



Illustrator Tutorial: Sand Text Effect

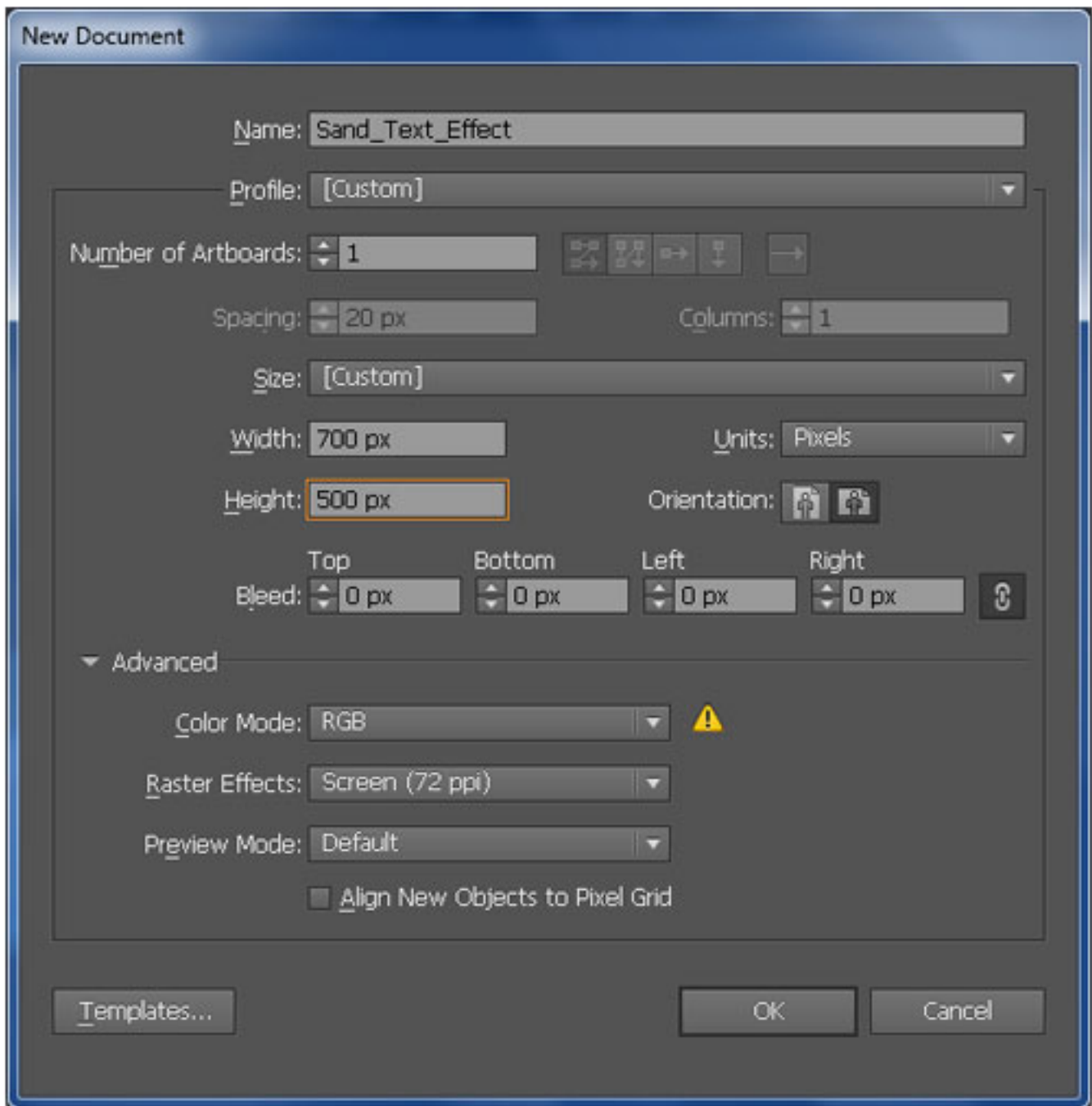
By [Bao Nguyen](#)



In the following steps, you will learn how to create a sand text effect using Adobe Illustrator. For beginners, you will learn how to create a nicely textured background. Using basic tools and effects along with vector shape building techniques, you will learn how to create the main shape. As we go along, you will also learn how to add shading and highlights using the Gaussian Blur effect. In this tutorial, I will guide you in every step to create the starfish and the waves.... So let's get started!

Create the New Document

1. Launch Illustrator and press (Ctrl + N) to create a New document. Select Pixels from the Units drop-down menu. Enter 700 in the width box and 500 in the height box then click on the Advanced button. Select RGB, Screen (72ppi) and make sure that the Align New Objects to Pixel Grid box is unchecked before you click OK.



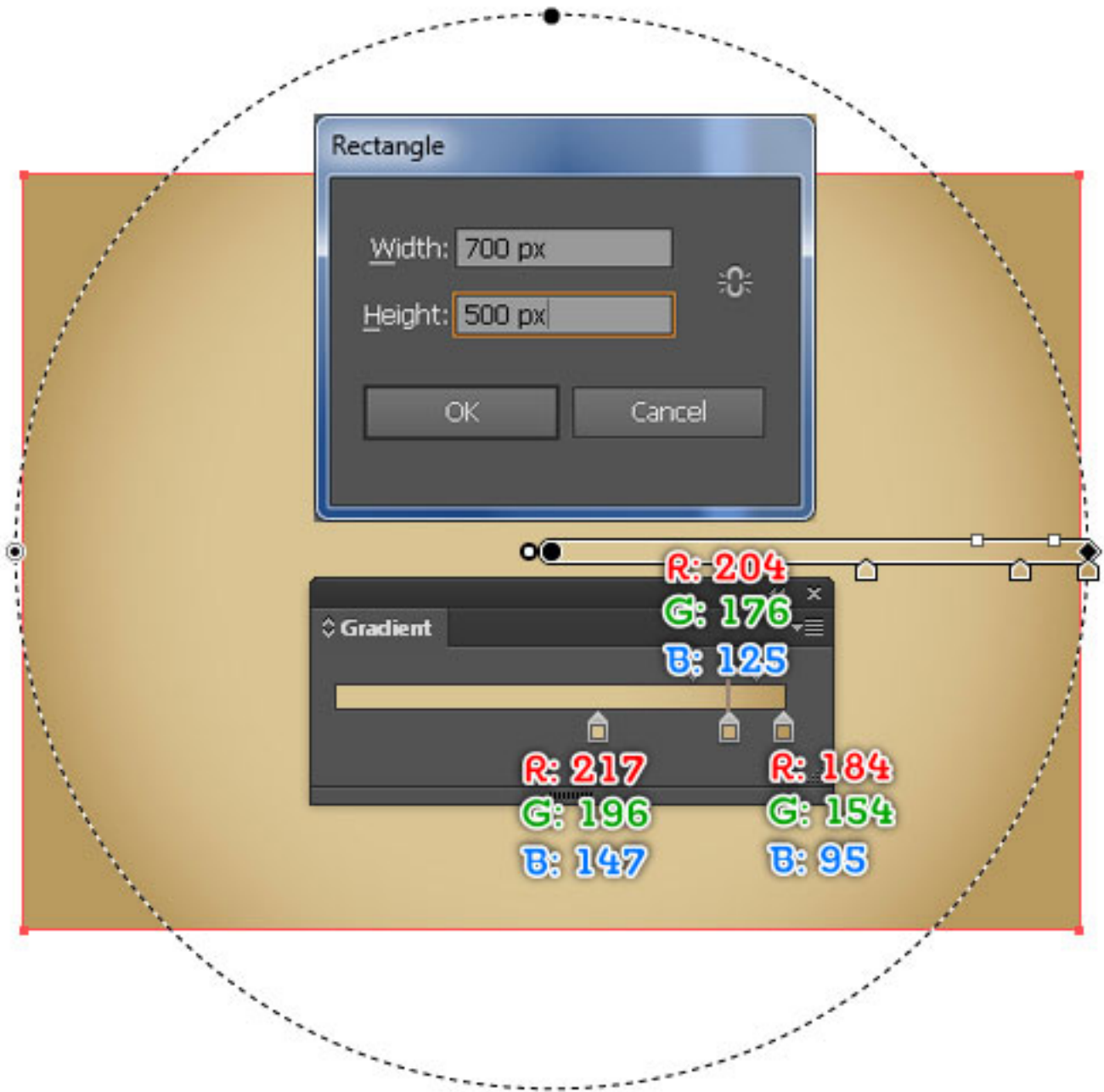
Create the Background

2. Start by drawing a 700px by 500px object using the Rectangle Tool (M) and fill it with the radial gradient. Keep the resulting shape selected and go to the Effect > Artistic > Film Grain. In the Film Grain box, follow the data as shown in the second image and then click OK.



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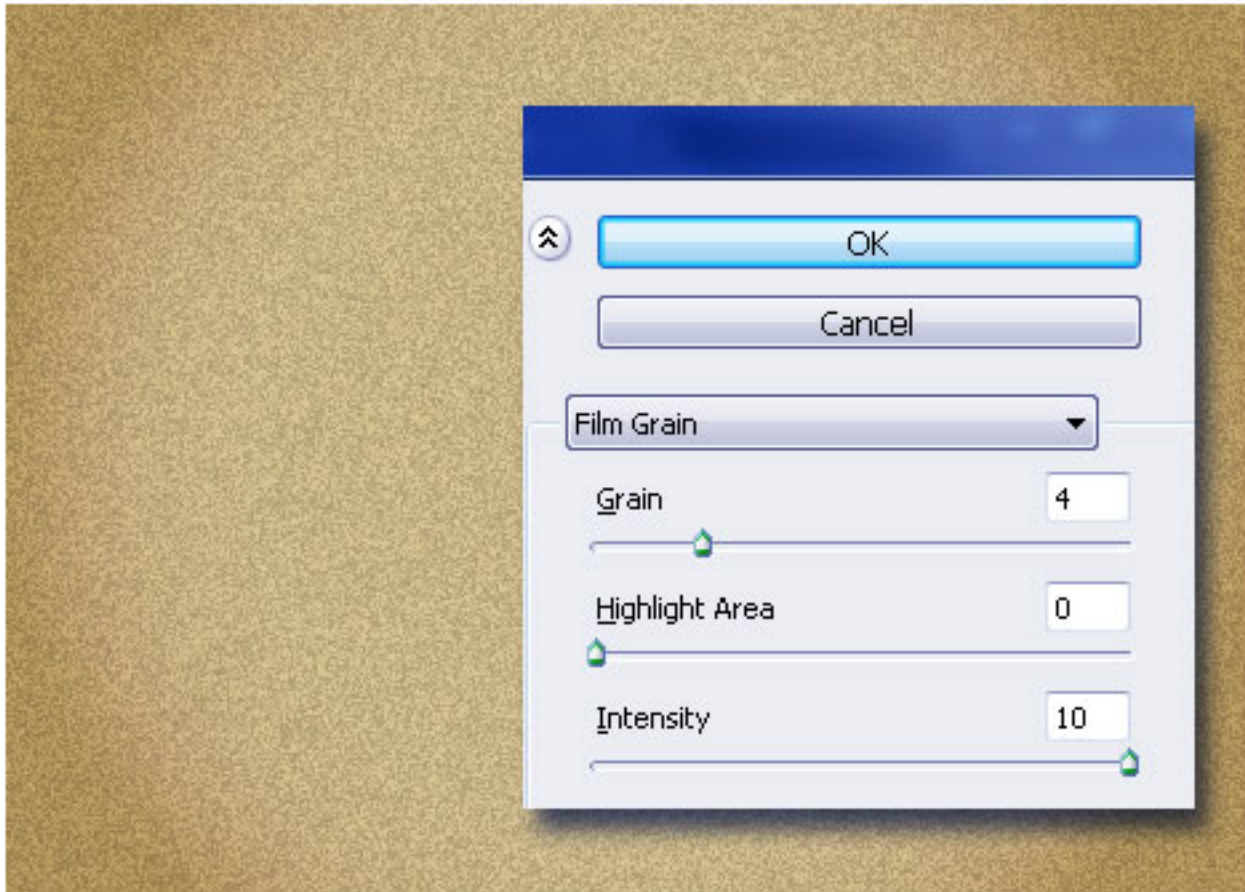
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3. Reselect the newly created shape and duplicate (Ctrl +C, Ctrl +F) it. While the duplicate is selected, go to the Appearance palette (Window > Appearance) and remove the Film Grain effect. Next, replace the existing color of the newly created shape with R=255, G=255, B=255. Make sure that the new shape is still selected. Go to the Effect > Artistic > Sponge. Follow the data as shown below and then click OK. Set the Blending Mode of the resulting shape to Multiply and reduce the Opacity to 30%.



Create the Main Shape

4. Pick the Type Tool (T). Simply click on your artboard and add the “*Relax*” black piece of text. Make sure that it stays selected, and open the Character palette (Window > Type > Character). Select the “Avant que... MF” font then set the size at 153px and the tracking at 24. You can also use other fonts similar to this font. Next, reselect the text and go to the Object > Expand. When the Expand box appear, click OK. Finally, select the “x” shape and remove it.



Relax



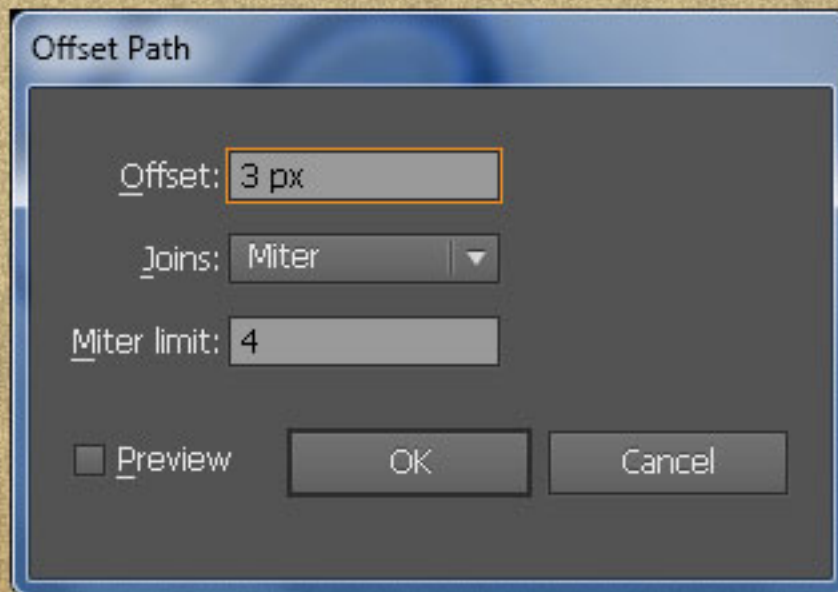
5. Select the four newly created shapes and go to the Object > Path > Offset Path. Follow the data as shown below and then click OK. Replace the existing color of the newly created shapes with red. Next, select the four black shapes and remove them.



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Reela





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6. Select the four red shapes and go to the Object > Path > Offset Path. Follow the data as shown below and then click OK. Replace the existing color of the newly created shapes with yellow. Now hide the red shapes (Ctrl +3), reselect the yellow shapes and replace the existing color with R=228, G=195, B=122. While the resulting shapes are selected, go to the Effect > Artistic > Film Grain. Follow the data as you can see in the second image and then click OK. Next, go to the Effect > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Enter a 3px Radius and then click OK.



