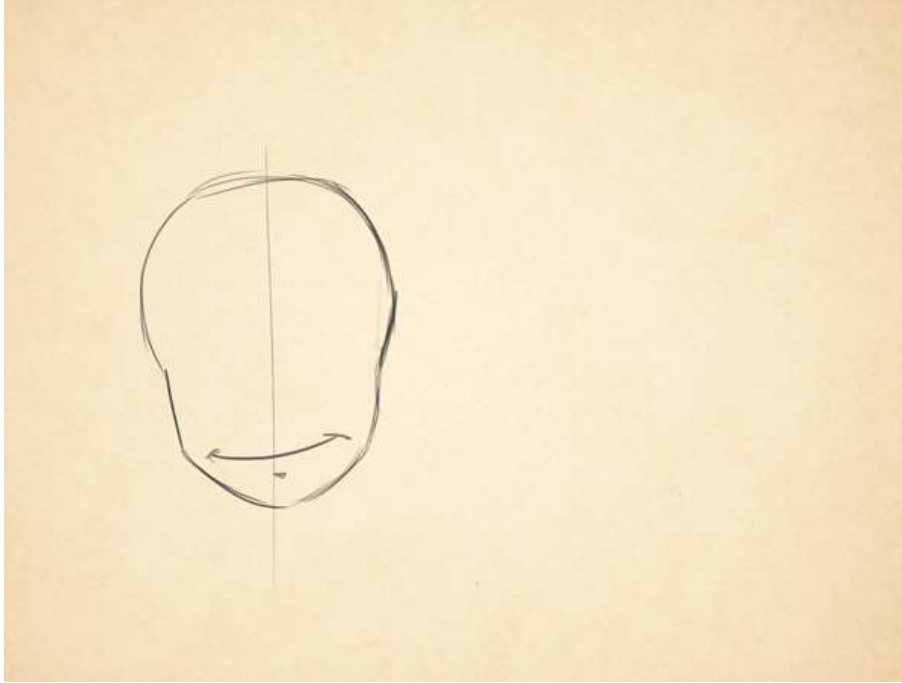


# The Child Basics

## Rounded Heads and Tiny Chins

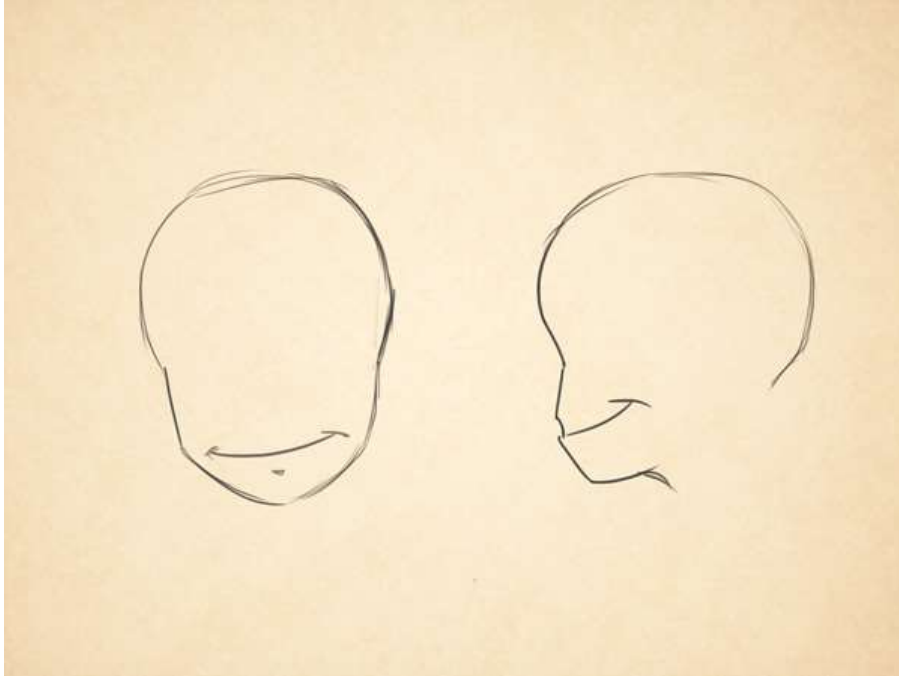
One of the most important techniques I learned when designing the head of a child is that they should be large with less definition. This means that the bones of the face are less apparent than the adult head. Note the image below:



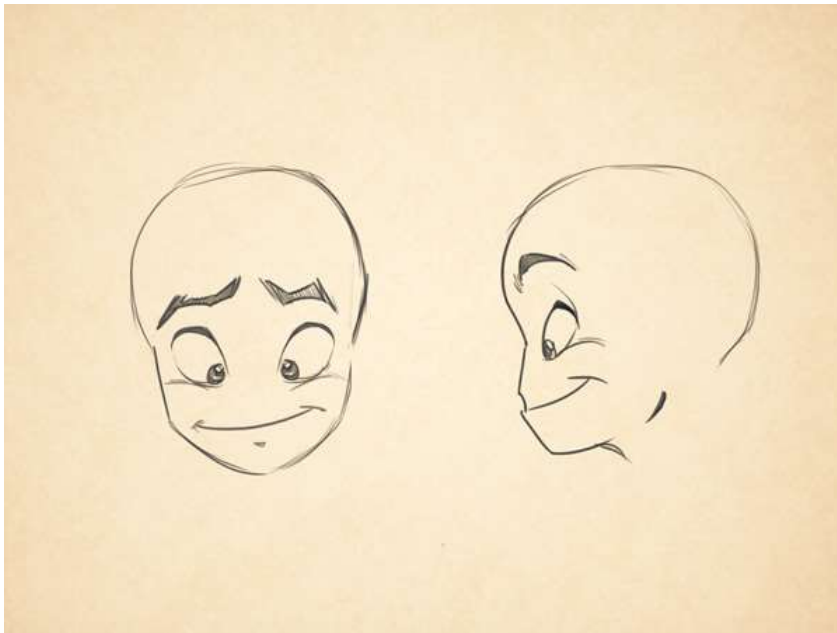
Another thing you should be aware of is in relation to the chin: He is far less protruding than the adults and often almost invisible. This is because children have naturally smaller jaws than the adults in comparison to the skull size. This technique allows the face to look more fluffy and the cheeks more protruding.

## Big, BIG Forehead!

If you search the Internet for any X-ray image of the head of a child, the thing that will instantly catch your attention is how big their heads in relation to the jaw is! Notice below that the forehead should be projected more upfront than the adult forehead. Let's take a look at the image below in profile view:



Once children have bigger foreheads, their eyes should also be positioned below the imaginary line used to set the height of the eyes of an adult:



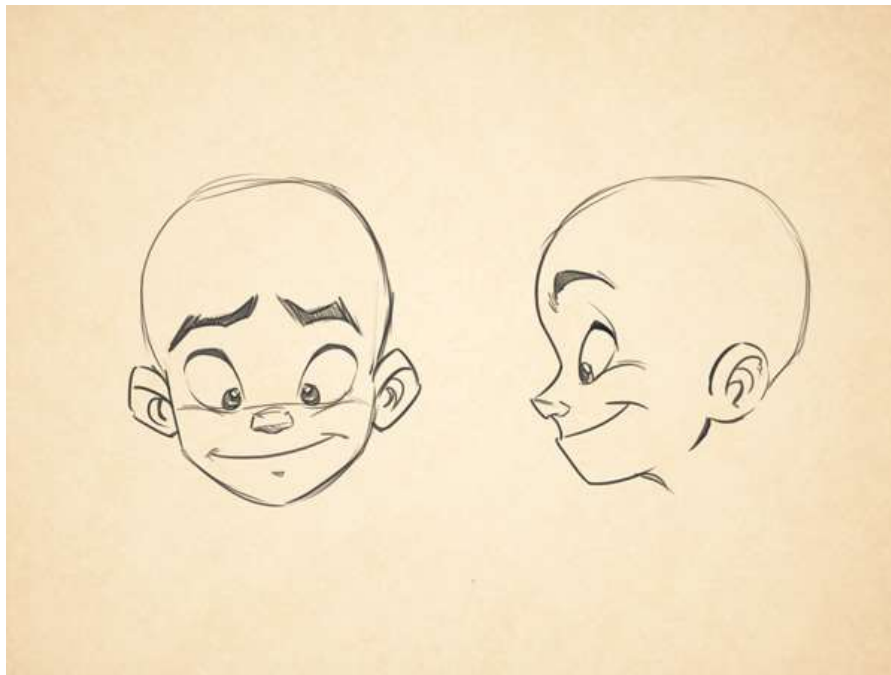
Speaking of eyes...

