

PAT KNEPLEY

CARTOONING "BY THE NUMBERS"

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How to Turn Numbers into
Cartoon Faces



Cartooning by the Numbers

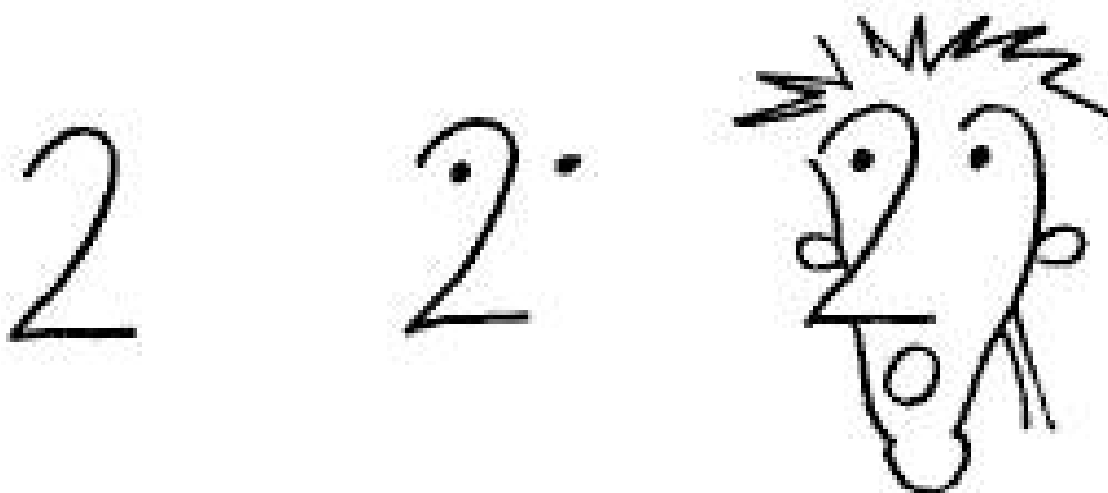
You probably remember Paint by Numbers...those kits with a canvas panel, perhaps six or eight small pots of paint, a cheap paintbrush and a pattern of exactly where to paint in each color by the number-coded sections.

If you were careful and followed directions exactly, you would have a pretty decent painting by the end. But the creation was not entirely yours. Someone else had drawn the basic sketch, and thought of the color selection and exactly where each should go, therefore using the numbers.

But kids are attracted to numbers, so one of the ways that I like to introduce beginning artists into the world of cartooning is with numbers. Here is a quick and fun lesson that will stir the imagination and perhaps add some humor into a boring math lesson.

The idea is to draw a cartoon face using the number as the central feature.

Here is the number "2". I start with the number alone. By looking at the number for a while, what naturally occurs to me is to make the pointed part of the number a nose. So I add two beady eyes on either side of the curved part. Now I have the beginnings of a face. I decide that those beady eyes under those arched eyebrows might look good with a surprised mouth...so I draw an "O" for the mouth. Add some small round ears, and a shock of crazy hair



Cartooning by the Numbers

Cartooning, like any other area of art, has some basic rules or guidelines to it. For the beginning cartoonist, the most important rule to remember is to not be worried about being realistic. Cartoons are not MEANT to look realistic. And, the second rule is to have fun. Cartoon faces are usually the best way to start experimenting with cartooning, since it offers a variety of options as you explore how to make so many kinds of faces.

There are six elements to a cartoon face: head, nose, eyes, mouth, ears, hair, and it is usually best to draw them in that order. For the numbers activity, you should spend some time simply looking at the number and see what pops up at you – is there a part of the number that looks like a round bulbous nose? Or would that make a better chin?

NOW TRY DRAWING A FACE WITH THE NUMBER 3

Here, the number three 3 with its two rounded sections, provides a great opportunity to make a round nose and a round fleshy chin. The way to distinguish one from another is to add in a bushy mustache in between.

