005

Photoshop **Techniques**
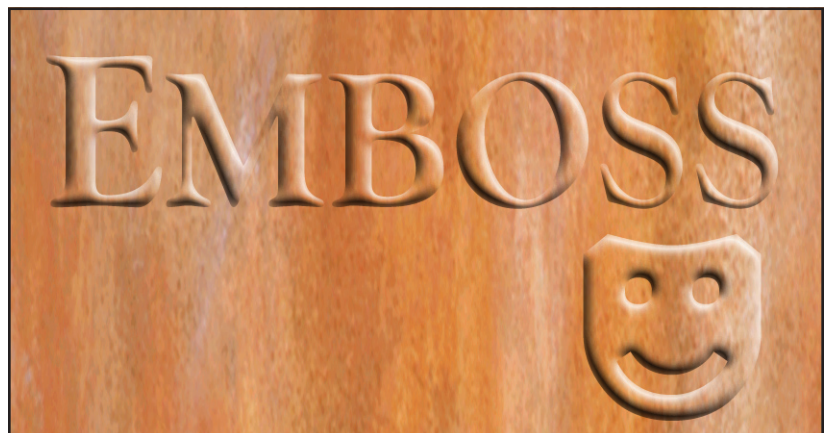
How to

CREATE AN EMBOSSED OBJECT.

The secret to reproducing an embossed look in Adobe Photoshop is creating highlights and shadows that work together to create the illusion of depth. Where you position these highlights and shadows control the direction your light appears to be coming from.

A smooth embossed effect is a gentle way to integrate graphics or text into your Photoshop images. Beveled and embossed graphics have become particularly popular in the last few years for multi-media uses.

This issue walks you through the basic steps involved in creating a simple embossed graphic. This issue also continues to expand on the use of layers and channels in Adobe Photoshop.
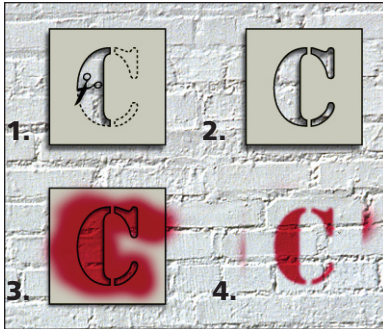
You can also look up these other issues to explore related techniques:

Layers and Channels. For new Photoshop users, the terms can meld and blend together. What is the difference between them? Why would you choose to use one over the other? This section should help give you a few reference points when thinking about layers and channels.

Channels.

Using channels is like using a cardboard stencil.

Look at how you might use a stencil: 1) Cut a shape out of a piece of cardboard. 2) Lay this stencil over a background. 3) Spray paint through the stencil. 4) Remove the stencil.

This is not unlike how you will use a channel in this technique. A channel will hold your embossed object's shape. The channel itself is not a visual part of your final image.

Follow through this technique. We create the channel in Step 2, and use it again in Steps 3 and 5. After completing this technique successfully a few times, the role of channels may start to make more sense.

Layers.

Layers on the other hand are more intuitive for the new user. Each layer in Photoshop is like a layer of clear glass. The diagram below may help you visualize how we use layers in this technique.

a The background layer contains your original image.

b Layer 1 holds the object you want to emboss into the background.

c Mode menu controls how the object blends into the background.

Channels Example

Final Image
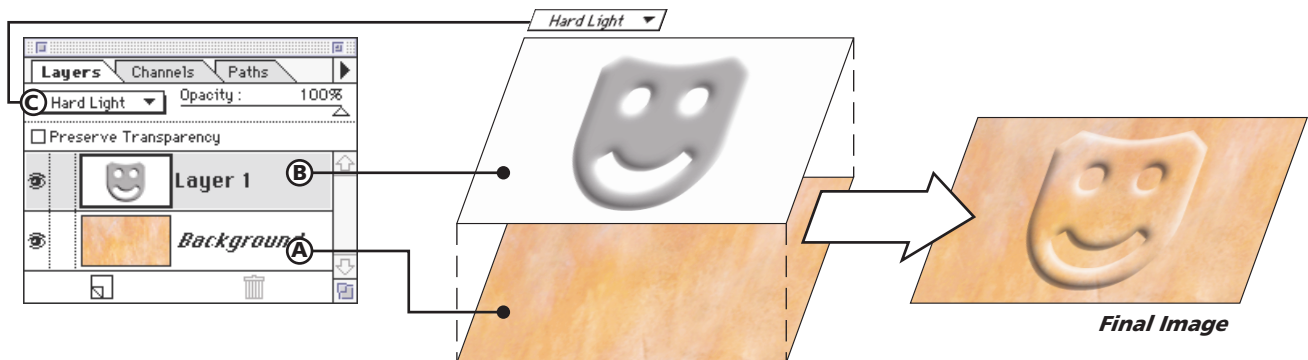
In this technique, we will create a gray, embossed version of our object. We will build this shape on its own layer. We apply a special "Hard Light" mode to that layer, allowing the background images to show through. The embossed graphic darkens or lightens the background image, but retains the background's color. This neatly creates a quick, simple, embossed effect.

