

# HOW TO DRAW SUPER SUPERHEROES!

## A GUIDE TO DRAWING SUPERHEROES MARVELOUSLY!

Excerpts from *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way* by Stan Lee & John Buscema. In this section we're going to cover the very basics. For further exploration of one or multi-point perspective foreshortening, drawing heads, creating a sense of action, and other awesome drawing techniques, please use the book/full pdf for further help. You might want to print out sections for students to use as reference guides as they draw.

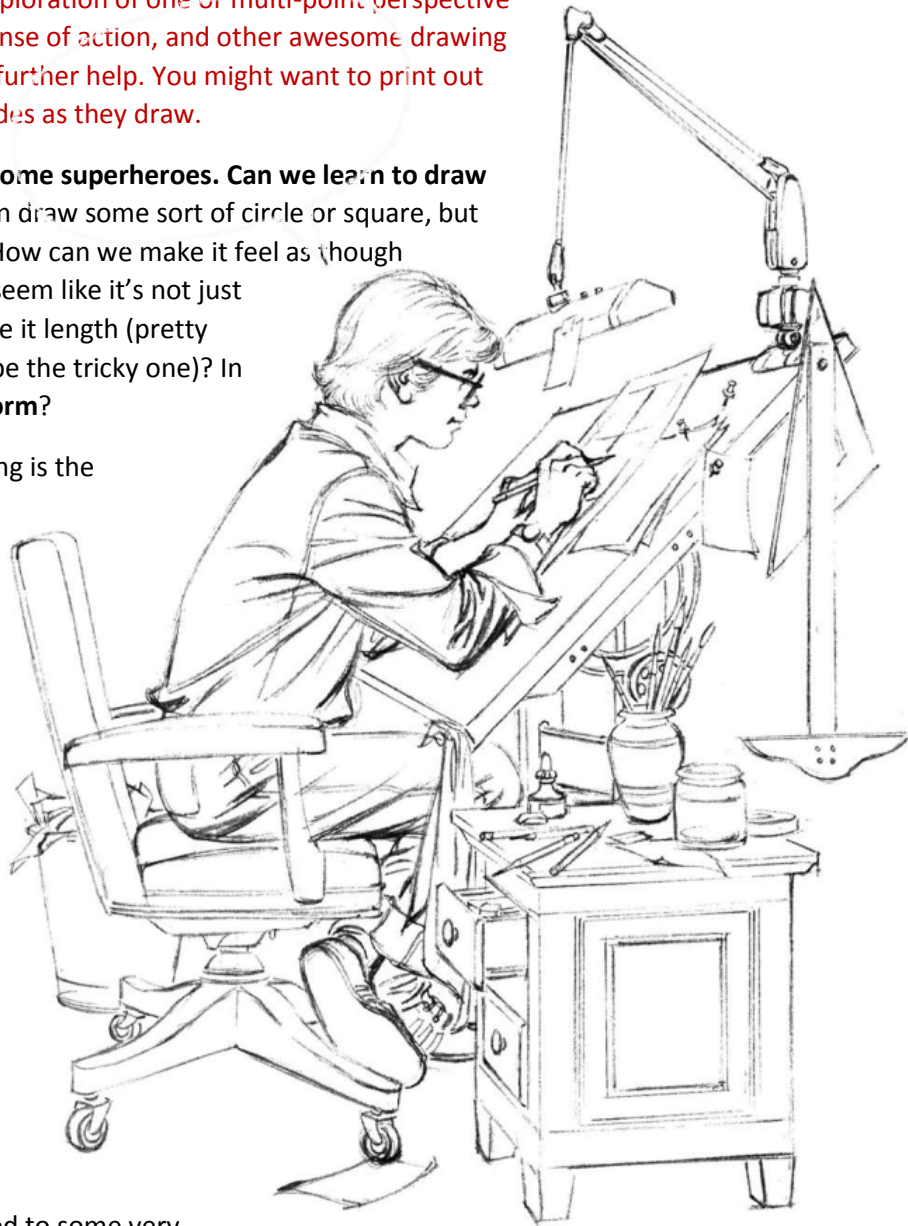
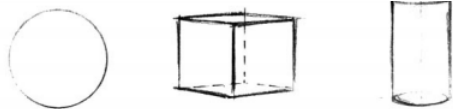
**Let's try it out! We're going to try drawing some superheroes. Can we learn to draw like Jack Kirby or John Buscema?** Anyone can draw some sort of circle or square, but how do we make it look like the real thing? How can we make it feel as though we can just reach out and touch it? Make it seem like it's not just laying there flat on the page? How do we give it length (pretty easy), width (not hard), and depth (this can be the tricky one)? In other words, how do we give it the proper **form**?

One of the main things that can ruin a drawing is the appearance of flatness. Too many beginning artists and even some old hands tend to concentrate on height and width and then neglect the important dimension of depth—really just another word for thickness.

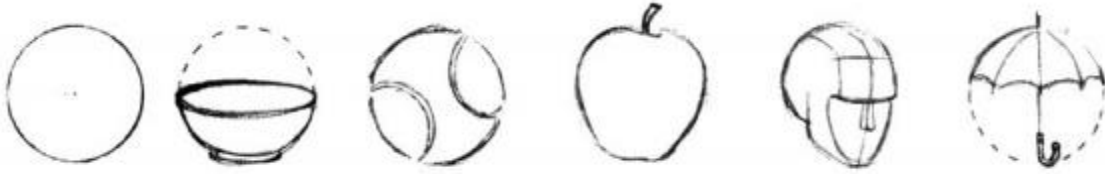
Whatever you draw should seem to have bulk, body, weight, thickness. It should seem solid. Every artist has to train themselves to think of everything you draw as being solid—as having some bulk to it. Think all around it—its sides as well as its top and bottom.

And remember, don't get impatient with the basics. It's easier to do more complicated drawings (like Spiderman in action) if you know the preliminary stuff.

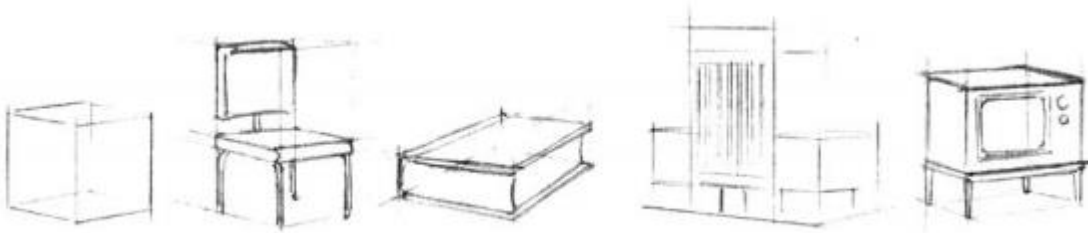
Like the fact that most objects can be reduced to some very simple shapes, in fact, three simple geometric shapes. A. the Sphere (or ball), B. the Cube (or box), and C. the Cylinder (or pipe.) Look carefully and you'll see that most every drawing is based on one or more of these three key shapes.



**SPHERE**



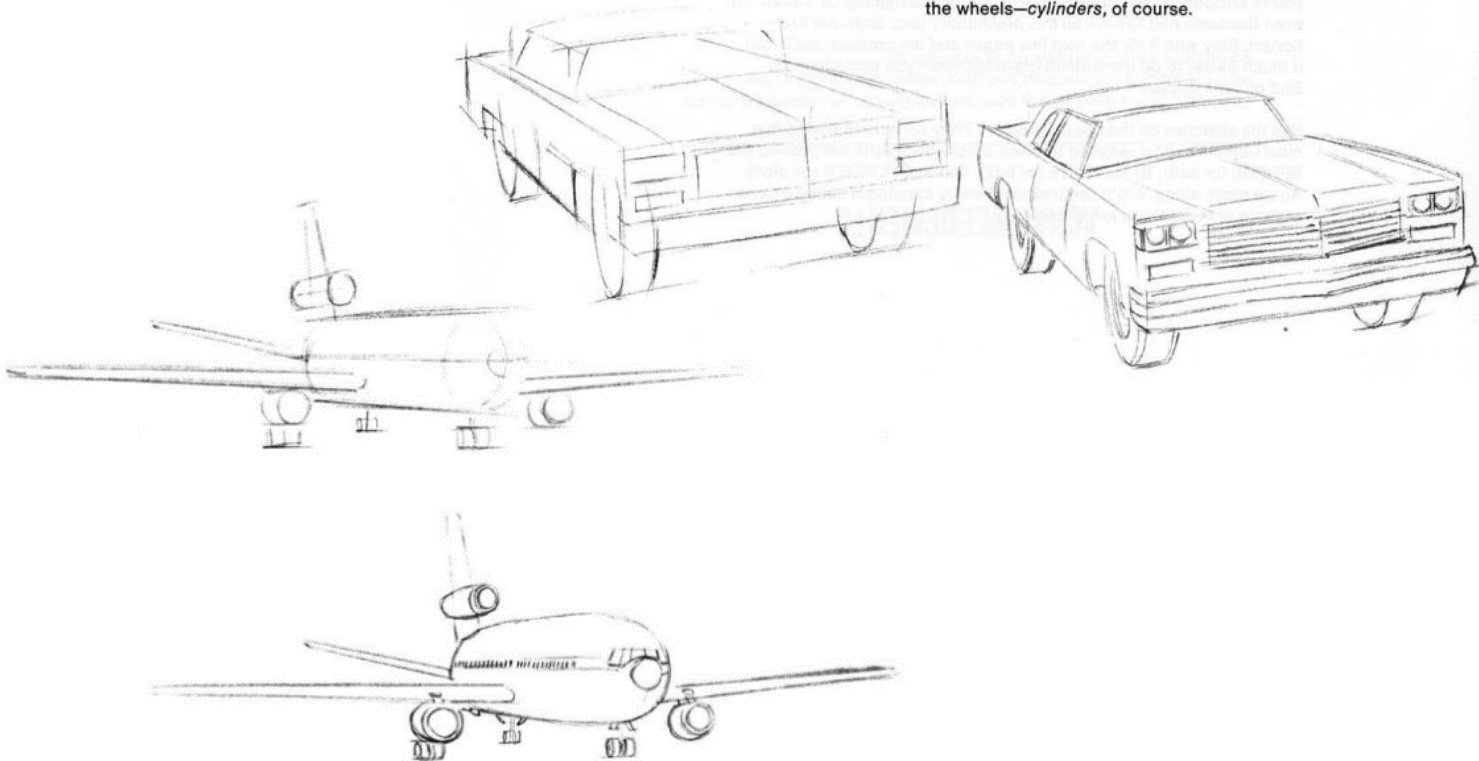
**CUBE**



**CYLINDER**



Now let's consider the automobile. Notice how there's a large *cube* representing the shape of the body, with a smaller *cube* denoting the window and roof area. As for the wheels—*cylinders*, of course.

