HOW TO FILL A SHAPE WITH A PHOTO IN PHOTOSHOP

In this tutorial, I show you how to fill a shape with an image using Photoshop! As we'll see, it's easy to place a photo into any kind of shape, from a basic rectangle or circle to a fancy custom shape. We'll be using a custom shape, and I'll show you how to load all of the shapes included with Photoshop so you'll have lots to choose from. You'll also learn the fastest way to draw your shape using the Shapes panel.

To follow along, you'll want to be using **Photoshop 2021** although 2020 will still work.

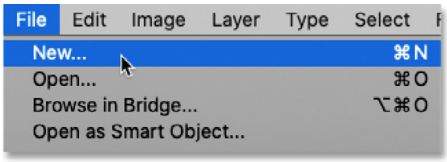


The final result.

Here's an example of what the final "image in shape" effect will look like. Along with placing the image into the shape, I'll also show you how to change the background color and how to outline the shape with a stroke:

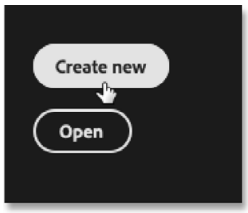
Let's get started!

Step 1: Create a new document



Going to File > New.

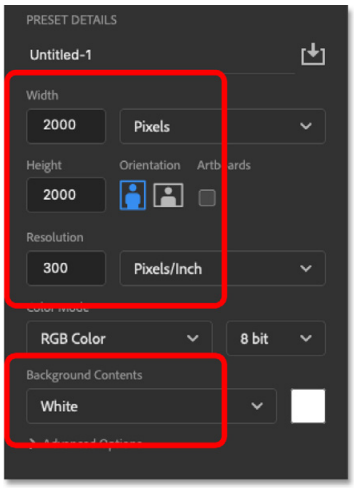
Create a new Photoshop document by going up to the **File** menu in the Menu Bar and choosing **New**:



Clicking the "Create new" button.

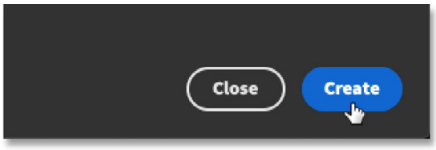
Or if you're on Photoshop's Home Screen, click the **Create new** button:

Then in the New Document dialog box, enter the settings you need for your document in the **Preset Details** panel along the right. For this tutorial, let's create a square-shaped document. I'll set the **Width** and **Height** to **2000 pixels**. Leave the **Resolution** value set to the default of **300 pixels/inch**, and set the **Background Contents** to **White**:



The new document settings.

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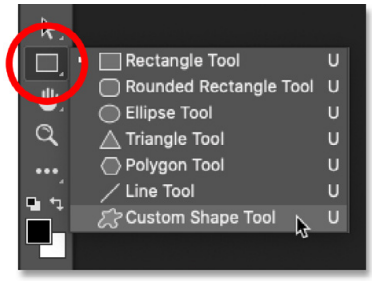


Clicking the Create button.

Then click the **Create** button, and the new document appears on the screen:

Step 2: Select the Custom Shape Tool

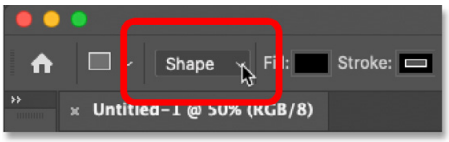
As I mentioned earlier, you can place an image into any kind of shape, from a simple rectangle or circle to a fancy custom shape. For this tutorial, we'll use one of Photoshop's built-in custom shapes, and I'll show you where to find more shapes than the ones Photoshop loads by default.



Selecting the Custom Shape Tool from the Toolbar.

In the **Toolbar**, select the **Custom Shape Tool** which may be hiding behind the Rectangle Tool or one of Photoshop's other shape tools. If it is, **right-click** (Win) / **Control-click** (Mac) on whichever shape tool is visible and choose the Custom Shape Tool from the menu:

Step 3: Set the Tool Mode to Shape



Setting the Tool Mode to Shape.

