

Art and maker class: Self-portrait drawing techniques for beginners



Overview

About this class

Learn how a range of introductory drawing techniques to create your own self-portrait drawing.

Materials

You will need these simple materials and tools to complete the project:

- 3 x pieces plain white A3 paper
 - 1 x lead pencil (HB, 2B)
 - 1 x eraser
 - 1 x mirror for a self-portrait or another subject to draw like a friend or relative
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Alternate materials

- A4 copy paper - or any other matte paper like a large paper bag or scrap paper
 - Biro, pen, marker or coloured pencil
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Set-up

- A comfortable place to sit
- A comfortable place for your subject to sit if you have one
- A table or a board, book or hard surface to lean on
- A surface for your mirror so you can see your own face as you draw

Glossary

Art terms

Portrait drawing

A portrait is an artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression are the focus.

Sketching

Rough or unfinished drawing

Hatching and cross hatching

A shading effect by drawing closely spaced parallel lines. When lines are placed at an angle to one another, it is called cross-hatching.

Continuous line

A line which is unbroken from the start to the end of the drawing.

Contour

Outline of a shape.

Proportions

Refers to the size relationships between objects.

Reference marks

Temporary mark or line set at a specific distance and in a specific direction to permit accurate measurement.

Perspective

Gives a three-dimensional feeling to a flat image such as a drawing.

Horizontal

Up and down.

Vertical

Left to right.

Tone

Refers to the degree of lightness or darkness of an area in your drawing.

Portrait orientation

Your piece of paper is taller than it is wide with the longest edge of your paper on the vertical axis

Instructions

Step 1: Warm-up exercise

Warm-up by drawing circles using varying pencil pressure. This exercise is to help you understand the varying marks you can make using your pencil.

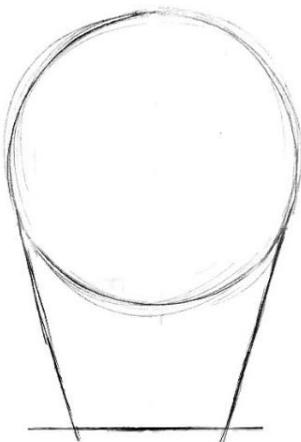
1. Start by drawing the lightest mark you can make – sketch lightly in a continuous motion until a circle appears.
2. Using this technique, draw two more continuous circles using medium and heavy pressure.



Step 2: Getting started on your portrait - mapping the head

The human head is shaped like an upside-down egg. Let's start construct the head using some basic shapes – these will help us to position the features on the face. Remember to use light pencil pressure to sketch in this part of the drawing.

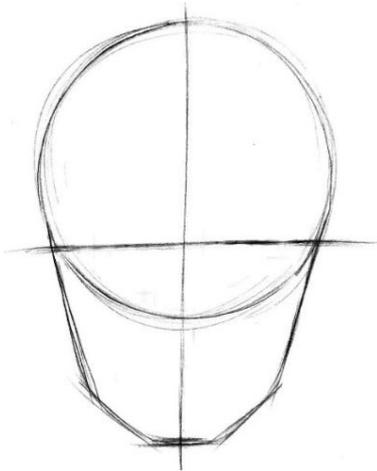
1. Draw a circle towards the top half of your paper. Make your circle no more than half the size of your page. When drawing your circle, leave some room for your jaw and neck



2. Sketch in your jaw using a tapered rectangle shape. Remove the corners of the rectangle to round off the jaw line. Observe your unique shape when drawing. Is your jaw square, rounded or pointed at the chin?



3. Sketch in the mid-point of the head shape on both the horizontal and vertical axis. The horizontal axis will be around the point where the rectangle shape meets the circle. This vertical axis acts as a mirror to help you draw a symmetrical portrait.



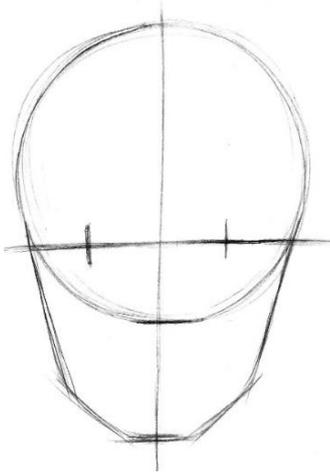
Step 3: Positioning the features

Next, you are going to mark in the position of the features including the eyes, nose and mouth. Using a light pencil pressure, sketch in some reference marks that will be used to position the features on the face. This will help us to create an accurate and well-proportioned drawing.

