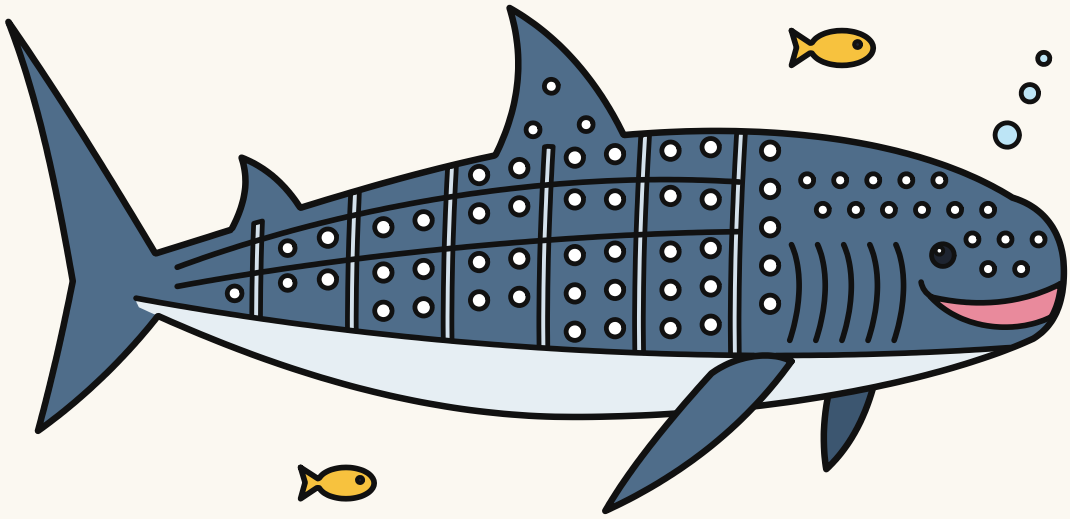
How to Draw a Whale Shark

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

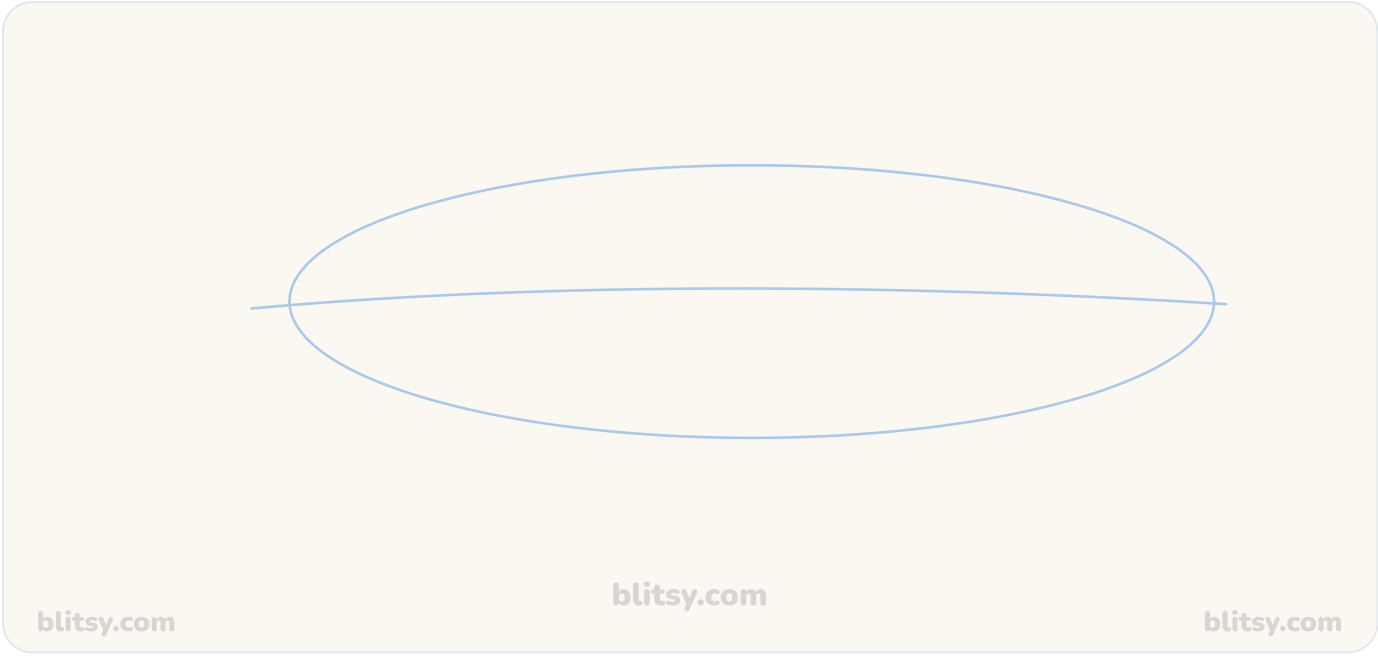
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker or fineliner
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Plain paper

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 →

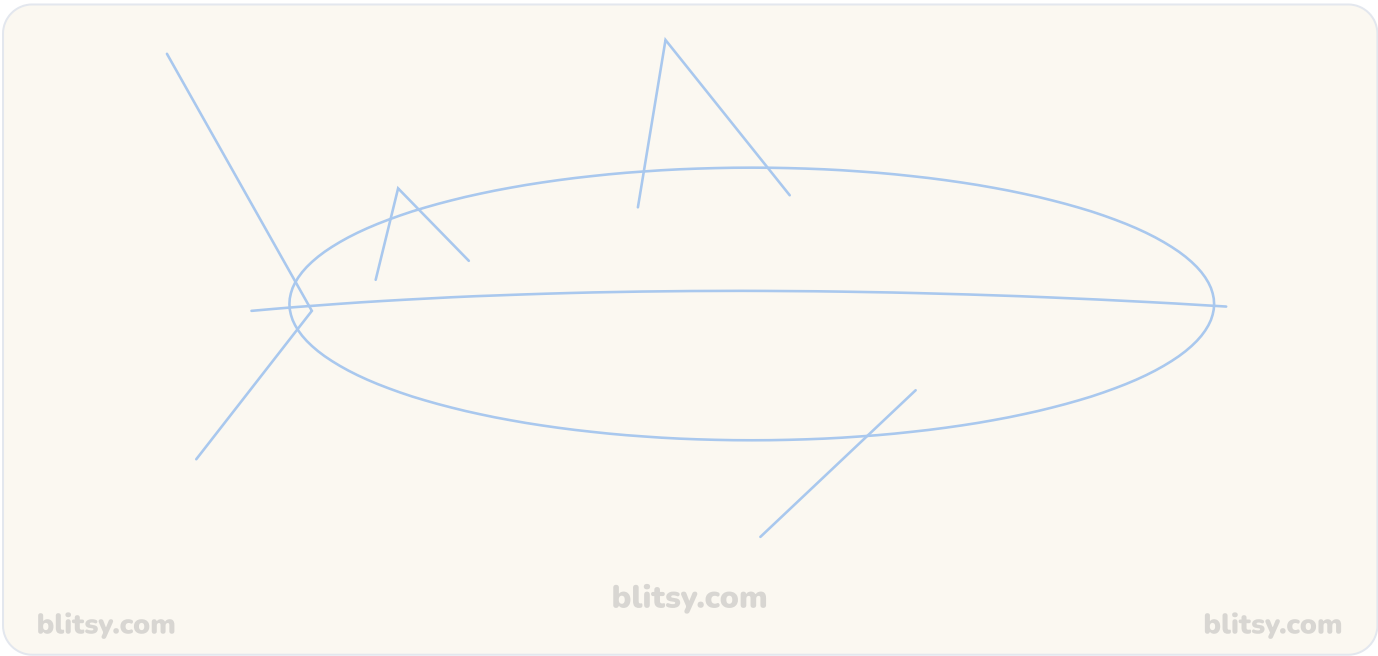
STEP 1 Sketch a long body oval



Draw one long, flat oval across the middle of the page, about four times as wide as it is tall. Leave room on the left for the tail. Then run a light center line through it from end to end, which keeps the stripes and ridges level later.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that the line almost disappears. Every guide in this drawing gets erased.

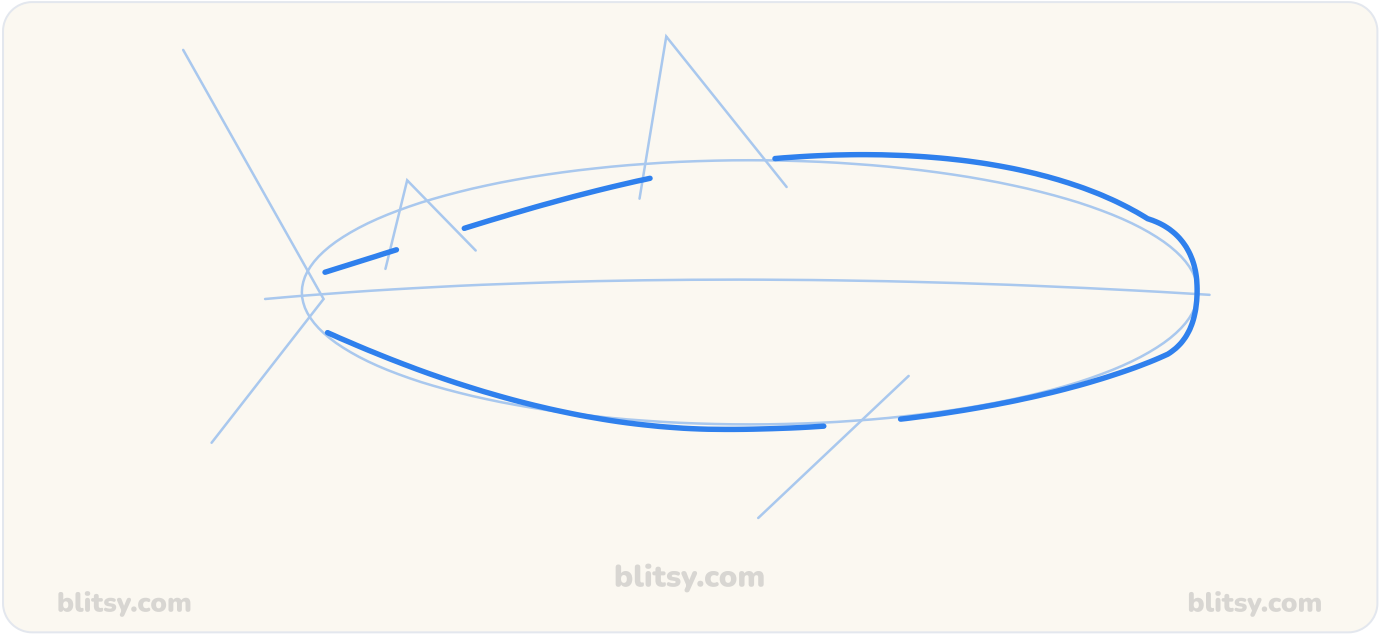
STEP 2 Add guides for the fins and the tail



On top of the oval, draw a tall triangle a bit left of the middle for the big dorsal fin and a much smaller one near the left end. At the left tip, draw a sideways V for the tail. One slanted line under the front half marks the pectoral fin.

💡 **Tip:** Make the tail V point up and down, never flat. That upright tail is what makes it a shark and not a whale.

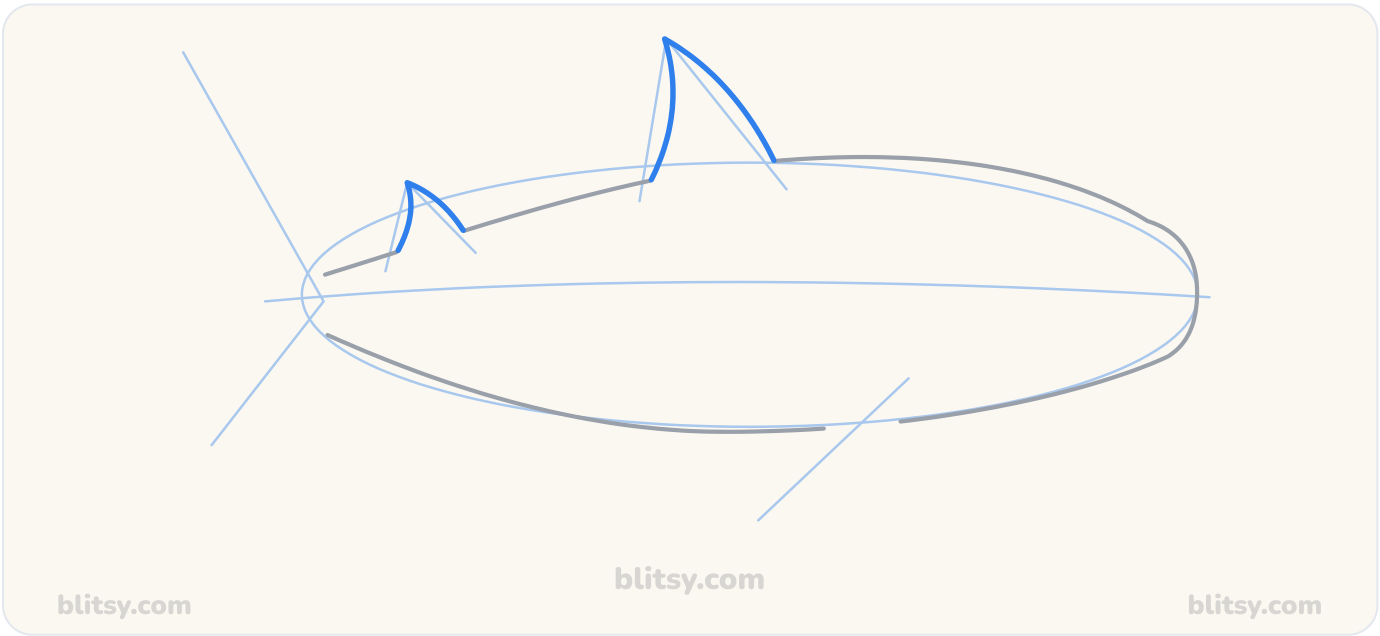
STEP 3 Draw the wide flat head and the body



Now trace the real outline over the oval. On the right, I square off the front into a broad, blunt snout, because a whale shark's head is flat and wide like a shovel. The back rises gently toward the fin and slopes down into a narrow tail stalk. Leave gaps where the fins will join.

💡 **Tip:** If the front comes out pointy, round it off and widen it. A sharp nose turns it into a regular shark.

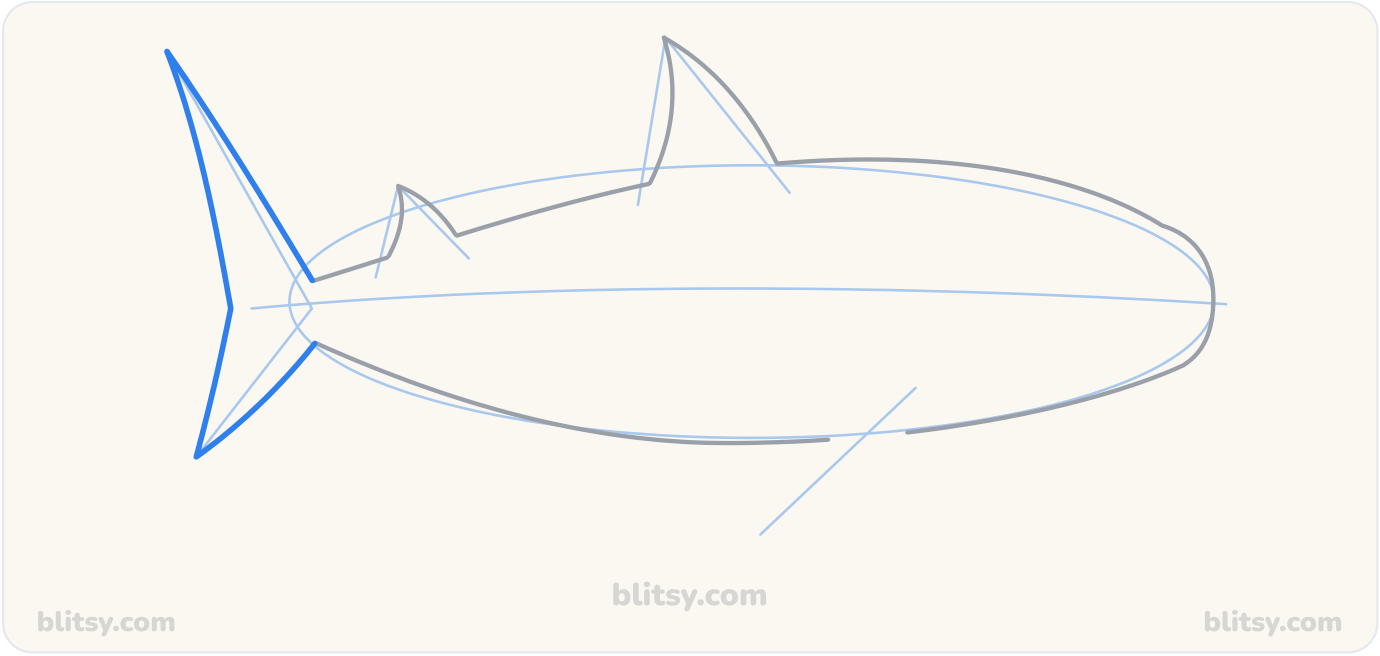
STEP 4 Draw the two dorsal fins



Follow the tall triangle guide with a fin that has a curved front edge and a slightly hollow back edge, so its tip leans backward. Then draw the little second fin near the tail the same way. I like the big fin quite tall here, since it balances that long body.

💡 **Tip:** Start each fin from the back line and pull your pencil upward. The curve looks smoother that way.

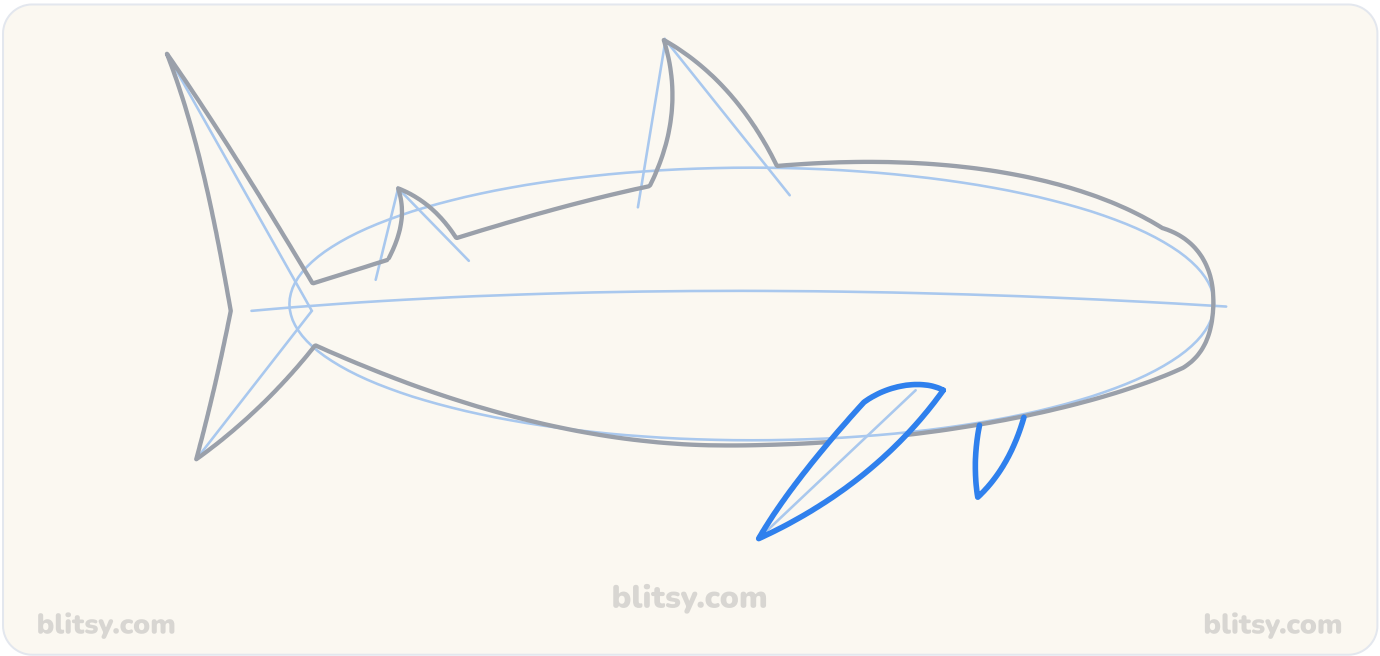
STEP 5 Add the crescent tail



From the tail stalk, draw an upper lobe that sweeps far up and back, then come down into a notch and out to a shorter lower lobe. Together they make a moon shape. The top part should clearly be bigger than the bottom one.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the notch close to the body. If it drifts far out, the tail looks like it's coming off.

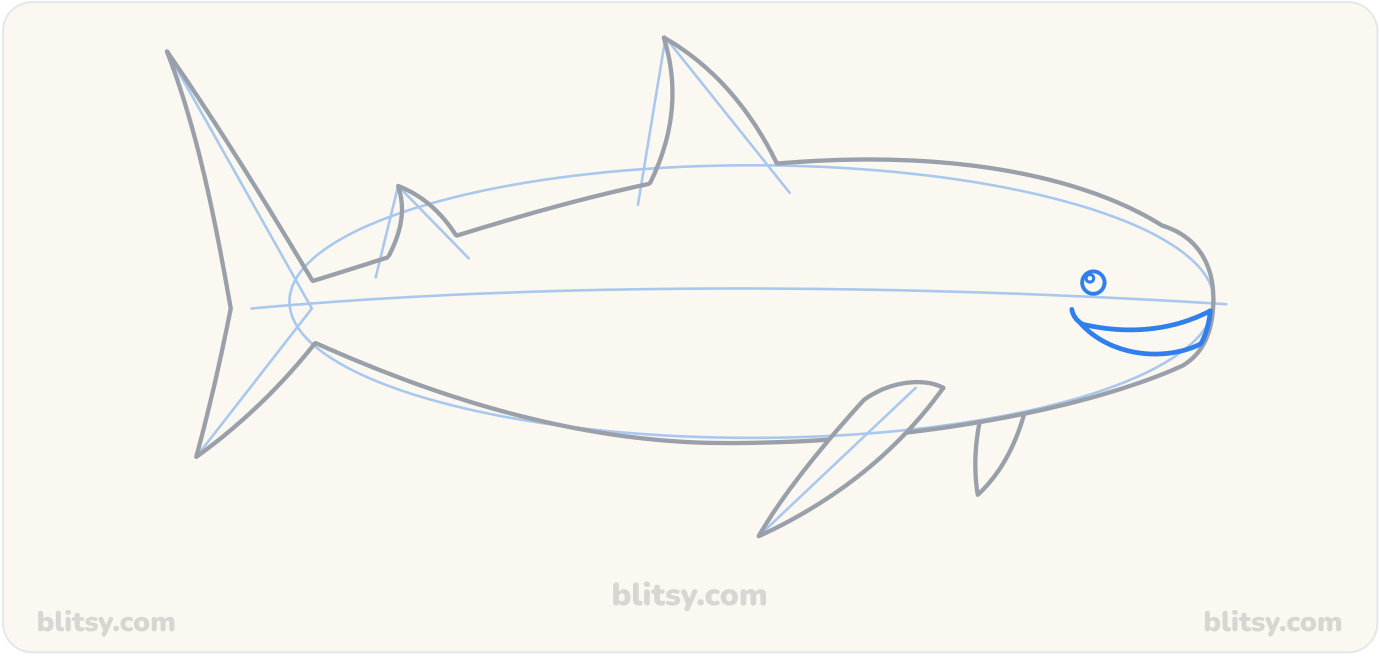
STEP 6 Draw the two pectoral fins



Under the front of the body, draw a long fin that starts just behind the head and swings back and down to a point. A bit further forward, add a short, rounded fin peeking out below the belly. That's the fin on the far side, so only its tip shows.

💡 **Tip:** Angle the big fin backward, as if the water is pushing it. A fin sticking straight down looks stiff.

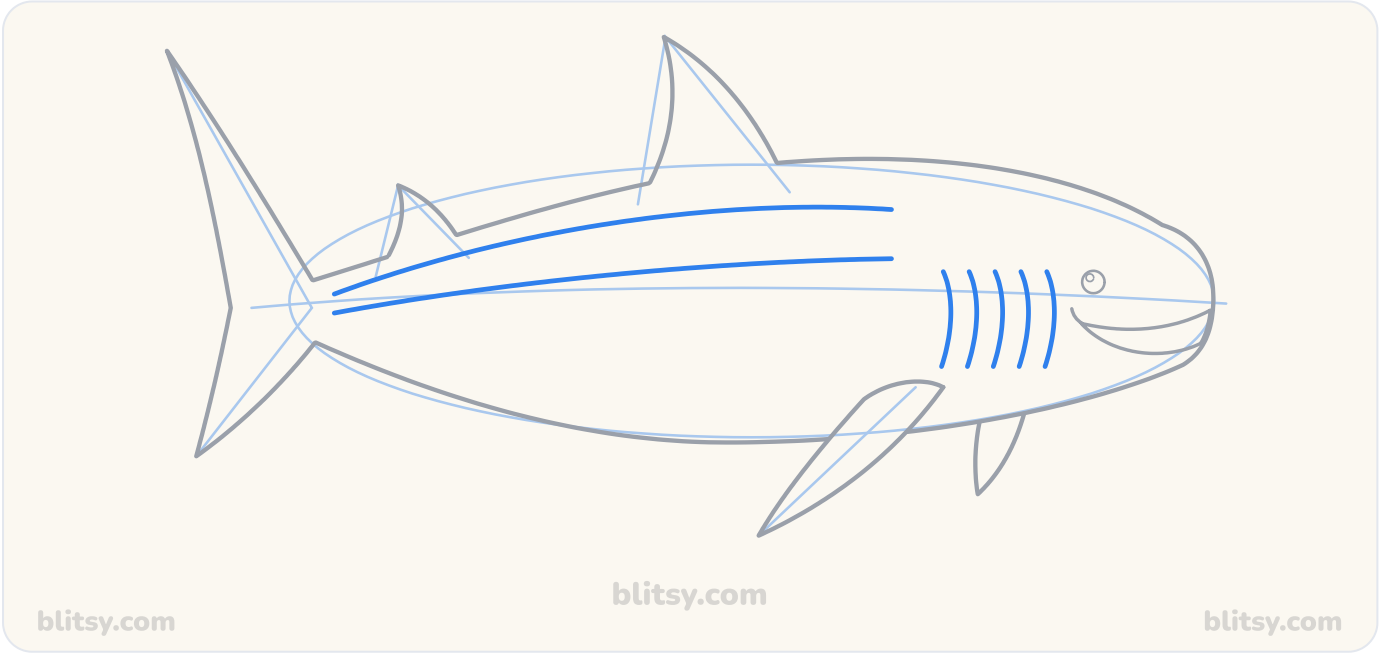
STEP 7 Give it a big smile and a tiny eye



Right at the front of the snout, draw a wide, curved mouth that runs back along the head and turns up at the corner. Add a lower lip curve underneath it so the mouth has some thickness. Just above and behind the corner, draw a small round eye with a dot of shine.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the eye small. Whale sharks really do have tiny eyes, and the small size makes the face look calm.

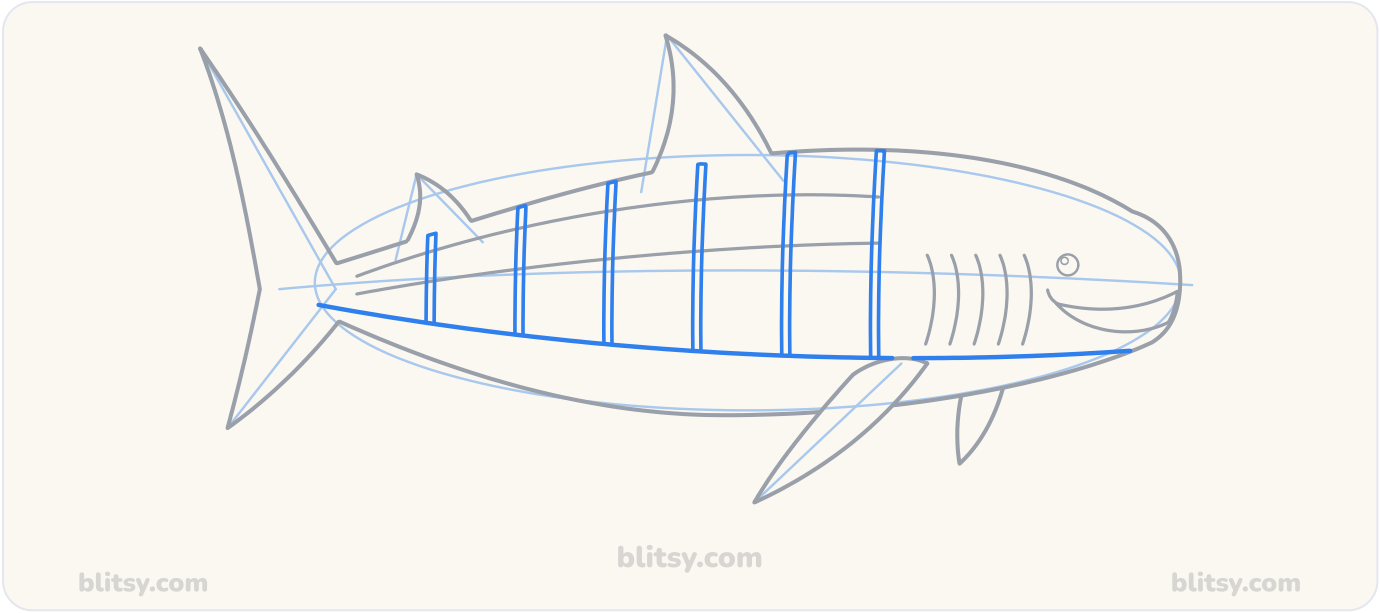
STEP 8 Draw the gill slits and the side ridges



Behind the eye, draw five curved lines side by side for the gill slits. They breathe through these, like any other shark. Then add two long lines from behind the gills back toward the tail, following the body's curve. Those are the raised ridges on its side.

💡 **Tip:** Space the gill slits evenly, about a finger width apart, so they read as a neat set.

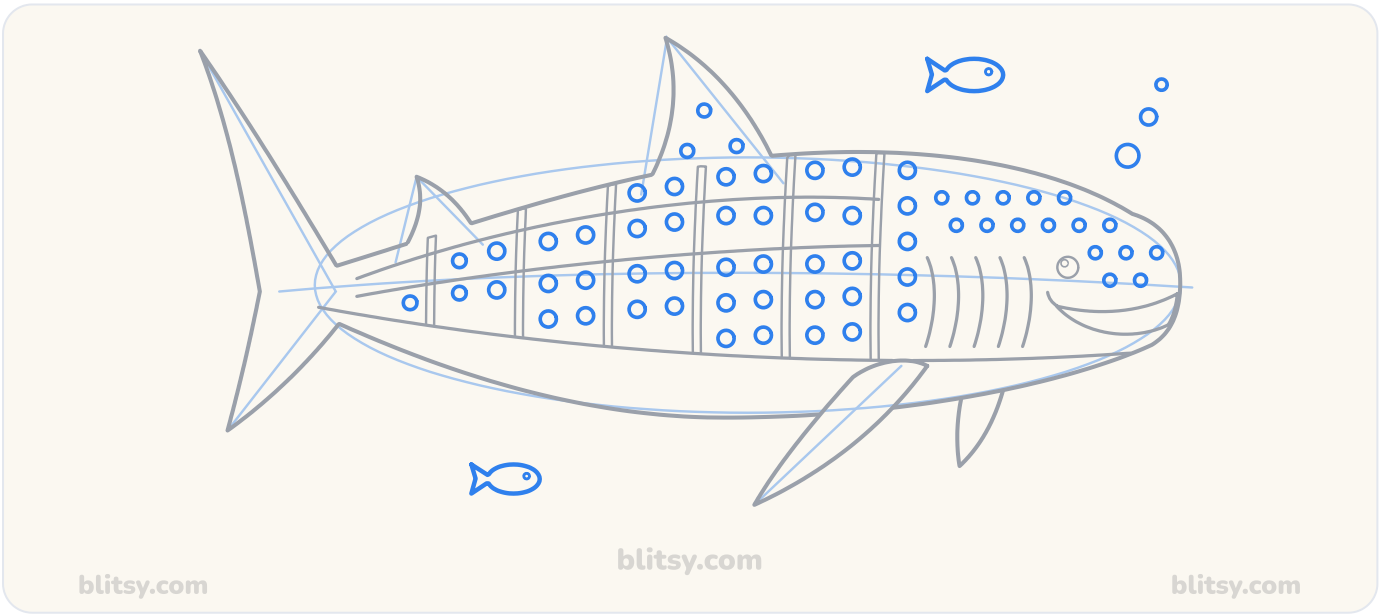
STEP 9 Add the belly line and the pale stripes



Draw a smooth line from under the mouth to the tail stalk to split the dark back from the light belly. Then add six thin vertical stripes from the back down to that line, evenly spaced. Each stripe is just two lines close together, and with the ridges they form a checkerboard.

💡 **Tip:** Let each stripe bend a tiny bit with the body. Perfectly straight stripes look like fence posts.

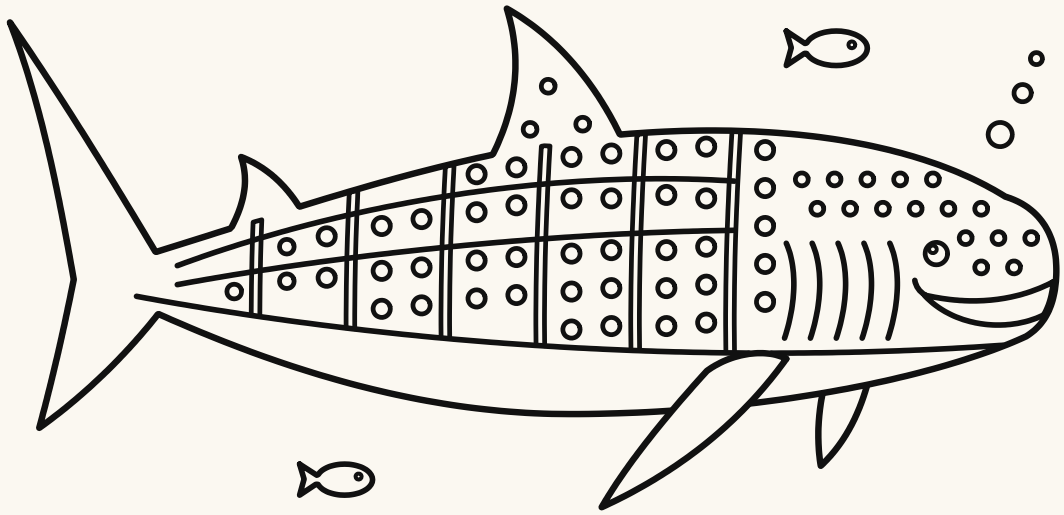
STEP 10 Fill in the spots, the fish and the bubbles



Put one or two round spots in each box of the checkerboard, plus a few on the big fin, and rows of smaller dots on the head. My trick is to finish all the spots before anything else. Then draw two little fish and three bubbles rising from the snout. Younger kids can draw fewer spots and it still works.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the spots in rows, working from the head toward the tail, so you don't lose your place.

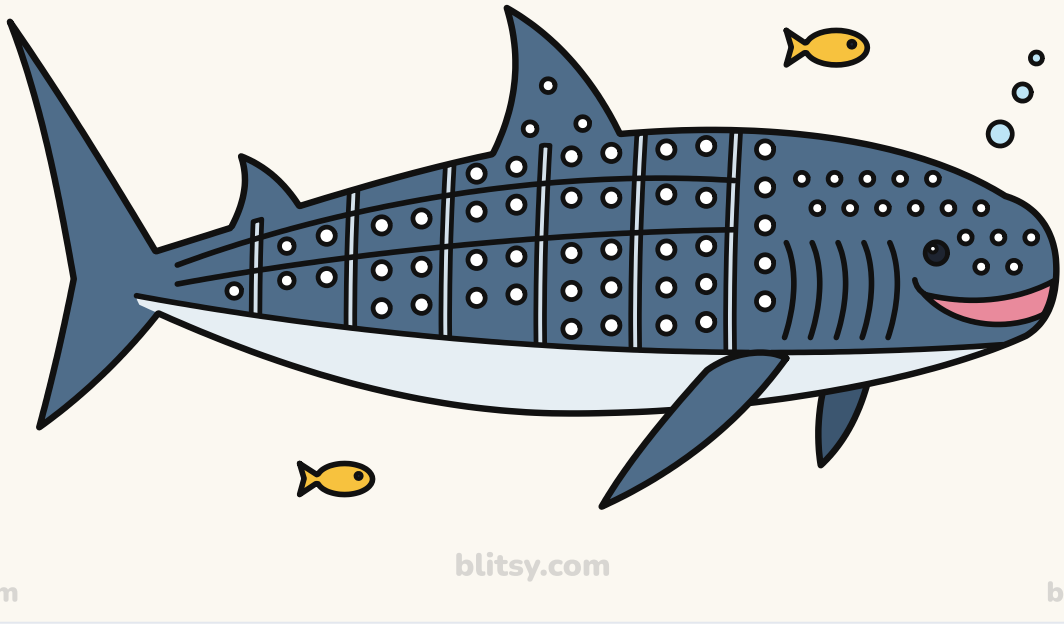
STEP 11 Ink the outline and erase the guides



Trace every keeper line with the black marker. I do the big outline first, then the fins, and the spots last, because they take the longest. Leave the oval and the guide lines alone. When the ink is completely dry, erase all the pencil.

💡 **Tip:** Turn the paper while you ink the spots. Small circles are easier when your hand moves the same way each time.

STEP 12 Color your whale shark



Color the back, fins and tail dark blue gray, and use a slightly darker shade on the far fin. The belly is a very light gray. Leave the spots and stripes white, or go over them with a white crayon. The mouth is pink, the eye black, the little fish yellow and the bubbles light blue.

💡 **Tip:** Color around the spots instead of over them. It's slower, but the white stays bright.