

MONTAGE LAYOUT – PHOTOSHOP TUTORIAL

By Kim Hill

If you have any questions regarding this tutorial, feel free to contact me at kim@cgsentials.com

This tutorial will teach you how to blend several photos into a collage/montage layout. This tutorial is done in PhotoShop 7, but it should be fairly compatible to any of the PhotoShop programs.

First you will need to select several photos that you want to use for your layout. You may decide that you only want to use one photo, and use text or colors to blend together. This is fine. For this tutorial, we will use 3 photos, text, and several special effects.

Create a new document, any size you want. I'm working in 8x8 format at 300 dpi. Open up your photo files. Click on one photo and drag it onto your new document. Do this with each subsequent photo you want to use. Move the photos around until you are satisfied with the placement. They may need to be re-sized (now or later as you go along).



Do you want your photos to be black & white? If so, you'll want to desaturate your photos. If not, that's okay. You can leave them in color if you want. I'm choosing to change mine to B&W. To do that, go to your layers palette and click on the first photo you want to alter. Once you have selected that layer, click on Image/Adjustments/Desaturate.



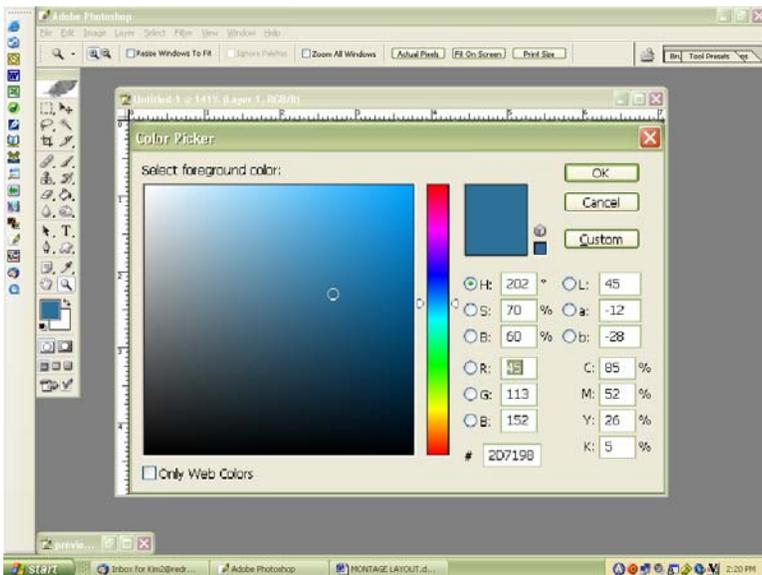
Repeat this process for each subsequent photo that you want to turn to B&W.

Now you will want to choose a color scheme. You can choose a variety of colors by clicking on the Color Picker. This is in your tool bar on the left. Do you see the squares at the bottom that are black and white? Double-click on the foreground color (top one) and a world of colors are there for you to choose from. Simply slide color bar up and down to see all the choices. Then place your mouse in the large color preview area to choose a color. Once you are satisfied with your first color, click the OK button. Now you can go back to the Color Picker in your tool bar to toggle to the background color. There is a small double-arrow connecting the two colors together. If you click on the arrow, it will toggle between the foreground and background. You will want to switch it to the white one on top, then double-click to open up the colors to choose from. Select your second color, click OK. I'm choosing two shades of blue.

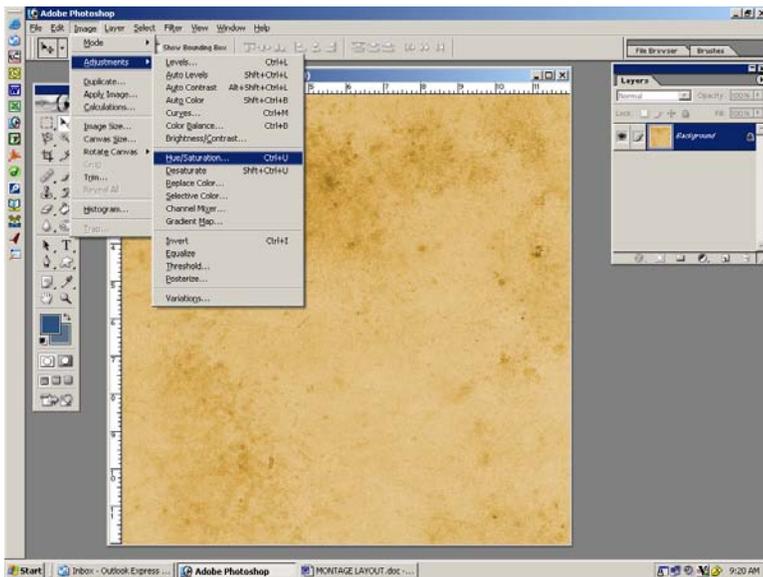


If you are working with a kit, you can simply choose a few background papers to work with. I'm going to use some pre-made papers of mine and simply colorize them to suit my layout color scheme. If you want to colorize your papers, here's how to do that.

