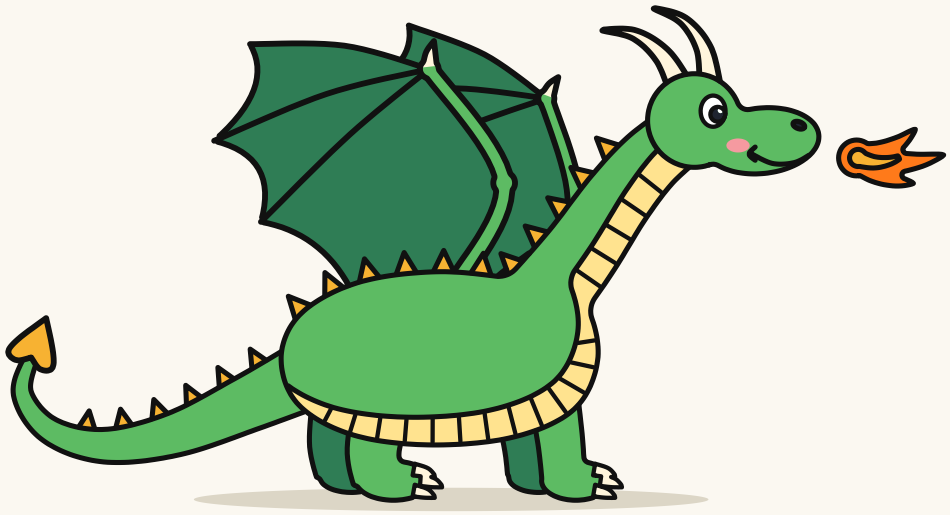
How to Draw a Dragon

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

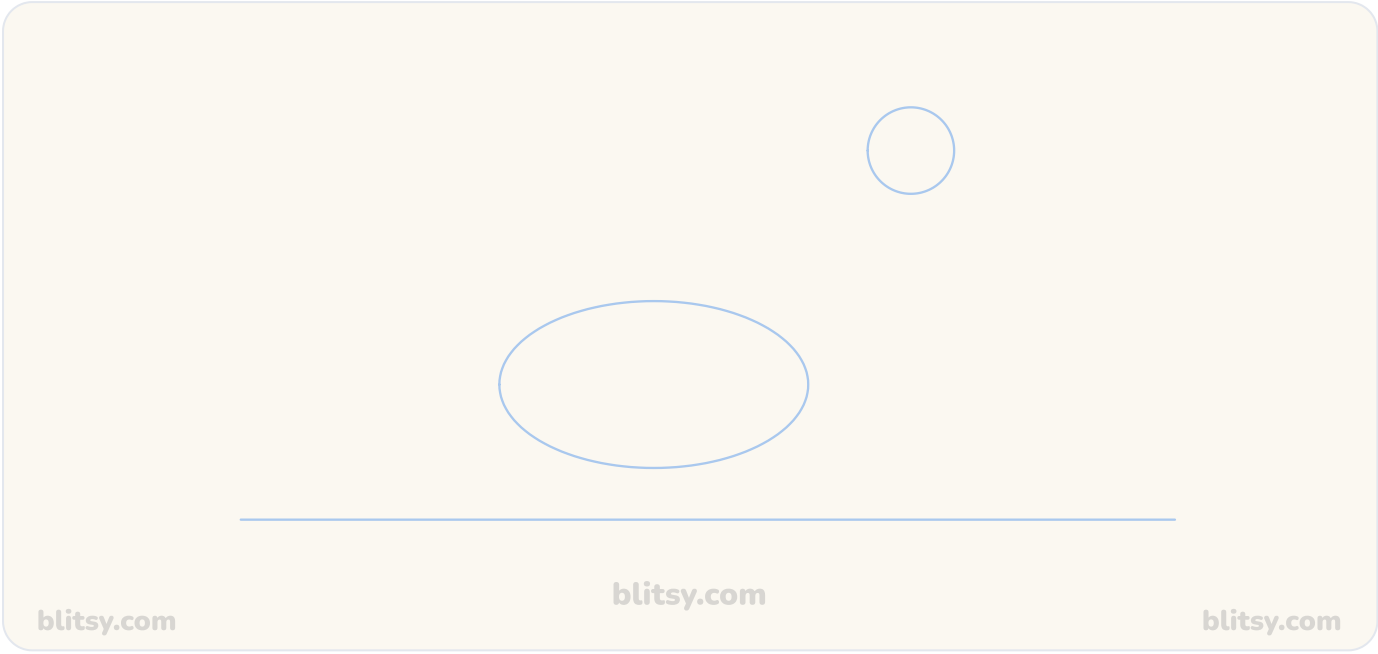
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils or markers
- Plain paper

