

ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR CS HELP

Useful help function terms: Help>Illustrator Help (F1) > search for ...

As you probably know, one of the hardest things about learning new software is knowing what things are called. If you know the term (that in Illustrator a vertex in a line is called an "anchor" point, for example) you can search the help and get useful advice.

1. Fill and Stroke Controls
2. Stroke an object (pull down to the right lets you "show options" and set a dashed line if desired)
3. Pathfinder panel overview
4. About paths
5. Drawing > Drawing with the Pen tool
6. Drawing > Editing paths
7. Convert type to outlines
8. Place (import) files
9. Trace artwork
10. Align and distribute objects
11. Change the color mode of a document
12. Create Blends > Create a blend with the Blend tool
13. Control panel overview (set the fill colour in the box indicated by the letter "A", the stroke colour immediately to the right, the default stroke is set to 0.025mm indicated by the letter "B")
14. Methods for cutting, dividing, and trimming objects

KILLER TIPS

The following images are taken from a very useful book on learning Adobe Illustrator. Each tip has a title and an explanatory image associated with it ... but if you read the tips closely they'll often give you useful information about a related task.

Illustrator CS Killer Tips

The hottest collection of cool tips and hidden secrets for Adobe Illustrator



New
Riders

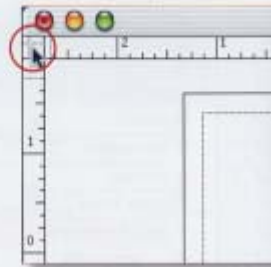
N.P.P.

Dave Cross

Killer Tips series developed by Scott Kelby

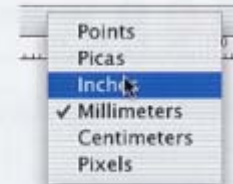
START OVER AGAIN

If you have changed the ruler origins (see previous tip) and want to put them back to the default setting, double-click on the top-left corner between the two rulers.



CHANGE RULER MEASUREMENT

The unit of measurement in Illustrator is determined in the Preferences (Mac: Illustrator>Preferences; PC: Edit>Preferences). This will affect all aspects of the program that use measurements, including the rulers. However, if you need to quickly override the current unit, just Control-click (PC: Right-click) anywhere on the ruler and choose your new unit of measurement.





CHOOSE THE BEST SELECTION TOOL FOR THE JOB

Trying to determine when to use the Selection tool versus the Direct Selection tool? Here's a simple suggestion: Think of the Selection tool as the "move" tool and the Direct Selection tool as the "reshaping" tool. Actually, I suppose that the Selection tool should be thought of as the move/resize tool, since those are the two functions it performs. So, anytime you need to decide between tools, ask yourself: Do I need to move/resize the object, or to reshape it? That will help you pick the correct selection tool.



Direct Selection tool



Selection tool



QUICK CHANGE TOOL

If you need to use the Selection tool and then return to the tool you were using, here's how to do it. With any tool selected, press-and-hold Command (PC: Control) to temporarily activate the Selection tool. (Actually, it will activate the last selection tool you used, so you may get the Direct Selection tool.) Once you've used the Selection tool, let go of the key to return to whatever tool you had been using.



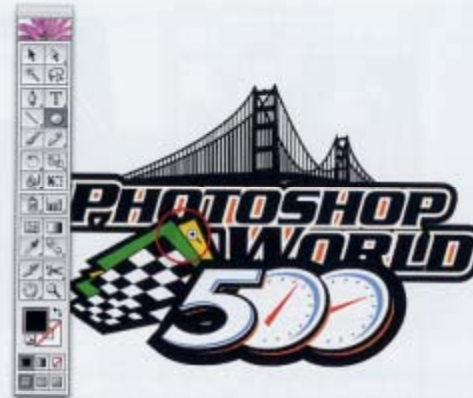
MEMORIZE THESE LETTERS

In the good old days of Illustrator, you could press Command-Tab (PC: Control-Tab) to switch between the Selection and Direct Selection tools. As of OS X on the Mac, this shortcut doesn't work anymore. So to switch between the two selection tools, you'll have to press "v" for the Selection tool and "a" for the Direct Selection tool. PC users have a choice of pressing Control-Tab to switch between tools or pressing "v" or "a".



