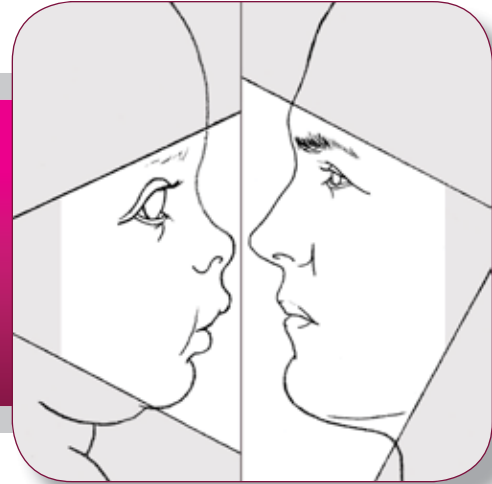


Basic Facial Proportions: Infant to Adult



Examining various facial guidelines used by professional artists to create realistically-proportioned drawings of people

This resource has four sections:

- Infants' Tiny Heads and Faces
- Children's Growing Faces
- Adult Facial Proportions
- Diverse Heads and Faces

Infants' Tiny Heads and Faces

Artworks of young children really should look like children – not mini adults. Many artists struggle to get a baby or child to look young enough.

Guidelines used for drawing babies and young children are quite different than those for older children and adults.

A baby's face (facial mass) is proportionately much smaller than that of an adult, especially when compared to the size of their skull (cranial mass).

Comparing the Face and Head

Drawing the size of the face, proportionate to the mass of the skull, is the key to correctly rendering portraits of babies and young children. Even their features fit on their tiny faces in predictable positions.



Tip!

The basic facial proportions of people of all ages fall somewhere within standard sets of guidelines.

Hence, knowing these guidelines is integral for creating realistic portraits and drawings of people's faces.



As an Aside

Newborns are unable to hold their heads up by themselves.

Compare the size of their tiny necks to their disproportionately large heads (Figure 1) to understand why.

Compare the face to skull ratio of a baby and an adult (Figures 1 and 2). A baby's face is only one-third the size of his or her skull, but an adult's is half the size.

- In Figure 1, lines visually separate a baby's head into sections (like pieces of a pie). Excluding the neck, the head is divided into four and a half segments.

The tiny face takes up only one section and the cranial mass takes up all the rest of the head. Accordingly, the skull is more than three times bigger than the face.

- In Figure 2, an adult head is divided into three pieces (excluding the neck). The face is one piece, and the cranial mass is two. Hence, the adult's cranial mass is twice the size of his facial mass.

Sizing up Tiny Facial Proportions

When compared to an adult's head, a baby's head is usually wider and their chins are shorter and more rounded.

In Figure 3, four horizontal lines identify how babies' features generally fit on their faces. Note the locations of this baby's features in relation to the following generic guidelines:

- The eyebrows are on or slightly above line AB.
- The tops of the ears and eyes are touching or slightly below line AB.
- The nose and the bottoms of the ears are touching or slightly above line CD.
- The opening of the mouth is in between lines CD and EF.
- The lower edge of the jawbone is identified by line GH. The bottom of the chin isn't a reliable point for measurement because most babies have chubby chins or even double chins.

Vertical guidelines are also helpful for accurately drawing a baby's facial proportions (Figure 4).

Figure 1



Figure 2

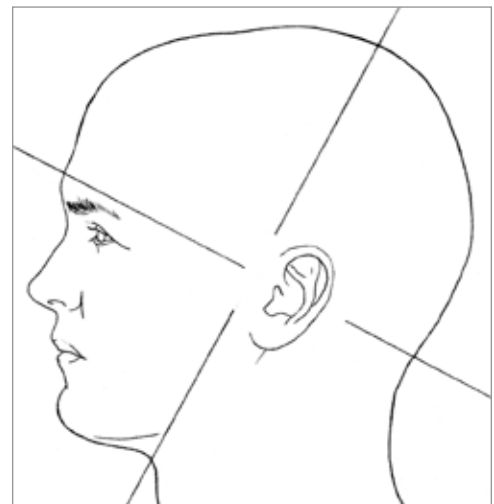


Figure 3

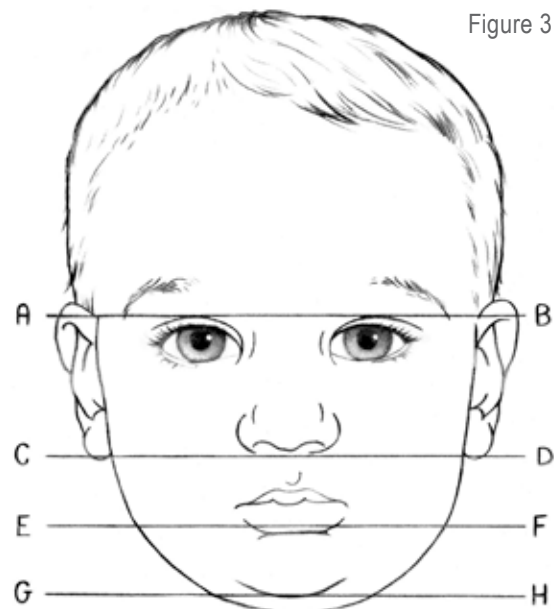


Figure 4



In Figure 4, four lines identify the horizontal placements of the features on a baby's face. Note the placement of the babies' features relative to six vertical lines:

- Lines IJ and ST identify the widest points on a baby's head.
- The eyes are located inside the spaces between lines KL and MN, and OP and QR.
- Most (or sometimes all) of the nose and mouth fit in the spaces between lines MN and OP.
- The distance between a baby's eyes is slightly more than the space between lines MN and OP.

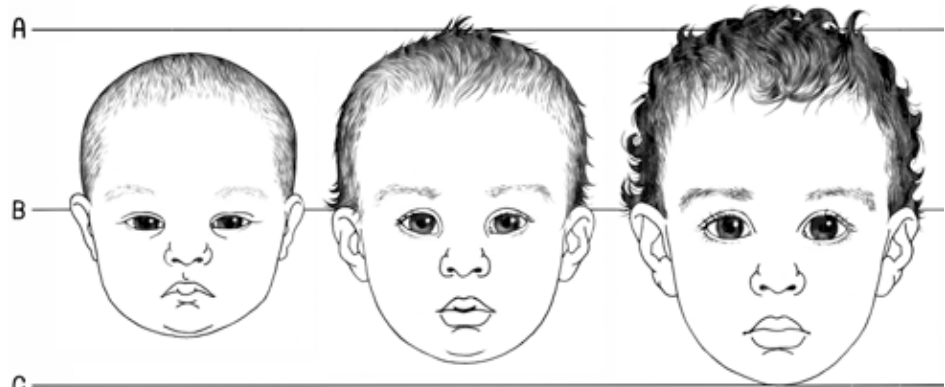
Watching a Baby's Face Grow

From birth to age two, the facial mass grows very quickly, and undergoes drastic changes.

The first drawing in Figure 5 is of my daughter, Heidi when she was an infant. During the first year, the lower half of her face grew to accommodate a few teeth (the second drawing). By two (the third drawing), her jaw had further developed, and her face had grown accordingly.

As a child matures from a baby to an adult, the overall length of his or her head grows approximately three inches. The facial mass continues to grow more than the cranial mass.

Figure 5



Compare an infant's head to an adult's (Figure 6) to identify the changes in proportions that occur as a human head grows.



As an Aside

Keep in mind that facial guidelines can't possibly be inclusive of all babies' faces. The placements and sizes of some infant's facial features, often wander a little outside the boundaries of generic guidelines.

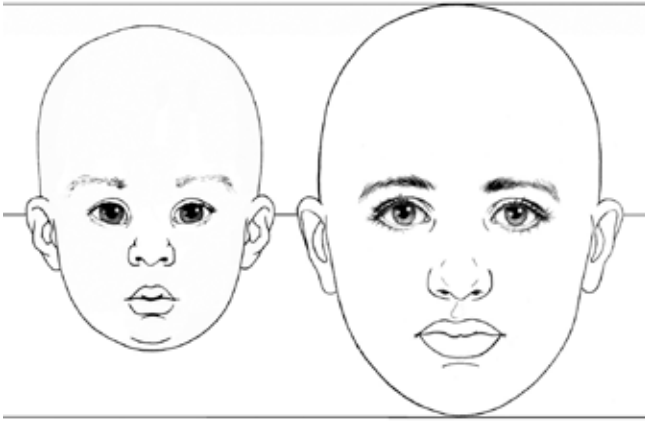


Caution!

The most common mistake, when drawing babies, is making the face too big in relation to the skull.

An adult's face is half the size of the skull, but a baby's face is only one third.

Figure 6

**Tip!**

When planning any straight-on frontal portrait, first draw a straight vertical line down the center of your drawing space to help you draw the head, face, and features symmetrically.

Children's Growing Faces

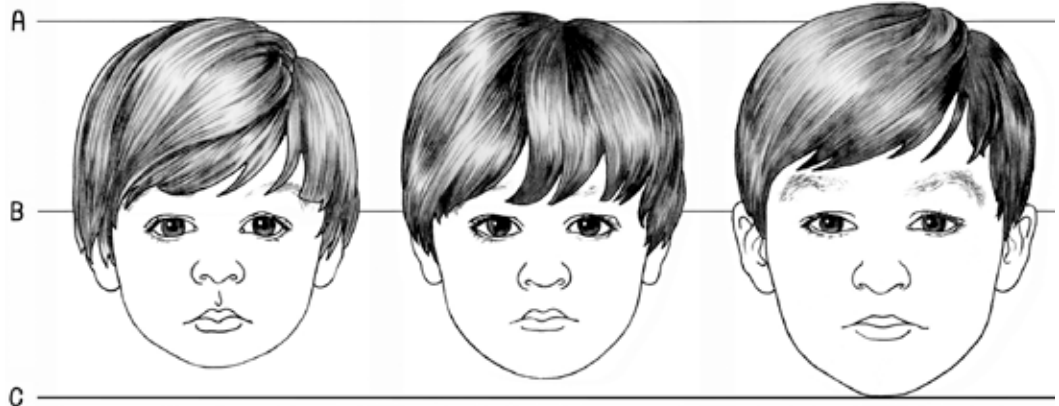
The facial proportions of preschoolers usually follow the same guidelines as used for babies. However, as children grow from preschoolers to teens, their facial proportions gradually change until they eventually fit into adult guidelines.

In Figure 7, three drawings of my son's face progressively grows from a preschooler into an older child.

The cranial mass grows slowly, and the position of the eyes stays fairly constant.

However, the facial mass continues to grow downward. As a pre-teen (on the far right), his chin touches the bottom line, which is approximately where an adult chin ends.

Figure 7



As a preschooler matures into an adolescent, the face grows much more quickly than the skull.

The sizes and positions of the individual features of an adolescent also continue to change:

- The eyes become larger, and more of the whites are visible. The irises grow very little.
- A large portion of the eyes is below the halfway point on the head. For example, the eyes of an adolescent are closer to or on the horizontal center line.
- The nose of an adolescent is longer and appears to be lower on the face than that of younger children.
- The mouth an adolescent is larger and wider than a younger child's. The chin is more clearly defined because the "baby fat" is usually disappearing.

Adult Facial Proportions

Various factors influence the physical appearances of adult faces, including the:

- sizes, shapes, and placements of features.
- physical development, gender, and age.
- diversity of ethnic origin.
- diet and lifestyle.
- differences in skeletal and muscular structures.

Even though the heads and faces of adults vary greatly, the basic proportional guidelines apply to almost everyone. In Figure 8, note that the:

- widest part of the skull is five-eyes wide (an eye is one-fifth the width of the widest part of the skull).
- nose is the same width as an eye.
- ears are the same length as the nose.
- outer corners of the mouth line up vertically with the irises of the eyes.

Identifying Features within Guidelines

Different types of facial guidelines are used by artists to depict adult facial proportions. Besides being super simple to set up, I consider the following guidelines more inclusive of diverse faces than some others.

Refer to the drawing of a man's face in Figure 9 and note how the following guidelines apply:

- Eyebrows are located above line AB.
- Eyes are on line AB. His right eye fits vertically in between lines KL and MN, and his left between OP and QR.
- The lower section of the nose is touching horizontal line CD, and mostly fits into the space between MN and OP. The nostrils are often below CD.
- The base of each cheekbone usually aligns with the bottom section of the nose.
- Ears are between horizontal lines AB and CD. The lower parts of the ears horizontally align with the bottom section of the nose.
- The mouth is generally wider than the nose. The lower lip is on or slightly above line EF.

Figure 8

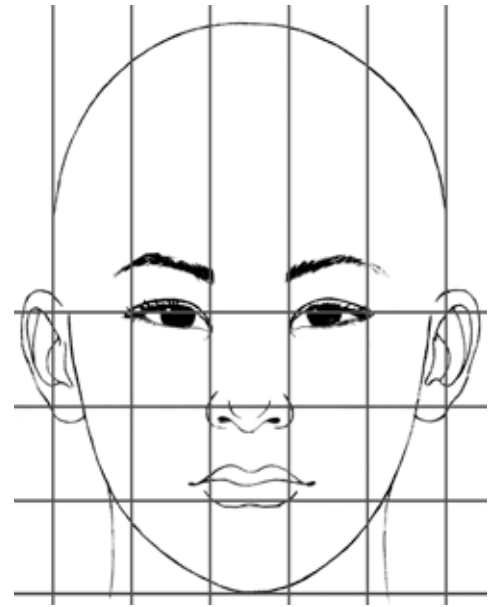
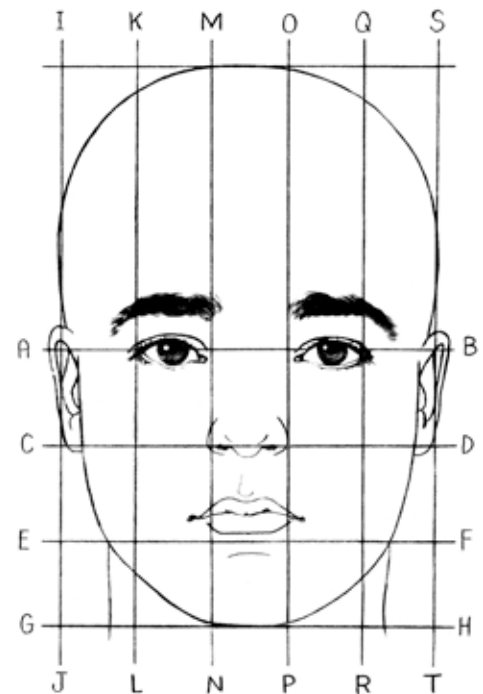


Figure 9



Diverse Heads and Faces

Combinations of gender, genetics, cultural origin, and facial slope can create an infinite array of different faces. Facial slope refers to the angle of the lower section of a person's head (excluding the nose) when viewed in profile: from the forward projection at the base of the upper teeth upward to the forehead. Examine the angle lines in Figure 10 to identify the three basic categories of adult human faces.

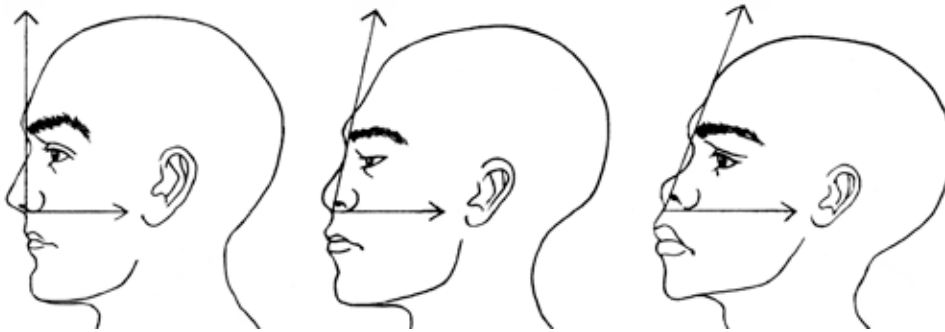


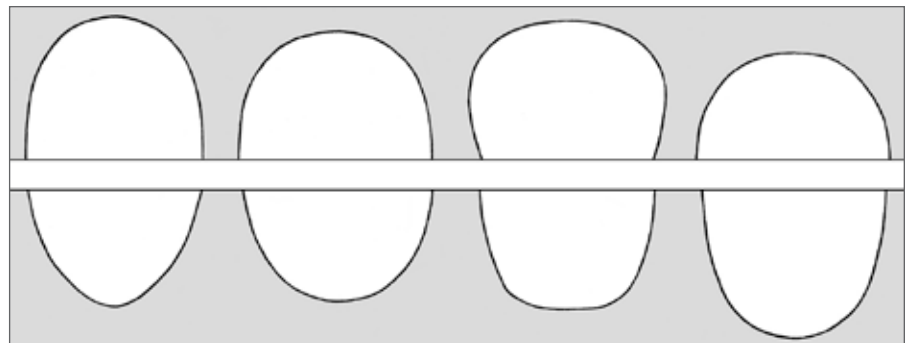
Figure 10

The facial slope of the person on the far left is almost vertical and the other two are at an angle.

Figure 11

In Figure 11, examine basic frontal half-views of some of the different shapes of both cranial and facial masses.

Slight variations of each of these eight shapes can be mixed and matched to create millions of completely different head shapes!



Challenge!

1. Examine the shape of your cranial mass in a mirror.
 2. Compare the frontal view of your cranial mass to the shapes in Figure 11.
 3. Choose the one that is closest to the shape of your cranial mass.
- Repeat steps 1 to 3 again to identify the facial mass most closely resembles yours.

Figure 12

For example, check out the four people in Figure 12.

