



Threading a Button in Photoshop Elements

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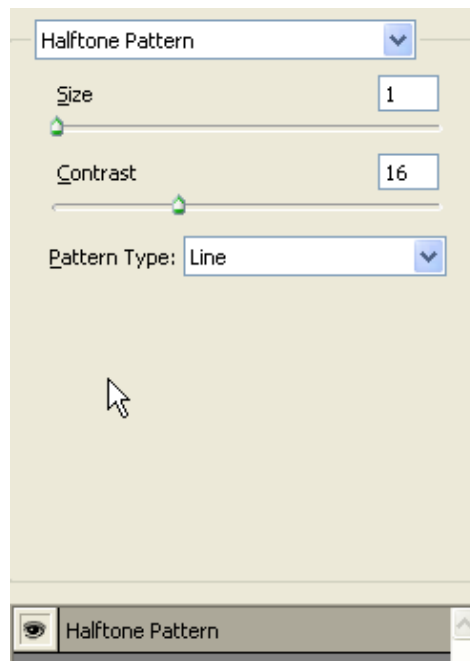
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Sometimes digital kits come with unthreaded buttons, which to some seem incomplete. This tutorial will show you how to use Photoshop Elements to thread these buttons yourself.

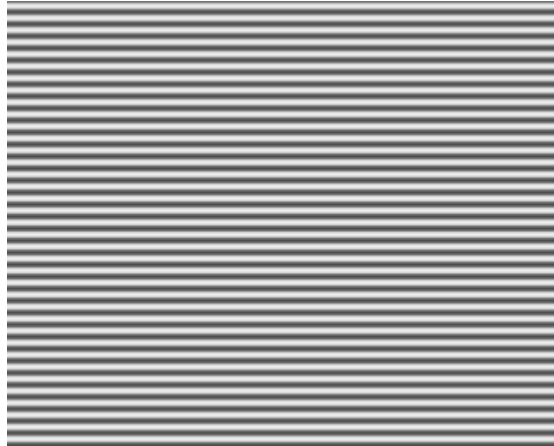
Creating a “Woven” Texture

Now first you need to create a thread-like, woven texture. To do this create a new document at 12X12, 300 ppi. Select RGB Color with a transparent background.

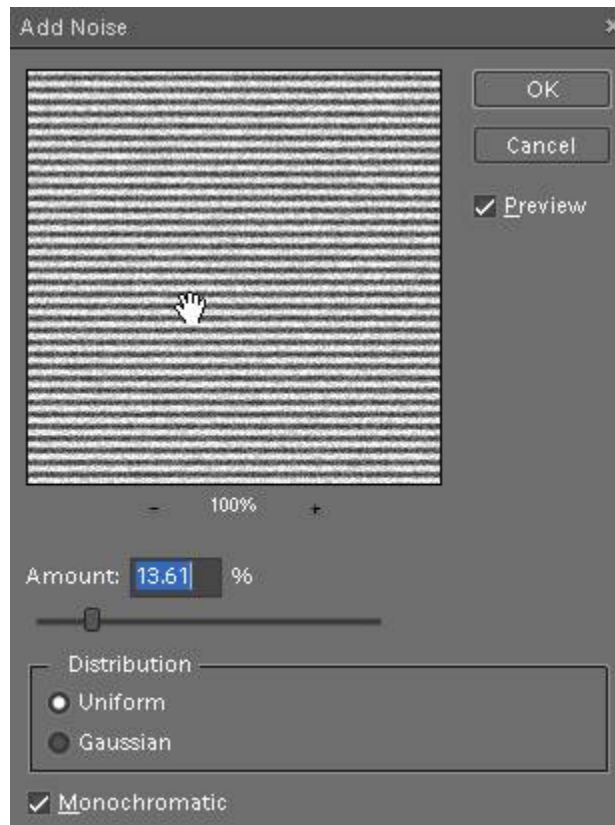
1. Set the foreground color a dark to medium shade of gray. I used #7b7b7b. Use the paint bucket tool to fill the space with gray.
2. Now set the foreground color with a dark gray and the background color white or light gray. I used gray (#4b4b4b) and light gray (#f1f1f1).
3. From the toolbar, select Filter>Sketch>Half-Tone Pattern. Choose Pattern Type: Line. Size, 1. Contrast 16. Choose OK.



