

2 Techniques for Selecting Artwork

Lesson overview

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

- Differentiate between the various selection tools and use different selection techniques.
- Recognize Smart Guides.
- Save selections for future use.
- Hide and lock items.
- Use tools and commands to align shapes and points to each other and the artboard.
- Group and ungroup items.
- Work in Isolation mode.



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.



Selecting content in Adobe Illustrator is one of the more important things you'll do. In this lesson, you learn how to locate and select objects using the Selection tools; protect other objects by grouping, hiding, and locking them; align objects to each other and the artboard; and much more.

Starting the lesson

Creating, selecting, and editing artwork is the cornerstone of Adobe Illustrator. In this lesson, you'll learn the fundamentals of selecting, aligning, and grouping artwork using different methods. You'll begin by resetting the preferences in Illustrator and opening the lesson file.

1. To ensure that the tools function and the defaults are set exactly as described in this lesson, 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.

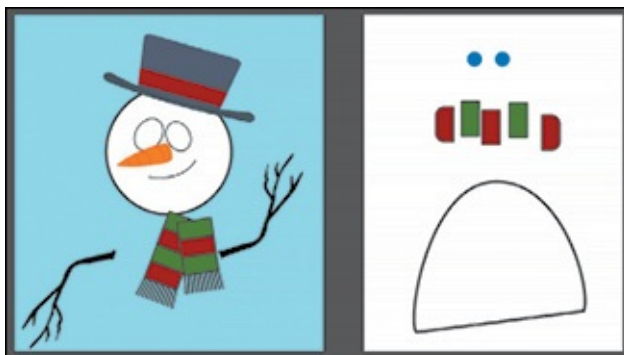
● **Note:** If you have not already downloaded the project files for this lesson to your computer from your Account page, make sure to do so now. See the “Getting Started” section at the beginning of the book.

2. Start Adobe Illustrator CC.
3. Choose File > Open. Locate the file named L2_end.ai, which is in the Lessons > Lesson02 folder that you copied onto your hard disk, and click Open.

This file contains the finished illustration that you’ll create in this lesson.



4. Choose File > Open, and open the L2_start.ai file in the Lessons > Lesson02 folder on your hard disk.



5. Choose File > Save As. In the Save As dialog box, name the file **Snowman.ai**, and save it in the Lessons > Lesson02 folder. Leave the Format option set to Adobe Illustrator (ai) (macOS) or the Save As Type option set to Adobe Illustrator (*.AI) (Windows), and click Save.
6. In the Illustrator Options dialog box, leave the Illustrator options at their default settings, and click OK.
7. Choose View > Fit All In Window.
8. Choose Window > Workspace > Essentials, make sure it’s selected, and then choose Window > Workspace > Reset Essentials to reset the workspace.

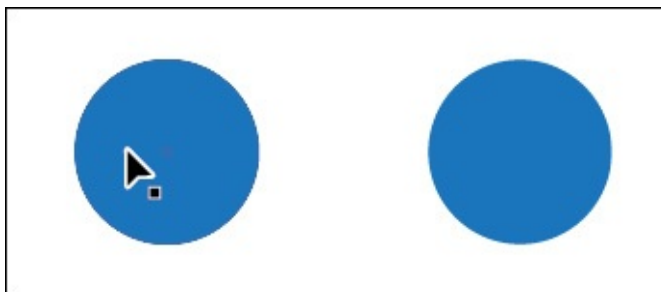
Selecting objects

Whether you're creating artwork from scratch or editing existing artwork in Illustrator, you will need to become familiar with selecting objects. There are many methods and tools for doing this, and in this section, you'll explore the most widely used, which includes the Selection (▢) and Direct Selection (◐) tools.

Using the Selection tool

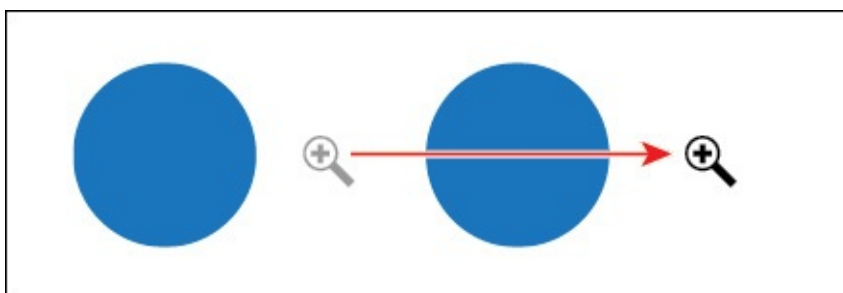
The Selection tool (▢) in the Tools panel lets you select, move, rotate, and resize entire objects. In this first section, you'll become familiar with it.

