CLIPPING MASK TUTORIAL
By Hummie

A clipping mask is simply a way to "clip" or cut something out of another shape or thing.

I prefer to do the first way I learned to cut paper to achieve the same effect as in this cutting paper tutorial.  I prefer this "control J" method simply because I can delete the layers I do not need after I cut out of them (or reuse them again if needed before I delete them).  However, this method of clipping masks may be easier for some people to understand.

**CONTROL G CLIPPING MASK**

I am going to apply a clipping mask to a template (striped pattern) in this example.

In the sample below I have three layers:

Top Layer:  The top layer is the paper which will be cut into the form of the template.   In this example, the paper is a solid blue layer, but it could be any paper or background or photo you desire.  Use a photo of grass or maybe of tiger stripes?  The ideas are endless.

Middle Layer:  The middle layer is the template (striped pattern with transparent area between stripes).  This layer could be a tag form or text shape or whatever shape you want to cut the paper out of.

Bottom Layer:  The bottom layer is my background green.  This layer will remain unchanged and is seen through the transparent areas of the above layers.
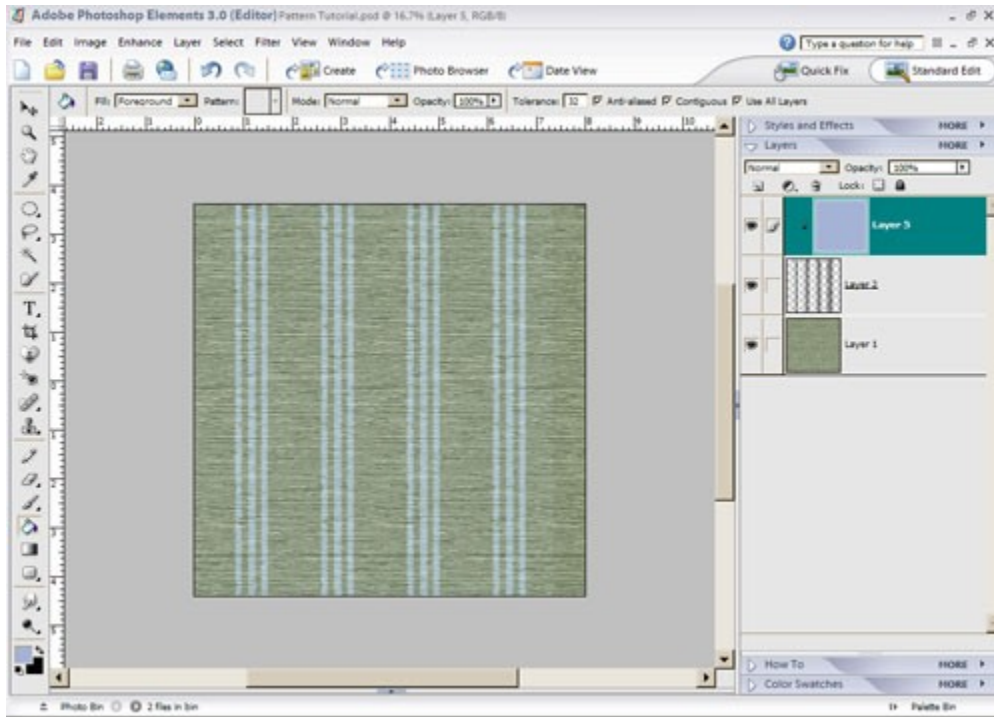
How?
With the paper on top of the template and with the paper as your active layer, simply hit Control G!  That's it!  Simple enough, huh?

Tip:  You can also go to the layer drop down menu and choose "group with previous."
Tip2:  You can also do an alt-click on the line between the two layers in the Layers Palette.

The nice thing about this method over the Control J method of cutting things is that you can resize the template layer even after the layers are grouped and visibly see how it changes the outcome.

You can leave the layers like this or you can lock the two layers together (with the chain icons) and then go to Layers/Merge Linked (or do a Control E) to make them one layer.
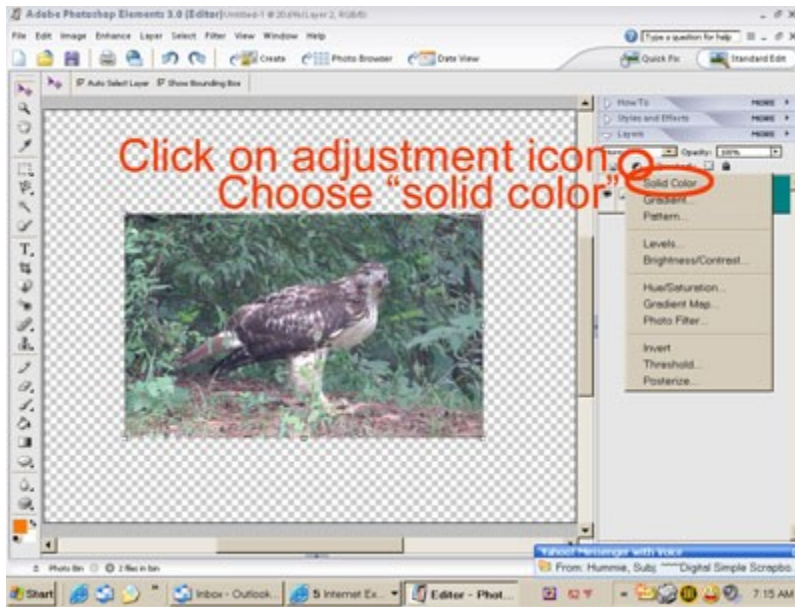


**IMPORTANT!** The above control-G clipping mask method only works with PNG's or layers which have transparency in them. There is transparency between my stripes.

