

# Beginners' Workshop

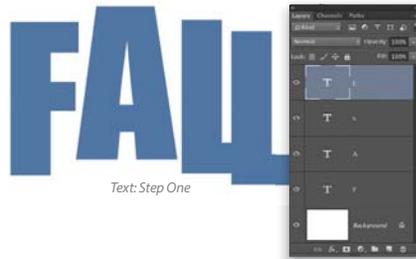
## conquering clipping masks

LESA SNIDER

Clipping masks are like the Photoshop version of stencils; they let you take one layer's content and push it through the solid area of the layer beneath it. In this column, you'll learn how to mask imagery using type and shape layers, as well as brushstrokes drawn on an empty image layer.

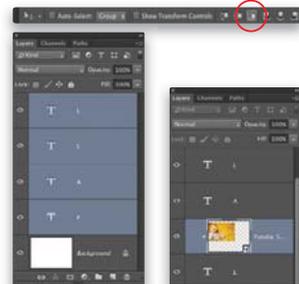
### Photo Through Text

**Step One:** Choose File>New to create a new document (say, 1600x1200 pixels at 72 ppi for Web or 300 ppi for print). Press T to grab the Type tool. To mask an image with a word, click in the document and enter the word (6 letters or less is best) using a thick font (e.g., Impact or Arial Bold). For this part of the tutorial, we're masking a different image with each individual letter. To mask a different image with each letter, enter one letter and then Shift-click in the document to force Photoshop to create another type layer, enter the next letter, and repeat. Text color doesn't matter.



Text: Step One

**Step Two:** With the final type layer active, Shift-click the first type layer to select all the type layers (if you entered each letter on its own layer). Press V to grab the Move tool and, in the Options Bar, click the Align Bottom Edges icon. To create equal spacing between letters, activate each type layer individually and, with the Move tool active, tap the Left or Right Arrow keys. To reposition the whole word, select all type layers and, with the Move tool selected, click-and-drag to reposition.



Text: Step Two

Text: Step Three

**Step Three:** Activate the first type layer and choose File>Place Embedded. In the resulting dialog, find a photo and click Place. Photoshop adds the image as a smart object above the active layer and puts it in a bounding box. Resize as needed and press Enter to commit the transformation. (Note: You can resize smart object content multiple times without quality loss.) With your image in place, choose Layer>Create Clipping Mask. Tip: Alternatively, press-and-hold Option (PC: Alt) while pointing your cursor at the dividing line between the layers, and click when your cursor turns into a square with a down-pointing arrow.



Text: Step Four

**Step Four:** With the smart object layer selected, use the Move tool to reposition the image inside the letter. To resize the image, press Command-T (PC: Ctrl-T) to bring up the Free Transform bounding box, and Shift-drag any corner handle inward to shrink or outward to enlarge, as shown here. Press Enter to accept the transformation.

**Step Five:** Activate the second type layer and repeat Steps Three and Four until you've clipped a different image to each type layer.



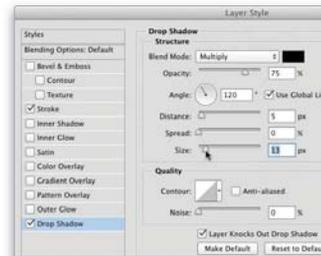
Text: Step Five

**Step Six:** Activate the first type layer and click the Add a Layer Style icon (fx) at the bottom of the Layers panel. Choose Stroke and, in the resulting dialog, enter 5 px for Size, Inside for Position (for straight corners), and click the Color swatch. In the resulting Color Picker, mouse over to the document and click to snatch a color from one of the images; keep clicking until you find a stroke color you like. Click OK to close the Color Picker, but don't close the Layer Style dialog.



Text: Step Six

**Step Seven:** In the Layer Style dialog, click Drop Shadow under the Styles list on the left. Set Size to 13 px and reposition the shadow by clicking-and-dragging atop your document. Click OK.



**Step Eight:** Choose Layer>Layer Style>Copy Layer Style. Command-click (PC: Ctrl-click) to activate the other type layers and choose Layer>Layer Style>Paste Layer Style. Tip: You can also Right-click on a layer name to access the Copy/Paste Layer Style commands.



**Step Nine:** Choose File>Save As and choose Photoshop from the Format menu. Here's the finished product after adding promotional copy.



Text: Step Nine

### Photo Through Shape or Illustration

Masking with a shape layer, or a vector illustration that you've placed as a smart object, works the same way. They key is to position the shape layer or smart object below the layer you're clipping it to.

**Step One:** Open a photo by choosing File>Open As Smart Object. Activate the Custom Shape tool (nested under the Rectangle tool [U]). In the Options Bar, make sure the drop-down menu on the left is set to Shape, click the Fill menu and pick any color, and set the Stroke menu to No Color. Click the Shape drop-down menu, click the gear icon in the resulting menu, and choose All. In the resulting dialog, click Append.



Shape: Step Two

**Step Two:** Click to activate a shape, then mouse over to your document and Shift-click-and-drag to draw it. (Tip: Press the Spacebar to reposition as you draw.) To rotate it, press Command-T (PC: Ctrl-T), move your cursor outside of the bounding box until you see a curved double arrow, then click-and-drag to rotate. Reposition the shape by dragging inside the bounding box. Press Enter to accept.



Shape: Step Three

**Step Three:** In the Layers panel, drag the shape layer beneath the smart object. Activate the smart object layer and choose Layer>Create Clipping Mask. To reposition the photo and shape, activate both layers and use the Move tool. Here's the final result, after placing another image for texture at the bottom of the layer stack, and adding a drop shadow to the shape layer.

Old, Creative Commons, Background, Government, Photos

### Photo Through Brushstroke

**Step One:** Open an image as a smart object and then add a new layer below the currently active one by Command-clicking (PC: Ctrl-clicking) the Create a New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel. Activate the smart object and choose Layer>Create Clipping Mask. Your document turns transparent, but you'll fix that next.



Brushstroke: Step One

**Step Two:** Press B to grab the Brush tool. In the Options Bar, click the Brush Preset Picker and, in the resulting menu, click the gear icon. Choose Faux Finish Brushes and click Append in the resulting dialog. Scroll until you find the Stencil Sponge – Twirl brush and click it.

Brushstroke: Step Two

**Step Three:** Activate the empty layer and make the brush big by tapping the Right Bracket key (]). Click or click-and-drag to add paint to the layer, which the photo shows through. Here's the final result after adding a solid white fill layer. To add a new fill layer, choose Layer>New Fill Layer>Solid Color, and click OK. In the Color Picker, set the color to white (R:255, G:255, B:255), click OK, and drag the fill layer to the bottom of the Layers panel.



Brushstroke: Step Three

Until next time, may the creative force be with you all. ■

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