PR 488: INTRO TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION

ILLUSTRATOR BASICS

REMEMBER WHAT ILLUSTRATOR IS GOOD FOR!

▸ As the name suggests, it's good for drawing stuff. It's the preferred program for creating logos or illustrations, or taking something hand-drawn and digitizing it.

▸ Illustrator is a **vector-based** program, which means you can scale up your work to your heart's content.

▸ One-page layouts and small blocks of text work best in Illustrator.

QUICK TIPS

▸ You can customize your panels however you want to, but the most recommended one is "Typography." It will give you access to the typography tools, color tools, and layers much more quickly.

▸ Just like in Photoshop, you can hit Command + R (Mac) or Control + R (PC) to make your rulers visible.

QUICK TIPS

▸ Helpful panels to have open if they're not open already: Swatches, Character, Paragraph, Layers. In the skinnier bar, it's helpful to have: Pathfinder, Stroke, Gradient, Transparency, and Appearance. If you can't find these panels, go to Window and find the appropriate panel to open it.

▸ Go to Illustrator CC > Preferences > Appearance of Black to toggle between Rich Black (100% CMYK) and 100% Black. Rich Black is darker than 100% K.

DOCUMENT SETUP

PRESET DETAILS

Untitled-1

Width
8.5   Inches

Height   Orientation   Artboards
11   1

Bleed
Top   Bottom
0   0
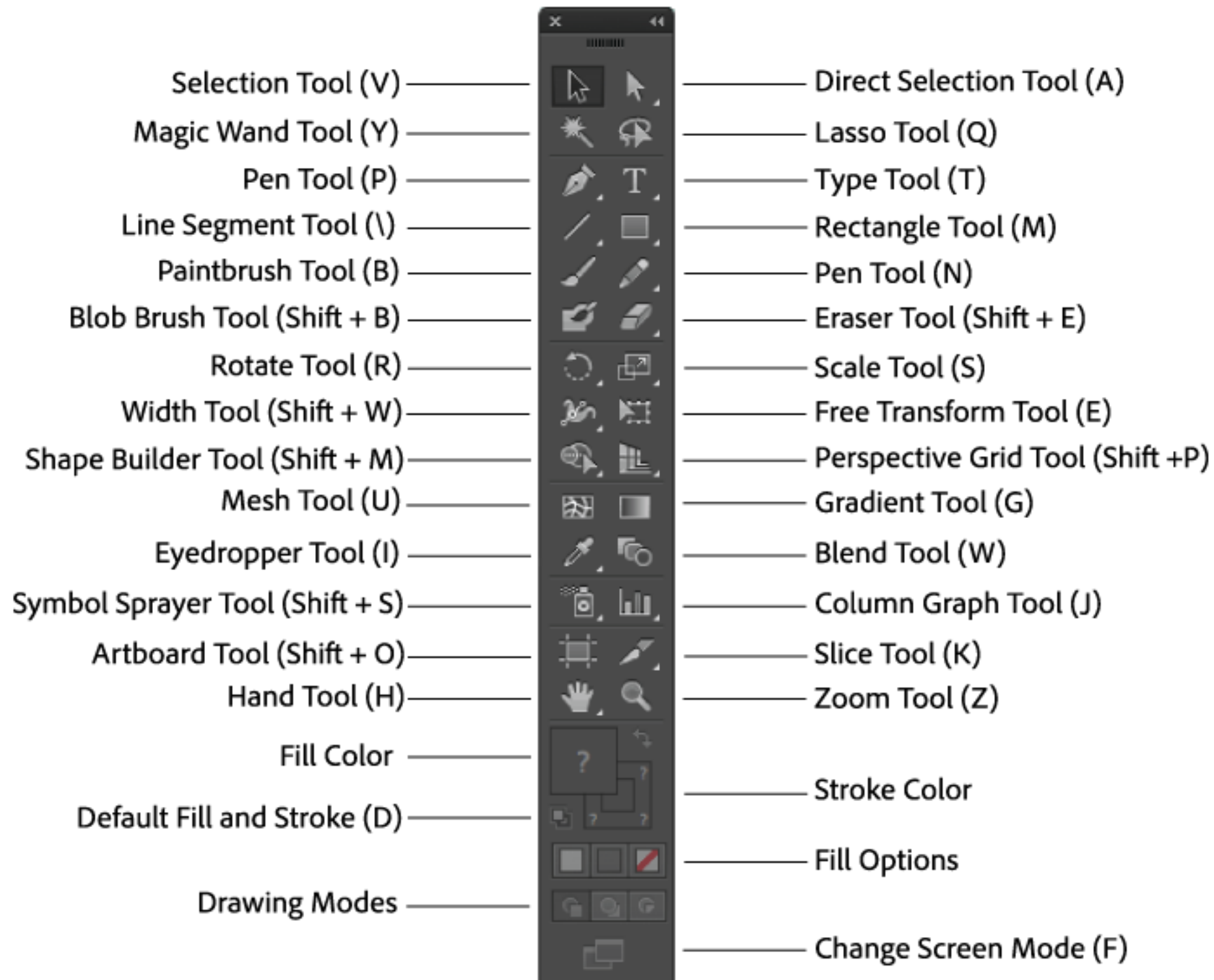
Left   Right
0   0

