

1 Getting to Know the Work Area

Lesson overview

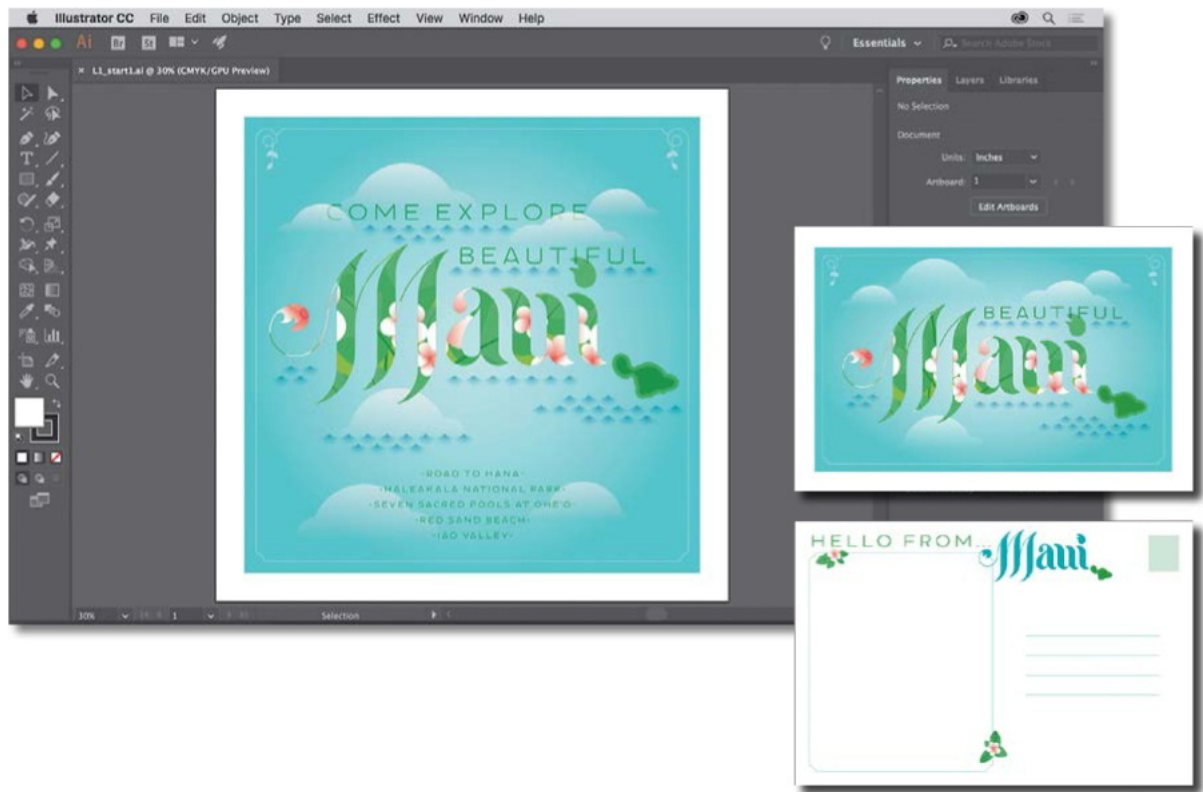
In this lesson, you'll explore the workspace and learn how to do the following:

- Open an Adobe Illustrator CC file.
- Work with the Tools panel.
- Work with panels.
- Reset and save your workspace.
- Use viewing options to change the display magnification.
- Navigate multiple artboards and documents.
- Explore document groups.
- Find resources for using Illustrator.



This lesson takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. Please log in to your account on peachpit.com to download the lesson files for this chapter, or go to the “Getting Started” section at the beginning of this book and follow the instructions under “Accessing the lesson files and Web Edition.”

Your Account page is also where you'll find any updates to the chapters or to the lesson files. Look on the Lesson & Update Files tab to access the most current content.



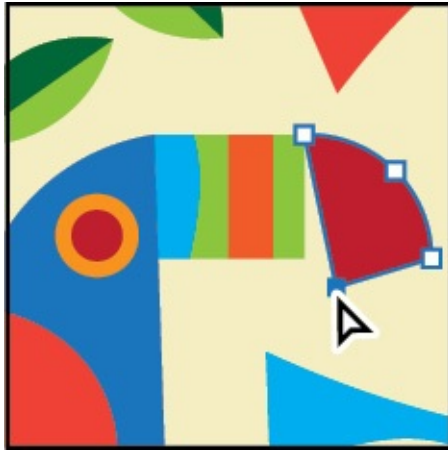
To make the most of the extensive drawing, painting, and editing capabilities of Adobe Illustrator CC, it's important to learn how to navigate the workspace. The workspace consists of the Application bar, menus, Tools panel, Properties panel, Document window, and other default panels.

Introducing Adobe Illustrator

In Illustrator, you primarily create and work with vector graphics (sometimes called vector shapes or vector objects). *Vector graphics* are made up of lines and curves defined by mathematical objects called *vectors*. You can freely move or modify vector graphics without losing detail or clarity because they are resolution-independent.



An example of vector artwork.



Editing vector artwork.

In other words, vector graphics maintain crisp edges when they are resized, printed to a PostScript printer, saved in a PDF file, or imported into a vector-based graphics application. As a result, vector graphics are the best choice for artwork, such as logos, that will be used at various sizes and in various output media.

► **Tip:** To learn more about bitmap graphics, search for “Importing bitmap images” in Illustrator Help (Help > Illustrator Help).

Illustrator also allows you to incorporate *bitmap images*—technically called *raster images*—that use a rectangular grid of picture elements (pixels) to represent the visual. Each pixel is assigned a specific location and color value. Pictures you take on your phone camera are considered raster images. Raster images can be created and edited in a program like Adobe Photoshop.



Example of a raster image and a zoomed-in portion to show the pixels.

Starting Illustrator and opening a file

In this first lesson, you'll begin by exploring Illustrator. You'll open a few art files during this lesson, but before you begin, you'll restore the default preferences for Adobe Illustrator CC. This is something you will do at the start of each lesson in this book to ensure that the tools function and the defaults are set exactly as described in this lesson.

1. To delete or deactivate (by renaming) the Adobe Illustrator CC preferences file, see “Restoring default preferences” in the “Getting Started” section at the beginning of the book.

● **Note:** If finding the preferences file proves difficult, please contact me at brian@brianwoodtraining.com for assistance.

2. Double-click the Adobe Illustrator CC icon to launch Adobe Illustrator.

With Illustrator open, you will see a start screen showing resources for Illustrator, and more.

3. Choose File > Open or click the Open button in the Start screen. In the Lessons > Lesson01 folder on your hard disk, select the L1_start1.ai file, and click Open. You will use the L1_start1.ai file to practice navigating, zooming, and investigating an Illustrator document and the workspace.

● **Note:** If you have not already downloaded the project files for this lesson to your computer from your Account page, make sure to do so now. See the “Getting Started” section at the beginning of the book.

