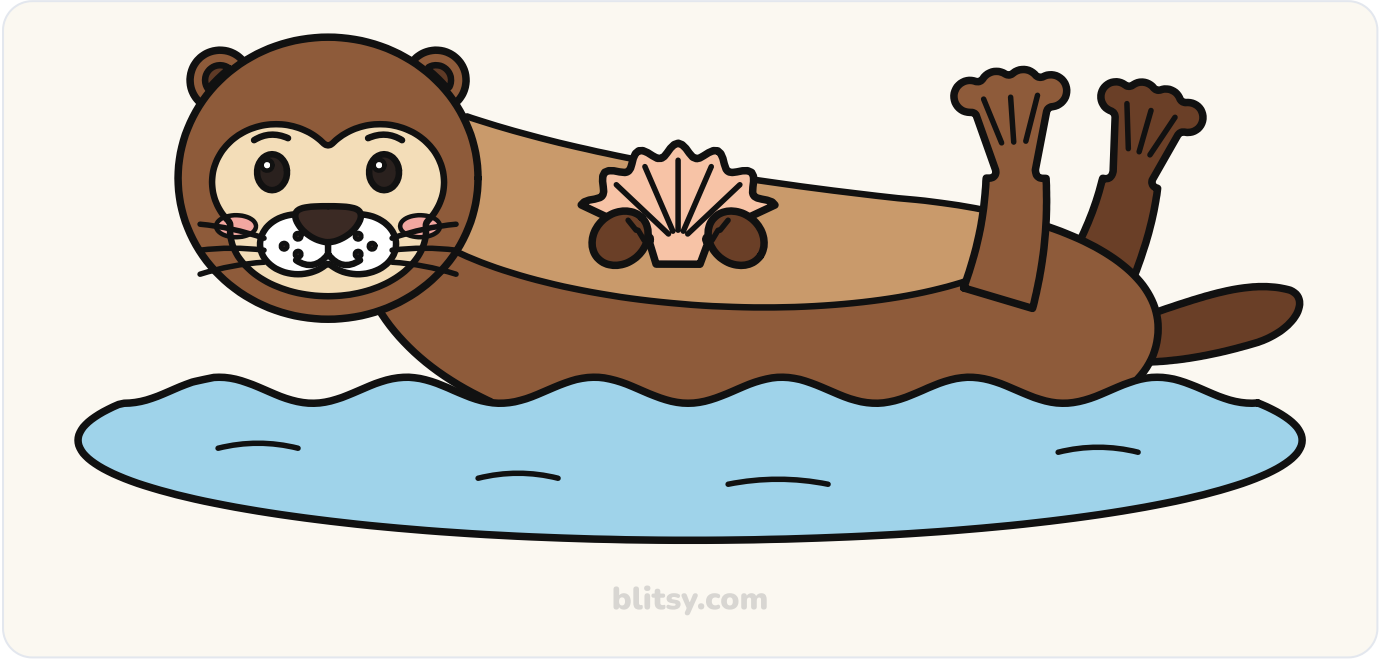
How to Draw an Otter

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

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

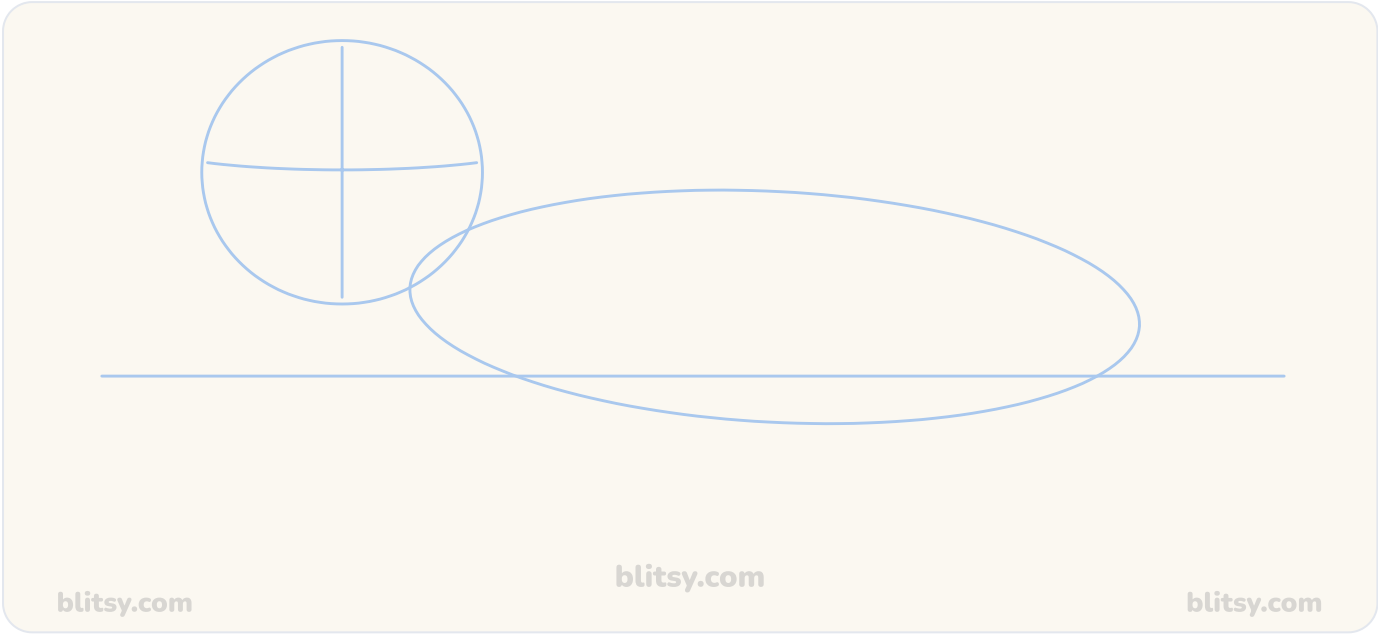
How to use this guide

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 →

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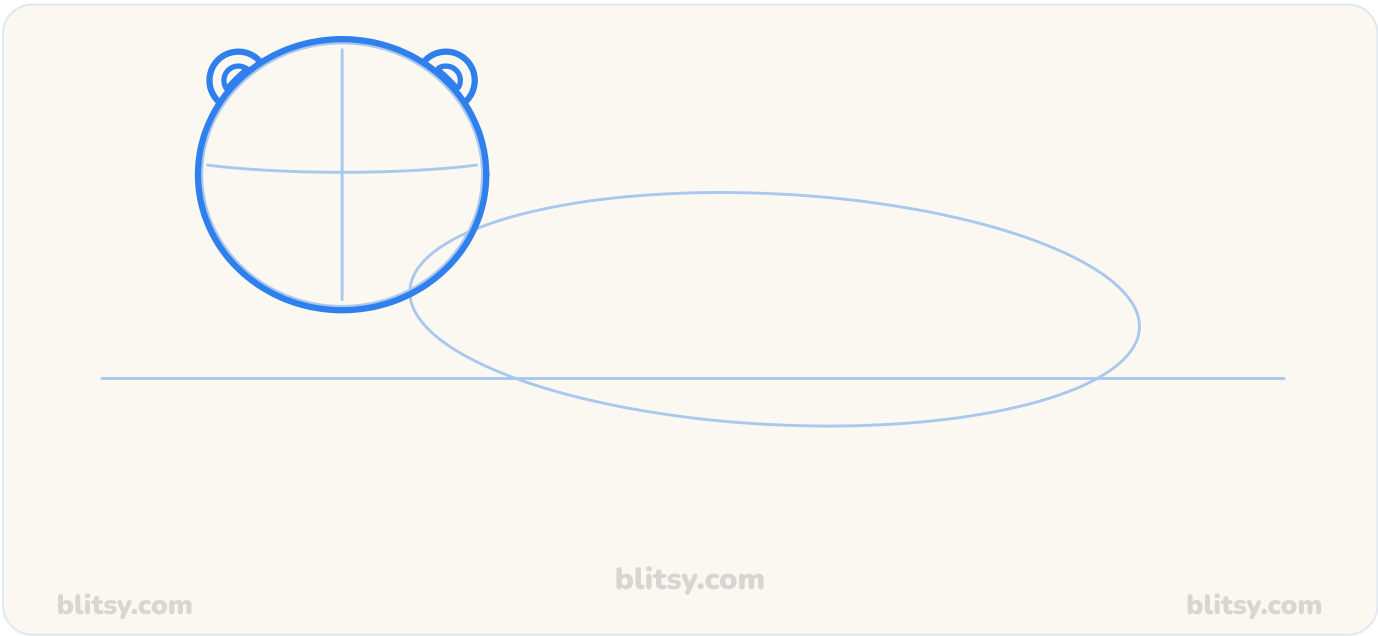
STEP 1 Sketch a head circle, a body oval and a water line



On the left side of the page, draw a circle for the head with a cross through it. Then draw a long, flat oval to its right, stretching most of the way across the paper. Under both, add one straight line. That's where the water will be.

💡 **Tip:** The oval should be about two and a half times as long as the circle is wide. A short oval turns the otter into a hamster.

