

How to Create Shapes

With the PhotoShop Elements Shape tools, you can draw perfect geometric shapes, regardless of your artistic ability or illustration experience. The first step to drawing shapes is to select from one of the six basic shape tools. You can add shapes to any file you can open in Photoshop Elements.

In Photoshop Elements, shapes are vector graphics, which means they are made up of lines and curves instead of individual pixels. Vector graphics can be scaled to any size and printed at any resolution without losing detail or clarity. New shapes are created on their own shape layer, but a shape layer can hold more than one shape. The shape tools provide an easy way to create buttons, navigation bars, and other elements used on a web page.

Drawing Basic Shapes

The shape tools include the Rectangle, Rounded Rectangle, Ellipse, Polygon, Line, Custom Shape, and Shape Selection tools (**Figure 1**). To activate the shape tools, change to the Full Edit workspace and press U or select a tool in the Tools palette. When you do, the six shape tools appear on the Options bar at the top of the workspace.

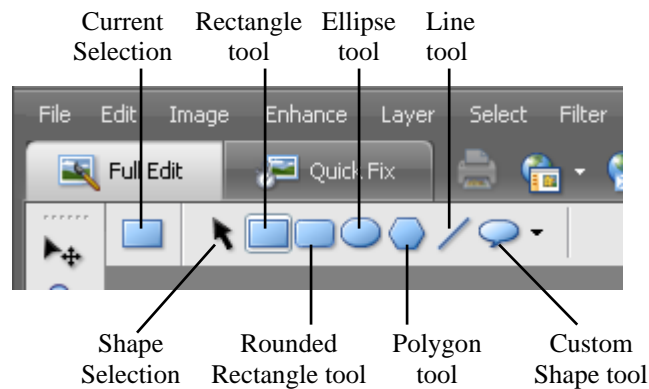


Figure 1 Shape Tools

Shape Selection: Use the Shape Selection tool to select and move shapes that have not been simplified (converted from a vector to a bitmap or raster image). When using the Shape Selection tool, drag to move shapes, hold down Alt to copy the shape, or drag the selection handles to resize the shape. After a shape has been simplified, you must use the Move tool to select and move the shape.

Rectangle: Draws squares and other rectangles.

Rounded Rectangle: Draws rectangles with rounded corners.

Ellipse: Draws perfect circles and other ellipses.

Line: Draws perfectly straight lines and arrows.

Custom Shape: Draws a variety of objects, including borders, frames, animal shapes, music notes, and more.

To draw a rectangle, square, or rounded rectangle:

1. Change to the Editor and select the Full Edit tab.
2. In the Tools palette, select the Rectangle or Rounded Rectangle tool. Or, press U and select the Rectangle or Rounded Rectangle tool on the Options bar.
3. On the Options bar, open the Geometry options and select options for the new shape (**Figure 2**).

Note: If the tool you want to select is not visible in the Tools palette, you can press and hold another shape tool in the Tools palette and then choose a tool from the list that appears.

Unconstrained: You set the width and height by dragging to draw the shape.

Square: Draws a perfect square.

Fixed Size: Draws a rectangle at the exact size you specify in the Width and Height boxes.

Proportional: Draws a rectangle based on the numbers you type in the Width and Height boxes.

From Center: Draws a shape from the center of where you begin drawing.

Snap to Pixels: Snaps edges of a rectangle to the pixel boundaries.

4. If drawing a rounded rectangle, select a radius for the corners of the rectangle (**Figure 3**).
5. Select a color from the Color menu, and click anywhere away from the Color menu to close it (**Figure 4**).
6. Drag in your image to draw the selected shape (**Figure 5**).

Note: New shapes are added to a new shape layer automatically (**Figure 6**).

