TRANSCRIPT FOR "Photo to Illustration Tutorial"

<https://www.spring-nutrition.org/media/videos/photo-illustration-tutorial>

**00:15: Peggy Koniz-Booher:** High-quality graphic images have become an essential component of social and behavior change communication. They are especially critical in the print materials we develop for youths in low-literacy or multi-language settings, where written words are often barriers to communication.

**00:33:** Visual images can stimulate interest and curiosity, capture attention, communicate difficult concepts, and add context.

**00:42:** In this video, we’re going to share an innovative technique called the photo-to-illustration process. This technique involves tracing a reference photograph to capture the key proportions and other elements, and then manipulating or translating the image using computer software to create realistic illustrations.

**01:02:** The photo-to-illustration process presented here has the benefits associated with high-quality photographic images, but the flexibility and adaptability of line drawings or illustrations.

**01:13:** Illustrations developed using this technique have often formed the cornerstone of highly successful communication tools, including a global resource developed by UNICEF in 2010, known as “The Community Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling Package”.

**01:28:** The technique presented in this video expands upon steps for the photo-to-illustration technique outlined in the UNICEF Adaptation Guide for this package.

**01:40:** The high-quality images resulting from the photo-to-illustration technique, and the materials they are used in, are often highly valued by community members as art. When individuals can really relate to and find value in the images, our experience shows that this helps the message stick.

**01:57:** Clearly, the artist has a critical role on a social/behavior change communication team, and really serves as a change agent.

**02:06:** Our main artist, Victor Nolasco, works internationally but is based in the Dominican Republic. He’s trained many artists from multiple countries over the years, and has assisted Spring in developing and adapting hundreds of images using this process.

**02:24: Victor Nolasco (translated):** Hello, I’m Victor Nolasco, a graphic artist born in the Dominican Republic. And today, we are going to learn about how to make very good illustrations based on photography as a reference.

**02:43: Peggy:** Now, we’re going to take you through the steps of creating and refining an image on feeding a young child, using an example from one of our country programs in Guinea.

**03:06: Narrator:** So, let’s get started. With the photo-to-illustration process, we can create high-quality illustrations using one or more reference photographs.

**03:17:** To begin the process, we need some good photos. A simple point-and-shoot, or even a camera phone, will work.

**03:25:** When planning a shoot, the photographer should work with a content expert who can identify and recreate the look of your desired images. It is best to take photos in a bright area.

**03:37:** Select the model that closely fits the culture and context for your image. Take photos that show the model’s entire body. Additional close-up images can supplement and provide more detail later.

**03:49:** Consider the angle you take your pictures from. This is the same perspective that the illustrators will have.

**03:56:** After the main photos have been taken, it’s a good idea to take supplemental photos of each person, object, and location. These can be useful to the artist in filling in any gaps.

**04:09:** If you’re nervous about reference photography, don’t be. The best tip to keep in mind is, just keep taking photos.

**04:20:** In order to transfer these photographs into realistic illustrations, you’ll need to access some equipment. First, you’ll need a printer to prepare the photo for tracing. Next, you’ll need a lightbox to trace the photographs to create line drawings.

**04:35:** A scanner is required to import the line drawings into your computer. You’ll also need a computer with Adobe Photoshop, or similar photo editing software.

**04:46:** These tools are used to alter illustrations and add color, shading, and volume.

**04:54:** The artist and the team have to decide which reference photos to use in creating the illustrations. Sometimes, the team may need elements from several different photos, which can be combined or manipulated in Photoshop later.

**05:08:** Once the best photos are selected, they will need to be prepared for tracing. Crop out unimportant elements, and use Lasso or other smart selection tools to remove other unnecessary background elements.

**05:20:** Some elements of the photo can be changed later in Photoshop. Here, we are adjusting the angle of the baby’s head to make a better illustration.

**05:29:** You can also adjust the brightness and contrast to better highlight lines in the photo, then resize the image for tracing. Larger images are better.

**05:38:** Sometimes, you may want to print a photo across two pages and combine the line drawings later in Photoshop.

**05:45:** When possible, trace each person, object, or background element separately, if there is time. This will make later modification or adaptation easier and faster.

**06:00:** Once you have your photos printed, you can begin tracing. Here, we are using a lightbox to trace a printed photo. Many artists now use a digital drawing pad which creates the line drawing directly in Photoshop.

**06:15:** If you don’t have these technologies available, you can also hold a printed image up against a glass window to trace.

**06:23:** Using a sharp pencil, trace the photo on the back of the printout along the lines of the image. You may have to fill in sections if lines are hard to see, or small adjustments may be necessary to make the perspective of the line drawing more appealing, such as adjusting position of an arm or leg, or eliminating an unwanted element.

**06:43:** For example, a lollipop can be turned into a child’s toy.

**06:49:** Ignore background elements for now. These can be added later in another layer, making changes easier to manage during the process.

**06:58:** If available, a magnifying glass can help you see the line details while tracing. Using large printouts of pictures can also help.

**07:08:** Inking the pencil tracing may be necessary to guarantee strong lines. Alternatively, pencil lines can be cleaned up in Photoshop after scanning. Many artists prefer inking because the lines are more precise.

**07:22:** When finalizing the tracing, it is best practice to make sure that the lines connect and there are no open holes. This will make adding color easier in later steps.

**07:32:** Different sized pens can add detail and effect to your ink tracing. Small details should be traced using super-fine pens.

