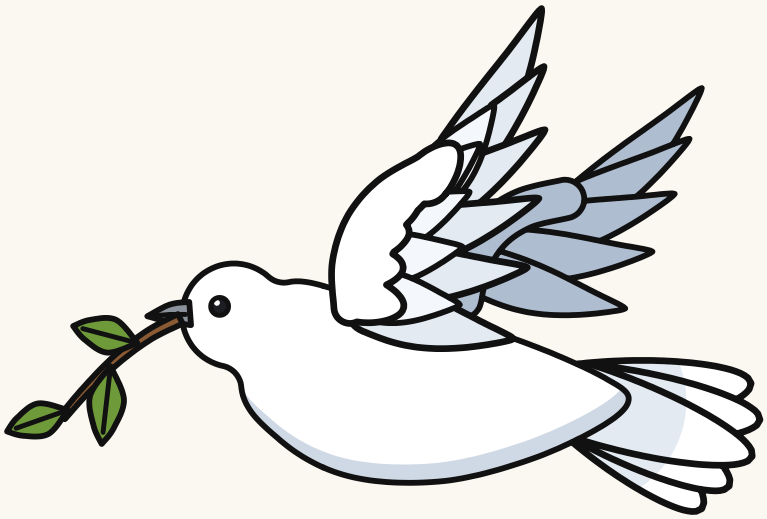
How to Draw a Dove

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

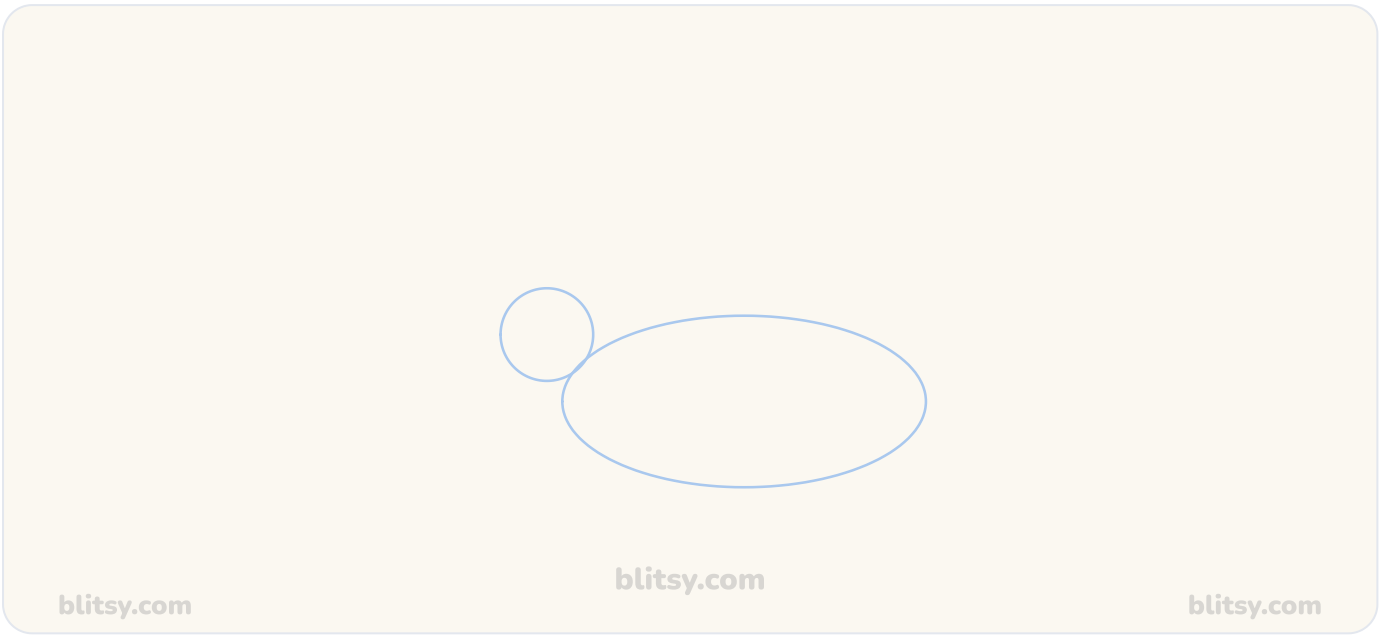
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils
- Plain paper

