

How do I make a comic?

A kids guide to the basics

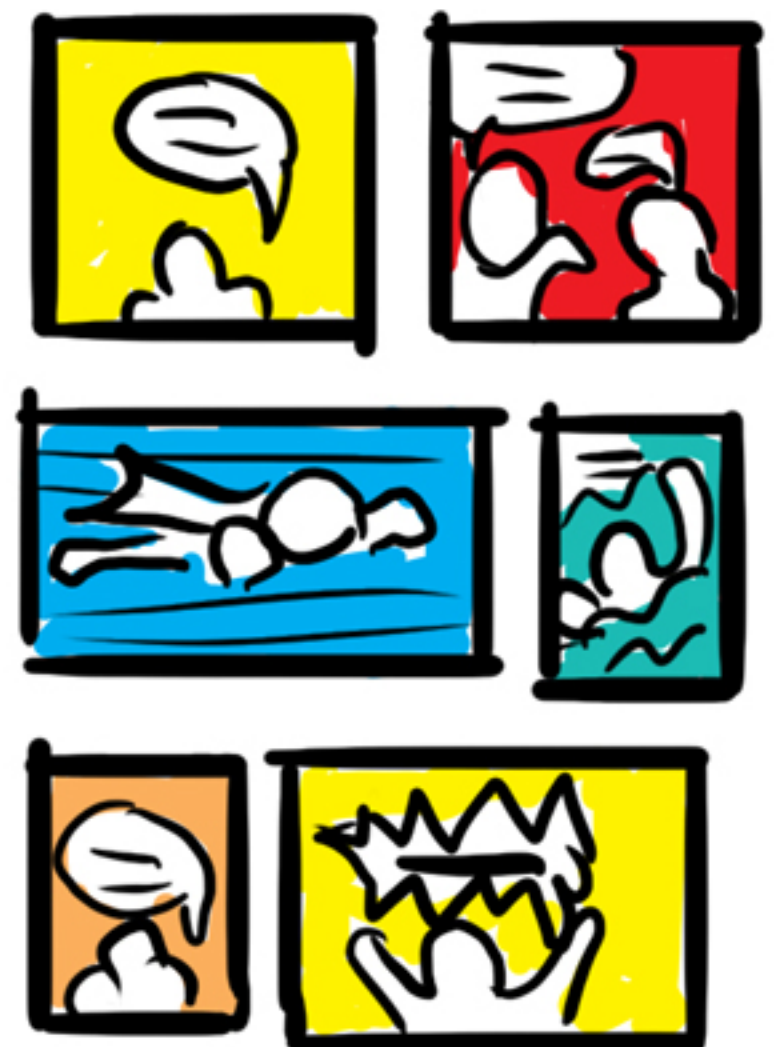
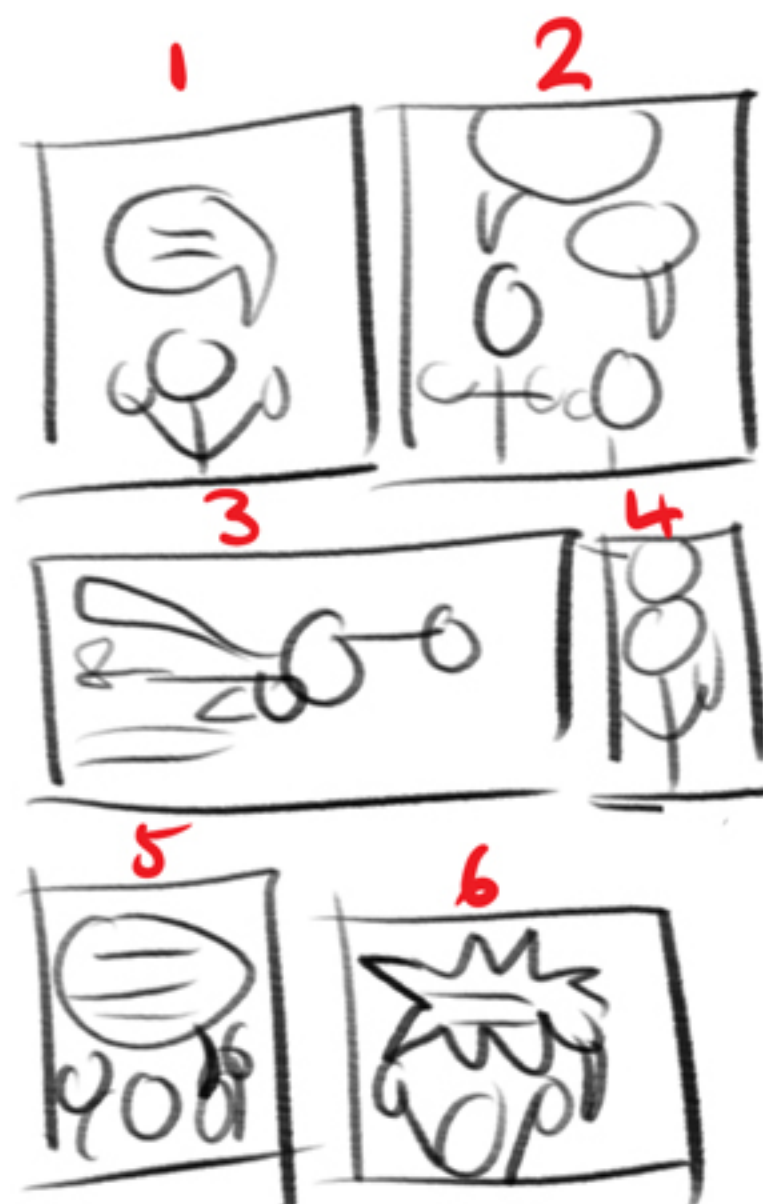
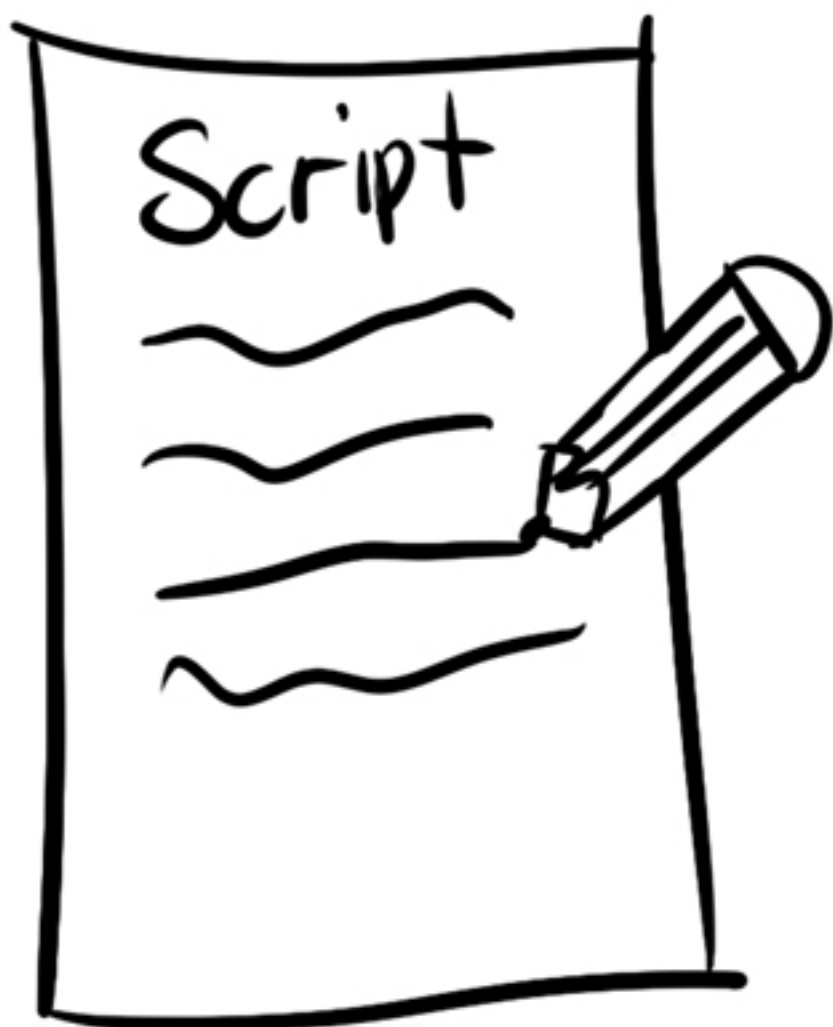
by Jessica Emmett - www.jessica-emmett.com

The job of the comic creator is to simply allow the reader to follow a story in a specific order with images & text!

