

New Dynamic Guides Will Change the Way You Draw

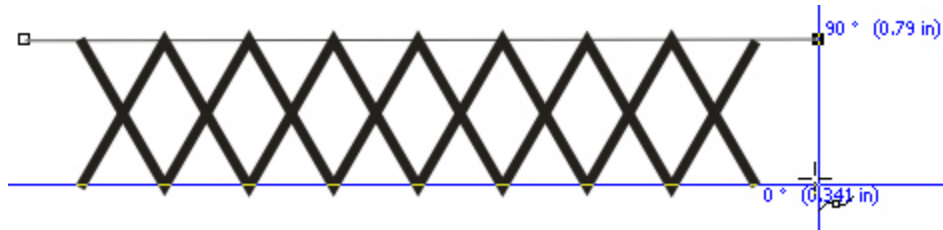
By Steve Bain

Once in a while, a new drawing feature comes along that's so innovative, it has the potential to completely change the way you draw. New Dynamic Guides in CorelDRAW® Graphics Suite 12 will do just that. In fact, after using them for a while, you'll wonder how you ever did without them. Let's explore just how great these fancy new guides really are.

A Boon for Drawing and Positioning Lines and Objects

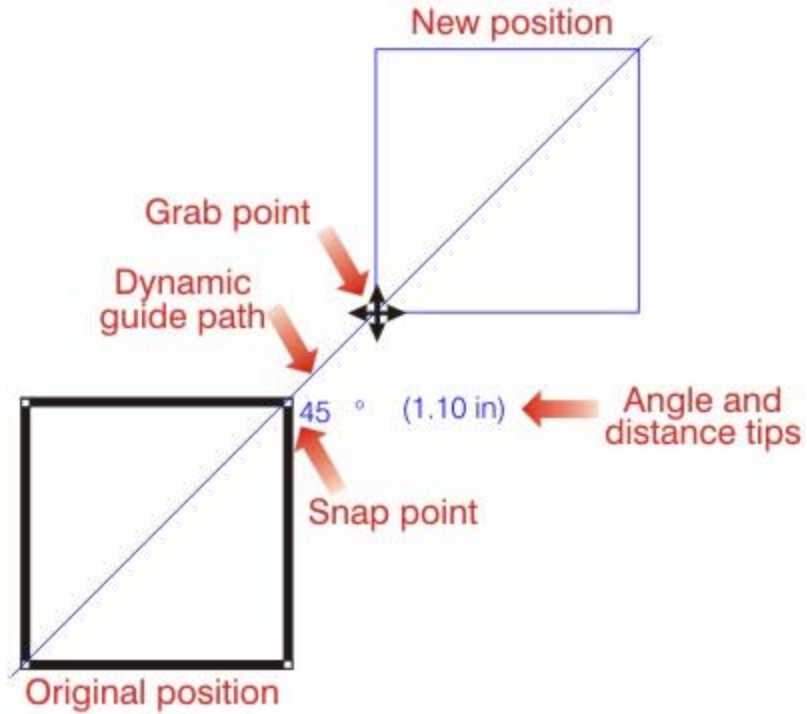
Unlike typical guidelines that physically occupy a point on your document page, Dynamic Guides appear only momentarily right where you need them. As you're drawing a line or dragging an object, they come to life to show information about your cursor's position relative to points on surrounding objects.

As your cursor comes within a certain distance of an object snap point, a Dynamic Guide path magically appears right where you need it. The guide path itself is "sticky", meaning your cursor easily aligns to it. When drawing or positioning objects, the screen tips you see provide angle and distance measurements from your cursor or grab point to nearby snap points, like this:

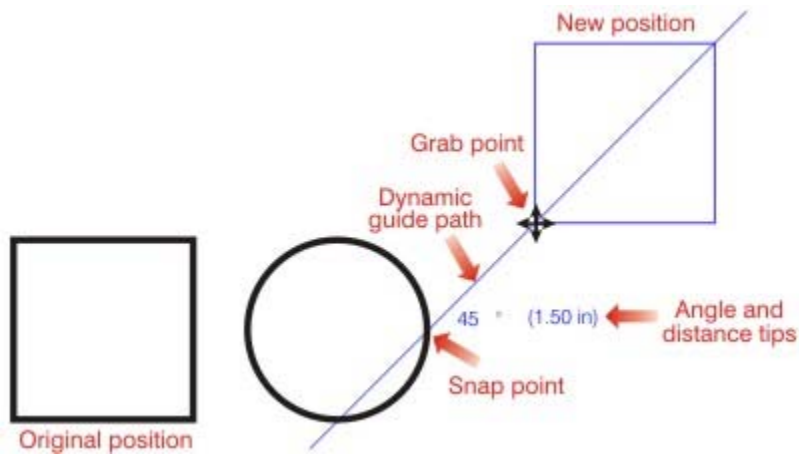


If you've never used Dynamic Guides before, try these steps and you'll see just how powerful this feature is:

1. To view only the feedback provided by Dynamic Guides, turn off the CorelDRAW 12 Snap to Objects feature. To do this, choose View/Snap to Objects Setup to open the Options dialog box for the Snap to Objects pane. Click to turn off both the Snap to Objects On and Show Snap Location Marks options, and click OK to close the dialog box.
2. Next, let's make sure Dynamic Guides are active. If they aren't already showing, activate your Dynamic Guide display by pressing Alt+Shift+D. Choose View/Dynamic Guides Setup to open the Options dialog box for the Dynamic Guides pane. Make sure the Angle and Distance Screen Tip options are selected and click OK.
3. Now that you're all set up, start your exploration with a single object. For example, draw a simple rectangle with the Rectangle tool (F6).
4. Choose the Pick tool, then grab the lower-left corner node of the rectangle and drag it in a circular motion around its original position. Notice as you do this that guide paths, and angle and distance values appear around the rectangle.
5. Continue dragging, but this time, drag your grab point close to a nearby snap point and slowly drag it along the guide path that appears. Notice how your cursor "sticks" to it, and the difference in angle and distance from your grab point to the current snap point is updated as you drag. What you see on your screen will look something like this:



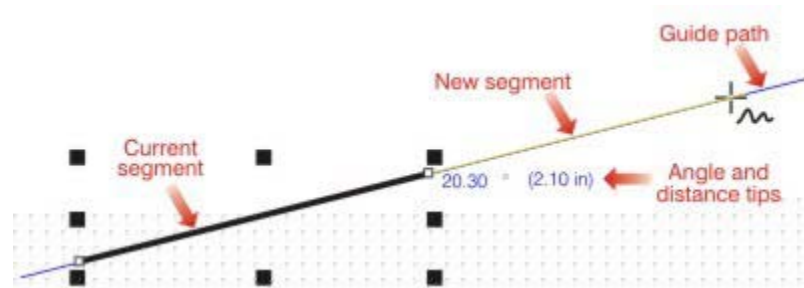
6. Create a second object (such as an ellipse) and add it to the mix. Drag your rectangle from the same corner beside the right side of the ellipse and notice another guide path appear at angles between your grab point and the ellipse snap points, like this:



Even if you're just creating lines or curves, you'll see Dynamic Guides feedback that displays the angle and distance from the last node position relative to the snap points of other objects. If you've ever fumbled trying to draw three nodes in perfect alignment at a non-typical angle, you'll certainly appreciate how useful this can be.

To see how easily you can add a perfect angled extension to a straight line, try these steps:

1. Use the same setup as in earlier steps. Start by creating a straight line at a non-typical angle (an angle that is anything but the standard 15-degree constrain interval). To create the line, choose the Freehand tool (F5).
2. Click any two points on your page to define the beginning and end points of the line. After clicking the second point, your straight line becomes a completed object, but remains selected.
3. Still using the Freehand tool, hold your cursor over the second point you clicked. Notice that the cursor features an end node symbol. Click your cursor on the node once to begin drawing another line segment. Move your cursor slowly away to extend the line and notice a Dynamic Guide appears at the exact angle of the existing line, like this:



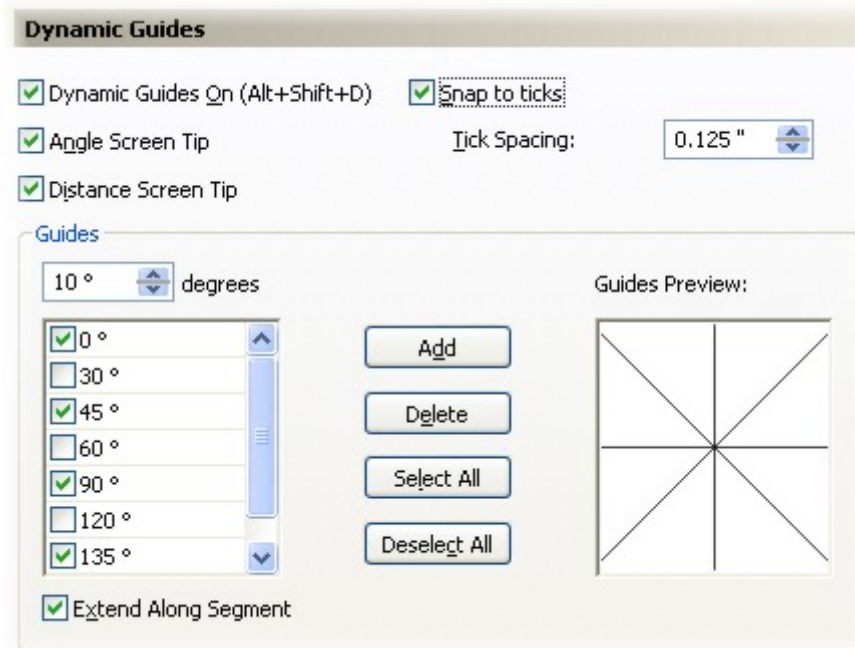
4. Move your cursor along the guide and click a point anywhere on it. Another node position is defined and your line segment is now a straight path composed of three nodes.

Customizing Dynamic Guides

There are plenty of ways you can control what you're seeing on screen. You can toggle Dynamic Guides on and off a number of ways: by using the Alt+Shift+D shortcut, by choosing View/ Dynamic Guides from the command menus, or by clicking the Dynamic Guides button in the Property Bar (shown next) while the Pick or Shape tools (and no objects) are selected.

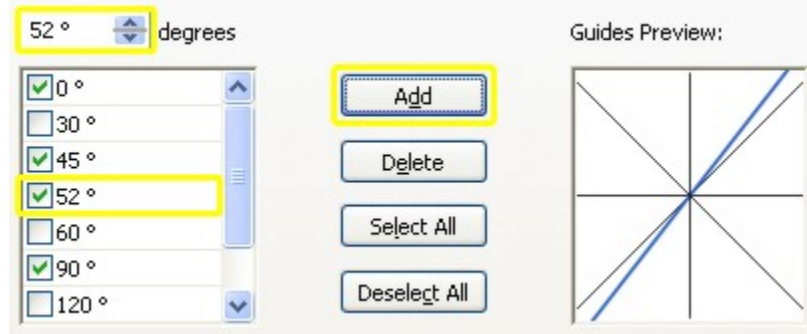


Dynamic Guides have a unique set of options that enable you to control their behavior. You can customize how the guides appear by choosing behavior options such as angle and distance tips, and tick snapping, and select which guide angles appear. To access these options (shown next), choose View/Dynamic Guides Setup to open the Options dialog box for the Dynamic Guides pane shown here:



Here's how each option will affect the way Dynamic Guides are displayed:

- **Dynamic Guides** – Select this check box to toggle Dynamic Guides on or off.
- **Angle Screen Tip** – When drawing with line tools, use Angle Screen Tip to show an angle value from the tip of your grab point relative to other object snap points, when positioning objects or placing nodes.
- **Distance Screen Tip** – When drawing with line tools, choose Distance Screen Tip to show the distance between your cursor position on a guide and the current snap point, when positioning objects or placing nodes. The unit measure you'll see is based on your currently selected drawing units. (You can set this in the Pick tool Property Bar while no objects are selected.)
- **Snap to Ticks** – Use Snap to Ticks to toggle tick snapping along the guide paths in customizable increments. This enables you to move your cursor along the guide and snap to tick points according to the current Tick Spacing value.
- **Guides** – Use this area to select which angles you want your Dynamic Guides to indicate on screen. Check boxes enable you to toggle the angles on or off in the list. As you select each one, its apparent angle is displayed in the Guides Preview window on the right of the dialog box. To add your own custom angles, just enter a value in the degree box above the list and click the Add button, as shown next. Custom guide angles are automatically added to the guides list, so you have the option of toggling them on or off. You can also interactively select and manage the guides via list selection or just by clicking the apparent angles shown in the Preview window.

