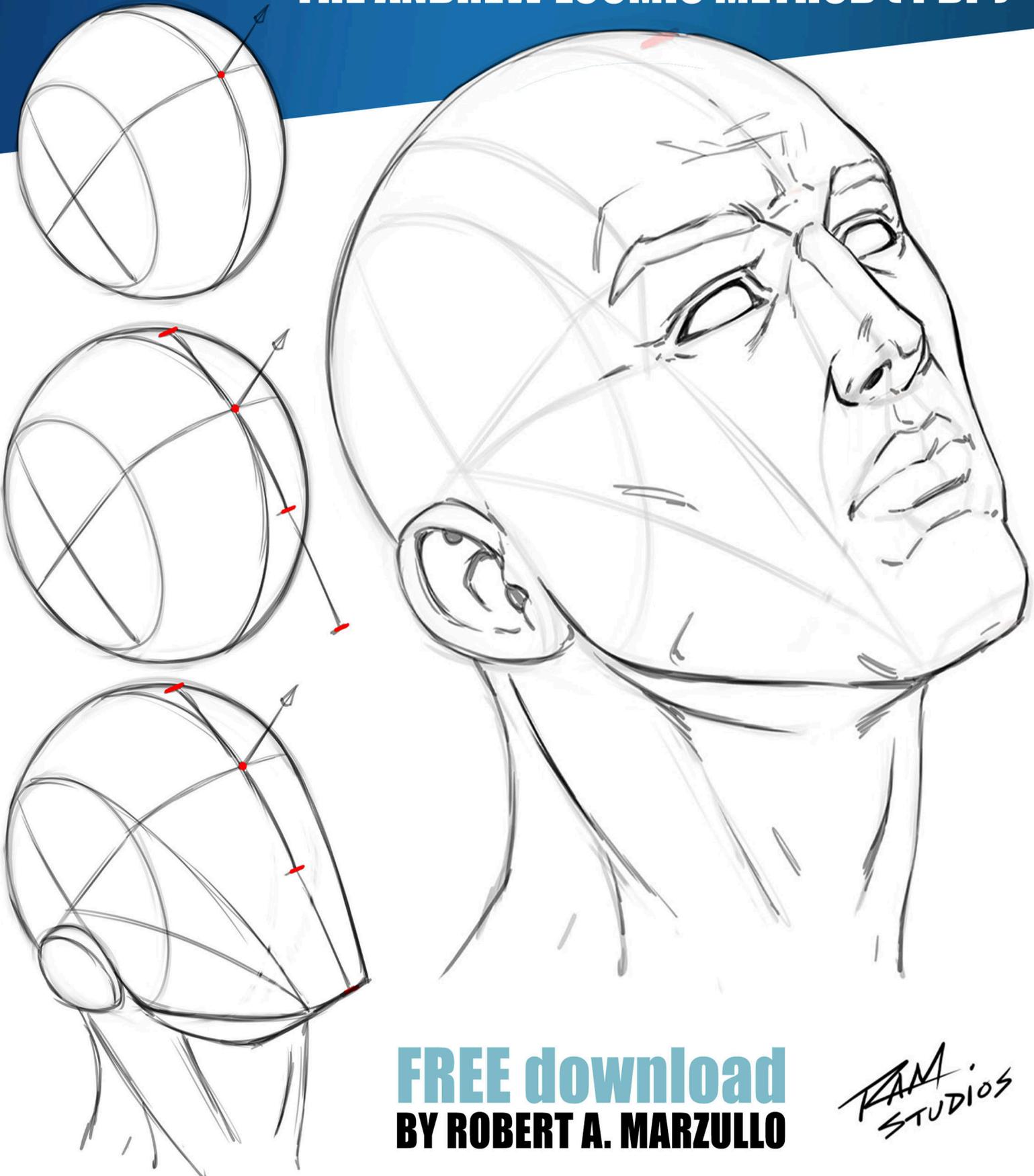


How to Draw Heads

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

THE ANDREW LOOMIS METHOD (PDF)

