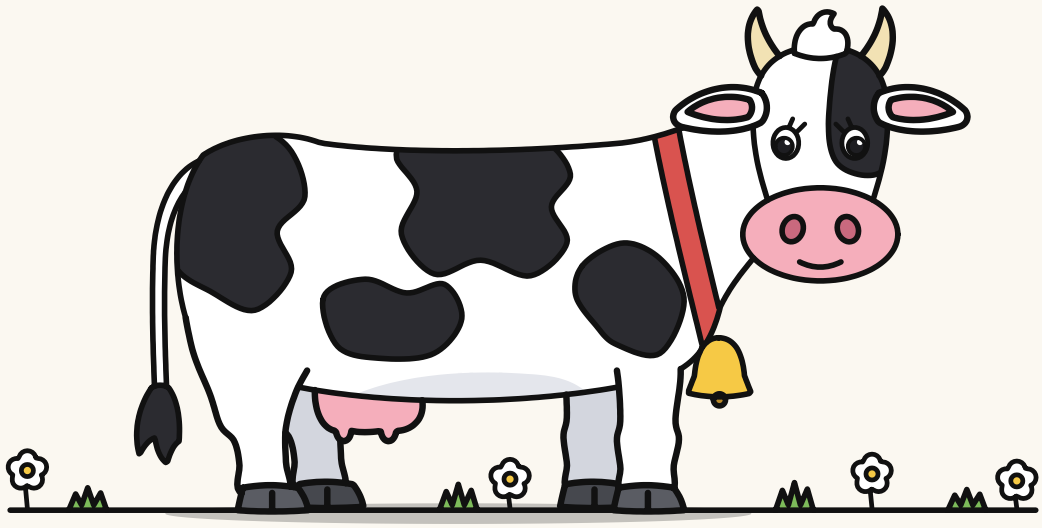
How to Draw a Cow

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

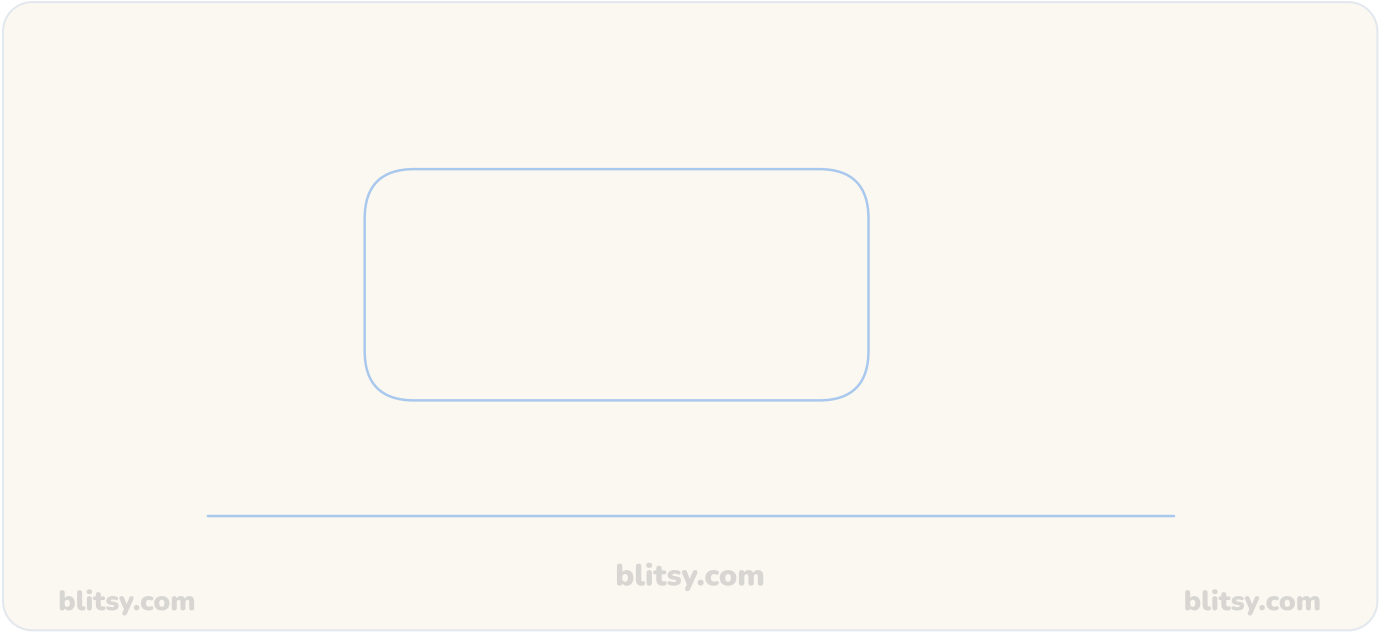
- A pencil
- A soft eraser
- A black fineliner
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Plain paper, sideways