Color Mode
CMYK Color

More Settings

▸ Setting up a document is similar to Photoshop. The main difference is that Illustrator usually defaults to print settings and CMYK color.

▸ Unlike Photoshop, you can set the bleed right in the document setup screen. Again, Illustrator is used primarily for print work, so that's why the bleed is much easier to find.

▸ If you're looking for resolution, click "More Settings." It's almost always set to 300 dpi by default.

ILLUSTRATOR TOOLS

Selection Tool (V) ———————————— ———————— Direct Selection Tool (A)

Magic Wand Tool (Y) ———————————— ———————— Lasso Tool (Q)

Pen Tool (P) ———————————— ———————— Type Tool (T)

Line Segment Tool (\) ———————————— ———————— Rectangle Tool (M)

Paintbrush Tool (B) ———————————— ———————— Pen Tool (N)

Blob Brush Tool (Shift + B) ———————————— ———————— Eraser Tool (Shift + E)

Rotate Tool (R) ———————————— ———————— Scale Tool (S)

Width Tool (Shift + W) ———————————— ———————— Free Transform Tool (E)

Shape Builder Tool (Shift + M) ———————————— ———————— Perspective Grid Tool (Shift +P)

Mesh Tool (U) ———————————— ———————— Gradient Tool (G)

Eyedropper Tool (I) ———————————— ———————— Blend Tool (W)

Symbol Sprayer Tool (Shift + S) ———————————— ———————— Column Graph Tool (J)

Artboard Tool (Shift + O) ———————————— ———————— Slice Tool (K)

Hand Tool (H) ———————————— ———————— Zoom Tool (Z)

Fill Color ————————————

Default Fill and Stroke (D) ———————————— ———————— Stroke Color

Fill Options ————————————

Drawing Modes ————————————

———————— Change Screen Mode (F)

COMMON SHORTCUTS

FUNCTION	MAC OS	WINDOWS
View Artwork at 100% Magnification	Command + 1	Ctrl + 1
Fit Artwork on Screen	Command + 0	Ctrl + 0
Temporarily Switch to Hand Tool while Drawing	Spacebar	Spacebar
Zoom In on Document	Command + (+)	Ctrl + (+)
Zoom Out on Document	Command + (-)	Ctrl + (-)
Lock selected Artwork	Command + 2	Ctrl + 2
Lock All Artwork	Command + Shift + Option + 2	Ctrl + Shift + Alt + 2
Unlock all Artwork	Command + Option + 2	Ctrl + Alt + 2
Duplicate an Object	Option + Drag	Alt + Drag
Change pointer to Crosshair when Selecting	Caps Lock	Caps Lock

OTHER HELPFUL THINGS

▸ Layers aren't as important in Illustrator as they are in Photoshop. It's rare you'll make an adjustment using a layer; you'll usually just manipulate the shape itself.

▸ Learn the difference between the Selection Tool (filled arrow) and the Direct Selection Tool (white arrow). The filled arrow selects an entire object, while the white arrow is for selecting a specific handle or point in an object.

WORKING WITH READY–MADE OR IMPORTED ARTWORK

If you prefer drawing and scanning your art into Illustrator, or you have elements or icons you've gathered from elsewhere (royalty-free, of course) and want to work with them in your Illustrator composition, you have three main options:

▸ Using the Image Trace tool to make a vector version of your drawing or found art.

▸ Importing your image into an Illustrator file and using the pen tool to trace an outline of the shape.

▸ Importing your image into Illustrator and reconstructing it using simple shapes.

LIVE TRACING (AKA IMAGE TRACING)

If you're more comfortable sketching with pen and paper, you can also open your drawing in Illustrator and use the Image Trace option.

