

## Illustrator Tutorial: How to create a stipple texture

By [Jason McConnell](#) on Dec, 19 2014

Have you ever wanted to add a stippled airbrush effect to your artwork in Illustrator? You might think you have to do it in Photoshop or use complex Vector Brushes, but there is a cool trick you can do with Effects and Gradients to give you the same look. This trick will work in versions at least as far back as Adobe CS4 too.



Step 1: Set up a linear stippled effect  
I started out with this flat owl artwork:

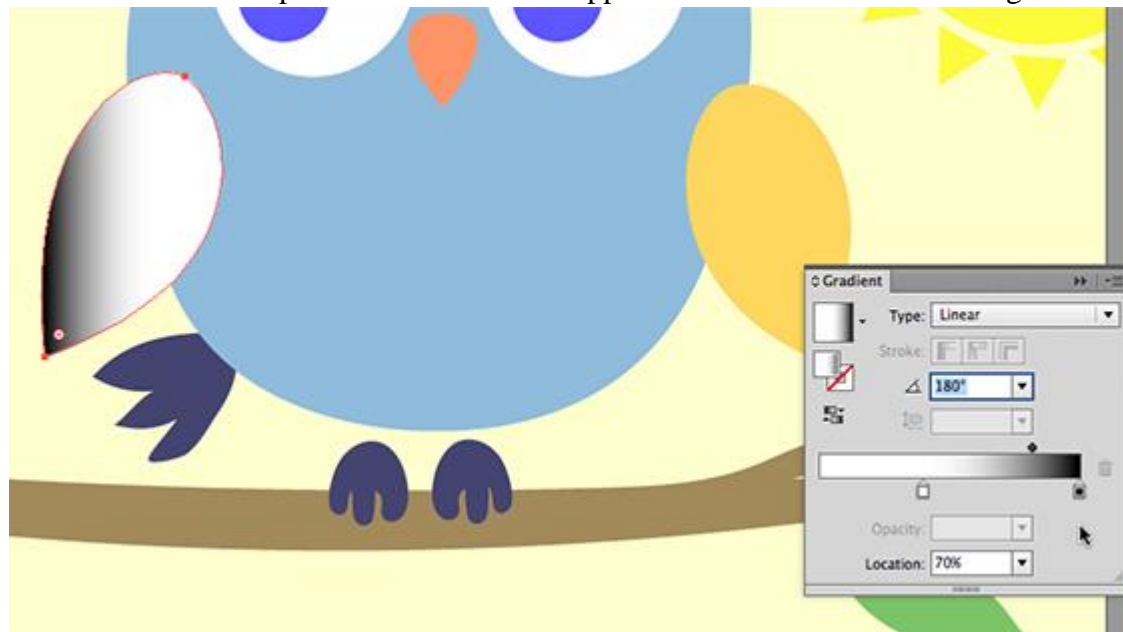


Select an object that you want to apply stipple to and from the Appearance panel menu choose Add New Fill. You will end up with two Fill attributes for your object. (You could do this on a separate Object as well but I decided to use Appearance Attributes instead to keep things tidy)