Every artist has different styles & different preferences to achieving the above. Over the next few pages I'll cover some comic basics that other comic writers and artists have found works well for them. Hopefully it's a good starting point but remember:

The best way to learn how to make comics is just to get writing and drawing and learn as you go along. AND have fun =)

The Short Answer



Think of a story.
Write a script.

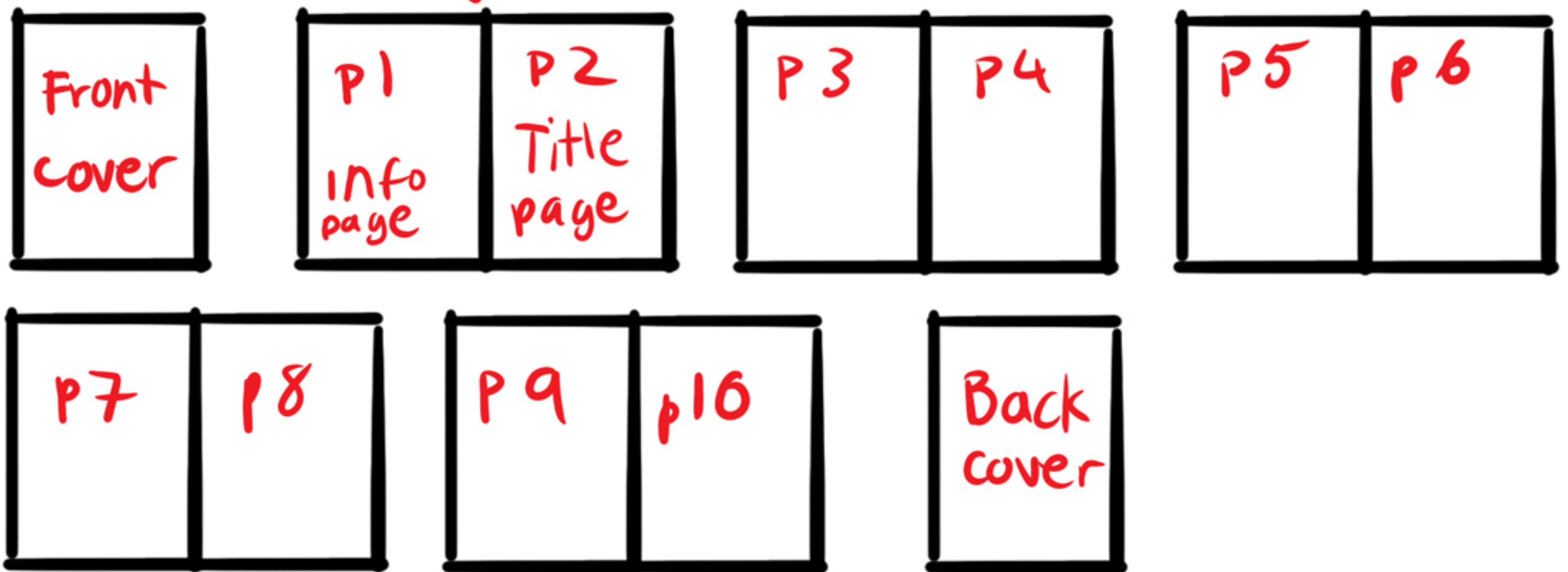
Create boxes
(panels) and
do a rough
storyboard.

Ink + colour
the comic

Book Layout

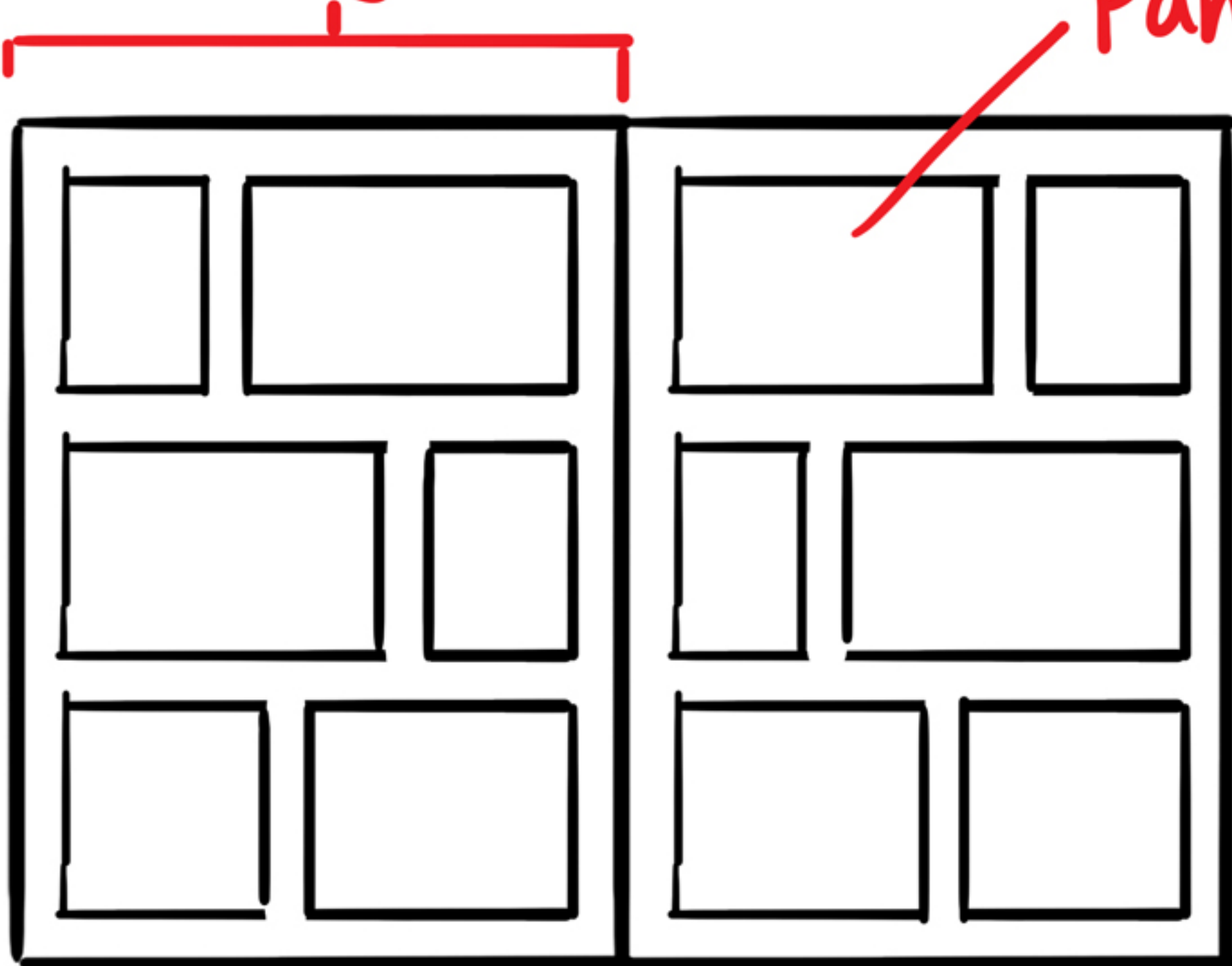
Understanding how to layout a book will help you write & design your story. Even adults struggle to finish long comic stories, so best to start with a short story, no more than 10 pages.