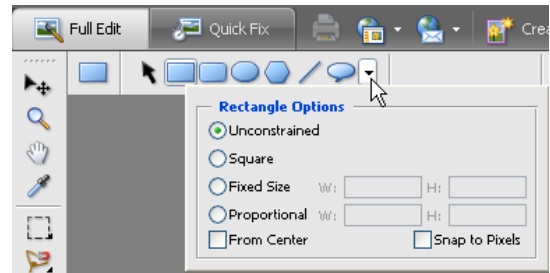


Figure 2 Rectangle options

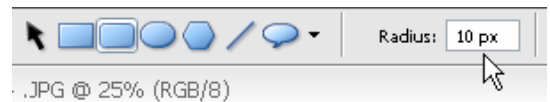


Figure 3 Corner radius for rounded rectangle

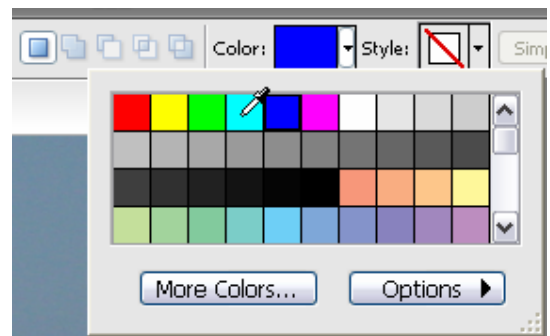


Figure 4 Color menu



Figure 5 Drag to draw the shape

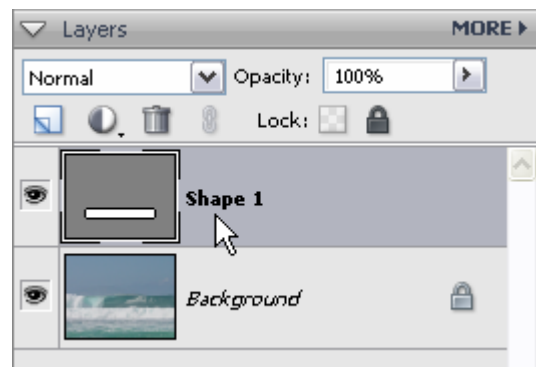


Figure 6 Shape layer

To draw a circle or ellipse:

1. Change to the Editor and select the Full Edit tab.
 2. In the Tools palette, select the Ellipse tool. Or, press U and select the Ellipse tool on the Options bar.
- Note:** If the tool you want to select is not visible in the Tools palette, you can press and hold another shape tool in the Tools palette and then choose a tool from the list that appears.
3. On the Options bar, open the Geometry options and select options for the ellipse (**Figure 7**).

Unconstrained: You set the size and radius by dragging to draw the ellipse.

Circle: Draws a perfect circle.

Fixed Size: Draws an ellipse at the exact size you specify in the Width and Height boxes.

Proportional: Draws a circle based on the numbers you type in the Width and Height boxes.

From Center: Draws the ellipse from the center of where you begin drawing.

4. Select a color from the Color menu, and click anywhere away from the Color menu to close it (**Figure 8**).
5. Drag in your image to draw the ellipse (**Figure 9**).

Note: New shapes are added to a new shape layer automatically (**Figure 10**).

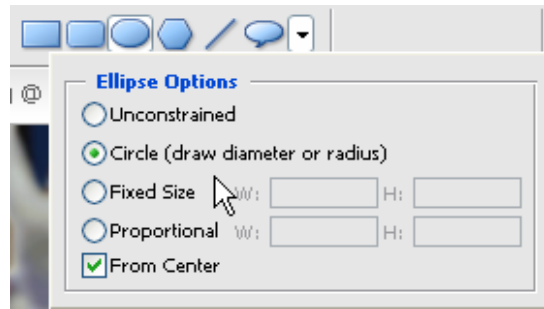


Figure 7 Ellipse options

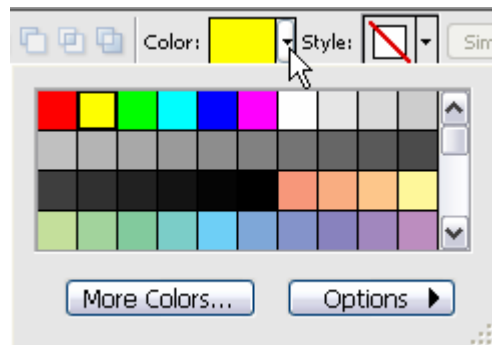


Figure 8 Color menu



Figure 9 Drag to draw the ellipse

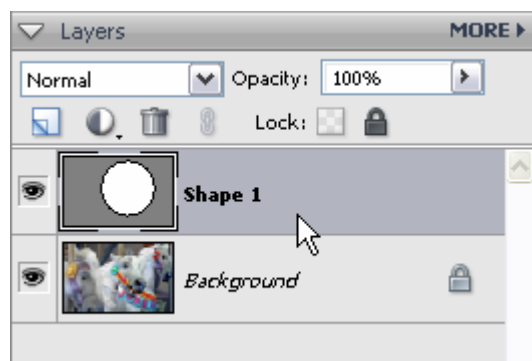


Figure 10 Shape layer

To draw a multi-sided shape:

1. Change to the Editor and select the Full Edit tab.
2. In the Tools palette, select the Polygon tool. Or, press U and select the Polygon tool on the Options bar.

