

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: April  
Lesson 6: Comic Strip, “Recess”  
Drawing

**Objective:** To learn basic figure construction and to create a comic strip using pencil and markers.

**Technique:** Drawing

**Set-up:** (before lesson starts, docents and aides)

9 X 12 white paper

Pencils and erasers

Black markers (optional, students are welcome to finish the cartoon in pencil if they wish)

**Visuals:**

Cartoon Sample, Calvin and Hobbes

Process Visuals: Figures in Motion and Figures Under Construction

**Teaching the Lesson: (1 hour total)**

Review the lesson and give your aides a brief summary

Introduce yourself and your aides.

The art of comic strips in the United States goes back to the late 1800’s. The introduction of newspapers made comic strips a favorite form of entertainment long before television cartoons. Familiar comic strips include: Peanuts, Garfield, and Calvin and Hobbes. The creation of a new comic strip can be a challenge and a source of great satisfaction to the cartoonist.

Today your student-artists will be making their own comic strips. The subject for their comics will be “Recess” and should reflect activities they enjoy on the playground at school.

Comic Strips should include:

A sequential progression (of events or parts of a game...)

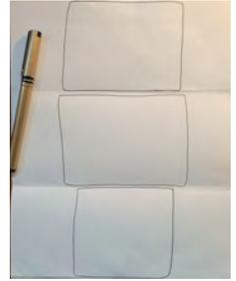
Dialogue (word bubbles)

Figures in action to suggest movement (walking, running, jumping, playing)

Simple backgrounds to establish the setting

1. Layout of the Comic Strip (3 minutes)

- Fold paper in thirds (like a letter that's going into an envelope).
- Open the paper and draw a large box border in each section.



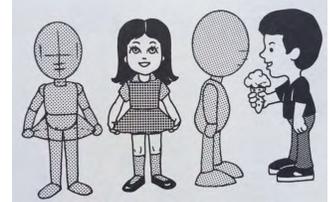
2. Introduction to basic figure construction, (10 minutes)

learning about the under-structure of the figure.

A child's body can be loosely divided into thirds:

- Top** third: head to shoulders,
- Middle** third: shoulders to hips,
- Bottom** third: legs and feet

(Refer to the 4-step "How to Build" visual)



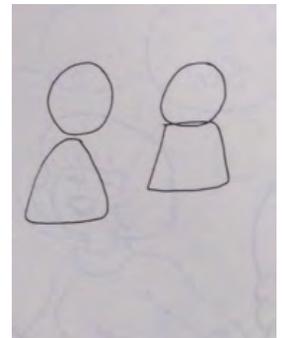
- Start with largest body shapes (torso and head) and use ovals or egg shapes to make torso and head.
- Connect the head and torso with a short cylinder for neck shape.
- Use longer, rounded tube shapes to add leg shapes and arm shapes. Make the legs and arms band at elbows and knees to show running and reaching motions.
- Add the hands and feet shapes, overlapping at joints so they are connected.

3. Plan and Draw the figures, with pencil: (20 minutes)

**IMPORTANT:** Show the animation-process visuals to help students understand the construction process. Explain that the lightly drawn pencil sketches will later be re-drawn and defined with pencil or black marker.

**NO DETAIL** should be drawn yet. Students are **ONLY** drawing the "skeleton" body structure to create form and mass and to describe the action/motion/movement for each figure.

- Keep it Simple, make only one or two figures in each cartoon box.
- Choose playground activity(ies) and use the cartoon boxes to show the students participating in the activity(ies).
- **Plan** the simple composition for each cartoon cell: where the figures will be placed, what **simple** background to include...where to place word bubbles...
- **Draw** the figures: Use **pencil** to **lightly** draw the body-structures, **using connected and overlapping ovals and circles** to place the figures in each cartoon cell.
- Next, lightly sketch a **very simple background** for each activity in each cartoon cell (again, simple drawings, no detail, just shapes, like the ball they are playing with or the bar they are swinging on).



4. Blocking In and Adding Detail, with pencil or black marker (25 minutes)

(After the body structures and simple background are positioned)

- Students may continue with pencil or switch to black pen.
- **Add** clothing detail and body features and **“dress” and draw the actual human features: faces, hair, hands, clothes, shoes....**
- **Now’s the time for DETAIL.**



**Refer to the Calvin and Hobbes Comic strip:** Note the simple way each cartoon cell shows action, motion, and personality with facial expression.

