

Color Blocking Tutorial

By Hummie

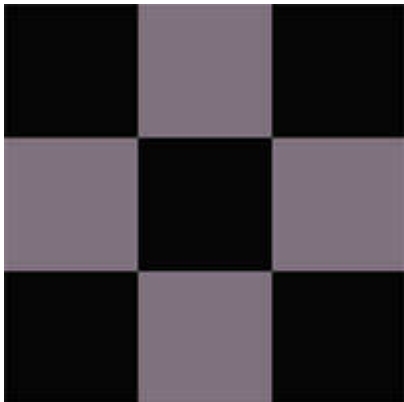
Color blocking is a technique that has long ago been popular in paper scrapbooking. The effect is very easy to achieve in digital scrapbooking.

What is **color blocking**? It is a technique whereby **blocks** (square or rectangle, any size, and direction) of **color** (paper, photos, text, elements) are put together to fill in all areas of a layout.

Creating blocks to fill is a great way to make a quick layout that balances.

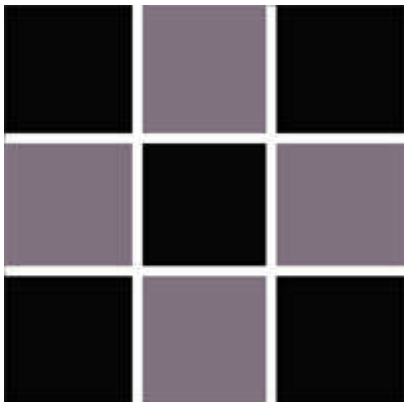
Before I share the skills in which to create this technique in Photoshop Elements, I will share examples to better understand how blocks can be put together and to inspire the creative flow.

BLOCKING EXAMPLES



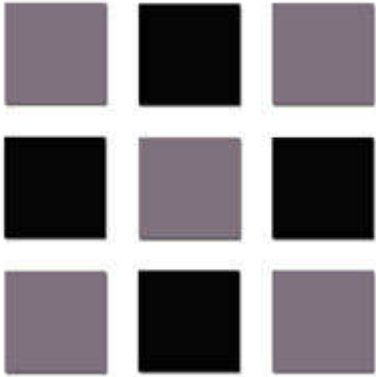
1. The simplest method is formed whereby the blocks directly touch each other.

Any block may be filled with a paper (solid or patterned), or photo, or a solid color with text, or an element.

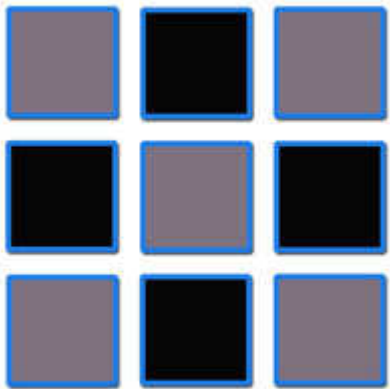


2. Create an overlay of lines which create blocks beneath. In this sample, the white lines are an overlay.

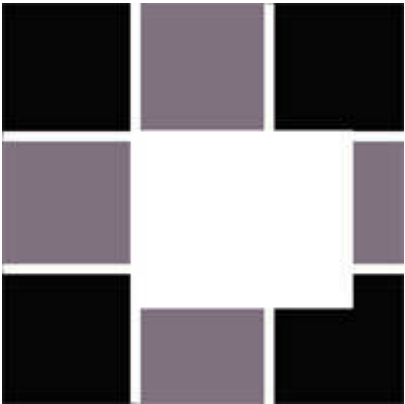
Directions on how to achieve this are below.



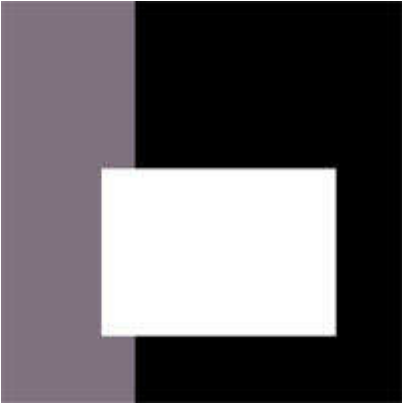
3. Allow the background paper to show through as the “lines” separating the blocks. In this method, drop shadows may be applied to the blocks.



4. Utilizing the above method allows for mats (or borders) around the blocks.



5. After creating the background in blocks, place photos offset from the blocks in the background.



6. Use the “rule of thirds” when creating blocks. In this example on a 12 x 12 background, the left block is 4 inches ($1/3$), while the right block is 8 inches ($2/3$).



7. Let your imagination be creative by creating any number of blocks in a variety of shapes. In this example, the black block is wide and thin. Note how the “rule of thirds” is applied in this example.



8. Break up equal areas into small blocks. In this example, the bottom right area is broken up into three small blocks equal to the area of the block above them. This would be a great place for three brads.



9. In this example, the bottom right area is broken up into two smaller blocks equal to the area of the block below them.



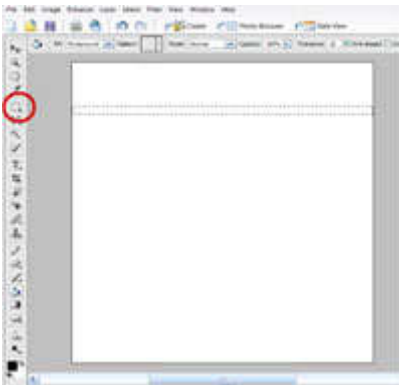
10. Place blocks opposite each other to keep symmetry and balance.

HOW TO BLOCK

Blocks Directly Touch Each Other. The easiest way to visualize areas that may be blocked and to keep them sized proportionately is to utilize the grid. To learn more about the grid, see [this tutorial](#).

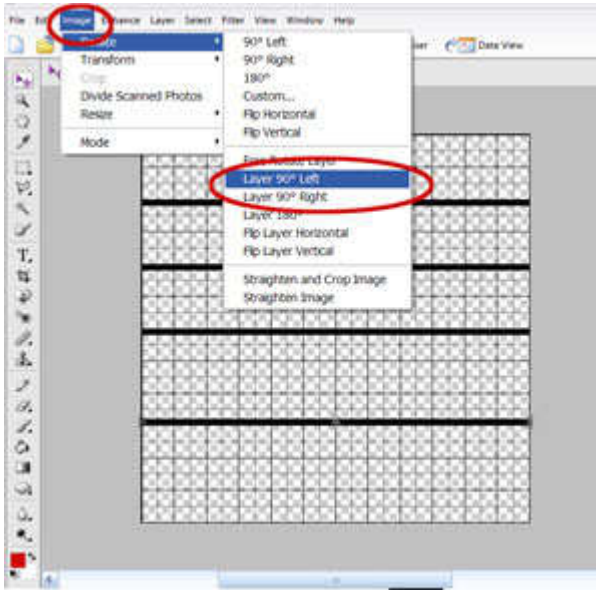
Use the rectangular marquee selection tool to draw squares and rectangles to cut pieces of paper and photos with. Move papers and photos into place, resizing them as needed and, thereafter, draw a selection and hold down the control key while hitting the J key on the keyboard to cut the paper or photo into the shape of the selection. Use the skills you learned in the [cutting paper tutorial](#).

If it is helpful, make a quick sketch of blocks as in the examples above before doing the actual cutting.



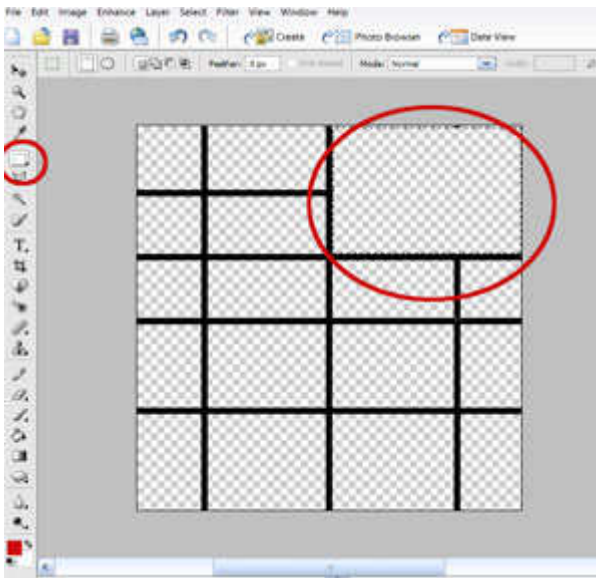
Create an Overlay of Lines. Create a new layer. Draw a thin selection as a bar across the page and use the paint bucket to fill the selection with black.

Duplicate the layer with the line and move it to a new placement. Duplicate again if desired.

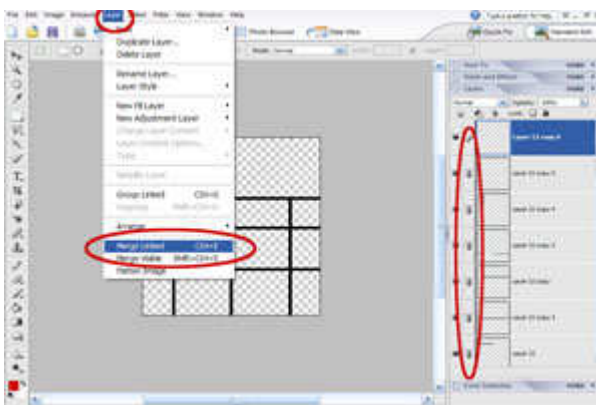


Duplicate a layer and rotate it vertically by going to the Image drop down menu and choosing Rotate and then “Layer 90 degrees Left” or Layer 90 degrees Right.”

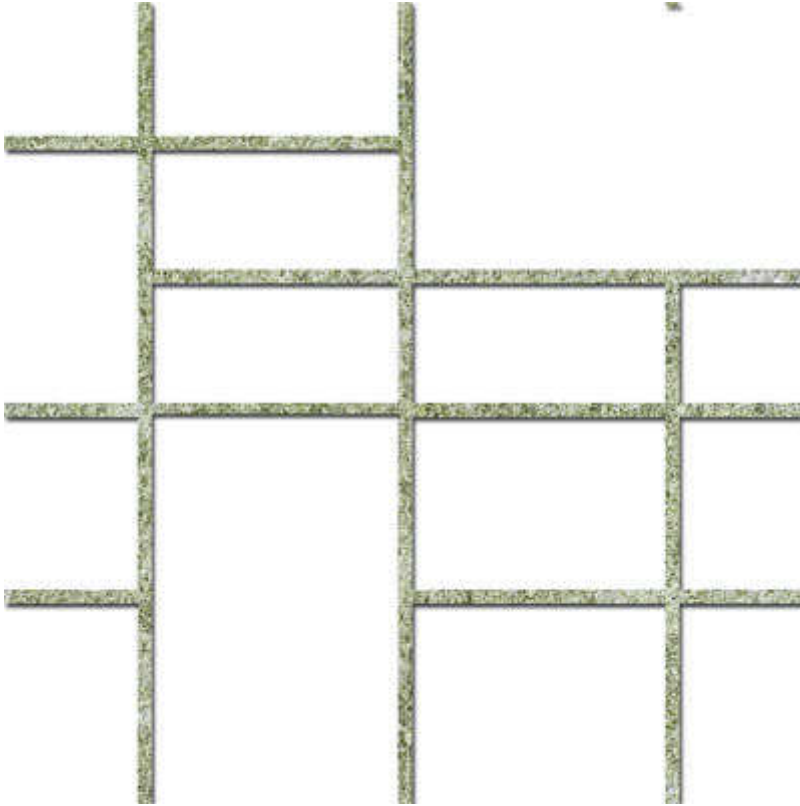
Move the line into place vertically. Duplicate the vertical line layer and move it into place. Continue as desired.



Use the selection tool to cut off (delete) portions of lines to create larger blocks of space. Be careful to have the correct layer as the active layer before hitting the delete key.



