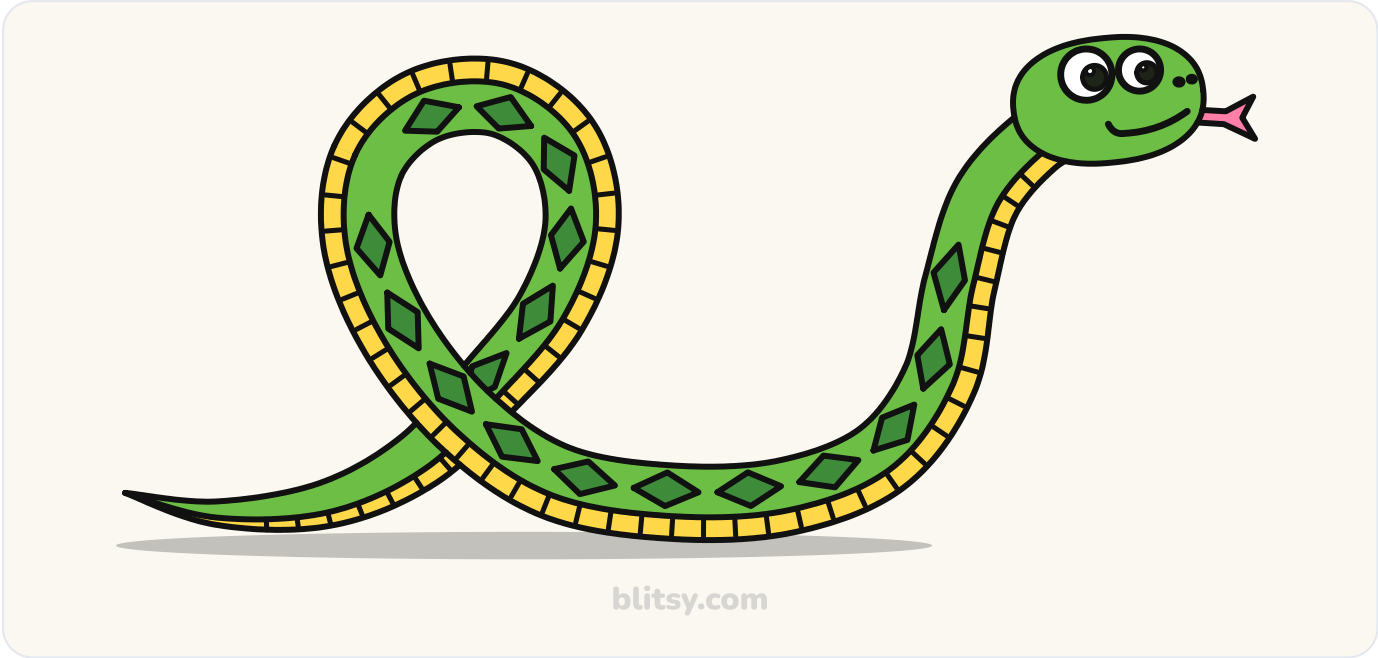
How to Draw a Snake

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

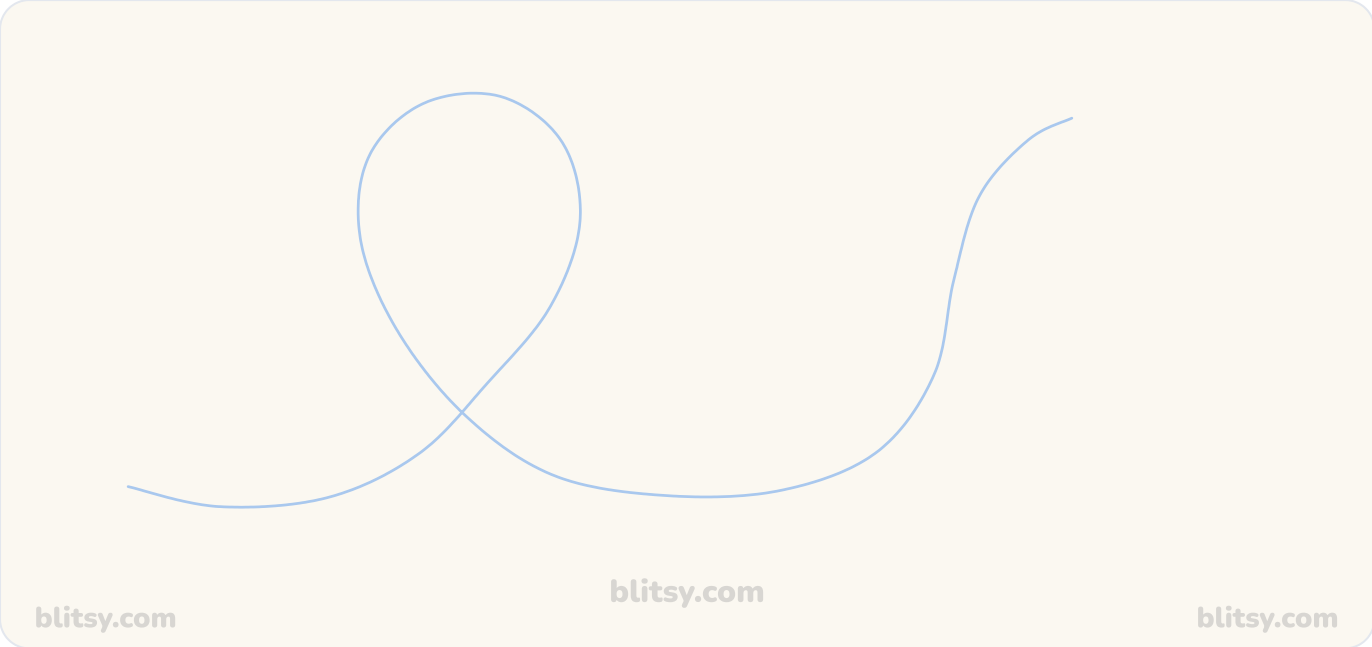
- A pencil
- A soft eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils or markers
- Paper turned sideways

