

# Stylization Decisions

*The deliberate choices that determine how your work departs from literal representation — each decision defining your visual voice.*

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## BEGINNER

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Stylization means choosing to represent the world differently from how it literally appears — more simplified, more exaggerated, differently proportioned, with different color or line character than photographic reality. Every artist makes stylization decisions, even those trying to be realistic (realism is itself a set of choices about what to include and what to exclude). The difference between deliberate and accidental stylization: in deliberate stylization, you know why you are making each departure from literal appearance and can defend it. Accidental stylization happens when you draw what you cannot yet accurately observe and call the result your style. The goal is to understand the difference and move toward deliberate choices.

## HOBBYIST

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Stylization decisions fall into categories: proportional (how exaggerated are figure proportions?), surface (how much texture and detail is included?), line (how varied and expressive is the line quality?), value (how simplified or elaborate is the value range?), color (how saturated, how many hues, how far from observed reality?), and compositional (how staged, designed, or abstracted?). Developing a style means making consistent choices across all these categories — your line decisions and your color decisions should feel like they come from the same artist working from the same visual intelligence.

## PROFESSIONAL

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Professional stylization is often dictated by the medium and market. Animation requires stylization consistent with efficient production — designs that can be drawn hundreds of times by different artists, on deadlines. Editorial illustration often requires stylization that communicates quickly and memorably at small reproduction sizes. Comics and graphic novels allow enormous stylistic range but require internal consistency across hundreds of pages. Understanding the constraints of the market you want to work in shapes what stylization decisions are practically viable.