Introduction to Adobe Illustrator

USE ILLUSTRATOR FOR DRAWING WITH VECTOR GRAPHICS.

Interface

Adobe Illustrator presents an uncluttered interface, allowing the artist to concentrate on the work at hand. The largest part of the screen consists of the work area and the art board, which is outlined in black. You may draw anywhere in the work area; the art board serves only as a reference.

Figure 1: The Illustrator work area.
A collection of tools and palettes line the left and right sides of the work area. Use the tools (Figure 2) to create artwork and the palettes to modify it later (Figure 2, Figure 8). For example, you can create a rectangle using the Rectangle tool and then fill it with a color gradient from the Gradient palette. You may also modify the gradient fill at any time from the Swatches or Gradient palettes. Other palettes control stroke styles and weights, text and paragraph properties, and object alignment.

![Figure 2: The Tools. Click and hold a tool's icon to see other tools of its class.](image1)

Many icons on the Tools bar stand for classes of tools (Figure 3), the icons showing the last-used tool of any category. Click and hold the tool's icon to view all available tools of its class. For example, clicking and holding on the pen tool reveals the Add, Delete and Convert Anchor Point tools.

![Figure 3: Tools beget tools.](image2)
Illustrator’s menus provide access to other tools and functions:

- the Object menu lists tools applicable to paths and groups of paths,
- the Type menu covers functions related to type and text,
- the View menu controls what will or won’t appear on the screen, and
- the Window menu allows customization of the work area.

See Figure 4.

The organization of your artwork plays a part in the ease with which you can later edit it. Use the Layers palette (Figure 1) to collect and lock related elements of your work. One case might be a drawing of a tree containing separate layers for leaves, trunk, ground and sky.
The dock houses the palettes. Click an icon on the dock to reveal one class of palettes, or click at the top of the dock to reveal all palettes. You may build your own dock configuration by simply dragging palettes to new positions (Figure 5).

![Figure 5: Expand the dock, open a palette, drag it onto the dock.](image)

Illustrator allows the user to configure, save and load palette layouts—known as workspaces—appropriate to specific tasks. Access them from WindowÆWorkspaces (Figure 4). You may also reset the workspace from here if you close a palette and don't know how to open it again.

![Illustrator interface](image)

Figure 6: Start a new document with the end product in mind.
Workflow

Document Setup

Click File→New to begin a new project (Figure 6). Size the art board by choosing an appropriate document type from New Document Profile and a standard size from the Size drop-down. Once you have defined your art board, you're ready to draw.

Drawing

In Illustrator, the artist creates a collection of paths to which he or she adds strokes and fills. Artwork in its initial state adopts whatever stroke and fill had been previously applied; Illustrator defaults to a one point black border with white fill. You may always change the appearance of an object later.

Each of the drawing tools creates a different type of path (Figure 2, Figure 3). One of the more useful is the Pen tool, which creates the control points and handles that define a shape's boundaries and curvature (Figure 8). Click and drag with the Pen to begin drawing a curve; click or click and drag on another part of the art board to place another control point and view the curve. Click without dragging to create an angle point. Change the type of control point—a curve point or an angle point—by using the Convert Anchor Point tool, located with the Pen in Tools (Figure 3). Select and adjust a single control point with the Direct Selection tool. Use the Direct Selection or Convert Anchor Point tool to drag control points' handles and change a line's or shape's curvature.

![Figure 7: The pen tool creates control points, angle points, and curves.](image-url)
Stroking and Filling

Illustrator allows the artist to change the color and style properties of an object from the Appearance palette (Figure 1, left). Simply click the property you wish to change and then select the style you wish to apply. For example, apply a brush stroke to a path by selecting the object, selecting ‘Stroke’ in the Appearance palette, and clicking on the brush shape of your choice from the Brushes palette.

![Appearance palette](image)

Use the Appearance palette to change the color and style of artwork.

You may also change the parameters of any Effect you apply to your art from the Appearances palette. Click on the circled-f icon to access the Effect's controls. Keep in mind that Filters are not alterable after you have applied them.

Changing the fill of an object requires selecting the object and then clicking on the color, gradient or pattern of your choice from the Swatches or Color palette (see above). Create your own patterns from Illustrator artwork by selecting objects and clicking Edit→Define Pattern…. Define a custom gradient by clicking a color stop on the Gradient palette and then selecting a color in the Color palette. Add a stop by clicking underneath the gradient. Drag the stop to the desired position.
Exporting

Adobe Illustrator can export your artwork in a variety of raster and vector formats. Use the Crop Area tool (Figure 2) to define the portion of your work that you would like to export; Illustrator will otherwise export every mark on the workspace. You can also copy and paste paths from Illustrator directly into Photoshop and After Effects.