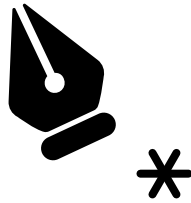# Mike's 2-Handed Pen Tool Technique
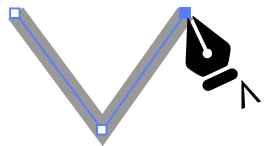
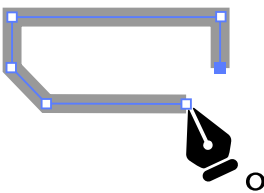Illustrator CC 2019 · InDesign CC 2019 · Photoshop CC 2019

This is the Pen tool with an ✻ beside it, ready to draw. In Illustrator versions prior to 2017, first click on the Direct Selection tool and then the Pen tool. This allows the Cmd/Ctrl key to show the Direct Selection tool.
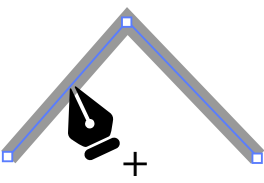
Click to create anchor points. Each next click creates a straight line segment or sub-path. While drawing, the pen shows a *delta shape*. Holding down the Spacebar allows to move the position of the anchor point.
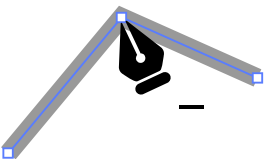
Hover the Pen tool over the first anchor point and it shows the *close path* symbol. Click or drag to close. An example of a closed path is a rectangle, ellipse, polygon, triangle, or other shape.
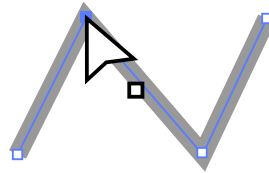
Hover the Pen tool over an selected sub-path or line segment, and the Pen tool will change to the *Add Anchor Point* tool. See the plus + sign. Click to add a new anchor point.
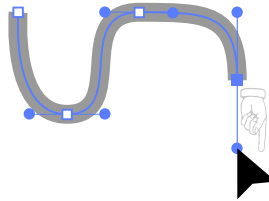
Hover the Pen tool over an existing anchor point and it changes to the *Delete Anchor Point* tool. See the minus sign. Click to delete an anchor from a path.
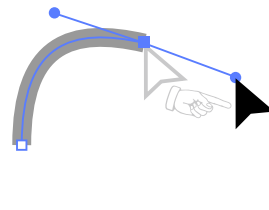
To move an anchor point, press Cmd/Ctrl key, and Pen changes temporarily to the white *Direct Selection* tool. In older Illustrator, click the Direct Selection tool before using the Pen tool.
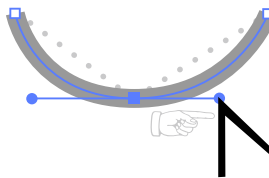
Drag the mouse to create anchor points with Bézier direction points that control curves. The anchor is where you begin the drag and the direction point where you release.
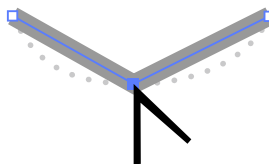
To adjust a direction point, press Cmd/Ctrl key and Pen tool changes to *Direct Selection* tool. Drag handle to adjust the symmetrical curve. Notice the *arrowhead icon*.
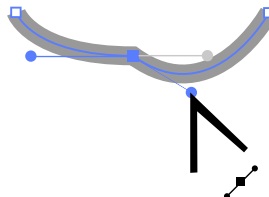
To convert a sharp corner to a curve, hold Opt/Alt key to get *(Convert|Direction|Anchor) Point* tool; then drag direction points out of the anchor.
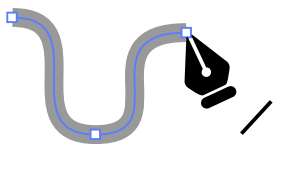
To convert a curve to a sharp corner, hold down the Opt/Alt key and click the curve anchor point to convert to sharp corner.
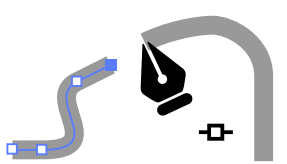
To smooth a curve while keeping the opposite curve intact, select the *Anchor Point* tool, press Opt/Alt and click on a direction point handle to make smooth.
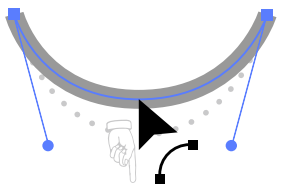
To join onto an open path, hover the Pen tool over an end anchor point. The tool shows a *forward slash*. Click (for straight) or drag (for curves) to rejoin the path and continue the pen drawing.
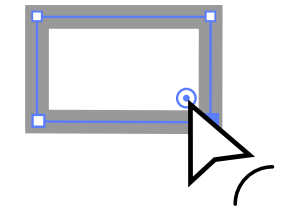
To join two separate open paths, hover over the end anchor point of the first path and click; then hover over the other path's end anchor point; see the *join path icon*; and click to join the paths.

New since Illustrator CC 2014 is the *path segment reshape function*, giving you the ability to drag a curved path segment using the Anchor Point tool, the Direct Selection tool, or holding Opt/Alt in the Pen tool.

New since Illustrator CC is the *Live Corners widget*, enabled when you select the Direct Selection tool and you have a path selection containing corner points. Drag the circle to set the radius of the corner.

New since Illustrator CC 2014 is the *rubber band preview* which displays a preview of the path that will be drawn from the previous anchor point to the current pointer position.