Adobe Illustrator
A Hot Air Balloon Sky Scene

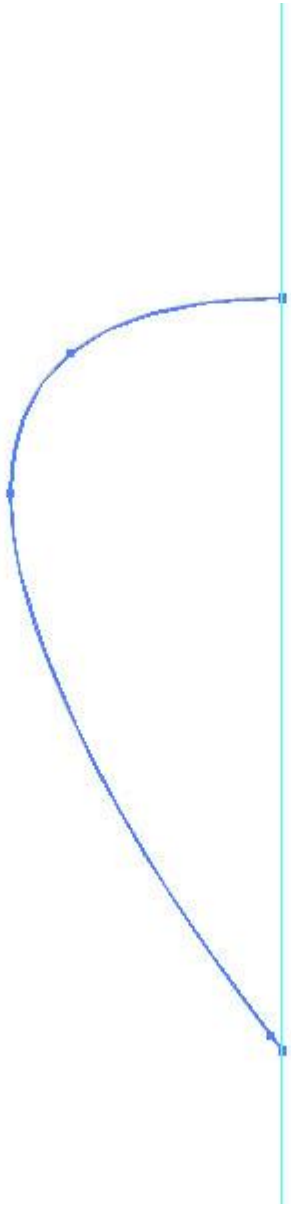
In this tutorial, we'll explain how to create a fun sky scene with hot air balloons. We will take advantage of the Blend Tool and the Symbol Sprayer Tool and make color changes easily with the Live Paint Bucket.

Final Image Preview

Below is the final design we will be working towards.

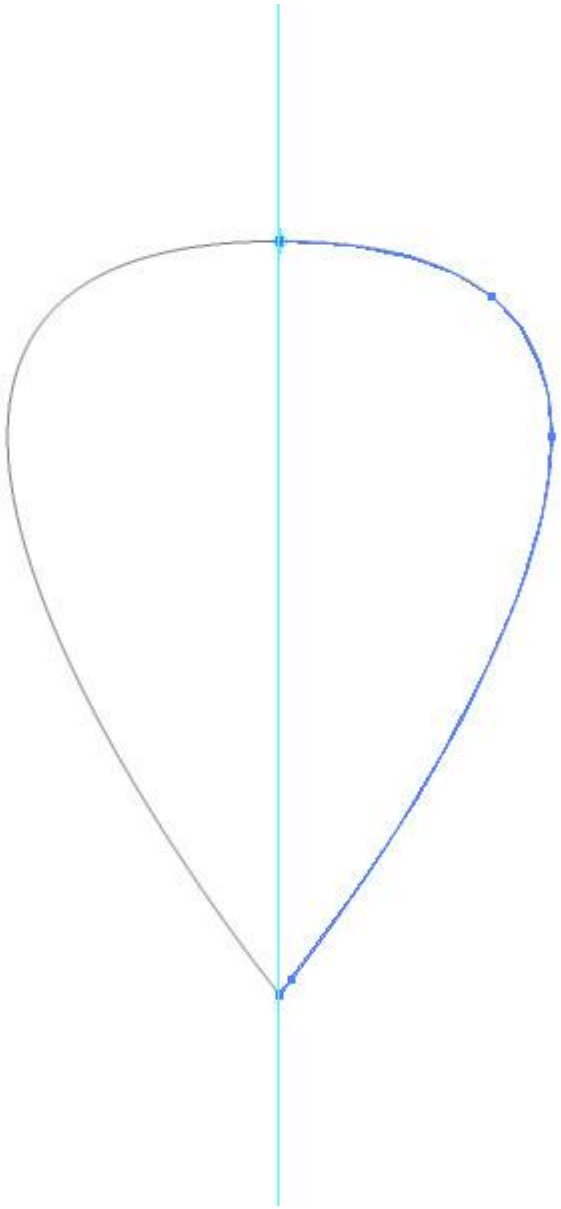
Step 1

Drag a horizontal guide onto the art board. Then select the Pen Tool (P) and start drawing a shape like you see below in the image. We only need to draw half of the balloon. Make sure that the end path points are aligned to the guide and to each other. You can align them by selecting both with the Direct Selection Tool (A), then clicking Command + Alt + J, and from the pop up window
choose align vertically.



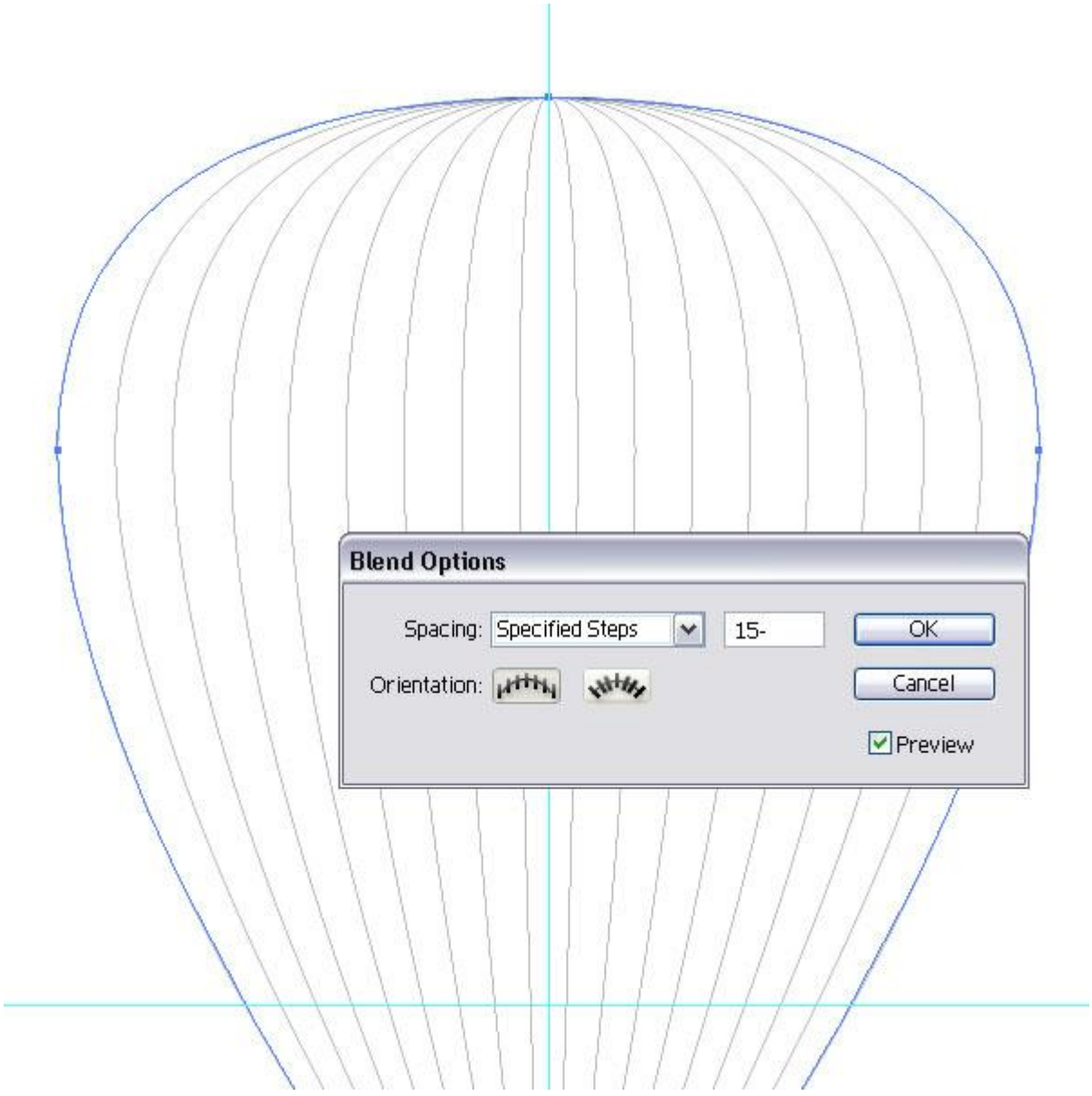
Step 2

Select the shape with the Selection Tool (V) and reflect it.

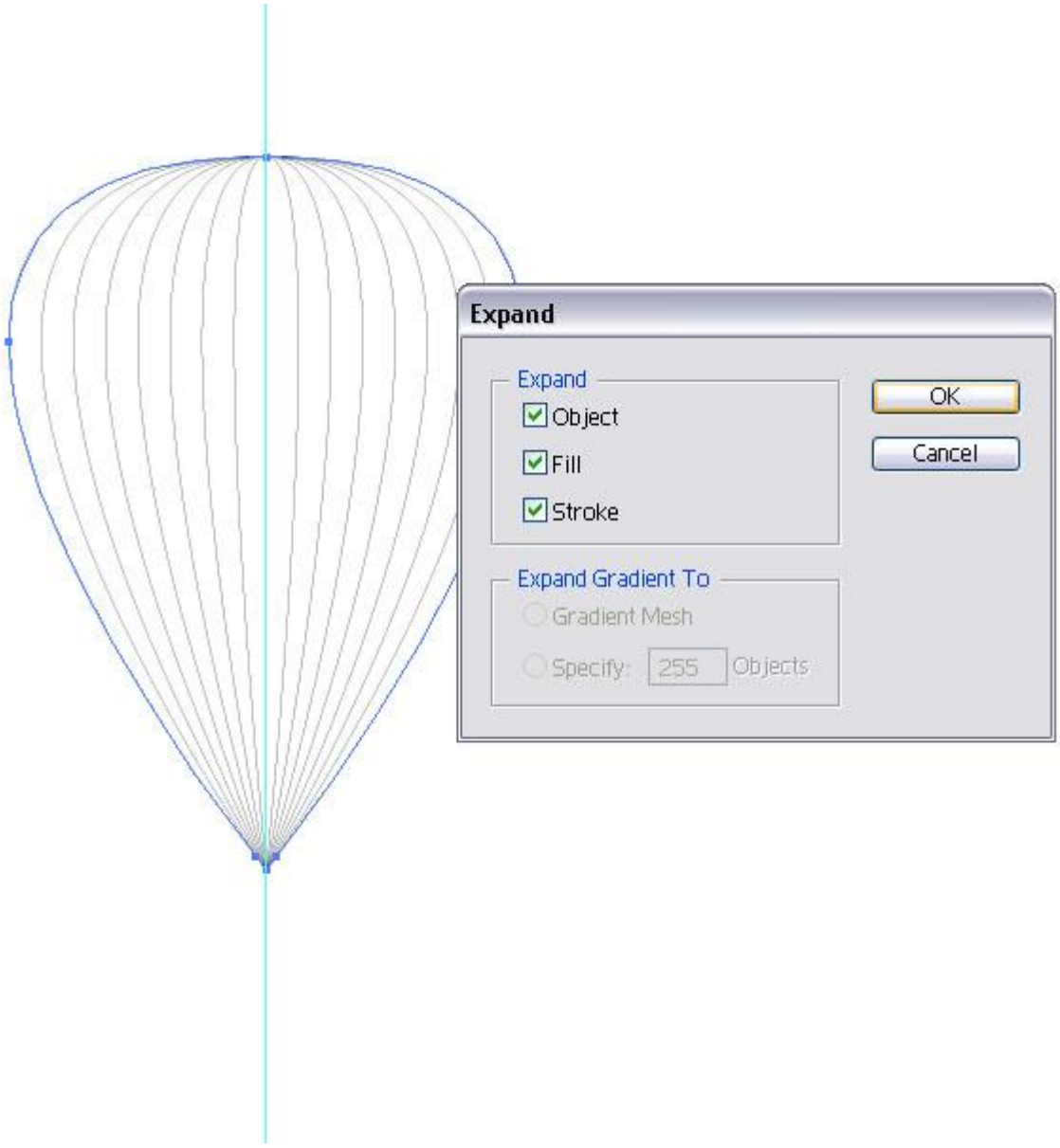


Step 3

Select both and go to Object > Blend > Blend Option. Select Specified Steps and set the steps to 15. Then click Command + Alt + B. This will blend us a nice balloon with sections.

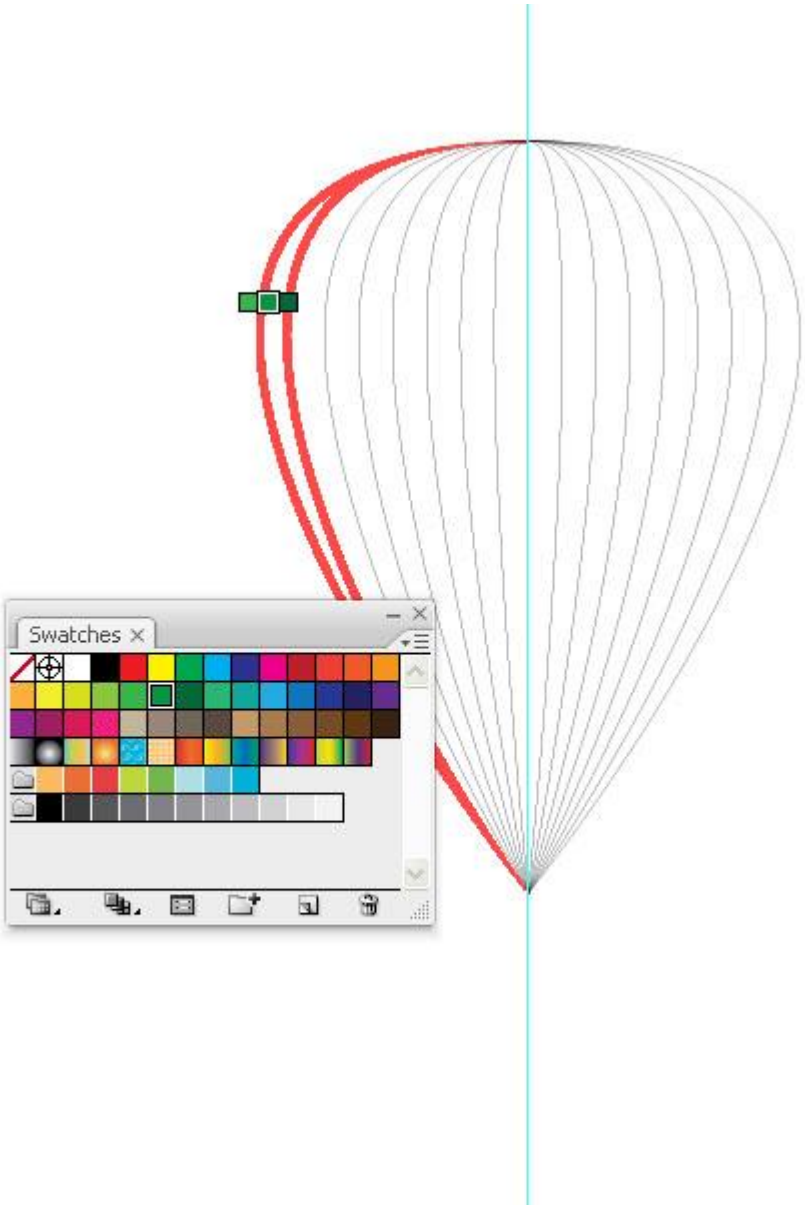


Step 4
While still selected, go to Object > Expand and hit OK.



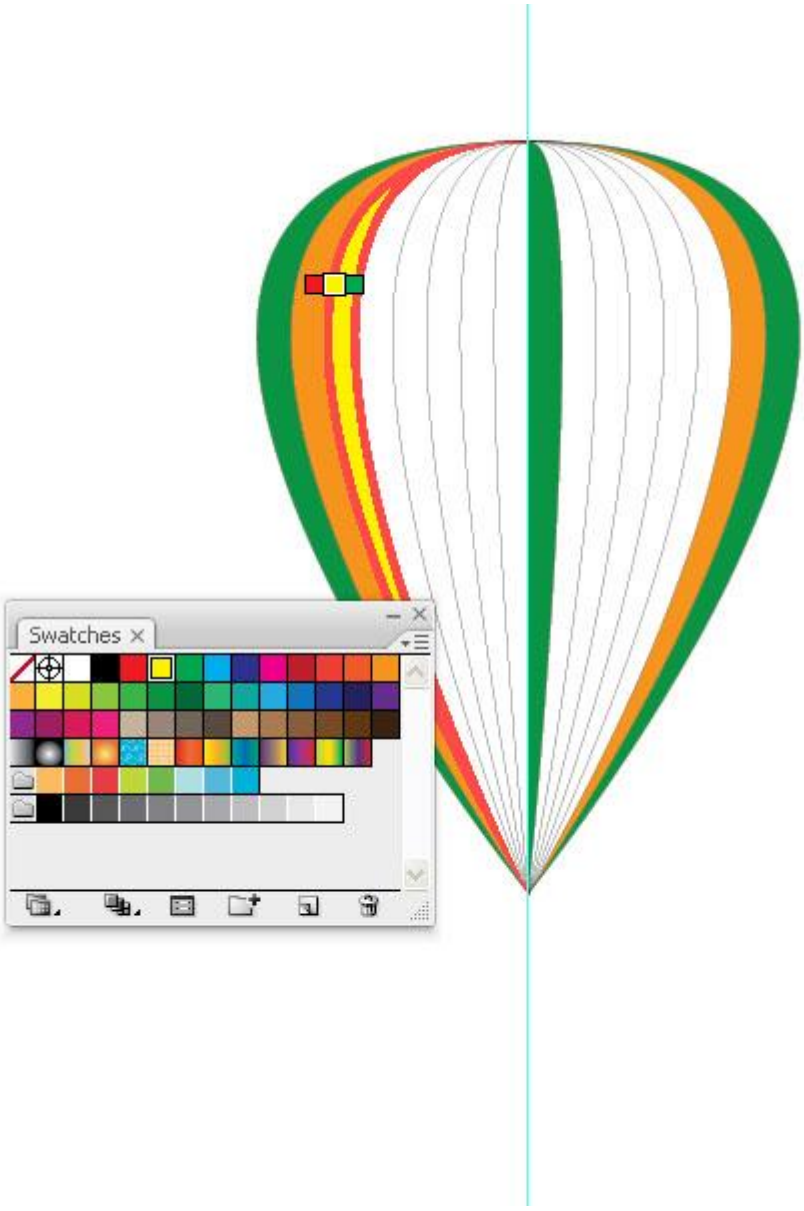
Step 5

Keep the selection active and go to Object > Live Paint > Make. Then select the color of your choice and select the Live Paint Bucket Tool (K). Once you go over the shapes, you will see how
it highlights the shapes that will be filled with the color of your choice.



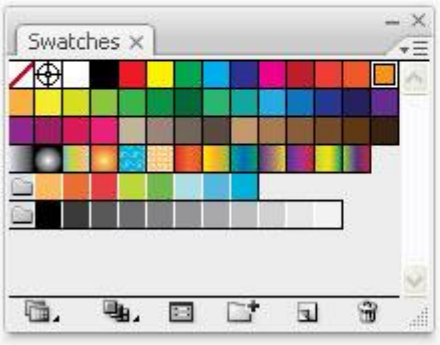
Step 6

I went ahead and filled the areas with different colors.



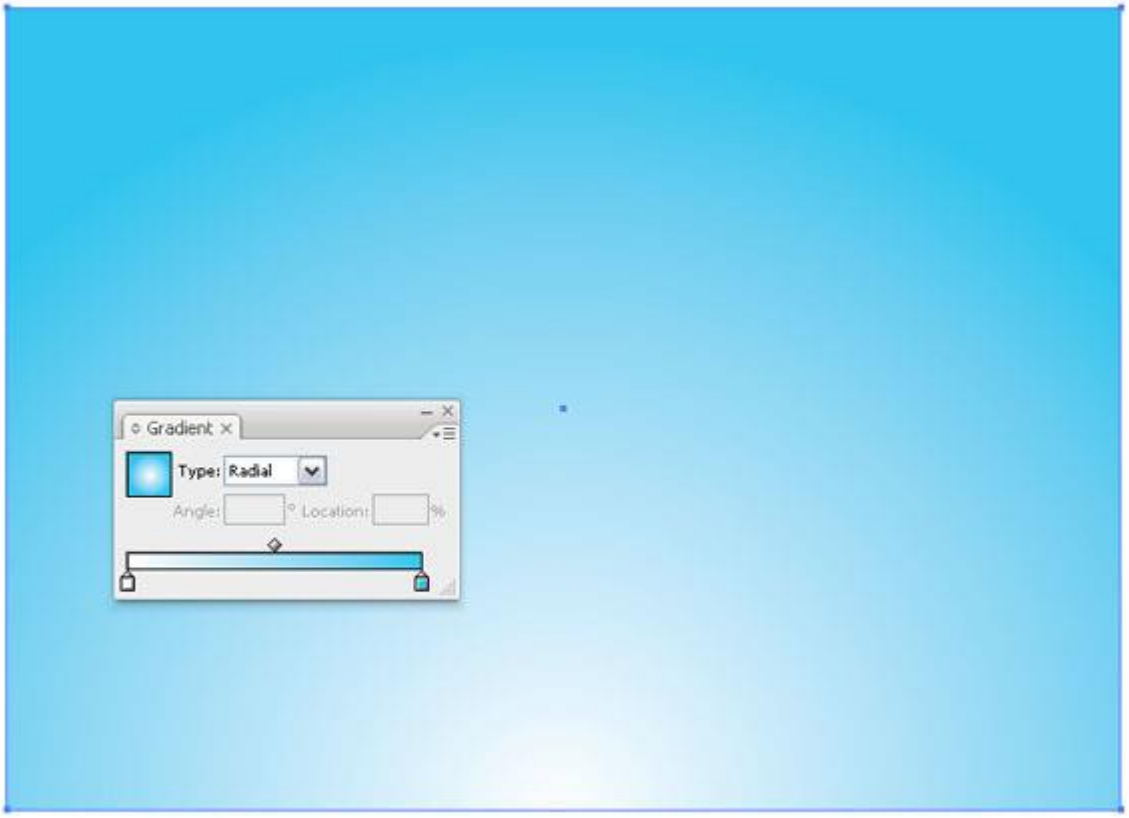
Step 7

Here you can see the balloon with many colors, maybe too much, maybe not color coordinated, but what the heck.