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 →

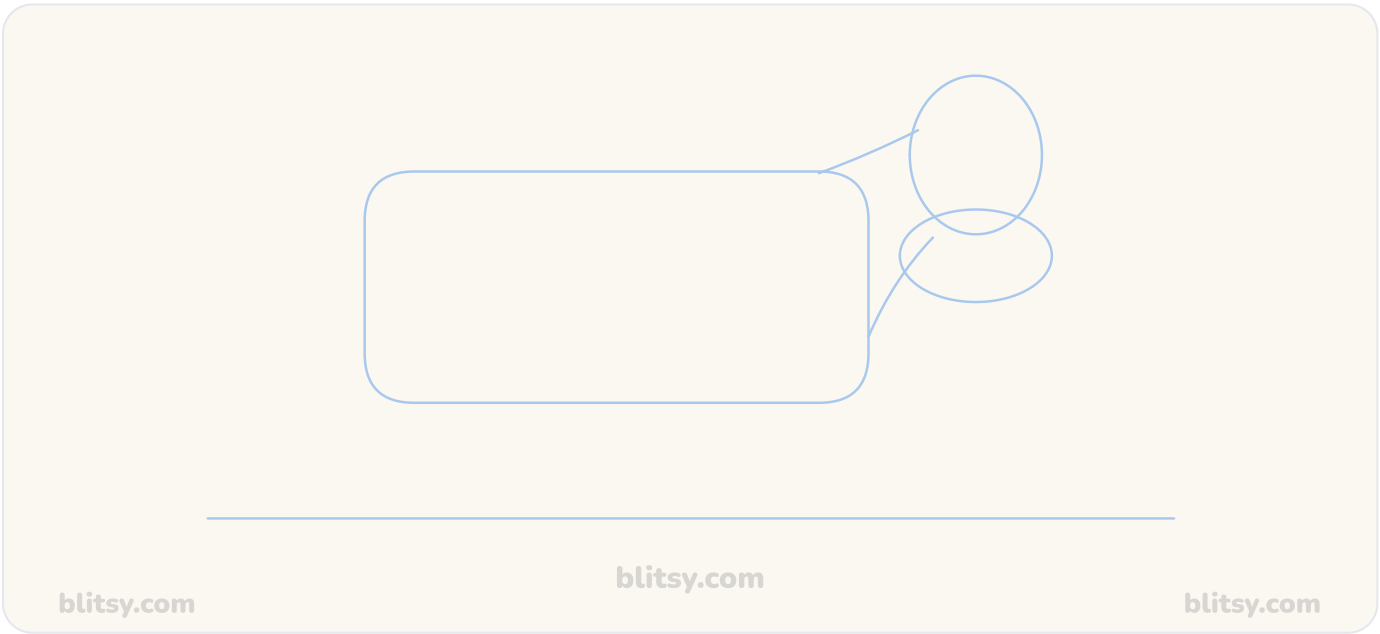
STEP 1 Draw a ground line and a long box



Draw a straight ground line near the bottom of the page. Above it, sketch a rectangle with rounded corners, about twice as wide as it is tall, with a good gap underneath for the legs. Keep it toward the left so the head has room. I always point out that this boxy body is what separates a cow from a horse.

