How to Draw a Sloth

11 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

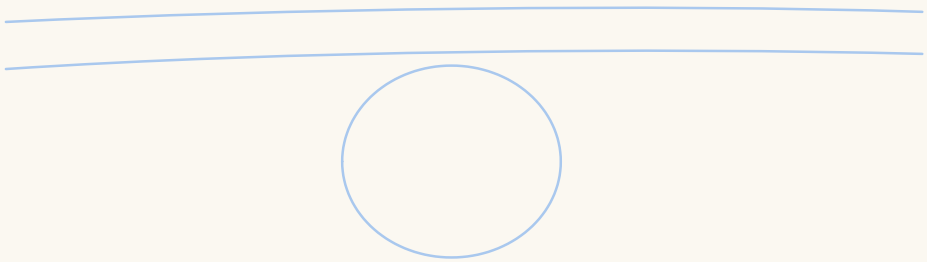
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker
- Colored pencils
- Plain paper

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 →

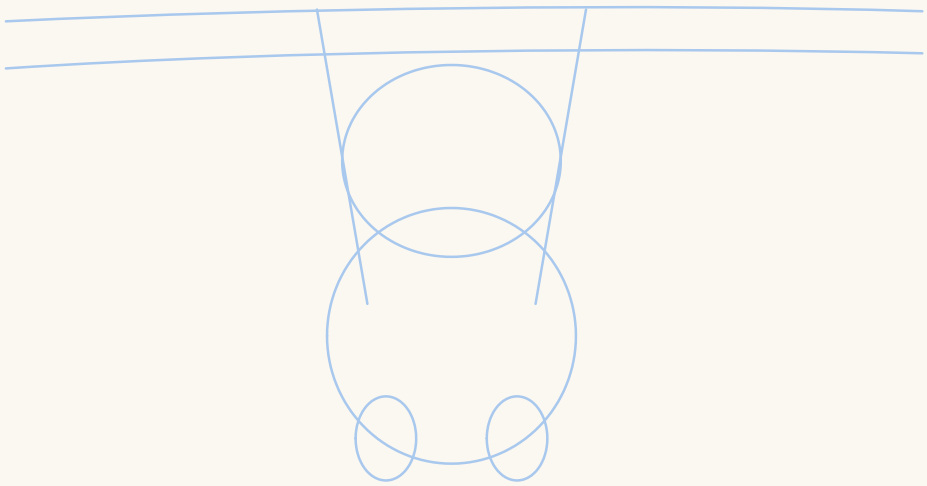
STEP 1 Sketch the branch and head guides



Near the top of your paper, draw two long lines across the page, about a finger's width apart. That's the branch. Just under its middle, draw an oval that's a little wider than it is tall for the head. Leave a small gap between the head and the branch, because the arms need room to reach up.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you can barely see the lines. Guides are meant to disappear.

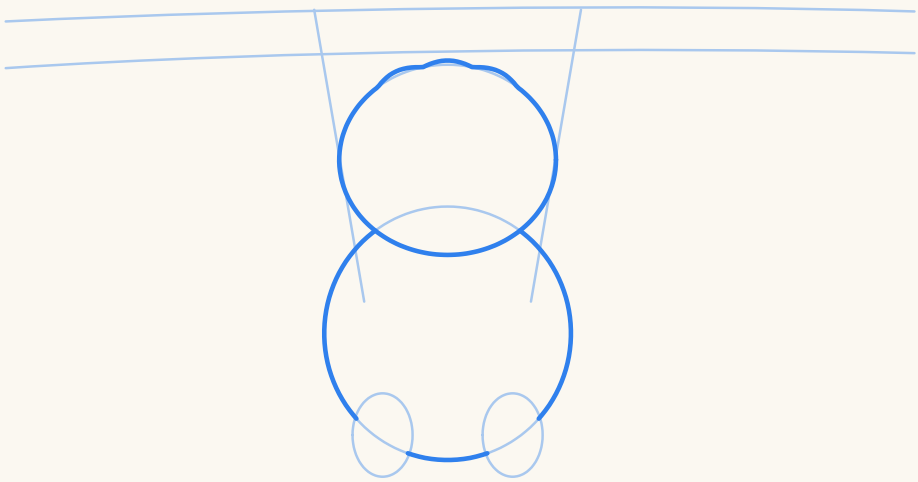
STEP 2 Add guides for the body and limbs



Below the head, draw a bigger circle for the body so it overlaps the bottom of the head a bit. Then draw two straight lines from the branch down to the sides of the body, leaning in like a tall letter A without the crossbar. Finish with two small upright ovals at the bottom of the body for the legs.