1. Select the Selection tool (▢) in the Tools panel on the left. Move the pointer over the different artwork on the artboards, without clicking.



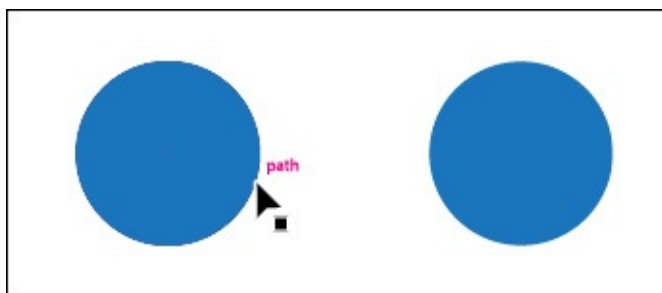
The icon that appears next to the pointer as it passes over objects (◐) indicates that there is artwork that can be selected under the pointer. When you hover over an object, that object is also outlined in a color like blue (in this instance).

2. Select the Zoom tool (🔍) in the Tools panel, and drag across the two blue circles on the artboard on the right, from left to right, to zoom in.



▶ **Tip:** If you can no longer see both blue circles after zooming, with the Zoom tool selected, drag from *right to left* to zoom out. You can also press the spacebar to temporarily access the Hand tool (🖱) and drag in the Document window.

3. Select the Selection tool (▢) in the Tools panel and then position the pointer over the edge of the blue circle on the left.

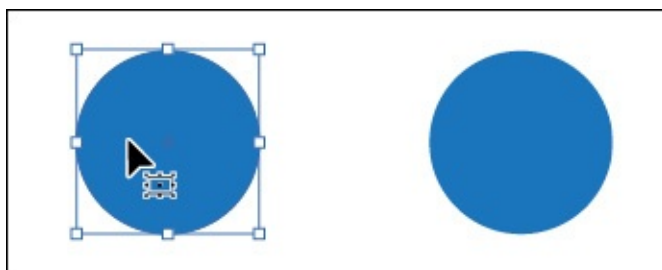


► **Tip:** You'll learn more about Smart Guides in [Lesson 3](#), “[Using Shapes to Create Artwork for a Postcard](#).”

A word such as “path” or “anchor” may appear because Smart Guides are turned on by default. *Smart Guides* are temporary snap-to guides that help you align, edit, and transform objects or artboards.

4. Click anywhere inside the blue circle on the left to select it. A bounding box with eight handles appears around the selected circle.

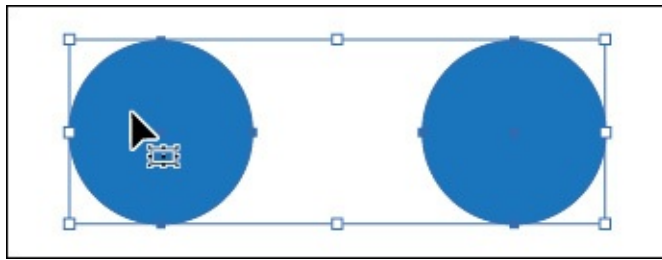
The *bounding box* is used when making changes to artwork (vector or raster), such as resizing or rotating. The bounding box also indicates that an item is selected and ready to be modified, and the color of the bounding box indicates which layer the object is on. Layers are discussed more in [Lesson 9](#), “[Organizing Your Artwork with Layers](#).”



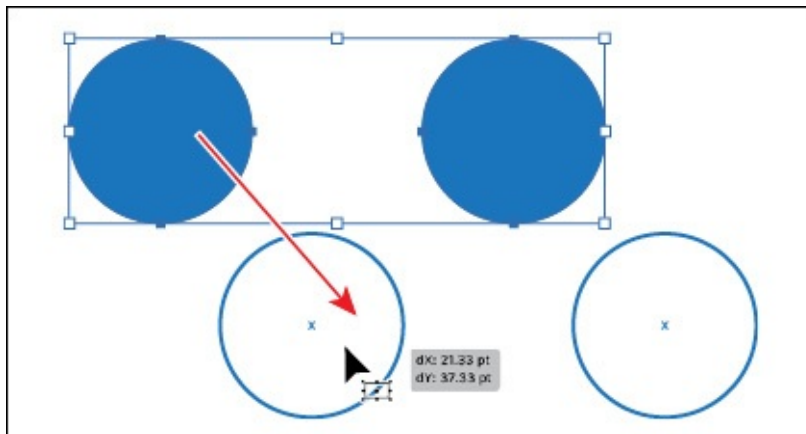
5. Using the Selection tool, click in the blue circle on the right. Notice that the left blue circle is now deselected and only the right circle is selected.

