How to Draw the Earth

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

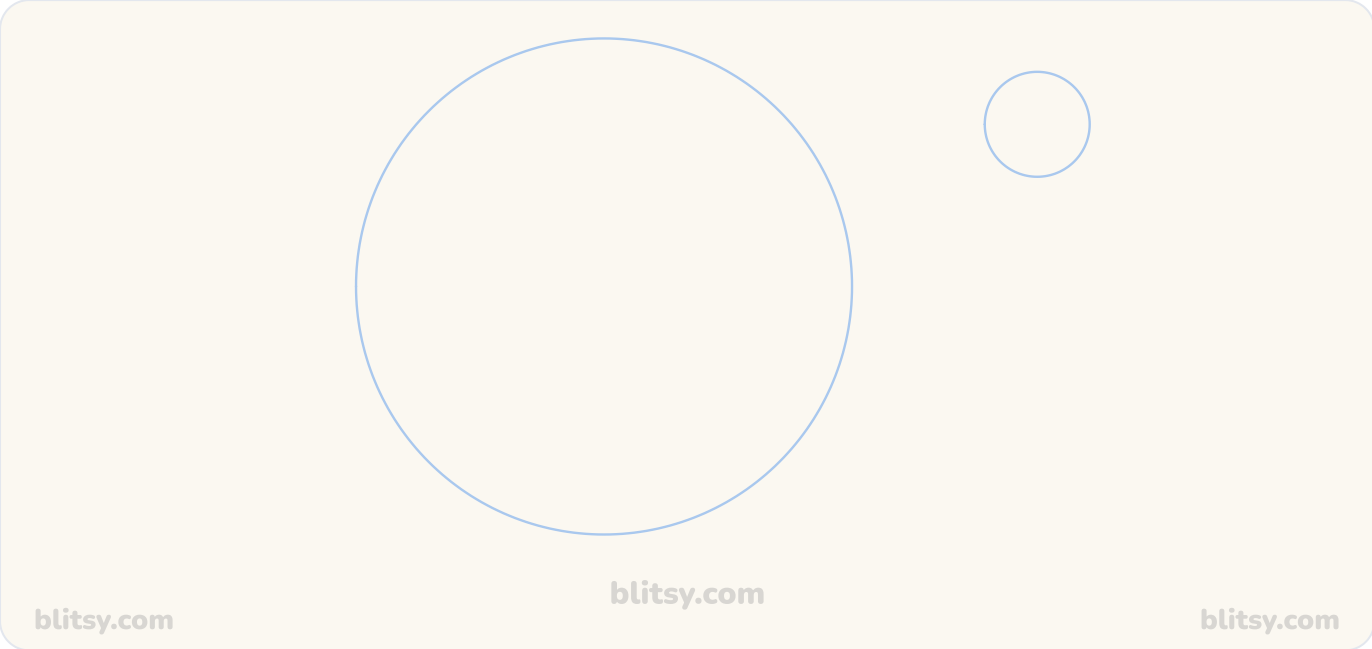
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils
- Plain paper

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 →

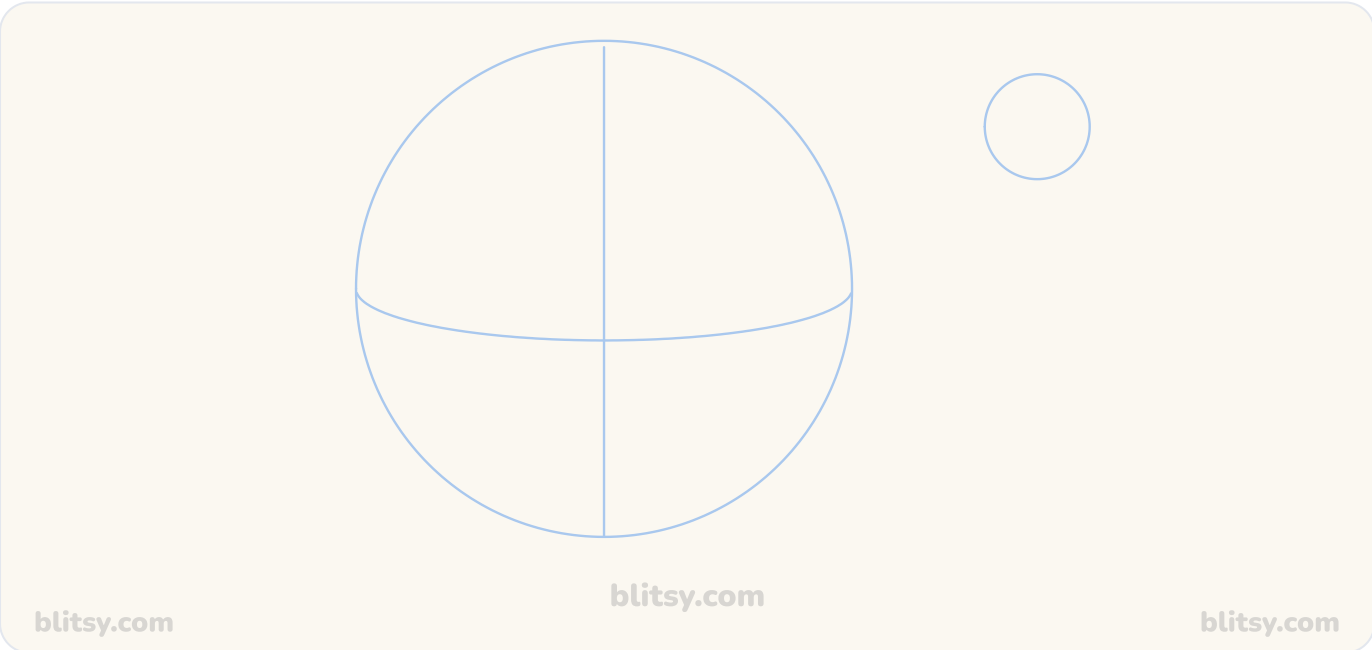
STEP 1 Draw a big circle and a small one



