

Overview of Adobe Illustrator

Adobe Illustrator is a vector graphics editor that lets you create logos, icons, sketches, typography, and complex illustrations for print, web, interactive, video, and mobile. With Illustrator you design and manipulate your projects using various elements, such as panels, tools, bars, and windows. The arrangement of these items is called a workspace, adaptable to the unique way you work. Select from several preset workspaces or create one of your own. The Illustrator workspace includes command menus at the top of your screen and a variety of tools and panels for editing and adding elements to your designs.

Illustrator works with *vector graphics*, a format that uses paths to draw images. *Paths* are drawings made of smooth lines with applied values such as stroke color, shape, curve, thickness, and fill. Vector graphics retain their crispness when scaled. Compare how *bitmaps* (images composed of a series of small squares, called *pixels*) and vector graphics appear when scaled up in **Figure 1**.

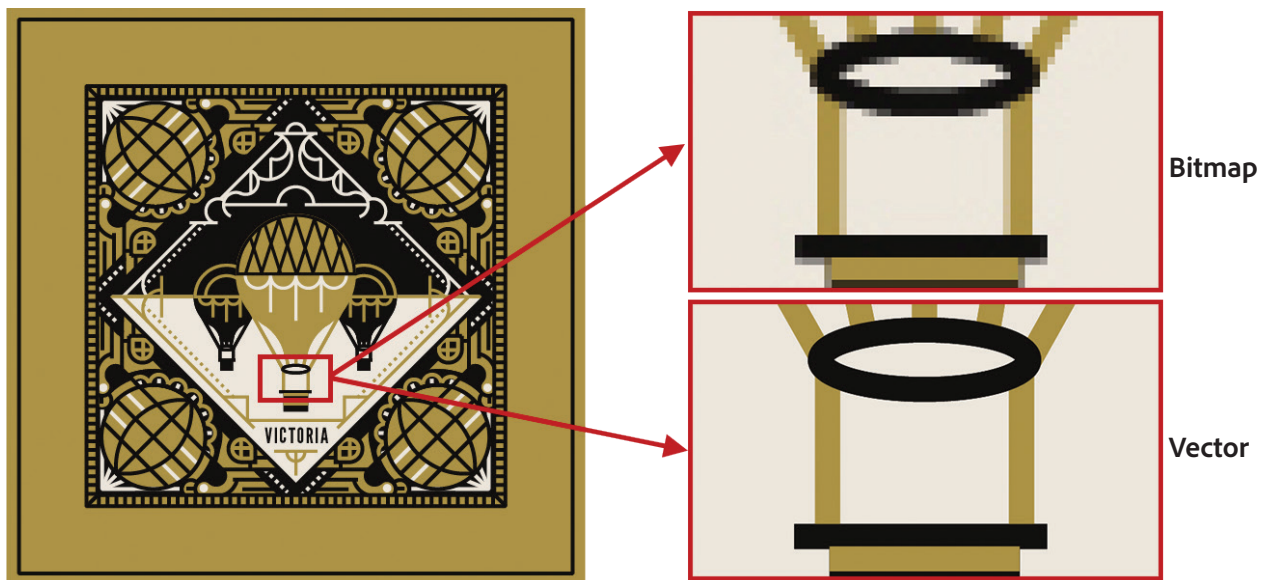


Figure 1 Example showing a magnification of 10x for a bitmap image (top) and vector graphic (bottom).

In this guide, you'll take a look at the fundamentals of Illustrator, including:

- How to use the workspace switcher, tools, document windows, and panels.
- Creating a new document.
- Changing the magnification of the document.
- Navigate through a document by using the artboard and navigator panels.
- Use rulers, grids, and guides for layout.

You can download the assets used in [this tutorial here](#).

The Start workspace

When you open Illustrator, the Start workspace appears. Two tabs at the top of include the Work and Learn tabs.

If it's your first time opening Illustrator, the Work tab will open and the recent files section will be empty (Figure 2). On subsequent openings, this workspace gives you quick access to your recent files, libraries, and presets. Depending on your subscription status, the Start workspace may also display content tailored for your requirements, including Adobe Stock. Illustrator displays the Start workspace at launch or whenever no documents are open.

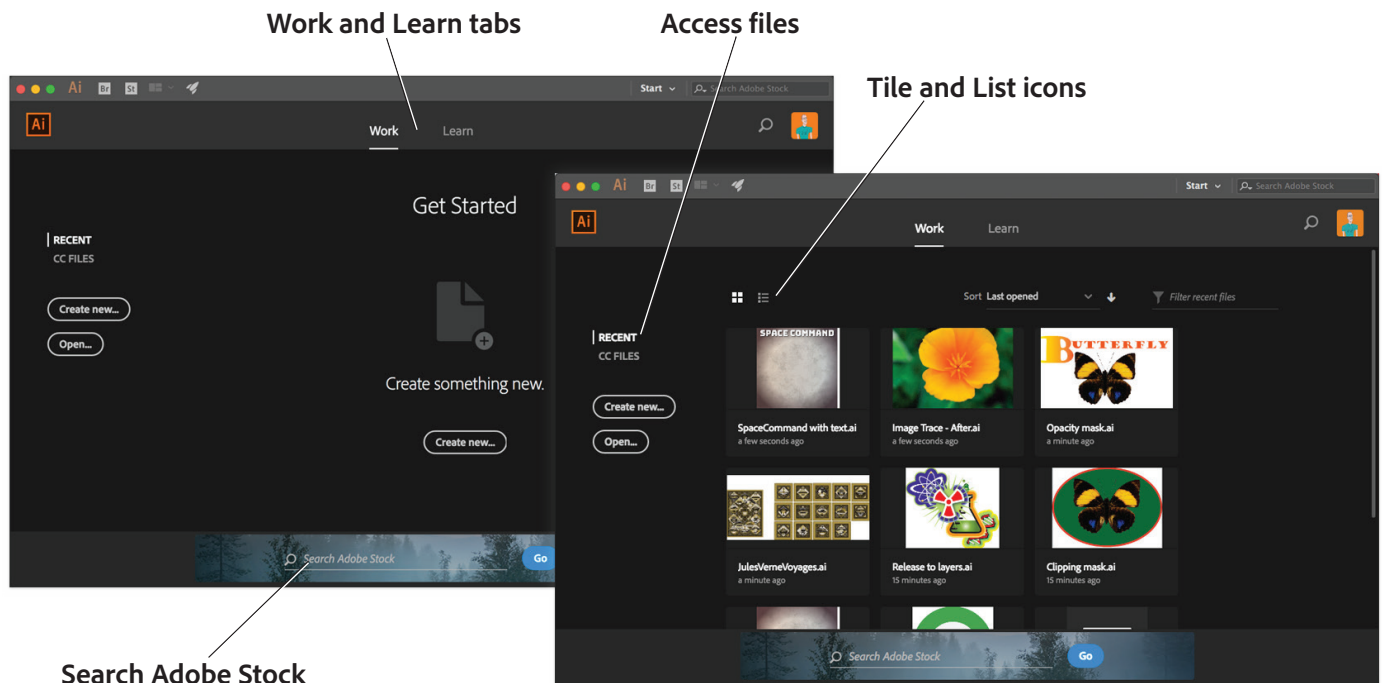


Figure 2 The Work view in the Start workspace at first time opening (left), and the Recent Files view (right)

To open a document from the Start workspace:

1. Start Adobe Illustrator.

The Start workspace opens. If you've previously used Illustrator, your recent files will be shown.

2. Use the options in the Start workspace to browse your recent files and libraries:
 - *Access your assets* - View recently-opened files, define and browse libraries, or select a preset option by clicking the **Create New** button.
 - *Toggle between tile and list views* - Click the Tile icon or the List icon.
 - *Find a stock asset* - Enter a keyword in the Search field. Illustrator displays the search results from Adobe Stock in a new browser window.
 - *Learn tab* - If you're a new user to Illustrator, there are several great ways to learn how to use the application, including links to step-by-step tutorials. Review these resources to learn the basics, or refine your skills.
3. Use one of these workspace options to create a new document, open an image, or select a defined preset.

The Illustrator working area opens.

Exploring the workspace

The Illustrator workspace (**Figure 3**) encompasses everything you see when you first open or create a document: the Tools panel, document window, artboard, and panels. You can customize and save a workspace to suit your work style. For example, you can choose to display only those panels you frequently use, minimize and rearrange panel groups, resize windows, add additional document windows, and so on.