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 →

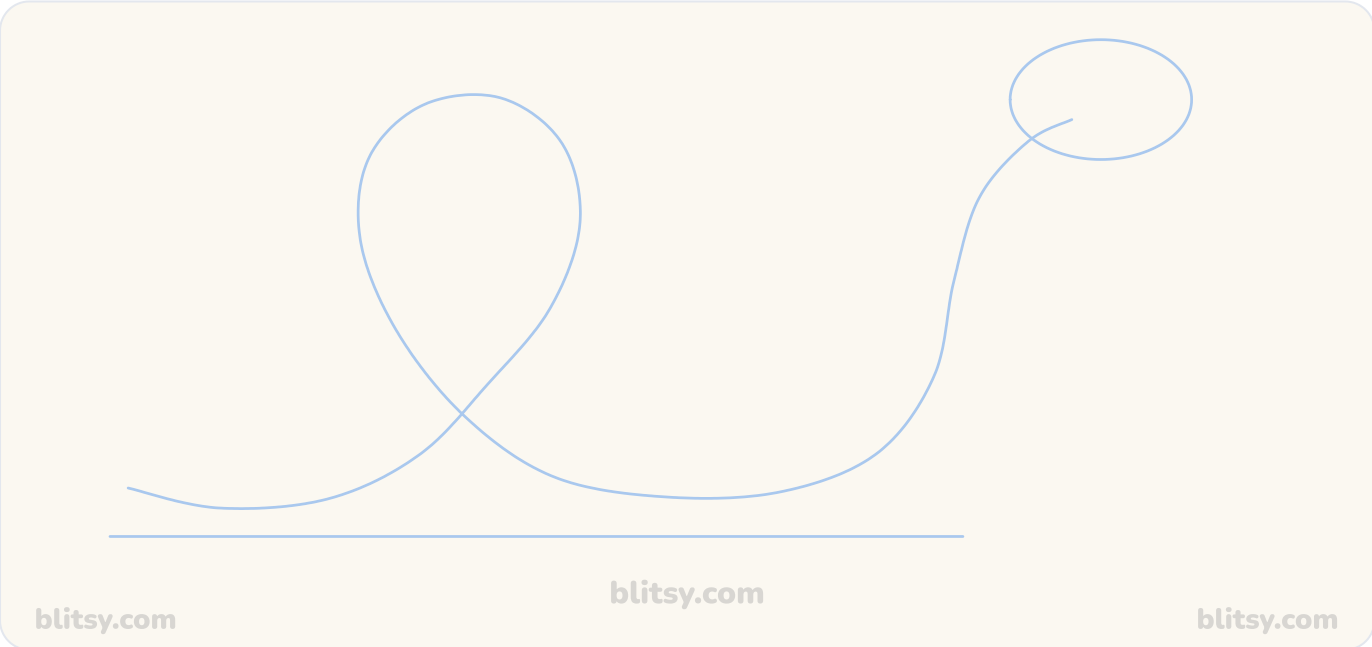
STEP 1 Draw one flowing center line



Start near the lower left and draw one long, light line: rise up to the right, curl over the top into a loop, come back down across your own line, run along the bottom and lift up on the right where the head goes. This line is the spine of the whole snake. I draw it in one slow motion, because short scratchy pieces turn into a lumpy body later.

💡 **Tip:** Practice the loop in the air above the paper once before you touch down.

