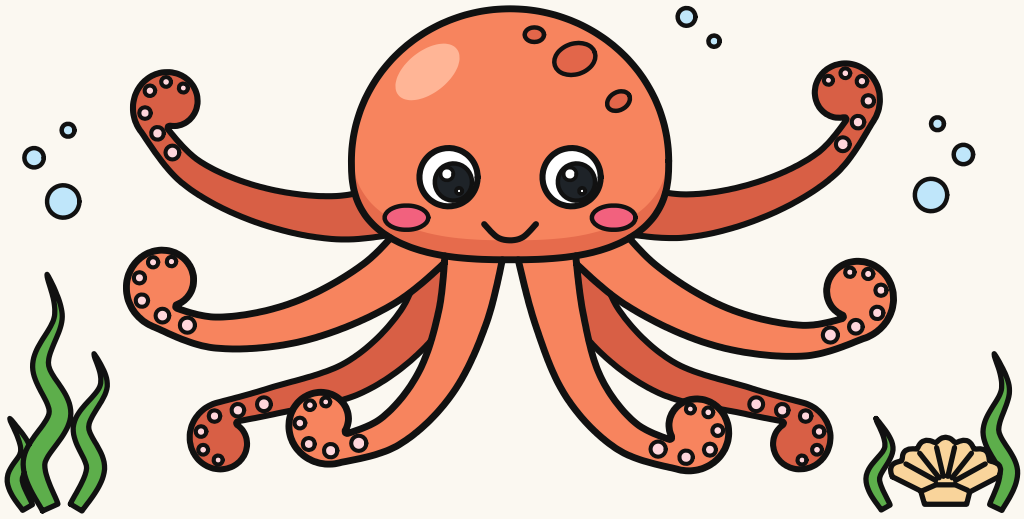
How to Draw an Octopus

11 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

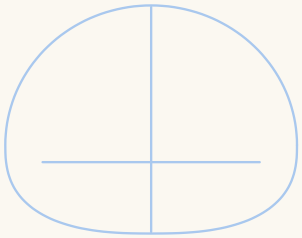
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Orange and pink colored pencils
- Paper turned sideways

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 →

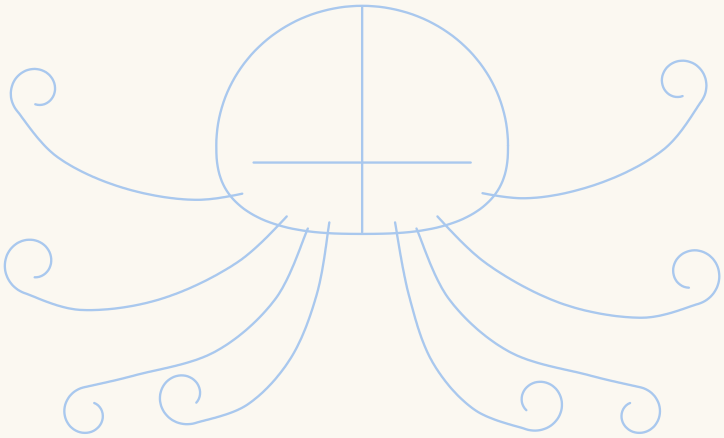
STEP 1 Sketch the dome and face guides



Start near the top middle of your page with a shape like an upside-down bowl: round on top, a bit flatter underneath. Make it roughly a third as wide as the page. Draw a light vertical line down its middle, then a short level line a little below halfway. Those two lines decide where the eyes sit later.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you could erase the line with one swipe.

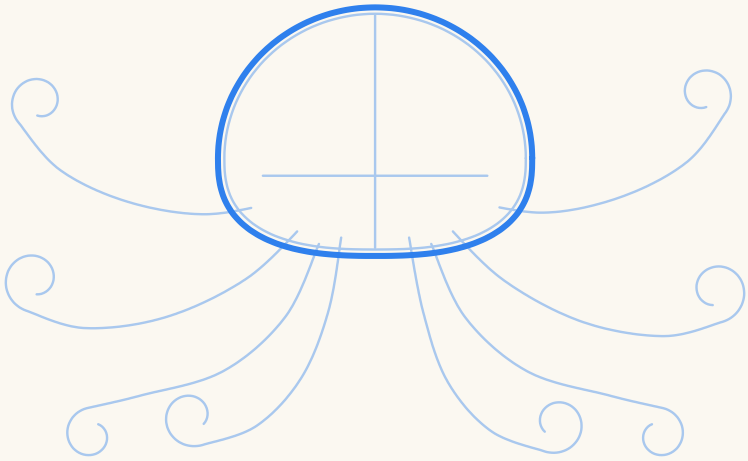
STEP 2 Draw eight arm center lines



This is the step I care most about. Draw one thin curve for each arm, starting at the bottom edge of the dome. Two sweep up beside the head, two reach straight out to the sides, two stretch low toward the bottom corners, and two run down near the middle. Finish every curve with a small spiral at the end. Count them before you move on: four on the left, four on the right.

