How to Draw a Polar Bear

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

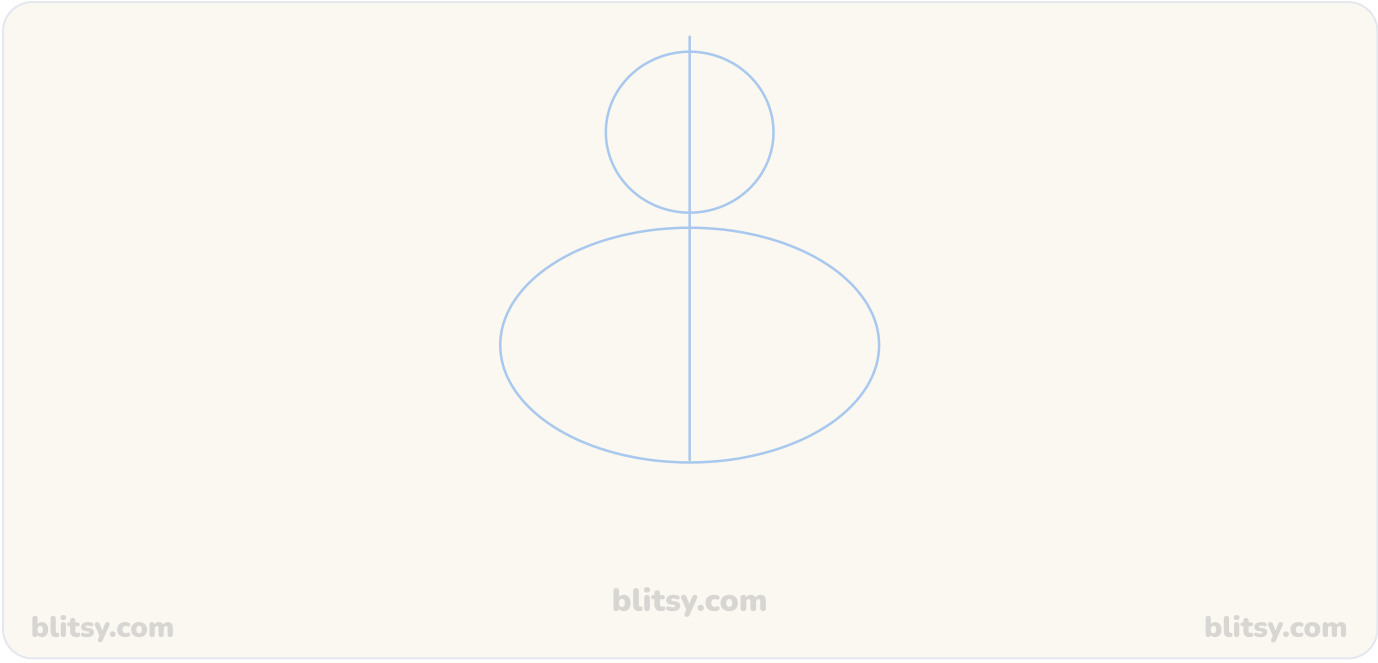
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils
- Plain paper