Step 1
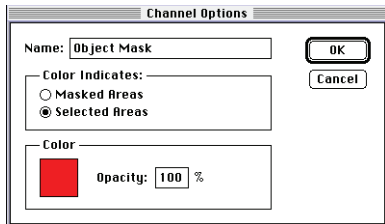
Step 2A

Step 2B

Step 3A-C
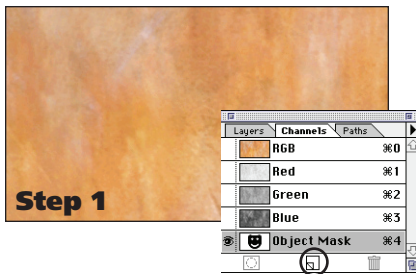
Step 2

Step 1

Open the background you want to emboss.

Scanned sections of fabric, marble or textured papers are useful to collect for this type of technique.

Step 2

Create an "Object Mask" channel.

This channel holds the artwork you want to emboss into your background. We use this channel as a tool, not a visual part of the image.

A: Click on the New Channel icon in the Channels palette.
Use the settings below and click OK.
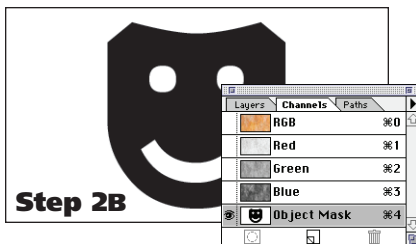
Name: Object Mask
Color Indicates: Selected Areas.

B: Create the graphic you wish to emboss.
This example is a placed graphic from Adobe Illustrator. You can also paste in artwork from a desktop scanner. Simple black and white artwork works best for this technique.

Note: When done, press ⌘-0 (zero) to switch back to the color image. (**PC Users:** CNTL-0)

Step 3

Create an "Embossed Object" layer.

Now we switch to the Layers palette. In this step, we create a new layer for our embossed object.

A: Click on the Layers tab.
This will switch you to the Layers palette.

B: Option-Click on the New Layer icon.
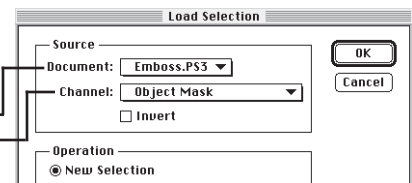**PC Users:** CNTL-Click.
This shortcut quickly creates a new layer.

C: Choose Load Selection from the Select menu.
This command lets us load the channel we built in the last step as a selection outline.

Document: Your document.
Channel: Object Mask.
Invert: Not Checked.

D: Choose Fill from the Edit menu.
This fills our object's shape with solid black. Remember that we are working on a layer above the background image.
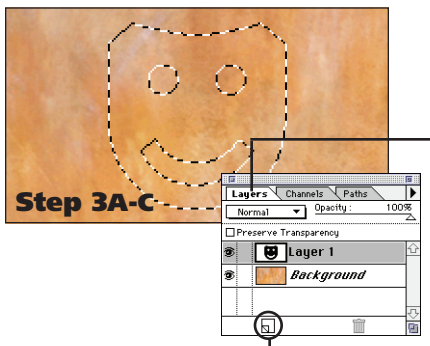
Use: Black.
Opacity: 100%.
Transparency: Not Checked.

E: Choose None from the Select menu.
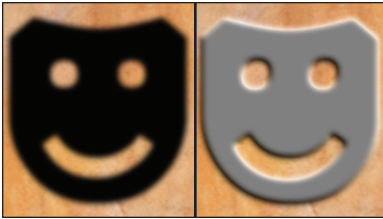**Shortcut:** Press ⌘-D to deselect the outline. (**PC:** CNTL-D)

Step 4

Emboss the image.

We use two standard filters to create our smooth embossed edge.

A: **Choose Blur → Gaussian Blur from the Filter menu.**
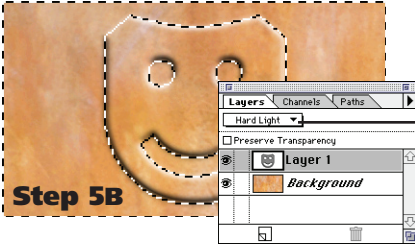**Radius:** Blur to taste (6 pixels).

B: **Choose Stylize → Emboss from the Filter menu.**
Angle: Your pick.
Height: Use the blur amount from Step A.
Amount: 300%.

Step 4A   Step 4B

Step 5

Change the layer's mode to finish the emboss.

A: **Choose Hard Light from the Mode pop-up menu.**
The mode controls how a layer interacts with the images below it.

B: **Choose Load Selection from the Select menu.**
Document: Your document's name.
Channel: Object Mask.
Invert: Checked.

C: **Press the Delete Key**
This trims your embossed effect inside the object's original shape. The embossed shape is on its own layer and can be moved or repositioned as needed.

Note: Notice how we used the channel from earlier to finish our emboss. This channel was a vital part of the technique, but the

Step 5B

Step 5B