Ready, Set, Draw!

Illustration Basics for Beginners

Created exclusively for Craftsy
by David Huyck & Jessie Oleson Moore

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IMPROVE YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS
With This One Simple Trick

By David Huyck

Do you love drawing? Want to get better? Well there's one simple (or at least simple-sounding) way to turn yourself into the best illustrator you can be.

A view of my drafting table in its "natural state"

At the end of four years of college, when I was making more art than ever before in my life — when I was making as much art at one time as I thought I possibly could — my professor launched me into the world with this parting advice:

"You need to draw more."

What? How could I possibly be drawing more? There were no more hours left in the day that weren't already devoted to friends, Frisbee and frolicking. I could still achieve my dream of making children's books with the skills I already had. It was all art all the time. He was all wrong. I was all good.

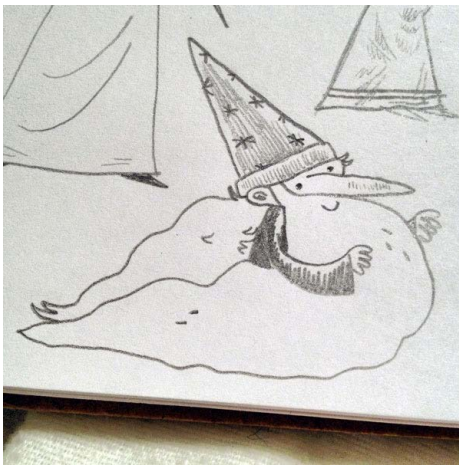
But it nagged at me. My professor's admonition echoed in my ears:

"You need to draw more."

I didn't, or couldn't, do anything about it until I was five years into a computer-programming career, working in code and databases 100% of the time at a world-class graphic design shop, surrounded by amazing and talented designers who were all drawing. A lot. They were doing the kind of work I wanted to do, and I was typing code all day, doing nothing to get myself closer to my illustration dreams.

So I got myself a sketchbook, and I drew a terrible-looking chicken on the first page. And this time I said it to myself:

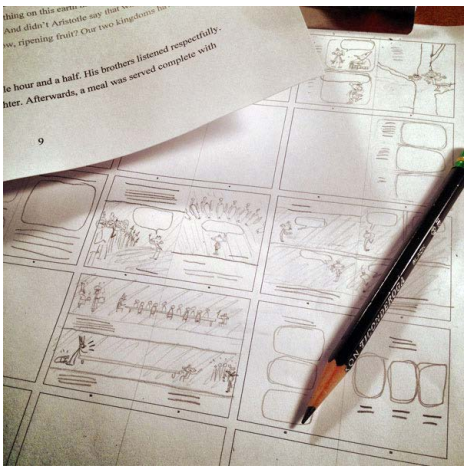
"Whoa. You need to draw more."



A wizard-in-progress sketch

It comes as no surprise that practice is a great way to improve a skill. As for drawing, I'm not sure there is any alternative. There is muscle memory that has to be trained. Our hand-eye coordination is only improved by repetition. Even world-class artists, illustrators and animators regularly attend life-drawing sessions or maintain some kind of regular drawing regimen. I recently saw a museum exhibit of the preliminary drawings that Edward Hopper made before he began painting. There were dozens of sketches for each image before any paint was applied to canvas.

Malcolm Gladwell has discussed the idea that we can only master a skill after 10,000 hours of practice. A noted animator told one of his protégés that we all have 100,000 bad drawings in us, and we just need to get those out of the way before we can start making the good ones. I like to tell my students to "draw like a photographer," which essentially means to make a lot of images, and pick the best ones.



Thumbnail sketches for the picture book, *Nine Words Max*

Whatever way you want to think about it, there is only one simple trick to improving your drawings: *"You need to draw more."*

But of course it is not really all that simple. For me, once I figured out how to trick myself into drawing more, I got better. Quickly.

Here are a couple of easy steps for getting started:

STEP 1: GET SOMETHING TO DRAW ON

It could be a sketchbook, but if that is intimidating, you can use plain copy paper on a clipboard, like I do. Nothing is permanent, and I can just toss anything I don't like in the recycling bin. Another great option is a pocket-sized notebook that you can carry around with you. That way you are ready whenever the mood strikes. Anything that works for you is good enough — this isn't about making finished, gallery-ready art. Think of it like calisthenics.

STEP 2: GET SOMETHING TO DRAW WITH

I love art stores. I call them toy stores. There are so many tools and utensils made for making marks on things, like pencils, pens, crayons, pastels, paints and anything else you can think of. A burnt stick will make marks. But my go-to sketching tool is a cheap, plastic, mechanical pencil that you can buy in the grocery store. There's nothing intimidating about it, and it's the same thing I used to draw with as a kid, sitting on the floor with my brothers, passing an Ed Emberley book back and forth for ideas.

STEP 3: MAKE TIME TO DRAW

If you close your eyes and imagine your day, you can probably think of dozens of little 5 minute chunks of time when you could pull out a pocket sketchbook and draw. One of my most productive sketching times is while I watch TV or stream a movie on my laptop. My mind goes a bit fuzzy, my subconscious takes over for a while, and strange and interesting things appear on the page. Or maybe you can be more deliberate about it, pausing that Alfred Hitchcock film or *Star Wars* dogfight and taking time to sketch out the composition of the scene.

No matter what works for you, the best plan – the only plan – for improving your illustration is that you need to draw more.

A finished copy of *Nine Words Max*, on the new releases shelf at the office of my publisher, Tundra Books

I promise you this works. Drawing more has led me to my dream job of illustrating children's books, including *Nine Words Max*, written by Dan Bar-el, and published by Tundra Books.

A PRIMER
On the Best Paper for Illustration

By Jessie Oleson Moore

Not all paper is created equal. To master the art of illustration, it's not just a matter of putting your best foot forward, it's making sure you're striding on the proper surface.

Let's take a look at some of the most common types of paper for illustration, and which types of illustration projects are best suited to each type.

Different qualities can be better suited to different media and styles of working: This guide will help you determine which type of paper is best suited to helping you tell your story in images.

Drawing Paper

Drawing paper is a versatile paper that is well-suited to illustration, particularly pen and ink as well as pencil works. Drawing papers can vary from lightweight or "sketching pad" styles, which are typically non-archival and well-suited to practice sketches or figure studies, to

heavier weight papers that allow for erasing, reworking and applying pen and ink. A variety of textures, from smooth to quite "toothy" and suitable for pastel work, are available. If you are producing a finished piece, be sure to use an archival, high quality drawing paper.

PROS:

Works beautifully with pen and ink as well as pencil, colored pencil and a variety of dry media. It is also a relatively inexpensive paper option.

CONS:

Not as absorbent or thick as other papers. If you are using ink from a well or watercolor, it may bleed through or make the paper warp. The slightly textured surface on some drawing papers can snag pens with a quill-type nib.

Bristol Board

Thicker than drawing paper but not as thick as illustration board, Bristol board provides two working surfaces, front and back. It typically comes in two varieties: one being vellum (lightly textured), the other being smooth. Bristol board is well-suited to all of the dry media you'd use on drawing paper, but because it is sturdier, it can also accept some wet media. Light watercolor is appropriate on the absorbent vellum surface (note, however, that it may bleed on the smooth surface). Better quality Bristol boards are archival.

PROS:

More affordable than illustration board and sturdier than drawing paper. But, it's not as absorbent as watercolor paper, so Bristol board can warp on the edges if the paint is applied too thick.

CONS:

More wet ink varieties, marker and watercolor can bleed unattractively on smooth Bristol board.

