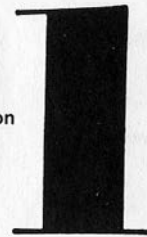


Famous Artists Cartoon Course
Westport, Connecticut

The comic head

Lesson



Rube Goldberg

Milton Caniff

Al Capp

Harry Haenigsen

Willard Mullin

Gurney Williams

Dick Cavalli

Whitney Darrow, Jr.

Virgil Partch

Barney Tobey



The cartoon head has height, width, and depth and is shaped somewhat like a toy balloon. By running one guide line around it to locate the eyes and ears, and another line up and down it to locate the nose and mouth, you can use this balloon shape to create cartoon heads of every type

The comic head

When you meet a friend the first thing you look at is his face. You say, "You look fine" or "You look sick" or "You look sad" or "You look happy." You recognize Joe or Bill or Mary by the eyes or nose or ears or hair. The good Lord is an expert at putting people together so you can identify them easily. Each of us has different features — even twins are not really identical — and, in addition, each of us has a definite and individual personality. As an observer and recorder of the human race, you must have an awareness not only of the surface differences between people but also of what makes them tick. In general, you must become a psychologist. A good understanding of the emotional differences between people will help you to create cartoon characters that will react properly to any set of circumstances and leave no doubt in the reader's mind as to the type of people they are.

From now on we want you to start thinking like a cartoonist. Stop looking at your friends as Joe, Bill or Mary. Instead, think of them as Joe, the big-mouthed showoff; Bill, the little mouse; and Mary, the girl that's afraid of her husband, kids and the family goldfish. Open your eyes and see the people around you. Watch and study their actions and reactions. The painter hires models to pose for him, but you, as a cartoonist, want no planned poses. You want your models to act naturally against a natural background. So wherever you are, at work, at play or at the supermarket, keep your eyes and your mind open — your eyes to study the physical differences and your mind to gain an understanding of your subjects' personalities.

Because the face and head are the most expressive parts of the figure, we naturally take them up first. The method we use to draw them may appear simple, but please remember that every head or face, from the simple exaggerated cartoon head to the very realistic head of the illustration and adventure-strip type, is built upon the same basic principles. All heads are shaped somewhat like a balloon and have two eyes, two ears, one nose and one mouth. In the pure comic or highly stylized type, these features may be exaggerated or even placed in extreme positions in relation to each other, but the basic principles of head construction are still the same as those used to draw the realistic type. Page 10 illustrates this basic relationship of all cartoon heads. Study it carefully and note how each of the different men has made use of the same basic principles and features to create his own individual characters.

In starting to draw the cartoon head, think of it as being like a child's balloon — something that has thickness as well as height and width. The photo of the balloon on the opposite page will demonstrate what we mean. The balloon has depth — a third dimension. If you let yourself think of it as a flat circle, you will end up with a lot of characters drawn without any feeling of solidity. Remember that the head is a sphere and, when the features are placed on its surface properly, they will give the effect of being drawn on a curve rather than a flat plane.

Get in the habit of dashing your balloons off freely. Let your pencil go around the balloon shape three or four times. Don't

try to make a perfect single-line balloon or oval, or draw the balloon with a compass. Do them freehand. The pencil work is only a guide upon which you will construct the cartoon head. If it is a little lopsided or bumps out on the side, don't worry about it. Sometimes these irregularities will suggest an entirely new type of character to you. Also, when drawing the balloon outline, do not get in the habit of bearing down too heavily with your pencil. In later lessons, to finish your cartoons, you will go over their outlines in ink; if your penciling is too dark, it will be almost impossible to erase after inking.

The important thing to remember when drawing any cartoon is to keep it simple. The simple, direct approach of cartooning has an instantaneous effect upon an audience. Because of its directness and clarity, the cartoon has become well established in every field of visual communication, including television and advertising. Keep in mind the importance of the simple, direct approach when you draw the cartoon heads for this lesson. Strive constantly to capture, in as few and as simple lines as possible, the personality and feeling of the character you are drawing. Avoid overdrawing or shading, particularly in the cartoon face. Remember that too many fine lines, instead of strengthening an expression, will often kill it. Make simplicity your watchword.

Many times throughout your Course we will remind you of the importance of practice. We particularly stress it here because the cartoon head is so basic. By practice we do not mean that you are to spend only ten or fifteen minutes a day at your studies. We mean that you should draw every chance you get.

Form right now the habit of carrying a sketch pad with you wherever you go. Sketch pads come in all sizes, and there is a small size that will fit in a coat pocket or a handbag. Every time you see an interesting face, jot it down in a quick sketch. Don't stiffen up and make work of it or worry about producing a clean, finished pencil drawing. You are interested in capturing a character or an expression, and a fast sketch will often do that better than a painstaking drawing. If you are all alone in the dentist's waiting room and there are no models present, just draw faces from memory. The important point is to keep drawing.