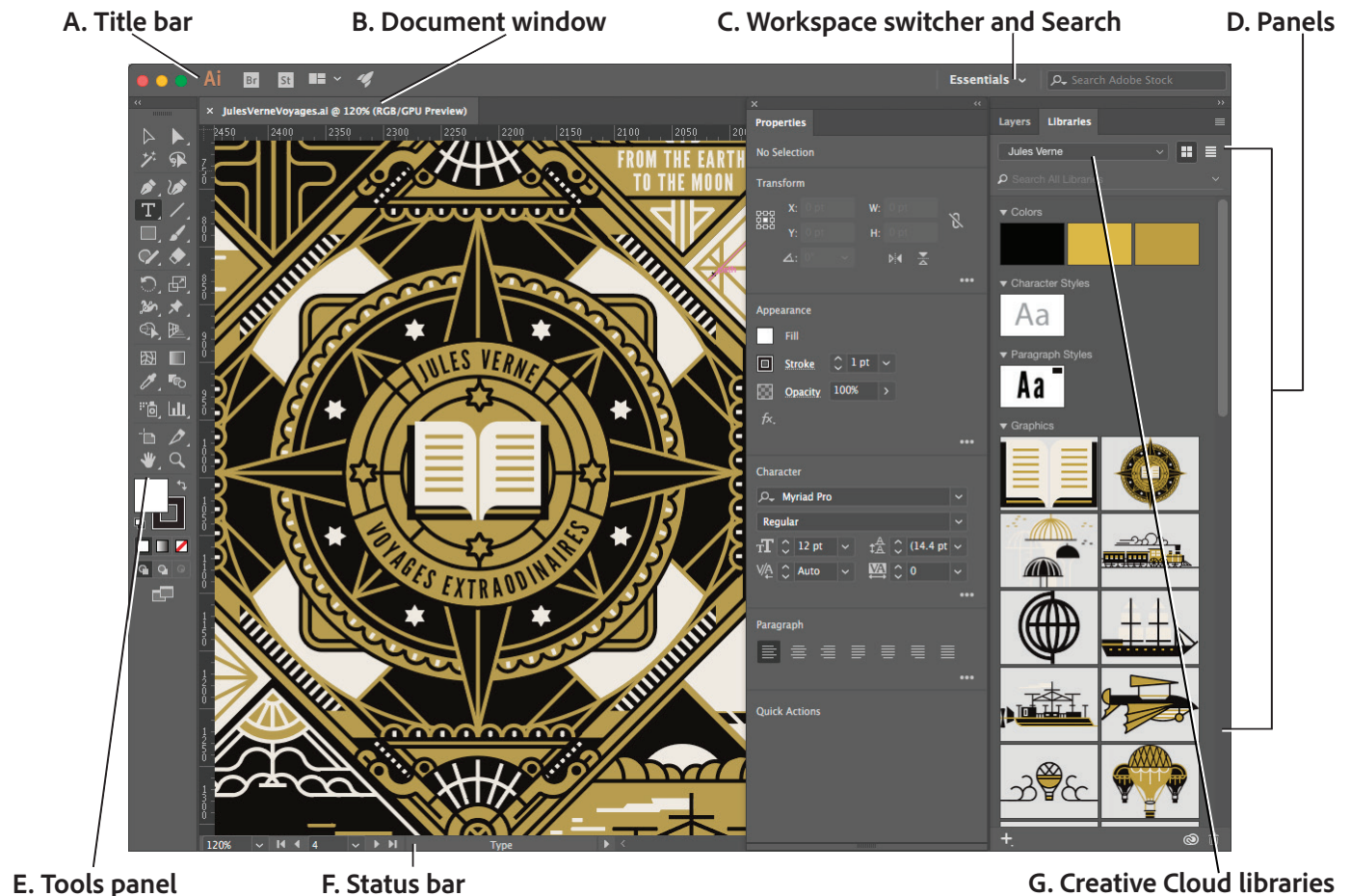


Figure 3 The Illustrator working area

Here's an overview of the elements that make up the Essentials workspace:

- The *Title bar* across the top contains a workspace switcher and other application controls. On Mac, the application bar is available only when Application frame is off. You can toggle it on or off using the Window menu.
- The *Document window* displays the file you're working on. Document windows can be tabbed and, in certain cases, grouped and docked.
- The *Workspace switcher* allows you to adjust the layout and functionality of the Illustrator workspace. The *Search* bar lets you search for inspiring Stock assets.
- Panels* help you monitor and modify your work. Certain panels are displayed by default, but you can add any panel by selecting it from the Window menu. Many panels have menus with panel-specific options. You can separate, group, stack, and dock panels into your preferred layout.
- The *Tools panel* contains tools for creating and editing images, artwork, page elements, and so on. Related

tools are grouped.

- F. The *Status bar* appears at the lower-left edge of the illustration window. It displays any of the following:
 - current zoom level
 - current tool in use
 - current artboard in use
 - navigation controls for multiple artboards
- G. The *Creative Cloud Libraries* makes your images, colors, text styles, and more sharable across desktop applications and mobile apps. You create new libraries and access them via the Libraries panel.

The *Application frame* groups all the workspace elements in a single, integrated window that lets you treat the application as a single unit. When you move or resize the Application frame or any of its elements, all the elements within it respond to each other so none overlap. Panels don't disappear when you switch applications or when you accidentally click out of the application. If you work with two or more applications, you can position each application side by side on the screen or on multiple monitors. If you are using a Mac and prefer the traditional, free-form user interface, you can turn off the Application frame.

Exploring the workspace options

Preset workspaces are available and optimized for specific types of workflows and creative projects. You can adjust the layout and functionality of the Illustrator workspace for dedicated uses by using the workspace switcher.

To explore the workspaces:

1. Click on the Workspace switcher and confirm the option is set to **Essentials** (Figure 4).
2. Select one of the other workspace options, for example, **Layout**.

The interface changes to feature the tools and panels best suited for that particular set of tasks.
3. Try another option, perhaps **Typography**.

Notice how the panels options change.
4. Choose **Essentials** to restore the default workspace.

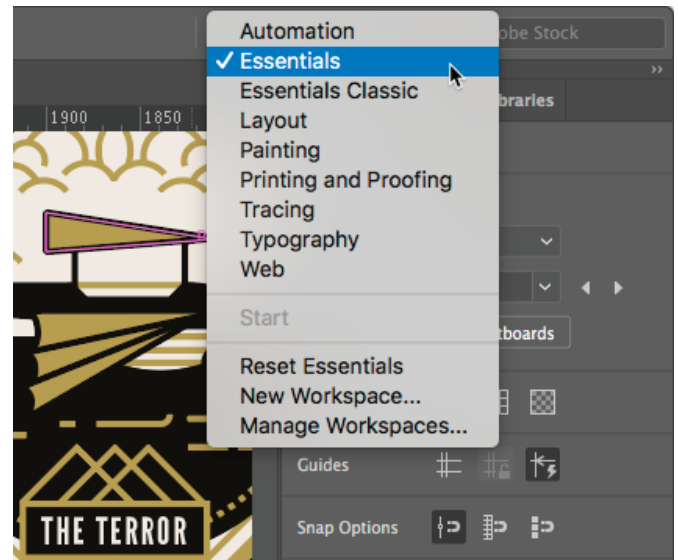


Figure 4 Workspace switcher

Customizing the workspace

You may have your own preferred way of arranging panels when working on a document. You can save a current size and position of panels as a uniquely named workspace and restore that workspace even if you move or close a panel. The names of saved workspaces appear in the **Window > Workspace** menu and appear in the workspace switcher.

How to create a custom workspace:

1. To create a custom workspace, move and manipulate the interface in Illustrator (Figure 5) to create a unique layout.
2. From the Workspace Switcher menu, select **New Workspace** (Figure 6).

The **New Workspace** dialog box appears (Figure 7).

3. Name your workspace.
4. Click **OK**.

Your new workspace appears in the upper-right corner of the interface in the workspace switcher area (Figure 8).

5. Open the workspace switcher menu.

Even if you change to another type of workspace, at any time you can return to your saved workspace by reselecting it from the workspace switcher menu.

Illustrator also records any changes you make to your task-specific or saved layouts, so that if you switch to a different workspace and then switch back during an editing session, the panels will be exactly where you left them.

You can restore the saved workspace at any time by choosing **Reset [your named workspace]** from the workspace switcher menu (Figure 8).