Most books use the first 2 pages for info + titles



Page

Panel



spread (2 pages together)

Writing

Drawing a comic can take a long time, which is why many comics are short stories. That means every panel and page counts. The best tip is to decide how many pages first and build your story around it. Consider making the story shorter or split it into 2 stories if it is too long.

Aim = 10 pages → start with bulletpoints.

①

Add important parts of the story.

②

Now fill in the gaps.

③

Now you have a rough story!

- 1 - Dog sits on bench & hears BANG
- 2 - Dog finds meteor + licks it.
- 3 - Dog turns into cat!
- 4 - Dog is very confused he doesn't know yet.
- 5 - Dog sees himself in window. Panics
- 6 - Dog meets a group of cats.
- 7 - Dog tries to act like them. Fails.
- 8 - Dog stops acting like a cat and just acts like himself.
- 9 - Dog turns back into dog.
- 10 - Dog is happy he is a dog.

Character Design

It can be very helpful to design key characters as it can really help you writing their personality.

Age?



Gender?



Personality?



Grumpy?

happy?

Lazy?

Colour?



Some design a character first and then create a whole story around it.

Script

When you're happy with the rough story, start to build a script. Think about dialogue & narration (optional). Split each page roughly into 1-6 panels. There are many ways to format scripts... as long as it is clear it's ok.

Page 1

[Dog is sitting on a bench in a park.]

Panel 1

[Dog is happy]

Dog - Woof woof means hello in dog!

Panel 2

[Dog hears BANG]

SFX - BANG! [out of frame]

Panel 3

[Dog stands to attention]

Dog - What was that! I think I should check it out!

Panel 4

[Dog jumps off bench.]

Panel 5

[Dog sniffs air]

Dog - Whats that smell?

Panel 6

[Wide shot of park, smoke coming from trees]

SFX - Sniff Sniff

Description, what you will draw.

who is speaking

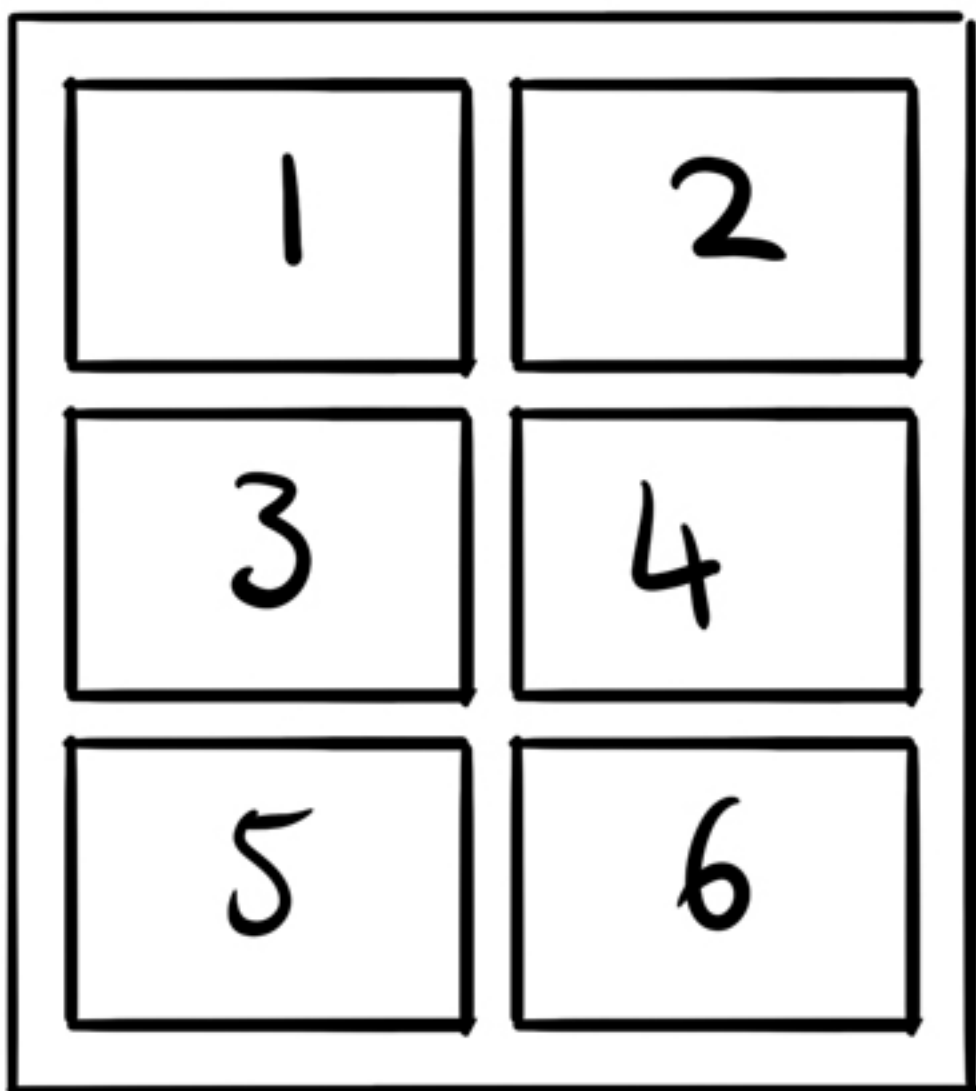
dialogue

Sound Effect

Panel Layout

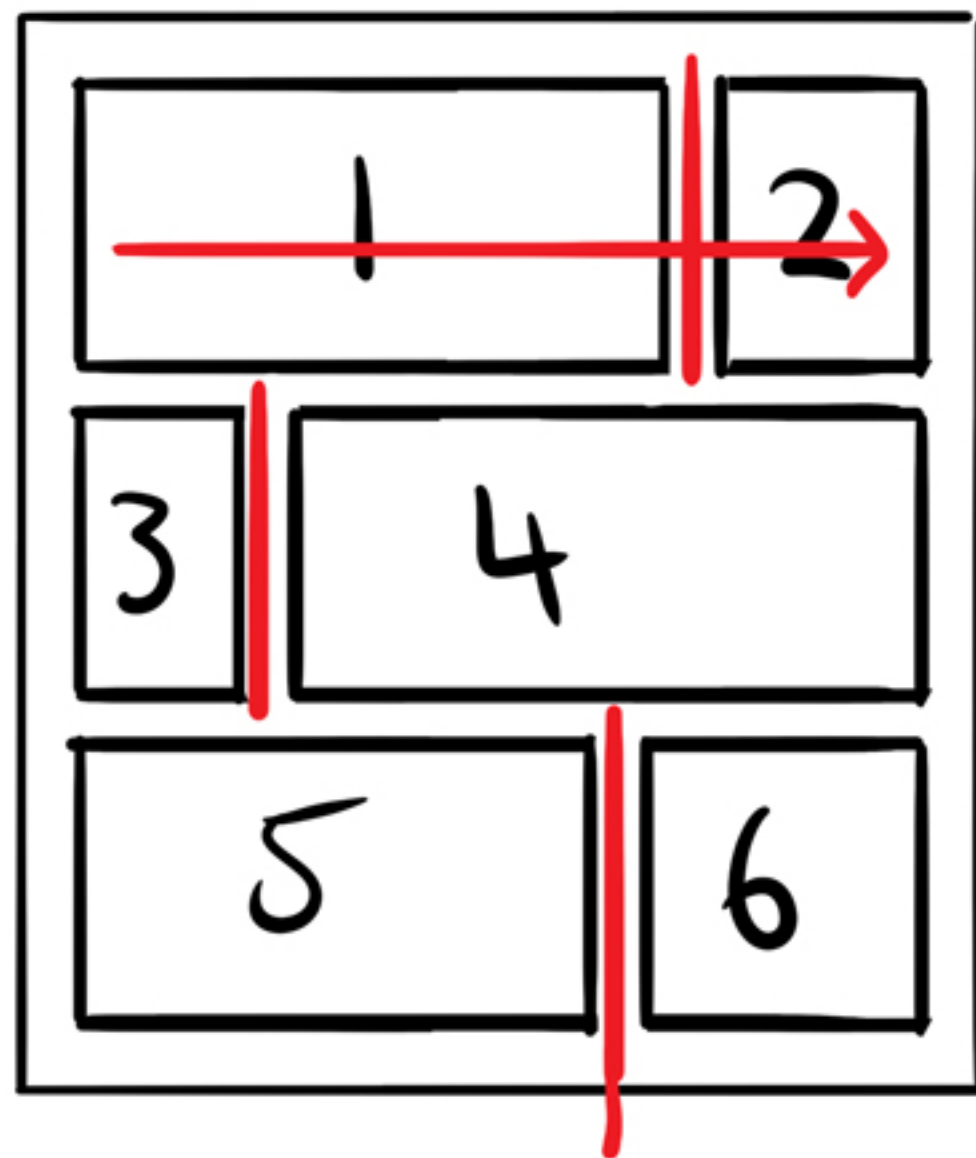
There are many ways panels can be used to help the reader follow the story. Artists have different ways they like to layout their panels, but here I'll start with some simple layouts for Western style comics.

