

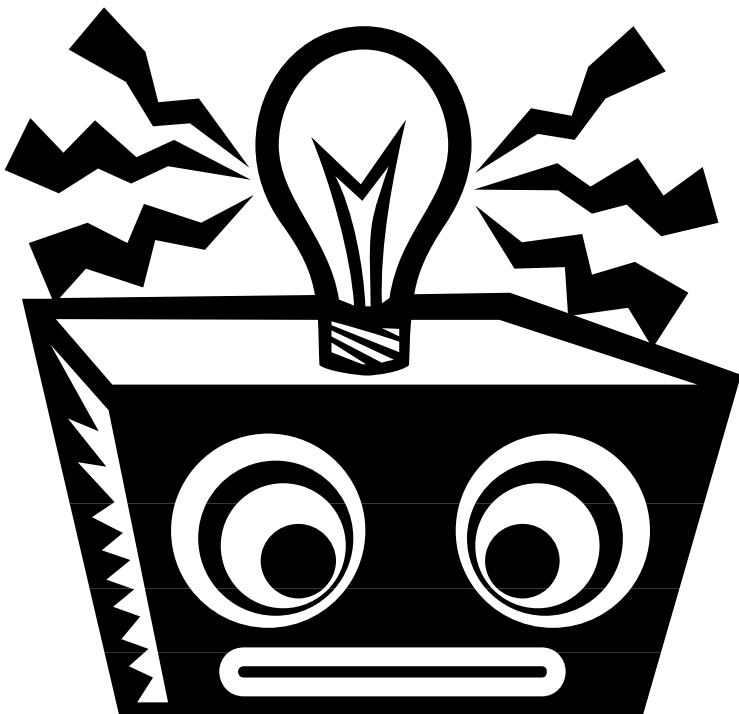
*How To*

**DRAW**

**& WRITE**

**Your Own**

**COMIC BOOKS**

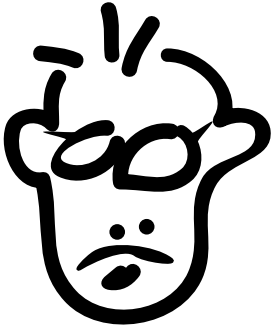


*By*  
*Peter*  
*Daves*

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# ABOUT HIM:

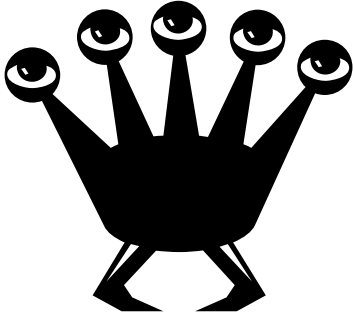


**T**he guy who put this together is named Peter Dawes. Peter is a graphic designer/illustrator who has been working in the comic field for over 10 years in Winnipeg. Winnipeg has been a breeding ground for great comic book talent over the years.

Peter worked for a company called Digital Chameleon which was a comic field pioneer in the electronic comic book coloring field and was based in Winnipeg. Not only was Digital one of the first companies to get comics into the electronic age in coloring but they also pioneered electronic inking, coloring from pencils, and electronic lettering. They were also one of the best companies involved in the reconstruction of old comic book classics by stripping out color and restoring the line work and recoloring.

Today Peter owns his own company called All Thumbs Creative which provides digital coloring to the comic industry. Peter has had one comic published as an artist/writer in the Captain Canuck Summer Special. Maybe some day he'll do another.

# WHAT'S A COMIC BOOK?



**W**hat do you think of when you think comic book?  
Cartoons? Funny stories? Superheroes?

Do you ever think of how to make one? Do you know what is involved and how you could make one yourself?

Begin by reading and looking at lots of comic books. Some you'll like better than others because everyone chooses differently. And isn't that a good thing? Variety means there is a place for your different book.

# COMIC COMPONENTS:

## THIS IS A PAGE

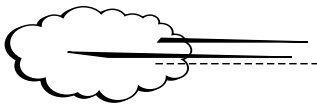
IT IS THE SHEET OF PAPER THAT CONTAINS THE ARTWORK OF THE COMIC BOOK.