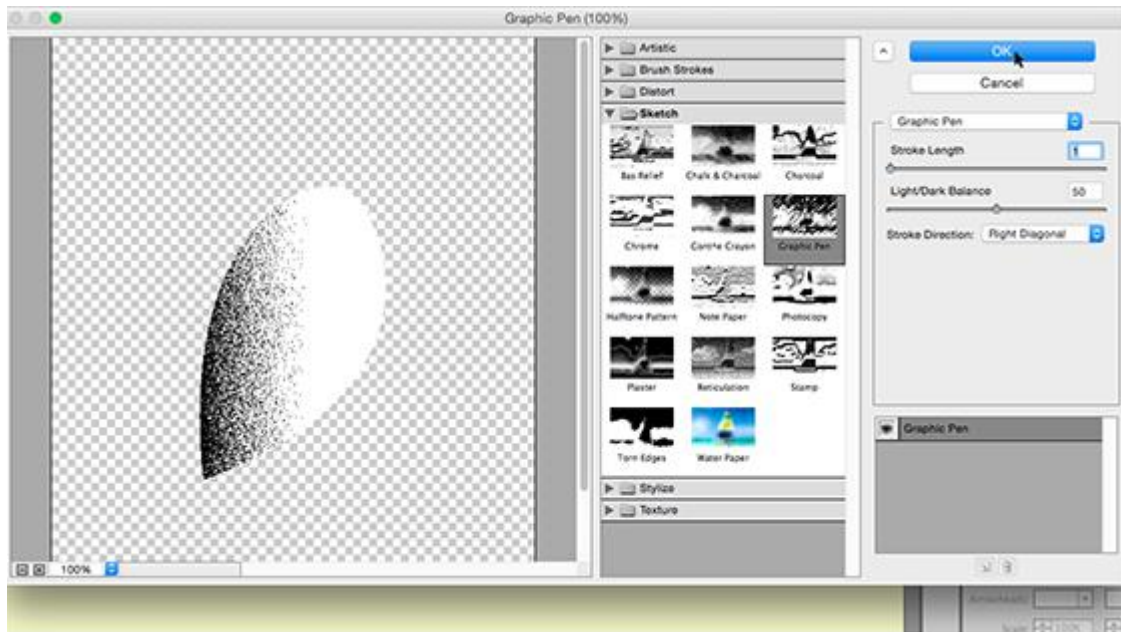


Next change the top Fill attribute to the default White to Black gradient.

In my case the light source is on the right side so I adjusted the angle to 180 and I also moved the white slider and mid point over so that the stipple will be more towards the edge later on.



Then with the object and the top Fill Attribute in the Appearance panel still selected go to Effect / Sketch / Graphic Pen...



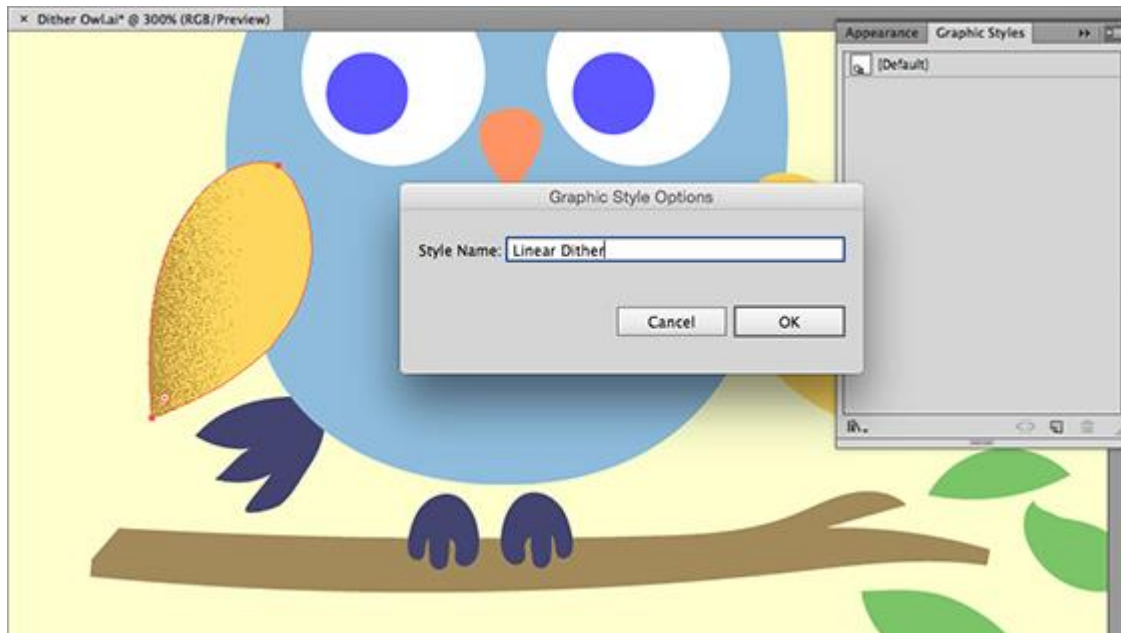
I chose a Stroke Length of 1 and a Light / Dark Balance of 50 plus Right Diagonal for Stroke Direction, but play around with these settings to get different looks for your stippling. Press OK when done.

