CREATE A SPRAY PAINT TEXT EFFECT IN PHOTOSHOP

In this tutorial, I'll show you how to create a simple spray-painted text effect where the letters look like they've been spray-painted onto a wall or surface. I'll also show you how to blend the spay paint in with the surface for a more realistic looking effect. And because we'll create the spray paint using nothing more than a layer effect and Photoshop's blending options, your text will remain editable even when we're done. I'll be using Photoshop CC 2019 but any recent version will work.



The spray-painted text effect.

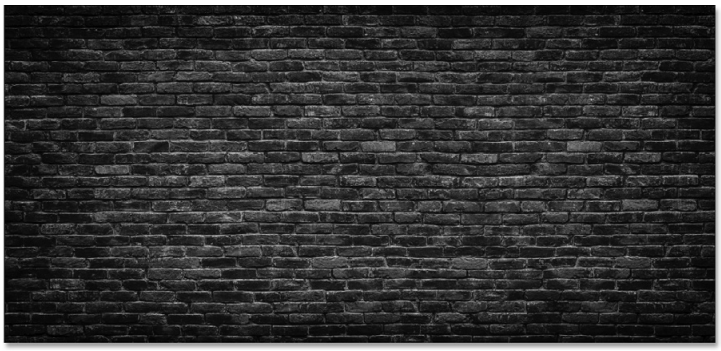
Here's an example of what the spray-painted text effect will look like. Of course, you can use any text, background and colors you like:

Let's get started!

How to create spray-painted text in Photoshop

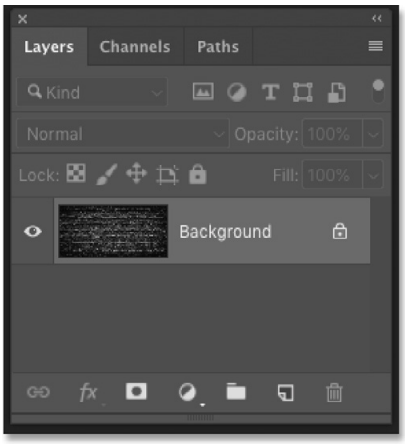
We'll start by learning how to create the main spray paint effect, and then I'll show you how to blend the letters in with the background. I'll also show you how to duplicate the effect to add more text to your design, and how to change the color of the paint.

Step 1: Open your background image



The surface where the text will be spray-painted. Credit: Adobe Stock.

Since we're going to want to spray paint the text onto some sort of background, start by opening your background image. I'll use this image that I downloaded from Adobe Stock:



Photoshop's Layers panel showing the Background layer.

And in the **Layers panel**, we see the image on the **Background layer**:

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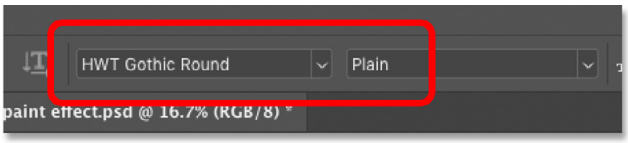
Step 2: Add your text



To add your text, select the **Type Tool** from the Toolbar:

Selecting the Type Tool.

Choosing a font

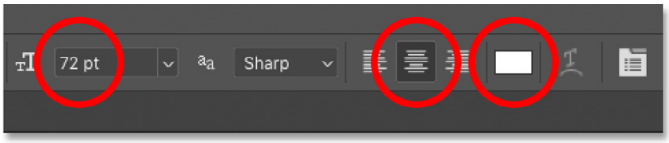


Choosing a font in the Options Bar.

And then in the **Options Bar**, choose your font. I'll use "HWT Gothic Round" which I downloaded from Adobe Typekit. If you don't have access to this font, that's okay. Any font will work:

More type options

Still in the Options Bar, I'll set my type **size** to **72 pt** just to give me the largest preset size for now. And I'll set the text **alignment** to **center**. For the **color**, I'll **choose** white by clicking on the color swatch and choosing white from Photoshop's Color Picker. This is not the color we're going to use for the spray paint. All we need for now is something that lets us see the text as we're adding it:



Setting the size, alignment and color of the text.

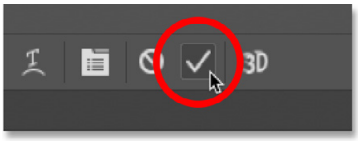
Adding the text



Then click in the document and add your text. I'll type the word "PAINT":

Adding the text.

