



Fashion Sketching

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Learn about materials used in fashion sketching
- ✓ Analyse and understand the posture of human figures and techniques for sketching heads and faces, arms and hands, and feet and legs
- ✓ Learn presentation techniques of fashion drawing and dressing up the sketched figures

Fashion Sketching

Fashion design sketches are tools that are used to help designers paint the picture they have in their minds. Visualising the garment must happen before a good design can be done. Once this is done, the image can then be recreated by pen and paper.

Design sketches allow the designers to get a rough idea of what is in their minds. No matter what type of garment or piece of clothing is being designed, i.e., dresses, pants, shorts, coats, belts, and shoes, they all begin with a sketch. Then, the imagination can be released and creativity can take place, making any alteration accordingly.

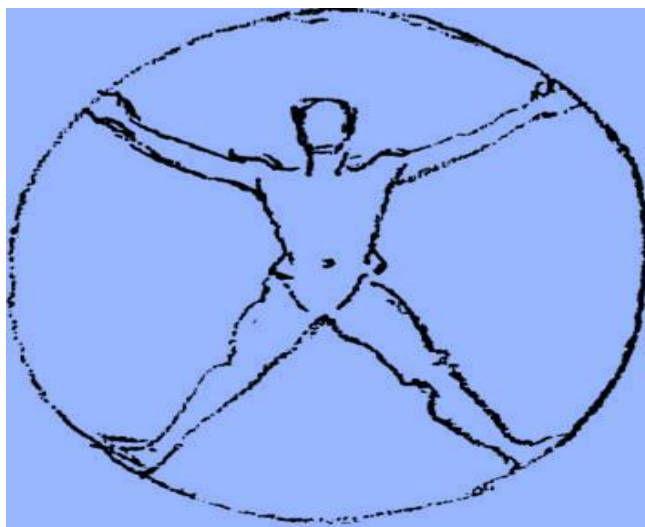
Fashion design sketches are also important because these will be submitted to the manufacturing companies who will produce the design. The drawings will also be helpful in deciding the type of materials and fabrics that would suit the garments best.

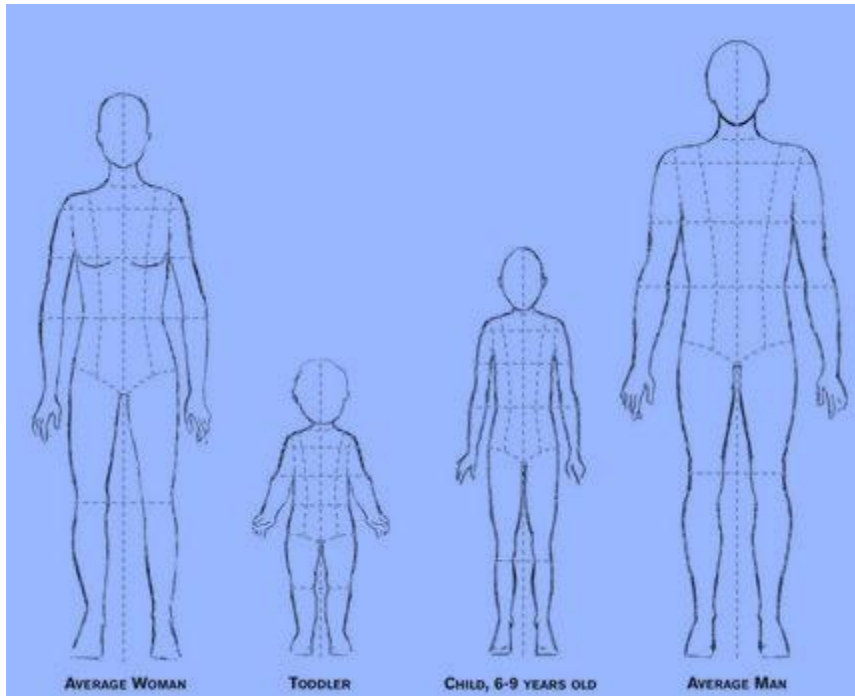
Materials for Sketching

Those who are more advanced in fashion sketching usually use long, sharp-pointed pencils. Beginners, however, can usually work more easily with a blunt point. For commercial artists long leads are time savers. When choosing a pencil the important requirement is that it must be long enough to keep fingers from cramping, therefore keeping the wrist and arm free and flexible.