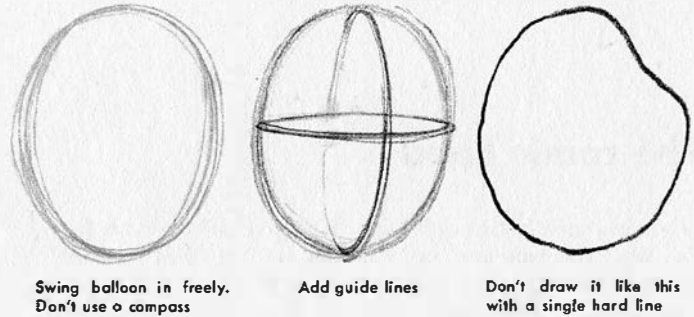
Learning to draw cartoons is a serious business. Fortunately, however, there is just as much pleasure in it as there is work. Cartooning has often been called "the happy art," and drawing comic heads is one of the happiest parts of it. So grab a pencil and start swinging them in. Don't expect every head you draw to be a masterpiece — but do expect them to get better as you give them more time and thought — and, above all, have fun drawing them!

For this first lesson, all the materials you need are some soft pencils (2B or 3B), some 8½ x 11-inch Bond typing paper, and an Artgum or kneaded rubber eraser, and you are ready to go to work. Remember, when buying supplies, that a good craftsman likes to use good tools. Luckily for the cartoonist, pencils are inexpensive. When one gets too short for comfort, throw it away or give it to the ladies' bridge club.

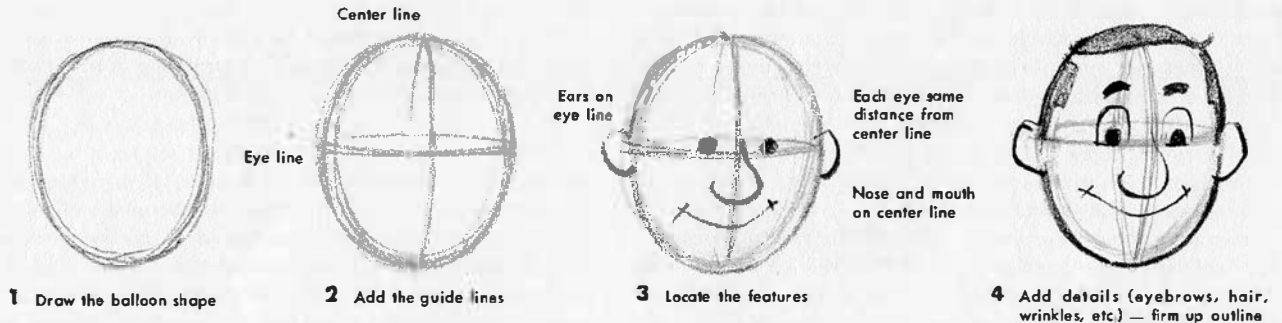
Drawing the balloon head

Before beginning to draw cartoon heads, you must learn to draw the balloon shape freely and quickly. Never use a compass. To form your balloon, swing the pencil around several times on the paper. The freely drawn balloon will be only a guide for the general shape of the head, so make it light — you can strengthen the outline later. Practice drawing balloons about the size shown here, because most of your work as a cartoonist will call for heads this size or smaller.

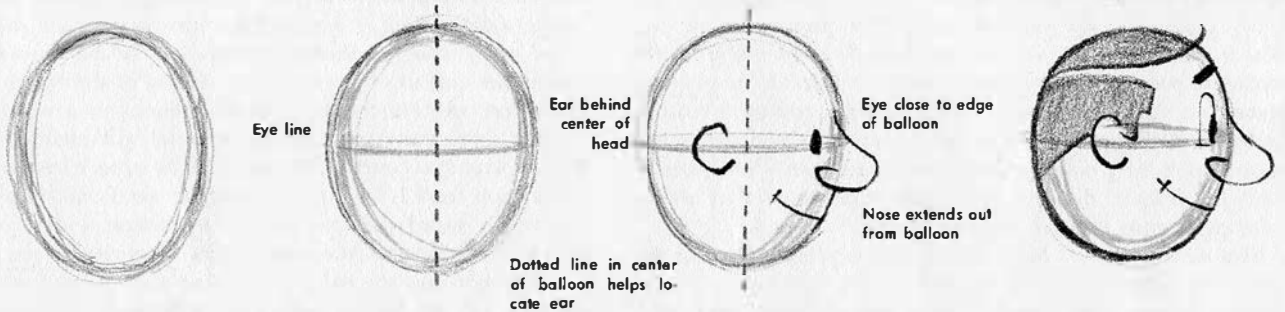
After you have gotten the hang of drawing the balloons and can dash them off easily, you are ready to swing the two guide lines in. Sketch these lines as though they go completely around the balloon. This will give the head a solid, three dimensional quality and keep you from drawing flat, pancake-type faces. Then start drawing in the eyes, nose, mouth and ears, following the principles demonstrated here.



