Introduction to Adobe Illustrator

When accurate drawings are needed, a vector-based program, such as Adobe Illustrator, is used. Vector-based programs store the shapes that make up an image mathematically, which increases their accuracy and also usually significantly reduces the file size compared to screen-based (or bitmap) programs.
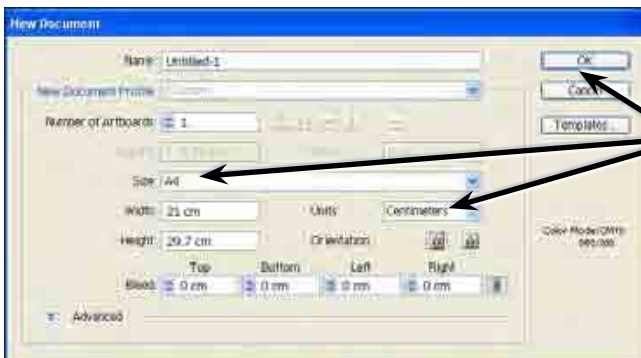
The Adobe Illustrator Screen

1   Load Adobe Illustrator CS4 and you will receive the WELCOME SCREEN.

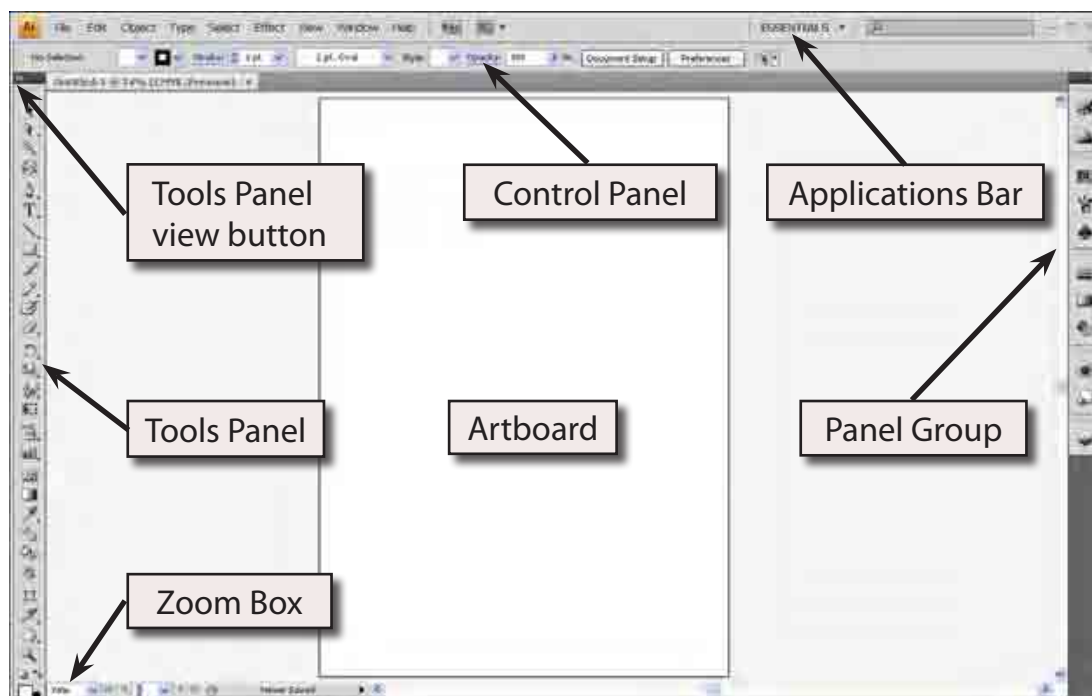2 In the CREATE NEW section click on PRINT DOCUMENT to start a new document.