**Play with the spacing between them!** This stays most apparent in babies (more on this below) but in cartoon drawing, children of any age tend to have a wider space between the eyes. This is not a rule by no means, but there are good chances in getting great success using this concept.

Keep in mind that these concepts may vary according to your drawing style, culture, and so on. These are just tips that work if you're seeking some kind of shortcut to create an immediate identification with the viewer.

### **Big Ears and Small Nose**

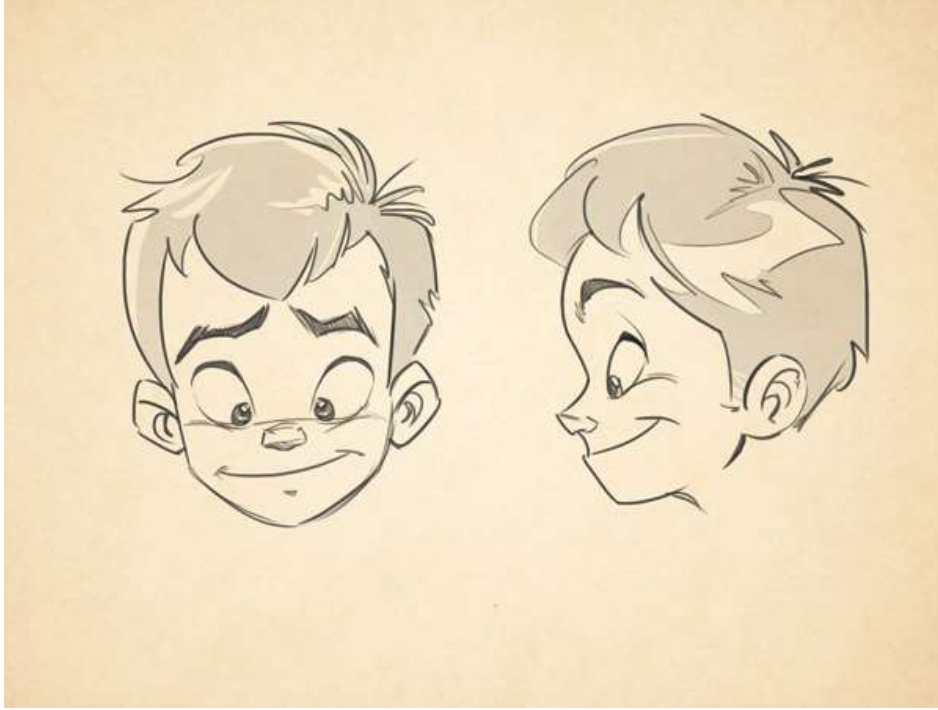
It is very common for older people have very big ears and giant noses. In cartoon these traits are slightly accented to create a distortion of reality and provide greater visual interest in the character. However, a common feature in children is that they have big ears also projected forward, but with tiny noses. The use of this techniques is almost unanimity among cartoon artists.



These are only artistic ways to take advantage of the natural growing process of a child's body: They are still in the development phase and some members grow with different sizes in different time intervals. When they become teenagers until they reached an adult age, the majority of them look kind of awkward too. Know how to take advantage of those features in favor of your character.

### **Giant Hair**

Another technique widely used in cartoon drawing is to play with the size of the hair. Again, an almost unanimity among artists, is to draw children with big hair, usually with a lot of movement and life of its own.



With advancing age, men lose hair. In childhood, it's common to have fuller hair - and sometimes kind of rebellious - with a cool fringe.

Hair is an extensive subject. Again, they may vary according to racial, cultural, and style features. Some artists prefer to draw several detailed lines to represent the character's hair while others do just the main outlines around the head. It's your choice which style to follow.

### **The Overall Body and Babies**

As already said in my previous tutorials, the cartoon bodies follows a convention called the pear-shaped body (or bean-shaped body, if you prefer). The success of your characters will depend on your artistic ability in combine these features with rounded shapes.



As already mentioned before, the proportions of the human body changes drastically from birth to adulthood. Little babies - especially newborns - are pretty strange: they have no neck, their heads are huge, they have no teeth and their arms and legs are practically the same size.



