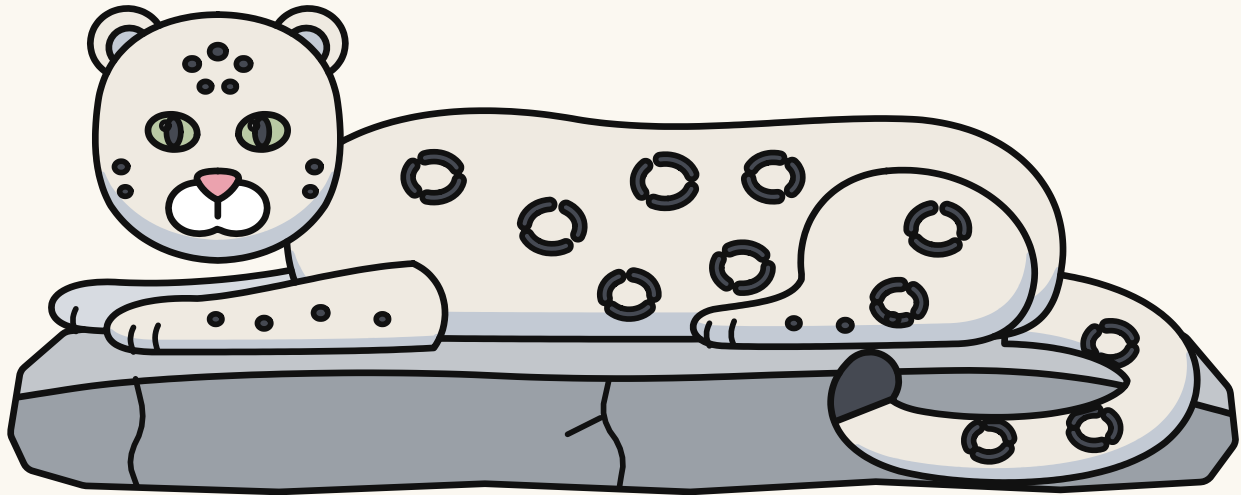


How to Draw a Snow Leopard

12 easy steps for beginners



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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 Start with a head circle and a cross

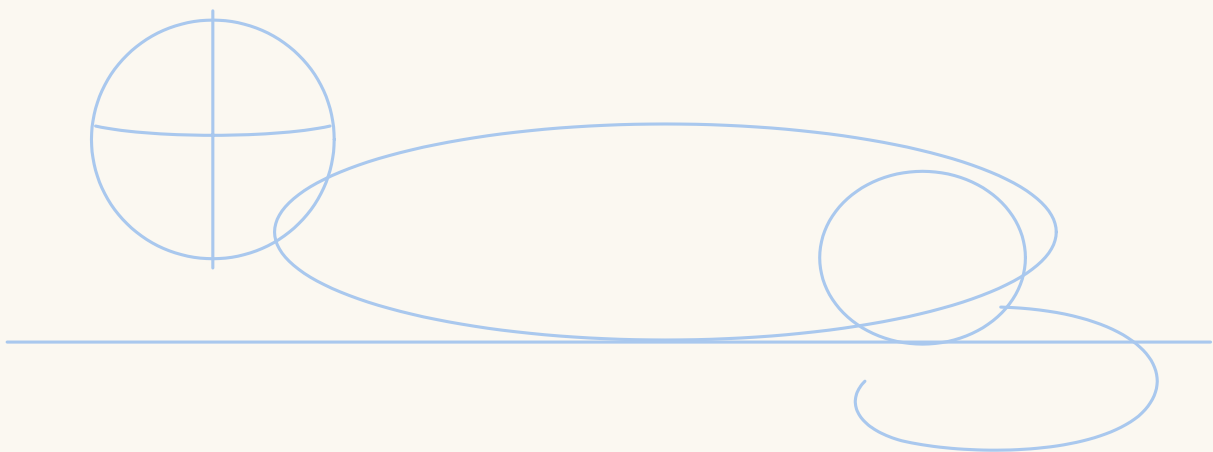
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Turn the paper sideways and sketch a circle near the upper left, about a fifth of the page wide. Draw a vertical line through the middle, then a slightly curved line across it, a bit above the center. That curve is where the eyes go.

