How to Draw a Grim Reaper

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

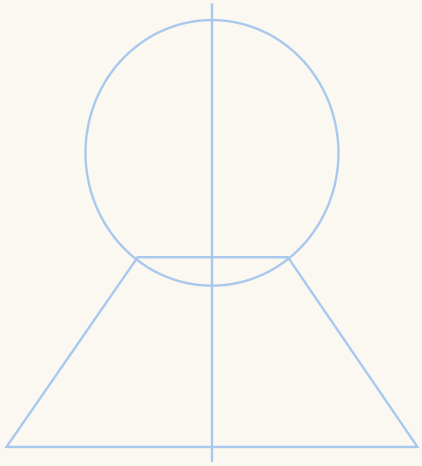
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker
- Colored pencils
- White paper

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 →

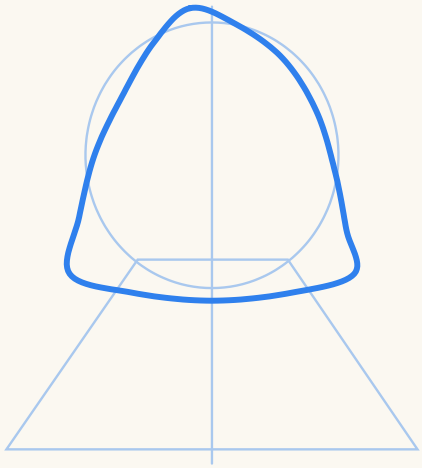
STEP 1 Sketch a circle, a center line and a cone



Draw a circle a little above the middle of your page. Run a straight line down through its center, then hang a wide cone, or trapezoid, below the circle. The circle holds the hood and the cone sets how wide the cloak will flare. When I teach this, I make the cone's bottom about three circles wide; a narrow cloak looks stiff.

💡 **Tip:** Use the lightest pressure you can. Every one of these lines gets erased.

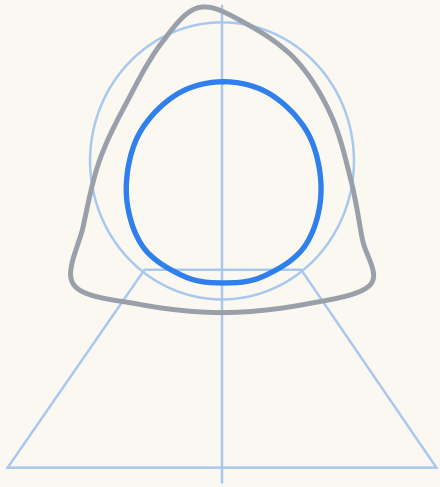
STEP 2 Draw a big hood with a soft point



Start at the top of the circle and draw the hood's tip as a rounded point, leaning just a touch to the left like floppy fabric. Bring both sides down around the circle and finish with a curved bottom edge that rests over the shoulders. The hood should be bigger than the circle on every side. A huge hood on a tiny body is the chibi look.

💡 **Tip:** Round the very tip. A sharp spike reads as a witch hat.

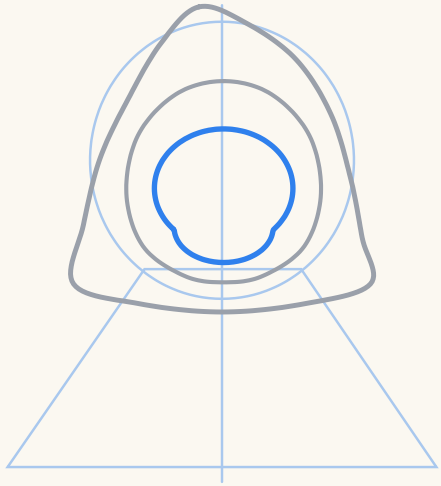
STEP 3 Add the deep opening



Inside the hood, draw a large oval opening with a slightly pointed top that echoes the hood's tip. Leave a thick band of hood all the way around it, roughly as wide as one of your fingers. That band is the fabric.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the band even on both sides so the hood faces straight at you.

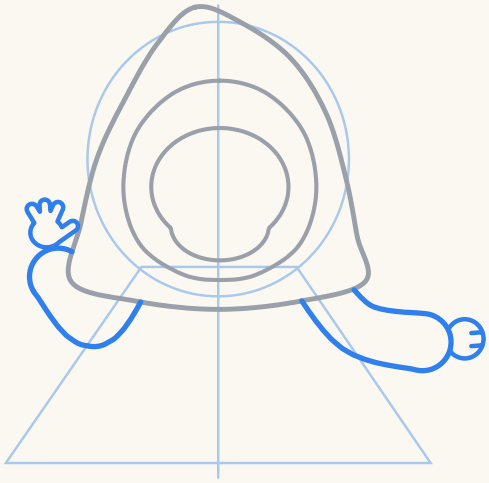
STEP 4 Draw the round face inside



In the lower part of the opening, draw a round face that gets a little narrower at the chin, like a cartoon skull. Leave dark space showing above it and around the sides. I place it low on purpose, because the dark space above makes the hood look deep.

💡 **Tip:** Let the chin almost touch the bottom of the opening.

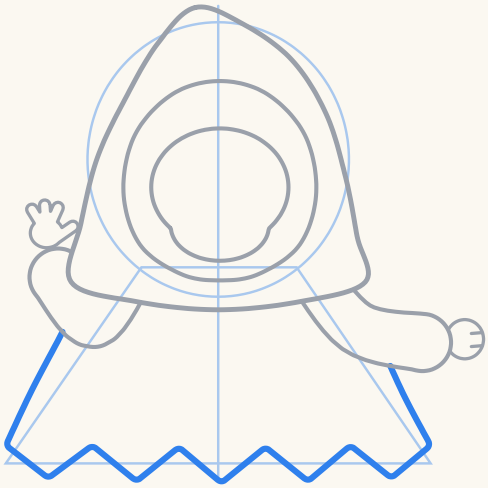
STEP 5 Add two sleeves and little hands



From under the hood's left edge, draw a wide sleeve that bends down at the elbow and comes back up, with a small hand waving above it: a round palm, three short fingers and a thumb. On the right, pull a longer sleeve straight out to the side and end it with a round fist.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the hands a bit smaller than the eyes will be. Big bony hands look creepy.

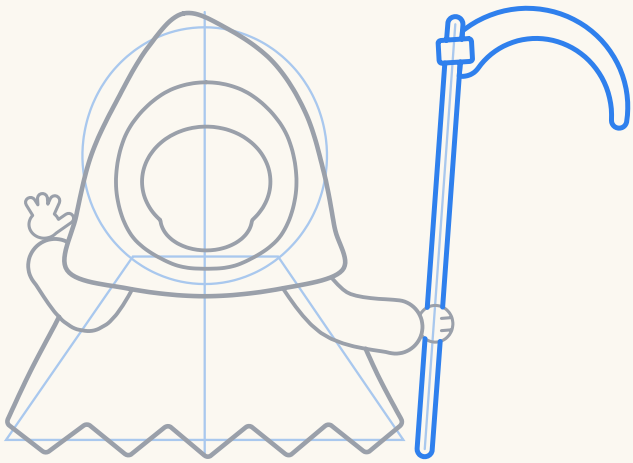
STEP 6 Draw the cloak with a zigzag hem



Now drop the cloak. From under each sleeve, draw a side line that slants outward, following the cone guide. Join their bottoms with a zigzag of five or six points. I round each point slightly, since crisp, jagged teeth start to look torn and scary. Keep the hem well above the ground; that gap makes him float.

💡 **Tip:** Space the zigzag points evenly before you worry about smooth lines.