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 →

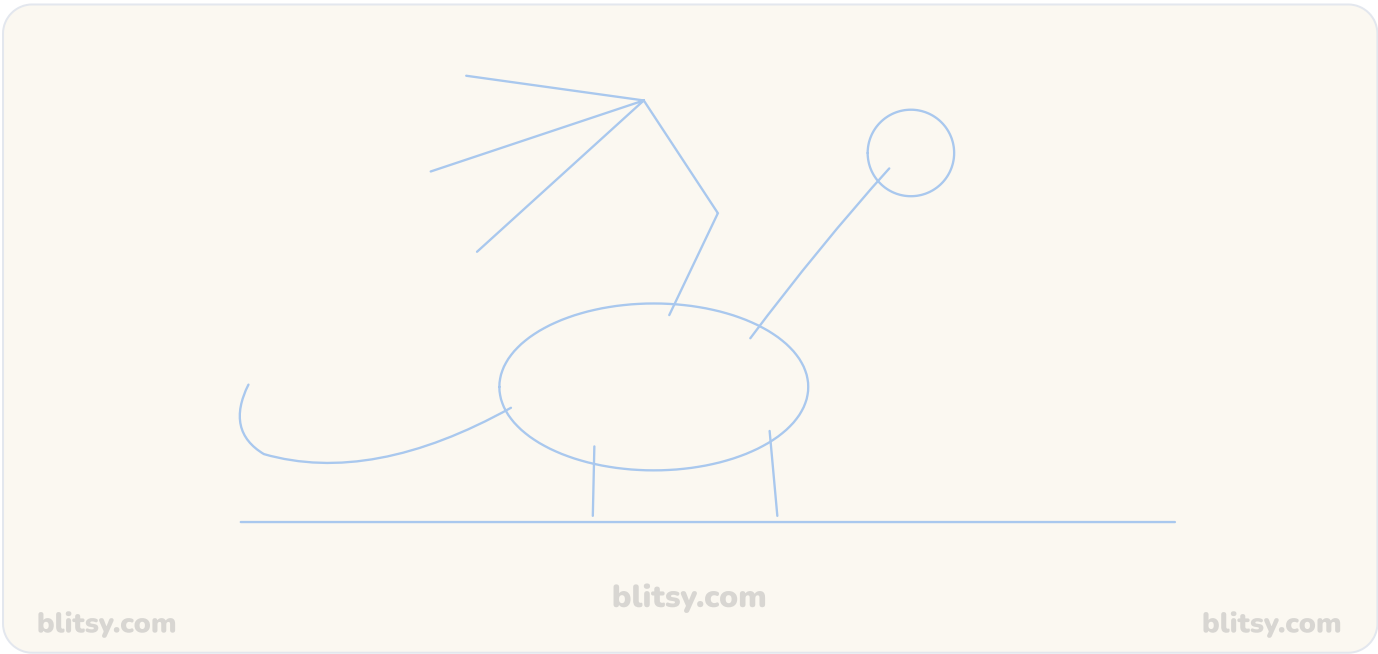
STEP 1 Sketch guide shapes for the body and head



Draw a long, flat line near the bottom of the page for the ground. Above it, a little left of center, sketch a wide oval for the body, about twice as wide as it is tall. Put a small circle up and to the right for the head, leaving a big gap for the long neck.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you can barely see the lines. They're only scaffolding.

