How to Draw a Mountain

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

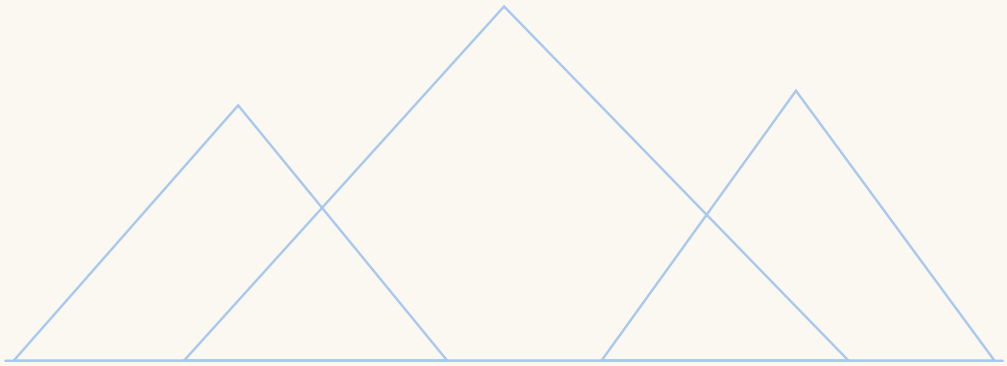
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker
- Colored pencils
- Paper turned sideways

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 →

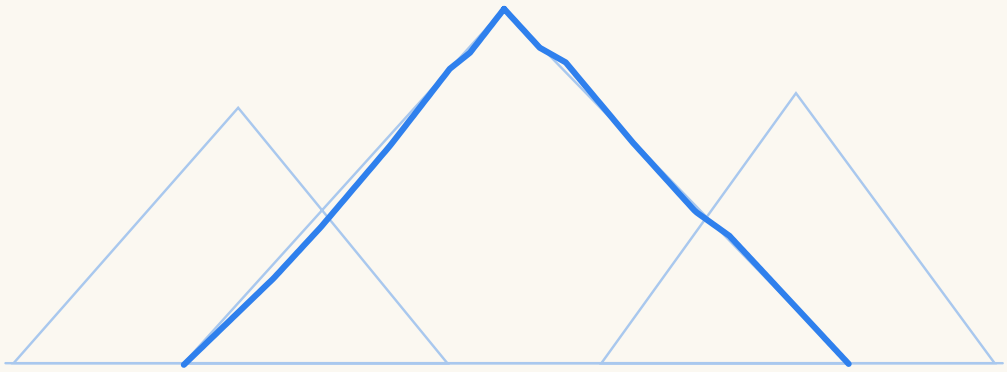
STEP 1 Draw a ground line and three triangles



Turn the paper sideways. About two thirds of the way down, draw a long, level line across the page. On it, sketch three light triangles: a tall wide one in the middle and two shorter ones on each side, overlapping the big one. Their tops should land at different heights.

💡 **Tip:** If the middle triangle isn't clearly the tallest, the whole range looks flat. Redo it now while the lines are faint.

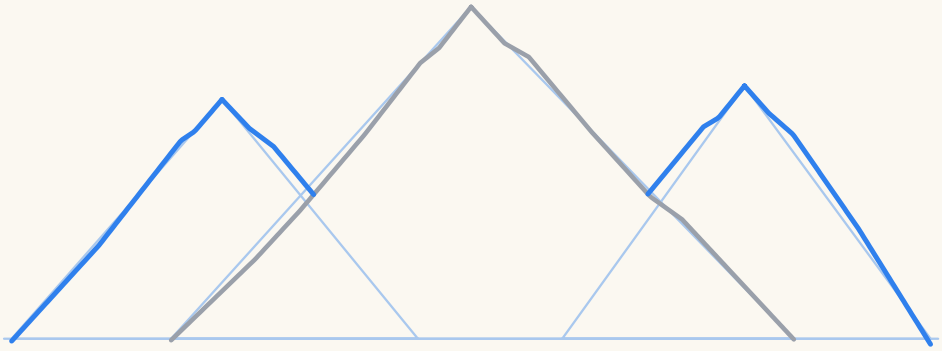
STEP 2 Outline the big front peak



Go over the middle triangle with a firmer line, but don't trace it perfectly. Add a small bump on each slope near the top, where rock would break up the shape. Stop both slopes at the ground line. I always draw this peak first because it sits in front, so nothing will ever cross its outline.

💡 **Tip:** Slight wobbles are good here. A ruler-straight slope looks like a tent, not a mountain.