Basic Grid



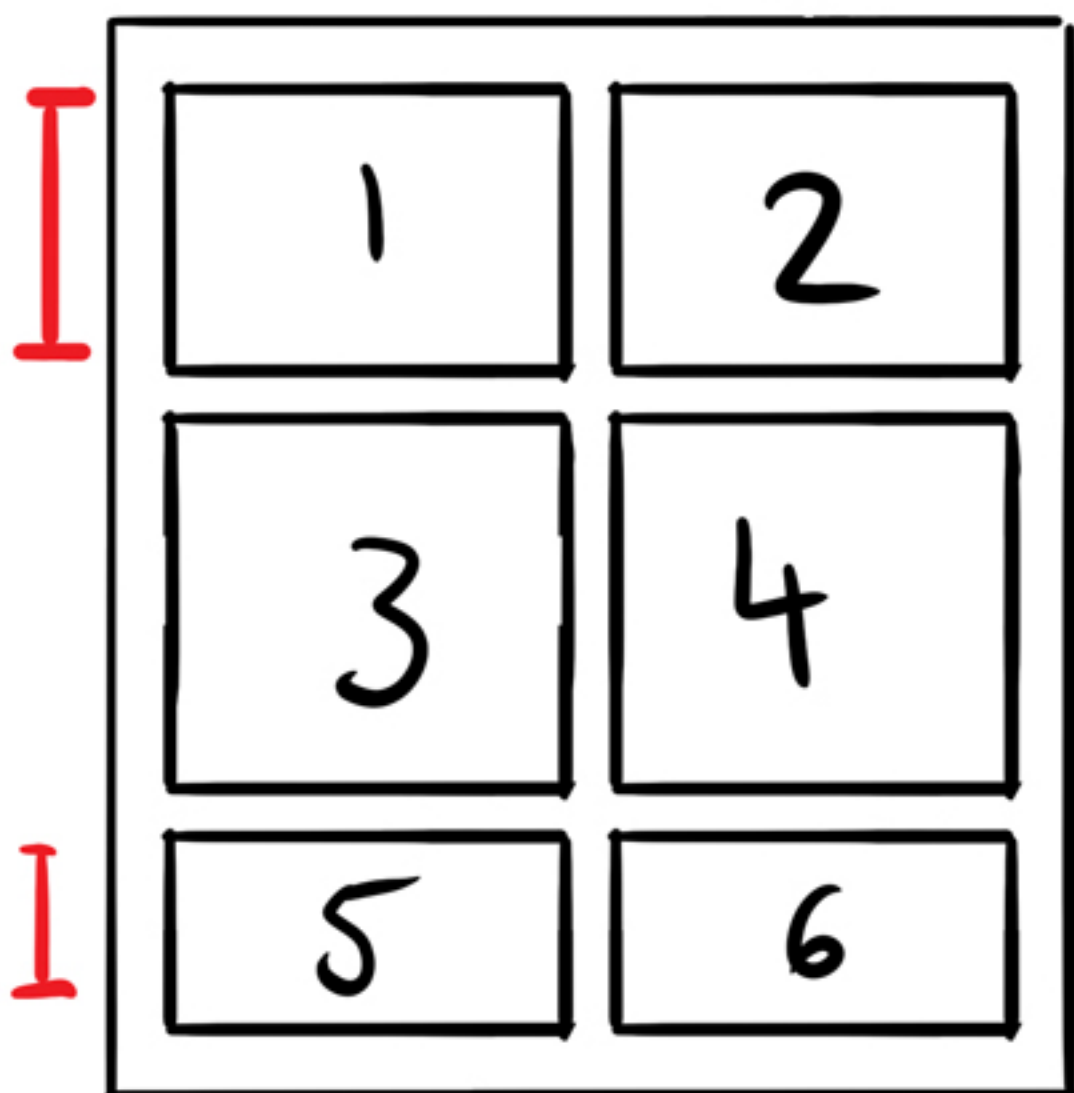
Good to start here 😊

Different widths

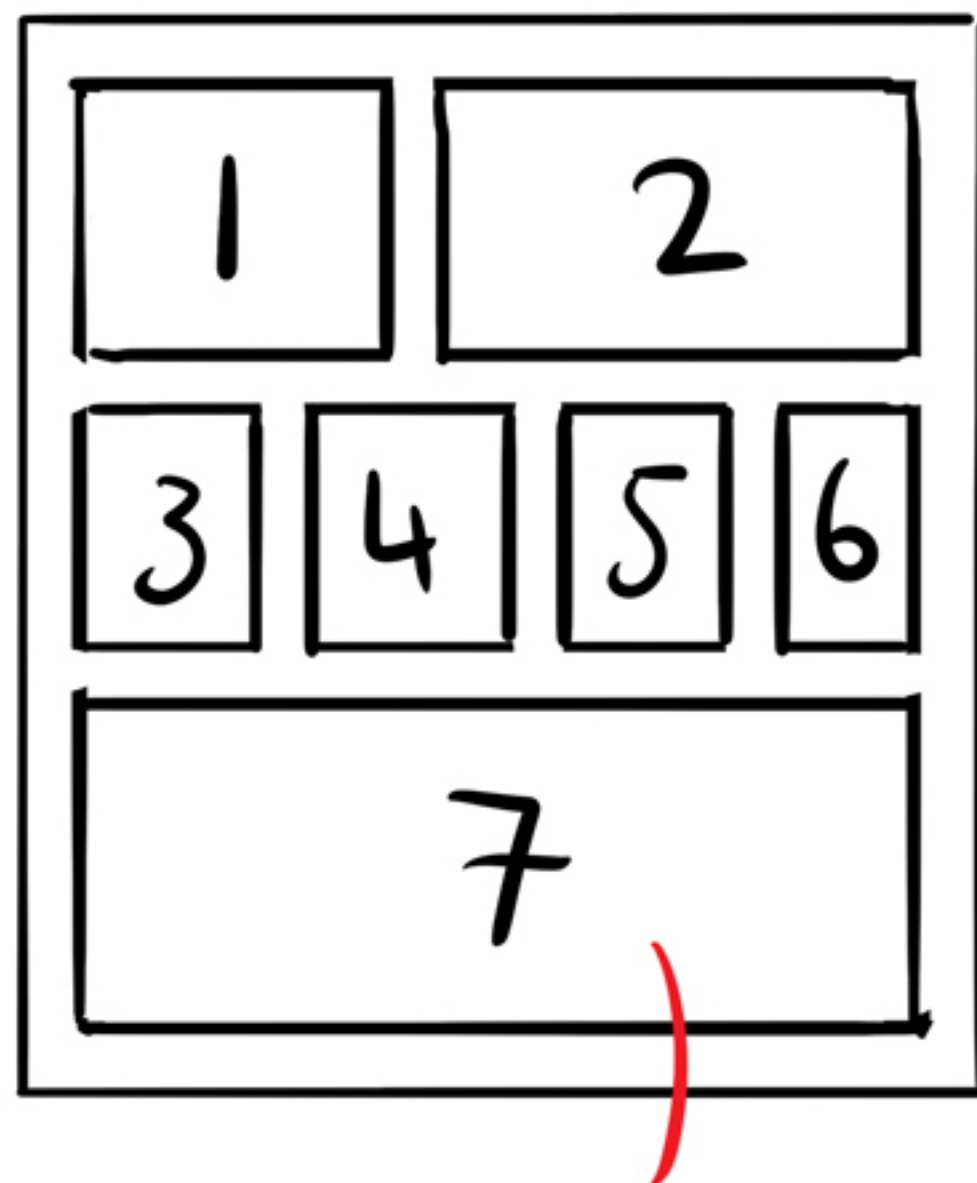


Easier for the eye to follow the row

Different row heights



Different panels per row



Bigger panels often key/important parts. Super key panels can be a full page or spread!

Comic Text

Here's some examples of comic text formats. Note: people use different terminologies, this is my personal preference.



