How to Draw a Fall Leaf

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils
- 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 →

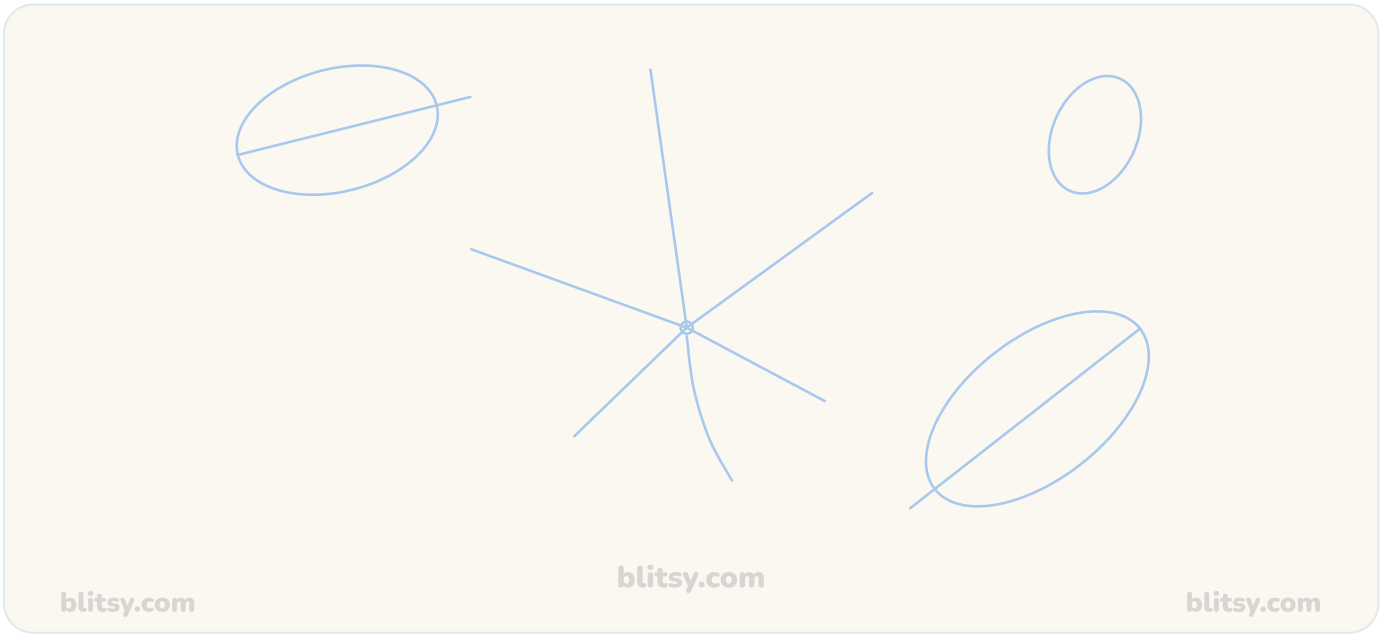
STEP 1 Draw a dot and five guide lines



Put a small dot a little below the middle of your page. From it, draw one long line straight up, two shorter lines out to the upper left and right, and two short lines angled down and outward. Add a gentle curve below the dot for the stem. I treat these lines as the bones of the leaf: every lobe sits on one, so the leaf stays balanced without measuring.

💡 **Tip:** Make the top line the longest; a maple's middle lobe is always the tallest.

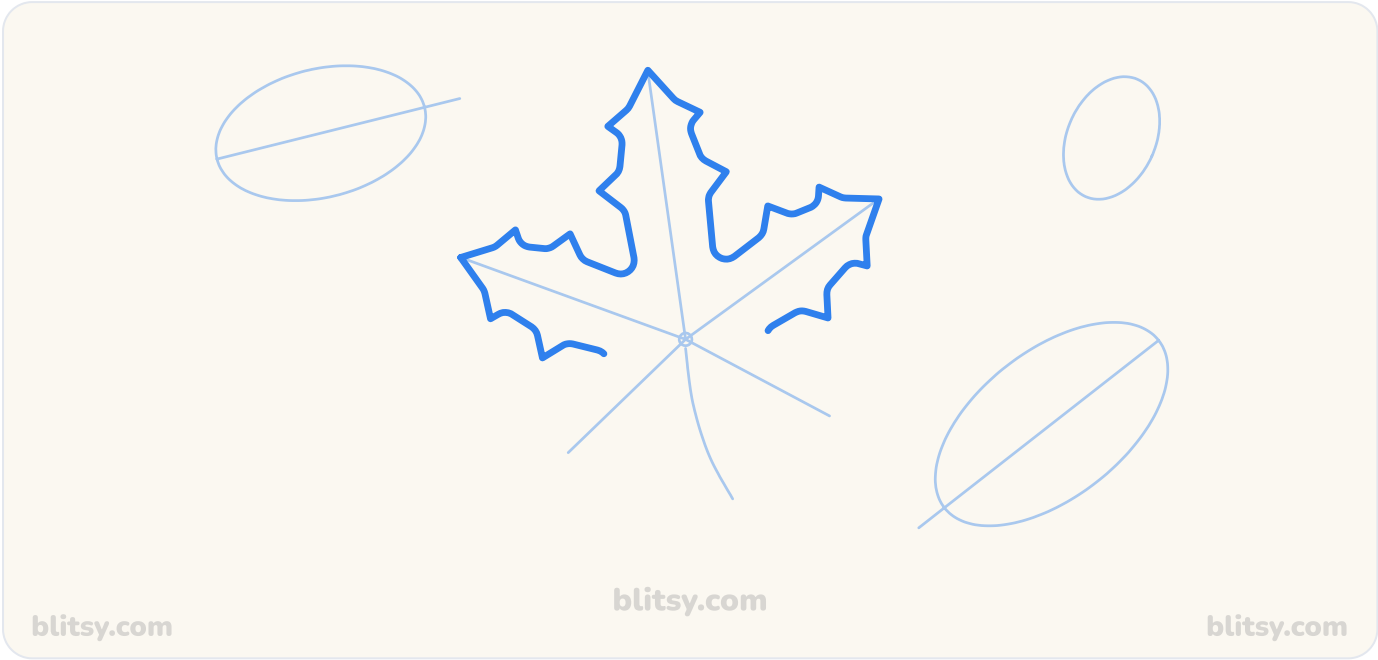
STEP 2 Add guides for the small leaves



In the upper left corner, sketch a tilted oval with a line through it for the birch leaf. Lower right, draw a longer slanted oval with a line through it for the oak leaf. A small upright oval near the top right holds the acorn. I tilt each shape a different way so they look like they're falling, not lined up on a shelf.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a clear gap around the maple so the small leaves never touch it.