**07:41:** After inking, pencil marks should be erased as much as possible for a clean image. Once the image is clean, the tracing is ready for scanning.

**07:53:** Place the tracing in a scanner and upload the image into Photoshop. While scanning the tracing, be sure to select at least 300 dpi to ensure high quality.

**08:03:** It is also best to use the Color scan setting, since it provides the most information, and the scanned image can be manipulated more easily than a Grayscale or black-and-white scan.

**08:13:** In scanning a pencil tracing, the Color scan can be converted to Grayscale. In Photoshop, you may adjust levels to increase brightness and contrast to remove some of the unintentional or unnecessary markings and information.

**08:28:** The lines of the tracing will need to be cleaned up, as they will appear pixilated in a scan. Zoom in and use the Eraser tool in Photoshop to ensure that the lines are in smooth surface.

**08:40:** This can take some time, but will result in a very high-quality final result.

**08:46:** Flip the image horizontally in Photoshop. You can compare the line drawing to the reference photo. Duplicate the line drawing layer and place it as the top layer.

**08:57:** Now, using the Magic Wand or similar tool, select the white background area and delete it. The layer style should be set to Multiply. This will help the overall quality of the illustration.

**09:11:** Using the same tool, select areas to fill in with the color. When we selected the mother’s skin here, the Wand tool also selected her shirt. This means there’s a gap. You can zoom in to fill in the gap using the Brush and Eraser tools.

**09:28:** When you select an area to color, hold Ctrl and use the Wand tool to select all the areas that use the same color, such as the mother’s face, arms, and feet.

**09:39:** Then, use the Paint Bucket tool to add the appropriate base color. Switch to a new layer and fill in another area with a new color using the same Paint Bucket tool. This keeps every color in a different layer.

**09:54:** For an individual skin tone, choose a swatch from the color palette and apply the color consistently to all skin areas. Each color should be added to its own layer, not the layer of the line drawing.

**10:07:** At this stage, it is best to get feedback on this flat color version of your illustration from the technical team, and if possible, pretest it with the community. This will save time if adjustments are needed.

**10:21:** Once the flat color image is approved, it is time to add volume to your drawing. Adding volume to the illustration involves making areas of the image lighter and darker to add depth and dimension. This makes the illustration look more realistic.

**10:38:** Use the original photo as a reference to find where highlights and shadows naturally fall. It is a good idea to duplicate each color layer before adding volume to preserve the original flat color image, just as you preserved the line drawing.

**10:53:** For highlights, use the Dodge tool. Set the Dodge tool to low, around 10%, and use a soft brush. For shadows, we use the same technique using the Burn tool. The tools should be set to low with the soft brush.

**11:08:** Begin with very general volume, then zoom in. Use a smaller brush and continue with details.

**11:18:** Using the Alt button with either tool will cause it to do the opposite task. So, you could add highlights and shadows at the same time.

**11:27:** When you’re done, adjust the brightness, contrast, and saturation of the layer to make the volume effect more or less dramatic. Repeat the process with all the colors where volume will be applied.

**11:42:** When we have a full volume illustration, we can increase the quality by adding patterns. Creating a pattern is easy. You can find inspiration in photographs, or by searching the Internet.

**11:54:** Patterns can be made with a simple Brush tool or by using an available image. In a new file, copy and paste your symbol repeatedly into your desired pattern.

**12:06:** Merge the layers together, and import the pattern into the illustration file. Position and resize the pattern layer over the clothes layer.

**12:17:** Set the layer to Free Transform, and use the Warp feature to adjust the pattern to look more natural over the clothes. Cut the pattern to fit the clothes layer.

**12:28:** The Layer Style can be set to Overlay so that the pattern matches the volume that has already been applied to the clothes. This technique can be repeated for patterns for other clothing.

**12:40:** Once your illustration is finished, you can combine it with other illustrations to make a complete scene that includes background elements, if necessary. Here, we have added a floor mat using patterns from the mat in the original reference photo.

**12:55:** You can also add objects that you have created separately, or use other stock images, like a chair or a bowl.

**13:03:** When the illustration is complete, save your layered file, but also save a copy and export it as a flattened TIP image.

**13:17:** As with the development of any SBCC material, concept testing or pretesting is critical to help ensure the comprehension and effectiveness of the image or material.

**13:29:** Illustrations should be shared with the technical team and community members for feedback at some point in the process to identify necessary modifications, if any.

**13:39:** For example, to promote hand-washing in Sierra Leone, we developed a draft image of a woman smelling her clean hands. During pretesting, people from the community interpreted the image as a woman praying, and gave suggestions for improvement.

**13:55:** A reference photo was taken and shared with the artist, and a new draft was created, tested, and approved.

**14:06:** By using the same process, existing illustrations can be adapted or modified for a different cultural context. When images are created using this technique, further adjustments and adaptations can be made fairly quickly and cost-effectively.

**14:22: Peggy:** Spring is committed to producing high-quality visual materials for all of our programming. We’ve used this photo-to-illustration technique to create realistic and culturally appropriate images, and want to make the process and the images more accessible to the global community.

**14:38:** It’s our hope that this video, along with complementary resources and guides found on our website, will inspire both program planners and graphic artists to use this process in developing their own high-quality SBCC materials.

**14:55: Victor (translated):** As artists, we know art has always been an important force, an important element of social change. When we make an image that powerfully communicates our intention, we are collaborating in making a better world.