



EduTrend Contents

W4C · VISUAL ARTS · MIDDLE SCHOOL

Portrait Proportions

Measure and draw a face with accurate proportions

Ages 12–14

Level: Intermediate

60 minutes

Pairs · up to 30

Activity 04

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 04 · AT A GLANCE

Portrait Proportions

Students learn classic proportion guidelines for the face, such as eyes about halfway down the head, then check them by measuring a partner with a pencil. They draw a portrait using guidelines, add tone, and discuss how real faces differ from the rules.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- describe common guidelines for facial proportions;
- measure proportions by sighting with a pencil;
- draw a portrait with features in believable positions;
- recognise that real faces vary and guidelines are a starting point.

KEY WORDS

portrait · proportion · guideline · sighting · symmetry · feature · tone · likeness

CURRICULUM LINKS

Art and design: drawing from observation and portraiture.
Maths: ratio and measurement.
National Core Arts Standards: creating.

1**EXPLORE**

Look and play

2**IMAGINE**

Generate ideas

3**PLAN**

Sketch and choose

4**MAKE**

Create the work

5**REFLECT**

Talk about it

6**REFINE**

Improve and share

Materials (per pair)

- Pencils (HB, 2B, 4B), erasers
- A4 drawing paper
- Rulers
- Hand mirrors (optional)
- Printed portrait examples by different artists
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Prepare a demonstration of the proportion guidelines.
- Print portraits from different periods and cultures.
- Pair students thoughtfully; offer mirrors for self-portraits as an alternative.
- Agree kind feedback rules.

SAFETY

Portraits of classmates are shared only with their permission. Feedback is about drawing, not appearance.

ACTIVITY 04 • SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Most students draw the eyes too high. Measuring the partner proves where they really are.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–10 min Hook	Ask students to draw a face from memory in one minute. Where did they put the eyes?	<i>"Are eyes really near the top of the head?"</i>
10–20 min Guidelines	Demonstrate an oval with horizontal and vertical guidelines for eyes, nose, mouth and ears.	<i>"How many eye widths fit across the face?"</i>
20–30 min Measure	Pairs measure each other using the pencil sighting method and record results.	<i>"Did your partner fit the rules exactly?"</i>
30–55 min Draw	Students draw their partner using guidelines and add tone.	<i>"Where are the darkest areas?"</i>
55–60 min Compare	Compare with the one-minute drawing from the start.	<i>"What improved most?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Draw a portrait of a partner in which the eyes, nose, mouth and ears are placed using measured proportions, then explain one way your partner differs from the guidelines.

ACTIVITY 04 • FACILITATOR NOTES

The art in brief

Artists use proportion guidelines as a starting point. On an adult face seen from the front, the eyes are roughly halfway down the head, the space between the eyes is about one eye width, the bottom of the nose is about halfway between the eyes and chin, and the ears line up roughly between eye level and nose level.

Sighting means holding a pencil at arm's length to compare lengths, so proportions can be measured by eye. Real faces vary a great deal, and children's faces have different proportions from adults'. Artists across history have used, adjusted or ignored these rules to create likeness, character or style.

Common ideas to listen for

- "Eyes go near the top of the head." They are usually about halfway down.
- "A good portrait must be perfectly symmetrical." Real faces are not perfectly symmetrical.
- "Proportion rules apply to everyone." They are averages; people vary.

Adapting the activity

Support

Provide a face template with guidelines already drawn.

Stretch

Draw the same face in three-quarter view and adjust the guidelines.

WORKSHEET 1

Proportion guide

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Draw the guidelines.

Guideline face

Draw an oval. Add lines for eyes, nose, mouth and ears. Label each.

WORKSHEET 2

Measuring my partner

Use the sighting method.

Measurements

Measurement	Guideline	My partner
Eye level on head		
Space between eyes		
Nose position		
Mouth position		
Ear position		

WORKSHEET 3

Reflection

Compare and reflect.

Biggest difference between my first and final drawing

How my partner differs from the guidelines

Next skill to practise

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Uses proportion guidelines	Measures by sighting	Recognises natural variation

Suggested codes: W = working towards • E = expected • G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Portrait Proportions is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents W4C Visual Arts programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

© 2026 EduTrend Contents. This activity may be printed and copied for use with students in your own school, club or home. It may not be resold or published elsewhere. Photos: Christian Agbede / Unsplash.