

How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way

How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way

by
Stan Lee
and
John Buscema

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Dedicated to John Buscema, the Michelangelo of the comics.

Stan Lee

Dedicated to Stan Lee, who knows talent when he sees it.

John Buscema

Oh well, you win some, you lose some!

Stan

But seriously, folks—

Dedicated to every wide-eyed guy or gal who has ever held a pencil, pen, or crayon and dreamed of telling fantastic stories through pictures; to everyone who's ever thrilled to the sight of a dazzling drawing and longed to be able to copy it, or better still, to create an original!

In short, to everyone and anyone who's ever wanted to be—a comic-book artist! You're our kind of people. We know just how you feel. You see, we've been there ourselves!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan & John". The "Stan" is written in a large, stylized cursive script, and the "& John" is written in a more fluid, cursive style to its right.

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PREFACE

I've been planning to write this book for years, but it took Big John Buscema to light the fire and get the whole thing started. Here's how it happened.

You know how it is. You intend to paint the barn, or mow the lawn, tidy up your room, or write a book—but you keep putting it off because there are a zillion other things you'd rather do. Well, that's the way it was with me. I've spent so many years as editor, art director and writer of so many superhero yarns that I just couldn't bring myself to write the one book that I knew would have to be written sooner or later—the one book that Marvel fans everywhere always ask for whenever I deliver one of my lilting little lectures on some campus or other. Namely, the book you're now so gratefully grasping in your pencil-smudged little paws.

Why has it been so eagerly requested? Simple. You see, while there's a veritable plethora of "How to Draw" manuals gallantly glorifying any bookseller's shelves, up to now there's been no book available to tell a budding young Buscema, or Kirby, Colan or Kane how to draw *comicbook superheroes*, and—most importantly—how to do it in the mildly magnificent Marvel style. Yep, I knew I'd have to write it someday, and it all came together when Big John organized his comicbook workshop.

Early in '75 Johnny told me he was going to teach a course in drawing for the comics. My curiosity aroused, I visited one of his classes and was absolutely amazed at the quality and depth of his instruction. You know how rare it is to find the foremost person in some field who can actually teach as well as perform. Well, take it from me, I had certainly found him that day—and I was doubly fortunate in that he was a longtime friend as well as a co-worker at Marvel Comics.

After viewing the success of his popular art course, I finally told Johnny that I felt it was a shame only a comparative handful of students could learn what he had to teach about comicbook artwork—a shame that so few were able to sit at the feet

of the master. Then I planted the seed. If he were to illustrate a book on the subject, he could reach thousands of aspiring artists all at the same time. Obviously, no one book can substitute for an entire art course, but at least we'd be able to present a broad overview, illustrating the most important elements of style, drama, and design that go into the making of a Marvel superhero feature.

Without looking up from his drawing board, he mumbled his usual monosyllabic grunt, which long years of friendship had taught me to interpret as a note of assent. Spurred on by his display of unbridled enthusiasm, I knew the project could be delayed no longer. John Buscema would organize, prepare, and illustrate our book—based on the highly successful course he teaches in his own workshop—and I would do the writing and sneakily steal a disproportionate share of the credit, as is my wont. So, here we are!

Okay, I won't keep you from the good stuff any longer. Just remember one thing. The pages that follow were created to give you an informed insight into the way the most popular comicbook superhero strips are designed and illustrated. They'll bring you as many artistic tips, tricks, secrets, and suggestions as possible. They'll show you what we strive for in doing our drawings, and how we go about achieving our unique objectives in art and design. We've tried to condense our own long years of training, toil, and experience into this one valiant little volume. And, in return, all we ask of you is—

Don't tell our competition what you've learned!

Excelsior!

Stan Lee
New York 1977

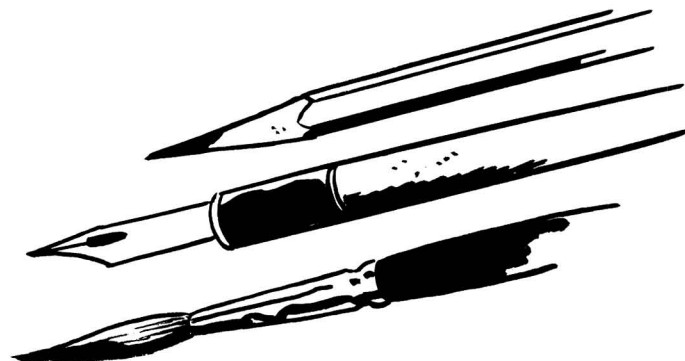
**CHAPTER
ONE!**



THE TOOLS- AND THE TALK- OF THE TRADE!

