Original Character Design Practice: Silhouette, Gesture, and Expression Prompts

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw a silhouette for an original character who is crouching to pick up a small object. Use solid black shapes only. Then list two anchor features visible in the outline.

Answer: A compact, low shape with a rounded back, bent knees, and one arm reaching down. Anchor features might be a pointed hood and a wide belt. The exact shapes vary, but the outline should read as crouching without internal lines.

Reason: The crouch compresses the body into a lower, wider mass. The reaching arm creates a downward diagonal that distinguishes the pose from a simple squat. Anchor features must be visible in the outline, so they should be large shapes rather than small details.

Check: Fill the shape solid black and squint. Ask whether a viewer could describe the pose as crouching or reaching down. Confirm that both listed anchor features are visible in the filled outline.

Task 2

Draw a gesture for an original character pushing a heavy box. Use a line of action, shoulder line, hip line, and mark the supporting foot. Keep it under 30 seconds.

Answer: A forward-leaning line of action from head to front foot, shoulder line tilted forward, hip line lower and angled back, both hands extended toward the box. The front foot is marked as supporting, with the back leg extended.

Reason: Pushing requires the body to lean into the effort. The line of action should angle forward, and the supporting foot should be under the leaning mass. Non-parallel shoulder and hip lines show the body bracing.

Check: Trace a vertical line from the head through the marked supporting foot. If the line falls far outside the foot, adjust the lean. Check that shoulder and hip lines are not parallel.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

Draw three expressions for the same original character: calm, frustrated, and delighted. Change eyebrows, eyes, and mouth. Test each by covering half the face.

Answer: Calm: flat eyebrows, relaxed eyes, slight smile. Frustrated: inner eyebrows lowered, eyes narrowed, mouth pressed. Delighted: eyebrows raised, eyes wide, mouth open in a smile. Exact shapes vary, but each expression should remain readable when half the face is covered.

Reason: Each mood uses a different combination of eyebrow angle, eye openness, and mouth curve. Testing by covering half the face checks whether the features work together rather than relying on one exaggerated element.

Check: Cover the mouth and check whether the eyes and brows suggest the mood. Cover the eyes and check the mouth. If either half fails, adjust one feature and retest.

Task 4

Using your character from the previous exercises, draw a front view and a side view in the same pose. List three anchor features and check that each appears in both views.

Answer: Both views show the same pose, such as standing with one hand on the hip. Anchor features might be a triangular skirt, a short bob haircut, and a round shoulder bag. In the side view, the bag appears on the near shoulder, and the skirt shape changes but remains triangular.

Reason: Front and side views test whether anchor features survive a change in viewpoint. The pose stays the same, so differences come from perspective rather than movement. Consistency means the features are recognizable, not identical in line.

Check: Compare each anchor feature across both views. If a feature is missing or unrecognizable in one view, redraw only that feature. Confirm the pose reads the same in both views.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Silhouette is filled solid and reads as a distinct shape without internal detail.
- [ ] At least one distinctive outline feature is visible in the silhouette.
- [ ] Gesture includes a line of action and shows which foot carries weight.
- [ ] Shoulder and hip lines are not parallel when the pose has twist.
- [ ] Expression changes one primary feature and one supporting feature.
- [ ] Expression remains readable when half the face is covered.
- [ ] Three to five anchor features are listed and present in each drawing.
- [ ] Valid alternatives are accepted if the checklist is satisfied; no single line style is required.

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