



Drawing a Paintbrush in Illustrator

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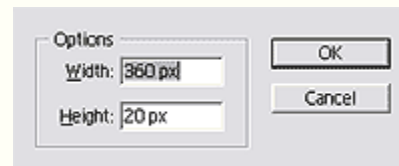


Drawing a Paintbrush with Illustrator

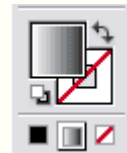
This tutorial was done in Illustrator 10, but it should also work with version 9. Versions before that, I don't know because I don't have any version before 9, so if you try it with a previous version and it does work, please [email me](#) with the version number of Illustrator and any changes you had to make to get it to work. Thanks!

Before we start, change your units preferences to **pixels** by going to **Edit > Preferences > Units and Undo**. Set **General** to **pixels** in the dropdown list. You can work without doing this, but if your preferences are in inches, make sure you type "**360 px**" or whatever (without quote marks) and not just "**360**" or Illustrator will assume you want a 360" (or point or pica or whatever) image. Since I'm making this image for the web, and not print, I'm working in pixels.

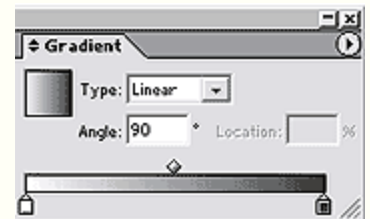
Step 1. First we'll build the brush handle. Highlight the ellipse tool in the toolbox, then click once on an empty area in your workspace or document. When the ellipse options dialog box appears, fill in 360 px for the Width and 20 px for the height. Click OK and an ellipse is created for you.



Step 2. Change the fill to gradient in the tool bar by making sure the fill (the solid square) is activated by clicking it to move it to the front, and then click on the small gradient square underneath it. Activate the stroke by clicking it and bringing it to the front, and then click the null button (the little white square with the red slash across it next to the tiny gradient button.) The ellipse fills with the default gradient, which doesn't look anything like a brush handle so we have to edit it.

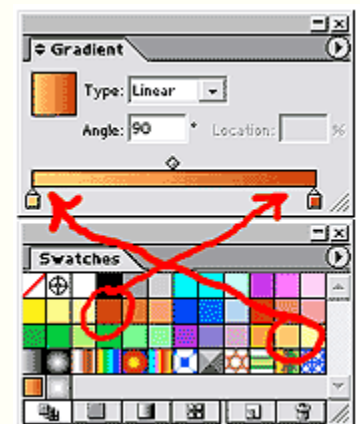


Step 3. Locate the **gradient palette**. Illustrator palettes can be moved around so if you don't see it, go to **window > gradient** to bring it to the front. Click on the two tiny arrows by the word Gradient on the tab to expand the palette. Leave the Type at **Linear** and change the **angle** to **90**



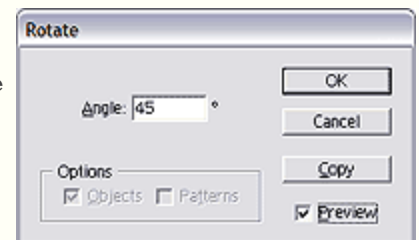
Step 4. Locate the swatches palette. (**Window > Swatches**) Grab the **brown swatch** (circled on the left) and drag it to the **right (dark) gradient stop** (little crayon under the gradient). The brown becomes the dark gradient color. Now grab the **pale orange swatch** (circled on the right) and drag it to the **left, or light colored, gradient stop**, and the light color of the gradient becomes pale orange.

Your brush handle is updated automatically with the new gradient. Definitely looking better!

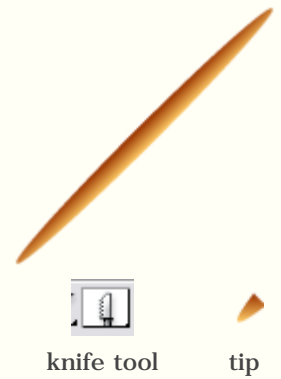


Step 5. To complete the brush handle, rotate it 45°. To do this, double click on the **rotate tool** in the toolbox to open the rotate options dialog box. (If you click on the artboard as we did to open the ellipse options, you will set the center of rotation for the handle to wherever you clicked. That's why this one opens with a double click of the tool.) Enter **45 in the Angle box**, and if you tick the "**preview**" box you can check the rotation.

Click **OK** to return to the artboard and close the dialog box.



