

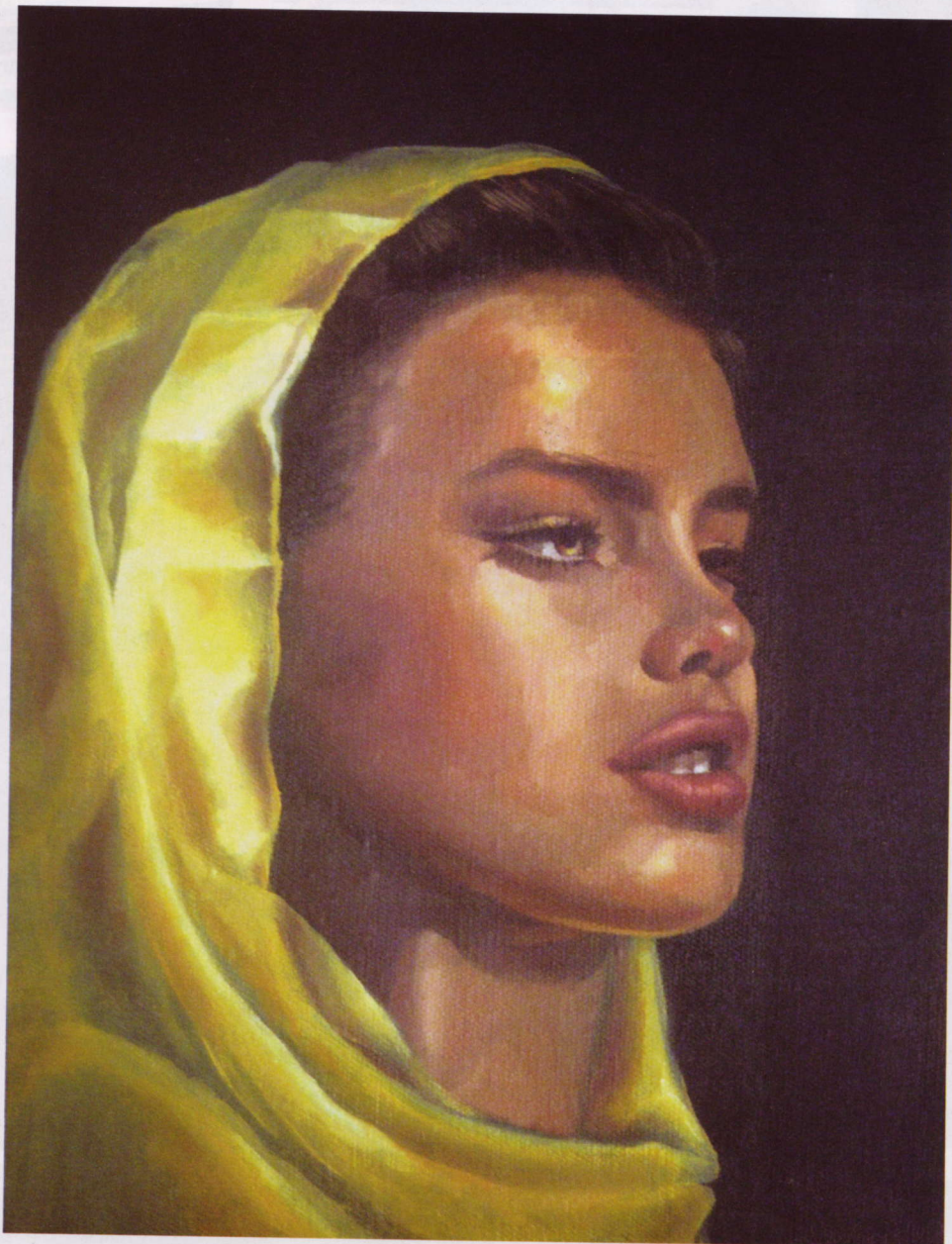
LEARN PORTRAITURE



# So you'd like to Paint a Portrait?

In this lesson we study proportions.

