



Illustrator 10's New Rectangular Grid Tool

[Home](#)

Printable Grids in Illustrator 10, and an overview of the new rectangular grid tool

[Vector vs Raster?](#)

How to make a printable grid in [Illustrator 9](#)

[Tips and Tutorials](#)

The alignment grids in Illustrator (**View > Show Grid**) are non-printing grid-lines, customizable by the user, to aid in layout and design. It's great for alignment and designing, but what if you want to print one (for instance, you're making a tutorial and you want the grid to show in the graphics, or you want a grid for part of the graphic)? They don't print and no matter what options you set, it still won't print. That must why it's called a non-printing grid! But we can get around that.

[Resources](#)

Illustrator 10 has a new grid tool. This is an overview of the new tool, and there is also a workaround for **Illustrator 9** [here](#).

Illustrator 10 Rectangle Grid Tool

Illustrator 10 now has printable-grid capability built-in. Adobe has added a new **grid tool**, accessible under the line tool, along with the new **arc tool** and **polar grid tool**. Hold the mouse over the line tool in the toolbox until the flyout appears, and slide the mouse over to the grid tool. (It's easy to spot, it looks like, well, a grid.) Release the mouse button and the grid tool is ready to use. Before we talk about the printable grid, we'll cover the basics of the new rectangle grid tool.

[Northlite Designs](#)

I'm working for the web today so I have my measurement preferences set in pixels. Before we start, if you want your measurements to look like mine, go to **Edit > Preferences > Units and Undo** and change the measurement unit in the **General** dropdown box to **Pixels**. (You can change the units for the page rulers on the fly by right-clicking on the ruler and choosing the new unit, but it doesn't change the unit of measurement for the program. This has to be done in the preferences.)

[Cards & Prints](#)

Drawing the Grid. Method 1: Dragging a Grid

[Gallery](#)

We can use one of two methods to create the grid: either **dragging** to create the grid immediately, or **setting the options**. To drag the grid, click the mouse once where you want the grid to start, and holding down the mouse button, drag the grid in the direction you want it to go and as large as you want it to be.

[Expression](#)

[About Me](#)

There are several options here as well:

[Contact Me](#)

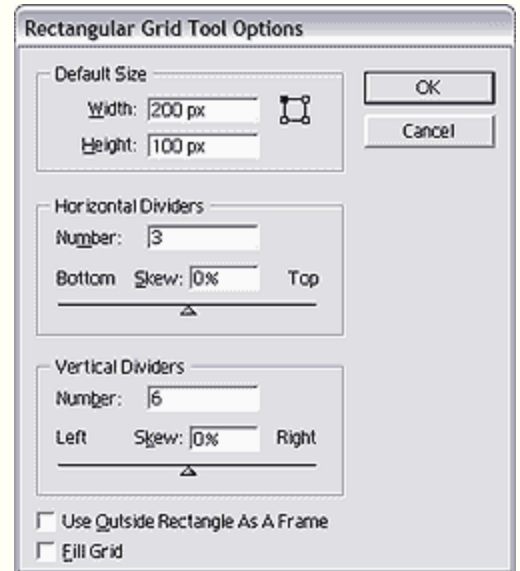
- Start to drag, then hold down the **SHIFT** key as you drag will constrain the grid to a perfect square.
- Start to drag, then hold down the **ALT** key as you drag will draw the grid from the center.
- Start to drag, then hold down the **SHIFT and ALT keys** and you'll draw a square grid that is drawn from the center.

Drawing the Grid, Method 2: Setting Options

To set options for the grid before it's drawn, **click on the artboard once to create the point of origin**. That is, if you want the grid to start at the upper-left corner of your document, click once in the upper-left corner, and that's where the grid will start. After setting the point of origin, double click on the grid tool icon in the toolbox to open the grid options. Let's take a look at the **grid options**.

Set the **width** for your grid in the Width box: mine is at 200 pixels. Set the **height** below that in the Height box. As you can see mine is set at 100 pixels. (If you have a preferences set at points or inches and you want to use pixels here you have to type px after the number so Illustrator knows to use pixels. It will convert it to the units set in the preferences, but it will be the size you entered.)

Next to the width box is a small square with four dots on the corners. This is the **origin point icon**. The black circle is the selected one. This sets the direction the grid is drawn from the point of origin you set when you clicked on the artboard before you opened the options. Mine is set so that the grid will draw from the upper left corner down (southeast as if on a map). If you had the lower right corner selected, the grid would start at your point of origin and draw up and left, or northwest. Try it and you'll see what I mean.



Next we set the **horizontal dividers**. This is the numbers of dividers you want between the top and bottom lines of the grid. (So if you want 4 squares you need 3 dividers.) If you want it to skew so there are more dividers set toward the top or bottom use the skew slider or type in a value. Positive values (slide to the right) the dividers will be skewed toward the top (less dividers on top); negative values (slide toward the left) skew toward the bottom (less dividers on the bottom.)

The **vertical dividers** are set the same way: enter the number of dividers you want between the left and right side of the grid; again, if you want 4 spaces enter 3. The skew slider and percentage box works the same way, except from left to right.

