How to Draw a Pair of Realistic Eyes

By Darlene Nguyen - September 8, 2017

This is hands down the most requested tutorial to date. It’s a long one too!

The video below is a super detailed version so you can actually watch me draw it with explanations along the way. It contains a bunch of extra steps and techniques you will surely find helpful! [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs4fSe-hSIk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs4fSe-hSIk)

**Tools** *(You can find all my recommended tools here)*:

- Kneaded rubber eraser
- H, HB, 2B, 6B pencil from Derwent
- 4B Lead
- Mono plastic eraser
- Canson Sketch paper
- Blending stump
- Tissue paper
- Ruler

This is a long tutorial and I tried to keep it short, so if you get stuck anywhere, please watch the video or let me know and I’ll try to explain it better or add examples :)

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Step 1: Determine the Eye Size

Using an HB pencil, draw 2 light ticks spaced well apart. This will determine the size of the first eye.

Use a ruler to draw a horizontal line through the ticks and extend it to the far right side of your sketchbook.

Measure the distance between the 2 ticks and triplicate it across the horizontal line so you end up with 3 equal spaces. Not sure how to do this? Check out the video to watch me do it.

Step 2: Draw two Circles

In the left and right spaces, draw 2 circles similar in size. Make sure the circles are large enough to fill the space.
Step 3: Decide on an Eye Angle

Eyes are usually a little slanted. Use a ruler or draw a line freehandedly across each circle at an angle.

Erase the horizontal line to keep your drawing space clean.
Step 4: Draw the Eye Shape

Draw the inner corner of each eye where the circles and slanted lines intersect.

Draw the upper eyelid while staying within the circle.
Draw the lower eyelid but avoid drawing a flat line. Put a little curve into it so it looks more realistic.

Let’s draw the upper crease now. Start from the inner corner and work your way out towards the tail of the eye. You can use the shape of the top lid for guidance. If you want a more detailed tutorial on drawing eye shapes, click here to learn how to draw 8 different eye shapes.
Step 5: Shadowline the Eyebrows

Starting above the circle, use the Shadowlining technique to outline the eyebrows. Shadowlining prevents your outlines from showing through in your final work.

Want more guidance on drawing eyebrows? Watch the video and visit this detailed eyebrow tutorial.

Now erase all your guidelines to get ready for the next step!
Step 6: Draw the Irises

Very lightly draw an iris in each eye using an HB pencil. The iris should take up about 2/4’s of the eyeball horizontally like the examples below:

Your measurement should start from the tear duct to the outer corner of the eye.

To draw a perfectly circular iris, draw a full circle and then just erase the parts that fall outside the eyeball instead of drawing bracket shapes. This helps a lot when drawing narrow eyes.
Step 7: Shade the Face

Shade the face, leaving the eyeballs white. If your drawing is too light, darken it just a little before you shade or else the lines could disappear.

Click here to learn how to shade a face

Step 8: Draw the Eyebrows

I’m using a sharp 0.5mm 4B mechanical pencil for this step. Starting at the bottom portion of the eyebrow, draw upward strokes. The strokes should be thickest at the base and very thin at the ends.
If you want a super detailed tutorial on drawing eyebrows, check out this tutorial.

Do the opposite for the top portion of each eyebrow. Angle your strokes downward and use lighter strokes near the end of each eyebrow. Make sure your strokes taper at the ends instead of crossing over each other forming ‘X’ shapes.

Add a row of hairs going down the center to fill in some white space.
Carefully go over your strokes on the bottom to darken them.

Lastly, add a light shadow by shading the area using an HB pencil.
Step 9: Draw Details in the Eye

This is a really long step because I tried to include as much detail as possible haha. Stick with me guys!

Draw a small circle (pupil) in the center of each iris. Draw a rectangle (or any shape you want) in or touching the iris. This is the reflection of light from a bright window. Curve the sides of the rectangle to make it look like the eyeball is spherical.

Use a sharp 6B pencil to shade the pupil. Try to keep your edges as clean as possible.
Around the pupil, draw a squiggly ribbon using an HB pencil.

Around concave areas, use a sharp 4B pencil to darken the ribbon to give the eye more depth.
From the center of the pupil to the ribbon, draw light spokes.

Darken spokes that fall within concave sections of the ribbon.
Very lightly, draw a second ribbon around the first one. Leave a thin space between them.

Use a dark pencil such as a 2B or 4B (up to you) to darken the ring of the iris. Then use an HB pencil to shade the section between the ribbon and ring.
Grab your kneaded eraser, pinch it and dab it onto your drawing. This will create white spokes.

Use a sharp 2B pencil to make the spokes pop! You can do this by outlining them.
Use a sharp 4B pencil to add more details in between those spokes.

Grab a blending stump and carefully blend everything but the rectangle reflection. If you don’t want to use a blending stump, use an H pencil to shade instead of blending.
Step 10: Shade the Rest of the Eyeball

To make the reflection really pop, shade the rest of the eyeball so the only thing that remains white is the reflection.

Start by shading the inner corner of each eye using an HB pencil. This area is bumpy, soft, glossy and darker than the rest.

Once you’re done, soften the edge around each iris using a blending stump or HB pencil.

Shade the rest of the white space using the contouring method. If you want a more detailed tutorial on shading eyeballs, visit this tutorial.
After shading the eyeball as light as I could, I decided to darken the face to give the drawing more contrast.

**Step 11: Draw the Eyelashes**

Start by drawing 3 lashes per eye lid. Space them well apart. Use very light pressure just in case you need to erase anything.

[Click here for How to Draw Eyelashes](#)  
There’s a lot more detail with longer explanations and more pictures.
Fill the empty spaces with more lashes.

Create some triangles by tapering the hair ends together.
Once you’re happy with the shape and placement of each lash, use a sharp 4B pencil to darken them.

Not enough lashes? Thicken the base and body of each one or add additional lashes – making sure not to overcrowd. Once you’re done, use a 2B pencil to shade the upper eyelid skin and an HB pencil to shade the lower lid.

The eyelashes should cast a shadow on the eyeball, so use an HB pencil to shade the top of the eyeball a little darker than the rest (Do not shade into the reflection). Try to make your shading very gradual.
Step 12: Add Eyelash Reflections

Finally, use a sharp 4B pencil to draw several eyelash reflections in the white rectangle. Want the eyes to have more depth? Darken your pupils as much as possible, brighten and/or darken some spokes to make them pop even more.

Guys, I really hope you enjoyed this tutorial!

If you like what I do and would like to support me, check out my Patreon page where you can support RapidFireArt while earning cool rewards at the same time!

Happy drawing!