3. Now the canvas should be filled with lines in gray and white. Like this at 100 percent zoom.

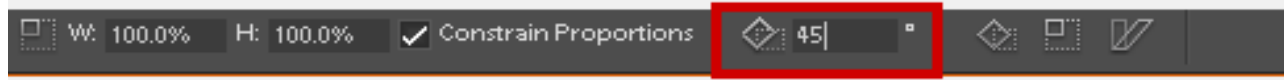


4. This is your woven thread pattern, so we need to add just a bit of noise to it. Go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise. Check “monochromatic.” Set the amount to about 12-13 and the distribution to Uniform.

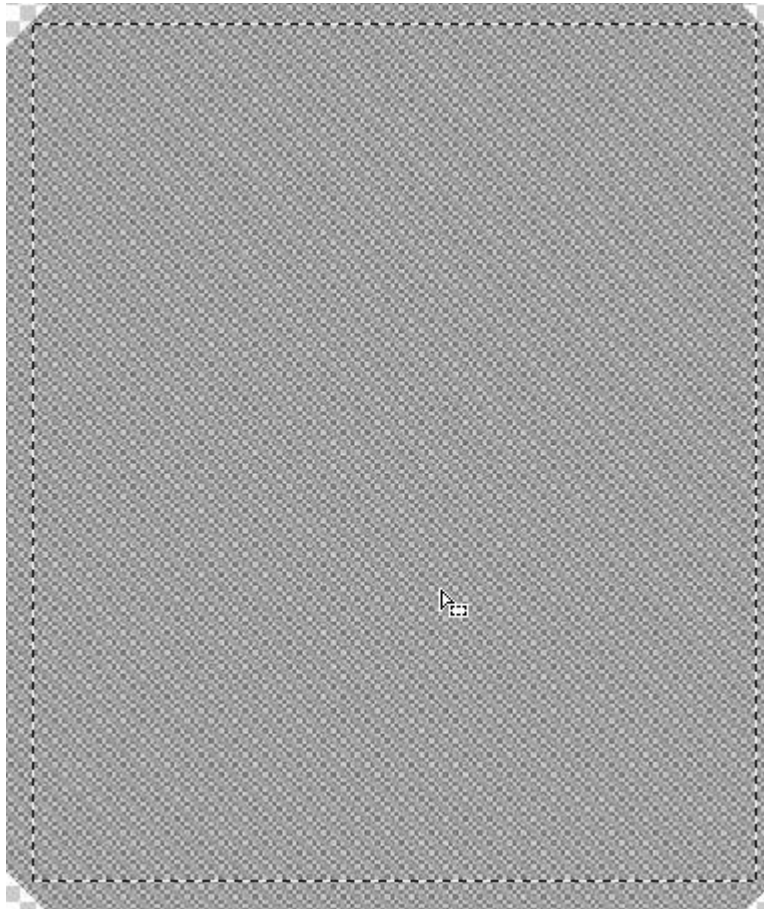


5. Now we'll tilt this entire layer 45 degrees to mimic the look of a woven texture. Select the move tool. With the texture layer selected, hit Ctrl+0. This will automatically resize the window so that you can see the handles of this layer.

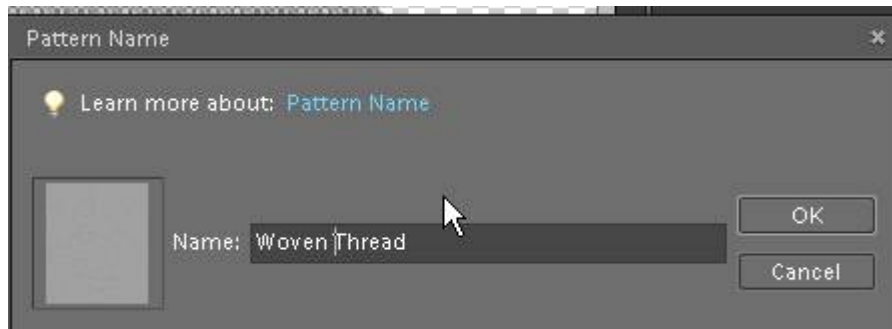
6. Click on one of the handles. Now up in the options bar, you'll see the rotate option. Input 45 and hit enter twice to confirm it.



7. Now you are going to define this texture as a pattern so that you'll be able to use it for your threads. Use the Rectangular Marquee tool to select a complete portion of the pattern. Do not include any of the transparent portion in the selection.



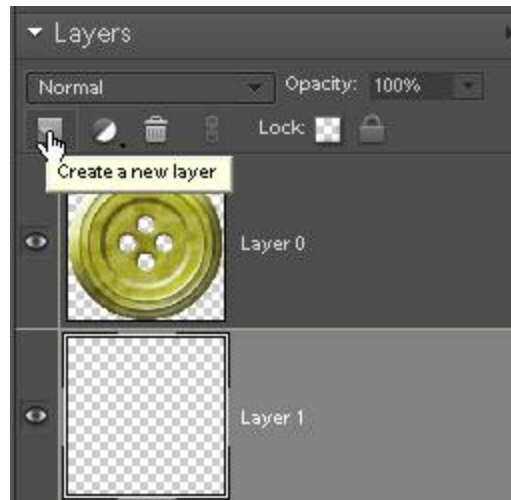
8. With the selection still active, go to Edit>Define Pattern From Selection. In the Pattern Name Dialog Box, give the pattern a name.



Creating the Threads

Now open the button you want to thread in Photoshop Elements. So that you don't edit the original button, rename it using File>Save As and give the button a new name.

1. First add a new layer beneath the button layer. Press Cntl while clicking the New Layer icon in the layers palette. This will put the new layer below the existing layer. Fill it with a contrasting color. This is just to help you see the results better as you “thread” the button. You'll eventually delete it.



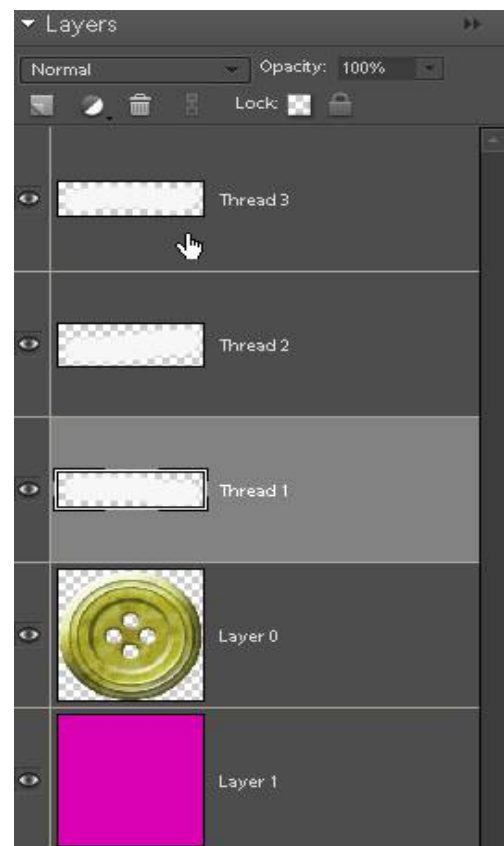
2. Now you are going to add the threads on one layer at a time. Click the New Layer icon in the layers palette to make a layer above the button.