In the Options Bar, make sure the **Tool Mode** is set to **Shape**, not Path or Pixels. This will let us draw a vector shape, which can be scaled to any size we need with no loss in quality:

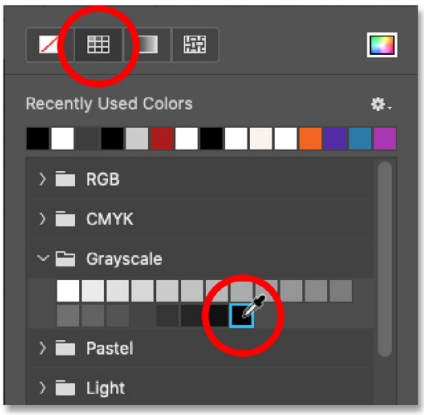
Step 4: Set the shape color to black

Still in the Options Bar, set the shape's **Fill color** to **black**. The color doesn't really matter since we'll be filling the shape with an image. But for now, black will make it easy to see the shape in front of the white background.



Clicking the Fill color swatch in the Options Bar.

Black is the default shape color, but if yours is set to something different, click the **Fill color swatch**:



Choosing black as the fill color for the shape.

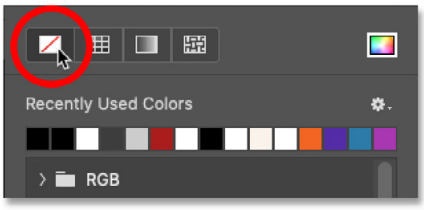
In the Fill Type dialog box, click the **Solid Color** option at the top (second icon from the left). Then twirl open the **Grayscale** folder and click on the **black** color swatch to select it. Press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) on your keyboard to close the dialog:

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Clicking the Stroke color swatch in the Options Bar.

We also don't need a stroke around the shape (we can add one later), so click the **Stroke color swatch**:



Setting the stroke to No Color.

And in the Fill Type dialog box, choose the **No Color** option (first icon from the left). Then press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) to close it:

Step 5: Open the Shapes panel

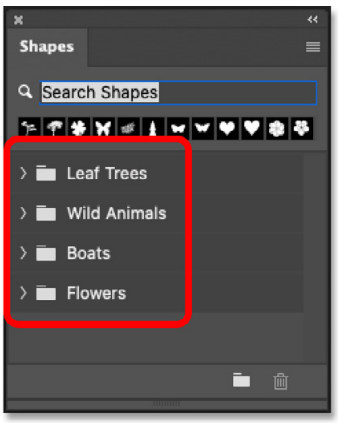
In earlier Photoshop versions, we would select a custom shape from the Options Bar. But as of Photoshop 2020, the best place to select and draw custom shapes is from the **Shapes panel**.



Going to Window > Shapes.

Open the Shapes panel by going up to the **Window** menu in the Menu Bar and choosing **Shapes**. If a checkmark appears next to the name, it means the panel is already open and selecting it from the Window menu will close it:

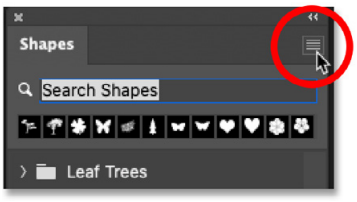
Step 6: Load more custom shapes



The four default shape groups in the Shapes panel.

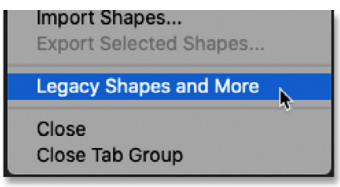
In the Shapes panel, the custom shapes are divided into groups, with each group represented by a folder. If you have not yet loaded more shapes, you'll be limited to the four default groups (Leaf Trees, Wild Animals, Boats and Flowers).

Twirl a group open (by clicking the arrow next to its folder icon) to view thumbnails of the shapes inside it:



Clicking the menu icon.

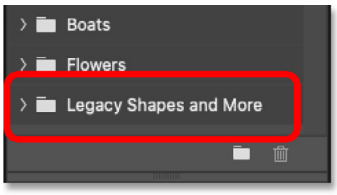
To load more shapes included with Photoshop (and there are *lots* more), click the Shapes panel **menu icon**:



Choosing "Legacy Shapes and More".

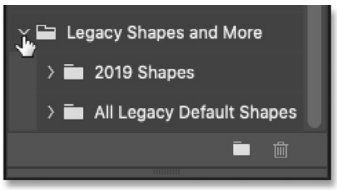
And choose **Legacy Shapes and More** from the menu:

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A new Legacy Shapes and More group appears below the default groups:

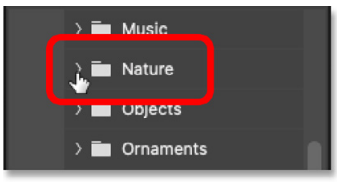
The new Legacy Shapes and More group.