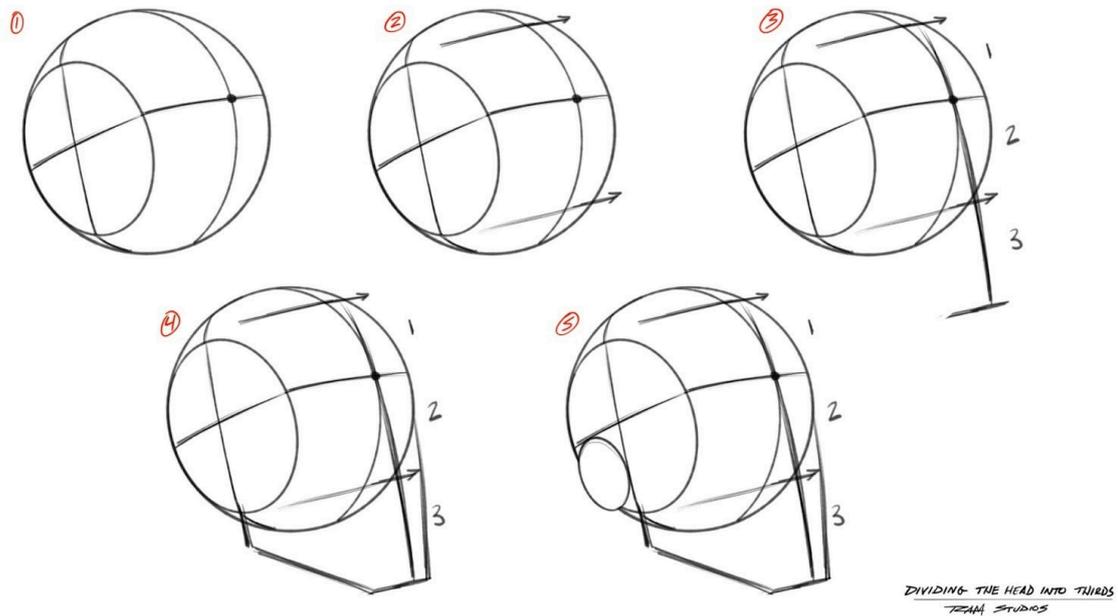


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BY ROBERT A. MARZULLO

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How to Draw Heads

Using the Andrew Loomis Method (PDF)

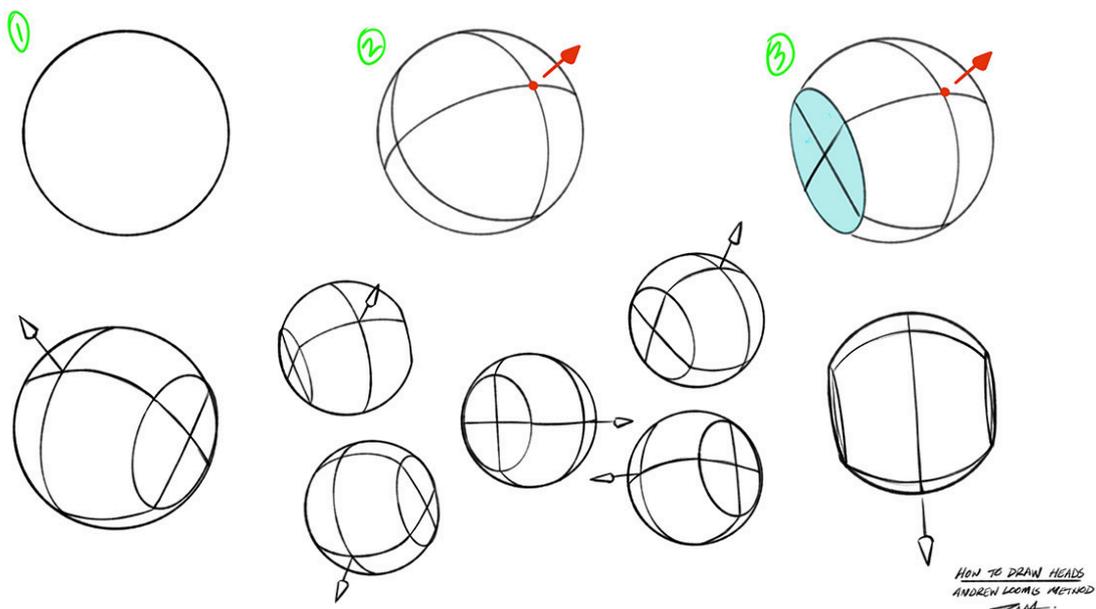


Welcome Back Fellow Artists!

In today's post I want to share the process I use to draw heads of all types from all angles. I learned these techniques from the book by Andrew Loomis.

His method for drawing the head has always resonated with me. So let me share that with you now!

Drawing the Simplified Cranium



Step 1

We first want to start by drawing a perfect circle. Just kidding, yours doesn't have to be perfect. I used a quick shape tool in the Procreate app for mine.

If you are working traditionally that would be the same as using a compass or a circle template of some kind.

The reason I say that your circle doesn't need to be perfect is that in the beginning it is far better to worry about the volume of these exercises rather than the clarity of them.

I made these cleaner for your viewing as a student. When I am drawing most of my characters I don't clean them up this much.

Step 2

For the next step we need to define a center line both horizontally and vertically across the circle. You can do this across the front and the side.

Notice in the illustration above that the red dot marks our front center point.

Step 3

Next we will create an oval on the side of the head. This helps us to define the side plane of the head. I have had a lot of students struggle with this particular part.

A common question that I get is, "**How big should I make the oval?**" I find that it is best to play around with this aspect of the layout.