💡 **Tip:** Swing each curve from your elbow, not your fingers, so it stays smooth.

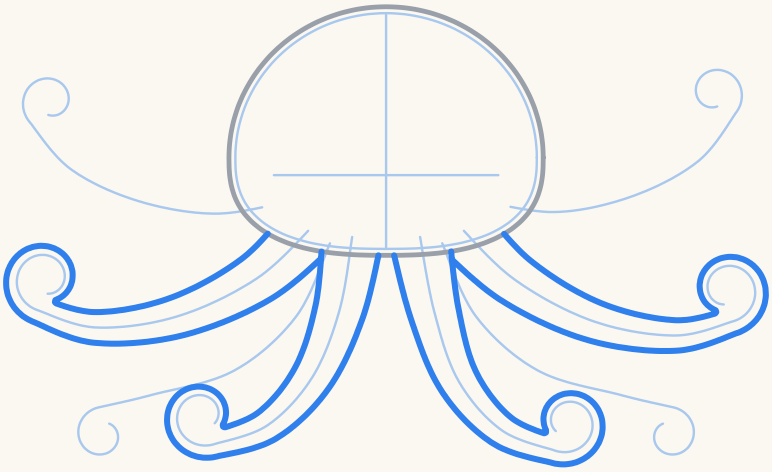
STEP 3 Outline the round dome head



Trace around the dome guide with a confident line, sitting just outside it. Keep the top tall and round and let the bottom edge flatten a little, because the arms tuck under it. I like the head big compared to the arms; a large head is what makes a cartoon octopus look friendly instead of creepy.

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

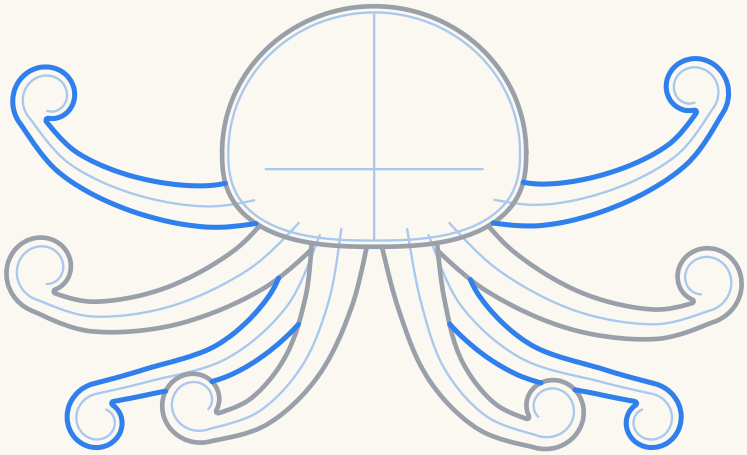
STEP 4 Thicken the four front arms



Pick the four arms closest to you: the pair reaching straight out to the sides and the pair running down the middle. Draw a line on each side of their center lines, wide at the head and narrowing toward the tip, then follow the spiral around and close it with a rounded end. Where an inner arm crosses an outer one, finish the inner arm first and stop the outer line where it meets it.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the gap between both sides shrinking evenly, like a carrot.