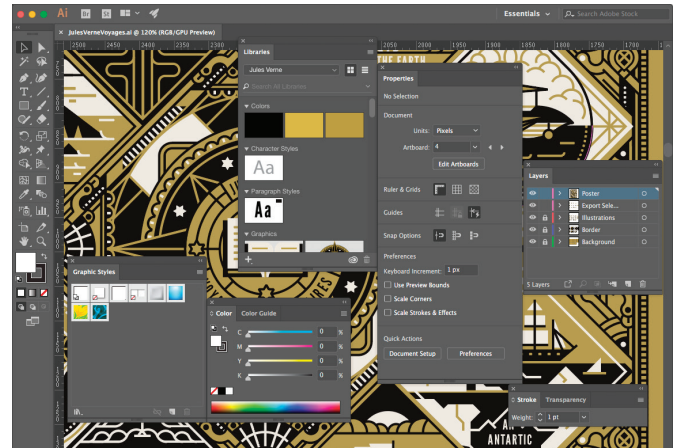


Figure 5 Custom interface layout

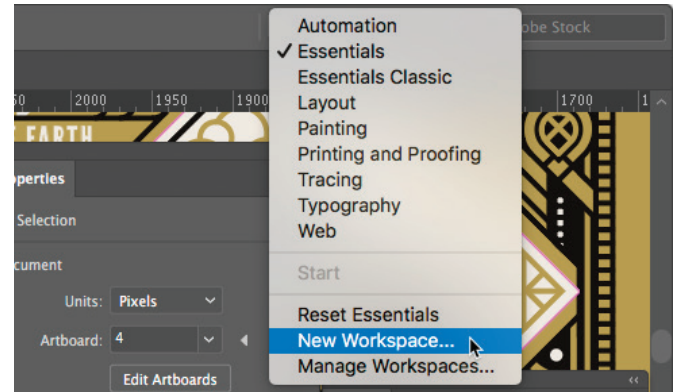


Figure 6 Creating the New Workspace

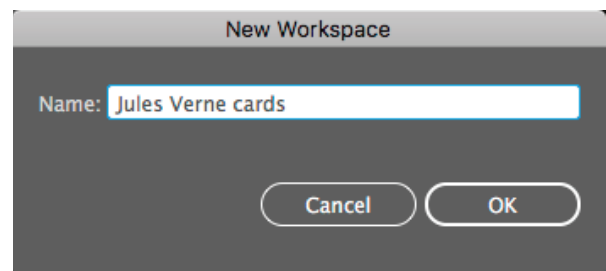


Figure 7 New Workspace dialog box

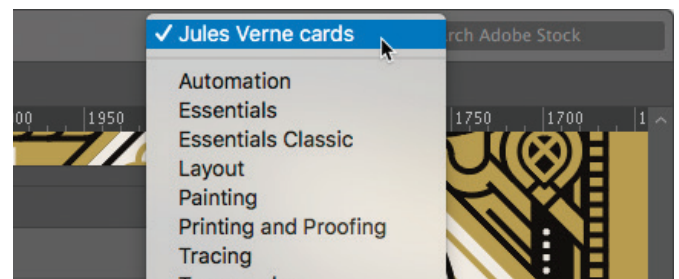


Figure 8 Reselecting a saved workspace

Opening a file in Illustrator

You can open files using Open command and Open Recent command. Creative Cloud Libraries is another way to access, organize, and share creative assets with other users, and across Adobe desktop and mobile apps. Learn more about [Creative Cloud Libraries](#) here.

To open a file:

1. Choose **File > Open**.

The Open dialog box appears.

2. Browse to the location of the file and select the name of the file you want to open.
3. Click **Open**. In some cases, a dialog box appears, letting you set format-specific options.

The file opens in its own window, called the document window (**Figure 9**).

4. Use the zoom controls in the status bar to reveal the full window to show the canvas, paper edge and artboard.
5. To close the image file, choose **File > Close** or click the close button on the title bar of the window in which the image appears. (Do not close Illustrator.)