▸ You don't need to scan your artwork; a good-quality photograph of your art will do.

▸ For best results, ink your design (if you drew it with pencil originally).

▸ Make sure you have high contrast between the drawing and the paper, and take a picture in good lighting.

LIVE TRACING (AKA IMAGE TRACING)

When you do an image trace in Illustrator, you have several options. The default is to make it a black-and-white image, but there are several modes to choose from. Make sure you have the image selected with the selection tool (black arrow). Either click the dropdown button next to the Image Trace button in the top menu bar:
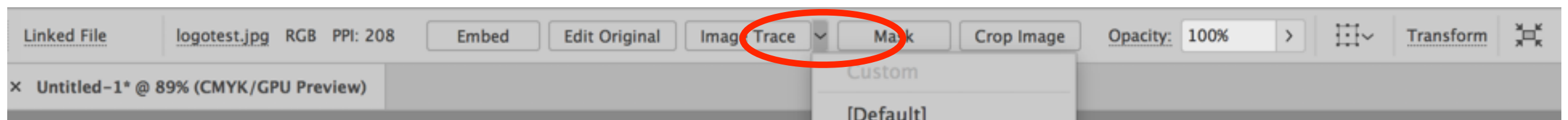
… or if you don't see that menu, go to Window > Image Trace to bring up the image trace options.

LIVE TRACING (AKA IMAGE TRACING)

Choose different modes until you get the results you like. If you have color in your drawing, you may need to use 3-color, 6-color, or 16-color mode, or if none of those work, try High Fidelity Photo.

Once you've made your trace and you're satisfied with it, HIT THE EXPAND BUTTON at the very top, or with the object still selected, go to Object > Image Trace > Expand.

You won't be able to manipulate individual paths or pieces of your trace if you don't expand your trace first!

LIVE TRACING (AKA IMAGE TRACING)

After you've expanded your Image Trace, you have a few options:

▸ Select your artwork with the selection arrow and go to Object > Path > Simplify. This can sometimes help you smooth out corners or rough edges.

▸ Use the Scissors or Knife tools to alter your paths and create new paths and shapes. A handy reference is [here](#).

LIVE PAINT

After creating an image trace, you can color it in by selecting individual paths or shapes and changing colors. But sometimes, this doesn't work if you have small gaps in your drawing, or the trace doesn't recognize an open space in your drawing as a shape (like the inside of an O, for example).

For instances of that, there is live paint. Live Paint can't fix everything, but it may work in some instances. When you're done with your Live Paint, don't forget to go to Object > Live Paint > Expand.

LIVE PAINT

To use Live Paint, select the artwork you wish to paint with the selection tool. Then, go to Object > Live Paint > Make. You'll know Live Paint mode is in use when your handles change and have a star-like pattern inside them:

From here, you can choose a color and roll over the parts you want to paint. To do that, it's easiest to use the Live Paint Bucket tool, which looks like this:

This tool is hiding beneath the Shape Builder tool, which looks like this: Hold down this tool to reveal the Live Paint Bucket.

LIVE PAINT

The Live Paint Bucket can be a little squirrelly (steady wrists and precise pointing devices help), but you'll be able to see what parts of your drawing can be painted in when you roll over your drawing and see a red outline:
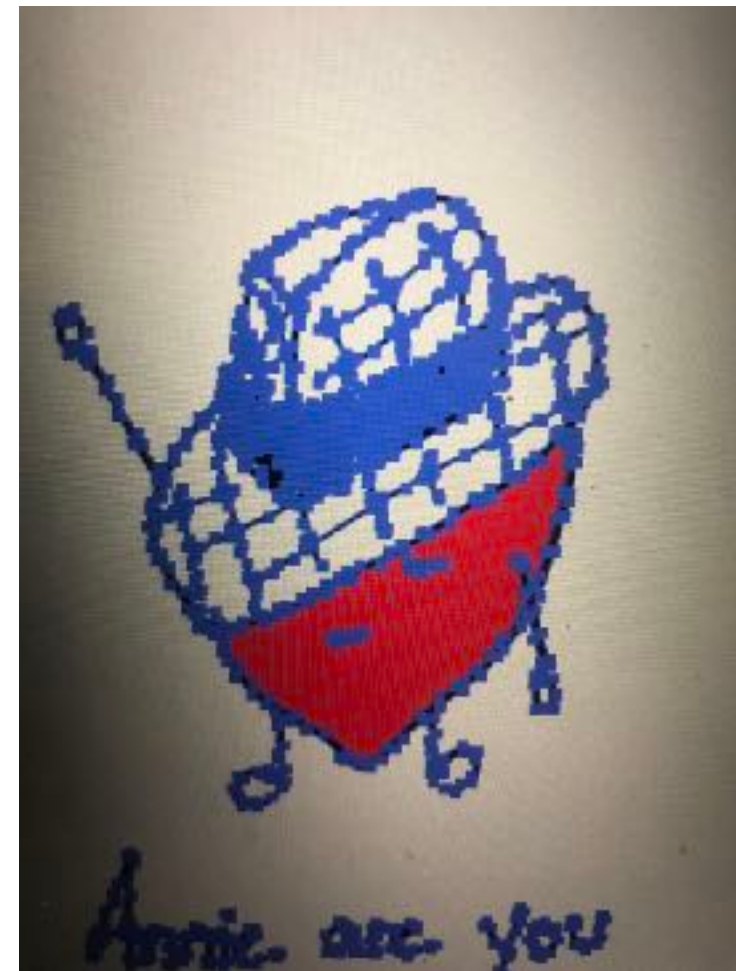
SHAPES AND THE PATHFINDER TOOL