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 →

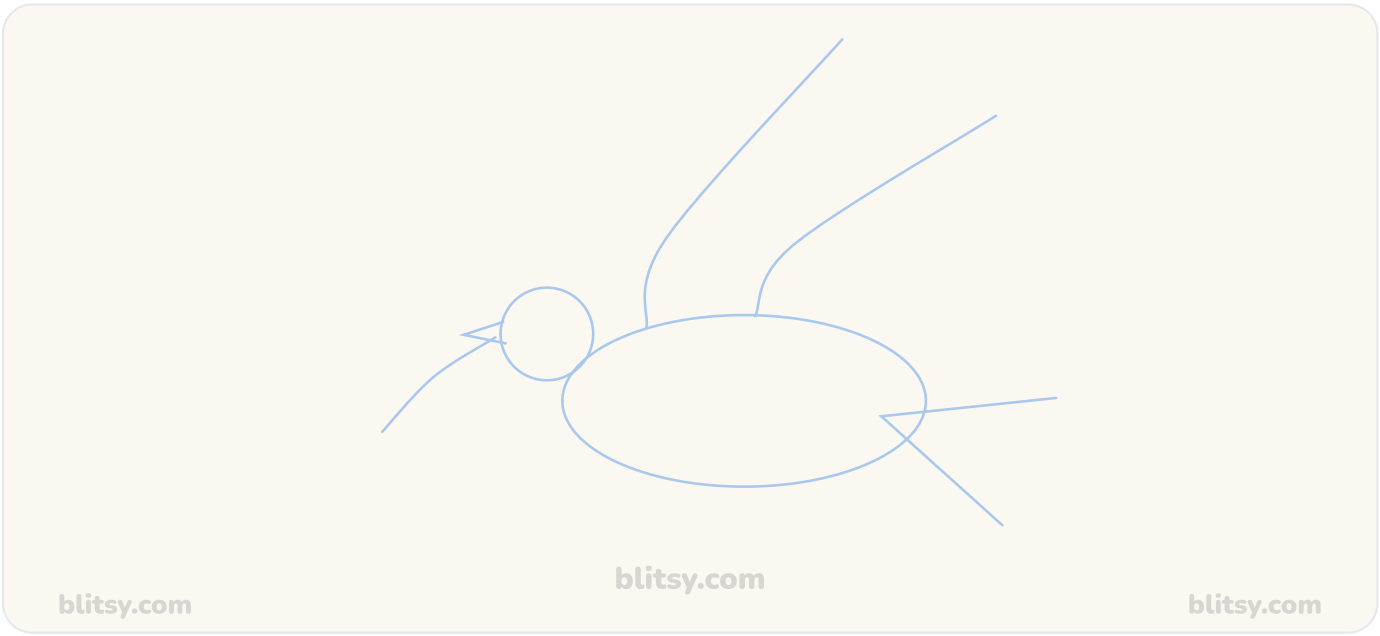
STEP 1 Sketch the head and body guides



Near the left middle of the page, draw a small circle for the head. To its right, draw a wide oval for the body, about four times as wide as the circle and touching it. Leave empty paper above the oval, because the wings rise high into that space.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you can barely see the lines. These shapes get erased later.