Since very few of us draw with just our fingernails, let's start off with what you'll need. Then we've got to make sure we're all speaking the same language. This part's the easiest.

Here we go! On these two pages you'll find just about everything you'll need to get you started. One of the nice things about being a comicbook artist is the fact that your equipment is no big deal. Let's just give the various items a fast once-over . . .



Pencil. Some artists prefer a soft lead, some like the finer hard lead. It's up to you.

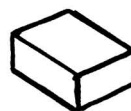
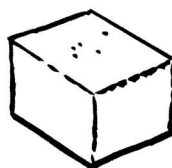
Pen. A simple drawing pen with a thin point, for inking and bordering.

Brush. Also for inking. A sable hair #3 is your best bet.



India ink. Any good brand of black india ink is okay.

White opaquing paint.
Invaluable for covering errors in inking.

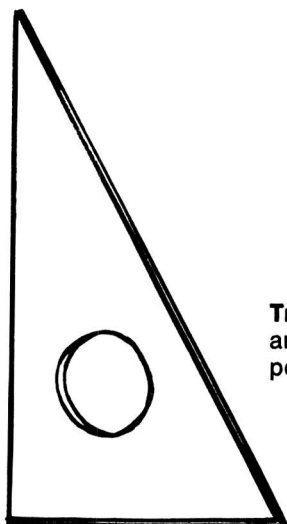


Erasers. One art gum and one smooth kneaded eraser—which is cleaner to use.

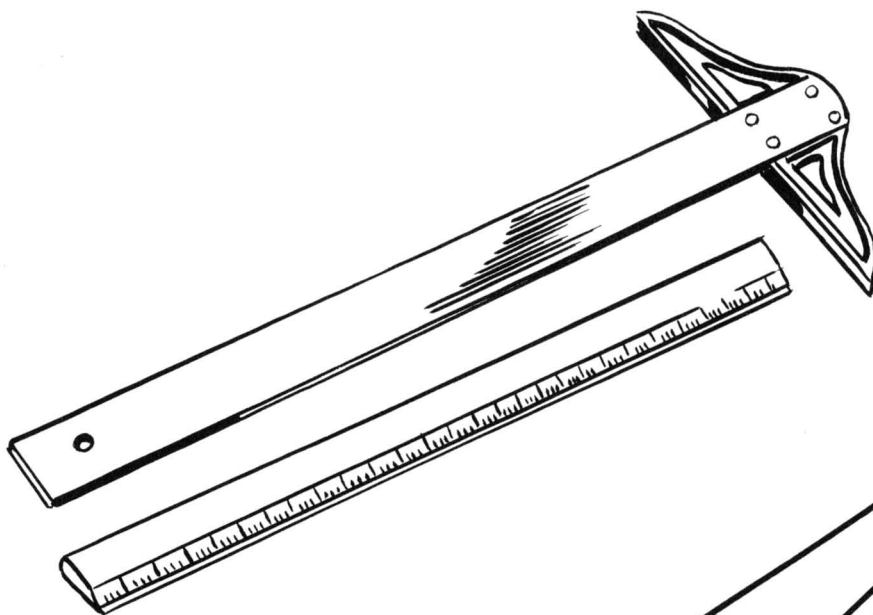
A glass jar. This holds the water for cleaning your brushes.



Pushpins. Handy for keeping your illustration paper from slipping off the drawing board.



Triangle. A must for drawing right angles and working in perspective.

