

Drawing People

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Essentials of Figure Drawing

Draw the anatomy first, then add clothes. It is much harder to draw clothed people properly if you don't have the right anatomy underneath. Feet and hands will be in the wrong places, and you won't know quite why.

Simplify complicated shapes. Human bodies are very complex, so to aid us in quickly getting down the pose, we break the body down into simple geometric shapes: cubes, cylinders, etc.

Humans don't have straight lines. Every bone, fingernail, and muscle has a curve. Men and women, curvy or angular. It may be a gentle curve, but it is a curve. Only robots have straight lines.

Only add details once the pose is correct. That may be the best hand you've ever drawn, but it doesn't matter how nice the fingers look if it looks like she's got a broken wrist. So don't get too attached to a body part at the beginning, because it might need to move.

Foreshortening. When objects are coming at you, you see less of the length, and it can appear larger towards the end (depending on how far away it is).

Process

Start very lightly and do not add details! Your first lines are just going to be getting things in position. Do not commit to anything by drawing heavy lines until the basic pose looks correct. You cannot move your perfectly drawn nose, so don't put it in until everything has been laid out.

Capture the essence of the pose. Sketch very lightly and try to capture the general movement or lines of the pose. Do not add any anatomy until this looks right. You're just trying to get the general flow.

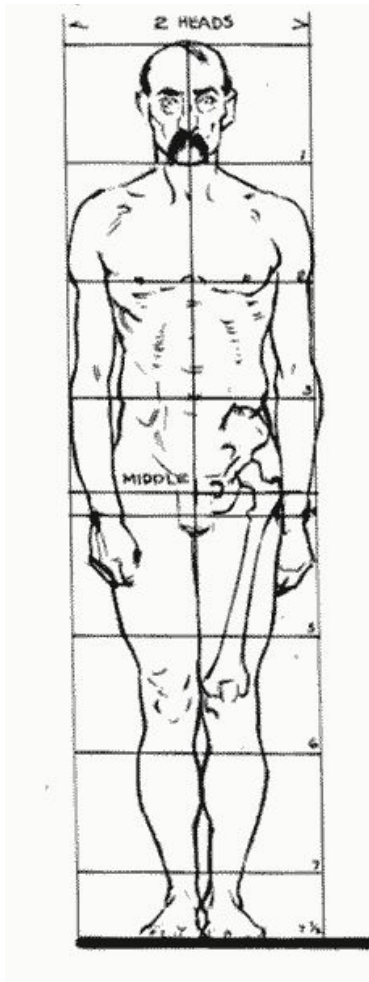
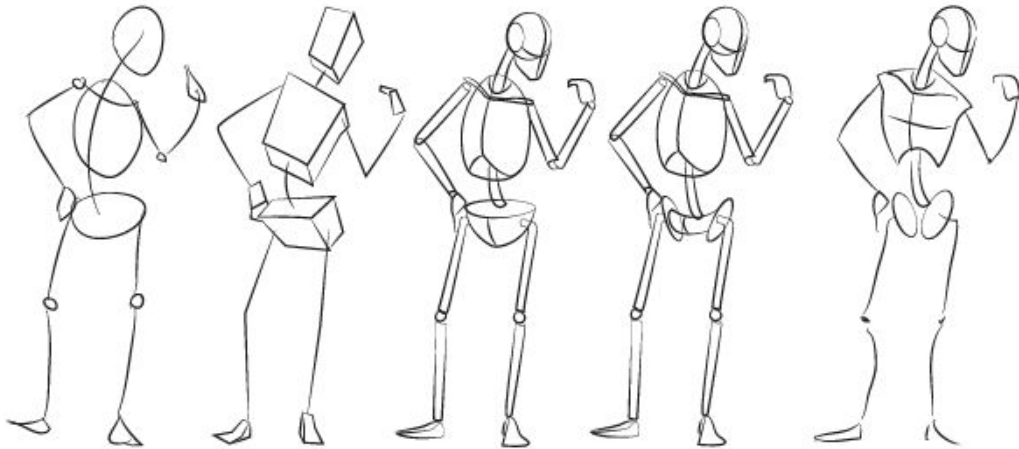
Block in head, torso, and hips. Break the body into simple shapes. Add a ribcage, pelvis, and head shape. You can indicate the angle these things are facing.

Check your proportions. If you draw people with too big heads, or too far apart eyes, or elbows in the wrong place, it will look wrong. Use reference material. Measure things. Is your person really 7-heads tall?

Slowly add details. Add simple shapes for arms, legs, hands, and feet. Block in the face.

Exercises

- **Warm-up: Blind Contour:** Without looking at your paper, draw your non-dominant hand. Slowly follow the outline. If you go off the paper, just move it back on.
- **Proportions:** Draw one of these simplified human shapes into the lines below.



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- **30 second Gesture:** Using only stick figures, quickly capture the essence of the pose. Absolutely no erasing! You don't have time for that! Try to use only curved lines.



- **2 minute Gesture:** As above, quickly capture the essence. Then quickly add the major shapes: ribcage, pelvis, torso. Reference the simplified human forms you used for the proportions exercise.

More Resources

Figure Drawing Books (might be out of print, but should be available from a library)

- *Figure Drawing for All Its Worth* - Andrew Loomis (any book by him is great)
- *Complete Guide to Drawing from Life* - George Bridgman

General Drawing Books

- *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* - Betty Edwards (I highly recommend for any adult learning to draw.)
- *The Natural Way to Draw* - Kimon Nicolaides

Other Resources

- Mundane figure drawing classes: your local art center, art supply store, community education program, university extension, art school, community college, etc may offer life drawing classes.
- Youtube: Proko. Excellent free instructional videos.



'Moutier-Grandval Bible' c. 830 AD
Grand Heures of Anne de Bretegne c. 1510 AD



Queen Mary Psalter, c. 1310 AD
Maciejowski Bible - 13th century