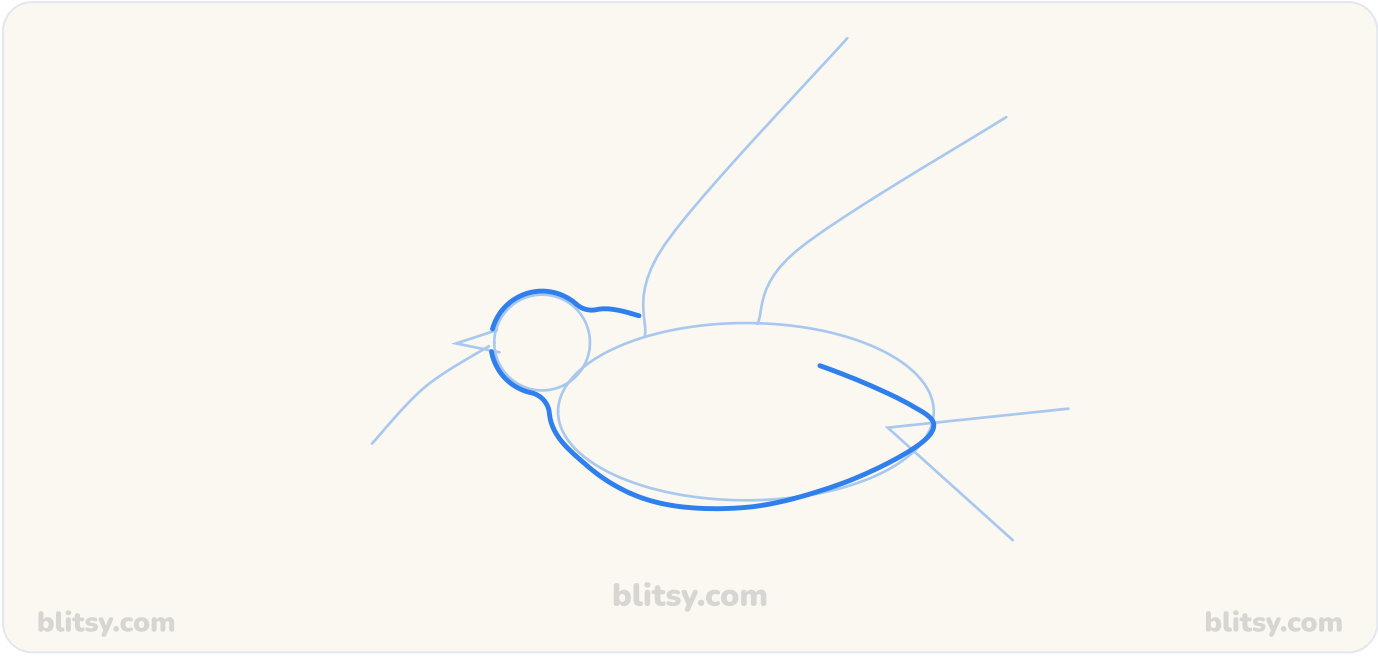
STEP 2 Add guides for the wings, tail and beak



From the top of the oval, just behind the head, draw a long line sweeping up and right for the near wing, and a second one a little further back for the far wing. At the right end, draw two lines spreading like an open fan for the tail. Add a tiny triangle on the head and a curved line hanging from it for the branch.

💡 **Tip:** Angle both wing lines upward. Flat wing lines make the dove look like it's gliding down instead of flying.

