

LEARNING MADE EASY



2nd Edition

# Manga

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
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Develop basic  
manga drawing skills

Choose the right tools  
and materials

Bring your own characters  
to life

**Kensuke Okabayashi**

Author, creator, illustrator, and  
collector of hats and stickers







# Manga

2nd Edition

**by Kensuke Okabayashi**

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## Manga For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

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# Introduction

**Y**ōkoso (welcome) to *Manga For Dummies*, Second Edition. Manga is a cultural phenomenon that continues to grow in popularity not only in the United States, but also worldwide. Throughout this book, I focus on the basic skills you need to create your first manga characters for your own creator-owned manga series. Whether you're an aspiring artist or a professional illustrator wanting to explore a different style of drawing, this book is a great place to start.

## About This Book

As you see throughout this book, more than 50 percent of the content is devoted to illustrations. I show you examples in the illustrations, and I tell you how to replicate them (or create your own examples) in the step-by-step instructions that accompany them.

All tips, advice, and drawings that I provide are based upon my own experience, both as a professional illustrator/sequential artist and as a former art student. I designed this book to take you through various drawing techniques and popular styles of drawing manga. Although you draw some manga characters realistically, others are more exaggerated. I encourage you to try out these different styles and find out which ones you like drawing most. As you become familiar with different faces and body types, you may want to combine different elements to come up with your own individual style.

Throughout this book, I cover a variety of popular manga topics. I introduce basic proportions and anatomy to demonstrate how to draw your first manga character from start to finish. I also cover different must-know character archetypes, including popular main protagonists, their supporting sidekicks, evil villains, wise ones, damsels in distress, and shōjo characters. In addition to characters, I show you how to create cool effects to apply motion and emotion to tell a story. For mecha fans, I also show you how to create your own mecha. Finally, I talk about some tips for self-publishing your first manga works and preparing to exhibit your works at your first manga convention.

# Conventions Used in This Book

While writing this book, I used a few conventions that you should be aware of:

- » Numbered steps and keywords appear in **boldface**.
- » Whenever I introduce a new term, I *italicize* it and define it.

## What You're Not to Read

Now, I didn't spend hours upon hours writing this book and drawing all the illustrations because I want you to skip over them. However, to be honest, you can skip over certain elements in this book and still get the gist of what's being covered. The sidebars (the gray boxes) throughout the book contain information that's interesting yet nonessential, so if you're pressed for time or just not into anything that isn't essential, feel free to skip them. Also, feel free to skip any information that has the Technical Stuff icon attached, because that info goes beyond what you absolutely need to know. You won't hurt my feelings (much).

## Foolish Assumptions

When I sat down to write this book, I made a few assumptions about you, dear reader. This book is for you if

- » You're really into manga, and you want to draw your own manga characters and come up with your own stories.
- » You've never sketched anything other than a stick figure before, but you want to try your hand at this style of art because it seems pretty fun and easy to pick up.
- » You're a fan of one kind of manga (maybe *kodomo* manga), and you want to know more about other kinds of manga (like *shōnen* or *shōjo* manga).
- » You know very little about manga, but you want to know how it got started and what it's all about.



- » You're an aspiring manga artist who hopes to be published someday.
- » You're not afraid of trying digital software and social media platforms to create and promote your artwork.
- » You don't care whether you're published or not. You just like to draw, and you like manga. So there!

While we're on the subject of foolish assumptions, allow me to take a moment to dispel a few foolish assumptions I've heard over the years:

- » **After reading this book from cover to cover, I will become a successful manga artist.** One misconception of most reference books is that you should be able to master the art of manga by reading through the book from front to back. Drawing isn't an overnight phenomenon. Unlike those final exams in high school, you can't cram good art. My strong advice is not to be dissuaded if your drawings don't come out the way you want on your first try. Like many skills, practice is essential to getting good results.
- » **I'm not as talented as my other friends — I may as well give it all up!** Nonsense! One of the glories of manga rests in its simplicity in line and form. Although having drawing skills or drawing lessons certainly helps, they aren't required. In my opinion, the key to achieving success isn't raw talent or even hard work, but passion. If you're not passionate about what you draw, no amount of talent or long hours you work will help you in the long run.
- » **Like other comics, manga is for kids — people will make fun of me for taking this art form seriously (even more so if I pursue it as a career).** If this is your first time experiencing manga, this is an understandable false assumption. As I explain in the first chapter of this book, manga has a tremendous diversity of topics and genres (ranging from sports to politics to romance). It's no surprise manga is a multi-billion-dollar entertainment industry enjoyed by all ages and sexes.

## How This Book Is Organized

This book is broken up into six different parts. Following is a summary of each of these parts, so that you can decide what appeals to you.

## Part 1: Manga 101

Think of this part as your first day in a class for your favorite subject. This part provides an overview of manga's history and different genres; it tells you what tools you need to get started; and it wraps up with some basic drawing exercises to get your brain and your hand moving.

## Part 2: To the Drawing Board

Even though this book is set up to be modular (meaning that you can start anywhere you like), unless you've drawn manga before, you don't want to skip this part. Here I show you how to draw the essential components of any manga character: the head, eyes, body, and basic clothing. These chapters are the foundation for the rest of the book, especially Part 3, where I show you how to draw specific types of characters.

## Part 3: Calling All Cast Members!

This is where things get juicy. Although you can find thousands of storylines and characters in today's popular manga world, most stories use certain archetypes as their protagonist or lead characters, sidekicks, antagonists, and so on. For whatever reason, this method has been a winning formula that's stood the test of time.

In this part, you take the basics and apply them to draw various types of characters, such as heroes, villains, and elders.

## Part 4: Time to Go Hi-Tech

Like drawing those cool robots, machines, and weapons? How about those small sophisticated electronic devices? In this part, I cover the basics to get you started on drawing your own machines (referred to as *mecha*).

## Part 5: An Advanced Case of Manga

In this part, I go over the more advanced topics and manga subject matter. I start off with basic principles of perspective that allow you to add depth and interest to your drawings. I then show you how to create the illusion of motion and emotion by using different types of lines. Next, I cover backgrounds and storyboards. Finally, I tell you what goes into a good manga story and how to get your work noticed if you're looking to break into the biz someday.

## Part 6: The Part of Tens

As a new manga creator, it's important to keep a look out for what other hot manga artists are drawing. As part of this section, I include ten of the most influential manga artists who continue to inspire the manga community worldwide. I also list ten places where you can present your work to the public.

## Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you see various icons in the left margins. These icons serve as flags to draw your attention toward important or helpful information. Each specific icon carries its own meaning, as listed here:



REMEMBER

As you may have guessed, this icon points out concepts or other information that you don't want to forget.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

This icon points out information that goes a bit beyond what you absolutely need to know. If you're a thorough type of person, you'll likely enjoy these tidbits; however, feel free to skip them if you prefer.



TIP

Look for this icon to provide you with helpful tricks and shortcuts to make your drawing life easier.



WARNING

Don't skip this icon. It alerts you to various mistakes and pitfalls that you want to avoid.

## Where to Go from Here

Going from cover to cover in a strict sequential order isn't required. Based on your interests, you can visit chapters in any order, and you'll find that each section takes you step by step through accomplishing an objective. For those with drawing experience, the beauty of this format is that you can select whichever topic you want to know more about and dive into it.

However, for those of you who are new to manga or don't have prior drawing experience, I recommend starting with Part 1 and working your way through this book in order. Even if you're an experienced artist but new to manga, it's not a bad idea to brush up on your knowledge by starting with Part 1 and then choosing the section you're interested in.

Regardless of where you start, I recommend reading all the way through the chapter you choose before sitting down at the drawing table and working through its steps. Give yourself time to first digest different kinds of characters and techniques that are used in today's manga world. After that, go back and draw to your heart's content.

Finally, as if you don't have enough to keep you busy here in this book, be sure to check out some great bonus content online. For example, going to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and searching for **Manga For Dummies cheat sheet** will send you right to a handy cheat sheet I worked up for this edition of *Manga For Dummies*.

# 1

## **Manga 101**

### **IN THIS PART . . .**

Explore a whole new world — the world of Manga

Set up your drawing toolbox

Create your own artist's studio

Familiarize yourself with the (drawing) tools  
of the trade

Tackle drawing basics



- » Discovering the origins and history of manga
- » Exploring the different types of manga
- » Evaluating the differences between American comics and Japanese manga

## Chapter **1**

# Welcome to Manga World

**W**elcome to the wonderful world of manga. From its humble beginnings after World War II, manga has grown to become an international phenomenon in the entertainment industry. Prestigious Japanese publishing houses (including the top three: Kodansha, Shueisha, and Shogakukan) release hundreds of titles translated into a multitude of foreign languages worldwide to promote the multi-billion-dollar industry.

Whether you're new to manga or a professional artist looking to try something different, this book is a great place to get your feet wet. Throughout this book, I take you step by step through exercises in drawing all sorts of characters, backgrounds, and useful special effects. I also give tips and pointers, most of which are based on my own experience. Although I recommend that beginners go through this book in sequential order, I designed the subject matter to be flexible so that you can navigate freely from chapter to chapter, depending on your interests.

In this chapter, I explore the history of manga, the various popular manga genres, and what makes manga so successful.

# Tracing the Rise of Manga's Popularity

Humorous and satirical illustrations trace back to 12th-century Japan. Although now understood to mean “comics originating from Japan,” *manga* (pronounced MAHN-gah or MANG-ah) is literally translated as “whimsical pictorial.” Katsushika Hokusai, a wood engraver and painter who lived from 1760 to 1849, coined the phrase in *Hokusai Manga*, one of his many publications. In a 15-volume series of sketches published in 1814, he covered various topics ranging from the informative to the comical aspects of the Edo period.

Despite the rapid growth and prosperity displayed in today's manga world, in truth, manga didn't see significant growth until World War II. Under the influence of the great manga artist Tezuka Osamu (1928–1989), manga began to gain not only national but also international recognition with works such as *Astro Boy*, *Black Jack*, *Buddha*, and many more. In the midst of a post-war economic struggle, Tezuka's manga adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* sold 400,000 copies to become the nation's top-seller.

During the 1960s, the generation that enjoyed reading manga as children grew up and brought their manga books and interests with them. People no longer viewed manga as something to be enjoyed only by children — it was now acceptable for adults, too. American comics at the time primarily had a huge audience of young boys idolizing superheroes whose sole mission was to defeat crime, but the Japanese community developed its own audience of both male and female groups, ranging from children to adults.

From 1980 to 2000, manga saw not only an evolution in terms of genre and style, but also the introduction of sophisticated techniques specifically geared toward enhancing manga's looks and effects. Techniques like *screen tones* (a series of adhesive design patterns used to suggest color) gave new sleek looks to the finished pages. Story lines became more complex and widespread to include more audience interests, such as science fiction (mostly for males), sports, politics, religion, sex, and romance (pulling in more female readers and artists). Thanks to professional computer graphics software, such as Clip Studio Paint, PaintTool SAI, Affinity Photo, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, manga artists (referred to as *manga-ka*) throughout Japan can put in more detail and all sorts of cool effects in less time. Along with the growing market appeal, scores of new artists are coming up with original ideas of their own in hopes of making it big in Japan and worldwide. At the same time, the number of talented female artists has skyrocketed; many of these artists are housewives who saw the opportunity of launching their manga career in drawing manga catering to female readers. This manga is now referred to as *shōjo* (young girl) manga.

Today, many successful artists, such as Fujiko Fujio (*Doraemon*), Matsumoto Leiji (*Starblazers*), Toriyama Akira (*Dragon Ball*), Rumiko Takahashi (*Ranma ½*), Takehiko Inoue (*Slam Dunk*), and Masashi Kishimoto (*Naruto*), have followed in the footsteps of Tezuka to contribute to the lucrative and popular entertainment industry.

## All Manga Is Not Created Equal: Looking at the Different Genres

Just *how* diverse is the manga world? Any major publisher has at least three types of manga magazines catering to different groups of people. Following is a list of the recognized types of manga being published in Japan:

- » **Kodomo manga:** Comics for little kids
- » **Shōnen manga:** Comics for teenage boys
- » **Shōjo manga:** Comics for teenage girls
- » **Seinen manga:** Comics for young adult males
- » **Shōjo-ai manga:** Romantic comics for teenage girls
- » **Shōjo-ai yuri manga:** Romantic comics for lesbians
- » **Shōnen-ai manga:** Romantic comics for men
- » **Seijin manga:** Comics for adult males
- » **Redikomi manga:** Comics written by women for late teen to adult women, depicting more realistic, everyday accounts; literal translation: “lady’s comics”
- » **Dōjinshi manga:** Comics written and illustrated by amateurs (usually circulated among a close group of other manga amateurs)
- » **Yonkoma manga:** Four-panel comics, usually published in newspapers
- » **Ecchi manga:** Comics focusing on heterosexual/lesbian erotic themes (softcore pornography) read by men
- » **Hentai manga:** Comics focusing on hardcore pornography

For those of you who are already seasoned manga fans, some of these genres may be unfamiliar to you because publishers have a tendency to simplify everything into either the boy (shōnen) manga or girl (shōjo) manga category, regardless of the specific subcontents. With the exception of the yonkoma, redisu, and redikomi

manga genres, most of the genres are available in the United States. For the purpose of this book, I base my example characters mostly on the shōnen and shōjo manga genres.

This long list testifies to the immense and diverse popularity, interests, and tastes of Japanese manga readers. As time progresses, no doubt the genre will shift to include other topics.

Looking over this list, you may notice the number of comics that are geared toward the female audience. A large number of girls read comics in Japan, and a large number of publishers specialize in comics geared toward women readers only. (In comparison, the number of females who casually read American comics is, to say the least, small.)

## The Key Components of Manga

You find several key components in most popular manga. For example, weekly magazines are restricted to 19 pages. These titles are designed to quickly satisfy the reader's short attention span, because many readers are busy commuters who don't have time to sit down for hours to read through a long book. Those magazines are eventually compiled into books that can be collected as a multivolume series.



REMEMBER

Not all magazines have those crazy weekly deadlines. Some magazines release their titles on a biweekly or monthly schedule.

Most mainstream manga feature certain archetypes. For example, you'll see the main lead character (who is often androgynous), a sidekick, a single attractive female character (who is either a lover or nurturer), and a wise old man (depending on whether the manga is action oriented). The villains usually have the charmingly evil leader accompanied by his strong henchman.

## Manga versus American Comics

When you pick up and open a manga book for the first time, you're no doubt confused. "Wait a minute," you say, "I'm looking at the end of this book?" Exactly. In Japan, you open and read manga (as well as all books in the country) from right to left and back to front. Reversed reading isn't the only difference between manga and American comics, though. In Table 1-1, I list some additional differences between the two.

TABLE 1-1

## First-Glance Differences between Manga and American Comics

Manga	American Comics
Most manga is printed in black and white (occasionally the first several pages are in color, depending on the success of the title).	Most comics are printed in full color. Comic book retailers often fail to receive black-and-white titles well.
All weekly manga magazines and compiled titles are printed on economical recycled paper.	More and more printers are now using recycled paper. However, until the recent past, elaborate variant issues used high-cost paper for covers and interiors (which attracted retailers and collectors).
Manga is first published in thick weekly or monthly magazines before finally being compiled into a single series of issues.	American publishers publish titles as stand-alone issues. Depending on the sales, the publisher may opt to compile the single issues to form a “graphic novel.”
Most competitive publishers release manga magazines on a weekly basis — deadlines are never, never, <i>neeeeeeever</i> missed. Publishers would never want to upset their 1 million plus regular weekly readers.	American publishers try to release titles on a monthly basis. Occasionally, some titles miss deadlines, upsetting retailers and readers who must order them through distribution catalogues. Best titles average 40,000 to 50,000 copies in monthly sales.
Manga and manga magazines can be bought at newsstands, bookstores, candy shops, gift shops, train stations, and almost anywhere else. If you miss out on those weekly issues, the compiled series (usually 180 pages) appears on your local bookstore shelf, and you can easily order it if you don’t see it.	If you want to find your favorite title selection and it isn’t a superhero title, you have to visit your “local” comic bookstore where they <i>might</i> have it. If they don’t, good luck getting the store to re-order the issue listed in last month’s distribution catalogue. Time to test your luck on eBay.

Besides these at-a-glance differences (like physical look and accessibility), do these two forms of comics have other *big* differences? You may be thinking, comics are comics, right? Not really. Both forms share a sequential format and have a story to tell. However, if you examine not only the national but also the international impact, you definitely find differences.

In the following sections, I compare American comics’ and manga’s demography and distribution.

## Broader readership than American comics

Popular mainstream American comics have traditionally been geared toward children (mostly teenage boys) and collectors. Mention you’re a comic book artist at any social gathering, and you’re guaranteed to get a weird look (especially from the women) that says, “Excuse me, how *old* are you?” Chances are good that the general public doesn’t take your job seriously. Although the genre has expanded (thanks to the independent and manga publishers), comics in America are still

dominated by Marvel, DC, and Image Comics, which still rely upon their superhero titles to survive. At major comic book conventions, these top three publishers usually take center stage among the smaller independent publishers. Smaller publishers put up a good fight to present the readers with their own original, independent titles, but many of them usually last no longer than a few seasons due to either poor management or the harsh market.

In contrast, manga has a wider genre and audience. Being a comic book artist, or *manga-ka*, in Japan is no laughing matter! If you ever visit Japan, you see manga pretty much everywhere you go. For example, if you're riding the subway to work, you commonly see a lot of people (a diverse range in age, sex, and occupation) engrossed in reading their favorite title in the latest manga magazine. From waiting rooms at doctors' offices to small cafés, you're guaranteed to see a stack of these manga magazines. Picture a high school student on their way to school reading the latest *Shōnen Jump* while a business professional next to them in their 40s is totally engrossed in the latest *Business Jump* magazine.

## Availability differences

As I mention in Table 1-1, major differences between American comics and manga are the distribution and availability. Currently, you can find American comics mostly in comic bookstores. Depending on where you live, you may have to drive miles and miles before finally getting to your "local" comic bookstore to buy your favorite book. Then, depending on how large that store is, the selection or choices you see may be very disappointingly limited. Sure, you may see comic titles in the form of graphic novels at major bookstores, but they usually consist of mainstream superhero comics. The space they occupy may be only a shelf or two.

In contrast, the Japanese market for manga grosses a whopping \$4.7 billion a year. For those of you manga fans thinking that the manga market is huge in America, it amounts only to a \$100 million industry. While manga artists and their teams of skilled assistants (ranging from 5 to 15 artists per title) constantly struggle to meet weekly deadlines, the publishers are using their much larger budgets to promote to a large, diverse audience. Unlike American comics, you rarely see manga published in book format without first being serialized in chapters or segments in weekly or monthly manga magazines. Among the many magazines, some claim 1 million readers *per week*.

But that's not the end. After a certain number of publications, the works of manga artists are compiled and sold at bookstores nationwide. Seeing up to one-third of any bookstore's sections devoted to manga titles isn't unusual (compared to maybe a shelf or two in bookstores in the United States). In addition, larger



distributors, such as VIZ Media, Dark Horse Comics, and Kodansha Comics, have contributed to the increased sales of manga and *animé* (Japanese animation) products in the United States.

## The guts and glory: Differences in workload and credit for artists

Many comic book artists and manga-ka go into the market for the love of the sequential art rather than for the money. However, the two have different processes by which they execute their work, and they're glorified in different ways.

If you work for either Marvel or DC Comics, chances are you're under a "work for hire" clause. This clause basically means that you don't own the rights to the artwork, characters, or story. Depending on the terms of your contract, you may own the actual artwork itself (which is why you see artists at conventions displaying the original pages for sale), but you technically don't have permission to reproduce the work or claim the characters you draw as your own creation. Though most large publishers such as Marvel and DC Comics issue royalties to the artists, most of the smaller presses will not offer much more (maybe a certain number of comped copies of the final product.) Many freelance illustrators (me included) cringe at the thought of losing the rights to the work they spend so many hours to complete. But these jobs give artists better chances to get additional work from other publishers. Here, I list some of the main specialized jobs that complete a comic book in America:

- » **Penciler:** This artist lays down the frames and images based upon the script they receive from the writer. Usually, the penciler gets paid the most because their responsibility takes the most time and usually dictates the overall look of the book.
- » **Writer:** The writer is responsible for writing the story of the comic book. They make sure that the story not only flows well from page to page (without cramming too many frames into one page), but also ends within 22 pages, which is the usual comic book page count. Many successful comic book writers have gone on to write their own novels.
- » **Inker:** The inker goes over the pencils and enhances or "interprets" the quality of the line work before sending the illustrations to the colorist. Traditionally, pencil drawings were more difficult to reproduce, so the inkers were in charge of making sure that the lines were clear. However, thanks to rapid scanners being pumped out at increasingly more affordable prices, more and more comic book projects are foregoing the inking process and moving straight to color.

- » **Colorist:** Traditionally, colorists colored the pages by hand. However, again, thanks to powerful technology, colorists all (and I do mean *all*) use graphics software such as Photoshop and Painter to pump out pages at a faster pace while inventing new special effects.
- » **Letterer:** In the past, lettering was a craft that required the special skill of making sure that words were legible and easy to read. The process took care but also cost time and money. Thanks to computers, almost all comic book lettering is now done digitally. Only a few titles still use a specialist to handle such a task.

In the manga world, a manga-ka is expected to do the creating, writing, penciling, and inking (even though they rely on their assistants to help them make the tight deadlines). Coloring isn't a huge factor in the equation because most manga is published in black and white. Although an increasing number of artists work with writers (especially with publishers with monthly or bimonthly deadlines), most published manga stories are each created and illustrated by one person. The publisher types in the lettering inside of the balloons (with the exception of editorial yonkoma manga, which is hand-lettered by the artist to match the simplicity of the art style).

Although the publisher retains the rights to publish the work exclusively, the manga-ka retains the rights to the creation and also receives royalties and overseas exposure. As I mention earlier in this chapter, the publishers also compile the artist's work after a number of magazine appearances. The compilation is in graphic novel form and distributed nationwide. In the end, the manga-ka is forever credited exclusively with their work, as opposed to the American comic book artist who may draw a trademarked Marvel comic book character for their entire career but may never get an iota of credit for its design or creation.

## “Making It” in the Manga World

So how does a Japanese aspiring artist “make it” in the professional manga industry? Typically, an artist starts as an apprentice to a manga professional (referred to as teacher, or *sensei*). After honing their craft under the *sensei*'s wings, the fledgling builds their own works and submits them to the *sensei*'s publisher.

Most manga-ka (such as Rumiko Takahashi) who made it were assistants at some point in their careers. Interestingly enough, you can actually tell who studied under a specific manga-ka by the similarity in style.

Becoming an apprentice isn't the only way of getting into the business in Japan. Some aspiring artists use the direct approach of bringing in and dropping off their work to the publisher — an approach known as *genkō mochikomi*. Artists can also submit their works to a competition sponsored by publishers and judged by a selected group of famous manga-ka. These competitions tend to be more competitive, because judges must choose a winner out of the thousands of works submitted. This competition's winner, however, shines above others as the “chosen one” and receives more publicity. Social media and online self-publishing websites are another effective method upcoming manga artists currently use to get their work out there.

In Chapter 19, I talk about different methods of shopping your portfolio, exposing your work to the public at conventions, and establishing a working network with professional artists. I also introduce digital/social media options you can use to get jump started on getting your manga out in the open. Entering competitions and working with other artists are great ways of opening up opportunities and breaking in, but they don't substitute for the importance of networking at professional gatherings.



- » Collecting the materials you need to get started
- » Discovering how to use the materials
- » Taking care of your investment

## Chapter 2

# Gearing Up and Getting Ready

It's time to lock and load — with art supplies, that is. Manga is so popular that an entire product line is geared specifically toward accommodating the manga artist's (or *manga-ka's*) needs and demands. From inks to paper to pens, most major art stores in Japan have an entire section devoted exclusively to selling manga materials. Thanks to online shopping and the growing demand due to manga-mania, you can easily attain materials today. I personally recommend visiting Wet Paint Art ([www.wetpaintart.com](http://www.wetpaintart.com)) and JetPens ([www.jetpens.com](http://www.jetpens.com).) Both online stores carry an impressive array of manga materials, including major brands that aren't easy to find in the United States. Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) is another great resource for materials, but when it comes to Amazon, you should always be aware of no-name products offered at bargain basement prices — you may end up with something whose quality is less than stellar.

In this chapter, I explain the various types of materials used by manga-ka and how to use and properly maintain them. I also talk about the importance of setting up your studio and environment. After reading this chapter and gathering the necessary gear, you'll be ready to get down to business.

# Looking at the Materials You Need to Get Started

Despite the different brands out there, the various types of pencils and brushes to choose from, and the different sizes of papers on the manga market, the basics you need to start drawing manga are quite simple. All you need is a pencil, pen, eraser, and paper. Pretty simple, eh? That doesn't necessarily mean that you can rely solely on whatever you have in your first-grade pencil case. Sometimes you may need some of those professional-looking materials you see on the market.



REMEMBER

Starting off with the correct paper size is helpful, as is working with materials that a typical manga-ka uses. But although I give advice and information on specific materials that are readily available, don't despair if you can't find every single tool I mention. Many artists have gone on to become successful without using them. However, if you can afford these materials and have access to them, I recommend trying them out to see whether you like working with them. If not, you can always go back to the materials that you're used to working with.

The advantage, of course, of trying out these materials is that comparing and sharing techniques with other manga buddies is easier when everyone is using the same tools. Another reason I recommend looking into some of the materials I highlight is that many of them are manufactured with you, the artist, in mind. For example, although certain cheap and generic inks may be easier to find, they may discolor and smudge easily.

The same thing applies to paper quality. You can't draw or ink on cheap toilet paper and expect to get decent results no matter how good you are. Working with quality materials is important. Although you don't need brushes that are made out of gold, going that extra mile to find and obtain materials that don't cause unnecessary problems doesn't hurt (and it isn't expensive).

In the following sections, I give you more details about various manga supplies.

## Paper (*genkō yōshi*)

If you're drawing manga for the first time, don't worry about the type or size of paper you're using (after all, paper is paper). I don't see anything wrong with using regular photocopy paper to practice your characters. If you're thinking of self-publishing or presenting your works to editors and publishers, consider working with the standard manga paper (referred to as *genkō yōshi*). Printers and editors sometimes expect to see a certain paper size from artists and young prospects. You don't want to submit your best work on, say, a crumpled receipt! If

you're already experienced, seriously consider paper size and paper quality issues. After all, if you draw your manga using paper that's too big, publishers can't fit all the content within the allotted space. As a result, your image runs off the page and gets cut off. Major publishers often provide their artists with company paper to ensure that the size is correct.

A manga-ka uses smaller, thinner paper sizes than the standard American comic book artist. For example, American comic book artists draw on 11-by-17-inch, quality paper known as *smooth Bristol paper*. Although many American comic book artists may opt to buy large sheets of Bristol paper and later measure and cut the sheets down to a specific size (usually to save cost), a manga-ka has their own specific high-quality paper that they can buy precut, measured, and treated for the exclusive purpose of drawing manga. These sheets are B4 size, which measure 180-by-270 mm. Although many companies sell this type of paper, I recommend buying from a Japan-based manufacturer called Deleter (available at [www.jetpens.com](http://www.jetpens.com), where you can also find other awesome manga art supplies). Deleter makes different paper sizes for different purposes and at the same price or cheaper than what you'd pay for a Bristol paper pad.

## PROTECTING YOUR BORDERS

Line frames, known as *borders*, tell you how much of the paper space you can use for your manga images. Artists rely on these boundary lines to contain their drawings and avoid having their work cropped out when it's published. Both American comic book artists and Japanese manga artists incorporate their own standard measurement sizes. You need to be aware of several border measurements, and you should indicate them on your paper even before you pick up your pencil to draw. (If you get the official genkō yōshi, the measurement guides are marked.) Here are the terms you need to know:

- **Safe area:** All images within this area are guaranteed to be printed without any threat of being cropped out.
- **Trim area:** Basically, this area signifies the "end" of the paper. The closer an image runs to the border, the better its chances of being cropped by the printing machine.
- **Bleed (expendable) area:** Cutting machines are imperfect. Sometimes you want to extend an image all the way to the end of the paper, but unfortunately, the cutting machines don't always cut right at the trim line — sometimes they go past the area. Therefore, if your image stops right at the trim line and you want it to go all the way to the edge, it may be cut too short due to the overshoot of the cutting blade. To ensure that the edge of the image doesn't end before the printed image does, use the bleed area. The printing company considers this area expendable. Art must extend past the trim line all the way to the bleed line.

If you're waiting to get your hands on the manga genkō yōshi, using 8-by-10-inch, smooth Bristol paper is perfectly fine, and you can find it at any art store.



TIP

If you decide to stick with the 8-by-10 pad, I recommend getting the Strathmore 300 Series brand. It generally stands the test of time, unlike other, cheaper Bristol paper brands, which bleed. However, even with this type of paper, I find some drafting markers I use still bleed. For this reason, I recommend eventually working with the smoother, lighter manga paper even if you have to go through the hassle of ordering it online. Companies sell these sheets in packets, and the paper is a delight to work on.

## Drawing supplies

Drawing supplies differ depending upon an artist's personal choice. Try different types of pencils, erasers, and inking methods until you find what you like best. The good news is that pencils are generally inexpensive and affordable. If you don't like one, getting another one is cheap.

In this section, I explore different types of pencils and drawing tools that artists commonly use today. If you're just starting out, pick up any pencil, as long as you feel comfortable drawing with it. However, if you're interested in either publishing or showing your work around, consider investing in a variety of pencils and drawing tools.

### Choosing your drawing pencil

Art supply companies sell drawing pencils in different degrees of hardness or softness. Ultimately, rather than just choosing a pencil at any generic stationery store, I recommend going to your local art supply store where you have a large selection. There, you can find pencils with varying degrees of lead hardness and softness. Some brands range from extra hard (5H) to extra soft (8B). You can find the degree of hardness or softness by looking at the ends of the handles.



TIP

I recommend getting at least three different pencils with contrasting levels of hardness to get a “feel” for the different lines you can draw. Beginners should try using leads HB, B, and 2B. Not many pros go past 2H or 2B. The harder the lead is (higher H level), the more accurate your lines are. This accuracy means you can easily erase the lines after you're done inking over them. The trade-off is that you lose a certain degree of feel or sensitivity of the line. Drawing with harder leads also damages the paper if you apply too much pressure. If you're drawing carefully and lightly, this isn't a problem. Most American comic book pencilers opt for harder lead because it facilitates the inker's job of erasing and gives the penciler more accurate lines, which minimizes any misinterpretations during the inking



process. In contrast, the softer the lead (higher B level), the looser and wider the range of line quality. Like the harder leads, softer leads have their own trade-offs. The lines you draw with high B pencils tend to be messier and much harder to erase.



REMEMBER

Unlike the American comic book world, where you may have to worry about inkers misunderstanding your pencil lines, in the manga world, you're responsible for inking your own work (unless you have an assistant), so you don't need to worry about someone misinterpreting your penciled lines.

## Adding a couple mechanical pencils

Take a look at mechanical pencils. They're cheap and easy to use, and you're always guaranteed a sharp point. You can find a lot of fancy brands on the market, but you don't need to shell out big bucks to get one that works. Make sure you get lead of the right size to go with your mechanical pencil. Most mechanical pencils come in 0.5 mm standard size. To refill them, pop open the cap and load the lead. In addition to the 0.5 mm lead size, the mechanical pencils come in sizes 0.3 mm, 0.7 mm, and 0.9 mm (the thickest). With a thicker mechanical pencil, you have more choices of lead softness because thinner leads are more brittle and break too easily if the lead is too soft.



TIP

If you are a manga artist already working with a different inker, consider penciling your artwork with light blue colored leads (also commonly known as *non-photo repro blue*, which doesn't show up when scanning the final artwork to be digitally printed). (The art material supply company, Pentel sells a variety of color leads at their website <https://www.pentel.com/>.)

## If money's no object: Lead holders

Lead holders are another alternative to pencils, but they're pricier than mechanical pencils because you also need a barrel-shaped sharpener. Like the mechanical pencil, you load or refill the lead by removing the end cap and inserting the lead from the top. After you replace the end cap, press down on it while holding the pencil right-side up. This causes the metal contraption at the front opening of the pencil to release the lead. The advantage of using a lead holder is that you can get a very fine line detail when you need it. The leads come in a package of a dozen with a wide range of softness and hardness.

## French curves

These plastic transparent templates have edges that are molded into various shaped curves. They come in a set of three different sizes; handle them carefully as they tend to break and scratch easily.

## Templates

*Templates* — semitransparent plastic sheets with various cutout shapes — are great for drawing geometric objects that are difficult to draw freehand.

## Screentones

Screentones are thin adhesive acetate sheets consisting of a wide range of design patterns. The most common types used by manga-ka are gray-scale patterns and speed lines. Manga artists use craft hobby knives to cut out the size selection from the adhesive pattern sheet and attach the cut-out portion to the manga artwork to produce an array of special effects. While digital software programs such as Clip Studio Paint and Photoshop have simplified the process, many traditional manga artists implement this material still to this day.

## Inking materials

You have many options to consider when selecting your inking materials. My advice to beginners is to try out as many as you can and see which ones work the best. Be patient with this process, and don't be afraid to experiment with different techniques. I always tell my students that I'm much happier seeing them take risks rather than just attempting to get good grades. Try different inking techniques even if it means not always getting the desired results.

## Markers

Artist's markers are useful when you want to draw mechanical objects, border frames, and small details. The ones I like to use are the Staedtler Pigment Liner and the more popular Sakura Microns. Either brand is excellent for starters. Like pencil leads, markers come in various thicknesses. They range from as thin as 0.1 mm to as thick as 0.8 mm. Although they're fairly expensive compared to cheap kid's markers, they're certainly worth every cent. Three sizes I recommend for starters are 0.3, 0.5, and 0.8 mm.



TIP

Be careful if you use low-grade markers that aren't waterproof — they fade and discolor over time. Cost is a huge factor for my beginning students when they're purchasing quality markers. Although they're not ideal for inking smaller details, I recommend getting Sharpie or Bic permanent markers. Both are waterproof, cheap, and widely used among American comic book artists to sometimes ink frames around the images. To ensure as much longevity as possible, always remember to put the cap back on the marker when you're not using it and store them tip side down when not planning on using them for a long period of time.

The advantage of using markers is that they're fast and easy to use. If you want a wider range of thickness, certain brands have brush pens that work just like markers but have a brush-like, flexible tip. The disadvantage to using these markers is that they tend to fade after erasing the pencil marks underneath. The life span of calligraphy brush pens isn't that great, either. Most markers (except for the more expensive synthetic brush pens) wear down fairly quickly, depending upon the amount of usage. Therefore, I recommend choosing another inking tool to supplement the markers.

## Brushes

Despite popular use by American comic artists, a typical manga-ka doesn't use much brushwork in their work (maybe due to the smaller size of paper — see “Paper [genkō yōshi]” earlier in this chapter for details on paper size). Manga studios are more likely to rely on pen nibs to get the work done (as I discuss in the next section). However, several brushes in varying sizes are worth mentioning. Sable brushes make excellent lines. Good ones can be expensive, but they last longer than markers when you properly clean and maintain them. In addition, you get more expressive and diverse line work with brushes. To ensure longevity, always wash them with soap under warm water and store them upside down to prevent any debris from getting into the base where the hairs of the brush meet with the cylindrical, metal part of the brush (known as the *feral*). One way to store them is to tape the brushes to a slanted drawing table.

Over the past years, calligraphy markers/synthetic hairbrush markers continue to improve in quality and convenience. Companies such as Kuretakei (my favorite go-to) make high quality affordable brush pens that use replaceable ink cartridges housed inside the pen handles. This saves artists time from having to dip their traditional brushes into the ink well every other stroke they make on their artwork.



TIP

Many artists favor Windsor Newton's flagship brush, Series 7. Because these brushes are rather expensive, start with the most widely used size, the number 2.

In addition to brushes for inks, I advise getting a couple thin brushes for correcting mistakes with the white manga correction fluid only.



REMEMBER

Never use your art brush for applying the white correction fluid you find in regular office stationery stores.

## Nibs

A *nib* resembles a sharp pointed dart when fitted into its nib holder and is the heart and soul of inking in today's manga world. Companies such as Zebra, Nikko,

Tachikawa, and Deleter have created and marketed many nibs exclusively for manga inking. When you use a brush, the quality and length of the hair strands determine the thickness of the stroke, but a nib has the flexibility of two metallic sharp prongs, which pinch tightly together. Dip the nib in ink, and it stores and dispenses the ink from between the two tightly compressed metal tips. By transferring the pressure from your hand to the tip of the pen, you control the thinness or thickness of the line.



REMEMBER

The difference from one pen nib to another is the flexibility of the two prongs. The softer the metal is, the easier it is to draw wider lines. When you have harder, more resistant metal, you get thinner, more tightly controlled lines.

Although nibs may be difficult to find at your local art store (depending upon its size and location), you should have no problem finding and ordering them online. I recommend starting off with the G-Pen. It's the most popular nib used among pros and amateurs because its metal is well balanced and allows artists to draw both wide and narrow lines with equal flexibility.

Following are the most common nibs used in manga:

- » G-Pen (most widely used)
- » Maru (Circle) Pen
- » Spoon Pen
- » Kabura Pen
- » School Pen



REMEMBER

Don't forget to get the nib holder that corresponds to the nib. Not all holders accommodate all nibs. Make sure you check for the matching size.

## Inks

As I mention earlier in this chapter, using waterproof ink is imperative. My personal favorite is the Japanese Kuretake Sumi Ink (green bottle). It's not only waterproof, but it also delivers excellent deep blacks and has a nice texture. If you visit the JetPens online store ([www.jetpens.com](http://www.jetpens.com)), you'll see plenty of other choices marketed as "manga ink," which are also waterproof. If you're on a tighter budget, I recommend getting the Higgins India Ink, which is the popular waterproof ink used by American comic book artists.

## Miscellaneous items

Following are other types of tools you should have in your manga arsenal. You can find these items in most art stores or even a grocery store:

- » Kneaded eraser (soft putty-like pliable material eraser that can be used to blend, soften, and delete pencil/charcoal lines. What I love most about this is that it leaves no eraser dust behind after erasing my mistakes on the paper and you can also shape the eraser into any form that comfortably fits your finger grip.)
- » Plastic eraser (hard edged rubber/vinyl eraser that is ideal for erasing dark pencil lines. It is also ideal for erasing smaller sections of my artwork.)
- » Paper towels (for cleaning any ink spills)
- » Rulers (triangle and straight edge)
- » Plastic or Styrofoam cup (for rinsing brushes)
- » Thumbtacks (for securing your ruler or French curve)
- » White correction fluid (for correcting ink mistakes)

## THE DIGITAL MANGA WORLD

Ready for a shocker? What if I tell you almost all younger generation manga-ka artists in Japan rarely use the materials that I list in this chapter? Advances in digital technology now allow software programs such as Clip Studio Paint, Photoshop, and ProCreate to create professional looking (and amazing!) manga artwork from scratch to finish using digital art tools that are supplied with the software. All you need in addition to your software of choice (mine is Clip Studio Paint — [www.clipstudiopaint.com](http://www.clipstudiopaint.com)) is a laptop/computer and a digital pen display tablet. I use a 24-inch-high-definition digital pen display tablet by Wacom ([www.wacom.com](http://www.wacom.com)) which connects to my laptop. My pen display tablet includes a pressure-sensitive digital stylus, which I use to select my favorite ink brushes, nibs, and pencils. (I can select various watercolors, oils, pastels, and charcoal sticks.) Buying the equipment can be pricey, so if you don't already own a computer or have budget constraints consider saving up for the future. Working digitally also has many productivity advantages over traditional methods of manga drawing including:

- **Easier edits:** You don't need messy correction fluid or have to deal with eraser dust when making changes to your artwork.

*(continued)*

(continued)

- **Faster execution:** All the software programs I list allow you to work in digital layers (think tracing paper). Artists can use a layer that has their rough sketches to create a finished inked artwork on a separate layer above.
- **Exposure:** No need to digitally scan large art originals on that small flatbed scanner before sharing them with friends, clients, or social media. With a click of a button, your creation is ready to be viewed.
- **Smarter storage:** Tight on studio space? Digitally stored artwork doesn't cramp your style with storage boxes filled with your art originals. Not to mention, it's so much easier to store and organize files on your computer's hard drive.

## Setting Up Your Studio

When you have the materials you need, set up a proper environment so that you can work productively. The basics of setting up a place to work in the beginning are quite simple. You need a chair, a table to draw on, and a light source bright enough that you don't strain your eyes. It's actually that simple.

"Okay," you say, "So what's the catch?" I'm glad you asked; the catch is that the place you choose to work needs to be a place where you can be productive without everyday distractions. This task is actually a lot more challenging than you may imagine. Small distractions add up and can throw an artist off focus. So, from time to time, take a walk or temporarily change working locations. Speaking from my own experience, you need to try different places because everyone has different working habits. For example, I enjoy occasionally working while drinking a latte at my local coffee shop, but some of my colleagues need complete solitude in order to work effectively.

### Finding a quiet place to draw

Although no single right solution works for everybody, try to identify some distractions that prevent you from concentrating on your work. For example, do you have chatty friends who keep calling your smart phone? If so, set the phone to silent mode when you work and let your voice mail pick up. Does your neighbor blast the radio so loud that you can hear it all the way across the street? I usually wear ear plugs or listen to my favorite podcast to combat this problem. How about any siblings or roommates who watch their favorite streaming shows or play

video games all the time in the same room you draw? Move to a different room with a door or designate a quiet time when the TV stays off. Bottom line: Be proactive in getting the most out of your working environment. You may find the best place for you to work is as simple as the kitchen table or the coffee table in your living room.



TIP

When looking around for a good place to work, keep track of your time to see how much you can accomplish in 30 minutes without having to stand up or leave your drawing table. Are you able to do it? Good! Next, try to work for 45 minutes and then for a full hour. This exercise helps you to gauge your work productivity.

## Using the right equipment

As I mention at the beginning of this section, all you really need to start your first manga studio is a drawing table, a comfortable chair, and a lamp. You don't have to have several thousand dollars' worth of equipment for your studio to be an effective working environment from the start. My first setup was a ping-pong table, an old toddler's bar stool, and a 15-year-old lamp.



TIP

If you plan on working for more than an hour, I recommend getting a good lamp that reduces strain on (and ultimately prevents damage to) your eyes. There are many LED lamps equipped with camera mounts to position your smartphones to record live drawing sessions on your social media channel such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Even better, there are now LED studio lights specifically made for artists working in low light conditions that allow artists to adjust the warmth (temperature) of the light to emulate closer to the natural outdoor daylight.

Personally, I have always used a studio arm lamp that has a circular florescent light with a warmer LED standard bulb at the center. When both are turned on simultaneously, the cool temperature of the florescent light matches well with the warmer temperature of the LED bulb. If you're on a budget, consider trying the LED lamp with temperature control as they are about a half the cost of the florescent/LED lamp that I own.

Wanna hear my guilty evening pleasure? When I'm working nights at my digital tablet, I turn off my studio lights and turn on my LED strip lights that I have attached to the backside of my workstation table. By changing the colors of the lights depending on my mood, it helps me zone in on my work and shut out any distractions around my house. It's very inexpensive and easy to apply. Try it out!

You should also take a moment from time to time to stand up and stretch your body. Some chairs come with adjustable height levels so your neck doesn't strain from supporting the weight of your head leaning over the artwork. In the next section, I give you some advice on upgrading your work equipment if you plan on working for an extended period of time.

## Upgrading your basic studio

If you ever decide that you want to upgrade from the basic table, chair, and lamp, the following list can help you decide what you need:

- » **Drafting table:** Your drafting table should be slightly tilted toward you, which minimizes the strain on your back and neck from your head weight. Back pain occurs when you constantly bend too far forward over your work. Aside from the ergonomic issue, a tilted table can improve your work. Having your work more or less parallel to your body minimizes the amount of distortion perceived by your eye. You should also get a side tray to hold your pencils, brushes, inks, and nibs. (See “Looking at the Materials You Need to Get Started” earlier in this chapter for more info.) Your side tray should be sturdy and have enough compartments to accommodate your wide range of materials. Because your table is on an incline, your tools slide off if you don't have this tray.
- » **Lights:** Lights are an essential tool in reducing the strain on your eyes. Working long hours without proper lighting can hurt your vision. If you're drawing for long hours on an everyday basis, I recommend getting clamp lights that have a socket for a regular bulb in addition to a separate socket for a halogen tube. When you simultaneously switch both lights on, you get a natural-looking light color that looks like the outside, natural daylight. Although these lights aren't cheap, my eyes are less strained after gazing at my work for a long period of time.
- » **Chair:** Choose a solid ergonomic studio chair for your workspace if you find yourself sitting at your drawing table for more than an hour at a time. Make sure you get a chance to sit in and try out a chair before you buy one. (You should visit different art stores and try out several chairs before making a decision.) You'll potentially be sitting in this chair for a very long time, so make sure you get adequate cushion and back support. Your drafting chair should come with a lever to adjust its height, and it should give your feet the option of touching the ground for support. Finally, should you need to stretch your back or move away from your drafting table, the back section of the chair should tilt, and the legs should have ball bearing coasters that enable you to move around without having to get up.



- » **Side table:** Your side table can be anything that's stable that you can use to place extra stuff on that can't stay on the drawing table. Actually, it doesn't even need to be a table. It can be your dresser, a mini-bookshelf, or even a trunk or case that happens to be lying close to your drawing table. If it has a place in which you can store additional items, that's an even bigger plus! In my case, I keep my oil painting materials for my illustration work in my side table. On the top, I have my most treasured equipment of all — my coffee maker!
- » **Light tablet:** This item comes in handy when I need to copy or transfer a drawing from one paper to another. This thin USB-powered tablet has a milky plastic surface, where I place my original drawings. On top of the original, I place the paper onto which I want to transfer the drawing. When I switch on the power, a bright LED light shines through both sheets of paper and reveals the original image. Using the image as my guide, I trace over the lines to get an accurate reproduction. As I demonstrate in Chapter 16, I use a light box to transfer my thumbnail sketches to my final manga drawing paper.



REMEMBER

You don't need to get everything at once, but if you're serious about drawing manga, this equipment may improve not only your working environment but also your final product.



- » Becoming familiar with basic drawing tools
- » Discovering basic drawing techniques
- » Trying out different types of lines and shading

## Chapter 3

# Drawing: Starting with the Basics

**A**fter you gather all the tools you need (take a look at Chapter 2 for more info), it's time to use them. In this chapter, I demonstrate how different types of inking and drawing materials produce different types of lines. You can use these techniques and tools when you begin drawing your manga characters.

**Note:** As you go through the exercises in this chapter, you may find that some materials work better for you than others. That's okay. Finding the tools you like is similar to trying on different shoes to find a pair that fits comfortably. But don't return materials or get rid of them just because they don't work for you at first. Be patient; some of these tools take some getting used to.

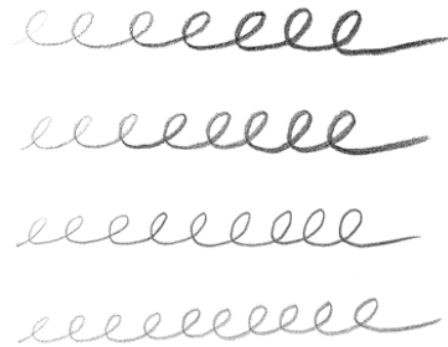
## Making Your First Moves with the Pencil

Making a series of scribbles is a good way to get used to using your pencils. When selecting a pencil's hardness, look for something that glides comfortably on the paper. If you're going to be at your drawing table for a long period of time, you want to make sure your hand doesn't cramp up, so a comfortable glide is especially important. In this section, I show you several simple exercises you can do to loosen up.

For the first simple exercise, follow these directions:

**Create a series of swirls using different types of pencils, as shown in Figure 3-1.**

Explore the various types of line quality (thinness versus thickness) you create when you apply pressure to the strokes. In Figure 3-1, I use a 3H lead to get lighter, thinner strokes and gradually switch to a softer 4B lead to achieve the darker, wider strokes that are typically created with softer leads.



**FIGURE 3-1:** Warming up by drawing loose swirls using different types of leads.



**TIP**

You'll notice pros and cons to using harder versus softer leads. Although harder leads take time to get used to because their lines are so light, you get more control of details, and you can more easily erase the final lines after inking over them. Unfortunately, you also scratch the paper if you press down too hard. Softer leads produce darker, thicker lines, but they can get a bit messy, and you have more difficulty erasing them. I recommend trying both extremes just to get a feel for what you can do.

When you're ready, move on to the next exercise:

**Draw a small circle and then use it as your center core as you continue to draw slightly larger circles around it, as shown in Figure 3-2.**

Don't rush through this one. Take your time, making sure that you're making the circles as round and symmetrical as possible as you build up the series of "rings" to form a large circle.

Finish warming up with the last exercise in this section:

**Use your wrist as a *fulcrum* (the point of support) to create a series of rapid zig-zag shading marks, increasing the pressure gradually from soft to hard, as shown in Figure 3-3.**

**FIGURE 3-2:**  
Warming up by  
drawing circular  
“ring” marks  
around a  
smaller circle.



6B



4B



2B



HB

**FIGURE 3-3:**  
Loosening the  
wrist using a  
rapid back and  
forth motion.



TIP

The key is to keep your wrist loose through this exercise. You should experience a “flicking of the wrist” motion as you rapidly go from left to right. As the pressure you put on the pencil gets harder, you find the shades get darker (depending on which pencil level you choose, you may get less or more depth of contrast).



REMEMBER

Nothing is more refreshing than shaking your wrist from time to time during long drawing sessions. Too much pressure building up on your fingers and wrist from holding the pencil tightly for a long period of time can result in pain and pinched nerves. Refer to Chapter 2 for more ergonomic tips for working comfortably and effectively at your drafting table.

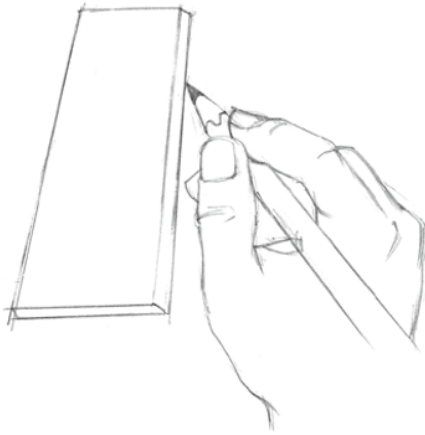
## Using Your Ruler

A ruler appears to be a simple, straight, plastic bar, but you’ll find no limit to its importance in creating cool effects. Make sure you have a transparent ruler for these exercises. Here are some tips to using the ruler effectively:

- » Make sure the pencil point rests securely against the edge of the ruler when you’re drawing straight lines, as shown in Figure 3-4.

- » As shown on the left in Figure 3-5, ink tends to seep underneath the ruler when you use it right side up. Flipping the ruler upside down solves this problem, as shown on the right in Figure 3-5.

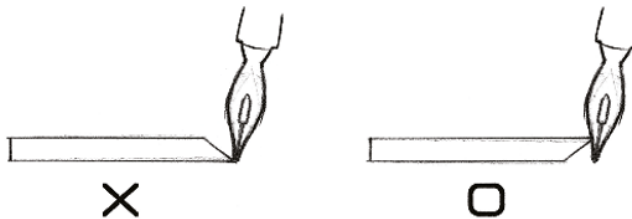
**FIGURE 3-4:** Make sure the tip of the pencil rests securely against the edge of the ruler.



**TIP**

Some rulers come with a beveled edge so that the ink doesn't bleed underneath. If you can, shell out a few extra bucks and invest in a nice one. If you're using pen nibs or quills, make sure to wipe the ruler clean with a tissue or rag after every couple of lines you ink, or the collected ink will drip down and bleed on the paper.

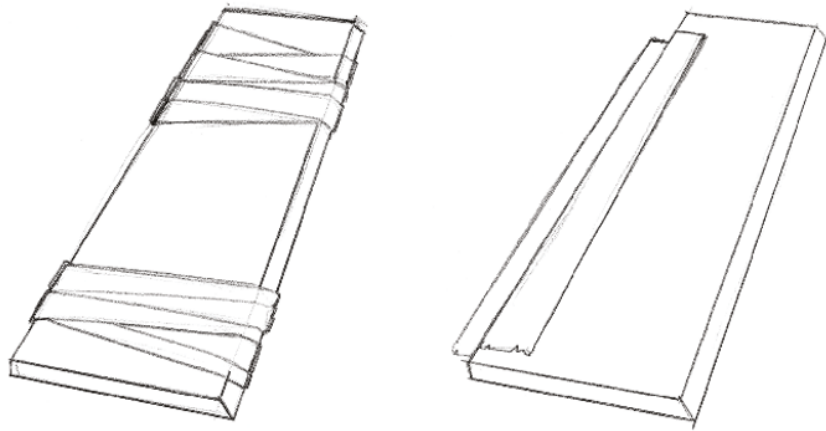
**FIGURE 3-5:** Avoid ink seeping under your ruler by flipping it upside down.



**TIP**

- » If you find your ruler slipping while you use it, wrap a small rubber band on both sides of the ruler to prevent it from sliding under pressure (as shown on the left in Figure 3-6) or use paper-safe tape to secure the ruler to the paper without damaging the drawing underneath (as shown on the right in Figure 3-6).

**FIGURE 3-6:**  
Some helpful  
tips to prevent  
the ruler  
from slipping.



## Drawing and inking basic straight lines

Now, try your hand at the following exercise:

1. **With a pencil, draw a series of lines equidistant from each other while going from right to left (as shown on the left in Figure 3-7).**  
Don't rush through this one — try to be as accurate as possible.
2. **Draw another series of lines, slightly increasing the distance between them (as shown in the center of Figure 3-7).**
3. **Draw another set of lines, alternating between the narrower and wider gaps between the lines (as shown on the right in Figure 3-7).**



**FIGURE 3-7:**  
Drawing lines  
for practice.

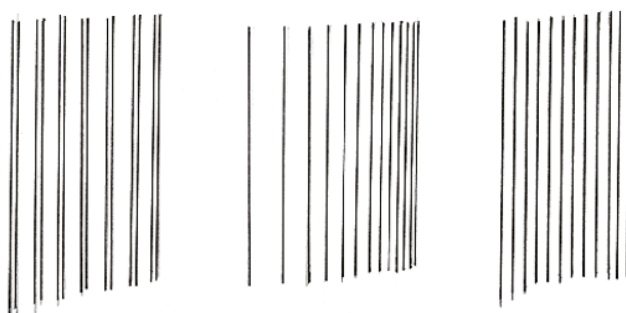
4. **Practice your inking by going over the pencil lines with a 0.5 mm marker while keeping the distance between the lines accurate. (See Figure 3-8.)**

Don't forget to flip over the ruler. (You don't want to let any of the ink seep underneath the ruler and create smudges between the lines.)



TIP

The width of your pencil lines may not perfectly match the thickness of your markers. That's normal — the objective of inking is getting used to seeing the pencil lines as guides rather than becoming obsessed with tracing over them perfectly. Your challenge is to stick to your pencil lines as closely as possible. However, if the difference is so extreme that your ink lines begin to overlap the neighboring pencil lines, consider switching to a thinner marker.



**FIGURE 3-8:**  
Inking over your  
pencil lines.

As you become used to inking over your own drawings, you may find that you don't need to put so much detail or work into your pencil drawings because you know how to ink them in the final product.

## Inking from thick to thin

In this section, you get to try your hand at using the popular *G-Pen* (the widely used inking pen nib in the manga-ka industry). As I mention in Chapter 2, Deleter, Nikko, Tachikawa, and Zebra are among the big company suppliers of this pen nib. (If you're looking for an American comic inking pen nib substitute, check out the Hunts 102.)

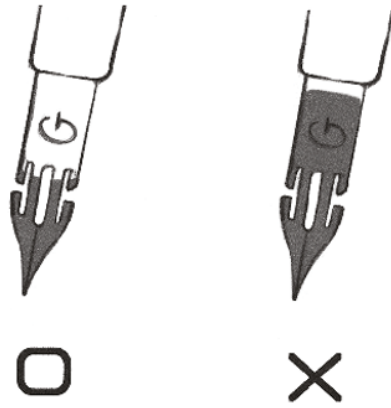
The image on the left in Figure 3-9 shows how you “feed” ink into the pen nib by dipping the tip into an ink jar. Try not to get too much ink (see the image on the right in Figure 3-9) into the pen nib; if you do, the excess spills over onto the paper. To get rid of the excess ink, simply tap the sides of the pen nib against the inside of the ink bottle opening.



TIP

Unlike a marker, the *G-Pen* can take some time getting used to, because its metallic tip doesn't glide as smoothly across the paper. Some of the paper bits get wedged between the two-pointed prongs. To get them out, gently press and drag the pen tip against a smooth, hard surface to separate the two prongs and release the paper.



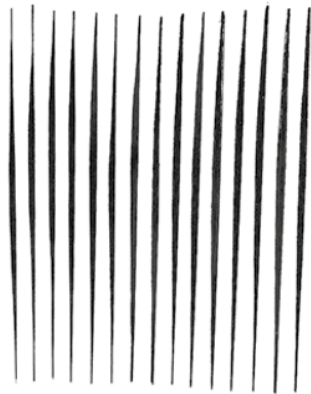


**FIGURE 3-9:**  
“Feeding”  
your pen.

Try the following to get familiar with inking:

**Starting from the top and going down, draw a series of equidistant lines going from thin to thick to thin (as shown in Figure 3-10).**

Remember to flip the ruler upside down.



**FIGURE 3-10:**  
Using the G-Pen  
nib to draw  
thin-to-thick-to-  
thin lines.



**TIP**

Start off by applying very little pressure to the pen holder, using the weight of your index finger. These pen nibs make great, crisp lines by merely touching the surface of the paper. The key to getting solid control of the lines’ thickness or thinness is to apply gradual pressure from your index finger over the pen holder. For thicker lines, let the weight of your hand transfer to the pen holder. Don’t use your body weight or force pressure onto the pen holder — you’ll damage or shorten the life span of the pen nib.



WARNING

These pen nibs are *very* sharp and can easily puncture your skin with little force. Be careful using this tool (especially when little children are around). The pen nibs are small and can be a choking hazard to children and pets.

## Splattering

Rulers aren't just for drawing. You can use the edge of a ruler to create what's called a "splattering" effect with a brush. This technique works with either white ink or regular black ink. If the white ink is dry, you can revive the solution by adding water and letting it sit before stirring it up. (You can't revive the black ink because it's waterproof after it dries.) To create the splattering effect, follow these steps:

- 1. Dip a stiff brush into the ink, as shown in Figure 3-11.**

If you don't have a brush handy, an old toothbrush is okay to use.



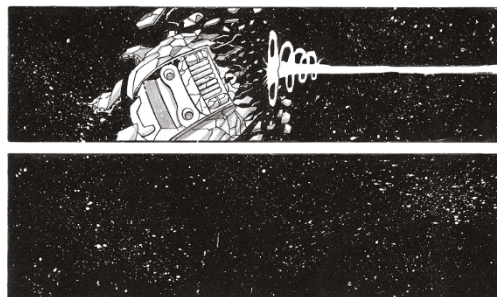
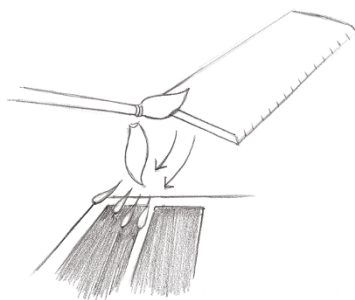
**FIGURE 3-11:**  
Dipping a brush  
into black or  
white ink.

- 2. Hold the edge of the ruler over the specified area and let the brush flick over the edge, creating a splatter over your work (see Figure 3-12).**

On the left in Figure 3-12, I show the flicking motion of the brush against the ruler. If you're using a toothbrush, you can also use your thumb. (I show the result of my actions on the right in Figure 3-12.)

This technique works best on contrasting values (black ink on a white background or white ink on a black background). In Figure 3-12, I use the white ink splattering technique on a black panel to create a star constellation effect. You can use the black splattering technique to show blood splattering or dirt being kicked around.

**FIGURE 3-12:**  
Splattering a  
black panel to  
create the start  
of a galaxy.



TIP

The trick to getting this technique right is angling the edge of the ruler slightly away from the paper (toward you). I recommend practicing this technique on different paper before trying it on your original work.

## Creating Patterns

Just like an athlete warming up with a series of stretching exercises, a *manga-ka* (or manga artist) also has a series of standard drills. These drills are fun because you can use any tool to do them at any time.

In this section, I show some drills for creating different types of hatchings and line work. For beginners, I recommend starting with either a pencil or a fine (0.3 mm or 0.5 mm) marker. Later on, as you become more comfortable drawing lines with the pen nib, you can use that as well.



TIP

When you're really advanced, check out some of the excellent manga graphics software. You can use this software to digitally paste in some cool pattern effects and other designs for your backgrounds. The software also includes different shades and tones, which you can use to give your characters shadow, ethnicity, and personality. Although getting used to these tools may take time, they can save you a lot of time, frustration, and money down the road.

## Trailing pattern

Try your hand at following these instructions to create a trailing pattern. This manga technique is known as *Nawa-ami*:

1. **Draw five small, short, parallel, equidistant lines, as shown in Figure 3-13.**

2. **From each line, draw another line, creating another series of segments in an alternate direction. Repeat, changing directions again.**

On the left in Figure 3-14, I keep the angles rather narrow so that the overall weaving pattern curves smoothly. On the right in Figure 3-14, I switch the direction of patterns.



**FIGURE 3-13:**  
Starting off the  
weaving pattern  
with parallel lines.



**FIGURE 3-14:**  
Alternating the  
direction of lines  
to complete  
the overall  
weaving pattern.

## Half-tone patterns

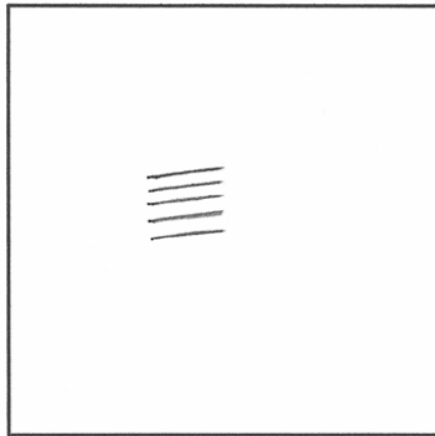
A manga-ka often uses half-tone patterns (or modified variations of them) in their background as an alternative for a solid black background. Because manga is printed in black and white, manga-ka have come up with creative ways of representing a wide range of in-between shades, known as *half-tones*.

## Drawing hito-keta (one-digit) half-tone patterns

Hito-keta is a shading technique used to darken in shadows and backgrounds. It's clean, fun, and relatively easy to create. Its direct translation is "one digit," and it's lighter than the futa-keta (two-digit) half-tone pattern. (See the next section.)

To master the technique, start with these steps:

1. Draw a 3-by-3-inch manga frame (referred to as *koma*).
2. Start from the center of your koma and draw five to seven small, short, parallel, equidistant lines, as shown in Figure 3-15.

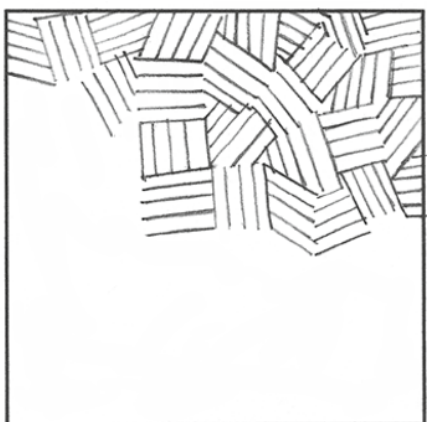


**FIGURE 3-15:**  
Starting the  
hito-keta pattern.

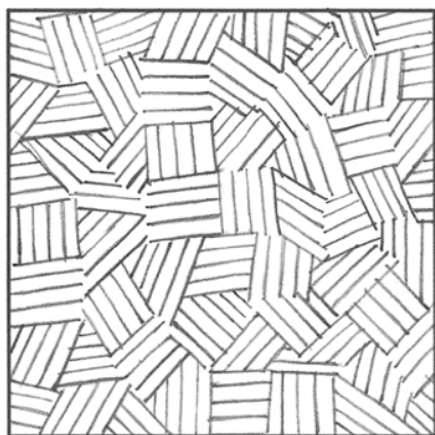
3. Add another set of five to seven lines perpendicular to the first set, and then repeat, as shown in Figure 3-16.

As you follow the instruction to repeat Step 3, keep adding more sets of lines randomly — just make sure each set is physically attached to the set of lines you drew previously, and fill any empty gaps. (See Figure 3-17.)

The lines aren't all the same length because you have to fill all white spaces. These patterns continue on until your entire koma is filled. Some of the lines may fall perpendicularly, while others simply exist to fill a gap.



**FIGURE 3-16:**  
Adding the next  
sets of lines to  
the hito-keta  
pattern.



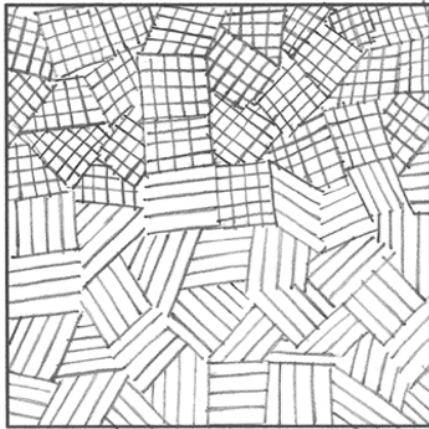
**FIGURE 3-17:**  
Completing  
the rest of the  
hito-keta pattern.

## Going a bit darker with futa-keta (two-digit) half-tone patterns

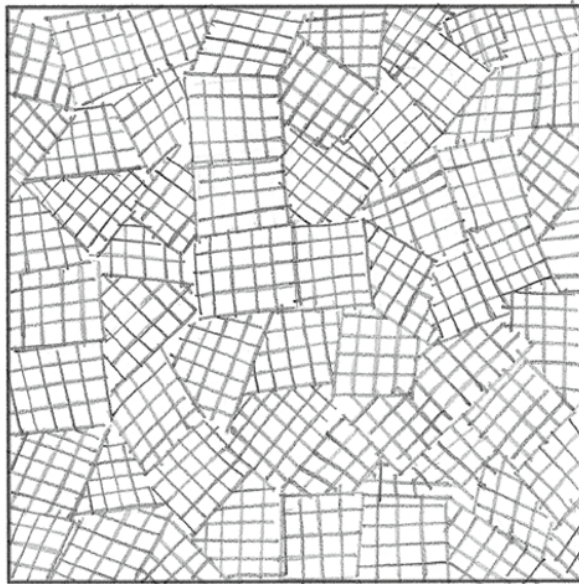
If you want to go a shade darker than the hito-keta pattern, you don't have to start all over again. Instead, take the completed hito-keta pattern (see the previous section) and apply the *futa-keta* concept by following these steps:

- 1. For every set of parallel lines, add the same number of lines crossing over perpendicularly. (See Figure 3-18.)**  
By adding this second set of lines, your overall pattern is darker.
- 2. Continue to repeat, adding the lines throughout the rest of the patterns to get a darker background, as shown in Figure 3-19.**

**FIGURE 3-18:**  
Starting the  
futa-keta based  
upon the  
hito-keta pattern.



**FIGURE 3-19:**  
Completing the  
futa-keta pattern.



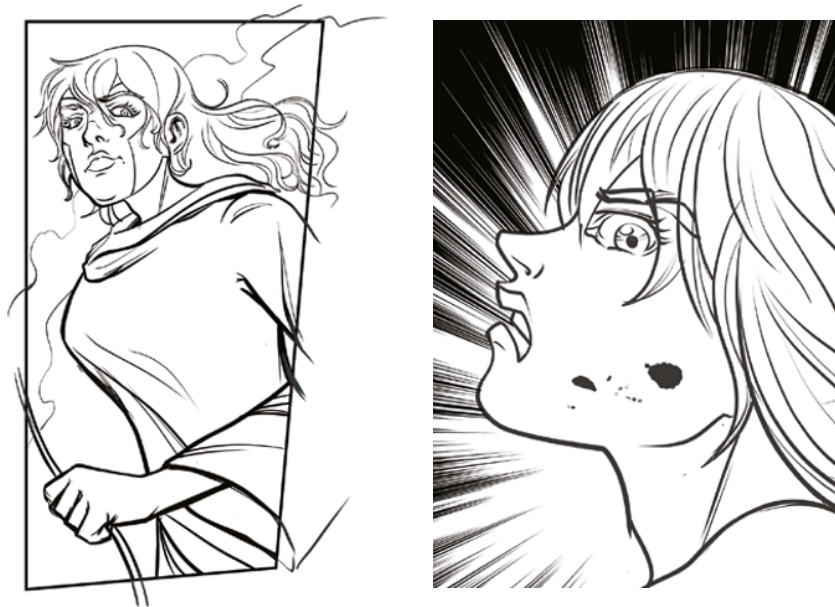
## Fixing Mistakes

Every professional or amateur manga-ka makes mistakes — it comes with the territory of being human. For every wrong line or ink spill, you can usually find a solution to fix it. As you get used to using your tools, you learn to minimize the careless mistakes and deal with the unavoidable accidents. Regardless of the kind of mistake, don't fret or panic when you make it. In this section, I introduce some techniques for correcting common mistakes.

## Brushing it out

As I mention in Chapter 2, you should have two thin brushes set aside for just correcting mistakes. Don't use the same brushes for inking purposes because the ink can come off the brush and create a mess in the white correction fluid jar. The advantage of using a brush to correct your mistakes is that you have excellent control over where you want to apply the white correction fluid.

The most common lines that you need to erase are the lines that overextend the *koma* (manga frame borders) — see the image on the left in Figure 3-20. The image on the right in Figure 3-20 shows an example of ink smudges or splotches, which are also frequent occurrences. You can easily fix mistakes by dipping your brush into white correction solution and thinly applying it to the desired area. Figure 3-21 shows how the images should look when the *koma* and smudges have been corrected.



**FIGURE 3-20:**  
Just a few  
examples among  
many typical  
inking mistakes.



**TIP**

In reality, I find the lines sometimes *do* end up showing through the correction fluid despite the “bleed-proof” label. In such cases, simply wait until the solution dries before applying another thin coat.



**WARNING**

Some correction fluids are *not* waterproof. If you go over non-waterproof correction fluid with ink, you may smear the applied correction. If this happens, use either the pen nib or brush-based office correction fluid that I mention in Chapter 2.



**FIGURE 3-21:**  
Inking mistakes  
corrected  
with white  
correction fluid.



**TIP**

Although you may run into difficulty at art stores (even the larger chain stores), try to get the waterproof correction fluid to begin with. The one I use is manufactured by Deleter. It's great because you can smoothly ink right on top of your corrected mistakes.

## Cut'n paste!

Sometimes you need to redraw an entire frame. Because applying correction fluid takes time (and looks messy when you apply it excessively to any certain area), you may want to consider replacing it with a freshly redrawn frame. Follow these steps to cut and replace an image:

1. **Place the original image over your light tablet (see Chapter 2 for details on the light tablet) and draw the corrected image that will replace it.**

When drawing the replacement image (like the one in Figure 3-22), make sure you draw the image right up to the border of the koma. Don't draw the border itself.

2. **Cut out the replacement image with a blade and ruler.**

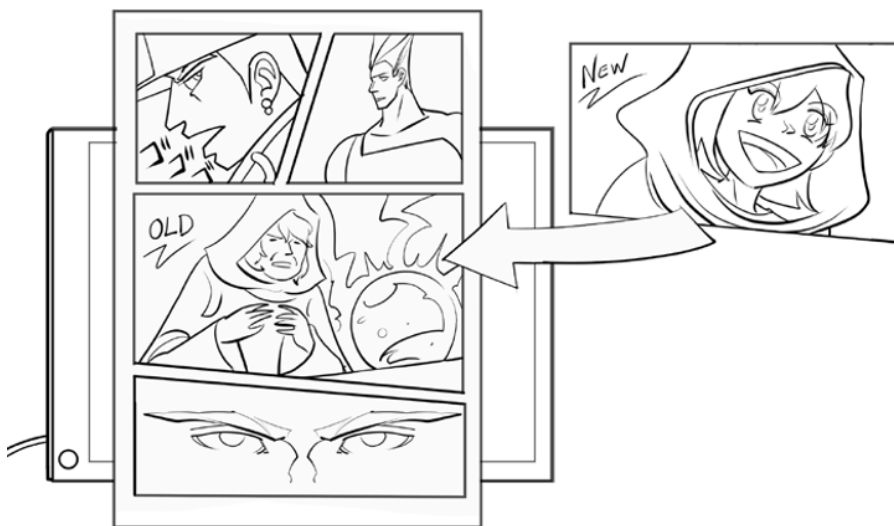
Don't forget to place a cutting mat underneath the image you're cutting out. Blades can damage the surface of your drafting table. If you don't have a cutting mat available, a thick piece of cardboard will do just fine.