3. In the new blank layer, you'll draw a thread using the brush tool. Select the brush tool from the Tool Box and select white or light gray as your color. Set the brush #9 from the default brushes.

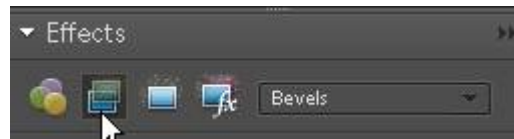
Now draw a line with the tool. Remember this thread does not need to be perfectly straight. Sometimes realism calls for imperfection. You don't want the thread to be too long. Start and finish just outside the button holes.



4. Now, make two more blank layers and repeat this process until you have a total of 3 threads. Your layers palette should look like this, but the threads won't look like much yet on your canvas.



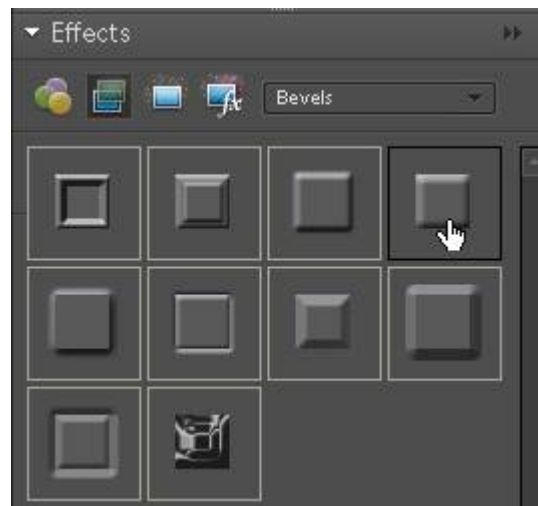
5. Now you'll add a bit of dimension to each thread. That will separate the threads and add realism. If it isn't open, open the Effect Palette and select the second icon from the left to select layer styles.



From the drop-down menu choose Bevels.



6. Choose the top-most thread layer in the layers palette and apply the Simple Inner Bevel Style by double click the style icon. This style is the 4th from the left.

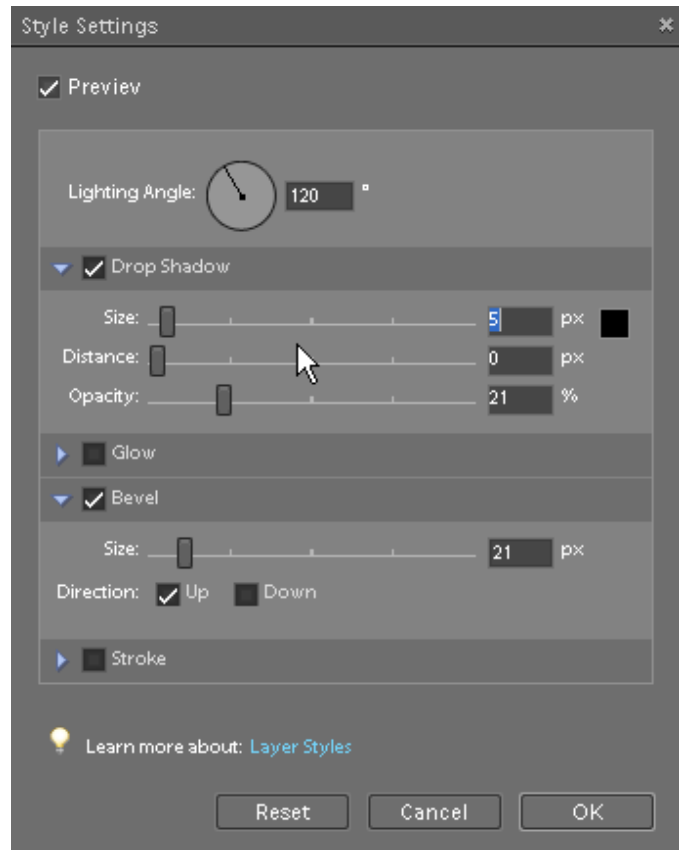


7. Now we are also going to add a slight shadow to this thread. Double click the fx icon in the layers palette beside the thread.



