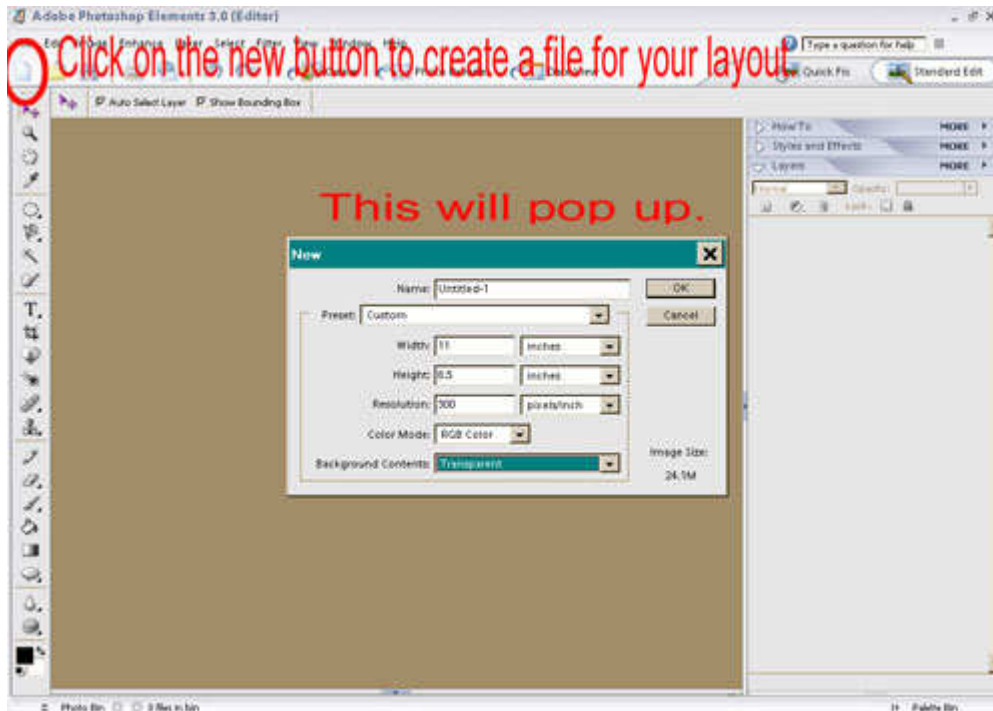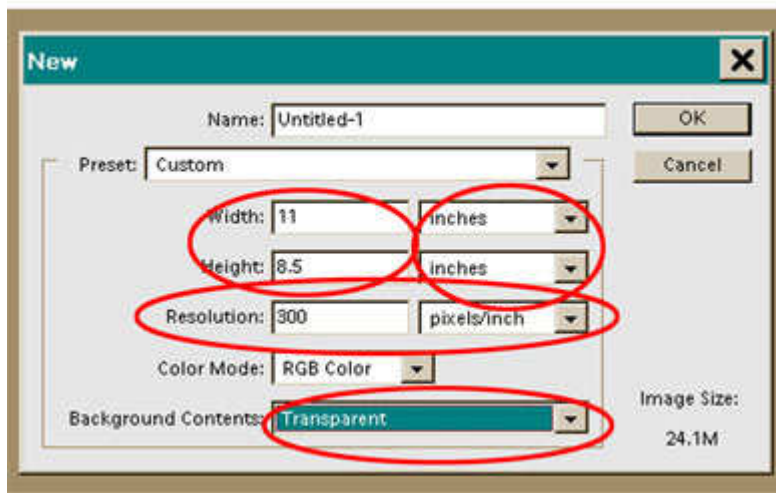# FIRST LAYOUT TUTORIAL

You CAN do it! Once you have done a few layouts in Photoshop Elements, you will wonder why you ever thought it was so hard! Just jump in and start playing (we all love to play!).

1) First, make a new file to create your layout in. Click on the button on the far upper left of the screen that looks like a little piece of paper and the new file box will open up.

2) Next, make sure the entries on the new file popup box are accurate.

a) Manually type in the width and height of the layout you are going to be making (as you decided in Lesson 2). Note that your sizes should be in inches, not pixels.

b) Make sure your resolution is set on 300. This is a very

important step. If your resolution is lower than the standard of 300, your layout may not print very well. Also, designers create elements in 300 resolution and if your resolution is smaller, all your elements will come in really, really big!

c) Set your background contents to "transparent." This is the standard procedure, but not a must-do because you can always delete or change your background layer.

Click okay.
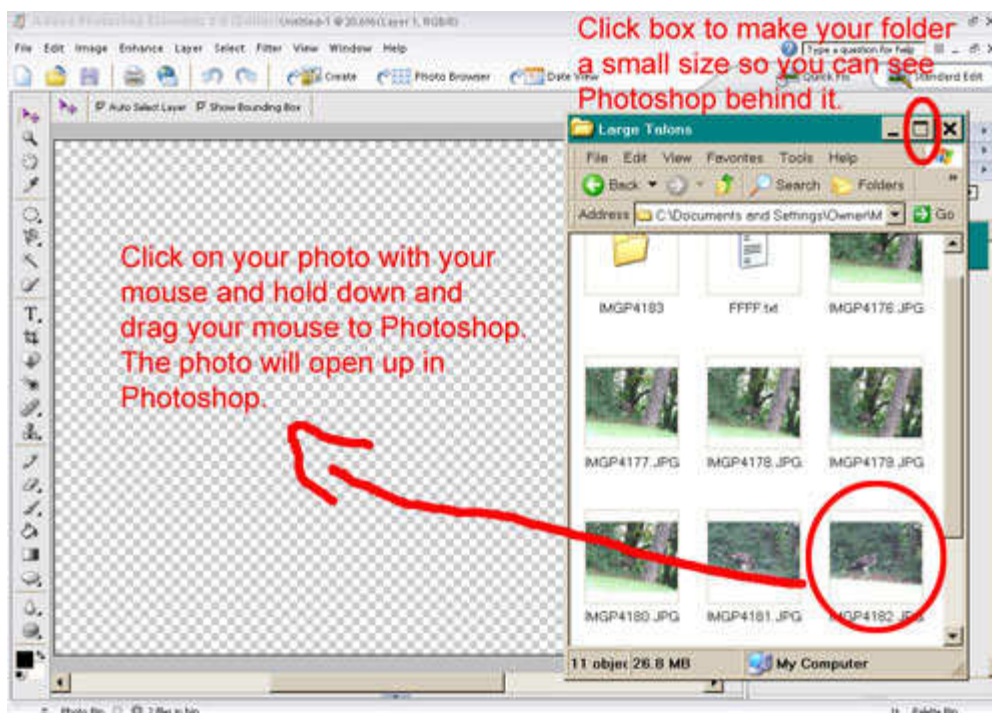
3) Now, let's get a photo on your layout! You can get your photos and elements onto your layout by using File/Open, but I prefer the following method. It really requires less browsing for things in the long run (leaving a folder for your photos and a folder for your kit/elements minimized on your computer for quick retrieval).

