How to Draw a Capybara

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

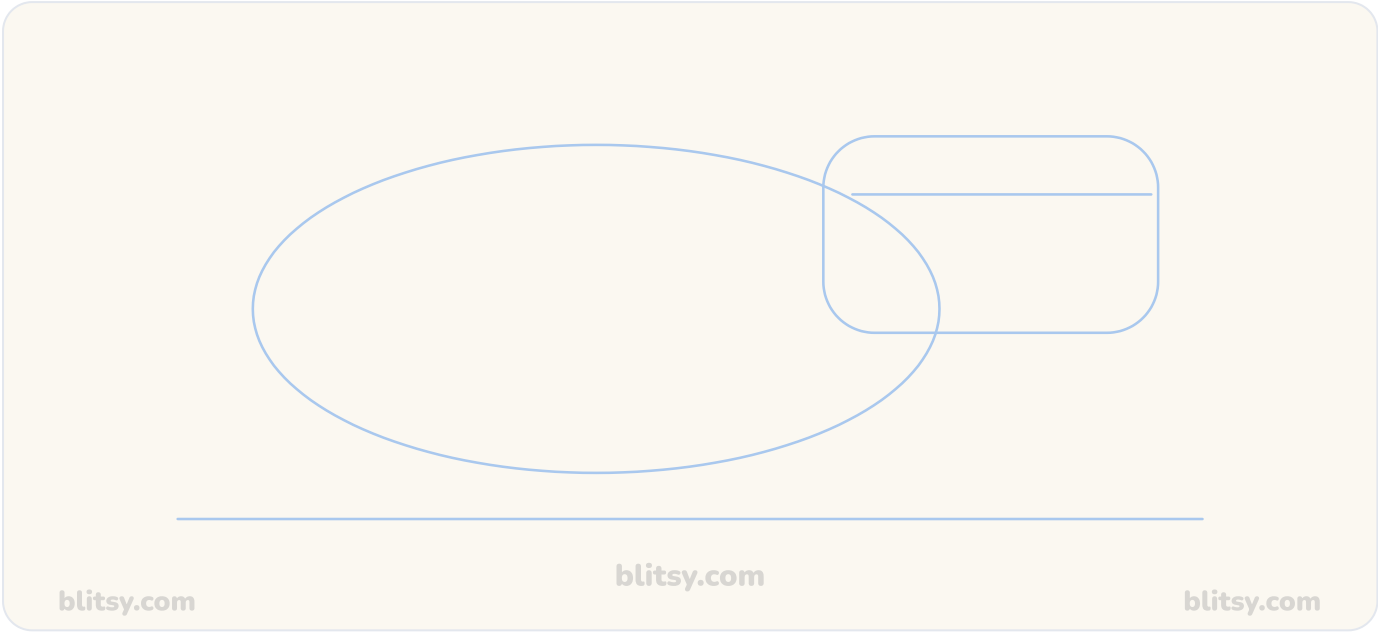
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker or fineliner
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Plain paper

