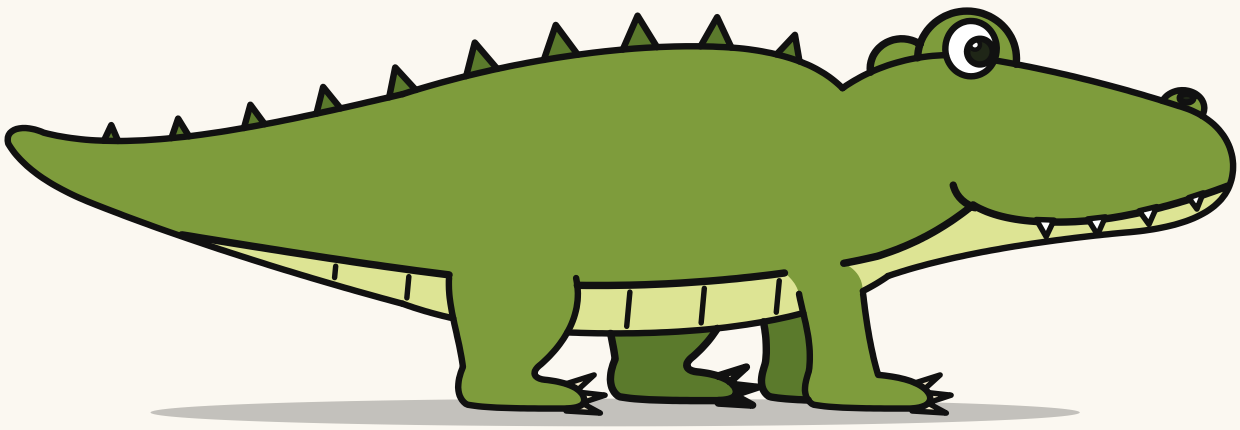
How to Draw an Alligator

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils or crayons
- 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 →

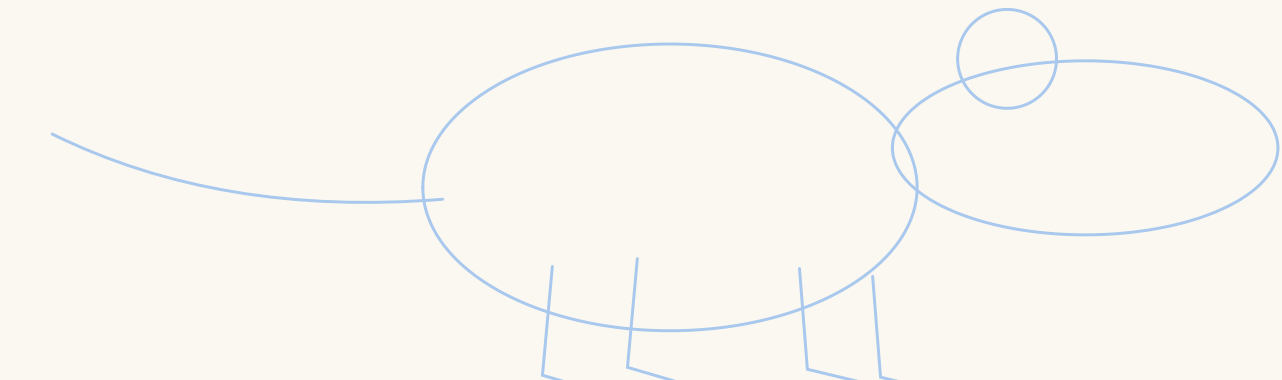
STEP 1 Sketch a ground line and two ovals



Draw a long ground line near the bottom of the page. Above it, sketch a big oval for the body just left of center, then a flatter head oval overlapping it on the right, about three quarters as long. I keep both ovals off the ground so the legs have room.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you can barely see the lines. They're only scaffolding.

