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How to draw a girl - step by step pencil sketch drawing for beginners face drawing

New Yorker cartoonist Jason Adam Katzenstein already taught you how to do “gesture drawing,” one of the most basic artistic techniques. In the new video above, he focuses on faces, showing how the principle of “draw what you see” helps you capture someone’s identifying features.My biggest takeaway here was how hard it is to draw what you actually see, and not start drawing what you imagine or assume. I drew Jason facing forward, when I was actually seeing him from an angle. That made it harder to accurately portray his face. In contrast, see how Jason foreshortened my eyes and gracefully captured the patchiness of my beard.I also learned that if you ink too many of your pencil lines, you end up drawing a yeti. Sorry Jason! But to draw good, you have to draw bad first—and the goal seems so rewarding, for you and for others. When you can accurately draw someone’s face, they feel special because they feel seen—and you learn how to really see them.Next, watch Jason explain how he draws cartoons. Learning how to draw an adorable cartoon girl can be easy with our detailed directions and easy to follow illustrations. With a little creativity, see how fun it can be to bring a cartoon girl to life.In just five simple steps, we’ll show you how to draw this cartoon girl perched on a pretty chair. You can draw this cartoon freehand while looking at your computer monitor or print out the page to get a closer look at each step.On each page, we’ll show you an illustration of each step and then give you a description of how to draw it.Follow the red lines in each illustration to learn exactly what to draw in that step. The lines drawn in previous steps are shown in gray.Pencils ready? Let’s get started!...Sketch a roughly heart-shaped figure for the head. Use an oval for the body. Show the neck as two short lines. Draw an oval at an angle for the top part of the legs.Form the foot with a smaller oval. Connect it to the knees with a very short straight line and a much longer one.Draw upside-down U-shapes and a straight line under them for the eyes. Show the nose as a J-shape with a straight line under it. Form the mouth with a broad curve and two short lines at the ends. Use a C-shape for the ear.Start to draw the arms with a U-shape. Draw another U-shape around it, and curve the tops for the shoulders. Show the back of the chair as an upside-down U-shape with a line through the middle.Draw the cushion with curved and straight lines. Use straight lines to start the chair legs. Form a second leg with a J-shape. Shape her first leg with a curved line.Sketch the hair with a pointed oval shape and two comma-shaped figures. Form a comma-shaped figure above the oval. Add an S-shaped ponytail. Draw slanted triangles and curved lines for the closed eyes. Use a J-shape and two small curved lines for the nose.Form the mouth with a J-shape and two curved lines. Outline the dress with curved lines at the neck, arms, bust, and above the knee. Shape the hands with curved V-shapes and lines. Show the leg’s outline with a curved line.Attach a backward J-shape for the shoe top. Add a second U-shape to the chair back. Show the chair seat with a straight line. Give the chair legs curled-up ends.Add texture to the hair with many curved lines. Draw comma-shaped eyebrows. Place a tiny curlicue in the ear. Use a small circle for the earring. Give the dress a collar and cuffs by attaching many small U-shapes. Show folds in the dress with some curved lines.Draw two J-shapes for more fingers. Add another shoe with a backward J-shape and three lines for the heel. Draw U-shapes and a long oval for the chair rungs. Make the cushion look plump with three short curved lines.For the chair back, use the centerline as a guide. Form an upper scroll and two side scrolls. Place a small circle above the upper scroll.Darken the hair band and eyebrows. Give dimension to the legs and back of the chair by thickening the scrolled lines. Shade the chair with short lines.There, your pretty cartoon girl is complete. Excellent effort. Your skills are getting better and better with each drawing, so now it’s time to stretch your ability a bit further.Continue to the next article to learn how to draw a gentle giraffe.See all How to Draw articles. The humble pencil is a ubiquitous and versatile drawing tool, and it’s sometimes massively underrated in today’s tech-focused worlds. To get the most out of it, there are some important considerations when picking out pencils, which we will cover here, followed by an introduction to the most fundamental unit of drawing – line. We’ve also got two exercises to help you create better lines.So whether you’re just learning how to draw or are a seasoned pro, these tips will provide a sound foundation for novices and some useful reminders for more experienced artists.For more advice, explore our essential pencil drawing