💡 **Tip:** Leave roughly a third of the page on the right empty for the head and ears.

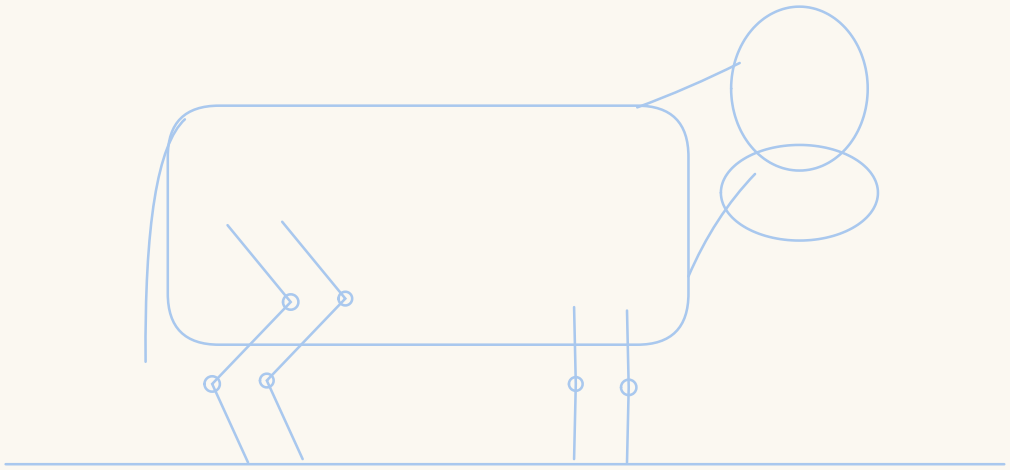
STEP 2 Add the head oval and the muzzle



Up and to the right of the box, draw a tall oval for the head. Its top should sit a little higher than the back. Overlap a wider, flatter oval across its bottom for the muzzle. Then join the head to the body with two curved neck lines: one from the top front corner of the box, one from lower down on the chest.

💡 **Tip:** Make the muzzle oval wider than the head. That wide nose is what reads as cow.

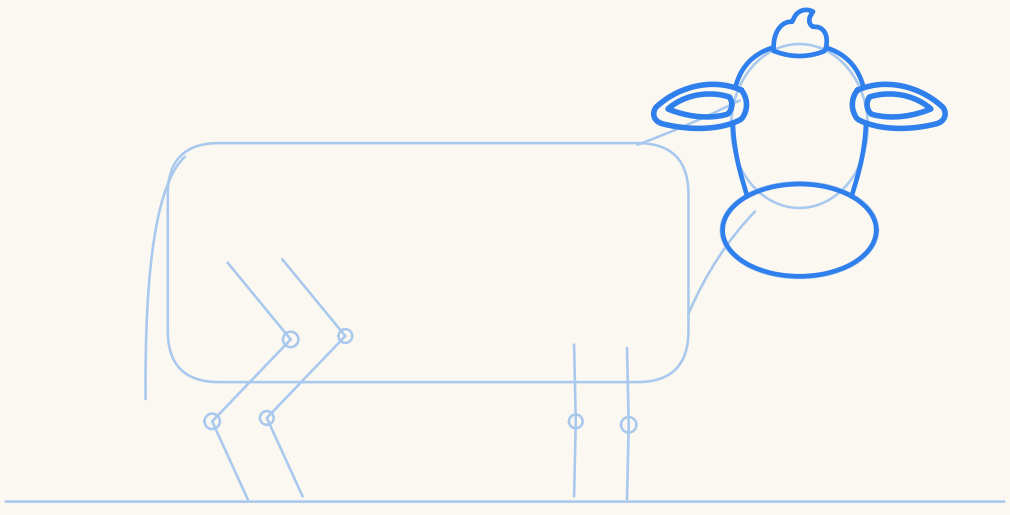
STEP 3 Sketch stick legs with joint dots



Front legs drop almost straight down from the front of the box, with a dot halfway for the knee. Back legs are trickier, and this is where I slow down. Start each one inside the box, angle it forward to a dot near the belly, then back to a dot for the hock, then down to the ground. Add a long curve from the top back corner for the tail.

