



Fundamental Photoshop

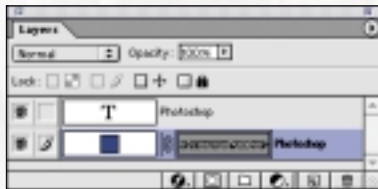
Little things make a big difference when working in Photoshop

BY BEN WILLMORE

Photoshop 6.0 allows you to do extraordinary things with text. The precision type settings and warping features can produce some awesome results, but when it comes to text, it's 6.0's new Shape layers that really give me a creative tingle.

When working with text in Photoshop, you're usually limited to the traditional settings used for text (size, leading, etc). Each time Adobe releases a new version of Photoshop, they usually add to the type settings. But with 6.0, Adobe added an enticing new feature that allows you to manipulate text in ways that would have been difficult in previous versions.

Before we get too far into these new features, be sure you have some text to play with and then switch to the new solid Arrow tool that appears just to the left of the Type tool. Next, choose Layer>Type>Convert to Shape and take a look at your Layers palette.



Top: Type layer before conversion
Bottom: Result of converting Type to Shape

Once your text has been converted to a shape, you'll be able to use the solid Arrow tool to move each individual character around your screen. You can also scale or rotate the characters by selecting one of the choices in the Edit>Transform Path menu. Or, if you want to scale and rotate a bunch of letters, turn on the Show Bounding Box checkbox in the Options Bar (it's only available with the solid Arrow tool).



The Show Bounding Box checkbox will allow you to quickly transform shapes.

When that checkbox is turned on, each time you click on a letter, Photoshop will automatically put you in transform mode. Just pull on one of the corner handles to scale a letter, or move just beyond a corner point to rotate it. Once you're done manipulating that character, then click the "✓" button in the Options Bar, or just press Enter to commit to the changes. Scaling and rotating characters in this fashion will not degrade the quality of your image at all. Even if you increase the size many times over, Photoshop will make sure your text remains crisp.

When you move two characters so they start to overlap, you can go to the Options Bar to specify how the characters will interact. The left-most choice is normal mode, where all the letters will be filled with a solid color. The second choice will cause the letter that's selected to punch a hole in the other characters. The third choice will only allow the other letters to show up where they overlap the character that's selected. And finally, the last choice will invert contents of the layer where two letters overlap, causing areas to become transparent where they overlap and leaving all the other areas solid.



The result of using the different choices that appear in the Options bar.

You can use a different setting for each character of your text, which allows for some pretty interesting results. I often select all the text by dragging across the text using

the solid Arrow tool, then I'll end up using the right-most choice in the Options Bar, which will cause holes to appear wherever the letters overlap.

You can add even more zest to your text by adding Layer Styles. I'm fond of the Drop Shadow and the Bevel and Emboss choices in the Layer Styles dialog box, but you must find your own favorites.



After spicing up the image with Layer Styles

The only downside to converting a Type layer to a Shape layer is that the text is limited to a single color. If you'd like multicolored text, then click on the letters you'd like to color (Shift-click to get more than one letter), then choose Edit>Cut. Next, type Command-H (PC: Control-H) to hide the shapes and then choose Edit>Paste. Finally, to fill those shapes with color, choose Layer>New Fill Layer>Solid Color and then choose the color you'd like to use. You can also use this technique to apply different Layer Styles to the individual letters of your text.

Until next month, have fun finding your creative tingle. ■

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