Techniques for creating dynamic superhero poses and action
Basic Tools

From your imagination to thumbnails and roughs, through to your finished inked piece ready for that splash of colour, you will need some traditional media and supports. The variety available is vast, and you should experiment with different kinds until you find what works best for you. Here are the contents of my tool kit for you to use as a guide.

Ruler
Vital for ruling up your panels and creating those awesome cityscapes.

Erasers
You can never have too many of these. Putty and plastic erasers are both good, and having more than one on the go means that you can generally find one that is clean and has a nice edge to work that detail.

Mechanical pencil
This pencil is my best friend. I prefer using mechanical pencils to traditional ones, as the fine lines you achieve and the feel of using them is much nicer to me. It’s important that you experiment and find what works best for you, however.

Black marker pen
Handy for filling in on inked pieces and picking out thicker lines.

Inking pens
They should last you for years, but make sure you have a couple of different thicknesses to achieve those graphic lines.

Brush pens
Great for getting realistic, fluid strokes onto the page either at the lightbox stage or inking. They’re also nice to rough with sometimes.

Lightbox
Not vital for the beginner, but essential for the more experienced comic artist. This is an invaluable piece of kit and probably the one object I use the most! It is handy for taking rough pieces forward onto art board, or refining your work onto a clean sheet of paper without having to start again. The old fashioned lightboxes used to be really big, deep and heavy objects, but you can get much smaller, thinner and lighter ones now that are portable and more comfortable to lean on.

Traditional pencils
From HB (hard and pale) to 5B (soft and dark) there is a wide variety to choose from. HB can sometimes be a bit faint, so I tend to use somewhere in between the HB and really dark ones, which I find are too heavy sometimes. Remember that you ultimately need to remove any trace of pencil, so large areas of dark, soft graphite are not very easy to work with. The softer pencils are good for rough work and thumbnails, but I would recommend using harder graphites in your final work.
Basic Tools

**Ink thinner**
To add variation in tone with your inks. Not essential for beginners, but will come in handy if you start to do your own inks.

**Putty eraser**
Good for getting into those tight areas where you need more precision than a big old plastic eraser can give you.

**Stencils**
You don’t need too many of these, but I find this circle one is really useful and speeds up the drawing process.

**Masking fluid and ink**
The inker’s tools. Cover up areas you don’t want to be inked with the masking fluid. It’s always handy to have a rag or paper towel close at hand when you’re using either of these.

**Correcting fluid**
Essential for tidying up your inked piece.

**Supports**
The paper you use to begin your work doesn’t have to be anything special or expensive. Printer cartridge paper at either A4 (US letter) or A3 (US tabloid) size is fine, but when you are moving on to more finished pencils and then to ink, having the sturdiness and extra texture of art board is vital. You also need this depth for inking as thinner, lighter paper will just absorb too much ink and tear or distort. I draw my final panels onto art board, and you can buy it online or from a good art store.
Where would your superhero be without being able to swing a devastating high kick onto their nemesis? Consider the camera angle of your shot so that you show it from the most impactful side: having your character face-on enables you to show the facial expression which will convey so much of your story; a side profile means that you will naturally focus more on the environment, body and clothing, while it would be very difficult to achieve the desired impact by shooting from behind. Perspective is key in this type of pose where some parts of the body are going to be closer to the viewer than others, so do lots of research beforehand, arm yourself with plenty of references to help you achieve realistic proportion and do plenty of thumbnails and roughs until you’re happy with the way it’s looking.

Start your image with a simple stick figure. Try to be loose and fluid and in your pencil strokes to achieve more natural lines.

Add in your guides for the facial features. Think about the angle the head is at in order to create the most dynamic pose; here it is angled down menacingly, revealing all of her head but hiding much of her chin and one half of her face.

Build up your lines with cylindrical shapes to add form. Keep it simple and clean at this stage, and remember to erase any lines you don’t want to keep.
The hands are a vital part of the storytelling process and can carry a lot of information about what's happening in the scene. Try to think about them early in your composition so that you can show them realistically. Having this hand as a clenched fist adds to the aggression of the shot and helps to set the scene.

Pick out your final outline and erase any other unwanted lines.

This is going to be the part of the body that is closest to the camera, so needs to be the largest. Foreshortening (see p. 30) can be hard to master, but it will really help with the storytelling and impact of your work.

Tidy up your lines and remove any from the final outline that you don't want. If you are happy with how it's looking, you can also start to remove the joint markings.
Once you’ve picked the colours for your character you need to start putting in the basic flat areas. This is known as ‘flattening’, and many pro colourists hire someone to do this bit. It may help to work in the colours you want to the character to be but you can use any colours at this stage, as long as you can select each element separately to make alterations.

The background (city) and foreground (character) elements should be on a separate layer so that you can alter them individually without affecting the other. If you really want to have control you may want to make several layers for the elements, i.e.: the character’s flesh, hair, costume, gloves etc all on separate layers.

Now you’ve got the colours down and are happy with the overall look of your image you can start adding the form. This stage is known as ‘Modelling’, as you’re giving the character form and shape. This is the time where you’ll want to select a light source and start adding shadow and highlights.

When that’s done, try adding a colour layer over all or most of your page; use a colour that you think will give atmosphere to the image – a warm orange or a cool purple are good starting points. Make this layer an overlay or multiply it and reduce opacity just so that you get a consistent hue to the image.
Superhero feats and exhilarating fights are the climax of a comic book; here readers will learn how to draw this fun and vital part of comic art.

Clever exercises will show how to achieve convincing movement by first drawing the torso then building other body components around it.

Techniques for drawing every dynamic action are explained from running, swinging and flying through to fist fights, group rumbles, and battles.

An Action File of comic character drawings in dynamic poses forms an invaluable resource; accompanied throughout by the kick-ass images of comic artist Lee Garbett.

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**Marketing Points**

Comic book action is what everyone wants to draw and this is the first book devoted solely to the subject.

- Includes plenty of step-by-step demonstrations plus an Action File of action poses as a quick reference.
- The interest in comics continues at a pace highlighted by numerous movie releases during 2010 and 2011.

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**The Author**

Lee Garbett is one of DC’s hot new artists. He has worked on Midnighter, The Highwaymen and Dreamwar at Wildstorm, and the Outsiders, Batman Last Rites and currently Batgirl at DC. In the UK he started out on 2000 AD; other clients include the BBC, The Face, and American Express. He lives in Devon, UK.