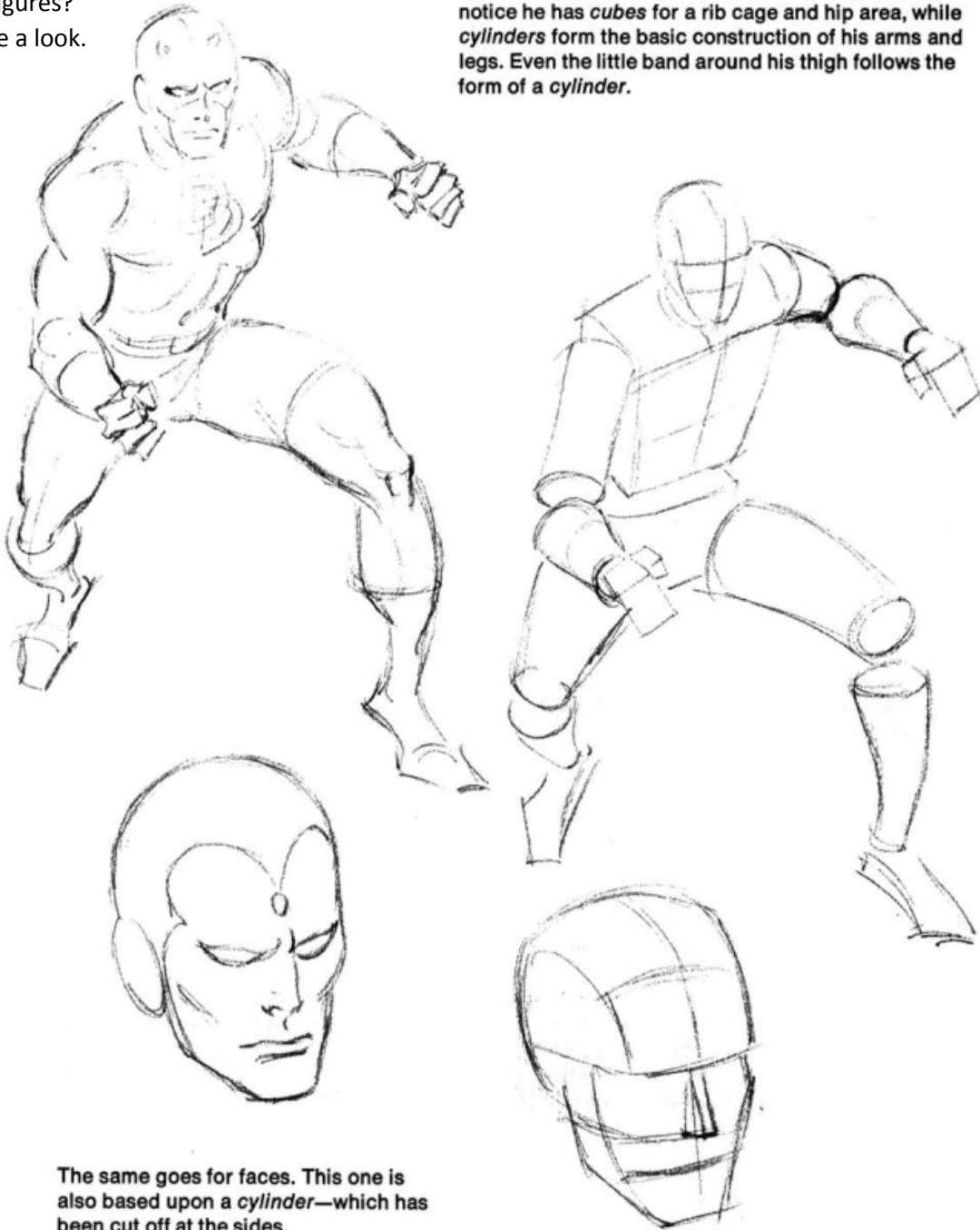


The plane is equally easy. As you can see, it's composed of a number of simple cylinders.

The purpose of this is to train you to “think through” any objects you see, especially the objects you want to draw. Don’t just see them as they are, but rather see them as made up of any combination of our three basic shapes. Sphere, cube, and cylinder may be the most important words you ever learn when it comes to drawing. Once it becomes a habit to think in terms of spheres, cubes, and cylinders when you see or draw an object you’ll find your drawings will begin to take the proper shapes and forms, which seems to make them come alive.

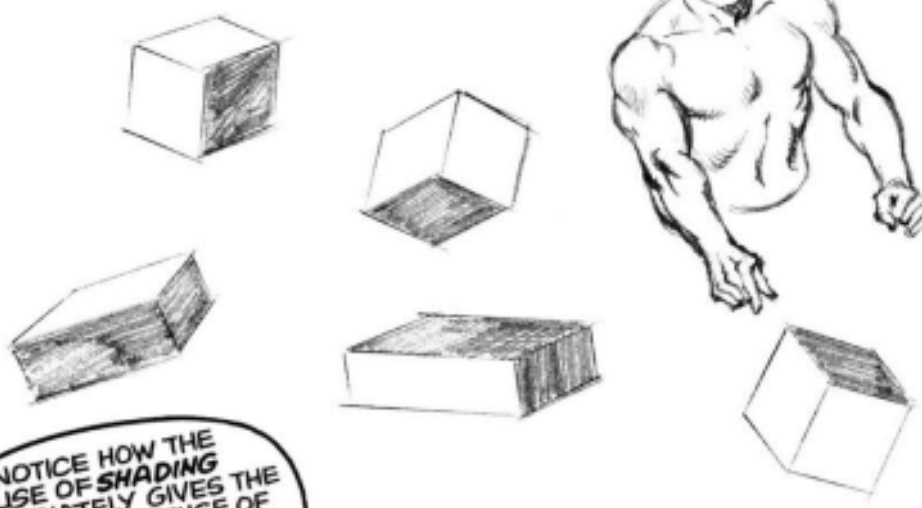
So how does this apply to human figures?  
Let’s take a look.

As promised, let’s see how what we’ve learned relates to the human figure. In this quick sketch of Daredevil, notice he has *cubes* for a rib cage and hip area, while *cylinders* form the basic construction of his arms and legs. Even the little band around his thigh follows the form of a *cylinder*.



The same goes for faces. This one is also based upon a *cylinder*—which has been cut off at the sides.

NOW, LET'S GET A LITTLE HEAVIER. EVEN SPHERES, CUBES, AND CYLINDERS CAN USE SOME EMBELLISHMENT. AND THIS IS THE WAY WE ADD **SHADING** (BLACK TONES) TO REINFORCE THE FEELING OF DIMENSION.



NOTICE HOW THE USE OF **SHADING** IMMEDIATELY GIVES THE OBJECTS A SENSE OF SOLIDITY. THEY SEEM TO HAVE DEPTH, ROUNDNESS, AND MASS.



OKAY, OKAY! IT'S TIME TO START PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER IN A PICTURE. SO WHAT'RE YOU WAITING FOR? TURN THE PAGE, O POTENTIAL PRODUCER OF PHANTASMAGORIC PICTURE PANELS!

## LET'S STUDY—THE FIGURE!

Here we go! What we've been waiting for. We've covered some of the basics (of course there's always more to learn and practice when it comes to drawing) but now on to the main course.

Characters are key when it comes to comics. Thus figure drawing ranks up there as pretty important! Everything is based on how we draw the characters: the heroes, villains, and of course the never ending group of bystanders and supporting stars. Superhero comic books are the stories of people after all.

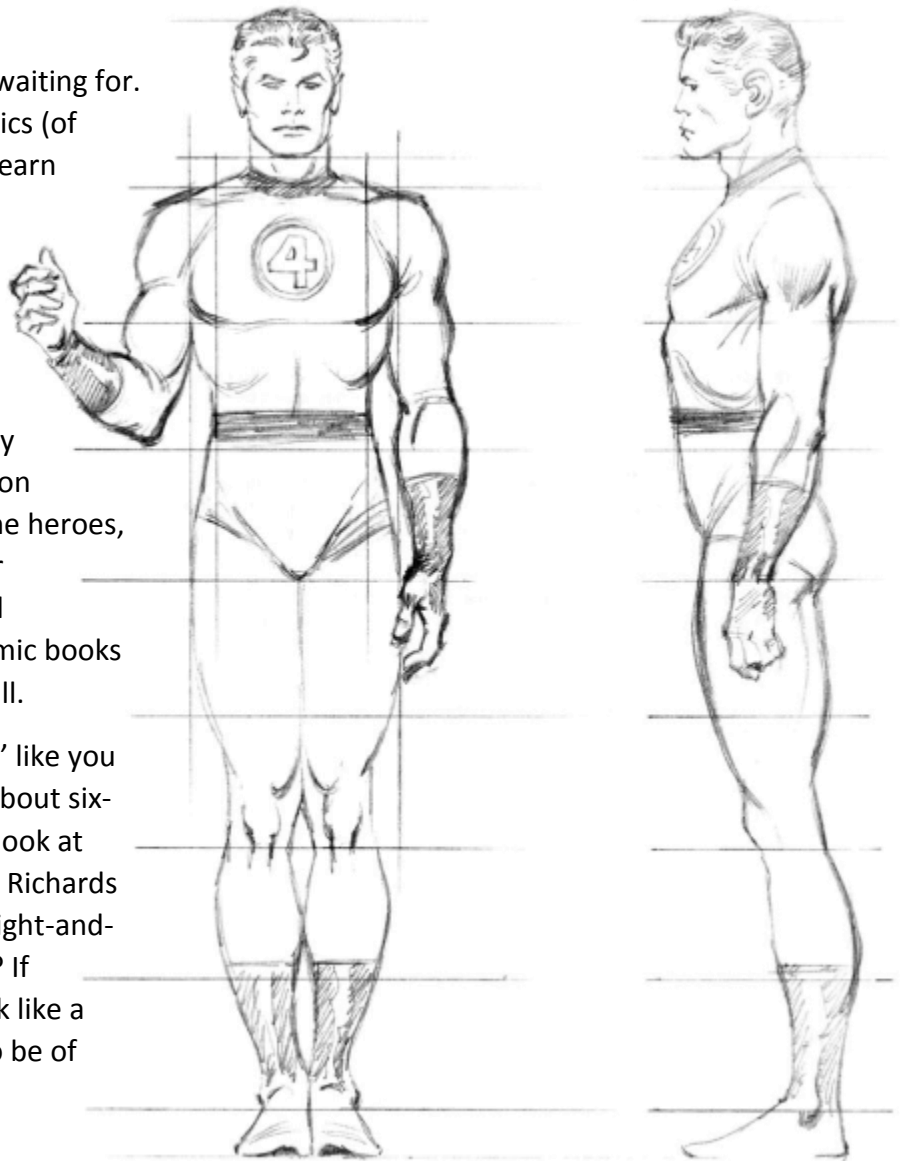
Let's start with an 'average Joe,' like you or me. Most average guys are about six-and-a-half heads tall. But if we look at this drawing of superhero Reed Richards and count 'em up, he's about eight-and-three-quarters heads tall. Why? If we draw a hero, he's got to look like a hero—thus he needs to be of

