How to Draw a Butterfly

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

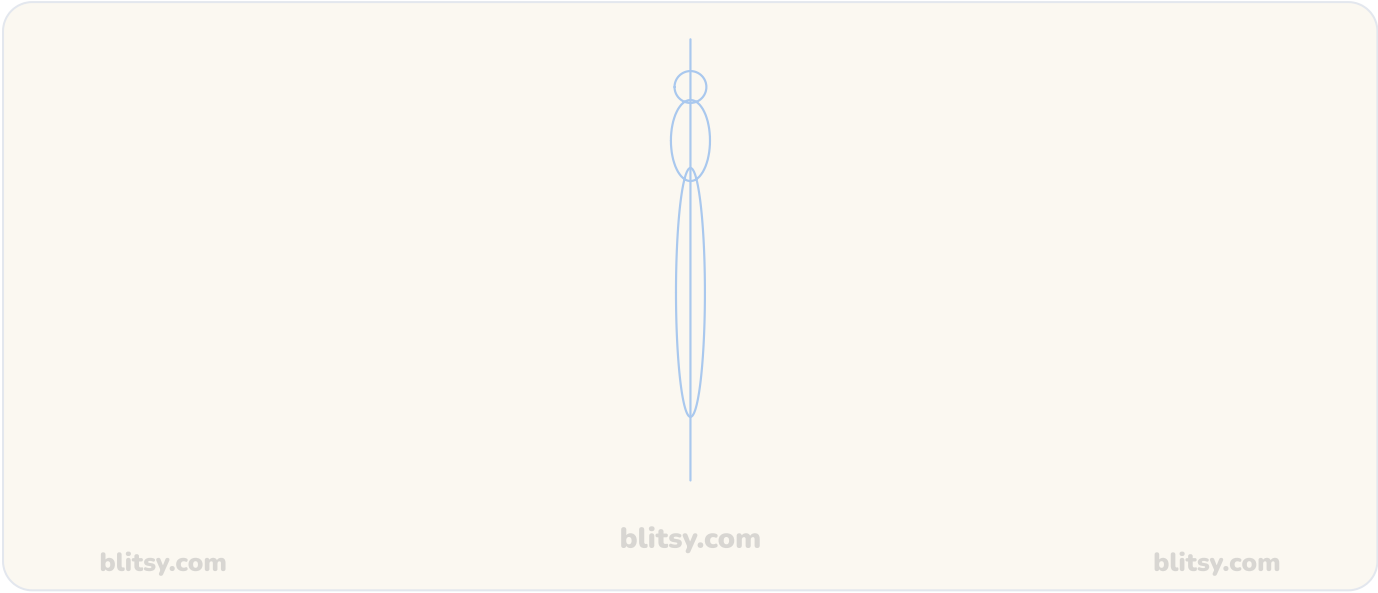
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker
- Orange and black crayons or pencils
- Plain paper

How to use this guide

New lines for each step are shown in **blue**; lines you already drew are gray. Draw lightly first, then ink and erase near the end.