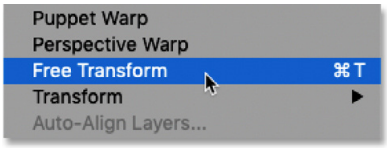
Accepting the text



To accept it, click the **checkmark** in the Options Bar:

Clicking the checkmark.

Step 3: Resize and reposition the text with Free Transform



To resize the text and move it into place, go up to the **Edit** menu in the Menu Bar and choose **Free Transform**:

Going to Edit > Free Transform.

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And then to resize the text, click and drag any of the corner handles. As of Photoshop CC 2019, the aspect ratio of the text is automatically locked as you drag the handles. In earlier versions of Photoshop, you'll need to hold down your **Shift** key as you drag to lock the aspect ratio in place.

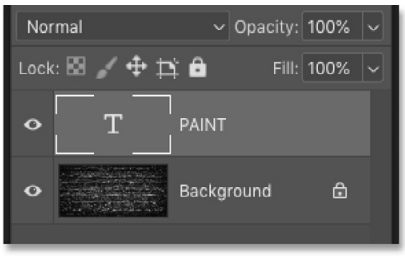
To resize the text from its center, press and hold the **Alt** (Win) / **Option** (Mac) key as you drag. And if you need to reposition your text, click inside the Free Transform box and drag the text into place.



Resizing the text by dragging a corner handle.

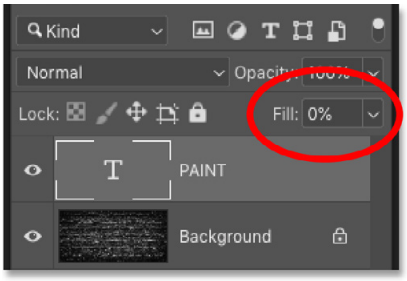
To accept it and exit out of Free Transform, press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) on your keyboard:

Step 4: Lower the Fill value of the Type layer to 0%



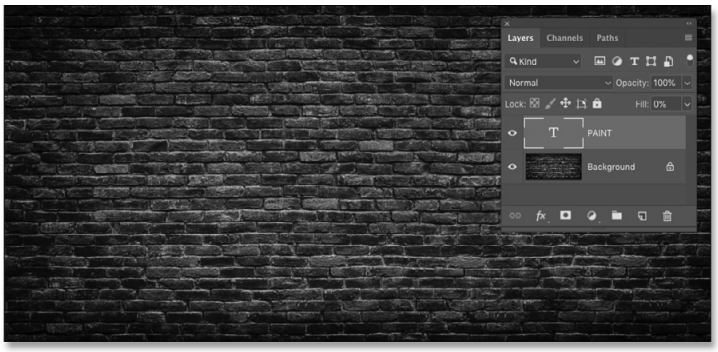
The text appears on its own Type layer.

In the Layers panel, we see our text on a new Type layer above the image:



Lowering the Fill of the Type layer to 0 percent.

To create the spray paint effect, the first thing we need to do is make our text transparent. To do that, lower the **Fill** value in the upper right of the Layers panel all the way down to **0%**. Make sure you're lowering the Fill value, not the Opacity value:



Lowering the Fill value made the text invisible.

The text completely disappears. It's still there, it's just transparent:

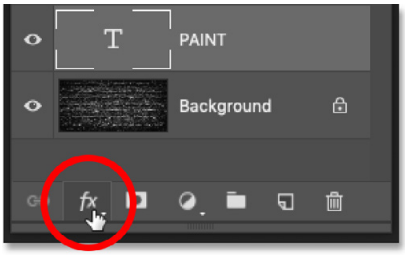
What's the difference between Opacity and Fill?

In the Layers panel, both the **Opacity** and **Fill** values affect a layer's transparency. The difference between them is that Opacity controls the transparency of both the *contents of a layer* and any *layer effects* that we've applied. Fill, on the other hand, affects *only the contents of a layer*. It has no effect on the layer effects.

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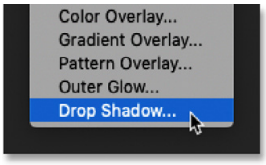
This means that by lowering the Fill value, we can apply layer effects to our text and keep the effects visible even though the text itself is hidden. And this is what's going to let us create our spray paint effect.

Step 5: Add a Drop Shadow layer effect to the Type layer



Clicking the Layer Style icon.