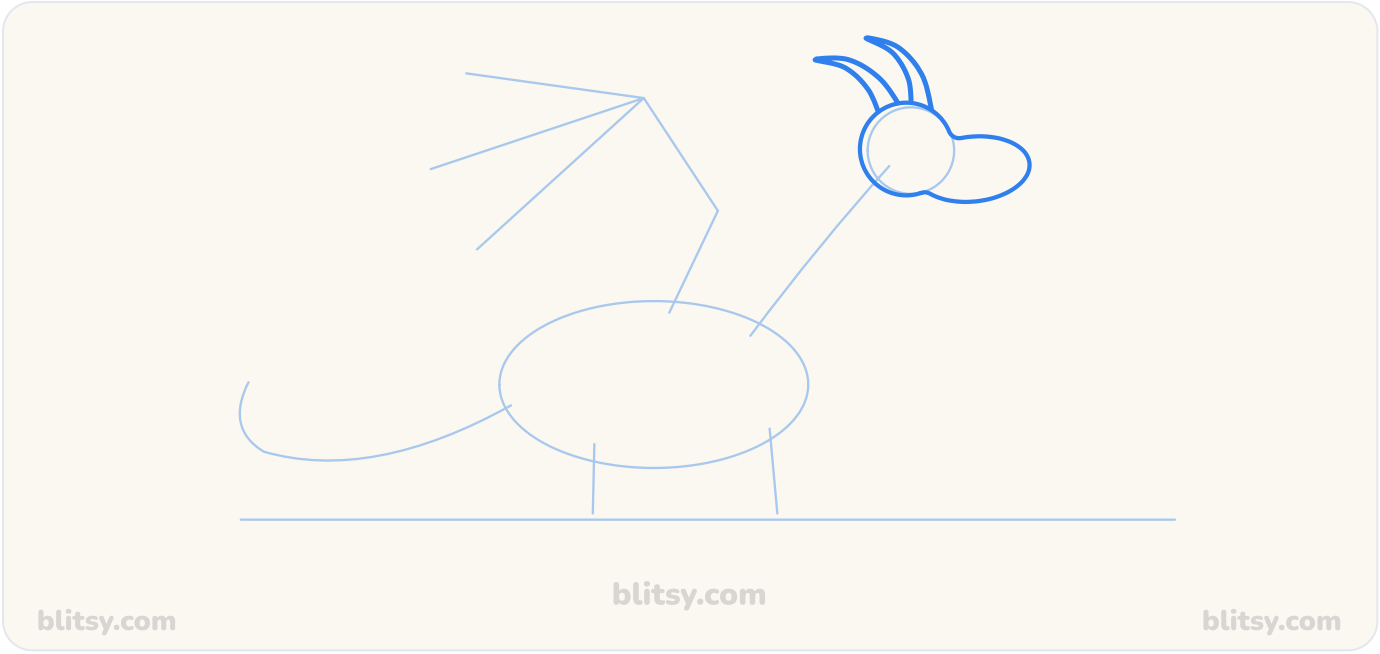
STEP 2 Add guide lines for the limbs and neck



Connect the oval to the head circle with one curved line for the neck. From the left end of the oval, sweep a long curve down and left, hooking it up at the end for the tail. Drop two short lines to the ground for legs. Then draw a bent line rising from the back for the wing arm, with three lines fanning out from its top.

💡 **Tip:** Think of the wing guide as an open hand: one arm, three long fingers.