Read the full tutorial online →

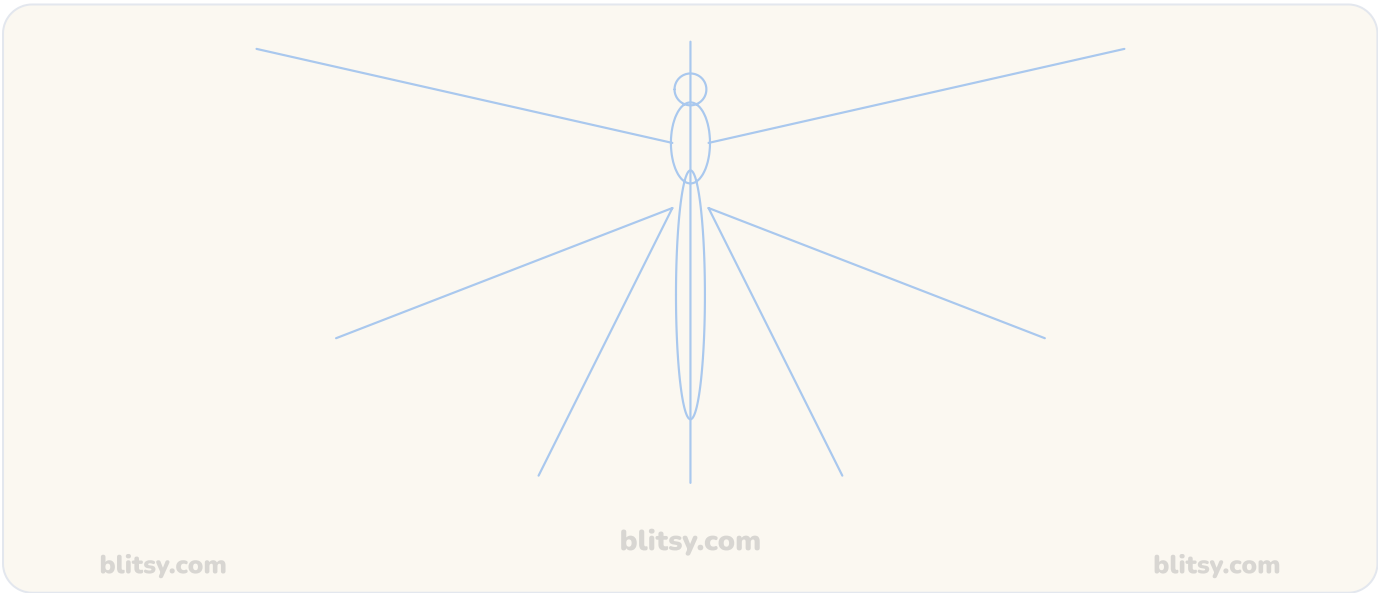
STEP 1 Draw a center line and body ovals



Turn the paper sideways and draw a straight vertical line down the middle. This center line is the most useful line in the whole drawing, because every wing gets measured from it. On the line, sketch a small circle for the head, an oval below it for the thorax, and a long, thin oval for the abdomen. Keep all of it very light.

💡 **Tip:** A ruler makes the center line straight, and a straight line makes mirroring much easier later.

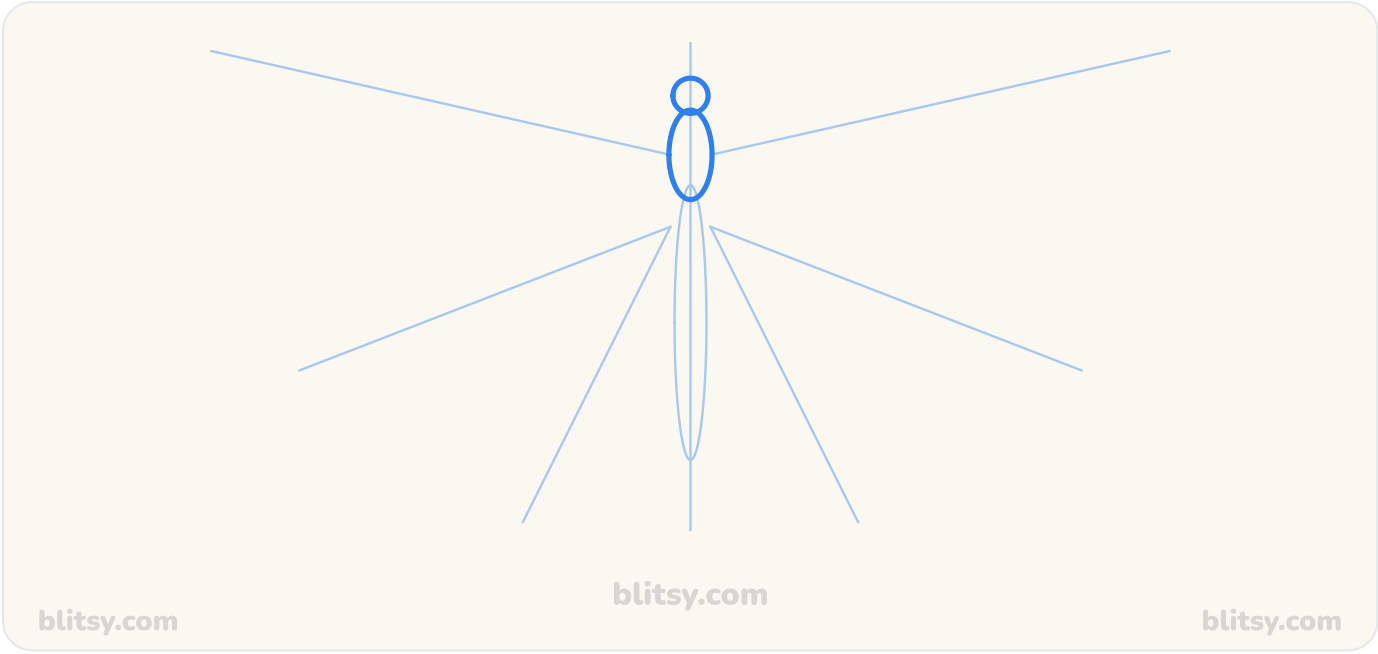
STEP 2 Add the wing guide lines



From the thorax, draw two long lines that rise toward the top corners of your paper. They show where the tips of the upper wings will go. Then, from a point a little lower, draw two lines out to the sides and two that slant down. These four lines mark the edges of the lower wings. Check that each line on the left mirrors its partner on the right.

💡 **Tip:** Hold the paper up to a window and look through the back. Lopsided guide lines jump out right away.

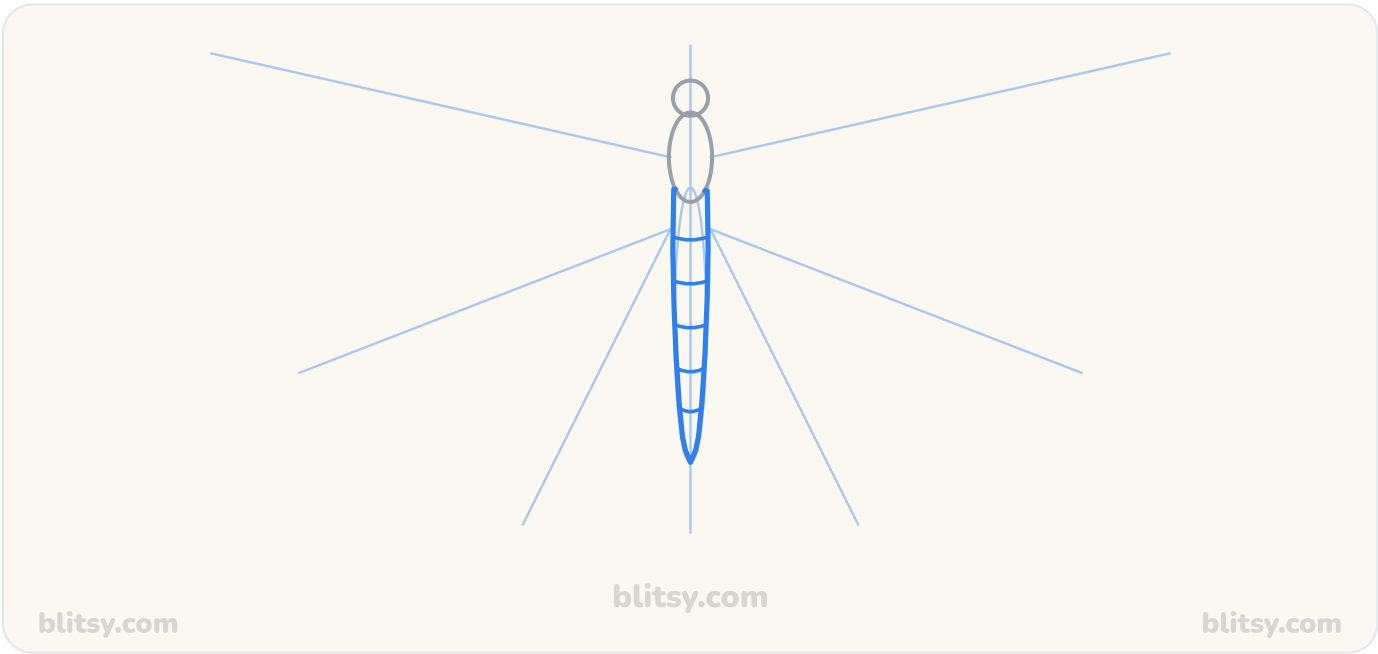
STEP 3 Outline the head and thorax



Go over the small circle and the oval with a firmer line. I keep the head small, about half the width of the thorax, because a big round head makes a butterfly look like a bug from a cartoon. Two tiny circles inside the head will become the eyes later.

💡 **Tip:** Draw each oval in two halves, left then right, so both sides come out the same size.

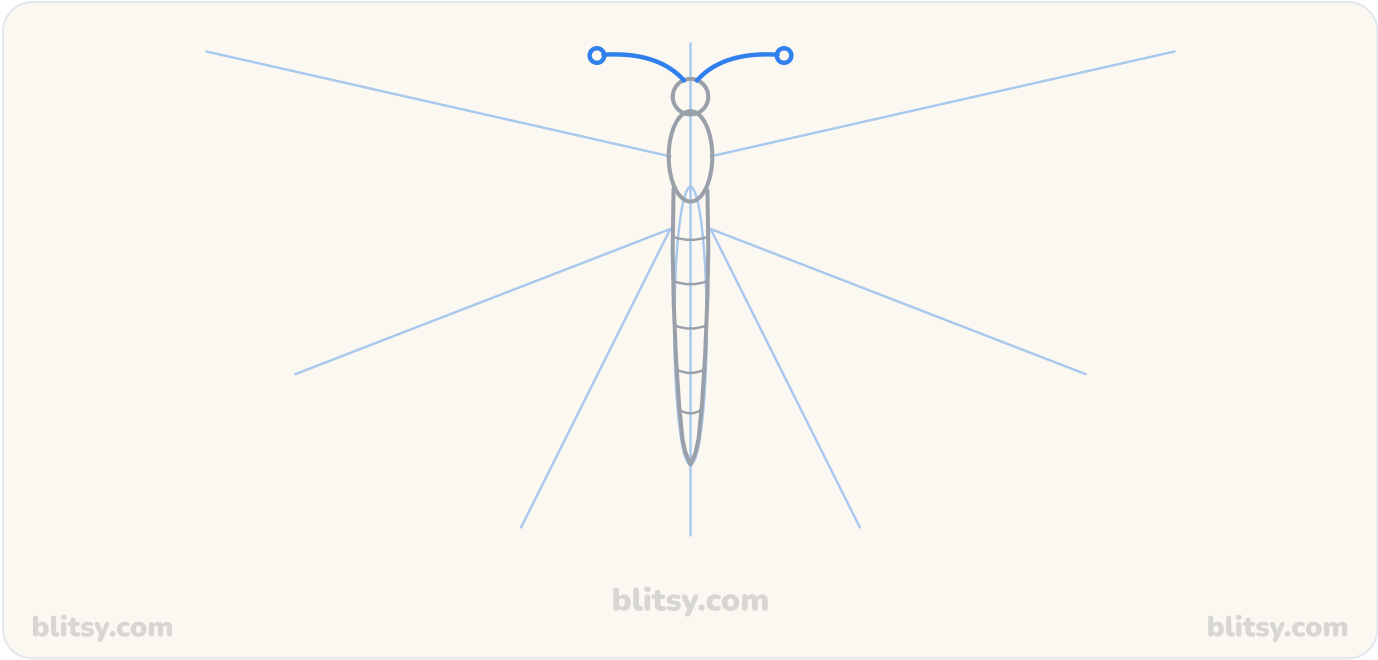
STEP 4 Draw the long striped abdomen



Trace the long oval below the thorax, letting it narrow to a soft point at the bottom. Its top tucks just under the thorax, so start the line where it touches the oval. Then add five gently curved stripes across it, spaced evenly. Those stripes are the body segments, and curving them slightly downward makes the body look round instead of flat.

💡 **Tip:** Space the stripes by eye first with tiny tick marks, then join each pair of marks.