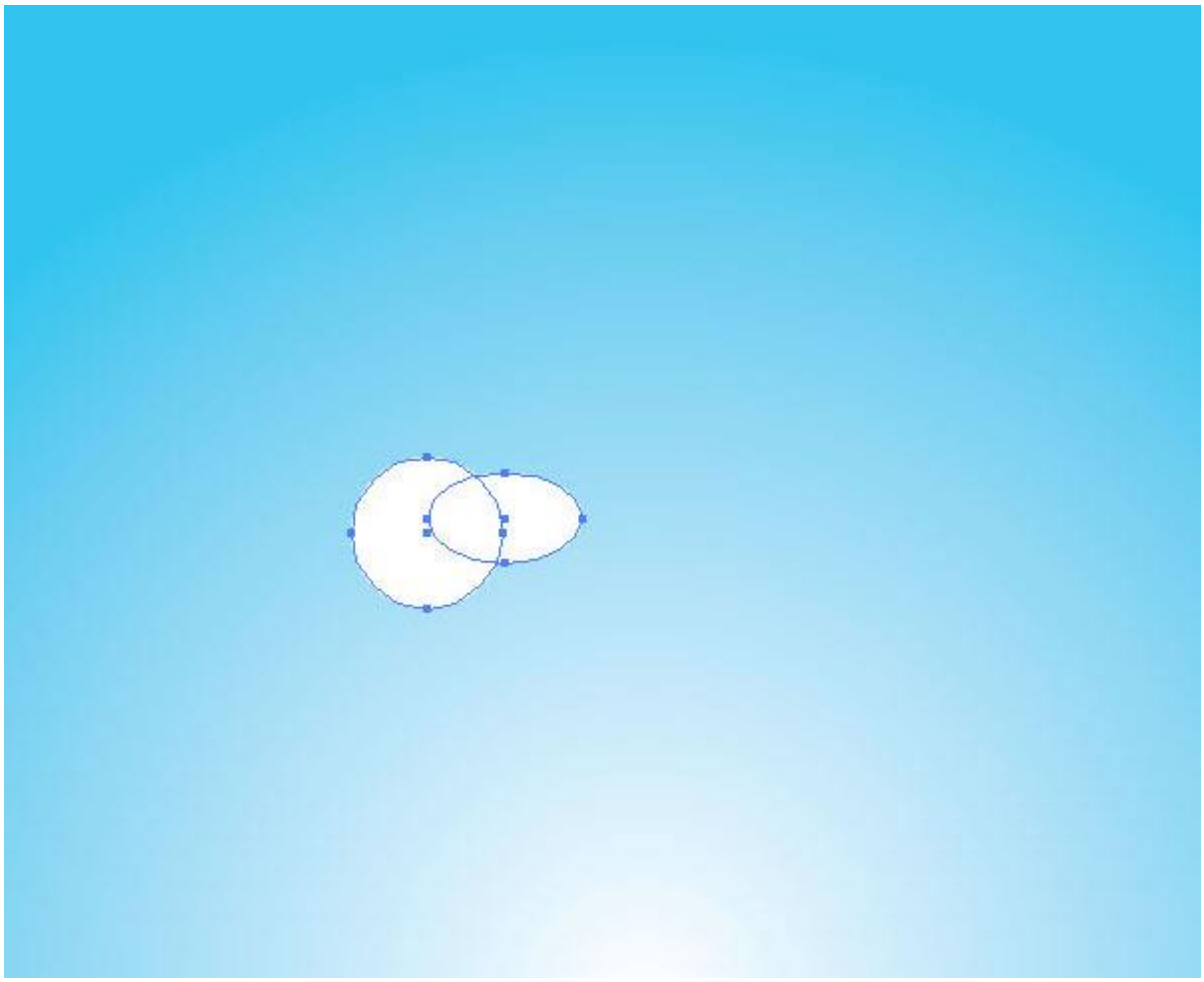
Step 8

Let's create our sky. Draw a rectangle with the Rectangle Tool (M) and fill it with a white to blue radial gradient. Set the gradient highlight towards the bottom half.



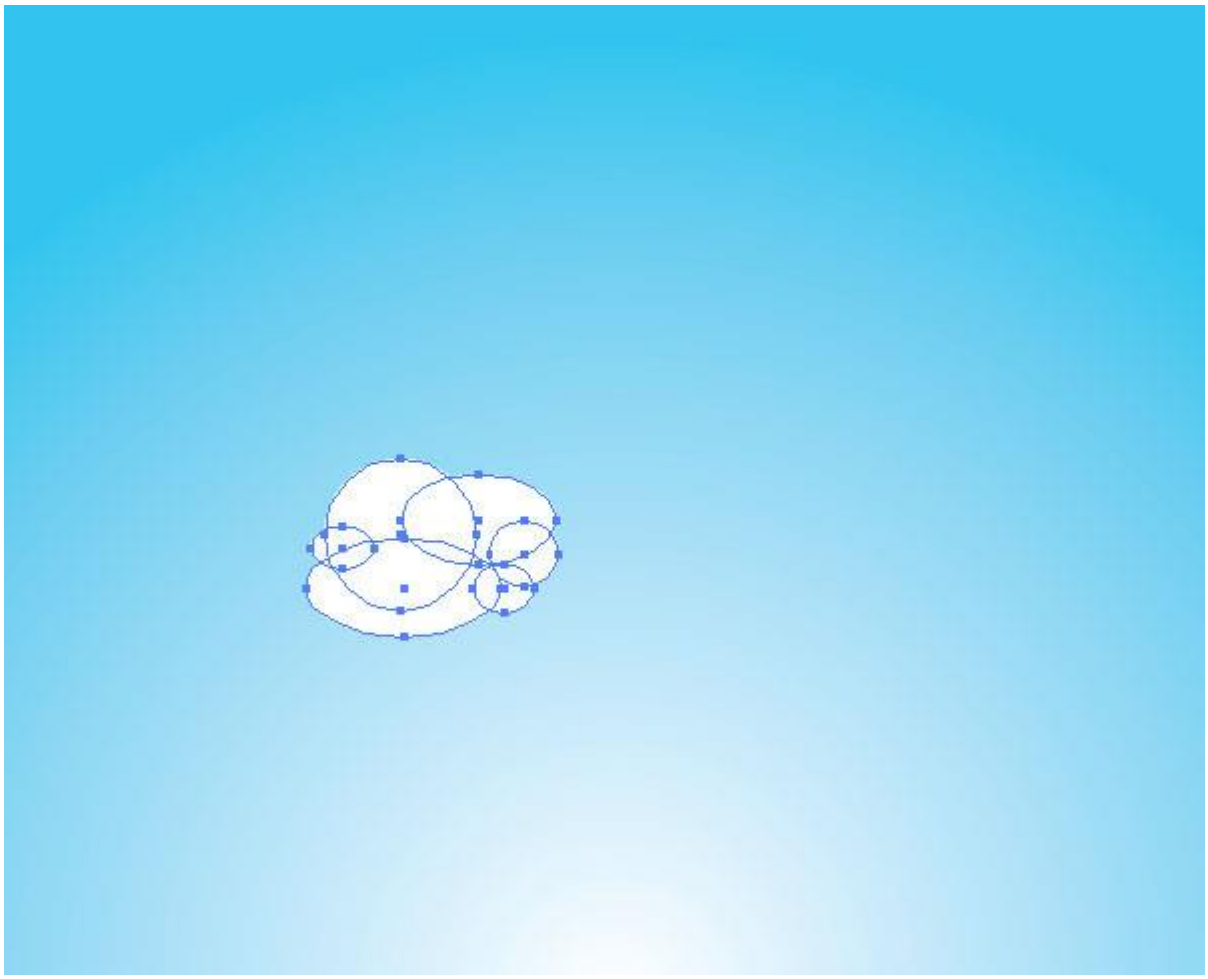
Step 9

A sky is nothing without some clouds. Start drawing ellipses with the Ellipse Tool (L) and overlap them. Also, fill them with white.



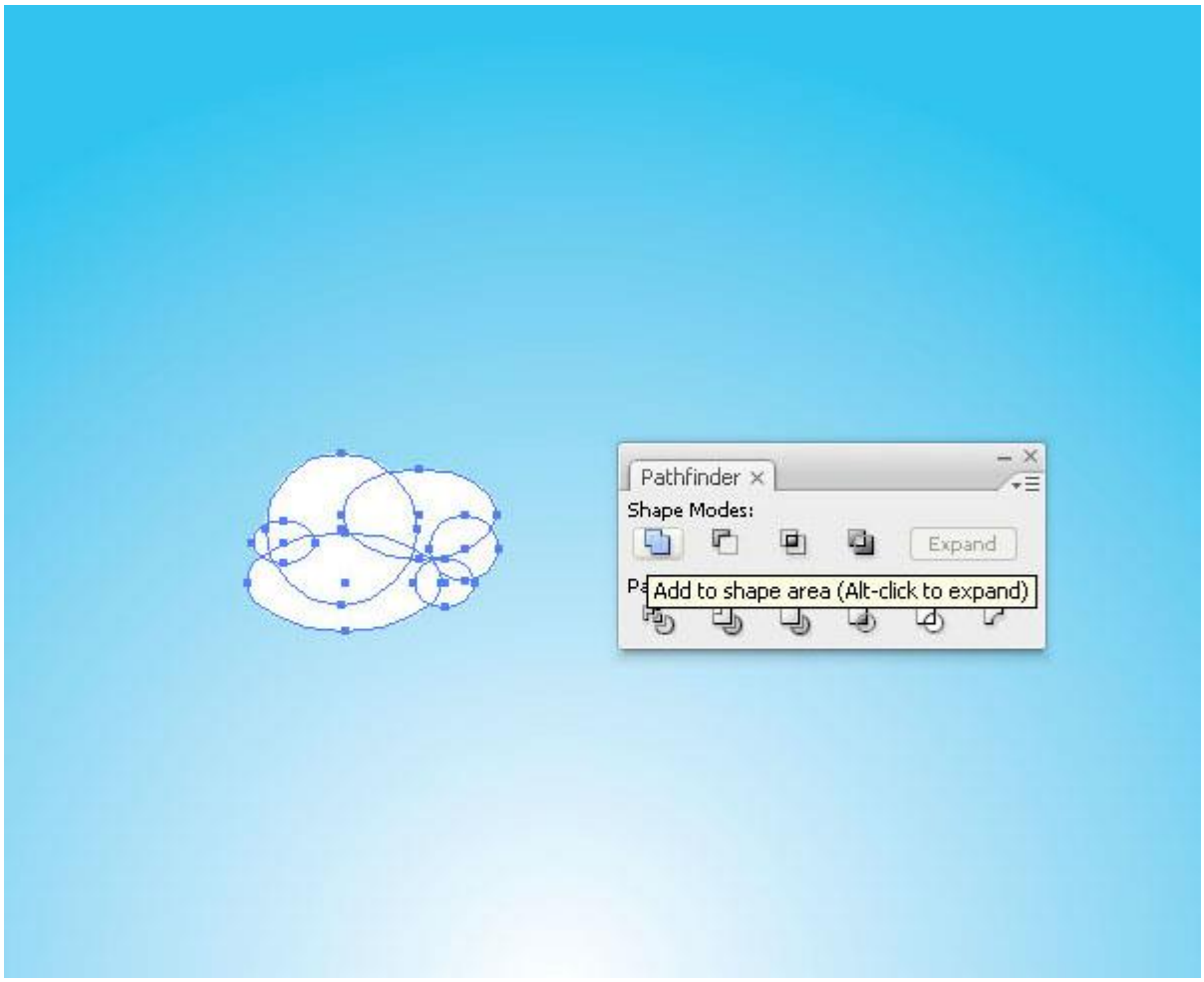
Step 10

Draw as many as you like. Pay attention to how they overlap. It is important to make it look like a cloud.