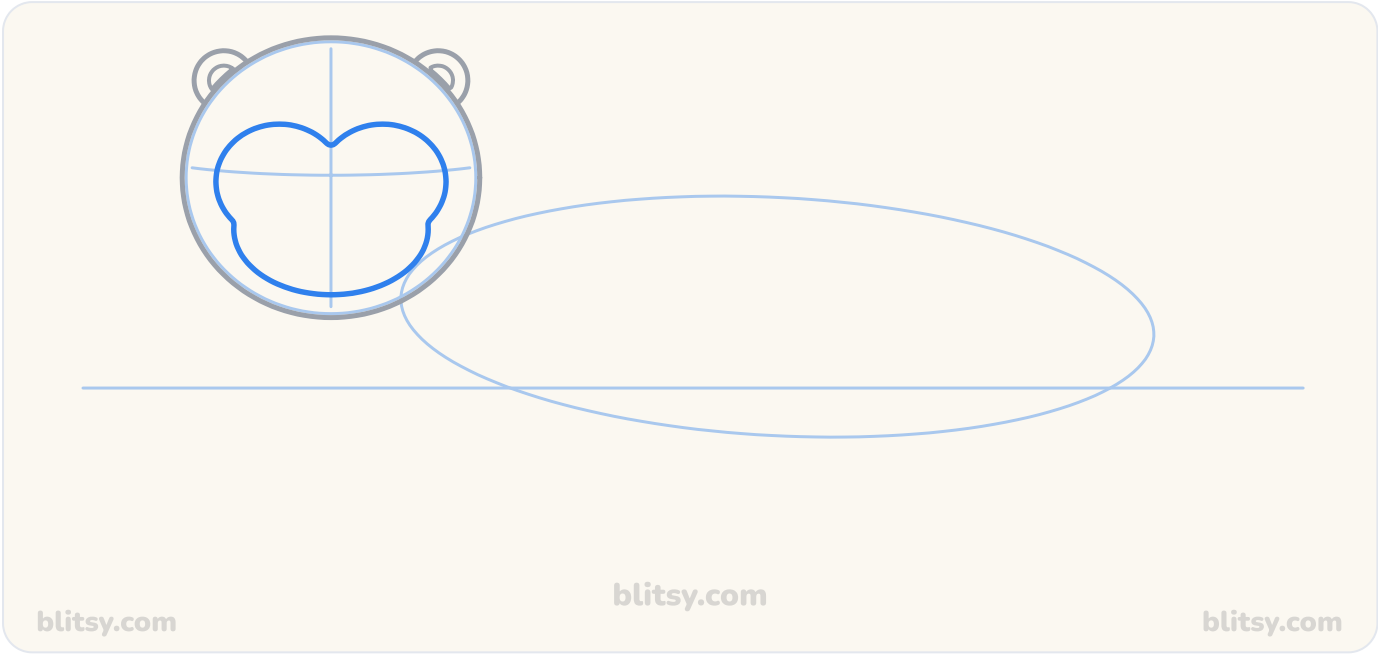
STEP 2 Draw the round head and two small ears



Go over the head circle with a firm line. Near the top, on the left and right, add two small round ears with a smaller circle inside each. Otter ears are tiny, so keep them about the size of a coin compared with the head.

💡 **Tip:** I place the ears a little out to the sides rather than straight up. Ears on top make it look like a bear.

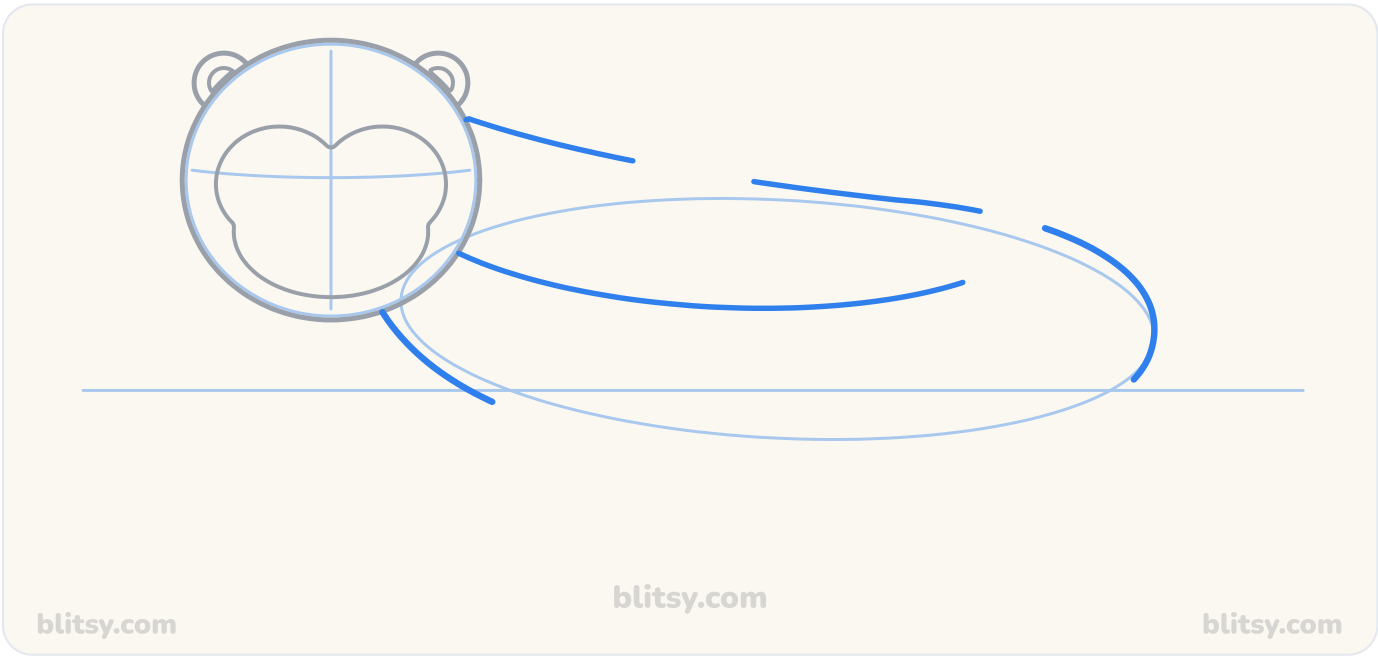
STEP 3 Add the pale face patch



Inside the head, draw a wide rounded shape that covers the eyes and the mouth area. The top dips down in the middle a bit like a heart, and the bottom is a big soft curve. This lighter patch is what makes the face look like a sea otter.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a band of the head showing all around the patch, about a finger wide.

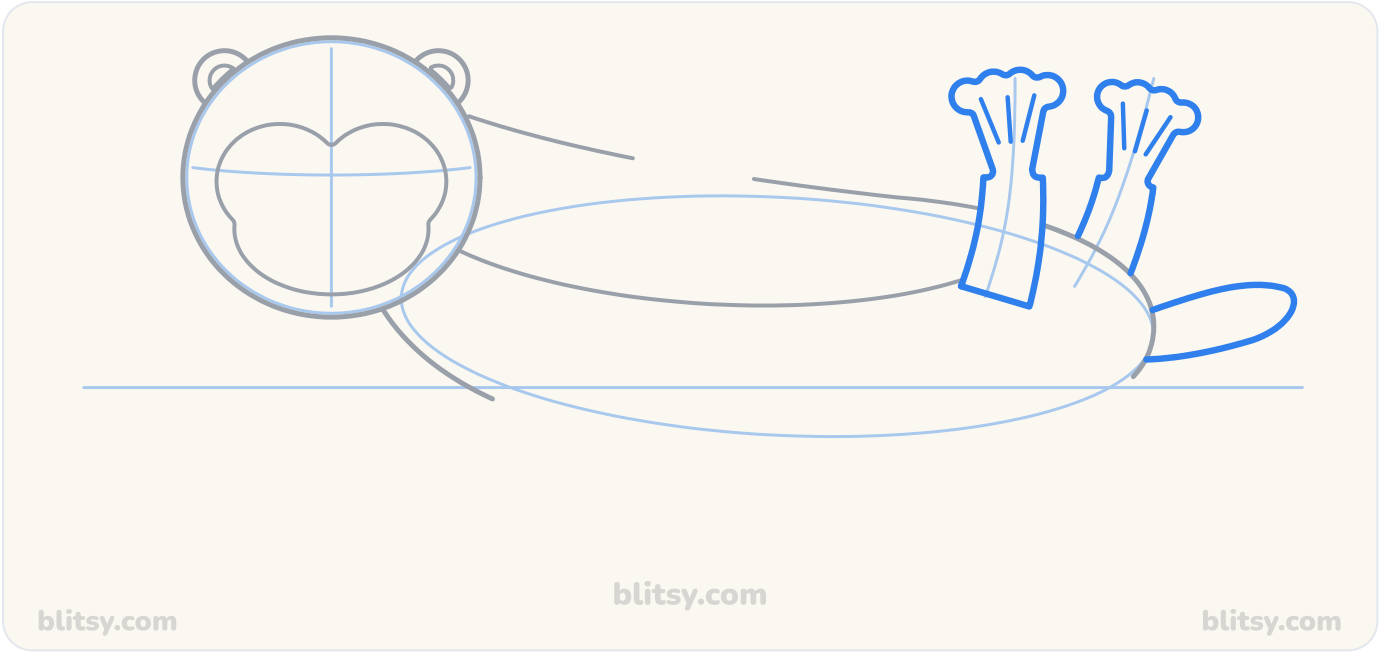
STEP 4 Outline the long floating body



From behind the head, draw the back line along the top of the oval and round it off at the right end like a hip. Then add a second line inside, parallel to the top, for the lighter belly. Don't draw the bottom of the body, because the water will cover it. One less line, one less thing to fix.

💡 **Tip:** Let the body tuck in behind the head. If the line crosses the face, the head will look stuck on.

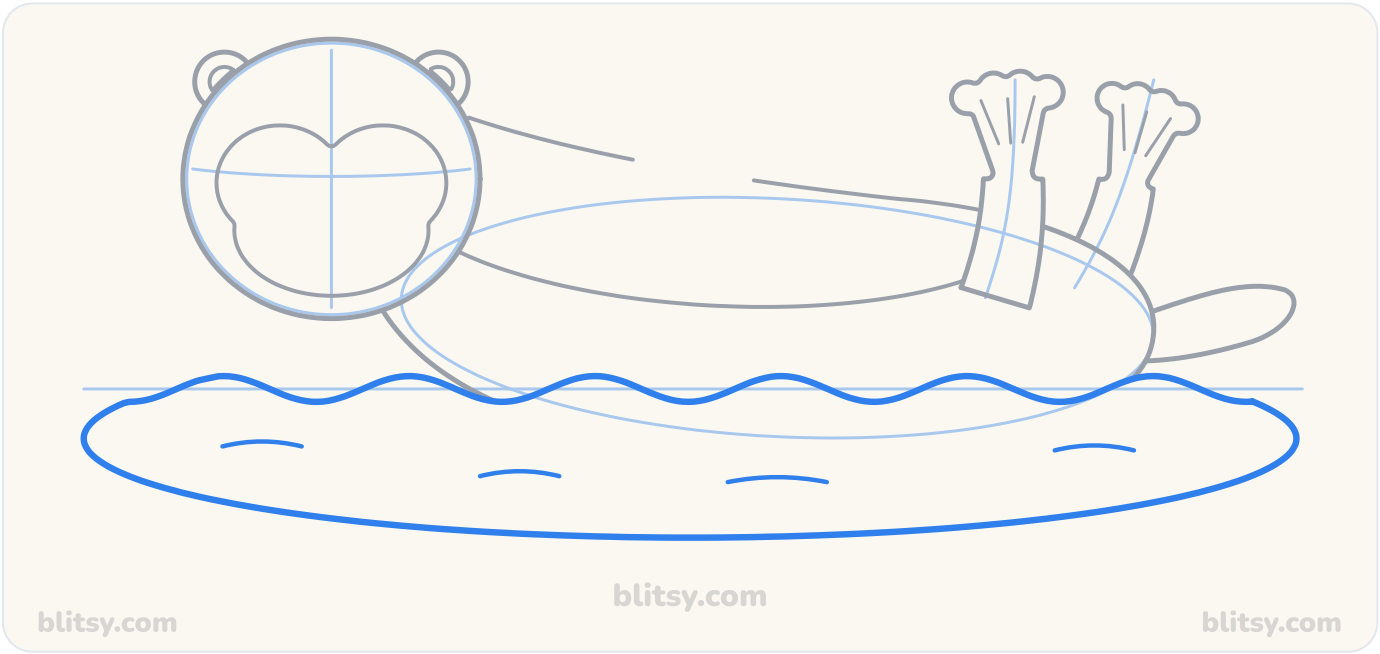
STEP 5 Add the webbed feet and a flat tail



Near the right end, I draw two short, chunky legs pointing up. Each one ends in a wide foot with four rounded toes and a few lines between them for the webbing. The back foot tips slightly to the right and peeks out behind the front one. At the very end of the body, add a flat, rounded tail lying on the water.

💡 **Tip:** Make the feet wider than the legs. Big flippy feet are the giveaway that this animal swims.

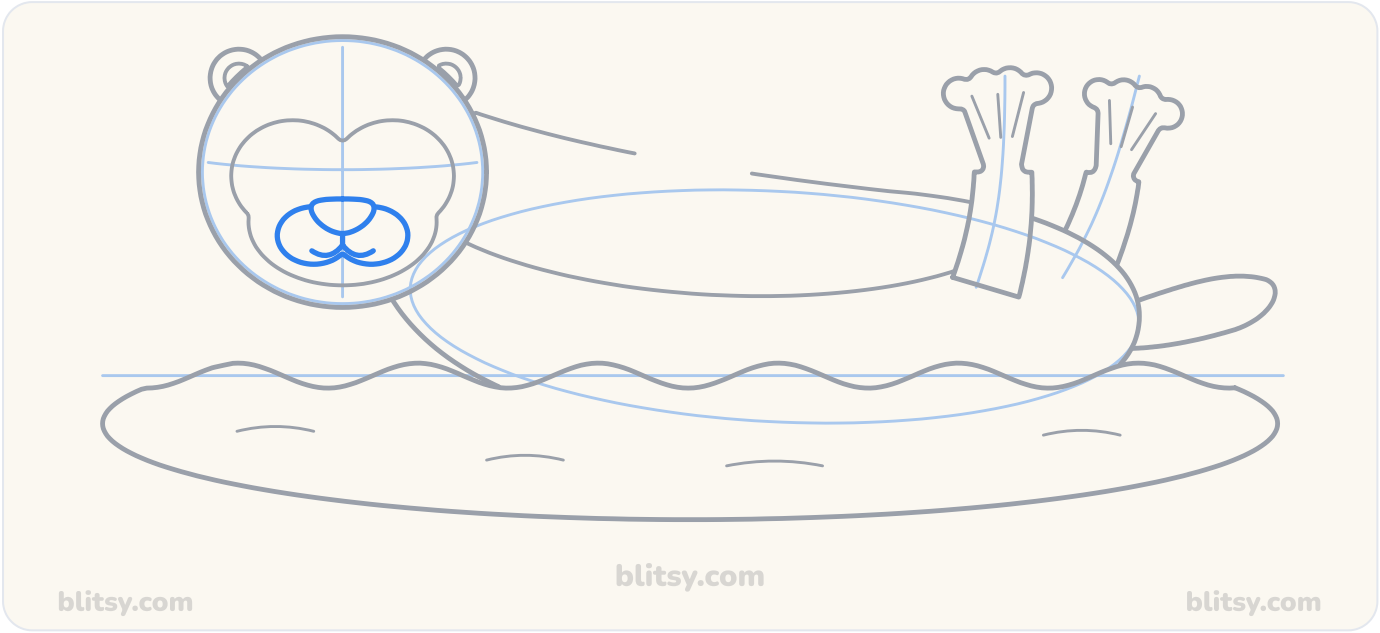
STEP 6 Draw the wavy water



Trace over the water guide with a wavy line, little hills and dips all the way across, so it overlaps the bottom of the body. Join its two ends with a long rounded curve underneath to make a pool shape. A few short curved strokes inside the water look like ripples.

💡 **Tip:** My rule is waves about the same size. A row of even bumps reads as calm water.

