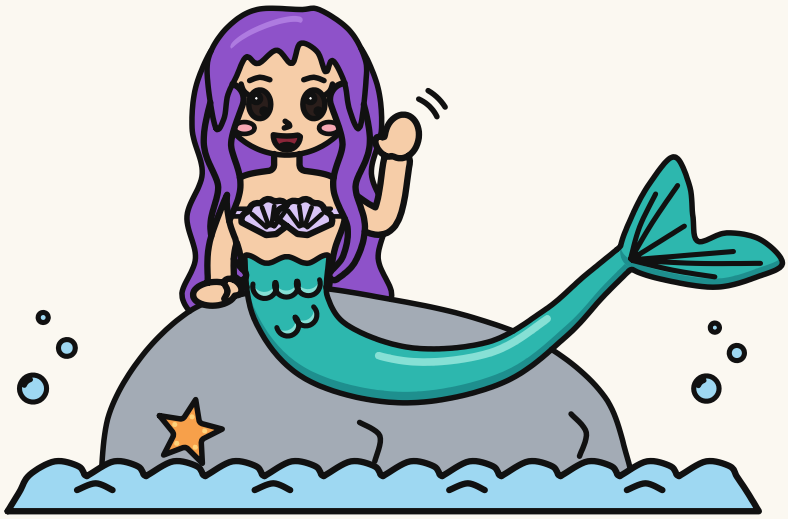
How to Draw a Mermaid

11 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

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

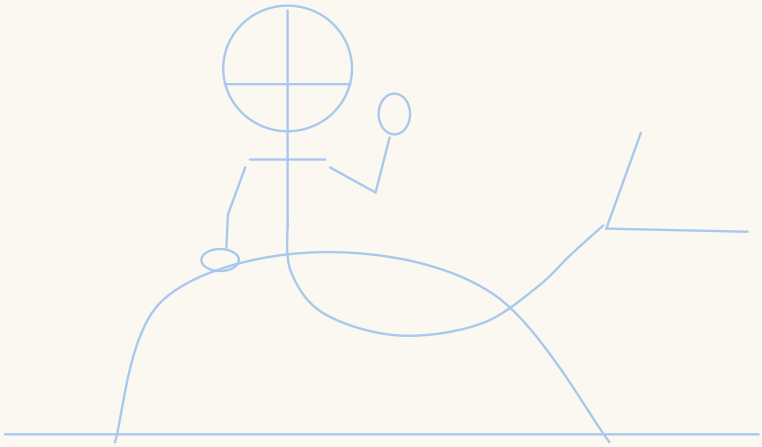
STEP 1 Draw a head circle, a body line and stick arms



Start on the left half of the page and draw a circle for the head, crossed by a short vertical line and a level eye line. Below the chin, run the body line down about one and a half heads and add a short shoulder line. One stick arm hangs down to a small oval hand; the other bends up beside the head.

💡 **Tip:** Leave the whole right half of the paper empty for now, because the tail needs that space later.

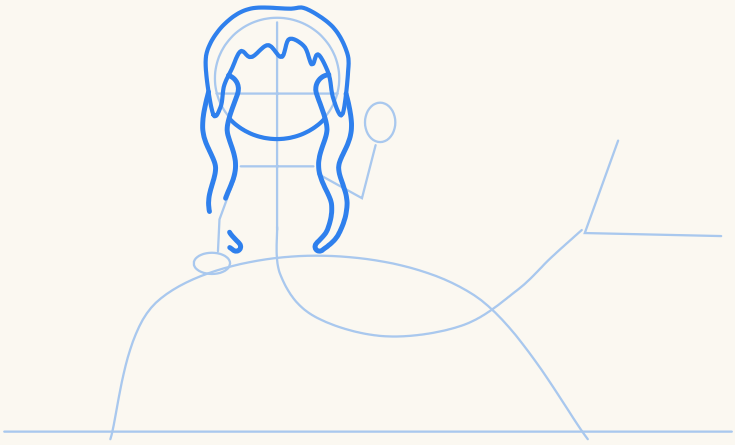
STEP 2 Sketch the S-curve tail line and the rock



This line makes or breaks a mermaid. From the bottom of the body line, swing a long curve down and to the right, let it rise again and flick outward at the end, like a stretched S lying on its side. Mark the fin with two short lines from the tip. Then draw a big dome under her for the rock and a flat line for the sea.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the tail curve in one relaxed sweep from your elbow; several short strokes make it wobble.

