ICONS
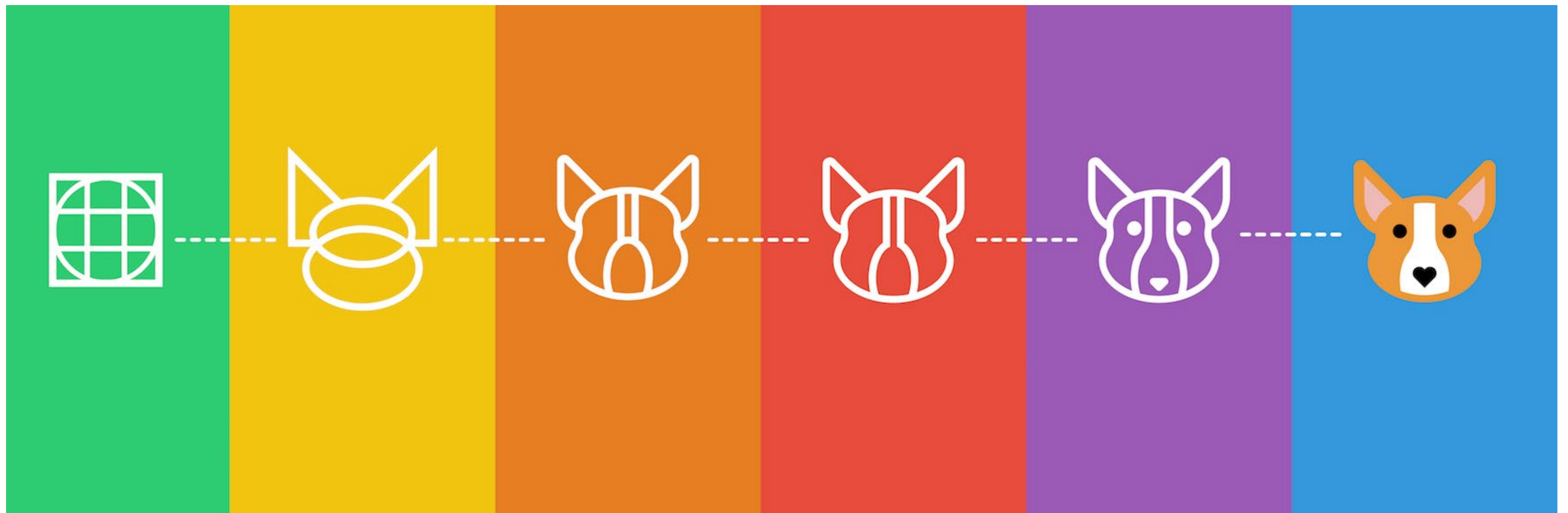
Icons communicate quickly and effectively when done well.

Start with sketche or even word association. There's also nothing wrong with looking at examples of how others have drawn the same concept as an icon.

In most creative activities, we try to be new and different. But with icons, we need to instantly know what it means. If someone tried to make a play button without a triangle, users would be very frustrated. For common concepts, know what the conventions are for that icon and start there.

