Add Transparent Type To An Image With Photoshop

Written by Steve Patterson. In this **Photoshop Effects tutorial**, we're going to learn how to add transparent type to an image. There's lots of different ways to make Photoshop type transparent, and in this tutorial, we'll look at a few ways to go about it.

We'll first look at the fastest and easiest way to make text transparent, and then we'll look at a few more interesting ways to create transparent type using layer styles, plus we'll look at the important difference between a layer's "Opacity" and "Fill" options.

This is sort of a combination of a photo effects tutorial and a text effects tutorial, and any recent version of Photoshop will work.

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Here's the image I'll be using throughout this Photoshop tutorial:

The original image.

And here, after we look at the fast and easy way to make text transparent in Photoshop, is the more interesting result we'll be working towards:

Let's get started!

Step 1: Add Your Text To The Image

Before we can worry about making our Photoshop text transparent, we first need to add it, so let's do that. Select your Type Tool from the Tools palette:

You can also quickly access Photoshop's Type Tool by pressing **T** on your keyboard. I want white as my Foreground color, so I'll press **D** on my keyboard, which resets Photoshop's Foreground color to black and its Background color to white, and then I'll press **X** to swap them, making white my Foreground color.

With your Type Tool selected and white as your Foreground color, go up to the **Options Bar** at the top of the screen and choose your font. Your choice of fonts will of course depend on which fonts you currently have installed on your system. I'm going to choose Helvetica Black Condensed for my font. You can also set your Font Size in the Options Bar if you wish, but it's often easier to adjust the size after you've added the type using Photoshop's Free Transform command, as I'll be doing in a moment. So for now, I'll go ahead and add

my type. I'm going to type the words "SCUBA DIVING" (even though technically, the people in the photo are snorkeling, but I'm sure they'll be going scuba diving later):

Add your type to the image.

Click the checkmark in the Options Bar to accept your type when you're done:

Click the checkmark in the Options Bar to accept the type.

Step 2: Resize And Reposition The Type As Needed With Free Transform

Press **Ctrl+T** (Win) / **Command+T** (Mac) to bring up Photoshop's **Free Transform** box and handles around your text. Move your text into position by clicking anywhere inside the Free Transform box and dragging the text around on the screen (don't click on the little target icon in the center though or you'll move the target, not the image). To resize the text, hold down **Shift+Alt** (Win) / **Shift+Option** (Mac) and drag any of the corner handles. Holding "Shift" tells Photoshop to constrain the width and height proportions of the text as you drag so you don't distort the look of it, and holding Alt/Option tells Photoshop to resize the text from the center. I'm going to stretch my text vertically a little as well, so once I've moved it into position and resized it with the corner handles, I'm going to hold down **Alt**(Win) / **Option** (Mac) again and click on the top center handle and drag it upward to stretch the text. Once again, holding down Alt/Option stretches the text from its center:
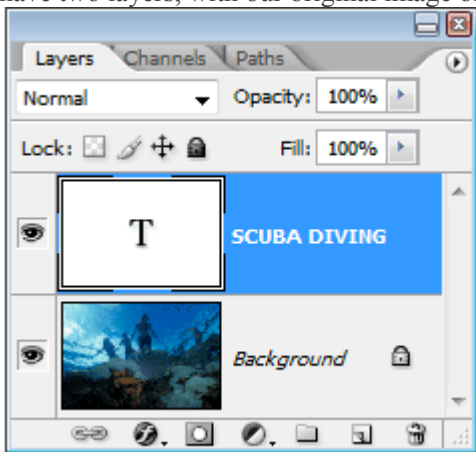
Move and resize the text as needed with Photoshop's Free Transform command.