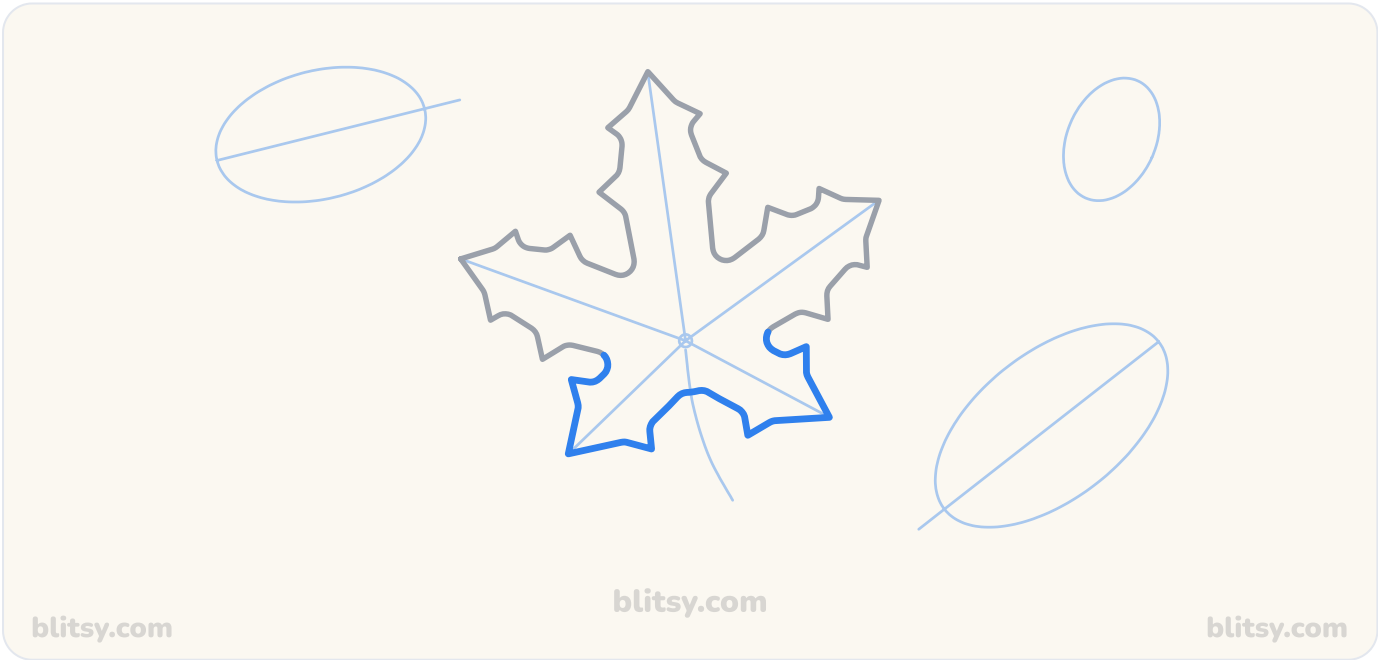
STEP 3 Outline the top three pointed lobes



Start at the tip of the top guide line and work down each side of the middle lobe. Give it two sharp teeth per side, one big and one small, then curve into a rounded dip where it meets the side lobe. Repeat on both side lobes. Those rounded dips matter: pointed ones make the leaf look like a star.

💡 **Tip:** Point every tooth slightly toward the tip of its lobe, never straight out sideways.

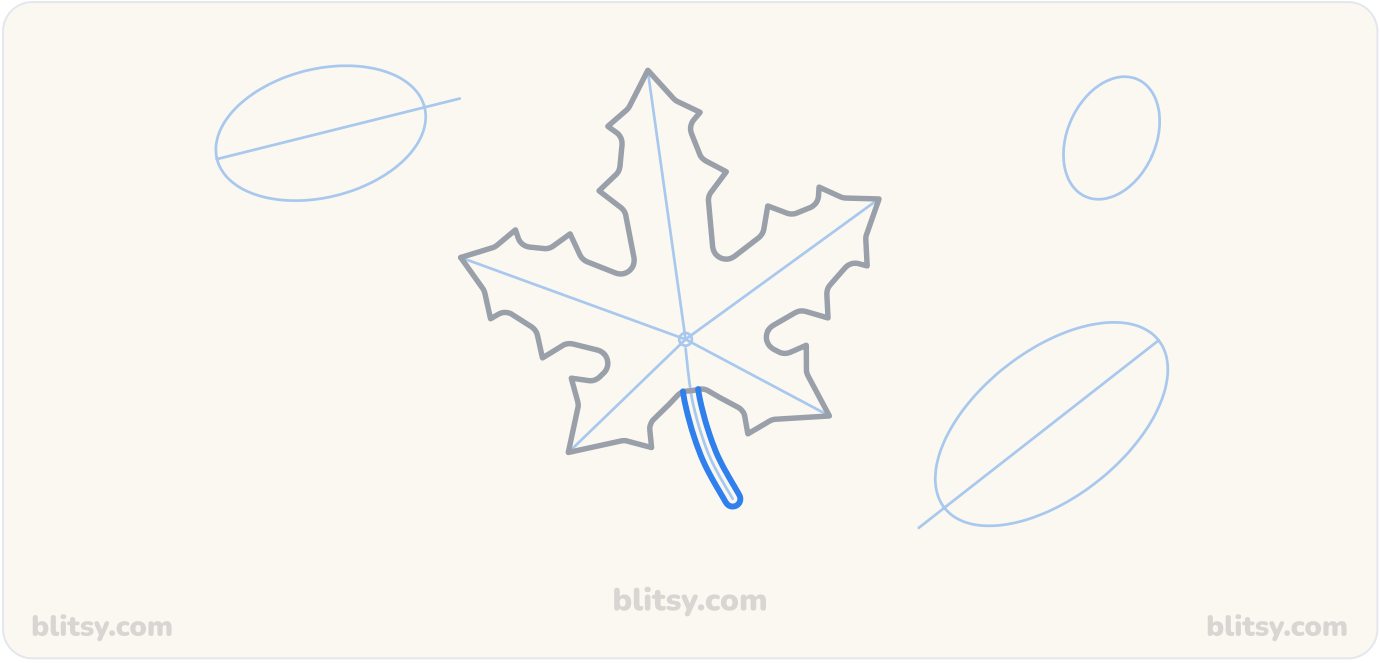
STEP 4 Close the leaf with two bottom lobes



