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Manga FOR DUMMIES®

by Kensuke Okabayashi



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About the Author

Kensuke Okabayashi is a professional freelance illustrator/sequential artist. Born and raised in Princeton, New Jersey, Kensuke has been inspired by manga artists such as Fujiko Fukio, Osamu Tezuka, and Rumiko Takahashi since childhood. While shopping his manga portfolio in Japan, he visited various animation and comic book studios to hone his skills. There Kensuke met with Matsumoto Leiji and Akazuka Fujio and interned with other manga artists.

After studying music and psychology at Wheaton College in Illinois, Kensuke shifted his focus from playing the piano to honing his art skills. He earned his BFA in Illustration at the School of Visual Arts in New York City after studying traditional painting and further developing his drawing skills. Upon graduating, he began picking up illustration and storyboard clients. His works eventually caught the eyes of several illustration agencies that currently represent him. His recent storyboard clients include Diesel Clothing, Diet Coke, Diet Pepsi, Dr. Pepper, Absolut Vodka, Wendy's, Allstate, State Farm, Canon Digital, All Nippon Airways, and Camel.

In addition to storyboards, Kensuke also actively illustrates for mainstream entertainment industry clients, including Wizards of the Coast, Takara Toys U.S.A., Kensington Books, Skyzone Entertainment, and Carl Fisher Music.

Inspired by his past experience of working long hours at a well-known coffee shop corporation, Kensuke developed and illustrated his creator-owned comic book series titled *JAVA!*, which portrays the quirky futuristic society of Neo Seattle, where mankind must consume coffee in order to live. The title attracted attention and was picked up by Committed Comics and published as a miniseries. His main character, Java (a high-power caffeine girl fighting crime), received positive reviews from major comic book review sites as well as from readers and distribution. Kensuke continues to work on creator-owned projects with other established colleagues and writers in the industry. His upcoming publication projects include Image Comics, Arcana Publications, and Archaia Press. His online portfolio is posted at his studio Web site at www.piggybackstudios.com.

On the side, Kensuke continues to draw from life and teaches art. He taught illustration courses at Mercer College of New Jersey for several years. He currently teaches studio art classes at the Education Alliance Art School in New York City. When not drawing or painting in his studio, Kensuke still enjoys playing the piano from time to time and honing his martial arts skills regularly at a local Tae Kwon Do club.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my parents, Dr. Michio and Sahoko Okabayashi, for their unconditional love and support.

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Introduction

Yōkoso (welcome) to *Manga For Dummies*. Manga is a cultural phenomenon that continues to grow in popularity not only in the United States, but also worldwide. Throughout this book, I focus on the basic skills you need to create your first manga characters for your own creator-owned manga series. Whether you're an aspiring artist or a professional illustrator wanting to explore a different style of drawing, this book is a great place to start.

About This Book

As you see throughout this book, more than 50 percent of the content is devoted to illustrations. I show you examples in the illustrations, and I tell you how to replicate them (or create your own examples) in the step-by-step instructions that accompany them.

All tips, advice, and drawings that I provide are based upon my own experience, both as a professional illustrator/sequential artist and as a former art student. I designed this book to take you through various drawing techniques and popular styles of drawing manga. Although you draw some manga characters realistically, others are more exaggerated. I encourage you to try out these different styles and find out which ones you like drawing most. As you become familiar with different faces and body types, you may want to combine different elements to come up with your own individual style.

Throughout this book, I cover a variety of popular manga topics. I introduce basic proportions and anatomy to demonstrate how to draw your first manga character from start to finish. I also cover different must-know character archetypes, including popular main protagonists, their supporting sidekicks, evil villains, wise ones, damsels in distress, and shōjo characters. In addition to characters, I show you how to create cool effects to apply motion and emotion to tell a story. For mecha fans, I also show you how to create your own mecha. Finally, I talk about some tips for self-publishing your first manga works and preparing to exhibit your works at your first manga convention.

Conventions Used in This Book

While writing this book, I used a few conventions that you should be aware of:

- ✓ Numbered steps and keywords appear in **boldface**.
- ✓ Whenever I introduce a new term, I *italicize* it and define it.
- ✓ Web sites and e-mail addresses appear in `monofont` to help them stand out on the page.