● ● ● DON'T CLICK ON THE ZOOM TOOL

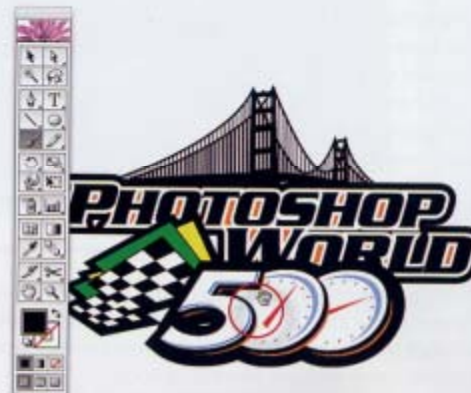
Rather than moving all the way over to the Toolbox to click on the Zoom tool, press Command-Spacebar (PC: Control-Spacebar). This will "interrupt" whatever tool you are using and activate the Zoom tool. Click to zoom in, then release the keys to return to whatever tool you were using. To zoom out, add the Option key (PC: Alt key), making the shortcut Command-Option-Spacebar (PC: Control-Alt-Spacebar).



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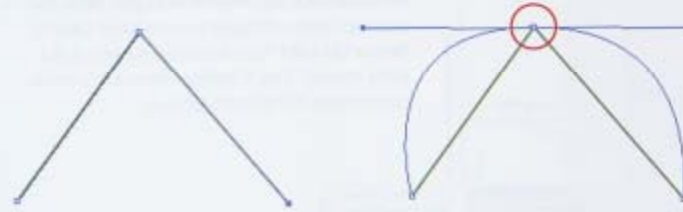
● ● ● NOR THE HAND TOOL

Don't bother clicking on the Hand tool in the Toolbox to scroll your view, just hold down the Spacebar. This will activate the Hand tool so you can scroll, then let go of the Spacebar to continue with your current tool. This works with all tools except the Type tools. (There is a trick, but you'll have to peek at the text chapter.)



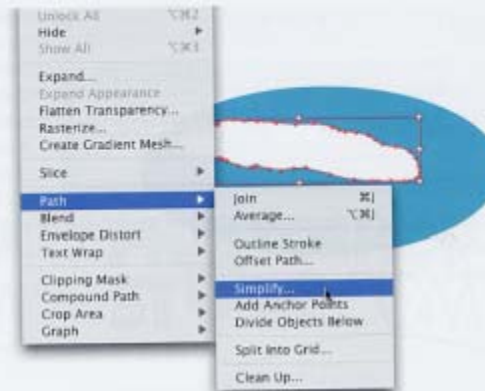
EASY CURVES

If you're new to drawing curves with the Pen tool, here's a quick method to create a simple curve. Use the Pen tool to draw two straight lines that create an angle that points in the direction you want your curve. Then hold down Option (PC: Alt) to activate the Convert Anchor Point tool. Click on the anchor point where the two lines meet and drag outwards to create a curve.



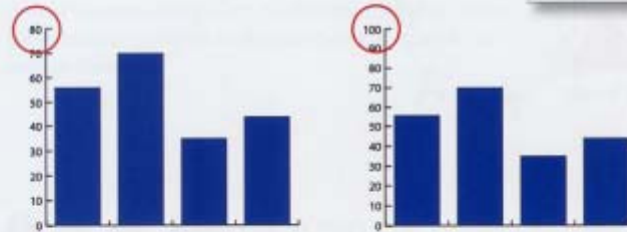
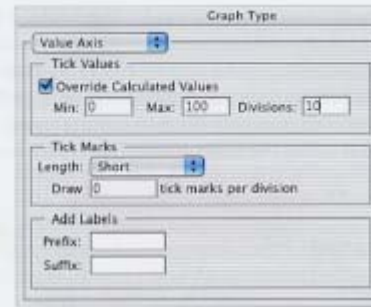
KEEP IT SIMPLE

One of the basic rules of Illustrator should be to use the minimum number of anchor points that you can get away with on a path. This will keep your objects as simple as possible, which will help streamline the printing process. An easy way to reduce the number of anchor points on a path is to select the path and use the Simplify command (Object>Path>Simplify).