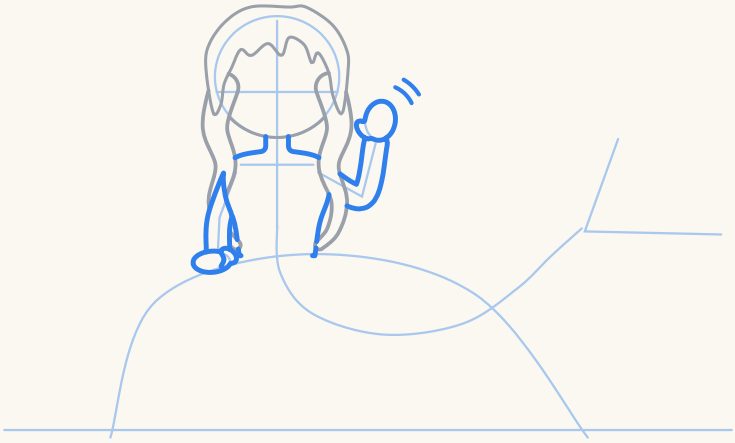
STEP 3 Draw the face, the bangs and two front locks



Trace the lower half of the head circle for her cheeks and chin. Above the eye line, draw the bangs as a cap that sits a little outside the circle, with a wavy lower edge made of small rounded clumps. Then let one lock of hair fall from each temple over the shoulders. Each lock wiggles left and right and ends in a soft curl.

💡 **Tip:** Think of each lock as a thick ribbon; both edges wave together, so they never pinch into a point halfway down.

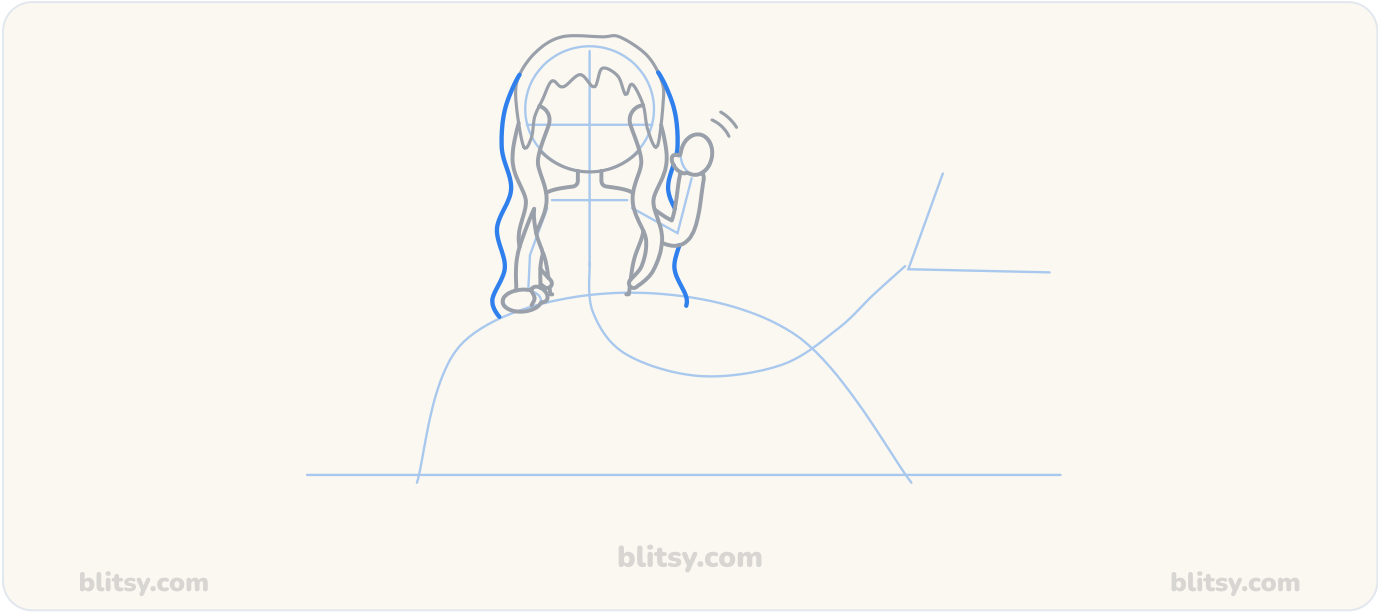
STEP 4 Add the neck, the body and the arms



Two short curves make the neck and flow into rounded shoulders. The sides of the body run down gently and stop at the hips. I keep a cartoon mermaid's body short, because the big head and long tail carry the character. Give each arm soft width, draw a mitten hand lying flat on the rock, and give the raised hand a thumb and wave marks.