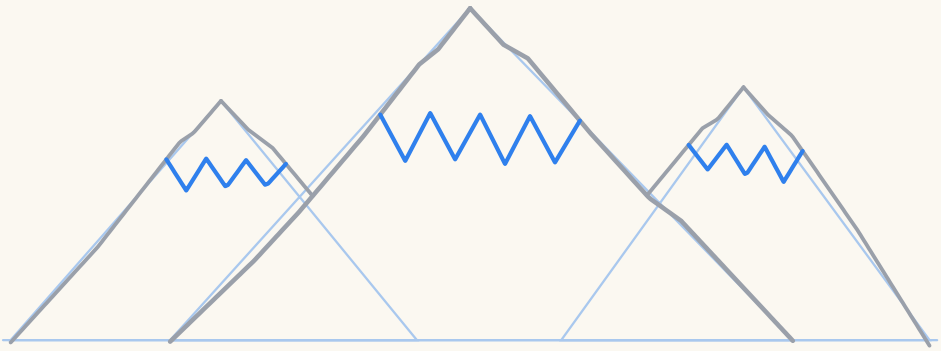
STEP 3 Add the two smaller peaks behind



Now outline the two side triangles the same way. Here's the overlapping trick: each inside slope stops the moment it touches the big peak, as if it slides behind it. That one cut tells the viewer which mountain is closer. Smaller peaks also read as farther away, so keep them lower than the front one.

💡 **Tip:** Run your finger along a back slope first. Where it bumps into the front peak, that's where your pencil lifts.

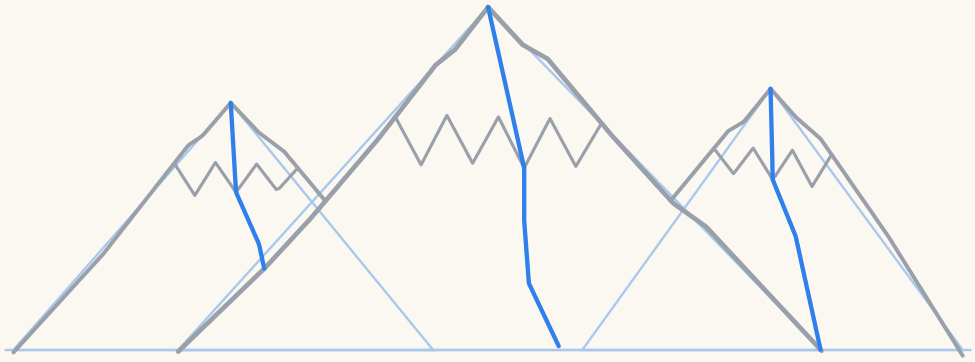
STEP 4 Draw the zig-zag snow caps



Near the top of each peak, draw a zig-zag line from one slope to the other. I make the points uneven on purpose, some deeper than others, the way real snow melts into rock. On the big peak the snow reaches about a third of the way down. The back peaks get smaller caps.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the zig-zag below the tip with some space to spare. A snow line too close to the top looks like a hat.

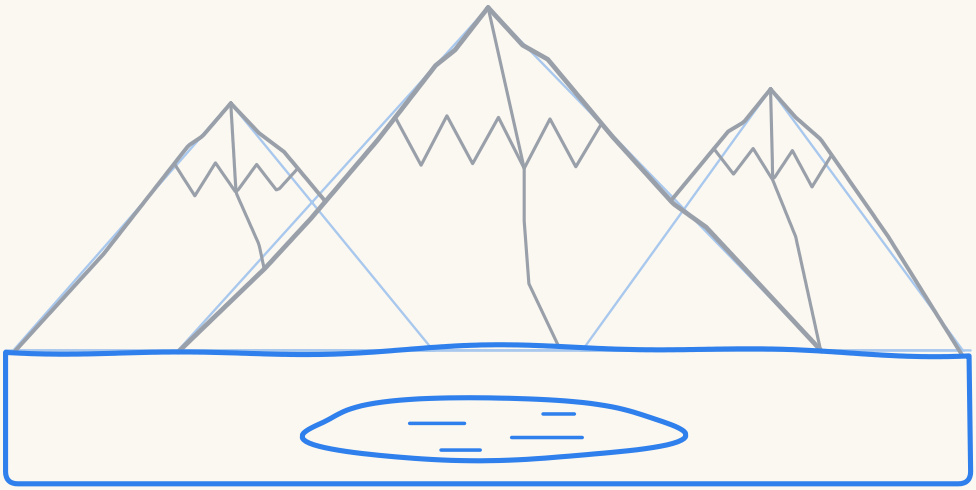
STEP 5 Split each peak with a ridge line



From the very top of each peak, draw a line down toward the ground, leaning a little to the right. It should pass through one of the snow points and bend once or twice on the way. This ridge divides the sunny side from the shadow side. With the sun on the left, the right side will be darker later.