 **Tip:** Hold the pencil far back from the tip. You'll press more gently without trying.

STEP 2 Add the body and hip guides

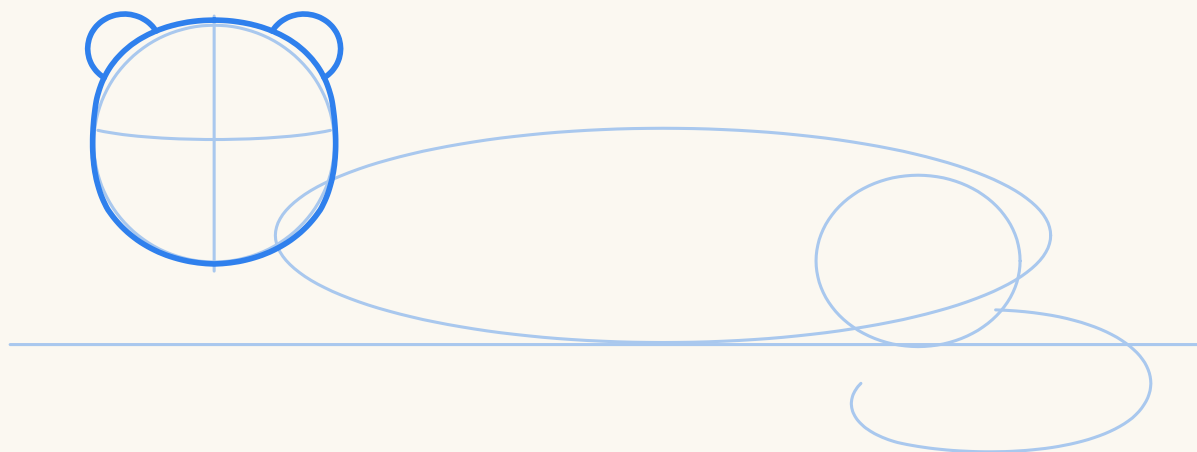
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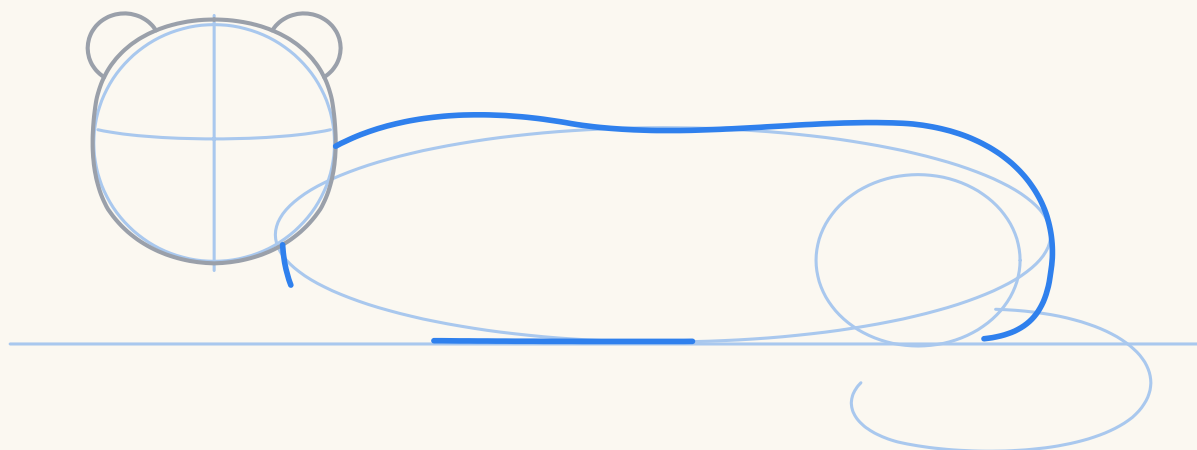
Sketch a long, flat oval to the right of the head, overlapping its lower edge, roughly three times as long as the head. At the far end, draw a smaller circle for the hip. Run a straight line under everything for the rock top, and add a looping curve below the hip for the tail.

