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12 AUGUST 2011

# How To Use The Pen Tool In Illustrator Tutorial: Part 3/3



This is Part 3 in a three-part tutorial covering the basics of the Pen tool in Adobe Illustrator. Find [Part 1 here](#) and [Part 2 here](#).

In Parts 1 and 2, you learned how to make straight lines with the Pen tool, how to make curvy lines, how to edit the anchor points and handles both during and after creating the shape, and how to combine shapes and edit their points.

In this last section of the tutorial, you will practice your Pen skills and create the cute kitten that will go inside your mug!

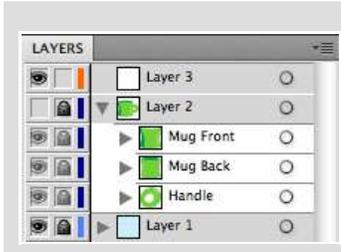


## Part 3: Making The Kitten

The kitten is made up of a body/head, two paws, and a tail. The body/head shape has added features like eyes, pink inner ears, a mouth, and a nose. Let's start with the body/head.

### Kitten Body

#### Make The Basic Body Shape



Lock the mug layer and hide it

First, lock the mug layer and hide it by clicking the eye icon next to Layer 2.

Create a new layer for our cat.

### About Vicki Wenderlich

I am an indie artist and illustrator. I create [iPhone apps](#) with my husband, who runs an [iPhone tutorial blog](#).



You can also find me on my [personal blog](#), where I talk about a wider variety of topics: favorite animals, latest projects, personal updates, and occasionally dragons.

Follow me on [Twitter](#), where I tweet on topics related to graphic design in games and iPhone apps!

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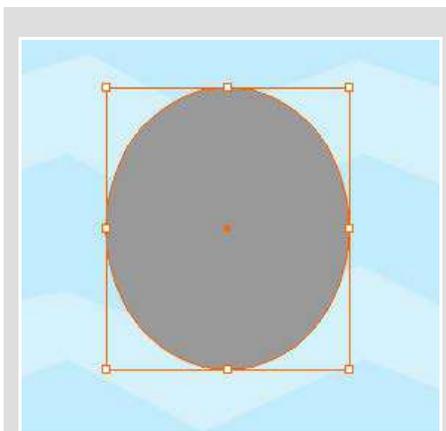
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### Drag Out An Ellipse

The cat body is mostly oval in shape, and I've learned that it is best to have a guideline for shapes rather than try to freehand them.



This ellipse will help us get the right shape for the kitten

Select the Ellipse tool (shortcut L).

Drag out an oval similar to the one as shown.

This will be our guideline for the major shape of the cat body/head.

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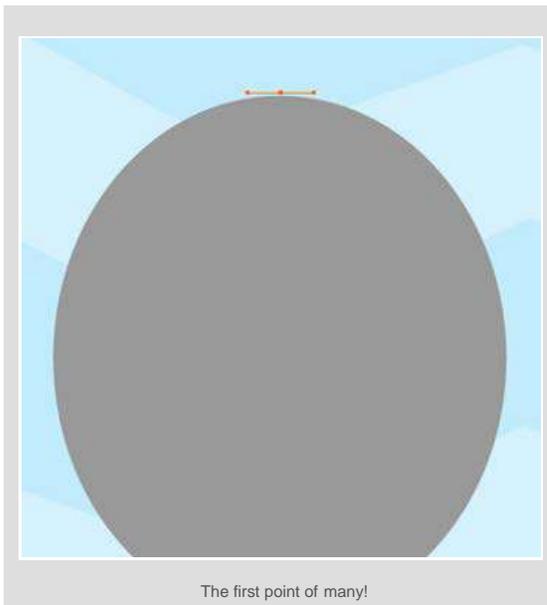
### Lock The Ellipse



Lock the ellipse in the Layers panel

Lock the ellipse layer in the Layers panel so that you don't accidentally select and move it.

### Place First Anchor



The first point of many!

Select the Direct Selection tool (shortcut A) and then the Pen tool (shortcut P).