● **Note:** To select an item without a fill, you can click the stroke (the edge) or drag across the object.

6. Holding down the Shift key, click the blue circle on the left to add it to the selection and then release the key. Both blue circles are now selected, and a larger bounding box surrounds them.



7. Move the circles anywhere in the document by clicking inside either selected circle (in the blue area) and dragging. Because both circles are selected, they move together.

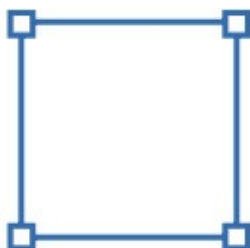


As you drag, you may notice the magenta lines that appear. These are called *alignment guides* and are visible because Smart Guides are turned on (View > Smart Guides). As you drag, the objects align to other objects in the document. Also notice the measurement label (gray box) next to the pointer that shows the object's distance from its original position. Measurement labels also appear because Smart Guides are turned on.

8. Revert to the last saved version of the document by choosing File > Revert. In the dialog box that appears, click Revert.

Using the Direct Selection tool

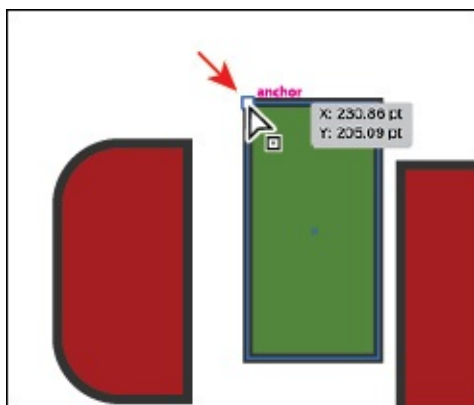
In Illustrator, as you draw, you create vector paths that are made up of anchor points and paths. Anchor points are used to control the shape of the path and work like pins holding a wire in place. A shape you create, like a square, is composed of at least four anchor points on the corners with paths connecting the anchor points.



You change the shape of a path or shape by dragging its anchor points (among other things). The Direct Selection tool (▸) lets you select anchor points or paths within an object so that it can be reshaped. Next, you'll become familiar with selecting anchor points using the Direct Selection tool and reshaping a path.

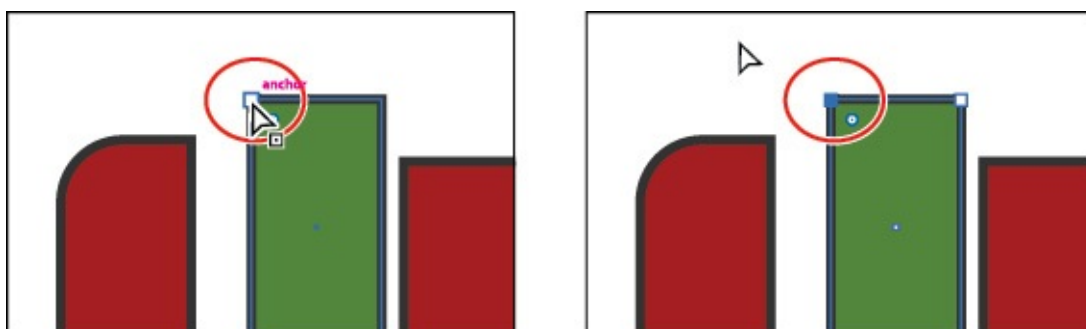
1. Choose View > Fit All In Window.
2. Select the Zoom tool (Q) in the Tools panel, and click several times on the series of red and green shapes below the blue circles to zoom in closely.
3. Select the Direct Selection tool (▸) in the Tools panel on the left. Without clicking, position the pointer over the upper-left corner of one of the green shapes. The word “anchor” should appear next to the pointer.

With the Direct Selection tool selected, when the pointer is over an anchor point of a path or object, the word “anchor” appears. The “anchor” label is showing because Smart Guides are turned on (View > Smart Guides). Also notice the little white box to the right of the pointer (▸). The small dot that appears in the center of the white box indicates that the cursor is positioned over an anchor point.