Turn your paper sideways and draw a large circle a little left of centre, reaching from near the top edge to near the bottom. In the top right corner, add a much smaller circle for the Moon. I trace a dinner plate for the Earth, because a wobbly globe makes every continent look wrong later.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you can barely see the line; these circles get cleaned up later.

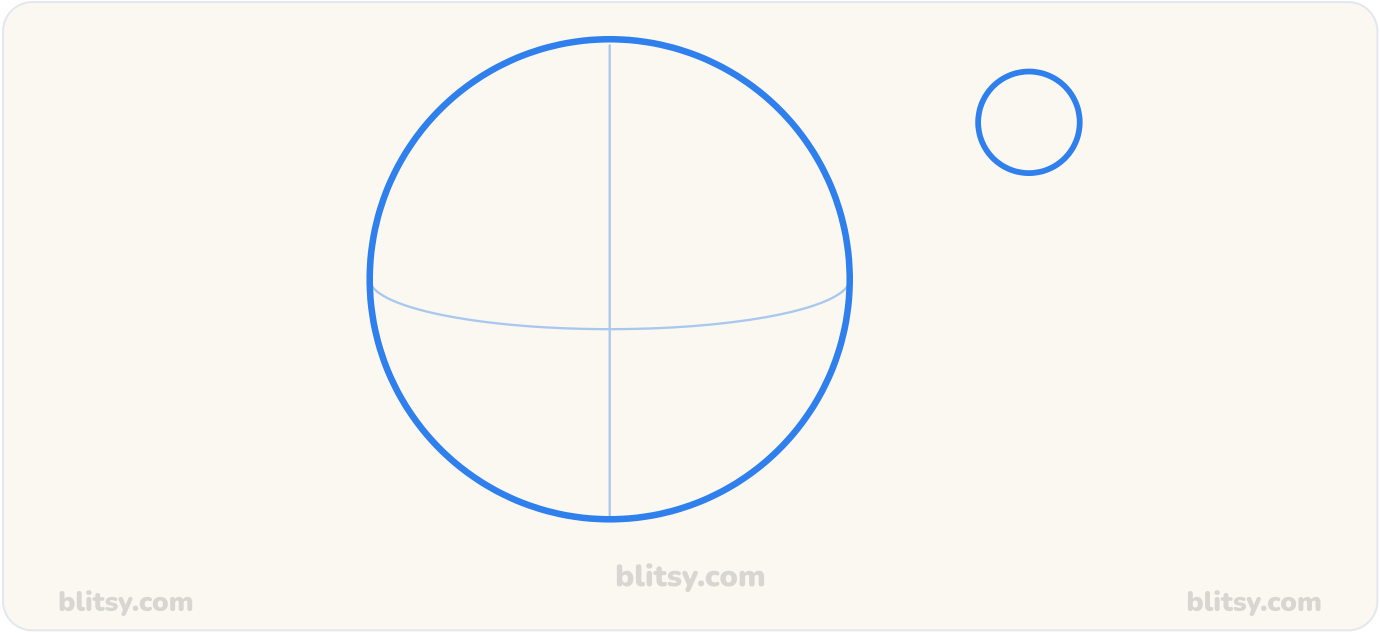
STEP 2 Add the equator and a meridian



Draw a gentle curve across the middle of the globe that sags a little toward the bottom. That's the equator, and the sag shows we are looking slightly down on the planet. Then draw a straight line from top to bottom through the middle. These two guides are your map grid.

💡 **Tip:** Where the two guide lines cross is roughly the Gulf of Guinea, the dent in Africa's west side.