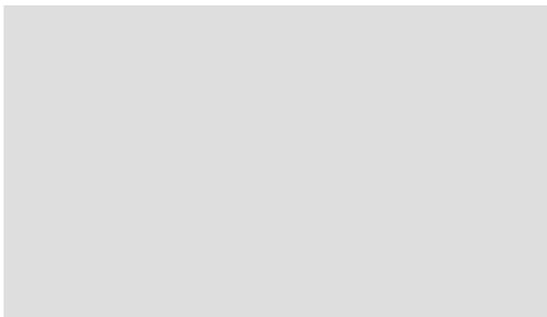
Remember that when pressing Command while using the Pen tool, it uses your last selection tool and we want that to be the Direct Selection tool.

Click and drag at the top of the oval.

This will be the top of the cat's head between the ears.

Don't make the handles too big – the ears are close by.

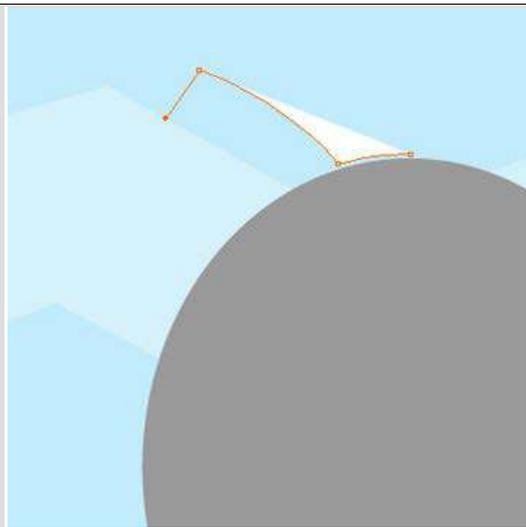
### Place, Edit, & Convert Anchors



Click and drag to the left of the first point, following the curve of the oval.

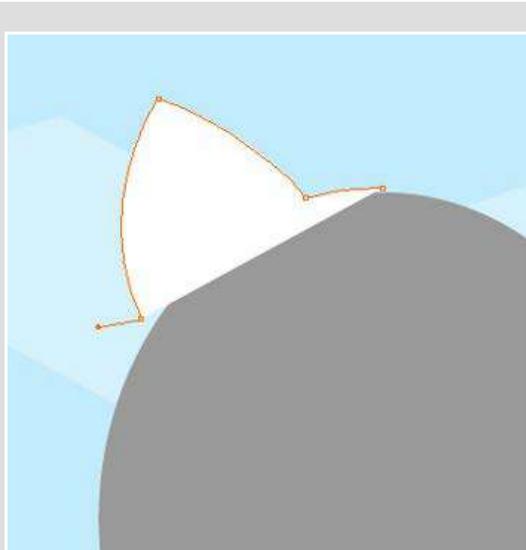
Press Option (Alt) and drag the left-most handle up, creating a sharp point. This will be the corner of your ear.

Click and drag where the top of the ear will be, and convert that point to a sharp one as shown.



Place the third point and convert the handles

### Continue Placing Points



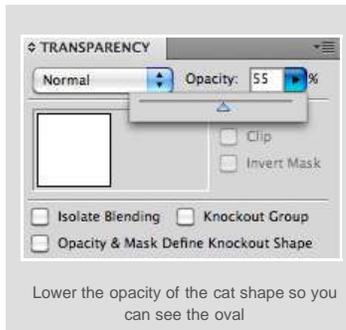
Finished the ear, move on to the fur!

Click and drag to create a third point down at the bottom of the ear.

Convert it as usual by holding down Option (Alt) and dragging one of the handles.

Notice that our cat shape is overlapping the oval. This will become a problem when it covers even more of the oval, since we are trying to follow the oval shape.

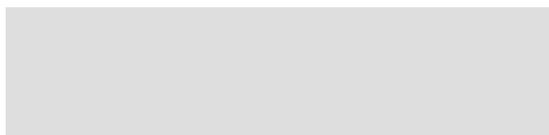
### Lower Cat Body Opacity



Go to the Transparency panel and lower it to around 50%.