Go to the folder where you have placed your photos on your hard drive and open it up.

Click on the box between your minimize (-) icon and your close (x) icon. This will make your folder smaller as in the sample below.

Your goal is to have both the Photoshop Elements program and the folder visible on your desktop at the same time. Click on the task bar at the

bottom of the screen, clicking on Photoshop Elements first to make it visible, and then clicking on the folder to make it visible on top, as shown below.

Next, drag the photo into the program and it will open up!

I am making a layout of this big bird my son took photos and a video of after he spotted it on our street.
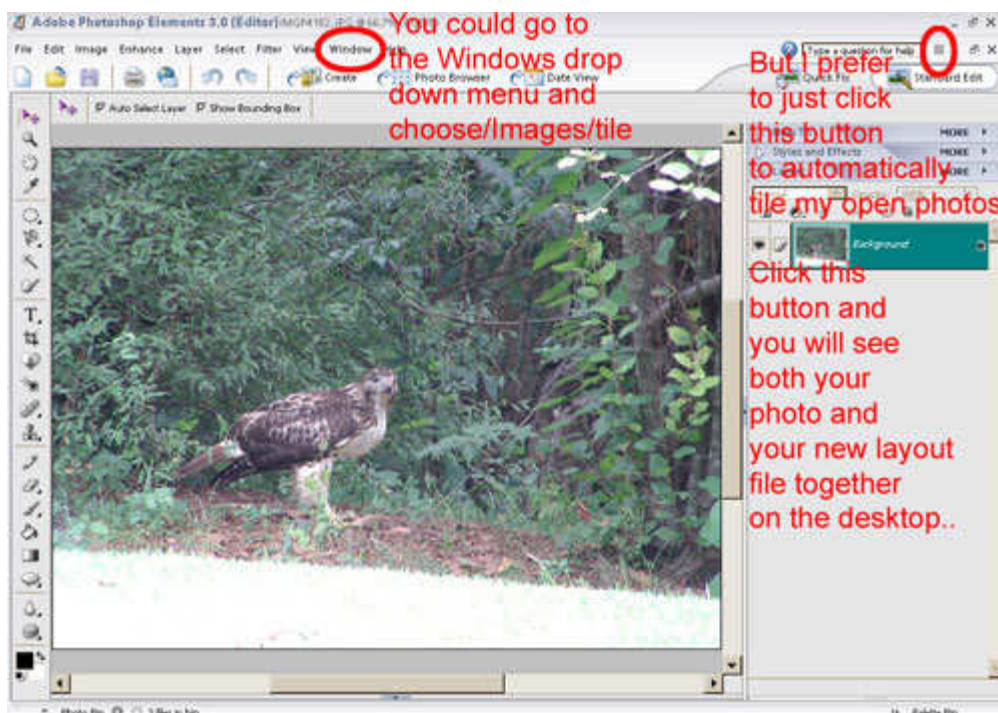
4) See below, the photo of my bird opened up! But now I cannot see the layout file I made. Where did it go? It is there, it is just behind my photo. There are several ways to get back to it, but this is the way I prefer.

As shown in the photo below, you could go to the Windows drop down menu and choose Images/Tile, but I click on the little button that has four squares on it instead.
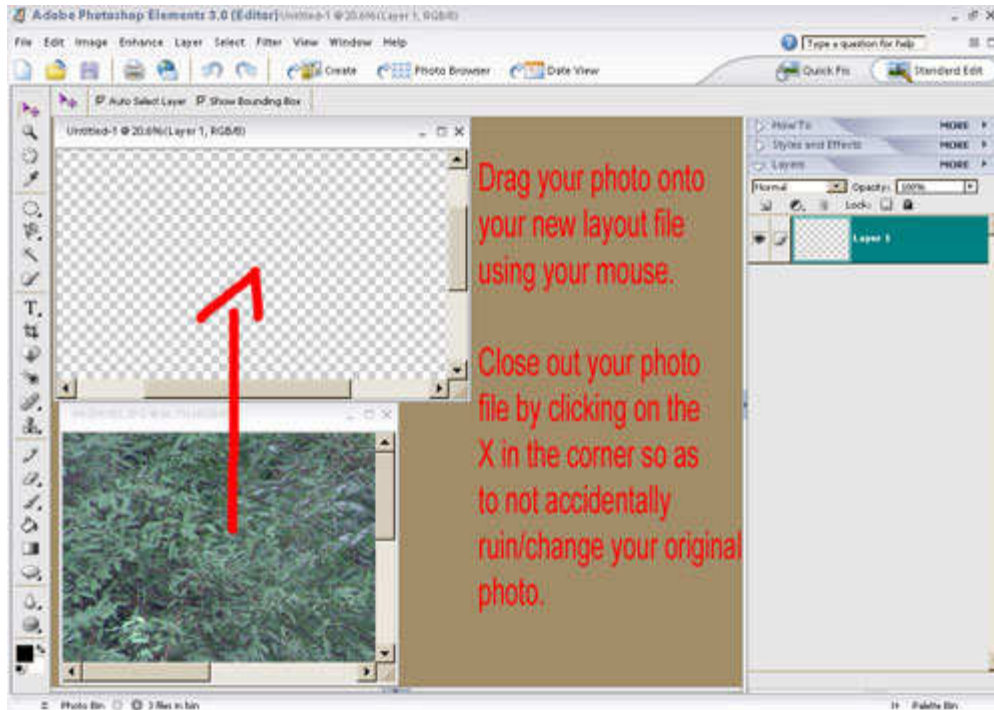
5) All files you have open should be visible in small boxes on your desktop (tiled). We want the photo on the layout. Simply use your cursor to drag your photo onto your new layout. Click on your photo with your mouse, hold down, and move your mouse over to the layout file. It will make a copy of your photo in the layout and your original photo will be unchanged. To protect your original photo, be sure to close it out now. You do not need it again.

If you have trouble, check to make sure your move tool is selected.
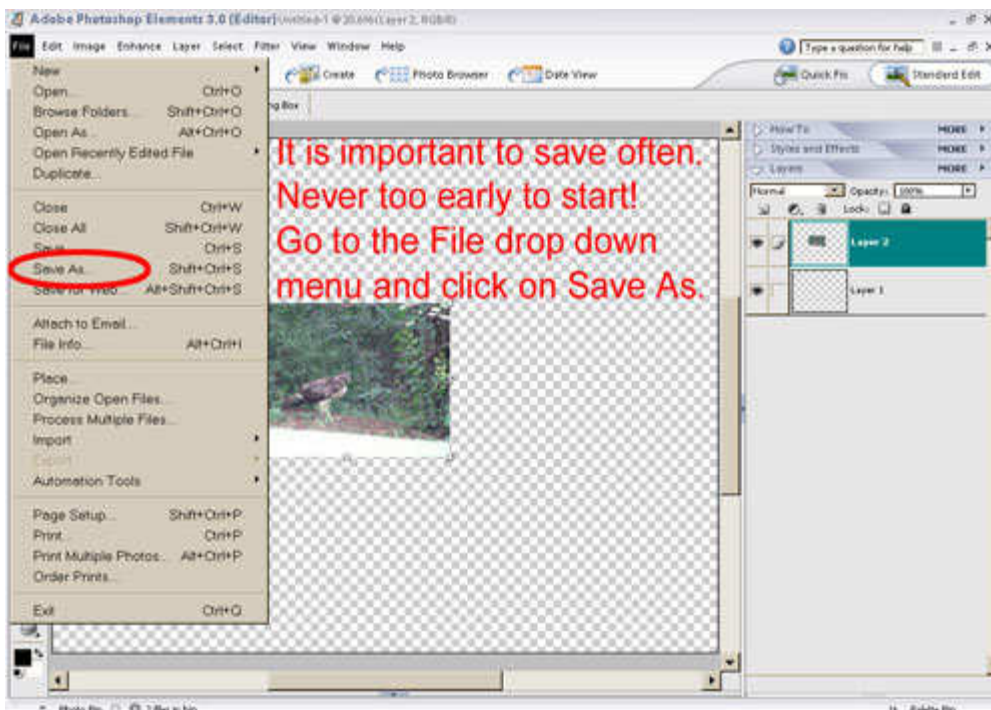
6) Now, pause and take the time to save your layout. As always, it is a good idea to hit that little save button often while creating so as to not accidentally loose anything if your computer should crash or freeze up.

Go to the File drop down menu and click on Save as.
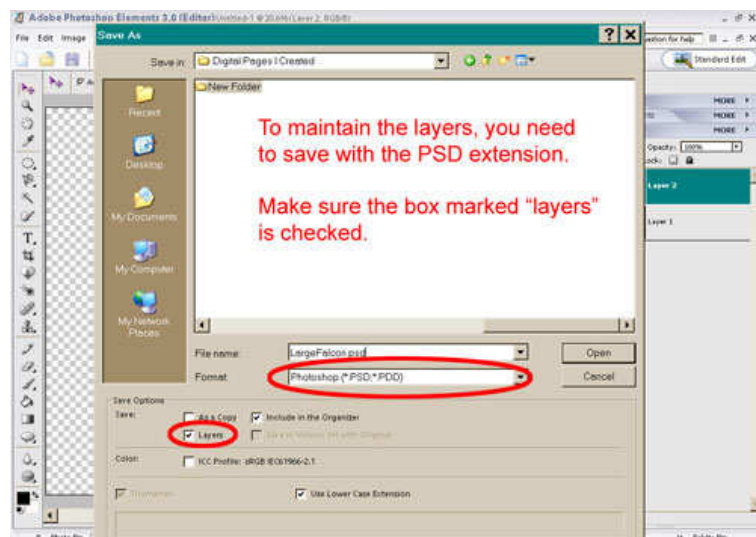
7) Eventually, you will want to save your final product as a jpg, but to preserve the layers, you need to save your working file as a .psd extension. Also, make sure the box is checked called "layers." Type whatever name you want as your file name (mine is called "LargeFalcon.psd). Hopefully, you are computer savvy enough to follow through with the rest of the saving procedure.
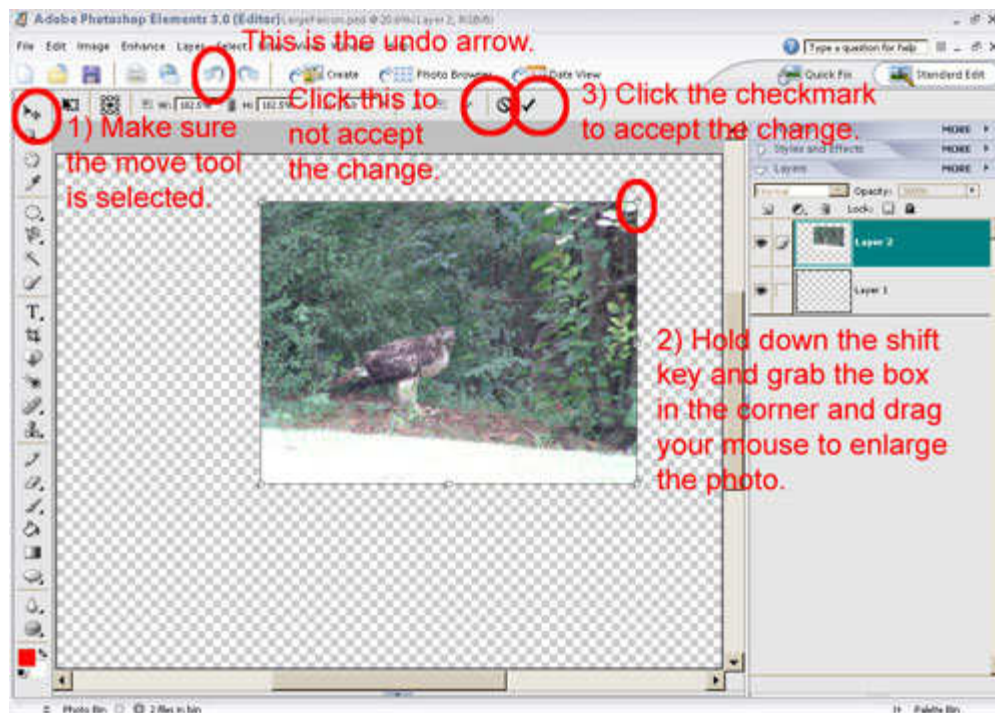
8) I've decided my photo is not large enough. Make sure the move tool is selected. Just click on it if you need to. With your photo layer active (the layer that is active is in a darker color in your layers palette to the right of your screen), you should see small boxes in the corner of your photo. Hold down the shift key (to keep your photo proportionate and not make people skinny or fat) and click on a

corner box with your mouse and hold it down and drag your mouse to make the photo larger.

Does your photo look fuzzy? No worry! This is normal! It will look that way until you accept the change. Click on the checkmark to accept the new size or click on the circle with a line through it to not accept the change and start over.