The two lower guide lines get smaller lobes, each with one tooth per side. Join their inner edges with a soft, shallow curve just under the dot, where the stem attaches. Most beginners make these lobes as big as the top ones, and the leaf starts to look like a hand.

💡 **Tip:** Keep each bottom lobe about half as long as the middle one.

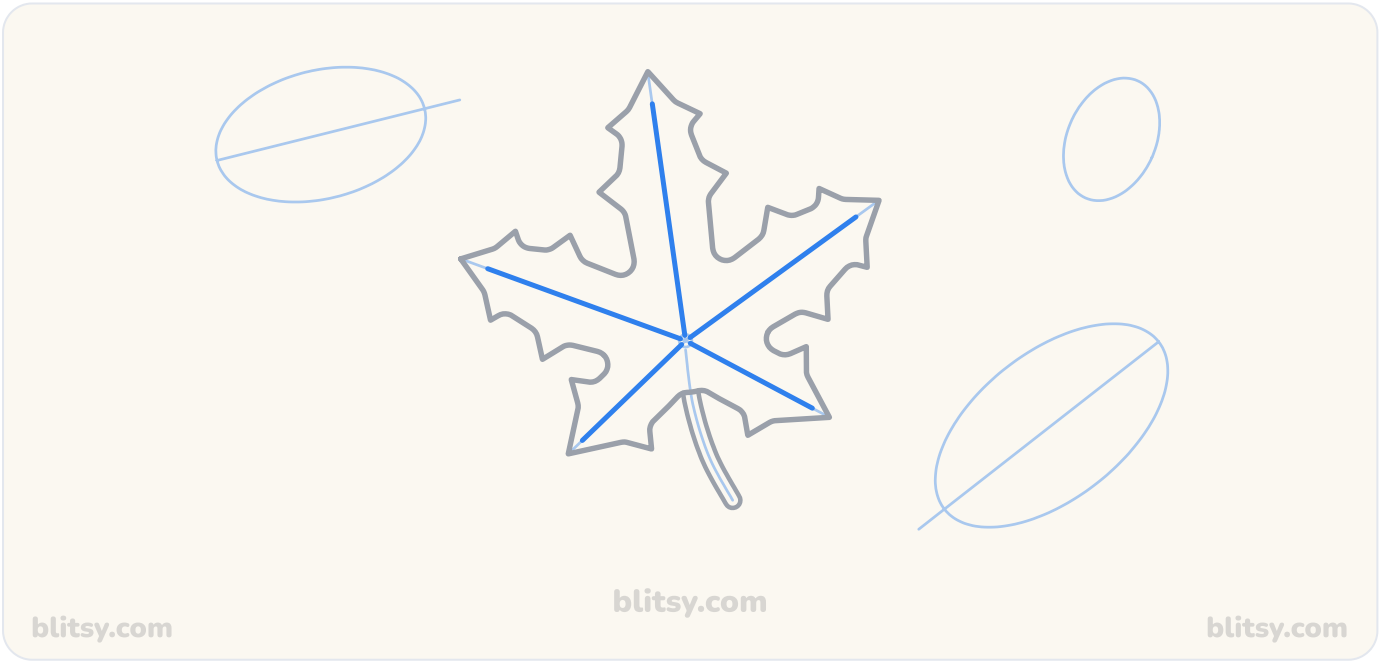
STEP 5 Draw a curved stem



Trace both sides of the stem guide, keeping the lines close together. A thin, slightly bent stem makes the leaf look light, as if it just let go of its branch. Round off the bottom end, and let the top disappear into the outline rather than poke through it.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the stem with one smooth pull of your arm instead of short scratchy strokes.

