

A Broad Selection of Selection Tools

Illustrator's toolbox includes five tools just for selecting: selection, direct selection, group selection, lasso, and direct lasso. The selection and lasso tools are pretty self-explanatory, and the direct selection tool is mainly used to edit an object's points and paths. If you have a group of objects within other groups, you can sequentially select and add the next group in the hierarchy by using the group-selection tool, which can be found in the direct selection tool pull-out.

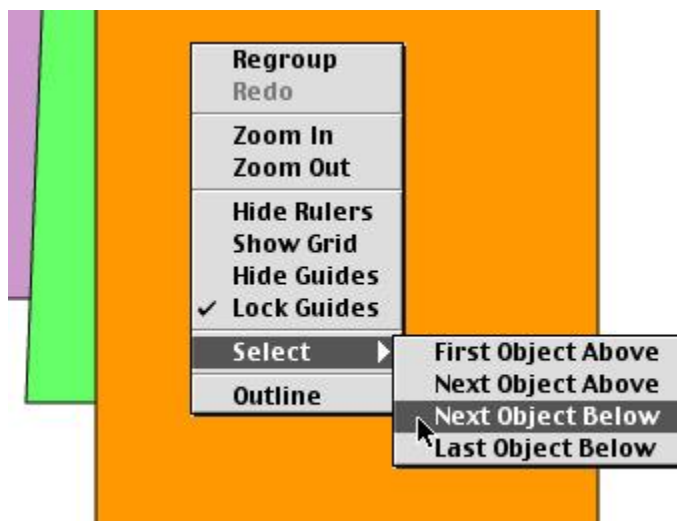


All of the selection tools are nestled at the top of the Illustrator toolbar.

All of these tools perform well in their own right, but they can seem rather limited when you attempt a more complex task such as selecting an object obscured by another. This is where the "Next Object..." command comes in handy.

To selecting an object below another object, do the following:

1. Position the selection tool over the top object, the object above the one you want to select.
2. Ctrl-click (Mac)/Right-click (Windows) to open the contextual menu (don't move your cursor as you do this). Choose the Select submenu.
3. Choose "Next Object Below" from the Select submenu. Keep in mind that this command only works within one layer. If you are trying to select between multiple layers, try using the Layers palette.



The contextual menu offers up a Select submenu for getting at those hard-to-reach areas.

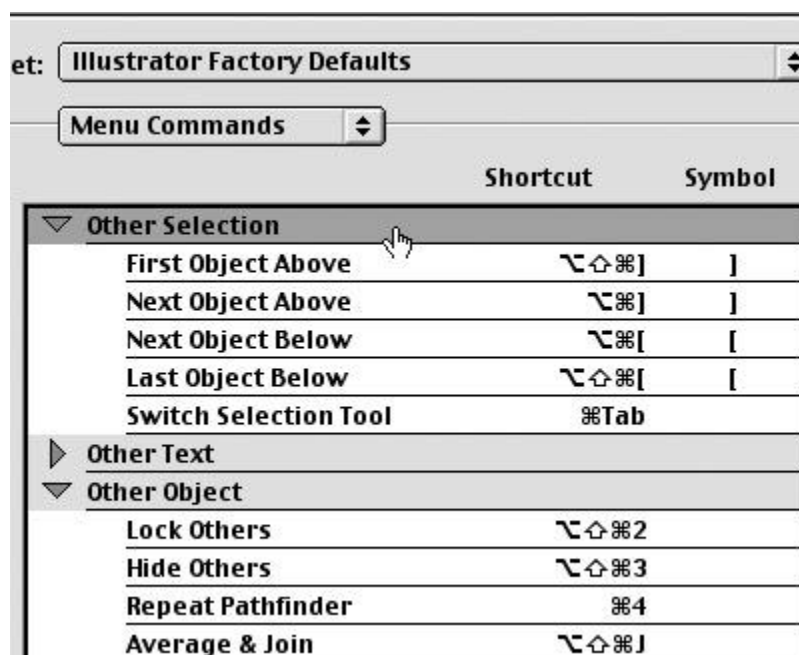
Lock 'em or Make 'em Disappear - Two of the most useful tools for isolating selections are the Lock and Hide commands. Both commands have been around in virtually their present form since the earliest incarnations of Illustrator. In fact, it would be tough to find any old-school Illustrator user who doesn't rely on these two commands just as much as the pen tool. Their usefulness is found in the sheer simplicity of what they do.

The Lock command makes objects visible but unselectable. To lock an object or series of objects, simply select the objects and then choose Object>Lock from the main menu. The lock command is a great, in-the-moment method to quickly get objects out of your way, but an even more powerful option lurks just a little-known key combination away: Select the object you want, and click Shift-Option-Command-2 (Mac) or Shift-Option-Ctrl-2 (Windows), and all other objects on the page will be locked. This allows you to concentrate your efforts on the objects selected. When you're ready to select those objects again, choose Object>Unlock All.