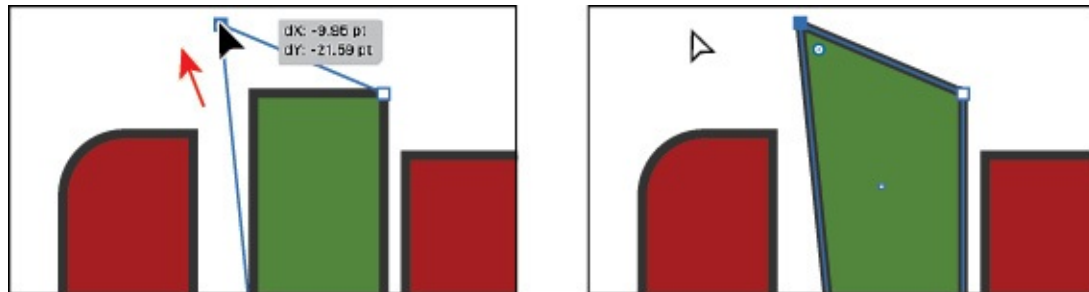
► **Tip:** You can also click in the middle of a shape to select it and to see the anchor points around its edge. This can be an easy way to see where the points are, and then you can click a point to select it.

4. Click to select that anchor point and move the pointer away.



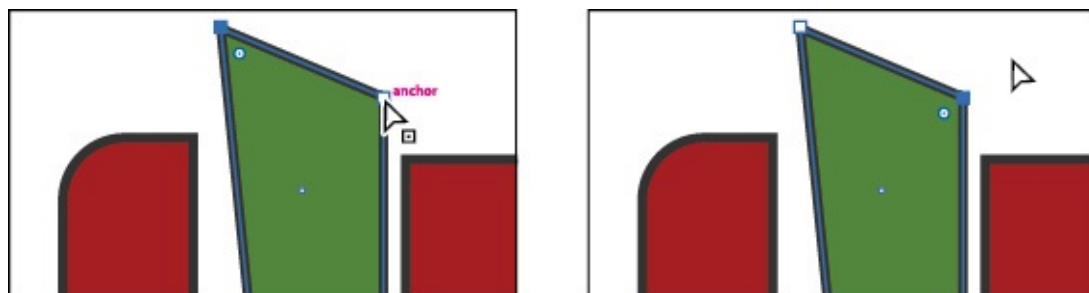
Notice that only the anchor point you selected is solid (filled with blue), indicating that it is selected, and the other anchor points in the shape are hollow (filled with white), indicating that they are not selected.

5. With the Direct Selection tool still selected, move the pointer over the selected anchor point and drag it up to edit the shape.



● **Note:** The gray measurement label that appears as you drag the anchor point has the values *dX* and *dY*. *dX* indicates the distance that the pointer has moved along the x-axis (horizontal), and *dY* indicates the distance that the pointer has moved along the y-axis (vertical).

6. Try clicking another point on a corner of the shape, and notice that the previous point is deselected.



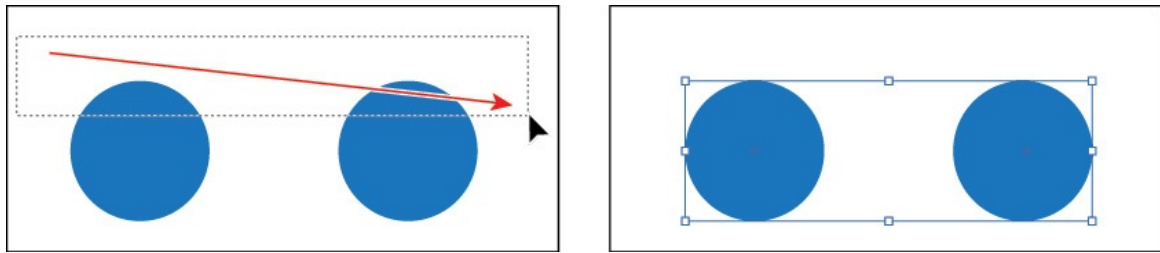
7. Revert to the last saved version of the file by choosing File > Revert. In the dialog box that appears, click Revert.

Creating selections with a marquee

Another way to select content is by dragging across content that you want to select (called a *marquee selection*), which is what you'll do next.

1. Choose View > Fit All In Window.
2. Select the Zoom tool (🔍) in the Tools panel, and click three times on the blue circles, on the right.
3. Select the Selection tool (🖱️) in the Tools panel. Position the pointer above and to the left of the leftmost blue circle and then drag downward and to the right to create a marquee that overlaps the tops of both circles. Release

the mouse button.

