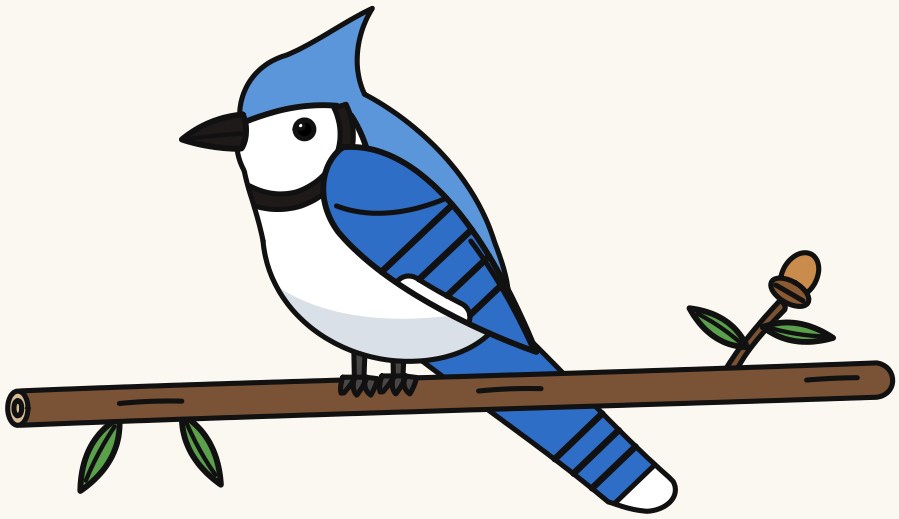
# How to Draw a Blue Jay

12 easy steps for beginners




## What you'll need

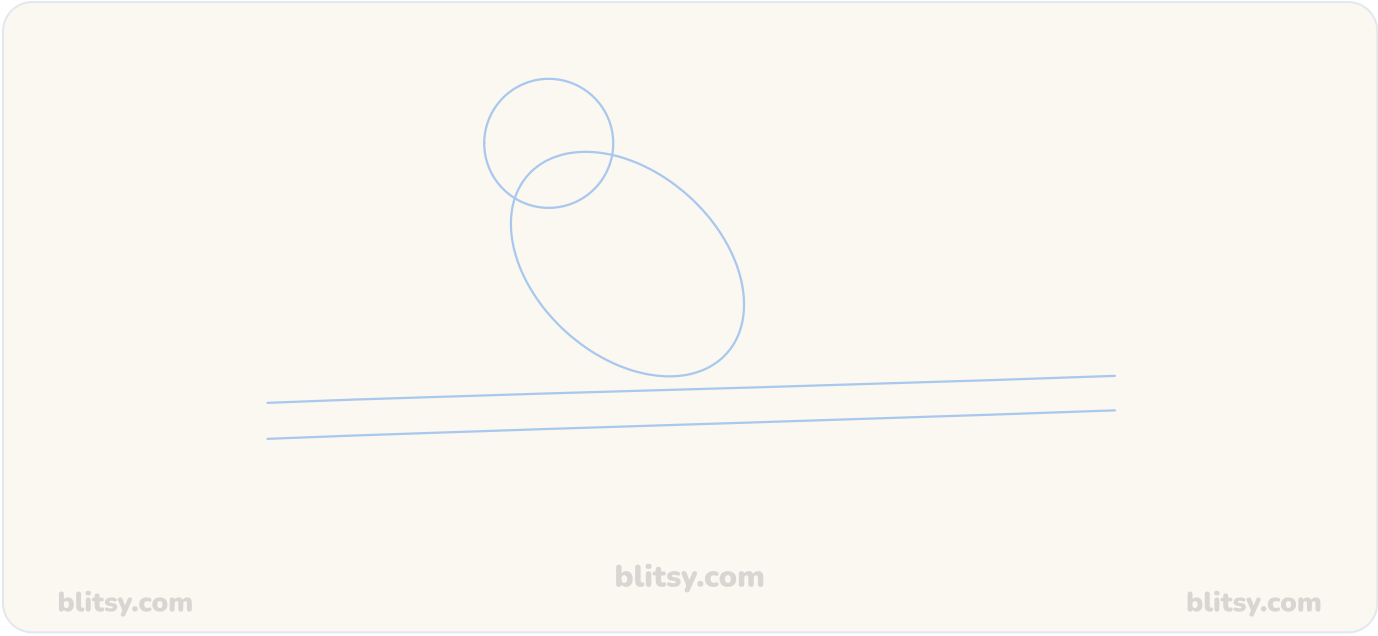
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils
- Plain paper