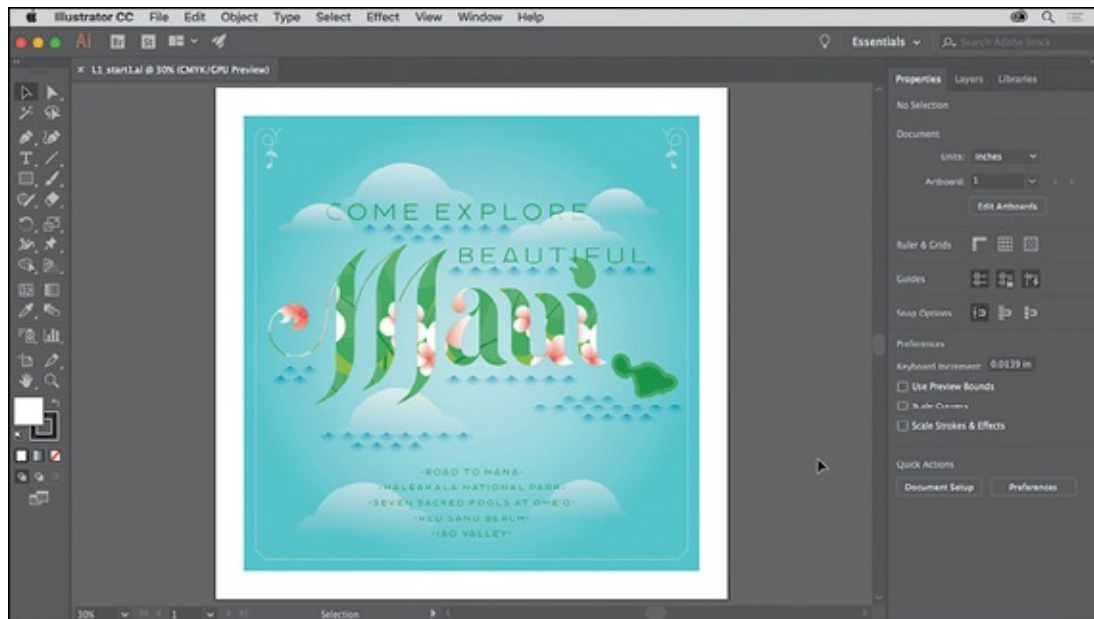
● **Note:** If a Tour window appears after opening the document, you can simply close it. Do the same thing going forward for each lesson.

4. Choose Window > Workspace > Essentials, make sure it's selected, and then choose Window > Workspace > Reset Essentials to reset the workspace.

The Reset Essentials command ensures that the workspace, which includes all of the tools and panels, is set to the default settings.

5. Choose View > Fit Artboard In Window.

An artboard is the area that contains your printable artwork and is similar to a page in Adobe InDesign®. This command fits the whole artboard into the Document window so that you can see the entire artboard.



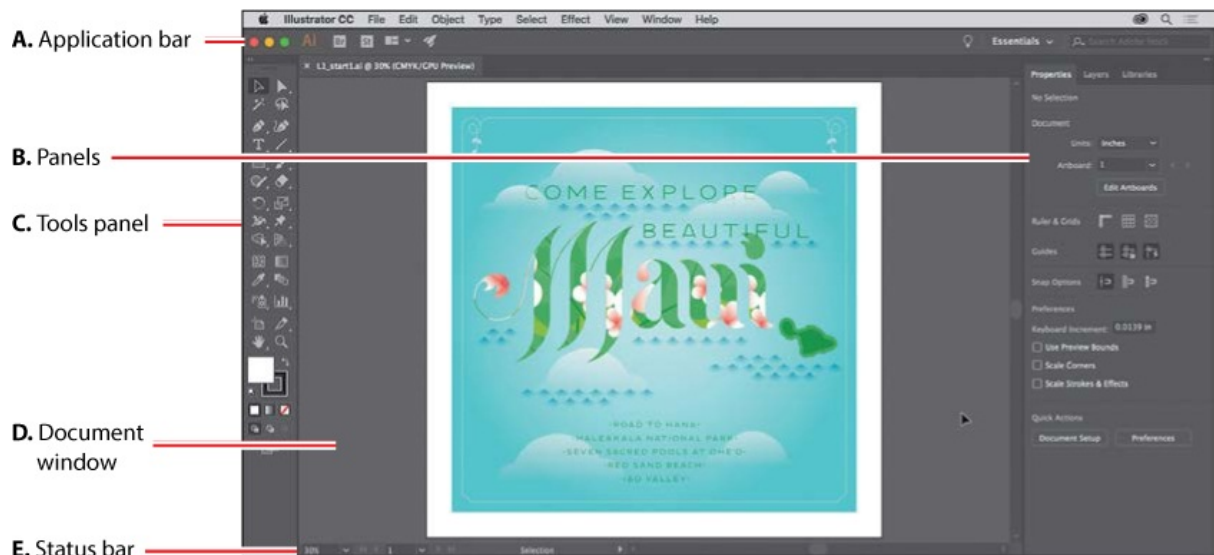
When the file is open and Illustrator is fully launched, the menus, Application bar, Tools panel, and panels appear on the screen.

Exploring the workspace

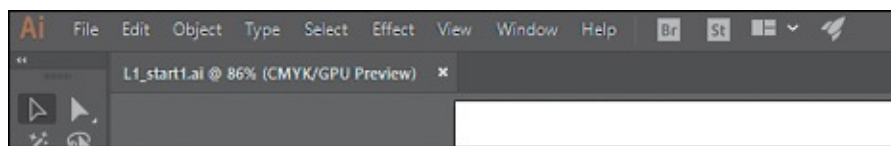
Note: The figures in this lesson are taken using the macOS operating system and may look slightly different from what you see, especially if you are using Windows.

You create and manipulate your documents and files using various elements, such as panels, bars, and windows. Any arrangement of these elements is called a *workspace*. When you first start Illustrator, you see the default workspace, which you can customize for the tasks you perform. You can create and save multiple workspaces—one for editing and another for viewing, for example—and switch among them as you work.

Below, the areas of the default workspace are described:



- A.** The **Application bar** across the top by default contains application controls, the Workspace Switcher, and Search. On Windows, the menu items appear *inline* with the Application bar—see the following figure.