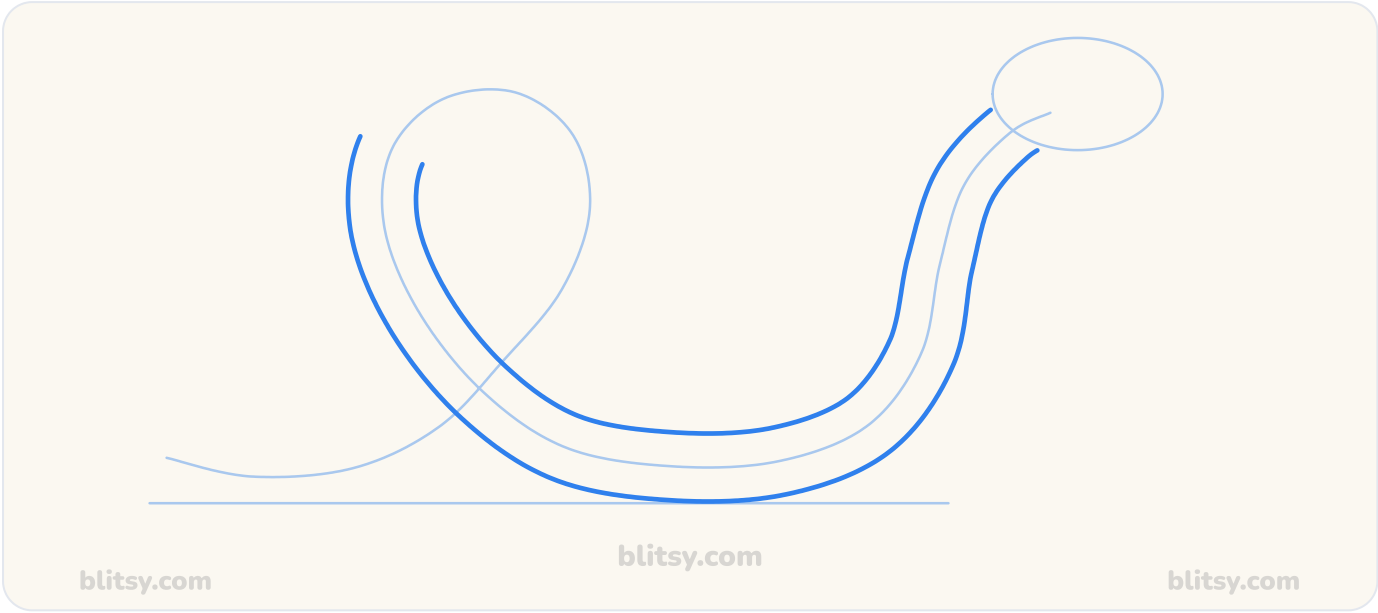
STEP 2 Add a head oval and a ground line



At the top end of the line, sketch a wide oval tilted a little upward on the right, about twice as wide as the body will be thick. Then draw a light, flat line under the lowest part of the curve. Your snake rests on it, so it won't look like it's floating.

💡 **Tip:** The head oval should overlap the end of the center line, not sit beside it.

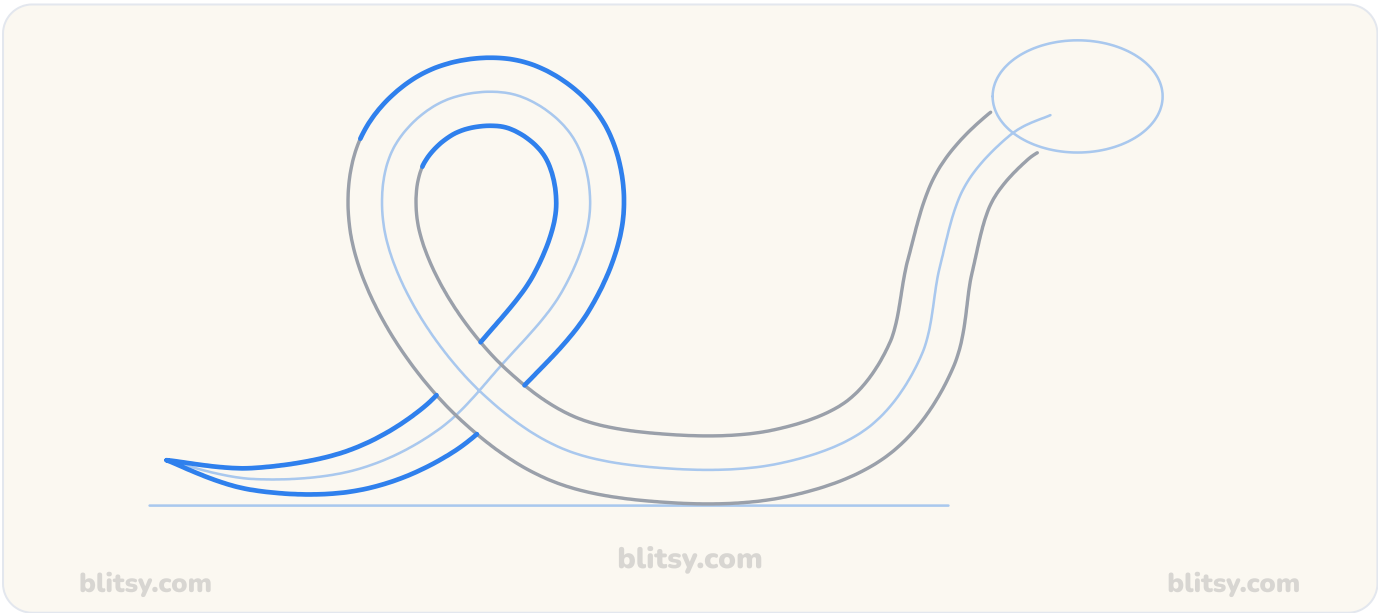
STEP 3 Thicken the front part of the body



Now give the line some width. Begin where the loop starts coming down on the left and draw two lines, one on each side of the center line, keeping the same gap all along. Follow them across the crossing, along the ground and up into the head oval. This part passes in front, so I draw it whole, with no breaks.

