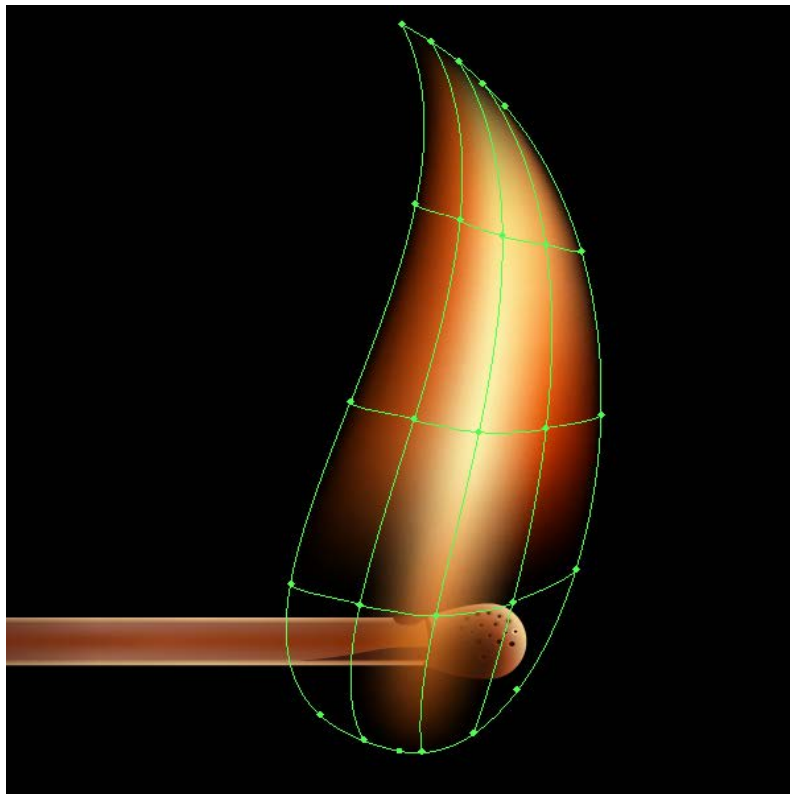


Adobe Illustrator: *Gradient Mesh Tool*

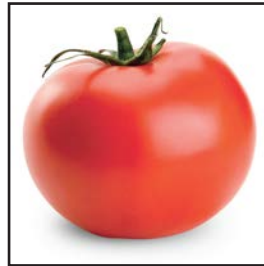
By Holly Lucent



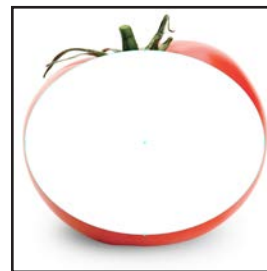
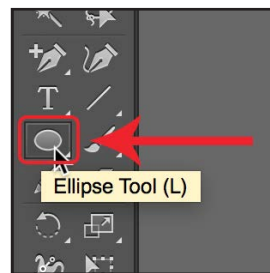
The Gradient Mesh Tool is a useful tool provided by Adobe Illustrator that allows the user to create photo-realistic gradients. When first starting out, it is best to attempt to mimic a real photo until you are comfortable with how the tool works. We will be recreating the fruity part of a tomato. I have pre-selected some colours from the tomato with the Eyedropper Tool.

When beginning any new project, you will always create a new document with the desired colour mode, size, and orientation.

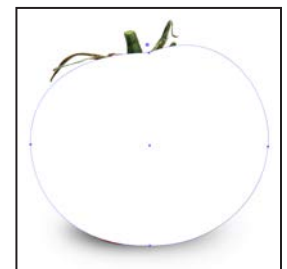
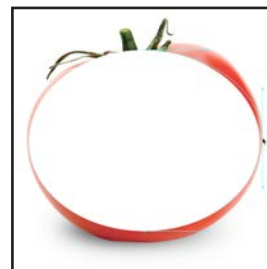
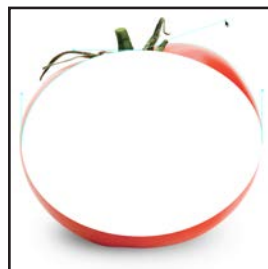
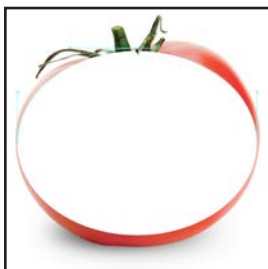
1. Place your desired image onto the artboard by going to File > Place. Then navigate to the location of your file, choose the file, click Place, then click on the artboard.



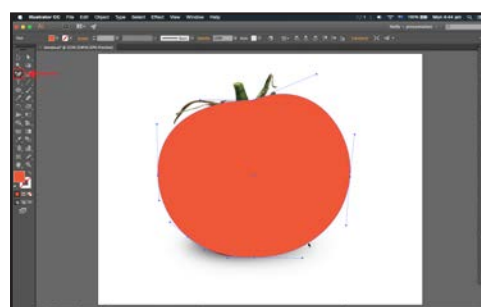
2. Arrange the image as desired on the artboard.
3. Create an ellipse using the Ellipse Tool. Hold the Alt key while dragging to keep the cursor in the center of the new ellipse.



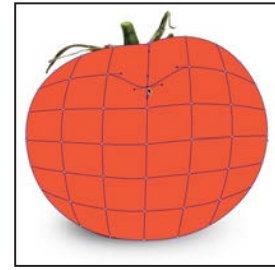
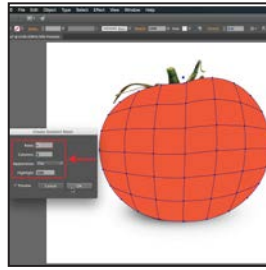
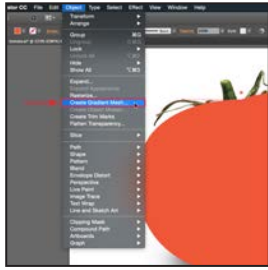
4. Now, using the Direct Selection Tool, grab a point on the ellipse and begin aligning it to the corresponding edge of the tomato (remember, tomato is used in lieu of the image you choose). After aligning the edge, hold the Alt key and left-click an arm of the corresponding point and attempt to align the ellipse's edge with the edge of the tomato. Continue for the remaining points.



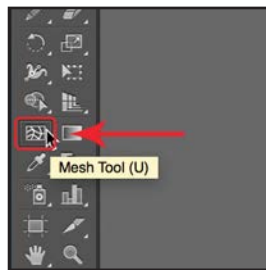
5. Once you have a full tomato, as shown above, use the Add Anchor Point Tool to add anchor points to key areas around the shape. This will help guide the mesh lines later.



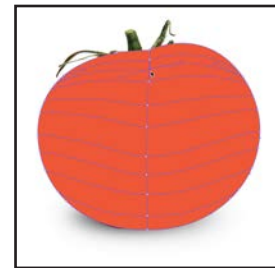
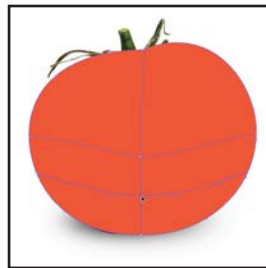
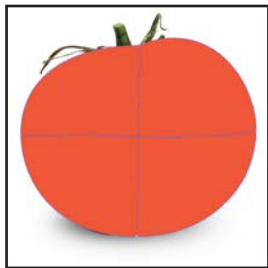
6. Finally, we will begin our mesh! There are 2 ways to do this:
 - a. The easy method is by going to Object > Create Gradient Mesh..., then enter the number of columns and rows, where you want the highlight (or flat for no highlight), and the intensity of the highlight. This method does not allow as fine control over the placement unless you adjust each point individually, as shown.



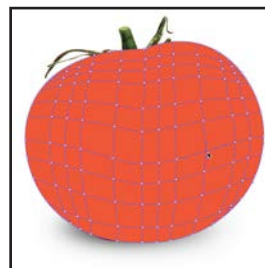
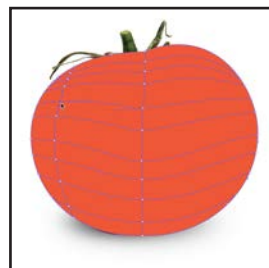
- b. For this project, we will be using the Mesh Tool (U) itself.



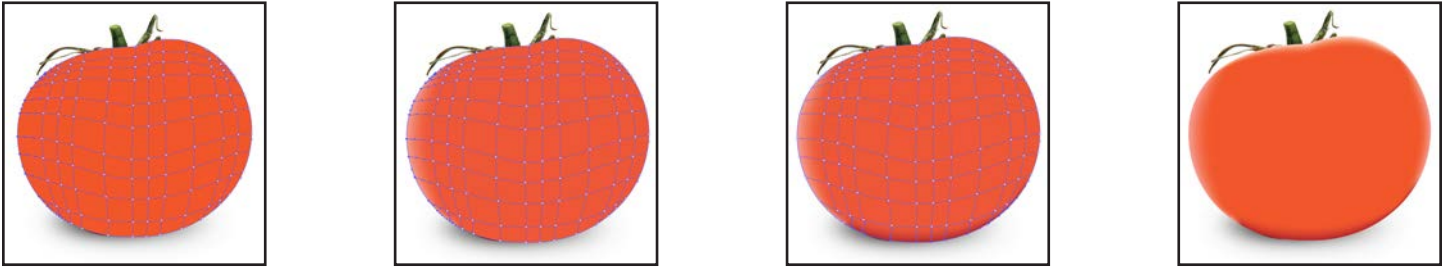
7. We will begin by creating a single mesh in roughly the center of the tomato. After we create the first or second meshes, we will use the Direct Selection Tool to align and curve the meshes with the curvature of the tomato. Continue to create horizontal meshes until you get near the top. Try to ensure that you are creating them around important points on the tomato, this includes highlights, lowlights, or variances in the surface. Adjust each mesh as necessary with the Direct Selection Tool.



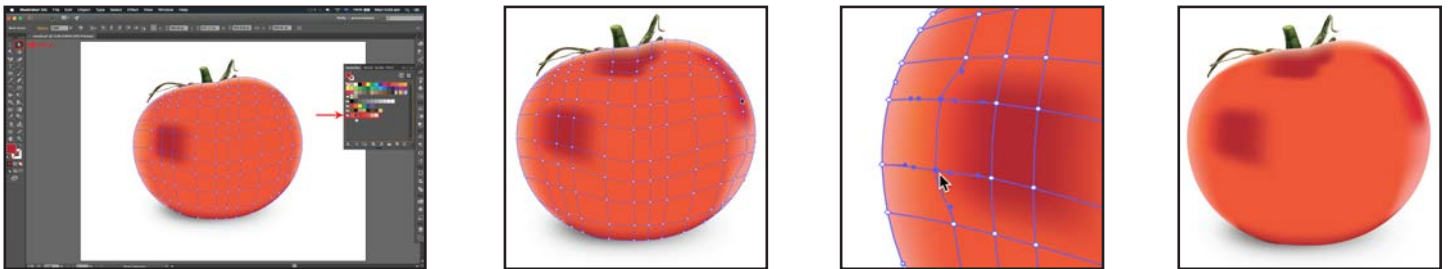
8. Now begin creating vertical meshes until you reach the other side. Cluster more meshes around important areas on the tomato as with the vertical meshes previously. You may add more later as needed.



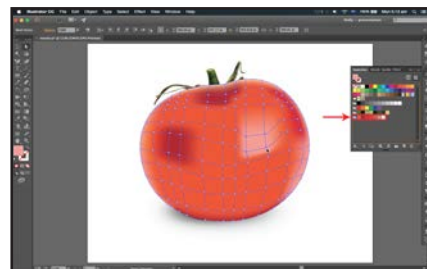
9. Let's shade the outer edge of our tomato since the edge of anything is never a solid colour. To do this, select the colour points of one edge of the tomato with the Direct Selection Tool. Hold Shift while Left-Clicking to select multiple points. Once selected, change their colour using the swatches you saved or by creating a new colour. Repeat until outer edge is completely shaded.



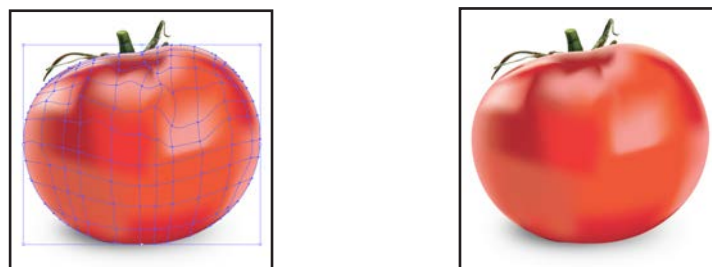
10. The next step is adding the lowlights. Select a group of colour points within the mesh that correspond to a lowlight on the image you are simulating. Then select the colour you would like the lowlight to be. Adjust the points and surrounding points accordingly to achieve your desired affect. You may also adjust the arms of each point to fine tune the colour spread.



11. Now that you have finished the lowlights, complete the highlights in the same manner.



12. Continue to fine tune the shading and gradients on the tomato until you are satisfied with the results. Vary the colours to make it look more natural.



13. We are now finished. I've completed the stem and shadow already. Now you can see the final product.