3   The PRINT DOCUMENT option will ask you for the settings of your printer.

4 Set the SIZE to A4 (or the paper size your printer uses), the UNITS to CENTIMETRES and select OK.
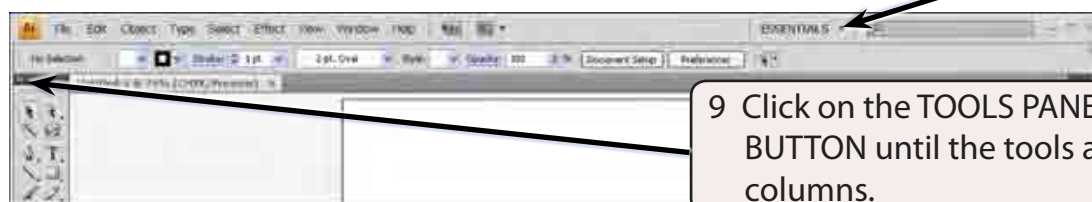
NOTE: There are a range of different document types which you select for the types of document you are creating. In this activities PRINT DOCUMENT will be predominately used for simplicity, but when you are doing Assignments or projects, select the document type that suits your needs.

5   The Adobe Illustrator screen should load and its sections have been labelled in the diagram at the top of the next page.

6 Refer to the labelled sections of the diagram until you become fully familiar with the different screen sections.

7 Numerous screen arrangements are available.

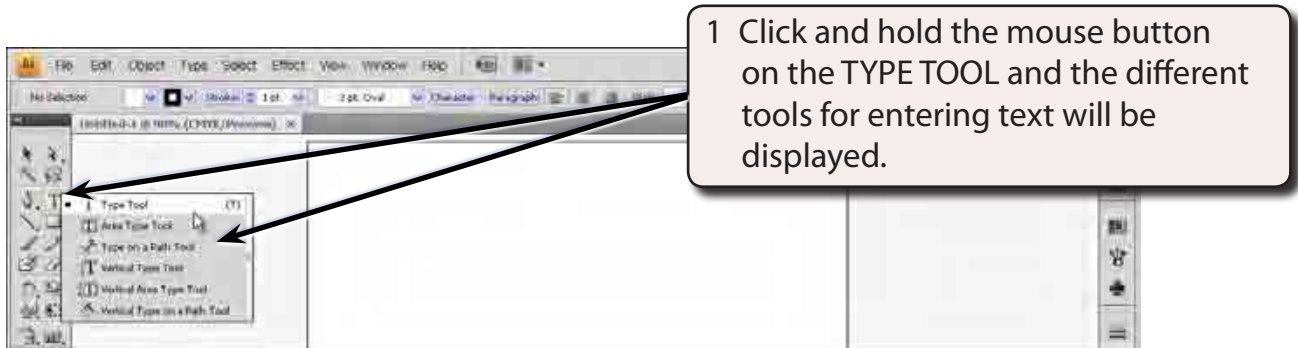8 Check that the WORKSPACES box in the APPLICATIONS BAR is set to ESSENTIALS.

9 Click on the TOOLS PANEL VIEW BUTTON until the tools are in two columns.

10 You can click on the ZOOM BOX arrow at the bottom left of the screen and select FIT ON SCREEN so that the screen view is adjusted to show the whole page.

NOTE: The ARTBOARD is the print area and it has a solid border so that you can see where it is. Anything drawn in the WORKSPACE outside the ARTBOARD is not printed.

The Tools Panel

The TOOLS panel at the left of the screen contains all the tools that Illustrator provides. Notice that some tools have a small arrow at their base. This indicates that more tools are available within that tool.
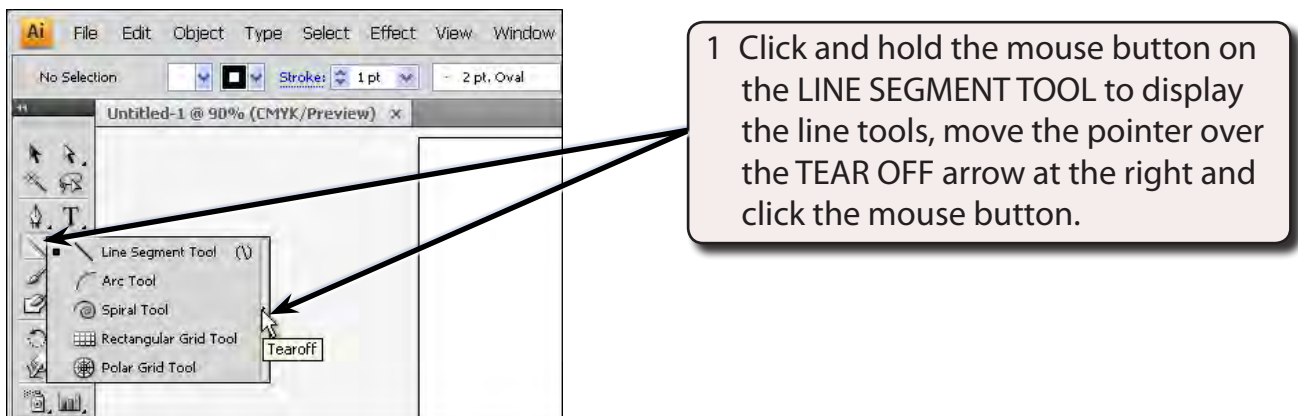