Watercolor Paper

Watercolor paper is a thick, sturdy and absorbent paper designed for wet media. It is thick enough that it won't warp even when you apply watercolor washes, and absorbent enough so that the paint doesn't spread or bleed. While watercolor papers are available in a variety of thicknesses and textures, there are main varieties: hot press (the flatter variety), and cold press (the more textured variety).

Student-grade watercolor paper is wonderful for practicing, but it is not archival, which means that eventually, the paper will yellow and deteriorate. For finished pieces, use a high quality archival paper.

PROS:

Brushed pen and ink work, or pen and ink with watercolor, both work perfectly on this surface. The absorbent nature of the paper will keep it from curling.

CONS:

The texture or "tooth" of the paper can snag pen tips. Use a thick, sturdy pen tip for best results, or use pencil for a base drawing atop which watercolor lies. The texture may show up on scans, so be sure that your design will support that.

A Note on Pens:

If you want to incorporate pen and ink into your watercolor illustration work, ballpoint or rollerball tips are good choices for using pen and ink on watercolor paper. The texture can wear away felt tip pens, dulling the line quality. This doesn't mean you can't use them, but their shelf life may be shorter. Quill pens can easily catch — use with caution. If you're adding watercolor or an ink wash, be sure to use waterproof ink (water-resistant is not the same).

Illustration Board

Illustration board is thick — in the photo above, you can see how it compares to the thickness of Bristol board. This sturdiness makes it fantastic for reproducing, as the paper is unlikely to bend or warp. Like watercolor paper, it comes in both hot and cold press varieties, but the texture is not as pronounced as that of watercolor paper, making it better suited to a variety of media, from pen and ink to pencil to light watercolor and even other paints such as acrylic or gouache.

PROS:

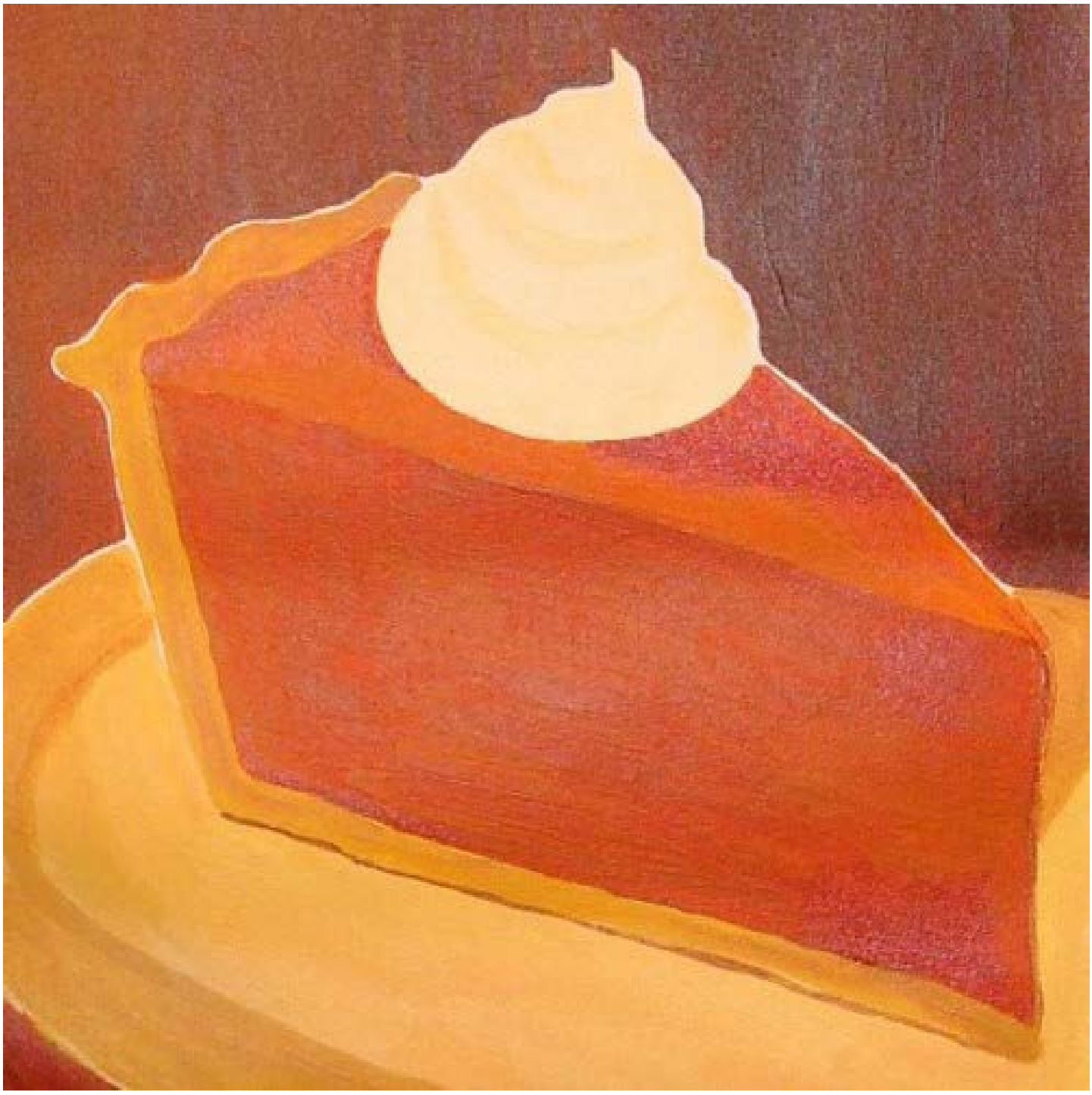
The sturdy surface can stand up to a variety of media, and it is presentation-ready and easy to scan. Just about any type of pen can be used on illustration board. Use the same cautions for cold press papers that you would for watercolor papers.

CONS:

Illustration board only has one working side, and can be expensive, so don't use it for practice pieces.

Canvas paper

Canvas, or canvas paper, bears mention even though it is quite different from the other types of paper. Canvas is a woven paper that is designed for painting — pen and ink and watercolor do not work well on this surface, but it is well-suited to creating works of art in acrylic and oil paint.



PROS:

Perfect for creating works of art in acrylic or oil paint.

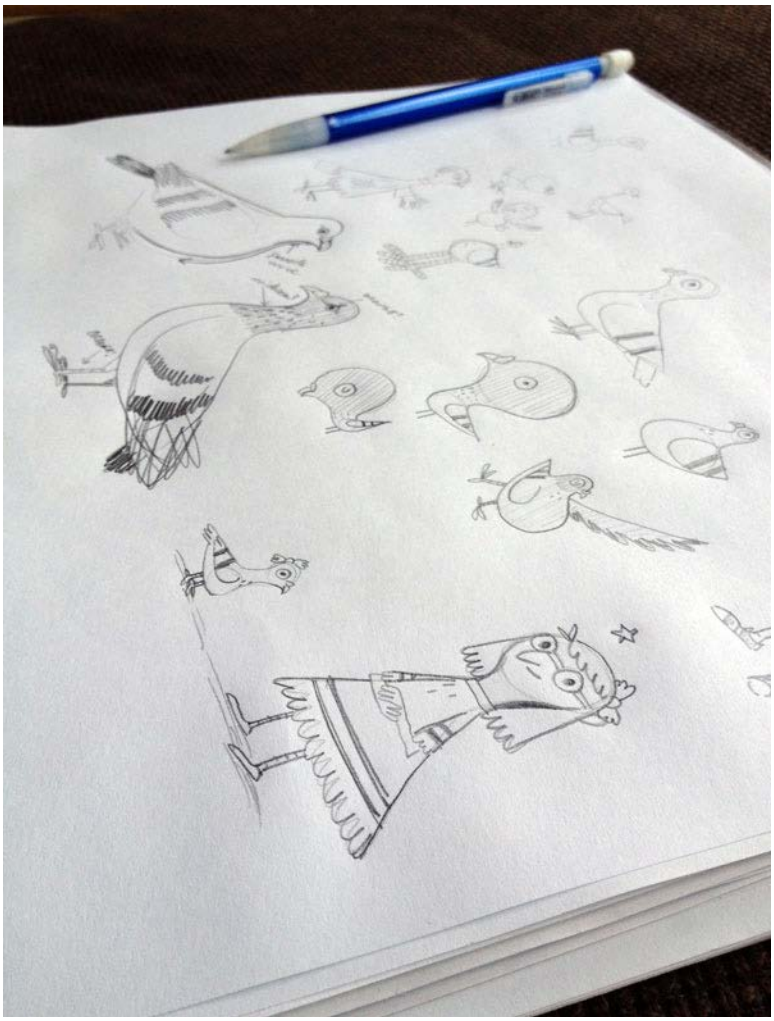
CONS:

Can be difficult to scan or reproduce. It is not well-suited for pen and ink, pencil or watercolor.