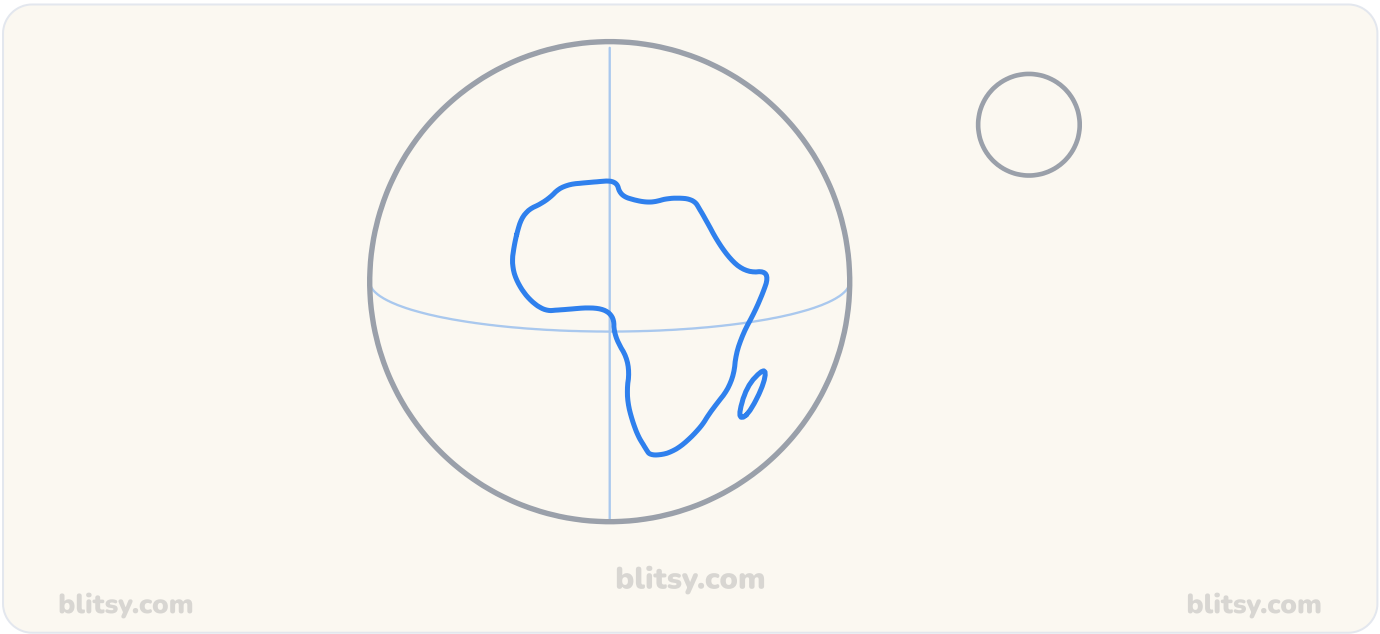
STEP 3 Outline the Earth and the Moon



Trace over both circles with a firmer, smooth pencil line, and keep the equator and the meridian faint. I like a clear rim early, since every coastline in the next steps has to stop exactly at the edge of the planet.

💡 **Tip:** Turn the paper as you go so your hand always draws the curve from the same comfortable angle.

STEP 4 Draw Africa in the middle



Africa is the anchor of this view, so it goes first. Start above the equator, left of the meridian, and draw the wide rounded top bulging to the left. Then let the shape narrow as it heads down, ending in a rounded point well below the equator. Add Madagascar as a small oval off the lower right coast.

💡 **Tip:** Think of Africa as a fat question mark without the dot: wide on top, slim at the bottom.

STEP 5 Add Europe and Asia above it



Leave a narrow gap of sea above Africa for the Mediterranean. Draw Spain as a square bump above Africa's top left corner, the coast of France going up, and a thin boot for Italy. Britain and Ireland are two small islands off the top left, and Scandinavia curls over like a thumb. On the right, add Arabia beside Africa and let India poke down at the edge.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the gap between Africa and Arabia thin; it's the Red Sea and it makes the map read instantly.

STEP 6 Show the Americas on the left edge



From this side you only see part of the Americas. Draw the bulging east coast of South America on the lower left so it ends at the rim. Higher up, add a short stretch of North America's coast curving into the edge. These partial shapes make the drawing look round instead of like a flat map.

💡 **Tip:** Let each coastline run right into the rim rather than closing it into an island.

STEP 7 Add polar ice and cloud swirls



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At the top, draw Greenland as a long rounded shape near the rim, with the curved edge of the Arctic ice beside it. At the very bottom, a short arc marks Antarctica peeking over the horizon. Then draw two spiral clouds over the open Atlantic. I keep them away from the coasts so the lines don't tangle.

