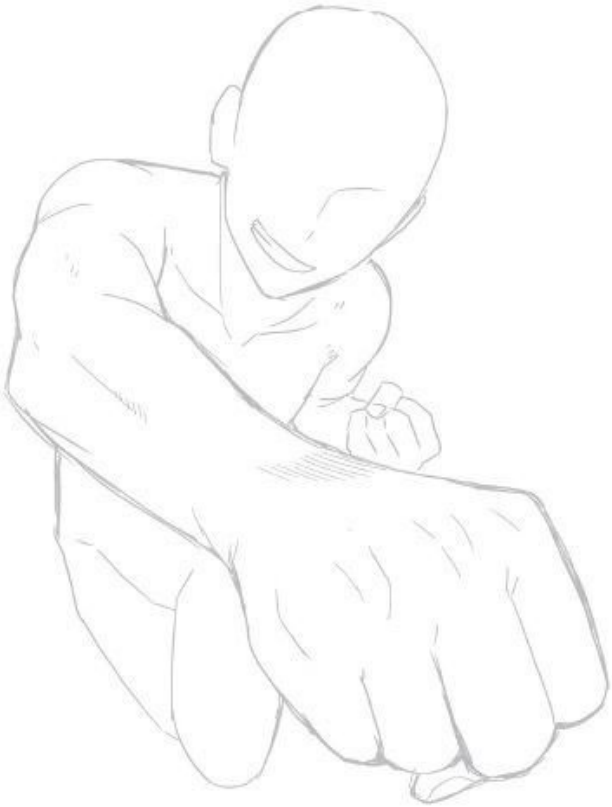
When the opponent is unclear and there is a sudden incoming kick, placing the light source behind the character for a backlit effect looks cool. Add depth by making the area behind the head gray.

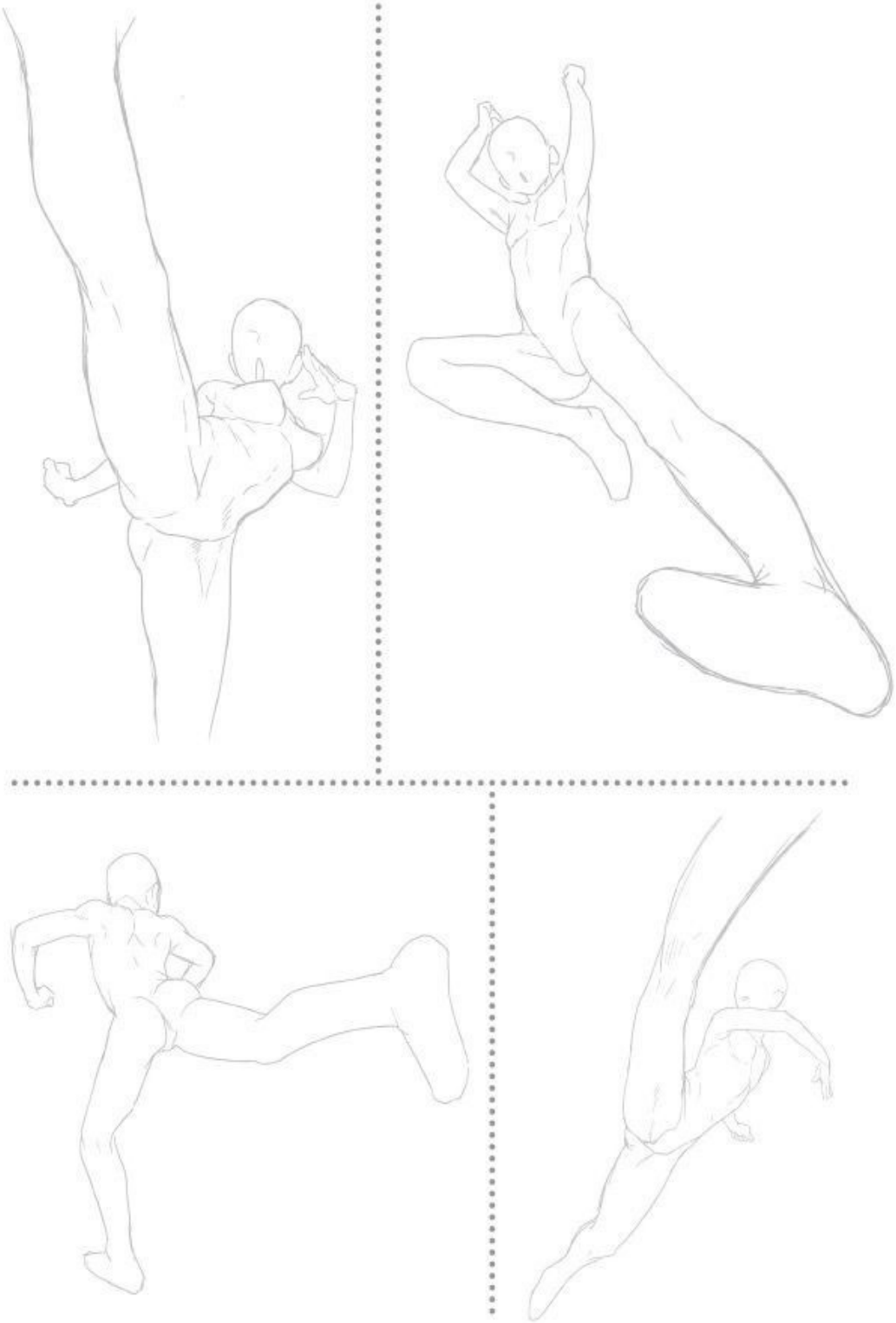
7 Completion

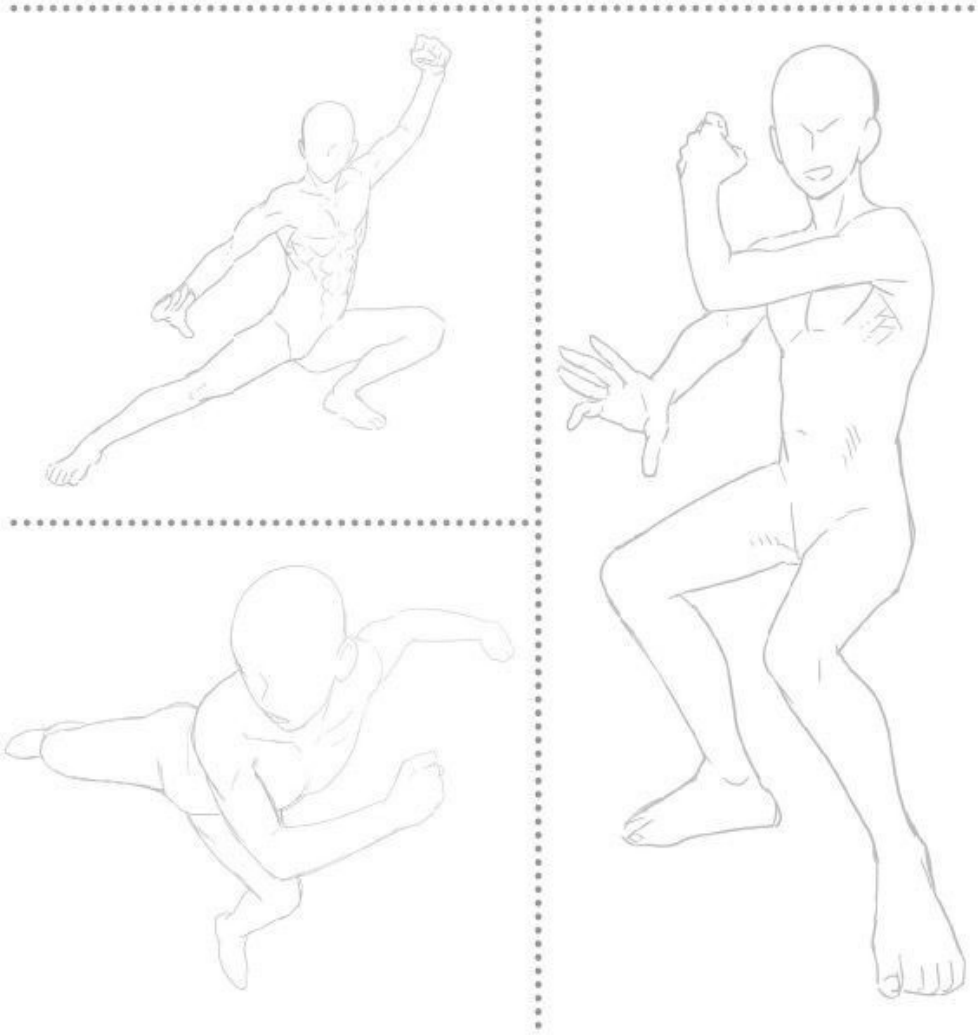
Bring out a feeling of movement by using the blur tool for the section of the leg that you previously prepared in a separate layer.

TRACING PRACTICE







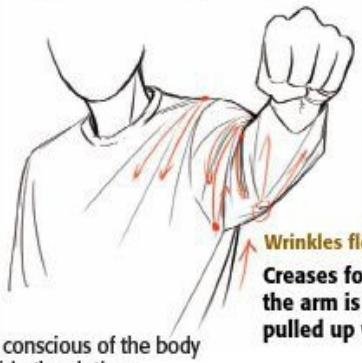


Spotlight

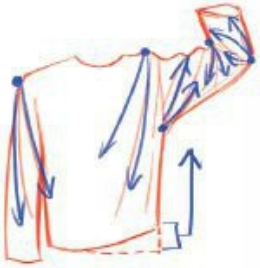
GETTING CLOTHES RIGHT

The ability to draw creases and wrinkles in clothes makes for much more convincing illustrations. Let's take a look at what kind of creases form in fabric and get some practice!

Upper body



Be conscious of the body inside the clothes.

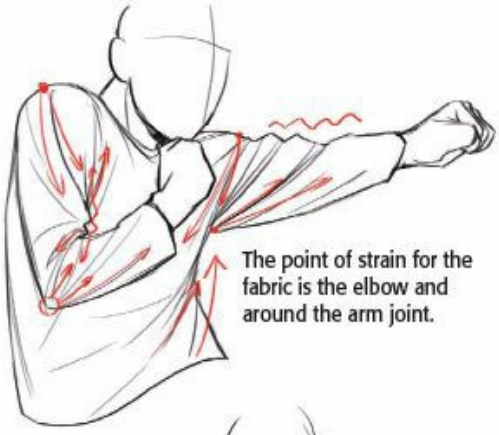


Wrinkles flow down from a high point

Creases form where the arm bends. If the arm is raised higher, the shirt will be pulled up with it, raising the shirt hem.

Be aware of the fullness of the chest.

It depends on the fabric, but traditional martial arts clothing doesn't crease much. Observe how martial arts clothing is put together before drawing it.



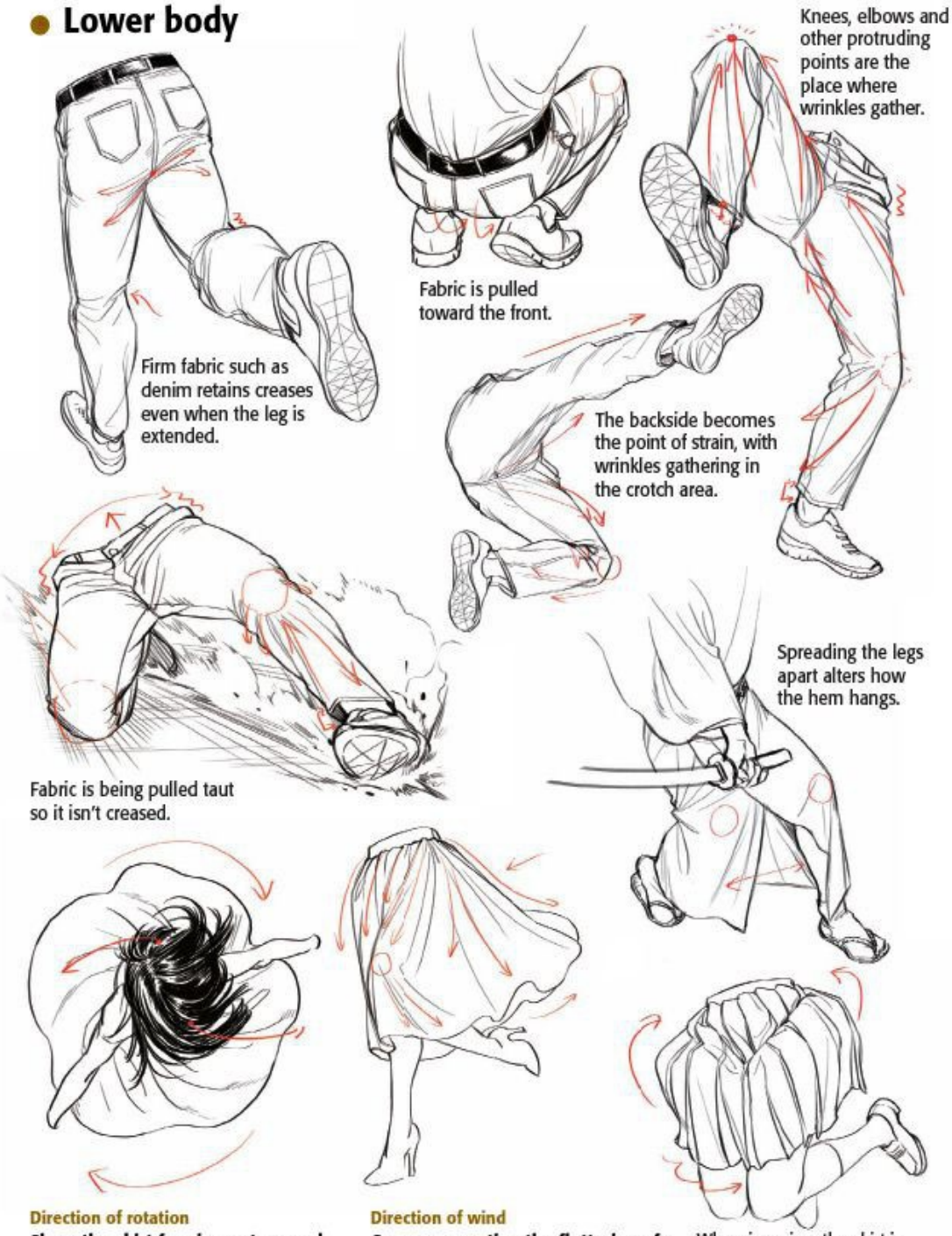
The point of strain for the fabric is the elbow and around the arm joint.

Pay attention to fabric and texture!

Wrinkles form readily in thin fabric, while thicker fabric creases less, instead forming into large drapes.

Clothes gripped and pulled by a hand develop wrinkles from the force of the movement.

Lower body



Direction of rotation
Show the skirt fanning out around the fi gure. The trick here is to create a circle that is not perfect but has some folds and dips around the edges.

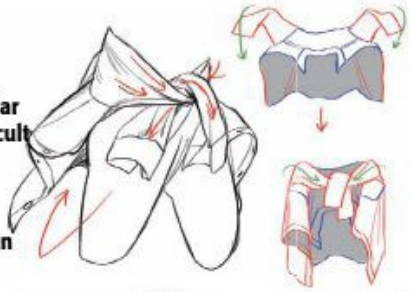
Direction of wind
Overexaggerating the fluttering of a skirt makes for a more stylish, elegant look. The hem flows out behind, drawn by the wind.

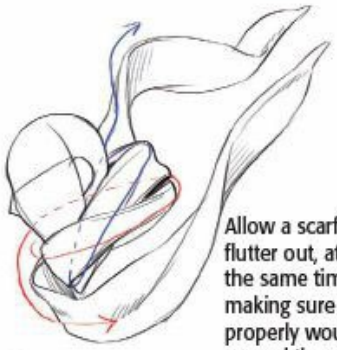
When jumping, the skirt is raised up for an instant.

Other items of clothing

Items that wind around

A shirt wound around the waist has an irregular shape and may be difficult to draw, but don't just draw it any old way. Observe how it sits by taking photos, looking in the mirror and so on.

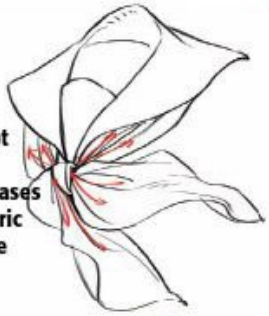


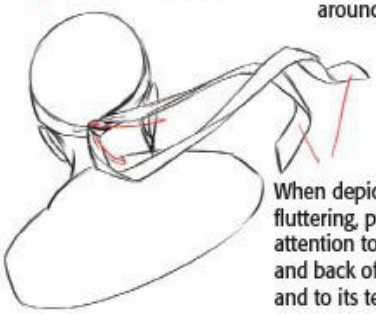


Allow a scarf to flutter out, at the same time making sure it's properly wound around the neck.

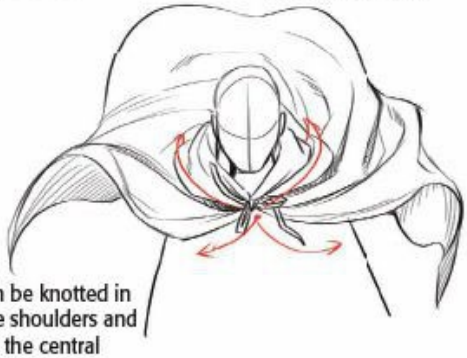
Tying

Remembering that the knot will be the point where wrinkles gather, create creases in the fabric. The more fabric there is to gather, the more wrinkles will form.



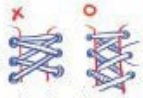


When depicting fabric fluttering, pay close attention to the front and back of the fabric and to its texture.



Superhero capes can be knotted in front, attached at the shoulders and so on. Keep in mind the central point where the fabric gathers, and observe how it drapes and falls.

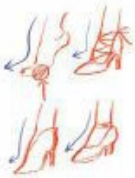
Sneakers



Keeping in mind the right and wrong (reverse) side of the shoelace, make sure it passes properly through the eyelets.

Sole There are many styles of sneaker, so you can show your fashion sense. Draw shoes properly to make a convincing illustration. Get the small details right.

Shoes with heels



Sole A clearly visible instep makes an attractive, sexy impression. Choose a design you like that suits the illustration.

Leather shoes

Sole Create shine through use of color and by filling in areas to create a solid block. An overexaggerated shine makes for a stylish look.

CHAPTER 3

INTERACTING

When an opponent or additional character appears in the scene, this will have an effect on your composition. In this chapter we'll look at action involving two people, focusing on aspects such as the structure of the body and balance.

SCENES WITH TWO PEOPLE

Compositions involving two people can be applied to a range of situations. Once you've practiced the basics, you can create endless variations by bringing out differences in body type, age and so on.

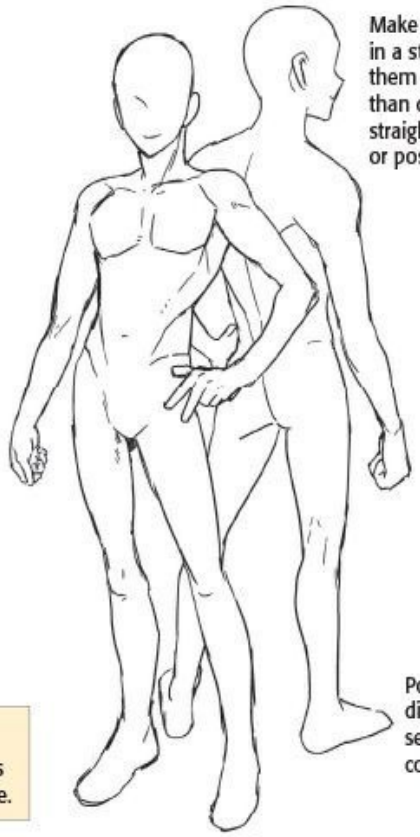
Back to back

This pose demonstrates that the characters have a trusting relationship.

This pose could be in a scene where the two characters are surrounded by enemies. Standing back to back shows that the two characters trust one another.

Alter the direction of the gaze. This makes the space around the characters appear bigger.

Bringing the gaze down and positioning the figures so that they are viewed from below brings a sense of dynamism and power to the illustration.

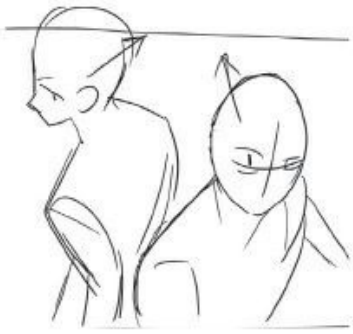


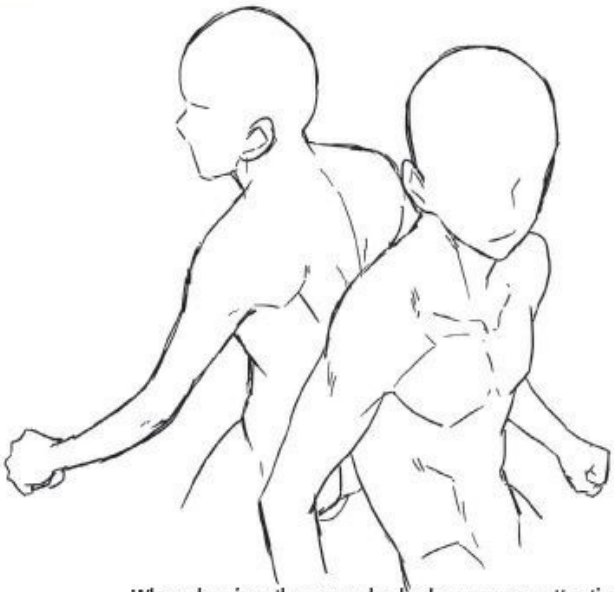
Make the characters look cool in a standing pose by giving them long legs. Note that rather than depicting them standing straight, you can twist the torso or position a hand on a hip.

Positioning the legs hip distance apart brings a sense of stability to the composition.

Blocking-in tip

When drawing two people, draw the parts that overlap and adjust the overall balance.





Blocking-in tip

Try using a bird's-eye view for a different feel.

When drawing the upper body close-up, pay attention to the facial expression. For example, the character in front here could look relieved to be protected by his partner.

Grabbing

Let's try drawing a grabbing scene, paying attention to how clothes bunch up when grabbed, the composition of the grabbing hand and so on.

This is a way of narrowing distance between characters when one is slightly aggressive. Draw the attacking character pulling the other one toward him and leaning slightly forward to show the tension in the air.

Blocking-in tip

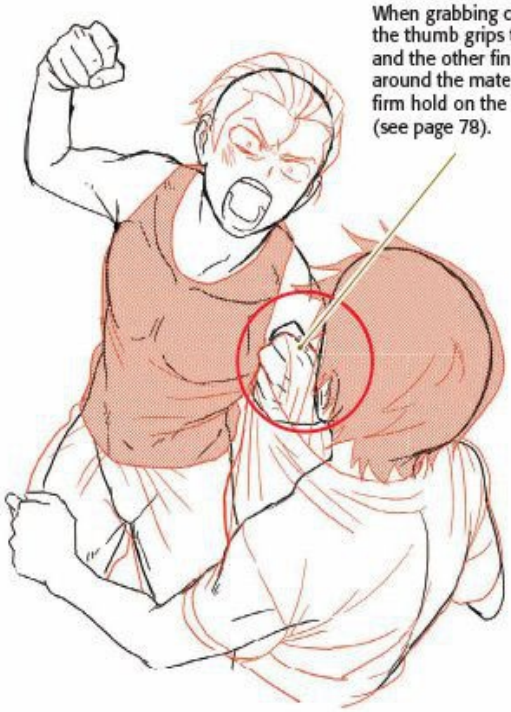
Block in the neck of the clothing being pulled, considering the point of strain.