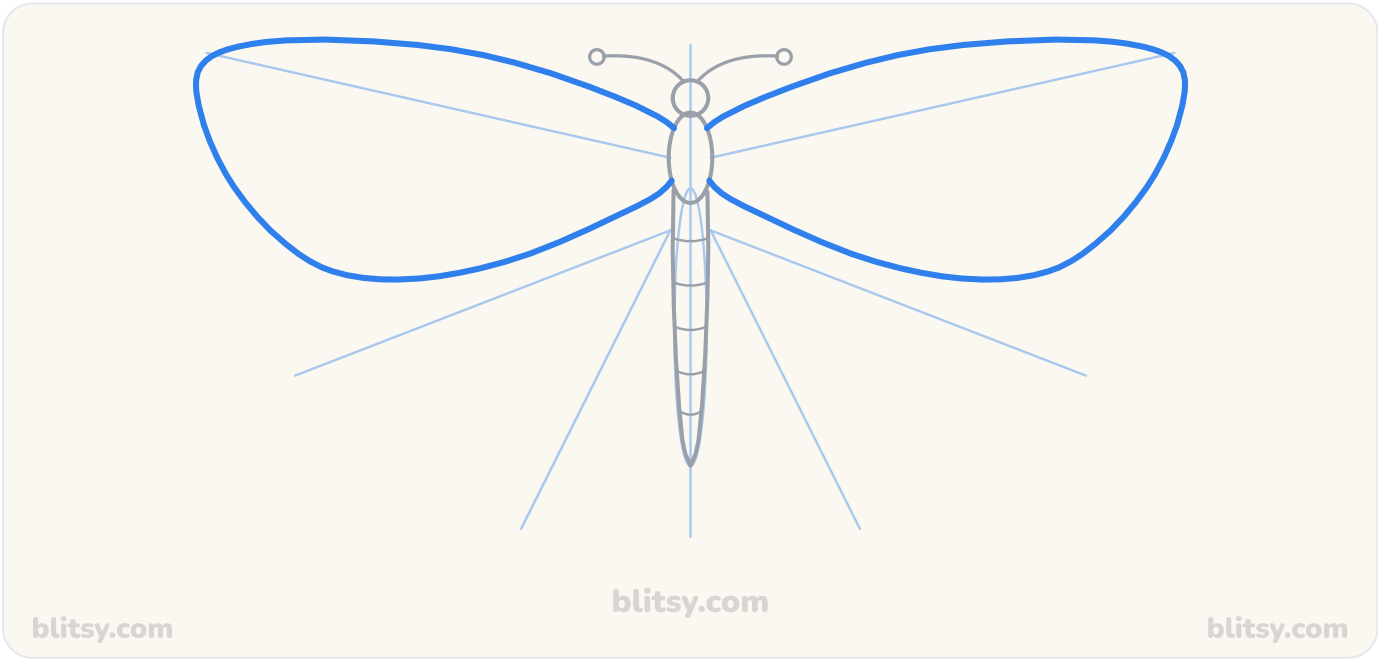
STEP 5 Add antennae with round knobs



From the top of the head, pull two thin curved lines up and outward, bending them toward the sides like the handles of a bow. Finish each one with a small circle. Butterflies really do have these little clubs, which is one way to tell them from most moths.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the antennae in one smooth flick rather than several short strokes.

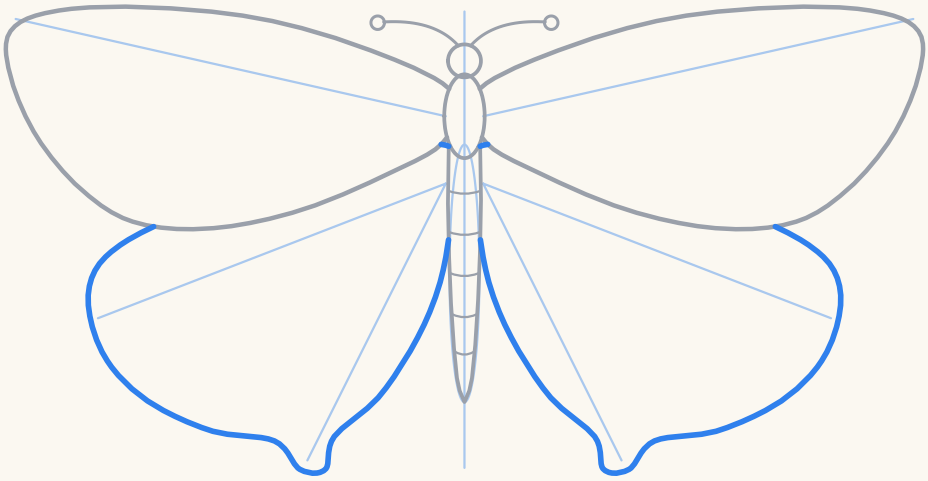
STEP 6 Draw the big upper wings



Start with the right wing. Begin at the thorax, follow the guide line up to a rounded tip, then curve down the outer edge and sweep back to the body. Now do the left wing as a mirror copy. Count how far the tip sits from the center line on the right, and place the left tip the same distance away.

💡 **Tip:** If one wing comes out bigger, fix the bigger one. Shrinking is easier than stretching.