💡 **Tip:** Glance at the gap every few centimeters. If it widens, pull the next bit back in.

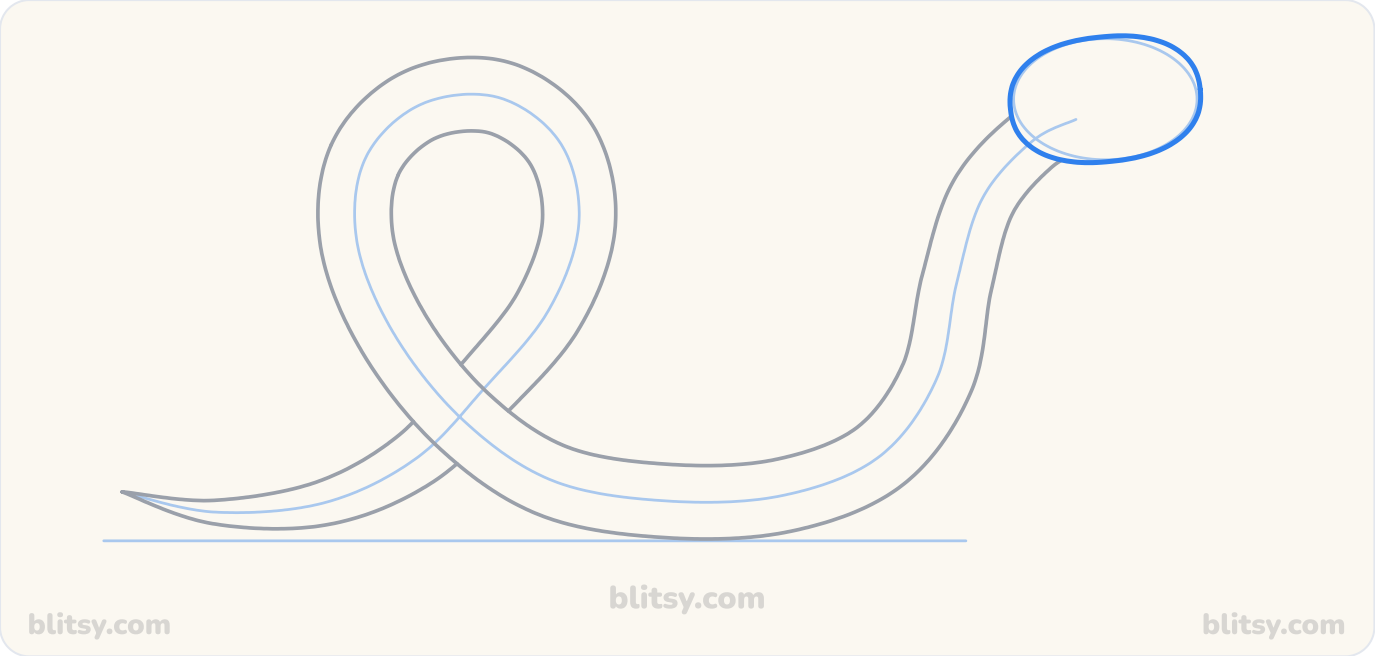
STEP 4 Draw the back part and a pointed tail



Go back to where the front part began and draw the rest of the body the other way: over the loop, down the rising stroke and out to the tail. Wherever these lines meet the front part, stop, then pick them up again on the other side, as if the body slides underneath. Near the end, bring the two lines together into a sharp point.

💡 **Tip:** Start narrowing the tail early. A long, slow taper looks much more natural than a sudden point.