## THIS IS A PANEL

THE NUMBER OF PANELS ON A PAGE DEPENDS ON THE PACING OF THE STORY. THE PANELS ARE IN THE LIVE AREA AND SPACES BETWEEN PANELS ARE CALLED GUTTERS.

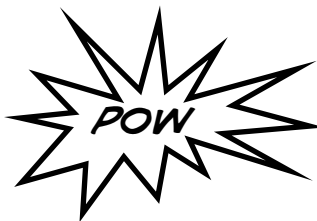
PANELS VARY IN SIZE AND SHAPE.

THE LINE AROUND THE PANEL IS THE BORDER.



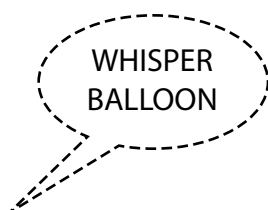
## THESE ARE SPECIAL EFFECTS

THIS IS A CLOUD OF DUST AND SPEED LINES SUGGESTING MOVEMENT. THE BURST IS USED TO SHOW IMPACT! THEY ARE A FORM OF GRAPHIC SHORTHAND



## THESE ARE WORD BALLOONS

THIS IS USED FOR SPOKEN WORDS OR THOUGHTS. THEY CAN BE CUSTOMIZED FOR SPECIAL CHARACTERS.



And Bob felt really bad too!

## THIS IS AN CAPTION BOX

THIS BOX WILL HAVE TEXT THAT DESCRIBES THE CHARACTER'S

EMOTIONS AND GIVE INFORMATION NOT SUPPLIED BY THE ARTWORK (LIKE NAMES). IT CAN ALSO BE USED FOR CHARACTER VOICE OVER.

# WHAM!

## THIS IS AN SOUND EFFECT

WOW, THAT WAS LOUD!!!

# INVENTING YOUR PLOT:



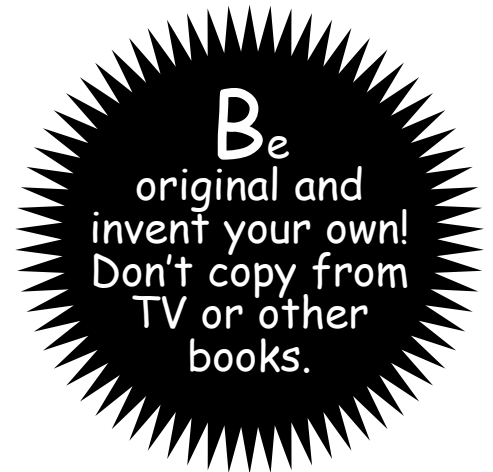
It can be just a single idea. It can be a series of events. But it has to make a story for your comic to work. Every story takes place **somewhere** with a main **character** who has a **problem**.

**PLACE:** Your story can take place anywhere you like -

- underwater
- in a haunted house
- in outer space
- in a backyard
- wherever you want.

**PERSON:** Who will your characters be --- ??

- mermaids
- insects
- spacemen
- aliens
- ghosts
- a turtle
- a chair
- a cloud



**PROBLEM:** Now you need to put those characters in so much difficulty your readers can't imagine how you're going to get them out of it. It can be great fun or total disaster. Choose the problem! But make it a situation your reader can identify with.

# PLOTTING ALONG:



**Y**our story can take a number of forms based on whether you write or draw first. It can be a **simple theme** like the comic antics of a cat chasing a mouse where you'll draw out your action and fill in the captions later. It can be a more **descriptive plot synopsis** of the story like a fumbling cat tries unsuccessfully to trap a clever mouse on pain of eviction where you might break the action generally down into pages. Or it can be a **full script** exploring camera angles and outlining action and dialogue and describing each panel on

the page.

For this method we are doing the drawing first based on a simple theme then writing the rest of the story after.

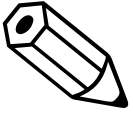
Whichever form it takes, before you start drawing, it should contain 4 basic parts:

- 1) Character **beginning** in a setting.
- 2) An event or **problem**.
- 3) The **consequences** or fallout of the problem.
- 4) The **solution** of the problem.

These 4 parts can be expanded or contracted based on how much room you have to tell your story. If you are doing more than one issue you can even break the story up so the problem is in one issue and the solution in the next.