Note: If the tool you want to select is not visible in the Tools palette, you can press and hold another shape tool in the Tools palette and then choose a tool from the list that appears.

3. On the Options bar, open the Geometry options and select options for the polygon (**Figure 11**).

Radius: You set the distance from the center of the shape to the outer edges or points of the shape.

Smooth Corners: Draws rounded corners instead of sharp ones.

Star: Draws an ellipse at the exact size you specify in the Width and Height boxes.

Indent Sides By: You set a percentage by which to indent the sides of a star.

Smooth Indents: Draws smooth indents/angles instead of sharp ones when drawing a star.

4. Select a color from the Color menu, and click anywhere away from the Color menu to close it (**Figure 12**).
5. Drag in your image to draw the shape (**Figure 13**).

Note: New shapes are added to a new shape layer automatically (**Figure 14**).

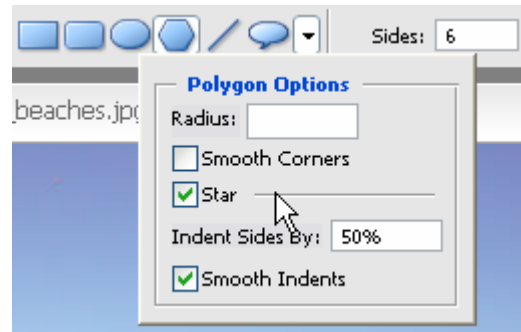


Figure 11 Polygon Options

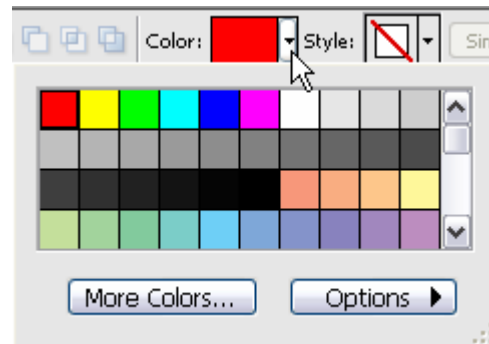


Figure 12 Color menu



Figure 13 Drag to draw the polygon

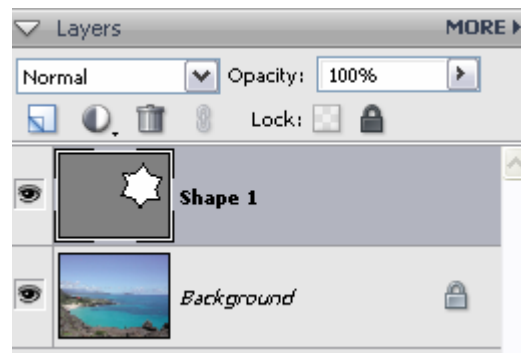


Figure 14 Shape layer

To draw a line or arrow:

1. Change to the Editor and select the Full Edit tab.
2. In the Tools palette, select the Line tool. Or, press U and select the Line tool on the Options bar.

Note: If the tool you want to select is not visible in the Tools palette, you can press and hold another shape tool in the Tools palette and then choose a tool from the list that appears.

3. On the Options bar, select a line weight and color (**Figure 15**).
4. To draw an arrow, select arrowhead settings from the Geometry options menu (**Figure 16**).

Start and End: Arrowheads can be added at either end (or both ends) of the line.

Width and Length: The size of the arrowhead is a percentage of the selected line weight.

Concavity: Use this option if you want the sides of the arrowhead to be curved. The number determines the curvature on the widest part of the arrowhead.

5. Drag in your image to draw the line or arrow (**Figure 17**).

Note: New shapes are added to a new shape layer automatically (**Figure 18**).

You can also add arrows by using the Custom Shape tool.



