



Layers – Part 2

Now we've had a look at the basics of using layers, I thought we'd have a look at a few ways that we can use them.

In Layers – part 1 we had a quick look at adjustment layers. This first technique shows how to use what's called an adjustment layer mask to restrict the area of the image that is affected by the adjustment. This is easier to see with an example than it is to explain.

You may have seen advertising illustrations where you perhaps have a greyscale image with just a red car in colour. This is how you can achieve that effect. You might like to have a look at the web site of GB media – <http://gbmedia.eu>. I came across this site recently and liked their use of this technique. If you click on the navigation options on the left you'll get a different main image on each page.

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| Open an image | File > Open > select an image |
| Create an adjustment layer | Click on the new Adjustment layer icon (looks like a half moon symbol) and select Hue/Saturation from the drop down list. |
| Reduce the saturation to the minimum. | Drag the Saturation slider all the way to the left. Your image will now be in greyscale. |
| Reveal some of the original colour | Use the brush to paint on the adjustment layer with black so you can see the colour of the image on the layer underneath. On the adjustment layer in the layers panel you'll see a white rectangle - this is the layer mask. When we apply |

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| | <p>black to the adjustment layer we effectively punch a hole through it so we can see the original colour on the layer underneath. You can see the shape of the hole you've punched on the layer mask.</p> <p>If you paint too much ie create too big a hole, you can reinstate the adjustment (repair the hole) by painting with white.</p> |
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There are a several advantages to using an adjustment layer, one of which is the ability to use a mask to restrict the area affected as we've just seen. Another is that you can go back and change the adjustment itself.

If the Adjustments panel is still open then you simply make the adjustment layer active and the sliders for the adjustments become active as well. If you can't see the Adjustments panel, double click on the symbol showing two sliders on the adjustment layer and you will see the sliders again.

Try:

- moving the saturation slider back to the centre so all the colour reappears then drag the hue slider until you get a colour you like.

The mask hasn't changed so the colour adjustment still only applies to the white areas of the mask.

- using different tools to apply the black – you could use the quick selection tool to select the lily head and fill the selection with black. You'll then see a black lily shape on the layer mask.

One thing to remember is that an adjustment layer is just that, a layer, so it has its own opacity setting. Vary the opacity of the adjustment layer and note the result.

NB This all applies to ANY adjustment layer, not just hue and saturation.

Clipping Mask

The next thing I want to look at is a clipping mask. This lets you cut an image out in the shape of another. We're going to start with cutting out in the shape of some text.

- Open an image with general pattern
- Add some text in a nice fat font.
- Unlock the background layer and give it the name 'image'.

- Drag the text layer below the image layer.
- Making sure the image layer is active, clip it to the text layer by selecting the Create clipping mask option (Ctrl-g) from the Layers menu.
- You should now see the image cut out in the shape of the text.

You'll notice that the background is shown as the chequerboard, meaning that it is transparent. So you could add another layer at the bottom of the stack and add another image or some other background.

Another option is to add a gradient to a new blank layer:

- Select foreground and background colours from the image.
- Select the gradient tool and drag with the mouse from the top to the bottom of the new layer.
- Add a texture from the Filters menu or change the opacity if you wish.

The shape you use doesn't have to be text you can create any shape you like, using whatever tools you like – make any selection you choose and fill it with a colour, or use the brush tool and so on.

Try:

- Unclipping the image from the text layer by selecting Release clipping mask (Ctrl-g) from the Layer menu .
- Create a new blank layer beneath the image, and use your chosen method to create a shape(s).
- Now clip the image to the shape layer and, again, the image is cut out in the shape you created.

Simple repeating patterns

Finally, for this tutorial, we're going to use layers to create a simple repeating pattern.

Repeating across:

- Open an image and crop it tightly so that there is no blank space round the edges.
- For speed change the size of the image to 200 pixels wide (Image > resize .> image size or Ctrl-Alt-I) Naturally if you were doing this for a real project then you would select a suitable size for the purpose. Picking a small size here will just speed up the processing needed for each manipulation.
- Now we need to make space for the repeats to fit in. To do this we need to increase the canvas size. I find it easiest to explain this idea to textile people ☺ – if you think of a piece of fabric with motifs appliquéd on to it then, in Elements terms the fabric as the 'canvas' and the motifs are the repeated images. So if we want to add more motifs then we need to increase the canvas size to make room for them.
- To do this we go to Image > Resize > Canvas size or use Ctrl-Alt-C. If you want to have, say, five repeats of the image across the top row of

your pattern change the units to 'percent' in the dropdown list, and type in 500.

- You also need to specify where the extra canvas is to go. If you don't change the setting then the new canvas will be spread evenly all round the image. I want it to all to be to the right of the image so I need to click on the arrow on the left of the anchor icon. The arrows now point to the right. (*I didn't find this bit at all intuitive when I started but you do get used to it quite quickly*).
- It's also quite useful to have the canvas extension colour set to something that contrasts well against the image. That way, if you have any gaps between your layers you'll see them more easily.
- Select the original image using the rectangular marquee tool and copy it (Ctrl-c). Then paste it (Ctrl-v).
- At the moment it doesn't look as though anything's happened but if you look at the Layers panel you can see the new layer that was created when the image was pasted. You can move it into place by holding the Ctrl key down and dragging with the mouse.

*NB holding the Ctrl key down **temporarily** converts any tool into the Move tool. If you already have the Move tool selected then you **don't** use the Ctrl key.*

- Next rotate the image you've just pasted so that it's facing the opposite way using Image > rotate and select 'Flip **layer** horizontal'. If you remember from the Basic Manipulations tutorial the first box in the Rotate option deals with the whole image. The second box deals with the **active** layer. So you can flip the whole image or just the selected layer.
- The image you copied is still on the clipboard so you don't have to copy it again you can simply paste a second time and again drag it into place.
- Repeat these last two steps, rotating where necessary, until you have your first row complete.

Repeating downwards:

Next, repeat the five images in a row underneath where they are now. To do this the image needs to be flattened. This means combining all the current layers into one so it can be copied as a block. (*I'll cover the variations of flattening layers in a later tutorial*).

- Go to the Layer menu and select flatten image.
- Next you need to increase the canvas size again, so go back to Image > resize > canvas size. This time increase the height by 200% and specify that the new canvas should be at the bottom this time by clicking on the top arrow of the anchor icon.
- Select the row of repeated images with the marquee tool and copy it before pasting it.
- Drag it into place with the mouse.
- Finally, rotate the new layer by going to Image > rotate and selecting Flip **layer** vertical.

You may need to just tidy up the positioning of the layers so everything is aligned properly and maybe crop the edges to tidy things up, but that is one way to do a basic repeating pattern.