Front view

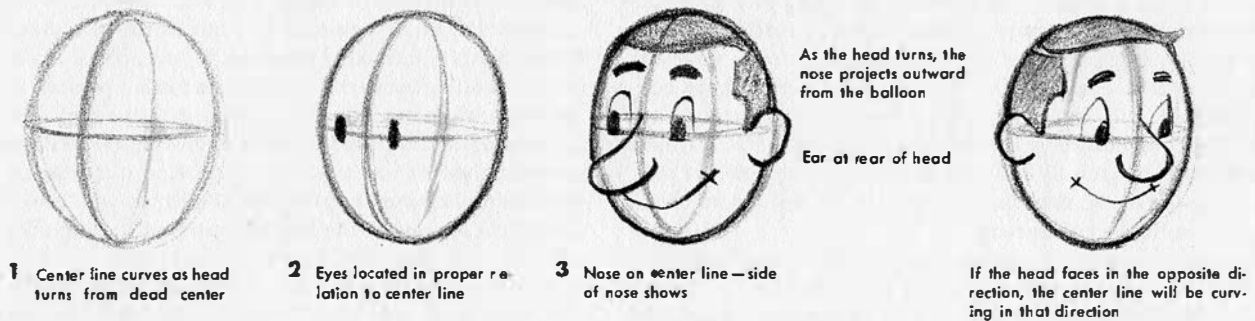


Side view

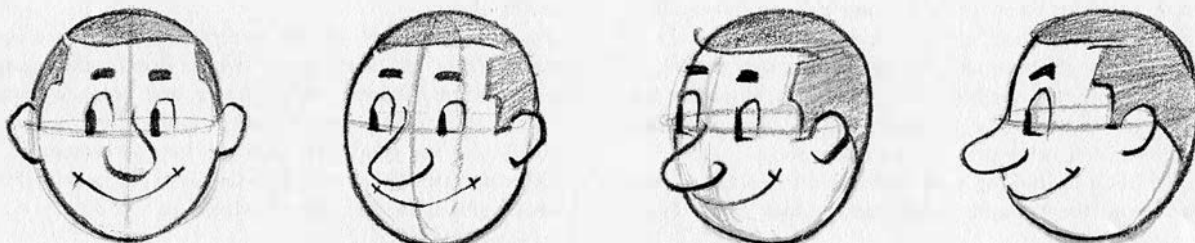


3/4 Front view

The center line indicates the direction the head faces. The more the head turns to the side, the more the center line curves.

