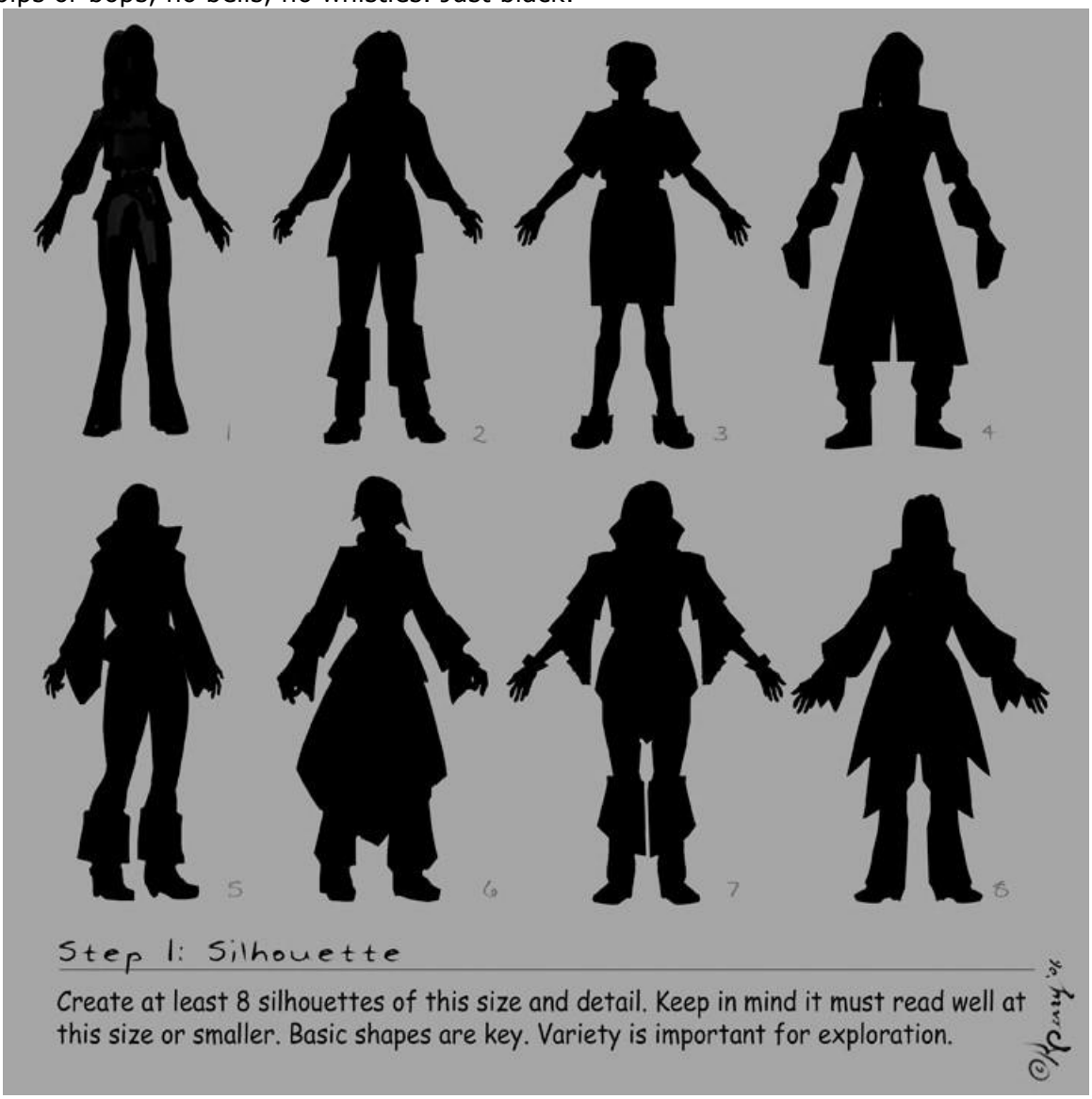
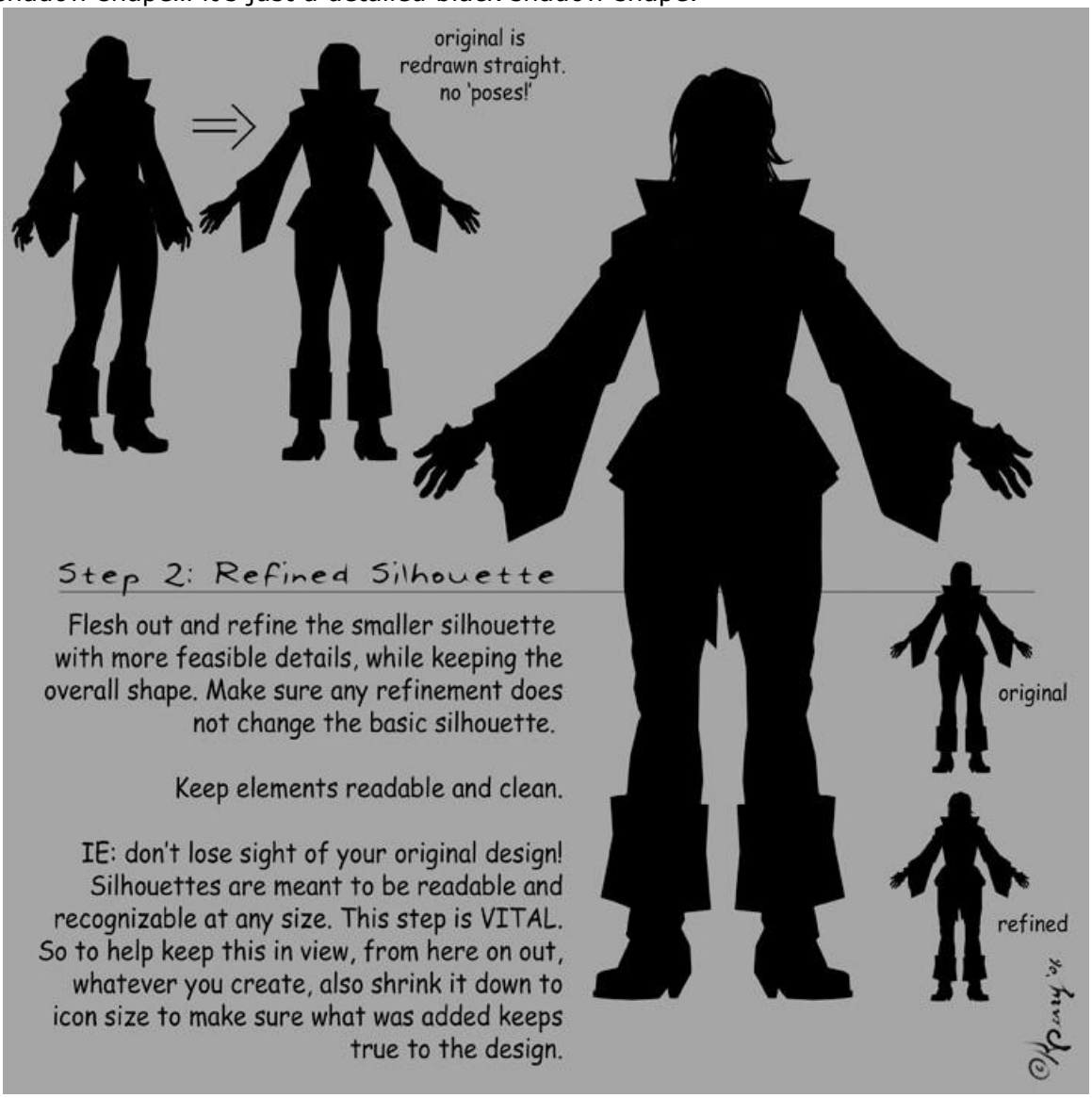
Preliminary Step: 100 words or less
Once you figure out your general idea, submit **with** your first silhouette step a short description of what you are going for. It doesn't have to be complex, just a general summary like: Middle-aged male ranger in classic tunic and boots, but with a specialized system of straps concealing knives and arrows/bow gear. Design emphasis on overlapping flaps for cover. Or maybe even: Schoolgirl ninja cowgirl who enjoys backpacks, lassos and high-top leather halfboots.
Erm. Yeah. You get the idea.