💡 **Tip:** Draw each swirl like a snail shell that is slightly stretched sideways.

STEP 8 Mark deserts and shallow water

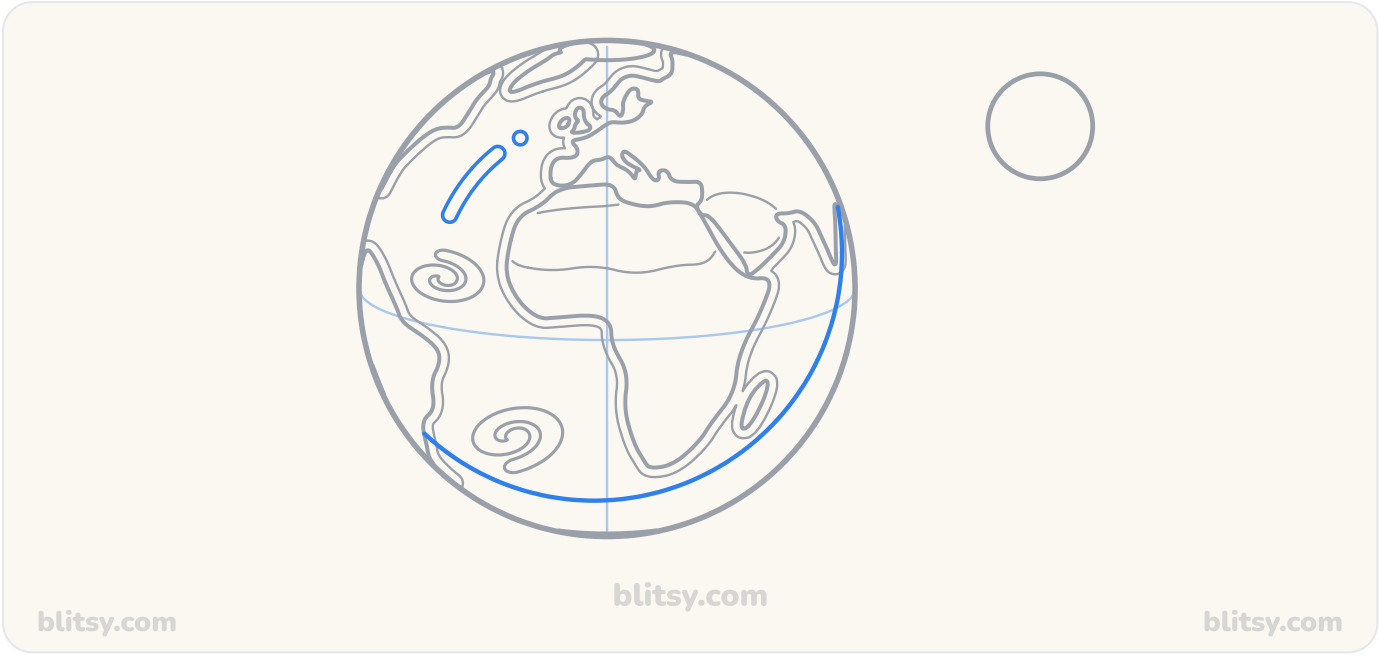


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Across the top of Africa, draw a wavy line from coast to coast; above it is the Sahara. Continue a similar line into Arabia. Next, follow every coastline with a second line a short way out to sea for the lighter shallow water. It takes patience, so small kids can skip it.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the shallow-water line the same distance from the coast all the way around.

STEP 9 Draw the night side and a shine



Only half of the Earth faces the Sun at any time. Show that with a thin curve along the lower right, parallel to the rim, where the shadow starts. On the upper left, draw a short curved stripe and a dot for a shine. Light and shadow on opposite sides turn a flat circle into a ball.

💡 **Tip:** Decide where your sun is first, then put the shine on that side and the shadow on the other.

STEP 10 Add Moon craters and stars



Draw three craters of different sizes on the Moon. Then scatter five-pointed stars around both bodies, a few large and several tiny, with more on the wide open sides. Keep stars away from the Earth's rim, where they would crowd the outline.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a little empty space too; a sky packed with stars looks noisy.

STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with a black fineliner, from the rim and continents to the clouds, the shadow line and the stars. Let the ink dry for a minute. Then erase the guide circles, the equator and the meridian. Once the grid is gone, the planet suddenly looks real.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the long coastlines slowly in short strokes; a shaky hand shows most on long lines.

STEP 12 Color the planet



Color the open ocean blue and the coastal bands light blue. Land is green, with tan for the Sahara and Arabia. Leave the ice, clouds and shine white. Fill the night strip dark blue, the Moon gray with white craters, and make the stars yellow. I color the ocean in small circles to avoid streaks.

💡 **Tip:** Press harder in the dark blue night strip so it clearly reads as shadow next to the brighter ocean.