Realistic Horse Head Drawing: Proportion, Eye Placement, and Pencil Shading

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

A side-view scaffold uses a head unit of 20 cm. Mark the eye line at one third of the head unit below the poll. The eye is then placed 9 cm from the poll and 10 cm from the muzzle front. Does the horizontal placement pass the convention check?

Answer: Yes, it passes. The difference between 9 cm and 10 cm is 1 cm, which is less than one tenth of the head unit (2 cm).

Reason: The eye line is at 20 divided by 3, about 6.7 cm below the poll, which matches the one-third convention. The horizontal check requires the two distances to be within one tenth of the head unit, and 1 cm is within 2 cm.

Check: Subtract the smaller distance from the larger and compare the result with one tenth of the head unit. If the difference is smaller, the placement passes.

Task 2

In a three-quarter view with a head unit of 18 cm, the near eye is 8 cm from the poll and 7 cm from the muzzle front. The far eye is drawn 11 cm from the poll. Is the far eye consistent with the near eye under the convention?

Answer: No. The far eye is too far from the poll for a three-quarter view; it should be closer to the near eye and the far-side distance should shorten.

Reason: In three-quarter view the far side of the face compresses, so the far eye should not be farther from the poll than the near eye by a large margin. The near-eye distances differ by 1 cm, which is within one tenth of 18 cm (1.8 cm), so the near eye is acceptable. The far eye at 11 cm is 3 cm beyond the near eye's 8 cm, which is more than 1.8 cm and suggests the head turn is not reflected.

Check: Compare the far-eye distance with the near-eye distance and with one tenth of the head unit. If the far eye is farther by more than one tenth of the head unit, adjust it toward the near eye.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

A muzzle is drawn 6 cm wide at the nose on a head unit of 15 cm. The cheek width is 10 cm. Does the muzzle taper match the convention of a nose width about one third of the head unit?

Answer: Yes. One third of 15 cm is 5 cm, and 6 cm is close to that convention; the muzzle also tapers from 10 cm at the cheek to 6 cm at the nose.

Reason: The convention gives a nose width of about 5 cm for a 15 cm head unit. A 6 cm nose is within a reasonable margin and the taper from 10 cm to 6 cm shows converging lines rather than a blunt muzzle.

Check: Divide the head unit by three and compare with the nose width. Also check that the nose width is smaller than the cheek width, confirming a taper.

Task 4

A shaded side-view head has its light coming from the upper left. The artist shades the right side of the face, the underside of the jaw, the hollow behind the eye, and the inside of the ear. The muzzle bridge is left light. Does the shading plan follow one light direction?

Answer: Yes. With light from the upper left, the right side, under-jaw, eye hollow, and ear interior are shadow zones, and the muzzle bridge stays light.

Reason: The chosen zones are consistent with a single light direction from the upper left. The shadow side is opposite the light, the under-jaw receives less light, and the eye hollow and ear interior are recessed areas. Keeping the muzzle bridge light supports the same direction.

Check: Name the light direction, then list each shaded zone and ask whether it faces away from that light. If all zones are consistent, the shading plan passes.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Head unit is clearly defined and used consistently in both views.
- [ ] Eye line is marked at about one third of the head unit below the poll, with eye-to-poll and eye-to-muzzle distances within one tenth of the head unit.
- [ ] Muzzle tapers with converging lines and the nose width is checked against about one third of the head unit.
- [ ] Jaw curve is a soft arc from below the ear toward the throat, not a straight line.
- [ ] Ear angle is recorded and applied consistently, with the far ear offset in three-quarter view.
- [ ] Shading follows one light direction and groups the shadow side, under-jaw, eye hollow, and ear interior into coherent shapes.
- [ ] Edges are soft where form turns gradually and sharper only at clear boundaries.
- [ ] Valid alternative proportions are accepted when the recorded measurements and checks support them.

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