Step 1: Silhouette
For this design I decided I wanted a pirate and I designed accordingly. This is one of the two most vital parts in designing a character. And of the two, I would place this first and foremost. And the reason why it is so vital is because it is the first line of character recognition on the most basic of levels. Silhouette is nothing more than the outline of a character as if it were a shadow on the ground. There are no details, no bips or bops, no bells, no whistles. Just black.



Step 2: Refined Silhouette

So you've done your 8 thumbnails and turned them into me as homework progress. Cool. Now pick out your favourite for discussed reasons (IE, you explain yourself why you chose that design and not others. And if I mentioned a particular direction, why you are or are not going with said direction.) and now you get to flesh out some of the details of the silhouette. Don't get carried away, we're still talking just a black shadow shape… it's just a detailed black shadow shape.



This is where you add nuance to your forms, putting tucks and folds and cuffs and belts and all the accessories that make the basic form interesting and show personality. However, the trick here is making sure all those new details don't completely crush your existing design. Just because you add some overlapping fold doesn't mean the whole arm line gets to go to crap. ;} When in doubt, shrink your character down to 1.5 inches high and put him/her next to a 1.5 inch high version of your basic silhouette. If the details have changed the idea too much, you need to choose other details. You can go more elaborate if you want, so long as it remains readable and true to the original direction. Remember, if it ahin't broke, don't fix it.

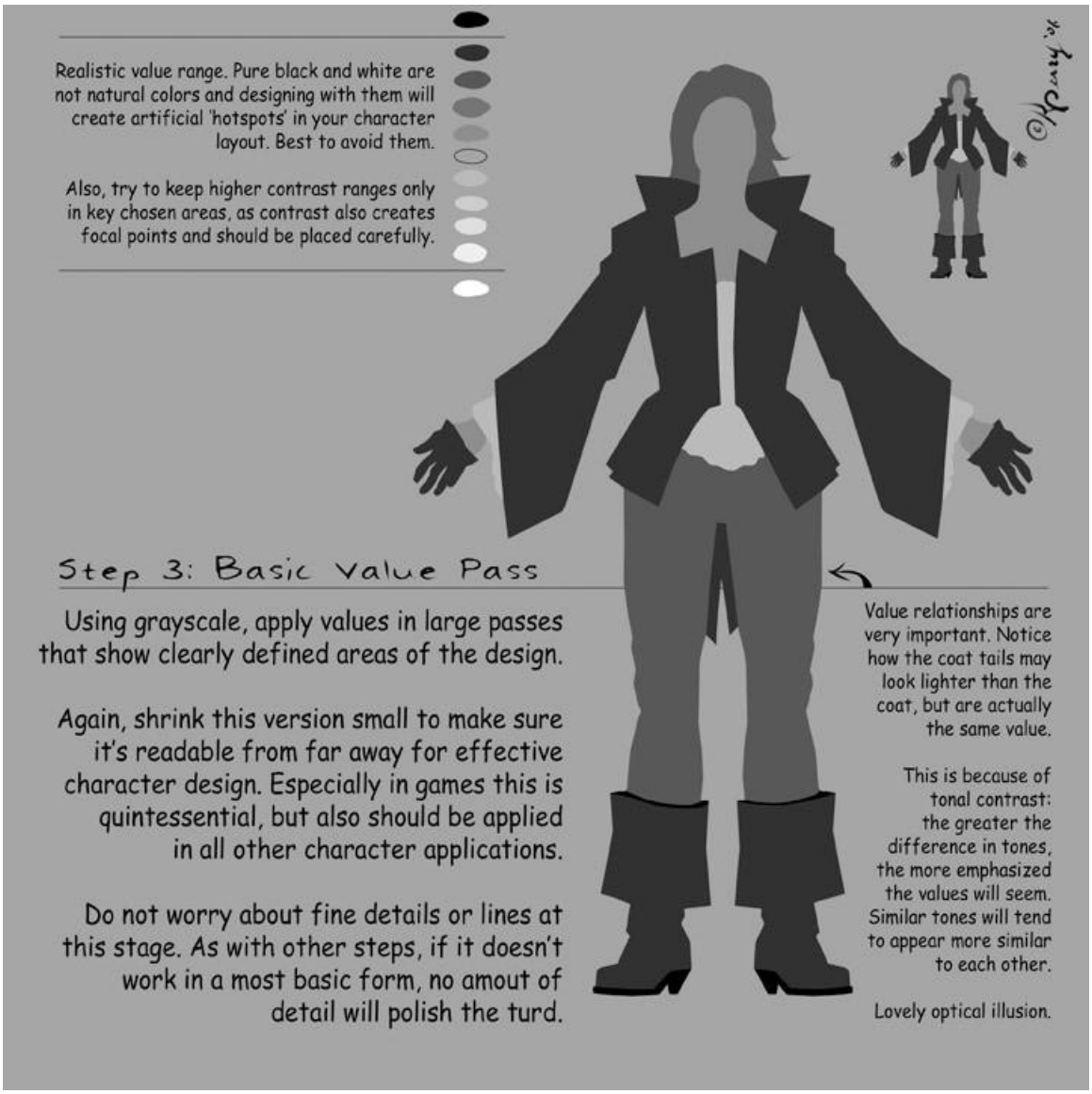
If the details change the overall idea, then scale it back and try something else.