- **Add the word bubbles** where they are needed to provide dialogue
- Define and draw the simple (playground) backgrounds
- Add the text for the word bubbles to tell the story of the comic strip
- Erase any unwanted pencil lines
- Create a title for the Cartoon
- Sign the Cartoon



5. Clean-Up

- Close the lesson
- Clean up the classroom
- Sort and return materials to containers in the bin
- Restock bin as needed



## Calvin and Hobbes Cartoon Created by Bill Watterson

Note how much **variety** there is in the composition of each animation cell and how much **action and motion is suggested** with **figure gestures and facial expression**.



**Above:**

Figures show movement.  
Arms and legs are usually bent.

Only **one** foot is touching the ground unless the figure is jumping or standing still.

**Above and at Right:**

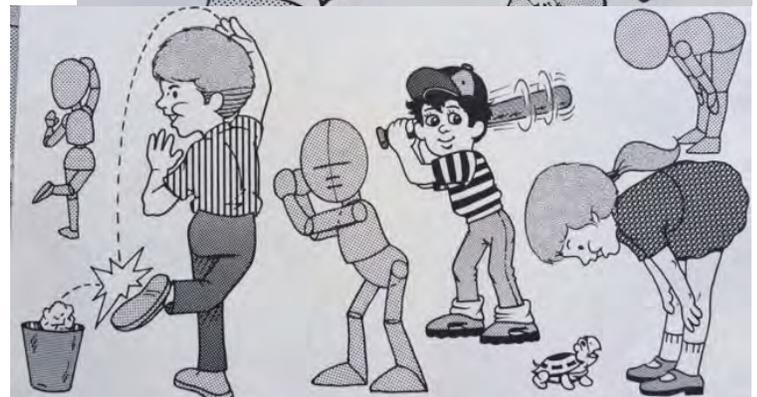
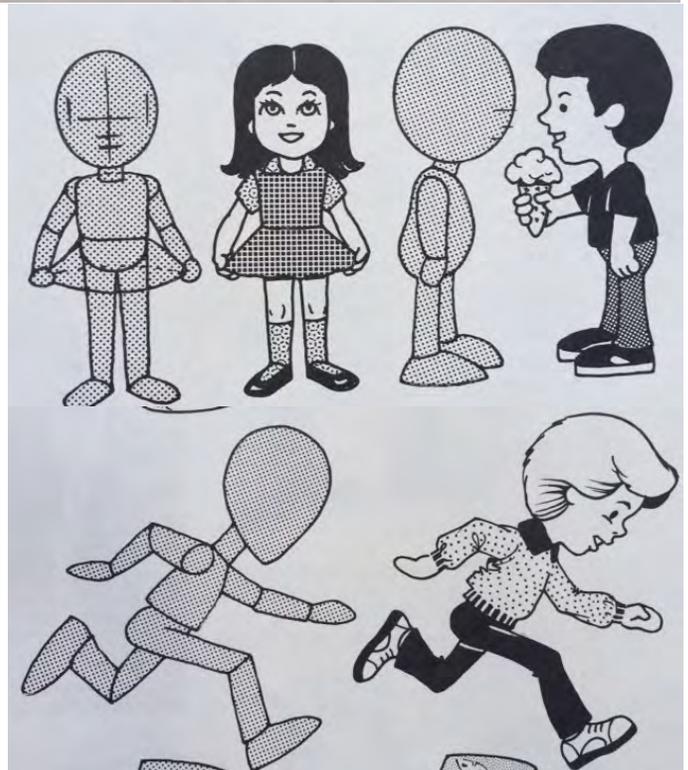
Figures are drawn with connected oval and rounded shapes to show VOLUME and MOTION.

Arms bend at elbows and hands  
Legs can bend at hips, knees and feet.

A child's body can be loosely divided into thirds:

- Top** third: head to shoulders,
- Middle** third: shoulders to hips,
- Bottom** third: legs and feet

**Elbows** line up with the waist



How to build your figures in a cartoon cell:

(Lightly with pencil) Start with largest body shapes (torso and head)

Add leg shapes and arm shapes

Redraw in pen. Add clothing detail and body features

Erase any visible pencil lines