1 Click and hold the mouse button on the TYPE TOOL and the different tools for entering text will be displayed.

2   Try looking at the tools within some of the other tools in the TOOLS panel.

Drawing Lines

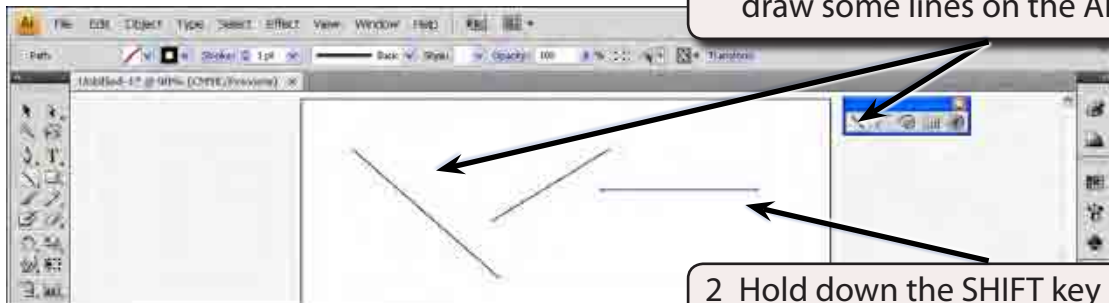Adobe Illustrator provides numerous line drawing tools.

A   Tearing off a Panel

You can tear-off a panel so that all the tools within a particular tool can be displayed on the screen

1 Click and hold the mouse button on the LINE SEGMENT TOOL to display the line tools, move the pointer over the TEAR OFF arrow at the right and click the mouse button.