Step 3: Value Pass and Value Alternates

So with this step we reach the second most important step, aside from the silhouette. Just as we took the silhouette and shrank it down to inch high versions to judge the recognition and delineation factors, so too will the value pass contain visual definitions to aide that cause. The value pass is simply creating large defining shapes that break up your character into its parts: tunic, pants, design shapes, etc. And it's really best done with just good old-fashioned gray tones… to the point where I would indeed make a quick chart up showing dots of 10% value steps for easy reference.

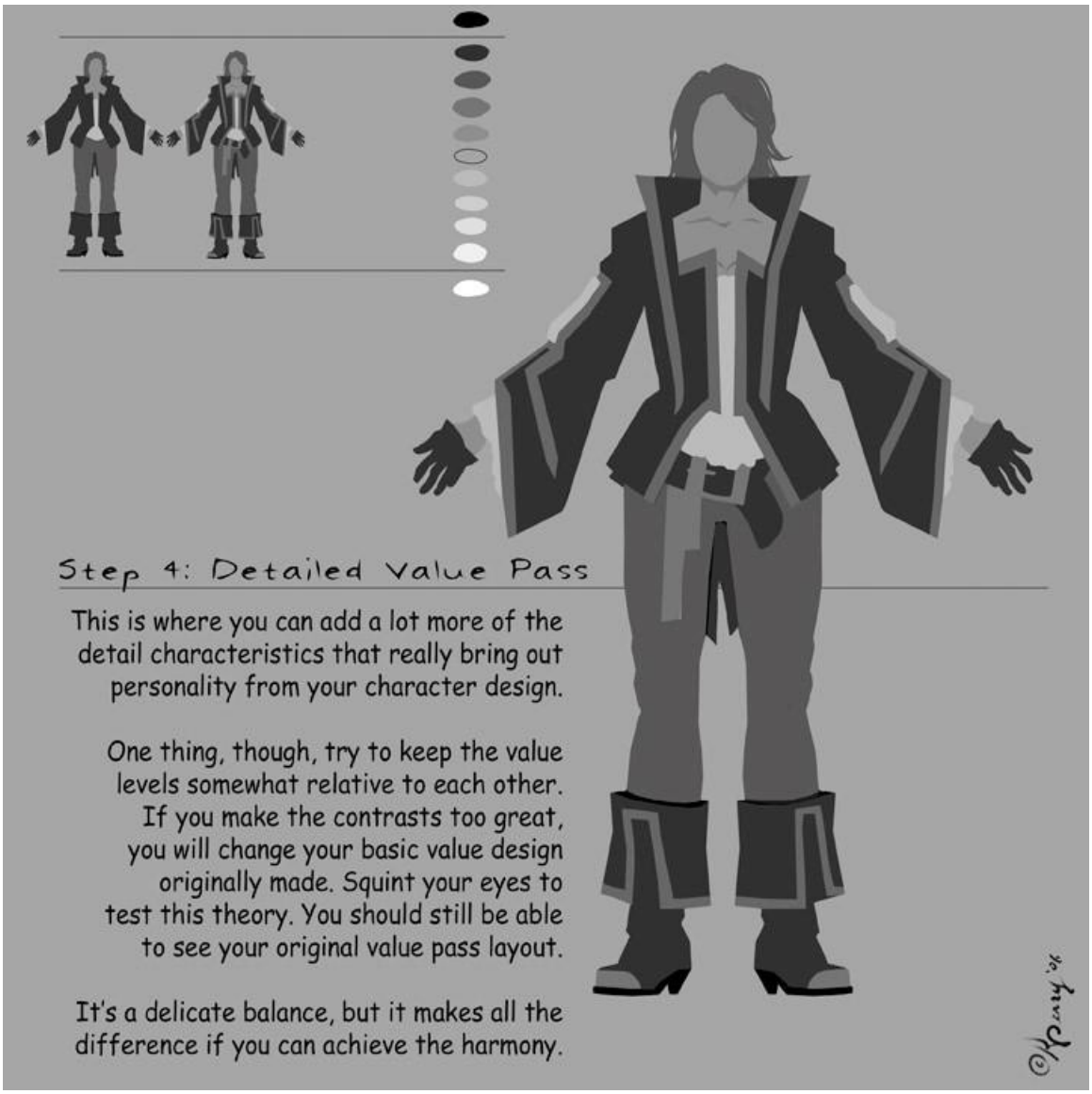
So if that isn't the case with your character, you're not going to see that level of pure white on it or anything in your environment. Even ice will have a goodly say on refraction and color based off of chemical composition and texture. The end result in all this being, white doesn't occur so don't use it.

Same thing goes with black. You'll only get pure black in the recesses of space where literally NO light occurs. And even then, don't use pure black for the absence of saturation will severely flatten the tone and depth nuance. In other words, it just doesn't make for pretty art. Keep it between 10% and 90% grays.



Step 4a: Refined Value Pass

This, much like the Refined Silhouette pass, is to flesh out your chosen Value Pass for your character with some of the smaller details. But just like that step, any details you add cannot override the predominant tone of the Value Pass. Here are where the guidelines of value contrasts really come into play. If your chosen details are of a contrast greatly removed from the main tone, you will create a focal point that draws attention away from your main shape. Try to avoid this and keep the detail tones relatively similar, especially dealing with up to medium-sized shapes that might compete with the larger shapes for attention. This isn't to say you can never add contrasting details. Just make sure you know why you're putting them there and they're small enough to avoid changing the overall value shape with reduced: for example, buttons. ;}



Step 4b: Color Pass

As was mentioned for importance in the Boot Camp tutorial, color is just as critical for focal points and eye-movement as value contrast is, particularly since color can lie. When choosing your colors for your character, brighter warm colors tend to pop forward, leaving cooler colors to recede. This is somehow oblivious of value most of the time, as the same value of blue and yellow will appear completely different: they yellow will always look lighter, brighter and closer. Outright lying bastard, it is.

Anyway, a good rule of thumb is to choose saturation (the intensity of a color) areas sparingly and have the rest of the tones remain more desaturated or downplayed with more gray in them. That way, where you put your stronger colors will aid in the focal point.

