

Adobe Illustrator: Autotracing a Raster Image for Glowforge

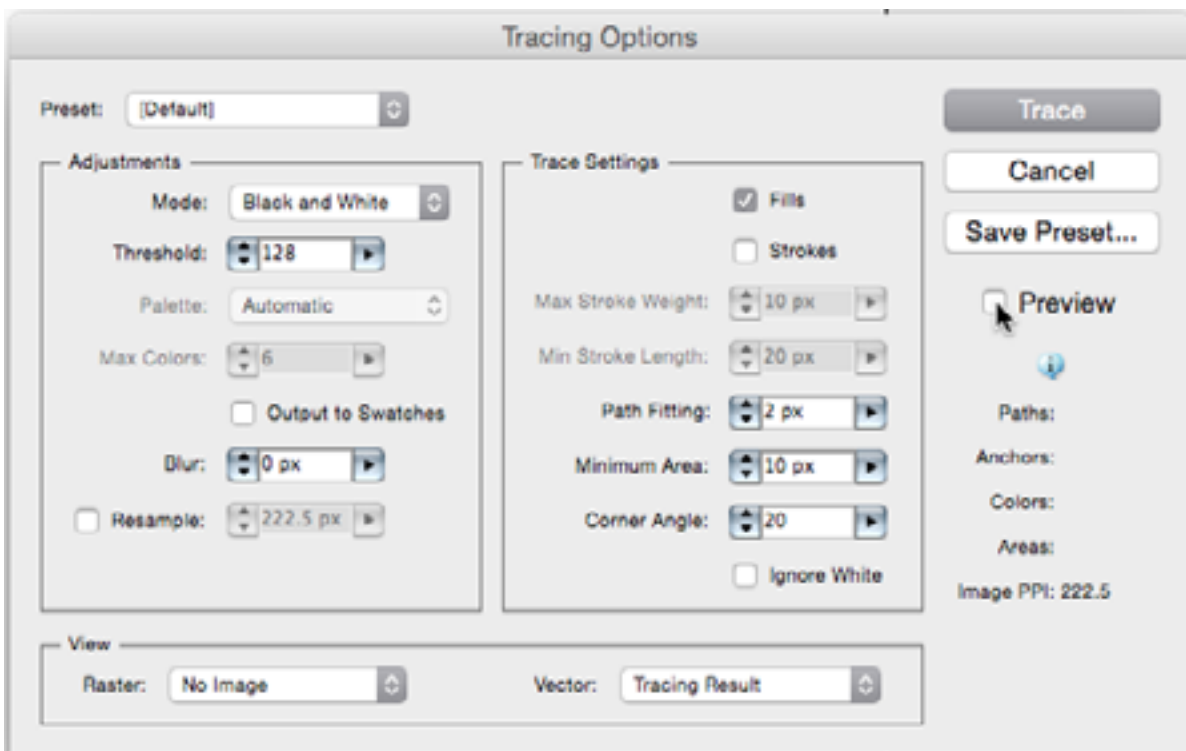
If you wish to create cut or score (vector) lines from a raster (bitmap) image, the image will have to be traced--either manually, or using the automatic tracing features of Illustrator. Before tracing, it is highly desirable to edit the image first to remove distracting backgrounds and other elements that may confuse the tracing routine (see tutorial Adobe Photoshop Clean Up An Image). In this case we want the flower only.



There are many options available for autotracing, depending on what you want the final result to be. Here is a workflow that will allow you to compare various options easily:

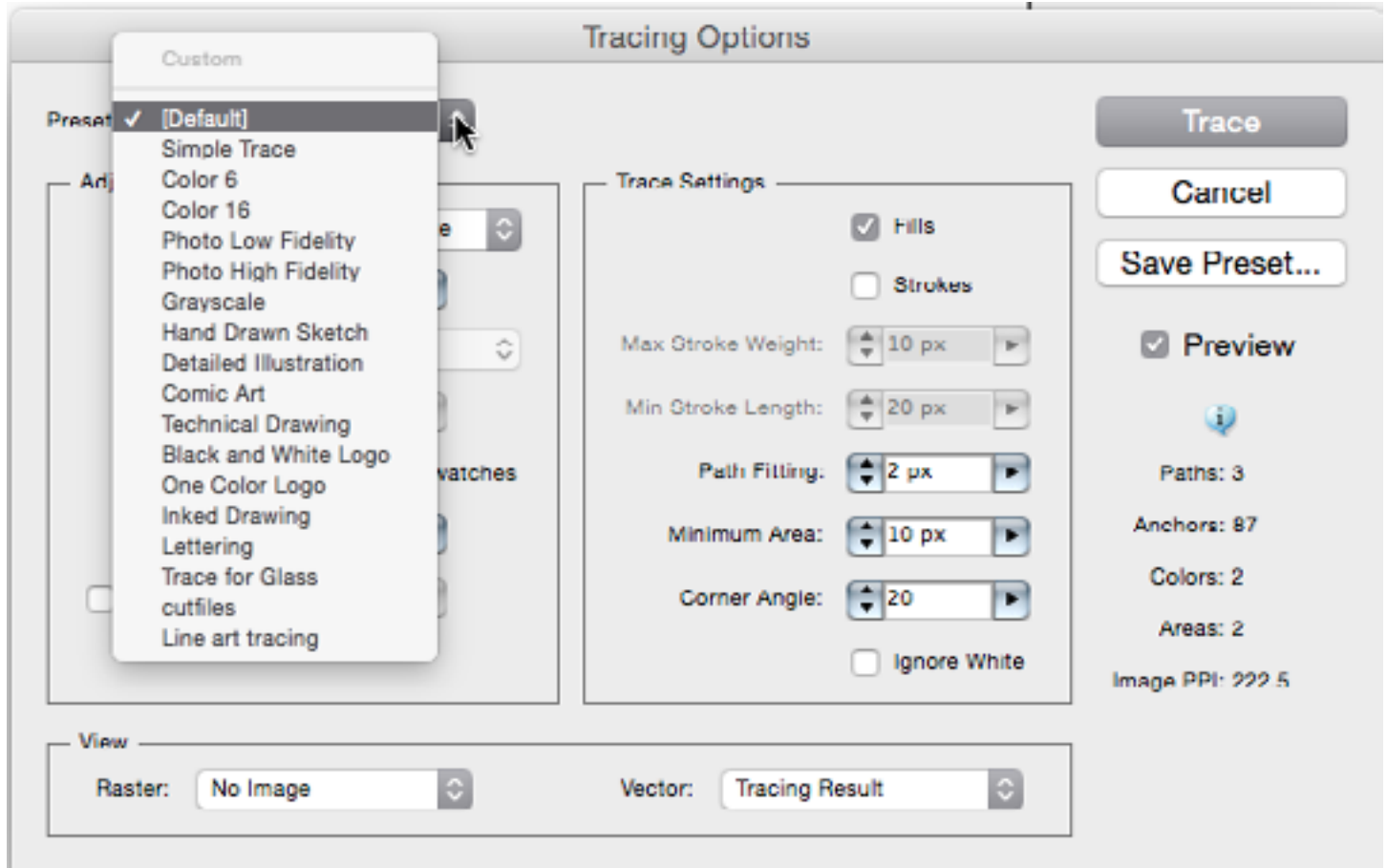
With a new empty document, choose **File > Place**, and navigate to the raster file with your image. Once placed, it will show in your Illustrator document as a selected object consisting of pixels.

While still selected, choose **Object > Live Trace > Tracing Options**.^{*} This will open a popup showing all the tracing options. Click on the Preview checkbox to see the expected result.



^{*}This tutorial was created using the CS5 version of Illustrator. In CS6 or later, you would choose **Window > Image Trace** to access the tracing options. Be sure to click the **Advanced** dropdown. The parameters listed will be similar to those described for CS5.

