Draw a Reclining Man with Foreshortening: A Step-by-Step Guide

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

A man lies on his right side, facing the viewer. His left arm extends toward the viewer, and his right arm is tucked under his body. The left leg is straight and the right leg is bent. Describe the order of landmark placement and how you would foreshorten the left arm. Use a hypothetical unit to check the left upper arm versus forearm.

Answer: Place the ground line, then mark the near left shoulder, near left hip, far right shoulder, and far right hip. Add knees and ankles. For the left arm, draw the upper arm cylinder from shoulder to elbow with a large shoulder ellipse, then the forearm cylinder from elbow to wrist with a slightly smaller wrist ellipse because the hand recedes slightly. Hypothetical check: if the upper arm measures 3 units and the forearm measures 2.5 units, the ratio is 3:2.5. Compare to your reference and adjust.

Reason: The left arm points toward the viewer, so the shoulder end is nearest and gets the largest ellipse. The forearm recedes slightly, so its wrist ellipse is smaller. Landmarks are placed before cylinders to anchor proportions.

Check: Measure the upper arm and forearm with the same unit. Confirm the shoulder ellipse is larger than the wrist ellipse. Verify all four landmarks are labeled.

Task 2

A man reclines on a sofa with his head at the far end and his feet near the viewer. His torso twists so the near shoulder is lower than the far shoulder. Describe how to draw the torso boxes and give a hypothetical ratio for the apparent torso length versus the apparent thigh length.

Answer: Draw the ground line and mark the near foot and far head as depth extremes. Place the near shoulder lower and the far shoulder higher, then draw the ribcage box tilted. Draw the pelvis box overlapping the ribcage at the waist. The near hip is closer, so its box edge overlaps the far hip. Hypothetical check: if the torso measures 4 units and the thigh measures 5 units, the ratio is 4:5. Compare to your reference; if the reference shows 4:6, lengthen the thigh or shorten the torso.

Reason: The twist means the shoulder line is not horizontal. Overlapping boxes show which side is nearer. The ratio check compares two apparent lengths in the same unit.

Check: Confirm the near shoulder is lower and the near hip overlaps the far hip. Measure torso and thigh with one unit and record the ratio. Re-measure after any adjustment.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

A man lies on his stomach, propped on both elbows. His legs are straight and extend away from the viewer. Describe how to foreshorten the legs and how to check the knee-to-ankle length against the hip-to-knee length. Use a hypothetical example.

Answer: Draw the ground line and mark the near elbows, near hips, and far ankles. Draw the thigh cylinders from hip to knee with moderate ellipses at the knees. Draw the calf cylinders from knee to ankle with smaller ankle ellipses because the ankles are farthest. Hypothetical check: if the hip-to-knee length is 6 units and the knee-to-ankle length is 4 units, the ratio is 6:4. Compare to your reference; if the reference shows 6:3, shorten the calf further.

Reason: The legs extend away, so both thigh and calf are foreshortened, but the ankle is farthest and gets the smallest ellipse. The ratio check uses the same unit for both segments.

Check: Measure hip-to-knee and knee-to-ankle with one unit. Confirm ankle ellipses are smaller than knee ellipses. Verify the ratio matches your reference within a small margin.

Task 4

A man reclines with his left knee bent up and his right leg extended. His left arm rests on his chest, and his right arm is behind his head. Describe the landmark order and how to check the head size against the torso length. Give a hypothetical ratio.

Answer: Place the ground line, then mark the near left knee, near left shoulder, far right ankle, and far right elbow. Add the left hip and right hip. Draw the torso boxes with the ribcage tilted back and the pelvis tilted forward. For the head, draw a simple oval and measure its apparent height. Hypothetical check: if the head measures 1 unit and the torso measures 4 units, the ratio is 1:4. Compare to your reference; if the reference shows 1:5, enlarge the head slightly or shorten the torso.

Reason: The bent knee is a near landmark and should be placed early. The head may appear larger if it is closer, so its ratio to the torso is a useful check. All measurements use the same unit.

Check: Measure head height and torso length with one unit. Confirm the ratio is close to your reference. Check that all landmarks are labeled and that the near knee ellipse is larger than the far ankle ellipse.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Landmarks for shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles are labeled and visible.
- [ ] Torso is built from two overlapping boxes that show twist and depth.
- [ ] Limbs are drawn as cylinders with ellipses at joints; nearer ellipses are larger.
- [ ] Apparent lengths of receding limbs are shortened and checked with a consistent unit.
- [ ] Overlap is used to show which body parts are closer.
- [ ] Construction lines are light and final contours are darker, following the stated convention.
- [ ] Valid alternative solutions are accepted if they match the learner's own reference and use consistent measurement.

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