FireAlpaca – The Basics

To get FireAlpaca Free Digital Painting Software, go to **https://firealpaca.com/**
The site has buttons to download Mac or Windows versions and a link near the
top to Illustration Techniques (Alpaca School) for tips on using FireAlpaca.
YouTube has many tutorials on various aspects of FireAlpaca.

Starting a New Project

Click on File → New … Then select Standard or Comic.

Tools

Tools are the icons lined up vertically on the left. The most important tools for getting started are the Brush tool (at the top) and the Eraser tool (the second one down). You can click on the icons or use the keyboard shortcuts **B** for Brush and **E** for Eraser. All the tools have keyboard shortcuts

Another frequently used tool is the bucket fill tool, shortcut **G**.

You will also put the selection tools to good use: **M** for rectangle select and **L** for lasso select.

You can also select tools by clicking on "Tool" on the horizontal menu at the top. That gives you a drop-down menu of tools and also tells you their keyboard shortcuts.

File   Edit   Layer   Filter   Select   Snap   Color   Brush   View   Tool   Window   Help
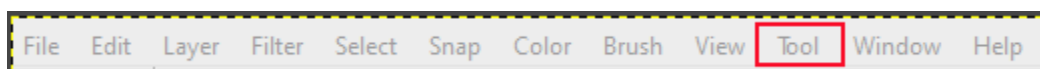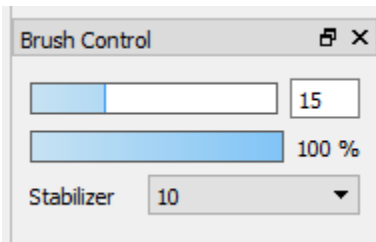
Brush Control

In Brush Control we can control the size of the Brush or Eraser, the opacity of your brush strokes (how much you can see through them) and how much you want FireAlpaca to help you draw smooth lines. In the above example the Brush is set to Size: 15, opacity: 100% and level of stroke stabilization: 10.

Snaps

Snap is a feature of FireAlpaca to help you draw parallel lines, criss-cross lines, circles, curves and perspectives. Snap is located horizontally at the top. Notice the black dot on the right – it is important for operating the Snaps.

Modes

Modes is a drop-down menu to select drawing perfect lines, rectangles, ellipses, polygons and curves. It defaults to Freehand, and it is important to remember to return to Freehand after using another mode.
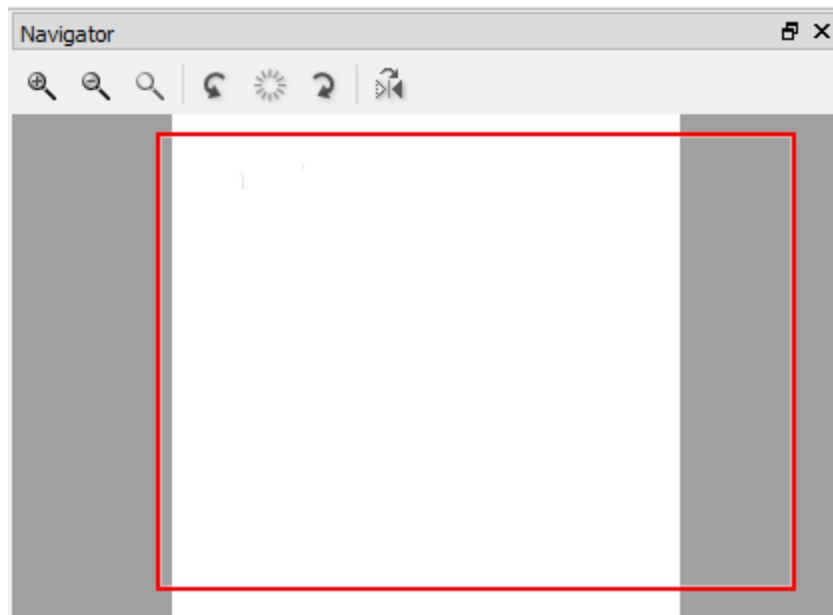
Layers