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 →

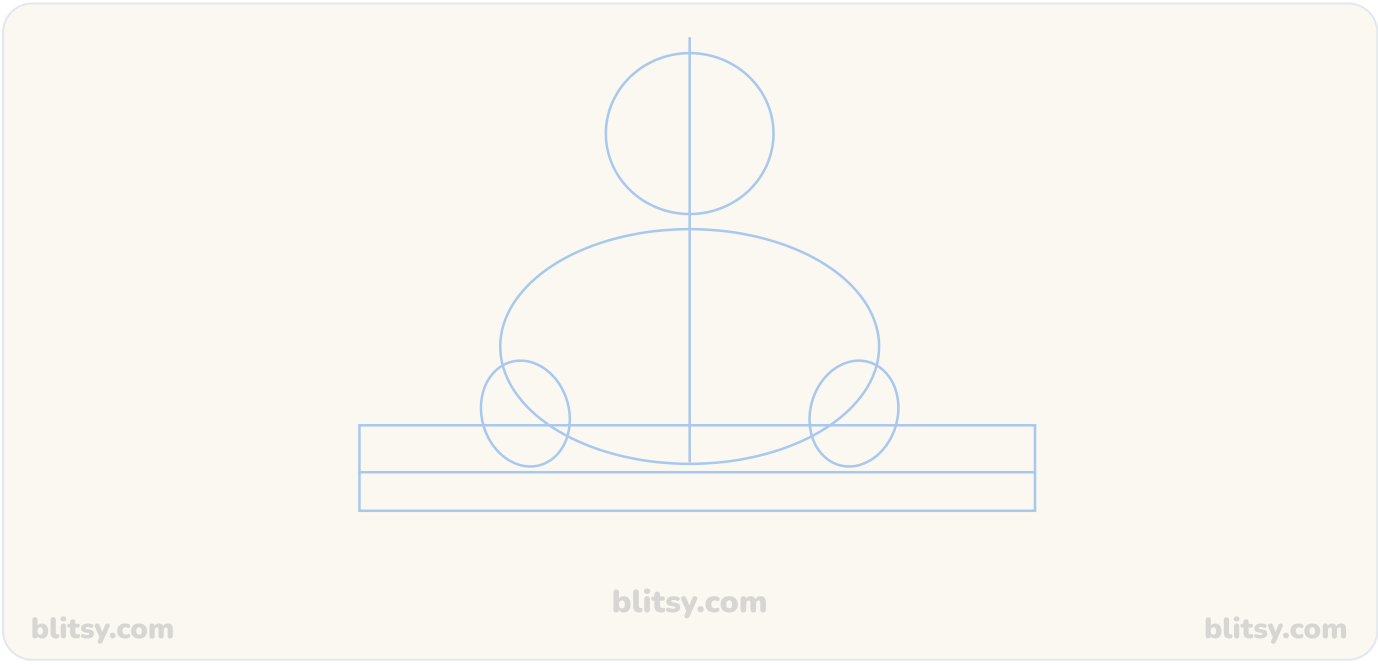
STEP 1 Sketch a head circle and a body oval



Near the top center of your paper, draw a circle for the head. Under it, draw a wide oval about twice as wide as the circle. Then run a straight line down through both. I never skip that center line on a front view, because it keeps the face and legs even.

💡 **Tip:** Keep your pencil pressure feather light so these shapes erase without leaving dents.

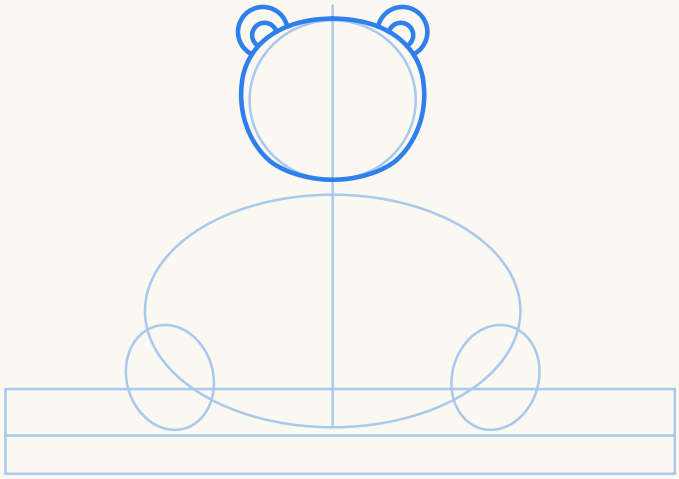
STEP 2 Add the ice block and two foot ovals



Draw a long, flat box under the body oval, much wider than the bear, with a line across its middle. The top half is the top of the ice and the bottom half is its side. Now place two upright ovals on the lower corners of the body oval for the back feet, tilted out a little at the top.

💡 **Tip:** Let the foot ovals overlap the body oval. Feet that float apart from the body look glued on.