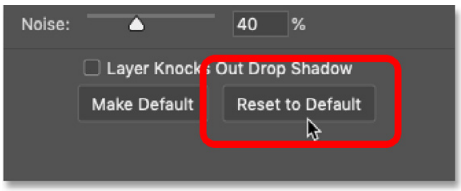
The entire spray paint effect can be created using a single layer effect, and the one we need is Drop Shadow. With the Type layer selected, click on the **Layer Style** icon (the "fx" icon) at the bottom of the Layers panel:



Choosing a Drop Shadow layer effect.

And then choose **Drop Shadow**:

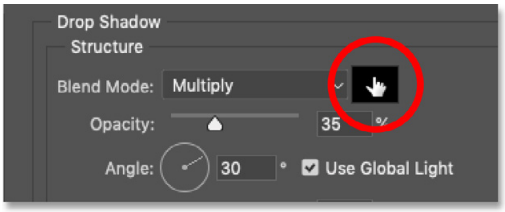
Step 6: Reset the Drop Shadow settings to the defaults



Clicking the Reset to Default button.

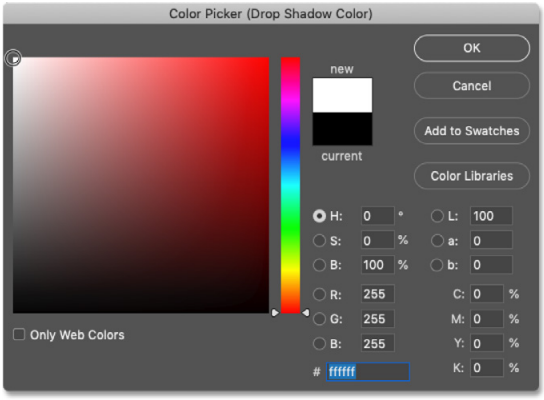
In the Layer Style dialog box, click the **Reset to Default** button to restore the default Drop Shadow settings, just so we're both seeing the same thing:

Step 7: Change the Drop Shadow's color to white



Clicking the color swatch.

Then change the drop shadow's color by clicking on the **color swatch**:

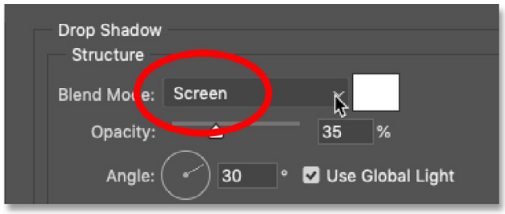


Setting the drop shadow's color to white.

And in the Color Picker, choose **white** for now, and then click OK. We'll choose different colors for the effect a bit later:

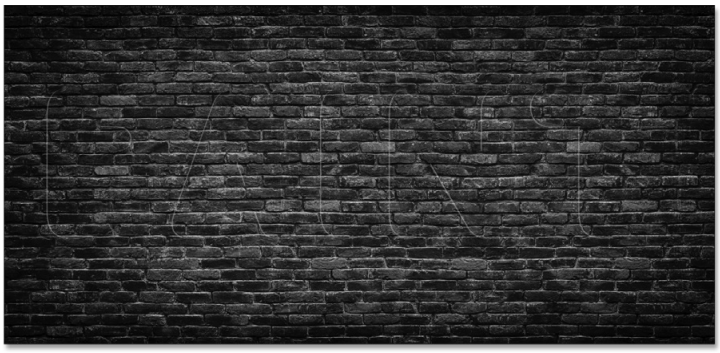
Step 8: Change the blend mode of the shadow to Screen

To see the white, change the blend mode of the drop shadow from Multiply (the default blend mode) to Screen:



Changing the blend mode to Screen.

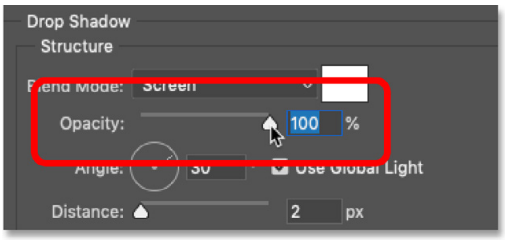
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And right away, we start to see white appearing behind the letters:

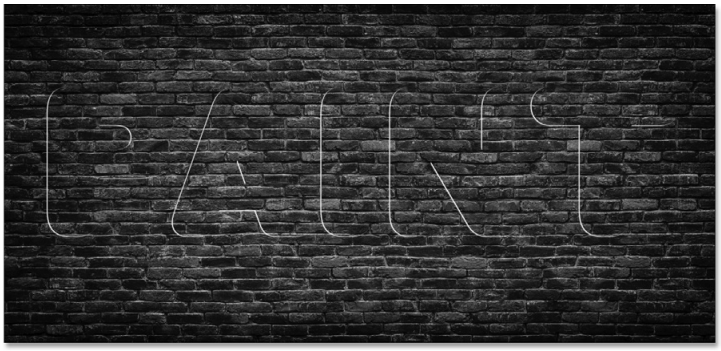
A faint white outline appears around the text.

Step 9: Increase the Opacity of the shadow to 100%



To make the effect brighter, increase the **opacity** of the drop shadow all the way to **100%**:

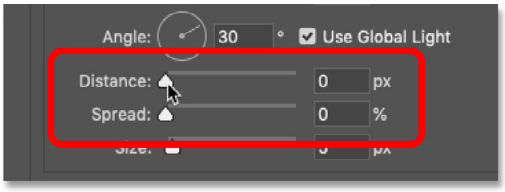
Raising the opacity to 100 percent.



And now the effect is easier to see. By changing the color of the drop shadow from black to white, and changing its blend mode from Multiply to Screen, we've essentially turned our shadow into a glow:

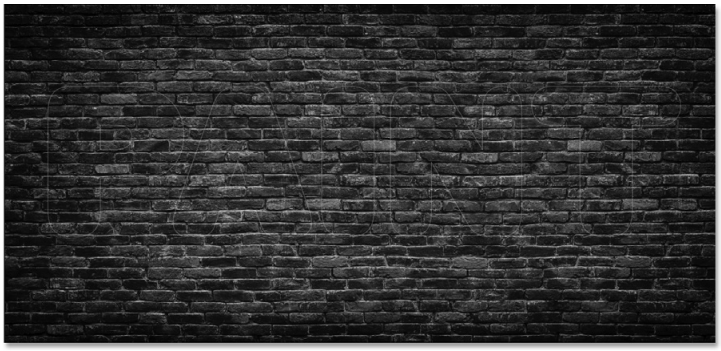
The result after increasing the opacity.

Step 10: Set the Distance and Spread to 0%



Ignore the Angle and Use Global Light options since they're not going to matter here. But lower the **Distance** to **0px** and make sure the **Spread** is at **0%**:

Setting both the Distance and Spread to 0.

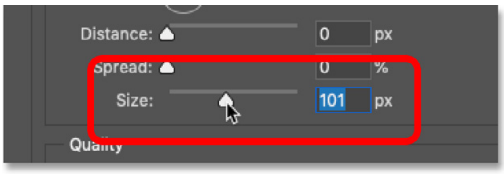


By setting the Distance to 0px, we've centered the drop shadow behind the text, creating a faint outline or stroke around the letters:

The result after lowering the Distance to 0px.

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Step 11: Increase the Size of the Drop Shadow



To spread the shadow (or glow, in this case) out further from the edges, increase the **Size** value:

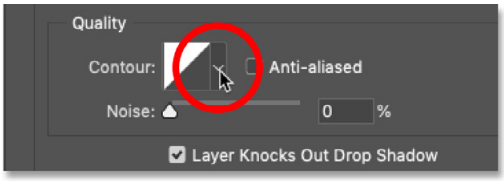
Increasing the Size of the drop shadow.



The more you increase it, the wider the glow appears:

The result after lowering the Distance to 0 px.

Step 12: Change the Contour to Cone



Click the arrow, not the thumbnail.

At this point, the effect so far doesn't look much like spray paint. Our glow needs to look more like an outline around the shapes of the letters. To fix that, still in the Layer Style dialog box, go to the **Quality** section, click on the small arrow next to the **Contour** preview thumbnail:



And then choose the **Cone** contour by double-clicking on its thumbnail. It's the one in the top row, second from the left:

Selecting the Cone contour.