'heroic proportions.'

Unfortunately, if

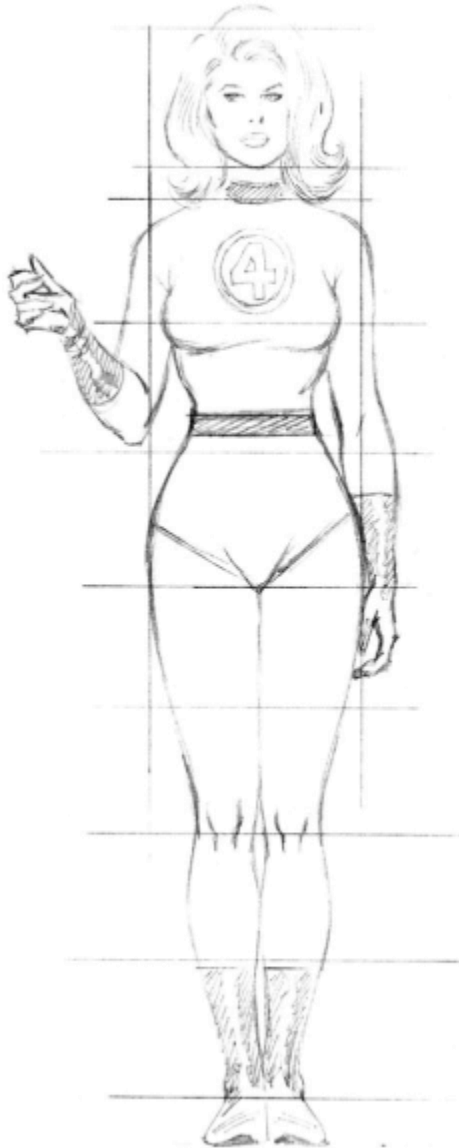
he's only six-and-a-half heads tall he's going to look sort of squatty in a comic book. Which of course if you want your superhero to be cuddly and squatty (like The Thing from Fantastic Four) then that's totally awesome and you can go with a ratio of six heads high.

Then we have to make the shoulders good and wide, and the hips very narrow. In comic books (and somewhat in general) males are usually drawn more angular (with sharper edges) than females are. A good helpful tip to remember with arms? The elbows should fall just a little bit below the waist (the part right below where your ribcage ends) and that is true for both men and



women. As a guide, try to remember that the hand (on both male and females) always falls mid-thigh on the body when the person/figure is standing.

When drawing superwomen they are still eight-and-three-quarters heads tall, but they are



often drawn on a smaller scale than men. Some artists draw women's heads slightly smaller than a males and generally draw them on a smaller scale all over. Though their hips are usually drawn wider in relation to their shoulders than they would be on a male. While muscles can be emphasized on females as well as males, they aren't usually drawn as prominently on females as they are on their male counterparts. (Though if you want to, go ahead!) Women are usually drawn with smoother edges compared to the more angular rendition of men.

The main purpose of the illustration on the next page is to show the difference between the way they might draw a normal nice looking 'average Joe' and a heroically proportioned superhero. **What do you see are the differences?** The superhero is larger with broader muscles, more muscular arms and legs, a heavier chest and an even more impressive stance. There's nothing wrong with the average guy, but a

superhero has to look more dramatic, more imposing than the average guy. **Why?** Perhaps the most important part to remember is to always slightly **exaggerate** the heroic qualities of your hero and attempt to ignore any negative undramatic qualities. Make the stance bigger, the muscles heavier, plant the feet farther apart, make the hands bigger and more powerful! Exaggerate! This can spell the difference between great artwork and everyday artwork.

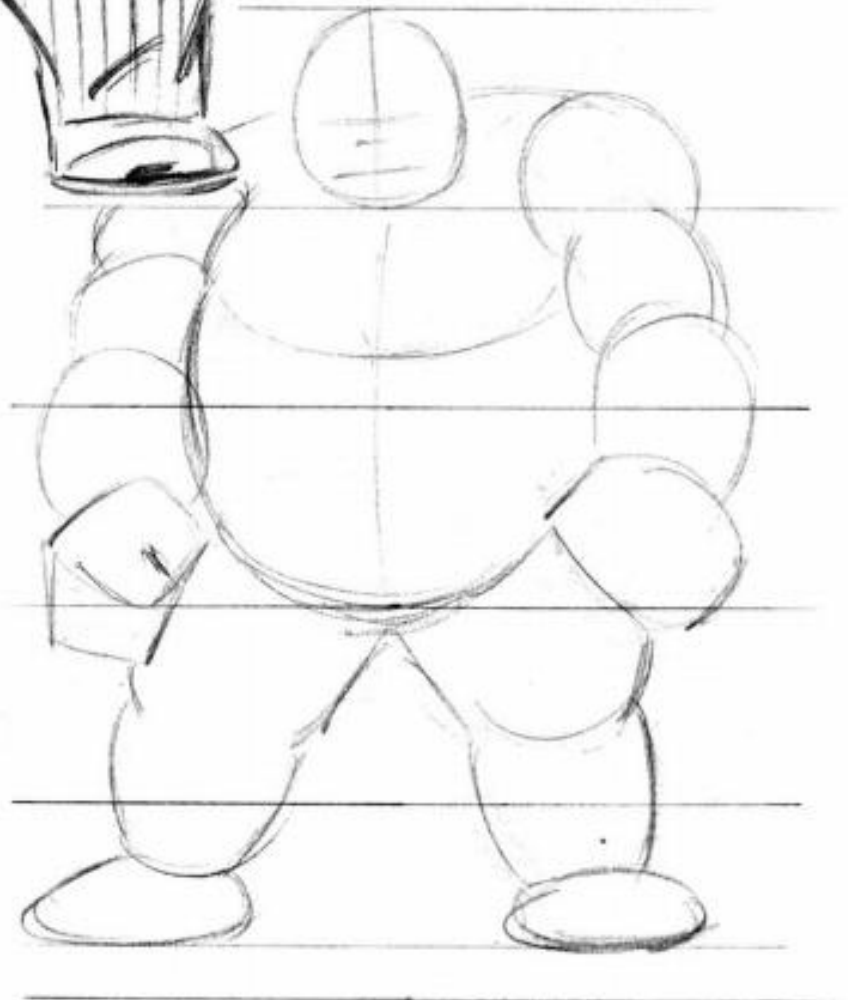
What about the villains, well, actually pretty much the exact same rules apply (when it comes to drawing them, at least!) And when you know the rules well, well that's when it's fun to stretch them a bit.





Just for fun, we thought we'd toss in The Kingpin also, to show you how to handle a character who's barely five heads high. The trick is to make him squat without making him look like a pantywaist. The larger you make the head in proportion to the body, the heavier and more bulky the character will seem.

