Adding Fireworks To A Photo With Photoshop

Written by Steve Patterson.

In this **Photoshop Effects tutorial**, we're going to learn how to add fireworks to a photo. What you'll need is a photo of fireworks and the photo you want to add the fireworks to (preferably a nighttime shot, since fireworks tend not to look very impressive in the middle of the afternoon).

Blending the two images together is easy. If you can paint with a brush and change a layer blend mode, you have all the Photoshop skills you need.

Download our tutorials as print-ready PDFs! Learning Photoshop has never been easier!

Here's the photo of fireworks I'll be using:

Here's the image I want to add the fireworks to:

And here's what the final image will look like:

Let's get started!

Step 1: Drag The Fireworks Photo Into The Other Photo

Open both images in Photoshop so that each one is in its own separate document window on the screen. We need to get the fireworks photo into the other photo, and with both images open in their own document window, all we need to do is drag the fireworks photo into the other photo's document window. To do that, we need the **Move Tool**, so select it from the Tools palette or press the letter **V** on your keyboard to quickly access it with the keyboard shortcut:

Select the Move tool from the Tools palette, or press "V" for the keyboard shortcut.

Then with the Move Tool selected, click inside the fireworks photo and drag it over into the other photo:

Click inside the fireworks photo and drag it into the other photo's document window with the Move Tool.

When you release the mouse button, the fireworks photo will appear above the second photo in the same document window, and if we look in the Layers palette, we can see that it's been placed on its own separate layer, with the fireworks photo on "Layer 1″ at the top:

Photoshop's Layers palette showing both images now in the same document, each on its own separate layer. The fireworks photo is on "Layer 1″.

You can close out of the document window containing the fireworks photo by itself at this point, since we no longer need it.

Step 2: Resize And Reposition The Fireworks With Free Transform

Now that we have the fireworks photo in the same document as the photo we want to add the fireworks to, we can move the fireworks where we want them and resize them if needed, and we can do both of these things at once with Photoshop's **Free Transform** command. With "Layer 1″ selected in the Layers palette, use the keyboard shortcut**Ctrl+T** (Win) / **Command+T** (Mac) to bring up the Free Transform box and handles around the fireworks image. If you can't see the corner handles because part of your image is outside the viewable area, press **Ctrl+0** (Win) /**Command+0** (Mac) to fit everything on the screen. Then, to resize the image, hold down the **Shift** key, which will prevent you from accidentally distorting the width or height as you're resizing it, and then click and drag any of the four corner handles. To move the image around on the screen, simply click on the image and drag it with your mouse.

I'm going to reduce the size of my fireworks image and move it into the top right corner so the fireworks appear above the main part of the city:
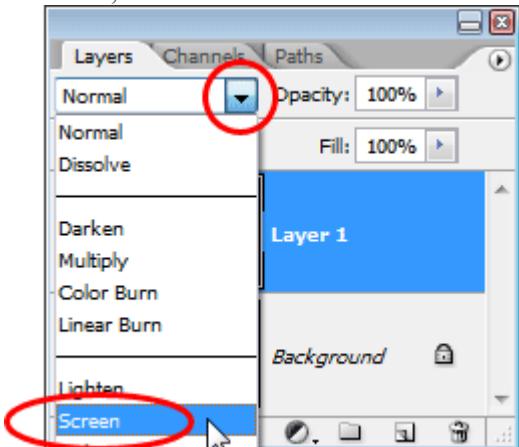
Move and resize the fireworks if needed with the Free Transform command.

Press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) when you're done to accept the transformation.

