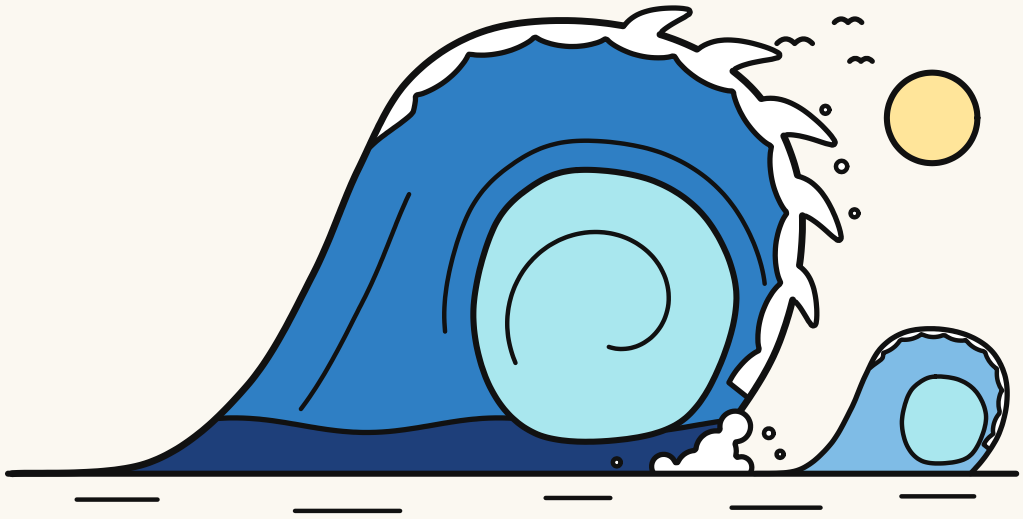
How to Draw a Wave

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

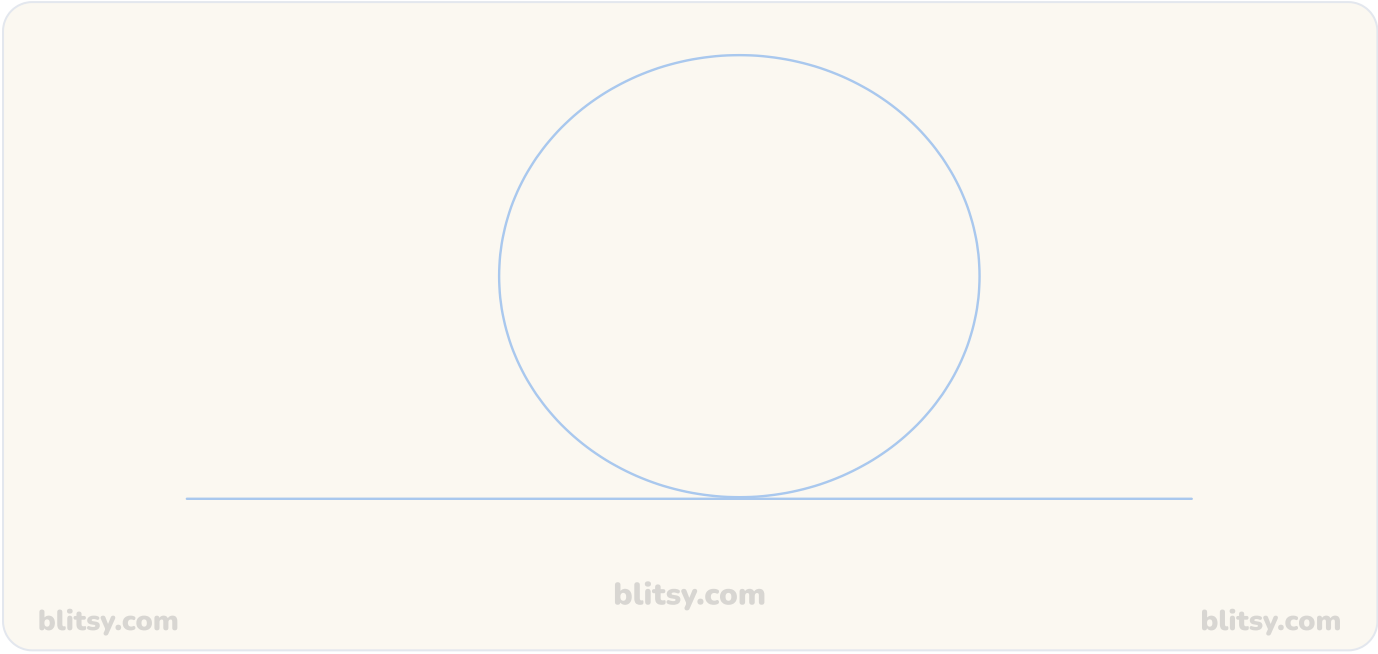
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black pen
- Blue and yellow colored pencils or markers
- Paper

