

# tutorials

OUR GUIDE TO ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS FOR EVERY DESIGNER

## METHOD: Creating editable effects using Illustrator's Effect menu

The Effect menu lets you create effects that don't alter the original image, which means you can create complex yet editable artwork with ease.



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**U**sers of Illustrator CS3 and earlier were often baffled by the fact that the program appeared to include two almost identical menus: Filter and Effect. Both included options for distorting objects, rounding corners and applying a whole range of special effects to selected artwork. So what was the difference?

The big difference between the two was that where operations selected in the Filter menu would modify the artwork's paths, the same operations performed using the Effect menu were 'live' effects. This meant that they could be edited, tweaked and even removed altogether at any time. The base artwork upon which the effect was based was left unaltered and could be returned to simply by disabling the effects.

With so much flexibility in the Effect menu, why bother keeping the same operations in the Filter menu at all? Good question. Which is why, with Illustrator CS4, Adobe dropped the Filter menu altogether. Illustrator Effects offer us the freedom to experiment and to create complex artwork with minimal effort. Here, we'll look at how to get the most out of the Effect menu.

Let's start by drawing a simple rectangle. When you choose Effect > Stylize > Round Corners, you see the standard Round Corners dialog [1]. As with most Illustrator dialog boxes, you need to manually click the Preview box every time you open it. You can either type a value into the numerical field or use the up/down cursor keys to raise and lower the radius in 1mm increments. The best part

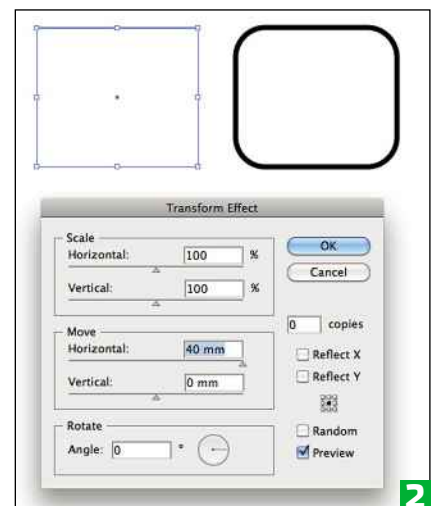


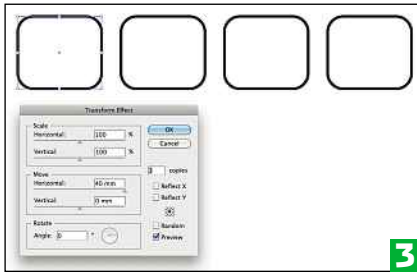
is you can always change your mind later. If you now go to Effect > Distort & Transform > Transform, you see a dialog box that allows you to move the artwork around. Entering a horizontal value of 40, in this case, 40mm moves the artwork 40mm to the right [2]. Notice how the blue rectangle on the left remains in place: this is the original, untouched artwork.

When you increase the Number of Copies value, rather than moving the original, you duplicate it. This is an easy way to create a horizontal array [3]. You could also choose to rotate and scale the artwork. Click OK to apply this transformation.

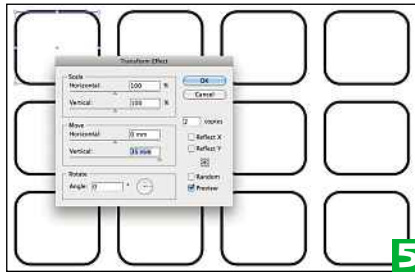
What if you want to create a grid of these shapes? All you have to do is to select the Transform effect once more from the menu. Because you've already used this effect, you get a dialog box warning that this isn't the correct way to edit it [4]. However, in this case, you don't want to edit it, you genuinely do want to apply another instance.

You can use the same technique to make two additional rows by specifying two copies

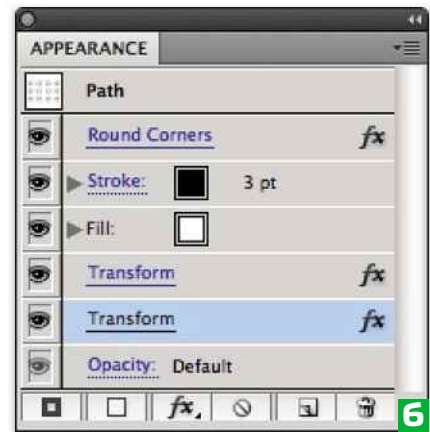




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'Effects offer us the freedom to experiment and create complex artwork with minimal effort'

with a vertical offset [5]. Although you only selected the original single object, the vertical duplication has also copied all the horizontal instances: the earlier Effect, just like the rounded corners, is reproduced in each copy added by this new transformation.

If you want to edit any of the effects, you have to use the Appearance panel (Window > Appearance). This shows all the parameters applied to the selected object, including the stroke colour and width, fill and opacity, as well as the Effects [6]. Double-clicking any of the Effects will open the dialog once more, allowing you to make any changes you wish.