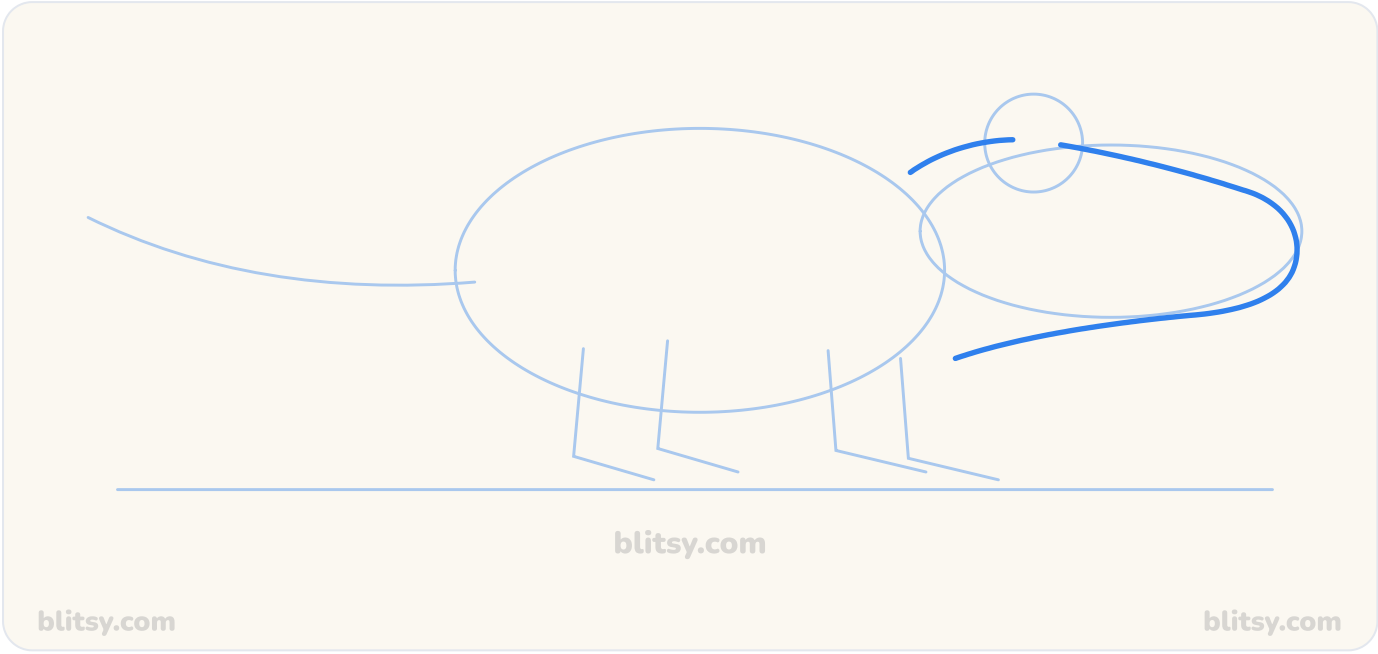
STEP 2 Add a tail curve, stick legs and an eye circle



From the left side of the body oval, swing a long curve out to the left, dipping a little and lifting at the end. Under the body, draw four short bent sticks, each with a little foot line pointing forward. Put a small circle on top of the head oval, near its back end, for the eye.

💡 **Tip:** Alligators have short legs, so stop the sticks well below the oval and keep them stubby.

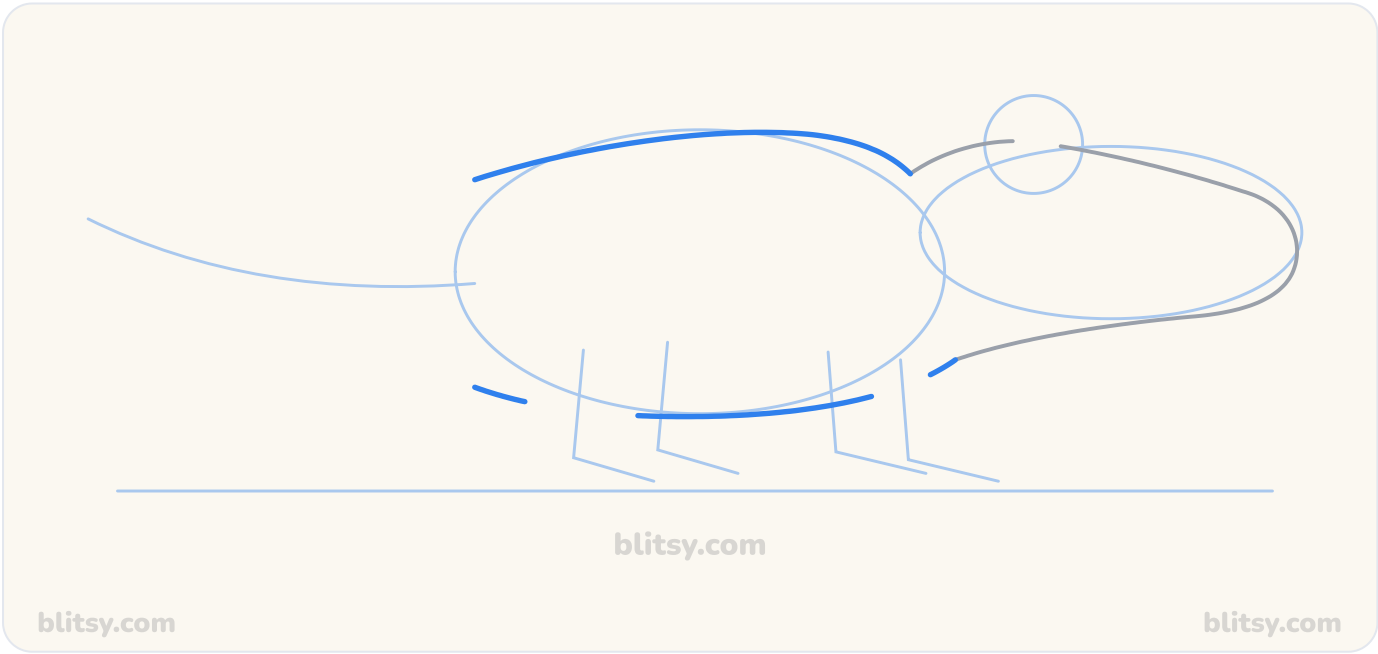
STEP 3 Draw the head with a wide, round snout