A Foolproof Methodology
FOR DEVELOPING CHARACTERS

By David Huyck

I love many of the various jobs I do as an illustrator of picture books, but perhaps my favorite thing is to design the characters. I love everything about it, from the exploration of sizes and shapes and faces and clothing, to the formalization of the design and the selection of colors and other finishing touches. It is what I do when I'm doing nothing at all, and I have a paper and pencil in front of me.



Everyone approaches character development differently, but here's one foolproof method for how to design characters:

STEP 1: EXPLORATION

Every story I draw – picture books or comics – has a main character or a cast of main characters about whom the story is being told. If I already have a story in mind or a manuscript to work from, I will focus on drawing the main character or characters first. If I'm just trying to come up with ideas for a new story, I will draw whatever comes to mind, and see if it sparks an idea for something I might want to write about.

There are infinite ways to draw a little boy, or a cute elephant, or a terrifying monster, so I always begin with a blank sheet of paper and something to distract me a bit, like TV or a movie. I also like to draw while I talk with friends or my family. The idea here is that I'm letting my subconscious have the reins for a while.

There's lower pressure to produce something interesting this way, which means that I can fill a few pages without worrying, and something along the way usually grabs my attention. I allow myself total freedom to explore tangents or write down a silly rhyme that pops into my head

or make a grocery list. It is a kind of meditation that calms me while also producing sheets filled with visual reference for the current project, and potential future projects, too. Including that trip to the market this Saturday.

STEP 2: ITERATIONS

Once I stumble into a look that I like, I can take a character's basic shapes and push and pull them until I find just the right configuration for my story. I take cues from the story I'm working on, and from the tone and "voice" of the text and the character in the context of the story. For this stage, I can't have visual distractions like a movie running in front of me, but music can be helpful to keep me moving and motivated.

Now I try out extreme versions of the character. If this character is going to stand out on the page, what will make him distinctive and eye-catching? What if his head is huge? What if his face is tiny? Long legs? Short hair? What are the eye shapes? Nose shapes? Mouth shapes? Three fingers, or all four? How many tentacles or spikes does he have?

I once spoke with 2003 Caldecott Medal winner Eric Rohmann about the subject of both characters and writing, and his advice was to push to the most extreme, and then dial back in until it works with the story you want to tell.

There are other tricks to drawing a character for different effects. Eyes low on the face, and larger eyes, and fewer details, make a character look younger. More lines and higher eyes can age her. Round shapes are kinder and gentler, while angular designs feel more volatile or even dangerous.

The bigger the head, the more "appealing" and cartoony the character is, and a more natural proportion can make your character more complex and distant. I spend a lot of time deciding whether my characters will be two head-heights tall or three heads. Grown-ups are more like four or five heads tall when I draw them, but a real person is closer to seven or seven-and-a-half.

If it is an animal character, the same kinds of proportions will help create the level of appeal you are after. When I draw animals, I refer to reference

photos a lot at the beginning, trying to decide which features describe that sort of critter well enough to make is recognizable as that particular animal. Once I figure out the right formula, I can riff on it, simplify it, clean it up, etc., until it is just right.

The iteration stage is usually the longest, trying to get the character just so, and then I can draw it correctly and consistently for an entire story. This is the star of my show, and I need to cast him/her/it, just right, so my reader will want to stick with the story all the way to the end. It also makes drawing that character easier for me later, since I have worked out all these decisions upfront, and I've practiced drawing the character dozens of times by this point.

STEP 3: MODEL SHEET

The last step I do is to take my finished design, and pose it all sorts of ways to make sure I understand it in three dimensions. I also add color and try out finishing touches like the particular brush or pencil or digital tool I will use to draw the character for the finished art. I will often use a detail or moment from the story I'm working on to illustrate with my

newly designed character, so I can see if my design truly works in the context it will need to live in.

If you do an image search for model sheets, you will see all different ways these can look. I like to make mine fit onto a printable sheet of paper – either letter or tabloid size – so I can tack it to my wall and refer to it as I draw the rest of the story. It helps me stay anchored to that character, both visually and emotionally, as I work out the other part of the illustrations.

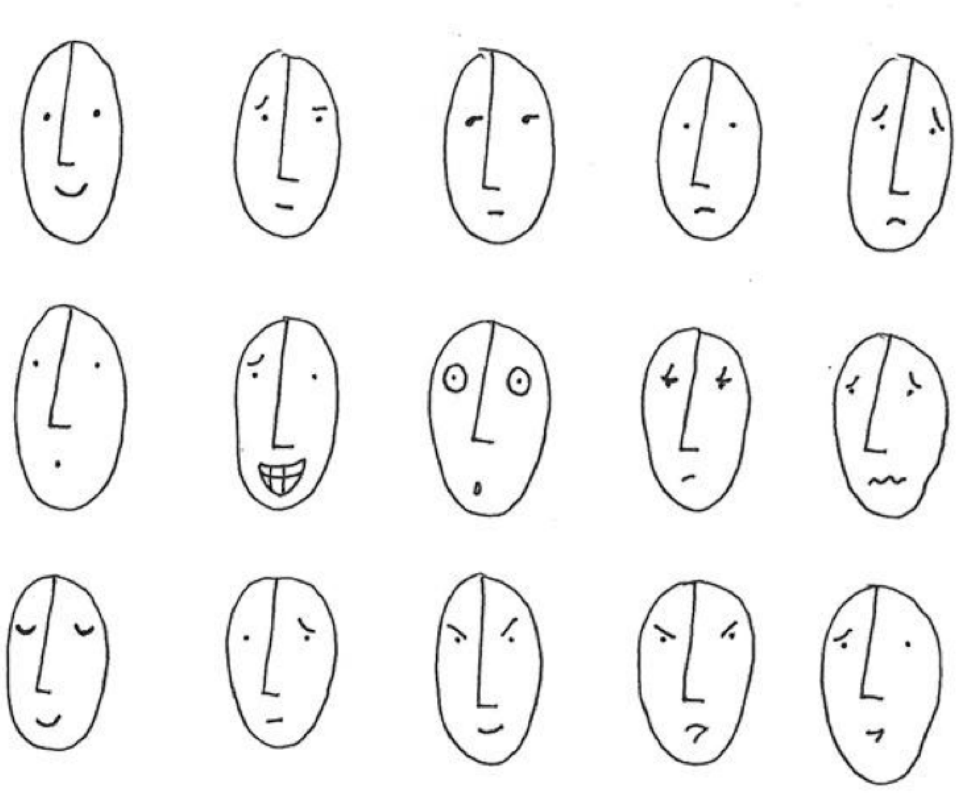
6 TIPS
for Creating Emotive Characters

By Jessie Oleson Moore

Whether drawing, sketching or creating a character for a series of illustrations for a picture book, the key to creating an expressive, compelling piece is the ability to capture emotions in your artwork. But how do you create different emotions when you're drawing or making fine art?