Layers are useful for keeping elements of your project separate to avoid messing up something while working on something else. Some actions automatically create a new layer. You can reorder layers and name each layer whatever you want. There is no limit to the number of layers you can have.
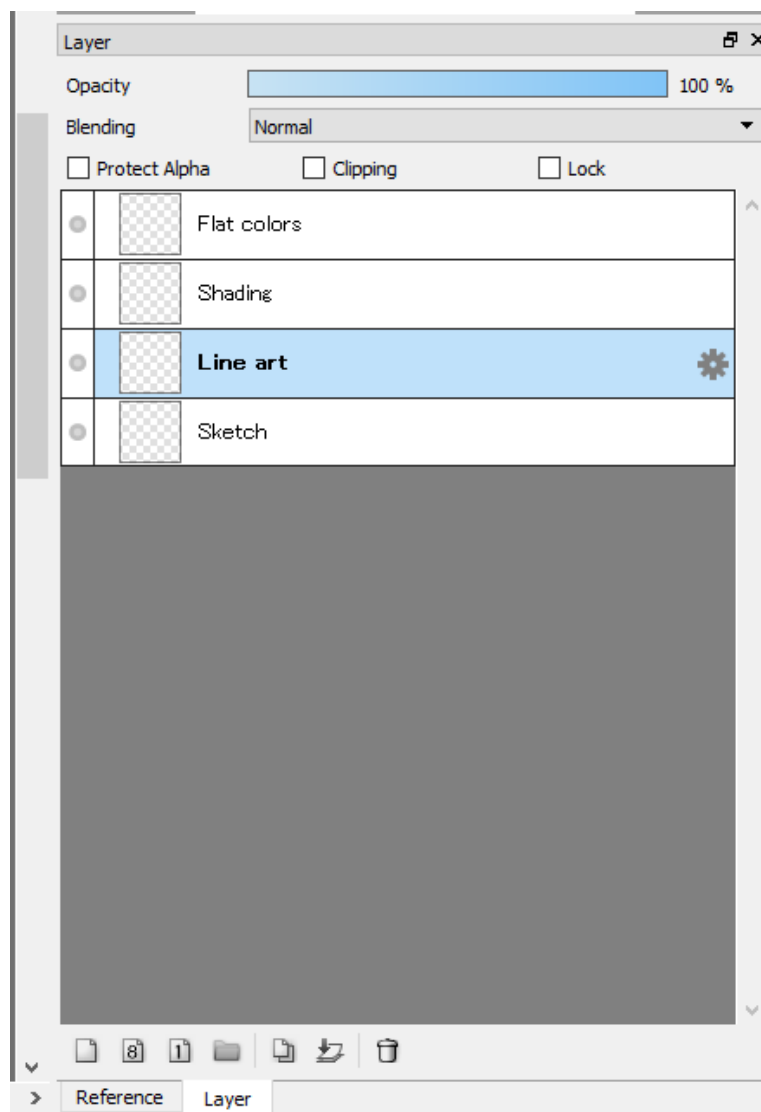
Navigator

The Navigator is useful for moving around inside your work, zooming in and out, rotating, and flipping (viewing it reversed, as a mirror image).

Comics

To add comics panels click on Layer → Add Panel Material … Then use the Panel Divide Tool to cut the panels as you want them.

Animation

To create animation it is helpful to be in Onion Skin Mode. Click on View → Onion Skin Mode. In the stack of animation layers, Onion Skin Mode shows the previous layer in red and the next layer in green. This is useful for easily comparing layers and adjusting the art so that the animation is smooth. To play the animation Click on View → AutoPlay …

Saving and Exporting

Saving is to keep the progress you have made in your work so that you can come back to it and work on it more. It is a good practice to save your work often.

Exporting is to generate the finished product. Click on File → Save, or File → Export.

Enjoying Art and Becoming a Better Artist

Daily practice is the best way to improve as an artist. You should practice by drawing actual objects or using reference photos. If you try to practice without a reference, you are not putting new information into your mind, so progress is much slower.

You should **not** judge yourself by comparing your skill level to other artists. You should only compare yourself to how *you* were in the past and how much *you* have improved. The enjoyment you get from making art is more important than your skill level.