



MakerSpace Software Guide

CorelDRAW



Latest Edition: August 2026

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Before You Start

What is CorelDRAW?

CorelDRAW takes a picture or graphic (like a JPEG or PNG) and convert it into a set of lines and shapes that CorelDRAW can edit. This turns your image into something you can resize, modify, or use with Maker equipment like cutters and printers, without losing quality.

What is CorelDRAW used for?

At the MakerSpace, CorelDRAW is used to:

- Design and prepare files for the laser cutter (cutting and engraving).
- Set up artwork and cut lines (CutContour) for the vinyl printer.
- Create vector designs for the vinyl cutter.
- Prepare artwork for the large format printer.
- Adjust sizing, layout, and line weights before sending a file to a machine.

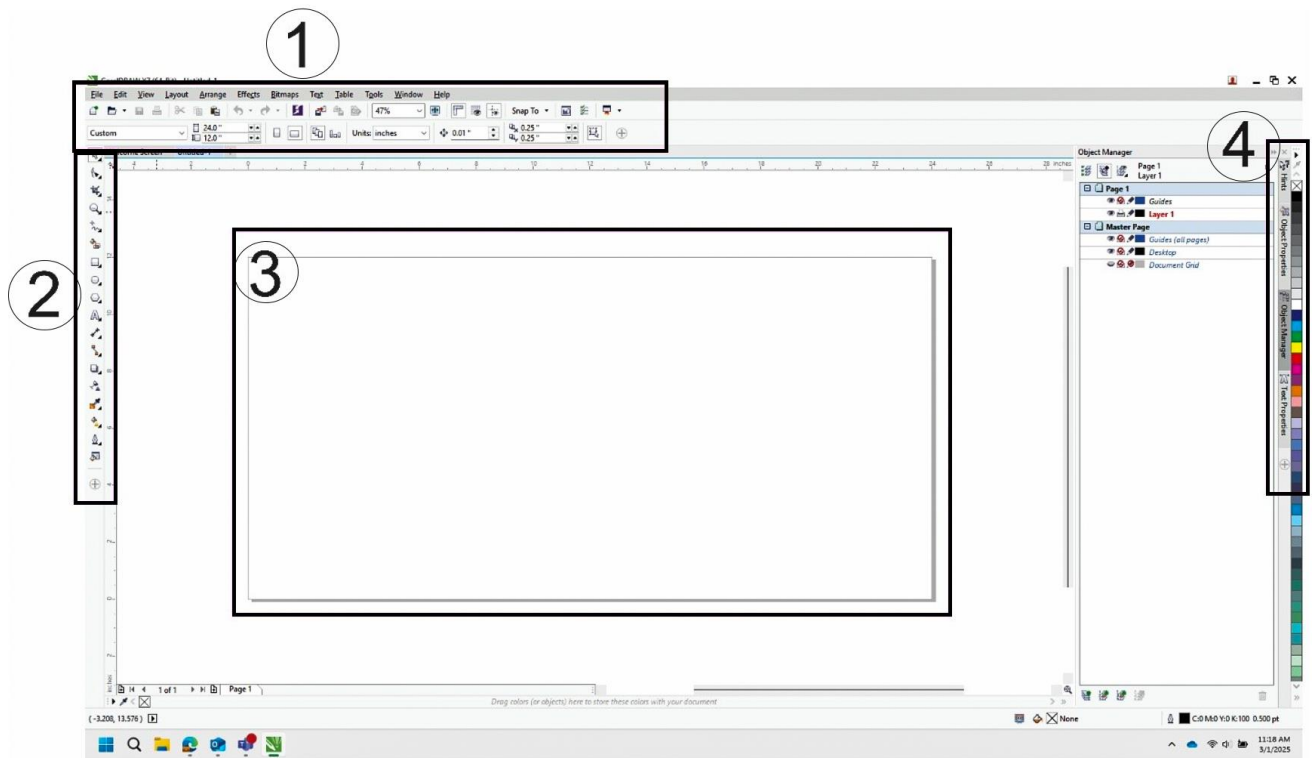
What to Expect

Skill level: Beginner-friendly. This guide covers the essentials you need to get started.

Time to learn the basics: Minimum 30 minutes of hands-on practice.

Prior knowledge: Reading the Rasters & Vectors guide first is recommended so you understand the difference between the two file types.

The Workspace



A screenshot of the workspace in CorelDRAW, with numbered labels

1. **Menu Bar and Tool Parameters** – Tools to adjust size, line weight, font and other settings.

