

How Can I Draw Shapes, Lines, or Freehand Sketches In A Microsoft Word Document

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Microsoft Word offers three distinct drawing methods: inserting preset shapes and lines, drawing freeform paths and scribbles, and using the dedicated Draw tab for pen/pencil-style freehand sketching. Here is how to use each one.

Method 1: Insert Preset Shapes and Lines

This is the most precise and reliable method for adding rectangles, circles, arrows, lines, and other geometric shapes to your document.

1. Open your Word document and click where you want the shape to appear.
2. Go to the Insert tab on the ribbon.
3. Click Shapes in the Illustrations group.
4. Browse the gallery and select the shape you want - lines, arrows, rectangles, ovals, callouts, and more are all available.
5. Your cursor will change to a crosshair. Click and drag on the page to draw the shape.
6. Release the mouse to finish. The shape can then be moved by dragging it and resized by dragging its corner or edge handles.

Quote: Tip: Hold Shift while dragging to create a perfect square or circle. Hold Alt to draw from the center outward.

Formatting Your Shape

Once a shape is selected, the Shape Format tab appears in the ribbon. From here you can:

- Change the fill color using Shape Fill
- Adjust the border color and thickness using Shape Outline
- Add shadows, glow, or 3D effects using Shape Effects
- Add text inside the shape by right-clicking it and choosing Add Text

Method 2: Draw Freeform Shapes or Scribble Lines

Word includes two freeform drawing tools under the Shapes menu - Freeform: Shape and Freeform: Scribble. Both are found in the Lines section of the Shapes dropdown.

Freeform: Shape (for clean, connected lines)

1. Go to Insert > Shapes and select Freeform: Shape from the Lines section.
2. Click on your starting point in the document.
3. Release the mouse, move to the next point, and click again. Word will draw a straight line between each click.

4. To finish, either double-click to leave the shape open, or return the cursor to your starting point to close and fill it.

Quote: Note: The Freeform: Shape tool draws perfectly straight lines between clicked points, which is ideal if your hands are unsteady.

Freeform: Scribble (for true freehand drawing)

1. Go to Insert > Shapes and select Freeform: Scribble (the wavy line icon) from the Lines section.
2. Click and hold the mouse button, then drag to draw. Word will follow your exact cursor movement.
3. Release the mouse button to stop drawing. The drawing is complete at that point.
4. If you bring the cursor back to the starting point before releasing, Word will close and fill the shape automatically.

Editing Points After Drawing

After drawing a freeform shape or scribble, you can fine-tune it:

1. Right-click the shape and select Edit Points .
2. Black dots will appear along the path - these are the editable vertices.
3. Drag any dot to reshape the path.
4. Hold Ctrl + click on the outline to add a new point. Hold Ctrl + click on an existing point to delete it.
5. Press Esc to exit Edit Points mode.

Method 3: Use the Draw Tab (Pen, Pencil, and Highlighter Tools)

The Draw tab gives you access to natural inking tools - multiple pen types, a pencil, a highlighter, and an eraser. This is the best method for freehand sketching, annotation, and stylus or touchscreen drawing.

Step 1: Enable the Draw Tab (if it is not visible)

The Draw tab is automatically visible on touch-enabled devices. On non-touch desktops, you may need to enable it manually:

1. Go to File > Options > Customize Ribbon .
2. In the right-hand column under Main Tabs , find Draw and check its box.
3. Click OK . The Draw tab will now appear in the ribbon.

Quote: Note: The Draw tab is only available in Word 2016 and later, and in Microsoft 365. It is not available in Word 2013 or older.

Step 2: Choose a Drawing Tool

1. Click the Draw tab.
2. Select a tool: Pen , Pencil , or Highlighter .
3. Click the small arrow at the bottom-right of the tool icon to open its settings. From here you can choose the color and line thickness (or select a custom HEX or RGB color).

Step 3: Draw on the Document

1. With a tool selected, click and drag anywhere on the document to draw. On a touchscreen or with a stylus, draw directly on the screen.
2. Use the Eraser tool (also on the Draw tab) to remove mistakes. Word offers both a stroke eraser (removes entire strokes) and a point eraser (removes partial strokes).

3. To select and move a freehand drawing, use the Lasso Select tool on the Draw tab - draw a loop around your drawing, then drag it to reposition it.

Bonus: Ink to Shape and Ink to Text

In Microsoft 365 and recent versions of Word, the Draw tab includes two powerful conversion features:

- Ink to Shape: Draw a rough shape freehand, then go to Draw > Convert > Ink to Shape . Word detects and converts your sketch into a clean geometric shape.
- Ink to Text: Handwrite text using a stylus, select it, and use Draw > Convert > Ink to Text to convert handwriting into typed characters.
- Ink to Math: Handwrite a mathematical equation and convert it to a properly formatted formula using Draw > Convert > Ink to Math .

Using a Drawing Canvas (Optional)

A Drawing Canvas creates a dedicated drawing area within your document that groups all shapes and strokes together, making it easier to move or resize the entire drawing as one unit. This is especially useful when working with multiple connected shapes such as flowcharts or diagrams.

1. Go to Insert > Shapes .
2. At the bottom of the dropdown, click New Drawing Canvas .
3. A bordered frame will appear in your document. Draw all your shapes and lines inside this canvas.
4. To resize the canvas, drag its edges. To move it, drag from the border edge.

Quick Reference: Which Method to Use

- Precise geometric shapes (rectangles, circles, arrows): Insert > Shapes
- Custom polygon or connected line drawing : Insert > Shapes > Freeform: Shape
- Natural freehand sketching with a mouse : Insert > Shapes > Freeform: Scribble
- Pen/pencil drawing, stylus input, touchscreen : Draw tab > Pen or Pencil
- Multiple drawings to organize together : Insert > Shapes > New Drawing Canvas