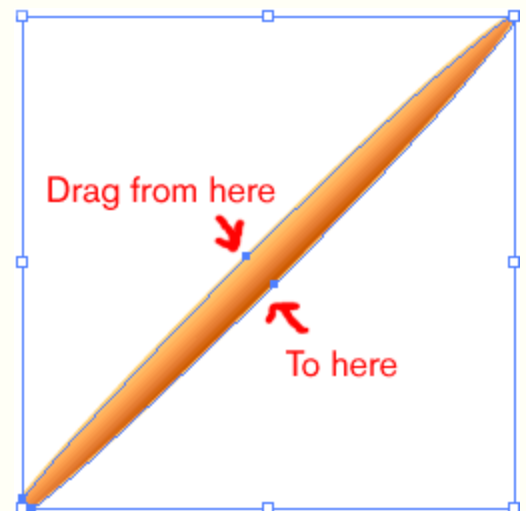
Step 6. Here's the rotated handle, shown at 50% size. Notice how pointed it is on both ends? We want to make the bristles fit better (after we build them!) so click on the knife tool (it's with the scissors tool in the toolbox. Left click on the scissors tool, and a flyout will appear with the knife tool in it. Slide the mouse to the knife tool, and let up on the mouse button. The active tool is now the knife, and your cursor turns into a knife. Select the brush handle, and then click on the knife tool to activate it. Run the knife cursor across the end of the brush handle at a 45° angle just a bit from the end to square off the end of the handle. Press V to get the move tool back, click once on the artboard to de-select everything and then click on the tip we just cut off to select it, and drag it away from the rest of the handle and delete it.



Step 7. Now our brush has a blunt end we can attach bristles to, but what happened to our nice gradient? We'll fix that next.



Step 8. Choose the **Gradient tool** in the toolbox (kb shortcut **G**). With the brush handle selected, drag the gradient tool across the center (the short way) at a 45° angle. Since we rotated the handle at a 45° angle, center mark to center mark is a 45° angle as well, so drag from the top one to the bottom one, as in the illustration to the right, to restore the gradient to the correct angle. Now we have a handle, let's move on to [part two](#) and make some bristles.



[On to part two to construct the bristles](#)

[Paintbrush part two](#)

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Illustrator

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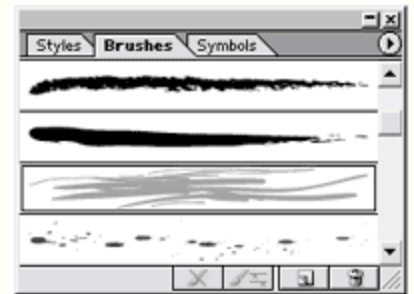
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Constructing the Bristles

Step 9. The bristles are a simple brush stroke, so make sure nothing is selected on the art board by clicking in an empty spot with the move tool (black arrow). The next step is to select the **paintbrush** from the **toolbox** (**KB shortcut B**). Open the **brushes palette** (**Window > Brushes** or **F5** on the keyboard). Click the tiny arrow on the right side of the top of the brushes palette and make sure "Show art brushes" has a check mark by it. Scroll down to the bristly looking stroke like the one I have selected and click on it to select it. In your color palette at the bottom of the toolbox, change the color of the stroke to brown and the fill to none. (If you aren't using Illustrator 10, you won't have the Symbols tab.)



Step 10. Draw several curved strokes with the brush, so you have something similar to this. Select all of them by drawing a marquee around them with the move tool. Then go to **Object > Arrange > Group**. You may notice that the bristles are paler than the brown color you have for the stroke...that's the nature of this particular brush so that's normal.



Step 11. It's nice, and looks like bristles, but the top, where it attaches to the brush handle, is a bit wild. We'll make a **clipping mask** to tame it a bit and control the shape. Select the **pencil tool** from the toolbox (**KB shortcut N** Why? I haven't a clue!). This next part will be easier if you **set the pencil tool preferences** a little different than the default. You can change it back later, if you want. Double click on the pencil tool in the toolbox, and the **pencil options** will open. **Uncheck "Keep selected" and "Edit selected paths"**. This will allow us to draw two paths that touch but will stay as two paths so we can join them the way we need them to be joined.

Step 12. Draw a smooth curved path like this one:



Step 13. Draw another one under it to complete the curve. Actually they should be very close together so you can match up the edges.



Step 14. Move them very close together, if need be.



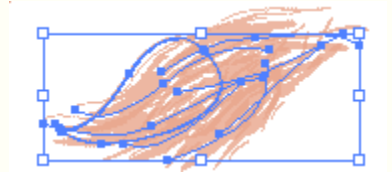
Step 15. Use the **lasso tool (KB shortcut Q)** and **draw a lasso around the two open ends** on the left side of the two open paths, and then go to **Object > Path > Join**, or type **Cntl/Command+J** to join them. Repeat the procedure with the two end points on the right side of the paths. Now you have one path, which we'll use as a **clipping mask**.