Toolbox (left side) – Contains your drawing and editing tools: pointer, crop, shapes, text, and more. Some tools have a small black arrow – click and hold to reveal additional tools.

Canvas / Workspace (centre) – Your working area. The size represents the real-world dimensions of the machine you will use.

Colour Swatches (right side) – Left-click a swatch to fill an object. Right-click to set the outline (stroke) colour. Click the X swatch to remove a colour.



Key Concepts

Accepted File Formats for Import

- **.CDR** – CorelDRAW's native format. Best for saving and reopening your work.
- **.PDF** (vector-based) – commonly used for importing designs.
- **.AI, .SVG, .DXF** – other vector formats that CorelDRAW can open.
- **.JPG, .PNG** – raster images can be imported for tracing or printing, but cannot be cut directly.

Rasters and Vectors in CorelDRAW

CorelDRAW works with both vectors and rasters.

- **Vectors** – Shapes, text, and lines you draw in CorelDRAW.
- **Rasters** – Photos or images you import (.JPG, .PNG).

Machines that cut need vectors; machines that print or engrave use both vectors and rasters. Refer to the Rasters & Vectors Guide for a full explanation.

Line Weight (Stroke Weight)

Line weight controls how thick a line appears. This matters because the laser cutter uses line weight to distinguish between cutting and engraving. Lines set to **Hairline** (the thinnest setting) will be cut. Anything thicker than Hairline will be engraved.

CutContour

CutContour is a special colour swatch used with the vinyl printer. Any vector line set to CutContour will be treated as a cut command rather than a printed element. It is applied by right clicking the CutContour swatch in the colour palette. See the Vinyl Printer Guide for details.

Image Trace

Image Trace converts a raster image (like a .JPG or .PNG) into a vector. This is essential when you have a photo or downloaded image that you want to cut on the laser cutter or vinyl cutter. The traced vector is placed on top of the original image.

Do note that complex images can be challenging to trace.

Grouping

Grouping combines multiple objects into a single unit so they can be moved, resized, or positioned together. Use **Ctrl+G** to group and **Ctrl+U** to ungroup.