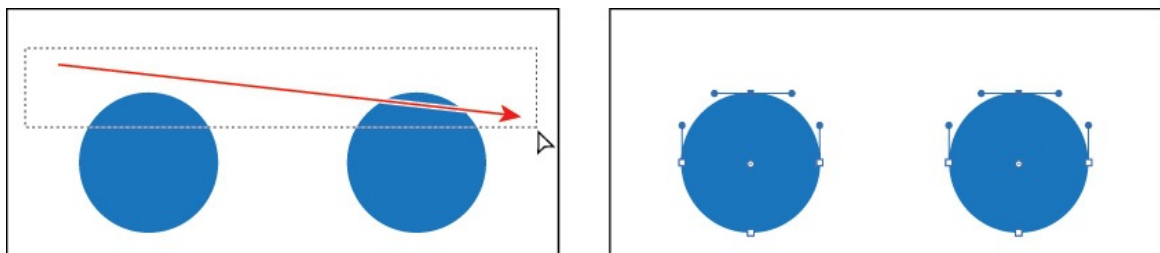


When dragging with the Selection tool (▢), you need to encompass only a small part of an object to select it.

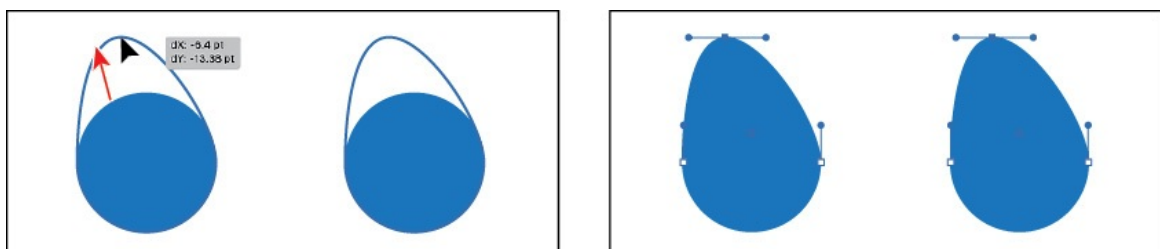
4. Choose Select > Deselect, or click where there are no objects.

Now you'll use the Direct Selection tool to select multiple anchor points in the blue circles by dragging a marquee around anchor points.

5. Select the Direct Selection tool (◄) in the Tools panel. Starting off the top left of the leftmost blue circle (see the following figure), drag across the top edges of the two circles, then release the mouse button. Only the top anchor points become selected.



6. Drag one of the selected anchor points to see how they move together.



You can use this method when selecting points so that you don't have to click exactly on the anchor point that you want to select.

7. Revert to the last saved version of the file by choosing File > Revert. In the dialog box that appears, click Revert.

Selecting artwork with the Magic Wand tool

You can use the Magic Wand tool (☞) in the Tools panel to select all objects in a document that have the same attributes, like a color fill. The fill is a color applied to the inside of an object. You can customize the Magic

Wand tool to select objects based on options, like stroke weight, stroke color, and more, by double-clicking the Magic Wand tool in the Tools panel.

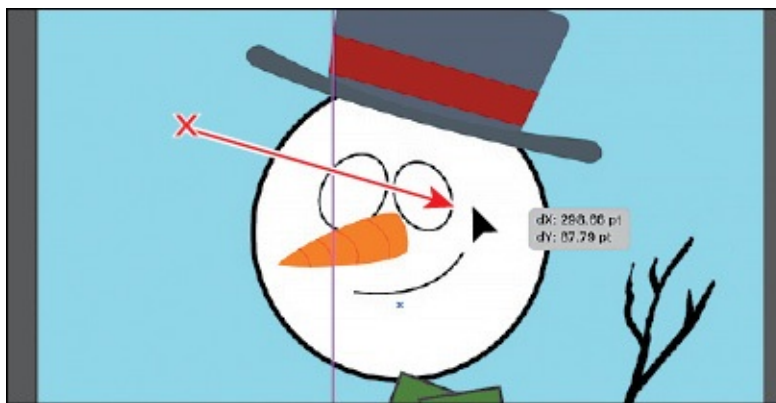
Hiding and locking objects

At times, selecting artwork may be more difficult if there are objects stacked one on another or there are multiple objects in a small area. In this section, you'll learn a common way to make selecting objects easier, by locking and hiding content.

1. Choose View > Fit All In Window.

Next, you'll attempt to drag across artwork to select it.

