How to Draw a Volcano

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

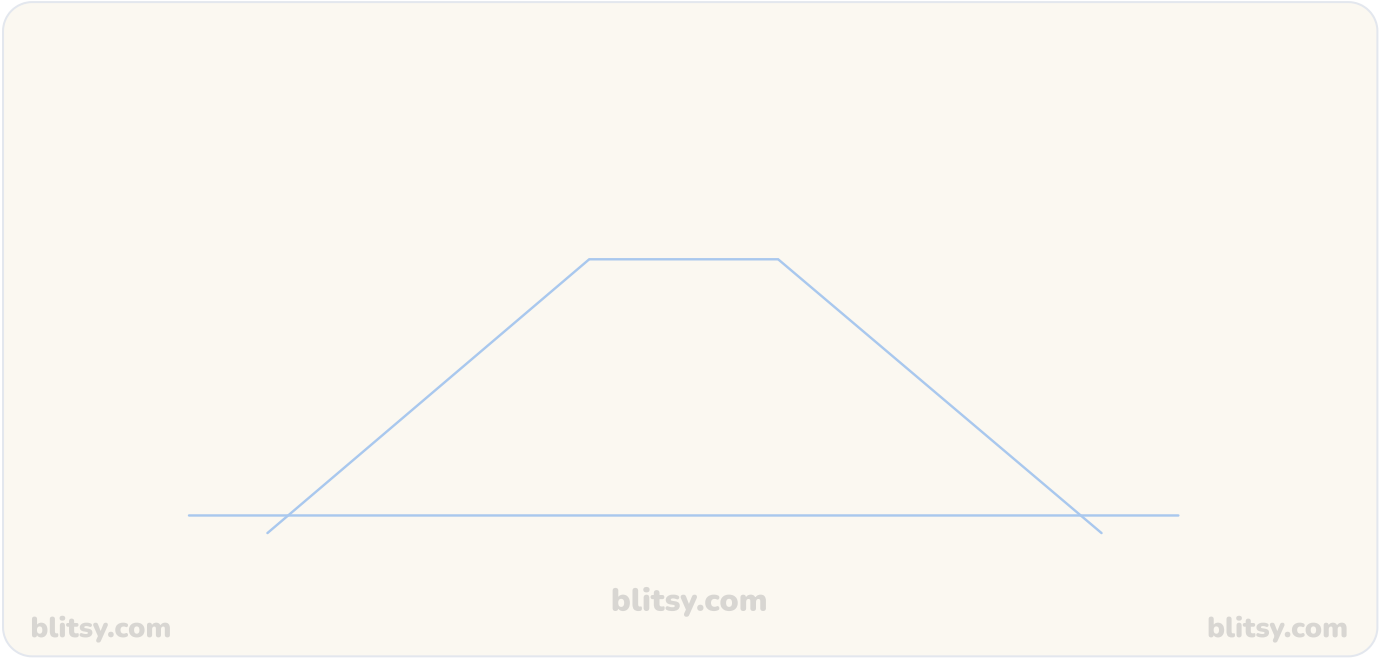
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker
- Colored pencils
- Plain paper