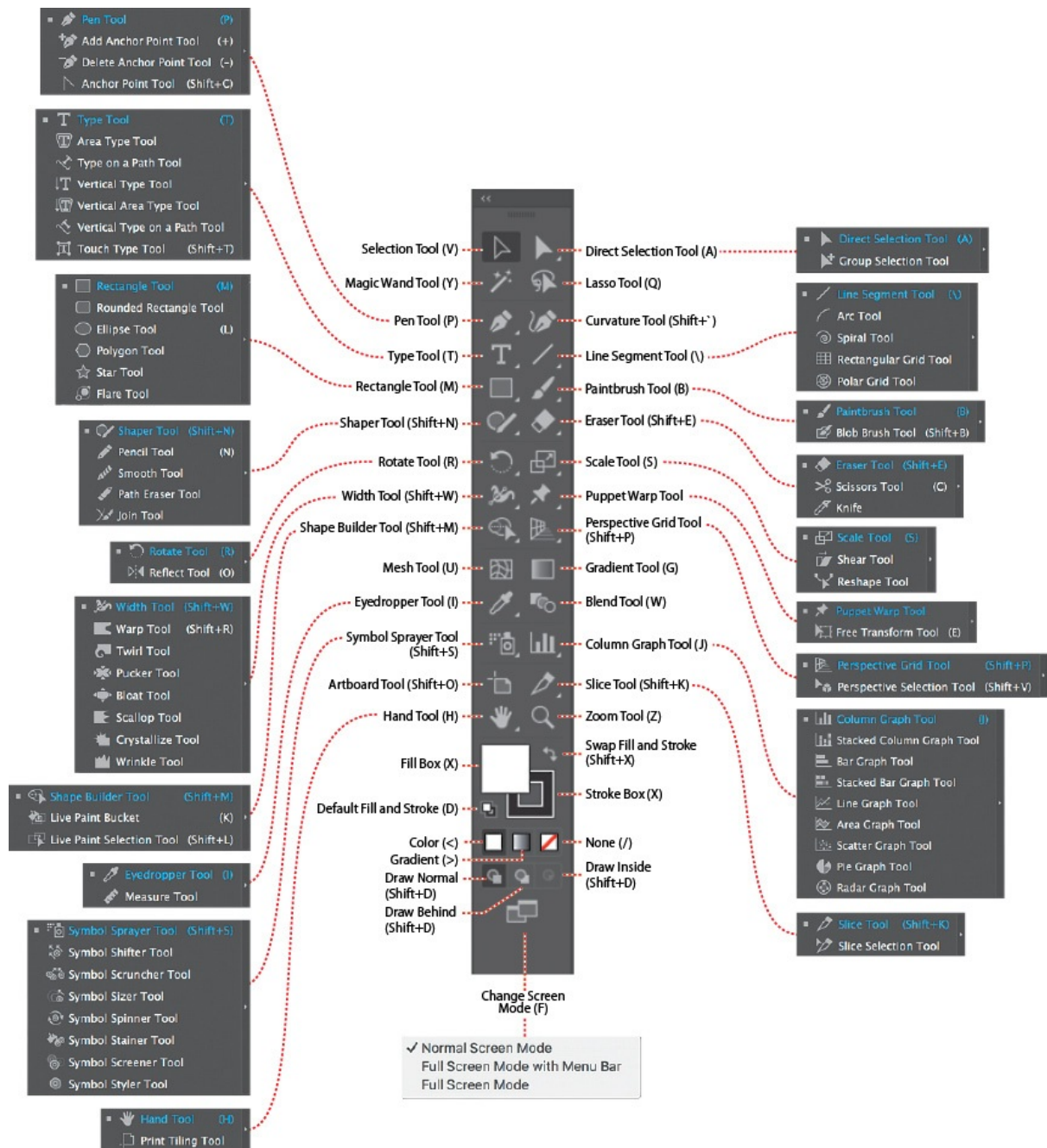


- B.** **Panels** help you monitor and modify your work. Certain panels are displayed by default, and you can display any panel by choosing it from the Window menu.
- C.** The **Tools panel** contains tools for creating and editing images, artwork, page elements, and more. Related tools are grouped together.
- D.** The **Document window** displays the file(s) you're working on.
- E.** The **Status bar** appears at the lower-left edge of the Document window. It displays information, zooming, and navigation controls.

Getting to know the Tools panel

The Tools panel on the left side of the workspace contains tools for selecting, drawing and painting, editing, and viewing, as well as the Fill and Stroke boxes, drawing modes, and screen modes. As you work through the lessons, you'll learn about the specific function of many of these tools.

● **Note:** The Tools panel shown here and throughout this lesson has two columns. You may see a one-column Tools panel, depending on your screen resolution and workspace.

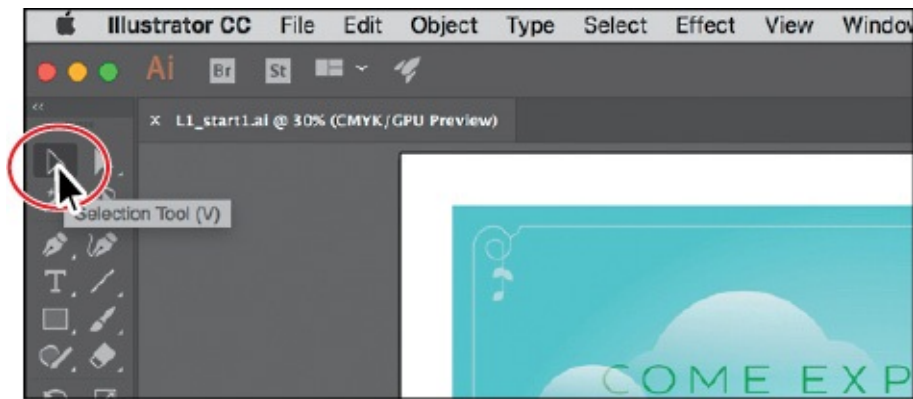


1. Position the pointer over the Selection tool (🖱️) in the Tools panel. Notice that the name (Selection Tool) and keyboard shortcut (V) are displayed in a tooltip.

▶ **Tip:** You can modify the default keyboard shortcuts that Illustrator comes with. To do this, choose **Edit > Keyboard Shortcuts**. For more information, see “Keyboard Shortcuts” in Illustrator Help (Help > Illustrator Help).

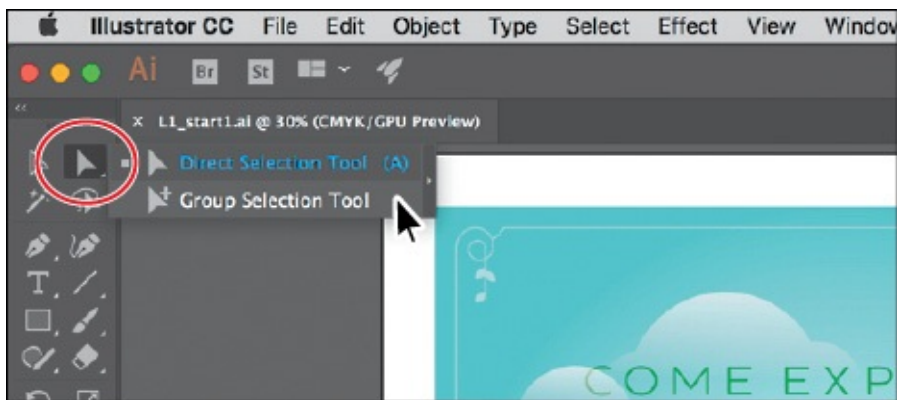
▶ **Tip:** You can turn the tooltips on or off by choosing **Illustrator CC > Preferences > General** (macOS) or **Edit > Preferences > General** (Windows).

(Windows) and deselecting Show Tool Tips.



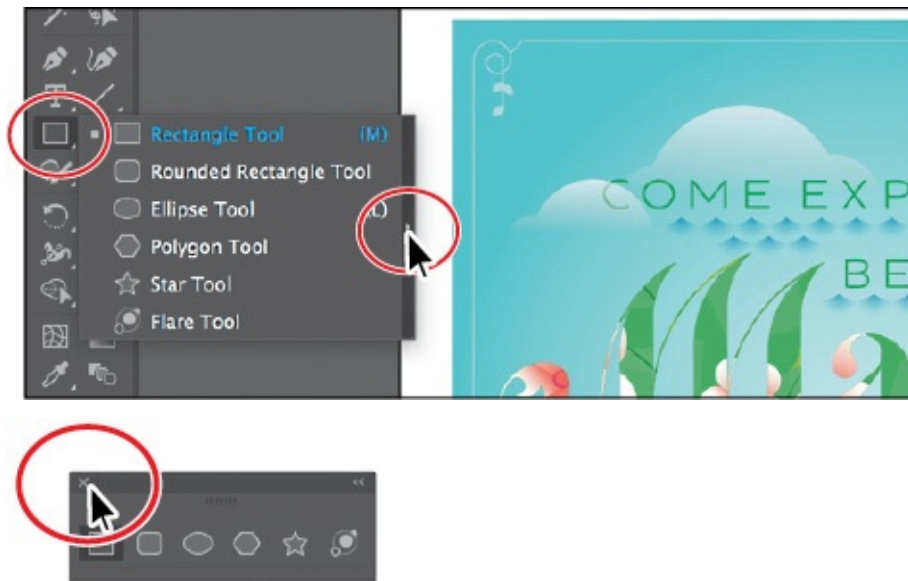
2. Move the pointer over the Direct Selection tool (◄), and click and hold down the mouse button until a tools menu appears. Release the mouse button and then click the Group Selection tool to select it.

Any tool in the Tools panel that displays a small triangle contains additional tools that can be selected in this way.



3. Click and hold down the mouse button on the Rectangle tool (■) to reveal more tools. Click the arrow at the right edge of the hidden tools panel to separate the tools from the Tools panel so that you can access them at all times.

► **Tip:** You can also select hidden tools by pressing the Option key (macOS) or the Alt key (Windows) and clicking the tool in the Tools panel. Each click selects the next hidden tool in the tool sequence.



4. Click the Close button (X) in the upper-left corner (macOS) or upper-right corner (Windows) on the floating tool panel's title bar to close it. The tools return to the Tools panel.