techniques. And if you’re in need of more tools, then see our best pencils buying guide.2B or not 2B? That is the question 2B or not 2B? Picking the right grade of pencil for your drawing will help you make the best sketch possible. Graphite pencils are available in a scale of hardness from 9H (hard, pale) to 9B (soft, dark), with HB and F in the middle of the range. Typically, the H grades are suited to technical drawing, while B grades are ideal sketching pencils. Start off with a 2B or 3B pencil for the exercises in this article.Make sure you always have a sharpener on hand (Image credit: Jake Spicer)Some drawings require a fine, sharp point for pinning down a crisp line, others a broad, flat side to the pencil lead for blocking in tone. Sometimes, a blunt point can serve your purposes. Whatever your preference, ensure you always have a sharpener on hand – if you use a regular handheld sharpener, make sure that it is sharp and that you have several with you if you go out to draw; a desk-mounted helical sharpener will last much longer and typically grinds the pencil to a longer point. If you use a craft knife, always cut away from your body. 03. Get the right pencil holdExperiment with different ways to grip your pencil as you draw Different pencil holds are suited to different marks, experiment with different ways to grip your pencil as you draw and work out ideal grips for different methods of mark making. It is important to consider where you are making your mark from – fingers, wrist or shoulder? When you make a mark, give some thought to the speed at which you make it. Also think about the weight that you put into the stroke – a heavy line is dark and definite; a lightly drawn line is pale and exploratory. When you are starting out, try to avoid uncertain, feathery marks. Here are two exercises (steps 5 and 6) to help you explore line – they could be applied to any subject and are great for all levels.05. Practise blind contour drawingThe first exercise is blind contour drawing The first exercise – blind contour drawing – is a common, playful exercise that helps you to draw unselfconsciously, making bold marks without feeling anxious about the outcome. Set up a subject in front of you and fix your eye on the top of it, placing your pencil on your paper. Without looking down at the paper, trace your eye around your subject, following its edges and contours, and as you do so, let your pencil follow the same journey on the paper. Draw in a single, unbroken line and don’t look back at the drawing until you are finished – it will look strange and misproportioned, it is supposed to! Repeat the exercise regularly as a warm up to get your hand working together with your eye.06. Try continuous line drawingThis second exercise is a development of the blind contour drawing This second exercise is a development of the blind contour drawing and involves the same continuous, unbroken line. This time as you draw, flick your eye down to the page regularly as your line explores the contour of your subject. Start with a light, playful line, and as you become more confident in the shapes that you are observing, put more weight into your mark, aiming for a variety of line weight across the picture. Don’t aim for precisely accurate proportion, instead aim for an honest process of looking and mark making, without overthinking the drawing. Related articles: (Image credit: Neil Edwards) If you want to know how to draw a face and head perfectly, this guide is for you. Whether you’ve got a multitude of faces to draw or just one in particular, when it comes to drawing heads nothing is set in stone. All characters have widely different features. But having a basic understanding of drawing and a grounding in head anatomy means you’ll be able to have confidence when experimenting – and these skills are sure to improve your drawings.On this page, you’ll learn how to draw a face – beginning with initial drawings and using references containing lots of different faces to draw, plus our specific techniques. When you’ve mastered that, you can flip to page two to learn how to draw a face with personality, including showing different expressions. For more drawing lessons, see our roundup of excellent how to draw tutorials. Or if you’re looking for a classic tool to hone your line work, check out our list of the best lightboxes. But for now, grab a sketchbook or your Cintiq and let’s get cracking with this tutorial from Neil Edwards. Click on the icon at the top-right of the image to enlarge it.01. Start with two circlesTwo circles form the basis of the head The first stage in learning how to draw a face is drawing two overlapping circles. Where they intersect is the eye level. From there, put a centre line down the two circles. This gives the basis of the human head. Use the guidelines to position the features Draw two lines slightly in from either side of your circles. These will indicate where the forehead and cheekbones sit. From the centre