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 →

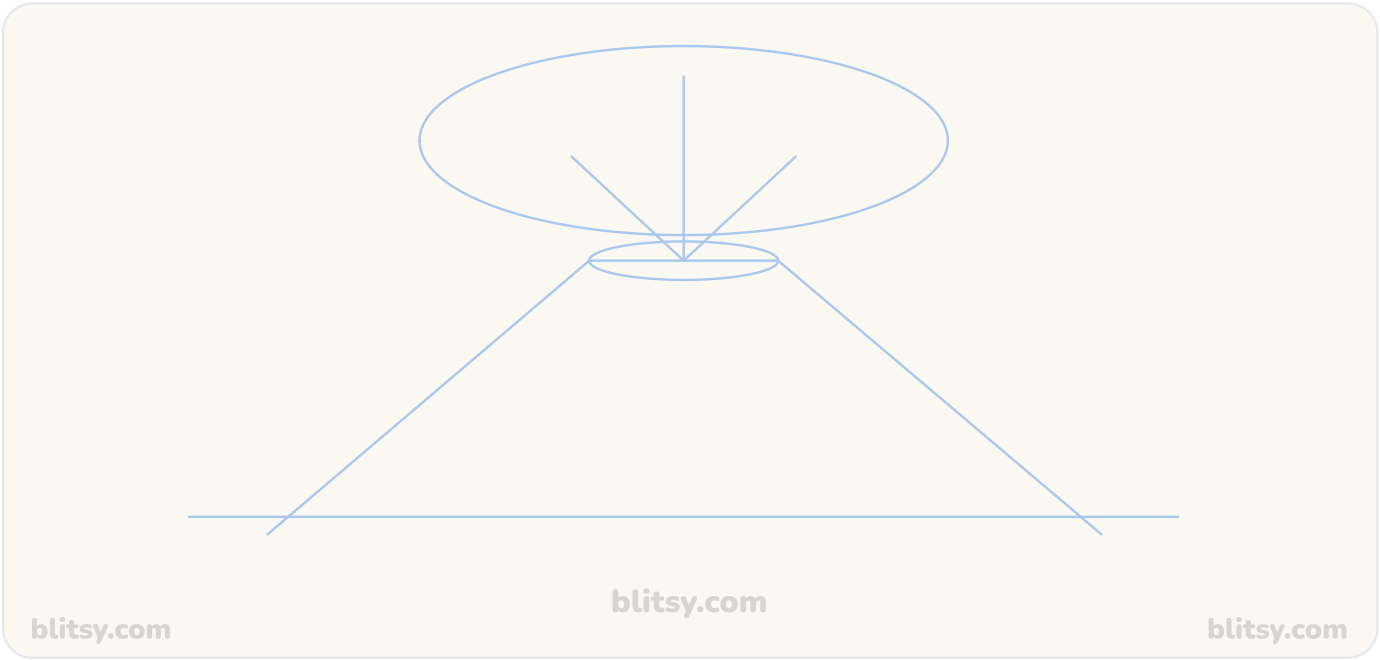
STEP 1 Sketch a ground line and a cone guide



Turn your paper sideways and draw a long, straight line across the lower part of the page. On top of it, sketch a wide trapezoid: two slanted sides that lean toward each other and stop at a short flat top. A base about four times wider than the top makes the volcano look huge.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a big empty band above the trapezoid for the smoke later.

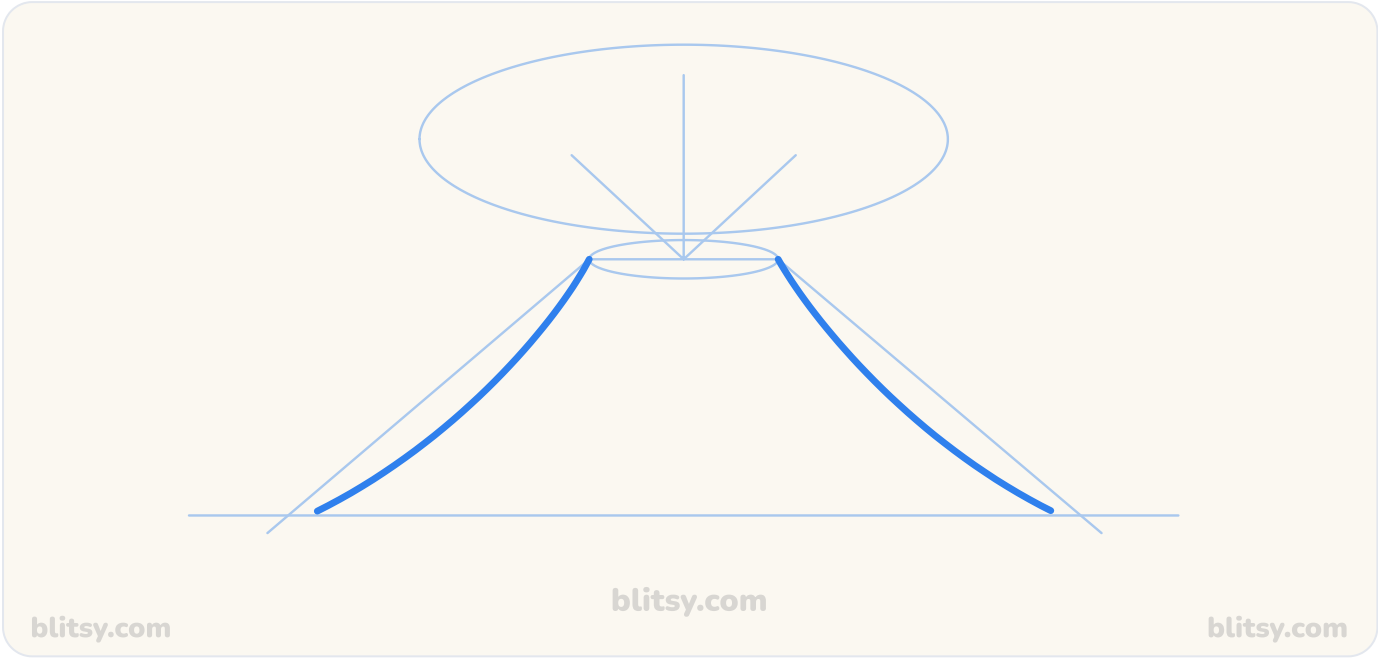
STEP 2 Add guides for the crater and cloud



Across the flat top, draw a thin oval that pokes out a little past both ends. From the middle of that oval, draw three short straight lines fanning upward like a crow's foot; they show where the lava will shoot. Then sketch one big oval above everything for the ash cloud, much wider than the crater.

💡 **Tip:** Draw guides with the side of the pencil tip so they stay faint.

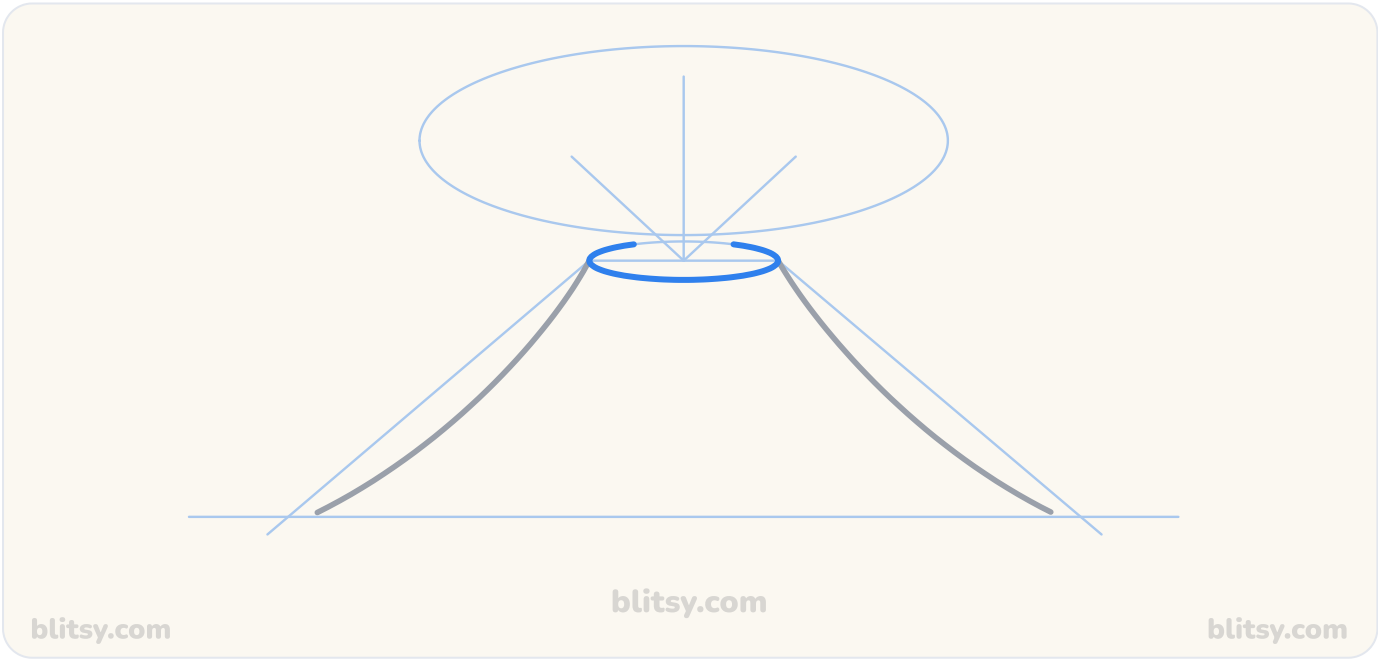
STEP 3 Draw the curved volcano slopes



Now replace the straight sides with curves. Start at each end of the crater oval and come down steeply first, then let the line bend outward and flatten as it reaches the ground. I like this curve because it stops the shape from looking like a plain triangle. Stop both lines at the ground guide.