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Rela

Offset Path

Offset: 3 px

Joins: Miter

Miter limit: 4

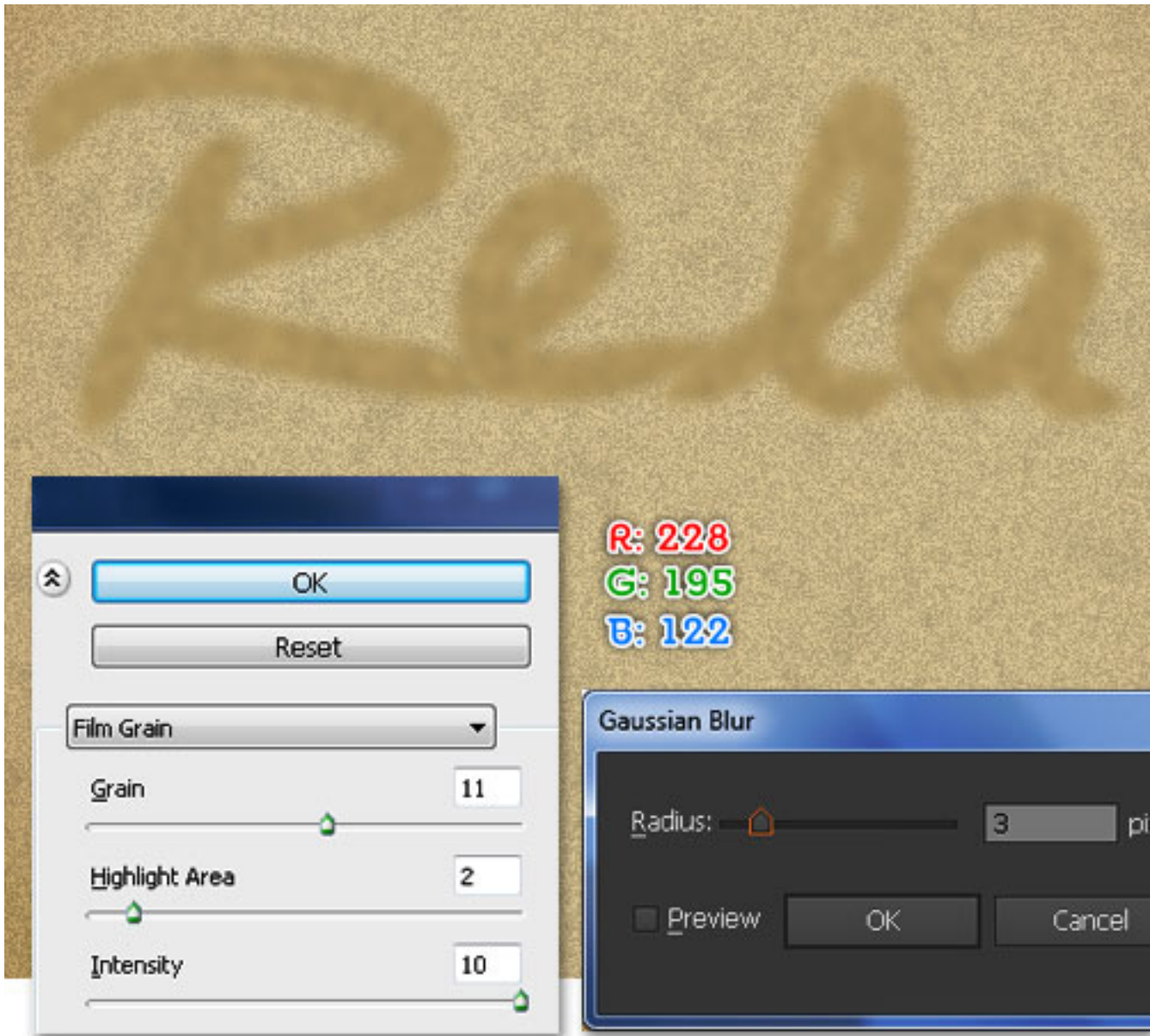
Preview

OK Cancel



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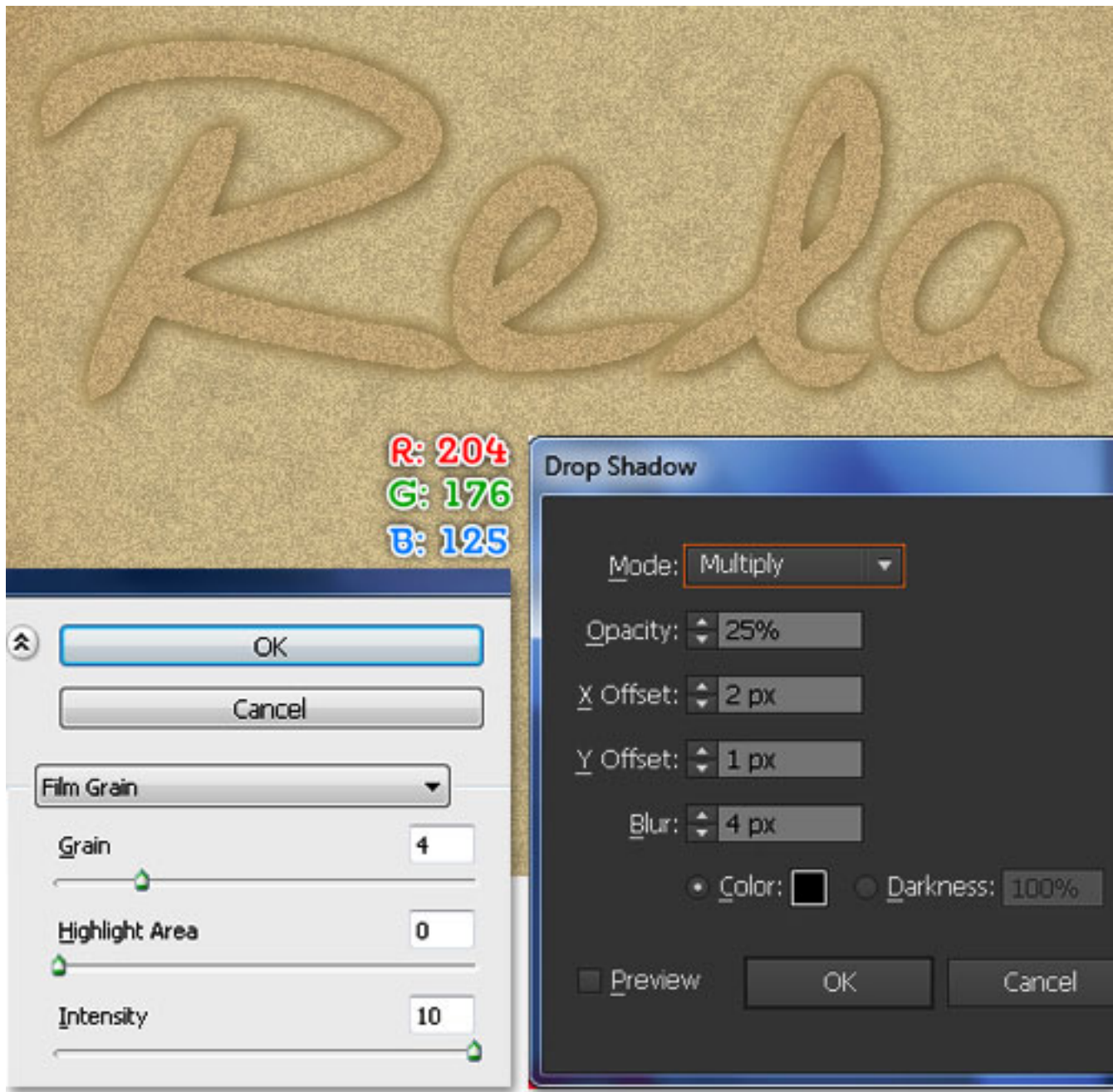


7. Press (Ctrl +Alt +3) to show the four shapes hidden in the previous step. While the shapes are selected, replace the existing color of them with R=204, G=176, B=125. Keep the resulting shapes selected. Go to the Effect > Artistic > Film Grain. Follow the data as shown below and then click OK. Next, go to the Effect > Stylize > Drop Shadow. Follow the data as you can see in the image below and then click OK.



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8. Select the “R” shape created in step 6. Duplicate (Ctrl +C, Ctrl +F) it and then bring the copy to front (Ctrl +Shift +Right Square Bracket). Make sure that the newly created shape is still selected. Go to the Appearance palette (Window > Appearance), remove the Film Grain and Gaussian Blur effects. Next, remove the fill color, add a 1px stroke (R=239, G=216, B=177) and apply the Width Profile 2 for the result. Keep the resulting object selected. Open the Stroke palette (Window > Stroke), then check the Dashed Line box. Enter 1px in the dash box and 5px in the gap box. Reselect the newly created object and go to the Effect > Stylize > Drop Shadow. Follow the data as you can see in the third image and then click OK.



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R: 239
G: 216
B: 177

Weight: 1 px

Cap: [Square] [Round] [Butt]

Corner: [Miter] [Bevel] [Round] Limit: 10 x

Align Stroke: [Left] [Center] [Right]

Dashed Line [Dash] [Gap]

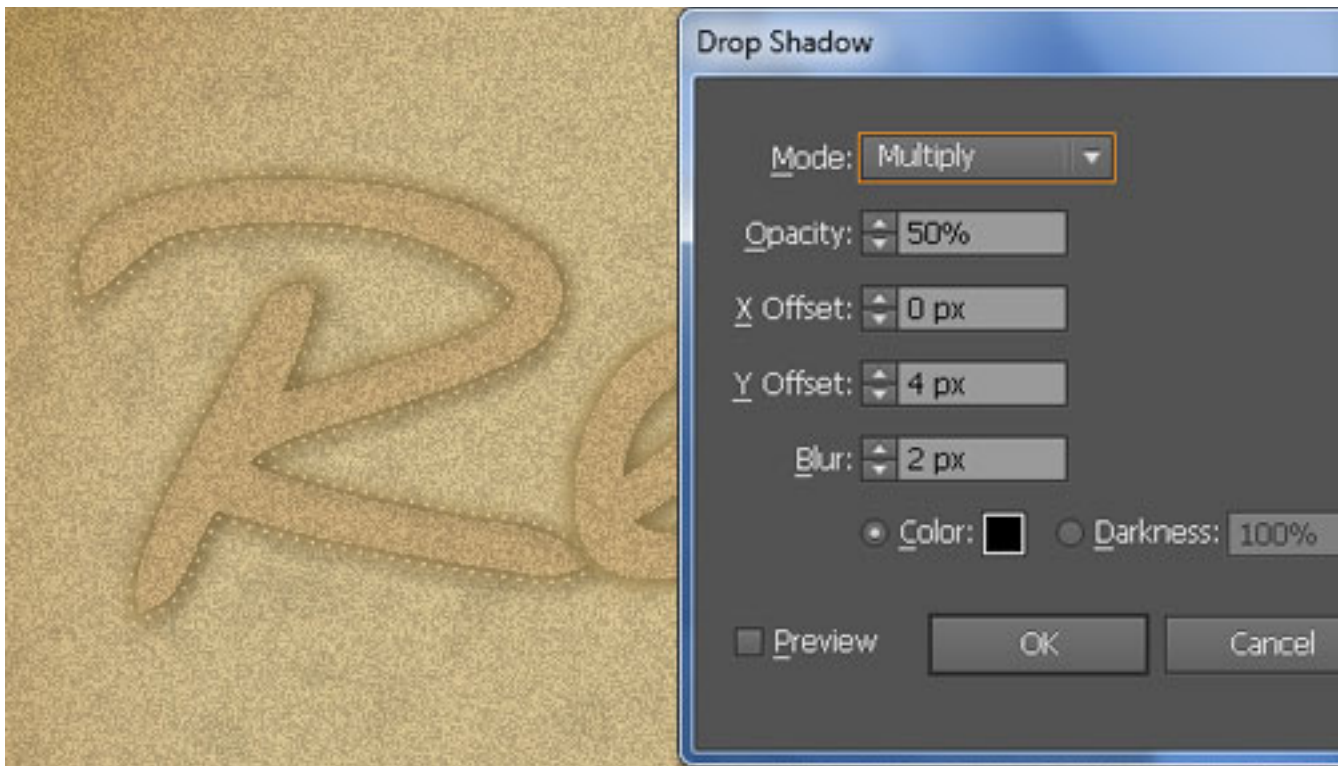
1 px 5 px [] [] [] []
dash gap dash gap dash gap

Arrowheads: [] [] [↔]

Scale: 100% 100% [⊙]

Align: [↔] [↕]

Profile: [Profile] [↩] [↪]



9. Select the newly created object. Duplicate (Ctrl +C, Ctrl +F) it and move the copy 1px up and then move it 1px to the left.



10. Repeat the previous steps for the remaining three shapes. Once done, your artwork should look like the third image below.



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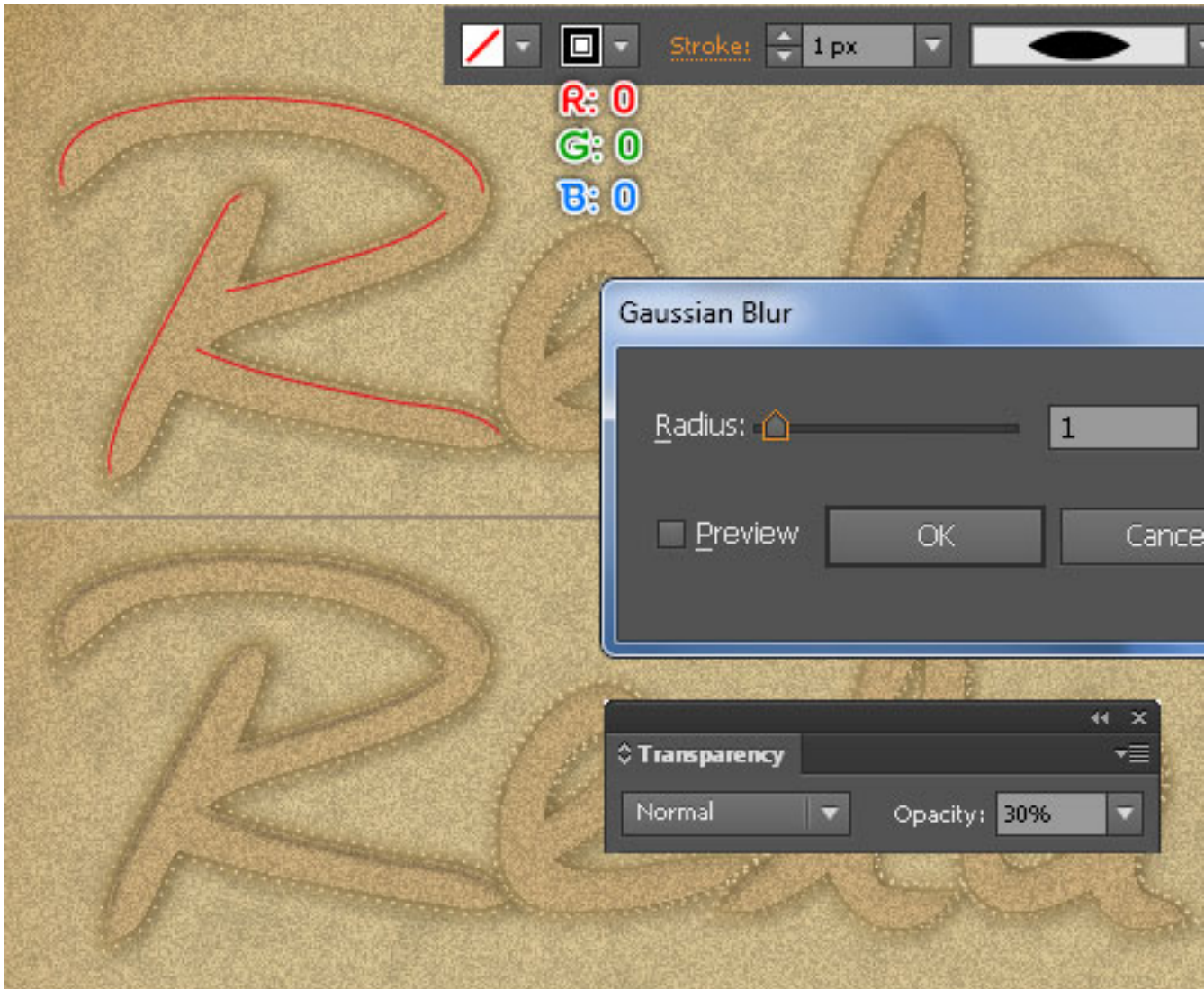




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11. To give a more realistic look, we're going to add some hard shadows on the letters. Pick the Pen Tool (P), focus on the "R" shape, and create four curved paths as shown below. Once your paths are drawn, fill them with none. Add a 1px stroke (R=0, G=0, B=0) and then apply the Width Profile 1 for the results. Keep the resulting objects selected. Go to the Effect > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Enter a 1px Radius and then click OK. Finally, reduce the Opacity of the result to 30%.



12. Repeat the previous steps for the letters "e", "l" and "a".



13. Use the Pen Tool (P) and the Ellipse Tool (L) to create an object and five ellipses as shown below. Once your objects are drawn, fill them with R=204, G=176, B=125. While the resulting shapes are selected, go to the Effect > Artistic > Film Grain. Follow the data as shown below and then click OK.

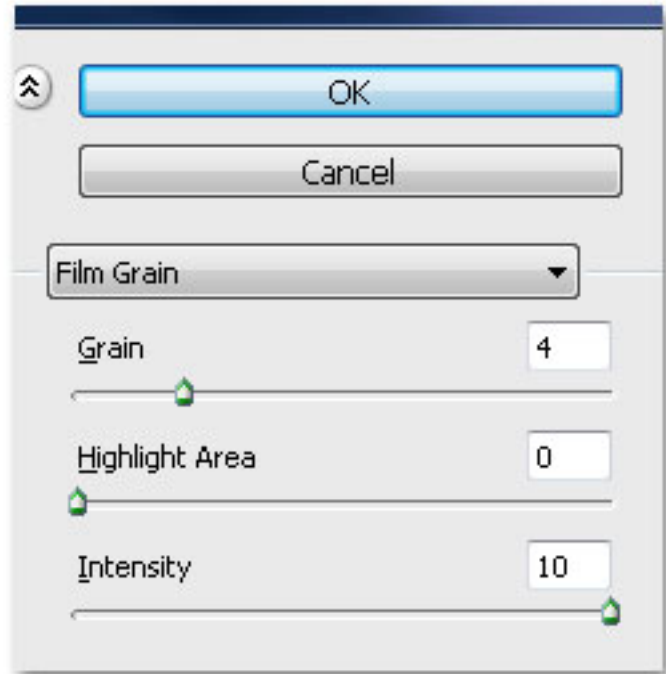


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R: 204
G: 176
B: 125



14. Select the shape created in the previous step and go to the Object > Path > Offset Path. Enter a 3px Radius and then click OK. Replace the existing color of the newly created shape with R=228, G=195, B=122. Keep the resulting shape selected. Go to the Appearance palette (Window > Appearance), click on the Film Grain section. Reset the data as shown below and then click OK. Next, apply a 3px Gaussian Blur for the result.