If there's a convention, use it
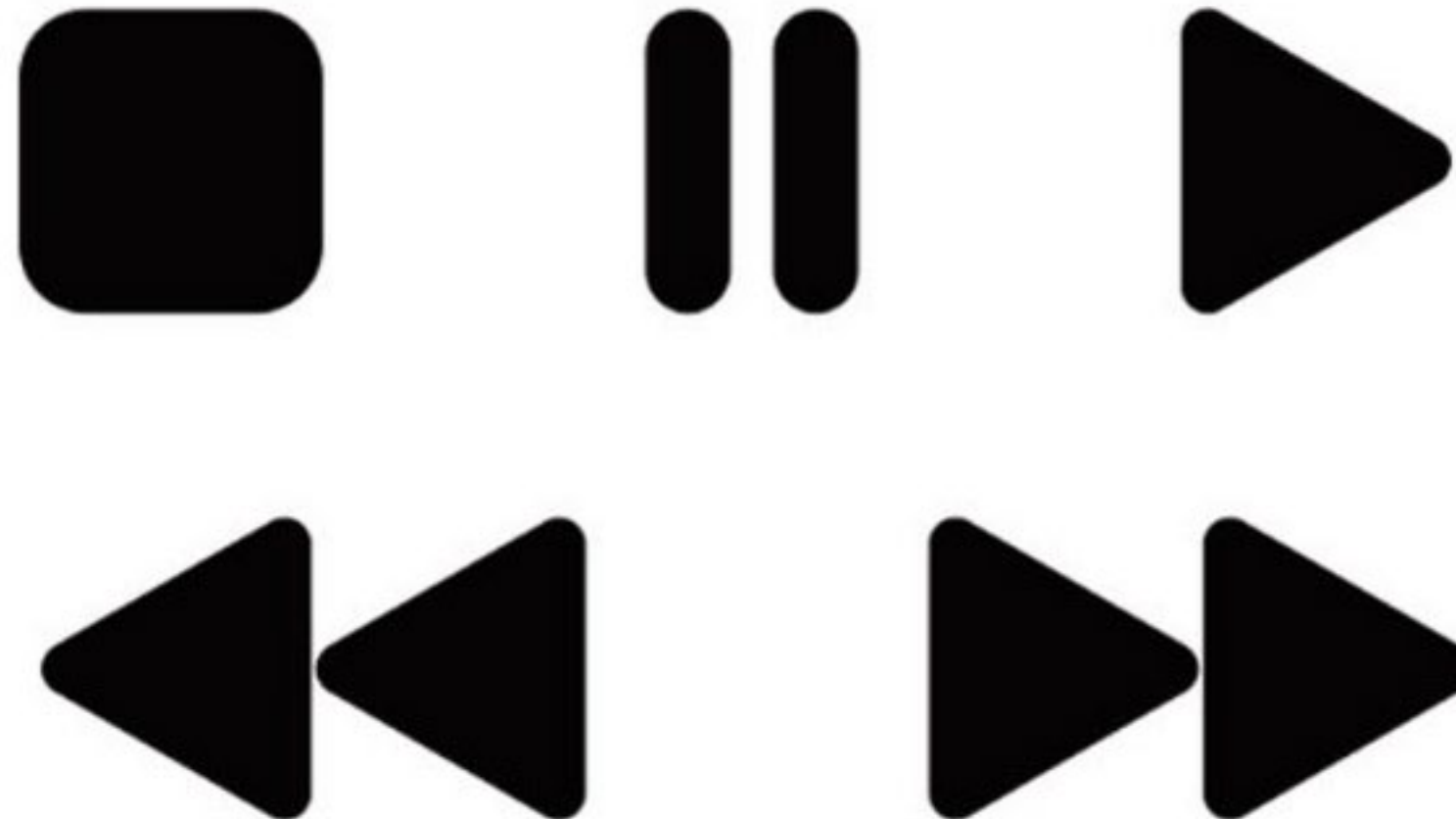
The most important thing is that people understand what your icon means