As you can see in my pirate, the coat is a rather rich color, but that's only because the sheer amount of it and it's dark. I've particularly chosen the rich gold of the belt and shoes as an accent focal point of saturation. If you take the image into Photoshop and use the eyedropper tool, you'll see most of the colors will reveal themselves to be in the 50-70% of saturation with the buckle etc being the only truly rich saturated color there. This is of course done on purpose. I like a little glitz. ;} And the pieces are small enough it doesn't draw too much attention away from the value of the coat and shirt, seeing as the buckle

is in the same color family as the pants and belt. If it were a bright red button, that might be a different story. Because remember: color lies. ;}

Step 5: Final Pass

This is basically a grocery list for you. It's the final stage in design where you pick your materials and textures defining the costuming choices. This is also important for helping you put together your pose, because folds and movement of the cloth will be dictated by the material's weight and this very much needs to be taken into account.

For example, that pirate coat is a thick, textured wool of sorts and the ruffled shirt underneath is more of a linen. If the arm is stretched outward, of course the cuffs of the linen shirt will drape downward rather apparently, whereas the cuffs of the outer coat will more faithfully retain its shape.

So have fun picking out what these materials are and draw up a nice finished version of it with all the final details and such in place. It's a nice formal step in your design, it helps figure out all remaining questions concerning the character and it looks pretty swell in a development lineup in the portfolio, too. :}

Now I know this step seemed a bit overwhelming to you guys, but what I'm asking you to do is nothing more than gather references and have fun playing with your new character. From the beginning, you guys always wanted to jump to this very step… This step is the step where you can finally put in the little painting strokes and highlights and shadows just like you wanted. This is where you get to play.

The point of the lesson is I want you to THINK about what materials you are using to create your character so that when you are drawing the character in pose for your final, you have all these material details and material weight questions answered for you. You'll know if there's a thick draping sash or a light fluffy tunic. You'll know if it's burlap or cotton. You'll

know if it's a battered old worn metal or one that's been finely oiled and cared for. These are the details I want you to KNOW about your character to prepare you for the final painting.
The design work is done. Just loose ends to clean up. :}

Bonus Step: Antithesis

Make the antithesis of your designed character and make sure it fits within the same world. What do I mean? Well, let's take the pirate I did as an example. She was a freelancing mercenary female pirate. Who would her nemesis be? Would it be a good pirate-like version -- maybe not a pirate -- but in the same general industry line of work like a male musketeer. Or what about an outright evil pirate like Blackbeard? Or how about a demonic pirate like the warped monster version of some essence of pirate long since dead? We could even go completely anti-pirate and choose something like an upstanding noble male individual complete with lace and a wig. ;} So long as it fits within the world of this pirate character.

Here are the rules:

* 1) They must be the opposite of your character in these ways.

a. Personality. Example: If your character was good, the anti-character must be evil or at least directly opposed to the same goals. This can be an enemy or just an opposite: a wife, a partner, a competitor, etc. Likewise, if your character was flamboyant, your anti-character could be practical. Just like in the intro silhouette step, Ren and Stimpy would be excellent versions of this concept.

b. Body Type. Example: It would even be good to see build differs: if your character was small and skinny, it would be appropriate to see the anti-character as large and lumbering, etc. Gender change could also apply here. If you designed a man the first time, this one has the possibility of being a woman and vice versa.

* 2) The character must fit within the same world as your original character. This means if you're doing a pirate, I don't think a space-age war veteran from the 38th century would be a fair anti. Likewise, if your characters are rather fantasy-driven space opera types, a caveman or cartoon character would also not work. So make it fun, but not bizarrely off the scale.

* 3) You will produce final images for each step as studied: 3 distinct silhouettes, 1 refined silhouette, 3 distinct value passes, 1 refined value pass, 3 distinct color passes and 1 materials pass. Painting a pinup is completely optional.

* 4) Turn these steps in on one sheet if you can, showing the progression. Media is optional, just keep it clean like the original lesson. No poses.