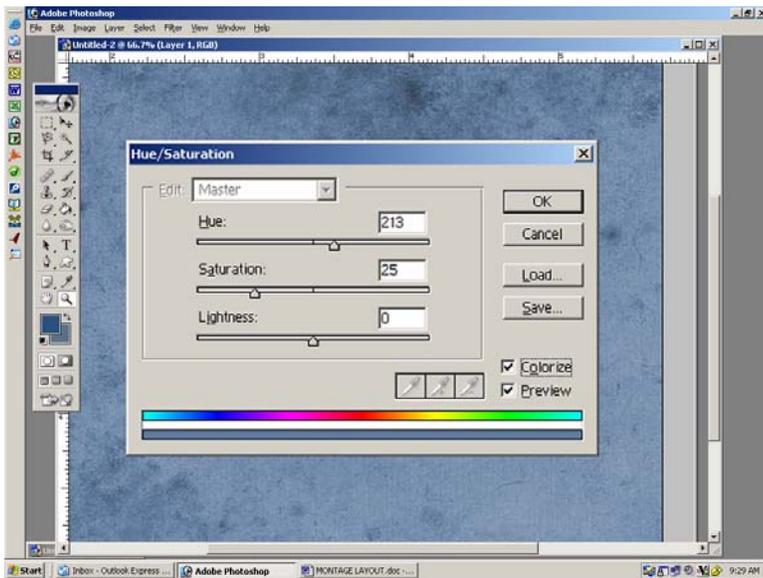
Double click on the foreground color in your tool palette. This will open up the color picker. You can now select any color you want. Choose one and then click Okay.



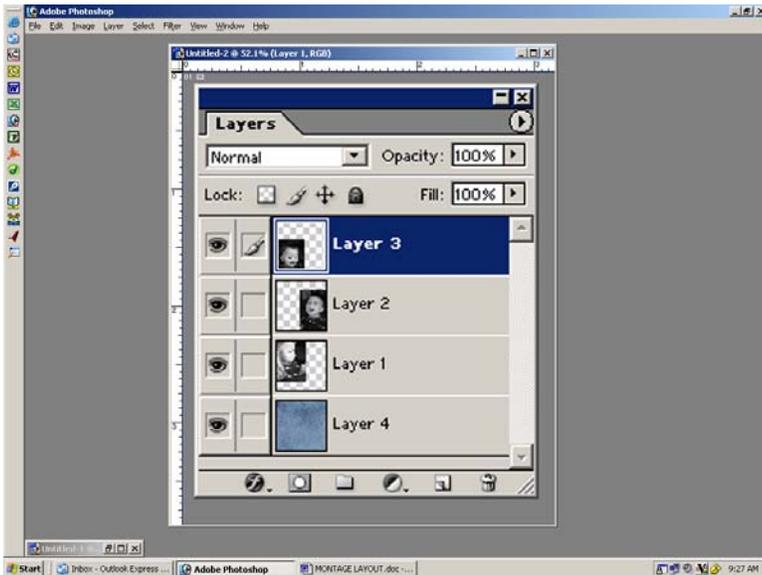
Open up the paper you want to colorize. Then click on Image/Adjustments/Hue-Saturation.