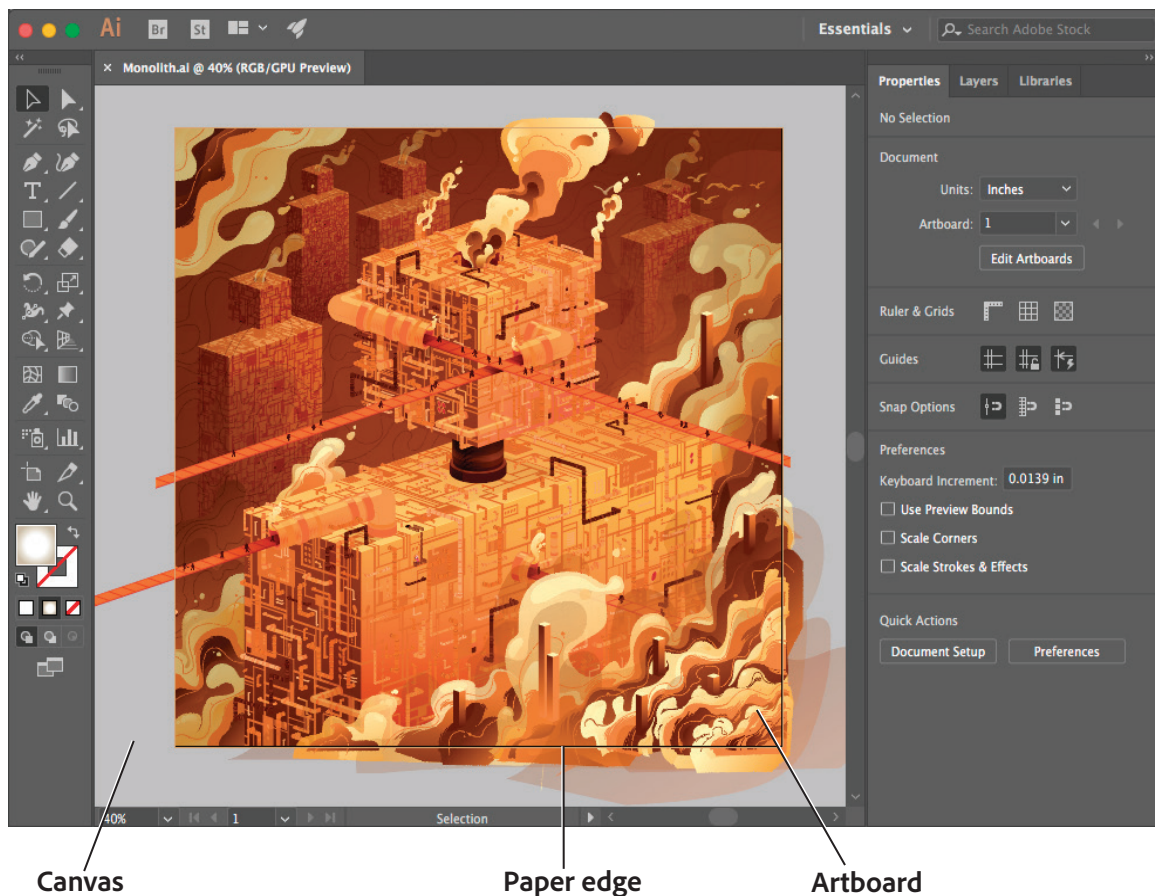


Figure 9 File open in the document window

To open a recently used file:

1. Choose **File > Open Recent**, and select a file from the submenu.

Tools panel overview

Illustrator provides an integrated set of tools to help you produce sophisticated graphics for print, web, and mobile (**Figure 10**). Tools let you create, select, and manipulate objects in Illustrator. Some tools are arranged in groups, with only one tool shown for each group and the other tools in the group hidden behind that tool. A small triangle in the lower right corner of a tool icon is your clue to look for hidden tools. Select a hidden tool by clicking and holding down the small triangle. You can also show or hide the Tools panel by choosing **Window > Tools**.

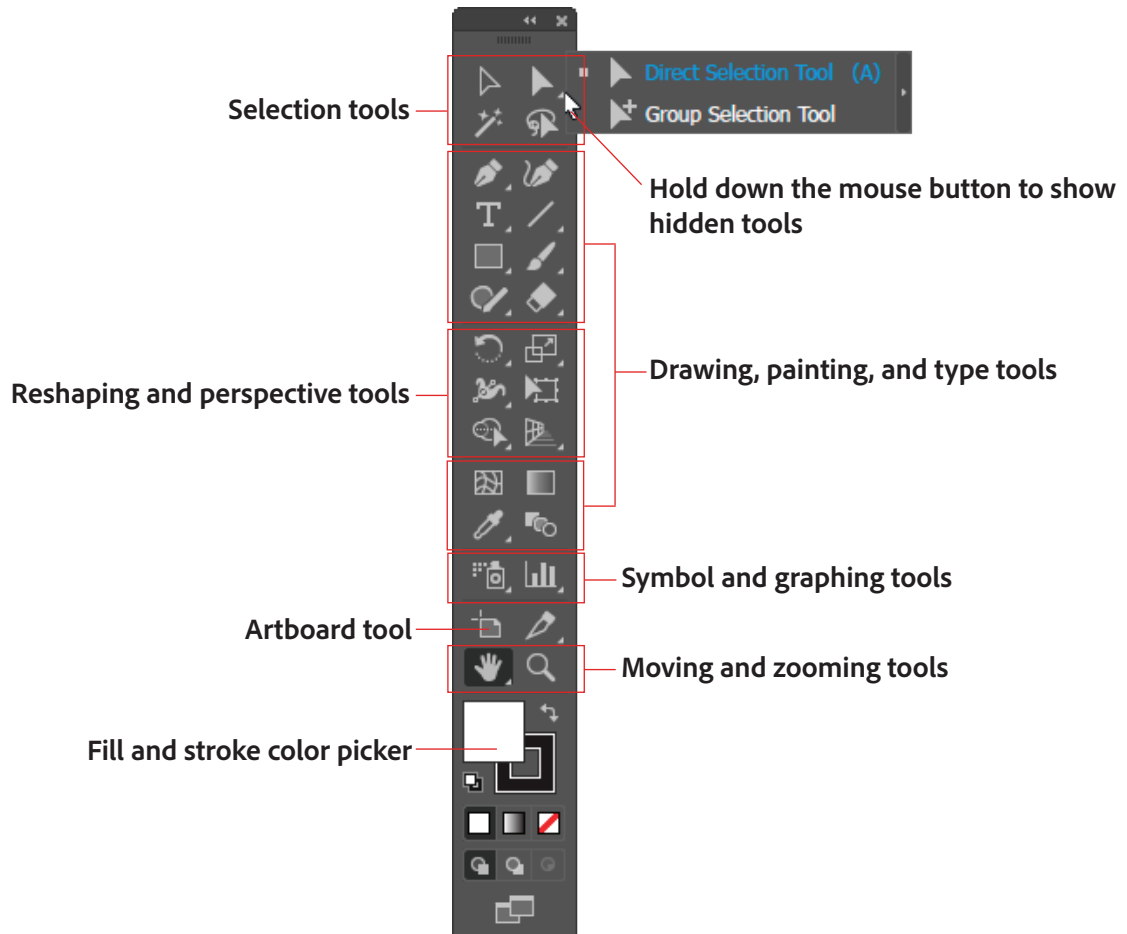


Figure 10 Tools panel

The next section covers the Zoom tool. The process for selecting and using this tool is similar to that for the rest of the tools in the panel.