💡 **Tip:** Let the resting arm cross in front of the lock of hair; it tells the eye the hair falls behind her shoulder.

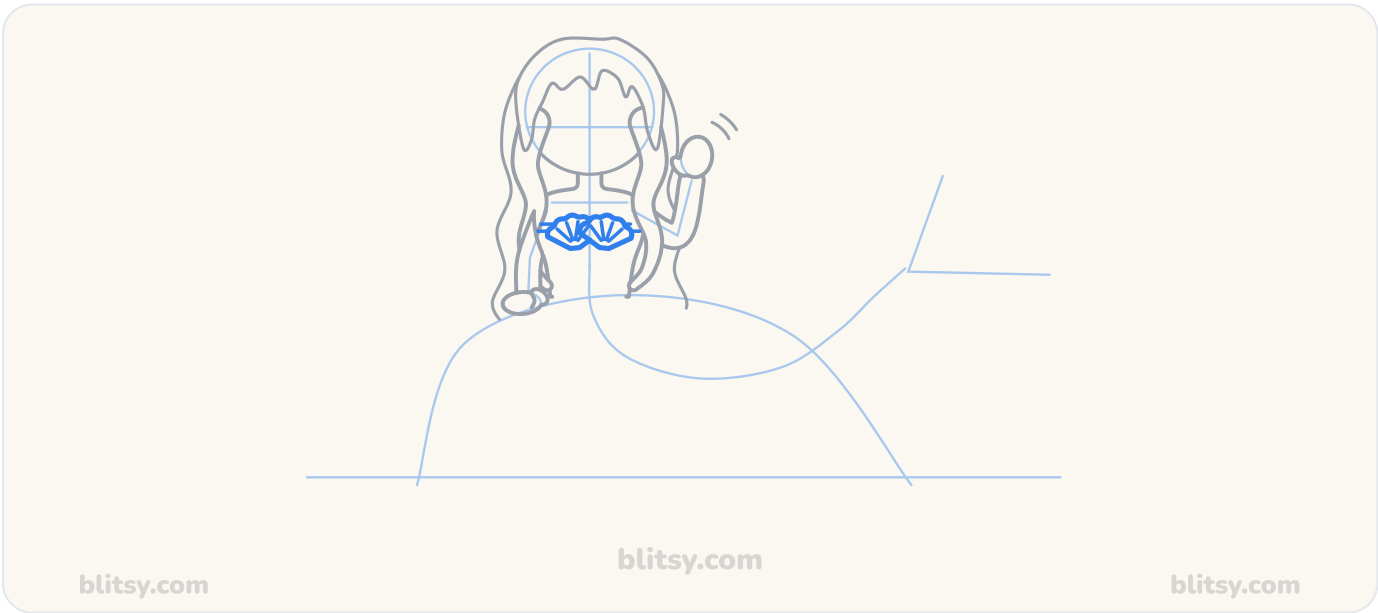
STEP 5 Draw the long wavy back hair



Now draw the hair that hangs behind her. Start at the top of the bangs, go wider than the head on both sides, and let the outline wave down past the shoulders to the rock. Keep the waves loose and uneven. Where the hair meets her arm or the rock, stop the line and pick it up on the other side.

💡 **Tip:** Make the outer waves bigger than the ones near her face, so the hair looks like it swings out as it falls.