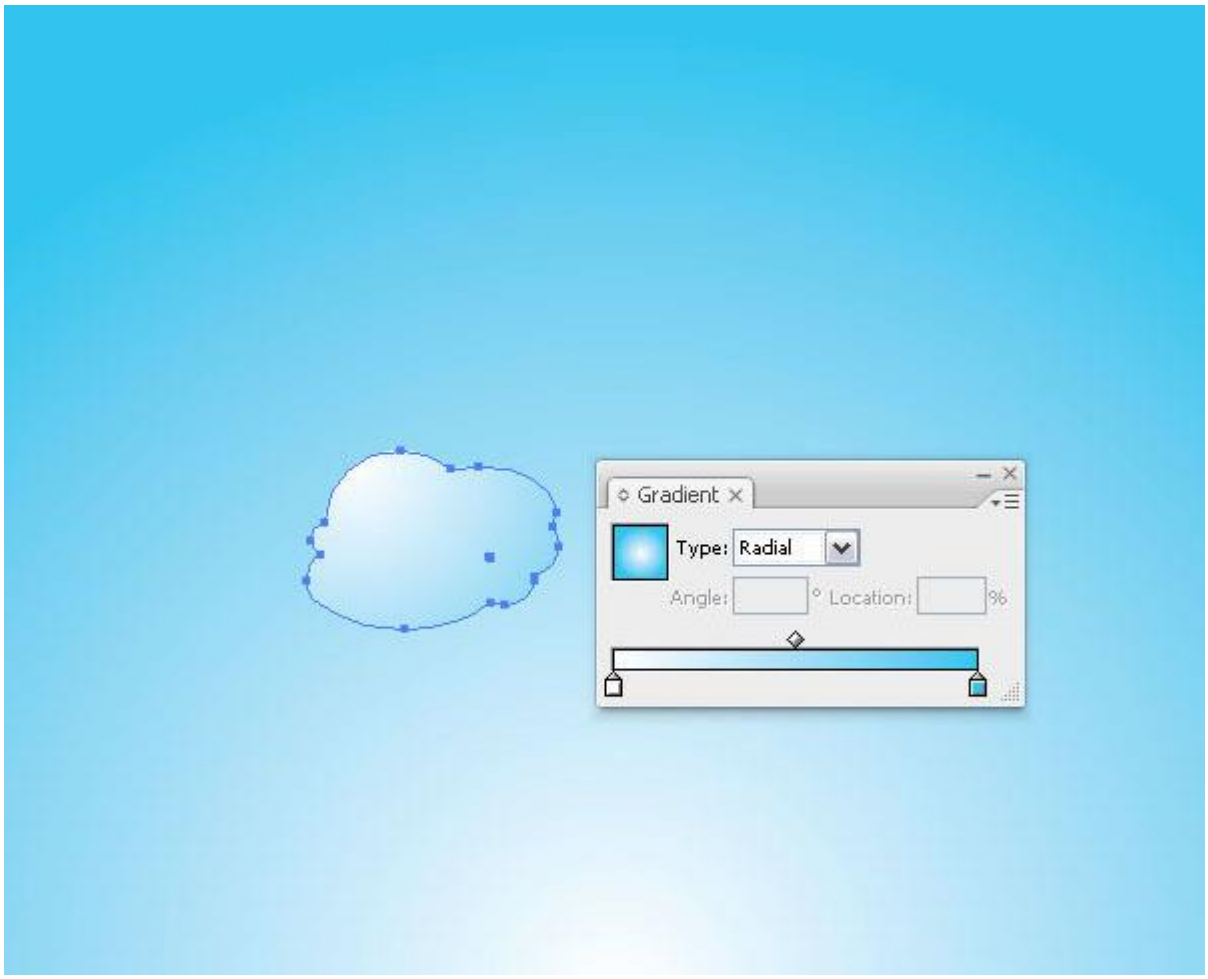
Step 11

Select all ellipses that will form a cloud and click the Add to Shape Area in the Pathfinder Palette.



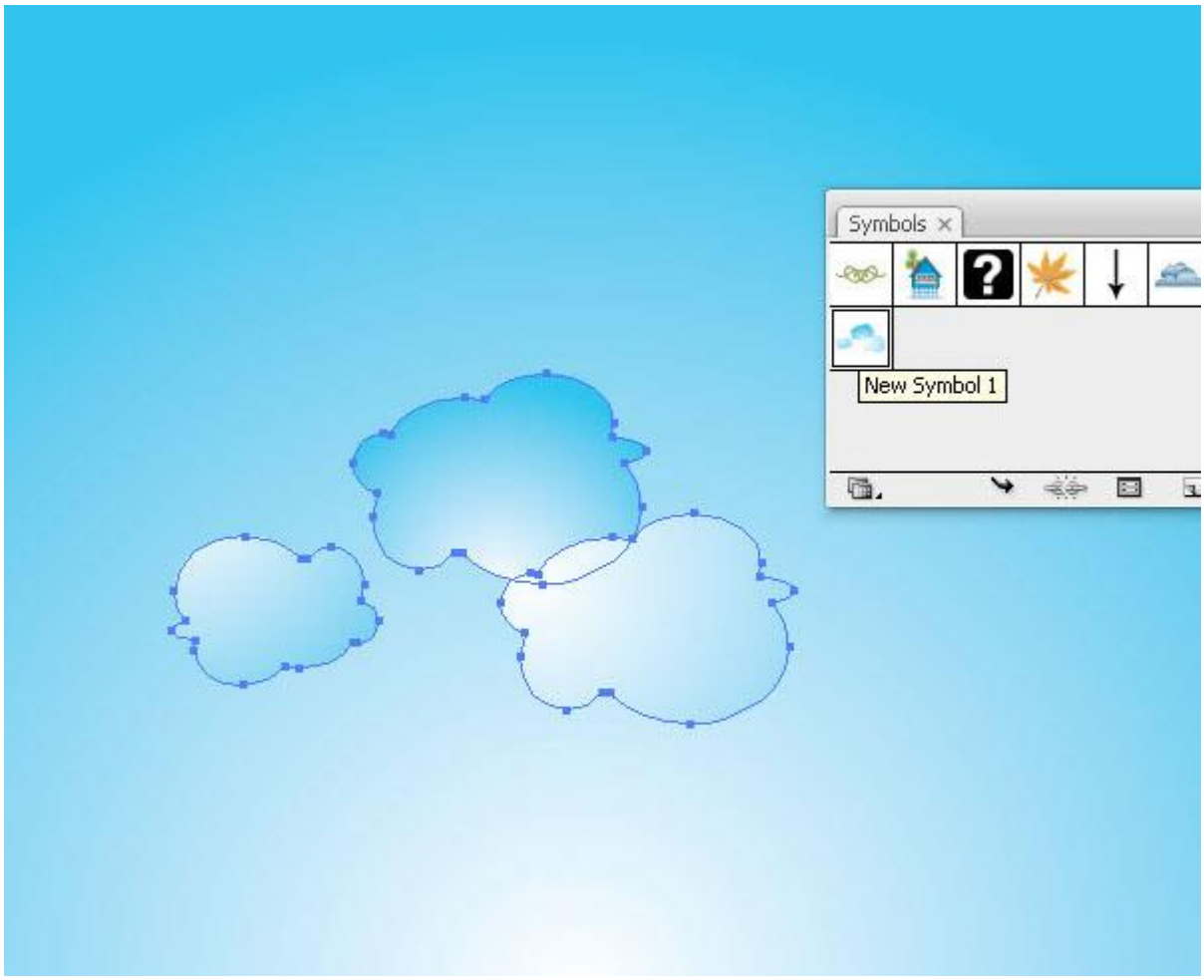
Step 12

Now we have our first cloud created. Fill it with the same radial gradient then the sky, but set the highlight in a different spot.



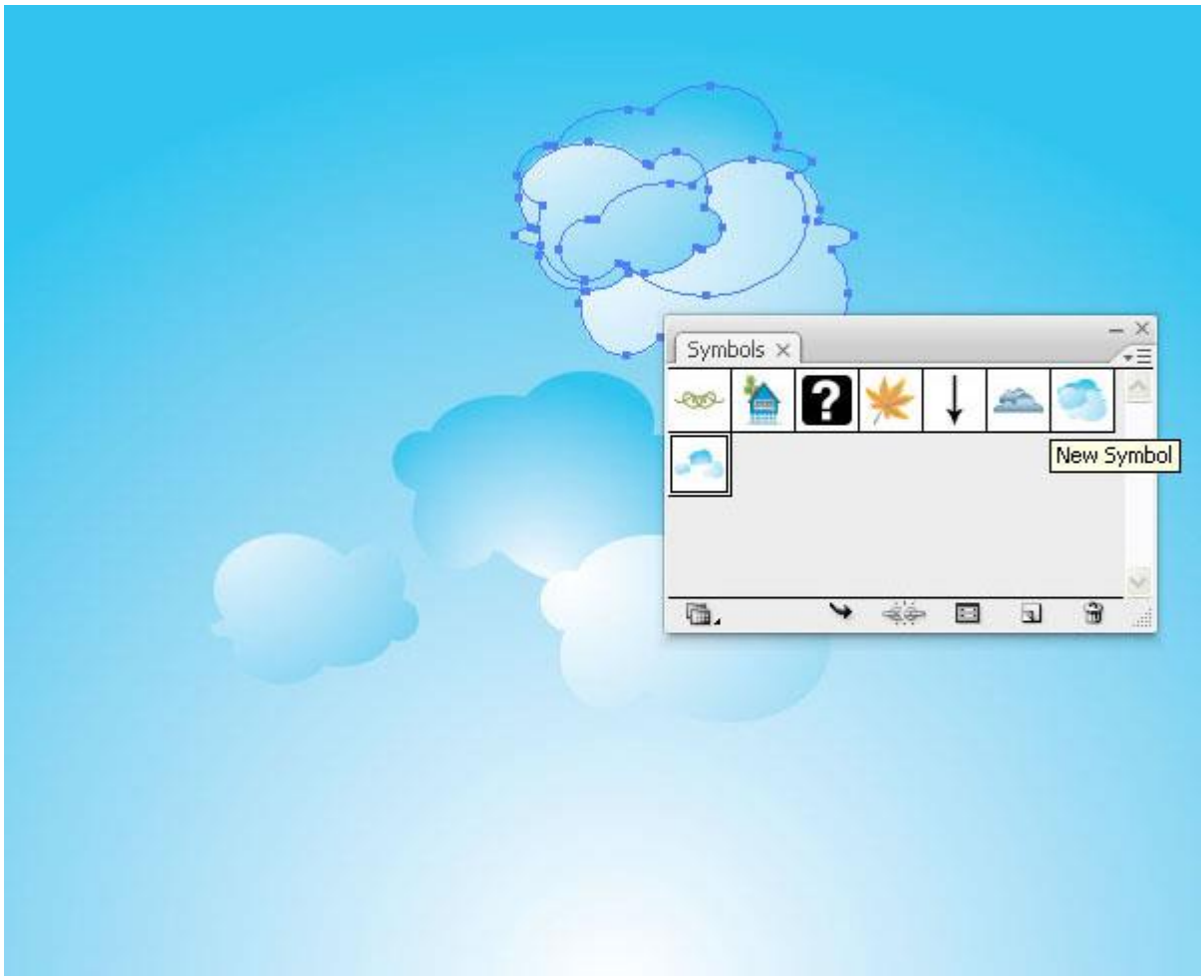
Step 13

Duplicate the cloud twice and scale them, fill them with different gradients. Then select a group of three and drag them into the Symbol Palette.



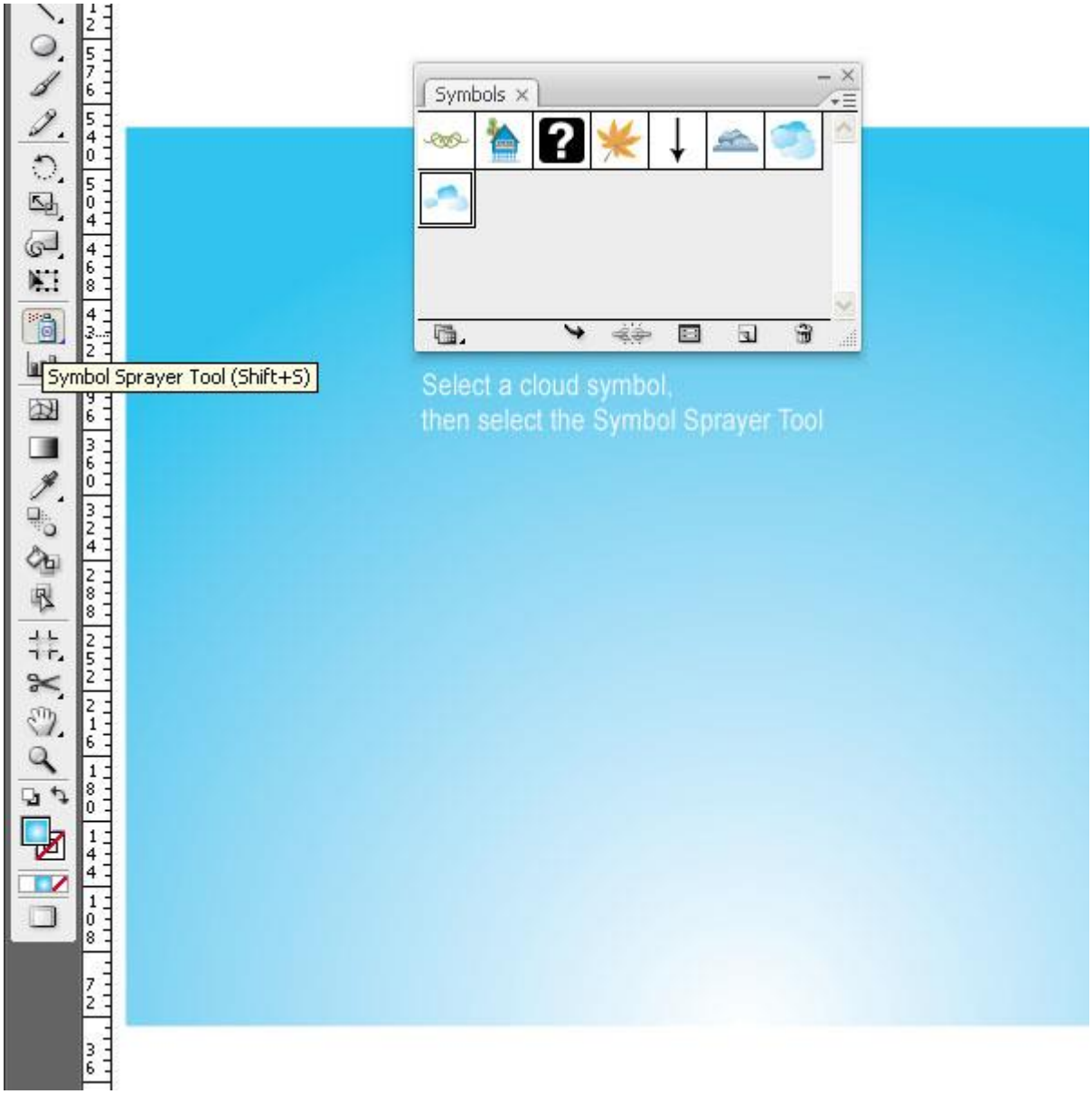
Step 14

Create another group of clouds that look slightly different, then drag them into the Symbol Palette as a new symbol.

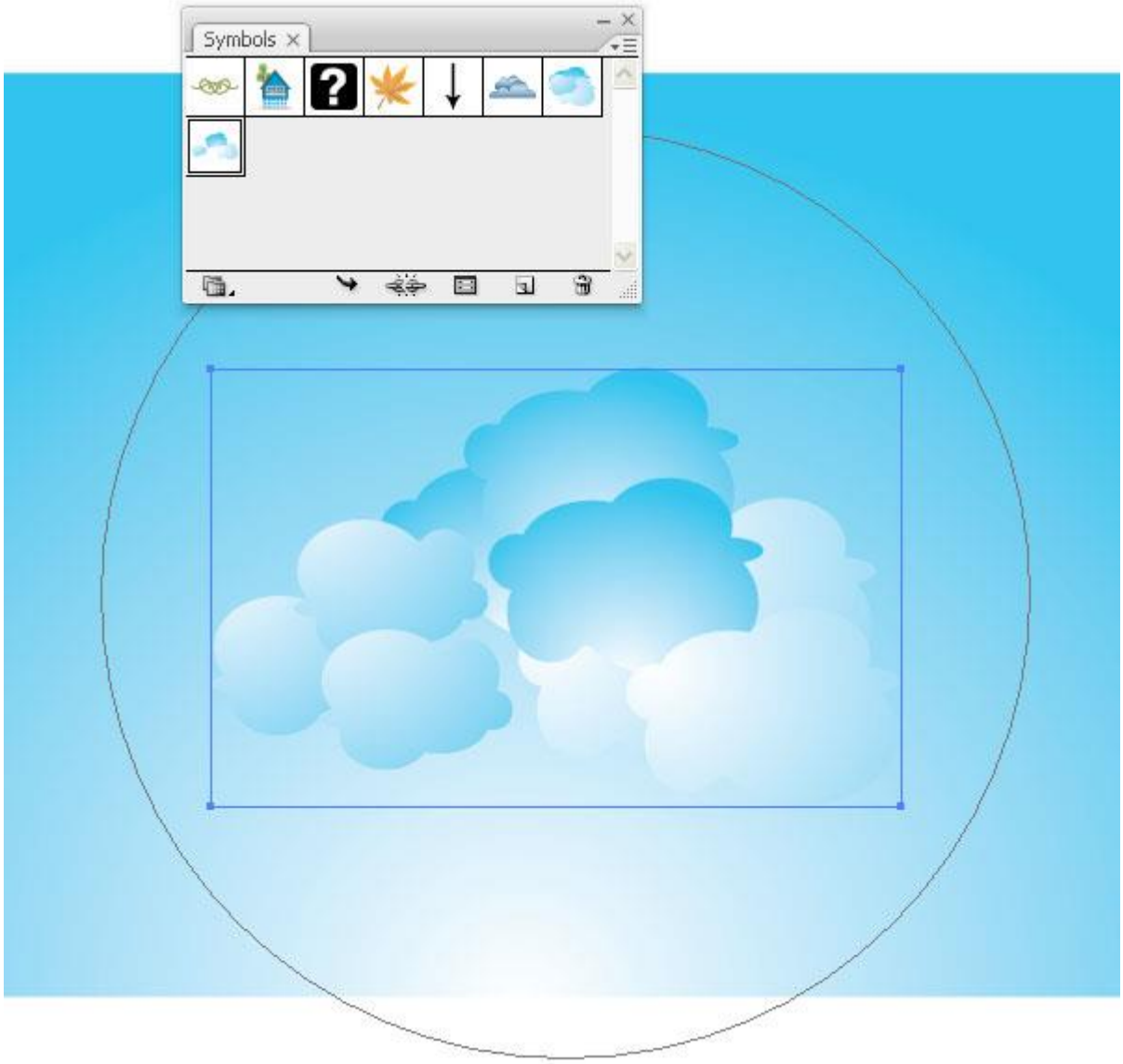


Step 15

With one symbol of the clouds selected, go and choose the Symbol Sprayer Tool (Shift + S).

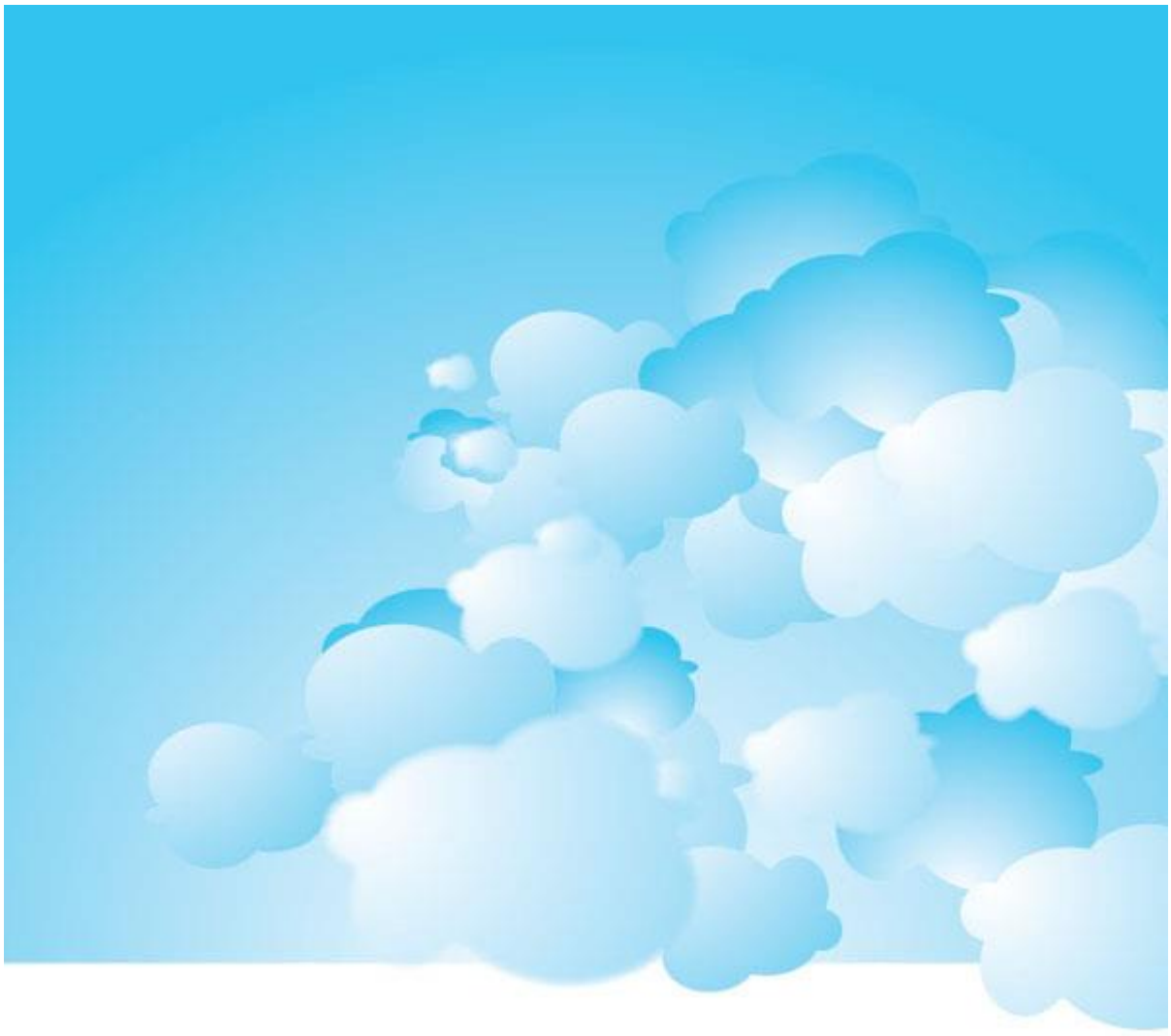


Step 16
Start spraying clouds all over the sky.



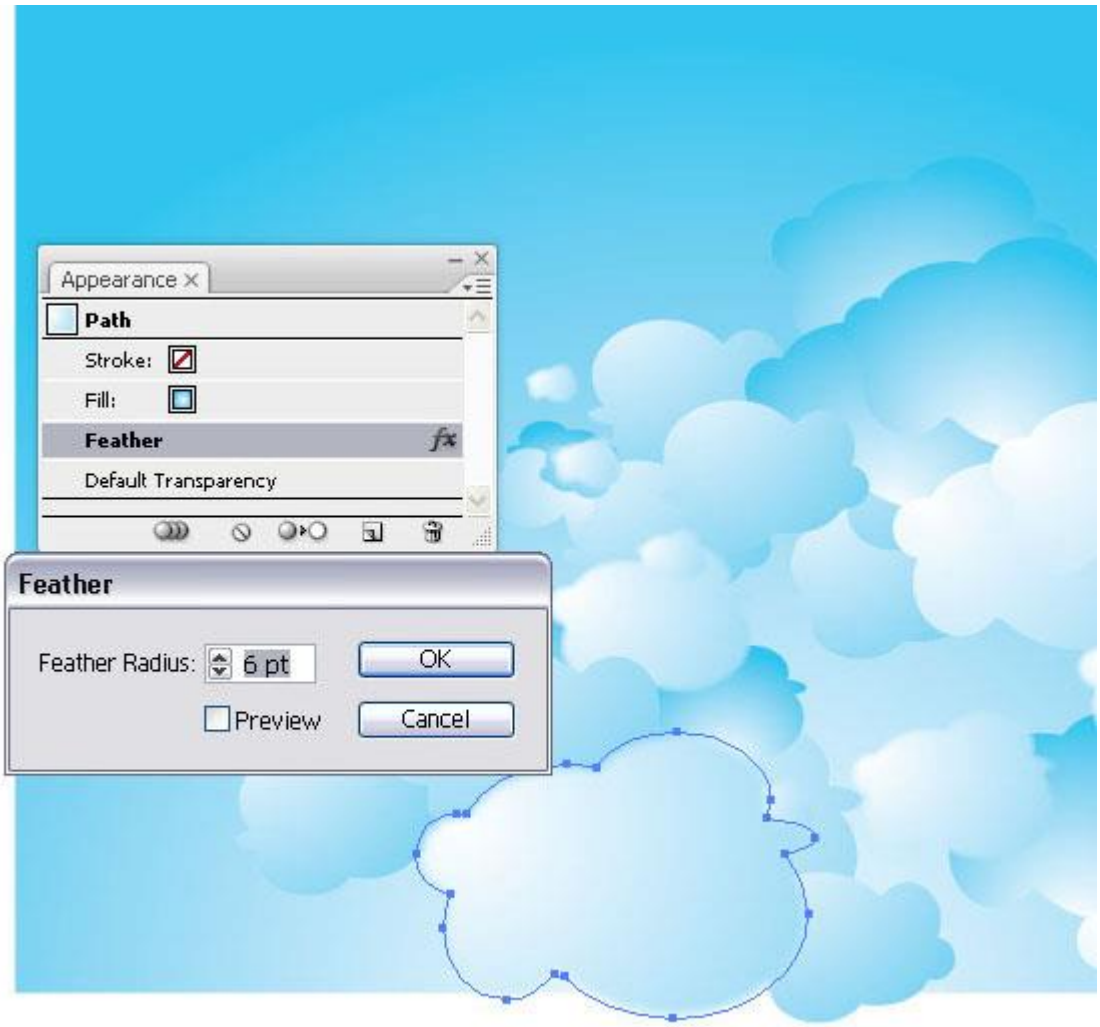
Step 17

Switch between the two cloud symbols and fill the sky with as many clouds as you like. It should look similar to the image below.



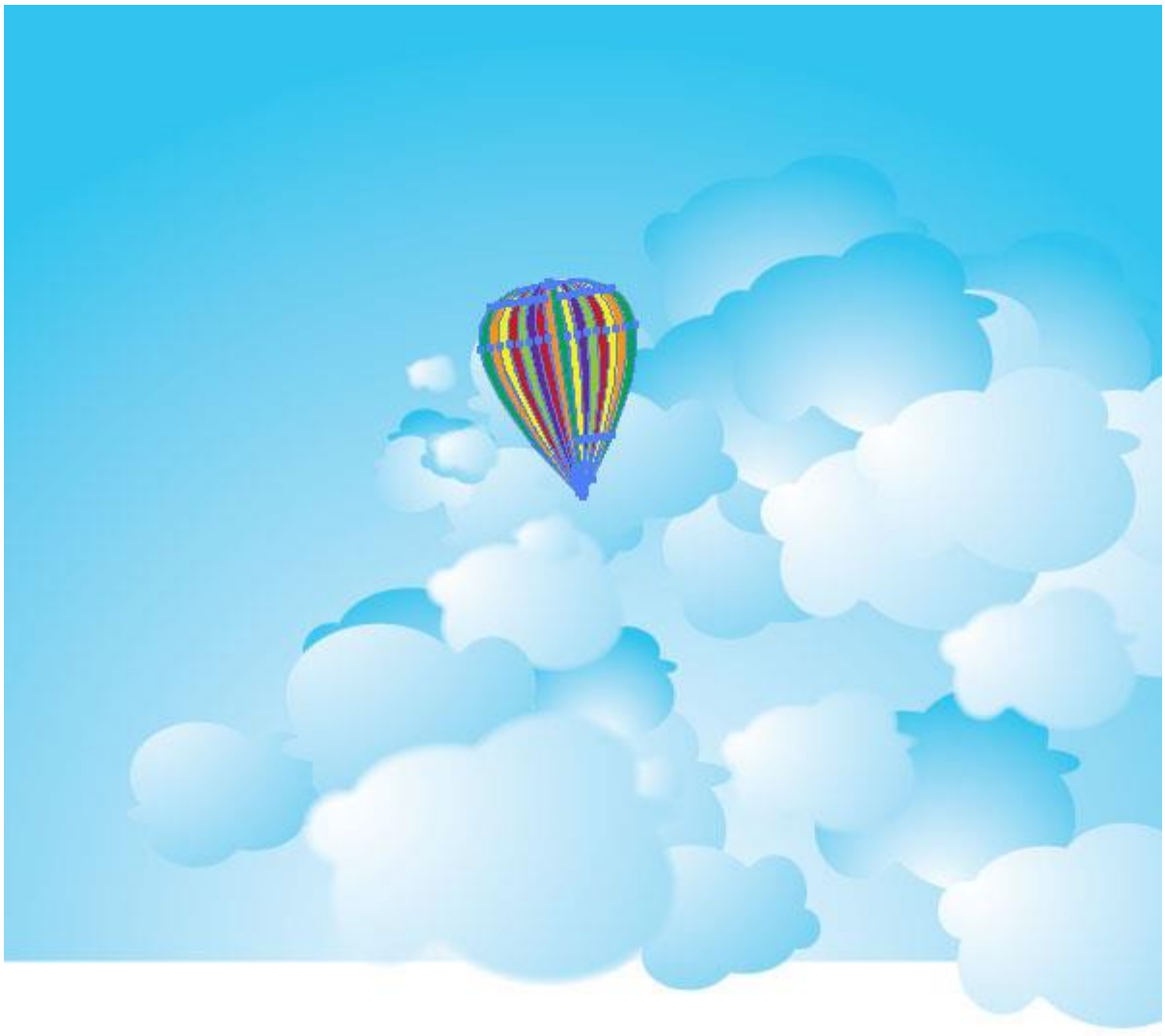
Step 18

We need to give the cloud a little bit more softness. Let's select one and add a Feather Effect to it. Go to Effect > Stylize > Feather and choose 6pt. Repeat that with as many clouds as you like.



