Cross-Contour Face Drawing: Surface Lines That Describe Form

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

On a blank face outline 10 cm wide, the forehead zone is 5 cm wide. You plan five cross-contour lines across the forehead. Compute the average spacing and describe where the lines should be closest together.

Answer: Average spacing is 5 cm divided by 5 lines, which equals 1 cm. Lines should be closest together where the forehead surface turns most sharply toward the sides, and wider across the flattest central area. Values are hypothetical examples.

Reason: Average spacing is zone width divided by line count. Tight spacing corresponds to a steeper surface turn, so the closest lines belong at the strongest curvature.

Check: Measure the forehead zone on your own outline, count your lines, divide width by count, and confirm the tightest gap sits at the strongest visible turn.

Task 2

A cheek zone is 7 cm wide and you draw three lines spaced 2 cm, 2 cm, and 3 cm apart. Is the spacing consistent with a surface that turns sharply near one edge? Explain.

Answer: The 3 cm gap is wider than the others, so it suggests a flatter area, not a sharp turn. If the sharp turn is near one edge, the tightest gap should be there. The spacing is only consistent if the 3 cm gap corresponds to the flattest part of the cheek. Values are hypothetical examples.

Reason: Spacing communicates surface change: tight gaps mean steep turns, wide gaps mean gentle slopes. A wide gap at a sharp turn contradicts the convention.

Check: Compare each gap to the visible surface change in the reference and redraw any gap that contradicts the turn.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

You draw a cross-contour line across the nose bridge and it has a sharp corner halfway along. Using the convention, describe how to revise it and why.

Answer: Replace the sharp corner with a gradual curve so the line reads as a continuous surface path. A sharp corner suggests a crease rather than a rounded form, which conflicts with the convention. Values are hypothetical examples.

Reason: The convention requires continuous curves with no sharp corners because cross-contour lines describe smooth surface curvature.

Check: Trace the line with your eye; if direction changes abruptly, smooth the transition and confirm adjacent lines remain separate.

Task 4

A face outline is 12 cm tall. You plan six cross-contour lines across the jaw zone, which is 6 cm wide. Compute average spacing, then state one check you would perform before finalizing.

Answer: Average spacing is 6 cm divided by 6 lines, which equals 1 cm. Before finalizing, check that the tightest spacing aligns with the strongest jaw turn and that no adjacent lines touch. Values are hypothetical examples.

Reason: Average spacing follows from width divided by line count. The check confirms spacing logic and the no-touching convention.

Check: Measure the jaw zone, count lines, divide, and inspect the tightest and widest gaps against the reference surface turns.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Lines cross the surface rather than outlining features or the silhouette.
- [ ] Spacing varies consistently: tighter where the form turns, wider where it flattens.
- [ ] Each line is continuous with gradual curvature and no sharp corners.
- [ ] Adjacent lines remain separate and do not touch or cross.
- [ ] The drawing communicates facial volume when viewed without shading.
- [ ] Valid alternative line styles are accepted if curvature and spacing logic remain clear.

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