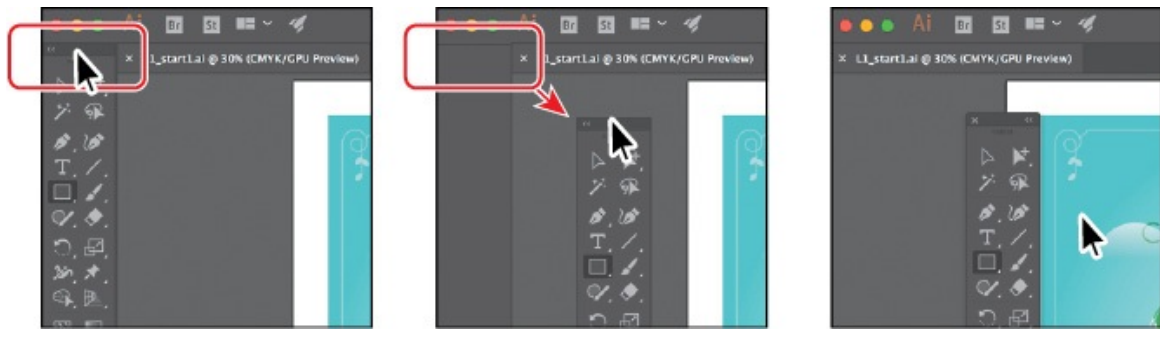
► **Tip:** You can also collapse the floating tool panels or dock them to the workspace or each other.

Next, you'll learn how to resize and float the Tools panel. In the figures in this lesson, the Tools panel is a double column by default. As I said before, you may see a single-column Tools panel to start with, depending on your screen resolution and workspace, and that's okay.

5. Click the double arrow in the upper-left corner of the Tools panel to either expand the one column into two columns or collapse the two columns into one (depending on your screen resolution).

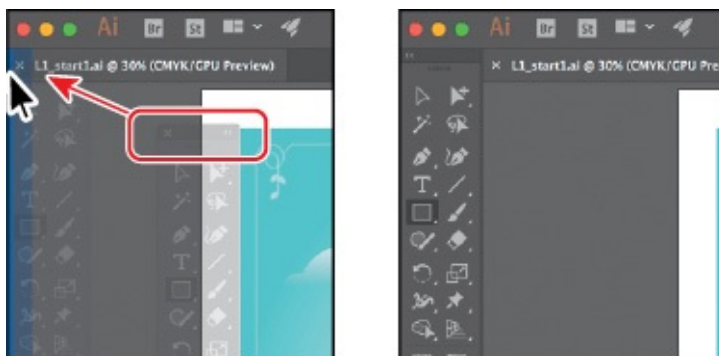


6. Click the same double arrow again to expand (or collapse) the Tools panel.
7. Click the dark gray title bar at the top of the Tools panel or the dashed line beneath the title bar, and drag the Tools panel into the workspace. The Tools panel is now floating in the workspace.



► **Tip:** You can click the double arrow at the top of the Tools panel or double-click the title bar at the top of the Tools panel to switch between two columns and one column. Just be careful not to click the X or it will close! If you close it, choose Window > Tools > Default to open it again.

8. To dock the Tools panel again, drag its title bar or the dashed line below it to the left side of the Application window. When the pointer reaches the left edge, a translucent blue border, called the *drop zone*, appears. Release the mouse button to dock the Tools panel neatly into the side of the workspace.

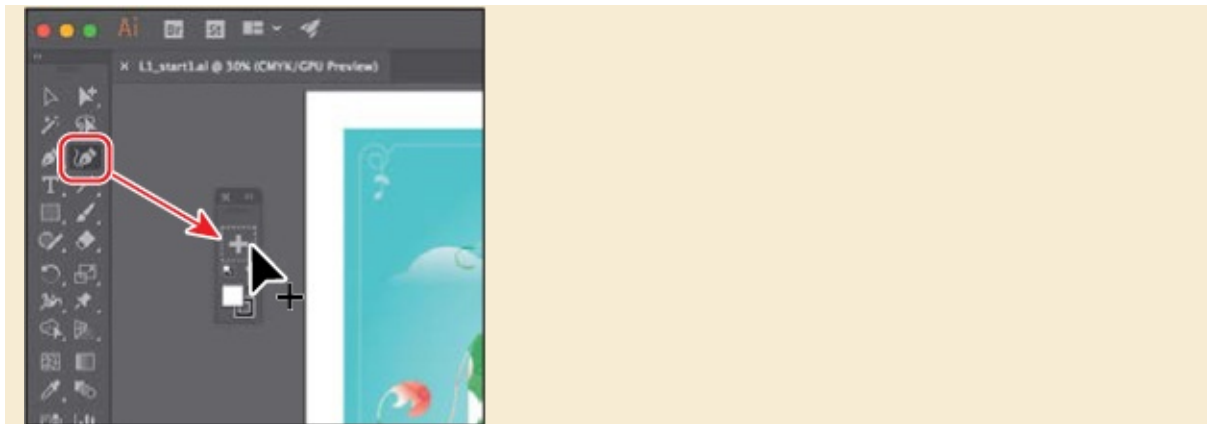


Custom tools panels

You may find yourself using a specific set of tools most of the time. In Illustrator, you can create custom tools panels that contain the tools you use most often.

By choosing Window > Tools > New Tools Panel, you can create a custom tools panel. They are saved with Illustrator and can be closed and opened, regardless of which document is open. They are free-floating and can also be docked and saved in a custom workspace you create.

Each new custom tools panel has stroke and fill controls at the bottom and a plus sign (+) where you can drag copies of tools from the main Tools panel onto the custom panel you are creating and drag them off to remove it.