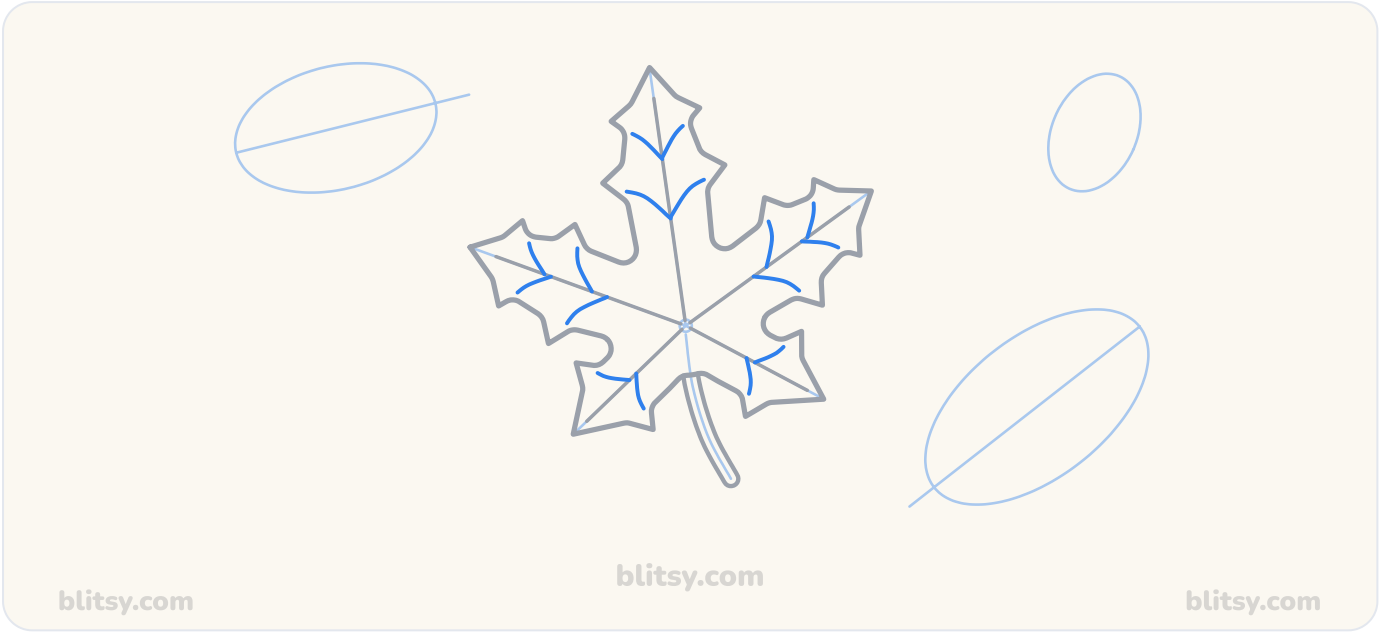
STEP 6 Add the five main veins



Go over each guide line inside the leaf with a firm line, from the dot toward the lobe tips. Stop each vein a little before the tip, because real veins fade out before the edge. In my experience this is the step where the leaf suddenly reads as a maple.

💡 **Tip:** If a guide line wandered off center, nudge the vein back to the middle of its lobe.