💡 **Tip:** Hold the page at arm's length to see if both slopes bend the same amount.

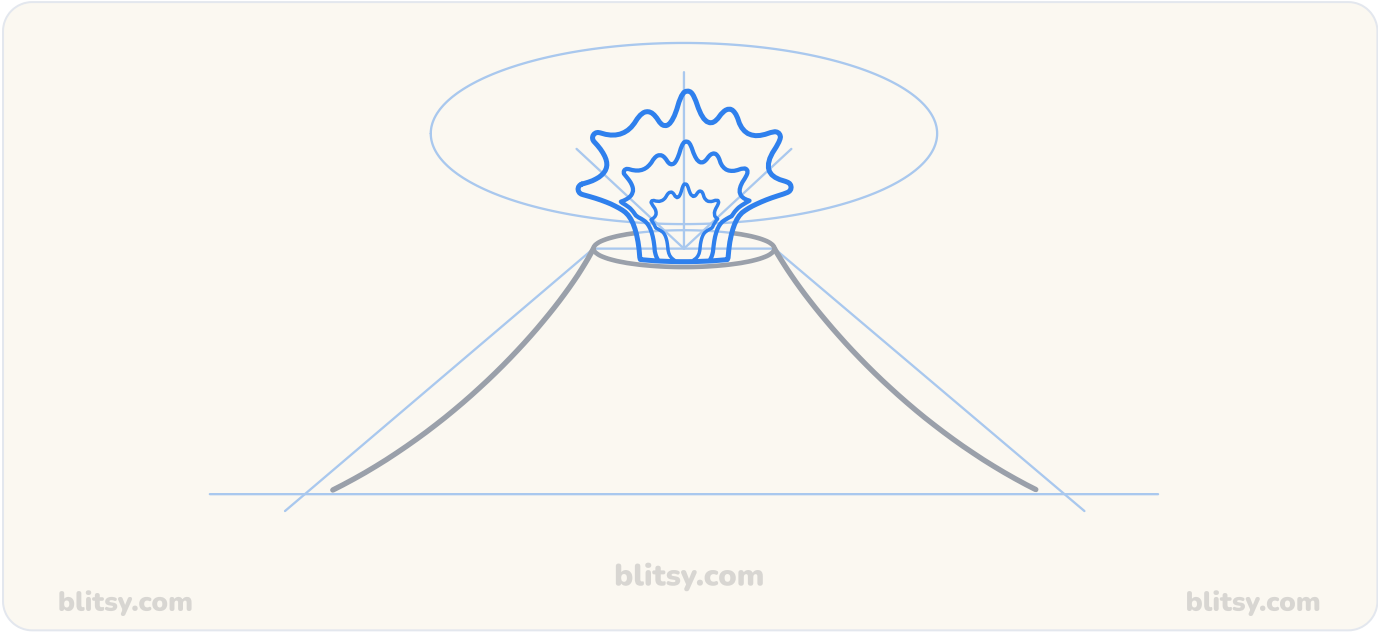
STEP 4 Outline the oval crater



Go over the crater guide with a confident line. I keep this opening flat on purpose. If it gets too round, the volcano looks like a cup seen from above. A flat oval says you're looking at the mountain from the side.

💡 **Tip:** Make the oval about five times wider than it is tall.