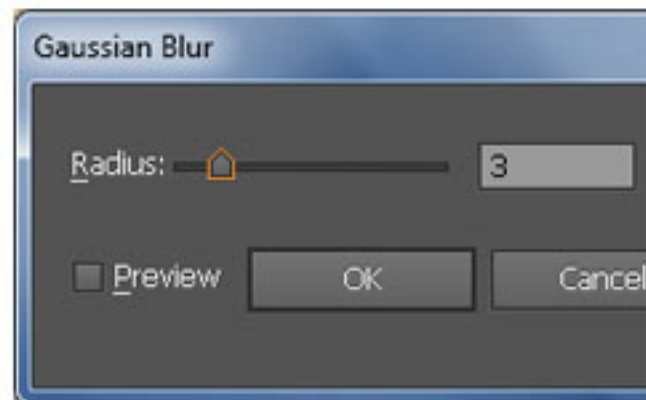
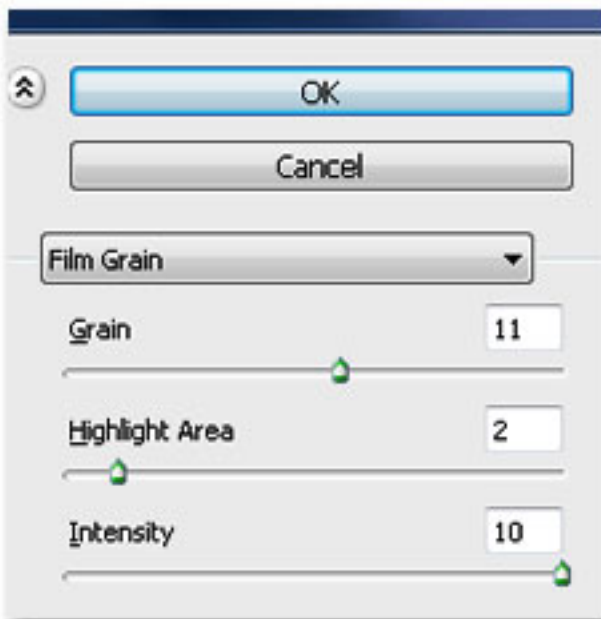
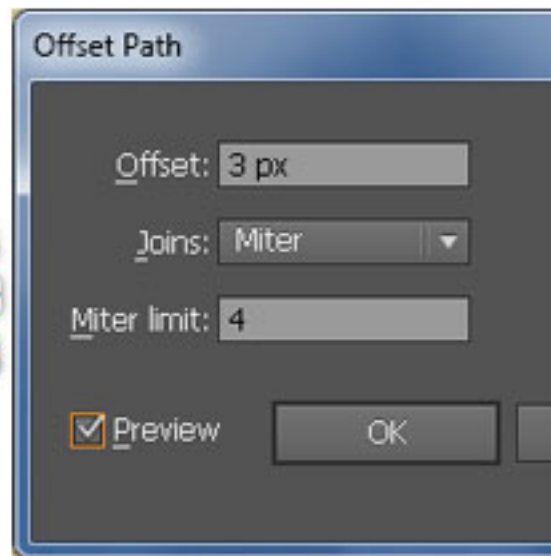


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R: 228
G: 195
B: 122

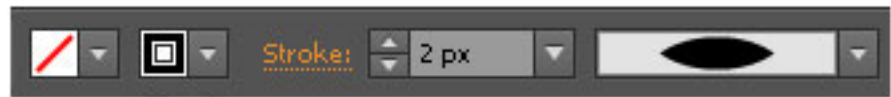


15. We're going to be adding some hard shadows on the foot. Use the Pen Tool (P) to create six curved paths as shown below. Once your paths are drawn, fill them with none, add a 1px stroke (R=0, G=0, B=0) and then apply the Width Profile 1 for the results. Keep the resulting objects selected. Go to the Effect > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Enter a 1px Radius and then click OK. Finally, reduce the Opacity of the results to 30%.

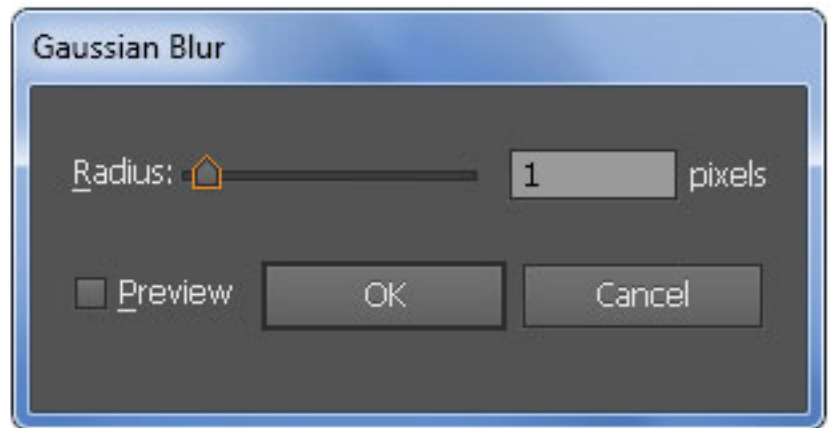
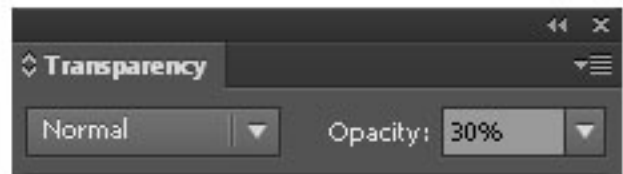


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R: 0
G: 0
B: 0

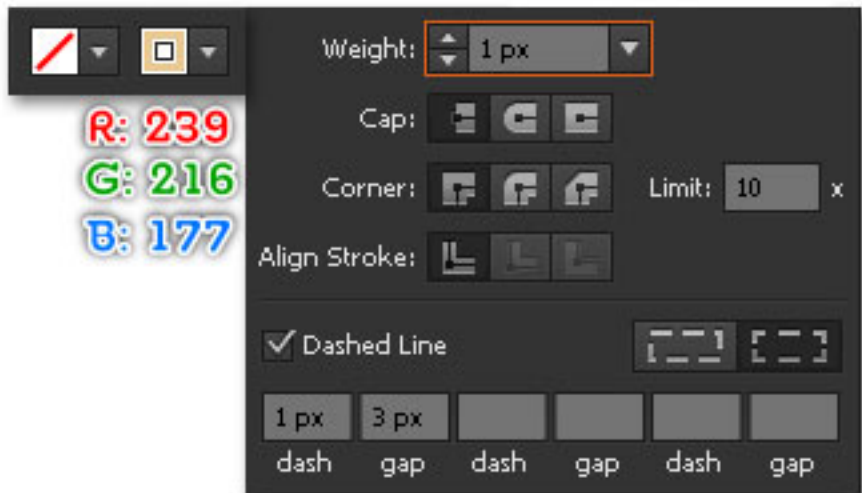
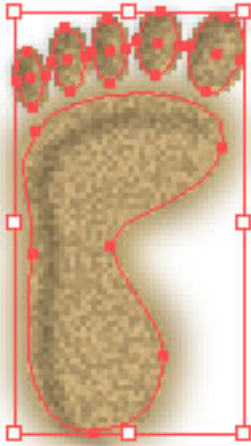


16. Select the six shapes created in step 13. Duplicate them and bring the copies to front. Keep the duplicates selected. Go to the Appearance palette and remove the Film Grain effect. Next, remove the fill color of the newly created shape and add a 1px stroke (R=239, G=216, B=177). Open the Stroke palette (Window > Stroke), then check the Dashed Line box. Enter 1px in the dash box and 3px in the gap box. While the resulting objects are selected, duplicate them then move the duplicates 1px down and 2px to the left.



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17. Select and group (Ctrl + G) all the objects created from step 13 up to this time. Make sure that the newly created group is still selected. Go to the Object > Transform > Reflect. In the Reflect box, check the Vertical and click Copy. Now reselect the two “foot” groups, rotate them to an angle of about -50 degrees and then place the results to the positions as shown in the second image. Once done, your artwork should look like the third image below.



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Reflect

Axis

Horizontal

Vertical

Angle: 90°

Options

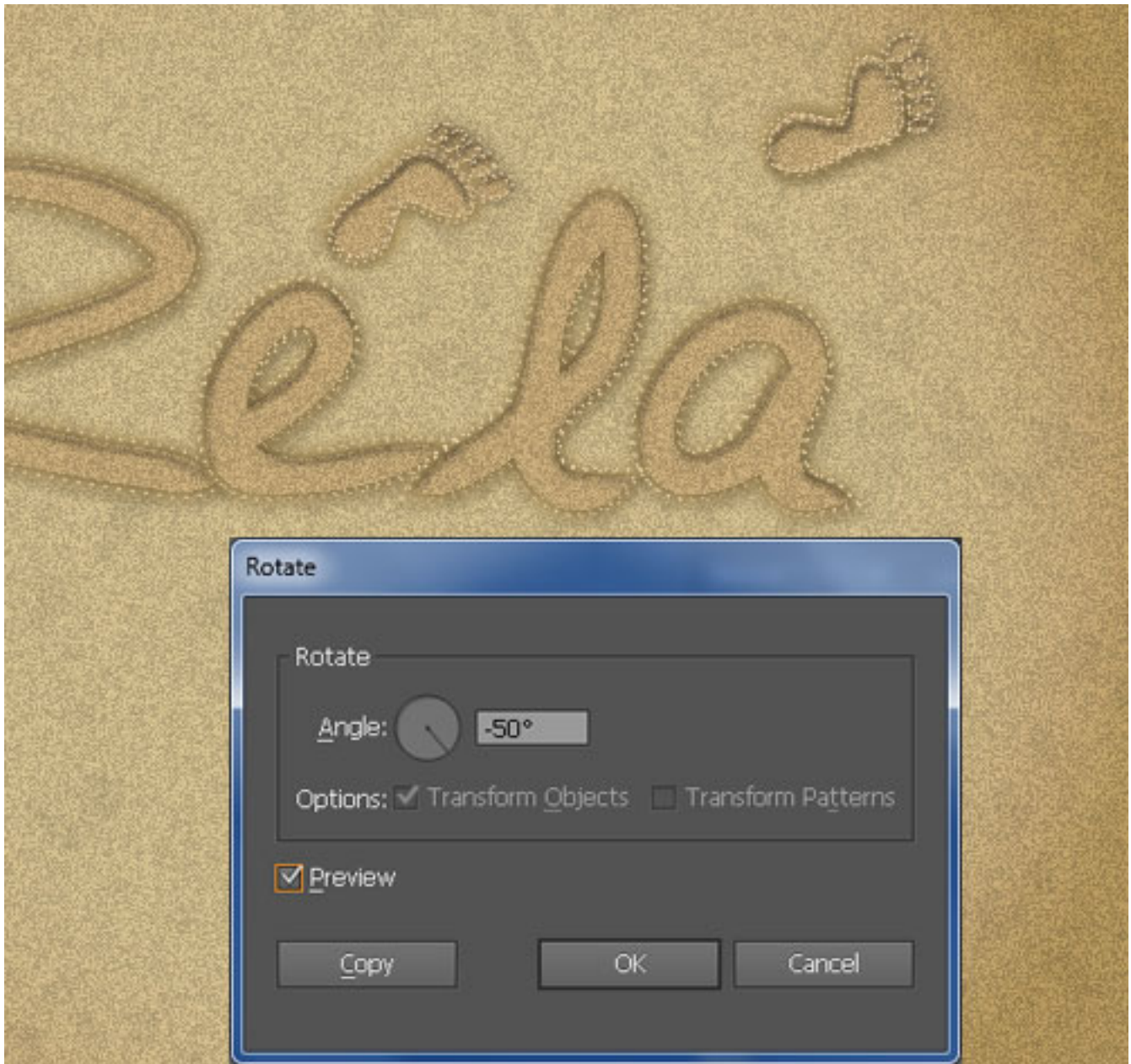
Transform Objects Transform Layer

Preview



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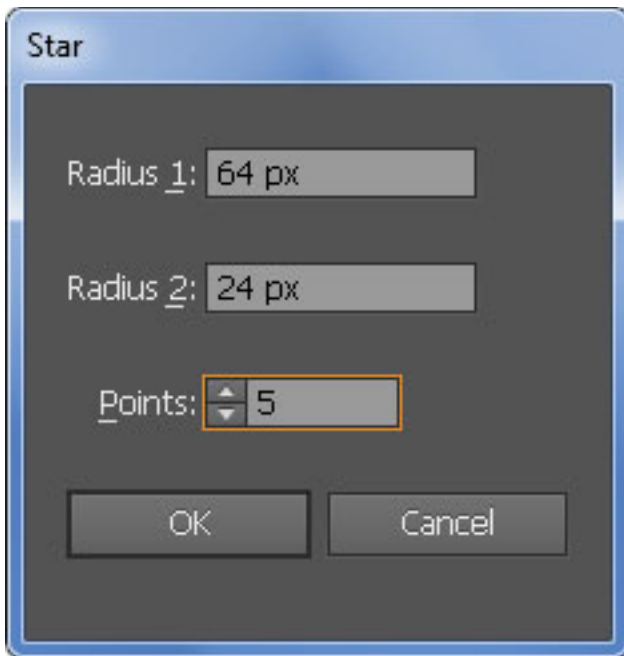


18. Pick the Star Tool from the Tool palette and click on the artboard. In the Star box, enter a 64px in the Radius 1, 24px in the Radius 2 and 5px in the Points and then click OK. Next, convert the anchor points of the star to smooth. After you are done adjusting the star, reselect and duplicate it then hide the duplicate. Next, pick the Line Segment Tool (—) and create five red paths as shown below. Now select all the objects created in this step. Open the Pathfinder palette (Window > Pathfinder) and click on the Divide button. Finally, reselect the result and ungroup it.