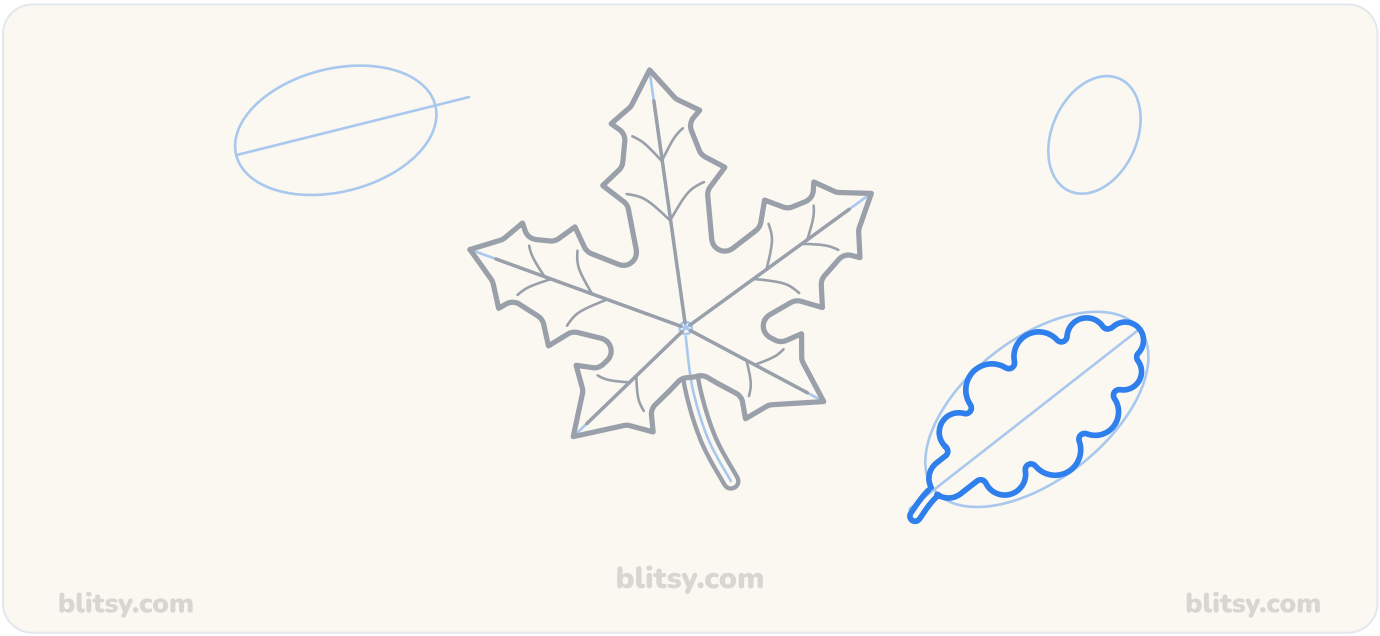
STEP 7 Branch side veins toward the teeth



From each main vein, draw thinner curved lines toward the teeth, one per tooth, leaving the vein at a slant. I keep these shorter than the main veins so the leaf doesn't turn into a web. Small kids can skip this step and still have a clear maple.

💡 **Tip:** Curve the side veins gently; ruler-straight branches look stiff on a leaf.

