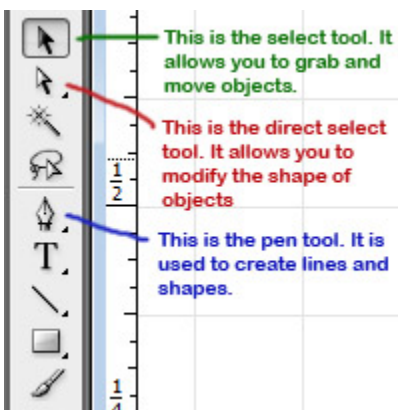


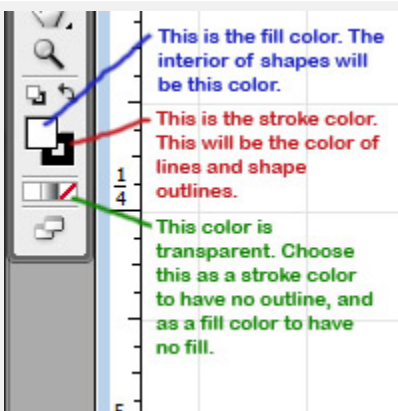
## MINIMATE DECAL DESIGN USING ILLUSTRATOR

This tutorial will cover the basics of creating a Minimate decal using **Adobe Illustrator**. There is a **free** 30-day trial of this software available at [Adobe.com](http://Adobe.com). The software is not cheap, so I would recommend making good use of the 30-day trial. There are other vector art programs available, but I have not personally tried any of them. The current version of Illustrator is CS4. I am using CS3, so my menu and tools might look slightly different from yours, but the tools we will be using are found in every version of Illustrator. Some of you may know some more advanced methods than we will be using here, and that is perfectly fine. I am trying to make this tutorial friendly for beginner users.

I chose **Dead Girl from X-Statix** as the subject of this tutorial.



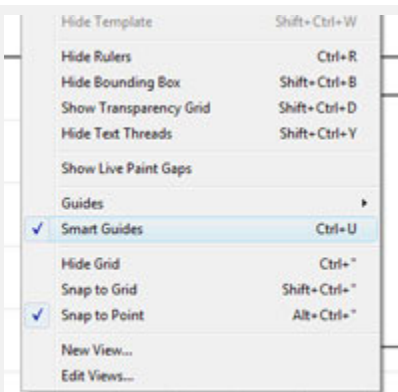
First lets take a look at some of the tools we will be using. The main toolbar is on the left side of your screen. Any tools have a tiny arrow in the corner can be expanded by holding your mouse button down on it. We will only be using a small percentage of the tools in this tutorial, but I will provide links at the end to other Illustrator tutorials if you would like to learn more.



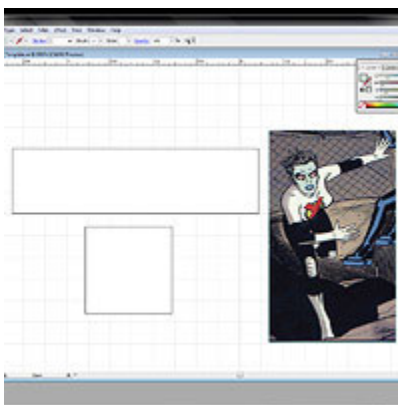
This image shows the current fill/stroke colors that are found at the bottom of the main toolbar. The size of the stroke (outline) of an object is adjusted through another palette, which we will look at later.



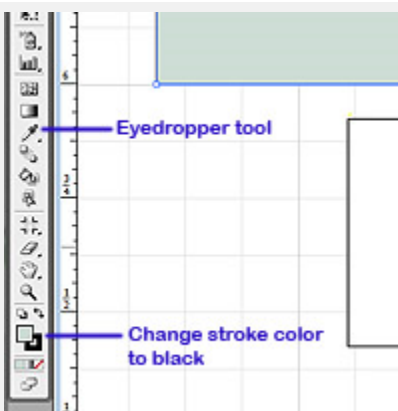
The palettes toolbar is found on the right side of the screen. Each of these palettes will pop out when you click on their icon. They can be closed in the same fashion if they are in your way. The three palettes we will be using in this tutorial are the colors palette, the swatches palette, and the strokes palette.



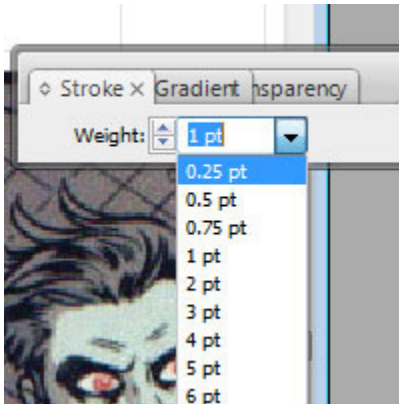
Before we get started with the design, it will be helpful to turn on Smart Guides. These are guidelines that will appear on the screen to help you as you are drawing objects. On the top menu, click on View -> Smart Guides. You will know it is on when there is a check next to it. You can also hit Ctrl U on your keyboard.



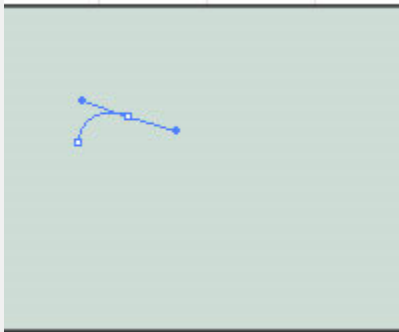
To zoom in on your design hit Ctrl + (zooming out is Ctrl -). I pasted in an image of Dead Girl that I found online [here](#) (grab the corner to resize it). I won't be making the decal look exactly like this image, because the decal should reflect her standard appearance from comic, not from one specific frame. But this will be a good guides for styles and colors.



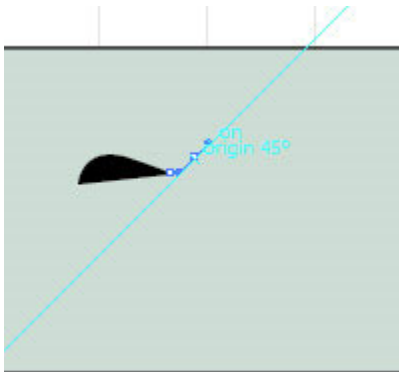
We are going to design her face first. The first thing we need to do is match her skin color. To do this, first click on the face decal rectangle with the selection tool (black arrow). You will know it is selected because the outline will turn blue. Then grab your eye dropper tool and click on Dead Girl's skin color. This will make the rectangle that light blue color, but it also removes the black stroke. I find these strokes helpful when cutting out the design later, so lets add that back in. Click the stroke color, which is currently transparent. Open up the swatches palette on the right and click on black.



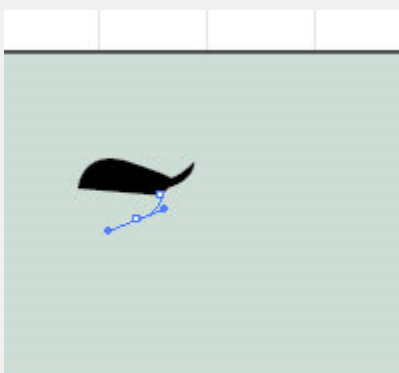
The stroke might be too thick, so let's change that. Open up the strokes palette and change the weight from 1 pt to 0.25 pt. Remember how to do this, as we will be doing it a few more times in this tutorial.



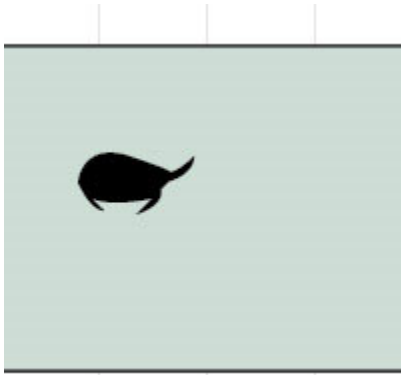
Time to start drawing! Click somewhere on the empty canvas so the box is no longer selected. Then change your fill color to black and your stroke color to transparent. We are going to start drawing her eyes. Zoom into the face area until it takes up most of your screen. Grab your pen tool. Click once to create a point where you think the left corner of her eye will be. It doesn't have to be perfect. We can move it later. Now comes the important part. Click to draw the second point approximately where I have it in the image, and keep the mouse button held down. Now you can change the arch of the line by moving your mouse. Give it a similar curve to the image at left.



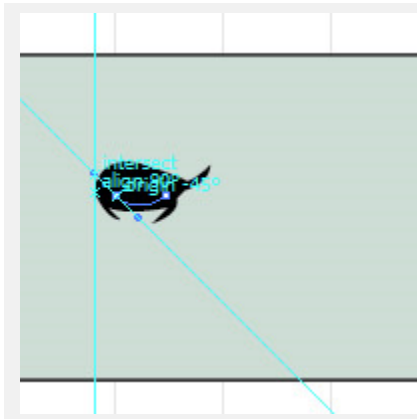
The next point you make will extend this curve naturally. If you don't want this to occur, click the previous point you made once before making your next point. You will see the two handlebars coming off the point (which indicate their curve) change to one handlebar. I made my third point diagonally down to continue the curve of her eye, and now I am curving up to make the wrinkles between her eyes.



In this image you can see the completed wrinkle. Now I am continuing to make points and curves to build the wrinkle underneath her eye. If you look at the Dead Girl image, we are building the dark area around her eye. Afterwards we will add the white of her eye.



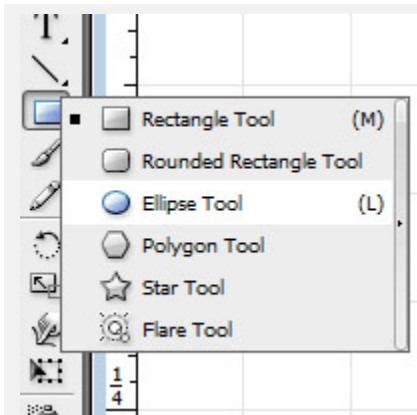
Here is the completed eye region. Once you connect your final point to your starting point you can click a blank area of the canvas to see your design without the blue outlines and corners. Next we will draw the white of her eye.



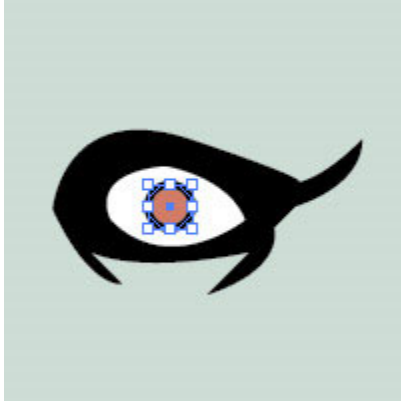
With nothing selected, choose white as your fill color and leave your stroke color transparent. In this image I have started drawing the lower part of the white of her eye. If you find the smart guides are making you snap to places you don't want to, zoom into the image further.



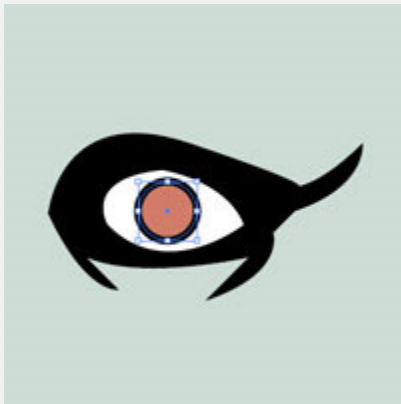
Here is the completed white part. Next we will add the pupil in different layers. Its worth mentioning here that every object you create is in order, with the newest one on top. If you ever want to rearrange this order you can right click on an object and go to the Arrange menu. There is also a layers palette where entire groups of objects can be on separate layers, but that is a subject for a different tutorial.



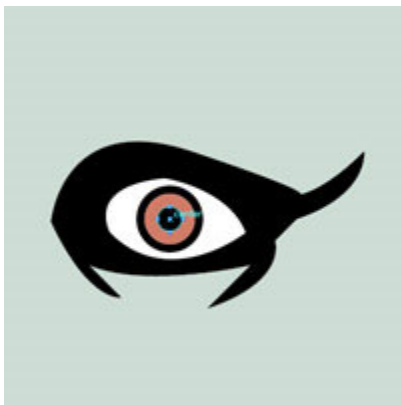
To make the pupils we are going to need the ellipse tool. Hold the mouse down on the Rectangle tool in the main menu, and it will expand so you can choose the ellipse tool. Now we are going to need her eye color. Make sure nothing is selected, click on the fill color, then grab the eye dropper tool and grab the pink color of her pupil. Change the stroke color to black, and change the weight of the stroke to 0.25 again.