💡 **Tip:** Cows have short legs for their size. Keep the knees and hocks fairly low.

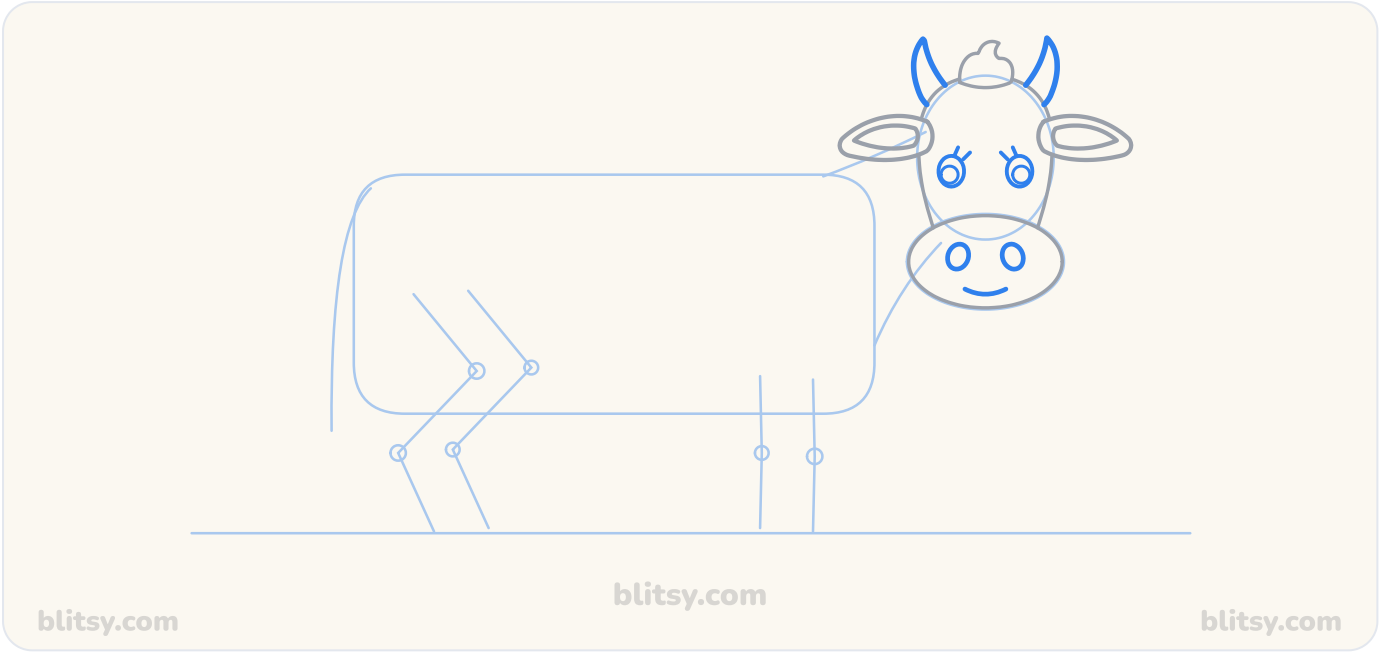
STEP 4 Outline the head with ears and muzzle



Go around the head oval with a line that's wide across the forehead and a bit narrower at the cheeks. Add a small curly tuft on top. Now draw two ears that stick straight out to the sides like flat leaves, each with a smaller shape inside. Finish with the muzzle by tracing the oval.

💡 **Tip:** Point the ears sideways, not up. Upright ears make a cow look like a cat.