when possible end near mouth



Alternative round



SFX
(sound effects)
CRASH
BING
Be creative with SFX ☺

Dialogue Tips

Dialogue and images are always going to be fighting for space so bear this in mind when designing panels.

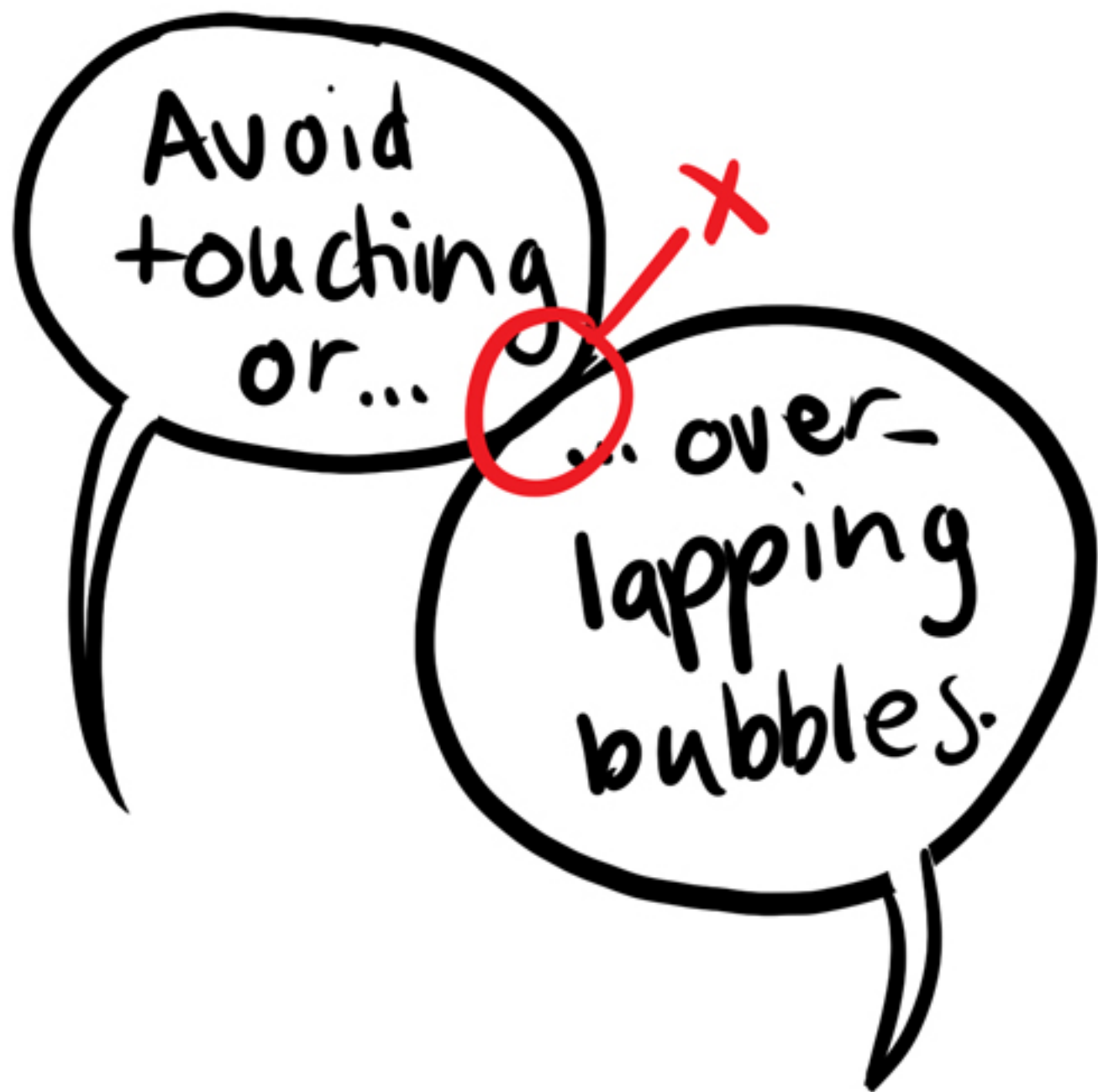
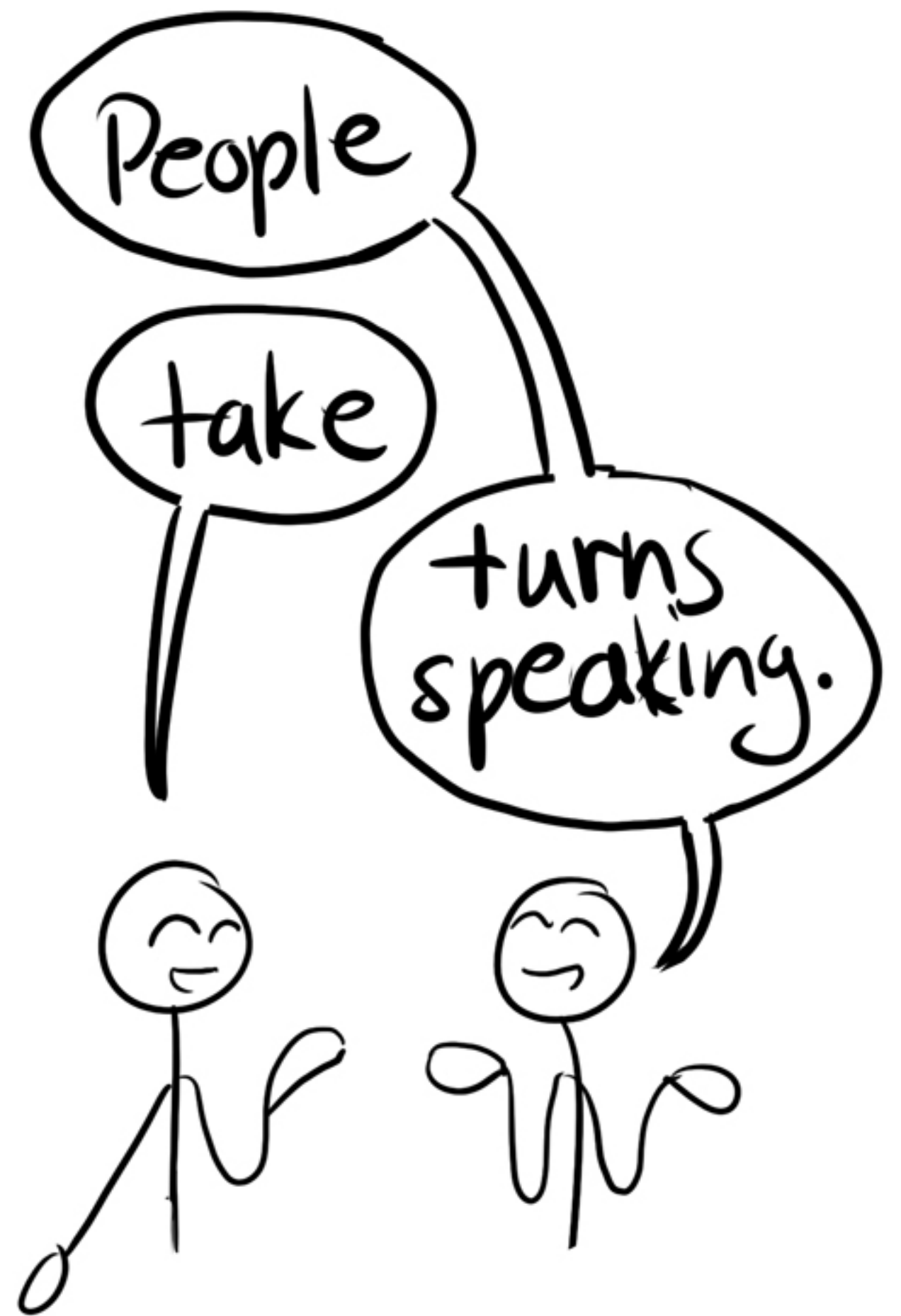
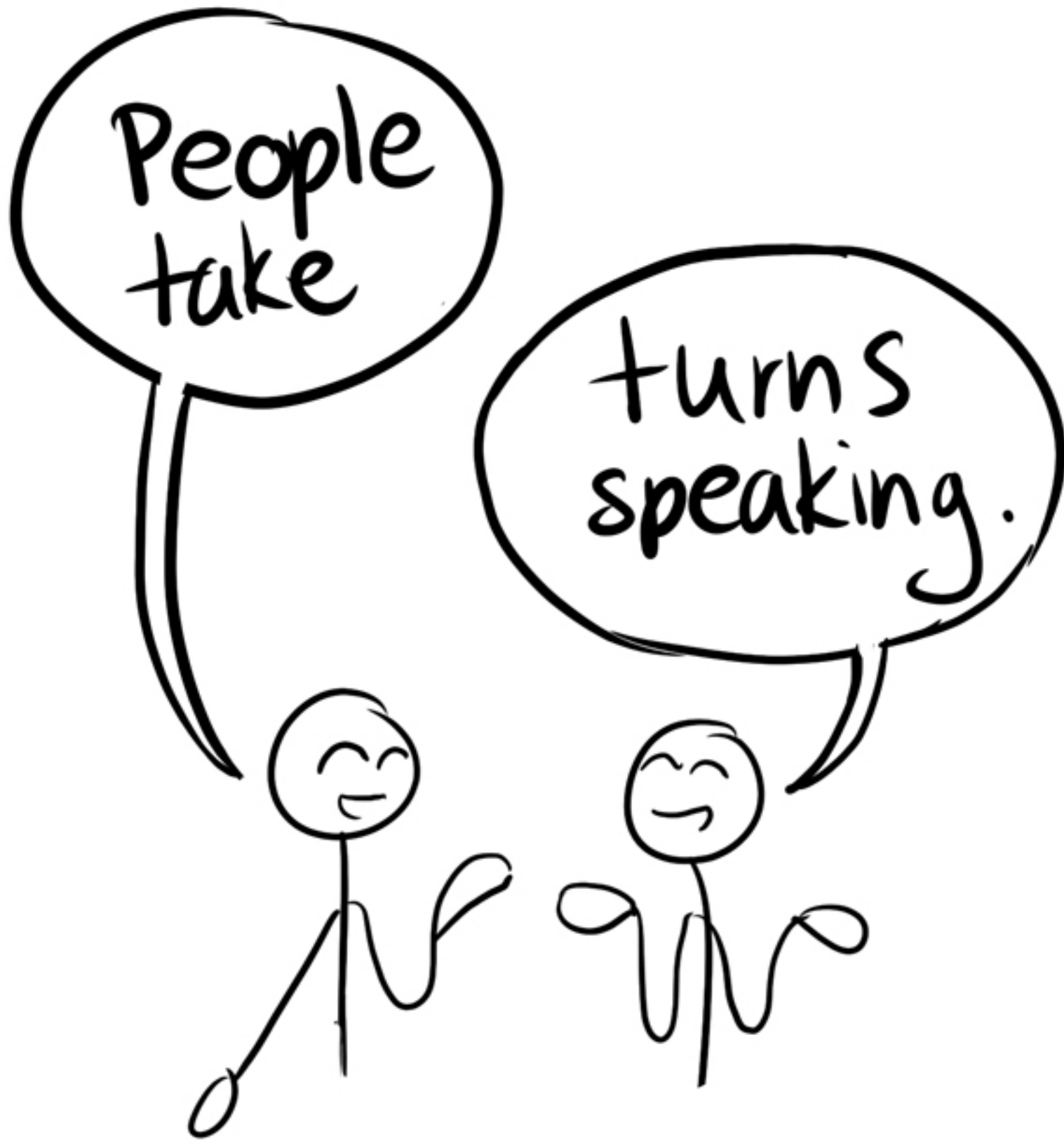