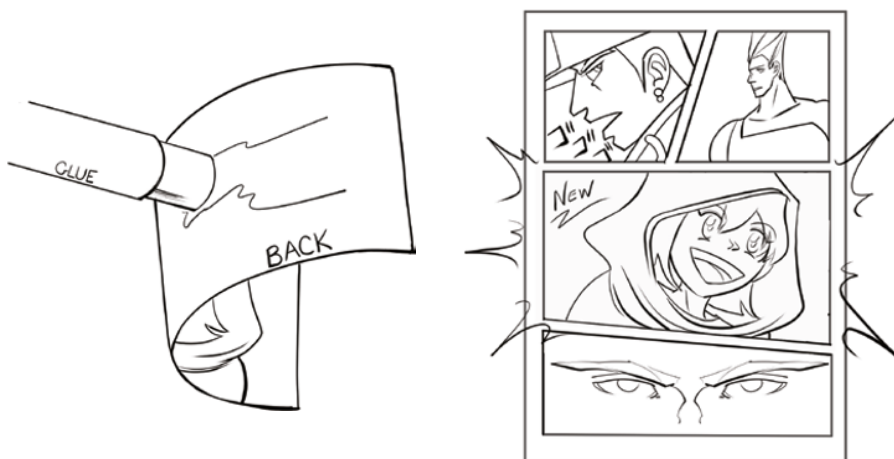
**REMEMBER**

3. **Use tape or stick glue on the back of the replacement paper to cover the original image. (See the top and bottom images in Figure 3-23.)**

**FIGURE 3-22:**  
Drawing the  
image to be used  
as a replacement.



**FIGURE 3-23:**  
Applying stick  
glue to the back  
of the replace-  
ment image and  
covering the  
original artwork.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

This is where a digital manga software such as Clip Studio Paint becomes a game changer when correcting your artwork. Scan in both the original page and the corrected image, crop out the image from the original page that you want to replace or resize, and fit the corrected image right over the original frame. Better yet, learn to draw your manga pages in Clip Studio Paint, and you can digitally remove and substitute the original frames with the replacement. As I mention in the preceding chapter, this software not only saves lots of time, but it's also very clean and practical.

# 2

## **To the Drawing Board**

## **IN THIS PART . . .**

Start at the top: Drawing heads

Master body basics

Accessorize, accessorize, accessorize: Give your characters that extra flair

- » Discovering the basics of manga faces
- » Exploring the differences between male and female facial features
- » Communicating a number of expressions the manga way

## Chapter 4

# Taking It from the Top with the Head

**T**he head and its features are probably the most distinguishable traits that classify a character as “manga.” Most manga faces have trademark Bambi eyes and cute little noses and mouths. American comic characters generally have more realistic features than manga characters. On the other hand, many of my students prefer manga because of its effectiveness in achieving a wide range of facial expressions with fewer lines and realism. They all say manga is so much fun to draw. You will, too! In this chapter, I demonstrate how to draw your first manga head and facial features from scratch.

## Heading Out on a Manga Mission

In this section, I show you how to face off in the right direction by drawing both male and female head structures.

In today’s mainstream manga, most features appear to be unisex (especially with teenage characters). Some distinct differences, however, separate the male and female characters. For the purpose of diversity, I use a full-grown adult male head to show the contrast in structure between that and the young adult/teen female

head. First, I show you how to draw the female head. (Note that you can also use this head shape for androgynous male characters.)

## Drawing the female head

To draw the basic female (or androgynous) head from three different angles (front, side, and  $\frac{3}{4}$ ), follow these steps:

1. **Draw a round oval and two slightly wider ovals, side by side (see Figure 4-1).**

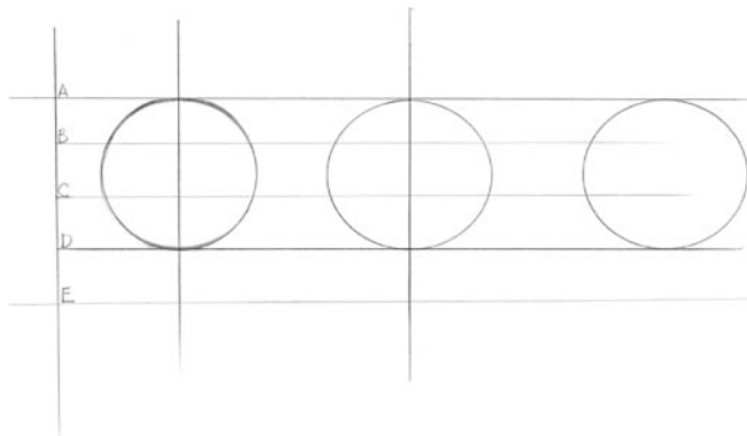
Be sure to place the ovals approximately 1 inch apart. Although the shapes on the left and right in Figure 4-1 are wider than the one in the middle; all three shapes should be the same height.

2. **Draw four guidelines across all three shapes.**

As shown in Figure 4-1, divide the ovals into approximate thirds by drawing straight horizontal lines across each oval, starting from the top. From top to bottom, draw four guidelines. These guidelines help you block in the rest of the basic head features. From the top, label these guidelines A through D.

3. **Draw another guideline under D and label it E.**

The distance between DE is roughly equal to the distance between BC and CD. Finish up the guidelines by drawing a center line down the leftmost and center ovals in Figure 4-2.



**FIGURE 4-1:**  
These ovals  
represent the  
front, side and  $\frac{3}{4}$   
views of your  
character's head.

**4. Lightly sketch in the jaw, chin, ears, and neck for the front view of the head (as shown on the left in Figure 4-2).**

Draw two lines starting from opposite sides of the oval to form the sides of the face from C heading down to D. From guideline D, draw the lower jaw lines angling down to converge where E meets the center guideline. Draw the ear shapes to fall approximately between C and D. (The top of the ear shape is slightly higher than C for all three views.)

To draw the neck, mark the midpoint between the center guideline and the left side of the oval. Repeat the process to find the midpoint between the center guideline and the right side of the oval. Use the distance between the two midpoints to determine the width of the neck. From both points, draw the sides of the neck below the chin.

**5. Draw the jaw, chin, ears, and neck for the side view of the head (as shown in the center image of Figure 4-2).**

Start with the jaw line, which begins on guideline C. From the midpoint of the center guideline and the left side of the oval, draw the upper jaw line at an angle until it connects with guideline D. From D, the lower jaw angles to connect with guideline E at approximately the halfway mark between the center guideline and the right side of the oval. The front of the face slightly curves from C down to meet with the end of the jaw line on guideline E.

Start the ear behind the upper jaw line, ending at the midpoint of the center guideline and the left edge of the oval. Start the front of the neck from the midpoint of the lower jaw line. The back of the neck starts right behind the ears.



**TIP**

I draw the side view of the ear shape tilted to match the angle of the upper jaw line. Most beginners make the mistake of drawing the ears completely vertical. I tell students to look at the ears on other people's profiles to get an idea of how the ear should look. Another common mistake is to draw the neck straight rather than slightly angled. Profiles of characters with straight necks look stiff and unnatural. A slightly angled position makes the overall stature and balance flow naturally.

**6. Create the shapes for the jaw, chin, ears, and neck for the ¾ view of the head (as shown on the right in Figure 4-2).**

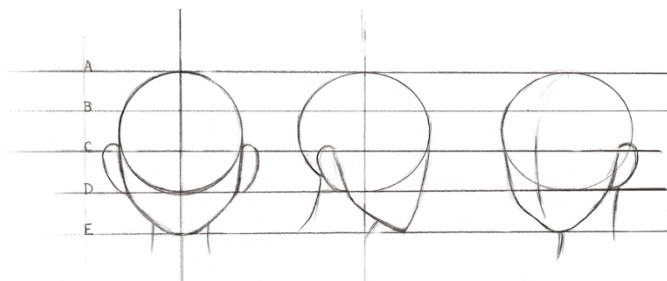
Think of the ¾ view as the front view and side view of the head rolled into one. Off the left of the oval, sketch a slightly curved guideline to indicate the center of the face from this angle. Draw the left side of the face dropping down slightly below guideline D before making a sharp turn toward the bottom of the chin at guideline E. Complete the other side of this view by drawing the upper and lower jaw line down to join the chin at E. Draw the ear behind the upper jaw line.



**REMEMBER**

Make sure the bottom of the chin lines up with the curved center guideline.

**FIGURE 4-2:** Mapping out the basic head shape for a young adult or teen female.



## Drawing the male head

In this section, I show you how to map out the head for the mature, heroic, male character. Lead characters with this head shape are typically in their late 20s to late 30s. Although the process of drawing this head is virtually identical to drawing the female head in the preceding section, pay attention to the change in the shape of the jaw line. For the following steps, you need to draw the three oval shapes and guidelines from Steps 1–3 in the previous section.

Draw the three oval shapes and guidelines you see in Figure 4-1 but make a couple changes. Guidelines A through D divide the male oval shapes in *exact* thirds (the distances between all guidelines are equally spaced out). And the distance between D and E is 50 percent longer than the distance between guidelines A through D. Sketch that out and then try your hand at completing the rest of the basic head shapes for male characters:

### 1. Draw the jaw, chin, ears, and neck for the front view of the head (as shown on the left in Figure 4-3).

Extend two lines starting from the left and right edges of the oval to form the sides of the face from C heading down past D. Think of the side face length as 50 percent longer than the female's face length. Draw the lower jaw angling down to form the bottom of the chin along guideline E.



**TIP**

The trick to making the male head shape look older and more masculine is to draw the jaw line so that it hits guideline E well to the left or to the right (depending on which side of the face you're drawing) of the center guideline. When I connect the bottom left and right jaw lines, I get a flat chin instead of a pointed one. If you want to increase the masculinity, increase the distance between the bottom jaw lines along guideline E so that he has a wider chin.

The placement of the male ear shape is no different than that of the female, but the width is narrower and more angled (as you can see in the middle and on the right in Figure 4-3).



Stronger masculine male characters have thicker and shorter necks than females. In the image on the left in Figure 4-3, I draw the neck starting from the point where the side of the face and lower jaw line meet. That makes the width of the neck just as wide as the entire head!

**2. Draw the jaw, chin, ears, and neck for the side view of the head (as shown in the face in the center of Figure 4-3).**

Draw the upper jaw line from guideline C, extending past D by 50 percent.

If you want to make sure the length and shape of your upper and lower jaw matches consistently with the other two angles in Figure 4-3, draw a line from the top of the lower jaw in Figure 4-3's leftmost face and extend it across the other two faces. Use this as a guideline to make sure you're not drawing the jaw lines too short or too long.

Draw the lower jaw by connecting from guideline E to the right edge of the oval at approximately the midpoint of the center guideline. The front of the face drops at a slight angle to meet with guideline E. Complete the square chin by connecting the gap between the bottom of the lower jaw with the bottom of the front of the face.

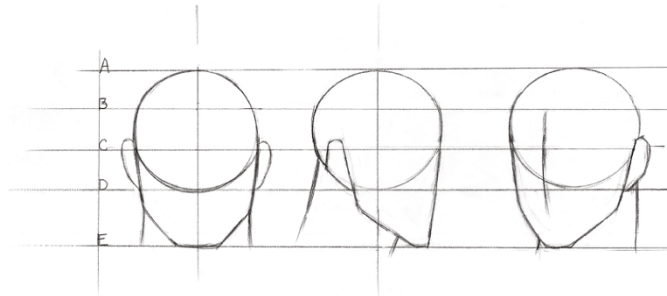
Ears sit behind the upper jaw line. Don't forget to draw the side view of the ear shape tilted to match the angle of the upper jaw line.

**3. Draw the jaw, chin, ears, and neck for the  $\frac{3}{4}$  view of the head (as shown on the right in Figure 4-3).**

Sketch a slightly curved guideline to indicate the center of the face from the  $\frac{3}{4}$  angle. The left side of the face extends past guideline D before slightly turning to connect at guideline E (off to the left of the center guideline). Draw the upper and lower jaw line down to guideline E (off to the right of the center guideline). Complete the wide chin by connecting the bottom of the face with the bottom of the lower jaw line. Finally, draw the ear behind the upper jaw line. Make sure that the center guideline aligns with the midpoint of the flat chin.



TIP



**FIGURE 4-3:**  
Drawing the  
basic male  
head shapes.

# The Eyes Have It!

In manga art, the eyes draw you in. You can use them to convey various emotions in your characters. Sad eyes look very different from happy or frightened eyes. In this section, I show you how to draw eyes the manga way. I also explore different types of eyes that you commonly find in today's manga world.

## Beginning with the basic eye structure

When constructing eyes, you want to use the basic structure of the eyeball and eyelid as a template. The eyeball itself consists of the pupil and the iris. As you become used to drawing the eye over and over again, you may find that drawing the eyeball each time you draw your character is no longer essential. However, for the purposes of this chapter, humor me and draw the eye from the start. Keep in mind that a solid foundational structure underlies everything, even cuteness.



TIP

Large manga eyes are cute and feminine looking, but a *manga-ka* (or manga artist) also uses them for male characters, especially the young, lead male character. Having said that, some differences do separate the male eye from the female eye:

- » Male characters don't have exaggerated eyelashes.
- » Artists sometimes choose to draw the male characters with thicker eyebrows.

Follow these steps to draw a basic manga eye:

### 1. At the center of your paper, draw two identical circles next to each other.

These circles represent the front view and the side view of the eye. My circles are around 1 inch in diameter and approximately 1 inch apart.



TIP

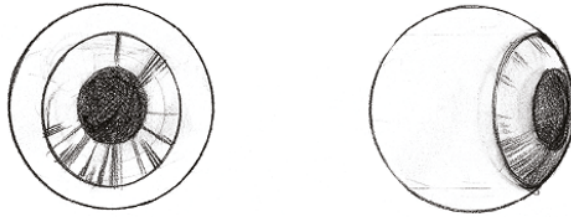
For consistency, I recommend using a circle template (refer to Chapter 2) to draw these round objects. Most templates have diameter measurements marked next to each shape.

### 2. Draw two ovals (one inside the other) inside each of the circles to represent the iris and pupil. (See Figure 4-4.)

Draw the large oval slightly narrower than the oval that's nested inside. The outer, larger oval is known as the *iris*, which is the most visible and colorful part of the eye. The smaller, rounder oval located at the center of the iris is the *pupil*, which expands and contracts to control the amount of light that enters the eye. Shade the pupil in black, as I do for both eyeballs shown in Figures 4-4. For the iris, I randomly draw a series of lines starting from the outside edge of the oval heading toward the center of the iris.

In the manga world, both the iris and pupil are exaggerated in size so that they take up more space in the eyeball than they do in real life. When your character shifts their gaze from the front (where the iris and pupil are rounder; see the eyeball on the left in Figure 4-4) to the side, the iris and pupil shapes become narrower (as shown on the right in Figure 4-4).

**FIGURE 4-4:**  
Drawing the two  
separate views of  
the eyeball,  
pupil, and iris.



3. **Draw the lower lid of the eyeball, keeping in mind that the lower lid represents a “flab” of flesh wrapping around the spherical eyeball form. (See Figure 4-5.)**
4. **Now, draw the upper lid of the eye (shown in Figure 4-5), forming an arc from the left edge of the eyeball to the right edge.**
5. **Add the final touches with eyelashes on the corner of the top lid and dark shadows over the iris and pupil.**

From the front view (on the left in Figure 4-5), I draw three pointed eyelashes that get thicker and longer as the eyelid hugs around the eyeball. For the side view, I draw an additional set of eyelashes that curl up at the front (as shown on the right in Figure 4-5).

Draw the dark shadow of the eye in a form of an arc crossing over the middle of the iris and pupil. This shadow is cast by the upper lid. The darkness of the shadow blends in with the darkness of the iris, so they appear to be one shape.

**Note:** Don’t add thick (or too many) eyelashes for a male character unless you want to emphasize his *yaoi* (androgynous) personality.

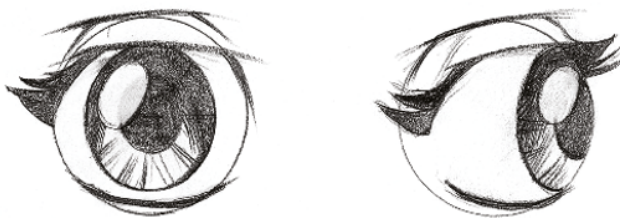
6. **Give the eye a highlight toward the upper left of the pupil and erase the edges of the eyeball sphere.**

Adding the highlight is the fun part — like adding the icing to the cake. The effect makes the eye sparkle and look realistic. With a clean eraser, erase the area you want highlighted. You can use many shapes and sizes for your highlights, but I choose an elongated oval. If you want to show your character on the verge of tears, increase the size of the highlight or draw additional smaller highlights that overlap the iris and pupil.

## 7. Draw in the eyebrow (as shown in Figure 4-6).

The eyebrow is an elongated shape that curves around right above the eye socket and dips slightly downward as it approaches the center of the forehead. Be sure to erase any parts of the oval eyeball shape that are hidden behind the eyelids.

**FIGURE 4-5:**  
The bottom and top lids wrap over the eyeball.



**FIGURE 4-6:**  
Drawing the eyebrow.



**TIP**

One secret to getting the eyes to fit your character's personality is to pay attention to the eyebrows. Thicker, angled eyebrows suggest strength and confidence. Thinner and more rounded eyebrows convey gentleness and grace.

## Seeing eye to eye



**REMEMBER**

When you're placing the left and right eyes together, side by side, the distance between them when they're facing forward is roughly one manga eye apart. (See Figure 4-7.)



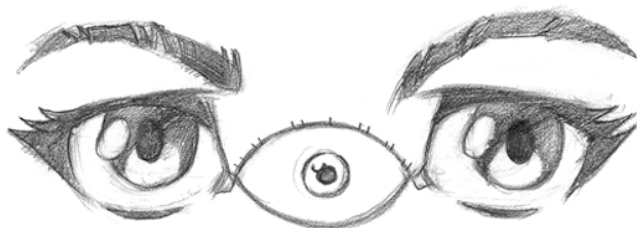
**TIP**

If you're not sure whether your eye measurements are accurate, lightly draw a generic eye symbol between the right and left eyes with a pencil.

One of the biggest challenges of drawing both eyes from the front view is making sure that they're close to symmetrical to each other. To make the character's eyes symmetrical to each other, try the following suggestions:

- » **After drawing both eyes, put the drawing in front of a mirror.** Check to see whether both eyes look accurate when you view them backwards. If either one of them looks off, pick the eye that you don't like and adjust it to fit the other.
- » **Take tracing paper and trace one eye with a soft pencil.** Then, flip the tracing and position the flipped image where the other eye should be. With a sharp pencil, trace over the flipped tracing. A perfectly mirrored eye should transfer onto the paper.
- » **Flip the drawing of both eyes over and hold it up against the light.** You then see the backward mirror image of the drawing. See where any part of the image is asymmetrical before turning it back over and making the necessary corrections.

**FIGURE 4-7:**  
Picturing an  
imaginary eye to  
measure the  
distance between  
two manga eyes.



## Drawing all shapes and sizes

Not all manga eyes are drawn in the same style or size. In mainstream manga, eyes range from large to larger. But other manga genres have eyes that are much smaller and closer to looking real. In this section, I show you some of the various types of manga eyes.

### Mega manga eyes

There is almost no limit as to how big you can make those mega manga eyes. In fact, because big eyes are the symbol of innocence, some young, female manga characters have eyes so large that there just isn't enough space to fit the rest of the face! I include the character's entire head in Figure 4-8 just to show you the enormity of the eyes.



**FIGURE 4-8:**  
Check out the  
popular big eyes.

Sometimes, what makes *shōjo manga* (comics geared toward teenage girls) uniquely different from other manga genres is not only the size of the eyes, but also the way the manga-ka diminishes the size of the nose and mouth to make more room for them. (See Figure 4-9.)



**FIGURE 4-9:**  
Can the eyes get  
any bigger? Sure!



**TIP**

As those eyes get bigger, be sure to increase the size of those highlights. You can add a second highlight in the lower right of the pupil as I show in Figure 4-9 to get an even more realistic look.

## More realistic eyes

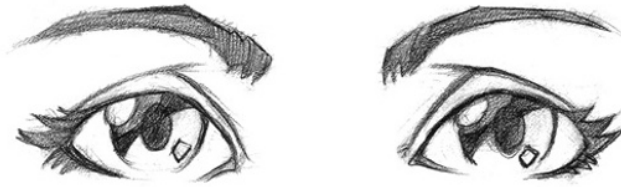
Characters don't need big eyes to be classified as manga. If you read the more serious, action-oriented manga, you find that the eyes are smaller and more realistic (see Figure 4-10).

**FIGURE 4-10:**  
Smaller eyes, with  
the same manga  
structure.



The eyes in which the eyelids angle upward (as in Figure 4-11) usually indicate aloofness or coldness. Picture these eyes on a cold-hearted female who has no problem telling the protagonist that she just cheated on him simply because he scored poorly on his test. These eyes commonly appear in *shōnen manga* (comics geared toward teenage boys).

**FIGURE 4-11:**  
Some eyelids are  
angled rather  
than smooth.



Stories focusing on more serious topics geared toward adults have even more realistic eyes. (See Figure 4-12.)

**FIGURE 4-12:**  
These eyebrows  
are so detailed  
that they come  
close to being  
realistic!



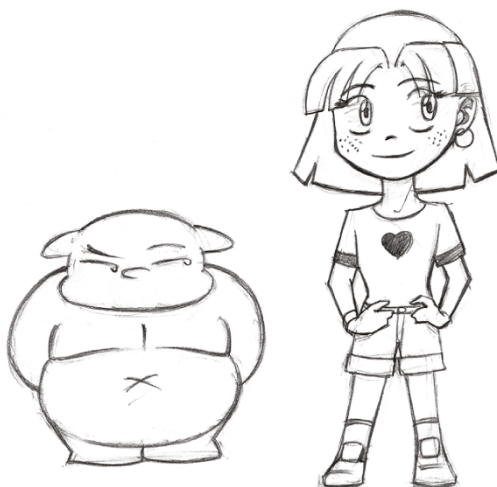
Generally speaking, the wider or bigger the eyes are, the more pure, young, and innocent the character appears. The narrower or smaller the eyes are, the more wise, cunning, or sometimes evil the character seems to be.

## Incredibly simple eyes

If you're not into realism, manga does offer other options. Manga eyes can go the opposite way to complete simplicity. Many *yonkoma manga* (editorial comics) in Japanese newspapers have simple eyes, yet they communicate emotions and personality just as effectively as the more typical manga eyes. Although these eyes may not be the most artistically elaborate or ornate, they can communicate complex emotions that would take longer to express if you were drawing more realistic manga eyes.

Check out Figure 4-13 for examples of yonkoma manga characters that I created. In the eyes on the left in Figure 4-13, simplicity is a powerful way of getting the attention of busy commuters reading their morning papers; showing “doubt” took just three lines with the pencil. On the right in Figure 4-13, the eyes are simple, but their structure is still there.

**FIGURE 4-13:**  
Simplicity gets  
the job done in  
the yonkoma  
manga style.



## Filling in the Features

In this section, I show you how to draw the nose and mouth shapes to accompany the eyes. Just as eyes are big in mainstream manga, noses and mouths are commonly small. As I demonstrate, however, you can draw these features in more than just one style. Like the eyes, you can draw these features traditionally or realistically in today’s manga world.

### Being nosy

Noses are one of the most fun parts of the face to draw. A manga-ka often selects nose sizes and shapes based upon the personality of the characters. Smaller noses generally imply cuteness, innocence, and youth, and you see them on cute girls and young boys. Bigger noses, on the other hand, show a character’s maturity, complexity, and age. Read on to find out how to draw some of the basic manga nose shapes and when each is most appropriate.



## Ski jump nose

I refer to this nose type as a ski jump nose. (See Figure 4-14.) You generally use this nose on younger characters (especially the main lead girls). Try your hand at drawing the ski jump nose by checking out these steps:

1. **Draw a slightly curved line, as shown on the left in Figure 4-14.**
2. **Curve the line back under to complete the bottom side of the nose (see the image in the center of Figure 4-14).**

The end point should be vertically aligned to the top of the first line, where you started in Step 1.

3. **Add several lines above the bridge of the nose, as shown on the right in Figure 4-14.**

These lines show the flat surface of the bridge of the nose.

**FIGURE 4-14:**  
Ski jump noses  
are simple  
and cute.



**TIP**

Here are some things to keep in mind when you sketch out ski jump noses:

- » They need to be cute — keep 'em short!
- » Never draw in the nostrils. Suggesting that the character can be seen with her nostrils pointing right toward the reader's face would be inappropriate. When in doubt, leave them out.
- » Keep the lines short and thin. If you draw the lines too long or thick, the nose stands out. You can't have that on an adorable princess face!
- » The tip of the nose should have a blunt tip pointing toward the sky. From the side profile, it should resemble a cute slope.
- » Make sure you include the thin lines on the bridge of the nose right before the nose starts turning up. Those lines help push the top part of the nose forward and add more dimension to the overall structure.

## Shadow nose

You may want to consider using what I call the shadow nose. (I show you two types in Figure 4-15 and Figure 4-16.) You see these noses mostly on older teen and young adult characters. The manga-ka usually draws a thin outline suggesting the outside shape of the nose and adds an outline of the shadow shape caused by the light source. In Figure 4-15, the shadow shape comes across the opposite side of the nose. In Figure 4-16, I draw the shadow shape falling below the nose.

**FIGURE 4-15:**  
The vertical  
shadow nose.



Follow the steps to drawing both types of the shadow nose, starting with Figure 4-15:

- 1. Draw a curved segment for the nose bridge as shown on the left in Figure 4-15.**

The nose bridge consists of a vertical line with the midsection slightly curving toward the right before returning back to its original course.

- 2. Add a shadow shape to the right of the nose bridge to complete the shadow nose as shown on the right in Figure 4-15.**

Starting from the top of the nose bridge, draw the shadow shape using a wider arc so that the overall nose shape appears dimensional. Finish the shadow shape by connecting the bottom of the shadow shape line to the bottom of the nose bridge.

Now try the other shadow nose in Figure 4-16:

- 1. At the center of the paper, draw a small ½-inch curve to represent the front tip of the nose as shown on the left in Figure 4-16.**
- 2. Draw the four-sided shadow shape as shown on the right in Figure 4-16.**

Starting from both ends of the arc line, draw sides of the shadows by sketching two short lines angling away from the arc.

Complete the shadow shape by drawing two more lines that angle back to meet at the center.

**FIGURE 4-16:**  
The wider  
shadow nose.



Here are some helpful tips for this type of nose, its shadow shapes, and its placements:

- » Never draw in the nostrils. As with the ski jump nose (see the previous section), showing the character's nostrils pointing toward the reader is inappropriate.
- » The nose should be a little longer with a sharper point toward the top before it turns inward toward the mouth.
- » Depending on the desired effect, you can shade in the shadow with screen-tone (refer to Chapter 2) for normal lighting and environment or you can fill in the shadow with black to exaggerate the emotional state or situation of that character. When dealing with a very neutral situation, you can even leave the shadow blank.
- » If you want just the shadow to define the nose, draw the nose first with the shadow. When you have the shadow the way you want it, erase the nose. Without actually knowing where the nose is, you run the risk of guessing where the shadow should fall.

## Realistic nose

You commonly find the realistic nose (see Figure 4-17) on adult characters who don't have extreme, exaggerated features. You see noses like this one usually in shōnen and business manga. Check out the following steps on drawing the realistic nose:

- 1. Draw a straight line at a 45-degree angle as shown on the left in Figure 4-17.**

Observe that the bridge doesn't curve upward like the ski jump nose does. (See "Ski jump nose" earlier in this chapter for details.)

**2. Draw the underside of the nose as shown in Figure 4-17's center image.**

From the tip of the bridge, I sketch a short arc for the bottom of the nose that curves back toward the face. Draw the arc at a 45-degree angle. For this nose to work, the short arc should *not* extend to align with the base of the nose.

**3. Add a small curve for the nostril as shown on the right in Figure 4-17.**

**FIGURE 4-17:**  
The realistic nose has more detail than other manga noses.



Following are some tips for drawing great realistic noses:

- » Draw the nostrils as small arcs. Never draw nostrils as round objects shaded in with black ink — that's just gross!
- » The top of the nose can be rounded instead of blunt or sharp. Male characters should have a slightly more rounded nose than females.
- » Elegant females should have a straighter nose bridge than males.

## Lend me your ear

Most manga characters with exaggerated features have very small ears with very little detail. In fact, you never see the ears of some manga characters (often the females). If you don't like drawing those awkward shapes, this is good news. However, I want to demystify this feature in the following sections. Drawing ears is actually fun after you get to know them!

### Figure-6 ear

You see the figure-6 ear mostly on young, innocent characters, often in conjunction with big eyes, smaller noses, and smaller mouths. The figure-6 is basically the ear in its most simple form. Besides the outline of the outer tube and outer ear shape, a simplified inner ear completes this type of form — all you do is draw a figure “6.” Follow these steps to draw the figure-6 ear:

**1. Draw the outside ear shape as shown on the top left in Figure 4-18.**

Think of the outside ear shape as a modified semicircle. Make sure that the bottom end of the semicircle extends to align slightly further than the top of

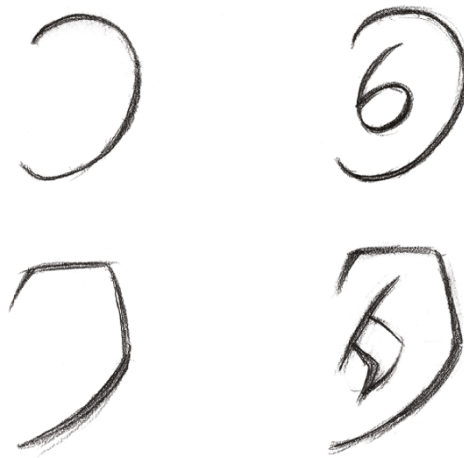
the semicircle. This ensures that the ear position properly aligns with the jaw line of the basic head shape.

For a “macho” style, simplify the outside ear into a five-sided shape. (See the bottom left in Figure 4-18.)

**2. Create a figure “6” shape in the middle as shown on the top right in Figure 4-18.**

I place my figure “6” shape so that the left edge aligns with the top end of the outer ear. This shape is a simplified version of the inner ear structure.

To complete the “macho” style, make the figure “6” less rounded. (See the bottom right in Figure 4-18.)



**FIGURE 4-18:**  
Drawing the  
side view of two  
types of the  
figure-6 ear.

When you draw the front view of the figure-6 ear, you still see a little of the inside ear. To draw this ear from the front, use these steps:

**1. Draw the outside of the ear as shown in the top left of Figure 4-19.**

The front view of the outer shape of the ear looks identical to the side view, only it's horizontally compressed to become vertically thinner. Drawing this view is like taking a clay hemisphere shape between the palms of your hand and slightly flattening it.

The bottom left of Figure 4-19 shows the outer ear in a more masculine style.

**2. Draw a curve to show the front shape of the ear at an angle at the center of the outer ear. (See the top-center image in Figure 4-19.)**

Picture the ear as a circular tube (like a doughnut or onion ring — but not as delicious). When drawing the curve, keep in mind that the space to the left is

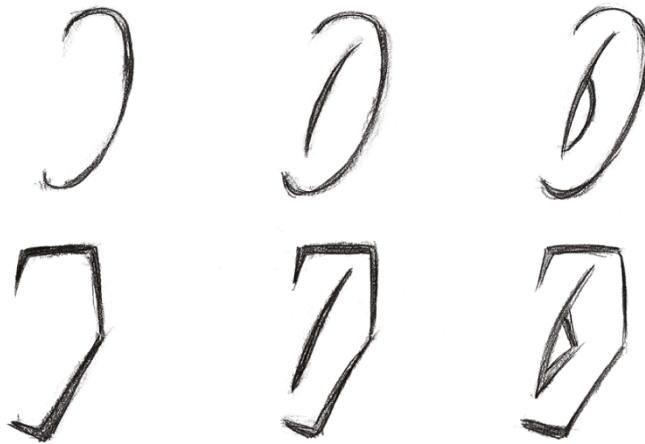
the side of the ear that's facing toward you. Everything to the right is facing away, toward the side.

Check out the bottom-center image in Figure 4-19 for the squared-off version of the same thing.

**3. Complete the shape of the inner ear with a smaller curve as shown on the top right in Figure 4-19.**

Toward the bottom of the original curve, draw a smaller rounded curve going in the opposite direction. This shape represents the inside section of the ear and is approximately half the height of the front shape curve.

The bottom right of Figure 4-19 shows the completed “macho” ear from the front.



**FIGURE 4-19:**  
Drawing the front  
view of the  
figure-6 ear.



**TIP**

Following are some tips for drawing a figure-6 ear:

- » Restrict the ear to two lines when drawing the “6” shape.
- » When drawing an infant whose head and facial features have yet to fully develop, simplify the shape by erasing the lower part of the front shape curve.
- » For the more “macho” looking boys, you can get rid of the curves and replace them with angled lines for an edgier feel.

## Shadow ear

You see the shadow ear mostly with more realistically drawn high school characters. The inner ear is basically simplified with a shadow shape. You can shade in the shadow with screen tones (see Chapter 2 for more) for normal lighting and environment or you can fill in the shadow with black to exaggerate the emotional state or situation of your character.

Try your hand at drawing the side view of the shadow ear (as shown in Figure 4-20) by using these steps:

1. **Draw a modified hemisphere for the outer ear as shown on the left in Figure 4-20.**

Observe the small dip at the bottom and to the right of the ear. This gives the overall shape more detail and realism than the figure-6 ear in the preceding section.

2. **Draw the curve for the front shape of the ear as shown in the center of Figure 4-20.**

Toward the bottom of the curve, add a new “tab” shape. This small shape functions as a shield to cover the ear tunnel inside the inner ear from dust and debris. The tab shape is rather abstract; think of it as a modified rectangle that’s been sliced in half.

3. **Draw the shadow shape of the inner ear. (See the image on the right of Figure 4-20.)**

Start from the front curve shape of the ear and leave a thin space between the top of the shadow and the outer ear shape. The top shadow angles slightly upward before angling back down and back toward the front curve.

4. **Draw another shadow shape below the top shadow.**

This square shape doesn’t extend past the upper shadow.

The bottom shadow shape mimics the shape of the ear “tab.” The only difference is that the lower portion of the shadow dips down.

**FIGURE 4-20:**  
The shadow  
shape resembles  
the head of a  
monkey wrench  
from the side.



When drawing the front view, make sure you see the shadow shape (as shown in Figure 4-21). Follow these instructions:

1. **Draw the outer ear so that it resembles a figure “6,” but with edges that are more angular and less round. (See the leftmost image in Figure 4-21.)**

I draw the bottom part of the ear turning upward (like a fishing hook).

2. **Draw the front curve shape of the ear as shown in the center image of Figure 4-21.**

I draw the front curve shape straighter to give the ear shape a more angular look than a rounder one like the figure-6 ear. The tab shape is the same shape as the tab of the figure-6 ear. (See the previous section for details.)

3. **Draw the shadow shape for the inner ear. (See the rightmost image in Figure 4-21.)**

From the top of the front curve shape, draw the top shadow shape angling down (almost level to the top of the ear tab) before angling back up toward the front curve shape. Note that the distance between the overall inner ear shape and the outer ear shape is consistent. Go on to complete the rest of the shadow shape around the ear tab. The overall shape mimics the shape of the tab it surrounds.



**TIP**

Avoid the mistake most beginners make by not leaving enough space between the bottom of the shadow and bottom of the ear.



**FIGURE 4-21:**  
The shadow ear  
from the front.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when drawing the shadow ear:

- » Make sure the outer tube of the ear is narrower than the figure-6 ear.
- » The top shadow shape of the inner ear angles sharply to resemble the tip of an arrow.
- » Notice the slight droop at the bottom of the outer ear. Be sure to include this droop in addition to space between the bottom of the droop and the bottom of the shadow because your character may want to wear earrings.



## Realistic ear

The realistic ear takes drawing ears to a higher level. You draw the inner ear more accurately and see a clear distinction in form that separates the inner ear from the ear tunnel. Follow these steps to draw the realistic ear in Figure 4-22:

1. **Draw a modified hemisphere for the outer ear shape as shown on the left in Figure 4-22.**

This shape is rounder than the shadow ear from the previous section. In addition, the lower end of the ear doesn't curl up as much.

2. **Draw the front curve of the realistic ear as shown in the center of Figure 4-22.**

Instead of drawing the curve at an angle, I extend the curve to loop around the inside of the outer ear shape.



TIP

Don't connect the looping line; keep the shape open. The top edge of the ear is a tube shape.

In addition to extending the front shape curve of the ear, I simplify the tab at the bottom of the front curve shape. Unlike the rectangular form in the shadow ear, the tab of the realistic ear resembles the shape of the ski jump nose from earlier in this chapter.

3. **Render the inner portion of the realistic ear. (See the rightmost image in Figure 4-22.)**

Draw the dark shadow shape next to the ear tab, making sure the top end is pointed. The rest of the shadow shape mimics the shape of the tab. I draw a short curve starting from the top of the ear, ending at the right side of the ear. Look at your own ear as a reference to fill in the shading details.



**FIGURE 4-22:**  
The inside of the realistic ear — the more detailed the better.

Now, I show you how to draw the front view of the realistic ear. The more realistic the ear becomes, the more detail you need to add. The larger shapes are broken up into smaller, more complicated pieces, as you see in Figure 4-23. Use these steps to draw your own realistic ear from the front:

1. **Draw the front portion of the outer ear shape as shown on the far left in Figure 4-23.**

This part resembles the butt end of a cigarette drawn at a slanted angle. You draw the back portion to complete the outer ear shape in Step 4.

2. **Starting at the right, bottom side of the outer ear shape, draw the ear tab. (See the second image on the left in Figure 4-23.)**

In this case, it protrudes out like the ski jump nose. Note that the size of the tab is slightly larger and rounder when you're drawing realistically.

3. **Start from the side of the outer ear shape and sketch the inner portion of the ear curving around to connect to the bottom of the ear tab. (See the second image from the right in Figure 4-23.)**

4. **Complete the lower portion of the outer ear as shown on the far right in Figure 4-23.**

This is a two-fold process. In the first stage, draw a line from the top corner of the outer ear shape down to the inner ear shape. Keep in mind that this line doesn't stop there but continues to run behind the inner ear shape. Start the second stage by drawing the outer ear shape line coming out from behind the inner ear shape. As you complete the shape, remember to leave space between the bottom of the outer ear shape and the tab.



**FIGURE 4-23:**  
Constructing the  
front of the  
realistic ear,  
shape by shape.



**TIP**

Here are some tips to keep in mind when drawing the realistic ear:

- » The more detail you can add, the better.
- » Make sure that some lines overlap others. That way, the ear becomes dimensional.

» Look at your own ear in the mirror or take a close-up picture of your friend's ears with your digital camera for reference.

## Speak your mind: Drawing the mouth

Overall, manga mouths are very simple. At times, the lines that represent the mouth are so minimalist that their existence is suggested by a small dot or a short line. Depending upon the genre, you may not even see them at all. That's right; the artist may not even draw the mouth. Rather, they may let those big eyes do all the talking. So, if drawing mouths isn't the thing for you, and you want to draw the manga way, you're in luck!

Despite its simplicity, the manga mouth is expressive — the smallest twitch can make a huge difference to the delicate, subtle expression on a face. If you're creating characters with mouths, you may be wondering what makes a successful manga mouth if it's nothing more than a simple line. Believe it or not, an accomplished manga artist has a solid understanding of the anatomy of the human mouth. So, first I give you a quick background of the basic structure of the mouth.

### Drawing the basic mouth structure

The mouth is made up of two sections — the lower lip and the upper lip. Don't view either the lower or upper jaws as two-dimensional, flat objects. As you can tell by feeling your own jaws, they have a rounded structure going from the front of the teeth heading back toward the neck. Follow these steps and look at Figure 4-24 to draw the manga mouth structure:

**1. Draw a short cylinder as shown on the top left of Figure 4-24.**

This cylinder is your basic jaw shape.

**2. Draw a center line going across the cylinder. (See the top-center image in Figure 4-24.)**

This line is the top of the lower lip.

**3. Draw the lower portion of the lower lip as I do in the top-right image in Figure 4-24.**

I draw the lower portion of the lower lip by sketching a curve that stretches below the top line from left to right.

If you want to draw fuller lips, draw the bottom part of the curve lower or lower the entire curve altogether.

**4. Draw the upper lip wrapping over the lower lip as I demonstrate in the bottom-left image in Figure 4-24.**

Start by drawing the bottom of the upper lip *over* the top of the bottom lip. The center shape at the middle of the upper lip protrudes forward and curves down to cover part of the lower lip.

Next, I draw the top of the upper lip. Both sides of the upper lip begin from the end corners of the mouth and angle up toward the center, above the mouth. Instead of joining the two lines at the center, draw an arc that's similar to the center arc that overlaps the lower lip but slightly wider to give balance to the overall mouth shape. Connect the line of the upper lip to each side of the arc.

The top and the bottom of the upper lip both resemble an "M" as they dip down in the center.

**5. Erase any part of the lower lip that you cover with the top lip. (See the bottom-left image in Figure 4-24.)**

**6. Highlight the lower lip to give the illusion that it has a shiny or moist surface (as shown on the bottom right in Figure 4-24).**

As a rule of thumb, surfaces that are more perpendicular to the light source catch more light (and therefore have larger highlights). As I later show in Figure 4-25, the lower lip has more direct contact with the light than the upper lip.



REMEMBER



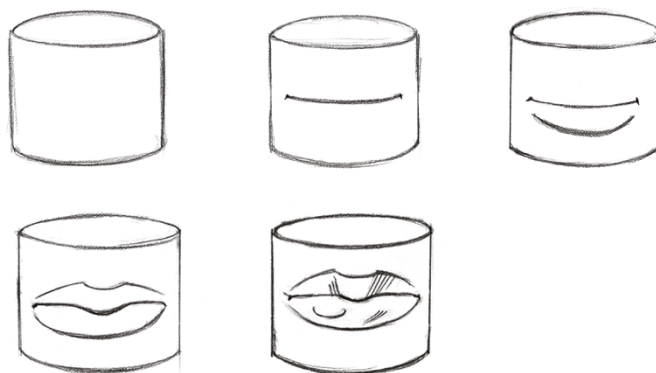
TIP

Do the best you can to match the center of the upper lip's "M" with the center of the lower lip. Also make sure that a portion of the "M" overlaps the top of the lower lip. If it doesn't, the lips will appear flat.

Drawing objects or shapes overlapping one another helps create the perception of three-dimensionality. This rule is simple, but it works wonders when you apply it.

Here, I show the lips at two different angles. On the left in Figure 4-25, the top portion of the lip curves slightly up before angling down to meet the center of the lower lip. Also notice how the upper lip protrudes farther than the lower lip.

In the  $\frac{3}{4}$  view of the face on the right in Figure 4-25, you see how the highlight shape on the lower lip and the thick-to-thin lines help create dimension and the appearance of realism on a flat, two-dimensional surface.



**FIGURE 4-24:**  
Demonstrating  
how to construct  
the lips.



**FIGURE 4-25:**  
The profile of the  
lips shows that  
they aren't flat.

## Priming up the androgynous mouth

It's time to explore the more simplified manga mouth. Most manga-ka draw their characters' mouths and expressions using short lines, dots, and circles. Conveniently, as a result, the manga mouth is, for the most part, unisex.

When you start off with a generic, simplified manga mouth that's smiling toward you, only two lines are visible (one for the bottom of the mouth and the other for the top). As I show you on the left in Figure 4-26, you can make the lips look sexier with a couple of simple tricks. For that image, I add an outline around the mouth and shade the space between to indicate that the character has luscious lips and is wearing red lipstick. When the character in the frame is drawn smaller, the mouth and lips are too small to go into detail. In that case, I forego the outline and shading and just darken the top and bottom parts of the lips with a dark thin line.

The second method, which I use on the right in Figure 4-26, creates fuller lips around the mouth by adding two lines above and below the mouth (one represents the top of the upper lip and the other represents the bottom of the lower lip). Even without shading in the lipstick, the two lines show that the mouth belongs to a female as opposed to a male.

**FIGURE 4-26:**  
Adding lipstick  
and creating  
thicker lips to  
boost the  
sex appeal.



## Further exploring the simplified manga mouth

After you draw and understand what goes on with the realistic version of the mouth, drawing the simplified manga mouth is easier. To elaborate further on the previous section, most of the time, you don't have specific methods, steps, or techniques when drawing a simplified manga mouth because of its very simplicity. If your character's mouth is closed, you can use just simple lines, dots, or ovals. (See the three mouths at the bottom of Figure 4-27.) At times, your character's mouth may not show at all (letting those big eyes do the talking).



**TIP**

When you're drawing a mouth in an open position (screaming or laughing; check out the three mouths at the top of Figures 4-27 for examples), the common mistake is to draw the upper lip too high or too low. The lower jaw usually does all the big movement while the upper mouth is immobile (after all, that whole section of the jaw is fused with the skull, so it doesn't move as freely). I recommend drawing the top of the mouth before drawing the lower lip and jaw that are wide open.



**TIP**

Because cute is king in manga, here are some tips that you can use to keep your mouth as cute as ever:

- » Add small dimples next to both sides of the corners of the mouth. I like to draw small arrow marks that resemble > and < signs on each side of the mouth for my dimples. This works especially well with a smiling mouth.
- » Curve the ends of the mouth upward when drawing a smile. Even the slightest, most subtle upward turn works miracles.
- » Never draw individual teeth. Rather, draw each upper and lower set of teeth as a single strip. I draw a simple horizontal line beyond the lips when the character opens his mouth (as shown in the top right of Figure 4-27). When the teeth are clinched together, I like to show both upper and lower sets of teeth as a single object (as shown on the top left in Figure 4-27).
- » Try experimenting with both symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes in your expressions.
- » Use the images in Figure 4-27 as a basis to combine different types of lines, dots, and other simple curves to come up with your own set of basic



**TIP**

expressions. For now, don't worry about trying to make the face look realistic or bothering to make it look finished. What happens when you raise an eyebrow higher than the other? How about skewing the triangle shape so that one end is sharper than the other?



**FIGURE 4-27:**  
Having fun  
mouthing off  
with simplified  
manga mouth  
expressions.

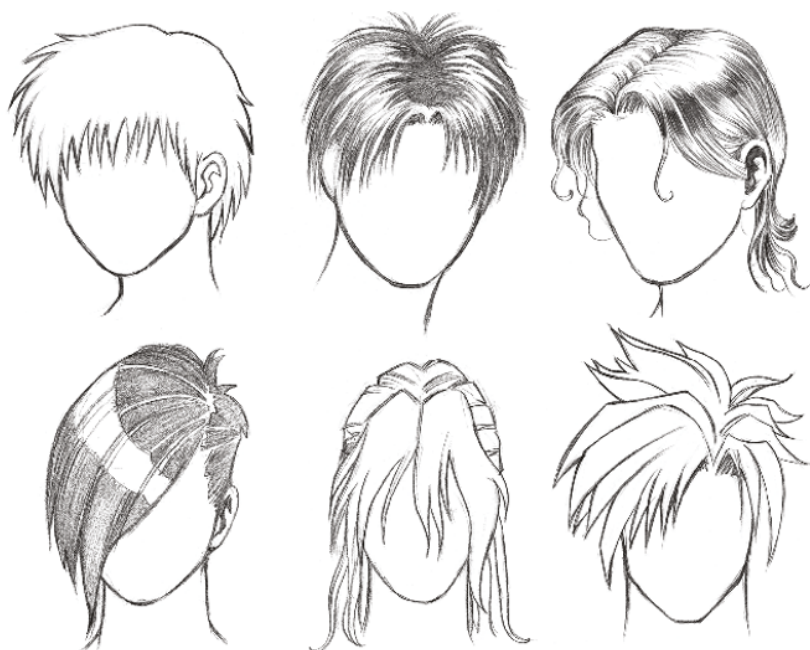
## Capping it off with hair

The hairstyle you choose describes a lot about your character's attributes and personality, as well as the nature of the manga story. The shapes (and even colors) you choose can present your character as a rebel with a cause, a loner, an intellect, or a bully.

The androgynous yaoi culture plays a major role in the men's manga fashion world, especially when it comes to hair. As I show you in this section, yaoi hairstyles (accompanied by the huge manga eyes) have made gender appearances indistinguishable at times.

In Figure 4-28, you can see just some of the many versions of the yaoi hairstyles. Generally speaking, the smoother and rounder-edged hair shapes suggest tidiness and a higher level of intelligence. The hair can be as long as the shoulders. The hair shapes with sharper and jagged edges usually suggest a disheveled youth who spends most of their day on cloud nine. This type of hair is usually short.

To make the most of this section, you need the complete head shapes I show you in the beginning of this chapter. If you've never drawn a manga head before, read through the section "Heading Out on a Manga Mission."



**FIGURE 4-28:**  
Different types of  
androgynous  
hairstyles.

In Figure 4-29, I show the steps you take to draw the hair on top of the basic head shape. Start with the  $\frac{3}{4}$  angle of the basic androgynous head shape, and then follow these steps to draw the jagged “Rugged Yaoi” hairstyle:

- 1. Locate and mark with an “X” the spot where the hair shapes will begin (you can call it your “bald spot”). The leftmost image of Figure 4-29 shows you how to do this.**

The spot usually begins just past the peak of the skull. About  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch above the X, I make my first hair shape, which resembles a checkmark.

- 2. Starting from that origin, draw in the jagged sections of the left and right sides of the hair as shown in the center image of Figure 4-29.**

Starting from the left side of the checkmark and drawing left toward the front of the head, I first draw a couple of curvy lines with pointed edges.

As the hair approaches the front of the head, I draw more sharp points and fewer curvy lines. The direction of the points curve toward the head.

Next, I return to the top of the right side of the checkmark and draw the hair toward the back of the head. My first curvy line is the longest one; it ends at a sharp point right above the ear. Three more sharp points curve toward the head. Be sure to place enough space between the scalp and the hair.





TIP

I find that the distance between the head and the hair increases toward the front of the head. The distance decreases at the point right above the X.

### 3. Draw the jagged bangs as shown on the right in Figure 4-29.

From left to right, I draw a series of sharp pointed shapes for the bangs. These shapes are thinner and longer than the rest of the hair. When drawing these shapes, I use my wrist as a pivot point to draw the sharp angles going in an up-and-down motion. A couple shapes overlap the eye region.

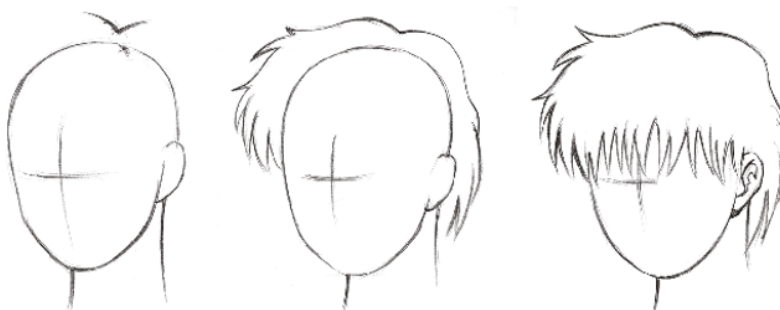


TIP

Here are some tips to getting the overall jagged hair shape to look right:

- » Start at the top with smaller jagged shapes.
- » Alternate the ends of the shapes facing up with shapes facing down.
- » Toward the bottom, the shapes should get longer and narrower.
- » Try rotating the paper sideways to complete the bangs.
- » The entire hairstyle's overall shape should be round or slightly oval.

**FIGURE 4-29:**  
Drawing the jagged yaoi style; working along the outsides of the hair first.



Start with a head, like the one I use on the left in Figure 4-30, and turn your attention to these steps to draw the rounder, “Smooth Yaoi” style:

### 1. Start just to the left of the vertical center line and draw the parted bangs first.

The parted bangs should be fairly long. In the center image of Figure 4-30, the bangs on each side of the part are clearly visible. For the left side of the bangs, I draw what I refer to as “ribbon hair.” I start by drawing a short-pointed hair shape. At the end of the sharp point, I draw a similar shape that’s shorter and going the opposite direction. I follow up with one long and one very short wave. Before continuing on to finish the right side of the bangs, I add short lines beneath the first short-pointed hair shape. These lines represent the base of the hairline shape.

The shape of the right side of the bangs resembles the tail of a horse. Toward the bottom of the bangs, draw a series of short sharp points clustered together to form a larger, rounder shape. Finish this side by drawing the pointed hairline shapes underneath.

**2. Draw and complete both sides of the hair. (See the right side of Figure 4-30.)**

Start at the part where the two sides of the bangs meet. Here, I draw four to five lines stretching toward the back of the head. The back of the hair is smooth with several subtle bumps. For the most part, the hair shape sticks flat against the head shape (unlike the “Jagged Yaoi,” where the hair is further from the head). The only place where the hair lifts away from the head is behind the ears. I finish the back of the hair by extending the smooth curve down the back of the neck, ending right at the level with the chin.

**FIGURE 4-30:**  
Drawing the  
“Smooth Yaoi”  
hairstyle.



## The Emotions Tell All

After you have a basic character put together, set them in motion by putting them on the acting stage. In this section, I look at several physical characteristics that help bring out the right emotions in your character. So, get into your director’s chair and get ready to take charge. Camera, lights, and action!



**TIP**

Before you examine some popular emotions, try this simple visual exercise: Take 15 minutes in front of a mirror and act out an emotion. Observe what happens. In some extreme emotions, such as rage or fear, an eye may appear to be higher than the other. See how the mouth and nostrils contort into twisted shapes that would make your mother scream. Have fun and then get back to the drawing board!

## Neutral face

Imagine the face of a young girl who has just walked outside of her apartment to face another day at work. She appears neither happy nor sad. Although readers don't know the exact emotion going through her head, her neutral face tells them that she's in touch with society or at least with her surrounding environment.

Follow these steps to draw the neutral expression in Figure 4-31:

1. **Draw the androgynous head shape for your character.**
2. **Draw the eyes staring straight forward with the eyebrows forming an arc around the eyes.**

Keep the eyebrows perfectly arched as if to mirror the shape of the eye itself.

3. **Draw the ski jump nose.**
4. **Draw the simplified mouth slightly upturned into a subtle smile.**

I draw an arc shape for the mouth with a smaller arc shape underneath to show the bottom of the lower lip. Adding the lower lip gives more dimension to the mouth.

5. **Draw the figure-6 ears.**
6. **Draw bangs and pigtails.**

Pigtails are fun and relatively simple to draw. The hair shape sticks close to the head shape. The pigtails emerge from the back of her head. I draw the long, pointed hair shapes for the bangs. Where the bangs extend down toward her chin, I incorporate some of the wavy patterns I use in the "Smooth Yaoi" hairstyle. To give the back of the head dimension, I draw lines starting from the sides of the head going toward the rectangle shape I draw for the hair band.



**FIGURE 4-31:**  
Drawing the  
neutral face.

## Serious face

Suppose your character enters her office but senses that something is awry. Her friends are hesitant about breaking bad news to her. Unlike the neutral expression she has in the previous section, emotion is more apparent when she puts on her serious face. Readers get a feeling of tension. With the smile completely gone, the character's features begin communicating that something isn't right. The expression on her face isn't subtle.

Follow these steps to change the neutral face into the serious face in Figure 4-32:

1. **Slightly curve her eyebrows down to create a little frown just above her eyes.**
2. **Curve the mouth upside down.**

The mouth should resemble the upside-down version of the subtle smile in the neutral face. (See the previous section.) Observe how I even flip the smaller arc to mirror the longer mouth shape.



**FIGURE 4-32:**  
Drawing the  
serious face.

## Mad face

You're about to find out the source of your character's anger as she puts on her mad face. She didn't get a promotion she was promised at work! Follow these steps to turn the serious face into the mad face in Figure 4-33:

1. **Draw her eyebrows so that they're straighter and digging even closer to the center of her forehead.**

Note that the eyebrows angle higher up toward her hairline as they move away from the center of her face.

2. **Add a series of hatch marks going across above the nose to suggest temperature change (in this case, the color red).**

Don't put too many lines in at this stage. (We need to save that for the even more intense emotions that are yet to follow this one.) For now, I draw just five short, diagonal lines.

3. **Alter the mouth by dropping the top center of the lip's dip down a bit and raising both sides of the upper corners of the mouth.**

In addition, I raise the center of the bottom lip or lower the edges of the bottom lip to expose the gnarling lower teeth.



**FIGURE 4-33:**  
Drawing  
the mad face.

## Psycho mad

Okay, your character has gone from mad to psycho mad. She finds out that the co-worker who got the promotion she wanted just happens to be the CEO's son! And to make things worse, he used to be her boyfriend! She's now yelling and screaming at the ex-boyfriend as he prances off happily toward his new private office and sits down in his expensive leather chair.

Follow these steps to go from the mad face to the psycho mad face in Figure 4-34:

1. **Draw her eyebrows down even farther than they were in the mad face.**
2. **Arch the lower lids of the eyes to show the raised and taut cheek muscles.**

Take the lower eyelids and flip them so that the curves are parallel to the top eyelid curves. Now, she's so mad that the lower part of her vision is obscured.

3. **Draw a series of hatch marks reaching underneath both eyes.**
4. **Draw the open mouth with the center of the upper lip dipped down so that she's baring her teeth.**



When drawing an angry mouth, draw the lower portion of the open mouth wider than the top. Adding small fangs on the top and bottom of the teeth makes for a cool effect.



**FIGURE 4-34:**  
Drawing the  
psycho mad face.

## Sad face

Reality starts to kick in as your character slumps into the old, tiny chair in her crammed cubicle at work — her dream position is now gone. Follow these steps to turn the neutral face into the sad face in Figure 4-35:

1. **Draw big eyes and keep 'em big.**



Draw a large highlight at the upper-left corner of the eye and draw another smaller one off to the lower right of the eye to show that she's getting teary-eyed.

2. **Draw straight eyebrows, angled up at 45 degrees.**
3. **Add faint hatch marks underneath each eye to show that she's becoming bloated and ready to shed some tears.**
4. **Add the sad mouth by drawing an arc that looks like a boomerang.**

Draw a short line right below the mouth to help emphasize the pouting.



**FIGURE 4-35:**  
Drawing  
the sad face.

## Even sadder face

Your character just got off the phone with her mother after telling her that she isn't coming home for the weekend because she isn't getting a raise or the job she had hoped to get. Follow these steps to go from the sad face to the even sadder face in Figure 4-36:



**TIP**

- 1. Draw small tears forming at the lower corner of her eyes.**  
When drawing the eyes, raise the lower lid to heighten the effect that she can no longer hold in her tears.
- 2. Draw slightly crooked eyebrows close to the eyes.**
- 3. Draw even more hatch marks under her eyes.**
- 4. Draw the mouth shape turned down (like an upside-down hot dog) with a narrower width than the mouth in the sad face.**

## Total devastation

Adding insult to injury, your character has just been ordered to go get coffee by the ex-boyfriend co-worker who got the promotion she wanted. Oh, the humiliation and the shame! Take advantage of your character's total devastation as she dashes out of the office building, bawling as she heads toward the nearest coffee shop. Follow these steps to turn the even sadder face into the total devastation face in Figure 4-37:

- 1. Clamp the eyes shut by drawing them in a half-moon shape like a bracket.**



**FIGURE 4-36:**  
Drawing the even  
sadder face.

## 2. Add tears streaming down both cheeks.

Start from the end of the closed eyes and make sure the tear streams curve as they follow the contour of her round cheeks.

Make the closed eyes look innocent by thickening the bracket eyelid shape (especially if you're drawing a shōjo lead character).



**TIP**

## 3. Draw the bawling mouth elongated and wide open.

The center of the upper lip angles to a sharp point. When drawing the open mouth from this angle, make sure that the curved sides of the mouth are parallel to each other. Finally, I draw the upper teeth and the tongue.



**REMEMBER**

Some things to keep in mind when drawing this mouth:

- » Draw the upper lip curving down.
- » Show the upper teeth.
- » Add in the tongue.
- » Make sure that the lower part of the mouth is wider than the top.

## Surprise or shock

Your character finds out from her co-worker friend that her slimebucket, ex-boyfriend, job-stealing co-worker has just been caught taking illegal bribes from investors. He's been arrested, and now the position she wants is potentially in her grasp! When drawing an expression of surprise or shock, make the eyes the main focus.





**FIGURE 4-37:**  
Drawing the total  
devastation face.

Follow these steps to go from the total devastation face to the surprised or shocked face in Figure 4-38:

- 1. Draw the eyes wide open.**  
Observe that the eyes are smaller than usual, and they don't touch either the top or bottom of the eyelids. Draw the eyebrows thin and raised high so that your reader's attention goes to the pupils.
- 2. Draw the mouth wide open.**



**FIGURE 4-38:**  
Drawing the  
surprised or  
shocked face.



REMEMBER

Some things to keep in mind when drawing this mouth:

- » Draw the top of the lip's curve going down slightly while extending past the width of the lower mouth.
- » The lower mouth shape should arc and come down narrower to form the smile.
- » Draw the tongue large enough so that it takes up most of the mouth.

## Happy face

Looks like things are finally shaping up for your princess character; she was informed that the position she wants has just been reassigned to her. Follow these steps to turn the neutral face into the happy face in Figure 4-39:

### 1. Draw the eyes, making sure the eyebrows are raised high.

Observe how the lower lid of the eye is raised up in this expression.

### 2. Add the happy mouth.



REMEMBER

Some things to keep in mind when drawing this mouth:

- » Avoid drawing individual teeth. Always draw teeth as a group.
- » When drawing a jubilant face, make the cheeks slightly curved outward.



**FIGURE 4-39:**  
Drawing the  
happy face.

## Super happy face

When your character's emotions turn ecstatic, the eyes squeeze shut, indicating that she's so happy that she can't see. Her eyebrows peak up to form a high arc position. As with the sad and angry faces earlier in this chapter, most artists draw at least several light marks on each cheek to show a shift in color or temperature when they draw this super happy face. Finally, the top of the mouth curves toward the cheeks more than before so that the smile becomes broader. Readers get a sense that her emotions are of such extreme joy that she's about to burst out with laughter. She should be — she just got a glimpse of her first paycheck after her new promotion!

Follow these steps to transition from the happy face to the super happy face in Figure 4-40:

- 1. Draw the arcs for the super happy eyes.**

Be sure to arch the eyes higher than those of the total devastation face, earlier in this chapter.

- 2. When drawing the mouth, the upper lip should curve up even higher than it does in the happy face.**

Also, the upper lip of the smiling mouth should be slightly wider so that you have more room to show the teeth and tongue.



**FIGURE 4-40:**  
Drawing the  
super happy face.



- » Understanding basic body proportions
- » Building body structure using basic geometric shapes
- » Bending and twisting figures into poses you like

## Chapter 5

# Nice Bod: Manga Body Basics

If you're ready to draw your first manga body, you've come to the right place.

First things first: You need to understand how to apply basic proportions to your characters. A solid *manga-ka* (or manga artist) knows how to create not only a good-looking face, but also a body to go with it. How tall, short, fat, or thin your character is doesn't matter. They need to look consistent and natural throughout your manga story. Create your skeletal structure first, and adding the muscles and curves will come more easily.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how to build up your characters in three stages. In the first stage, I show you how to achieve accurate proportions using a skeletal wire frame figure. In the second stage, I show you how to add structure to your character using basic geometric shapes. Finally, I show you how to add muscular definition to the body.

# How Many Heads? Setting Up Your Character's Proportions

So, what are proportions? Simply put, a *proportion* is the head-to-body ratio of your character. Measuring proportions means using individual body parts (usually the head) as a ruler to measure how tall the character needs to be.

Measuring someone's proportion usually begins by taking what's called a *head count* — taking the height measurement of the head (from the top of the head to the bottom of the chin) and using that as your measuring stick for the height of the entire human body. If you attend a live figure-drawing course, your peers likely take a pencil and hold it up toward the posing model with their arm fully extended and one eye shut. They're measuring out the proportions of the body. After using the pencil to gauge how tall the head is, the artist uses that length to measure the size of the rest of the body.



TIP

If you live near an art museum that has figure sculptures or small figurines, I recommend taking a field trip so you can go check out the collection. Choose a specific sculpture and, using a pencil to measure it, see whether you can determine the proportions of that object. I recommend observing works from different cultures and periods.

In the manga world, the characters of simple manga are usually 2 to 4 heads tall, as shown on the left in Figure 5-1. By contrast, lead characters in action manga are drawn a whopping 10 to 15 heads tall, as shown on the right in Figure 5-1. Depending upon the proportion scale you use, you can achieve either a simplified or more realistic figure. Traditionally, the human figure is 7 to 8½ heads tall.



TIP

Throughout this book, when addressing the proper length and width of specific body parts, I use the size of the head as the standard measuring unit for that particular figure. I also take the extra step of writing down how tall and wide the head of my character is so that I don't have to keep remeasuring.

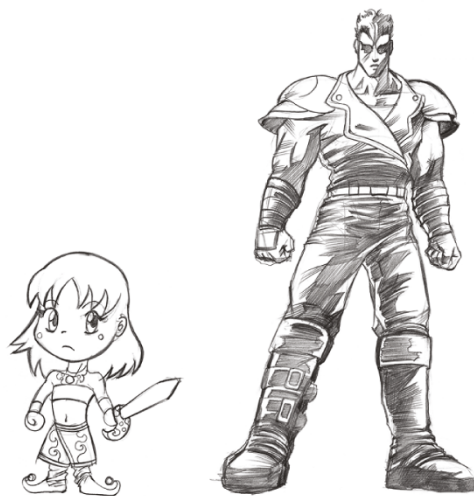


REMEMBER

When you're dealing with proportions, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- » The more simplified your proportions are, the more your features are exaggerated.
- » Simpler characters have larger symbolic props (such as hair, clothing, jewelry, and so on).
- » The more realistic your proportions are, the more precisely you have to draw the physical features.

**FIGURE 5-1:**  
Simple manga  
and action manga  
use different  
head-proportion  
scales.



**WARNING**

If you're drawing manga for the first time or if you haven't taken any figure drawing courses yet, I recommend not attempting to draw realistic manga until you get comfortable drawing the more typical, exaggerated style. Drawing realistically usually entails spending more time doing research for references (clothing, advanced anatomy, and so on). Getting caught up with the details can get in the way of the big picture (no pun intended).



**TIP**

Whichever manga genre you choose to illustrate, determining how many heads tall your average characters are going to be is crucial. Successful manga artists make a point of fleshing out their characters from different angles in their *character design sheets*. In Figure 5-2, I show you an example of a character design sheet for my character, Java, and her sidekick, La-Té. The purpose of this study is to make sure that I know how to draw my character from different angles using the same proportion measurements. Note the head measurements on the side figures. Starting from left to right, from my series *JAVA!* are Swizz Mizz, Astronumus, Java, La-Té, and Mickey. Having this chart gives me a better idea of how my characters measure up against each other in strength and size in their next encounter.



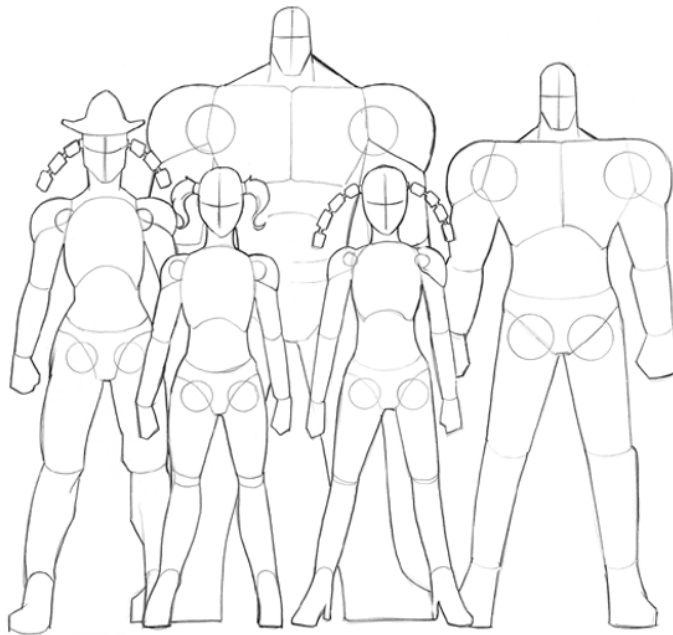
**TIP**

Here's an exercise that could prove useful: Start by drawing the front view of one of your characters and then go on to create your own character design sheet by drawing each character side by side like I do in Figure 5-2. Don't worry about drawing the details for a finished look — you just want to get a feel for how your characters look next to each other. Drawing just the outline of the character is enough for now.

## TAKING A TOP-DOWN APPROACH

So, where's the best place to start when drawing your first manga body? In my opinion, it's "from the top" for a couple of good reasons:

- First, manga places a huge emphasis on the face — so much so that if the face doesn't look right, it can zap your inspiration to do well on the rest of the body.
- The second reason can be summed up in one word: gravity. Your hands and eyes work better when you're working with nature's gravitational pull. I can prove it to you: Select a simple object in the room. On your sketch pad, begin drawing that object, but work from the bottom to the top (rather than from the top down). Notice how awkward and tight your wrists feel when drawing this way. Working against gravity's pull makes your arm tired at a faster pace than normal.



**FIGURE 5-2:**  
An example  
of a character  
design sheet.

## Drawing a Wire Frame

After you set your character's proportions (refer to the previous section), your next step is to create a skeletal *wire frame*. A wire frame is best described as a simplified skeletal structure. As I show you in this section, it's a quick and accurate



tool that helps you get the pose you want from your character with proportional accuracy.

One advantage of a wire frame figure is its flexibility to represent both sexes. In addition, getting a desired action pose is easier when you use a wire frame before getting into the heavier anatomy session. In this chapter, I draw the front and the side at the same time so that you can compare what the wire figure looks like from different angles.

**Note:** If you haven't read the previous chapter on drawing the manga face, you don't have to backtrack, because you aren't filling in the actual facial features yet. However, you should definitely spend time going over Chapter 4 before attempting to create your own characters from scratch.



REMEMBER

Drawing a body isn't a skill you can master overnight. For most people, it takes practice and patience. Although I provide examples and tips, you have to practice to become accustomed to using and controlling the tools to get the feel and the accuracy of the lines and shapes that you make.

So, are you ready to get wired-up? Follow these steps to draw your wire frame figure, which serves as the basic foundational skeleton for your character:

**1. Draw a slightly egg-shaped oval for the head.**

You're drawing the front view, as shown on the left in Figure 5-3. You use this oval to measure the rest of the proportions of the body.

Be sure to give yourself plenty of room below the head for the entire body to fit. If you draw a head with too little space for the rest of the body to fall under, you may find yourself subconsciously distorting the body to fit the space.

**2. Draw cross hairs on the front of the face to indicate roughly where the features will be.**

Drawing cross hairs helps you decide which way the face is pointing.

**3. Next to the head, draw another head that's looking sideways in a profile. (You can see this head on the right in Figure 5-3.)**

Make sure you put plenty of distance between the two heads. Draw the same oval shape for each head, but for the profile, drop a slightly curved line from the right side of the circle (which is the front of the face) going down and angling back into the circle to indicate the jaw. Refer to Chapter 4 for more on drawing the head.

**4. Draw the neck. Starting from the base of the head, draw a line indicating the length of the neck.**

Use longer necks for the female characters and shorter necks for males and teenagers. I choose a shorter neck as my default in both drawings in Figure 5-3.



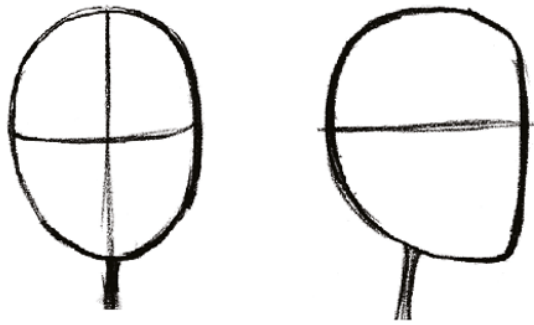
**WARNING**

Don't extend the neck too much. If the neck is too long, it throws off the balance of the rest of the body.

**5. Draw a horizontal line indicating the shoulder.**

The wider the shoulder is, the more a character appears to be masculine and bulky. Stick to more narrow shoulder frames for female characters. The default is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  heads wide. (See the image on the left in Figure 5-4.) The shoulder frame is indicated in the side view (as shown on the right in Figure 5-4) with a shorter line because you're looking at it from a different angle.

**6. From the center of the neck, draw the spine.**



**FIGURE 5-3:**  
Drawing the head  
and neck of the  
wire frame figure.

Looking from the front (see the image on the left in Figure 5-4), the spine is drawn as a straight line. However, as you can see in the side view drawing on the right in Figure 5-4, the spine has a slight "S" curve as it travels from the head and into the crotch at a slanted angle. **Note:** In females, the angle of the profile "S" curve is a little more tilted.

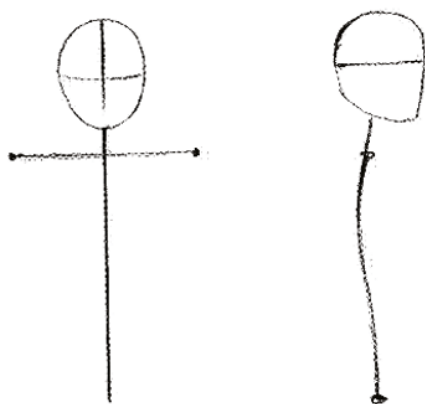


**TIP**

For the default wire figure, the length of the spine should be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  heads down from the shoulder line. The younger the character is, the shorter the length should be. Adolescents, for example, may measure only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  heads.

**7. From the bottom of the spine, draw a line for the hip.**

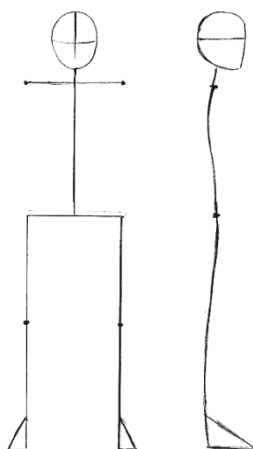
This line is parallel to the shoulder line but slightly shorter. Draw the line slightly above the end of the spine as shown on the left in Figure 5-5.