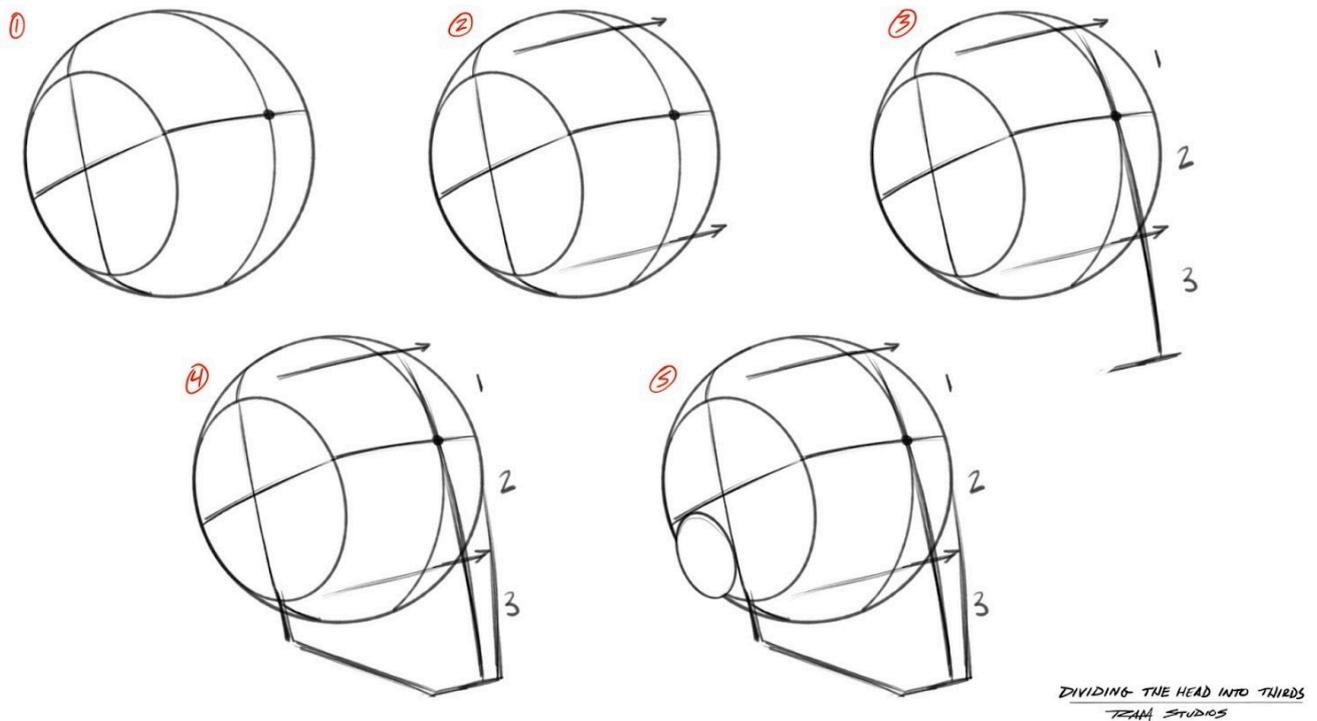
The most common answer you will get is $2/3$'s of the initial circle. I tend to deviate from this because I draw more stylized characters.

Start with the $2/3$'s approach and get comfortable with that. Skulls are pretty much the same proportions and that is what this is really meant to be.

I will show you how I create exaggerations later in the post.

Practice Drawing These from Every Angle Imaginable

Please don't rush past this part. Take your time and log in lots of these sketches. Drawing basic forms from different angles is a big part of getting better at art!



Now we will take the previous step and use it to divide the face into equal one thirds.

Step 1

Draw another example of the previous lesson or pick one that you have already drawn to begin with.

Step 2

Reference the top of the oval and draw lines horizontally across the form to establish the first and second 1/3 of the face.

Step 3

Use these new divisions as a reference point to draw the bottom 1/3.

Step 4

Draw a line down from the center point of the oval to establish the first angle of the jaw line. Then bring that to the lower center with another angle. Follow this around to the side of the face.

Step 5

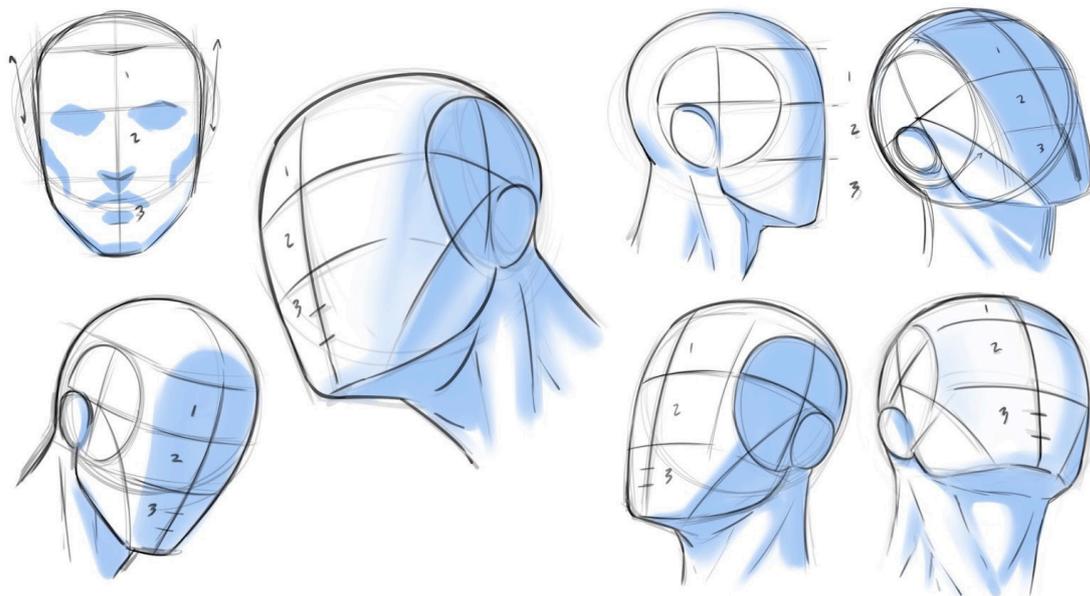
Now add an oval to the back lower quarter of the side plane of the head. This is where the ear goes.