Positioning the eyes

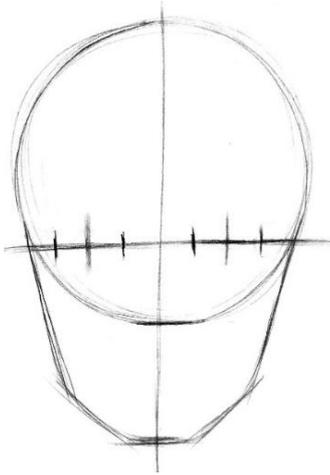
The eyes are located on the central horizontal line. Let's call this the eye line.

1. Find the mid-point between the vertical axis and the edges of the face. When you locate this point, mark in two vertical lines on the eye line – these cross hairs mark the location of your pupil.

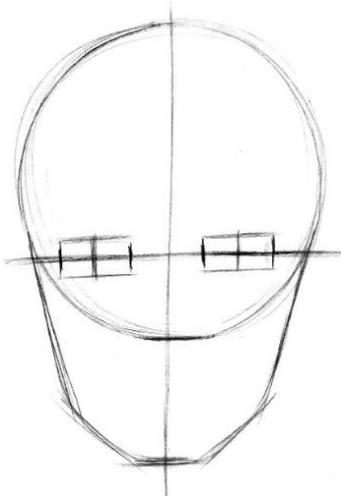


2. Next, mark in the corners of the eyes. Generally, the space between your eyes is equal to one eye width.

The space between the outer corners of your eyes and the edge of your face is the width of one eye. Your face width should be equal to roughly five eye widths.



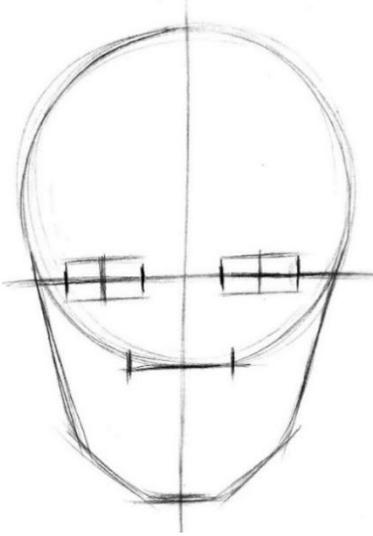
3. Now that we have identified the width of the eyes, let's mark in the top and bottom eyelids. Lightly sketch a rectangle for your eyes – this will be used as a guide to draw your eye shapes in the next step.



Positioning the nose

Mark in the nose using the vertical line as a guide. The base of the nose should sit roughly at the point where the circle shape intersects the vertical axis.

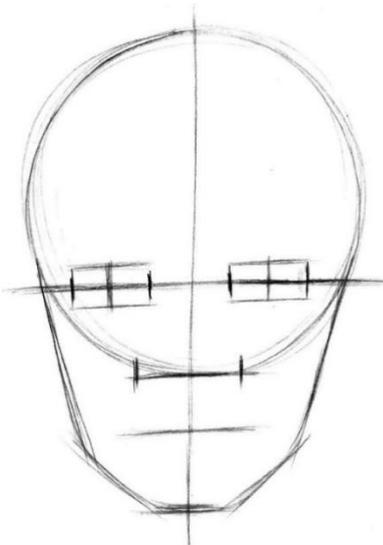
Sketch in the width of the nose – observe on your own face where the edges of the nostrils sit, using the inner corners of your eyes as a guide.



Positioning the mouth

Sketch in a horizontal line for your mouth roughly halfway between the nose line and the chin. This line represents the opening of your mouth.

Mark the width of your mouth using the width of your nose for comparison. Your mouth should be wider than your nose. As a rule, the width of the mouth is the same as the distance between your pupils, which are marked by the cross hairs on the eyeline.