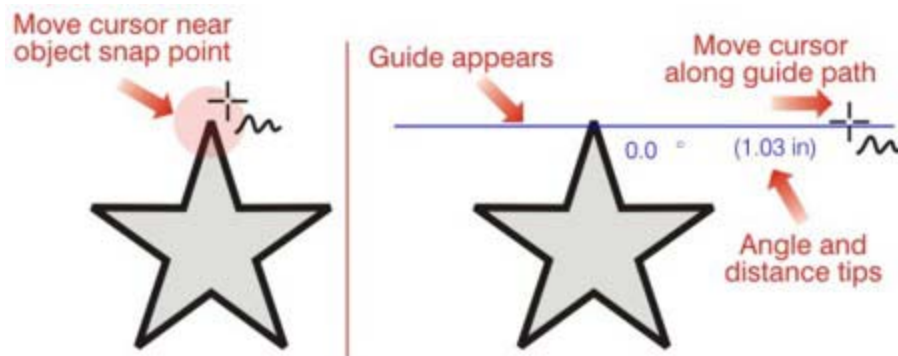


- Extend Along Segment** – When drawing using any line tool, use this option to easily add straight portions to an existing angled line segment. A Dynamic Guide will automatically show you where to place your new node so it's in perfect alignment with the existing straight line.

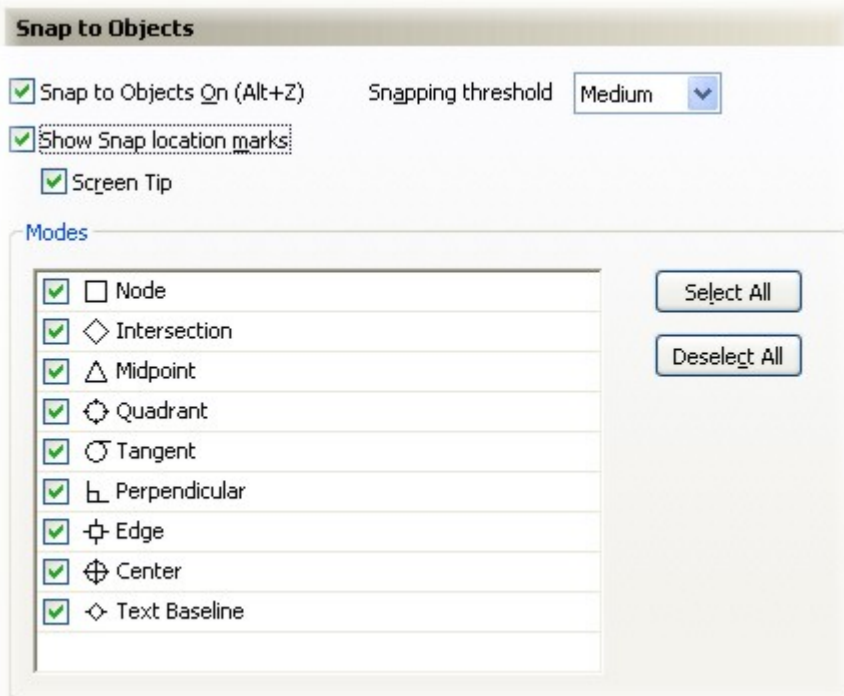
Extend Along Segment

The Dynamic Duo

It may also help you to know that Dynamic Guides work together with the new Snap Modes feature in CorelDRAW 12. The guides appear whenever your grab point or line tool cursor comes within a certain threshold of an active snap point on your original object, or on a different object, like this:



You can set up to nine object snap points to include in the process by choosing View/Snap to Objects Setup to open the Options dialog box for the Snap to Object pane, shown next.



If you're already using CorelDRAW 12 but haven't yet explored what Dynamic Guides can do, the steps we've covered here should get you on your way. Although this only scratches the surface, you've just turned a corner to a novel new way of drawing.

Steven Bain is an award-winning illustrator and designer, and author of nearly a dozen books including CorelDRAW: The Official Guide.