In scenes where the characters' faces are close together, convey the pressure felt by the character on the receiving end of the attack.

Block in the parts of the body concealed by clothing. Creases in the fabric make for a more convincing illustration.

Incorporating perspective brings out momentum and a sense of tension. This can be tricky in terms of composition but set yourself a challenge and give it a go.

The character on the receiving end tilts backward. The arms behind him convey that he is on the defensive.



When grabbing clothes, the thumb grips the collar and the other fingers wrap around the material to get a firm hold on the opponent (see page 78).

You might depict a situation where one character becomes enraged, and this confrontation can lead to a punching scene.

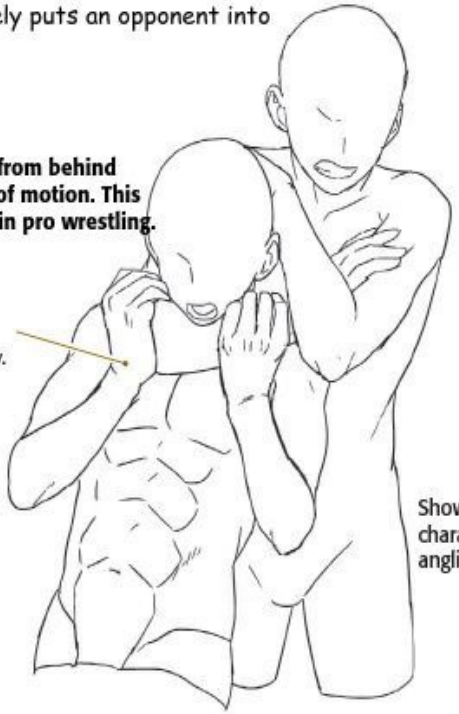
Throttling

Throttling immediately puts an opponent into a difficult position.

Sleeper hold

Grabbing the opponent from behind shuts down their range of motion. This is a choking move used in pro wrestling.

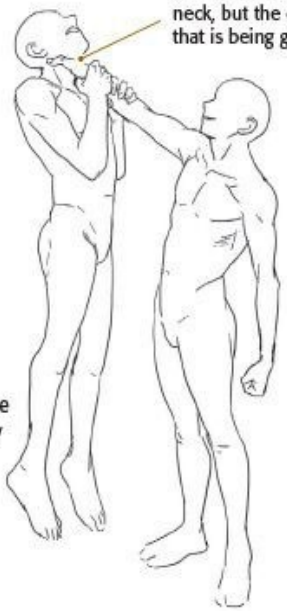
The character being choked defends himself by trying to pull the attacker's arms away. It's important to depict the force being directed into the character's fingers.



Show the distress of the character being choked by angling his face downwards.

Lifting with one hand

It's not the middle of the neck, but the carotid artery that is being gripped.

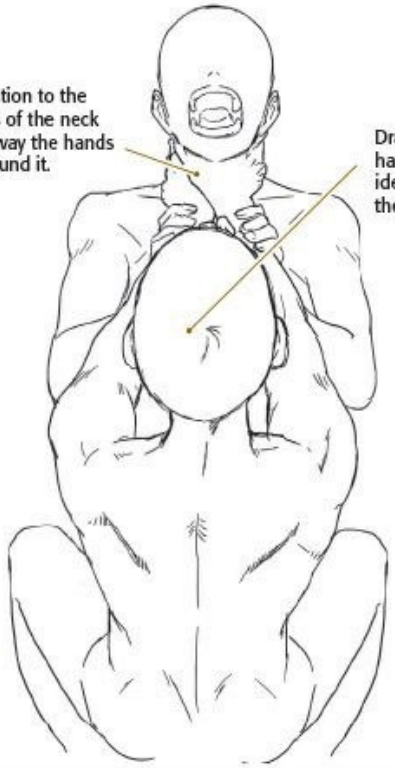


This is a pose made possible in illustration. The attacker doesn't have to be strong; a physically weak female character can also work here.

The character being held is suspended in the air.

Pinning down an opponent

The attacker sits on top of a prone opponent and pins him down by grabbing him around the neck.



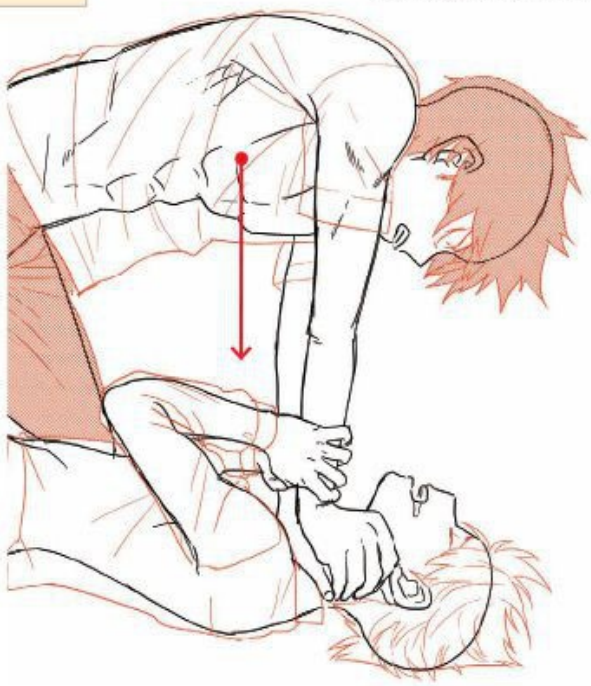
The attacker uses his entire body weight to completely prevent his opponent from moving.

Blocking-in tip

Viewed from above, the attacker's head would conceal the opponent's, making it impossible to see the opponent's expression. In this composition, however, the attacker's center of gravity has been shifted back so that the opponent's face is visible.

Side view

When the scene is viewed from the side, we can see the expression on both faces.



Here, the body weight of the attacker rests on the opponent's neck. The entire weight of the attacker's head is supported by his arms.

Headbutting

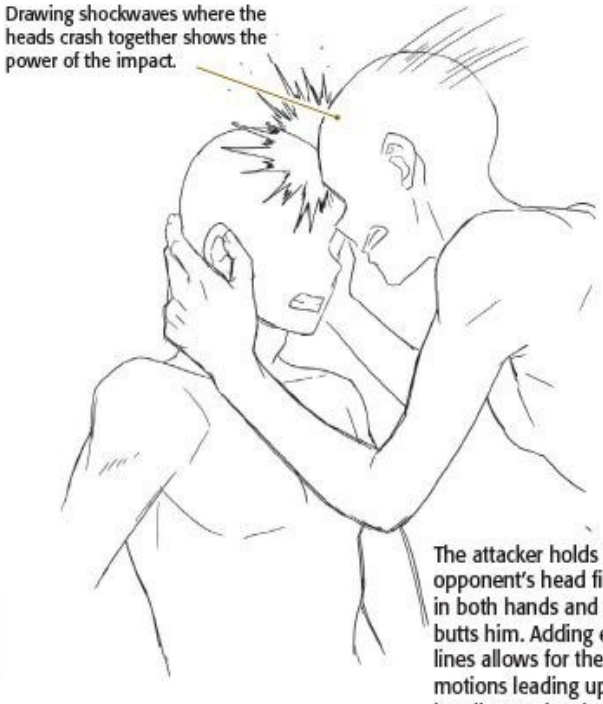
To draw this, visualize the attacker charging headfirst into the opponent at full speed.

Holding the head

The attacker holds the opponents head while he brings his own head down.

Blocking-in tip

Block in the part of the opponent's head that is hidden by the impact.



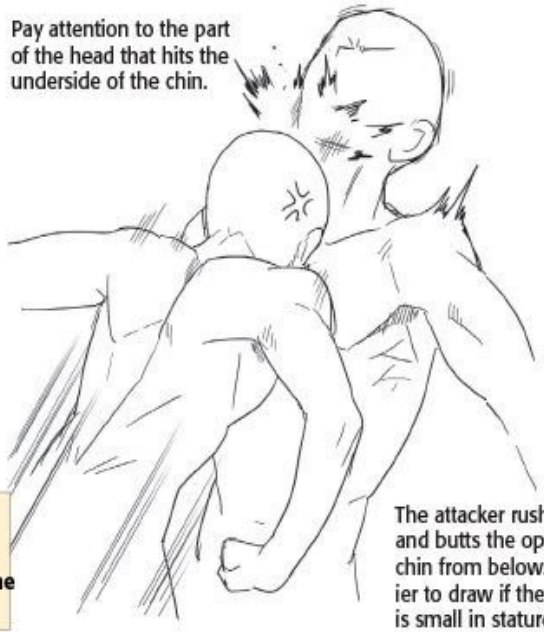
The attacker holds the opponent's head firmly in both hands and head-butts him. Adding effect lines allows for the motions leading up to the headbutt to be shown.

Headbutting the chin

The head butts into the point of the opponent's chin. This can also be used in comical scenes.

Blocking-in tip

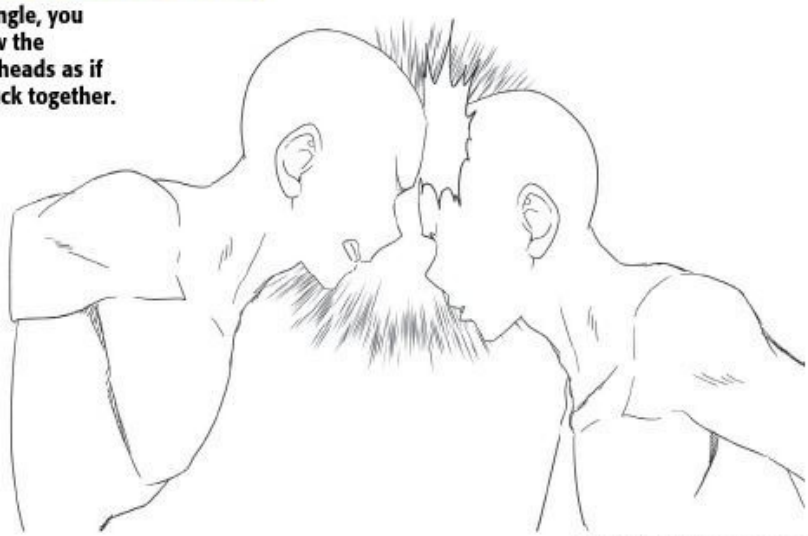
Perspective can be used to show the attacker's head butting up and into the opponent's chin.



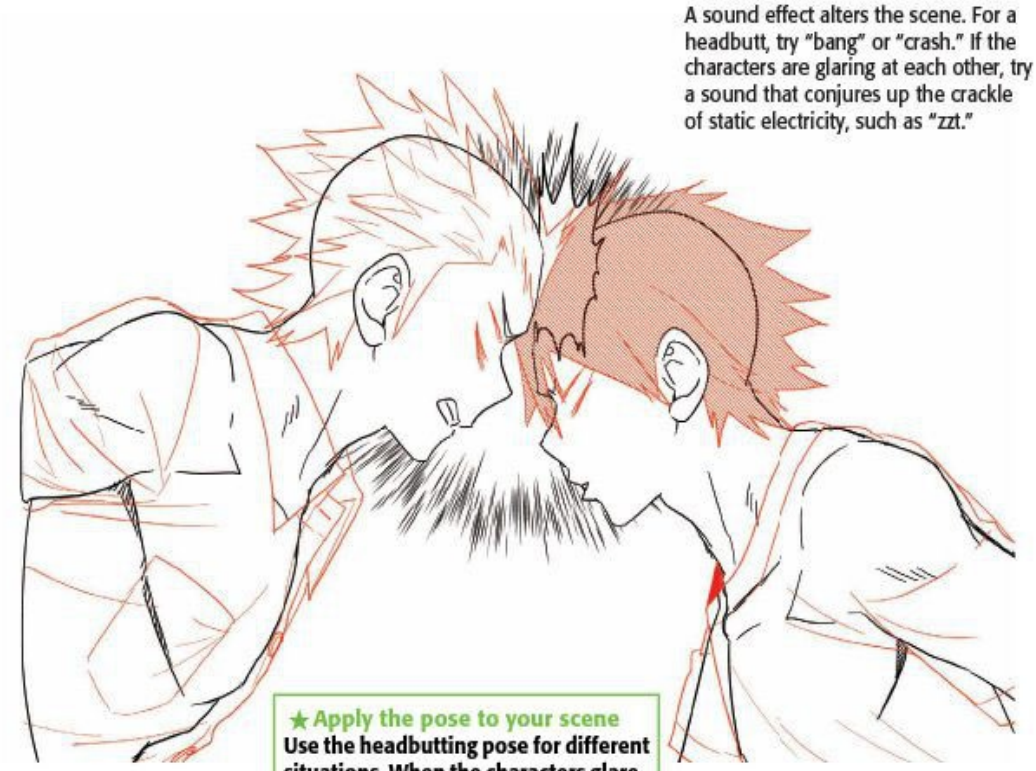
The attacker rushes up and butts the opponent's chin from below. It's easier to draw if the attacker is small in stature.

Headbutting with a glare

From this angle, you should draw the characters' heads as if they are stuck together.



A sound effect alters the scene. For a headbutt, try "bang" or "crash." If the characters are glaring at each other, try a sound that conjures up the crackle of static electricity, such as "zzt."



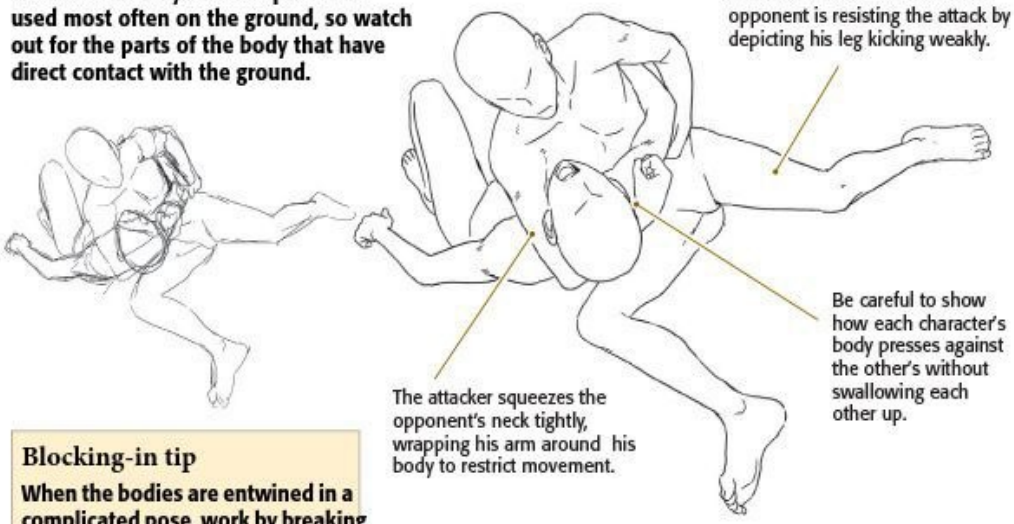
★Apply the pose to your scene
Use the headbutting pose for different situations. When the characters glare at each other, their eyes meet. But the way their eyebrows are raised, or whether the area between the brows is wrinkled can change the effect.

Judo

Use the principle of leverage to weigh down and apply pressure to an opponent's joints and restrict their movement. This technique is used in martial arts such as judo and jujitsu.

Grappling

This is essentially a technique that is used most often on the ground, so watch out for the parts of the body that have direct contact with the ground.

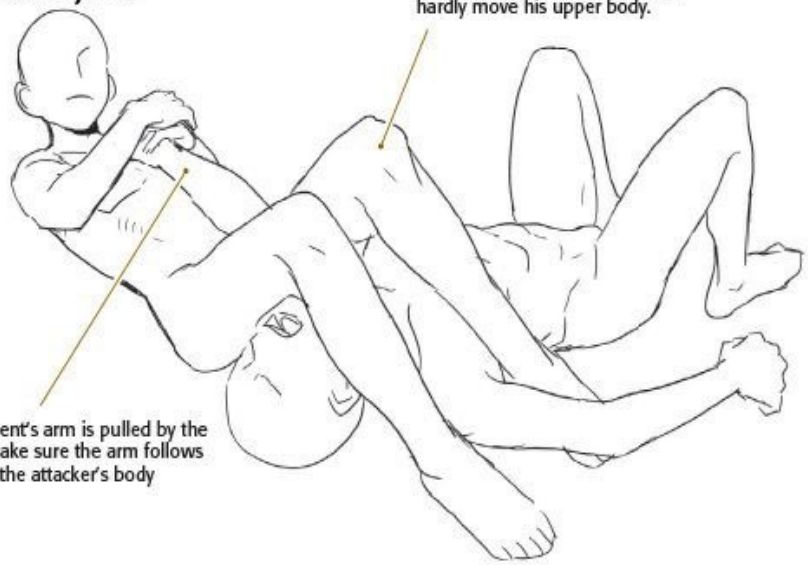


Blocking-in tip

When the bodies are entwined in a complicated pose, work by breaking them down into individual parts.

Joint lock

This technique restricts movement at the joints. Pay attention to the position and angle of the joints.

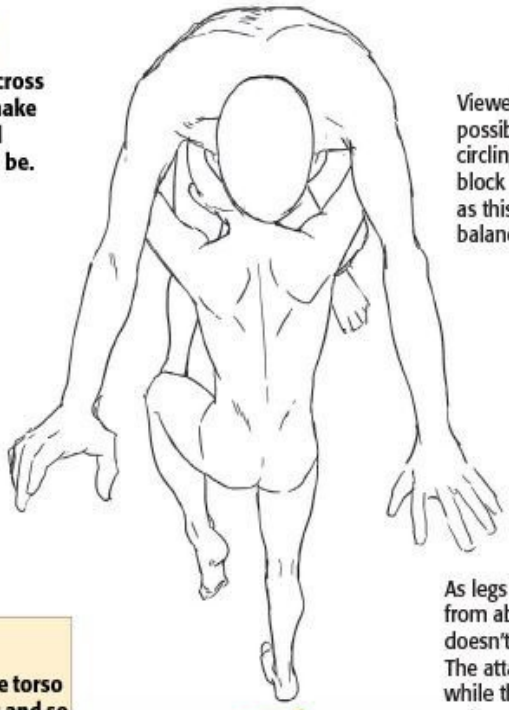


Tackling

This technique involves working up momentum to grab the opponent and topple them to the ground. Keeping the hips low is the key point here.

View from above

The characters' body parts cross over at various points, so make sure you are clear where all body parts are supposed to be.



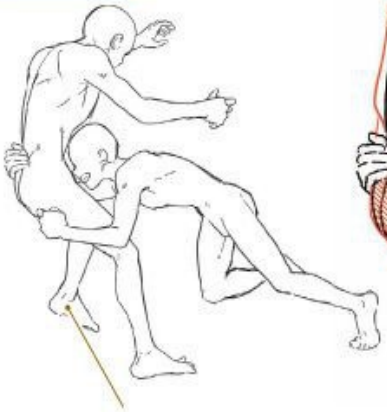
Viewed from above, it's not possible to see much of the arms circling the opponent's body, but block in the hidden sections too, as this will help you maintain balance in the illustration.

As legs look smaller when viewed from above, make sure the body doesn't lose its sense of balance. The attacker brings his foot forward, while the opponent's hips fall back as he stumbles.

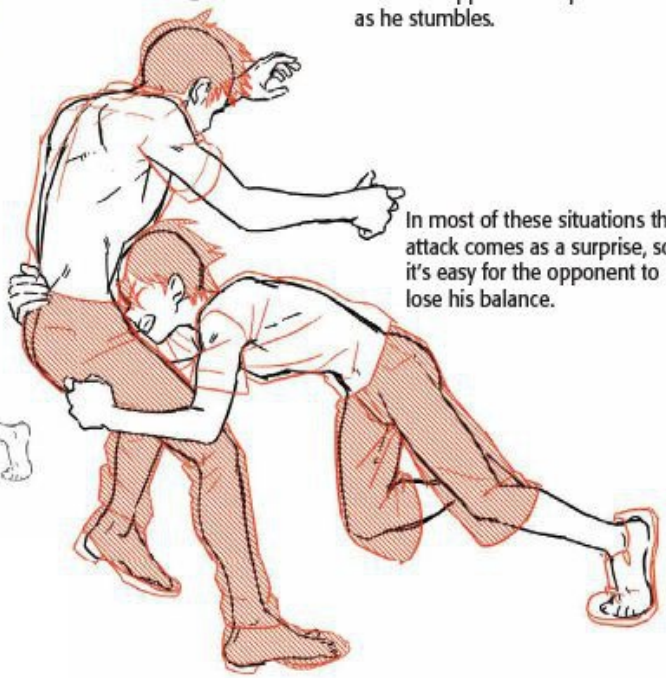
Blocking-in tip

As you draw, check how the torso looks, the angle of the legs and so on when viewed from above.

Side view



From this angle, the attacker can be seen heading for the opponent's stomach at full speed. The opponent's leg jerks up with the force of the impact.



In most of these situations the attack comes as a surprise, so it's easy for the opponent to lose his balance.

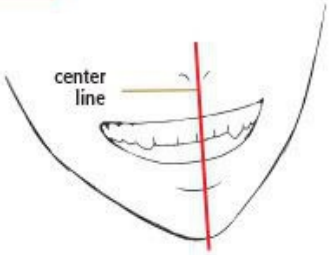
Biting

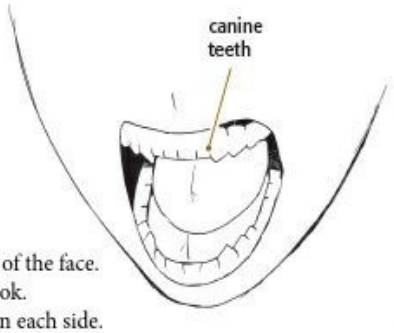
Here, the attacker sinks his teeth hard into the opponent.

When drawing a biting scene, make sure to show the teeth. You can try showing canine teeth, jagged teeth and so on, too.

Key Point

How to draw teeth



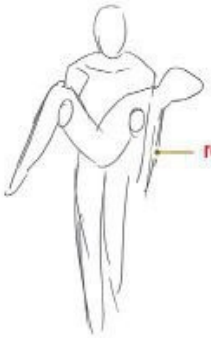


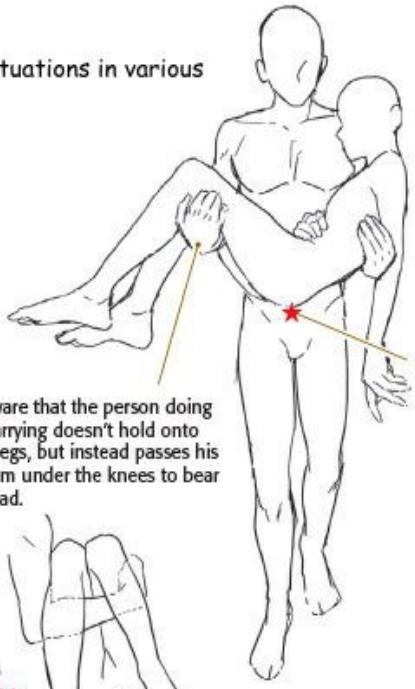
- The middle of the front teeth aligns with the center line of the face.
- Draw gaps and cracks in the teeth for a more realistic look.
- Starting from the middle, the canine tooth is the third on each side.

Carrying

These poses can be adapated to fit the situations in various kinds of scene.