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 →

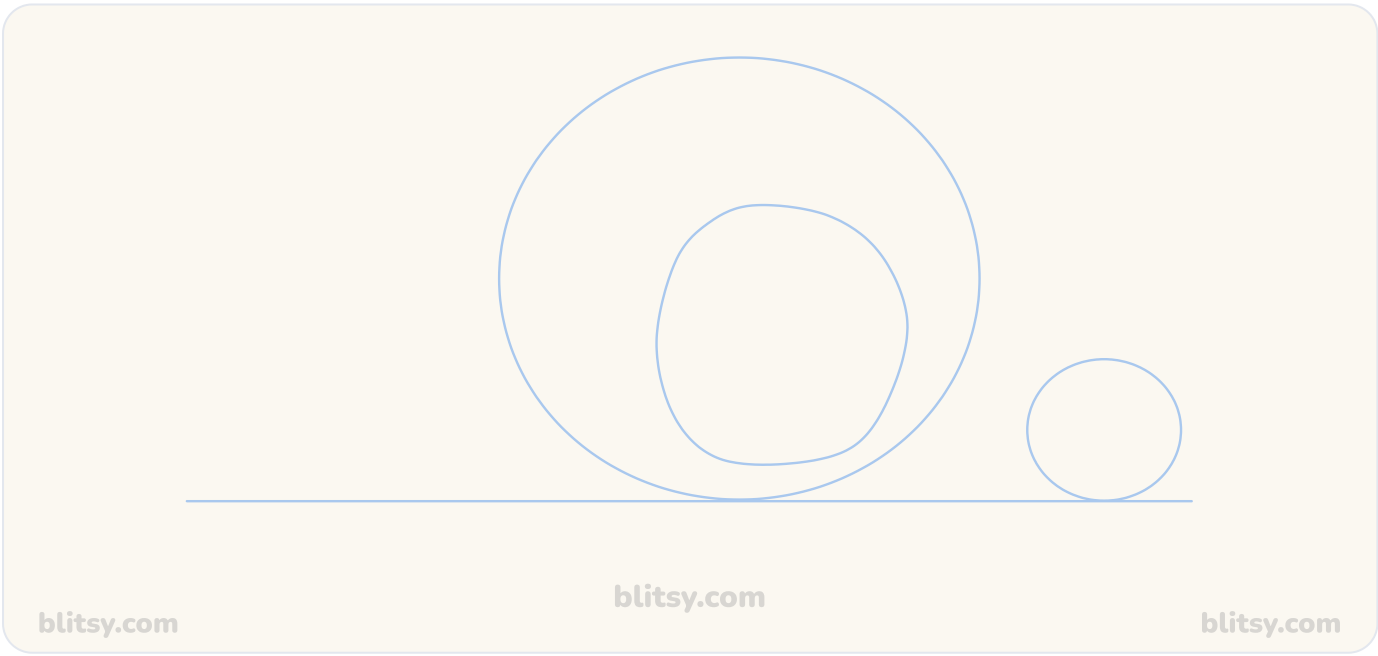
STEP 1 Draw a sea line and a big oval



Turn the paper sideways and draw a long, light line across the lower part of the page. Now place a big oval on top of it, a little right of center, so its bottom just touches the line. The oval should take up about half the width of the paper. Your wave will roll over it.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you can barely see the pencil. These lines get erased.

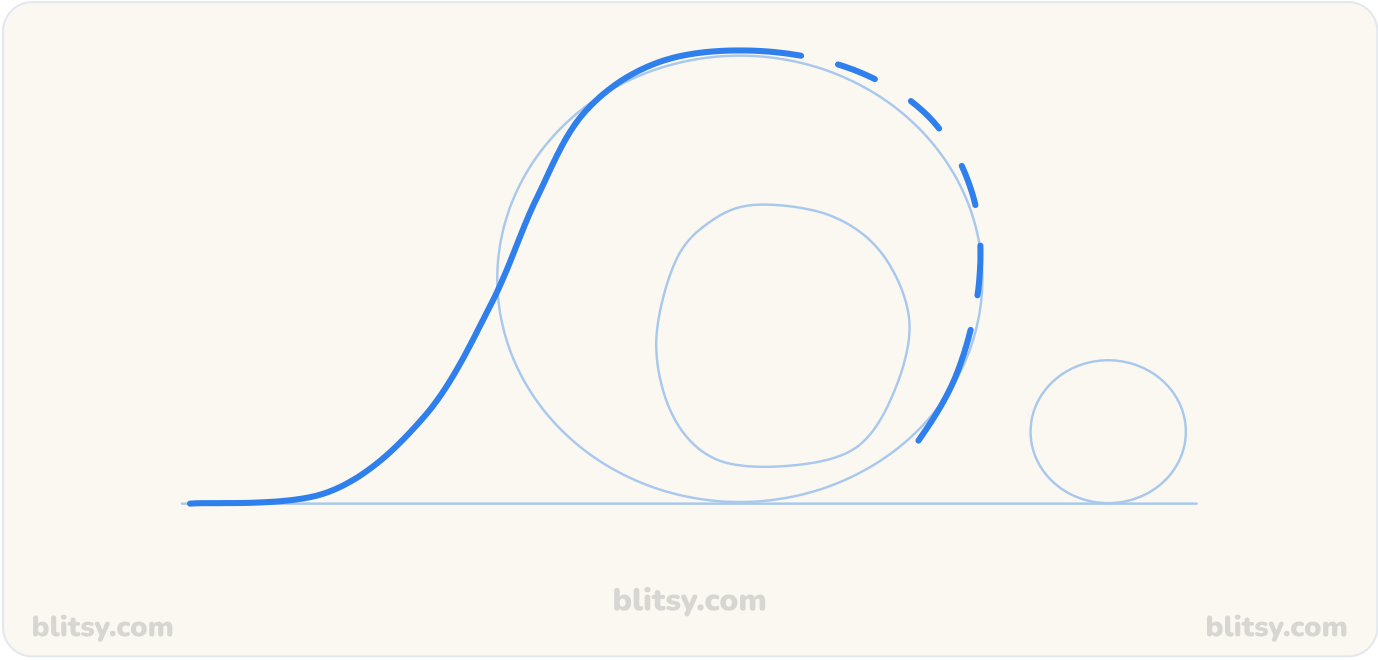
STEP 2 Add an egg shape and a small oval