And if you twirl the group open, you'll find two more groups. **2019 Shapes** includes hundreds of new custom shapes that were added in Photoshop 2020, and **All Legacy Default Shapes** holds all of the classic shapes from earlier Photoshop versions:

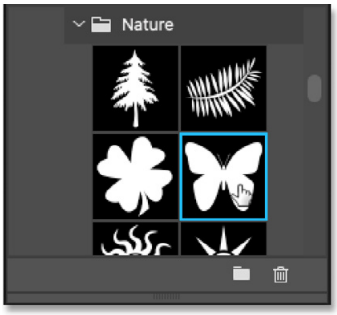
The 2019 Shapes and All Legacy Default Shapes groups.

Step 7: Select a shape



Choose one of the shapes. I'm looking for the classic Butterfly shape from earlier versions, so I'll twirl open the **All Legacy Default Shapes** folder and I'll scroll down to the **Nature** folder:

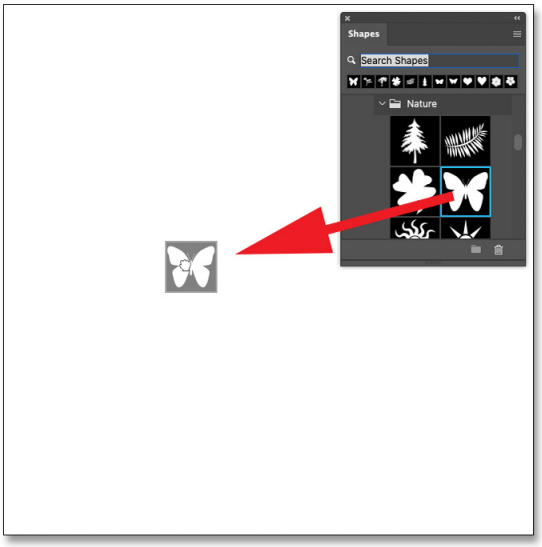
Selecting the Nature group inside the All Legacy Default Shapes folder.



Then inside the Nature folder, I'll click on the **Butterfly** shape's thumbnail to select it:

Selecting the Butterfly custom shape.

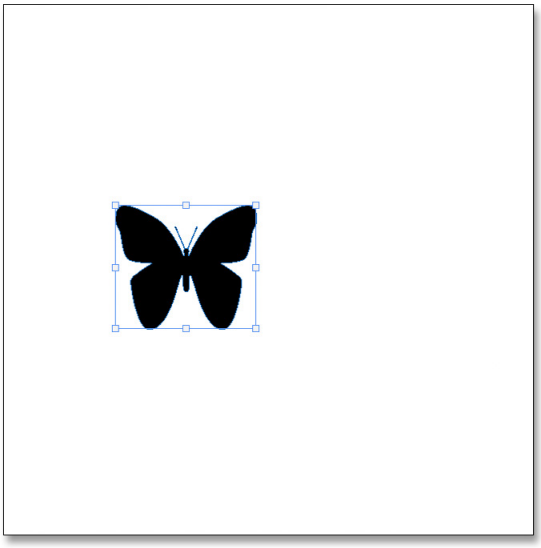
Step 8: Drag and drop the shape into the document



The easiest way to draw a shape is to simply drag and drop it from Shapes panel into your document:

Dragging and dropping the shape onto the canvas.

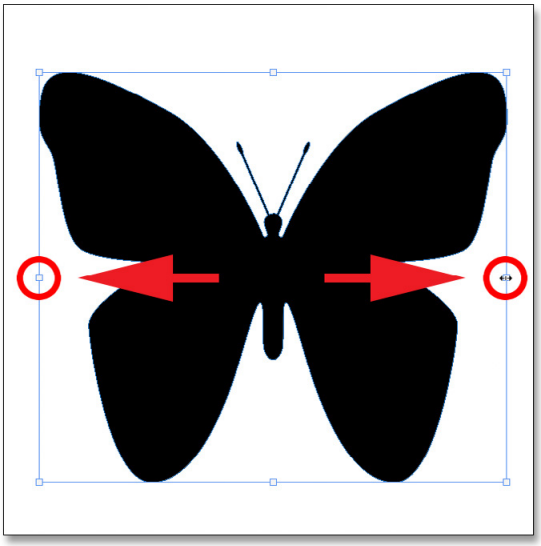
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Release your mouse button and the shape appears:

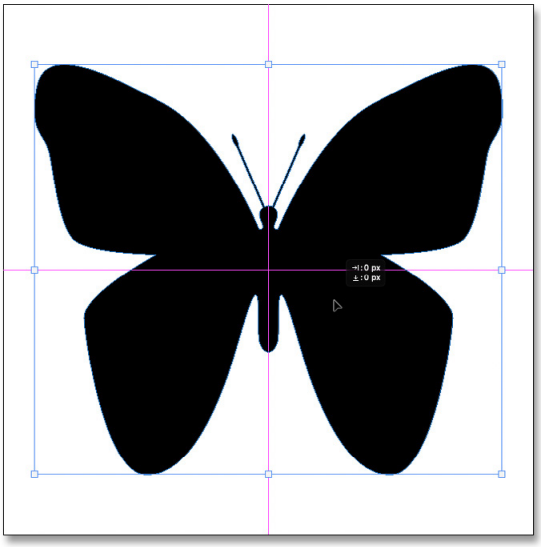
The shape is drawn when you release your mouse button.

Step 9: Resize and center the shape



Resize the shape by dragging any of the **transform handles**. The shape will scale proportionally, but if you want to scale it non-proportionally, hold **Shift** as you drag:

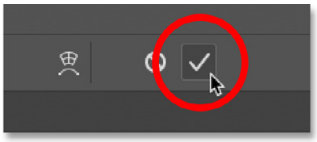
Dragging the side transform handles outward.



Then click inside the transform box and drag the shape into the center of the document. If you have Smart Guides turned on (which they are by default), a vertical and horizontal Smart Guide will appear when the shape is centered:

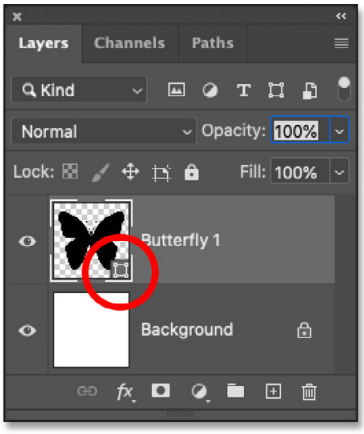
Centering the shape.

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To accept it and close the transform box, click the **checkmark** in the Options Bar:

Clicking the checkmark.

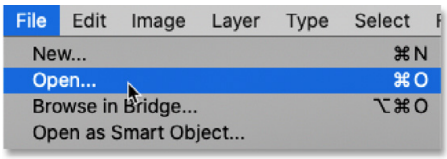


In the Layers panel, the shape appears on its own **shape layer** above the Background layer. And the icon in the layer's preview thumbnail tells us that it's a shape:

The new shape layer.

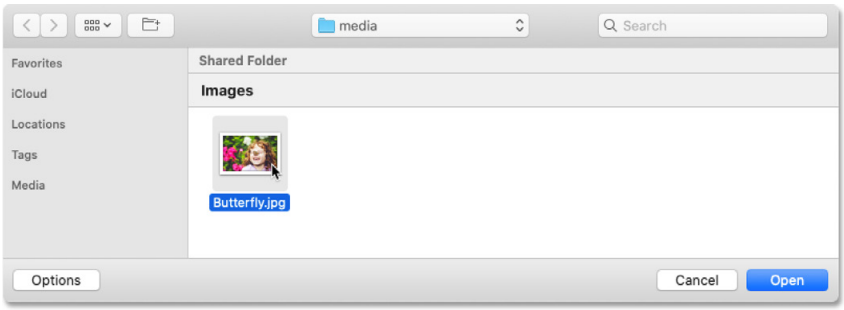
Step 10: Open your image

With our shape drawn, we're ready to place an image inside it. But first, we need to open the image into Photoshop.



Go up to the **File** menu in the Menu Bar and choose **Open**:

Going to File > Open.



Then navigate to the image on your computer, click on it to select it, and click **Open**:

Selecting and opening the image.

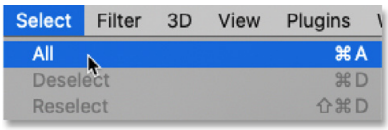


The image opens in its own separate document. I'm using **this image from Adobe Stock**:

The image I'll be placing inside the shape.
Credit: Adobe Stock.

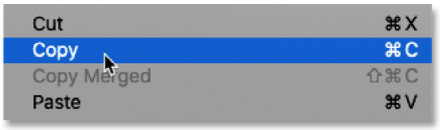
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Step 11: Select and copy the image



Going to Select > All.