There are two checkboxes at the bottom of the options:

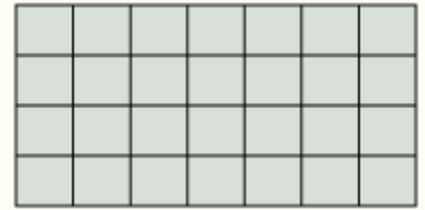
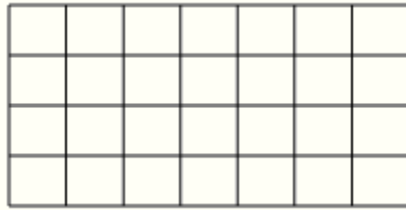
Use Outside Rectangle as a Frame: When this is checked, the top, bottom, left and right segments of the grid will be replaced with a separate rectangle.

Fill Grid: When this one is checked the grid is drawn using the fill and stroke colors in the toolbox. If it is not checked, the grid is drawn with no fill, and the squares are transparent. This will have no effect unless **Use Outside Rectangle as a Frame** is also checked.

As soon as you are done setting options, click **OK** and the grid appears on the artboard, drawn from the point of origin as you specified, and with the division options you selected.

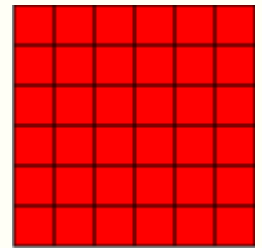
This grid has the options set as in the illustration above, with fill grid unchecked, You can see the page background.

On this grid I set the fill color to this soft green, and the stroke color I left at black. Both "use outside rectangle as frame" and "fill grid" were checked.

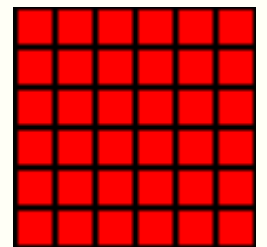


Changing Fill and Stroke Colors

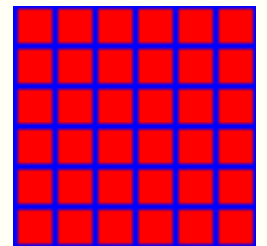
Fill Grid can be tricky. You already know **Use Outside Rectangle as a Frame** has to be checked to get the grid to fill. If you have this set and your fill color is red, your grid will be red, with its stroke the color you have set in the toolbox **Changing the stroke** is no problem. If you want the stroke color or size changed, simply change it in the swatches and stroke palette the same way you change any object. But the fill doesn't behave that way, and can be frustrating until you know the secret. Which I know. And which I'm sharing with you.



The table above had a default stroke of 1. To change it, just go to the stroke palette and set a different number; I set it to 3 here.

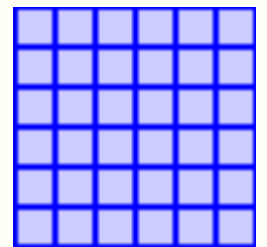


To change the color of the stroke, make sure the stroke is active in the toolbox, and click on the color swatch you want in the swatches, or double click on it and open the color picker, and choose a color. But the fill isn't that easy.

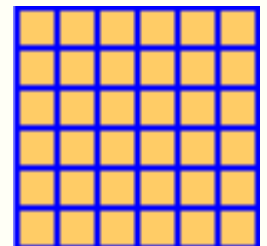


The fill is active, and I changed the color...but even though the grid is selected it doesn't change the fill color.

The quickest solution is to make sure the **grid is selected**, and grab the **fill swatch in the toolbox** and drag it over and **drop it on the grid**, and the fill color changes.

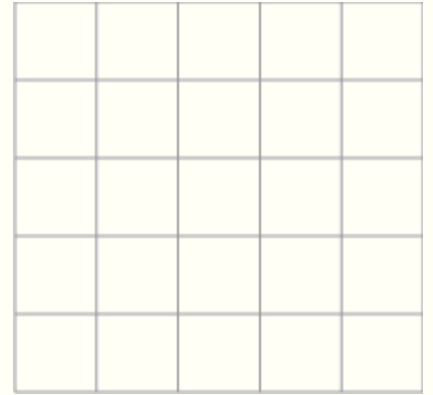


OR you can change it to a color that isn't selected in the tool box by **dragging a swatch** from the **swatches palette** over to the grid and **dropping it on the grid**. (Just make sure you drop it on FILL not STROKE. If you try to drop it on the stroke nothing happens.)



Printable Grids...finally!

We started talking about printable grids. To get a printable grid in Illustrator 10, start with setting the fill to none, and the stroke to the grid color and point size (in the stroke palette) you want. Then either drag or set your size and spacing options in the grid options as we talked about at the beginning of this tutorial. Setting options is best if you're trying to get a specific grid size.



To find out how to draw a printable grid in Illustrator 9, go [here](#).

[Download this tutorial as a PDF file](#)

(requires Adobe Acrobat Reader to view)

Adobe Acrobat Reader is available as a free download from <http://www.adobe.com>

[To the top of the page](#)

[Back to the main page to try another tutorial](#)



[Contact Me](#)

Disclaimer: Site Design and all graphics on this site are the property of and copyrighted to Sara Froehlich and Northlite Designs.

March 20, 2002

©2002 Sara Froehlich and Northlite Designs