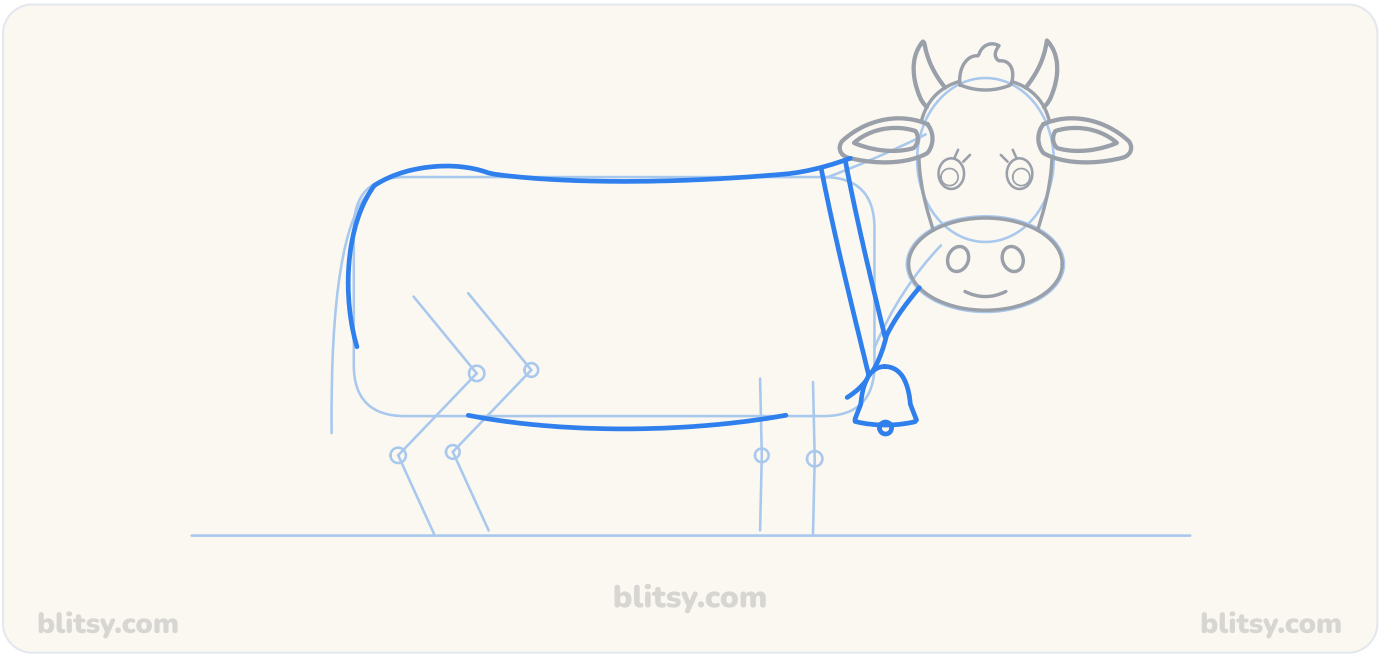
STEP 5 Give her horns and a face



Two short horns curve up and out from the top corners of the head, tucked partly behind it. The eyes sit about halfway down the face and far apart: two ovals with big pupils, a white shine dot and three little lashes each. Inside the muzzle, add two oval nostrils and a small smile underneath.

💡 **Tip:** I keep the horns short and blunt. Long pointy ones make her look like a bull.