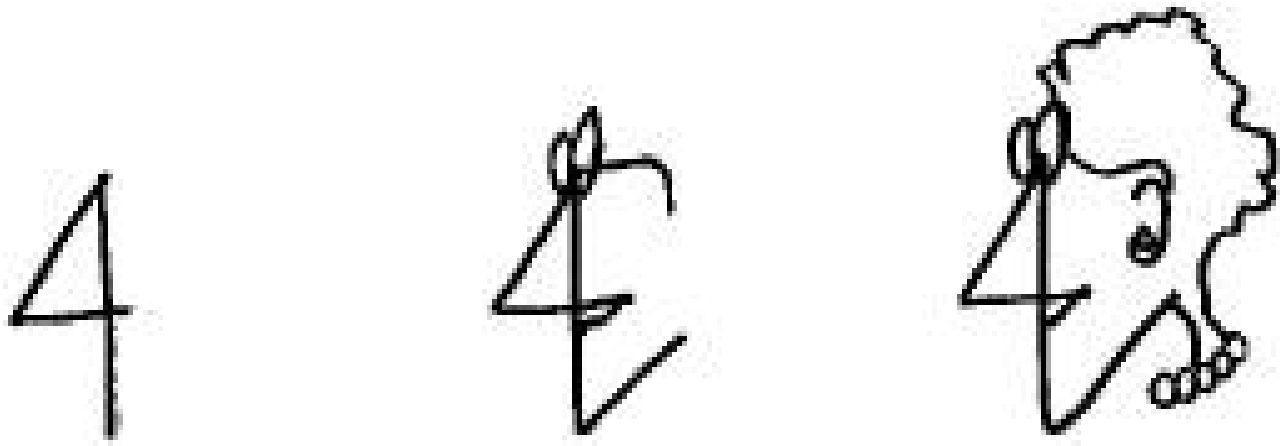


Always work with a pencil, and draw lightly. That way you can experiment with shapes and erase if it is not working.

Cartooning by the Numbers

What makes a cartoon face fun is the exaggeration. The features of the face (eyes, nose, ears, chin, mouth) should either be smaller than normal, or larger than normal. So, pair small beady eyes with a long large nose.

Or try pairing a small round nose with a large mouth with buck teeth. A good place to start your cartoon face is with the nose, since it is an anchor for the face, and provides a point of reference for all of the other features. So when looking at each of your numbers, figure out where the nose should be – or if there is a part of the number that naturally looks like an exaggerated cartoon nose.



After looking at the number 4 for a while, I started to see a librarian looking down a long nose. So the triangular part of the number became the nose, and I drew a profile of an older lady wearing glasses.

The end of the number lent itself to a pointy chin! One of the last steps is the hair, but you should always draw the ears in first, so you know just where to place things like hairline and sideburns. Experiment with hair – again, making it exaggerated.

Cartooning by the Numbers

Try to use as few lines as possible to suggest the type of hair you want. Try curly, long, straight, crazy, wiry, jagged...let the lines just move and go until you find a quality you like for that character. If you do it in pencil first, then you have options to change it later.

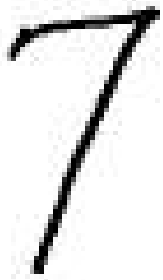
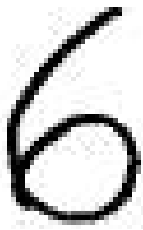
Some extra features to consider adding in order to bring more character to your number cartoon faces are things like eyebrows, mustaches, beards, hats, collars, earrings, even wrinkles! The idea is to make each numeral you have look different than all the others. By the time you are finished you will have ten unique and distinct cartoon faces.

HERE ARE A FEW MORE NUMBERS TO TRY:



For the number 5, I see the long straight line at the top as the brim of a ball cap. The bottom of the 5, to me at least, looks like a big nose.

Cartooning by the Numbers



The loop at the bottom of the number 6 looks like a nose. I add some spiky hair at the top and have the making of a young guy's face.

The way this 7 is drawn, I see an upturned nose. Add some eyes, earrings, and frizzy hair and we've got what looks like a rather snobby lady.

The final step is to now go over your cartoon face with a black marker. I like to use a bullet-tipped Sharpie. You may decide to only go over the main lines, and leave out some small details.

Cartooning by the Numbers

Most cartoonists get their character across with a few lines, rather than a lot of detail. Look at some of your favorite cartoon characters on television or in the comic pages.

FINISHING YOUR DRAWING:

Once the black marker is dry, use a white eraser to do some clean-up by erasing any pencil lines that are showing. The result will be fabulous cartoon faces, ready to inspire a funny story. It is really fun to do this quick exercise with friends, and you get to compare how everyone interpreted their numbers into cartoon faces. Now that you know a few tips for cartooning, keep on drawing.

Anything can be made into a cartoon! Just add some funny face features! Draw a heart, a piece of fruit, a vegetable, or a flower...add some silly eyes, a ridiculous nose, and a weird mouth, and you have a cartoon!

Just try it! Simple shapes (like a slice of bread, or a lollipop) can make a quick cartoon, and possibly make someone smile!

EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS:



**Watch Pat
Knepley
demonstrate how
to draw
cartoons from
numbers**

[Play Video](#)

Cartooning by the Numbers



Cartooning is a lot of fun. If you've enjoyed this exercise, head over to the [See the Light Store \(SeeTheLightShine.com/shop\)](http://SeeTheLightShine.com/shop) and check out some of our other homeschool art resources.

TAKE ME TO THE STORE!