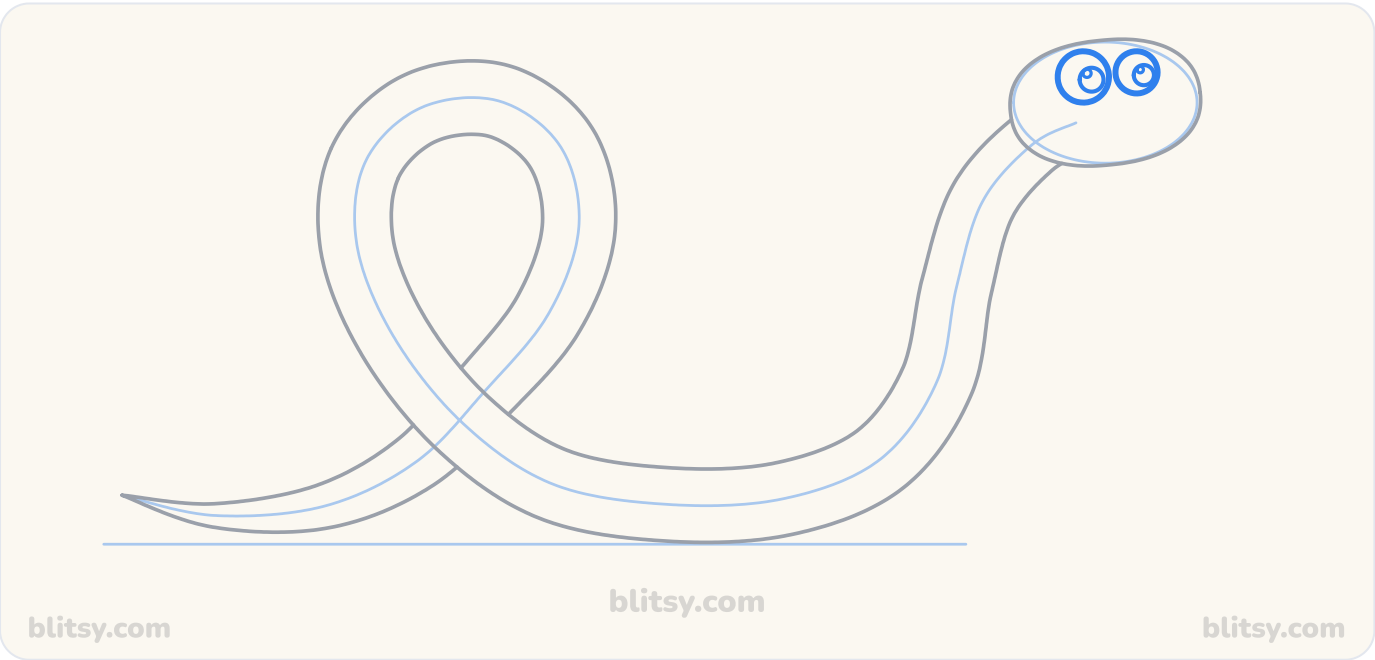
STEP 5 Round off the head



Trace the head oval with a firmer line, letting the front bulge a little so the snout feels full. The neck lines should run right into it. Snakes don't really have a separate neck, but in my cartoon version a head slightly wider than the body is what keeps it from looking like a worm.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the back of the head round. A flat back makes it look like a sock puppet.

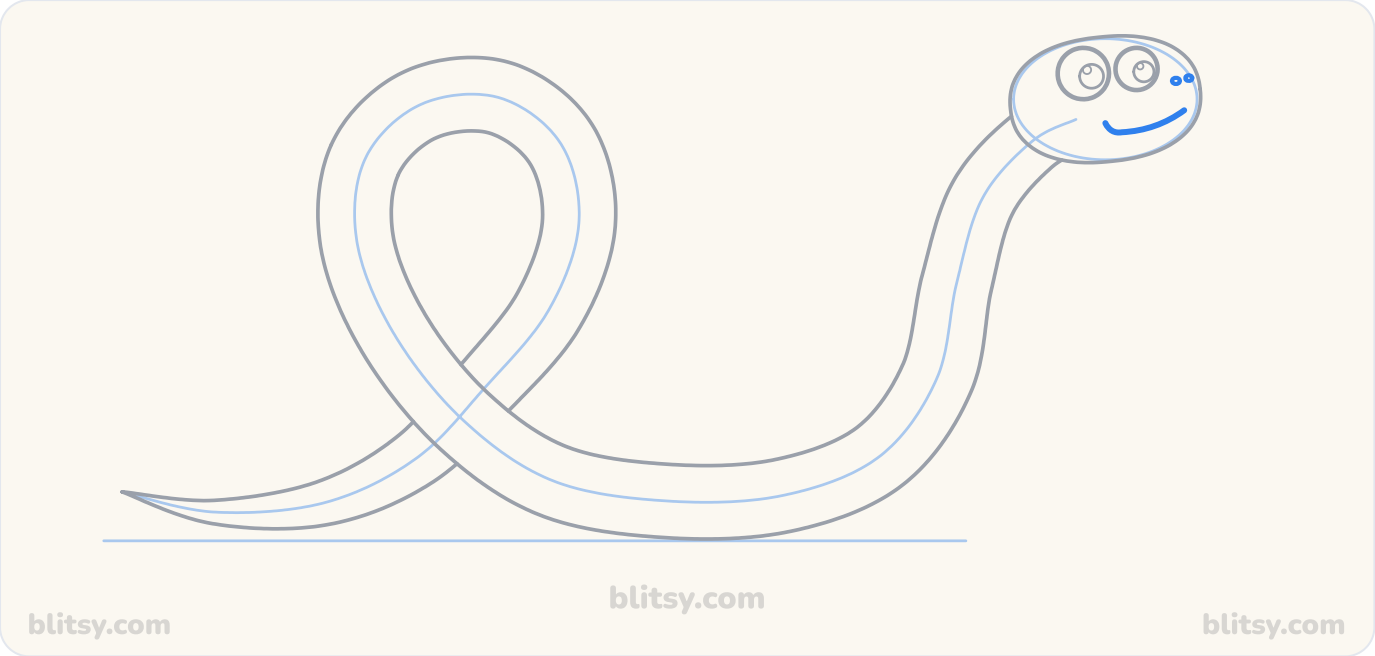
STEP 6 Give it two big friendly eyes



Draw two circles near the top of the head, the near one slightly bigger. Add a dark pupil in each, nudged toward the front so the snake looks where it's going, plus a tiny shine circle. Big round eyes high on the head make this snake friendly. Small slanted ones would make it look sneaky.