① → ②
Write the text first



Dialogue Tips continued

Like panels, use speech bubbles to help readers read the text in the right order. Think left to right and up to down.



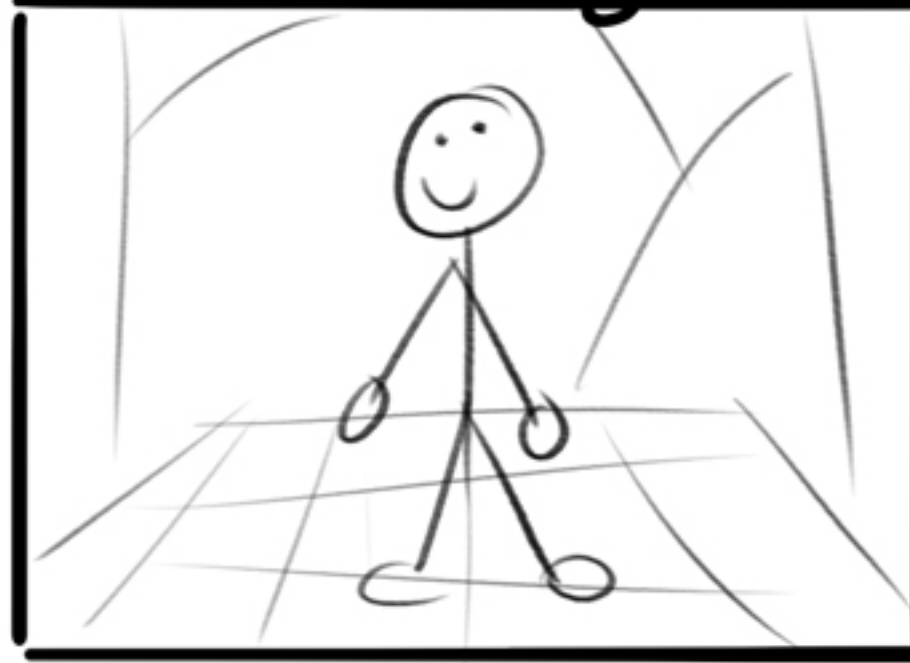
Angles & shots

It's more interesting for readers to vary the shots or angles. You can borrow some bits from films/tv to make the comics more dynamic.