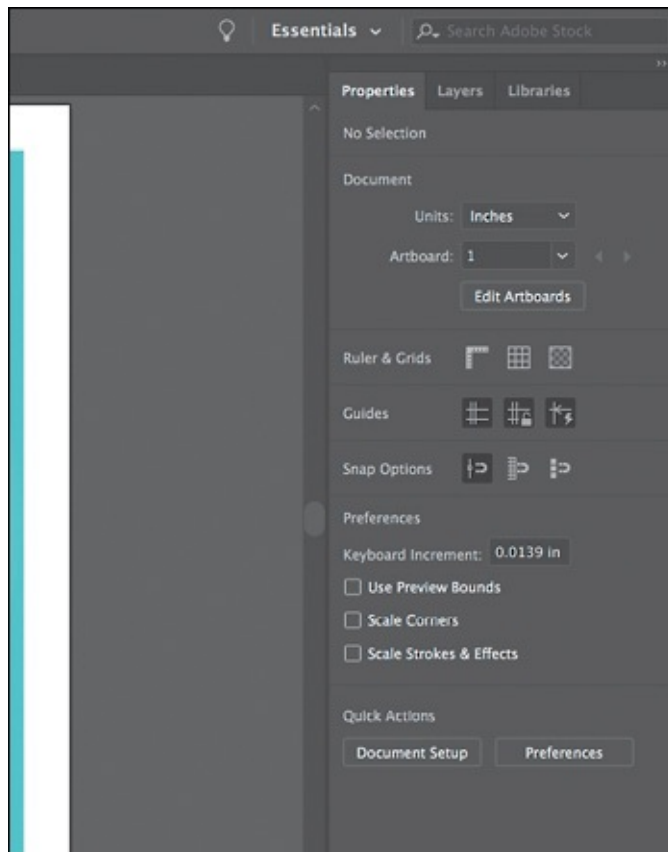


Working with the Properties panel

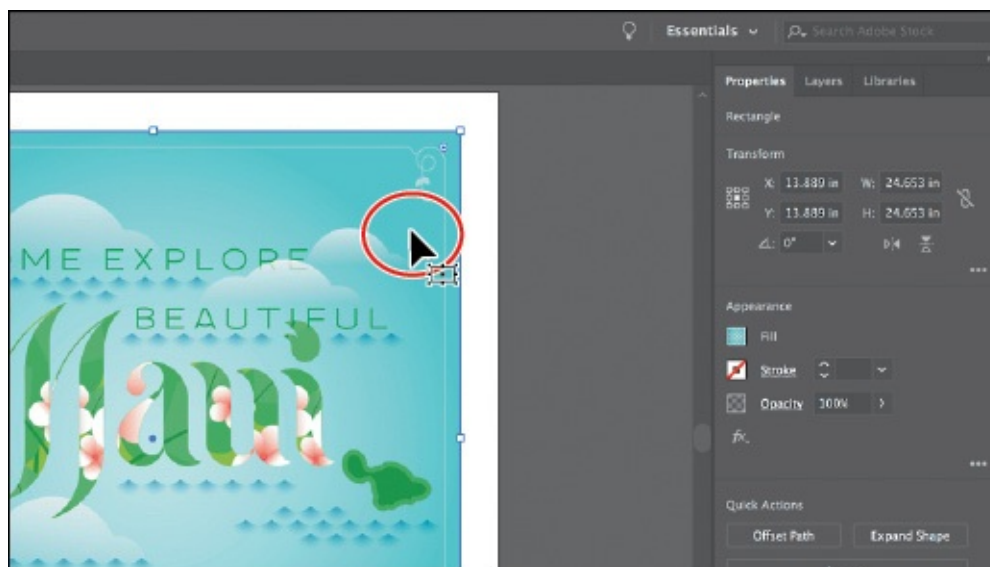
When starting Illustrator for the first time and opening a document, you'll see the Properties panel on the right side of the workspace. The Properties panel displays properties for the active document when nothing is selected, and appearance properties for content you select. It puts all of the most commonly used options in one place, and it's a panel you will be using quite a bit.

1. Select the Selection tool (▸) in the Tools panel, and look in the Properties panel on the right.

At the top of the Properties panel, you will see "No Selection." This is called the Selection Indicator and is a great place to look and see what type of content is selected (if any). The properties in the Properties panel are currently for the current document properties and program preferences.



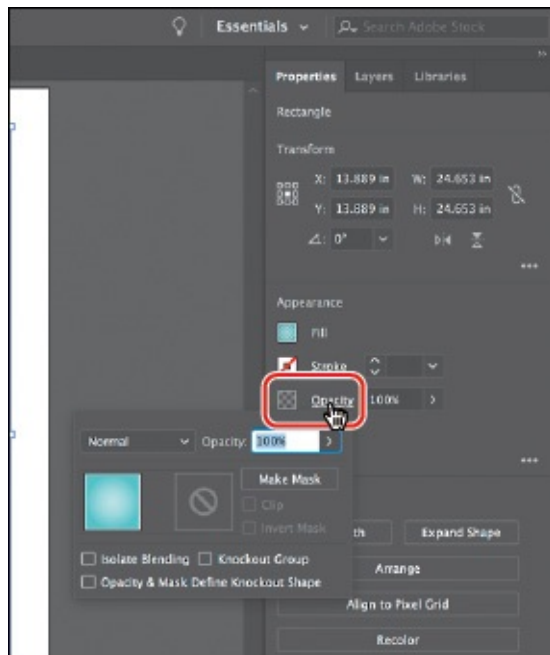
2. Move the pointer into the blue background in the artwork, and click to select it.



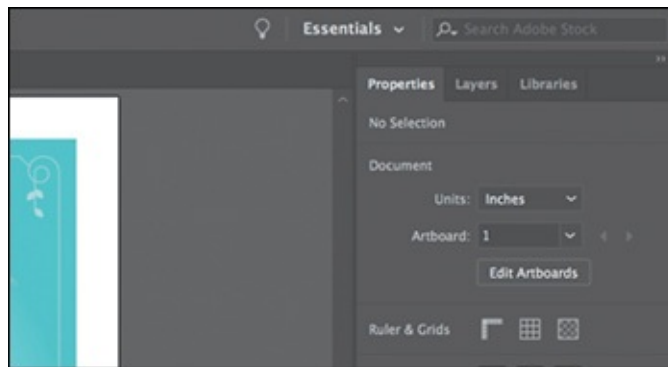
In the Properties panel, you should now see appearance options for the selected artwork. You can change the size, position, color, and much more for the artwork you selected. The artwork selected is a rectangle, as indicated by “Rectangle” at the top of the panel.

3. Click the underlined word “Opacity” in the Properties panel to open the Transparency panel options. Words that are underlined in the Properties

panel will show more options when you click them.



4. Press Escape to hide the Transparency panel, if necessary.



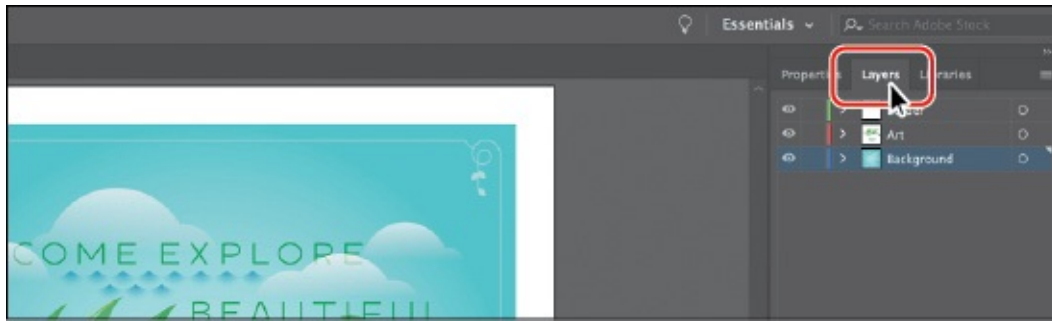
5. Choose Select > Deselect to deselect the rectangle.

The Properties panel once again shows the default properties when nothing is selected.

Working with panels

Panels in Illustrator, like the Properties panel, give you quick access to many of the tools and options that make modifying artwork easier. All of the panels available in Illustrator are listed alphabetically in the Window menu. Next, you'll experiment with hiding, closing, and opening panels.

1. Click the Layers panel tab to the right of the Properties panel tab.

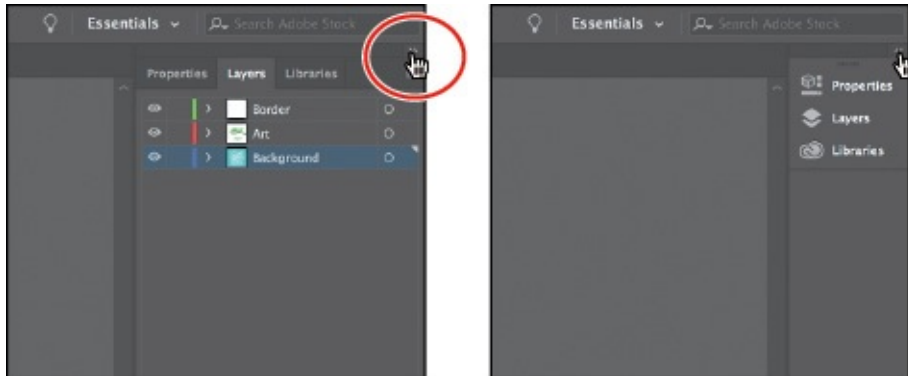


The Layers panel appears with two other panels—the Properties panel and the Libraries panel. They are all part of the same panel group.

► **Tip:** To find a hidden panel, choose the panel name from the Window menu. A checkmark to the left of the panel name indicates that the panel is already open and in front of other panels in its panel group. If you choose a panel name that is already selected in the Window menu, the panel and its group either close or collapse.

