Draw Animals from Basic Shapes: Step-by-Step Construction

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw a cat using a large upright oval for the body, a circle for the head, two triangles for ears, four rectangles for legs, and a curved rectangle for the tail. Refine into a sitting cat.

Answer: Body oval about 1.5 units high and 1 unit wide, tilted slightly upright to suggest a sitting posture. Head circle diameter 1 unit at the top front of the oval. Ears as small triangles on top of the head. Legs as four rectangles below the body, with the front legs reaching down to the ground line. Tail as a curved rectangle from the back. Refine: smooth the neck, round the ears, taper the legs, and add eyes and nose.

Reason: The upright oval suggests a sitting posture with the chest raised. The head circle is smaller than the body, which is typical for cats. The tail curves to suggest relaxation.

Check: Measure the head diameter against the body height. It should be about two-thirds of the body height (1 unit head to 1.5 units body). Check that the front legs reach the ground line and the hind legs sit under the back of the body.

Task 2

Draw a bird using a vertical oval for the body, a smaller circle for the head, a triangle for the beak, two elongated ovals for wings, a triangle for the tail, and two thin rectangles for legs. Refine into a standing bird.

Answer: Body oval about 1.5 units high, 1 unit wide. Head circle diameter 0.6 units on top of the oval. Beak triangle pointing right. Wings as ovals on the sides of the body. Tail triangle at the bottom. Legs as thin rectangles below the body. Refine: smooth head-body connection, round wing tips, add eye.

Reason: The vertical oval gives a upright bird posture. The head is smaller than the body. Wings are placed symmetrically. The tail triangle balances the form.

Check: Check that the head circle sits on top of the body oval without overlapping too much. The beak should point in the direction the bird faces. Legs should be centered under the body.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Draw a rabbit using a rounded oval for the body, a smaller circle for the head, two long ovals for ears, two large ovals for hind legs, two small rectangles for front legs, and a small circle for the tail. Refine into a crouching rabbit.

Answer: Body oval about 2 units long, 1.2 units high. Head circle diameter 0.7 units at the front. Ears as long ovals standing up from the head. Hind legs as large ovals at the back of the body. Front legs as small rectangles at the front. Tail as a small circle at the back. Refine: smooth transitions, add eye and nose.

Reason: The rounded oval suggests a crouching posture. Large hind legs are characteristic of rabbits. Long ears are a key identifying feature.

Check: Verify that the hind leg ovals are larger than the front leg rectangles. Ears should be at least as long as the head diameter. The tail circle should be small and at the rear.

Task 4

Draw a fish using a large oval for the body, a triangle for the tail, two small triangles for fins, a small circle for the eye, and a short line for the mouth. Refine into a swimming fish.

Answer: Body oval about 2.5 units long, 1 unit high. Tail triangle attached to the back, pointing outward. Fins as small triangles on top and bottom. Eye circle near the front. Mouth line at the front tip. Refine: smooth body outline, round fin tips slightly, add gill line if desired.

Reason: The large oval is the main body. The tail triangle provides propulsion shape. Fins add stability. The eye and mouth are minimal details that make the fish recognizable.

Check: Check that the tail triangle is attached at the narrow end of the oval. Fins should be on the top and bottom, not the sides. The eye should be on the front half of the body.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Uses at least three different basic shapes (circle, oval, rectangle, triangle).
- [ ] Starts with the largest shape and adds smaller shapes in a logical order.
- [ ] Construction lines are light and distinguishable from the final outline.
- [ ] Animal form is recognizable and proportions are plausible.
- [ ] Refinement smooths transitions and adds minimal details.
- [ ] Valid alternatives: different pose, ear shape, or tail curve are acceptable if the animal remains recognizable.

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