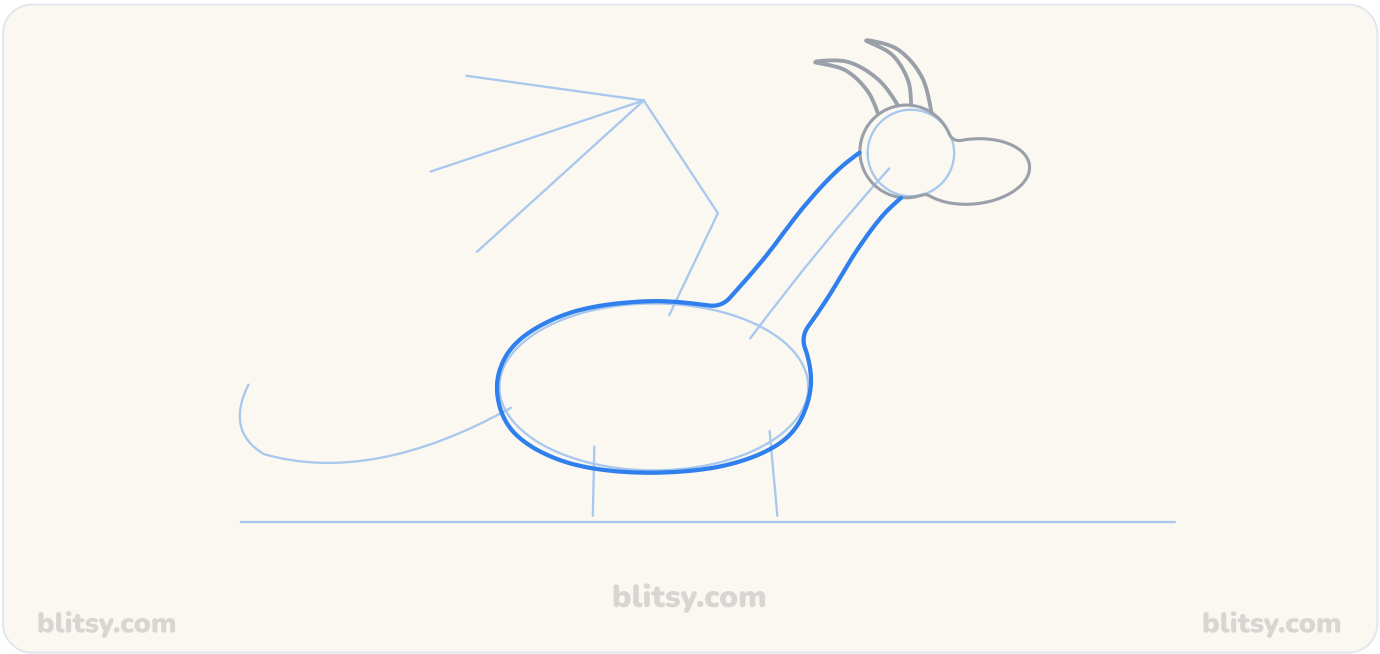
STEP 3 Draw the head with a snout and horns



Trace the head circle with a firmer line and stretch a rounded snout out to the right, like a bean on its side. Keep the snout as tall as the lower half of the head so the face stays friendly. On top, draw two horns curving backward. Start with the front horn and stop the back one where it meets it.

💡 **Tip:** Curve the horns back, not up. Straight-up horns make him look like a goat.

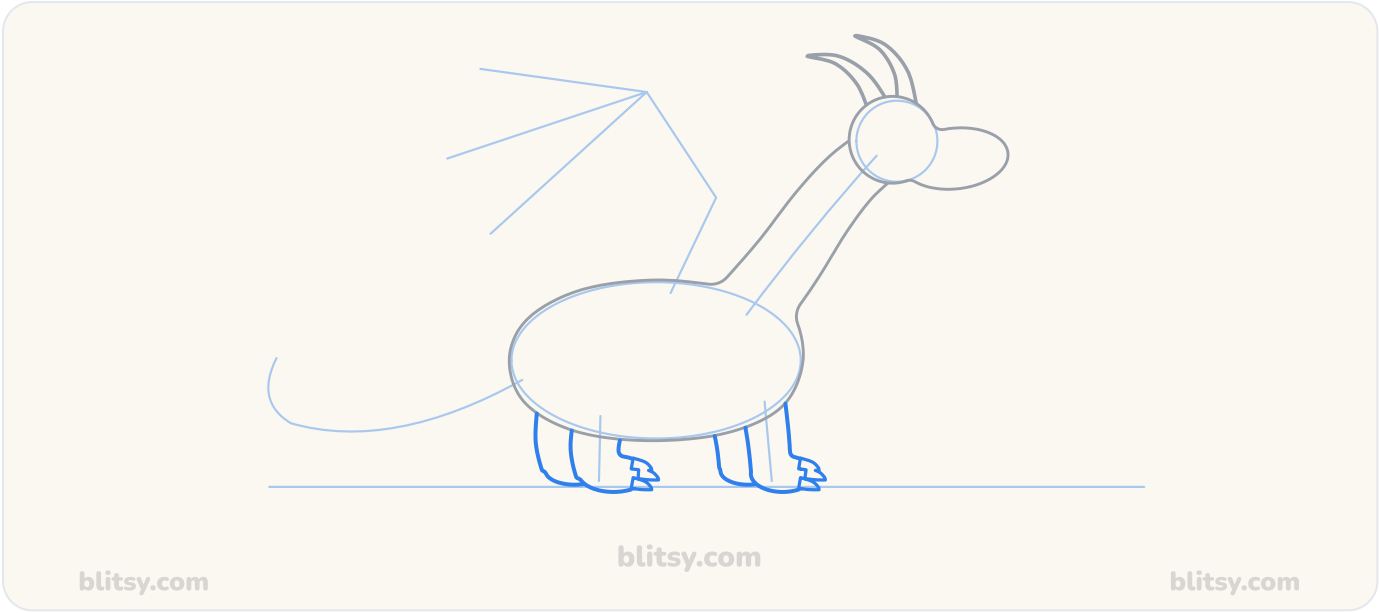
STEP 4 Outline the long neck and round body



