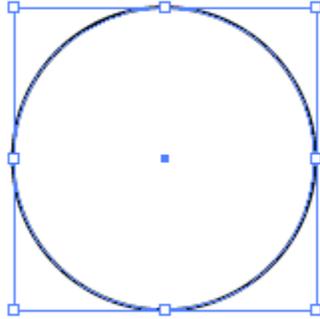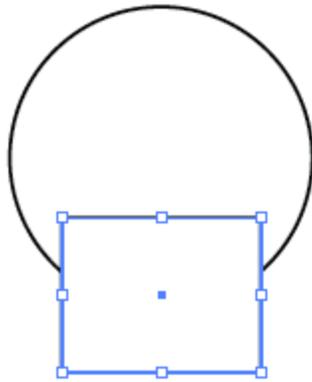Create a Gang of Ninjas

Grab the Circle Tool and draw a shape on the artboard, hold the SHIFT key to create a perfectly equal object. By default this will have a white fill and black stroke.

Select the Square Tool and draw another shape on the artboard, position this to overlap the original circle. Use the Align Palette to center the two shapes horizontally. (window menu -> align) Move square behind circle by going to the Object menu -> Arrange -> move to back
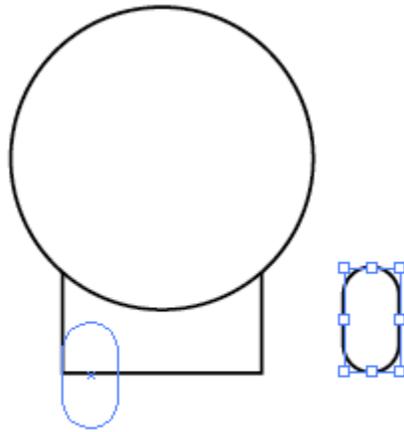
From the same menu, use the Rounded Rectangle Tool to draw a small leg. Adjust the roundness of the corners with the keyboard cursor keys (up and down arrows) until the ends are completely circular. Zoom in and position the leg exactly in relation to the edge of the square body.
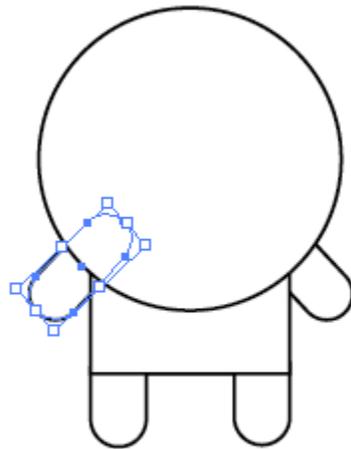

Duplicate the leg and move into position for the remaining limbs, for the arms rotate the shape by 45 degrees (Hold shift when rotating for perfect 45 degree angle). To position the shapes behind the other objects, press the CTRL + [to move back and CTRL +] to move forward repeatedly to adjust the stacking order of the selected objects.
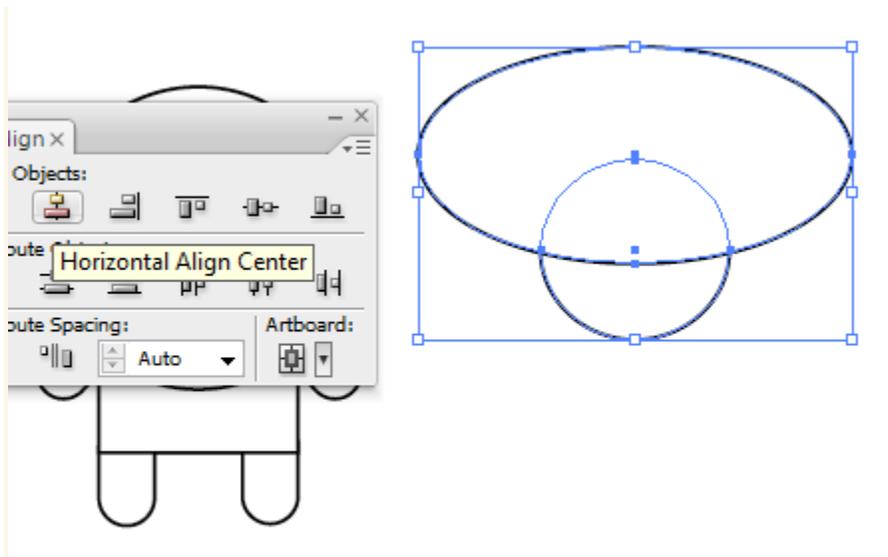
Draw another perfect circle onto the artboard, and beside it a much larger oval. Overlap the two and use the Align Palette to position exactly.