Beginners may find it more convenient to get correct proportions using a tilted board. However, with practice comes more experience and eventually they will learn how to draw just as well on a flat board. An eraser can be used in any type, although, Art Gum is the most popular.

Portions of the Human Figure

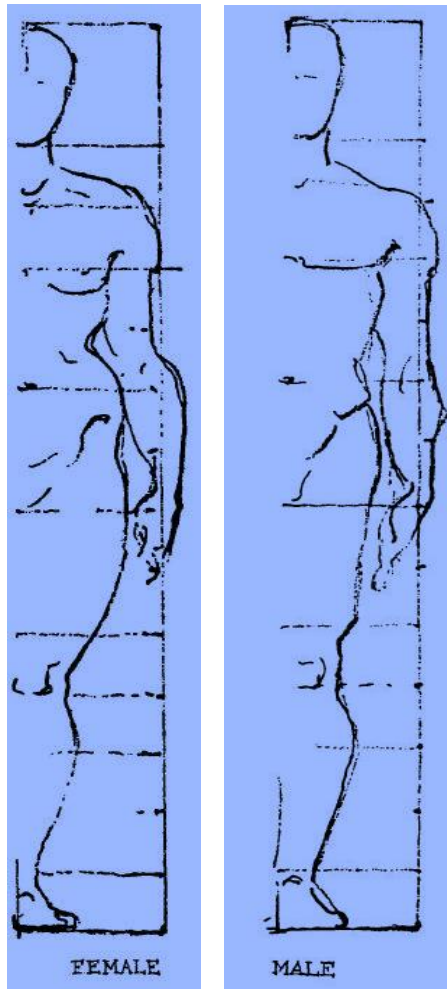




The typical human figure is around eight heads tall, whereas a fashion figure may be between 8 to 10 heads tall or in some extreme mannequin cases even 12 heads tall. The general rule, however, is that a fashion figure should be designed using the length of the head and the width of the shoulders. The additional height will offer sophistication and grace as well as a sense of smartness to the figure. These are qualities that are usually sought after by women especially, and for this reason they increase the appeal of a garment.

A more angular appearance and more abstract feeling to a fashion sketch should be added to it, more so than what there is to a human figure. The figure, however, should still maintain a natural look and even a suggestion of action in order to meet popular demand.

The below comparison will show the contrasting proportions of the human and fashion figures. Both figures began with the same size head as their unit of measuring.



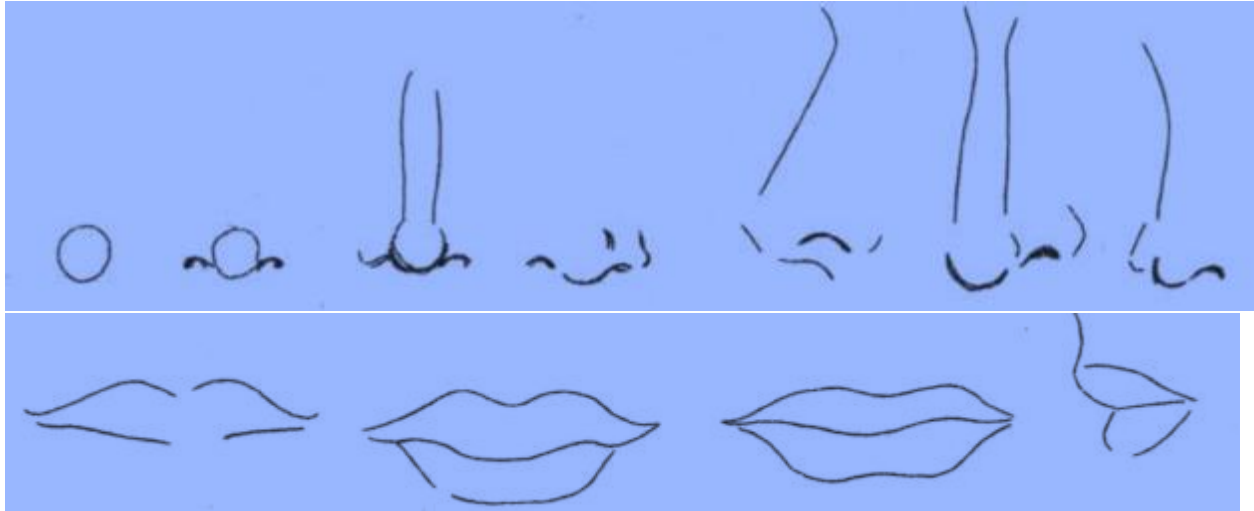
Most people find it easier to draw from left to right, from the top of the paper moving down. However, each individual designer draws the way they are comfortable with so there really is no set way. The head, being the most useful area for measuring figures, should be used as a measuring unit for the other proportions. Remember, the average human figure is around eight heads tall but the fashion figure is between eight - to - ten heads tall. An Animated Type of fashion figure is eight and $\frac{3}{4}$ heads tall.

- The first step is to draw a vertical line across through the centre of the paper.
- Draw an egg-shaped oval at the top of this line ensuring the larger part of the oval is at the top. This will represent the head.
- Mark off eight heads on the line and number each one on the left hand side of the page as 1st, 2nd etc.
- Mark the body identifications on the right hand side i.e. Shoulder line, Waistline...
- Lower half of the second head for the shoulder line and this will double as the pit of the neck. The width of the shoulder line should be about one and three quarters of a head wide. The arms should widen slightly over this mark.

Fashion Sketches - Head and Face

The general rule when sketching faces is to leave out too much detail as this will avoid a photographic likeness. This is because the idea is to produce a sketch not a detailed description of a particular person and it is important to keep the sketch loose and free. One can even be a little abstract with the face sketching, leaving out nostrils, for example.





The face is a place where it is essential to strive for character and personality. Any weakness in the face would suggest either a weakness of character of the designer him/herself or a lack of knowledge about the subject being illustrated. Often, artists use a certain amount of their own features in their sketches.

It is a good idea to make your sketches individual and add or eliminate certain features to make them so. In some cases this individuality can be achieved by omitting the pupil in the eye or filling in the entire eye altogether. When drawing the pupil it should be drawn with an eyelid covering part of the upper part of the eye. There should be an eye width space in between both of the eyes in a front view and only one eye is to be seen in a profile view.

Below are a set of instructions for sketching a front view. It may be altered to meet any individual needs:

Begin with an egg-shaped oval, placing the larger part at the top.

Place a vertical line through the centre (this being the centre of the face in a symmetrical pose). Draw a horizontal line a little above the centre of the oval. This will be the eye-line and will be divided into eight equal parts. Connect the second and third spaces in an almond-shaped oval. This will be the left eye of the sketch. Connect spaces six and seven in the same way.

Drop down half the distance from the eye line and chin line to make the nose line. Show a horizontal line about an eye width. Make the bridge of the nose quite narrow near the eyes but a bit broader near the nostrils. This will give the face a more aristocratic expression.

Think of a small circle when drawing a front view of a nose. The nostrils should extend from the circle. Two lines moving up toward the eyes suggest the planes of the nose. In the later stages of the sketch only the nostrils can be left and everything else erased about the nose.

The mouth will be located in the one third of the remaining lower part of the oval. The mouth should be about one and one half the length of an eye. Depending on the expression you wish to achieve, full lips are for a more youthful look and narrow lips are used for a more mature expression. For the upper lip it

helps to think of a bow shape. The lower lip is suggested. When using the profile view of the mouth extend the upper lip out over the lower lip just a little. How wide an artist wants to draw the mouth depends on his/her personal taste. Some draw full lips and larger mouths while others draw small, pointed mouths.

With regards to the eyebrows, they will vary depending on the expression and there are really no set rules. When drawing the ears they should extend a little bit outside the oval and follow the eyebrow and nose lines. Once all the facial features are in place the oval can be shaped. Make an indent at the eye line.