Start at the neck and draw the top of the head, rising toward the eye circle and then running almost flat to the front. Round off the tip in a big, blunt curve, then bring the chin back along the bottom of the oval. I leave a small gap on top where the eye bump will sit. That rounded tip is what tells people this is an alligator and not a crocodile.

💡 **Tip:** If the snout ends in a point, widen the tip curve until it looks like the end of a spoon.

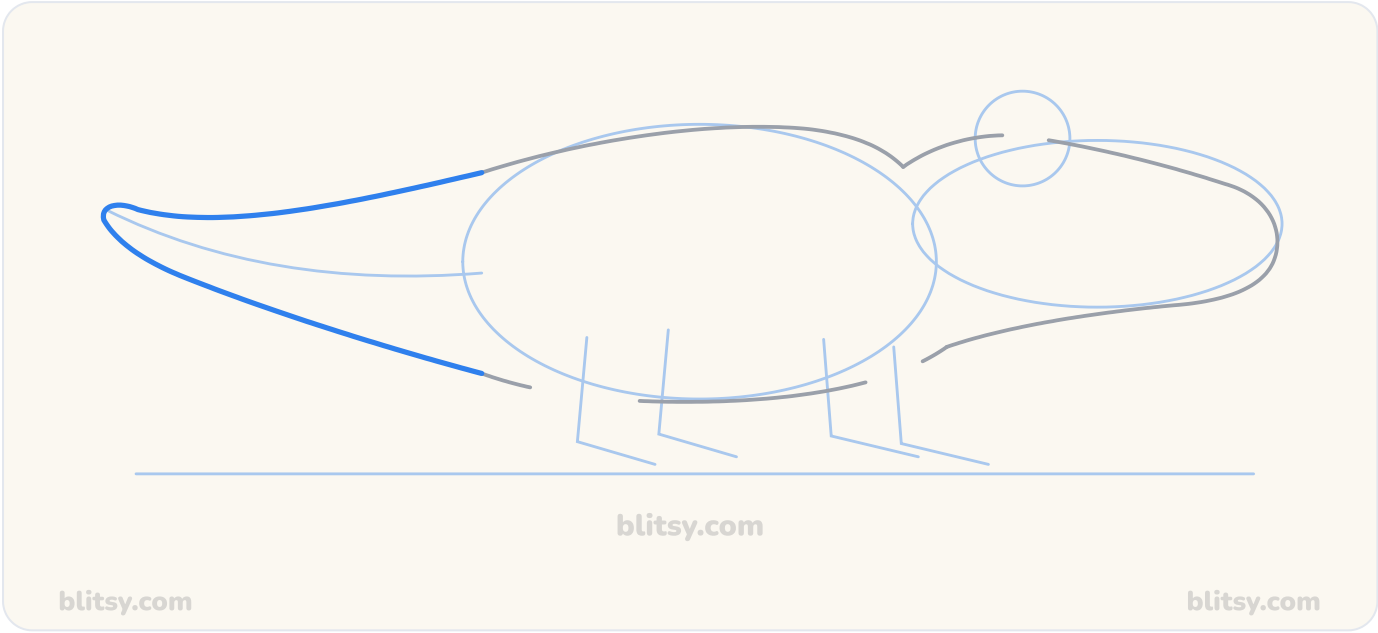
STEP 4 Outline the back and belly



Go around the top of the body oval with a gentle arch from the neck down toward the tail curve. Then draw the belly along the bottom, leaving gaps where the near legs attach. I let the back sit a bit higher than the head, which gives the gator its heavy look.