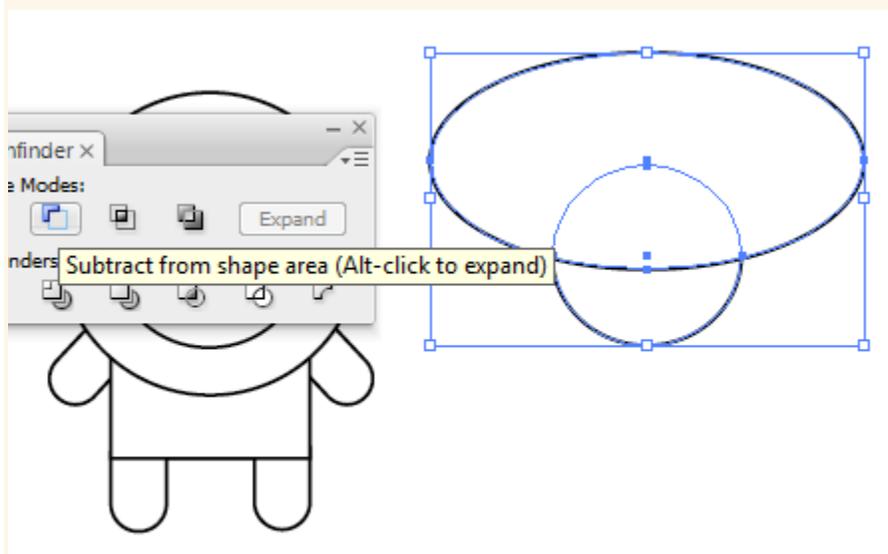

With the two shapes selected, click the Subtract from Shape Area option from the Pathfinder palette. By using temporary shapes as tools along with the Pathfinder options, a range of custom objects can be created.
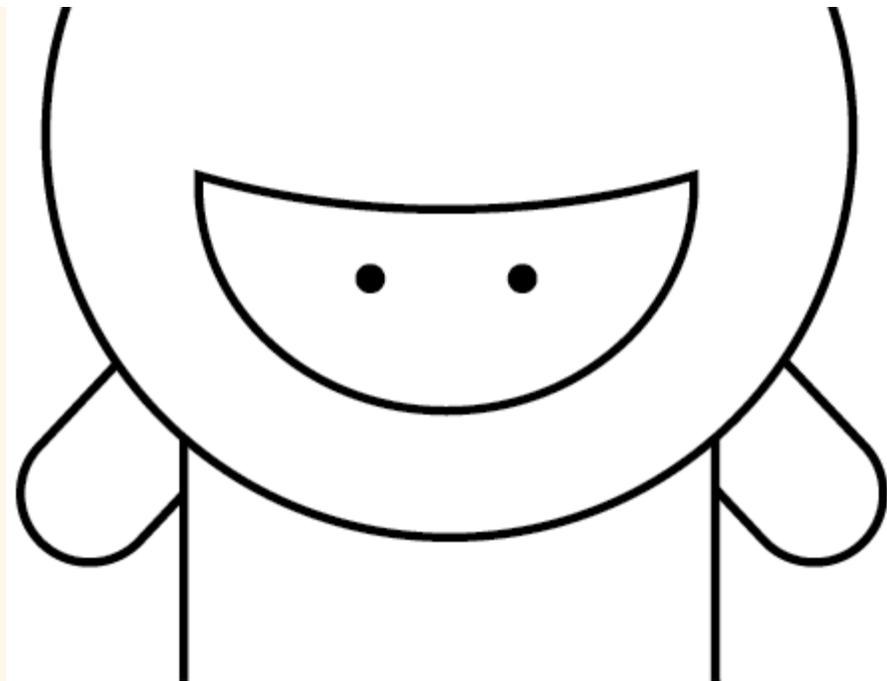
Position this semi-circular shape within the large circle of the character to represent the facial area. Draw in a small circle as an eye, fill this with a black swatch and clear any stroke. Copy and paste in front (CTRL + F), then move horizontally to the side (hold SHIFT to constrain the axis)

Grouping any pairs of objects, such as the eyes and arms will allow them to be centralized with the other objects using the Align Palette without being moved individually.