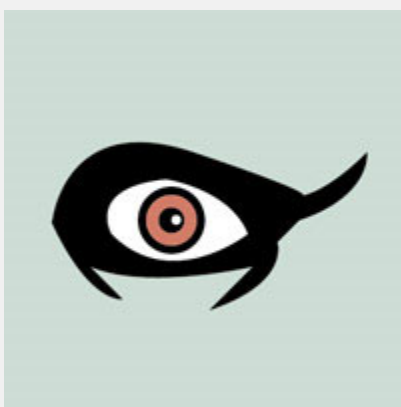
Click in the center of her eye and hold down the button. By default, circles are drawn from the top left corner. To make it drawn from the center instead, hold the Alt key as you hold down the mouse button. Also, we want a perfect circle, not an oval. So hold down the Shift key as well. (If you slip and mess up, just hit Ctrl Z to undo) Pull the circle outwards until it is the size you want, then release the mouse first, and the keyboard buttons second.



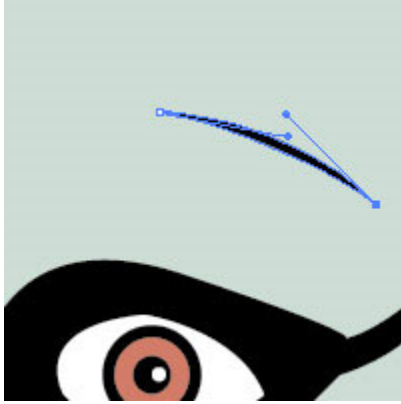
I felt like my circle was too small at first, since I still had to fit a black circle and a white highlight inside. So I resized it by using the Selection tool, holding down a corner of the circle along with the Alt and Shift keys, and pulling it outwards.



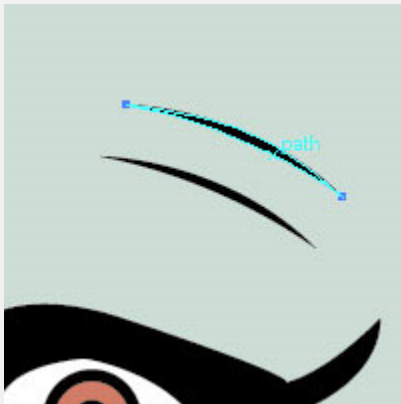
To make the inner circle, make sure nothing is selected, then change your fill color to black and your stroke color to transparent. When you put your mouse in the middle of the first circle, the Smart Guides will help you start at the exact center for your second circle. Hold down Alt and Shift again as you make it.



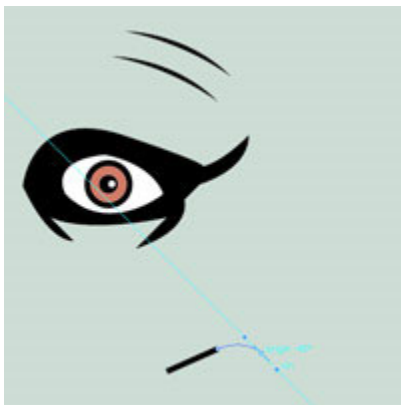
Finish it up with a small white highlight (white fill, transparent stroke), and move it to the corner of the black circle. Click the blank canvas to take a look at the full eye.



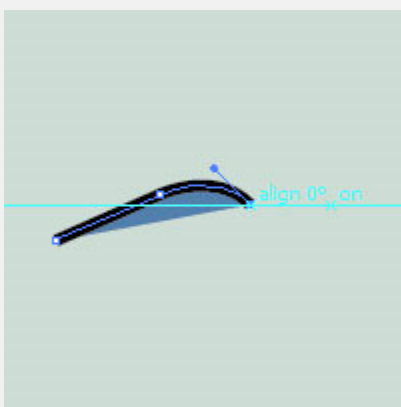
Now we can add in a few forehead wrinkles by using a black fill and a transparent stroke. When you finish one end of the wrinkle, make sure to click the previous point once before clicking again, otherwise you will get a wierd curve on the side instead of a sharp point. There are times when you want the curves to be continuous, but this is not one of those times.



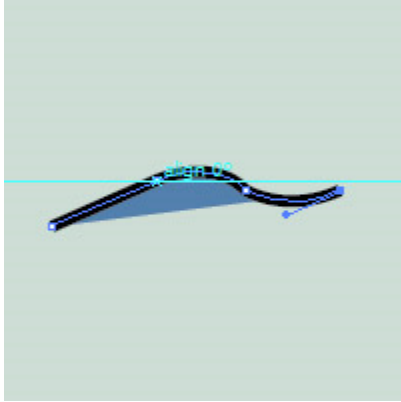
The quickest way to copy an item is to click on it with the Selection tool and hold down the mouse button. Then hold the Ctrl and Alt keys and move it to where you want a copy to be. You could also just copy and paste, but if you use the other method you can use the guidelines to help align it with the original item. That isn't necessary with these forehead wrinkles, but it is very helpful at other times.



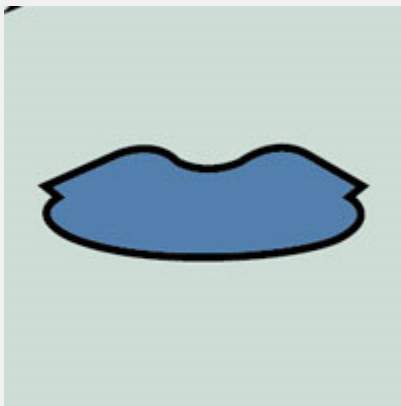
Next we are going to move on to the lips. Once those are complete we will copy and reflect the eye, so we know exactly where to put it. Grab your eye dropper tool again and pick the blue of her lips, then give it a black stroke with a weight of 0.25 pt and start drawing.



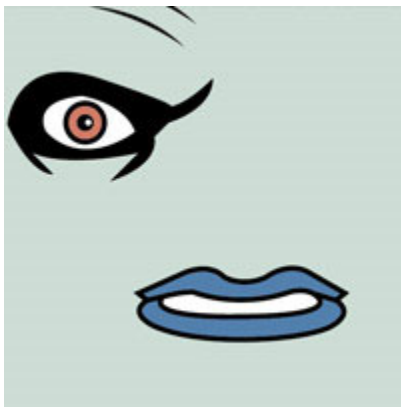
You will probably want to zoom in again to draw the lips accurately. Here is where I am at so far.



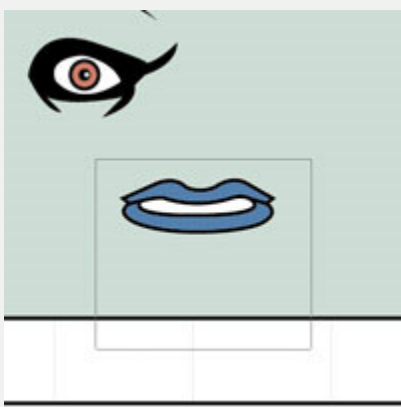
The points on one side of the lips should line up with the points on the other side. In this image you can see the last two point I made line up horizontally. To do this, hover your mouse over the point you want to line up with, then move over to make your point. A guideline should follow you, allowing you to make it exactly where you want it. In this image, I hovered my mouse over the point where the guideline is, because I want my next point to line up with this one.



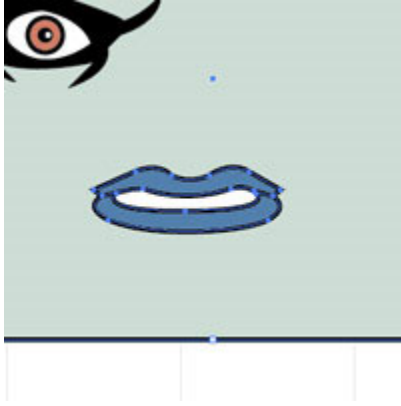
Here is the completed outer lips. Each point on the left half lines up with the corresponding point on the right half. Next I will add the inner details.



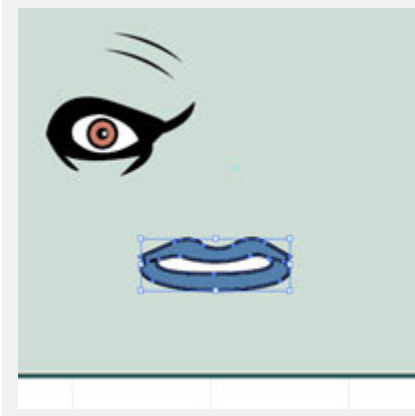
Here you can see the teeth (white fill, black stroke) and the lines defining the bottom of the upper lip (transparent fill, black stroke).