Carrying bridal style





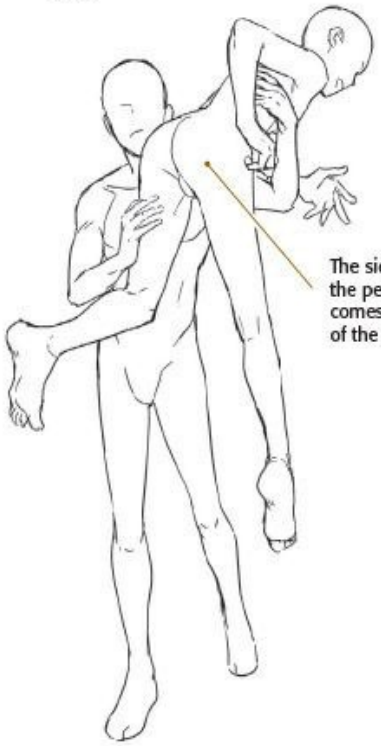
Be aware that the person doing the carrying doesn't hold onto both legs, but instead passes his forearm under the knees to bear the load.

Blocking-in tip

Remember that gravity forces the body being carried to hang downwards.

Over the shoulder

This pose involves a character being carried over one shoulder. Adjust the shoulder width to suit the character.



The side of the buttock of the person being carried comes up next to the face of the carrier.

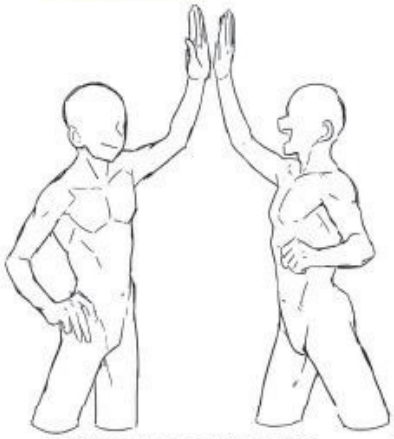
Blocking-in tip

Block in the abdomen, which should rest on the carrier's shoulder.

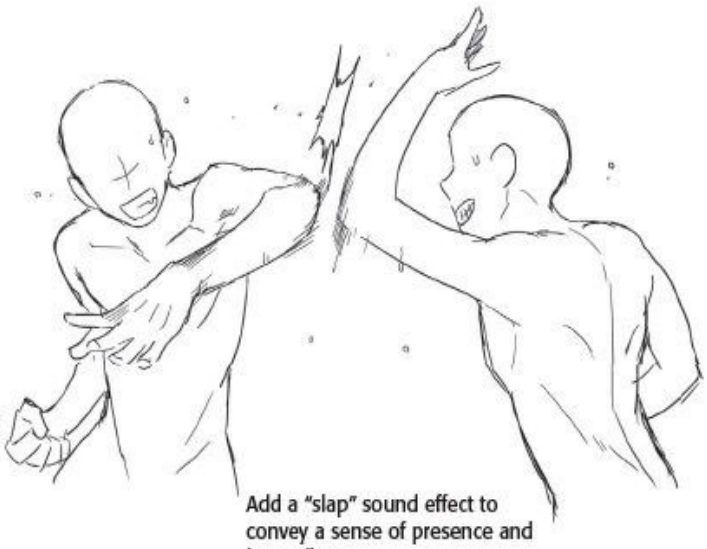
High-fiving

A high five is an action that can be used to express happiness or trust between friends.

One hand

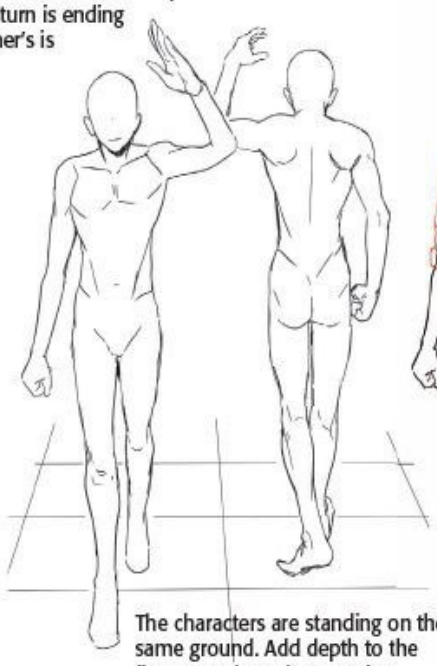


Decide on the apex where the hands will meet. The degree to which the arms are raised indicates how happy the characters are.

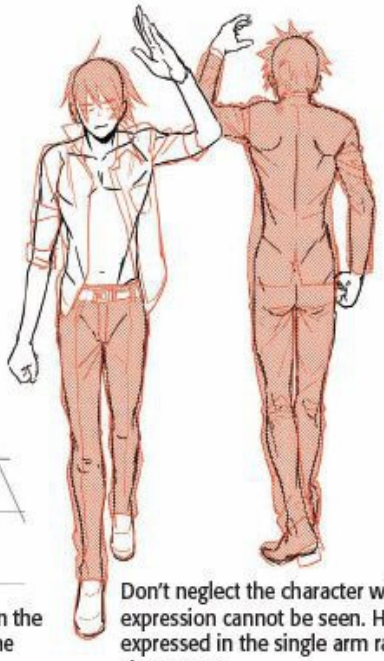


Add a "slap" sound effect to convey a sense of presence and immediacy.

A loose high five between passing characters can be used in fight scenes or in competitions when one character's turn is ending and the other's is beginning.



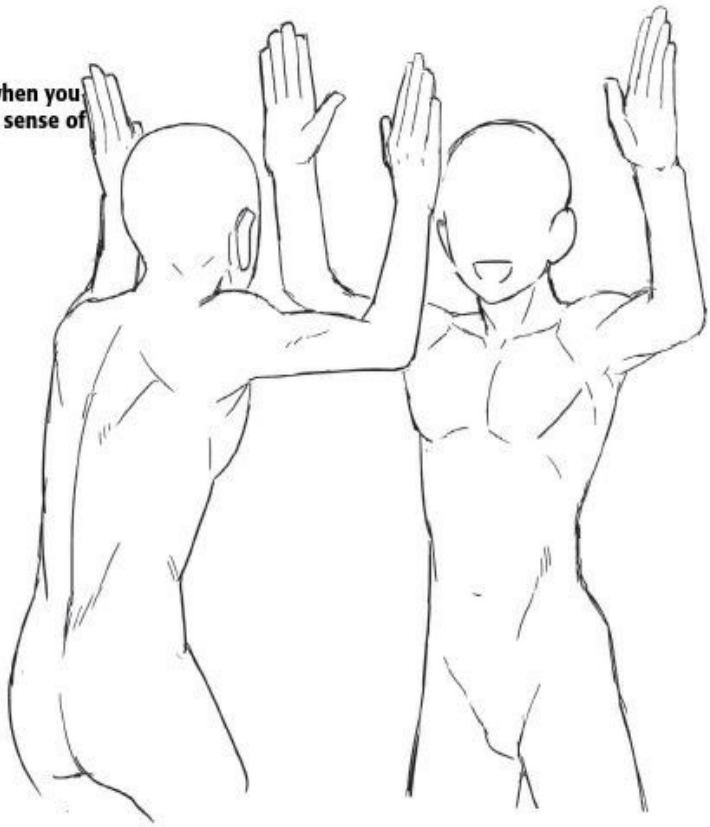
The characters are standing on the same ground. Add depth to the figures to show time passing.



Don't neglect the character whose facial expression cannot be seen. Here, joy is expressed in the single arm raised as if in a victory pose.

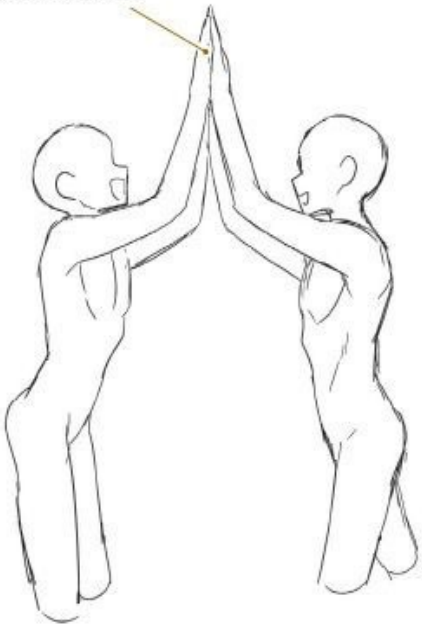
Both hands

Use a double-handed high five when you want to convey an even stronger sense of happiness and delight.

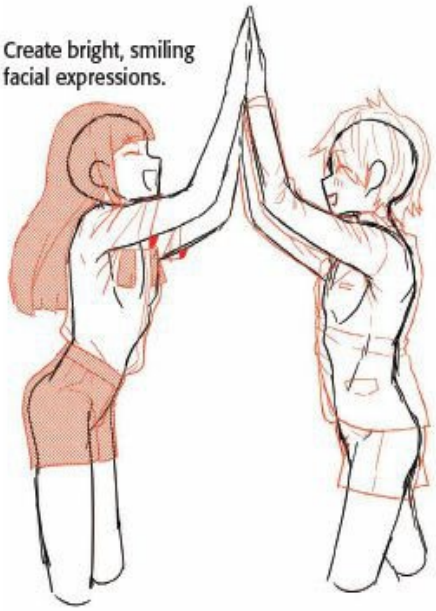


Both hands are raised high and the gaze is directed at the palms of the opposite figure's hands. Raising the figures' faces creates an impression of cheerfulness and shows that they are sharing their joy.

This composition shows the exact moment when the hands meet. If both characters are around the same height, the positions of their shoulders, elbows and hands should mirror one another.

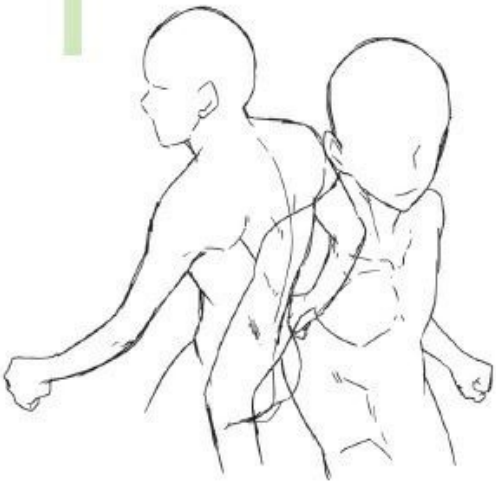


Create bright, smiling facial expressions.



ILLUSTRATING IN COLOR

1 Rough Sketch



When drawing only the top part of the body, it doesn't matter if the positioning isn't perfect.

2 Draft

You don't have to slavishly follow the rough sketch. It's important to have some flexibility when drawing outlines. Leave a clear gap between the characters so that it doesn't look like their backs are blending into one.

4 Base Color

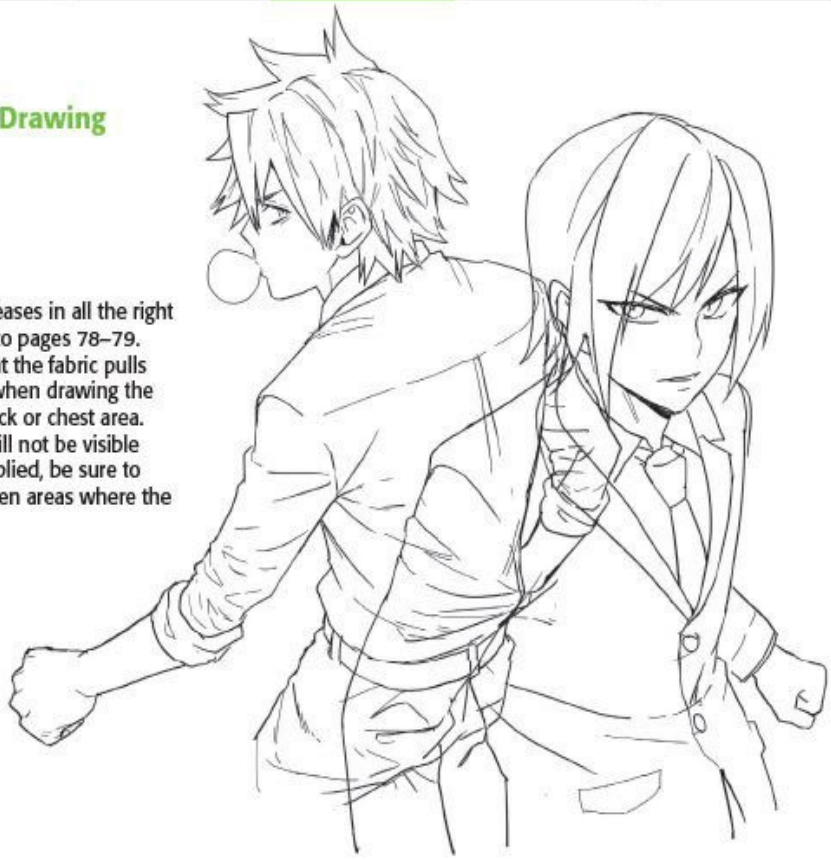
When applying the base color, use similar chroma levels to achieve a natural-looking finished tone. If the chroma levels are all different, the end result can appear scrappy, so care is needed.

5 Add Shadow

Due to the position of the light source, the shadow of one character will fall on the other. Don't rely on your imagination to depict how the shadow looks against clothes—take photos and observe real life situations to achieve a realistic result.

3 Line Drawing

Draw clothing creases in all the right places, referring to pages 78–79. Keep in mind that the fabric pulls under the arms when drawing the creases in the back or chest area. Even though it will not be visible when color is applied, be sure to block in the hidden areas where the bodies overlap.

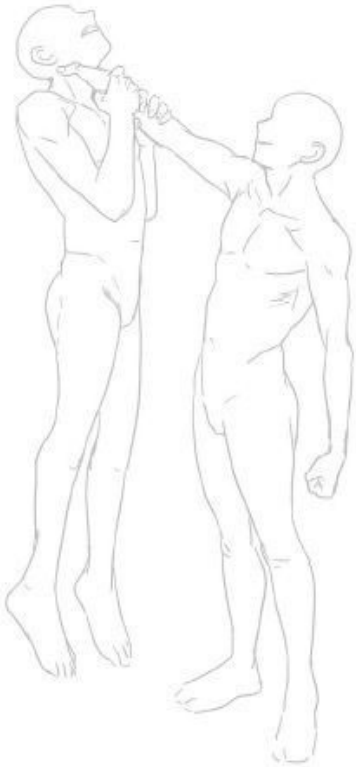


6 Effects and Highlighting

Don't use only white for highlighting. Try a pale undercoat color (such as lilac, if the main color is purple). For example, making the light source yellow and the shadows purple creates a soft look. Use an overlay to add gradation from purple to yellow.

7 Completion

TRACING PRACTICE



Spotlight

GETTING THE HAIR RIGHT

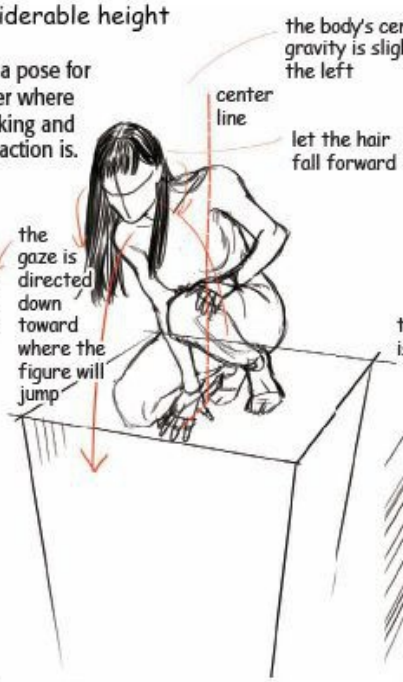
Hair is one of the most effective tools at your disposal for showing a figure's movement. Here, we look at how it moves when the body is in action or has been set in motion by some external force.

Thinking about motion

Jumping from a considerable height

When selecting a pose for a figure, consider where the figure is looking and what their next action is.

Before deciding on the camera work (i.e., how a camera would capture the figure), the gaze and so on, draw the pose from a different angle that is easy to understand. This will make it easier to comprehend tricky poses and angles.



In reality, hair doesn't blow around so much in the wind, but a degree of distortion and overemphasis makes an illustration more dynamic.

The character's gaze is directed decidedly upwards. This gives the appearance of the character being ready for her next move.

❶ Falling straight down at high speed (for example in a jet coaster or when free falling).

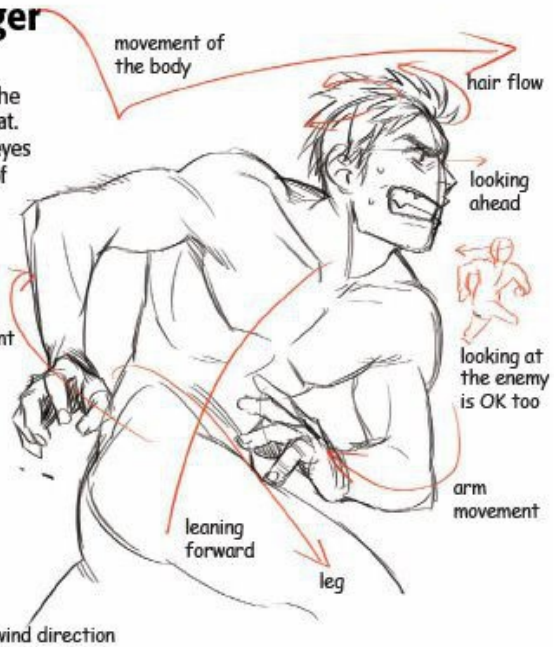
❷ A moment floating in the air, allowing for mass, a sense of speed and so on to be expressed.

Add sound effects, effect lines and so on to lend greater vibrancy to the illustration.

Sensing and evading danger

The gaze moves in the direction of the threat. Add tension to the eyes to express a sense of urgency.

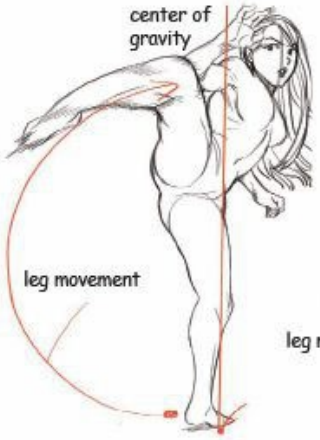
Let's consider the stance required for the next action. In this kind of scene, the body movement communicates the character's agitated state of mind.

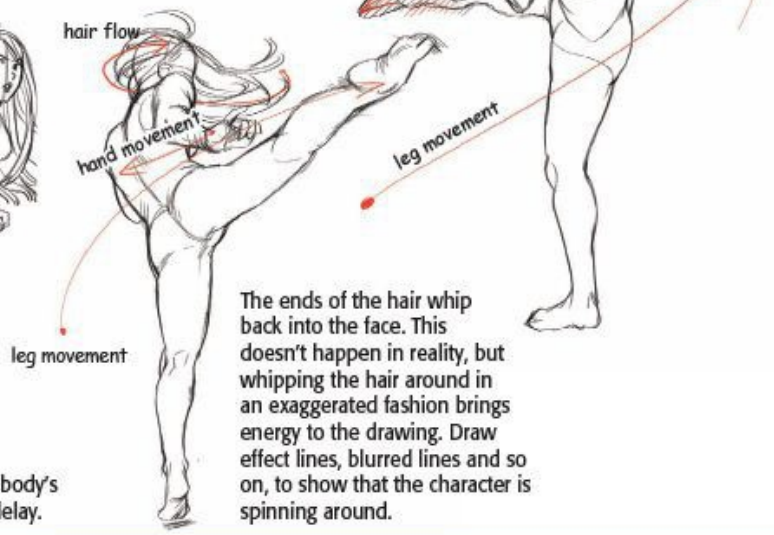


The character's gaze is directed at an object flying toward him. Portray him as on the alert against whatever is coming, trying to make sure that it doesn't hit him.

The momentum from a crouching motion to avoid attack can propel the character straight into a run.

Roundhouse kick





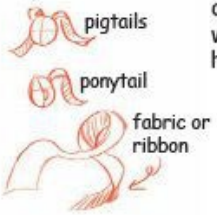
Think of the hair following the body's motion with a few moments' delay.

The ends of the hair whip back into the face. This doesn't happen in reality, but whipping the hair around in an exaggerated fashion brings energy to the drawing. Draw effect lines, blurred lines and so on, to show that the character is spinning around.

Wind direction

Even if a character is not in motion, setting their hair fluttering brings out the movement of the wind. It's easy to depict this if the character has long hair.

Effect lines can be drawn in if you are aware of the direction that the wind is coming from and what kind of wind is blowing. Even when there is no wind, giving the hair an bouncy look brings movement to the illustration.



When you block in a ribbon or other flat, band-like object, pay attention to its reverse side and how it twists.

When drawing hair that moves, pay attention to how it grows from crown the hairline

CHAPTER 4

WEAPONS

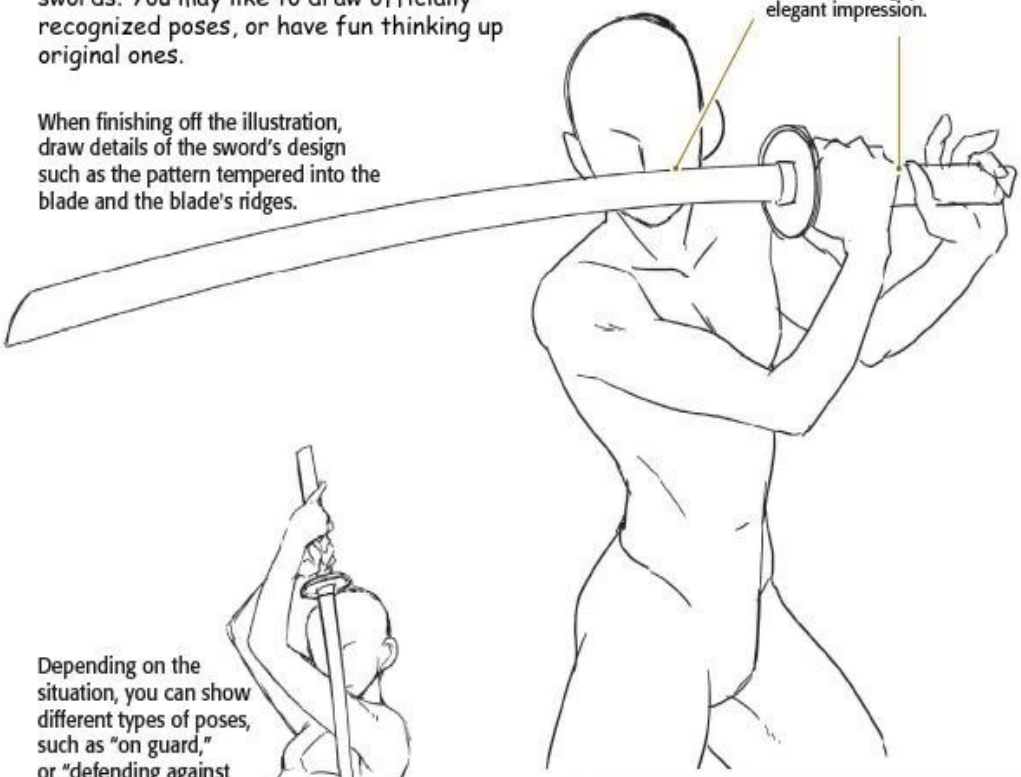
The way in which a character holds a weapon can make all the difference to your scene. In this chapter we'll see how the use of weapons can help you create standout characters.