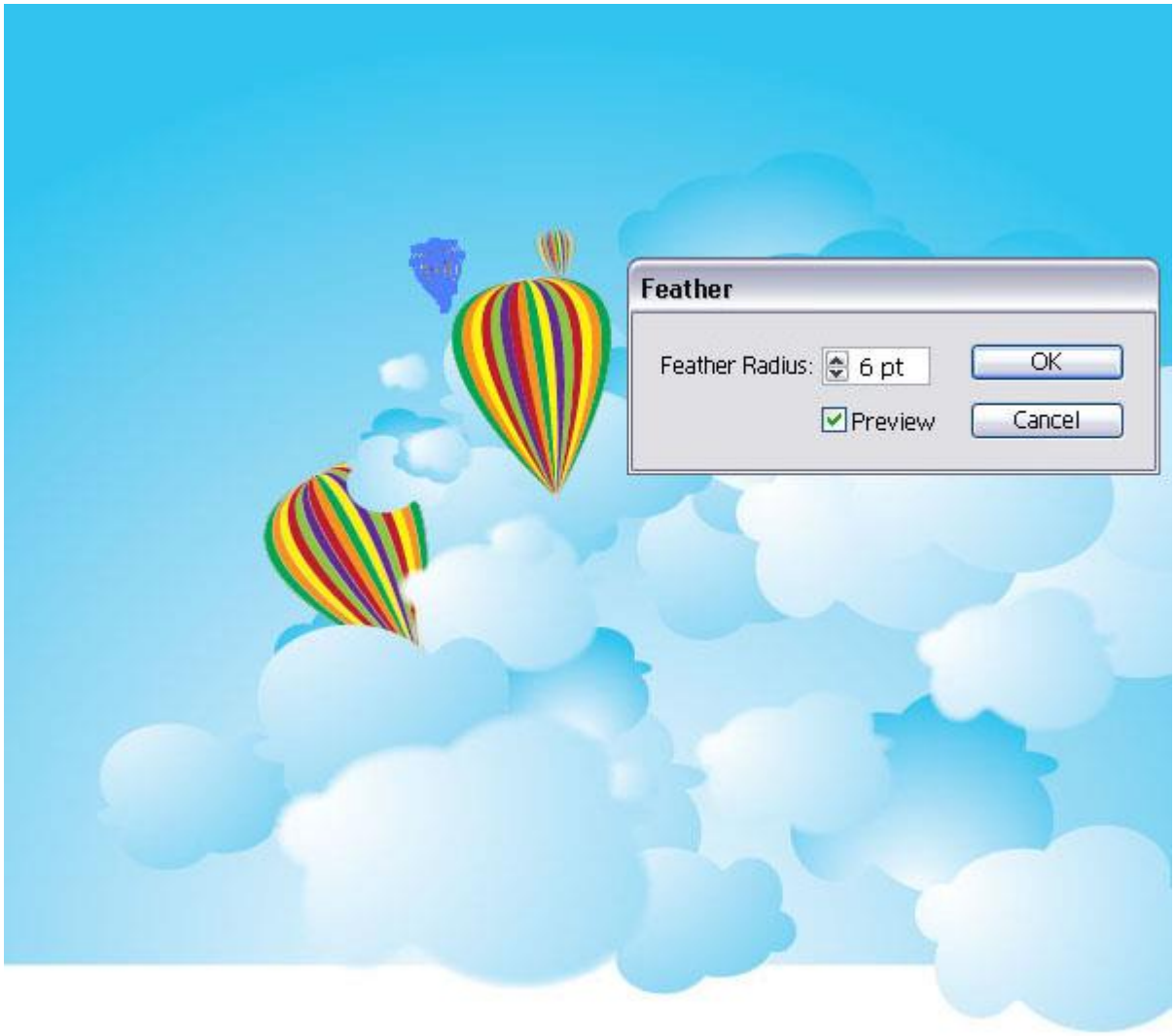
Step 19

Let's place the first hot air balloon. You might want to scale it up or down depending on your first drawing.



Step 20

Add several small balloons and add the Feather Effect to some of them.



Step 21

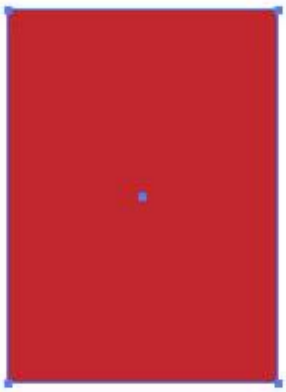
Once you placed several more copies of the balloons, you might find the colors choices a bit too much. Since the objects are still Live Paint objects, you can change the colors easily with the Live Paint Bucket (K).

Step 22

I set one balloon as light green to dark green and my biggest balloon I filled with orange and red. Feel free too choose any color you like.

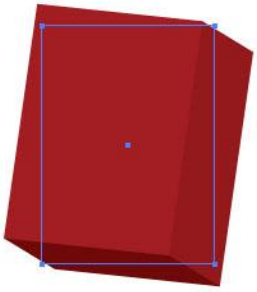
Step 23

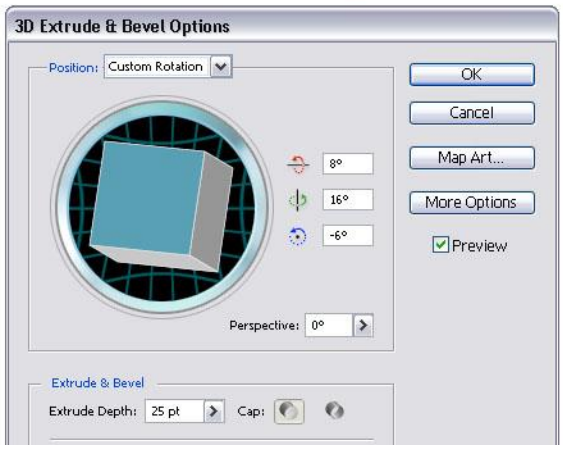
But wait, a hot air balloon is nothing without a basket. Create a rectangle and fill it with red.



Step 24

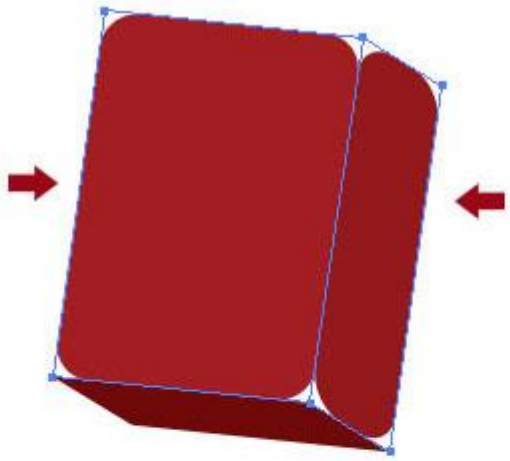
Select the rectangle and go to Effect > 3D > and apply the 3D Extrude & Bevel Options Choose, which is the setting you see in the image below.





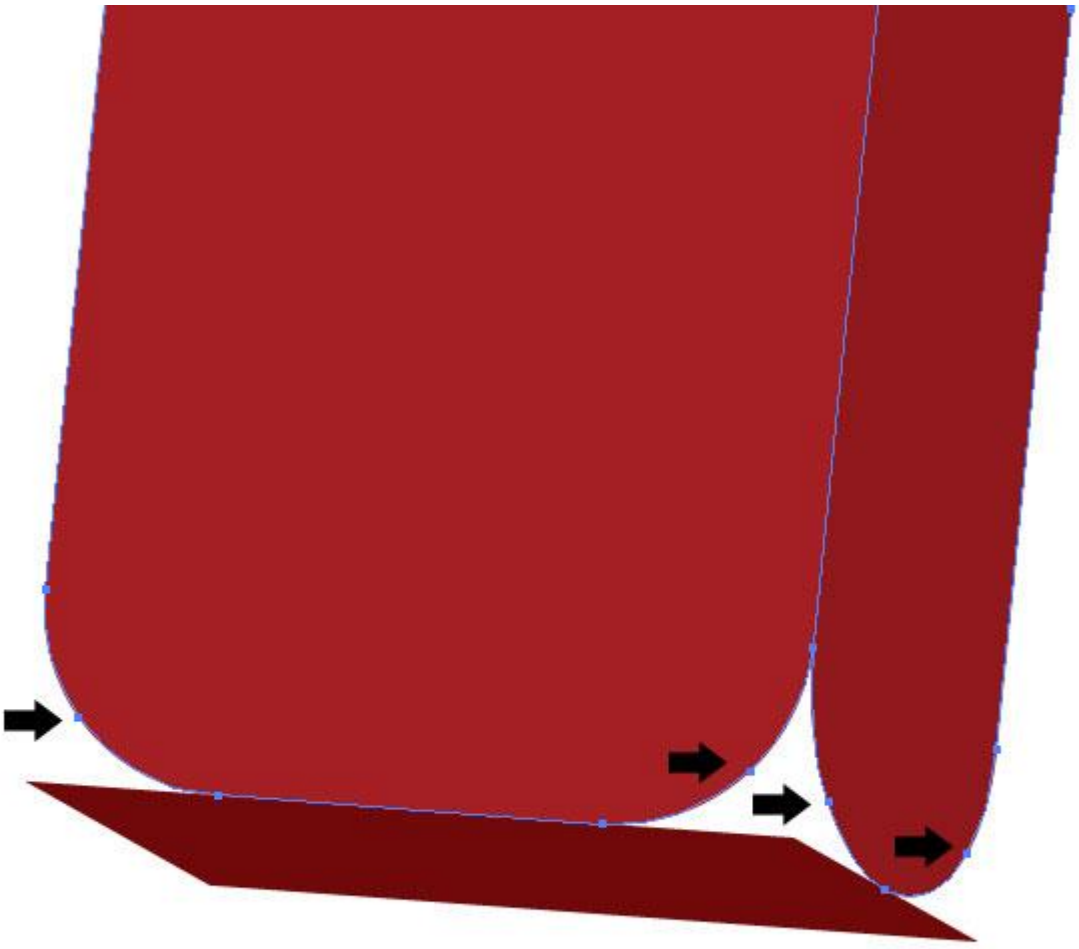
Step 25

Next, with the object still selected, got to Object > Expand Appearance. Then select the left and right side of the basket with the Direct Selection Tool (A) and apply a rounded corner effect of 3pt (Effect > Stylize > Rounded). Make sure you expand the appearance as well.