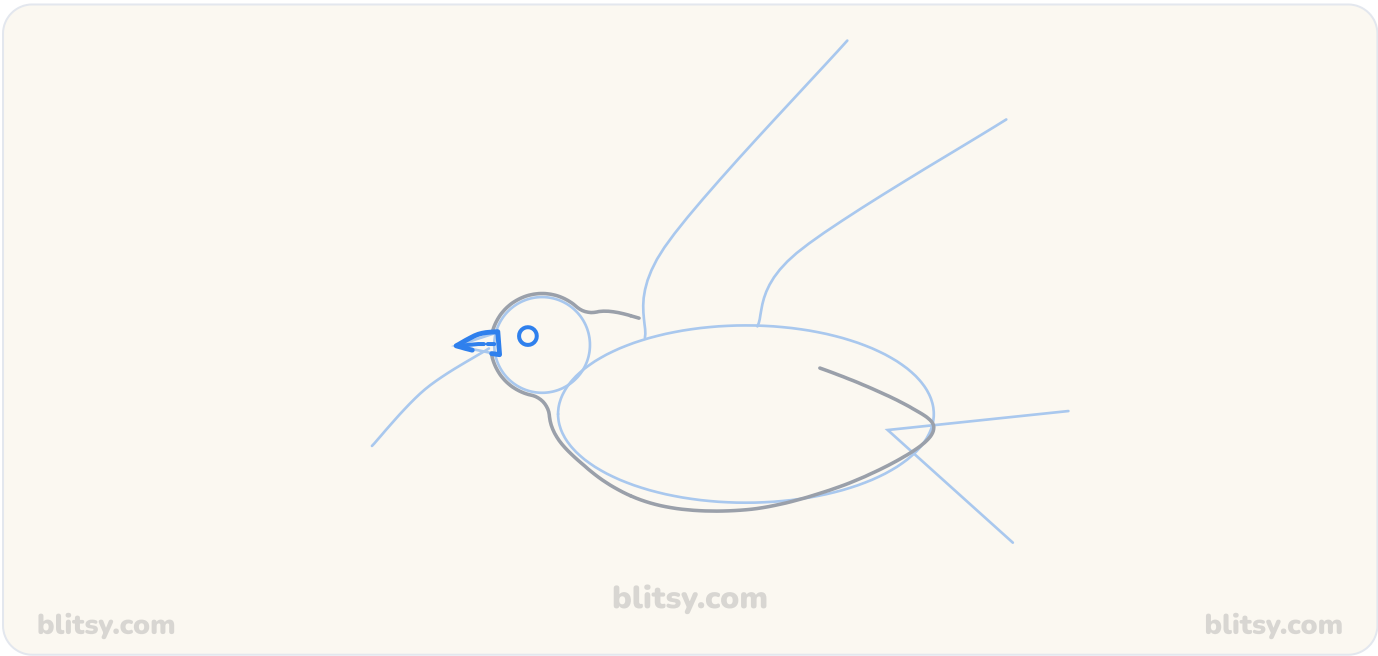
STEP 3 Draw the round head and plump body



Trace the head circle, let the line dip in slightly at the throat, then swell out into a full, rounded chest. Carry it along the belly to a point at the tail end. Draw the back too, leaving a gap where the wing will sit. Doves have a puffed-out chest, so make the front of the body deeper than the back.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the head small. On a dove it's barely a third the height of the body.

