

DaVinci Syllabus

1. Getting started

This first week is dedicated to understanding the course culture, getting to know your team mates and ensuring that you are absolutely at home navigating our friendly, private online forum and uploading your first cartooning efforts to it.

2. Circle-y circles

What's the difference between an amateur and a professional cartoonist? Sketchy, circle-y circles is what! This week we set the foundation for the habit of working sketchily every time you pick up your pencil.

3. Drawing animals by arranging circles

You can draw anything using circles but because drawing humans can be daunting, we avoid any possibility of intimidation at the outset and start off with animals.

4. Snoopy Ahoy!

I bet you didn't think you'd be drawing like a professional so soon, did you? This week we tackle Snoopy via tracing and copying and before you know it, he'll look (almost) perfect.

5. Hallo, Charlie Brown and pals

Charlie Brown is a great way to dive into drawing cartoon people — simple enough to get started, but with loads to teach us.

6. Speed Sketching — Da Vinci's secret weapon

This week we introduce *speed sketching*, a recurring Da Vinci tool which enables you to quickly bypass your Bully Brain and start to draw relying on your reflexes and instinct rather than painstaking care.

7. Stick Figures

Why didn't we start the course with stick figures? Well, it turns out that drawing a flexible stick figure needs a trick or two: learn the tweaks that will help you construct a flexible "Stick-y" to form the basis of later, lively characters. Learning this now will help you decode our next two cartoony fellows.

8. Enter Po the Panda

There's a treat in store as we decode this circle-y, furry fellow and see how sketchy roundness and overlapping can combine magically to make things 3D.

9. Speedy Po

Speed week with the Kung Fu Panda— using Speedies once again, to reinforce how useful this tool is for building trust in ourselves, as well as to confirm that we are building and accessing our visual memory.

10. Pink Panther

After many weeks of circles and ovals, it is time to Get Geometric. The Pink Panther shows us some triangles and rectangles as well as sharpening our pencil control to draw long, smooth lines.

11. Speedy Sticks and Panthers

One final hurrah, and as it is the only time you are safe from traffic cops — on your marks... get set... Speed! Drawing speedy Sticks from Panther poses and then converting them to Pink Panthers will build skills for your own work later.

12. Cuatro

For Brain Auditors, Cuatro needs no introduction. Sean D'Souza's signature character takes us into human territory once again... and you'll see that cartooning 'people' isn't that daunting.

13. Beans and Blobs

Now we're going to combine our Stick-y skills and our circle-y skills to do some playing around with cartoony proportions. Because cartoon characters don't always have 'regular' body shapes, sizes or even necks!

~ End of Part 1 ~

14. Drawing faces and expressions

What are the essentials of cartoon faces? Which two features dictate most of what the face is saying? Start exploring the infinite variety of expressions you can create with small tweaks.

15. Create an alter-ego

This is the week you've been waiting for: time to create your first character ever. Don't agonise over the process or the outcome, because characters keep evolving the more you draw them. Aim to create just one character, a 'shadow character' you can travel with through the rest of the course.

16. Hands and Shoes

Hands can be a stumbling block until you realise that you can draw 'bubble hands' — circle-y hands that take the opposable thumb into account. Same applies with feet — tackling things circle-y-style takes the pain out of drawing your character's footwear.

17. Daily Diary, cartoon inspirations and some Composition

Introducing the surest-fire way of continuing to grow your cartooning skills regardless of where you are or what you are doing. Plus we learn a basic trick to set up a scene sharply, and plan our way to December Self-study break success.

~ December Self-study break ~

18. Fore, middle and background

Rich backgrounds involve depth and a clear fore, middle and background. Include the benefit of some extra depth by adding a few pencil strokes to even the simplest cartoon. Revisit self-study cartoons and polish them to a sparkle using Alison's feedback.

19. Big and Small

Anything goes in Cartoonland, and mixing up big and small is the best comedic techniques you can learn. This week we experiment with big objects vs small characters, and vice versa.

20. Thick and thin (digitally or brush, pen and nib)

Add dynamism to every pen stroke and engage your inner artist with old-school tools. If you are working digitally, learn how to harness the power of a variable-width brush tool consciously.

21. Face-on (one-point) Perspective

The simplest time of perspective is a great place to start. Learn how to draw objects in perspective when you are looking at the flat side of them.

22. Corner-on Perspective (Cheese & Kites)

Corner-on perspective will make all your 'stuff' more dynamic. Learn the best angles to create drama, and the hacks you need to draw 'good enough' perspective for cartoons. Hint: placing the horizon line well wins you a good part of the battle)

23. Challenge week: mixing it all up

Using all the principles learned to date, Alison gives you a scene and you all draw it as **you** imagine it. So much to learn from other brains and how we all tackle the same project. Plus this is an opportunity to iron out any perspective wrinkles you may still be having.

24. Morphing your character from great references

You've found an artist or two that you like, right? Well, here's a method that will let you create new cartooning knowledge on your own way beyond Da Vinci, all while growing your own unique style.

25. Revisiting expressions

Setting up for success beyond Da Vinci again — facial expressions are a life-long learning area. We spend a week re-purposing iconic expressions for our own use — something you will do over and over again in the future.

26. Grand Takeaway + After-Party

Everybody plays! This week we create & polish something to take out into the world — whether you print it on a postcard to mail your team mates, make your own mug, add it to a work Powerpoint — the choice is yours. Plus, it's time to say goodbye, or perhaps just *Au Revoir*? Psychotactics courses never simply fizzle out; we gather, reflect, celebrate and figure out options to keep our skills growing beyond the close camaraderie of the course.