

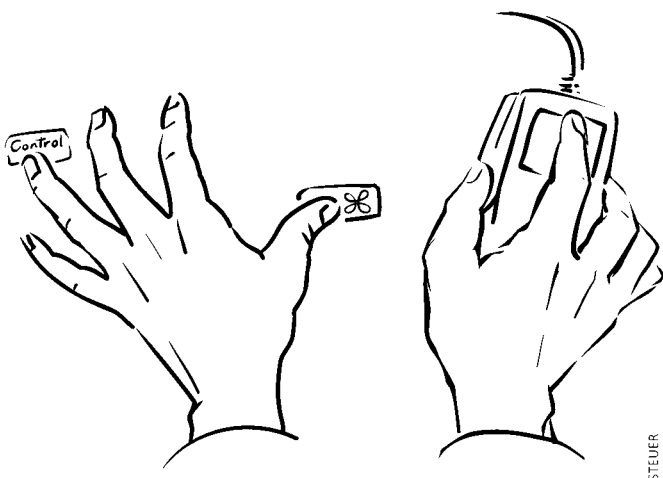
# A Finger Dance

*Turbo-charge with Illustrator's Power-keys*

If you are using the mouse to choose your selection tools from the Toolbox, then you need this lesson. With some time and patience, you'll be able to free up your mouse so that practically the only thing you do with it is draw. Your other hand will learn to dance around the keyboard accessing all of your selection tools, modifying your creation and transformation tools, using your Zoom and Hand tools, and last but not least, providing instant Undo and Redo.

This "Finger Dance" is probably the most difficult aspect of Illustrator to master. Go through these lessons in order, but don't expect to get through them in one or even two sittings. When you make a mistake, use Undo (⌘/Ctrl-Z). Try a couple of exercises, then go back to your own work, incorporating what you've just learned. When you begin to get frustrated, take a break. Later—hours, days or weeks later—try another lesson. And don't forget to breathe.

**Rule #1: Always keep one finger on the ⌘ key (CTRL for Windows).** Whether you are using a mouse or a pressure-sensitive tablet, the hand you are not drawing with should be resting on the keyboard, with one finger (or thumb) on the ⌘ key. This position will make that all-important Undo (⌘/Ctrl-Z) instantly accessible.



**Overview:** *Save hours of production time by mastering the finger dance of Illustrator's power-keys.*

**Rule #2: Undo if you make a mistake.** This is so crucial an aspect of working in the computer environment that I am willing to be redundant. If there is only one key combination that you memorize, make it Undo (⌘/Ctrl-Z).

**Rule #3: The ⌘ (Ctrl) key turns your cursor into a selection tool.** In Illustrator, the ⌘/Ctrl key does a lot more than merely provide you with easy access to Undo. The ⌘/Ctrl key will convert any tool into the selection arrow that you last used. In the exercises that follow, you'll soon discover that the most flexible selection arrow is the Direct-selection tool.

**Rule #4: Watch your cursor.** If you learn to watch your cursor, you'll be able to prevent most errors before they happen. And if you don't (for instance, if you drag a copy of an object by mistake), then use Undo and try again.

**Rule #5: Pay careful attention to *when* you hold down each key.** Most of the modifier keys operate differently depending on *when* you hold each key down. If you obey Rule #4 and watch your cursor, then you'll notice what the key you are holding does.

**Rule #6: Hold down the key(s) until after you let go of your mouse button.** In order for your modifier key to actually modify your action, you *must* keep your key down until *after* you let go of your mouse button.

**Rule #7: Work in Outline mode.** When you are constructing or manipulating objects, get into the habit of working in Outline mode. Of course, if you are designing the colors in your image, you'll need to work in Preview, but while you're learning how to use the power-keys, you'll generally find it much quicker and easier if you are in Outline mode.