

"Whoooo are you?" asked the caterpillar



Getting to know a character is like getting to know a new friend.

In order to do it you need to ask questions, questions such as:

Where are they from?

What are their likes and dislikes?

What is their personality like?

What motivates them?

Who are they?



Be sure to ask specific questions that can help you focus on what this character should look like.

For example:

physical appearance: species, age, gender, size, and ethnicity

personality: thoughtful, angry, selfish, silly, introverted, extroverted etc.

personal or professional history: education, occupation, relationships, beliefs

character motivations: goals, money, sex, power, revenge, friendships, love, etc.

important events: life-changing moments or experiences that affect who the character is

Character Design: Form and Personality

First impressions are everything!

Overall shape can say a lot about who a character is to your viewer.



We have instinctive reactions towards shape based on our sense of touch and real life experiences. Rounded shapes tend to be soft or safe, while angular shapes make us feel cautious.

Therefore overall shape tends to *imply character traits*.

THE BASIC SHAPES



CIRCLES

Circular shapes or soft shapes read as the friendliest. Circular shapes in nature have a tendency to be harmless, so they make us predisposed to like the round character.

SQUARES

Square-like shapes communicate strength, stability, and confidence. They often depict steadfast characters who are dependable, like Wreck-it-Ralph.

TRIANGLES

Triangles are composed of diagonal angular lines. They are the most dynamic of the three shapes. This shape is often the basis for bad guys or villains, as the shape form is easily made to appear sinister and communicate aggression.

Character Design of Pixar's *UP*



CARL is a grouchy, stubborn old man who wants to stay put, and his solid and static manner is revealed in his square-like shape.

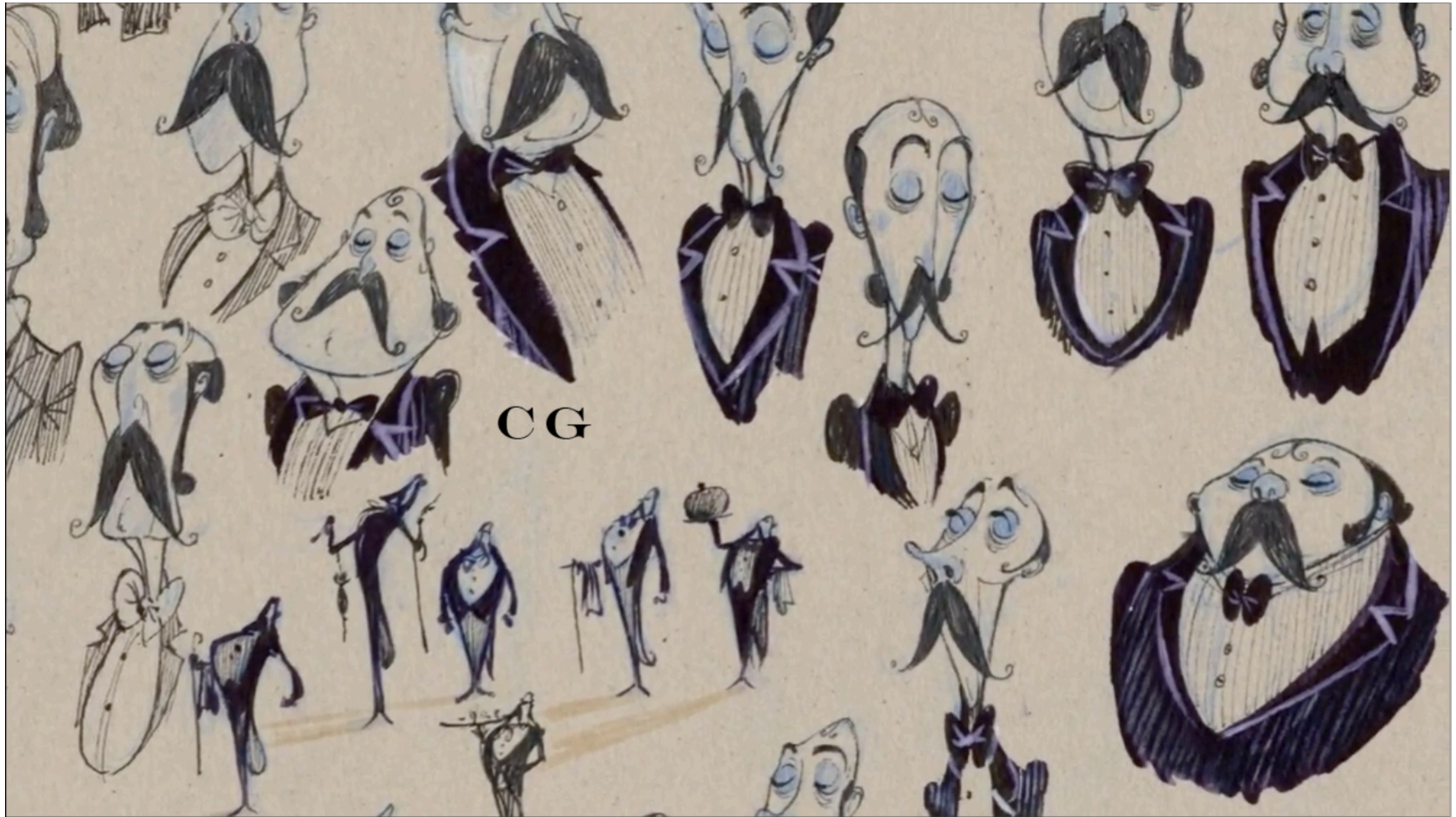
Charles Muntz, Carl's adversary, has a much more angular design. We can see this in his head, shoes and cane. When silhouetted we can easily recognize that his major shape is triangular.

Alpha, Muntz' dog, has a hostile appearance.

Dug has obviously friendly appearance.

The two dogs appearance differences are a triangle shape versus a circular one.

TRIAL AND ERROR



As we have seen in so many aspects of illustration, our designs are strengthened by multiple attempts.



Once you have a basic form, try out different smaller shapes, for example swapping out different facial features, to achieve a memorable character communicating the right personality to the viewer.



630mm

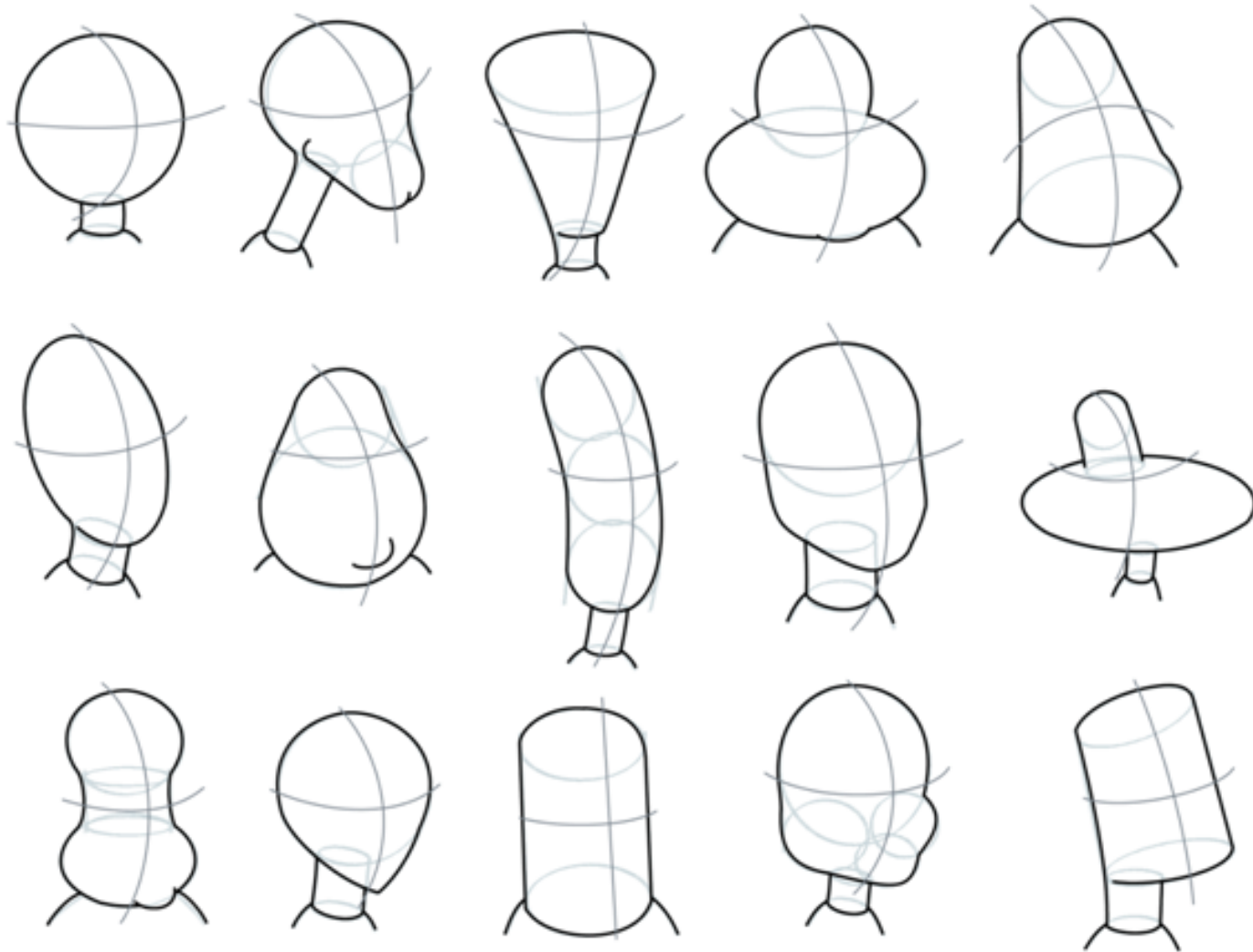