Your plot should have a series of events that move in a logical direction that your reader can follow, usually in a linear direction (ie. a series of events that follow each other logically in order of time).

# SKETCHING YOUR PLOT:

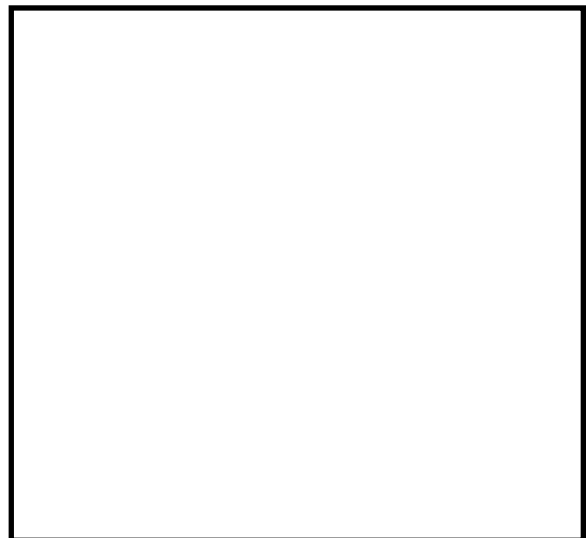
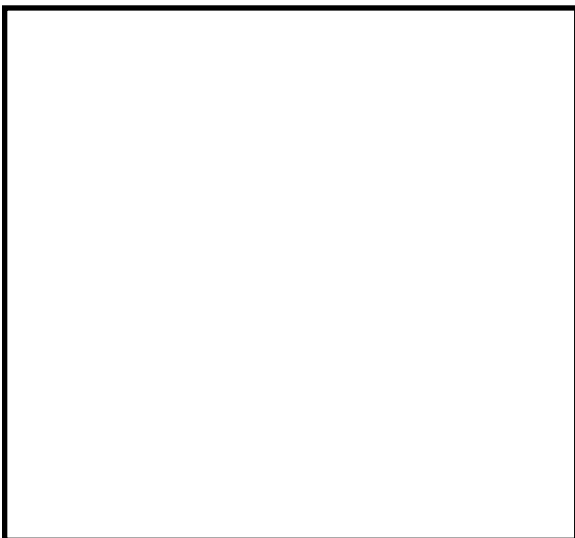


**N**ow it's time for action! It's time to draw the thumbnail sketches of your story plot. But ... you're not going to **write** your story until after you've **drawn** it.

The time you spend working through your thumbnails and character sketches will make your characters come alive enough for you to choose their words.

In a thumbnail sketch, all that is needed is quick sketches of things (like stick men) for placement that maybe only you understand! This is NOT the time to do a detailed drawing!!! The purpose of a thumbnail is to break the story down into panels.

For example, you may have to sketch the story of a cat and mouse in only 4 panels.



# NOTES FOR THUMBNAILS:



**1** It's action you're drawing, not talking heads!! Make your characters show what's happening through their actions.



**2** Pacing is deciding what the most important plot elements are and then dividing those plot elements into pages and finally panels.

**3** Use a visual variety (just like using different words to describe something) - bird's eye, up shot, close-ups and long shots. Imagine you have a flying camera, moving around a scene to get the best point of view to describe the action.

**4** Decide where you want to place your pictures and words in each panel. Remember you have to leave room for the words. (example)

**5** It's your characters that people care about, so make them large. Don't draw teeny figures along the bottom of the panel. Put them higher up and fill the space!



**6** Most important, the panels should give direction so the reader knows where to go next. (example)

**7** Think about the visual clues that will tell the reader things like time of day, character's feelings, description of surroundings, and clues to the problem or its solution. (example)

**8** Think about the suspense of a page turn. (example)

# PACING YOUR COMIC:



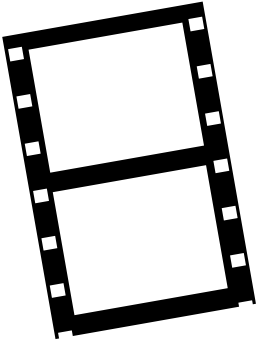
**P**acing is knowing how to use your energy so you have enough to finish the race. In comics, it means breaking up your story to fill the space you have. The most important aspects of your story will have more space given to it.