Here's a collection of helpful tips on capturing emotions for your drawn or illustrated characters. As you'll see, subtle differences can make big difference when creating emotions with your characters — which means that there's a world of emotion just waiting to be captured on the page, whether you're working in pen and ink, pastel or oil.

So grab the medium of your choice and get ready to express yourself.

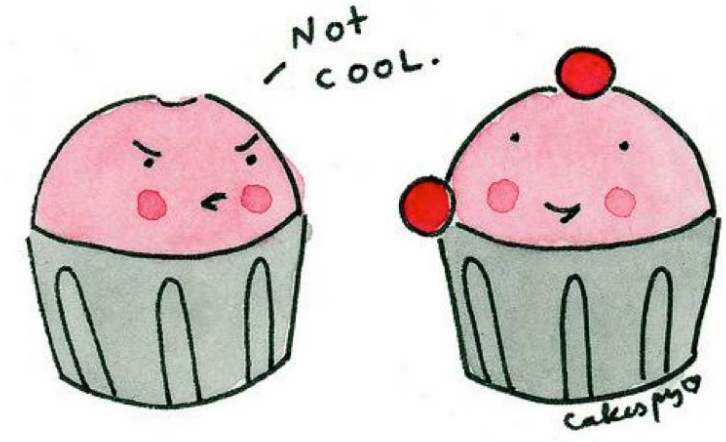


TIP #1: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Don't expect to get an expression or emotion perfectly on your first try. Practice makes perfect. As part of, or in addition to character studies, make expression studies. One fun way to do this is to make a sheet full of blank faces. They can be human, kitten or creature faces — whatever you'd like. You can even make a photocopy of the page of blank faces you've made, so that you always have a canvas at the ready to test out expressions. Try out variations of expressions on this page until you've gotten it just right.

TIP #2: INCREASE YOUR BROW KNOW-HOW

Eyebrows can convey so much feeling. They can heighten an emotion: For instance, they can take mildly unhappy to deeply sad. But, they can also contrast a facial expression: A happy face, for instance, can instantly become devious when paired with downward slanting brows, or bemused when paired with wonky brows.



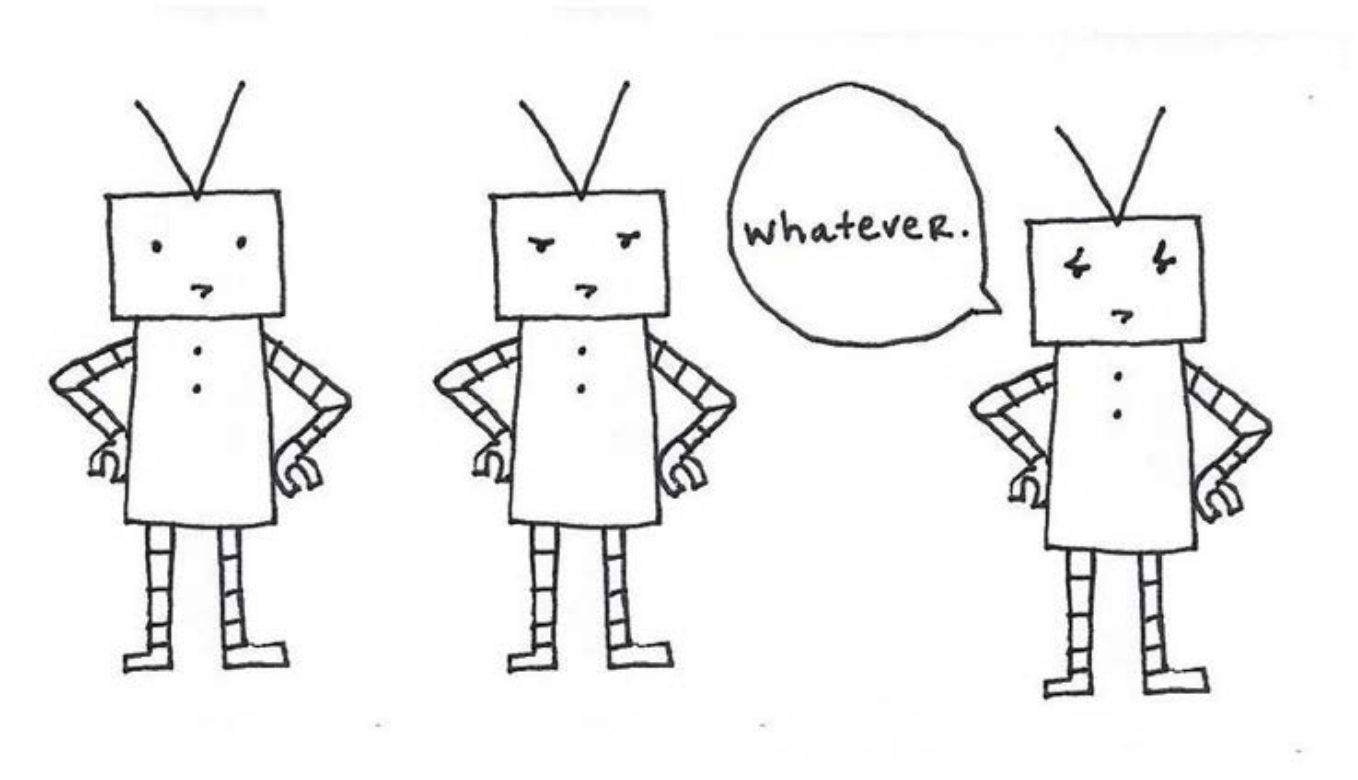
TIP #3: TWIST AND POUT

The mouth. We talk, smile, frown, blow bubbles with it... These are all things that you can show with your drawing.

Subtle changes can refine mouths in drawings. For example, a smiling mouth can convey happiness while a smiling mouth with teeth can show outright joy (or could come across manic or sinister when paired with different eyebrow expressions!). A slightly parted mouth can imply talking or conversation. An effective trick is to angle not only the eyes at the subject matter the character is looking at or speaking to, but also the mouth.

TIP #4: EYES ON THE PRIZE

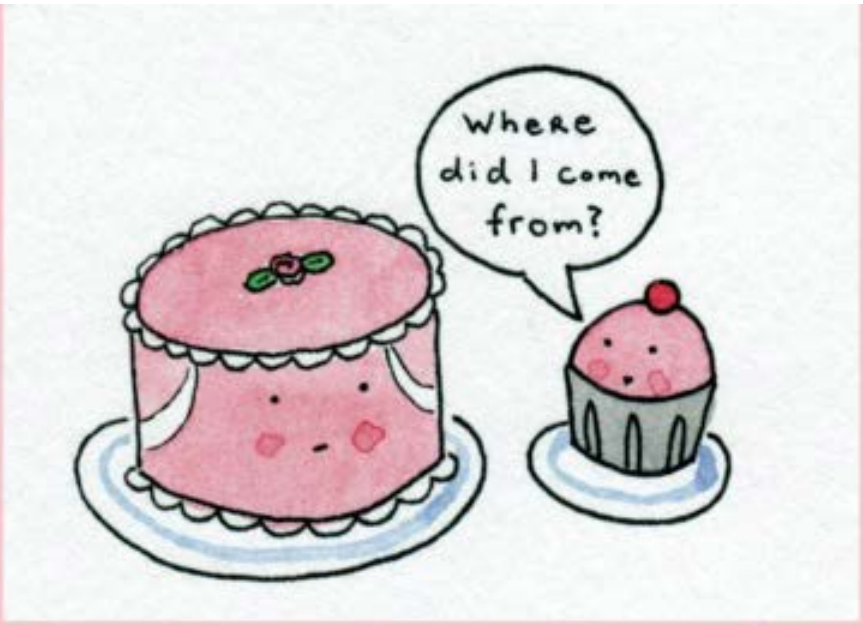
The eyes are the window to the soul. And whether they're realistically rendered or simple dots, they have the ability to be extremely expressive in your drawing.