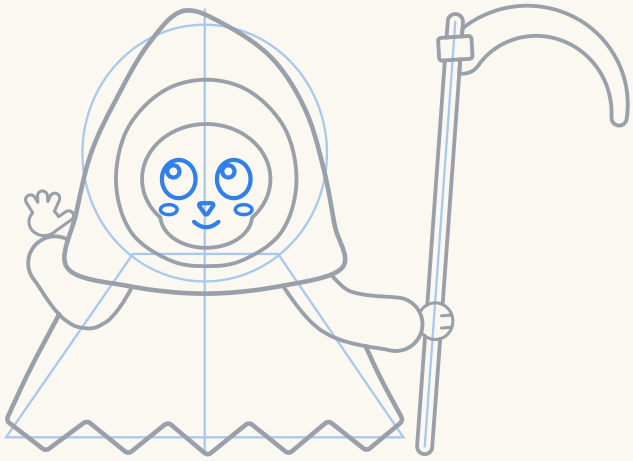
STEP 7 Add the staff and a curved blade



Draw a long straight guide line through the fist, from level with the hem up to the height of the hood's tip. Turn it into a thin staff with two parallel lines and round ends. At the top, add a small band, then pull a fat curved blade out to the right, like a banana that bends downward, ending in a rounded tip. A real scythe is an old farm tool for cutting tall grass; a soft, rounded blade keeps ours friendly.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the staff with a ruler if your hand wobbles. Nobody will know.

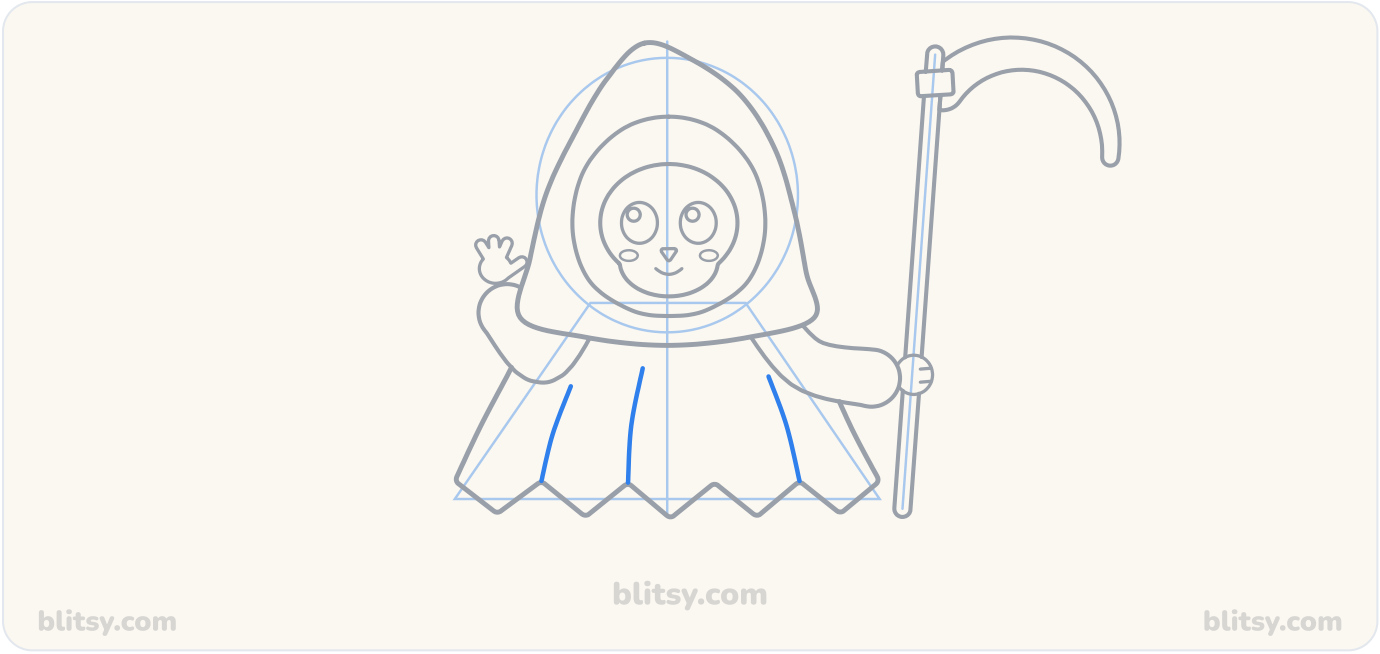
STEP 8 Draw cute eyes, a nose and a smile