When drawing the cheeks, curving the cheek line a little bit will make the cheeks look a little hollow and give the cheek lines a more angular look. Use as few lines as possible when sketching hair on a design drawing as it looks more professional.

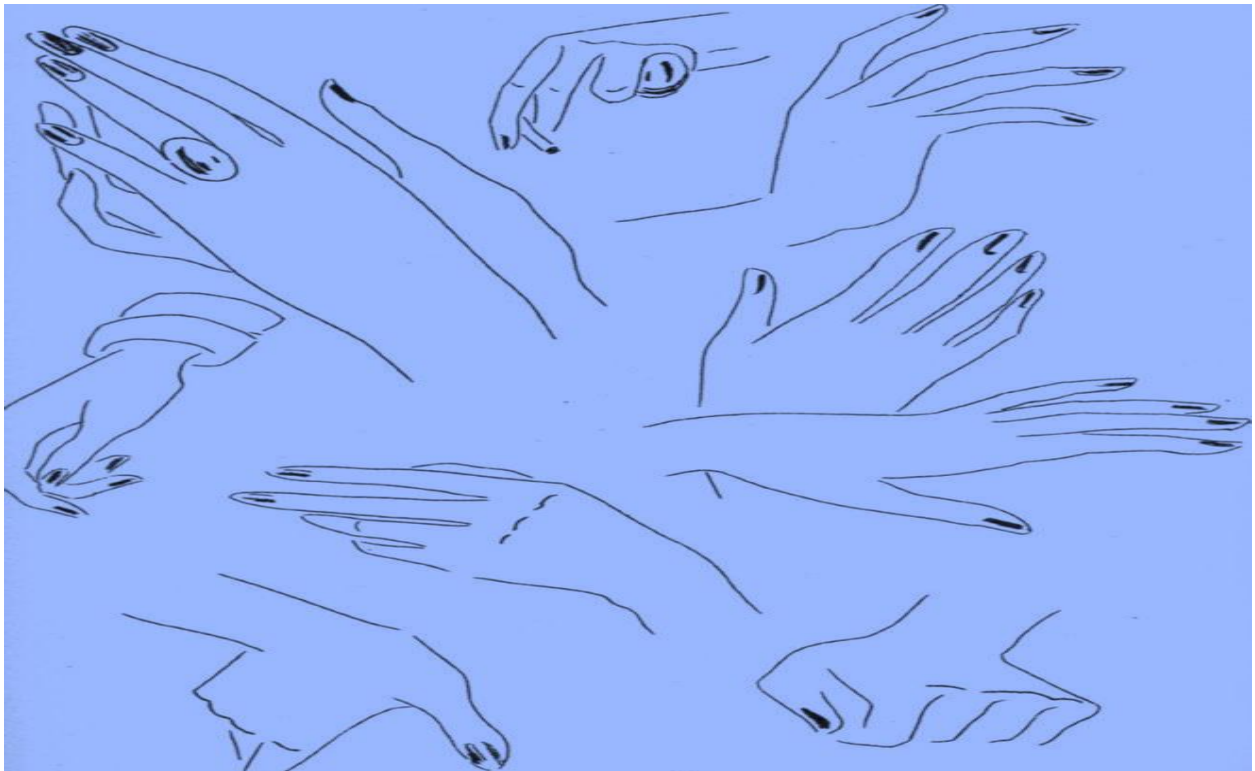
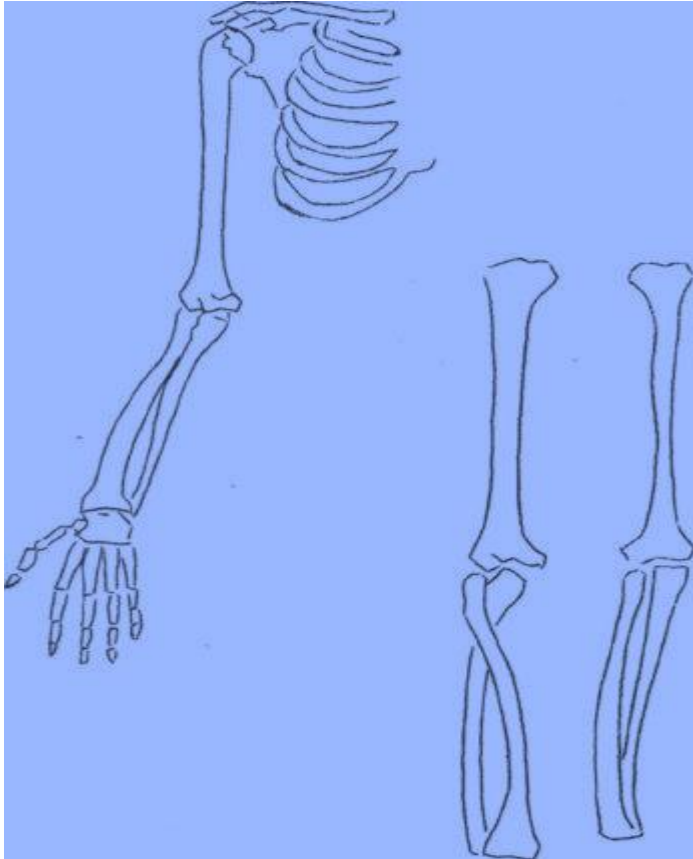
The Arms and Hands

