

Bezier Curves

Art & Design

How the pen tool actually works, and the habits that produce clean paths.

A vector path is a chain of anchor points, each carrying control handles. The handles set the direction and the strength of the curve leaving that point.

POINTS

at the extremes

HANDLE LENGTH

about a third of span

- Use the fewest points possible; each one is a decision.
- Place points at the extremes: top, bottom, left, right.
- Handles about one third of the span they cover.
- A handle in line with the path gives a smooth join.
- Break the handle to make a corner.
- Handles held horizontal or vertical stay controllable.

LOOK FOR IT

A circle is four anchor points with horizontal and vertical handles, not eight scattered ones.

A path with too many points cannot be edited or scaled cleanly. Simplify it before handing the file to anybody else.