By Rosa Fedele

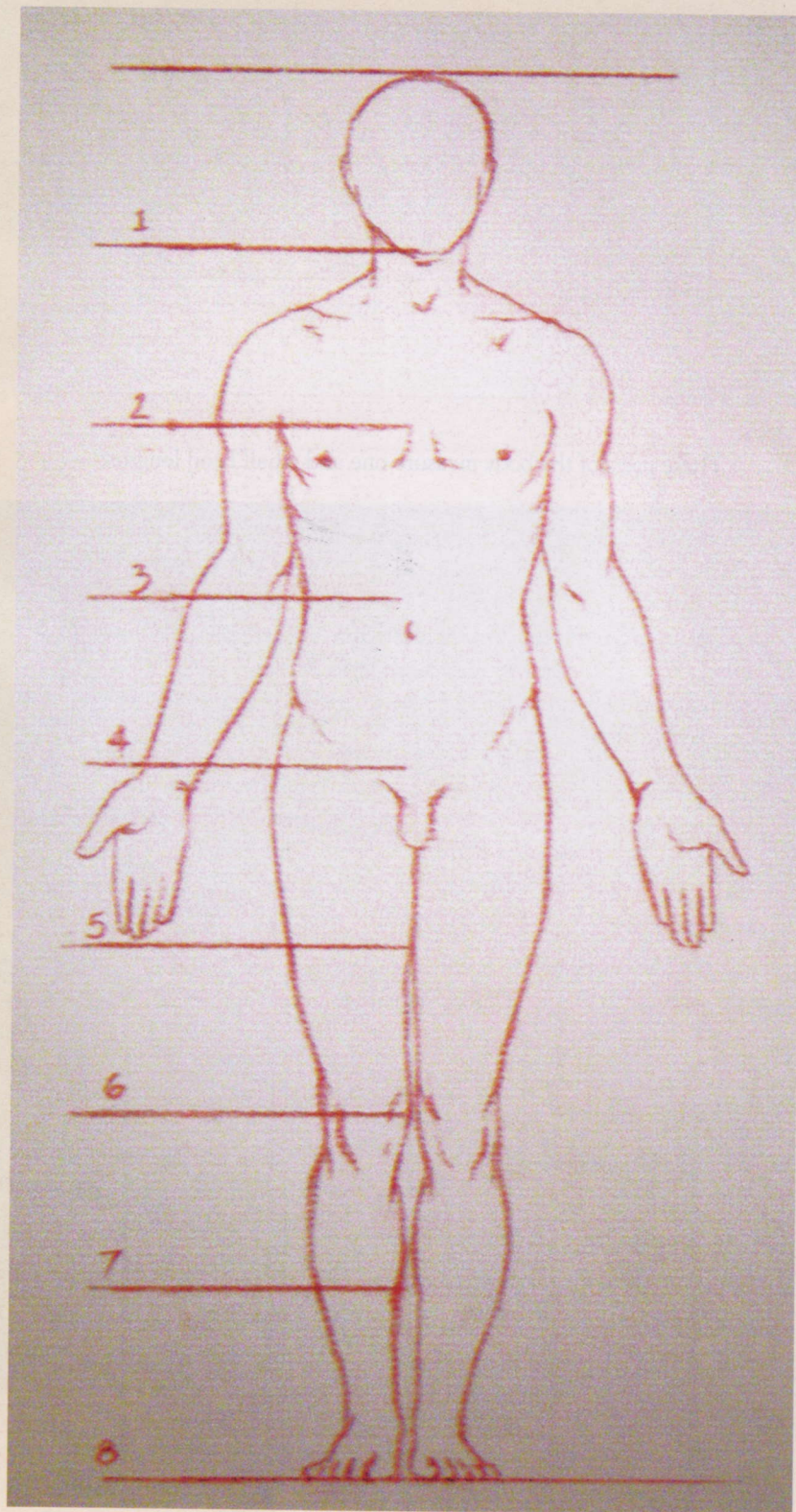




## USE YOUR HEAD!

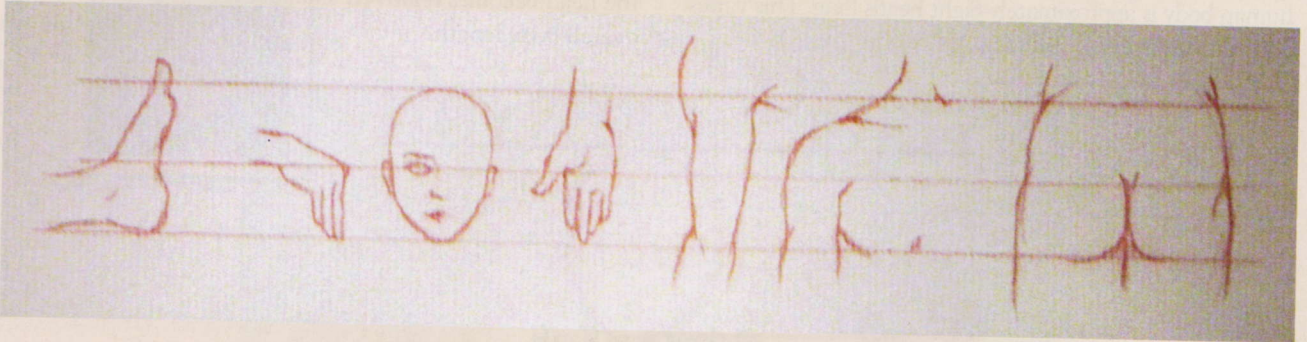
The human head can be used as a unit of measurement in estimating proportions and the general rule is that, the human body is approximately eight heads long. This varies according to age, sex and race.

A baby is born with its head relatively larger than its body – about one quarter of its total height. As the baby grows, the head becomes relatively smaller in proportion to the overall body length.