It is best if the fashion student is also familiar with anatomy so he/she can construct a proper human figure. Knowing the skeletal structure of the limbs and the torso, hands and feet is important.

The upper arm is made up of three areas: upper arm, forearm and hand. The upper arm encompasses the shoulder to the elbow and has one large bone. The forearm encompasses the elbow to the wrist and has two bones. In the forearm the joints of the bones are such that the arm can be moved freely in certain directions. The outer bones rotate over the inner bones and their movement will determine the contour of the arm.

When sketching the hand it is important to understand that it is composed of two large masses and these should be sketched first. Use a head length to determine the length of a hand and make it three quarters the length of the forearm. The finger bones are attached to a common centre and each finger consists of three bones. Ensure when sketching that the middle finger is the longest. It is a general rule for fashion artists to exaggerate the length of the fingers slightly and minimise the width of the hand therefore making it look more graceful.

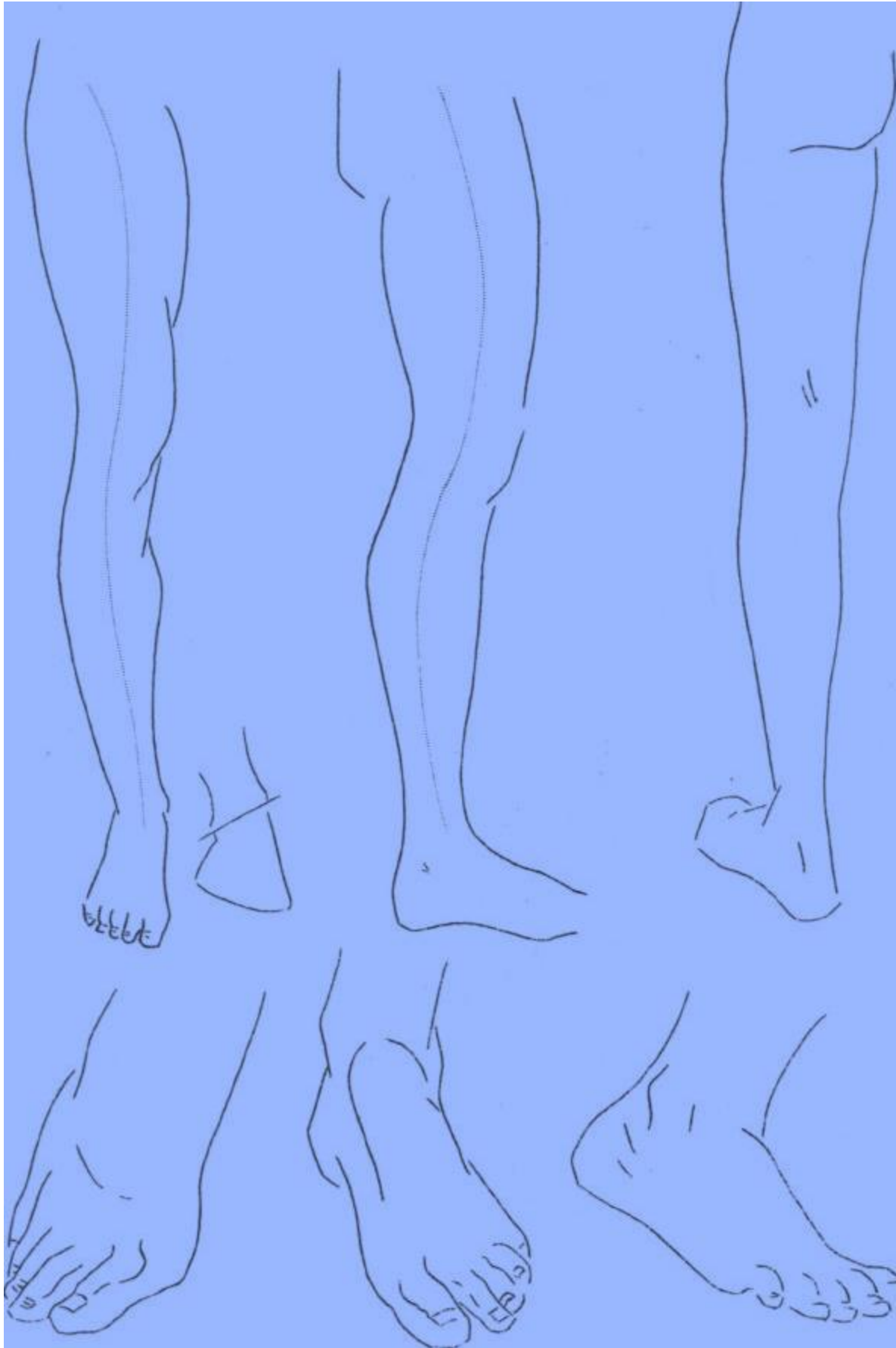
It might be helpful if you are a fashion artist when first starting out to make sketches of your own hands or body in various positions. Using a mirror to work from, you can sketch the reflection and be your own model. Use your own figure and hands as a reference.

