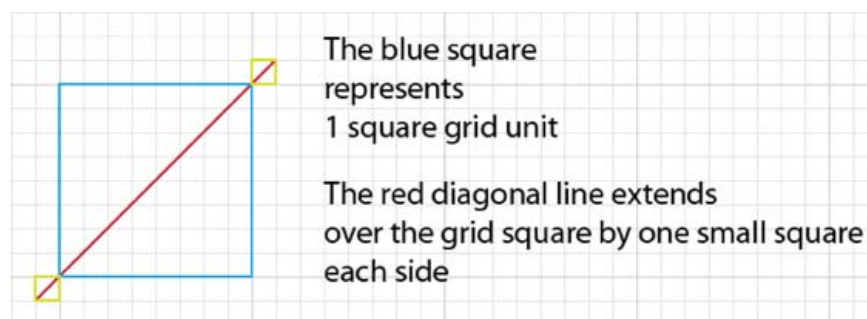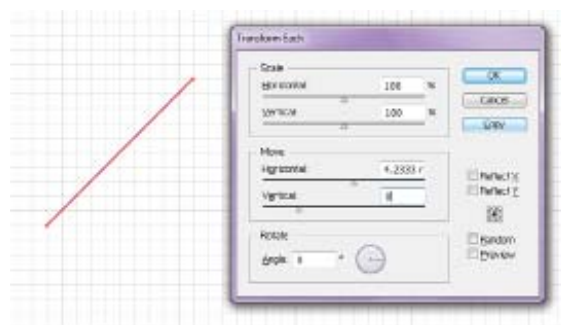# Making Swatches in Illustrator

Diagonal Lines

This technique lets you create a diagonal striped fill that is perfect for irregular shapes.

1. Start by turning on Smart Guides and Snap to Grid (Ctrl-# or View>Snap to Grid)

2. Select the Line tool. Select the stroke width and colour you want for the line.

3. Draw a diagonal line one square longer than a square grid unit:

The blue square represents 1 square grid unit

The red diagonal line extends over the grid square by one small square each side
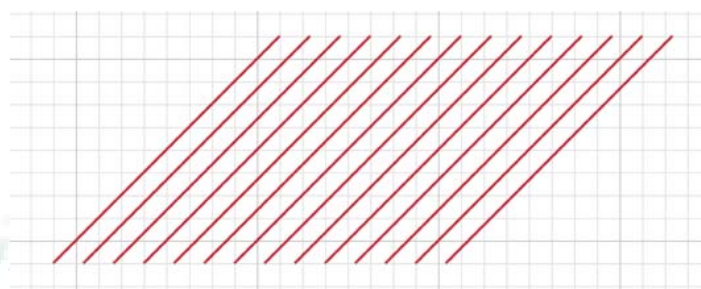
4. Select the line and duplicate using the Transform Each function (Transform>Each or Alt-Ctrl-Shift-D) it so that it completely covers the adjacent grid square.
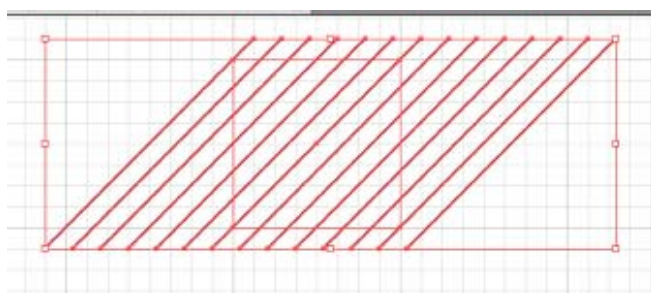

Use the values in the dialogue box above for now, you can always experiment later. Make sure you click Copy. This creates one copy of the line. Use Ctrl-D to continue to duplicate the line until the square is covered. (see below).