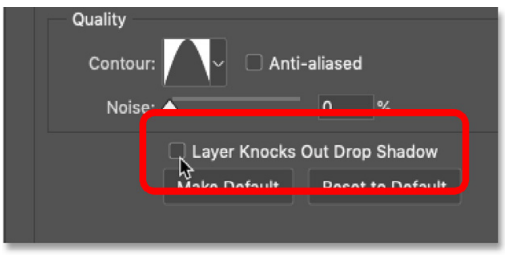


Contours affect the transparency of the drop shadow, changing how and where it transitions from opaque to transparent areas. And right away, we see a much stronger outline around the edges of the letters:

The effect after switching to the Cone contour.

Step 13: Uncheck "Layer Knocks Out Drop Shadow"

But notice that even though our text is transparent, the glow only appears around the *outside* of it. We need to see the glow *inside* the letters as well. To fix that, uncheck the option that says **Layer Knocks Out Drop Shadow**:



Unchecking "Layer Knocks Out Drop Shadow".

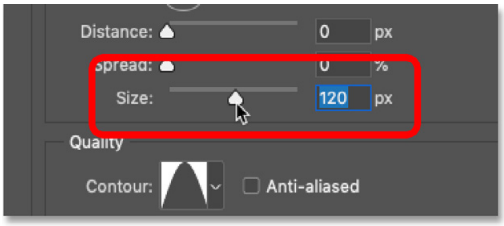
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The effect after switching to the Cone contour.

And now the outline appears both outside *and* inside the text:

Step 14: Re-adjust the Size value if needed



Increasing the Size value.

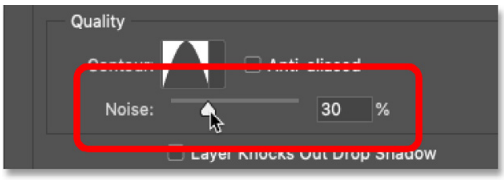
At this point, you may need to go back and re-adjust the **Size** value to change the thickness of the outline. Don't go too high though or you'll spread the glow out too far. The exact size you need will depend on the size of your text. In my case, I'll go with a Size value of around 120px, but you may need a different value:



The effect after re-adjusting the Size value.

And here's the result:

Step 15: Add noise



Adding noise to the effect.

Finally, add some noise to the outline by increasing the **Noise** value. I'll set mine to around 25-30%:



The effect after adding noise.

And now, if I zoom in, we see little speckles in the outline, making it look more like spray paint.

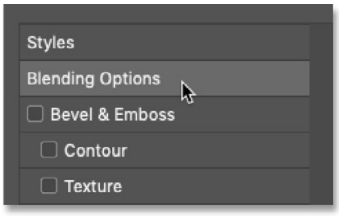
Depending on the size of the font you're using, you may notice some faint hard edges along the areas where the effect and the background meet. In this screenshot, you can see them inside the letters "P" and "A". These edges will disappear once we blend the text in with the background, which is what we'll be doing next:

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How to blend the spray-painted text with the background

At this point, we're done with our Drop Shadow layer effect. So let's learn how to blend the effect in with the background, so it looks like the text is actually spray-painted onto the background and not just sitting in front of it. When we're done, I'll show you how to copy the effect to add more text while keeping the layer effects and the blending options intact.

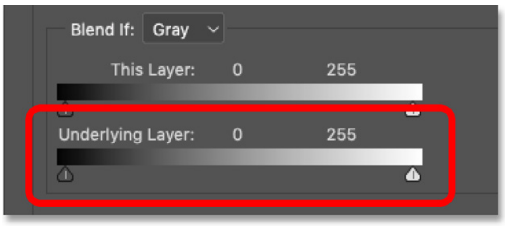
Step 16: Open Photoshop's Blending Options



Opening the Blending Options.

Still in the Layer Style dialog box, select the **Blending Options** category on the left:

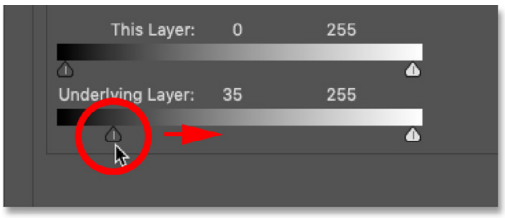
Step 17: Drag the black "Underlying Layer" slider to the right



The "Underlying Layer" slider in the Blending Options.

At the bottom of the Blending Options are two sets of sliders. The one on top says "This Layer" and the one below it says "Underlying Layer". We can use these sliders to blend our text with the background image. And the set we need is the bottom one (**Underlying Layer**):

Notice the two sliders below the gradient bar. There's a black slider on the left and a white slider on the right. We're going to blend our text in with the darkest parts of our background image. And for that, we need the **black slider**.