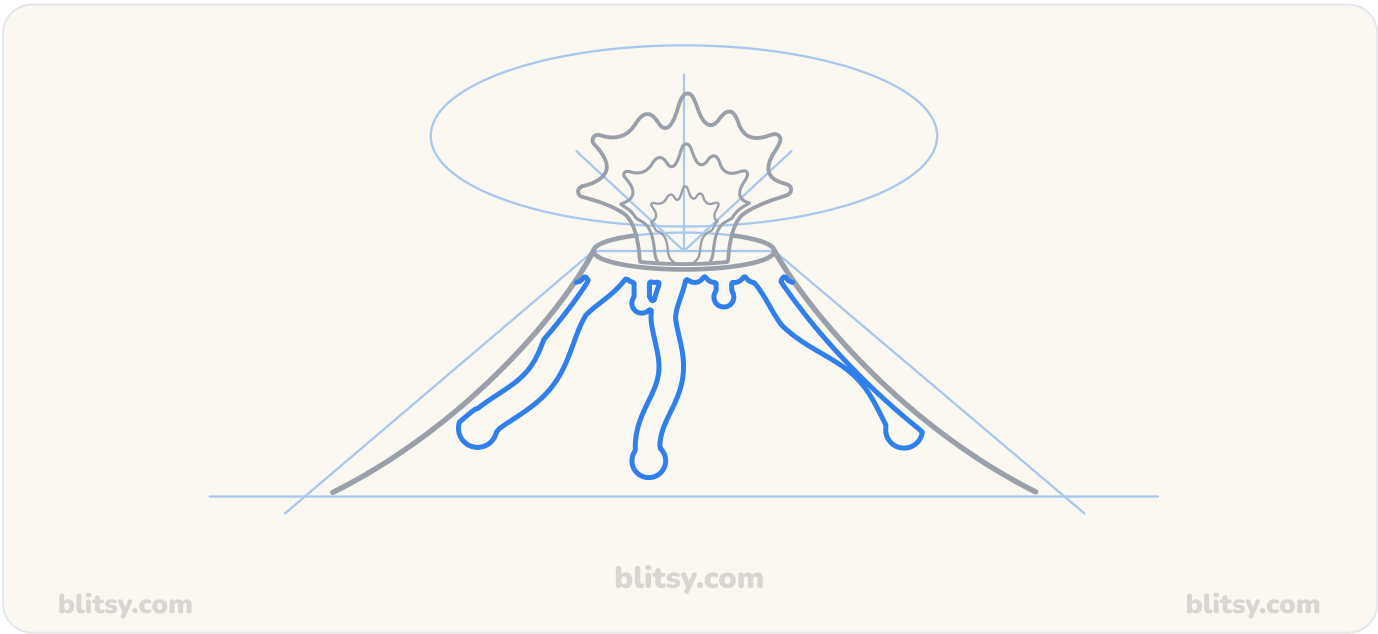
STEP 5 Shoot a lava fountain out of the crater



From inside the crater, draw two lines that rise and spread out like a vase. At the top, break the edge into wavy, flame-like tongues that splash outward, with the tallest tongue in the middle. When I demonstrate this part, I draw a smaller copy inside it, and inside that one, a little spiky shape for the hottest part. Most beginners make it too narrow at the top, so let it burst wide.

💡 **Tip:** Start the fountain inside the crater rim, never on top of the front edge.

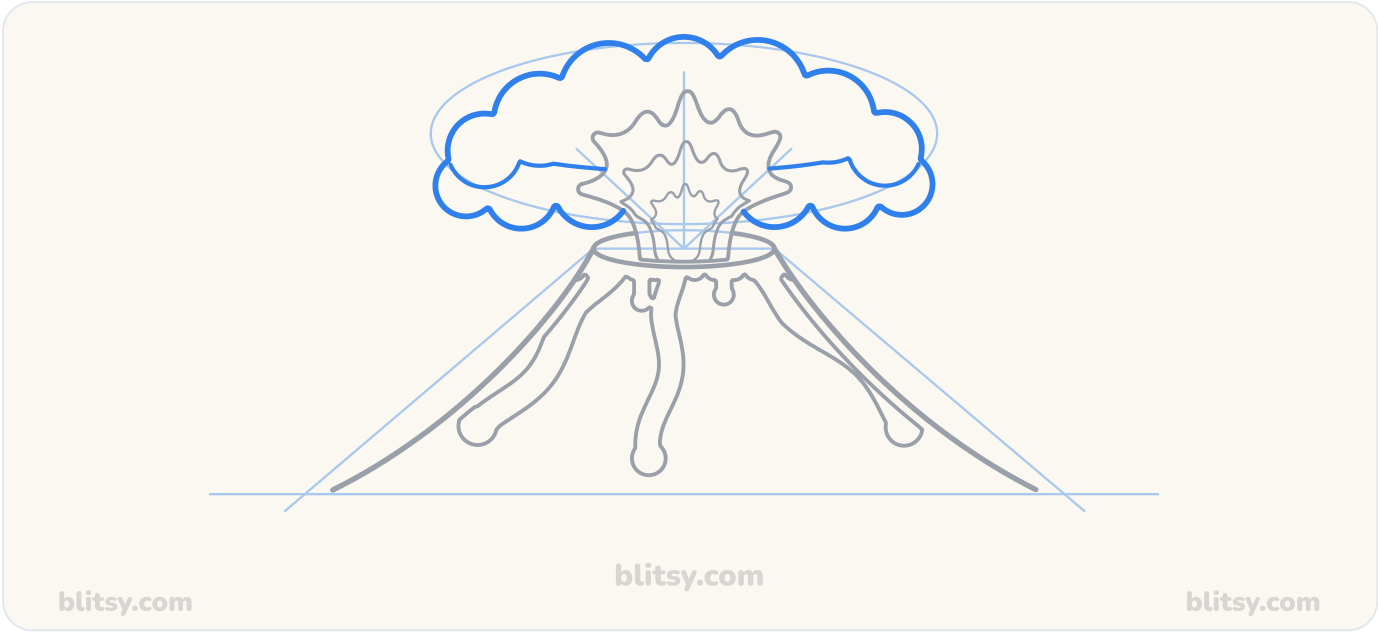
STEP 6 Let lava rivers run down the slopes



