

Adobe Photoshop Elements
INTRO TO LAYERS (PART 2)

By Dave Cross

In Part 1, we talked about the main concept behind layers and why they're so important. Now we'll take it a step further and show how to make a simple collage of images.

First, we need to open the image we're going to use as a background and whatever images we're going to use in our collage. To add one image onto the main image, we need to drag-and-drop it. That means clicking the Move tool on the smaller image and dragging it onto the larger, main image. We can do this in two ways:

Go to the Window menu, under Images, and choose Cascade. This allows you to see and work with more than one image at a time. Make the smaller image your active window and make sure you can also see at least a portion of the main image. Using the Move tool, click-and-hold on the smaller image and drag it onto the main image. When you let go, a new layer is created that contains the image you just dragged.



Figure 1

In Maximize Mode (Window > Images > Maximize Mode), make sure the Photo Bin is visible. Using the Move tool, click-and-hold on the smaller image and drag it onto the thumbnail in the Photo Bin of the main image. Again, a new layer is created (Figure 1).

This drag-and-drop technique makes a copy so you don't have to worry about anything happening to the original you've dragged over—it's still there, untouched.

It's a good habit to name each new layer that's created by dragging-and-dropping; otherwise, you'll end up with a bunch of layers called Layer 1, Layer 2, Layer,

To do this, double-click on the layer name in the Layers palette and type in a new name (**Figure 2**).

If the image you dragged over is too big, (with the Move tool active) look in the Options Bar and make sure that Show Bounding Box is checked. Use the handles to resize the image to make it smaller, making sure to hold down the *Shift* key to keep it proportional (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3

Note: Your copied image will have a very hard edge unless you soften the edge of your selection first using feathering. So, before dragging the selected area, go to the Select menu and choose Feather. In the resulting dialog, choose an amount: The higher the number, the softer the edge will be. You can always delete the layer and start over again if you're not happy with the results (**Figure 5**).



Figure 2

(Don't try to make an image bigger, as the quality will be very poor.)

It's also possible to drag-and-drop a portion of the image rather than the entire photo. Just use any of the selection tools to make a selection of the area that you want to copy. Then, use the Move tool in either of the two ways described above to copy over the selected area (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4

If you want a layer to blend in more with the Background image, you have a couple of options. First, you could drag the Opacity slider in the Layers palette to the left to lower the opacity of the layer so the Background layer shows through (**Figure 6**).

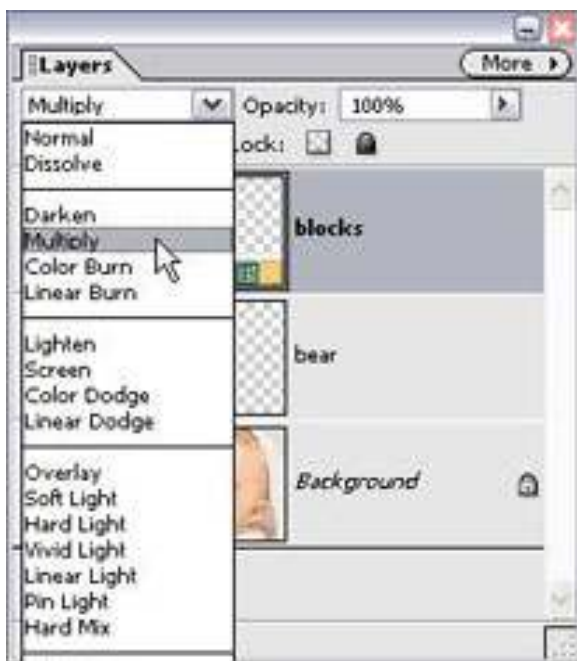


Figure 6

You can also make use of the main image in your collage by duplicating it and making the copy smaller. To do this, either press Control-J or go to the Layer menu and choose New > Layer via Copy. Then use the Move tool's bounding box to scale down the copy (**Figure 7**).



Figure 5

Or you can experiment with the layer blend modes (found under the menu that currently displays as Normal in the Layers palette). Each one of these options will change the way the active layer blends with the Background layer below. In our example we used Multiply. (Just try some until you find a look that you like.)



Figure 7

Here's what our Layers palette looks like at this point (**Figure 8**): the original image (Background), the smaller copy (Background copy), the bear, and the blocks. A simple collage made up of four layers.



Figure 9

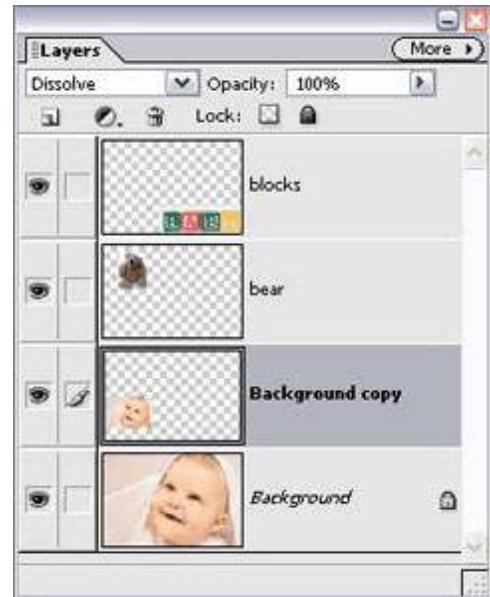


Figure 8

Now let's add a few finished touches. To help the layers stand out a bit, we'll add a drop shadow. First, in the Layers palette, click on the name of the layer you want to work on. Then from the Styles and Effects palette, choose Layer Styles from the left pull-down menu. Select Drop Shadow from the right pull-down menu and then click on the drop shadow you want to use (**Figure 9**). Repeat for each layer where you want a drop shadow.

We'll make the Background layer lighter and a slightly different color by adding an adjustment layer (**Figure 10**). First, click on the Background layer in the Layers palette to make it active. Then use the Create New Adjustment Layer pop-up menu (the second icon from the top left) and add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. In the resulting dialog, click on the Colorize button and then drag the Hue



Figure 10

slider to choose the color tone that you want to use. We'll also drag the Lightness slider to the right to make the background lighter. Click OK when you're satisfied with the colors.

Notice in the Layers palette that the adjustment layer sits above the Background layer. This means that you can delete the adjustment layer completely, hide the effect by clicking on the Eye icon to the left of the layer, or double-click on the adjustment layer icon to change the color or lightness (**Figure 11**).

We'd like the bear and the background copy to be the same size, so we'll use the Rectangular Marquee tool (with the Shift key held down) to drag a square selection over the bear layer. Then from the Select menu, choose Inverse (or press Shift-Control-I [Mac: Shift-Command-I]), then press Backspace (Mac: Delete) to erase the other pixels. Press Shift-Control-I (Mac: Shift-Command-I) once again to get back to the original selection and use the Move tool to position the selection over the Background copy layer. Again we'll press Shift-Control-I (Mac: Shift-Command-I) and then press Backspace (Mac: Delete) to erase the other pixels. (Notice how the drop shadow layer style automatically adjusts to the new shape.)

Finally, we use the Type tool (T) to add some appropriate type (the Type tool automatically creates a new, editable Type layer in the Layers palette). Here's the finished collage and Layers palette.

This is just one simple example of what's possible, of course. Just remember: Create separate layers by dragging-and-dropping (or duplicating); name your layers; and experiment with Layer Styles, adjustment layers, and Opacity to create your collage (**Figure 12**).



Figure 11



Figure 12