💡 **Tip:** Decide where your sun will go before you draw the ridges. The shadow side always faces away from it.

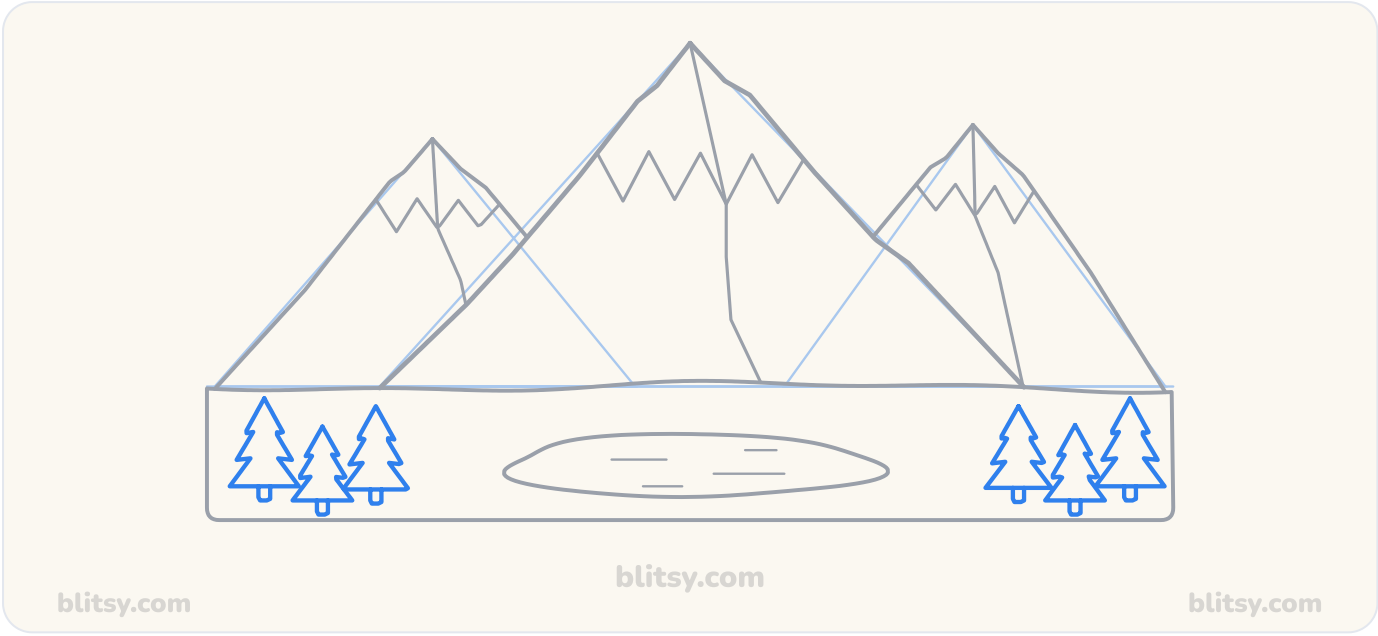
STEP 6 Add the meadow and a small lake



Trace the ground line with a gently wavy line, then close a band underneath it with straight sides and rounded bottom corners. In the middle of the band, draw a long, flat oval for the lake. I see beginners make lakes too round all the time. Seen from far away, water is wide and thin, so squash that oval a lot.

💡 **Tip:** Add three or four short flat dashes inside the lake. They read as ripples instantly.