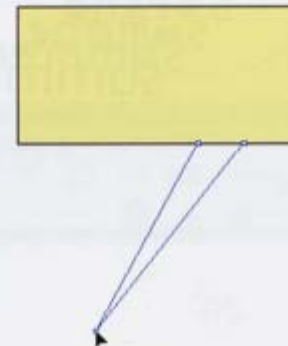
THAT'S OUT OF 100

By default, the value axis on a graph will be slightly more than the largest value in your data. To set a specific maximum value (such as 100), select the graph and go to **Object>Graph>Type**. In the dialog, choose **Value Axis** from the pop-up menu. Check the **Override Calculated Values** box and enter the maximum value (100 in my example). (Note: The maximum value you choose will become the default, so be prepared to change it back the next time you create a graph.)



ADD TO A SHAPE TO CREATE A SHAPE

Sometimes it's easier to create a simple shape and then add to it with more anchor points. For example, to create a map pointer, draw a rectangle with the **Rectangle** tool and then use the **Add Anchor Point** tool to add three anchor points along the bottom. Press "a" to get the **Direct Selection** tool, then drag out the middle of the three anchor points you added. There you have it!

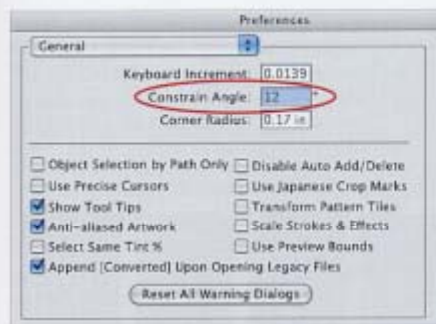


CLOSE A PATH AUTOMATICALLY

To create a closed path with the Brush tool or the Pencil tool, start drawing, then hold down Option (PC: Alt). Continue drawing, and when you're ready to have the path closed for you, let go of the mouse button. Once the path has closed, then release Option (PC: Alt).



ANGLED OBJECTS

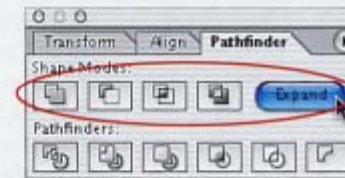


Rather than create objects and then rotate them to a specific angle, here's another option. Before drawing any object, press Command-K (PC: Control-K) to open the Preferences dialog. In the Constrain Angle field, enter the angle at which you want objects to be created. Click OK and every object you create will be drawn at the angle you entered. Once you've finished, go back to the Preferences and change the angle back to zero. (This function does not change objects that have already been created, only new objects.)



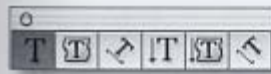
PERMANENT PATHFINDER

By default, clicking on the top row of icons in the Pathfinder palette creates a “live” effect that can be edited. Clicking on the Expand button makes the effect “permanent.” If you want to create a permanent effect right away, hold down Option (PC: Alt) as you click on the Pathfinder icons of your choice.





TEAR OFF TOOL MENU



Any tool in the Toolbox that displays a small triangle in the bottom right-hand corner has a set of "hidden" tools that can be accessed by clicking and holding on the current tool. Instead of popping up hidden tool menus all the time, make your life

easier by tearing off commonly used tool menus. Just click-and-hold on the tool to pop up the other tool choices, then drag over to the bar at the end of the tool menu. When you release the mouse, the tool menu becomes a floating palette that you can position anywhere you want.

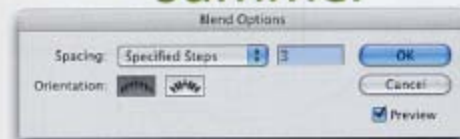


SHAPES AROUND A CIRCLE

If you use a circular path for the Replace Spine command, chances are the objects in your blend will not be evenly distributed around the circle. There's a simple trick to make sure the objects in your blend are evenly spaced around the circle: Select the path, and with the Scissors tool click somewhere on the path of the circle to create an open path (don't move anything, just click once to cut the path). The blended objects will automatically be distributed along the path. (Note: Try this for any path, not just circles.)



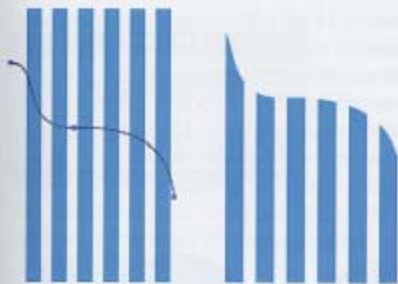
CHANGE THE BLEND



After you've created a blend (and it's still "live"), you can change the number of steps in the blend by going to the Object menu and choosing Blend>Blend Options (or double-clicking the Blend tool in the Toolbox). In the dialog, change the number of Specified Steps and the blend will update. An even quicker way is to check the Preview box and use the Up and Down Arrow keys for an instant update.



