Cross-Contour Figure Drawing: Surface Lines for Limbs and Torso

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

A forearm is drawn as a cylinder 10 units long. You want five cross-contour wraps with even nominal spacing. State the spacing and describe how you would adjust it near the wrist if the form narrows sharply.

Answer: Nominal spacing is 10 divided by 5, or 2 units. Near the wrist, tighten spacing slightly, for example to 1.5 units for the last interval, and widen earlier intervals to keep the total about 10 units. Curvature should increase where the form narrows.

Reason: Dividing total length by the number of wraps gives nominal spacing. A sharp narrowing compresses the surface, so local spacing decreases while total length stays consistent.

Check: Add the intervals and confirm they sum to about 10 units. Check that the last interval is smaller than the nominal spacing and that earlier intervals compensate.

Task 2

A torso is 16 units tall. You place cross-contours at the upper chest, lower ribs, waist, and hips. Propose hypothetical spacings that sum to 16 units, with the waist interval smaller than the others, and explain the curvature at each line.

Answer: One valid set: upper chest to lower ribs 5 units, lower ribs to waist 3 units, waist to hips 8 units. These sum to 16. The chest line bows outward strongly; the lower rib line bows moderately; the waist line is flatter or slightly concave; the hip line bows outward again.

Reason: The waist compresses the surface, so its interval is smaller. The chest and hips are broader, so their intervals are larger. Curvature follows the rounded box shape.

Check: Sum the intervals to 16 units. Confirm the waist interval is the smallest and that curvature descriptions match the torso's broad and narrow regions.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

You draw a thigh 14 units long with four wraps. After adjusting for a bulge, your intervals are 4, 3, 3, and 4 units. Do they sum correctly? If not, propose a corrected set that keeps the bulge compression and sums to 14.

Answer: The given intervals sum to 14, so they are correct. The middle intervals are smaller, showing compression at the bulge, and the end intervals are larger, keeping the total consistent.

Reason: Addition confirms the total. The pattern of smaller middle intervals and larger end intervals is plausible for a central bulge.

Check: Add 4 plus 3 plus 3 plus 4 to get 14. Check that the compressed intervals are near the bulge and that no interval is negative or zero.

Task 4

A figure's upper arm and torso both have cross-contours, but the arm lines are straight bars while the torso lines curve. State the inconsistency and describe one correction using a single convention.

Answer: The inconsistency is that the arm lines do not follow the stated wrapping convention while the torso lines do. Correction: redraw each arm line so it bows toward the viewer at the closest point and tightens near the silhouette, matching the torso convention.

Reason: A convention must apply across the figure. Straight bars read as flat stripes, so they contradict the curved torso lines.

Check: Compare each arm line to the written convention. Confirm that every line changes curvature at a surface feature and that no line reads as a flat bar.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Cross-contour lines are present on both limbs and torso, not only outlines.
- [ ] Each line reads as a wrap around a volume rather than a flat stripe.
- [ ] Spacing changes plausibly at bulges, joints, and the waist.
- [ ] Lines follow a stated convention consistently across the figure.
- [ ] Torso lines show a rounded box shape, not a cylinder.
- [ ] Valid alternative conventions are accepted if internally consistent and clearly described.

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