Don't reinvent the wheel, finding a new symbol that's different from a shopping bag. **Instead**, focus on **_how_** you draw the bag, tweaking the style of the lines and shapes. Think about whether your lines are more curvy, more angular, or even change the viewing angle.
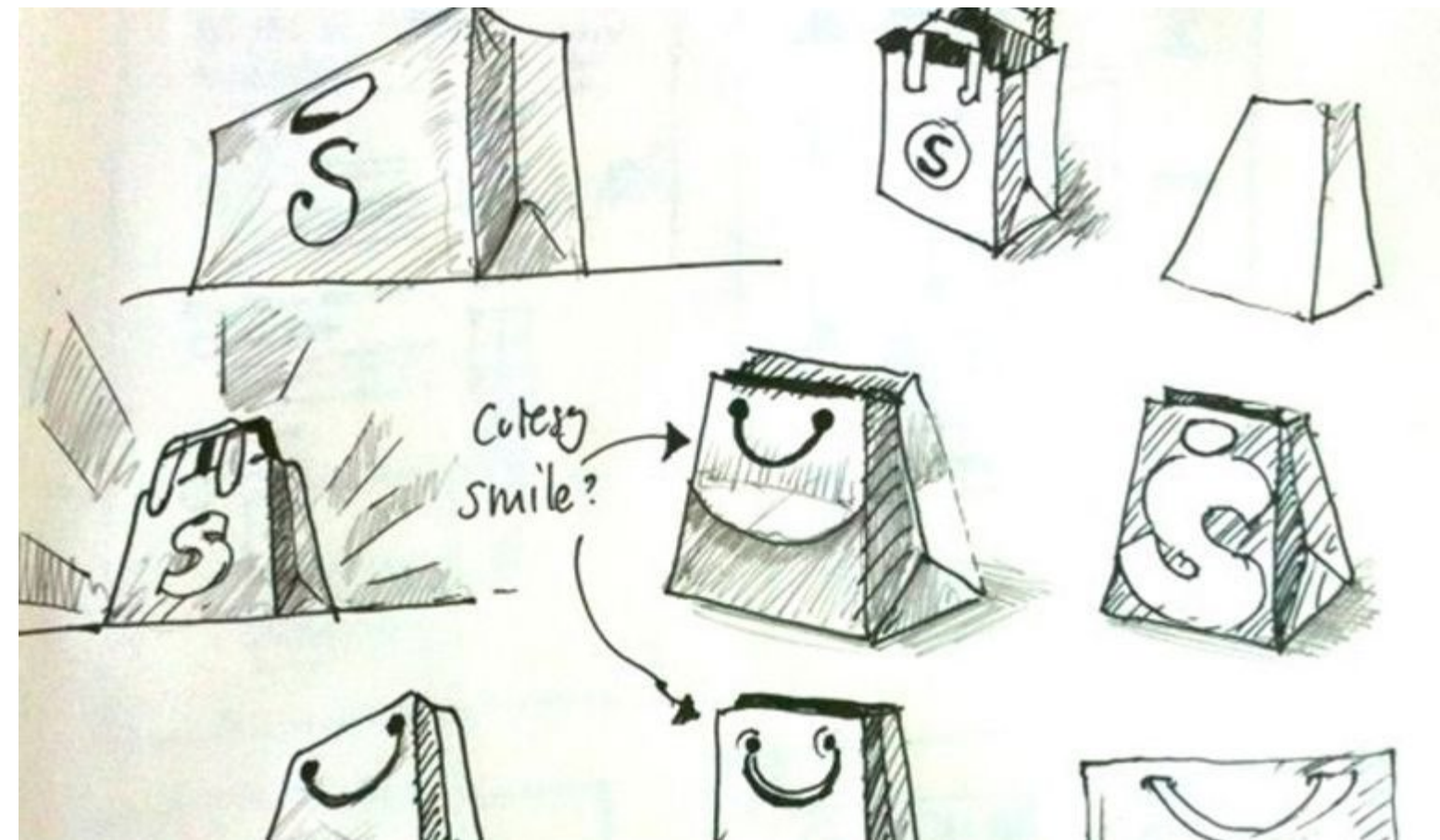
Once your vector art is exported as a PNG, it is turned into pixels. There's