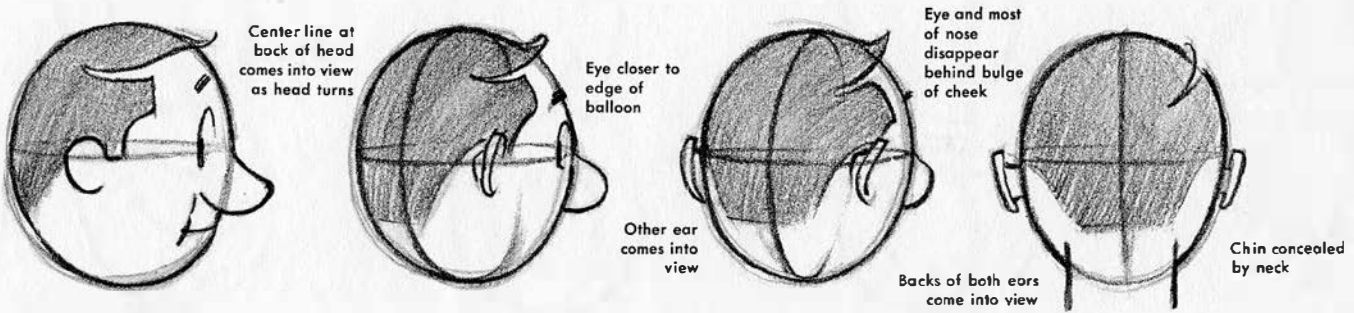


Front to side

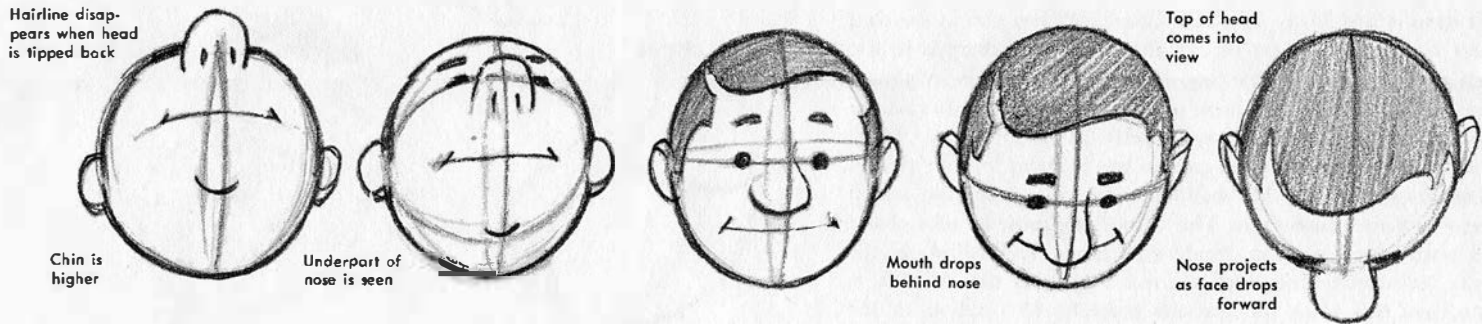


By varying the amount of curve to the center line, the head can be made to turn to any desired position. Note how the ear moves toward the center as the head turns to the side

