



DRAFTSIGHT: SETTING UP THE INTERFACE

Set up the interface before you start drawing



When you move from AutoCAD to DraftSight, the basic drawing process is usually not the problem. The first interruption comes from the interface. The cursor looks different, selection behaves differently and familiar visual cues are not yet where you expect them.

This guide removes those distractions. The aim is not to reproduce AutoCAD pixel for pixel, but to create a predictable 2D working environment so you can concentrate on the DraftSight differences that genuinely matter.

Using DraftSight on a Mac? Good news: this guide applies to you too. The Options dialogs on macOS differ slightly in layout and color, but their structure and settings are the same. Where a procedure takes a different route on the Mac, the text says so.

By the end of this guide, you will have:

- selected the most practical workspace;
- created a separate settings profile;
- configured the theme, colors, cursor, Entity Snap, selection and grips;
- saved the configuration so it can be restored or transferred.

Work through the settings in the order presented. Start with the workspace and the profile. After the color scheme you will find a short table of system variables that applies the most important values in one pass. The detailed sections that follow are grouped by where the settings live in the Options dialog, so you are not jumping between panels. Finish by saving the profile and the drawing-template settings in the correct places.

For each setting, the guide gives the dialog path and, where available, the corresponding command or system variable. Use whichever method fits your normal workflow.

One thing to know before you open the first dialog. DraftSight spreads its preferences over several panels in the Options dialog: **System Options** holds the application-wide settings, **User Preferences** holds the drafting behavior. Both contain a section called Display, which is easy to mix up. Every section in this guide therefore gives the full path, starting at Options.

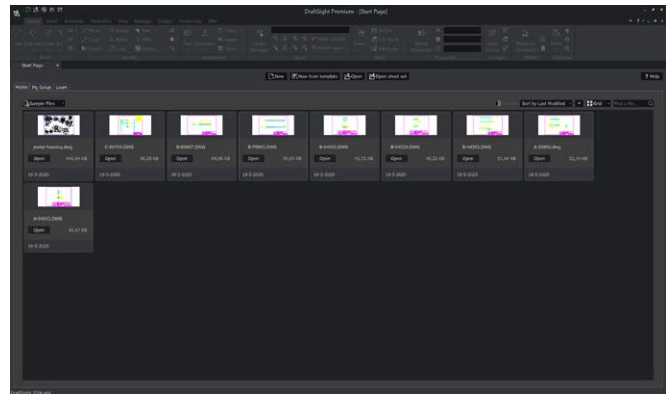


Figure 1. Start Page - the DraftSight welcome screen before you open a drawing

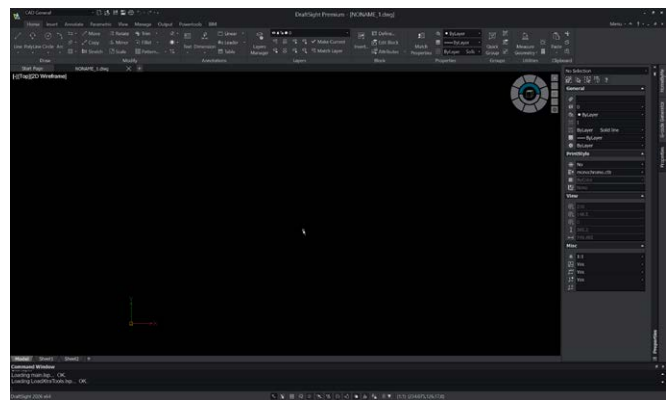


Figure 2. Model space - a new drawing with the default interface

TAKE THE QUICK ROUTE: MY SETUP ON THE START PAGE

Before you open a single dialog, take a look at the Start Page. Next to the Home tab sits **My Setup**, a compact settings page for the choices that shape your working environment. The left panel shows the workspaces as cards, and the one you need is already active: **CAD General**, the default workspace. Its own description explains why you can leave it exactly as it is: "This workspace mirrors the AutoCAD layout, so you can dive right in without missing a beat." Curious what the other workspaces look like? Double-click a card and the entire environment switches on the spot, ribbon and palettes included, with no restart and no confirmation dialog. Switching back works the same way.

The **Palettes** panel in the middle lists the available palettes. For most AutoCAD users, one is enough at the start: **Properties**, which carries the same name and the same role you are used to. Switch the others off and keep the drawing area clean. Everything you switch off stays one click away on this tab when a project calls for it.

The **Quick Settings** panel on the right collects a handful of common preferences, from the default template to the model background color. Leave them for now. This guide covers the same ground through the Options dialogs, where you see the complete picture, one decision at a time.

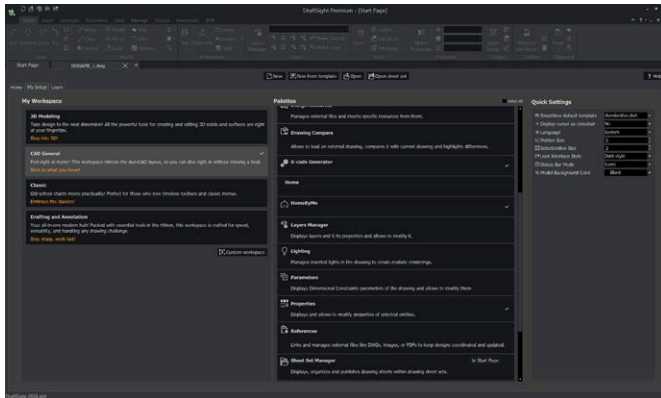


Figure 3. My Setup - workspaces, palettes, and Quick Settings on the Start Page

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: WORKSPACES AND PROFILES

Before changing any settings, separate two concepts that are easy to confuse. DraftSight stores the interface layout and the application preferences independently. A workspace controls what is arranged on the screen. A settings profile stores how the application looks and behaves.

A **workspace** (UI Profile) controls the layout of the interface. It determines which ribbon, toolbars, menus and palettes are displayed, and where they appear on the screen. You can switch workspaces from the selector in the upper-left corner of the DraftSight window or by using the **UIProfile** command.

DraftSight includes four predefined workspaces:

- **3D Modeling**
- **CAD General**
- **Classic**
- **Drafting and Annotation**

For an experienced AutoCAD user, CAD General is the recommended starting point. It comes closest to the working environment you are used to, so most of your habits carry over without adjustment.

Classic, with its menus and toolbars, is mainly for those who remember AutoCAD R14 and still miss the toolbar layout of the nineties. Choose the workspace first, then fine-tune the appearance and behavior in the sections that follow.

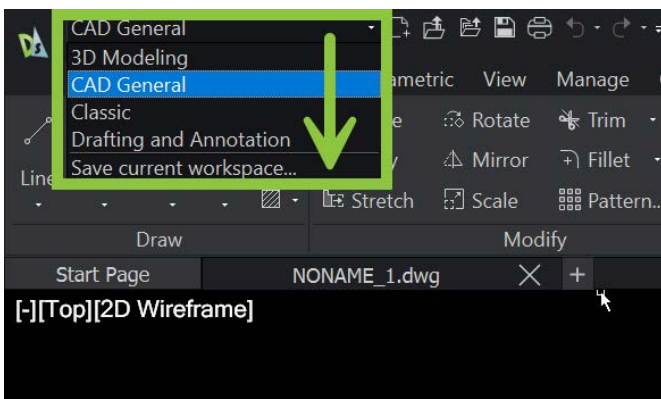


Figure 4. Workspace selector - switches the layout, not the colors

A **settings profile** stores application preferences such as the model background, crosshair, interface theme, selection colors and many other options. Profiles are managed through **Options > Profiles**.

Workspaces and settings profiles are independent. Changing the workspace does not change the model background or cursor settings, and activating another settings profile does not rearrange the ribbon or palettes. This separation is useful, but only after you know which type of setting you are changing.

One further distinction becomes important later in this guide: not every setting belongs to the profile. The position of the coordinate system icon (Origin or NoOrigin) is stored in the drawing, so it is saved in the drawing template rather than the profile.

Once you have configured the interface the way you like it, export the profile as an .xml file. You can import it later on another computer or use it as a starting point for future installations.

CREATE AND ACTIVATE YOUR OWN PROFILE

Create a separate settings profile before changing the interface. This keeps the original DraftSight configuration available as a clean reference and gives you a profile that can be exported, transferred or restored without affecting the default setup.

A new DraftSight installation starts with a single profile named <<unnamed profile>>.

The quickest way to open the dialog is a right-click in an empty part of the drawing area. The context menu ends with **Options** and **Drafting Options**, the two entries this guide uses throughout.

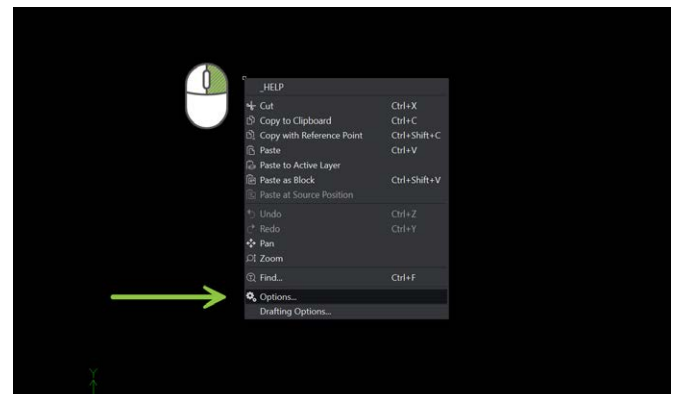


Figure 5. Right-click menu - the fastest route to Options

1. Open **Options > Profiles** or type **Profiles** at the command line.
2. Click **Add**, enter the name **My_Profile**, and click **OK**.
3. Select **My_Profile** and click **Activate**.
4. Check the top of the dialog and verify that **My_Profile** is the active profile before continuing.