One really useful aspect of creating arrays using Effects is that any changes you make to the original object will instantly appear in all the rest. Here, for instance, we've deleted the bottom-right corner point and recoloured the object with an orange fill [7]. That object

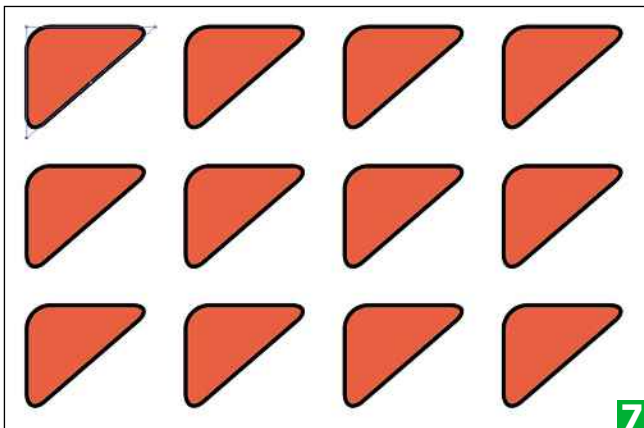
is now reproduced in all the other objects in the grid. However, look how the live Rounded Corner effect has reapplied itself to the top-left and bottom-right corners: if this had been regular rounded-corner artwork, deleting the bottom-right point would have left ugly joins.

There's little limit to the number of effects you can apply to an object. Here, we've added another point to the original shape, added a Pucker distortion and then added a 3D Extrude to the whole lot [8]. This last Effect is of particular interest: the 3D perspective has been applied to the entire array as if it were a single object, so the shapes at the bottom appear closer to us than the shapes at the top. That's because the 3D Effect was added after all the others. Using the Appearance Panel, you can change this order: dragging the 3D Extrude so it's above both of the Transform Effects will apply it first [9]. Now

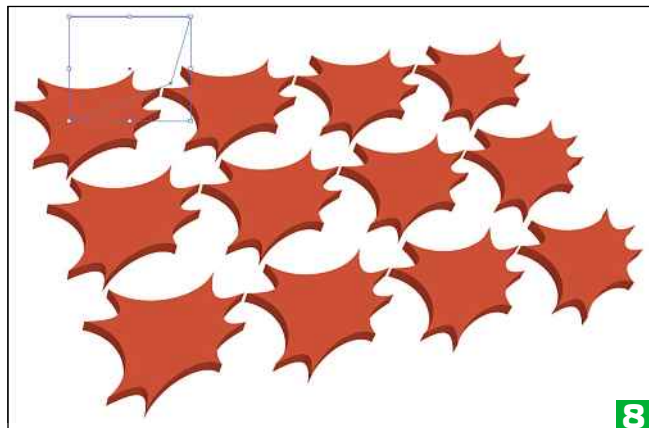
the grid array is performed on the 3D object, rather than the other way around.

The Transform dialog box offers a range of other possibilities. Here, we've created 12 copies of this blue petal shape [10]. Each one has been scaled 90% both horizontally and vertically, and rotated -15° around the bottom centre handle. Because a white stroke was applied to the original object, this is replicated on all the rest.

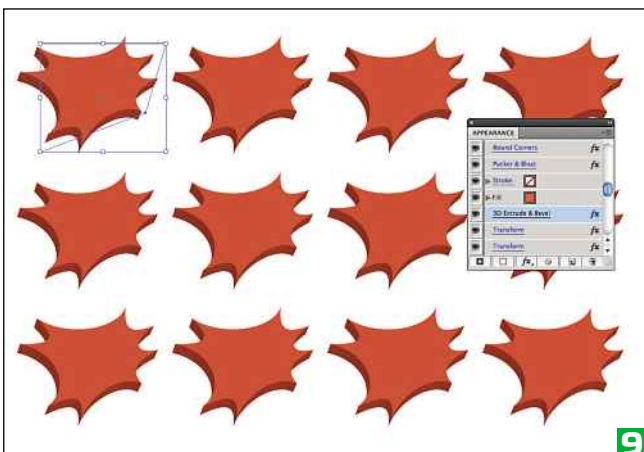
Sometimes you don't want the Effects applied to an object or an array to remain live. For example, we might wish to recolour some of the rounded rectangles in our grid, or to reshape just one of them to make it stand out. In this case, you can select the object and then choose Object > Expand Appearance. This will turn any duplicated versions into independent objects, and will turn any distortions into regular, editable paths. 



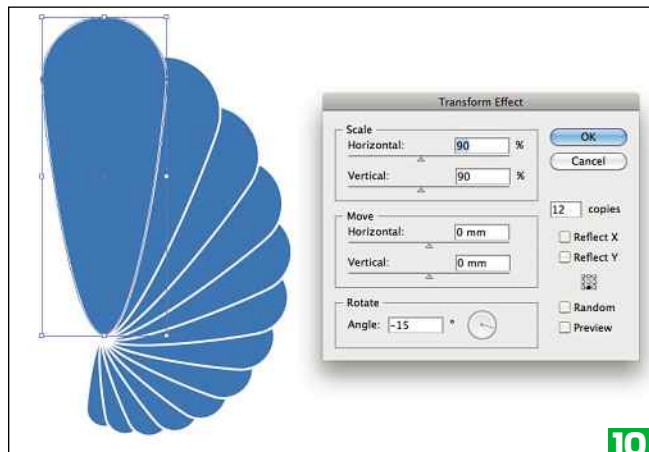
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