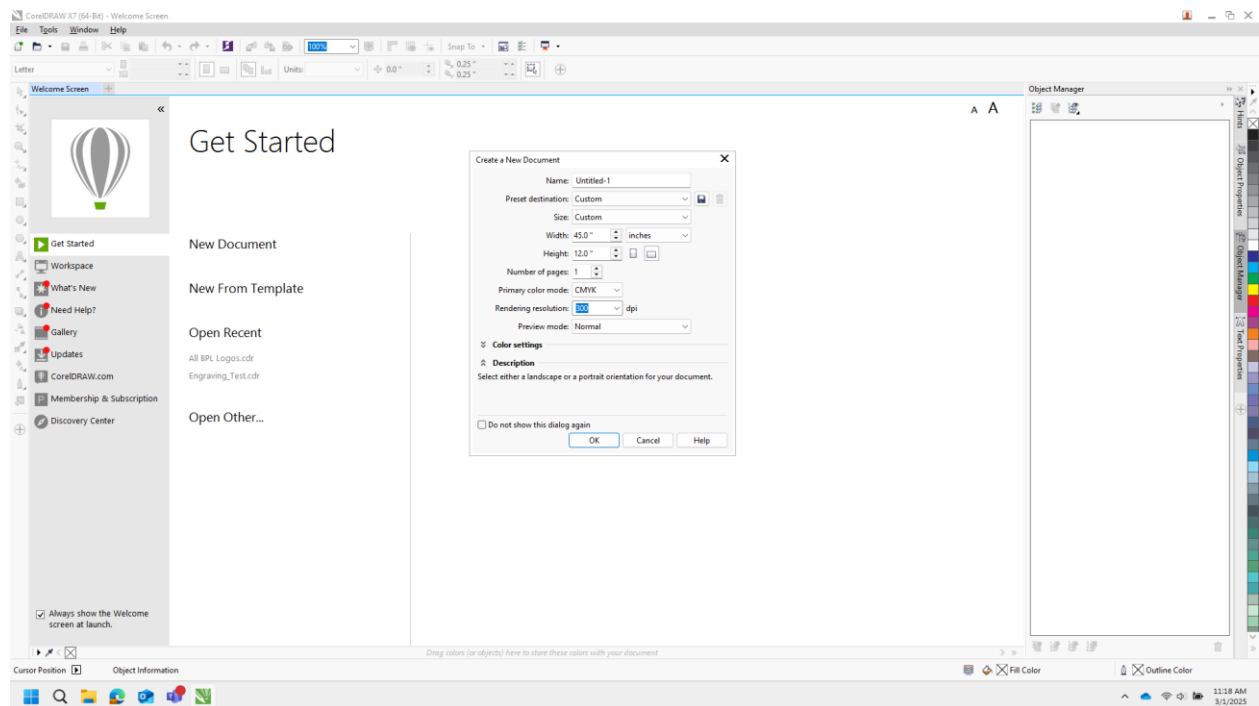
Outline

Grouping combines multiple objects into a single unit so they can be moved, resized, or positioned together. Use **Ctrl+G** to group and **Ctrl+U** to ungroup.

Getting Started

1. Create a New Document

1. Open CorelDRAW. On the Get Started page, click New Document (or File → New).



A screenshot showing the Get Started Page.

2. When creating a new document, set your canvas size to match the equipment you plan to use:

Equipment	Maximum Width	Height
Laser Cutter	24"	12"
Vinyl Printer	18"	Your design height
Vinyl Cutter	22"	Your design height
Large Format Printer	41.5"	Your design height

3. Set the resolution to 300 DPI for better image quality.
Click OK to create the document.

2. Import an Image or File

1. Go to File Import, or drag and drop a file from your USB onto the canvas.
2. If prompted, select Curves to import vector data correctly.

Note: Not all file types import perfectly. If an image does not appear correctly, you may need to convert it to .JPG or .PNG first.

3. Draw and Edit Shapes

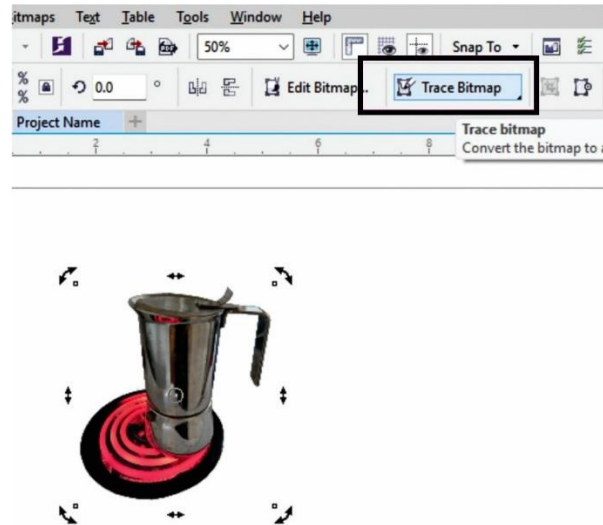
The shape tools on the left toolbar are used to draw various shapes. After selecting the desired shape tool, click and drag on the canvas to create a shape. Use the pointer tool to select, move, and resize objects.

Tip: In CorelDRAW, you must fully enclose objects when dragging to select. A partial drag over the object will not select the object.

4. Trace a Raster Image (Image Trace)

If you need to convert a photo or image into a vector for cutting:

1. Select the raster image on the canvas.
2. Click the Trace Bitmap button in the top toolbar.



A screenshot showing the Trace Bitmap button in the top toolbar.

3. Choose a tracing option (Quick Trace can work for simple images, the other options are better suited toward specific image types. It is ok to play around to see what type of Image Trace works best with your image.).
The traced vector will appear on top of the original image. Use the Pick tool to move it and separate the image from the traced design.

