# Snap to It with CorelDRAW® 12!

By Steve Bain

If you've ever fumbled around trying to align your cursor to something, you can bid this frustrating task farewell. CorelDRAW® 12 object snapping has been re-designed with nine new modes to give you maximum snapping control that works together with the program's new Dynamic Guides.

Now you can instantly snap to text baselines, object nodes, edges, midpoints, centers and ellipse quadrants; or snap to ellipse tangents, perpendicular angles or angles specified as Dynamic Guide paths. For example, you can snap the baseline of a text object to a rectangle, like this:

You can also quickly draw a line between precise points on two separate objects, like this:
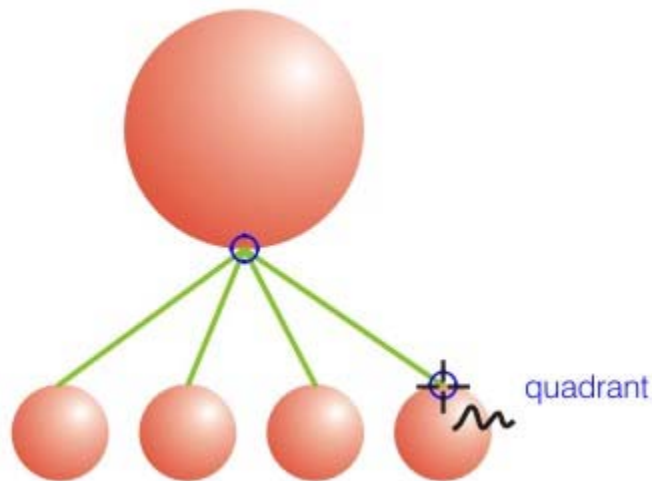
For the record, the effect of snapping is like holding a magnet near metal. As the magnet draws closer, it's drawn toward the metal and the attraction becomes stronger until the magnet eventually "snaps" to it.

When using CorelDRAW 12, two things can serve as magnets: the point at which you grab an object or your current drawing tool cursor. The "metal" that these points are drawn toward can be a guideline, a grid line, a new Dynamic Guide path or a specific point on another object.

Object snapping saves considerable time when moving or transforming shapes, or when creating lines or curves. It enables you to control how and where the snapping action occurs and eliminates the aggravation of fumbling with alignments, or guessing at angles and distances. If you've already used grids or guidelines to snap to, you'll appreciate the productivity boost this gives you.

Welcome to Snapping

CorelDRAW 12 delivers a mix of reliable existing and brand new snap features. If you're new to CorelDRAW, it may help you to know a bit about some of the existing snap actions you can activate and how to use them.

Snap to Grid – To have your drawing shapes and tool cursors snap and align to your document grid, choose View/Snap to Grid; press Ctrl+Y to toggle the feature on and off; or click the Snap to Grid button on the Property Bar (shown next). When objects snap to a grid, they snap to the grid lines as well as the grid line intersection points.

Snap to Guidelines – To activate guideline snapping, choose View/Snap to Guidelines or click the Snap to Guidelines button on the Property Bar (shown next). Guidelines are created by dragging from your vertical or horizontal rulers (they can also be slanted), or by using Presets with automated scripts in the Guidelines Presets page of the Options dialog box.

Snap to Objects – To have your objects or cursors snap to and align with other objects, choose View/Snap to Objects; press Alt+Z; or click the Snap to Objects button on the Property Bar (shown next). You can set snap points using new snap modes option in the Snap to Objects page of the Options dialog box.

Dynamic Guides – This new feature uses the selected snap modes that we'll explore next. Press the Dynamic Guides button in the Property Bar (shown next) or choose View/Dynamic Guides (Alt+Shift+D) to toggle Dynamic Guides on or off.

Maximum Object Snapping Power

Here's where object snapping really takes a new turn. The new snap modes enable you to snap to more points on your objects, and offer live feedback by showing onscreen symbols and screen tips.