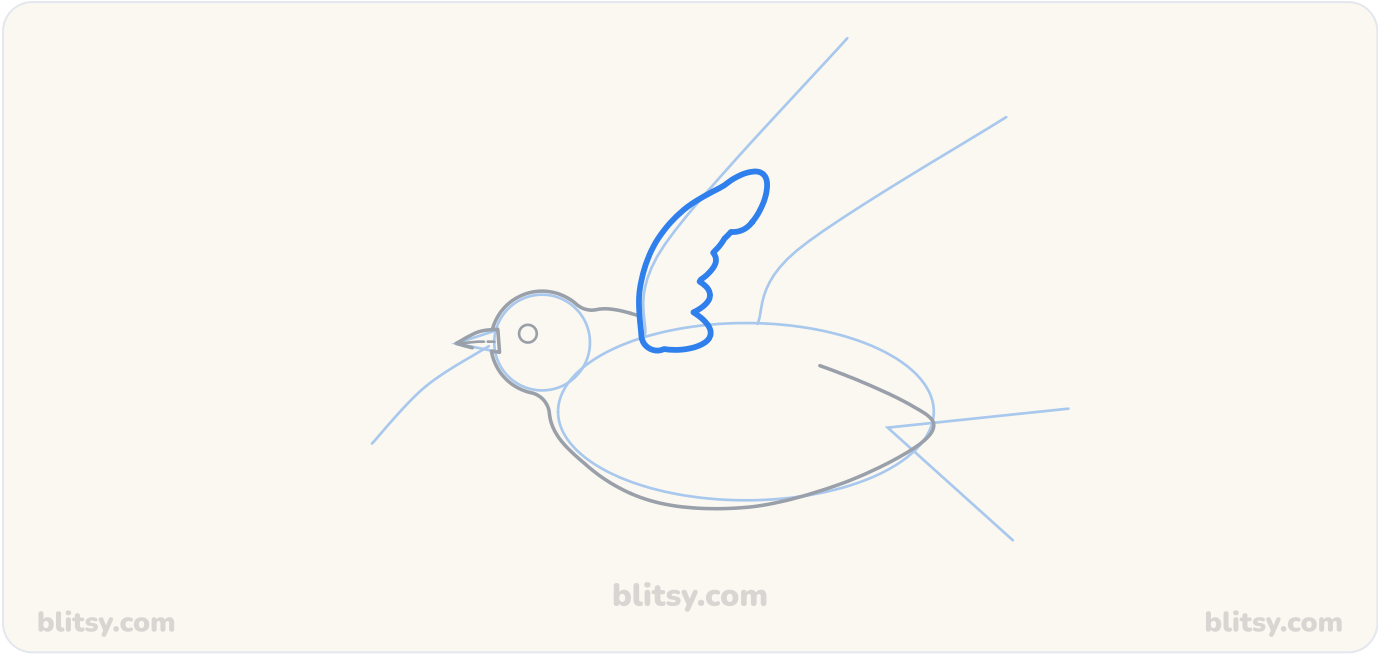
STEP 4 Add the small beak and the eye



On the front of the head, draw a short, slim pointed beak with a tiny mouth line along the middle. Place the eye a little above and behind it, as a small circle. I keep the beak short on purpose. A long one quickly turns a dove into a seagull.

💡 **Tip:** Put the eye closer to the beak than to the back of the head. That placement makes the face look gentle.