💡 **Tip:** Let the neck dip slightly where the head meets the body. A straight join looks stiff.

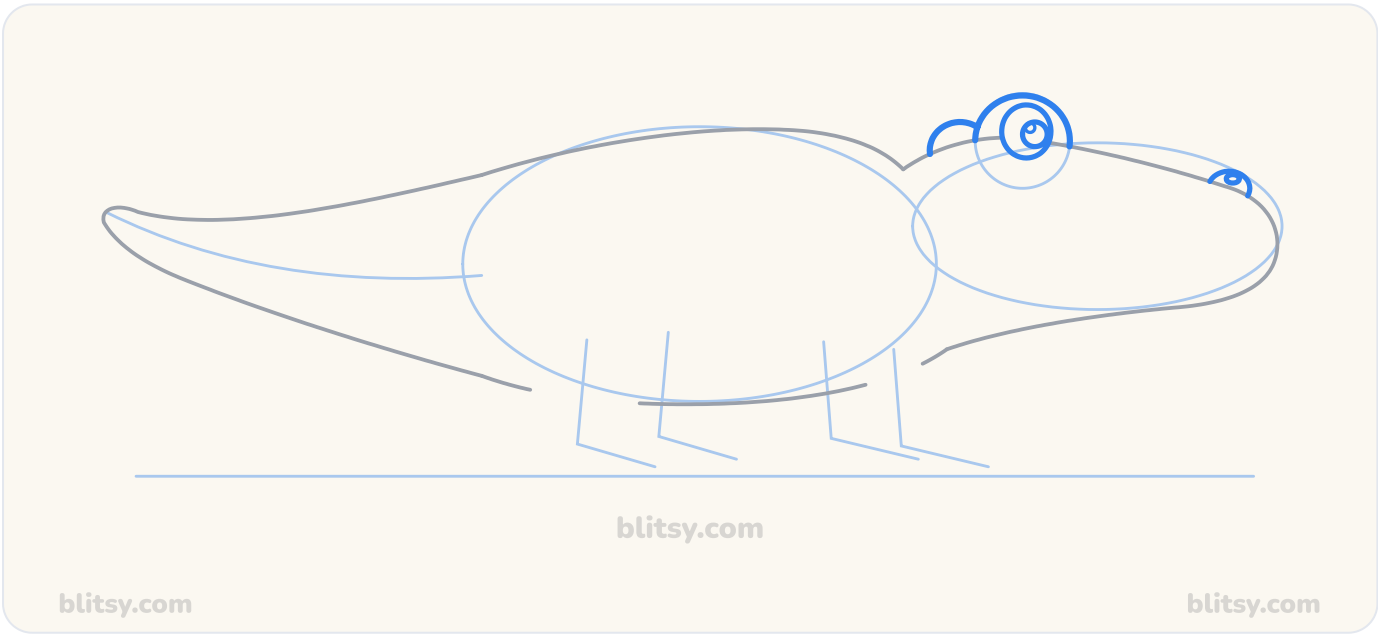
STEP 5 Finish the long tapering tail



Follow your tail curve with two lines that start wide where they meet the body and slowly come together. Make the tip rounded and lifted a little, like the gator is flicking it. Most beginners make the tail too short and thin. In my drawings it's nearly as long as the rest of the animal, and it stays thick for the first third.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the upper edge first, then match the lower edge to it so the taper stays even.