Below is another type of clipping mask. It is actually the more true-to-its-name type of clipping mask.
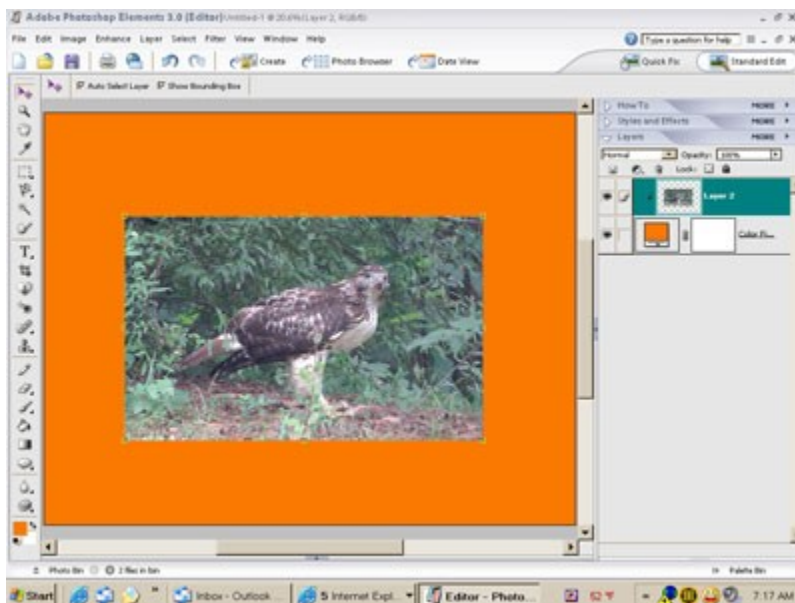
## ADJUSTMENT LAYER CLIPPING MASK

1) On the sample below, I've a nice bird shot that my son took. Make sure it is not a background layer. If so, double click on the layer and resave it in another name to "unlock" it.

2) Click on the adjustment icon and then click on "solid color." Choose any color (it doesn't matter) and click okay. Like magic, a new layer is created above my bird layer (called an "adjustment layer").

3) As seen below, the color I chose for my adjustment layer was orange. The color doesn't really matter. Now, move your adjustment layer below your photo layer (look in the layers palette on my sample to see what it looks like now).

With the photo layer as the active layer, hit Control-G to group the two layers together.
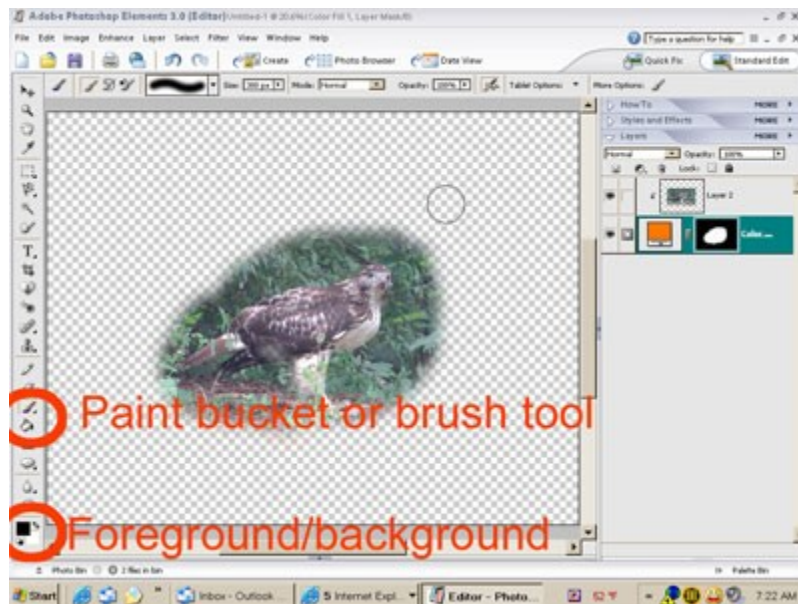
4.  Please note, if you click on your D key on your keyboard, it will turn your foreground/background color to black and white.  If you click on your X key on your keyboard, it will eXchange the foreground and background colors.

5.  For clipping mask purposes, remember that black erases and white reveals.  Note that the right box on the adjustment layer is white by default.  That is why I can see my entire bird photo (as in the above screencap).

Play to learn how the black and white works.  Choose the paint bucket and with your adjustment layer active, paint with black, then white to see what happens.  When you are done playing, leave it painted in black so the photo is invisible.

6.  Next, choose your brush tool and make your foreground color white.  Use your mouse to drag around the area where the bird (in my case) should be and it will begin to reveal the bird!  Oops, some of my orange was revealed, so I clicked X to get black as my foreground color and used the brush again over that area to make it invisible again.

Play with the opacity of your brush to blend the photo even more.



Have fun playing!