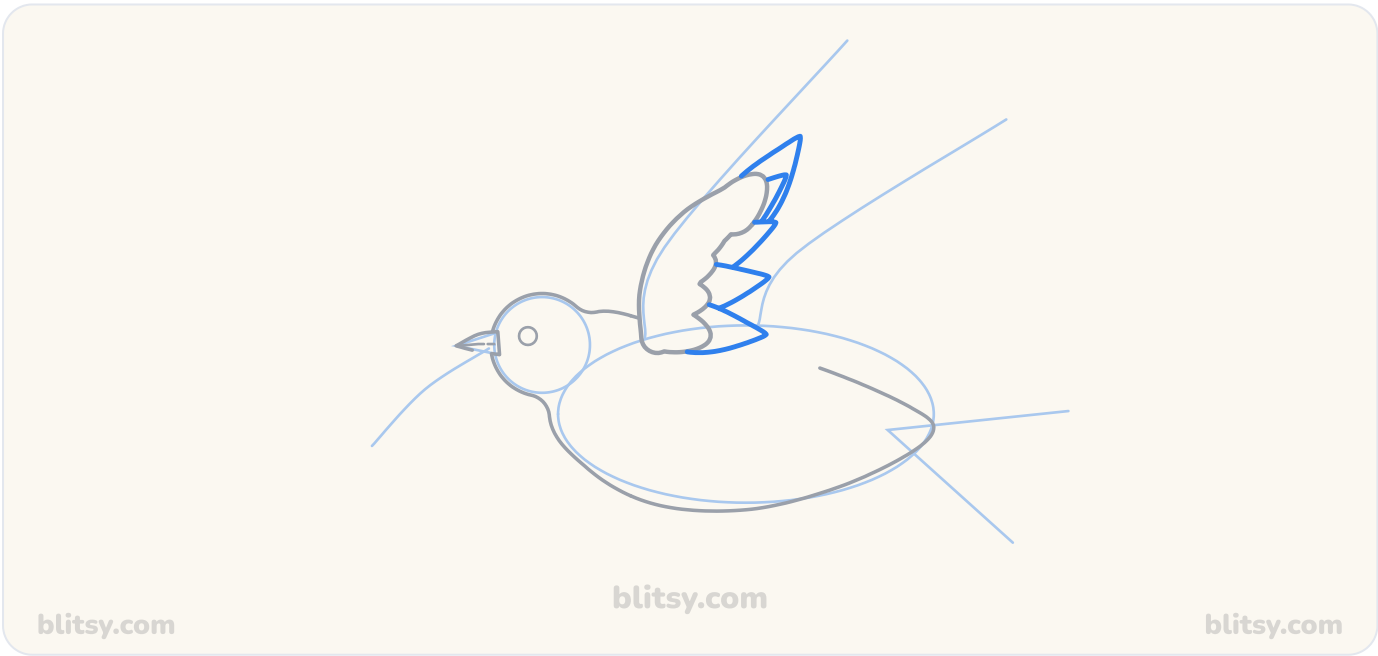
STEP 5 Draw the rounded top feathers



Start at the top of the back and draw the front edge of the near wing curving up. Turn it around at the top, then come back down with a row of small round bumps, like the edge of a cloud. This shape holds all the long feathers you'll add next.

💡 **Tip:** Make the bumps different sizes. Perfectly even scallops look stamped instead of feathery.

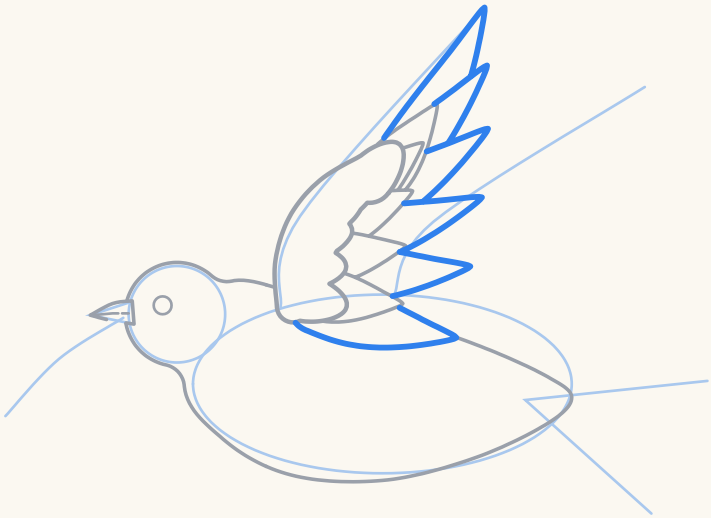
STEP 6 Add the middle row of wing feathers



Below the scalloped edge, draw five medium feathers poking out to the right, each a short leaf shape with a pointed tip. Let them overlap like roof tiles, drawing only the part you can see. The upper ones tilt upward, the lower ones point straight back.

💡 **Tip:** Draw each feather with one smooth stroke from base to tip, then return to the base on the other side.