Inside the big oval, sketch an upright egg shape that sits low and toward the right, with its flat-ish bottom just above the sea line. This will become the hollow tube under the curl. Then, to its right, draw a much smaller oval resting on the sea. I make it about a third of the size, so the second wave reads as farther away.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a thicker gap above the egg than beside it; the crest needs the extra room.

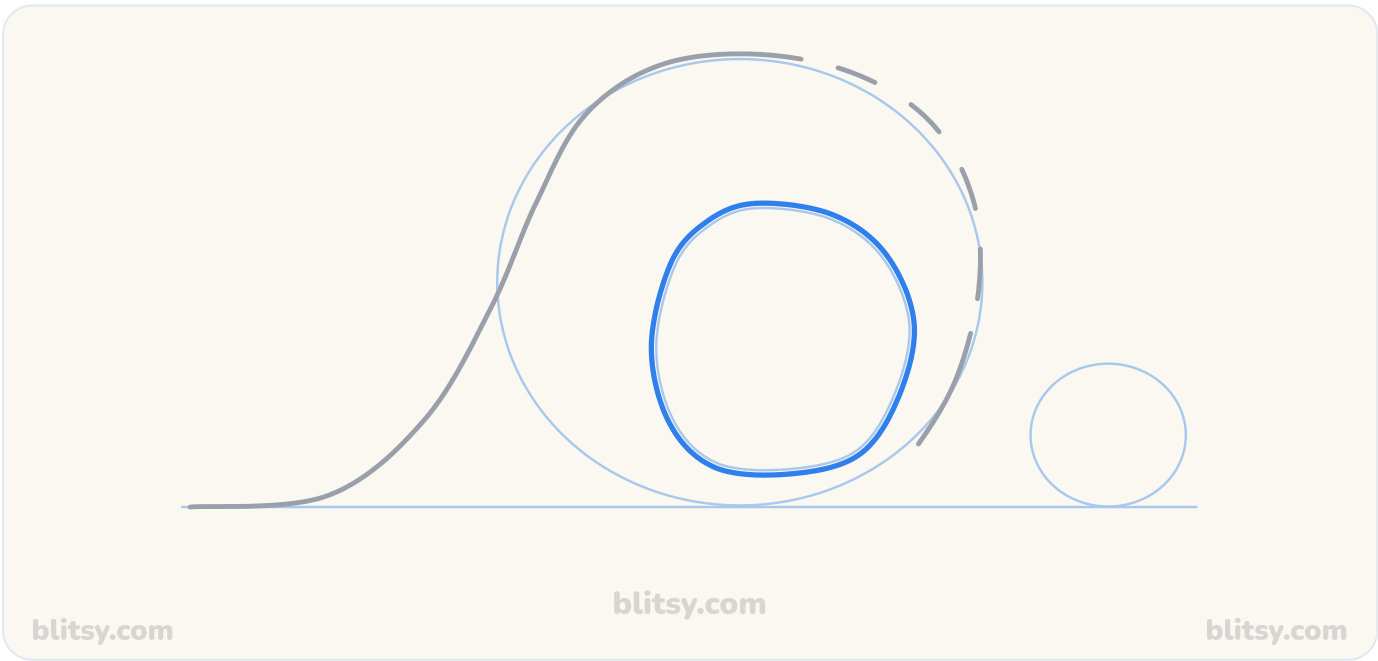
STEP 3 Roll the wave over the oval



Start at the far left on the sea line. Draw a long, low slope that rises slowly at first, then climbs steeply up the left side of the big oval. Follow the top of the oval over and down the right side. As you come down the front, leave five short gaps where the foam claws will reach out, and stop a little above the sea, because a splash covers the bottom.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the back slope in one sweep from your shoulder for a smooth rise.