▸ Shapes are the building blocks of Illustrator. You can combine simple shapes to create more complex shapes, like flowers, clouds, even people. Learn to look at an object and think of all the different shapes that make up that object, and drawing becomes much easier in Illustrator.

▸ Group your shapes together if you want to move them as a whole. Use the Selection Tool (dark arrow) to select all the shapes you want together and hit Control/Command + G to group them. You'll also see that they're a group in your Layers panel.

SHAPES AND THE PATHFINDER TOOL

▸ The Pathfinder tool is key when it comes to combining shapes. With it, you can cut parts out of a shape (for instance, creating a donut by cutting the middle of a circle out with a smaller circle). Creating complex shapes in this fashion is sometimes more powerful than simply creating groups because you can control color fills and strokes much more easily.

BRINGING IN OUTSIDE ASSETS

If you're going to try to trace a shape, it's helpful to bring in an image and lock it down in the background. To do this, simply drag your image onto your empty canvas. Embed it (click Embed in the top bar).

Then, under layers, click the tiny arrow to expand the objects inside that layer. Find your image and click the empty box next to the eyeball. You should see a lock when you click the empty box. That will lock the image in place so you can trace over it without moving it by accident.
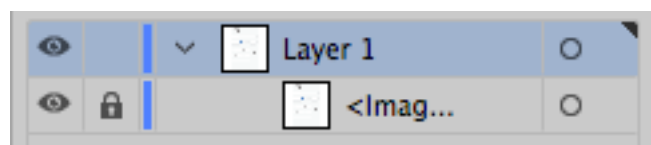
FLOURISHES

▸ You can open the Brushes panel to add illustrative touches to shapes. For instance, you can use a charcoal brush to give a box a stroke that looks hand-drawn, or use a pattern brush to give a shape a distinct border. There are tons of free brushes for use in Illustrator if you want to find them on Adobe Stock or on the internet.

▸ The Symbols panel has small symbols you can use if you want to spread them randomly over your project, or use a single symbol. These are essentially fancy shapes. One of the stock symbols is an inkblot, for instance, if you wanted quick ink spatter. To use a symbol, click the Symbol Sprayer tool (it looks like a spray can). Click once for one symbol, click and drag to randomly spray them around. If you spray symbols, they cannot be individually selected.

KNOW YOUR FORMATS!

▸ **AI:** The native Illustrator format. Preserves all layers. It's common to have one version that had all the fonts outlined and one version that doesn't so you can actually edit the type. This is also the file type that often gets linked and embedded in Photoshop documents or InDesign documents.

▸ **PDF:** Similar to Photoshop, saving to a PDF will usually keep your font problems to a minimum. You can often edit these PDFs directly in Illustrator too if you check the "preserve layers" option.

KNOW YOUR FORMATS!

▸ **EPS:** Sometimes people request EPS versions of a logo. Hit "Save As" and save it as an EPS. This isn't as common as it used to be, though.

▸ **JPG/PNG:** You can export your AI document into JPG or PNG if it's going to be used on a website. Keep in mind, though, that once you export it to one of these formats, you lose the ability to resize without losing quality. It becomes a raster file once you export it in these formats, so make sure it's the size you need it in.