2. With the Selection tool (▢) selected, move the pointer into the blue area to the left of the snowman (the "x" in the following figure) and drag across the two ellipses that are the eyes of the snowman.



Notice that you drag the large blue shape instead.

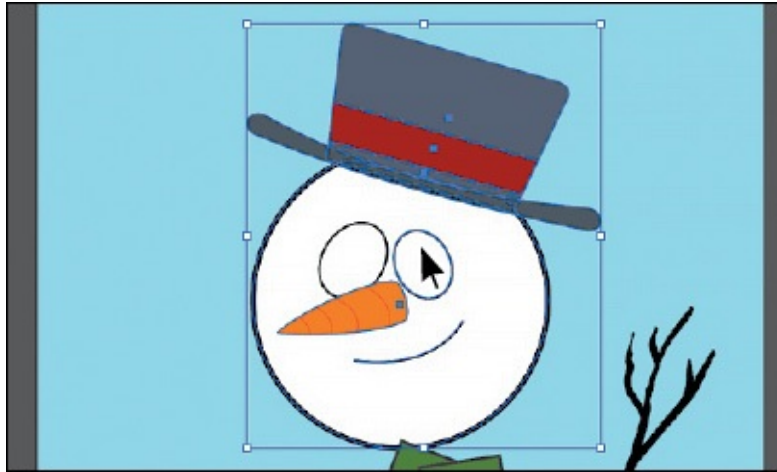
3. Choose Edit > Undo Move.
4. With the blue background shape still selected, choose Object > Lock > Selection, or press Command+2 (macOS) or Ctrl+2 (Windows).

Locking objects prevents you from selecting and editing them. You can unlock artwork by choosing Object > Unlock All.

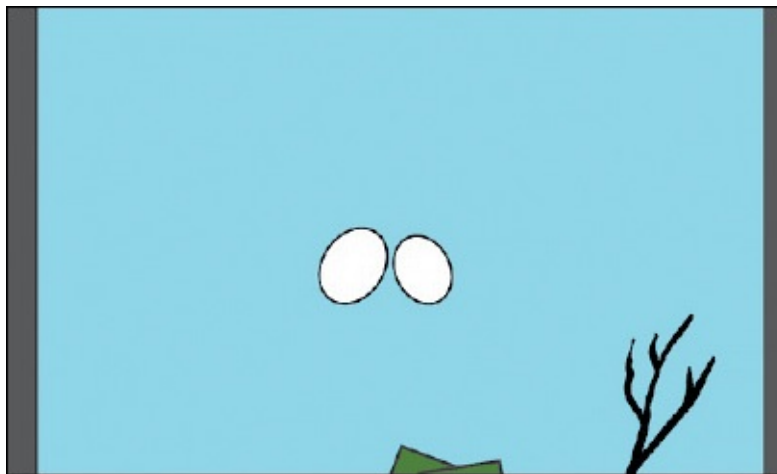
5. With the Selection tool (▢), move the pointer into the blue area to the left of the snowman's hat and drag across the head of the snowman to select the whole thing (including the hat). See the following figure.

● **Note:** Any artwork within the marquee area will be selected using this method.

6. Press the Shift key and click each eye shape, one at a time, to *remove* them from the selection.



7. Choose Object > Hide > Selection, or press Command+3 (macOS) or Ctrl+3 (Windows).



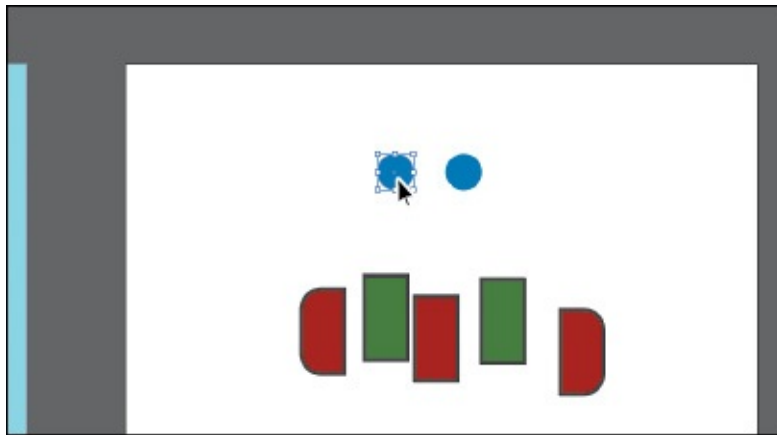
The selected shapes are temporarily hidden so that you can more easily select other objects.