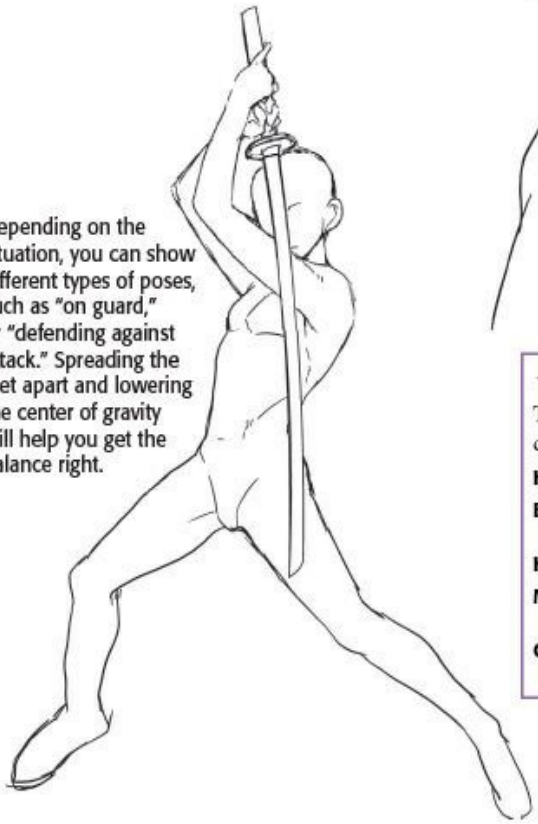
POSES WITH WEAPONS

Here, we look at weapons such as swords, spears, and nunchucks, which require human action in order for them to be used in an attack. There are lots of striking poses for characters holding these weapons.

The Japanese sword

There are various stances associated with swords. You may like to draw officially recognized poses, or have fun thinking up original ones.

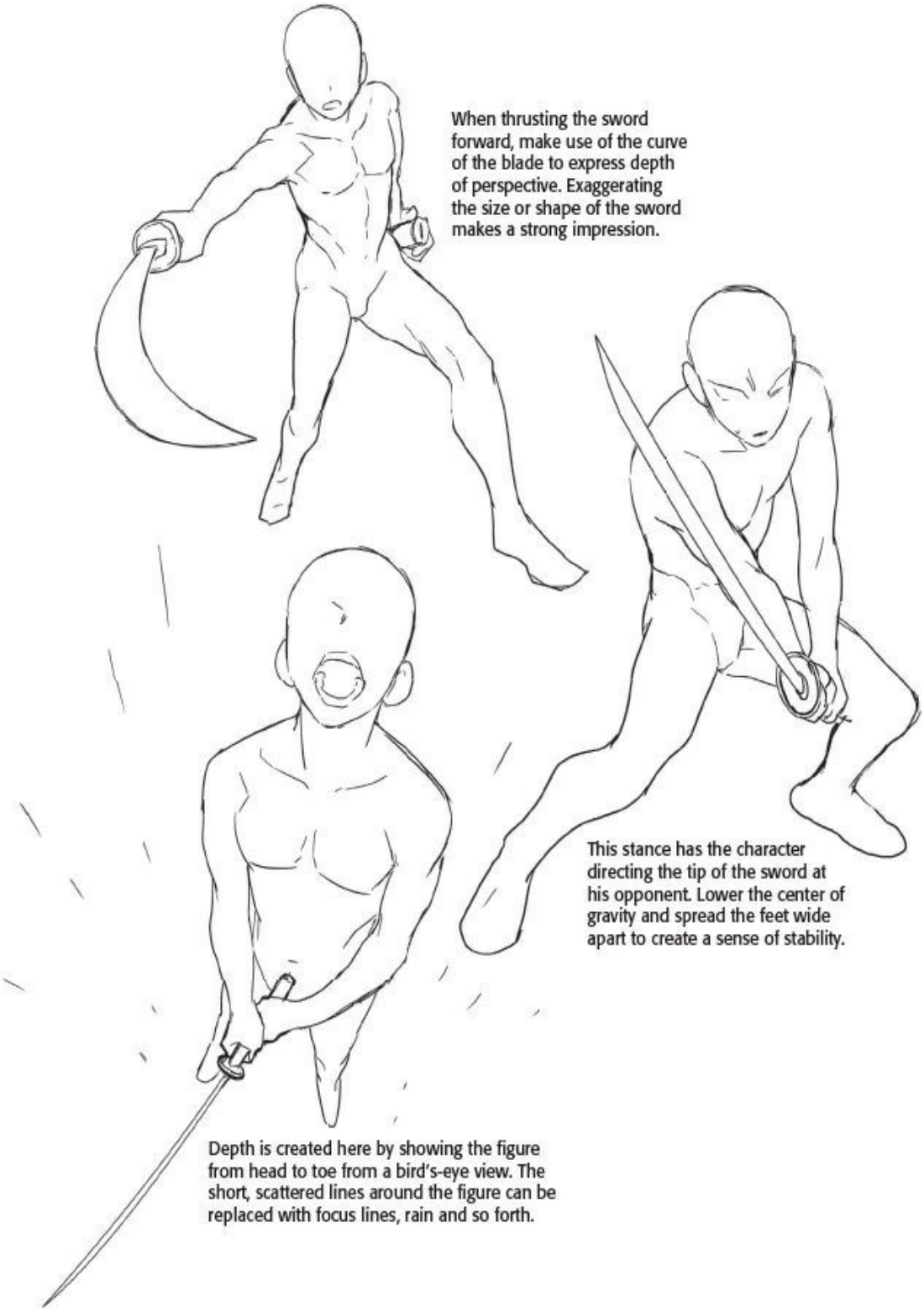




★ Sword terms

These are the parts of a Japanese sword that are crucial to master when drawing them.

Hilt:	**The section used for gripping the sword.**
Blade:	**The part of the sword covered by the sheath.**
Hamon:	**The patterns on a sword blade.**
Molding:	**The shaping between the cutting edge and top ridge of the sword blade.**
Guard:	**The "collar" section in between blade and hilt.**



When thrusting the sword forward, make use of the curve of the blade to express depth of perspective. Exaggerating the size or shape of the sword makes a strong impression.

This stance has the character directing the tip of the sword at his opponent. Lower the center of gravity and spread the feet wide apart to create a sense of stability.

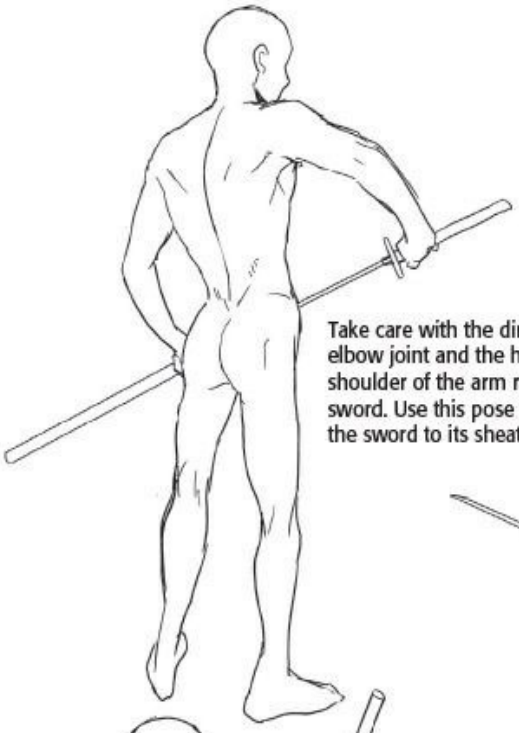
Depth is created here by showing the figure from head to toe from a bird's-eye view. The short, scattered lines around the figure can be replaced with focus lines, rain and so forth.

Unsheathing a sword

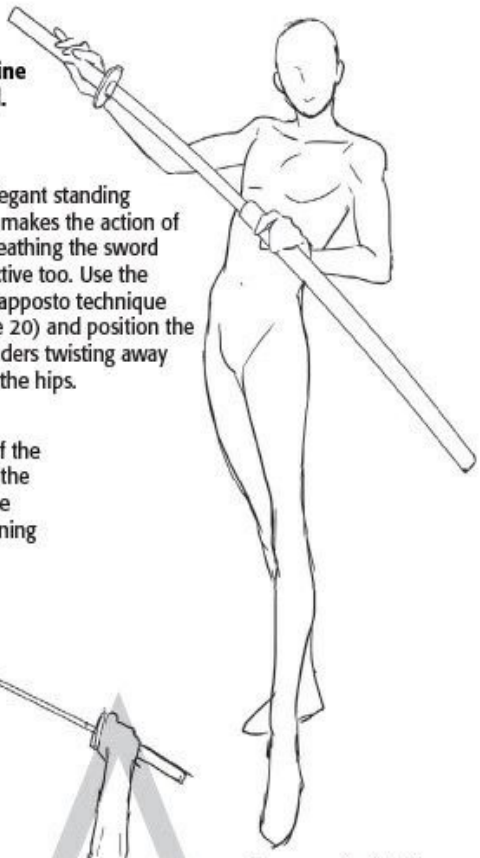
This action involves removing the sword from its sheath. When pulling the sword out, the hand is placed on the sword hilt.

Standing

The longer the sword, the wider the arms open. Imagine the sword tracing a path in the air as it is unsheathed.

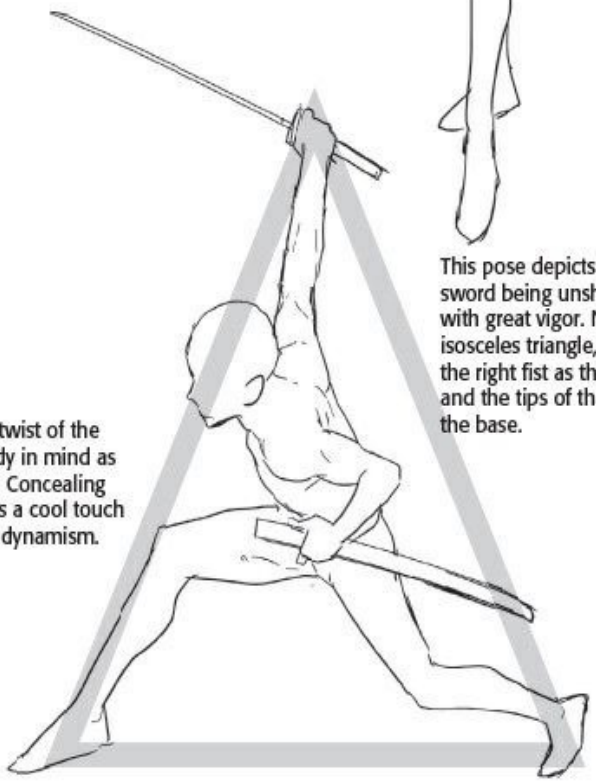


Take care with the direction of the elbow joint and the height of the shoulder of the arm raising the sword. Use this pose for returning the sword to its sheath too.



An elegant standing pose makes the action of unsheathing the sword attractive too. Use the contrapposto technique (page 20) and position the shoulders twisting away from the hips.

Keep the twist of the upper body in mind as you draw. Concealing one arm is a cool touch that adds dynamism.

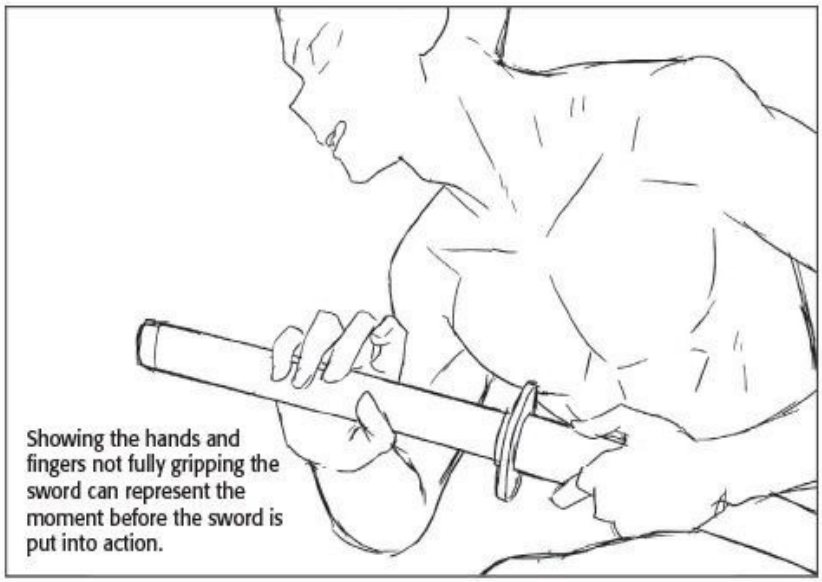


This pose depicts the sword being unsheathed with great vigor. Note the isosceles triangle, with the right fist as the apex and the tips of the toes as the base.

In a seated position

There tend to be fewer variations of movement in a seated pose than in a standing pose. Experiment with depicting various angles.

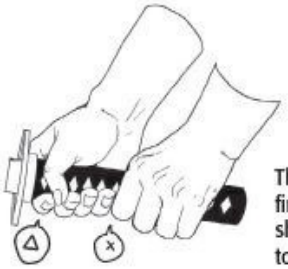
★ Effective ways to crop your illustration
Crop your illustration so the parts that you want to show fit within a frame. Shifting the character away from the center to create a little space on one side makes for good balance.



Showing the hands and fingers not fully gripping the sword can represent the moment before the sword is put into action.

How to grip a sword

The index finger touches the sword guard. The left hand grips the hilt not quite at the end.



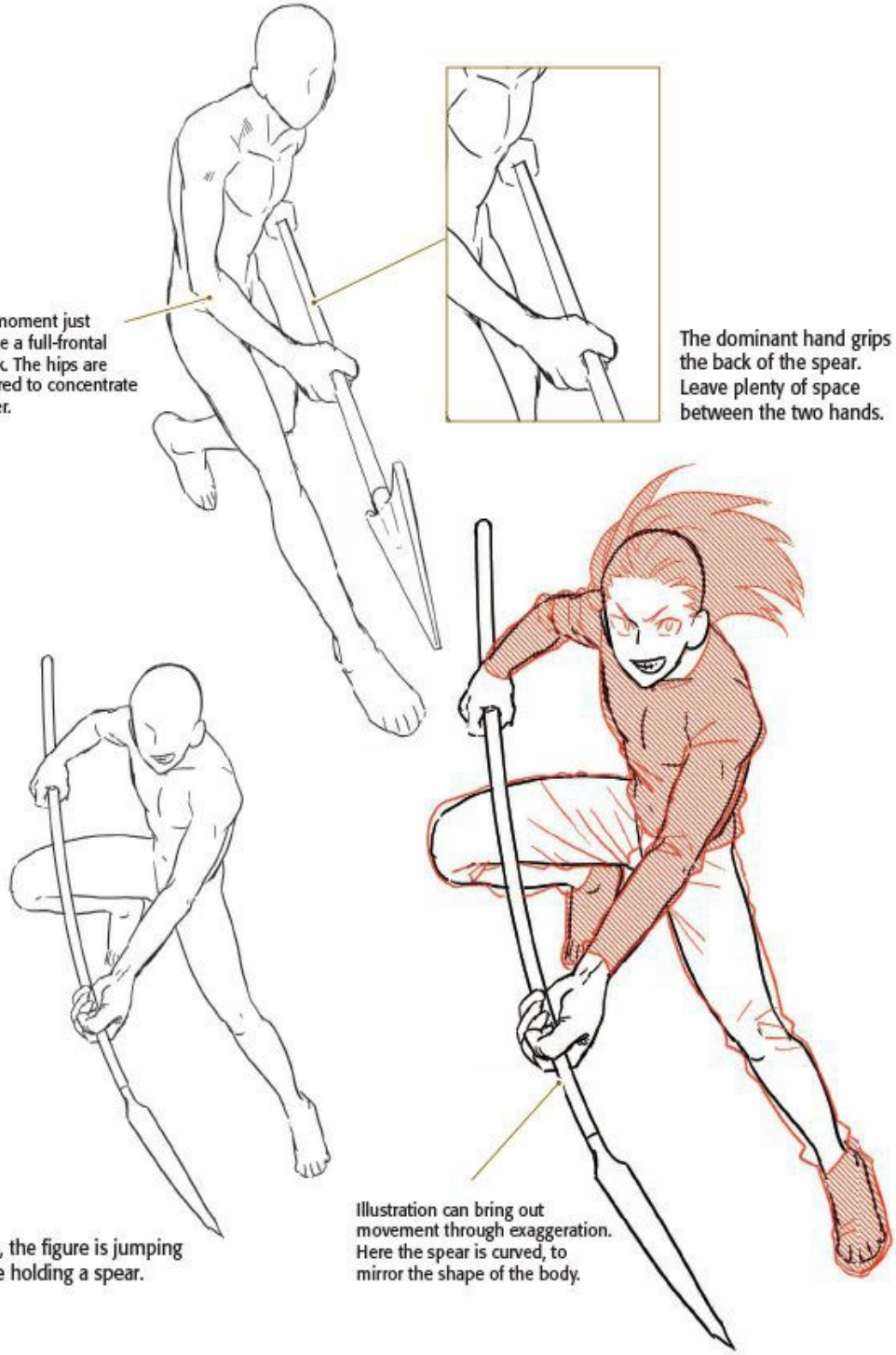
The hands should be two fingers' width apart and shouldn't clench the hilt too tightly.

The hilt should not be lying flat.

Don't change the positions of left and right hand. A left-handed grip exists, but usually the sword is held with the right hand on top.

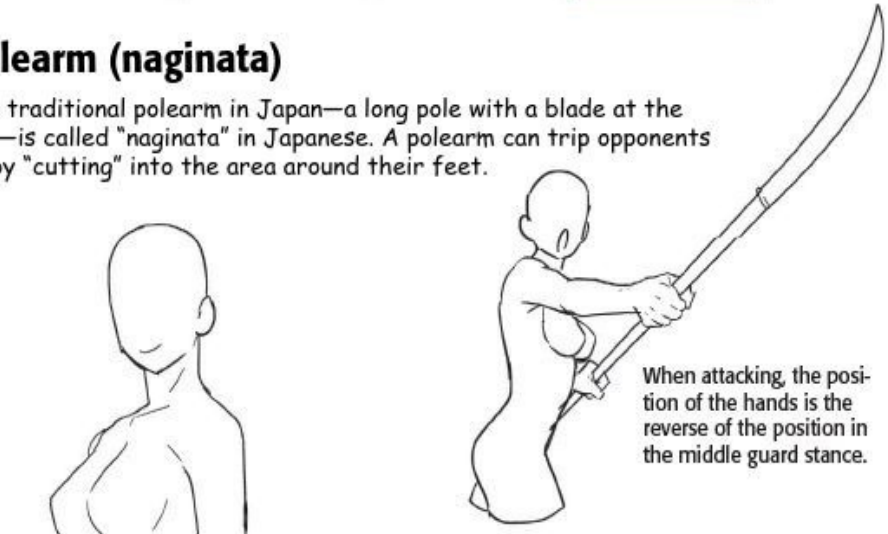
Spear

Thrusting a spear is a unique movement. Make use of the length of the shaft and take into account the large area of attack that it enables.



Polearm (naginata)

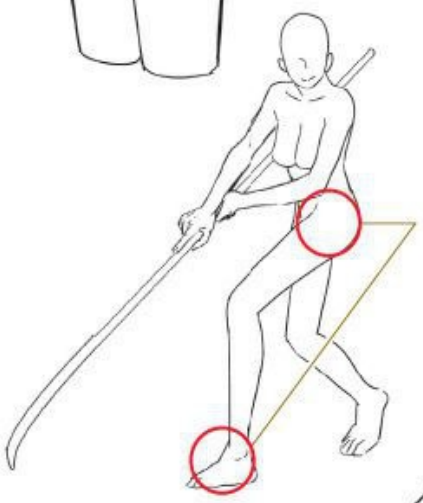
The traditional polearm in Japan—a long pole with a blade at the end—is called "naginata" in Japanese. A polearm can trip opponents up by "cutting" into the area around their feet.



When attacking, the position of the hands is the reverse of the position in the middle guard stance.

The middle guard stance is the foundation for all polearm movements. It is used for both attacking and defending. The polearm is held parallel to the ground.

A pose with the figure holding the polearm. The step to the side brings movement to the drawing. The polearm is mainly seen as a weapon favored by women, so give the actions a feminine look.



one leg steps forward

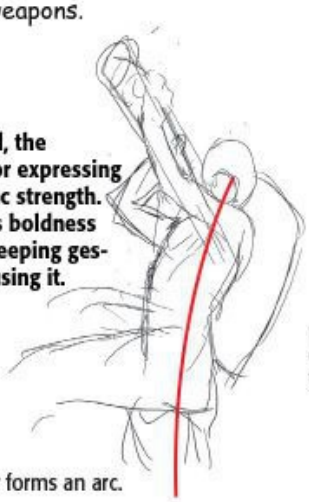
This action closely resembles the actual stance. It's a pose effective for attacking the shins and the feet. It can also be used to portray movement that flows on from the upper guard stance.

Blunt instruments

Here, we look at poses where characters are wielding heavy items such as hammers and ball-and-chain weapons.

Hammer

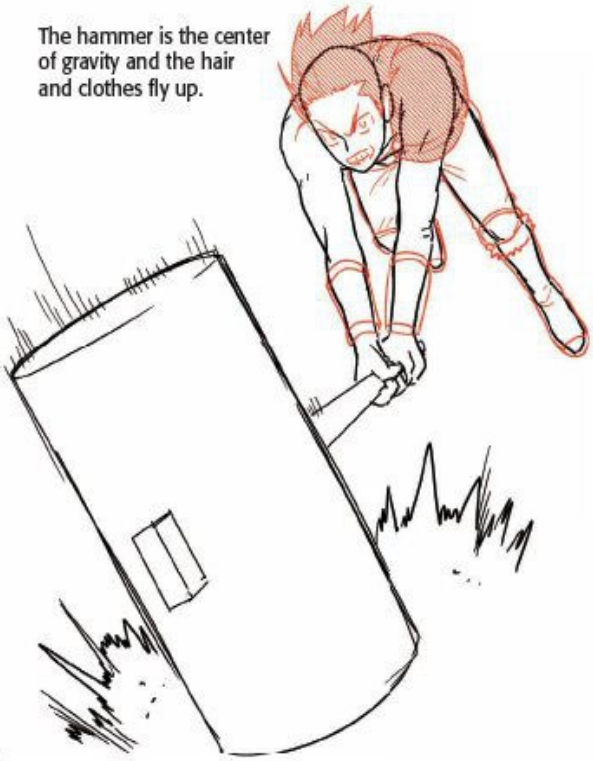
With its huge head, the hammer is ideal for expressing a character's heroic strength. Be conscious of its boldness and the broad, sweeping gestures involved in using it.

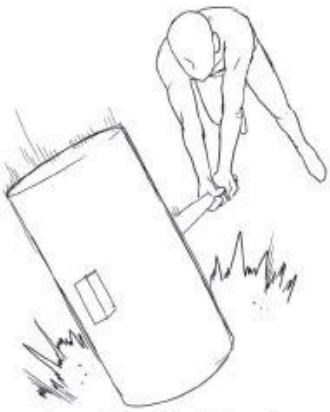


The body forms an arc.

Distribute the weight evenly by positioning the hands apart.

The hammer is the center of gravity and the hair and clothes fly up.

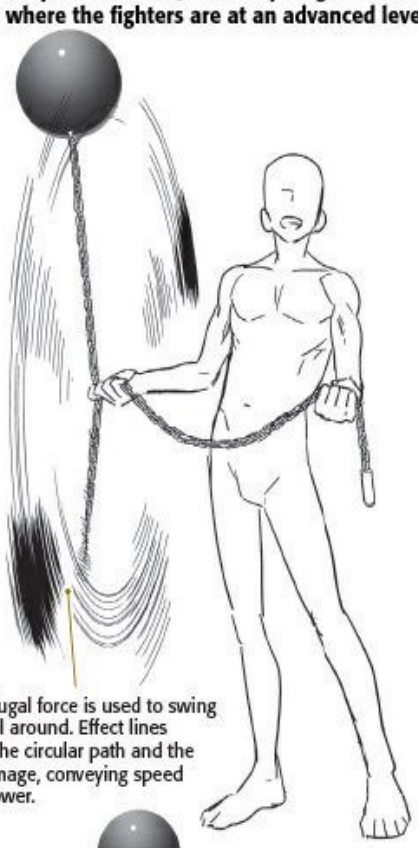




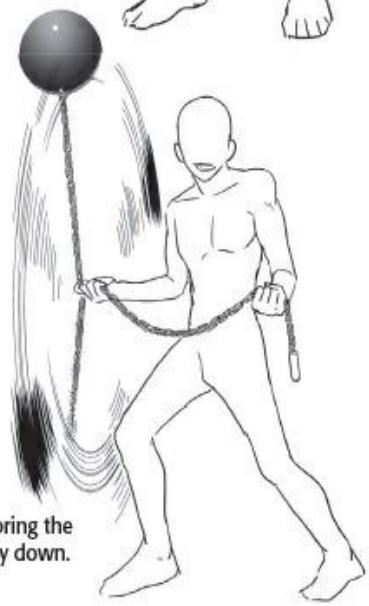
The weight of the falling hammer causes the figure to bounce. Adding shockwaves around the area of direct impact makes for an even greater impression of weight.