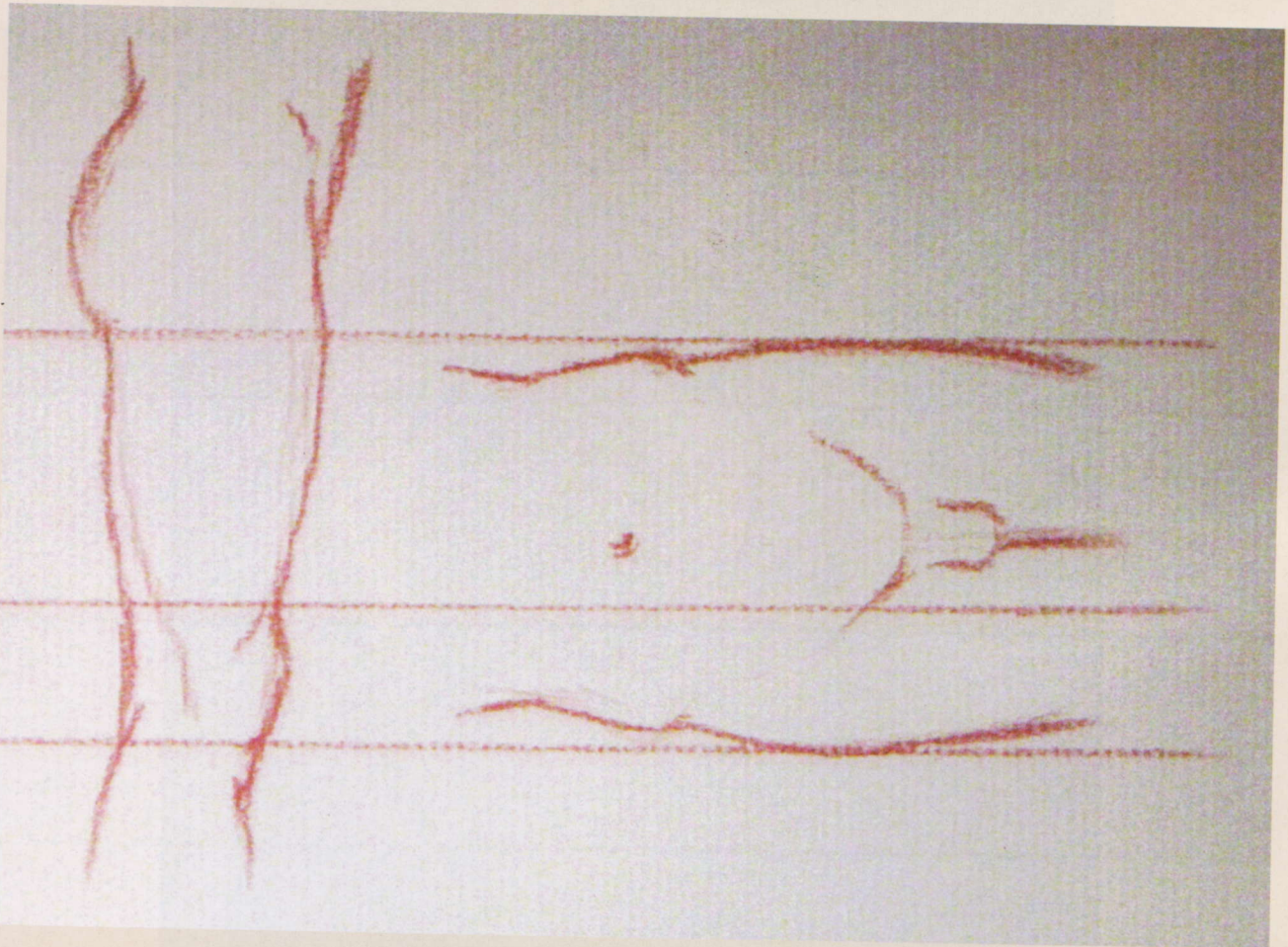




These parts of the body measure one head length:

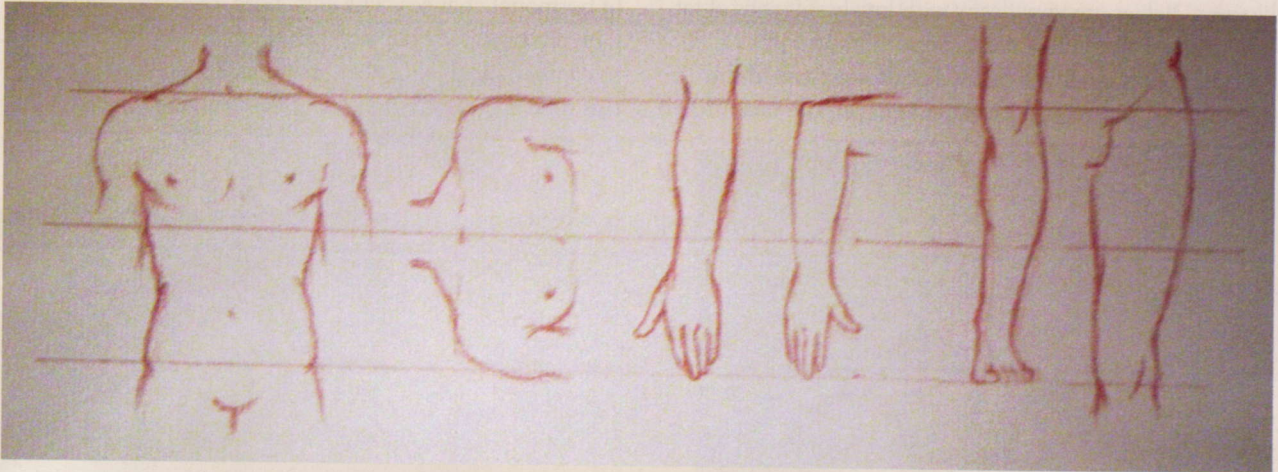


These parts of the body measure one and a half head lengths:

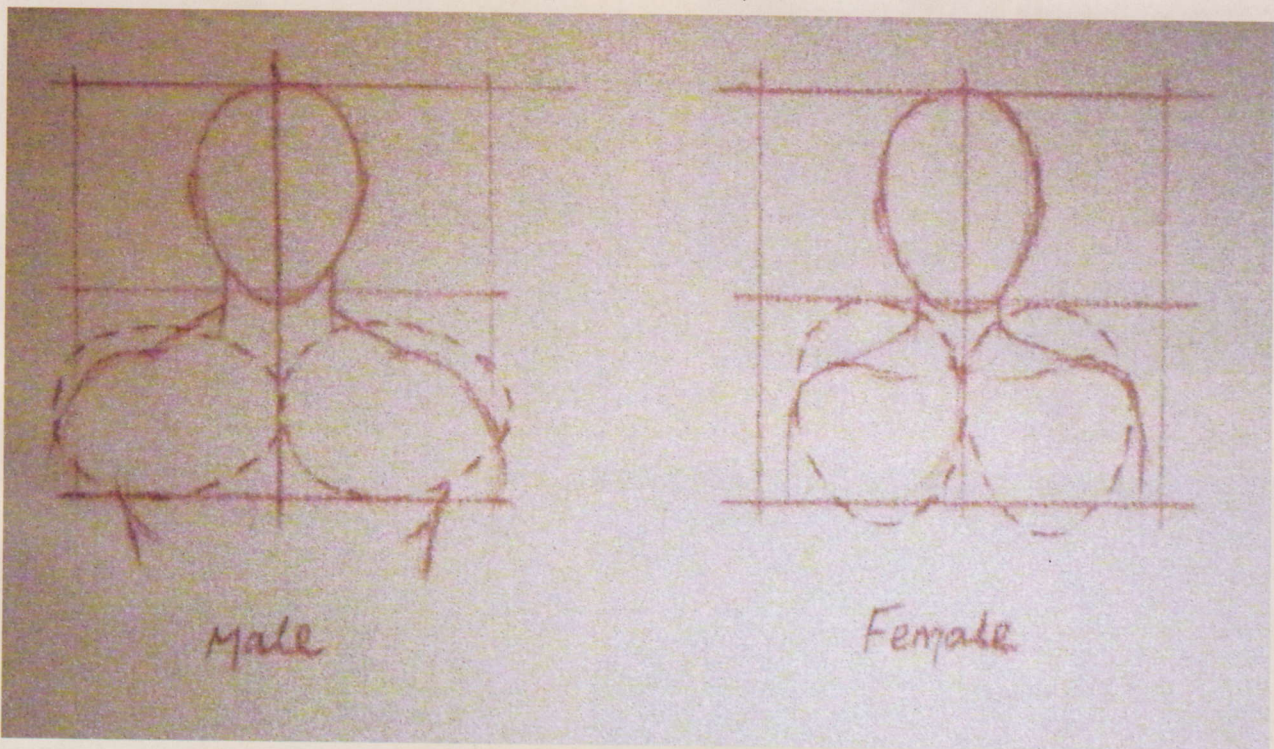




These parts of the body measure two head lengths:



The width of a male's shoulders is two heads laid sideways and the width of a female's shoulders is two vertical heads side by side.