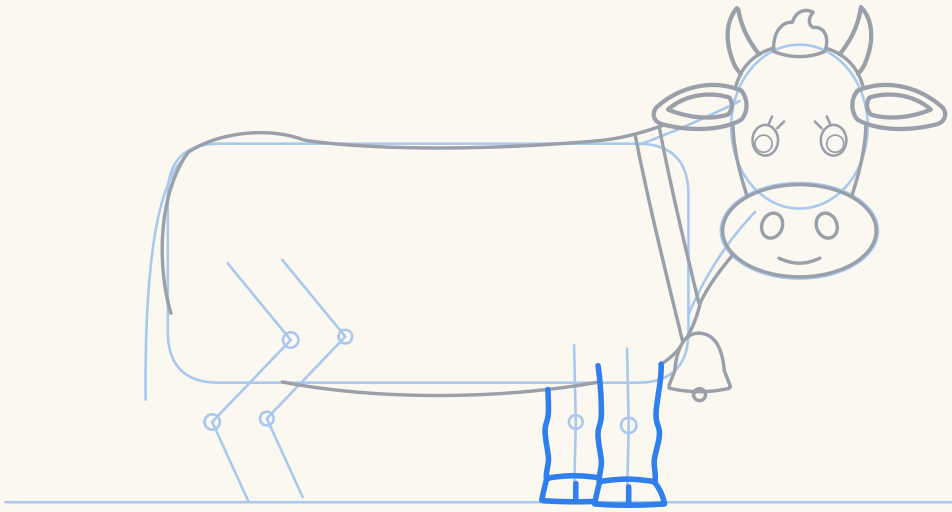
STEP 6 Shape the body and add a collar



Trace over the box, but let the lines relax. The back stays almost straight, with a small bump over the hip, and the belly hangs low in a gentle curve. Carry the top line up into the neck behind the left ear, and the throat line from under the muzzle down to the chest. Then draw a strap around the neck with a bell at the bottom.

💡 **Tip:** Round every corner of the box a little. Sharp corners turn the cow into a brick.

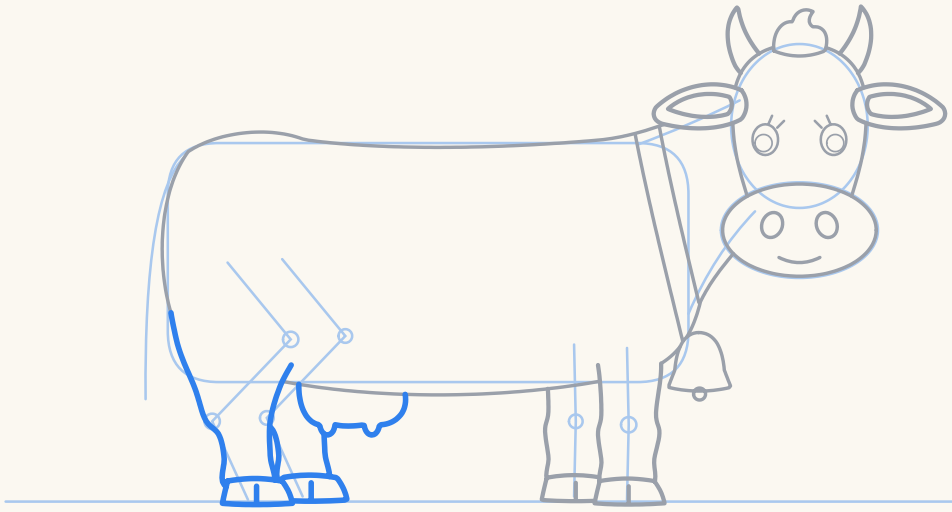
STEP 7 Draw the front legs and hooves



Build each front leg around its stick, thick and nearly straight, with a slight bump at the knee. At the bottom, draw a wide hoof and split it with one short vertical line, since cows have cloven hooves. The far leg sits a little to the left and peeks out behind the near one.

💡 **Tip:** Keep both sides of a leg parallel. A cow's legs barely taper.