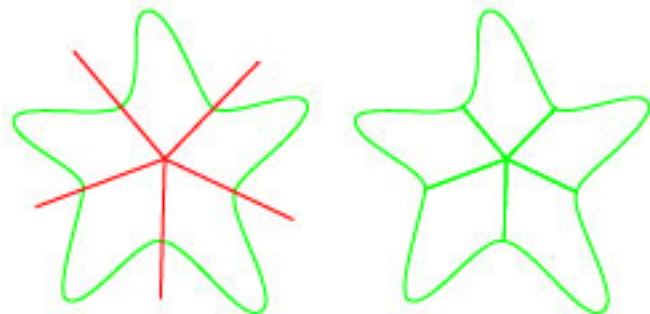
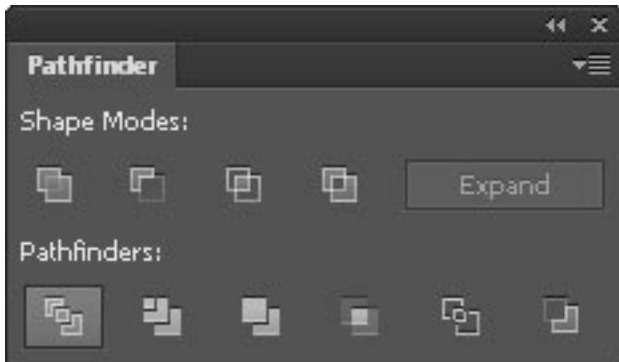
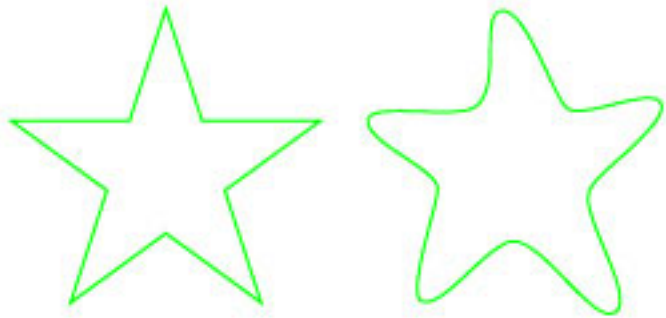


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Convert selected anchor points to smooth



19. Fill the five newly created objects with the linear gradient as shown below.

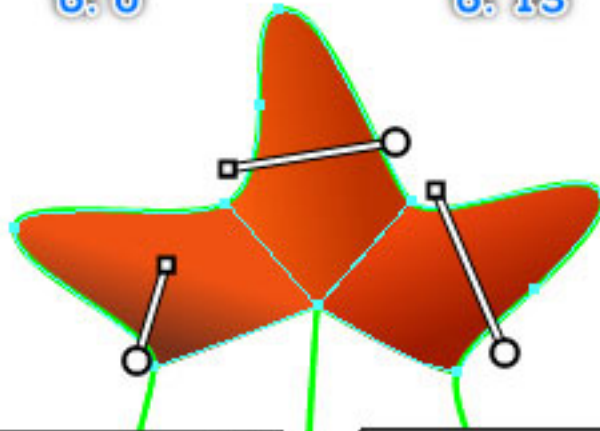


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Gradient

R: 190 R: 250
G: 50 G: 90
B: 0 B: 13



Gradient

R: 124 R: 239
G: 49 G: 81
B: 26 B: 18

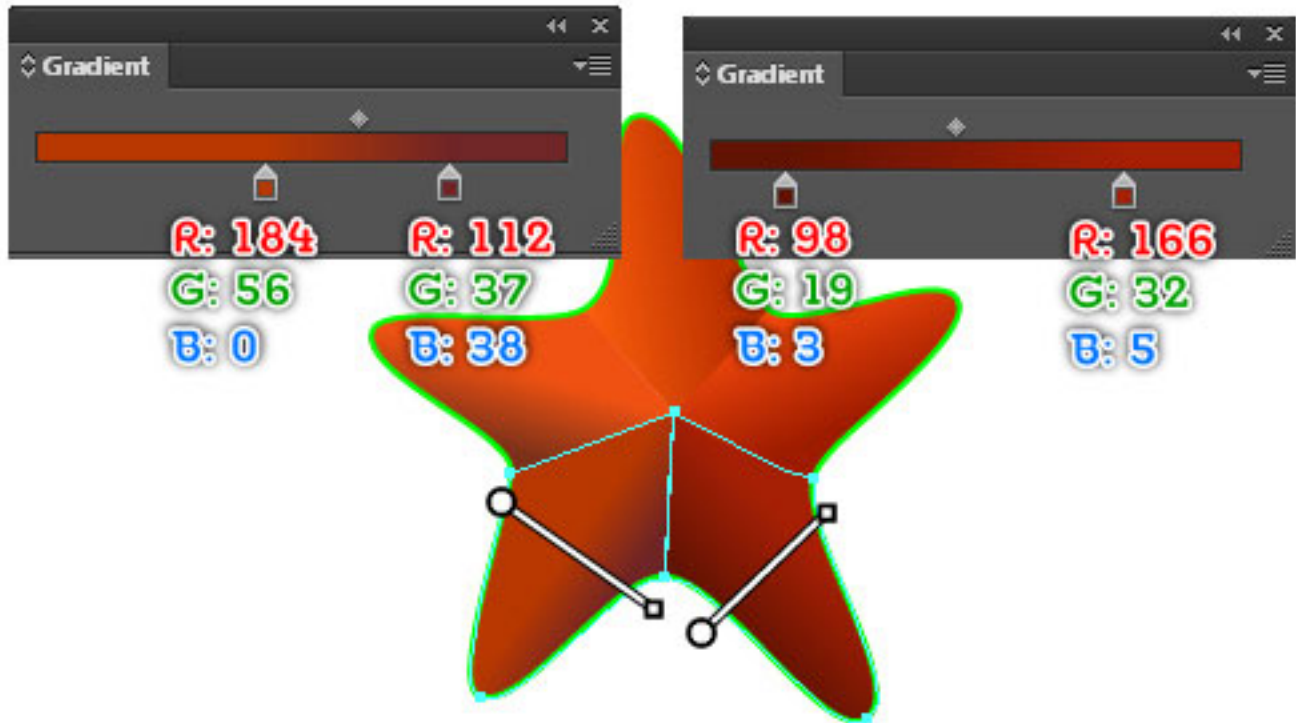
Gradient

R: 158 R: 250
G: 28 G: 79
B: 0 B: 13



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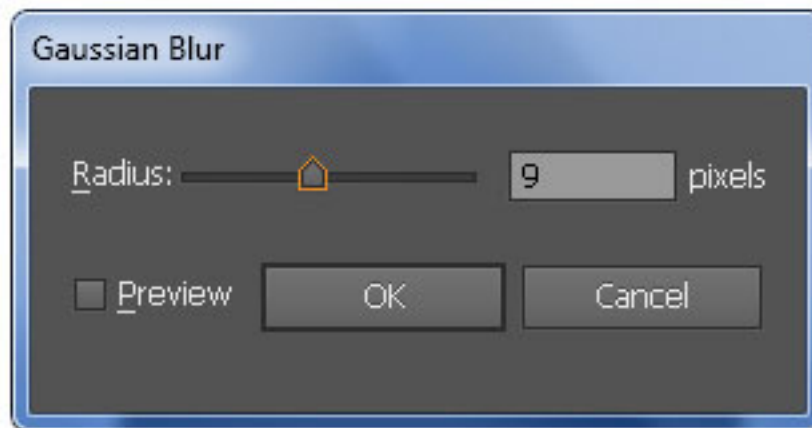
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20. Now we'll add the highlight for the starfish. First, use the Pen Tool (P) to create an object as shown below. Once your object is drawn, fill it with R=249, G=129, B=0. Next, apply a 9px Gaussian Blur for the resulting shape.



R: 249
G: 129
B: 0



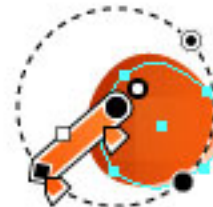
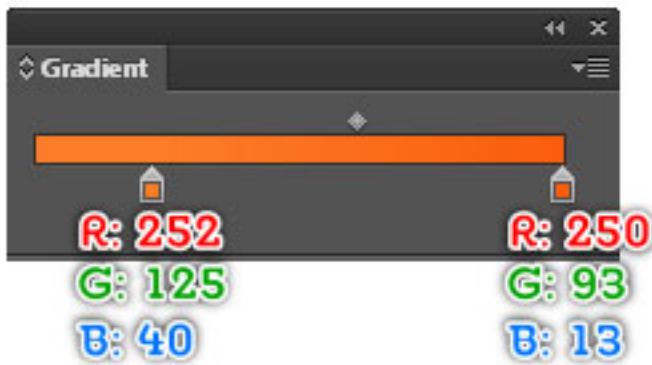
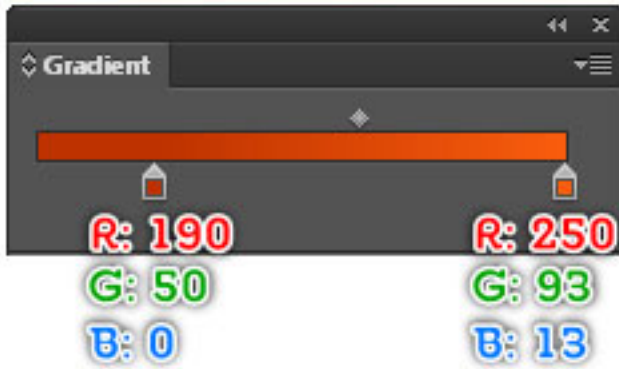
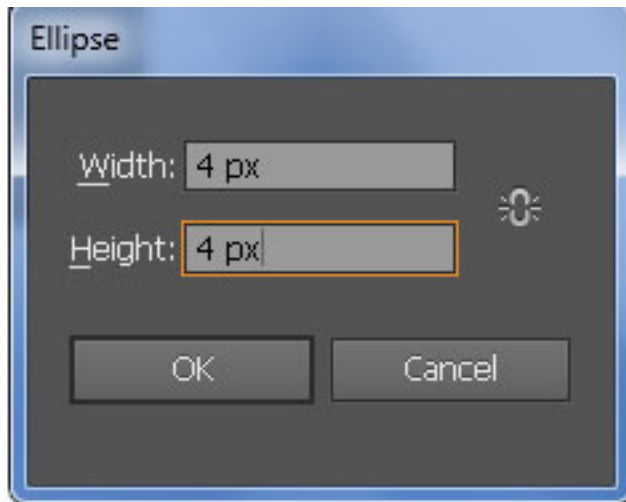
Create the Spines

21. Use the Ellipse Tool (L) to create a 4px by 4px object. With the help of the Direct Selection Tool (A), adjust the circle to get the result as shown in the second image below. After you are done adjusting the newly created object, fill it with the linear gradient. Keep the resulting shape selected. Duplicate and reduce the size of it and then move it a bit to the right. Replace the existing color of the newly created shape with the radial gradient. Next, add the highlight for the spine by creating a white curve as you can see in the final image. Finally, select and group (Ctrl +G) all the objects created in this step.



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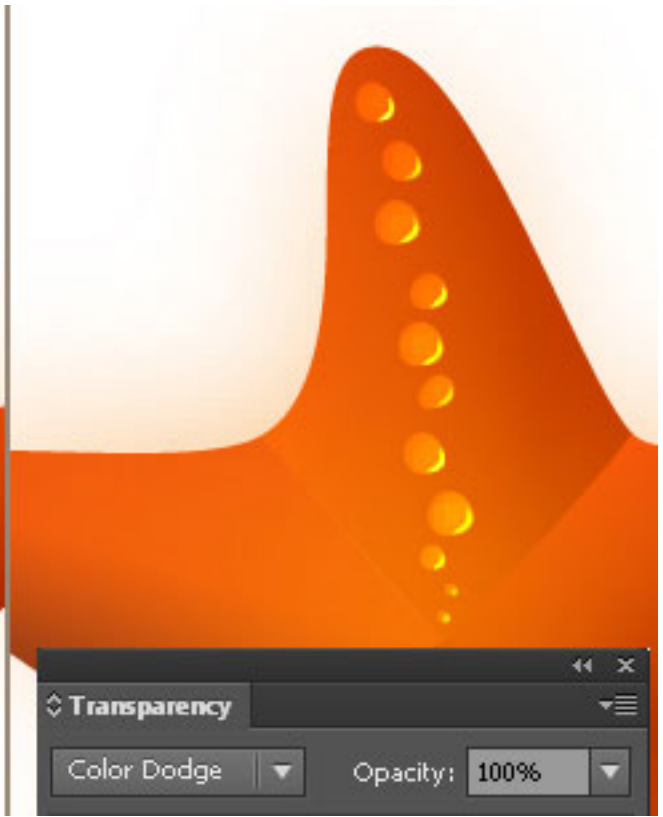


22. Make several duplicates of the “Spine” group. Resize the newly created groups and place them to the positions as shown below. Next, select all the “Spine” groups and set the Blending Mode to Color Dodge. Repeat this till you have results as seen in the third image below.



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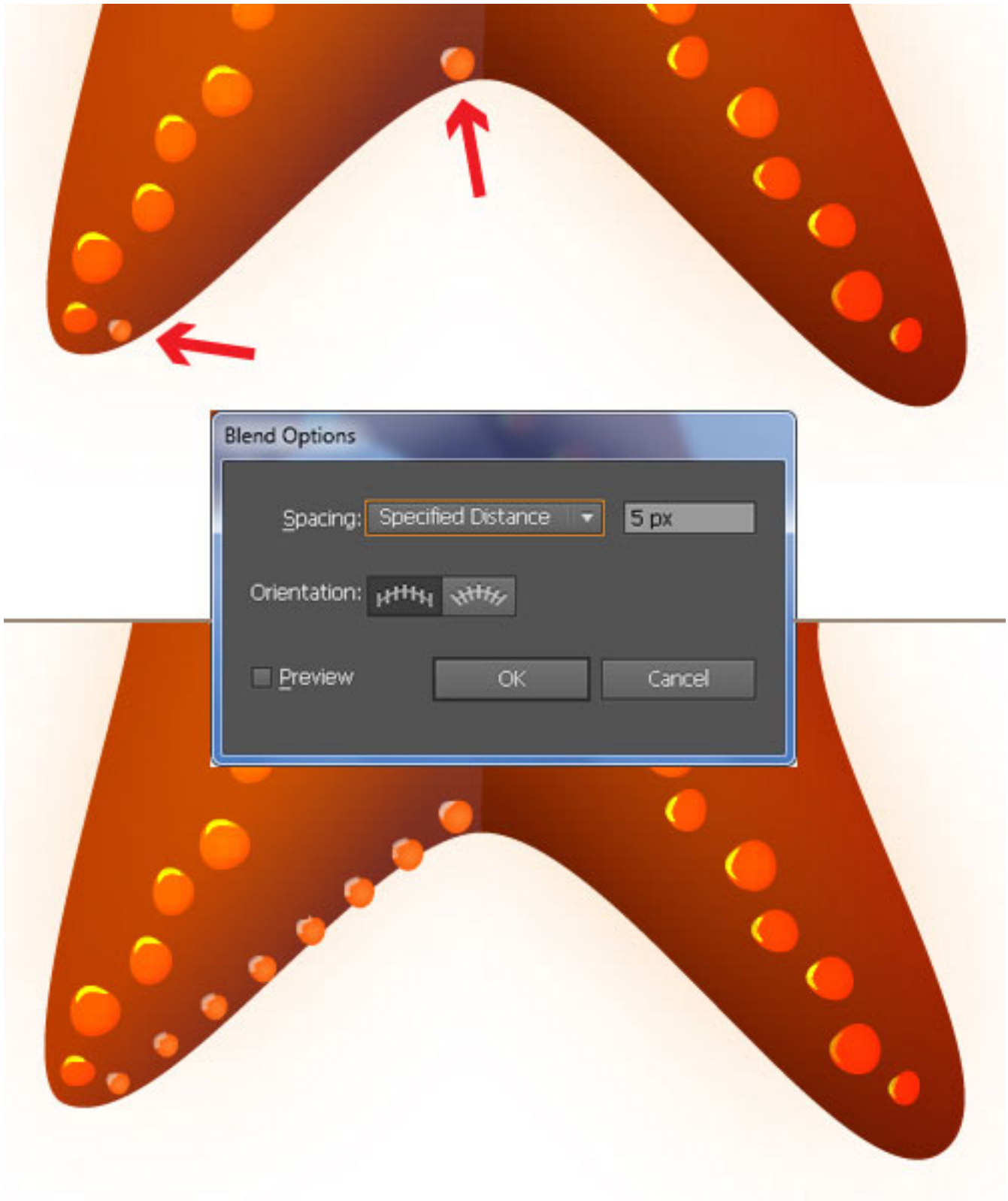


23. Continue to create more spines. First, place two “Spine” groups to the positions as shown below. Reselect these two groups and create a blend between them. Now use the Direct Selection Tool (A) to select the spine of the newly blended object. Next, pick the Convert Anchor Point Tool (Shift +C). Click on the top anchor point, hold mouse and drag it down. Continue to click on the bottom anchor point, hold the mouse and drag it up. You should end up with something like the final image shown below.