Take a look at the three robots pictured above. It's actually the same robot form three times, but with subtle differences in the eyes. Starting from the left, you have two simple dots for eyes and a fairly neutral expression. Then, in the middle image, two small lines over the eyes imply annoyance. A simple flick of the pen forms an eyelid in the robot image furthest to the right, which gives it a world-weary expression.

To give another example of how effective eyes can be in creating an effect, check out this cartoon (next page) featuring a cupcake learning the facts of life. In the bottom panel, the simple eyes show great surprise by showing whites on all sides. How different would the outcome of this cartoon be without showing the whites of the eyes?

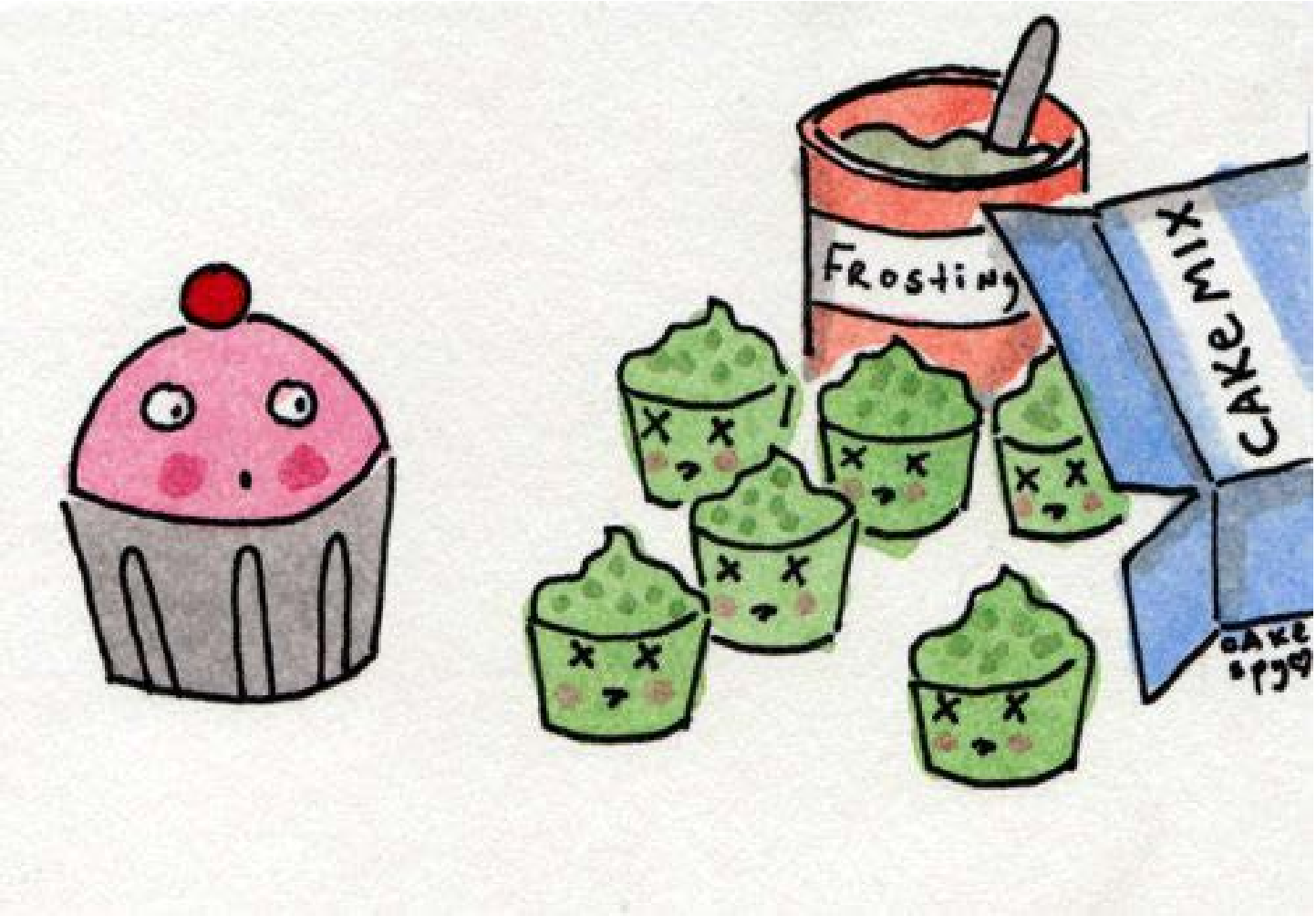
You can also have further fun with the eyes. Little spirals can show confusion; little x's can imply death, inebriation or even zombie-fication (as featured on page 19).


Where did I come from?


Recipes
Recipes

TIP #5: SHOW YOUR TRUE COLORS

Color can also help convey emotion. For instance, a happy face with red cheeks can imply shyness or embarrassment; an angry face colored red can show anger; an unhappy face tinted green can convey jealousy, squeamishness, or (should it ever be necessary) the fact that your character has become a zombie.



TIP #6: MAKE THE FACE YOU'RE DRAWING

This might sound like a downright silly trick, but don't knock it 'til you've tried it. Just as making the voices of characters as you read a bedtime story to children, making the face you're drawing is surprisingly effective.

If making faces while you're drawing is distracting, taking photos of friends or even selfies with the expression you need can help you capture these moments, so you can translate the expressions into your own drawings later.

ADDING MOVEMENT
to Your Artwork

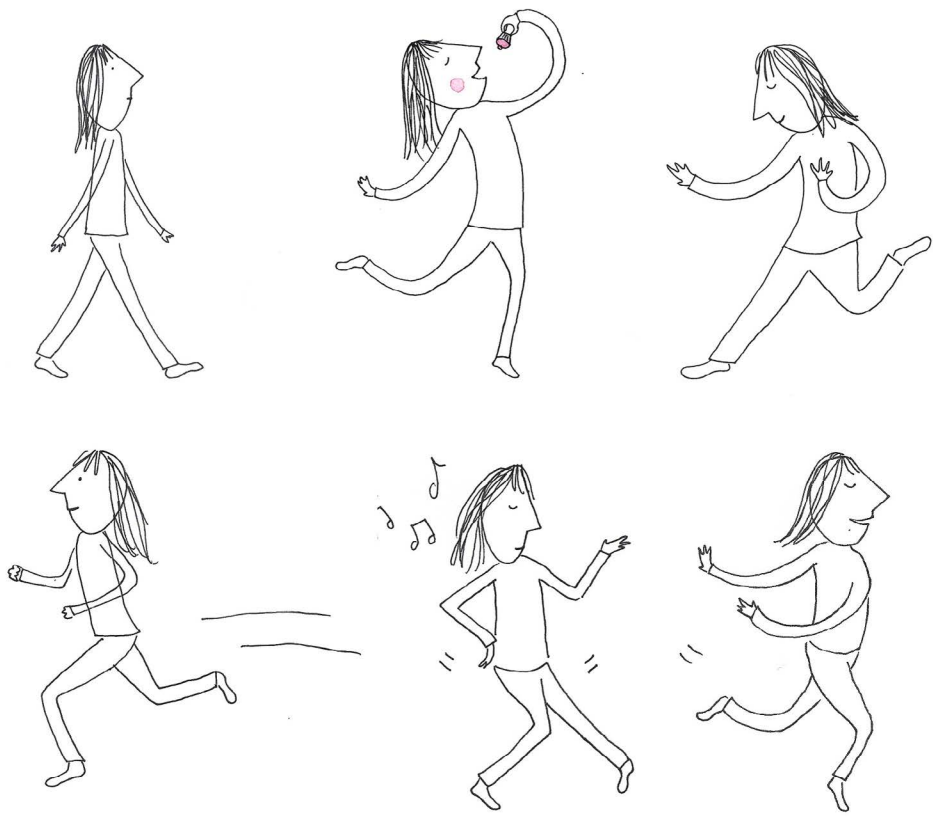
By Jessie Oleson Moore

Movement is an important part of creating captivating artwork. While "motion" and "movement" might immediately imply action, they can also be employed to add a bit of dynamism even to static scenes. A bit of movement breathes life into a piece of artwork, and keeps the viewer's eyes engaged in the world you've created, regardless of whether you're drawing with graphite or working in pen and ink.

There are many different tips, tricks and techniques for adding movement to your artwork. Here are several highly-effective methods for adding motion that you can easily incorporate into your next piece.

PRACTICE CAPTURING MOVEMENTS

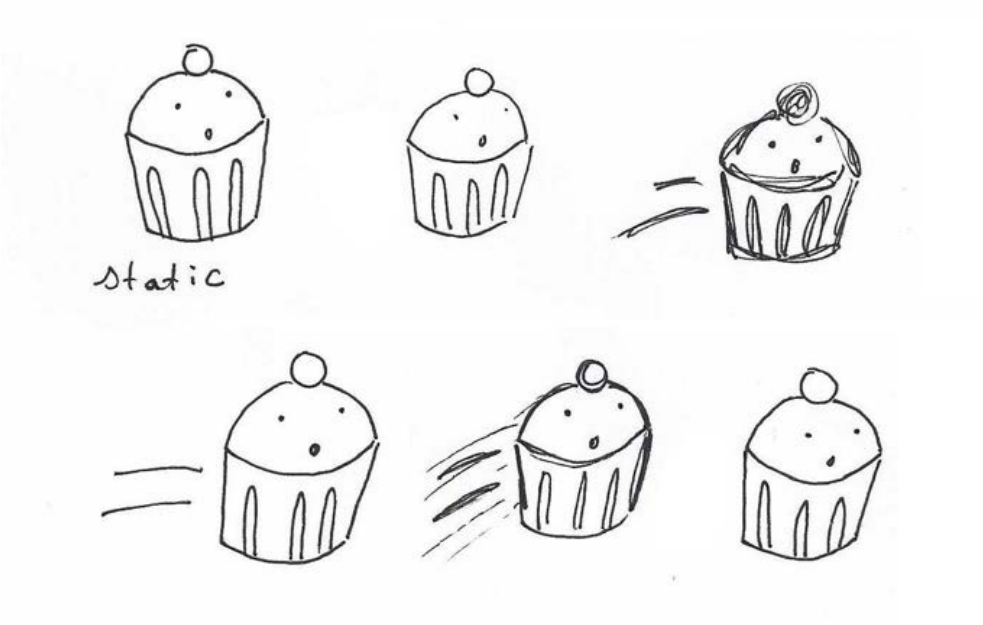
If you don't quite know where to start, take some time to practice capturing movements by taking a cue from a common art school exercise. Sometimes, models will do a series of very short poses for figure drawing — 10 seconds or even less each — and the artist's job is to capture the movement as powerfully, quickly and effectively as possible. The drawings tend to come out quite abstractly, but it is a great way to master movement.



No, you don't need a live model (clothed or unclothed!) to start practicing drawing in this method. You can replicate this by capturing movements of actors in movies or on TV. Recordings of dance performances are also a great way to begin acquainting yourself with anatomy, movement and form.

Work Your Lines

The way in which you lay down line work can affect the apparent motion in a piece. Here are some ways to begin refining your lines.



EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT LINE QUALITIES

In the above illustration, there is a fairly static character pictured top left. However, there are a variety of easy and small adjustments to imply movement.

You could simply use a thin, quickly applied line, as in the top middle image, to add movement. Or, you could use thicker, sketchy lines to make the image crackle with life, as illustrated by the top right image. You could lean the image, which suggests forward movement. Perhaps you could even use a variety of these methods to see what feels natural to you.

ADD LINES TO IMPLY MOTION

It's one of the oldest tricks in the book, but still effective. Adding lines to imply motion, from a car moving to a jaunty jogger or spiraling lines to represent wind can be a simple and beautiful way to convey motion.

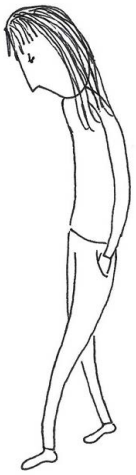
EXAGGERATE LINEAR MOVEMENT

Working your lines to form an exaggerated version of a motion can also be effective. For instance, not all people literally swing their arms while they walk like the character pictured above. However, an exaggerated version of a movement is effective in getting the point across in illustrated form. The work of Keith Haring is a fantastic example of conveying motion through exaggerated movement, with bold, thick lines forming characters with limbs askew to represent a kind of dancing motion.

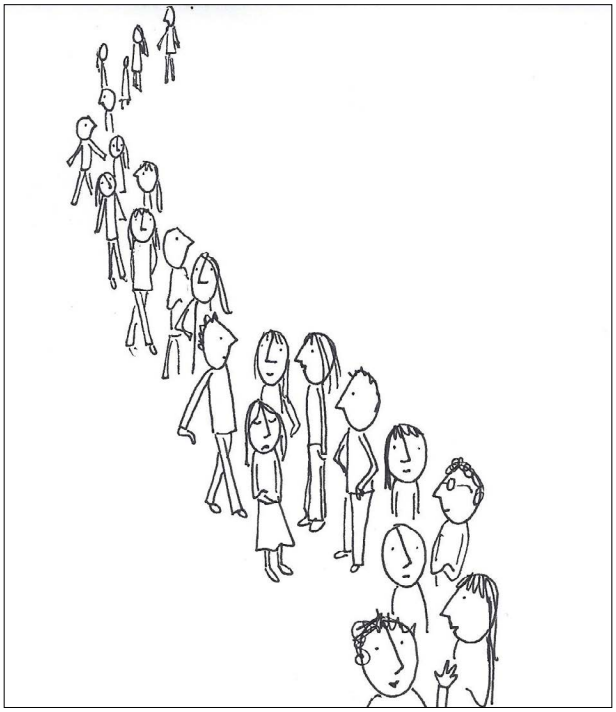
Reference images can be a fantastic way to gather information about movements, offering you a chance to capture the main motion of

a movement and helpful information so that you can accurately capture the anatomy of a movement: Where do elbows go when you run? How do feet look when you dance?, etc.

ADJUST EXPRESSIONS ACCORDINGLY



Adjusting expressions will add context and emotion to any motion you're trying to capture. Just as motions are exaggerated to convey movement, facial expressions should match. In the image to the right, a languid walking pose is rendered a shuffling morose movement due to a downturned expression and heavy-lidded eyes.



CREATE MOVEMENT WITH YOUR COMPOSITION

Even if there is not much movement in individual pieces of your design, the composition can convey a sense of movement, whether you're creating a scene with people, animals, even a landscape or still life. Making your composition a cascade or zigzag can create a sense of movement even when there isn't a whole lot of movement going on in the scene.

You can take this concept further by creating a scene in which there are close up and further away elements, which only adds to a sense of motion.

FURTHER YOUR MOVEMENT WITH COLOR

Color can further accentuate movement in your pieces. Watercolor, with its fluid, liquid color variations, adds movement practically without trying, as does a lushly layered application of colored pencil or pastel.

Flatter media such as marker or acrylic won't add much movement by themselves, but this doesn't mean that they can't be used in clever ways to add more movement. For instance, the famous painting "Starry Night," rendered in oil. Oil paint colors are fairly flat, but by combining colors to create natural gradients and by forming swirls of wind with thickly applied paint, a deep sense of movement is created.