no such thing as a half pixel, so if your lines are not exactly on the grid (think x = .5 instead of x = 1), then the computer uses anti-aliasing to split the difference. This can end up looking blurry.
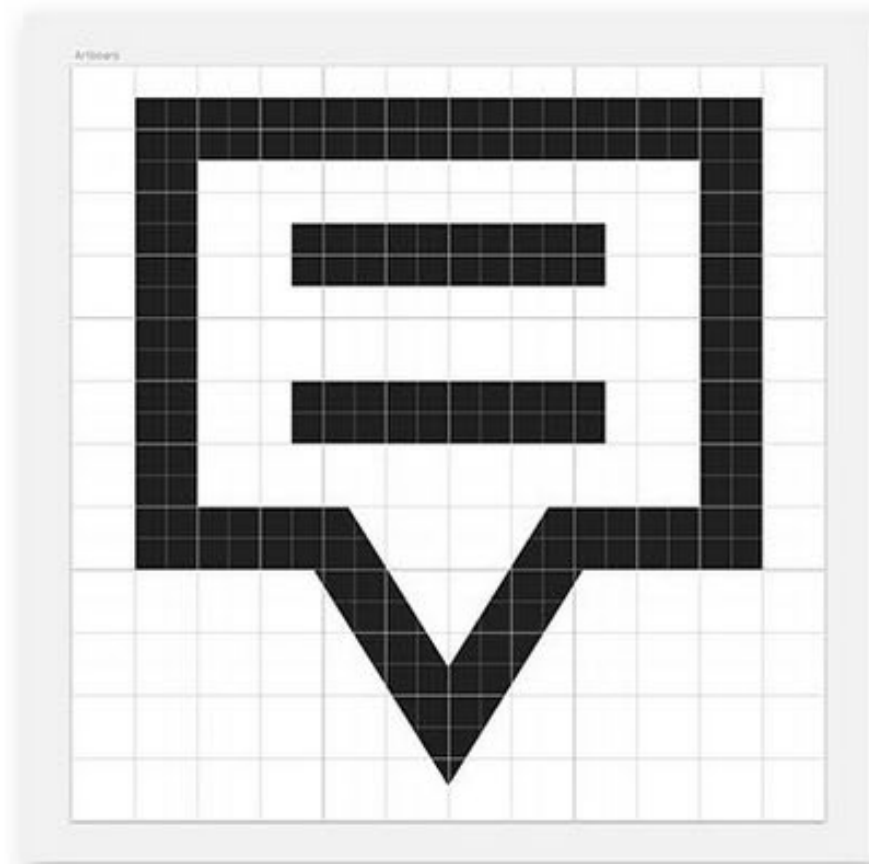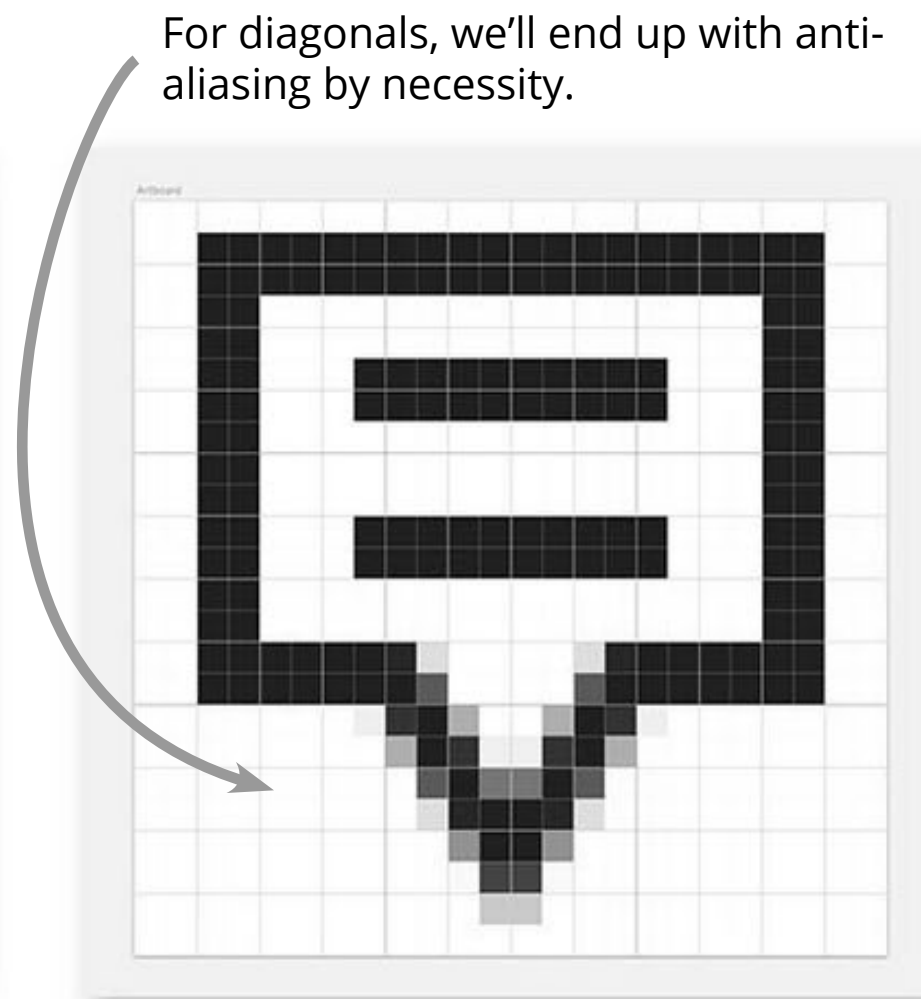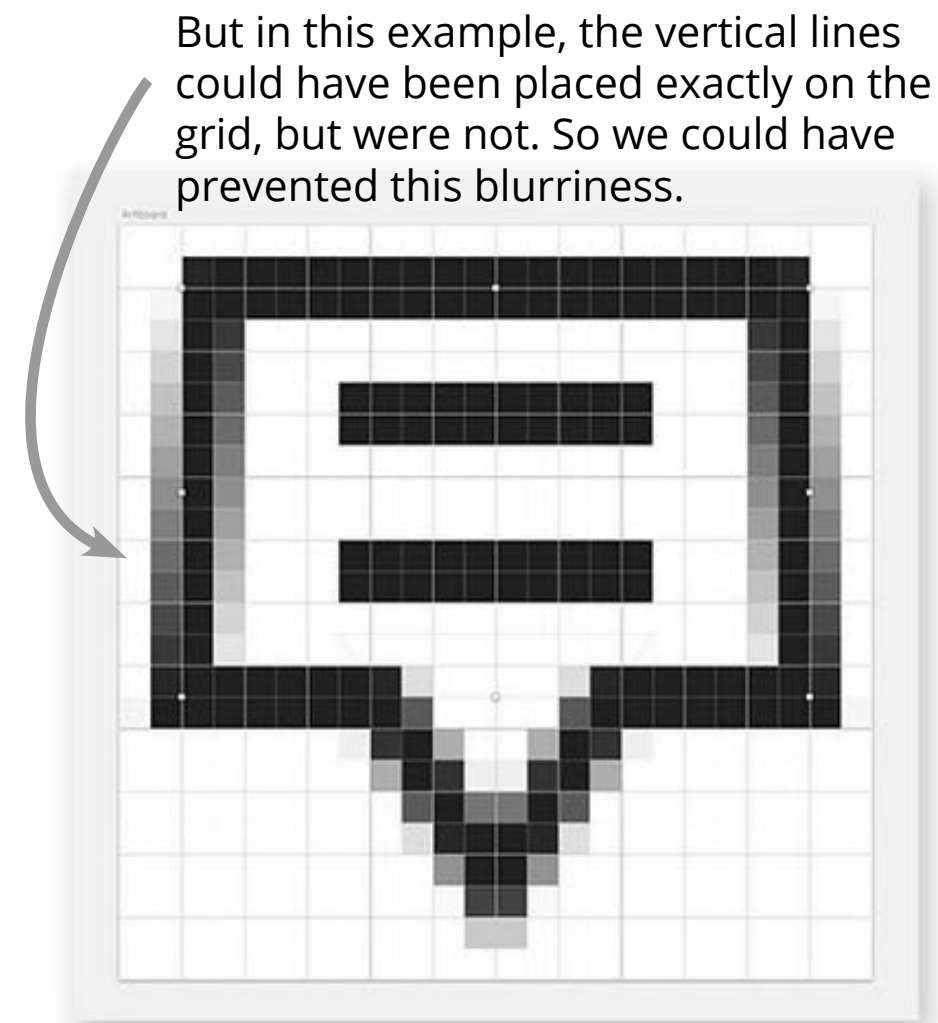
For diagonals, we'll end up with anti-aliasing by necessity.