💡 **Tip:** Put both pupils on the same side of their circles, or the snake will look cross-eyed.

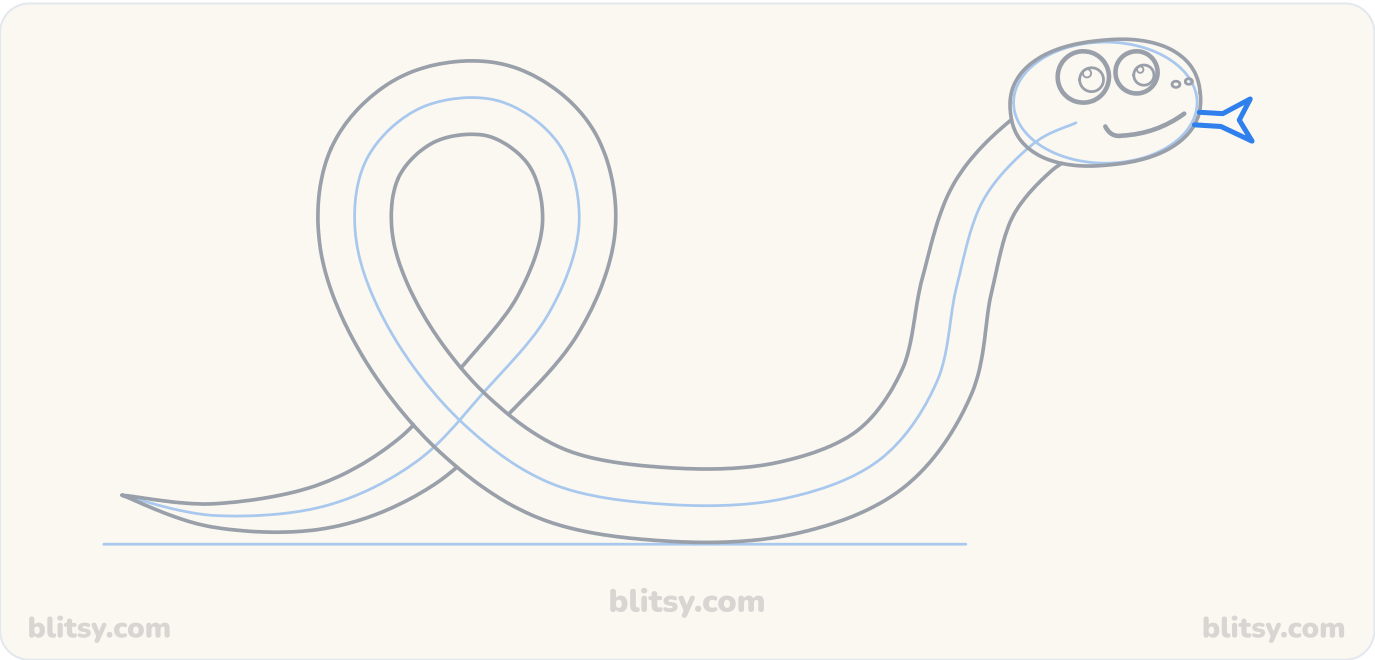
STEP 7 Add a smile and two nostrils



Under the eyes, draw a gentle curve from the front of the snout back toward the middle of the head, ending in a small hook like a dimple. Two tiny ovals near the tip are the nostrils. I keep the smile in the lower half of the head so there's green space between it and the eyes.

💡 **Tip:** A smile that's too long reaches the neck and looks like the head could pop open.