Step 3: Change The Blend Mode Of The Fireworks Layer To "Screen"

To blend the fireworks in with the photo behind it and remove the black background behind the fireworks, all we need to do is change the **blend mode** of the fireworks layer to **Screen**. To do that, go up to the blend mode options in the top left corner of the Layers palette, click on the down-pointing arrow to the right of the word "Normal", and select "Screen" from the list:

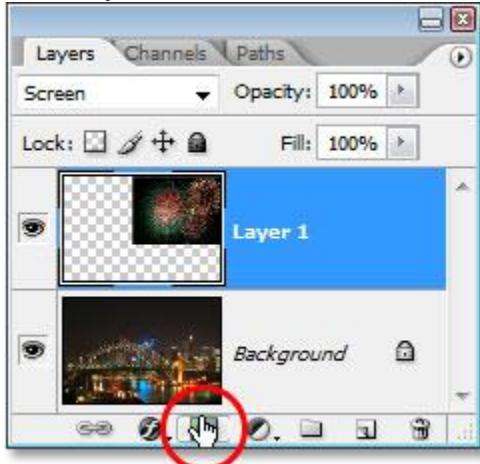Change the blend mode of the fireworks layer to "Screen" to blend them in with the photo below.

Here's my image after changing the blend mode:

The image after changing the blend mode of the fireworks layer to "Screen".
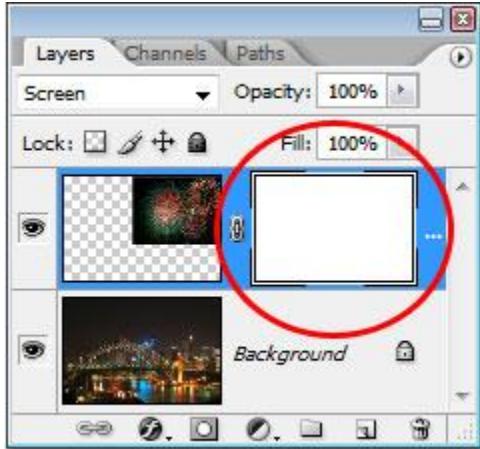
Step 4: Add A Layer Mask

With "Layer 1″ still selected, click on the **Add A Layer Mask** icon at the bottom of the Layers palette:
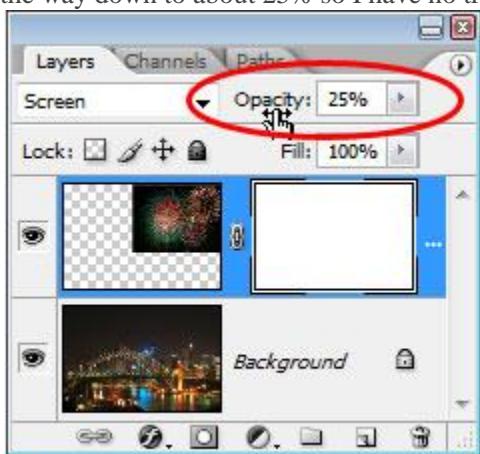

Click the "Add A Layer Mask" icon.

This adds a layer mask thumbnail to "Layer 1″, and we can see that the layer mask, not the contents of the layer (the fireworks photo), is selected by the white highlight border around the thumbnail:

A layer mask is added to "Layer 1″, with the layer mask thumbnail visible in the Layers palette.

Step 5: Lower The Opacity Of The Fireworks Layer

With the layer mask added, we're going to use it to hide the fireworks in any areas where we don't want them to appear. Currently, the fireworks in my image are appearing in front of the buildings, and I want them to appear to be*behind* the buildings, which means I need to hide any areas of the fireworks that are in front of them. To do that, all I need to do is paint with black over the buildings, and because I'm painting on the layer mask, not the image itself, I'll be hiding the fireworks in any areas I paint over. Problem is, the fireworks are making it difficult for me to see where the buildings actually are, so to solve that problem, I'm simply going to lower the **opacity** of the fireworks layer in the top right corner of the Layers palette. I'm going to lower it all the way down to about 25% so I have no trouble seeing the buildings behind them:

Lower the opacity of the fireworks layer so you can see the image behind it.

Step 6: Paint With Black To Hide The Fireworks As Needed

Now that I can see the image easily behind the fireworks, I can paint with black over the buildings. Press the letter **D** on your keyboard to reset your Foreground and Background colors. Normally when you do this, you end up with black as your Foreground color and white as your Background color, but when you have a layer mask selected in the Layers palette, as we do, and you reset the colors, you actually end up with the exact opposite. White becomes your Foreground color and black becomes your Background color. We want black as

our Foreground color, so to fix that, simply press **X** on your keyboard to swap your Foreground and Background colors.

Then, grab your **Brush Tool** from the Tools palette or press **B** to access it with the keyboard shortcut:

Select the Brush Tool.

Then, using a hard-edged brush and with black as your Foreground color, paint over any areas in the image where you want to hide the fireworks. You can zoom in on the image to make things easier by holding down**Ctrl+Spacebar** (Win) / **Command+Spacebar** (Mac) and dragging a selection around the area you want to zoom in on, then hold down the **spacebar** by itself to access the **Hand Tool** and drag the image around on the screen as needed:

Paint with black over any areas where you need to hide the fireworks.

If you make a mistake and accidentally paint over an area you didn't mean to paint over, just press **X** on your keyboard once again to swap your Foreground and Background colors, which will make white your Foreground color, and paint over the area to bring back the fireworks. Then press X to set black as your Foreground color again and continue painting.

When you're done, if you've zoomed in on the image, press **Ctrl+0** (Win) / **Command+0** (Mac) to quickly zoom back out. Also, set the opacity of the fireworks layer back to 100%.
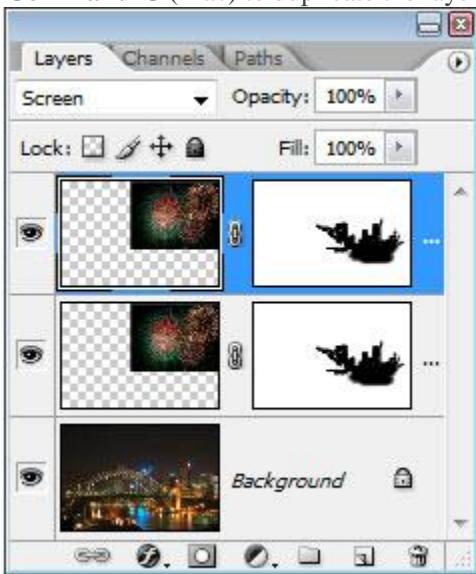
Here's my image after painting on the layer mask. The fireworks now appear to be behind the buildings:

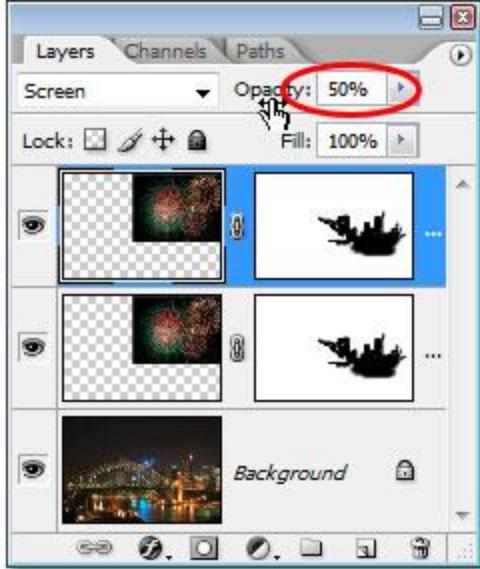The fireworks now appear to be behind the buildings..

Step 7: Duplicate The Fireworks Layer To Brighten Them (Optional)

Finally, if you want your fireworks to be even brighter, with "Layer 1" still selected, press **Ctrl+J** (Win) /**Command+J** (Mac) to duplicate the layer:

Press "Ctrl+J" (Win) / "Command+J" (Mac) to duplicate the fireworks layer and add more intensity to them.

If, after duplicating the layer, you find your fireworks are a little too intense, simply lower the opacity of the duplicated layer. I'm going to lower mine to about 50%:

Lower the opacity of the duplicate layer to fine-tune the intensity of the fireworks.

Once you've fine-tuned the brightness of your fireworks, you're done!

Here's my original image once again before adding the fireworks:

The original image once again for comparison.

And here, after duplicating my fireworks layer and then lowering the opacity of the duplicate layer to 50%, is my final result:

The final result.

And there we have it!