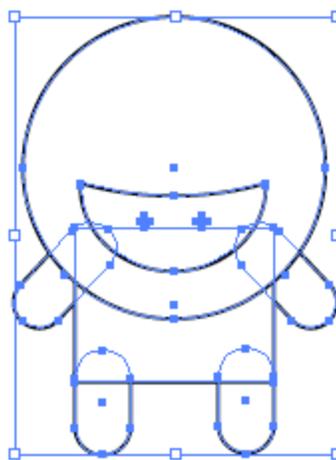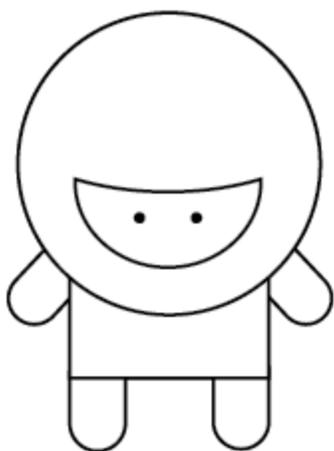
With the complete line-work character laid out and aligned, draw a selection around the complete object and copy and paste a duplicate. Move a copy off to the side as a backup.
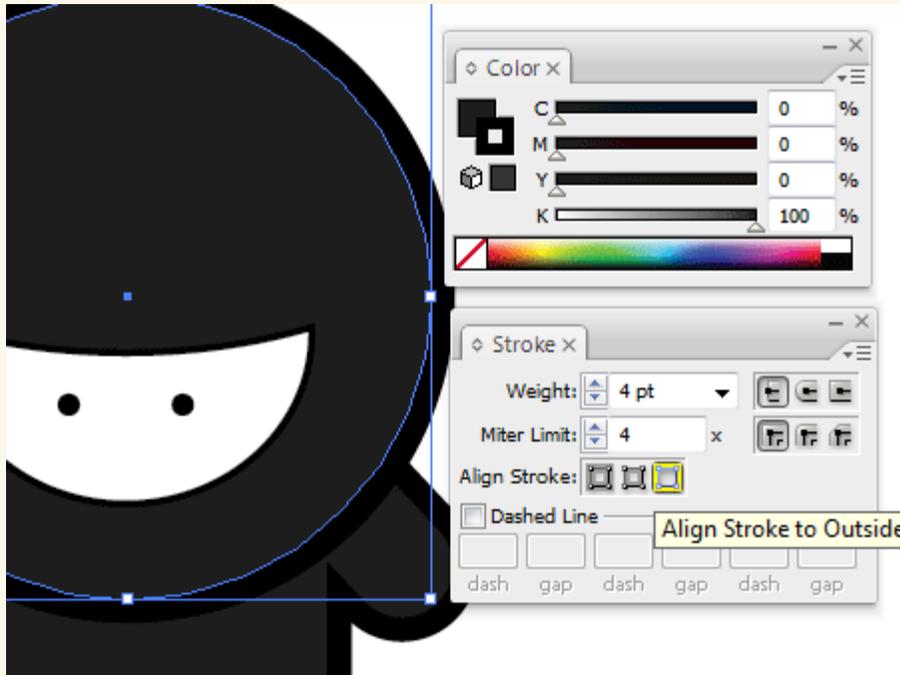

Select everything except the eyes. Fill the body elements with a color of your choice. Add a 4 pt stroke aligned to the outside at 100% black.
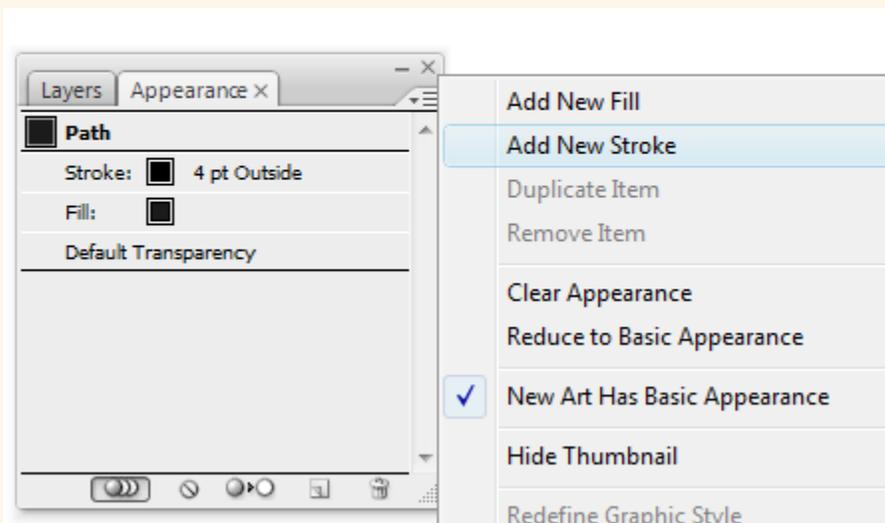
Select just the head. In the Appearance Palette, click the small options arrow and select Add New Stroke.
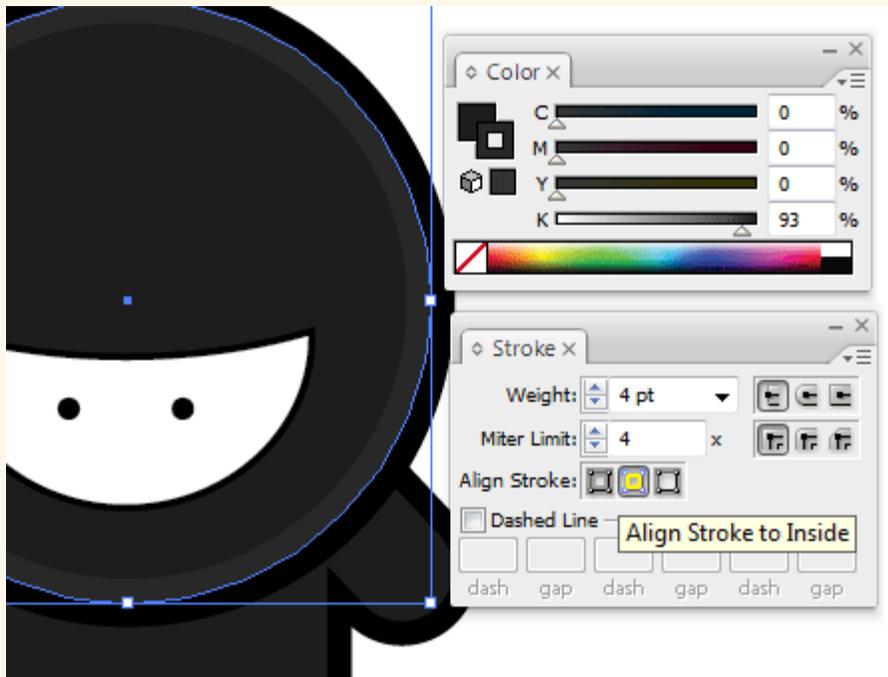
This time, add a 4pt stroke aligned to the inside, with a different color. This multiple use of strokes is a technique I've come to use in my character designs which really helps lift the colors by adding a little depth and variation.
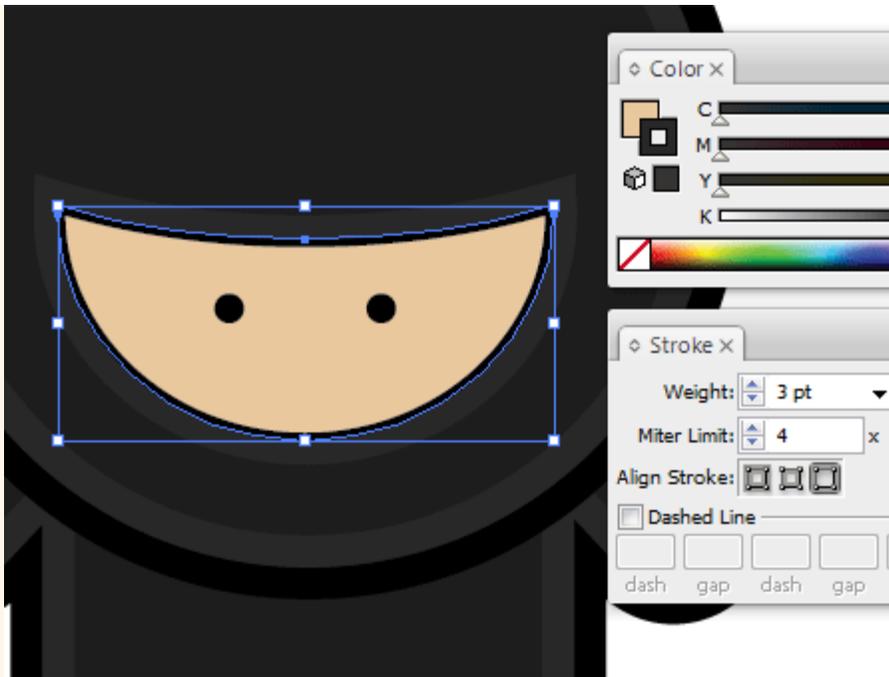
Select the facial area and fill with a skin tone of your choice, add a slightly thinner stroke at 3pt aligned to the outside using the 90% black.
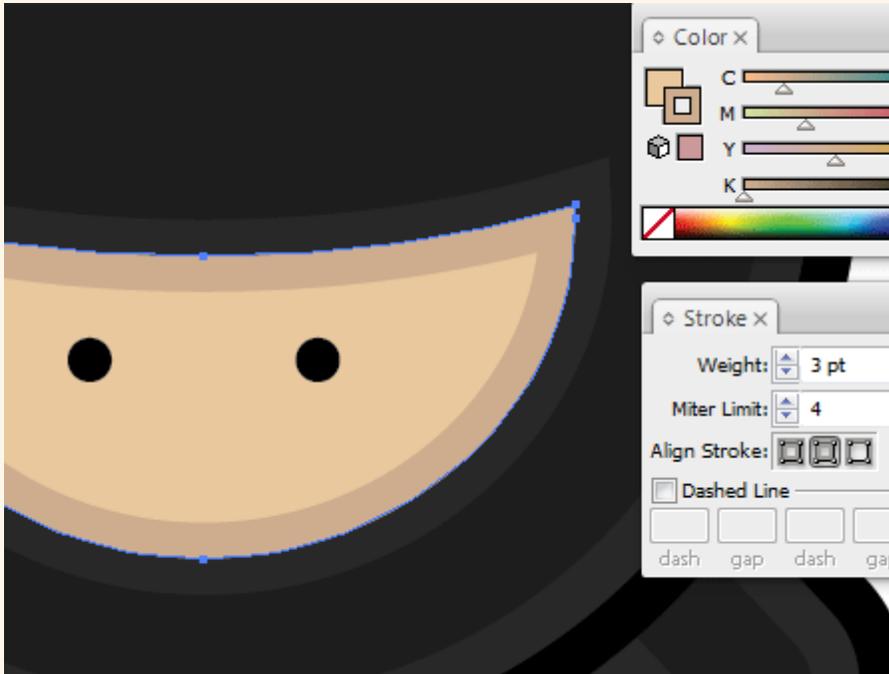

Add a New Stroke through the Appearance Palette and give this line a slightly darker tone, aligned to the inside of the shape.

The basic version of the character is complete, ready for some stealthy ninja action.

Copy and paste multiple variations of the character. Adjust and rotate the limbs into a range of scary ninja combat positions, adjust the stacking order of the arms to in front or behind the body to give different effects.
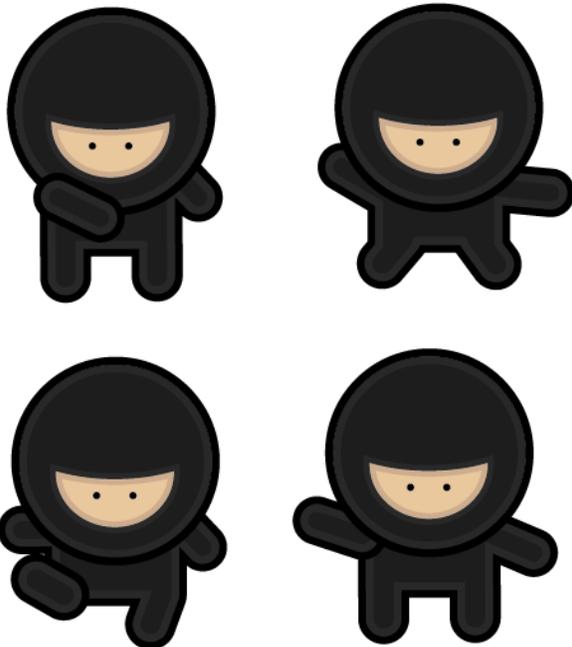

With each individual character, repeat the process of merging shapes and coloring the objects to produce a group of cool ninjas. However, no ninja would be complete without combat accessories.
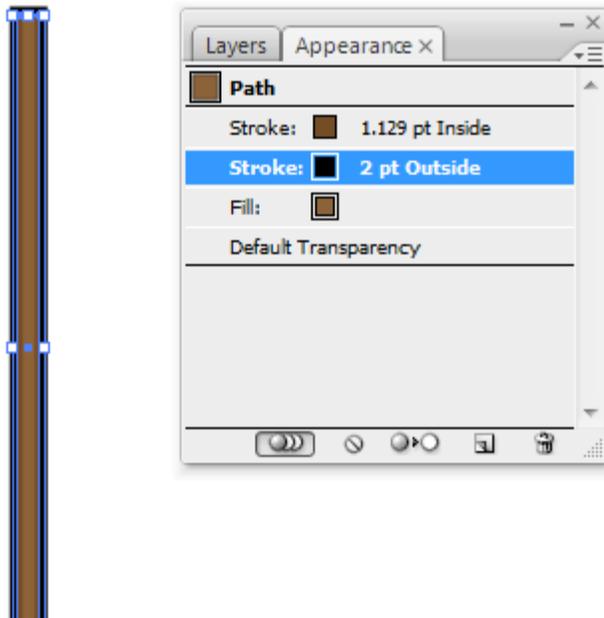
Create a staff using a long thin rectangle, fill the object with brown while adding a black outline.

Create a pointed object using the Star Tool, using the Direct Selection Tool select each of the outside points of the path from each arm of the star. (use shift key to select more than one)
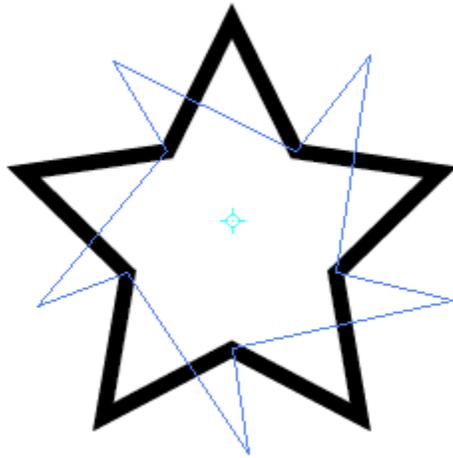
Upon selecting the Rotate Tool, the point of origin will automatically default to the centre of the object. Click and drag to adjust the overall shape of the star.
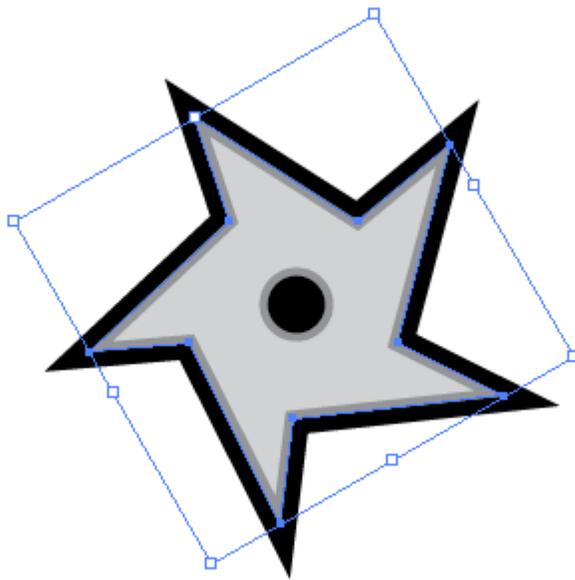
Draw a solid circle in the centre and fill the death star weapon with a metal like grey. Add a black outline and a secondary inner stroke with a slightly darker grey. Select entire object. Go to object menu -> Group.
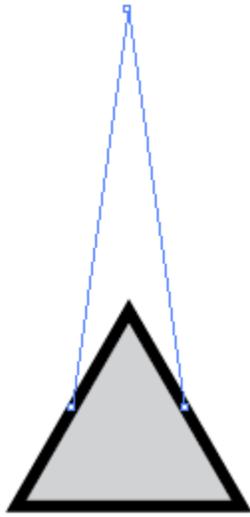
Using the same colour scheme, draw a triangle by dragging a shape with the Star Tool and pressing the downwards cursor key to reduce the number of points. Grab the upper most point with the Direct Selection Tool and drag vertically.
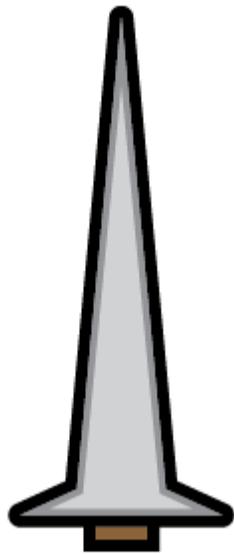
Select and drag the middle two points to squash the lower half into a sword like shape. Finalize this with a small brown rectangle, remember the majority of the handle would be concealed by the hand so only a small section is required.
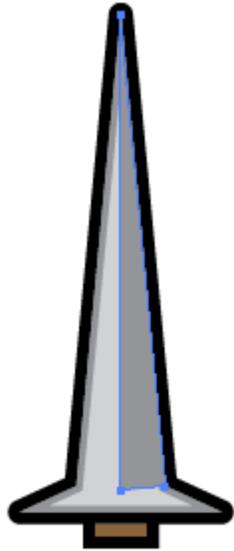
Change stroke to none and change the fill color to a slightly darker grey. Use the Pen Tool to neatly draw in a three-sided shape to represent the chamfered finish of the sword blade. Select entire object. Go to Object menu -> group.
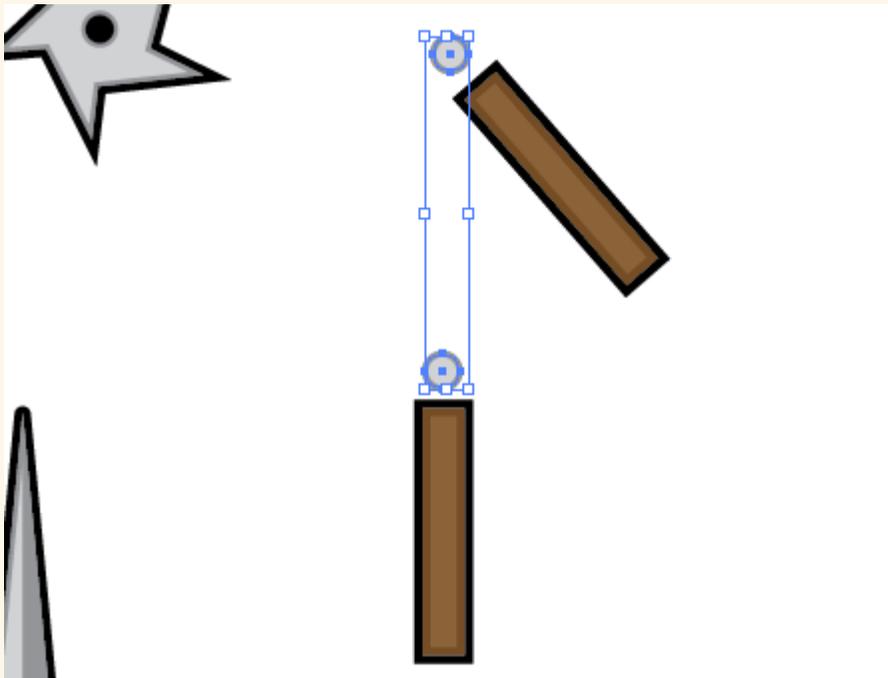
Turn the stroke back on. Create two Numchuk handles and the beginning and end points of the adjoining chain. With both chain elements selected head to Object > Blend > Make
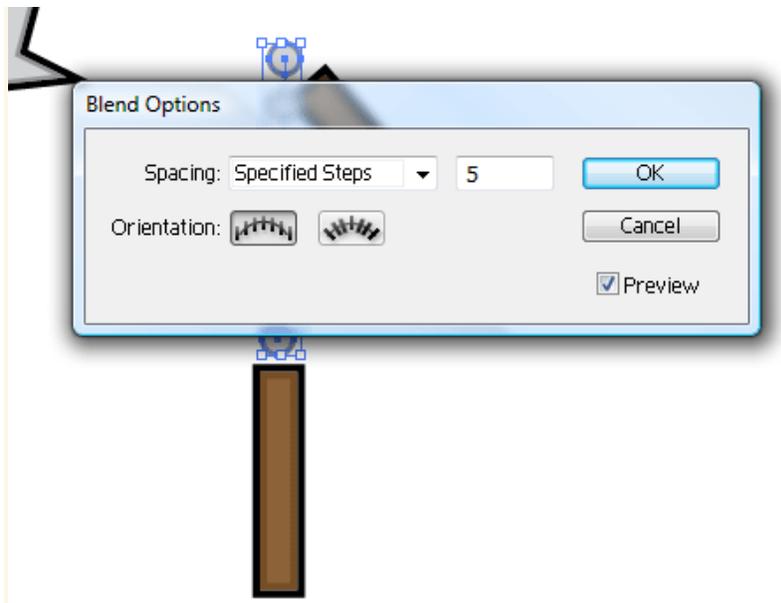
Go back to Object > Blend > Blend Options, enter 5 under the Specified Steps option to alter the type of blend to give a line of individual items.
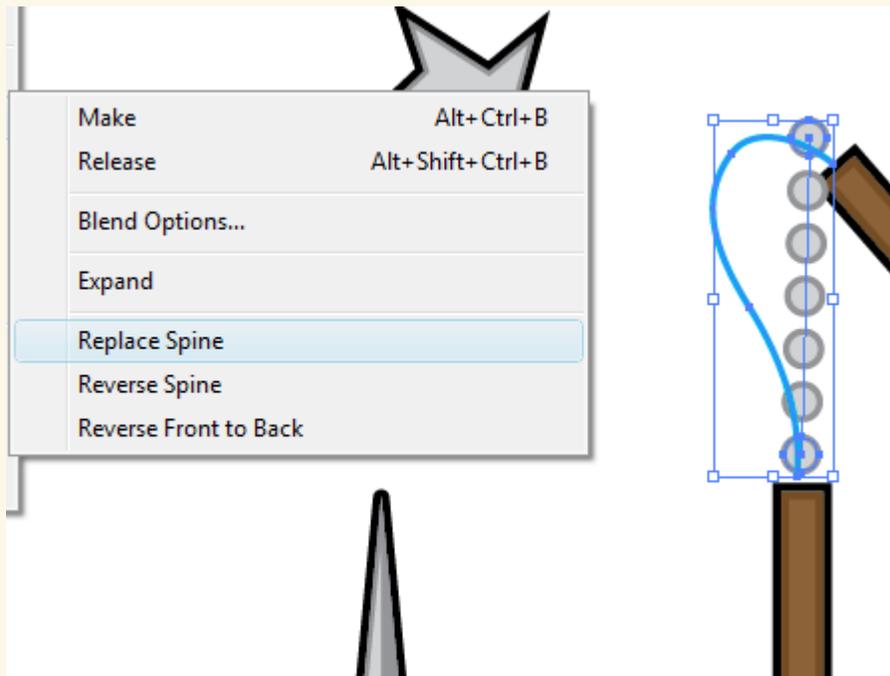
Deselect chain. Use the Pen or Pencil tool to draw a temporary line to symbolize the desired route of the Numchuk chain, with this and the blend selected, go to Object > Blend > Replace Spine. Select object. Go to object menu -> group.

Group each individual weapon and move into place on the various characters, completing the group making them ready for action!