But in this example, the vertical lines could have been placed exactly on the grid, but were not. So we could have prevented this blurriness.

Vector file

If the lines were placed on the grid (only on whole numbers) the PNG comes out like this.

If the lines were placed on half pixels (where snap to grid is turned *off*), the PNG comes out like this.

https://medium.com/allurive/designing-icons-at-24-px-a783aa7b23cd

# Keep it simple... but not too simple

If it's too complex, it will be hard to read at small sizes.

If it is too simple, your icon may be unrecognizable, and you'll have defeated the purpose.

Toward the end of the project, I'll have you do a user test. You'll have others (who don't know your project) guess what the meaning of each icon is. This will help you with knowing if the meaning is clear.

We're all tempted to freehand the drawing, but in the end, icons that start with just simple geometric shapes end up being more clean and cohesive.
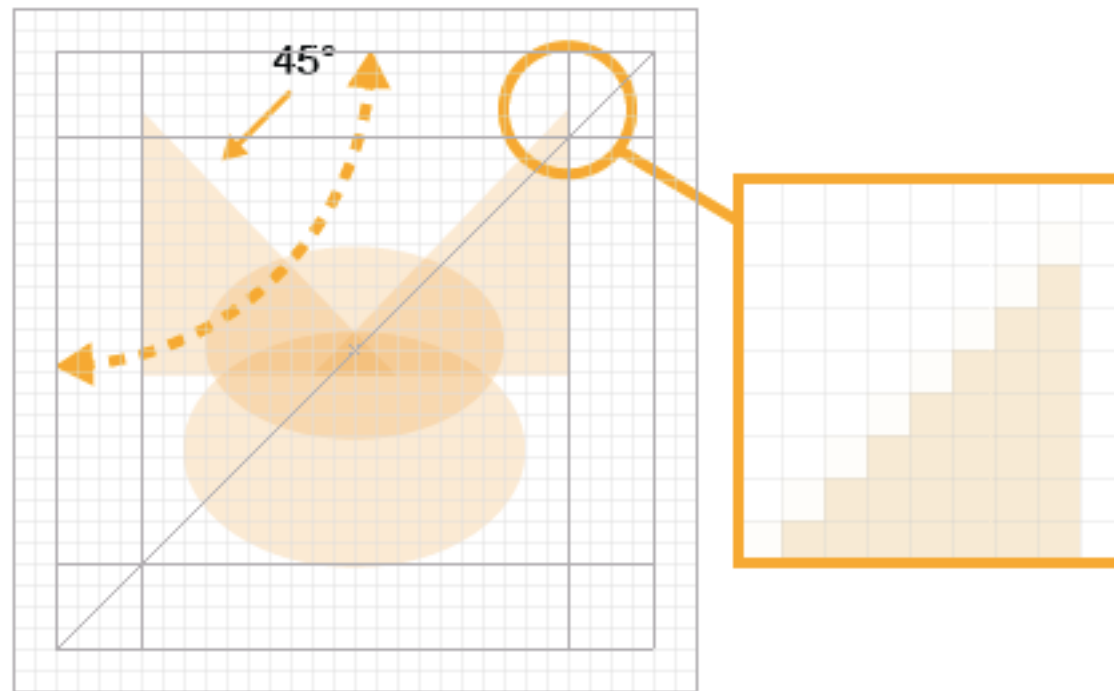
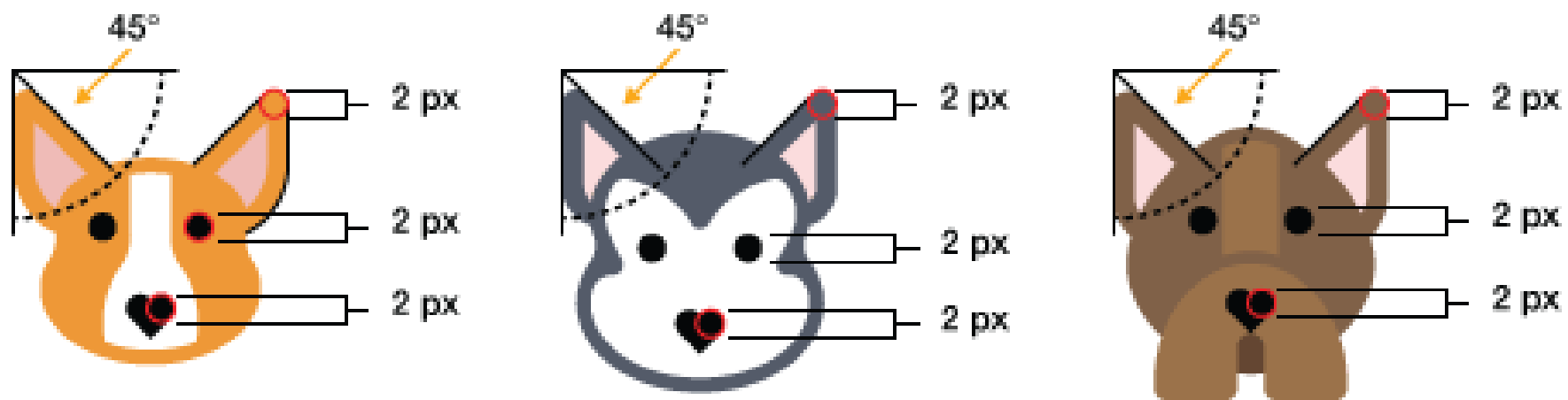It's hard to get used to thinking this way, but it will pay off.