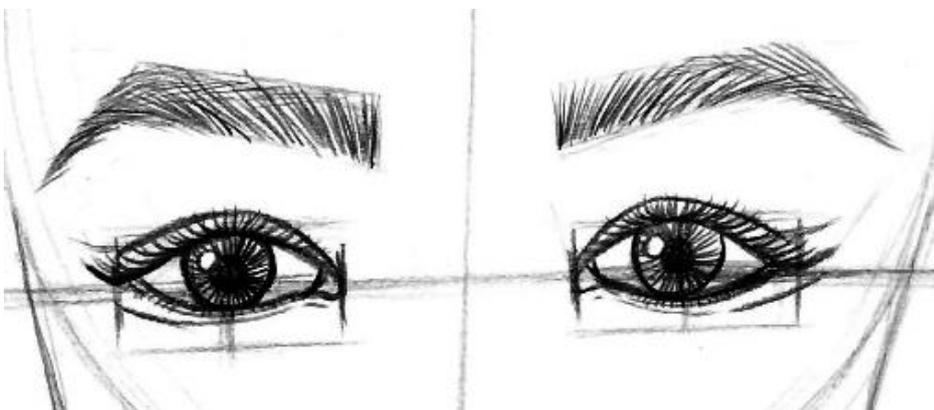


Step 5: Drawing the eyes and eyebrows

Now it's time to sketch in the eyes and eyebrows using the reference marks we prepared in steps 1-3. When drawing your eyes start off drawing lightly and then, use medium pressure to confirm the drawing decisions you've made.



1. Your eyes are a variation of a leaf shape. Are your eyes wide or narrow? Do they turn up or down at the ends? Draw your unique eye shape using the rectangle as a guide.
2. Next, draw your upper eyelid. Some people's eyelids aren't visible when their eyes are open, whereas other people have large hooded ones. Draw your lower eyelid and then draw another thin line parallel to this where your lower lashes grow from.
3. Add a drop shape in the corner of your inner eye, the pink fleshy part closest to your nose and any creases you may have around your eye.
4. Draw your other eye as a mirror image of your first eye.
5. Look into the mirror and focus on your iris - the coloured part of your eyeball. For most people the upper or lower eyelid cuts across the top of the iris. If you draw your iris as a complete circle you will look surprised or scared. Draw your iris in the centre of your cross-section.
6. Add circles for any shiny spots you have on your iris before drawing a circle in the centre of your iris to represent the pupil. Shade this area in. Draw the muscles around your pupil as if they were bicycle spokes radiating from the centre of the pupil.



Eyelashes

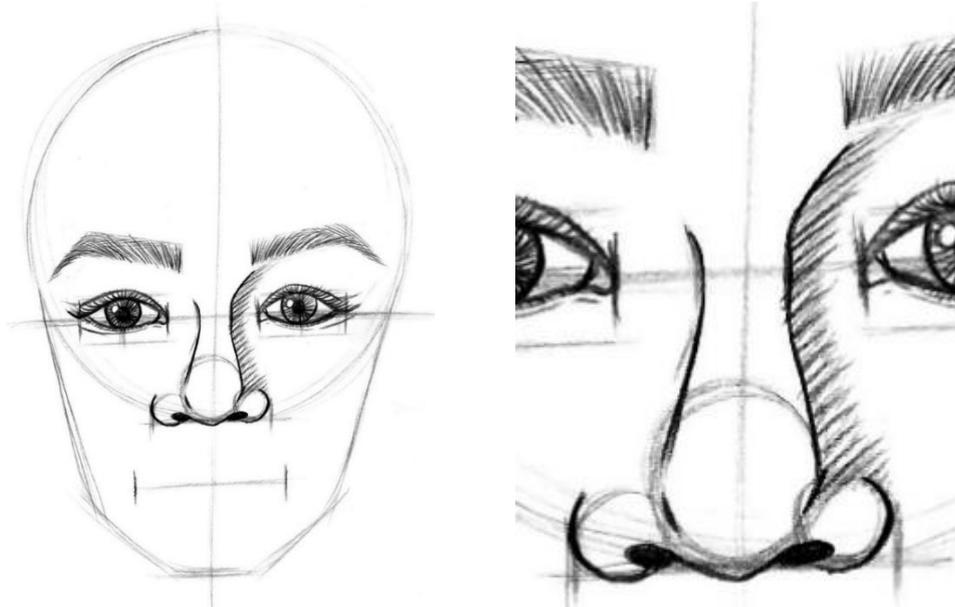
Look at your eyelashes in the mirror. Some people have straight lashes and some have curled ones.

Eyebrows

1. If you have definite shaped eyebrows, lightly draw the outline of your eyebrow shape and fill in the hairs.
2. If you have eyebrows with a fuzzy shape, draw a line representing the angle of your brows. Then draw the hairs surrounding this line as a guide.

Step 6: Drawing the nose

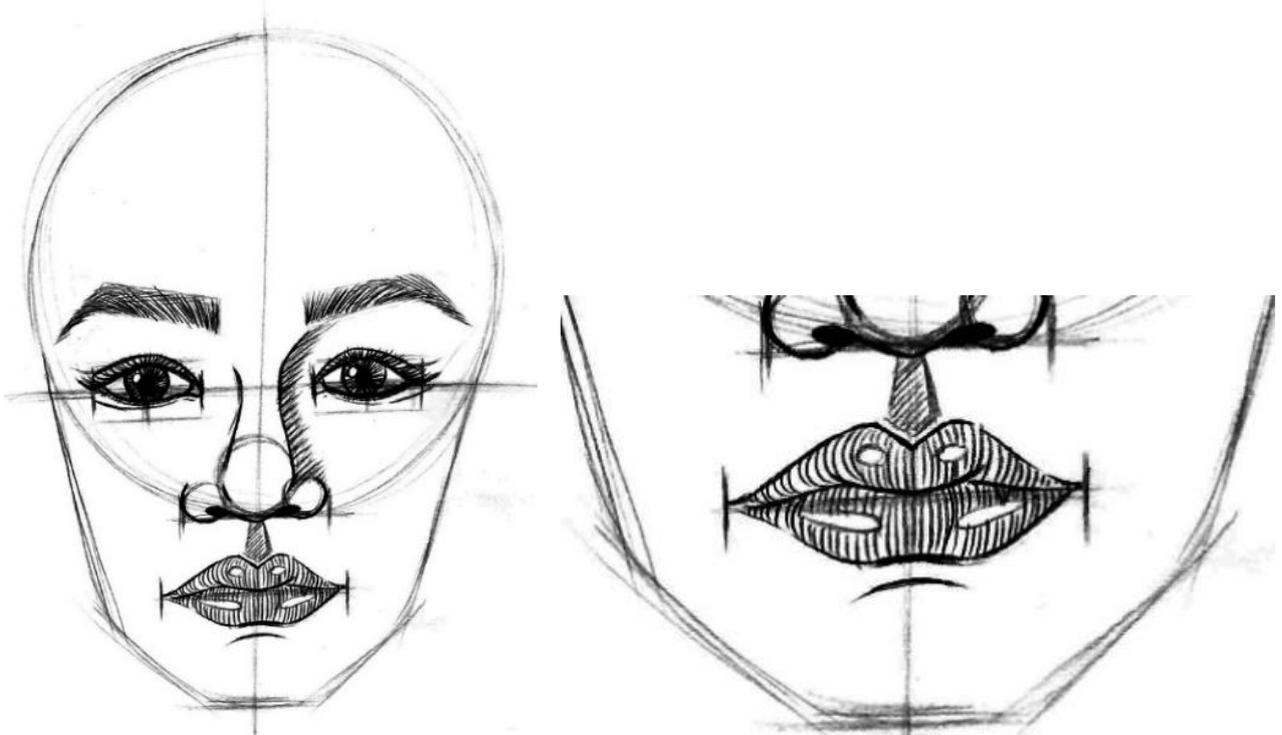
To draw your nose, you'll use three circles or oval shapes.



1. Draw a circle or oval for the middle of your nose. Then draw two smaller ovals or circles for sides of your nose around the nostrils.
2. Now draw your nostril shapes. Some people don't have their nostrils showing from a front facing view, just a curved edge. Others have very round or angular nostrils. Look in the mirror and draw the nostril shape you see and shade these areas in.
3. Draw the tip of your nose and your septum, the bit of skin between your nostrils, if it's showing.
4. Draw the bridge of your nose. Draw a line from the lower corner of your eyebrow, down along the shadowed edge of your bridge to the side of the tip of the nose.

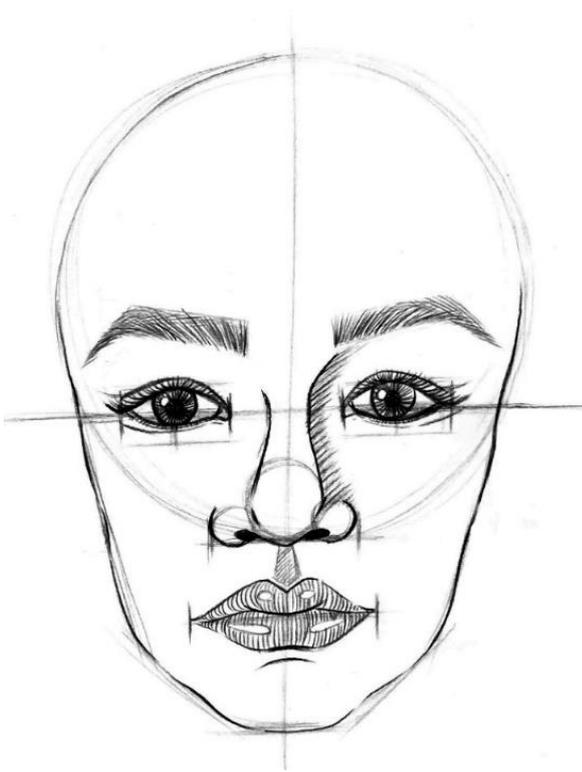
Step 7: Drawing the lips

Check the position of the middle of your mouth. Is it still in the right place in relation to your nose? You may need to reposition it as well as your jawline and chin.



1. Draw the shadow underneath your nose. This shape is narrow at the top and gradually gets wider towards your upper lip.
2. Observe and sketch in the shape of the lips - is your top lip smaller or bigger than your bottom lip?
3. Draw any shiny spots on your lips. These spots are the parts of your lips that are closest to the light.
4. Add a chin under your bottom lip.

Step 8: Chiselling the face

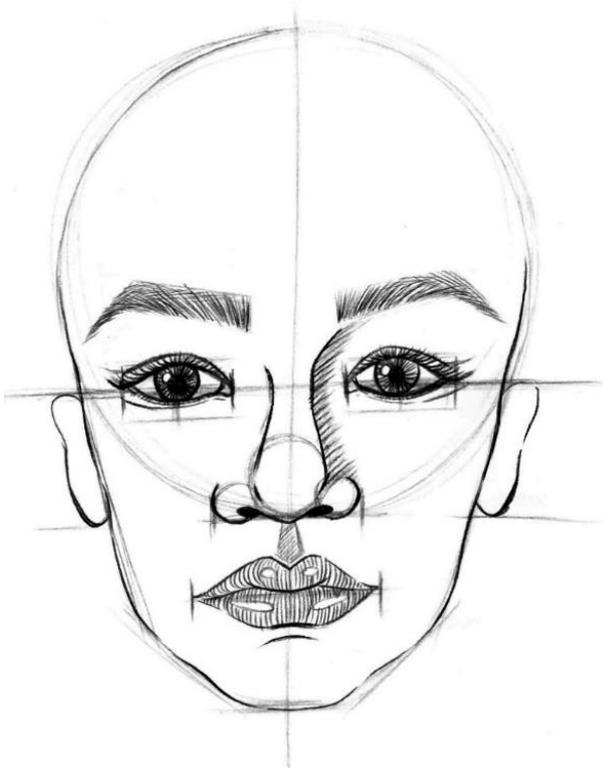


1. Now we've drawn our features, trim your face a little and put in the subtle hills and valleys of the contour, or outline of our face.
2. Have a look at the distance from your outer eye to the side of your temple. Does this need a trim? Does your face dip in at the cheekbone? Or the sides of your chin? Draw what you see.
3. Look at your face as a whole. Does it look right to you? Ask a friend for their opinion if you need to.

Step 9: Drawing the ears

Once you're happy with the shape of your head, observe your ears and sketch them in. Your ears are bigger than you think – use these rules to sketch in your ears:

1. The top of your ears lines up with the horizontal eye line.
2. The bottom of your ear lobe lines up with the bottom of your nose.



Step 10: Drawing the hair

Sketch in the hairline to frame your face. If your hair is parted draw this in first. Look at the different directions your hair is flowing in the mirror and use short or long broken strokes and draw your hair from root to tip.



Step 11: Shading the face



1. Before shading your self-portrait, rub out the planning lines with an eraser.
2. When shading, start with a light pressure no matter how dark or light your tones are. Leave the brightest areas as the white of your paper. Add areas of extra layers of shading for darker areas on your face.

Eyes

Shade in your iris in a tone equal to how light or dark your iris is. You may have a darker outer edge around your iris. Are your eyes lighter or darker than your hair? This should be reflected in your drawing.

Skin

Determine where your main light source is coming from, that will help you figure out where the shadows on your face are.

Nose

There is a shadow on the side of your bridge and under the nose.

Mouth

If the skin on your lips is darker than your face, shade it in with an appropriate tonal value and leave the shiny spots alone.

Congratulations, you've completed your portrait

We hope you enjoyed this class. Here are some tips to help you improve your portrait drawing skills:

- Practice, practice, practice - the more you draw the better you will get
- Try drawing some different people using what you've learned in this class
- Try experimenting with shading using a coloured pencil

Happy drawing!

Don't forget to check out our other City of Sydney Art and maker classes online at whatson.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/programs/city-of-sydney-art-and-maker-classes-online.

