How to Draw a Skull

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

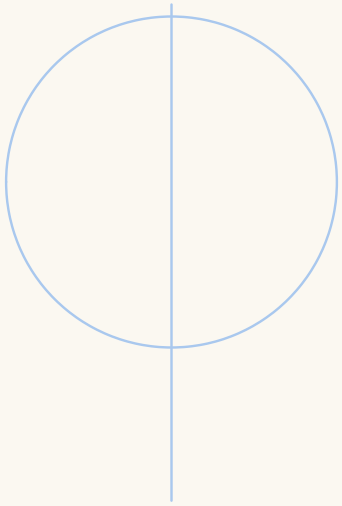
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker
- Colored pencils
- Plain paper

How to use this guide

New lines for each step are shown in **blue**; lines you already drew are gray. Draw lightly first, then ink and erase near the end.

Read the full tutorial online →

STEP 1 Draw a big circle and a center line



Place a large circle in the upper part of your page. This is the cranium, the round dome that holds the brain, and it takes up more than half of the whole skull. Then run a straight vertical line through the middle, from above the circle down to well below it. Every part of the face will be mirrored on that line.

💡 **Tip:** Leave space under the circle. The jaw hangs down almost half a circle further.

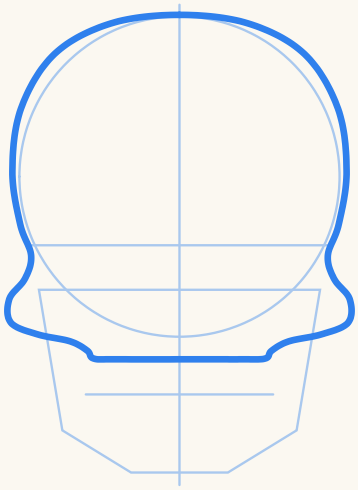
STEP 2 Add the eye line and a jaw guide



Measure from the top of the circle to where the chin will be, and draw a level line halfway between. That's the eye line, and it surprises most beginners because it sits so low. Under the circle, sketch a six-sided shape that is widest at the cheeks, narrows to two jaw corners and ends in a short flat chin. Finish with a short level line across the lower face where the teeth will meet.

💡 **Tip:** If the eye line feels too low, trust it. Real eye sockets sit near the middle of the head.

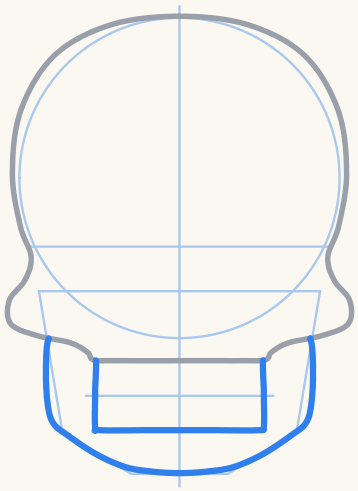
STEP 3 Outline the cranium and cheekbones



Trace the top of the circle in a firm line, then bring it down each side. Just above the eye line the outline dips inward a little, which is the temple. Below that it bumps out again for the cheekbones and then curves in toward the middle, where it ends in a flat bottom edge. That flat edge is the upper gum line.

💡 **Tip:** Draw one side, then check the other side against the center line before you go on.

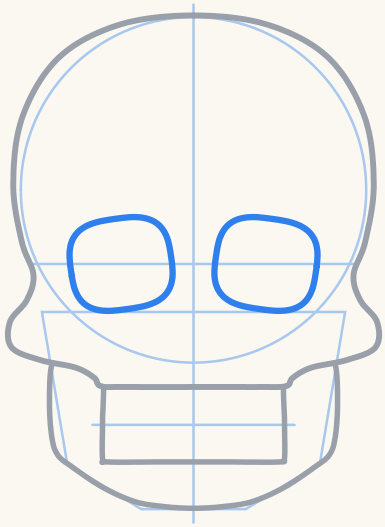
STEP 4 Draw the lower jaw with its corners



The jaw starts tucked under the cheekbones. Go straight down on each side, turn a rounded corner about level with the bottom of the lower teeth, and slope in toward a wide, slightly flat chin. Inside, draw the top of the jaw as a straight line with short walls at each end, so it looks like an open box for the lower teeth.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the jaw narrower than the cheekbones. A jaw as wide as the cranium looks like a helmet.

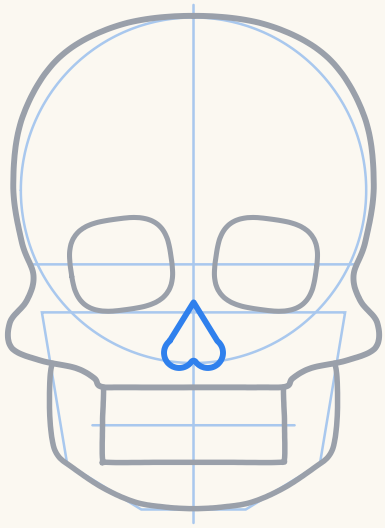
STEP 5 Add two deep eye sockets



On the eye line, draw two big rounded squares with soft corners. I tilt them so the outer corners sit a bit lower than the inner ones, which gives the skull a calm look instead of an angry one. Leave a gap between them roughly half a socket wide.

💡 **Tip:** Make the sockets bigger than feels right. Small ones turn the skull into a cartoon face.

