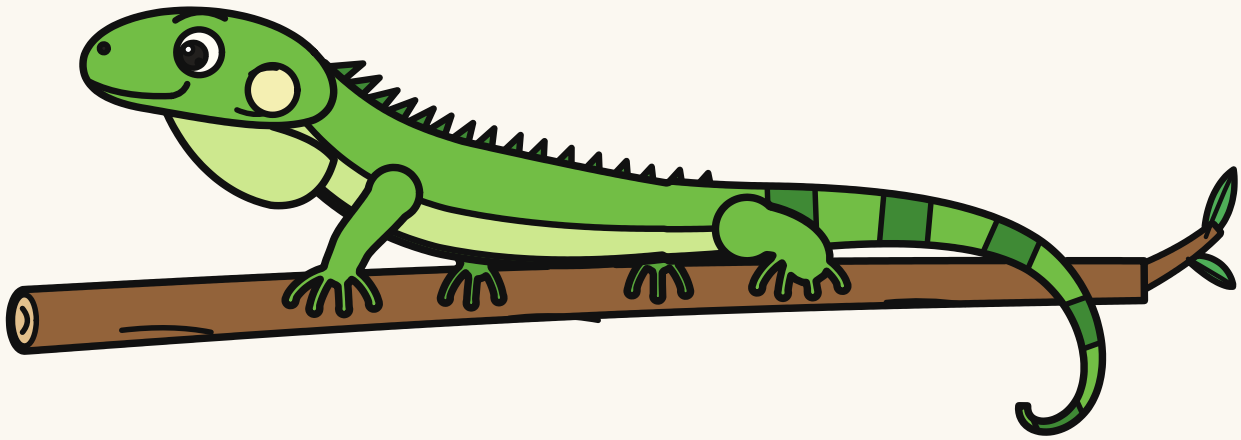
How to Draw an Iguana

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black marker or fineliner
- Colored pencils or markers
- 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 →

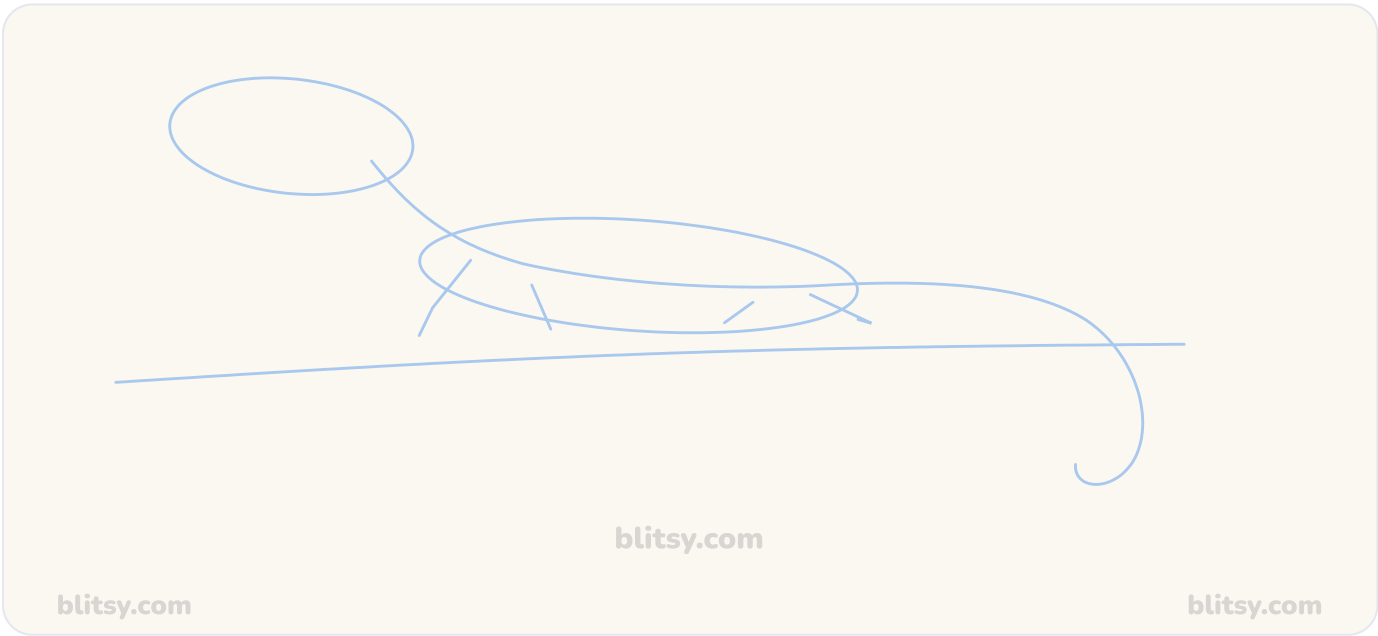
STEP 1 Sketch a head oval and a long body oval