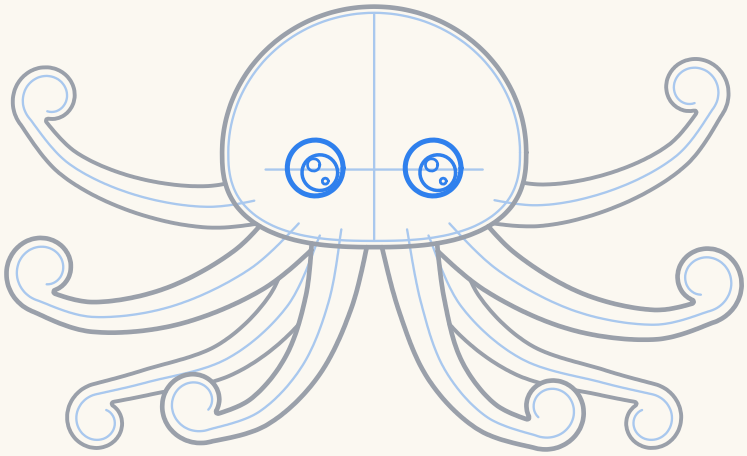
STEP 5 Let the back arms peek out



The remaining four arms sit behind. Thicken them the same way, but stop every line the moment it touches a front arm or the head. That small habit is what makes them look farther away. Two back arms rise up beside the head, and the other two slip out between the front arms before curling at the bottom corners.

💡 **Tip:** If a back line crosses a front arm, erase that bit right away.

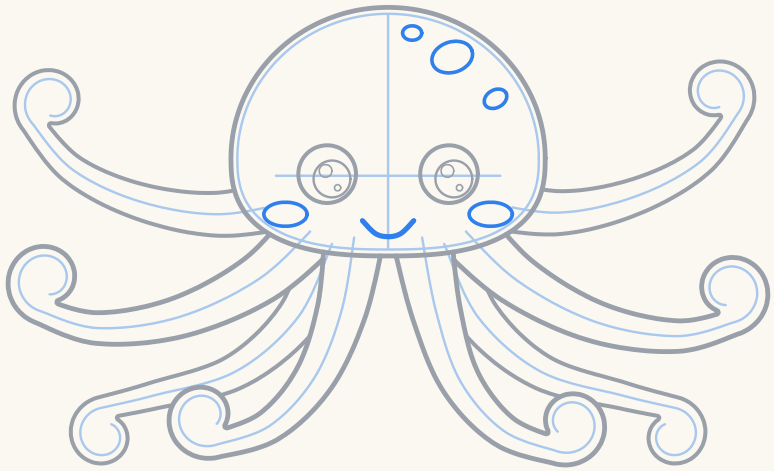
STEP 6 Add big friendly eyes



Place two large circles on the level guide, one on each side of the center line, leaving about one eye width between them. Inside each, draw a big round pupil shifted slightly toward the middle and down. Then add one small shine circle at the top left and a tiny one lower down. Leave both shines empty.

💡 **Tip:** Put the shines on the same side in both eyes, or the gaze looks crossed.

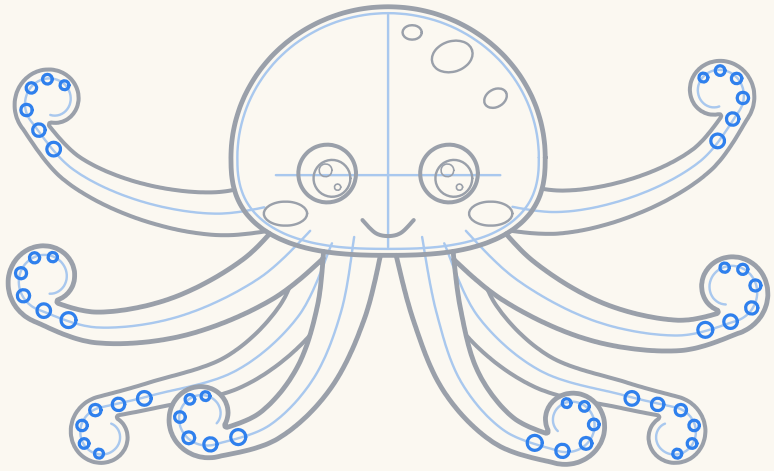
STEP 7 Draw a smile, cheeks and spots



Under the eyes, right on the center line, draw a short curved smile. Mine is barely wider than one eye, which keeps the face shy and sweet. Set a flat oval cheek under each eye, close to the edge of the head but fully inside it. Finish with three spots of different sizes on the upper right of the dome.

💡 **Tip:** Odd numbers of spots look more natural than even ones.

