

Tracing

There are two main ways to use Illustrator. One approach is to draw components (such as windows and doors) that are then assembled into larger compositions as in the last chapter. The other approach is to trace an existing image or sketch. In this chapter, we'll cover how to trace complex images that include curves. Learning how to draw curves takes time and practice. However, knowing a few simple techniques can dramatically speed up the learning process.

Set up the template

1. Start Illustrator. Choose File>New. Specify Size: Letter and Orientation: Portrait (the icon on the left) and then click on OK.

2. Choose File>Place. Click once on tracingtemplate.jpg to select it.

At the bottom of the dialog box make sure Link is not checked. This ensures that Illustrator will import a copy of the image into the document.

3. Click on Place.

The image that appears is the tracing template you'll use for this exercise.

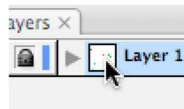
4. If the Layers palette isn't showing, choose Window>Layers.

5. Click next to the eye to lock the layer—



The layer containing the placed template is now locked and cannot be accidentally changed.

6. Double-click on the layer icon—



7. Choose the Template option and make sure Dim Images is set to 50%. Then click on OK.

This fades out the template making it easier to trace.

8. At the bottom of the Layer palette, click on the new layer icon—



This creates a new layer for you to draw on.

Trace curve A

This exercise involves only dragging the mouse. Do *not* click the mouse button.

1. Choose the Pen tool in the Toolbox.

The same Pen tool that you used to create straight lines is used to create curves.

2. In the Toolbox, click to select the default black stroke and white fill—



3. In the Toolbox, click on No fill—



This sets the fill, which is in front, to None.

4. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the first blue circle in curve A.

5. Drag the mouse upward to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.

6. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the second blue circle.

7. Drag the mouse down to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.

Trace curve B

This exercise involves only dragging the mouse. Do *not* click the mouse button. For this and the following sections, don't be afraid to Undo your work (Edit>Undo) or delete it and start again.

1. Choose the Pointer tool in the Toolbox. Then choose the Pen tool.

Clicking on the Pointer tool tells Illustrator that you're going to create a new path. Otherwise, you may continue tracing from curve A.

2. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the first blue circle in curve B.
3. Drag the mouse upward to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.
4. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the second blue circle.
5. Drag the mouse down to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.
6. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the next blue circle.
7. Drag the mouse upward to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.
8. Repeat this procedure until you're done. You don't have to be too exact for now.

Each time you drag, Illustrator automatically creates an anchor point (you may be able to see the anchor points in each blue circle). If your tracing looks a little strange, check to make sure that the fill is set to no fill.

Think of drawing curves in Illustrator as creating mountains and lakes (from a side view). The anchor points are usually placed at "sea level." You do not usually create an anchor point at the tip of a curve because this typically creates a bump in a curve.

Trace curve C

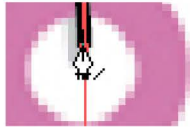
Curve C is harder to trace than curves A and B. You may wish to zoom in closer to the page. The main difference between this and the previous set of curves is that each curve ends in a sharp corner. This shape only has mountains and no lakes, so a slightly different technique must be used. This exercise involves only dragging the mouse. Do *not* click the mouse button.

1. Choose the Pointer tool in the Toolbox. Then choose the Pen tool.

You may also wish to close any open palettes except the Toolbox to give yourself more space. You won't need the palettes again for this lesson.

2. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the first blue circle in curve C.
3. Drag the mouse upward to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.
4. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the pink circle labeled 2.
5. Drag the mouse down to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.

6. While holding down the Option key (Macintosh or Alt key (Windows) and without dragging or clicking, position the cursor over the pink circle labeled 2 until you see the cursor change to a Pen tool with a corner—



If the cursor does not look like this (for example, if it simply looks like a corner) then the Pen tool is not positioned correctly over the anchor point within the pink circle.

7. Drag upward to the orange square. Then release the Option or Alt key and release the mouse button.

8. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the next pink circle. Then drag downward to the orange square.

9. While holding down the Option key (Macintosh or Alt key (Windows) and without dragging or clicking, position the cursor over the pink circle until you see the cursor change to a Pen tool with a corner.

10. Drag upward to the orange square.

11. Repeat this procedure until curve C is traced.

Trace curve D

Curve D is different from the previous curves because it includes straight lines. In this exercise you do click on the mouse button to transition from drawing curves to drawing straight lines.

1. Choose the Pointer tool in the Toolbox. Then choose the Pen tool.

2. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the first blue circle in curve D.

3. Drag upward to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.

4. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the green circle labeled 2.

5. Drag down to the orange square. Then release the mouse button.

6. Position the cursor over the anchor point in green circle 2. The cursor should look like Pen tool with a corner.

7. Click once.

This tells Illustrator that you're going to stop creating curves.

8. Click once in green circle 3.

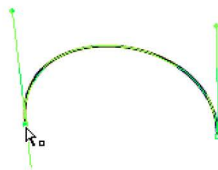
9. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over the anchor point in green circle 3. Then drag down to the orange square.

10. Without clicking or dragging, position the cursor over green circle 4. Then drag up to the orange square.

11. Repeat this basic procedure until you're done.

This is the basic procedure for creating curves with the Pen tool. The other exercises on this page are extensions of this basic technique. There are three basic ways to edit a curve after you've created it. For these techniques, use the direct selection tool (the white arrow) in the Toolbox.

Drag the anchor point —



Drag the curve's handle—



Drag the curve itself—