This way you can see your new shape as well as the old one below it.

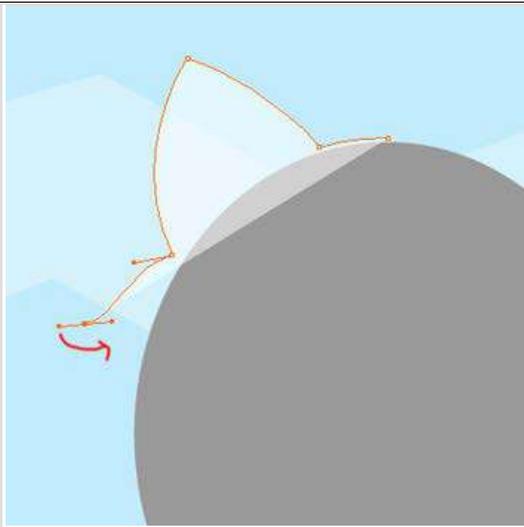
### Make Cat Fur



Now we will start making the fur part of the cat.

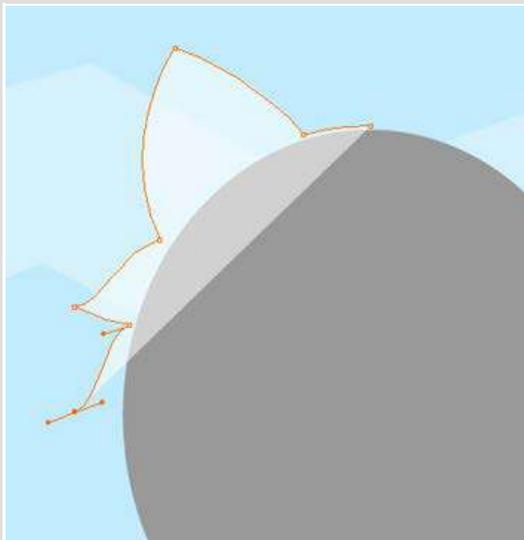
Click and drag to the left of the oval, making sure your anchor points and handles are as shown.

Convert the point, dragging the leftmost anchor



point back in towards the cat body.

Place and alter the anchor points and handles as shown

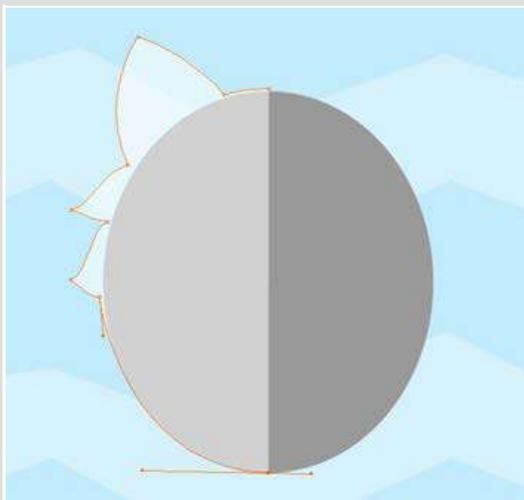


Click and drag close by the oval again.

Convert the anchor point and continue, making another tuft of fur.

Keep going!

### Round The Body

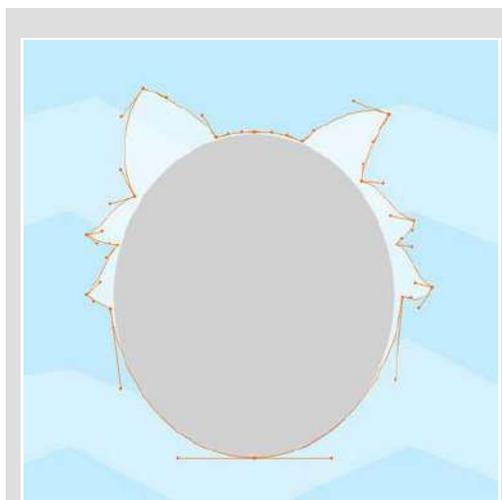


When done with the second tuft of fur, click and drag down at the bottom of the oval, as shown.