Turning the head



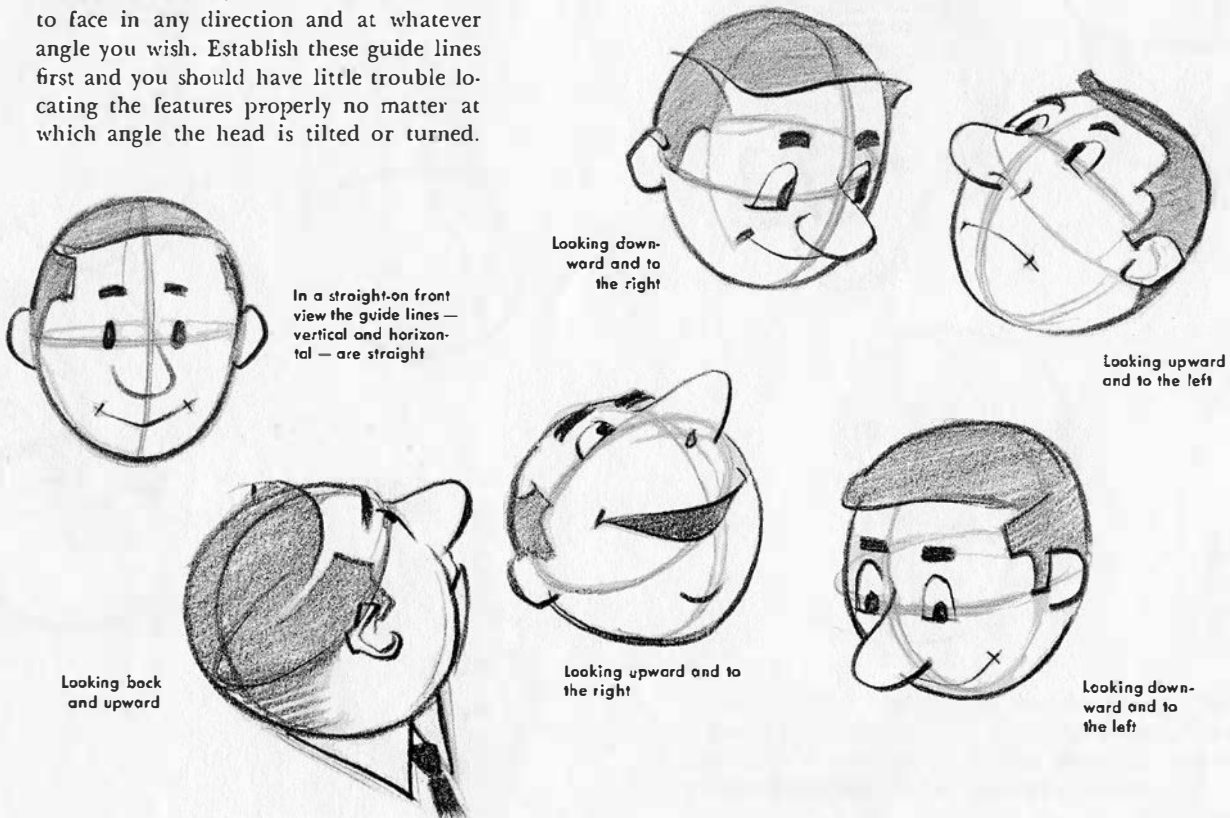
Looking up and down

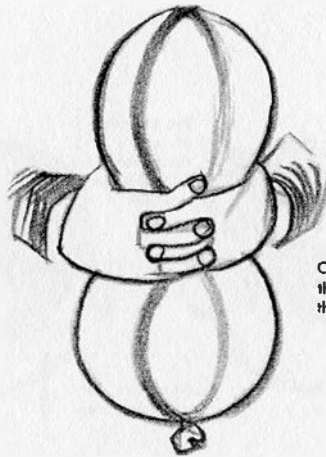
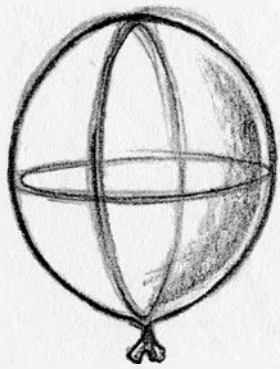


The curve of the eye line indicates whether the head is tipped back, level or tilted forward.

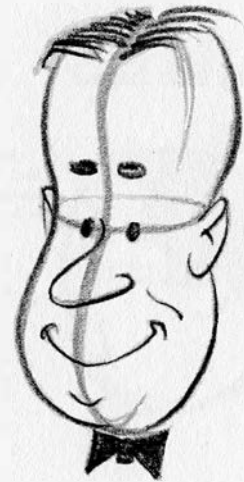
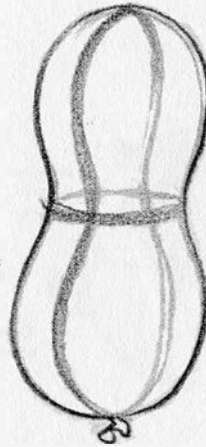
Angles

By combining the curved eye line with a curved center line, the head can be drawn to face in any direction and at whatever angle you wish. Establish these guide lines first and you should have little trouble locating the features properly no matter at which angle the head is tilted or turned.





Center line follows
the contours of
the balloon

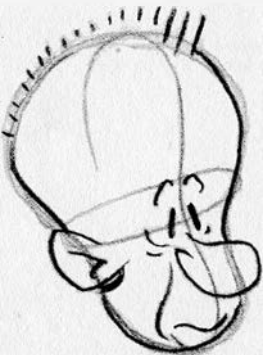
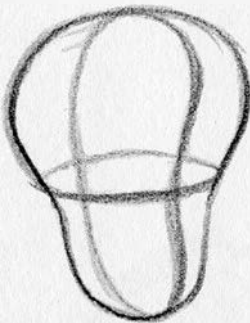
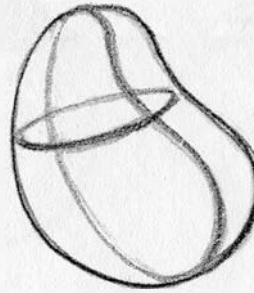


Center line runs
over top of head
and underneath
the chin . . . helps
locate the necktie
or center part of
the hair

Changing the shape of the balloon

If everyone had his or her hair shaved off, you would see that there is as much variety in the human head as there is in the tops of a range of mountains. Human heads come in almost every shape, from a lima bean to a toy top — and so do cartoon heads. The round balloon head is only the beginning.

Imagine that you are grasping a toy balloon in your hands. Now squeeze it hard. The balloon changes its shape but it still keeps its three dimensions. The same thing must be true of the different-shaped cartoon heads you draw. Regardless of the form, your center line must follow the curve of that form. If it does, you can place the features correctly in relation to the center line and maintain the three-dimensional effect.



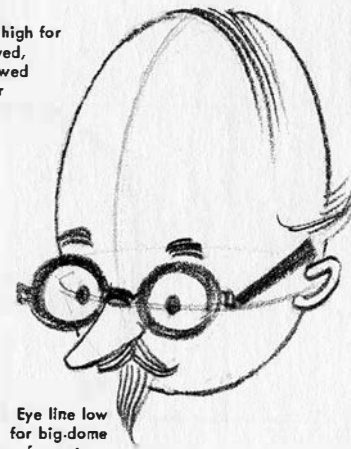
Changing the shape of the basic balloon head is the key to creating many different cartoon types. As you see here, just a couple of varied shapes can be the start of a whole cast of interesting characters — Milquetoasts and mugs, debutantes and dowagers, seadogs and swamis.

