Making Faces Out of Shapes: A Cartoon Drawing Exercise

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw a cartoon face with a circle head, square eyes, flat brows, and a wide oval mouth. Name the expression.

Answer: A circle head with two square eyes, flat brows, and a wide oval mouth. The expression reads as neutral or slightly surprised.

Reason: The circle head gives a soft base; square eyes and a wide oval mouth create a calm, open look. Flat brows keep the expression neutral rather than angry or worried.

Check: Confirm the head is a circle, the eyes are squares, the brows are flat, and the mouth is a wide oval. Ask whether the expression is readable as neutral or slightly surprised.

Task 2

Keep the same circle head and square eyes, but change the brows to angle toward the center and the mouth to a downward crescent. Describe the new expression.

Answer: The face now reads as worried or sad. The angled brows and downward crescent mouth change the expression while the head and eyes stay the same.

Reason: Changing only brows and mouth isolates the effect. Angled brows suggest tension; a downward crescent mouth suggests sadness. The unchanged head and eyes show that expression comes from small feature changes.

Check: Compare with the first exercise: head and eyes should match; brows should angle toward the center; mouth should curve downward. Check that the expression is described as worried or sad.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Plan a face with a triangle head, triangle eyes, raised curved brows, and a small oval mouth. State one measurement example in millimeters and check the eye spacing arithmetic.

Answer: A triangle head with two triangle eyes, raised curved brows, and a small oval mouth. Hypothetical example: head width 50 mm, each eye 8 mm wide, center gap 8 mm, and side margins 13 mm each. Total across: 13 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 13 = 50 mm, so the spacing fits exactly. The expression reads as surprised.

Reason: Raised curved brows and a small oval mouth suggest surprise. Triangle shapes give an angular feel. The arithmetic checks that the eye spacing fits inside the head width using consistent units.

Check: Verify the shapes are triangles for head and eyes, brows are raised and curved, mouth is a small oval. Recalculate the spacing: 13 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 13 = 50 mm, matching the head width. Confirm units are all millimeters.

Task 4

Create a four-box expression panel using the same square head and circle eyes. In box one use flat brows and a straight mouth; box two angled brows and a straight mouth; box three raised brows and a small oval mouth; box four lowered brows and a downward crescent mouth. Name each expression.

Answer: Box one: neutral. Box two: angry or focused. Box three: surprised. Box four: sad or worried. The head and eyes stay the same in all four boxes.

Reason: Each box changes only brows and mouth, so the expression differences are controlled. Flat brows and straight mouth read neutral; angled brows read angry or focused; raised brows and oval mouth read surprised; lowered brows and downward crescent read sad or worried.

Check: Check that the head and eyes are identical in all four boxes. Confirm each box changes only brows and mouth as described. Ask whether the four expressions are distinguishable and correctly named.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] The face uses at least one head shape, two eye shapes, and one mouth shape from circles, squares, or triangles.
- [ ] The expression is readable and supported by at least one brow or mouth change.
- [ ] The shape-breakdown grid or planning notes show separate decisions for head, eyes, and mouth.
- [ ] Labels are readable and follow a stated x-height convention; valid alternative letter styles are accepted.
- [ ] Measurements, if used, are in consistent units and simple arithmetic is correct.
- [ ] The drawing avoids realistic portraiture, anime style, and full-body figures; the focus stays on cartoon faces from shapes.

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