7 Steps to Create Hand-drawn Vector Patterns

Get in on the hand-drawn vector illustration trend without leaving the digital realm with this fun and tropical pattern tutorial.

Tutorial Details: 5 Steps for Easy Flat Work Icon Design

- **Program**: Adobe Illustrator CS6 – CC
- **Difficulty**: Intermediate
- **Topics Covered**: Design Theory, Drawing Skills, Tracing Panel
- **Estimated Completion Time**: 15 Minutes

Final Image: Hand-drawn Vector Pattern

Step 1

We’ll begin with the **Shape Builder Tool** in drawing simple plant shapes. You can also use the **Pen Tool** or **Pencil Tool** if you’d rather; just make sure you’ve converted any stroked paths to objects when done. Draw stems, leaves, flowers, palms, and more. Vary their size and shape. They’ll be layered over each other later. **Unite** each design element (each plant) in the **Pathfinder** panel with its respective components.

Step 2

Next we’ll need some watercolor, gouache, or marker-like textures. You can open up **Adobe Photoshop** (if you have it) or a similar drawing program and scribble out some textures with textured brushes.

You'll find plenty of them over on Brusheezy that work well for this use. Use whatever colors you want to appear in your final drawing. It's also an option for you to use pre-made watercolor and grunge textures, which you can find on Vecteezy and other digital asset resource sites.

Step 3

Import any raster-based textures into **Adobe Illustrator** (I simple **Copied** and **Pasted** my textures from **Photoshop** into my **Illustrator** document). Select your raster image and open the **Image Trace** panel. Select **Color** for **Mode** and hit **Preview** to see your image tracing result. Make adjustments as you see fit to these settings.

Below you’ll see a zoomed-in version of one of my watercolor textures. The variations in color and texture are difficult to create without the help from the **Image Trace** panel, but it can be done by layering multiple colors and hues on top of each other. **Expand** traced images under **Object** and **Delete** any large white spaces or unwanted components of the tracing result. Make sure you **Group** together sections you want to save and use within your design. If you’re using pre-made vector textures or patterns, you won’t need to follow this step.

Step 4

Place one of your plant objects over one of your textures and **Make a Clipping Mask (Control – 7)**. Repeat this action for each one of your plant objects and set the clip groups' **Blending Mode** to **Multiply**. Begin to layer your objects on top of one another to form the pattern.

Step 5

Layer different and like objects over one another to form your pattern. Consider what colors and object types are next to each other as you create your basic pattern design. **Group** together your pattern and open the **Pattern Options** panel.

Step 6

In the **Pattern Options** panel, select your **Tile Type** and adjust the pattern boundaries. My **Tile Type** is set to **Column**.

Step 7

Paste in other components within your pattern. You can do this easily by hitting **Done** on your working pattern, creating or copying additional objects from your document, and opening your pattern again from the **Swatches** panel. Make sure objects are set to **Multiply** and create a vibrant, dense pattern by overlapping objects and the pattern boundaries.

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Conclusion

When satisfied with your final design, apply it to a new object, such as a rectangle, or prepare it for print if you wish. These types of patterns, being vector, work wonderfully as stationery and textile designs. Share your final projects in the comment section below and don’t forget to check out our other pattern and vector tutorials here on Vectips!

Author: Mary Winkler

Mary works under the brand Acrylicana® and has illustrated and designed for companies like Disney, Jakks Pacific, Jada Toys, Envato, and more. Check out Acrylicana.com for artwork, tutorials, and more. Follow Acrylicana on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter!

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