

How to work with swatches

The term *swatch* comes from the textile industry, where a small sample of a piece of cloth or fabric is used to represent a larger whole. In Illustrator, swatches are samples of named colors, tints, gradients, and patterns that you can use and apply to objects in a creative design project.

About swatches

You use the Swatches panel to control all document colors, gradients, and patterns (**Figure 1**). The swatches associated with a document appear in the Swatches panel. Swatches can appear individually or in groups. You can open libraries of swatches from other Illustrator documents and various color systems. Swatch libraries appear in separate panels and are not saved with the document.

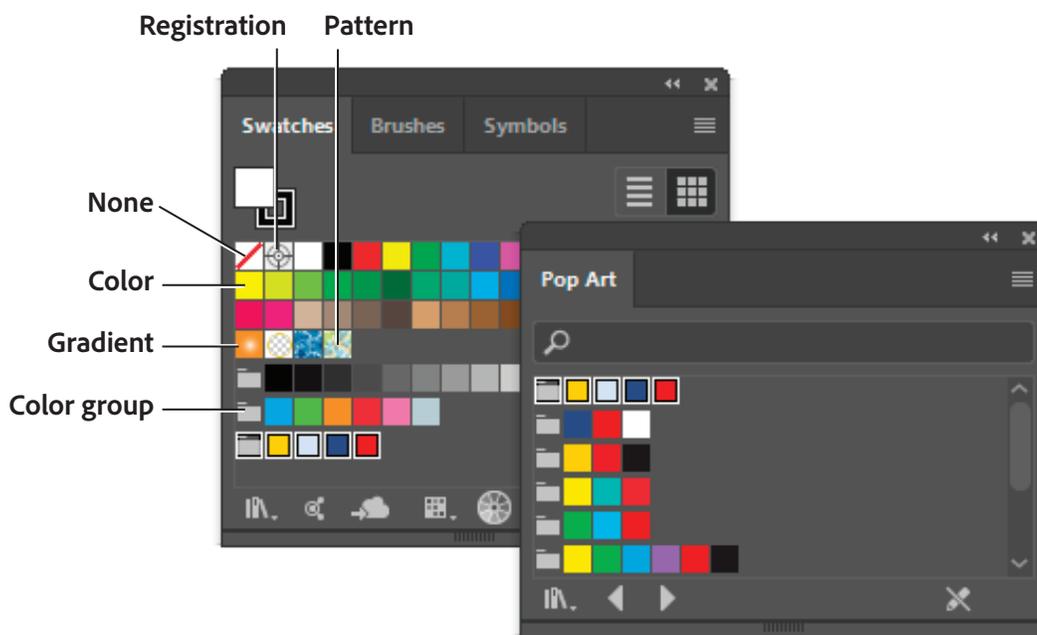


Figure 1 Swatches panel in small thumbnail view (left) and Swatch Libraries (right)

The Swatches panel and swatch library panels can contain the following types of swatches:

- *Process colors* A process color is printed using a combination of the four standard process inks: cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. By default, Illustrator defines new swatches as process colors.
- *Global process colors* A global color is automatically updated throughout your artwork when you edit it. All spot colors are global; however, process colors can be either global or local. You can identify global color swatches by the global color icon (when the panel is in list view) or a triangle in the lower corner (when the panel is in thumbnail view).
- *Spot colors* A spot color is a premixed ink that is used instead of, or in addition to, CMYK process inks. You can

identify spot-color swatches by the spot-color icon (when the panel is in list view) or a dot in the lower corner (when the panel is in thumbnail view).

- *Gradients* A gradient is a graduated blend between two or more colors or tints of the same color or different colors. Gradient colors can be assigned as CMYK process colors, RGB colors, or a spot color. Transparency applied to a gradient stop is preserved when you save the gradient as a gradient swatch. The aspect-ratio and angle values of elliptical gradients (those created by adjusting the aspect ratio or angle of a radial gradient) are not preserved.
- *Patterns* Patterns are repeating (tiled) paths, compound paths, and text with solid fills or no fill.
- *None* The None swatch removes the stroke or fill from an object. You can't edit or remove this swatch.
- *Registration* The registration swatch is a built-in swatch that causes objects filled or stroked with it to print on every separation from a PostScript printer. For example, registration marks use the Registration color so printing plates can be aligned precisely on a press. You can't remove this swatch. Note: If you use the Registration color for type, and then you separate the file and print it, the type may not register properly and the black ink may appear muddy. To avoid this, use black ink for type.
- *Color groups* Color groups can contain process, spot, and global process colors. They cannot contain pattern, gradient, none, or registration swatches. You create color groups based on harmonies by using either the Color Guide panel or the Edit Colors/Recolor Artwork dialog box. To put existing swatches into a color group, select the swatches and click the New Color Group icon in the Swatches panel. You can identify a color group by the folder icon.