Press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) when you're done to accept the transformation.
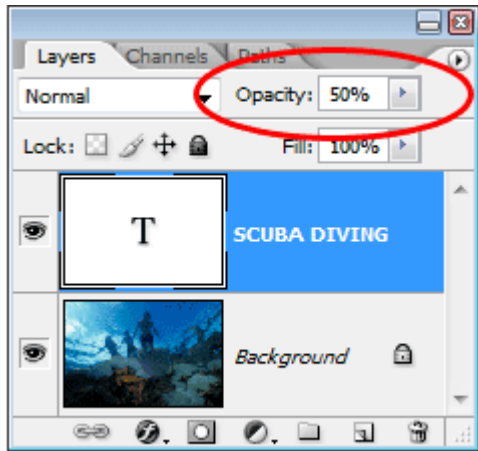
Step 3: Lower The Opacity Of The Type Layer

The quickest and absolute easiest way to make your Photoshop type transparent in front of an image is to simply lower the type layer's **Opacity** value. If we look in our **Layers palette**, we can see that we currently have two layers, with our original image on the bottom "Background" layer and our text on the layer above it:

Photoshop's Layers palette showing our two layers.

To lower the opacity of the text and allow the image underneath it to partially show through, simply go up to the**Opacity** option in the top right corner of the Layers palette and lower its value. The lower you set the opacity value, the more transparent the text will become. I'm going to lower mine to about 50%:

And here's my image after lowering the transparency of my text:
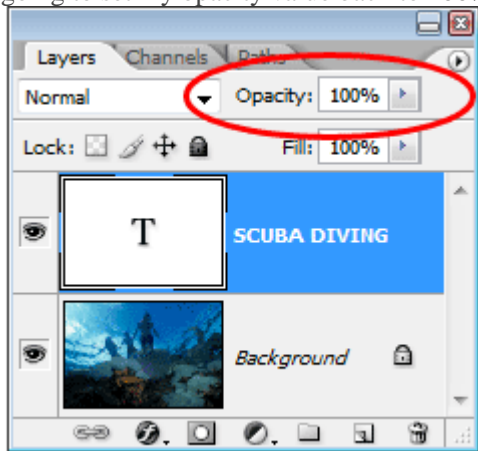
The text now appears semi-transparent, and if I was to lower its opacity value even further, it would become even more transparent. Here's the image with the text's opacity lowered to 35%:

Of course, if I was to lower the opacity all the way down to 0%, the text would become completely invisible, which isn't really what we want. Generally speaking, an opacity value of somewhere between 30-50% works well with most images.
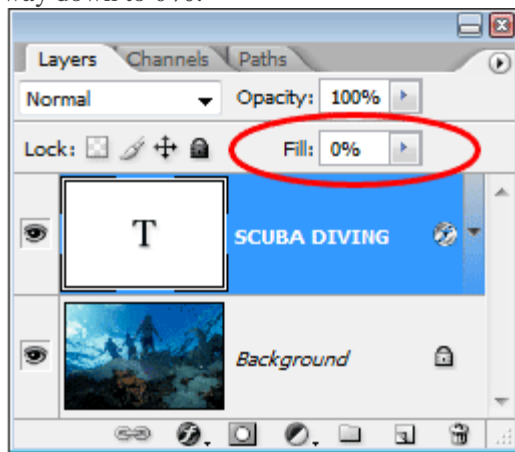
So that's the fastest and easiest way to make text transparent over an image, but it's certainly not what I would call the most interesting way, so let's look at a different way to go about it. Before we do that though, I'm going to set my opacity value back to 100%:

Setting the opacity value of the text back to a full 100%.

Step 4: Lower The "Fill" Value All The Way Down To 0%

A minute ago, we saw how lowering the opacity value of the type layer can make it transparent. The more we lowered the value, the more transparent the text became. If you look directly below the Opacity value option in the top right corner of the Layers palette, you'll see the **Fill** option. The difference between "Opacity" and "Fill" has to do with any **layer styles** that have been added to the layer, and understanding this difference opens up an entire*world* of possibilities in Photoshop, so it really is important that you know the difference. Currently, I don't have any layer styles applied to my type layer, so if I was to lower the Fill value, the result would be exactly the same as if I lowered the Opacity value. The lower I set the Fill value, the more transparent the type would become. In fact, let's do that now. Lower the Fill value of your type layer all the way down to **0%**:

Lower the "Fill" value of your Photoshop type layer down to 0%.

Your text will completely disappear in your image, which is exactly what would have happened if we lowered the Opacity value down to 0%:
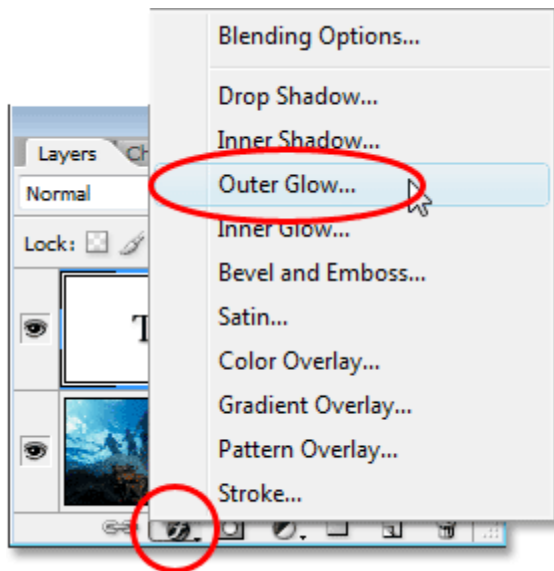
The text has disappeared inside the image.

Step 5: Add An "Outer Glow" Layer Style

The difference between "Opacity" and "Fill" is that if we had lowered the Opacity value down to 0%, not only would the type itself be completely transparent and hidden from view but any layer styles we tried to add to it would also be completely transparent as well, which means we wouldn't see anything no matter what we did to the type, which means this whole thing would be kind of pointless, really. But, by lowering the Fill value down to 0% instead, the type still becomes transparent but any layer styles we add remain fully visible! Click on the **Layer Styles** icon (the icon that looks like an "f") at the bottom of the Layers palette and choose the **Outer Glow** layer style from the list:
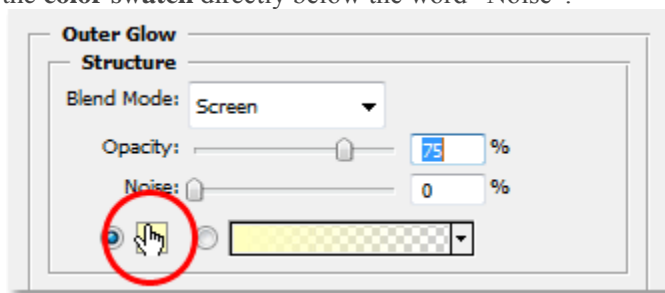
Add an "Outer Glow" layer style to the Photoshop type layer.

This brings up the Layer Style dialog box set to the Outer Glow options in the middle column, and already, if you look in your image, you'll see the glow around the outside of your type. Again, if we had lowered the Opacity value to 0%, the layer style itself would also be hidden from view, but since we lowered the Fill value, only the text becomes transparent while the layer style remains visible.

By default, the Outer Glow color is yellow, so let's change it to something that fits in better with our image. In fact, let's sample a color directly from the image and use it as our Outer Glow color. To do that, click on the **color swatch** directly below the word "Noise":
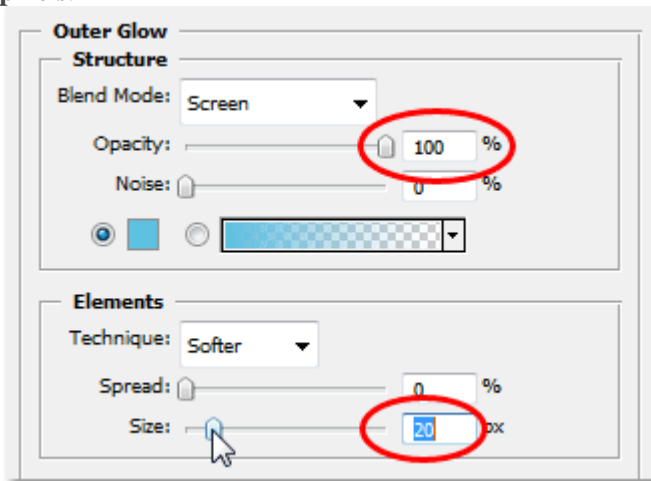

Click on the color swatch to change the color of the Outer Glow.