You are halfway done!

Halfway done!

## Finish The Shape



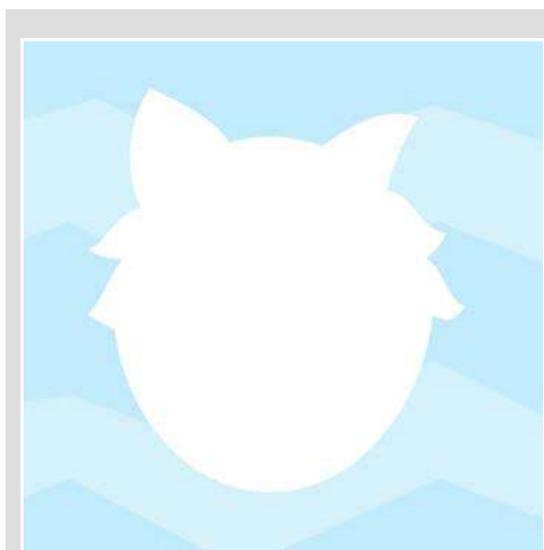
The finished shape with anchor points and handles shown

Continue placing points and converting them, controlling the handles as you go. When you are finished, you should have a shape like the one here.

If you ever accidentally switch away from the Pen tool, you can resume drawing your shape by switching back to the Pen tool and then clicking and dragging the last point you created.

Your cursor when you mouseover the last point should have a straight diagonal line pop up to the right of it – this tells you that if you click there, your shape will be continued rather than starting a new shape.

## Raise Opacity And Hide Oval



Here's the finished body/head shape

Raise the opacity of your cat body shape back to 100%.

Hide the grey oval in the Layers panel by clicking the eye icon next to it.

## Adding Details

### Inner Ear Shapes



Create the inner ear shapes

Switch to the Direct Selection tool (Shortcut A) and click somewhere off your cat body to deselect it. Click the lighter pink swatch.

Choose the Pen tool again (shortcut P – have you memorized it yet?).

For each inner ear shape, place and convert three anchor points, moving the handles into the positions shown to the left.

### Make An Eye



Create an eye shape as shown with three points.

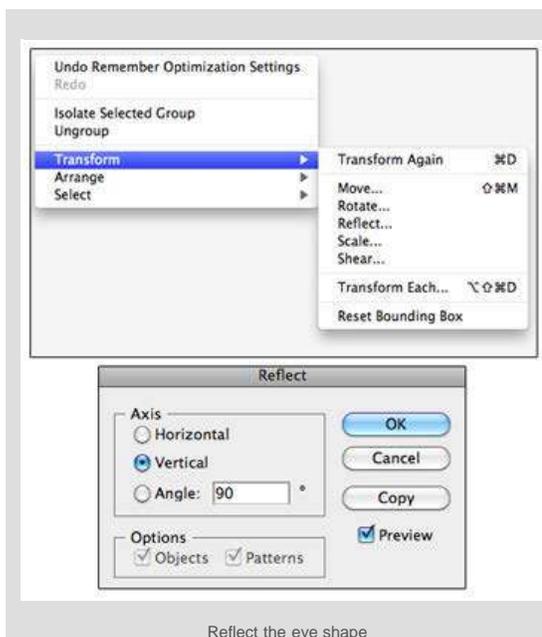
### Copy The Eye



When you are finished with it, switch to the Selection tool (shortcut V).

