

Exercise walk-through

3.6

Composition and the Picture Plane

AP Drawing

Composition and the picture plane

Composition is a **named** drawing skill

– and the **first thing a scorer sees**.

- what you **crop out** is as expressive as what you keep
- the **rule of thirds** beats dead centre
- design the **negative space** : the empty shapes are shapes you **drew**
- keep the **figure-ground** relationship **readable**

Test crops with a **viewfinder** (or a phone) **before** committing to the page.

Change the **viewpoint** : eye level is neutral – low or high angles make ordinary subjects **fresh**.

Drawing the figure and portrait

The figure combines **every** drawing skill at once: **proportion**, gesture, form and likeness.

The adult figure is about **7.5 heads** tall, and the body's halfway point is near the **hip**, not the waist.

Drawing the figure, and the head

start with gesture

and the **big masses** – ribcage, pelvis, skull

features come later

features and fingers come last, once the masses are placed and in proportion

why that order

a beautifully drawn eye in the wrong place cannot be rescued; a well-placed mass can always be refined

checking likeness

use **landmark distances**, not memorised rules alone – **every face bends the average**

hands and feet

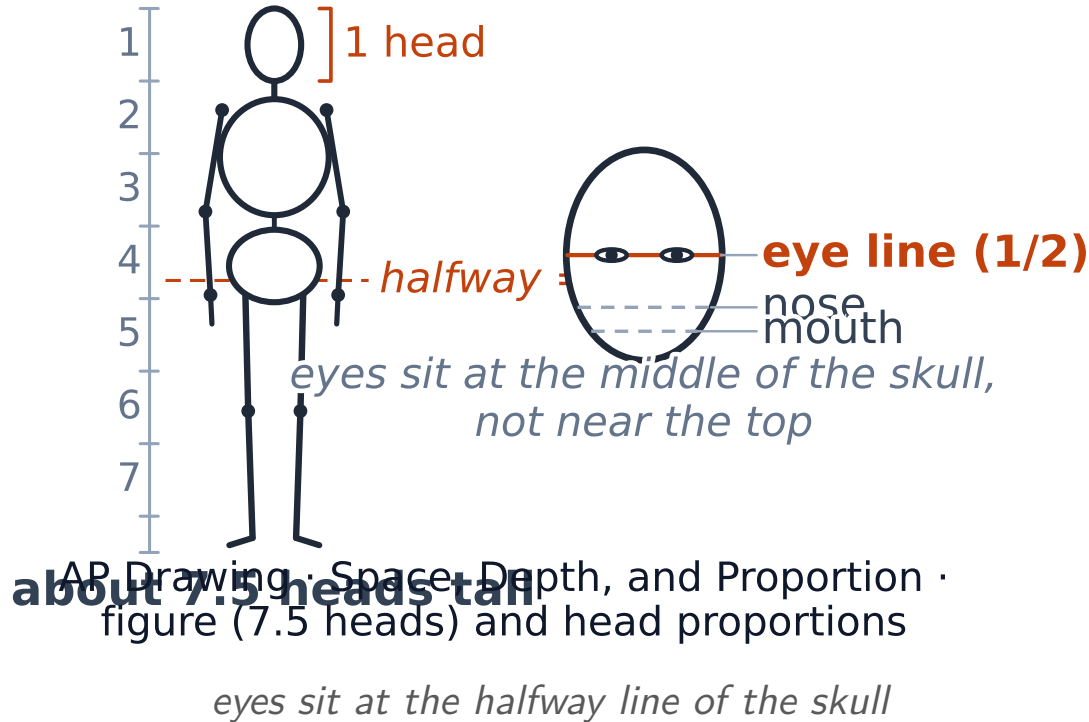
draw them as **simple geometric mittens and wedges first**, then divide into parts

the same logic

large shape first, subdivision second – exactly as with the box in perspective

“Big to small” is one habit applied everywhere in this unit: masses before features, mittens before fingers, boxes before objects.

Drawing the figure and portrait, in detail



The figure combines **every** drawing skill at once: **proportion**, gesture, form and likeness.

Worked example – checking a perspective drawing

Before you render, run this check

Every depth line must actually **aim at its vanishing point**. Lay a ruler along each one and follow it to the horizon. Perspective errors are the **easiest** mistakes for a scorer to spot – and the cheapest to fix, **before** you spend three hours shading.

Include one strong **observational space** – an interior, a stairwell, a street. It demonstrates the *space* skill **unmistakably**.

Exercises 2.1-2.2

2.1 The empty shapes around a subject are its

[1]

☐

A positive space

B negative space

C liminal space

D wasted space

2.2 Why is placing a subject on a third-line often stronger than dead centre?

[2]

Exercises 2.1-2.2

2.1 The empty shapes around a subject are its

[1]



- A positive space
- B negative space
- C liminal space
- D wasted space

2.1 B

- **negative space** is designed, not leftover

2.2 Why is placing a subject on a third-line often stronger than dead centre?

[2]

2.2

- dead centre is static/predictable; a third-line placement creates a more dynamic, designed balance

Exercise 2.3

2.3 Name two things that can lead the viewer's eye to the focal point. [1]

3 Studio & portfolio tasks

3.1 Make a **composition study set** of one subject.

(a) Draw three thumbnails: centred, rule-of-thirds, and a cropped close-up. [3]

(b) Mark the negative space in your strongest thumbnail. [1]

3.2

() Redraw one subject from an unusual **viewpoint** (very low or very high). [2]

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Full solution 2.3

2.3

- any two of: lines/paths, value contrast, areas of detail

3.1

- three genuinely different compositions; one clearly uses the rule of thirds; negative space identified as a designed shape

3.2

- a clearly non-eye-level viewpoint; the fresh angle strengthens the subject