💡 **Tip:** Check that the two arm lines lean in by the same amount before moving on.

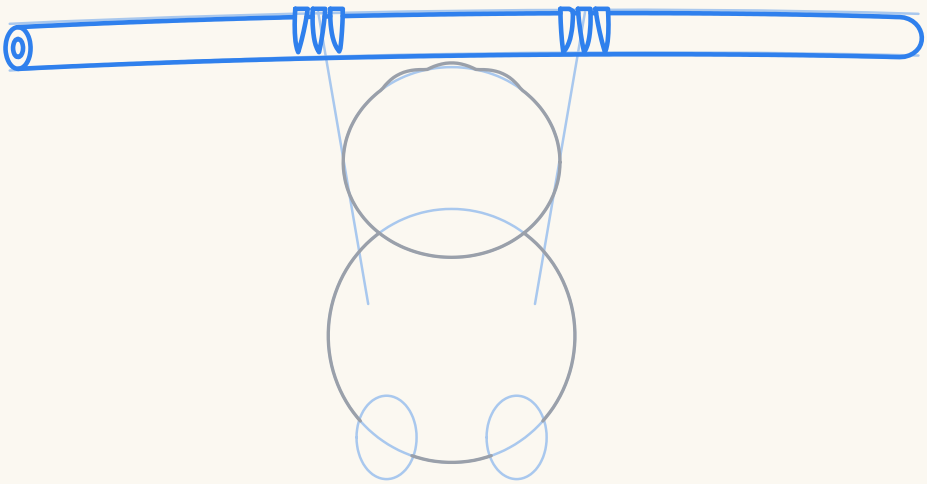
STEP 3 Draw the head and body outline



Trace over the head oval with a firmer line, and give the top three soft little bumps for fluffy fur. I like the bumps small, since big ones start to look like a crown. Next, trace the body circle, but stop where the head sits in front of it and where the leg ovals cross it.

💡 **Tip:** Turn your paper as you go around a circle so your hand always pulls the line toward you.

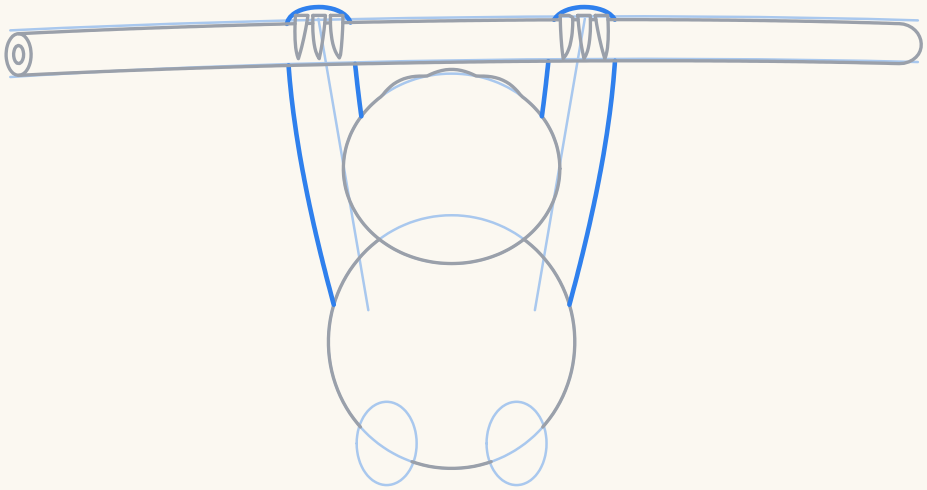
STEP 4 Draw the branch and the hooked claws



Go over the two branch guides and close the right end with a rounded curve. On the left end, draw a small upright oval with a tiny one inside it, so the branch looks like it was cut. Then, where each arm line meets the branch, add three long curved claws hanging over the front of the wood.