Up near the top left, draw a flattened oval for the head. Below it and to the right, add a much longer, thinner oval for the body, roughly twice the head's length. Leave a small gap between them, because a neck goes there. I press so lightly here that I can barely see my own lines.

💡 **Tip:** If the body oval comes out round like an egg, stretch it. Iguanas are long and low, not plump.

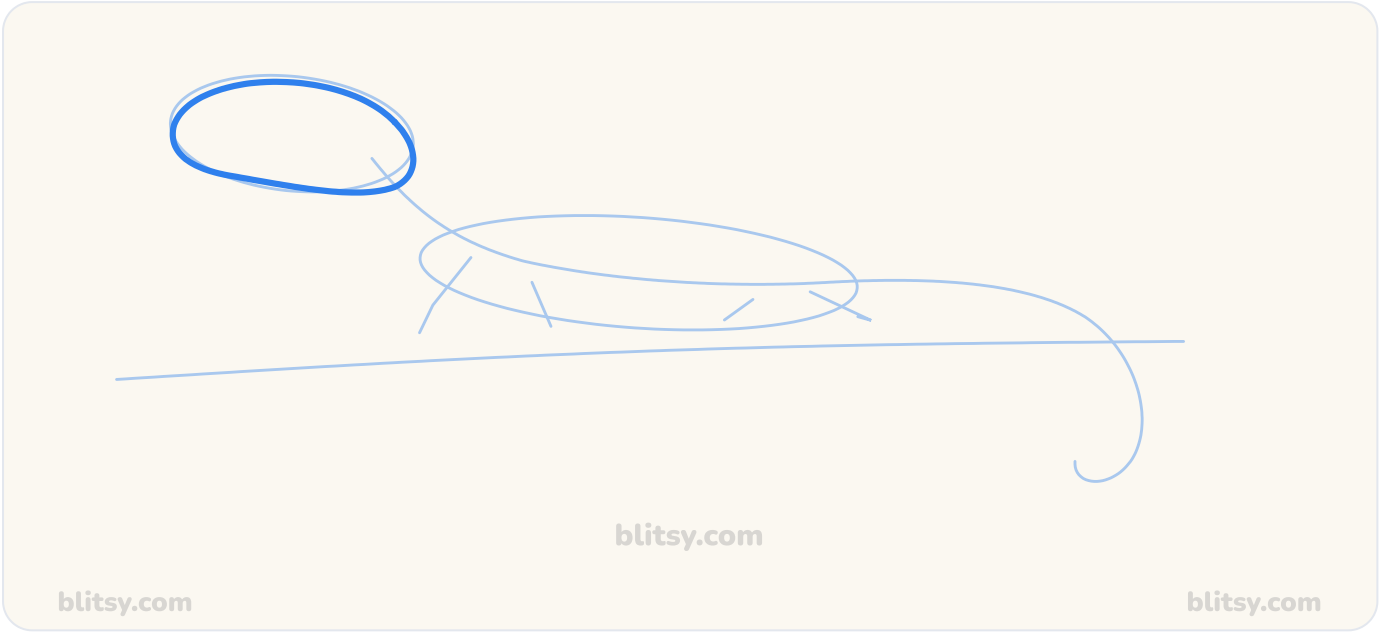
STEP 2 Add the spine curve, branch line and leg lines



Draw one smooth curve from the back of the head, through the body oval, then off to the right where it bends down and ends in a small hook. That curve is the neck, back and tail in one. Under the body, sketch a long, nearly straight line for the branch. Add four short bent lines for the legs.

💡 **Tip:** Tilt the branch line very slightly so the right end sits higher. A perfectly flat branch looks stiff.

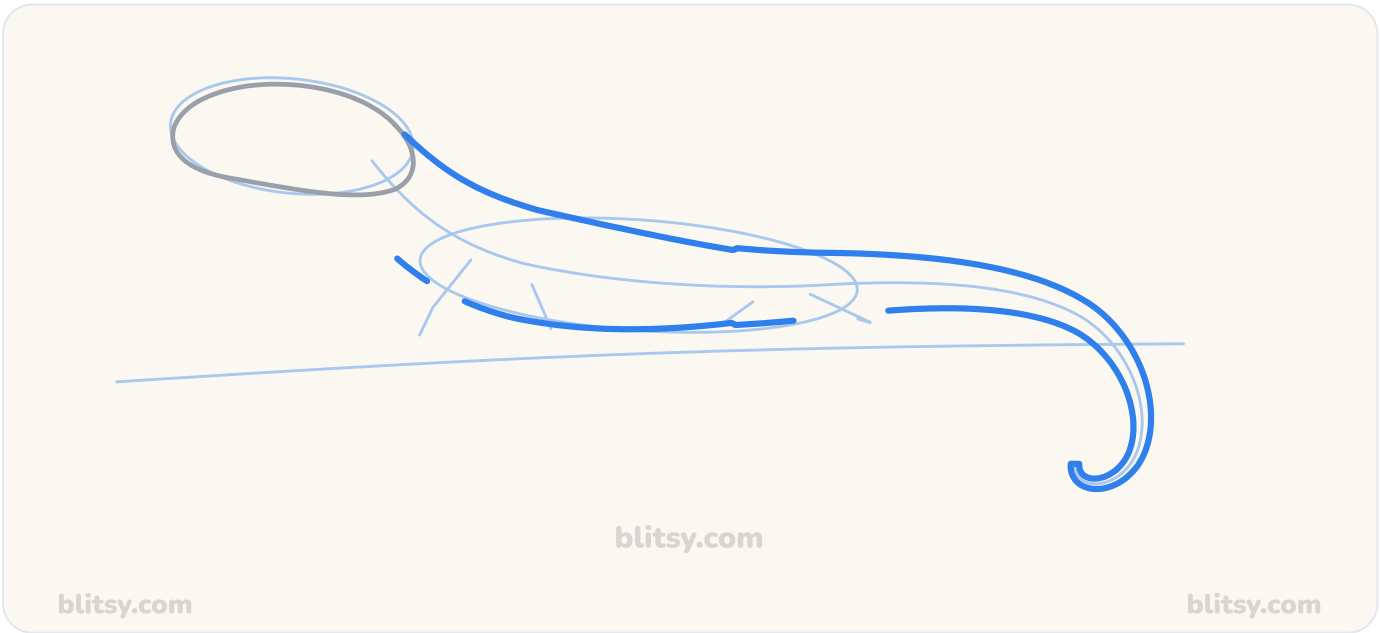
STEP 3 Draw the blocky head



Trace over the head oval, but square it off. Keep the top fairly flat, round the snout at the front, and run the jaw line back along the bottom. I deliberately make an iguana's head boxier than a gecko's, since that chunky shape is the first thing that tells people what animal this is.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the snout blunt. Once it gets long and pointy, the head starts to look like a crocodile.