Another thing to consider here is that the jaw lines will vary greatly.
So here I have established a longer, more narrow face.

It is really best to learn to see these initial drawings as guides and reference points and not as strict markings. Again, this is what works for me and I tend to exaggerate my faces.

I was a caricature artist for many years so that probably has a bit to do with it. ;)

Here is a Youtube video that I created that shows you the process for dividing up the head into one thirds. ([Clicking the image will take you to the video.](#))



Basic Shapes for Drawing the Facial Features

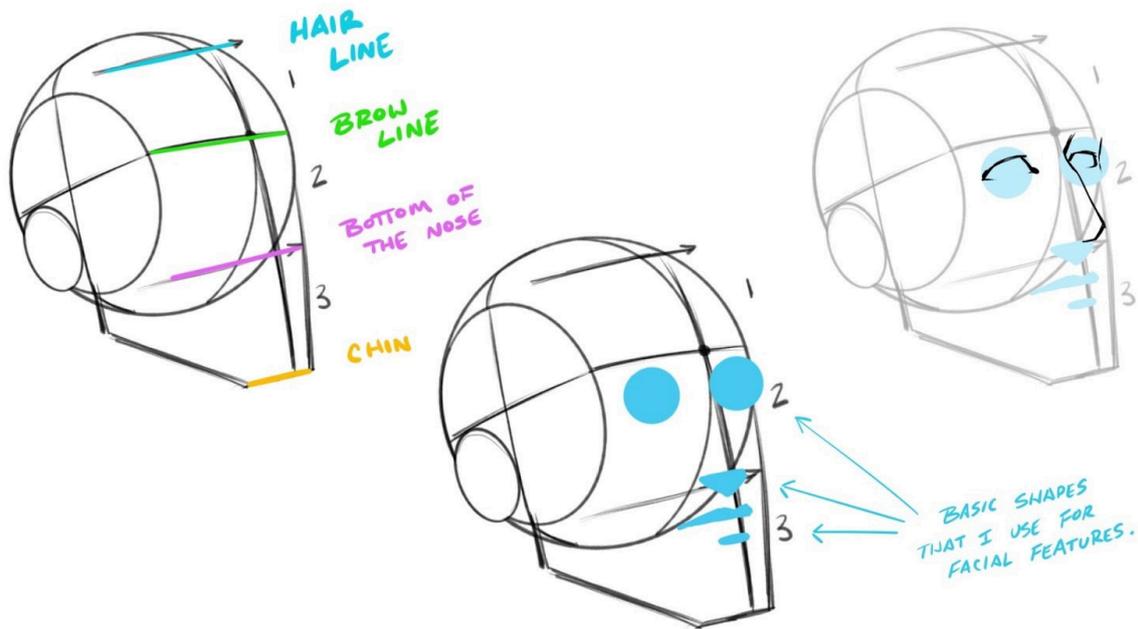
Now that we have divided the head into equal one thirds we can begin to place the facial features.

Notice in the illustration below that the top line gives us the hair line, the middle line in green is the brow line, the purple line is the bottom of the nose, and the yellow is the bottom of the chin.

This is again an area where I would be a bit more forgiving in the approach. You may need to bring the hair line down a bit more for certain character types.

You may not want as much spacing for the nose, or as much height for the jaw, and so on. Start with these methods but as you feel more comfortable you can start to explore and move these guides around.