7 Different Methods
FOR COLORING ILLUSTRATIONS

By Jessie Oleson Moore

Adding color can be an easy and effective way of making your pen and ink illustrations sparkle and pop. But what medium should you use to take them from black and white to technicolor? After all, the mode in which you color your pen and ink work can have a profound effect on the tone of the finished piece.

Let's explore several of the many different ways to tint your drawings. We'll begin with a group of pen and ink illustrations that start out quite similar, then taking the drawings on different paths based on different modes of coloring, including a discussion of the pros and cons of each method.

Method #1: Digital

HOW IT'S DONE:

Scan your pen and ink illustration, and color it digitally in an image editing program. If you want to get fancy, you can remove the white background and adjust the contrast on the drawing for strong, crisp lines. This method is most straightforward with illustrations featuring "closed" lines.

ADVANTAGES:

- Easily contained, and you can edit the color easily if you change your mind or just want to experiment.
- As long as you have your computer, you'll always have the right supplies.

DISADVANTAGES:

- The color can be "flat" when done in this way.
- If you prefer a tactile approach, this might not satisfy your desire to get your hands dirty.

Method #2: Pencil / Colored Pencil

HOW IT'S DONE:

Drawing with colored pencils is like coloring in a coloring book, but with a bit more care and refinement. Cross hatching, stippling or the layering of multiple colors can be used to make dimensional tones. Smooth or lightly textured papers work best for this medium.

ADVANTAGES:

- This is a wonderful way to add soft, dimensional color to your illustration.
- It's easy to combine colors gently, making a lush, subtle color scheme.

DISADVANTAGES:

- Some pencils are more opaque than others and can diminish the lines.
- You'll need to avoid heavily textured papers, so that the pencil will coat the surface evenly. As you can see on the example, even a lightly textured paper can yield undesirable white spots on the drawing.

Method #3: Watercolor or Liquid Inks

HOW IT'S DONE:

Once your pen and ink is dry, simply wet and paint, applying the paint in washes or smaller, more delicate strokes. If you are scanning your watercolored work, make sure that it is dry first. If you plan on reproducing the work, make the colors slightly more vivid than you'd like because scanners may not pick up the most subtle of watercolor tones.

ADVANTAGES:

- This adds a fluid, vivid color and painterly quality to pieces.
- It's easy to mix colors and add subtle shadows and highlights.

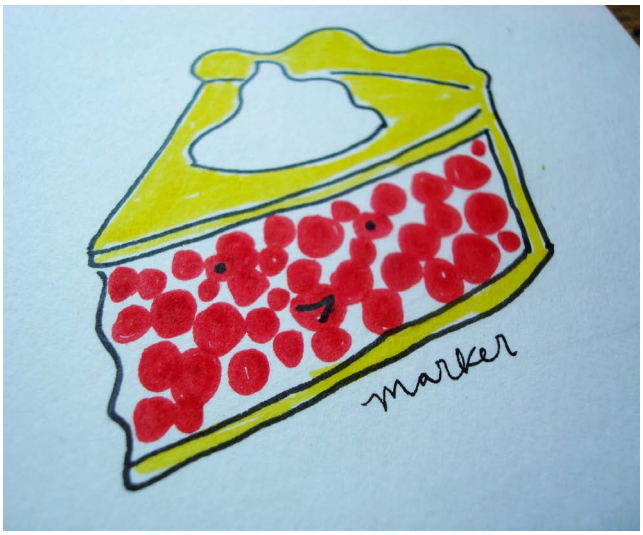
DISADVANTAGES:

- Translucent watercolor is tough to correct if you make a mistake.
- Waiting for watercolor to dry takes a while, so it can be time-consuming.
- Some scanners may not pick up subtleties in color.

Method #4: Marker

HOW IT'S DONE:

Simply color between the lines. Using marker blenders and different pressures to apply the ink can add variety and dimension in color. Use a relatively smooth paper, but one that is thick enough so that it will not bleed. Test your markers on the paper first because sometimes the ink will bleed slightly beyond your markings.

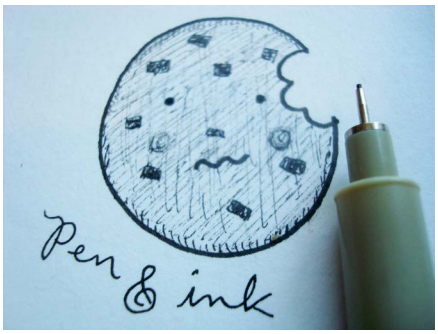


ADVANTAGES:

- Bold, bright, popping colors.
- Marker reproduces easily and well.

DISADVANTAGES:

- It takes some prowess with markers to get used to adding more subtle color, such as shading or blending.
- Markers can bleed, so make sure to test the paper you are using to make sure the color won't bleed outside the lines.



Method #5: Pen and Ink

HOW IT'S DONE:

Create a variety of different pen strokes to "color" your illustration with varying tones. You can use black and white or colored pens for this method.

ADVANTAGES:

- Minimal supplies needed.
- The finished work looks intricate and cool.

DISADVANTAGES:

- This highly detail-oriented method can be very time-consuming.
- It can be hard to keep detailed pen and ink pieces like this from becoming "static," so the drawings sometimes lack movement.

Method #6: Acrylic Paint

HOW IT'S DONE:

You can simply paint between the lines, or color in blocks of paint before using pen and ink on top of the dried paint. The paint will leave a pleasant, light texture from brush strokes.

ADVANTAGES:

- It produces bright, vibrant color.
- The paint is opaque, so you can paint over pencil lines.

DISADVANTAGES:

- Opaque paints can be "flat."
- Mastery of adding shadows and subtle color variations can be more difficult with opaque paints.

Method #7: Mixed Media

HOW IT'S DONE:

Technically, combining pen and ink and any of the media listed above classifies as "mixed media." But we're referring to mixing the media with which you add color to your illustrations here. For instance, watercolor with colored pencil details; acrylic or gouache with accents added digitally.

ADVANTAGES:

- You can combine different aspects of different media to attain unique look that reflects your style.

DISADVANTAGES:

- You have to work in two different types of media, which may mean more money spent on supplies or more time spent.

The Art of Restraint
HOW TO KNOW AN ILLUSTRATION IS FINISHED

By Jessie Oleson Moore

The art of completing an illustration can be likened to knowing when it's time to leave a party. You don't want to leave too early for fear of missing the good stuff — but then again, you don't want to stay too late and have the host start cleaning up to signal that it's time to go. With an illustration, you don't want to quit before you've reached the pinnacle of your work — but then, if you continue too long, you risk an overworked and lifeless piece of art.

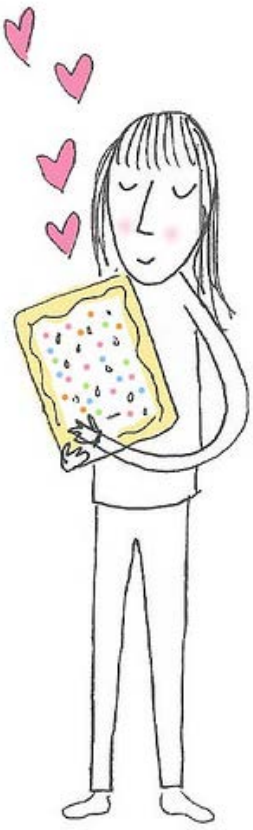
So how do you know when it's time to declare an illustration finished?

Ultimately, this is a decision that is totally up to you. However, there are some tips that can help you determine the best time to call a piece of art complete. Here are several tricks for helping you determine when your illustration is finished.