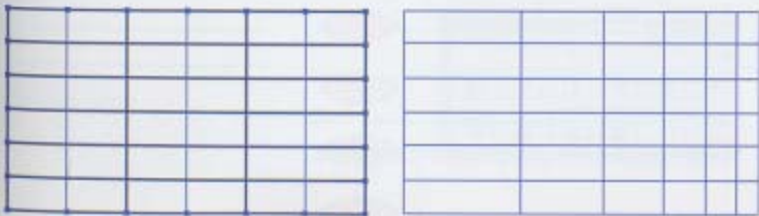
DON'T SELECT FIRST



This one's a little odd since it breaks a "fundamental" rule of Illustrator: Make sure you have selected all the objects you want to work with. In the case of the command called **Divide Objects Below**, it won't work if more than one object is selected. Simply create the object that will do the dividing and position it over the other object(s) to be divided. Select only the dividing object, then choose **Object>Path>Divide Objects Below**. (If you have too many objects selected, it won't work and you'll get a warning dialog.)

CHANGE GRIDS ON THE FLY

By default, the Rectangular Grid tool, under the Line tool in the Toolbox, creates equal spacing between the horizontal and vertical dividers. To change the spacing as you drag a grid, tap "x" or "c" to move horizontal dividers left or right, tap "v" or "f" to move vertical dividers up or down. (Here I tapped "c" as I dragged out the grid.)





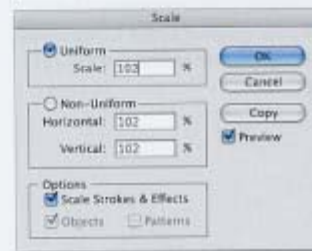
THE TRUE CENTER

When you use the Attributes palette (Window>Attributes) to show the center of a star, you'll note that the center point isn't exactly centered (as shown below, left). Rather than try to explain why this happens (which isn't really important since I can't change it), let's see how to find the "true" center of a star. Select the object, then choose Edit>Copy and then Edit>Paste in Front. From the Object menu choose Path>Average. In the dialog, click Both for Axis. The point that appears is the true center of the object.

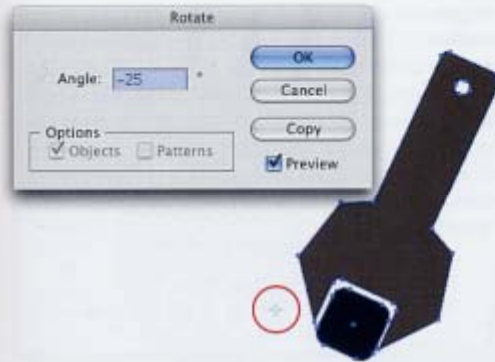


BIGGER OR SMALLER A BIT AT A TIME

Perhaps you are trying to scale one object to fit within a second object, or you need to make an object smaller, but you're not sure by how much. Try this method: With the object selected, double-click on the Scale tool and enter 98% if you're scaling down, or 102% if you're making it larger. That will scale the object 2% smaller or larger. (You can choose Copy from the dialog to make a smaller or larger copy of your object, as I did in my example here.) Then press Command-D (PC: Control-D) to repeat the transformation. Each time you press this shortcut, the object will scale by 2% (smaller or larger, depending on the value you entered), allowing you to scale a bit at a time.



TRANSFORM BY NUMBER



With all transformation tools, such as Scale, Rotate, and Shear, you can transform manually by dragging the mouse—or numerically. Double-click on any transformation tool to get a dialog for a numeric transformation. By default, the reference point for the transformation is the center of the object. But to open the dialog and set a different reference point, hold down Option (PC: Alt) and click in the spot you'd like to use as a reference point.