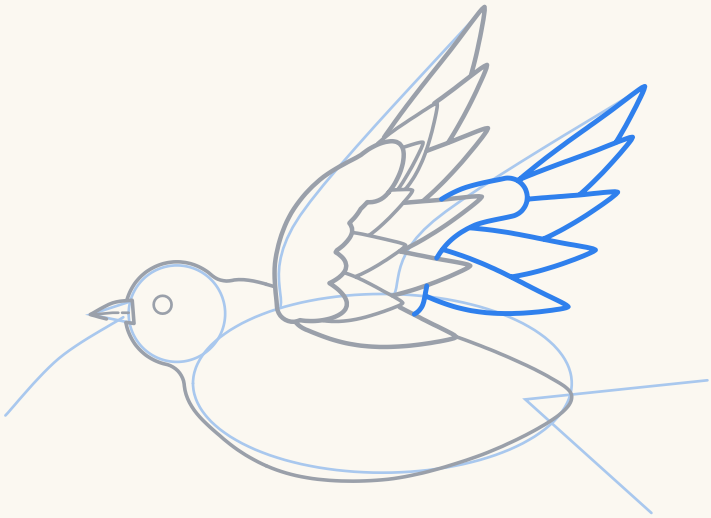
STEP 7 Draw the long flight feathers



Now add the long feathers that make the wing reach up. They follow the same fan as the middle row but stick out much further. Most beginners make them all one length. Let them grow from short near the body to long at the top, and the wing looks lifted.

💡 **Tip:** Follow your wing guide line for the tallest feather so the wing keeps its upward angle.

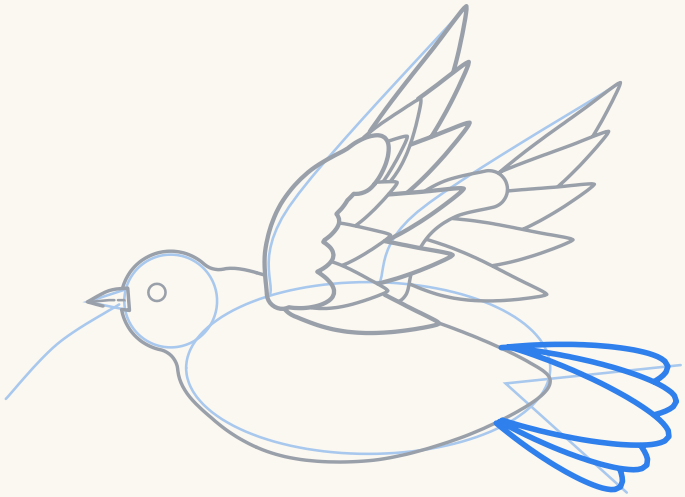
STEP 8 Sketch the far wing behind



The second wing sits on the far side of the bird, so only its upper half shows. Draw its rounded top peeking out behind the first wing, then five long pointed feathers fanning toward its guide. Stop each line where it meets the near wing or the back. Those hidden lines push the wing behind.

💡 **Tip:** Tilt the far wing a little further back than the near one, so the two never line up exactly.

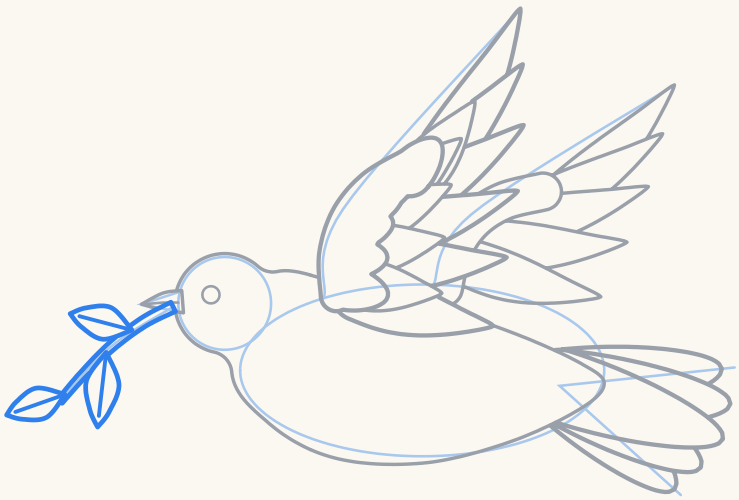
STEP 9 Add the fan-shaped tail



At the back of the body, between the tail guides, draw five long feathers spreading like a paper fan. Give each one a rounded tip, because a dove's tail feathers are blunt at the ends. Draw the middle feathers first, then tuck the outer ones behind them.