The effect will look black and white so go to the Appearance Panel and change the Blending Mode for the Gradient Fill to Multiply and lower the opacity to 30%. This will create a dithered shadow look. (Tip: To create a highlight instead of a shadow use the Screen or Soft Light Blending Modes)



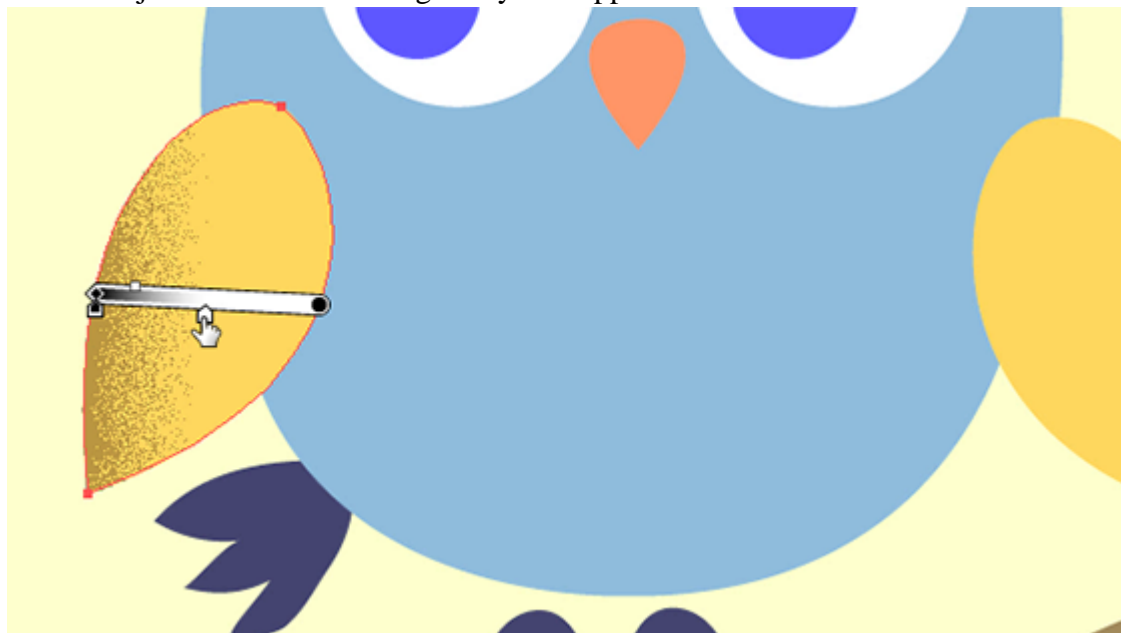
Step 2: Save the effect for later

We don't have to go through all of those steps the next time we want to add stipple so with the object selected go to the Graphic Styles Panel menu and choose New Graphic Style... I named mine Linear Dither.



### Step 3: Adjust the stippling

The great thing about this trick is that you can go back in and adjust the gradient position, angle and sliders to change the stippling. Select the object that you applied the effect to before and make sure the Gradient Fill Attribute is selected in the Appearance Panel. Then use the Gradient Tool to adjust the sliders and angle of your stipple.



### Step 4: Apply the Linear Dither Graphic Style to other objects

I selected the other wing and clicked the Linear Dither Graphic Style I just created to apply the same effect to the object. Then I adjusted the gradient fill to change the dither angle and density.



Next I selected the branch object and applied the Linear Dither Graphic Style to it as well. The Graphic Style has the yellow fill stored so from the Appearance panel I changed the bottom Fill attribute back to Brown. I then selected the Gradient Fill attribute and adjusted the gradient angle so that the stippling would be below the branch.



After that I added the Dither effect to the leaves, feet, tail and nose of the Owl.

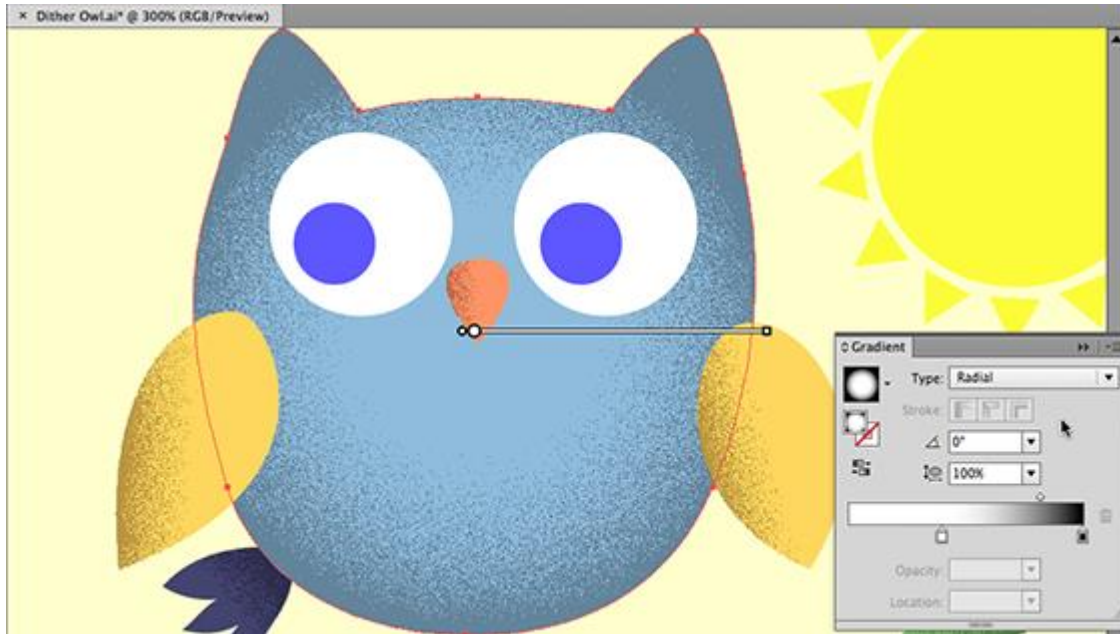


Step 5: Create a radial stipple effect

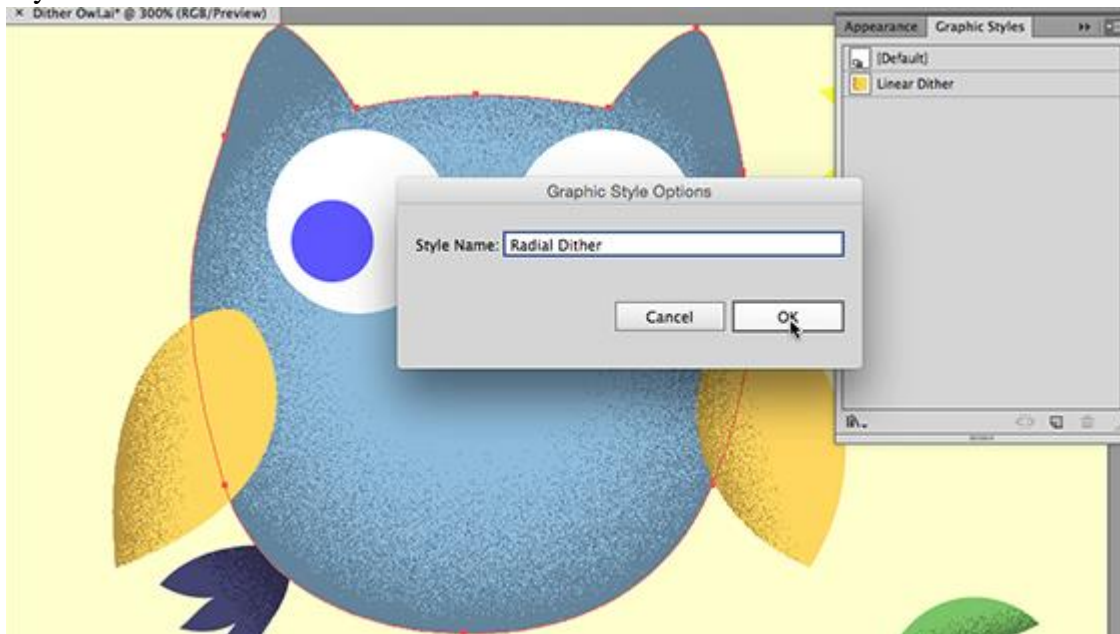
I applied the Linear Dither to the body object of the owl and then changed the color to blue. It really like the stipple to go around the edges of the owl instead here.