8. Choose File > Save to save the file.

Selecting similar objects

You can also select artwork based on similar fill color, stroke color, stroke weight, and more, using the Select > Same command. The stroke of an object is the outline (border), and the stroke weight is the width of the stroke. Next, you will select several objects with the same fill and stroke applied.

1. With the Selection tool (▢), click to select one of the blue circles on the right.

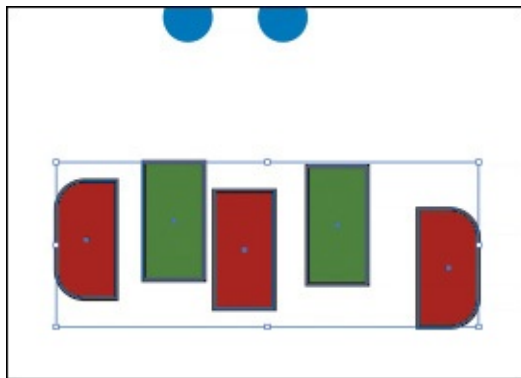


2. Choose **Select > Same > Fill Color** to select all objects on any artboard with the same fill color (blue) as the selected object.

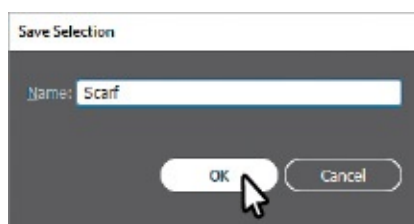
Notice that the circles with the same blue-colored fill are selected.

3. Click to select one of the red- or green-filled shapes below the blue circles, and then choose **Select > Same > Stroke Color**.

All of the shapes with the same stroke (border) color are now selected. If you know that you may need to reselect a series of objects again, like the selected red and green shapes, you can save a selection. Saved selections are a great way to easily recall a selection later, and are only saved with that document. You'll save the current selection next.



4. With the shapes still selected, choose **Select > Save Selection**. Name the selection **Scarf** in the Save Selection dialog box, and click OK so that you'll be able to choose this selection at a later time.



► **Tip:** It's helpful to name selections according to use or function. If you name the selection "1 pt stroke," for instance, the name may be

misleading if you later change the stroke weight of the artwork.

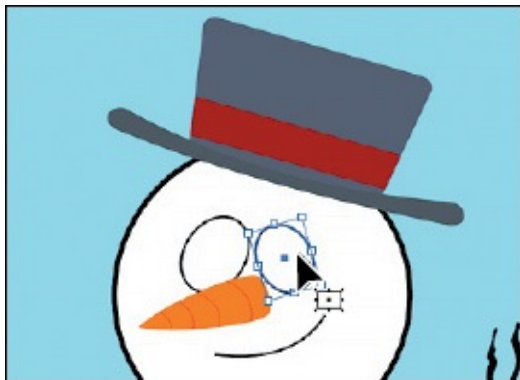
5. Choose Select > Deselect.

Selecting in Outline mode

By default, Adobe Illustrator displays all artwork with their paint attributes, like fill and stroke, showing. However, you can choose to display artwork so that only outlines (or paths) are visible. The next method for selecting involves viewing artwork in Outline mode and can be very useful if you want to select objects within a series of stacked objects.

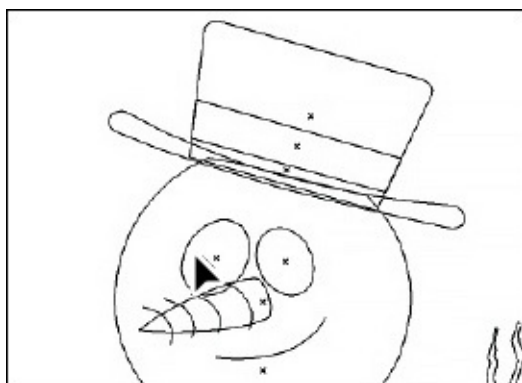
1. Choose Object > Show All so you can see the artwork you previously hid.
2. With the Selection tool (▸), click within one of the white eye shapes to select it.

Since the shape has a white fill (a color, pattern, or gradient filling the inside of an object), you can click anywhere within the bounds of the object to select it.