Place two big round eyes just above the middle of the face, close together. Add a round shine in the upper left of each one. Under them, a tiny upside-down triangle makes the nose hole of a cartoon skull, and a short curve becomes the smile. Add an oval cheek under each eye. Most beginners draw the eyes too small, and that's when a cute reaper turns eerie.

💡 **Tip:** Put both shines on the same side, or the eyes look like they're crossing.

STEP 9 Sketch soft folds in the cloak



Draw three long, gently curved lines that start at the inner corners of the zigzag and fade out halfway up the cloak. Don't connect them to the hood. Folds that stop partway look like hanging fabric; lines that run all the way up cut the cloak into panels.

💡 **Tip:** Curve each fold the same way as the nearest side of the cloak.

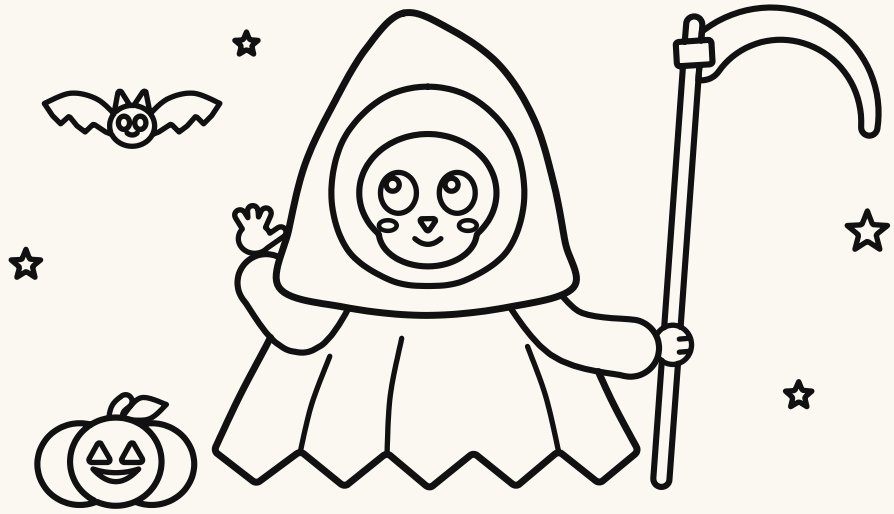
STEP 10 Add a jack-o'-lantern, a bat and stars



On the left, draw a short ground line and a wide pumpkin sitting on it: a round middle with a slightly smaller lobe peeking out on each side. Give it triangle eyes, a happy grin and a bent stem with a leaf. Above, draw a round bat with two pointy ears and scalloped wings. Scatter four stars in the gaps.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the pumpkin smaller than the hood so the reaper stays the star.

STEP 11 Ink the outlines and erase the guides



Trace every keeper line with your black marker, extras included, and let the ink dry for a minute. Then erase the circle, the center line, the cone and the staff guide. Go gently over the face, because white paper shows every smudge.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the long cloak sides in one steady pull instead of short dashes.

STEP 12 Color your little reaper



Fill the whole robe with dark purple, then add light purple strips beside each fold. Color the opening black, leave the face and hands white with a faint gray edge, and give the cheeks a touch of pink. The staff is brown, the blade gray, the pumpkin orange with a yellow glowing face, the bat purple and the stars yellow.

💡 **Tip:** Color the dark inside of the hood first, then the face edges stay crisp.