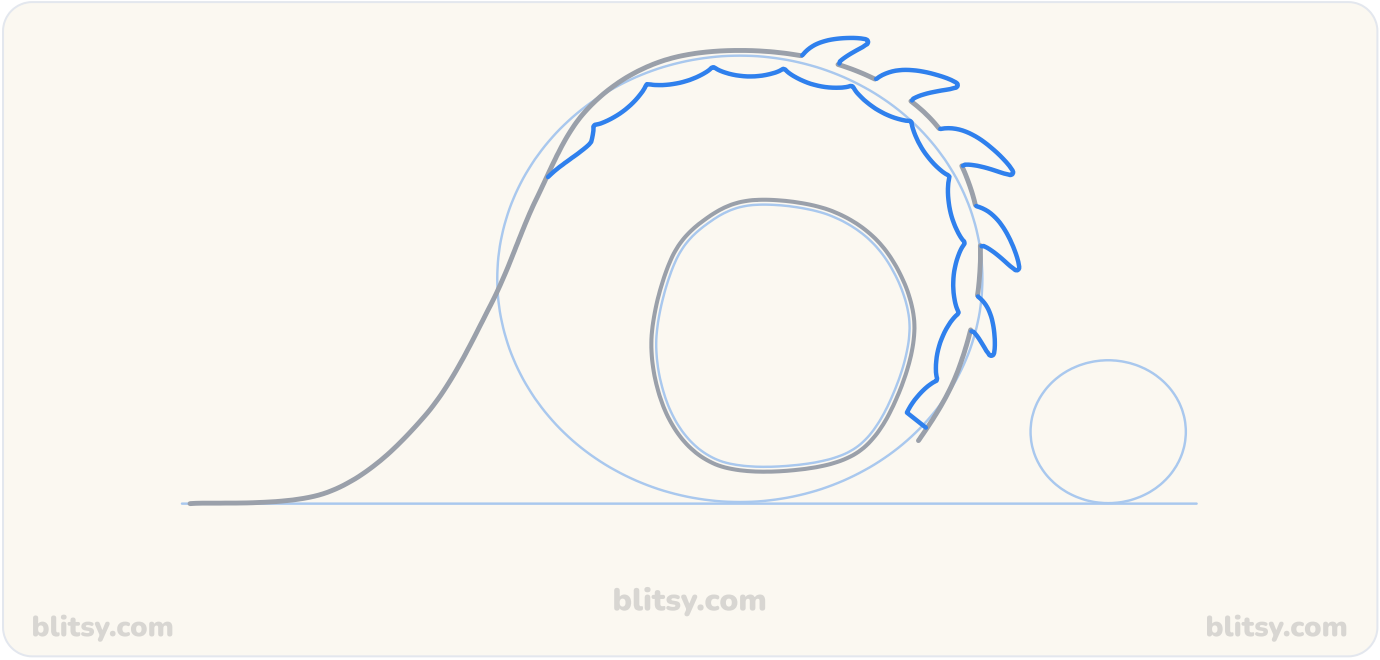
STEP 4 Trace the hollow tube



Go over the egg guide with a firm line. This hollow is the space inside the curl, where the falling water traps a pocket of air. Keep the line smooth and close the shape at the bottom.

💡 **Tip:** Turn the paper as you go so your hand always pulls the pencil toward you.

