Making Squirls using the Width Tool in Illustrator

I'm getting to grips with the new tools in CS5 and was pleased to find the Width Tool an easy and useful new entry. I've used it to make a bunch of squirls - squares that taper to a curl at the end. Technically I'm using rectangles with curly bits at the end but rectangles don't lend themselves to cute words like squirls. As Ronnie Wood would say 'Artistic licence'.

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1	Draw a line - use the pen, pencil or the Line Tool - whatever you like to work with, using a stroke value wide enough to show the tapering for a squirl. Just make the shape one continuous length, ie, so that whatever values you enter for stroke, colour, etc, apply to the whole element.
2	Select the shape using the Dircct Selection Tool. This will show you where the end of the straight bit of your shape is and, therefore, where the curl will start from.

Anchor point that 'marks' the end of the rectangle, ie the end of the straight bit before the curve

3 | Select the Width Tool

Width Tool (Shift+W)
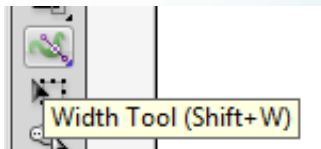
Double-click just behind the anchor point, ie, at the end of the straight bit, to insert a new width point. It brings up a dialogue with the width values of the shape and how much of the width is distributed either side of its x-axis (like a line drawn horizontally along the length with how wide it is either side of that line).

If you don't enter a new width point, Illustrator will try to smooth the whole length into a curled end and so the whole shape will taper. This is fine if you want that effect - there are no rights or wrongs, but if you want to keep a level top you will need to insert the point.
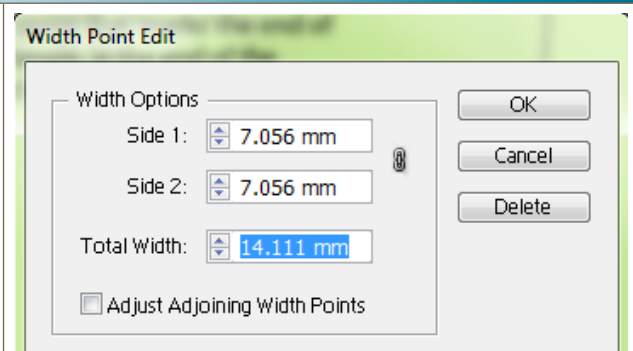
There are two default Width points - one at the start and one at the end of your shape. Illustrator will smooth between points so by inserting a new width point it will smooth from the end to just the next width point along the length.
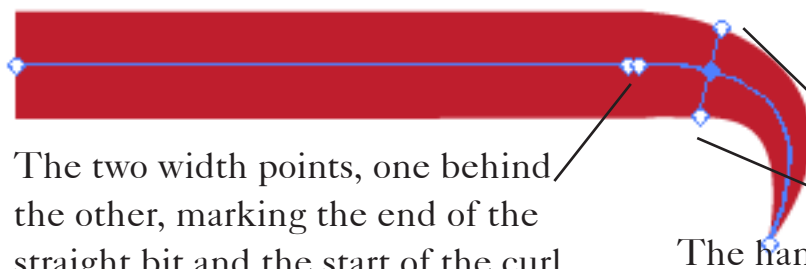
The two width points, one behind the other, marking the end of the straight bit and the start of the curl

The handles on the width point

4 | That's about it! To get your shape as smooth as you want you might still need to tweak using the Bezier Curves or by editing the width values. The width either side of the centre line (sides 1 and 2) do not have to be equal so you can experiment to see what effects you get.

Width Point Edit

Width Options

Side 1: 7.056 mm

Side 2: 7.056 mm

Total Width: 14.111 mm

☐ Adjust Adjoining Width Points

OK

Cancel

Delete

5	You can also double click on the width points (or insert new ones) and enter new values or simply click on the points to fatten or shrink as you wish. Basically, experiment and have fun!
	Here are a bunch I made just playing around and adjusting the values manually or inserting more points etc.

make SQUIRLY things with the width tool in ILLUSTRATOR cs5