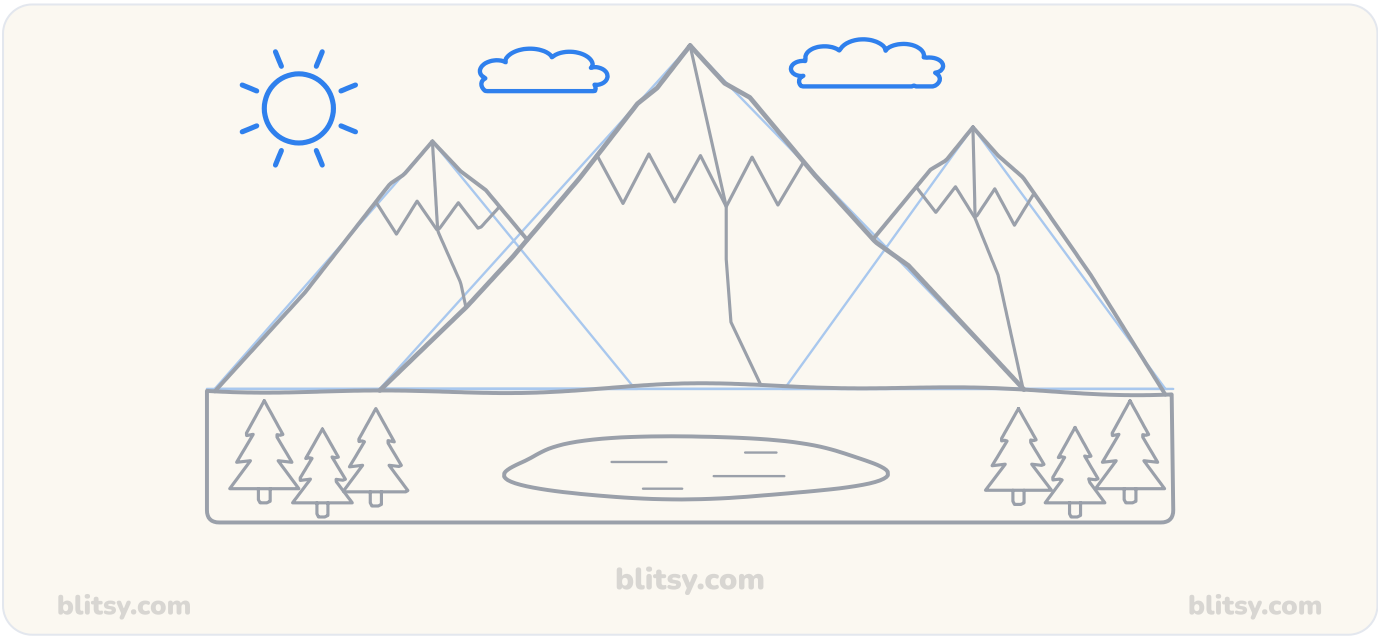
STEP 7 Draw a row of pine trees



On each side of the lake, draw three small pines. Each one is three triangles stacked from small to big, with a tiny rectangle trunk at the bottom. Draw the lowest tree in each group first. It's the nearest, so the two trees behind it stop where they meet its branches.

💡 **Tip:** Little kids can draw each pine as one tall triangle on a stick. It still looks like a forest from a distance.

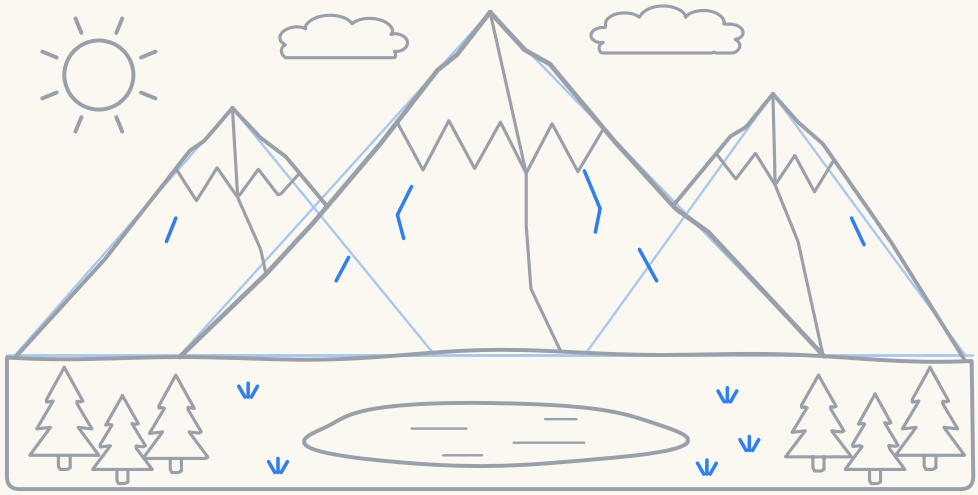
STEP 8 Put a sun and two clouds in the sky



Place the sun in the top left corner, on the same side as the light slopes. Give it a circle and eight short rays. Then add two puffy clouds with flat bottoms on either side of the tall peak. Keep both clouds small so the mountains stay the main event.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a gap between the clouds and the peaks. When a cloud touches a summit, the picture starts to feel crowded.