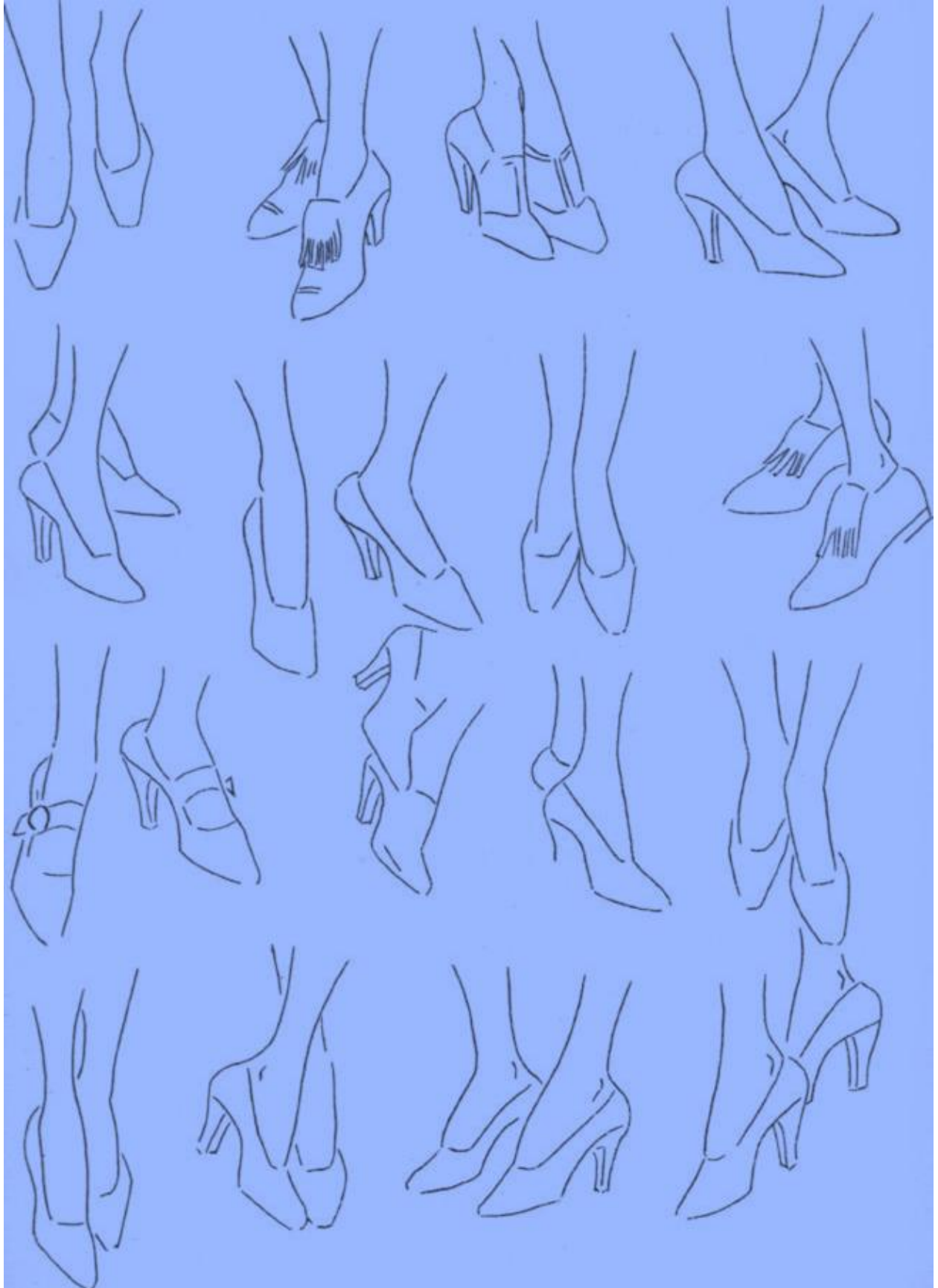


The Feet and Legs

The legs are also composed of three masses: thighs, legs, and feet. The thigh is from the hip to the knee and only has one bone. The leg is from the knee to the foot and the bones there are fixed together so they cannot move as freely as the arm. Thighs and legs usually slim down as they descend towards the foot. The foot is the same length as the forearm and the calf is the same width as the neck.







Dressing the Figure

Dressing the figure is one of the biggest problems facing the fashion artist. For this reason, an absolute familiarity of the human form is necessary as he/she must be able to make a garment appear to be on an actual body rather than a flat hanger. If a live model is available this would be ideal, however, if one is not then a mannequin will do. Being able to see the garment on an actual figure will help the fashion artist enormously when sketching it.

Women (especially) and men have a personal reaction to clothes. When a woman sees a dress she likes she will automatically visualise herself in it. If the garment is well-modelled the woman will feel it will look good on her. This is the goal: to make the people feel this way so they become interested in buying the garment.

When the drawn figure has been freely and carefully blocked in, erase all unnecessary lines and visualise a line through the centre. Be careful not to confuse this line with the line of balance (this should have been erased by this stage). Also visualise the centre of the dress and place it on the centre of the figure. All lines and trimmings should be in proportion to, and correct location in the figure.

Getting the contour of the body under the dress in order to show the third dimension and thickness is important and the artist must ensure this is done. Specific lines of the dress will be influenced by the contour of the body. Folds and lines of skirts will be determined by the position of the legs. Circular skirts or those cut in a specific way may be quite snug on the waist and hips and then flare outward around the thighs and hemline. The amount of flare will depend on the fullness.

An outline will follow a bodyline to the hem if a skirt is cut straight. From the hipline down there is not much variation in the width of a straight skirt although it may seem a little narrower toward the knees. Any lines or pleats that may be on a skirt will be affected by the leg position and follow the leg lines.