We'll copy the image from its document and paste it into the shape's document. First, select the image by going up to the **Select** menu and choosing **All**. A selection outline appears around it:



Going to Edit > Copy.

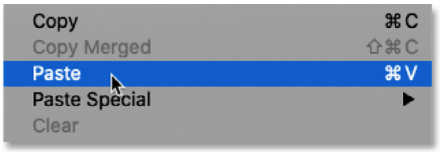
Then copy it by going up to the **Edit** menu and choosing **Copy**:

Step 12: Paste the image into the shape's document



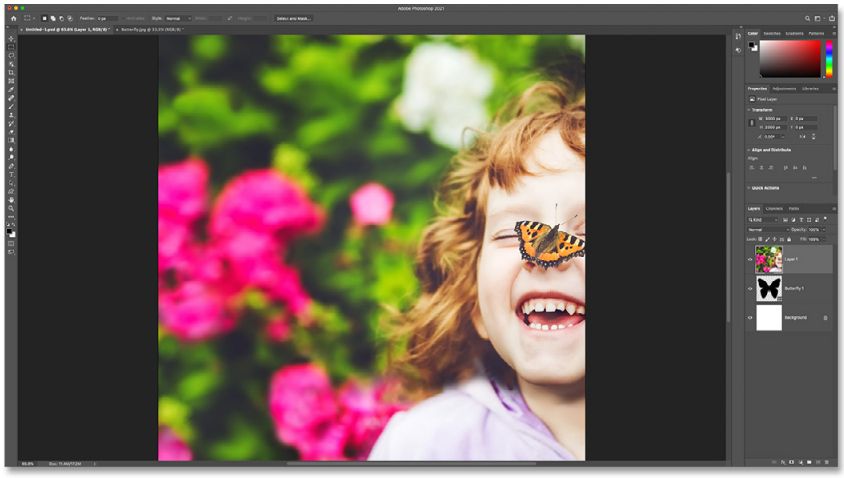
Clicking the shape document's tab.

Switch over to the shape's document by clicking its **tab** just below the Options Bar:



Going to Edit > Paste.

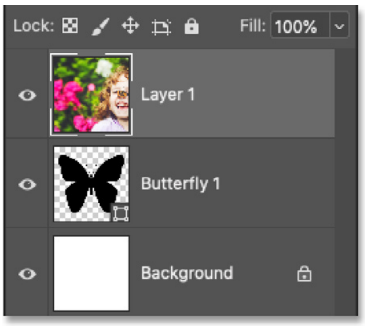
Then go back up to the **Edit** menu and choose **Paste**:



The result after pasting the image into the shape document.

Photoshop pastes the image into the document. But there's a couple of problems. One is that the image is too big, and the other is that the image is blocking the shape from view:

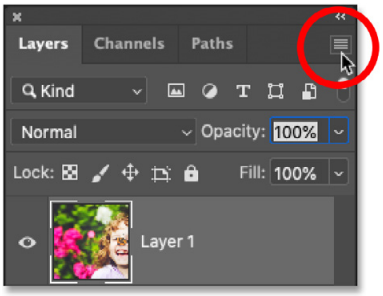
Step 13: Create a clipping mask



The image is added above the shape layer.

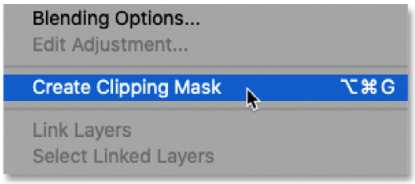
In the Layers panel, we see that the reason the image is blocking the shape is because Photoshop placed it on a new layer above the shape layer:

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Clicking the menu icon.

To place the image *into* the shape, all we need to do is create a clipping mask. With the image layer ("Layer 1") selected, click on the Layers panel **menu icon**:



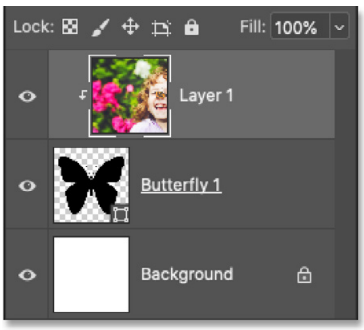
Choosing the "Create Clipping Mask" command.

And choose **Create Clipping Mask** from the list:



The clipping mask placed the image inside the shape.

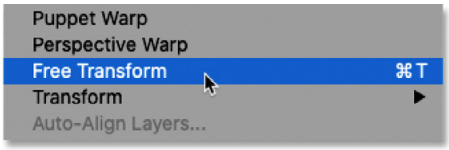
This "clips" the image to the shape below it, and now the only part of the image that remains visible is the area in front of the shape. Everything outside the shape is hidden from view:



The Layers panel showing the clipping mask.

