

Before You Draw Someone You Love, Avoid These Five Common Mistakes That Discourage So Many Beginners.

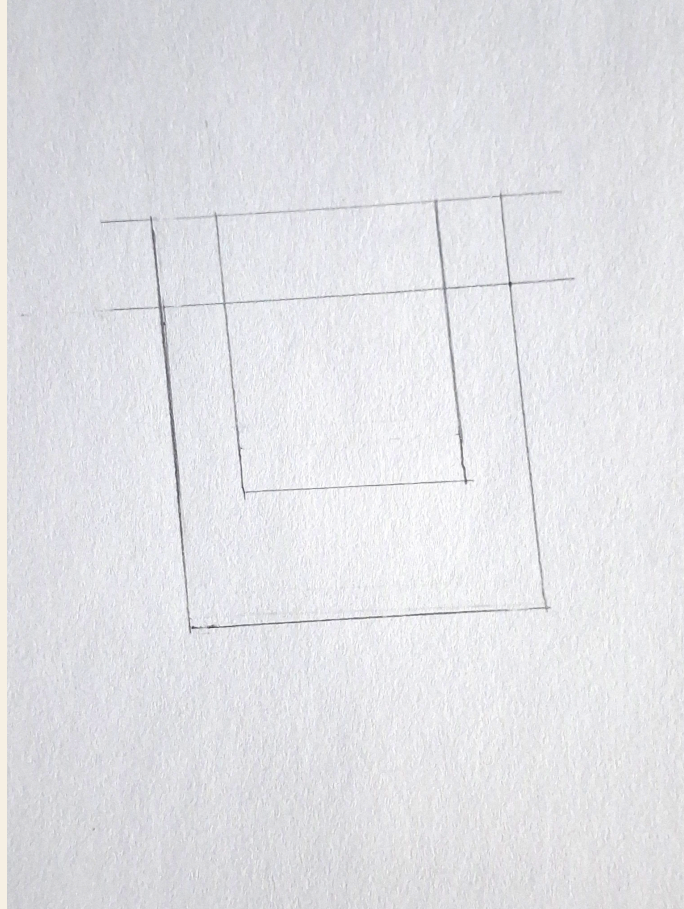
By the end of this guide, you will watch this portrait come to life one step at a time.



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Mistake #1

Trying to draw details before building the foundation.



Teaching Tip

Start with simple shapes and lines.

Many beginners believe they must begin by drawing an eye, a nose, or a mouth. Instead, begin with a few light guide lines. These lines create the foundation that helps every feature find its proper place.

Use a ruler if it helps you draw straight, accurate lines. Your goal is not perfection. Your goal is to build a strong framework.

- **Top horizontal line:** Eyebrows
- **Second horizontal line:** Eyes

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- **Third horizontal line:** Bottom of the nose
- **Fourth horizontal line:** Where the lips meet when the mouth is closed

The vertical lines help establish the width of the face.

- **First vertical line:** Middle of the eye to the edge of the mouth
- **Second vertical line:** Inside corner of the eye to the edge of the nose
- **Third vertical line:** Inside corner of the eye to the edge of the nose
- **Fourth vertical line:** Middle of the eye to the edge of the mouth

Once these simple lines are in place, the portrait becomes much easier to build because each feature already has a home.