intersection, place a triangle for the nose and mark out where you want the mouth to go. Then add two triangles for the eyes – these will also help you locate the eyebrows and eye sockets.03. Explore different proportionsDifferent sized circles will create different effects You can experiment with different sized circles to give different head dimensions, perfect for any ideas you have of different faces to draw. The more squashed the circles, the wider and heavy the face, while the more elongated the circles, the longer the head shape.04. Line up the featuresImagine the features are wrapped around a cylinder Always remember that the eyes, nose and mouth are on the same plane on the face, otherwise things start to go a bit lopsided and weird! Imagine the facial features are wrapped around a cylinder, so they have a natural curve. Position the top of the eyebrow and bottom of the nose so that they’re lined up with the height of the ear. This helps the face look more natural; giving it a flow, and stopping it from feeling flat.05. Start with the eyesA light source helps eyes look more alive Your character’s eyes are crucial to conveying the right emotion – a key part of conquering how to draw a face. Try to keep them focused and tell a story with them. Give the top eye a thicker line to indicate a shadow from the eyelid, and add a light source to give them life. Longer and thicker eyelashes create a more feminine look.06. Add in the noseThe tip of the nose is roughly diamond shaped Noses can be pretty difficult to get right. I initially create a triangle with a diamond shape for the tip of the nose. From there I draw nostrils, remembering to add line weight and shadow to the bottom of the nose. I keep the details light, adding only what’s needed.07. Try different lip shapesLook at your own mouth to explore different lip shapes I keep a little sketchbook to practise different lip shapes. Study films and TV programmes to see how actors exaggerate their mouths. Experiment and explore different mouth shapes. Try to convey ‘oh’, ‘ah’ and ‘esss’: this will help when you want figures to look like they’re having a conversation.Male faces tend to be more angular – although this isn’t a hard and fast rule The male face is a harder, angular shape. The female face is softer and rounder in general. For women, try to depict fuller lips, larger eyes and rounder cheeks. These are not hard and fast rules, though – just a guide.09. Finish with some hairRemember, the hair is bigger than the scalp Of course, learning how to draw a face and head also means learning to draw hair. When drawing a character’s hair, I first create the basic hair shape, noting that the hair is bigger than the scalp. I then add direction to the hair, remembering to draw strokes from the crown of the head. To give hair a more natural appearance, I introduce a sense of weight to the bottom of the shape. Trying drawing the hair shape with a thicker outline and thinner internal lines. This gives it direction.Next page: more advanced techniques for drawing a face Figure drawing is a fundamental skill for artists, but one of the hardest to truly master. In this article, I explain my personal process and offer some advice to help you improve your figure drawings.On this page we’ll walk through how to draw a female figure. Jump to page 2 for a step by step guide to drawing male figures, or page 3 for a closer look at gesture drawing.Although having knowledge of the proportions of a human figure is important, bear in mind that these are only a guide. Trying to shoehorn every person you draw into an eight-head-high ideal is a shortcut to uninspiring figure drawing.To achieve style we need to work with gesture, the spirit of the pose, the fluid nature in line. If we take gesture too far, though, our drawing will look wobbly. To counter that we need to also work with a solid structure, but too much structure can make for a stiff drawing. Therein lies the great balancing act of figure drawing that we will explore here. For a more basic guide, see how to draw a person. Above you can watch one of my-depth video tutorials where I explore how to get the most from references. For step-by-step written instructions on how to draw a female figure, read the tutorial below.After more drawing tips? Take a look at our guide to how to draw pretty much anything, or check out our essential advice on foreshortening in art or even these charcoal drawing tips. Alternatively, get yourself kitted out with the best pencils around.With that out of the way, let’s get started on how to draw the female figure...Click the icon in the top right of each image to enlarge it.01. Start with simple shapesFirst establish your basic proportions Start with your attention level set to high. I use a small, two-finger wide piece of charcoal for my initial sketch. Draw the basic proportions, making any adjustments required – especially if you’re working from a photo.02. Add more sophisticated linesUse a gestural grip for this