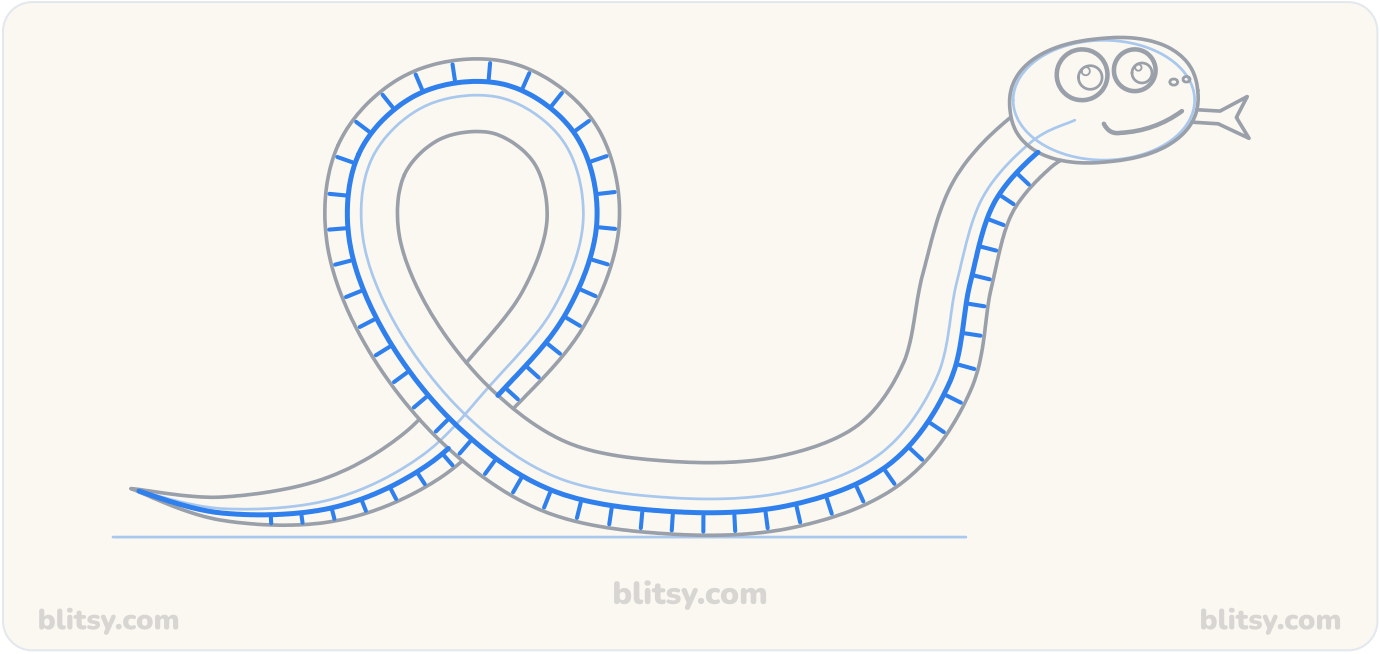
STEP 8 Draw the forked tongue



From the front of the mouth, pull out a short, thin strip and split its end into two pointed tips, like a letter Y lying on its side. Real snakes flick their tongues to pick up scent from the air and carry it to a special organ in the roof of the mouth. A snake smells with its tongue.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the tongue shorter than the head. A long one quickly looks like a ribbon.

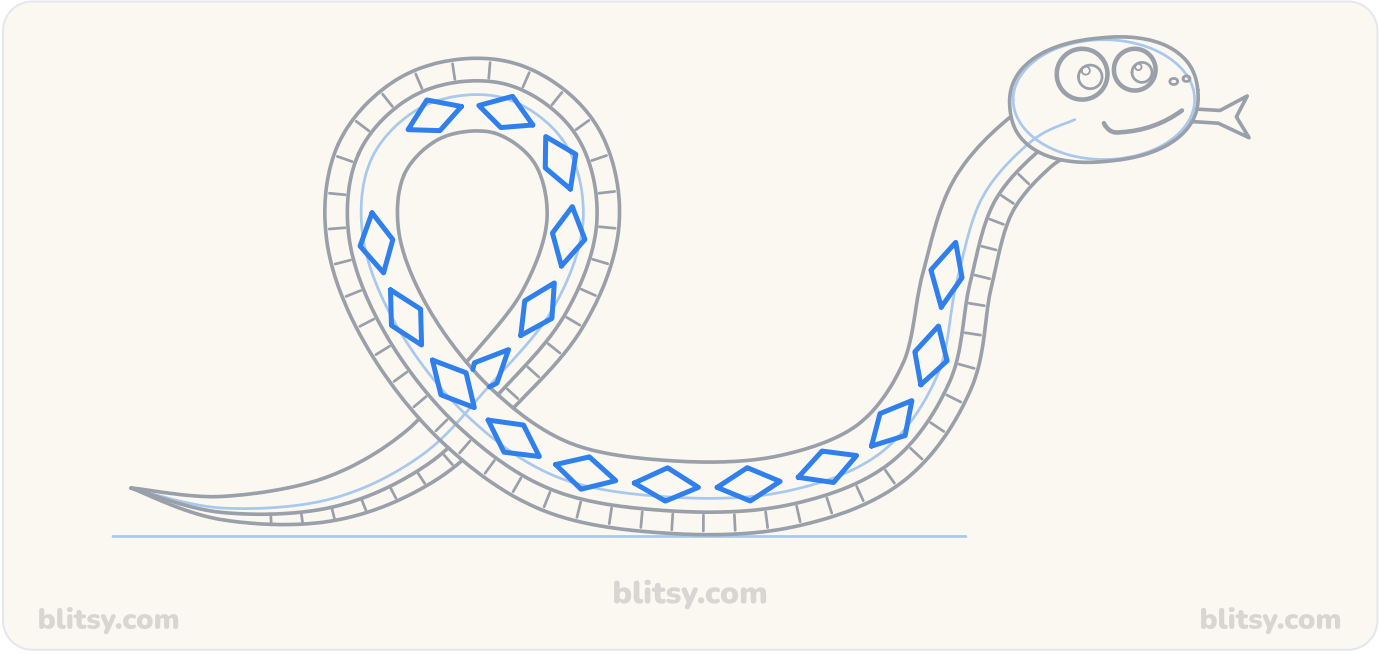
STEP 9 Mark the belly band and stripes



Inside the body, draw a line alongside the lower edge, about a third of the way in. Keep it on the same side all the way: under the tail, around the outside of the loop and up the front of the neck. Then cross the band with short lines. They stand for the wide belly scales that help a real snake grip the ground.