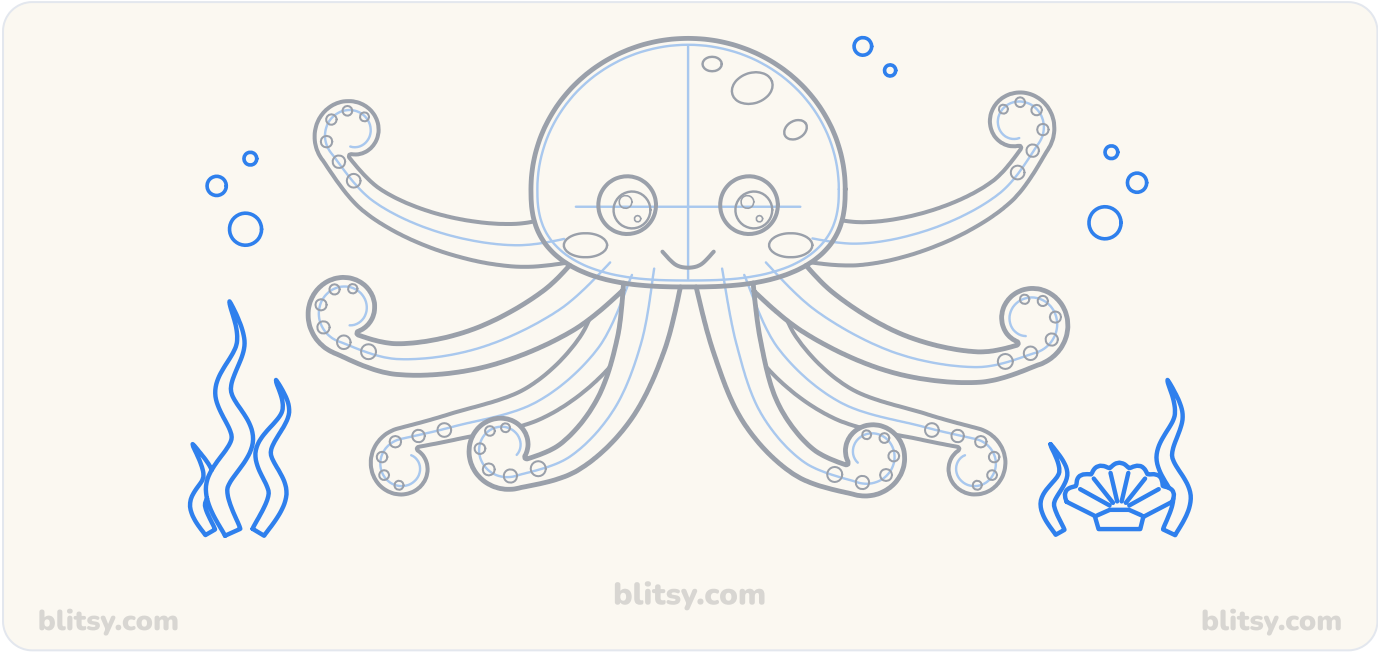
STEP 8 Add suckers on the curls



Real octopuses carry hundreds of suckers on the underside of their arms, and the curled tips are where we get to see them. Draw a row of small circles following each spiral, biggest near the start of the curl and getting smaller toward the tip. Give the back arms a row too, but skip any spot hidden by a front arm.

💡 **Tip:** Space the circles about one circle apart so the row reads clearly.