Click the arrow beside Drop Shadow and check the box next to it. This will apply the shadow. Now adjust it to these settings:

- Size: 5 px.
- Distance: 0 px.
- Opacity: 21%



Now your top-most thread should look something like this:



8. We just need to apply these same settings to the other thread layers. Make sure the initial thread is selected – the one you've applied effects too. Now go to Layer>Layer Style>Copy Layer Style.

Select the other two thread layers at the same time, by holding down the Cntrl Key while clicking the layers in the palette

Select Layer>Layer Style>Paste Layer Style. The effects are now applied to all the threads.

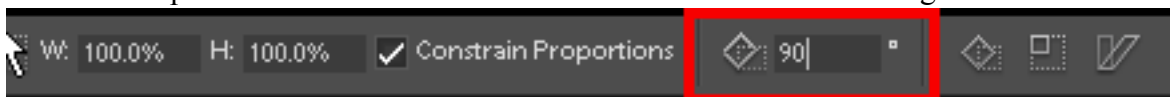
Now is a good time to manipulate each layer. Resize and rotate as necessary and shift their positions. You may also want to change their position in the layer palette. Here is my threading so far.



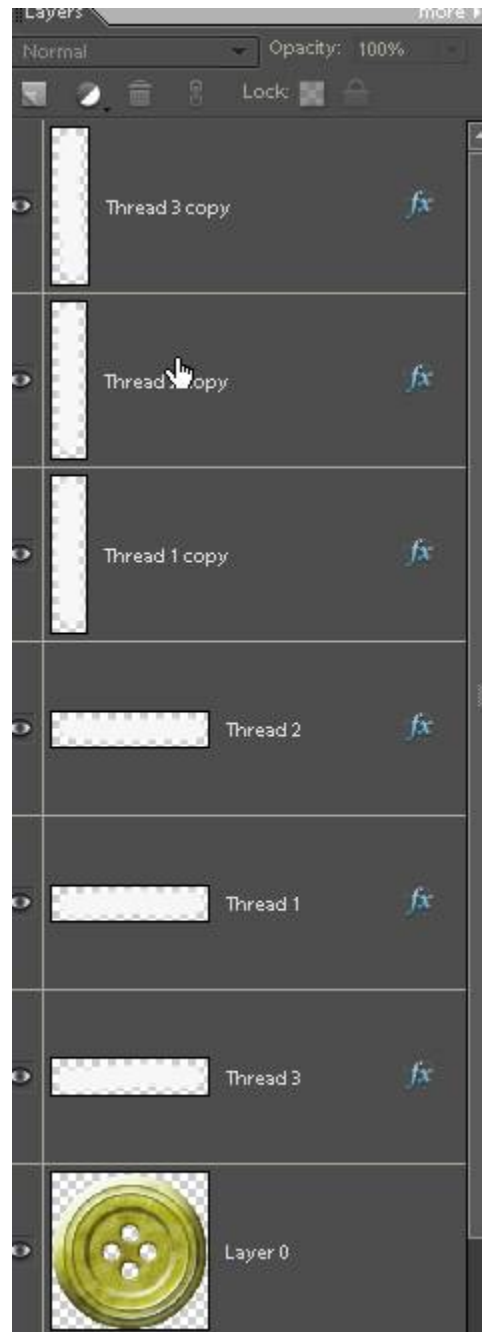
For this particular button, there are 4 holes, so we need another set of threads. That's the easiest part. You need to select all three of the threads in the palette. Hold down the cntrl key as you select to select multiple layers. Right click and choose Link Layers. A chain-link icon should appear next to each of the layers.