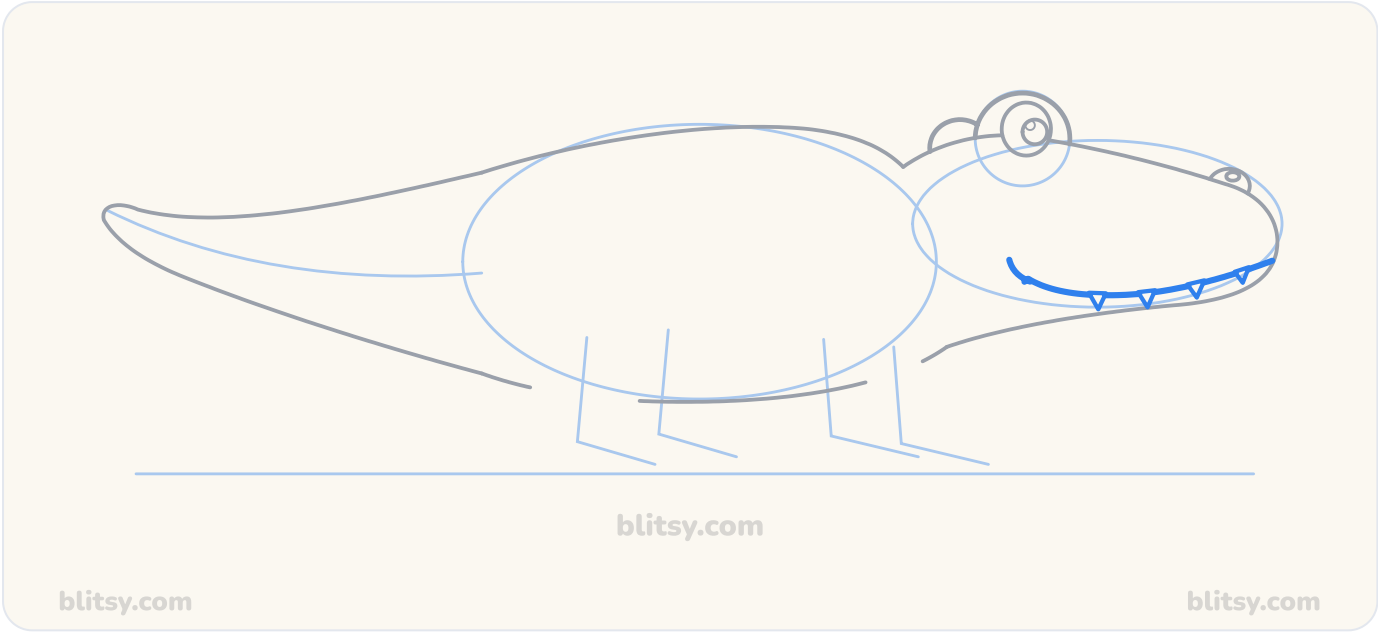
STEP 6 Add eye bumps, an eye and the nostril



Trace over the eye circle so it pops up like a little dome, and add a smaller bump behind it for the far eye ridge. Inside the dome, draw a white oval eye with a pupil leaning toward the snout and a shine dot. At the snout tip, add a small bump with a nostril dot. Real alligators keep eyes and nose on top so they can peek out of the water.

💡 **Tip:** Point the pupil forward. A gator looking where it walks feels friendly instead of sneaky.