**FIGURE 5-4:**  
Drawing the  
shoulders and  
spine of the wire  
frame figure.

**8. From both sides of the hip line, draw down both legs. (See both images in Figure 5-5.)**

Here's a good way to determine the right leg length for your default figure: The length should be roughly the same as the measurement from the top of the head to the bottom of the spine. The crotch (intersection point of the spine and the hip line) should be the midpoint of the figure.



**FIGURE 5-5:**  
Creating the hips  
and legs for the  
wire frame figure.

**9. Draw the knee joints and add the feet.**

As I show you in Figure 5-5, use circles to indicate where the joints are. You can determine where to place the knee joints by measuring  $1\frac{1}{2}$  heads from the hip. As for the feet, use the simple triangle shape that I use in Figure 5-5. The triangle is slightly skewed — the side facing inside should be flatter than the outside.

## 10. Draw the arms.

They should be 2 head lengths. (See the image on the left in Figure 5-6.) The upper arm and lower arm are both 1 head length long.

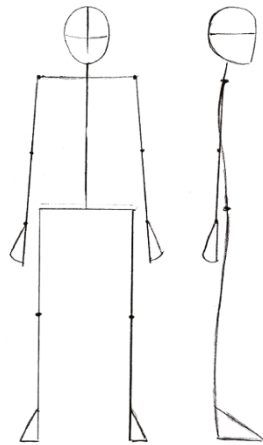


When you place the arms tightly against the body without the hands (see the image on the right in Figure 5-6), they should end right at the end of the spine.

## 11. Finally, draw the hands.

For the wire figure, use the same triangles you use for the feet. (See Figure 5-6.) The side facing outside should be flatter than the inside edge facing the body. A good way of determining the size of the hand is by checking the size of the face. With your pencil, estimate how much space (height) the face will take up on the head. Then take that measurement and apply it to the hands.

After you finish your skeleton stick figure, add some flesh and muscle by heading to the gym to get in shape — geometric shape, to be more precise. Read on for more.



**FIGURE 5-6:** Completing the legs and drawing the arms and hands for the wire frame figure.

## PATIENCE, GRASSHOPPER!

I can't stress enough the importance of being patient while learning to draw. I always encourage my students to stick with the class they're in. Unlike some academic courses, you can't cram to learn an art project or skill. Pacing yourself is important, as is practicing on a daily, consistent basis. If your schedule isn't flexible, you should still make a point to draw for just 15 minutes a day. If you don't have time to sit at a drawing table, carry a small sketch pad and mechanical pencil with you. During a break or some time off, create some sketches or doodles!

# Getting in Shape with Geometry

When you look around at your surroundings, objects appear quite complex and loaded with detail. Take the human body, for example. Did you know that you're packing 206 bones inside of you? An infant has even more bones — 350. (The bones fuse together as you mature.) Yes, it's a bone-chilling world indeed. But despite all that detail, complex objects such as your body structure can be generalized into simple yet versatile geometric shapes. In this section I show you how to create the individual body parts using larger geometric shapes.

In this world of complexity, visual simplification is key. All you need to know are some basics from geometry class. The four basic geometric shapes that you need to familiarize yourself with are the cylinder, cube, sphere, and cone. (See Figure 5-7.)

**FIGURE 5-7:**  
Cylinders, cubes,  
spheres, and  
cones are your  
best friends!



Using these shapes, you can create any character, animal, hi-tech prop, or background. You name it, you can make it!



**TIP**

Practice drawing the geometric forms you see in Figure 5-7. Try drawing them at different heights and widths. For example, what would a sphere look like if it were, say, a rubber ball being squished? What about a tall cylinder bending forward like a slinky? Also try drawing shapes, such as the cone, upside down or rotated at different angles.



**REMEMBER**

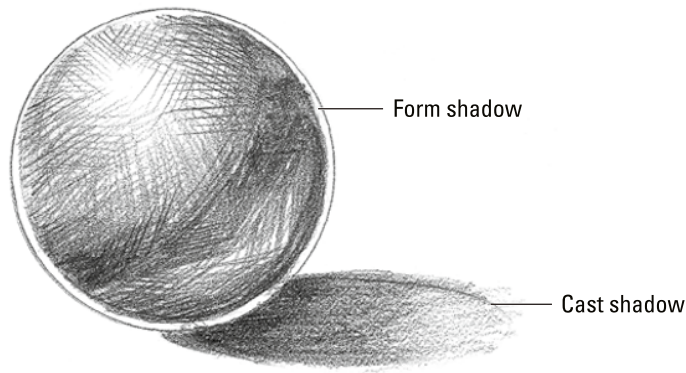
While practicing these shapes, I show you two types of shadows that make the shapes look dimensional and real: *form shadows* (the shading that curves around an object based on the light source near it) and *cast shadows* (the shadow the object casts on the floor or wall behind it) create the look of three-dimensionality. See Figure 5-8 for an example of these shadows.



**REMEMBER**

Throughout this book, I use the term *bearing sphere* to describe the object that serves as a joint between movable body parts. The purpose for introducing this feature is to help simplify the complexity of the joint/ligament structure that actually exists. This section could get really long and boring if I approached it from a pure anatomical perspective.

**FIGURE 5-8:**  
Exploring the  
form and  
cast shadows.



## Defining the head

I talk about the head structure in depth in Chapter 4. Keep in mind that the head is a three-dimensional sphere and not just a circle. This concept is critical when you're drawing poses where the character has their head in a twisted or tilted position. In three dimensions, the cross hairs run around the spherical head and give readers a better sense of which way the character is looking.

Start with the head and draw three elongated oval shapes, as shown in Figure 5-9.

I make the bottom of the oval more pointed to describe the chin. I wrap the cross hairs around the round form of the head in the  $\frac{3}{4}$ -angle view.

If you have a clear sense of how the cross hairs fall on the form, you also have a good idea of how the features rest. At this stage, don't add the details of the features to the head yet; leave everything in its basic geometric form.

**FIGURE 5-9:**  
Drawing the  
sphere for the  
head — front,  
side, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  views.



## Taking on the torso

The *torso* is essentially the upper body or general ribcage area. It measures approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$  heads tall and 2 heads wide, and it's a slightly egg-shaped sphere.



TIP

Similar to the shoulder line in the wire figure, the torso's width expands to fit the proportions of a bulkier, broader character. Likewise, it's narrower for female and teen characters.

Follow the steps for drawing the torso from several different angles:

1. **Draw three separate, slightly egg-shaped spheres, as shown in Figure 5-10.**

Although I draw the front view of the torso (the first drawing on the left in Figure 5-10) as if it's positioned upright, by observing the  $\frac{3}{4}$  view (in the center) and side view of the torso (on the right), you can see that all three are a little tilted to reflect the "S" curve of the wire figure spine. (See the "Drawing a Wire Frame" section, earlier in this chapter, for details on the wire figure.)

2. **Cut a half-moon arc shape at the center bottom of all three spheres, as shown in Figure 5-11.**

**FIGURE 5-10:**  
The tilting of the torso from different angles — front,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and side views.



This cut has two purposes. First, it mimics the indentation of the structure of the actual rib cage. Second, it makes room for the stomach structure to snap in. Note that on the side view (third drawing in Figure 5-11), the cut is there, but it isn't visible.

**FIGURE 5-11:**  
Cutting into the torso from the front,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and side views.



3. **Cut a hole on the upper left and right of the torso and fit in a bearing sphere for each shoulder.**

Be careful not to place the arm holes too high on the torso. Also, make sure they're level with each other. (See Figure 5-12.)

**FIGURE 5-12:**  
Creating the  
opening for the  
arms to fit in.



## Can you stomach this?

The stomach is essentially a sphere — and that's it (no strings attached)! Don't let its simplicity fool you, though — the stomach plays a very crucial role in making your character's poses work. It functions as a large *bearing sphere* (joint) between the torso and the hip so that your character can bend forward, backward, and sideways. In Figure 5-13, you see how the stomach fits into the torso from the front,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and side views.

**FIGURE 5-13:**  
Fitting the  
stomach sphere  
snuggly into the  
torso opening.



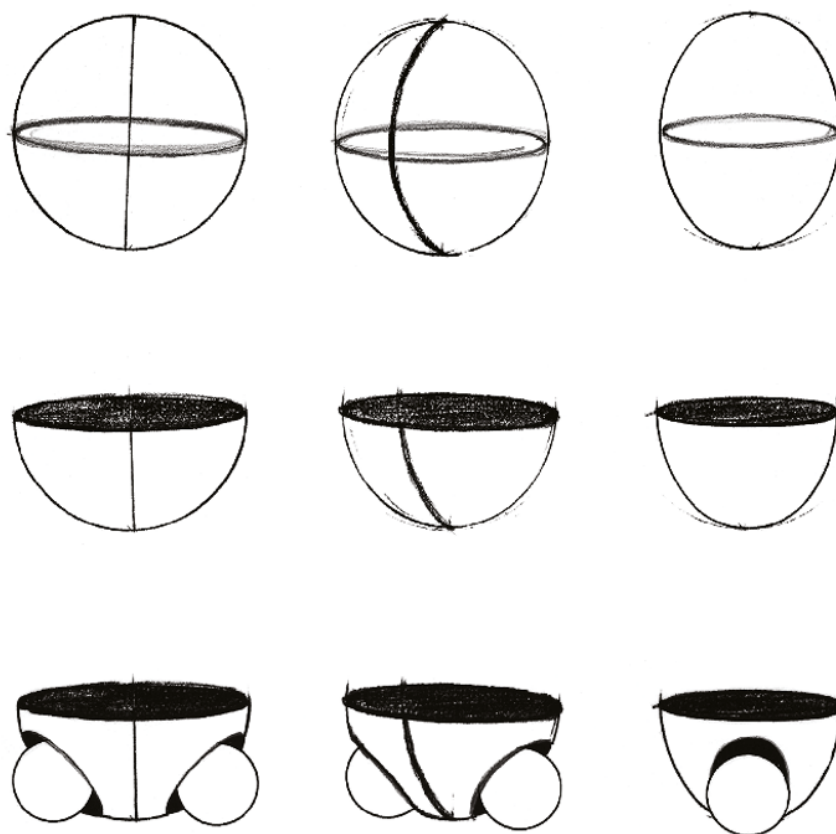
## It's all in the hips

The hip is basically half of a sphere that looks like a pair of underwear when completed. Follow these steps to get your shorts:

- 1. Draw three separate spheres.**  
The images in Figure 5-14 show these spheres from the front,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and side views.
- 2. Erase the top half of each sphere, leaving the remaining portion for the hip (as shown in the middle row of Figure 5-14).**
- 3. Cut holes in the lower portion of each half-sphere for the legs to fit in.**
- 4. Draw a bearing sphere in both sides, as shown in the bottom row of Figure 5-14.**

Think of each bearing sphere as a hip joint to which your leg bones attach. Draw the bearing spheres smaller than the hole openings.





**FIGURE 5-14:**  
Constructing the  
hips using the  
half-sphere.

## Forging the arms

Think of the arms as cylinders. You have the upper arm (*biceps*) running from your shoulder to the elbow. Next, you have the lower arm (*forearm*), which runs from the elbow down to the end of the wrists. I show you how to take these two shapes and attach them together.

### Drawing the upper arm (biceps)

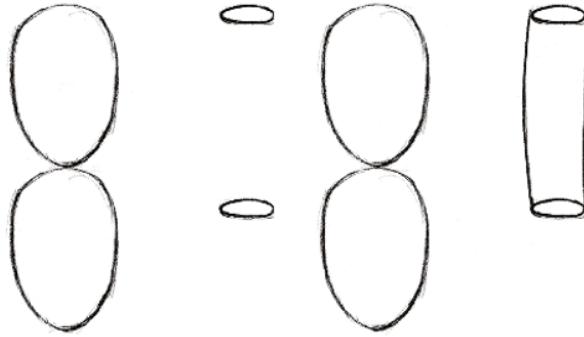
Follow these instructions to draw the upper arm in Figure 5-15:

1. **Draw two narrow ovals  $1\frac{1}{2}$  of a head length apart from each other (as shown to the right of the leftmost image in Figure 5-15).**

Both ovals are the same size. To make sure they're the right amount of space apart, I draw two head shapes to the left of the narrow ovals to use as a measurement guide.

2. **Connect the two ovals with slightly curved lines to complete the cylinder for the upper arm (as shown in the rightmost image in Figure 5-15).**

Make sure both lines are parallel to each other.



**FIGURE 5-15:**  
Constructing the  
biceps using  
the cylinder.

## Creating the lower arm (forearm)

In the following sequence shown in Figure 5-16, I show you how to draw a forearm using another cylinder. Observe that the top of the forearm is wider than the end of the wrist. Start with the upper arm from the previous section and then check out these steps:

1. **Draw a bearing sphere that covers the entire end of the bottom of the upper arm (as shown on the left in Figure 5-16).**

This bearing sphere is the elbow joint that joins the biceps with the forearm.

To make sure the two ovals for the lower forearm are properly spaced in relation to the upper arm, I attach two additional head shapes below the first two head shape measurement guides on the left.

2. **Draw the top of the cylinder of the forearm (as shown in the middle of Figure 5-16).**

The width of the oval is the exact same width as the opening of the biceps. This cylinder overlaps the sphere representing the elbow and creates the perception that the two forms are securely joined.

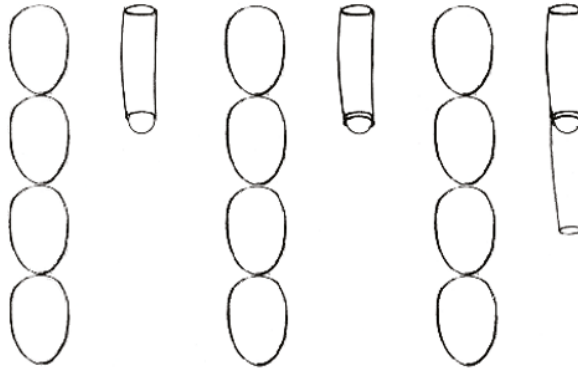
3. **Draw the bottom of the cylinder for the lower arm approximately head length apart from the top (as shown on the right in Figure 5-16).**

The bottom of the cylinder is narrower than the top.

4. **Connect both sides of the cylinder with slightly curved lines (again, as shown on the right in Figure 5-16).**

The inside line curves in at a slightly steeper angle than the outside line. This angle aids the overall balance and design of the arm.

**FIGURE 5-16:**  
Building and  
connecting the  
forearm to  
the biceps.



## On to the legs

Like the arms, the legs are also divided into two sections — the upper leg and the lower leg. The upper leg is much bulkier than the lower leg because it contains larger and more powerful muscles.

Legs are probably one of the most important and most overlooked parts of the body. Most people forget that without the legs placed in the proper position, the body may not be able to support a pose. In the section, “Getting off on the right feet,” later in this chapter, I talk about the importance of keeping track of where one leg rests in relationship to the other leg. Also, with all the exaggerated proportions you see in manga, you may easily discount the fact that the legs and feet count for half the human proportion.

### Upper legs

Time to get some good legwork done! Bring out the hip structure that I discuss in the earlier section, “It’s all in the hips.” This structure gives you a more accurate shape and overall better proportion as you draw the upper leg. Refer to the set of demonstrations in Figure 5-17 as you follow these steps to draw the front,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and side views:

- 1. Draw the top of a cylinder partially covering the bearing sphere on the hips for both the left and right legs.**
- 2. Draw the bottom side of the cylinder for the upper leg  $1\frac{3}{4}$  head lengths down from the top.**

The width of the bottom of the upper leg should be about half the width of the top. The bottom of the cylinder shouldn’t be parallel to the wider top side. The top is angled 45 degrees higher.



In order to avoid drawing body parts colliding into each other, draw limbs branching slightly out to angle *away* from the body. Poses look more stable and stronger when the legs and arms angle away to form a more triangular-shaped composition. A good way to start is by drawing the ovals for the knees slightly separated.

### **3. Draw both sides of the cylinder to complete the upper leg.**

You can see how the outer edge of the upper leg is higher than the opposite, inner side.

## **Lower leg**

Next in order is the lower leg. In Figure 5-18, look at how narrow the cylinder structure is compared to the upper leg. Before starting to draw the lower leg, make sure you construct the hips and attach the upper leg with a bearing sphere as I show you in the previous section.

To continue constructing the lower leg, just follow these steps, keeping in mind that I show you the front,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and side views, left to right:

### **1. Draw a bearing sphere into the bottom of the upper leg (as shown in the top center of Figure 5-18).**

This bearing sphere fits snugly into the lower end of the upper leg to create the kneecap.

### **2. Draw the top of the cylinder around the lower half of the bearing sphere. (See the image in the bottom left of Figure 5-18.)**

### **3. Draw the bottom of the cylinder for the lower leg $1\frac{1}{2}$ heads from the top.**

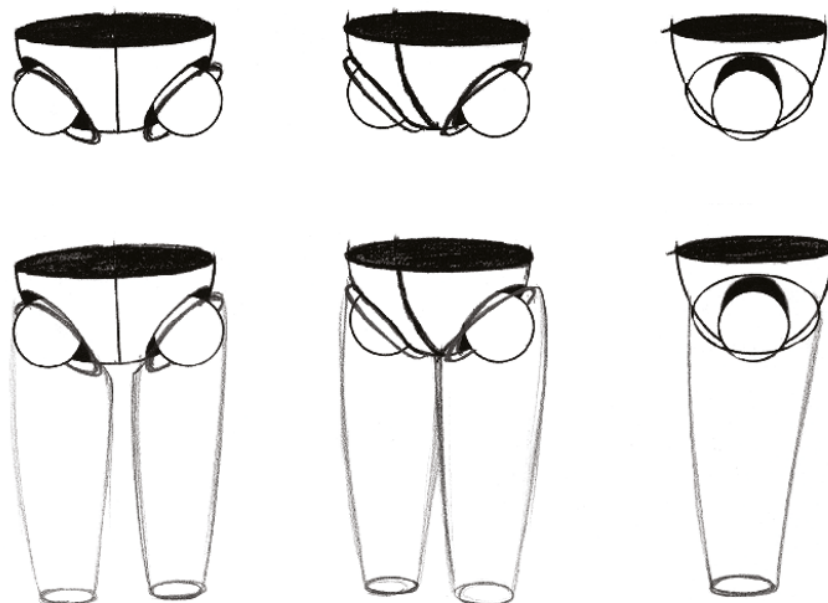
As shown in the bottom left of Figure 5-18, the bottom side of the cylinder is narrower than the top.

### **4. Draw both sides of the cylinder to complete the lower leg. (See the image on the bottom right of Figure 5-18.)**

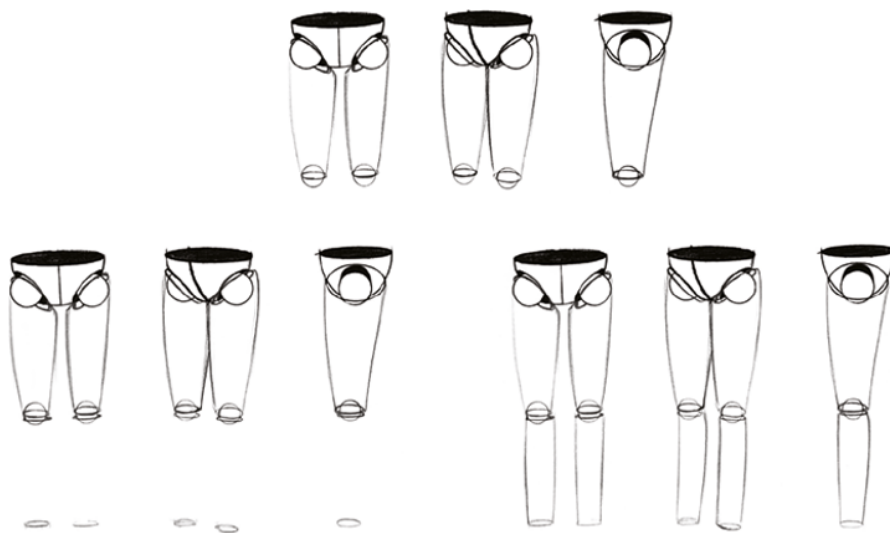
The lower leg is slightly longer than the upper leg. Most beginners make the false assumption that the upper and lower legs are the same length.

## **All hands on deck**

The hands are probably the most sophisticated part of the body. I show you in Figure 5-19 how to break down the hand structure into a simpler object, but the best way of achieving success in drawing hands is to practice.



**FIGURE 5-17:**  
Building and  
connecting the  
upper leg  
to the hip.



**FIGURE 5-18:**  
Building and  
connecting the  
lower leg to the  
upper leg.

Sometimes the importance is not on what you practice, but on how you practice. In this case, conceptualize the hand into geometrical shapes. Carry around a small sketchbook wherever you go. You never know when you're going to get the urge to sit and draw.

Another reason to practice getting better at drawing hands is that they convey a wide range of emotions. For example, clenched fists may show anger. When you're happy, you may clasp your hands together with thankfulness. Being comfortable drawing hands allows you to show your characters' emotions without showing their faces.

For the purpose of clarity, I divide this section into two parts: the palm and the fingers. In each section, I give you the chance to draw step by step the subject at hand (no pun intended).



TIP

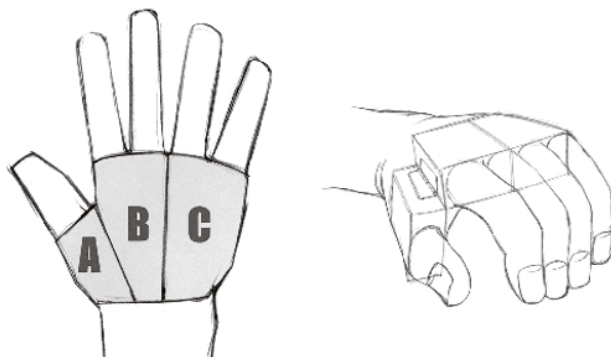
Let me tell you a secret. The hand is used to moving and functioning in only so many patterns — no more than ten, by my book. Any other positions are uncommon, impractical, or simply unappealing. The more you draw the hands, the more you begin to identify these patterns on your own and add them to your repertoire of things you comfortably can draw from memory or without having any reference.

## The palm

Although the palm (like the entire hand) contains a very detailed anatomical structure, you can simplify it into three basic sections. Take time to get to know these sections to help you understand how the rest of the hand works. Each section shown in the left in in Figure 5-19 has its own specific function:

- » **Section A:** Aids the thumb's lateral and vertical movement
- » **Section B:** Groups the index and middle fingers
- » **Section C:** Groups the fourth and fifth fingers

Note the “curving” change in shape and movement that the three sections of the palm make from the front view (as shown on the right in Figure 5-19).



**FIGURE 5-19:**  
The hand divided  
into sections  
A, B, and C.

Start at the upper-left corner of your sketch pad (if you're left-handed, you start at the upper right), and follow these steps:

1. **Draw the basic palm outline (as shown on the left in Figure 5-20).**
2. **Draw a straight, vertical line to divide the center of the palm (as shown in the central image in Figure 5-20).**

The divided sections are as follows: B on the left and C on the right.

3. **Divide Section B with a diagonal line as shown on the right in Figure 5-20.**

The new section on the far left is section A.

**FIGURE 5-20:**  
Drawing the  
hand, sections  
A through C.



## The fingers

The key to understanding the fingers is to see how they group and move in relation to one another. Most beginners are intimidated by the number of intricate gestures associated with the fingers. One student told me that they hated drawing hands because there are simply “too many fingers to draw.” In this section, I show you how to draw the fingers without becoming overwhelmed by the sheer number of them.



REMEMBER

Observe how the fingers move in sync with their respective sections of the palm. Consistent with the letter codes in the section on the palm, each finger naturally mimics or follows the movement of the other finger in the same section. The thumb rests by itself in Section A.



TIP

Look at your hands in motion. Run through normal gestures such as pointing, holding a coffee cup, waving a casual hello, and so on. Keep the gestures simple and relaxed. Observe the motions that happen between the index finger and middle finger (both attached to section B) and the motions that happen between the fourth and fifth fingers (both attached to section C).

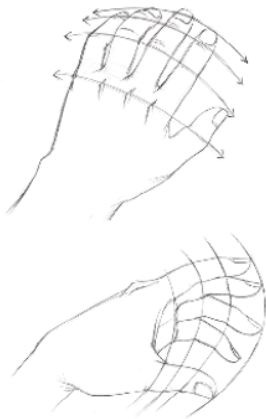
The topmost image in Figure 5-21 shows how the finger joints follow the “curving” movement of the three sections of the palm. (I note the joints of the fingers, so the arc is clear.) In the image at the bottom of Figure 5-21, you see how the index and middle fingers rise in accordance with the higher arcing of section B. Relax your hand in front of you. Then, looking from the side, lift up either the

index or middle finger and watch what happens. You should find that depending upon which finger you moved, the other followed. Even when fingers from one section are higher than the fingers of the other, the arc shape is still there.



REMEMBER

This arc shape helps create a well-balanced and well-designed hand. Without this balance, the hand you draw looks awkward and poorly contrived.



**FIGURE 5-21:**  
Tracking  
the finger  
movements.



REMEMBER

The hand is a lot bigger than you may give it credit for. Most beginners make the mistake of drawing the hands on their characters way too small. Don't let that narrow wrist and the small bones in your hand fool you. The hand is as big as the face of the character, which mimics real life. Don't believe me? Stand in front of the mirror with your open hand in front of your face.

Now, try your hand at drawing the fingers. You need the palm of the hand that I show you in the previous section. Use it as your starting point and follow these steps:

1. Draw a vertical line extending from the center of the division of sections B and C (as shown on the top left in Figure 5-22).
2. Mark the midpoints of sections B and C with small notches, and extend two segments from them, as shown in the top center of Figure 5-22.
3. From each midpoint, draw an elongated cylinder to represent the middle and fourth fingers. (See the image on the top right in Figure 5-22.)



TIP

Make the middle finger slightly longer than the fourth finger. Use the division marks you made on sections B and C to determine the width of the fingers.

4. Add the index finger to the left of the middle finger and the fifth finger to the right of the fourth finger. (See the image on the bottom left in Figure 5-22.)



Both fingers are shorter than the middle and fourth fingers. The fifth finger is the shortest of the four. The width of the fingers should start from the middle of sections B and C and extend to the edge of the top of the palm.

5. **Draw the cylinder for the thumb, as shown in the bottom center of Figure 5-22.** The width of the base of the thumb is the same width as the top of section A. I draw the thumb's inner side (the side facing the palm) by extending the diagonal line of the right side of section A upward and away from the palm. The outer side of the thumb (facing away from the palm) angles inward, almost perpendicular, toward the sky. Complete the top of the thumb by connecting the outside and inside lines of the thumb with a short segment that's parallel to the bottom base of the thumb. The length of the thumb is approximately the same as the length of its base.

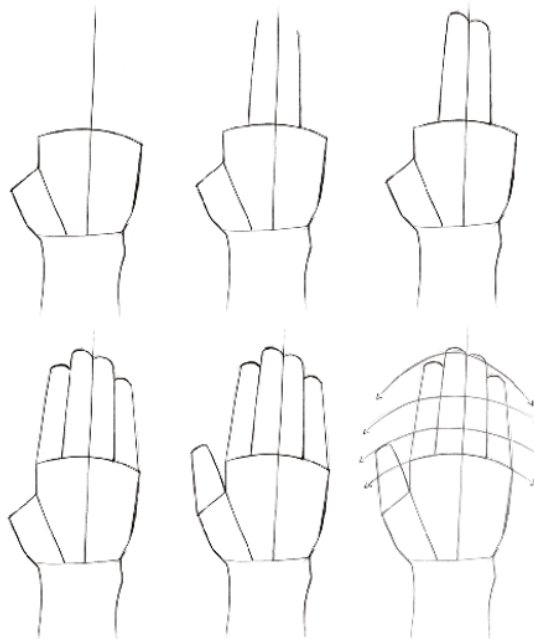
6. **Draw four arcs (as shown on the bottom right in Figure 5-22) to determine the placement of the finger joints.**

The first arc goes over the first joint of the thumb and top of the palm. The second wave crosses over the second joints of all the fingers. The third wave goes through the second joint of the index, middle, and fourth fingers and over the top of the fifth finger. The fourth and final arc travels over the fingertips of the four fingers. This final arc shape is slightly higher than the first three.



REMEMBER

These arcs help the overall design and balance of the hand. Whenever you're in doubt, use these arcs to check your hands.



**FIGURE 5-22:**  
Connecting  
the fingers  
to the palm.

# Getting off on the right feet

Feet are essential to drawing a solid manga pose for your character. Most beginners and even professionals hate drawing feet because they can be such an awkward shape depending on the angle from which you're looking at your character.

## Go ahead, take a stand!

Having a solid footing helps establish your character's relation to their surroundings. Without feet, your characters can't stand. Your character's feet support the weight of the pose. A cool manga pose may require the body to lean more one way than the other. As a result, you need to adjust the feet of the character to compensate for the weight shift. If you're not used to drawing feet, you have problems guessing where to position them.



REMEMBER

Your feet have to be in sync with each other in order for you to stand confidently and comfortably. Check out sports magazines or watch any athletic event on television. Note the placement of the athletes' feet when they strike an action pose. How does a pitcher, for example, place their feet to keep their balance after throwing a 99-mile-per-hour fastball? How does a ballet dancer arrange their toes to keep the center balance of their body from spilling over when they pirouette?

## The structure of the sole

Start drawing the foot from the source of its origin — the lower leg. Start with the front view of the foot. Check out the section on the lower leg earlier in this chapter and then follow these steps to draw the foot:

1. **Attach a bearing sphere to the bottom of the lower leg (as shown in the leftmost image in Figure 5-23).**

This is the ankle, which secures the foot in place.

2. **Draw a short necktie shape over the lower portion of the bearing sphere (as shown in the center-left image in Figure 5-23).**

This necktie shape is the front view of the foot. The bottom tip of the shape is off to the right side. Because the big toe fits in that top section, you can see that I'm drawing the character's right foot. Consequently, if you want to draw the left foot, you skew the necktie shape so that the tip is off to the left.

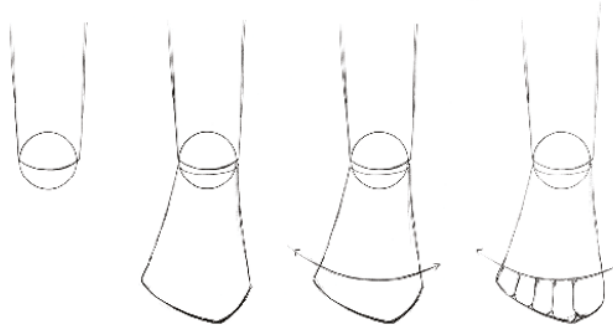


TIP

3. **Draw a single arc toward the bottom of the foot. (See the center-right image in Figure 5-23.)**

Similar to marking the knuckle joints of the fingers (see “The fingers,” earlier in this chapter), this arc is the guideline for the front portion of the foot, right before the toes extend out.

4. **Map out each toe, starting with the big toe right at the end of the corner of the foot. (See the rightmost image in Figure 5-23.)**



**FIGURE 5-23:**  
Attaching the  
front view of  
the foot to  
the lower leg.

Next up is the side view of the foot. Use the front view as your reference point. As you do with the front view, start with the lower leg. I show you both side views of the foot, so you need two lower legs to start. Take the lower leg and glance at these steps:

1. **Attach a bearing sphere to the bottom of each lower leg (as shown on the top left in Figure 5-24).**  
This is the ankle, which secures the foot in place.
2. **Draw a right triangle shape (with the top end cut off), as shown on the top right in Figure 5-24.**
3. **Smooth out the details of the curves in the foot. (See the image on the bottom left in Figure 5-24.)**

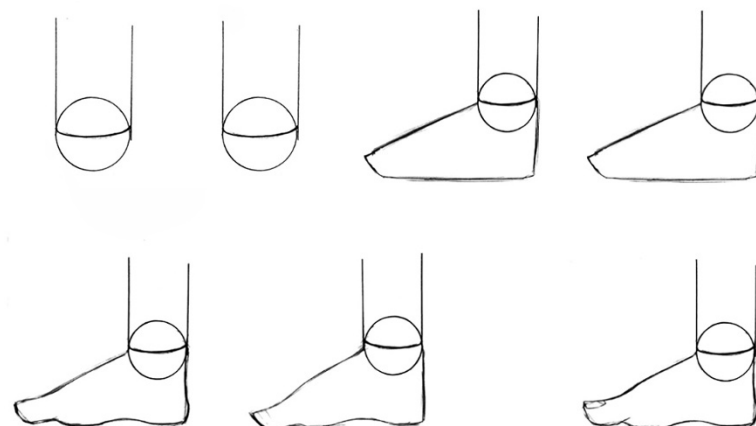


**TIP**

I fine-tune the foot by rounding off the edge on the bottom of the heels and creating an arch in the midsection. Also, I like to add a subtle slope leading down from the top of the ankle to the end of the toes in the front. The foot is approximately the same length as the forearm.

4. **Select one side-view foot and draw its big toe (as shown in the bottom right of Figure 5-24) to show the inside view of the foot.**

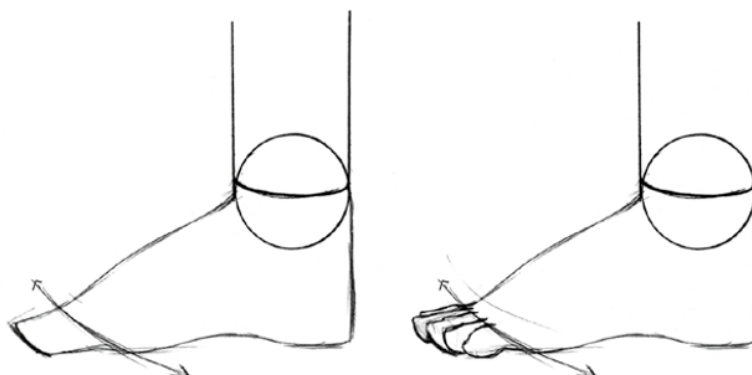
You don't see the rest of the toes because they're all hidden behind the big toe. You're done with the inside view!



**FIGURE 5-24:**  
Attaching the side  
view of the foot  
to the lower leg.

5. For the outside view of the foot, use the other side view foot and draw a guideline arc as shown on the left in Figure 5-25.
6. Draw the toes, starting from the smallest “little piggy” (as shown on the right in Figure 5-25) and continuing to the big toe.

Toes have joints as well. Although they don’t get as much attention as finger joints (mostly due to the fact that characters wear shoes and socks all the time), the joints in the toes allow them to curl.



**FIGURE 5-25:**  
Drawing the  
opposite side  
of the foot.



**TIP**

Whenever I’m drawing overlapping shapes, I start with the largest object closest to me. There certainly isn’t one “right” way of drawing but try to find the “smartest” way of working.

## COVERING YOUR FOOT TRACKS — BAD IDEA!

In many comic books, I've seen instances of artists adding a lot of smoke and mist on the ground to cover up the feet. Luckily for them, battle scenes are abundant! But when a fan at a comic book convention asks you to do a full sketch of a character and you can't draw the feet, you may end up ruining your reputation. That's just one important reason why every artist should continue to draw from life. Keep practicing and get out there to see what kind of shoes are in the fashion world that you want to use for your characters.

## Merging the shapes to the wire figure

The second stage of building your character starts here. In this section, you use the wire frame figure (from “Drawing a Wire Frame,” earlier in this chapter) and piece all the individual geometric parts together. This process is like snapping clothes onto an action figure or doll. I show you how to go about drawing your manga character from the start:

- 1. Pose your wire frame figure. (See Figure 5-26.)**

Start with a simple pose. Avoid complex action poses that have foreshortening or distortion. I lay out a standard pose with the character's arms pretty much straight.

- 2. Fit in the neck and torso/stomach. (See Figure 5-27.)**

- 3. Snap in the hips, legs, and feet. (See Figure 5-28.)**

- 4. Fit in the left and right arms and hands. (See Figure 5-29.)**

And that's it! By keeping the pose straightforward and simple, you can work out the drawing proportion issues before tackling more challenging poses.

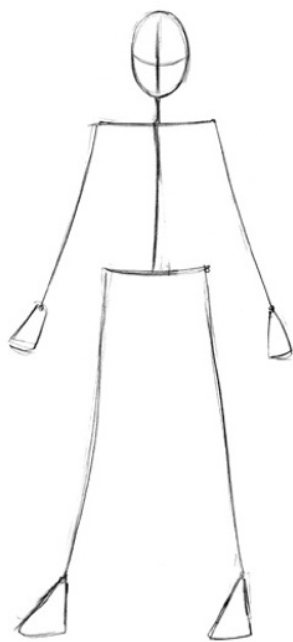
## Beefing up with muscles and rhythm

In the third stage of building up your character, you define the specific physical profile with basic muscle structure. Is your character strong? Slender? You get to choose their appearance!

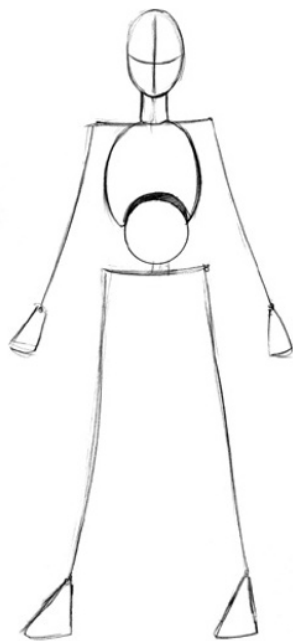


REMEMBER

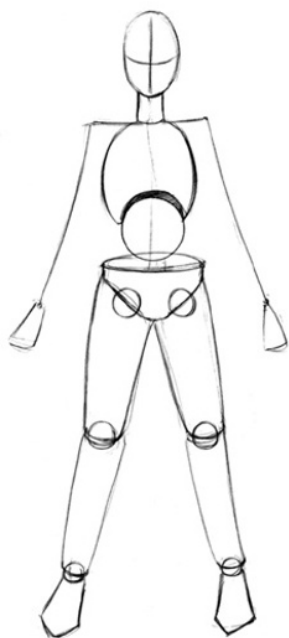
Throughout this section, I show you the basic muscle structure, which I believe is the key to understanding the dynamics and rhythm of the figure. Whichever part of the body you choose to exaggerate should communicate the character's essence. Not every muscle is accentuated. I certainly encourage all artists (students and professionals) to study human anatomy and physiology and draw from life, but don't overwhelm yourself with information overload to the point that you lose sight of the objective of your studies.



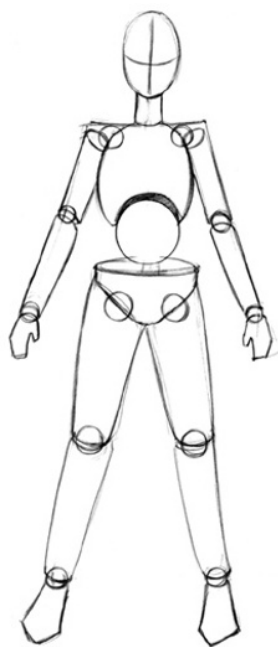
**FIGURE 5-26:**  
A standard pose  
for the wire  
frame figure.



**FIGURE 5-27:**  
Attaching  
the neck and  
torso/stomach.



**FIGURE 5-28:**  
Adding the  
lower body.



**FIGURE 5-29:**  
Including the left  
and right arms  
and hands.

Be careful not to overdo the muscle detail if you're drawing manga characters for the first time. Start off drawing the simple shapes that are closer to real-life proportions rather than overwhelming your readers with all the busy muscle structure details.



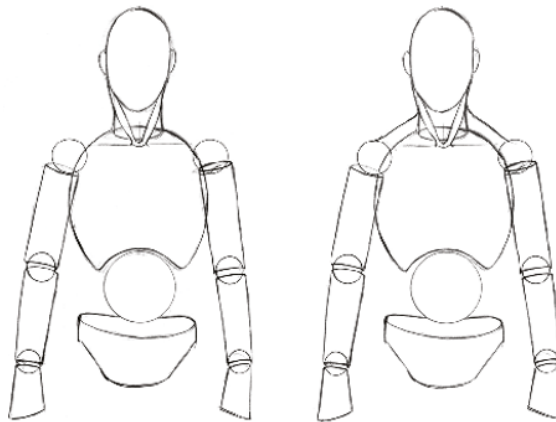
WARNING

In this section I show you how to add definition, and I note the differences between the male and female figures. Males and females share the same basic anatomical structure, but you need to be aware of major, obvious differences. I list some major muscle groups that you can use, starting from the neck.

## The neck

Adjusting the width of the *sternomastoid* and the *trapezius* muscles in the neck is the key to showing strength in men. Including the shape of these muscles in female characters can also suggest elegance and beauty. You have more room for play with the size of these muscles when you're drawing male characters. Check out these steps to draw the neck:

1. As shown on the left in Figure 5-30, draw two muscle bands (the *sternomastoid*) coming from behind the jaw and under the ear down to the center of the character, right above the middle of the torso.
2. From each band, draw a curving line (as shown on the right in Figure 5-30) to create the *trapezius* muscle form.



**FIGURE 5-30:**  
Drawing the  
sternomastoid  
and the trapezius.

## The chest

Shōnen action manga characters often have bulging muscles in their upper torsos. These muscles are the *pectoralis* muscle group — they just aren't as big in real life. As you see in Figure 5-31, this muscle group joins from the center of the rib cage

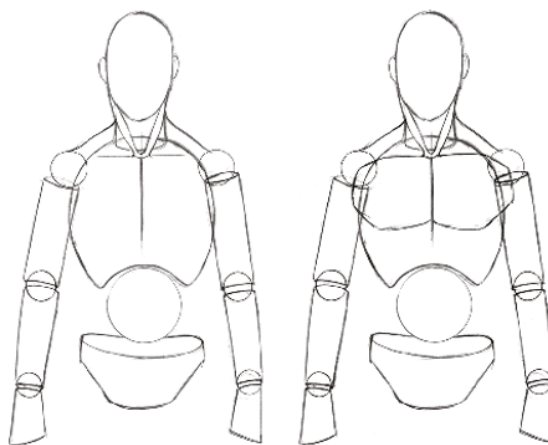


and connects underneath the shoulder muscle where a bearing sphere is located. The stronger the character is, the more prominent the bulge is. Use these steps to draw the chest:

1. **Draw a line to divide the center of the torso into left and right pectoralis muscle groups. (See the image on the left in Figure 5-31.)**
2. **Add the pectoral muscles to complete the upper torso. (See the image on the right in Figure 5-31.)**

When drawing the left and right pectoral muscle group, make sure they stretch to slightly overlap the upper arms. It's important that the outer top and bottom sections of both groups angle inward toward each other before connecting with the upper arm.

3. **As a finishing touch, add a couple of marks just below the torso or ribcage to give definition to the overall structure.**



**FIGURE 5-31:**  
Stretching the  
pectoralis  
muscles over  
the torso.

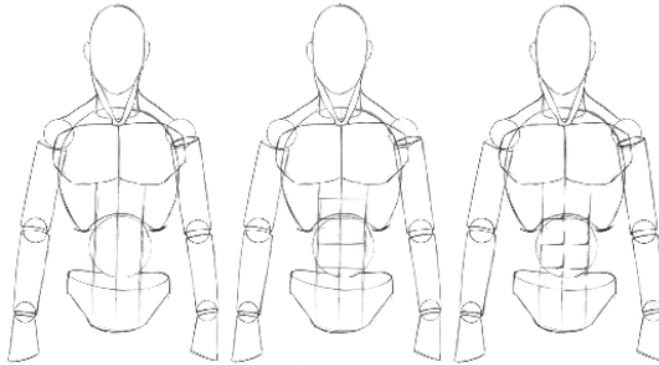
## The stomach

The stomach consists of a pair of muscles groups (*rectus abdominis*) in the shape of a wide band, running side by side. As I show in Figure 5-32, the pectoralis muscle overlaps the very top of the stomach muscles. That's why you see six-pack abs rather than eight-pack abs on those fitness magazine models. To draw the rectus abdominis, try these steps:

1. **Lightly sketch three lines going from the center of the torso down to the bottom center of the hip (as shown on the left in Figure 5-32).**
2. **Lightly draw three cross-division lines hinting at the individual muscle divisions (as shown in the center image in Figure 5-32).**

### 3. Decide which lines to keep and which ones to erase.

In the image on the right in Figure 5-32, I erase some lines to avoid including too much detail. Otherwise, the overall anatomy is too busy and distracts the readers. Sometimes less is more!



**FIGURE 5-32:**  
Stretching the  
rectus abdominis  
over the stomach.

## The hips

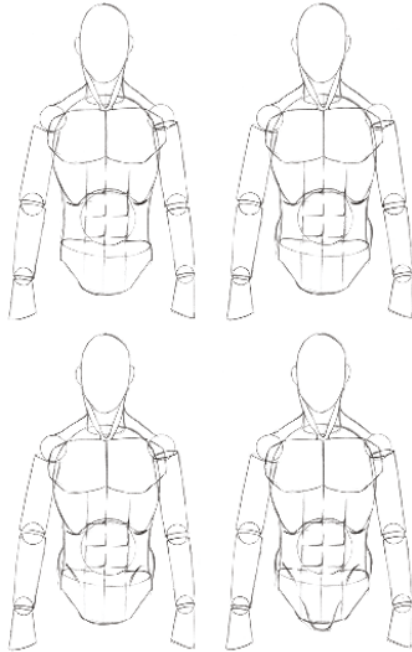
Include three body landmarks when you're defining the hip. First, fit on the *external oblique*. Don't let the name intimidate you. As shown in Figure 5-33, it's just two small bumps on both sides above the hips. Keep them small and subtle. The second landmark, *iliac crest*, includes the two lines marking the front of the hip-bone, slightly protruding from the skin. The final landmark is the curve for the groin area, *symphysis pubis*. Use these steps to draw the hips:

1. **Draw two lines to connect both sides of the torso to the hips (as shown in the top left of Figure 5-33).**
2. **Add two bumps for the external oblique (as shown in the top center of Figure 5-33).**  

If you make these bumps too big, they end up looking like love handles, and you don't want that (unless, of course, your character has a massive beer belly).
3. **Create two marks in front of the hips (as shown in the bottom left of Figure 5-33).**
4. **Draw the curve for the groin area (as shown in the bottom right of Figure 5-33).**



A good way to see whether you're placing the hipbones correctly is to compare them to the lines and markings of the torso/stomach area. The overall markings of the torso and stomach muscle groups should resemble the bottom of a turtle shell.



**FIGURE 5-33:**  
Defining the hips.

## The legs and feet

In my opinion, legs are one of the more fun and rhythmical parts of the entire body. As I show you in the following steps, a distinct rhythmical flow starts from the hips and continues down to the feet. Draw this part of the body with the aid of these steps:

1. **Draw an outline of the muscle form (*vastus lateralis/medialis*) from the upper leg crossing over diagonally from the outside of the lower hip to the inside of the leg where the kneecap is. (See the image on the left in Figure 5-34.)**

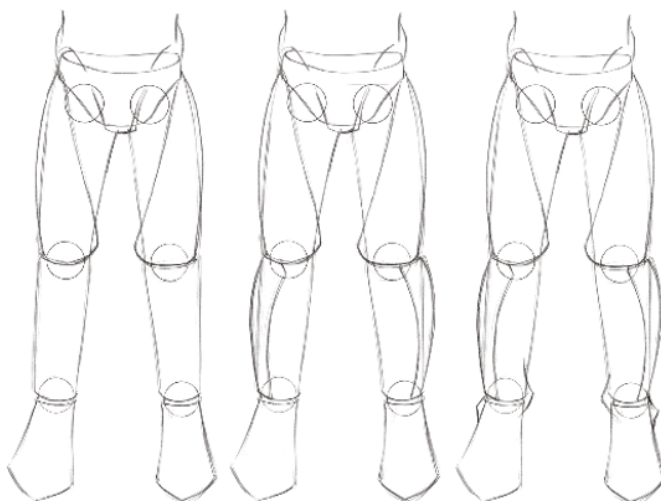
Observe the way the overlapping shape slightly extends past the cylinder of the upper leg as it travels down to the knees. This is the largest muscle shape of the lower leg, and it supports basically the entire upper body.

2. **On the outside of the lower leg, draw a slight curve (as shown in the center image Figure 5-34) to show the grouping of smaller muscles known as the *anterior* muscles.**

**3. Draw the ankles right above the feet by drawing a bump on each side (as shown on the right in Figure 5-34).**

The bump on the inner side of the leg (the *medial malleolus*) is higher than the bump on the outside (the *lateral malleolus*).

Now comes the cool part. See whether you can identify the curving rhythmical lines that wind down the leg from the hip, following the structural landmarks you just created. The same mirroring curves on both legs create an “S” curving shape. (See Figure 5-35.)



**FIGURE 5-34:**  
Defining the legs.



**FIGURE 5-35:**  
Observe the  
curving flow,  
resembling an “S.”

## The arms

I save the arms for last in this particular pose because they carry the least amount of significance.



TIP

Here are some questions to ponder when posing your character:

- » Which portion of the body is carrying the most weight?
- » Which body part, if moved, would cause the character to lose balance?
- » Which body part, if moved, wouldn't affect the character's balance at all?

With this particular pose, this character can be flailing their arms high up in the air without tripping or falling down.

Follow the steps and Figure 5-36 to define the arm:

1. **As shown on the top left in Figure 5-36, cover the bearing sphere at the shoulder with a cap-like muscle structure (*deltoid*).**

Think of the deltoid as a shoulder pad for hockey or football. Also note that the end of the deltoid is a pointed tip.

2. **Draw a line dividing the upper arm to create two muscle divisions (as shown on the top right in Figure 5-36).**

The back section of the upper arm is called the *triceps*. The front section of the upper arm is known as the *biceps*. Depending on which angle you draw the upper arm, either side should be drawn larger than the other.

3. **Going into the forearm, draw a dividing line from the center of the biceps down to the wrist (as shown in the bottom left of Figure 5-36).**

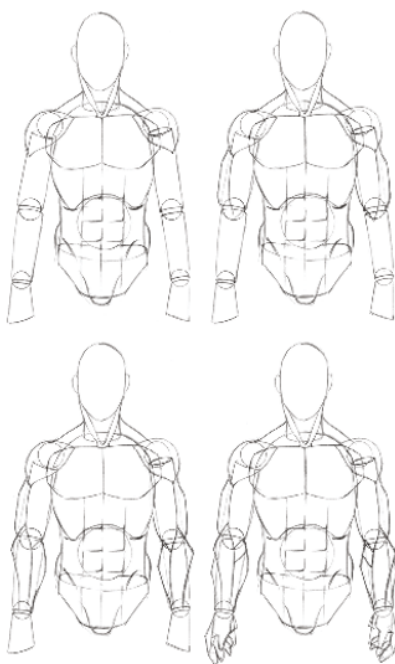
Observe carefully how the top of the divided forearm muscles intertwines to fit between the triceps and biceps of the upper arm.

4. **Complete the arm by drawing the hands (as shown in the bottom right of Figure 5-36).**



TIP

Be careful not to mix up the left and right hands when snapping them onto the end of the wrists. A good rule of thumb (no pun intended) is that the thumb side of the hand always faces toward the front of the body in a relaxed position.

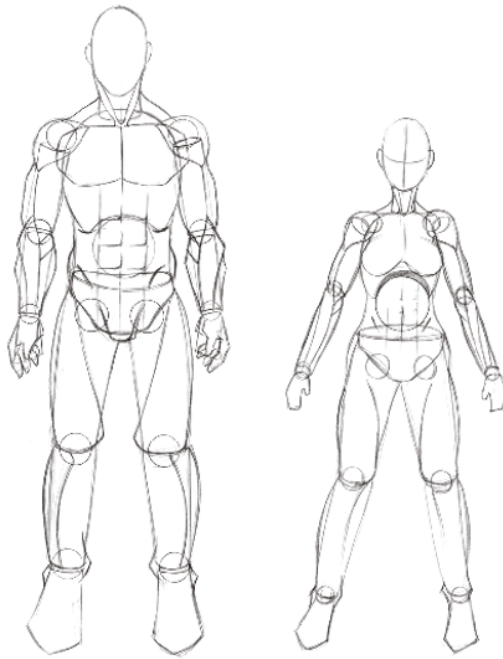


**FIGURE 5-36:**  
Defining  
structure  
in the arm.

## Adding a woman's touch with curves

Rather than redrawing some of the repetitive steps over again, in this section I show you a comparison between the defined female form versus the defined male form in the earlier sections. Check out the contrast between the left and right images in Figure 5-37. Here are some differences when creating definition for the female figure:

- » **Thinner neck:** Her neck is slender. Adding the lines for the sternomastoid is okay but keep them subtle.
- » **Shoulders:** Keep them narrow. Notice that the trapezius is less pronounced. Also, draw the deltoids smaller.
- » **Torso/stomach:** Note that the torso is tilted a bit more forward. The waistline is narrower and tighter. Think of the breasts as two hemispheres resting on the torso.
- » **Hips:** Draw the hips wider. Full-grown adults should have an hourglass figure.
- » **Legs:** Draw the legs thinner and longer (even if you have to make the torso a bit shorter). Don't draw the upper leg muscles too prominently. Draw the feet smaller.
- » **Arms/hands:** Note how slender and less defined the arms and especially the hands are. Unless your female character is a pro wrestler on steroids, keep the figure as smooth and round as possible.



**FIGURE 5-37:**  
Comparing the  
male versus  
the female.

## Growing Pains

As time progresses, physical changes take place before your very own eyes. Exploring some of these changes is worth your time for a couple of reasons. First, you may want to draw your character differently, say, ten years from the present. When readers are hooked on your character, they want to know everything about them (including what happens to them in the future). Second, you need to consider drawing characters other than your main character, and they're likely to be different ages.

In Figure 5-38, I show examples of manga characters at different ages.



**TIP**

Here are some helpful characteristics to keep in mind while studying proportions for children:

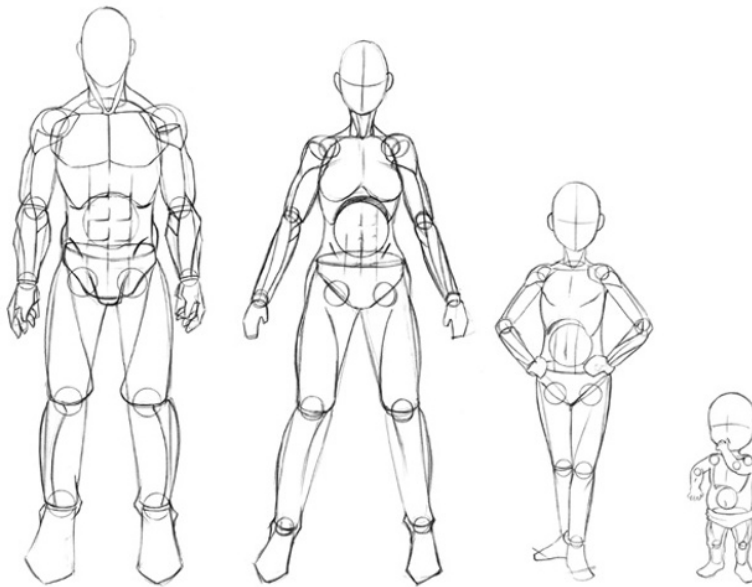
- » Usually children are 3½ heads tall.
- » Muscles for the arms and feet aren't defined.
- » The forehead and the back cranium head structure are noticeably large.
- » Like in real life, the head is disproportionate to the body.

Here are some helpful characteristics to keep in mind while studying the proportions for teenagers:

- » Generally, teenagers are  $6\frac{1}{2}$  heads tall.
- » Muscle structure is relatively subtle.
- » Toward the late teens, males begin to develop muscle tone throughout their bodies (especially the torso).
- » The breasts begin to form for the females relatively early in their teens.

Here are some helpful characteristics to keep in mind while studying the proportions for adults:

- » Males and females reach anywhere between  $7\frac{1}{2}$  and 11 heads tall.
- » Males develop a more chiseled muscle definition.
- » Females develop a fuller form and curves around the hips, breasts, and legs.
- » Females have wider hips than males.
- » Males develop broader shoulders and torso than females.



**FIGURE 5-38:**  
Observing  
characters at  
different ages  
and stages.



- » Discovering basic fold techniques
- » Creating your own outfits
- » Tailoring your accessories to custom fit your character

## Chapter 6

# Customize and Accessorize Your Manga Character

In the manga world, fashion is pivotal! It differentiates one character from another. Whether your character is the lead athlete getting ready to take on the whole world or a regular Joe standing in the corner never to make another appearance, what they're wearing can play a huge role in whether the audience remembers your character's name or the title of your manga.

From drawing basic folds to cute hair ribbons, the choices of what your character can wear are endless. In this chapter, I give you the lowdown on how to draw basic manga clothing and accessories. Keep in mind that overloading your character with too much bling isn't always a good thing. You want to strike the right balance and make sure you dress your character appropriately for every occasion.

# Know When to Fold 'Em: Drawing Fabric Folds

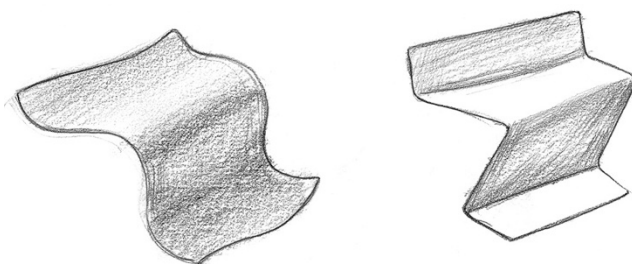
To get your character's clothing to look right, start with the basics — knowing your folds. In this case, folding doesn't refer to the hand you gave up at your last poker game. Instead, think of a *fold* as the kind of shape the fabric makes.



TIP

You see folds everywhere, from the simple fold in a napkin to the many folds in an elaborate wedding dress. Don't become overwhelmed, thinking that you have to draw every single fold in a character's clothing. Here are two simple rules to start with:

- » **Softer materials create larger and rounder folds (as shown on the left in Figure 6-1).** Examples of soft materials include kimonos, pajamas, T-shirts, and cotton sweaters. Think of the characters wearing these fabrics dumping a jug of fabric softener into the washer.
- » **Tougher materials create sharp folds (as shown on the right of Figure 6-1).** Examples of tough materials include school or military uniforms, business suits, and stiff leather. Think of the characters wearing these fabrics using up a huge can of hardcore starch before ironing.



**FIGURE 6-1:** Rounder and sharper folds tell readers the quality of the material.

## The art of the pinch, pull, and tuck: Exploring drapery folds

Folds in fabric are caused by a tug, pull, pinch, or other tension on the surface. Based on the direction and intensity of that tension (maybe due to the wind, or someone grabbing a shirt by the collar), the folds change in size and direction.

## BUILDING A FASHION SENSE

Coming up with original ideas on your own is difficult without help from the outside world. Over the years, I've accumulated a bunch of images from fashion magazines to help me come up with costume ideas. Today, you can do all your research on the Internet, which makes accumulating ideas easier. You can store all your files digitally on your computer instead of buying large, heavy binders and bookshelves on which to store them. If you decide to go digital, organize your files so that images that you want or need to use are easy to retrieve. Also, store your images on a separate drive that's large enough to accommodate larger images.

Although the clothes conceal the figure underneath, keep the figure's form while you're drawing the outfit. As I show you later in this chapter, the tensions that cause the folds can be the result of twisting, bending, or stretching motions of the body underneath. Similar to an earthquake, tension always has a source. The folds are simply pointing toward that source.



REMEMBER

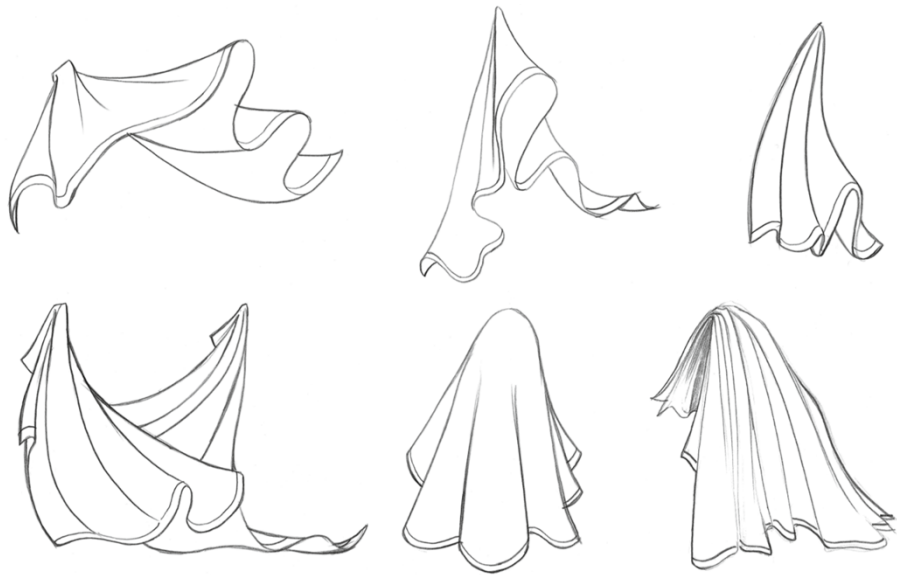
Here I give you some patterns to pay attention to when you're first drawing folds in clothing. Exceptions exist for every rule, but for the most part, the following list has withstood the test of time:

- » As folds fall away from the source of tension, they get wider.
- » As folds come closer to the source of tension, they get narrower.
- » As folds fall away, they obey gravity (with the exception of folds that wrap around underneath a form).
- » Folds angle down and away from the source of tension.
- » Folds are almost never parallel to each other.

## Basic free-falling folds

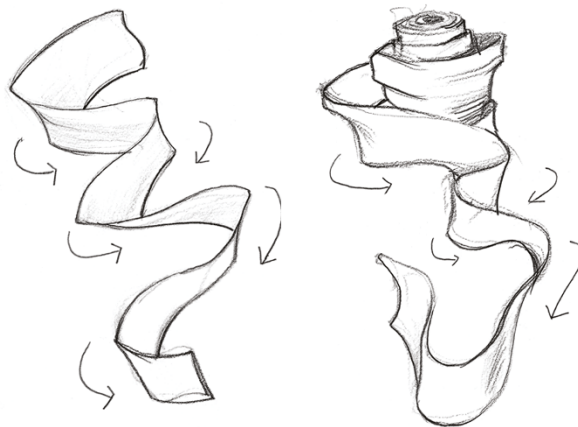
Artists commonly draw basic free-falling folds on loose clothing hanging down, like a blanket, scarf, or towel. These folds are on fabric that's suspended or blowing loosely in the air. Starting with this fold is great, because the tension is usually caused by just one or two factors. In these examples, you can't see the form underneath these folds. Study the drawings in Figure 6-2. Try to identify the source of the tension causing the fold(s) to happen. Also, pay attention to which direction the folds are flowing.

**FIGURE 6-2:**  
Folds point  
toward the center  
of tension.



## Overlapping folds

In Figure 6-3, I show you examples of overlapping folds. Recognize the differences between the “Z” patterns on the left in Figure 6-3 and the “S” patterns on the right: The “Z” shapes suggest rapid and aggressive movement, whereas the “S” shapes give the sense of flowing and graceful movement. Overlapping folds show how the environment (such as wind, energy waves, or rapid movement) affects loose, large articles of clothing.



**FIGURE 6-3:**  
Overlapping  
folds show  
more movement.

## Folds that wrap around

In Figure 6-4, I show you folds that wrap around. These folds are commonly associated with clothing that wraps around the body it covers. When you're drawing loose clothing on a character (such as sweaters, leg warmers, or scarves), the folds get wider as they come closer to the edge of the object they cover. (See Figure 6-4.) If you want to draw tighter clothing (such as tight T-shirts, undergarments, or jeans), the folds should get narrower as they wrap around the edge of the object they cover. (See Figure 6-5.)



TIP

Folds that wrap around don't fall with gravity. Rather, the direction of the folds is dictated by the tension and the forms that lie underneath. Most of these folds travel more horizontally or diagonally than vertically.

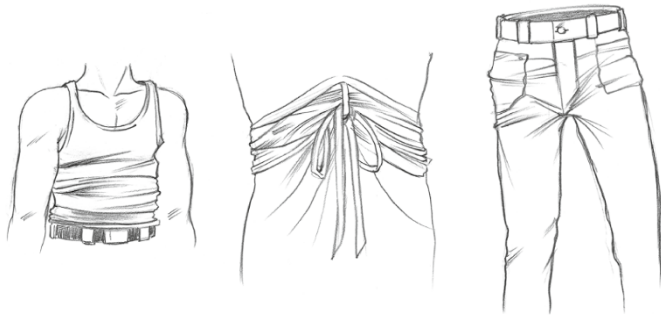
## NESTING FOLDS

*Nesting folds* are more advanced; they literally fold into one another. As shown in Figure 6-6, nesting folds usually happen when clothing or drapery bunches together. Although these folds tend to be more complex in detail and design, they certainly add to the overall aesthetics of the character's appearance. (For now, just look at the examples I show and know they exist. Don't worry about drawing these advanced folds at this point; you can always iron out the wrinkles later!)

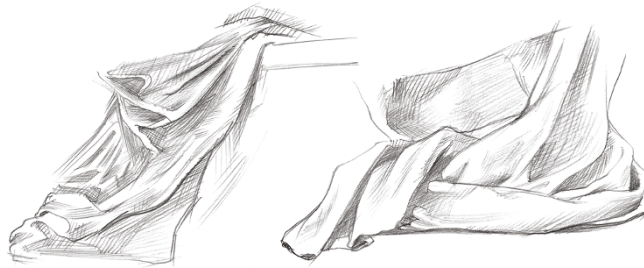


**FIGURE 6-4:**  
Looser clothing  
has wider,  
softer edges.

**FIGURE 6-5:**  
Tighter clothing  
has narrower  
edges.



**FIGURE 6-6:**  
Interesting  
nesting folds  
happen when  
folds overlap.



## Is that leather, silk, or what?

Is your character wearing thick leather, soft wool, or paper-thin silk? By adjusting the space between the two edges of the character's uniform, the choice becomes yours. (See Figure 6-7.) Observe how the thickness of the decoration on the character's hat implies that it's made out of metal. In contrast, the sharp thinness of the lines in his shirt suggests that the material is made of everyday cotton. In addition to adjusting the space on the rim of the material, folds flowing down in straight lines or angles from the source of tension suggest that the material is stiff and thick. By contrast, softer materials tend to have folds coming down in wavy cascades. Often, the ends of the material flow up and down, resembling that of a bell-shaped curve.

## Shadows revisited

I explain the concept of shadows in depth in Chapter 4. As you become comfortable drawing folds, you can start adding shadows to enhance depth and create texture in the fabric. As I show you on the left in Figure 6-8, shadows with soft edges around the rim give the illusion that the material is thick but very soft (in this case, a thick wool jacket). However, watch what happens when I replace those soft edges with a hard-lined shadow for the center image in Figure 6-8. All of a sudden, this jacket looks like it could weigh a ton. I can't imagine any current fashion model being able to wear this jacket down the catwalk!



**FIGURE 6-7:**  
Adjusting the rim  
width to show  
different material  
thicknesses.

You can use shadows to push parts of the clothing back and forth in space as well. Look at the center image in Figure 6-8 and note how the shaded area gets pushed back behind the non-shaded area of the front. The shading gives the readers a sense of open space between the front and the back of the jacket. The moment you remove the shadow, the sense of depth is compromised.



**TIP**

In addition to adding wider edges to the rim of the material, you can add streak marks to suggest that the material is made out of metal or glass. This technique is known as adding texture to the surface. You can easily implement these streaks by drawing several paired lines running diagonally. (See the image on the right Figure 6-8.)



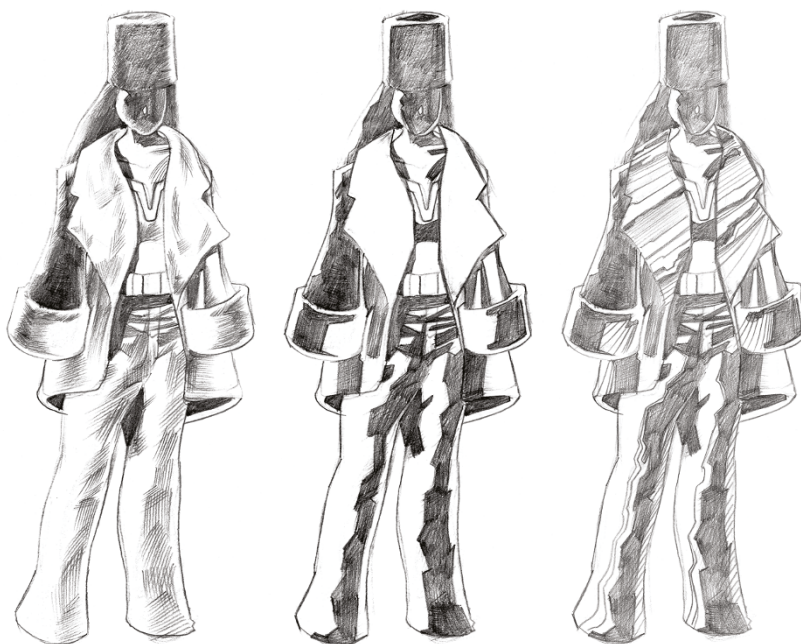
**REMEMBER**

Knowing where to place shadows takes some practice. The location of shadows shifts when the light source or direction changes drastically, but you should generally assume that the source is coming from above and to the right of the subject matter.

Here's a quick, simple exercise that can help you figure out where the shadows fall on the folds. Take a moment to follow these steps in creating a mock-up of the structure of a fabric fold (say you're looking at the folds of a curtain):

- 1. Take a sheet of regular printer paper and draw four horizontal lines going from side to side as shown at the top of Figure 6-9.**

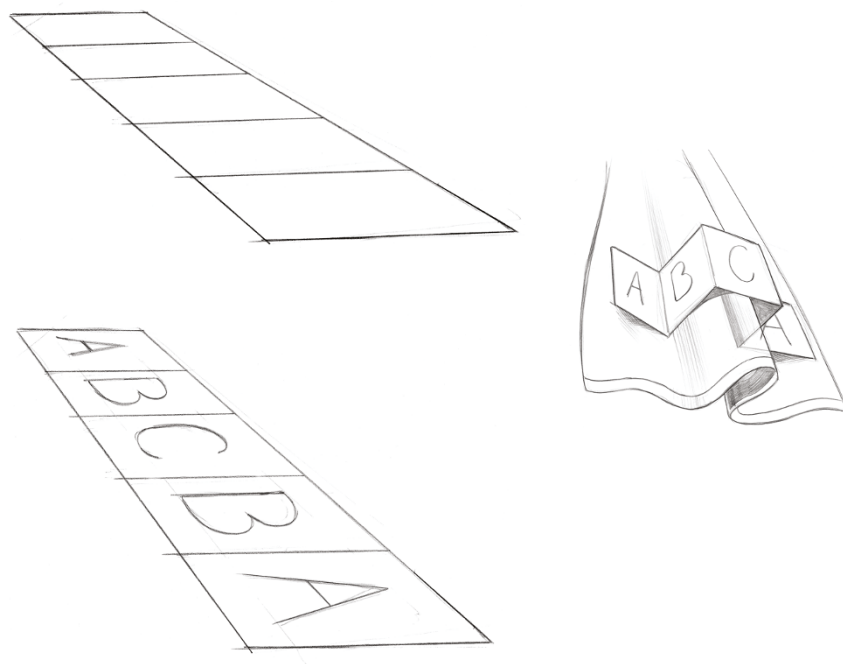
**FIGURE 6-8:**  
Using soft and  
hard edges to  
create hardness/  
softness of  
the clothing.



2. Mark the letters A-B-C-B-A in the sections on the paper. (See the image on the center right of Figure 6-9.)
3. Fold the paper so that the sides marked A face upward, the sides marked B face the sides, and the side marked C faces upward. (See the image on the bottom left of Figure 6-9.)

With a mock-up of the fold, watch what happens when you put a light source (it can be a simple desk lamp or a flashlight) on either side of the model. Notice and study what happens when you place the light above and to the right of the model. Which side is the brightest and which side is the darkest? What kind of cast shadows do you see? If you push in the A sides toward side C, how does the way you perceive the light change? Finally, place this model next to a fold in a curtain and compare the two to see how the shadows on both models are similar. The goal of comparing these two models is to discover the patterns of where the light does and doesn't fall on the fold. The areas where the light doesn't fall need to be shaded in.





**FIGURE 6-9:**  
Creating a mock  
drapery fold  
out of paper.

## Dressing Up for the Occasion

For an introduction to basic shapes and how things fold together, see “Know When to Fold ’Em: Drawing Fabric Folds” earlier in this chapter. In this section, I show you how to put these concepts into action, applying these folds into drawing the actual clothing of your character.

When you’re getting ready to draw clothing, ask yourself whether you want your character to be wearing the following:

- » Short or long clothing
- » Thick or thin clothing
- » Loose or tight clothing

When drawing a character, I usually start from the top. In this case, “top” means clothing for the upper body.

## Starting from the top

You have various types of tops to consider for both sexes. In Figure 6-10, I show you some of the basic generic types of clothing that manga characters commonly wear. For the most part, girls have the fashion advantage of being able to wear most clothing that boys wear. Tops usually fall into the categories of short sleeves (such as preppy summer wear and T-shirts, like the one on the left in Figure 6-10), long sleeves (such as uniforms and sweatshirts; see the image in the center of Figure 6-10), or no sleeves (such as evening wear or the tank top on the right in Figure 6-10). All you need to be aware of is maybe changing the color of the top to a warmer color (which is rarely a problem, because most manga is printed in black and white, with the exception of the cover of the trade paperback).