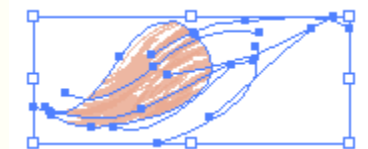
Step 13. Position the new clipping mask we just made over the bristles we did earlier. Keep in mind that whatever is outside the clipping mask won't show, so position it where you get the best shape for the bristles inside the mask.



Step 14. Draw a marquee with the move tool (black arrow) around the clipping mask and the bristles to select them. Your clipping mask is on top, and the bristles should still be grouped from Step 10.



Step 15. Go to **Object > Clipping Mask > Make**. The area outside the mask become invisible. As you can see from the paths to the right, it's still there, you just can't see it.



Deselect by clicking on an empty part of the art board, and you can see the shape of the bristles. Now we can move on to [part three](#) and make the metal collar that holds the bristles to the brush, and put it all together.



[On to part three to construct the metal collar](#)

[Paintbrush part 1](#)

[Paintbrush part 3](#)

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Constructing the Metal Collar and Assembling the Brush

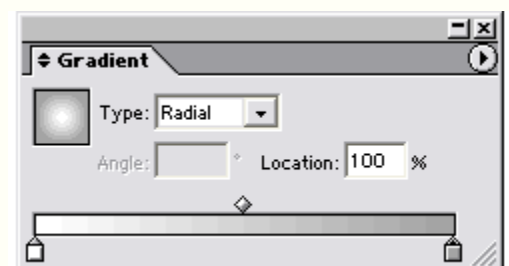
Step 16. Access the **rounded rectangle** tool by holding the mouse button down over the rectangle in the toolbox and when the flyout opens, slide the mouse to the rounded rectangle. Release the mouse button to select it, and then click on an empty part of the art board to open the rounded rectangle options. Set the options the same as we did for the ellipse for the brush handle, but make it **16px by 2 px**, with a corner radius of **2px**. (Remember to type "16px" etc. if you haven't got your preferences in the units and undo set to pixels.) You might want to zoom in (hold down the spacebar and then the control key to temporarily change to the **zoom** tool) so you can see better. The one on the right here has been scaled to 200% so you can see it better on the webpage. It's at the default setting of white fill and 1 point black stroke, but we'll be changing that.



Step 17. In the swatches palette select the black and white radial gradient for the fill. It will be too dark though so we'll change the gradient colors as we did for the brush handle. First change the stroke to gray, which is to the right of black in the swatches palette, and next we'll edit the gradient.



Step 18. Open the swatches palette, and the gradient options as we did before and drag the gray swatch (just to the right of the black one, same gray as we used for the stroke) to the black gradient stop on the far right side of the gradient ramp in the gradient palette. Your gradient turns to a white-to-silver gradient from the white-to-black one it was, and so does the rounded rectangle, as shown below.



Step 19. Now with the silvery rectangle selected, use the **move tool (V)** and start to **drag** it, then **hold down** the **ALT** key, then the **SHIFT** key. Holding the **ALT** key will make a **duplicate**; holding down **SHIFT** as well will **constrain** the copy to a **90° angle** if you drag down. (Or a 45° angle if you happen to be dragging at an angle that is not a right angle). Stop when the duplicate is just touching the original.

When using the **ALT+Drag** method of duplicating make sure to let up on the modifier key or keys (in this case, both the **SHIFT** and **ALT**) **BEFORE** you release the mouse button. Don't worry, it's easier than it sounds and once you do it a couple times it's instinctive.

Now you've got two rings for the collar.

Step 20. Hit **Ctrl+D** to make two more copies, perfectly aligned. (**Ctrl+D** always repeats your last command.) Now you have a stack of four rectangles like the ones on the right. Draw a marquee around the four rectangles, and go to **Object > Group** (or type **Ctrl+G**) to group them.

Step 21. Double click on the rotate tool as we did before and set the rotation angle to **-45°**. Tick the **preview box** to make sure the rectangle group looks like the one on the right.

Step 22. Position the bristles at the left end of the handle. If you need to make the bristles be behind the handle, with the bristles selected, go to **Object > Arrange > Send to Back**.

You'll probably have to do that because Illustrator keeps track of the order in which you create objects, and each one goes on top of the last one. We made the handle before we made the bristles so the handle will be behind the bristles.



Step 23. Drag the rectangles over to the brush, and position them on the lower edge of the handle as shown. If your bristles seem too large, select them and with the move tool (V) resize them a bit until they look in perspective to you. Select the handle, bristles and metal collar by dragging a marquee around them and then with them all selected, go to **Object > Group**, or type **Cntl+G**.



Step 24. That's it! The brush is done! If you want, choose the brush tool from the toolbox, and a brush stroke from the brush palette, and paint a wavy line to be the paint. Color it whatever color you wish.



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