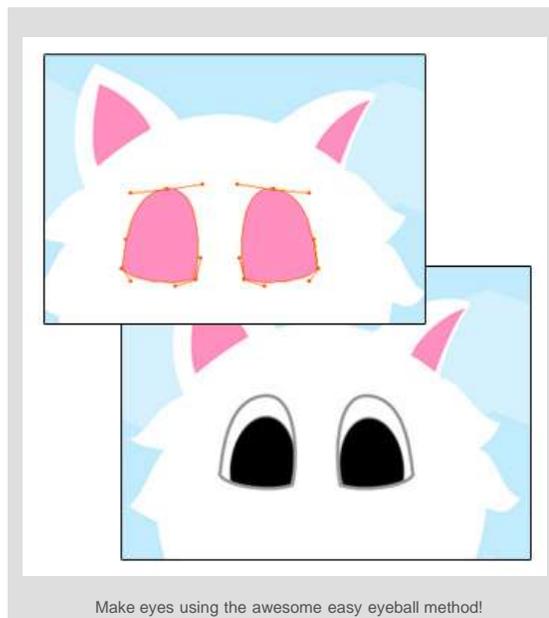
Hold down Option (Alt) and drag the eye shape to the right to create a copy.

### Reflect The Second Eye



Right-click and select Transform>Reflect.

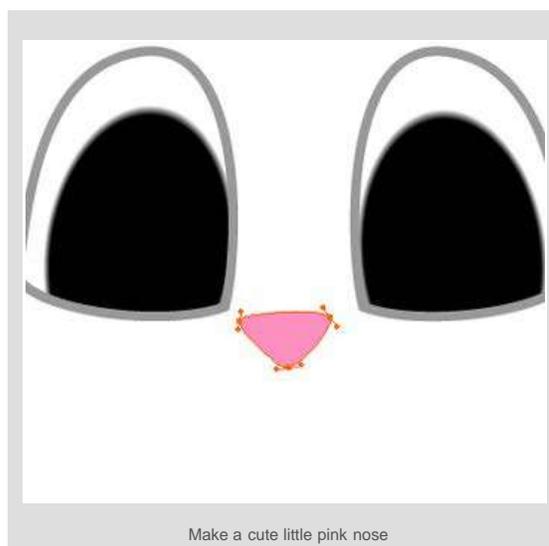
Select Vertical, and click OK.



Follow the steps in the [Awesome Easy Eyeball Tutorial](#) to make these shapes into eyes.

They have a 2 point medium grey stroke.

### Create The Nose

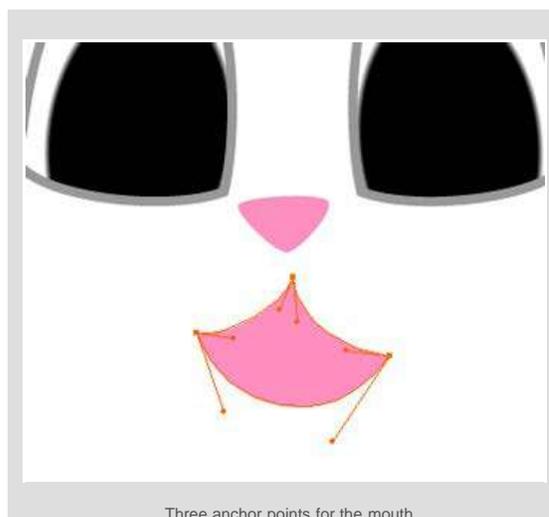


Switch back to the Pen tool and create the nose shape.

It has three smooth anchor points as shown.

Give it the light pink fill.

### Create The Mouth

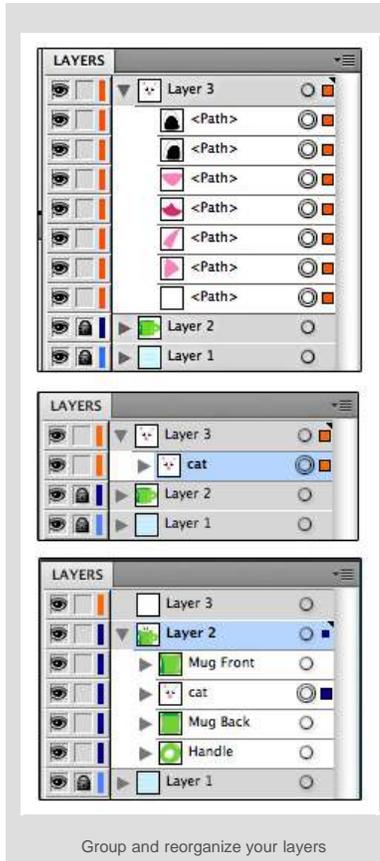


Now make the cat mouth.