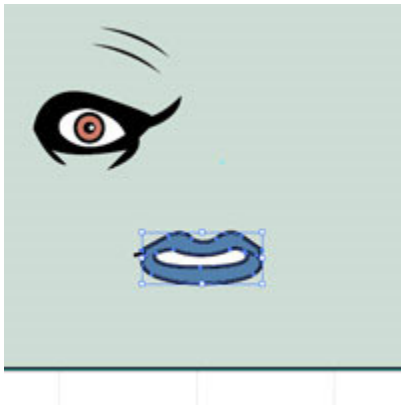
I feel like I made the lips too wide, so I am going to compress them horizontally. To select multiple objects, grab the Selection tool. Click on a spot in the blank area of the canvas and make a box around the lips, then release the mouse.



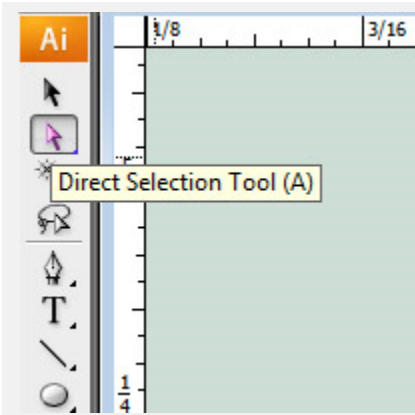
Anything this box touches will be contained in the selection. You will know what is selected by the blue outlines with white boxes at the joints. As you can see here, the face rectangle got selected along with the lips. We don't want that, so hold down the Shift key, make a small box starting in the blank area of the canvas, and only make this box touch the face rectangle, and nothing else.



Now you should see a box only around the lips, like in this image.

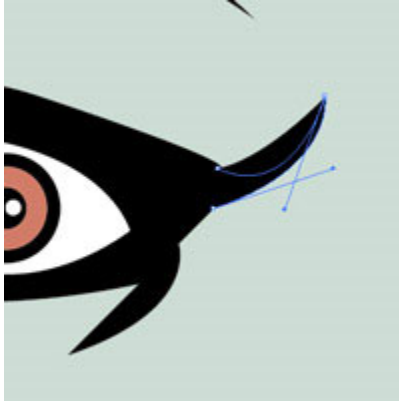


Grab your selection tool. Click and hold the middle-left white box with your mouse. Also hold down the Alt key. Then start dragging to resize the lips while keeping them centered. You can see my result in the image at left.

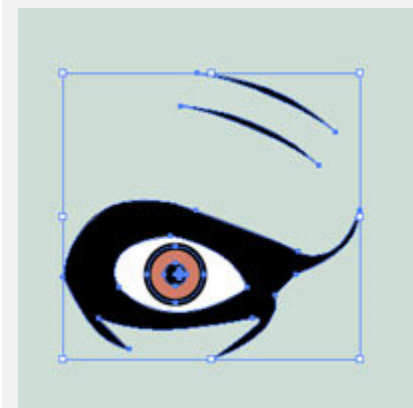


Before I copy the eye and reflect it, I realized I wanted to make a few changes to the curve of the wrinkles around the eyes. Grab your Direct Selection tool (the white arrow). With this tool you can change the position of individual points on a shape. You can also change the shape and size of curves. Now zoom into the eye on your image.

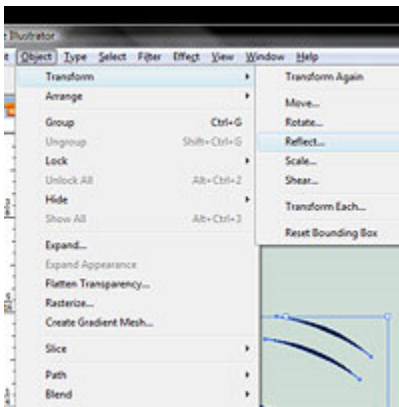




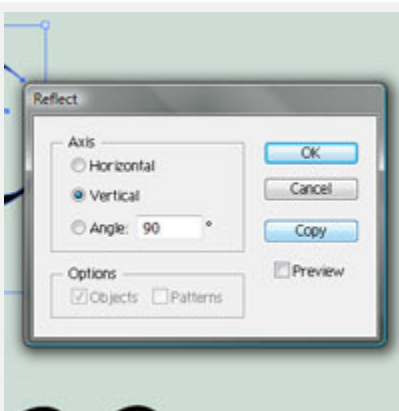
To change a curve, click on the corresponding point. You will see the handlebars appear. Click one of these handlebars and move the mouse around until you get the curve you want. You can see how I am changing this curve in the image at left.