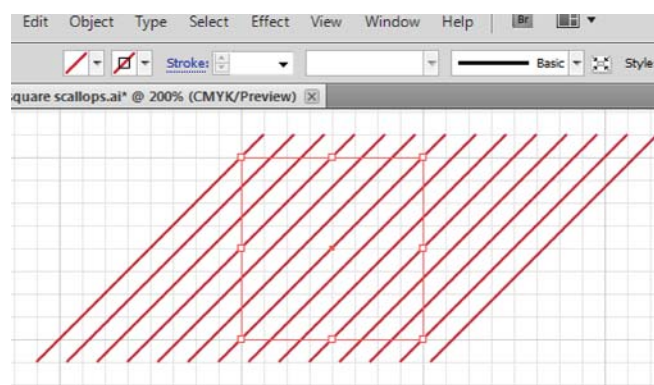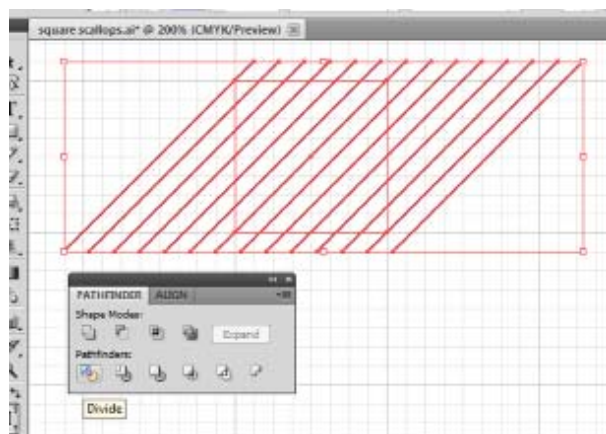5. Select all the lines and go to Object>Path>Outline Stroke.

6. Select the Rectangle shape tool and draw a no-fill, no-stroke square over a major grid square.
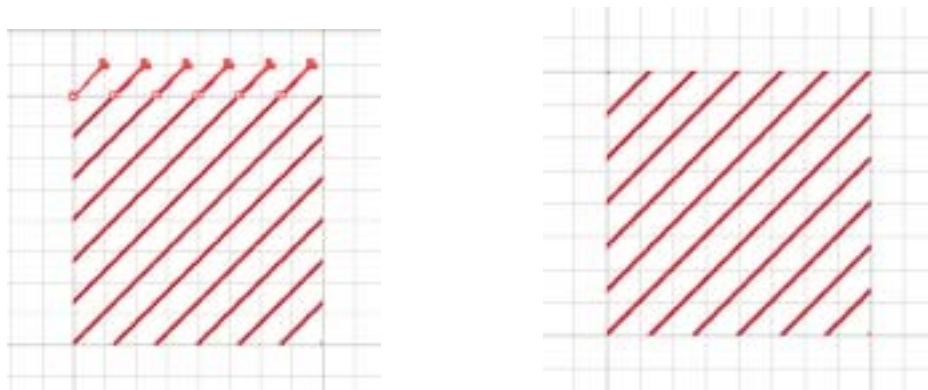

7. Select All:

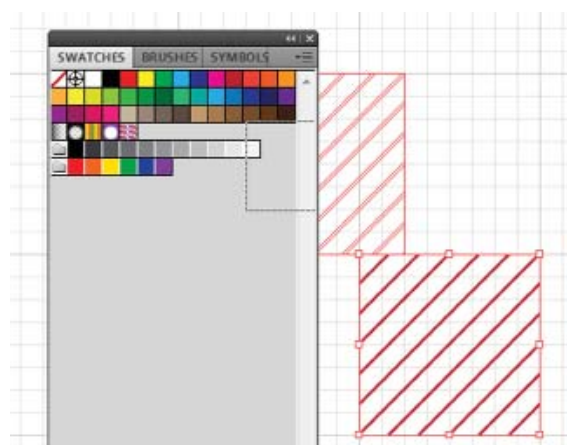8. Click on 'Divide' from the Pathfinder palette:

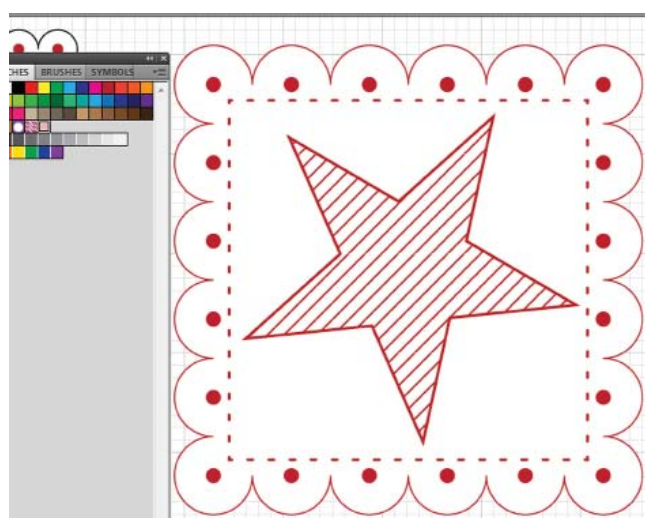9. Ungroup the elements (Object>Ungroup).