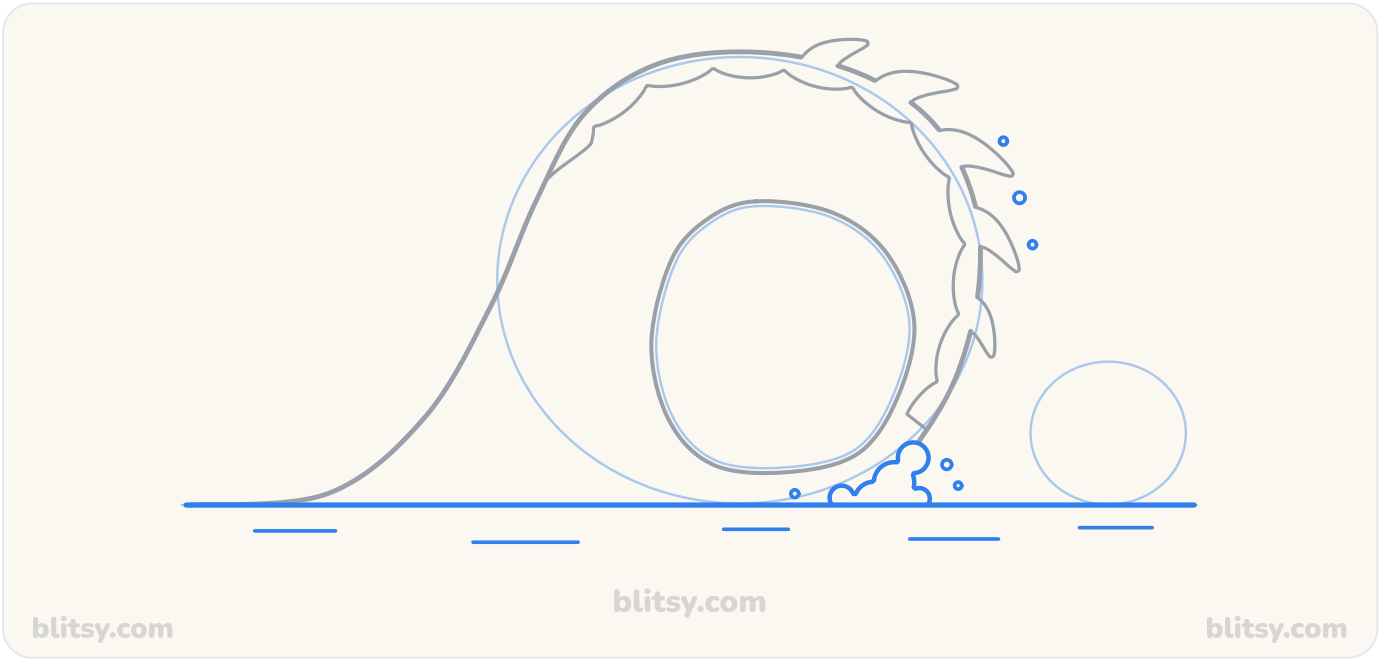
STEP 5 Draw foam with claw fingers



Just inside the top edge, draw a wavy line of small bumps, starting partway up the back and running over the crest. The strip between this line and the outline is the foam. At each gap on the front, add a curved finger that reaches out and hooks downward, like a claw grabbing the air.

💡 **Tip:** Hook every claw downward so the whole wave seems to fall.

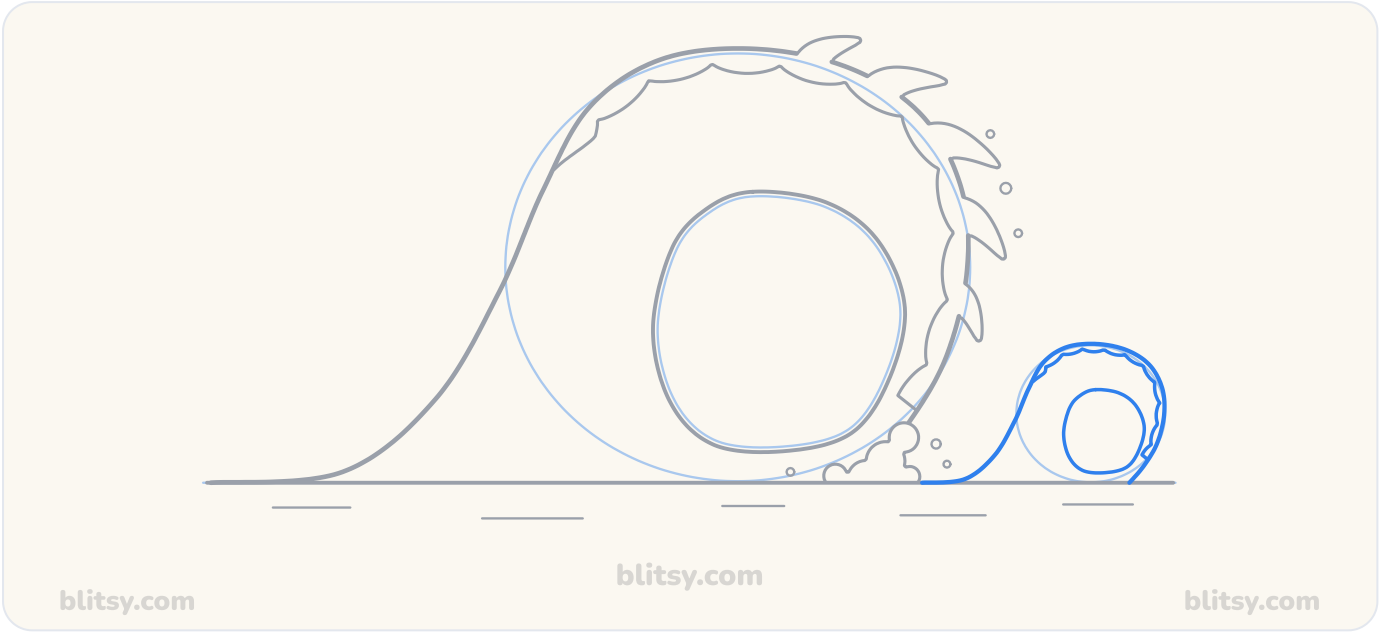
STEP 6 Add the splash, the sea and ripples



Where the front of the wave meets the water, draw a little cluster of round bumps for the splash. Add three or four small circles flying off the front as spray. Then trace a firm sea line across the whole page and draw a few short dashes underneath it. These ripples make the flat sea look wet.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the spray circles different sizes. Matching ones look like a necklace.

