

Adobe Illustrator Principles

Goal: Students become confident building clean vector artwork (logos, icons, illustrations, layouts) using professional Illustrator habits.

Outcome: Students can confidently create clean vector artwork, simple logos, icons, posters, and export properly for print and digital use.

Duration: 4-6 weeks course: 1 or 2 sessions per week. 1.5 hours per session

Each session includes: Concept (principle), Demo, Guided practice, Independent exercise, Quick critique / checkpoint, Optional homework.

Investment: 100\$/ person

Learning Objectives (what students will be able to do)

By the end, students can:

1. Navigate the Illustrator interface, panels, and shortcuts.
2. Create and edit vector shapes using core tools.
3. Use Pathfinder and Shape Builder to combine shapes.
4. Work with color (fills, strokes, swatches, gradients).
5. Trace/convert sketches into vectors.
6. Add and style type (text on path, outlines).
7. Organize artwork with layers, groups, and artboards.
8. Prepare files and export in correct formats.

Materials & Setup

- Adobe Illustrator installed (latest version preferred)
- Mouse + optional drawing tablet

- Starter assets: a simple sketch, icon reference sheet, brand colors palette
 - Folder for class files + exports
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Main Title “Think in Vector, Not Pixels”

Session 1 “Getting Comfortable”

Goals

- Understand vectors
- Learn workspace + selection
- Build simple shapes

Topics

- Vector vs raster (anchor points, scalability)
- Workspace: Tools panel, Control bar, Properties, Layers
- Zoom/pan/hand tool, artboards
- Selection tools: Selection (V), Direct Selection (A)
- Basic shapes: Rectangle, Ellipse, Polygon, Star
- Fill vs stroke, stroke weight and alignment

In-class activities

1. Interface scavenger hunt: “Find where strokes live, how to add artboards, how to align objects.”
2. Shape drill: Create a simple “robot face” using only shapes.

Mini-project: Geometric badge (circle + text + simple icon)

Homework: Recreate 3 simple icons from references using shapes only.

Session 2 Drawing & Editing Paths

Goals

- Draw custom shapes
- Edit anchors and curves
- Use pen & curvature confidently

Topics

- Pen Tool (P): straight vs curved segments
- Curvature Tool
- Add/delete/convert anchor points
- Smooth vs corner points

In-class activities

1. Trace practice: Trace a leaf and a cup outline.
2. Anchor clean-up: Convert messy paths to smooth ones.

Mini-project: Simple fruit vector (apple/orange with stem + highlights)

Homework: Vectorize a hand-drawn doodle (photo-based trace manually, no Image Trace yet).

Session 3 Shape Building & Alignment

Goals

- Combine shapes to create more complex forms
- Control layout precision

Topics

- Align panel (center, distribute, key object)

- Pathfinder (Unite, Minus Front, Intersect, Exclude)
- Shape Builder (Shift+M)
- Boolean thinking for icons

In-class activities

1. Icon construction grid: Create 4 icons (camera, chat bubble, pin, heart).
2. Before/after: Same icon via Pathfinder vs Shape Builder.

Mini-project: Icon set of 3 in a consistent style

Homework: Expand icon set to 6; keep consistent stroke and corner style.

Session 4 Color, Swatches, Gradients

Goals

- Choose + apply color systematically
- Build simple shading

Topics

- Color panel, Swatches, global swatches
- RGB vs CMYK (when to use)
- Gradients: linear, radial, freeform
- Eyedropper tool
- Recolor Artwork panel (quick palettes)

In-class activities

1. Palette build: Create a 5-color swatch group.
2. Gradient drill: Add depth to a sphere + button.

Mini-project: Flat illustration (e.g., landscape, coffee cup)

Homework: Recolor last project into 2 alternate palettes.

Session 5 Typography Basics

Goals

- Place and style type
- Integrate text with vector forms

Topics

- Type tool, point vs area text
- Character/Paragraph panels
- Type on a Path
- Outlines (create outlines for logos)
- Simple hierarchy (title/subtitle/body)

In-class activities

1. Type pairing: Choose fonts for a fictional brand.
2. Curved text exercise: Create a circular label.

Mini-project: Simple logo lockup (icon + wordmark)

Homework: Make 2 logo variations: horizontal + stacked.

Session 6 Layers, Artboards, and File Hygiene

Goals

- Organize projects clearly
- Work multi-artboard

Topics

- Layers, sublayers, naming

- Grouping vs compound paths
- Multiple artboards for versions
- Saving, packaging, linking assets

In-class activities

- Clean up a messy file together.
- Make 3 artboards: icon, logo, poster.

Homework: Submit an organized .AI file with layers labeled.

Session 7 Image Trace + Basic Effects

Goals

- Convert sketches quickly
- Add light stylistic effects without getting lost

Topics

- Image Trace presets and expand
- Cleaning traced shapes
- Effects: Offset Path, Rounded Corners, Drop Shadow (subtle)
- Appearance panel basics

Mini-project: Sticker-style illustration using trace + cleanup

Homework: Trace a simple sketch, edit it into clean vector.

Session 8 Exporting + Final Project

Goals

- Export correctly for web/print

- Apply full workflow

Topics

- Export As vs Save for Web vs Asset Export
- File formats: AI, PDF, SVG, PNG, JPG, EPS
- Resolution and scaling
- Bleed/crop marks basics for print

Final project options (pick one)

1. Brand starter kit: logo + 6 icons + color palette sheet
2. Event poster: illustration + type hierarchy + export for IG + print
3. Mini UI icon pack: 12 icons in consistent grid.

Optional Add-ons between sessions (if there's an extra time)

- Clipping masks & opacity masks
- Pattern maker
- Live Paint
- Simple mockups / placing vector into Photoshop