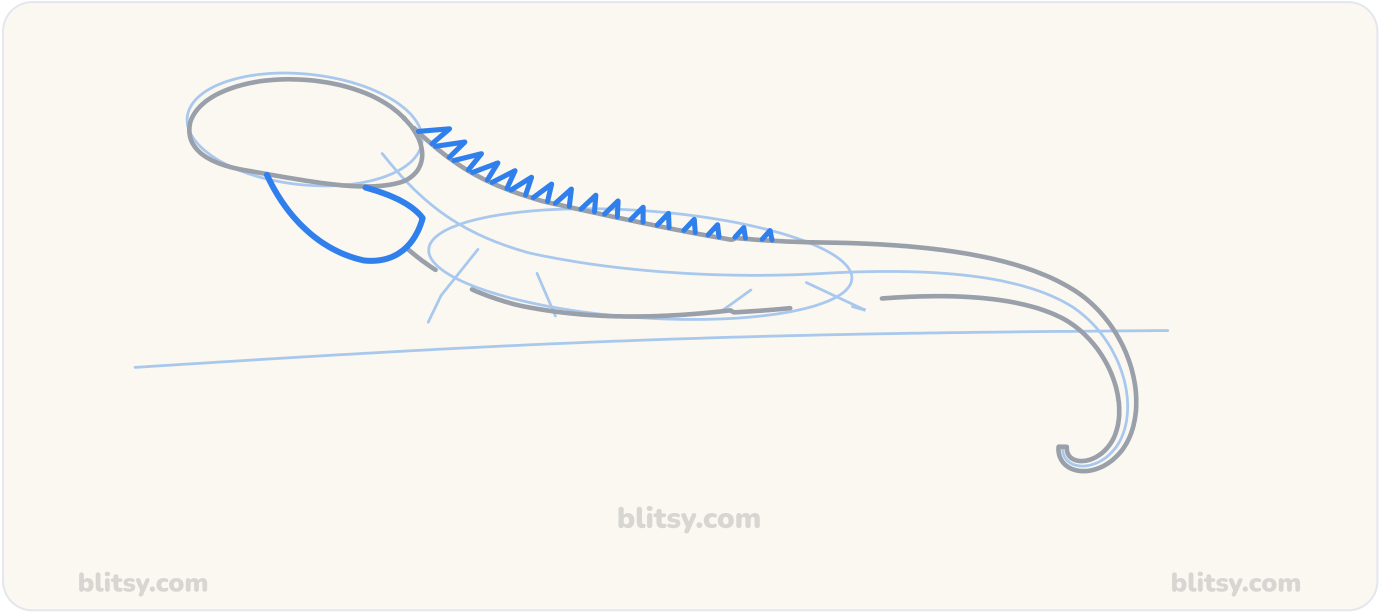
STEP 4 Outline the long body and tail



Starting at the back of the head, draw a line along the top of your spine curve and another along the bottom. They start a neck's width apart, widen over the belly, then slowly squeeze together down the tail until they meet at the hook. Leave the gaps under the body open for now. The legs will fill them.

💡 **Tip:** An iguana's tail is longer than its body. If yours ends before the branch does, extend the curve.

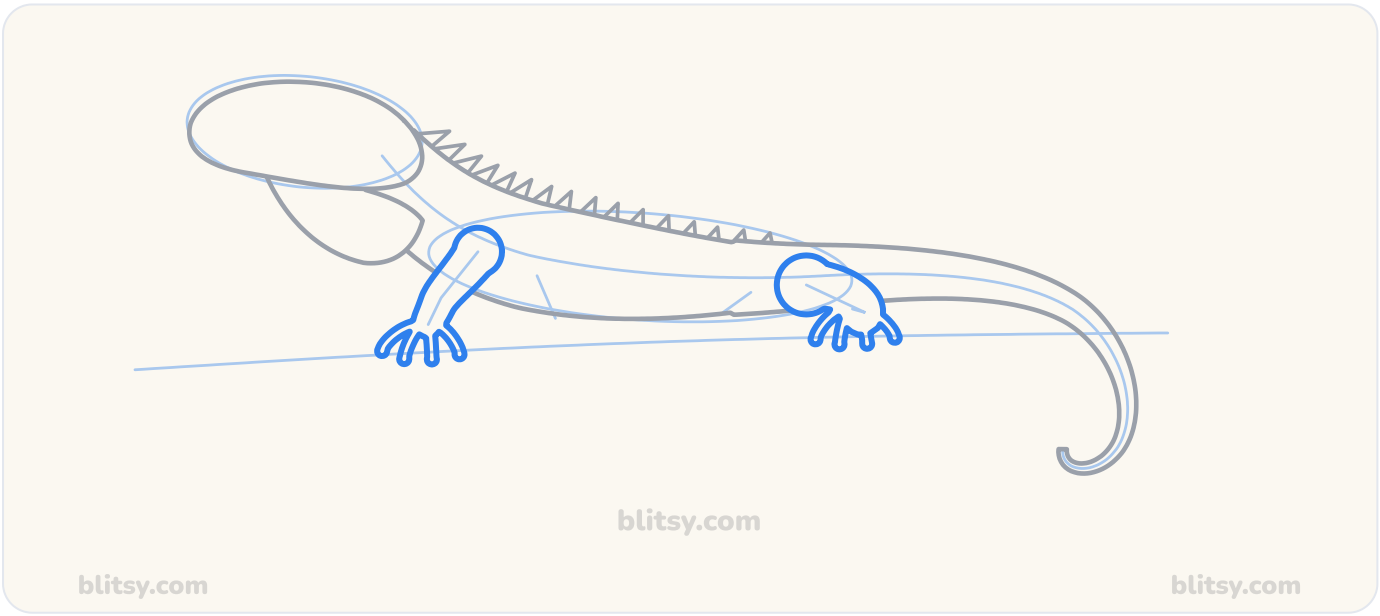
STEP 5 Add the back spikes and the dewlap



Along the top of the neck and back, draw a row of small triangles, tallest just behind the head and getting shorter toward the hips. I lean each one slightly backward so the iguana looks relaxed. Then hang a rounded flap of skin under the chin and throat: that's the dewlap.

💡 **Tip:** Space the spikes evenly but don't measure them. Small differences in size look more natural.

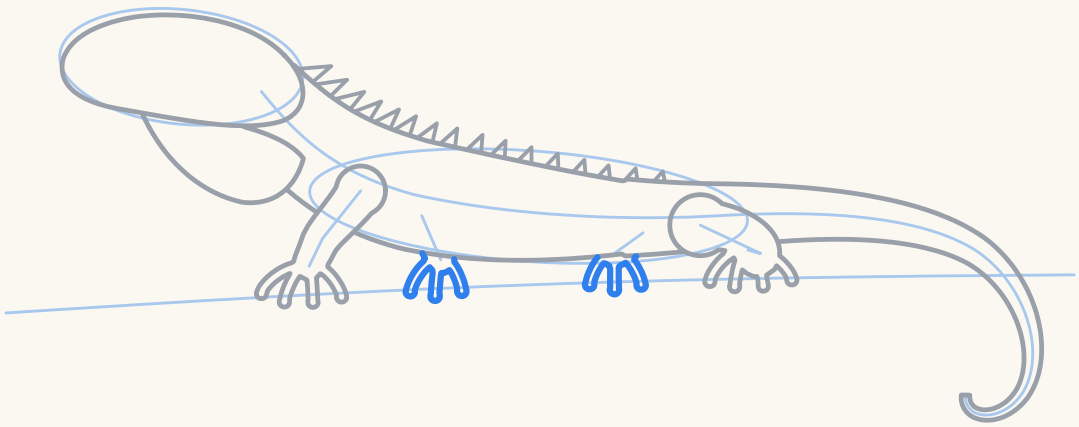
STEP 6 Draw the two near legs with long toes



These legs are closest to you, so they overlap the body. The front leg drops from a rounded shoulder and bends at the elbow; the back leg starts with a big round thigh near the hips. At the bottom of each, draw long thin toes that curl down over the front of the branch. Those curled toes show the iguana is holding on.

💡 **Tip:** Draw each toe as a single smooth curve with a rounded end, never a stick with a sharp point.

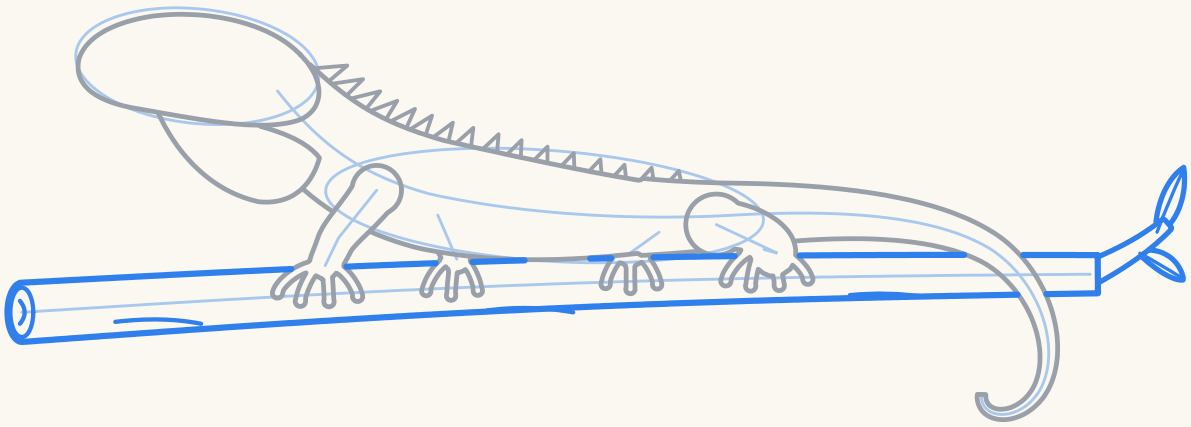
STEP 7 Add the two far legs



Between the near legs, draw two slimmer legs that start behind the belly line. Only the lower part shows, plus three toes on each foot gripping the branch. Hiding their tops behind the body gives the drawing depth.

💡 **Tip:** Stop each far leg exactly at the belly line. If you draw over the body, it looks like the iguana has six legs stuck on the front.

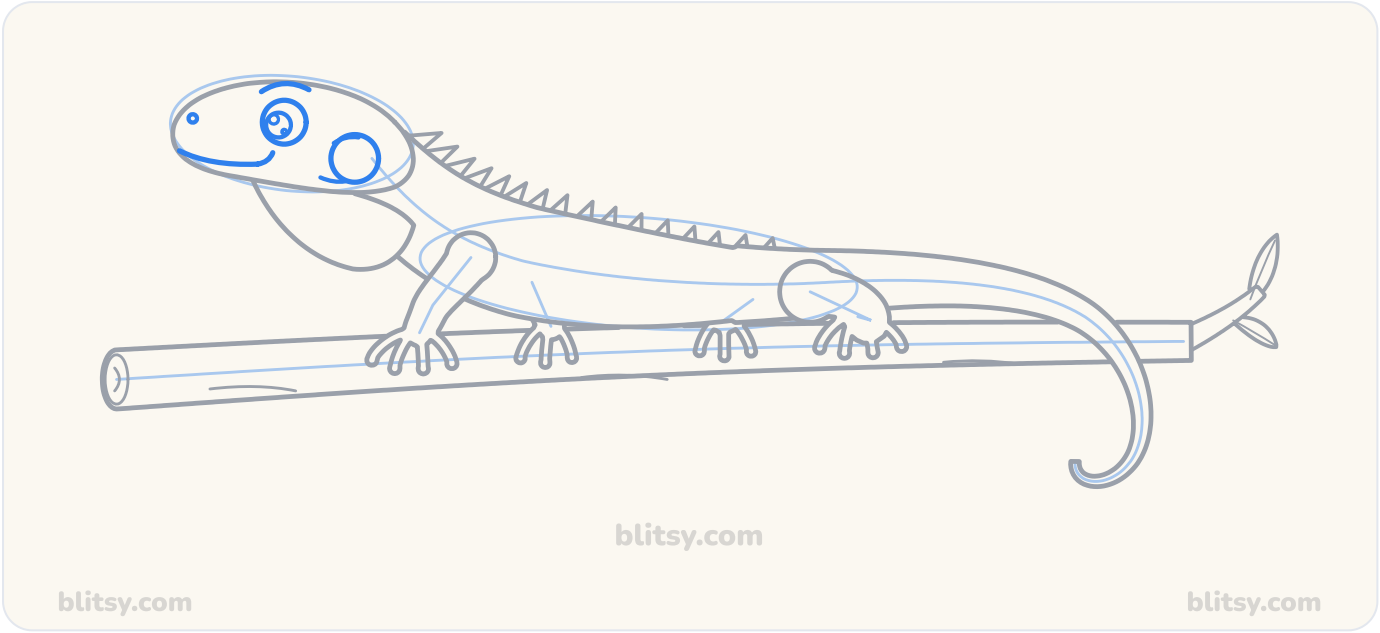
STEP 8 Draw the branch and two leaves



Go over the branch guide with two firm lines, a little thicker on the left and thinner toward the right. Close the left end with a small oval for the cut wood and add a curved ring inside it. Add a thin twig with two leaves on the right.

💡 **Tip:** Draw the branch lines only up to the legs and tail, not through them. That keeps the toes in front.

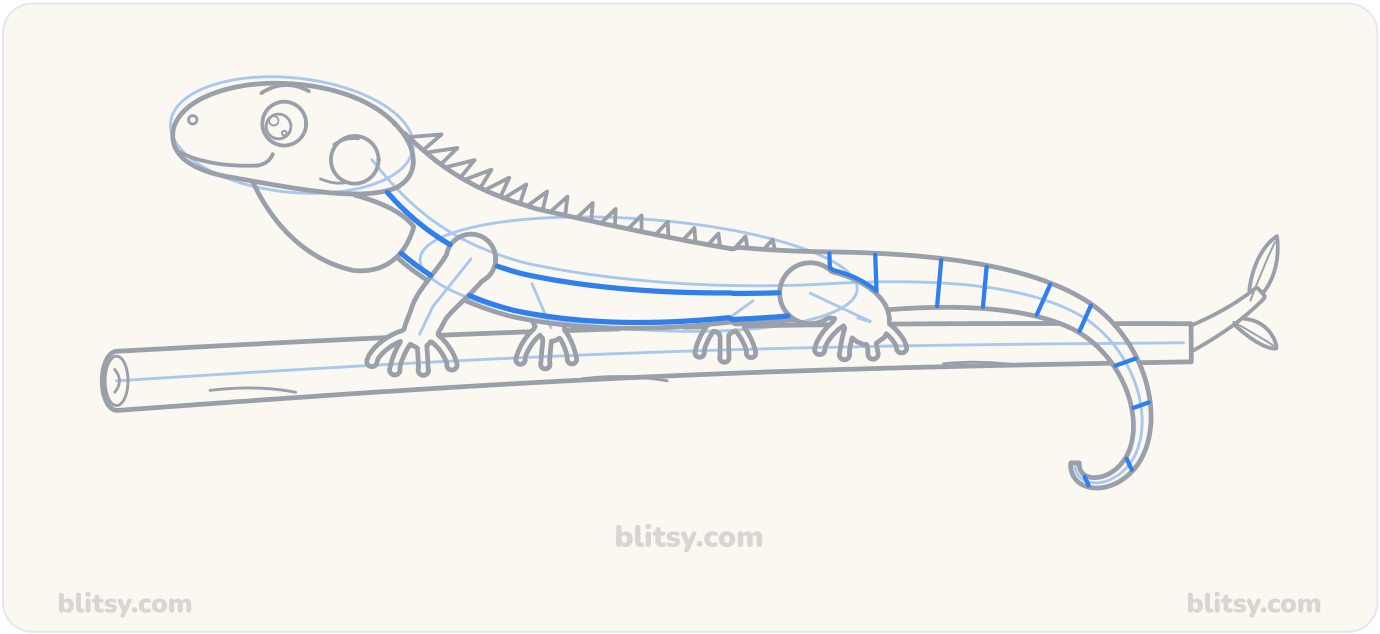
STEP 9 Add the eye, cheek plate and smile



Draw a round eye near the top of the head with a dark pupil and a white shine dot, then a soft arched line above it like a raised eyebrow. Behind the eye, low on the cheek, draw a large circle. Real green iguanas have a big round scale there, and I never leave it out. Finish with a dot for the nostril and a long, gentle smile along the jaw.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the line above the eye curved upward in the middle. A slanted line makes the iguana look grumpy.

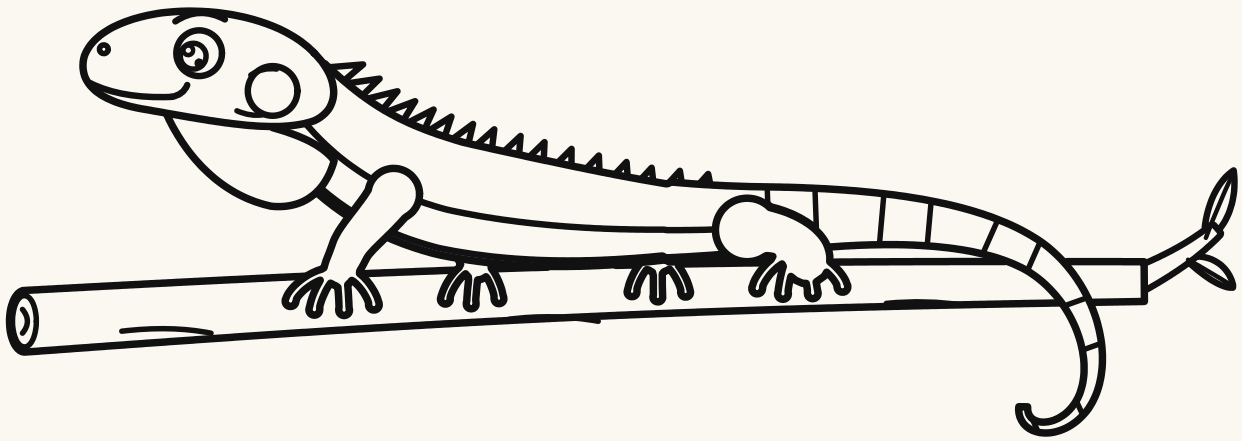
STEP 10 Draw the belly line and tail bands



Inside the body, draw a line parallel to the bottom edge, from the neck back to the hips, for the lighter belly. Then wrap five wide bands around the tail, leaving green gaps between them. I keep them wide, because many thin stripes start to look like a zebra pattern.

💡 **Tip:** Let each band follow the curve of the tail so it looks wrapped around, not pasted on flat.

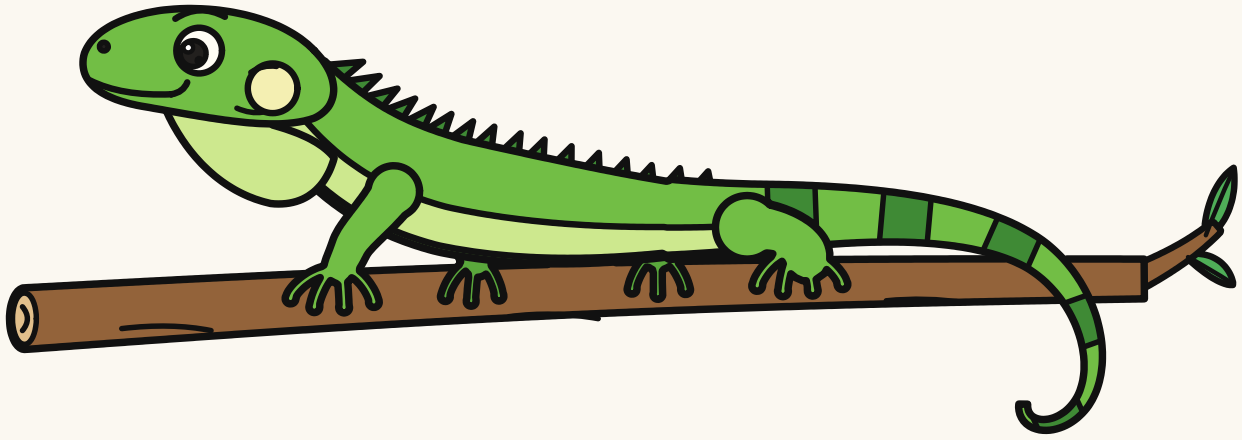
STEP 11 Ink the lines and erase the guides



Trace every keeper line with a black marker or fineliner. Wait a minute for the ink to dry, then erase the ovals, the spine curve and the leg lines. Most beginners rush this and smudge the ink.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the head and spikes first while your hand is fresh, and the long branch lines last.

STEP 12 Color your iguana



Color the head, body and near legs bright green and the far legs a slightly darker green. Dark green goes on the spikes and tail bands, light green on the belly and dewlap, pale yellow on the cheek plate. The branch is brown with a tan cut end, and the leaves get a fresh leaf green.

💡 **Tip:** Color the body in long strokes that follow the curve of the back. It hides pencil marks much better than scribbling.