These anchor points are all sharp, so convert the handles as you make the shape.

When finished, go to the Appearance panel and select the Fill. Click the darker pink swatch in the Swatches panel.

## Group The Cat Layers



Select all the layers that make up the cat in the Layers panel.

Group them by right-clicking on the canvas and selecting "Group".

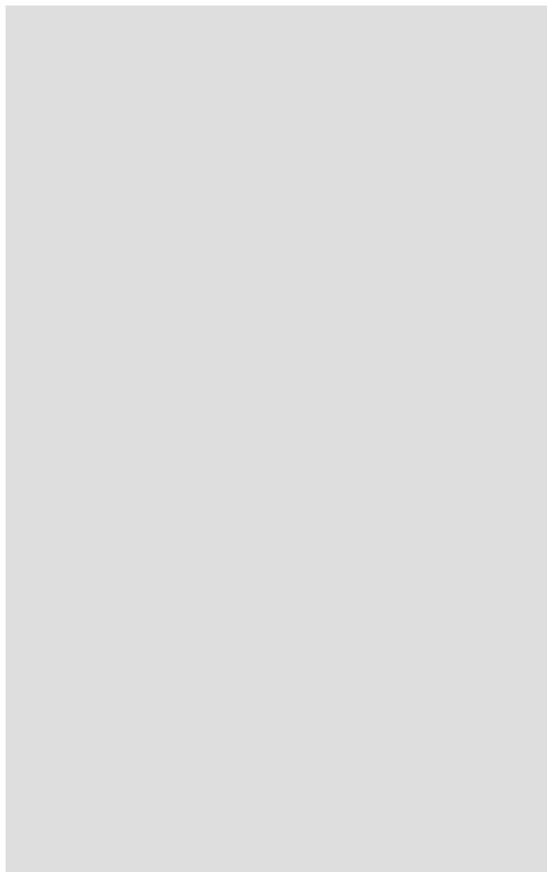
Rename the group "cat".

Turn on Layer 2 by clicking the lock icon and the empty box next to it (an eye icon should appear).

You should see your mug on the artboard now, behind your cat.

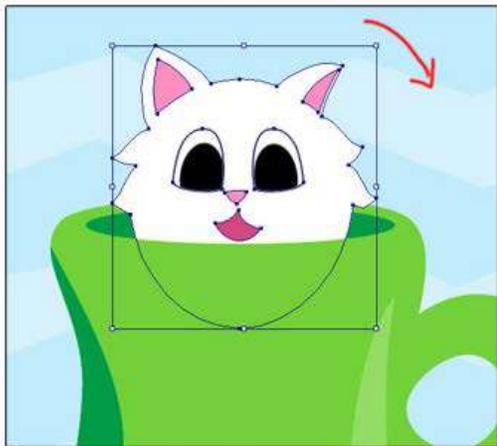
Drag the cat group down into Layer 2, underneath the Mug Front layer.

## Position and Rotate



Choose the Selection tool (Shortcut V) and drag the cat into position between the mug front and back.

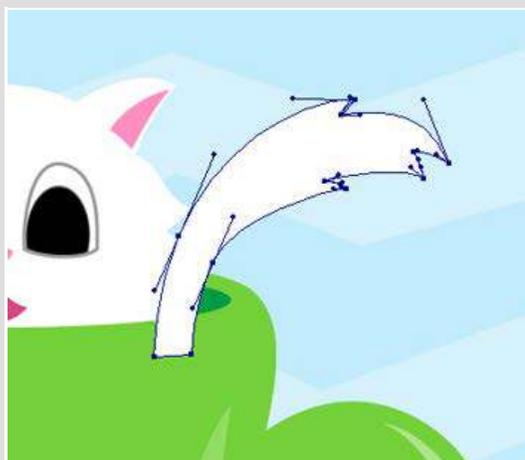
Rotate the cat slightly as shown. Tilted heads always increase cuteness!