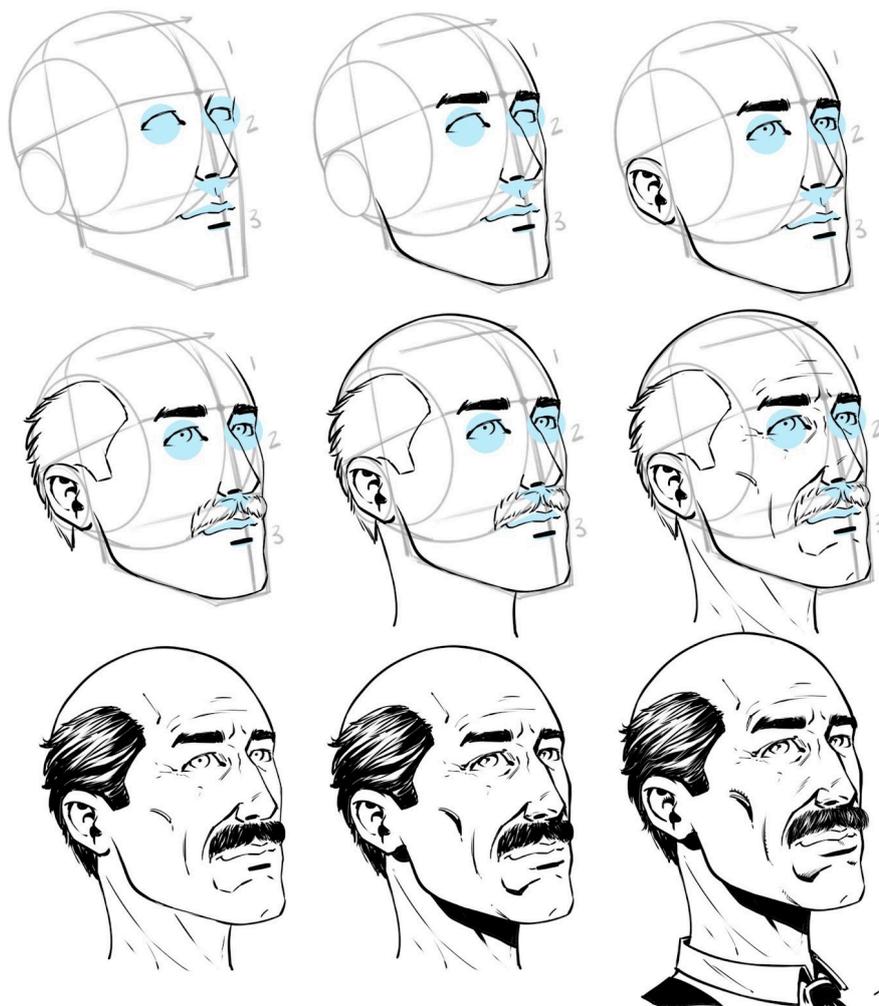
Nothing worse than drawing a bunch of clones!



Another technique that I find to be helpful when drawing the head is to place some basic shapes for reference.

Circles for the eyes, an upside down triangle for the bottom of the nose (I like to imagine the shadow that the nose will cast.), a small “M” like shape for the upper lip, and a small “U” like shape for the bottom of the lip.