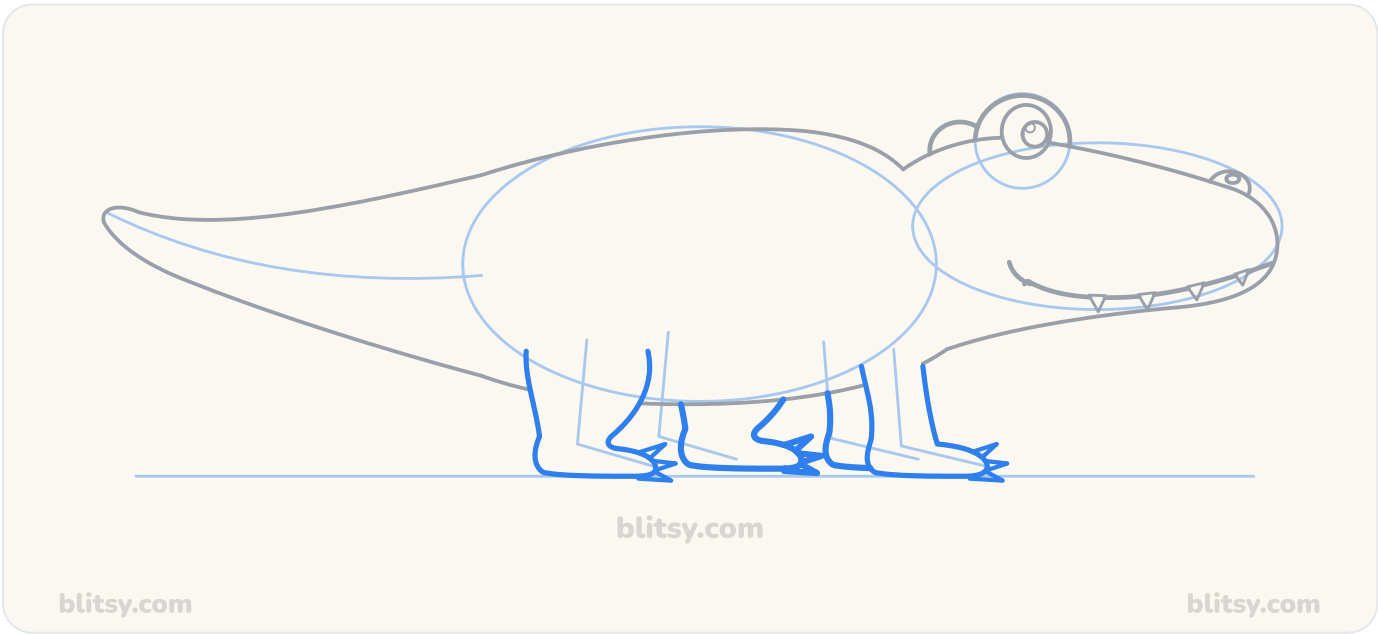
STEP 7 Give it a smile and small teeth



Draw the mouth from the snout tip back toward the eye, curving down slightly in the middle and turning up at the end into a little smile corner. Hang four small triangle teeth from that line, spaced evenly. Keep them tiny. Big fangs make the face scary, and we want this gator to look like it's having a good day.

💡 **Tip:** Stop the mouth under the eye. Running it any farther back makes the grin look strange.

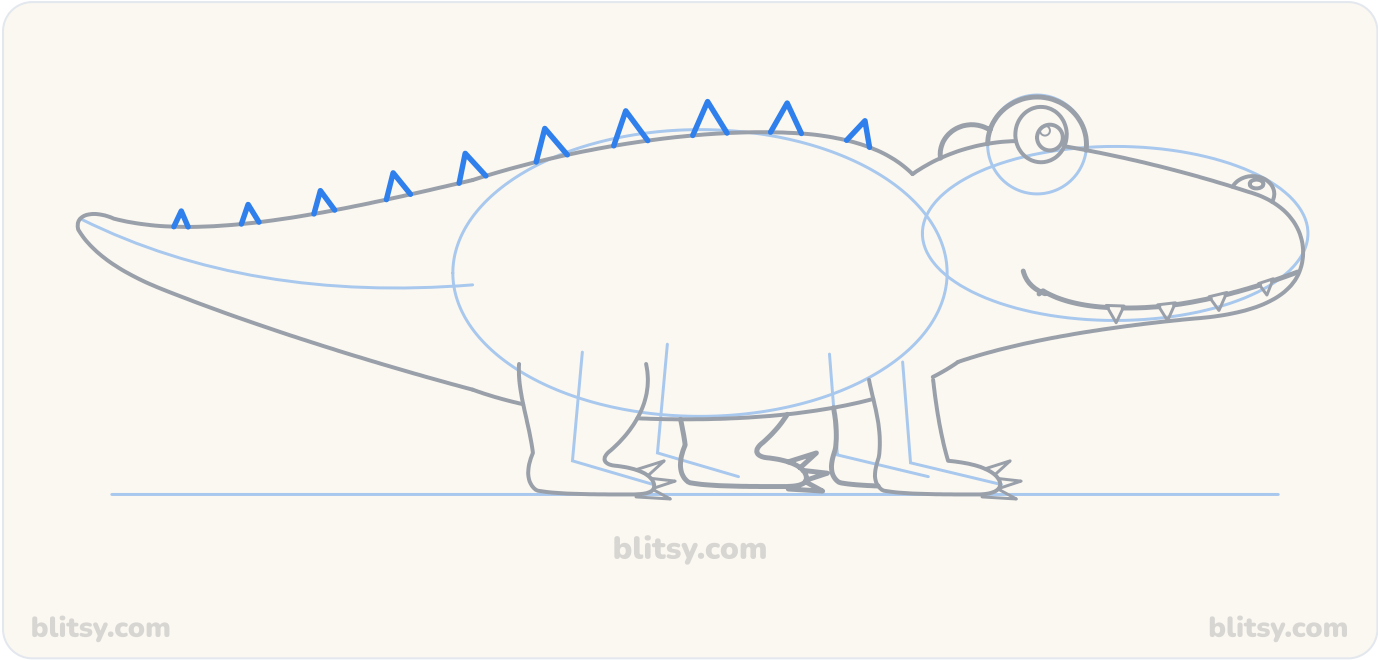
STEP 8 Build four short, bent legs



Around each stick, draw a thick leg that bulges at the top and narrows at the ankle. Each foot is a flat rounded shape pointing forward, with three short claws peeking out the front. The near front leg reaches forward and the near back leg steps back, so the gator walks. The far legs show only partly.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the near legs fully first. Then you'll see how little of the far legs is left to draw.

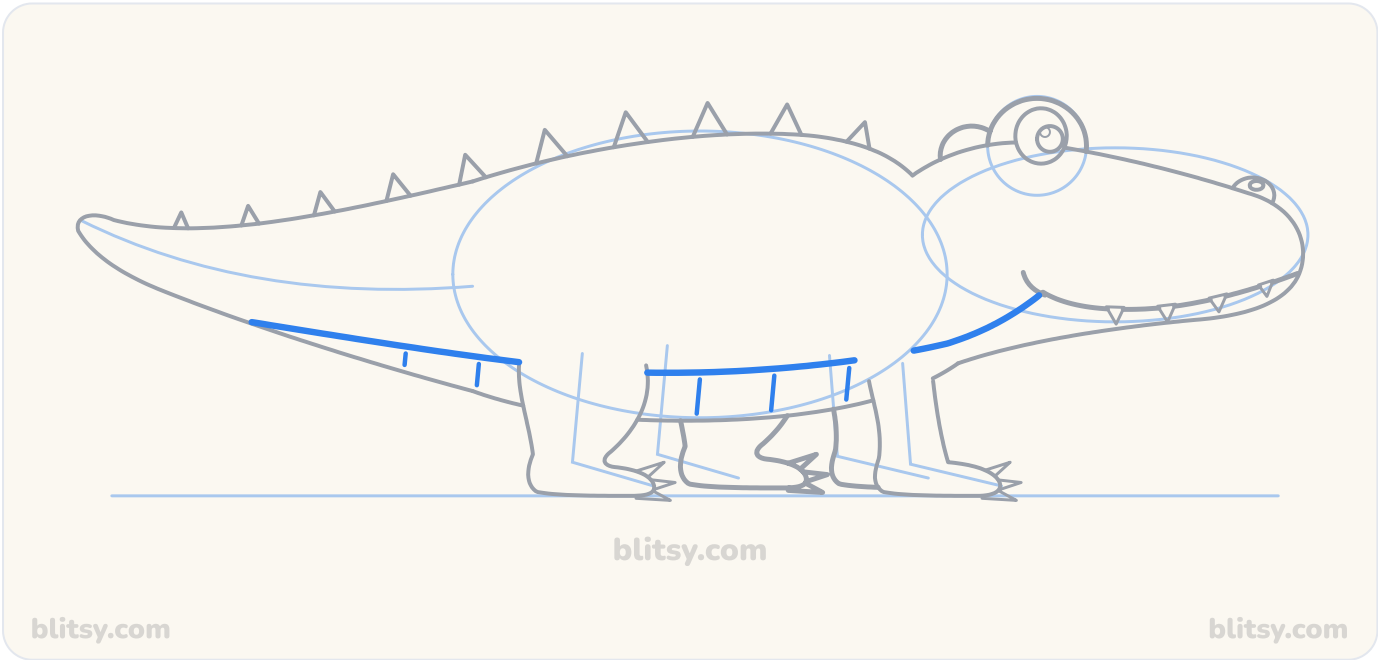
STEP 9 Line up spiky scutes along the back



Scutes are the bony ridges on an alligator's back. Draw a row of small triangles standing on the back line, biggest over the middle of the body and shrinking down the tail. I leave the head bare and space them about one triangle apart, so the row looks neat.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the tallest spike in the middle first, then shrink the rest toward each end.