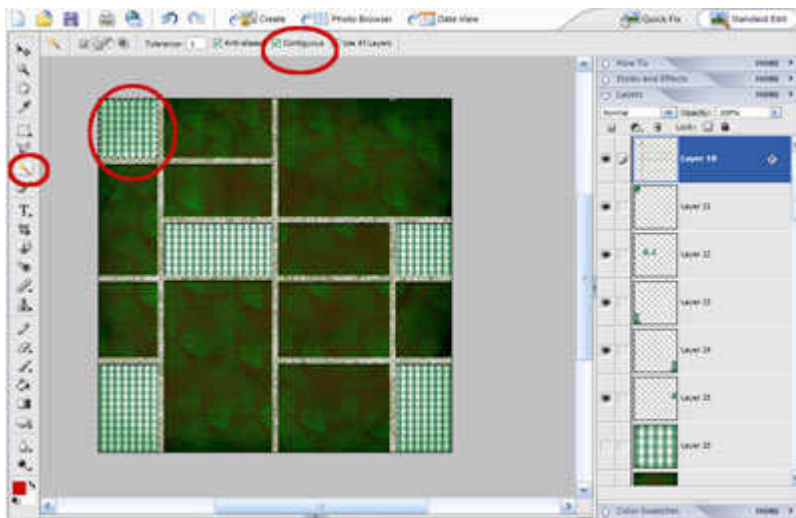
Although it is not necessary, it may be helpful to merge the lines together when a satisfactory overlay is created. After linking together the layers, go to the Layer drop down menu and choose “merge linked.”



One reason to merge the line layers is to have the ability to recolor all the lines with the paint bucket at the same time or to be able to cut the lines out of a paper.

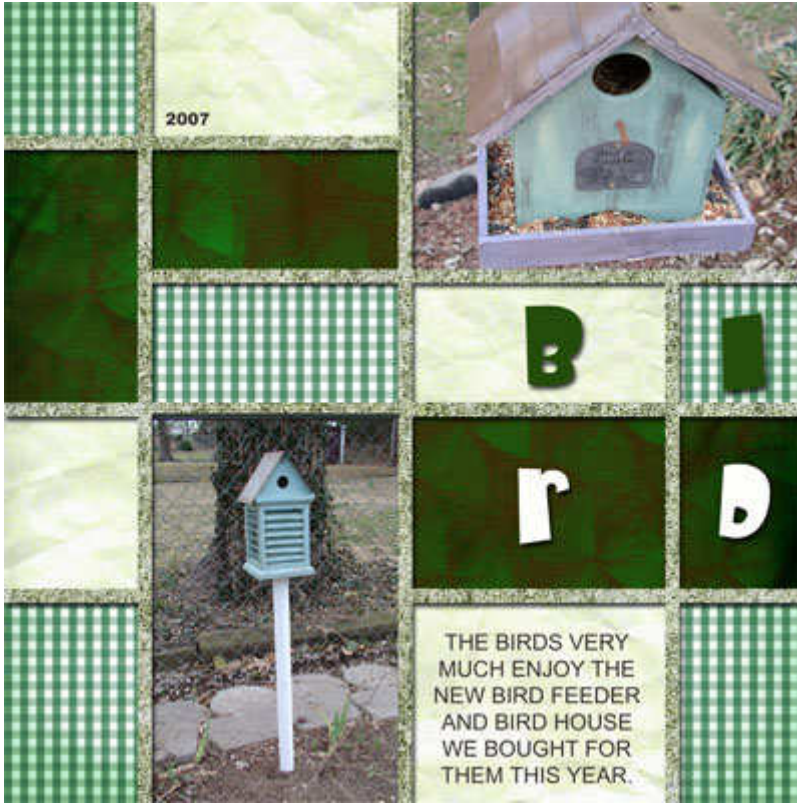
Use the cutting paper tutorial (control J method or control G method) to cut the lines from the paper.

Add a drop shadow.



To fill the blocks, use the magic wand selection tool. Checkmark the box for "contiguous" and (with the line template as the active layer) click inside a square to make a selection (marching ants) of the box. Next,

make the paper layer the active layer and hold down the control key while hitting the J key to cut the selection out of the paper onto a new layer. For photos, it may be helpful to position them under the square, resizing as necessary, before cutting them.



Continue filling in blocks with photos and text.

Although my example does not have elements, a few cute buttons or other elements in some of the boxes may add a nice touch. Be creative.

Allowing the background to show through as lines. This method is also achieved using the rectangular selection tool to cut papers and photos into blocks. As indicated above, add drop shadows and mats to the cut blocks. Utilize the grid to make the selection or to line up the blocks. Place a background paper on the bottom layer to be seen between the blocks.