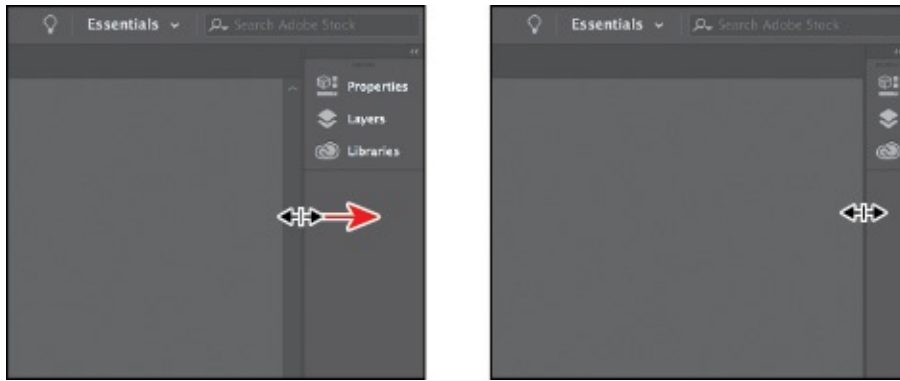
2. Click the double arrow at the top of the dock to collapse the panels.

► **Tip:** To expand or collapse the panel dock, you can also double-click the panel dock title bar at the top.



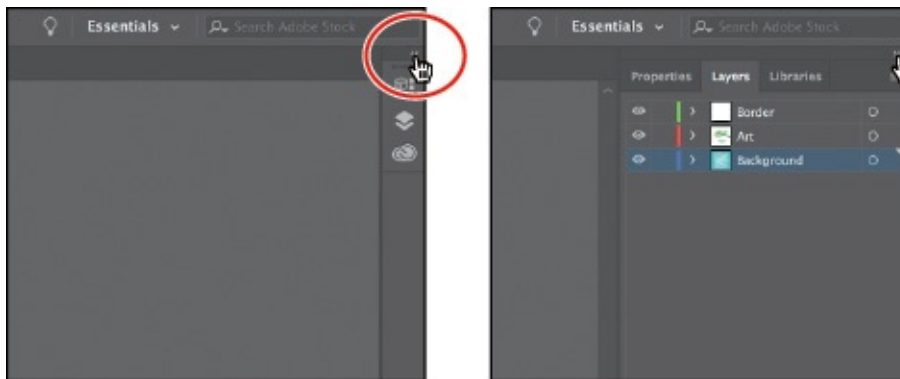
You can use this method of collapsing the panels so you have more area to work on your document.

3. Drag the left edge of the docked panels to the right until the panel text disappears.



This hides the panel names and collapses the panel dock to icons only. In order to open a panel when collapsed as an icon, you can click a panel icon.

4. Click the double arrow again to expand the panels.



5. Choose Window > Workspace > Reset Essentials to reset the workspace.

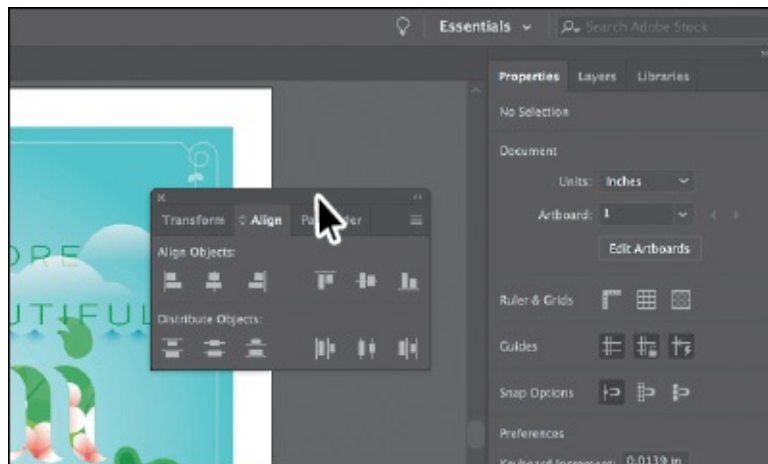
Docking panels

Panels in Illustrator can be moved around in the workspace and organized to match your working needs. Next, you'll open a new panel and dock it with the default panels on the right side of the workspace.

1. Click the Window menu at the top of the screen to see all of the panels available in Illustrator. Choose Align in the Window menu to open the Align panel and the other panels grouped with it by default.

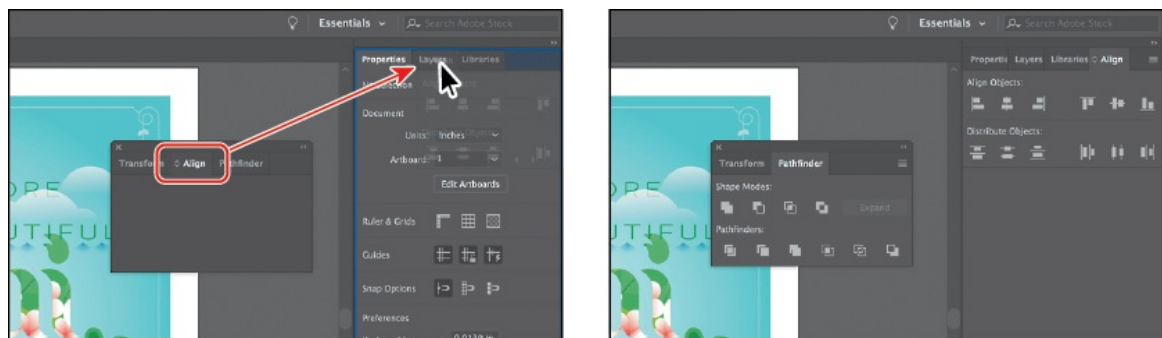
Panels you open that do not appear in the default workspace are free-floating. That means they are not docked and can be moved around. You can dock free-floating panels on the right or left side of the workspace.

2. Drag the Align panel group by the title bar above the panel names to position the group closer to the docked panels on the right.



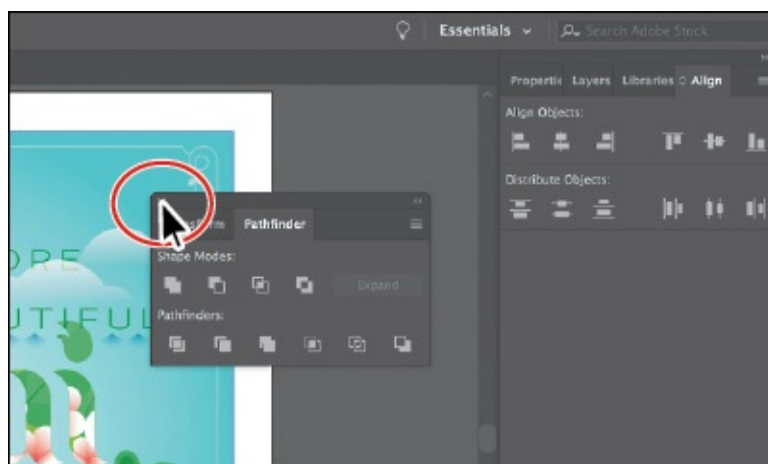
Next, you'll dock the Align panel with the Properties panel.

3. Drag the Align panel tab away from the panel group and onto the panel tabs (Properties, Layers, and Libraries) at the top of the docked panels. When a blue highlight appears around the entire panel dock, release the mouse button to dock the panel.



4. Click the X at the top of the Transform and Pathfinder panel group, which is free-floating, to close it.

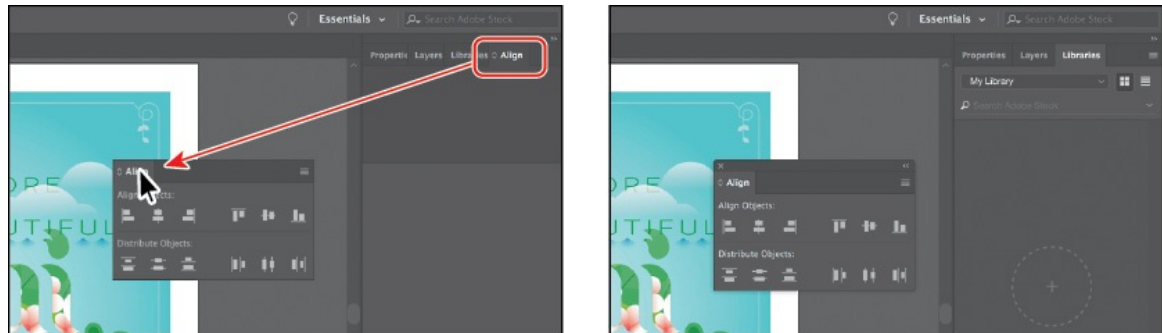
► **Tip:** You can also dock panels next to each other on the right or left side of the workspace. This is a great way to conserve space.