Figure 15 Line weight and color

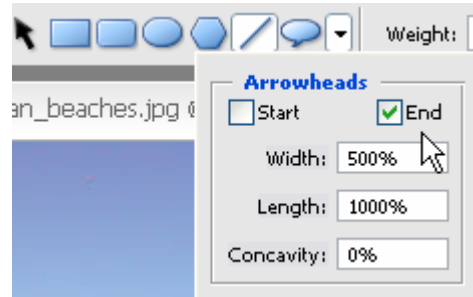


Figure 16 Arrowhead options



Figure 17 Drag to draw the arrow

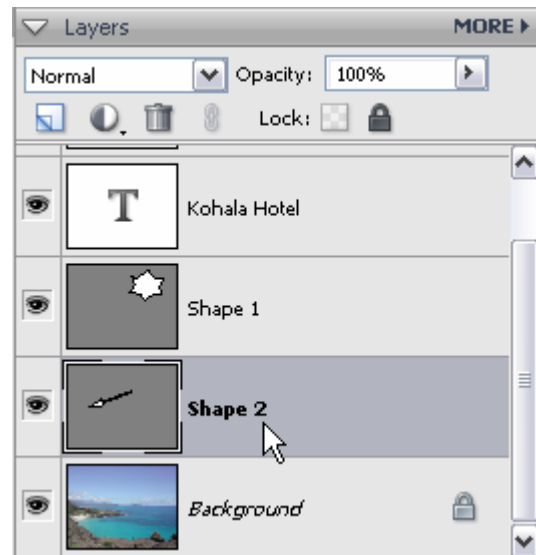


Figure 18 Shape layer

To add custom shapes:

1. Change to the Editor and select the Full Edit tab.
 2. In the Tools palette, select the Custom Shape tool. Or, press U and Select the Custom Shape tool on the Options bar.
- Note:** If the tool you want to select is not visible in the Tools palette, you can press and hold another shape tool in the Tools palette and then choose a tool from the list that appears.
3. On the Options bar, open the Geometry options and select options for the custom shape (**Figure 19**).

Unconstrained: You set the size by dragging to draw the shape.

Defined Proportions: The shape always maintains the proportions created by the designer of the shape.

Defined Size: The shape is always the size the designer created the shape to be. Dragging will not resize the shape.

Fixed Size: You enter the dimensions you want. This can include inches, pixels, or centimeters.

From Center: Draws the shape from the center of where you begin drawing.

4. On the Options menu, open the Custom Shape picker and select a shape to draw (**Figure 20**). If you don't see the shape you want, click the arrow in the upper-right corner of the window and select a new category of shapes (**Figure 21**).
5. Select a color from the Color menu.
6. Drag in your image to draw the selected shape (**Figure 22**).

Note: New shapes are added to a new shape layer automatically.

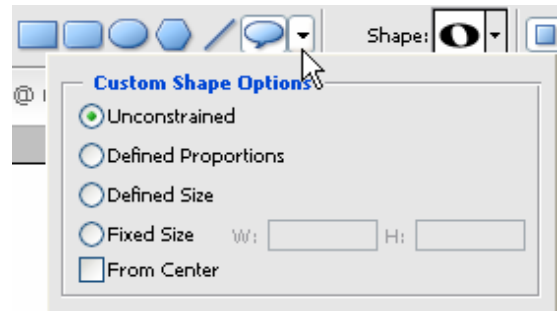


Figure 19 Custom shape options

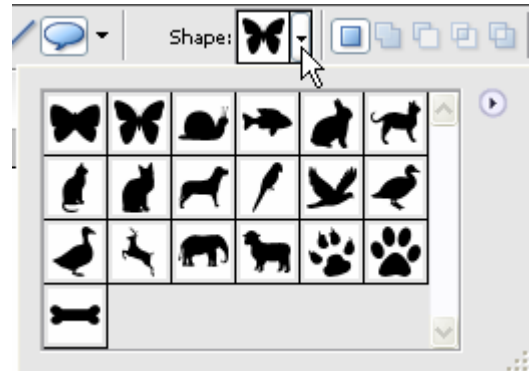


Figure 20 Custom shape picker

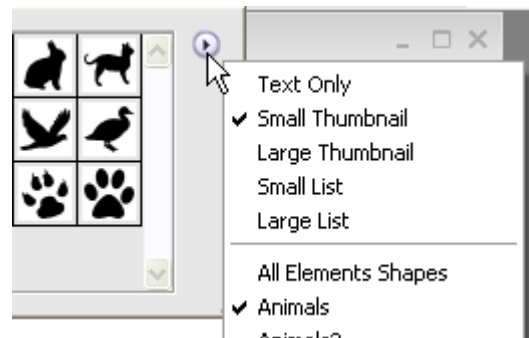


Figure 21 Custom shape library menu

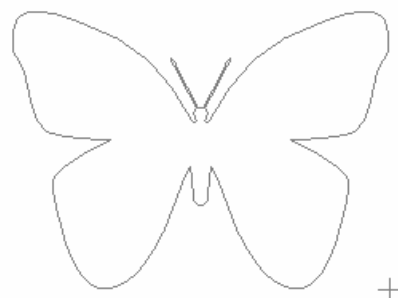


Figure 22 Drag to draw the shape

Selecting and Moving Shapes

The arrow in the Options bar is the Shape Selection tool. This is a special kind of selection and move tool that works only on shapes that have not been simplified (converted from a vector to a raster image). The Shape Selection tool functions much like the Move tool. You can drag a shape to move it, hold down ALT to copy (instead of moving), and drag the handles to resize the shape.