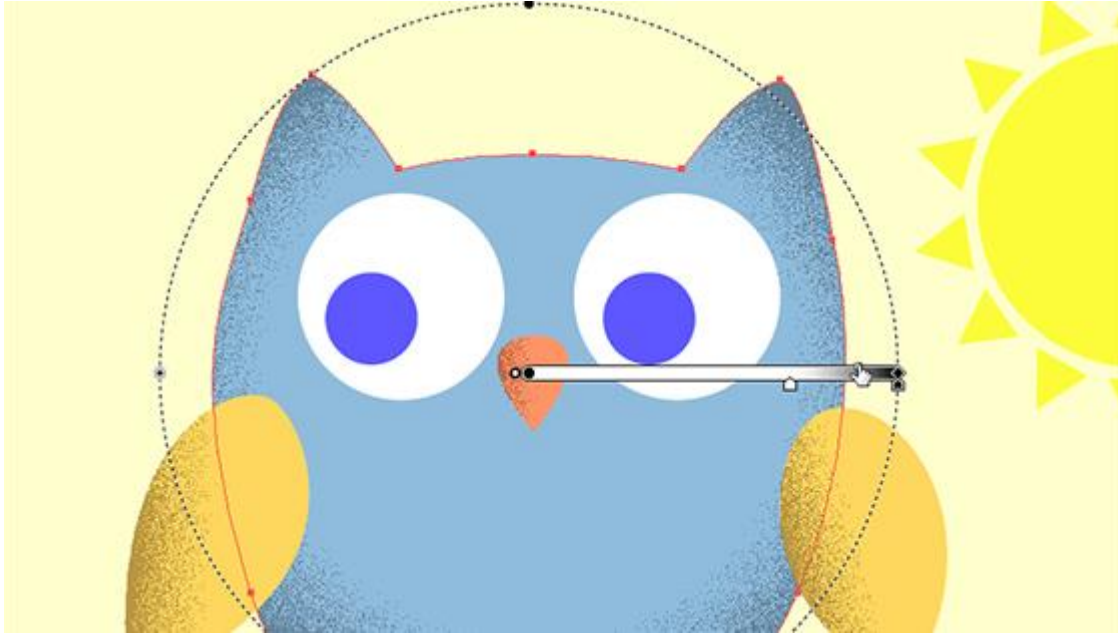
With the Gradient Fill Attribute selected in the Appearance Panel go to the Gradient Panel and change the Type to Radial.



We'll make some changes to the radial gradient but first let's save the Appearance as a Graphic Style. I named it Radial Dither.

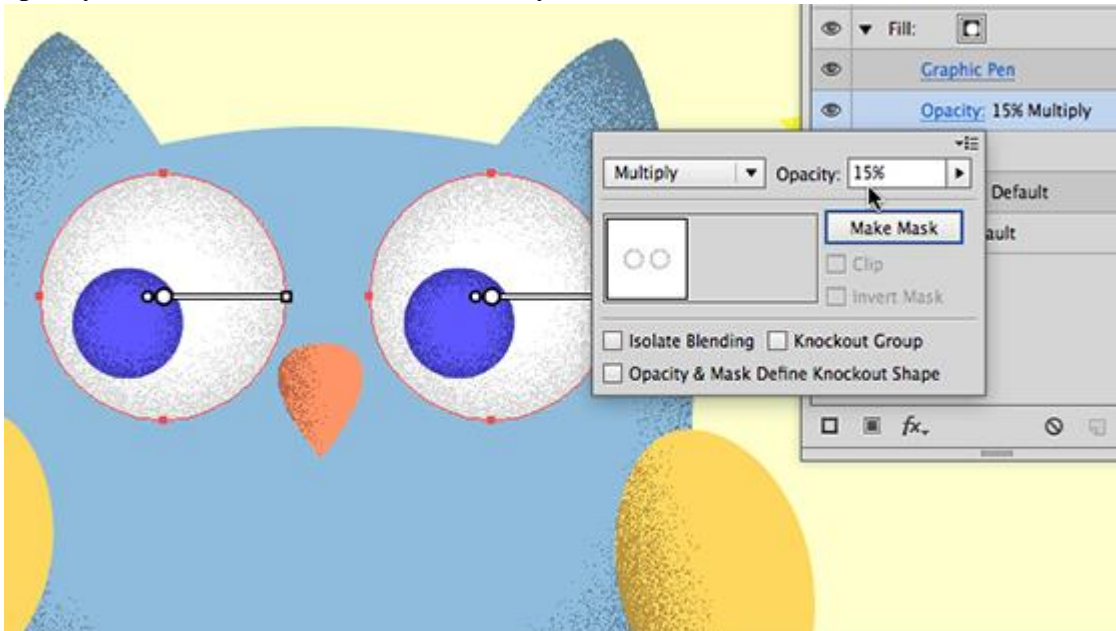


Then I chose the Gradient Tool and adjusted the Position, Sliders and Aspect Ratio of the gradient to get the stippling the way I wanted.