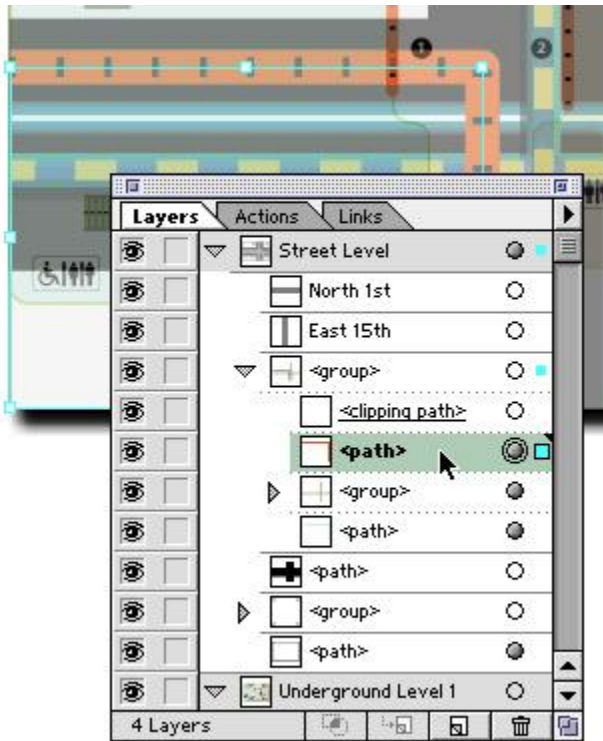
The Lock and Hide commands can be found under the Object menu, but the keyboard shortcuts are fairly easy to remember.

The Hide command works in similar fashion as Lock but instead makes the objects invisible and unselectable. To hide selected objects, choose Object>Hide Selection from the main menu. A companion command for the lock all deselected artwork exists as well: Try Shift-Option-Command-3 (Mac) or Shift-Option-Control-3 (Windows) to hide all unselected artwork.



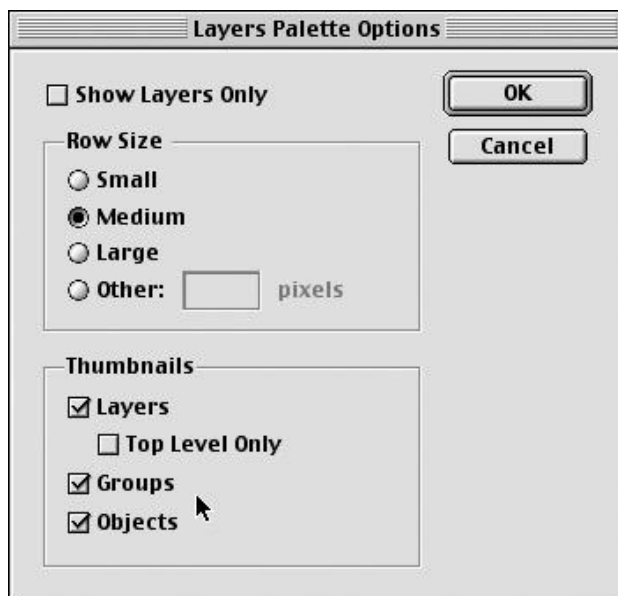
Layers Are Your Friends - Layers can be your best friend if you understand what they can do for you. Photoshop forces you to work with layers when using multiple objects, but because layers are relatively new to Illustrator, Adobe has wisely made their use optional, to avoid disgruntling longtime Illustrator users. Whether you've thought in Beziér for years or are just

now picking up your first pen tool, however, layers provide a level of organization that can make your life easier. Not only do layers provide hierarchical organization and selective displaying and printing of objects, they also afford a great way to quickly select and edit specific objects. It may take a little forethought and discipline on your part to get into the habit of using layers, but ultimately the rewards will far outweigh the effort of getting up to speed.



The Layers palette can show objects by group within each layer.