Back in the Layers panel, notice that the image layer is now indented to the right, with a small arrow pointing down at the shape layer below it. This is how Photoshop lets us know that the image is clipped to the shape:

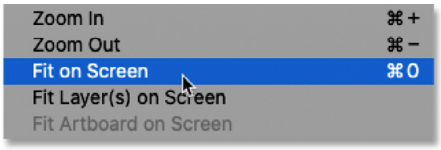
Step 14: Select Free Transform



Going to Edit > Free Transform.

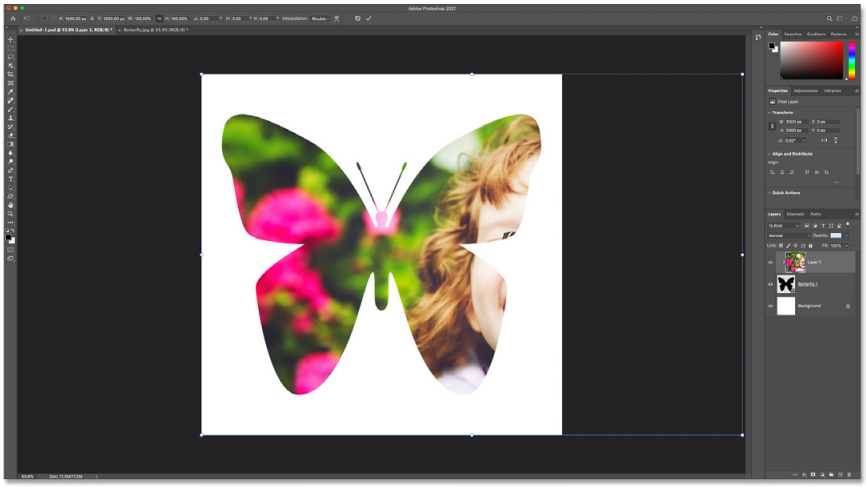
To resize and reposition the image inside the shape, go up to the **Edit** menu and choose **Free Transform**:

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Going to View > Fit on Screen.

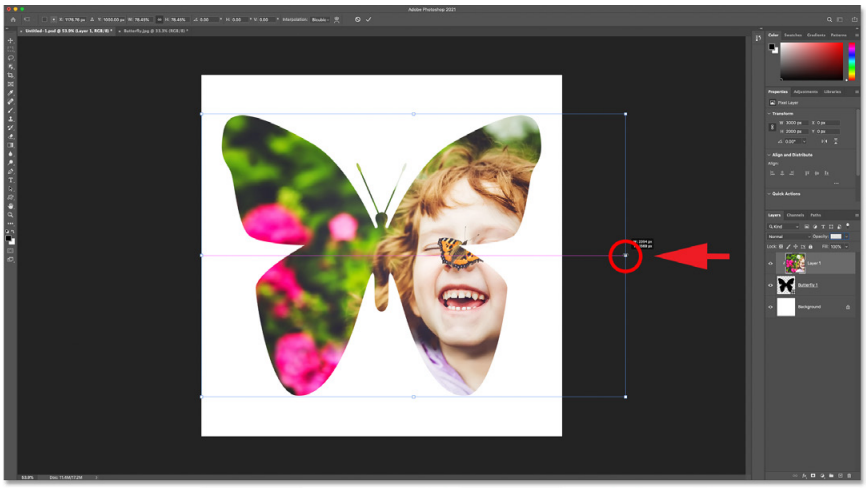
The Free Transform box and handles appear around the actual boundaries of your image, including the areas outside the visible canvas. If you can't see the handles because your image is too big to fit on the screen, go up to the **View** menu and choose **Fit on Screen**:



All of the transform handles are now visible.