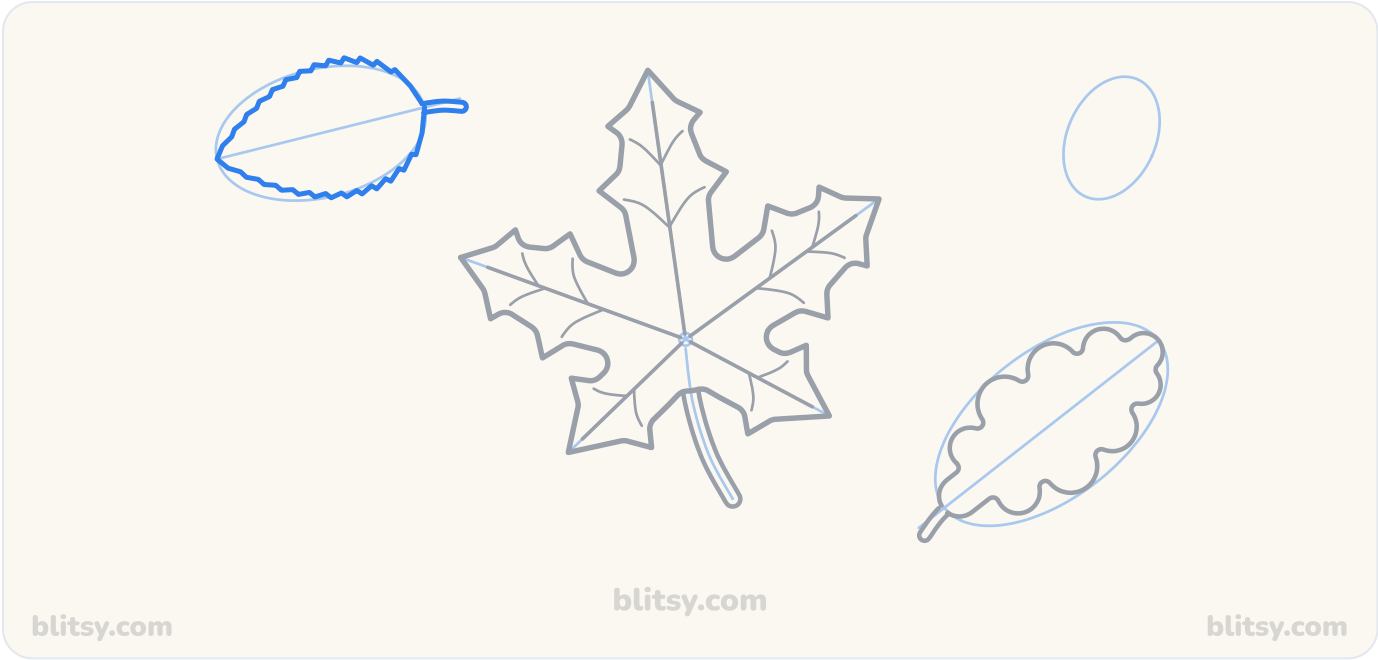
STEP 8 Draw a wavy oak leaf



Inside the long oval, draw a short stem at the bottom end. Run a wavy edge up each side with four rounded bumps that shrink toward the top, and finish with a round tip. Dip in deeply between the bumps. Round lobes like these belong to the white oak group, and they're far easier than the pointy kind.

💡 **Tip:** Let the bumps on the two sides sit at different heights, so the leaf looks natural, not mirrored.