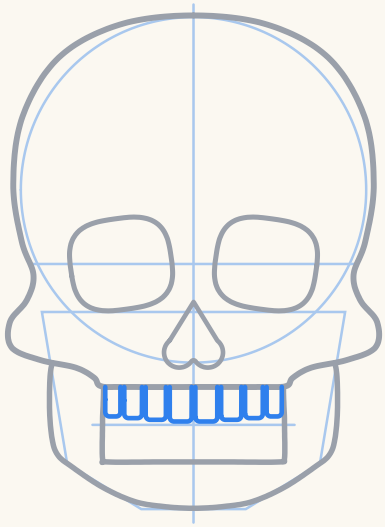
STEP 6 Draw the upside-down heart nose



Below the sockets and on the center line, draw a heart flipped upside down. The point goes up, close to where the sockets end, and the two round lobes sit at the bottom. Living people have soft cartilage there, which is why a skull only shows a hole.

💡 **Tip:** Start with the point, then pull both sides down at the same time, one hand stroke each.

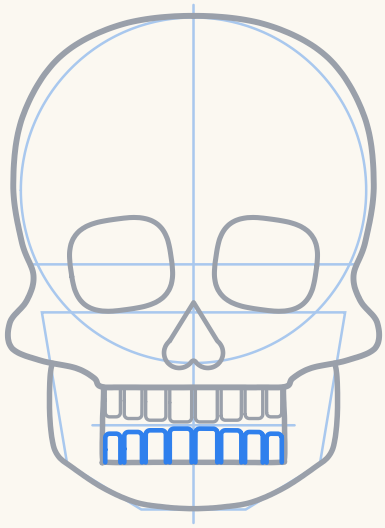
STEP 7 Fill in the upper row of teeth



Hang the top teeth from the gum line. Begin with the two front teeth on either side of the center line, then add three more on each side, each a little narrower than the one before. Round off the bottom corners and leave a thin gap between neighbors.

💡 **Tip:** Count the teeth out loud as you go. Four per side keeps the row even.

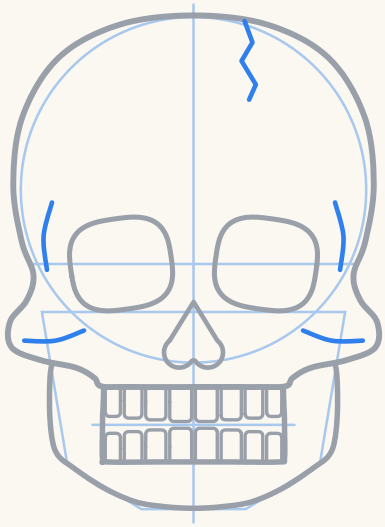
STEP 8 Add the lower row of teeth



These stand on the top edge of the jaw and reach up toward the bite line. Line each one up under a tooth from the upper row, with rounded tops this time. A small space between the two rows reads as the closed mouth.

💡 **Tip:** Turn your paper upside down. The lower row then feels like drawing the upper row again.

STEP 9 Add temples, cheek lines and a crack



Draw a short curved line inside each temple dip, following the outline. Under each eye socket, add a gentle curve that runs out to the cheekbone, showing where the bone sticks out. For a finishing touch, a small zigzag crack near the top of the cranium works well. Keep it to a few short strokes.

💡 **Tip:** One crack is enough. Several start to look messy rather than old.

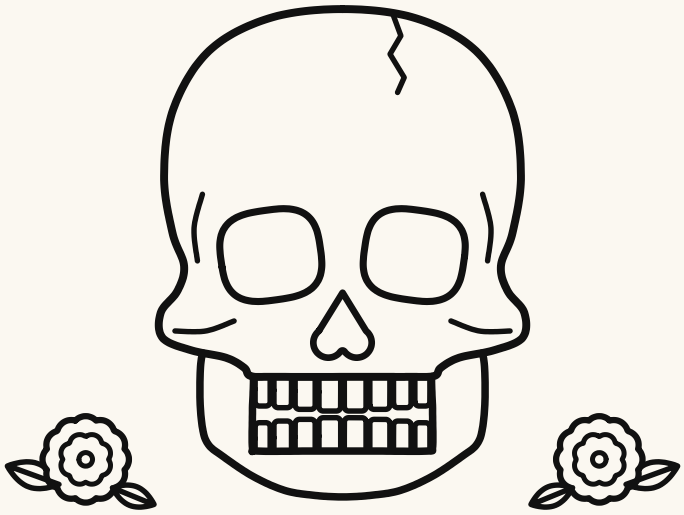
STEP 10 Draw two marigold flowers



Marigolds are the flower of the Day of the Dead, so I like them next to a skull. On each side, near the jaw, draw a circle with a scalloped edge, a smaller scalloped ring inside it and a dot in the middle. Then add two pointed leaves that poke out from behind the flower head.

💡 **Tip:** Skip the flowers for a plain Halloween skull. The drawing works fine without them.

STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with your black marker: the outline, the jaw, the sockets, the nose, the teeth, the small detail lines and the flowers. Wait a minute for the ink to dry. After that, erase the circle, the center line and the jaw guide.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the teeth last, when your hand is warmed up. They're the fiddliest part.

STEP 12 Color the skull and the flowers



Color the skull and jaw cream and keep the teeth white. With beige, shade the temples, the hollows under the cheekbones and a thin band along the bottom of the jaw. Fill the eye sockets, the nose and the gaps between the teeth with dark gray. Give the marigolds orange outer petals, yellow inner petals, brown centers and green leaves.

💡 **Tip:** Press lightly with the beige. Soft shading looks like bone, heavy shading looks like dirt.