**FIGURE 6-10:**  
Generic, unisex  
tops common  
for manga  
characters.



The differences that distinguish what the girls versus the boys wear lie within the addition of lingerie, dresses, or other skimpy outfit assortments.

## Collars

In this section, I get down to the specifics, exploring some of the choices and options you have when making alternations to the collar or opening of a top. Refer to the drawings I show you in Figure 6-11 to see these collars:

- » **Raised Tube-Shaped Collar (top left, Figure 6-11):** You usually find this collar on school and military uniforms and on characters wearing the traditional Chinese martial arts outfit. This collar can either be connected completely or have a V-shaped opening in the front. Although you can use this type for both sexes, it's primarily associated with boys.
- » **V-Neck Collar (top right, Figure 6-11):** Boys usually have this type of opening on their sweatshirts or long-sleeved fall fashion wear. Female characters generally have the V-shape going lower to increase their sex appeal.
- » **U-Neck Collar (bottom left, Figure 6-11):** Both boys and girls have this collar on their T-shirts and some long-sleeved shirts. Again, the U-shape should drop lower for female characters. This type is probably the most unisex collar you see today.

» **Dress-Shirt Collar (bottom right, Figure 6-11):** You generally see this collar on school uniforms and corporate dress uniforms. Although boys usually have a tie, the artists commonly substitute ribbons and jewelry in place of the tie for the girls. Draw this collar a little larger than you see it in real life. If the character is a rebel without a cause or a sexy girl, skip the necktie and leave the top couple of buttons open.



**FIGURE 6-11:**  
Unisex collar tops  
worn by manga  
characters.

## Sleeves

Sleeves are fun to draw because you have so much variety and liberty in how you can interpret the folds.



REMEMBER

The key to drawing great sleeves isn't necessarily drawing them realistically. Rather than trying to draw every single wrinkle and fold that you see from your reference photo, consider taking more liberty and drawing bigger, generally abstract shapes.

In Figure 6-12, I show you how to incorporate a rhythmic flow to the sleeves, similar to a rhythm I demonstrate in Chapter 5 with the human figure. The great advantage and beauty of drawing manga clothing is that you have so much freedom and room for interpretation in coming up with interesting shapes.

For the following steps, you need the arm you construct in Chapter 5 (if you haven't done that yet, flip to Chapter 5 first). Then follow these steps to draw the long sweatshirt sleeve:

1. **Draw the upper part of the outside of the sleeve over the arm (as shown on the far left in Figure 6-12).**

Because this is a sweatshirt, note the space between the outside sleeve and the arm.

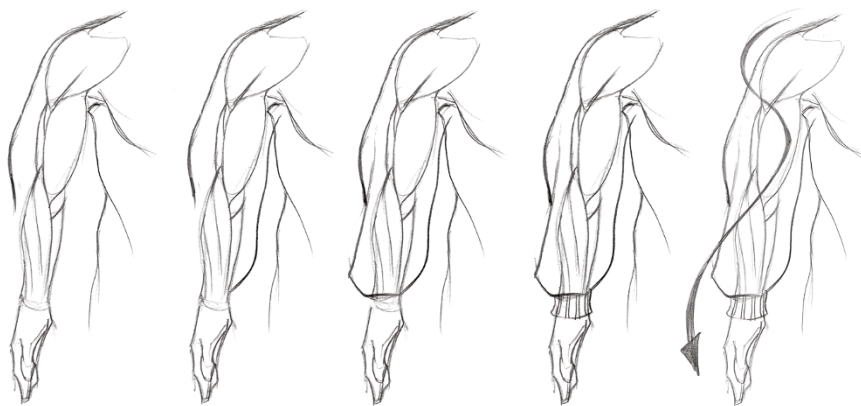
2. **Draw the inside shape for the lower sleeve (as shown second from the left in Figure 6-12).**

3. **Draw the last portion of the outside sleeve (as shown in the central image in Figure 6-12).**

4. **Complete the sleeve by adding the cuff at the wrist of the sleeve. (See the second-to-the-right image in Figure 6-12.)**

Observe the S-curve rhythm (see the image on the far right in Figure 6-12) or flow traveling from the top to the bottom of the arm.

**FIGURE 6-12:**  
Drawing the  
sleeve of the  
sweatshirt.



When the arm lifts up, note the shift of tension in the fold. Keep asking yourself which direction the shirt is being pulled toward. Look at the image on the far right in Figure 6-12 and observe how the small folds bunch together under the tight armpit section of the shoulder. Also, note the tension or direction of the longer folds that stretch from underneath the armpit toward the lower ribcage and across the *pectoralis* (chest) muscle group of the torso.



REMEMBER

As you explore and observe different folds, you find how closely a lot of them mimic the muscle structure of the figure that lies beneath. For example, that fold at the top of the shoulder closely resembles the structure of the pectoralis muscle. You still see how the lines of the sleeve form the rhythmic S-curve shape across the arm.



TIP

I have another trick up my sleeve (bad pun — someone stop me) that you can use when drawing the lines for the sleeves. As soon as you complete one line, draw the corresponding line on the opposite side. As the sleeve approaches the wrist, make the lines shorter. Don't forget to make sure that the lines form shapes that overlap each other. Otherwise, the arm will appear flat and two-dimensional.

The folds and wrinkles of tighter sleeves adhere closely to the form of the arm itself. Follow these steps to draw tighter-style sleeves:

- 1. As shown on the far left in Figure 6-13, draw the outside and inside sleeves close to the arm.**

With tighter sleeves that adhere to the arm, some popular manga-ka draw the sleeves curving out away from each other to separate the clothing from the skin.

Also note that you don't need as many lines to create these sleeves as you do to make looser sleeves.

- 2. Add the folds emerging from under the armpits. (See the second-to-the-left image in Figure 6-13.)**

Draw the folds diagonally, short, and fairly straight, in contrast with the round curve forms on the loose sweatshirt.

- 3. Add small folds at the joint between the biceps and forearm. (See the second-to-the-right image in Figure 6-13.)**

Note that the folds curve in inversely to describe forms underneath.

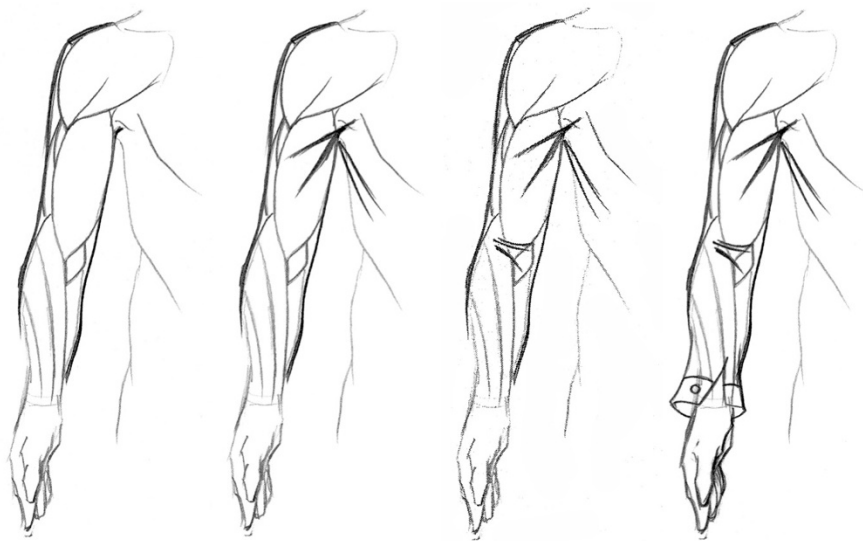
- 4. Draw the sleeve curving outward at the end of the arm. (See the image on the far right in Figure 6-13.)**

The V-shape and a button add nice touches to the sleeve.

## The body of the shirt

The body of the shirt shares its behavior with the sleeve. The sources of tension or pull usually start under the arms, right around or slightly above the waistline, and across the chest section.

**FIGURE 6-13:**  
Drawing the  
sleeve of  
the tighter  
dress shirt.



The tighter the shirt is, the closer the clothing clings to the body. In the image on the left in Figure 6-14, you see multiple fold lines hugging around the hip area. Among the many fold patterns you see (especially in tight clothing), you will start to recognize two common shapes: the letters “Y” and “X” (when viewed sideways). These common shapes are usually the result of multiple folds compressing together. The tighter the clothing is, the more tension is created by the clothing, and the more closely it has to mimic the figure that lies beneath. The pull in the tension that causes the folds is heightened when the body twists, turns, or bends at even the slightest degree (as shown on the right in Figure 6-14).

**FIGURE 6-14:**  
The “X” and “Y”  
fold patterns  
on a tight shirt  
or blouse.



## Fitted shirt

For the following directions, you need the torso that I show you in Chapter 5 with the front and side views completed. Follow these steps to draw a fitted shirt:

1. **Draw the outline of the collar and sleeve shape you want over both sides of the arms as shown on the left in Figure 6-15.**

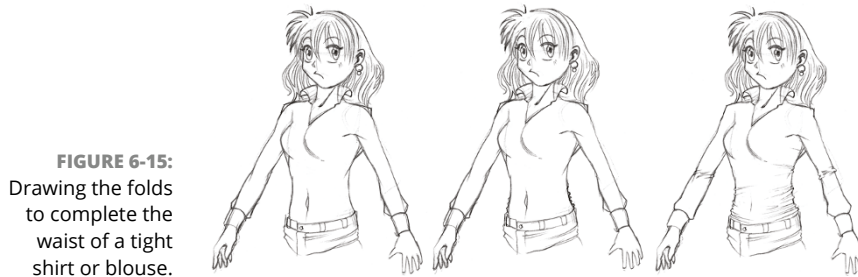
When drawing thinner and tighter clothing, quite often you don't need to worry about drawing the outside edges of the clothing after you draw the human form underneath. The fabric clings so tightly to the body that you can't see the fabric outline with the exception of subtle folds that happen where the joints bend or the body underneath creates folds (such as fat folds around the stomach when a person sits down or bends forward).

2. **Draw several bumps to show the folds hugging both sides of the lower torso. (See the center image in Figure 6-15.)**

Don't draw the bumps too big. Bigger bumps should be reserved for looser clothing.

3. **Draw folds hugging the stomach as shown on the right in Figure 6-15.**

Leave the lines of the folds open and incomplete. They should be curving downward.



**FIGURE 6-15:**  
Drawing the folds  
to complete the  
waist of a tight  
shirt or blouse.

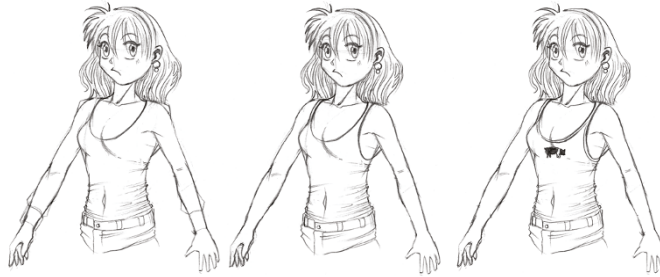
## Tight tank top

If you want to transform the fitted shirt into a tank top, all you need to do is cut off the sleeves and widen the collar opening, as shown in Figure 6-16. Follow these steps:

1. **Let the neckline drop down to the middle of the torso (as shown on the left in Figure 6-16).**
2. **Draw a line curving from the top of the middle of one shoulder down to the middle of that side of the torso. Repeat on the other side of the body. (See the center image in Figure 6-16.)**

**3. For female characters, draw the character's favorite animé character or icon, like I do in the center of the shirt on the right in Figure 6-16.**

Especially in Japan, animé characters and icons are an ever-growing popular phenomenon.

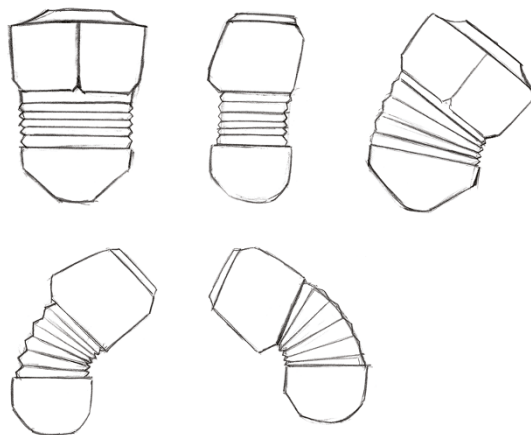


**FIGURE 6-16:**  
Converting the  
tight shirt into  
a tank top.



**TIP**

Think of the tight shirt on the torso as an accordion. As I show in the top-left and top-center images in Figure 6-17, while the torso is standing up straight from the front and side views, the folds are evenly distributed on both sides right above the waist. But watch what happens when the torso bends toward either side: the top-right image in Figure 6-17 shows what happens when the center line bends. The folds bunch up together in the midsection on the bent side while the tension is more dispersed on the other side. Also observe what happens on the bottom left in Figure 6-17 when the body bends over backward. (Okay, so I drew a girl who looks like a slinky.) You can see the same dynamics in this fold as you do when the character bends sideways. Tension shifts to her mid-back section, and the number of folds bunching together increases on her backside. As soon as the slinky girl bends forward on the bottom right in Figure 6-17, the reverse happens.



**FIGURE 6-17:**  
Aerobics class  
comes to life as  
you bend your  
character in all  
directions.



## Loose-fitting shirt

When drawing the torso of looser shirts (sweatshirts, pajamas, track suits, and kimonos), you have the freedom to draw more abstract forms. Depending on the bulkiness of the clothing, the figure may be obscured. However, a body is still buried underneath all that clothing. Starting with the central torso form keeps the clothing shapes from becoming unfocused and causing the overall figure to lose design and balance. Again, you need to bring back the torso from Chapter 5 for the following steps. In this example, I'm drawing a character who's a young karate champion. Follow these steps to draw a loose shirt:

### 1. Draw the collar lines of the uniform as shown in Figure 6-18.

Observe how the collar line mimics the form of the torso.



REMEMBER

Drawing shirts is always easier when you start from the center collar. After you establish the center of a clothed figure, adding the smaller accessories (buttons, pockets, icons, and zippers) becomes easier and more fun. If you draw these objects without a center figure in mind, these smaller objects have no solid foundation to rest upon. You don't have a clear idea of how wide you should make the shoulder, or any way of making sure that both shoulders are the same length and distance apart. Sure, you can always guess, but think about all that time you're wasting if you get into the habit of erasing your mistakes and redrawing them in hopes that your next guess is the right one.

**FIGURE 6-18:**  
Starting off with  
the central collar  
lines of  
the uniform.

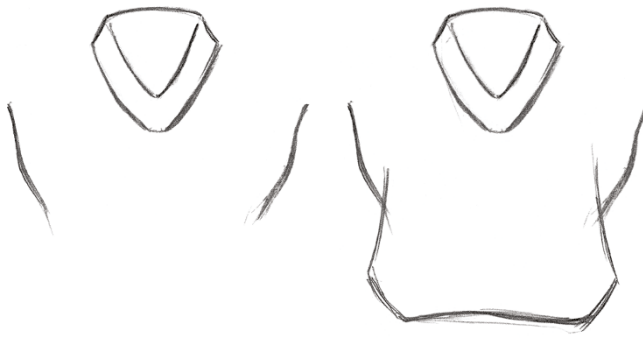


### 2. Without worrying about the top of the shoulders, draw two lines to represent both sides of the upper torso as shown on the left in Figure 6-19.

These lines shouldn't complete either side. These lines aren't skintight, but they do mimic the pectoral muscles.

### 3. Complete the sides by drawing the remaining lines of the torso as shown on the right in Figure 6-19.

Observe how these lines resemble the free-falling drapery (see "Basic free-falling folds" earlier in this chapter) where the folds are dictated by gravity rather than the tension caused by pulling and twisting. These folds resemble a towel hanging off the towel rack.



**FIGURE 6-19:**  
Drawing the sides  
of the uniform.

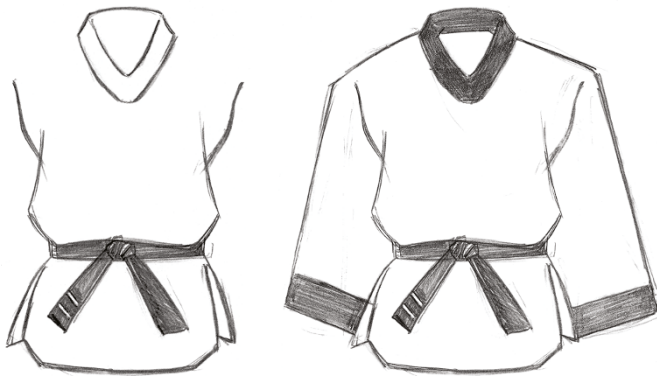
4. **Add the karate belt at the waist, the folds tucking into the belt, and the “flaps” under the belt (as shown on the left in Figure 6-20).**

Note that the karate belt reflects the actual width of the waist. After drawing the belt, add the folds overlapping in front of the belt to create dimension and the bagginess of the uniform.

Drawing the flaps helps show the forms coming out from underneath the karate belt. Draw the bottom end of the flap with a rounded arc.

5. **Add the sleeves to complete the top of the uniform. (See the image on the right in Figure 6-20.)**

The final body of the uniform should resemble an hourglass.



**FIGURE 6-20:**  
Finishing off  
the karate  
uniform to get  
an hourglass  
shape.

## Do these jeans make my butt look big?

When you’re drawing the bottom attire, your female characters once again have the advantage of being able to wear what men usually wear (with the exception of the underwear — which is why those lingerie companies are making a killing!).

With the exception of the baggy pants that martial arts characters wear, most mainstream manga characters wear either long jeans or school uniforms.

Jeans are a long-standing part of manga fashion. They're so versatile that if you can't decide what your character should wear in any given situation, just draw them wearing a pair of jeans. It's a safe bet, guaranteed! Anatomically, adult women have rounder hips and rears than adult men do. Men have flatter rears that are fairly boxy or square (don't ask me why I know all this — it's a job hazard). Consistent with the trends of manga fashion and real-world fashion, which are meant to hype the human sex appeal, artists draw women wearing tighter pants and jeans than men wear. Here are two of the different shapes of jeans you should know:

- » **Classic/normal fit:** These jeans are snug at the hip and upper legs and fairly loose at the bottom. These are known as the unisex jeans.
- » **Loose/relaxed fit:** Again, you have a lot of variety within this type of fit. These jeans range from the retro bell-bottoms to the loose Goth style jeans. The extreme types have legs that are so long they cover most of the shoes.

As I mention in the previous section, folds usually form underneath the armpits, at the waist, and under the breasts for the females. With jeans, folds form at the crotch and the knees. If the jeans are the loose-fit variety, the folds at the knees typically run all the way down to the end of the jeans' legs.



TIP

I strongly recommend going over fashion magazines or looking at fashion catalogues. Although drawing rears (or, if you prefer, hind ends, bottoms, buttocks, rumps, or butts — does that about cover them all?) can be an embarrassing subject due to its sensitivity, you need to be able to draw them correctly! Believe it or not, drawing this particular part of the body can be quite tricky. The last thing you want is your readers laughing at your characters because your lead male character looks like a girl based on the way you drew his jeans.

## Classic/normal jeans

Before I show you how to draw jeans, you need to bring out the hip section for males and females that I tell you about in Chapter 5. Then, proceed to read through and follow the steps on how to draw the jeans, starting from the front. I start off here with the top waist section of classic-fit jeans for females:

### 1. Draw the fly tab from the top of the waist to the center of the crotch.

Draw a center line as shown on the top left in Figure 6-21. Don't forget to add the seams of the tab to the right of the crotch line.

2. **Add the waistband line (as shown on the top right in Figure 6-21).**
3. **Add a button on the waistband right in the middle, above the fly tab.**
4. **Add two thin rectangle belt tabs, one on each side of the button.**

The belt tabs should be fairly close to the buttons. Note that they extend a little further down past the waistband (as shown on the bottom left in Figure 6-21).

5. **Add two more tabs, one on each side of the waist (as shown on the bottom right in Figure 6-21).**

If your character isn't going to be wearing a belt around the waist, you should draw the side belt tabs slightly curving outward away from the hips so that there's a small gap between the belt tab and the waist. If your character is wearing a belt, there's no space because the width of the belt stretches the belt tab flat.

6. **Draw two arcs, one on each side of the jeans for the pockets.**

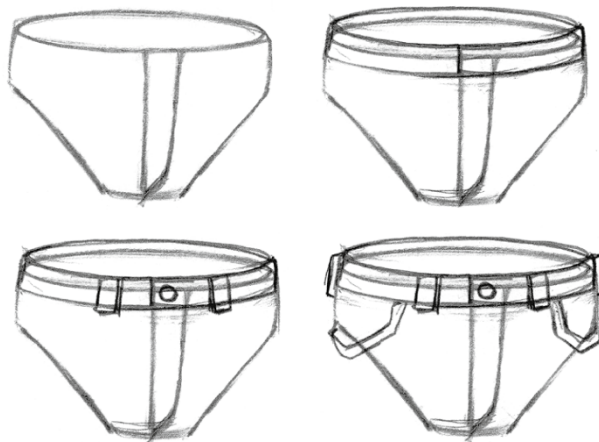
As with the fly tab, don't forget to add the seams at the top of the pocket.



**REMEMBER**

Classic jeans are fairly tight (although not as tight as the tight-fit jeans). Therefore, the edges of the jeans contour to the shape of the hips and legs. The only exceptions looking from the front are the places where the legs connect to the hips and at the knees. At these points, where the bearing spheres serve as a connecting joint, you may see small bumps of the folds.

7. **Draw in the upper and lower legs (including the feet), as shown on the far left in Figure 6-22.**



**FIGURE 6-21:** Drawing the waist section of the classic-fit jeans for women.

**8. Add several lines from the center of the crotch toward the hips (as shown in the second-to-left image in Figure 6-22).**

The lines should form several “V” shapes. The tighter the jeans are, the more lines you should make. Keep in mind that these lines are showing the contours of the hips.

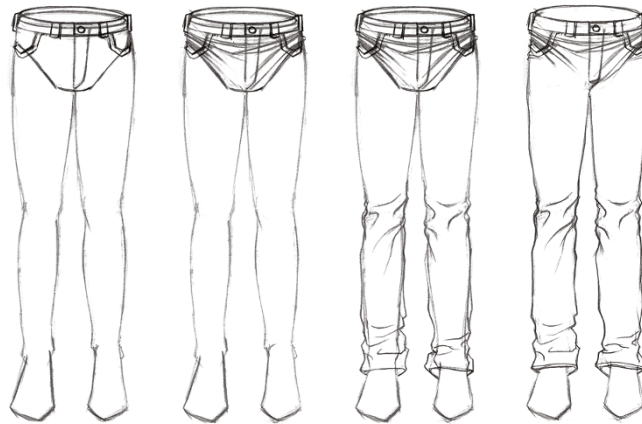


TIP

The trick to making denim jeans look realistic is to place the shorter folds in tighter areas (such as the crotch, where the buttocks and legs meet, and behind the knees, where the upper leg connects with the lower leg). Likewise, place broader folds in areas that have less tension of the leg movement (such as the front of the upper and lower legs).

**9. At the knees and at the hem of the jeans, add a couple of “X” folds. (See the second-to-right image in Figure 6-22.)**

**10. Clean up any stray lines and shapes as shown on the far right in Figure 6-22.**



**FIGURE 6-22:**  
Adding the folds  
to complete the  
classic-fit jeans  
for women.

In Figure 6-23, I show the differences between the female classic jeans (on the left in Figure 6-23) versus the male classic jeans (on the right in Figure 6-23) from a  $\frac{3}{4}$  view so that the difference is clearer. For the most part, these jeans are unisex, but observe how the rear and hips are toned down for the men, consistent with the differences in anatomical makeup. Also, the men’s jeans are looser in the front, which means the folds are more relaxed with less tension, as compared to the female’s jeans.



WARNING

Drawing your male characters wearing the loose-fit jeans is perfectly acceptable but having them wear anything tighter than the classic jeans is, for the most part, a major *faux pas*. You don’t want to blatantly describe a male character’s anatomy to your readers. It’s just wrong. (Trust me.)

**FIGURE 6-23:**  
Comparing male  
classic jeans to  
female  
classic jeans.



## Loose/relaxed jeans

Although loose-fit jeans are for the most part unisex, female characters are more likely to be wearing slim-fit jeans to show off their figures. On the other extreme, teenage boys who fall into the rebel without a cause category tend to wear baggy, loose jeans. This character demography is known as punk or Goth. A character dressed in these jeans may be attending a punk-rock concert while chanting anti-establishment slogans.

On that note, I loosen things up by showing you how to draw the loose/relaxed jeans on your character. I compare the two types of loose jeans (regular loose versus extremely baggy loose) side by side, using a male model. (You need the male torso and legs from Chapter 5.) Try your hand at drawing both variations simultaneously. As you draw and compare the differences, note how much more liberal you can be with adding more décor and design to the Goth jeans. Just follow these steps:

- 1. Draw the fly line from the top of the center jeans to the crotch.**
- 2. On each side of the jeans, draw in one belt hook at the front and one at the side.**

The Goth jeans on the left in Figure 6-24 have wider belt hooks than the regular loose jeans seen on the right.

- 3. Draw in the belt.**

For the belt, I draw in a dark strip that goes through the belt hooks. I draw a wider strap for the Goth belt. Note that the buckle is more decorative on the Goth jeans.

- 4. Draw the sides of the jeans.**

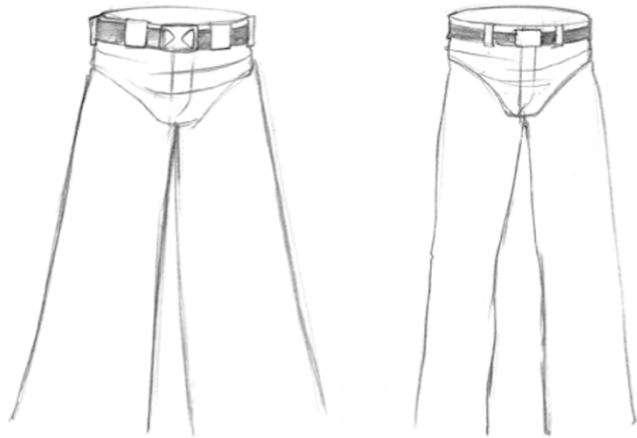
Because these jeans are looser than the classic/normal jeans, you need to draw both sides of the jeans. As you look at Figure 6-24, one thing that should

be evident with both jeans is that the transition between the hips and the lower legs is seamless and smooth. No folds or curves are present in either example. The Goth jeans on the left in Figure 6-24 have the longer, straighter lines that become wider toward the bottom. The normal loose jeans on the right in Figure 6-24 have a little more curve toward the bottom.

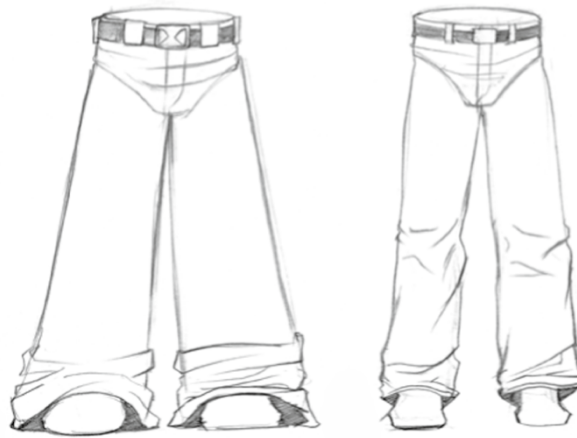
## 5. Add the folds.

Note the simplicity in the folds in both drawings. With the standard loose jeans on the right in Figure 6-25, you see a fold line stretching from the kneecap to the folds at the ankles. Compare that to the folds in the Goth jeans on the left. Toward the ankles, the shoes push up the hem to create a fold on the regular jeans. With the Goth jeans, the folds are closer to the ground.

**FIGURE 6-24:**  
Drawing and  
comparing two  
types of loose  
jeans (Goth  
versus regular).



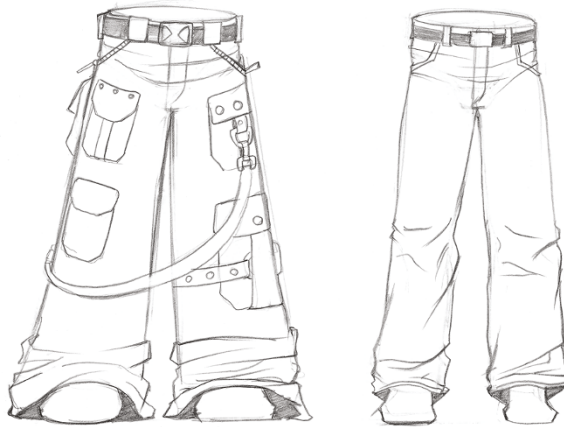
**FIGURE 6-25:**  
Adding the folds  
to two types of  
loose jeans.



## 6. Draw the décor.

Drawing the pockets is just the start. See Figure 6-26 for the interesting pocket shapes, straps, and zippers you can add to the Goth jeans (on the left in Figure 6-26). Keep the décor on the standard loose jeans (on the right in Figure 6-26) plain.

**FIGURE 6-26:**  
Adding décor  
to the Goth  
and regular  
loose jeans.



# Equipped to Make a Positive Impression

After deciding on your character's basic clothing, you continue to get into style by figuring out what else they will wear. So many characters are walking and crawling around the pages of the popular world of manga that you want to make sure readers recognize your characters from others. I demonstrate in this section how to draw a variety of simple yet cool accessories. Drawing these accessories is easier if you start with a drawing of a young girl's head. (If you haven't drawn this head yet, refer to Chapter 4.)

## Hair and head accessories

As you develop your own characters and stories, you may start to wonder how you're supposed to come up with something that's *truly* yours when so many manga characters look so much alike. The challenge is to equip your characters with accessories so they become recognizable to the readers. The key lies within



the clothing. Like Indiana Jones who never loses his hat, you must come up with an accessory that readers immediately identify with your character. The following sections give you some suggestions.

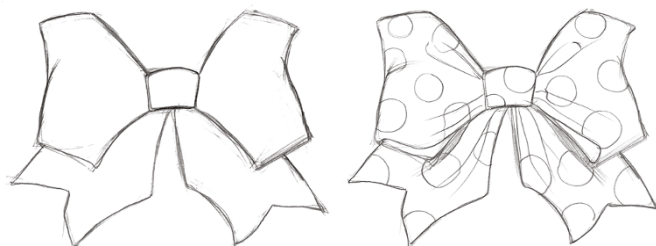
## Ribbons

Ribbons are the most popular hair items for today's manga characters. Most artists draw them for the young female characters. The age of the character or the way you want readers to perceive a character changes the size of the hair accessory. For example, you may draw a younger and more naïve female character with larger ribbons to add cuteness to her looks and personality. Try your hand at drawing a large bow-tie ribbon by following these steps:

1. **Draw the center knot of the ribbon and then lightly sketch in both sides of the bow tie. (See the image on the left in Figure 6-27.)**

Make sure the knot is off to the right and toward the front of the head. The sides should resemble the wings of a butterfly.

2. **Finish off with polka dots and small folds on both sides of the knot (as shown on the right in Figure 6-27).**



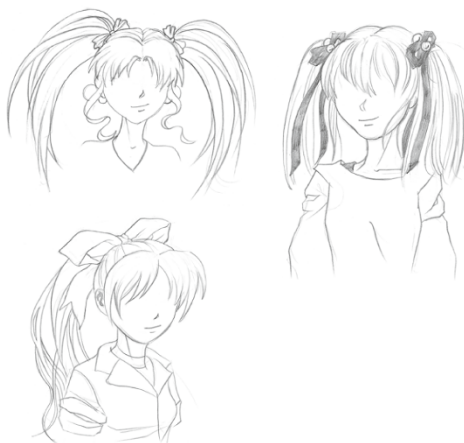
**FIGURE 6-27:**  
Drawing a bow tie  
with polka dots.



If you're not sure whether to enlarge or shrink the size of the ribbon, follow this rule: The larger and more exaggerated you make the features on the character, the larger you need to make the accessory.

Figure 6-28 shows other sizes and shapes of bow-tie ribbons. Play around with the patterns and designs! Be open to placing the bow in different positions. Some characters may wear one behind the head while others may wear the ribbon at the bottom of a long braid.

**FIGURE 6-28:**  
Other types of  
bow-tie ribbons  
that enhance  
cuteness.



## Headbands

Headbands are another fun, easy way to manage a character's hair. As you see in the next set of steps, headbands follow the contours of the character's head. Characters who wear them typically have long hair (at least down to their shoulders) and can be older. Check out these steps:

1. **Draw a light line that follows the contours of the head. (See the image on the far left in Figure 6-29.)**

This line helps you properly position the headband. Headbands must rest comfortably against the head or else they look awkward.



TIP

To ensure that you draw the band properly, note the angle at which I draw the guideline for the first image in Figure 6-29. It starts above the forehead and goes behind the ears.

2. **Draw a second line for the headband.**

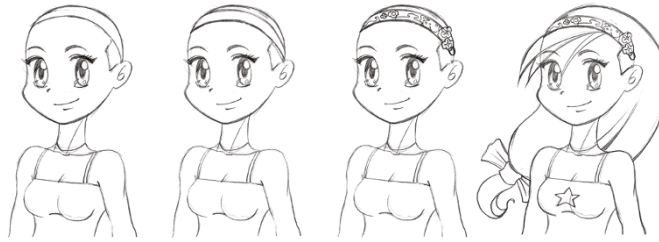
As shown in the second-to-left image in Figure 6-29, the shape of the headband gets larger at the top and narrower at the end.

3. **Complete the band shape with rounded edges and simple decorations.**

The edges should come all the way down to just below the top of the ear. As I show in the center-right image in Figure 6-29, designs and decorations add to the visual appeal.

4. **Add the hair to finish the look. (See the image on the far right in Figure 6-29 for an example.)**

**FIGURE 6-29:**  
Headbands are simple accessories that take care of long hair.



Headbands also come in handy as battle gear fashion. Although the primary function of this headband is to protect the forehead of your character, it's also a cool way to personalize your character with this kind of protection plate. If they are a protagonist in an action/adventure manga story, consider the following demonstration:

- 1. Draw a light line that follows the contour of the forehead starting from the left front of the forehead and ending toward the back of the head as shown on the left in Figure 6-30.**
- 2. Draw a second line for the headband as shown in the center image in Figure 6-30.**

Be sure to draw the band wide enough for the protection plate to comfortably fit in place.

- 3. Draw a personalized protection plate at the center of the forehead.**

This plate is usually a rounded rectangle. Embellish the shield by adding a symbol that represents the character. Check out the image on the right in Figure 6-30 for an example.

**FIGURE 6-30:**  
Headbands create a great way to personalize your character.



## Warrior scarf

No formidable warrior is complete without styling their scarf — that one article of clothing that not only helps protect the identity of the character but adds the

element of mysticism. It is widely used with both protagonist and antagonist characters. Start with these steps:

**1. Draw a concave arc. (See the top-left image in Figure 6-31.)**

The bottom of the curve should barely touch the bottom of the character's chin. Make the width roughly the width of their entire head. The ends of this curve stop at the edges of their hair.



TIP

**2. Draw a second curve (same shape but slightly wider) below the first curve where the base of the curve meets right above the middle of the torso. (See the top-center image in Figure 6-31.)**

To give the draping fabric some weight, see how I make the bottom of the third curve dip lower than the two curves above.



TIP

**3. Next, add the third wider curve below the second curve. (It should dip down to the midpoint of the pectoralis muscle to complete the bottom of the scarf, as shown on the far right in Figure 6-31.)**

Start with both ends of the curve from the top of the torso where the shoulder muscles meet (roughly midpoint of the entire shoulder length). To give the draping fabric some weight, I draw the bottom of the third curve dip lower than the two curves from Steps 1 and 2. Also note that both ends of the third curve slightly curve the opposite (convex) way to show the weight of the fabric draping over the shoulder tops.

**4. Draw two side contour lines of the scarf shape. (They should connect from the bottom of both sides of the chin to just short of both ends of the second curve, as shown on the bottom left in Figure 6-31.)**

Draw the angled lines so they look like an upside-down hockey stick slightly tilting away from the center of the character. (Note how I leave a small gap between both angled lines and the ends of the top curve from Step 1.)

**5. Draw a second set of side contour lines of the scarf to connect the first pair of contour lines from Step 4 to the edges of the bottom curve line in Step 3. (See the bottom-center image in Figure 6-31.)**

The side contour lines start from the midpoint of the first pair of side contour lines in Step 4. As I mention in that step, observe how I leave a gap between these angled lines and both ends of the second curve from Step 2.

6. **Finish off the scarf by adding a tail end, your favorite pattern designs, and erasing the body shapes behind the fabric, as shown on the bottom right in Figure 6-31.**



Be sure to experiment with different shapes and lengths of the scarf fabric, using the tips I spell out in the “Overlapping folds” section earlier in this chapter. The flowing shapes at the end of the scarf fabric add more movement and personality to your character, especially when they are in action.



**FIGURE 6-31:**  
Creating a  
dynamic scarf for  
your action  
character.

## Glasses

Glasses come in all shapes and sizes. They shield and protect the eyes, aid the vision, and tell about the personality of the manga characters. The shape and size of the glasses tell a lot about your character, whether they're a cunning, intelligent businessperson or a geeky, unsocial high school kid. In Figure 6-32, I illustrate some key archetypes commonly seen in today's manga world:

- » **Round glasses (far left, Figure 6-32):** For the innocent, naïve, young high school girl who studies very hard.
- » **Box square glasses (center left, Figure 6-32):** For the geeky high school kid who bases their self-worth on academic performance.
- » **Rectangle glasses (center right, Figure 6-32):** For the suave “player” who is confident that he can steal any girl's heart — anytime, anywhere.
- » **Oval/pointed glasses (far right, Figure 6-32):** For the crafty librarian in her late 30s who can spot any overdue item a mile away.

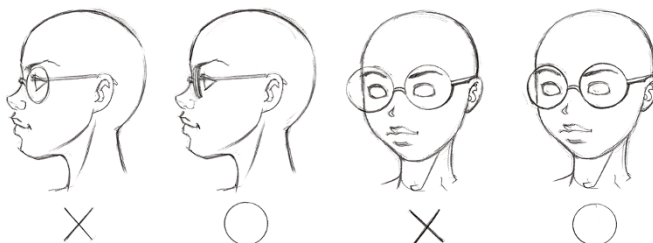
**FIGURE 6-32:**  
The shape and size of glasses tell a lot about your character.



The key to drawing glasses is making sure both lenses rest well in front of the eyes and are parallel to each other. Glasses are simple in nature, but beginners commonly make a couple of mistakes, which I show in Figure 6-33.

One mistake beginners make is drawing the glasses too close to the head in a profile shot. (See the image on the far left in Figure 6-33.) In Figure 6-33's center left image, I show you the correct way to draw the profile. Another common mistake is drawing both circles of the eyeglasses the same size when drawing the head from a  $\frac{3}{4}$  view (as shown in Figure 6-33's center right image). In the image on the far right of Figure 6-33, I show you what the glasses should look like. The circle for the lens that's closer to the readers should be slightly larger than the circle that's farther away.

**FIGURE 6-33:**  
Common front- and side-view mistakes that beginners make with glasses.



I've shown you what the front and side views should look like; now try your hand at drawing the glasses at a  $\frac{3}{4}$  view:

- 1. Draw a light line (that you can later erase) that runs right in front of the center of the eyes. (See the image on the left in Figure 6-34.)**
- 2. Draw two oval shapes for the lenses.**  
The lens that is closer to you should be slightly larger and wider than the one farther from you (as shown in the center image in Figure 6-34).
- 3. Draw the bridge of the glasses over the nose and draw the ear flap (as shown on the right in Figure 6-34).**

At this stage, erase the guidelines from Step 1.

**FIGURE 6-34:**  
Round glasses  
create an  
innocent  
character  
appearance.



## Goggles

Goggles are bulkier than glasses, so characters who wear them tend to wear them up rather than over their eyes. Manga eyes are key to communicating the emotions of your character, so drawing lead characters with their eyes completely shielded all the time isn't recommended.

Goggles create that cool “adventure” appeal but are a bit more complicated because you have more shapes to draw and more steps to follow. They're worn above the eyes, so getting used to drawing them at an angle is a challenge. Start with these steps:

1. **As I show on the left in Figure 6-35, draw a light line that runs right above the eyebrows.**

This guideline indicates the bottom edge of the goggles.

2. **Mark the midpoint of the guideline with a narrow square (representing the goggle hinge).**

3. **Draw two geometric rectangles, one on each side of the guideline (See the center image in Figure 6-35.)**

Because the goggles point upward, you see the underside of the rectangle.

4. **Draw the sides of the goggles, which are tilting down at an angle as shown on the right in Figure 6-35.**

Observe carefully and note that the side panes aren't completely square. The top line of the surface area facing the sky is angled downward more than the bottom. Without these angles, the goggles look flat and unbalanced.

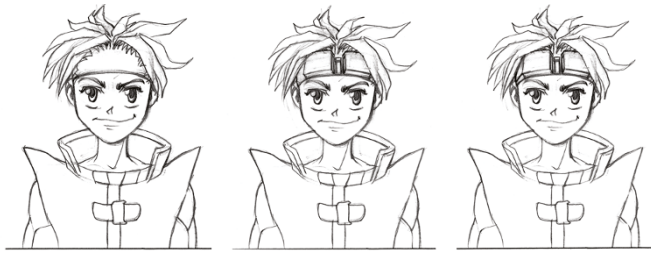


**TIP**

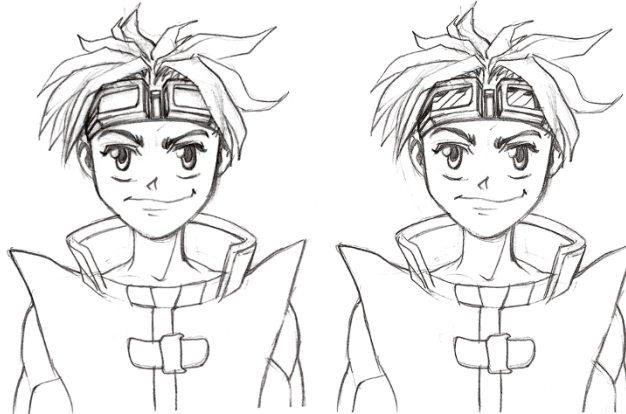
An easier way of getting this side shape down is by first drawing the angled surface area facing the sky. After that, the top of the bottom plane that is visible becomes easier to fit in.

5. **Draw the glass window shape of the goggles as shown on the left in Figure 6-36.**
6. **Finish it off by adding a shadow and reflection to the goggles as shown on the right in Figure 6-36.**

**FIGURE 6-35:**  
Goggles take  
some time to get  
used to, but they  
look great on  
your character!



**FIGURE 6-36:**  
Adding the  
shadows and  
highlights to get a  
finished,  
dimensional look.





3

**Calling All  
Cast Members!**

## **IN THIS PART . . .**

Settle on your main characters

Choose your sidekicks

Master villainy

Respect your elders

Deliver damsels in distress

Show your girl power

- » Drawing different types of protagonists in today's manga world
- » Setting up poses that suggest strength or confidence
- » Exploring various lead-character costumes

## Chapter 7

# The Main Protagonists

**E**very manga story must have a main leading character, either male or female. Readers lose interest in manga very quickly without a lead character to identify with. Even if everything else about your script is terrific, captivating the audience with memorable lead characters is crucial. In this chapter, I show you popular types of male and female lead characters in today's manga world. Think of this chapter as a casting call where you get to choose your lead cast members as the head director of a major manga motion picture!



WARNING

If you're drawing manga characters for the first time and you have no drawing experience, read through Chapters 4, 5, and 6 before attempting to draw these characters on your own.

## Drawing Male Lead Characters

In this section, I show you how to draw popular male lead characters. These archetypes are always expanding and changing, just like every form of popular entertainment, but you should at least recognize the common trend that has flooded the popular manga market for the past several decades.

# The Adventurer

The reckless adventurer is loud and independent from the get-go. He's an impulsive leader who may remind you of that high-octane, energetic classmate in high school who stops at nothing to get the job done. Sure, he has authority issues and frequently refuses to heed any words of wisdom from his team members (which often lands himself and his team in a tight squeeze), but readers are drawn to his strength, guts, and his never-give-up fighting spirit. What makes this character relatable is his struggle to finally accept humility and heed the advice of his teammates (which happens after his ego gets him into trouble and he's left with no choice).

Here are some traits or patterns that the reckless adventurer often possesses:

- » **Fully caffeinated:** It's gonna take more than a tranquilizer to slow this guy down.
- » **Free spirited:** His gut instinct is his moral compass. Not afraid to take the first plunge into the danger zone in order to bring down the bad guys.
- » **He can dish it and take it:** Despite his drab appearance, he can take a beating like a honey badger and fight back harder than ever before!
- » **Short or medium jagged hair:** You're going for that wild look.
- » **Sporting it caj:** Nothing fancy — that one outfit he's wearing, it ain't ever coming off!

Keeping these traits in mind, follow these steps to create the reckless adventurer:

1. **Draw the wire figure with narrow shoulders and teenage proportions (refer to Chapter 5 for more on proportions) — approximately 6 heads tall (as shown in Figure 7-1).**

Keep the pose open and strong. For example, position him with one hand on his hip and the other clenching his fist up in the air as if he's claiming victory or making his presence known to the world.

2. **Define the body, so that it looks more human.**

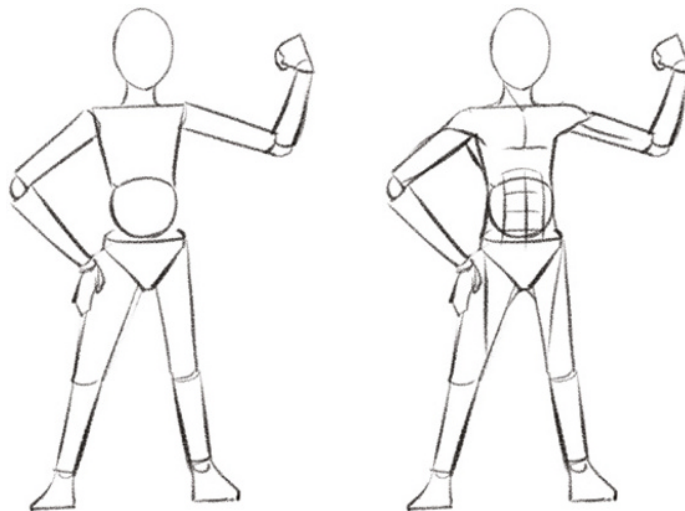
On the left in Figure 7-2, I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing that I will erase them in the final draft). While my character is still a barely a teenager, I want to show he's lean and fit, so I keep the width of his shoulders slightly wider than his waist.

On the right in Figure 7-2, I define the basic body muscle structure, so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. Because these characters have yet to fully develop their muscles, I keep them toned down.

At this stage, I'm pretty sure that his rugged clothing will cover up his body. I keep the body lines light and fairly rough so that I can easily erase them.



**FIGURE 7-1:**  
Setting up the  
wire figure for  
your lead  
character.



**FIGURE 7-2:**  
Sketching the  
geometric shapes  
and drawing the  
basic muscle  
definition.

**3. Draw the head shape and facial features then lightly draw the unbuttoned vest and shorts (as shown in Figure 7-3).**

I draw the yaoi (androgenous) hairstyle with large, jagged edges in addition to the large eyes, small nose, and wide-open mouth. Keep his mouth a simple

geometric shape. (Here, I draw a triangle.) This archetype is boisterous and not afraid to display extreme emotions by opening up to scream, laugh, or cry. To add drama to the overall feel of the pose, I keep the clothing shapes loose to give the illusion that wind and energy are blowing all around him.



TIP

Keeping the lines light is still important at this stage. (You want to make sure that you can make changes to the lines without too much trouble.)



**FIGURE 7-3:**  
Sketching in the  
face and clothes.

#### 4. Refine the head and facial features, add more details and accessories, and then finish up by adding some cool effects. (See Figure 7-4.)

I shade in the detail of his hair and render in the eyes. Next, shade his hair a solid dark value. I also draw some loose strands of hair whipping into the air.

I draw the tattered cape behind him and sandals to his feet. Be sure to include a rugged over-the-shoulder pouch on his right hip. To show his natural strength and fitness, in addition to the *pectoralis* (chest muscles associated with masculinity), I further define the lines for the abdomen muscles. Don't forget to add the tiny belly button to give him the cuteness (he's still barely a teenager after all).



TIP

Adding tattered bits of leaves or debris blowing around the character creates a cool effect of unseen energy flowing around him.



**FIGURE 7-4:**  
Add finishing  
touches on his  
outfit with  
accessories  
and effects.

## The Rookie

The most popular varsity sports in manga are tennis, soccer, baseball, and martial arts. The rookie characters sport a smoother yaoi hairstyle compared to the reckless adventurer (see the previous section), but they have fuller proportions. At first glance, he appears to have a quiet demeanor but don't be fooled. It takes very little to bring out their wild personality and passion for their sport — and they aren't afraid to bleed in order to win!

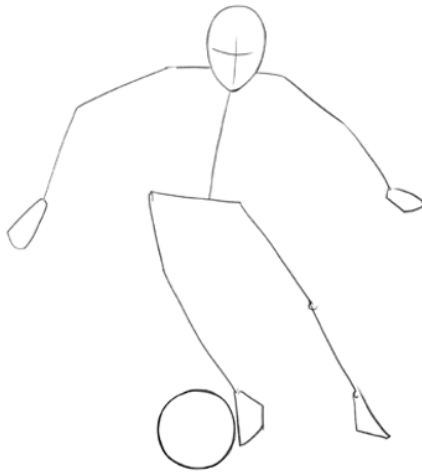
Following are some common traits of the rookie:

- » **Passionate and ambitious:** He's all about hardcore training to become the star player no matter what.
- » **Strategizer:** Does a lot of inner dialogue and analyzing his opponents and how to best his opponent.
- » **Smooth hair and good looking:** You're going for a more refined and quieter look than the reckless adventurer.
- » **A fair build that isn't too muscular.**

Keeping these traits in mind, follow these steps to draw your own rookie character:

### 1. Draw a wire frame that's about 6 to 6½ heads tall. (See Figure 7-5.)

In this pose where he is dribbling toward the readers, I draw his head slightly hunched over in front of his torso with his arms stretched out to his sides to show he is ready to pull off a fancy move. I also lightly draw in a circle to indicate the soccer ball next to his right foot.



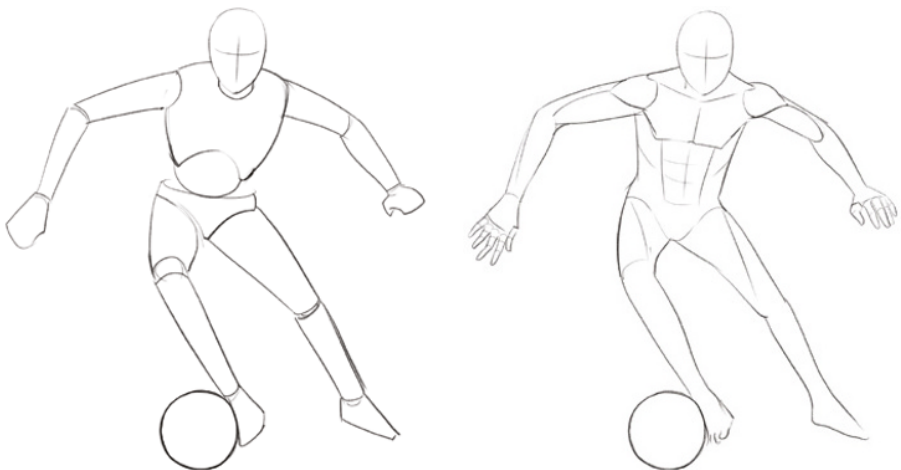
**FIGURE 7-5:**  
A wire frame  
figure dribbling a  
soccer ball.

## 2. Define the body, so that it looks more human.

On the left in Figure 7-6, I lightly draw the geometric shapes over the wire frame figure (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft). Like the reckless adventurer earlier in this chapter, the width of the shoulders is the same width as his waist.

On the right in Figure 7-6, I define the basic body muscle structure, so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. At this teenage stage, his muscles are more defined especially around the shoulders, chest, upper arms, and upper legs.

At this stage, I'm pretty sure that his soccer jersey will cover up his body, so I keep the body lines light and rough so that I can easily erase them.



**FIGURE 7-6:**  
The rookie  
evolves.



### 3. Draw his basic clothing shapes, sketch his head shape and facial features, and draw his soccer gear.

As I fit the shorts and soccer jersey over the figure in Figure 7-7, I make sure that the defined body is still visible underneath the fabric. Keep the shirt and shorts fairly tight to his body shape.

I draw the smooth yaoi hairstyle, huge eyes, a small nose, and a thin mouth. To show his body movement, I draw the front and side ends of the hair shifting off to the side. Draw his pupils toward the top of the upper eye lid to show he's looking up front and ready for the challenging foe he's confronting.

Soccer socks cover most of the lower leg so that the shin guards can slide underneath to protect the shins. (I indicate the shin guards by drawing a thin outline of the shape on both legs.) I make sure to erase the guidelines underneath the clothing.



When drawing cleats, I take out my own shoes and use them for reference. You don't have to draw shoes with photorealistic detail. But many beginners overlook the different types of shoes for different types of activities.



**FIGURE 7-7:**  
Drawing the sleek  
soccer uniform.

### 4. Complete the uniform and add the finishing touches to his features.

For this character, I'd probably add detail to the soccer ball, soccer jersey, and trunks. (See Figure 7-8.) Have fun especially with his uniform design. In today's Japanese high schools where students now have a say in designing their school uniforms, students take pride in what they wear. For ideas on uniform designs, I also recommend looking at soccer matches (such as the World Cup) where you see all sorts of creative wear from soccer teams all over the world. I also shade in his hair and leave some white areas for the highlights.



TIP

Adding cross-hatching marks creates the effect of dirt and scuff marks from a well-fought match. A couple of bandages show that he got some attention during a break in the match and is back on his feet for more action. Be careful not to overdo this — you want to make sure this guy's still got some fight in him and isn't ready to collapse.



**FIGURE 7-8:** Finishing up the character's uniform and adding in details to his hair.

## Ruggedly handsome

This type of lead character is full of bad boy charm and isn't afraid of making life harder for people around him. While he's stubborn and doesn't like to take orders from others, this character has a strong sense of justice and will do whatever it takes to see it through (usually by taking matters into his own hands). Age ranges between high school teens to middle-aged adults.

Following are some common traits of this lead character:

- » **A serious but handsome face:** This lady killer is all business and justice.
- » **Full adult proportions:** Make sure you give him at least a 7½ head count proportion. You can even go 8 heads if he's an older guy.
- » **Cool as a cucumber:** Yes, he's strong. But he's got the wits about him and stays calm under pressure.
- » **Style that goes a mile:** He takes pride in his trademark clothing fashion. Like Indiana Jones with his hat and whip, he sticks to his guns when it comes to the way he dresses.

With these traits in mind, follow these steps to create your own character:

**1. Draw the wire frame figure 8 heads tall, as shown in Figure 7-9.**

Keep the stance wide. To give his pose confidence, I position his right arm and hand at his side where I later draw his pants pocket. His left arm is lifted toward his head where I draw his hands gesturing toward his eyes as if he is saying, “I’ve got my eyes on you!” I have his head tilted slightly down to his left so that he is going to be glaring up at the readers.

**2. Define the body, so that it looks more human.**

On the left in Figure 7-10, I lightly draw in the geometric shapes over my wire frame figure (knowing that I’ll erase them in the final draft). Since he’s older than the other teenage protagonists I talk about in this chapter, I draw wider and longer geometric shapes.

On the right in Figure 7-10, I draw the basic body muscle structure over the geometric shapes so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. I define the individual muscle parts so they stick out more prominently and look more developed than The Rookie from the previous section. Draw the neck wide to emphasize his excellent physique. Keep the body lines light and fairly rough so that you can easily erase them.



**FIGURE 7-9:**  
Setting the wide  
stance for the  
wire frame figure.



**FIGURE 7-10:**  
Making the  
character look  
more realistic.

### 3. Draw the head, facial features, and loose clothing, as shown in Figure 7-11.

Because this type of character appears in action manga more suited to teenagers and young adults, I make his features smaller and more realistic. The nose is small, and I draw the thin bridge to give him a mature look. (He's at least past his teen years.) I draw a fire-flame-like shape for his hair (similar to Chapter 4, Figure 4-28).

Many beginners make the mistake of thinking that a professional manga-ka conjures up costume designs. Not so — like other creative artists, a manga-ka gathers up references for inspiration. Here I slightly exaggerate the clothing shapes of the shoulders, arms, chest, torso, and upper legs to emphasize the muscles underneath. To keep his overall appearance flowing and organic, I let ends of the draping fabric such as the bottom of his jacket and pants flow as if a slight wind is blowing around him.



**TIP**

In addition to looking at what types of costumes/accessories other manga-ka are designing, I recommend also taking either tracing paper or using a light tablet (see Chapter 2) to trace the contour shapes of a costume you like. Pay particular attention to any interesting geometric shapes (wavey lines, circles, triangles, and so on) the artist uses.



**REMEMBER**

Don't overload this character with overly baggy clothing. You still want to see some muscle definition underneath the fabric.

**FIGURE 7-11:** Sketching in the head and facial features and snapping on ornamental badges, neck wear, and belts.



**4. Draw energy lines around him (see Figure 7-12) and add detailed designs on his accessories.**

I add design patterns on his forearm, jacket, neck wear, and jeans.

Starting from the bottom of either foot of the character, I draw jagged fishhook-like shapes which dart around the entire figure. Be sure to alter the sizes as well as the direction of these shapes so that the energy field appears to crackle in the air. I add detail to his hair and shade the hair in.



**REMEMBER**

Keep a little space between the energy lines and the figure (about the width of the character's hand). This helps him look dominant and untouchable.



**FIGURE 7-12:** Drawing the energy field and adding the detail along his accessories.

# Drawing Female Lead Characters

Lead female characters continue to evolve over the decade. While they used to play traditional maternal or supporting roles, mainstream manga titles today have aggressive females who aren't afraid to bare some skin at times. When it comes to especially female manga characters in general, the descriptive term *tsundere* — used to indicate a certain personality type — is common in Japanese pop culture where a character initially appears a bit stuck up and uncaring toward another male character but later reveals her caring side in the story.

## The Shy Mysterious Student

This student shows up as the new, seemingly innocent and shy girl on the block. Her main adversaries are her jealous competitive female classmates who harass her and make it their mission to embarrass her in hopes that she will drop out and change schools. Typically, she catches the interest and affection of socially awkward male student who falls in love with her, sensing that she is different from the rest (as well as extremely attractive) and will do anything to protect her from the evil peers.

Following are some traits of the shy mysterious student:

- » **Enormous eyes:** To symbolize her innocent look (only later to realize she really isn't all that pure)
- » **Mature body shape:** Despite her shy personality and youth, her body shape is more developed (larger chest and curved hips).
- » **Long hair:** Hair should be long, dark, and smooth.
- » **Has an intriguing past:** No one knows where she comes from, but she comes carrying a mysterious powerful gift/talent.

With these traits in mind, follow these steps to create your shy mysterious student:

### 1. Draw her wire frame to be considerably narrower than her male counterpart's, keeping her 6 to 6½ heads tall. (See Figure 7-13.)

You also want to make sure that her stance is narrow to represent her faux shy mannerisms. I bend her right arm and hand so that she is touching the lower side of her face (a conservative pose).

### 2. Define the body, so that it looks more human.

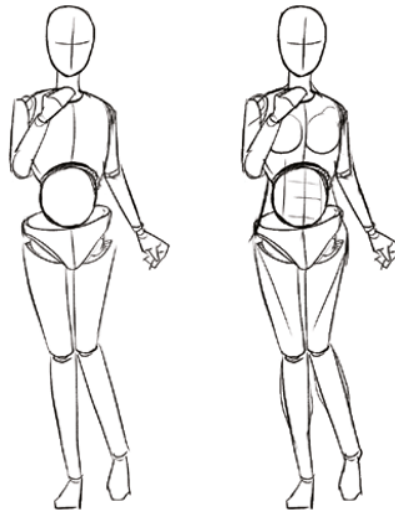
On the left in Figure 7-14, I lightly draw the geometric shapes over the wire frame figure (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft). The shapes of her arms and legs are slightly thinner than her male teenage counterpart's.



**FIGURE 7-13:**  
Drawing a more conservative, narrow stance for the wire frame figure.

On the right in Figure 7-14, I draw the basic body muscle structure so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. The muscles, breasts, and hips are exaggerated. The head is slightly larger and rounder (implying that she still has that “baby fat” look).

At this stage, I’m pretty sure that my character’s body will be covered by her school uniform, so I draw all lines lightly so that I can easily erase them.



**FIGURE 7-14:**  
Keeping the overall definition down to a minimum.

### 3. Draw her school uniform and then define her head and facial features.

These archetypes usually attend a very good high school in a very rich community. Her school uniform must reflect the conservative atmosphere as well as the school's old-fashioned etiquette expectations. (See Figure 7-15.)

While dressing my character (well, *someone's* gotta do it), I make sure that the school uniform fits snugly over her body without being too tight. The only loose item should be the short skirt. Keep the socks knee-high. In addition to drawing a vest overlapping the shirt, I attach a ribbon in front of her chest.

For her hair, I draw her straight bangs, which come down past her eyebrows, and extend the sides of her long straight hair past her shoulders. To show its smooth flowing texture, I turn the ends of the hair slightly inward toward the center of her body. Big eyes are a must. Keep 'em wide open with ovals inside for highlights. Draw the nose and mouth small and narrow.



**FIGURE 7-15:**  
Dressing the  
character to  
match the  
conservative  
style.

### 4. Add her shoes and accessories and then draw wrinkles and details on her school uniform.

I draw the pleated folds on her skirt. (See Figure 7-16.) Her slip-on shoes have a small plain strap across on top. Don't forget the smaller detail accessories such as buttons, pocket, and school emblem (the symbol of school pride) on her top blazer.





TIP

To show that her uniform is not loose nor baggy, keep the lines for the folds short and minimal. I draw a band going across the bottom of the skirt while making sure the shape adheres to the shapes of the folds. This gives the skirt shape more dimension. For more ideas on authentic Japanese high school uniforms, check out <https://www.conomi.jp/>.



**FIGURE 7-16:**  
Adding the  
final bells  
and whistles.

## The Brave Compassionate Princess

Another popular archetype is the brave and compassionate princess. Unlike the quieter shy and mysterious student from the previous section, the brave and compassionate princess is outspoken about her clear mission and is not afraid to kick some serious butt of those who keep getting in her way! She's strong, beautiful, and a winning personality. This character type typically exists either in a fantasy or a postapocalyptic world.

Following are some traits of this character:

- » **Full-grown proportions:** 7 to 8 heads tall
- » **Medium athletic build:** A tad bit leaner than the body frame of the shy mysterious student
- » **Short hair that comes down to the shoulder:** While she rules with gentleness and humility, she enjoys simple hair accessories.
- » **Strong compassion toward those who have been cast down:** She will go so far as to risk her own life to save another soul who is considered the scum of the world.

Follow these steps to draw your own brave compassionate princess:

**1. Create the wire frame, setting the shoulders and hips wide and making the pose dynamic (as shown in Figure 7-17).**

I sketch her shoulders lengths to match the width of her torso. I draw her left arm at her side while resting her hands on the hilt of her sword with the opposite right. I make sure to draw a rough t-shape line as a placement for the sword.



**TIP**

Be creative on how you use the wire frame structure to capture your character's body language. I slightly arch the torso and widen the feet stance to give my character confidence.



**FIGURE 7-17:**  
Setting up a  
dynamic  
character's pose.

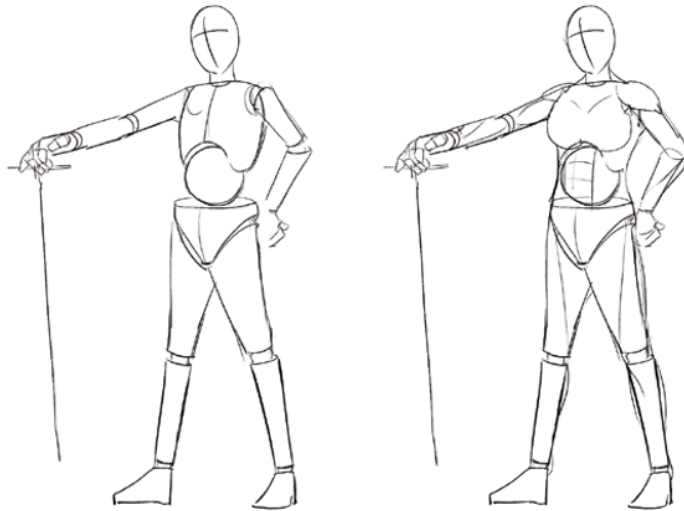
**2. Define the body, so that it looks more human.**

On the left in Figure 7-18, I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft). Draw the leg shapes, especially the thighs, wide.

On the right in Figure 7-18, I draw the body muscle structure over the geometric shapes, so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. The muscle tone should be minimal with slightly exaggerated curves (especially the breasts and hips). Keep her limbs (neck, arms, and legs) on the leaner side. (Remember she's still a princess at heart.)

At this stage, it's important to keep the edges of her body clear so that I can use it as a guide to add thicker protective clothing on her arms, lower legs, and torso.

**FIGURE 7-18:**  
Building a slender  
yet curved  
definition to the  
character.



**3. Sketch in her thicker outer clothing, draw her head and facial features, and refine her body shapes. (See the image on the right in Figure 7-19.)**

Generally, these character types wear goggles and scarfs to keep the dust and wind out of their eyes in hostile environments. Similar to how I show in Chapter 6, I draw in her goggles resting above her eyes and draw a tail end of her scarf flow back horizontally, as if to show the wind blowing. I sketch in her gloves which are a little larger and thicker than your average winter mittens. Draw in the flight jacket, which hugs around the contour edges of her torso and runs slightly past her waist. Finally, I draw in the high combat boots, which come up to the knees.

I draw her jawbone slightly angled and lower to show that she's in her mid-20s and no longer has any baby fat. Draw the front of her bangs, which part at the center of her forehead, and then draw her medium shoulder-length bob hair flowing from behind her head. Her hair doesn't overlap her eyes but consider letting some of the bangs fall between the eyes. Draw thick eyelashes to show that she still displays her femininity while not being afraid to release her aggressive side. Draw the small nose and thin lips.



**TIP**

When drawing the fingers of the gloves, avoid getting caught up with the details of each finger joint bend that's underneath. See below how I keep the shape of the entire finger as a rounded shape. A helpful reference would be to put on a pair of gardening gloves and see how each finger shape changes as you bend it.

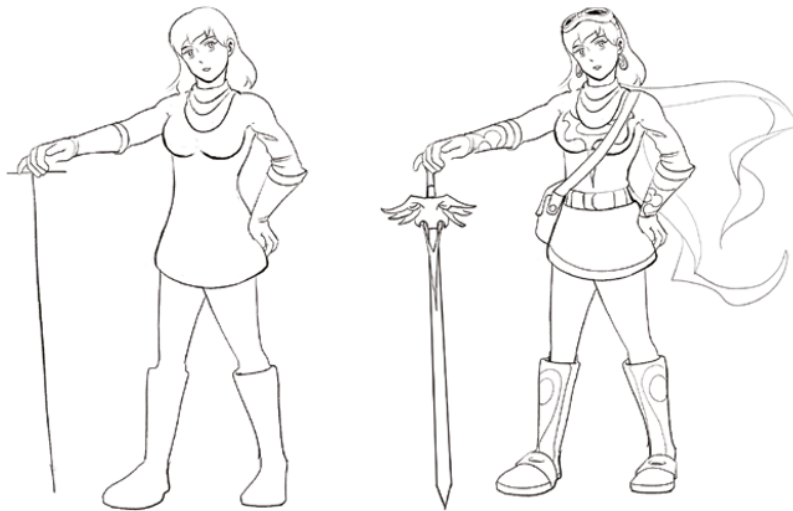
#### 4. Add details to her hair and uniform (as shown on the right in Figure 7-19).

For the details and accessories, I begin by drawing oval earrings on each ear with abstract engravings. Then I draw random design patterns (maybe a family crest) around the edges of her gloves, the center of her vest, and her boots. Complete the boot with straps on top. Add a strap running across the front of her torso connecting to her pouch on her right hip. I draw her flight jacket accessory belt, which runs across her torso above her hip. Finally, I add her combat goggles.



TIP

To show that the belt is snug around her waist, see how I draw the belt ending just short of both side edges of the flight jacket. Then I erase the outside edges of the flight jacket and connect the loose ends to the belt.



**FIGURE 7-19:** Drawing the clothing to complete the brave compassionate princess.

## Shōjo Romantic

If you're familiar with shōjo manga, you've no doubt encountered this type of character before. She's young and shy (usually typecasted as an outsider) but focused on finding something to fill the empty personal void in her everyday life. While her quest to satisfy her emptiness traverses between the career, friends, and food, it almost always lands on finding the love of her life.

The shōjo romantic exhibits some of the following traits:

- » **Proportions ranging from 5 to 6½ heads tall**
- » **Fairly large eyes:** The pupils are especially large and take up a lot of space. (See Chapter 12 for details about shōjo manga.)

- » **Small nose and mouth:** Since the eyes are so darn big, the rest of her features need to be smaller than the female lead characters I show earlier in this chapter to fit on that limited real estate.
- » **Polite and reserved (well, at first):** Don't let that deer-staring-at-the-headlights look fool you. She can be quirky and tucks away a wicked sense of humor behind that bouquet of flowers.
- » **Physically lean:** The chest and hips are flatter and squarer compared to the shy and mysterious student.

To draw your own shōjo romantic, keep these traits in mind and follow these steps:

**1. Set up a shy pose for the wire frame figure.**

Rather than having both feet touching the ground, try drawing one leg slightly bent and off the ground as if she is shy and fidgeting with her feet.

I make sure that the torso is angled so that she can maintain her balance on one leg. Similar to the shy mysterious student (see the previous section), you see the “S” curvature running from the top of her head to the bottom of her supporting leg.

To show just how nervous she is, I make her fidget with her hands. (See Figure 7-20.)



**FIGURE 7-20:**  
Setting up a shy  
pose using the  
wire frame figure.

**2. Define the body, so that it looks more human, making sure that she is lean with even less curves than the brave compassionate princess.**

On the left in Figure 7-21, I lightly draw the geometric shapes over the wire frame figure (knowing that I will erase them in the final draft). You want to make the width of the arms and body narrower than the brave compassionate princess, especially around the wrists, neck, and ankles.

On the right in Figure 7-21b, I sketch the body muscle structure over the geometric shapes, so that the figure looks more realistic. I lightly draw in her breasts which are smaller and add slender concave curves at base of both sides of her neck for the trapezius muscle. (Refer back to Chapter 5.)

At this stage, I know that most of her body (with the exception of her legs) will be covered with loose clothing, so I leave out most of the muscle definition.



**TIP**

When defining nervous hands, observe how we tend to flex our wrists downward while touching with our index fingers and thumbs when nervous. It can be a tricky position to draw so I recommend revisiting the hands section in Chapter 5 and then use your smart phone camera to take a reference shot of a friend's hands.



**FIGURE 7-21:**  
Building minimal  
definition to the  
character.

**3. Sketch in her head, facial features, and her loose clothing. (See the image on the left in Figure 7-22.)**

Shōjo romantics generally have long hair and/or loose braids in the back. Draw large eyes, a small nose, thin eyebrows, and a small, rounded, kidney-bean-shaped mouth. She has a dazed expression as if she is at a loss for words.



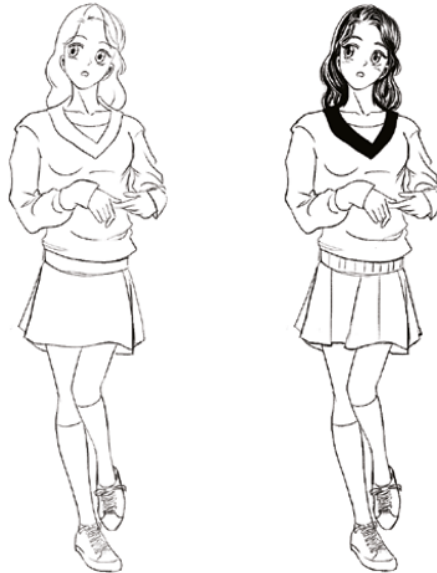
TIP

The secret to drawing dazed-looking eyes is by making her pupils larger than the female lead characters that I show earlier in this chapter. (See Figure 7-22.) You want only the bottom tip of the pupil touching the bottom lid while leaving a small gap between the top of the pupil and the upper eye lid. (I go more in detail about eyes in Chapter 12.)

The loose shirt covers most of the body (as if she's trying to mask her true form behind the fabric) with the cuffs of the sleeves running slightly past the wrist. I draw her skirt going down the thighs to just above her knees and add in the black socks and Vans style sneakers.

**4. Add in the details of her clothing and shading to complete the figure. (See the image on the right in Figure 7-22.)**

I draw the details to her shoes and folds to her shirt. Shade in her jet-black hair and add in highlights to the top front and both sides of the hair shape.