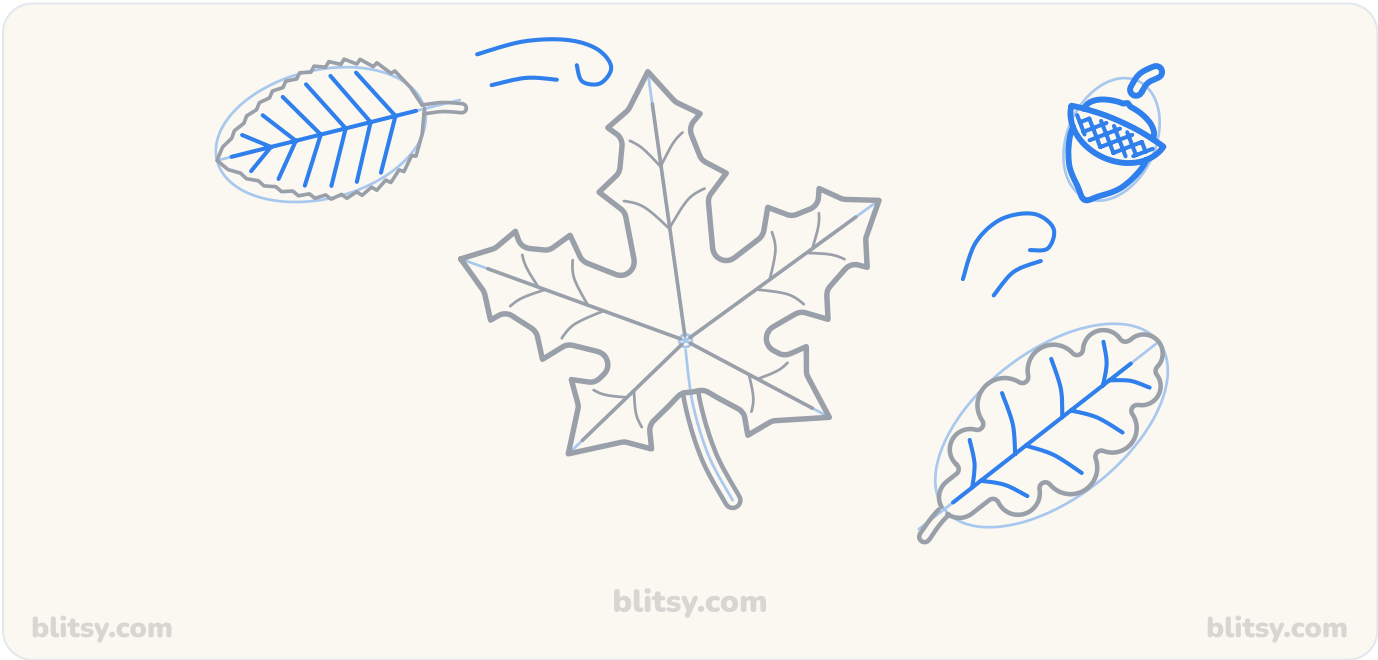
STEP 9 Draw a saw-tooth birch leaf



Around the top left oval, draw a leaf that's wide near the stem and narrows to a point. Give the edge lots of tiny teeth, like a small saw, each leaning toward the tip. Add a short stem at the wide end.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the teeth small and close; big ones turn a birch leaf into a holly leaf.

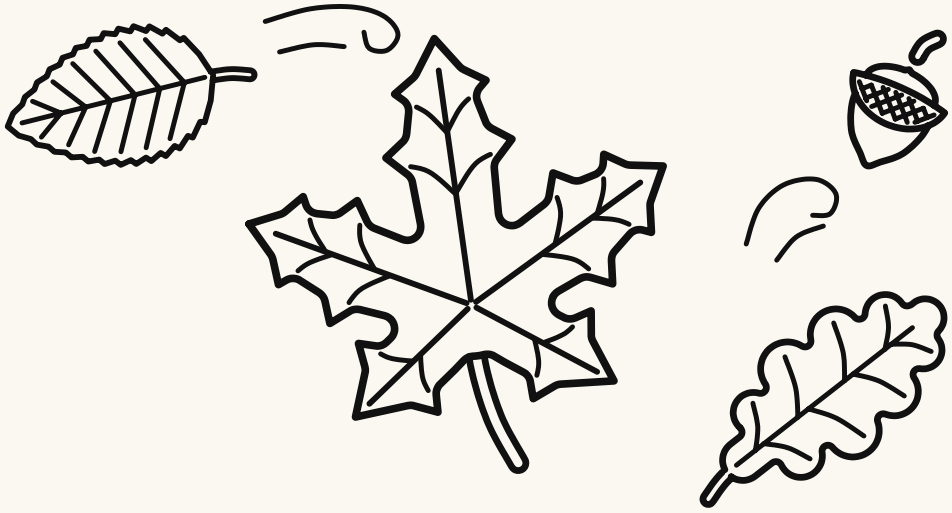
STEP 10 Add veins, an acorn and wind lines



Give the oak a center vein and one curved side vein into each bump. The birch gets a center vein with straight, parallel side veins. In the small oval, draw an acorn: a nut with a little point at the bottom, a cap with crisscross lines and a short stalk. Finish with a few curling wind lines.

💡 **Tip:** End each wind line in a small curl; that one loop turns a plain line into a breeze.

STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Trace every line you want to keep with a black pen, and skip the dot, the guide lines and the ovals. Wait until the ink is dry, then erase all the pencil. Thick outlines with thinner veins give the page a clean look.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the long outlines first while your hand is fresh, and the tiny birch teeth last.

STEP 12 Color the fall leaves



Color the maple's edges red, then an orange band along the veins and a yellow glow at the center. Real leaves change this way: as green chlorophyll breaks down in autumn, the yellow and orange pigments already there show through, and the reds come from anthocyanins the leaf makes in the fall. Make the oak rust orange, the birch golden yellow and the acorn light brown with a dark cap.

💡 **Tip:** Start with the yellow center and work outward, so the darker red never smudges into it.