Selecting a shape:

1. Select the Shape Selection tool and select Show bounding box on the Options menu (**Figure 23**).
2. Click the shape to activate the layer that contains it. You can also click the shape layer in the Layers palette.
3. Click the shape again to select it.

The shape's bounding box and selection handles appear (**Figure 24**).

Moving a shape:

1. Select the Shape Selection tool and click to activate the layer that contains the shape.
2. Drag the shape to a new position.
3. Click away from the shape to deselect it.

Note: After you deselect the shape, the layer is still active. You can click the green check mark above the Layers palette to deactivate the target path (**Figure 25**).

Note: You can also undo the move by clicking the Cancel Current Operation button.

Sizing a shape:

1. Select the shape.
2. Position the pointer over one of the selection handles and drag to change the height or width of the shape. Drag a corner handle to change the height and width at the same time. Or hold down Shift as you drag to maintain the shape's proportions as you size it (**Figure 26**).
3. Click the Commit Current Operation button to complete the move (**Figure 27**).

Note: You can also undo the move by clicking the Cancel Current Operation button.



Figure 23 Shape Selection tool

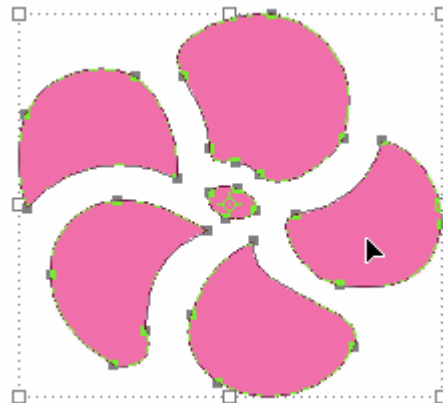


Figure 24 Selected shape



Figure 25 Click to deactivate the target path

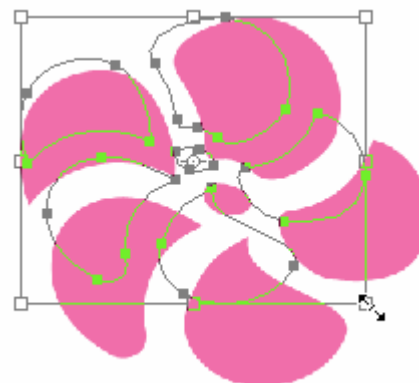


Figure 26 Sizing a shape



Figure 27 Commit or cancel the current operation

Overlapping and Combining Shapes

When you create a new shape by using the shape tools, the shape is added to a new layer automatically. You also have the option of placing more than one shape on the same layer. When you do, you can use the small square buttons on the Options bar to control how the two shapes interact (**Figure 28**).

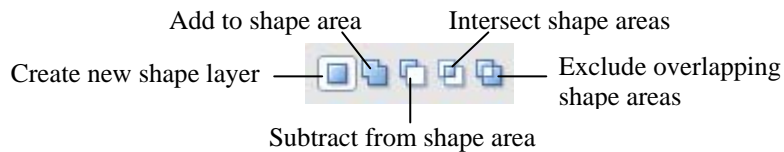


Figure 28 Options for managing shapes

Create new shape layer: Each new shape is placed on a separate layer automatically. This is the default setting.

Add to shape area: With this option selected, new shapes are placed on the active shape layer. Shapes remain separate objects and can overlap without affecting each other.

Subtract from shape area: With this option selected, a new shape drawn over an existing shape will remove a piece of the existing shape.

Intersect shape areas: With this option selected, the area where two shapes intersect defines the final shape.

Exclude overlapping shape areas: With this option selected, the area where two shapes intersect is removed from the final selection.

Placing two shapes on the same layer:

1. Select a shape tool and add your first shape to the image.
The shape appears on a new layer.
2. Select a shape tool for drawing the second shape. Or you use the same tool for both shapes.
Note: All shapes on the same layer are the same color. To draw a shape of a different color, place it on a separate layer.
3. Select the Add To Shape Area button on the Options bar (**Figure 28**).
4. With the layer for the first shape still active, drag to draw the new shape (**Figure 29**).

