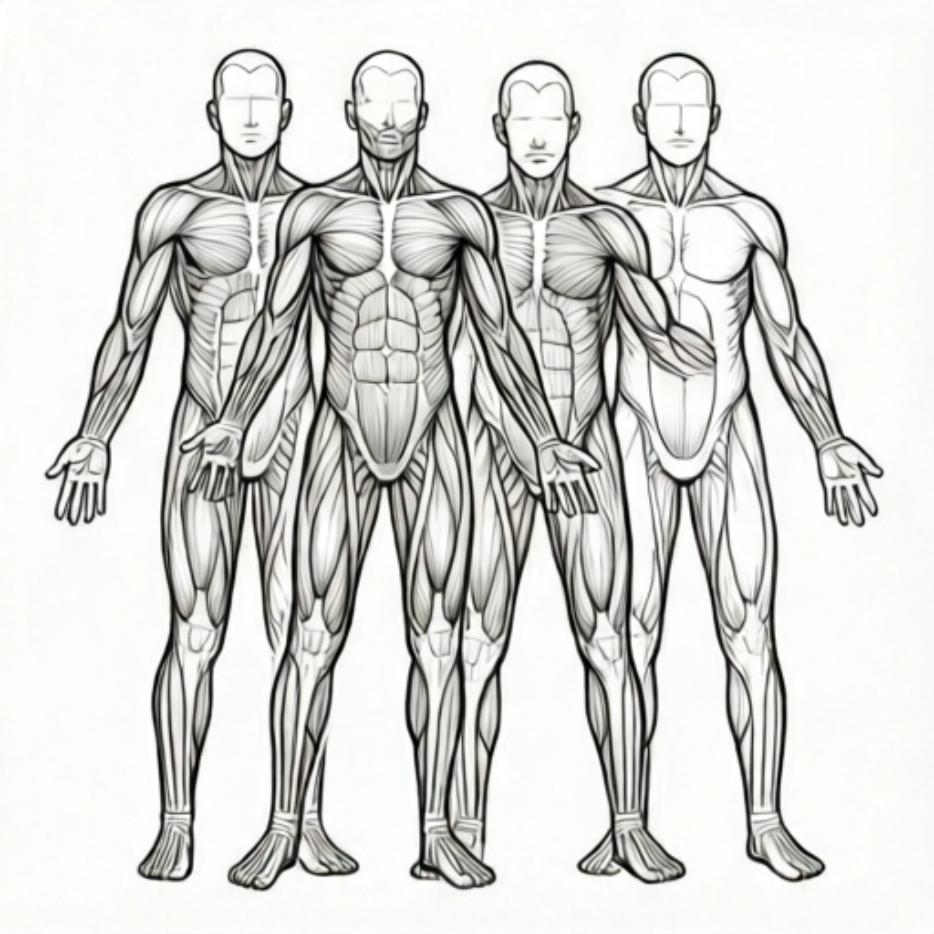
Four-Person Composition: Spacing, Overlap, and Depth

Topic reference / ordinary illustration



Ordinary topic reference. Hypothetical dimensions in the four tasks are supplied in their own text; this illustration is not their measured answer.

Four-Person Composition: Spacing, Overlap, and Depth

Worked example / complete source key

A hypothetical paper is 24 cm wide and 18 cm high. The drawing area is divided into a 4 by 3 grid, so each column is 6 cm wide and each row is 6 cm high. The chosen head unit is 3 cm, and each standing adult is four head units tall, or 12 cm. Place four figures in columns A, B, C, and D. Figure B is front, figure C is middle-front, figure A is middle-back, and figure D is back. Describe the spacing and overlap plan.

Answer: Column centers are at 3 cm, 9 cm, 15 cm, and 21 cm from the left edge. Face centers can sit near row 1, about 3 cm from the top. With a 3 cm head unit, keep face centers at least 3 cm apart horizontally; the column centers are 6 cm apart, so the spacing is comfortable. Overlap order: B in front, C next, A behind C, D farthest back. Where B's shoulder crosses C's torso, stop C's line at B's edge. Where C's arm crosses A's shoulder, stop A's line at C's edge. Leave at least 1.5 cm (half a head unit) of empty space at shoulder level between A and D, since they do not overlap. Ground contact points for all four standing figures sit near the same horizontal line, about 15 cm from the top, leaving 3 cm below for feet and shadow. Check: four figures, four columns, one clear front-to-back order, faces uncovered, and at least one varied gap.

Reason: The grid gives equal columns, but the overlap order creates depth. The head unit makes spacing checkable: 6 cm between column centers is two head units, which is more than the one-head-unit minimum. The half-head-unit shoulder gap prevents accidental collisions. The ground line keeps the group anchored.

Check: Measure column centers and face gaps with the head-unit gauge. Trace each outline to confirm the front figure's edge stops the behind figure's line. Confirm no face is covered and that at least one gap is wider than the others.