**FIGURE 7-22:**  
Finishing a  
sketch of the  
shōjo romantic.





- » Drawing sidekick characters in today's manga world
- » Setting up poses that match each sidekick's role
- » Exploring supporting-character costumes

## Chapter 8

# Those Loveable Sidekicks

**F**or every lead character, you have at least one supporting cast member — otherwise known as the sidekick. These archetypes can be male, female, or neither (alien or animal). Conquering battles and winning over the hearts of loved ones gets pretty lonely without supporting sidekicks. Humans learn from interacting with each other, and that's true of manga lead characters in every story.

Readers are always curious to see how lead characters react to their surrounding characters; that's why manga sells so well. Lead characters look alike in so many manga stories, so the sidekicks make the difference — by either helping the lead character's mission go smoothly or by turning it into a living nightmare (usually unintentionally). Regardless of their impact, a sidekick's existence is just as crucial as the lead characters.

In this chapter, I show you popular sidekick characters in today's manga world. First, I show you how to draw the male sidekicks, and then I show you how to draw the female sidekicks.



WARNING

If you're drawing manga characters for the first time and have no drawing experience, read through Chapters 4, 5, and 6 before attempting to draw these characters on your own.

# Drawing Male Sidekick Characters

In the following sections I show you how to draw popular male sidekick characters. These archetypes expand and change, just like every form of popular entertainment, but you want to at least recognize the common trend that has flooded the manga market for the past several decades.

## Hustle with Mr. Muscle

This type of character is pure bulk and muscle. He's the ultimate backup for any lead character who has heavy-duty work to do. Note there are various types within this character type. This specific character I draw in this section pairs well with the Reckless Adventurer in Chapter 7.



REMEMBER

Mr. Muscle often has the following traits:

- » **Brute strength:** He's 100 percent muscle and force.
- » **A rather disproportionate figure:** At 8 to 10 heads tall and 5 heads wide, his body looks a lot bigger than his head.
- » **A lack of secret powers:** He just likes taking things down.
- » **A love of eating.**
- » **More brawn than brain yet full of heart and gusto.**

To create your own Mr. Muscle sidekick, keep these traits in mind and follow these steps:

- 1. Set the wire frame figure at 8 to 10 heads tall and 4 to 5 heads wide to accommodate the size.**

The pose needs to be simple yet full of energy to reflect his large personality.

In Figure 8-1, I have my own character with both arms flexing upwards. (I want to showcase his ridiculously large biceps in Step 2.) His head is tilted upward, and I keep a wide stance with his right leg elevated on a rock podium.

- 2. Define the body with geometric shapes and basic muscle groups.**

On the left in Figure 8-2, I make the geometric shapes thicker and bigger than the ones I use for the rookie in Chapter 7 to give him his bulky appearance. On the right in Figure 8-2, I define the head, facial features, and body muscle structure. In most cases, you see these types with their fists clenched. To showcase his ridiculous power, I make his fist and arms larger than the

ruggedly handsome hero in Chapter 7. Their pectoral muscles are larger than their head. Here, I loosely block in the placement of the eyes, nose, and mouth. I also indicate the hair shape.

At this stage, the clothes I later design for him need to be tight. I draw the lines lightly, knowing that I will need to refine them more accurately.



**FIGURE 8-1:**  
Setting up the  
wire figure for  
my sidekick  
character,  
Mr. Muscle.



**FIGURE 8-2:**  
Sketching muscle  
definition over  
geometric shapes  
and loosely  
blocking  
in the head.



### 3. Lightly draw in the clothing and tighten up the facial features.

Choose clothing that doesn't hide too much of his formidable physique. Remember, you want to convince readers that this guy is packing enough muscle power to tear down a wall.

For this particular character (see Figure 8-3), I sketch in a skintight body suit. (After all, it would be a shame to hide those pecs.) I draw in his scarf and cape as well as add in his combat sandals and gloves.

This type of character isn't afraid to show his animal-like emotions (when he has a bad temper, he lets the world know). I give my character an expression as if he's saying, "Bring it!"



If the character means serious business, I like to leave the eyes as small white dots, which represent highlights from a light source and give the eyes a more realistic look.



**FIGURE 8-3:**  
Sketching in the  
top, shorts,  
and shoes.

### 4. Clean up the line work and add the details and design to his outfit, as shown in Figure 8-4.

Use this step to add in the details, such as the clothing patterns on his belt. Don't forget to include fun tattoos on his shoulders and designs on the gloves. I tighten up his wild rooster hairstyle that matches his cocky persona. Like many popular manga characters, I draw him carrying a large sword on his back that only his strength can wield. I take time drawing in the details to the sword hilt.

I finish off my Mr. Muscle with the details to his combat boots.



**FIGURE 8-4:**  
Adding the  
finishing touches  
to Mr. Muscle.

## The Good Little Soldier

This sidekick character represents the lead character's little right-hand kid. Like the parrot to the pirate, this character makes a great companion, despite his smaller size and power. What he lacks in size, he makes up for with his loyalty to aid the lead character — even to the death. This type of flexible sidekick blends well with the following protagonist characters from Chapter 7: the reckless adventurer, the rookie, the shy mysterious student, and the ruggedly handsome.



REMEMBER

Following are some traits of the good little soldier sidekick:

- » **Youthful appearance**
- » **Always traveling with the lead character:** You never see a cover without them together.
- » **Short, jagged hair:** You're going for that disheveled yaoi (androgenous) look.
- » **Light muscle definition and shorter in stature compared to the main male characters**

Follow these steps to draw the little guy:

- 1. Draw your wire frame figure, deciding what kind of pose he's going to strike.**

This character is usually  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 heads tall. His pose should reflect naïve but passionate youthfulness; he's a straight shooter who's eager to get the job done to help his big brother succeed.



REMEMBER

When posing the wire frame figure in Figure 8-5, I draw his frame much smaller than Mr. Muscle in the previous section. For this pose, place his arms in a guarding stance, ready for any enemy trying to hurt his master.

He's the type of kid all the bullies once made fun of in the martial arts dojo, but now he's the best friend any person can have (at least in the eyes of the lead character).



**FIGURE 8-5:**  
The wire frame figure that will eventually become the good little soldier.

## 2. Define the body with geometric shapes and basic muscle groups.

In contrast to the bulkier Mr. Muscle, this character has a narrower body shape. Don't go overboard by drawing him too skinny — you don't want him to look like he's starving. For my character (see the image on the left in Figure 8-6), I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft because the clothing will cover most of the body).

Keep the muscles toned down. What this character lacks in muscle, he makes up for with guts and glory. On the right in Figure 8-6, I leave the muscle definition to a bare minimum. The pectoral muscles are almost nonexistent. I'm going with a martial artist/ninja sidekick character. I keep the body lines light and fairly rough so that I can easily erase them. I loosely block in the placement of the eyes, nose, and mouth. I also indicate the large flashback '80s hair shape.



TIP

When drawing large hair, be sure to start your outline a bit higher than the men's yaoi hairstyle (Chapter 4).

**FIGURE 8-6:**  
Beginning  
to develop  
muscles and  
facial features.



### **3. Draw the clothing over the body and tighten up the features.**

Although his features have the yaoi look, he may also have a tight smirk suggesting that he's beaming with confidence.

As I draw the loose *gi* (martial arts uniform), wrist band, gloves, boots, and pants over the figure on the left in Figure 8-7, I make sure that they're slightly baggy rather than skintight. This bagginess enhances the cuteness of this particular archetype. The shoes should look plain and streamlined. For the mouth, I make a straight line with a little twist at the corner at the end to reflect the intensity of the character's mental focus.

### **4. Add any accessories and details to the clothing and features.**

For my character, I give him a head band wrapping around the front of his forehead with a metal armor plate. I make sure to give him a black belt — more indicative of his drive rather than his actual fighting ability. (Refer to the image on the right in Figure 8-7.)

If you want to, you can also add some effects with cross hatching and shading on the clothes and face to show his strong personality that allows him to stand up against injustice and abuse in the tough city.

**FIGURE 8-7:**  
Drawing the  
loose martial arts  
uniform and  
tightening up  
the features.



## The Intellectual Veteran

This cool and calculating mastermind sidekick character is typically slightly older than the lead character and has more experience — he's the brains of the operation, so to speak. He represents the older brother who has a hard time controlling the younger lead character. Although he may not possess the vitality and audacity the younger rookie usually has, he makes good decisions to help guide the team to success. Despite butting heads, the younger rookie ultimately wins the veteran's respect.



REMEMBER

Following are some common traits of the intellectual veteran:

- » **Signs of mental/physical maturity:** His face can maintain the yaoi look, but perhaps he has slightly longer hair that doesn't have jagged edges that randomly stick up like the loyal little helper. The face could also be longer with narrower eyes. While his authority doesn't supersede the boss of the team, his decisions are rarely met with opposition from the top.
- » **Greater height:** He's taller than the younger lead character; I draw him approximately 6½ to 7½ heads tall.
- » **A more subdued personality (at least in the beginning):** His mindset is very cool in contrast to the hotheaded rookie. As I mention earlier in this section, the two end up sticking to their guns and working together.



Follow these steps to draw your own intellectual veteran:

**1. Draw the wire frame, making sure that the stance is narrow and closed to show that he's cocky and has no intentions at first of letting our protagonist into his mental inner circle.**

In addition to having a narrow stance, you can also show his cocky attitude by either having his arms folded or resting at his hips.

For my own character, I decided that he's the leader of a top-secret government organization, so I have him holding up his glasses (very common among these character types) with one hand at his hip which and the other tucked into his suit pocket. (See Figure 8-8.)



**TIP**

Try varying the angles of your character's neck and head tilt to capture the attitudes. In this case, tilting my character's head off to the side and slightly angled adds to his cocky expression.



**FIGURE 8-8:**  
Setting the cocky  
narrow stance  
for the wire  
frame figure.

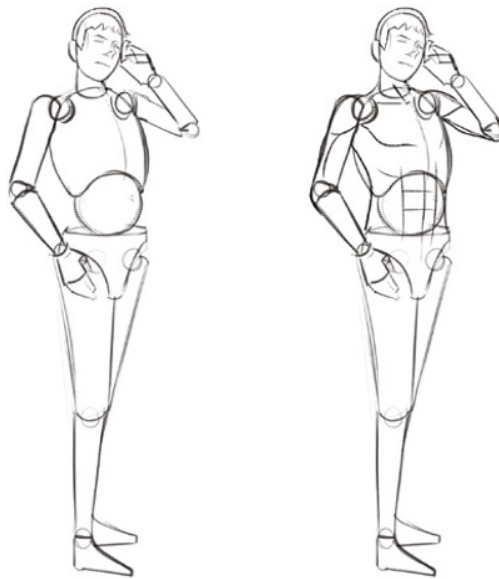
**2. Define the body with geometric shapes and basic muscle groups.**

This character shares the same head proportions as the ruggedly handsome hero from Chapter 7.

On the left in Figure 8-9, I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft). I loosely block in the placement of the eyes, nose, ear and mouth as well as the basic hair outline.

On the right in Figure 8-9, I define the body muscle structure so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. His overall muscle structure needs to be more defined, but thinner and not as exaggerated as Mr. Muscle. (See “Hustle with Mr. Muscle,” earlier in this chapter for more details.)

At this stage, I’m sure the suit will cover up his body, so I keep the body lines light and fairly rough so that I can easily erase them.



**FIGURE 8-9:**  
Sketching in the  
muscle definition  
over the  
geometric  
shapes.

### 3. Draw the clothing over the body and tighten up the features.

Sidekicks like this one usually appear in either a school uniform or a corporate suite and tie; he dresses similarly to the rest of his peers.

On the left in Figure 8-10, I draw the suit top, followed by the suit bottom on the right.



**TIP**

In addition to reviewing Chapter 6 on drawing folds, I recommend looking at reference photos of coat and tie suits. (The Internet is an excellent source.)

As you tighten up the features, remember that this type’s eyes aren’t as big as his protagonist counterpart’s eyes. The larger the eyes get, the more innocent and naïve your characters appear. Because you want your veteran to appear wiser, consider varying the eye shapes, so they aren’t as round. (Check out Chapter 4 for more on the eyes.)

With my veteran sidekick, I angle the upper eyelid to convey that cocky expression. I imagine him saying to the young rookie on their first encounter, “What’s an amateur like *you* doing here?”



**FIGURE 8-10:** Fitting the coat and tie uniform over the figure and tightening up the facial features.

#### 4. Clean up the line work and make any finishing touches. (See Figure 8-11.)

For my character, I add in the tight folds of his suit and shade in the tie and shoes. Adding the small details such as the belt and buttons make his suit appear realistic. Finally, I tighten up the character’s hands along with his rectangle shaped glasses. For the other hand, I draw the pants pocket, which covers up most of the hand. (Yay, no fingers to draw!)



**TIP**

Yes, drawing hands interacting with objects may seem trickier when starting out. I strongly recommend googling the plethora amount of “hands touching eye-glasses” references to find the closest angle reference you need. While it’s important to struggle to make your hand gestures look realistic, make sure you spend time finding the angle of the hand that will save you time rather than references that are either the wrong hand or too low of a resolution that ends up wasting your time guessing the finger position.



**FIGURE 8-11:**  
Cleaning up the  
pencil marks and  
adding the details  
to the suit.

## Drawing Female Sidekick Characters

Female sidekicks used to be virtually unheard of. Now, you see them frequently in mainstream manga (especially in those stories with lead female characters). In this section, I show you how to draw these up-and-coming characters.

### The Underrated Tactician

Looking at her physical appearance, you see that this character is basically the female counterpart to the little brother I introduce in “The Good Little Soldier” section, earlier in this chapter. Very similar in small physique, this character starts out as a shy and quiet type who is afraid to voice her opinion in front of the team. You’ll typically see this character type carrying a doll, a pet, or even large head wear to hide her face from public. This character matches well with the reckless adventurer and the rookie (both in Chapter 7), and she’s also handy as a supporting sidekick. For example, she may be the sister of the intellectual veteran (see the previous section), and she may have a crush on the lead protagonist despite the age difference. As the story progresses, she unveils her outgoing personality and emerges as the team mascot after winning over her team members’ respect with her sage strategy.



REMEMBER

Following are some common traits of the underrated tactician:

- » **Enormous eyes:** To symbolize just how shy she initially presents herself
- » **An androgynous body:** Small chest with no bulging muscles
- » **Hair that's either short or in pigtails**
- » **Socially awkward:** Sometimes she cries and stammers with her speech when she's put under the spotlight.

To draw your own underrated tactician, follow these steps:

**1. Draw a wire frame, making the character petite and narrow.**

Her pose should be slightly wide to reflect her attitude that says, "Don't count me out or else you'll regret it!" Make her head slightly larger than the rest of her body to reflect her youth.

For my character, shown in Figure 8-12, I make the shoulders and hips of the wire frame figure slightly narrower than her male, little brother counterpart. I keep the proportion between 3 and 4½ heads tall. I'm posing the figure so that she's holding a giant head piece (indicated by drawing a circle shape as a placement) that she uses to hide under when embarrassed. The other hand is making a "peace" sign commonly displayed by Japanese manga characters ("V" shape with the index and middle finger).



**FIGURE 8-12:** Drawing the short wire frame figure for the underrated tactician.

## 2. Define the body with geometric shapes and basic muscle groups.

Because this character is young, the shapes need to be thin and narrow. The muscle structure should also be flat and without any of the exaggerated curves you'd find in mature females.

On the left in Figure 8-13, I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft). On the right in Figure 8-13, I define the head, facial features, and body muscle structure so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. On each cheek, I draw three short vertical lines to show that this character is full of energy. For her mouth I sketch what looks like a rounded lower case "w," which creates a cute manga kitten-like mouth. I keep the definition minimal (no breasts or hips). Make the head slightly larger and round to imply that she has that "baby fat" look.

At this stage, draw all lines lightly so that you can draw her uniform over her body and erase the old lines easily.

**FIGURE 8-13:**  
Keeping the  
overall definition  
down to  
a minimum.



## 3. Draw her clothing and tighten the facial features.

I'm dressing my character as if she's part of a safari expedition team (shown in Figure 8-14).

I keep in mind that the loose sleeves end at the elbows, leaving the forearms exposed. The shorts stop at her knees. I keep the socks knee-high (similar to the shōjo style; see Chapter 1 for more on this and other manga styles). I also darken the lines to refine her facial features. For giggles, I create the hat in the form of a giant strawberry.

**FIGURE 8-14:**  
Dressing the  
character to  
match her cute  
quirky style.



**4. Add her accessories, which should reflect the shōjo way with more curls and frills. (See Figure 8-15.)**

I draw the hair and pockets at the front of her shirt. For her accessories, I draw a large belt and buckle around her waist, along with cute safari boots. Go add in the buttons to her safari uniform as well as shoulder straps for her water canteen. Complete the character with a few wrinkles of her safari uniform.

**FIGURE 8-15:**  
Adding the  
final bells  
and whistles.



# The Strong and Caring Soul

This is by far one of my favorite fun characters to draw. She's a mix of an angry ex-girlfriend and my wife all rolled into one (better hope neither of them reads this book). She represents the maternal figure who makes sure that she's there to give sage advice to the lead character in dire situations, but better make sure that you don't cross her path, or else the consequences are dire. Sometimes, in science fiction, she appears as a spirit to lead characters who can't receive physical aid when they're hurt. These characters are usually old enough to be the lead character's mother or big sister.



REMEMBER

Following are some traits of the strong and caring soul sidekick:

- » **Full grown proportions:** 6½ to 7 heads tall
- » **Slender and elegant physical appearance**
- » **Longer hair**
- » **Down to earth:** She won't pull any punches when telling how it is, but she'll fight to the end to protect the main protagonist.

Follow these steps to draw the strong and caring soul:

1. **Draw your wire frame, making the shoulders and hips narrow and the overall proportions fairly elongated (as shown on the left in Figure 8-16).**

Because I'm drawing my character as a housewife who is a mixed martial artist, I have more liberty with exaggerating the proportions.

2. **Define the body with geometric shapes.**

On the right in Figure 8-16, I lightly draw narrow geometric shapes (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft).

3. **Give the body and face definition, keeping in mind the breasts should be the size of the shy mysterious student, but the eyes are smaller and narrow to represent her shrewdness.**

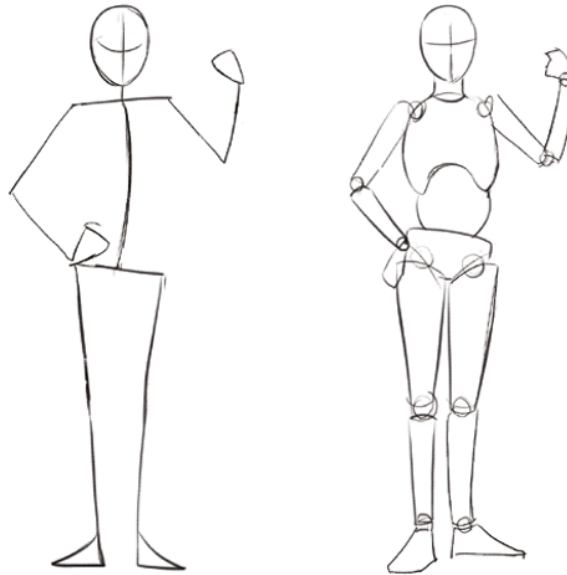
On the left in Figure 8-17, I define the head, facial features, and body muscle structure so that the figure looks more realistic and believable.

4. **Draw her clothing and accessories.**

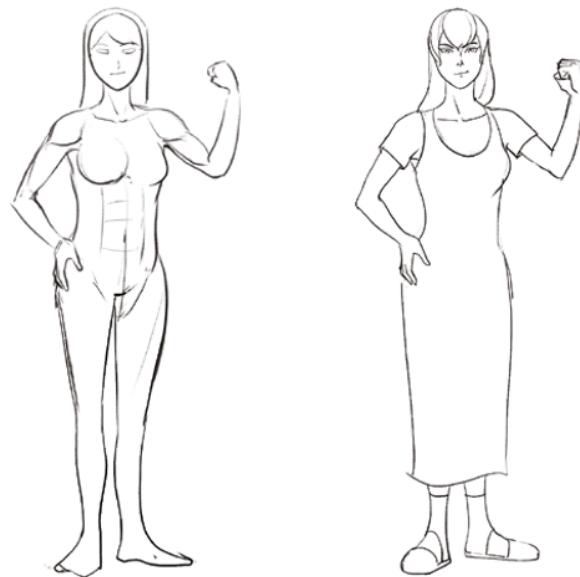
On the right in Figure 8-17, I tighten up her head and facial features. Then I add details to narrow the eyes: making the eyebrows angle downward to partially conceal the inside corners of the top of the eyes, for example. The apron



should cling tightly to the upper body while dangling loosely from her curved hips to the knees. Add the short sleeves to her upper blouse first before drawing in the neck collars in the next step. Finally, I lightly draw in her footwear shape, which looks like sandals with high socks.



**FIGURE 8-16:**  
Drawing a narrow  
and elongated  
frame.



**FIGURE 8-17:**  
Fleshing out the  
strong and caring  
character.

## 5. Add final details and clean up the line work.

When fitting on my character's outfit, I focus on drawing wrinkles. (See Figure 8-18.) I also make sure the folds show how tight the clothing is around the waist of the long apron dress. Complete the footwear by erasing the front of the sandals and adding the detail to the exposed toes sticking out. I draw her V-shaped neck opening starting from both sides of the neck down to the center point midway of her torso. Add in the collars on the outsides of the V-shape opening. Finish the details by adding hem stripes to her sleeves and pockets to both sides of her apron.



**FIGURE 8-18:**  
Adding the  
smaller clothing  
wrinkles  
and shoes.

- » Drawing popular manga villains
- » Setting up poses to match the villains' personalities
- » Examining the costumes that the bad guys wear

## Chapter 9

# The Dreaded Villains

No action manga saga is complete without an opposing bad force — for every protagonist, there must be an antagonist. Otherwise, you don't have a strong plot. (I talk about building a strong plot in Chapter 17.)

Contrary to most American comics, where villains are portrayed as teeth-gnashing, angry, and grotesque, modern manga stories rely on good-looking, intelligent, and cunning lead villains to make the plot more interesting. What makes many of them relatable is that at some point of time, they were once the good guys fighting against the very evil they swore to destroy before having a personal tragic experience that convinced them to join the dark side.

In this chapter, I show you how to draw popular villain characters. These archetypes expand and change, just like every form of popular entertainment does, but you want to at least recognize the common trend that has flooded the popular manga market for the past several decades.



WARNING

If this is your first time drawing manga characters and you have no drawing experience, read Chapters 4, 5, and 6 before attempting to draw these characters on your own.

# The Cunning Prince of Darkness

This character is as complex as he is handsome, and while he isn't armed to the teeth, he likely carries a sword. His attire is just as simple. He wears a dark cape, but the rest of his costume is one plain color.



REMEMBER

Some common traits of the handsome villain include the following:

- » **Partially obscured faces:** Many of these characters' faces are hidden by their long hair in front or with their costume accessories.
- » **Towering height:** He's rather disproportionately tall, ranging from 8 to 10 heads tall.
- » **Long and beautiful features:** The overall face (particularly the nose and chin) is slightly elongated. Eyes are usually narrow and smaller than the protagonist eyes.
- » **Mysterious power and deceit:** He plays mind games against his enemies, using charm and seducing the weak with compassion in order to find ways of increasing his physical power.

Now follow these steps to create this super villain:

1. **Draw your wire frame, making the character 8 to 10 heads tall and setting the frame very wide.**
2. **Define the body with elongated and muscular geometric shapes over the wire frame figure.**
3. **Add curves and muscle structure and then block in the facial features.**

In Figure 9-1, the posture for my own villain is upright and proper.

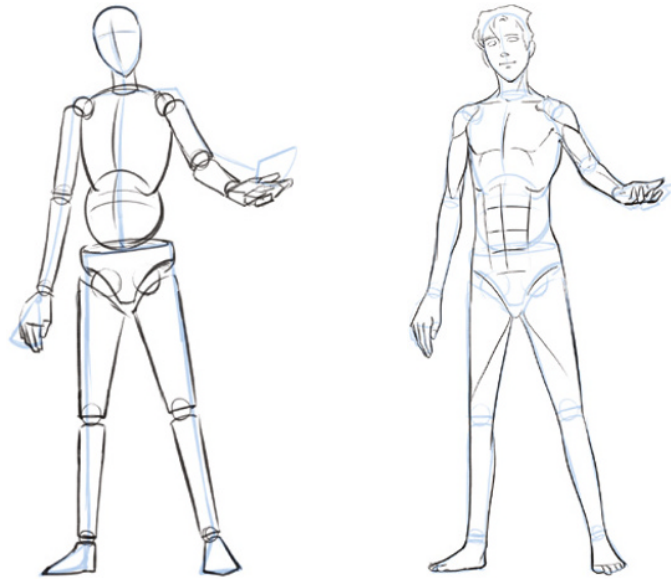
On the left in Figure 9-2, I lightly draw the geometric shapes. At this stage, I want the waist to be narrow in relation to the shoulders. Don't draw the arm and leg shapes too narrow — he's still physically fit.

On the right in Figure 9-2, I sketch in the hair, facial features, and body muscle structure. This character isn't physically bulked up, but the muscles are more defined and prominent than the androgynous student's. (See Chapter 7.) I give the villain narrowly set eyes, a long nose, and a small mouth. I sketch in the basic shape of the bangs and the long hair.

Draw the hands and the rest of the limbs elongated to show his gracefulness. I draw the lines lightly, knowing that I'll later refine them more accurately.



**FIGURE 9-1:**  
Setting up the  
wide shoulders in  
the wire  
frame figure.



**FIGURE 9-2:**  
Defining the head  
and sketching in  
the muscle  
definition over  
the geometric  
shapes.

#### 4. Lightly draw the clothes, and tighten up the hair and facial features, as shown in Figure 9-3.

I draw the martial arts long robe. Darken the lines of the head to solidify the hair as well as tweak the lower jaw of the face by making both sides slightly convex. I also make the bottom of his chin flat rather than pointed.

I draw the details of the eyes and draw wavy hair lines behind the head. For the robe, draw the V- neckline shape of this robe starting from each side of the outside edges where the neck connects to the shoulders and joins together at the midpoint of the sternum. Then draw a slightly long curved line starting from the midpoint of the trapezius muscle of the robe stretching down to right above the ankles. Next, starting from underneath each armpit, draw a slightly curved line angling away from the feet to form a Christmas tree shape before connecting with the previous lines in this step. (See Figure 9-3.) Draw the shapes for the loose sleeves. (Note how the opening of his right sleeve is an oval shape, since his right arm is slightly bent toward the readers as if to say, “come with me and everything will be fine.”) Finish the robe shape by drawing the bottom hem of the robe, stopping right above the ankles.



**FIGURE 9-3:** Sketching in the robe for the prince of darkness.

## 5. Clean up and refine the lines and facial features and add accessories, as shown in Figure 9-4.

Draw an eye width line underneath each eye to show the dark twisted side of his personality. I add a wide cloth belt wrapping across his torso. (Note the nice bow front and center.) I also draw decorations around the edges of his sleeves and collar.

To top things off, I draw the long fold lines on his robe and, for the footwear, sketch the kind of sandals that ninjas and master swordsmen put on. Draw the handle grip and hilt of the sword sticking out of his right side of the robe.

Finally, shade in the hair and pupils of his eyes.



**FIGURE 9-4:**  
Adding the belt,  
sword, and other  
finishing touches.

## The Formidable Henchman

This giant relies on his strength to get the job done. The awesome warrior is not as handsome as the Prince of Darkness, but he's more muscular and isn't afraid to let his emotions out (which can spell trouble for the protagonist unless he can take advantage of the henchman's volatile psyche).



**REMEMBER**

This list includes some common traits of the awesome warrior:

- » **Fierce eyes:** Pupils are either drawn small or none at all to show the intensity of his anger.
- » **Muscles:** The exaggeration of his muscles are so crazy you might see some areas of his bulk that might seem made up by the artist.
- » **Testosterone:** Pure high-octane energy is his name, lust for more ultimate power is his game (as if this guy needs any extra vitamins to start with!).

Follow these steps to draw the awesome warrior:

1. **Create a wire frame that's 7½ to 10 heads tall, making sure the width of the shoulders is wider than the handsome villain's to accommodate more muscle mass. (See Figure 9-5.)**



**FIGURE 9-5:**  
Setting up the  
wire frame figure  
with wide,  
muscular  
shoulders.

2. **Define the body with geometric shapes, keeping the head and facial features square and chiseled.**

On the left in Figure 9-6, I lightly draw the geometric shapes. On the right in Figure 9-6, I draw the muscle groups over the geometric shapes. His ripped upper body will remain exposed, so I want to make sure I take time in this stage to plan as much detail.



**TIP**

This character is so physically buff that you need to think about and draw the muscle groups as if you're fitting a thick fur coat over the geometric shapes. I recommend starting from the shoulder muscles behind the head and neck and working your way down toward the legs. Keep the waist thin. The trick to making each bulging muscle look chiseled is drawing each one angular as opposed to the rounder muscle shapes of *The Brave Compassionate Princess* in Chapter 7.

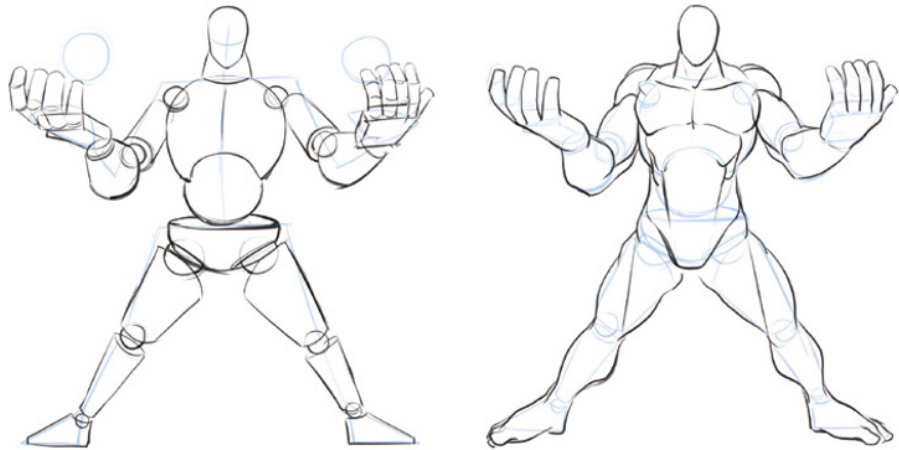


**REMEMBER**

When deciding on which of your character's muscles to exaggerate, be sure to revisit the section on anatomy in Chapter 5. Creativity is important, but it needs to be based on real anatomy. If you are still lost for ideas or need clarity on how body shapes should look from different perspectives, I highly recommend looking at 3D modeling websites such as <https://sketchfab.com/>, where you can search for all kinds of 3D models and rotate them under different light sources. It's free, fast, and fun!



**FIGURE 9-6:**  
The henchman  
bulks up.



**3. Block in the muscle shapes and sketch in the hair and facial features.**  
(See Figure 9-7.)

As a finishing touch for the muscles, I darken the lines that separate each muscle division.

Draw thick eyebrows that angle downward and almost cover the eyes. These character types do not show their pupils when they display their power. Similar to The Prince of Darkness, I erase the bottom half of the basic head geometry shape and sketch in an angled lower jaw and replace the pointed chin with a flat chin. I sketch in the shape of his wide-open mouth which looks like a keystone.

**FIGURE 9-7:**  
Drawing the basic  
clothing folds and  
blocking in the  
facial features.





TIP

If you want a menacing expression, draw the eyebrows thicker, pointed, and closer to the eyes. I like to add lines for the wrinkles gathering between the eyes.

**4. Refine the hair and facial features as well as draw the clothing over the lower part of the figure and lightly sketch the guidelines for his accessories. (See Figure 9-8.)**

For his hair, I define his hairline across his forehead and sides and add in two more lightning-shaped clumps of hair on each side of the head that stick up like flames from a fire. I complete the mouth by drawing in the upper and lower teeth.

I lightly sketch the loose pants shape and then add in the wide cloth belt that wraps around the mid torso. On each forearm, I draw a cylinder shape bracelet. He's rugged and plenty battle tested, so footwear is optional for this tough hombre. (After all, he's no lady's soulmate!) I lightly sketch in a partially oval guideline around his neck (which I later erase) for the placement of his giant necklace. (See the next step for that bit.)



TIP

While the pants are loose, we still want to show the outside shapes of the leg muscles that lay underneath. As I show in Figure 9-8, the clothing covering the inside and outside edges of the upper and lower legs are snug. The areas where there is less fabric tension are around the knees and ankles where there is more space between the body and the clothing.



**FIGURE 9-8:**  
Adding facial  
details and  
clothing to the  
henchman's  
appearance.

**5. Add in details of the henchman's clothing as well as the details for the rest of the accessories and effects to match his persona. (See Figure 9-9.)**

Draw a series of wave lines for the effects of pulsing energy around the two orbs floating above his hands.

I add in the long folds to his loose pants and add tattered edges to the hems of both legs. I draw a large scar in front of his torso. (You can add a few more anywhere on his body.) Finally, use the necklace guideline from the previous step to draw in the large, beaded necklace that wraps around the neck.



**FIGURE 9-9:**  
Draw the details  
and special  
effects to  
complete  
the henchman.



**TIP**

When drawing the beads, start by drawing the center front bead first in the middle point of the guideline and proceed to fill in the rest from that center bead out toward the back of the neck. To make the overall shape of the necklace look 3-dimensional, each subsequent bead should be partially overlapped by its predecessor's bead shape and decrease in size.

## The Tiny Time Bomb

This little package is your worst online shopping mistake — you'll want to save the return receipt. The tiny time bomb is the deceptively small villain who takes down any man or woman in charge to seize power, even if it means betraying her own evil master. Her personality is typically cold and ruthless. Although she's cute, her dark attire and evil smile are dead giveaways that it's only a matter of time before the world around her is going to go BOOM!



REMEMBER

The tiny time bomb usually has the following traits:

- » **A short, petite body:** Approximately 5 heads tall, lean, and everything mean
- » **Spikey hair**
- » **An emotional personality highlighted by an evil, hot temper:** In quite a few manga scenarios, her brash emotions contribute to her own demise.
- » **A dark, fashion statement:** She wears dark goth style clothing. Hoodies are a plus.

To draw your own tiny time bomb, follow these steps:

**1. Start out with a tall wire frame figure, as shown in Figure 9-10.**

I make this evil character approximately 5 heads tall.

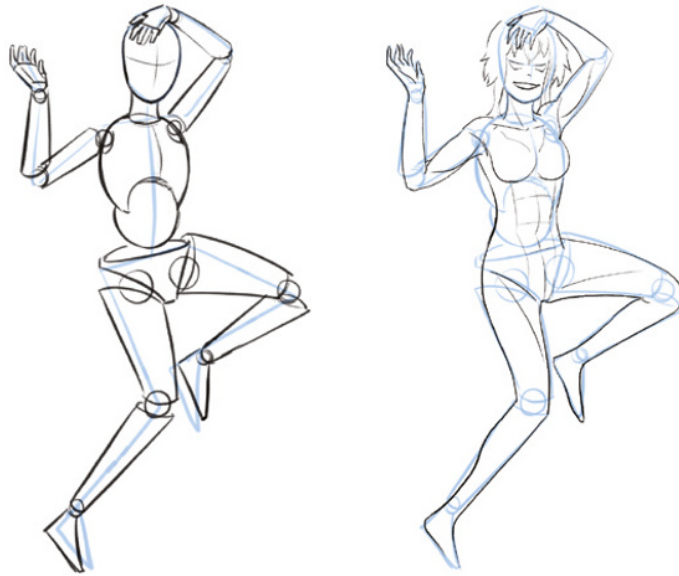


**FIGURE 9-10:**  
Setting the short  
pose for the wire  
frame figure.

**2. Define the body with geometric shapes, keeping in mind that they should be slendrer than those of a male villain.**

On the left in Figure 9-11, I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft). On the right in Figure 9-11, I block in the head, facial features, and body muscle structure so that the figure looks more

realistic and believable. I also sketch the jagged sharp front of her bangs to show her rough-around-the-edges personality. Although I tone down the muscle definition, I draw the chest large. (This feature tends to represent a villain's power and status.)



**FIGURE 9-11:**  
Adding geometric  
shapes and  
adding  
on to them.

### 3. Sketch in the basic goth costume shape and define the character's facial and hair features, as shown in Figure 9-12.

Start with the sketch of her hoodie that covers her head. Then sketch in her arm openings of her sleeveless tank top. Since her upper tank top size and snug fit connect seamlessly to her lower cargo pants without any belt, just draw a light line right above her hip to indicate the bottom of her top. Next, sketch in her loose pants. Like the previous henchman, the pants are loose around her knees and ankles. (This is to show off her curves in the hips and thighs.)



**TIP**

When drawing the hoodie, treat the opening for her face as a diamond shape starting from the center top of her hair bangs and bottoming at the midpoint of the sternum of her ribcage. After the diamond-shaped head opening is complete, start the outside shape of the hoodie, starting from the top then following the contours of her head before reconnecting at the bottom of the diamond-shaped head opening.



TIP

In addition to reviewing Chapter 6 on drawing folds, I recommend looking at reference photos of different hoodies. (The Internet is an excellent resource.)

When defining the head, make her cheeks full and her chin pointed. Make the eyes narrow-set with long, thin eyelashes. Give the character a small nose and wide smile.



**FIGURE 9-12:**  
Drawing the goth  
costume over the  
figure and  
defining  
the features.

**4. Clean up the line work, as shown in Figure 9-13, and add details to the uniform and facial expression.**

Render details to her eyes by shading in the pupils. Also add the folds to her clothing, remembering to keep the fold lines short to reflect a skin-tight halter top and bottom. I draw a tattered cape in behind her back.

Personalize her with some random shape tattoos on her arms. Draw her snake coil-like arm bracelets.



**FIGURE 9-13:**  
Cleaning up the  
pencil marks and  
adding the details  
to the character.

## The Slender Beauty

The physical appearance of the slender beauty brings to mind the anti-Wicked Witch of the West (younger, beautiful, and ice cold). With her clever magic, no one knows what demonic plan she has in mind. Despite her reserved appearance, her deep-down anger and endless hatred toward the protagonist brings instant transformation into a demonic form during battle.



REMEMBER

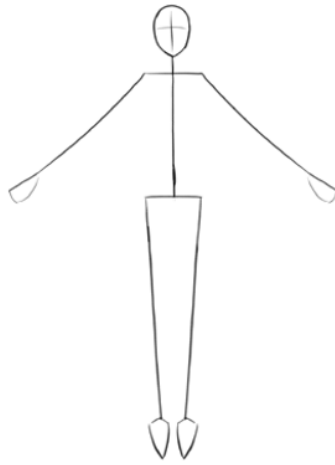
Following are some traits that all Slender Beauties share:

- » **Tall and slender:** She is 7 to 8 heads tall and skinny but has the medium to large chest size of The Shy Mysterious Student. (See Chapter 7.)
- » **Long flowing hair:** Often drawn blowing in the wind like an open parachute.
- » **Neutral expression:** She fights ice cold.
- » **Simple clothing:** A long flowing kimono does the job.

Follow these steps to draw your own slender beauty:

1. **Draw the wire frame so that the structure of this character looks mature and taller than the tiny time bomb. (She should be about 7 to 8 heads tall.)**

As you can see in Figure 9-14, I make the shoulders and hips of the wire frame figure slightly wider in relation to her head to reflect her age. My slender beauty is 8 heads tall.



**FIGURE 9-14:**  
Drawing tall  
proportions for  
the slender  
beauty.

## 2. Define the body using geometric shapes that are both rounded and curved.

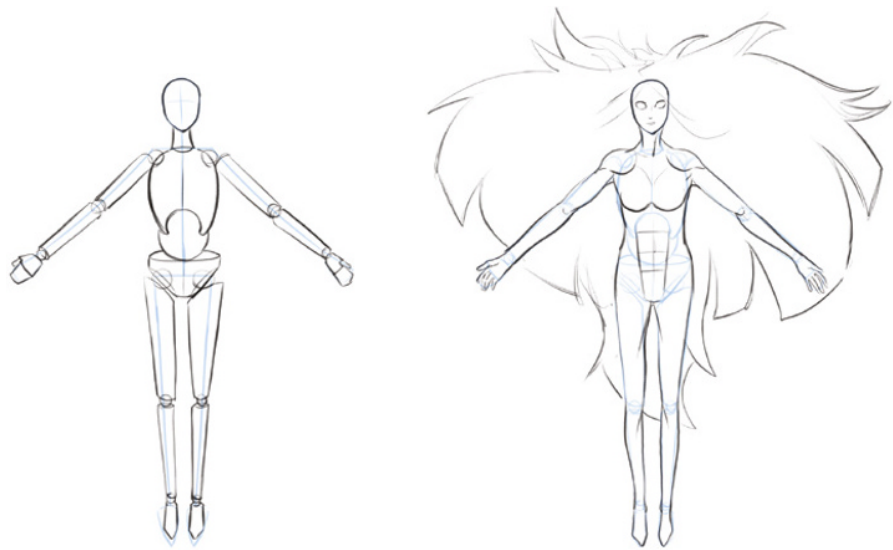
On the left in Figure 9-15, I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft). On the right in Figure 9-15, I loosely block in the placement of the head, facial features, and basic muscle structure so that the figure looks more realistic and believable. I draw all her limbs and waist thin and keep her chest size full. I also keep all shapes and lines lighter than characters with tighter clothing since most of her features are later concealed with her flowing kimono.

Her pose is simple and symmetrical with her body facing forward with both arms spread out. Her legs, also facing front, are straight and touching together. In addition to sketching her eyes and mouth, I block in the shape of her giant hair that's blowing in the air.

## 3. Define her hair and facial features and sketch in her basic kimono shape, using Figure 9-16 as an example.

Draw the face shape narrow, with smaller than *shōjo manga* (comics geared toward teenage girls; see Chapter 1) eyes. I draw a simple wider version of the shadow nose (refer to Chapter 4) so that the readers' attention goes straight to the eyes. I draw her mouth small as not to compete with the eyes. To top off her facial features, draw pointed bunny-shaped ears at the top of her head. I refine the overall shape of her hair so that the overlapping layers within the dense thatch are visible.





**FIGURE 9-15:**  
Sketching in the  
basic shapes and  
muscle structure  
for my slender  
beauty.

The overall shape of her costume is like a cross between an angel costume and a Japanese geisha kimono. I start with the V-shaped collar around the neck. Draw the sides of the kimono tapering to her waist. When drawing clothing over large chests, let the fold from one side of the chest overlap the fold from the other side to give more dimension to the overall shape. Draw the shape of her lower kimono like a Victorian cocktail dress that balloons away from the lower legs. Start the top of her kimono sleeves by following the top of her arms down to her wrists. Next start from under the chest level of her torso and draw a slightly curvy line to complete the rest of the loose sleeve on each side. Note that the bottom of the sleeve is much wider than the top portion of the sleeve closer to her torso. Complete the sleeve cuffs by drawing a narrow oval shape to connect the top of the sleeve line with the bottom of the sleeve line. (See Figure 9-16.)



**TIP**

4. **Add more definition to her hair and her accessories to complement her costume.**

As you can see in Figure 9-17, I add a ton of ornaments and jewelry. I draw a gem necklace, hair jewelry, and a thick belt with mystic symbols. Since her hair is critical to her appearance, I finish the hair shape by adding more long curve lines for her hair strands.



**TIP**

When drawing hair that's flowing in the air, be sure to vary the width between the groupings of the hair strands.



**FIGURE 9-16:**  
Dressing the  
character to  
match her  
fashion sense.

I draw decorative bands along the cuffs of her sleeves as well as along her V-shaped collar. Draw in her sandal laces like how you make checkmarks (V shapes). Mark the front of the sandal shape, which mimics the shape of the front toes. (Again, see Figure 9-17.) Add the finishing touches to her costume by making her nails long and sharp.



**FIGURE 9-17:**  
The smaller  
articles of  
clothing, jewelry,  
and accessories  
complete the  
slender beauty.

- » Discovering grandmasters and wizards
- » Using unconventional proportions
- » Drawing costumes for these mystic characters

## Chapter 10

# Elder Figures

**Y**ou commonly see an elder figure with whom all seek counsel in *shōnen manga* (action/adventure comics geared toward teenage boys). Genres covering fantasy and action are flooded with these archetypes. Most of these characters are old wizards or grandmasters who have immense knowledge and experience and take center stage in aiding the lead characters. Some of these characters appear at the beginning of a story as the one who has been teaching the lead character since they were born. In other instances, the lead character seeks the elder figure throughout the entire manga story and doesn't find him until the very end when the mission finally comes to an end. Traditionally, these elder archetypes are male.

The main purpose of having these characters is to build up the readers' sense of a divine figure who surpasses the abilities and powers of the lead character (no matter how strong they are portrayed).

In this chapter, I show you how to draw the popular mystic characters in today's manga world. I start with the grandmasters and follow with the wizard. If this is your first time drawing manga characters, and you have no drawing experience, read Chapters 4, 5, and 6 before attempting to draw these characters on your own.

# Enter the Grandmasters

The grandmaster is an old-timer who you never see in anything other than his traditional uniform. You never really see him in full action, but readers are kept in anticipation that he can kick some serious butt when the time comes. Physically, grandmasters are either really thin or massively huge. (I show you how to draw both in this section.)

Following are some common traits of grandmasters:

- » **Long beards**
- » **Bald heads:** A plus
- » **A no-nonsense attitude:** The large masters don't joke around.
- » **A bit perverted:** The smaller, thinner masters often chase young girls or peek in the girls' locker room.
- » **A staff:** The thin masters carry a staff.
- » **Lack of weapons:** Both the thin and the huge grandmasters have absolutely no weapons.

## The Thin Grandmaster

These old masters are either grumpy or comedic. As I mention in the previous list, some are perverts trying to relive their younger years. Others sit around getting their kicks from telling dad jokes to girls much younger. Don't get me wrong, there's still plenty of power hidden underneath that old hood.

To draw your own thin grandmaster, follow these steps:

### 1. Set the wire frame figure to a short and narrow size.

On average, the thin grandmaster is around 4 to 6 heads tall.

In Figure 10-1, I set my thin grandmaster to 5½ heads tall. I position my character with a wide leg stance and both forearms bent and raised to show that he's full of energy. His right arm looks like he's waving a peace sign to the readers (or to a pretty young girl). In his left hand, I draw a line to represent the grandmaster's trademark staff.



**FIGURE 10-1:**  
Setting up the  
wire figure for my  
thin grandmaster.

## 2. Define the body, so that it looks more human and sketch in the facial features.

On the left in Figure 10-2, I draw the geometric shapes. In general, this character's upper torso and arms are thinner and shorter than the waist and legs. I make his arms short, and his lower legs slightly wider than his arms. I make his neck thin to show his advanced age. Next, I block in the fingers gripping the staff and put his other hand in the classic "V" sign hand gesture that says "all is well with life."

On the right in Figure 10-2, I lightly draw the muscle structure over the basic geometric shapes and block in the facial features. Keep in mind that he's thin, but not feeble. Because he's thin from old age, his ribcage structure is more visible than the ribcage of a younger teenage character. To show thinness, I draw several diagonal curvy lines on each side of the torso, and I lightly sketch his pectoral chest muscles on the upper torso.

I lightly sketch the eyes and facial hair (which includes the bushy eyebrows, the hair behind his bald head, and beard). At this stage, I draw just two arcs for the eyes to show he's happy.

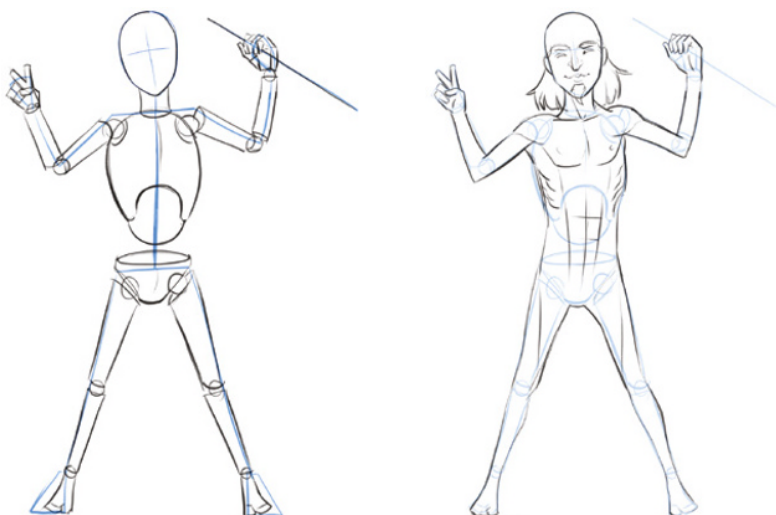


**TIP**

When you block in the goatee, leave a small space between the lower lip and the top of the goatee shape. Also, keep the eyebrows away from the eyes. I suggest drawing the eyebrow shape in the same arch shape of the eyes (as shown on the right in Figure 10-2).

At this stage, I know that the grandmaster's entire body will be covered by his attire, so I keep all the lines light in order to easily erase them later.

**FIGURE 10-2:**  
Adding basic  
geometric  
shapes, muscle  
structure, and  
facial features.



**3. Lightly draw the character's clothes and tighten up the facial features and hands.**

In Figure 10-3, I choose a variation of a kung fu martial arts uniform (the loose long-sleeved garment) — traditional Japanese pants (*hakama*), to be more precise — for my character. These clothes are traditional for a thin grandmaster, but feel free to experiment with other options when you draw your character. I draw a convex curve across his forehead to indicate his cap line.

**FIGURE 10-3:**  
Lightly sketching  
the grandmaster's  
clothes and  
tightening up the  
facial features.



I narrow down both sides of the lower jaw to show his frail appearance. Most grandmasters have crooked or flat noses, which make them look older and gruffer. To show that his nose is crooked from the front view of his face, I draw a long curvy line starting from my character's right eyebrow down to the center of the nose. Wrinkles underneath the eye show the age of your character.

**4. Clean up the line work, complete the detail on the face and clothing, and add accessories. (See Figure 10-4.)**

Generally, thin grandmasters have high cheekbones and deep-set eyes. (As people age, features such as eyes, cheeks, and ears gradually recede back into the skull.) I draw a diagonal line on each side of the cheek and upper eyelids. I also add two mirroring parenthesis bracket shapes lines which connect each side of the corner of his smile with each side of his nose — I refer to these as “muzzle wrinkles,” since they mimic a dog’s mouth muscle structure.

I finish off the front of his martial arts vest by adding a series of parallel lines with ends capped with a small circle for his fastener on each side running vertically equidistantly to each other starting from below the top of his neck collar down to the bottom flap of his vest. I complete his sleeves by drawing huge cuffs to make his thin wrists appear even thinner. If you want, add in some designs to his uniform like I show with his neck collar.

Happy-go-lucky types carry a *saké* (Japanese rice wine) flask at all times. I draw mine attached to his right hip in the traditional shape of a *Hyotan* (a Japanese gourd whose outside shell is used as a flask when dried). Don't forget to complete the wooden staff! Usually, the top part is blunt and deformed and the bottom is sharper. Finally, I draw in the traditional Japanese straw sandals (*wara-zōri*) for his footwear.



**FIGURE 10-4:**  
Adding the  
finishing touches  
and accessories  
to the thin  
grandmaster.

# The Huge Grandmaster

The huge grandmaster is still physically active. He participates in sparring and fighting while the young fledgling looks on with awe and respect. Most of this grandmaster's emotions are less humorous and more intense than the thin grandmaster's. (See the previous section.)



REMEMBER

Although huge grandmasters are stronger and bulkier, they aren't always tall. Some are short and rather stocky.

To draw this character, follow these steps:

## 1. Set the wire frame figure to about 7 heads tall. (See Figure 10-5.)

Although proportions vary among huge grandmasters, the shoulders should be wider than the hips (which is the opposite of the thin grandmasters). The large grandmaster assumes a no-nonsense posture to reflect his inflexible intolerance toward his pupil's mistakes.

I set the shoulders a little more than twice the width of the hips on my wire frame figure, and I draw a wide stance with his arms folded across the chest.



**FIGURE 10-5:**  
Setting the  
broad-shouldered  
wire frame figure  
for the huge  
grandmaster.



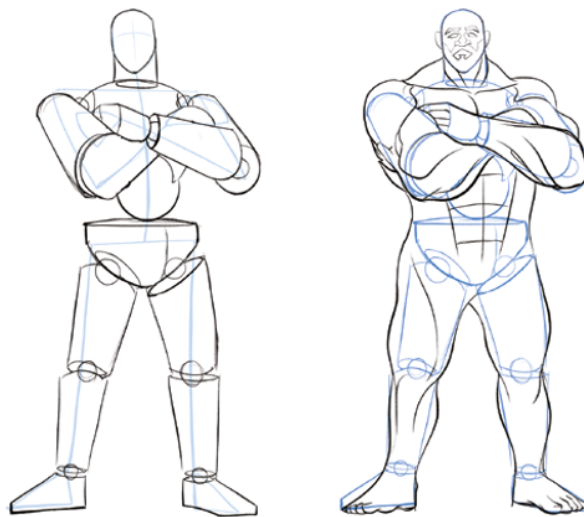
## 2. Define the body so that it looks more human.

On the left in Figure 10-6, I lightly draw the geometric shapes, knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft because the character's martial arts uniform will cover most of his body.

Be sure to draw the shapes wide! With my huge grandmaster, the upper body shapes (such as the cylinders for the arms) are as wide as, if not wider than, the shapes for the legs. A manga-ka may exaggerate the size of the arms to show how physically formidable the character is. Try it, and don't be alarmed if your grandmaster's head looks small!

On the right in Figure 10-6, I lightly draw the muscle structure over the basic geometric shapes and block in the facial features. To exaggerate the muscular build of the character, allow some space to fall between the basic muscle structure and the geometric shapes.

I draw the facial hair (eyebrows, beard, and moustache) straight and angled rather than arched and rounded like the thin grandmaster. I tweak the evenly rounded geometric shape of the head so that it has a rounded peak at the center top. I let the eyebrows angle down toward the center of the forehead. I draw his almond-shaped eyes and shade them in, indicating his identity partially shrouded in darkness. The nose is identical to the thin grandmaster's nose, except I shorten the length and increase the width a bit so that his face doesn't look as long. No need to draw the mouth since it's hidden behind his moustache. Finally, I make the hair long, which makes him look as though he's been training without rest.



**FIGURE 10-6:**  
The huge  
grandmaster  
begins to  
come to life.

### 3. Begin to sketch the character's clothes and tighten up his facial features.

In Figure 10-7, I draw the huge grandmaster's loose uniform over the figure, making sure it's slightly baggy — not skintight like those superhero outfits.

In this stage, I tighten up the facial features by increasing the line contrast and adding hair strands to the overall hair shape to give him a more realistic appearance. Don't forget to sketch in the wrinkle lines underneath the eyes. I draw his high leggings tucked under his pants and sketch in his slip-on martial arts shoes.



**FIGURE 10-7:**  
Drawing the huge  
grandmaster's  
loose, classic  
clothing.

### 4. Add finishing detail to the character's clothes, face, and hands.

In Figure 10-8, I draw rip and tear marks around the edges of my huge grandmaster's uniform to show that his entire life revolves around his arduous journey. To give him a scowl, draw several lines at the center of his forehead for wrinkles. You can also draw several short lines along each finger joint of his hand, so that his hands tell the story of someone who's been in a countless number of fights and tournaments. I decide to add in a tattered cape behind his back to accentuate his ruggedness. Finally, I complete his leggings with a series of concave arcs to represent multiple wraps of bandages.



**FIGURE 10-8:**  
Adding the  
finishing touches  
to the huge  
grandmaster's  
appearance.

## The Sage Grandmaster

Brute strength isn't the only thing that makes your elder figures awesome. Brains and years of experience are clear winners when it comes to the main protagonist seeking advice in the face of troubled times. Remember, his intellectual skills are not only combat related, but also can be applied to sports, crafts, politics, and even tea ceremony etiquette. (Yes, that's right!)

Following are some common traits of sage grandmaster:

- » **Elongated body proportions and facial features.**
- » **Considerably more height than the younger lead character:** Sage masters are approximately  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to  $8\frac{1}{2}$  heads tall.
- » **Subdued character:** Sage masters don't raise their voices in anger, but let their stern expressions speak for themselves.
- » **Conservatively dressed:** Since they don't necessarily engage in combat, these characters either dress in western or eastern formal wear.

Follow these steps to draw your own sage master:

- 1. Draw the wire frame figure to reflect the tall stature of the sage master, as shown in Figure 10-9.**

Although I draw my sage master at  $8\frac{1}{2}$  heads tall, he appears even taller at the completion thanks to the loose clothing I later draw.



TIP

Straight postures are important to show the character's high-class intellect. Since this character type tends to be lean rather than bulky, keep in mind to draw their poses with backs straight and chest out.

I draw a line to show my character holding a folding fan (another prop suggesting class status). His hands and feet are spread out to balance his upper body.



**FIGURE 10-9:**  
Setting the  
stance for the  
sage master.

## 2. Define the body, so that it looks more human.

On the left in Figure 10-10, I lightly draw the geometric shapes, knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft. On the right in Figure 10-10, I first lightly sketch the body muscle structure so that the figure looks more realistic and then block in the basic facial features.

My master's overall muscle structure is lanky and tall. Refer to "The Thin Grandmaster" section, earlier in this chapter, as you draw his muscle structure over the geometric shapes.

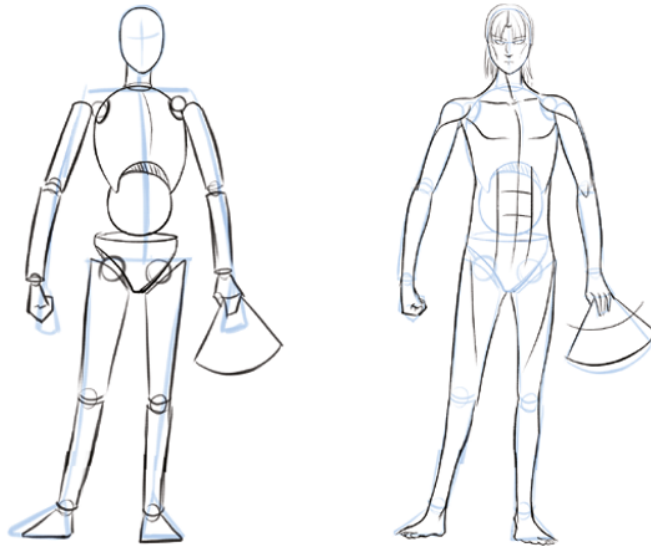
His features should be that of a noble intellectual elder. Compared to the thin and strong grandmasters that I show earlier in this chapter, sage masters are well coiffed and appreciate proper hygiene. My character has slick straight hair and is clean shaven.

At this stage, I'm sure I'll make dark robes to cover his body. I, therefore, keep the body lines light and fairly rough so that I can easily erase them.

## 3. Add basic shapes for the clothes and accessories and further define the face and hands.

I draw the sage master's robe flowing from top to bottom. (See Figure 10-11.)

**FIGURE 10-10:**  
Drawing lean  
muscles over the  
geometric shapes  
and sketching  
in the face.



**TIP**

The key to making a thin character look dominating is by allowing extra space between the clothing and the structure of the character underneath. (Again, see Figure 10-11; the drawing here is yet another reminder as to why it's so important to understand all of your characters' basic anatomy when adding on the clothing.) In addition to reviewing Chapter 6 on drawing folds, I recommend looking at reference photos of long robes to see examples of loose, long clothing draped over the human form. With my sage master, I sketch in the "V" shape neck opening of his kimono, which runs all the way down to the halfway point on his lower leg. I sketch in a second upper kimono with loose sleeves.

Using the basic geometric face as a guide, I tweak his lower jaw and chin to be narrower and angled (while keeping the flat chin).

#### **4. Finish the sketch by adding detail to face, clothes, and accessories.**

For my character, the fun is far from over as I add more detail — face wrinkles underneath his eyes and "muzzle wrinkles," to be precise. (Refer to "The Thin Grandmaster" section, earlier in this chapter, for my explanation of "muzzle wrinkles.") Just above his waist, I draw the two sphere-like fasteners that secure his upper kimono in place. Just underneath, sketch in his belt. Draw in the hems of his sleeves. Now comes the exciting part where we draw in the long slightly curved wrinkles along his sleeves and lower kimono to give a more natural appearance to show the softness and texture of the materials. (Again, review Chapter 6 on drawing folds.)

I complete the detail in his fan by drawing the grooves for the folds of each panel. (See Figure 10-12.)



**FIGURE 10-11:**  
Adding a robe  
and details to  
make the sage  
grandmaster  
come alive.



**FIGURE 10-12:**  
Cleaning up the  
pencil marks and  
adding the details  
to complete  
the sage  
grandmaster.

- » Drawing expressions that say “Save me, or you’ll regret it!”
- » Exploring different types of hapless girls who need to be rescued
- » Matching the face and personality with the proper costume

## Chapter **11**

# Damsels in Distress

**E**ver watch those silent movies featuring attractive girls in tattered clothing tied down to the railroad tracks? How about the girl who gets abducted and taken up the tall building by a giant gorilla? Well, guess what? The manga world (especially shōnen manga) is flooded with these characters. Some of them are young, spoiled little princesses who have to learn their lesson the hard way by being captured and held prisoner. Others may be the brave and mature types who stand up for a greater cause even at the risk of losing their lives.

In this chapter, I show you several popular damsel-in-distress archetypes that you can use for your manga. Remember, though, these characters shouldn’t steal the spotlight from your main characters; they should play a secondary role in advancing the focus of your story.

## The Tiny Firecracker

Picture a rambunctious baby sister getting into trouble by sticking her nose into other people’s business. Her little-to-no sense of fear results in the lead character having little choice but to go in to bail her out. Usually, the plot to rescue these girls is based not on romance, but on emotional love.

Here are some traits or patterns to keep in mind when creating this type of character:

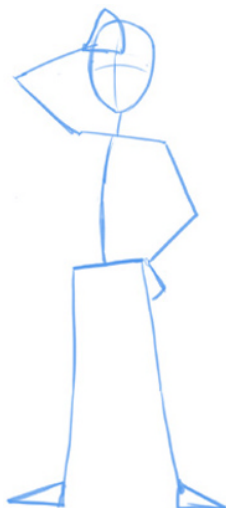
- » **Youth:** These types are generally young (anywhere between 6 and 18 years old).
- » **Adorable faces:** Draw them cute.
- » **Petite body type:** This girl has no exaggerated proportions or features.
- » **Stubborn and determined personality:** She may not always be the most pleasant person to deal with on an everyday basis.
- » **Act now think later:** Impulsivity is her name, think later is her game.
- » **A rescuer:** The lead character who eventually saves her is usually a “big brother” type lead character who loves the damsel as his “little sister.”

Imagine a stubborn child who’s about to throw a fit after not getting her way. Or maybe a spoiled teen daughter who’s irately waiting for her overworked father for her daily double deluxe ice cream banana split. Then follow the steps to create this bundle of joy:

### 1. Pose the wire frame figure about 5½ heads tall.

This character generally has her arms either folded across her chest or on both sides of her hips. Despite her attitude, she should have narrow shoulders and the narrow body frame of a normal teen or preteen youngster.

In Figure 11-1, I pose her standing with one hand on her hip while mocking the readers with a loser sign. Observe how the left hip is raised higher than the right when more weight is placed upon it.



**FIGURE 11-1:**  
Setting up the  
wire figure for my  
little firecracker.



**2. Lightly draw the geometric shapes over the wire frame figure and then draw the cross hairs on the face to indicate the direction of her head.**

When drawing these shapes for this character type, keep them narrow, but not wafer thin. (She's not a fashion model.) Don't make them so wide that the head loses significance or balance when compared to the rest of the body. If the character is younger, make the head larger and the body narrower. If the girl is more mature, make the body shapes narrow but longer to accommodate the change in proportion.

In Figure 11-2, I lightly draw the geometric shapes, knowing that I'll erase them in the final draft after drawing in the clothing. I slightly arc the cross hairs on her face to show that her head is tilting up and away from the readers.



**FIGURE 11-2:**  
Sketching  
geometrical  
shapes over the  
wire frame.

**3. Based upon the geometric shapes, add the curves and muscle structure and block in the facial features. (See Figure 11-3.)**



**REMEMBER**

Keep your character's definition to a minimum. She shouldn't look muscular or overly defined. You're not drawing a full-grown adult at this stage. Adding breasts for the older teenagers is okay but keep them toned down.

I keep the body lines light and fairly rough so that I can easily erase them. I also angle her toes down a bit so she can fit into those high heels comfortably.

I lightly block in the facial features, which I refine in the next step. At this stage, you just want to get the placement of the eyes, nose, and mouth down. I also sketch in the shape of the hair.



**FIGURE 11-3:** Drawing the definition and body structure over the geometric shapes.

#### **4. Lightly sketch her clothing shapes and refine the facial features.**

I lightly draw the sleeves of her denim top, as shown in Figure 11-4. (I'll complete the front and sporty convex style shoes later.) I draw the u-shaped neck opening for her undershirt. I sketch in the bottom of the shirt at her waistline.

When I draw her cargo shorts, I keep them baggy and loose by leaving gaps between the body surface and the clothing toward the bottom of the leg opening. In contrast, I leave little if any gaps between the clothing and skin when drawing the waist section. When drawing the skintight socks, I let them run up the midpoint of her lower leg between the ankles and her knees.

I refine the facial features and expression. Sarcastic and lofty expressions help sell this type of character to your readers.

With my character, wide-open eyelids with thick eyelashes add to her arrogant personality.



**TIP**

When drawing her elated expression (wide open mouths or clenched teeth), I draw the bottom of her eyes slightly convex and angled upward toward the center.

I draw her smiling mouth taller rather than wider. Don't forget to add in her tongue and fang-shaped upper teeth. This expression gives readers a taste of her haughty and arrogant attitude (which hopefully changes after she's rescued from the very danger she brought upon herself).



**FIGURE 11-4:** Refining the facial features and sketching in the jacket, shirt, shorts, socks, and shoes.

## **5. Finalize the clothing details and draw her props and accessories. (See Figure 11-5.)**

Draw in the large collar and front lapel opening of her denim jacket. Although the front shape of the denim jacket obscures most of the breast shape underneath, I add some shading accents next to the opening of the jacket to make her clothing look more realistic. Add in a stitch line at the front of her jacket.

In addition to drawing in the folds of her clothing, I draw in the thick laces to complete her shoes. For her side accessory, I give her a satchel attached to the side of her hip (for her to conceal-carry her tools and weapons so she can take on the entire enemy all by herself).

In Figure 11-5, I toss in a few dots on both of her cheeks for freckles and a small cute adhesive bandage (a reminder it's not the first rodeo she's gotten herself into).



**FIGURE 11-5:**  
Finalizing her  
clothing and  
accessories.

## The Elf Princess

The elf princess is a classic fantasy manga damsel who spends most of her time under the captivity of creatures or aliens from another radically different world and shoved behind bars and held either for ransom or as bait to get a worthy young protagonist to fight against their own fearsome warrior.

This character endures harsh treatment and remains powerless at the hands of her captors while the main lead character devises an effective and daring way of rescuing her without getting himself killed. Don't worry, she never dies (that would *kill* the plot).

Here are some traits or patterns to keep in mind:

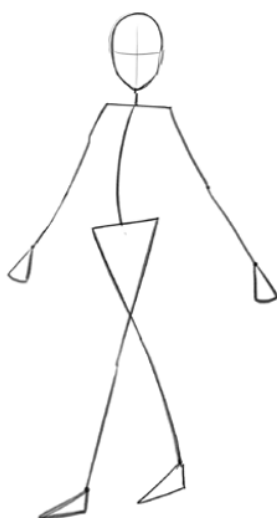
- » **Lack of anger:** Err toward the insecure, nervous look instead of drawing her angry.
- » **Big Bambi manga eyes:** These eyes are always welcome.
- » **Lord of the Rings motif:** Take inspiration from Peter Jackson's female elves based on Tolken's masterpiece.
- » **Perseverance:** Although she endures abuse from her captors, she never dies, and her knight in shining armor almost always saves her.
- » **A savior:** The lead character who eventually saves her is usually a male physically strong enough to stand up against the enemy ruffians, or who possesses the magic power to conquer the demonic forces of her captors.

Follow these steps to create your own elf princess:

**1. Set the wire frame structure between 5 and 6 heads tall and make it narrow, with slightly wider shoulders.**

You can draw a more realistic character at the standard  $7\frac{1}{2}$  heads tall. Use poses that are generally reserved and narrow (keep her feet positioning close to each other and her elbows close to the torso).

In my example in Figure 11-6, I pose the character taking her pose while gazing off screen. Maybe a charming classmate who becomes her rescuer has just captivated her attention.



**FIGURE 11-6:**  
Setting up the  
wire figure for my  
elf princess.

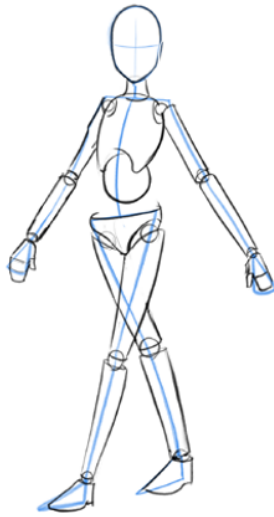
**2. Lightly draw the geometric shapes over the wire frame figure and then draw the cross hairs on the face to indicate the direction of her head.**

Keep the shapes on this character narrow to match her wire frame figure. If you're drawing a more realistic character, make her torso wider and include more elongated shapes to match her taller proportions.

In Figure 11-7, I lightly draw the geometric shapes (knowing I need to erase them in the final draft). I loosely draw the hairline shape on her head showing that she's facing the front.

**3. Define her body and muscle structure and block in her facial features.**

Regardless of her proportions, she shouldn't look muscular or too strong. (She must appear to be as helpless as possible.) Keep in mind that her breasts and hips are similar to the Shy Mysterious Student in Chapter 7.



**FIGURE 11-7:**  
Loosely defining  
the head and  
sketching  
geometric shapes  
over the wire  
frame figure.

In Figure 11-8, I tone down her muscle definition to a minimum. Notice how straight and smooth her arms and legs are. Because the loose waist garment I draw in the next step covers most of her body, I keep the lines light and fairly rough, so that I can easily erase them.

I lightly block in the facial features. At this stage, I worry only about the placement of the pointy elf ears, large eyes, small nose, and small mouth, and I also sketch in the shape of the long hair, which extends all the way down to the back of her knees.



**FIGURE 11-8:**  
Lightly sketching  
the body's  
definition.

#### 4. Draw her clothes and refine her facial features.

Generally, girl's fantasy clothing is skintight and leaves a lot of the body exposed. Sensuality is key when choosing how to draw this damsel's fashion. (We wouldn't want to disappoint the saving protagonist after all the peril he goes through to finally free her from her captors!) It's therefore critical you have a solid understanding of the geometric body shape when drawing smaller shapes such as the halter top in Figure 11-9. If this is the first time drawing this character, be sure to review Chapter 5 where I show how to construct the basic anatomy. For her lower clothing, I draw an elegant bowtie shape loin cloth where the top and bottom hug the line of her hips and curve inward toward the center of her groin. (Avoid making this look like the sweaty sumo wrestler's *mawashi*.)



WARNING

As I mention in the introduction of this archetype, draw her eyes large. Don't, however, draw them so big that you upset the head versus body balance. If the eyes become ridiculously enormous, the readers assume that the rest of the body should be smaller and shorter than the intended height proportions of around 6 heads tall.

In my drawing in Figure 11-9, I draw the big eyes with larger-than-normal pupils. I also raise her eyebrows and draw her mouth slightly open to convey her emotional vulnerability. I draw a very small shadow nose to enhance her cuteness.



**FIGURE 11-9:** Sketching in the fantasy costume and refining her facial features.

#### 5. Finalize the character's facial and clothing features.

I draw in more long curve strands of her hair to complete the overall shape of her head and body. It's important to take your time and be patient with these curves so that they do not cross over each other (In Figure 11-9, I leave some

space between the strands of hair that loosely mirror each other to make her overall appearance look smooth and silky.) Add details to her elf ears and shade in her pupils to make her features more realistic.

I add in the design patterns to the edges of her halter top and draw accent shadows in the front opening of her chest where the fabric touches the skin. I draw the fold lines at the front of her loin cloth.

Unlike the Tiny Firecracker who has an appetite for destruction, this damsel is more into reflection. So, I draw her a side diary/notebook in which she records her thoughts and ideas.

Finally, I refine her shoes by drawing in the straps. (See Figure 11-10.)



**FIGURE 11-10:**  
Finalizing the  
facial features  
and adding in her  
accessories.

## Miss Priss

The Hopeful Miss Priss takes pride in her high-end fashion and appearance. You usually see this character type in comedy manga where silly fun adventure is the name of the game. Even in the face of being kidnapped, she shows more concern about being separated from her Gucci bag and smartphone. Physically, she's generally taller and older than the tiny firecracker. While she's kidnapped against her own will, her captors are often portrayed as goofy looking creatures — in stark contrast to The Formidable Henchman I discuss in Chapter 9. The rescuer (a courageous, daring, rookie team member, for example) goes out of his way to “risk his own life” (no one really dies) in order to save her and bring her back to safety.



Here are some traits or patterns to keep in mind:

- » **A bit ditz:** Her scatterbrain nature and quirky silliness is enough to drive her captives bonkers.
- » **A soft spot for *kawai* (cute):** In the face of danger, she'll reach for her cute kitten over a weapon for protection.
- » **Pure at heart:** Her idea of a relaxing Friday evening is watching romance comedy movies while eating Baskin Robbins chocolate mint chip ice cream.
- » **A hero:** The lead character who eventually saves her is usually a shorter male rookie or underdog who's willing to bend the rules in order to save the damsel.