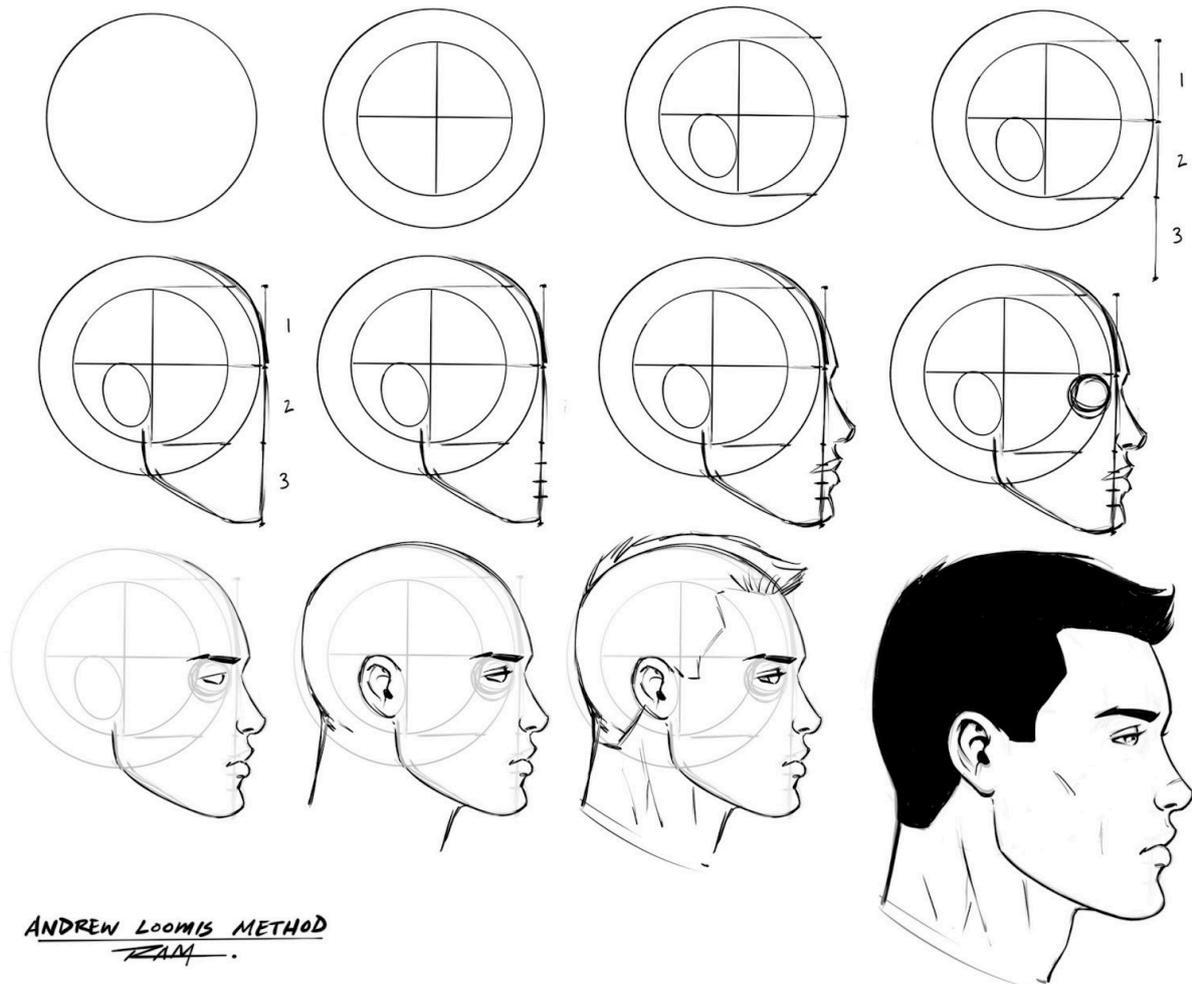
Drawing in the Facial Features



As you can see by the step by step drawings above, it becomes much easier to draw in the facial features with the structure in place.

The real trick is to experiment with the variations and develop the characters that you image. For this one I was going for Alfred from the Batman comics.

Drawing the Side View of the Head



Now we just have to keep repeating the same process from the various angles and experiment with different character types.

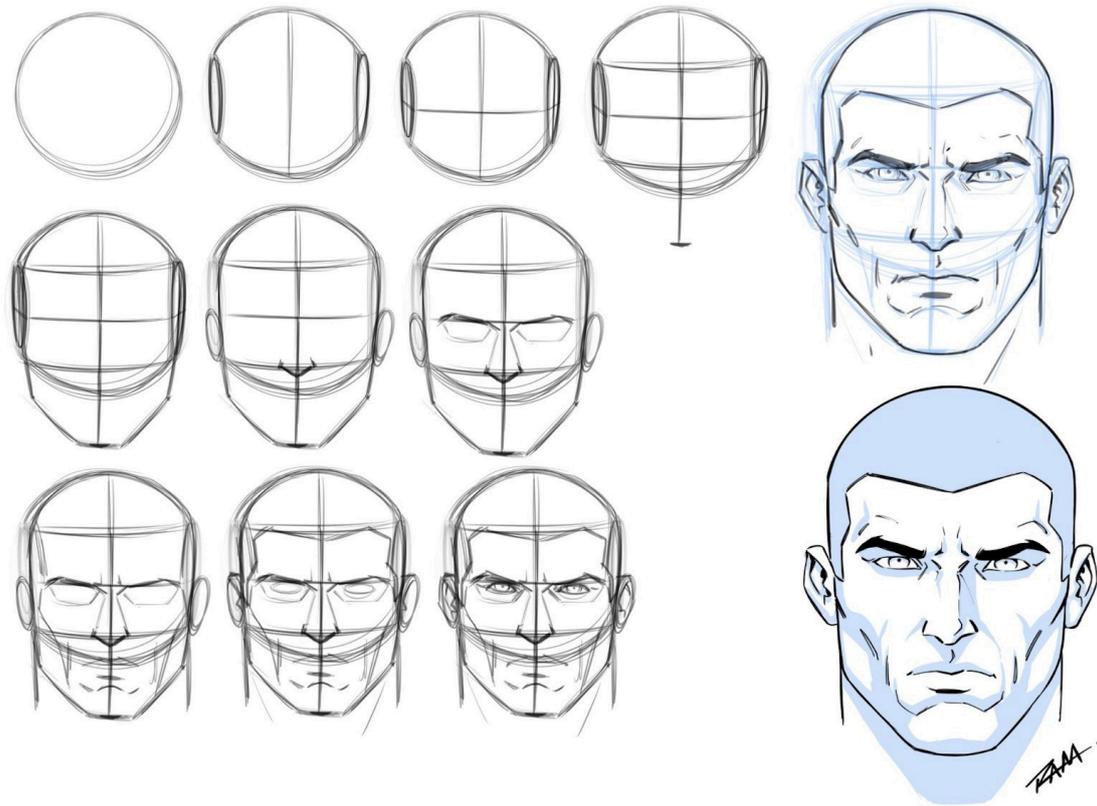
Notice that the side view of the head is all the same steps.

Some other things to keep in mind when drawing the head from a side view is that the sits just behind the nostril.

Also, notice how the top of the ear aligns with the eye brow and the bottom of the ear aligns with the bottom of the nose.

As you draw more and more faces these things start to become very clear in your mind and your drawings begin looking more and more accurate.

Drawing the Front View of the Head



For this front view notice that the distance between the eyes is equal to the width of one eye. Also the distance on the sides of the eyes to the edge of the head is also one more eye.

Simply put the total width of the head is generally equal to **5 eyes wide**.

Also, the width of the mouth aligns to the approximate middle of the eyes.

Remember to treat these concepts as guides rather than hard rules or else we run the risk of drawing clones.