**And now that we've studied the figure—**



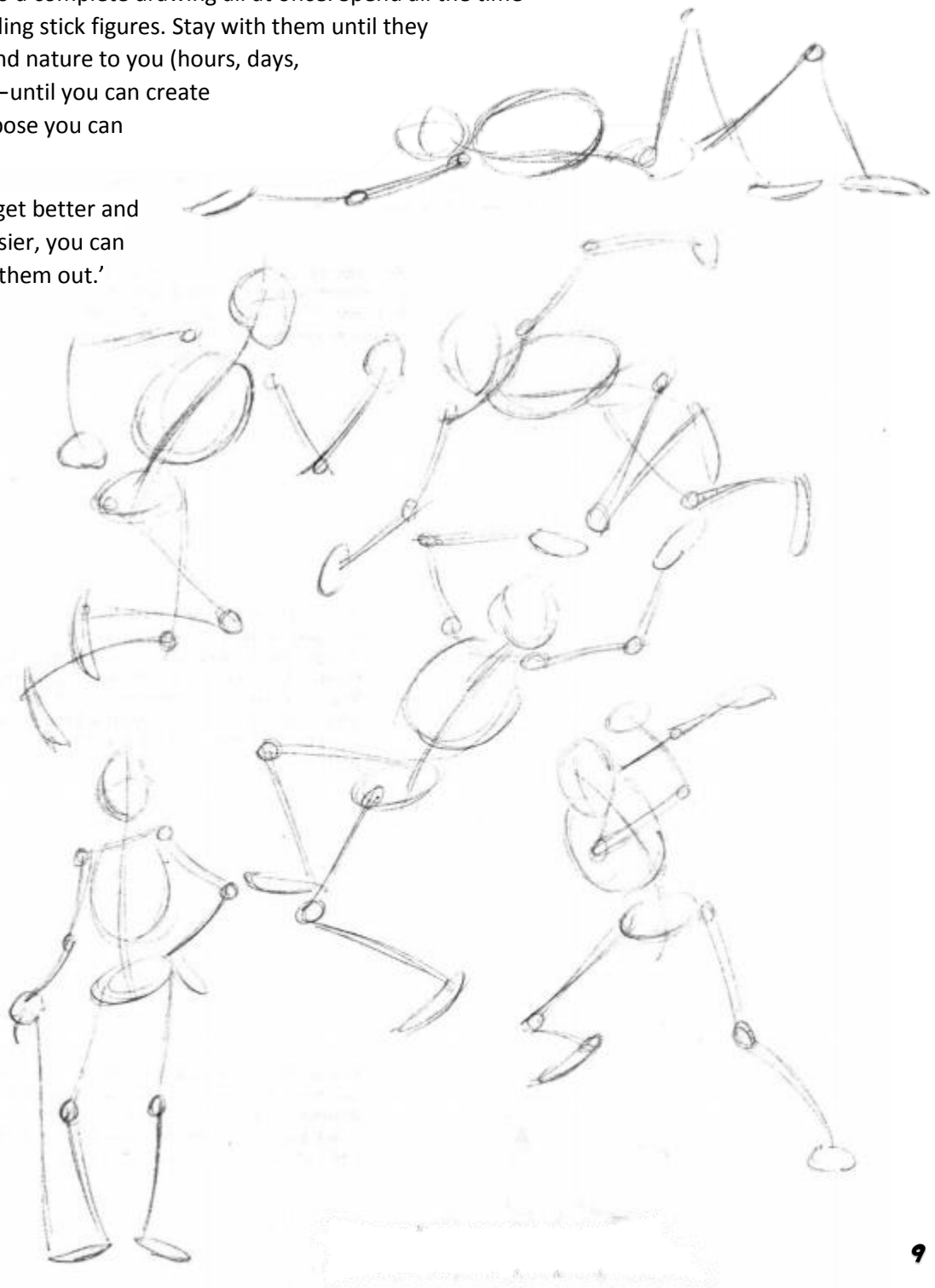


## ***BUILDING CHARACTER--LET'S DRAW!***

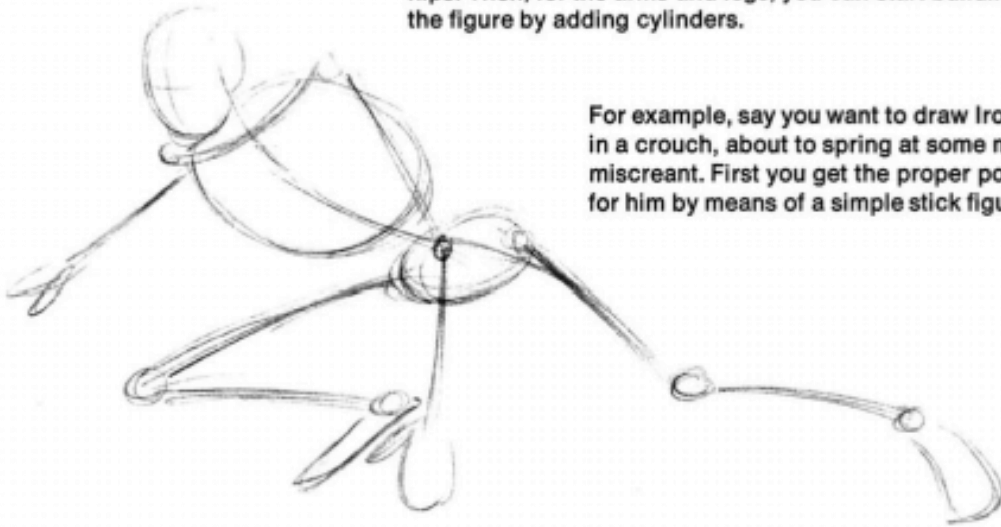
The first thing a fledgling artist needs? Paper? Nope. A pencil? Close, but actually, no. The first thing a fledgling artist needs is self-confidence. And here's the way to get it. Anyone can draw a stick figure. Anyone. They're simple, they're fun, and most important of all, they're the easiest possible way to get the action and the position you want for your character.

Don't try to do a complete drawing all at once. Spend all the time you can doodling stick figures. Stay with them until they become second nature to you (hours, days, weeks even)—until you can create virtually any pose you can think of.

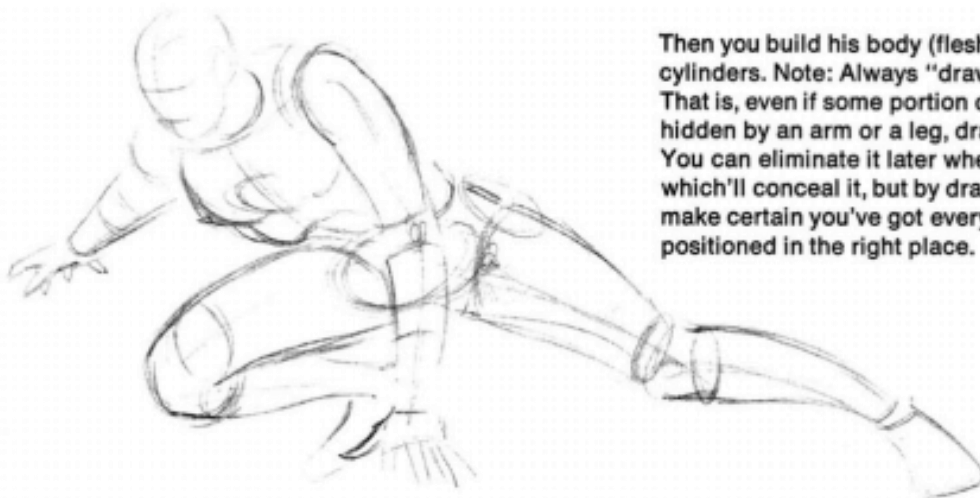
Then, as you get better and they come easier, you can start fleshing them out.'



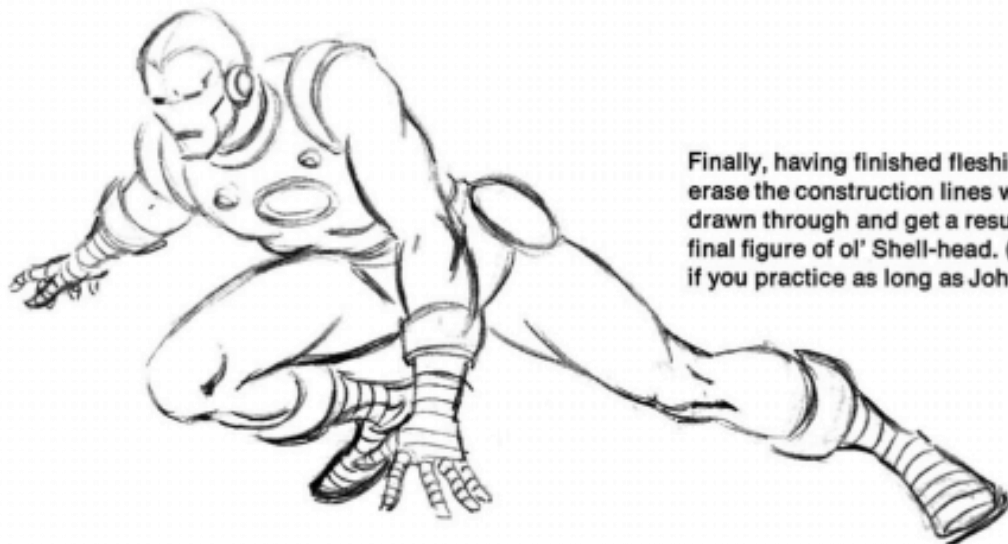
Notice how you can add ovals for the rib cage and the hips. Then, for the arms and legs, you can start building the figure by adding cylinders.



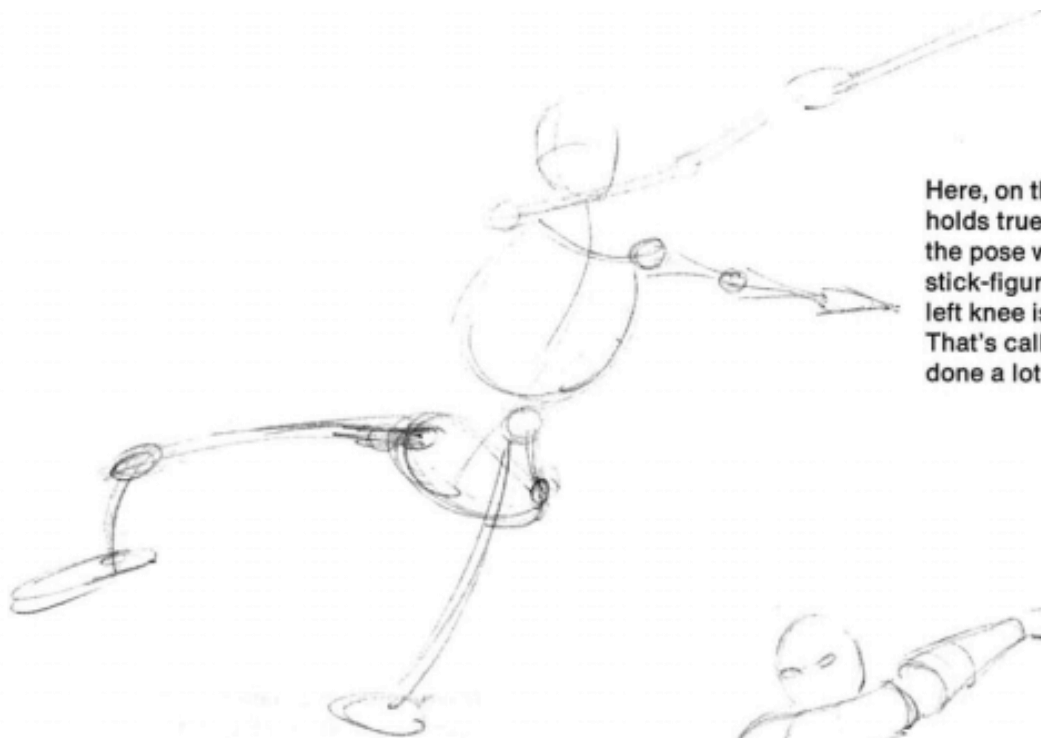
For example, say you want to draw Iron Man in a crouch, about to spring at some malicious miscreant. First you get the proper position for him by means of a simple stick figure.