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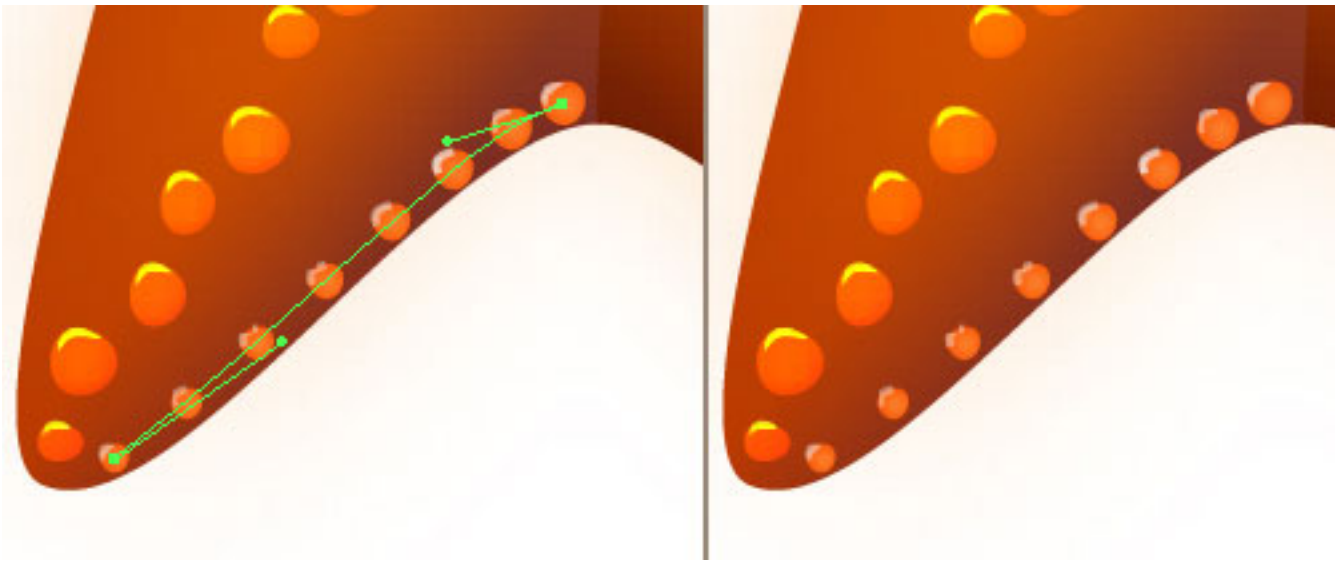
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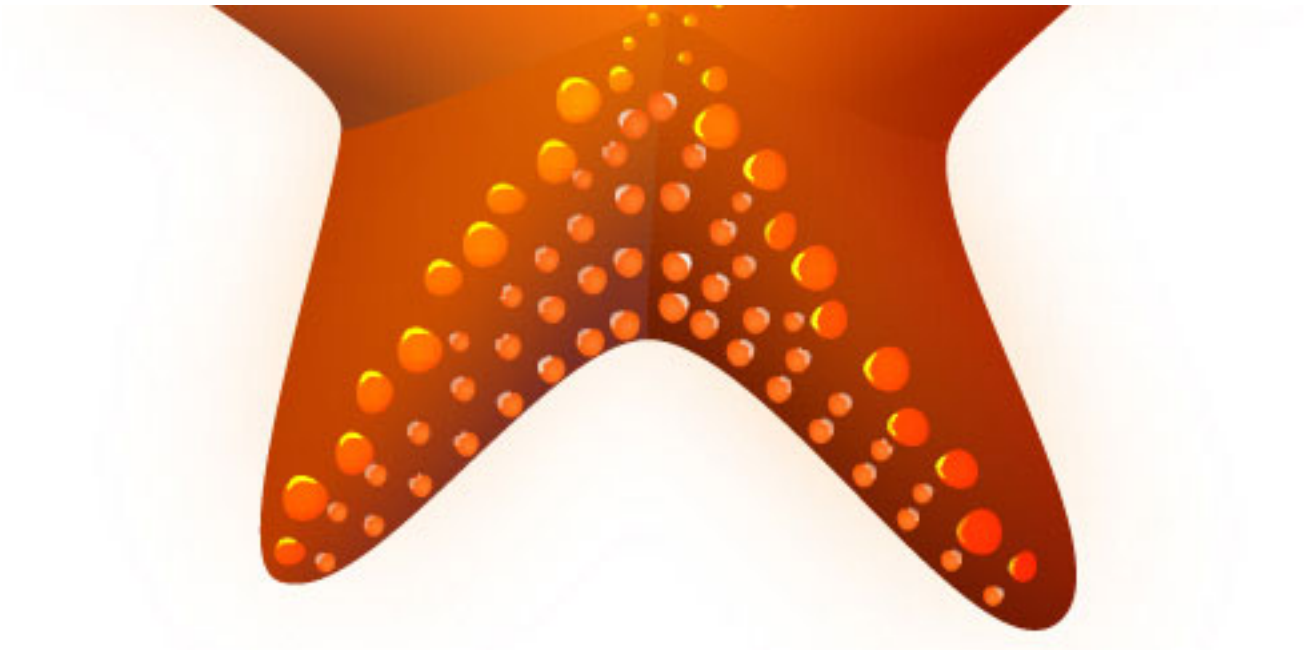


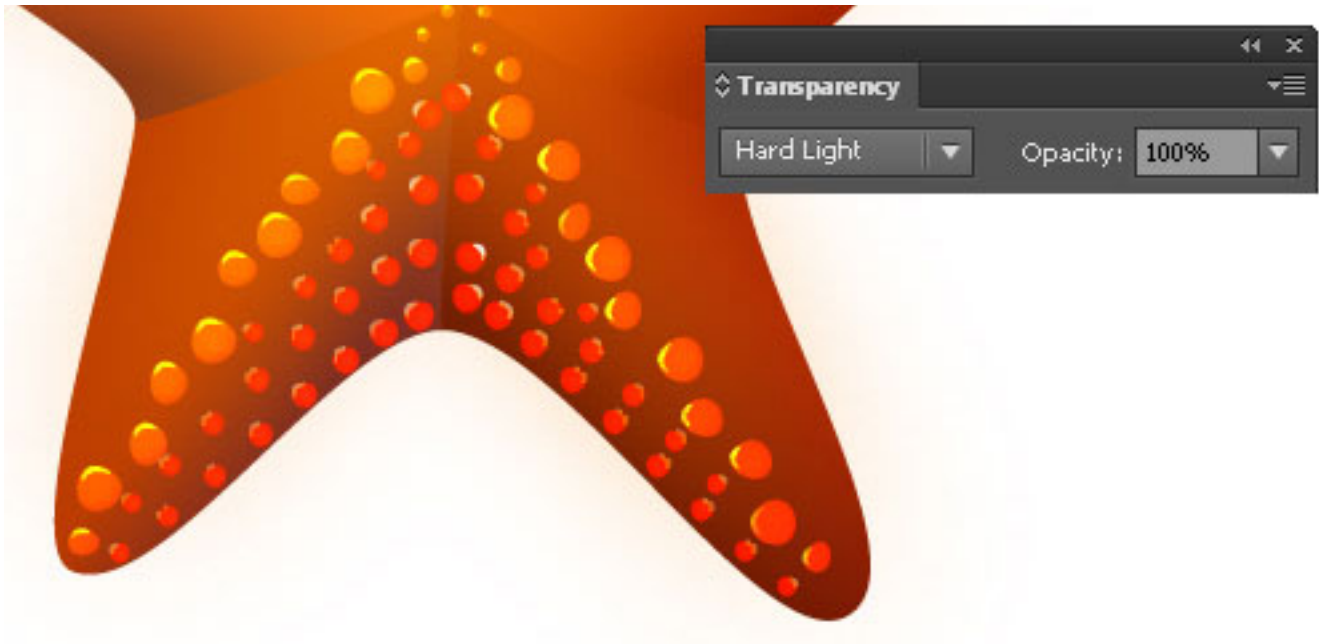
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24. Repeat the process to add these spines on the starfish. Next, select all the newly created spines and then set the Blending Mode to Hard Light.





25. Repeat the techniques in the previous steps to draw more spines. Once done, your starfish should look roughly like the image below.



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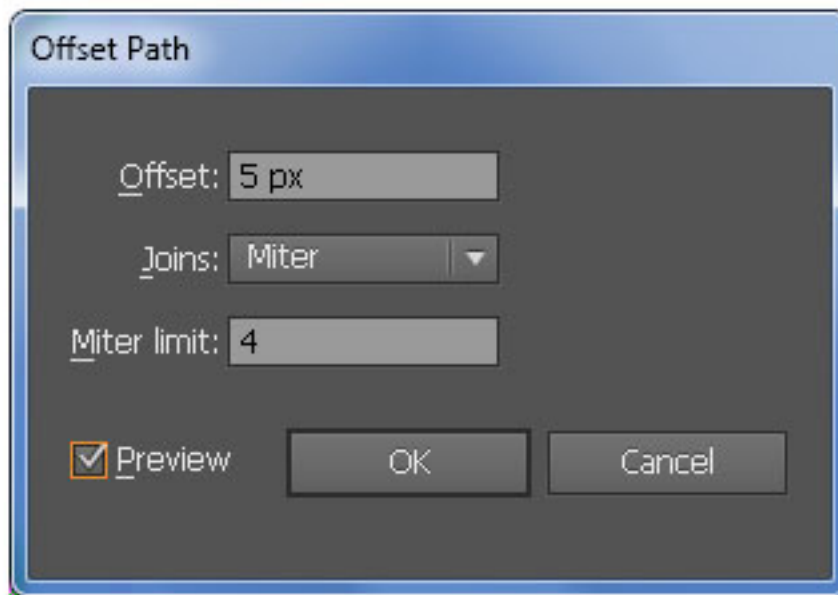
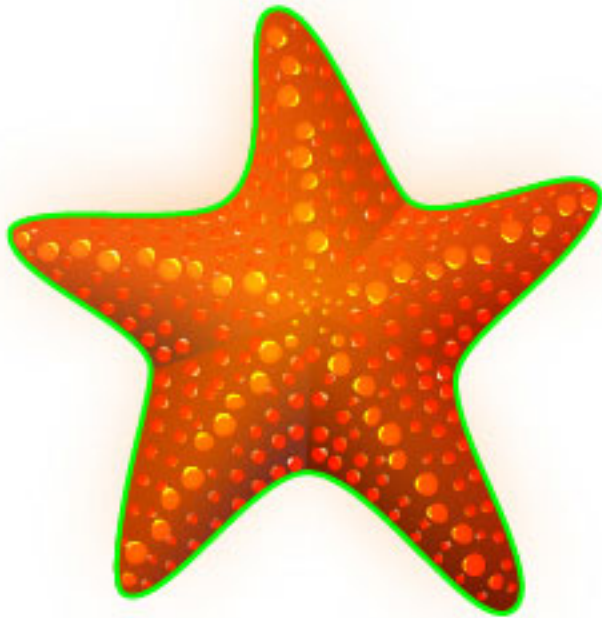


26. Press (Ctrl +Alt +3) to show the green object hidden in step 18. Keep this object selected and go to the Object > Path > Offset Path. Enter a 5px Offset and then click OK. While the resulting object is selected, fill it with R=228, G=195, B=122 and remove the stroke. Reselect the newly created shape and go to the Effect > Artistic > Film Grain. Follow the data as shown in the second image and then click OK. Next, apply a 3px Gaussian Blur for the result.



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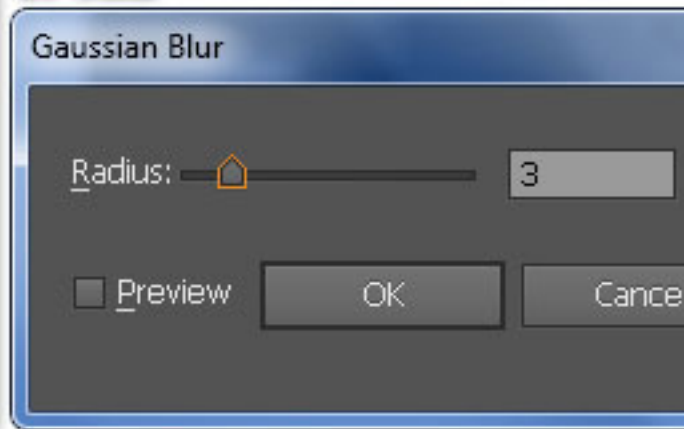
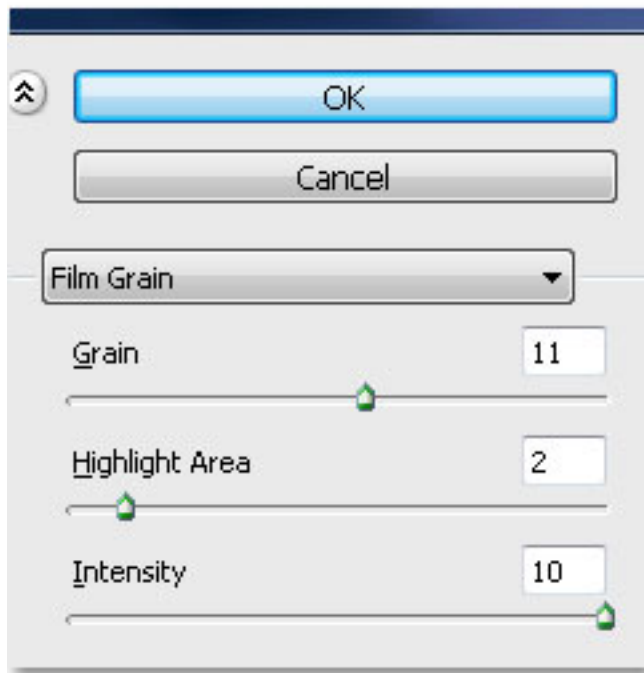


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R: 228
G: 195
B: 122



27. Reselect the green object and go to the Object > Path > Offset Path. Enter a 1px Offset and then click OK. Replace the existing stroke color of the newly created object with R=239, G=216, B=177 and apply the Width Profile 2 to the result. Make sure that the newly created object is still selected. Open the Stroke palette (Window > Stroke) and then check the Dashed Line box. Enter 1px in the dash box and 3px in the gap box. Now reselect the newly created object. Duplicate it and then move the copy 1px down and 1px to the left. Finally, select and remove the green object.



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Weight: 1 px

Cap: [Square] [Round] [Bevel]

Corner: [Miter] [Bevel] [Round] Limit: 10 x

Align Stroke: [Left] [Center] [Right]

Dashed Line [On] [Off]

1 px 3 px [] [] [] []
dash gap dash gap dash gap

Arrowheads: [] [] [] []

Scale: 100% 100%

Align: [] []

Profile: [] [] []



Offset Path

Offset: 1 px

Joins: Miter

Miter limit: 4

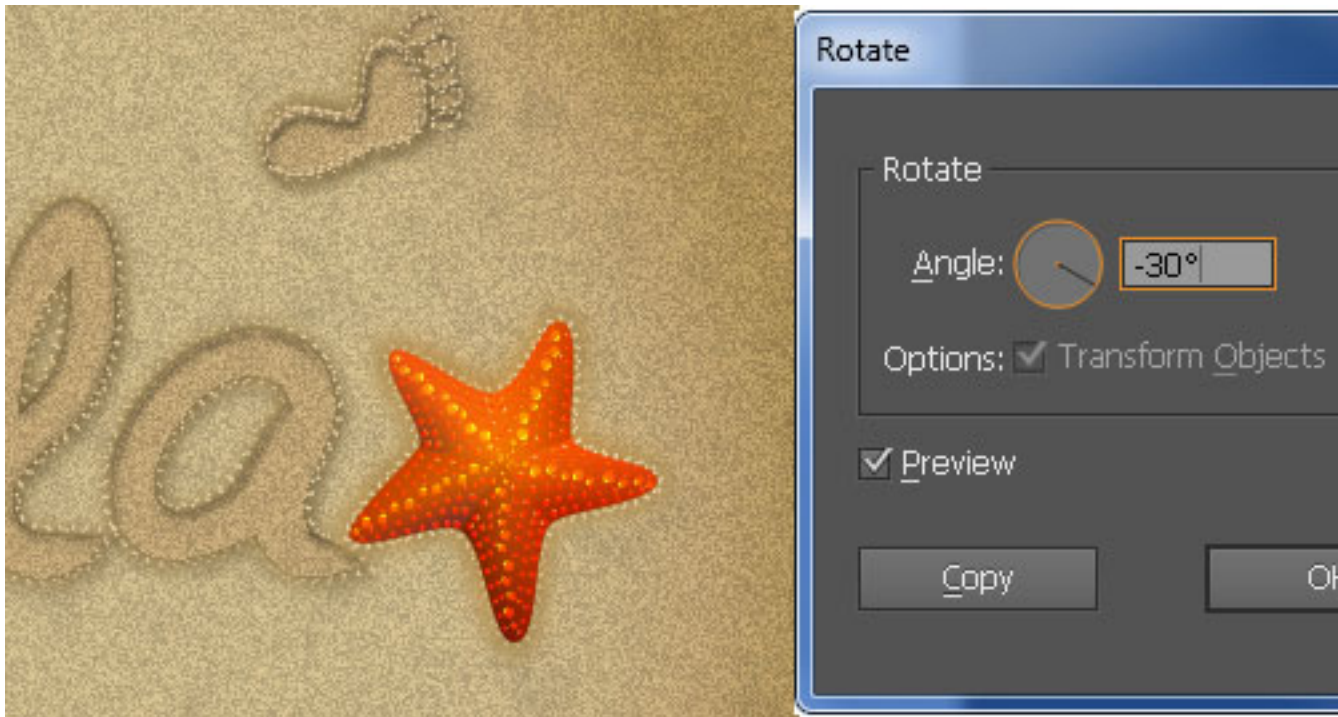
Preview [OK]

28. Select and group (Ctrl + G) all the shapes created from step 18 up to this time. Next, rotate this group to an angle of about -30 degrees and then place it to the position as shown below.