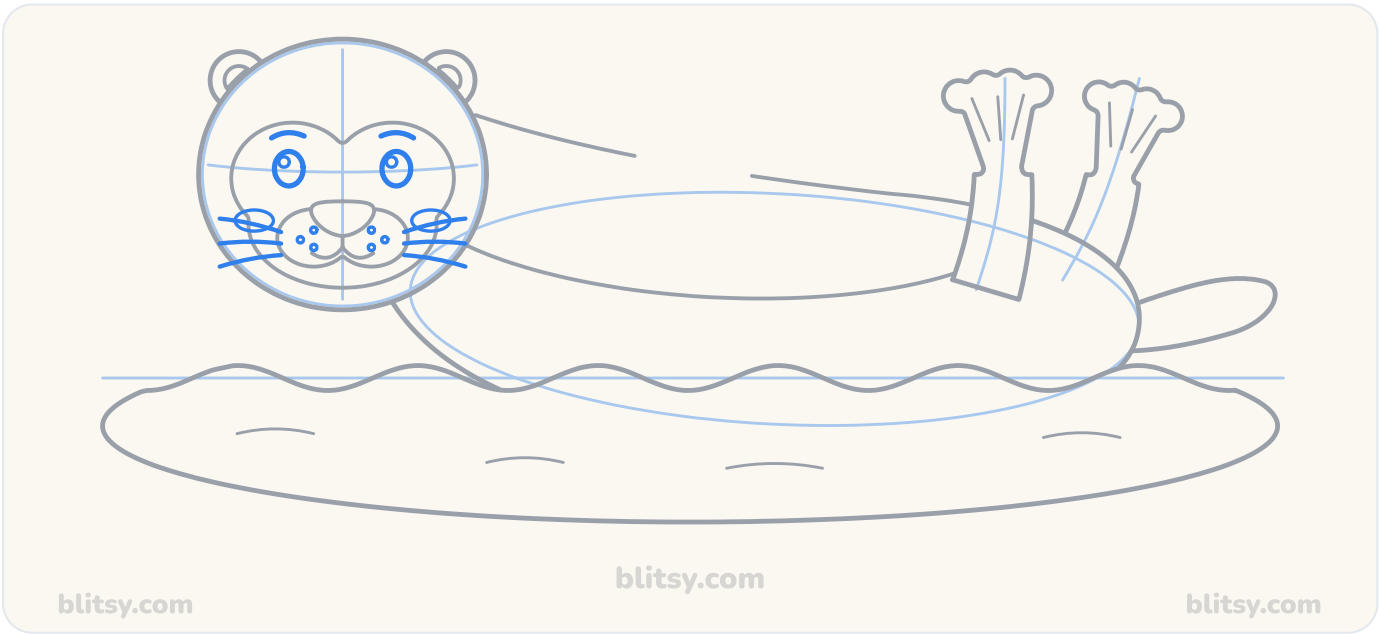
STEP 7 Draw the muzzle, nose and smile



Low in the face patch, draw two puffy cheek bumps side by side. On top of them, right in the center, put a big rounded nose that's wider at the top. Under the nose, a tiny line drops down and splits into two curves for a happy little mouth.

💡 **Tip:** When I teach this, kids always want a tiny nose. Keep it big, because that's part of the otter look.

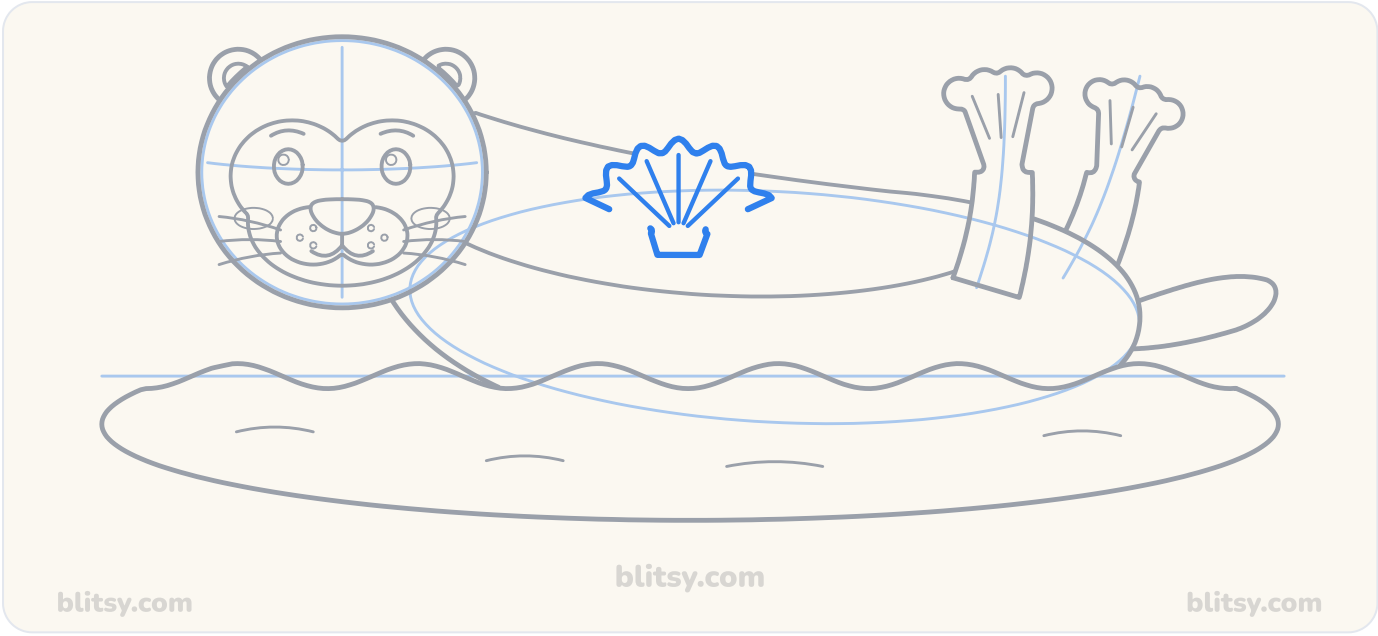
STEP 8 Add eyes, whiskers and rosy cheeks



Put two oval eyes on the cross line, a nose width or more apart, each with a small shine circle in the upper left. Short curved brows sit above them. On the cheeks, dot in three whisker spots on each side, then draw three long whiskers that fan outward past the face. Small ovals under the eyes become pink cheeks.

💡 **Tip:** Draw whiskers with one quick flick of the wrist. Slow whiskers come out wobbly.

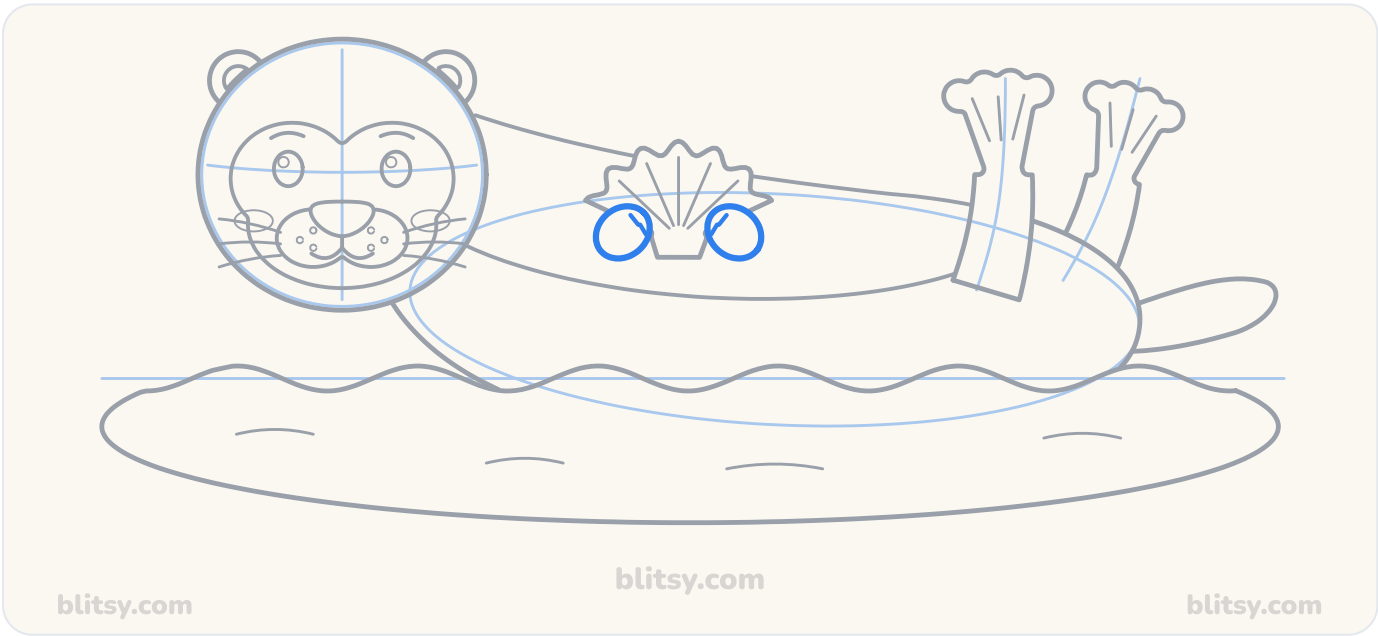
STEP 9 Draw a scallop shell on the belly



In the middle of the belly, draw a fan shape with a bumpy top edge, like a little open fan. At its bottom point, add a small square hinge. Then draw a few straight lines from the hinge out to the edge for the ridges.

💡 **Tip:** Sea otters often float with a shell or a rock like this, so either one works if you want to swap it.

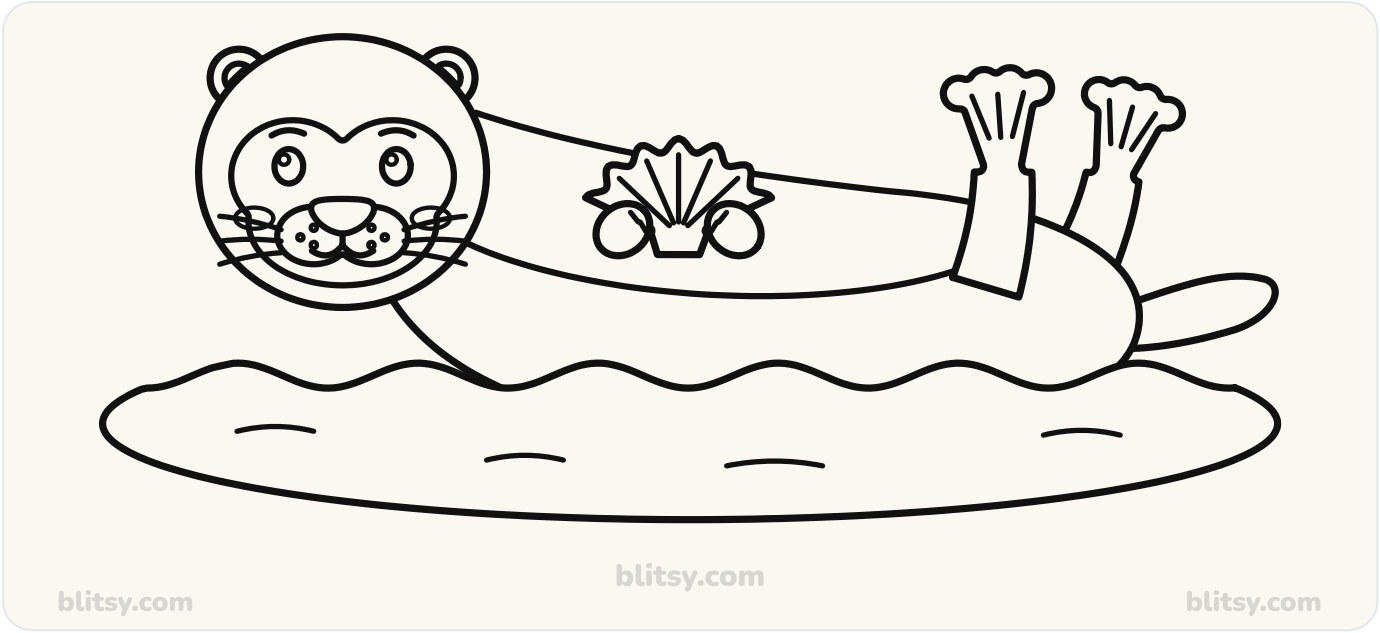
STEP 10 Add two paws holding the shell



On each lower side of the shell, draw a small round paw tilted toward the middle, so the two look like they're gripping it. A couple of short lines on each paw show the fingers. Erase the parts of the shell the paws cover.

💡 **Tip:** I keep the paws small. Otters have short front legs, and big hands would steal attention from the face.

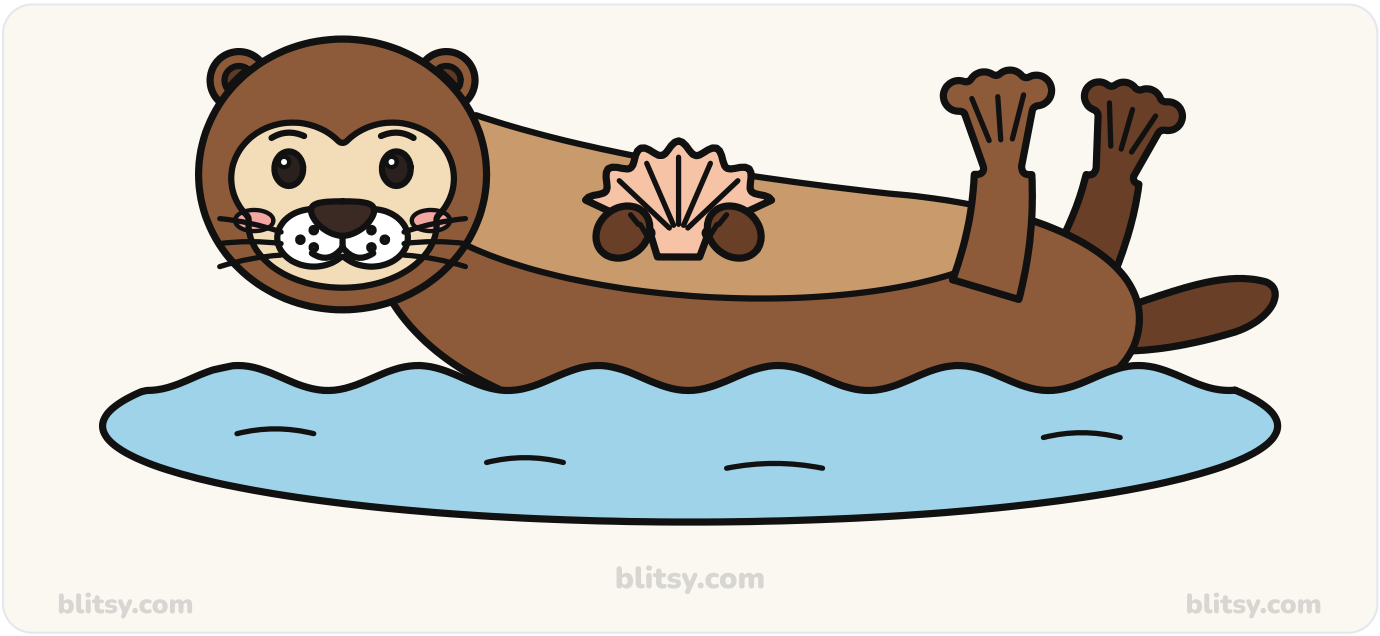
STEP 11 Ink the otter and erase the guides



Go over every keeper line with the fineliner. I start with the face while my hand is steady, then the body, the feet and the water. Wait until the ink is fully dry before you erase all the pencil guides, otherwise it smears.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the whiskers last, with a light touch, so they stay thinner than the outline.

STEP 12 Color your otter



Brown goes on the head, the ears, the body and the front leg. The back leg, the tail and the paws get dark brown, which helps them sit behind or on top of the body. Use light brown on the belly, cream on the face patch and peach on the shell. Fill the eyes and nose dark, leave the muzzle white, add pink cheeks and color the water light blue.

💡 **Tip:** Press harder with the brown near the edges of the body and lighter in the middle. It gives the fur a soft, rounded look.