Thumbnail Sketching for Cartoon Ideas: A Prompt-Based Practice Guide

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

Base idea: a square character carrying a box. Make two thumbnails: one changes expression to angry, one changes prop to a flower. In each thumbnail, also change one more checklist item (pose or setting) so each box has two changes. Use the stick-figure convention and write two change notes per box.

Answer: Thumbnail A: angry eyebrows above midline, carrying box, leaning forward; notes: expression angry, pose leaning forward. Thumbnail B: neutral face, carrying flower, standing on a step; notes: prop flower, setting step. Both show head, body, feet.

Reason: Each thumbnail changes two checklist items from the base (expression plus pose or setting), producing two distinct ideas. The convention keeps sketches readable.

Check: Verify each box has a one-word prompt, two change notes, and visible head, body, feet. Confirm the two boxes differ in expression or prop and that each lists two actual changes.

Task 2

Create three thumbnails from the prompt word 'lost'. In each thumbnail, vary two of pose, prop, and setting. Label each with the two changes you made.

Answer: Example: Thumbnail 1: character looking left, holding map, in a forest; changes: pose looking, prop map. Thumbnail 2: character sitting, holding compass, on a hill; changes: pose sitting, prop compass. Thumbnail 3: character running, holding flashlight, in a cave; changes: pose running, prop flashlight.

Reason: The prompt word gives a theme; varying two checklist items per box ensures distinct ideas rather than copies.

Check: Count that each box lists two changes drawn from pose, prop, and setting, and that no two boxes share the same pair of changes. Check that head, body, feet are visible.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Score the following thumbnail using the rubric: a stick figure with a circle head, midline eyes, baseline feet, holding a kite, action is flying the kite, and it changes pose and prop from a base idea. Give scores and total.

Answer: Distinctness 2 (changes pose and prop), action clarity 2 (flying kite is obvious), variation count 2 (two changes), convention use 2 (head, body, feet, midline, baseline). Total 8 out of a possible 8.

Reason: The rubric scores each of four criteria 0-2, so the maximum total is 8. The thumbnail meets all criteria clearly, so each is 2.

Check: Re-read the description and confirm each criterion is met before summing. If any criterion is missing, lower that score.

Task 4

A student made four thumbnails but three look nearly identical. Diagnose the likely mistake and propose a fix using the variation checklist.

Answer: Likely mistake: repeating the same idea with tiny changes. Fix: for each box, change at least two checklist items (expression, pose, prop, setting) and write the two changes beside the box.

Reason: The variation checklist forces deliberate differences, which increases distinctness scores.

Check: After redrawing, confirm each box lists two different changes and that a viewer can name a different action or prop for each.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Idea distinctness: 0 = repeats another box; 1 = slightly different; 2 = clearly different.
- [ ] Action clarity: 0 = action unclear; 1 = action guessable; 2 = action obvious in three seconds.
- [ ] Variation count: 0 = no checklist changes; 1 = one change; 2 = two or more changes.
- [ ] Convention use: head, body, feet visible; midline used for eyes; baseline for feet.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?