From this point on, every interface and appearance setting you change is stored in this profile. When your configuration is complete, you can export it as an .xml file and import it whenever you need the same setup again. The profile name is not technically important. What matters is that it is recognizable and separate from the original unnamed profile.

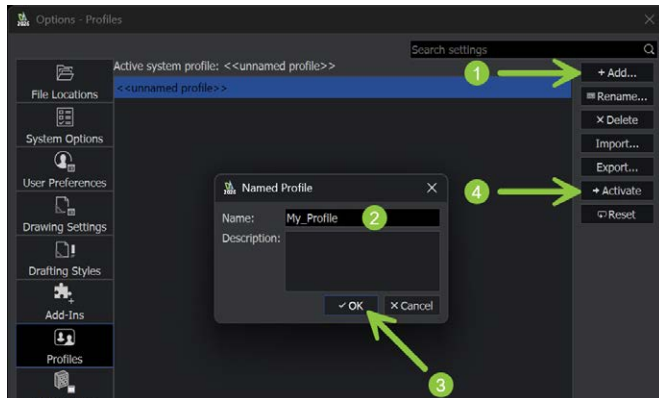


Figure 6. Options > Profiles - add and activate My_Profile

Before you close the dialog, note the **Search settings** box in the top right corner. Options spreads its settings over several panels, and this box is the shortcut across all of them: type part of a setting name and DraftSight lists every match with its full path, then jumps to the setting you pick. Whenever this guide names a setting you cannot find, the search box gets you there.

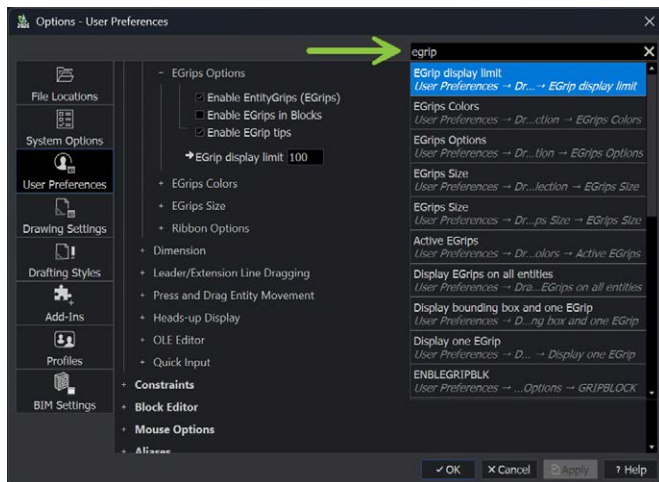


Figure 7. Search settings - every match listed with its full path

CHOOSE THE INTERFACE THEME: DARK OR LIGHT

The interface theme is configured through **Options > System Options > Display > User interface style**. Pick Light or Dark.

There is no command or system variable for this option. Outside this dialog, Quick Settings on the Start Page offers the same choice.

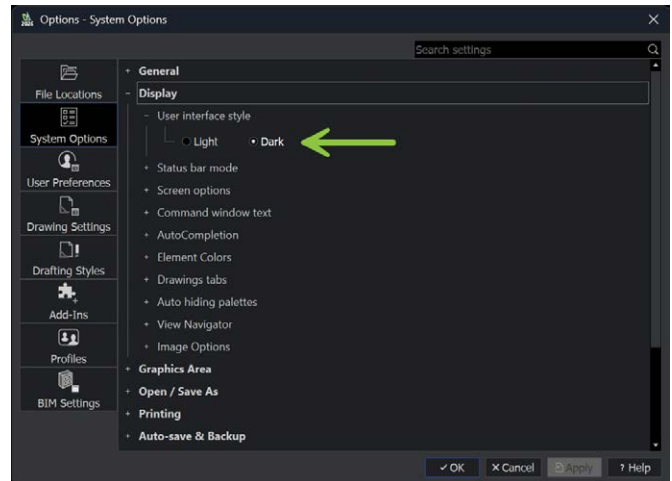


Figure 8. User interface style - Light or Dark under System Options > Display

The theme changes the DraftSight interface, including the ribbon, menus, toolbars, palettes and dialog boxes. It does not set the Model space or Sheet background. Those colors are configured separately in the next section.

The Light theme displays the ribbon icons in color, which can make commands easier to recognize during the first weeks of a migration. The Dark theme uses a more subdued interface with grayscale icons. Neither choice changes the commands or drawing behavior.