While object snapping is turned on, your objects and cursors use snap modes to determine where to snap. You can customize these using options in the Snap to Objects pane of the Options dialog box (shown next), accessed by choosing View/Snap to Objects Setup.
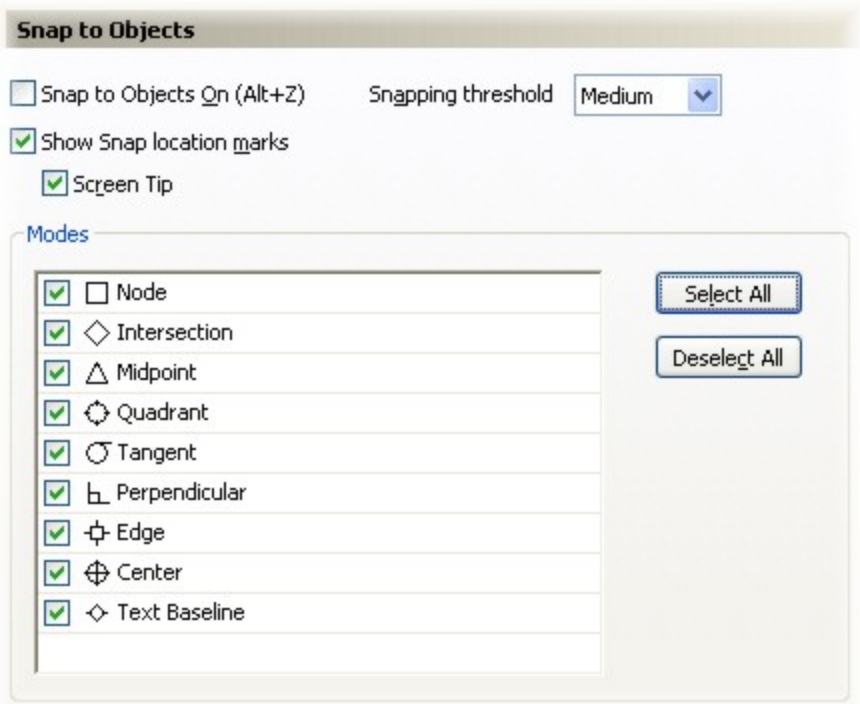
For object snapping to happen, two steps are involved: your cursor must be dragging or drawing something, and it must be at or near snap points on another object. (This also includes an object being dragged from its original position to a new position.) When your cursor connects with snapping points on the other object, the snapping action occurs. As you get accustomed to using this feature, you'll wonder how you ever did without it.

Custom-select options in the Snap to Objects dialog box to set your snap behavior exactly how you need it. Here's how each of the options control snapping:

Snap to Objects On – Click this to turn Snap to Objects on or off.

Snapping Threshold – This menu enables you to set the snapping sensitivity, based on pixel proximity to snap points. Choose Medium (the default), Low or High, where Low reduces the snapping distance and High increases it, like this:
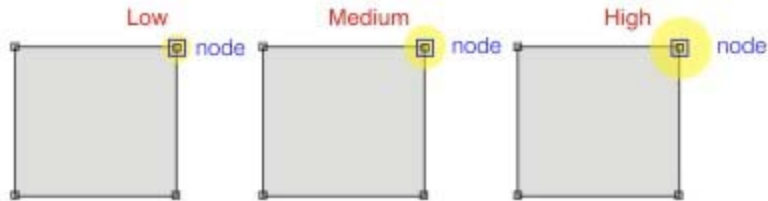

Show Snap Location Marks – This toggles the display of the icon markers identifying each snap point type on various objects. This is great to use for identifying specific snap points in a crowded clusters of objects, like this:
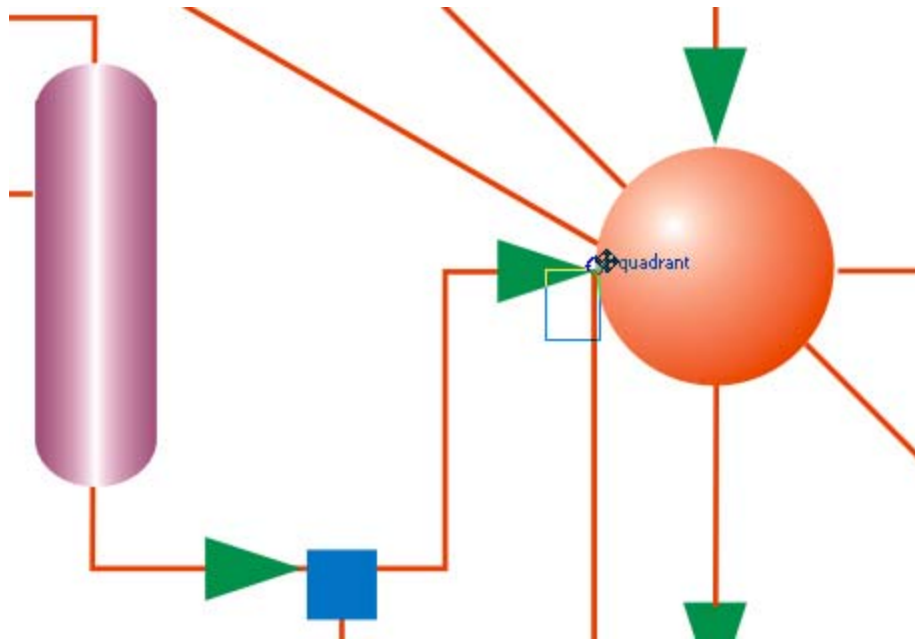
Screen Tip – While the Show Snap Locations Marks option is selected, use Screen Tip to control whether or not the text label that identifies the current snap point is displayed.

Customize Where Objects Snap

The mode list (shown next) in the Snap to Objects dialog box includes nine specialized object snap modes. They can be toggled on or off individually when you want to quickly snap to certain object points but ignore others. The icon list beside each of the modes acts as a symbol legend to show how each snap point is indicated on your screen when using the Show Snap Location Marks option. You can also use buttons in this dialog box to quickly activate or deactivate all the options in the list at once.
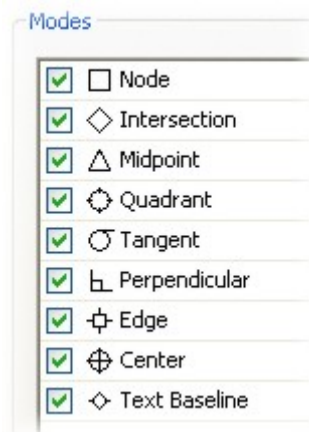

Each of the modes causes object or cursor snapping in the following ways:

Nodes – Use this mode to snap an object or your cursor where nodes exist (shown as square markers) on any object type or any open or closed path.

Intersection – Use this mode to activate snapping where the outline paths of two objects

intersect (shown as a diamond marker) or where the guide paths of two object snap points cross, like this:
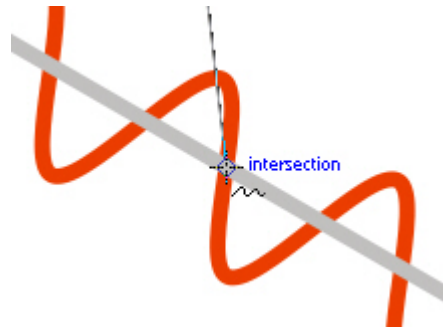

Midpoint – Use this mode to snap to the point at the exact center between any two nodes (shown using a triangular marker) on an object or path.

Quadrant – This mode activates snapping to the precise left, right, top or bottom edge point of an ellipse object (shown as a stylized circle symbol), or the visible quadrants on an ellipse set to the Pie or Arc state.

Edge – Choose this mode to snap to anywhere on the outline path of an object (shown as a stylized square symbol).

Center – This mode activates snapping to the dead center origin of closed-path objects (indicated as a target dot symbol) based on their width and height.