Try This

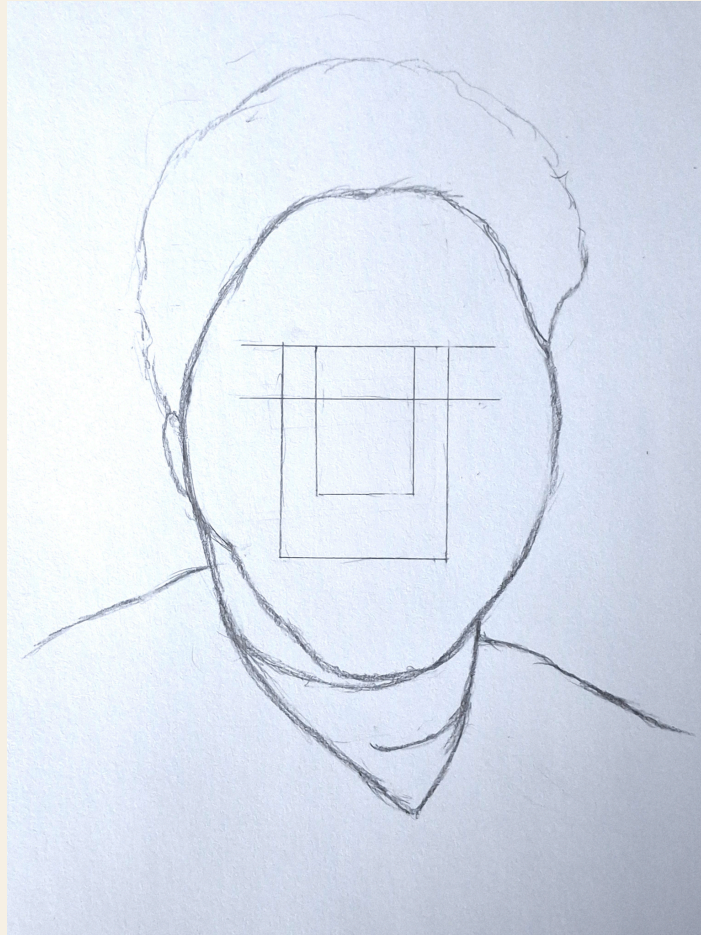
Using a ruler, lightly draw these eight guide lines on a blank sheet of paper. Do not worry about drawing a face yet. Today, your success is simply creating a strong foundation.

Remember: Every finished portrait begins with a few simple lines. Do not rush past the foundation.

Mistake #2

Looking at what you think you see

Build the Structure



Teaching Tip

Now that your placement lines are complete, it is time to build the structure of the head around them.

Think of the head as a simple oval. As you move toward the bottom, allow the sides of the oval to gradually angle inward to form the chin. Do not worry about drawing a perfect shape. Focus on the overall structure.

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Next, lightly sketch the hair, neck, and shoulders. These shapes help establish the size and position of the head before you begin drawing the facial features.

As you draw, compare these important distances:

- **Outside edge of each eye to edge of the face**
- **Eyebrow line to hairline**
- **Mouth line to bottom of the chin**

Finally, notice the shoulders. One shoulder is usually slightly higher than the other. Very few people hold their shoulders at exactly the same height.

Keep every line light. These are construction lines that can be adjusted as your drawing develops.

Try This

Using your placement lines as a guide, lightly draw the head, hair, neck, and shoulders. Do not add the eyes, nose, or mouth yet. Your goal is to build a strong structure that will support every feature you draw next.