What You're Not to Read

Now, I didn't spend hours upon hours writing this book and drawing all the illustrations because I want you to skip over them. However, to be honest, you can skip over certain elements in this book and still get the gist of what's being covered. The sidebars (the gray boxes) throughout the book contain information that's interesting yet nonessential, so if you're pressed for time or just not into anything that isn't essential, feel free to skip them. Also, feel free to skip any information that has the Technical Stuff icon attached, because that info goes beyond what you absolutely need to know. You won't hurt my feelings (much).

Foolish Assumptions

When I sat down to write this book, I made a few assumptions about you, dear reader. This book is for you if

- ✓ You're really into manga, and you want to draw your own manga characters and come up with your own stories.
- ✓ You've never sketched anything other than a stick figure before, but you want to try your hand at this style of art because it seems pretty fun and easy to pick up.
- ✓ You're a fan of one kind of manga (maybe *kodomo* manga), and you want to know more about other kinds of manga (like *shōnen* or *shōjo* manga).
- ✓ You know very little about manga, but you want to know how it got started and what it's all about.
- ✓ You're an aspiring manga artist who hopes to be published someday.
- ✓ You don't care whether you're published or not. You just like to draw, and you like manga. So there!

While we're on the subject of foolish assumptions, allow me to take a moment to dispel a few foolish assumptions I've heard over the years:

- ✓ **After reading this book from cover to cover, I should become a successful manga artist.** One misconception of most reference books is that you should be able to master the art of manga by reading through the book from front to back. Drawing isn't an overnight phenomenon. Unlike those final exams in high school, you can't cram good art. My strong advice is not to be dissuaded if your drawings don't come out the way you want on your first try. Like many skills, practice is essential to getting good results.
- ✓ **I'm not as talented as my other friends — I may as well give it all up!** Nonsense! One of the glories of manga rests in its simplicity in line and form. Although having drawing skills or drawing lessons certainly helps, they aren't required. In my opinion, the key to achieving success isn't raw talent or even hard work, but passion. If you're not passionate about what you draw, no amount of talent or long hours you work will help you in the long run.
- ✓ **Like other comics, manga is for kids — people will make fun of me for taking this art form seriously (even more so if I pursue it as a career).** If this is your first time experiencing manga, this is an understandable false assumption. As I explain in the first chapter of this book, manga has a tremendous diversity of topics and genres (ranging from sports to politics to romance). It's no surprise manga is a multi-billion-dollar entertainment industry enjoyed by all ages and sexes.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is broken up into six different parts. Following is a summary of each of these parts, so that you can decide what appeals to you.

Part I: Manga 101

Think of this part as your first day in a class for your favorite subject. This part provides an overview of manga's history and different genres, it tells you what tools you need to get started, and it wraps up with some basic drawing exercises to get your brain and your hand moving.

Part II: To the Drawing Board

Even though this book is set up to be modular (meaning that you can start anywhere you like), unless you've drawn manga before, you don't want to skip this part. Here I show you how to draw the essential components of any manga character: the head, eyes, body, and basic clothing. These chapters are the foundation for the rest of the book, especially Part III, where I show you how to draw specific types of characters.

Part III: Calling All Cast Members!

This is where things get juicy. Although you can find thousands of storylines and characters in today's popular manga world, most stories use certain archetypes as their protagonist or lead characters, sidekicks, antagonists, and so on. For whatever reason, this method has been a winning formula that's stood the test of time.

In this part, you take the basics and apply them to draw various types of characters, such as heroes, villains, and elders.

Part IV: Time to Go Hi-Tech

Like drawing those cool robots, machines, and weapons? How about those small sophisticated electronic devices? In this part, I cover the basics to get you started on drawing your own machines (referred to as *mecha*).

Part V: An Advanced Case of Manga

In this part, I go over the more advanced topics and manga subject matter. I start off with basic principles of perspective that allow you to add depth and interest to your drawings. I then show you how to create the illusion of motion and emotion by using different types of lines. Next, I cover backgrounds and storyboards. Finally, I tell you what goes into a good manga story and how to get your work noticed if you're looking to break into the biz someday.