Both shapes appear on the same layer (**Figure 30**).

Note: The two shapes can overlap without affecting each other.

Note: To add a new shape to a shape that already exists, make sure the shape's layer is active. You do this by clicking the shape's layer on the Layers palette or clicking the first shape with the Shape Selection tool.

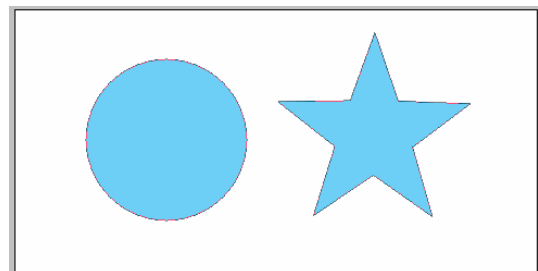


Figure 29 Two shapes drawn together

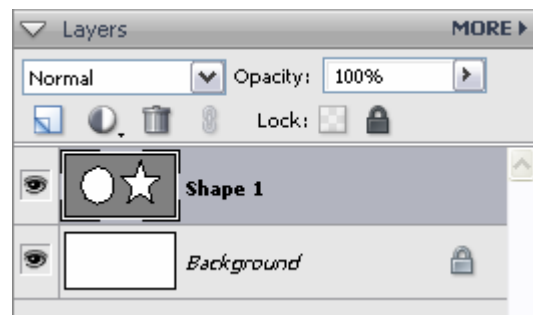


Figure 30 Two shapes on the same layer

Subtracting an area from a shape:

1. Select a shape tool and add your first shape to the image (**Figure 31**).

The shape appears on a new layer.

2. Select a shape tool for drawing the area you want to subtract or remove from the first shape. Or use the same tool for both shapes. You can use one shape tool to cut a hole in another tool.
3. Select the Subtract From Shape Area button on the Options bar (**Figure 28**).
4. With the layer for the first shape still active, drag over the first shape to remove an area of the shape (**Figure 32**).

Both shapes appear on the same layer and the second shape functions as a cutout from the first shape (**Figure 33**).

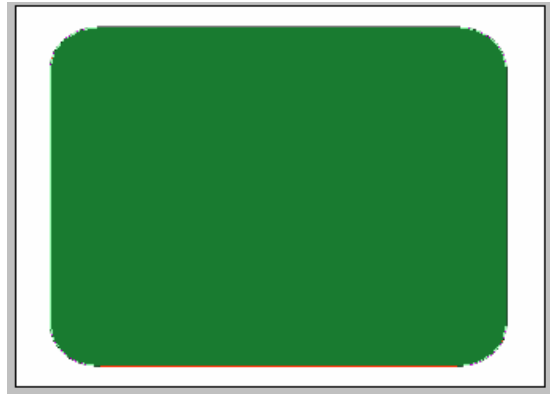


Figure 31 First shape drawn on a new layer

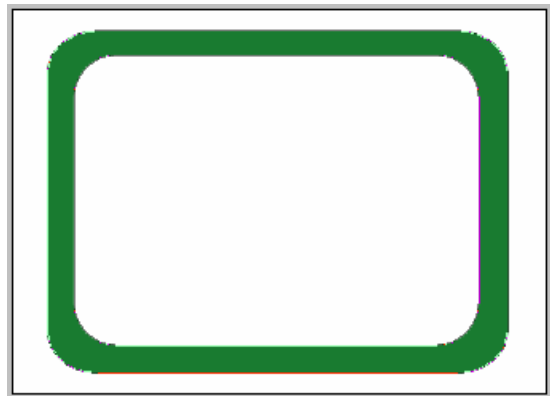


Figure 32 One shape used to remove an area from another shape

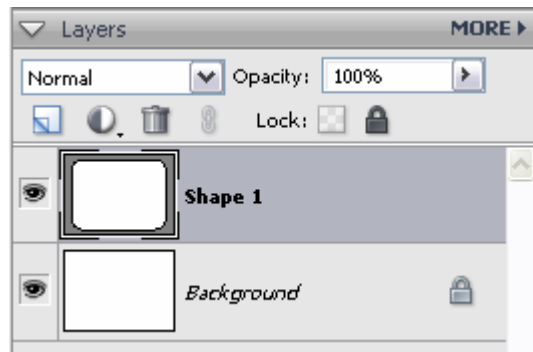


Figure 33 Two shapes on the same layer

Creating a new shape by intersecting two shapes:

1. Select a shape tool and add your first shape to the image (**Figure 34**).

The shape appears on a new layer.

2. Select a shape tool for drawing the area you want to intersect with the first shape. Or use the same tool for both shapes.

3. Select the Intersect shape areas button on the Options bar (**Figure 28**).

4. With the layer for the first shape still active, drag to draw the second shape. Use the Shape selection tool to position the two shapes wherever you want them.

The area where the two shapes overlap defines the final shape (**Figure 35**).

Both shapes appear on the same layer (**Figure 36**).

5. Click the Dismiss Target Path button (green check mark) on the Options bar to see the final shape (**Figure 37**).

Note: The two shapes are still separate objects. To resize or manipulate the shapes as one, you need to combine them into a single shape.

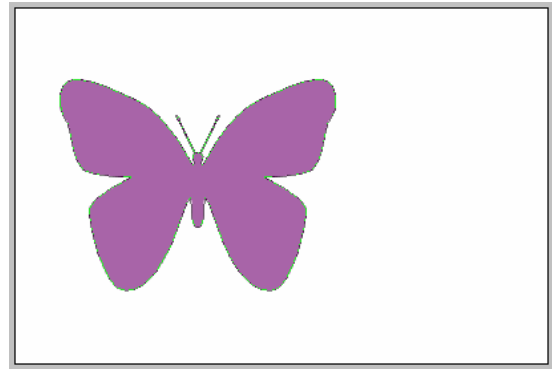


Figure 34 The first shape is on a new layer

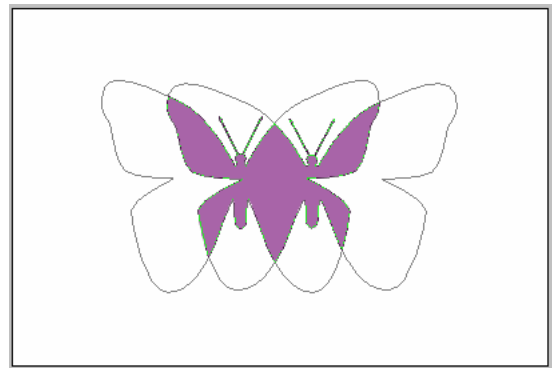


Figure 35 The intersection defines the new shape

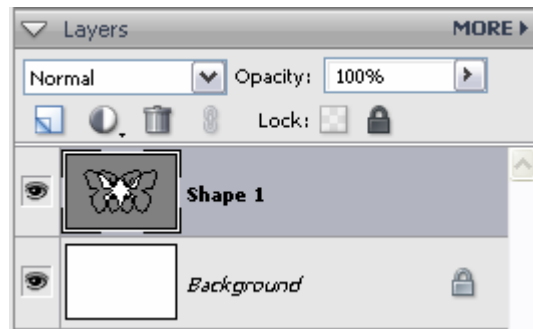


Figure 36 Both shapes are on the same layer



Figure 37 The final shape

Combining shapes:

1. Use the Shape Selection tool to select two or more shapes on the same layer.
2. Click the Combine button on the Options bar (**Figure 38**).
3. The shapes now share the same bounding box and selection handles (**Figure 39**).
4. Resize or manipulate the combined shape as desired (**Figure 40**).



Figure 38 Combine shapes on the same layer

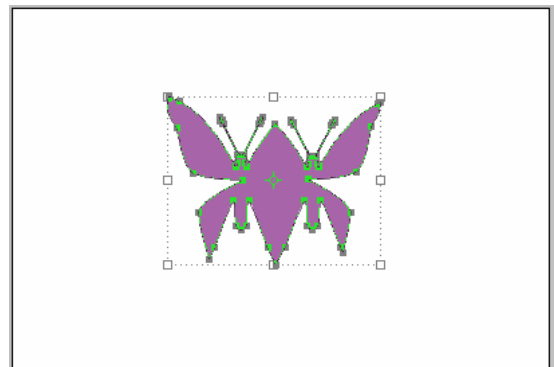


Figure 39 Combined shapes

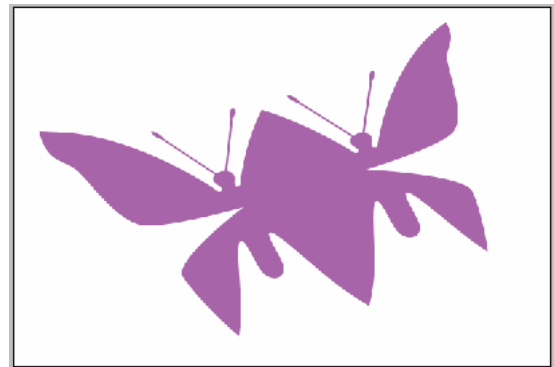


Figure 40 Combined shapes can be sized or manipulated as a single shape

Using the Cookie Cutter Tool

The Cookie Cutter tool creates the same shapes as the Custom Shape tool but is designed to crop a portion of a photograph in the selected shape. You can use the Cookie Cutter to crop an image in the shape of a star, heart, flower, or other custom shape. Or, use the Cookie Cutter to apply artistic edges to an image by applying one of the Crop Shapes from the Custom Shapes library.

Using the Cookie Cutter tool to create a photo edge:

1. Select the Cookie Cutter tool in the Tools palette (Figure 41).
2. Select a shape for the Cookie Cutter (Figure 42).

Note: To view more shape categories in the Custom Shapes library, click the arrow in the top-right corner of the Custom Shapes menu. The shapes shown in Figure 42 are located in the Crop Shapes category.

3. On the Options bar, open the Geometry options and select options for the Cookie Cutter (Figure 43).

Unconstrained: You set the size by dragging to draw the shape.

Defined Proportions: The shape always maintains the proportions created by the designer of the shape.

Defined Size: The shape is always the size the designer created the shape to be. Dragging will not resize the shape.

Fixed Size: You enter the dimensions you want. This can include inches, pixels, or centimeters.

From Center: Draws the shape from the center of where you begin drawing.

4. You can also specify an amount to feather the edge of the selection (Figure 44).
5. Drag over the image to define the area you want to appear in the finished image (Figure 45).

Note: After drawing the shape, you can drag or size the shape to fine-tune its position (Figure 45). When you have the shape and position you want, commit the current operation.

6. Click the Commit Current Operation button (green check mark) to accept the position of the Cookie Cutter shape.

The image is the shape you created and includes any options, such as feathering, you selected. (Figure 46).



Figure 41 Cookie Cutter tool

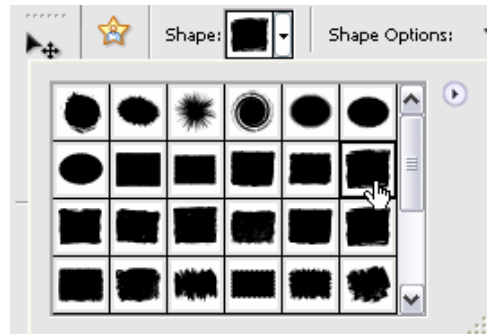


Figure 42 Cookie Cutter shapes

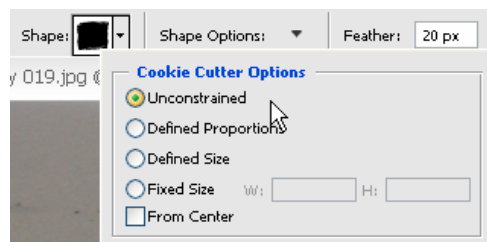


Figure 43 Cookie Cutter options

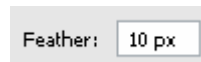


Figure 44 Feathering the edge of the selection



Figure 45 Drag to define the shape of the image



Figure 46 Feathered image

Simplifying Shapes

The shapes you create in Photoshop Elements remain vector graphics until you simplify the shape. You must simplify a shape before you can apply effects such as filters. When you simplify a shape, Elements converts the shape from a vector graphic to a raster or bitmap image. This is also called rasterizing the image.

After you simplify an image, your shapes have the same limitations on sizing as any other raster image. For example, you can make the shape smaller but cannot make the image larger than 100% without losing quality. When you simplify a shape, everything on the shape layer is affected.

It's a good idea to create the final shape as large as you plan to use it before simplifying.

In Photoshop Elements, a message informs you when the image must be simplified to use a feature or apply an effect. After the shape is simplified, you can edit it like any other raster image you open in Elements.

Simplifying a shape:

1. Use the Shape Selection tool to select the shape you want to simplify.
2. Click the Simplify button on the Options bar (**Figure 47**).

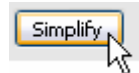


Figure 47 Simplifying a shape