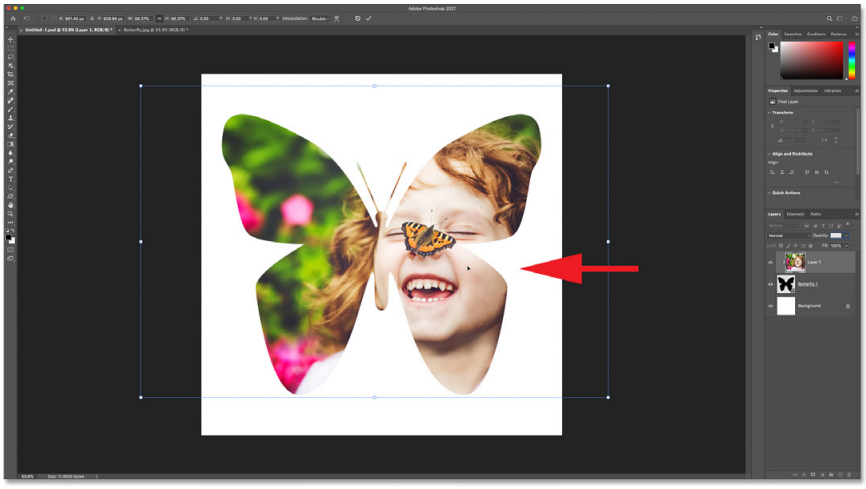
Photoshop automatically adjusts the zoom level so everything fits, including the Free Transform box which in my case extends into the grey pasteboard area to the right of the canvas:

Step 15: Resize and reposition the image



Scaling the image by dragging the transform handles.

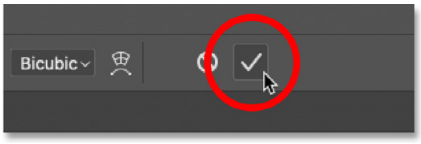
Drag any of the handles to resize the shape within the image. Here I'm dragging the right side handle inward:



Moving the image by dragging inside the transform box.

Then move the image within the shape by dragging inside the transform box. You'll most likely need to go back and forth between resizing and moving the image until it looks good:

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To accept it and close Free Transform, click the **checkmark** in the Options Bar:

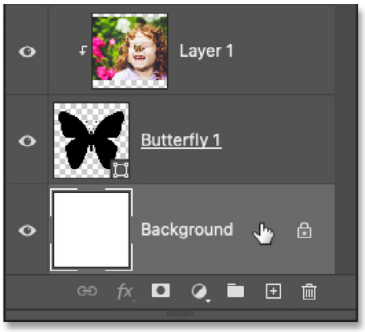
Clicking the checkmark.



And here's my result. If you're happy with the white background, you can stop here. But up next, I'll quickly show you how to change the background color to something better:

The initial result.

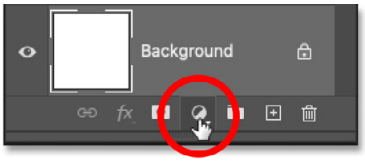
Step 16: Add a Solid Color fill layer



To change the background behind the shape to a color other than white, we'll use a Solid Color fill layer.

We want the fill layer to appear above the Background layer but below the shape. So first, in the Layers panel, click on the **Background layer** to make it active:

Selecting the Background layer.



Then click the **New Fill or Adjustment Layer** icon:

Clicking the New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon.

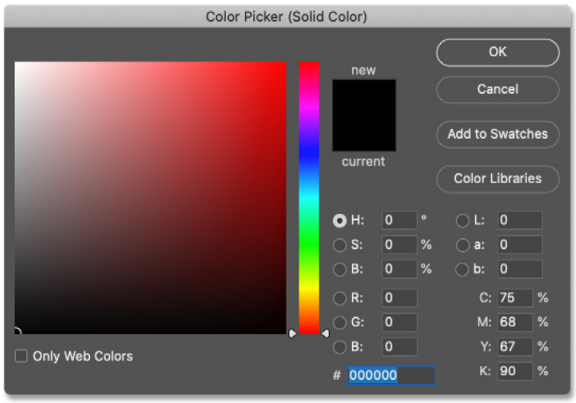


And choose a **Solid Color** fill layer from the top of the list:

Adding a Solid Color fill layer.

Step 17: Choose a new background color

Photoshop opens the **Color Picker** where we can chose a new color. Black is the default color, so let's see what that looks like:



Choosing black from the Color Picker.

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Black definitely brings out the details of the shape. But as the background color for a butterfly, I'm not sure it works:

The result after changing the background color to black.



You can choose a different color from the Color Picker, but you can also sample a color directly from the image inside the shape.

Just move your mouse cursor over the color you want to sample. Your cursor will temporarily switch to the Eyedropper Tool icon. Then click on a color to sample it. To keep the background subtle, I'll choose a light skin tone from the girl's forehead:

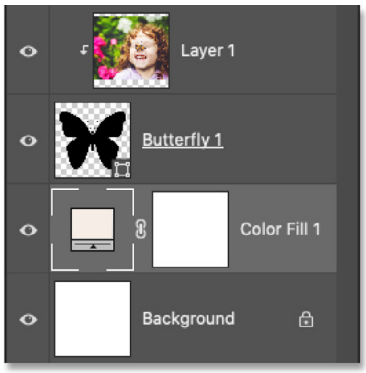
Sampling a new background color from the image.



