

2019 Da Vinci Syllabus

1. Getting started

This first week is dedicated to introducing the course culture, getting to know your team mates and ensuring that you are absolutely at home uploading images to our friendly, private forum.

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 with 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 pro 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. Enter the Gruffalo

There's a treat in store as we decode this shuffling, furry fellow and see how sketchy roundness and overlapping can combine magically to make things 3D. He also has a few triangular parts for his spikes.

8. Speed Gruffalos

Speed week — Speedies again, to reinforce and test how we are building and accessing our visual memory.

9. Pink Panther

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

10. Speed Pink Panther

One final hurrah, and as it is the only time you are safe from traffic cops — on your marks... get set... Speed!

11. Cuatro

For Brain Auditors, Cuatro needs no introduction. Sean D'Souza's signature character takes us into human territory at last... and you'll see that drawing 'people' is not as scary as you may expect.

12. Stick figures

Why didn't we start the course with stick figures? Well, it turns out that drawing a (good) stickman is not as simple you thought: learn the tricks of constructing a flexible stickman to form the basis of a lively character.

~ End of Part 1 ~

13. Beans and Blobs

Now that we have the idea of jointed limbs firmly in mind, it's time to head back towards cartoony proportions. Because cartoon characters don't always have 'regular' body shapes, or even necks!

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.

16. Daily Diary, cartoon inspirations and the fundamentals

Introducing the surest-fire way of continuing to grow your cartooning skills regardless of where you are or what you are doing. Plus we remind ourselves of the basics which are more important than ever.

17. Hands

Hands can be a stumbling block until you realise that you can break them down with x-ray vision, and that the opposable thumb has special rules.

18. Feet and shoes

Drawing feet is less of a challenge than hands, as most characters wear shoes a lot of the time. Still, there is always a way to tackle them simply

19. Composition

Great cartoons have a sharp focus and no confusion. Learn how to compose a scene so that your viewer looks exactly where you want them to, every time.

20. 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.

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. Perspective and Cheese Wedges

Two-point perspective from a bird's eye view is best tackled by thinking about it as a wedge of cheese. We'll show you how.

23. Perspective and Kites

Of course most scenes are drawn from eye level, and so we take the cheese-wedge principle to the next level and draw perspective using an old-fashioned kite shape.

24. Thick and thin (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.

25. 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.

25a. Grand Finale

And now it is time to say, 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.