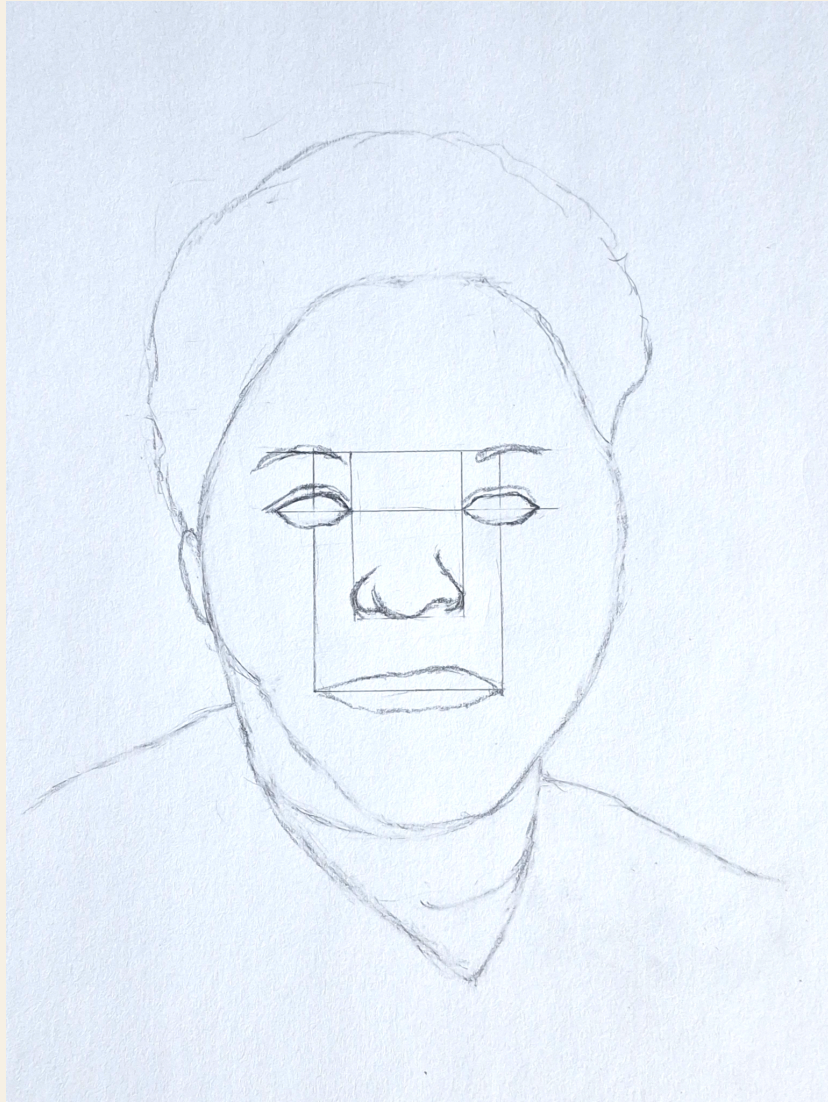
Remember

Do not chase the details. Build the structure first, and the details will have the right place to belong.

Mistake #3

Drawing every feature before checking placement

Place the Facial Features



Teaching Tip

Now it is time to use your placement lines to build the facial features. These guide lines help you place each feature before you begin adding detail.

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Eyes

Use the **second horizontal line** as the halfway point of each eye.

Begin by drawing only the **upper outline** of each eye. Then draw the **lower outline** below the placement line. Do not worry if one eye looks slightly different from the other. Very few faces are perfectly symmetrical.

Nose

The **third horizontal line** marks the bottom of the nose. The tip of the nose should not extend below this line.

Think of the tip of the nose as a **wide "U."** To draw the nostrils, think of a **forward "C"** and a **backward "C."** Extend the bottom of each curve until it connects naturally to the tip of the nose.

Mouth

The **fourth horizontal line** marks where the lips meet.

Draw the **top lip** above the placement line and allow it to end where the line begins. Then draw the **bottom lip** below the placement line, just as you divided the eyes into upper and lower halves.

Eyebrows

The eyebrows rest on the **first horizontal line**. Draw only a light outline. The texture and individual hairs will be added later.

Try This

Lightly sketch the eyes, nose, mouth, and eyebrows using your placement lines as guides. Concentrate on **placement and shape**, not detail.

Think in Familiar Shapes

- Eyes → Two football shapes
- Nose → Wide **U**, **C**, and backward **C**

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- Mouth → Two gentle curves
 - Eyebrows → Soft arches
-