Place and rotate the kitten so he looks cute!

## Kitten Tail and Paws

### Make The Tail



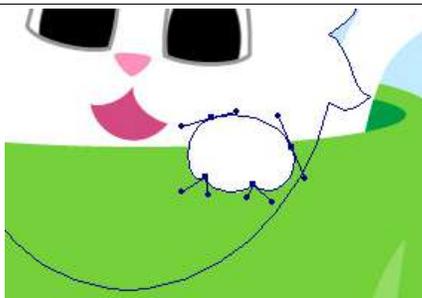
The tail's anchor points and handles

Select the Pen tool again and create the shape shown to the left. This is your kitten's tail.

When done, drag it behind your cat group in the Layers panel.

### Make The Paws

Create this shape with the pen tool. Note that it has two smooth anchor points and two sharp ones.



Choose the Direct Selection tool (shortcut A).

Hold down Option (Alt) and drag the paw to the right to copy it.

Reflect it vertically as you did with the eye shape.



### So Far, So Cute

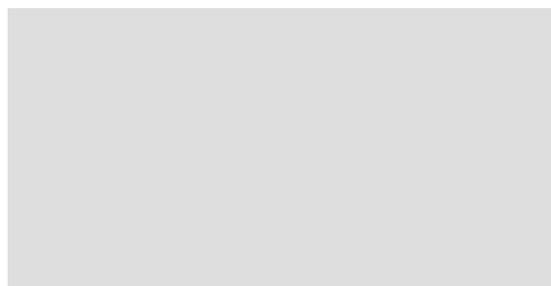
Here's what we have so far:



Pretty good, eh? But there's something missing...

Since the cat is all white, the paws and tail and cat body all blend together. Let's fix this by adding drop shadows.

### Add Drop Shadows



Switch to the Selection tool (shortcut V).

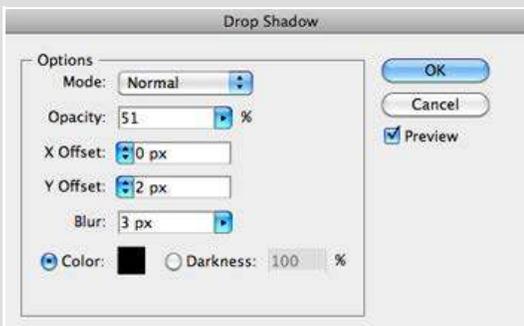
Select one of the paws.

Go up to Effect > Stylize > Drop Shadow.



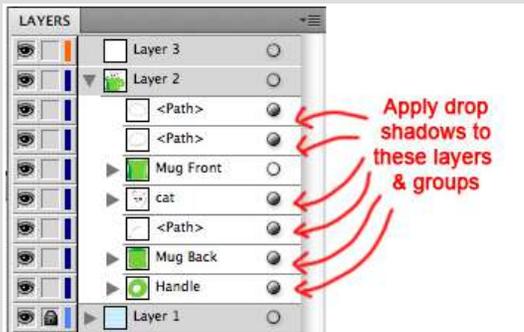
Find Drop Shadow under Effects

Change the settings so they match the ones shown here, and click OK.



Use these settings

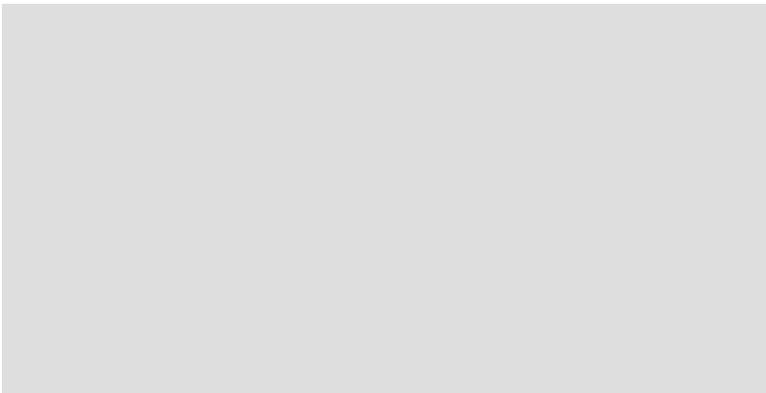
See how good that looks on the paw? Now select the other paw, go up to Effect, and click Apply Drop Shadow. That spot on the Effect menu will always have "Apply (last effect you used)". This time, it applies the drop shadow you just made to the second paw.