Ball and chain

Attacks are made by swinging the iron mass around. It is a difficult weapon to control, so it may be good to use in situations where the fighters are at an advanced level.



Centrifugal force is used to swing the ball around. Effect lines show the circular path and the after-image, conveying speed and power.



Lowered hips bring the center of gravity down.

Key Point

How to draw a ball

❶ Draw a circle and color it in so it is completely black.

❷ Make a white spot where the light hits the ball. If using color, a circle is fine, but a lightbulb-like flash (with jagged edges) will enhance a manga illustration.

❸ Use gray to add reflected light (the section at the bottom right). It's fine to just use one color.

❹ Add strong reflected light at the very edge (lower section).

❺ If necessary, add more shadow and light. Take care to create a pleasing design of light and shade.

How to draw chains

❶ Draw zero (0) shape, remembering to make it look solid.

❷ Alternate zero (0) and minus (–) shapes to create a continuous chain.

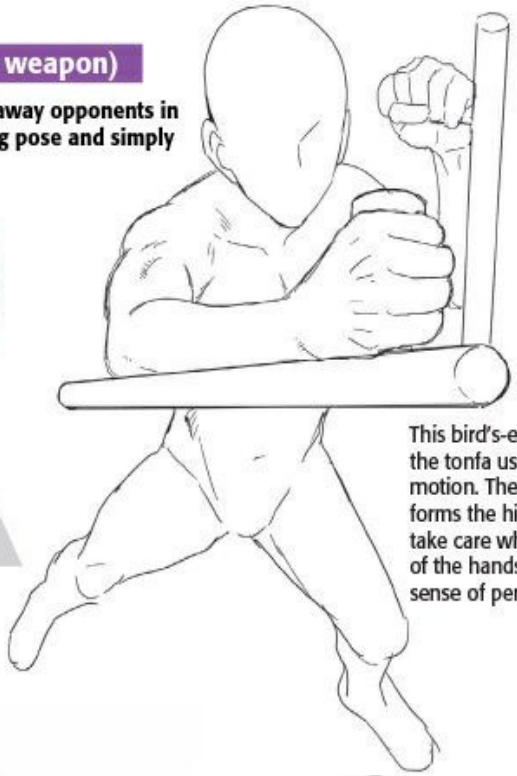
❸ If the chain is not drawn straight, it will look slack. These days, there are chain brushes available online as free open-source material, so you may like to use those for drawing chains. Sometimes, having the tools to express something can be just as good as drawing it yourself!

Other weapons

Here, we look at highly versatile weapons that are held in each hand and can be used for attack and defense.

Tonfa (traditional Okinawan weapon)

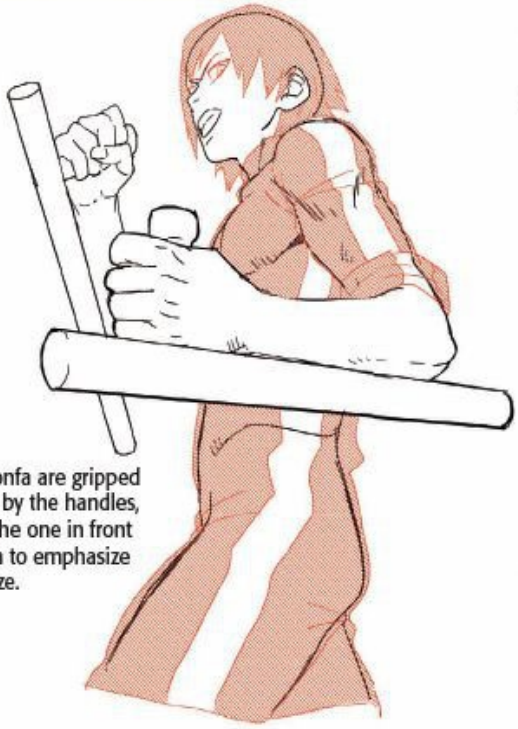
Frequently used to thrust into or drive away opponents in close combat. It's fine to use a punching pose and simply add this weapon in.



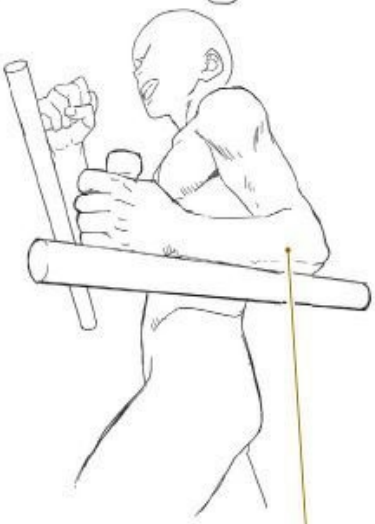
This bird's-eye view shows the tonfa used in a thrusting motion. The weapon's tip forms the highest point, so take care when positioning of the hands to bring out a sense of perspective.

Blocking-in tip

Drawing body parts so that they appear to leap out of the sketch is a great way of adding movement.



The tonfa are gripped firmly by the handles, with the one in front drawn to emphasize the size.



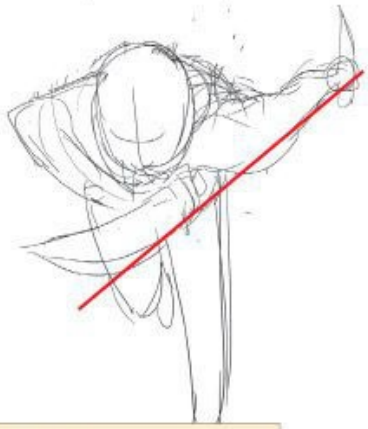
The tonfa should sit close to the arm.

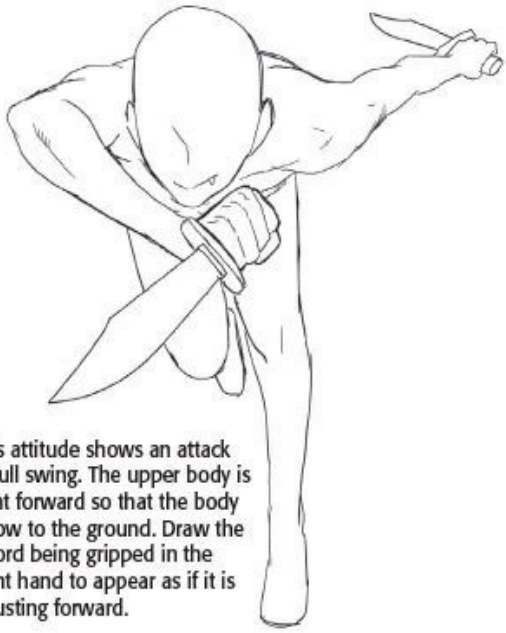
Nunchucks

Swung around in the air or used in a signature pose, nunchucks can really set off a drawing.

Double swords

Sometimes a character has a sword or knife in both hands. There are many examples incorporating Western-style swords. Try different weapons with this pose.





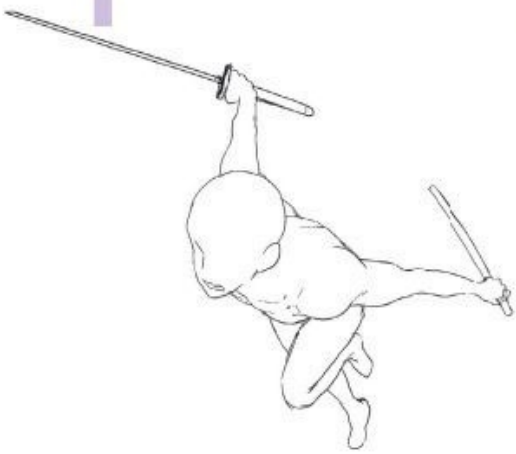
This attitude shows an attack in full swing. The upper body is bent forward so that the body is low to the ground. Draw the sword being gripped in the front hand to appear as if it is thrusting forward.

Blocking-in tip

The weapon is drawn in a way to catch the eye. It can be exaggerated still further so that it hides the face.

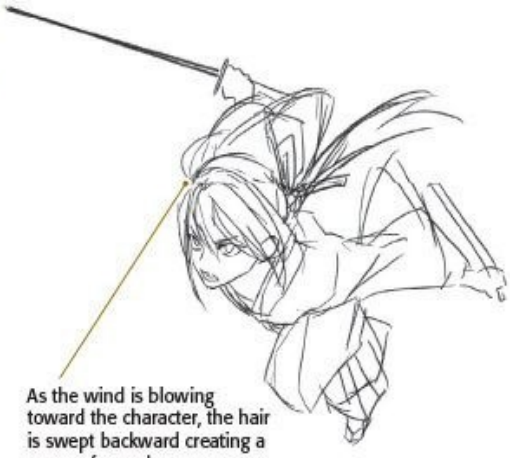
ILLUSTRATING IN COLOR

1 Rough Sketch



The figure is shown bent forward as if his sword has just been unsheathed and he is about to slash someone with it. At the moment that the right hand unsheathes the sword, the left foot steps forward, so draw the left leg in front.

2 Draft



As the wind is blowing toward the character, the hair is swept backward creating a sense of speed.

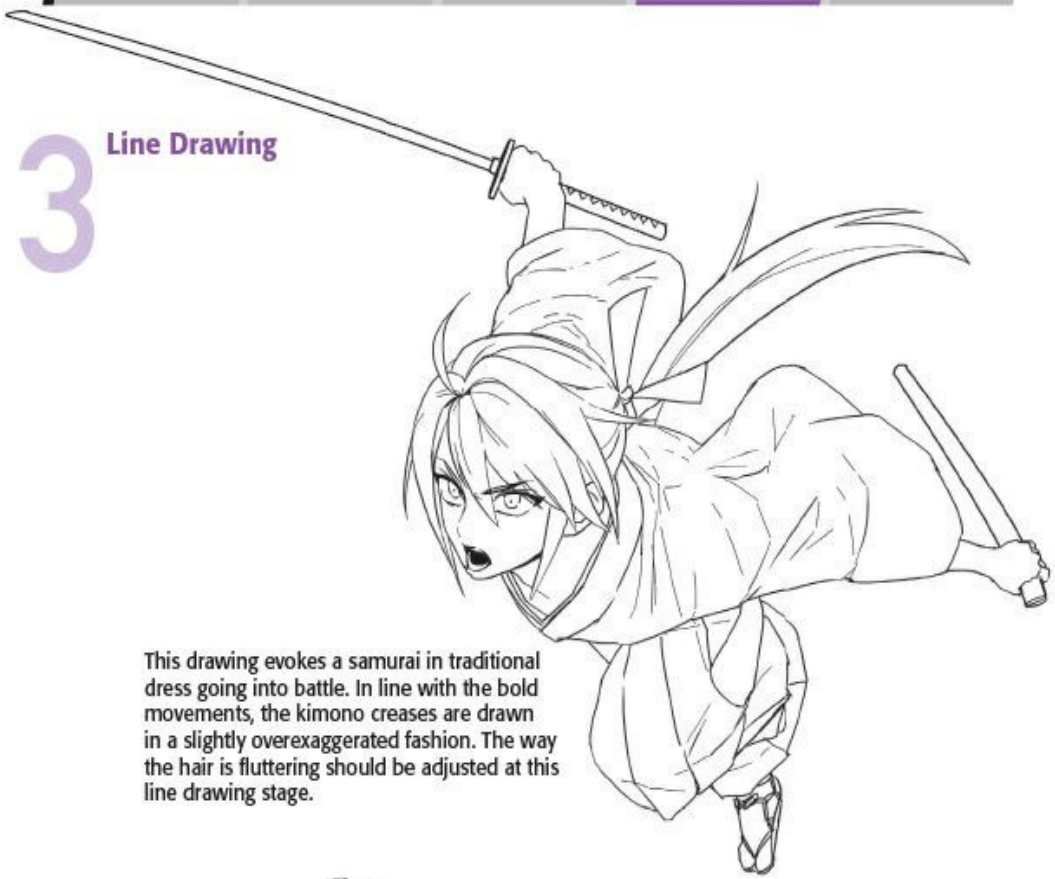
4 Base Color

Make sure that the base color doesn't throw the illustration off balance by using colors with similar chroma (see page 96).

5 Add Shadow

In this example, the clothing is plain, but patterned clothing makes it difficult to see creases. To bring out texture in soft fabrics, use a stiff brush to apply color as well as an airbrush to blur some sections.

3 Line Drawing



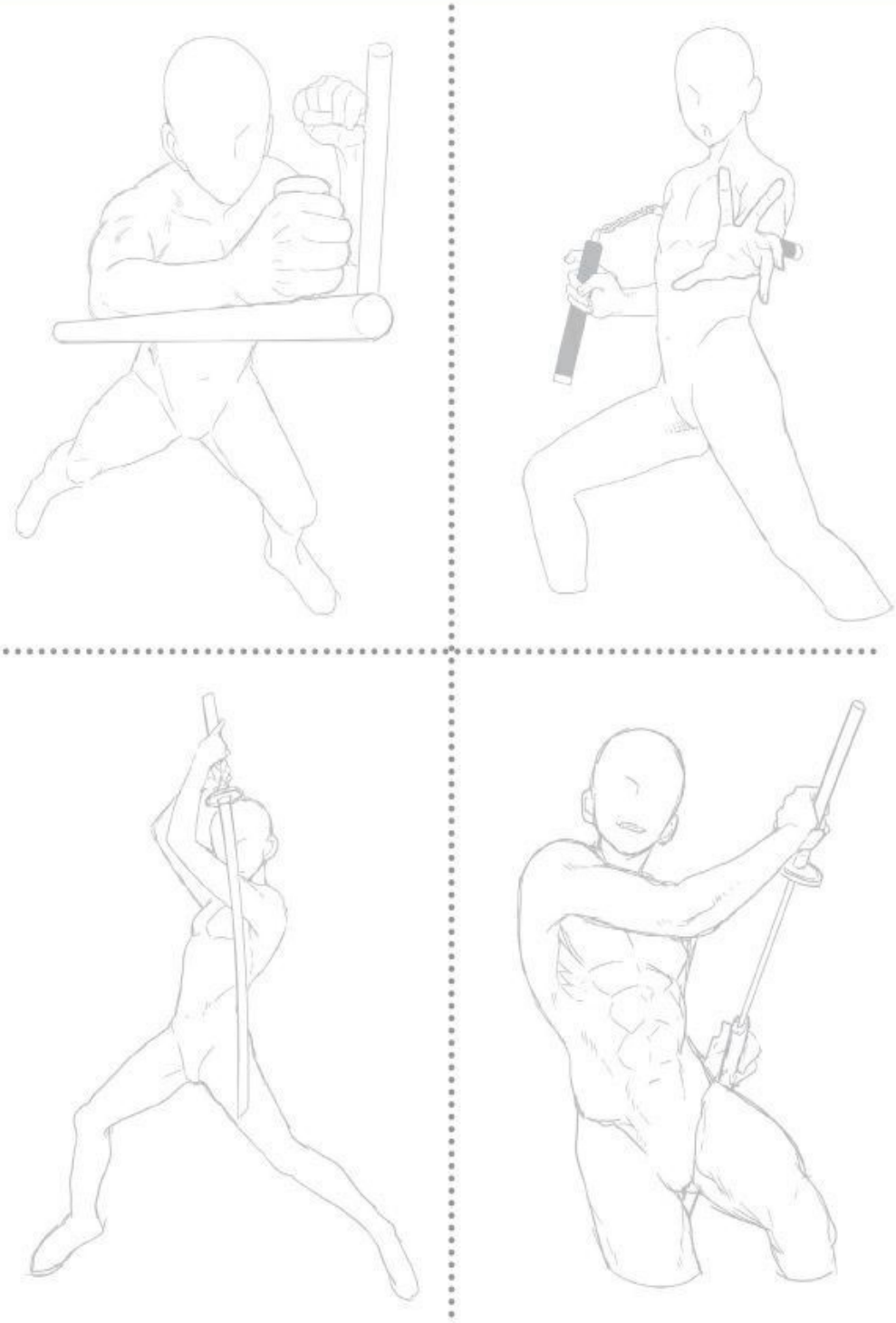
This drawing evokes a samurai in traditional dress going into battle. In line with the bold movements, the kimono creases are drawn in a slightly overexaggerated fashion. The way the hair is fluttering should be adjusted at this line drawing stage.

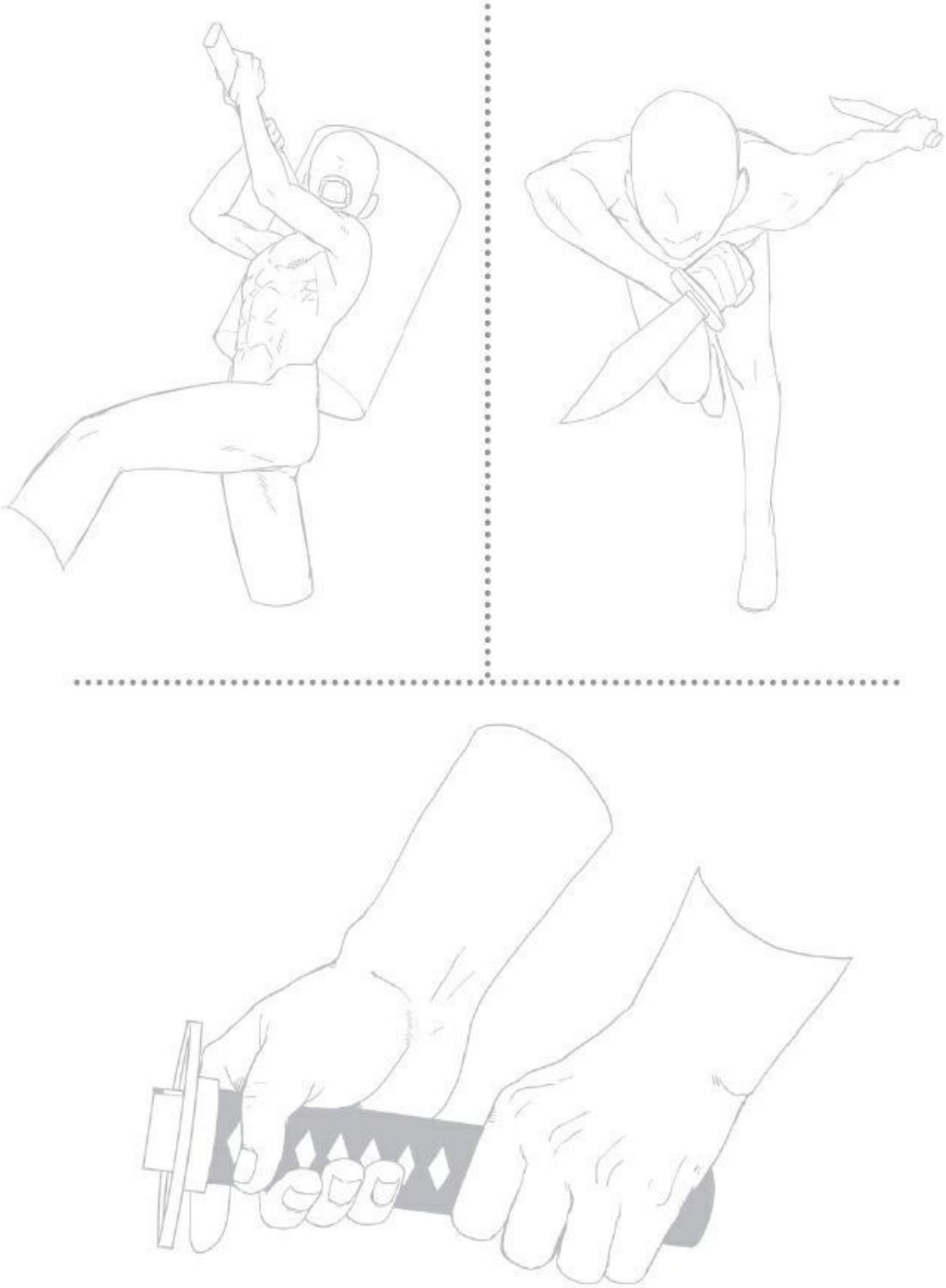
6 Effects and Highlighting

7 Completion

In order to make the hair look smooth and glossy, an overexaggerated ring of shine has been painted in. Making the right foot gray brings out depth.

TRACING PRACTICE





Spotlight

GETTING THE FACIAL EXPRESSION RIGHT 1

Let's learn the tricks of drawing facial expressions used when fighting. Go for overexaggerated expressions and cool signature looks to make your characters look even more animated.

Emotions

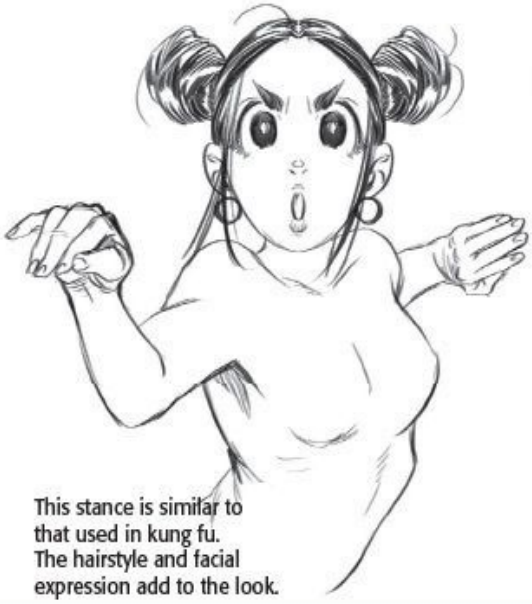
Rage ↑
Clearly defining the eye area and showing the mouth open wide establishes tension.

Rage ←
Raising the eyes and eyebrows communicates rage. Use effect lines from bottom to top to represent the release of pent-up emotion.

Holding back emotion →
Try adding a quivering effect to convey clenched teeth. Use when the character is holding back tears or trying not to lose his temper.

Crying ↑
For sobbing, show the eyebrows drooping down, the mouth open and huge teardrops. A dripping nose can show that the character has lost control of her emotions.

Fighting faces



This stance is similar to that used in kung fu. The hairstyle and facial expression add to the look.

A courageous smile creates a degree of levity in a situation. But a mouth drawn straight across conveys seriousness.