Placing a few wrinkles across the abdomen and pelvis area of the skirt is a good idea for the front view. They pull from the hip as this is where the weight of the body rests and are often extended to suggest the leg positions.

Using a general feeling of a rectangle rather than sketching it straight across is a better idea as if it is drawn straight it may look like it is on something flat and two dimensional rather than on an actual body. The hemline will also seem to be longer over the foreleg or the foot that is nearest to the artist. The aim is to express some rhythm in the lines of the folds in the skirt.

If the dress has a snug-fitting belt, it is best to sketch it on straight lines across the front and curve it on the sides. Sketching it curved all the way around would make it seem like it is on a fatter waistline and is too large for the figure. Drooping effects are not conducive to modern styles.

With the sleeves, placing a few wrinkles at the bend of the arm will make them more obvious. Using this small detail will actually make a difference because without it a sketch often appears to be sleeveless.

If you are going to use a button trim on a garment make sure you count them and sketch the exact same number on your drawing.

Keep in mind some points when sketching a dress on a figure. These are things like:

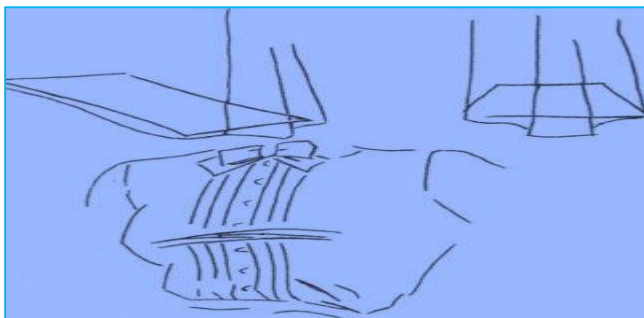
- Where is the neckline situated – high or low?
- Does the garment have a collar and if so what shape is it?
- What style of sleeve does the garment have? Short? Long? Tight?
- Does it have a normal shoulder line or is it exaggerated or maybe slanting?
- Is the waistline above or below the normal area?
- Does the garment have a belt and if so, is it tight or too loose?
- What is the type of skirt? Circular? Pleated? Straight?
- What is the length of the skirt?
- What type of trimming does the garment have?
- What is the fabric that is used?

The final question is very important and the fashion artist must be able to get the right effect in order to capture the 'spirit' of the fabric and the design. For example, using a soft and clinging fabric in the illustration of what should be a crisp taffeta evening gown would completely take away the feel of the outfit.

With the exception of evening clothes, almost all other fashion sketches are drawn with bags, hats and gloves. The reason for this is so that the fashion artist keeps up to date with any development in apparel and accessories.

Harmonising the mood and action of the figure in the clothes is absolutely essential and cannot be stressed enough. If the figure is in sports clothes it is important to sketch it actually engaged in some sporting activity. Dramatizing the figure, especially if it is a female figure, is necessary but be careful not to over emphasise it. It is essential to make sure that it is the apparel that takes centre stage and not the figure sketch. It is also important to ensure that the figure seems comfortable in the clothes and that the garment looks as if it were actually being worn by a real human.

At the bend of the arms, wrinkle the sleeves.



The hemline of skirts should be sketched in the general shape of a rectangle.



Using wrinkles will pull away from the hip that supports the weight of the body.

To show a third dimension figure, curve the belt.



Dressing the Fashion Figure (Step – by - Step)



1. Draw your figure in a pose. Draw the human figure using basic shapes. Make the figure taller and thinner than the average person.



2. Add the shapes as shown. Take note of how thin the figure is and how long the legs are compared to "normal" human drawings.



3. Sketch the outline of your image. Not much detail is needed here on the face or hands.



Add hair if you so choose but this is not necessary.

4. Think of the figure as a mannequin and add in clothes you have in mind.



5. Outline the entire drawing and erase any guidelines.



6. Add the colour and it is ready.





Further Reading:

- ✓ *Basics Fashion Design: Fashion Drawing (BY John Hopkins)*
- ✓ *Fashion Drawing: Illustration Techniques for Fashion Designers (Michele Wesen Bryant)*