Dragging the black slider to the right.

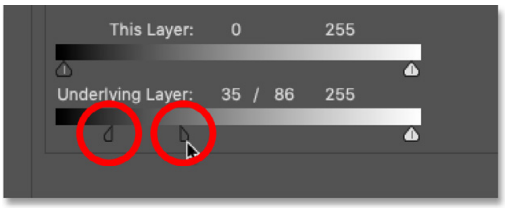
Click on the black slider and begin dragging it towards the right:

As you drag, keep an eye on your text and you'll see the darkest areas of the background image starting to show through it. And as you drag further, more and more of the background appears:



Dragging the black slider reveals the darkest areas of the background through the text.

Step 18: Split the black slider in half



Hold Alt (Win) / Option (Mac) and drag the slider apart.

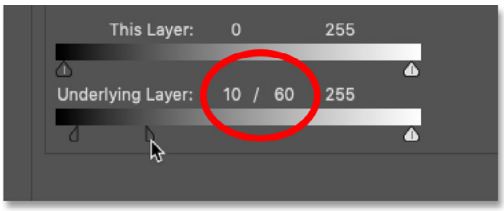
The problem is that the transitions between the text and the background are very harsh. To create smoother transitions, press and hold the **Alt** (Win) / **Option** (Mac) key on your keyboard. Click on the right side of the black slider and drag it away from the left side. This splits the slider into two halves:

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Step 19: Adjust the sliders to create a smooth transition

The left half of the slider now controls the brightness level where the text begins to appear in front of the background. And the right half sets the brightness level where the text becomes fully visible and the background no longer shows through it. The area between the two sliders becomes the transition area where the text and the background are blending together. The further apart you drag the sliders, the more gradual the transition appears.

Adjust each half of the slider until you're happy with the effect. There are no specific values to use here since it will depend on your background image.



My brightness levels for the left half (10) and right half (60) of the slider.

In my case, I'll set my left half to a brightness level of 10 and my right half to a brightness level of 60. In other words, any areas of my background image that are at a brightness level of 10 or darker will completely show through the text. Areas at a brightness level of 60 or lighter will be completely hidden by the text. And the brightness levels in between (11 through 59) are where the transition is taking place:



The effect with the text blended in with the background.

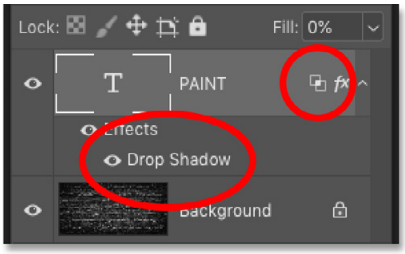
And with the text now blending with the image, we get a much more realistic-looking spray paint effect:

Step 20: Close the Layer Style dialog box



Clicking OK to close the dialog box.

We're done with the main effect, so go ahead and close the Layer Style dialog box by clicking OK:



The Type layer now shows our Drop Shadow and blending options.

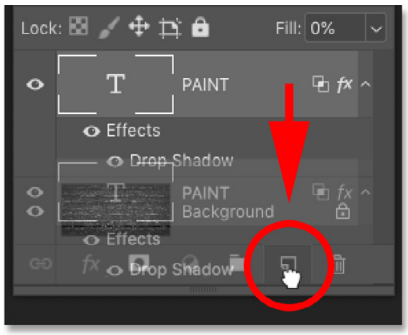
And in the Layers panel, we now see our Drop Shadow listed as an effect below the Type layer. We also see a Blending Options icon beside the "fx" icon, telling us that we also have some advanced blending options applied to the layer:

How to duplicate the effect

At this point, adding more spray-painted text is easy.

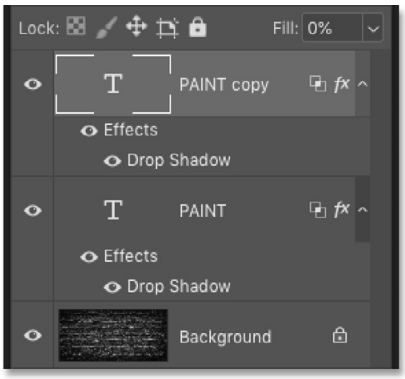
Step 21: Make a copy of the Type layer

All we need to do is duplicate our Type layer. Simply drag it down onto the **Add New Layer** icon at the bottom of the Layers panel:



Dragging the Type layer onto the Add New Layer icon.