TRIANGLES

ELLIPSES

Hand-drawn, irregular curves are not ideal
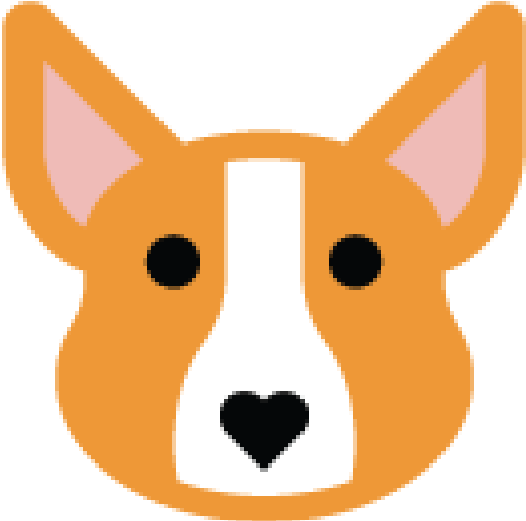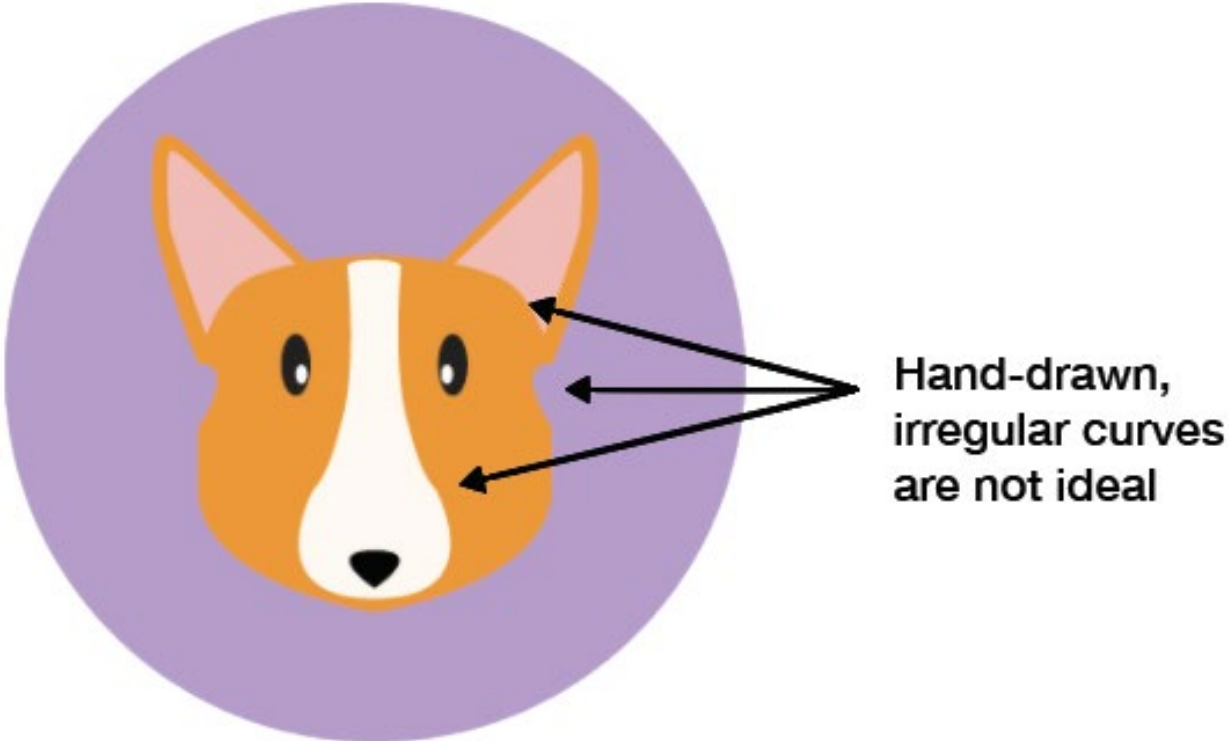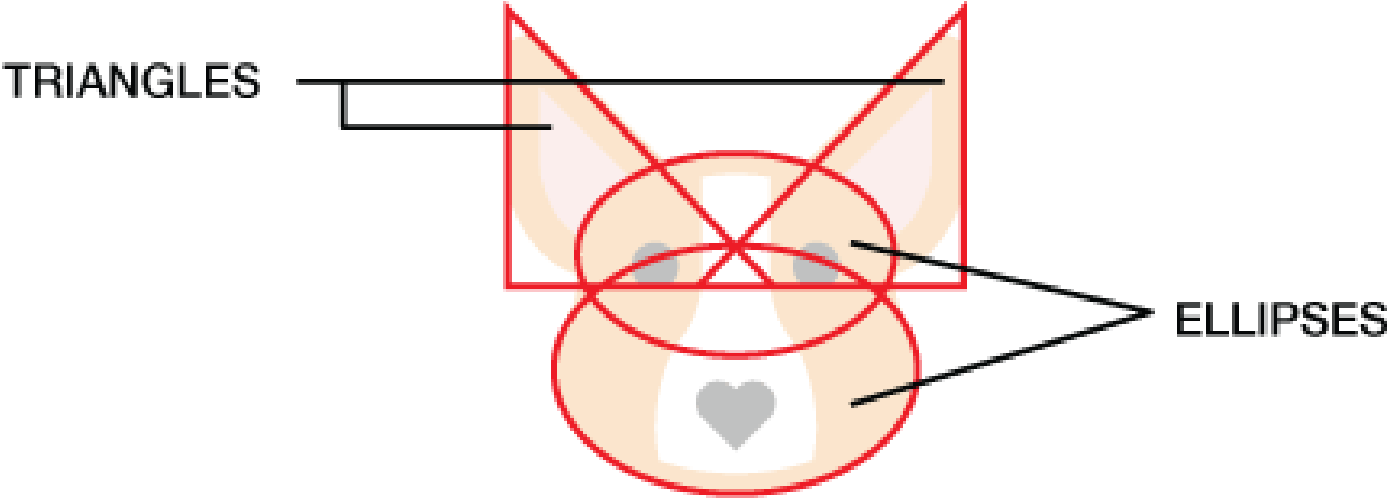
Better: Made with simple geometric shapes.