Follow these steps to create your own loyal, selfless damsel:

### 1. Set up the wire frame figure.

Make the wire frame figure taller and more elongated to show that she's an adult.

Character types featured in stories geared toward a general audience tend to have shorter, more standard manga proportions ranging from 5 to 6½ heads tall. They also tend to be younger.

In my example in Figure 11-11, I pose my damsel in distress with her hand clasped against her chest.



**FIGURE 11-11:**  
Setting up my  
wire figure for my  
Little Miss Priss.

**2. Lightly draw the geometric shapes to cover the wire figure and then draw the cross hairs on the face to indicate the direction of her head.**

These characters have slender and elongated arms, necks, and legs (similar to The Shoji Romantic in Chapter 6). Audiences for these types of damsels range from kids to teenagers. I keep in mind that the large ballroom type dress I draw later covers her entire lower half of her body, so I keep the leg line loose.

With my damsel in Figure 11-12, I keep everything thin and elongated. I draw cross hairs on her face slightly arced upwards to show that she's looking up and away from the readers.



**FIGURE 11-12:**  
Drawing  
the slender  
geometric shape  
onto the wire  
frame figure.

**3. Based upon the geometric shapes, add the curves and muscle structure and sketch her facial features.**

Never draw her muscular looking; she is not a martial artist nor a body builder. You should, therefore, tone down her muscular definition. However, don't forget to add the curves to her body to show off her femininity as I do in my example in Figure 11-13. I lightly block in the facial features, placing the eyes, nose, and mouth. I also sketch in the shape of the hair. For her mouth, I draw a small upside-down triangle shape. I sketch in her eye placement slightly toward the center (cross-eyed), which shows the audience she's a bit "spaced out."

Observe how I keep her shoulders squared and parallel to the floor in this vertically symmetrical pose. The narrative is that she's happy and excited to be rescued by her prince charming (without an iota of fear of her captors). By adding the round curves to her body, the overall appearance should resemble an hourglass structure as shown in Figure 11-13.



**FIGURE 11-13:**  
Adding the curves  
and definition  
over the  
geometric  
structure.

#### 4. Draw her clothing and refine her facial features.

When drawing the clothing for this type of character, #cute and #pink are her hashtags.

I roughly sketch the simple shape of her ballroom dance dress, which starts at the top of her hip bone and balloons away from the center of her body all of the way down to her feet (approximately  $2\frac{1}{2}$  shoulder width wide, as shown in Figure 11-14).



**TIP**

Draw the robes while thinking about the folds in loose drapery (see Chapter 6 for complete details on drawing folds). Think of the top and bottom of the dress as a parasol, as shown in Figure 11-14. When I have both sides of the marked in, I go ahead and connect both ends together with a series of curvy lines which loosely follow a concave arc. Remember that her feet are completely hidden behind the dress.

I sketch in the top of her dress including her poofy shoulder pads. I draw the top of her hip band, which starts at the middle of her torso and then connects to the other side. I complete the bottom of her belly band, which starts at the hip joint and angles down to meet at the halfway point of her belly button and the bottom of her crotch.

#### 5. Finalize the character's facial and clothing features and ornaments.

I finalize the features of my damsel by defining the hair shape and sharpening the contrast of her hair (you can do this by making your grays darker). I add detail to her mouth shape by drawing in the upper and lower lip to add to her sensuality.



**FIGURE 11-14:**  
Sketching in the  
shapes of  
her dress.

When selecting the shapes for her accessories, think exaggerated and simple shapes. For Miss Priss, I draw a large bow at the back of her head. Her earrings are simple circles sans any intricacy. As you become more comfortable, you can experiment with more elaborate designs.

I draw in the side drapes on each side of her hip to complete the overall shape of her dress and add in the long folds to the fabric. I add a little hem line to complete the bottom of her dress. (See Figure 11-15.)



**FIGURE 11-15:**  
Finalizing the  
facial features  
and adding her  
accessories.

- » Becoming familiar with the history and evolution of shōjo manga
- » Drawing classic shōjo manga features
- » Discovering the simple shōjo manga style used today

## Chapter 12

# Girl Power! Shōjo Manga

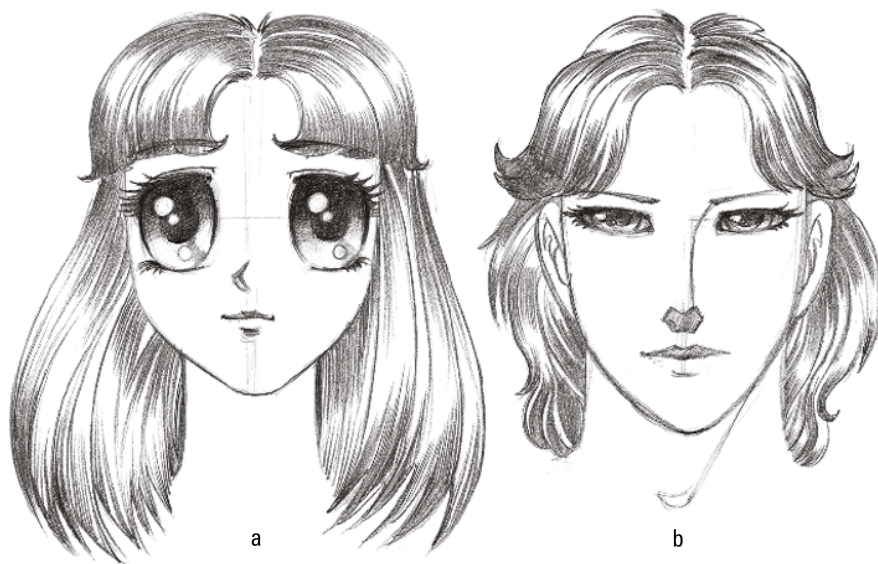
Shōjo manga continues to evolve into a larger and more diverse genre since its early days of Osamu Tezuka's *Ribbon no Kishi*. Shōjo manga stories depict not only strong leading female characters, but also a range of topics from work, family, romance to the risqué topic of sexuality. As I mention in Chapter 1, women shōjo *manga-ka* (manga artists) throughout Japan and worldwide have increased as a result of this genre's rise in popularity. If you happen to browse through the manga section of your average bookstore in Japan, finding almost 1/3 of the manga store devoted to shōjo manga is common.

In contrast to the shōnen manga, whose themes deal with humor and action adventure/fantasy, the object of a shōjo manga-ka is to relate to the psychological aspect of their readers and draw them into the character's world. Commonly, a classic shōjo manga story may focus on a story of romance where an orphan tries to win the heart of a prince. In other classic shōjo scenarios, you see a Grimm fairy tale being used to paint a dark surreal plot background. Today's shōjo manga displays more plot diversity, extending beyond the classic surrealistic world of the Brothers Grimm. In a more interestingly twist, many of the teen and 20-year-old aspiring shōjo manga artists have taken to social media platforms such the popular Korean Webtoons ([www.webtoons.com/en/](http://www.webtoons.com/en/)) to display their creator-owned quirky shōjo stories.

In this chapter, I illustrate some of the popular styles and effects widely used throughout shōjo manga.

# Drawing the Modern Shōjo Manga Faces and Hair

While the theme of romance/relationships are the same as in classic shōjo, modern shōjo stories are increasingly incorporating more diverse topics, ranging from office room politics to food and entertainment to real modern family issues such as divorce and death in the family. Naturally, this also changes the way the modern shōjo faces are drawn. Classic shōjo manga-ka such as Mizuno Hideko and Nishitani Yoshinko pioneered the high school romance themed stories and incorporated the elaborate art deco/art nouveau background designs that many shōjo manga-ka still use today. I would be remiss if I didn't pay tribute and show an example of a classic shōjo manga female and male face commonly found in characters who resemble the Victorian ideal. (See Figure 12-1.) Observe how the classic, big shōjo eyes as well as the heavyset eyelashes and sketchy pupils with huge highlights hype up the emotional intensity of my main character. They look like they're about to burst out crying at any moment.



**FIGURE 12-1:**  
A quick glance at  
the classic  
stylized shōjo  
manga faces.

## Dreamy is the name, disheveled is the game!

If you're already a big shōjo manga or animé (short for Japanese animation) fan, chances are you've noticed that most of the characters, especially the female lead characters, look as if they are dazed or staring in space like a deer in headlights.

It's not that they are terrified or in fear of their lives but reacting to being caught off guard either by a handsome guy or by something sexual or romantic that another person said. Noses vary from simple line noses to realistic noses. (See Chapter 4 for more about the variety of noses out there.) The lead female mouths are usually partially open in a shape of a small oval. If it's the front color cover of the book, the artist will include a rosy pink blush to her cheeks under her eyes to show she is slightly embarrassed. Also noteworthy is whenever the characters are shown in color (either on the manga cover or in the anime rendition), their hair colors range from the natural Japanese/Asian black to various shades of red brown. IMHO, this fashion trend is a manifestation of the profound influence Western images and Western fashion has had on Japan.

## Female and male shōjo faces

A shōjo manga-ka generally draws the male shōjo face more elongated than the female lead character. Likewise, the noses are longer and taller than the female lead counterpart. The girls have larger wide opened eyes than the male characters who have a more rectangular eye shape. (Some artists draw especially cocky male characters with eyes half closed and looking down at the readers.) In many of today's popular modern shōjo manga, both sexes have narrow pointed chins and larger irises and pupils than the main lead characters I show in Chapter 7 and side kick characters in Chapter 8.

To draw a shōjo manga head, start off with the head shape from Chapter 4. Run through these steps, comparing the female and male side by side as you go:

- 1. Loosely sketch the shape and placement of both eyes (as shown on the left in Figure 12-2 as well as on the figure's right).**



REMEMBER

Note that I draw the eye shapes slightly larger than the normal manga eye — in fact, they're so large that you may not have enough room for the "one-eye-apart" rule that I talk about in Chapter 3. That's okay; keep all lines light for now. In the final step I will erase the sides of the eye shapes so that only the top and bottom eye lines remain.

- 2. Draw the large circles for the eyeballs (as shown on the left in Figure 12-3 as well as on the figure's right).**



TIP

I draw these circles very large as well. For girls, the key to getting the eyes to look cute yet slightly disheveled is to allow space between the top of the eyes where they meet the top eyelids and slightly cut off the bottom of the eyes that touch the bottom lids. In contrast, for guys, I cut off the top of the eyes that touch with the top eyelids. (See the image on the right in Figure 12-3.) When you might want to draw the cocky male expression I describe at the beginning of this section, you'll want to lower the top of both eyelids to the half point of your character's pupils. (Just be sure to lower the eyebrows later in this section at Figure 12-4.)

**FIGURE 12-2:**  
Blocking in the  
basic eye  
shapes for the  
female and male.



**FIGURE 12-3:**  
Drawing the  
super-  
large eyeballs.



- 3. Draw the lines of the eyebrows, the circles at the center of the pupils for the irises, and the eyelashes on the top shōjo girl's eyelids. (See Figure 12-4.)**

Be sure to note the shōjo male iris is roughly half the size of the shōjo female iris. Also observe and compare the eyes to the classic shōjo in Figure 12-1. There, I draw the modern female shōjo's eyelashes shorter and sparser so as not to detract attention from the rest of her features.

- 4. Darken the top of the eyeballs and finish with highlights and sparkles, as shown in Figure 12-5.**

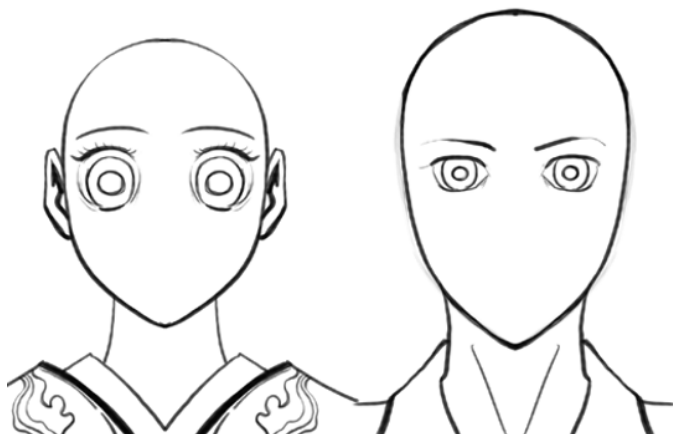


**TIP**

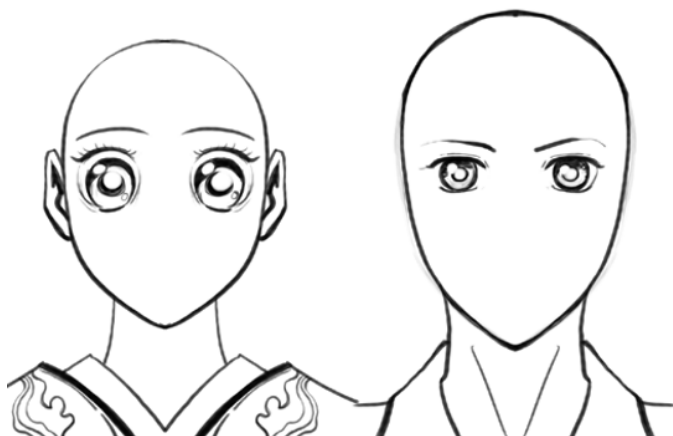
Various shōjo manga-ka use different highlight shapes, but the most common are circles. I shade in the eyeballs first and then erase the shaded area to get the highlight shape I want. This technique is commonly referred to as “pulling out your highlights.”



**FIGURE 12-4:**  
Sketching in the  
top eyelashes,  
eyebrows,  
and irises.



**FIGURE 12-5:**  
Shading in the  
shadows of the  
eyeballs and  
“pulling out” the  
highlights.



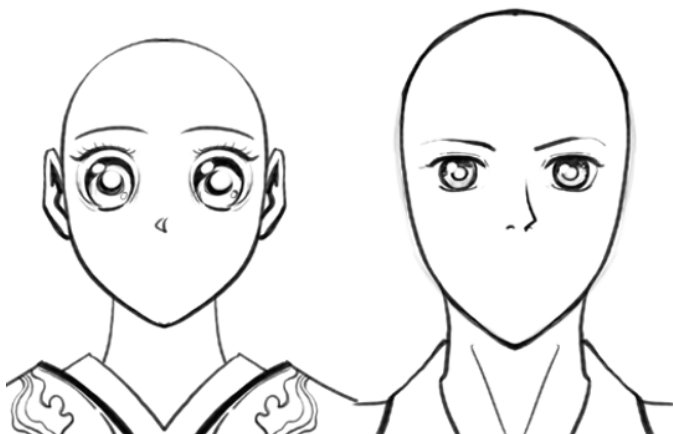
**5. Add the short, pointed nose as shown in Figure 12-6.**

For the female shōjo, I draw a version of a simple nose from Chapter 4 without nostrils. For the male shōjo, I draw a realistic shadow nose from Chapter 4 with nostrils.

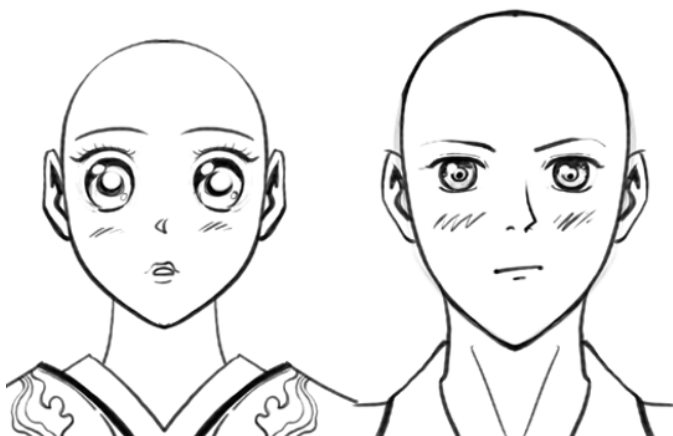
**6. To complete the face, add the slightly open mouth shape and blush lines, as shown in Figure 12-7.**

I add the mouth shape slightly higher toward the nose to expose the elongated chin shape. I also hint at the top of the lips to show the character’s sensuality.

**FIGURE 12-6:**  
Adding the  
simplified,  
elongated noses.



**FIGURE 12-7:**  
Drawing the  
blush effects and  
slightly open  
mouth shape  
closer  
to the nose.



## Modern shōjo hair

Try your hand at drawing the modern manga female and male hairstyles. Characters (males in particular) in today's shōjo manga have adopted a more everyday, simple, *yaoi* (androgynous) hairstyle that you see in many shōnen manga stories. Many modern shōjo manga-ka add detailed highlights and strands to the hair to show smooth texture (just like those shampoo commercials). As I demonstrate in the last section of this chapter, current popular shōjo female characters wear their hair in ponytails, braids, pigtails, or sometimes just grown out and wild.

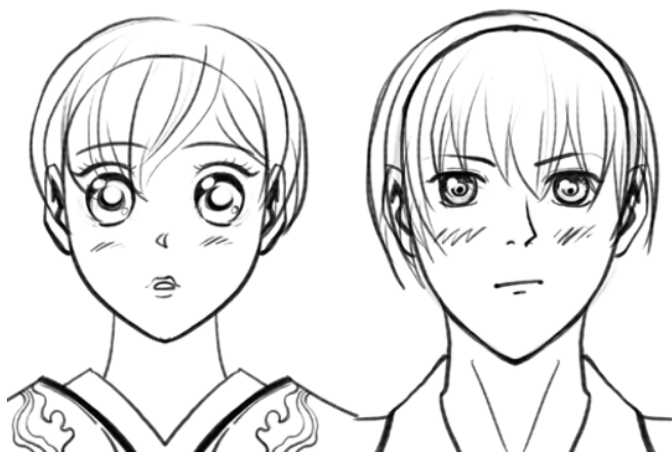
For the following steps, start off with the female and male heads from the previous section:

**1. Draw the bangs long and partially covering the eyes (as shown in Figure 12-8).**

In my shōjo female example in Figure 12-8, I start to draw the long curve lines for her bangs starting from the center where her hair parts to the left. I then draw the next few lines to the left of the part to complete the left side of her bangs. To complete the right side of her bangs, I draw in some curvy lines going the opposite direction away from the center of her forehead.

For my shōjo male, I draw straighter lines compared to the shōjo female to reflect the modern shōjo yaoi hairstyle. (If this is your first time to draw hair, you may want to read Chapter 4 on how to draw hair.) As I show here, the lines I draw overlap a good portion of his upper eyes to give him a disheveled appearance. In contrast, when drawing a more mature shōjo male, you can make the lines curvy.

**FIGURE 12-8:**  
Drawing in the  
smooth and  
jagged bangs on  
the shōjo  
manga head.



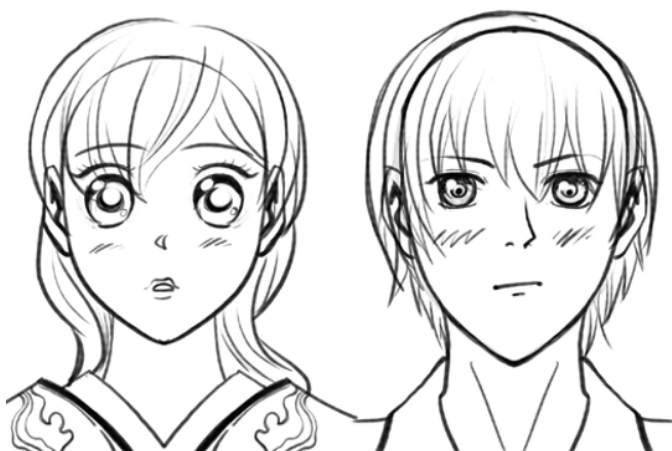
**2. Draw the curvy hair behind for the female shōjo head (see the image on the left in Figure 12-9) and short tapered hair behind the male shōjo head. (See the image on the right in Figure 12-9.)**

I keep both sides of the hair more or less symmetrical.

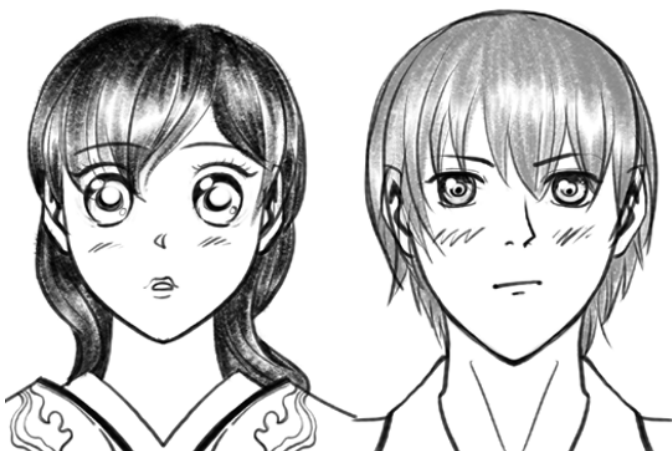
**3. Complete the hair by shading and adding some lines to indicate highlights on the head and show specific hair strands, as shown in Figure 12-10.**

In my example, I shade all the areas except for the section of highlights to make the hair look shiny and glossy.

**FIGURE 12-9:**  
Completing the  
hair behind the  
large bangs.



**FIGURE 12-10:**  
Adding detail to  
the hair to  
complete the  
shōjo head.



**TIP**

Here's a bonus manga hair tip that won't leave you stranded: Hair strands that shoot off from the main hair shape, resembling in their own way pins sticking out of a pin cushion, enhance the disheveled look or emotional state of your character. See how I apply this to the shōjo male (the image on the right in Figure 12-10) by drawing a few randomly placed lines shooting away from his hair shape. Be careful not to overdo this application. (He'll turn into a "porcupine head.")

## More shōjo hairstyles? (Yes, please!)

As I mention in the previous section, current shōjo hairstyles don't necessarily follow the classic straight-and-simple shape. Although today's shōjo manga-ka

still draws in the details of the hair, they break down the overall shape into smaller segments, which makes the hairstyle appear looser.

In this section, I draw a couple of shōjo hairstyles that you're likely to see in today's popular shōjo manga. These styles are just the tip of the iceberg. If you want this style for your characters, I recommend picking up several shōjo issues at a comic book/manga convention or looking up popular titles on the Internet. As of the release of this book, [www.crunchyroll.com/](http://www.crunchyroll.com/) and [www.viz.com/shojo-beat](http://www.viz.com/shojo-beat) have a wide assortment of titles and you can read previews of hot releases for free.

## Shoulder-length shōjo hairstyle

The type of high school student who sports the shoulder-length hairstyle could be a bit absent-minded. Perhaps she always looks as if she just woke up five minutes ago. She tends to talk to herself a lot and is easily startled or disoriented.

Try your hand at drawing the shoulder-length shōjo hairstyle:

- 1. Start with the basic female head shape, and lightly draw the overall “helmet” shape for the hair guideline (as shown on the left in Figure 12-11).**
- 2. Draw in the sharp, pointed hair strands of her bangs. (See the central image in Figure 12-11.)**

Starting from close to the top of her head, I draw long, pointed shapes that vary in width and length. Some of them curve to follow the contour of her forehead, while others go slightly crooked or straight (which gives her that disheveled look). The tips of the hair strands can pass over the guideline, but they shouldn't go as far as covering the character's eyes.

- 3. Draw the sharp, pointed hair strands for the back of her hair (as shown on the right in Figure 12-11).**

Don't draw them all going in the same direction. Like the pointed shapes for her bangs in Step 2, some of the shapes in the back of her hair should be different widths.

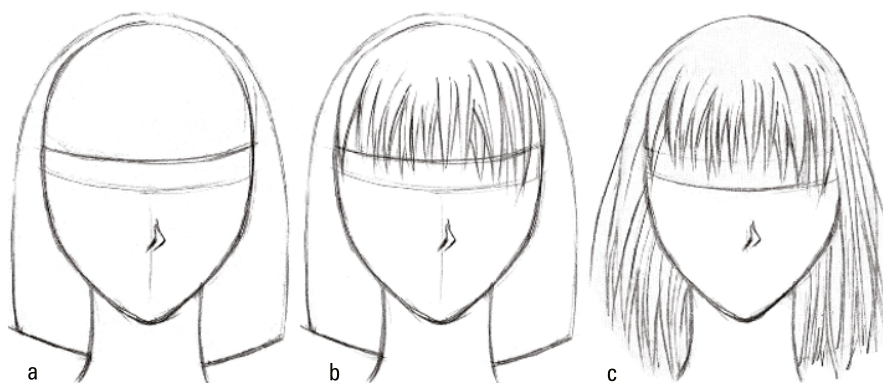


**TIP**

The trick to making the hair look disheveled is mixing stray lines going along with the pointed hair shapes.

For a finishing touch, I draw some stray lines outside the “helmet” guidelines. Don't forget to erase those guidelines after you're done with the hair.

**FIGURE 12-11:**  
Drawing the  
contemporary  
shōjo shoulder  
length hairstyle.



## Long hairstyle

The archetype sporting the long hairstyle could be a Type A personality who is her own worst critic. She's punctual and well organized, and she goes through emotional turmoil at the slightest failure.

Try your hand at drawing the long shōjo hairstyle:

1. **Start with the basic female head shape and then draw a diagonal parting hairline and an outside guideline down opposite sides of the head (as shown on the left in Figure 12-12).**

Be careful not to draw the hairline too long. (It shouldn't go past the forehead.)

2. **Draw the inside hair shapes starting from the end of the parting hairline at the forehead. (See the central image in Figure 12-12.)**

By completing this step, I complete the left and right hair shapes.

3. **Add a line to divide the right hair section to create the shape for the bangs that cover her forehead (as shown on the right in Figure 12-12).**

4. **Define the bangs of the hair (as shown on the left in Figure 12-13).**

Starting from the hairline, draw the pointed hair shapes. I draw the shapes in front thinner and shorter than the ones toward the top of the bangs.

5. **Define the left and right hair shapes. (See the central image in Figure 12-13.)**

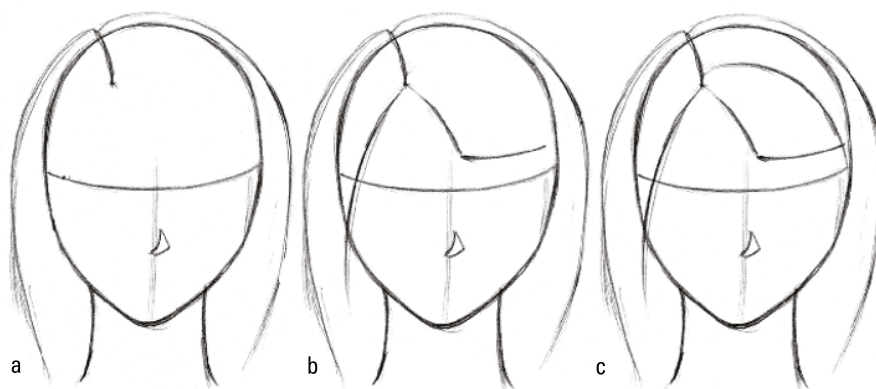
Starting from the front of the parting line, draw a series of lines to build up the dimension of her hair.



**TIP**

The key to making the overall hair shape dimensional is decreasing the distance between the lines as they recede from the front of the face and go toward the back of the head.

**FIGURE 12-12:**  
Drawing the basic  
hair shapes for  
the long shōjo  
hairstyle.



6. **Shade in the value (*value* just means filling in the hair with a darker tone to create depth or contrast) to complete the long shōjo hair (as shown on the right in Figure 12-13).**

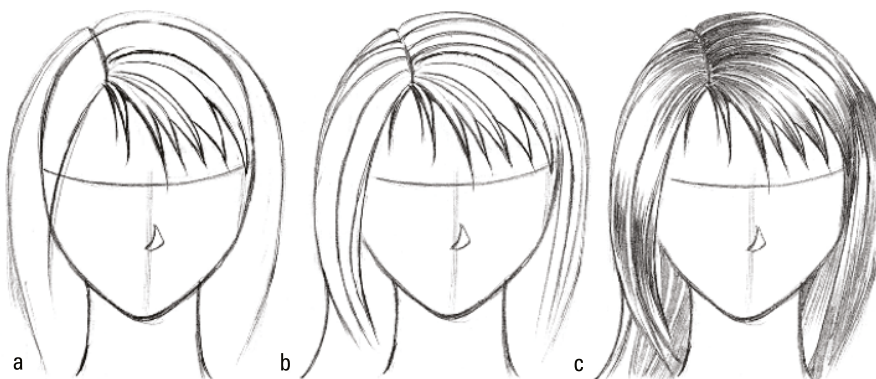
The shading creates texture as well as contrast for the highlights in the overall hair shape.



**TIP**

I find it easier to start drawing my value from the opposite sides of each hair shape. Turning the page sideways sometimes is easier on the wrist when you draw the shading lines.

**FIGURE 12-13:**  
Completing the  
long shōjo  
hairstyle.

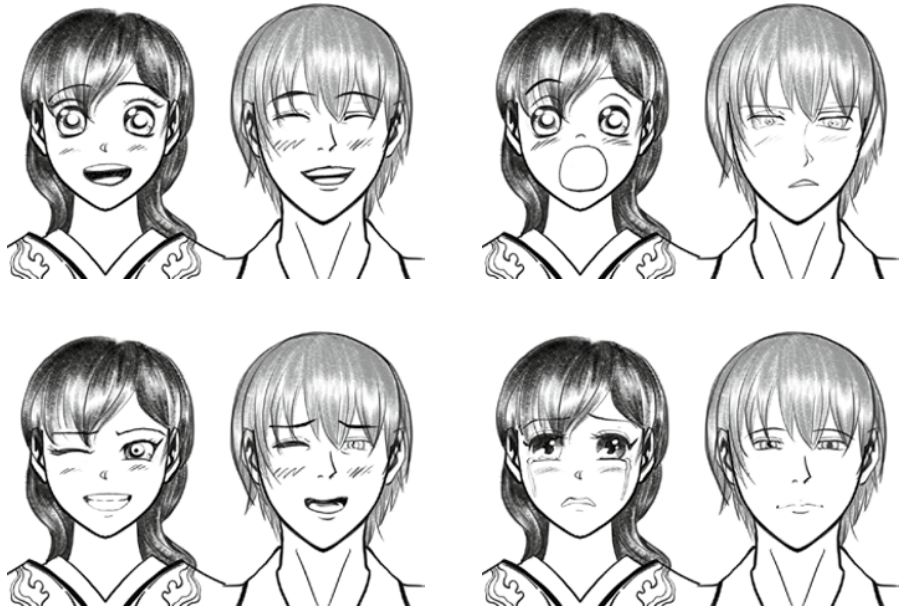


## Oh, those Passionate Whimsical Expressions!

Shōjo manga is all about *tsundere* — those quintessentially manga-ish facial expressions that are meant to communicate to the readers the emotional/romantic (and playfully erotic) internal conflict that rages under those Bambi



shōjo eyes. (Figure 12-14 highlights some of the many various types of shōjo emotions you'll come across — see if you can figure out what might be going through each character's mind.)



**FIGURE 12-14:**  
So many deep  
emotional shōjo  
expressions.

## Drawing the Rest of the Body

In this section, I show you how to find a body to match the female and male shōjo heads. A shōjo manga-ka usually draws female and male characters with thin and elongated limbs (especially the necks and legs). In most, if not all, situations, the male shōjo character is always taller than the female shōjo character, wearing slightly looser to baggier clothing compared to the mainstream characters that I show in Chapter 7. (I've got nothing against the *Victoria Secrets* catalogue.) If you're already familiar with shōjo manga, you'll find popular female shōjo characters with little chest definition and loose upper body clothing. (Turtlenecks, scarves, and extended pull-over sleeves that partially conceal her hands are welcome but not required.) Many male shōjo high school characters have oversized collars and loose sleeves. (Interestingly enough, the pants are drawn slim to show how trim and tall the characters are.)





TIP

When envisioning the poses for your shōjo characters, keep the *tsundere* motif in mind. The postures and body language ranges from being a bit stand offish (maybe arms folded or in pockets with little eye contact with each other when they are posed side by side) to indulging in a warm whimsical embrace as if they are relieved to discover they like each other.

## Drawing the modern shōjo female

Looking through fashion websites (preppy styles such as Banana Republic, J.Crew, and Lands' End) are good ways to find different ideas for the casual daily wear for your shōjo characters. If your characters are younger, look at various types of sailor outfits and school uniforms. Follow these steps to draw a female shōjo character:

### 1. Draw the wire frame figure.

Typically, a female shōjo character measures around 5 to 6 heads tall with slender proportions. She'll also usually assume an arms-folded pose (as if she disapproves of this guy but for some inexplicable reason is attracted to him at the same time). Set the shoulders narrow, around  $1\frac{1}{2}$  heads wide.

In my example in Figure 12-15, I pose my figure with her head tilted to the side.



**FIGURE 12-15:**  
Posing the wire  
frame figure for a  
female shōjo  
character.

**2. Fit the geometric shapes you've chosen onto the wire frame figure. (See Figure 12-16.)**

Classic shōjo female figures should be slender (especially at the waist). Their overall structure shouldn't overshadow the head's shape or size.



**FIGURE 12-16:**  
Fitting the slender  
geometric shape  
onto the wire  
frame figure.

**3. Based upon the geometric shapes you've chosen, add the necessary curves and muscle structure and block in her facial features and hair.**

In keeping with the narrow, elongated geometric shapes, the female shōjo form should be subtle yet rounded. Don't draw any sharp angles or defined muscles. A muscular shōjo lead character is a major no-no. Although drawing the breasts and hips is fine, keep them moderate.

In Figure 12-17, I take a little liberty and exaggerate the length and slenderness of the neck, arms, and legs. Even though the joints are bent, they don't have any sharp angles.

Take this moment to loosely sketch in her hair shape and facial features.



**FIGURE 12-17:**  
Adding the curves  
and definition  
over the  
geometric  
structure.

#### 4. Sketch her shōjo dress and refine her facial features.

The most popular classic choices are high school uniforms, simple dresses, kimonos, and classic Victorian dresses. In addition to the high school uniforms, modern shōjo manga characters in popular titles have been wearing more casual everyday outfits (cute overalls, T-shirts with adorable icons or phrases, tight designer jeans, and so on). The important thing is to make sure that the overall clothing shapes are simple and complement the figure of the character. Your goal is for readers to either emotionally relate to or want to be your character.

I decide to go with a modern high school uniform in Figure 12-18. I sketch the loose collar shirt and sleeveless cardigan shape, which extend down to her crotch level. I also lightly draw her basic mini skirt shape, high-leg socks, and leather shoes.

I define the facial features based on my female shōjo face earlier in this chapter. Don't forget the eyelashes to accentuate the eyes!

#### 5. Tighten up the face and add details to your character's clothing.

Start nailing down what kind of jewelry and other accessories you want your character to be wearing. For my high school shōjo, I draw a cute school bag. (See Chapter 6 on how to draw your own bag.)



**TIP**

If you're a female who's out of ideas, think about what kind of cute or trendy items you want. Perhaps go through your fashion magazines to select the items that are the focus of the current buzz. If you're drawing characters for current popular shōjo manga, you want to look at what kinds of clothes your female friends wear on a casual day. If you see them wearing something you like, have them pose for a photo using your smart phone.



**FIGURE 12-18:**  
Drawing the basic  
shōjo high school  
uniform shape  
and refining the  
facial features.

In Figure 12-19, I complete my classic shōjo high school uniform with pleated folds and shade it in with black. I add detail to her hair with short curvy lines (and yes, do add in those random hair strands that I mention earlier in this chapter to highlight her disheveled look). I draw in two circle highlights in each eye to give her that realistic look. Finally, I draw in a few crosshatch marks to show that blushing effect.



**FIGURE 12-19:**  
Finalizing my  
shōjo lead  
character.

## Dressing up the shōjo male

Males in modern shōjo manga generally present themselves as laid back and whimsical. For the lack of a better analogy, think of them as the side male role characters of the '90s love comedy hit titles such as *She's All That* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. They must be presented as taller than the shōjo female, handsome, free spirited, brash (yet caring), and as most often is the case in recent popular shōjo titles, androgynous. Check out the following steps to draw this character:

### 1. Draw the wire frame figure for the modern male shōjo character.

Typically, classic male shōjo characters are 6 to 7 heads tall with fairly wide proportions. Keep the shoulders average width, around 2 heads wide.

Although the typical age ranges from mid-20s to mid-30s, recent popular shōjo titles also include younger androgynous male characters in their late teens to mid-20s. These characters have proportions closer to their female counterparts.

In Figure 12-20, I set my classic shōjo male character at  $6\frac{1}{2}$  heads tall, assuming a leaning back posture with both hands in his jacket (as if he's saying "Hey, what's been keeping you?"). I keep my pose narrow for this character.



**FIGURE 12-20:** Setting up the wire frame figure for my shōjo male character.

## 2. Fit the geometric shapes you've chosen onto the wire frame figure.

Shōjo male figures should be slender. None of the shapes (especially the hips) should be wider than the shoulders.

In Figure 12-21, I make the geometric shapes slender and slightly elongated while keeping the shoulders narrow and the hips flat.

## 3. Add curves and muscle structure and lightly block in the hair and facial features as well as loosely sketch in his clothes.

Like the shōjo female, keep the shapes for the male narrow and elongated. The male shōjo form should be subtle and not overly built or pumped up. A muscular shōjo male character is a major no-no, although the chest muscles (*pectorals*) are visible when he isn't wearing a shirt.

In Figure 12-22, I make the neck, arms, and legs slim, but not as skinny as the female shōjo character's. The muscles should be slightly more defined than the female shōjo's as well.

Take this moment to loosely block in the facial features and the shape of his hair.



**FIGURE 12-21:**  
Filling in the  
character's shape  
with long, narrow  
geometric  
shapes.



**FIGURE 12-22:**  
Further defining  
the shōjo male  
character and  
loosely blocking  
in the  
facial features.

**4. Draw the character's clothes, based on how you think he should be dressed, and add the detail to the head.**

Modern shōjo male characters wear casual everyday outfits (sunglasses, tank tops, loose baggy jeans, and designer shirts). Unless you're dressing the male character ostentatiously for a particular purpose, tone down his attire to avoid stealing the lead female character's thunder.

I go for the modern casual coat and dress shirt in Figure 12-23. Watch how I keep the shapes of his suit straight and angular (especially at his shoulders).

Draw the detail of his face using the male shōjo head from earlier in this chapter.

As I mention earlier in this section, I draw him tucking both hands into his pants' side pockets to give his pose some attitude.

**5. Add finishing touches to the head and add the details to your character's clothing.**

Even for the males, you should include some definition to the upper eyelids. Don't underestimate the simplicity of the attire. Make sure you get a proper reference for what a suit or tuxedo looks like.



**TIP**

Recent popular shōjo titles may have males wearing earrings to match their casual attire. If you go with the more contemporary shōjo manga style, build a photo reference of your friends wearing casual clothing. If you choose to go with T-shirts and tank tops, solidify the drawing of the torso before fitting on the clothing. Remember to keep the clothing articles loose!



**FIGURE 12-23:**  
Drawing in the  
suit shapes and  
tightening  
up the head.

In Figure 12-24, I complete my modern casual male shōjo. For reference, I look at some of the men's casual fashion styles in magazines such as J.Crew or Banana Republic. I shade in his hair and highlights. Remember to add in those key hatch blush marks underneath both eyes.



**FIGURE 12-24:**  
Finalizing my  
shōjo male  
character.



# Art Nouveau Backgrounds in Shōjo Manga

To add to the emotional drama of a story, a shōjo manga-ka often uses a series of patterns and designs in the background, mimicking the *art nouveau* (a period that places emphasis on decorative style through ornamentation) style. The patterns a manga-ka uses range from repeating, abstract, geometric shapes (such as circles and stars) to more organic objects (such as flowers and vines). Often, a shōjo manga-ka keeps the backgrounds to a minimum — at times, the background is even blank. Instead, they add a series of decorative patterns mimicking one another in the background or surrounding the character to help establish the mood and connect with the readers.

In this section, I demonstrate several effects of shōjo backgrounds. For this exercise, you need a completed upper body of a shōjo character in a cute pose (for example, she could be holding her hands clasped in front of her chest). Then follow these steps:

1. **Beginning in the lower-right corner, draw a simple star (as shown in Figure 12-25).**



**FIGURE 12-25:**  
Starting the  
background stars.

**2. Repeat the stars at different sizes, continuing from right to left (as shown in Figure 12-26).**

The key is to keep varying the sizes and angles of the shapes. Go back to erase or add shapes so that the overall composition is balanced.

You can replace the stars with overlapping circles. If you're up for a challenge, substitute flowers, like I do in Figure 12-27. (Roses tend to be the most popular.)

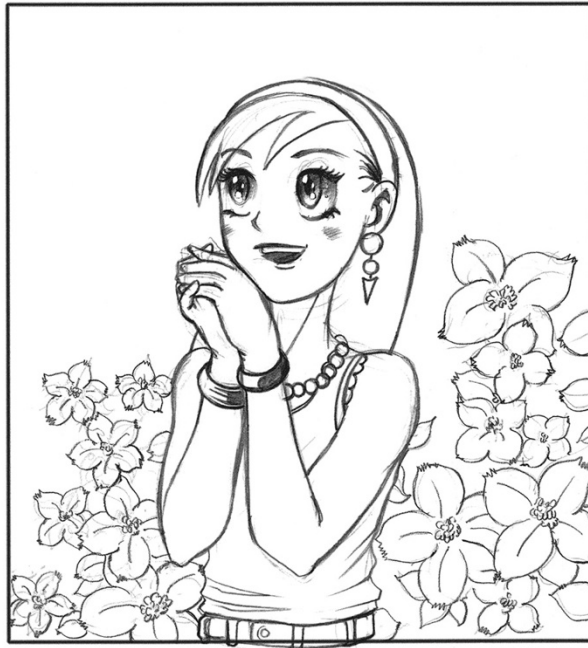


**FIGURE 12-26:**  
Finalizing  
my shōjo  
background.



**TIP**

Ultimately, you want to select patterns and shapes that reflect the mood of either the story or the character. Be careful not to overcrowd the space around your character. She needs some empty space to breathe.



**FIGURE 12-27:**  
Using other  
shapes for  
your shōjo  
background.



# 4

## **Time to Go Hi-Tech**

**IN THIS PART . . .**

Work with mechas

Stockpile your weapons and gadgets

- » Becoming familiar with mechas and their distinguished roles of service
- » Using basic geometric shapes to draw cute mechas
- » Designing lightweight and heavyweight mechas

## Chapter 13

# Designing Mechas

**M***echa* refers to sophisticated hi-tech robots (some of which are large enough to be piloted) or piloted vehicles that commonly appear in shōnen manga and animé. Drawing and illustrating mecha have generated hype and opened up a huge, separate market in the manga/animé genre.

Some of these mechas are as tall as (or smaller than) a human, but most mechas are giant humanoid machines that humans actually get in and pilot. The design and the types of roles mechas perform are more specific than they were in the early days of the original, popular *Gundam* series (1979). Some roles are geared toward combat while others are better suited for construction.

In addition to establishing a purpose for your mecha, think about the relationship the character has with the mecha. When readers see your mecha, they should be able to associate it with your main character.

In this chapter, I discuss several kinds of machinery and show you how to draw them.



WARNING

If you're drawing manga or geometric shapes for the first time, please refer to Chapters 4 and 5 before tackling the illustrations in this chapter.



TIP

Throughout this chapter, I'll be drawing most of my mechas in symmetrical poses for instructional purposes. To save time and effort, I recommend readers learn how to use the symmetry ruler features found in digital manga software like Clip Studio Paint, Procreate (digital tablet only), and Photoshop. When using this digital symmetry ruler, whatever lines I make to either the left or right are mirrored on the flipped opposite side of the drawing. This is incredibly useful since I can complete my entire mecha by drawing the left or right half only. This also allows me to focus my efforts in adding details to the shapes of the mecha parts.

## Creating Simple and Cute Mechas

Simple and cute mechas serve as either companions or pets. In almost all cases, these types are either a) created by their owners and move independently or b) they operate by remote control. The simpler, independent mechas don't play a role in any fighting or heavy-duty lifting — they just look cute and evoke that “awww” sentiment in your readers. Sidekick mechas also engage in banter with the protagonist and act as a conduit for the reader, which is especially useful when there are limited characters. The more sophisticated mechas, on the other hand, help save the day in unexpected ways that at first may appear to be trivial.

Using geometric shapes (spheres, cubes, cylinders, and cones) makes drawing simple mecha fun. Overall, even a simple mecha has some degree of human resemblance. Keep in mind, though, that you don't always need limbs and full features in order to make a mecha that has personality or that can win over the reader's affection. In this section, I select several mechas that start from a single geometric structure.

### Drawing a single-shape body

In this section, I show you how to draw a mecha with a single geometric shape as its main body structure. Follow these steps to create a simple mecha based upon a single shape:

- 1. Start at the center of your paper with a simple geometric shape (cube, sphere, cylinder, or cone) as shown in Figure 13-1; draw your shape large enough that you can add the smaller details or embellishments in the following steps.**

In my example, I use my character Java's little spherical companion mecha called the Braid Maid. Her role is to make sure Java's hair (as well as the rest of her hygiene) is shipshape (because Java is kind of a big slob). This sphere is all I need to start the basic body shape.

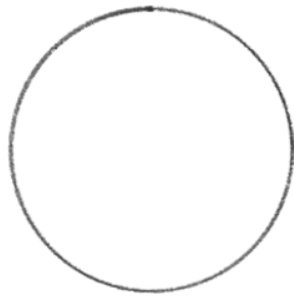


## 2. Add simple facial features as shown in Figure 13-2.

In keeping with the simplicity theme, you don't have to draw all the features (eyes, nose, ears, and mouth).

As I show in my example with Java's Braid Maid, her eyes display on a circular screen at the front center of her spherical body. The beveled frame for the screen consists of two circles that concentrically follow the rounded edges of her spherical body. You want to make sure that the smaller inner circle is large enough to fit her features. I simplify her eyes with two narrow elongated ovals and two short concave curves eyelashes at the top outside edges of the eyes. To give her a little more appeal, I add in her simplified upper lip (which resembles an "M" shape) and an equally wide lower lip (which looks like a sliced watermelon).

**FIGURE 13-1:**  
Starting off my  
simple mecha  
with a cylinder.



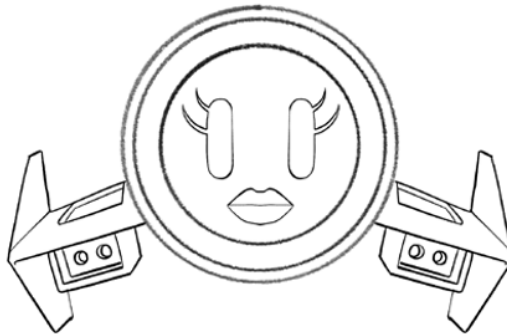
**FIGURE 13-2:**  
Drawing the  
mecha's  
simplified  
features.



## 3. Draw the wings as shown in Figure 13-3.

Instead of (or in addition to) wings, you can add arms, legs, or even a tail. Think about how these shapes move in relation to the body. Do they extend out from the body, or are they left exposed the entire time? How will they bend or twist (if they even have joints to begin with)? Again, avoid the misconception that you need to draw the limbs of these types of mechas with complicated parts or shapes.

I draw a set of *kawaii* (cute) jet wings that protrude from both sides of her lower body. Since her wings are comically smaller than what you find on a real plane, it doesn't offset the visual balance of the overall shape. I add in a set of taser guns under each wing; the guns are used to wake her master up when she oversleeps from her missing her dosage of melatonin from the previous night.

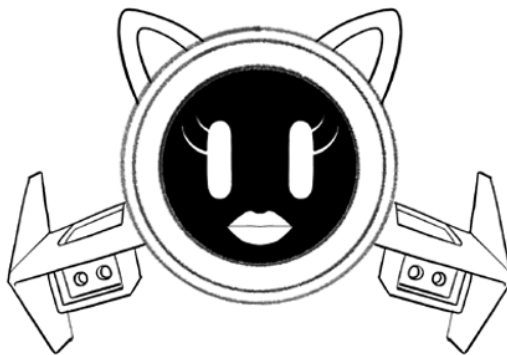


**FIGURE 13-3:**  
Adding the wings  
as well as  
the tasers.

**4. Finalize the small droid with your own cosmetic touches, as shown in Figure 13-4.**

You can add a serial or model number or design stripes that are painted onto the body. Think about what kind of accessories you can add that reflect the mecha's role or function. I shade the spherical body and shade in the entire circle screen except the eyes and lips. I use my eraser to pull out the eyelashes so that they stand out alongside with the eyes.

Finally, since this type of mecha is about “cuteness” I add a pair of cat ears above her head as her fashion statement.



**FIGURE 13-4:**  
Completing my  
Braid Maid with  
shading and  
cat ears.

## Mixing it up with a multi-shaped body

By adding simple shapes together, you give your mecha more character by increasing its humanoid functions. Follow these steps to create a simple mecha based upon multiple shapes:

### 1. Draw a shape for the head as shown in Figure 13-5.

Because the head is usually the largest part of the body, it's a good place to start. This way, you have a better assessment of how large you should make the body. Although you can stick to the basic sphere, cylinder, cube, or cone, don't shy away from modifying the shapes by skewing or slicing off partial segments.

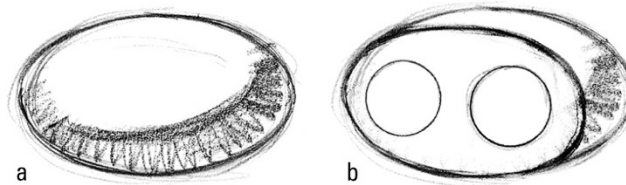
In my example, I start off with a slightly squashed sphere you see on the left in Figure 13-5. Think of making this shape by imagining ground beef intended for a large meatball and squishing it to form a burger patty. On the right in Figure 13-5, I take my burger patty shape and slice it in half. The sliced off portion is the front of my mecha's face. For the eyes, I plunk down two large spheres on the front (like adding pieces of coal to a snowman).

### 2. Draw a cylinder or cube for the neck, as shown in Figure 13-6.

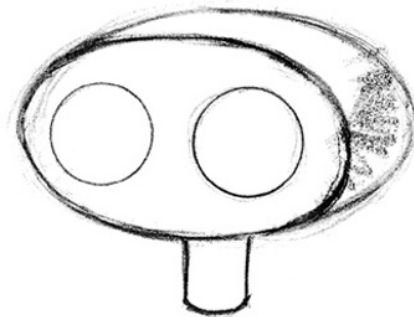
Use your own judgment to determine the width and length of the neck but keep the overall width narrower than the width of the head.

Because the head is rather simple and funny looking, I use a short and narrow shape for my cylindrical neck.

**FIGURE 13-5:**  
Creating my  
mecha's head  
by slicing a  
squashed  
sphere in half.



**FIGURE 13-6:**  
Giving the head a  
neck to lean on.



### 3. Give your mecha a torso as shown in Figure 13-7.

If you feel confident drawing your basic geometric shapes, begin to experiment by modifying them. You can make one side of a cube smaller than the opposite side or you can take half a sphere and slice the front off to make room for a control panel.

I use my first suggestion by taking the top side of the cube and making it smaller.

### 4. Draw the lower portion of the mecha. (Again, see Figure 13-7.)

In this step, think about how this thing transports itself. Does it fly, walk, or roll? If it flies, consider adding a jet pack on its back. If it walks, you need to design some legs. To make it roll, make some wheels. Whatever you decide to do, keep it simple.

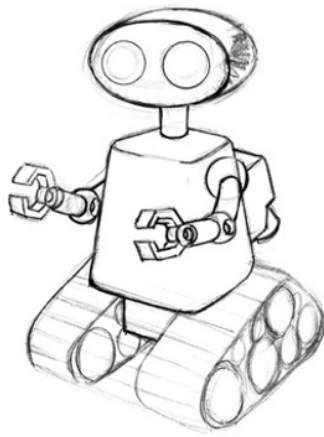
In my example, I sketch in the outside shape for a caterpillar mechanism (similar to the ones found on a tank).

### 5. Tighten up the shapes and draw the arms, hands, and accessories.

In Figure 13-8, I draw the wheels for the caterpillar mechanism as well as the track lines. I create the arms by using spheres for the shoulder and elbow joints and tube cylinders for the arms. I simplify the hands by drawing them as clamps. In addition, I add a jet pack on the back of the mecha so that it can fly. I draw my jet pack with a flat cube and add two small cylinders on the bottom as thrusters.



**FIGURE 13-7:**  
Adding your  
mecha's body.



**FIGURE 13-8:**  
Drawing the  
bottom, which  
transports  
your mecha.

## 6. Finalize your mecha by adding the cosmetic designs and details.

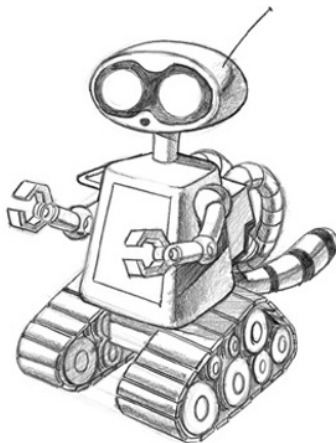
A lot of mecha *manga-ka* (or manga artists) add in pipes, model numbers, and decorations (either painted on or physically attached). Take a look at some of the popular *Gundam* mecha for inspiration. Although the original series is over, its impact in the mecha world continues to thrive in spin-offs where more complicated and sophisticated mechas are brought into the spotlight.



**TIP**

For a comprehensive listing of the *Gundam* mechas, visit the website [www.gundam.jp](http://www.gundam.jp). Spend time at manga/animé conventions to pick up popular manga and animé DVDs, which feature popular mechas. I also recommend looking at *Macross* (translated as *Robotech* in the United States), *Evangelion*, *Patlabor*, *L. Gaim*, *Full Metal Panic*, *Giant Gorg*, *Big O*, and *Eureka 7*.

To finish off my mecha, I add some raccoon eyes as well as a spot mark for his nose. (See Figure 13-9.) Just for giggles, I add a mechanical raccoon tail.



**FIGURE 13-9:**  
Drawing the final  
details and  
design marks on  
your mecha.

# Drawing Pilot-Operated Mechas

In this section, I show you mechas that are large enough to be piloted by humans from the inside. Although most of them are designed for combat, some function as transportation or construction mechas. Depending on the rank or significance of the character who operates them, the mecha takes on a unique and sophisticated appearance. Usually, the pilot seats themselves at the center of the mecha's torso. While I use head count proportions to layout the mechas, the head body proportions are vastly different than what I show you in Chapter 5. (You'll want to review this chapter about normal human head count proportions for reference.) For sake of clarity, I draw in a visual head count reference when drawing the stick figure for each mecha in this chapter.



WARNING

That being said, avoid getting too caught up with the visual head count when measuring out your proportions. These are just rough guidelines and not meant to be absolutes. I want to make sure you have plenty of time to add your own creative energy when it comes to personalizing your mecha.

In this section, I demonstrate how to draw two types of combat mecha: the lightweights and the heavyweights.

## It's all about the shapes

Before drawing the entire mecha figure, explore and get used to drawing different types of common mecha body parts and armor shapes. These parts and shapes include shoulder pads, breastplates, forearm guards, waist protectors, shin guards, and feet. In Figure 13-10, I draw some basic shapes.



WARNING

For starters, avoid drawing the shapes from a three-dimensional angle ( $\frac{3}{4}$  angle). Although the ( $\frac{3}{4}$  angle gives a more realistic and dimensional look, it can be quite confusing and hard to grasp at first. For now, keep all the angles straight on (from the front or from the side). As you become more comfortable drawing the shapes, you can begin drawing the shapes from other dimensional angles.

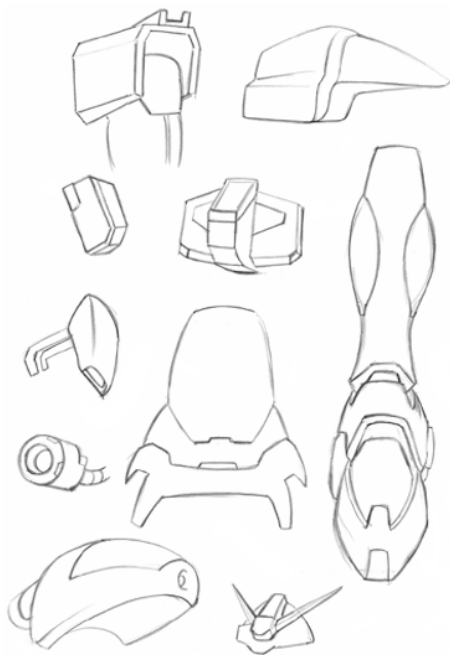
Now is a good time to introduce the "X" and "A" shapes you see in mecha poses. As I show in Figure 13-11, regardless of what types of mecha you plan to draw, they should all assume a default position in the form of an "X" or an "A."

On the left in Figure 13-11 (mecha with accessories) and on the right in Figure 13-11 (mecha without its accessories), the “X” and “A” shapes create strong, stable poses. Avoid deviating from this default pose and making the legs and arms too close to each other or the body. You need plenty of space between the body parts for the accessories to fit.



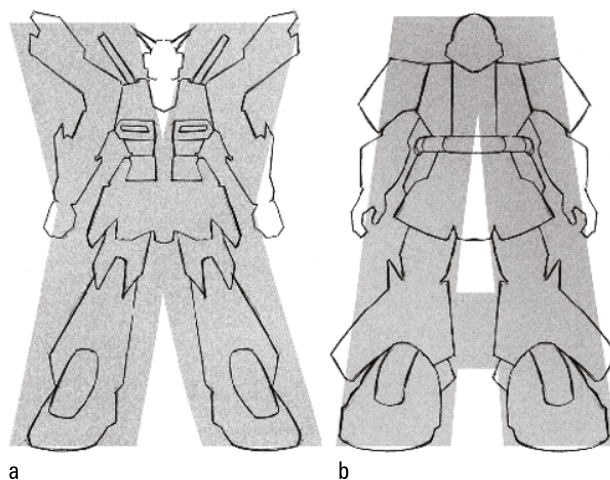
TIP

If you’re not familiar with mecha shapes, I recommend purchasing and assembling a few mecha model kits. I still remember painting and gluing my Gundam kits together as a kid. (In fact, some of my favorites are sitting on my studio display shelf.) Most of the kits are now snap together and are widely available. Checkout Gundam Planet ([www.gundamplanet.com/](http://www.gundamplanet.com/)) to get your first kit. (Be forewarned; in addition to a huge inventory of mecha models, the website is chock full of learning resources and materials. You might forget you’re a manga artist and become a full-time model assembler!) For additional inspiration for the humanoid mechas, I also recommend looking at the Japanese Ultraman character designs.



**FIGURE 13-10:**  
Become familiar  
with drawing  
common  
mecha shapes.

**FIGURE 13-11:**  
Comparing the  
“X” and “A”  
default stances.



## Enter the lightweights

These lightweight mechas excel in speed, precision, and sleek looks. In general, leaner ones are usually associated with the lead characters on the good side. For starters, two types of basic protagonist mechas exist — the classic style with its angled, boxy-shaped parts and the rounded, smoother mechas, that take on a more humanoid-like form compared to the classic mecha. In this section, I use the same wire frame figure that I use to draw my human characters to start off my mecha. I show you how to draw the classic mecha lead character and then I show you how to draw the streamlined organic shaped mecha lead character.

### Classic protagonist mecha (with a twist)

Follow these steps to draw a classic mecha with a twist for your lead character:

**1. Pose your wire frame figure in an “X” position, as shown in Figure 13-12.**

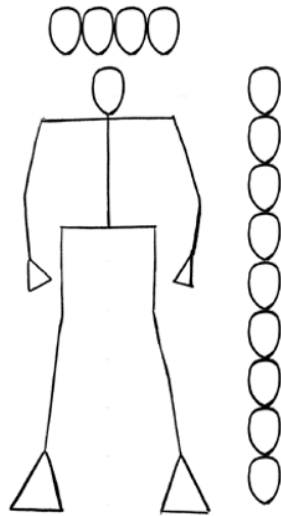
Over the course of mecha evolution, proportions have grown. Although the average varies, the lightweight mecha is approximately between  $8\frac{1}{2}$  and 10 heads tall. Compared to older models, current popular models have wider shoulders — typically 4 heads wide (5 to 6 if you factor in the shoulder pads).

I set my classic combat mecha at 9 heads tall.

**2. Sketch the basic geometric shapes based on the wire frame figure, as shown in Figure 13-13.**

Keep the pencil marks light and loose because you'll later go over them to refine the shapes. Start thinking about where you want to place the specific armor, air vents (where hot air is released to cool off the mecha), or other designs.





**FIGURE 13-12:**  
Setting my classic  
mecha's wire  
frame figure.



**TIP**

Pay close attention to the types of geometrical shapes I use to lay down the foundation of this mecha type. Not all sides of the shapes (such as the torso and hips) are parallel to each other. In fact, the key to striking a hero pose is having the bottom ends of the leg limbs and feet slightly angled wider and away from each other.



**FIGURE 13-13:**  
Adding loose  
shapes over the  
wire frame figure.

**3. Rough in the specific shapes for the armor over the geometric shapes, as shown in Figure 13-14.**

Use some of the shapes that you find interesting in Figure 13-10. Don't draw the shapes too wide. (Remember, you're drawing a lightweight mecha.) Avoid drawing the thick armor — you want to save the bulkier stuff for the heavier mecha models.

With my mecha, I vary the shapes. I make some shapes (such as the biceps and lower legs) rounder and keep the forearm and torso shapes fairly square. I also block in the basic head shape and features.

**4. Tighten up the shapes, as shown in Figure 13-15.**

Determine which shapes you want to be rounder as well as which shapes you want to be more angular and pointed. As a general rule of thumb, rounder edges imply sleekness and elegance as opposed to angular edges, which suggest sturdiness and aggressiveness. You're not right or wrong in making either decision — leave it to your personal taste.

In my mecha, my edges are a bit more angular. At certain sections, such as the hip protectors and sides of the legs, I let the edges come to a fine, sharp point. Note how I draw the bottom section of the legs narrow to show the slenderness.

**5. Shade in the accents and draw the details, such as antennas, arm shields, or pipes. (See Figure 13-16.)**

I shade in the areas where I think the shading will make the mecha stand out. I keep the areas limited so as not to darken the overall complexion of the mecha.



**WARNING**

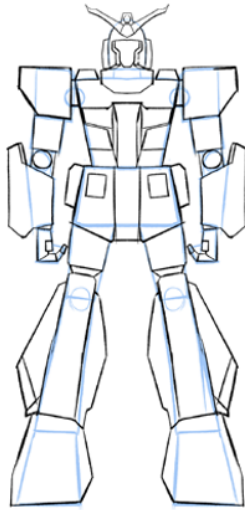
Don't overburden the mecha with too much bling. Make sure you keep the midsection between the upper torso and the hips slender. Popular places to add extra designs and small parts include the front of the torso, the back (improvise the rucksack), the forearms, and the shoulders.



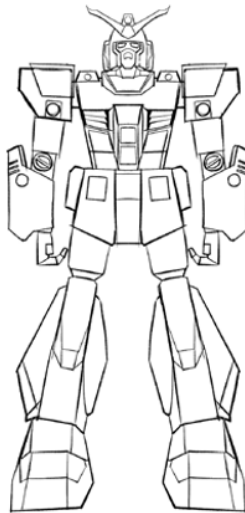
**TIP**

Be mindful of physics when drawing your mecha. If you decide to add heavier items, such as thrusters, make sure you place them where there's enough mass so that the items don't look like they're going to break off.

Based on the "X" shape I sketched in Step 1, I give a little "twist" to my classic mecha shape by adding a large radar array and two *beam sabers* (swords) protruding behind the mecha's back from its rucksack. In addition, I add some decoration marks, such as the model number on its right shoulder.

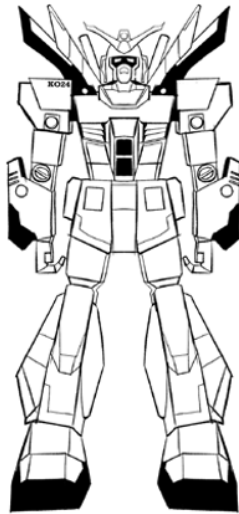


**FIGURE 13-14:**  
Lightly drawing  
the armor and  
other specific  
shapes over the  
geometric form.



**FIGURE 13-15:**  
Tightening and  
defining the  
edges of  
the mecha.

Finally, I draw in the inner side planes edges for the mecha's cube-shaped arms and upper legs so that the overall figure looks more dimensional. (I go into detail about perspective planes in Chapter 15.)



**FIGURE 13-16:**  
Finishing off the  
mecha with  
details and  
decoration.

## Sleek humanoid mecha

If this is your first time drawing this type of mecha, take a moment to read Chapter 5. Reading about the manga body basics in that chapter should familiarize you with the overall structure of the humanoid mecha. If you are already familiar with Chapter 5, follow these steps to draw the sleek humanoid:

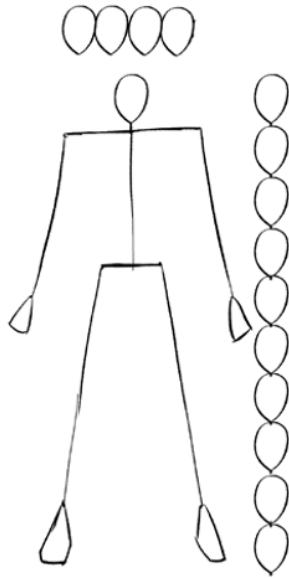
### 1. Pose your wire frame figure in an “A” position, as shown in Figure 13-17.

The average proportions of sleek mecha have grown to approximately  $8\frac{1}{2}$  to 10 heads tall in recent years. Compared to older models, current popular models have wider shoulders that come in at 3 to 4 heads wide (5 to 6 if you factor in the shoulder pads). Also, pay attention to the narrow width of the hips (it’s only 2 heads wide.)

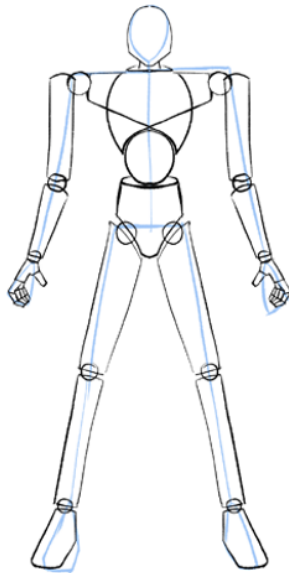
I set my sidekick combat mecha at 10 heads tall.

### 2. Sketch the basic geometric shapes based on the wire frame figure, as shown in Figure 13-18.

Keep the pencil marks light and loose and be sure to think about where you want to place specific armor, air vents, or other designs. Note how the geometric humanoid shapes in Figure 13-18 closely resemble that of the manga character geometric shapes from Chapters 7 through 11. Pay attention to the additional baseball-home-plate-shaped polygon (elongated to match the shoulder width wire frame figure drawn in the previous step), which rests on top of the upper oval torso. Also note the height of the hip shape (taller than the hip shape I first introduce in Chapter 5).



**FIGURE 13-17:**  
Setting my  
sidekick mecha at  
10 heads tall.



**FIGURE 13-18:**  
Beginning to  
fill in the  
mecha's shape.

### 3. Rough in the specific shapes for the armor over the geometric shapes, as shown in Figure 13-19.

See in Figure 13-19 how the armor mecha shapes I draw closely mimic the manga character's muscle anatomy from Chapter 5. In order to make a distinction, I slightly exaggerate the size of the shoulder deltoid muscle shape. I sketch in the shape of the mecha head that houses the main camera.



**FIGURE 13-19:**  
The backup mecha's simple organic shapes over the geometric humanoid mecha structure.

#### 4. Tighten up the shapes, as shown in Figure 13-20.

I clean up the lines and refine the shape lines. I shade in the gaps between the armor. Resist the urge to add too many embellishments to the humanoid mecha. Adding too many shapes obscures the visual integrity of the humanoid shape.



**TIP**

Challenge yourself with combining various humanoid mechas designs from different titles. One of my favorites from this genre are Evangelion and Ultraman. (While not “mecha,” the design features in the recent rerelease now streaming on popular Netflix services are pretty amazing.) These are just a couple of simple but awesome shapes examples you can use to embellish your humanoid mecha without overdoing it.

## Here come the heavyweights

In this section, I demonstrate how to draw two types of heavier mecha that antagonists and protagonists usually use. Both combat heavyweights typically have extra-thick armor and gear and usually don't fly under Earth's gravity. But in space, depending upon the pilot, the combat mechas have enough boosters and power to make flying and maneuvering easy enough to take on an entire fleet.



**FIGURE 13-20:**  
Adding final  
details to my  
sleek humanoid  
mecha.

## Lead villain mecha

Although the type of mecha that lead villains use isn't as graceful as the lightweight mecha, it makes up for everything with power. Most of these mechas are equipped with large bazookas or cannon weaponry that has enough kick to destroy an entire cruiser with a single blast.

Follow these steps to draw the villain's heavyweight mecha:

### 1. Pose your wire frame figure in an "X" position, as shown in Figure 13-21.

Note that because the armor adds so much bulk to this mecha's build, the approximate proportion is 13 heads tall. Draw the width of the shoulders wider than the lightweight mecha because the overall shapes are thicker. The shoulders also extend wider, to around 6 heads wide. Don't worry about the overall head count proportions making the head appear comically small in relationship to the rest of the body — you'll see how the design of the thick armor makes up for this offset later in Steps 2 and 3.

I set my heavyweight combat mecha at just above 13 heads tall.

### 2. Sketch the basic geometric shapes based on the wire frame figure, as shown in Figure 13-22.

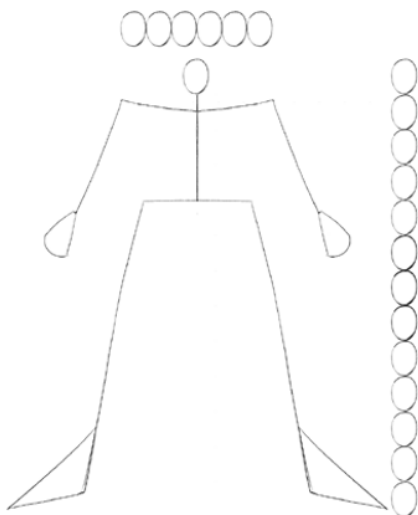
Keep the pencil marks light and loose and, as always, think about where you want specific details in the overall design.



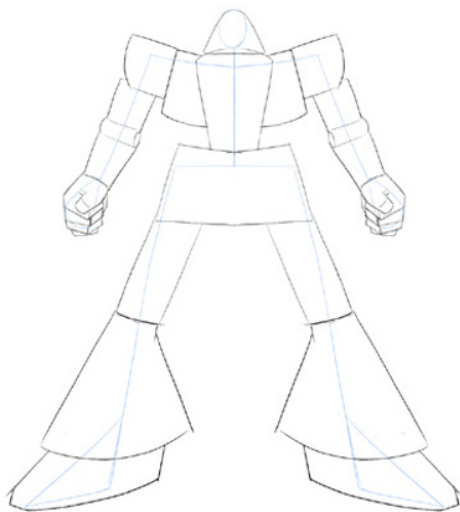
TIP

Regardless of its bulk, don't draw the waistline, arms, and upper legs too thick. You can make the torso, hips, lower legs, and shoulders wider. Remember, this thing is still pretty darn fast in combat and must be able to twist and turn fast enough to engage its enemies.

I exaggerate the torso of my mecha by omitting the neck shape and tweaking the overall head shape into a pyramid-shaped triangle that rests on top of the torso shape. This technique gives the impression that this thing has armor that's at least twice as thick as the lightweight mecha's armor.



**FIGURE 13-21:**  
The base for my  
heavyweight  
combat mecha.



**FIGURE 13-22:**  
Adding the basic  
shapes that  
will become  
thick armor.



### 3. **Rough in the specific shapes for the armor over the geometric shapes, as shown in Figure 13-23.**

When creating these shapes, you want to be sure that they reflect the durability, rigidity, and strength of the combat mecha.

In this step, have fun and take some liberties when adding shapes reflecting the villain pilot's personality. I draw in the popular round camera for my cycloptic friend at the front of the head. Since my villain pilot is a tough hombre with years of fierce combat experience, his mecha head reflects a samurai warrior's helmet (the *kabuto*), with tall antler-like prongs at the top and shark teeth spikes on each side.

I give my mecha plenty of armor to protect the shoulders, around the hips and lower legs. I avoid adding the thick armor at the upper waist and joints where he needs to move. To be consistent with the classic popular mecha style sheet that has that single round camera for the eye that I draw in Step 1, I add the popular tubes that connect from the backpack on his back (you don't see it from this angle) and wrap around the upper waist like a belt from both opposite sides of the upper waist and connect to the lower abdomen shape in the center front of the upper body.

### 4. **Add accessories and details to the shapes as shown in Figure 13-24.**

I draw the upper portion of the backpack thrusters (visible behind the back of his head). Remember that heavier mechas have larger backpacks and thrusters to enable quick movements. Next, draw in the details to the feet. I draw in the vents on his chest. Continuing with the pipe motif from Step 3, I draw in a pair of pipes on each side of the arms connecting the outer upper arm to the outer lower arm. I sketch in the hinge lines at the elbow and knee joints that connect the arm and leg shapes to give the mecha a more realistic look.