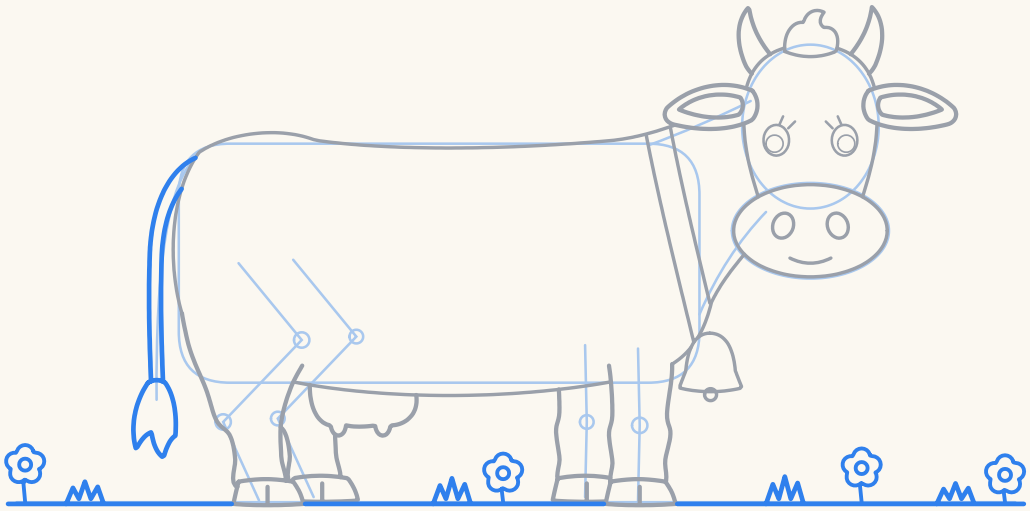
STEP 8 Add the hind legs and the udder



The hind leg starts as a big thigh at the back of the body. Its front edge swings out over the knee, then the line slants back to the hock, which points backward, before going straight down to the hoof. Add the far hind leg just to the right. Between the back legs and the belly, draw a rounded pink udder with two small teats showing below it.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the udder after the legs so you can see how much space it has.

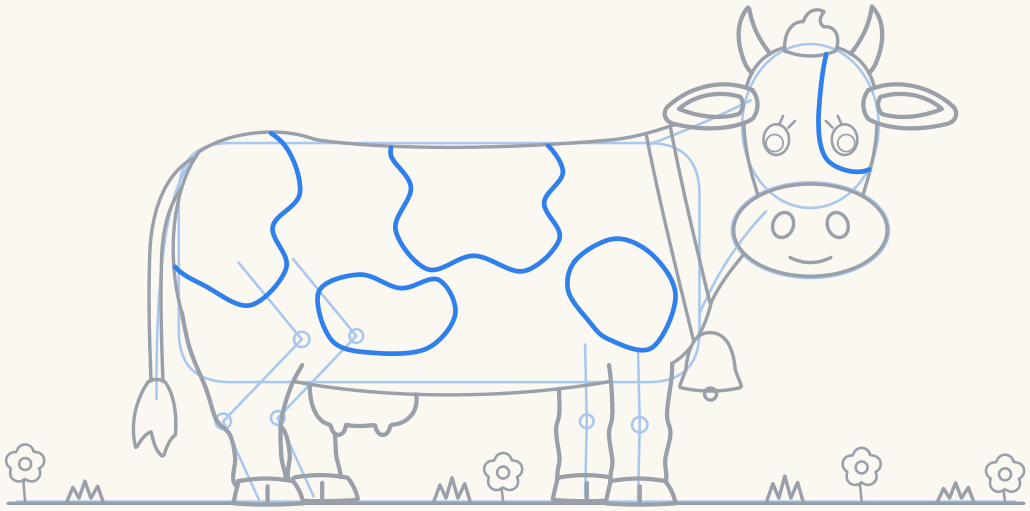
STEP 9 Hang the tail and plant the grass



Follow the tail guide with two thin lines that start at the top of the rump and hang down past the hock. End it with a ragged tuft shaped like a small paintbrush. Go over the ground line, then add a few grass tufts and some simple daisies: a circle in the middle with five round petals.

💡 **Tip:** Let the tail hang a bit away from the back leg. Glued to the leg, it disappears.