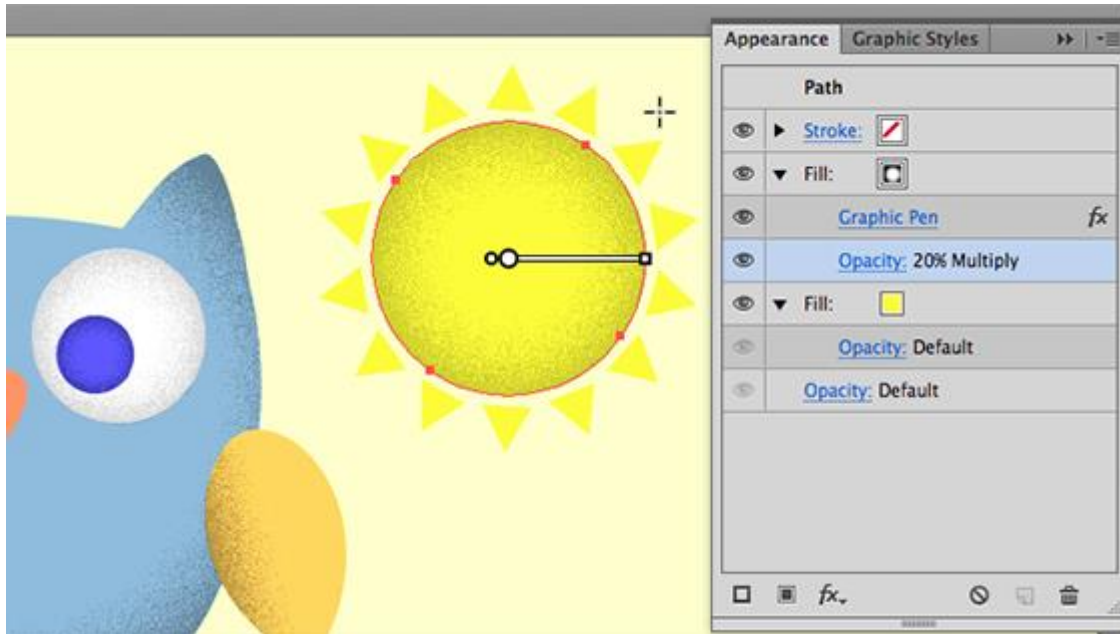


Step 6: Apply the Radial Dither Graphic Style to other objects

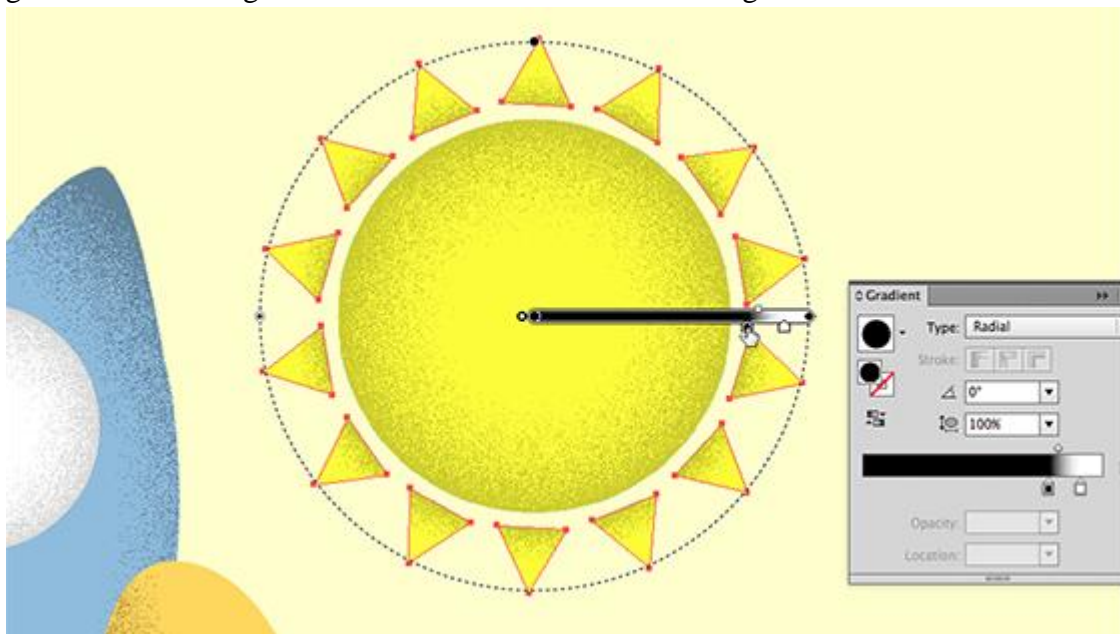
I then applied the Radial Dither Graphic style to the eye objects and the sun and also lowered the opacity of the effect in the whites of the eye and the sun.