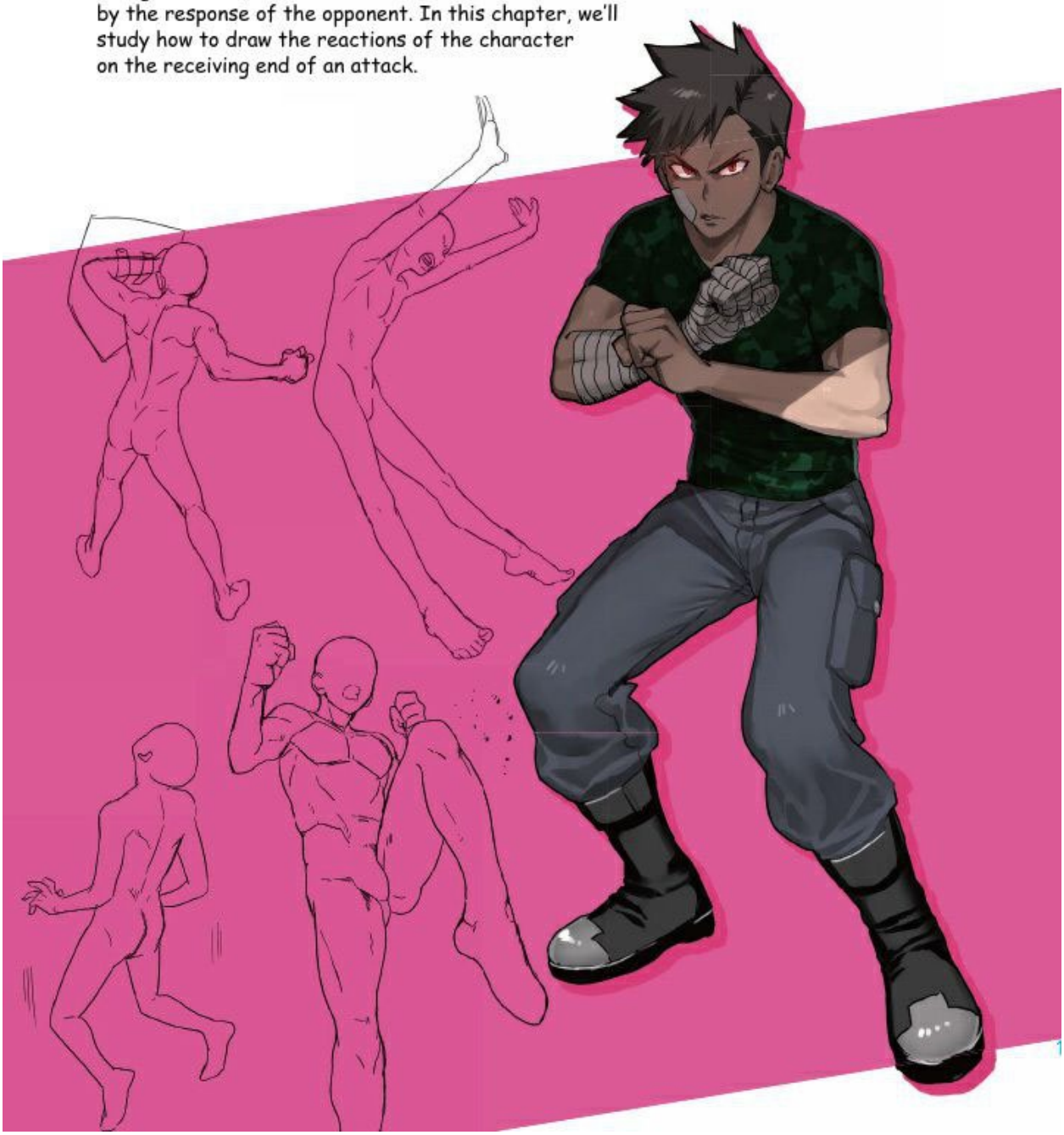
Well-defined facial features give the air of a character about to do battle. This face can also be used to depict a critical moment.

A screaming face is perfect for showing a spirited attack. Use focus lines and speed lines to direct the gaze, focusing on the fist.

CHAPTER 5

REACTING

In fight scenes, the moves of the attacker are enhanced by the response of the opponent. In this chapter, we'll study how to draw the reactions of the character on the receiving end of an attack.



OPPONENTS' REACTIONS

When creating a fight scene it's important to be able to depict the reactions of the character being attacked, such as dodging the attack, or going on the defensive.

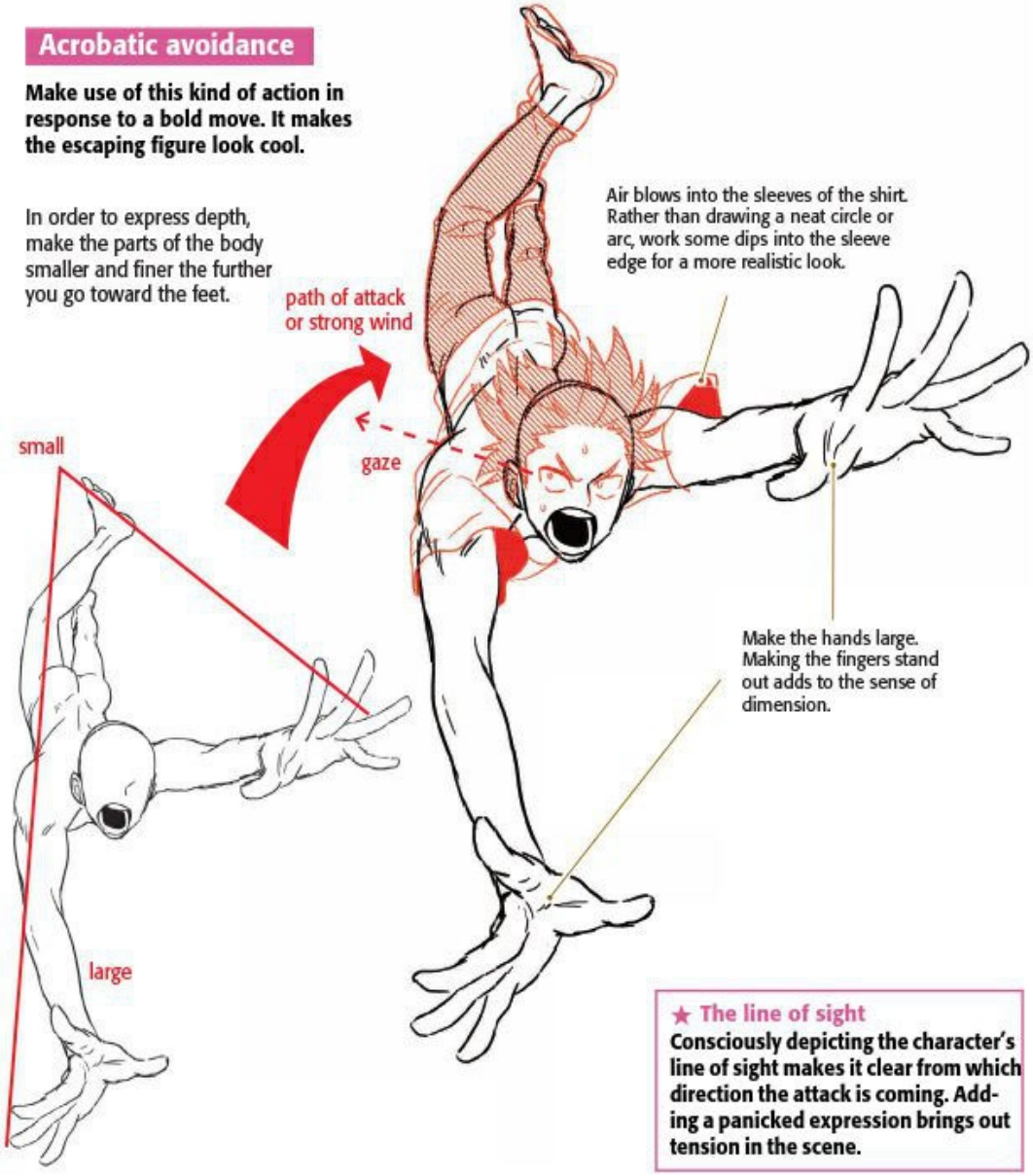
Dodging

Let's think about how the character will avoid the path of the impending attack.

Acrobatic avoidance

Make use of this kind of action in response to a bold move. It makes the escaping figure look cool.

In order to express depth, make the parts of the body smaller and finer the further you go toward the feet.



Air blows into the sleeves of the shirt. Rather than drawing a neat circle or arc, work some dips into the sleeve edge for a more realistic look.

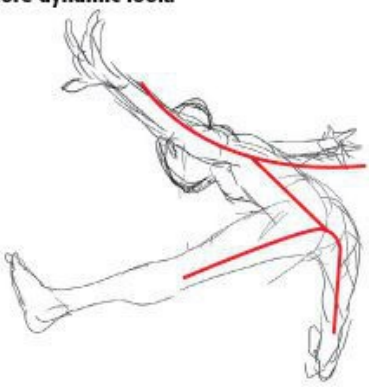
Make the hands large. Making the fingers stand out adds to the sense of dimension.

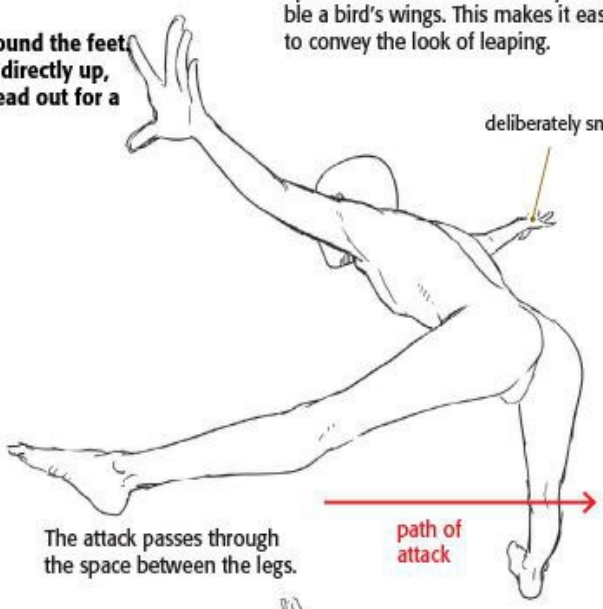
★ The line of sight

Consciously depicting the character's line of sight makes it clear from which direction the attack is coming. Adding a panicked expression brings out tension in the scene.

Leaping up

This action is used to avoid an attack around the feet. Instead of having the character jumping directly up, have him bending forward with legs spread out for a more dynamic look.



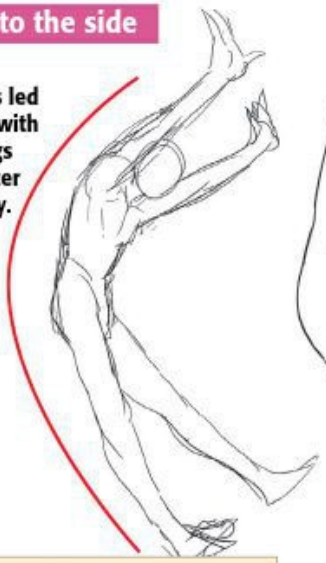


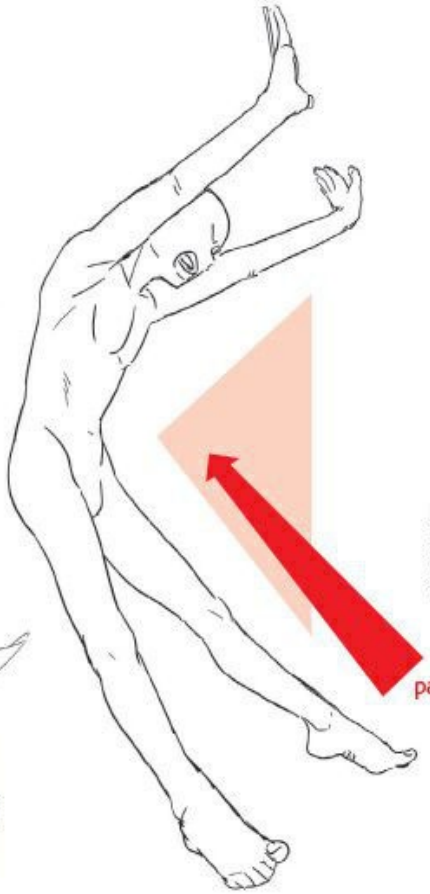
Blocking-in tip

Keep the arms in line with the shoulders. This makes the movement look more elegant.

Shifting to the side

The body's movement is led by the hips, with arms and legs following after a slight delay.



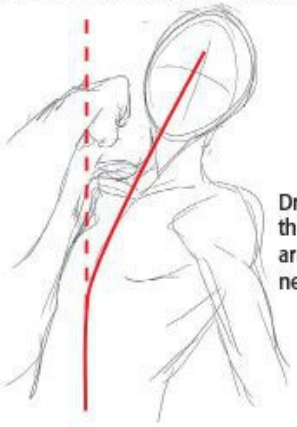


Blocking-in tip

The figure's bottom protrudes during this movement. Exaggerating this makes for a comical effect.

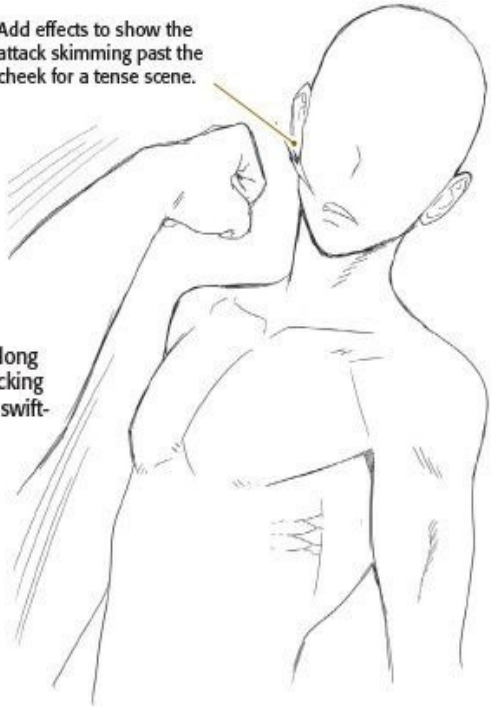
Warding off an attack

The face leans out of the way of an attack. Use this in situations where the opponent can see all the attacker's movements.



Draw speed lines along the side of the attacking arm to express the swiftness of the attack.

Add effects to show the attack skimming past the cheek for a tense scene.

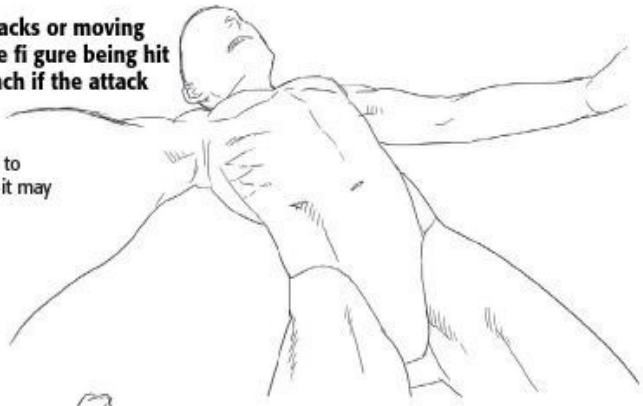


Blocking-in tip

Although the character is leaning away, if the torso remains firm it shows that he is not too worried about the situation.

Bending backward

The body bends back to avoid attacks or moving objects. To draw this, visualize the fi gure being hit at around the height of the stomach if the attack were to be successful.

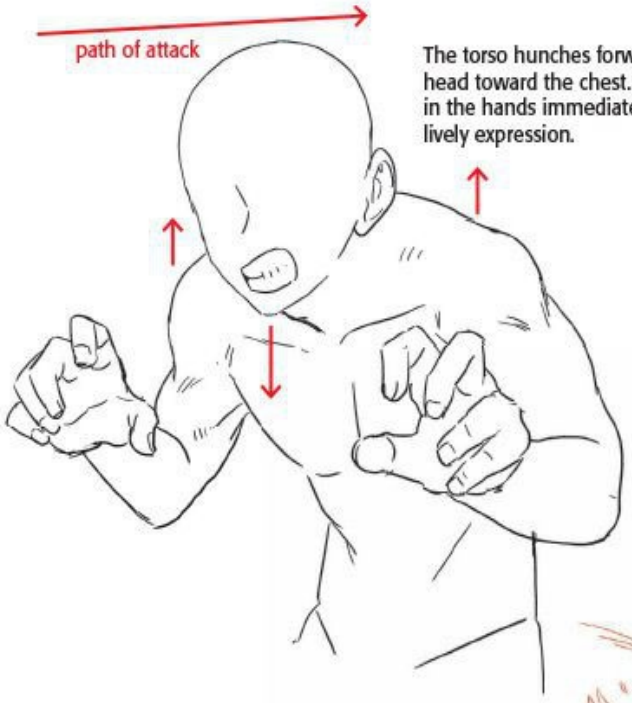


Adding effects adds the look of speed to objects. When drawing from front-on, it may also be helpful to add focus lines.

This composition has the figure viewed from the legs up. The closer the parts of the body are to the viewer, the thicker you need to make them.

Dodging a flying object

For situations where the character has to duck to avoid an object overhead.



The torso hunches forward with the head toward the chest. Movement in the hands immediately creates a lively expression.

Give the character an expression that conveys a sense of danger. Adding creases between the brows and drops of sweat brings out the feeling of tension.

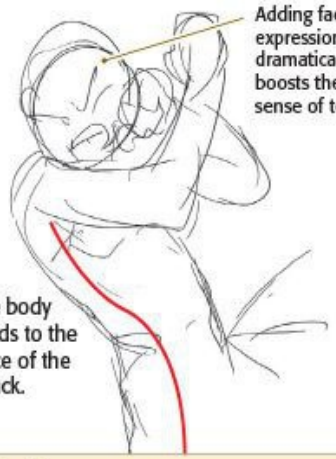
Add blurred lines and effects to bring out movement. Adding too many effects will detract from the image, so incorporate only a suitable amount.

On guard

Work in a facial expression of endurance, while showing that the character is defending himself using his body, protective equipment and so on.

Crossed-arm block

Both arms guard against an inescapable attack. The arms are brought up from the chest, crossing in the area around the face.

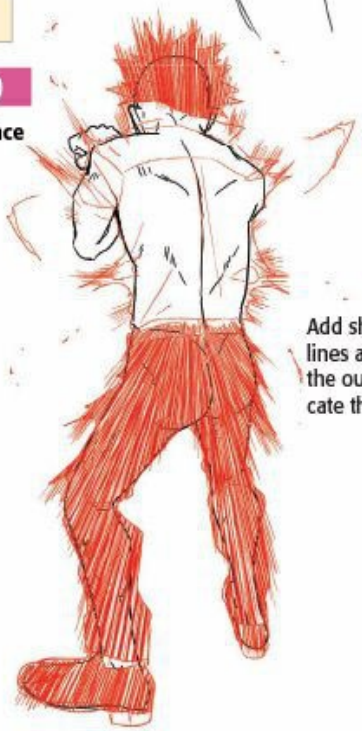


Blocking-in tip

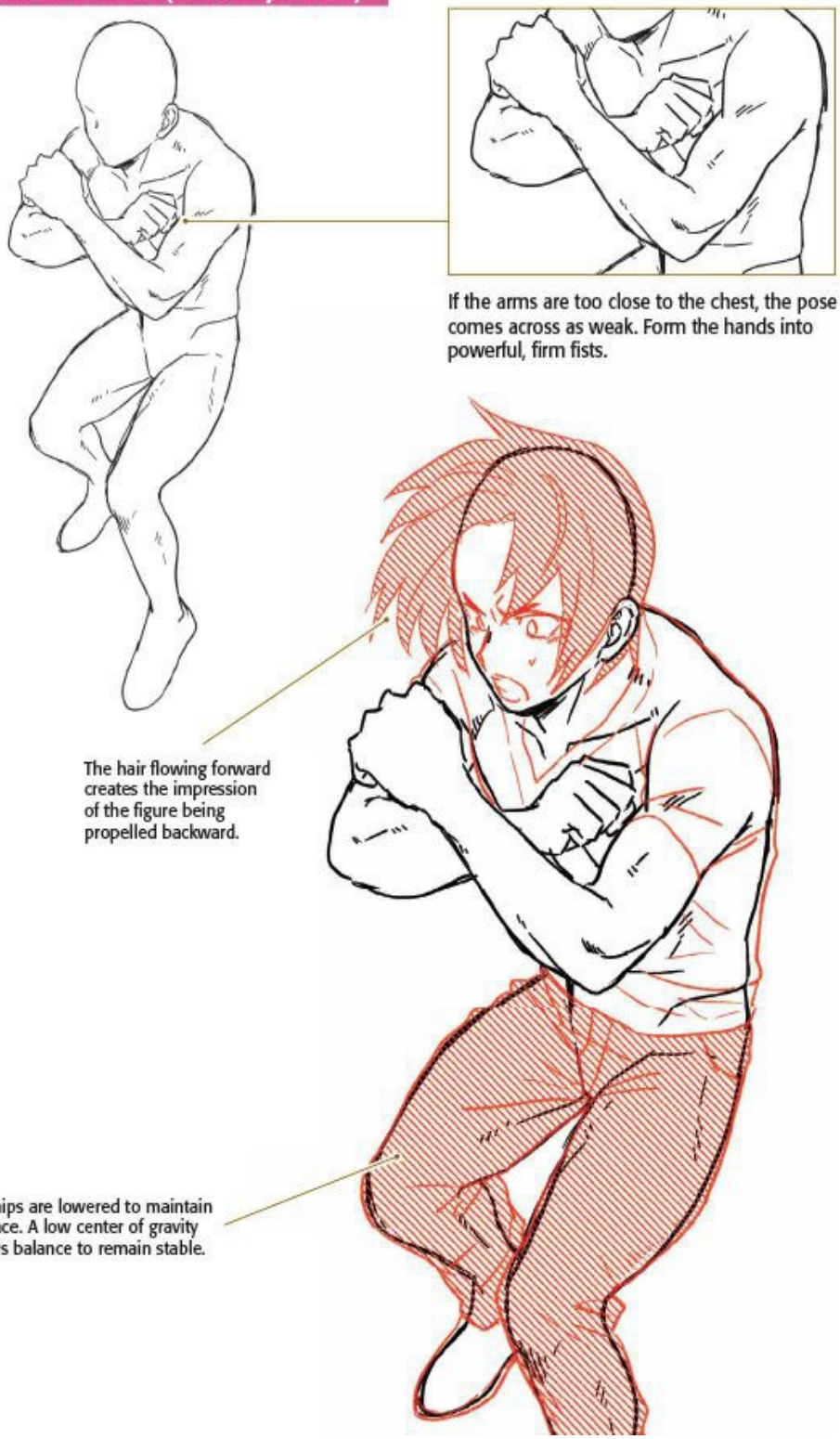
Don't place the arms directly against the chest, but have them slightly away from the body.

Crossed-arm block (from behind)

Slightly rounding the back increases the surface area that can be protected with the arms.

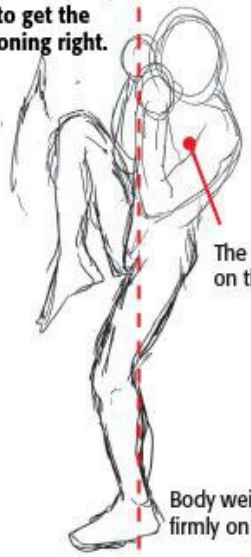


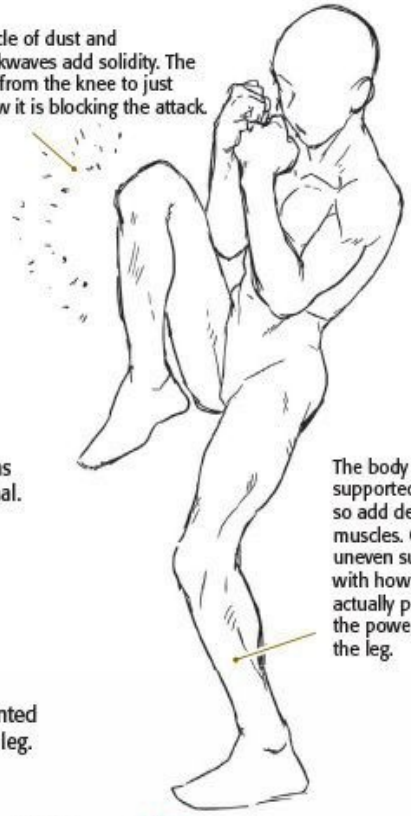
Crossed-arm block (bird's-eye view)



Guarding with the legs

Warding off attacks on the lower to mid-level parts of the body with the knees is a good look. An attack is painful if it hits the shins, so be careful to get the figure's positioning right.