 **Tip:** A lying cat is long and low. If your oval looks tall, stretch it sideways before going on.

STEP 3 Draw the round head and small ears

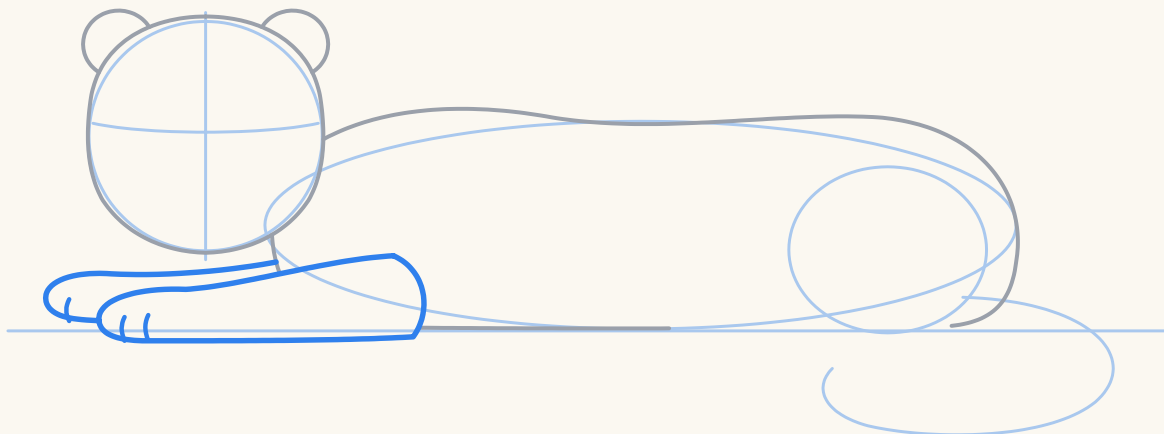
Go over the head circle, letting the cheeks bulge out a little below the cross line. Then put two small half circles on top, set wide apart. I keep these ears tiny on purpose. Snow leopards have short, rounded ears, and big pointed ones would turn this into a house cat.

 **Tip:** Compare the ears with a coin next to a plate. They should look that small against the head.

STEP 4 Shape the long lying body

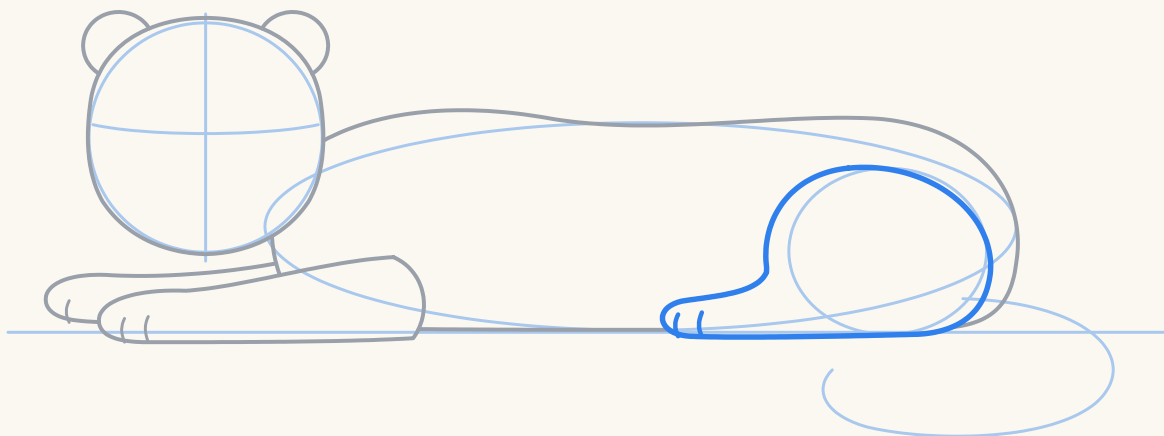
Start behind the head and draw the back along the top of the oval, with a soft bump over the shoulders and a rise toward the hip. Curve it down around the rump to the rock line. Then mark only the middle of the belly, because the legs will cover the rest.