I created a Compound Path out of the sun bursts (Object / Compound Path / Make) and then used the Eye Dropper to pick up the radial yellow look of the center of the sun. Then I adjusted the gradient sliders to get the dither where I wanted on the edges of the sunbursts.

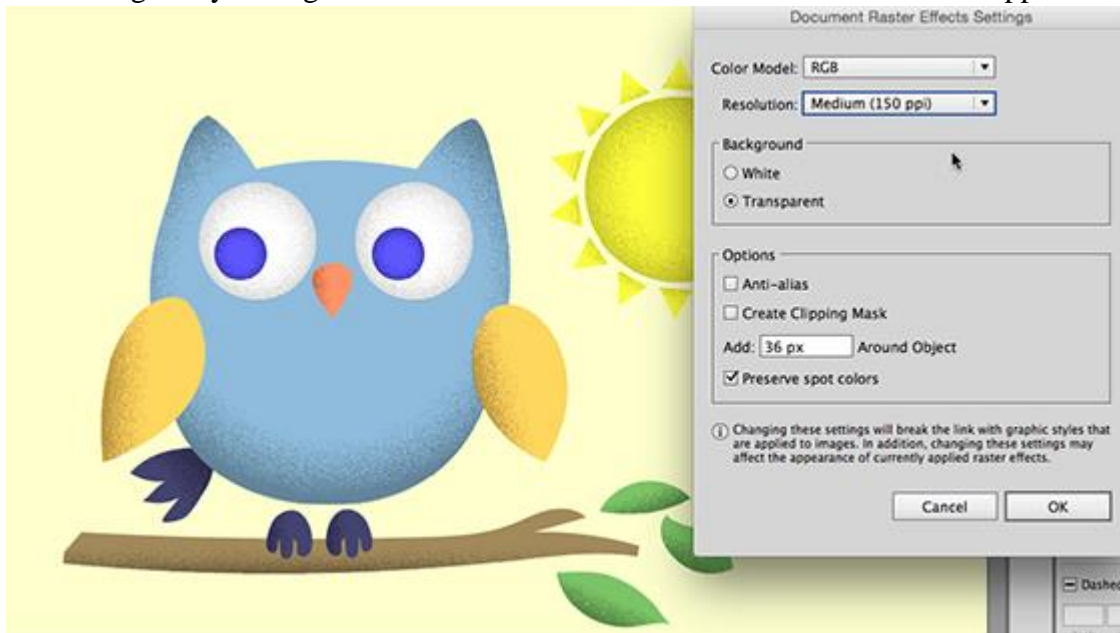


And here we have the final scene:



### Step 7: Adjust the size of the stippling effect

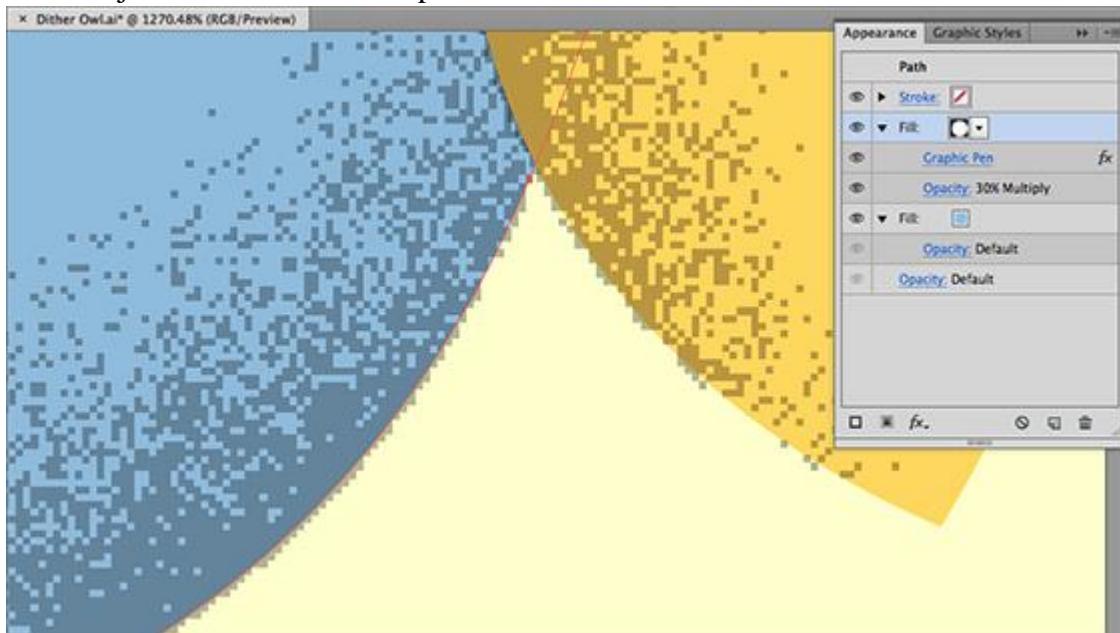
You can quickly change the size of the stippling of all of the objects at once. Go to Effect / Document Raster Effects Settings and the lower the resolution setting the larger the stippling will be. I changed my setting from 300 down to 150 which results in a chunkier stipple look.





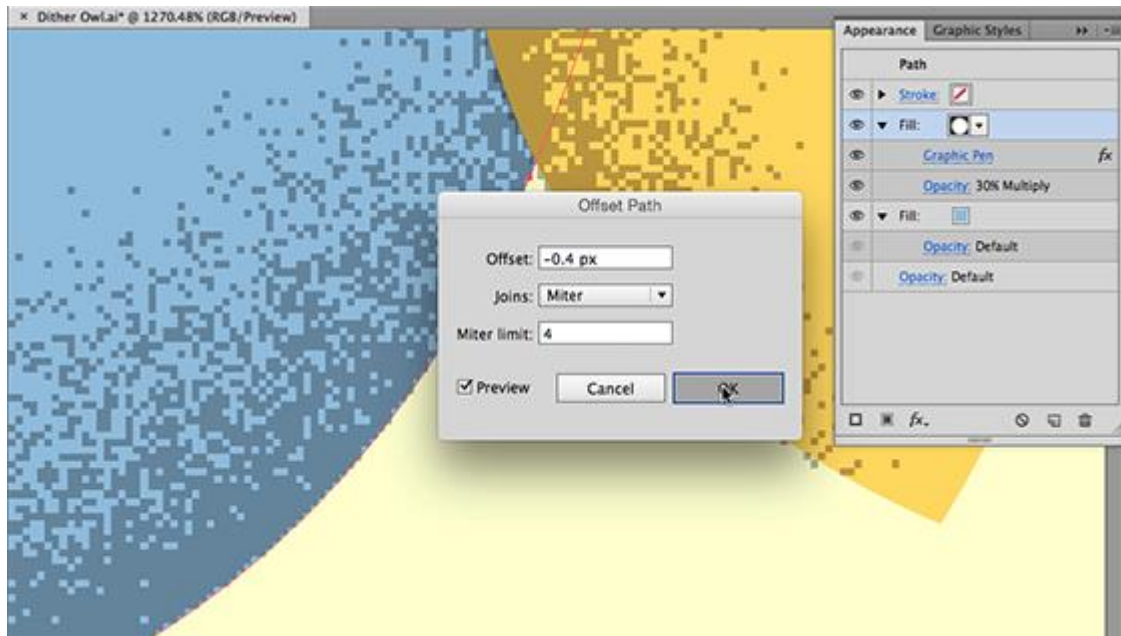
#### Step 8: Odds and Ends

You might notice while zoomed in really close that the Graphic Pen effect spills out of the edges of the objects a little like in this pic:



If this is an issue for you then we can fix it. Select an object that has the effect and highlight the Gradient Fill Attribute in the Appearance Panel.

Then go to Effect / Path / Offset Path... I chose `-.4px` for the Offset and hit OK. This will bring the Graphic Pen effect in just a little so it doesn't spill over past the path of your objects. Save new Graphic Styles to re-use the new effect later.



That's all for this Tutorial, I hope you enjoyed it and please share with friends! -J