

BetterHandles 1.4 Windows QuickStart

Welcome

BetterHandles is a plug-in with four versions for Adobe® Illustrator® 10, CS/CS2, CS3/CS4, and CS5. It combines a tool and palette to make working with Bézier curve handles easier and more powerful.

To install, drag the file **BetterHandles.aip** to Illustrator's Plug-ins/Tools folder and relaunch Illustrator. You should then see the **BetterHandles** tool to the right of the Convert Anchor Point Tool (in the Pen Tool family). For easiest access, drag and release on the tear-off at the right to create a standalone toolbar for this tool group.



The **BetterHandles** standalone palette should initially appear to the right of the tool palette. If you can't find it, go to the *Window* menu and make sure the menu item *BetterHandles* is selected (has a check next to it). You can dock or group the palette with other palettes.

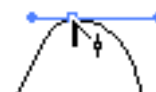
Tool Functions

Combining properties of the Convert Anchor Point Tool and Direct Selection Tool along with unique features of its own, the **BetterHandles** tool can be used to click and drag on direction handles, anchor points, path segments, and blank areas of the document as described below and on the tables of tool operations on page 3. Cursor hints and optional text annotations tell you when the cursor is over an item of interest. Hold down Ctrl during a drag to activate "slow-drag," where only a fractional part of the cursor movement is used to move items, resulting in increased precision. Set a preference and the Ctrl key can instead temporarily hide the handles and points.

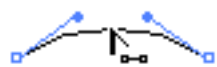
Handles: Click and Shift-click to select or deselect the point. Alt-click to change the type of point (smooth to corner and vice versa), moving the clicked handle only. Shift-Alt-click to retract the handle. Drag and Shift-drag to move the handle. Alt-drag to move the handle, constraining it to its original angle; add Shift to snap (when Smart Guides are on).



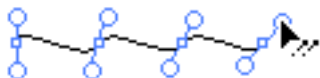
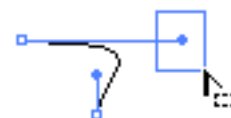
Points: Click and Shift-click to select or deselect the point. Alt-click to change the type of point, averaging the handles. Shift-Alt-click to retract the handles or create new ones if none exist. Drag and Shift-drag to extend new handles (or move the points – see *Preferences* on the next page). Alt-drag to extend new handles at the original angle; add Shift to snap (when Smart Guides are on).



Segments: Click and Shift-click to show or hide the segment's handles. Alt-click and Shift-Alt-click to show or hide all of the handles on the path. (You can change a preference to have Alt-click add a point to the path instead.) Drag to intuitively reshape the segment; add Shift to keep the segment symmetric. Alt-drag to reshape the segment while keeping handle angles frozen; add Shift to also equalize the handle lengths.



Blank areas: Drag out a marquee to select multiple handles (or points, if no handles fall within the marquee). Shift-drag to deselect selected handles. Alt-drag and Shift-Alt drag to select and deselect only points. Click to deselect either.



When multiple handles are selected, you can drag them with various movement modes, or use the editing functions of the palette on them.

Palette Functions

The **BetterHandles** palette gives you full control over points and handles:

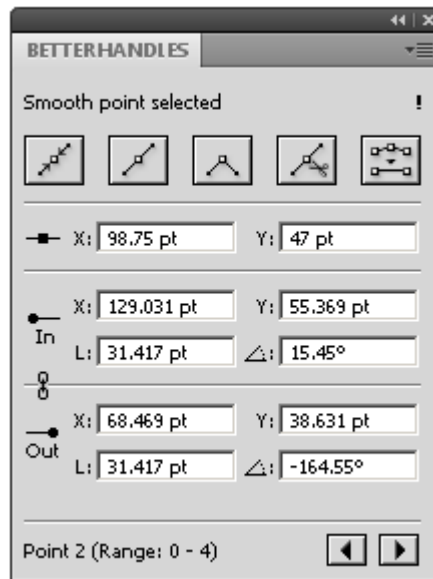
Status lines tell you how many points or handles are selected, their types and ID numbers, etc.

Point editing buttons edit one or more points simultaneously: retract handles, swap handles, make smooth, make smooth and extend new handles, make corner, split path, and delete point and close path.

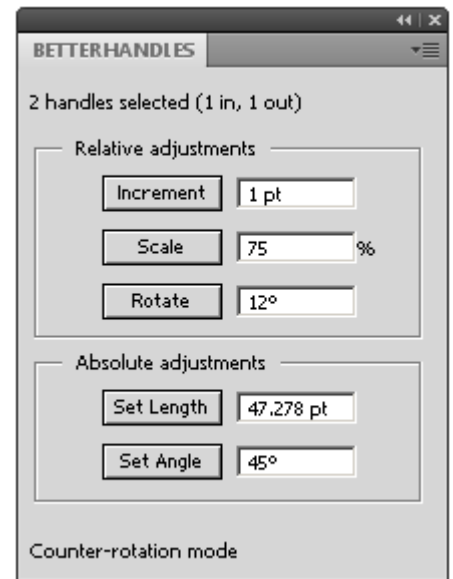
Numerical point editor lets you edit a point and its handles with complete numerical precision.