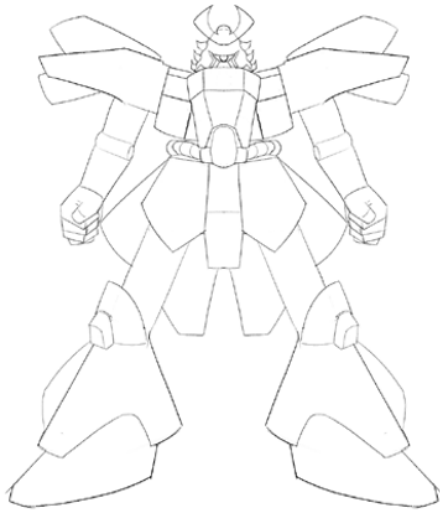
### 5. **Draw the final touches, as shown in Figure 13-25.**

For the final details I shade in the shadows and add decorative arrow symbols around the shoulders, torso, and legs.

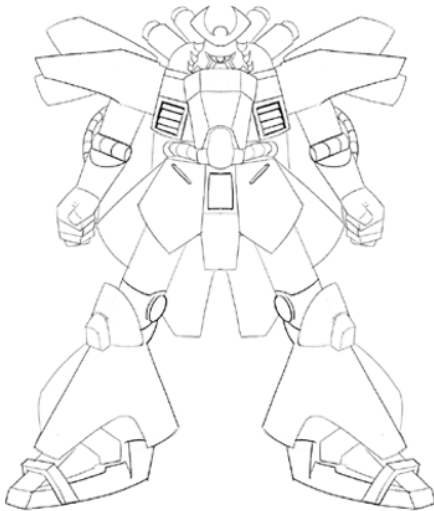
## **The Herculean mecha**

Unlike the previous heavyweight villain mecha, which is visually aggressive with its pointed angled body shapes, this retro-futuristic mecha has smoother curves and larger streamlined body parts than the war-hungry counterpart. Manga titles that feature these types of mechas often pay homage to Japanese classic mechas from the 1950s, noir, or stream punk where fighting is not done in outer space but right here on Earth. While it is strong and certainly combat ready, don't be shocked to find yourself grabbing a box of tissues to wipe your tears after seeing this mecha save a cute puppy from drowning.

**FIGURE 13-23:**  
Lightly drawing  
the armor to  
protect the  
shoulders,  
waist, and legs.



**FIGURE 13-24:**  
Drawing the  
backpack thruster  
accessory of the  
mecha and more  
detailed lines  
and shapes.



Follow these steps to draw the Herculean heavyweight mecha:

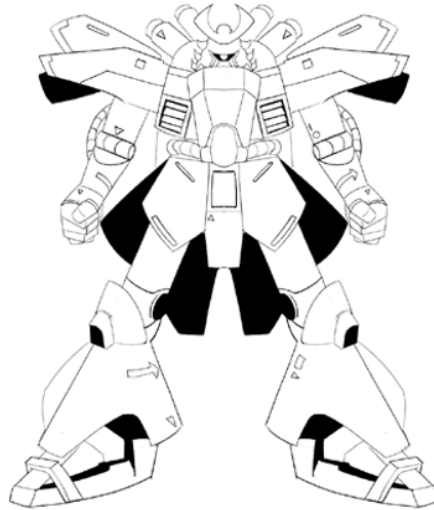
**1. Pose your wire frame figure as shown in Figure 13-26.**

The lower legs should be the largest part of the measurement. Since this mecha is all power when it comes to especially using its ridiculously large arms, I position its elbows bent to make ample room for the size I later draw in Step 2. This robust mecha shoulder is approximately 5 heads wide and 12 heads tall.

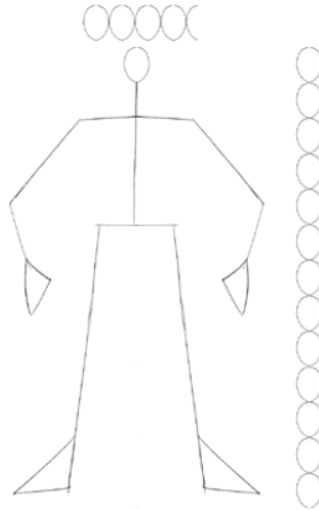


**WARNING**

As I show in Figure 13-26, make sure the neck length is longer than all previous mechas I show in this chapter. It is crucial to give the neck 1 head height length in order to achieve a streamlined body shape for this heroic piece of metal.



**FIGURE 13-25:**  
Giving the evil  
mecha what he  
deserves:  
more details.



**FIGURE 13-26:**  
Setting my  
heavyweight  
mecha to 12  
heads tall and  
about 5  
heads wide.

## 2. Sketch the basic geometric shapes based on the wire frame figure, as shown in Figure 13-27.

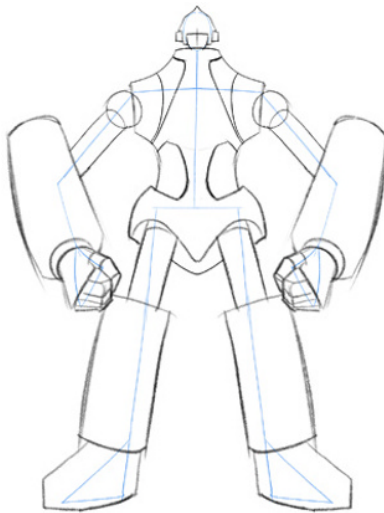
As I draw the shapes, recognize the similarity to other mechas, such as the shoulder joints and cylindrical shapes for the limbs. Also pay attention to the large size of the lower forearms and fists (approximately 5 head tall). Note the top portion of the lower forearm extends past the joint, as I show in Figure 13-27's overlay of the stick figure.

I lightly sketch in the torso shapes knowing that I will later erase the dividing lines in the next step when I add in the details. To show his larger-than-life appearance, I draw the top short curve of the torso so that it slightly covers the lower portion of his chin and then I connect both ends of the curve with a concave curve connecting with the shoulders.



TIP

In order to support all the upper-body weight, the mecha's lower legs have to be large and wide so it doesn't trip and keel over from walking through debris. I draw them the same width as the large forearms. I draw large ball bearings at the hips to connect with the legs.



**FIGURE 13-27:**  
Adding the loose  
shapes over the  
wire frame figure.

## 3. Rough in the specific shapes for the armor over the geometric shapes, as shown in Figure 13-28.

In addition to defining the armor, I add smaller design shapes, such as the curves and ovals at the center of the body, protruding toward the readers. This

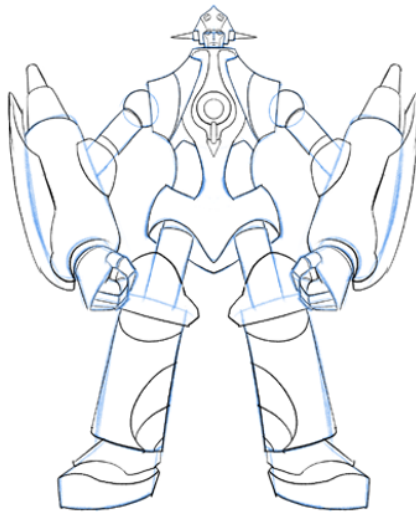
section bulges outward so that the pilot can fit into the torso cockpit. I keep the hip section detail to a minimum so as not to upset the visual balance of the powerful large limbs. I add to the forearm shapes with plated armor on the facing outside edges and sketch in a pair of cone-shaped engine exhaust systems at the back of the elbows, as seen in Figure 13-28.

I draw in the smaller shape details for the head and define the facial features as well. For his helmet, I draw in spikes on the side and screws at the top front. Note that I render more realistic details to the face than I had done with the previous mechas in this chapter. (If this is your first time drawing a face, be sure to read Chapter 4.)

Finally, I complete the lower leg and foot armor shapes and add details to the design. For example, I sketch in what looks like upside-down acorn shapes on top of his knees to add to his leg armor. I also draw in a few semi-circle shapes on the lower legs, as shown in Figure 13-28, to make the layers of dense armor look realistic. I sketch in the details of the top of the foot armor, which guards the top of his feet.



When drawing the feet, make sure to take the time to draw them in correct perspective. In addition to getting the perspective right, I draw the convex arc in the front of the foot and a slight concave arc on the inside of the foot to give the mecha feet additional dimension.



**FIGURE 13-28:** Lightly drawing the armor and other specific shapes over the geometric form.

#### 4. Tighten up the shapes to give more dimension, as shown in Figure 13-29.

This is the exciting step where things start to come together. I clean up the image by erasing any lines that are extraneous. In Figure 13-29, I accentuate the density of the armor by slightly tweaking the outside edges of the larger shape groups by slightly raising one side higher or lower than the side of the adjacent shape. See how I do this with the left and right shoulder lines that connect to the center torso shape. I also do this with the arcs I draw in the previous step on the lower leg armor.



TIP

When deciding which shape edge to make higher than the other connecting shape, I go by the size comparison. Since larger shapes generally overlap the smaller shapes, I tweak the line of the larger shape connecting to the smaller shape so that it is slightly higher. Conversely, you can also make the line of the smaller shape slightly lower than the connecting line of the larger shape. Have fun with this tip!

Finally, I add finishing designs to the armor. Here I draw in wavy engravings to the forearms and fill in the sides of the torso with boomerang shaped patterns. I add in lines running parallel to the inside large armor shape edges such as the forearm armor, top of the waist, lower legs, and foot guard to add more realism.



**FIGURE 13-29:**  
Tightening and  
defining the  
edges of  
the mecha.

**5. Draw in the finishing touches with bolts and shading, as shown in Figure 13-30.**

I add in three ovals for iron bolts on each side of the upper torso, as well as on the outsides of the forearm armor. Pay attention to how some of the ovals are partially concealed as the shapes continue on to the other side of the armor plane.

I finish off the Herculean mecha by shading in the shadow areas along the armor joints and crevasses.



**FIGURE 13-30:**  
Finishing off the  
mecha with  
shadows  
and bolts.





- » Drawing small, cool gadgets
- » Improvising basic geometric shapes to create different types of weapons
- » Discovering the tricks you need to draw metallic, sharp weapons

## Chapter 14

# Gadgets and Weapons

Ever take a moment to drool over the wide range of cool gadgets and armor featured in action shōnen manga? From the mind-blowing oculus to historic samurai swords to hi-tech battle gear and headsets, characters rely on props to accomplish their missions. In this chapter, I explain step by step how to draw some of these hot items using basic geometrical shapes. Regardless of how complex the final drawings appear, they all follow the same principles. And after you get used to first laying down the overall geometric shape, you can make your own interpretations and decisions on where and how much detail you want to add.



WARNING

If you have little drawing experience and you're not familiar with the geometrical shapes I talk about in Chapter 5, please take time to read through that chapter before continuing on with this chapter.

## Small Gadgets

Small gadgets make great accessories because they're easy to carry and operate, yet they can perform sophisticated functions. They also serve as fashion statements to your characters as much as clothes do.

## Power girl head gear

This popular gadget usually worn by girl protagonists in sci-fi/space opera manga combines a fashion statement and advanced technology in one cool package. In addition to tuning into a favorite music playlist and communicating with the team, some characters may need it for gathering classified data, and others may need to use it as a remote-control device to summon their sidekick robot (usually pairs with the Herculean mecha from Chapter 13).

For purposes of application, I start with a girl's profile. Follow these steps to draw a power girl's head gear:

1. **Draw a flat cylinder for the ear cup and cushion of the device and add in the headband, as shown in Figure 14-1.**

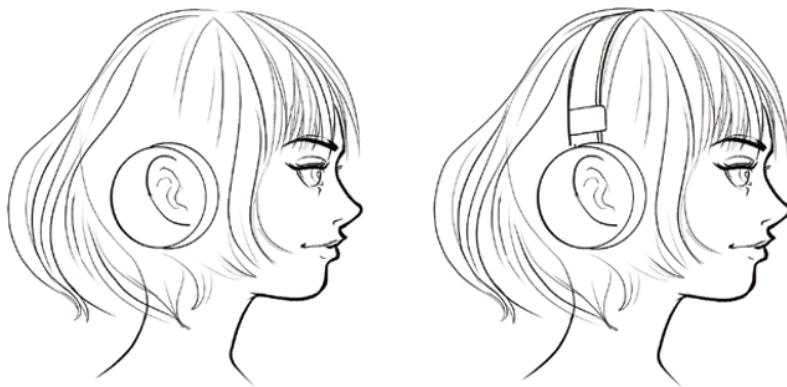
On the left in Figure 14-1, I sketch the bottom plane of the cylinder (ear cushion) so it's centered over the girl's ear. When drawing the circle to create the top plane of the cylinder (ear cup,) make sure that the size is about 5 percent smaller than the base covering the ear.

On the right in Figure 14-1, I draw the headband shape with two curved lines with a rectangle component that allows the user to adjust the band length of the head gear. Pay attention to the positioning of the top of the headband so that the front side of the band connects no further than the center of the top of the head.



TIP

Make the headband look dimensional from the get-go by adding a third curve to the right of the front side of the headband. (Again, see the image on the right in Figure 14-1.) The closer you draw the curve to the curve facing front, the slimmer the headband material appears.



**FIGURE 14-1:** Sketch in the basic ear cushion/cup and headband shape.

## 2. Sketch in the smaller geometric shapes, as shown in Figure 14-2.

Here's where we start adding the back wing shapes, the popular manga cat ears, and smaller supporting shapes along the front of the ear cushion.

These shapes can be any shape and size you want to create them. With my character, I make sure the smaller shapes stay behind her face.

For inspirational ideas for creative shapes, try your hand at cosplay sites such as <https://m.ezcosplay.com/>. Use that inspiration when adding more details in the next Step 3.



TIP



**FIGURE 14-2:**  
Draw in the smaller supporting shapes for the head gear.

## 3. Add in the final details to the design, as shown in Figure 14-3.

My favorite step when creating any character is when you add an identity to your character by drawing in decals and logos. In addition to a series of triangles and stripes, I draw a cat head logo to match the cat ears on top of her headband. Challenge yourself to come up with your own logo to put on your character's gear.



REMEMBER

## 4. Finalize the illustration of the head gear by adding shading, as shown in Figure 14-4.



**FIGURE 14-3:**  
Drawing the  
details to the  
head gear.



**FIGURE 14-4:**  
Adding the  
finishing touches  
to the head gear.

## The mystic orb

This fun and simple-to-draw gadget needs to be in every adventure fantasy manga. If you're looking to exude some exciting mystery into a super-simple spherical shape, the mystic orb (similar to the single-shape mecha I draw in Chapter 13) is *the* place to start (especially if this is your first time drawing a tech gadget for your main character!). In some popular manga titles, similar gadgets house a creature that battles against other creatures to gain points for their master and owner. Pair this with a protagonist such as The Reckless Adventurer in Chapter 7, and the possibilities for an exciting plot for your manga story are endless.

To get started, take a look at these steps:

**1. Draw the body of the orb and guidelines for the features, as shown in Figure 14-5.**

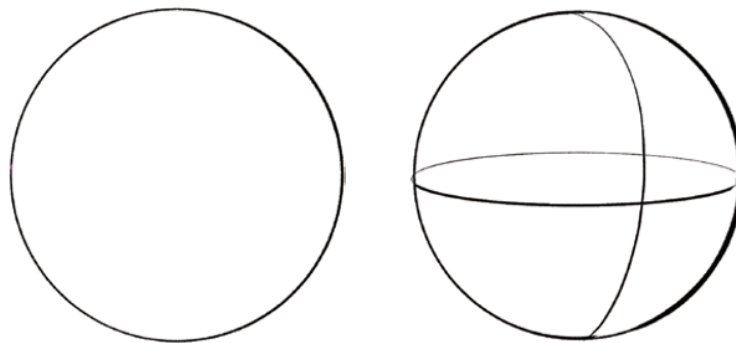
As shown on the left in Figure 14-5, start out with using either a circle template or digital ruler to draw the outside shape of a sphere that's 2½ to 3½ inches in diameter for the body.



**TIP**

Avoid the common mistake of drawing objects too small. While drawing objects smaller than the size of your pinky tip are faster, drawing a circle roughly the size of the palm of your hand allows you to sketch in more details to your final drawing to make it unique and personalized.

As shown on the right in Figure 14-5, lightly sketch in an oval guideline at the center of the sphere as well as a light vertical curved guideline. This helps establish which direction the orb is facing (similar to the process of establishing the human facial features in Chapter 4).



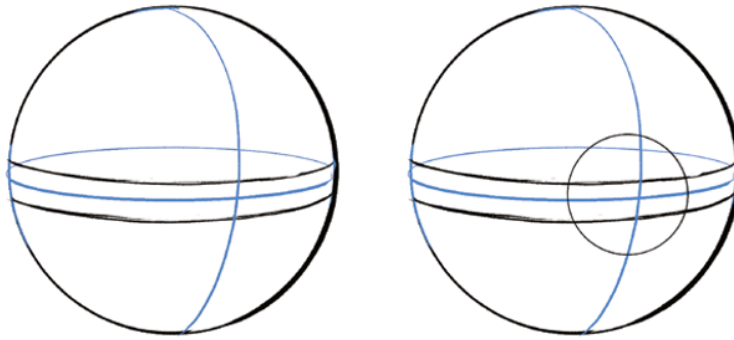
**FIGURE 14-5:**  
Drawing the body  
and guidelines for  
the mystic orb.

**2. Draw a series of guidelines for the top and bottom sides of the orb and create the opening guideline for the eye lens to fit into the spherical body. (See Figure 14-6.)**

On the left in Figure 14-6, I lightly sketch in two slightly concave guideline curves running one above and one below the center guideline from the previous step. (See the image on the left of Figure 14-5.) I draw these lightly, knowing that I will later erase them. For clarity, I label the top, center, and bottom as A, B, C, respectively.

Using the crosshair intersection point in Step 1 as my center point, I lightly sketch in a circle guideline about 2/3 the diameter of the body of the orb. (See the image on the right in Figure 14-6.) I draw these lightly, knowing that I will later erase them.

**FIGURE 14-6:**  
Adding more  
guidelines and an  
outline of the  
orb's eye.



**3. Use the guidelines from Step 2 to draw the top and bottom half shapes of the orb in Figure 14-7.**

On the left in Figure 14-7, I draw three concave curves using the guidelines from the previous step. This represents the outside rim of the lower half of the orb.

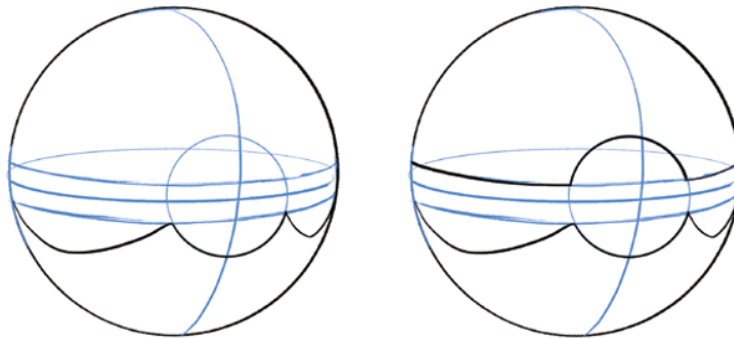
Here, I find it visually helps to start drawing the center curve first following the circle guideline shown on the right in Figure 14-6. Pay close attention to how the top of the three curves align with the bottom guideline, C.

On the right in Figure 14-7, I use the circle visual guideline to draw an opening for the eye of the orb and follow guideline A to complete the top half shape.

**4. Add in the details to complete the mystic orb, as shown in Figure 14-8.**

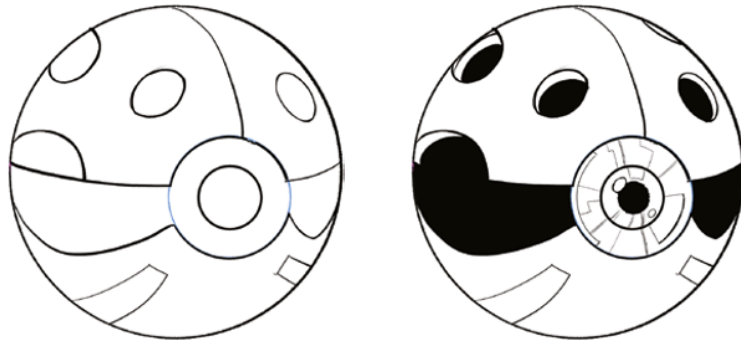
I decide to make my orb into a ladybug theme. On the left in Figure 14-8, I draw a circle for the eye inside the front opening made in Step 2 for my top half and then sketch in oval-shaped portals on the back. Also, I draw a line running across the middle of the top showing the seams of the ladybug wing.

On the right in Figure 14-8, I erase the guidelines and add more details to the shapes to make the ladybug orb look realistic. Finally, I shade in the gaps between the upper and lower orb and add the glass camera eye at the front of the orb.



**FIGURE 14-7:**  
Making a space  
for the eye  
of the orb.

**FIGURE 14-8:**  
Finalizing  
the lines and  
details on the  
ladybug orb.



## Battle Arms

Combat gadgets are just as important as fashion in giving your character an identity. In this section, I demonstrate two popular battle arms by drawing a sword and guns.

### Swords

A sword was considered the soul and honor of a Japanese samurai during the Edo Period in Japanese history. A samurai spent a lot of effort making sure his sword was well maintained and had a unique design. Not surprisingly a lot of popular manga titles feature this traditional sword style.

Despite all the elaborate variations, a sword is a three-section weapon consisting of the handle, the guard, and the blade. I start off with the traditional samurai sword:

1. Lightly draw a long guideline and a shorter line perpendicular to the long line that intersects toward the end, as shown in Figure 14-9.

**FIGURE 14-9:**  
Drawing the  
guidelines for the  
samurai sword.



2. Block in the basic geometric shapes for the handle, protector (known as a *tsuba*), and blade, as shown in Figure 14-10.

**FIGURE 14-10:**  
Adding the basic  
shapes for  
the sword.



**3. Add the decoration patterns to the handle and sharpen the tip of the blade, as shown in Figure 14-11.**

Pay attention to the tip of the sword where the front side suddenly curves up at the end. The back side should curve up just slightly. If your character is superstitious, you want to draw a good luck charm at the end of the handle.

**FIGURE 14-11:**  
Sharpening the  
definition of  
the sword.



In Figure 14-12, I show the sword from different perspectives. On the top left in Figure 14-12, the sword is pointed toward the readers, while on the top right, it's pointing away. The extreme distortion you see in both images is known as *foreshortening*.



**TIP**

Think of the foreshortened images of the sword as thin, long cylinders coming toward and going away from you. For this exercise, you need a tube (say the cardboard center from a paper towel roll, which is about a foot long). Hold it up about 10 inches in front of you so that the side is facing you. Then gradually rotate the position so that the tube faces you until you're looking right through the hollow opening. Do you notice how the length of the tube gradually becomes shorter as it rotates to face you? It's the same foreshortening that's happening with the swords in Figure 14-12.

If your character uses the sword as his main weapon, you want to design a *tsuba* for his sword. On the bottom left and right of Figure 14-12, I show some *tsuba* designs. Traditionally, the engravings include the bearer's family symbol.

## Guns

In this section, I demonstrate the steps you need to draw several types of guns. Smaller grip guns have smaller handles and are easier to control, while the bigger guns, such as bazookas, are heavy enough that characters need to rest them upon their shoulders for stability.





**FIGURE 14-12:**  
Swords from  
different  
angles and  
*tsuba* designs.



**TIP**

When drawing difficult angles of the hand gripping the gun, I take a photo, using my digital camera, of either myself or a friend posing. After I use that photo for my drawing, I save it for future reference. As you keep drawing and re-using the references, you gain the confidence and skill to draw those poses more quickly and eventually from memory.

## Phaser

Think of a phaser as the future of today's handgun. It has no bullets, so you don't need to reload. As a result, the chamber and barrel are often fused together into one piece, which I refer to as the main body. In place of bullets, it fires deadly laser beams and needs to be charged after each battle.phasers are generally compact so that you need only one hand to fire them.

Follow these steps to draw your first phaser:

- 1. Draw the main body (barrel and chamber) of the gun (as shown in Figure 14-13).**

Draw the front end of the main body where the laser shoots out narrower than the back of the main body where the grip will attach beneath.

- 2. Attach a rectangular grip, as shown in Figure 14-14.**

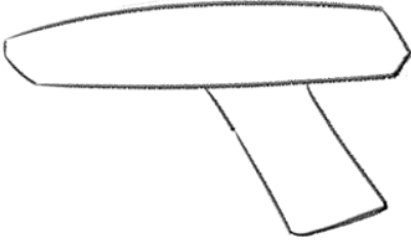
**FIGURE 14-13:**

Drawing the main body of the phaser.



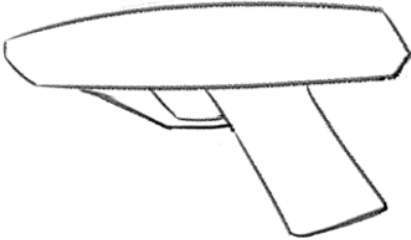
**FIGURE 14-14:**

Drawing the grip section of the phaser.



- 3. On the front side of the grip, draw two overlapping polygon shapes to support the trigger guard. (See Figure 14-15.)**

The elongated polygon is facing the muzzle.



**FIGURE 14-15:**

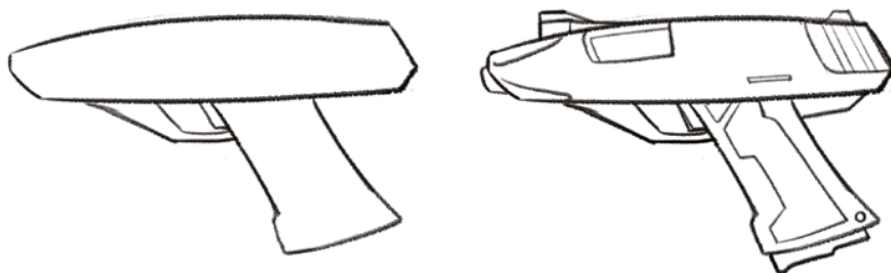
Drawing the trigger guard at the front of the grip.

- 4. Draw the trigger and add the magazine extender underneath the grip to complete the bottom half of the phaser, as shown on the left in Figure 14-16.**

The magazine extender should stick out and angle down so that the bottom of the character's hand rests comfortably on top.

- 5. Add the smaller details to complete the main body of the phaser, as shown on the right in Figure 14-16.**

Draw the front of the barrel, iron sights, slide port, and rear slide serrations above the main body. Finally, I add in the design lines on the grip to make it look more realistic.



**FIGURE 14-16:**  
Completing  
the phaser.

## Laser beam rifle

A laser beam rifle may be used by a combat *mecha* (large robots that are piloted by humans; refer to Chapter 13). This type of larger and heavier weapon requires both hands of the mecha to operate. Although it shoots laser beams like the phaser in the previous section, the rifle delivers greater accuracy, distance, and power. If your mecha is a lightweight or heavyweight combat mecha, this toy is for you!

To draw a laser beam rifle, follow these steps:

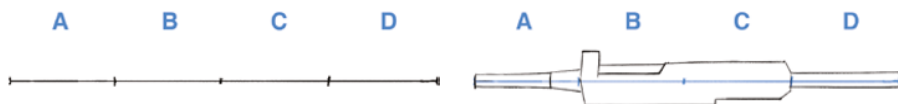
### 1. Start with the main upper body of the rifle, as shown in Figure 14-17.

The main body consists of two sections — the upper and lower casing. Have fun designing the upper casing because that's what defines the overall shape of your character's or your mecha's rifle.

With my ruler, I lightly draw a 4-inch horizontal guideline that is marked into four equal segments (labeled A, B, C, D.) I use this to align the proportions of the rifle as well as indicate the direction of the muzzle. (In this case, the rifle is pointing to my left.) Sketch in the bigger shape for the upper casing taking up the center A and B segments of the guideline, as shown on the left in Figure 14-17. This section represents the top portion of the main body of the rifle.

As shown on the right in Figure 14-17, using my guideline, I draw a long cylinder shape in segment D for the buffer tube. (See how this cylinder is centered along the guideline.) Next, I draw in another long cylinder shape for the rifle barrel, starting in segment A and extending it to fill in the gap of the upper case in segment B. Make sure the bottom side is parallel to the top of the upper casing.

**FIGURE 14-17:**  
Drawing the  
guidelines and  
basic shapes of  
the upper casing  
of the rifle body.



## 2. Complete the upper portion shape of the rifle, as shown in Figure 14-18.

Draw in the front muzzle flash hider, the rear bump stock, and power scope. Make sure you don't make the muzzle too short — for the rifle to be effective on long distance targets, it needs to have a certain length.

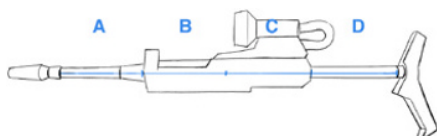
On the top right of the upper case, draw the red dot scope system. From the side view, it resembles a giant flashlight and a riser connected with a giant tube.



TIP

You can add dimension to your rifle profile view by drawing the opposite ends of the rifle's cylinder shapes (the flash hider and the buffer tube) so they curve away from the center of the rifle body.

**FIGURE 14-18:** Sketching in the muzzle, stock, and scope of the rifle.



## 3. Complete the lower portion of the main body as shown on the left in Figure 14-19.

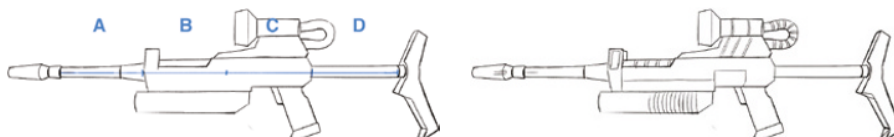
Draw in the grenade launcher, trigger system, and grip underneath the upper case. For the cylinder grenade launcher, I position it beneath the upper case diagonally opposite of the scope. For the grip, I draw a brick shape polygon underneath the upper case making sure the outside edge of the grip base is flush with the back of the scope base above the upper case. Note the grip is slightly canted to the right (about 18 degrees). Complete the lower shapes by drawing another rectangle polygon shape to the left side of the grip base.

## 4. Erase the guidelines and add the final details to finish the beam rifle (as shown on the right in Figure 14-19).

I draw several groove serrations on the grip and body to prevent the hand from slipping when using it during combat. I do these on the grip of the grenade launcher, main grip, and scope.

## 5. Finally, I personalize this popular rifle by adding small decals to add realism.

**FIGURE 14-19:** Completing the beam rifle.



## Rocket launcher/bazooka

One of the largest weapons commonly used by military and mecha, the rocket launcher/bazooka has enough power to destroy an entire space cruiser. It's heavy and clumsy looking, but here in the manga world, you can make it fun by adding cool shapes to create your own weapon of mass destruction. Most of all the mechas that I show how to draw in Chapter 13 use these types of weapons. (The exceptions here are single-shaped, multi-shaped, and humanoid mecha.)

To draw this powerful weapon, follow these steps:

1. **Draw a guideline and elongated rectangle for the body or barrel of the gun, as shown in Figure 14-20.**

On the left in Figure 14-20, I draw a 5-inch horizontal line (sectioned into five equal segments labeled A, B, C, D, E) to align the proportions of this weapon.

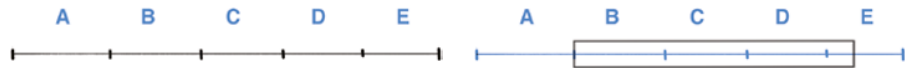
Keep the line light since you'll be erasing it later.

Draw a rectangle polygon for the main barrel spanning segments B, C, D, and 1/3 of E, as shown on the right in Figure 14-20. This is wide enough for a rocket capable of destroying a galaxy cruiser to pass through.



REMEMBER

**FIGURE 14-20:** Drawing the guideline and main body shape of the rocket launcher/bazooka.



2. **Draw the lower grip system, as shown in Figure 14-21.**

On the left in Figure 14-21, I draw the base of the grip shape (referred to as "lower") under the main barrel taking up the width of section C. Beneath the lower, I sketch in a small perpendicular rectangle grip. Make it at a slight angle so that the other hand can comfortably support the additional weight.

Add in the smaller shapes to complete the lower grip system, as shown on the left in Figure 14-21.

When creating these smaller shapes, try incorporating angled parallelograms with the design.



TIP

**FIGURE 14-21:**

Adding the lower grip system including the main grip (fused with the trigger guard), and trigger.

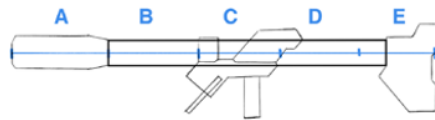


**3. Draw the muzzle at the front of the barrel and the rocket magazine rack at the back, as shown in Figure 14-22.**

This is where the rockets are stored and fed directly into the launcher. The muzzle is similar to the flash hider on the rifle (see the previous section) except it's thicker and is approximately the length of segment A. The magazine rack, which is the length of segment E, should rest comfortably behind the user's shoulder. Because of the size of the rockets, they're capable of launching only four to five rounds.

**FIGURE 14-22:**

Fixing the muzzle and rocket magazine to the launcher.

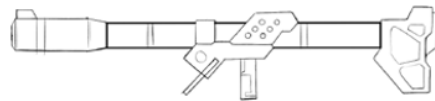


**4. Erase the guidelines and draw the smaller shapes/design to complete the launcher, as shown in Figure 14-23.**

These smaller shapes include the front sights, model numbers, circle vent holes, triggers, and so on. Personally, I have fond memories of painting the groove marks on my Gundam plastic models in high school, so I add in grooves on the grip and rocket magazine rack.

**FIGURE 14-23:**

Completing the rocket launcher/bazooka.



# **5**

## **An Advanced Case of Manga**

**IN THIS PART . . .**

Master the art of perspective

Work with storyboarding and scenic backgrounds

Develop your narrative skills



- » Using horizon lines and vanishing points
- » Applying perspective to construct basic buildings
- » Creating dynamic angle shots

## Chapter 15

# Putting Manga into Perspective

Getting the right perspective on your surroundings is crucial when drawing manga. Usually, a manga story begins with an *establishing shot*, which is a panel that tells the viewers where the story takes place. The establishing shot can be anywhere from the busy streets of Metropolis to the quiet deserts in Nevada. Most importantly, these establishing shots give your characters a sense of belonging within the story. Unless your characters interact in outer space with nothing but emptiness in the background for an entire episode, readers will have a hard time seeing how your characters physically relate to their surroundings without the establishing shot. If your characters, for example, are college tourists exploring the big city for the first time, make sure you're prepared to draw some awesome scenery. No reader will be convinced that your characters are standing in front of the Statue of Liberty if all they do is point off screen or toward an empty background.

The goal of this chapter is to help you become familiar with basic perspective theories and see the benefit of applying them in your drawings, so that you can take your manga drawing up a notch.



WARNING

You need a straightedge ruler and a triangle ruler for this chapter. (See Chapter 2 for more on basic drawing tools.)

# Creating Buildings and Backgrounds with Basic Perspective

What is perspective? *Perspective*, from an artistic standpoint, is a technique or method that enables you to turn flat two-dimensional images into three-dimensional images. It's what helps make one-sided drawings, such as squares, into more believable and realistic objects, such as cubes. (For more information on drawing geometric shapes, see Chapter 4.) You're no longer stuck with viewing just the front side of the object — now you also know what the side, top, and even the back look like in relation to the front. Perspective is the creation of illusionary depth on a flat two-dimensional sheet of paper.

You need to know the following basic principles to understand this drawing technique:

- » **One-point perspective:** An illusion in which straight horizontal edges of simple geometric objects converge toward a single point (commonly known as a *vanishing point*) along the horizon line.
- » **Two-point perspective:** An illusion in which straight horizontal edges of simple geometric objects converge toward two separate points (commonly known as *vanishing points*) along the same horizon line.
- » **Three-point perspective:** An illusion in which straight horizontal edges of simple geometric objects converge toward two separate points (commonly known as *vanishing points*) along the same horizon line. In addition, you add a third vanishing point either above or below the horizon line where the vertical lines of the simple geometric objects converge.

In this section, I show you the basics for drawing all three perspectives.

## Drawing one-point perspective

One-point perspective is the way to present a three-dimensional object in its simplest state. In manga, this perspective comes in handy when you're drawing scenes such as roads, railroad tracks, or a series of buildings where the front is directly facing the reader.

Following is an exercise in drawing one-point perspective:

1. **With your ruler, draw a horizontal line across your paper, as shown on the top of Figure 15-1.**

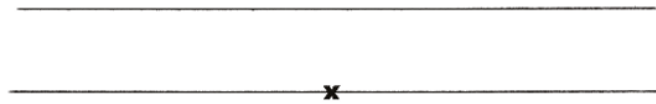
This is the *horizon line*. By the book, it's defined as the line where the earth meets the sky. Personally, I prefer to think of the horizon line as your current eye level. If you look straight in front of you, that level of field is your horizon line.

2. **Create a dot at the center of the line, as shown on the bottom in Figure 15-1.**

This is the *vanishing point*. It marks the point where all parallel lines you draw to create the three-dimensional shapes meet together.

3. **Draw a square to the lower left of the horizon line, as shown on the top left in Figure 15-2.**

**FIGURE 15-1:**  
Drawing the horizon line and establishing the vanishing point.



4. **Draw and connect the three corners to the vanishing point. (See the image on the top right of Figure 15-2.)**

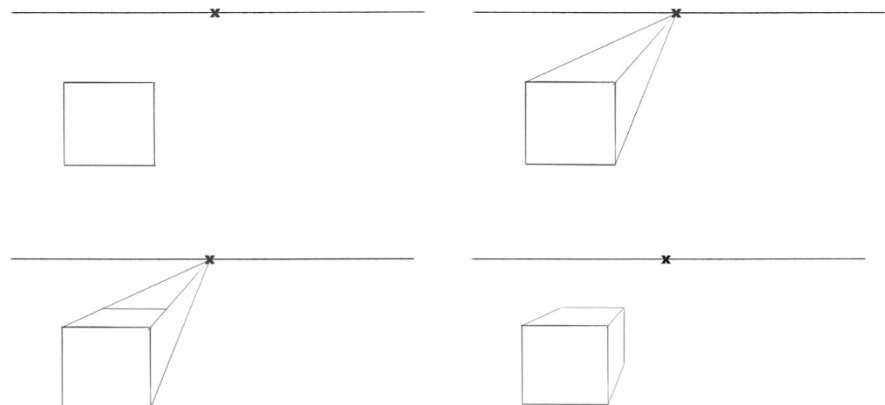
The technical term for these imaginary guidelines is *orthogonal lines*.

5. **Lightly draw a line between the top two guidelines, as shown on the bottom left of Figure 15-2.**

This line determines the depth of the shape.

6. **Based on where the line ends in the image on the bottom left of Figure 15-2, draw the vertical line as shown in the image on the bottom right of Figure 15-2.**

7. **Erase the extra guidelines and voila! You're done!**



**FIGURE 15-2:**  
Drawing a one-point perspective cube.

In Figure 15-3, I use one-point perspective to create a city scene. With my vanishing point right in the middle, readers can tell that I'm standing right in the middle of the road, looking down at all the buildings facing me.

**FIGURE 15-3:**  
All these  
buildings are  
created using  
one-point  
perspective.

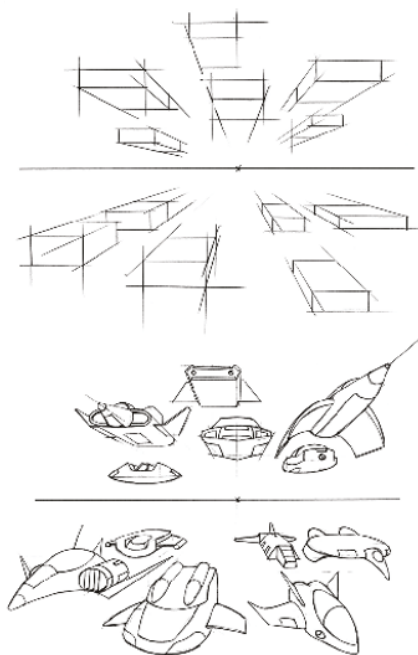


**TIP**

Here's a cool trick to impress your friends. One-point perspective isn't just for drawing buildings. I can add many cubed objects into the scenario. (See the image at the top of Figure 15-4.) You can apply these multiple simple geometric shapes to a fleet of spaceships gearing up for battle. (See the image at the bottom of Figure 15-4.) When attempting complex composition in which you have to draw many objects, figuring out the perspective is easier if you first use simple geometric shapes before you modify them into more complex, final objects.

## Trying two-point perspective

Two-point perspective provides more viewing flexibility than one-point perspective by adding a second vanishing point on the same horizon line. You now have two separate sets of guidelines converging rather than one. This second vanishing point allows you to view the same cube you drew in one-point perspective at a rotated angle. This technique is useful when you're drawing more complex cityscapes, because not every single building you see is facing you. Instead of just one road heading toward one direction, you now have a road forking into two separate directions.



**FIGURE 15-4:**  
It's a whole fleet  
of cubes . . . no,  
wait —  
spaceships!

Try the following exercise in drawing two-point perspective:

1. **Set up a horizon line and place two vanishing points on both sides. (See the top left of Figure 15-5.)**

2. **As shown there on the top left of Figure 15-5, draw a vertical line (segment AB).**

This line represents the front edge and the height of the cube.

3. **From each vanishing point, draw two guidelines. (See the image on the top right of Figure 15-5.)**

These lines set the top and bottom edges of the cube.

4. **Draw two vertical segments (CD and EF) on opposite sides of segment AB, as shown on the bottom left of Figure 15-5.**

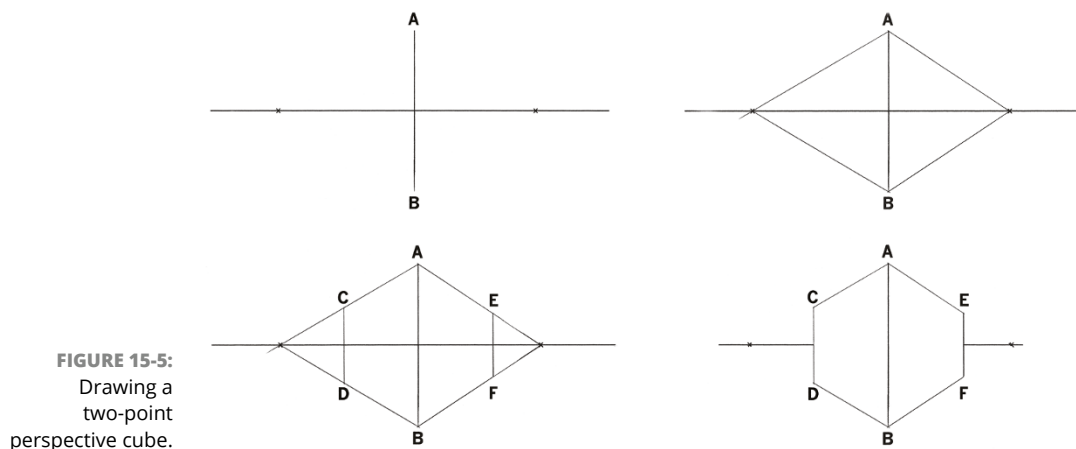
These segments determine the depth of the cube. If you want to increase the depth of the cube, move either or both segments further away from segment AB.

Keep in mind that by creating segments CD and EF, you are in effect creating two separate walls. One wall is formed by points ABDC, and the other wall is formed by points ABFE.

5. **Finish the cube by tightening and erasing extraneous lines, as shown on the bottom right of Figure 15-5.**



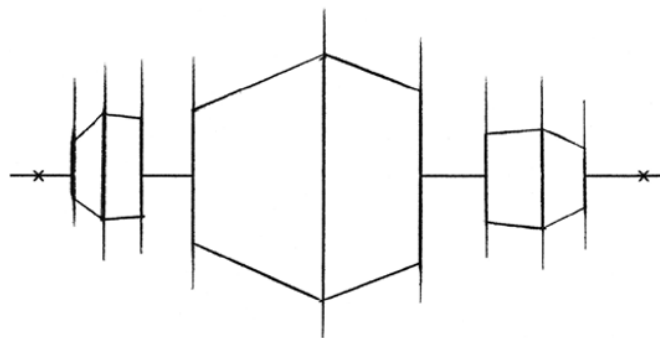
REMEMBER



**TIP**

If you want to draw multiple cubes in two-point perspective, you need to first establish multiple vertical lines, as shown in Figure 15-6. You can change the degree of rotation of the cube by changing the placement of the cube as well as the distance between the vertical segments in relation to the two vanishing points.

In Figure 15-7, I show a series of buildings facing a different angle. Now you get the feeling that I'm looking at the buildings from a corner of a sidewalk.



**FIGURE 15-6:** Drawing multiple cubes in two-point perspective.

## Shaping up for three-point perspective

Three-point perspective is achieved by adding a third vanishing point either below or above the horizon line. This perspective is useful in setting up extreme up and down shots of larger-than-life objects, such as buildings.



**FIGURE 15-7:**  
Drawing multiple  
buildings using  
the two-point  
perspective.

The three-point perspective has two categories: worm's-eye view and bird's-eye view. First, I show you how to draw a bird's-eye view. From this perspective, your character could be looking down at a building from an extreme angle in a chopper flying high above. Next, I demonstrate the worm's-eye view. From this view, your character could be looking up in awe from an extreme angle at a tall skyscraper. These extreme angles are responsible for the distortion you see in the following examples when I add the third vanishing point.



**WARNING**

I strongly advise students to practice and become familiar with the one-point and two-point perspective theories before attempting the three-point perspective.

## Drawing a bird's-eye perspective

Try the following exercise to get a bird's-eye view in three-point perspective:

- 1. Set up a horizon line and place a vanishing point on each side. (See the top-left image in Figure 15-8.)**
- 2. As shown on the top right of Figure 15-8, draw two guidelines from each vanishing point to complete the shape ABCD.**

This shape represents the top plane of the cube.

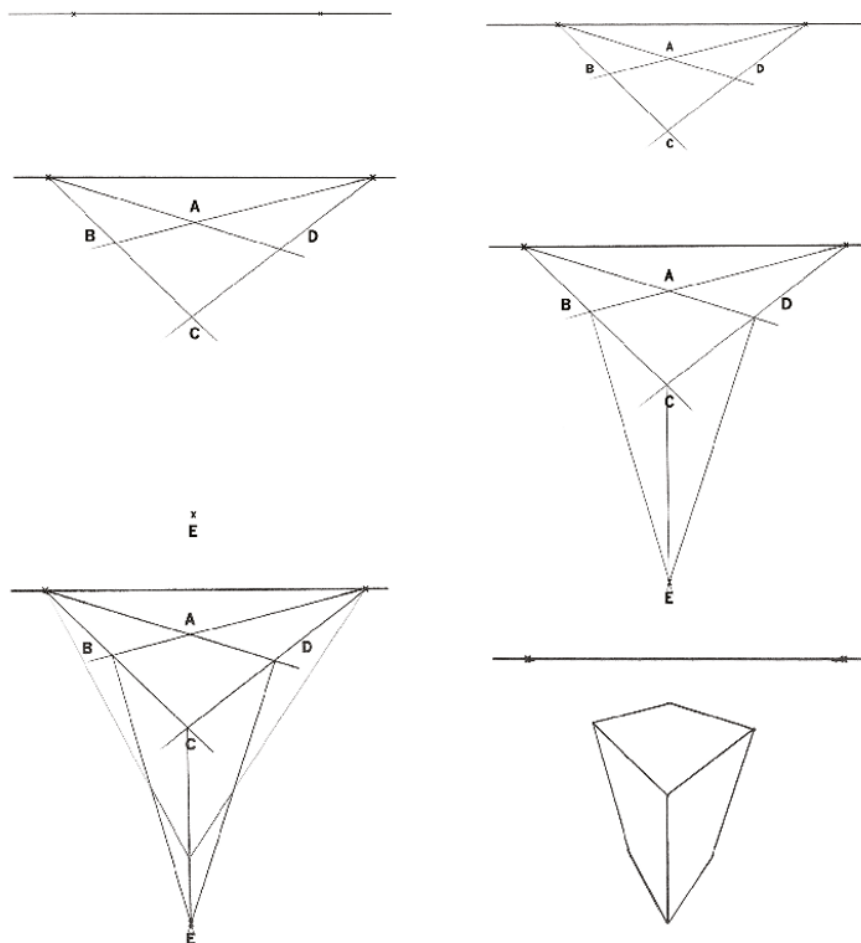
- 3. Add a third vanishing point, E, well below plane ABCD, as shown in the center-left image in Figure 15-8.**

I like to call this point a floating vanishing point because you don't need to attach it to the horizon line the way you do with the vanishing points in Step 1.

- 4. From point E, draw three guideline segments to connect with points B, C, and D. (See the center-right image in Figure 15-8.)**

5. Draw two guidelines from the two original vanishing points meeting midway on segment CE, as shown in the bottom-left image in Figure 15-8.

The further down the two guidelines meet on segment CE, the taller the cube is. Likewise, the higher and closer to point C the guidelines meet, the shorter the cube is.

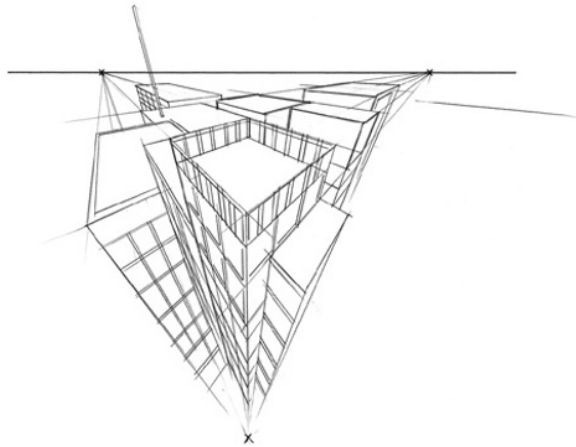


**FIGURE 15-8:**  
Drawing a  
bird's-eye view.

6. Clean up the cube by erasing the unnecessary guidelines, as shown on the bottom right in Figure 15-8.

In Figure 15-9, I apply the theory of the bird's-eye view to show an aerial view of a tall building.





**FIGURE 15-9:**  
A building from a  
bird's-eye view.

## Drawing a worm's-eye perspective

Here I show you how to draw a worm's-eye view perspective. The process is essentially the same as creating the bird's-eye view. (See the previous section.) The big difference is that the floating vanishing point is now above, as opposed to below, the horizon line.

To try this worm's-eye perspective, follow these steps:

- 1. Create the horizon line and two vanishing points as you do in Step 1 for the bird's-eye view, and draw a vertical line for segment AB, as shown on the top left in Figure 15-10.**

This line represents the front edge and the height of the cube.

- 2. Draw two guidelines from each vanishing point to points A and B, as shown on the top right in Figure 15-10.**

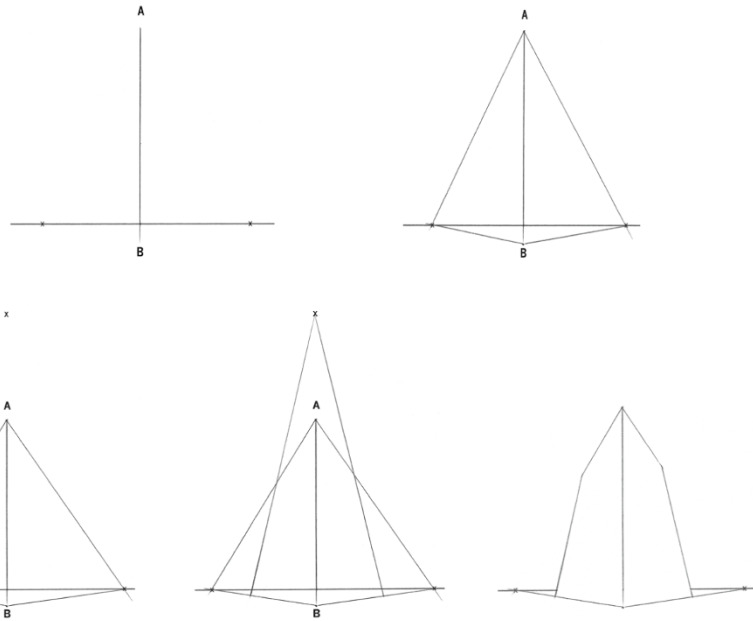
These segments determine the height of the shape.

- 3. Add the floating vanishing point over the horizon line and above point A, as shown on the bottom left in Figure 15-10.**

I recommend that beginners place the floating vanishing point above the middle or tallest segment. As you become more comfortable, you can try moving the floating vanishing point slightly to the right or to the left.

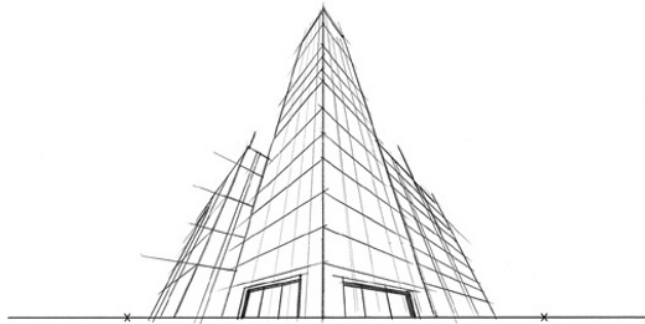
- 4. Draw two guidelines from the floating point down to the bottom guidelines that connect with point B, as shown in the bottom-center image of Figure 15-10.**

- 5. Erase the extra guidelines to tighten up the drawing, as shown in on the bottom right of Figure 15-10.**



**FIGURE 15-10:**  
Drawing  
shapes from a  
worm's-eye view.

In Figure 15-11, I demonstrate the effect of a worm's-eye view on a tall building.



**FIGURE 15-11:**  
Drawing a tall  
building from a  
worm's-eye view.



**TIP**

Students ask “How far up should I place the floating vanishing point?” The answer is, “As far up as you want it to be.” One key trick to remember is that the farther up or away you decide to place any vanishing point, the less extreme or exaggerated the perspective becomes. For example, when you’re standing close to a desk, pinpointing the location of the vanishing point isn’t easy, because the edges of the desk are so close to you that they appear almost completely parallel. Even if you have the longest ruler, the guidelines don’t find their target for miles.

# Adding People to the Environment

In order for characters' interactions to be credible to the viewers, the characters must abide by the same perspective rules that govern their environment. In this section, I show you some techniques on applying basic perspective theory to your characters. (*Note:* Throughout this section I assume you know how to draw the figures. If you don't, I recommend reading through Parts II and III.)



TIP

When you're drawing characters interacting in a large background with a lot of perspective, solidify the background first before working in the detail of the characters. You'll find drawing believable characters easier and more efficient if you first resolve the bigger environment. You don't want to spend hours perfecting your character's appearance only to have to erase and redraw them later because they're too big in relation to the background.



REMEMBER

No character can exist outside of their environment. Whether the character is flying in the open blue sky or fighting 10,000 soldiers in middle of New York City, an indication of where they stand in relation to the environment is always necessary. The bigger setting dictates the relationship with the character.

## One-point perspective characters

Start with a simple one-point perspective building in the background and try your hand at drawing two characters using one-point perspective:

- 1. Draw a series of parallel lines for the ground and then determine the height of the figure by drawing vertical line AB, as shown on the top left in Figure 15-12.**

Note that the distance between the parallel lines increases as they come closer.

When deciding where to place line AB in relation to the background buildings, I first look at my horizon line and see where it levels with the building doors, and then I compare it to the would-be height of my character. In this case, the bottom of the chin rests along the horizon line.



TIP

The longer you make line AB, the larger, taller, and closer to the readers your characters must be. The shorter you draw line AB, the smaller, shorter, and farther away from the readers your characters must be. As long as the level of the neck rests along the horizon line (in this particular case), your characters exist comfortably within the environment.



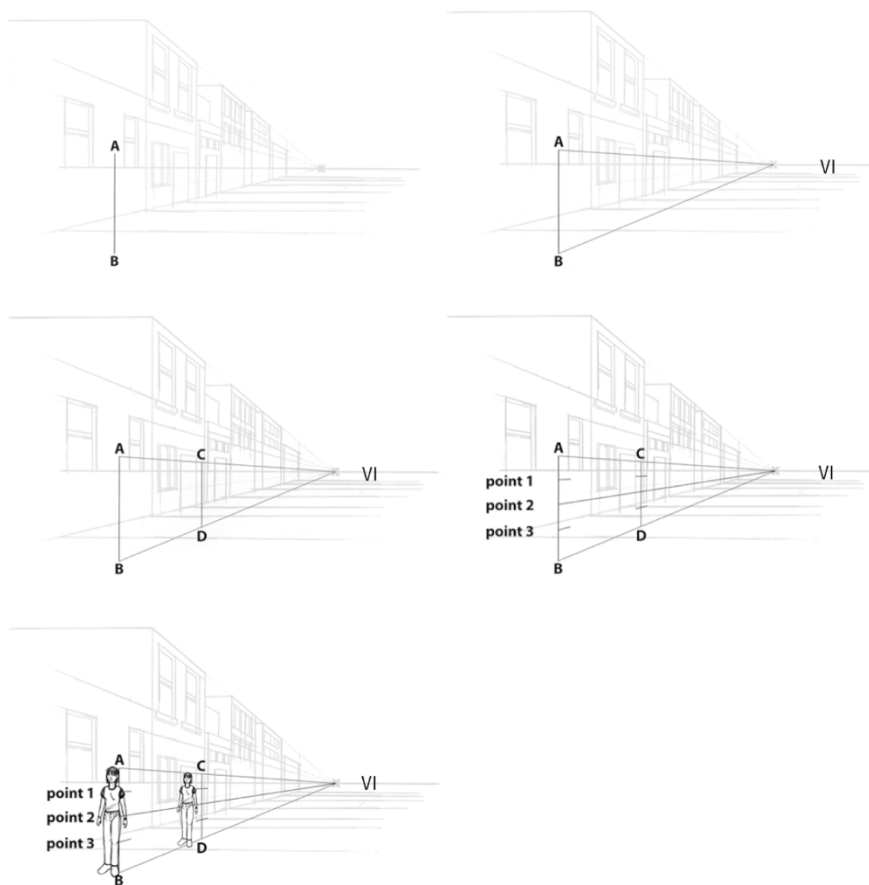
WARNING

Don't draw your character so short that their legs can't reach the ground. If you do, your character looks like they're either flying or levitating in space.

2. Draw two guidelines from the vanishing point (V1) to points A and B, as shown on the top right in Figure 15-12.
3. For the second person, draw another line (CD) between segment AB and the vanishing point. (See the center-left image in Figure 15-12.)
4. Divide segment AB into quarters and draw a guideline to cut the segment in half, like I do for the center-right image in Figure 15-12.

The halfway mark (point 2) is the crotch point. Point 1 marks the center of the torso. Point 3 marks the knee area.

5. Based on these division marks, complete both figures as shown in the image at the bottom of Figure 15-12.

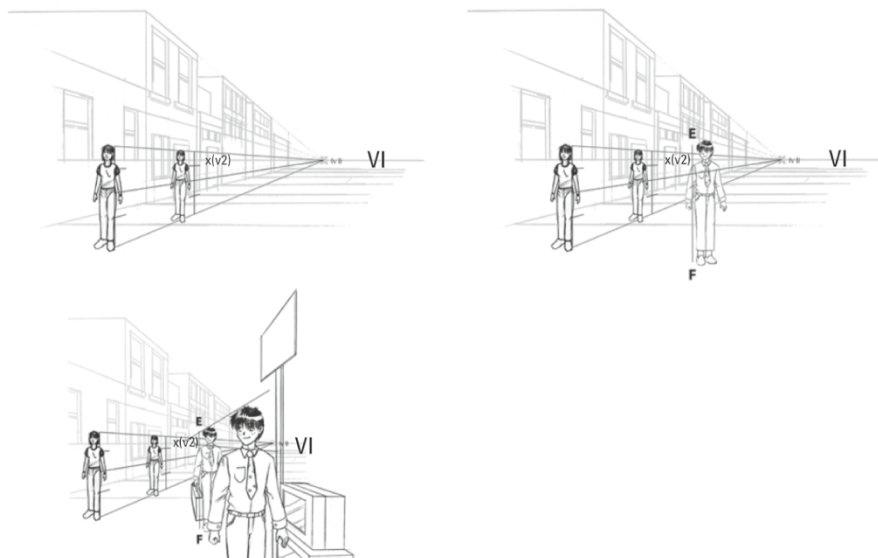


**FIGURE 15-12:**  
Constructing two  
figures based on  
one-point  
perspective.

## Two-point perspective characters

As I mention in the section “Trying two-point perspective,” earlier in this chapter, you need to have a second vanishing point linked to the same horizon line as the first vanishing point to draw in this style. For clarity, I begin Step 1 in this section from where I left off in Step 5 of the last section (“One-point perspective characters”). In the following steps, I establish my second vanishing point and go on to build a two-point perspective character. As you see by the end of this demonstration, the final picture has a lot of depth and movement as I add more people based on a separate vanishing point. Continue with these steps:

1. **Mark a second vanishing point (V2) as shown on the top left in Figure 15-13.**



**FIGURE 15-13:**  
You get a lot of depth perception with these two-point perspective characters.

2. **Create two segments and divide them into fourths.**

As I show on the top right in Figure 15-13, the depth perception is greater when your figures are based upon a second vanishing point.

3. **While finalizing the two new figures, add some simple objects. (In this case, I add a suitcase, a newspaper vendor, and a bus sign.)**

The additional items aren't important, but as I show on the bottom in Figure 15-13, they help secure the new characters to the environment.

## Three-point perspective characters

In this section I show you how to control the narrative tension when your characters interact in a three-point perspective environment. Because your characters and buildings exist on the same horizon line, they must abide by the same vanishing points. As I mention earlier in this chapter, the farther away you place a vanishing point from an object (building or human), the less exaggeration or distortion you get. However, readers can get queasy after looking at too many frames of characters drawn under extremely close perspective guidelines.

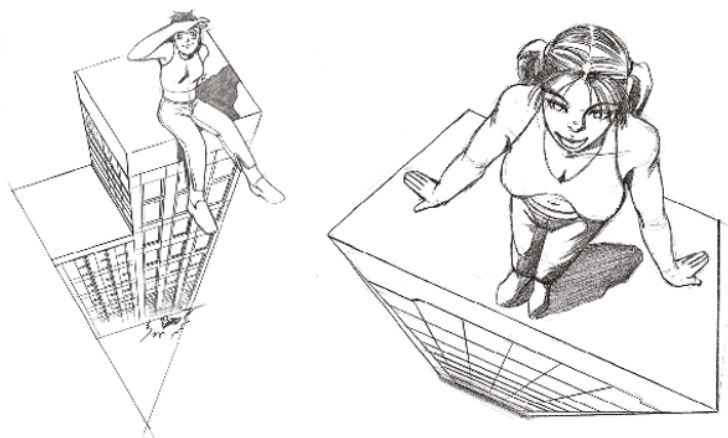


REMEMBER

While exaggeration certainly helps hype up the tension in a story, using it in every frame isn't a good idea. Readers either become bored or confused as to what's going on if every frame has them looking up underneath your character's nostrils or right above her head.

### Drawing characters from a bird's-eye view

Take a look at the examples where I draw a character on top of a tall building. In Figure 15-14, I have two scenes — in one, I place the floating vanishing point farther away from the objects, and in the other, I place it closer to the objects. On the left in Figure 15-14, the character appears to be relaxed, sitting on top of the building. You can see space between the readers and the objects in the frame. But look what happens when the floating vanishing point is closer, as shown on the right in Figure 15-14. I draw a different girl and a different building, but you sense the tension of height awareness of the building that she's peering over. The focus suddenly shifts from the girl to their environment.



**FIGURE 15-14:** Examples of the floating vanishing point's nearness to the building and character.

## Drawing characters from a worm's-eye view

Take a look at the examples where I draw a character from a worm's-eye view. In Figure 15-15, I draw two different scenes, varying the placement of the floating vanishing point. On the left in Figure 15-15, the character is standing below a large skyscraper. The building is so much taller than the person that the perspective effect on the character is small. The focus is not so much on the character, but on the exaggerated environment.

As massive objects (such as Caribbean cruisers, giant skyscrapers, or galactic space stations) recede back into perspective distance, you want to either simplify the detail or make the lines lighter.

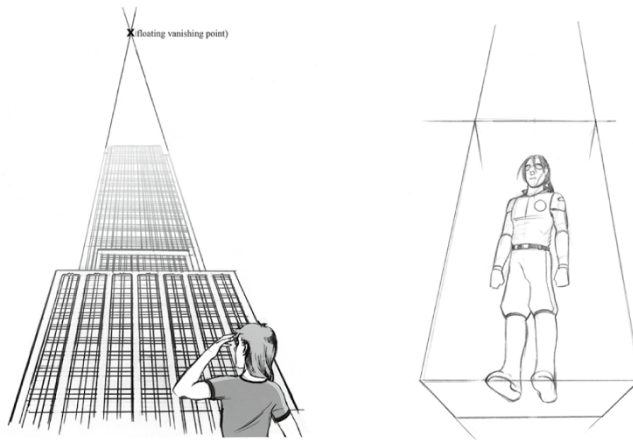
If you want to shift the focus from the environment to the character, check out the image on the right in Figure 15-15. Here, the floating vanishing point is closer to both the elevator and the character inside. The drama is on the character, and they look like they're reporting for duty for an important mission.



TIP

Ultimately, conjuring up complicated environments (such as large cities) is hard when you're establishing a vanishing point. If you're having difficulty, I recommend taking a photo and using it as reference.

**FIGURE 15-15:**  
Drawing a worm's-eye view for the characters without the third vanishing point.



# Using Perspective and Camera Angle to Tell the Story

If you read the earlier parts of this chapter, you know the basics of perspective. In this section, I show you how to apply these theories and principles to help tell your story. Manga is no different than a movie — in both, being able to tell a story well and convincingly is key. You're the director and producer working with an unlimited budget — your creative resources. Think of the movie camera as your eye: It sees what you want the audiences to see. You control it and you're in charge of making sure that every framed shot develops the plot and storyline.

As I mention at the beginning of this chapter, strong perspective shots help communicate to the reader not only where the story takes place, but also how your characters relate to their environment. Now I show you how perspective angles can communicate to the reader the way objects and characters relate to each other psychologically. Specifically, I want you to ask questions like “What kind of reaction do I get from the audience by using this type of perspective shot on this character?” If you're ready to discover the answers to this and other questions, keep reading.

## Creating strong establishing shots

Establishing shots are important in setting the opening scene of any story. The shots usually have specific backgrounds to show where the story takes place, and the perspective angle you decide to use also determines the tone.

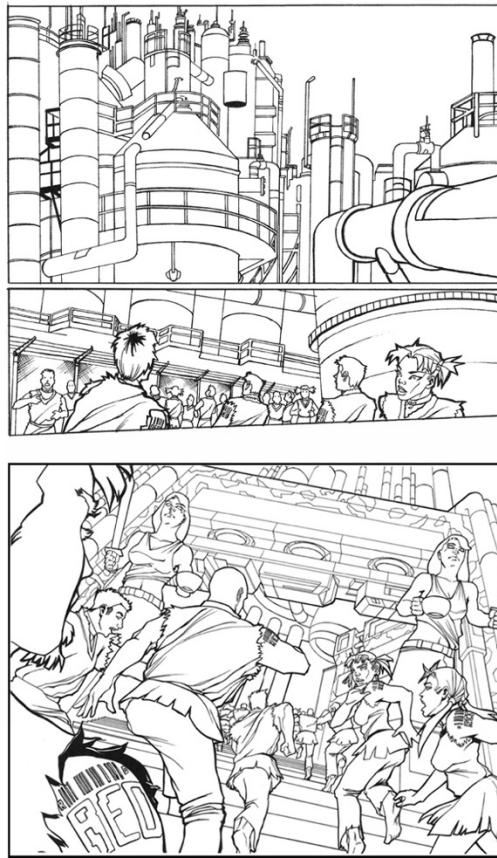
In this section, I pull examples from my creator-owned series *JAVA!* to help illustrate my point. The story focuses on a satirical future city in the year 2073; in Neo Seattle, coffee takes over the whole world. Everyone must drink coffee or perish. In the midst of a society wrapped in turmoil, Java emerges as a high-powered caffeine girl who fights crime. In the top image of Figure 15-16, you see an opening one-point perspective shot of the slums of Neo Seattle, taken from a spin-off of the original published miniseries. I use a single vanishing point to evoke the feeling of a quiet, run-down city. For the bottom image in Figure 15-16, I use a worm's-eye view to create the perception of a massive coffee storage depot where everyone is rushing to get a caffeine fix.



TIP

When drawing a worm's-eye view of huge buildings where the vanishing point is off the paper, extend the paper by taping another sheet to the page and use a ruler to extend the guidelines to find your vanishing point.





**FIGURE 15-16:**  
Using perspective  
to create  
establishing shots  
in Neo Seattle.

Here's a neat visual exercise to try: Armed with your ruler, take a walk downtown to an area with a lot of buildings. You can also go to a grocery store or a library where the aisles are lined up in perfect order. Any location with large geometric structures will work. See whether you can identify where your horizon line is. (*Hint:* It's wherever your current eye level is.) Then, find your vanishing point(s). Extend your arm out with the ruler and see whether any of the guidelines running from the objects in the foreground meet.

## Establishing the strong versus the weak

In Figure 15-17, I show two examples where you can use extreme camera angles to give the illusion that a character is larger or smaller than they are. By applying the third vanishing point that I talk about in the section "Shaping up for three-point perspective," your character can either look overpowering or overpowered. On the left in Figure 15-17, my fighter (skilled though they may be) is feeling

outgunned by the mysterious visitor. On the right in Figure 15-17, I use a slight worm's-eye view to make my villain female character from *JAVA!* look more menacing, even though they're shorter than the male characters in my book.



TIP

If you want your shots to look dynamic, tilt the angle of the camera so that the ground is slightly diagonal. Next time you go see an action movie, take note of all the dynamic camera angles and establishing shots with a wide range of perspective angles. If you carry a small drawing pad and pencil with you, quickly sketch a thumbnail of what you remember.



**FIGURE 15-17:**  
The difference  
changing the  
camera  
angle makes.

- » Creating your own storyboards
- » Making thumbnails work for you
- » Drawing basic types of scenic backgrounds

## Chapter 16

# Thumbnails and Scenery

**A**s you might guess, without an environment surrounding any characters you create, your readers won't have a world in which to identify with those characters. In this chapter, you find out how to take characters you created based on previous chapters and place them into a believable environment where they can interact with other characters. (*Note:* I put this chapter in the advanced section of the book because you need to first have an understanding of not only drawing figures but also basic geometric objects in correct perspective before you tackle anything in this chapter.)

## Creating Effective Thumbnails

“What’s a thumbnail?” you ask? Well, a *thumbnail* (often mistakenly confused with a storyboard) is to manga as an outline is to a novel. *Thumbnails* are basically miniature rough sketches of a manga page that a *manga-ka* (manga artist) uses to get their ideas onto paper before going to the final full-size page.

## Why bother with a thumbnail?

Some consider thumbnails as an extra step (that the readers never see), but it saves the manga-ka hours of frustration and energy. Some of the many benefits include the following:

- » **When working on a larger page size, you often get caught up with the details and lose sight of the overall drawing.** With an established thumbnail sketch as a guide, a manga-ka gets a better overall sense that the final image reflects the initial “feel” being described in the smaller image.
- » **Thumbnails are an essential brainstorming method that helps you preview how the pictures in the frame ultimately flow throughout the entire story.** The manga-ka looks over the small sketches and (a) may change the sequential order or (b) decide to make certain frames larger or smaller to better communicate with the readers.
- » **Thumbnails help the manga-ka plan the pages so that each episode ends when it’s supposed to without running over the allotted page count.** Ruining the ending of a well-illustrated and exciting story just because the manga-ka doesn’t have enough open pages left is a nightmare.

So, the moral of the story is to always, *always* get into the habit of drawing thumbnails for your pages before heading into the final larger pages. It saves time, headaches, and money you spend on materials.

## THUMBNAILS VERSUS STORYBOARDS

In case you were wondering, the concept behind thumbnails and storyboards is identical. Both are used as planning stages for the development of the final product. Though often confused with each other, manga and comic book artists and illustrators use the term *thumbnails* exclusively to describe a series of brainstorming sketches that lead to the development of either a comic/manga book or an illustration. A *storyboard* is a finished product that describes an established script for a commercial, movie, or a theatrical performance. Storyboards are more neatly drawn than thumbnails (which are rougher) because high-end corporate clients or a large group of directors who see the final product need to have a clear picture of what’s going on. However, the biggest visual difference is that a storyboard sequence is drawn out frame by frame rather than a bunch of frames grouped together page by page.

## Practicing thumbnails

A professional manga-ka shows thumbnails of their pages to the publishing editor or to the writer who then gives feedback to the manga-ka during the development stage before they spend hours creating the final pages. As a freelance illustrator, I also draw thumbnails to show art directors what kinds of ideas I have in mind before I develop the final product. It also helps my art directors get a clearer idea of what to expect. In Figure 16-1, I show some examples of page thumbnails.

Try this thumbnail project working from a script:

1. **Select a comic book script (pages without any images — just the frame-by-frame dialogue and description of what’s going on) and read through the first five pages.**

If you don’t have a script, you can send a request to a publisher for a sample copy or have a friend write a five-page script describing an existing comic book that you don’t know. Make sure to have them indicate the page and panel number as well as dialogue and characters.

2. **Take several blank sheets of regular photocopy paper and fold them in half to create your own mini-book.**
3. **Read through the script several times and then quickly sketch out the entire page-by-page sequence according to the script.**



TIP

Rather than drawing the panel frames around the completed rough image, first draw all the frames before drawing any of the images inside. Drawing the frames first allows you to better judge how big or small you need to draw images inside. As you sketch your manga images inside the panel frames, I recommend also sketching where you want to fit in the *word balloons* (empty space for dialogue). You don’t want to face the shocking reality after you spend all those hours drawing that you have no space left for the word balloons. Unavoidably, small portions of your final manga art get covered by word balloons — you need to make sure that whatever space is covered up isn’t too important.