 **Tip:** Stop the line wherever a leg will sit in front. Leaving gaps now saves erasing later.

STEP 5 Stretch out the front legs and big paws

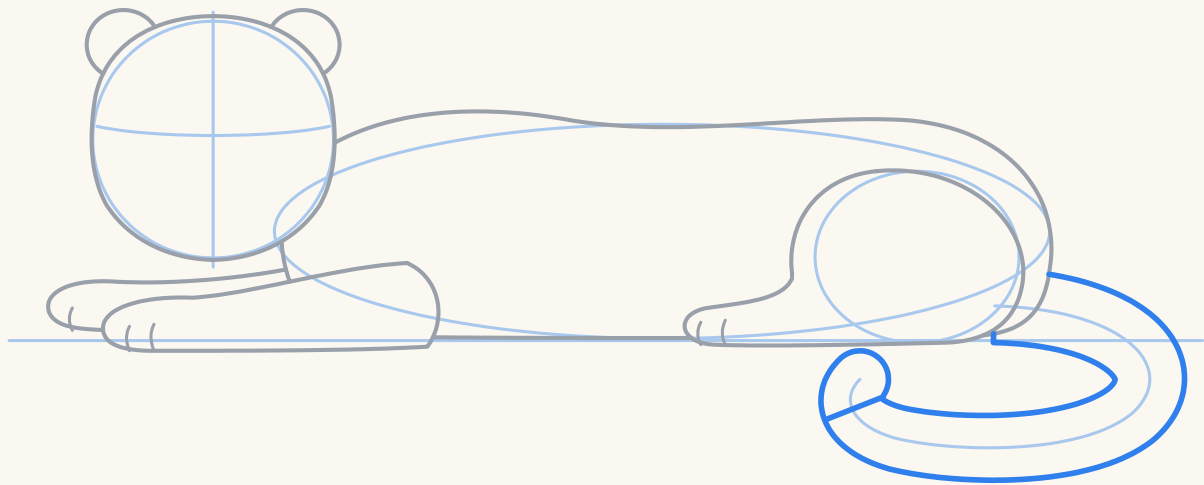
Both front legs reach forward under the chin. Draw the near leg as a thick tube ending in a wide, rounded paw on the rock line. The far leg sits just above and behind it, with its paw poking out further left. Add two toe lines on each paw.

Tip: Make the paws wider than the legs. Big paws read as snowshoes, which is exactly right for this cat.