Aside from adding panels to the dock on the right, you can also remove

them.

5. Drag the Align panel by the panel tab, to the left, away from the dock of panels, and release the mouse button.



6. Click the X at the top of the Align panel to close it.
7. Click the Libraries panel tab on the right to show that panel, if it isn't already.

Switching workspaces

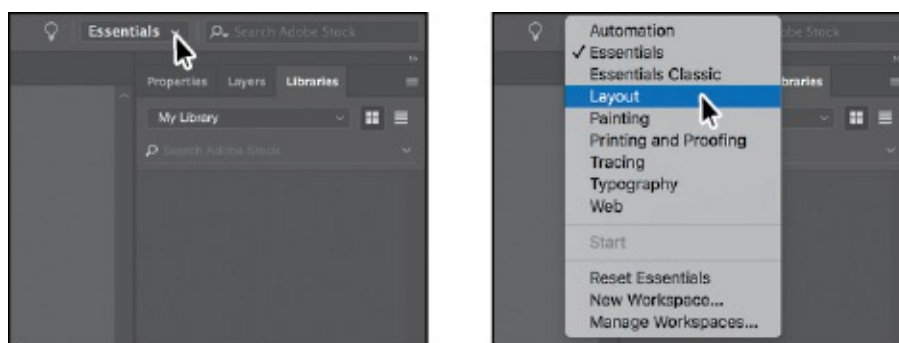
When you first launch Illustrator, the Essentials workspace is showing. Illustrator comes with a host of other default workspaces that can be used to set the workspace for a variety of tasks. Next, you'll switch workspaces to another default workspace to learn about some new panels.

1. Click the workspace switcher in the Application bar above the docked panels to change the workspace.

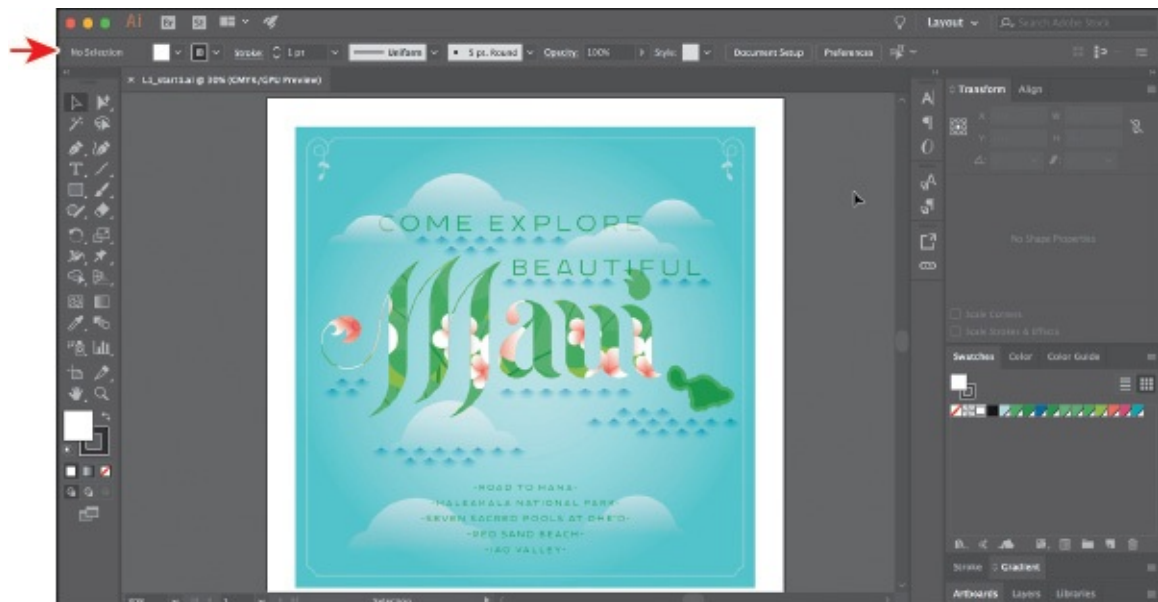
► **Tip:** Press Tab to toggle between hiding and showing all panels. You can hide or show all panels at once, except for the Tools panel, by pressing Shift+Tab to toggle between hide and show.

You'll see a number of workspaces listed, each with a specific purpose, that will open panels and arrange the workspace to make it most conducive to that type of work.

2. Choose Layout from the workspace switcher menu to switch workspaces.



You'll notice a few major changes in the workspace. One of the biggest is the Control panel that's now docked at the top of the workspace, just above the Document window (an arrow is pointing to it in the following figure). Similar to the Properties panel, it offers quick access to options, commands, and other panels relevant to the currently selected content.



Also, notice all of the collapsed panel icons on the right side of the workspace. In workspaces like Essentials, you can create groups of panels that are stacked one on another. This way, you can have a lot more panels showing.

3. Choose Essentials from the workspace switcher above the docked panels to switch back to the Essentials workspace.
4. Choose Reset Essentials from the workspace switcher in the Application bar.

When you choose a previous workspace to switch to, it remembers any changes you made, like selecting the Libraries panel. To completely reset a workspace, Essentials in this case, to the default settings, you can choose to reset it.

Saving a workspace

So far, in this lesson, you've reset the workspace and chosen a different workspace. You can also set up the panels the way you like and save your own custom workspace. Next, you'll dock a new panel and create your own workspace.

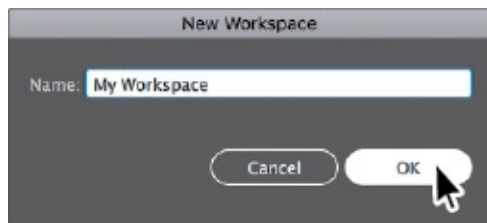
1. Choose Window > Artboards to open the Artboards panel group.
2. Drag the Artboards panel by the panel tab onto the Properties panel tab at

the top of the dock on the right. When a blue highlight appears around the entire panel dock, release the mouse button to dock the Artboards panel.

● **Note:** To delete saved workspaces, choose Window > Workspace > Manage Workspaces. Select the workspace name, and click the Delete Workspace button.

▶ **Tip:** To change a saved workspace, reset the panels as you'd like them to appear and then choose Window > Workspace > New Workspace. In the New Workspace dialog box, name the workspace with the original name. A message appears in the dialog box warning that you will overwrite an existing workspace with the same name if you click OK.

3. Click the X at the top of the free-floating Asset Export panel to close it.



4. Choose Window > Workspace > New Workspace. Change Name to **My Workspace** in the New Workspace dialog box, and click OK.

The name of the workspace could be anything, as long as it makes sense to you. The workspace named “My Workspace” is now saved with Illustrator until you remove it.