Using Shape Language

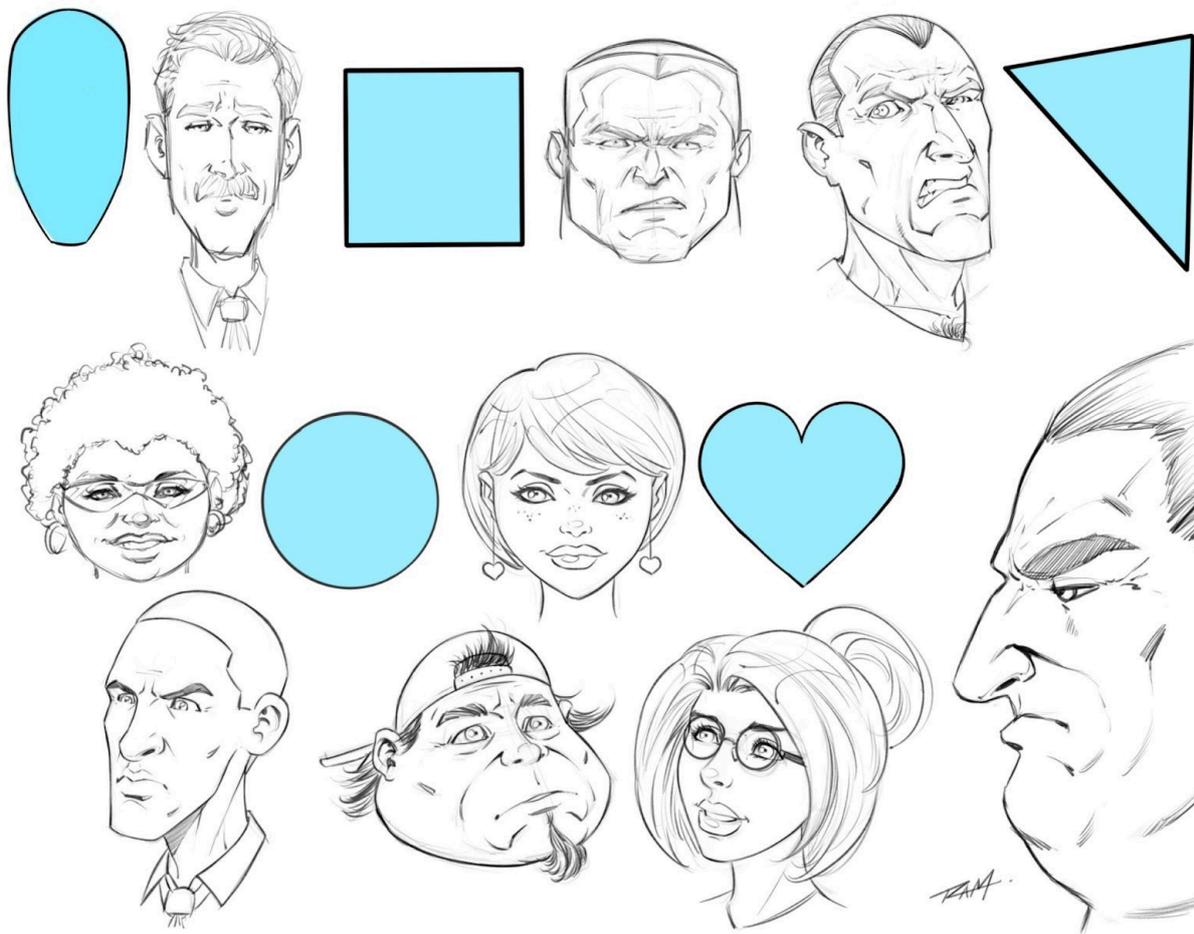
Another thing to consider is how shape language plays a role in the way we draw our characters and how they are perceived.

Notice in the drawings below that the characters can be drawn with distinct shapes that direct their narrative.

Triangles or sharp angles generally convey danger and work well for villainous characters.

Squares or 90 degree angles express a sense of strength and dependability.

Circles or heart like shapes convey love and safety.



Try drawing some basic shapes and seeing what type of characters you can come up with. It can be a lot of fun to do!

Practice Various Hair Styles

Another thing to practice is all the various hair styles. Start with basic patterns like an "S" curve or ribbon technique and then experiment from there.

You can also start with the silhouette and then add to the interior forms like the drawings below...





