Poster Design in Illustrator CC

Participant's Guide

<u>Background</u>

This workshop introduces skills and design principles needed to create a large format poster integrating text, pictures, charts, and will provide information on poster sizing, saving, and print options.

Required skills

The following skills are required before taking the series:

- Knowledge of basic Illustrator tools
- Knowledge of basic design principles
- Knowledge of STC poster printing services
- Classroom management skills
- Ability to work with diverse groups

Poster Design Illustrator CC Agenda

- Poster Design Principles
- Getting Started
- Creating a New Document and Saving
- Adjusting the Artboard
- Selection & Direct Selection Tools
- Zooming
- Using Guides
- Adding Objects to Your Poster
- Utilizing Important Features
- Saving a Document for Submission
- Submitting a Poster to the STC
- Notes, Tips, and Common Issues

Poster Design Principles

Poster Size

- The standard poster size is 36" height and 48" width.
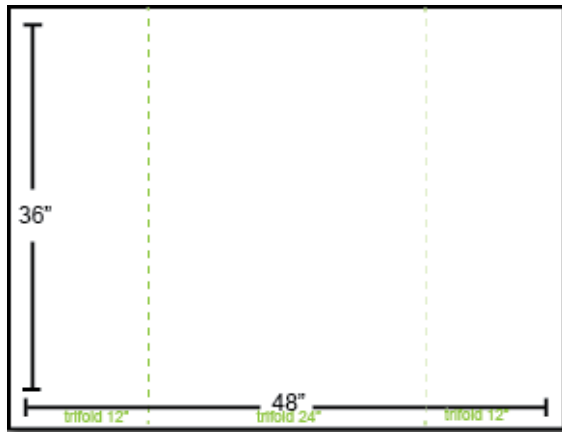
Backgrounds

- Use light-colored backgrounds.
- Do not use dark or busy backgrounds. Do not use multi-colored gradients or backgrounds with clashing colors.

Font Sizes

- For headers, use a font size around 200pt.
- For paragraph text, never use a font size smaller than 24pt.

Images

- Use large, high-resolution images.
- Do not stretch or compress images; keep them in proportion.

Poster Design in Illustrator CC

Getting Started

Before You Begin

Before actually beginning in Illustrator, there are a few things you should do to make the design process go smoothly.

Organizing Your Files

- Gather all of your resources into a working folder on your computer. This will help you stay organized as you work on your project.

  - Create a standardized naming structure for your files. Rename each file something that you will easily recognize and understand to save yourself time and frustration.

Sketching Your Design

- Sketch out a basic outline of what you want to create.

  - Your outline will help you stay on track and work towards a specific finished product, as opposed to aimlessly creating objects and hoping it all comes together well.

  - Your outline can be as basic or as detailed as you need it to be.
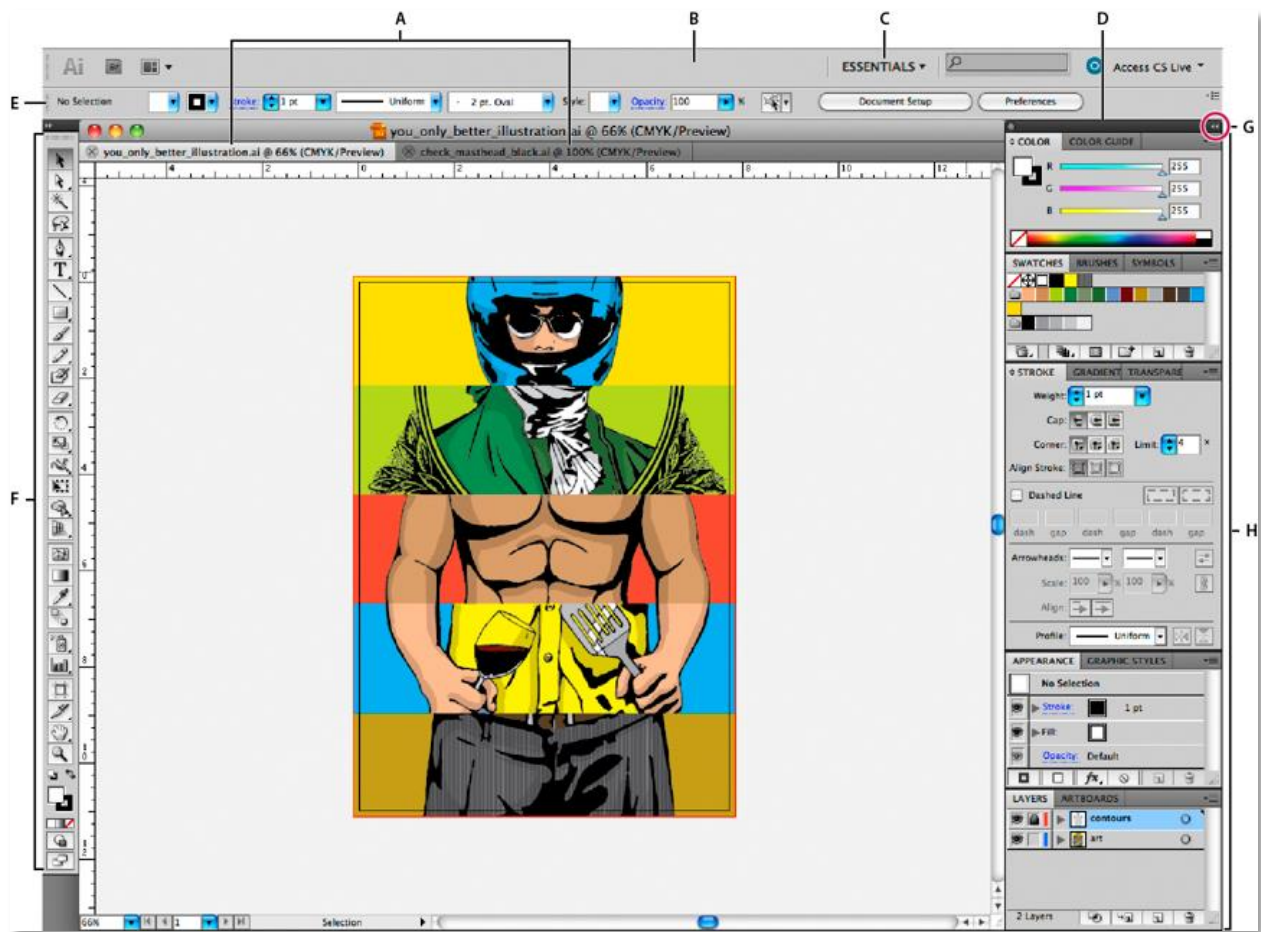
Workspace Overview

A. Tabbed Document windows

B. Application bar

C. Workspace switcher

D. Panel title bar

E. Control panel

F. Tools panel

G. Collapse To Icons button

H. Four panel groups in vertical dock

Tools Panel Overview

You use tools in the Tools panel to create, select, and manipulate objects in Illustrator. Some tools have options that appear when you double-click a tool. These include tools that let you use type, and select, paint, draw, sample, edit, and move images.

You can expand some tools to show hidden tools beneath them. A small triangle at the lower-right corner of the tool icon signals the presence of hidden tools. To see the name of a tool, position the pointer over it.

In this workshop, we will learn about a few key tools for poster creation, but it may be helpful for you to have a general overview of all of the other tools as well.

Tools panel overview

Ⓐ Selection tools
- ■ Selection (V)
- ■ Direct Selection (A)
- Group Selection
- ■ Magic Wand (Y)
- ■ Lasso (Q)
- ■ Artboard (Shift +O)

Ⓑ Drawing tools
- ■ Pen (P)
- Add Anchor Point (+)
- Delete Anchor (-) Point
- Convert Anchor Point (Shift+C)
- ■ Line Segment (\)
- Arc
- Spiral
- Rectangular Grid
- Polar Grid
- ■ Rectangle (M)
- Rounded Rectangle
- Ellipse (L)
- Polygon
- Star
- Flare
- ■ Pencil (N)
- Smooth
- Path Eraser
- ■ Perspective Grid (Shift+P)
- Perspective Selection (Shift+V)

Ⓒ Type tools
- ■ Type (T)
- Area Type
- Type On a Path
- Vertical Type
- Vertical Area Type
- Vertical Type On a Path

Ⓓ Painting tools
- ■ Paintbrush (B)
- ■ Blob Brush (Shift+B)
- ■ Mesh (U)
- ■ Gradient (G)
- ■ Eyedropper (I)
- Measure
- Live Paint Bucket (K)
- Live Paint Selection (Shift+L)

Ⓔ Reshaping tools
- ■ Rotate (R)
- Reflect (O)
- ■ Scale (S)
- Shear
- Reshape
- ■ Width (Shift+W)
- Warp (Shift-R)
- Twirl
- Pucker
- Bloat
- Scallop
- Crystallize
- Wrinkle
- ■ Free Transform (E)
- ■ Shape Builder (Shift+M)
- ■ Blend (W)

Ⓕ Symbol tools
- ■ Symbol Sprayer (Shift+S)
- Symbol Shifter
- Symbol Scruncher
- Symbol Sizer
- Symbol Spinner
- Symbol Stainer
- Symbol Screener
- Symbol Styler

Ⓖ Graph tools
- ■ Column Graph (J)
- Stacked Column Graph
- Bar Graph
- Stacked Bar Graph
- Line Graph
- Area Graph
- Scatter Graph
- Pie Graph
- Radar Graph

Ⓗ Slicing and cutting tools
- ■ Slice (Shift+K)
- Slice Select
- ■ Eraser (Shift+E)
- Scissors (C)
- Knife

Ⓘ Moving and zooming tools
- ■ Hand (H)
- Print Tiling
- ■ Zoom (Z)

■ Indicates default tool
* Keyboard shortcuts appear in parenthesis

Creating a New Document and Saving

IMPORTANT: It is always important to continually save your document(s). Sometimes the program might unexpectedly close or freeze, causing you to lose any unsaved changes. Saving often can keep you from losing your work.

1. File/New
   a. Or use the keyboard shortcut: (*Windows*) Ctrl+N — (*Mac*) Cmd+N.
2. File/Save or File/Save As.
   a. Or use the keyboard shortcut: (*Windows*) Ctrl+S — (*Mac*) Cmd+S.

Adjusting the Artboard

You can customize the Artboard to fit the parameters of your project. The default size is 8.5"x11" but you can adjust it to any size you want. When you open Illustrator and create a new document, you have the option to change the size of the Artboard (*See "Option 1" below*). Even after closing the New Document window, <u>you can still change the size of the Artboard at any time</u>, and as many times as you want (*See "Option 2" below*).

Recommended sizes (used in the STC) are:

- 11" x 17" (Tabloid Size) [small poster]

- 20" x 30" [foam core]

- 36" x 48" [large poster, standard trifold]

To change the Artboard:

Option 1. Adjust it in the dialog box when you open a New Document.

- File/New.
- Or use the keyboard shortcut: Ctrl+N (*Windows)* or Cmd+N (*Mac)*.

1. Name the file as your Sac State Username.
2. Be aware of the units. Make sure to change it to inches.
3. Set the width and height to the desired values.

Option 2. Click the icon of the *box with crop marks* near the bottom on the left
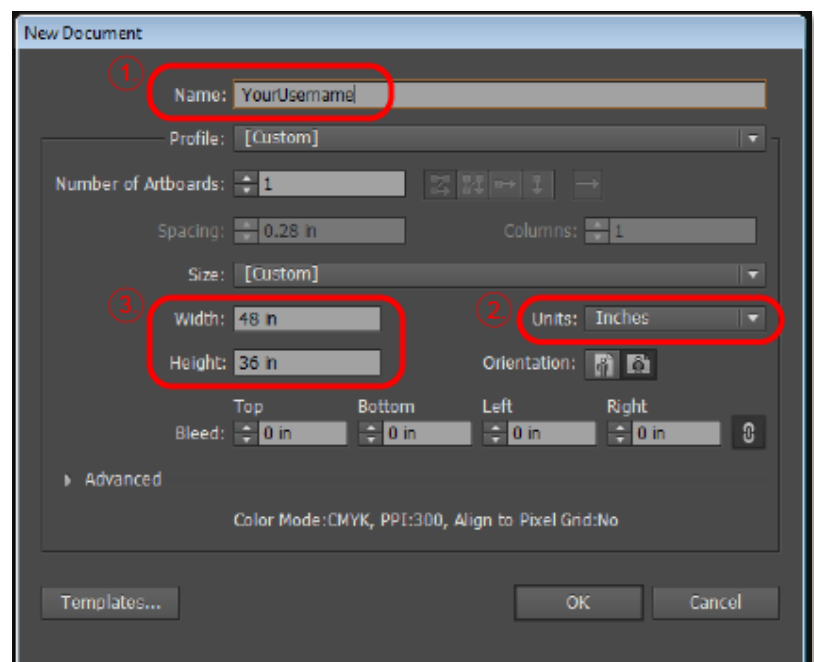
Menu Bar.

1. Locate the dialogue boxes at the top of the page.

2. Input the desired value in the width (W) and height (H) boxes.
3. Finish adjusting by clicking on the Selection Tool.

Activity 1:   Open a New Document and adjust the Artboard.

Selection Tool

The Selection Tool selects entire objects and entire groups. *Click* or *click-and-drag* over any part of an object and it will be selected. While using this tool you can scale objects (increase or decrease in size) and rotate objects.

It can be turned on by:

- Clicking the **black arrow** at the top left of the tools panel.
- Or use the keyboard shortcut: (v).

Notice the white squares (anchor points) around the perimeter of the object. Select any of those points and drag/move it to where you want it.
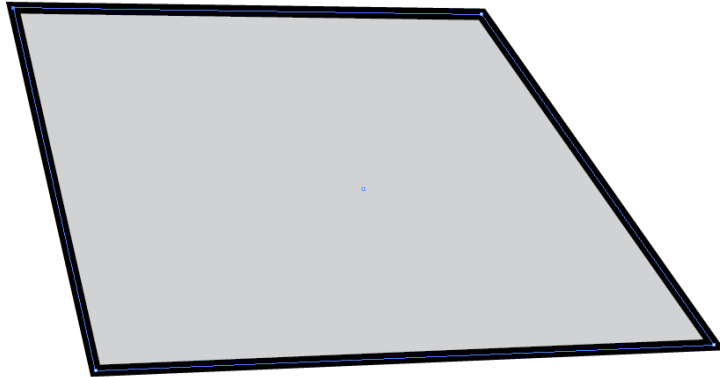
Direct Selection Tool

The Direct Selection Tool allows you to select parts of an object, a segment, an individual anchor point, or multiple points. When a point is selected, that point is filled while the other points remain open.

It can be turned on by:

- Clicking the ***white arrow*** on the top right of the tools panel.
- Or use the keyboard shortcut: (a).

Activity 2:	Using the Direct Selection Tool, click on your object, select a corner and drag/move it to skew the shape.

Zooming

In Illustrator, you have a few different methods of zooming in and out. The easiest way to zoom is to use the following keyboard shortcuts.

Effect	Zoom In	Zoom Out	Fit Screen	Actual Size*
Shortcut (Windows)	Ctrl + (+)	Ctrl + (-)	Ctrl + (0)	Ctrl + (1)
Shortcut (Mac)	Cmd + (+)	Cmd + (-)	Cmd + (0)	Cmd + (1)

As the name implies, this will show the actual size of your poster, but it will only be exact if your monitor is calibrated correctly. This is a great way to check if your text is large enough or if details of pictures are viewable.

Using Guides

Guide lines help you align text and graphic objects. Objects will snap align to a guide when they are placed near it.

Guides will not print or show up when you export your file; they are only visible inside of Illustrator to help you align the contents of your poster.

Create Guides

1. If the rulers aren't showing, go to View/Rulers/Show Rulers (or use the keyboard shortcut (Windows) Ctrl+R — (Mac) Cmd+R).
2. Position the pointer on the left ruler for a vertical guide or on the top ruler for a horizontal guide.
3. Drag the guide into position.

Note: If you are creating a 36"x48" poster to mount on a standard trifold poster board, it may be helpful to place vertical guides at the 12" and 36" marks so you can visualize where the fold will be on your poster and design accordingly.

Lock or Show/Hide Guides

1. To lock guides, select View/Guides/Lock Guides.

2. To show or hide guides, choose View/Guides/Show Guides or View/Guides/Hide Guides.

Adding Objects to Your Poster

You will want to add objects to your poster. There are a few different types of objects you can easily add using Illustrator: shapes, text, freeform drawings, images, and charts.

Shape Tool

The Shape Tool allows you to draw shapes with a single click. By clicking and holding on the icon, you can choose from a rectangle, circle, star, or other shapes. These shapes can be used for backgrounds, added designs, or even text boxes.

It can be turned on by:

- Clicking the *rectangle icon* on the left Menu Bar.
- OR use the keyboard shortcut: (M).

To create a shape you can either:

- With the Shape tool selected, *Click-and-drag* anywhere on the artboard. You will notice a blue preview outline as you drag the cursor around the artboard. This is a preview to show you where your shape will be located once you release your click. Release the mouse button to create your shape.

- OR with the Shape tool, click anywhere on the artboard and this dialog box will appear:
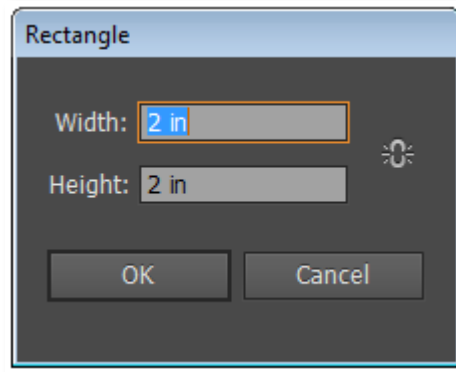
- o Enter a height and width for your new shape and press *OK* to create the shape or *Cancel* to close the dialog box without creating a shape.
  - ▪ The default width and height values in this dialogue box will be the same values as the last shape you created.

Activity 3: Use the Shape Tool to create various shapes on your artboard.

1. Locate the Shape Tool on the Menu Bar on the left side of the screen.
2. *Click-and-hold* on the icon.
3. From there, options for other shapes will show up (ex. Star, Flare, Eclipse...etc.).
4. Release the mouse on your desired shape.
5. Continue drawing.

Swatches Palette

The Swatches Palette is a collection of color swatches you can use to fill your objects or change the color of a line or stroke. This palette also allows you to create your own swatches, create new color groups, and lets you browse through its mass library of swatch themes and groups.
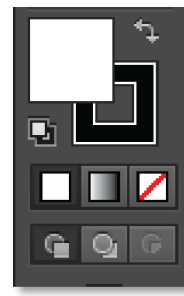
At the bottom of the left Menu Bar there is a box that represents *fill* and a box outline that represents *stroke*. Once you create a shape you can change the colors by *clicking* on either one
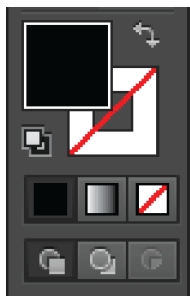
Black fill with invisible
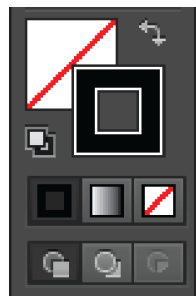
Black stroke with invisible fill

White fill with black stroke

White stroke with black fill

Adding a Background Color

Although it is okay to use the default white background for your poster, you may wish to add a different background color to spice it up. Background colors are a great way to your poster more interesting. Adding a background color in Illustrator is a different process than you may be used to in most other software.

1. Create a rectangle that covers the entire space of the artboard.
    a. (The rectangle will cover up any other objects you have already created. Don't worry about that for now; we will fix it later.)
2. Using the swatches palette, choose a fill color that you want for your background.
    a. PRECAUTION: Use light-colored backgrounds. Do not use dark or busy backgrounds. Do not use multi-colored gradients or backgrounds with clashing colors.
3. To place the shape in the background, Right-Click on the rectangle. In the popup menu, select Arrange/Send to Back. Now your rectangle will be placed underneath the rest of your content.

Once you are satisfied with your background's color, you may want to **lock the background** shape in place to avoid complication later.

1. Select your background shape.
2. Go to Objects in the Control Bar and go to Lock/Selection.
3. This will lock the shape in place so it cannot be accidentally moved or changed.
    a. If at any point you feel like making changes to the background, you can go back to Objects in the Control Panel and choose Unlock All to make the shape editable again.

Type Tool

The Type Tool is an essential tool to use when creating a document. You can use it for titles, captions, bodies of paragraphs, etc. The Type tool allows you to click-and-type, create text boxes, type inside shapes as well as along paths (*lines created with the Pen or Pencil Tool*).

It can be turned on by:

- Clicking the icon on the left Menu Bar ("T" located near the top).
- Or use the keyboard shortcut: (t).

Click-and-Type Method

To create a **single line of text** (best for titles and subtitles)…

1. Click anywhere within the document and start typing.
2. You can create another line by pressing (enter) or a soft return (*Windows)* (Shift+Enter) — (*Mac*) (Shift+Return) to continue a sentence without creating a new line of text with a capital letter.

Textboxes

To create a **textbox** (best used for paragraphs and large bodies of text)…

1. *Click-and-drag* the mouse to the desired textbox size and start typing.
   a. The text will remain within the boundary you have set and automatically create a new line when the text reaches the horizontal length of your textbox.

   Note: When pasting text from another source (like a Word document), do not paste it straight onto the artboard. First, create a textbox *and then* paste the text into that textbox. Otherwise, your text will not paste properly and will skew when you try to resize it.

To change the font size and typeface as well as the alignment (Left, Center, Right)…

- Open the *Character* window:

- Window/Type/Character.

- Or use the keyboard shortcut: (*Windows*) Ctrl+T — (*Mac*) Cmd+T.

   Note: A Red Box with a Plus Sign at the bottom right corner of your textbox means there is hidden text. Either enlarge the textbox or shrink the font size to make that hidden text visible [*see below*].
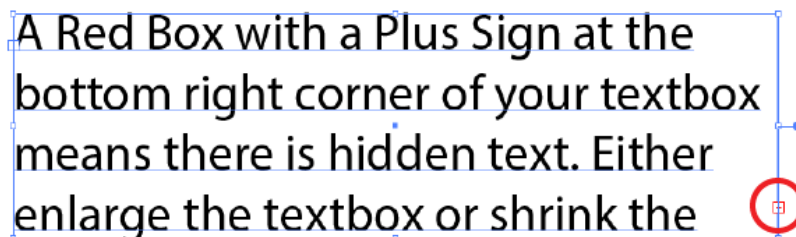
Activity 6:   Create a Single line of text (Title) and type a sentence.

   1. Go through the library in the Character palette and choose a typeface.
   2. Change the font size.
      a. (Recommended: 24-72pt for paragraph text; 100-200pt for headings and subheadings)

Pencil Tool

The Pencil Tool lets you draw open and closed paths as if you were drawing with a pencil on paper. Anchor points are set down as you draw with the Pencil Tool; you do not determine where they are positioned. However, you can adjust them once the path is complete.

If you hold down the SHIFT key while drawing, you will create straight lines.

It can be turned on by:

- Clicking the *pencil icon* on the left Menu Bar.
- Or use the keyboard shortcut: (n).

When you turn on the Pencil Tool and begin to draw, make sure that you have turned the *stroke* on–apply a color. If there is no *stroke*, only the outline of what you have drawn will appear. You must change the *stroke* (line) in order to see it.

Placing an Image or Chart

1. Go to *File / Place*.

2. Locate your file.

3. Click *Place*.
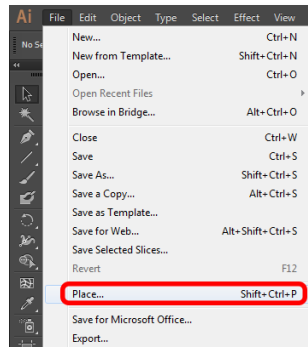
Utilizing Important Features

Illustrator is full of useful features that will enhance your design. When designing a poster or logo, features like the *Transparency and Align* are extremely handy.

Transparency Panel

The Transparency panel allows you to adjust the opacity of an object (or group of objects). Adjusting the opacity allows light to pass through the object so that objects behind it can be seen more distinctly.

The transparency panel can be turned on by…

- Going to *Window > Transparency*.

- Clicking on the icon of two overlapping circles on the right Menu Bar.

Activity 7:	Change the Transparency of your background or any of your shapes you have created.

Align Panel

The Align panel allows you to align and distribute objects along the axis you specify. You can use the objects anchor points, you can align to a selection, an artboard, or a key object as the reference point.

In order to use the Align panel, you must:

1. Open the Align panel.
   a. Window/Align.
2. Click the drop down of the Align panel.
3. Click *Show Options*.
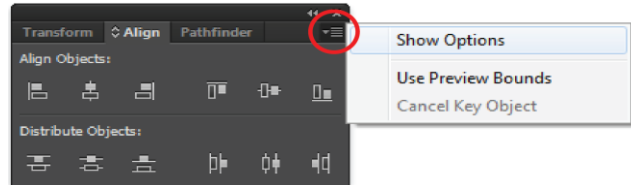
Select the objects you wish to align.

   a. Align Objects:
      i. Horizontal Align Left, Center, Right.
      ii. Vertical Align Top, Center, Bottom.
   b. Distribute Objects:
      i. Vertical Distribute Top, Center, Bottom.
      ii. Horizontal Distribute Left, Center, Right.
   c. Distribute Spacing:
      i. Vertical Distribute Spacing.
      ii. Horizontal Distribute Spacing.
   d. Align To:
      i. Selection, Key Object, Artboard.
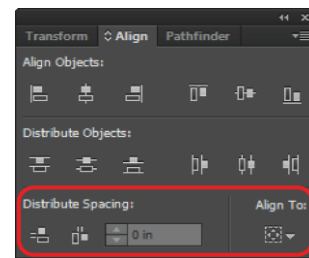
Activity 8:   Align objects on your artboard.
   1. Use *Horizontal Align Center, Vertical Align Center,* and *Align to* Artboard for your background.
   2. Use *Horizontal Align center* with *Align to Artboard* to center your Title.

Saving a Document to Submit to the STC

Illustrator has multiple saving options. You can save the file as an Illustrator File (ai) to reopen and edit later. When your poster is complete, you can create a PDF for print or for viewing on the web.

Saving an Illustrator file (ai)
   1. File/Save As.
   2. Make sure the format is set to *Adobe Illustrator* (ai) (the default file format).
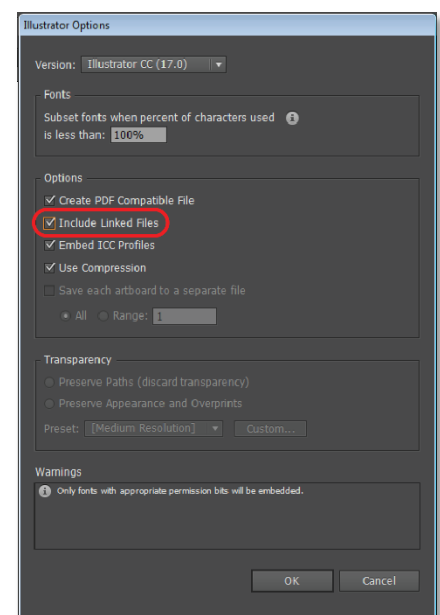
3. In the field for File Name, type your Sac State username.

4. Click Save.

5. After pressing save, another window will appear, giving you more save options. **If you have any images or other linked files,** then you want to check the box that says **"Include Linked Files"** before pressing OK. For this Intro course, you can leave all the other options at their default settings.

Saving a PDF
1. File/Save As.
2. Change the format from *Adobe Illustrator (ai)* to *Adobe PDF (pdf)*.
3. In the field for File Name, type your Sac State username.
4. Change *Adobe PDF Preset* from *[Illustrator Default]* to *[High Quality Print]*.
5. Click *Save*.

Submitting a Poster to the STC

This section needs to be completed after the STC poster printing process for future semesters is finalized. Include link to STC Printing Facts page. Cover how to submit, how long it takes to print, and the STC printing policies/times.

3-day turnaround, submit in person, 4-5 days a week, 1 per semester?, Sac State username, poster form

Notes, Tips, and Common Issues

Moving Objects with Arrow Keys

To move units with more precision:

1. Select the object you want moved with the *Selection Tool* (*black arrow*).
2. Use the arrows on the keyboard (up, down, left, right) to move the object.
   [Option] *Press-and-hold* (Shift) to increase the distance/movement 10 times.

The Perspective Grid

If you ever see an orange and blue grid (like the one on the right) on your screen and you wish to remove it, press the keyboard shortcut *Ctrl + Shift + I* (Windows) or *Cmd + Shift + I* (Mac) to make it disappear.
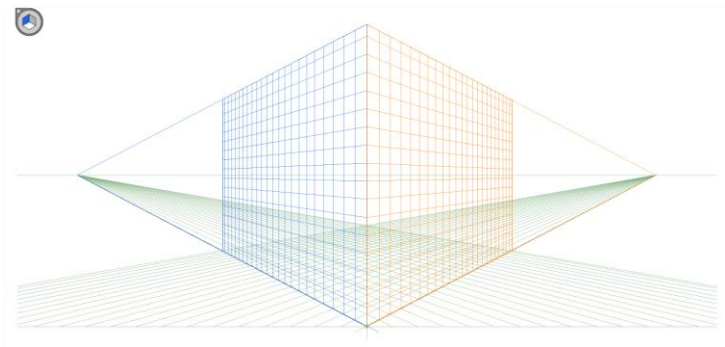
Skewed Text

Many students have issues with text in textboxes being skewed strangely and with Illustrator not recognizing the letters as text. This problem is especially common when the text was pasted into Illustrator from a different program.

To fix the problem, create a textbox in Illustrator. Next, go back to the text's source file and copy and paste the text into the textbox in Illustrator.

This issue can easily be avoided. **When pasting text into Illustrator, always make sure to place it in an already existing textbox.**

Isolating Objects

If you double-click on an object with the Selection Tool (black arrow), Illustrator will enter Isolation Mode. Isolation Mode makes it so only the selected object is able to be edited; no other objects can be adjusted in this mode. When isolation mode is active, the isolated object appears in full color, while the rest of the artwork appears dimmed.

If you ever have trouble with selecting objects or notice that many of the objects on the screen are dimmer than they should be, you may have accidentally entered Isolation Mode. Don't worry, this happens a lot and is easy to fix. If you suspect you have unintentionally entered Isolation Mode on an object, simply press the *Escape Key* (Esc) on your keyboard. If you were in Isolation Mode, this would exit out and return to normal. If you were not in Isolation Mode, then pressing (Esc) will have no effect.

Missing Linked Files

You may open your document on a different computer than you originally created it on and see an error message about missing linked files. If this happens, any images or charts that you placed on your poster will not show up in Illustrator.

You can prevent this from happening or to fix the problem after it occurs. To do this, go back to the computer where the images are saved and open up your Illustrator file. Re-save the .AI file and this time check the *Include Link Files* option in the window that pops up after the save window.

Conclusion

You now understand standard poster design principles and have the skills to create your own poster. You can navigate the Illustrator workspace and you know how to use the basic tools. You can create documents and edit their properties. You know how to add text, shapes, pictures, and charts to your posters. You also understand various size and printing options.

If you have any further questions, you can visit the STC. Our Illustrator drop-in hours can be found at http://www.csus.edu/irt/stc/tutoring.html.