After you've created the geometric shapes, use either the shapebuilder or the pathfinder to combine or take away.
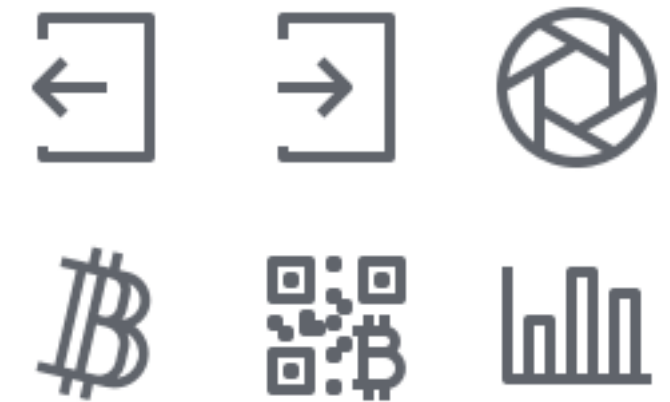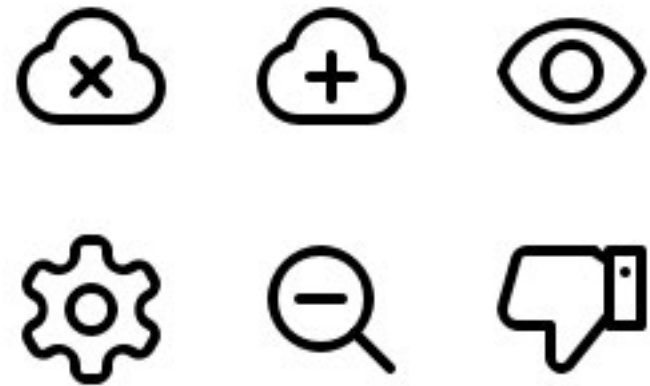

[UNION]

[ROTATE]

45° angles make the cleanest angles.

Make all your strokes the same width. If you have common shapes or cutouts, make them all the same size. Consistency makes a big difference visually.

45°

2 px

2 px

2 px

45°

2 px

2 px

2 px

45°

2 px

2 px

2 px

Your icons need to have some consistent visual properties in order to work as a set.

They could be fills or lines, and curvy or angular. Pick a style and use it across the set.

The style could also be invented. See the consistent use of a dash, a dot, and a notch.