The biggest factor is how many pages you have, fewer pages means you have to tell your story faster or in fewer panels.

So if your story is only one page and you have only four panels, one panel will introduce your character and his situation. Panel two will have him encounter his problem. Panel three might be the consequences of his problem and panel four might be the solution.

If this same story were two pages of four panels, you might have the first panel introduce the character, then 3 panels for the problem, then 2 or 3 panels for consequence and 1 or 2 for the solution. You decide what is important.

# PANEL DISCUSSIONS:



**N**o matter how many panels you have on a page, each panel has a story to tell or a punch line to deliver. Together they should work to show the reader what the whole story is all about.

Think of your story as a film strip with many frames. You need to take only one frame from that sequence that best illustrates that part of the sequence, and that usually means right in the middle of the action each time. You can try doing one panel strips like in the newspaper to get the hang of making your panel deliver a point. Then try a one page story of 4 panels and try to get the pictures to tell the story in order.

Panels can be set up in grid form of the same shape & size in each panel or in free form where the size and shape vary. Each page set-up gives a different way of reading the page. In grid the panels tell you to read one after the other in order. In free form the panels themselves can help say something by varying the size of the panel to display importance. They can also make something feel small or gigantic, squeezed and free. And the very border you use on the panel can be used for effect.

What effect does each panel set up below create?