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① HAIR LINE

② OVERALL SHAPE

③ FLOW + DIRECTION



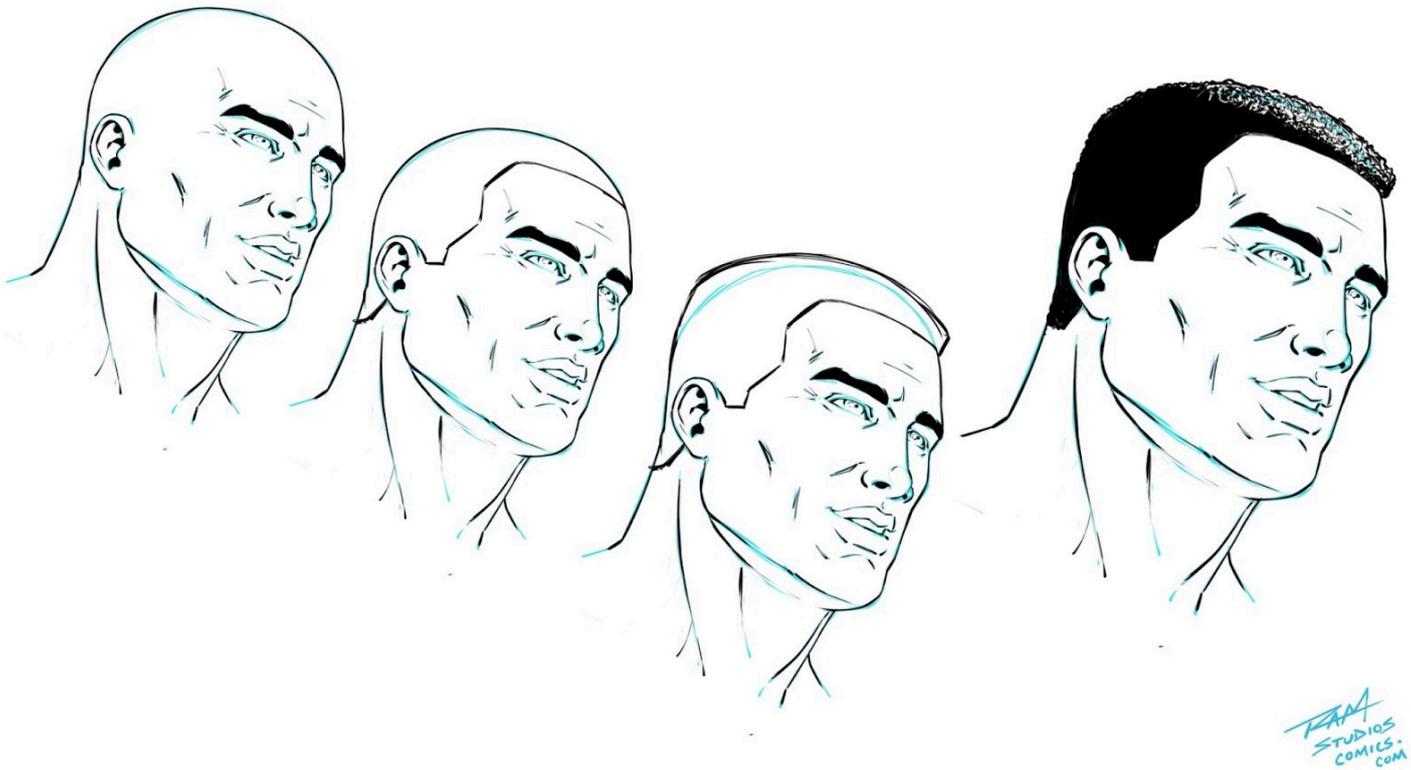
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④ ADD INTERIOR VOLUMES + BEAUTY LINES.

⑤ INK THE HAIR KEEPING THE LIGHT SOURCE IN MIND.



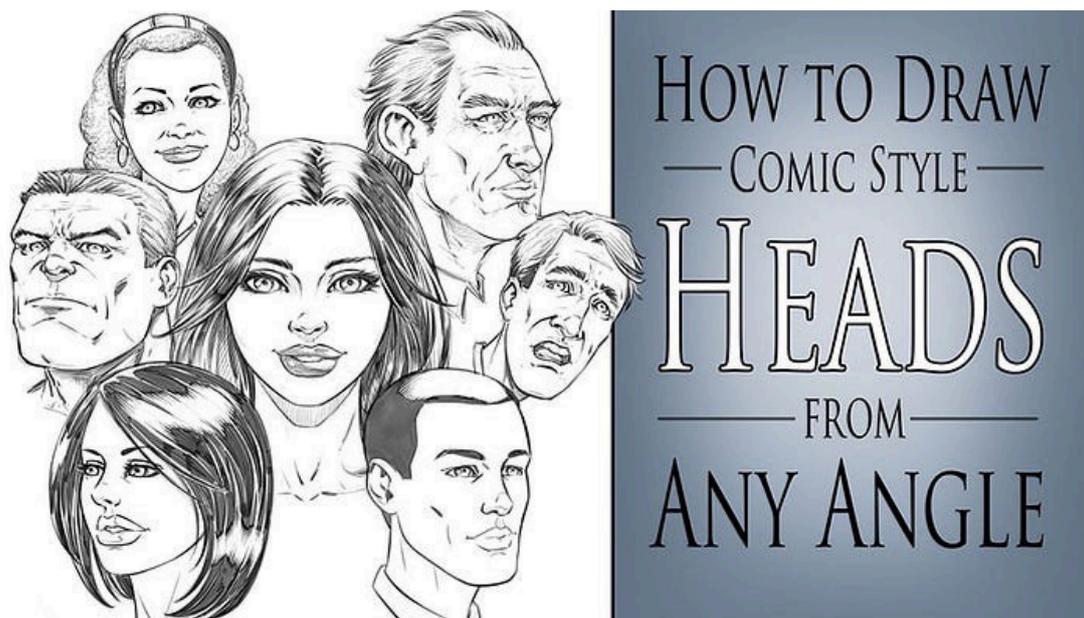
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I hope these step by step art files have helped you and I would love to see your work.

Let me know if you have any questions and good luck with your studies!

Ready to learn more and master drawing heads from any angle? Use this link for a special discount on my full head drawing course— [Click here...](#)



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