



Introduction to the Custom Shape Tool in for PSE

by LaWanna Desjardin

www.desjardindigitaldesigns.com

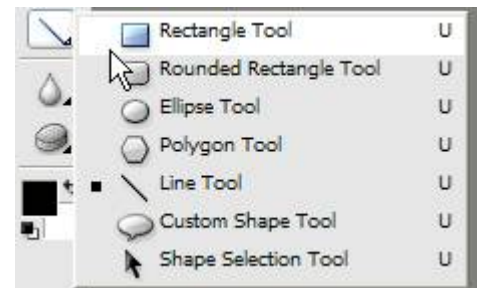
Ldesjardin@gmail.com

If you are not familiar with the shape tool in Photoshop Elements, you are missing out on a lot. This is a very simple tool that can help you do more with less with digital elements and papers. In Photoshop and in Photoshop Elements, Custom Shapes are vector shapes. For our purposes, this means that the shapes can be re-sized over and over without losing quality as long as the shapes haven't been rasterized, or simplified. The most popular use of Custom Shapes involves creating a clipping group with a pattern paper or photo. If you've used the cookie cutter tool you've already encountered Custom Shapes, but you may not know it.

First I'll show you how to see and use the custom shapes.

Quick Introduction to Shapes in Photoshop Elements

1. In PSE, to view custom shapes, click on the shape tool in the tool box. It looks like this. The shape visible on the tool box can include any of those shown in the flyout ----->



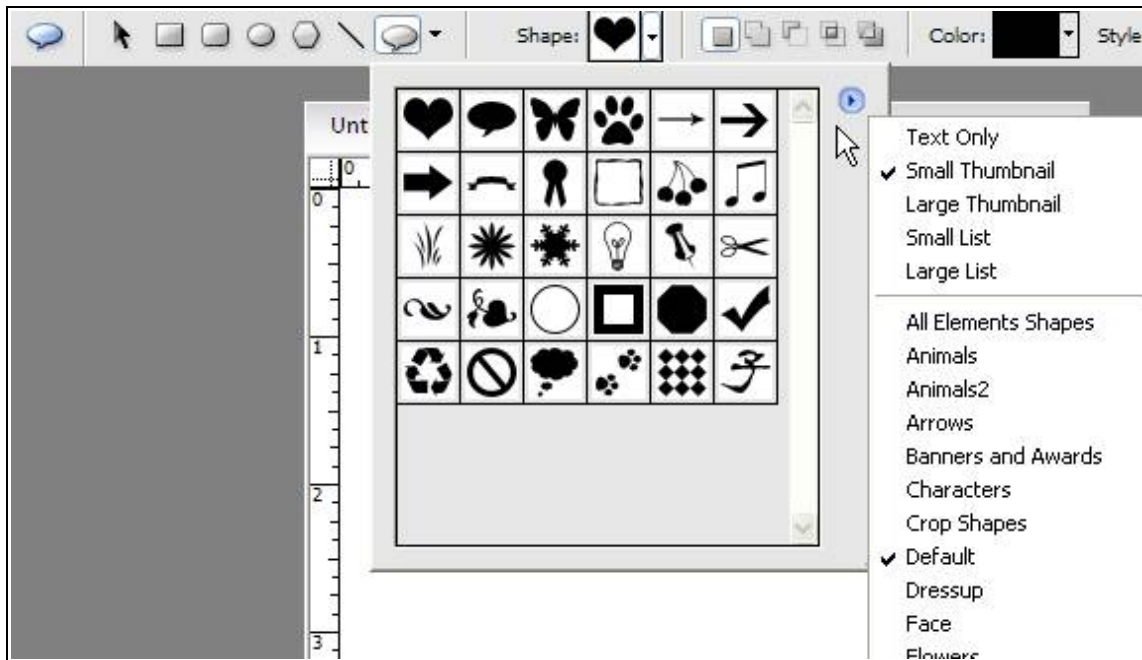
2. Once you choose the shape tool from the tool box, look up in the options bar. This is the toolbar that appears under the general toolbars, and will change in accordance the tool chosen. The options bar for the shape tool looks like this.



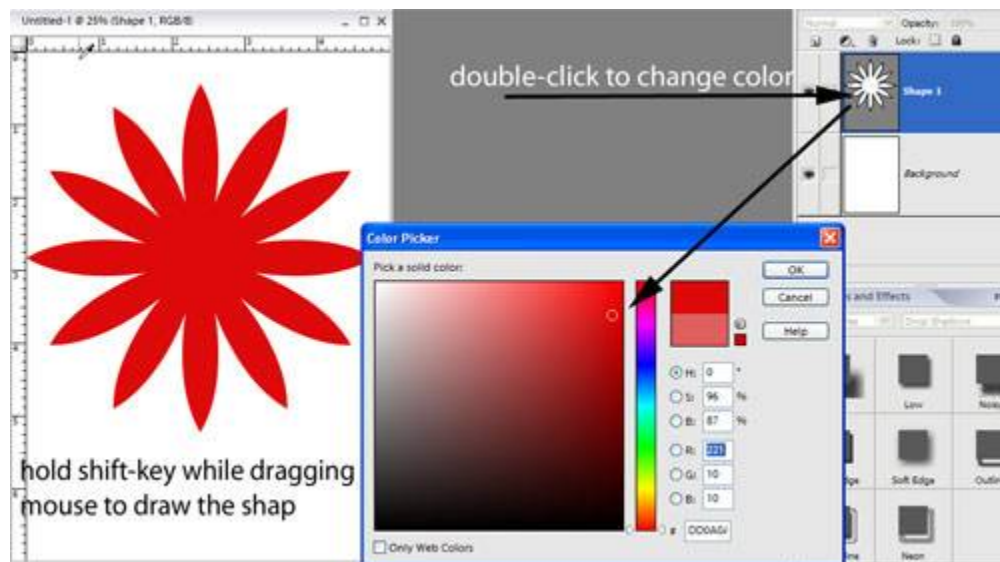
3. To make the tool bar display all available shapes, click the speech bubble icon. Now the options bar looks like this.



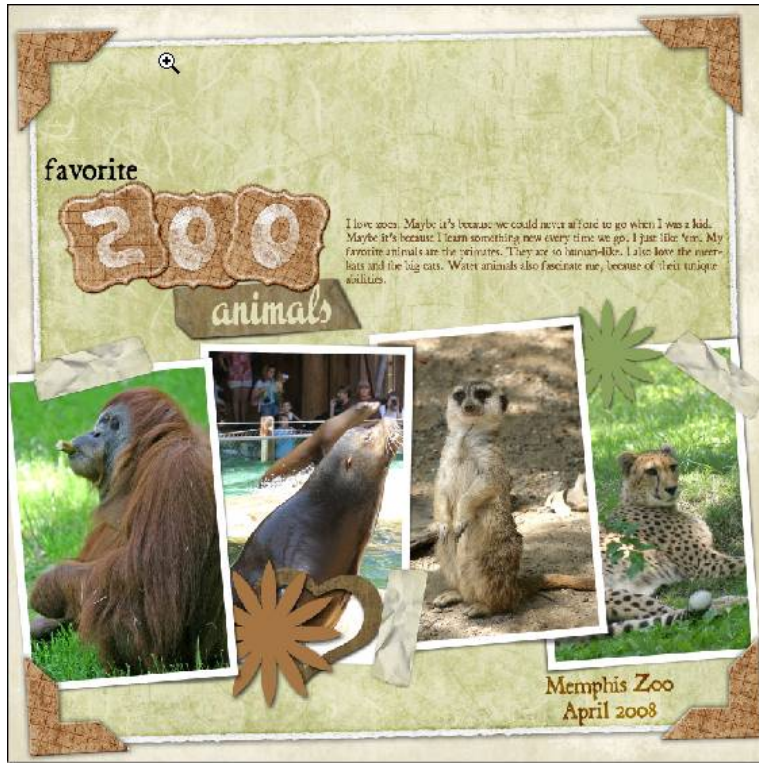
4. Click the drop-down menu under shape, and you'll see a bunch of shapes that are available. Click the fly-out menu (the little arrow on the side) and you'll see several more categories of shapes including animals, arrows, flowers and many more.