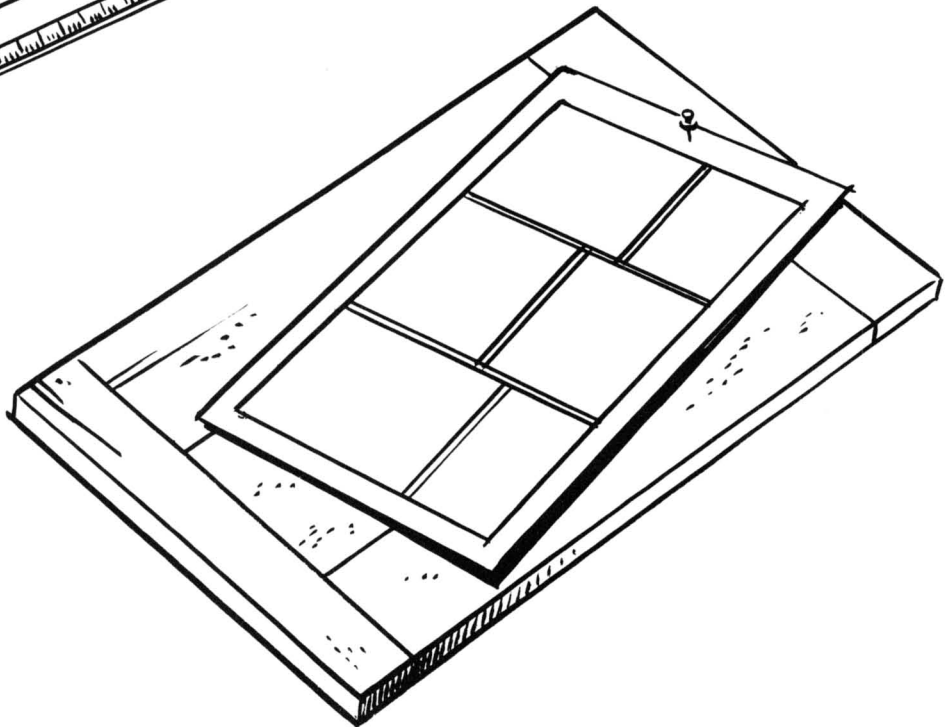


T square. Invaluable for drawing borders and keeping lines parallel.

Ruler. For everyone who says “I can’t draw a straight line without a ruler.” Now you’ve no excuse!

Illustration paper. We use 2-ply Bristol board, large enough to accommodate artwork 10” x 15”.

Drawing board. This can be a drawing table or merely a flat board which you hold on your lap. Either way, you always need some such thing upon which to rest your sheet of illustration paper.



Ink compass. Well, how else are you gonna draw circles? While you’re at it, you might as well get a pencil compass, too—even though Johnny forgot to draw one for you.

Rag. This plain ol’ hunk of any kind of cloth is used to wipe your pen points, brushes, and whatever. The sloppier you are, the more you’ll need it.



Of course, there are some things we omitted, like a chair to sit on and a light so that you can see what you’re doing in case you work in the dark. Also, it’s a good idea to have a room to work in—otherwise your pages can get all messy in the rain. But we figured you’d know all this.

And now, onward!

Just to make sure we all use the same language and there's no misunderstanding when we refer to things, let's review the various names for many of the elements that make up a typical comicbook page.

- A:** The first page of a story, with a large introductory illustration, is called the **splash page**.
- B:** Letters drawn in outline, with space for color to be added, are called **open letters**.
- C:** Copy which relates to a title is called a **blurb**.
- D:** The name of the story is, of course, the **title**.
- E:** An outline around lettering done in this jagged shape is called a **splash balloon**.
- F:** A single illustration on a page is called a **panel**.
- G:** The space between panels is called the **gutter**.
- H:** You won't be surprised to know that this "ZAT" is a **sound effect**.
- I:** Copy which represents what a character is thinking is a **thought balloon**.
- J:** The little connecting circles on thought balloons are called **bubbles**. (We'd feel silly calling them "squares"!)
- K:** The regular speech indicators are called **dialogue balloons**.
- L:** The connecting "arrows" on dialogue balloons, showing who is speaking, are called **pointers**.
- M:** The words in balloons which are lettered heavier than the other words are referred to as **bold words**, or **bold lettering**.
- N:** This is my favorite part—where the names are. We call it the **credits**, just like in the movies.
- O:** All this little technical stuff, showing who publishes the mag and when and where, usually found on the bottom of the first page, is the **indicia** (pronounced *in-dee-shah*).
- P:** Copy in which someone is talking to the reader, but which is not within dialogue balloons, is called a **caption**.





Movin' right along, we now introduce you to one of Marvel's many widely heralded **close-ups**, so called because the "camera" (meaning the reader's eye) has moved in about as close as possible.

This type of panel, in which the reader's view of the scene is from farther away, enabling him to see the figures from head to toe, is called a **medium shot**.



And here we have a **long shot**. In fact, since it shows such an extreme wide-angle scene, you might even call it a **panoramic long shot** without anyone getting angry at you.

