Cross-Contour Line Drawing for Portraits: Mapping Facial Surface Form

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

A reference portrait shows a forehead that bulges forward at the center and recedes at the temples. Using horizontal lines that bow forward over the brow, describe how you would space the lines across the forehead from center to temple.

Answer: Space lines wider apart at the center where the forehead faces the viewer, and closer together toward the temples where the surface turns away. Let each line bow slightly forward at the center and flatten toward the sides.

Reason: Wider spacing reads as a surface facing the viewer; closer spacing reads as a surface turning away. The forward bow follows the brow ridge curvature.

Check: Cover the forehead outline and confirm the lines alone suggest a central bulge and receding sides; verify spacing is wider at center than at temples.

Task 2

A nose in the reference projects forward, with a rounded bridge and flaring nostrils. Using lines that wrap around the bridge from left to right, describe the direction change at the nostril and how spacing should differ between bridge and nostril.

Answer: Lines wrap across the bridge in a gentle curve, then flare outward and downward at the nostril. Spacing is wider on the bridge where it faces the viewer and closer at the nostril sides where the surface turns away.

Reason: The bridge is a forward-facing rounded surface, so wider spacing reads as facing the viewer. The nostril sides turn away, so closer spacing reads as curvature away from the viewer.

Check: Trace one line with a finger to confirm it wraps rather than outlines; check that nostril spacing is tighter than bridge spacing.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

A chin is rounded and projects forward, with a slight crease beneath the lower lip. Using vertical lines that run from the lower lip down across the chin, describe how you would handle the crease and the spacing across the chin.

Answer: Let lines run downward across the chin, curving outward slightly at the sides. At the crease beneath the lower lip, change line direction briefly to follow the indentation, then resume downward. Space lines wider at the front of the chin and closer at the sides where it turns away.

Reason: The crease is a change of surface direction, so lines should respond to it rather than ignore it. Wider front spacing and closer side spacing convey the rounded projecting form.

Check: Cover the chin outline and confirm the crease and roundness are readable; verify spacing is wider at front than at sides.

Task 4

A right cheek is flatter near the nose and rounds more toward the ear. Using lines that run roughly horizontally and curve downward at the outer edge, describe how spacing should change from nose side to ear side and state your convention in one sentence.

Answer: Convention: lines run horizontally across the cheek and curve downward at the outer edge. Space lines wider near the nose side where the cheek is flatter and closer toward the ear side where it rounds away.

Reason: Flatter surfaces facing the viewer get wider spacing; surfaces turning away get closer spacing. The downward curve at the outer edge follows the cheek turning toward the ear.

Check: Confirm the convention sentence matches the drawing; cover the outline and check that the cheek reads flatter near the nose and rounder toward the ear.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Lines cross surfaces rather than outlining features or the face boundary.
- [ ] A stated convention is applied consistently across zones, or zone transitions are explained.
- [ ] Spacing varies to indicate surface turning away versus facing the viewer.
- [ ] Cheek, nose, and forehead zones are each readable as form when the outline is covered.
- [ ] Line weight is even and no tonal shading is used.
- [ ] Valid alternative conventions are accepted if internally consistent and explained.

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