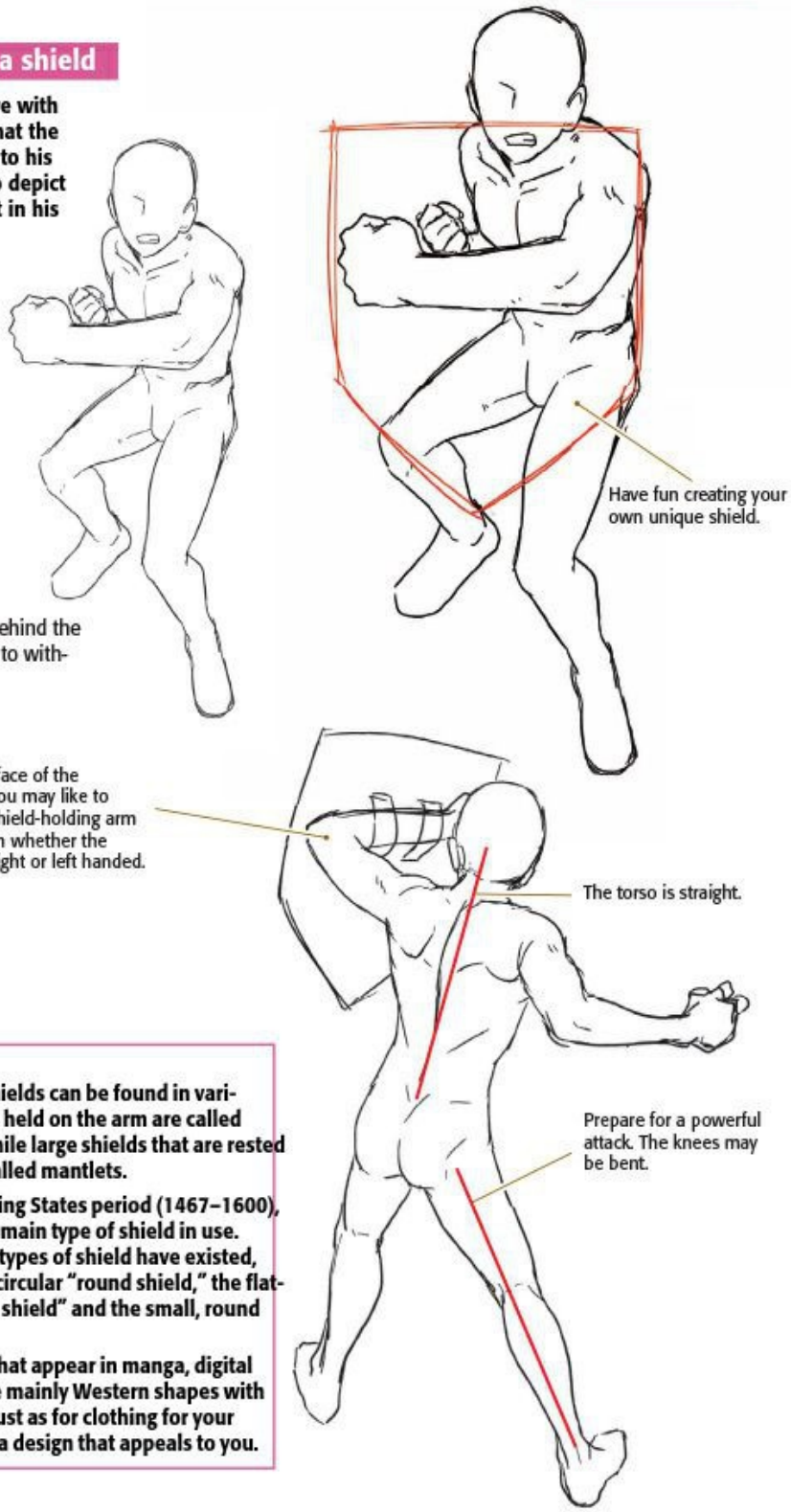
Blocking-in tip

Take care with the center of gravity when drawing unstable poses. Balance is important.

In this composition, the gaze comes from below. Viewing the figure from the groin area upwards brings out a sense of dynamism and creates a cool drawing.

Guarding with a shield

When drawing a figure with a shield, remember that the back of it is attached to his arm. Be careful not to depict it as if he is holding it in his hand only.



★ Shields

Around the world shields can be found in various designs. Shields held on the arm are called strapped shields, while large shields that are rested on the ground are called mantlets.

During Japan's Warring States period (1467–1600), the mantlet was the main type of shield in use. In the West, various types of shield have existed, including the large, circular "round shield," the flat-iron shaped "heater shield" and the small, round "buckler."

The types of shield that appear in manga, digital games and so on are mainly Western shapes with elaborate designs. Just as for clothing for your characters, hunt for a design that appeals to you.

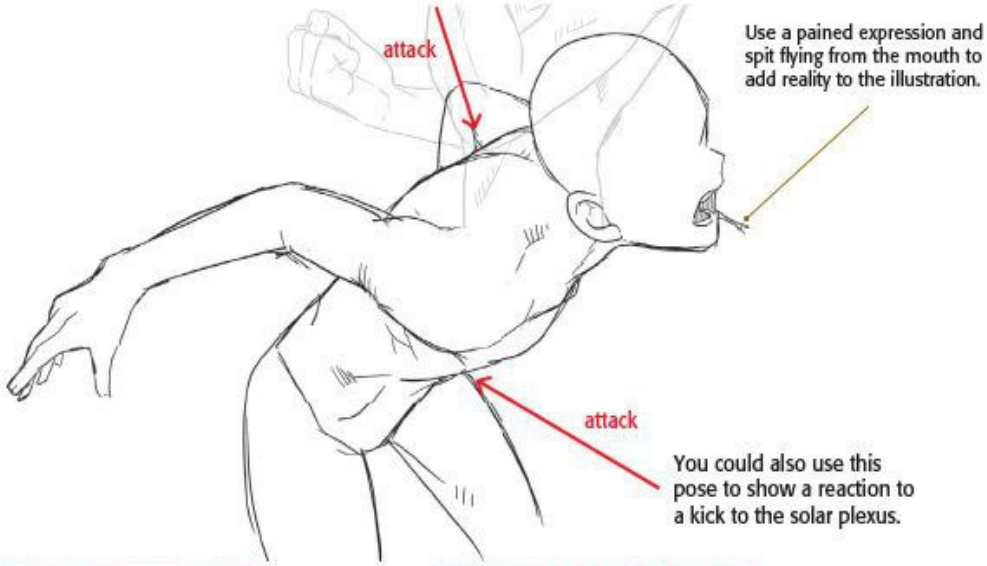
Taking a blow

Show the damage resulting from an attack, keeping in mind which parts of the body came into direct contact with the attacker or object used.

A pose that works two ways

The pose you choose will depend on where the impact of the attack lands.

In this scene, the character could have been attacked from behind with a sharp elbowing, a strike to the neck with the attacker's hand and so on.



A blow to the cheek

Change the angle of the face to reflect the force of an attack. The more unrealistic the angle, the stronger the attack will appear.

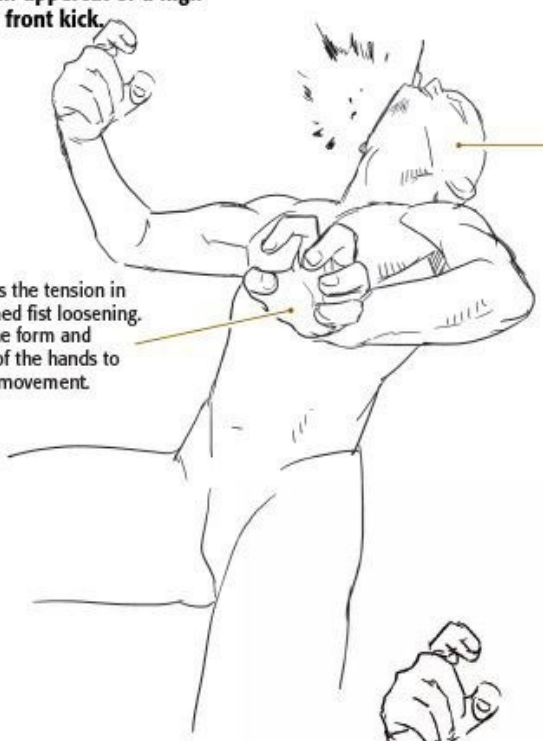
Falling to one's knees

Unable to withstand the attack, the character falls to his knees.

Use a sound effect to show that the figure is collapsing, such as "thud." This will express a feeling of despair and sense of defeat.

A blow to the chin

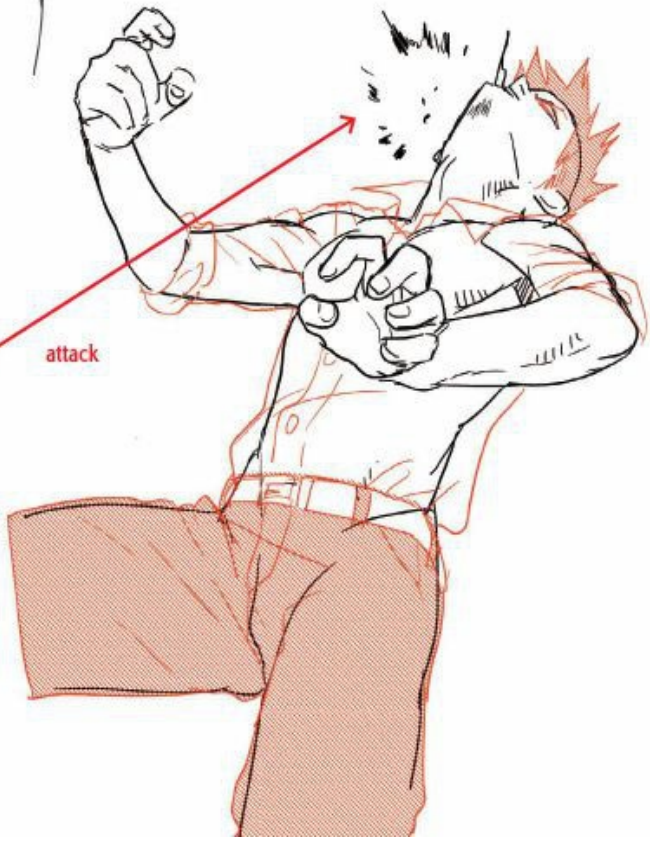
This expresses the damage done to the key point just below the chin by an uppercut or a high-reaching front kick.



This shows the tension in the clenched fist loosening. Change the form and direction of the hands to bring out movement.

★ **The opponent's expression**

Layer lines to indicate grazing, redness and so on to show where the attack has landed. Revealing the whites of the eyes shows that the character is losing consciousness.



Adding shockwaves to the area impacted by the attack creates tension and immediacy. Here, the expulsion of spittle builds the picture. You could also plaster the character with blood in such scenes.

ILLUSTRATING IN COLOR

1 Rough Sketch

In this standing stance, pay attention to how the character is positioned in relation to the ground.

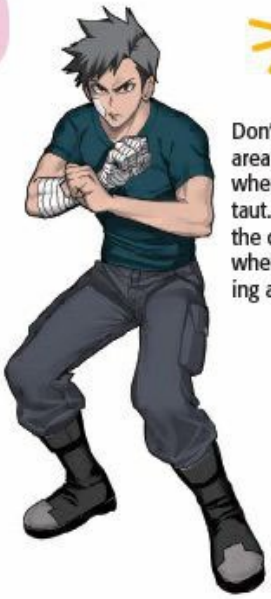
2 Draft

The character has a muscular build. At the rough sketch stage, he appears brawny, but creates a different impression once clothed.

4 Base Color

When applying base color, look at the basic color combinations as well as paying attention to the chroma of the colors.

5 Add Shadow



Don't add shadow in the area around the thighs where the fabric is pulled taut. Add shadow around the opening to the boots where the fabric is gathering and forming creases.

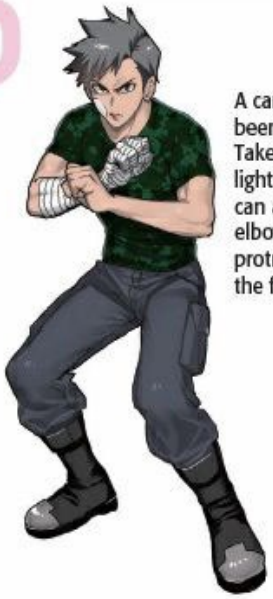
3 Line Drawing

The size and style of the pants can be seen where the cloth meets the boots. If the fabric sags, the pants are a large size, but if it doesn't, the pants are a tight, skinny style. If there are no creases in the pants, they come across as stiff and too tight. Bear these points in mind so that you can successfully create the look you envisage.

Add creases to the shirt to show that the fabric is being pulled horizontally across the chest and stomach. This creates the look of the fabric being pulled taut by muscle.

If the character is standing on tiptoe, creases will form in the area around the mouth of the boots, the toe section and so on.

6 Effects and Highlighting

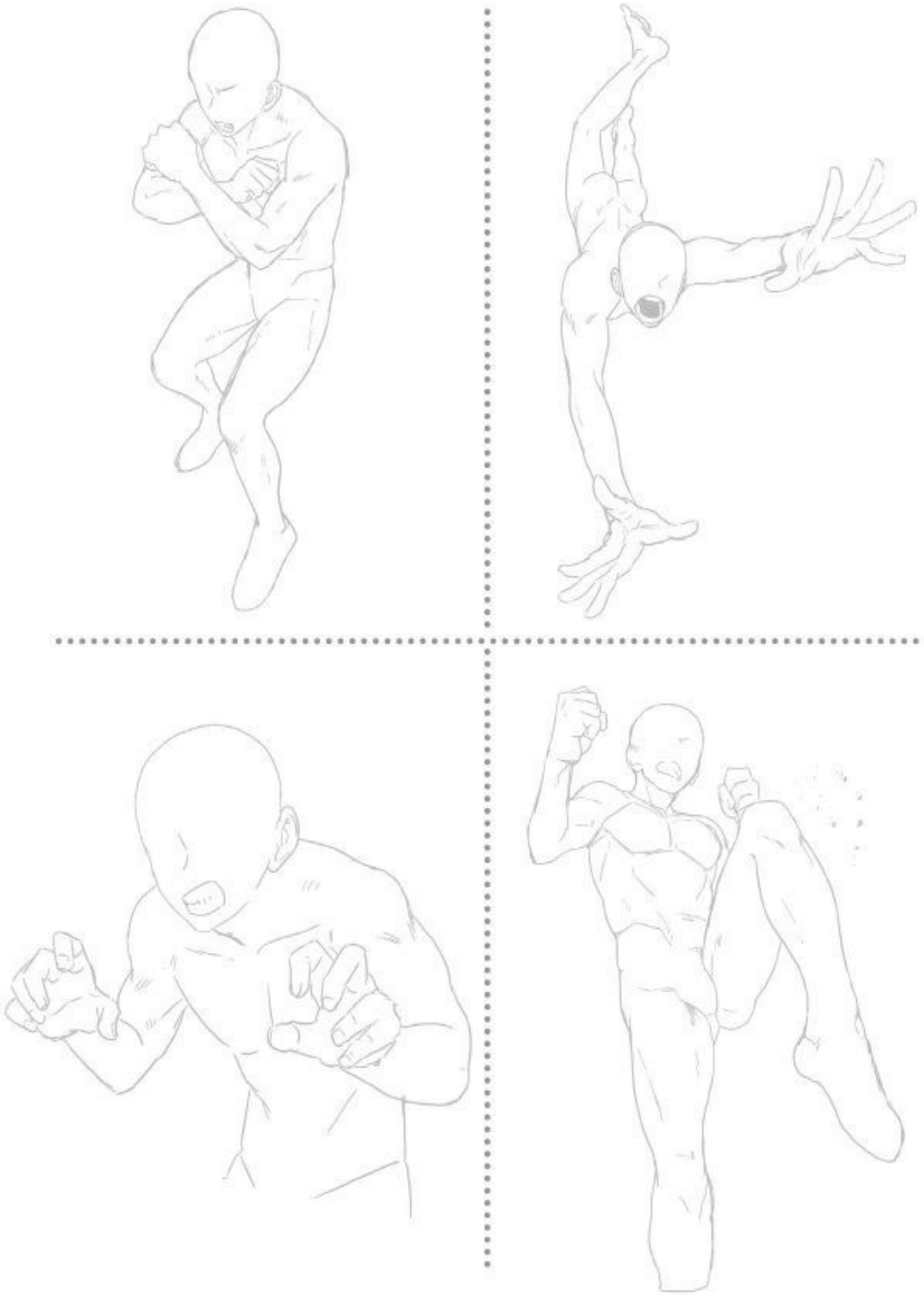


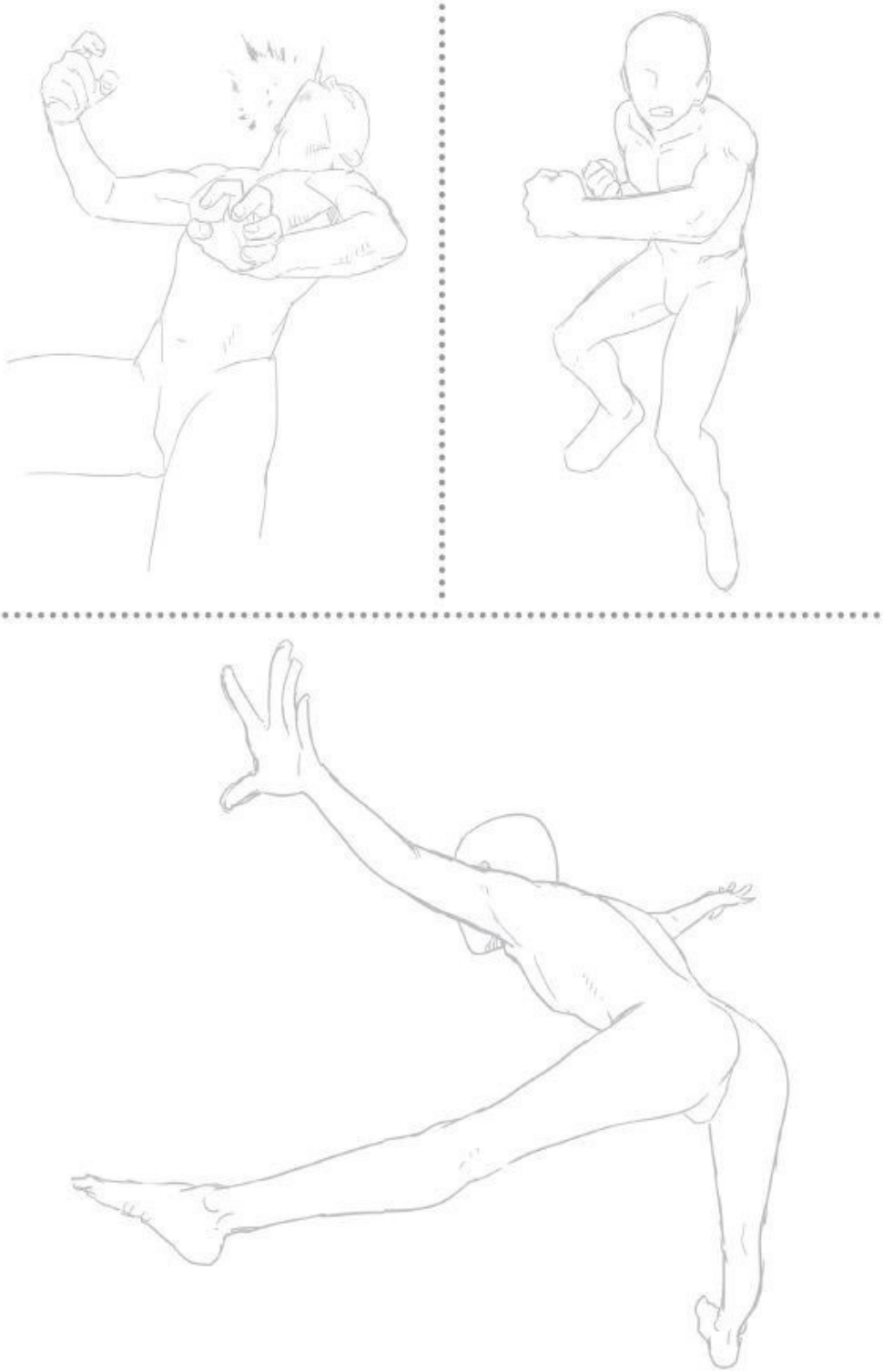
A camouflage pattern has been added to the T-shirt. Take care to use highlighting appropriately. You can add it to the knees, elbows, cheeks and other protruding areas, such as the fuller areas of muscles.

7 Completion

To complete, cover half the body in shadow. Erase the shadow from the eye area only and use the airbrush tool to spray it with red. Finally, use overlapping to make the eyes flash.

TRACING PRACTICE





APPLYING THE POSES TO YOUR MANGA

In this section, you'll find examples of manga that incorporate some of the poses you've studied in this book. Using these pages to inspire you, have a go at creating your own unique manga stories!

LET'S EXPERIMENT WITH THE POSES WE'VE STUDIED!

Justice is served! A knockout side kick!

A problem student begins picking a quarrel with the president of the student council, a model student. Usually calm and collected, the president of the student council can't take any more of the violence and delivers justice in the form of a neat karate move. His sharp blow to the chin knocks out the good-for-nothing kid in one hit.

Left: Roundhouse kick (mirror image), page 60. Right: Blow to the chin, page 129

You can't leave the club!

One day, the protagonist's close friend suddenly says he is giving up club activities. The protagonist asks why, but the friend won't give him a reason. Until now, they've done everything together, and the protagonist feels as if he has been betrayed. He gets worked up and, without thinking, raises his left arm . . .