FIGURE 1

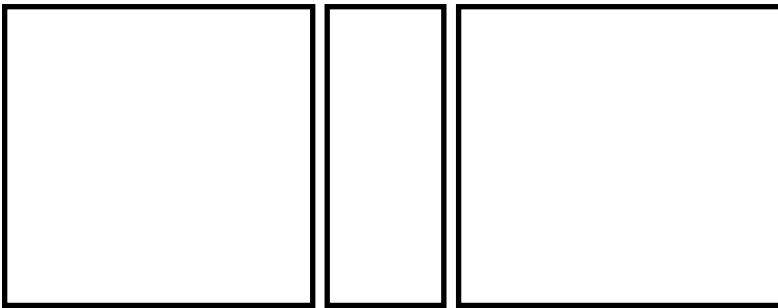


FIGURE 2

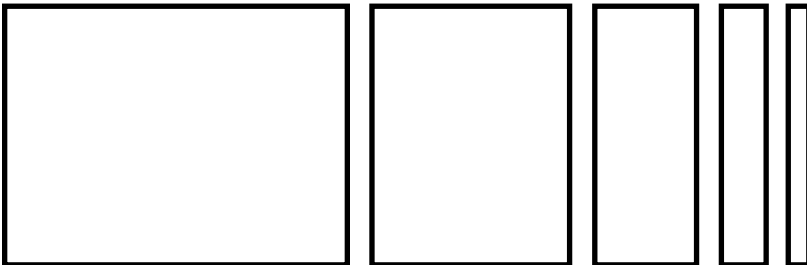


FIGURE 3

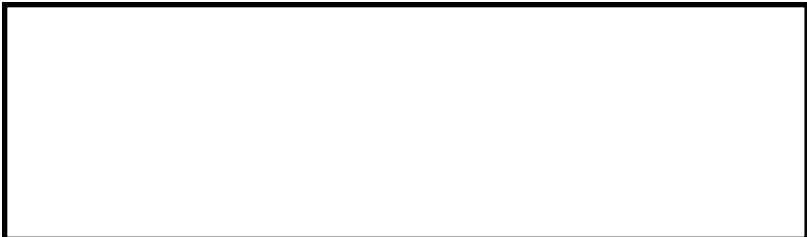
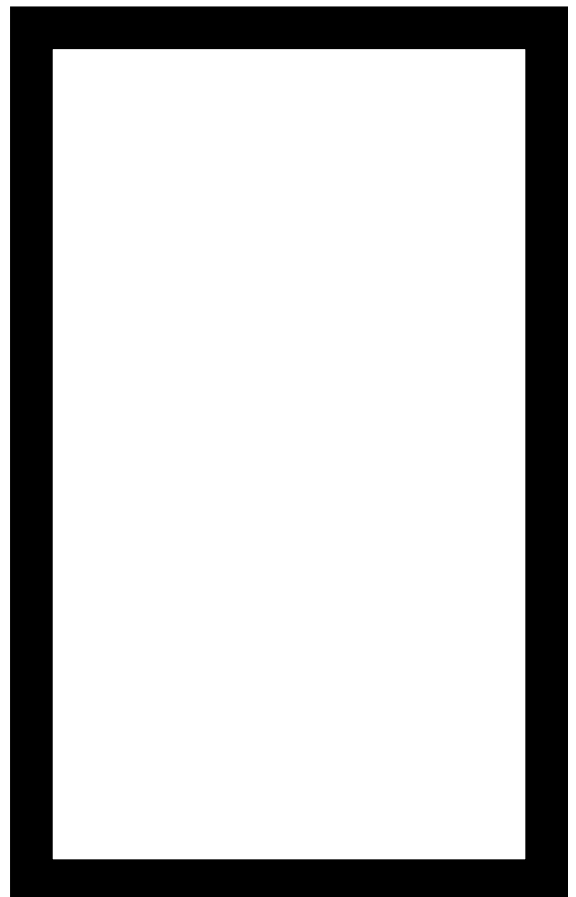
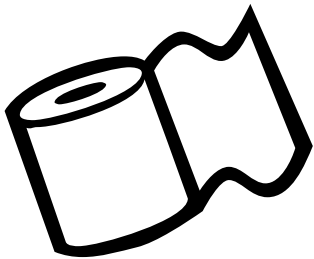


FIGURE 4



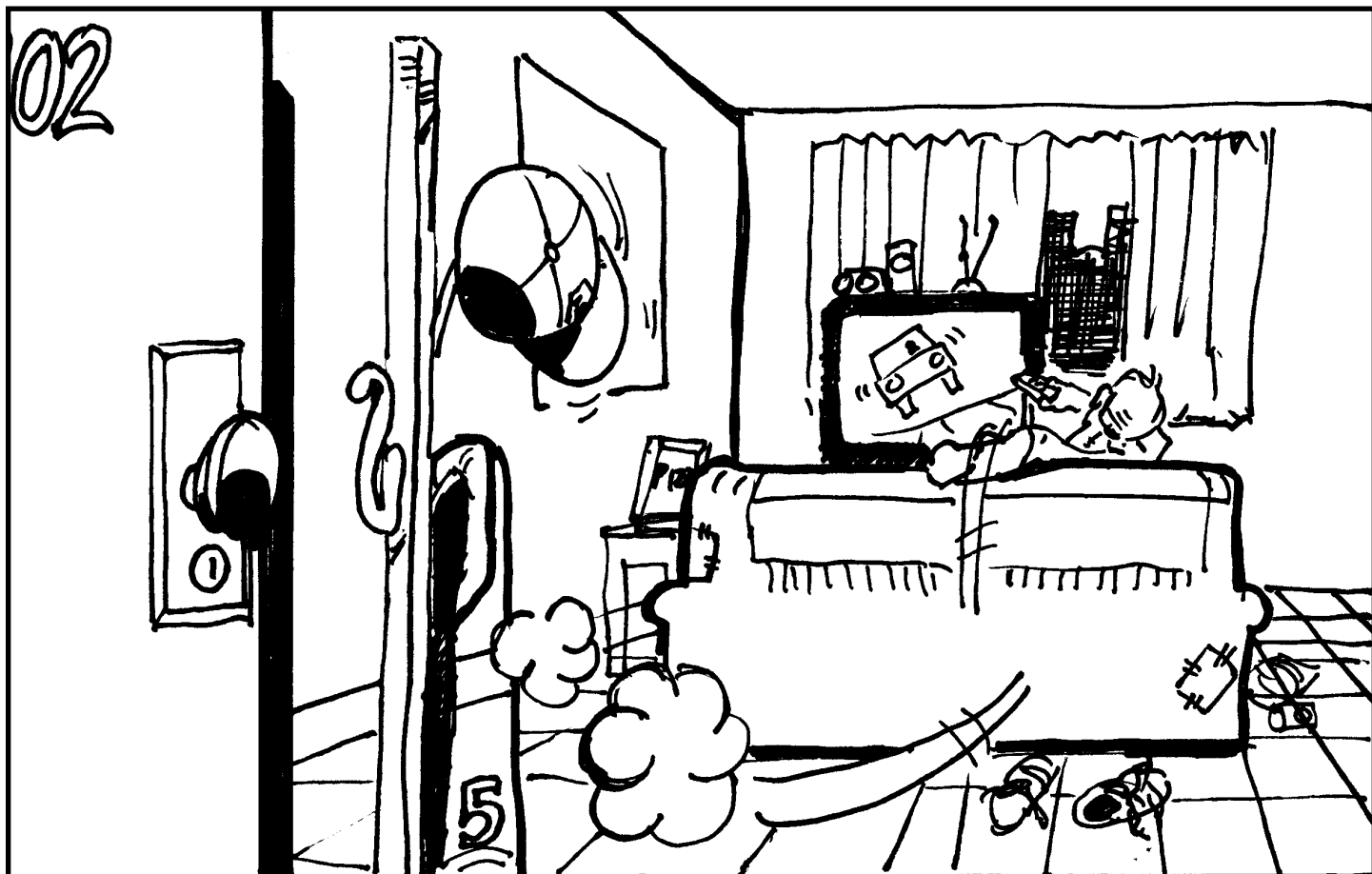
# STORY FLOW:



**P**anels are not read in isolation but in relation to each other. The reader uses comparison between the panels to understand the story. It is the reader who fills in the gaps of time and action between the panels. The way the pictures relate to each other determines how well the story flow works.

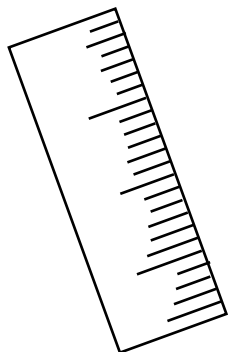
You create a flow by using direct and implied action. Direct action is what is actually drawn there. Implied action is what has gone on between panels. In order for the reader to fill in the implied action he must have some clues to go by.

You can add visual clues in each panel to say something about the action that has gone on up to that point in the picture. For example if someone has come home you can show the person inside sitting on a couch watching TV. But you can also add the doorknob of an open door and maybe a hat still settling on the hook of a coat rack with a small dust cloud and two motion lines going up to the back of the couch. What do all those clues tell you about what went on in that panel?



# VISUAL DEPTH:

## BACKGROUND, MIDGROUND, FOREGROUND



**T**o display the action of something or someone *going away from* or *to you*, you need depth. Use depth to show importance of subjects in your story. Put the most important (big) in the front (foreground) of the panel, the next important (mid-sized) in the middle (midground) of the panel and the smallest drawing at the back of the panel to give your picture depth perception.

Depth shows what's important in your panel and gives direction (left or right) to your reader. You create the impression of depth through the use of overlapping objects and the use of perspective.

The use of depth in your panel can also convey feeling like being followed or watched, feeling alone or isolated depending on where the person or object is placed.



# EXPLORING THE ANGLES:

**T**he angle you use to tell your story can really help bring out important points in the story like emotion or direction. Look at the camera angles below and see how each can enhance your story.

## CLOSE UP:

Use this when you want to show detail like an strong emotion.



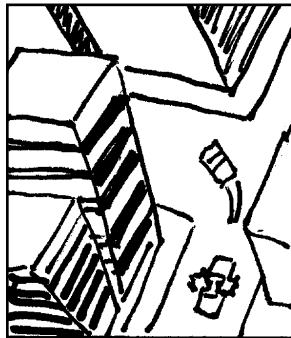
## LONG SHOT:

Use this to express distance or feeling lonely.



## BIRD'S EYE:

Use this to keep up on the action.



## UP SHOT:

This can make a bully seem 10 feet tall.



## PAN:

Use this to show a long landscape like a street or beach.



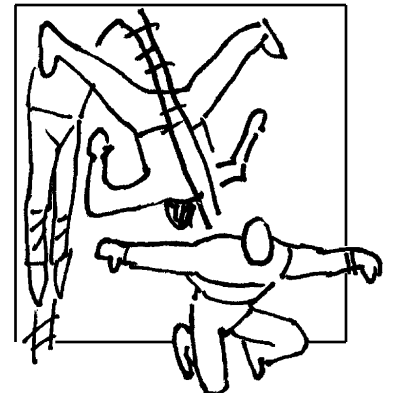
## TIME LAPSE:

This shows time taking place by action.