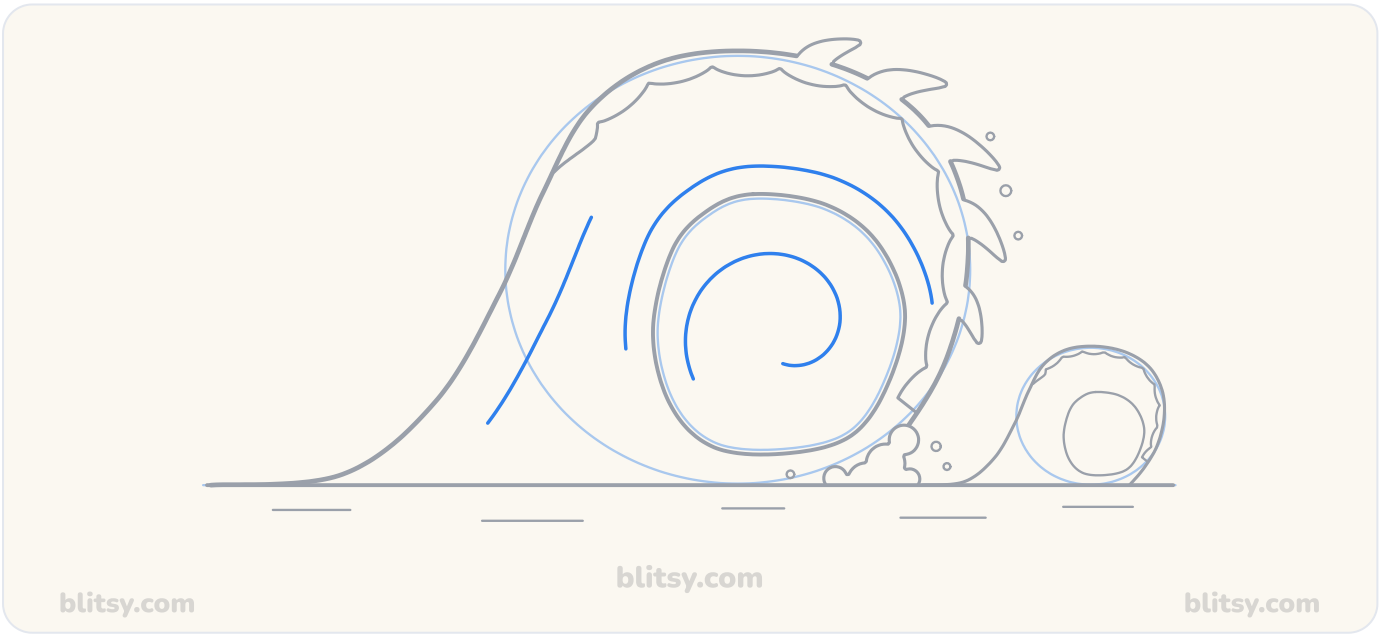
STEP 7 Draw a small wave behind



Use the small oval to repeat the big wave in miniature: a gentle back slope, a rounded top, a tiny tube and a thin bumpy foam line. Skip the claws here, since they'd be too small to read. Start its back slope behind the splash so the big wave overlaps it. Overlapping is my favorite way to show distance.

💡 **Tip:** Smaller and simpler pushes it back. Don't add more detail than the big wave has.