Follow the neck guide with two lines that start wide at the chest and narrow toward the head, tucking both under the jaw. Then go around the body oval, letting the chest bulge forward and keeping the bottom fairly flat. I let the neck flow into the back in one smooth curve, because a sharp corner there makes the neck look glued on.

💡 **Tip:** Turn your paper sideways for the long neck curve; your hand moves better that way.

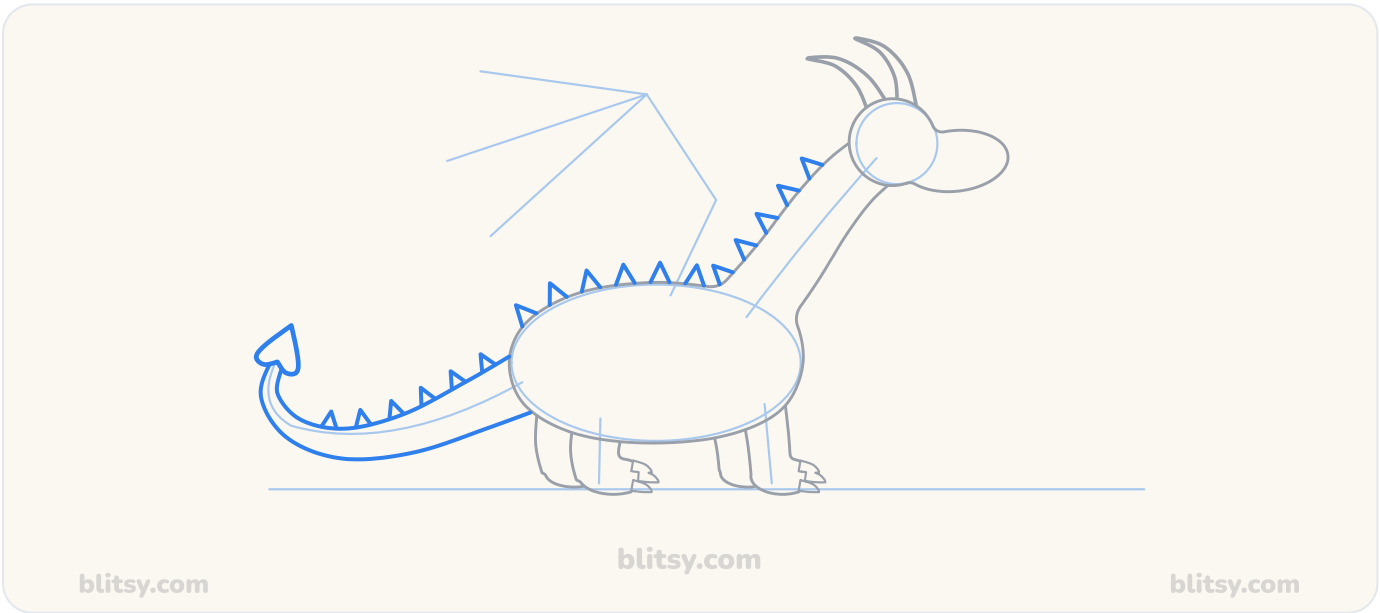
STEP 5 Add four legs with claws



Under the body, draw two thick legs in front: one near the chest and one near the rump, each with a rounded foot pointing forward. Add two more legs just behind them, peeking out to the left. These are the far legs, so they stop where the near legs cover them. Finish each front foot with three small hooked claws.

