Drawing Eyes in Perspective: Foreshortened Lids and Iris Ellipses

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

Front view: draw a head-angle frame with a horizontal eye line. Place two symmetric eyes. Draw the iris as a nearly circular ellipse and the upper lid as an arc peaking near the middle. Annotate the brow angle.

Answer: A front-view frame with a horizontal eye line, two symmetric eyes, nearly circular irises, upper lids arcing with peaks near the middle, and brows roughly horizontal.

Reason: At front view, the eye line is horizontal and the iris is nearly circular because the eyeball front faces the viewer. The lid arc peaks near the middle because the visible eyeball is symmetric.

Check: Measure the distance from each eye to the midline; they should be equal. Check that the iris ellipse is nearly circular and that the brow angle is roughly horizontal.

Task 2

Three-quarter view: draw a head turned to the viewer's right. Place the near eye on the right and the far eye closer to the midline. Draw the upper lid with its peak shifted right, and draw the iris as an ellipse narrower than at front view. Use a hypothetical iris width of 70 percent of front-view width and label it as hypothetical.

Answer: A three-quarter frame turning right, near eye on the right, far eye compressed toward the midline, upper lid peak shifted right, and iris ellipse with a hypothetical horizontal width of 70 percent of front-view width.

Reason: As the head turns right, the near eye is on the right and the far eye compresses toward the midline. The lid peak shifts toward the near side, and the iris ellipse narrows because the eyeball front turns away.

Check: Check that the far eye is closer to the midline than the near eye. Measure the iris ellipse width and confirm it is narrower than the front-view width you used. Confirm the lid peak is on the near side.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Profile view: draw a head in profile facing left. Draw only the visible eye near the front of the face. Draw the upper lid as a short, steep curve and the iris as a thin vertical ellipse or partly hidden by the lid. Annotate the brow angle following the forehead curve.

Answer: A profile frame facing left, one visible eye near the front, a short steep upper lid curve, a thin vertical iris ellipse or partly hidden iris, and a brow angle following the forehead curve.

Reason: In profile, only one eye is visible and the eyeball front turns nearly perpendicular to the viewer, so the iris becomes a thin vertical ellipse. The lid curve is short and steep because only the front edge of the eyeball is visible.

Check: Check that only one eye is drawn and that it sits near the front of the face. Confirm the iris ellipse is thin and vertical or partly hidden. Check that the brow follows the forehead curve.

Task 4

Correction task: a drawing shows a three-quarter head turned left, but the iris is circular and the upper lid is a flat line. Describe two specific changes that would make the eye agree with the head turn, and state how you would check each change.

Answer: Change the iris from a circle to an ellipse narrower horizontally, centered on the eyeball front axis. Change the flat upper lid to an arc on the eyeball sphere with its peak shifted left toward the near side. Check the iris by measuring its horizontal width against the front-view width; check the lid by confirming it curves around the eyeball sphere and peaks on the near side.

Reason: A circular iris and a flat lid contradict the three-quarter head turn. Narrowing the iris ellipse and curving the lid on the sphere restore consistency with the head angle.

Check: Measure the iris ellipse width and confirm it is narrower than a front-view circle. Trace the lid curve and confirm it follows the eyeball sphere with its peak on the near side.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Head-angle frame is drawn before the eye and shows a consistent midline and eye line.
- [ ] Near and far eye positions agree with the head turn, with the far eye compressed toward the midline.
- [ ] Upper and lower lids are drawn as curves on the eyeball sphere, not as flat lines.
- [ ] Iris is drawn as an ellipse whose width narrows as the head turns toward profile.
- [ ] Pupil is a smaller ellipse inside the iris with the same orientation.
- [ ] Brow angle agrees with the eye line and head turn.
- [ ] Valid alternatives in lid shape and eye style are accepted if the construction remains consistent.

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