

Making Everything Easier!™

Drawing Cartoons & Comics

FOR
DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Master the basic building blocks of cartoons and comics
- Bring life to your characters
- Practice lettering and coloring
- Market your work

Brian Fairrington

Nationally syndicated cartoonist



Drawing Cartoons & Comics For Dummies®

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by Brian Fairrington



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About the Author

Brian Fairrington is a nationally syndicated, award-winning editorial cartoonist and illustrator and one of the few U.S. cartoonists whose political leanings are conservative. Brian began his career in the mid-1990s while he was a student at Arizona State University, where he began drawing cartoons for the student newspaper, the *State Press*.

Arizona State University is home to the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, one of the more prestigious journalism programs in the country. The newspaper is part of that program but is independently operated by the students. During his undergraduate years at the *State Press*, Brian won every major national award, making him one of the most decorated cartoonists to come out of college. His honors include the John Locher Memorial Award, given by the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, and the Charles Schulz Award, given by the Scripps Howard Foundation. Brian is also the two-time winner of the Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence Award, as well as a ten-time winner of the

Gold Circle Award, presented by Columbia University's Journalism School.

While still in college, Brian's cartoons were nationally syndicated by the Scripps Howard News Service. After graduating, he became a cartoonist for the *Arizona Republic* and the *East Valley Tribune*, both in the Phoenix area. He then moved from Scripps Howard to become nationally syndicated by Cagle Cartoons, and his work is currently distributed to more than 800 newspapers, magazines, and Web sites. His cartoons have appeared in *The New York Times* and *USA Today* as well as on CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News. Additionally, his cartoons regularly appear on MSNBC's Cagle Cartoon Index, the most popular cartoon Web site on the Internet.

The in-your-face approach and conservative flavor of Brian's editorial cartoons have brought him notice from fans and critics alike. His work has been the subject of editorials in the *Wall Street Journal* and numerous other publications. He was featured on MSNBC's *Imus in the Morning* show and was most recently profiled on CBS *News Sunday Morning*. Brian is a regular guest on the Phoenix-based TV show *Horizon*, where one of his appearances garnered an Emmy Award for news programming.

Along with Daryl Cagle, Brian is the author and editor of *The Best Political Cartoons of the Year* series of books by Que Publishing. To date, Brian has published seven annual "best of" cartoon books featuring the best cartoons from all the top editorial cartoonists in the country.

Brian has done numerous illustrations and full-color artwork for such magazines as *The New Republic* and *Time*, among others. A collection of Brian's original

cartoons is on display at the Ostrovsky Fine Art Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona. An Arizona native, Brian resides there with his wife Stacey and their four children. He can be reached at bfair97@aol.com.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those individuals who love to draw and have grown up (and are still growing up) with a passion for drawing cartoons. Thank you to all the cartoonists who inspired me as a kid with all the wonderful and fantastic art that made me want to follow in their footsteps.

A special dedication goes out to all the cartoon fans who, though they may not be able to draw a straight line themselves, still appreciate the funny, strange, wacky, and sometimes serious world of cartooning. Cave drawings were the first cartoons, and it's safe to say in the end that someone will probably draw a cartoon on the outside of the big bomb that blows up the world. Until that day, this book is dedicated to everyone who reads it. As we say in the cartoon world, "Kaboom!"

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I have to thank my wife Stacey, who has put up with all the late nights needed to draw the art and write this book on time (okay . . . never on time). Thanks also go out to my wonderful children: Chase, Hayden, Blake, and Lauren, and the 435,567 times they asked me, "What are you drawing?" Thanks to all my friends and extended family who haven't seen me over the last six months and are probably wondering what happened to me.

Lastly, I want to thank anyone who has ever run for political office or who is thinking about running for office. As long as you feed your egos and relentless thirst for power by entering the crazy world of politics, I will always have material.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

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Introduction

You may think cartooning is just for kids, but that's far from the truth! Cartooning is a highly lucrative enterprise. Cartoons influence the way people look at political and world events, they make people think, and they help people laugh at themselves. Cartooning is more than just funny characters telling jokes — it's a snapshot of real-life situations where you, the cartoonist, can share your opinion about life and its endless interesting situations. Being able to draw is only one facet of being a good cartoonist. Being able to get across a compelling point with just a few pen strokes and to add the details that make your cartoons stand out from the pack is equally important. This book shows you how.

About This Book

This book is for people interested in drawing cartoons, whether they're novices unsure where to start or pros who want to improve their art or find better ways to market themselves. Every top-selling cartoonist in the world started out as a beginner. It takes time, practice, and some talent to become a successful cartoonist, but it also takes determination and the desire to stick to it until you become good at it.

More important, this book can show you how to create your very own cartoon characters in a fun environment. I give you step-by-step instructions on how to create not just human cartoon characters, but others like cars, animals, and other creatures. You may even decide to make an unusual inanimate object your main character!

And because cartooning is more than just drawing, I also give step-by-step instructions on how to come up with ideas and color your cartoons.