Then you build his body (flesh it out) by adding cylinders. Note: Always "draw through" the figure. That is, even if some portion of the body will be hidden by an arm or a leg, draw it through anyway. You can eliminate it later when you add the limb which'll conceal it, but by drawing through, you make certain you've got every part of the anatomy positioned in the right place.

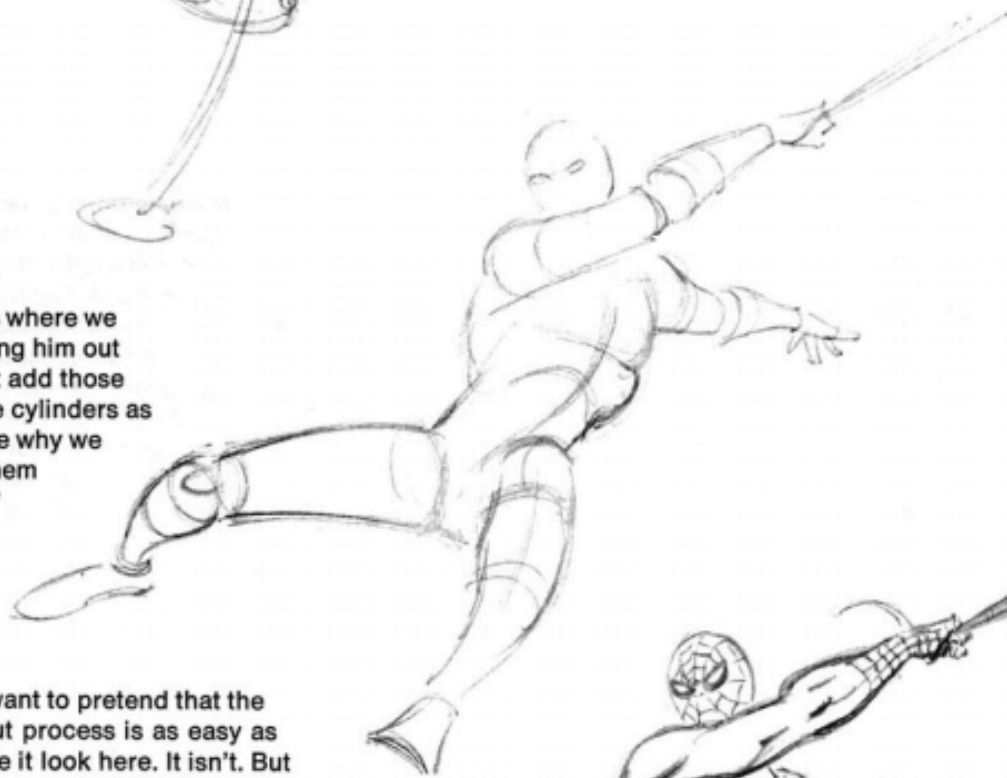


Finally, having finished fleshing out the figure, you erase the construction lines which have been drawn through and get a result somewhat like this final figure of ol' Shell-head. (That is, you'll get it if you practice as long as Johnny did!)

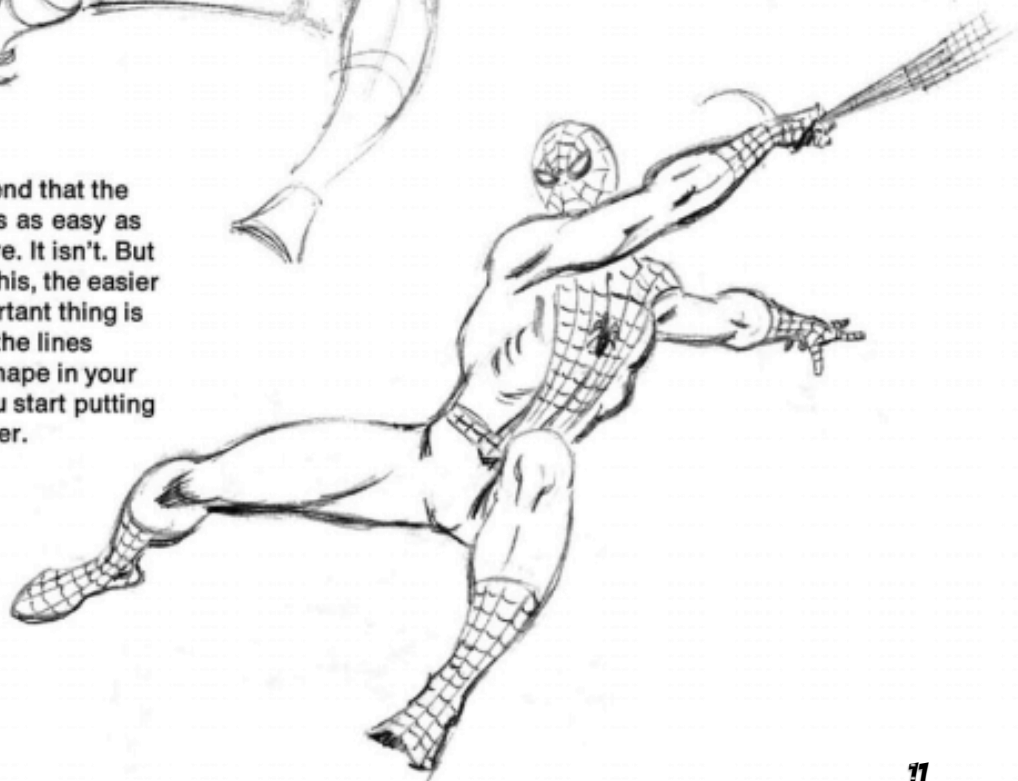


Here, on this page, the same thing holds true for Spidey. We decide the pose we'd like to draw and start stick-figuring it. Notice the way his left knee is bending towards you? That's called "foreshortening." It's done a lot in comicbook artwork.

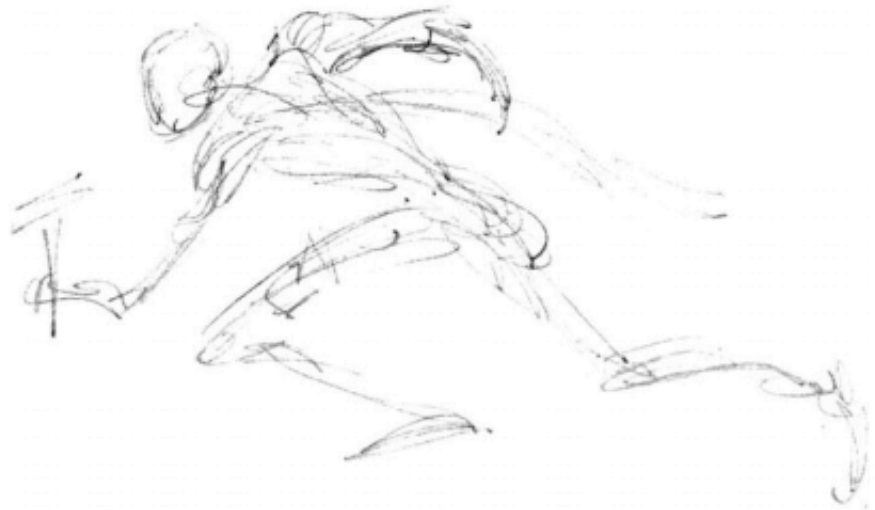
And here's where we start fleshing him out again. Just add those clever little cylinders as you go. See why we stressed them earlier on?



We don't want to pretend that the fleshing-out process is as easy as we've made it look here. It isn't. But the more you work at this, the easier it'll become. The important thing is to train your eye until the lines almost begin to take shape in your imagination before you start putting them down on the paper.



Now then, for those of you who've mastered the cubes and its cousins, and for those who really understand the construction of the human figure, there's another approach to forming the body. It's as basic and obvious as the simple process of—scribbling! So, if you're a more advanced student, you may get a kick out of this . . .



Never underestimate the importance of scribbling. After you've started with your stick figure, build it up by scribbling—as in the drawings on this page. As John explains it, it's like being a sculptor and building a figure with clay. You just keep adding these loose little lines until the figure starts taking shape.



Another important thing about scribbling is that it helps you to loosen up and get a feeling of movement and action. Do your scribbling lightly, and try to train your eye to spot the lines that are correct and to reject the ones that aren't. Then, as you continue to mold the figure with your pencil, you emphasize the important lines and eventually lose the others.



As you can see, the same technique applies for any pose, any mood, and any person, male or female, young or old. Can you now easily recognize the progress of the sketches? Can you see how we start with a primitive stick figure and continue to scribble over it, thinking in terms of imaginary cylinders, until we end up with the pose we want?