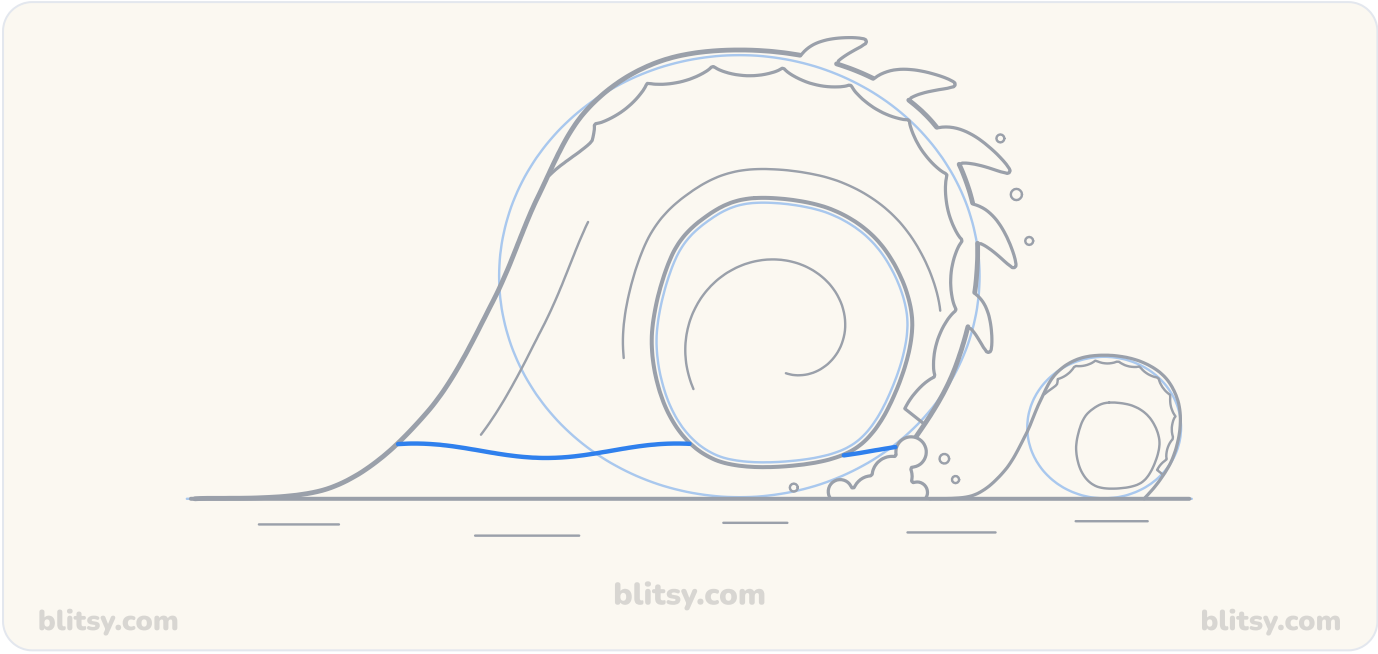
STEP 8 Add curl lines in the water



Now show which way the water moves. Draw one curved line that follows the tube around its top, a finger's width away from it. Add a second line running up the back slope, parallel to the outline. Inside the tube, draw a spiral that starts near the lower left wall and turns inward clockwise, the same direction the wave is rolling.

💡 **Tip:** Stop each curl line before it touches another line. The gaps keep it light.

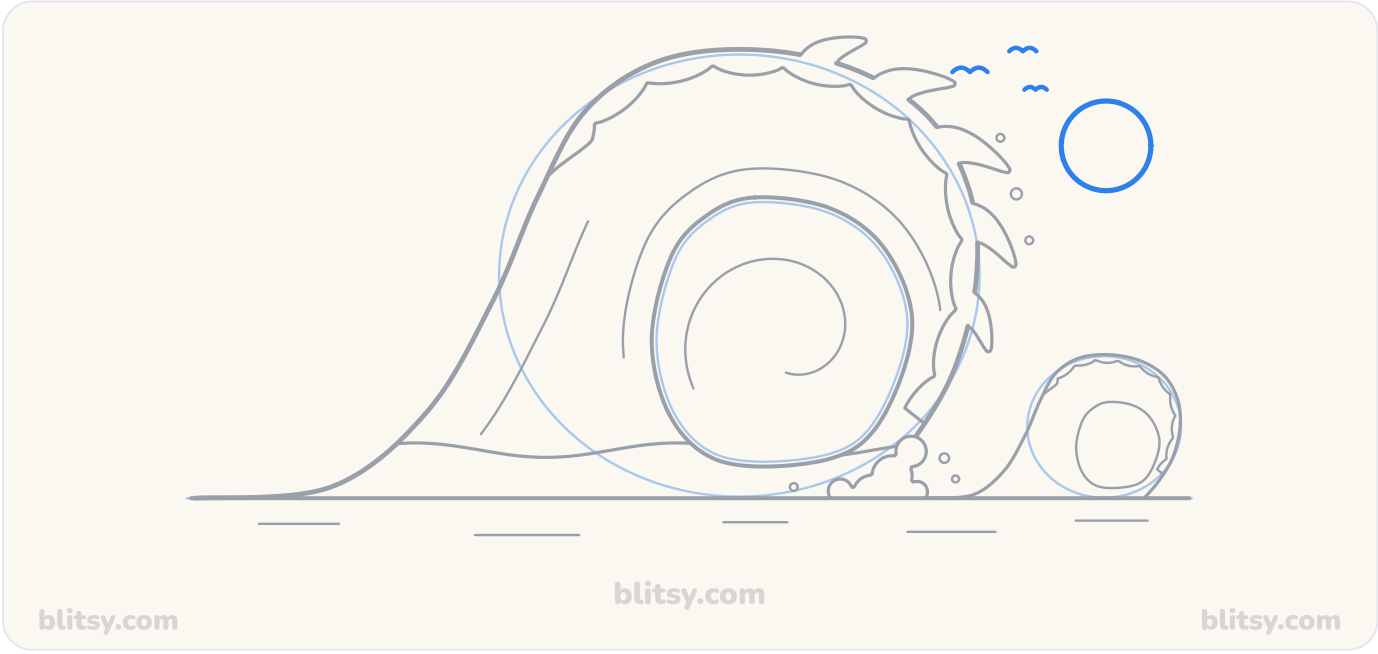
STEP 9 Mark the dark water at the base



Draw a gently wavy line across the bottom of the big wave, roughly a quarter of the way up from the sea. It runs from the back slope to the tube, then continues on the other side of the tube to the front. Everything below it will be colored navy. Deep water looks darkest, so this band makes the wave feel heavy.