Common Element "The Notch"
shared acrossicons
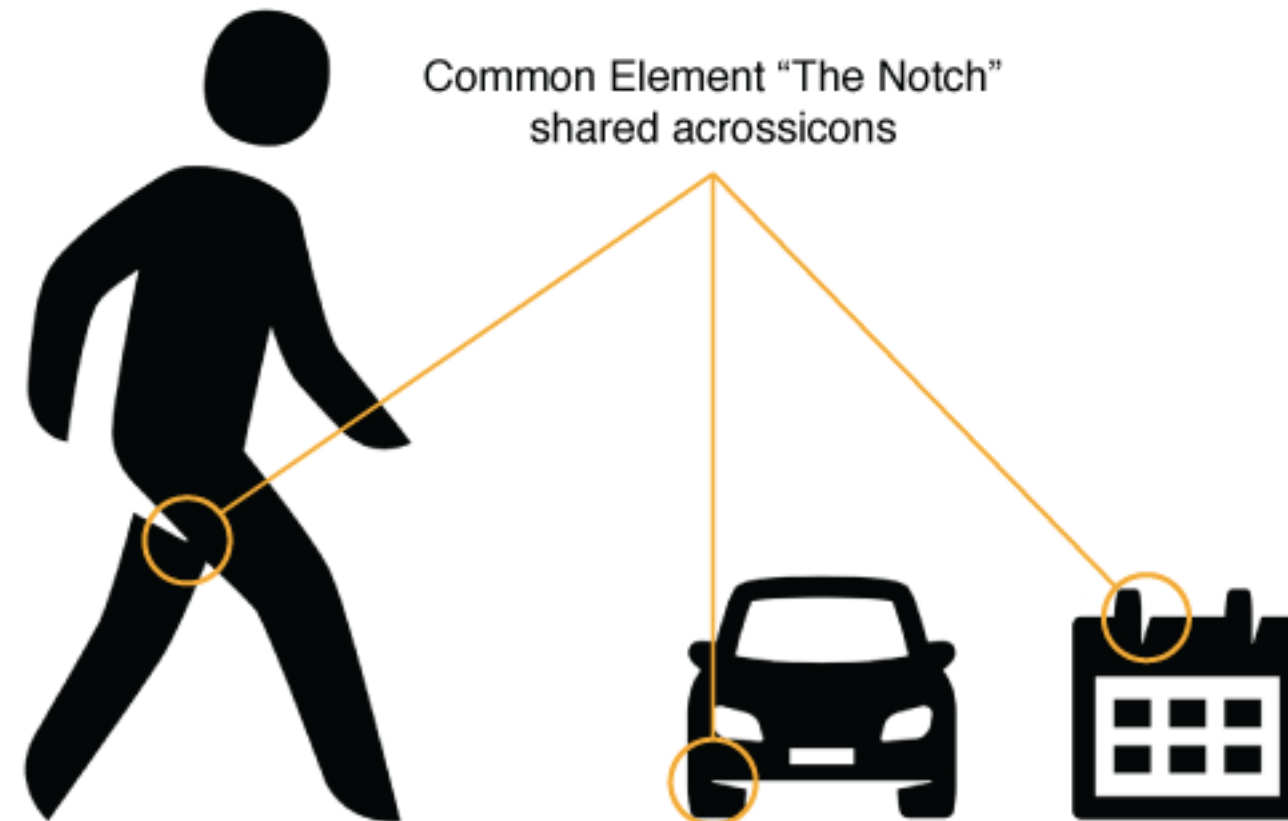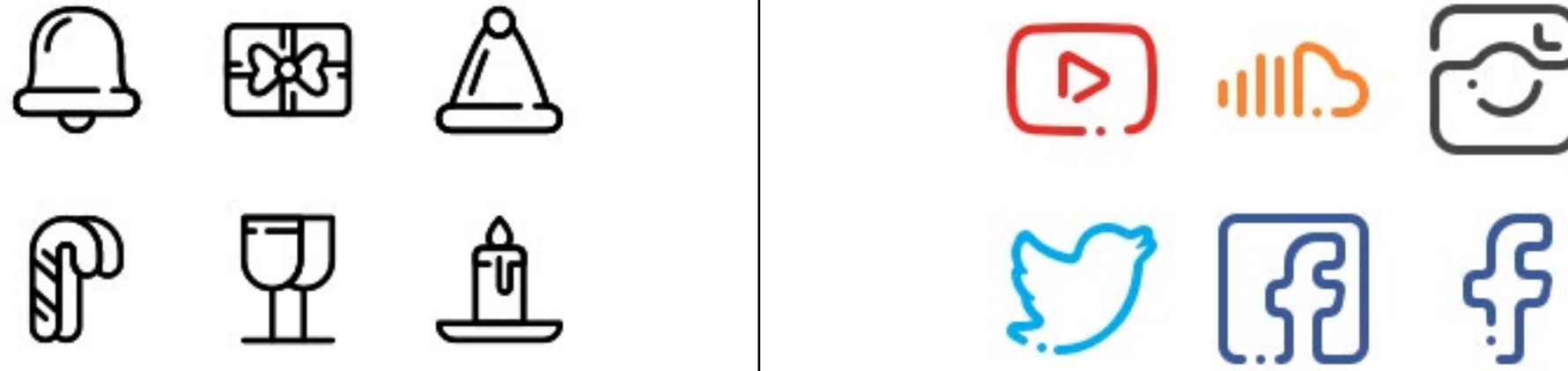
It will also be important to be consistent in the amount of detail on the icons within your set.

SET 1

SET 2

Going back over the icons to make them all stylistically similar and consistent in the amount of detail is something that will take much more time than you might think, but it will pay off in the end.