2 Drag the torn off panel to the top
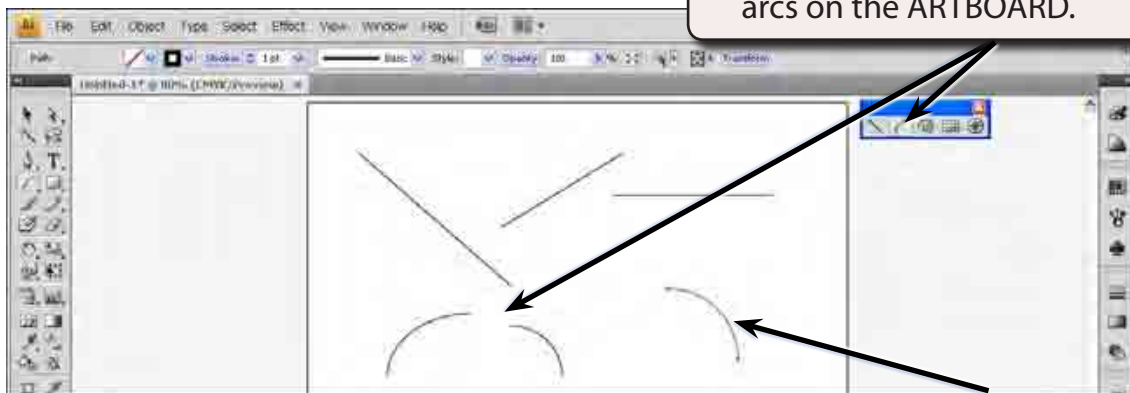   right of the ARTBOARD.

B   Drawing Different Line Types

1 Select the LINE SEGMENT TOOL and
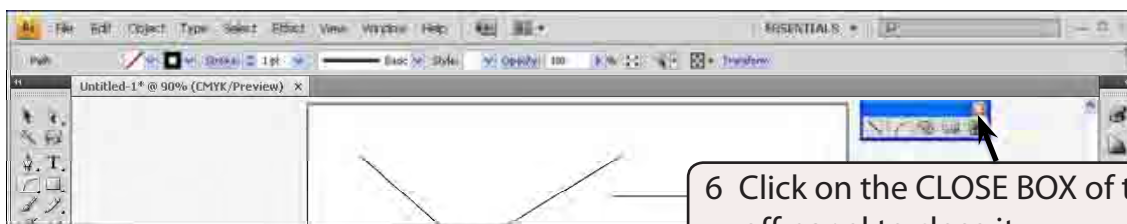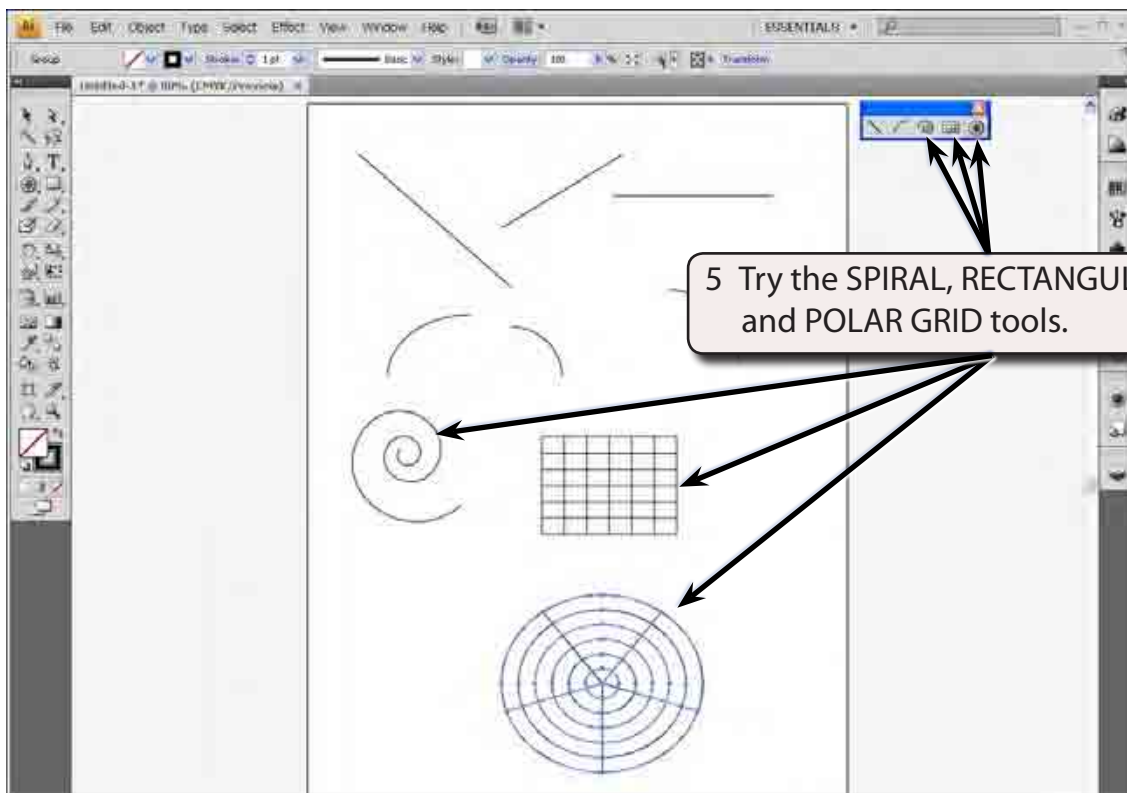   draw some lines on the ARTBOARD.

2 Hold down the SHIFT key and draw
   some more lines.

**NOTE: With the SHIFT key depressed, only horizontal, vertical or 45° lines
          can be drawn.**

3 Select the ARC TOOL and draw some
   arcs on the ARTBOARD.

4 Hold down the SHIFT key and draw
   some arcs - they should be circular.

5 Try the SPIRAL, RECTANGULAR GRID and POLAR GRID tools.

6 Click on the CLOSE BOX of the torn off panel to close it.

7 Press CTRL+A or COMMAND+A to select all the shapes (or select ALL from the SELECT menu).

8 Press the DELETE or BACKSPACE key to remove the shapes from the ARTBOARD.