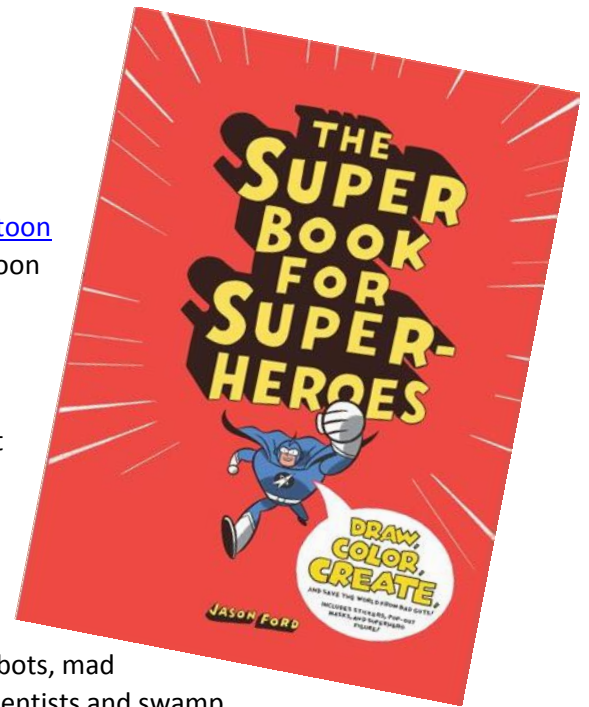
Never never let yourself forget—you always *build* your drawing, starting with a loose sketch and fleshing it out. It's the professional way, the best way—the Marvel way!

# HOW TO DRAW A SUPERHERO: FOR JUNIOR HEROES!



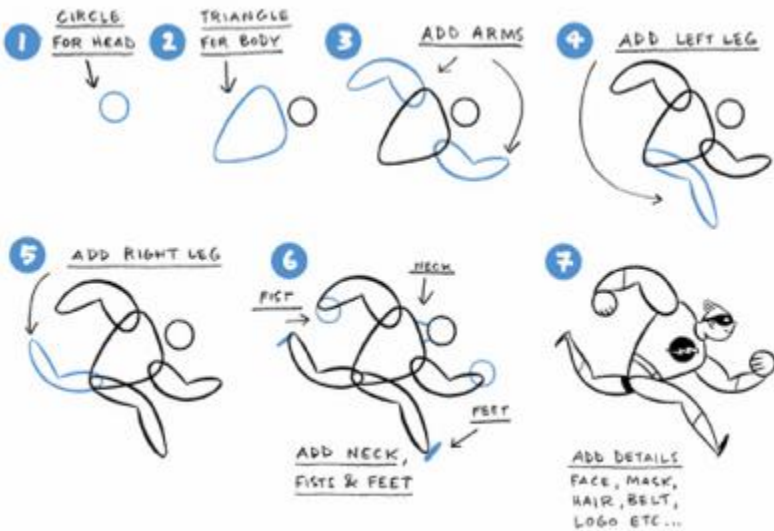
Video Resource: [How to Draw a Cartoon Superhero](#) Learn how to draw a cartoon superhero from our friends over at [Cartooning 4 Kids!](#)

A great book and resource for younger kids, and those wanting to draw superheroes in general is, *The Super Book for Superheroes*. It lets creative kids (or kids at heart) get ideas on how create their own superheroes, supervillains, sidekicks, secret hideouts,



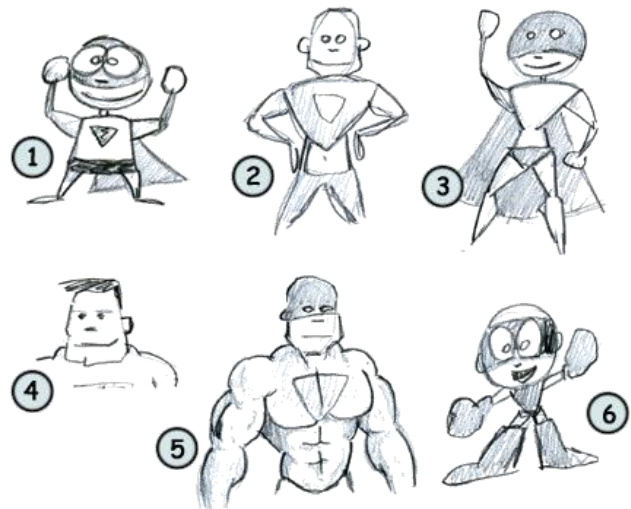
## LET'S DRAW A SUPERHERO RUNNING

### HERE'S HOW



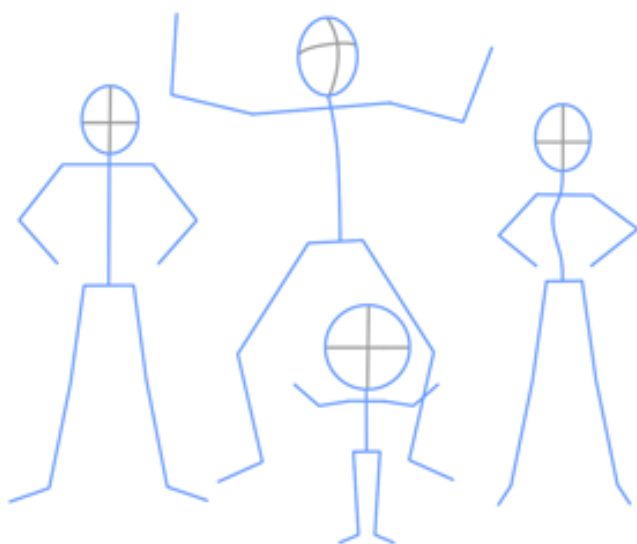
robots, mad scientists and swamp creatures without being a bit too technical and dry or worrying about anatomy overly much.

When drawing your character(s), it's up to you to decide if you want a more realistic superhero (4) (5) or some cartoon heroes (6) (1) with a funny look.

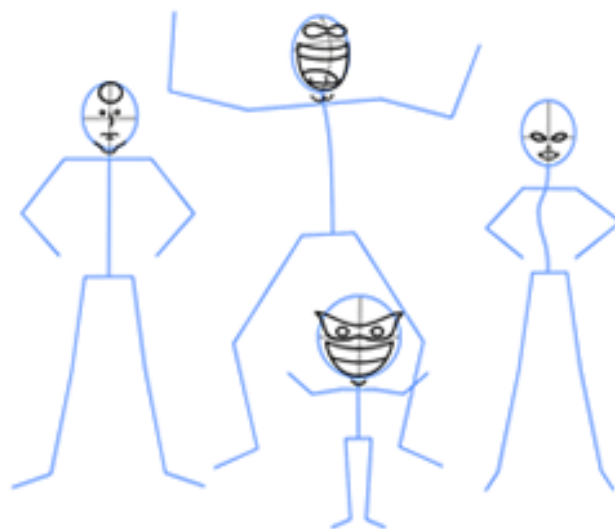


And the following is a tutorial from [How to Draw Comics](#) online.

# HOW TO DRAW SUPER SUPERHEROES!



**FIRST, DRAW STICK FIGURES!**



**2ND, GIVE THEM FACES!**



**3<sup>RD</sup>, THEY NEED HEADS! ADD SOME DETAILS  
(FACES, HEADS, GLASSES, MASKS, HORNS,  
HATS, HAIR... ETC.)**



**FOURTH, TIME TO ADD THEIR TORSOS  
& SYMBOLS**



**FIFTH, GIVE THEM SOME ARMS!**



**SIXTH, ADD THOSE HANDS!**  
 (PRACTICE GLOVES BY MAKING SIMPLE SHAPES ON  
 SCRAP PAPER)



**SIXTH, ADD A BELT TO SHOW THEIR  
 WAIST**



**SEVENTH, PUT ON SOME PANTS!**  
 (THERE ARE TWO STYLES SHOWN  
 HERE—SUPERMAN STYLE & REGULAR)

**ALRIGHT... AFTER YOU'VE COMPLETED THIS PHASE OF THE LESSON - KEEP GOING BY  
 DRAWING YOUR CHARACTER'S LEGS, AND FINALLY --- THE DETAILS!**



**AS MENTIONED ABOVE, KEEP RIGHT ON GOING UNTIL YOU'VE DRAWN THE LEGS OF EACH OF YOUR CHARACTERS. NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE IN THE BOOTS SHOWN IN THE EXAMPLES BELOW.**

**AND AFTER THIS... THE BEST PART OF THE LESSON BEGINS!**

**THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REALLY MAKE YOUR CARTOON SUPERHEROES STAND OUT. A SIMPLE LINE OR TWO HERE AND THERE REALLY DOES WONDERS.**

**FOR IDEAS, HAVE A LOOK AT THE FINAL IMAGE. NOTICE THE PATTERNS OF SIMPLE LINES ON EACH OF THEIR COSTUMES. DO THIS WITH YOUR CHARACTERS -- MIX IT UP TO SEE WHAT KIND OF UNIQUE STYLES YOU CAN CREATE ON YOUR OWN.**

**AND FINALLY, ASIDE FROM COLORING YOUR FINISHED CARTOON SUPERHEROES... SKETCH IN ANY REMAINING DETAILS THAT TELLS THE OBSERVER WHAT IT IS THAT MAKES THEM SO SUPER!**



# AND FOR THE TINIEST HEROES

A GUIDE TO DRAWING HEROES BY AUTHOR REBECCA ELLIOT

## 1. Choose your super character



## 2. Choose your super headwear

A super dude's most important possession is his secret identity. The best way to keep it a secret is with a mask. This will fool even his closest friends and family.



### 3. Choose your super outfit

Your super suit should be comfy, slick, easy to fight crime in, and above all, COOL.