This will bring up Photoshop's **Color Picker** but just ignore it or slide it out of the way if needed, since we won't be using it. Instead, move your mouse over the image and as you do, you'll see your mouse cursor change into the**Eyedropper** icon. Click anywhere inside the image to sample a color, which will become the color of your Outer Glow. As soon as you click inside your image, you'll see the Outer Glow around your text change to the color you just sampled, so feel free to click on different areas of your image to preview what that color looks like. I'm going to sample a light blue from the top left corner of my image and as soon as I do, my glow color around my text changes to the same light blue color:

Once you've sampled a color to use for your Outer Glow, click OK in the top right of Photoshop's Color Picker to close out of it and return to the Outer Glow options in the middle column of the Layer Style dialog box. Increase the**Opacity** of your Outer Glow all the way to 100%, then increase the glow **Size** to around **20 pixels**:

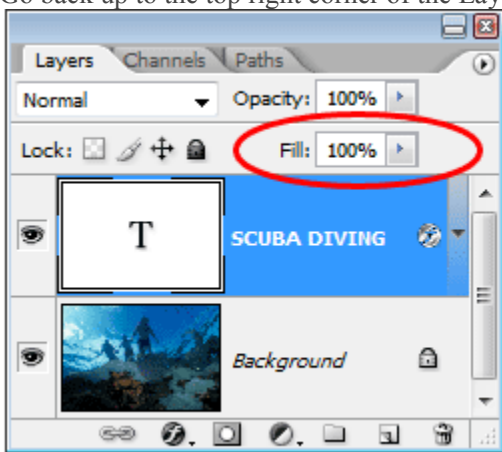Click OK when you're done to exit out of the Layer Style dialog box. Here's my image so far:

The Photoshop text after applying the Outer Glow layer style with the color sampled from the image.

We could end here if we wanted, since we now have our transparent text effect and it does look more interesting than if we had simply lowered the type layer's Opacity value as we did back near the beginning of the tutorial, but let's take things further.

Step 6: Set The "Fill" Value Back To 100%

Go back up to the top right corner of the Layers palette and set the type layer's Fill value back to a full 100%:

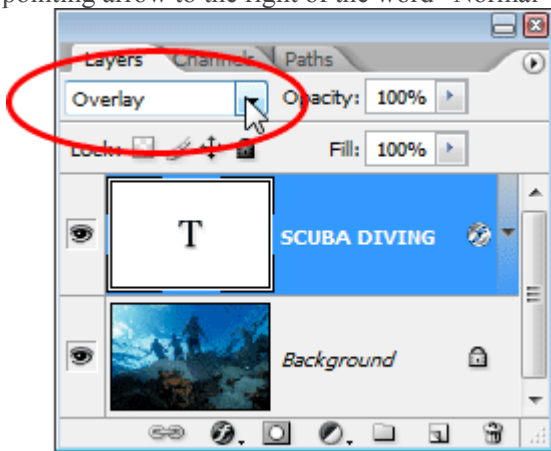Set the Photoshop type layer's Fill value back to 100%.

This is going to temporarily fill your text with white again:

The text is now filled with solid white once again.

Step 7: Change The Type Layer's Blend Mode To "Overlay"

Another way to make text transparent in an image is to change its **blend mode**. By default, a layer's blend mode is set to "Normal", which basically means "nothing special". The type layer is just sitting there and not really interacting with the image below it in any way, but we can change that. Go up to the Blend Mode options in the top left corner of the Layers palette, directly across from the Opacity option. Click on the down-pointing arrow to the right of the word "Normal" and choose **Overlay** from the drop-down list that appears:

Change the blend mode of the Photoshop type layer from "Normal" to "Overlay".

Now look at the image. The text has become transparent once again but it's also picking up the colors from the image below it and making everything brighter, giving us a really nice effect:
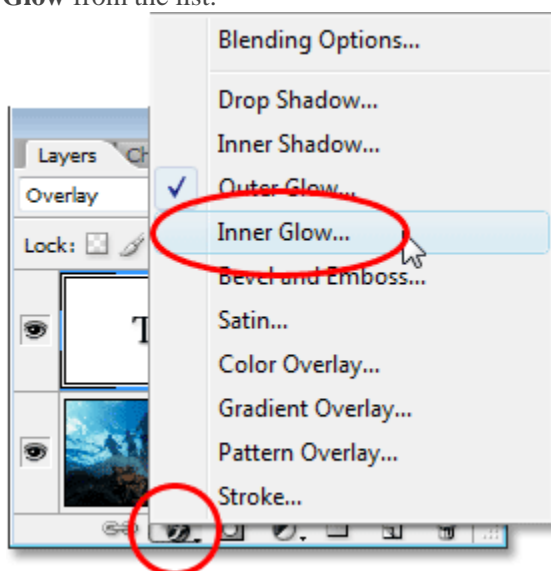
If you find that the Overlay blend mode is too intense with your image, try "Soft Light" instead, which gives the same yet much more subtle effect.