Choose the theme before adjusting individual element colors. Otherwise, you may judge the same color settings twice against two different interface backgrounds. Test both themes, select the one that supports your normal working environment, and then leave it unchanged while you complete the remaining configuration.

MATCH THE INTERFACE COLORS

The appearance of the interface has a greater impact than many users expect. After years of working with the same color scheme, even small differences can make an application feel unfamiliar.

All element colors live in one list under **Options > System Options > Display > Element Colors**. DraftSight lets you customize the color of almost every interface element. The scheme below is a migration baseline, not a universal color scheme. A few choices are deliberate. Model space uses a charcoal background rather than pure black, which keeps strong contrast with white geometry while reducing glare. Sheet backgrounds stay white because the layout represents printed paper.

Window and Crossing selections use different colors so the selection direction stays readable at a glance. Treat the values as a starting point and adjust individual colors once the rest of the interface is stable.

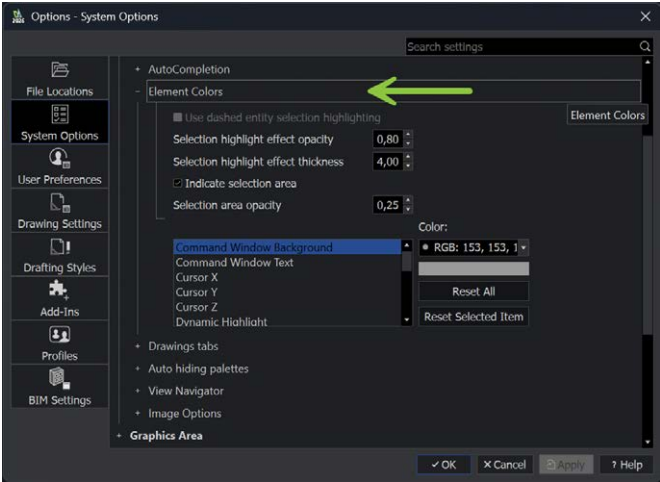


Figure 9. Element Colors - one list for all interface element colors

#	Element	Description	Recommended Setting
1	Command Window Background	Command line area background	Leave default
2	Command Window Text	Command line text	Leave default
3	Cursor X	X arm of the crosshair pointer	White
4	Cursor Y	Y arm of the crosshair pointer	White
5	Cursor Z	Z arm of the crosshair pointer (3D)	White
6	Dynamic Highlight	Rollover highlight when hovering, before selection	White
7	ESnap Cue	Entity Snap marker in model space	Green
8	ESnap Cue Sheet	Entity Snap marker on sheet tabs	Green
9	Model Reference Guides	Tracking and alignment guides in model space	1,152,1
10	Model Background	Drawing area background in model space	33,40,48
11	Model Crosshair	Crosshair color in model space	White
12	Cross selection	Crossing selection box fill (right to left)	Index 100
13	Window selection	Window selection box fill (left to right)	Index 150

#	Element	Description	Recommended Setting
14	Selected Entity	Highlight of entities once selected	82,169,255
15	Sheet Reference Guides	Tracking and alignment guides on sheet tabs	Green
16	Sheet Background	Drawing area background on a sheet	White
17	Sheet Crosshair	Crosshair color on a sheet	Black
18	View Tile Controls	Viewport labels in the drawing area (top-left)	White
19	Quick Input Background	Dynamic input field background	153,153,153
20	Quick Input Border	Dynamic input field border	Black
21	Quick Input Text	Dynamic input field text	Black
22	Component Editor Background	Block or Component editor background	153,153,153

Leave the Command Window colors at their default. Fixed colors do not adapt when you switch the interface theme, which can produce unreadable combinations such as white text on a white background. The defaults follow the active theme, and the colored command options remain easy to read on the dark background.

One difference from AutoCAD is worth knowing here: the Command Window options are colored for readability, not for clicking. To choose an option, type its highlighted letters, pick it from the drop-down list next to the pointer, or right-click for the same list.

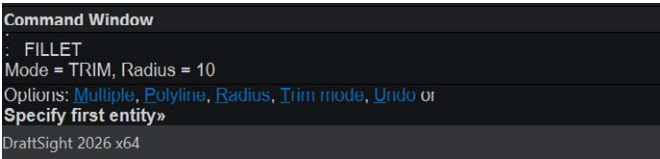


Figure 10. Command Window options appear colored, not for clicking



THE FAST TRACK: SEVEN SYSTEM VARIABLES

With the colors in place, the largest remaining part of this setup comes down to seven values. Set the following system variables to bring the interface as close to AutoCAD as possible. Type the variable name at the command line, enter the value, and continue with the next one.

Variable	What it controls	Value
CURSORSIZE	Crosshair size, as a percentage of the screen	5
PICKBOX	Selection box size, in pixels	5
APERTURE	Snap detection area around the cursor	20
GRIPCOLOR	Inactive grips	Index 150
GRIPHOT	Active grips	Index 12
GRIPHOVER	Mouseover grips	Index 11
GRIPSIZE	Grip size	7

Selection behavior needs no entry in this table. DraftSight 2026 already ships with the values an AutoCAD user expects, and the selection section below explains what to check.

Prefer the dialogs, or want to know the reasoning behind a value? The sections below cover every setting in detail, grouped by panel: first System Options, then User Preferences, and finally the coordinate system icon, which has its own dialog outside Options.

CONFIGURE THE POINTER: DISPLAY A CROSSHAIR

The cursor is one of the first things experienced CAD users notice. Because you look at it throughout the day, even small differences in its appearance can affect how comfortable the application feels.

By default, DraftSight displays an arrow with a small pickbox when no command is active. To always display a crosshair, enable **Display cursor as crosshair** under **Options > System Options > Graphics Area**. There is no command or system variable for this switch. Outside this dialog, Quick Settings on the Start Page offers the same option.

Once the crosshair is enabled, adjust its size directly below the checkbox. The **Pointer size** setting is controlled by the **CURSORSIZE** system variable. The value ranges from 1 to 100, representing the percentage of the screen occupied by the crosshair. A value of 5 keeps the crosshair compact enough to stay out of your way while still giving a clear alignment reference across the screen.

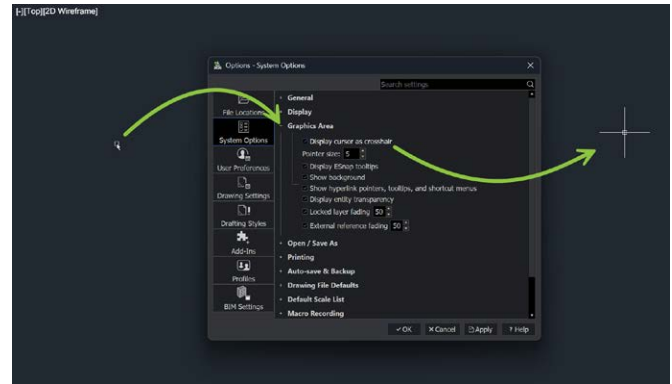


Figure 11. Display cursor as crosshair and Pointer size - System Options > Graphics Area

SET THE PICKBOX AND CHECK THE SELECTION BEHAVIOR

The next settings live on one page: **Options > User Preferences > Drafting Options > Entity Selection > Selection Settings**. Typing **DraftingOptions** at the command line takes you to the same panel.

Set the pickbox with the **PICKBOX** system variable or the **SelectionBox** command. In the dialog, it is the **SelectionBox size** slider at the bottom of the page. The range is 1 to 50 pixels. Use 5 as a starting value. DraftSight defaults to 3, but the slightly larger box makes selection more forgiving without covering too much nearby geometry.

The pickbox is measured in pixels, so on a very high-resolution display a few extra pixels help: 6 or 7 may feel more comfortable there. The crosshair size is a percentage of the screen, so it does not change with resolution. Start at 5 for both, and avoid oversizing either: an oversized pickbox or crosshair hides the precision it is meant to give and makes dense drawings harder to read.

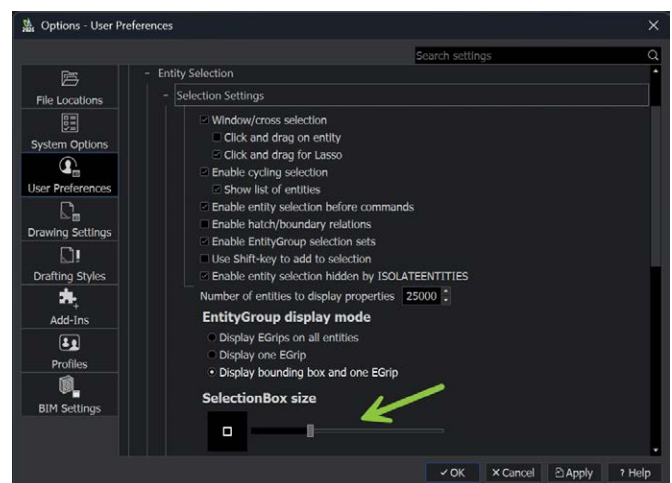


Figure 12. Selection Settings - the SelectionBox size slider sits at the bottom

Selection itself is used so frequently that even a small difference becomes disruptive. The good news: DraftSight 2026 comes configured the way an AutoCAD user expects. This part is a check, not a change.

Verify that **Window/cross selection** is enabled. This preserves the traditional two-corner workflow: click once for the first corner and again for the opposite corner, or press and drag to create the selection window. You can use whichever method suits the geometry and the current operation.

Click and drag for Lasso is enabled by default, matching the behavior AutoCAD has had for years. Leave it on. There is nothing to relearn here.

The same behavior can be checked from the command line. **PICKDRAG** should report 2 and **PICKAUTO** should report 5, the values a fresh DraftSight 2026 installation already has. Check them once and leave them alone.

CONFIGURE ENTITY SNAP FEEDBACK (ESNAP)

In DraftSight, Entity Snap (**ESnap**) is what you know in AutoCAD as Object Snap (**OSNAP**). This is also a good place to note one term that runs through the whole application: DraftSight calls the elements you draw entities, where AutoCAD uses objects. The two words mean the same thing.

Entity Snap settings determine how easily you can locate and snap to precise points in a drawing. The following settings provide clear visual feedback without adding unnecessary clutter to the drawing area.

Set **APERTURE** to 20. This defines the size of the snap detection area around the cursor and provides a good balance between precision and ease of selection. DraftSight recognizes the AutoCAD name and resolves it to its own variables (**GRAVITY** and **SETGBOXSZ**).



Figure 13. Aperture - the snap detection area around the cursor

The same detection area has a dialog page: **Options > User Preferences > Drafting Options > Display > Gravity Box**. Make sure **Enable ESnap gravity** is on and switch **Display GravityBox** off. Snapping remains fully functional, but the detection box is hidden, resulting in a cleaner drawing area. This keeps the visual feedback useful without adding a permanent box around the cursor.

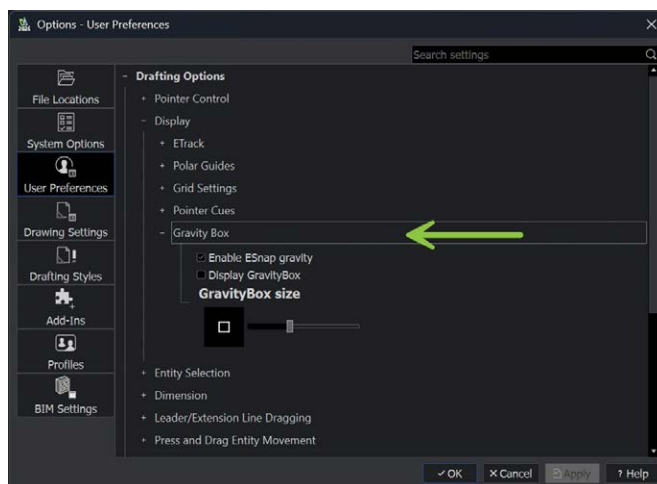


Figure 14. Gravity Box - ESnap gravity on, the visible box off

For the snap marker, open **Options > User Preferences > Drafting Options > Display > Pointer Cues** and make sure **Display ESnap cues** is enabled, so the markers appear while you work. The same page sets the cue color and, with the ESnap cue size slider, the size of the marker; the preview next to the slider shows the result. If you prefer the command line, the **SETESNPCUESZ** system variable sets the same size directly. Change color or size when the cue lacks contrast against your chosen background. The marker should remain distinct from both the geometry and the crosshair.

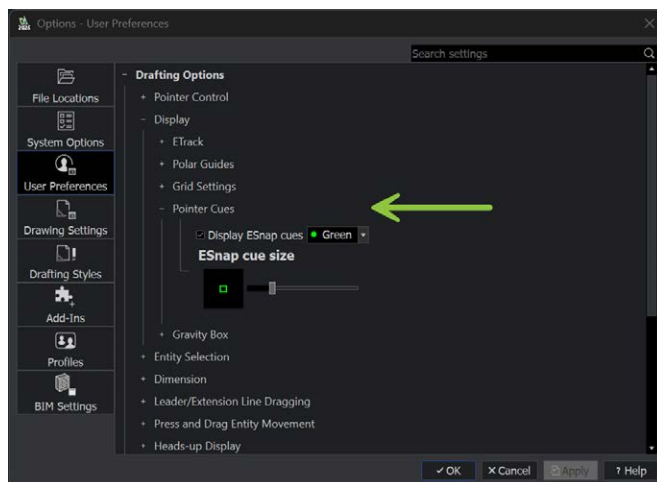


Figure 15. Pointer Cues - ESnap cue color and size



CONFIGURE GRIPS

Grip colors and size are part of your profile, like the other interface colors, but they are not in the Element Colors list. You will find them in the panel you are already in: **Options > User Preferences > Drafting Options > Entity Selection**, under EGrips Options, EGrips Colors and EGrips Size. The **EntityGrips** command takes you to the same place.

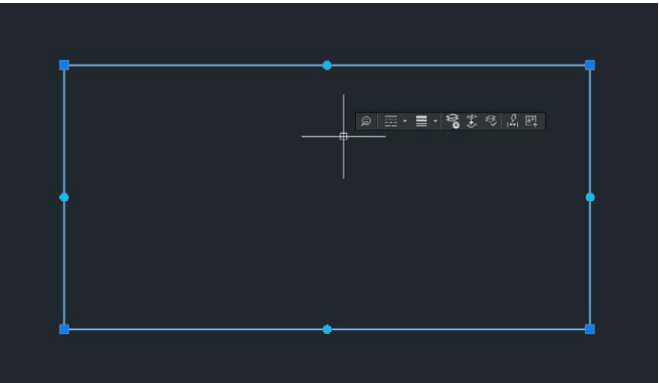


Figure 16. Grips and Heads-up Display toolbar - on a selected entity

The colors are entered as color index numbers. DraftSight uses the same color index as AutoCAD, the 1 to 255 palette built into the DWG format, so the index numbers you already know carry over directly.

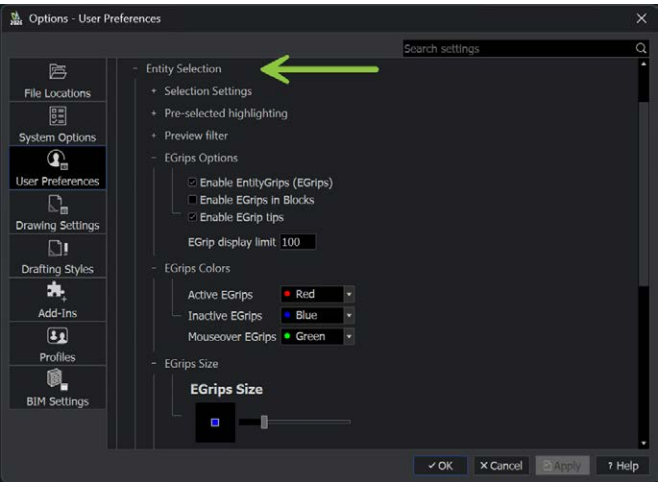


Figure 17. EGrips colors and size - Entity Selection in Drafting Options

You can type the variable names below. DraftSight recognizes them and, for the mouseover and size settings, resolves them to its own variables (**SETEGRIPMSEOVRLR** and **SETEGRIPSZ**).

DraftSight Setting	Variable	Recommended Value
Inactive EGrips	GRIPCOLOR	Index 150
Active EGrips	GRIPHOT	Index 12
Mouseover EGrips	GRIPHOVER	Index 11
EGrips size	GRIPSIZE	7

These settings provide clear visual feedback while editing entities and make it easy to distinguish between inactive, active and highlighted grips.

One aspect of grips is fixed: you can change their color and size, but not their shape. At vertices and endpoints, grips are square, just as you are used to. The difference shows on polylines, where DraftSight marks the midpoint of each segment with a round grip, where AutoCAD uses a rectangular bar. Separate lines keep square grips throughout. The grip shape itself cannot be changed.

DECIDE HOW TO USE THE HEADS-UP DISPLAY TOOLBAR

When you select one or more entities, DraftSight displays a small toolbar near the cursor. The **Heads-up Display** toolbar provides quick access to common layer and property changes for the selected entities.

During the first stage of a migration, the simplest choice is to turn the toolbar off. A control that follows the cursor adds movement to the drawing area and can hide nearby geometry, which makes it harder to judge the core selection and editing behavior. You can switch it on later if it proves faster than the Properties palette.

To disable the toolbar, open **Options > User Preferences > Drafting Options**, expand **Heads-up Display**, and clear **Enable toolbar**. The toolbar will no longer appear when entities are selected.

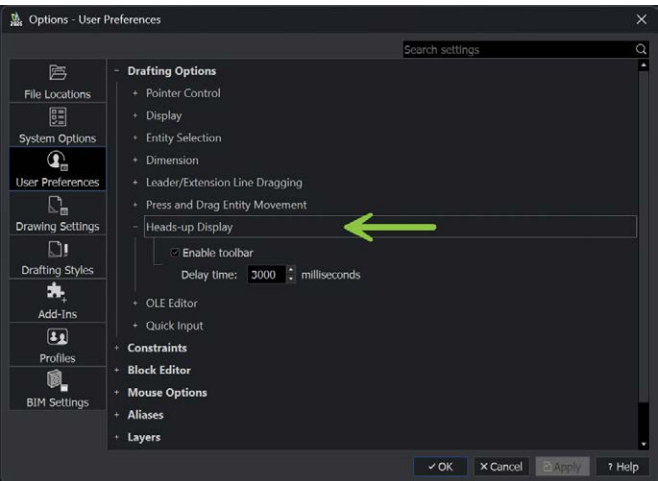


Figure 18. Heads-up Display toolbar - settings in Drafting Options

If you prefer to keep the toolbar available, you can make it less intrusive by adjusting **Delay time**. This setting determines how long the toolbar remains visible, in milliseconds, before it disappears automatically.