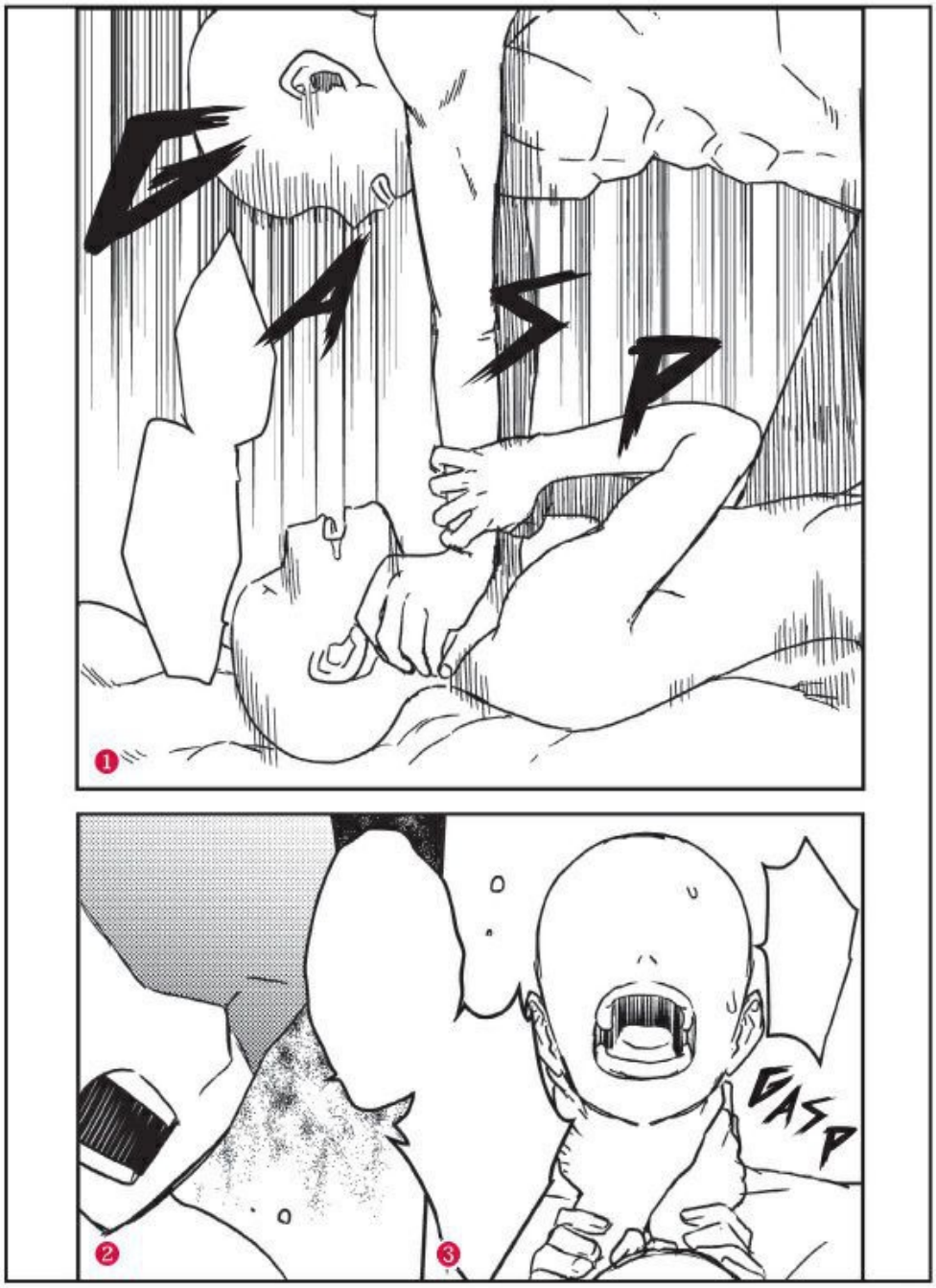
---

1 Grabbing, page 84 4 Grabbing, page 85

Who will be the victor of the battle?

A young, solitary master swordsman finds his way into enemy territory to fight a final duel. Despite being surrounded by enemies, he maintains the relaxed manner of a man of strength. Drawing his weapon with a brave smile, he rushes in at lightning speed, cutting through the air with the sword as he goes. In this battle, where both sides have staked their pride, who will be the victor?

1 Unsheathing a sword, page 107 2 Illustrating in color, page 114–115

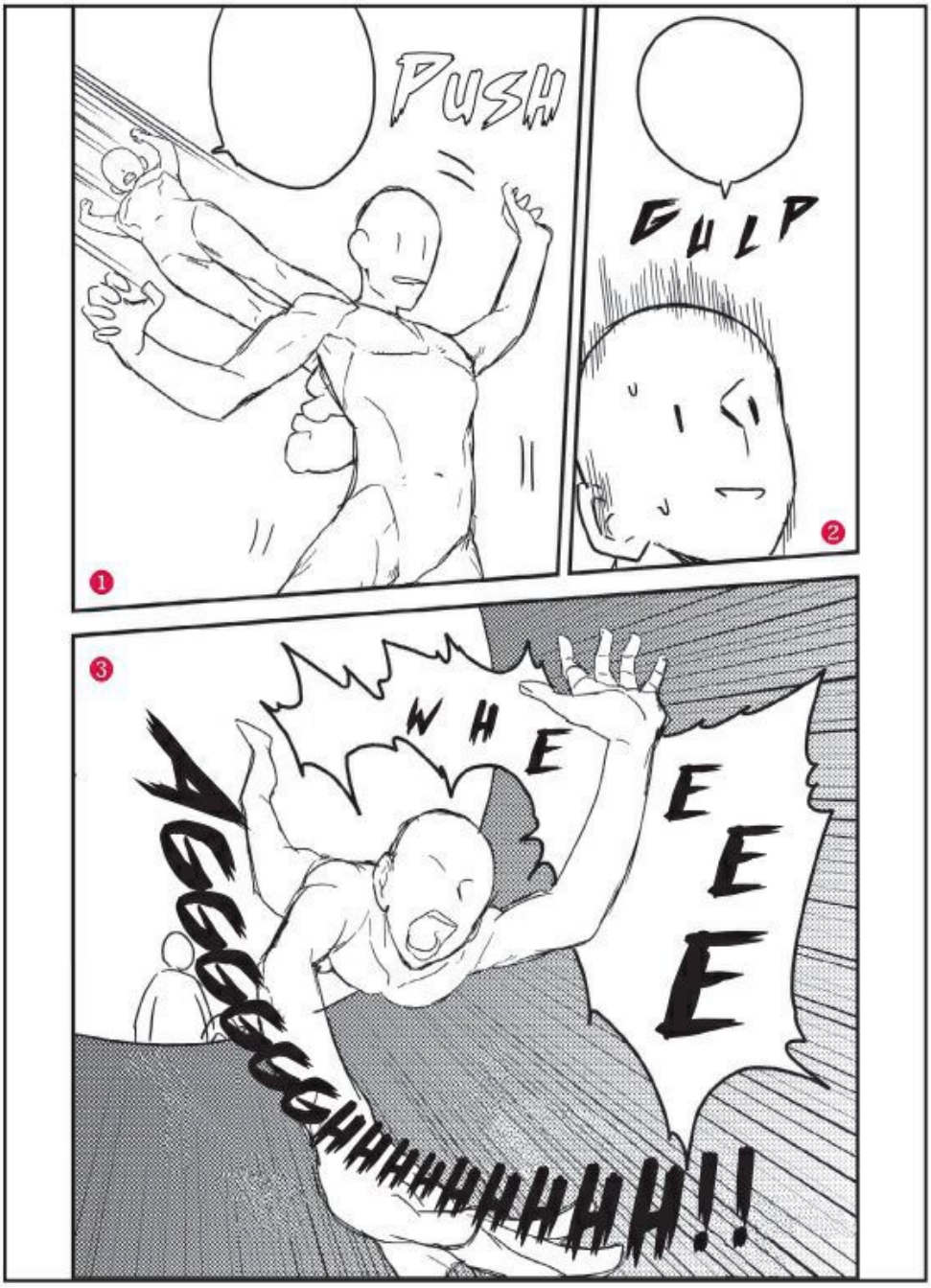


Tell me the truth!

After long years of investigation, the protagonist comes face to face with the enemy who holds the secret of his parents' death. The enemy, however isn't prepared to reveal anything. Enraged, the protagonist grabs the neck of his foe, screaming "Tell me the truth!"

---

1 3 Throttling, page 87



Tumbling down a hole to a great adventure!

One day on the outskirts of town, a group of boys discover a strange hole that they've never seen before. Although his curiosity is piqued, the cowardly protagonist hesitates . . . and that's when his friends push him into the hole from behind! This tumble into the abyss may be the start of a great adventure.

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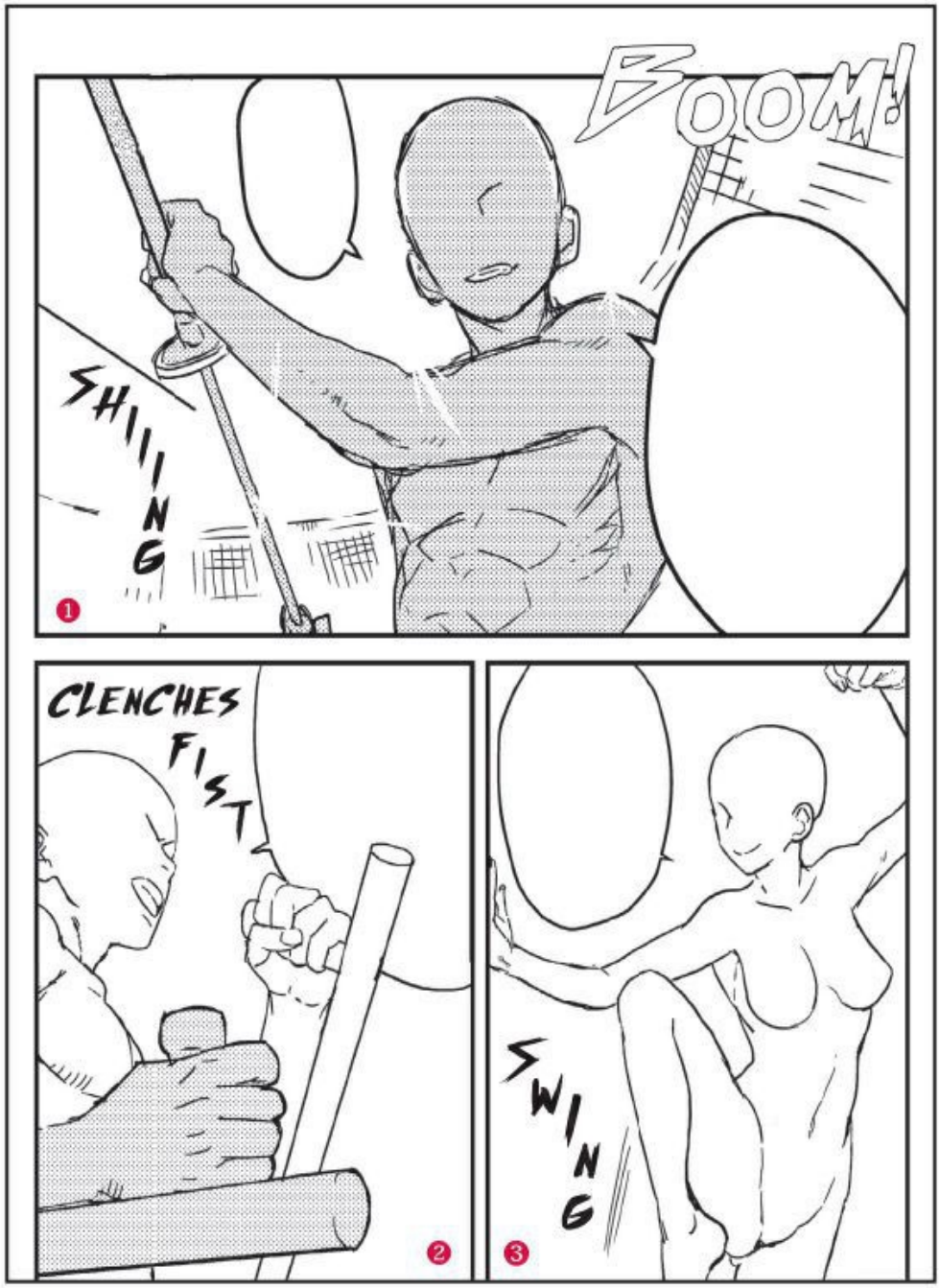
1 Left: Flying kick (both legs), page 67. Right: Falling, page 34 (mirror image) 3 Falling, page 35 (mirror image)



Who's the strongest? The ultimate armed-combat competition!

Martial artists from around the world gather in a competition to find the strongest in armed combat. As the use of weapons also permitted, it's the ultimate arena for all kinds of martial arts. Some fighters grip swords, others wield tonfa and some are ready to compete with their bare hands . . . and now, the sound of the starting gong echoes through the arena!

---

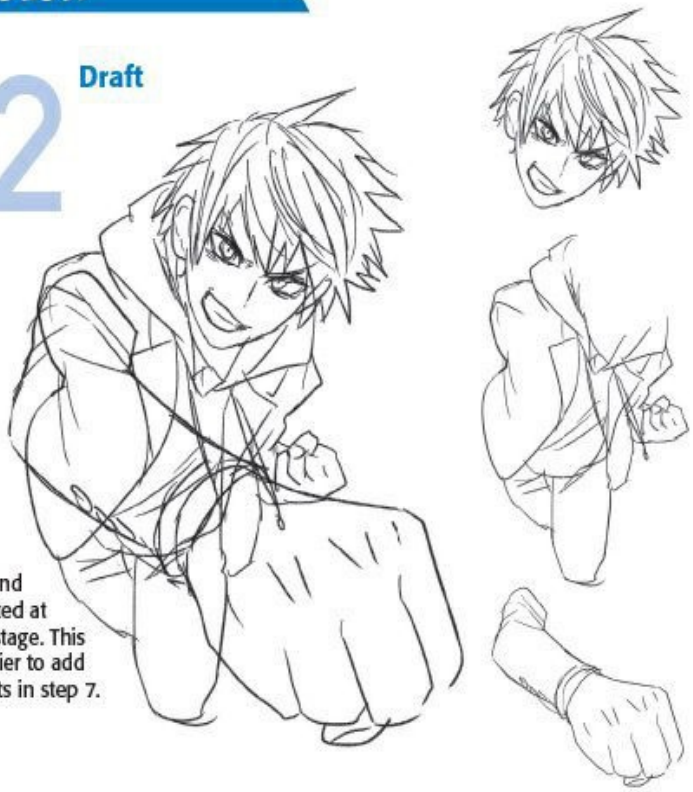
1 Unsheathing a sword (mirror image), page 106 2 Other weapons (mirror image), page 112 3 Kung fu poses, page 71

ILLUSTRATING IN COLOR

1 Rough Sketch

Here, we add color to the rough sketch of the superman punch on page 50.

2 Draft



The face, torso and arms are separated at the rough draft stage. This is to make it easier to add the special effects in step 7.

4 Base Color

Painting in the base forms a platform on which to build color, so choose an appropriate color scheme.

5 Add Shadow

Decide on the light source and add shadow. Here, the light source is positioned directly in front but slightly above the figure.

6 Effects and Highlighting

Add highlights as appropriate, basically to areas that are protruding.

3 Line Drawing

Hair moves to match the slant of the neck. Create interest by breaking up the hair so that it doesn't all lie in the same direction.

Emphasize the arm and the parts of the hand to which you want focus to be attracted. This adds dynamism to the drawing. Key here is that the fist is being thrust way out in front, so needs to be depicted as larger than the face.

Don't be afraid to experiment with clothes. Being playful with clothing choices makes things more fun for the viewer, too.

7 Special Effects

8 Completion

1. For the eyes, use the airbrush tool in overlapping mode.
2. Draw scars on the skin as accents.
3. Create momentum by scattering dust and so on around the image.
4. Use the radial blur in Photoshop on the arms, dust and other things flying around the image to create an unfocused look. Finally, overlay gradation to complete the illustration.

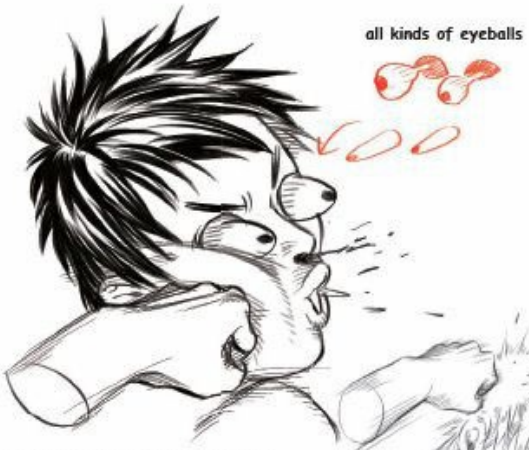
Spotlight

GETTING THE FACIAL EXPRESSION RIGHT 2

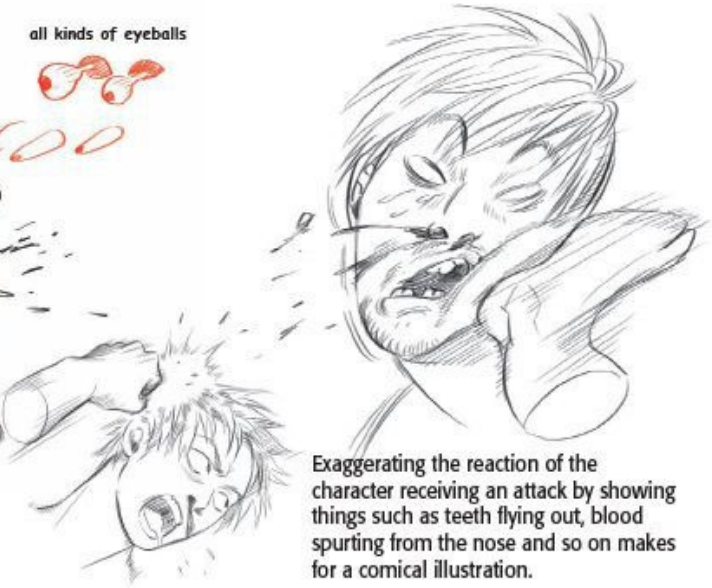
Let's think about the expression of a character receiving a damaging blow to the face. Try to visualize the direction of the attack to make drawing easier.

Add blurred lines, effect lines and so on around the face to show where the slap has come from. Remember that when a face is punched, eyes squeeze shut in reaction. This facial expression shows pain and emotion.

As the chin is struck, the mouth naturally jams shut. Adding clenched teeth and the tongue being bitten is another way to portray this reaction.

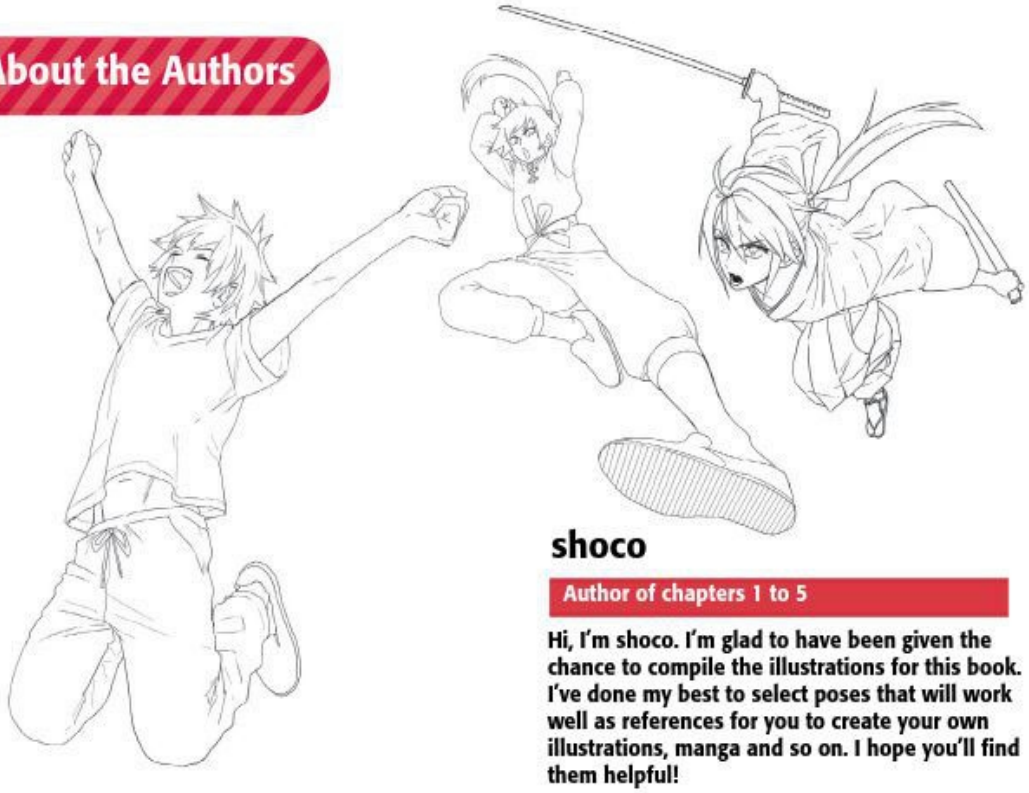


Showing the whites of the eyes, nosebleeds and other such elements expresses the force of the attack.



Exaggerating the reaction of the character receiving an attack by showing things such as teeth flying out, blood spurting from the nose and so on makes for a comical illustration.

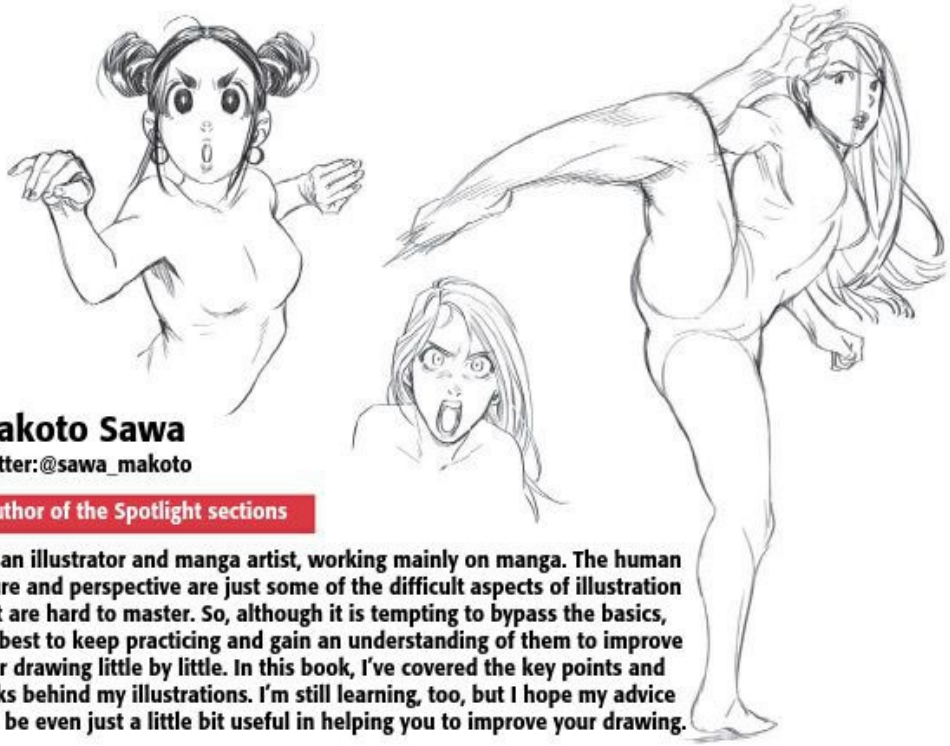
About the Authors



shoco

Author of chapters 1 to 5

Hi, I'm shoco. I'm glad to have been given the chance to compile the illustrations for this book. I've done my best to select poses that will work well as references for you to create your own illustrations, manga and so on. I hope you'll find them helpful!



Makoto Sawa

Twitter:@sawa_makoto

Author of the Spotlight sections

I'm an illustrator and manga artist, working mainly on manga. The human figure and perspective are just some of the difficult aspects of illustration that are hard to master. So, although it is tempting to bypass the basics, it's best to keep practicing and gain an understanding of them to improve your drawing little by little. In this book, I've covered the key points and tricks behind my illustrations. I'm still learning, too, but I hope my advice will be even just a little bit useful in helping you to improve your drawing.

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SHOCO is a Japanese manga artist and illustrator born in 1990. During a year in Paris as an exchange student, she spent nearly every day in the Louvre, constantly inspired by the artwork around her. She also spent a year studying art at the P.I. Art Center in New York. She has won numerous awards for her manga in Japan, which include *The Rose and the Stray Dog* and *Samurai Lover*. She is currently working on a new project.

Japanese manga artist MAKOTO SAWA is best known in his home country for his work on the *SQ. Crown* and *Blue Striker* manga series.

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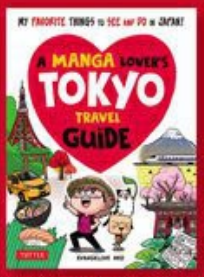

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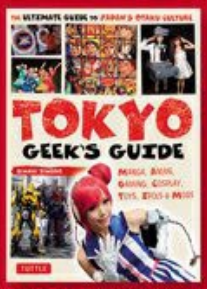

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