Corel Concepts - Shape Up!

Whew! We have now covered both Artistic and Paragraph text in detail. It is time to whip that text into shape! Literally! Check out **Figure 1**.

Figure 1

I used the Interactive Envelope tool and the Perspective effect on the top two Artistic text samples. I placed Paragraph text within a shape and wrapped it around a shape in the bottom two samples. Over the next few articles, I'll show you how to do all of these things and more, in detail. We'll begin with…

Applying Envelopes

Envelopes are applied with the Interactive Envelope tool, which is found in the Blend tool flyout (**Figure 2**).
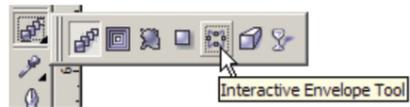

Figure 2

Envelopes allow you to distort the basic shape of an object. When applied, the envelope looks like a highlighting box with nodes. These nodes can then be dragged to create the desired distortion. You can apply an Envelope to just about any object, but when used with text it makes shaping your text a snap. To teach the Envelope tool, I'll take you through a series of examples. So, open up your CorelDRAW and follow along. I will be working in version 12. (Envelopes are unchanged in X3.)

1. Begin a new document and immediately choose the Interactive Envelope tool from the Blend tool flyout. Check out the Property Bar. Note the four buttons there that correspond to the four basic envelope modes (**Figure 3**):

• Straight line
• Single arc
• Double arc
• Unconstrained

Figure 3

2. Now let's learn the basics. Draw a small rectangle, approximately 1-inch high and 2-inches wide (precision is not important). Create three more rectangles by dragging this rectangle down, leaving behind an original as you do to create a second rectangle, and then tap **Ctrl+R** twice to create a total of four rectangles. The fourth rectangle will be selected.

3. Return to the Envelope tool. Note that the last rectangle you created now has an envelope on it and that the cursor changes as shown in **Figure 4**.
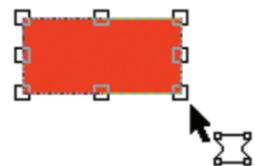

Figure 4

4. In the Envelope Property Bar, click on the Straight Line Mode button. Bring the mouse over the top right node and drag it up, but don't release the mouse yet. Note that the Envelope reshapes with the edge remaining straight, hence, the name Straight Line Mode (**Figure 5**-left).

5. Now release the mouse. The rectangle reshapes based on the envelope (**Figure 5**-right).
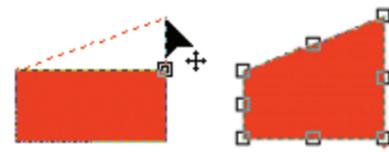

Figure 5

6. On another rectangle, using the same method, apply an envelope using the Single Arc Mode. Use each mode in turn. **Figure 6** shows examples (from top to bottom) of the Single Arc, the Double Arc, and Unconstrained Modes.
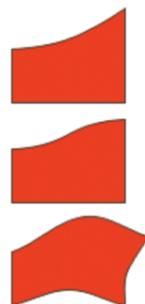

Figure 6

The Unconstrained Mode presents you with control handles to 'free form' your envelope. Adjust each node uniquely and play with the control handles. If you are familiar with drawing curves with the Bezier tool, the Unconstrained Mode is a piece of cake. As with the Bezier tool, you can add nodes for additional control. If, however, you are not familiar with the Bezier tool, the Unconstrained Mode may prove a bit daunting.

Play a bit with all the envelope modes until you get a feel for how they work. Note that you can apply an envelope from any node on the object, that is, you are not constrained to a corner.

The Ctrl and Shift Keys

Once you feel comfortable with the various envelopes, it's time to learn how to use the modifier keys: **Shift** and **Ctrl**.

1. Draw a new rectangle. Select the Double Arc Mode button in the Envelope Property Bar.

2. Now, drag the middle-lower selection handle up and down **but don't release the mouse!**

3. Now, hold the **Shift** key down while you continue to pull the same handle up and down. Observe that the **Shift** key causes the opposite side's complementary handle to move in the opposite direction (**Figure 7**-right).

4. Now, release the **Shift** key and hold the **Ctrl** key while you continue to pull the same handle up and down. The **Ctrl** key causes the opposite side's complementary handle to move in the same direction (**Figure 7**-left).
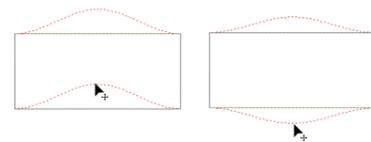

Figure 7

5. With the **Ctrl** key held, release the mouse. As you would expect, the rectangle reshapes with the double arc.

Time for Text

1. Watch how easy it is to shape your text. On a new document, key in your name. Use a heavy font such as Arial Black or Futura Black (or whatever you have available on your system). Use all capitals so the text is of even height.

2. Invoke the Envelope tool. Using the single arc mode, grab the top middle handle and, with the **Ctrl** key held, drag the node straight up. Release the mouse. Voilà! The result is instant shaped text. (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8

A Custom Envelope

In addition to the standard envelopes, you can also create an envelope from curve of any shape as shown in **Figure 9**. In performing this exercise, you'll learn some additional controls.

Figure 9

1. You'll need to open up the Envelope docker to compensate for a little glitch [**in the program?**]. Open the docker by choosing **WINDOW**/Dockers>Envelope. All of the interactive tools have dockers associated with them. Some people prefer to work with these as opposed to working interactively on screen. The dockers often provide a few more controls and visual cues than property bars.

2. You'll need to create a heart for this exercise. Click on the Basic Shapes tool (**Figure 10**). From the Property Bar drop-down, choose a heart. Then draw one with the **Ctrl** key held to constrain the proportions. Note that the Status Bar shows **Perfect Shape**. (Keep this in the back of your mind for a moment). Fill the heart with red (of course).
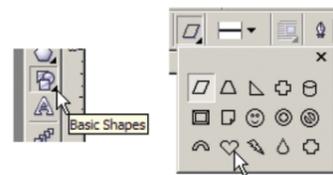

Figure 10

3. Now type in the text 'LOVE' in a heavy font and scale it wide enough to cover the heart (**Figure 11**).

Figure 11

4. With the text selected, click on the Interactive Envelope tool. Note in the Property Bar there is a special button: **Create Envelope From** (**Figure 12**). There is also one in the docker, should you prefer to access it that way. Click it and the cursor will change to an arrow. Now click on the heart.

Figure 12

5. Whoops! Corel tells you that the object you selected is invalid. Why? Remember in step 2 I told you to make a mental note that the heart was a Perfect Shape. For some reason, you can't create an envelope from a Perfect Shape type object. You can create one from a rectangle or ellipse, but Perfect Shapes must first be converted to curves. So…

6. Select the heart and choose **ARRANGE**/Convert to Curves or **Ctrl+Q**. Now perform step 4 again and voilà-er, well almost. You can see the envelope, but the text doesn't change. This is the little glitch I mentioned earlier, and why you require the docker to be open. In the docker, click on the **Apply** button, and voilà-er, well almost. (**Figure 13**)

Figure 13

7. Note in both the docker and property bar, there is a drop-down menu that defaults to **Putty**. Open this and choose **Vertical** and **Apply** again if necessary. This little drop-down menu allows you to maintain the horizontals or verticals. Other controls allow you to maintain lines (i.e., they will not be converted to curves).

8. As a last step, you can centre the text inside the heart to give you the final result (**Figure 9**).

Please send your comments and questions to questions@retlabgraphics.com. Pradhan Balter has taught CorelDRAW since it was invented. He lectures frequently at the regional and national ARA shows. His training manuals are available through ARA at www.ara.org/products.

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