Varying the location of the features

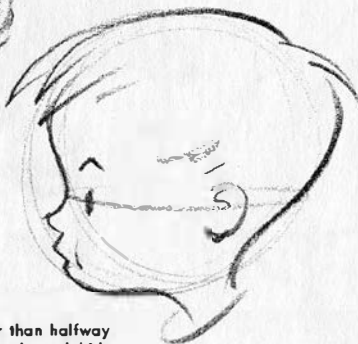
While the eye line is usually halfway between the top of the head and the chin, interesting cartoon characters of many different types can be created by raising or lowering this line. Even with balloons of the same shape a shift in the eye line can be the start of a new character. Keep in mind, however, that since the features are evenly balanced on each side of the center line, this line serves as a fixed guide for locating them.



Eye line high for low-browed, heavy-jawed character



Eye line low for big-dome professor type



No matter where the eye line is placed or at what angle it is drawn, it should serve as a guide for locating the ear

Draw the eye line lower than halfway on the heads of cute gals and kids

Hair on the head and face

In the simple cartoon head, hair makes the head male or female. When it comes to hair, anything goes – from the last precious few of the almost bald gent to the weird result of milady's latest visit to the beauty parlor. Every successful cartoon character has its own distinctive hairdo. Hair is important stuff.



In this simple cartoon head, hair makes the character male or female



Simple solid black for dark hair



If you show highlights, keep them simple



Too many scattered highlights break up the form



When drawing hair, always be aware of the balloon outline. Be sure the hair extends beyond the basic form



Express the form of the hair simply, with a few shaping strokes



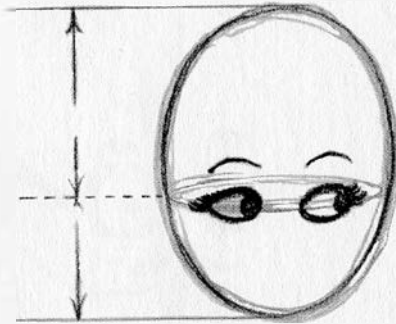
Don't try to draw every strand



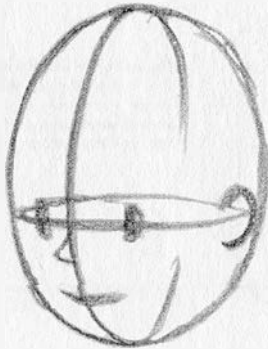
Hats go around the head

Girls' heads

Girls' heads are constructed the same way as any others, but they will appear cuter and more glamorous if the eye line is drawn lower than halfway. Remember to keep the outlines of the face smooth and simple and give emphasis to hair, eyes, and lips. Later in the Course, girls will be treated in greater detail. For now, this page will give you a good basic start. Girls add up to more than half of the human race. Learn to draw them well!



Draw the eye line low



Sketch in the balloon shape and add the guide lines to show the direction the head faces and the degree it tilts up or down. Then lightly indicate the location of the features. From this point on, the details you add and the facial expression you give her will determine her type



Simple blonde hair, wide open eyes, turned-up nose and pleasant smile create a typical cute gal



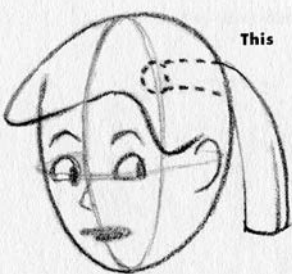
Dark hair and eyes, straight nose and full lips create the exotic type. Beauty patch, flower in hair, etc., add a sultry effect

Don't be afraid to exaggerate eyes and lips. But keep the nose relatively small

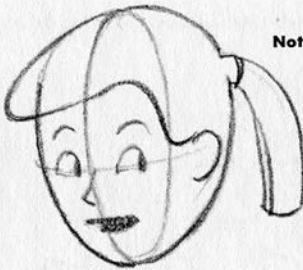


Bongs, pigtails and simplified eyes and mouth make her a member of the younger set

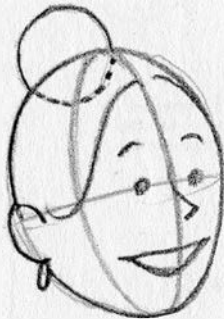
Hairdo tips



This

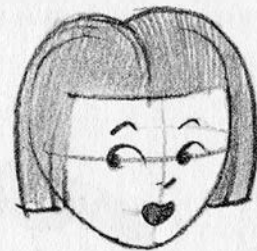
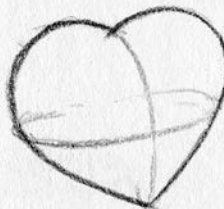


Not this



Carrying the center line around and behind the head will help you draw a partially visible hairdo correctly in 3/4 front views of the head. Note that the base of the pony tail stems from this center line . . . the bun is centered on it