10. Use the Direct Selection tool (A) to select the bits of line that extend beyond the square grid and delete them until you are left with a square of diagonal lines:

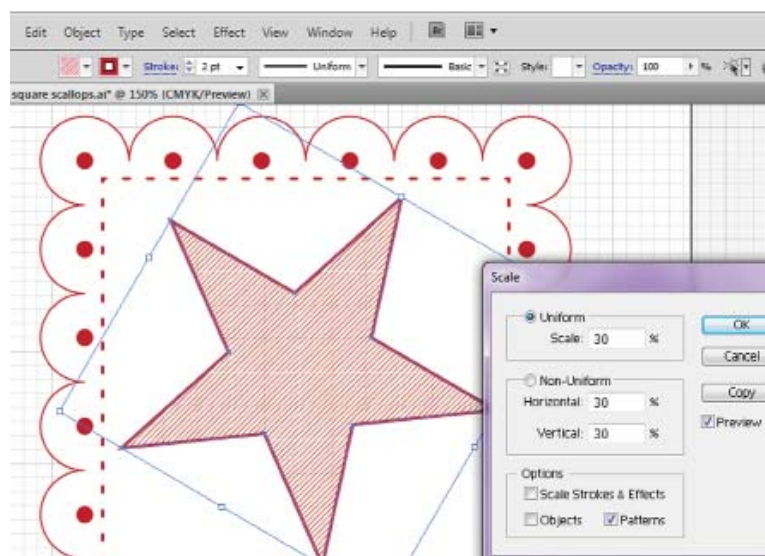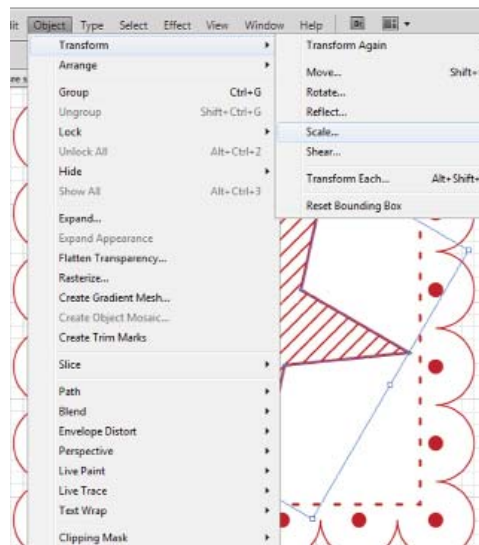11. Select All then drag and drop into the Swatch Palette:

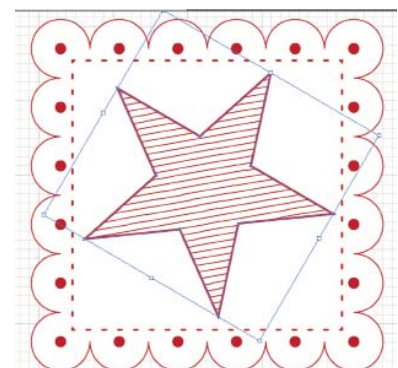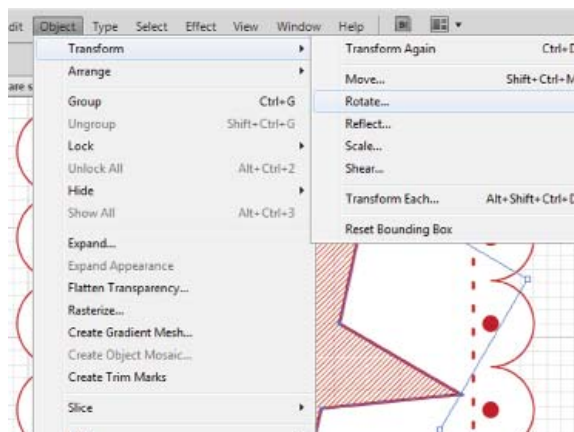Now you can apply the swatch to any shape you like:

You can change the scaling of the stripes by going to Object>Transform>Scale. Make sure that 'Object' is not selected (unless you want the pattern AND the object scaled) and enter the percentage change you want:

You can also rotate the pattern inside your object. Go to Object>Transform>Rotate:
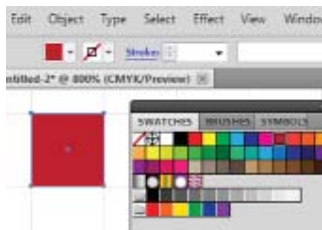
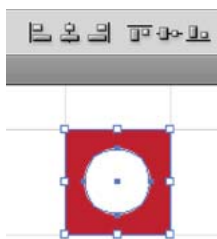And you can rotate and scale any swatch pattern you want!

Spotty Swatches

1. Fill a small perfect square (hold down shift while using the Rectangle tool) with a colour but no stroke:
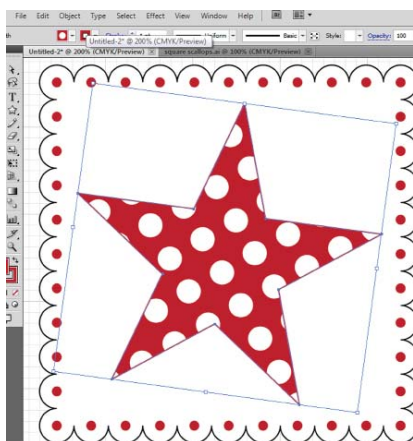

2. Create a filled (no stroke) circle using the Ellipse tool (hold down Shift to ensure it is a perfect circle):

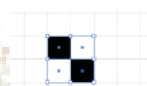3. Centre the circle inside the square (use the centre vertically and horizontally tools (see below):

4. Drag and drop the swatch onto the Swatch palette.

Now fill your shapes with your spotty swatches:

Chequered Swatches

1. Fill a square with one colour, no stroke. Create another filled square alongside making sure they align perfectly with no gap. Copy the two squares then go to Object>Transform>Reflect>Vertical. Align these squares under the original two, again using the align tools to make sure there is no gap and they are straight.
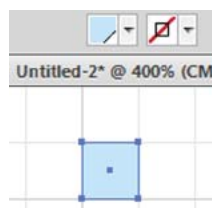
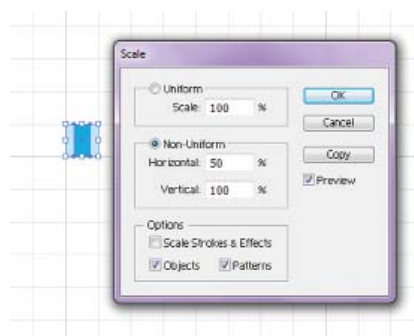2. Drag and drop onto the Swatch palette. and apply:

Gingham Swatches

1. Create a filled square, (no stroke or same colour stroke) with a pale colour.

2. Copy the filled square and Paste in Front (Edit>Copy; Edit>Paste in Front or Ctrl-F). While it is selected, change the colour of the fill for a darker shade.

3. Go to Object>Transform>Scale and change the horizontal scaling to give a thin darker band down the middle of the original square:

4. While the darker band is still selected, drop the opacity (see 'Opacity' along the top of the menu bar) down to 20%.
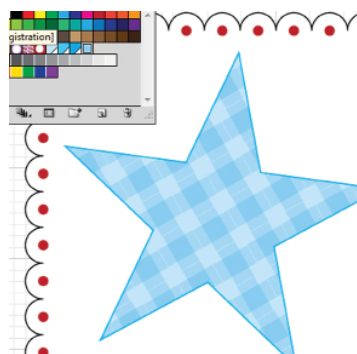
5. Copy and paste this darker band and paste in front (Ctrl-F) and then go to Object>Rotate:

Enter 90 degrees in the Angle field and you'll get a cross of two thin darker bands on top of the original lighter filled square.

6. Select All and drag and drop onto the swatches palette: and use when you want.

There you go. Nice and easy. Over to you to make your own and have some fun!