A quick-start screenshot guide to Illustrator

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Here choose the size of your page and orientation.

You must also choose the color space of your document BEFORE you start. For online/screen only, CMYK will give more vibrant colors. However, for most print productions it must be RGB.
This toolbar provides different 'cursors'.

This is your artboard. Only content within this area will be printed or exported.

Here you can modify items you create with the left-hand tools, like colors and effects.

These buttons allow you to navigate different components of your vector graphic, like layers, artboards, and assets.

Default cursor – click here if you get lost

Basic tools for stroke, fill, and brush settings

Search Adobe Help
This is where you can see and adjust your artboard.
Common premade shapes

Makes lines or arcs

Makes text

Rotate/flip
Make a square with the object tool

Add line and fill colors with ‘swatches’

Drag the corners around to resize (hold shift to maintain aspect ratio)
Interacting with objects

Use these handles to adjust the corners into curves

Appearance panel shows you the different features of your object
Stroke = outline
Path = object type

You can also adjust the stroke (outline) here
View the order of objects and layers in the layers tab. You can switch the order of objects by dragging them up and down in the list OR by Right/Control clicking on them and moving up or back with the drop-down menu.
Show/use rulers
Click and drag from the top or side rulers to create guide lines.
Use the align menu to align objects relative to each other or to the artboard.
Free-form paths with pen tools
Use the direct selection tool to modify the node angles of your path.

Drag on either “handle” to adjust the angle.
To smooth out the line, select the smooth tool and drag across the path with the cursor.
Free-form paths with brush tool

The brush tool allows for drag-and-draw lines

You can also edit the brush stroke here

The brushes menu contains a large variety of “stroke” types

Side note: you can also use the ‘pencil’ tool to do this without access to brushes
Direct select to modify nodes.

Each blue dot is a ‘node’ that can be individually adjusted and moved.
A library of brushes is available in the library tab at the bottom of this pane.
For example, this is a ‘watercolor’ palette of brushes
Gradient fills provide a sense of depth to your objects.

Choose radial or linear gradient here.

These carrots let you edit the internal and external colors.

This diamond adjusts the rate of transition between colors.
Press “G” to access additional gradient controls.
Illustrator has many digital effects that can be applied to an object. *Blur* is a relatively simple effect that can help you achieve more depth or contrast in focus.

With the object selected, open the appearance tab and select “effects” in the lower part of the pane.
You can adjust the size of your blur effect in this popup window.
To import an image in the most “illustrator-friendly” way, use File > Place.

Placing a PDF file allows editing of content within the PDF in Illustrator (like tables or graphs).
To crop an image, use the top toolbar that appears when the image is selected.

If you do not embed your image, the image in AI is only linked to your external file, and will not carry over if the file is moved or deleted.
Making advanced shapes in Illustrator

Illustrator does these functions a little differently from Inkscape, and there are many ways to achieve the same results.

Two options:
A) Shaper tool
   → The shaper tool creates pre-made shapes based on your freehand strokes
   → These shapes are mutable and can be combined or subtracted with cursor gestures

B) Outline stroke & eraser tool
   → This can be used in any freeform shape, text, or stroke
   → Once the path is “outlined” it cannot be reshaped
The shaper tool allows you to free draw shapes and it predicts the closest standard shape.

The dotted lines showing shape outlines appear under the cursor.
Drag your cursor across lines like this to delete shape-limiting lines and combine shapes.
Combined shape using shaper tool
Option B: Outline stroke and edit with eraser
This is what your shape looks like right after outline stroke

Now you can edit the strokes with the eraser tool
Here my cursor is an eraser, and I erased the interior lines. Note that the nodes adjust to accommodate the final shape.
Now this object can be filled as a single shape
Layers can be selected in their entirety, or as single objects.

Layers can be ordered just like objects. Here Layer 2 is behind Layer 3, as you can see from the objects on the left.
There are a few different ways to export in Illustrator

1) As Artboards
2) As Assets

Common file types:
* PDF – retains Illustrator editing capacities, but can be opened by others
* PNG – smallest image file, for drafts and quick file transfers
* TIF – standard high quality image format
* SVG – [scalable vector graphic] can be imported into other graphics software and resized without pixelating (not rasterized)
Select and drag objects (as many as you want) to the Asset panel to export as an asset.

Here select the type of file and the size ratio to export assets. Select one or all of your assets to export.
Here select the type of file and file name
Select ‘Use Artboards’ to export a file for each artboard, individually (ie. Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3...)
Illustrator keyboard shortcuts (a SMALL selection)

- [ and ] keys increase and decrease the point of your cursor
- Hold shift + click/resize to lock aspect ratio
- Hold shift + drag to lock into horizontal/perpendicular line
- “x” to toggle between editing the path and editing the fill of your selection
- “v” to change to ‘normal’ selection tool
- ”p” to select pen
- “l” to select eye dropper tool
- “a” to select direct selection tool
- “g” to switch to gradient editing
- “b” to use the brush tool
- “r” to rotate
- “o” to flip
- “t” to use text tool
Resources

- [https://helpx.adobe.com/illustrator/tutorials.html](https://helpx.adobe.com/illustrator/tutorials.html)
- Adobe has TONS of FREE tutorials online
- You can also access them via the search bar: