

PSE Tutorial~Adding Depth to Your Layouts + Outlining

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A very nice comment just inspired me to write another tutorial today. This one will be quick, but these are little things that (I feel) add a lot to a layout.

Let's look again at the layout that I made in the last tutorial.

It's cute, but there's no real depth to it. It's hard to distinguish the ribbon from the background and everything just looks, well, flat. There are some really easy things you can do to dress up your layouts a bit.

Drop Shadows~You Can Change Those?

I put drop shadows on everything, but I only found out recently that you can adjust them in PSE. I was so happy! So here's what you do.

Let's add a nice shadow under our flower to make it 'pop' off of the page a little bit. Select your 'move tool', then select your flower layer in your layers menu. Just above your layers menu, there is a box that says 'styles and effects' at the top of it. Right under those words is a pull-down menu. Choose 'layer styles' in that menu, like this.

Right next to that drop-down menu is another drop-down menu. In that menu, select 'Drop Shadows'. It will give you a selection of very basic shadows that you can apply to any of the layers in your layout. Go ahead and try using some of the drop shadows.

If you're anything like me, you'll soon realize that those drop shadows sometimes just aren't quite right. The high one should be a little lower, or the soft one should be a little bigger, or you'd like your light source to be coming from the bottom of your page so that the shadows are cast upward. You can change that! Click on a layer that has a drop shadow on it (you can tell which ones have a layer style applied to them because they'll have a little 'bubble' on the right side of the layer). Now click on the 'layer' tab at the top of your screen, go down to 'layer style' and click on 'style settings'. A fabulous little window will pop up that will allow you to change how big your shadow is, and what angle the light is coming from. Play with those settings and notice that you can see the changes on your layout right away. When you get just what you want, click ok.

Bevels and Glows

Go back to the pull-down menu where you chose 'drop shadow' and change it to 'bevels' or 'outer glows'. Bevels and outer glows work exactly like drop shadows, and can be changed using the same method. You can see that there are lots more choices of layer styles, so play with those too. You can add as many layer styles to an item as you want! Play with them as much as you want, because if you end up with something you don't like, there's an easy fix. Remember that 'bubble' on the right side of any layer that has a layer style applied to it? If you decide that you don't like the layer style, you can right-click on that bubble and choose 'clear layer style' from the menu that pops up. Ta da! The layer is back to the way it started and you can try another style on it if you want to.

Outlines

Just one more quick trick that I think can make a world of difference to a layout. I think this comes in especially handy when I have a photo that I want to use photo corners on, or if I want the photo to stand alone on the page without anything around it, but you can put an outline around anything in your layout. Here's what you do. Make sure you click on the image that you want outlined on your layout, or on its layer in the layers menu. Go up to the 'edit' tab at the top of the screen, then choose 'Stroke (Outline) Selection'. A window will pop up that will allow you to choose how big to make your outline, and what color to make it. For large photos, you can get away with a width of 30 or 40 pixels or more, and very small things might need a width of just 2 or 3, so you can play with those settings as much as you want until you're happy. Remember, if you do something and don't like it, just go to the 'edit' tab at the top of the page and click on undo, or hold down ctrl+z.

I hope those tips are helpful for you! [Click here](#) to see my next tutorial.

~Steph