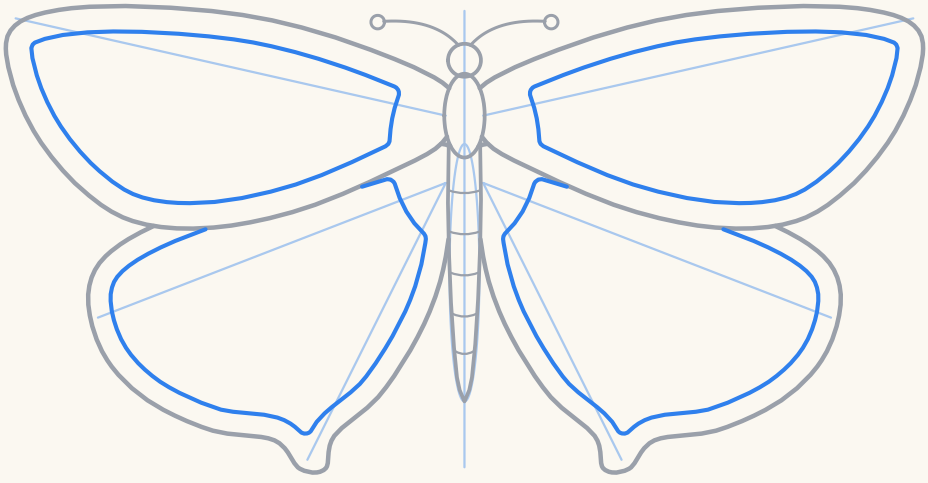
STEP 7 Add lower wings with tail tips



Each lower wing starts under the upper wing's bottom edge, so you only draw the part that peeks out. Round it out along your guide lines, then add a short tail tip near the bottom. A real monarch has rounded lower wings without tails, so skip the tails if you'd like a true monarch. I add them because they give the shape a nice finish.

💡 **Tip:** Stop the lower wing line where it meets the upper wing. Don't draw through it.

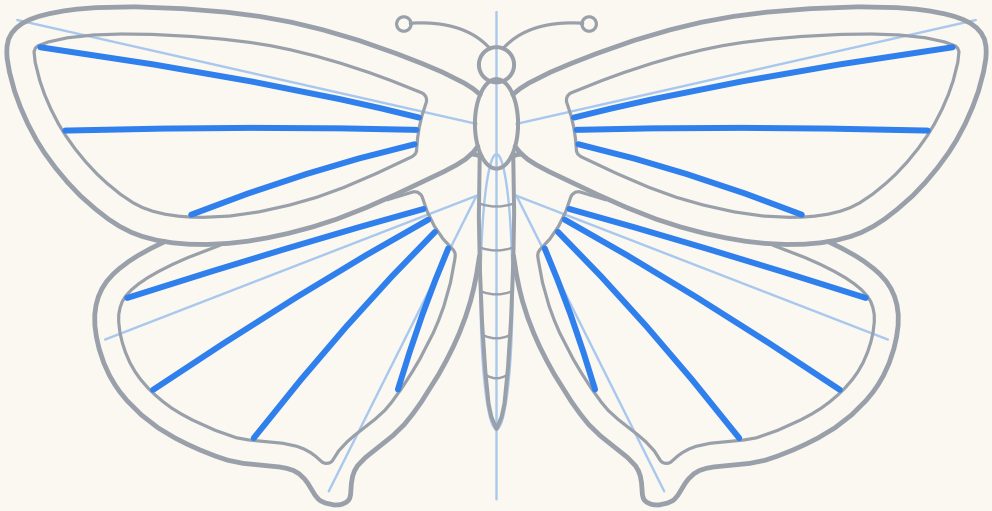
STEP 8 Draw the inner border lines



Inside every wing, draw a second line that follows the outer edge about a finger width in. The space between the two lines becomes the black border, and the inside becomes the orange panel. Near the body, curve the inner line around so the base of each wing stays dark. Keep the border the same thickness all the way around, or the wings look dented.

💡 **Tip:** Rest your little finger on the paper outside the wing and let it slide along the edge as a guide.