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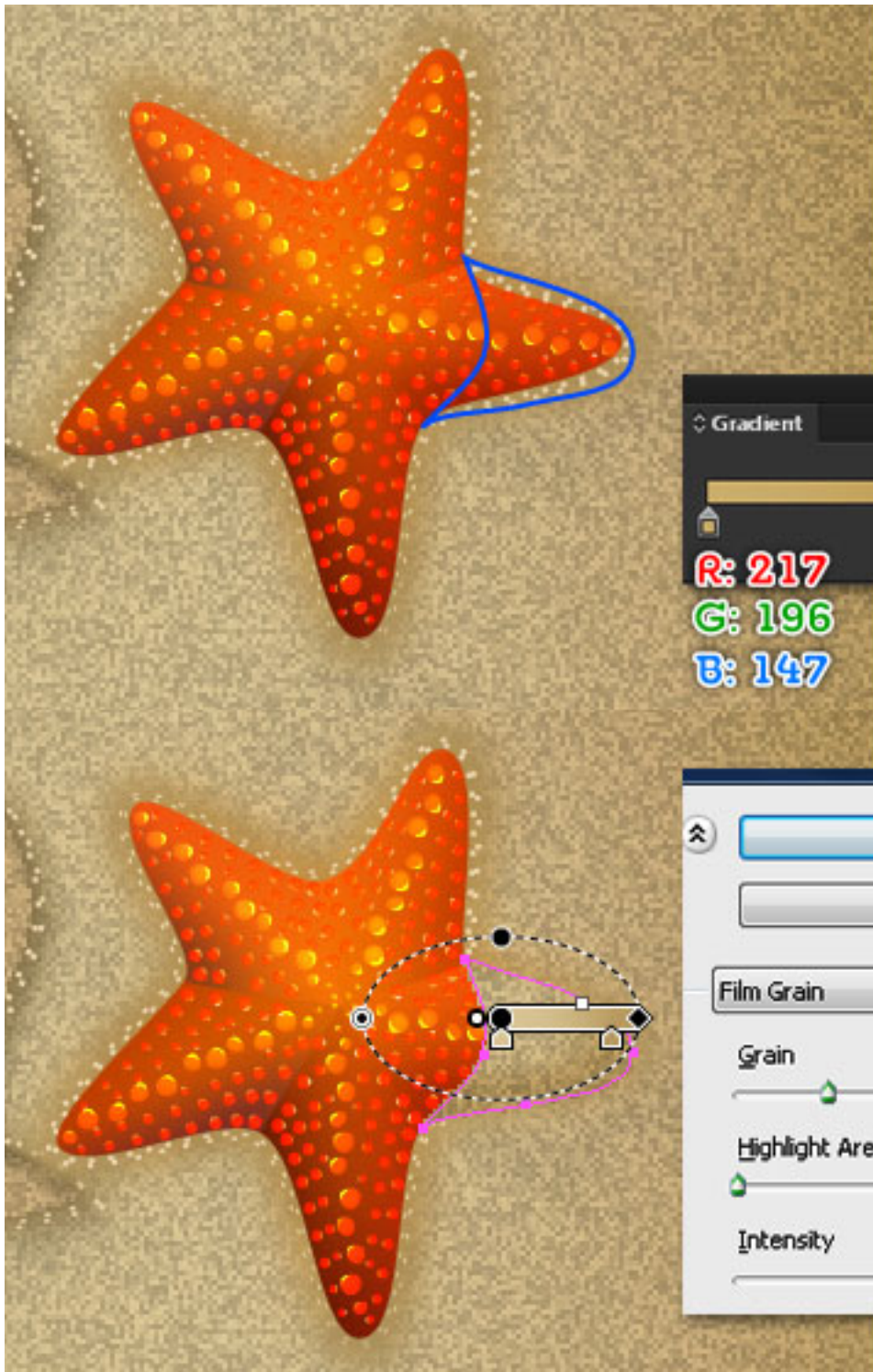


29. We'll hide a part of the starfish behind the sand. First, create an object and fill it with the radial gradient as shown below. Keep the newly created shape selected and go to the Effect > Artistic > Film Grain. Follow the data as shown in the second image and then click OK.



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Gradient

R: 217 R: 184
G: 196 G: 154
B: 147 B: 95

OK

Cancel

Film Grain

Grain 4

Highlight Area 0

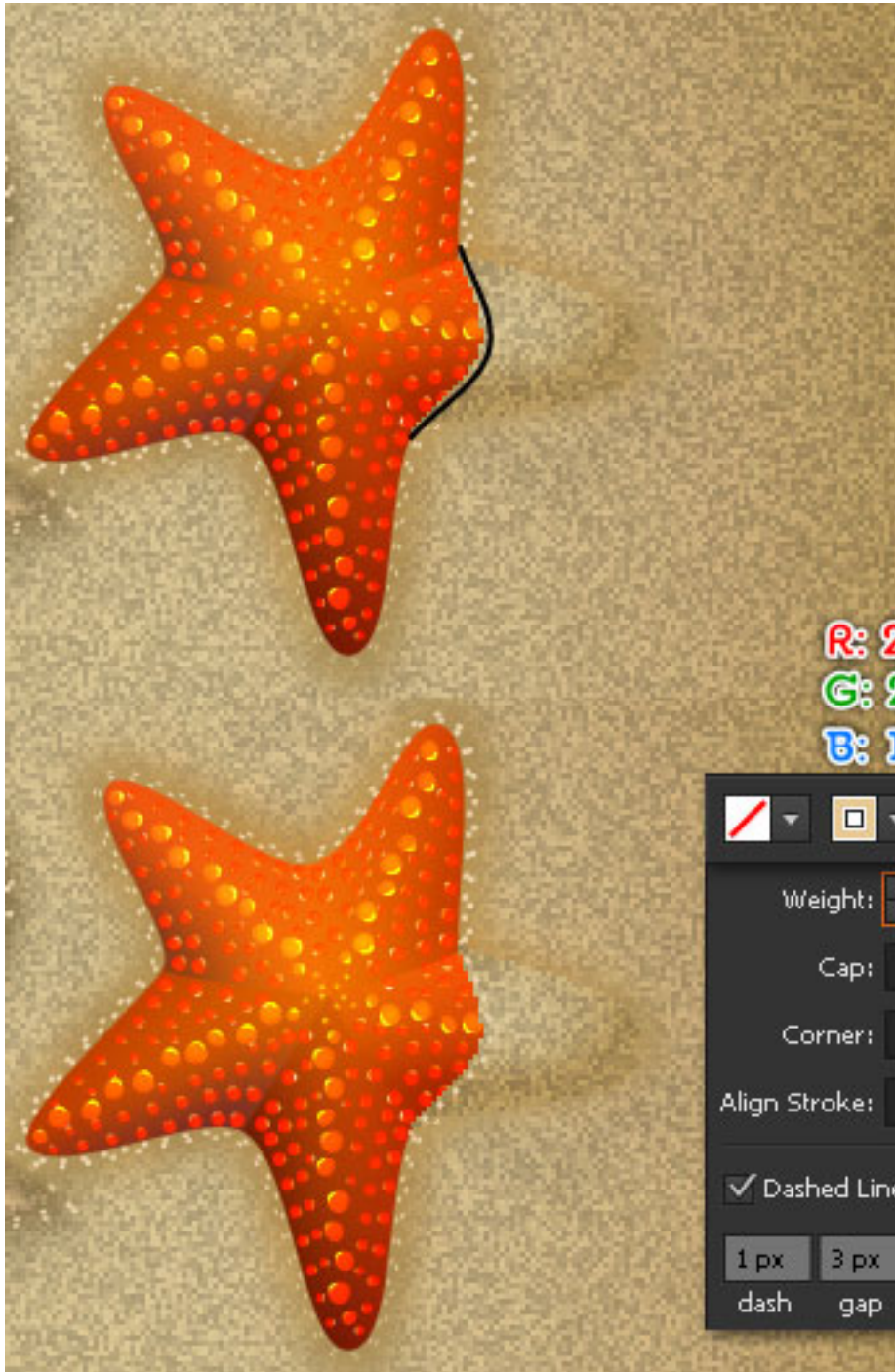
Intensity 10



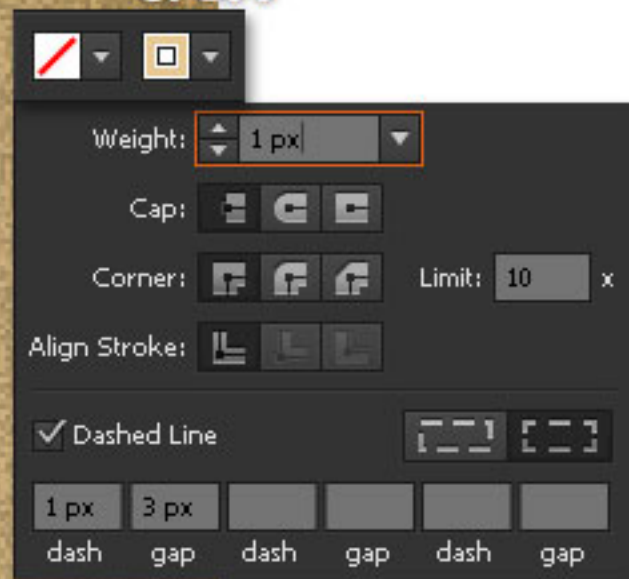
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30. To add some details, draw a curved path as shown below. Once your path is drawn, fill it with none and add a 1px stroke (R=239, G=216, B=177). Reselect the newly created object, open the Stroke palette (Window > Stroke) and then check the Dashed Line box. Enter 1px in the dash box and 3px in the gap box. At this point, your text should look like the final image.



R: 239
G: 216
B: 177





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Create the Waves

31. Use the Pen Tool (P) to create an object as shown below. Once your object is drawn, fill it with R=213, G=255, B=255. Keep the resulting shape selected. Go to the Effect > Artistic > Film Grain. Follow the data as you can see in the second image and then click OK. Next, apply a 2px Gaussian Blur for the result then set it to Blending Mode Soft Light.



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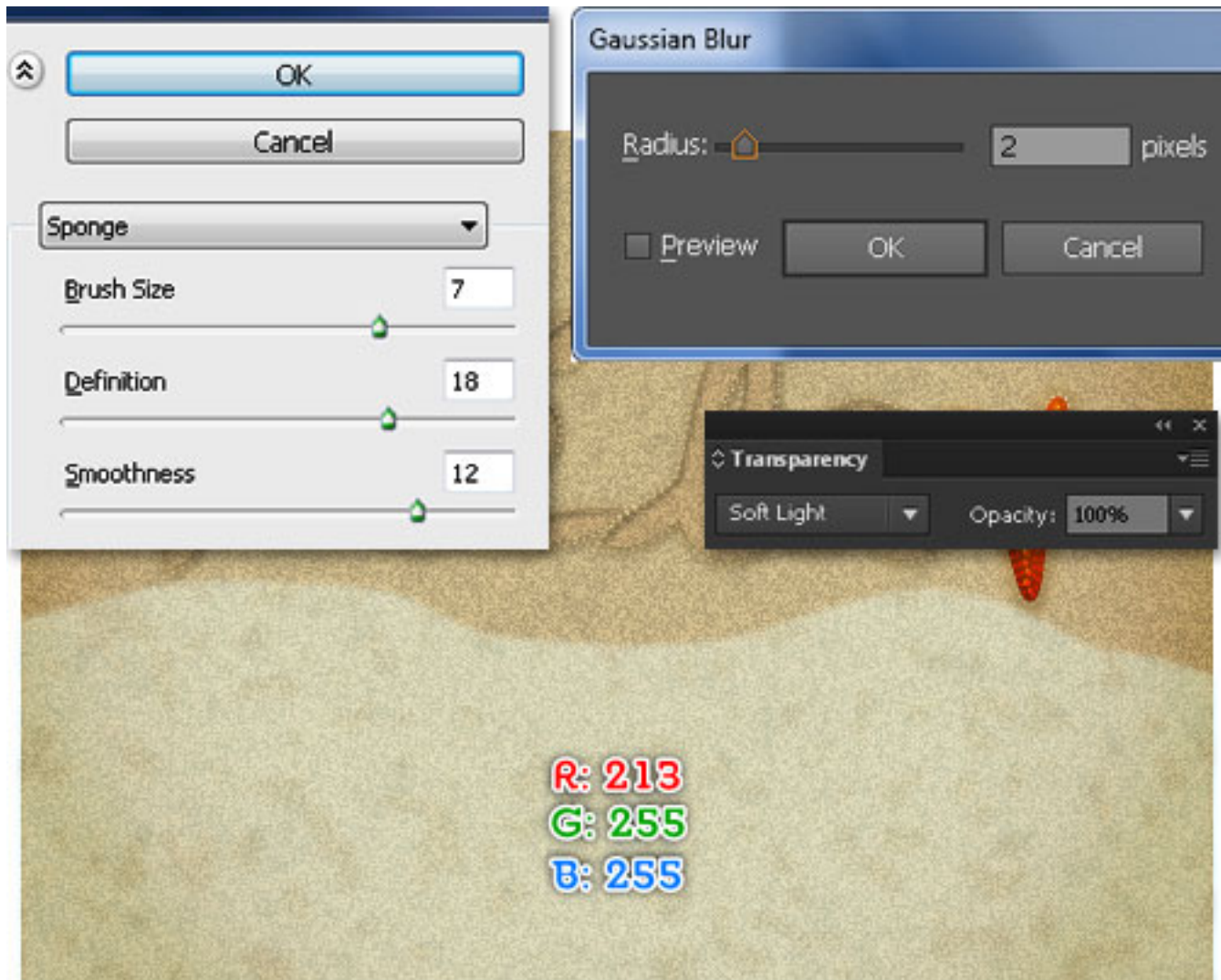
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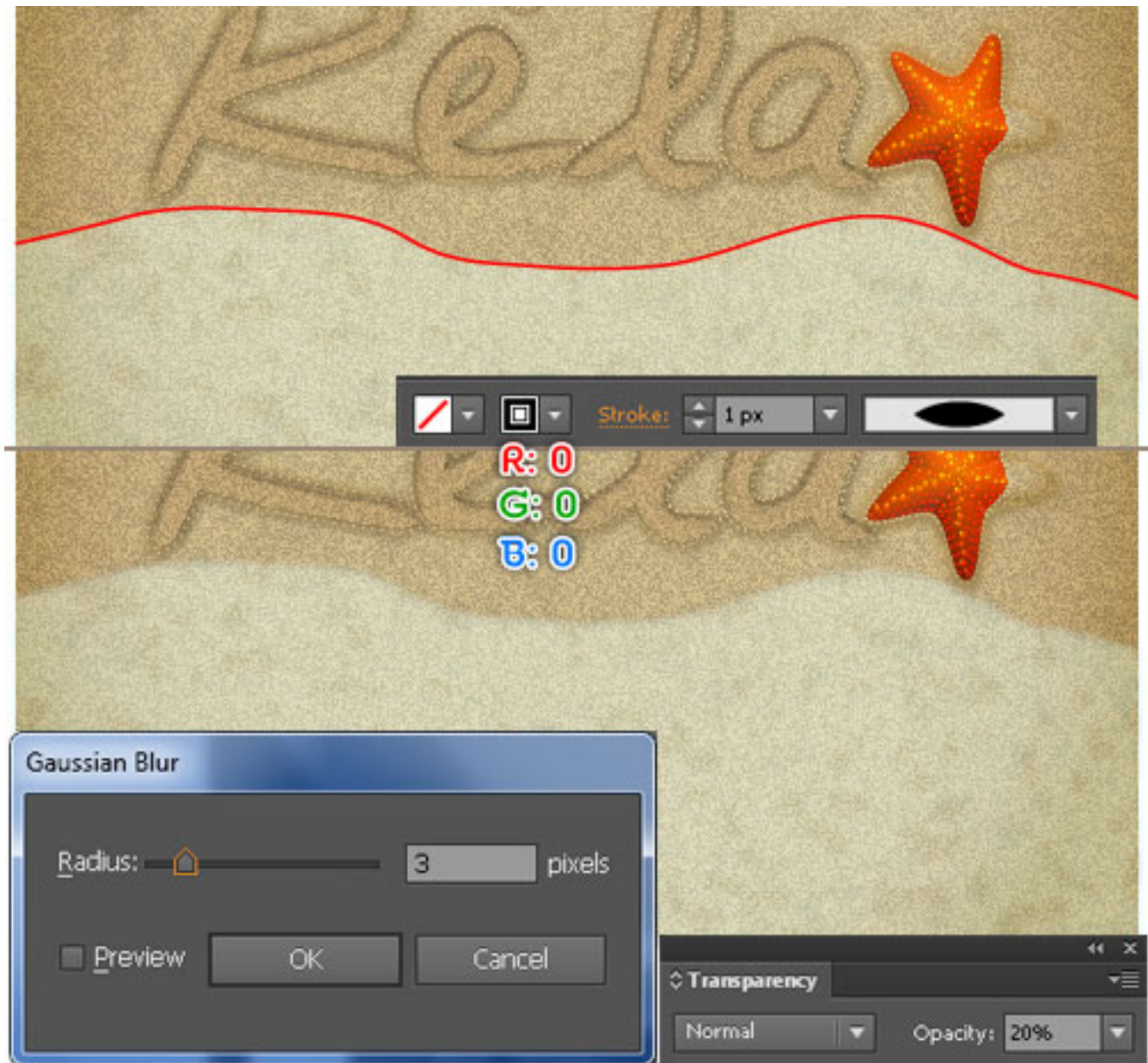


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32. To give a realistic look, I'm going to add the shadow on the newly created shape. First, draw a curved path with the help of the Pen Tool (P). Next, fill this path with none, add a 1px stroke (R=0, G=0, B=0) and then apply the Width Profile 1 for the result. Keep the newly created object selected. Go to the Effect > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Enter a 3px Radius and then click OK. Next, reduce the Opacity of the result to 20% and hide it behind the shape created in step 31.