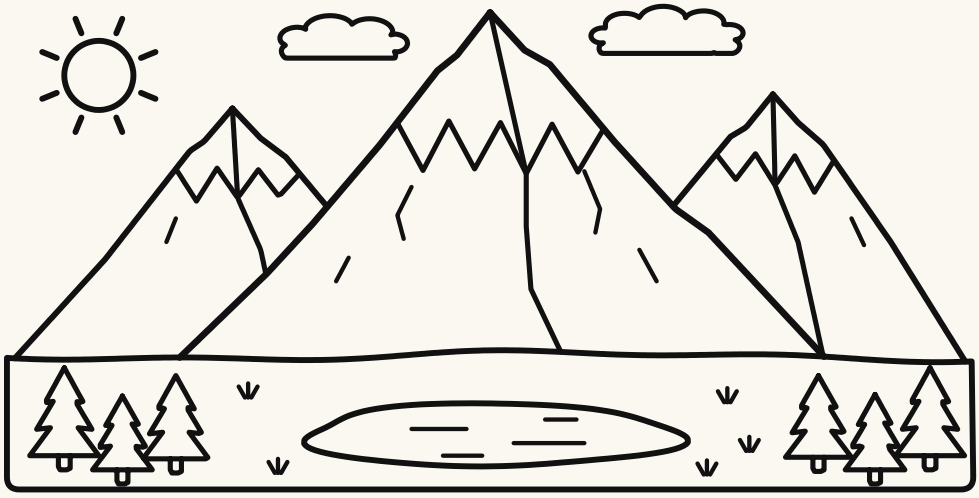
STEP 9 Add rock cracks and grass tufts



A few short broken lines on the slopes, just below the snow, turn smooth triangles into rock. Two or three per peak is enough. In the meadow, add little three-stroke grass tufts around the lake. These are tiny touches, yet they make the scene feel finished.

💡 **Tip:** Draw cracks in the same direction as the slope. Lines going across the slope look like scratches.

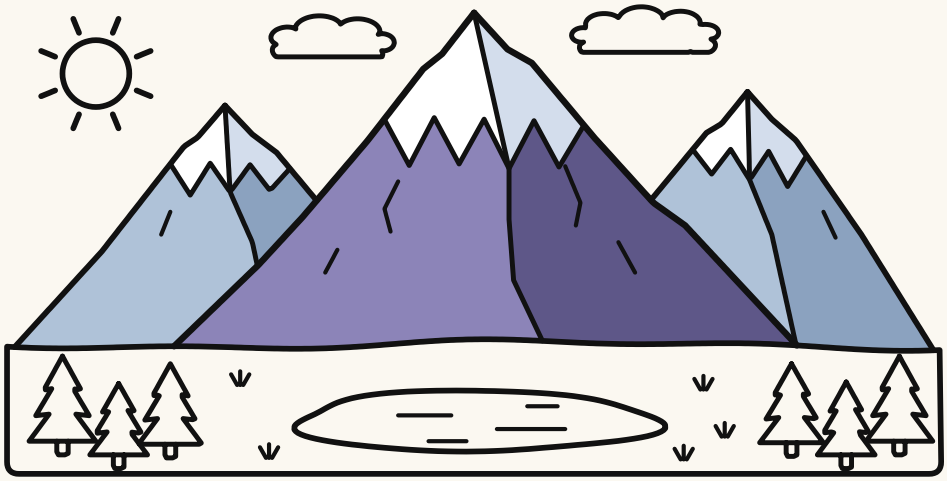
STEP 10 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Trace every line you want to keep with the black marker. I start at the top and work down so my hand never drags across wet ink. Give it a minute to dry, then erase the ground line and the three helper triangles.

💡 **Tip:** Erase in one direction with light strokes. Scrubbing back and forth can smear marker that isn't fully dry.

STEP 11 Color the peaks and the snow



Color the sunny side of the front peak purple and the shadow side dark purple. Use gray blue on the back peaks, pressing harder on their right sides so they get a shadow too. Leave the snow white on the sunny side and give the shaded snow a whisper of light gray. In my experience, that pale gray is what makes snow look three-dimensional.

💡 **Tip:** Paler colors on the back peaks push them into the distance. Keep the strongest color for the front.

STEP 12 Color the meadow, lake and sky



Fill the meadow with light green and the lake with light blue, leaving the ripple dashes alone. Pines get dark green with brown trunks. Finish with a yellow sun. The clouds can stay white, or you can shade the sky behind them very softly in blue.

💡 **Tip:** Color the big green meadow with small circles instead of back-and-forth strokes. It hides pencil marks.