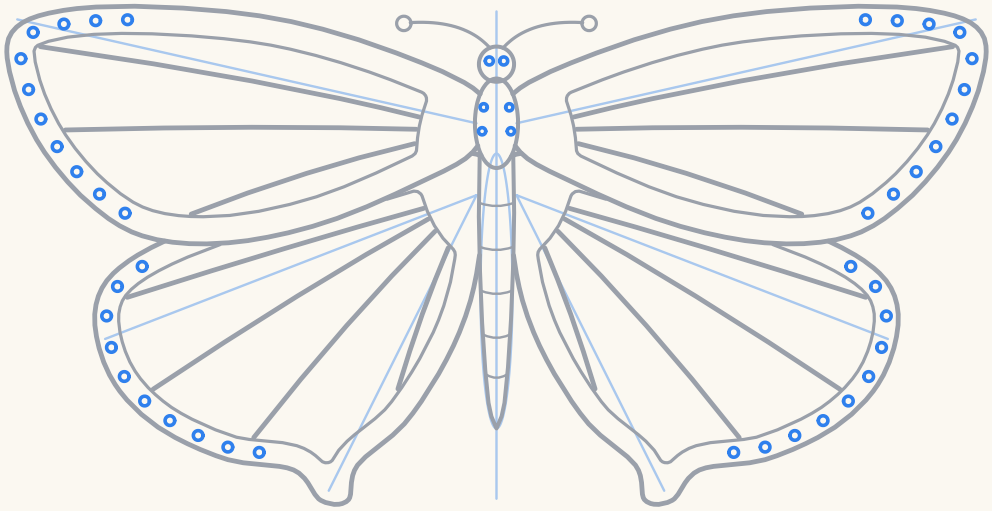
STEP 9 Fan out the wing veins



Veins start near the body and spread outward like the ribs of a fan. Draw three on each upper wing and four on each lower wing, running from the dark base to the inner border line. Most beginners draw them straight and parallel. A slight curve, getting wider apart toward the edge, looks far more natural.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the matching vein on the other wing right away instead of finishing one side first.

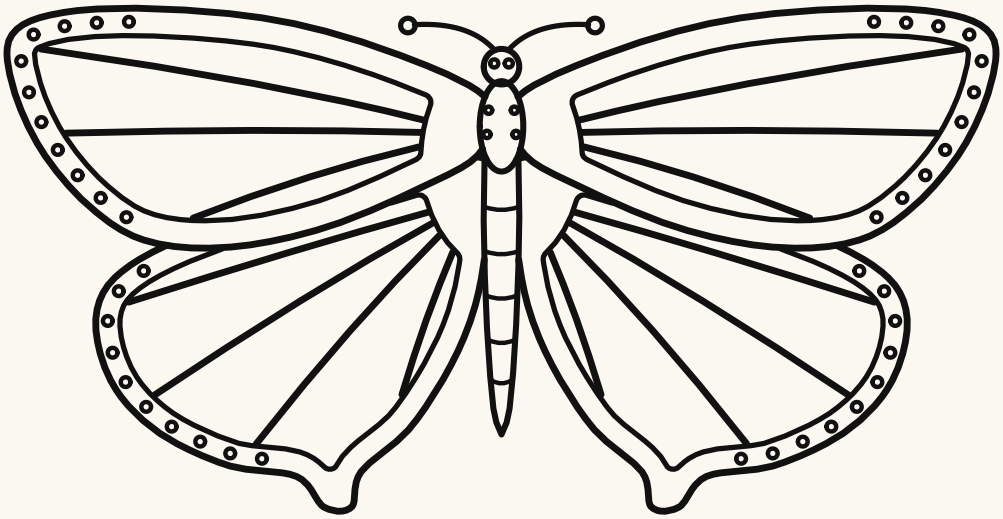
STEP 10 Place dots along the border



Monarchs have rows of small white dots in their black borders. Draw small circles down the middle of the border strip, starting at the wing tips and working around the outer edges. Leave the dots out near the body. Add four tiny dots on the thorax too, and the two little eyes on the head.

💡 **Tip:** Place one dot at the start and one at the end of each edge, then fill the gap between them.

STEP 11 Ink your lines and erase guides



Trace every final line with a black marker, skipping the guide lines and the center line. Go slowly around the dots. Wait for the ink to dry, then erase all the pencil.

💡 **Tip:** Turn the paper as you ink the curves so your hand always pulls the line toward you.

STEP 12 Color the butterfly



Color the upper wing panels bright orange and the lower panels a lighter yellow-orange. Fill the borders, the dark wing bases and the veins with black, working around the white dots. The body gets dark gray, so it stands apart from the black wings. If you're using markers, color the orange first and the black last, because black smears into light colors.

💡 **Tip:** Color each orange panel in strokes that run the same way as its veins.