Lava spilling over the rim forms a wavy band around the top of the cone with a couple of short drips hanging down. From that band, draw three rivers: one curving down the left slope, one down the middle, one sliding toward the right. Make them wiggle gently and end each with a round drop, like paint running down a wall.

💡 **Tip:** Give each river a slightly different length so they don't look copied.

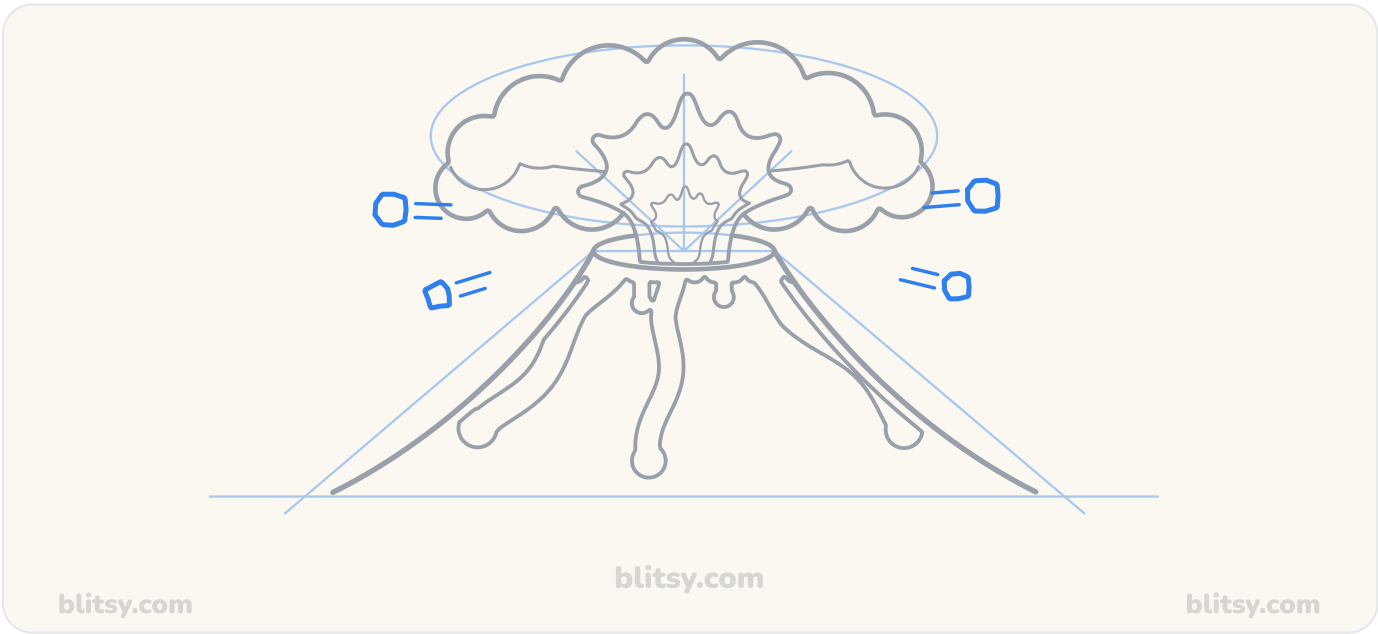
STEP 7 Build the rolling ash cloud



Using the big oval, draw a row of bumps along the top, like the top of a cauliflower, with the biggest bump near the middle. Then draw a second, smaller row of bumps along the bottom. Stop at the fountain's edge so the lava sits in front. Last, add a wavy line between the two rows, which turns one flat cloud into stacked puffs.

