In this tutorial we’re going to learn the basics behind designing a logo using Adobe Illustrator CS5. We’ll cover some basic concepts behind what makes a good logo and how you should approach the process of designing it. I want to go ahead and say that there’s infinitely many ways to design logos, graphics, ads, etc. but this is personally how I go about the process. You may find that this is backwards or a little bit different when compared to the way you would approach it, but that’s okay! Everybody will tackle these creative endeavors a little bit differently, but if you’re having trouble then this tutorial can provide you with an excellent place to start.

Know What Your Client Wants

While this may have nothing to do with the design process, knowing the exact details of the logo your client wants will definitely help in the long run. Sometimes, you’ll have clients that give you a very vague, ambiguous description of what they’re looking for. In this case, you’re going to need to ask questions. What colors are they interested in? Are there any other logos that they’re attracted to? Is there anything in particular that they don’t want used in their logo? It’s also important to find exactly what kind of business/company you’re making this logo for. You’re design will need to reflect the image of the company, as obvious as this sounds, and special attention should be paid to the nature of what they do.

For my example, I’m going to use the new Student Computing Services logo. This logo needed to be a clean, simple logo that reflected what we do, while utilizing the traditional colors of maroon, white, and black. The logo also needed to be sort of “techy” considering technology is what we focus on. With those ideas in mind, I set off on my journey to create the ultimate SCS logo.
Get Inspired

The first thing I always do is look to other logos and designs for inspiration. The easiest method for this is to go to Google and start searching for popular logos. Google image search will provide you with more than enough pictures of logos that you can use as great examples and starting places. It’s a good idea to search for logos that are relatively similar to the company that you’re creating your logo for. I searched for computer companies and technology logos, and then I went through picking the logos I liked and thought would be great for this particular design. The beauty of doing this is that if you’re struggling creatively, you can take ideas from several different logos, combine them and create something entirely new. That’s exactly how the current SCS logo was designed.

Start Sketching

Once you’ve got some logos that you like pulled up, it’s a good idea to grab some pencil and paper and start sketching. This is where you’re going to formulate the initial design that you can go by when designing in Illustrator. For me, I found the design that had three separate squares, each with a different item in each. I replaced these with the items you see in the current design: phone, computer, and game controller. This was relevant to the work we do here, showing our customers (students) exactly what our office is for.
Go Digital

After you’ve gotten some initial sketches finished and have decided on a path to take the logo in, it’s time to bring those ideas into the digital realm. Using Adobe Illustrator, you can either scan your ideas in or refer to the sketches on paper (which is what I did) and start coming up with a few mockups. At the time of my sketches, I wasn’t exactly sure which type of logo I wanted to go with, so I made several different versions of logos. When you do this, you give yourself and the client different options.

After I had come up with some different designs in Illustrator, I had several fellow employees take a look at them and give me some feedback. You can do this with your clients as well, you just want to make sure that they understand that the logos are incomplete, and are only being provided to further decide on a finished product. You also want to make sure that the different mockups of the logo you
Provide are polished and somewhat complete (you don’t want your clients seeing designs that are just terrible).

Decide On a Final Design

After discussions with fellow employees and the client, it’s time to decide on a final design. For our design, everybody really enjoyed the three-part logo, with each box showcasing a different piece of technology in which we frequently work with. So, after a little polishing up, the end result was this:
Before adding any color, you want to make sure that the client is satisfied with the black and white version. It’s important to have a version like this because some clients will want to use it on stationary, decals, etc.

**Finishing Touches**

Adding color is generally the final step. You can play around with it during sketches and digital mockups, but you don’t want to actually commit to any colors until you’re finished with the final, black and white version. Our colors are of course maroon, white, and black, coinciding with the team colors of EKU. Colors of your final design will of course be dependent on whatever the client has specified.

Like I said previously, everybody’s creative process is different and this tutorial has merely outlined my personal process in the creation of the new SCS logo. Sometimes steps can be reversed, and you’ll end up doing things completely different from me, and that’s fine. The end result is one that’s going to please the client. I hope this has sparked the inspiration you were looking for.