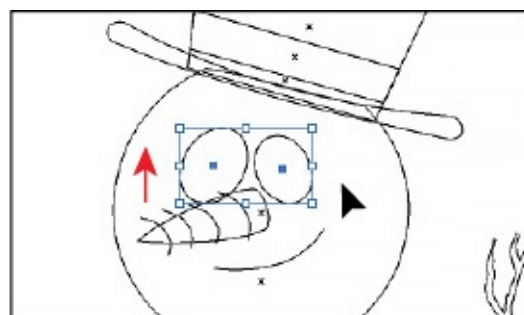
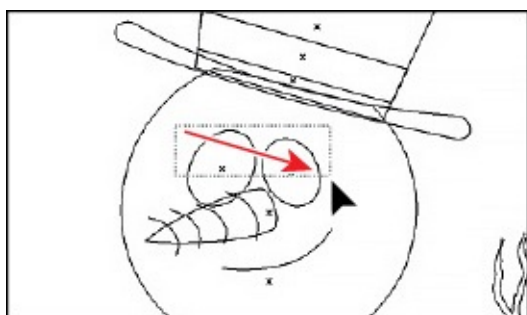
3. Choose View > Outline to view artwork as outlines.
4. With the Selection tool, click in a blank area of the other eye shape.

Notice that you cannot select the object by clicking the fill using this method. Outline mode displays artwork as outlines with no fill. To select in Outline mode, you can click the edge of the object or drag a marquee across the shape to select it.



► **Tip:** In Outline mode, you may see the small x in the center of the shapes. If you click on that x, you can select the shape.

5. With the Selection tool selected, drag across both eye shapes. Press the Up Arrow key several times to move both shapes up a little bit.



6. Choose View > GPU Preview or View > Preview On CPU (or Preview) if GPU Preview is not available to see the painted artwork.

Aligning objects

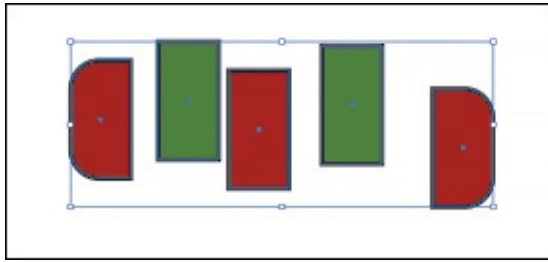
Illustrator makes it easy to align or distribute multiple objects relative to each other, the artboard, or a key object. In this section, you'll explore the different options for aligning objects.

Aligning objects to each other

One type of alignment is aligning objects to each other. This can be useful if, for instance, you want to align the top edges of a series of selected shapes to each other. Next, you'll align the red and green shapes to each other.

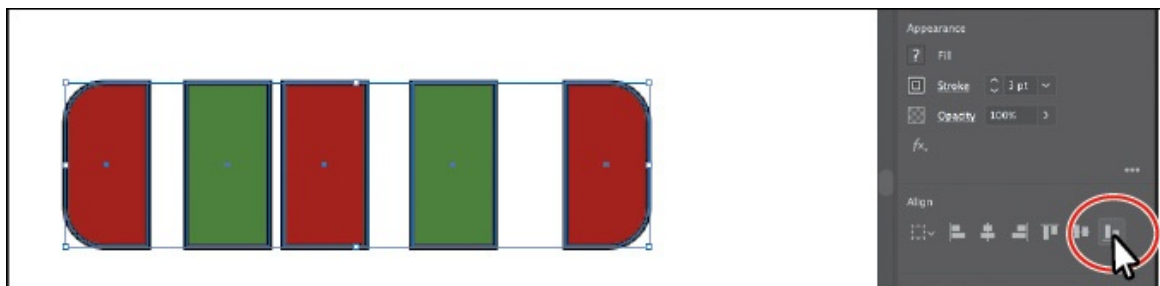
1. Choose Select > Scarf to reselect the red and green shapes on the right.
2. Click the Next artboard button (▶) in the lower-left corner of the Document window to fit the artboard with the selected red and green shapes in the window.
3. Select the Zoom tool (Q) in the Tools panel, and drag across (from left to

right) the red and green shapes to zoom in.



● **Note:** You can also simply click several times to zoom in.

4. Click the Vertical Align Bottom button () in the Properties panel on the right.




Notice that the bottom edges of all the selected objects move to align with the lowest selected object.

5. Choose Edit > Undo Align to return the objects to their original positions. Leave the objects selected for the next section.

Aligning to a key object

A *key object* is an object that you want other objects to align to. This can be useful when you want to align a series of objects, and maybe one of them is already in the perfect position. You specify a key object by selecting all the objects you want to align, including the key object, and then clicking the key object again. Next, you will align the red and green shapes using a key object.

1. With the shapes still selected, click the leftmost shape with the Selection tool (.

When selected, the key object has a thick outline indicating that other objects will align to it.