💡 **Tip:** Short, sturdy legs suit a cartoon dragon. Long thin ones make him wobble.

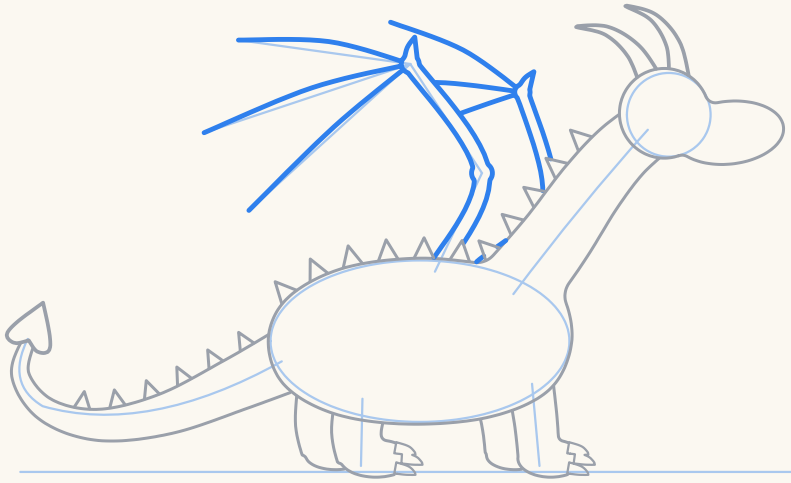
STEP 6 Draw the tail, spade tip and back spikes



Wrap the tail guide with two lines, thick where it leaves the body and thin at the tip, and let it curl up at the end. Add a spade shape on the tip, like an arrowhead with a notch at the bottom. Then line the top of the neck, back and tail with small triangles. I make them all about the same size and lean them slightly back, so they look like they ride along the spine.

💡 **Tip:** Space the spikes by eye, about one spike width apart, and don't worry about a perfect count.

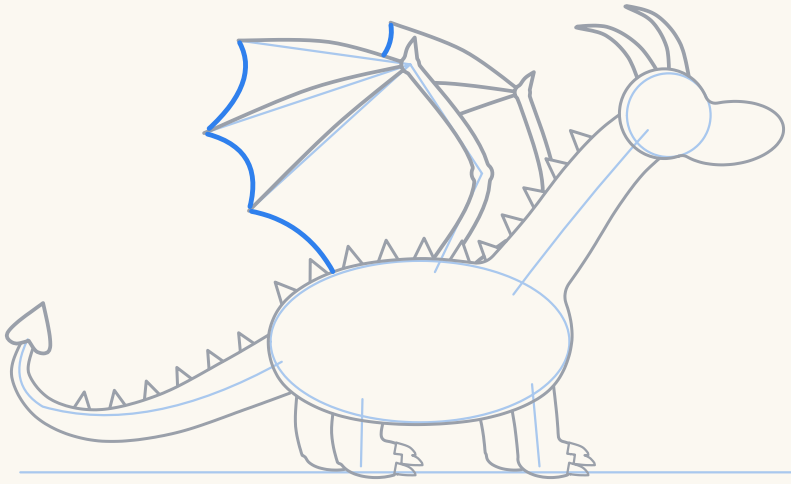
STEP 7 Draw the wing arms and finger bones



Go over the bent wing guide with a double line to make a thin arm with a knobby elbow, and add a small hooked claw at the wrist. From there, draw three long, slightly curved finger bones along the fan guides. Repeat a smaller set just to the right for the far wing, peeking out behind. This is the trickiest step, so take it slowly.

💡 **Tip:** Curve each finger bone a tiny bit outward. Ruler-straight bones look stiff.

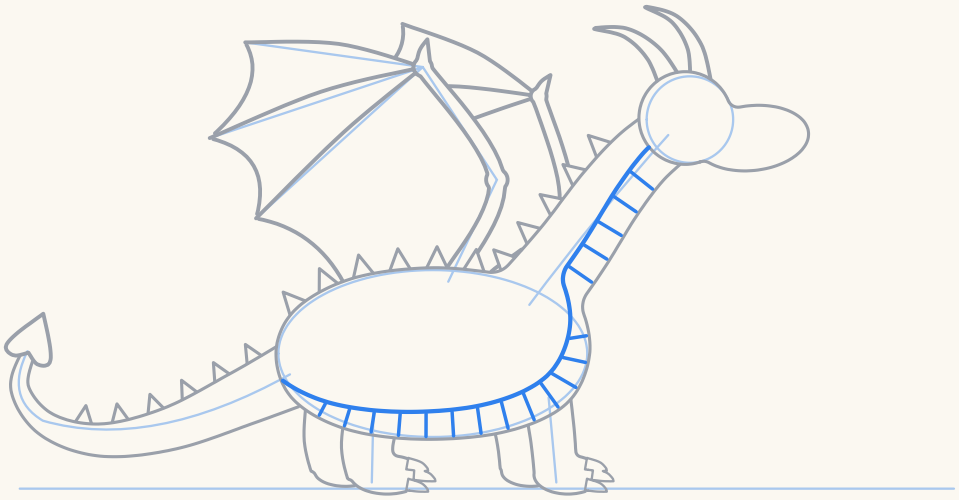
STEP 8 Connect the wing skin with scallops



Join the finger tips with curves that dip inward toward the wrist, like shallow bites. The last curve runs from the lowest finger back down to the dragon's back. Do the same on the far wing where it shows. I always point out these inward scallops, since they make the wing read as bat skin instead of a sail.

💡 **Tip:** Dip every scallop by about the same amount so the edge looks even.

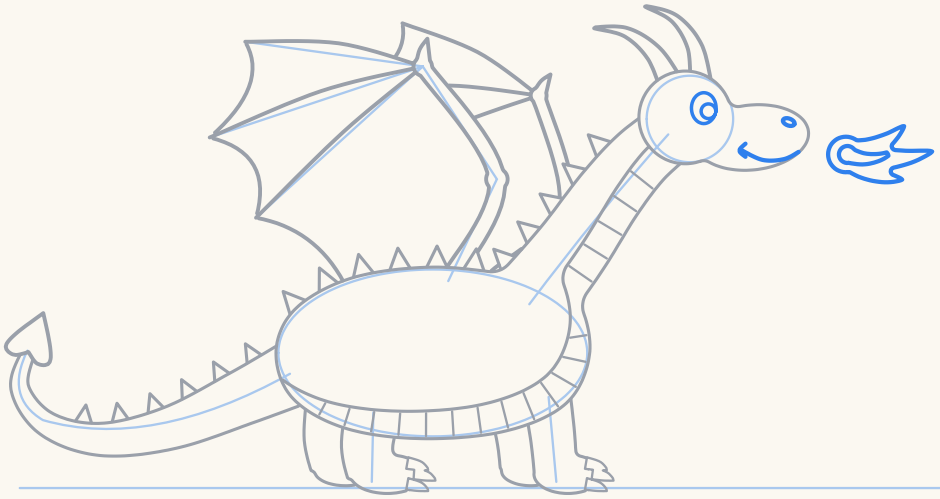
STEP 9 Mark the belly and the belly plates



Draw a second line inside the front of the neck and along the bottom of the body, parallel to the outline. That band becomes the light belly. Divide it into plates with short lines across it, like ladder rungs, a little narrower on the neck where the band thins.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the plate lines across the band, never along it, so they read as plates.

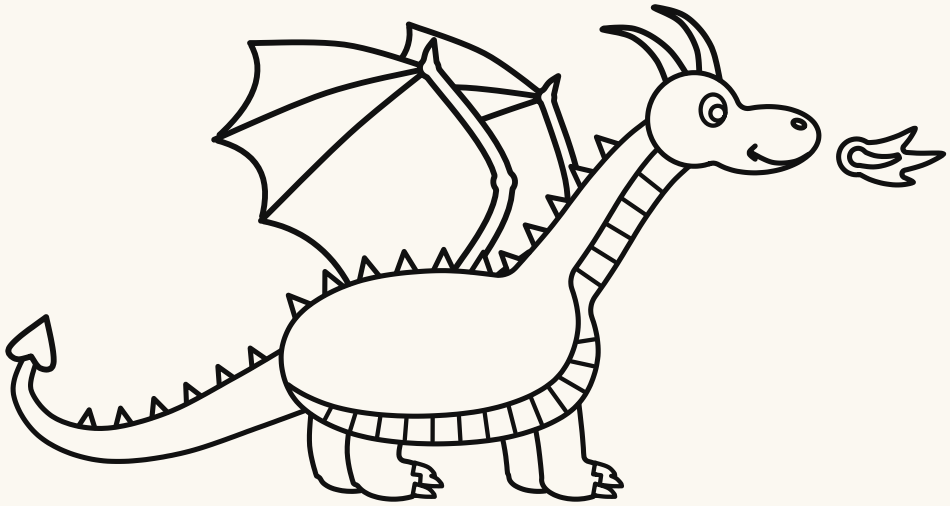
STEP 10 Add the eye, the smile and a puff of fire



Place a big round eye high on the head, just behind the snout, with a dark pupil and a white shine. A large eye with a shine keeps a dragon friendly instead of fierce. Add a little nostril near the tip of the snout and a gentle smile. In front of the mouth, leave a small gap and draw a puff of fire with three pointed flames.

💡 **Tip:** Look toward the fire with the pupil, so the dragon seems pleased with his own puff.

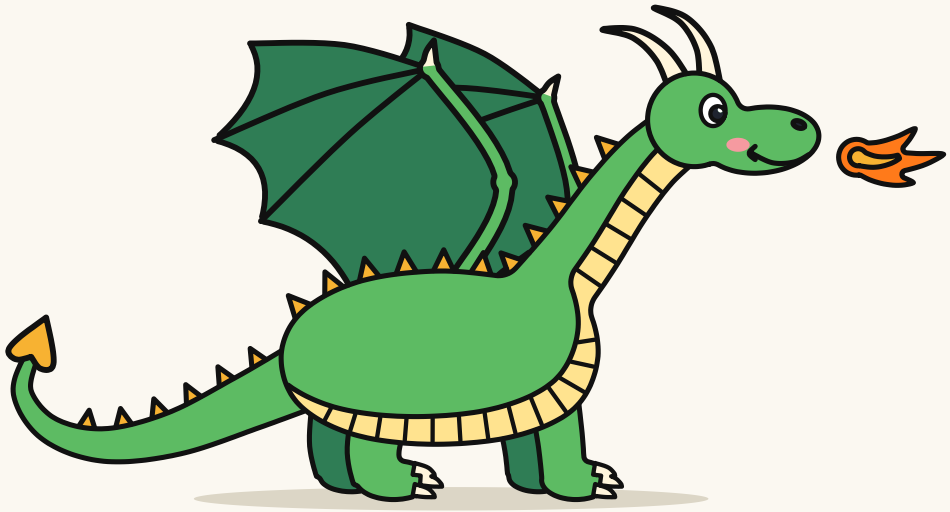
STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Trace every line you want to keep with the black pen, skipping the ground line, oval, head circle and wing and leg guides. Ink the small spikes and claws with short, careful strokes. Let the ink dry for a minute before you erase the pencil.

💡 **Tip:** Ink from left to right if you're right-handed, so your hand never drags across wet ink.

STEP 12 Color your dragon



Color the body, head, tail and near legs bright green. Use a darker green for the wing skin, far wing and far legs, which pushes them back. Fill the belly light yellow and the spikes and tail tip gold. Horns and claws stay white, the fire is orange with a gold center, and I add a pink cheek last.

💡 **Tip:** Color in small circles instead of back-and-forth lines for smooth, streak-free green.