Text Baseline – The baseline of text is the imaginary line on which each character appears to rest. If you create text and image layouts, this invaluable mode will activate snapping to anywhere on text baselines (shown as a stylized solid diamond symbol). Both Artistic and Paragraph text objects are valid objects even if the text is formatted in multiple lines, as shown here:
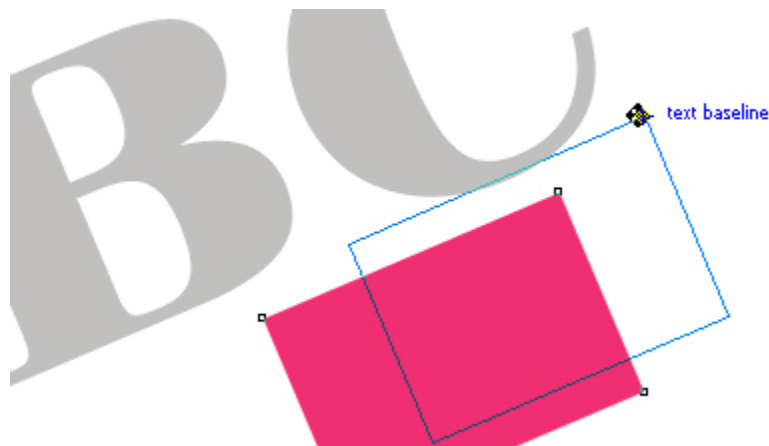

On a slightly higher object snapping level for geometry lovers, the next two modes add tangent and perpendicular actions to the mix. Both help when drawing with line tools to define node positions. Here's how they work:

Tangent – A tangent is a straight line that only touches to align with the edge of a curve. You

can use this mode to snap your drawing tool cursor to a point on a tangent (shown as a circle-and-line symbol) from a curve or ellipse, like this:
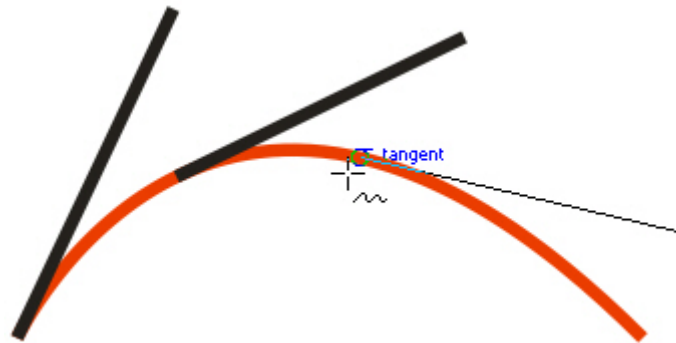
Perpendicular – A perpendicular line creates a right angle (90 degrees) from another line or curve plane. Choose this mode to snap your drawing tool cursor to a point perpendicular from a point on an existing line or curve (shown as a typical right-angle symbol), or to a point on the guide path aligning with open or closed lines and curves, ellipse objects, or ellipses set to Pie or Arc, as shown here:
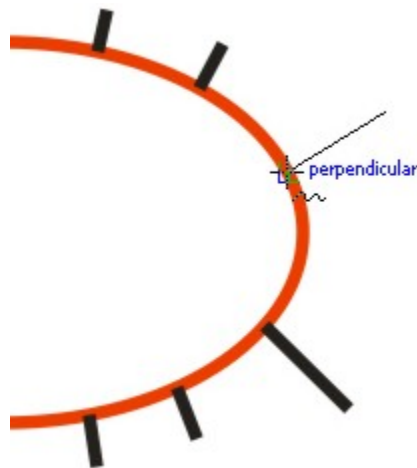
The ideal way to familiarize yourself with what each mode does is to activate an object (Alt+Z), and practice by selecting only one active mode at a time. When you do, be sure to turn off all other snapping (Ctrl+Y) as well as Dynamic Guides (Alt+Shift+D). That way, you'll get a clear view of the real snapping power you have at your fingertips with this new feature.

Steve Bain is an award-winning illustrator and designer, and author of nearly a dozen books including CorelDRAW: The Official Guide.