Very wide
(more background)



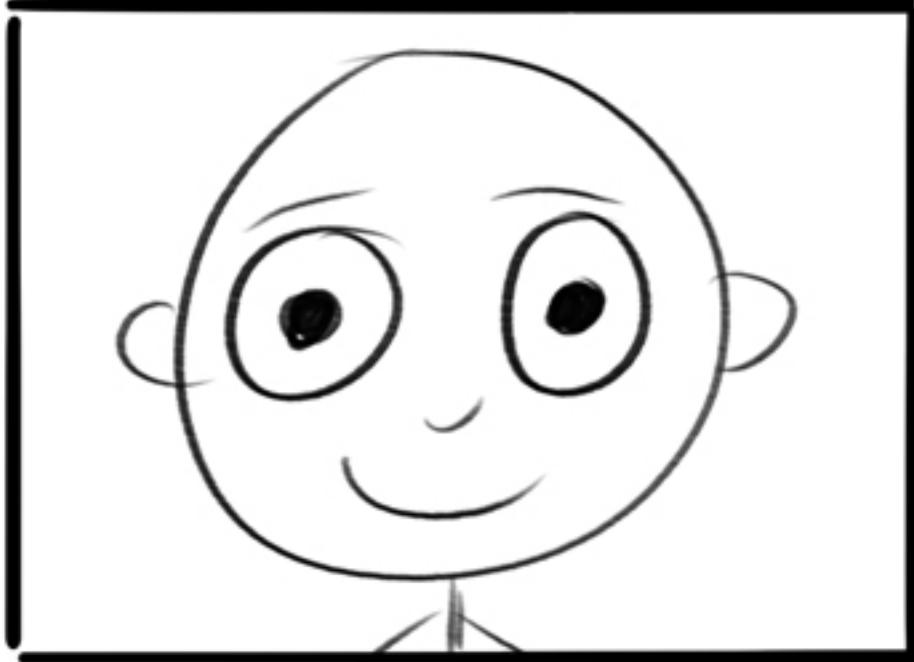
Wide
(full body)



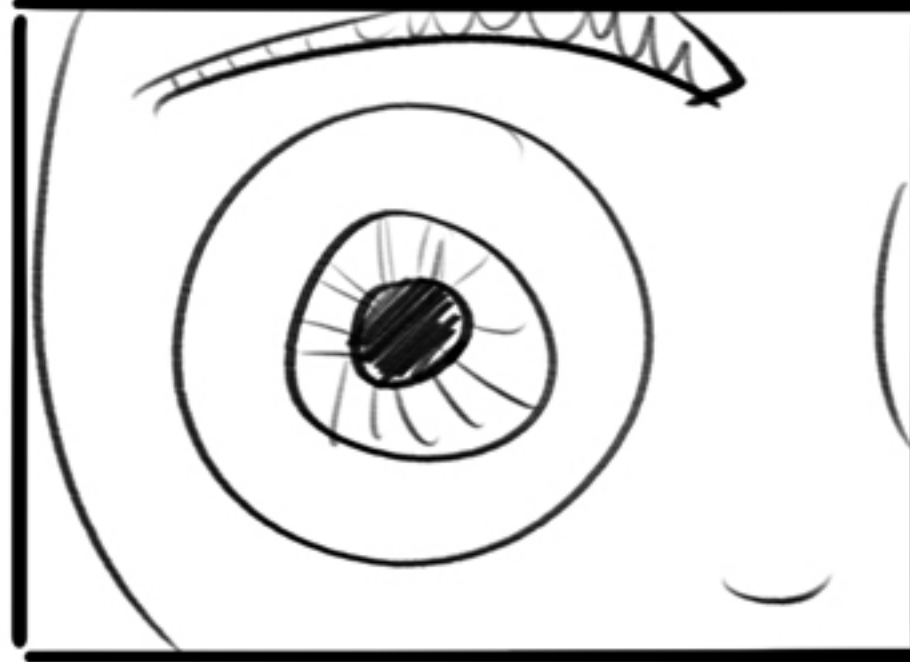
Mid
(1/2 body or head + shoulders)



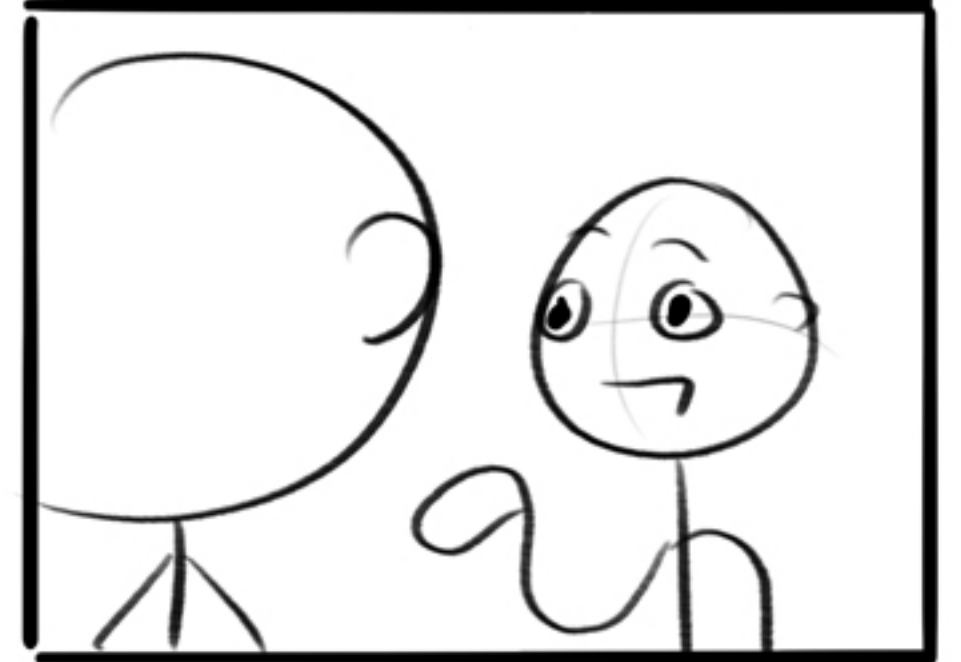
Close up
(use sparingly)



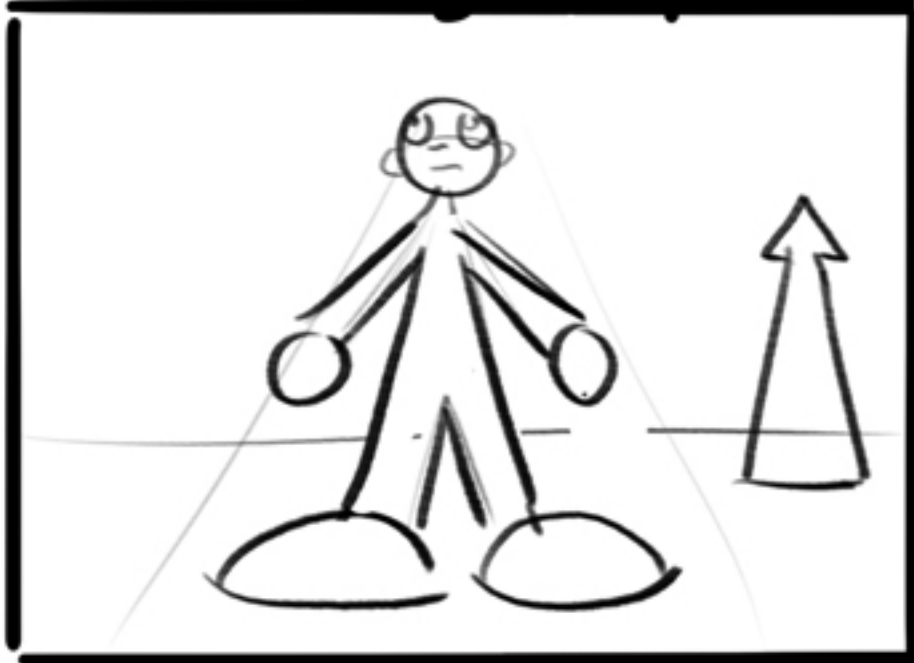
Very close up
(use rarely)