💡 **Tip:** Vary the bump sizes; perfect half circles look like a cartoon sheep.

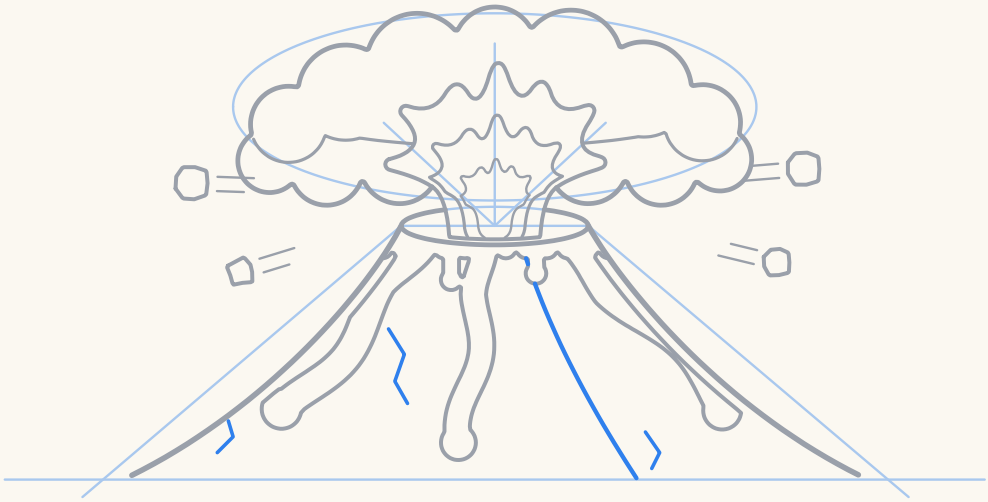
STEP 8 Throw some lava rocks



Real eruptions can throw lava blobs high into the air. Draw four small, lumpy rounded shapes around the volcano, two near the cloud and two lower down. Behind each rock, add two short parallel lines pointing back toward the crater. Those speed lines tell the eye which way the rock is flying.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the rocks lumpy, not round, or they'll read as balls.

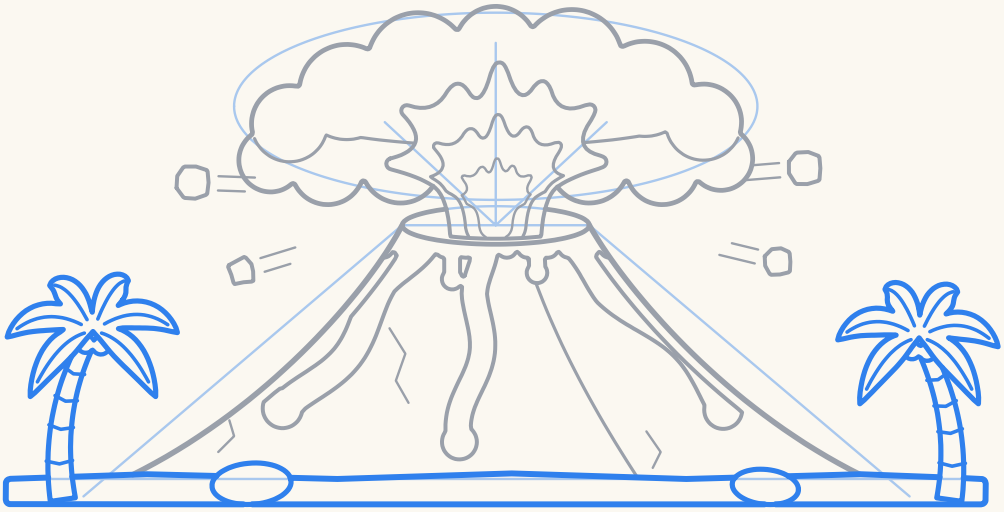
STEP 9 Add a ridge line and a few cracks



Starting just right of the crater's front edge, draw a long curve down to the ground. This ridge splits the volcano into a sunny left side and a shady right side, and it's the reason the cone will look round instead of flat. Add a couple of short zigzag cracks on the slopes, keeping them small.