💡 **Tip:** Make the claws longer than you think. Sloth claws are one of the things people recognise first.

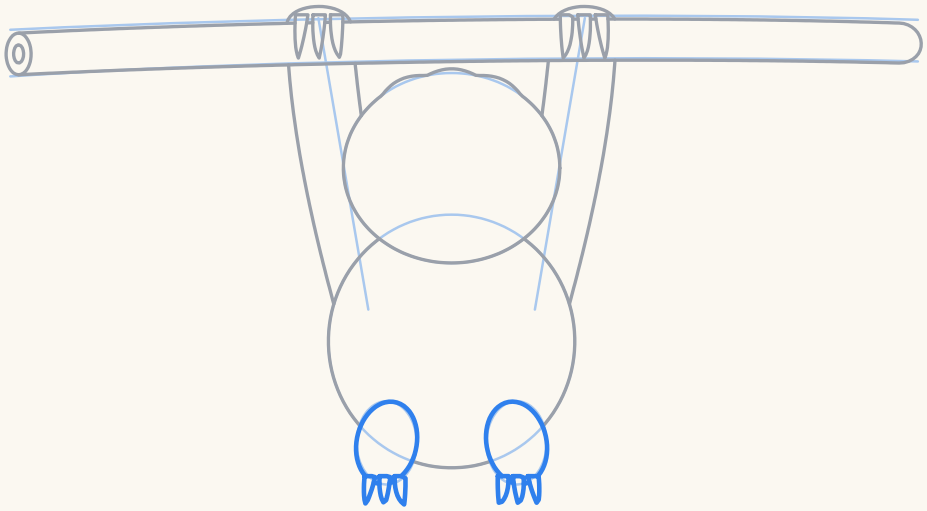
STEP 5 Draw the long arms



Each arm is a long tube from the branch down to the body. Start on the outside edge and draw a gentle curve that widens slightly near the shoulder. Draw the inside edge too, stopping where it meets the head. Above the branch, add a small rounded bump behind the claws for the paw. The arm lines simply stop at the branch, because the wood is in front of them.

💡 **Tip:** Keep both arms about as thick as the claws are wide, or the paws will look tiny.

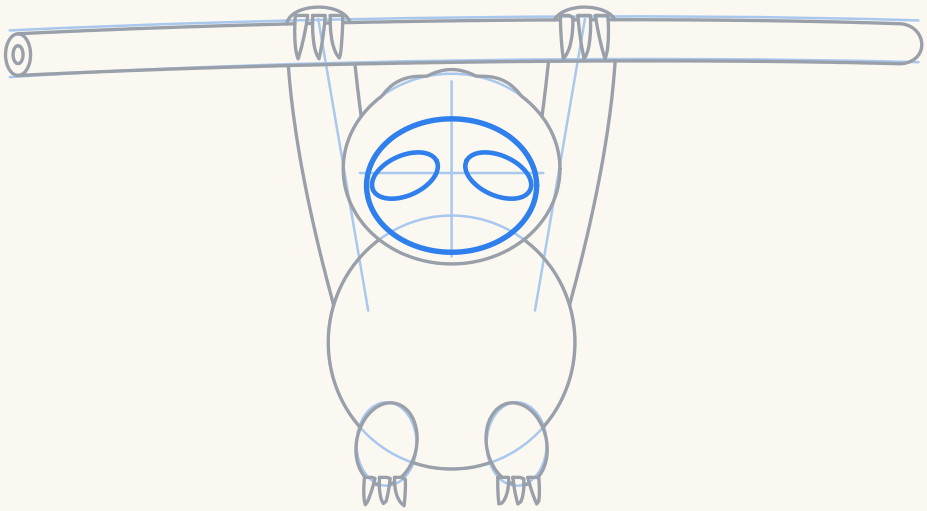
STEP 6 Add the dangling legs and toes



Trace the leg ovals into round, slightly tilted shapes hanging from the bottom of the body. Most beginners make the legs too long here. A sloth's back legs are short and chunky when it hangs like this. Under each leg, add three short claws pointing down.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the middle toe claw first, then one on each side. It keeps them evenly spaced.