💡 **Tip:** Space the stripes by eye, not by ruler. Slightly uneven looks more alive.

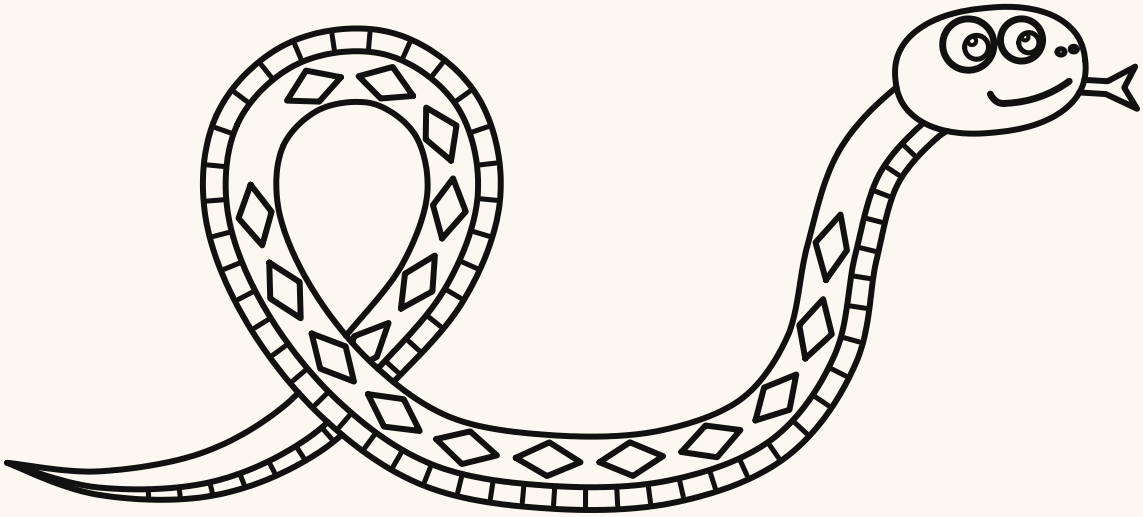
STEP 10 Add diamonds along the back



Fill the top half of the body with a row of diamonds, each pointing along the body, with about one diamond's length between them. Around the loop, turn each one to follow the curve. Where the back part slips under the front part, a diamond can be cut in half. Skip the thin end of the tail.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the diamonds at the bends first, then fill in the straighter stretches.

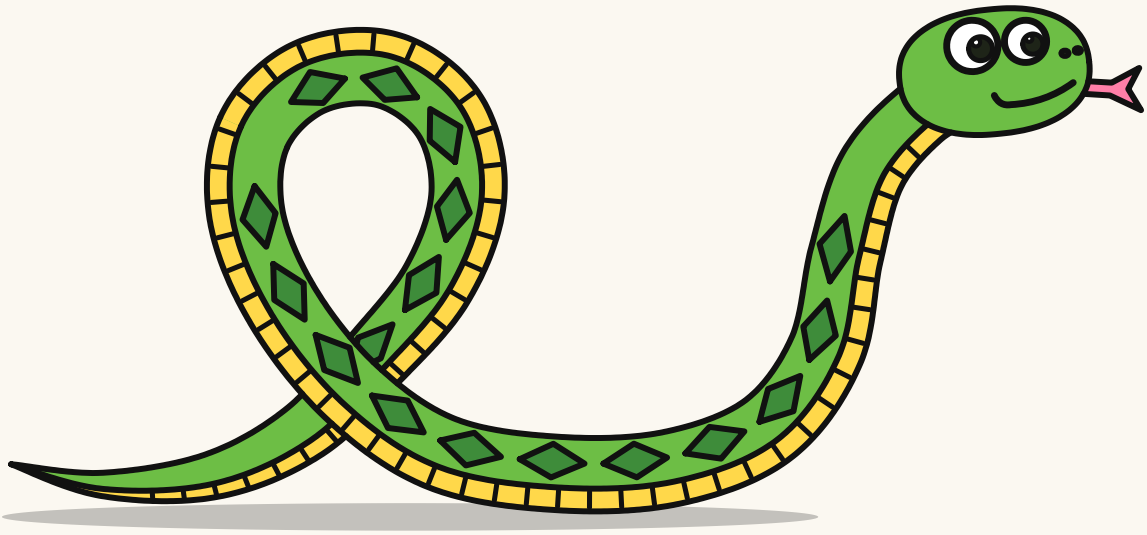
STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Go over every line you want to keep with the black pen, from the body edges to the stripes and diamonds. Leave the center line, head oval and ground line in pencil. Let the ink dry for a minute, then erase all the pencil, and the snake suddenly looks clean.

💡 **Tip:** Ink long body curves with your whole arm moving, not just your fingers.

STEP 12 Color your snake



Color the body and head bright green, then use dark green inside each diamond. Fill the belly band yellow and the tongue pink, and leave the eyes white with black pupils. A soft gray shadow under the snake sets it on the ground. Green and yellow is just my pick, so check the ideas below first.

💡 **Tip:** Color the green in the direction the body flows to avoid streaks across it.