Practice Drawing Comic Book Characters: Proportion, Gesture, and Expression

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A panel is 20 cm tall. You choose a 5-head-unit character. Calculate the head unit and state where the knee markers go if knees are at half the leg length.

Answer: Head unit = 20 cm divided by 5 = 4 cm. Knees at half the leg length: if legs occupy the lower 3 head units (12 cm), knees are 6 cm below the hip line.

Reason: Divide panel height by head-unit count to get a checkable unit; then apply simple arithmetic to place markers consistently.

Check: Multiply the head unit by 5 to confirm 20 cm, and measure the knee marker distance to confirm 6 cm.

Task 2

Describe three gesture lines for a character reaching upward with one arm while standing on one leg. Explain how you would test that the gesture reads.

Answer: Line one runs from the head through the torso to the supporting foot; line two follows the reaching arm upward; line three follows the lifted leg or balancing arm. Test by covering the proportion guide and checking whether the reach and single-leg balance are still obvious.

Reason: Gesture lines capture action direction; limiting them to three keeps the pose readable and prevents clutter.

Check: View the three lines alone at a short distance; if the action is unclear, adjust tilt or curve and retest.

Task 3

Using the x-height convention, describe how to draw a surprised face and a sad face in two face boxes. State one check for each.

Answer: Measure your own x-height and mark the midline in each box. Surprised: raise brows, widen eyes, open mouth; check that brows and mouth both signal surprise. Sad: tilt inner brows up, lower eyelids, turn mouth down; check that the expression reads without labels.

Reason: Expression clarity comes from coordinated changes across brows, eyelids, and mouth, not from one feature alone.

Check: Ask a peer to name the emotion from a short distance; if they hesitate, adjust one feature and retest.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Plan an original character in a blank panel: choose a head-unit count that fits a 16 cm panel, name a gesture, and name an expression. Show the arithmetic and one consistency check.

Answer: Example: 16 cm panel with 4 head units gives a 4 cm unit. Gesture: crouching to leap; expression: determined. Consistency check: confirm the forward-leaning gesture matches the focused brows and firm mouth, and confirm 4 units times 4 cm equals 16 cm.

Reason: Choosing a unit that divides evenly prevents cutoff, and matching gesture to expression keeps the character readable.

Check: Recount head units against the panel height and verify the expression and pose describe the same emotion.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Proportion guide is measured and labeled with a consistent unit; total height equals the chosen head-unit count.
- [ ] Gesture uses no more than three clear lines and the pose reads when details are covered.
- [ ] Expression changes brows, eyelids, and mouth together and matches the body pose.
- [ ] X-height convention is defined from the student's own handwriting and used consistently.
- [ ] Valid style alternatives are accepted; the work is checked for clarity and consistency rather than a single universal look.

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