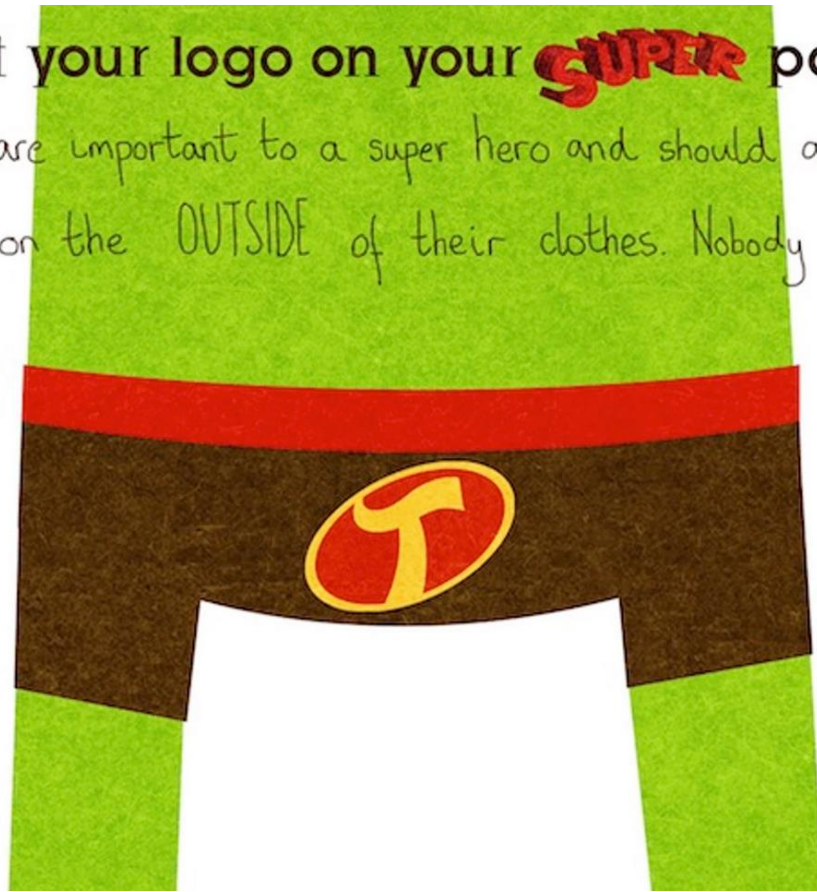
### 4. Design your **SUPER** logo

Branding is important in the life of a super hero - they need to be remembered and sell lots of merchandise so design your hero a great logo.



## 5. Put your logo on your **SUPER** pants

Pants are important to a super hero and should always be drawn on the **OUTSIDE** of their clothes. Nobody knows why.



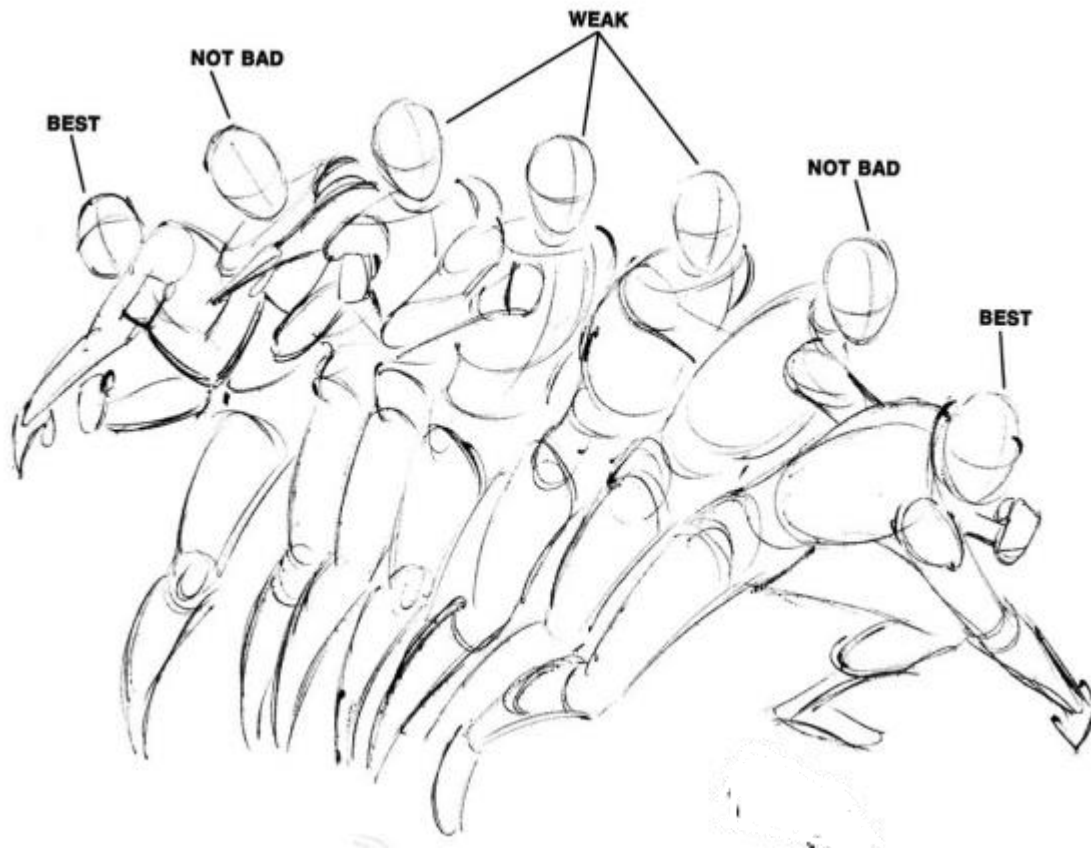
## 6. Draw you hero in a **SUPER** pose with a **SUPER** background and **SUPER** sidekicks



## ***DRAWING TIPS: THE NAME OF THE GAME IS-ACTION!***

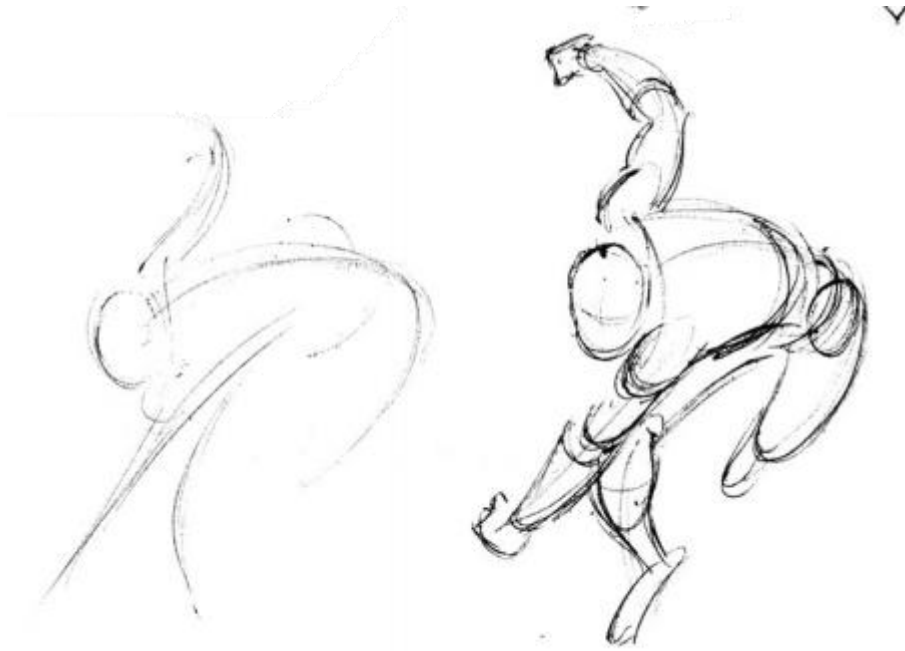
Sharpen your pencils! It's time to draw! Just being able to draw the figure is great, but it's really only part of the job. When you're drawing comicbook superhero sagas, you've got to be able to move it—to animate it—to put it a story in action!

Using what we've learned in stick figure drawing, take a character running, walking, playing ball, or throwing a punch. Draw a series of stick figures, like in our example, and depict as many different stages of that action as possible. Get familiar with moving the body: work slowly from one position to another, like you're making a flip book, but still all on the same page. Work slowly, loosely, casually, and use lots of scribbles lines, as many as you need. Don't try to make a perfect finished drawing—just try to show and feel the action.

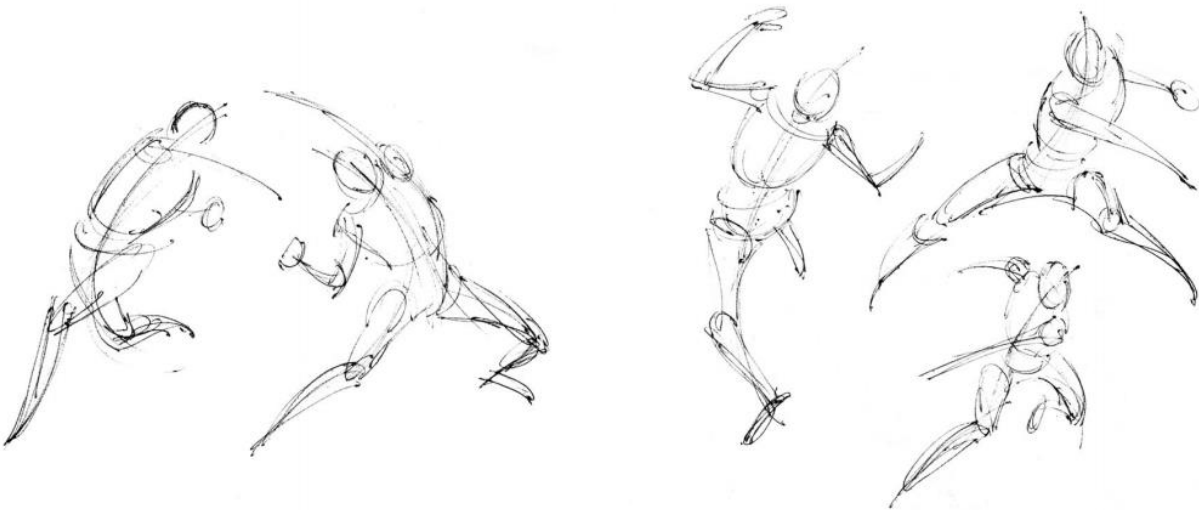


Notice how the first drawing and the last drawing in this sequence seem to have the most action—the most impact. To tell a story in a comic book (which has limited space) the artist would use either the first or last pose, the most dramatic ones, rather than the tamer ones in between. Action is always exaggerated and figures should seem in motion.