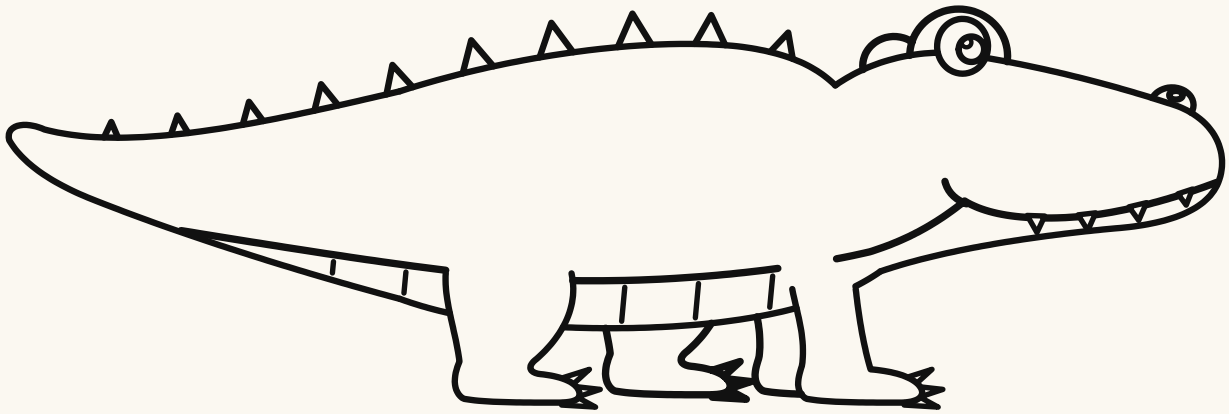
STEP 10 Draw the belly line and stripes



Run a soft line along the lower body, from under the tail to the neck, where it joins the mouth. Everything below it becomes the pale belly. Inside that band, add short stripes across, like the plates on a real gator's underside. A few stripes are enough; filling the whole belly makes it busy.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the belly band narrow on the tail and a little wider under the chest.

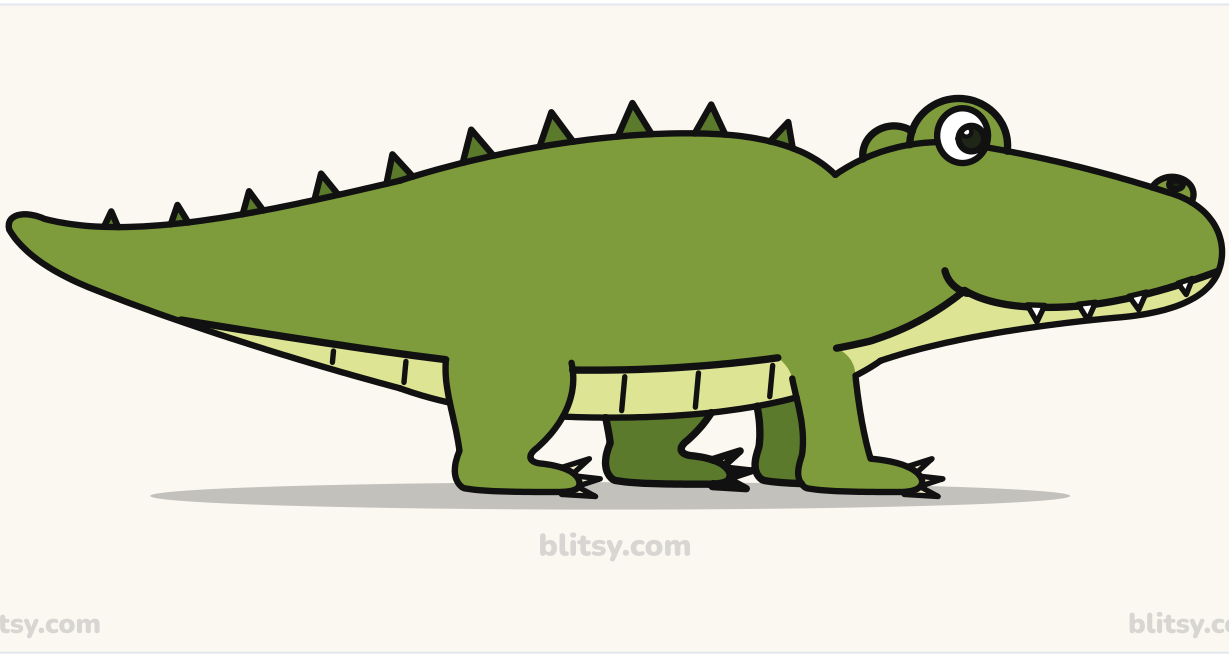
STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with your black fineliner: the outline, the eye, the smile, the teeth, the legs, the claws, the scutes and the belly stripes. Skip the ovals, the tail curve and the stick legs. Wait a minute for the ink to dry, then erase all the pencil underneath.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the long tail lines in one slow stroke each so they stay smooth.

STEP 12 Color your alligator



Olive green goes on the head, body, tail, eye bumps and the two near legs. Use a darker green for the scutes and the far legs, which makes them sit behind the body. The belly and lower jaw get a pale yellow-green. Leave the teeth and eye white, color the claws cream, and fill the pupil and nostril with black.

💡 **Tip:** Color the big green body in long strokes going the same way, from tail to snout.