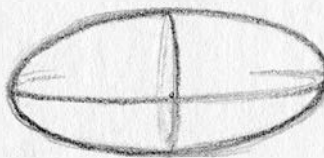
Vary the head shape for different types



Heart shape for sweet young thing

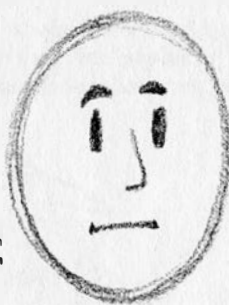


Pear shape for the gal who ought to diet



Flattened balloon for simple animated cartoon heads





The eyes and mouth make the expression

Facial expression

If a cartoon character is to be animated and interesting to the reader, it must express exactly the right emotion. Later in the Course we will show you how the whole figure can be used to express emotions, but, for now, we are concerned with the head and face. Joy, sorrow, anger, and other moods are shown chiefly in the face and you should learn all you can about how to draw them.

A good way to begin is to study the faces of the people around you, and the different moods they express. Also, set up a mirror and study your own features as you register various emotions. See what happens to eyes, eyebrows, mouth corners, etc., and practice drawing what you see.

A good cartoonist doesn't just think of his character's expressions and emotions—he feels them. This is what gives his characters conviction. Watch even the most experienced cartoonist at work and you will note that when he draws an unusual expression on the face of a character, his own face unconsciously assumes that expression.



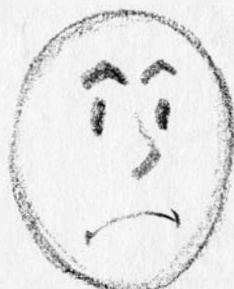
Pleased—Mouth curves upward



Amused—Mouth partly open and corners raised



Hilarious—Mouth wide, eyes half closed



Sad—Mouth curves downward



Surprised—Mouth an "O," eyebrows raised



Frightened—Mouth wider, eyebrows high



Displeased—Mouth corners turned down



Grim—Mouth a straight line, eyes squinted



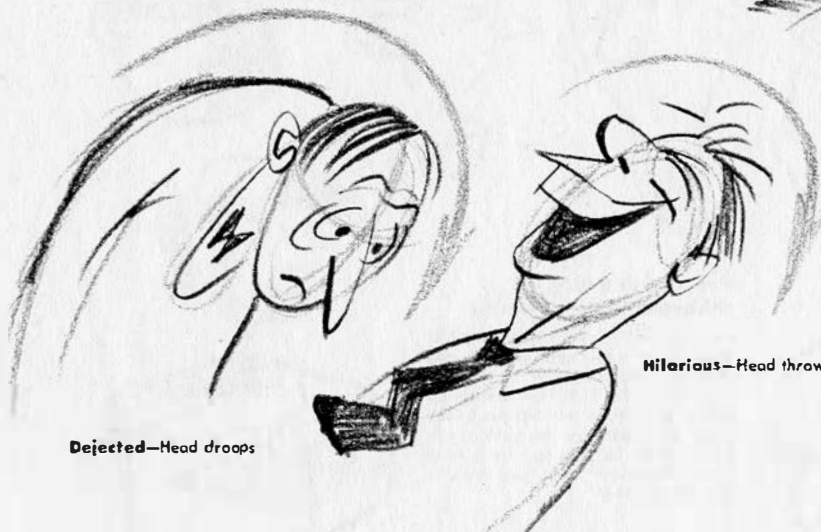
Angry—Eyes glaring, teeth bared

Head gestures

Give the facial expression more punch and drama by drawing the head in an attitude or gesture that matches the emotion expressed by the features. Again, stand in front of a mirror and try out some of the basic expressions. Note how naturally the head takes a position that corresponds to the expression. When you laugh, the head goes back. When you look dejected, it goes down. For nearly every facial expression there is a head gesture. Practice these gestures and apply them in your work.

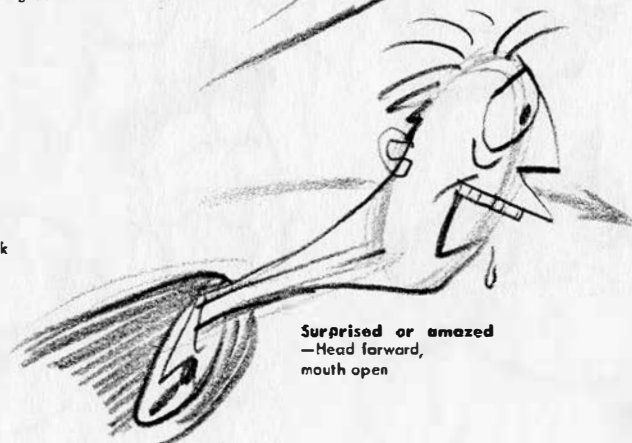


Alarmed—Head recoils backward



Hilarious—Head thrown back

Belligerent—Head thrust forward, jaw jutting out



Surprised or amazed—Head forward, mouth open

Dejected—Head droops

All cartoon characters are based on real people

All cartoon heads, regardless of the style of drawing, are based on real people. To turn a real head into a cartoon head you must do two things: (1) Eliminate detail and (2) exaggerate outstanding characteristics. This enables you to express the feelings and personality of the character clearly and sharply.