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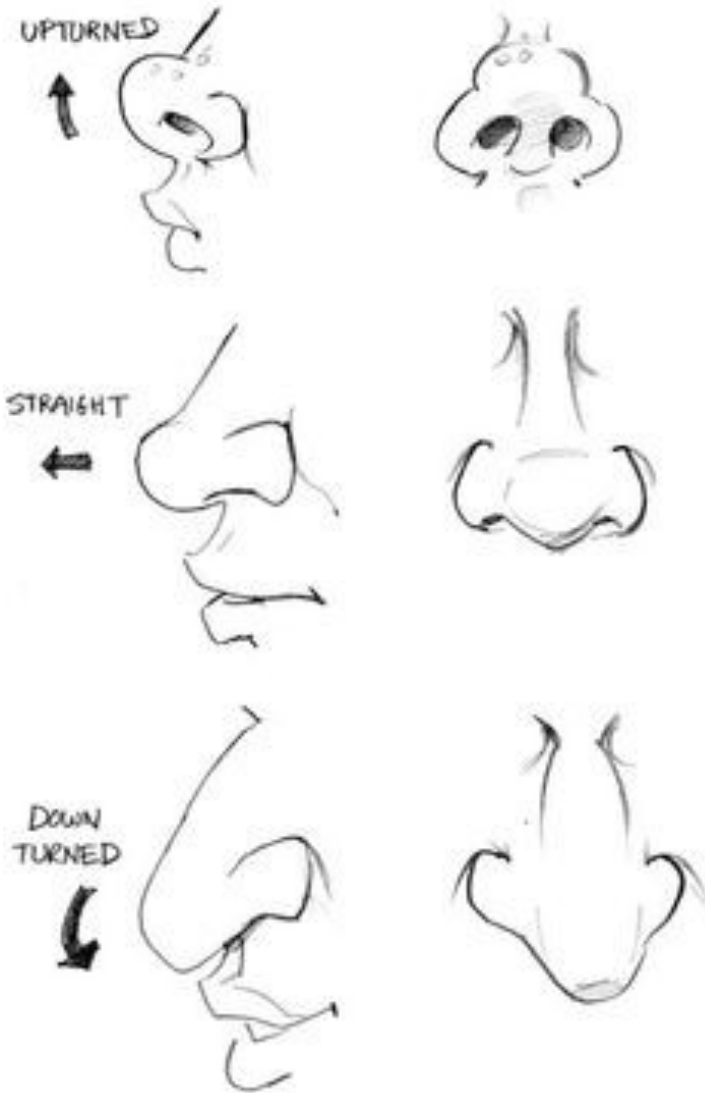
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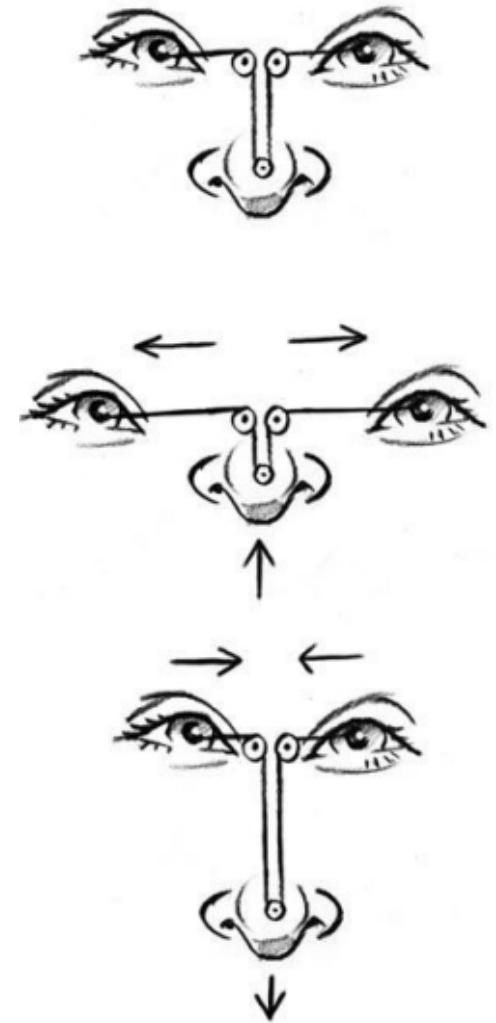
When you are designing your own characters, don't settle! Take the time to test out many different variations on the theme.



What would your character look like with an upturned nose?
Or a more rounded one?



The Relationships Between
the Eyes and Nose
in Action



What if you changed the “T shape”,
or distance of the features?