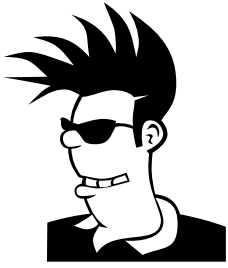


## MULTIPLE EXPOSURE:

Great for action or to show fluid motion.



# CHARACTERS:



What does the way this character is drawn say about his personality?

- 1 Think about how you want your characters to look: long hair, punk, round head, square body, skinny, plump, tall, short, clothing, costumes, and props etc. (example)
- 2 Everything you use for your character should say something about their personality. A round face looks more happy. A chic haircut looks more hip. (example)
- 3 Your drawings will not be like a class photograph where everyone looks straight ahead. We want to see your character's face from different viewpoints – front, side, back. (example)
- 4 Play around and draw characters in action – bent over, from the back, talking to each other, scolding, mad, laughing. (example)

***Practice! Practice! Practice!***

***SQUARE***



***TRIANGULAR***

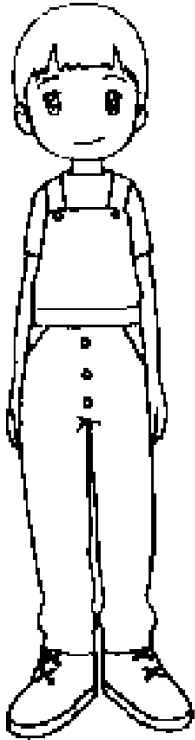


***ROUND***



# MODEL SHEETS:

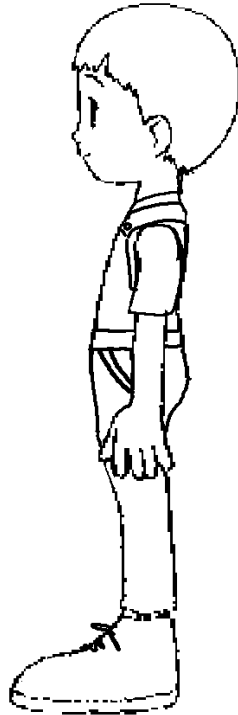
FULL BODY  
FRONT



BACK



SIDE



## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER:

- HEIGHT
- GENDER
- HAIR COLOR
- EYE COLOR
- SKIN COLOR
- HEAD SHAPE
- BODY SHAPE
- HAIR STYLE
- CLOTHING/COSTUME
- POWERS
- WEAKNESSES
- PERSONALITY
- PROPS
- ACTION POSES
- EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS
- FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

HEAD SHOT

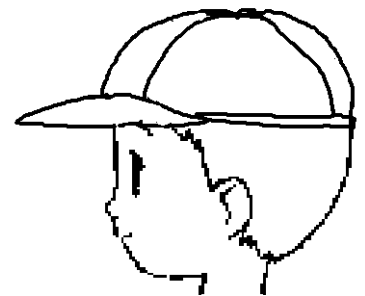
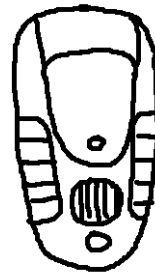
PROPS



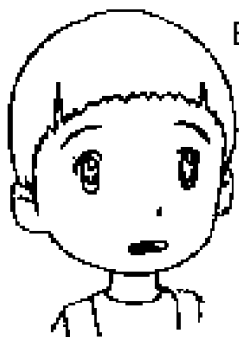
FRONT



3/4



EYE











SIDE

# EDITING YOUR COMIC:

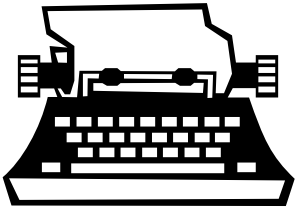
*(Before Inking and/or Coloring)*



**H**ere are some important questions to ask yourself after you look at your completed thumbnail sketches:

-  Do the drawings fill up the space?
-  Do important characters need to be made bigger than others?
-  Are the characters well up from the bottom of the panel?
-  Do the bodies show action and relate to each other?
-  Have you left room for words and indicated placement of word balloons and captions?
-  Does your layout tell the reader what direction to go when reading the panels?
-  Have you put in visual clues and details that give your reader something interesting to see and help tell the story?
-  Can a friend tell you the story based solely on your drawings. "Buddy editing" will alert you to possible problems in your storytelling.