5. Create a boundary outline

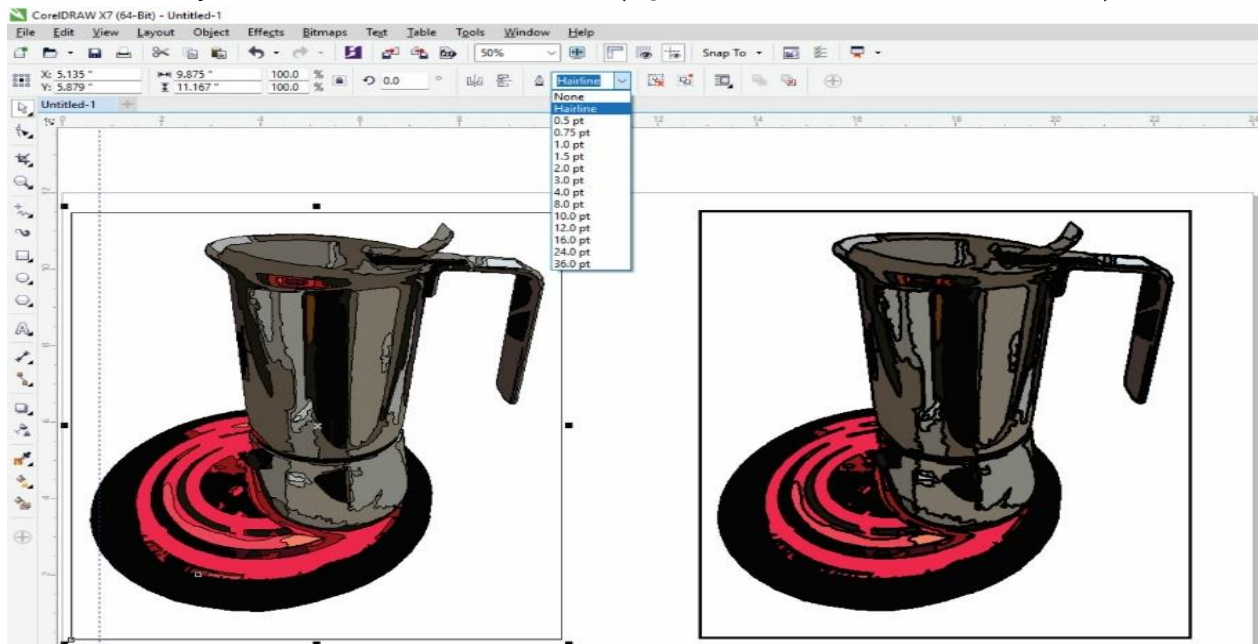
If you need preserve the shape of the Image you can use the boundary tool to get the outermost shape.

1. Once the object has been live traced. Right click and select Ungroup.
2. You may have to select the background elements and delete them.
3. Reselect (all parts) of this new object and use the Boundary option (Object > Shaping > Boundary)
4. This will create a shape that matched the outside line
5. Delete any unwanted vector details.
6. Apply the CutContour to the boundary if planning to print stickers.

6. Set Line Weights

Select a vector object, then find the Stroke Size setting in the top toolbar:

- **Hairline** — for laser cutting (the laser will follow these lines).
- **Thicker lines** — will be engraved or printed, not cut.
- **CutContour** — Not a line weight but a Swatch applied to a Hairline line so that the vinyl cutter knows where to cut. (right-click the CutContour swatch)



A screenshot showing how to change Stroke Size.

7. Export Your File

1. Select all objects to include.
2. Go to File → Export.
3. Export as .PDF for use with VersaWorks (vinyl printer).
4. Remember to ensure that line weights, cut lines and Cutcontour swatches are ready for your machine and project needs. Please see machine specific guides for further information.
5. Save to the Desktop or a USB drive.
6. Delete all files from the Desktop or Maker USB after use.

Tip: Also save the original .CDR file so you can re-edit your design later.

Tips for Success

Save often. CorelDRAW does not auto-save. Save regularly to avoid losing work.

Play around to learn. The best way to get comfortable with CorelDRAW is to experiment with the tools on a blank canvas.

Check for hidden objects. Elements can be invisible or stacked on top of each other. The machine will still process them even if you can't see them. For example, two hairlines on top of each other will cause the laser to cut the same line twice.

Ungroup before editing. If you cannot select part of an object, it may be grouped. Use Ctrl+U to ungroup it first.

Check your bounding box. Object dimensions in the toolbar are based on the bounding box (shown as small black squares around the object), not just the visible artwork.

Common Issues & Quick Fixes

Problem	What to Do
Imported file has missing fonts	CorelDRAW may not have the font used in the file. Choose Convert to Curves when prompted or select a replacement font or download the missing font and add it.
I can't select part of my design	The objects may be grouped. Select the group and press Ctrl+U to ungroup. Then try selecting individual elements.
Image Trace result looks messy	Use the Virtual Segment Delete tool (under Crop) to click or drag over unwanted line segments. You can also try a different tracing preset.
Laser cut my design twice	You likely have two overlapping Hairline lines. Select and delete the duplicate. Hidden elements are a common cause.
My .PDF won't import correctly	The PDF may contain fonts or features CorelDRAW cannot read. Try converting the PDF to curves, or re-export it from the original program.
Colours look different when printed	Screen colours and print colours often differ. For vinyl printing, VersaWorks manages colour profiles. For best results, use the CMYK colour mode.

Need More Help?

If you need additional support:

- Ask MakerSpace staff for assistance at All Levels Access hours.
- Check the MakerSpace guides for Rasters & Vectors and VersaWorks.
- Refer to the equipment-specific guide for your project.