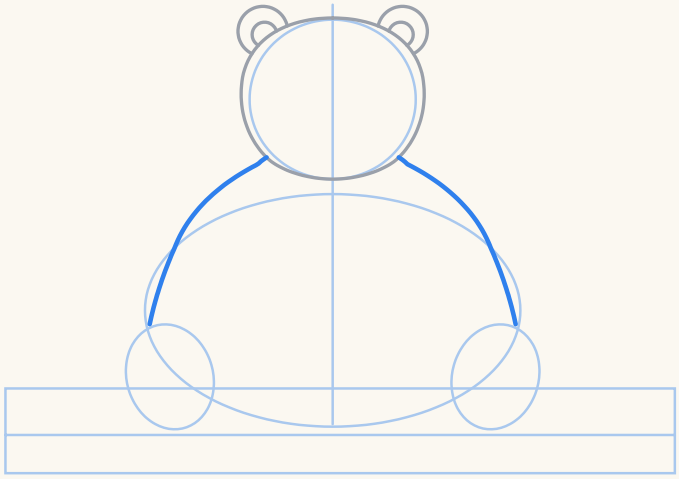
STEP 3 Draw the head and small ears



Go around the head circle with a slightly fuller line, flatter on top and a bit wider at the cheeks. Polar bears have short, round ears, so keep them small. I set them at the upper corners of the head, with only the top half showing, and add a smaller circle inside each one.

💡 **Tip:** If the ears look like a teddy bear's, shrink them. Tiny ears are one of the clearest polar bear clues.

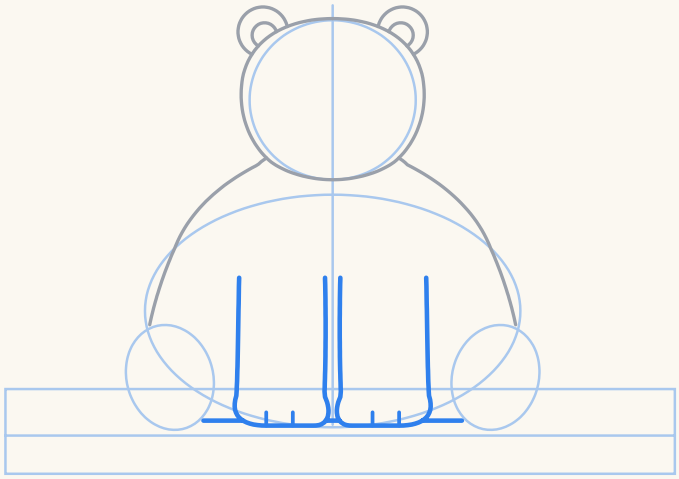
STEP 4 Draw the big sitting body



Start each side of the body just under the cheeks. Curve the line out and round over the shoulders, then down along the edge of the oval until it reaches the foot ovals. This is a heavy animal, so give it full shoulders instead of a narrow cone. Stop the lines where they meet the feet.

💡 **Tip:** Round shoulders make the bear look strong. Straight sloping sides turn it into a tent.

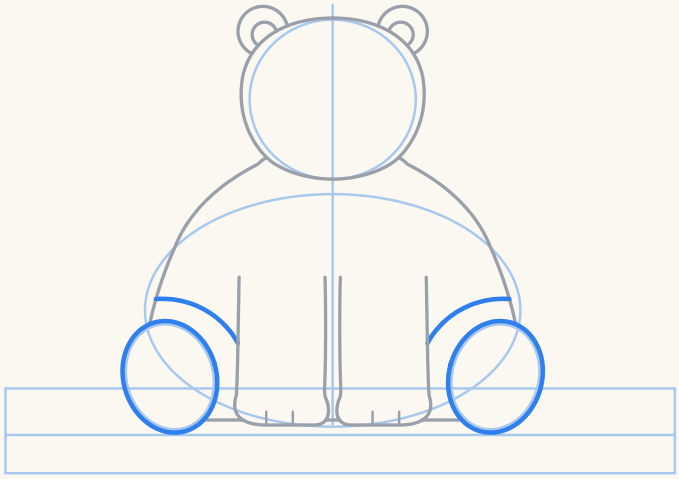
STEP 5 Add the two front legs



Drop two thick legs from the middle of the chest to the ice, with a thin gap between them. Round off the bottoms into paws, add two short toe lines on each, and draw a little ground line from each paw out to the feet.

💡 **Tip:** Start the leg lines partway down the chest and leave the tops open, since fur hides where the leg begins.

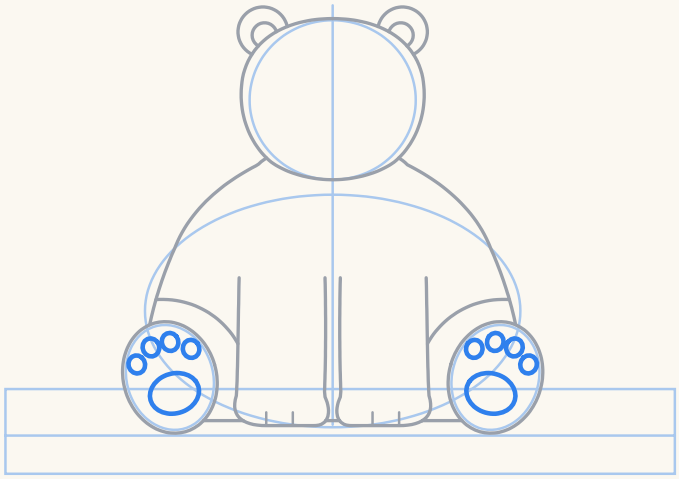
STEP 6 Draw the back feet facing you



Trace over the foot ovals with a firm line. Because the bear is sitting with its legs forward, we see the bottoms of its feet. Next, draw a curved thigh line from the side of the body down toward each front leg. Two simple curves show the folded back legs without any extra shapes.

💡 **Tip:** Keep both feet the same size. One big foot pulls the whole drawing off balance.

STEP 7 Add the black paw pads



Inside each foot, draw one wide oval pad in the lower half. Above it, in a gentle arc, draw four small toe pads. Real polar bears have five toes, but I use four because it reads more clearly at this size. These pads are what make the pose so cute.

💡 **Tip:** Space the toe pads evenly first, then make the middle two a touch higher than the outer two.

STEP 8 Draw the snout, nose and eyes



In the lower half of the face, draw a wide oval for the snout. Put a rounded triangle nose at its top, then a short line down and a soft W for the mouth. Place two small oval eyes above the snout with a dot of shine in each. Finish with two little V marks on the chest for fur.

💡 **Tip:** Small eyes set wide apart look more like a polar bear than big cartoon eyes do.

STEP 9 Turn the box into an ice floe



Use the box as a rough guide only. Make the back edge of the ice bumpy and slanted at the ends, then draw the front edge and the side below it with a slightly wavy bottom. Add short zigzag cracks on the side and a couple of bent lines on top.

💡 **Tip:** Stop the ice lines where they touch the bear. The bear sits on top, so it hides the ice behind it.

STEP 10 Add water and snowflakes



Below the ice, draw a wavy band of water that reaches past both ends of the floe and narrows to a point at each side. A short wiggle on each end shows ripples. In the sky, draw two snowflakes, one big and one small, each with six arms and a little V on every arm.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the three long lines of a snowflake first, crossing in the middle, then add the V shapes.

STEP 11 Ink your lines and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with the black pen: the bear, the ice, the water and the flakes. Skip the circle, the oval, the box, the center line and the foot guides. Give the ink a minute to dry, then erase. I always erase in one direction across the page so the paper stays smooth.

💡 **Tip:** Use a thinner pen, or a lighter hand, for the cracks, ripples and chest fur.

STEP 12 Color your polar bear



Leave most of the fur as white paper. With a light blue-gray, shade a band under the chin, along the right side of the head and body, and down one side of each leg. Fill the paw pads, eyes and nose black. Color the ice top very pale blue, its side light blue and the water sky blue.

💡 **Tip:** Shade only one side of the bear. Picking a single light direction makes the white fur look round.