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 →

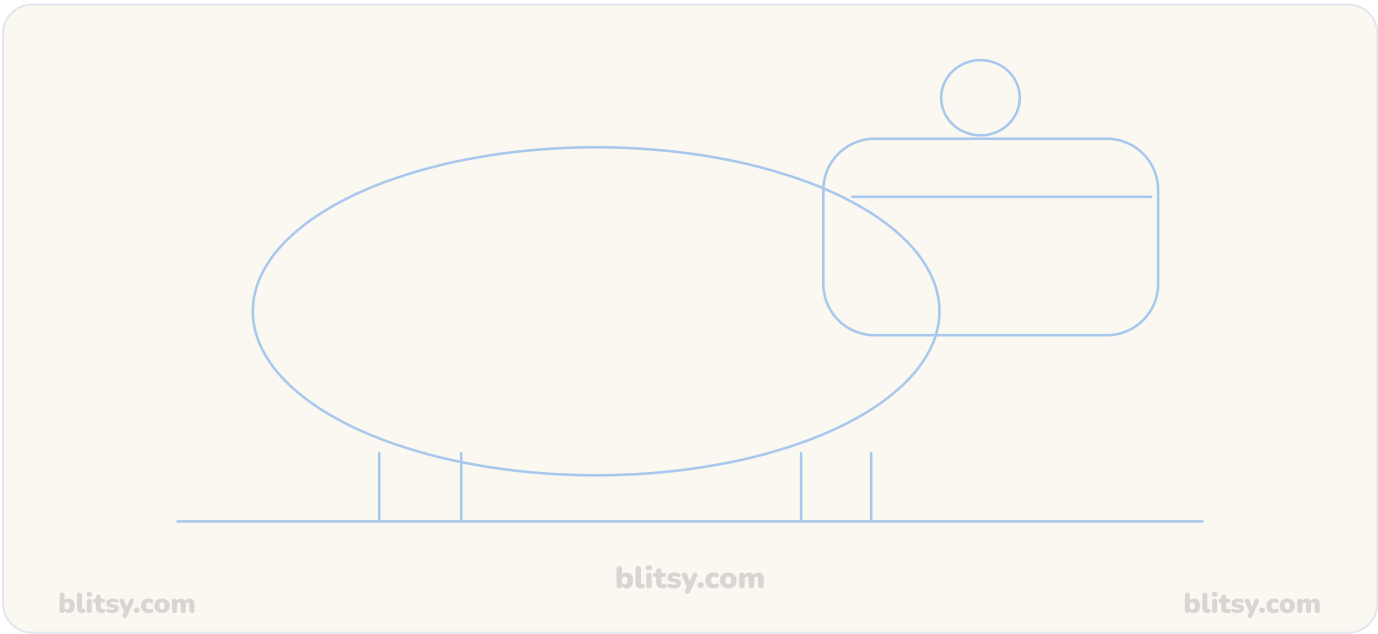
STEP 1 Sketch a long oval and a head box



Draw a light ground line near the bottom of the page. Just above it, sketch a long oval that takes up about two thirds of the width; that's the body. On its right end, overlapping the oval a little, draw a rounded box for the head, about half as tall as the body. A straight line across the upper part of the box marks where the eye goes.

💡 **Tip:** Keep these first shapes faint. They're scaffolding, and you'll erase every one of them.

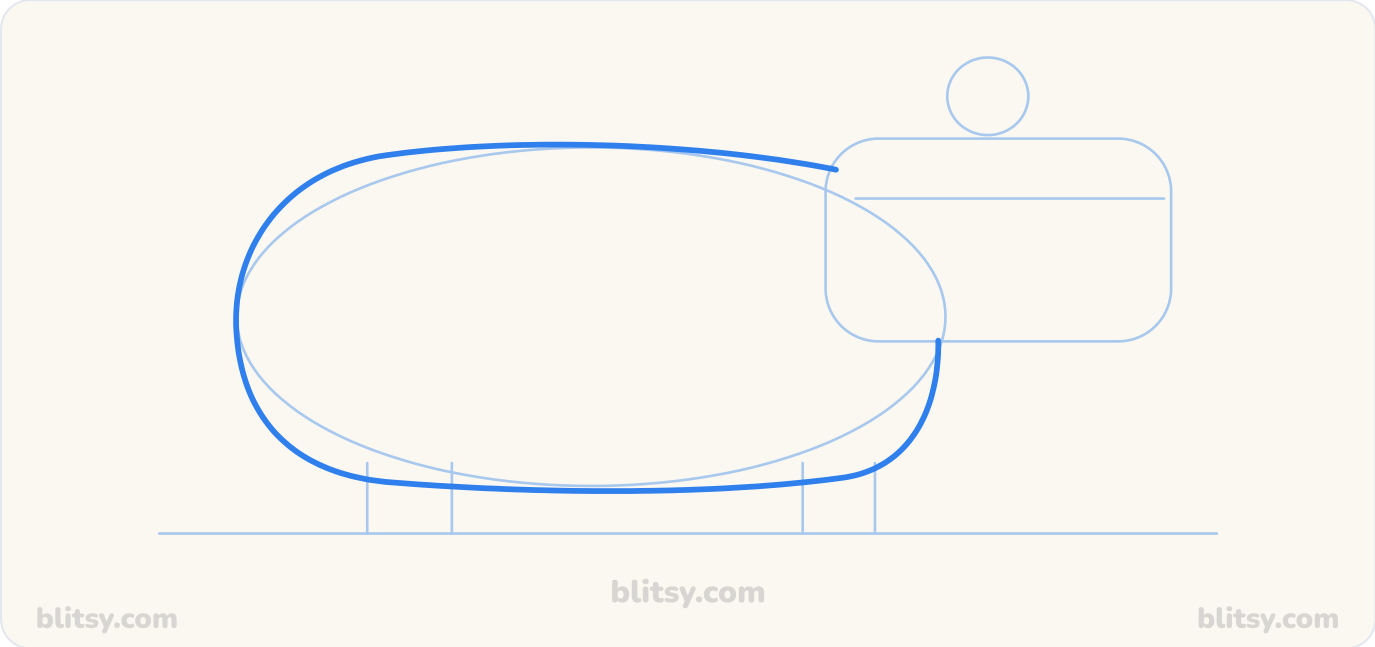
STEP 2 Add four leg lines and a small circle



Under the oval, drop four short lines to the ground: two near the back and two near the front. They're only guides for where the legs stand. Then put a small circle right on top of the head box, a bit left of center. That circle becomes the orange later.

💡 **Tip:** Space the leg pairs well apart. If all four bunch up in the middle, the body looks like it's balancing.

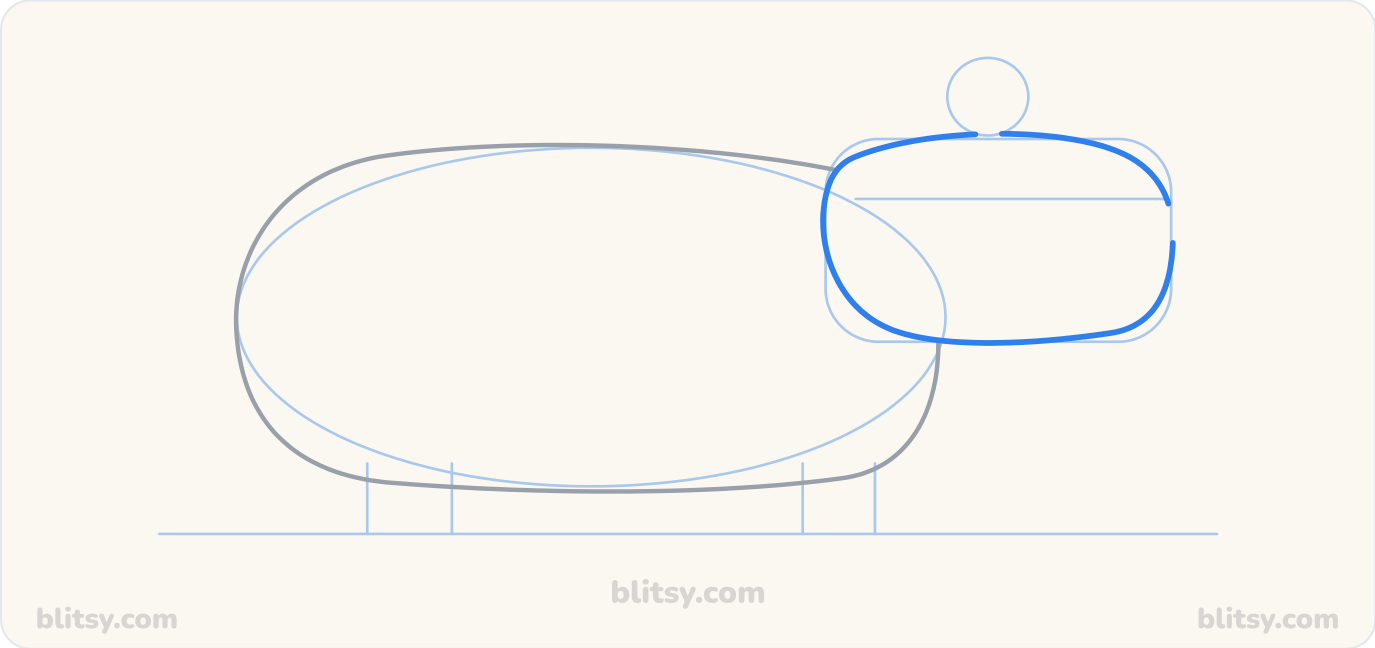
STEP 3 Draw the big barrel body



Now trace a firm outline around the body. The back is almost flat, with a slight rise toward a big round rump. Let the belly run low and fairly straight. Stop the line where it meets the head box, because the head sits in front of the body.

💡 **Tip:** Make the rump higher than the shoulders. That little slope is a very capybara detail.

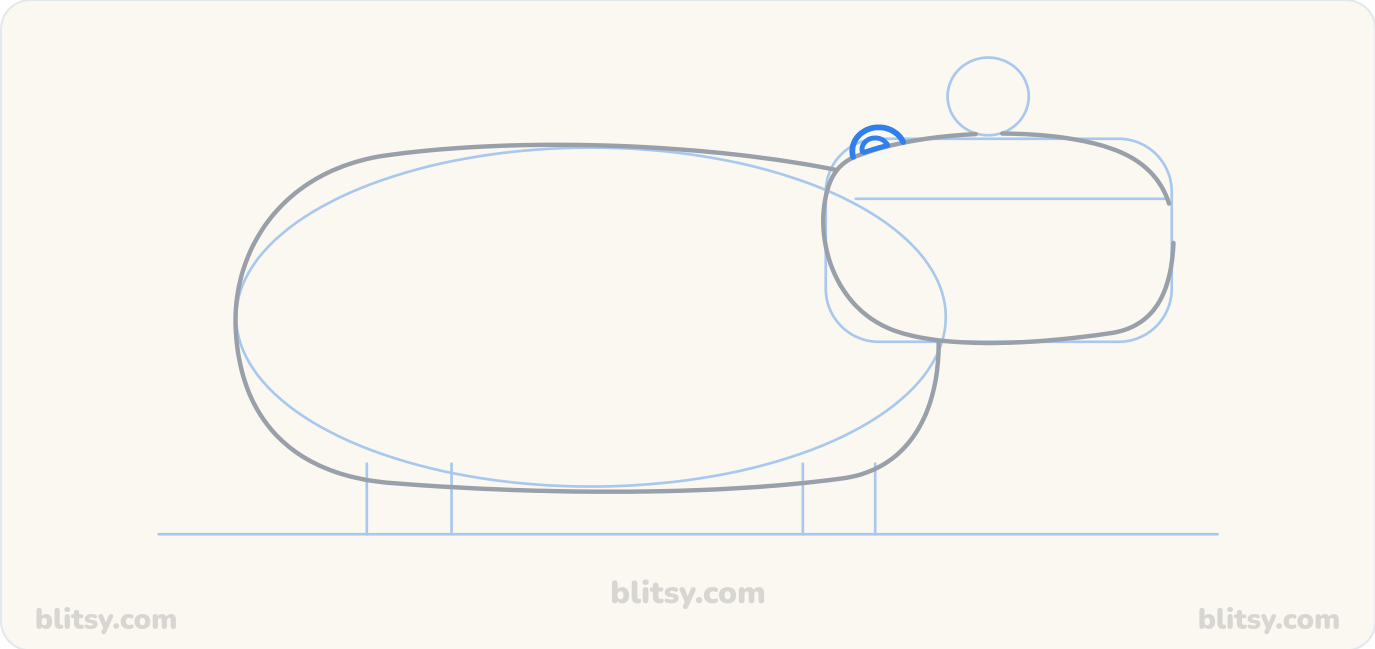
STEP 4 Shape the blocky rounded head



Go around the head box with a solid line, softening every corner. The top stays fairly flat, and the front of the snout is tall and blunt, almost a straight up and down edge. Round off the back of the head where it overlaps the body. I like a slight bulge at the bottom of the cheek, as it gives the face some weight.

💡 **Tip:** Resist the urge to make a pointy snout. A pointed nose turns it into a rat or a mouse.

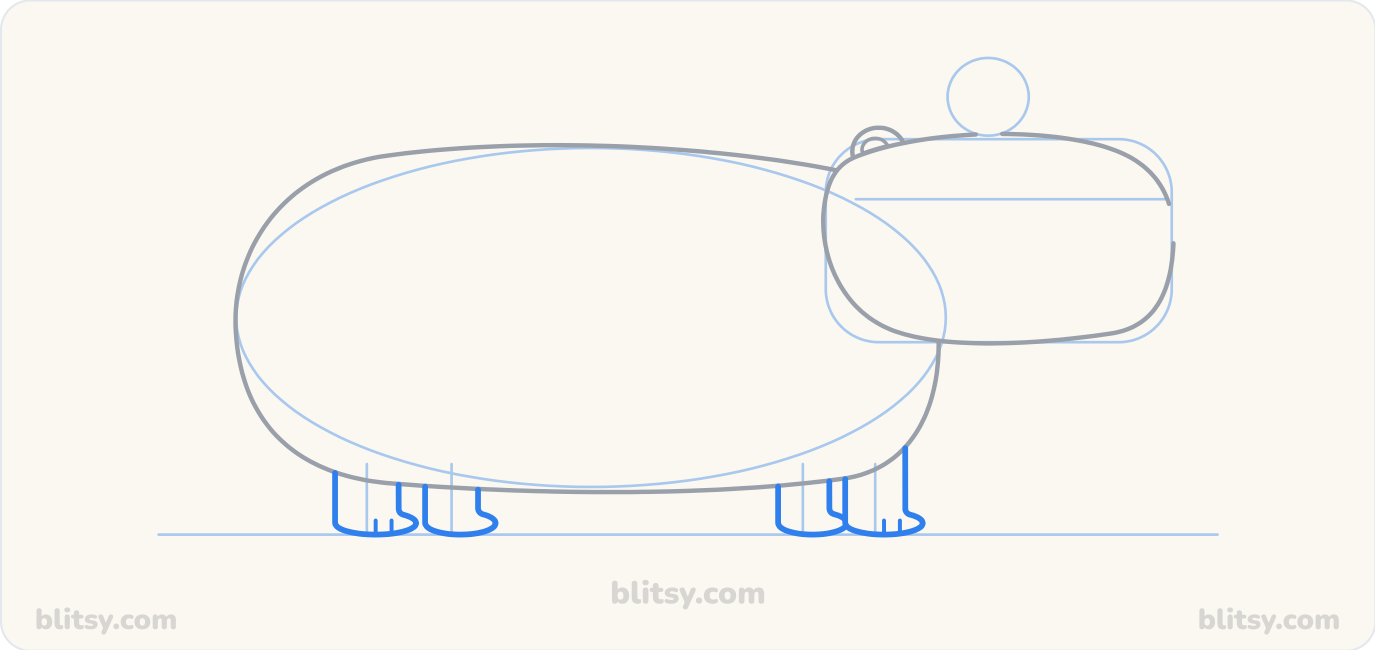
STEP 5 Add one small round ear



At the top back corner of the head, draw a small round ear that peeks up above the outline. Add a smaller curve inside it. Capybara ears are tiny compared with the head, so keep it about the size of the orange's top half.

💡 **Tip:** Draw just the part of the ear you can see; the head covers its bottom edge.

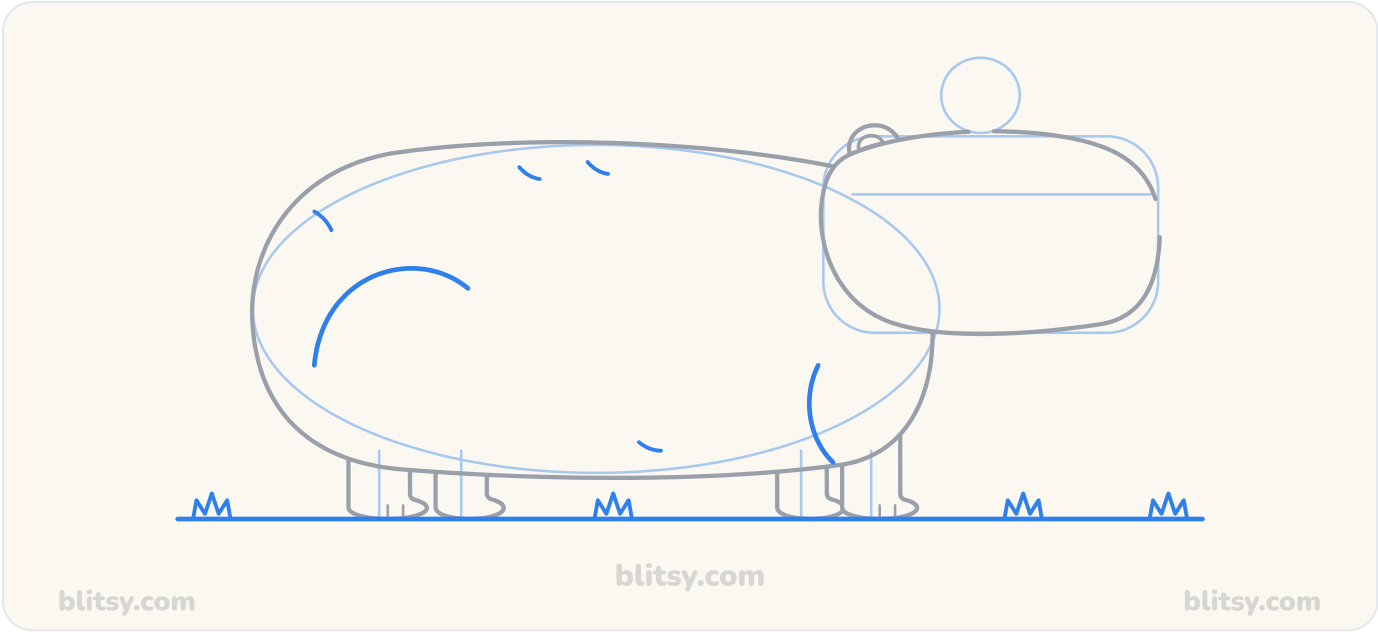
STEP 6 Draw four short stubby legs



Follow your leg lines down from the belly. Each leg is a short, thick column that ends in a rounded foot pointing forward. Draw the two near legs first, then tuck a far leg just behind each one. Finish with two tiny toe lines on the front of each near foot.

💡 **Tip:** Only a little of each leg shows under the belly. Short legs are what keep the capybara looking calm and heavy.

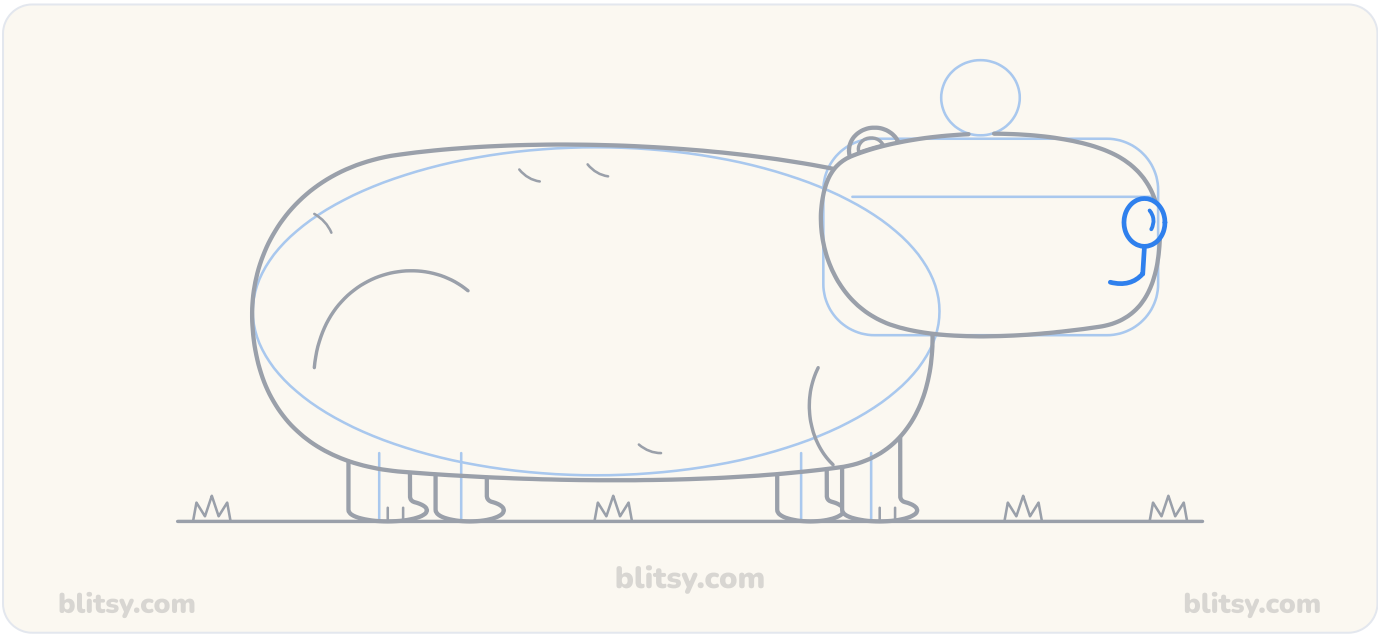
STEP 7 Add a hip line, fur flicks and grass



Inside the back of the body, draw one curved line that sweeps up and over toward the rump; it shows the big back leg under the fur. A smaller curve in front of the front leg marks the shoulder. Scatter three or four short flicks on the back and belly for fur. Then go over the ground line and add a few little grass tufts.

💡 **Tip:** Fewer fur flicks look better than many. Three or four on the whole body is enough.

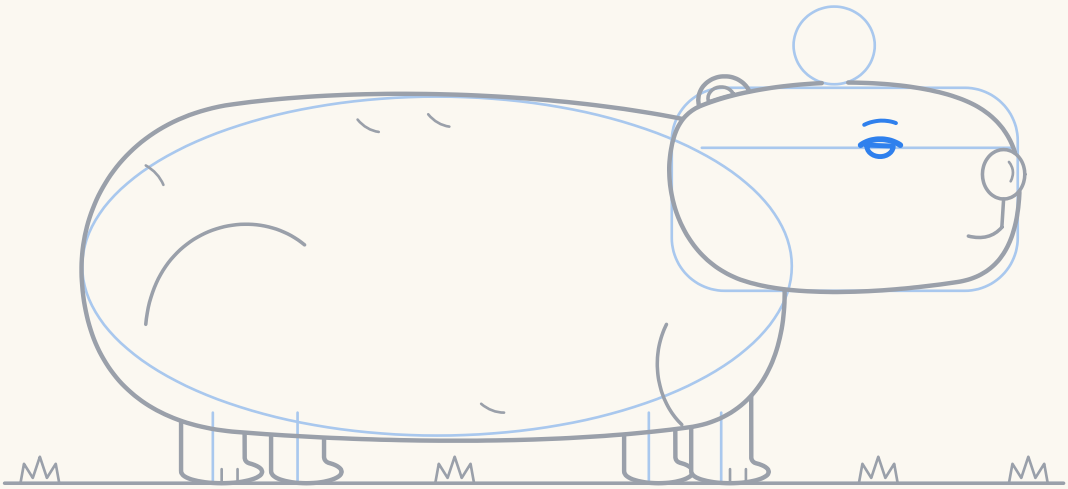
STEP 8 Draw the big flat nose and the mouth



Right at the tip of the snout, near the top, draw a large rounded nose that slightly overlaps the front edge. Under it, a short line drops down and then curves back into a small, content smile. Add a tiny curve inside the nose for the nostril.

💡 **Tip:** Make the nose bigger than feels right. It sits at the end of a very wide face, so a small dot gets lost.

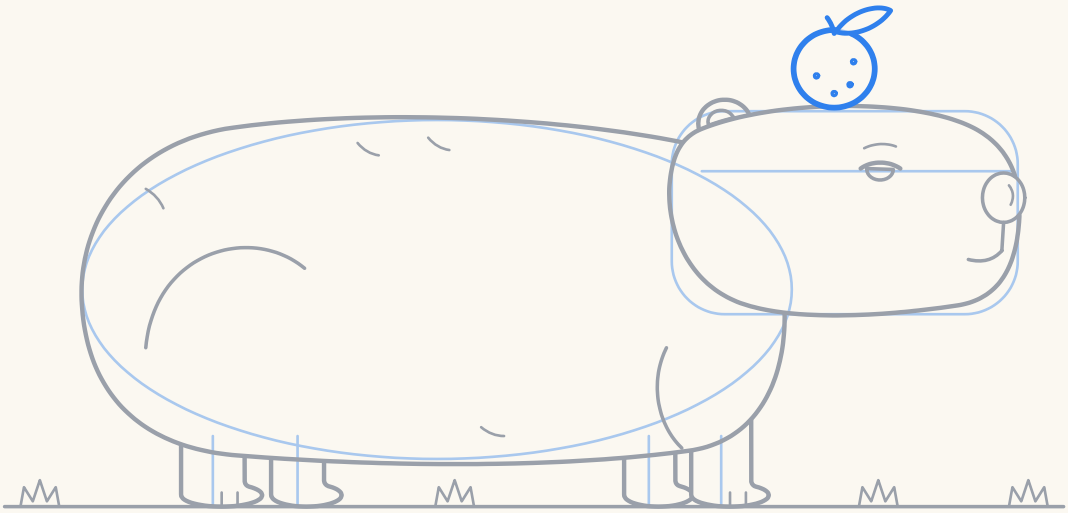
STEP 9 Give it a sleepy little eye



On the eye line, roughly halfway along the head, draw a small half circle that's flat on top. Put a slightly longer curved lid line across the flat side. A short eyebrow above it finishes the drowsy expression. This one change does most of the work in making the capybara look relaxed.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the eye small and high on the head. A big round eye makes it look surprised instead of calm.

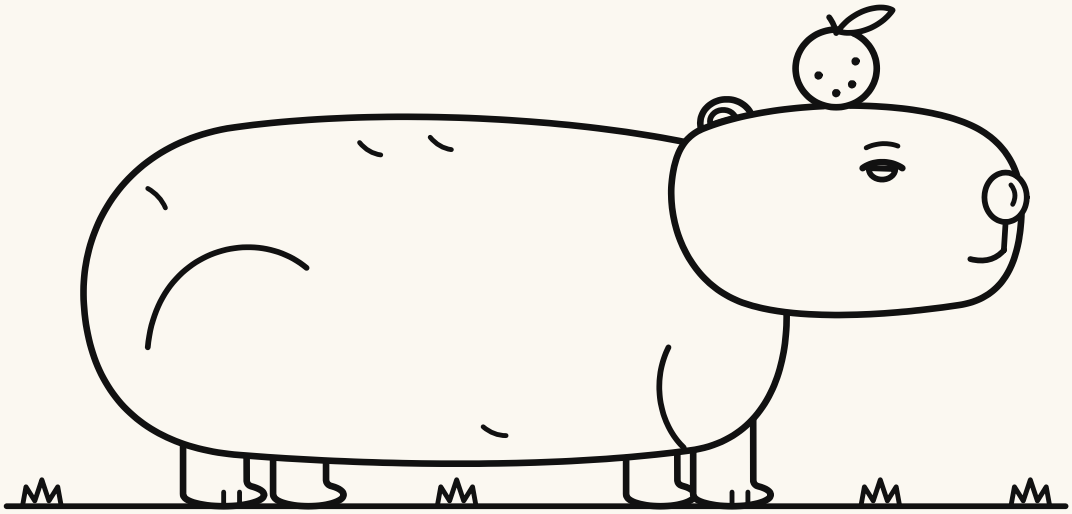
STEP 10 Balance an orange on its head



Trace the small circle on top of the head into a round orange, letting its bottom sink just into the head line so it looks like it's resting there. Add a short stem and a pointed leaf leaning to the right. A few dots on the skin give it that citrus texture.

💡 **Tip:** If you don't have an orange crayon, a lemon or a little bird works on top just as well.

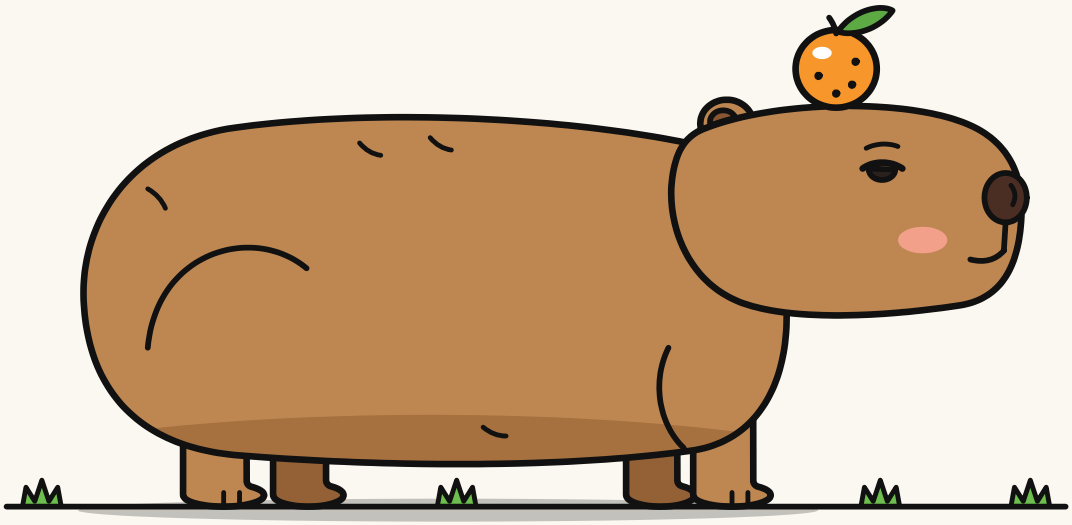
STEP 11 Ink the outline and erase the guides



Trace every keeper line with the black marker. I start with the face while my hand is steady, then the orange, the body and the legs. Leave the oval, the box and the leg lines alone. When the ink is completely dry, erase all the pencil underneath.

💡 **Tip:** Wait a minute before erasing. Fresh marker smears and leaves gray streaks across the body.

STEP 12 Color your capybara



Light brown covers the body, the head, the ear and the two near legs. Use a regular brown for the far legs and a soft shadow along the belly, and dark brown for the nose. The eye is black, the cheek gets a little pink, the orange is orange and the leaf and grass are green.

💡 **Tip:** Color the fur with short strokes that all go the same way. It looks furry instead of flat.