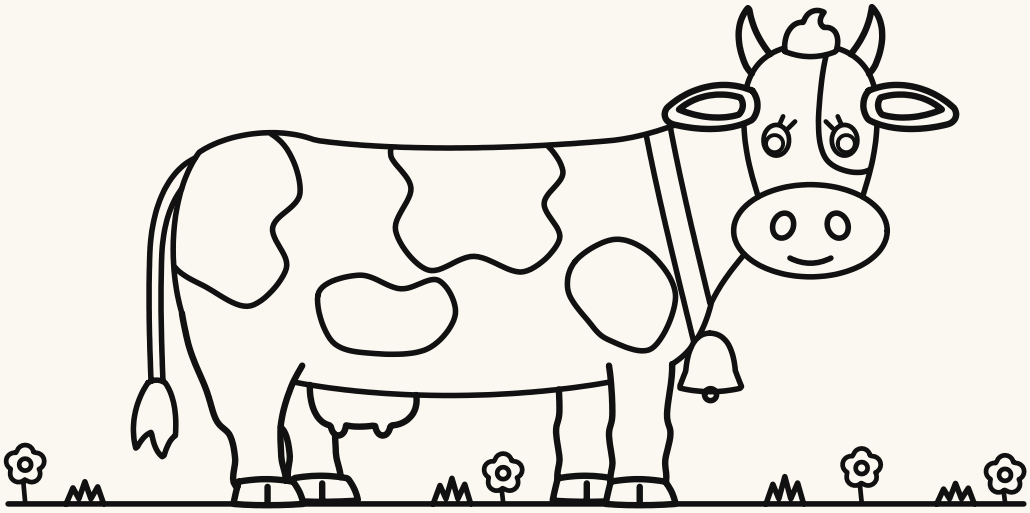
STEP 10 Draw the black spots



This is my favorite part. Draw a patch around one eye, then four or five big patches on the body with wavy, uneven edges. Let some touch the back or the rump so they seem to wrap around her. Real Holstein cows each have their own spot pattern, a little like a fingerprint, so there's no wrong arrangement.

💡 **Tip:** Vary the spot sizes. Even, round spots look more like a dalmatian.

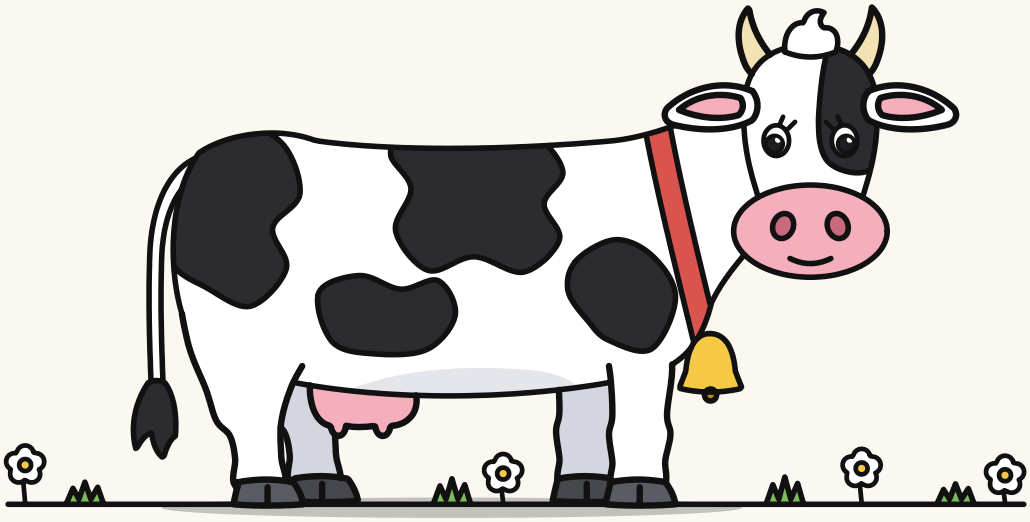
STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Trace every keeper line with your black pen, including the spots and the grass. Give the ink a minute to dry. Then erase all the guides: the box, the ovals and the stick legs. The cow should now stand on her own with no sketch lines behind her.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the face first, while your hand is fresh. Wobbles show most there.

STEP 12 Color your cow



Leave the body white and fill the spots, the tail tuft and the pupils with black. Pink goes on the muzzle, the udder and inside the ears, with darker pink for the nostrils. Make the horns cream and the hooves dark gray. A light gray on the far legs and under the belly adds depth. Finish with a red collar, a yellow bell and green grass.

💡 **Tip:** Color the black spots before the pink, so a smudge doesn't darken the nose.