As soon as you click, the sampled color becomes the new background color. Once you've found a color you like, click OK to close the Color Picker:

The sampled color is now the background color.

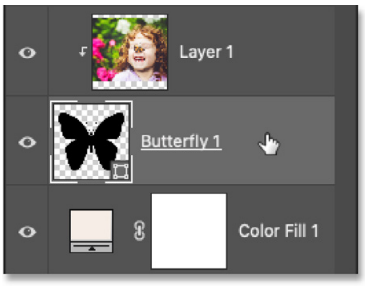
And in the Layers panel, the Solid Color fill layer appears exactly where we needed it, between the Background layer and the shape:



The new Solid Color fill layer.

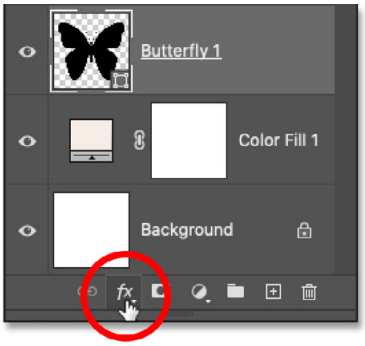
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Step 18: Add a stroke around the shape



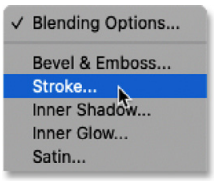
Selecting the Shape layer.

Finally, let's finish off the effect by adding a stroke around the shape. And for that, we'll use a layer effect. Click on the **shape layer** in the Layers panel to select it:



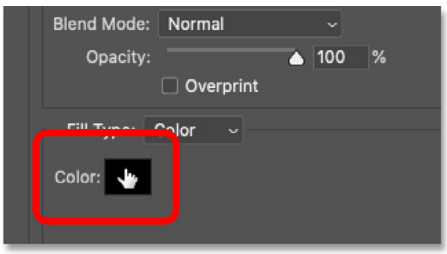
Clicking the layer effects icon.

Then click the **fx** icon:



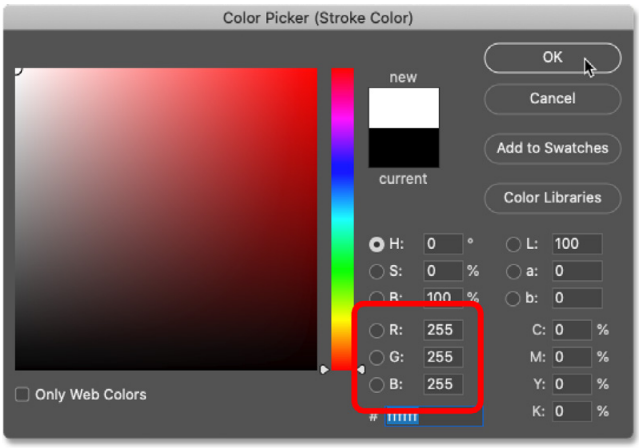
Choosing a Stroke layer effect.

And choose **Stroke** from the list:



Clicking the color swatch.

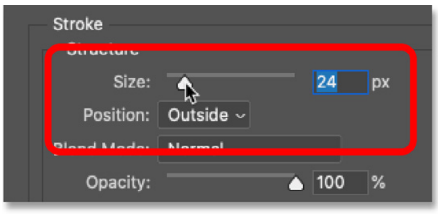
Photoshop opens the Layer Style dialog box with the Stroke options in the middle column. To change the stroke's color, click the **color swatch**:



Choosing white from the Color Picker.

Then choose a new color from the Color Picker. I'll choose **white** by setting the **R**, **G** and **B** values to **255**. Click OK when you're done to close it:

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Setting the Position and Size of the stroke.

Back in the Layer Style dialog box, set the **Position** to **Outside** so that the stroke appears around the outside of the shape. Then increase the **Size** value to adjust the thickness of the stroke. For my image, a size of around **24 px** works well:



The final result.

Click OK to close the Layer Style dialog box, and we're done! Here, after changing the background color and adding a stroke around the butterfly, is my final "image in shape" effect:

And there we have it! That's how easy it is to place an image in a shape with Photoshop!

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