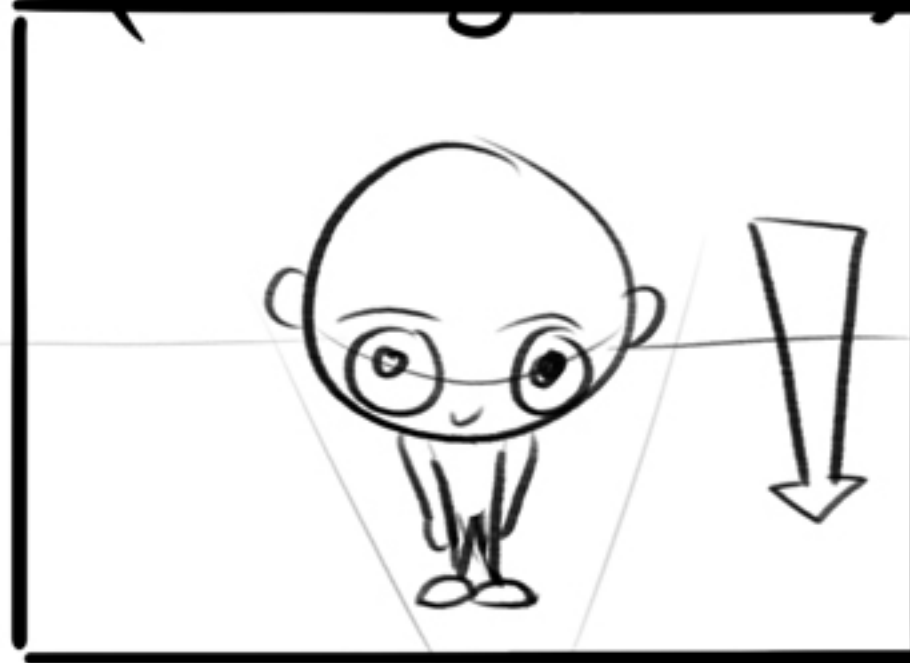
Over the
Shoulder (OS)



Low
(looking up)



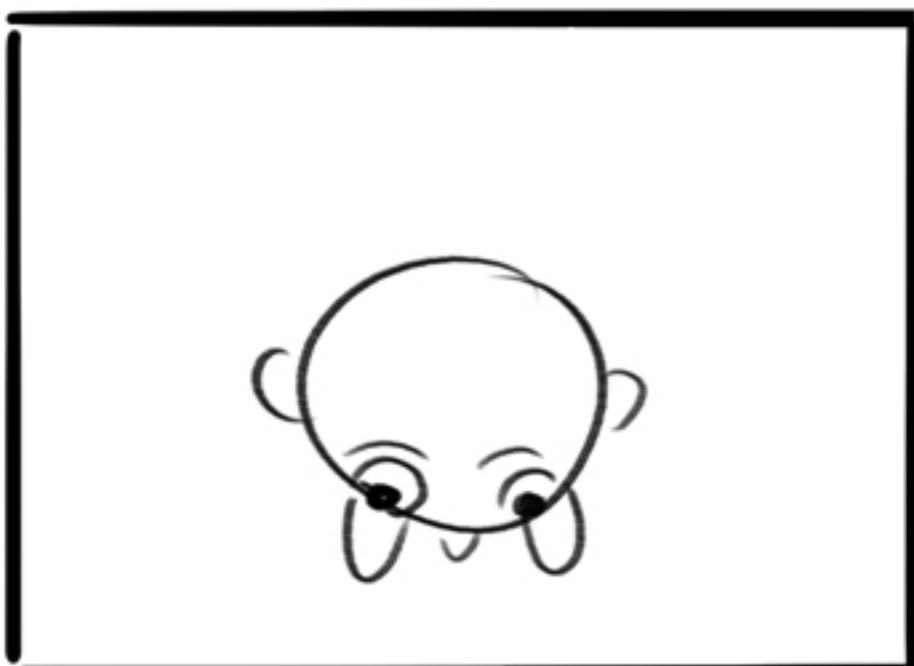
High
(Looking down)



(towards camera)



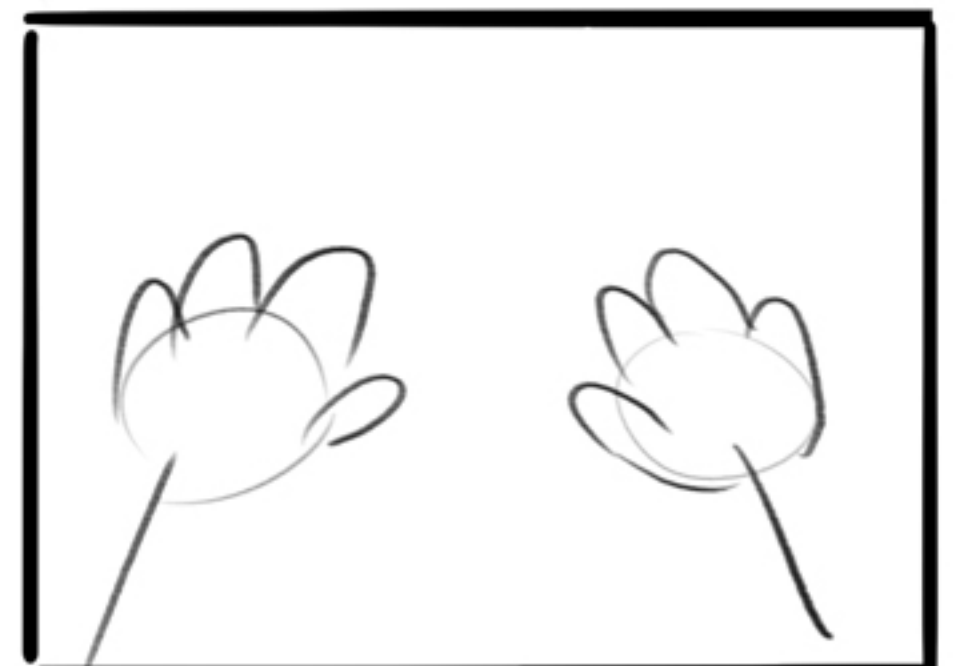
Birds eye view



(use blur or
action lines)



Point of view (POV)



Storyboarding

Storyboarding is when the writing and images first come together. Many changes happen here so keep drawings rough. Storyboards are the backbone of the comic process!

Page 1 [Dog is sitting on a bench in a park.]

Panel 1

[Dog is happy]

Dog - Woof woof means hello in dog!

Panel 2

[Dog hears BANG]

SFX - BANG! [out of frame]

Panel 3

[Dog stands to attention]

Dog - What was that! I think I should check it out!

Keep descriptions brief so you have more artistic freedom later.



Needs editing! Remember stay rough.

Text edited

Text moved

character more pointy.



Artwork

When you're happy with the storyboards you can finally start drawing the art. Here is a common process of art.



Penciling

Takes time... Keep going!
😊



Inking

Draw straight on top of the pencil.



Use smudge proof ink. Let it dry before erasing pencil.



Some people scan their line art + colour on the computer.



Colour

It's your choice if you add colour.

← Sometimes text and bubbles are added on top after the artwork.