Apply drop shadows to these layers

Select the cat, mug front, mug back, and mug handle groups, as well as the cat tail. Go up to Effect and choose Apply Drop Shadow.

Here's what you should get:





The final Mug O' Cuteness!

And for extra credit, move your cat parts around the mug to make more cuteness:



Create any number of cute kitten poses!

**Congratulations!** You just finished an illustration that made extensive use of the Pen tool – you now have mad skillz!

Go forth and create whatever vector shapes you want, now that you know how!

If you found this tutorial helpful, or if anything is unclear, please let me know in the comments :]



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Tags: [beginner](#), [cat](#), [illustrator](#), [pen tool](#), [tutorial](#)

## 9 Comments



Brujo

August 13, 2011 at 12:34 am

Thanks Vicky 😊, I love to learn with your tutorials, a good help for beginners like me. Your work is cool!

[Reply](#)

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I'd love to hear your thoughts!



Mike

August 27, 2011 at 7:20 pm

Fantastic tutorials thank you so much! One question, when i save these created graphics in .png format for my app, should i copy it from illustrator to photoshop to do it because the sizing is confusing to me..

[Reply](#)



vwenderlich

August 27, 2011 at 7:24 pm

Mike – no, you can save it in the appropriate size right from Illustrator. Here's what you do:

- Under File, choose Save For Web & Devices
- Choose PNG-24 from the choices on the right
- Go to the "Image Size" tab (under "Color Table")
- Resize the image

You can resize it to whatever pixel dimensions you need right there. Hope that helps!

[Reply](#)



Mike

August 28, 2011 at 9:14 pm

Does this process decrease the quality of the graphics? I drew myself a cannon and after resizing it and saving it was very blurry



[Reply](#)



vwenderlich

August 30, 2011 at 4:11 am

Mike, can you give me more information about how you created the canon and saved it?

- What techniques did you use (pen tool, shape tool?)
- What size did you create it?
- What pixel size did you save it?

[Reply](#)



Rajan

February 12, 2012 at 3:17 am

Vicki,

I am getting stuck with the step "Click and drag to the left of the first point, following the curve of the oval" under "Place, Edit, & Convert Anchors". I am unable to "follow the curve" using the Pen Tool. I completed the previous step of placing the first anchor. When I perform the next step of clicking and dragging using the pen tool, I am unable to follow the curve as per your direction. Can you help me in that step please?

[Reply](#)



vwenderlich

February 13, 2012 at 6:07 pm

Hi Rajan – what I meant was that when you click and hold down the second anchor point, drag until you see the handles, and drag them so that the line is curved. Hope that helps!

[Reply](#)



DeAnne

August 14, 2012 at 10:34 am

I cannot tell you how much I love your tutorials. They're clearly written, fantastically illustrated with screen caps and work in progress. The tone is helpful and non-condescending. I just got Illustrator a few days ago...the last time I used the application was

Illustrator 88....which, really a long time ago. 😊 Yours are the first tutorials that have helped me get a handle on the tool set. Thank

you so much for taking the time to do this, and to do it so very well. If you have not considered it, I think there is an audience out there for ebooks/printed collections of your tutorials.

[Reply](#)



vwendelich

August 14, 2012 at 11:48 am

Wow, thanks DeAnne – you made my day :]

[Reply](#)

Name (required):

Email (not published):

Website (optional):

Comment:

Email me further comments: