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#### TIME NEEDED

2.5 hours

#### INFO



Derek Lea is an award-winning illustrator and acclaimed author. His body of work is very diverse, but he tries to incorporate tentacles into his illustrations whenever he can. View more of his work at [www.dereklea.com](http://www.dereklea.com).

## → ILLUSTRATOR

# TRANSPARENCY TRICKS

Derek Lea explains how to add transparency to your objects and vary their Blending Modes within *Illustrator* to achieve rich, multi-layered, vector-based art that surpasses simple sections of solid, flat colour

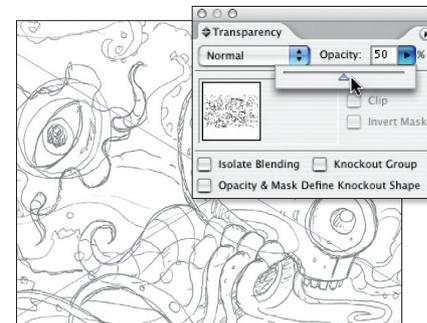
→ Blending Modes and layer transparency are features most commonly associated with *Photoshop* and its Layers palette; it's the mission control centre when it comes to blending layers in *Photoshop*. You can achieve the same result in *Illustrator*, but rather than blending pixels, you're blending shapes. And here, rather than controlling it all from one palette, you must learn to use three different palettes together.

The Appearance palette, the Transparency palette, and the Layers palette all work together when it comes to blending shapes, groups, and layers within *Illustrator*. With the Layers palette

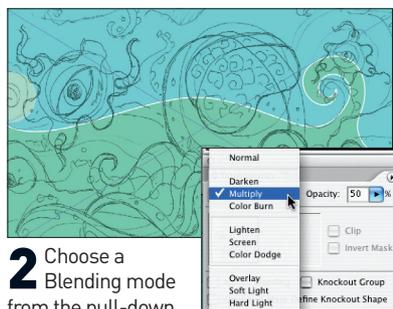
you can specify your target – it can be a single object, a group of objects, or an entire layer. The Transparency palette is the place where you can alter the Blending Mode and opacity of your object. The Appearance palette enables you to target the stroke or fill of a shape independently, altering either the stroke or fill while leaving the other untouched.

Once you get into the routine of using the three palettes, the flexibility of using them becomes quite evident. And it won't be long until it feels intuitive.

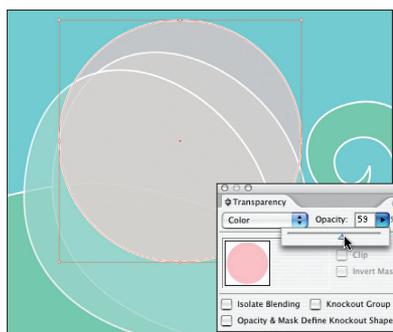
Tutorial by Derek Lea  
[www.dereklea.com](http://www.dereklea.com)



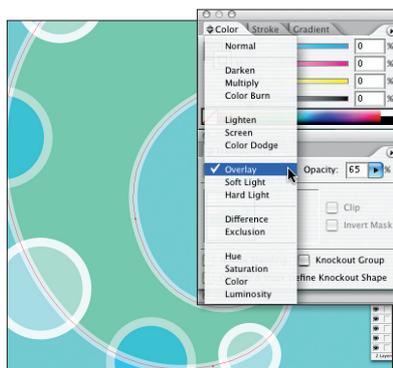
**1** Changing the transparency of an object, or even placed artwork, is as simple as selecting the object on the artboard or targeting it in the Layers palette. Next, drag the slider in the Transparency palette to adjust the opacity of the selected object.



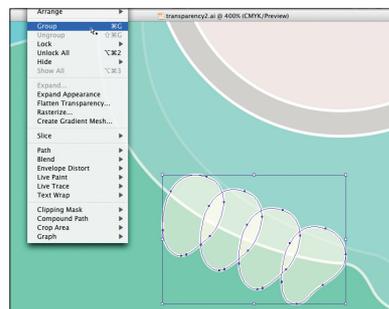
**2** Choose a Blending mode from the pull-down menu to change the way the object blends with underlying art. Here, the mode of the placed sketch has been changed to Multiply. This way it is possible to see what is underneath and disable the sketch visibility when you're not using it as a template.



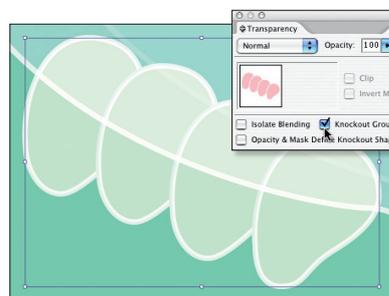
**3** Try creating a shape with a stroke applied to it. Select the shape and then, in the Appearance palette, click on Fill. With Fill targeted in the Appearance palette, alter the Blending mode and reduce the opacity of the object in the Transparency palette. Note that the object's stroke is unaffected.



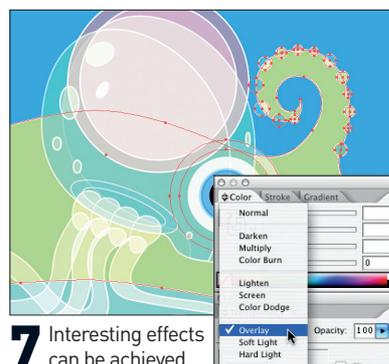
**4** Next, try selecting an object and then targeting Stroke in the Appearance palette. With Stroke targeted in the Appearance palette, change the Blending Mode and reduce the opacity in the Transparency palette to alter the stroke without affecting the object's fill.



**5** After drawing a series of base shapes for the tentacles, alter the strokes and fills of the objects individually. At the moment, each shape reveals not only the underlying shape, but the neighbouring tentacle bases as well. To remedy this, select all of the shapes and then group them.



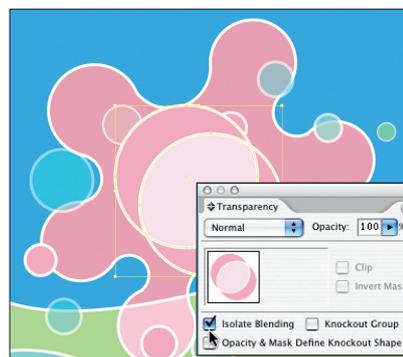
**6** With the group selected, enable the Knockout Group option in the Transparency palette. Enabling this nifty feature causes the Blending Modes and opacity of the objects in the group to affect the relationship between the group and the background, but the objects won't affect each other within the group.



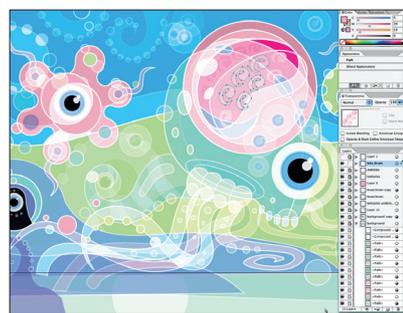
**7** Interesting effects can be achieved by stacking altered duplicate layers and objects. Here, the background layer has been duplicated by dragging it on to the Create New Layer button in the Layers palette. Click on the layer's target icon to target the layer and change the mode to Colour Burn in the Transparency palette.



**8** Try creating a shape with a simple Blending Mode of Normal, with no transparency alterations applied to it. Now Alt/Option-drag the shape to duplicate it. Change the Blending Mode of the duplicated shape to Screen.



**9** Select both shapes and group them. Activate the Isolate blending option in the Transparency palette. This feature causes the Blending Mode applied to the duplicate circle to be isolated to the other members of the group, so the effect is only visible where it overlaps the other circle.



**10** Note that the transparency and Blending Mode of the group can be altered, too. Use all of the techniques explained here to create and duplicate objects and groups, altering them in whole or in part, to create a stunning illustration of your own, or like the one shown here. **arts**

## DUPLICATING APPEARANCE ITEMS

One interesting feature of the Appearance palette is the Duplicate Selected Item button. It bears the same page icon as the Create New Layer button and, when clicked, will duplicate either your stroke or fill, depending upon which item is selected within the Appearance palette. You can alter the Blending Mode and opacity of a duplicated item in the same way you would edit the original stroke or fill. This takes blending to yet another level, enabling you to achieve interesting results via stacked strokes and fills, before you even consider going outside of the Appearance palette.

## NEW OBJECTS

At the bottom left of the Appearance palette you'll notice a button that has three overlapping circles on it. When all three circles are solid, this means that all new objects will maintain the appearance of the current art in the Appearance palette, using multiple strokes and fills if applicable. When you click the button, only one circle on the button becomes solid. When the button is clicked, this means that all new objects will be created with a basic appearance of only a single stroke and fill.