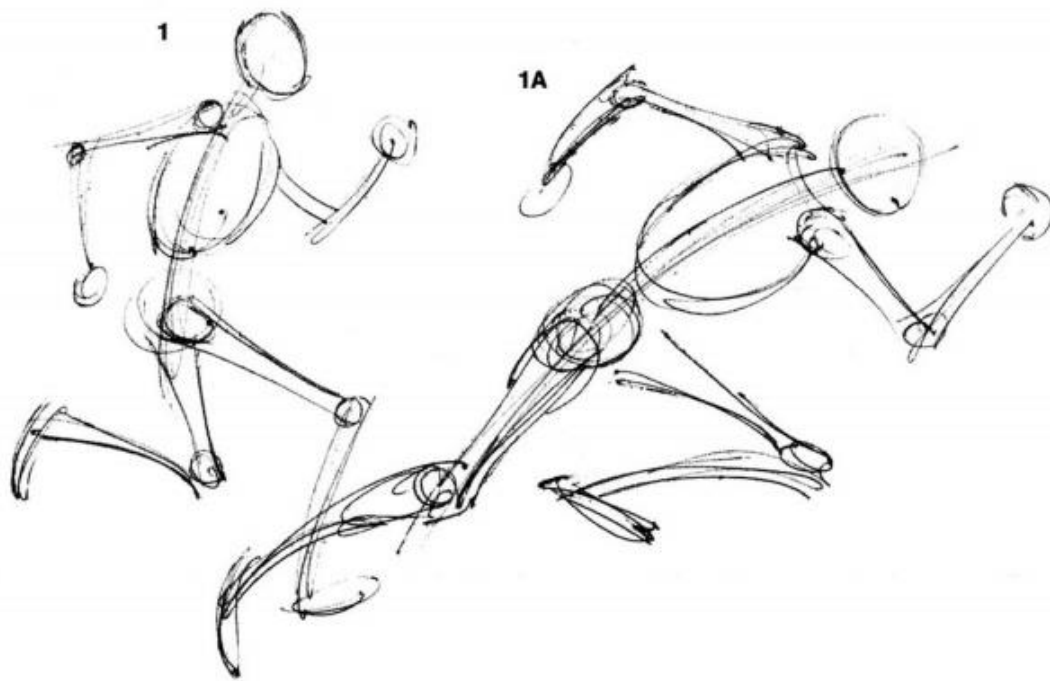
Really, you only need three or four lines to show the action. The following two sketches show that. You can see how Johnny caught all the action he wanted in just the fewest of lines and then built up from there. Once you've got the swing of it, the feel of it, then build up from there.



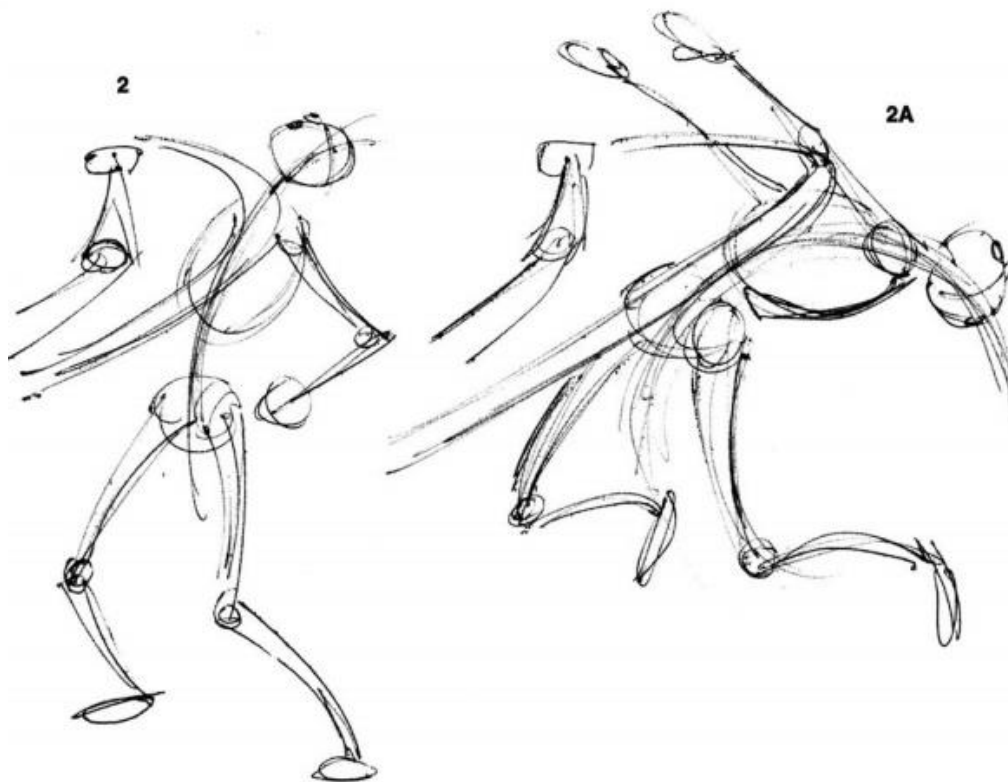
Pay particular attention to the center line drawn through each of these figures from top to bottom. This line is always, always!, drawn first. It gives you the curve, or the swing, that you want your figure to have. Every post has a certain 'rhythm' to it. With the one simple line you can determine it and start building your figure around it.



Now, let's look at some figures in motion and have students figure out which ones they like, and which ones they don't—and why.



Figures 1 and 1A are both rough sketches of somebody running. But notice how much faster, how much more dramatically, how much more heroically figure 1A is moving. See how his center line has more swing to it, impelling him forward with force and urgency.



Same thing goes for figures 2 and 2A. Both depict a character reacting to a punch in the jaw. While 2 is a perfectly clear, understandable sketch, it simply isn't done in the Marvel style. It doesn't have the vitality, the movement, the sharply curved center line of 2A. See how much looser 2A is—see how the legs are bent and thrusting backwards as the arms jut forward. See how the head follows the center line, completing a graceful, fluid curve. Now that's Marvel!

It makes a difference even when figures are standing still!









1



2



3

Well, we know you're anxious to start drawing a complete figure now, so let's get right to it. John has reduced the process to a matter of five steps. 1) Draw the basic center line to determine your pose and action curve. 2) Start fleshing out the sketch (and remember your spheres, cubes, and cylinders). 3) Begin drawing through, adding the details you're going to need. Remember, keep your pencil strokes loose, light, and graceful. If a line isn't right, don't worry about it; just go over it lightly until it begins to assume the proper form.

Steps 4) and 5)—as if we have to tell you!—are on the next page . . .



4

4) Voila! After studying all the little sketch lines we've been doodling, we finally select the ones that please us the most and go over them once more, bearing down harder on the pencil. At last the final drawing begins to take shape.

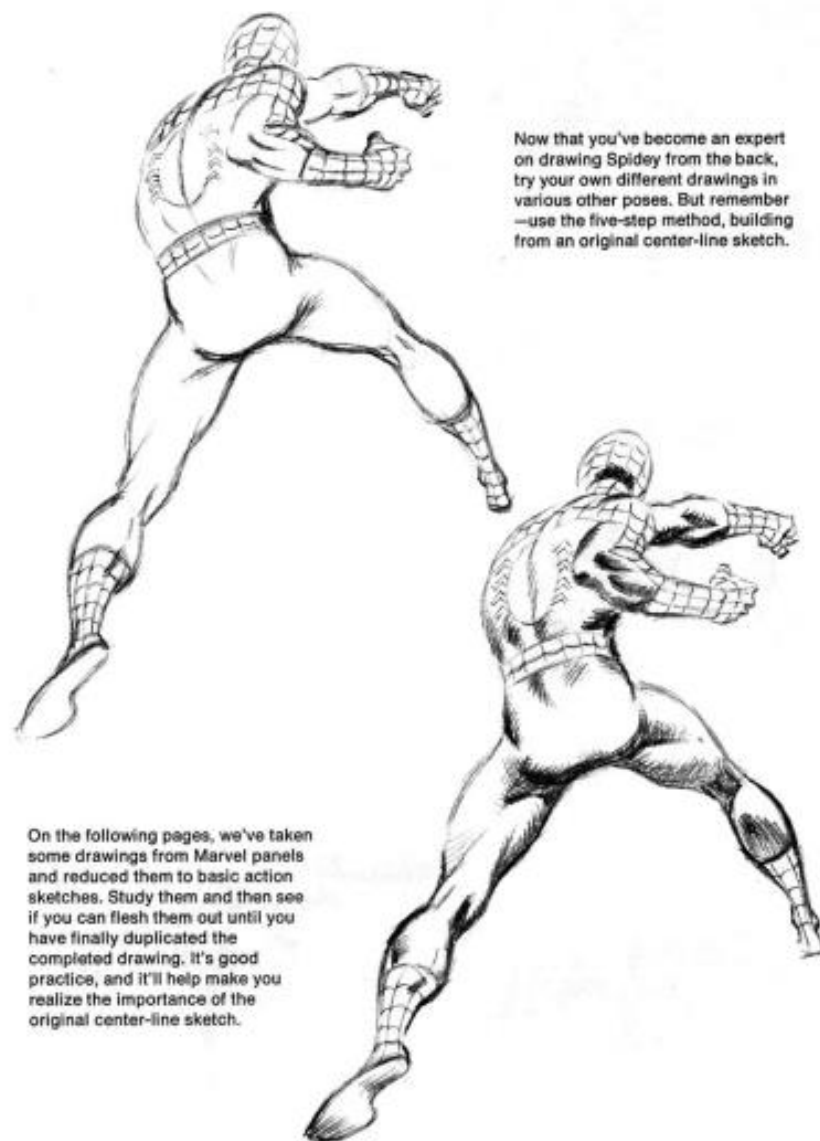


5

5) In Chapter Two, remember how we added black tones to our various spheres, cubes, and cylinders in order to give them form? Notice how we accomplish the same thing on the human figure. There'll be more about this later—we just wanted to whet your appetite!



Let's follow those same five steps again, this time ending with a figure of Spider-Man. Try to work along with John, imitating his sketches and his four additional follow-through steps. Virtually every comicbook artist uses this construction technique, or one which is very similar.



Now that you've become an expert on drawing Spidey from the back, try your own different drawings in various other poses. But remember—use the five-step method, building from an original center-line sketch.

On the following pages, we've taken some drawings from Marvel panels and reduced them to basic action sketches. Study them and then see if you can flesh them out until you have finally duplicated the completed drawing. It's good practice, and it'll help make you realize the importance of the original center-line sketch.