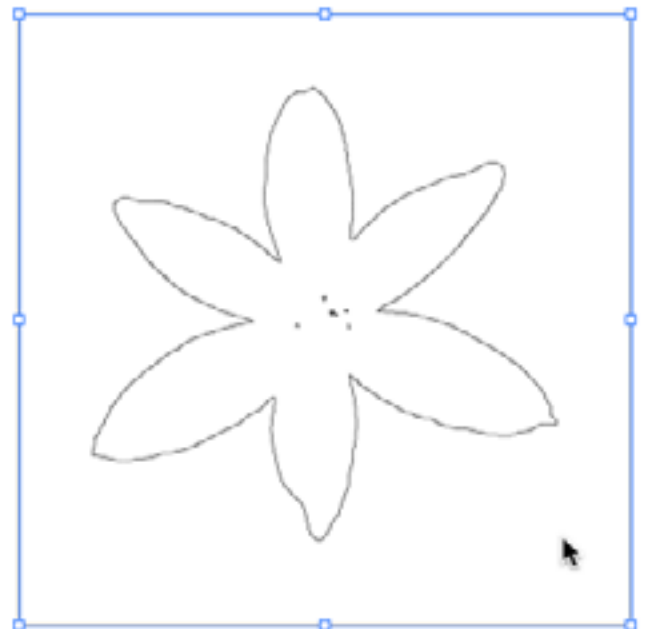
You can choose from one of the preset options as a starting point. They are found in the Preset drop-down menu.



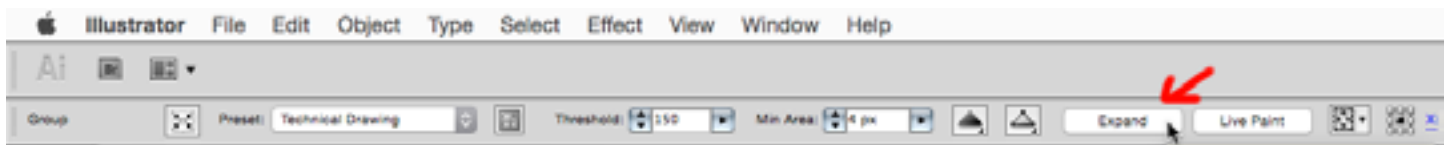
You'll notice that the trace settings change to correspond to each preset, and they may consist of either fills or strokes, or both. If you are looking for a result that would give a cut line (or score line) for the Glowforge, you should concentrate on methods that use Strokes but not Fills. You can change the various settings to better fit your raster image. When you are happy with the resulting preview, click on Trace.

In this example the Technical Drawing preset, which consists of Strokes only, was used.

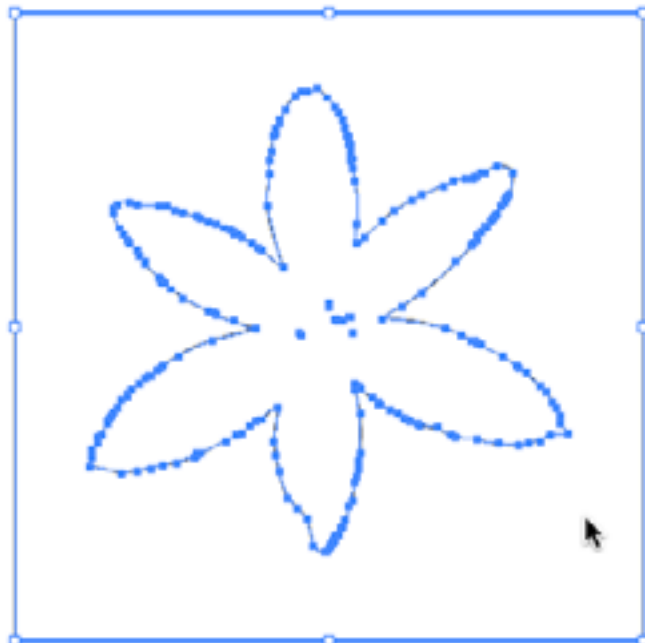
At this point you will have an autotraced image that is still bonded to the raster image. To get access to the actual vector lines, you need to **Expand** the tracing.



From the **Object** menu choose **Live Trace > Expand**. Or you can click on the **Expand** button in the toolbar.



Result:



You can edit this vector drawing as you would do any Illustrator drawing, including deleting the unwanted extra bits in the center of the flower, as well as the box around the flower. (You will need to ungroup the object first.)

Final Result:

