

# Getting Started~Making Your First Layout in PSE

## Don't Know Where to Start?

I've had several people tell me that they would love to start digital scrapbooking, but they have no clue what to do with their software. Since I'm a teacher at heart, but I'm a SAHM for now, I need to get my teacher groove on somehow so I thought I'd write a tutorial for beginners. If people give me good feedback about the helpfulness of this first tutorial, I'll be happy to do more! I'm aiming this tutorial to people who have no idea how to get started. If you already know how to do something, you might find a trick that you didn't know before. I'm always finding easier, quicker ways to do things when I read other people's tutorials

I use PSE 4, so this tutorial will be specific to that software, although it should work pretty much the same for all versions of PSE. If you don't have PSE, you can buy an inexpensive copy here [http://www.clickcooldeals.com/show\\_category.php?category\\_id=9&gclid=CPuM0vKNqo4CFREDWAodAU58ZQ](http://www.clickcooldeals.com/show_category.php?category_id=9&gclid=CPuM0vKNqo4CFREDWAodAU58ZQ) and you can download a free trial to play with until that gets here. This is one site that offers a free trial <http://www.softpedia.com/get/Multimedia/Graphic/Graphic-Editors/Adobe-Photoshop-Elements.shtml>

Okay, once you have PSE up and running on your computer, we can get started. I do not use the photo organizer in PSE, by the way.

## Downloading Kits

There are tons of free kits out there, and I have links to some really good freebie sites on this blog. For the sake of keeping instruction simple and not having to worry about copyright issues, I made my own kit. I am not a designer, so it is very simple. If you want to use a different kit, feel free! If you would like for your page to look like mine as you follow this tutorial, you can download my kit by clicking here or clicking on the freebie preview below. When you start your download, your computer will ask you where to put it. If you are comfortable with navigating your hard drive, put it wherever you want your scrapbooking stuff to be. If you aren't comfortable with that, you might want to right-click on your desktop, then click on New->Folder and make that your scrapbooking folder. Download the kit into that folder. We'll talk more about organizing your folders in a later tutorial.

I got these colors from the towels in my house. Clever name, right? :)

Now you'll need to unzip the file. Minimize your web browser and open up the folder where you saved the file. The file you just downloaded will look like this.

Locate the zipped folder and double click on it. My husband assures me that if you have one of the newer versions of Windows, your unzip program will automatically start up. Your computer will ask you where you want to unzip the file to. I always just unzip into the same folder I downloaded the file to, then I delete the zipped file and only keep the one I unzipped. If you want to keep your zipped files, you might want to create a separate folder to move them into after you've unzipped them.

## Creating the Layout

Open up your Photoshop Elements (PSE) program. A window will open, and along the top you'll see an icon that says 'Start From Scratch' under it. Click on that. A new window will open, asking you what size you want your page to be. I like to set my width and height both at 12 inches for a layout, with a resolution of 300 pixels/inch, RGB Color for the color mode, and I set the background contents to Transparent. Many people like to make their layouts different sizes, so that is up to you, but 12 inches by 12 inches has served me well so far. Don't change the name and preset settings. If I'm making a siggy, I'll set a width of 4 or 5 inches and a height of 2 or 3. Click 'ok' when you have your settings the way you want them.

Now you have a screen in front of you that looks something like this.

That is where you are going to build your page. Now you need to open the kit that you want to use. In the above picture, see the green arrow that is pointing at the file folder? You'll click on that file folder every time you want to open any images that are on your computer. So click on it now, and navigate your way to the kit you want to use and open the kit folder. To open the whole kit, hold down the shift key and click on the first and last image in the folder, then click 'open'. If you only want to open a few of the items in the folder, hold down the 'ctrl' key while clicking on the items you want, then click 'open'.

All of the files will open up in the tray at the bottom of your screen, called the photo bin. You can make your photo bin bigger or smaller by clicking and dragging on the little triangle at the top of the tray. The first item in your photo bin is your blank page. Now we'll start building your layout.

Look through the background papers that you have in your tray and pick the one that you want to use. Choose the 'move tool' (the little triangle at the top of the left hand column). In your editing window (the big window in the middle), click on the paper, and drag it onto your blank page in your photo bin, like this

Just a note: if you're really new at this, you'll need to keep in mind that whenever someone says 'click and drag', it means to click on an item, hold down the mouse key, and use the mouse to drag the item somewhere. When you get the item where you want it, let go of the mouse button.

Now the paper you chose will be on your layout page. If it is too big or small, use the 'move tool' to click on the corner of the paper and drag it until it is the right size to cover your work space, then click on the check mark at the top of the editing window.

Now look at your layers bin on the lower right-hand side corner of the screen.

The key to PSE is learning how to manage your layers. Notice that the paper you just dragged onto your page is shown in a thumbnail above your blank background in your layers bin. We'll be doing a lot of work within that bin.

Okay, you have your background paper, now what? Let's put another paper on our page. Find another paper that you like in the photo bin, then make sure your 'move tool' is selected and drag your new paper onto your layout, and resize it if you need to (remember how we did that before?). If you look at your layer bin now, you'll see that your new paper is on top, then your first paper, then the blank background is on bottom. But you can't see your first paper on your layout anymore, so we need to fix that. In the layers menu, click on the new paper to highlight that layer, then make sure that you've selected that same 'move tool' that we've been using. Click on your paper in the editing window and drag it about halfway down your page. Now you should have something like this.

So now you're looking at it, and you decide that you just don't like that combination of papers. It's okay, you can just get rid of one of them. See the little trash can at the top of your layers menu? If you have a layer that you no longer want, you can click on that layer to highlight it, then click on the trash can. Bye bye layer.

Oh, wait, you think you might want that layer later? Instead of deleting it, you can just hide it for now. To do that, you click on the little eye next to the icon in the layer menu. When you click on that eye again, the layer will re-appear. Play with dragging other papers onto your layout and re-arranging them until you come up with something you're happy with.

Another tip-you can undo anything that you've done in PSE (and many other programs) by holding down the ctrl+z keys. That will undo the last thing you did. If you want to undo the last 5 things you did, just hold the ctrl key and hit the z key 5 times. Sometimes that doesn't work, but you can still undo by clicking on the edit tab at the top of your window, then clicking on the top item (the one that starts with the word 'undo' and then says the last thing you did).

## Elements

Now let's try dressing up your page with some elements. Go to the photo bin and click on the thumbnail that has the element you want to use. I'm using the one with the silver frame and the red ribbon (use the scroll arrows at the side of the window to scroll through the bin). When there are more than one element on a page, you can't just drag one of them onto your layout, so you need to do a little bit of work to get just the one element you want.

Click on the rectangular marquee tool in your tools menu at the left-hand side of the screen (see illustration below). Click just to the left of and above your ribbon, then drag the rectangle down and over to the bottom right corner, so that you have a rectangle around your ribbon. Make sure that your layer is highlighted in your layers menu (always remember to

do this), then click on edit at the top of the page and go down and click on copy (or hold down the ctrl+c keys on your keyboard) to copy just what is inside the 'marching ants' rectangle.

Now click on your layout in the photo bin at the bottom of the page. To get your ribbon onto your layout, you can either hold down ctrl+v on your keyboard to paste it, or go to the edit menu and click on 'paste'. Your ribbon will open up as a new layer. It should be at the top of your layers menu, but if it isn't, click on the ribbon layer and just drag it to the top of the layers menu so it is sitting on top of your papers. In your editing window, use your 'move tool' to grab the ribbon and move it so it's sitting at the place where your two papers overlap. Now you'll have something like this.

Let's put a flower onto our layout. Click on the flower thumbnail in the photo bin. Designers usually package their elements separately, so this is usually how you'll use them. Just click on the flower, then drag it onto your layout, like you did with your papers. But when you get it onto your layout, it probably won't be the size you want it. What to do now?

## Resizing

One of my personal pet peeves when I look at other scrappers' layouts is bad resizing. Stretched out elements, and especially photos, look absolutely terrible. You can just use your 'move tool' to grab the corner of an element, then drag the corner to resize it, but you might end up with it stretched out. So be sure to use the height and width boxes when you resize.

So let's try it, select your 'move tool', click on the corner of your flower and start to resize it. When you get it to the size you like, take a look at the height and width boxes at the top of your window (see illustration below). You can type in those boxes, so if your height is perfect and you need your width to match, just type the same number in the width box. Or better yet, click on the little chain link between the two boxes. That will lock the ratios. When your flower is the right size, move it where you want it, and click on the check mark at the top of your window.

## Photos and Frames

Why, that's starting to look like a layout, isn't it? We really need a picture in there though, don't we? First let's get a frame. Click on your frame thumbnail in your photo bin, then if you're using mine, use the rectangular marquee and copy function to copy it (remember how we did that before?), and paste it onto your layout. See, you're learning!

Now click on that file folder that we used earlier to open the kit, then find and open the photo that you want to use. It will open in the photo bin at the bottom of your screen. If you can't see it in the photo bin, use the scroll arrows at the side of the bin until you do find it, then click on its thumbnail. Make sure your 'move tool' is selected, then click on your picture and drag it onto your layout. You'll have something like this, but your photo may be much bigger or much smaller.

Make your photo the size that you want it by resizing it. Notice that the photo layer is on top of the frame layer in the layer menu. That's okay, just click on the photo layer and drag it under the frame layer. Now your frame should be on top of your photo. Move and resize your frame until it is properly covering the edges of your photo, then click on the check mark at the top of the page.

Your photo and frame aren't placed where you want them? That's easy to fix, but first you need to lock your photo and frame layers so you can move them both at the same time. To do this, click on your frame layer in your layer menu, then hold down the ctrl button and click on the photo layer. Both layers should be highlighted. Now click on the little chain link icon just above your layers (right next to that trash can we found earlier). This will link your photo and frame layers so that they can be manipulated together. Go onto your editing window and resize your frame however you want, the photo will move right along with it. Cool, right?

You can also rotate your photo and frame. While you're resizing, move your mouse just a little bit away from your resizing box. You'll see a semi-circular arrow. Use that to rotate your photo however you want.

Always remember to click on that checkmark at the top of the screen when you get done transforming an item.

That's a Layout!

Wow, that really looks like a layout, doesn't it? Okay, there is still a lot we can do with it, but it's a start anyway. You now have the skills you need to use that alphabet to give your layout a title. Don't believe me? Give it a try! If it's not working for you, don't worry, I plan to teach you an easy way to use alphabets soon.

Let's learn how to save our layers so that we can work with them more later. Go to the File tab at the top of your screen, then click on 'save as'. Find your scrapbooking folder, and save your layers as a .psd file (so I would call mine kyrapilgrimlayers.psd). That will save your project as layers so you can work on it again later. I'll write a few more tutorials using this same page, so if you keep the layers you've already done, we can pick up where we left off.

What, you say you like how it looks and you don't want to work on it anymore? Or you already saved your layers, but you also want to save it as a page that you can print out or e-mail to someone? Okay, right click on one of your layers in the layer bin (it doesn't matter which one) and click on 'flatten image'. It might ask you if you want it to discard hidden layers. If so, say ok. Once the image is flattened, go to the File tab at the top of the screen, then click on 'save as'. Save your page as a .jpg file in your scrapbook folder. A window will open up asking you what quality you want your page saved as. I always slide my slider all the way up to 12, but you can set yours however you want. I don't change anything else in that window. Then click 'okay'. There ya go!

I have many, many, many more tricks to improve your scrapbook pages. I'd love to teach them to you now, but this is getting sooooo long and I don't want to overwhelm anyone. If you like this tutorial, leave a comment and let me know what tricks you'd like to learn next. Or do you just want me to keep working through the basics in a systematic way? I'm here to help! And if you have any trouble with anything, don't hesitate to ask for help!

Go ahead and play with all of the features in your PSE program now! If you try something and don't like it, just undo it. That's one of the great things about PSE!

[Click here to go to my next tutorial.](#)

~Steph