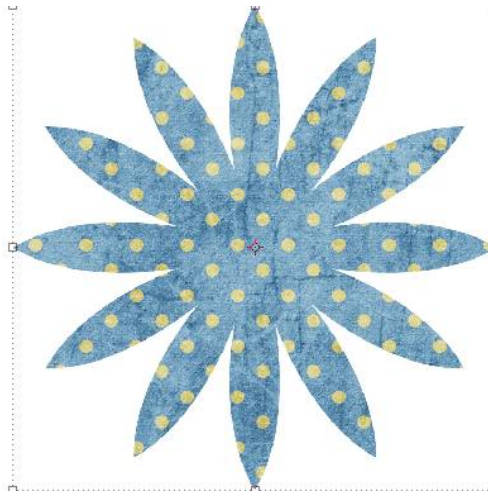
5. All you have to do to use these shapes, is click on the shape you want in the menu. Now use your mouse to “draw the shape” on your canvas. Hold down the shift key as you drag the mouse to maintain proportions in the shape. The color of the shape will be whatever you have chosen as the foreground color, but you can change it just by double clicking it in the layers palette.



You can use the shape tool, just as it is, with a drop shadow, as an element on a layout, as I've done with this layout with the floral element.

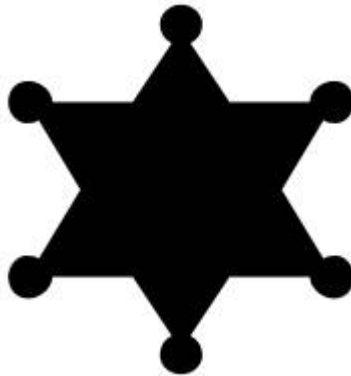


But you can also use a clipping group to combine the shape with patterned paper. The resulting image looks like a shape cut out or punched from of a piece of patterned paper or photo, like this.

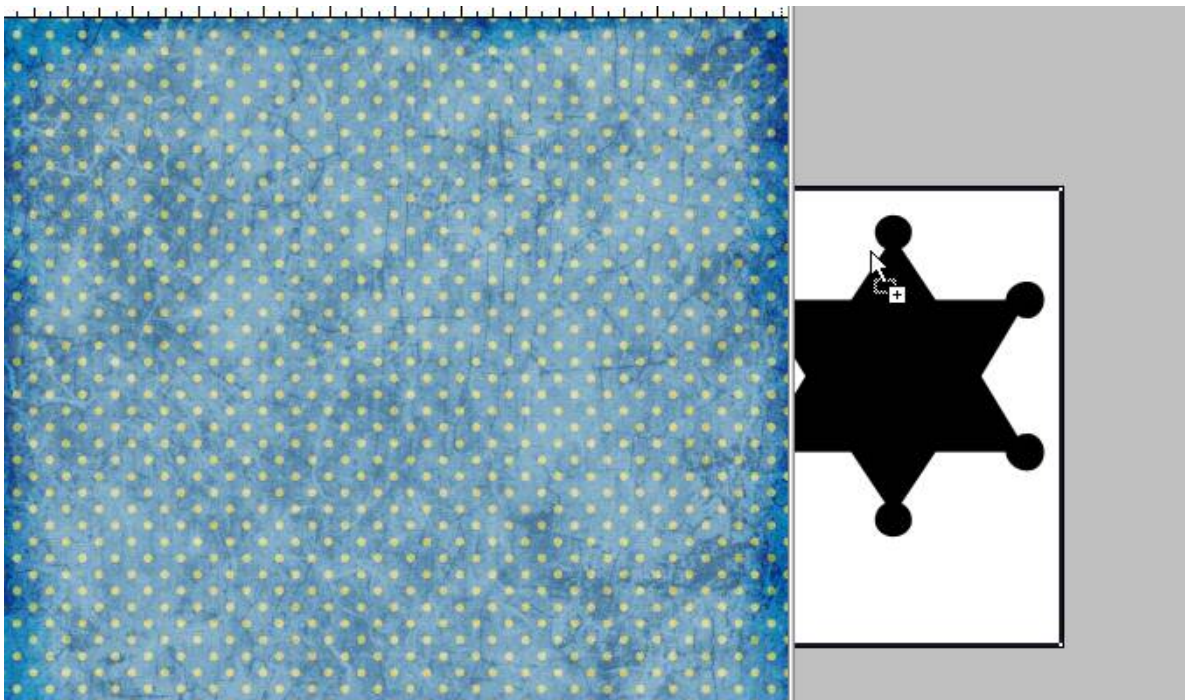


Create a Clipping Group with the Custom Shape.