Conventions Used in This Book

Every *For Dummies* book has certain conventions to make it easier for you to get the information you need. Here are some of the conventions I use in this book:

Whenever I introduce a new technical term, I *italicize* it and then define it.

I use **bold text** to highlight keywords or the main parts of bulleted and numbered lists.

The Internet is a wealth of information on everything from the history of cartooning to great sites to buy expensive supplies for less. Web sites appear in monofont to help them stand out.

What You're Not to Read

In today's busy world you may be juggling a full-time job, your better half, kids and pets, friends and family, and a wide assortment of other responsibilities. You don't have much free time. In aspiring to improve your cartooning abilities, you simply want the essential info to help you. If that's the case, feel free to skip the sidebars — those boxes shaded in light gray. Sidebars present interesting (I hope!) supplemental info that helps you gain a better

appreciation of the topic, but the info isn't essential to understand the topic, so you won't miss anything if you skip them.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, I make a few assumptions about you:

You want to know more about cartooning in general.

You want to know how to draw some common cartoon characters and make them interesting.

You want to know how to liven up your cartoon backgrounds and settings.

You may be interested in a career as a cartoonist.

Note: If you're looking for a complete art course, this book isn't for you. Although I give specific, step-by-step examples of how to draw basic characters and backgrounds, I assume you already know how to pick up a pencil and draw basic shapes. You also won't find a complete art history here, although I do give quite a bit of cartoon history throughout the book.

How This Book Is Organized

For Dummies books are written in a modular fashion. This format gives you the option of reading the book from beginning to end, or alternatively, selecting certain parts

or chapters that are relevant to your interests or experience. I organize this book to start with the basics and build up to the more advanced concepts. The following describe each part in more detail.

Part I: Drawing Inspiration: Getting Started with Cartoons and Comics

Part I is all about getting familiar with the nuts and bolts of cartooning. What art supplies do you need to get started? How can you set up a workspace that's efficient without breaking the bank? Can you draw cartoons at the kitchen table with nothing more than a number 2 pencil? What's the first thing you do when you sit in front of a blank piece of paper?

This part answers those questions and then leads you into the harder questions: What types of cartoons are you interested in drawing? How do you develop your characters? And the oft-asked and hard-to-answer question: Where do you get your ideas?

Part II: Creating Cartoon Characters

Part II is all about drawing and developing characters. The chapters in this part teach you to draw your characters starting from their heads right down to their toes, whether your characters are people, animals, or inanimate objects. I also look at the fine art of satirizing the political landscape with editorial cartoons.

Part III: Cartoon Designs 101: Assembling the Parts

Cartooning is much more than talking heads and word balloons. Creating a background perspective that adds detail and interest, deciding how to letter your cartoons, and setting a scene that enhances your cartoons without interfering with your main point are all part of what I cover in this part.

Part IV: Cartooning 2.0: Taking Your Cartoons to the Next Level

Part IV goes deeper into the cartooning world. I look at the impact computers have had on the cartooning world, and I describe tools and toys available today to help you fine-tune your work, like Photoshop. If you want to make this your life's work, this part gives you the tools you need to evaluate your work and find out if you have what it takes to make it in the big time.

Part V: The Part of Tens

All *For Dummies* books contain the Part of Tens section, which gives you fun, helpful information in easily digestible chunks. In this part I review ten steps to creating a finished cartoon, from first pencil stroke to final product. I also help you launch your new career with ten steps to breaking into the cartooning world.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout the book, I use icons in the margins to highlight valuable information and advice. Here's what each one means:



This icon points out something that's important to remember, whether you're a novice cartoonist or a more experienced one.



This icon indicates helpful hints, shortcuts, or ways to improve your cartooning.



I use this icon to alert you to information that can keep you from making big mistakes!



The text associated with this icon goes into technical details that aren't necessary to your understanding of the topic but that may appeal to those who want more in-depth information.



The info that this icon highlights isn't essential, but I hope these anecdotes about the world of cartooning help you appreciate just how rich that world is.

Where to Go from Here

If you want to know every single thing about cartooning, start at the beginning of the book and read straight through. However, you don't need to read the book in sequence. You may be looking for specific info on certain aspects of cartooning, in which case you can refer to the table of contents or the index to find the subject you want. Each chapter is meant to stand alone, and the info each contains isn't dependent on your reading previous chapters to understand it.

If you're brand new to cartooning and aren't sure where to start, Chapter 2 helps you understand the different cartoon genres and choose the genre that best suits your interests. If you're a beginning cartoonist and need some drawing pointers, jump into Chapter 4 and start with the drawing basics. If you're already drawing but want to improve your characters, check out Chapters 6 and 7.

Part I

Drawing Inspiration: Getting Started with Cartoons and Comics



In this part . . .

Are you a budding cartoonist, or would you like to be a professional cartoonist someday? The world of cartooning is more diverse and interesting than you may realize. In this part, I explore the world of cartooning, including the different types of cartoons and the tools you need to draw them. I also give you tips on how cartoonists come up with their ideas, and