stage Starting your figure drawing with basic shapes makes it easier to draw more sophisticated lines on top. Here, I’ve drawn the face using small shapes inside a big shape. This is two of my disciplines in action at once: big to small; and simple to sophisticated.Note the gestural grip in action. Drawing with our gestural hand enables us to use the rhythm of our arm rather than our stiff wrist to make our marks. It gives us the freedom to draw long fluid lines on the paper (for more advice, see this article on how to hold a pencil correctly).03. Exaggerate the curvesYou don’t need to copy exactly what you see I’m constantly analysing the photo reference. On closer inspection, what appears to be a foot is actually the ankle twisting. I decide to draw the classic shape of a foot to make the drawing more clear. I’m improving what I observe in the photo in terms of artistic mark-making. Note how many times I exaggerate the curves to make the drawing more lively.04. Lay in broad tones in charcoalTime to add some depth At this stage I step back from the art to check the drawing has solid structure. I lay in broad tones with my charcoal. Remember, our goal here is to interpret the reference. If we gauge success on how close we copy, we’ll end up with a stiff drawing that looks like a distorted photo.05. Blend tone into formBlending the drawing means you can adjust anything you want to Up until now I’ve juggled gesture with structure. It’s an okay drawing, but nothing stylish. This is the journeyman stage, from which we can stamp our own style. Using tissue, I blend tone into form, this also fades the drawing and gives me a second chance to draw better on top.06. Add more tonal gesturesMake some final tweaks to your figure drawing Here I’m making small structural adjustments and adding more tonal gestures. This second time around goes quickly – just a matter of minutes, which is a small investment for an hour-long drawing. From this point onwards, my quest is to further explore style in the drawing.07. Remember, if it looks wrong, it is wrong!Sometimes parts that are anatomically accurate will look incorrect I use shadows to push the gesture, but omit the shadow of the xiphoid process (the small bone under the pointed arch of the ribcage). It looks odd here. Even though it’s correct, it violates one of my art laws: if it looks wrong, it’s wrong, even if it’s right!08. Use a paper stump for adjustmentsPush charcoal around rather than adding more Using a paper stump, I push around the charcoal that’s already on the paper rather than lay more charcoal down. This keeps the drawing light and fresh. I’m also mindful to always be drawing even when blending. I use a sheet of paper to prevent me smudging the drawing.Struggling with to make the medium work for you? Check out our ten expert tips for charcoal drawing.09. Create highlights with an eraserThink of the eraser as another drawing tool I draw highlights with a kneadable eraser. I think of the eraser as a drawing tool rather than a correction tool. Slowly does it, especially in the early stages. Drawing fast is a false economy – if we rush a drawing then we inevitably spend most of our time fixing mistakes.10. Take a breakTaking a break means you’ll spot inaccuracies more easily I take a short coffee break away from the drawing and come back with a fresh eye. A break helps me see the bugbears more clearly when I return. I see the breasts are too close in shape while the lower rib cage is too smooth. I make minor changes to both bugbears and am ready for the big finish.11. Add in a backgroundA chamois leather is useful for creating abstract marks I lay down a large swath of charcoal, then smudge it with a chamois leather cloth, playing with textures as I go. I learned of the chamois from Glenn Vilppu a few years back and it’s been part of my drawing arsenal ever since. Here I use it for abstract marks to ground the figure and add style.12. Introduce the elements of fantasyThe figure here is reimagined as a vampire For my image, I imagined a vampire in a bloodlust trance. With large charcoal sticks I draw abstract shapes then pencil in the breast plates and jewellery using hard erasers for highlights.Next page: How to draw a male figure Page 2 Now let’s focus on how to draw a male figure. Our figure here is in a contrapposto pose – this Italian term means counterpoise, or counterbalance, and refers to a figure balancing more weight on one side, usually the straight-leg side of the body, in a standing pose. The most famous contrapposto artwork is probably Michelangelo’s David.Art terms like this are a great way to get your head around the creative process. Check out our art terms glossary for more explanations of commonly used terms.Above is an in-depth video tutorial, or read on for a step by step guide to how to draw a male figure.Click the icon in the top right of each image to enlarge it.01. Start with basic shapesAt this point you need to identify the weight-bearing leg For this