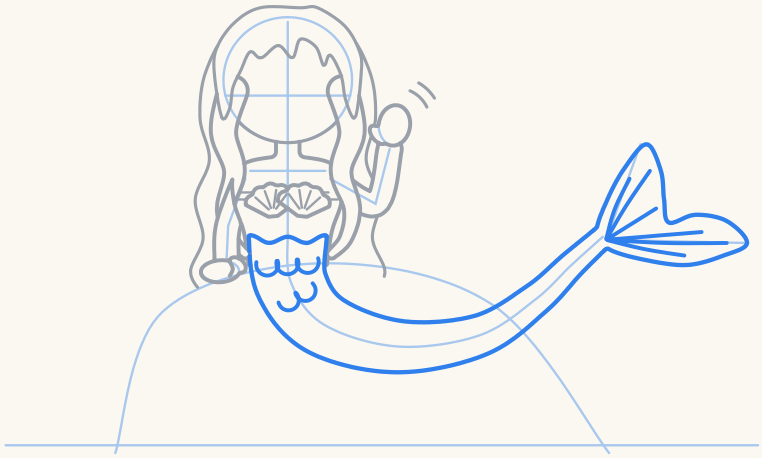
STEP 6 Draw the seashell top



Place two big fan-shaped scallop shells side by side across the chest, with their top edges about level with the armpits and the narrow end of each shell at the bottom. Tilt them slightly apart. Add four short rib lines inside each shell, spreading out like fingers. One thin band runs straight across behind the shells to the sides of the body.

💡 **Tip:** Make the two shells together almost as wide as the chest; shells that are too small look lost on the body.

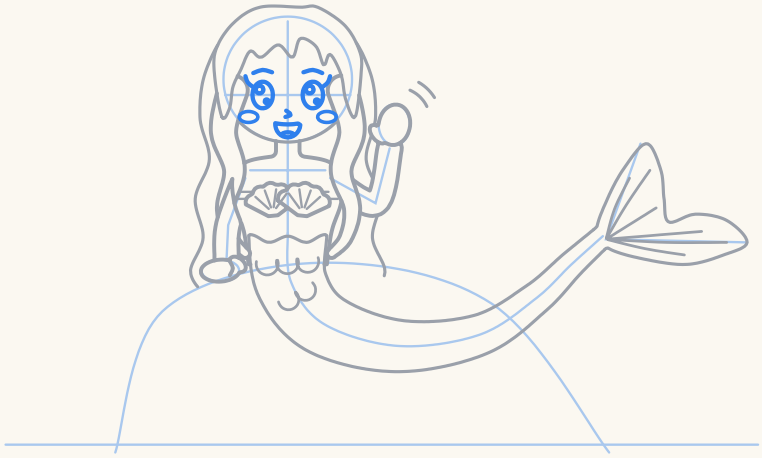
STEP 7 Shape the tail, the fin and a few scales



Follow your S-curve and draw a line on each side of it. The tail is widest at the hips and gets steadily thinner toward the end. Draw a wavy waistline where skin meets tail. At the tip, add a fin with two big rounded lobes and a notch between them, plus rib lines fanning from the base. Finish with two short rows of U-shaped scales near the hips.

💡 **Tip:** Check the tail width in three places: hips, middle and tip. Each one should be clearly thinner than the one before it.

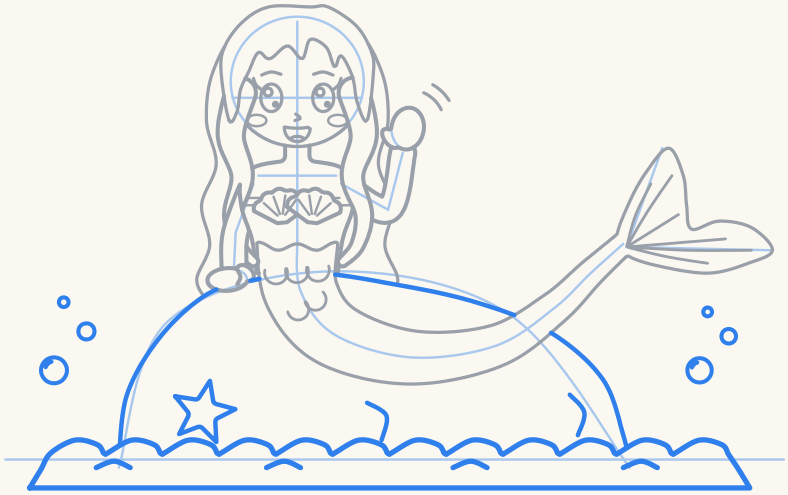
STEP 8 Give her big eyes and a happy smile



Put two tall ovals on the eye line, about one eye-width apart. Inside each, save a round white shine near the top and a tiny one lower down. A lash flick at the outer corner and a thin brow make her look friendly. Add a tiny hook for the nose, an open smile with a little tongue, and a blush on each cheek.