How to use the Zoom tool to navigate your document

You can zoom in or out of artwork to manipulate fine elements of a layout.

How to use the Zoom tool to change the magnification of your document:

1. Notice the Tools panel appears as a double column. Click the double-arrow button at the top of the Tools panel to toggle to a single-column view (**Figure 11**). Use the single- or double-column panel that uses your screen space most efficiently.



Figure 11 Tools panel

2. Open an image, examine the status bar at the bottom of the image window, and notice the percentage listed on the left corner (**Figure 12**).

This represents the current enlargement view, or zoom level of the image.

Note: This value will also appear in the title bar of the document window.

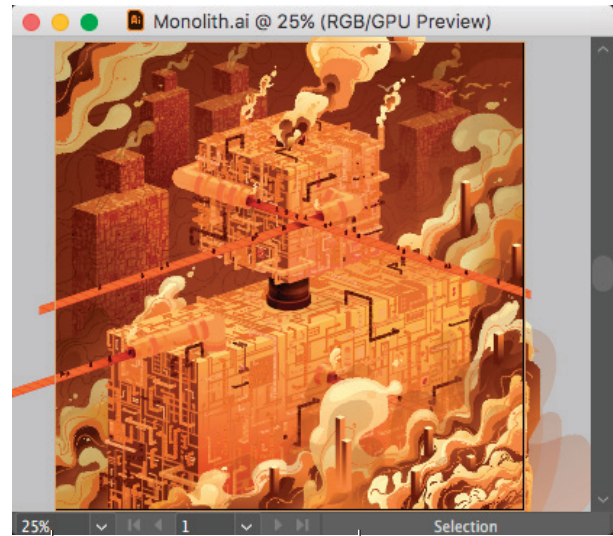
3. Move the pointer over the Tools panel and hover over the magnifying-glass icon until a tool tip appears, identifying the tool by name and providing its keyboard shortcut (**Figure 13**).
4. Select the **Zoom Tool** either by clicking the Zoom tool button in the Tools panel or by pressing Z, the keyboard shortcut for the Zoom tool.
5. Move the pointer over the image window. Notice that it now appears as a tiny magnifying glass with a plus sign in the center of the glass.
6. Click anywhere in the image window.

The image zooms in according to a preset percentage level, which replaces the previous value in the status bar. The location you clicked when you used the Zoom tool becomes the center of the enlarged view. If you click again, the zoom advances to the next preset level, up to a maximum of 3200%.

7. Hold down **Alt** (Windows) or **Option** (Mac OS) so that the Zoom tool pointer appears with a minus sign in the center of the magnifying glass (**Figure 15**), and then click anywhere in the image. Then release the Alt or Option key.

Now the view zooms out to a lower preset magnification.

Note: You can also hold the **Alt** (Windows) or **Option** (Mac OS) and use the mouse scroll wheel to zoom in and out of an image.



Zoom level **Status bar**

Figure 12 Zoom level and Status bar

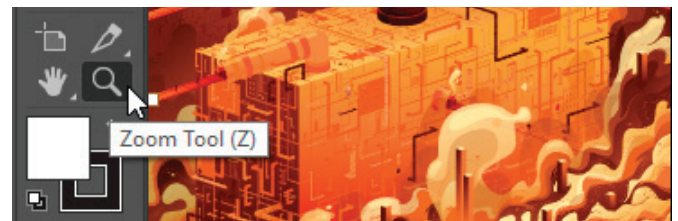


Figure 13 Tool tip

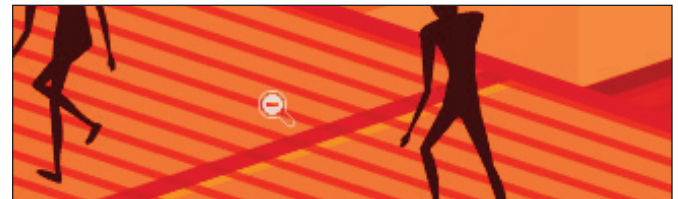


Figure 15 Using the Zoom tool with a minus sign

How to scroll around a document with the Hand tool

The Hand tool moves a document within the document window. This is useful if you want to see a part of the document that is currently out of view.