To show you what we mean, we had four cartoonists draw their interpretations of three models. Their drawings, ranging from the realistic to the highly stylized, appear below. Note that each man has created a unique and individual cartoon while expressing the type and personality of the model.

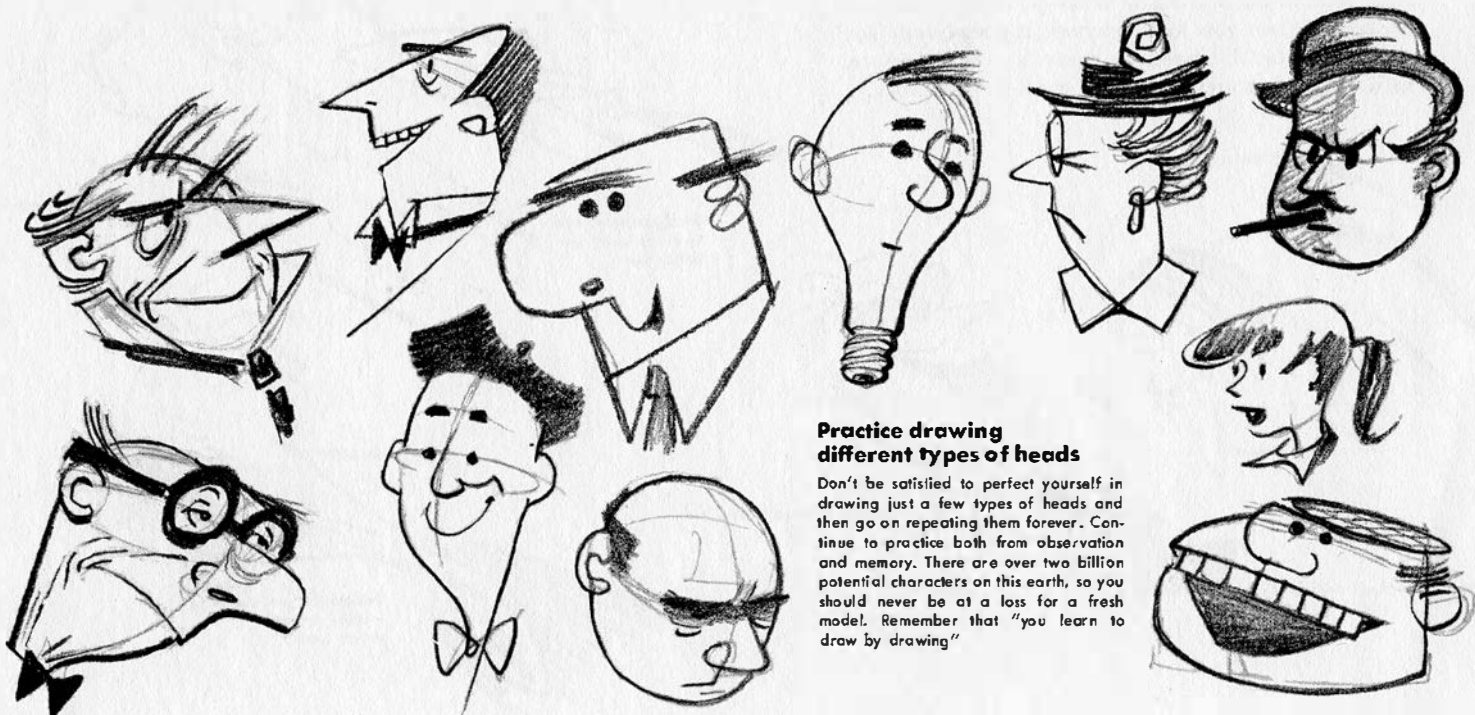


The realistic or adventure-type heads in this column are closest to the live models. Still, much detail has been eliminated

By simplifying the features—particularly the eyes and hair—the heads can be cartooned in a semi-realistic manner

With more exaggeration of the outstanding features and further simplification of outline, the characters become pure cartoons

Even with extreme exaggeration and stylizing, the heads in this column are still essentially the same as those in the first column



Practice drawing different types of heads

Don't be satisfied to perfect yourself in drawing just a few types of heads and then go on repeating them forever. Continue to practice both from observation and memory. There are over two billion potential characters on this earth, so you should never be at a loss for a fresh model. Remember that "you learn to draw by drawing"