

Adobe Illustrator

Level: 3

Career Cluster: Media Arts, Digital Technology

Program: Design and Digital Arts, Information Technology

Pathway: Graphic Design, Web Design

Course Catalog Description

This course develops advanced skills in Adobe Illustrator as students create professional vector graphics, branding assets, and digital illustrations for print, web, and multimedia applications.

Summary

This course concentrates on the high-end capabilities of Adobe Illustrator as an illustration, design and vector drawing tool. Students learn how to use the tools to create digital artwork that can be used in web design, print media, and digital screen design.

This guide is based on the 2021 version of *Graphic Design and Illustration Using Adobe Illustrator*. <https://certifiedprofessional.adobe.com/illustrator#ExamGuide>

Notes

The updated course reflects a shift from a traditional software-focused course to a more comprehensive, industry-aligned digital design program. The original course primarily emphasized learning Adobe Illustrator tools and functions to create vector graphics and basic design outputs. In contrast, the revised course expands these technical skills into a more structured framework that integrates design theory, professional practices, and real-world application, including project management concepts, ethical considerations, and communication with clients and collaborators. Additionally, the updated version introduces clearer alignment to career readiness through expanded learning strands such as portfolio development, leadership, work-based learning, and a final assessment project. These updates enhance alignment with current CTE expectations by emphasizing professional workflows, applied design thinking, and preparation for industry certification and postsecondary pathways while maintaining strong focus on Illustrator proficiency.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Working in the Design Industry

Objective: Covers critical concepts related to working with colleagues and clients as well as crucial legal, technical, and design- related terminology and principles.

- 1.1) Identify terminology and interpret communication relating to the purpose, audience, and audience needs for developing designs.
 - a. Determine whether content is relevant and has an appropriate design for the purpose, audience, audience needs, and user experience.
 - b. Identify requirements based on the intended output and usage of the design.
 - c. Identify techniques for communicating about design plans with peers and clients.
 - d. Define basic project management concepts.
- 1.2) Determine the type of copyright, permissions, and licensing required to use specific content and fonts.
 - a. Identify legal and ethical considerations for using third-party content.
 - b. Check and change copyright information for Illustrator file.
- 1.3) Define key terminology related to digital graphics.
 - a. Define digital graphics terminology.
 - b. Explain how color is represented in digital graphics and print.
- 1.4) Evaluate the application of design principles.
 - a. Integrate the elements and principles of design to create effective communication.
 - b. Identify how typographic adjustments create hierarchy and enhanced readability.

2. Document Management

Objective: Covers managing documents, including creating, saving, and exporting.

- 2.1) Create documents and modify their settings for the intended output.
 - a. Set appropriate document settings.
 - b. Create and use document presets for specific project needs.
- 2.2) Use artboards.
 - a. Manage and work with artboards.
- 2.3) Manage assets in a project.
 - a. Place assets in a document.
 - b. Use the Links panel.
- 2.4) Save and export documents and assets.
 - a. Save documents.
 - b. Export graphics.
 - c. Package a project.

3. Workflow and Interface Customization

Objective: Covers the interface setup, program settings, layers, and reusable assets that assist in an efficient and effective workflow.

- 3.1) Navigate and customize the workspace.
 - a. Identify and manipulate elements of the interface.
 - b. Organize and customize the workspace.
 - c. Configure application preferences.
- 3.2) Use design aids.
 - a. Navigate documents.
 - b. Use rulers.
 - c. Use guides and grids.
 - d. Use views and modes to work efficiently with vector graphics.
 - e. Use Drawing modes.
 - f. Use the Dimension Tool.
 - g. Use the Mock Up Tool.
- 3.3) Manage colors, swatches, and gradients.
 - a. Create, manage, and edit swatches and swatch libraries.
 - b. Create and modify gradients.
- 3.4) Manage brushes, symbols, styles, and patterns.
 - a. Open and import brushes, symbols, graphic styles, and patterns from libraries.
 - b. Create, edit, and apply brushes, symbols, graphic styles, and patterns.
- 3.5) Use layers to manage design elements.
 - a. Use the Layers panel.
 - b. Work with multiple layers.

4. Working with Objects, Paths, and Text

Objective: *Covers the core tools used to create content.*

- 4.1) Create objects and paths.
 - a. Use the Pen tool.
 - b. Use drawing tools.
 - c. Use Shape tools.
 - d. Use Image Trace to create vectors from raster images.
 - e. Use AI to create objects and content.
 - f. Use the Anchor Point tool.
- 4.2) Modify objects and paths.
 - a. Use path refinement methods.
 - b. Modify objects.
 - c. Expand the appearance of objects.
 - d. Use Live Corners to change the appearance of shapes.
- 4.3) Add text.
 - a. Use type tools to add typography.
 - b. Use appropriate character settings.
 - c. Use appropriate paragraph settings.
- 4.4) Modify text.
 - a. Manage text flow.
 - b. Manage Area Type options.
 - c. Convert text to graphics.

5. Modifying Object Appearance and Position

Objective: *Covers tools that affect the visual appearance of document elements.*

- 5.1) Make, manage, and manipulate selections.
 - a. Select, modify, group, and refine selections using various methods.
 - b. Rotate, flip, and transform individual objects, selections, or groups.
- 5.2) Modify the appearance of design elements.
 - a. Adjust the appearance of objects and selections.
 - b. Use effects to modify groups, objects, and layers.
 - c. Create, edit, and save graphic styles.

6. Career Exploration and Postsecondary Opportunities

Objective: *Students will analyze career pathways in graphic design by exploring industry roles, workplace expectations, required education, certifications, professional organizations, and postsecondary opportunities available in Colorado in order to make informed academic and career decisions.*

- 6.1) Identify employment opportunities in various fields with a focus in the area of graphic design
 - a. Recognize the work typically performed, tools and technology used, and nature of work environments
 - b. Identify potential certifications within the careers
 - c. Find membership organizations associated with the careers
 - d. Understand the necessary education associated within the careers
- 6.2) Define professionalism within the context of graphic design
 - a. Criticism and evaluation
 - b. Presentation
 - c. Assessment
- 6.3) Recognize laws, regulations, and ethics significant to the fields of graphic design
- 6.4) Identify postsecondary opportunities offered in the state of Colorado
 - a. Technical college, community college, 4-year institutions
 - b. Certificates, associates, bachelor, and advanced degree opportunities

7. Portfolio Development

Objective: *Students will develop and refine a professional vector-based design portfolio by selecting, organizing, presenting, and evaluating Illustrator projects that demonstrate technical proficiency, creative problem-solving, and readiness for postsecondary opportunities and careers in graphic design.*

- 7.1) Select and curate Illustrator projects that demonstrate a range of vector design skills, including branding, illustration, typography, and layout.
- 7.2) Organize and sequence portfolio work for digital presentation, ensuring clarity, consistency, and audience awareness.
- 7.3) Refine portfolio artifacts using critique, feedback, and professional design standards.

- 7.4) Develop written project descriptions and reflections explaining design intent, process, tools, and outcomes.
- 7.5) Evaluate portfolio quality based on industry expectations, technical accuracy, and visual communication effectiveness.

8. Leadership

Objective: *Students will demonstrate leadership skills in digital design environments by communicating professionally, collaborating effectively, taking initiative, and contributing to successful project outcomes in classroom and production settings.*

- 8.1) Demonstrate responsibility, initiative, and accountability in individual and collaborative design tasks.
- 8.2) Apply effective communication skills during critiques, presentations, and client-based discussions.
- 8.3) Collaborate with peers to plan, execute, and evaluate design projects using shared workflows.
- 8.4) Apply conflict-resolution and problem-solving strategies within team-based design environments.
- 8.5) Reflect on personal leadership strengths and areas for growth in creative and technical contexts.

9. Work-Based Learning

Objective: *Students will connect classroom learning to industry practice by applying Illustrator skills in authentic work environments and evaluating how professional expectations influence design decisions and career readiness.*

- 9.1) Apply Illustrator skills to authentic workplace tasks such as branding projects, client briefs, or production assignments.
- 9.2) Demonstrate workplace expectations including professionalism, time management, communication, and collaboration.
- 9.3) Analyze how design workflows, client needs, and platform requirements impact project outcomes.
- 9.4) Document work-based learning experiences through reflection, presentation, or portfolio evidence.
- 9.5) Evaluate personal career readiness based on technical skills, employability behaviors, and feedback from authentic experiences.

10. Final Project Assessment

Objective: *Students will synthesize course knowledge and technical skills by planning, producing, presenting, and evaluating a comprehensive Illustrator-based design project that demonstrates creative intent, technical proficiency, and professional-quality execution.*

- 10.1) Plan and develop a final project with defined purpose, audience, design goals, and deliverables.

10.2) Apply advanced Illustrator tools and techniques to create a polished vector-based design solution.

10.3) Integrate design principles, typography, color, and composition into a cohesive final product.

10.4) Present and justify design decisions using appropriate design vocabulary and process evidence.

10.5) Evaluate the final project using criteria related to technical quality, creativity, communication, and professional readiness.

11. Career and Technical Student Organizations

Objective: *Using the [CTSO Resource Document](#), chapter activities will provide some of the best opportunities CTSO members will have to learn by doing. A successful [program of work](#) creates a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. CTSO members learn how to accept responsibility, work as a team, manage a budget, and handle success and failure. Per the CTE Admin Handbook, CTSOs are embedded into curriculum.*

Professional Development

Prepare each member for entry into the workforce and provide a foundation for success in a career. Becoming a professional does not stop with acquiring a skill, but involves an increased awareness of the meaning of good citizenship and the importance of labor and management in the world of work.

Community Service

Promote and improve goodwill and understanding among all segments of the community through services donated by CTSO chapters, and to instill in its members a lifetime commitment to community service.

Business and Industry Connections

Increase awareness of quality job practices and attitudes, and increase the opportunities for employer engagement and eventual employment.

Financial Leadership

Plan and participate in activities to allow all members to carry out the chapter's projects. Educate members on their own personal finance for current and future success.

Public Relations

Make the general public aware of the good work that students in career and technical education are doing to better themselves and their community, state, nation, and world.

Social Activities

To increase cooperation in the school and community through activities that allow CTSO members to get to know each other in something other than a business or classroom setting.

Academic Standards Alignment

Colorado CTE courses are required to integrate academic and essential skills into course content. The following academic standards have been identified as aligned to this course and should be integrated throughout instruction.

[CO CTE Academic Standards Resources](#) (Rubrics, integration strategies, etc)

[CDE Colorado Academic Standards Online](#) (Online standards lookup tool)

Note: Mathematics and Science standards will be added in the future. Visit the [Colorado Academic Standards](#) page for the most current version.

Reading, Writing and Communicating Crosswalk

Course: Adobe Illustrator

Colorado Academic Standards – Reading, Writing and Communicating

Standard	Prepared Graduate Competency	Description	Course Evidence / Alignment
Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening	Prepared Graduate 1 – Collaboration	Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully; pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others; and contribute ideas to further the group's attainment of an objective.	Students collaborate on advanced vector design projects, participate in structured critiques, listen to feedback, and contribute ideas to refine complex design solutions.
Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening	Prepared Graduate 2 – Oral Presentations	Deliver effective oral presentations for varied audiences and varied purposes.	Students present and defend Illustrator-based design concepts, workflows, and final portfolio pieces to peers, instructors, and clients.
Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes	Prepared Graduate 4 – Informational Texts	Read a wide range of informational texts to build knowledge and to better understand the human experience.	Students read and apply advanced informational texts including software documentation,

			professional tutorials, branding guides, and production specifications.
Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes	Prepared Graduate 5 – Language in Context	Understand how language functions in different contexts, command a variety of word-learning strategies to assist comprehension, and make effective choices for meaning or style when writing and speaking.	Students apply precise design and vector-graphics vocabulary and adapt communication appropriately for technical, creative, and client-oriented contexts.
Standard 3: Writing and Composition	Prepared Graduate 7 – Informational Writing	Craft informational/explanatory texts using techniques specific to the genre.	Students write detailed design rationales, process documentation, critiques, and reflections explaining creative and technical Illustrator decisions.
Standard 3: Writing and Composition	Prepared Graduate 9 – Writing Process	Demonstrate mastery of their own writing process with clear, coherent, and error-free polished products.	Students revise and refine written explanations and visual assets to produce polished, professional-quality vector design products.
Standard 4: Research Inquiry and Design	Prepared Graduate 10 – Research and Ethics	Gather information from a variety of sources; analyze and evaluate its quality and relevance; and use it ethically to answer complex questions.	Students research design trends, visual systems, and references; evaluate sources; and apply ethical practices including copyright, licensing, and attribution.

Free Resource Links

6. Career Exploration and Postsecondary Opportunities

- Adobe Certified Professional – Illustrator Exam Guide (Certification, Career Readiness)
<https://certifiedprofessional.adobe.com/illustrator#ExamGuide>
- AIGA Design Careers (Graphic Design Careers, Industry Roles)
<https://www.aiga.org/resources/design-careers>
- O*NET Graphic Designer Profile (Job Outlook, Skills, Work Environment)
<https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/27-1024.00>
- Colorado Community College System Programs (Postsecondary Pathways, Colorado Programs)
<https://cccs.edu/programs/>

7. Portfolio Development

- Adobe Portfolio Guide (Digital Portfolio Development, Presentation)
<https://helpx.adobe.com/portfolio/get-started.html>
- Behance Student Portfolio Examples (Portfolio Curation, Industry Examples)
<https://www.behance.net>
- Canva Design Portfolio Guide (Portfolio Organization, Branding)
<https://www.canva.com/learn/portfolio/>
- Wix Portfolio Creation Guide (Personal Branding, Online Presentation)
<https://www.wix.com/blog/how-to-create-a-portfolio>

8. Leadership

- MindTools Leadership Skills (Leadership Skills, Teamwork)
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_LDR.htm
- Indeed Career Guide – Leadership Skills (Professional Communication, Workplace Skills)
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/leadership-skills>
- Edutopia Collaboration Strategies (Teamwork, Classroom Collaboration)
<https://www.edutopia.org/topic/collaboration>

9. Work-Based Learning

- NAF Work-Based Learning Continuum (Work-Based Learning Models, Career Readiness)
<https://naf.org/work-based-learning/>
- Indeed Career Guide – Soft Skills (Professionalism, Workplace Behavior)
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/soft-skills>
- Trello Project Management Guide (Workflow, Client Projects, Organization)
<https://trello.com/guide>
- Adobe Creative Cloud Tutorials (Applied Skills, Real-World Projects)
<https://helpx.adobe.com/illustrator/tutorials.html>

10. Final Project Assessment

- Adobe Creative Projects (Project-Based Learning, Design Process)
<https://creativecloud.adobe.com/learn>
- Google Design Sprint Kit (Project Planning, Design Thinking)
<https://designsprintkit.withgoogle.com/>
- Canva Design Principles Guide (Evaluation, Visual Communication)
<https://www.canva.com/learn/design-elements-principles/>
- Rubistar Rubric Maker (Assessment, Project Evaluation)
<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>



Technology Student Association – National Competitive Events

Promotional Design

Objective: Students will design, produce, document, and present promotional materials that meet TSA Promotional Design requirements for branding, visual communication, production quality, and portfolio documentation.

- Research the annual TSA Promotional Design theme, target audience, required products, and branding expectations.
- Develop a consistent visual identity using appropriate typography, layout, color, imagery, and design principles.
- Create required promotional items that communicate a clear theme, message, and purpose.
- Use vector design tools to create scalable graphics, icons, layouts, typography, and production-ready artwork.
- Document the design process through sketches, drafts, production notes, references, and required portfolio materials.
- Prepare final promotional products for submission or display according to TSA event procedures.
- Evaluate the final entry using TSA criteria for creativity, consistency, production quality, communication, and theme alignment.

Resources

- Technology Student Association – Promotional Design competition guidelines
<https://tsaweb.org/competitions-programs/tsa/themes-problems>
- Adobe Illustrator – Vector design and production graphics
<https://www.adobe.com/products/illustrator.html>
- Adobe Express – Promotional graphics and design tools
<https://www.adobe.com/express/>
- Canva – Branding, layouts, and promotional design templates
<https://www.canva.com/>



Technology Student Association – National Competitive Events

Board Game Design

Objective: Students will design, prototype, document, and present an original board game that meets TSA Board Game Design requirements for theme, gameplay, visual design, rules, prototype quality, and presentation.

- Research the annual TSA Board Game Design theme and develop an original game concept.
- Design the game board, cards, tokens, packaging, instructions, and visual assets using consistent graphic design principles.
- Develop game rules, objectives, player actions, scoring, and win conditions that support clear gameplay.
- Create a playable prototype that demonstrates the game concept, components, and theme connection.
- Test the game with users and revise the design based on clarity, balance, usability, and player feedback.
- Prepare documentation explaining the game concept, design process, materials, rules, testing, and revisions.
- Present the board game to judges and explain the visual design, gameplay decisions, and response to the annual theme.

Resources

- Technology Student Association – Board Game Design competition guidelines
<https://tsaweb.org/competitions-programs/tsa/themes-problems>
- Adobe Illustrator – Vector artwork, layout, and game component design
<https://www.adobe.com/products/illustrator.html>
- BoardGameGeek – Board game design examples and references
<https://boardgamegeek.com/>
- The Game Crafter – Board game prototyping resources
<https://www.thegamecrafter.com/>