💡 **Tip:** Place the mouth closer to the nose than to the chin, and the face instantly looks younger.

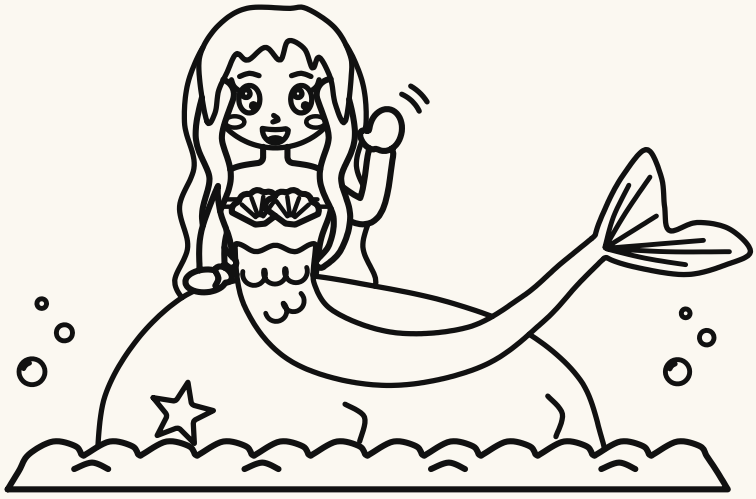
STEP 9 Add the rock, a starfish and the waves



Go over the rock guide with a rounded outline that disappears behind the tail and sinks into the water. Two short crack lines make it look like stone. Draw a five-armed starfish on the left side of the rock. Along the bottom, draw a row of rounded wave tops with a few splash marks, then float some bubbles near the edges.

💡 **Tip:** Round off the starfish points slightly; sharp points look more like a Christmas star than a sea animal.

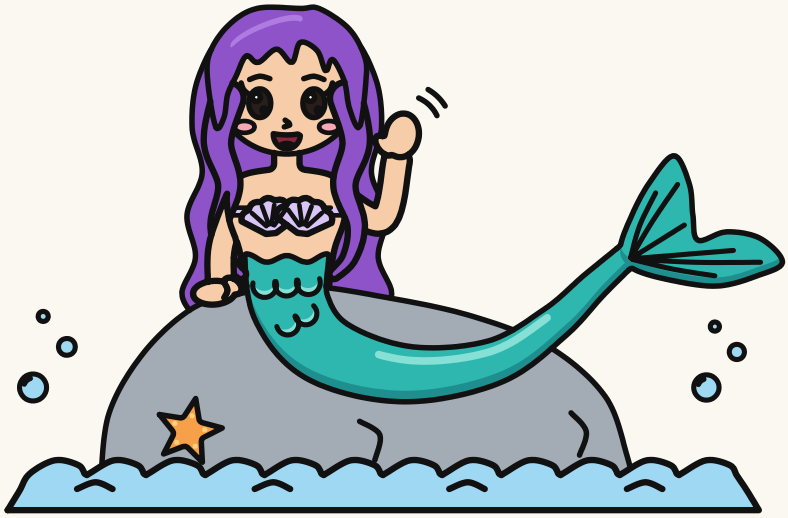
STEP 10 Ink the drawing and erase the guides



Trace all the keeper lines with a black pen: hair, face, body, shells, tail, fin, rock and waves. Skip the head circle, the body line, the S-curve and the rock dome. I ink the face first while my hand is fresh, then move outward. Wait a minute for the ink to dry before you erase the pencil underneath.

💡 **Tip:** If the ink smears when you erase, it wasn't dry yet; give gel pens an extra minute.

STEP 11 Color your mermaid



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Color the hair purple, pressing a little harder near the ends. Skin gets a soft peach and the cheeks a touch of pink. Make the tail and fin teal with a dark teal strip along the underside, and leave the scales and one long streak a lighter mint. The shells are lavender, the rock gray, the starfish orange and the water and bubbles light blue.

💡 **Tip:** Put the darker teal on the same lower edge all along the tail, so the light seems to come from above.