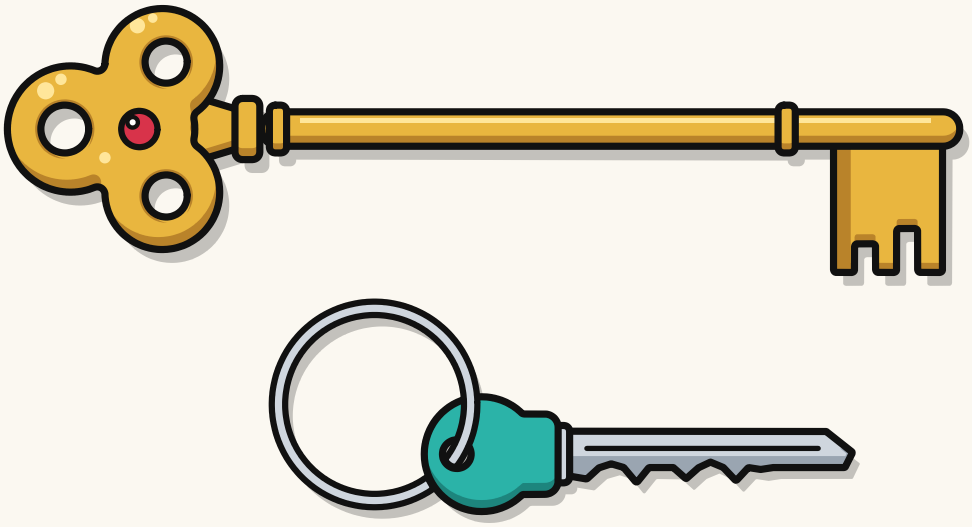
How to Draw a Key

11 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

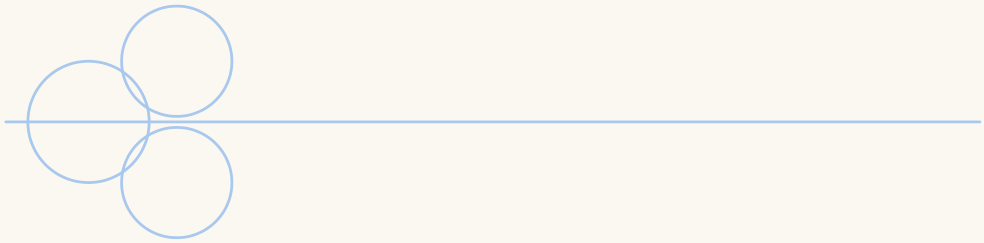
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A ruler (optional)
- A black marker or fineliner
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Plain paper

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 →

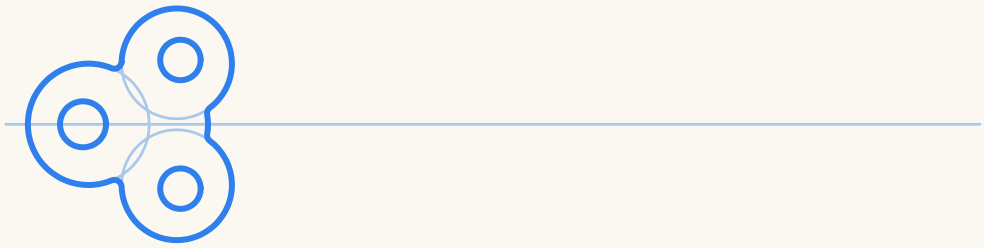
STEP 1 Draw a center line and three circles



Run one light, straight line across the upper part of the page, almost from edge to edge. I always start keys this way, because every part lines up on it later. Near the left end, put three circles that touch: one sitting on the line, one above and one below, both slightly to its right.

💡 **Tip:** The top and bottom circles should be the same size. Measure them with your eye against the line before you go on.

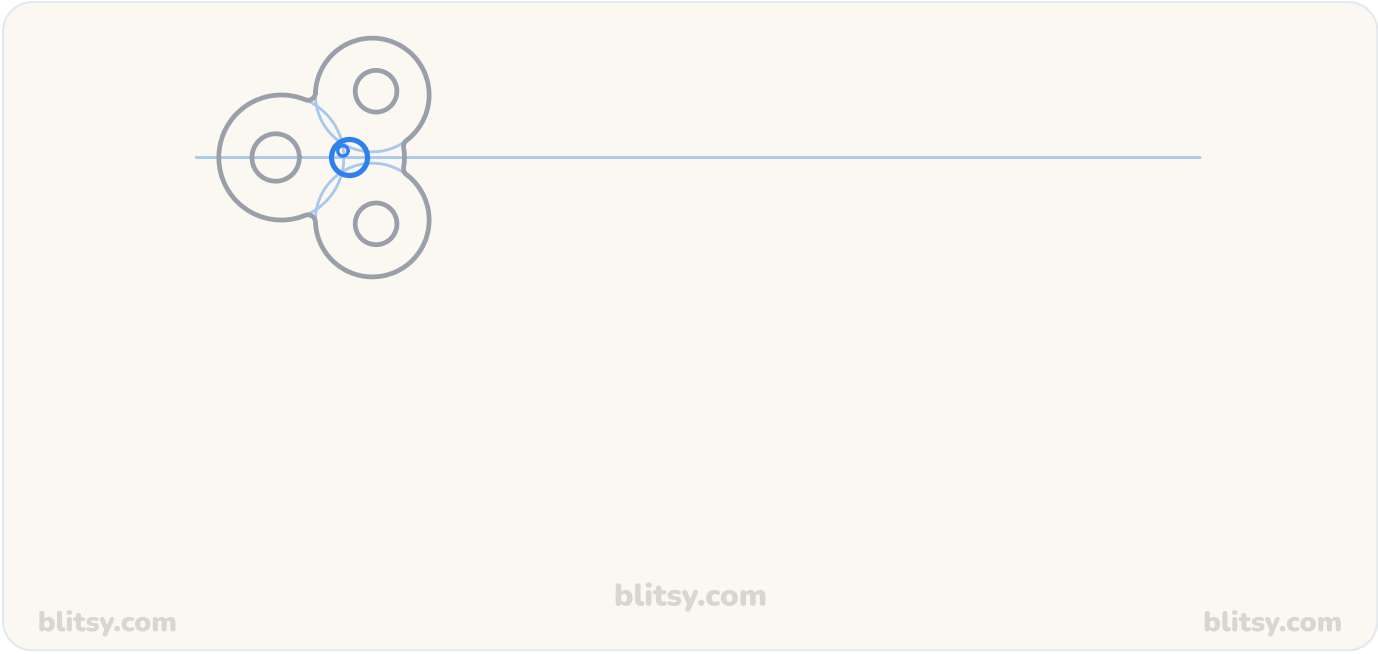
STEP 2 Turn the circles into a clover-shaped bow



The bow is the part your fingers hold. Trace around the outside of the three circles in one smooth, wavy line, rounding off the dips where they meet. Then draw a smaller round hole inside each lobe. I keep the holes fairly big, because tiny holes make the bow look heavy and dull.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the outside line slowly and let it bulge a little past the guide circles. It ends up looking softer and fuller.

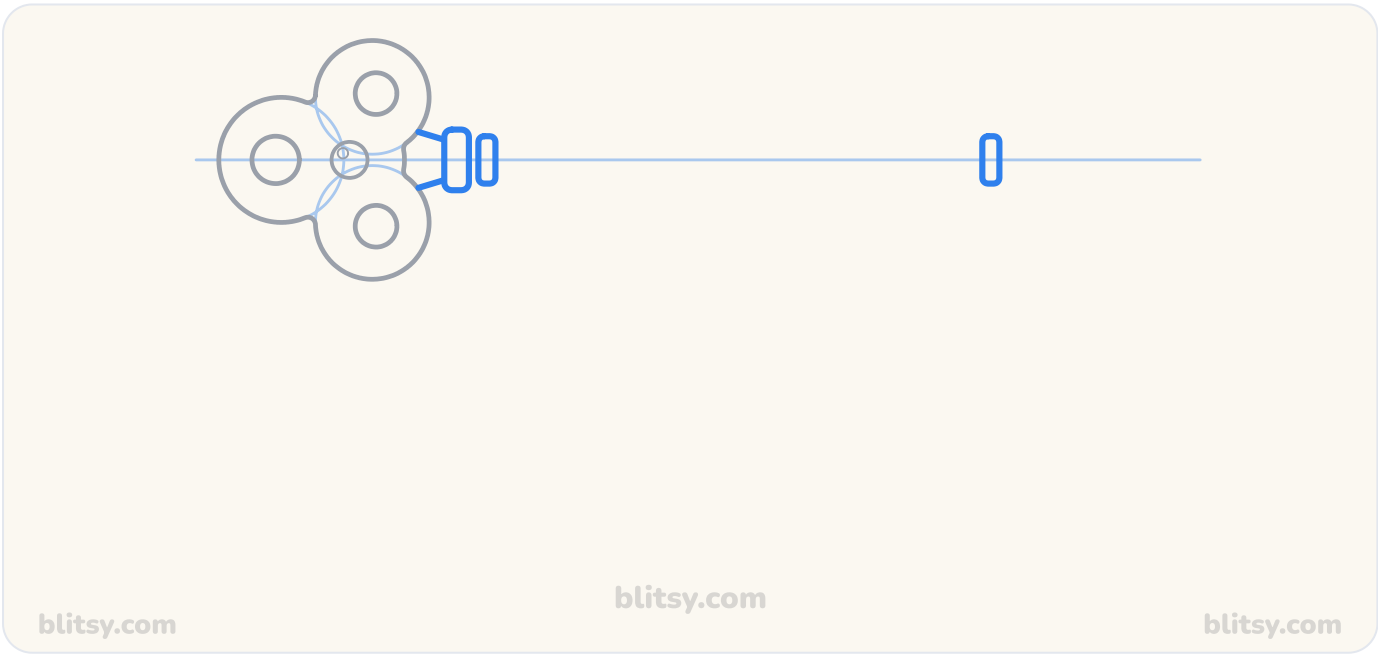
STEP 3 Add a gem in the middle



Right where the three lobes meet, on the center line, draw a small circle for a gem. Add a tiny circle inside it near the top left. That little dot becomes the shine later, and it's what makes the gem look round instead of flat.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the gem smaller than the holes, or it starts to compete with them.

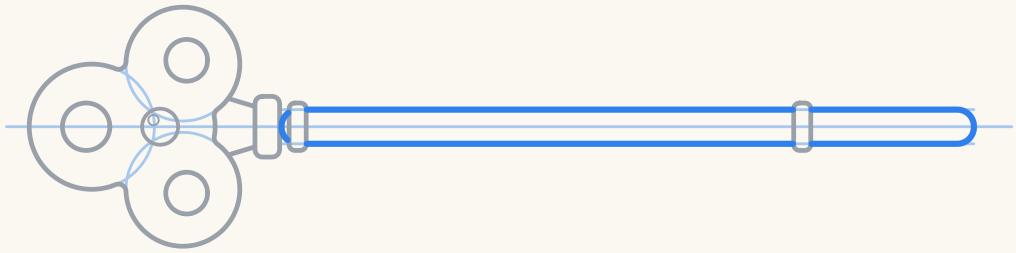
STEP 4 Draw the neck and the collar rings



Where the bow ends on the right, draw a short neck that gets narrower as it leaves the bow. Right after it, add two upright rounded bars, a taller one and a shorter one. These collars are what make the key look old and fancy. Far along the line toward the right, add one more small collar where the shaft will end near the bit.

💡 **Tip:** Center every collar on the line so half of it sits above and half below.

STEP 5 Draw the long shaft



Sketch two light lines parallel to the center line, one just above and one just below it. Connect them from the collars on the left all the way to the right end, and round off the tip. The shaft runs behind the far collar, so stop the lines where the collar starts and pick them up again on the other side.

💡 **Tip:** I use a ruler here every time. A wobbly shaft is the first thing people notice on a key.

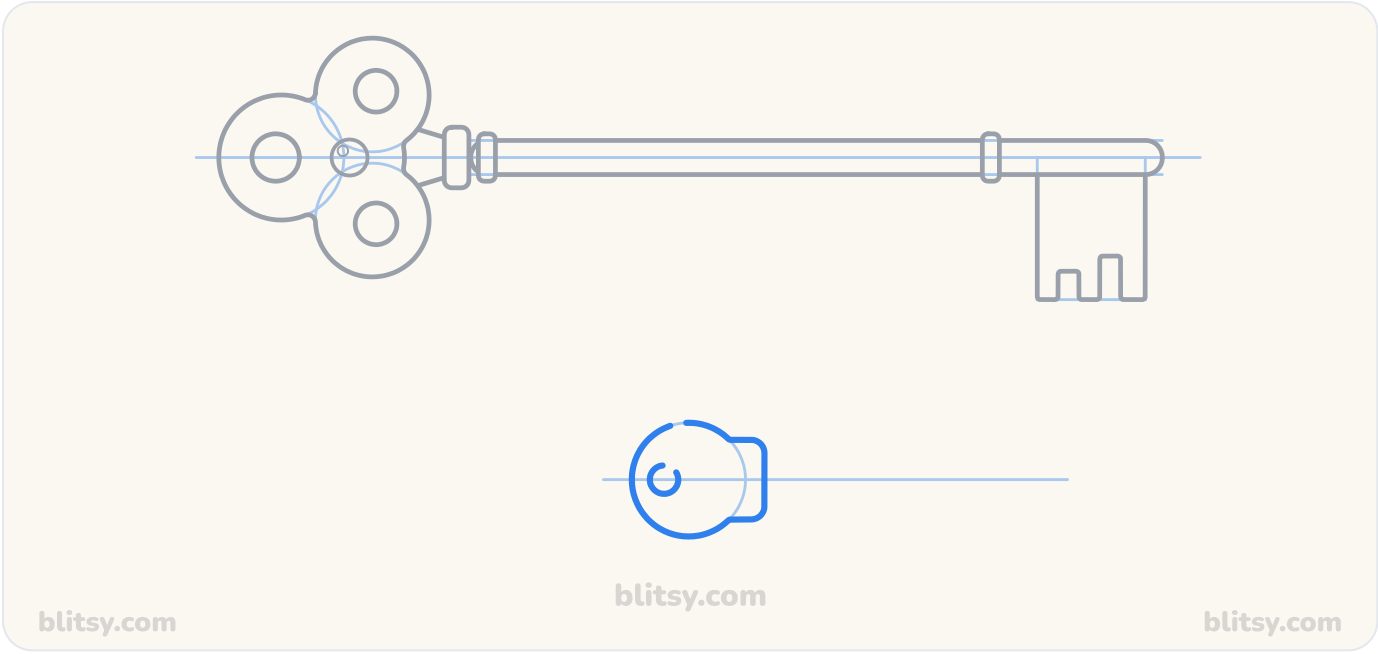
STEP 6 Add the notched bit at the end



The bit is the part that turns the lock. Hanging down from the right end of the shaft, draw a tall rectangle. Then cut two square notches into its bottom edge so it looks like a short comb with three teeth. Different notch sizes are fine, and real old keys all have their own pattern.

💡 **Tip:** Make the bit a little narrower than the bow is tall. Too big and the key looks top-heavy on the wrong end.

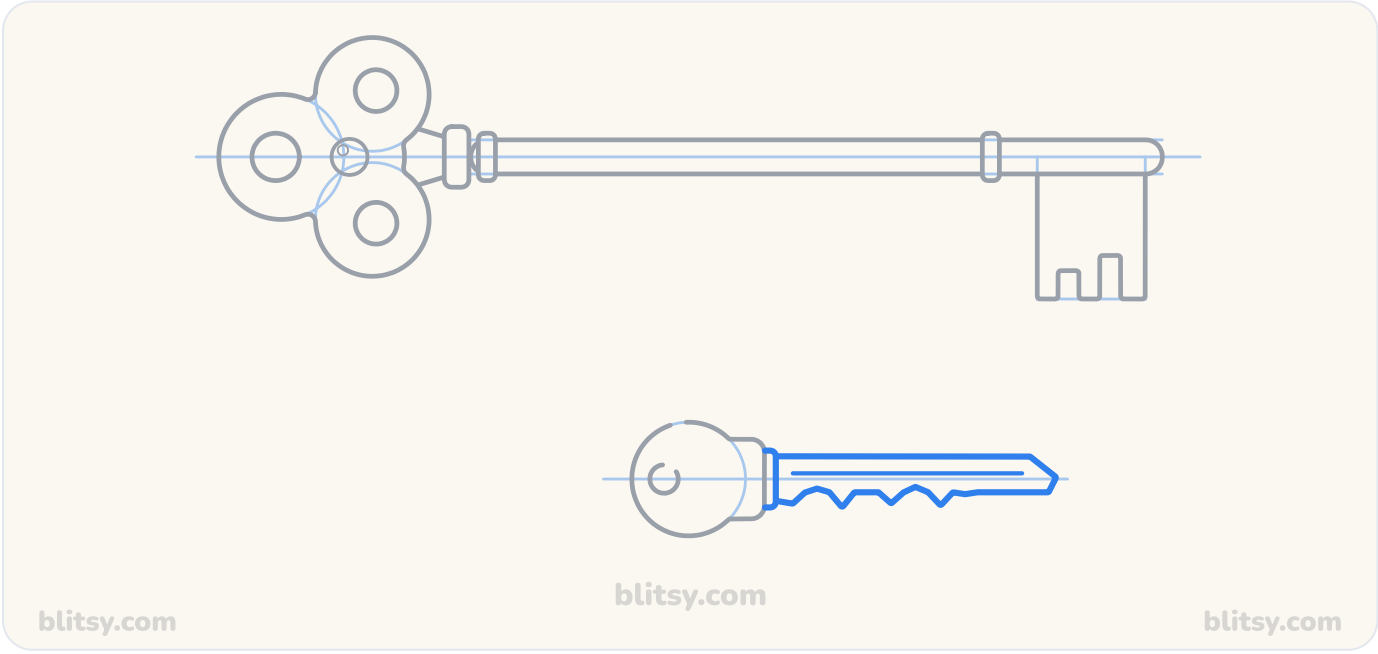
STEP 7 Start the house key with its head



Now the second key. I like adding it because it shows how different an everyday key looks. Below the big one and a bit to the right, draw another light line. On its left end, sketch a circle, then turn it into a round head with a short squared-off side on the right, like a ball pushed into a box. Draw a small hole near the left edge. The key ring will go through it.

💡 **Tip:** Keep this head small. The house key should look clearly smaller than the skeleton key.