How to use the Hand tool:

1. Open an image and zoom in until scroll bars appear on the image window.
2. Select the **Hand Tool** from the Tools panel (**Figure 16**). You can also press Shift+H.
3. Using the **Hand Tool**, drag to scroll around and view different parts of the image (**Figure 17**).

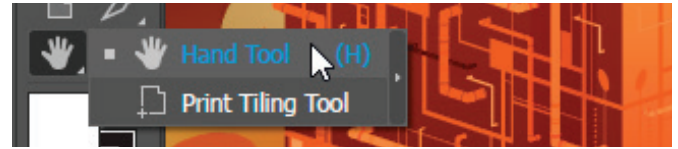


Figure 16 Hand tool in the Tools panel



Figure 17 Dragging the Hand tool

Using the Navigator panel

Panning or zooming an image in the Navigator panel is another quick way to make large changes in the zoom level, especially when the exact percentage of magnification is unimportant. It's also a great way to scroll around and get oriented to an image, because the thumbnail shows you exactly what part of the image appears in the image window.

To use the Navigator panel:

1. Click the Navigator icon in the right side of the workspace (or select **Window > Navigator**) to open the **Navigator** panel.

Notice a red box is displayed around the zoomed area of the image (**Figure 18**). You can grab the box and move it around the Navigator to locate a specific area of an image.

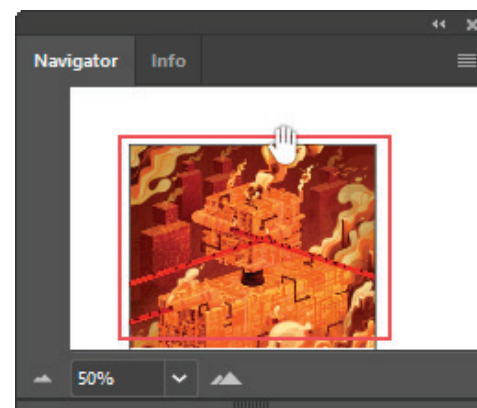


Figure 18 Navigator panel showing zoom area

2. Locate the zoom buttons under the image thumbnail in the Navigator panel and click on the **Zoom Out** button to the right of the percentage level.

Notice that the red box in the Navigator panel gets larger (**Figure 19**) while the image in the document window gets smaller.

3. Now click the **Zoom In** button and increase the scale of the image in the document window.

The red box in the Navigator panel gets smaller, showing you that the zoom level is increasing while it focuses on a smaller part of the image.

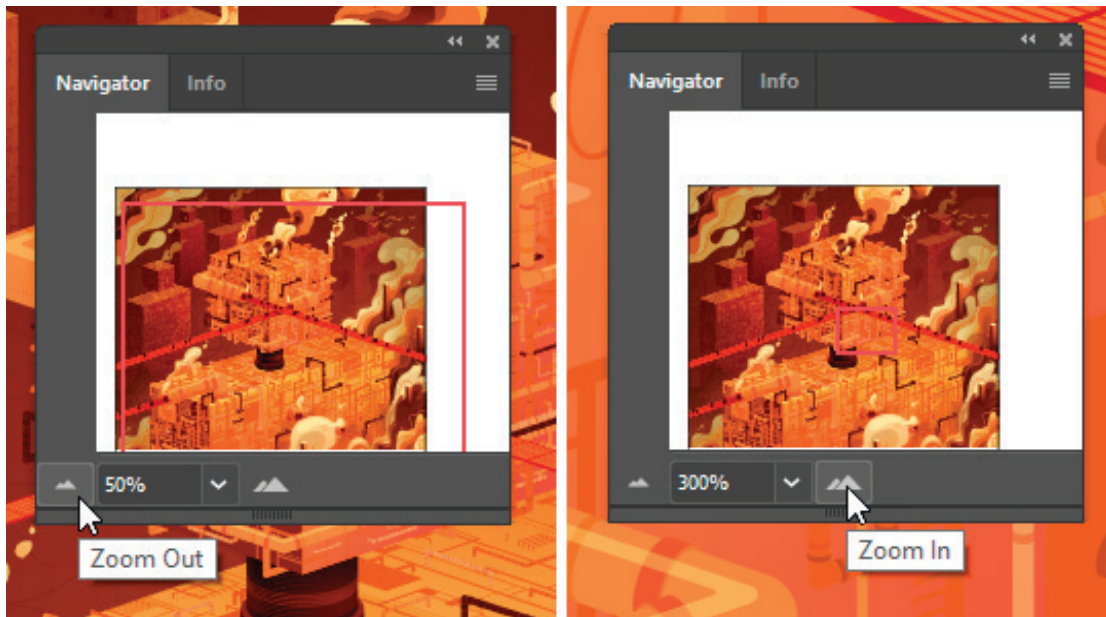


Figure 19 Using the slider to zoom in or out

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