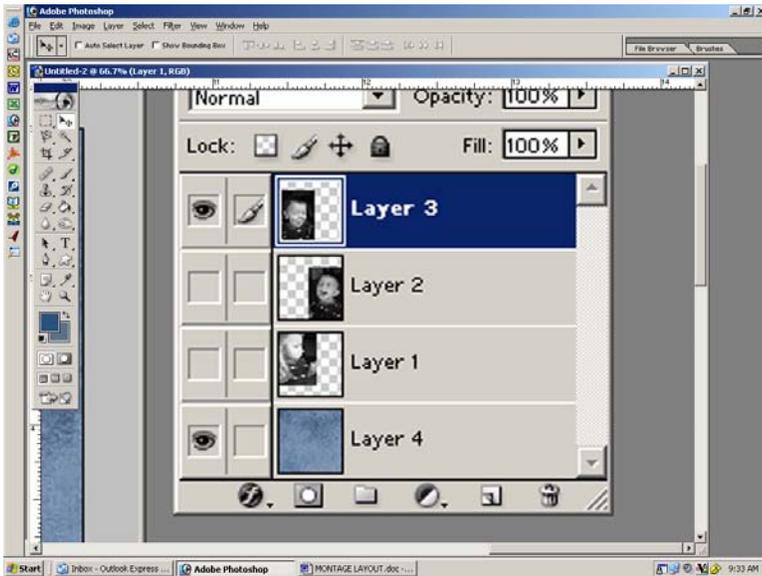
A new window will open. Check the “colorize” box on the right. Your paper will take on the hue of whatever color you have previously set in your foreground of the color picker. Since I chose blue, my yellow paper has now changed to blue. You can play with the settings to make it darker, lighter, or any other color you want.



Now you can click and drag this paper onto your new document with the photos. Rearrange the layer order in your layers palette because the paper will automatically become the top layer when you drag it over. You’ll want to move it to the bottom of the layer list so that it is now your first layer.



Now the fun begins. You will want to “turn off” each layer that you are not working. To do this, click on the “eye” to the left of the layer in the layers palette. I’m going to work on my first photo and the background paper, so I will “turn off” the other two photos.

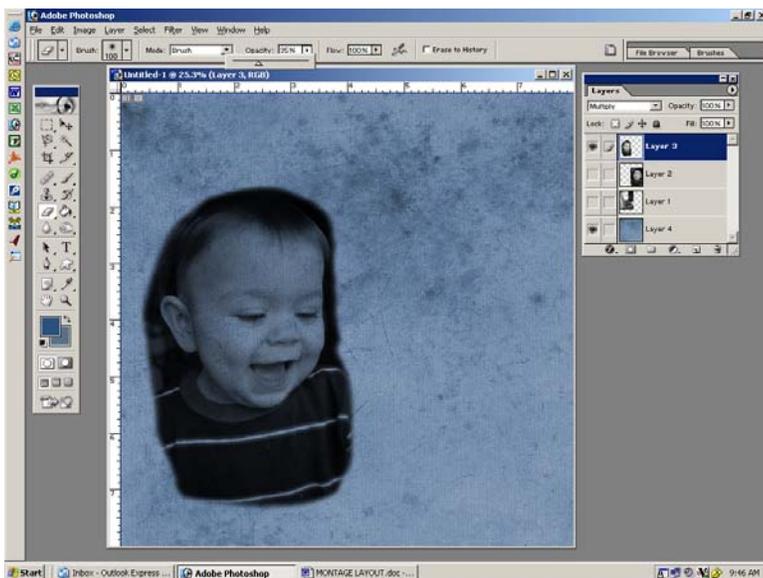


Let’s “blend” the first image into the background by changing the blending mode. To do this, go to your layers palette. In the box that says “normal”, you can change the setting to anything you like. Try them all out to see which one you like best. I’m going to choose “multiply”. To the right of that box is the opacity adjustment. Play around with this if you want. I’m going to leave mine at 100% for now, but I may reduce it later.



Go to your tool palette (on the left) and select the eraser (it's the sixth tool down on the left column). You will then need to go to the options bar (at the top of your screen) and change the eraser to a soft brush. To do this, click on the window that says "block" and change it to "brush". Then click on the brush icon (to the left of the word "brush"). Here you can change the eraser to any shape or size you want. You'll want to choose the soft airbrush and set the size by sliding the bar to where you like it. I'm going to set mine at 100. Leave the opacity setting at 100% for now.