STEP 6 Add the round back leg

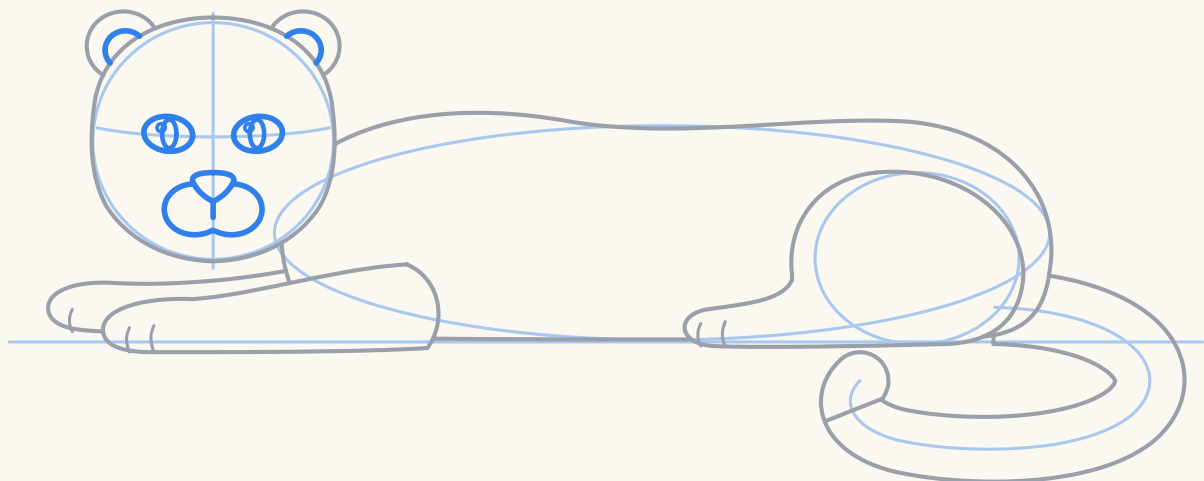
Trace the hip circle to make a big, round haunch. From its lower front edge, draw the hind foot as a long, flat shape tucked forward along the rock, with two toe lines. When a cat lies down like this, the back leg folds into almost a perfect circle.

Tip: Let the haunch bulge past the back line a little. That roundness is what tells us the leg is folded.

STEP 7 Draw the thick curled tail

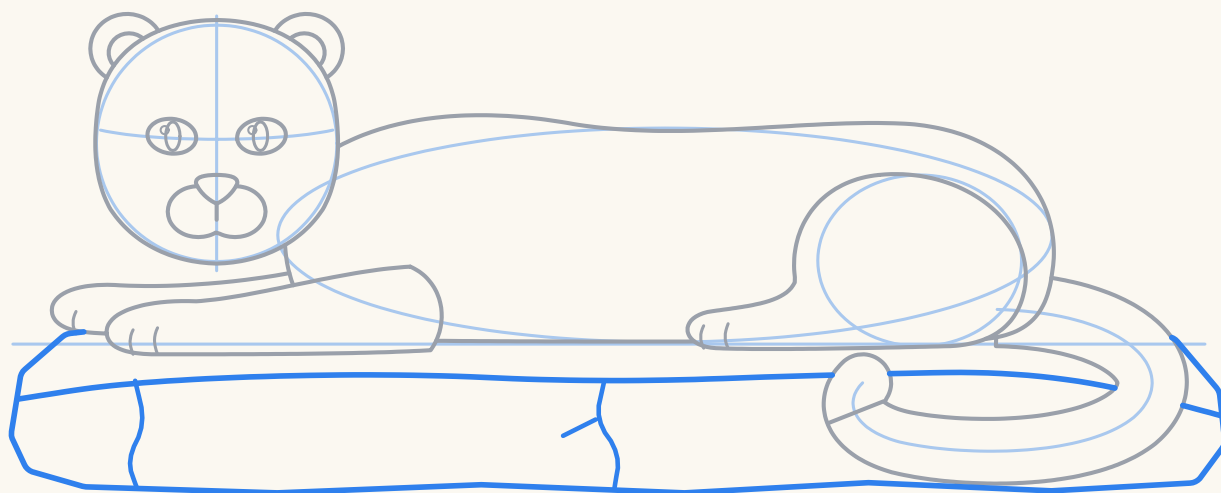
Here's the feature I always save my best attention for. From behind the haunch, draw a very fat tail that drops over the rock edge, sweeps back to the left and curls up at the tip. Keep it nearly as thick as a front leg the whole way. Mark the dark tip with a short line across the end.

Tip: Use the curve guide as the middle of the tail and draw one edge on each side of it.

