

Image Generation / Character Design

Generate consistent expressions for a character — emotional range documentation for animation and illustration.

Difficulty: Advanced

Model: GPT-4 / Claude / Gemini

Use Case: Expression Sheets, Animation Reference

Updated: May 2026

Why This Prompt Exists

Characters need emotional range. Without expression sheets, animators guess how a character should look when angry, sad, or surprised — leading to inconsistent performances.

You get:

- angry face that looks like surprised (wrong emotion, wrong context)
- sad expression that reads as bored (audience confused)
- happy expression that looks the same as neutral (no emotional range)
- no baseline neutral face (can't measure emotional intensity)
- expressions that don't match the character's personality

But expressions can be systematized:

- neutral: baseline, no emotion, relaxed features
- happy: raised cheeks, crow's feet, mouth upturned

- sad: downturned mouth, drooping eyes, furrowed brow
- angry: furrowed brow, tense jaw, narrowed eyes
- surprised: raised eyebrows, wide eyes, dropped jaw
- fearful: wide eyes, raised brows, tense mouth, sweat
- disgusted: wrinkled nose, raised upper lip, squinted eyes

Without expression libraries, characters feel flat.

This prompt builds consistent expression sheets.

The Prompt

Assume the role of a character animator who creates expression libraries.

Your task is to generate consistent expressions for a single character.

Generate:

1. BASE CHARACTER SPECIFICATION (from CD-01)
 - Face shape: [round/oval/square/heart/diamond]
 - Eye shape and color: [description]
 - Eyebrow shape: [thick/thin/arched/straight]
 - Nose shape: [description]
 - Mouth shape: [wide/small/full/thin]
 - Distinguishing features: [freckles, scars, dimples, etc.]
2. EXPRESSION LIBRARY (6-8 expressions)

Expression	Facial Features	Eye Change	Eyebrow Change	Mouth Change
Neutral	Relaxed, balanced	Open normally	Relaxed	Slight line, closed
Happy	Raised cheeks, crow's feet	Squinted slightly	Relaxed or slightly raised	Upturned, teeth visible
Sad	Drooping features, tension	Downcast, half-lidded	Inner brows raised, outer down	Downturned
Angry	Tense, furrowed, jaw clenched	Narrowed, intense	Lowered, drawn together	Tight, possibly baring teeth
Surprised	Frozen, wide open	Wide open, round	Raised high, arched	Dropped open, oval
Fearful	Tense, strained, sweat	Wide, darting	Raised, drawn together	Stretched, grimace
Disgusted	Wrinkled, recoiling	Squinted, narrowed	Lowered, wrinkled bridge	Raised upper lip, curled

3. EXPRESSION SHEET PROMPT

`Expression sheet for [character name], [role]. Six expressions arranged in a grid: Neutral, Happy, Sad, Angry, Surprised, Fearful. Consistent face shape ([face shape]), [eye color] eyes, [eyebrow shape] eyebrows, [nose shape] nose. Same character, same lighting, same angle (front view). Character design sheet, white background, animation reference. --ar 16:9`

4. EXPRESSION INTENSITY LEVELS

Intensity	Neutral Baseline	Happy	Sad	Angry	Surprised	Fearful
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Mild	Relaxed	Smile, slight upturn	Downturned, slight	Slightly furrowed	Slightly raised brows	Slight tension
Moderate	Alert	Grin, crow's feet	Drooping, tears starting	Furrowed, narrow	Wide eyes, dropped jaw	Wide eyes, sweat
Extreme	Tension	Laughing, eyes closed	Crying, anguish	Snarling, veins	Extreme wide, scream	Terrified, recoiling

5. PERSONALITY-TO-EXPRESSION MAPPING

Personality	Dominant Expressions	Expression Style
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Hero	Determined, hopeful, noble	Broad, open, warm
Villain	Smug, angry, calculating	Narrow, cold, sharp
Comic relief	Exaggerated happy, surprised, scared	Broad, exaggerated
Stoic	Subtle neutral, slight variations	Minimal, controlled
Romantic	Warm happy, longing, sad	Soft, expressive eyes

6. EXPRESSION SHEET VERIFICATION

- [] Same character recognizable across all expressions
- [] Neutral expression is truly neutral (baseline)
- [] Each expression reads clearly without context
- [] Emotional intensity matches the character's personality
- [] Expressions are distinct from each other

- [] Same lighting and angle across all expressions
- [] Consistent eye color, hair, and features

7. COMMON EXPRESSION MISTAKES

Mistake	Why It's Wrong	Correct Approach
Same face, different mouth	Misses eye/brow changes	Change eyes, brows, AND mouth
Angry looks like surprised	Wrong brow position	Lower brows for angry, raise for surprise
Sad looks like bored	No tears, no droop	Add drooping eyelids, downturned mouth
Happy looks like neutral	Missing crow's feet, cheeks	Add raised cheeks, squinted eyes

INPUTS:

Character name and role:

[E.G., "Kaelen, elven ranger"]

Face and feature description (from CD-01):

[E.G., "Oval face, green eyes, arched brows, straight nose"]

Personality type:

[E.G., "Stoic warrior", "Bubbly sidekick", "Brooding anti-hero"]

Expressions needed:

[NEUTRAL, HAPPY, SAD, ANGRY, SURPRISED, FEARFUL, DISGUSTED]

RULES:

- Neutral expression is the baseline for all other expressions (get it right first)
- Eyes and eyebrows change more than mouth for some emotions (angry = brow, happy = eyes)
- Each expression must be distinct and readable without context
- Match emotional intensity to character personality (stoic = subtle, comic = broad)
- Keep lighting and angle consistent across all expressions
- Same character must be recognizable in every expression
- Test expressions by covering the mouth (can you still read the emotion?)

How To Use It

- Neutral expression is the baseline for all other expressions — get it right first.
- Eyes and eyebrows change more than mouth for some emotions — angry is mostly brow, happy is mostly eyes.
- Each expression must be distinct and readable without context — no ambiguous faces.
- Match emotional intensity to character personality — stoic characters have subtle expressions.
- Keep lighting and angle consistent across all expressions — variations confuse the viewer.
- The same character must be recognizable in every expression — don't change the face.
- Test expressions by covering the mouth — can you still read the emotion from the eyes and brows alone?

Example Input

Character name and role:

“Thorne, dwarven paladin”

Face and feature description:

“Square face, brown eyes, thick brows, broad nose, long braided beard”

Personality type:

“Gruff but noble, emotionally reserved”

Expressions needed:

“Neutral, Happy (slight smile), Sad (grief), Angry (righteous fury), Surprised (shock), Fearful (dread)”

Why It Works

Most AI character generation produces static, neutral faces — missing the emotional range that brings characters to life.

This framework improves outcomes by forcing:

- facial feature decomposition (eyes, brows, mouth, cheeks for each emotion)
- expression classification (neutral, happy, sad, angry, surprised, fearful, disgusted)
- intensity levels (mild, moderate, extreme per emotion)
- personality-to-expression mapping (subtle vs. broad vs. exaggerated)
- verification checklist (ensuring expressions are distinct and consistent)

Failure modes this prevents:

- Angry face that looks like surprised (wrong brow position)
- Sad expression that reads as bored (no droop, no tears)
- Happy expression that looks the same as neutral (missing cheeks, crow’s feet)
- Emotions that don’t match character personality

This improves on: Static, neutral character art. Expression sheets enable emotional

storytelling.

Related to: CD-01 (Turnaround) for consistent base design; CD-03 (Outfits) for full character sheet.

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