Make sure all three layers are still selected. Now drag the mouse, up to the new layers icon in the palette. You should now have 3 new layers in the palette and these three new layers are also linked.

Now select the new duplicate layers. They should each have “copy” at the end of their layer names. Select the move tool from the tool box. Now click one of the handles to get the option bar at the top near the toolbar. Input 90 into the rotate box to rotate these new threads 90 degrees.



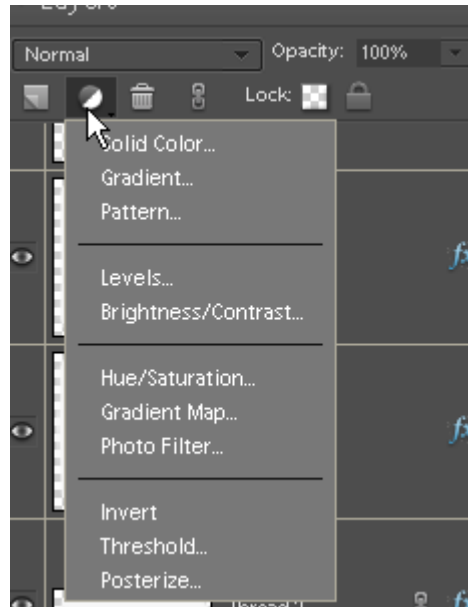
Again, you may want to resize, rotate and manipulate these new layers until you like them. You'll need to unlink them first. (Just select and choose Unlink.) Here is my button now as well as the layers palette..



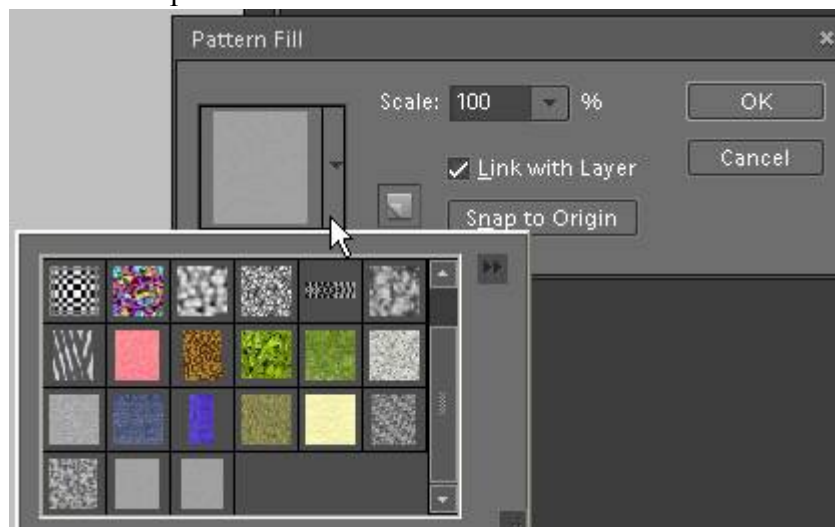
Applying the Woven Texture

Now remember that texture file we made earlier. We finally get to use it.

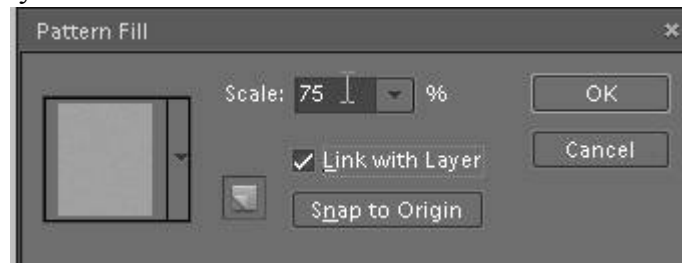
1. Select any one of the thread layers. Now go to to adjustment layer icon in the layer palette. It looks like a circle half-black and half-white. From the menu, choose Pattern.



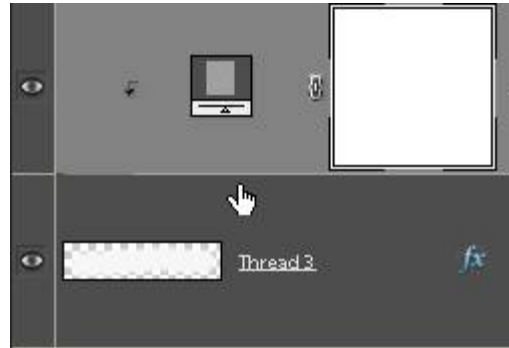
2. In the Pattern Fill box, choose the Pattern you've just made. It should be the default, but if it isn't you'll find it by open the pattern picker. Click the little arrow in the pattern window to see the choices. The newest pattern will be the last one.



3. Now choose a scale of 75%. You may want to experiment with this number to suit yourself. Choose OK when you are finished.



4. Now you need to group this Pattern Fill with the thread. With the Pattern Layer selected, choose Layer>Group with Previous. It will look like this when you are done.



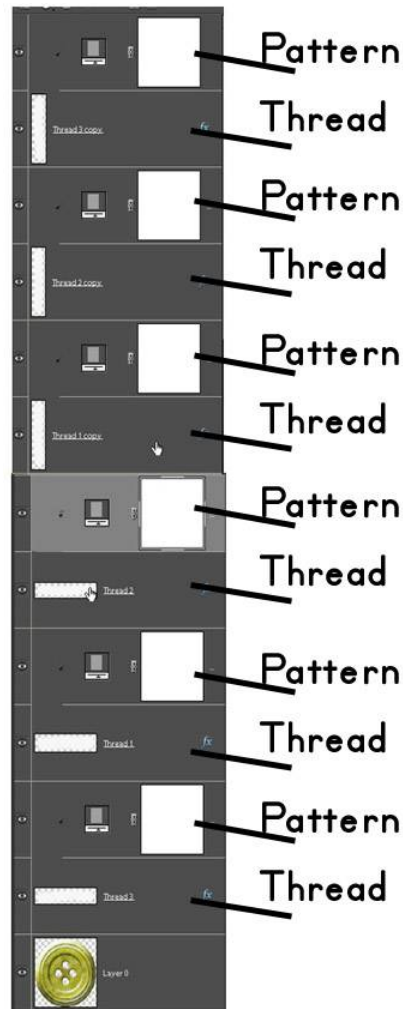
Shortcut: Here's a handy way to shortcut that last Grouping step. With the pattern selected, press Cntrl+G.

5. Now you need to apply this same pattern to every other thread. You can repeat steps 1-4 for each thread. But I prefer to do it like this.


a.) Select the Pattern Layer. Duplicate it by pressing Cntrl+J. Drag it up above the next thread. Hit Cntrl+G to group those layers.

b.) Repeat this for each of the thread layers. This might seem like its tedious, but it actually goes pretty quickly.

When you are done, your layers palette will look a bit like this:



At this point you can be finished with the threads. However, I like to do just a bit of shading along the edges of the threads.

1. Select all layers above the button, but not including the button. Right click and choose Merge Layers. (Or press Cntrl+E.) This creates one layer from all of the threads.
2. Select the burn tool  from the toolbox.
3. From the brush menu, choose a small, soft brush. I'm using Soft Round 27 from the default menu. Leave other settings at the default - Range, Midtones; Exposure: 50%.
4. Use the brush to darken the edges of the threads where they “wrap around” the button holes.

That's it, now you have threaded your button.



Tips:

1. Once you get the hang of this, try making thinner threads and making more threads.
2. Experiment with the shape of the threads. Wiggly lines will appear looser and straighter lines will seem tighter.
3. Try adding a loose thread coming out from behind one of the other threads
4. Have fun with colors. Try more colored threads for variety.
5. Use the burn tool to add some shadows and highlights on the threads, between the threads, or on the button itself.

Here is my completed button.