You can also create tints in the Swatches panel. A tint is a global process color or spot color with a modified intensity. Tints of the same color are linked together, so if you edit the color of a tint swatch, all associated tint swatches (and the objects painted with those swatches) change color, though the tint values remain unchanged. Tints are identified by a percentage (when the Swatches panel is in list view).

Swatches panel overview

You use the Swatches panel to control all document colors, gradients, and patterns (**Figure 2**). You can name and store any of these items for instant access. When a selected object's fill or stroke contains a color, gradient, pattern, or tint applied from the Swatches panel, the applied swatch is highlighted in the Swatches panel.

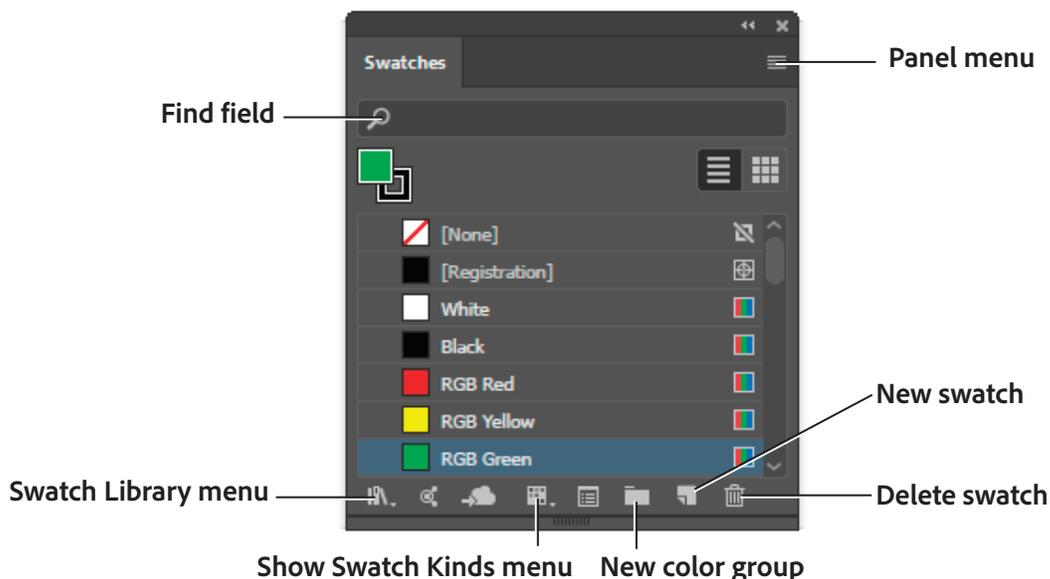


Figure 2 Swatches panel in Small List view

How to manage swatches:

- **Change swatch display:** To change the display of swatches, select a view option from the **Swatches** panel menu and choose from types of views: small, medium, or large thumbnails; small or large list.
- **Show a specific swatch type:** To show a specific type of swatch and hide all others click the **Show Swatch Kinds** menu and choose one of the following show swatch options: all; colors; gradients; pattern; or color groups.
- **Select unused swatches:** To select all swatches that aren't used in artwork and limit your **Swatches** panel to only the colors that are used in artwork. If you want to limit your **Swatches** panel to only the colors that are used in a document, you can select all unused swatches and then delete them.
- **Select a color group:**
 - To select the entire group, click the Color Group icon
 - To select swatches inside the group, click individual swatches.
- **Select swatch by name:** To select a swatch by name, select **Show Find Field** from the **Swatches** panel menu. Type the first letter or letters of the swatch's name in the Find text box at the top of the panel.
- **Move swatches:** To move swatches into a color group:
 1. Drag individual color swatches to an existing color group folder.
 2. Select the colors you want in a new color group and click the New Color Group button.
- **Reorder swatches:** To reorder individual swatches or swatches inside a color group, select **Sort By Name** or **Sort By Kind** from the Swatches panel menu. These commands only work on individual swatches, not swatches in a color group. Drag a swatch to a new location.

About swatch libraries

Swatch libraries are collections of preset colors, including Color Book libraries such as PANTONE, and thematic libraries including options like Art History, Earthtone, Foods, and many more (Figure 3).

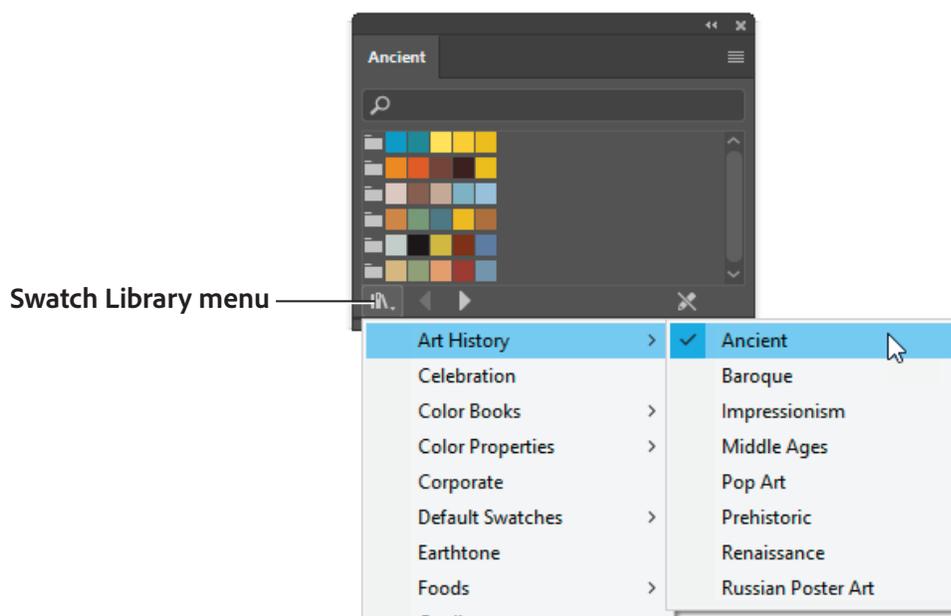


Figure 3 Swatch libraries panel

When you open a swatch library, it appears in a new panel (not the Swatches panel). You select, sort, and view swatches in a swatch library the same as you do in the Swatches panel. However, you can't add swatches to, delete swatches from, or edit the swatches in the Swatch libraries panel.

How to use swatch libraries:

- **Open a library:** To open a swatch library, click the Swatches panel menu and choose **Open Swatch Library > [library name]**.
- **Save a library:** You create a swatch library by saving the current document as a swatch library.
 1. Edit the swatches in the **Swatches** panel so it contains only the swatches you want in the swatch library.
 2. Select **Save Swatch Library** from the **Swatches** panel menu.

Note: To remove all swatches that aren't used in the document, choose **Select All Unused** from the Swatches panel menu, and then click the Delete Swatch button.
- **Edit a library:** To edit a swatch library:
 1. Choose **File > Open** and then locate and open the library file. By default, swatch library files are stored in the Illustrator/Presets/Swatches folder.
 2. Edit the colors in the **Swatches** panel and save your changes.
- **Move swatches to a library:** To move swatches from a swatch library to the **Swatches** panel, drag one or more swatches from the Swatch Libraries panel to the **Swatches** panel.

How to create a swatch

You can create a new swatch color (**Figure 4**) or gradient color swatches. To learn how to create pattern swatches, please see the guide *How to use symbols, patterns, and graphic styles*.

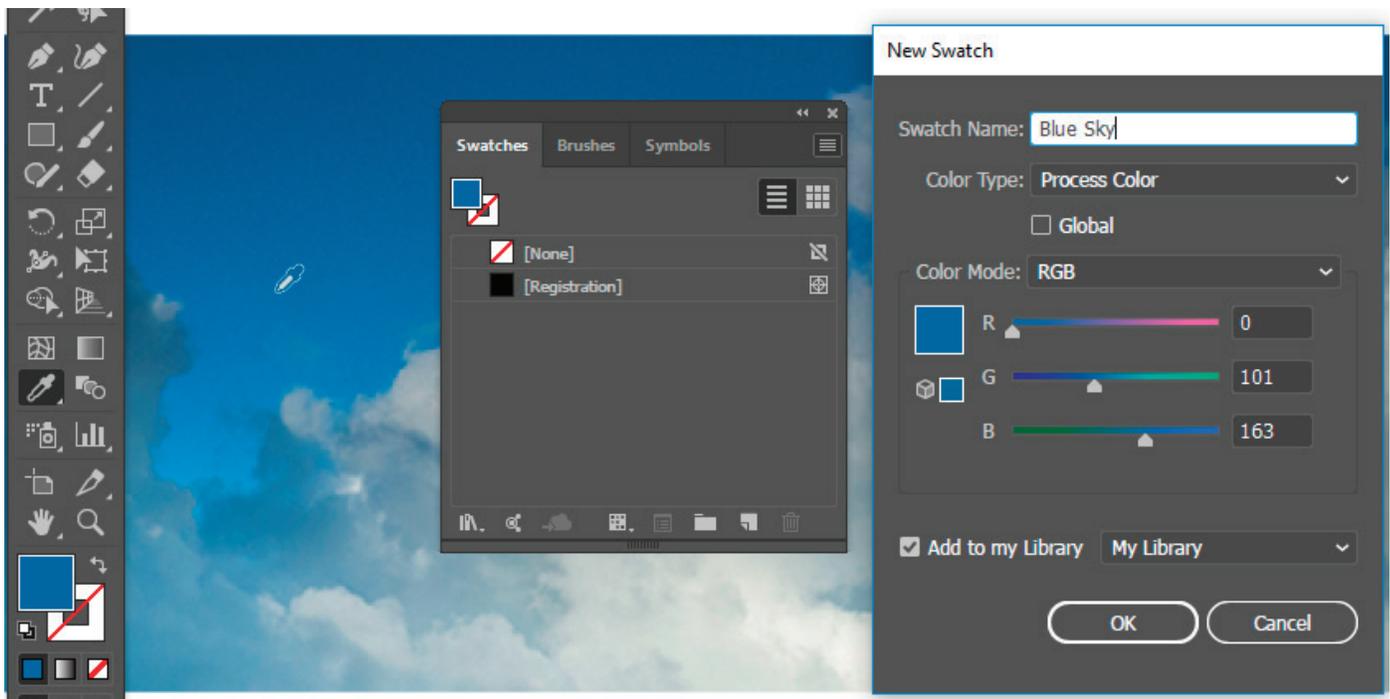


Figure 4 Creating a new swatch color

How to create a color swatch:

1. Select a color by using the Color Picker or Color panel, or select an object with the color you want.
2. In the Swatches panel, click the New Swatch button or select **New Swatch** from the panel menu.

The **New Swatch** dialog box opens (Figure 4).

3. In the dialog box, select **Global** if you want the swatch to be a global color. Set additional swatch options, and click **OK**.

How to create gradient swatches:

1. Create a gradient by using the Gradient panel, or select an object with the gradient you want (Figure 5).

2. In the **Swatches** panel, click the New Swatch button or select New Swatch from the Swatches panel menu.

The **New Swatch** dialog box opens (Figure 6).

3. In the dialog box that appears, enter a swatch name, and click **OK**.



Figure 5 Gradient object selected

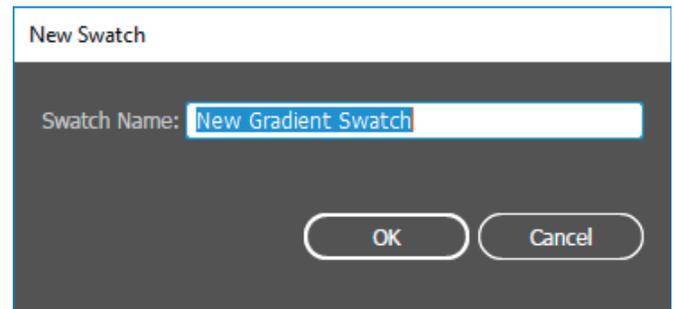


Figure 6 New Swatch dialog box

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