IS IT DONE?

Practically speaking, does the illustration meet the basic standards of doneness? Have you inked in everything over your pencil lines? Have

you colored in each element that needs tinting? Though it might seem obvious, these are basic things that should be complete before an illustration can be deemed done.



HAVE YOU MADE YOUR POINT?

The point of an illustration is to, well, illustrate an idea. Have you done that? If so, you've done the hard part — everything else is just accentuating your work, like whipped cream on a sundae. For instance, the above illustration is not unfinished, it's an act of restraint, with key elements colored in to create a contrast for the viewer and bring emphasis to certain parts of the composition.

ARE YOU SCANNING THE PIECE AND SAYING "WHAT ELSE?"

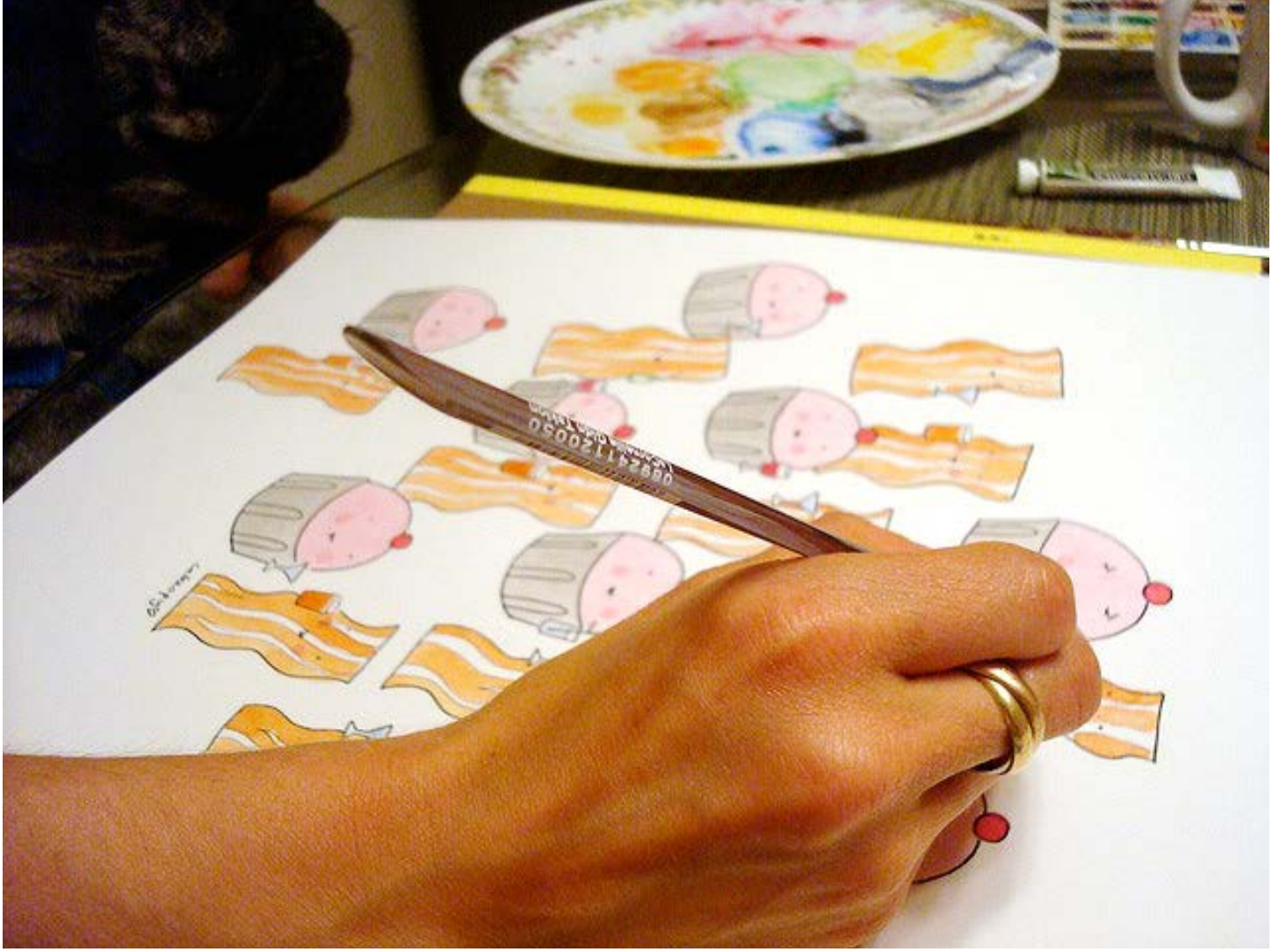
Have you ever tried to trim your own hair, and by going back and forth to "even things out" ended up with a crew cut? It is possible to take it too far by adding too many details. If you catch yourself scanning the work for different things to add, it might be a sign that the piece is done.

Exercises

These tricks can help you hone the art of knowing when it's time to stop.

TRY STOPPING AT 90%

See how it feels to stop just short of doneness. Sometimes, just like eating a meal, it takes a few minutes to realize you're full; likewise with art, sometimes you have to pause and be mindful to truly determine



doneness. What could happen if you stopped when a piece is 90% done? It might be more finished than you realize.

MAKE LIKE GOLDILOCKS

Underdone? Overdone? Or just right? This exercise will help you learn the difference. Make the same simple drawing three times. In one, make it consciously "underdone," while aiming to make another consciously "overdone." Try and see if this reveals any secrets as to where you added too much, or where you need more or when you need to pull back, and try to make the third drawing with these observations in mind.

IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE DONE

Sometimes, you're not quite sure if you need to add more. Here are some methods for handling this situation.

STEP BACK, FIGURATIVELY

Take a breather. Walk around the block, make yourself a snack, do anything to distance yourself from the art for a few minutes. When you come back to it, you might be surprised by how clearly you "see" what it needs or doesn't need.

STEP BACK, LITERALLY.

In art school, we were taught this trick: Put a piece across the room and look at it. Even though you can't see it clearly, you can sometimes get a nice perspective on how the overall piece looks. Sometimes when you are literally too close, you stop seeing the big picture. By looking at it

from a distance, sometimes you can see where an illustration could use more contrast, more movement, and so on.

SCAN THE PIECE OF ART

Scan the piece of art, not visually but literally, on a scanner. By scanning the piece of art at the point you think it might be done, you preserve it as is. You can then continue to work on the original, but if you decide what you add is too much, you still have the scan of the earlier version.

Want to Learn More?

If you dream of taking your illustrations to the next level, check out Craftsy's online illustration class *The Art of the Picture Book*. With expert guidance from published illustrator Shadra Strickland, you'll learn everything you need to know about creating a storybook that will delight children everywhere.

You'll discover the secrets for building complex characters, setting specific moods, enchanting rhythm and more. Plus, get industry tips for preparing your book for a publisher proposal!

Special Offer

Enjoy exclusive 25% savings when you sign up for *The Art of the Picture Book* today!

Click to Save

MEET THE EXPERTS

DAVID HUYCK

David is a picture book maker, cartoonist, animator and designer. Raised on a steady diet of Muppets, cartoons, comic strips and piles and piles of books to read (along with a lot of "time to go outside, David!") he has spent his whole life preparing for this role. His previous online exploits include regular contributions to the now-retired *Drawn!* illustration blog. You can find his books at your favorite bookstore, or you can find him working on his next project in his Minnesota studio.

JESSIE OLESON MOORE

Jessie Oleson Moore honed her illustration skills at the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York City. After many years of working in the greeting card industry, she combined her illustration skills with a love of writing and sweets to found *CakeSpy*, an award-winning dessert website. She's published two books: *CakeSpy Presents Sweet Treats for a Sugar-Filled Life* and *The Secret Lives of Baked Goods*.