Illustrator: Using the Pen Tool

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This tutorial will show you how to use the pen tool. The pen tool can be hard to work with until you get the feel for it but once you do, you will have less creative boundaries. The best way to learn the pen tool is tracing shapes, numbers or patterns and lots of practice.

1. Set your Fill and Stroke color. *It is easier to draw with a stroke color and no fill color.* You will find the fill and stroke color options on the Swatch palette, if you don’t see the swatch palette, go to **Window > Swatches**

2. From the swatches palette choose the color you want to you. Check to insure you are editing the stroke and not the fill color. You can toggle between the two by clicking the one that is underneath. If no color is applied a red diagonal line will appear.

Choose the **Pen** tool from the tool bar. The pen tool works by placing anchor points down and drawing lines in between them. Click on the artboard (the area of the file you draw on) with the pen tool selected. Each time you click on the artboard anchor points appear.
3. Click on another place on the artboard. Another point appears and a line is drawn between the two points.

4. Next, make a third point.

5. Finally, connect the third point to the first. To do this you'll need to click on the original point. Hover your tool tip or mouse pointer over the original point. You’ll know you’re over the point when a small circle appears next to your pen tool, then click on the point. Your line or path is closed.
Make a Curve with the Pen Tool

1. Make your first point. Then, make your second point, *but don’t release the mouse*. Instead, drag the mouse downward or upward slowly. You’ll notice the line starts to curve. When you get the curve you want, release the mouse button.

2. Now make another point. You’ll notice Illustrator makes a reciprocal curve.
If you aren’t happy with that curve.

1. You can go to Edit > Undo Pen to delete the last step. Or maybe you change your mind, go to Edit > Redo Pen and it is back.

That curve still doesn’t look right to you, so let’s manually adjust it.

2. Go to Toolbar and select the Direct Selection tool (it’s the white arrow).
When you are making curved lines, you will notice a blue handle that extends out from the curve, this handle allows you to adjust the shape of the curve.

1. Click and grab the point at the end of the handle and move your mouse around to adjust the curve. Once the curve is how you want it, release the mouse button.

Curves can be deleted if they don’t turn out as you had hoped.

2. To delete, select the Selection tool, the black arrow on the Toolbar and click on your curved line. Then hit Delete on the keyboard.

Once you have made a curved line, you can change it to a straight line.
Instead of making another point, click on the Direct Selection or the Selection tool and deselect your line. To deselect your line, just click on a blank spot on the artboard using one of the Selection tools.

You can toggle between the Pen tool and the last tool you used by holding down Command (Apple) key on a Mac or the Control key on a PC.

To restart drawing on the same line, hover your mouse over the end point like you did when you were closing a shape or path. This time instead of a circle beside the Pen tool tip, you’ll see a slash mark. This means you’re over the point. Click on it and then make your next point and your line will continue. You should have a line that curves then goes straight.
Illustrator Tools

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