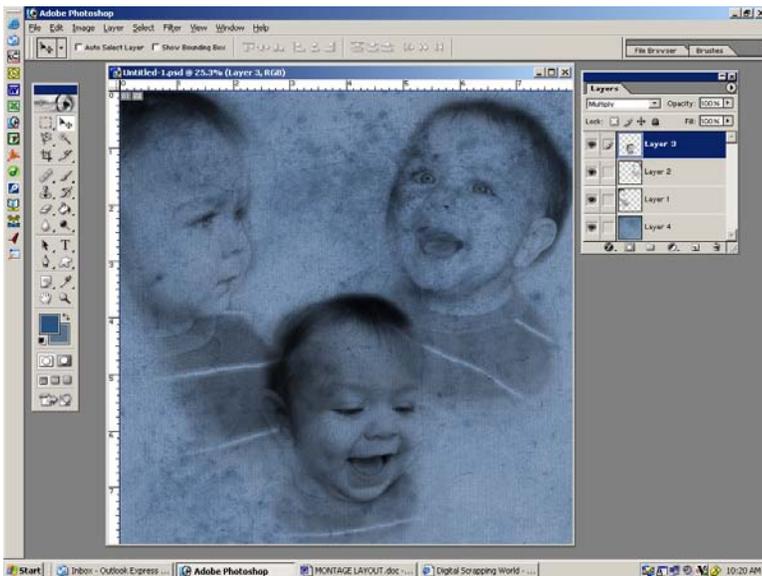
Begin erasing the edges of the photo and leave a nice buffer around the subject. Now go to the options bar (at the top of the screen) and reduce the eraser brush opacity to 35%. Continue erasing, getting closer to your subject.



Now you will go back to the options bar and reduce the eraser brush opacity to 15% and continue erasing until you are satisfied with the way it blends into the background. Here's a close-up of what mine looks like.

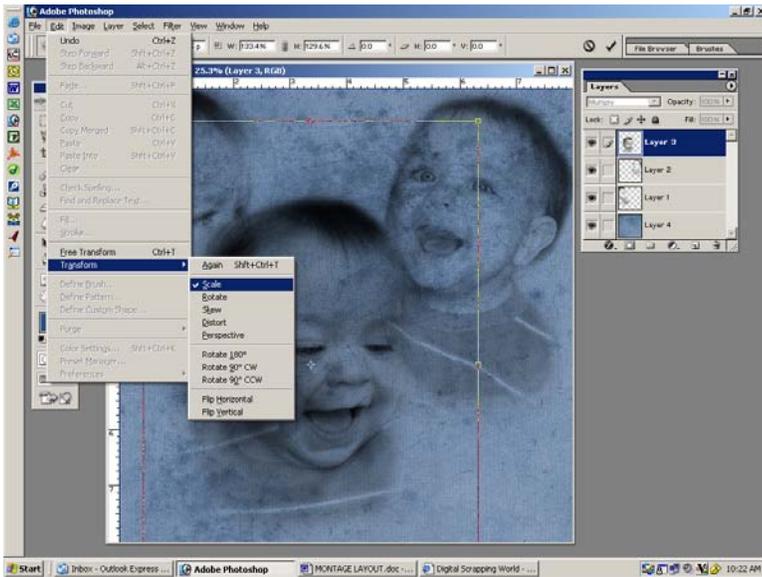


Now you will repeat the erasing process for all other photos you plan to use. Be sure to turn the eye “on” for the image you want to work with and “turn off” the eyes of the other images that you are not working on. At this point, you should have something like this.



At this point, you may need to enlarge or reduce the size of some of your images. You may even want to lighten them up or darken a few areas. I'll explain how to do resize and darken/lighten now.

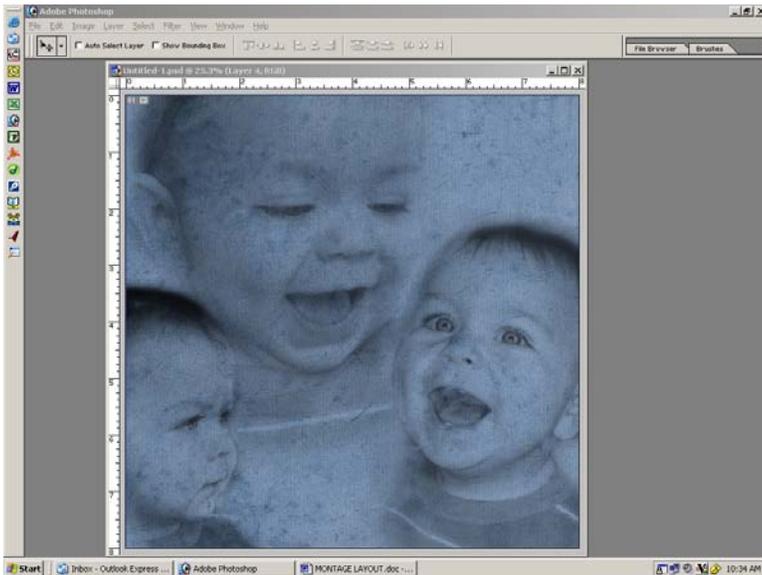
If you want to enlarge or reduce the size of any of your images, you will need to click on the layer in the layer palette for each image you want to alter. Once you have selected your first layer, click on Edit/Transform/Scale. Then click your mouse on one corner and drag the image to make it smaller or larger. When you are satisfied, click the arrow tool in your tool palette and then click Apply.



If you want to lighten or darken the entire image, click on Image/Adjustments/Brightness-Contrast and slide either bar across until you are satisfied with the way it looks.



Do this for each image until you are satisfied. If your images overlay each other, you may find that you need to erase a little more around the edges. Go ahead and do that as needed. Mine looks like this.

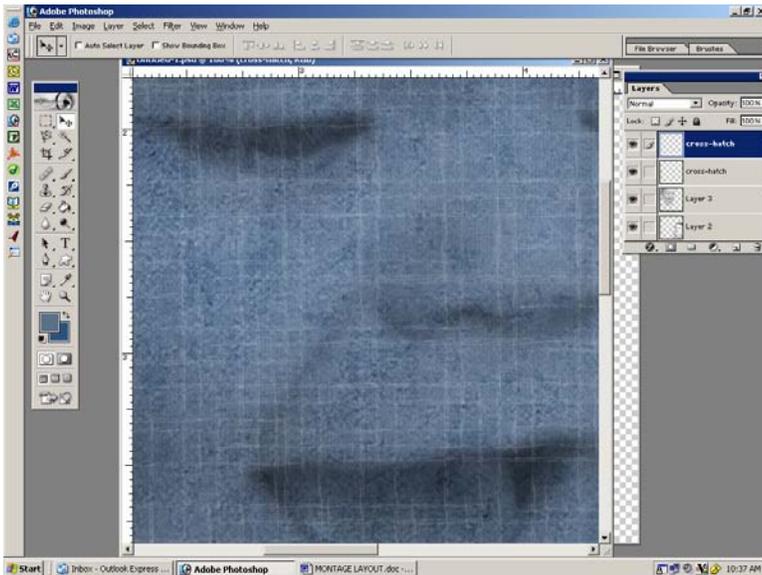


Now you can add more layers containing journaling, word art, textures, etc. The possibilities are endless. I'm going to use a cross-hatch overlay I made (from the Ethereal Kit) and lay it on top of my other layers. If you find any overlay is not dark enough, simply duplicate the layer over and over again until it is dark enough for you. The merge your overlay layers together. To do this, you will need to link the layers together in your layers palette by clicking on the open box. A little chain link will appear. Do this for layer you want to link together.



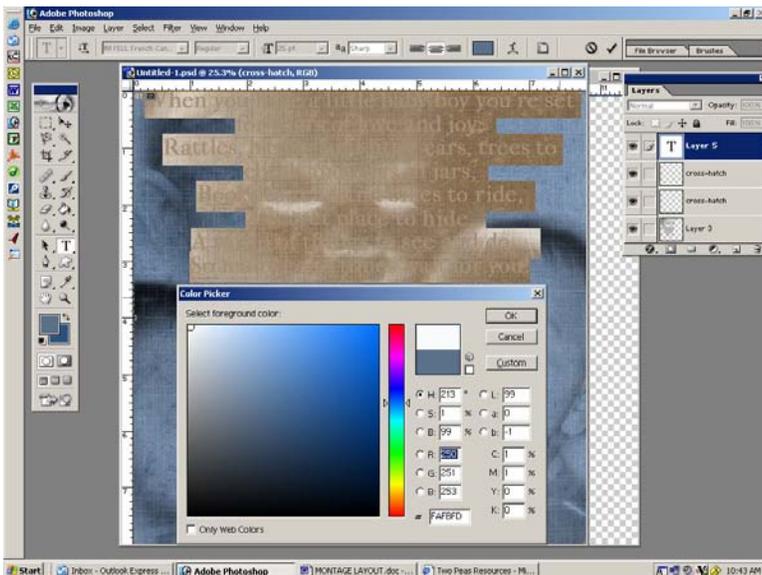
Now go to your options palette and click on Layer/Merge Linked. Now all of your layers of the overlay are just one layer.

In this zoomed in screen-shot, you can see that I made two layers of the cross-hatch overlay and linked them together. When zoomed out, it is very subtle.

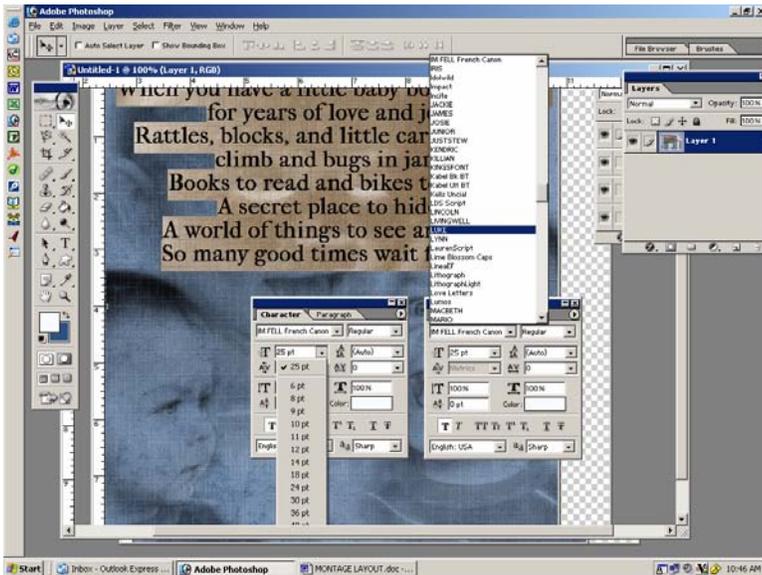


Next, I am going to add some words across the entire layout. These will be very subtle and nearly unreadable, so it doesn't really matter what text you use. However, you may want to pick a poem or words that you find have meaning to you or to the photo in the event some of it is recognizable.

To place your text, click on the text tool in your tool palette. It is the large T (8th button down on the right). Now place your mouse on your document where you want to begin typing. Click on that spot and begin typing. You will need to change the color of your text to any shade you want. I am making mine white. To do this, highlight the text with your mouse and then click on the color picker in your tool palette. Click OK.



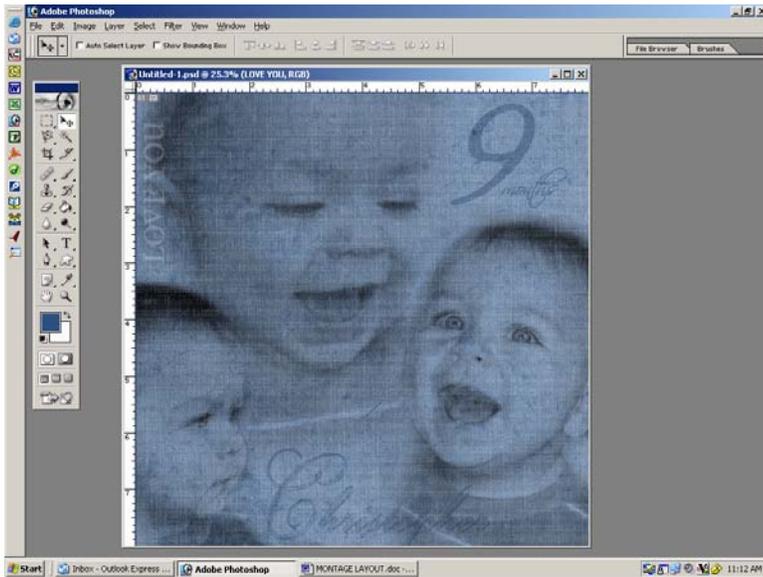
You will also need to change the size and font. In the options bar at the top of your screen, click on Window/Character. A new window will open. Here is where you can increase or decrease the text size by choosing the numbers next to the top big T. And you can also change the font by scrolling through the list above the T. I've shown both drop down tabs in this screen shot. I've chosen to use 12 point size and IM Fell French Cannon as my font style.



I have copied the text over and over again so that it fills the entire page. But you can place text wherever you want. Be creative! Now you will need to reduce the opacity so that it's semi-transparent. To do this, click on the text layer in your layers palette and then slide the opacity bar down to 10-15%. You should barely be able to read it. This text is here more for a filler layer than for actual readability.



Now you can add text that is intended to be read. I am going to pick just a few single words and randomly place them on my layout. I will also be changing the color of the text, reducing the opacity, and changing each text layer's blending mode to multiply (as previously described above). Here's how it looks now.



And that's all there is to it. You can continue adding more layers of text, or place a semi-transparent flower on there, or anything else you choose. Have fun!!