STEP 8 Put in the face

Sit two almond-shaped eyes on the cross line, each with a narrow upright pupil and a tiny shine dot. Below them, draw a rounded upside-down triangle for the nose. Under it, add two puffy muzzle shapes side by side with a short line down the middle. Finish with a smaller circle inside each ear.

Tip: Leave about one eye width between the eyes. Closer than that and the face starts to look worried.

STEP 9 Build the rock underneath

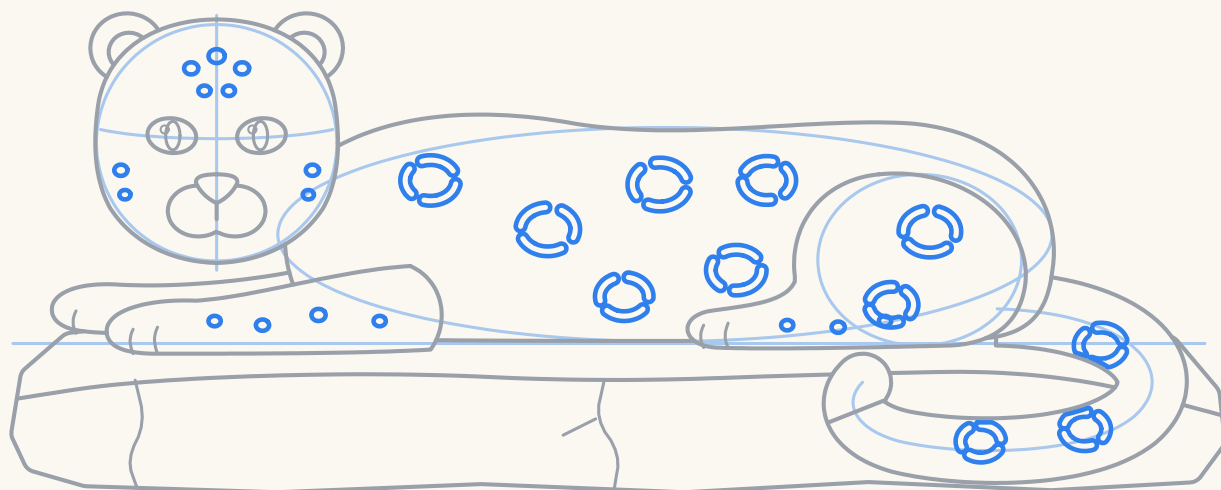
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Now give your cat something to lie on. Draw a long, low slab under the body with flat sides and slightly cut corners, so it reads as stone and not a cushion. Add a line along the front for the top face, then two wobbly cracks. Stop every rock line where it meets the cat.

Tip: Straight edges with a few sharp bends read as rock. Smooth curves make it look soft.

STEP 10 Draw the rosettes and spots

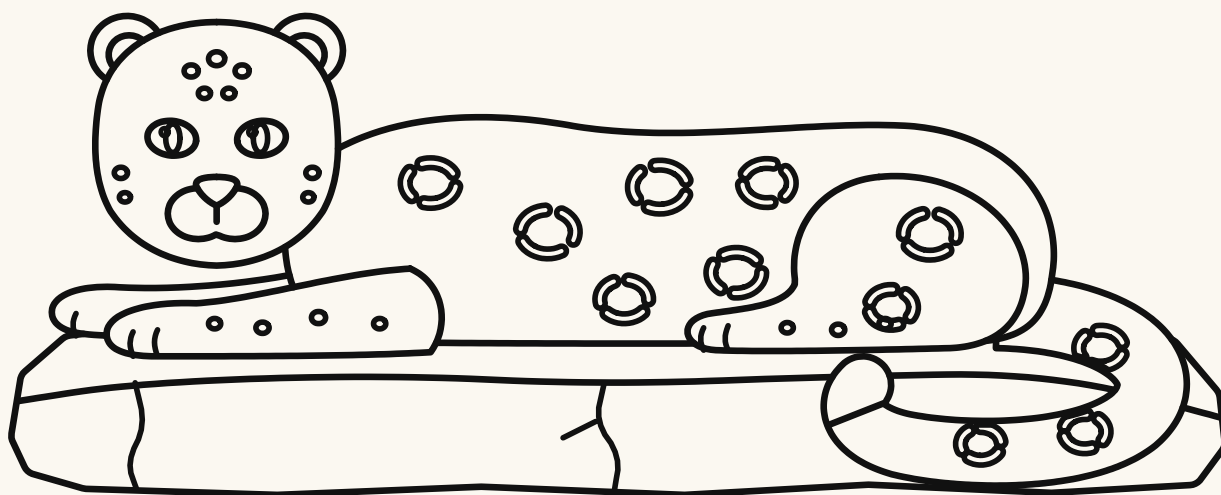
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Snow leopard rosettes are open, broken rings. Draw each one as three short, thick curves arranged in a circle with small gaps. Spread six across the body, a few on the haunch and three on the tail. Dot small solid spots on the forehead, cheeks and legs. Most beginners pack too many in, so I leave plenty of plain fur between them.