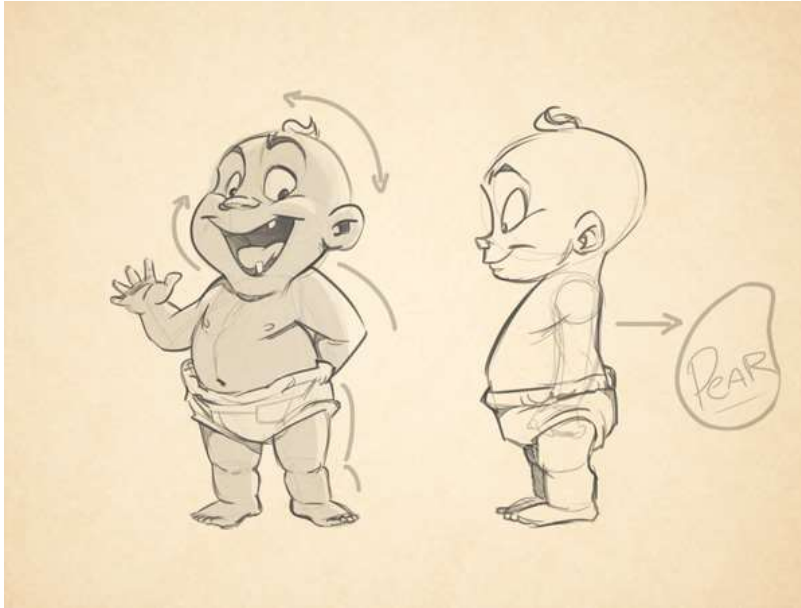
Babies with only one tooth (or none) helps to create identification with the viewer.

Notice that fragility and innocence are the focal points of this period of life. Babies crawl, they don't know how to stand up, they don't eat alone and do not go to the bathroom on their own. They are - basically - dependent on adults. However, when dealing with cartoon, nothing prevents us from exaggerating expressions and create distortions of reality:



Bad baby... What's he's planning now?!

Babies are full of folds, simply because they have more skin available to cover the bones than adults. This makes them appear to be chubby and cute (and a bit wrinkled too). When drawing babies, try to sketch with more circular lines instead of the straight ones:



While babies have very small and closed eyes in real life, in cartoon they are very expressive and giant, in order to create a better harmony with the big head. This technique works with any character which tries to pass the impression of being cute, so it's more a matter of style and taste rather than a rule.



The more you invest in different forms to give personality to your characters, more efficient and diversified your art becomes. So, always look for creating subtle differences between characters, even if they have the same age.

### **Clothes, Behavior and Personality**

Clothes are not only an indispensable item for your character but also helps to emphasize different characteristics between the genders. Ensure that the clothes of your character are also suited to their personality:



Cartoon craziness: Little boys commonly wear big shoes while behaved girls have small feet.

### **Going Even Further**

Unlike adults, older children, and especially teenagers, are still under statement phase. They are trying to find their place in the world, they like to test their popularity (whether in school or inside the house), they want to be accepted in social groups (whether in the real or virtual world) and have their personality basically split between: extroverted, introverted and rebels. This is due to the transition between childhood and the adulthood and the result of this process is characterized by severe changes in both the physical and social status.



To express the characteristics of this phase is essential that you observe how these children behave in real life: What type of clothes they like to use most? What kind of music they are listening to? Which groups they like to belong? What are the main differences between genders? And this process also involves the cultural and temporal analysis: Nowadays there's a whole market of utensils and accessories geared for children and early teens. In the past, things were different and it was very common to see children using adult clothing (take a look at the old photos of your grandparents or great-grandparents). Therefore, we can affirm that drawing children also involves the investment of your time in research. This will differentiate you as a professional. Be sure of it.



Try to tell a story with your drawings: Who is your character, anyway? Can you show that to others without using any text? Great... You've just gained several points!

### **Final Thoughts**

While drawing kids is a great way to go back and being one of them, creating them with the correct appeal takes practice, time and lots of observation. Notice how their bodies reacts to external stimuli, how their emotions are expressed and how they see the world differently: With innocence, sincerity and intensity. This is the biggest secret of all.

As a last word, it is extremely important that you store in your head the rules of proportions presented in the outset, in order to avoid that your character is always based on measures of "heads". That way you avoid a mechanical design and makes it more fluid (and you also gain more time to draw, as a reward). Remember: Children have small legs, heads with the same width as the shoulders, big forehead, tiny chin, and very little neck. If you can keep these basic rules, you're in the right path in developing your own cute characters. Have fun!