33. Reselect the object created in step 32. Duplicate and bring it to front. Keep the duplicate selected and go to the Appearance palette then remove the Gaussian Blur effect. Now open the Brushes palette (Window > Brushes). In the Brushes palette, click on the “Brushes Libraries Menu” button (at the left-bottom corner of the Brushes palette) and you will get brush sets in various categories. Open the Artistic category, and select the Chalk Charcoal Pencil subcategory. You will get a library of rough brushes. Select a suitable brush. I will use the one labeled as Charcoal Feather. Before you continue, close the Chalk Charcoal Pencil subcategory. Now reselect the newly created object, then move to the Brushes palette and click on the Charcoal Feather brush. Make sure that the newly created object is still selected. Replace the existing stroke color with R=153, G=227, B=255. Change the stroke weight to 3px and apply the Width Profile 2 for the result. Finally, set the Blending Mode of the newly created object to Screen and reduce the Opacity to 30%.

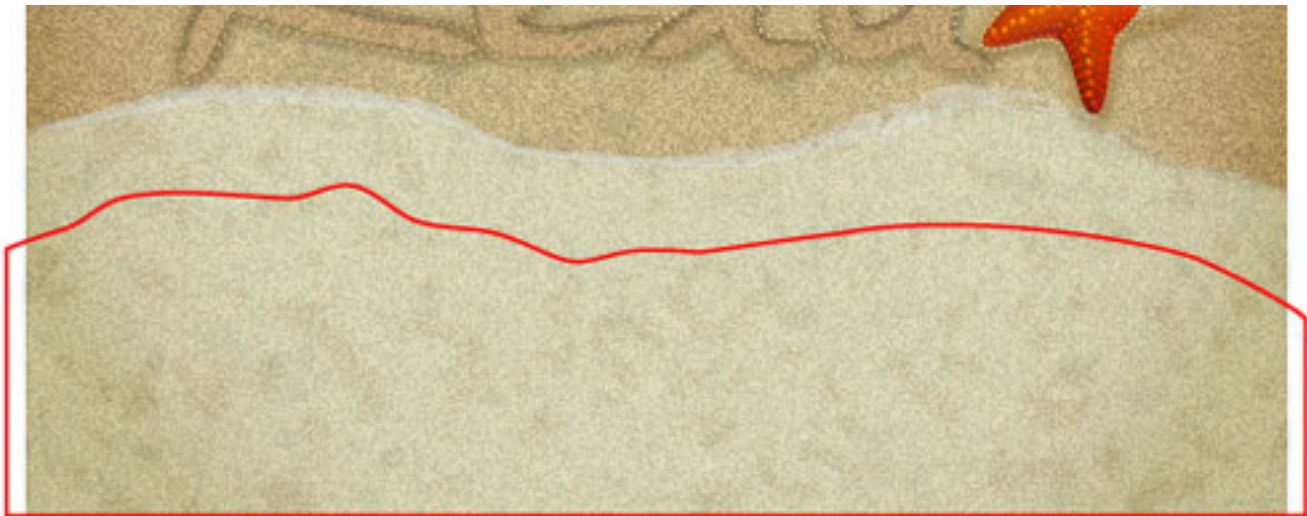


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34. Next comes the another wave. Using the Pen Tool (P), create an object as shown below. Once your object is drawn, fill it with the linear gradient. Keep the resulting shape selected, and go to the Effect > Artistic > Sponge. Follow the data as you can see in the third image and then click OK. Next, apply a 2px Gaussian Blur for the result then set it to Blending Mode Hard Light and reduce the Opacity to 50%.





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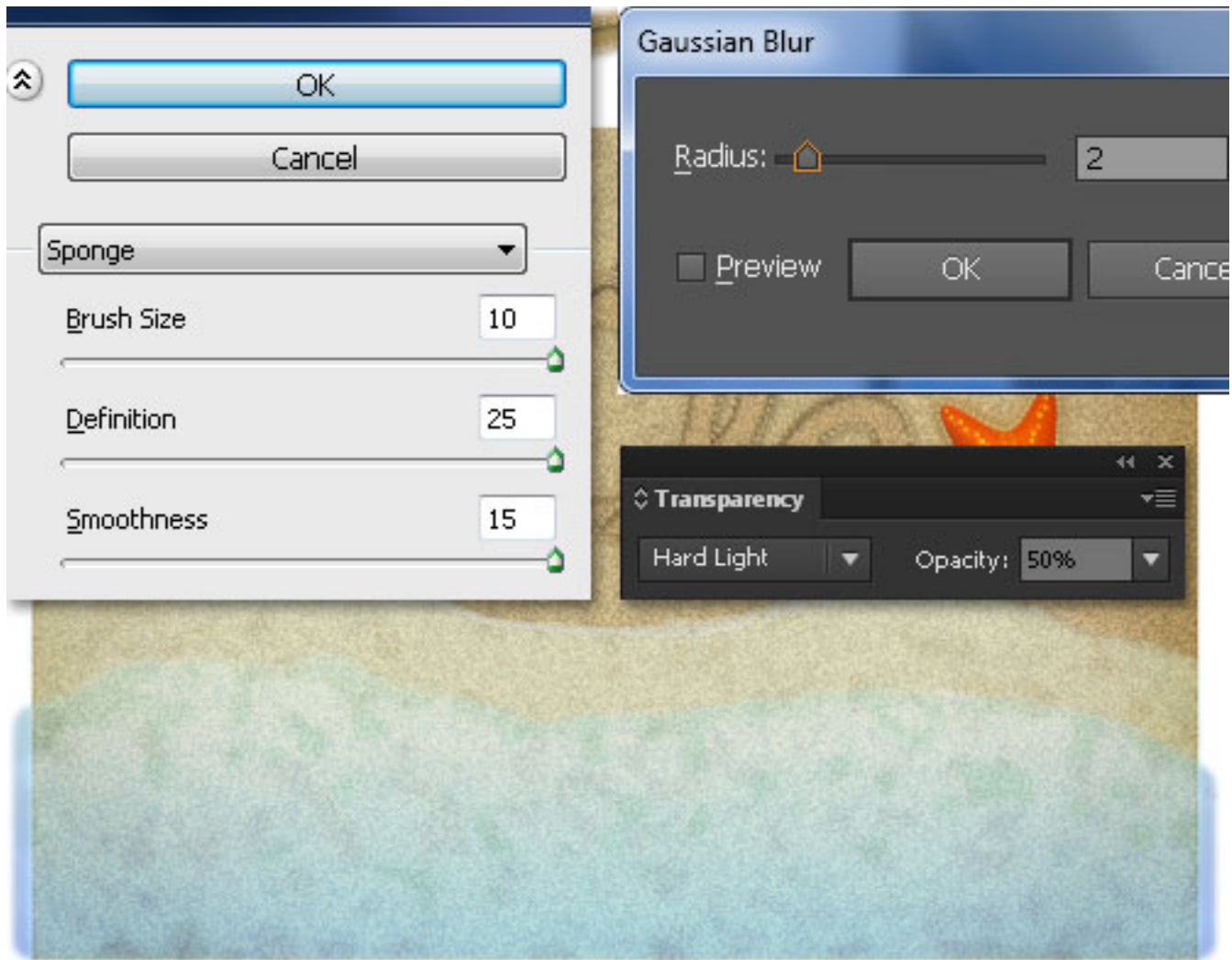
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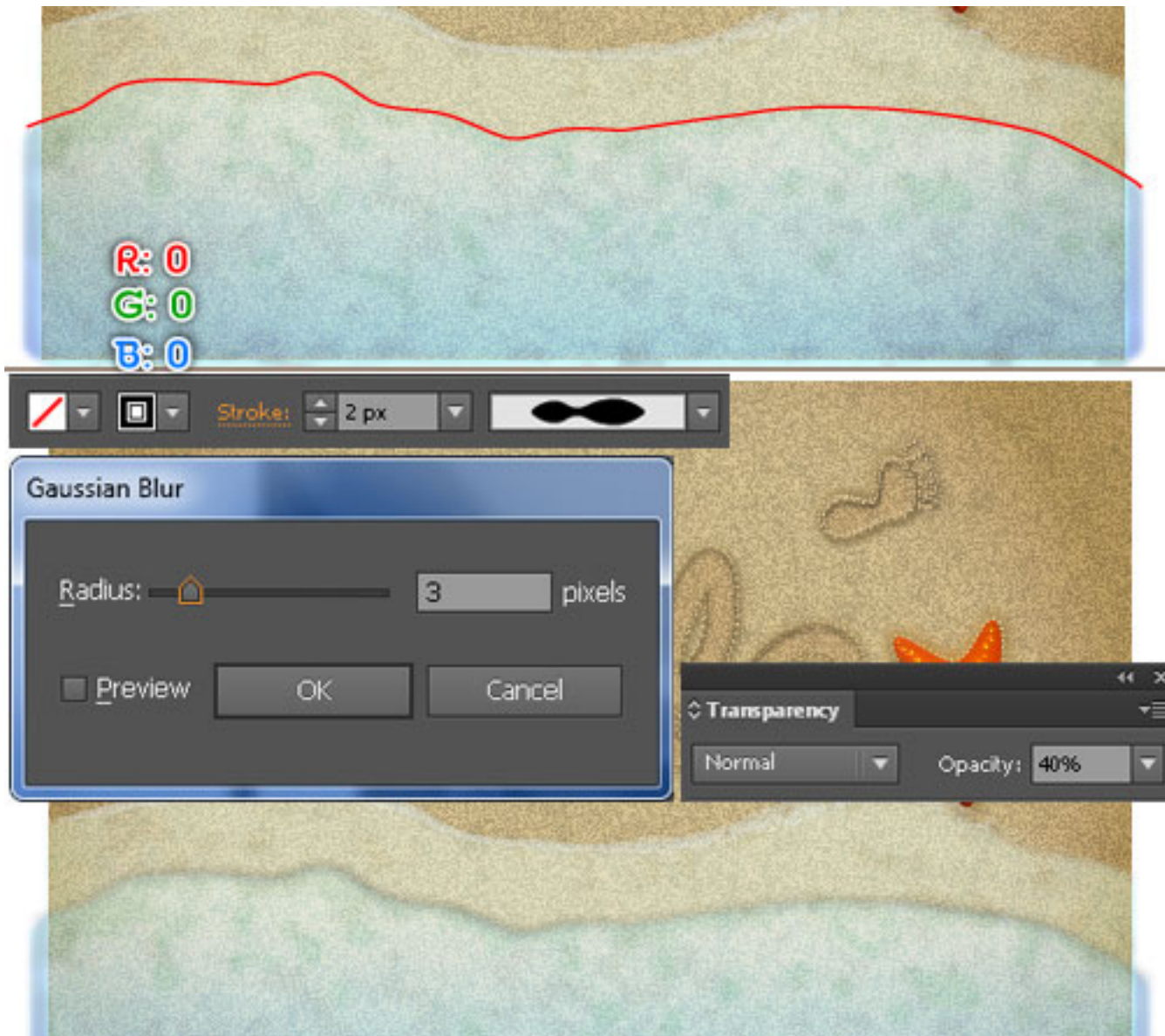


35. Let's create the shadow for the shape created in step 34. First, draw a curved path with the Pen Tool (P) similar with the image below. Next, fill this path with none, add a 2px stroke (R=0, G=0, B=0) and then apply the Width Profile 2 for the result. Keep the newly created object selected. Go to the Effect > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Enter a 3px Radius and then click OK. Next, reduce the Opacity of the result to 40% and hide it behind the shape created in step 34.



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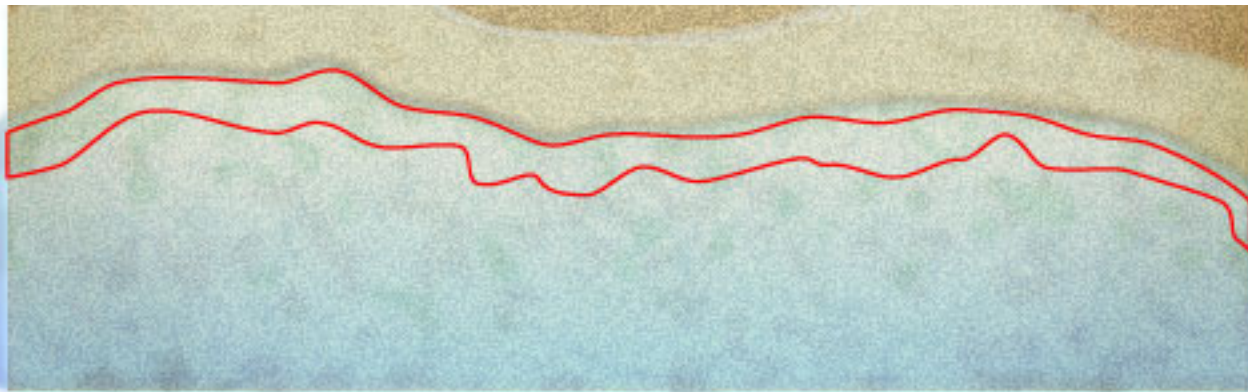


36. To give a realistic look, we're going to add some details on the second wave. With the help of the Pen Tool (P), create an object as shown below. Once your object is drawn, fill it with R=241, G=242, B=242. Next, apply a 5px Gaussian Blur for the resulting shape then set it to Blending Mode Screen and reduce the Opacity to 50%.



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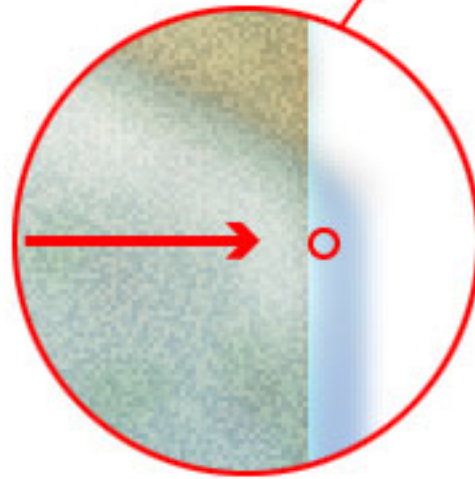
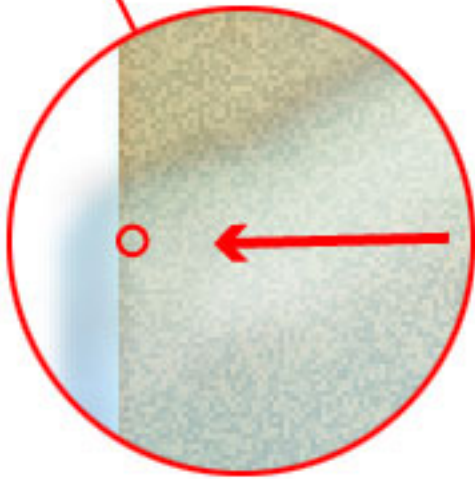
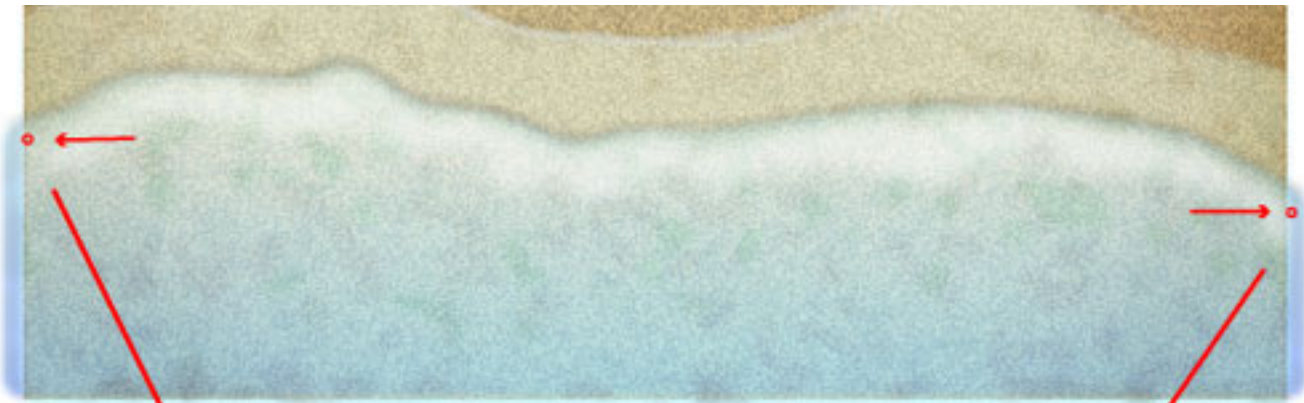


37. Using the Ellipse Tool (L), draw two objects and then place them to the positions as you can see in the image below. Next, fill the two newly created ellipses with the radial gradient. Now reselect these ellipses and create a blend between them.



