

Creating Montages

Montage

A montage combines multiple images into one image by manipulating the boundaries of the separate images as they are brought into the main image. This is an example of a montage where I combined two photos of different skies, two red-tailed hawks, and an Indian shield.



Getting Started with Montages

While you might like to just jump in and bring pictures together, you really should check out a couple of things first.

Do the pictures you want to combine have similar size and resolution?

If not, then adjust the resolution and/or size using Image > Resize > Image Size until the images are similar. Save the changed images as copies so you retain your original images.

Are images vastly different in color and contrast? If so, then you might have to make some adjustments after merging them.

The process from here on follows these steps.

1. Choose a main image, and save it as a PSD file.
2. Open your secondary image and make a selection around what you want to copy. Choose Edit > Copy to place that selection on the clipboard.
3. Go back to your main image, add a new layer, and Edit > Paste the contents of the clipboard on that new layer. (I will call this the imported image layer.)
4. With the new layer still active, Choose the Move Tool, click on the image for that layer (or do a Ctrl + A), and Select Image > Transform > Free Transform (or Ctrl + T).
5. Using the Move Tool, move the imported image and resize using the outer corners of the Transform box. You can even rotate the Transform box by clicking and moving the double arrows just outside the box corners. Click the Check Mark to accept the transformed selection.
6. Add a new Levels adjustment layer and click and drag it down the layer

stack until it is just below the imported image section.

7. Place your mouse between the Levels layer and the imported image layer while holding down the Alt key until you see two combined circles (one open and one closed), and Click on that combined circle icon. The imported image layer will shift to the right just above the Levels layer. If this did not happen, reread these instructions and try again. Or look up Clipping in the Photoshop Elements Help system.
8. Now it is time to feather that imported image into the main image. Select the Brush Tool and click on the mask on the Levels layer just under the imported image layer. The mask is that white box on the layer.
9. Click on that white mask box again just to be sure, and go back to the main canvas and paint the edges of the imported image as necessary to blend it into the main image. I often reduce the Brush tool to an Opacity

Ok, we will do one for real here. I want to combine a picture of a truck with a picture of a rose. The goal is to make the truck look like it is being offered as a present from the center of the rose.

as low as 15 - 25% to achieve smooth feathering at the edges of the imported image. [Using Black as the Foreground Color will hide the portions of the imported image where you paint. If you take out too much, switch the Foreground - Background colors by typing X, and paint with White to recover your image.]

10. Note: If you suddenly see black or white streaks on your image, then you need to do a Ctrl + Z until those streaks go away. Then click back on the Levels layer's mask, and start painting again.
11. Repeat steps 2 through 10 for any additional images you wish to import and blend into the main picture.
12. Save, save, save the main image as a PSD file. That retains all your layers, so you can change anything later if needed.

Creating a Montage





I use the rose image as the main file and save it as a PSD. Then I open the truck image and use the Quick Selection Tool to capture the truck. This is what the selection looks like as I start the selection process on the truck's hood.



I continue with the Quick Selection tool, using Add to Selection or Subtract from Selection to adjust until I have captured the truck and none of the background. Tip: Since it takes some time to make this selection, I usually do a Selection > Save Selection and name the saved selection "truck". While this will force

me to save the truck file as a PSD file, I can always quickly recapture the selection by opening this PSD file and Choosing Select > Load Selection > Truck. It is that simple.

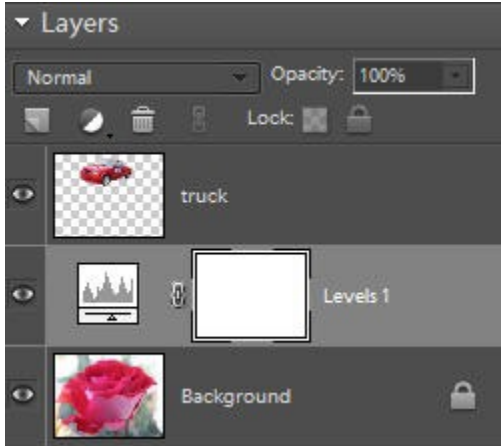
Ok, after I have made the selection of the truck, I do a Ctrl + C (or Edit > Copy) to place the truck on the clipboard. I go back to the PSD file of the rose and add a new layer. Then I Ctrl + V (or Edit > Paste) to put the truck on that new layer. [Note: For the sticklers, yes you could have not added a new layer and just Ctrl + V to create a new layer and paste the truck on that layer in one step. I just like to do it the long way.]

In my pictures, the image looked like this after I imported that truck selection.

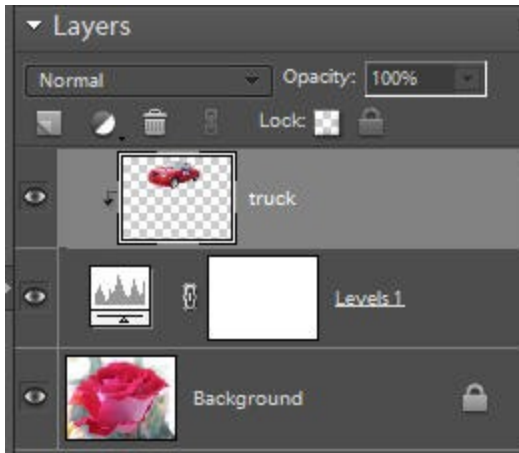


Then I select the Move Tool, click on the truck layer and do a Ctrl + T to start a Free Transform. I move the truck to the upper part of the rose, and shrink the size by moving a corner of the Transform box inward. I get positioned and at the size I want before I add the masking layer.

I then add a Levels adjustment layer using the half white/half black icon at the top of the layers palette. Then I click and drag that layer under the truck layer.



Next step is to hold the mouse between the truck layer the Levels layer, hold down the Alt key until I see the Clipping symbol, and then Click the mouse on that symbol. The truck layer shifts right, and the layers palette looks like the following.



I click back on the white mask to make the Levels layer active, and then I select the Brush tool. Because I have clicked on the mask, the Foreground Color should switch to Black (if not just hit the X key). I like a moderate soft brush at an initial Opacity of

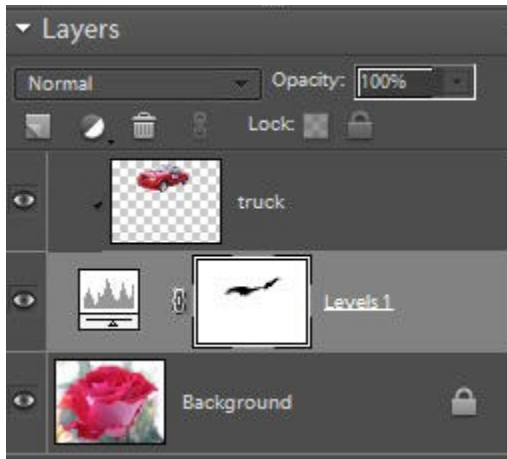
60% to start to blend the truck into the rose. The object is to paint out the truck's wheels and fender as necessary to make it look like it is tucked behind the rose's petals. This is my first cut after I have painted enough of the rose to see the edge of the front petal.



Too much of the truck has been removed, so I need to change the Foreground color to White, select a smaller brush size, and paint on the mask over the truck to bring it back to be visible just up to the edge of the front rose petal. For this part, I reduce the size of the brush and further reduce the Opacity to around 16%. The lower Opacity gives a feathered transition between the rose and the truck tires. Here is the final version, up close.



The layers palette looks like this.



The finished version of the truck in the rose looks almost magical.

Finished Montage of Truck in Rose



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