Again, we could stop here, but let's finish things off by giving our transparent type just a bit more definition.
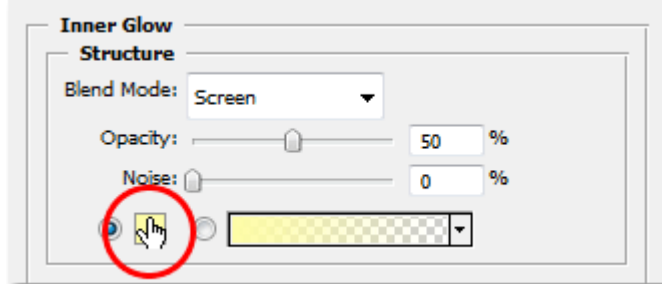
Step 8: Add An "Inner Glow" Layer Style To The Type

Click back on the **Layer Styles** icon at the bottom of the Layers palette and this time, choose **Inner Glow** from the list:

Once again, Photoshop will bring up the Layer Style dialog box, this time set to the Inner Glow options in the middle column. Just as we did with the Outer Glow, let's sample a color from the image to use for our Inner Glow. Click on the **color swatch** directly below the word "Noise":
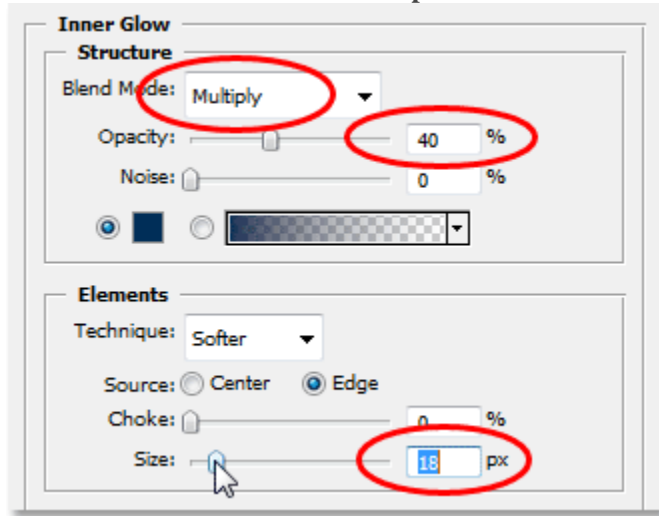
Photoshop's Color Picker will appear and again we're going to ignore it, since we're going to sample a color directly from the image. Move your mouse cursor over the image and you'll see it change into the Eyedropper icon. Click on a dark color in the image to sample it. We want a dark color because we're going to be changing our glow into a shadow, so make sure you sample a color that's nice and dark. I'm going to sample a dark blue color from my image:

Once you've sampled your color, click OK in the top right corner of the Color Picker to exit out of it and return to the Inner Glow options in the Layer Style dialog box. To change our Inner Glow into an Inner Shadow, all we need to do is change its **Blend Mode** at the top of the options from "Screen" to **Multiply** by clicking on the down-pointing arrow to the right of the word "Screen" and choosing "Multiply" from the list. As soon as you change the blend mode, you'll see the shadow appear just inside the edges of your letters.

Lower the **Opacity** value of the shadow down to about **40%** so it's not so intense, and finally, increase the **Size** of the shadow to around **18 pixels**:

Change the options for the Inner Glow (Shadow) as circled above.

Once you've changed the options, click OK to exit out of the Layer Style dialog box, and you're done! Here, after adding a little more definition to my transparent type with an inner glow, is my final effect:

The final result.

And there we have it! That's how easy it is to add transparent type to an image in Photoshop!