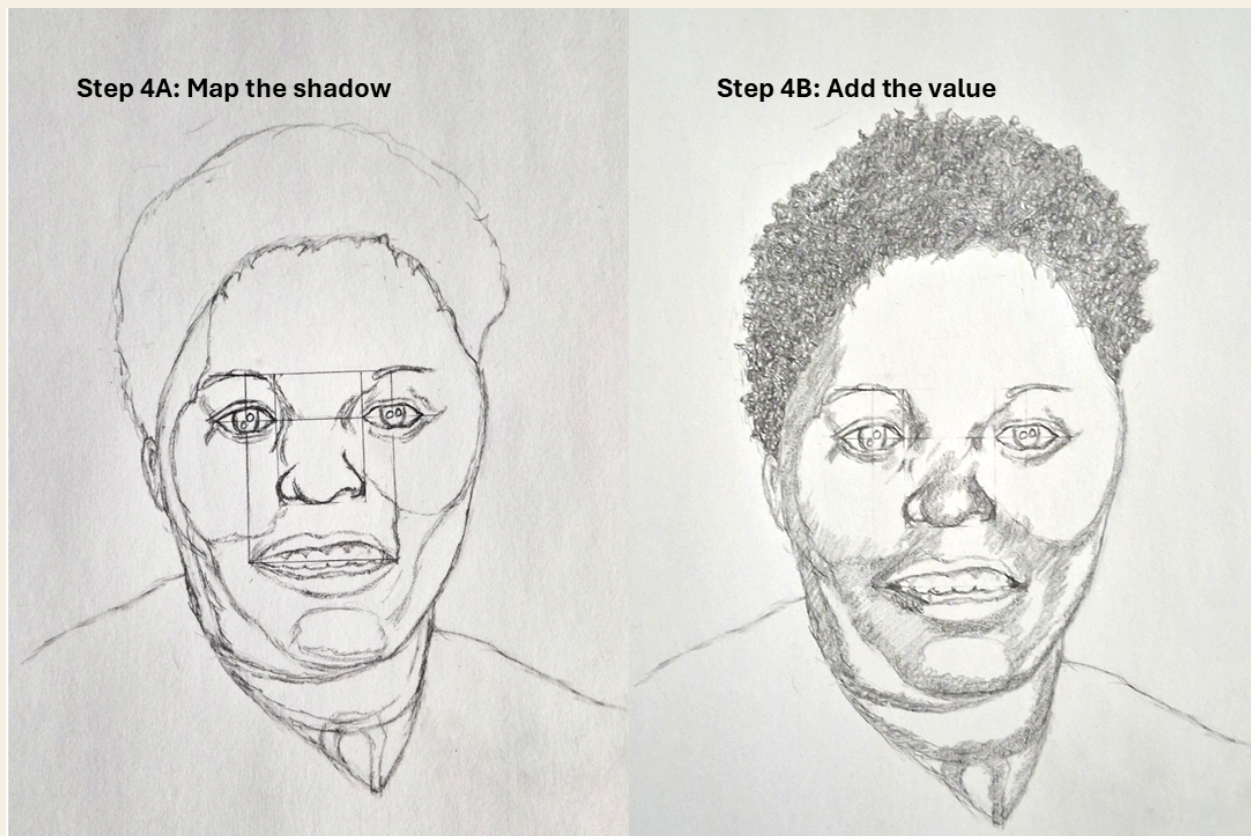
Remember

Likeness begins with placement. Details become important only after each feature is in the right location.

Mistake #4

Ignoring values

Find the Shadows Before You Shade



Teaching Tip

One of the biggest mistakes beginners make is shading without first identifying the shadow shapes.

Before you begin shading, lightly outline the darkest areas around the eyes, nose, mouth, hairline, jaw, and neck. Think of these shadow shapes as a map that shows you exactly where the darkest values belong.

Once your shadow map is complete, begin shading the **darkest areas first**. Use a light touch and gradually build the values. As the shadows begin to connect, you will notice the likeness of the portrait starting to appear.

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The shadow shapes guide your hand. Instead of guessing where to shade next, you simply follow the map you created.

Try This

1. Lightly outline the shadow shapes.
2. Shade the darkest areas first.
3. Slowly connect the shadows using light, even strokes.

Do not rush. Let the portrait develop one value at a time.

Think of It This Way

Left Drawing

"I am deciding where the shadows belong."

Right Drawing

"Now I simply shade inside those shapes."

Remember

The shadows create the form. The details simply describe it.

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Mistake #5

Trying to finish everything at once



Refine the Portrait

Teaching Tip

By now, your portrait should no longer look like a collection of lines and shapes. It should begin to resemble the person you are drawing.

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Refining a portrait is not about making large changes. It is about making many small improvements.

As you compare your drawing to your reference photo, look for opportunities to soften edges, smooth value transitions, strengthen dark areas, and make small adjustments to the proportions.

Notice how the left side of this portrait has been refined while the right side remains in an earlier stage. The likeness becomes stronger because of many thoughtful decisions—not one dramatic change.

Take your time. The refinement stage rewards patience.

Try This

Choose one feature to refine.

Ask yourself:

- Can this edge be softer?
- Does this shadow need to be darker?
- Does this highlight need to be lighter?
- Does this feature match my reference photo?

Make one improvement before moving to the next.

Remember

Every thoughtful adjustment brings you one step closer to capturing the person you love.

Congratulations.

A few pages ago, this portrait began with nothing more than a handful of simple lines.

Today, you have watched it grow into a recognizable face.

That is exactly how every heirloom portrait begins.

If you enjoyed this experience, imagine what you could create with personal guidance, thoughtful feedback, and a step-by-step process designed around your own photograph.

I would be honored to help you create a portrait of someone you love.

When you are ready, I invite you to schedule a **Portrait Planning Session** with me on Zoom.

During our **30-minute Portrait Planning Session**, we will:

- ✓ Look at your reference photo.
- ✓ Talk about your drawing experience.
- ✓ Discuss your goals.
- ✓ Answer your questions.
- ✓ Decide whether my portrait experience is the right next step for you.

There is no pressure and no obligation.

This time is simply a chance for us to meet and talk about your portrait.

With gratitude,
Rubertha
Tameka Art