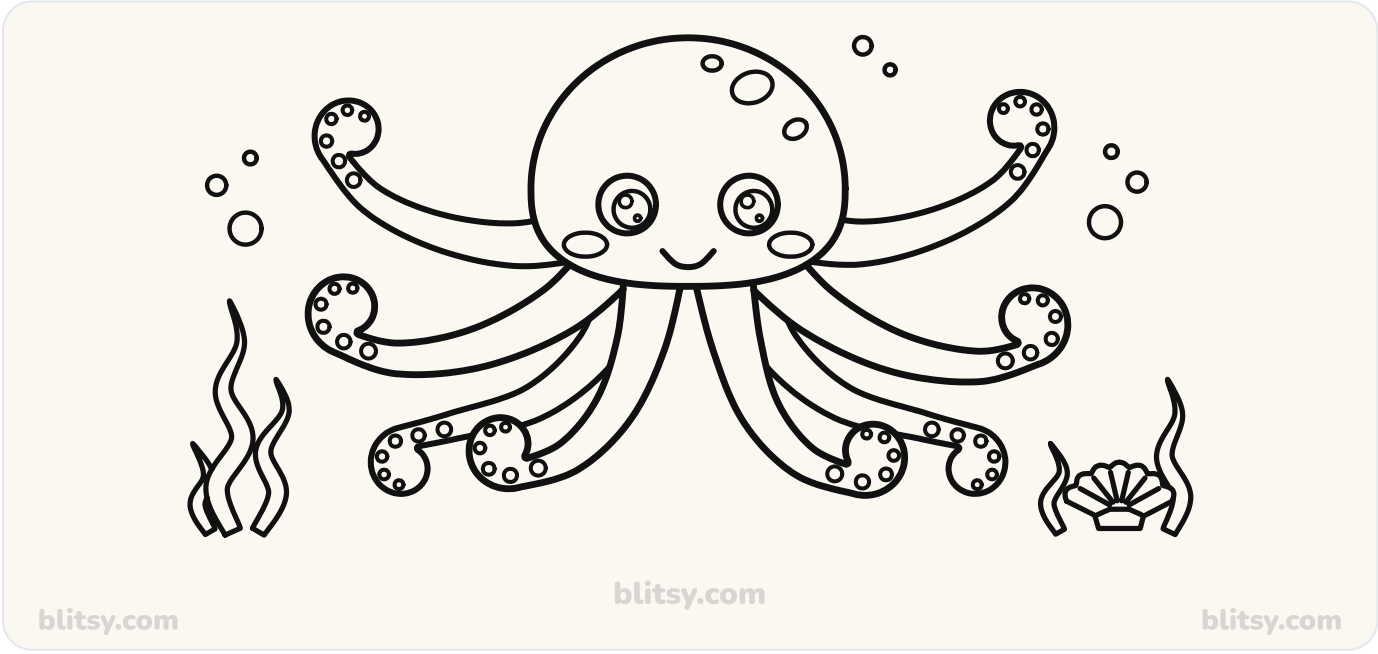
STEP 9 Add bubbles, a shell and seaweed



Now give your octopus somewhere to live. Scatter a few bubbles in small groups on both sides, mixing big and tiny ones. In the bottom right corner, draw a fan-shaped scallop shell with a little base and lines spreading from it. Then grow some tall wavy seaweed blades from the bottom edge on the left, plus two on the right beside the shell.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the scene away from the arms so the octopus stays the star.

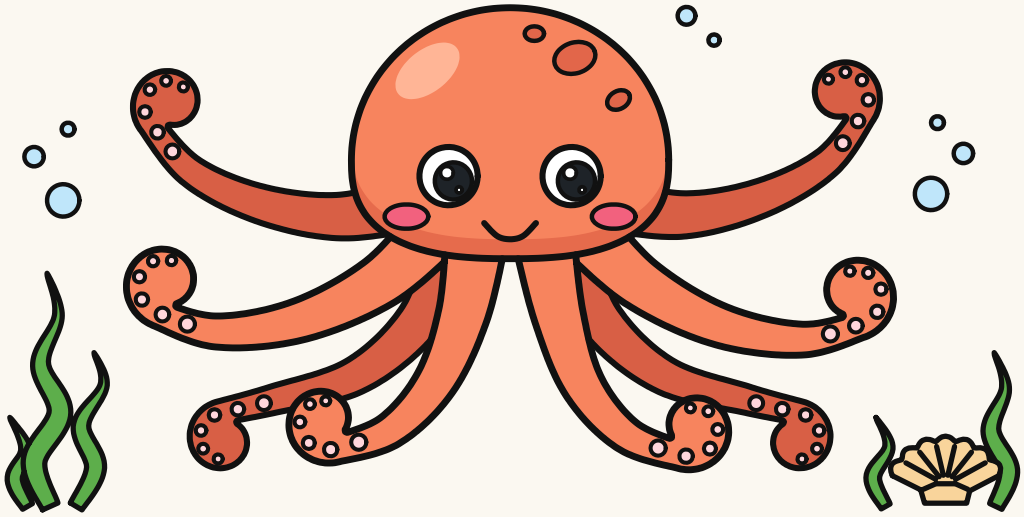
STEP 10 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with your black pen: the head, all eight arms, the face, the suckers and the scene. I take the spirals slowly and turn the page around them. When the ink has fully dried, erase the dome guide, the face cross and all the arm center lines. What's left should be a clean outline.

💡 **Tip:** Test the ink with a fingertip in a corner before you start erasing.

STEP 11 Color your octopus



Color the head and front arms coral orange, then use a darker orange on the back arms and spots so they sink behind. Add a strip of that darker shade along the bottom of the head and leave a pale patch near the top left for shine. Suckers get light pink, cheeks a stronger pink, bubbles light blue, the shell peach and the seaweed green.

💡 **Tip:** Color each arm from the head toward the tip, following its curve.