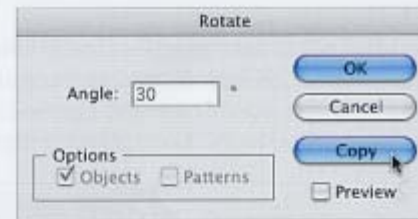
FREE TRANSFORM

Add all kinds of extra functions to the Free Transform tool by using a number of different keys after you click on a corner handle. For example, press Command (PC: Control) as you click-and-drag to distort; press Command-Option-Shift (PC: Control-Alt-Shift) to distort perspective; press Command-Option (PC: Control-Alt) to shear an object; hold Shift to scale; etc.



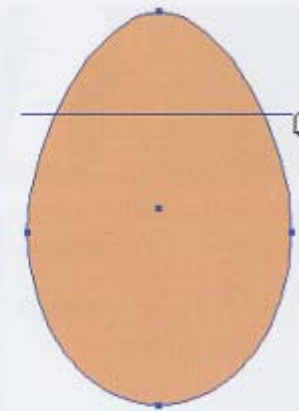
TRANSFORM AGAIN

Don't be fooled by the shortcut for this command: Command-D (PC: Control-D). In many applications that's the shortcut for Duplicate, but not in Illustrator. In this program the command is called Transform Again, and it's quite different from duplicating (in a very good way). Transform Again is a shorter way of saying "whatever you just did, do it again." So if you just rotated an object 30°, pressing Command-D (PC: Control-D) will rotate the object another 30°. The object will not be duplicated unless that's part of the original transformation. For example, if you drag an object with Option (PC: Alt) held down to move a copy, Transform Again will move another copy the exact same distance and angle. This is an extremely powerful command that has many uses! (Just remember not to do any additional operation, or you will alter your Transform Again command.)



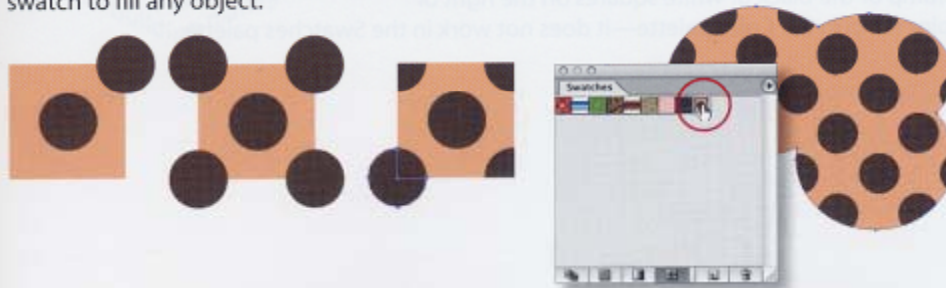
STRAIGHT CUTS

Here's a weird one: The Knife tool doesn't use the Shift key to cut in a straight line. Although every other tool uses Shift as a constraint for straight lines, with the Knife tool you hold down Option (PC: Alt) to cut in a straight line. Use Option-Shift (PC: Alt-Shift) to cut in a straight horizontal or vertical line.



MAKE YOUR OWN PATTERNS

Anything you drag into the Swatches palette will become a pattern, but it takes a bit of planning to create a seamless repeating pattern. Start by creating a square with no stroke—pick a fill color if you want your pattern to have a background. Draw the shape you want in your pattern, center it, and then copy it four times, lining up the center of one object on each corner of the square. Select all the objects and click the Divide icon in the Pathfinder palette. With the Direct Selection tool, select and delete the outer portions of the repeating objects until you end up with just the square containing the shapes (as shown in the third square below). Select all the pieces and drag them into the Swatches palette. Now you can use the pattern swatch to fill any object.





MOVE YOUR PATTERN

It's possible to transform only the pattern within an object without moving the object itself. You do this with any of the transformation tools (Rotate, Scale, Shear, etc.) while holding down the tilde (~) key. Keep the key held down as you transform—don't let go or the object will be transformed instead.



DIM IMAGES

A common approach to creating artwork in Illustrator is to import a photograph or a scanned image (File>Place) and to trace over it. You can make this procedure a little easier by putting the placed image on its own layer and then making it a template. Use the Layers palette's flyout menu to choose Template. The placed image will automatically be dimmed. To change the setting for the template, double-click on the layer in the Layers palette to open the Layer Options dialog. In the Dim Images To field, enter a percentage. Then click on the Create New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers palette and use your favorite creation tools to trace over the dimmed image.



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