Handle editing buttons edit selected multiple handles simultaneously: increment, scale, rotate, set length, set angle. Add Shift or Alt when clicking to multiply or invert the effect of the transformation.

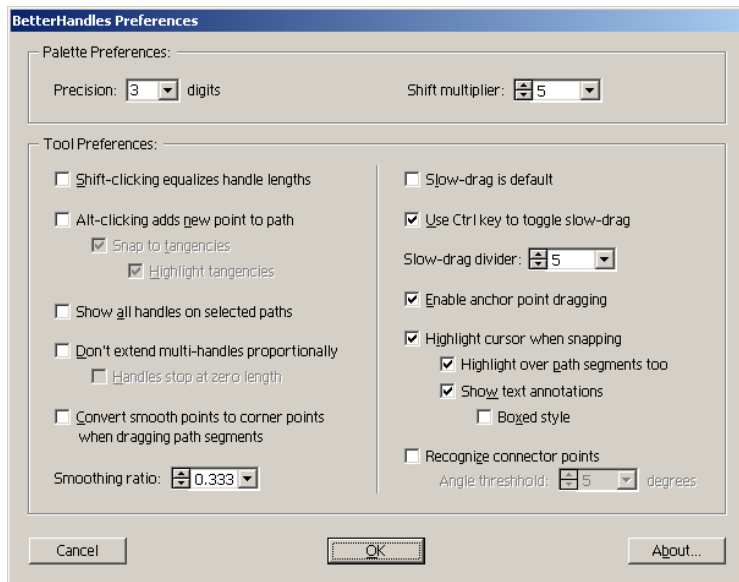
Flyout menu lets you copy and paste handles, select handles, change a multiple-handle selection, close or reverse paths, add points at tangencies, and more.



Palette in single point mode



Palette in Multi-Handle mode



Preferences

Either double-click the tool icon, or choose *BetterHandles Preferences...* from the flyout menu of the palette to set preferences which give you even more options. You can:

Choose how many digits to display on the numerical point editor; override the default functions of the Shift and Alt keys for additional functionality; choose to show all the handles of a path when it is selected; use Ctrl to toggle slow-drag; change the slow-drag divider for even finer control; allow anchor points to be moved when dragging them with the tool; highlight the cursor when it's snapping to an object of interest, and more.

Registration

Unregistered copies are fully-functional but time-limited. We hope you'll find **BetterHandles** incredibly useful, and register your copy. Registration entitles you to free tech support by e-mail, free upgrades to all 1.x versions, and a substantial discount on any 2.0 or higher versions. Purchase a registration code by visiting our web site at <http://www.nineblock.com>. When you receive it, click the "About..." button to bring up the *About* window, and then click the "Register..." button to enter your registration information.

See the **BetterHandles 1.4 Windows User Manual** for more detailed information.

BetterHandles Tool Operations (Simplified)

Alternate functions shown in color can be enabled through the preferences dialog.

	Click	Shift-click	Alt-click	Shift-Alt-click
Handles	Selects point	Toggles point selection or Equalizes handle lengths	Converts point from corner to smooth (and vice versa)	Retracts handle(s) (or creates new handles if none exist)
Points				
Segments	Shows handles for segment	Toggles segment handles or Equalizes segment handle lengths	Shows handles for entire path or Adds a point to the path	Toggles handles for entire path or Retracts/creates segment handles
Blank areas	Deselects any selected handles (first click) or points (second click)			Selects all handles of selected points and enters Multi-Handle Mode

With the Shift-clicking equalizes handle lengths preference turned on

With the Alt-clicking adds new point to path preference turned on

	Drag	Shift-drag	Alt-drag	Shift-Alt-drag
Handles	Moves handle freely*	Moves handle constrained in 45° increments*	Moves/extends handle(s) at original angle	Moves/extends handle(s) at original angle and snaps using Smart Guides
Points	Extends handle(s) freely or Moves point	Extends handle(s) constrained in 45° increments or Moves point constrained in 45° increments		
Segments	Reshapes path	Reshapes path while keeping curve symmetric	Reshapes path while maintaining angles of handles	Reshapes path while maintaining angles of handles and keeping handle lengths equalized
Blank areas	Marquees, selecting multiple handles or points/segments	Adds or subtracts from multiple handle or point/segment selection	Marquees, selecting multiple points/segments only	Adds or subtracts from multiple point/segment selection

Ctrl: During all drags, toggles “slow-drag” mode or hides points and handles (depending on preferences)

*See “Multi-Handle Modes” in the user manual (pages 12–14) for details on how multiple handle are moved

With the Enable anchor point dragging preference turned on

See the **BetterHandles 1.4 Windows User Manual**, pages 30–31, for more detail.