💡 **Tip:** Let the line rise and dip softly. A ruler-straight line looks like a painted stripe.

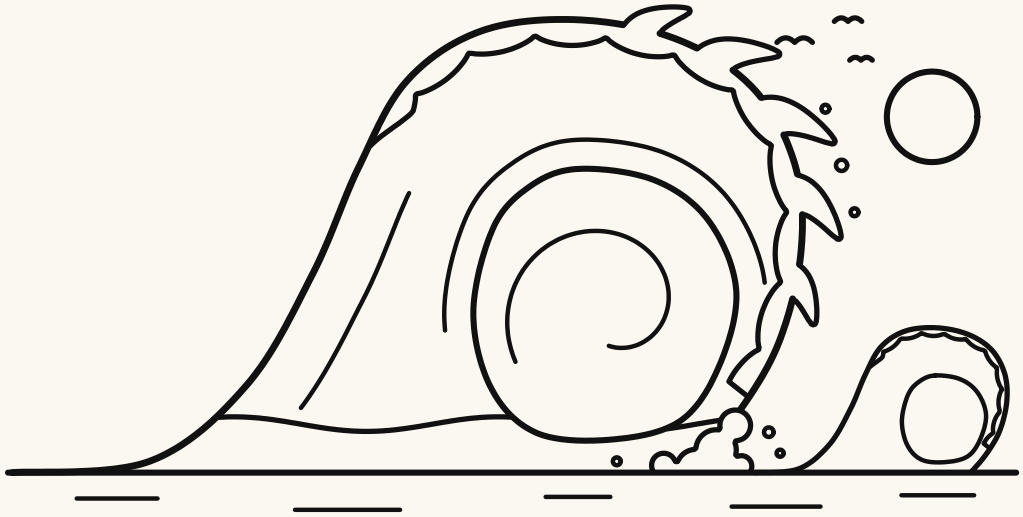
STEP 10 Draw the sun and three birds



In the empty sky to the upper right, draw a circle for the sun, placed away from the claws so they don't crowd each other. Between the sun and the wave, add three small birds as soft letter M shapes. I make one smaller and higher than the others.

💡 **Tip:** A coin or bottle cap traced lightly gives you a clean sun circle.

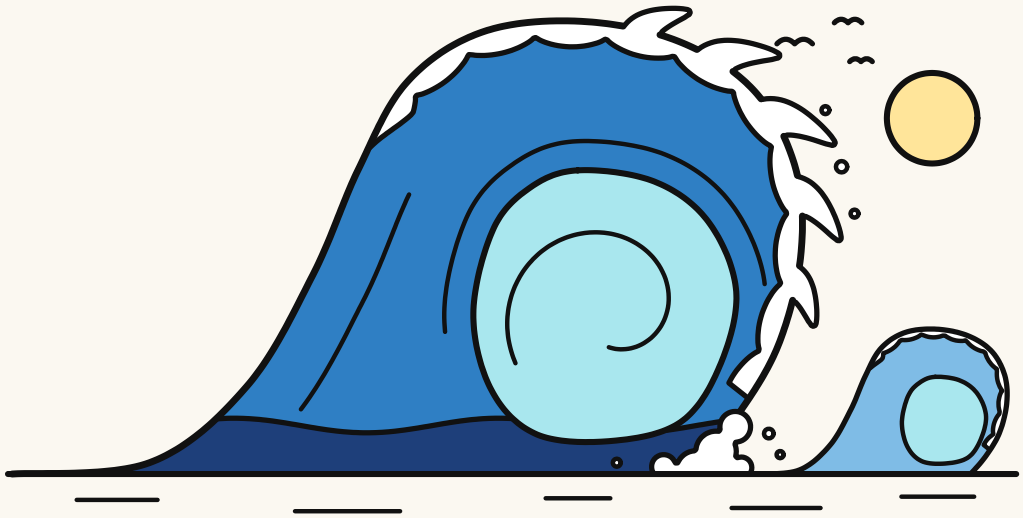
STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Trace every line you want to keep with the black pen: the outline, tube, foam, claws, splash, sea, small wave, curl lines and the sun with its birds. Skip the faint ovals, and let the ink dry for a minute. Then erase all the pencil, and you'll have a crisp outline that's ready to color or to copy.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the long outline first while your hand is fresh, details after.

STEP 12 Color the water, foam and sun



Color the big wave blue and the band at the base navy. Fill the tube with light aqua, which makes it glow like sunlight shining through thin water. The small wave gets sky blue with an aqua tube. Leave all the foam and spray white, then finish with a pale yellow sun. I color the navy band first.

💡 **Tip:** Stroke the color along the curl, not across it, to keep the motion going.