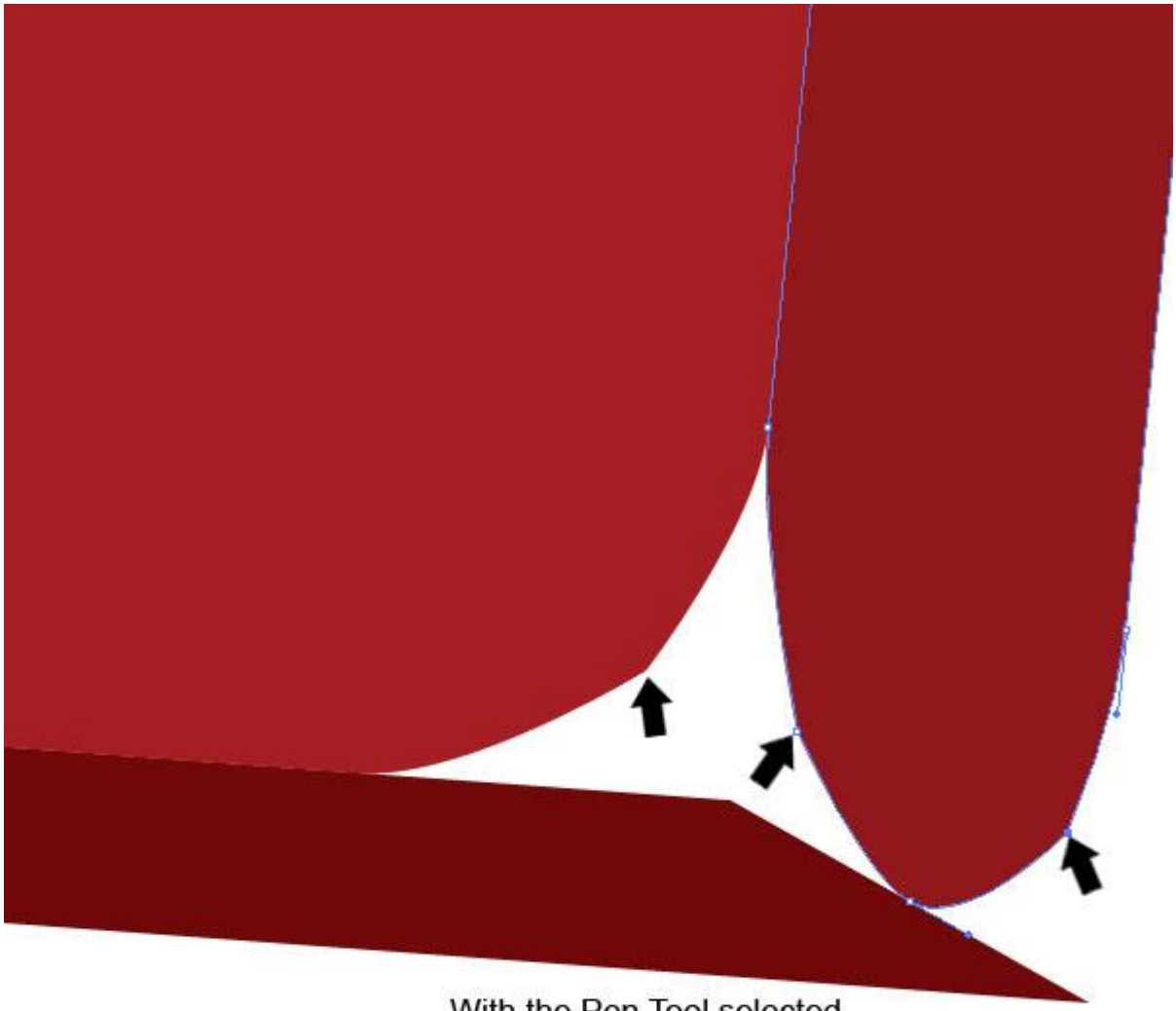


Step 26

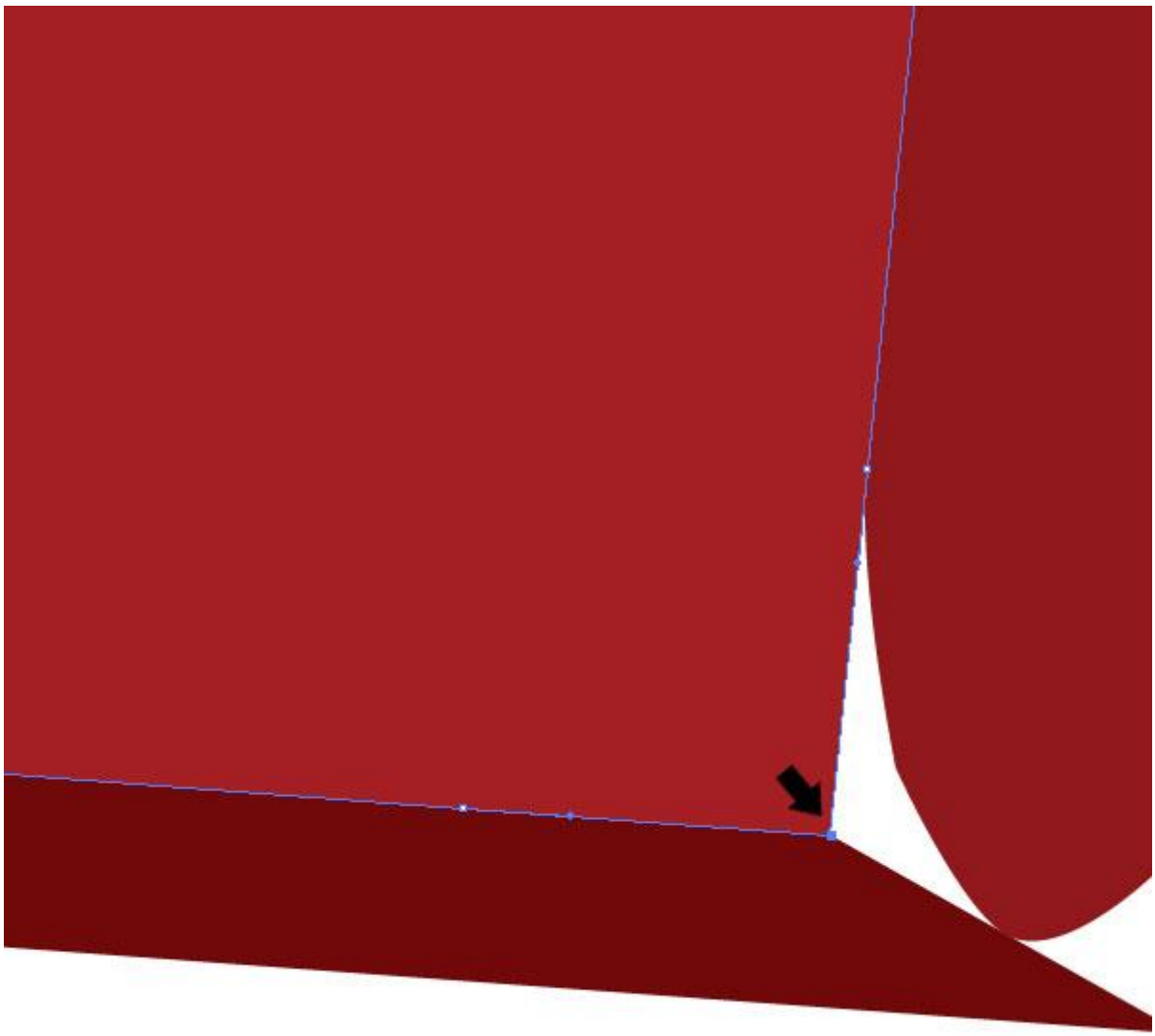
Since the rounded corners get applied everywhere, we need to change them on the bottom where the left and right side meet the floor of the basket. Add extra path points and eliminate the rounded corners with the Pen Tool (P). Then with the Pen Tool (P) still active, hold the Alt key and move the mouse over one of the points. You will see that the icons changes into an arrow. Click the path point. This will straighten the path. Select the point with the Direct Selection Tool (A) and drag in towards the floor shape.

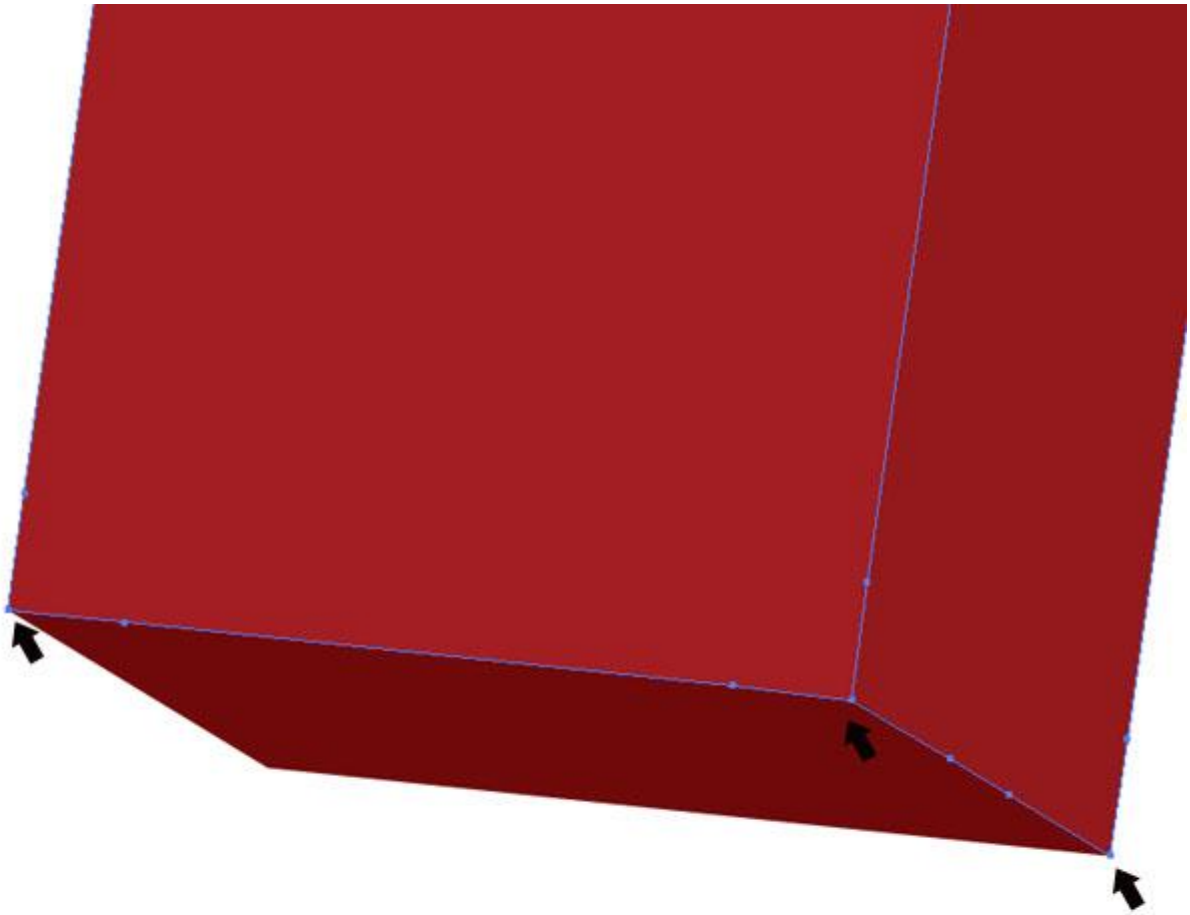


Add extra path points with the Pen Tool (P)

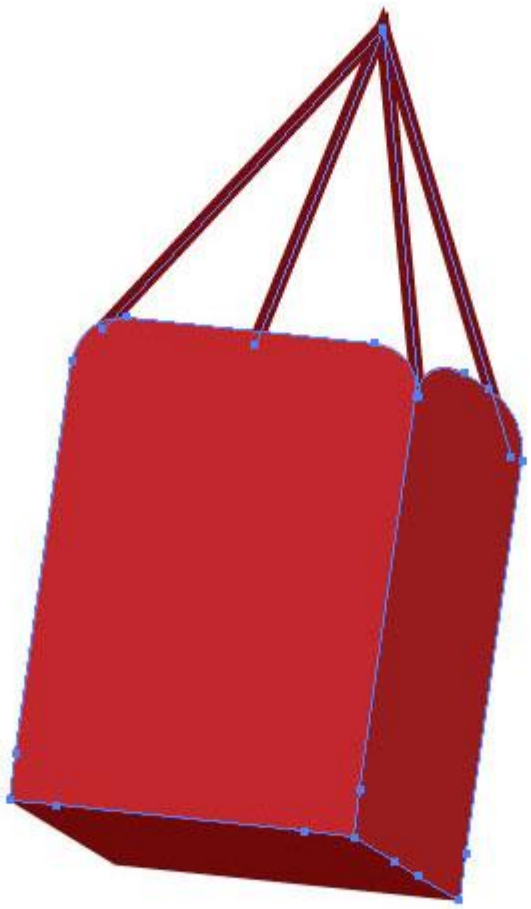


With the Pen Tool selected,
hold the Alt key and click on the
extra added path points





Step 27
I added simple lines as ropes, selected all shapes, and grouped them (Command + G).



Step 28

I duplicated the baskets and placed them with the balloons. To make the biggest balloon look shiny, I duplicated the shape and expanded it. Then I chose Add to Shape Area in the Pathfinder Palette and filled it with a light mid gray to light gray radial gradient. I placed the gradient highlight towards the top.

Step 29

By setting the Layer Option to Multiply, the balloon gets a slight shiny look.

Conclusion

Last but not least, we added a funky colored star burst to the background behind the clouds. I hope you enjoyed this tutorial.

The finished drawing minus the star burst may be turned in for a somewhat reduced grade … but if you want to excel, search for an adobe illustrator star burst tutorial using your browser, and follow the directions.