1. First select a shape from the menu using steps 1-5 in the section above. I've chosen a badge-like star shape from the Objects Collection.

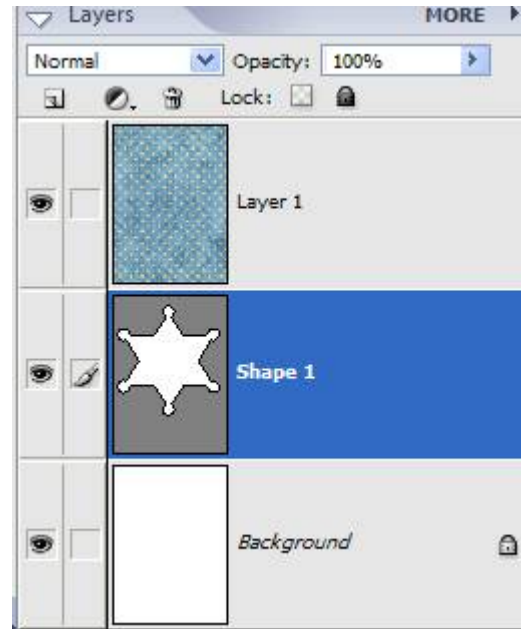


2. Now open the paper, that you want to use with the shape. Select the move tool from the tool box. Select the paper on the canvas and drag it over to the shape document. (I have each of my image windows minimized for this step.) When you drag the paper over, the shape document will have a black outline around it and a small plus-sign icon will appear as below.



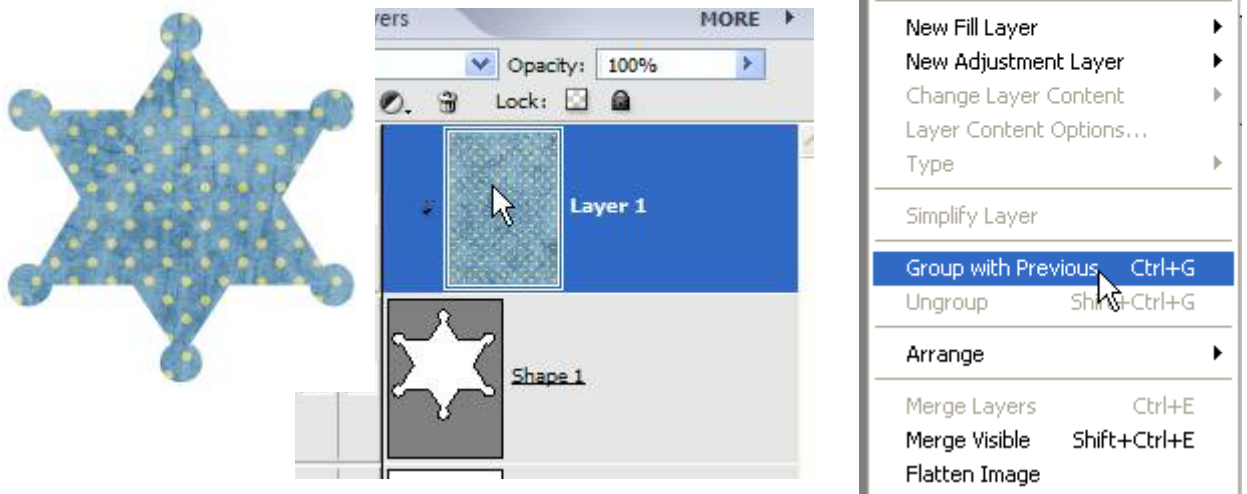
Now the paper and the star shape should be on the same canvas.

- At this point, the shape may not be visible on the canvas. But you should still be able to see it, using the layers palette, which will look like this:



- Now all that's left to do is to “clip” the paper to the shape. Select the upper layer, the paper layer. Now go to Layer>Group with Previous or press Cntrl+G on the keyboard. ----->

The resulting image and layers palette are below.



As long as you have not rasterized, or simplified the shape layer, it can be sized and resized. When you are ready to use it on your layout, just choose hide the background layer and choose Layer>Merge Visible.