5. Choose Window > Workspace > Essentials.

6. Choose Window > Workspace > Reset Essentials.

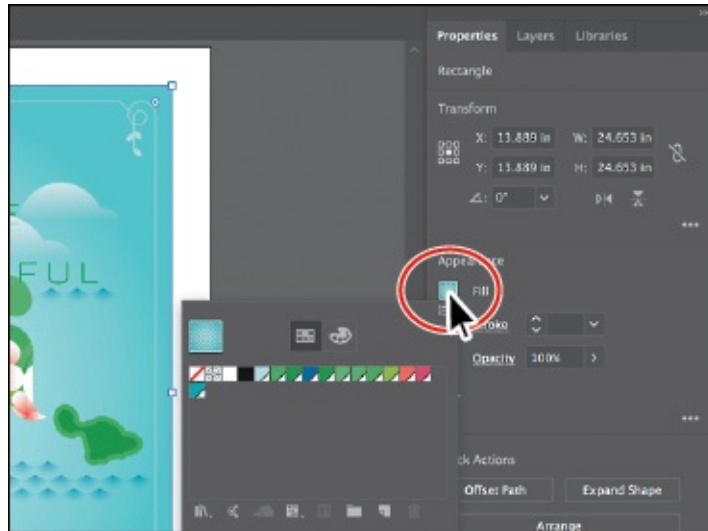
Notice that the panels return to their default positions.

7. Choose Window > Workspace > My Workspace. Toggle between the two workspaces using the Window > Workspace command, and return to the Essentials workspace before starting the next exercise.

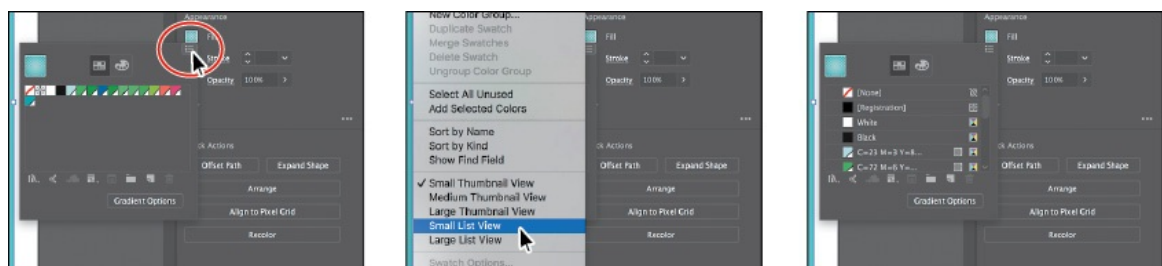
Using panel and context menus

Most panels in Illustrator have more options available in a panel menu, found by clicking the panel menu icon (■ or ■) in the upper-right corner of a panel. These additional options can be used to change the panel display, add or change panel content, and more. Next, you'll change the display of the Swatches panel using its panel menu.

1. With the Selection tool (☛) selected in the Tools panel on the left, click the blue shape in the background of the artwork again.
2. Click the Fill color box, to the left of the word “Fill,” in the Properties panel.



3. In the panel that appears, make sure that the Swatches option (🎨) is selected. Click the panel menu icon (☰) in the upper-right corner, and choose Small List View from the panel menu.

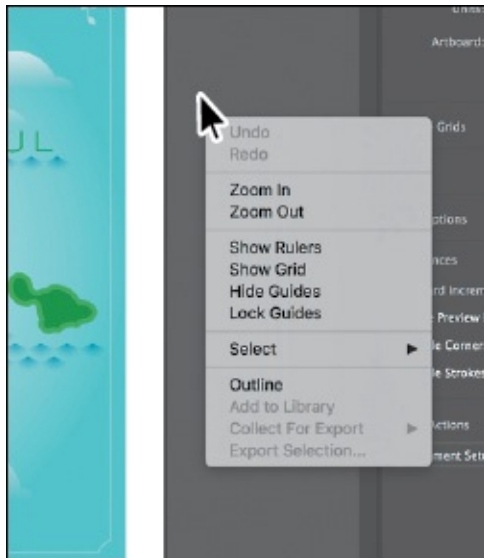


This displays the swatch names, together with thumbnails. Because the options in the panel menu apply only to the active panel, only the Swatches panel view is affected.

4. Click the same panel menu icon (☰) in the panel showing, and choose Small Thumbnail View to return the swatches to their original view.

In addition to the panel menus, context-sensitive menus display commands relevant to the active tool, selection, or panel. Usually the commands in a context menu are available in another part of the workspace, but using a context menu can save you time.

5. Choose Select > Deselect.



6. Position the pointer over the dark gray area surrounding the white area of the artboard. Then, right-click to show a context menu with specific options.

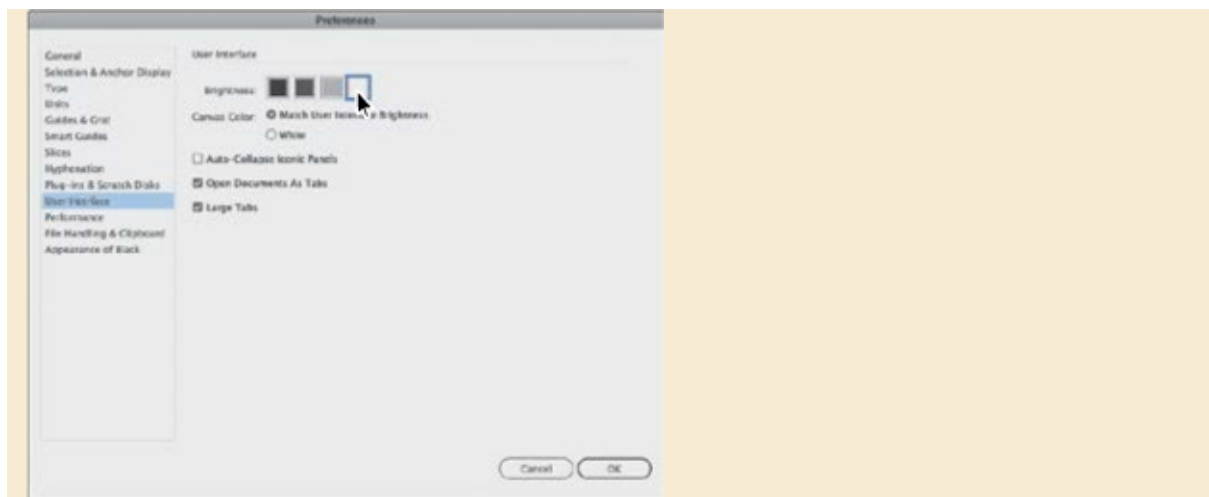
The context-sensitive menu you see may contain different commands, depending on what the pointer is positioned over.

● **Note:** If you position the pointer over the tab or title bar for a panel and right-click, you can close a panel or a panel group in the context menu that appears.

Adjusting the user-interface brightness

Similar to Adobe InDesign or Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator supports a brightness adjustment for the application user interface. This is a program preference setting that allows you to choose a brightness setting from four preset levels.

To edit the user-interface brightness, you can choose Illustrator CC > Preferences > User Interface (macOS) or Edit > Preferences > User Interface (Windows).



Changing the view of artwork

When working in files, it's likely that you'll need to change the magnification level and navigate among artboards. The magnification level, which can range from 3.13% to 64000%, is displayed in the title bar (or document tab) next to the filename and in the lower-left corner of the Document window.

There are a lot of ways to change the zoom level in Illustrator, and in this section you'll explore several of the most widely used methods.

Using view commands

To enlarge or reduce the view of artwork using the View menu, do one of the following:

- Choose View > Zoom In to enlarge the display of the artwork.
- Choose View > Zoom Out to reduce the view of the artwork.

► **Tip:** You can also zoom in using the keyboard shortcut Command++ (macOS) or Ctrl++ (Windows). That's Command *and* + (macOS) or Ctrl *and* + (Windows). You can also zoom out using the keyboard shortcut Command+- (macOS) or Ctrl+- (Windows). That's Command *and* - (macOS) or Ctrl *and* - (Windows).

Each time you choose a Zoom option, the view of the artwork is resized to the closest preset zoom level. Using any of the viewing tools and commands affects only the display of the artwork, not the actual size of the artwork. The preset zoom levels appear in a menu in the lower-left corner of the Document window, identified by a down arrow next to a percentage. If you have artwork selected, using the View > Zoom In view command will zoom into what is selected.