Rotating Photos and Elements (the transform tool)
By Hummie

You will not want everything on your layout to be all squared-up and symmetrical for every layout. By turning your photos and elements and papers, you will easily be able to give your layouts a whole new feel and look.

To rotate your photos or elements, you will utilize the transform tool.
As always, there are several ways to bring up the transform tool, although it does appear a hidden to newbies.

1. The method I most often use is to click on the desktop on the item you want to rotate while the move tool is activated. Note that this brings up lines around your item and little boxes in the corners. This is called a "bounding box." Hover the curser over the little boxes in the corners and you will see a curved line appear to let you know that your cursor is in the correct place. Push down your left mouse button and drag the photo with your mouse to rotate it.

As soon as you begin dragging, notice a new box appear in the horizontal bar across the top of your page. This is the transform tool.

2. Another way to bring up the transform tool bar is the Image drop down menu, Transform, and then choose Free Transform. (You will note other choices under this drop down menu, but the first one includes the other three.)

3. However, it is much easier to just click on Control-T!

ROTATE

When hovering the mouse over the corner box, the cursor will change to curved arrows. Click down at this point with the mouse and move the mouse to turn the photo, element, or text.

As you rotate your image, note that the figure in the "set rotation" box changes, as circled, changes. Most often I do not even pay attention to this bar, but there may be times when you will want to note this figure if you are being exact. You may manually type a figure in this box to rotate a certain number of degrees.

ROTATE SEVERAL LAYERS AT ONCE

If you have a mat behind your photo, you can rotate them both at the same time by first linking them together with the chain (as learned in the First Layout Tutorial). You can link together as many items as you want and rotate them at the same time.
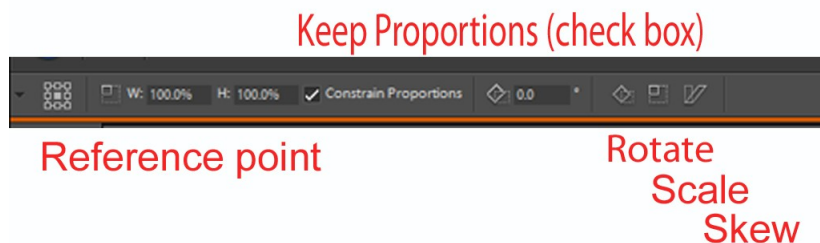
This is also useful if you have text on a tag as you can link the two together and then rotate them at the same time to keep your text at the same angle as your tag.

That is basically all I ever use in digiscrapping and is enough to get you started in making more interesting layouts.
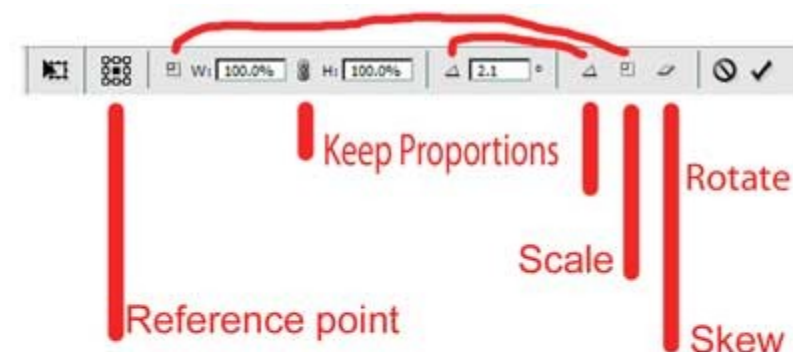
However, I'm sure you are wondering what in the world all those other things are on the transform tool bar. Yep!

I will give you a quick run down here, but the best way to learn is to play. The Transform toolbar controls both "rotating" and "resizing."

A VIEW IN PSE6

A VIEW IN PSE3

KEEPING PROPORTIONS WHEN USING SCALE

First, you will note there is a chain on the bar (marked as "keep proportions" in the screencap) in PSE3 and a box to check to "constrain proportions" in PSE6.

You learned in the First Layout Tutorial how to grab the corners of your elements and drag them with your mouse to resize them. In versions before PSE6 , if you hold down the shift key while you resize, your photo will retain its proportions (so your subjects do not get fat or skinny). If you click on this chain, it will replace the need to hold down your shift key. In PSE6, the shift key toggle works exactly the opposite. The default is automatically set to keep proportions, so if you do not want to keep proportions, use the shift key.

You will note that when you hover over the icons in the toolbar which control manually inserting exact figures, they will turn to an arrow. Click with the mouse and drag to the right or left to make changes.

Toggle between keep proportions: Shift + drag

DUPLICATE ICONS TO CONFUSE US

Just to make your life interesting, in PSE 3 they have given you two icons for rotate. (Note in the screencap that they both look like a triangle and there is a short red line at the top of the screencap pointing to both). With the first one, you can manually enter a number in the box for a specific amount of rotation.

The second rotate icon toggles between rotate and resize (scale and skew). When the rotate icon is active, use the mouse to rotate.

Of course, to confuse you even more, they give you two scale icons; although the first one does not appear to be clickable (see longer red line on screencap; they look like a square inside a square)! The first icon merely indicates that the boxes to the right are for scale measurements. The second icon allows you to scale with your mouse.

In PSE6 there are two icons for scale also. The toolbar is much more simplified and easier to use in PSE6.

SKEW

The third icon is the skew icon. This is a fun tool! Be sure to play with this tool! It allows you to pull one corner at a time or drag the little boxes on the sides.   To skew an element without the bar, hold down the control and then shift keys while resizing by dragging with your mouse.   You will note that when you pull with one corner, the corner on the opposite edge also moves.

Skew: Control + Shift + drag

To change the perspective of a photo, you can play with the skew to achieve the same. However, it is much easier to use the following keys which will keep the sides centered as they change.

Perspective: Control + Alt + Shift

To be able to drag the corners without affecting the opposite corner and distort freely in any direction, use the following keys.

Distort: Control + drag

ROTATING WITH THE REFERENCE POINT

There is one last fun gadget on this tool bar. This is the reference point. The default reference point is the center of your item. This is indicated by the center dot which is blackened in on this icon. Click on one of the other boxes surrounding the center one (and it will now be black) and then play with your transforming tools to see what happens.

Have fun playing!