Of course, if you accept the change and do not like it, you can always hit the undo arrow! In fact, you can hit the undo arrow several times to go back through several changes.

You can also resize without keeping the proportion. An example of this is if you have a rectangular box of a solid color. You can resize by grabbing the boxes at the corners or in the middle of the sides. You can also turn elements using these boxes.
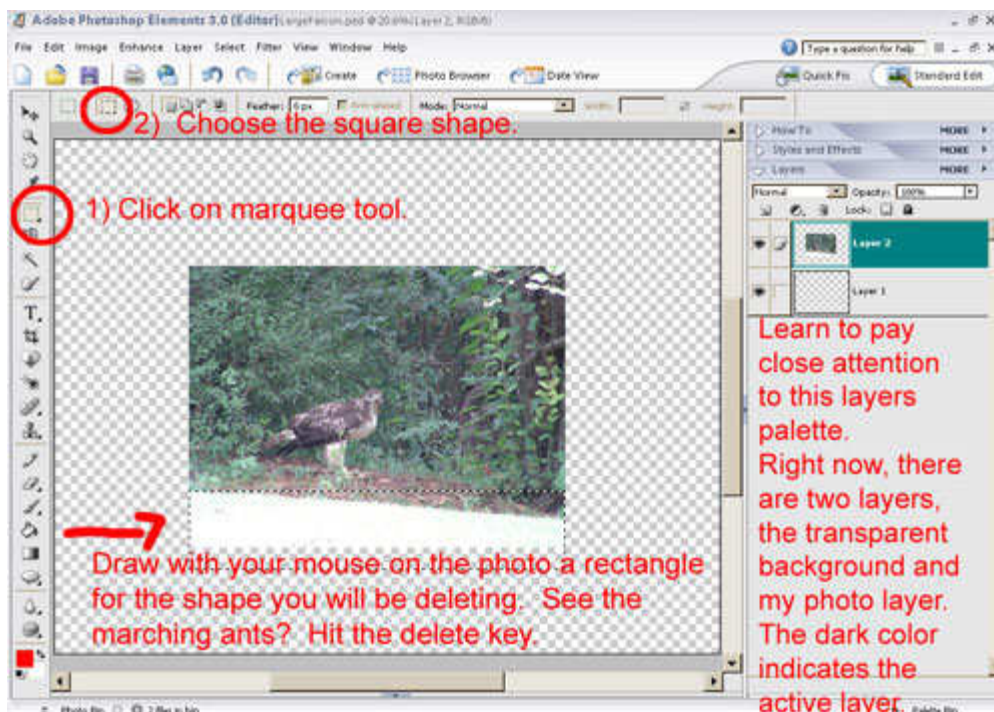
9) I do not like the grass in the foreground of my photo that looks light, so I am going to crop it out. Click on the marquee tool (which is a fancy name for a tool that makes selections). For this instance, I want a square

shaped selection. Click on the square on the bar.

With the mouse, draw a rectangle around the area you will be deleting. Do you see the marching ants? Now, hit the delete key and, poof! that part of the photo is gone!

Now is a good time to begin learning about the layers palette. Throughout your layout, you will need to pay close attention to it. On my sample below, you see I have my transparent background layer and my photo layer (that is, two layers). Observe that the active layer is always a darker color. Try clicking on the lower layer and watch it become darker.

When working on the desktop, the things you do will only happen to the active layer. For instance, if my transparent layer was the active layer when I tried to hit the delete button, I would have gotten an error message saying that no pixels were selected. That's because there are no pixels (dots of color) on a transparent layer.

Stay tuned for more instructions on the layers palette!
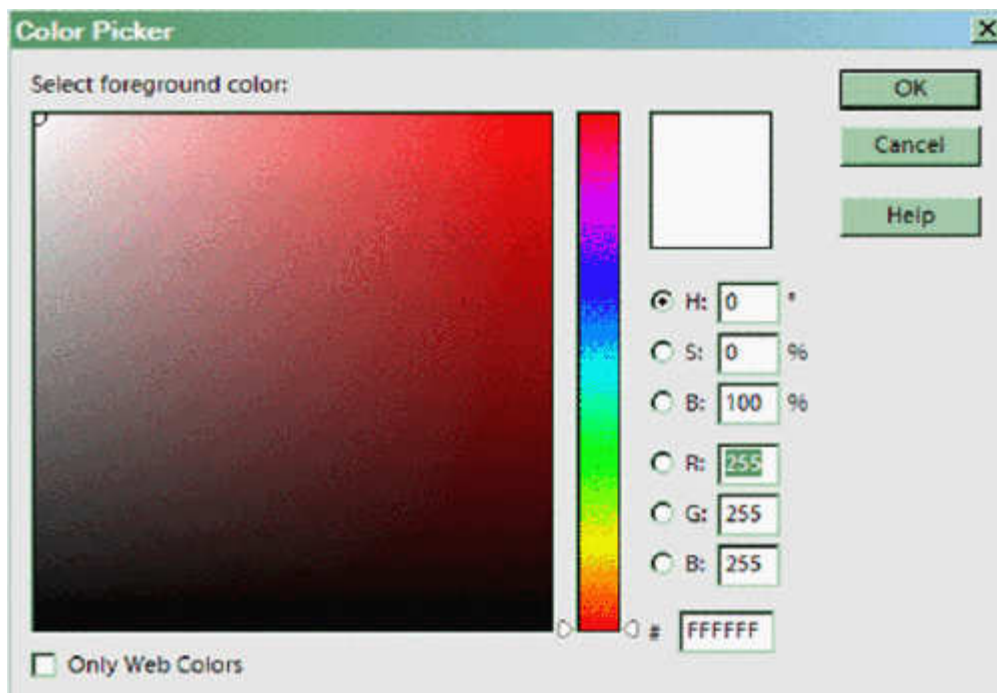
10) Next, I am going to make my background a color. I really like white in layouts, so I am going to use white. (Remember, there are zillions of backgrounds/papers on the internet for purchase or as a freebie that you can just bring into your layout following the same steps as above when you brought your photo into the layout).

At the bottom of your tool bar, you will see the two color boxes which are your foreground and background colors. Double click on the foreground box and it will bring up a pop-up box for you to change the foreground color. This popup box is called the Color Picker.
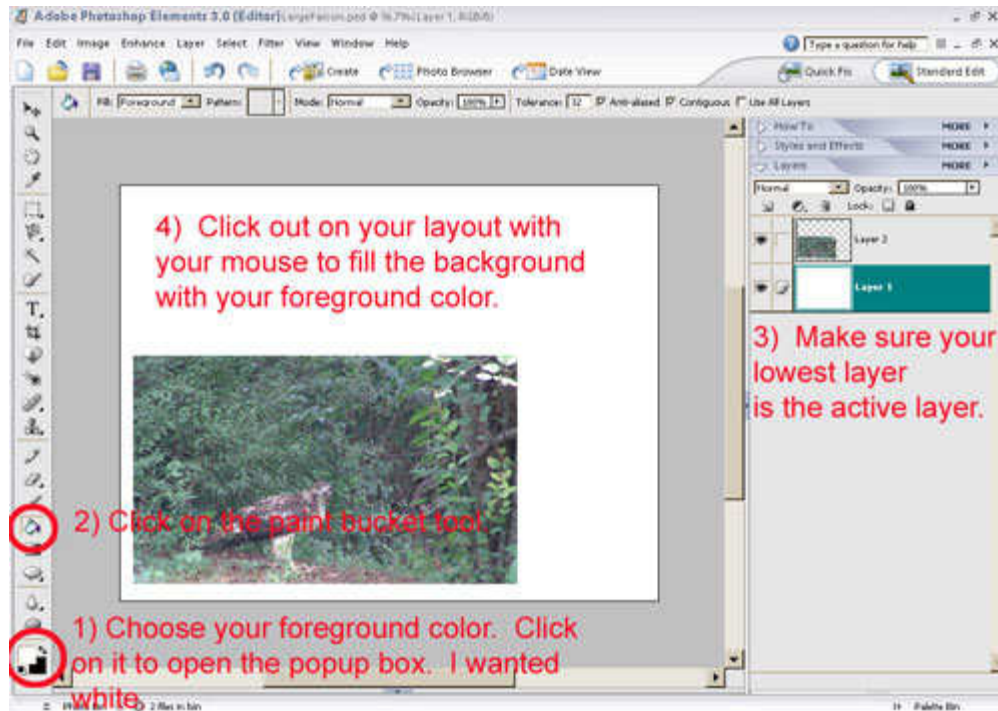

To set your colors back to black and white, simply hit the D key on your keyboard.

To exchange black for white, that is to switch them, simply hit the X key on your keyboard.

Click on the paintbucket tool on the tool bar.

Make sure that your transparent layer is the active layer and then click with your mouse out in the middle of your desktop. Your background will be painted the color of your foreground color.
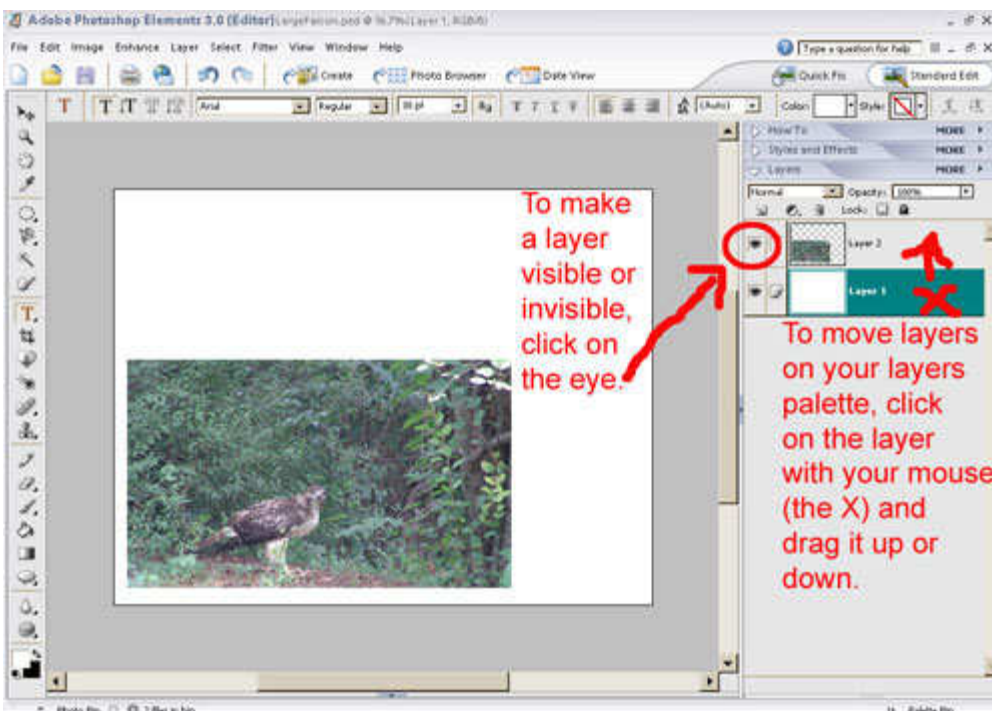

11) Okay, back to our regularly scheduled lesson on paying attention to the layers palette! Are you ready for some playing? I love to play!

Sometimes, you may not be able to see something on the page, but yet you see it on your layers palette. What happened? It is probably because something is covering it up. Think of your layers like stacks. Whatever is on the top is going to be what you see. If an item on the bottom is larger than the thing on top, you will see only a part of it.

To fix this problem, learn how to reorganize and move your layers. Take time now to play with this. Click on your background layer with your mouse and drag it up the layers palette. Now you cannot see your photo! It is at the bottom of the layers and the bigger background layer is covering it up.

Try playing with the eye to make your background layer invisible. Just click on it and your background will be invisible and you should be able to see your photo again. Click on the eye once more and your background will be visible again.

Okay, time to stop playing and get back to work. Move your layers back so the background is below the photo, make everything visible, and let's move onto the next step.
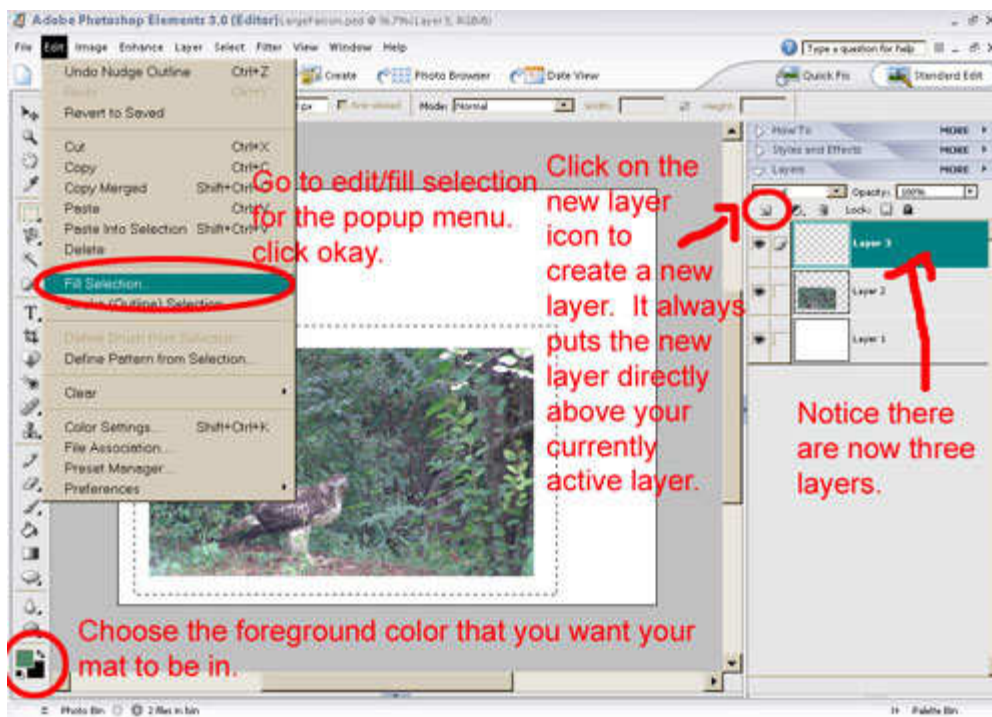
12) I want to put a mat behind my photo. (Remember you can bring in a mat you downloaded into the photo rather than making this plain one if you would like.)

Click on the new layer icon. We want the mat to be on a layer by itself. Observe that the new layer is your active layer.

Using the marquee square tool, draw a selection around your photo (a little larger than your photo). You should see marching ants. If your selection is not centered around your photo, you can use your arrows on your keyboard to move your selection sideways or up and down.

Click on your foreground color and choose a color for your mat. I am going to choose a nice green color.

Click on Edit/Fill Selection and it will bring up a popup. Click okay and your selection will fill.
(You may also fill it with the paintbucket.)
Notice that your mat may be top of your photo. Just click on the layers palette and drag it down between the background and the photo layers.

Hit Control D to deselect your selection and make the marching ants go away. You can also go to the Select drop down menu to deselect or, if your selection tool is still active, simply click out in the middle of your layout. You will find there are always so many ways to do one thing!

Have you remembered to save lately?
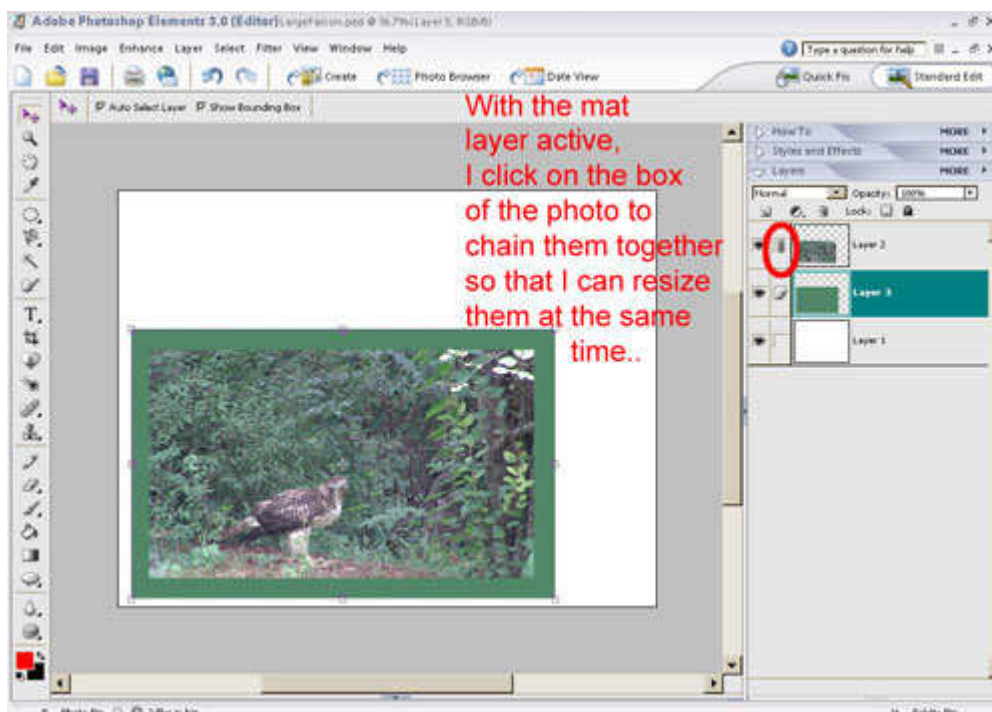
13) I have studied my layout and determined that I do not have room for both my title and my journaling, so I need to make my photo and my mat smaller.

Rather than resizing them one at a time and trying to

line them up again, resize them both at the same time. With the mat layer active, click on the box beside the icon of the photo layer and a chain appears. These two layers are now linked together. If need be, link together as many layers as needed to either resize or move things on my layout.

As above, with the move tool selected, grab the corner and make the two items smaller, clicking the checkmark to accept the change.
(to unlink layers, click on the chain icon again.)
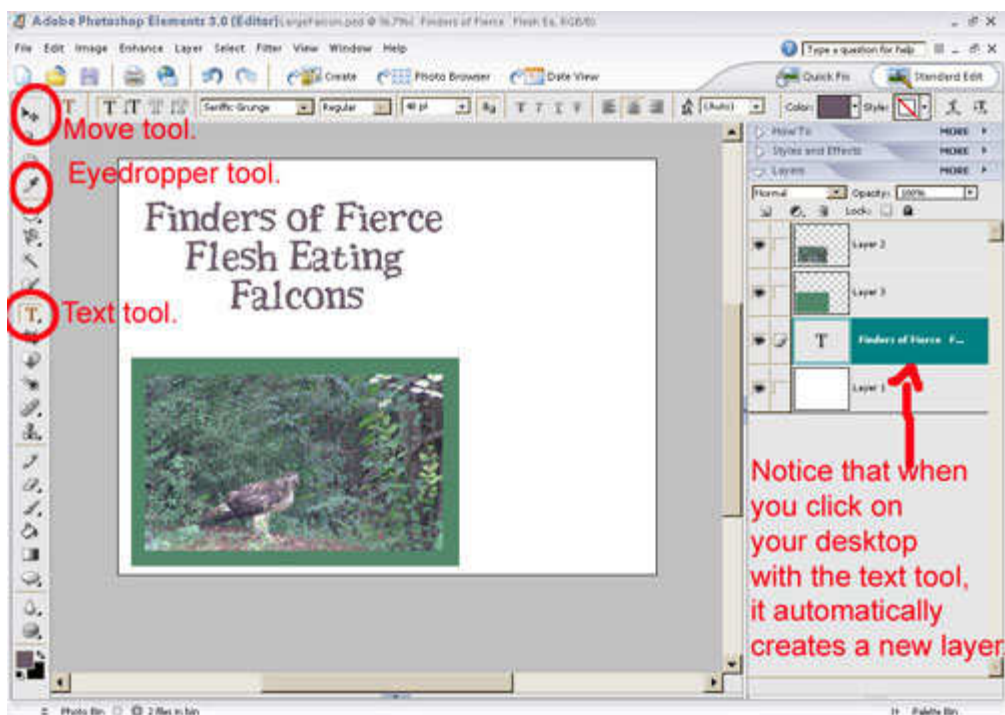
14) I have decided I want my title to be in the same color as the bird's feathers. Click on the eyedropper tool and (with the photo layer as the active layer) click around on the bird until I see my foreground color change to a color I like.

Click on the text tool. Just as in word programs, choose your font style, font size, etc. at the bar at the top. Click with your mouse where you want your title to begin (notice a new layer is created). Then type your title.

Just as in word programs, highlight your text and change the font style, size, color, boldness, alignment, etc.

Also, change the size of the text by clicking on the move tool (the top tool) and then grabbing the corner boxes and resizing just like you did the photo

as explained above. Also, with the move tool selected, you can move your text around your page with your mouse to reposition it, just like any other element.
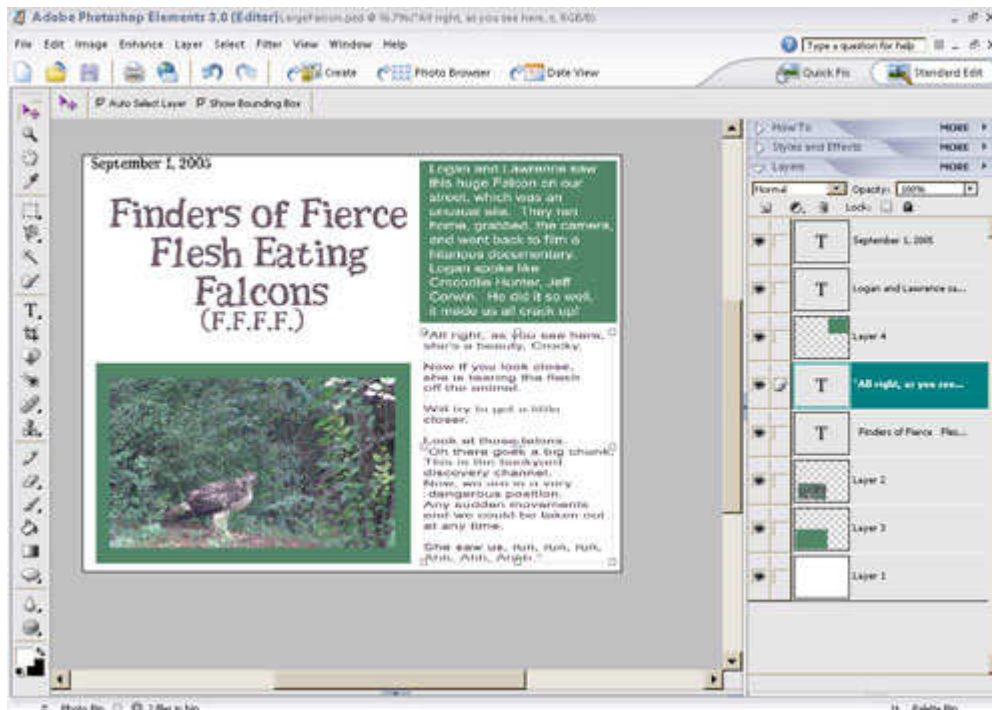
15). I'm a firm believer that every layout should have journaling, a date, and names.
Be sure to add these with your text tool. I also added another green mat behind some of my journaling.
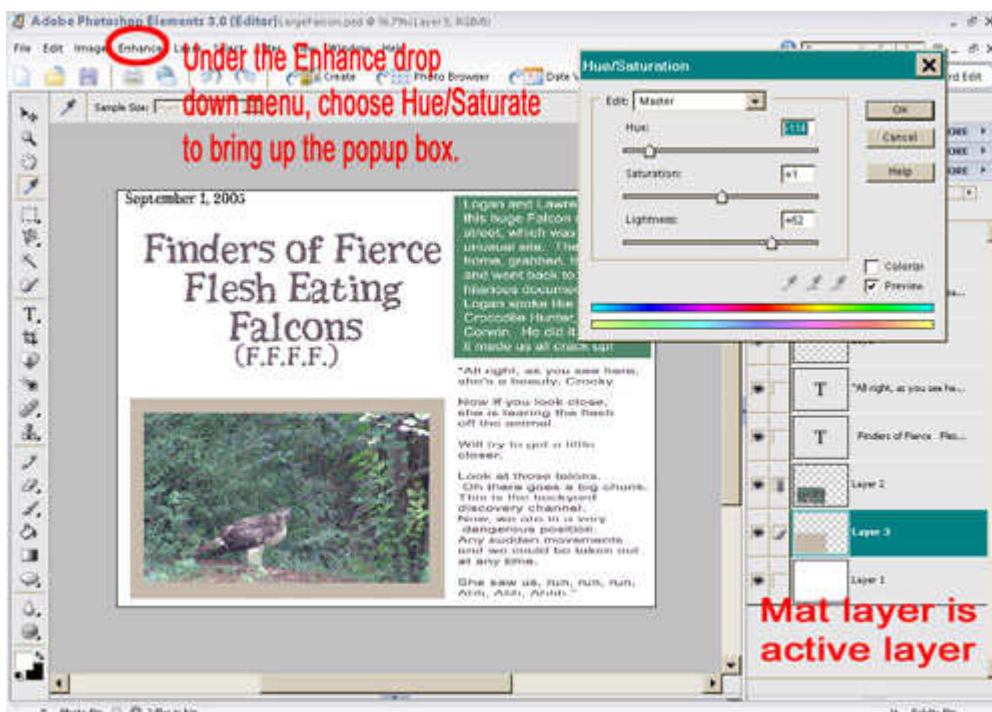

16) As always, you want your eye to go to the photos first when someone looks at the layout for the first time. This is also called making the photo "pop." (You just learned your first design principle!)

My photo is not popping in this layout. Uh oohh!

I need to change the color of the mat.

The general rule to make photos pop is to have a contrasting color beneath them, either the mat or the background (or both). (You just learned your second design principle—contrast!)

There are many ways to change the color of the mat, but I will show you a fun and easy way. First, make sure your mat layer is the active layer. Then, under the Enhance drop down menu, choose Hue/Saturation...and play! Play with the sliders. Since my photo is a "dark" photo in color, I need a "light" mat to make the photo pop. So, I slid the slider for "lightness to the right until I saw my mat have a pleasing lightness. Then I slid the hue slider back and forth until I saw something appealing, which turned out to be this tan color. I also played with the saturation slider, but chose not to change it.
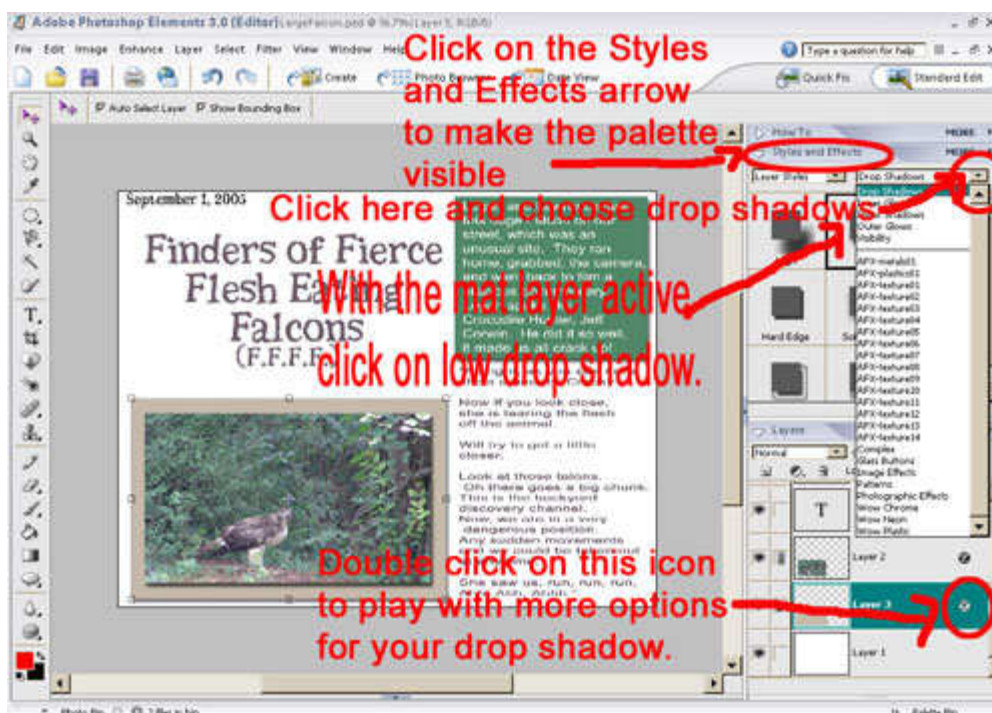
17) Here's an important step many newbies overlook! You will be surprised at what a difference it makes!

If you haven't played around too much, your Styles and Effects palette may not be visible. Click on the arrow (as shown below) to make it visible. Once you are done with it, you can click on the arrow to close it too.

Mostly likely, your default is the drop shadows. But if not, click on the drop down menu and choose drop shadows (as shown below).

With the layer you want to add a drop shadow to active, click on the most commonly used "low shadow." You can play around will all the others later.

You can also double click on the styles icon on the layers palette and play with those options.

Click on another layer to make it active and put a drop shadow on it too. (You can also click on the element on the desktop to make a layer the active one.)

Most often, text does not have drop shadows, unless it is a title cut from paper.
However, right above the drop shadow drop down menu is the bevels. I like to occasionally put bevels on my text. Why don't you play with it too?
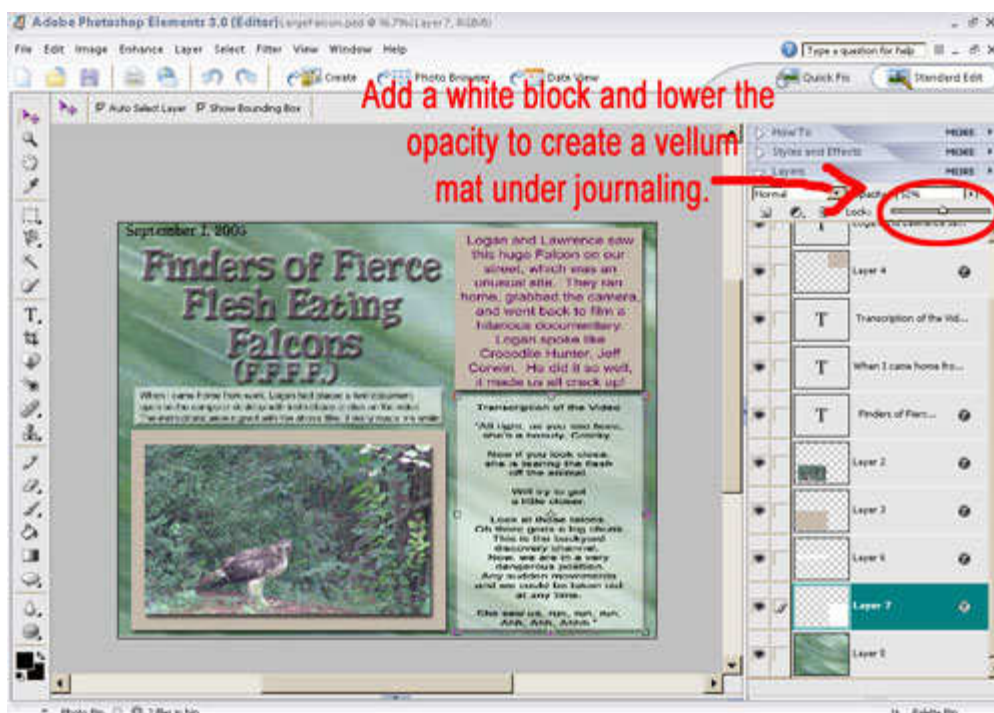
18) For my final layout, I decided to bring in a background I made. But then the green mat on the upper right didn't look right on the green background. So I changed that mat (using the eyedropper tool on the other mat to get the same color), by using the paintbucket tool to fill the mat.

I could not see the bottom set of words, so I added a white box mat under them and then lowered the opacity (see where the slider is in the sample below). This makes the mat look like vellum. You can see the background

peeking through it. Tip: make sure you add your drop shadow before you change the opacity. Just a little quirk in Photoshop Elements.

19) Other helpful tips:

If you want to zoom in or out to see something better, hold down the control key and press the minus (-) or the plus (+) on your numeric key pad.

To move elements just a tiny bit, make them active and use your arrow keys, rather than your mouse.

To print out your layout, save it as a jpg extension when you are done. Some people choose to save their .psd files, but they are rather large files that take up hard drive space. That is a personal choice on whether or not you want to keep the .psd file after you are done. However, once you delete the .psd file you will not be able to edit any layers.