These options are available through the dialog only. There are no corresponding system variables.

CONFIGURE THE COORDINATE SYSTEM ICON (UCS)

DraftSight calls this the Custom Coordinate System, or CCS. In AutoCAD you know it as the UCS. The appearance and position of the icon are controlled with the **CSIcon** command, and the familiar **UCSICON** name also works.

To change its appearance, open **CSIcon > Properties**. Set **In Model space** to White and leave In Paper space set to Blue. Enable **Apply single color** to display the entire icon in a single color instead of using separate colors for each axis.

Next, set the icon position to NoOrigin. This pins the icon to the lower-left corner of the drawing window so it stays visible as you pan and zoom. By default the icon sits on the origin, the way it does in AutoCAD, and it travels with the origin point until that point leaves the view. NoOrigin keeps it fixed in the corner instead, which many drafters find calmer to work with.

Unlike most interface settings, the UCS icon is not stored in a single place. Its colors and size are part of your profile, together with the other interface colors you set earlier.

Only the icon's position, whether it sits on the origin or stays fixed in the lower-left corner (Origin or NoOrigin), is stored in the drawing. To give every new drawing the same icon position, set it once in your drawing template and save the template. Drawings created from that template then open with the same icon position.

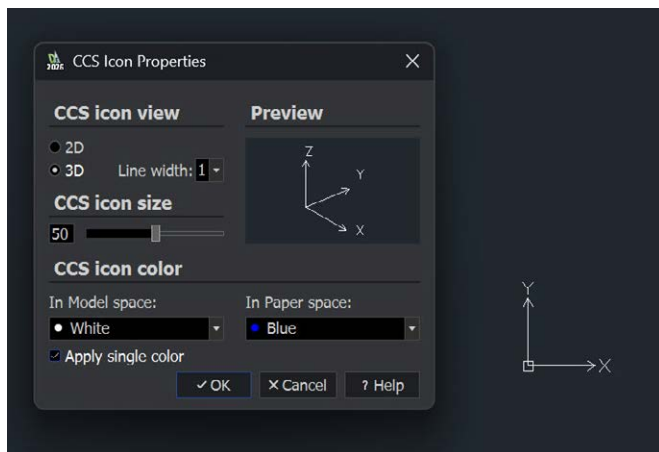


Figure 19. CCS icon - single color, white on a charcoal background

SAVE THE SETUP IN THE RIGHT PLACES

The interface configuration in this guide is stored in two places. Save both before moving on.

1. Export the settings profile. Open **Options > Profiles**, select My_Profile, and click Export. Save the profile as an XML file in a location that is included in your normal backup. This

file carries the interface colors and application preferences, including the grip colors and the coordinate system icon colors, and can be imported on another computer or after a new installation.

2. Save the icon position in the template. The coordinate system icon position is stored in the drawing, not the profile. Open the drawing template you use for new work, set the icon to Origin or NoOrigin, and save the template. Every drawing created from that template inherits the position.

The two are complementary. The profile does not restore the icon position, and the template does not restore the interface colors. Keep both so another workstation can be configured without guesswork.

The workspace itself does not need saving. You selected CAD General, one of the standard workspaces in DraftSight, so it is always available, including after a reinstall. Building and saving your own workspace is advanced customization and falls outside this guide.

STARTING OVER WITH A CLEAN SETUP

You should not normally need to reset DraftSight after completing this guide. Use the following options only when the configuration has become difficult to troubleshoot or when you want to rebuild the setup from a known starting point.

Start by resetting only the settings profile. This preserves the rest of the DraftSight configuration and is sufficient in most cases. Reset all user settings only when the problem extends beyond the active profile.

1. Reset the profile. In most cases the trouble is limited to your own profile. Open **Options > Profiles**, activate the unnamed profile, then create a new profile and set it up again using this guide. Your previous profile stays in the list, so you can go back to it if you need to.
2. Reset all user settings. If more than the profile seems wrong, reset DraftSight's local settings folder. Close DraftSight first, because it rebuilds these settings on the next start and cannot do that while running.

Then open %APPDATA%\DraftSight (you can paste %APPDATA% into the File Explorer address bar to get there directly; it resolves to C:\Users\[username]\AppData\Roaming\DraftSight) and rename the folder, for example to DraftSight_OLD.

Start DraftSight again. It creates a fresh DraftSight folder with default settings, and the renamed folder stays as your backup. This also resets your profiles, since they live inside this folder.

On a Mac, the same reset works through the settings folder ~/Library/Preferences/DraftSight. Close DraftSight, rename that folder, for example to DraftSight_OLD, and start DraftSight again.

These two steps cover the quick recovery you can do yourself. Deeper resets belong to system administration and fall outside this guide.