STEP 7 Draw the face mask and eye patches



Lightly mark a cross on the head: one line down the middle and one across, a bit above the center. Around that cross, draw a wide oval for the pale face. On the across line, draw two flat ovals that tilt down toward the outside. Those dark patches give a sloth its famous sleepy look.

💡 **Tip:** Tilt the outer ends of both patches downward. Tilting them up makes the face look cross.

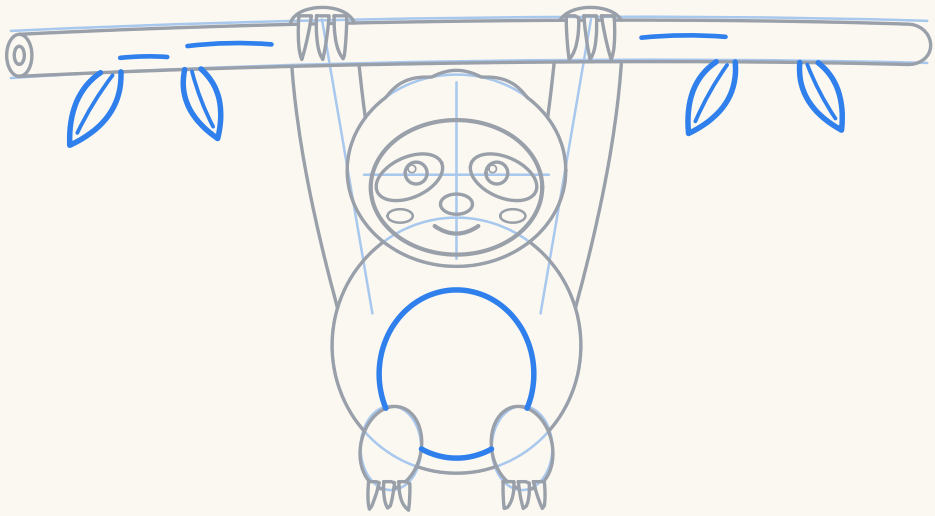
STEP 8 Give it eyes, a nose and a smile



Inside each patch, close to the nose side, draw a small circle with an even smaller one in it for the shine. Under the cross, add a short wide oval for the nose. A small curve below it makes the smile. I put two tiny ovals on the cheeks as well, just outside the patches.

💡 **Tip:** Put both eye shines on the same side. Different sides make the eyes look like they point in two directions.

STEP 9 Add the belly, bark lines and leaves



Draw a tall oval in the middle of the body for the lighter belly, stopping where the legs cover it. Add three or four short strokes along the branch for bark. Then hang four narrow leaves from the bottom edge of the branch, two on each side, each with a line down its middle.

💡 **Tip:** Point the leaves in slightly different directions so they don't look like a row of teeth.

STEP 10 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Now trace every line you want to keep with your black marker. I start with the face, while my hand is fresh, and leave the long branch for last. Skip all the guide lines, including the cross on the face. Give the ink a minute to dry, then erase every bit of pencil.

💡 **Tip:** Rest the side of your hand on a scrap of paper so it doesn't smudge the fresh ink.

STEP 11 Color your sloth



Real sloths are a soft grayish brown, so a light brown works well for the head and body, plus the arms and legs. Use cream for the face and a tan for the belly and the cut end of the branch. The branch itself gets a deeper brown, and the leaves get green. Finish with dark brown for the eye patches, then the nose and claws, black eyes and pink cheeks.

💡 **Tip:** Color the fur in short strokes that follow the shape. It looks a little fuzzy, which suits a sloth.