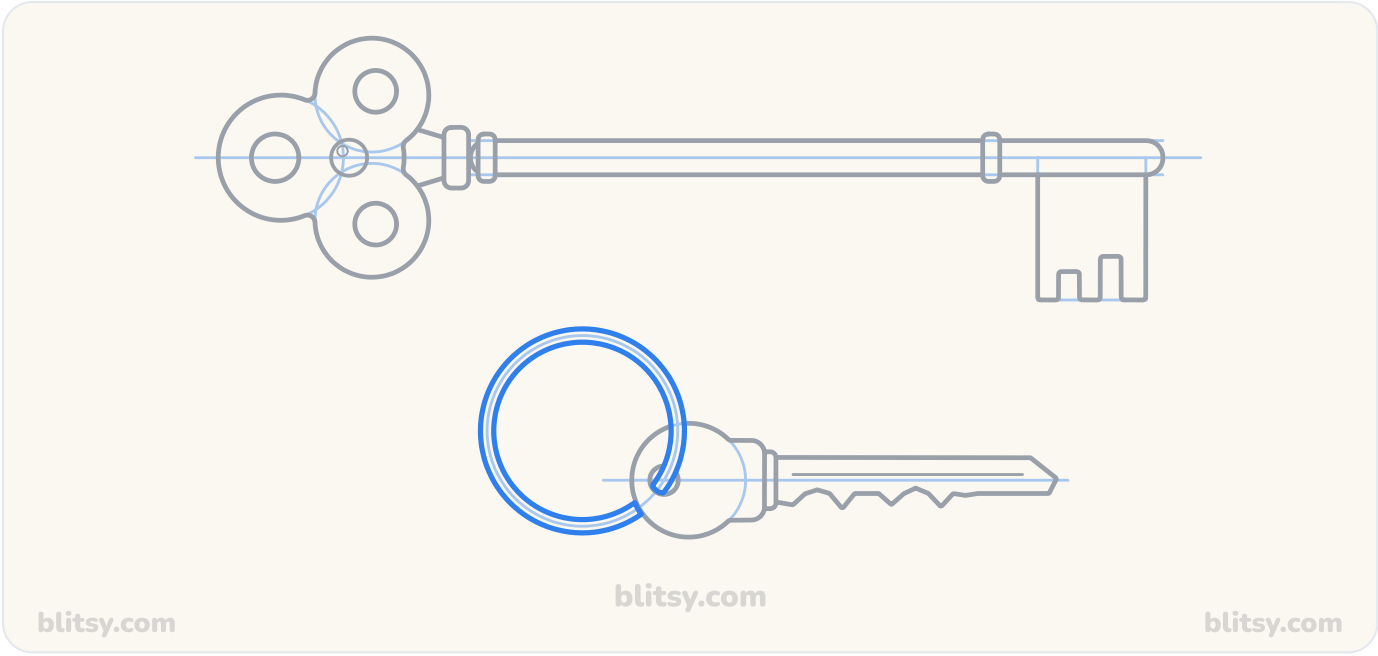
STEP 8 Draw the blade with jagged teeth



Add a narrow shoulder bar right after the head. From there, draw a long thin blade out to the right with a pointed tip. The top edge stays straight, and the bottom edge zigzags up and down to make the teeth. Finish with one thin groove line running along the middle of the blade.

💡 **Tip:** Make the teeth uneven on purpose. Neat matching teeth look like a saw, not a key.

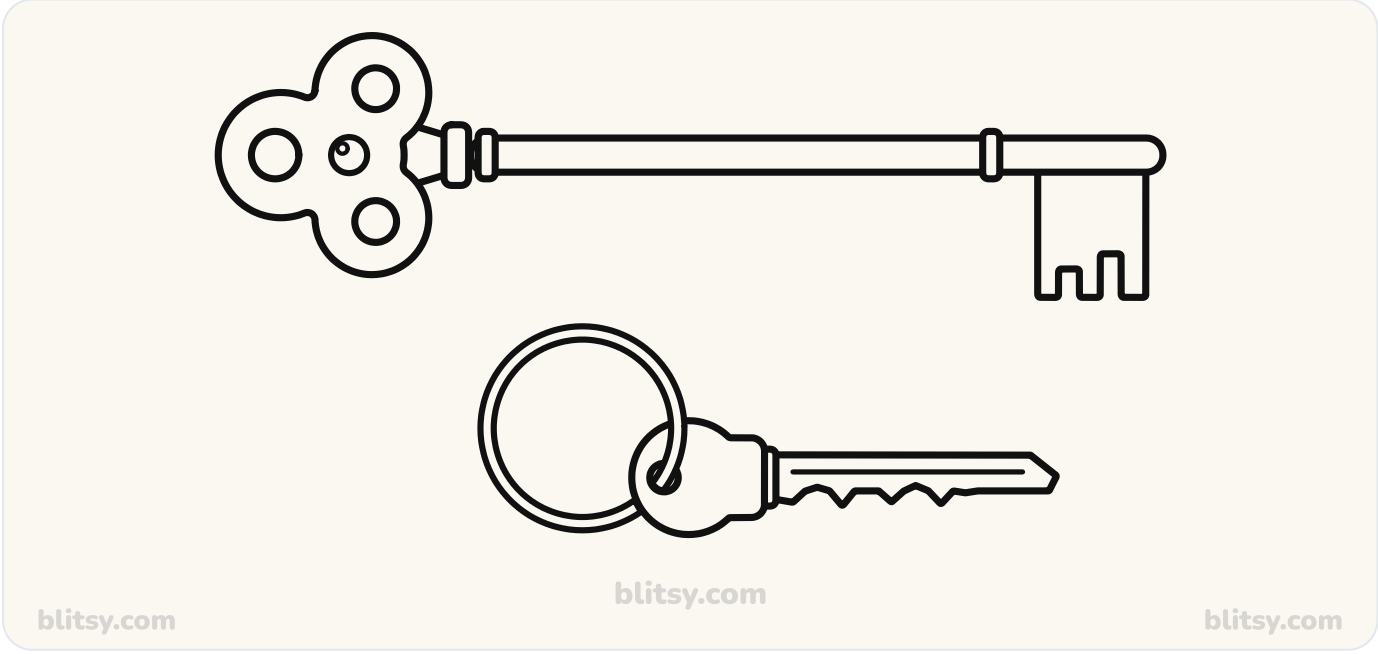
STEP 9 Hang it on a round key ring



Draw a big circle to the left of the house key so its edge passes through the little hole. Then trace it with a double line to give the ring some thickness. Where the ring goes behind the key head, erase that part, so it looks like it truly loops through the hole.

💡 **Tip:** The over and under trick is easy to miss. Check that the ring disappears behind the head on one side only.

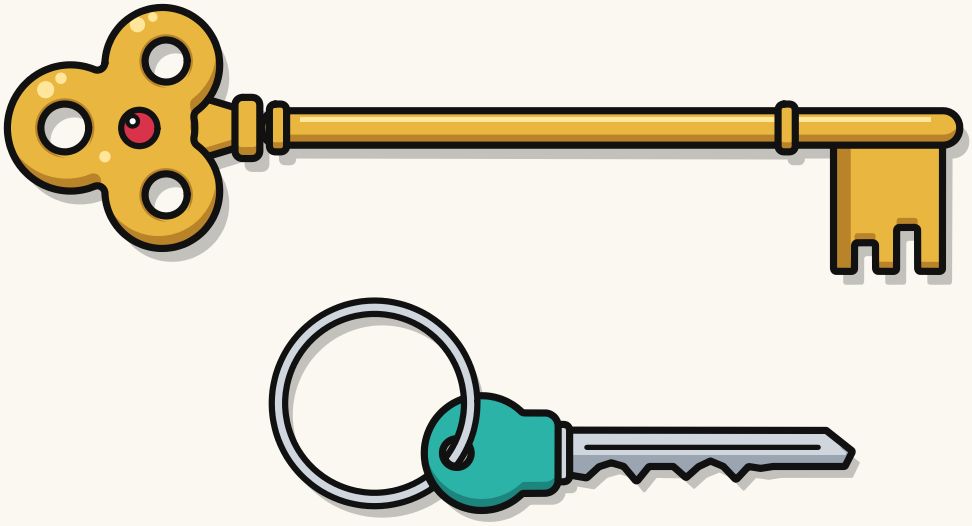
STEP 10 Ink the keys and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with a black marker. I do the bow and the bit first, since curves and corners need the steadiest hand. Leave the guide circles and the center lines alone. When the ink is dry, erase all the pencil, and the drawing suddenly looks clean and finished.

💡 **Tip:** Wait a full minute before erasing. Marker smears more than you'd expect on smooth paper.

STEP 11 Color your keys



Color the whole skeleton key golden yellow. Go over its lower edges and the inside rims of the holes with a darker gold, and leave a thin pale strip along the top of the shaft for shine. The gem is red with a white dot. For the house key, use teal on the head and light gray on the blade and ring, with a slightly darker gray along the teeth.

💡 **Tip:** Shading only the bottom edges is the whole trick for metal. Light seems to hit from above, so the key looks shiny.