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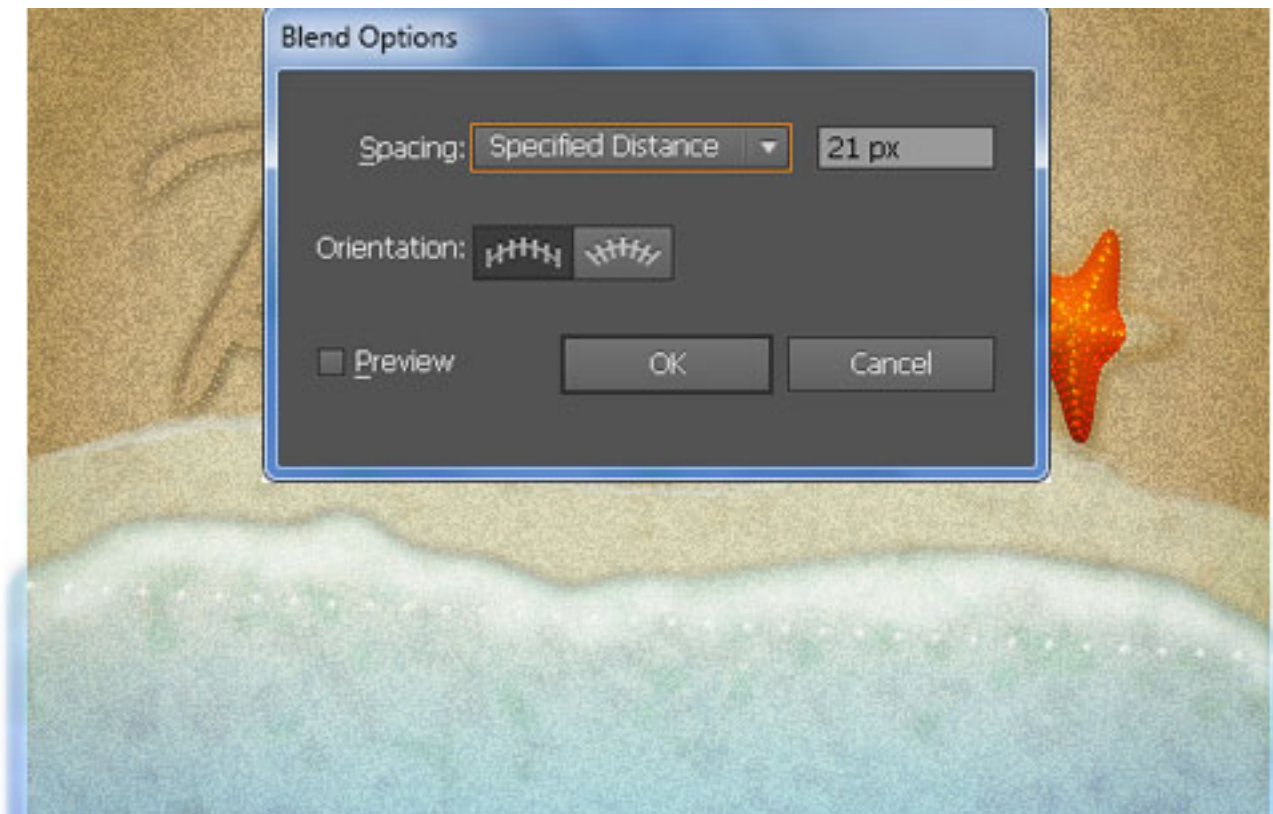
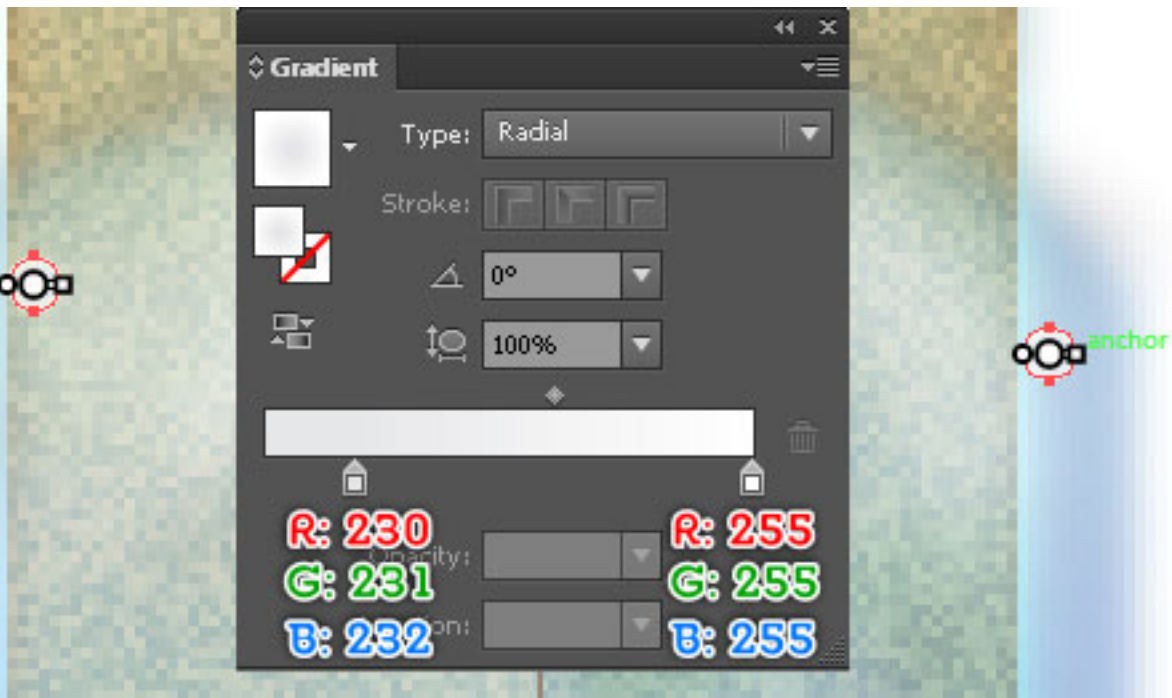
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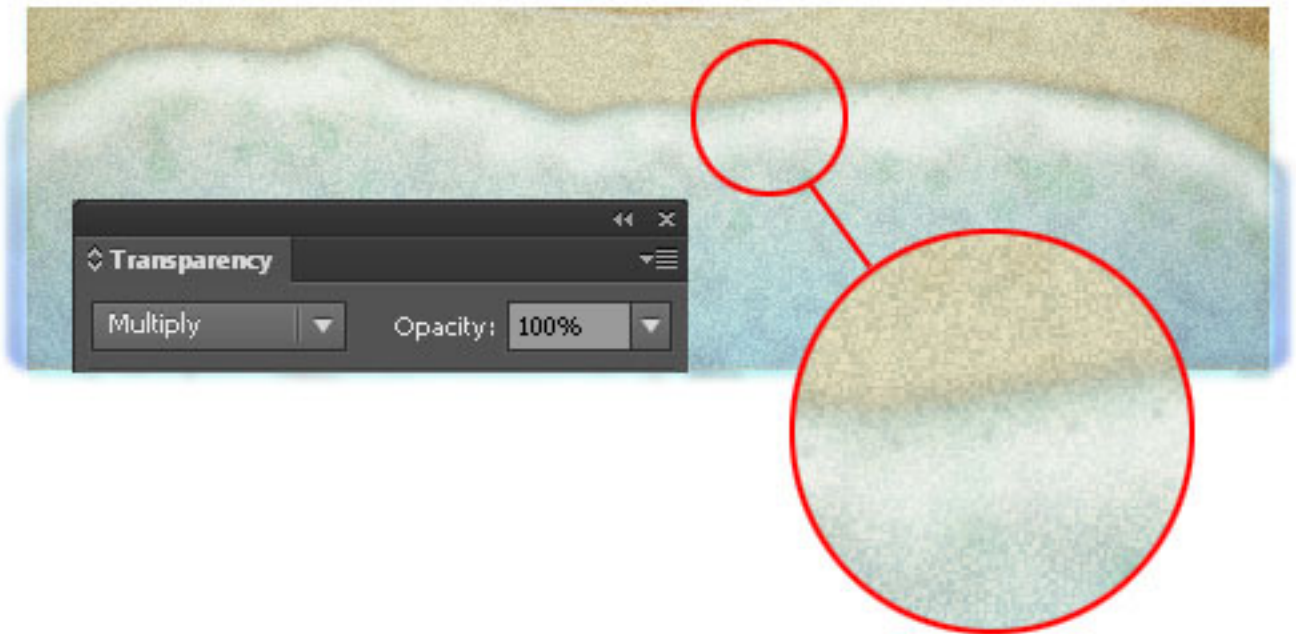
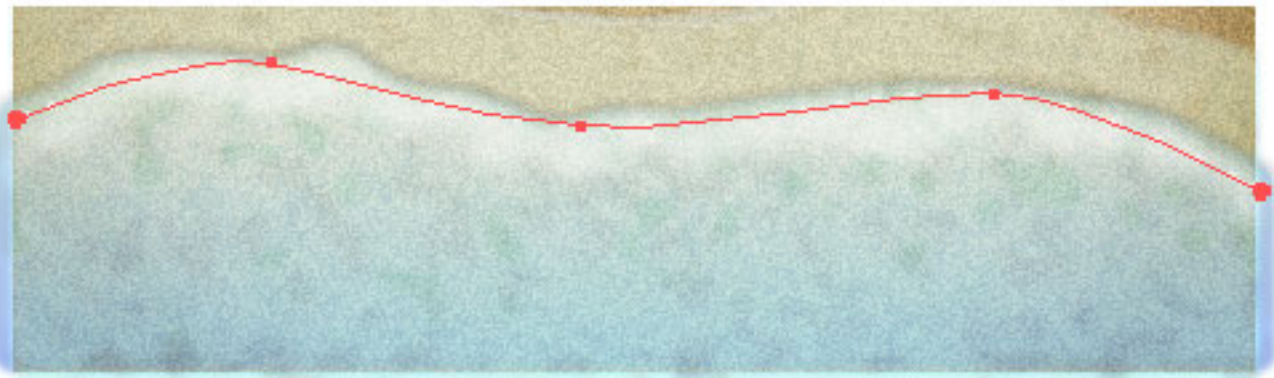
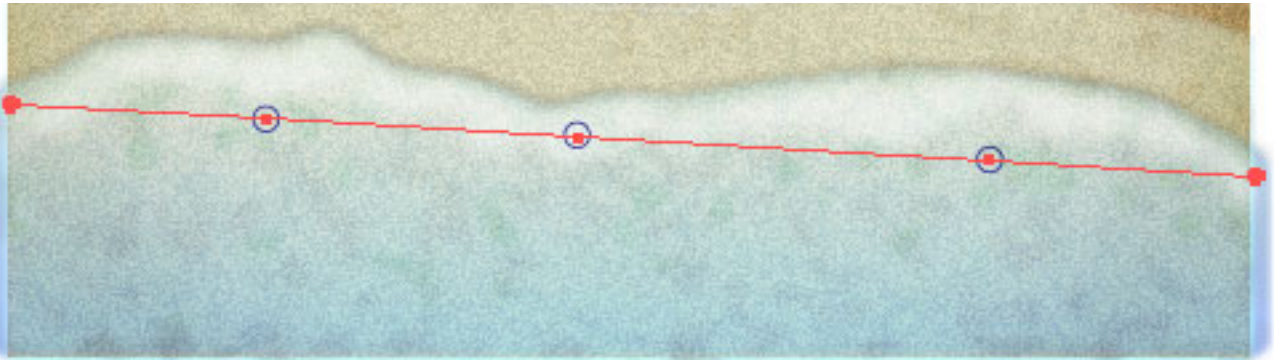
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38. Make sure that the blended object is still selected. Pick the Add Anchor Point Tool (+) and click on the three points highlighted with blue. Reselect the three newly created anchor points and click on the “Convert selected anchor points to smooth” button from the Properties bar. Reselect these newly created anchor points (except the center anchor point) and move them up to get the result as shown in the second image. Now select the newly blended object and set the Blending Mode to Multiply.

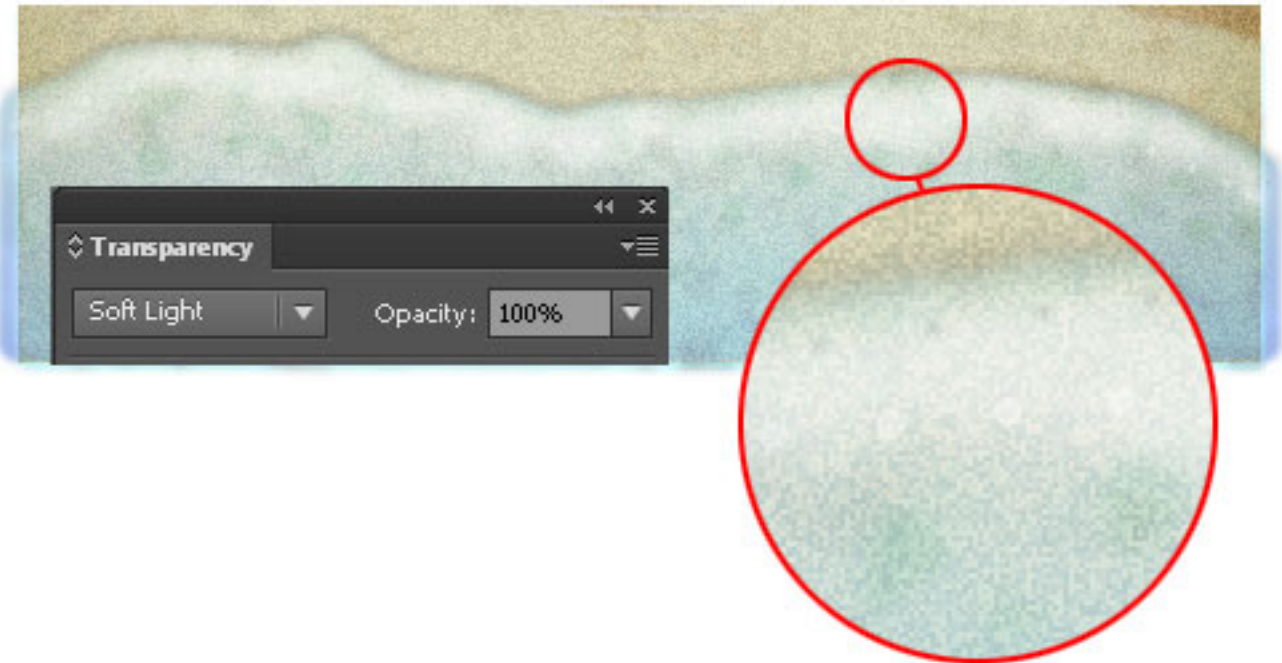
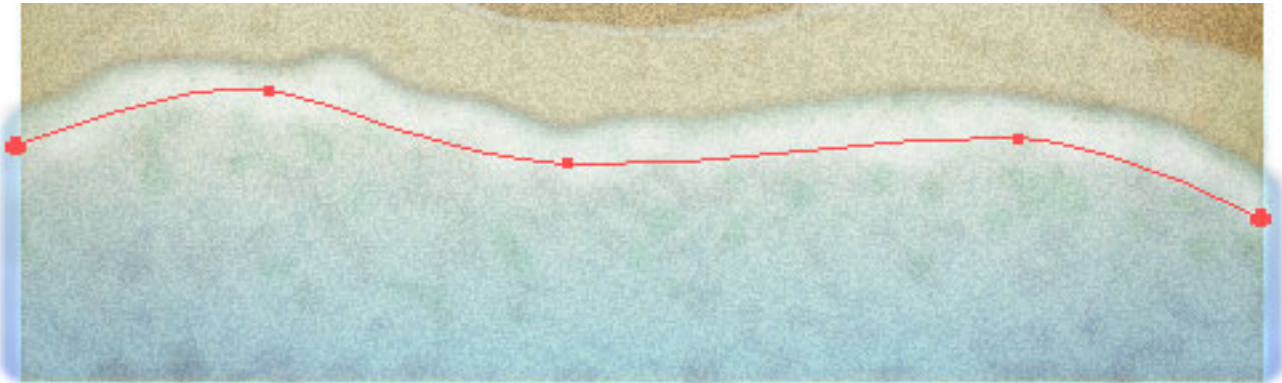


39. Reselect the newly blended object. Duplicate and move it 17px down. While the duplicate is selected, change the Blending Mode to Soft Light.



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Were done! I hope you've enjoyed this tutorial and be able to apply these techniques in your future projects.



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