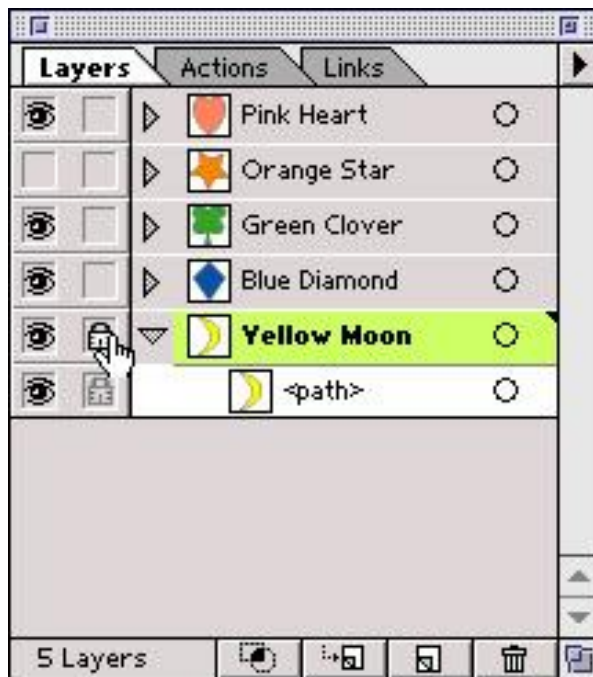
In Illustrator 9, Adobe has done an exceptional job of super-charging the Layers palette. A complete list of all the objects in your document is available, and objects and groups appear as sub-layers to their originating layer. Although this may seem like overkill to some, it provides a great way to get to a path nested deep below several other paths. If it all becomes too much for you, you can always turn off these options within the Layers Palette Options found in the Layer palette's pull-down menu.



Layer Palette Options lets you control how much information the Layers palette gives you about objects.

It's a good idea to get in the habit of using layers to organize your objects manually despite Illustrator's automatic object categorization: Even with all its polish and innovation, Illustrator 9 still isn't smart enough to place your related objects onto the same layer. The ability to organize your own layers using a hierarchy that makes sense to you will come in handy.

Locking, hiding, previewing, and selecting objects within the Layers palette can all be done using a few simple mouse-clicks or keyboard shortcuts.



The Layers palette offers numerous possibilities for easily selecting, hiding, or locking down your layers.

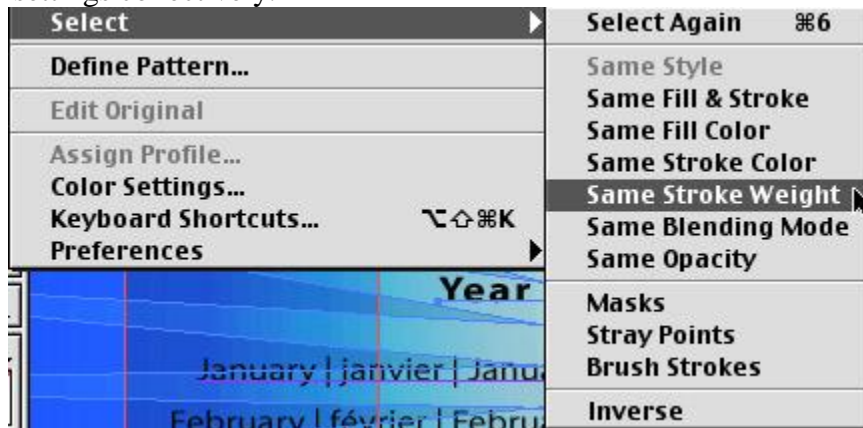
- To lock a layer or sub-layer, click the empty box beside the eye icon. A padlock should appear. Click it again to toggle locking.
- To lock all layers except the layer you wish to isolate, hold Option (Mac)/Alt (Windows) while clicking the toggle lock area.
- To hide a layer or sub-layer, click the eye icon.
- To hide all layers except the layer you wish to isolate, hold the Option (Mac)/Alt (Windows) while clicking the eye icon of the layer.
- To set a layer to Outline view, Command-click (Mac)/Control-click (Windows) the eye icon of the layer.
- To select all objects on a layer, hold the Option (Mac)/Alt (Windows) while clicking the layer name or thumbnail.

This One and These Three, But Not Those Others - OK, let's say you just finished a design in Illustrator, and after printing it becomes clear that all the stroke weights on certain similar objects are too thick. You want to make the adjustment but you dread picking through all 42 of the objects and changing the line weight. Don't despair: Illustrator includes a set of handy commands for such circumstances.

Tucked away in the Edit menu is the inconspicuous-yet-powerful Select submenu. Here you can have Illustrator find and select all similar objects based on fill or stroke color, stroke weight, blending mode, opacity, or style. You can even make selections based on other special criteria such as masks or brush strokes.

Follow these steps to use the Select submenu:

- Select a color swatch, style, or object that represents the type of objects you are trying to select.
- Choose Edit>Select>Same Fill Color or any of the other choices that pertain to what you are attempting to select. All the objects should then be selected, allowing you to change their shared settings collectively.



The Select command, found in the Edit menu, can help you select similar items effortlessly.

Selecting the elements of your work you need is certainly one of the fundamental tasks when working in any application, and Illustrator is the sort of application in which you can quickly get lost in your own artwork. Adobe has outfitted its star illustration package with a powerful set of tools and commands to help you through nearly any selection challenge. Taking advantage of Illustrator's selection tools and using layers and the Lock, Hide, and Select commands can go a long way toward making your job just a little bit easier.