## 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 →**

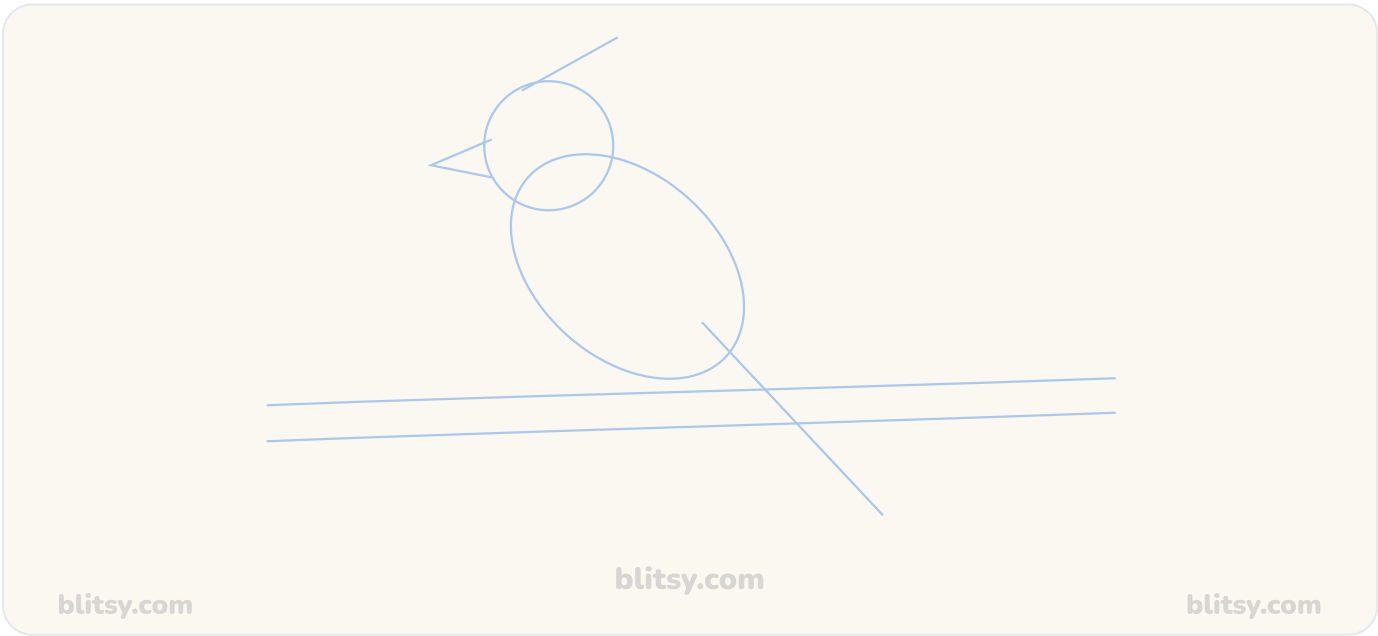
## STEP 1 Sketch the branch and body guides




Draw two long, nearly flat lines across the lower third of the page for the branch. Above the left half, make a circle for the head. Then add a big oval for the body that overlaps the circle and tilts to the right, like an egg lying at an angle. Keep everything very light.

💡 **Tip:** The head circle should be about half as wide as the body oval. Go bigger and the jay starts to look like a baby bird.

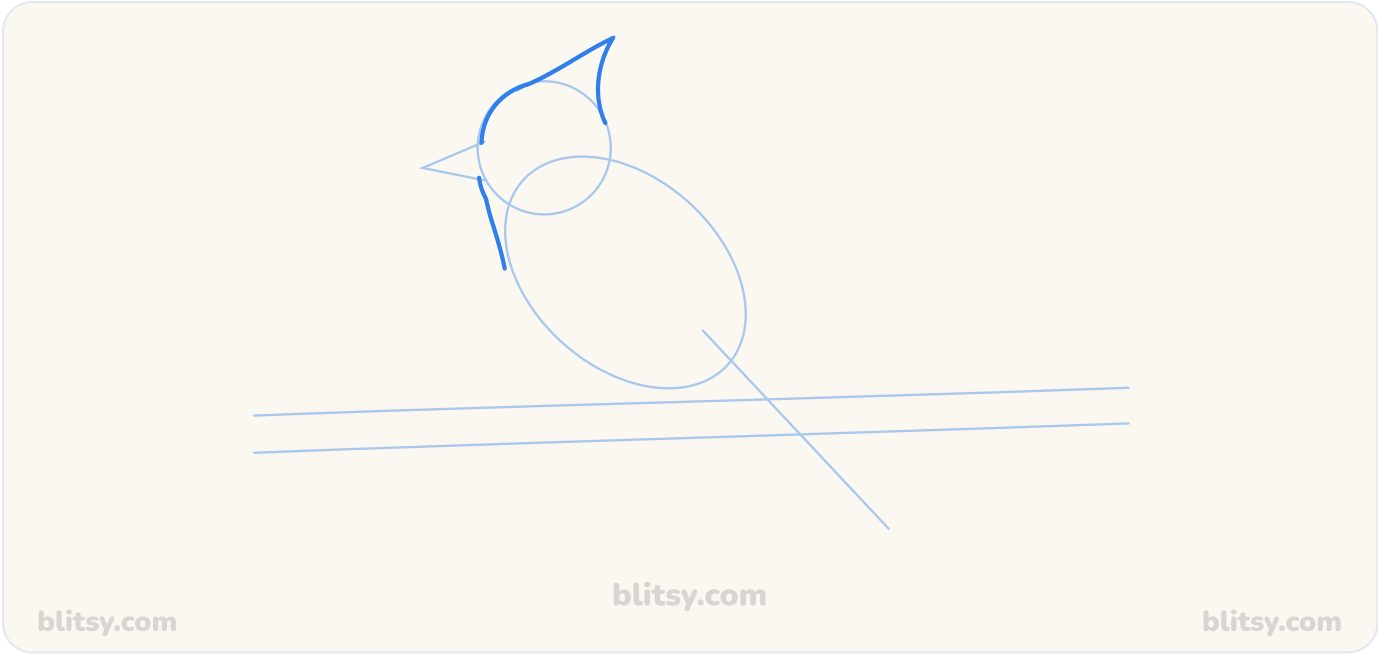
## STEP 2 Add the crest and tail guides




Now place three quick marks. A slanted line rises up and back from the top of the head for the crest. A small sideways triangle on the left of the circle marks the beak. Last, a long line runs from the lower back of the oval down past the branch for the tail.

💡 **Tip:** Aim the tail line in the opposite direction from the beak, so the bird feels balanced on the branch.

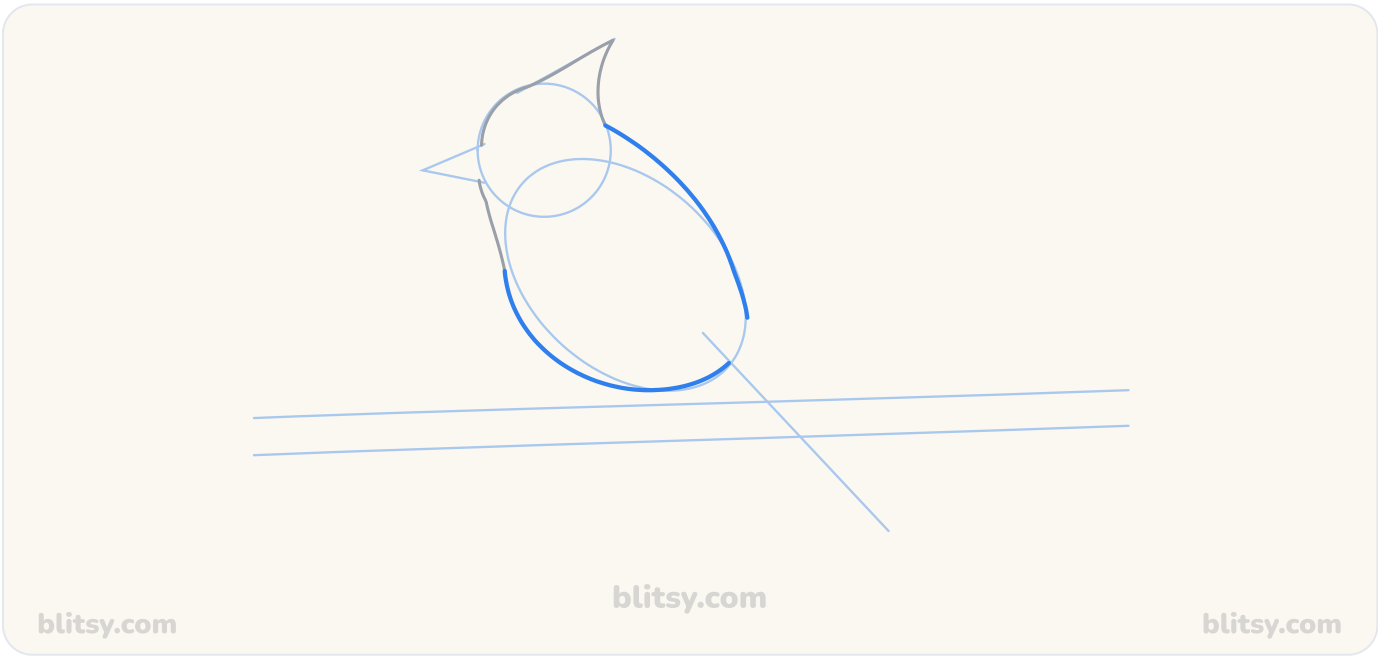
## STEP 3 Draw the head and the pointed crest




Start at the beak and curve up over the forehead. At the crest guide, follow it to a sharp tip, then come back down in a slightly hollow curve to the back of the head. Finish with a short chin line. I keep the crest tall on purpose, because it's the first thing people look for.

💡 **Tip:** Flick the pencil quickly at the crest tip so it ends in a clean point instead of a blunt bump.

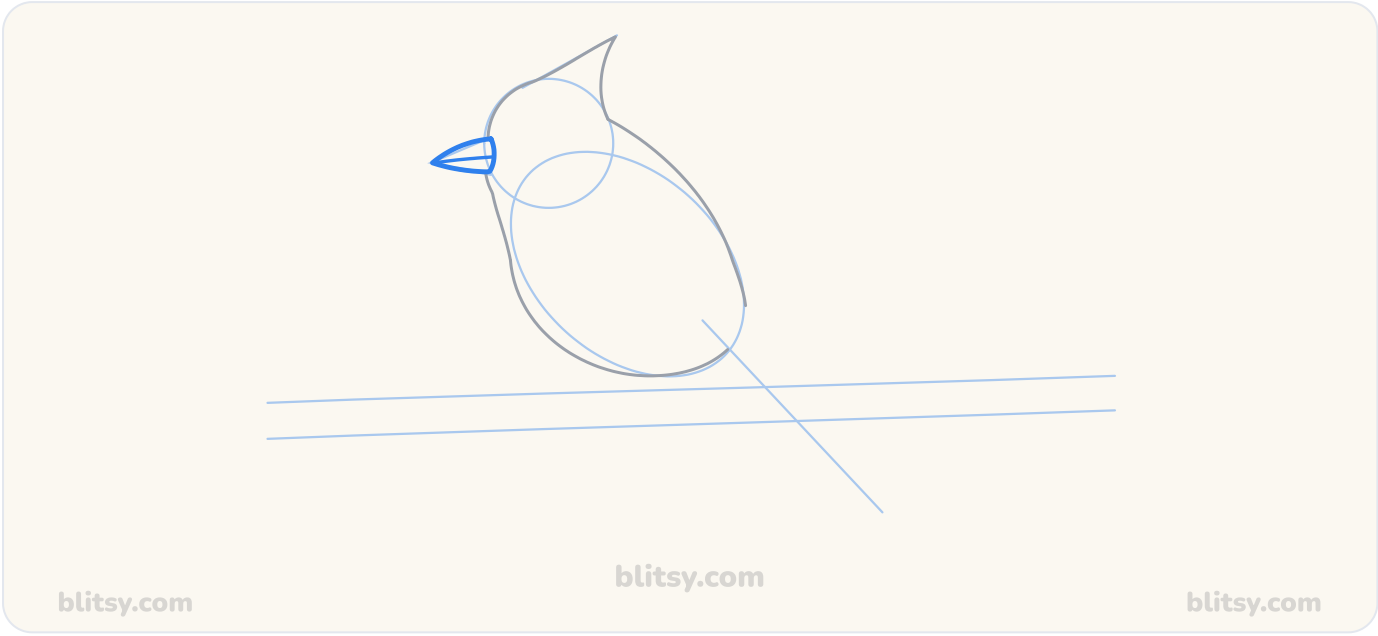
## STEP 4 Shape the round chest and back




From the back of the head, run one long curve down the back to the tail line. Then go back to the chin and draw a fuller curve that bulges out for the chest and sweeps under the belly. Jays puff their feathers a lot, so a round front looks more natural.

💡 **Tip:** If the chest looks flat, push the curve out further than feels right. Songbirds are rounder than most people draw them.

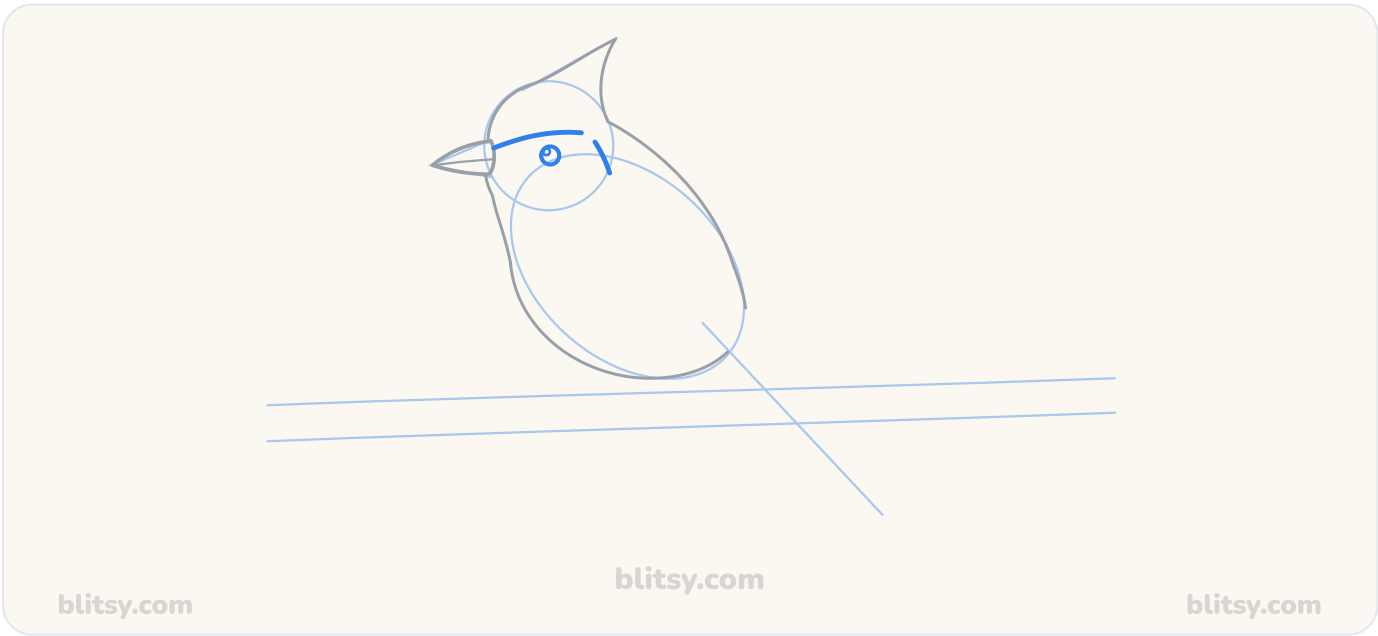
## STEP 5 Draw the slim black beak




Over the triangle, draw a beak that's longer and thinner than a cardinal's, with a top edge that dips gently toward the tip. Add one thin line through the middle. Most beginners make it short and stubby, but I draw it slim because a jay pries open acorns with it.

💡 **Tip:** The beak should be about as long as the eye is far from the forehead. Measure it with your pencil if you're unsure.

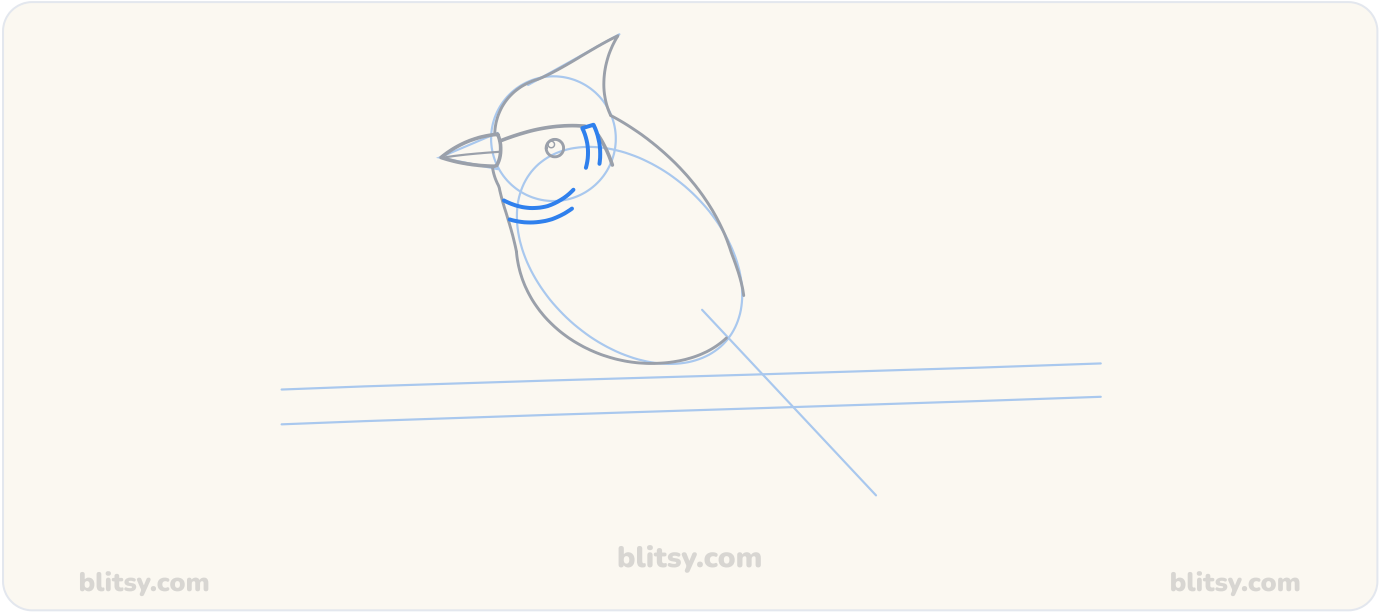
## STEP 6 Draw the blue cap line and the eye




This line splits the blue from the white. Start just above the beak and curve it back over the spot where the eye goes. Right below it, draw a round eye with a small circle inside for the shine. The eye sits just under the cap line, not inside the blue.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a little white space between the eye and the cap line, or the jay will look like it's frowning.

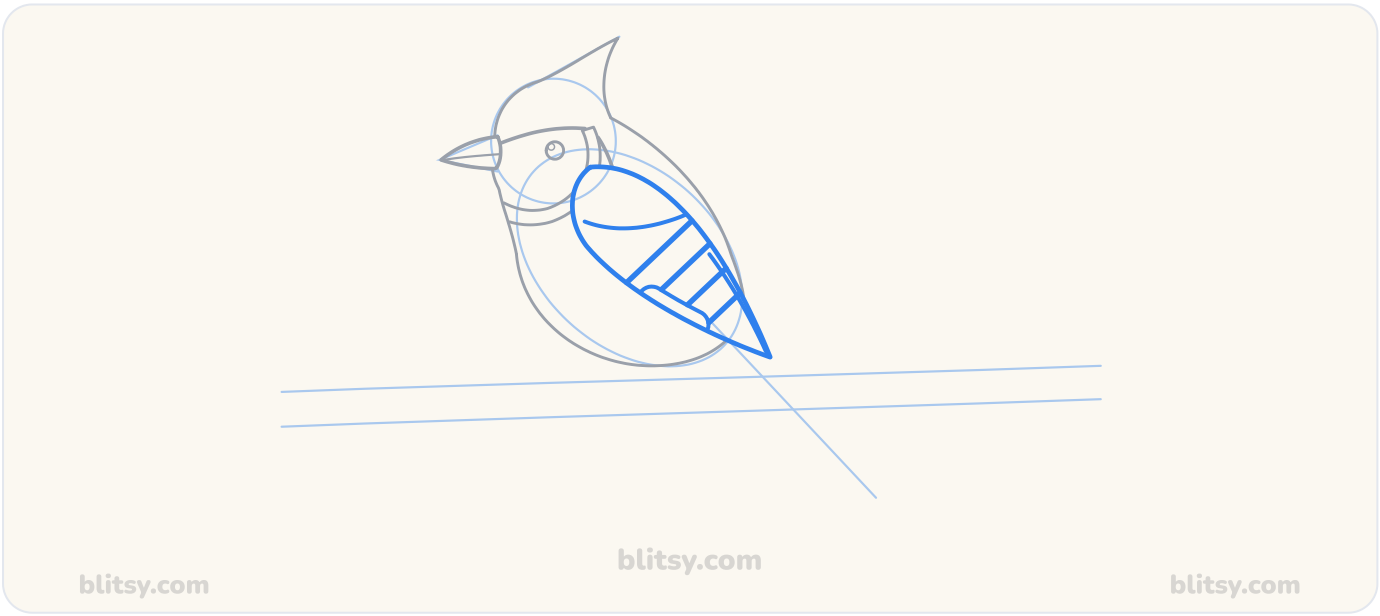
## STEP 7 Add the black necklace




This band is what makes a blue jay a blue jay. Begin behind the eye near the cap line and draw a thick curved band down the side of the head, then sweep it forward across the throat to the chest. Draw it as two lines with space between, like a sideways smile.

💡 **Tip:** Make the band thicker at the throat and thinner near the eye. An even width looks like a ribbon tied on.

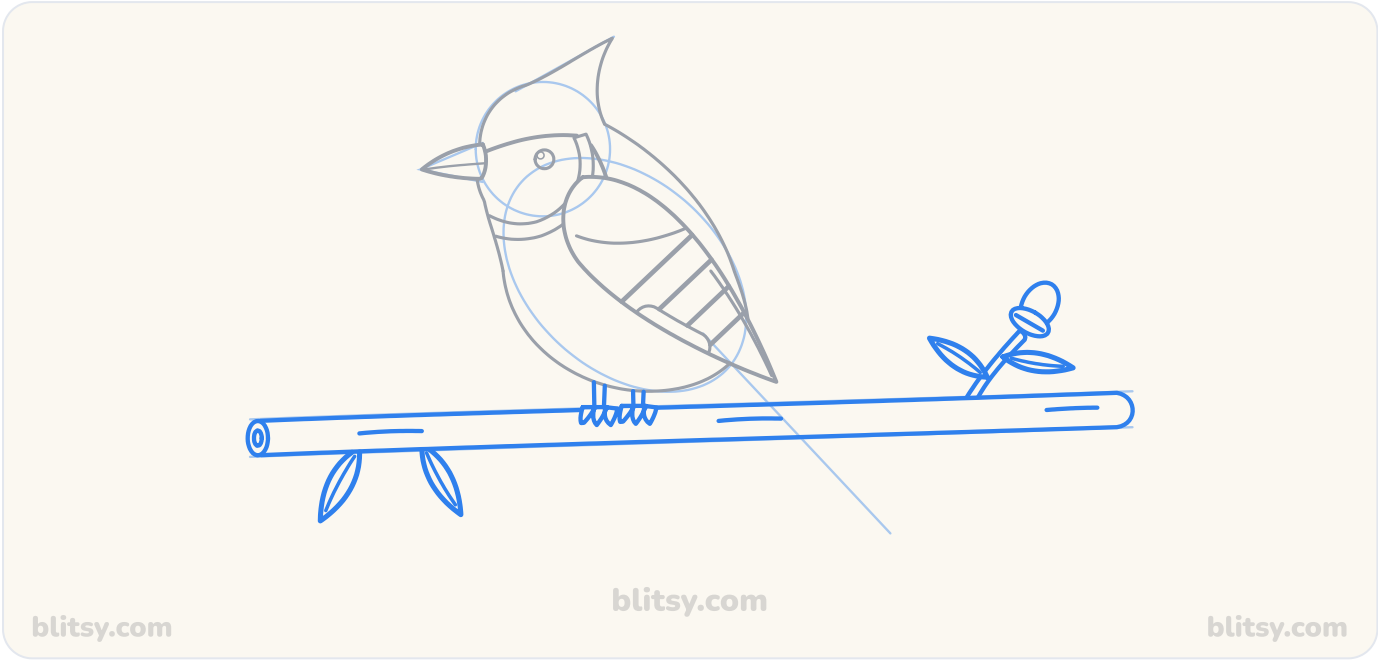
## STEP 8 Draw the barred wing and white patch




The folded wing is a long leaf shape on the side of the body. Start it behind the necklace, follow the back and end in a point that pokes a little past the body. Inside, add one curve across the top and a line toward the tip. Then draw four short bars across the lower wing and a small rounded patch along the bottom edge.

💡 **Tip:** Space the black bars evenly. Uneven gaps are the quickest way to make the wing look messy.

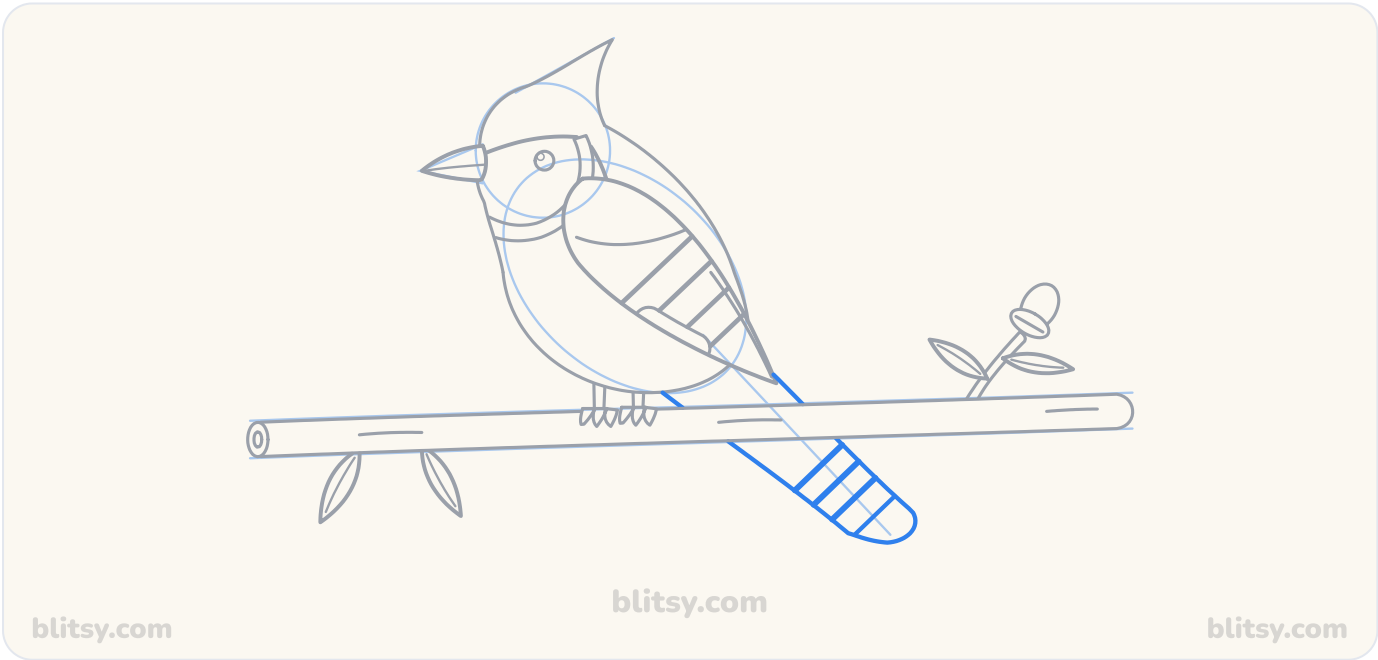
## STEP 9 Draw the branch, feet and acorn




Trace the branch guides with firm lines, round the right end and give the left end a small oval with a ring so it looks cut. Draw two short legs from the belly, each with three curved toes over the front of the branch. Hang two leaves underneath and add a little twig with an acorn on the right.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the toes on top of the branch line so the feet look like they're really holding on.

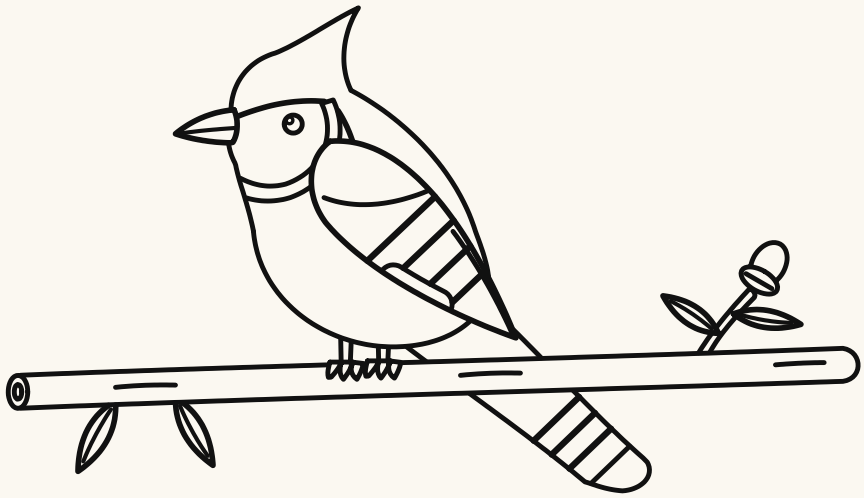
## STEP 10 Add the long tail with black bars




Below the branch, follow the tail guide and draw a long, narrow tail that widens a little at the end. Only draw the parts you can see past the branch and body. Add three black bars across the lower half, then a curved line near the end for the white tip.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the tail roughly as long as the body. A short tail makes the jay look like a sparrow.

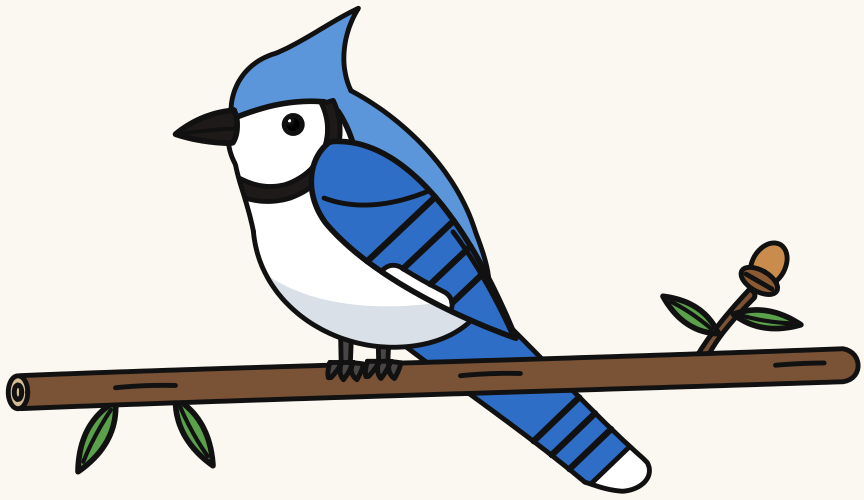
## STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with a black fineliner in short, slow strokes. Let the ink dry for a minute, then erase all the pencil guides. I always check the throat twice, since the old head circle likes to hide right under the necklace.

💡 **Tip:** Test the ink on the edge of the page with your finger before erasing. Smudged ink is hard to hide.

## STEP 12 Color your blue jay



Use light blue on the cap and back, then a deeper blue on the wing and tail. Fill the necklace, the beak and every bar in black. Leave the face, the wing patch and the tail tip white, with soft gray along the lower belly. The branch is brown, the leaves green and the acorn tan with a darker cap.

💡 **Tip:** Color the blues with the pencil moving along the feathers, from head to tail. It gives the wing a soft feathered look.