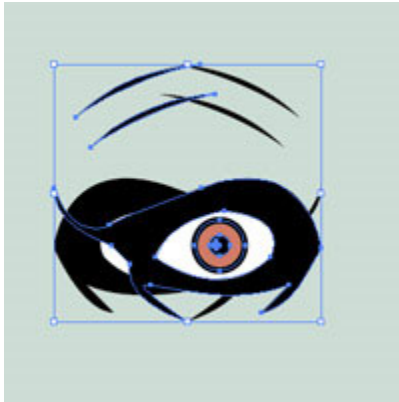
Here is the revised eye. Now it is time to copy and reflect it over to the other side. I made a box around it with the selection tool, then removed the face rectangle from the selection, just as we did before. You can see in the image that I only have the eye and the forehead wrinkles selected. Now click Ctrl G to make this set of items a group. Groups of items are easy to manage and move around.



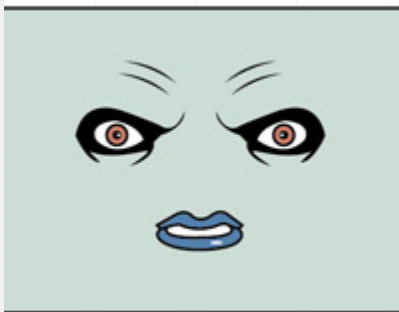
To copy and reflect the image, click on Object on the top menu, then go to Transform -> Reflect.



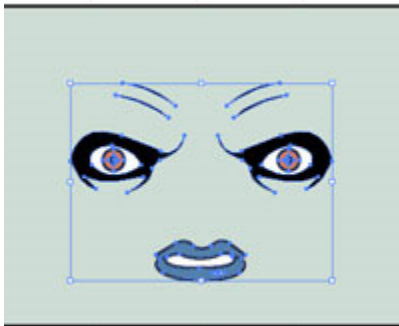
Here is the Reflect dialogue box. You want to reflect this image across a vertical axis. Then click the Copy button.



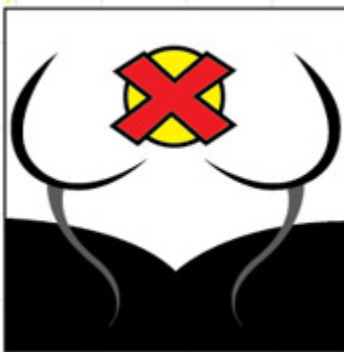
This is what you will see. It is a copy of the eye and wrinkles reflected and then pasted on top of itself. Now zoom out, grab your selection tool, click this group of items anywhere inside and hold down the mouse button. If you start dragging this to the right, there should be a guideline that will help you keep it aligned with the left eye. Another option is to hold down the Shift key as you drag it. This only allows you to move an item along 45° angles.



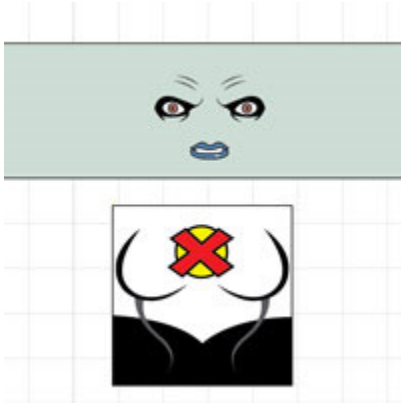
Move the eye until the lips are centered beneath the eyes. My completed face is on the left.



Actually its not completed. I decided to move the face down a little to account for a future hairpiece.



Now it is your turn to create the body decals using the tools and methods that I described above. The completed decal is already in the file you downloaded, but it would be very good practice for you to recreate it yourself. One hint I will share is to use at least three points along a large curve, like the... ahem... breasts. Also, let these curves flow continuously to make sure they don't look angled or distorted.



Here is an image of the completed decal. You should be able to use these same techniques to design almost any character.

So how did you like using Illustrator? It definitely has a learning curve, but it is the best vector design software in the industry. If you want to branch out into other areas of design using Illustrator, there are tons of other tutorials available online. I hope this tutorial was helpful to you!