# WRITING YOUR STORY:



**N**ow its time to fill in the blanks. You have drawn your comic to show the action, so your words do NOT need to say "and then ... and then".

What they do need to say is how your characters feel as the plot evolves –

- what they smell,
- what they hear,
- how food tastes,
- how scared, mixed-up, happy, angry or sad they are.
- verbal dialogue between characters

Words should make your readers feel that they're actually living inside your story.

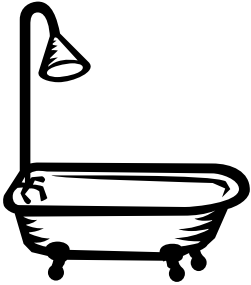
Take time to find exact words, strong words. For example:

"He **trudged** home in **despair**."

"Her **nervous** smile betrayed her great **fear**."

"The **stench** in the **dark** alley was **overpowering**!"

# SPLASH PAGE:



**T**he Splash Page is like the opening film credits and will grab the readers' attention and feature the **story title**, the **credits for writer and illustrator** and a **drawing**.

First, choose a Story Title. The title makes people want to keep reading. It should tease them to look inside. For example:

The Chocolate Bar Incident

Oops! I did it again!

Don't tell Mom!

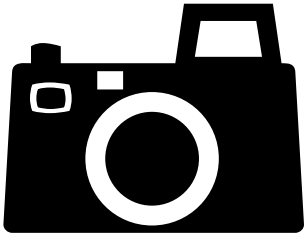
Was that a UFO?

This story title will be different from the name of the comic on the cover. The comic might be called Batman but the story might be called Chaos in the Cave.

Second, write your credit lines for the writer and illustrator and anyone else who helped out.

Third, make a drawing that introduces your characters and sets the scene for your story.

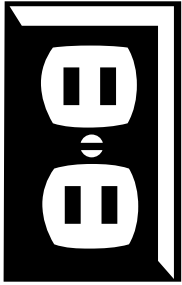
# COVER DESIGN:



**O**kay you have the house all clean and ready to present but how do you get the people inside? Put up a for sale sign. The cover is your selling feature and should have the ***name of your comic book*** (ex. Superman), a ***logo of the publisher*** (ex. DC Comics) and an eye-catching ***drawing***.

The cover design picture should "capture" the main plot point of your story! It should feature your main character and entice the reader to open the comic but not give away your story. The problem is usually presented on the cover and the inside story is how they got in trouble and how they got out of it. Occasionally, the cover will have a text blurb to entice people to read it like "A pulse pounding story!"

# ADDED RESOURCES:



In addition to all the facts and information provided here, there is a wealth of other resources available to build your understanding of comics and comic book creation.

Listed below are a number of book titles available from book stores and even your local library\*.

Action Cartooning

Ben Caldwell (Sterling Publishing)

Comics & Sequential Art

Will Eisner (Poorhouse Press)

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Cartooning But Were Afraid To Draw\*

Christopher Hart (Watson-Guptill Publications)

How To Draw Comics The Marvel Way

Stan Lee & John Buscema (Simon & Shuster)

Graphic Storytelling

Will Eisner (Poorhouse Press)

Human Anatomy Made Amazingly Easy

Christopher Hart (Watson-Guptill Publications)

Perspective For Comic Book Artists

David Chelsea (Watson-Guptill Publications)

Reinventing Comics

Scott McCleod (Harper Collins)

The DC Comics Guide to Pencilling Comics\*

Klaus Janson (Watson-Guptill Publications)

The DC Comics Guide to Writing Comics\*

Dennis O'Neil (Watson-Guptill Publications)

Understanding Comics

Scott McCleod (Harper Collins)

Draw and Write magazines

(One is for drawing and the other for writing comics. By TwoMorrows Publishing)