## Transferring the thumbnails to final paper

When you’re done with the thumbnails, you’re ready to transfer them onto larger drawing paper. The most common mistake beginners make is trying to redraw the entire storyboard at a larger size to match the larger paper. This method has many problems. First, you’re wasting your time trying to duplicate the energy that you spontaneously generated in your thumbnails. The energy and flow that you have in your smaller sketches are difficult enough to reproduce as it is. Second, redrawing the entire thumbnail just isn’t practical. In fact, obtaining the same overall

feel is impossible when your vision and hand coordination become overwhelmed with having to compensate for such a large space to fill.

What I recommend is quite simple: Go to a copy machine and, for less than 10 cents a copy, enlarge your sketches to the size of your final drawing paper. After that, take the enlarged photocopy and place it over a *light box* (a box with a translucent lid fixture with florescent light bulbs inside). Place your final manga paper over the enlarged sketch so the position of the rough sketch frames matches roughly where you want the final frames to be. Don't worry if the placement doesn't match up 100 percent — you want to use the rough sketch underneath as a guide to draw a more accurate outline drawing from which you can further refine. After that's done, turn off the light box, and you're ready to render and refine your manga drawing on your final manga paper (you no longer need the rough sketch from this point). This may seem like a lot of steps, but it's the cheapest and most efficient method.



**FIGURE 16-1:**  
Examples of  
typical rough  
thumbnails.

## Sketching Scenic Backgrounds

In this section, I share some tips and methods on creating scenery for your characters. Three elements go into creating a dimensional composition: a *foreground*, *middle ground*, and *background*. Try to include all three; they're especially effective

when you're drawing establishing shots to show readers where your story takes place.



TIP

The key to creating the illusion of depth is creating overlapping shapes. (I say illusion because you're trying to fool the eye into thinking that it's seeing a three-dimensional object on a flat, two-dimensional space.) As I show you in the following examples, objects in the foreground should overlap objects in the middle ground, which in turn go in front of the background images.

## Cityscapes

In Chapter 15, I show you how to create basic cityscapes using one-point, two-point, and three-point perspectives. Adding more layers to the background behind the basic cityscape not only makes it more dimensional, but also tells the reader more about the character and time setting of the scene.

In this exercise, I demonstrate how adding a middle ground and background behind a foreground setting helps create depth within your establishing shot:

1. **Draw a set of buildings using one-point perspective, as shown in Figure 16-2.**

My example is a passable establishing shot. The readers know that the story takes place in some city downtown (which is the foreground level for this particular example).

2. **Add simple, abstract building shapes behind the foreground perspective, as shown in Figure 16-3.**

Observe that the building objects run fairly parallel to the horizon line. I vary the perspective of the buildings by having some of them face completely forward while I turn others at an angle. By completing this step, you're letting the readers know that the city is quite large.



TIP

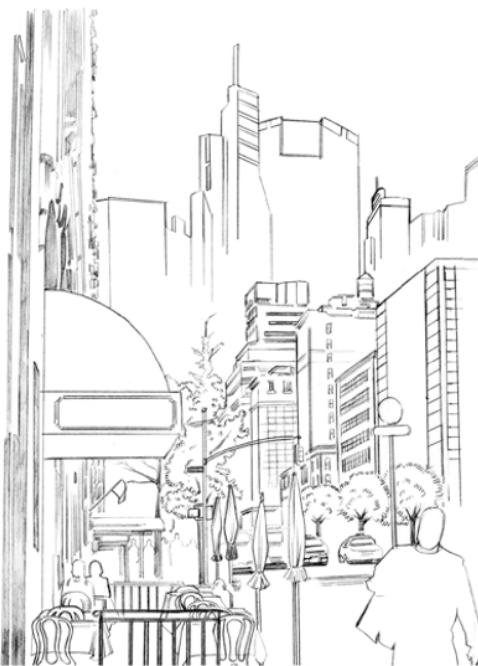
3. **Draw a skyline in the background of the city, as shown in Figure 16-4.**

You don't have to draw the images in detail. In fact, the farther away the objects get, the less detail you should see. In my scene (as shown on the left in Figure 16-4), I draw simple abstract cloud shapes and a sun setting behind the buildings. On the right in Figure 16-4, I use the cross hatching and line technique from Chapter 3 to show that it's getting darker.

**FIGURE 16-2:**  
Starting with a  
one-point  
perspective  
downtown shot.

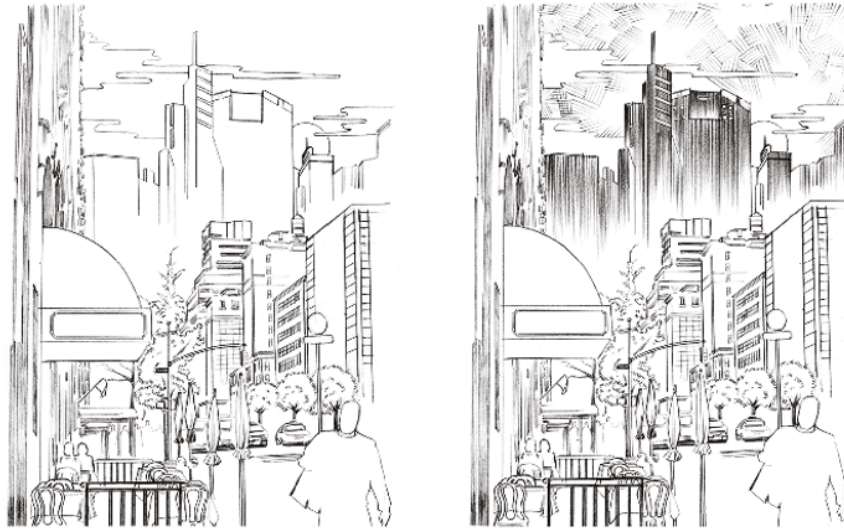


**FIGURE 16-3:**  
Adding the  
middle ground  
layer behind the  
foreground  
buildings.





**FIGURE 16-4:**  
Adding the  
background to  
the scene.



## Heading to the country: Trees, bushes, and pastures

Don't let the complex forests on those nature shows fool you into thinking that drawing trees is impossible. In this section, I start you off with the basics of drawing simple tree variations. From there, I demonstrate more complex scenes.

### Single circle-based trees

First, I show you how to draw a single tree using a simple circle and triangle as your guide. These types of trees are fun and quite addicting.

- 1. Lightly draw a circle at the center of your paper, as shown on the left in Figure 16-5.**

I recommend keeping the circle small at first (no larger than 1½ inches in diameter). Remember, your circle guide needs to be drawn lightly. (Otherwise, erasing it when you no longer need it is difficult.) The circle doesn't need to be drawn perfectly. In fact, less perfect circles make more interesting trees.

- 2. Draw a narrow triangle for your tree trunk intersecting at the bottom of the circle. (See the center image in Figure 16-5.)**

It's easier to work with a triangle with a blunt tip. The degree to which the triangle needs to overlap the circle depends on how long you want the trunk to be. The lower you draw the triangle, the longer your trunk becomes.

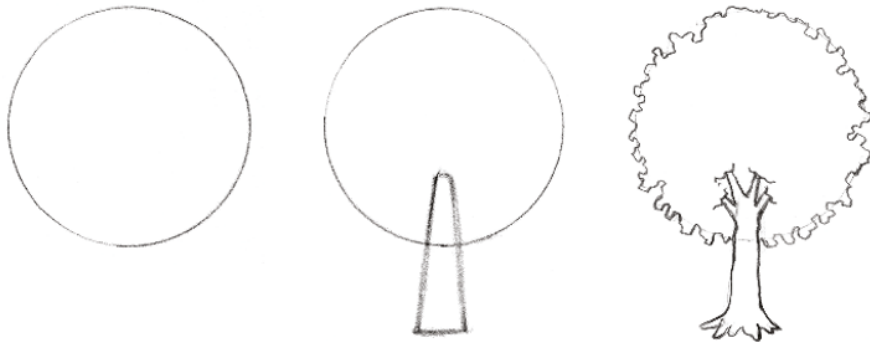
3. **Refine the tree trunk to make it more realistic and use the circle guide to add smaller bumps for the outside tree shape. (See the image on the right in Figure 16-5.)**

Draw the roots of the trunk as well as the top branches going into the top circle of the tree. At the end of the branches, you want to cap them off with short squiggly lines. (Make sure the bumps face *toward* the branches and not away.) This gives a more dimensional look to branches. Lightly erase the circle line but leave enough so you can see and use it to draw a series of uneven blunt squiggly lines around.



TIP

To make your tree look believable, draw the length and width of the branches and roots as random as possible so they don't look artificial.



**FIGURE 16-5:**  
Drawing a single  
circle tree.

## Multiple circle-based trees

Now I step it up and show you how to create larger trees using more than one circle. The concept is similar to using just one circle in the previous section, but here you get more artistic freedom and more interestingly shaped trees.

1. **Lightly draw several different shapes of overlapping circles around the center of your paper, as shown on the left in Figure 16-6.**

Make sure your circles overlap each other to create the illusion of depth. I recommend keeping the largest circle no larger than 1¼ inches in diameter.

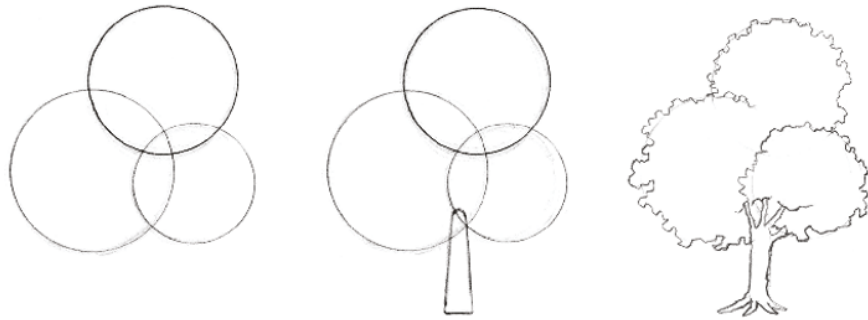
2. **Draw a narrow triangle for your tree trunk intersecting at the bottom of the circles. (See the central image in Figure 16-6.)**

The triangle is the same one you use for the single circle tree from the previous section. Instead of determining the midway point of a single tree like you do in the previous section, you want to determine the centermost point based on the length of both bottom circles combined. But don't bother measuring the length to find the mark, just make your best guess. Then go ahead and draw the triangle for the trunk.

**3. Refine the tree trunk to make it more realistic and use the circle guides to add smaller bumps for the outside tree shapes. (See the image on the right in Figure 16-6.)**

Draw the roots of the trunk as well as the top branches going into the top circle of the tree. Cap off the ends of the branches with short squiggly lines. Lightly erase the circle lines, leaving enough so you can see and use them when you draw a series of uneven blunt squiggly lines.

When drawing these squiggly lines, determine which circle you want to place in the foreground, middle ground, and background. I recommend using either circle on the bottom as your foreground or middle ground. (The top circle usually sits in the background.) You can show one circle in front by completing the squiggly lines as opposed to leaving the remaining two shapes either incomplete or partially hidden behind the other.



**FIGURE 16-6:**  
Adding multiple  
circle shapes  
to the tree.

## Leaves and branches

In this section, I demonstrate ways of creating leaves and branches that you can use in the foreground. (As I mention earlier, you can get more specific with objects that are close in the frame.) I encourage you to look around and select interesting leaf shapes that are simple enough to draw. For example, follow along with my steps for drawing a tear-shaped leaf:

**1. Lightly draw a circle guide at the center of your paper. (See the image on the left in Figure 16-7.)**

Don't draw the circle too large; keep it around 1 inch in diameter.

**2. Using the circle as the base, draw the leaf shape and stem, as shown in the center image of Figure 16-7.**

I suggest first drawing the leaf shape that resembles a tear drawn sideways. If it helps, draw the tear shape vertically and then rotate the paper so that it's resting on its side. Next, draw the stem on the left side of the circle leaf base.

Draw the midsection of the stem slightly narrower than both ends to give it a natural organic look. If you look at a leaf in real life, you notice that the end of the stem has curves in a “C” shape where it connects to the branch.



TIP

Draw one side of the leaf different than the other; one side may have a simple curve, and the other may have an inverse curve shape. The tip of the leaf should lean toward one direction (up) over the other (down). This asymmetry helps give the leaf a more natural appearance.

- 3. Add the details, starting with the center vein of the leaf, which travels from the base stem on the left to the tip of the leaf on the right, and then draw the smaller vein shapes that extend from it. (See the image on the right in Figure 16-7.)**

The center vein (called the *mid rib*) should curve and thin out gradually as it runs from the base stem to the end tip of the leaf. I make sure the veins that branch out from the mid rib to the edges of the leaf also curve from thick to thin to give it that organic look.

**FIGURE 16-7:** Starting off with a basic circle to draw a tear-shaped leaf.



Circle guides come in especially handy when you’re determining the overall composition and structure in a frame where you have a branch with multiple leaves in the foreground. Follow along to see what I mean:

- 1. Draw several bare branch shapes (as shown in Figure 16-8).**

I show you just a few of the many types of branches that are common. Generally, straighter and angled branches (see the leftmost and center images in Figure 16-8) are more brittle as opposed to branches that have longer curves. (See the image on the right Figure 16-8.)



TIP

When drawing branches, think of them as hands and fingers extending out from an arm. I find it gives more personality and feeling (plus it adds to the fun of drawing them).

- 2. Draw a series of circles for the leaves, working from the tip of the branch and going up, as shown in Figure 16-9.**

Don’t use a template when drawing these circles — it slows you down, and imperfect circles (which are uneven and slightly different sizes) make more natural-looking leaves.



**FIGURE 16-8:**  
Exploring some  
different types  
of branches.



**TIP**

I make a point of placing the leaves opposite of each other. In addition, I don't hesitate to overlap the circles (especially if they're from different neighboring branches).



**FIGURE 16-9:**  
Deciding on the  
placement of my  
leaves by drawing  
the circle guides.

### 3. Finish off the leaves on the branches, as shown in Figure 16-10.

You don't have to draw all the detail onto the leaves if they're farther away. I like to overlap the leaves to give the branches more dimension and a more natural look.



**FIGURE 16-10:**  
Finishing off the  
leaves on  
my branches.

## Grass and bushes

Grass and bushes work well together and are fun to draw because they're quite simple and have interesting shapes. Just for giggles, look at how different manga-ka draw these items. Although they're simple in form, they play a big role in telling readers where the ground is in relation to where the characters stand and the rest of the natural environment. In this section, I start off by demonstrating how I draw grass and shrubbery that are closer as opposed to some that are farther away.

Follow these steps on how to draw an open grass field with some simple bushes off to the side:

### 1. Draw two horizontal squiggle lines (one long and the other short).

On the top left in Figure 16-11, I leave parts of the longer line thinner without much detail to show that the horizon is out in the distance. On the top right in Figure 16-11, I draw the second shorter line below and slightly off to the right of the longer line. Make this line thicker with more details of the grass to show that this patch of grass is closer to the readers.



TIP

### 2. Draw small batches of grass, which I like to call "hedgehogs," randomly on the empty area, as shown on the bottom in Figure 16-11.

The purpose of drawing these "hedgehogs" is to give readers something more to look at instead of staring at a blank empty space beneath the horizon line. In my drawing, it also helps to balance the weight of the overall composition so that readers aren't too distracted by the darker patch of grass off to the right from Step 1.



TIP

To get that random feel of placement, slightly alter the shapes and sizes of the hedgehogs. Avoid simply reproducing the same ones — if you do, the overall image appears flat.



**FIGURE 16-11:** Drawing horizon grass lines and little hedgehog grass patches.

### 3. Add the bushes right above the shorter, darker grass line, as shown in Figure 16-12.

Lightly draw a series of overlapping, bubble-shaped guidelines right above the shorter darker grass line off to the right, as shown on the top in Figure 16-12.



TIP

The key to getting the bushes to look dimensional is to always draw the next bubble shape either slightly higher, or above and behind the last bubble. The more similar objects you draw on the same level, the more the overall image becomes flat and unconvincing.

In the image at the bottom of Figure 16-12, I lightly (but not completely) erase the bubble guidelines just enough that I can still see them to draw the outer edges of the bushes.



**FIGURE 16-12:** Drawing bushes behind my grass line.

When you know how to create the individual elements, combine them together to establish a clear foreground, middle ground, and background, like I do in Figure 16-13. Everything looks dimensional and shows enough information to make the readers believe the story that you're about to tell.



**FIGURE 16-13:** Pulling everything together to create a foreground, middle ground, and background.

## Rocks and bodies of water

Picture a nightmare where you're standing in front of a lake surrounded by jagged mountains and rocks. In this section, I show tips on how to draw a convincing water surface as well as various rock surfaces. So, get ready to rock on!

### Water

Everybody knows that water is transparent, but you need to account for the blue color reflected from the sky, add all the detailed shadow shapes, and highlight the reflections you see at the beach or while sailing. In this section, I show you a trick to drawing water so it looks convincing enough for your manga audience.



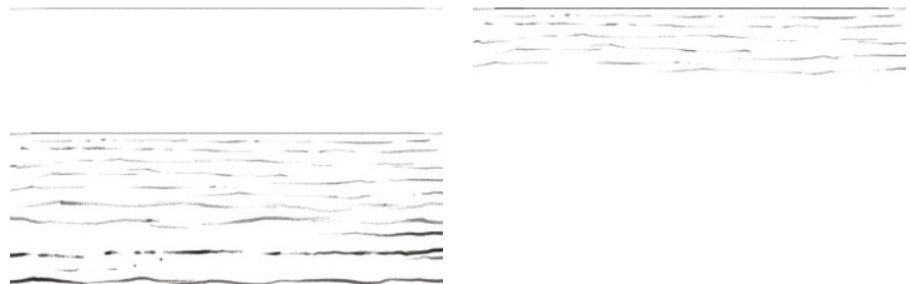
I show you how to draw three types of water surfaces under different weather conditions. Keep in mind that the calmer bodies of water have less detail, thinner lines, and smoother shadows. Rougher waters have more detail, thicker lines, and jagged/harsher shadow shapes.

Follow these steps to draw a calm, quiet body of water:

1. **Draw a thin horizon line without using your ruler, as shown on the top left in Figure 16-14.**  
  
This horizon line represents my viewpoint or eye level of the water. To make the water look as if it expands forever, make the horizon line as thin as possible.
2. **Starting from the top of the horizon line to the bottom of the frame, draw a series of light, sporadic, short lines, as shown on the top right in Figure 16-14.**
3. **As the lines get closer to the bottom of the frame, switch to using thicker shapes to represent the shadows cast by the water movement, as shown on the bottom in Figure 16-14.**



REMEMBER



**FIGURE 16-14:**  
Drawing a calm  
water surface.

Next, I step it up a bit by demonstrating how to draw the same ocean, yet under windier weather. In this case, you need to draw larger water movements caused by the rising wind.

1. **Draw the horizon line with some pointed edges protruding up, as shown on the top in Figure 16-15.**
2. **Starting from the top of the horizon line to the bottom of the frame, draw a series of small, lightly shaded “blotch” mark shadows cast by the rising water movement, as shown in the middle image in Figure 16-15.**

Avoid making the shadow shapes too tall, angular, or big — you’re still looking on from a distance.



TIP

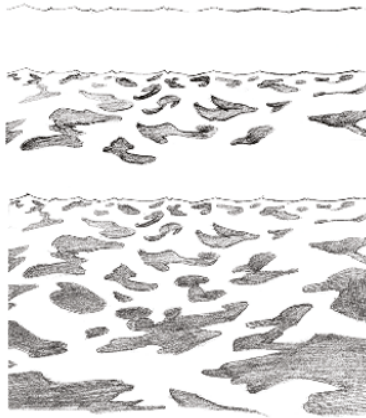
Although drawing this surface takes practice, the surface looks more believable the more you vary the shapes (especially the width).

3. **As the shadow shapes come closer to your readers (or your character on the boat) as you work your way down the bottom of the frame, gradually increase their size and darkness, as shown on the bottom in Figure 16-15.**



TIP

Add a variety of smaller shadow shapes to fill in the gaps between the larger shapes. Adding more detail to the shadow shapes makes the water look more dimensional. The shapes of the shadows should also become more complex. As objects approach the readers, be sure to draw more detail.



**FIGURE 16-15:**  
Adding some  
action to the  
water surface.

## Rocks

In this section, I show you how to draw the basic smooth and rough surfaces found in common rocky terrain. (If you aren't familiar with cross-hatching, please turn to Chapter 3, where I demonstrate how to warm up with a series of cross-hatching exercises.)

I begin with a mountain of smooth rocks (known as boulders):

1. **Start from any random point and draw a large bubble shape for your boulder guide along with other various sizes randomly placed, as shown on the top left in Figure 16-16.**



TIP

The key to getting the rocks to look dimensional is letting shapes overlap one another. Also, the overall size of the shapes should get bigger as they come closer to you.

**2. Refine the rocks and draw the shadows, as shown on the top right in Figure 16-16.**

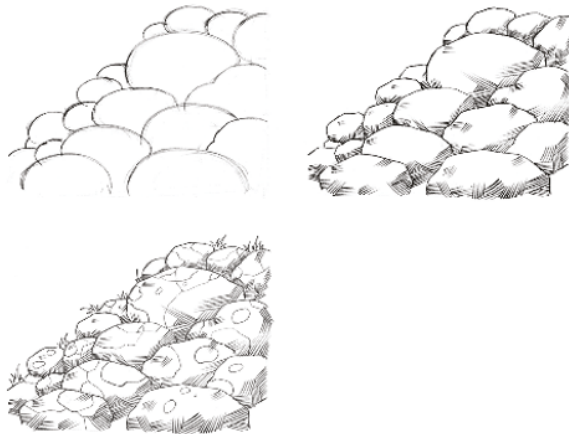
You want to give the rocks shadows to give them dimension. Although the rocks aren't completely round, see how similar the shadow shapes are with that of a sphere. As I shade them, I use the *hito-keta* half-tone shading technique. (Refer to Chapter 3.) If this is your first time applying this technique, don't be frustrated if its application doesn't come naturally at first. Keep practicing in your sketchpad, and you'll develop the knack for getting it down.



TIP

**3. Add the finishing touches, such as the nicks and cracks, to show the age and surface texture, as shown on the bottom in Figure 16-16.**

I draw some grass strands sticking out from between the boulder cracks. Straight, angular lines for cracks mixed with rounder stain marks give more realism and character to the rock.



**FIGURE 16-16:**  
Drawing  
smooth boulders.

Now I present to you the jagged, rough rock pillar:

**1. Starting from the top of your paper, draw the outline of the whole pillar shape measuring 6 to 7 inches tall, as shown on the top left in Figure 16-17.**

Keep your pillar shape centered. By nature, the smaller rocks tend to be on top while the heavier ones remain at the bottom. But just for kicks and giggles, I draw a large, jagged boulder stuck at the top. Observe that unlike the smoother lines of the boulders, the outline here is angular and chiseled without any curves.

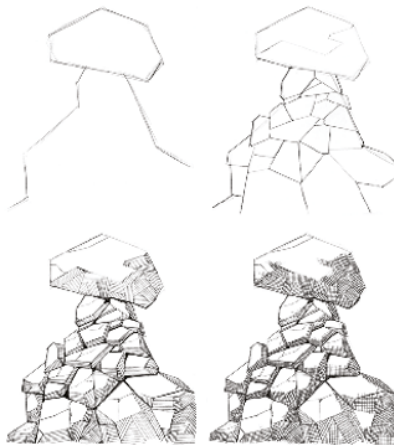
2. Taking it from the top, draw small, abstract, trapezoidal shapes that get larger as you work your way down to the base of the pillar, as shown on the top right in Figure 16-17.

3. Chisel in the shadow shapes, which are straight, without any soft edges. (See the image on the bottom left in Figure 16-17.)

I use the same *hito-keta* half-tone pattern I use in the previous smooth boulders to fill in the shadow shapes. Compare these shadow shapes to the softer, rounder shadow edges of the boulders earlier in this chapter.

4. Give the final image more contrast, as shown on the bottom right in Figure 16-17.

I apply the *futa-keta* half-tone pattern based on the *hito-keta* pattern. (Refer to Chapter 3.)



**FIGURE 16-17:**  
Drawing the pillar  
of jagged  
slabs of rock.

- » Keeping your readers on their toes
- » Developing a strong plot with likeable characters
- » Finding inspiration for fresh ideas

## Chapter 17

# Writing a Good Story

Coming up with solid stories that feature characters your readers care about is important to every *manga-ka* (manga artist). Brilliant artwork and cool special effects are initially eye-catching, but today's readers are sophisticated in taste and demands. As is the case with some mainstream movies being released today, huge special effects in manga need to be partnered with strong casting and an enticing plot. Despite an increasing amount of manga titles written and illustrated by more than one individual, a *manga-ka* is ultimately expected to be proficient in both drawing and storytelling. In this chapter, I ask you to determine your target audience, give you pointers on developing a plot, and encourage you to look for inspiration.

## Deciding Who Your Audience Is

First thing's first: Ask yourself who your manga audience is going to be. Read through the list of different genres of manga in Chapter 1 to see which ones you find interesting. No matter how proficiently you crank out wonderful pages with stellar story concepts, your audience won't respond if your material is geared toward the wrong crowd.

To avoid writing for the wrong audience, find out what kind of manga genre best fits your story style and drawing tastes. I recommend getting several manga magazines and flipping through a number of titles. Chatting with friends and

participating in online manga groups are both great ways to find out what popular titles people are raving about today. If you don't find a niche immediately, don't worry. It can take time.



TIP

The story line isn't always what triggers your interest in a specific niche — sometimes the artwork or character design draws you in. I recommend scouting out local animé or manga conventions to see what type of character art is out there. Talk to the exhibiting guest artists who have their artwork on display. If a style interests you, ask which audience the manga-ka is marketing toward.

## Establishing a Synopsis and Plot

Simply put, a *plot* is what makes your manga story juicy enough to get your readers to read until the end. An effective plot begins by building up a series of sequential obstacles and events that keep the audience wondering what's going to happen to the characters. These obstacles and events build toward the very height of the story's *climax*, which is the decisive turning point in the action. From the climax, the characters resolve the obstacles and ultimately restore order.

In the following sections, I explain the purpose behind creating your own synopsis, and I break down the structural essence of an effective plot in the four story-telling narrative stages that most manga-ka professionals and amateurs observe.

### Creating a synopsis

A *synopsis* is several short paragraphs in which you present your characters, the setting, and the main obstacle that your character must overcome. If you're interested in submitting work to a publisher, most editors request a synopsis along with copies of the first five pages of your original artwork. In length, a synopsis shouldn't exceed a full page. Although you don't state exactly how the main characters conquer their problems, you should include enough information to catch the publisher's or reader's attention. Your ultimate goal is to whet the appetite of the publishers by giving them something to nibble on when they look at your submission. Although readers rarely get to see the synopsis in their favorite comic book, most manga publishers in Japan typically place a brief synopsis of the story at the beginning of the book so that new readers tuning in for the first time know what's going on before they jump in.



TIP

Look at the synopsis as a brainstorming opportunity, where you can flesh out a general proposal of what you have in mind without actually committing to a resolution.

## A GOOD PLOT ALSO NEEDS MEMORABLE CHARACTERS!

One of the most challenging tasks of writing a convincing story that will keep readers pining for more is making sure you have a clear vision of who your characters are. (I list a few examples in Chapters 7 through 12.) The writer/creator of *One Punch Man*, ONE, for example displays a wide array of superheroes who each have their strong distinct personalities which either make them brilliantly shine in the public's image or have them shunned due to their narcissistic dark side while battling demonic monsters to save humanity. Among his characters, I credit his strong main protagonist, Saitama, for keeping fans coming back for more even though they may have not kept up with every single past back issue. I agree with my colleague, Takeshi Miyazawa, who states that a great story plot keeps the readers entertained, but a great character keeps readers rooting for more during the lulls of the story.

## Constructing your plot

In this section, I explain the basic stages that a manga-ka uses to create their original plot. The basic stages are widely embraced by the manga-ka community today, and they originate from classical Chinese poetry. After I explain the concept behind each stage, I demonstrate how to apply it by referring to page excerpts from the first issue of my original series, *JAVA!*

### STAGE 1: KI — INTRODUCTION OF AN IDEA

Stage 1 basically sets up the context and scene so that the story can begin and the characters can begin to interact. To start this *Ki* (introduction) stage, a manga-ka draws the opening frame, called an *establishing shot*, to give the readers a sense of the location where the story takes place. These shots are usually larger than the average-sized frame the manga-ka draws, because they want to include more detail in the setting. By the time this stage is complete, readers should have a good sense of who the important characters are as well as the time and location of the story.

In my *Ki* stage in Figure 17-1, readers meet my main and side characters for the very first time. I show the opening page of issue 1 of *JAVA!* where the readers see the main heroine, Java, with her sidekick, La-Té. The dialogue going on in the background leads the way into the introduction of the characters. Java (the rookie team member) is the reckless caffeine-powered girl who fights crime. La-Té is her big sister veteran figure who cautiously looks after the safety of the team (see Chapter 8 for more about this kind of sidekick). I make it clear that the story takes place in a desert (shortly to be revealed as Neo Seattle in the year 2073). Because Java is peering through hi-tech binoculars, you know the story takes place during a technologically advanced era.





**FIGURE 17-1:**  
The opening  
introduction  
section taken  
from a prelude  
in *JAVA!* #1.



## STAGE 2: SHO — DEVELOPING THE IDEA

In the second stage, you focus on building up the suspense of the story based upon the characters and concepts you introduce in the *Ki* stage. (See the previous section.) You introduce your readers to your characters and brief them on the context of your story, and in this section, you build up their curiosity. In the *Sho* (development) stage, the tempo of the story's flow should steadily increase. What kind of conflicts are your characters taking on to achieve their goal? Do you leave clues to the readers about possible dangers that the main characters themselves don't know about? What are the perils or challenges ahead? In most manga, this section is crucial, because if the readers don't care about your characters, they don't care about what happens to them.

As an example, check out Figure 17-2 to see the *Sho* stage of the first issue of *JAVA!* You see that the characters are gearing up on their hi-tech surfboards and going off to break up the illegal trafficking operations. They hope to take a sample of the tainted beans as evidence for the team's mentor figure, Dr. D. He mentions that Java's chances of survival are reduced to nil without La-Té by her side, and that builds up the readers' curiosity about the nature of these two characters' working chemistry. What makes it so special? Can the enemy exploit a certain weakness to defeat Java? From what I let the readers know up to this point, she seems confident enough to handle things by herself.

## STAGE 3: TEN — THE DRAMATIC, UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS

In the third stage, you want a surprise development in which your characters face a situation that throws the *readers* off guard. Note that I say “readers” and not necessarily characters. In the *Ten* (turn) stage, the result of all the building up since Stage 2 leads to the ultimate climax in which readers are sitting at the edge of their seats holding their breaths. If you're looking to reveal to the readers the largest showdown of your story sequence, this is the right time and place to do so!

If you're following the events from *JAVA!* #1 that I include in this chapter, check out Figure 17-3 to see what happens next. Java's sidekick, La-Té, gets caught — an event that happens unexpectedly. Java's arch nemesis, Commander Krang, suddenly grabs La-Té and holds her hostage. The scene reaches its climax when Krang orders Java to either drop the *Decaffeinating Grenade* that she plans to use to destroy the illegal tainted coffee beans or lose her sidekick. You can tell by the way she hesitates grinningly that she's reckless; she's so confident that her friend can handle things on her own that she doesn't take Krang's threat seriously.



**FIGURE 17-2:**  
The development  
section taken  
from a short  
prelude in  
*JAVA! #1*.



**FIGURE 17-3:**  
The climax of a  
short prelude  
in *JAVA!* #1.

## STAGE 4: KETSU — CONCLUSION

Stage 4 finishes the story. While some episodes may end by fully resolving an issue, others end by opening another can of worms, leaving the readers hanging from a cliff, wanting to know what happens in the next issue.

To find out how the action in issue 1 of *JAVA!* ends, take a look at Figure 17-4. In my *Ketsu* (conclusion) stage, everything is resolved, but not the way La-Té would have hoped for. Commander Krang yanks on the espresso shot-glass grenades she wears in her hair and accidentally triggers their detonation. La-Té's hair and makeup are ruined and Dr. D has no sample of evidence to use or analyze in his lab. Java grins guiltily, but she knows it's just another day at the office.

If the examples in this chapter leave you jonesing for another shot of *JAVA!*, go to [www.kensukeart.com](http://www.kensukeart.com).



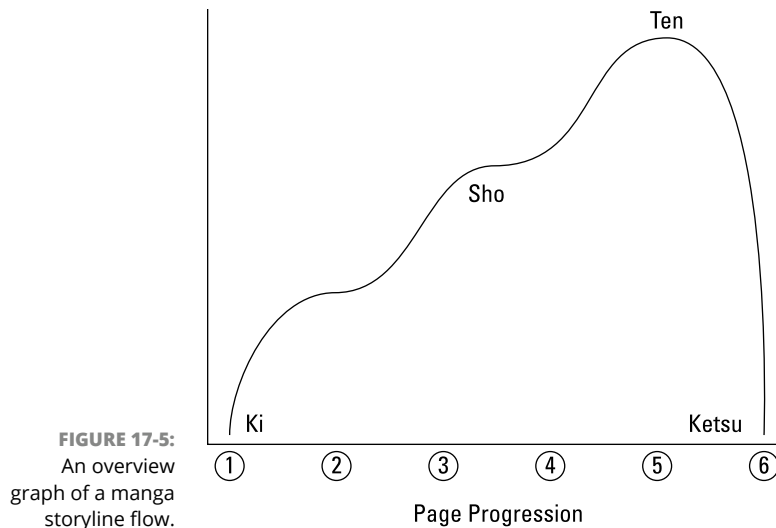
TIP

For a helpful way of understanding this concept, look at the four steps in a graph format, as shown in Figure 17-5. As you plan the stages for your script, I recommend limiting your first story to six to eight pages.





**FIGURE 17-4:**  
The resolution  
section taken  
from a short  
prelude  
in *JAVA!* #1.



## Seeking Inspiration

When you know the basic concept and structure of a story line, you're ready to explore ways of generating material to fill in that story line. Part of the challenge of writing is developing fresh ideas you care about enough to share and talk about. A popular writer's myth is that all ideas come out of the writer's head without them having to step outside their studio. In order to cook fresh food, you need fresh ingredients from outside farms. Likewise, your experiences shape your personality and strong opinions, and you can incorporate them into your story lines. You have those invaluable resources, but you need outside stimulation. Following are some tips and ways of finding various sources of inspiration:

- » **Read the classics.** Classic literature has helped inspire the creativity of many writers and artists seeking to come up with something on their own. Dust off that *Grimms Fairy Tales* and see if you can come up with a spoof or spin off of one of the side characters.
- » **Keep a diary.** One thing that helps create an interesting plot is depicting the way characters respond to their environment. The best way of personalizing any of your characters' responses is by recording and becoming aware of the way you respond to your own environment. A general rule of thumb: As long as people are nosy, they will always want to know what's going on with other people's lives. Use the interesting events that happen in your life to draw people's curiosity to your story.

- » **Gain inspiration by sketching.** You may not read much about this fact, but whenever possible, a manga-ka leaves their studio to travel around, seeking inspiring ideas for their next manga episodes. Sometimes, the manga-ka even travels abroad! Just as a movie team scouts out locations for the right spot to start shooting, a manga-ka records their findings in their sketchbook for new visual ideas. Not all fresh story ideas can be generated from the comforts of your home or studio.
- » **Remember that sketching isn't limited to traveling.** When you need some fresh faces for your characters to match your story, try using your friends, classmates, or family. What are friends and family for? Well, besides being great pals and lifelong friends, they can also inspire great character ideas. Just make sure you get their written permission to use their likeness in your manga.
- » **Watch movies.** Am I actually suggesting that you can go watch your favorite movies and call it work? Yes and no. Watching *some* movies that interest you is important, but seeing movies that people are talking about and raving about is also important. Some of these movies may even include black-and-white silent movies from the past. Others may require you to make a trip to an independent film theater. After viewing a show, document your reactions. Online streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Paramount+ (just three of a plethora number of platforms) offer a variety of shows, including international imports. Just watch your budget — those monthly subscriptions fees add up.
- » **Visit art museums and galleries.** For centuries, artists have learned from one another as apprentices, friends, and rivals. Without feeding off another's resources, coming up with a fresh approach to any story line or character is difficult. Whenever you get the opportunity, visit art shows at museums or galleries. If you have time, some museums let artists sketch or even paint a reproduction right in front of the hanging original!
- » **Watch people.** Venture into your community to observe how people interact with one another. Spend a day at a mall or café. Take a small sketchbook with you so that you can scribble down ideas or observations based on people's clothes, gestures, or expressions. You may see someone who triggers an idea for a new character for your manga story!
- » **Build your library.** Finally, but far from last, you should keep a diverse manga and American comic book library. When you visit your next manga or comic book convention, look around to see what's hot. Plenty of retailers are selling books that may serve as an inspiration for another creative story. And don't shy away from the digital manga market! There's lots to explore there as well.





# 6

## **The Part of Tens**

**IN THIS PART . . .**

More than ten manga artists who reflect the highlights of the current and past classic manga hits

Top ten tips on getting your work out to the public

- » Discovering a century of great manga-ka
- » Viewing the life works of great manga artists

## Chapter **18**

# Ten (or More) Manga Artists

### Osamu Tezuka (1928–1989)

Considered the “Father of Manga,” Osamu Tezuka was born in Osaka, Japan, in 1928. He’s most remembered as the prolific *manga-ka* (manga artist) who inspired artists of all genres to follow in his footsteps. Inspired by Walt Disney, Tezuka is credited with applying those large Bambi eyes to the manga characters.

His life works are simply astounding. No other manga-ka has come close to creating as many successful classics. Among them are *Tetsuwan Atom* (*Astro Boy*), *Black Jack*, *Tell Adolf*, *Hi no Tori*, *Jungle Emperor*, and *Buddha*.

*Astro Boy*, which became a hit animated series from 1963 to 1966, is about a robot, Atom, invented by Dr. Tenma as a substitute for his son who died in a car accident. However, Atom is disowned when Dr. Tenma realizes he’s a robot who will never grow or become a complete replacement for flesh and blood. Holding a pure heart and knowledge of good from bad, Atom finds a new home with another genius inventor, Dr. Ochanomizu, who builds a younger sister, mother, and father for him. Atom is equipped with super strength and machine guns on his posterior, and he can fly. Throughout the series, he fights crime and injustice.

In addition to creating shōnen manga series, Tezuka pioneered the shōjo manga genre with the hit classic, *Ribbon no Kishi*.

## Fujiko Fujio: Hiroshi Fujimoto (1933–1996) and Motoo Abiko (1934–1988)

A true manga-ka dream team, the dynamic duo of Hiroshi Fujimoto and Motoo Abiko formed to work under the pen name Fujiko Fujio for more than 40 years before going on their separate creative paths.

Buddies since fifth grade, these two lit up the manga world with titles such as *Doraemon*, *Kaibutsu-kun*, *Pa-man*, *21 Emon*, and *Obake Q-no Taro*. In 1956, they formed a manga alliance group with other well-noted manga-ka, Fujio Akazuka and Ishinomori Shotaro. In a megahit project titled *Manga Michi (Manga Road)*, Fujiko Fujio recorded their events and experiences growing up to become professional manga-ka.

Perhaps their best claim to fame is *Doraemon*, which first appeared in 1970 and lasted for a phenomenal 40 volumes. It's about a robot cat, Doraemon, from the future, who pops out of elementary school student Nobita's desk at home. Doraemon is here to take care of Nobita because he's quite lazy as well as a social outcast. One of the many appealing factors is that Doraemon has a mysterious pocket where he stores a lot of cool gadgets, which he uses to bail Nobita out of trouble. The series continues to live on and maintains merchandise success even after the deaths of both artists.

## Rumiko Takahashi (1957–)

One of the most successful female shōnen manga-ka, Rumiko Takahashi was born in 1957 in Niigata, Japan. Her claim to superstar fame came when she wrote and illustrated the satire/comedy series *Urusei Yatsura*, which was published by *Shōnen Sunday*, spanning a decade from 1978 to 1987. It's about a high school playboy, Moroboshi Ataru, who saves the world by beating the daughter, Lum, of the head of a group of alien invaders in a game of "catch me if you can." In the process, Ataru inadvertently proposes to Lum while thinking of his current girlfriend, Shinobu. Although Lum is very pretty, for some reason, Ataru refuses to tie the knot with her and, thus, triggers the series of this wacky romantic comedy that spans 34 volumes and animated movies.

Rumiko Takahashi's other titles include *Firetripper*, *Mermaid's Flesh*, *One or W*, *Laughing Target*, *Dust in the Wind*, *Bye-bye Road*, *Surimu Kannon*, *Dutiful Vacation*, *Maris the Chojo*, and many more.

## Leiji Matsumoto (1938–2023)

I've had the honor of meeting this famed manga-ka twice at his studio in Japan when I was shopping my portfolio to become an assistant. I was naturally saddened to hear of his passing. A legend in the science-fiction manga genre, Matsumoto Leiji was born in 1938 in Fukuoka, Japan. Ironically, he began his career drawing shōjo manga series (much to his dislike). It wasn't until he met his wife, Miyako Maki, also a shōjo manga-ka, that he got his chance at drawing shōnen manga magazines.

His claim to fame came with his classic space opera series in 1974, *Space Cruiser Yamato* (later translated as *Star Blazers* when the series came to the United States). The saga went on to become a successful animated movie series. The opening premise is about Earth on the brink of death as invading aliens in search of a new living planet pummel it with radiation meteorites. Facing death, scientists engineer the ultimate fighting battleship using the remains of the battleship Yamato, which sank during World War II. Armed with a powerful Wave Motion Gun and warships, the crew must travel light-years away to acquire machinery that will restore Earth to its normal state. They're ultimately successful despite the fierce and devastating battles and death tolls that occur during the mission.

His fame is also manifested in the space opera work he created in 1977, titled *Galaxy Express 999*. His other titles include *The Cockpit*, *Queen Millennia*, *Queen Emeraldas*, *Gun Frontier*, *Sexaroid*, and *Otoko Oidon*.

## Takehiko Inoue (1967–)

One of the most popular young superstar manga-ka in Japan, Takehiko Inoue was born in Kyushu, Japan, in 1967. His exceptional storytelling skills, popular subject matters, and incredible artwork have made his works top sellers worldwide.

As a huge fan of basketball, he debuted with the hit shōnen sports series *Slam Dunk* (1993–1996). The story focuses on a new high school transfer, Sakuragi Hanamichi, who joins his basketball team with little or no experience. However, what he lacks in experience, he makes up for with reckless and daring courage and attitude.

Sakuragi's extreme athletic ability helps propel him and his team to the national championship. Although sports manga isn't a new concept, the dynamic chemistry between the characters makes this series incredibly fun to read.

Upon completing the series, Inoue re-created the adventures (fictionalized) of the legendary samurai, Miyamoto Musashi, in his action manga *Vagabond*. Inoue's other titles include *Kaede Purple* and *Real*.

## Tite Kubo (1977–)

As one of the highest manga industry sales franchise record holders, this artist was born in Hiroshima, Japan, in 1977. Both writer and illustrator, he broke into the publishing scene at a young age with *Zombiepower* (1999), which was published by Shonen Jump. While the series did not last long, his next mega hit title, *Bleach* (2001–2016) about a teenager, Ichigo Kurosaki, who has the ability to see ghosts, rocked the manga world earning him multiple prestigious awards including the 50th Shogakukan Award for the Shonen Manga category in 2005.

## Eiichiro Oda (1975–)

Another rock star *shonen* genre manga-ka who cannot be ignored, this artist was born in Kumamoto, Japan, in 1975.

Known for his industry record selling title, *One Piece*, Eiichiro was already winning manga awards such as the prestigious Tezuka Award at the age of 17. In 1997, his pirate-themed fantasy manga, *One Piece*, debuted in *Weekly Shonen Jump* and became the best-selling series of manga history. The plot revolves around a rubber (yes, you heard me) pirate, Monkey D. Luffy, who is on a quest with his buddy pirates to find the treasure named “One Piece” to win the King of the Pirates throne. With his crew, Luffy sails the seas, fighting against interested half-human mutant characters and their never-ending greed for riches. Interesting side note — *One Piece* set the 2022 Guinness World Record for “the most copies published for the same book by a single author.” 516,566,000 copies? Not bad!

I watched the anime version of this series with my kids who immediately fell in love with the protagonist characters.

## Katsuhiro Otomo (1954–)

One of the most controversial and innovative creators of his time, Katsuhiro Otomo was born in Miyagi, Japan, in 1954.

Both a manga-ka and animé director, he is most known for his work *Akira*, which opened in 1988. Based upon his manga series that was being published simultaneously, the animated movie focuses on social unrest surrounding a group of teenage delinquents in Neo-Tokyo, 31 years after a mysterious explosion demolishes the Tokyo Bay. Readers discover that the explosion is caused by Akira, a boy possessing powerful psychokinetic abilities. The climax peaks when one of the delinquent teens, Kaneda, confronts his friend, Tetsuo, after finding out that he too possesses a similar psychokinetic ability that is just as destructive as Akira's.

Otomo is also noted for works such as *Memories* (1996), in which the same themes of social unrest, religion, and political corruption are apparent. His most recent mega-feature, *Steamboy* (which hit theaters in 2004), is the most expensive and costly animated film to have been made. Other well-known animated titles include *Robot Carnival* (1987) and *Metropolis* (2001).

## Yoshiyuki Okamura (1947–) and Tetsuo Hara (1961–)

Yoshiyuki Okamura (known as Buronson) and Tetsuo Hara are credited for their work as a writer and illustrator team. A former manga assistant, writer Okamura was born in Nagano, Japan, in 1947. Illustrator Hara was born in Tokyo, Japan, in 1961.

As a writer, Okamura has written stories geared toward adults. Many of his stories deal with the Japanese *yakuza* (mafia), politics, and sex. His popular works include *Sanctuary* (which ran from 1990 to 1995) and *Strain* (which ran from 1997 to 1998).

However, his biggest claim to fame is the apocalyptic, violent manga series that Hara illustrated, *Hokuto no Ken* (better known in the United States as *The Fist of the North Star*). The premise focuses on lead character Kenshiro, who's a master of one of many clans of deadly martial artists that uses human pressure points to kill. During its release from 1983 to 1988, it caused a controversial stir as body parts were graphically illustrated exploding or splitting in half. It was so violent that

many parts had to be censored during overseas translation. Despite this, it ran as a successful television animated series and was embraced by many youngsters in Japan.

Hara joined forces with Okamura to illustrate the prequel *Fist of the Blue Sky* in 2001.

## Akira Toriyama (1955–)

Akira Toriyama was born in Aichi, Japan, in 1955 and combined master storytelling with meticulous line work.

Starting his career in his early 20s, Toriyama rocked the manga world with *Dr. Slump*. The comedic anthology (which is full of funny bathroom humor and silly puns, openly pokes fun at sexuality, and mocks Hollywood celebrities) ran from 1980 to 1984. Personally, this is one of my favorite manga series. The story takes place in Penguin Village, where a genius inventor (and pervert), Dr. Sembei, builds a female robot whom he names Arare-chan. Although powerfully strong, she's also silly, witty, and clueless.

After completing *Dr. Slump*, Toriyama created the series *Dragon Ball*, which propelled his name to worldwide fame. The series ran from 1984 to 1995 with a whopping 42 volumes. The adventure series begins with the funny bathroom humor surrounding a little boy named Goku. However, as the story progresses, Toriyama shifts the overall tone of the manga to a more serious action-oriented theme as Goku becomes an adult and faces one powerful enemy after another.

## Karuho Shiina (1975–)

An award winning shōjo manga artist, Karuho Shiina was born in Hokaido, Japan, in 1975.

Her fame struck the nation when her manga *Kimi ni Todoke* was published as an official series in 2006 by Margaret publishing. This high school shojo romance surrounds a teenager student, Sadako, who is ostracized for her quirky demeanor. She finds hope in a relationship with a popular male student, Kazehara who has his own emotional baggage. This series' popularity led it to be adapted into a television anime series as well as a live action romance drama series. Similar to many manga-ka artist starting out, Karuho got her start by illustrating a series of her own original one-shot pieces.



- » Attending comicons
- » Looking into schools, competitions, and publishers
- » Checking out online resources

## Chapter 19

# (Nearly) Ten Places to Strut Your Stuff

So where do you go from the end of this book? In this chapter, I give you some tips and advice on places and ways of getting your work out to the public. You really need only a handful of people to ignite the buzz surrounding your work. Word of mouth travels more ground and distance than the fastest car or plane.



REMEMBER

Don't become discouraged if you aren't published or established immediately. Success rarely happens overnight. Although your first manga project may need to be refined, be open to the possibility that sometimes publishers aren't ready to see the marketing potential in your ideas or artwork. Like all artistic careers, a satisfying manga career takes time to nurture and mature. Aspiring to become successful is okay, but be careful what you wish for. Many of my students expect overnight fame — after all, we live in a society of instant gratification. But if you rush through your studies impatiently, chances are good that you'll have problems. My advice is always to take advantage of the times when your primary focus is education instead of rushing off to try to become the youngest, most successful manga phenomenon ever.



TIP

For even more great information and advice on showing off your work, head to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and search for the title of this book. There, you'll find some great bonus content.

# Animé/Manga Conventions

Going to conventions is one popular way to get your work noticed. If you Google comic book convention websites, you'll always find an artist alley section where amateurs as well as seasoned professionals strut their best stuff. If you're thinking of purchasing a table to put your work front and center, make sure you contact the organizers well in advance (some as far as one year).



REMEMBER

With a lot of the larger conventions (say, San Diego Comic Con and New York Comic Con), getting a table is more challenging (and expensive) as they have only so many table spaces, and they prioritize the more established artists in the industry over newcomers.



TIP

IMHO (In My not-so Humble Opinion) spending hundreds of dollars on a table is pretty steep if you're just getting started. If you are planning your first comic book convention experience, start by looking up local comic book conventions that are more reasonable in cost. Sure, you won't get to see mega stars like Dwayne Johnson duking it out with Jason Momoa, but I promise you, the experience of (a) learning how to set up your table and (b) promoting your artwork to the public fans will be worth every minute.

Following is a list of several conventions that are currently receiving a lot of buzz.

## International San Diego Comicon

Probably one of the world's largest comic book shows takes place on the West Coast in California every summer. Over the years, the International San Diego Comicon keeps on growing larger and more popular than ever. Plenty of animé and manga publishers and artists attend and panel series focus on the especially famous. In addition, you can meet editors and directors of some of the most prestigious companies at portfolio review booths.

San Diego Comicon is the only convention that currently runs for five days in a row. Industry professionals who meet the convention requirements and provide documents that verify their industry status via their website application may qualify for a free badge. You'll want to do this as early as possible if you think you have the qualifications. If you can afford to make the trip, I highly recommend doing so! On a side note, seeing downtown San Diego transformed into a thriving comic book community is fascinating.

For details about this convention, call (619) 491-2475 or check out [www.comic-con.org](http://www.comic-con.org).

## Heroes Convention

Located in Charlotte, North Carolina, this convention draws indie artists who are promoting their own original works as opposed to art that is fan-related. Started back in 1982 by a comic book shop owner, Heroes Con continues to draw top artists in the nation's industry. Last time I went with my colleagues, they had an art auction featuring some of the attending artists' original art. If you are able to make the trip, I recommend getting a table when you feel you are ready to showcase your stuff — it's a smaller crowd yet large enough to cater to new, upcoming artists and established professionals alike. If you're traveling with another person who can watch your table, walk around the convention hall to meet and greet your fellow convention attendees during the slow days (typically Fridays). In addition to a friendly environment, artist tables are more affordable compared to other conventions. Usually held in summer, the show runs for three days.

If you're interested in Heroes Convention, call (704) 375-7462 or go online to <https://www.heroesonline.com/>.

## New York Comicon (Jacob Javits Convention Center)

Although younger than its San Diego counterpart, New York Comicon is East Coast's largest pop culture convention. It is unfortunately one of the most expensive conventions to get tickets and an artist table. (Bear in mind when you fill out their application online, conventions' organizers need to "approve" your professional credentials even before you shell out the big bucks.) I remember on its opening year, the floor became so crowded that the New York Fire Department had to temporarily shut it down!

Even if you can't get a table, it's a show worth attending to meet the industry leading hottest talents. I learned a lot just from watching some of these mega stars working on commissions at their tables.

Held in New York City's Jacob Javits Center, the show runs for four days. For additional details about dates and ticket purchases, call (888) 605-6059 or go to the website at <https://www.newyorkcomiccon.com/>.

## Animé Expo

Held in Los Angeles Convention Center during summer, this is one of America's largest manga/animé events of the year. Well-known manga-ka and animé artists from Japan's leading studios are among the many creator celebrities who make the trek to meet and greet their fans from abroad. Not only is this a great time to

come prepared with questions and maybe show your portfolio to these guest artists, but it's also a great place to get an artist's alley table since the competition for space is less fierce than San Diego or New York Comic Con.

As much as it is a showcase for artists, it is just as much a haven for cosplayers who want to flaunt their costumes they've been working on to compete in the annual contest. Throw maid cafes and J-pop concerts into the mix and you'll have to admit that even if you are not planning on pursuing manga professionally, you will have a blast immersing yourself in four days of manga/ animé bliss. **Warning:** You may not ever want to leave.

To download the registration form for Animé Expo, check out <https://www.anime-expo.org/>.

## Art Schools

Although you can select from many art schools, make a point to visit them and see what the facilities and faculty are like by calling to schedule a campus tour. You also need to find out what their admissions requirements are; most, if not all, schools require a portfolio in addition to the standard SAT scores and letters of recommendation. Most schools have an application form that you can download from their website. I list some of the current top-contending schools in the United States along with their admissions phone numbers and school websites:

- » **School of Visual Arts, NY:** (212) 592-2000; [www.sva.edu](http://www.sva.edu)
- » **Parsons School of Design, NY:** (212) 229-5150; [www.parsons.edu](http://www.parsons.edu)
- » **Pratt Institute, NY:** (212) 636-3600; [www.pratt.edu](http://www.pratt.edu)
- » **Rhode Island School of Design, RI:** (401) 454-6100; [www.risd.edu](http://www.risd.edu)
- » **Art Center of Design, CA:** (626) 396-2200; [www.artcenter.edu](http://www.artcenter.edu)



TIP

Before committing to any school, ask your peers or current students who study in the major of your interest for their feedback. It also may help to check out popular social media channels such as YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) X ([x.com](http://x.com)) and Instagram ([www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com)) where you can find various art students' experiences with their education first hand. Bear in mind, of course, one user's experience may greatly differ than yours. I used to tell my illustration major students that the success in any career rests ultimately in their hands — their efforts and their passion — rather than in the hands of some school or other. If you have fresh ideas and stick to promoting it, the people *will* listen!

# Manga Competitions

Get online to see what manga competitions are taking place. Major publishers sponsor events where you can win cash or an opportunity for your works to be published. The common myth is that smaller competitions aren't worth the time to apply. When starting off for the first time, you need to go for every possible chance at public exposure and recognition. Clip Studio Paint, a major digital manga software firm, holds its own international illustration contest attracting global talent from all diverse styles. Be sure to check out Clip Studio Paint's website ([www.clipstudio.net/en/](http://www.clipstudio.net/en/)) and try your hand at submitting one of your best pieces! Awards include cash, credit for their online store, and exposure through their website/social media.

## Self-Publishing

If you are looking to self-publish your manga creation, I have great news. Getting your work out before the public is more feasible than it has been in the past. While print is the traditional way to market your works, many artists are turning to digital comics to get their manga out to the fans. Sending and creating digital manga pages is cheaper than hard copy print. (You only need to pay for digital software and web hosting services to store the art files.) But say you really wanted to get a physical book printed; artists have used crowdfunding sites to raise the capitol to make their printed book a reality.



REMEMBER

When it comes to publishing, the choice — digital or traditional print — is always yours and yours alone. While both have pros and cons, don't feel pressured; ultimately, exploring both options and venues is a win in my book.

Check out just some of the many options to self-publishing:

» **Kickstarter ([www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com)):** While technically not a "publisher," this crowdfunding site has helped many artists (both professional and amateur) raise funds to print and publish their manga creation. I myself have used it successfully to raise enough funds to print my graphic novel series, *The Foreigner*. (Visit my website at [www.kensukeart.com](http://www.kensukeart.com) to find out more about it.)



TIP

Before deciding on launching your first crowdfunding campaign, be sure to visit their website and study what other artists are doing to promote their manga project. You need to have a clear strategy and plan (including a video of yourself explaining your campaign) prior to creating your campaign page on their website. You will be required to come up with a rewards tier plan that gives "backers" (people who financially pledge to support your project) a

reason to pledge more support than they normally might consider. Also be prepared to do a lot of promoting your campaign to friends, colleagues, and family. From my experience, unless you are an established artist with an already existing social media presence, most of your backers are those you know personally.

- » **Webtoon ([www.webtoons.com/en/](http://www.webtoons.com/en/)):** This South Korean online manga website is home to thousands of artists who are looking to become the next big thing and possibly monetize on their creation. Be sure to check out their website and browse all the interesting genres for free! Categories range from drama, fantasy, comedy, action, romance, superhero, sci-fi, thriller, supernatural, and many more.

Webtoon is one of the first of its kind to break away from the traditional comic book page layout by allowing readers to read through the creators' manga by scrolling down to get to the next manga frame on their smartphone/tablet screen using their finger as opposed to swiping across to "turn" to the next page. Artists who post on their website have adapted to this new format, as have popular manga software like Clip Studio Paint, which now includes a template compatible to Webtoon's manga formatting.

- » **Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing ([https://kdp.amazon.com/en\\_US/publish-comics-graphic-novels](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/publish-comics-graphic-novels)):** Amazon provides a comprehensive artist's guideline for creating and uploading your manga to their online store. Fans can buy their favorite artist's manga and download and read the title to their preferred mobile device (iPad, Amazon Kindle Fire, Android, or the web). Amazon uses what it calls Guided View (GV), which sets the pace for panel to panel reading. The company claims that using the GV feature makes the reading experience more enjoyable rather than trying to digest the whole manga page. (Personally, I have mixed thoughts on that, but that's another story ☺.)

## Small Press

Don't discount the status of small press publishers who don't have the same elite status as the top large publishers enjoy. If a small press offers to publish your work, be sure you retain as many rights over your creation as possible. Avoid publishers who require you to sign away your rights as a "work for hire" artist. Also make sure you get a valid contract with them — don't settle for "verbal agreements."

Most small presses have their start with an artist self-publishing their own work. Depending upon the success of their sales, an artist who initially self-publishes

may decide to go on to publish other artists' works and eventually become a small publisher.



REMEMBER

Although starting off by self-publishing your works under a tight budget is completely acceptable, it can be rather financially risky and time consuming to take on other artists' works. Make sure you have your own personal project completed before joining forces with another artist. If you really want to start your own small press, I suggest grouping with your close friends or peers who are on the same level and with whom you can get along. When you're ready to find a printer, make sure (if at all possible) to use a U.S.-based printer rather than one that's overseas. While it may be tempting to use overseas printers that lure you with cheap rates, I personally feel my intellectual property is more secure when supporting domestically based businesses.



TIP

Ka-Blam digital printers (<https://ka-blam.com>) is a printer I recommend that has printed high quality comics since 2005. I've used them for my mini-series to sell at comic book conventions and have had excellent experiences with their customer service department. They provide you with their page template for you to ensure proper formatting when submitting your final artwork to be printed.

## Self Promoting

While promoting your creation takes time and energy, many resources are out there, including a variety of marketing apps. (Most are either free or offer free basic services.) Here, I list some examples you may find helpful:



REMEMBER

» **Instagram ([www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com)):** Instagram is one of the more popular social media apps that artists are using to share/promote their artwork images with others. Artists can also share short videos on their profile and interact with fans who leave messages on the posts made by the artist.

Be sure to do some research on how best to use things like strong keywords and hashtags so that your profile is more easily found by web browser search engines. Feel free to check out my Instagram account at @KensukeART.

» **X ([www.x.com](http://www.x.com)):** X is another social media app that artists use to share short texts, images, and videos. Originally popular among journalists, artists using X (albeit fewer than Instagram) use it more toward real-time back and forth discussions on such topics as comic convention status updates, reactions to breaking industry news, or random thoughts about their creative progress.

» **Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)):** Assuming that you already use this social media platform to stay in touch with friends, family, and colleagues, this



REMEMBER

makes a perfect way to spread the word about your manga creation to those who are familiar with you and want to see your project succeed.

If you are already established, Facebook allows you to create your own business page where your fans can keep updated with your progress or project announcements. See how I use my business page @KensukeART.

» **YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)):** When it comes to sharing knowledge and resources, YouTube is a powerful platform capable of providing a wealth of information and entertainment. For artists, it is a great place to share your creative process. You can also broadcast your video live, and followers and manga fans can type in their questions and comments while you are in the middle of the creation process.



TIP

Challenge yourself to post your first creative YouTube video! It's normal to feel the butterflies in the stomach when shooting your first video. Don't make the mistake of overthinking or editing your first video. Just keep making more videos, and your delivery will start to come naturally. Then you can look back at those "uhms" and "likes" from your earlier videos with a smile 😊. Make a visit to my YouTube channel @KensukeART where I share drawing tips using Clip Studio Paint.

» **Mailchimp ([www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)):** This is another useful app that lets you create mailers that enable creators to find their target audience and build relationships with the fans. The templates you use for your mailers are customizable down to the colors, typeface, and layout.

## Small Galleries and Art Shows

Most galleries have competitions or submission guidelines that you can easily obtain. Although fine arts galleries are unlikely to be interested in looking at manga work, illustration galleries may be interested if the style is unique. If you're a student, galleries (such as New York City's The Society of Illustrators) have student competitions in which the school may sponsor your entries.

Also keep in mind that art shows don't necessarily take place in fancy galleries. Many cafés, coffee shops, and eateries exhibit artwork to promote the ambience for the customers. Walk downtown to visit these places and ask whether they're interested in letting you exhibit your work for several weeks. Remember to bring your contact business card or a postcard that has a sample of your artwork attached.



# Friends

Show your artwork to your friends. Let them spread the word around about your artwork. The more people talk about your work, the more curious others are going to be about what your artwork looks like.

## Online Portfolio

Whether you are reading this book as a beginner of manga drawing or a professional artist, there has never been a more exciting time to take advantage of the Internet to promote your original manga creations. Thanks to popular website builders such as Squarespace ([www.squarespace.com](http://www.squarespace.com)) and Wix ([www.wix.com](http://www.wix.com)), building your own website to showcase your works is easier than ever. A lot of programs are being developed that allow artists to pop in their work and post it with little difficulty. Seeing how rapidly web technology has advanced over the past years, I'm sure that shopping your portfolio via the Internet is going to get even easier and more efficient.

For a freelance artist (either an illustrator or a manga-ka), not having a website is a major *faux pas*. Rather than sorting through a pile of submission materials, many art directors and editors prefer to access your work with the click of the mouse from their cozy offices.



REMEMBER

Before you set up a website, you need to create and register your own unique domain name. Many artists use their own full name, while others use their studio name. It's crucial that the domain name be unique and easy to remember. Avoid using obscure abbreviations or long numerical sequences.



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# About the Author

Kensuke Okabayashi is a freelance illustrator and writer with a passion for manga that began in his childhood in Princeton, New Jersey. Influenced by legendary manga artists such as Fujiko Fujio, Osamu Tezuka, and Rumiko Takahashi, Kensuke went to Japan to refine his craft. There, he had the opportunity to work alongside notable figures like Matsumoto Leiji and Akazuka Fujio, further honing his skills through internships with prominent manga artists.

Kensuke earned his BFA in Illustration from the School of Visual Arts in New York City, where he specialized in traditional painting and advanced drawing techniques. After graduation, Kensuke began working as a fantasy illustrator for Wizards of the Coast's *Magic the Gathering* before working as a storyboard artist, illustrating for various advertising firms. His recent clients include LEGO, Amazon, Hoka, Clinique, J.Crew, and Airbnb.

Kensuke's instructional art publications include *Manga For Dummies* (First Edition), *Figure Drawing For Dummies*, and *Drawing For Dummies* (Second and Third Editions). His illustrated business manga, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (Manga Edition), is a collaboration with bestselling author Patrick Lencioni. In addition to his storyboard work, Kensuke is also working on a sequel to his Kickstarter-funded graphic novel, *The Foreigner Book One*. The books follow Kaz, a socially awkward Brooklyn accountant who has been transported to a war-torn alternate universe. To return home and rescue his kidnapped wife, Anya, Kaz must restore peace between warring kings.

Kensuke's past creator-owned works include the JAVA! series, which was published as a miniseries by Committed Comics. The series, featuring Java — a high-energy caffeine-fueled crime fighter — was well-received by both critics and readers.

Kensuke and his wife have two children and recently relocated to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. When not creating art, Kensuke enjoys playing the piano and lifting weights at his local gym.

Explore Kensuke's art portfolio and learn more about his projects at [KensukeArt.com](http://KensukeArt.com). Kensuke also posts instructional art videos on his YouTube channel [@KensukeART](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqKsUjYUgUgUgUgUgUgUgUgUg).

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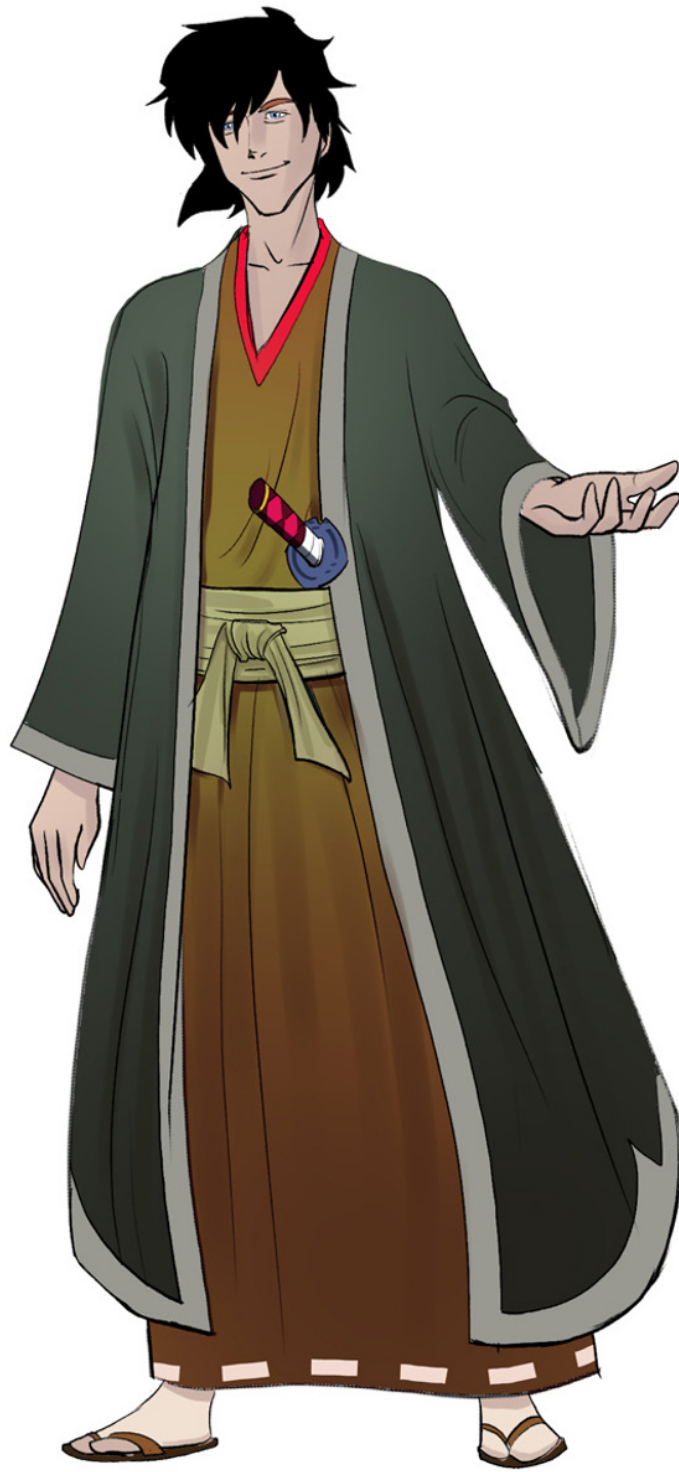
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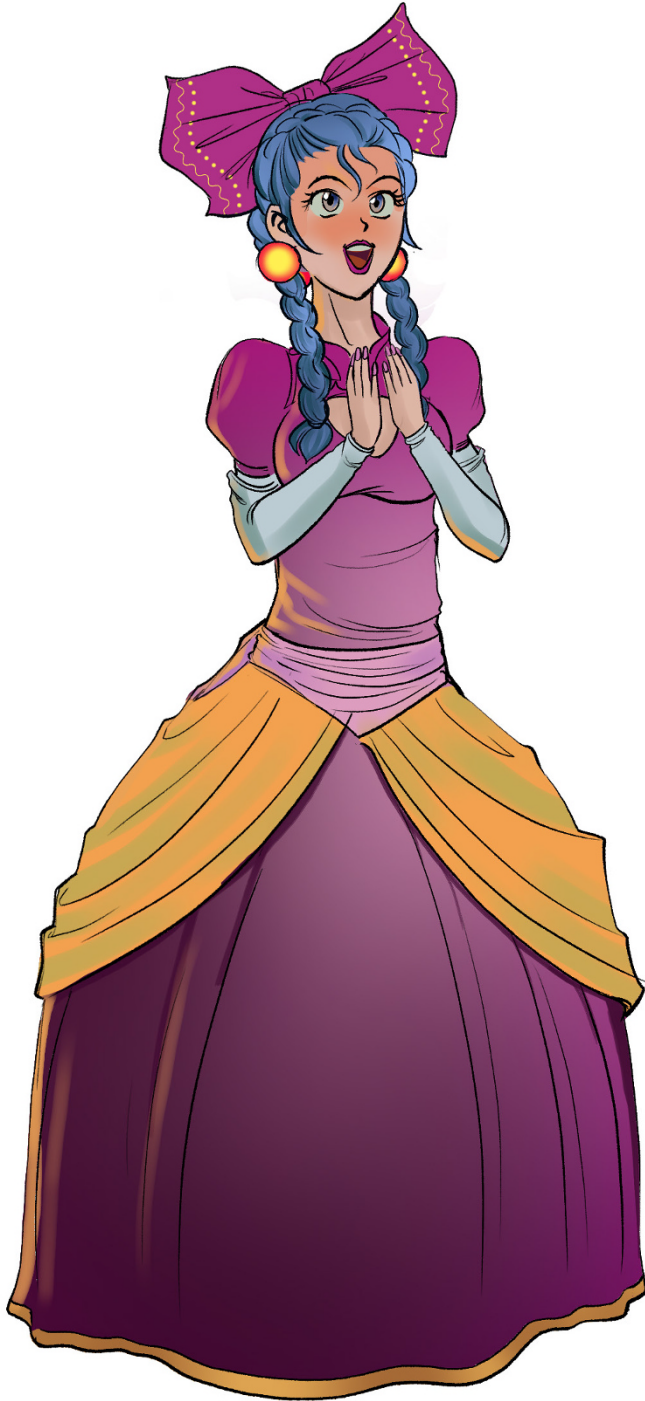


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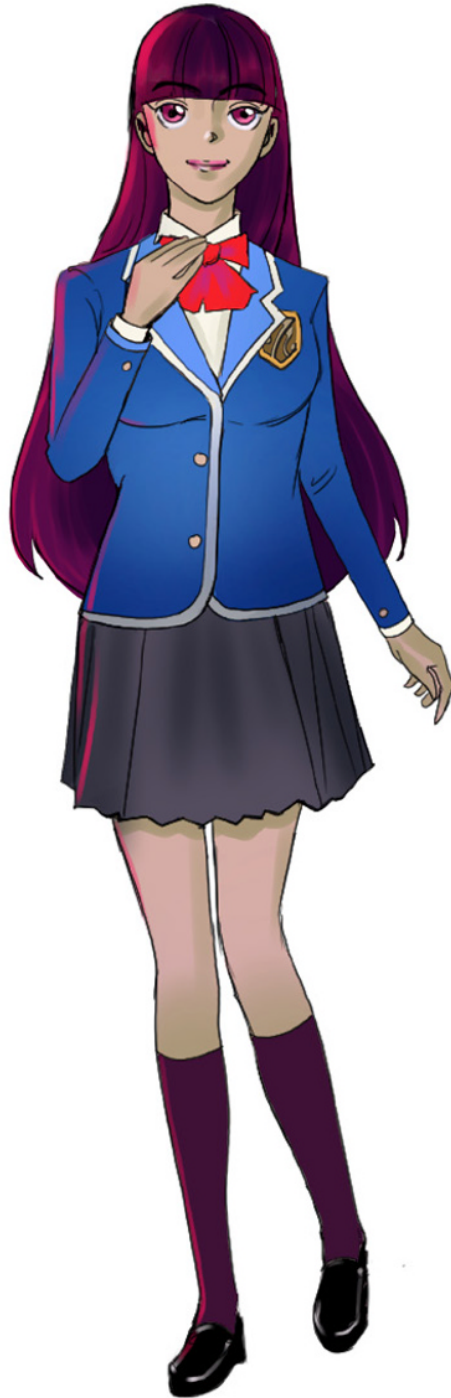
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