

An Intro to Adobe Illustrator

What is Adobe Illustrator?

Adobe Illustrator is a vector graphics creation program. It stands alone as a single software package and is also included in several of Adobe's Creative Suites.

Vector graphics

Vector graphics are scalable to any size without becoming pixelated. Raster graphics (jpgs, pngs, and gifs) become artifacted and distorted when they are upsized too far. Vector graphics are very useful in logo design, flash, graphic design, and vinyl printing. Vector graphics are easy to manipulate both in shape and color. Adobe Illustrator files are also smaller in size than your average Photoshop file.

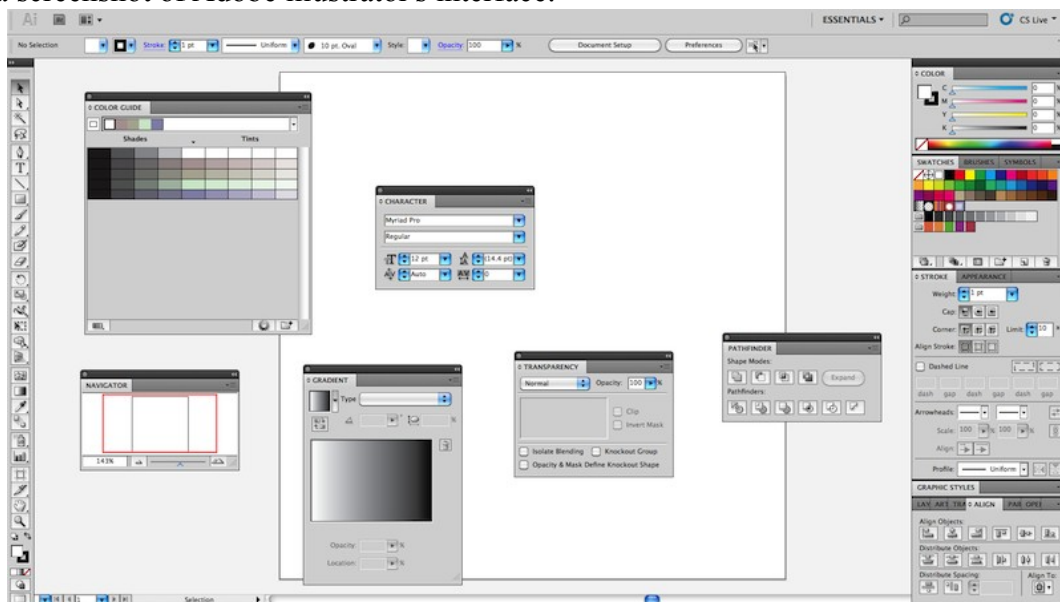
Vector graphics are built using points and bézier curves. The nature of these curves lets the program store your graphics as code snippets instead of on a pixel by pixel color basis.

Common formats for vector graphics are .ai (Adobe Illustrator), .eps (usable across vector programs as eps 8 files) and .svg (also usable across platforms and used by Corel's Freehand program)

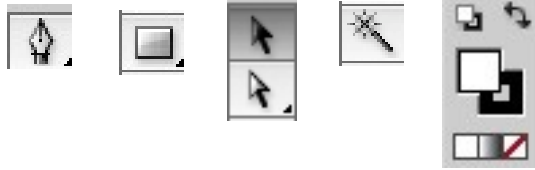
Basics of the Illustrator interface

Illustrator at first glance looks very similar to Photoshop. Many of the tool icons are repeated. This can cause frustration if you are using this software for the first time. The nature of vector graphic means that many familiar looking tools act differently in Illustrator than they do in Photoshop:

Below is a screenshot of Adobe Illustrator's interface:



Five tool sets that will get you started in Illustrator



From left to right (pen tool, shape tool, arrows, magic wand, and fill/stroke)

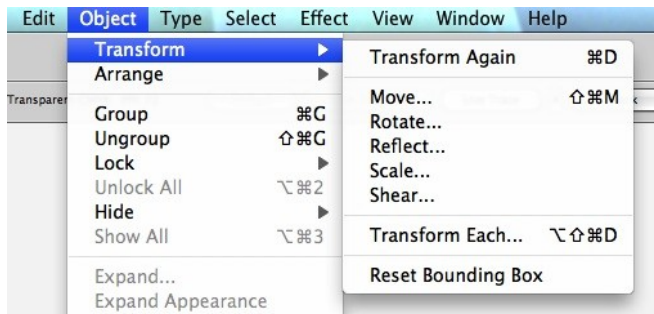
With these five controls you can start creating images in Illustrator

- The **pen tool** creates points and sets the curves between connecting points. It can also be used to remove and add points to an existing shape or line.
- The **shape tool** allows quick creation of squares, rectangles, rounded rectangles, stars and other shapes
- The **arrows** allow you to select an object (black arrow) or points on an object (white arrow)
- The **magic wand** lets you select objects based on their colors and strokes (depending on its settings)
- The **fill/stroke** area sets the colors for an object

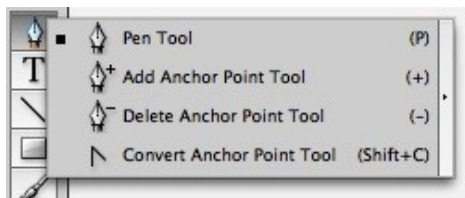
Editing your vectors in Illustrator

Several ways of manipulating the shapes of your vectors include the following menu options:

* The **transform menu**: Object → Transform (Move, Rotate, Reflect, Scale, Shear)

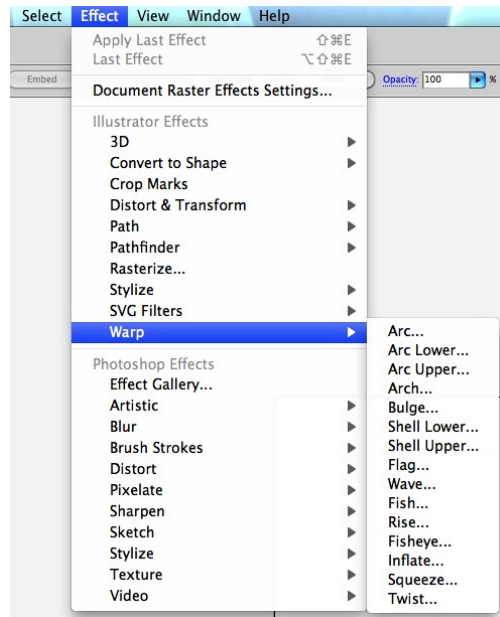


* The **pen tool** and the anchor editing tools:



You can use the convert anchor point tool to change the behavior of points and curves on your vector graphics.

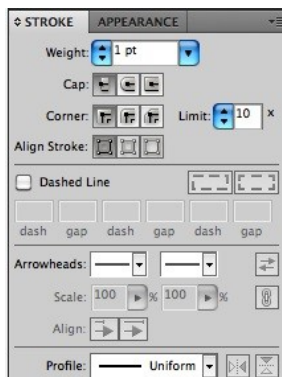
* The **warp menu**: Effects → Warp (Arc ... Twist)



The warp menu will let you manipulate the overall shape of your images. You can use the control popup window to alter the effects. To lock these shapes in you can use Object → Expand Appearance. This finalizes the changes.

-note- stay out of the photoshop effect tools if you want to retain vector graphics. Using these tools can cause your image to become a raster graphic and then you lose the benefits of vector graphics.

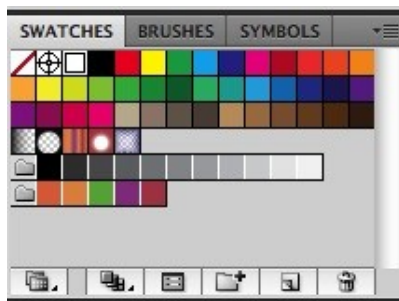
* The **stroke window**: Window → Stroke



The stroke menu offers a variety of ways to alter an objects outline. Strokes can be made thicker or thinner, the edges of the outline can be smooth or sharp, and the end points can be curved or rectangular. Strokes can be made into dashed or dotted lines and end points can be given arrows and other shapes.

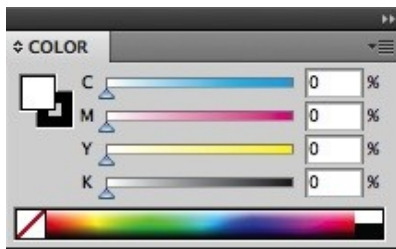
Color editing – beyond the Fill and Stroke tools

* The swatch window:



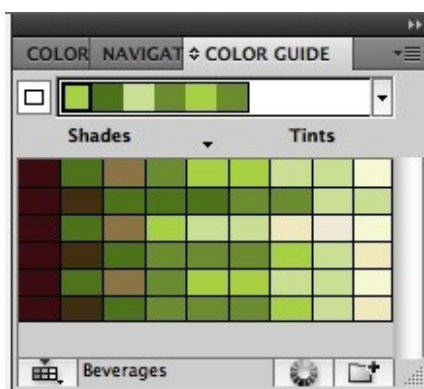
Swatches are available for quick color selection. You can also create your own by dragging colors you are using into the swatch area. Don't drag items into the swatch area or it will create a pattern.

* The color window:



Colors can be edited on a single color basis using the color window. Depending on the color mode you are working in (grayscale, rgb, or cmyk) you will see different sliders for what you are manipulating.

* The color guide window:



If you want to manipulate several colors at the same time, the color guide is very useful. The color guide's wheel icon opens a color manipulate window. This window lets you move the colors of your illustration through different preset color schemes. Getting familiar with the color guide is very helpful.

Clean up in Illustrator

Cleaning up your Illustrator files when you are finished is important. By cleaning up your files you make them easier to handle later. It also helps if you are sending them to other people. This also makes sure there aren't issues that could alter the final appearance of your vectors when viewed or printed.

1. Close all your paths. This can be done one at a time by merging a single item in the Pathfinder or using the ClosePath third party script. As you get comfortable in Illustrator you will have less open paths to fix.
2. Check for invisible (no fill /no stroke) items as well as stray points. You can see these in Outline view as well as with a third party free script for your selection area.
3. Outline your strokes. This isn't always necessary and lowers the level of manipulation you can perform on them. However, it will keep them from randomly disappearing in some programs.
4. Place all final items on an artboard. This will make saving out in other formats easier.

Free plugins and scripts

<http://vector.tutsplus.com/tutorials/tools-tips/a-comprehensive-guide-illustrators-paintbrush-tool-and-brush-panel/>

<http://vectips.com/tricks/10-free-and-extremely-useful-illustrator-scripts/>

If you have more questions feel free to contact Melissa Patton – gate5w@aol.com | www.melissapatton.net