💡 **Tip:** Stop the ridge wherever it meets a lava river.

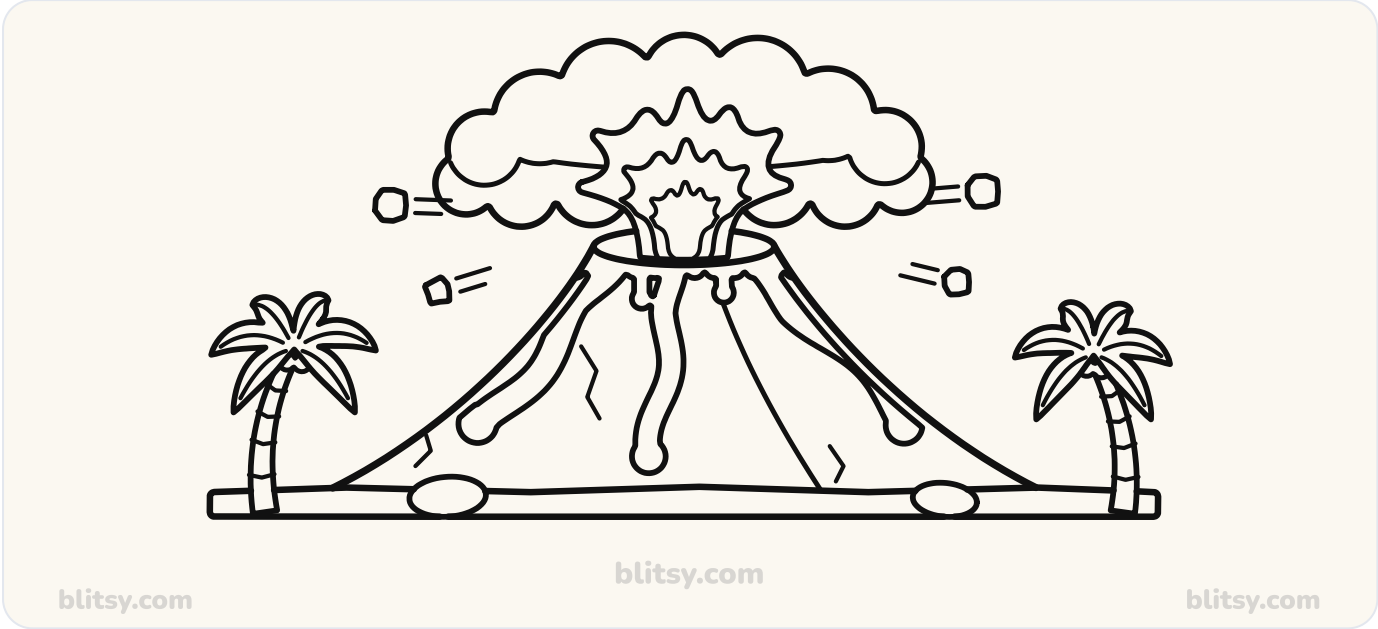
STEP 10 Draw a sandy beach with palm trees



Turn the ground guide into a narrow sandy strip with a slightly bumpy top edge. Put two flat oval boulders on it. Near each end, draw a palm tree: a curved trunk that's thicker at the bottom, a few short curved lines across it, and six pointed leaves drooping from the top. Small kids can draw banana-shaped leaves.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the palms small so the volcano still looks enormous.

STEP 11 Ink the keeper lines and erase guides



Trace every line you want to keep with the black marker: slopes, crater, all three fountain layers, lava, cloud, rocks, ridge and cracks, plus the beach and palms. I always wait until the ink is fully dry. Then erase the trapezoid, the ovals, the jet lines and the ground guide.

💡 **Tip:** Use a thicker stroke for the outer slopes than for the cracks.

STEP 12 Color the eruption



Color the left side of the cone medium brown and the right side darker brown, with the crater opening darkest of all. The lava rivers are orange, turning red where they cross the shady side. Paint the fountain red on the outside, orange in the middle and yellow in the center. The cloud gets light gray on top and darker gray underneath. Finish with red rocks, tan sand, gray boulders, brown trunks and green leaves.

💡 **Tip:** Color the yellow first, then work out to orange and red.