💡 **Tip:** Let the bottom tail feather droop lower than the top one. It gives the bird a sense of movement.

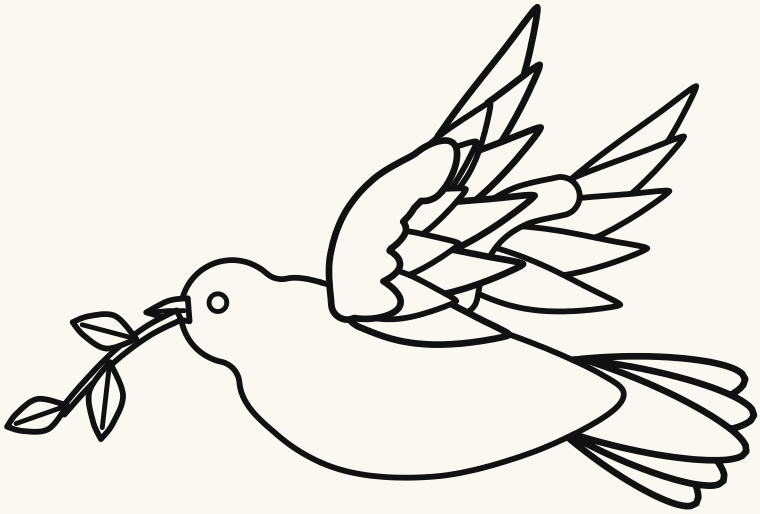
STEP 10 Draw the olive branch in the beak



Follow the branch guide with a thin twig that starts at the beak and slims down as it hangs to the left. Add three narrow olive leaves: one near the beak pointing left, one hanging from the middle and one at the tip. Give each leaf a center vein.

💡 **Tip:** Olive leaves are long and slim, so stretch them out. Wide, round leaves will read as a generic plant.

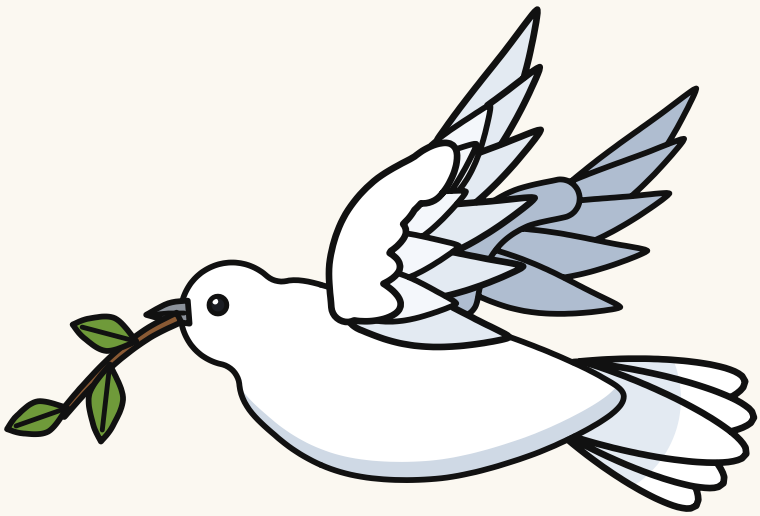
STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Go over every line you're keeping with the black pen. My habit is to ink the head and beak first while my hand is fresh, then the wings, then the tail. Skip the guides. Once the ink is fully dry, erase the circle, the oval and every guide line.

💡 **Tip:** Turn the paper as you ink the feathers, so your hand always pulls the pen toward you.

STEP 12 Color your dove



Leave most of the dove white. Shade a thin band along the bottom of the belly with light blue-gray, and color the far wing the same blue-gray so it falls back. Give the long wing feathers a very light gray. The beak is gray, the eye black with a white dot, the twig brown and the leaves olive green.

💡 **Tip:** Shade softly with the side of the pencil tip. Heavy blue-gray makes a white dove look dirty.