Tip: Vary the angle of each ring slightly. Identical rosettes in neat rows look like wallpaper.

STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides

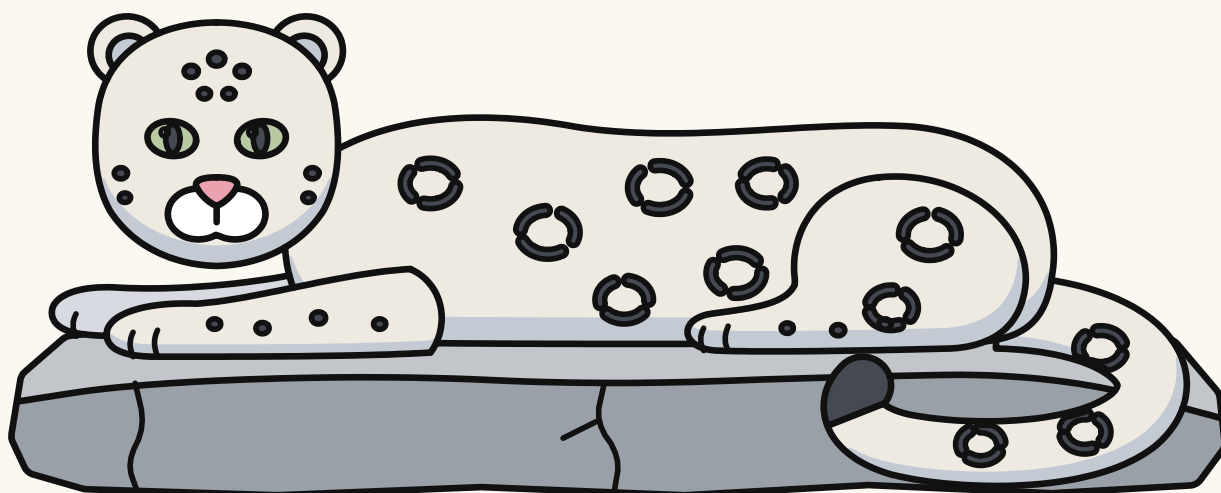
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Trace every line you want to keep with the black pen, including the rosettes and the rock. Skip the circles, the oval, the rock line and the tail curve. Give the ink a full minute to dry, then erase all the pencil guides.

Tip: Ink the rosettes slowly. Each little curve is short, so tiny wobbles show up more there.

STEP 12 Color your snow leopard

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Color the fur a very light cream, then add light blue-gray along the bottom of the body, haunch, tail and chin. That cool shading makes pale fur look soft instead of blank. Fill the rosettes, spots and tail tip with dark gray. Give the eyes pale green and the nose pink, and leave the muzzle white. Use light gray for the rock top and a darker gray for its front.

Tip: Color the dark rosettes last, after the cream and gray, so they stay crisp.