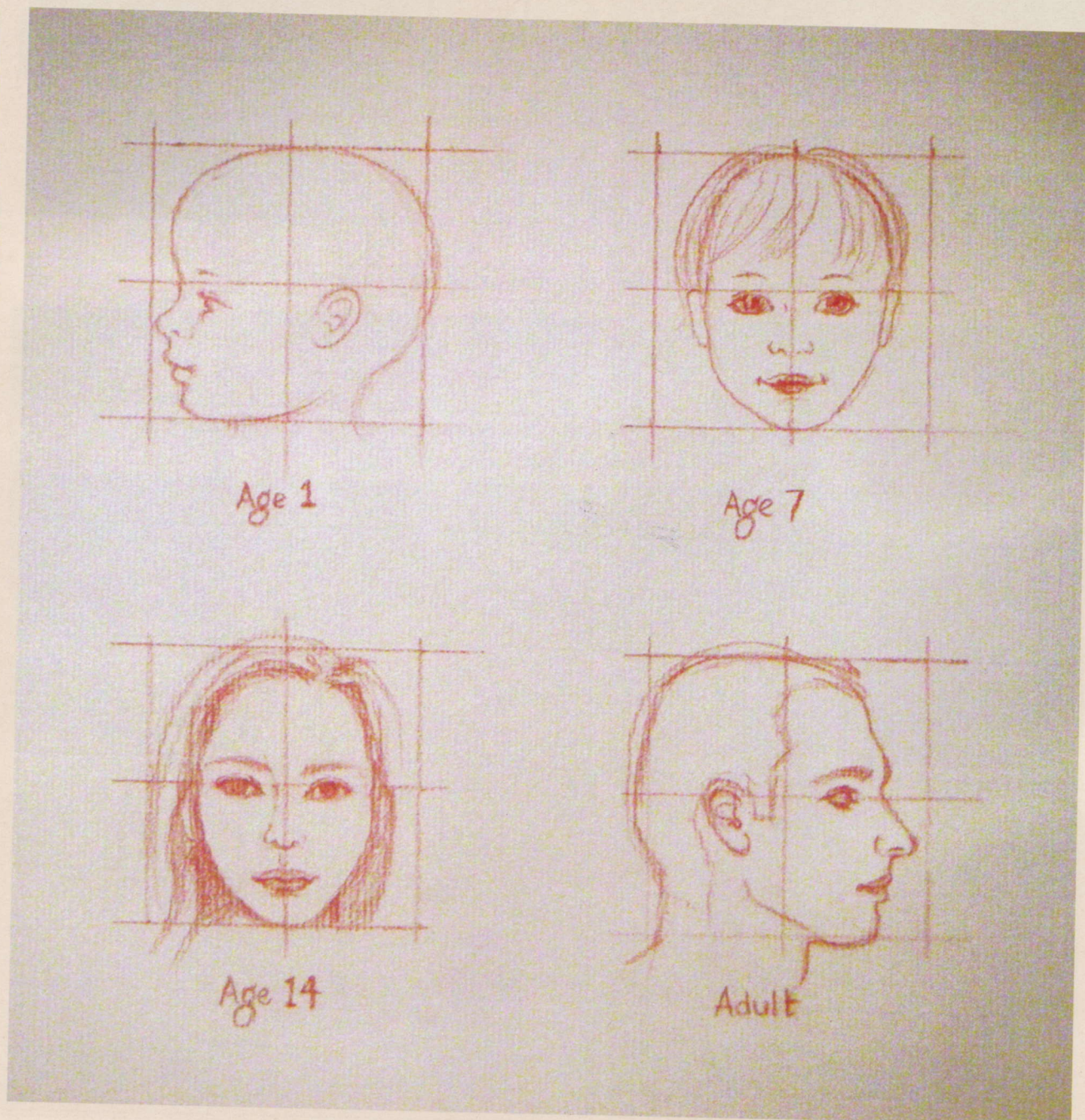


The face changes dramatically from infancy to adulthood. From birth to age two the face is only a small proportion of the entire head. Bone structure is not yet defined on young children, therefore it can be harder to capture a likeness. Babies are very fleshy with lovely soft rolls of fat – there are no hard lines yet.

Note the eyes are well below the median line in the baby and as they mature they 'move up' in the face. When their upper and lower teeth develop, a firmer bone

structure emerges, and this occurs again when adult teeth come through.

For a while in the teenage years, some features may seem at odds with the rest of the face and body as a result of hormonal changes. The ears, nose, teeth and limbs may look too big or out of place. However, I find these ages fun to capture, along with their changeable moods, because this time is precious and passes so quickly.



*Head proportions at varying ages*



## USING A PLUMBLINE

I use a plumbline to visually check measurements and relationships between body parts. To make one, attach a weight such as an old key or dog tag to string.



Let the weight fall freely to observe vertical lines and relationships or hold both ends to measure distances.

Here are some examples:

I close one eye and use the dangling plumbline to assess the vertical relationship between Alice's shoulders, hips and foot placement.

I close one eye and align the plumbline to the angle of Alice's elbow, then holding the string in place, I transfer directly on to my sketch book.



I also use the plumbline to measure and correct body lengths and angles of facial features.

Next issue we will begin learning how to observe and draw facial features.

Happy sketching!

Rosa can be contacted on [garretti@bigpond.com](mailto:garretti@bigpond.com) or on 0425 277 441. ■