drawing I’m using sanguine pastel pencil on toned paper. Sanguine means blood and sanguine pencils can range between dark brown to almost pink. I’ve chosen a dark sanguine and a flesh-coloured paper. As usual, I start with basic shapes. I then identify the weight-bearing straight leg and tilt the shoulder towards it for more balance. If you’re curious about working with pastels, read our guide to getting started with pastels.02. Find the rhythm in the poseStart to build out the basic shapes I draw smaller shapes inside the big simple shapes. Notice how I treat the rhythm of the legs; I’m drawing from one side to the other. Study how the knees have a low, overlapping curve on the inside and how the calves are high on the outside. This is the natural rhythm of the body, and cannot be ignored by the figure artist. 03. Smooth out the paperPastel paper has a ‘tooth’ I’m using a high-grade pastel art paper, which can be bought in large individual sheets. Pastel paper has a smooth and a rough side. I choose the smooth side, but it still has a ‘tooth’, meaning that it has micro pits that hold the pastel pigment. I blend with tissue to smooth out the grain and then ghost the image back.It’s better to make your head too small than too large to start with I stand back from the art and see with a fresh eye that the head needs to be bigger. Best to err on the side of a smaller head to start with, rather than a big head, which can look comical. If the head looks small you can try adding to the skull rather than drawing all the features bigger. Usually this works fine. Once I’m happy with the new head size and basic proportions, I start to detail the anatomy. 05. Reshape the figure with a paper stumpThink through each change you make at this point I blend the edges with a paper stump, improving as I go by reshaping and pushing the pigment around. Be careful not to mindlessly render as it will make the drawing worse. Always think as you render: your drawing will reflect your inner feelings and energy in every mark. I recommend keeping two sets of paper stumps and kneadable erasers so as not to dirty your drawings – one set for sanguine and one set for charcoal.06. Use an eraser like a drawing toolA kneadable eraser is useful for building up form As with the blending stump, I use the eraser with the same mindset and think of it as a drawing tool. Kneadable erasers are pliable, and can be moulded and shaped to pull out highlights. Note how the knees are changing from simple shapes into something more sophisticated. Going from simple to complex is the best approach.07. Keep your hand off the paperNatural oils can make blots on the paper As I soften edges with tissue I keep a piece of paper under my hand. This prevents oil transferring to the paper. Natural oil from our hands can be invisible initially, but then appear as blots when we blend later. This is not a big deal on a textured background, but it could spoil the flawless skin tone that you had hoped for. 08. Use white pastel for highlightsMake sure you’re happy with your figure before adding highlights It’s been a long time coming but here it is: the white pastel pencil for the highlights. It’s important to make sure that the art is already strong, because the white effect shouldn’t be used as a crutch. It’s also crucial not to mix the sanguine with the white, because the midtone paper represents the midtone flesh of the figure.09. Blend and pushBlend the white pigment into the paper surface Using all my tools, I blend and push the white pigment into the surface. Note how fleshy everything has become based on three simple values: the darks of the sanguine; the midtone of the paper; and the highlights of the white. My pencil eraser with the brush end comes in handy for brushing away eraser debris.10. Tackle anatomical detailsPersonal details will give your figure character Time to address the small stuff and explore the beauty of anatomy and form. Constant study of the knees is important because everyone’s knees are different due to variable ‘bursa’ shapes. These are little fatty pads that protect the joints. Note that I’m using a clean paper stump for blending whites.11. Sharpen your linesIt’s tricky to achieve crisp lines on textured paper Using a mono eraser, I thin down some of the lines. Pastel paper is wonderful to work with, but due to the grain it’s a fight to achieve thin lines when working on a relatively small scale. This drawing would be easier to work with at twice this size, but there are always workarounds.12. Add texture in the backgroundA background helps give the figure context Using erasers, tissue and paper stumps for background texture draw the eye to the contrasting tones of the smooth skin. Sanguine on toned paper is slow, but worth the effort. I spend over three hours pushing and blending into the grainy surface. Take time over your sanguine drawings and you’ll be rewarded.Next page: A guide to gesture drawing

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