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A copy of the Type layer appears above the original, complete with our Drop Shadow effect and our blending options:

The Layers panel now showing both Type layers.

Step 22: Select the Move Tool



To reposition the text, select the **Move Tool** from the Toolbar:

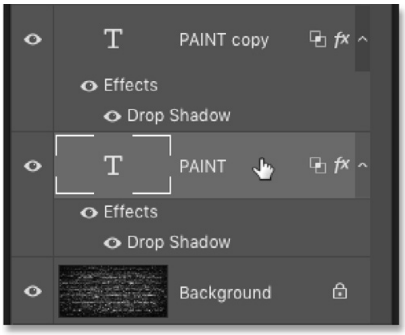
Selecting the Move Tool.

Step 23: Move the text into place



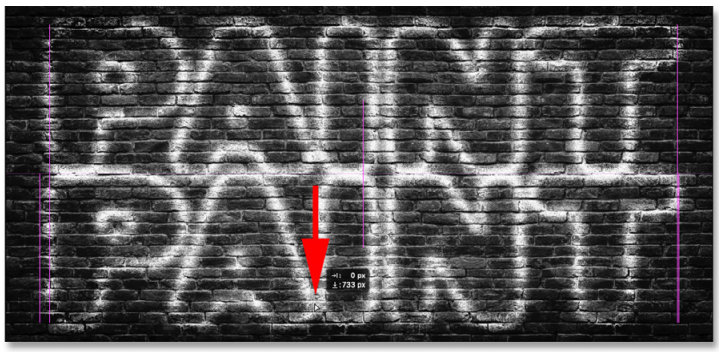
And then click on the text and move it into place. I'll drag the copy of the text upward:

Dragging the copied text to the top of the background image.



Then in the Layers panel, I'll click on the original Type layer to select it:

Selecting the original Type layer.



And I'll drag the original text downward:

Dragging the original text to the bottom of the background image.

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How to edit the spray-painted text

Since our text is still editable type, we can easily edit the text and keep the spray paint effect intact.

Step 24: Select the Type Tool



I don't want both words to be the same, so to edit the top text, I'll select the **Type Tool** from the Toolbar:

Selecting the Type Tool.

Step 25: Select and edit the text



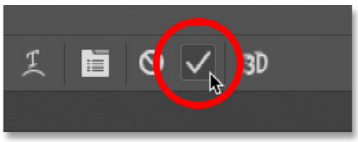
Then, I'll double-click inside the word to highlight it:

Highlighting the top word by double-clicking with the Type Tool.



And I'll change the word from "PAINT" to "SPRAY":

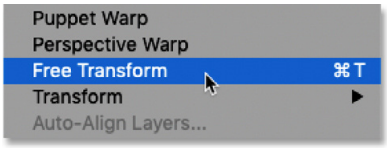
Editing the text.



To accept it, I'll click the **checkmark** in the Options Bar:

Clicking the checkmark.

Step 26: Resize the edited text with Free Transform



I'll resize the top text by going up to the **Edit** menu and choosing **Free Transform**:

Going to Edit > Free Transform.

And then I'll drag the top corner handles to resize the word so it's the same width as the bottom word. To accept it, I'll press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) on my keyboard:



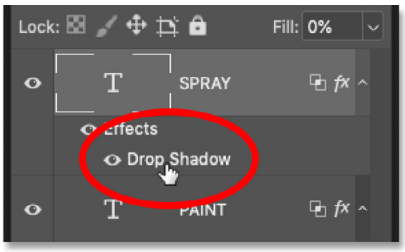
Resizing the copy of the text.

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How to change the color of the spray paint

And finally, let's look at how to change the color of the effect.

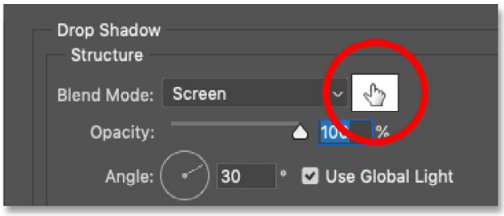
Step 27: Double-click on the Drop Shadow layer effect



To change the color of the spray paint, double-click on the words "Drop Shadow" below the Type layer. If you have more than one Type layer as I do, make sure you're double-clicking on the one you want to edit.

Double-clicking on the words "Drop Shadow".

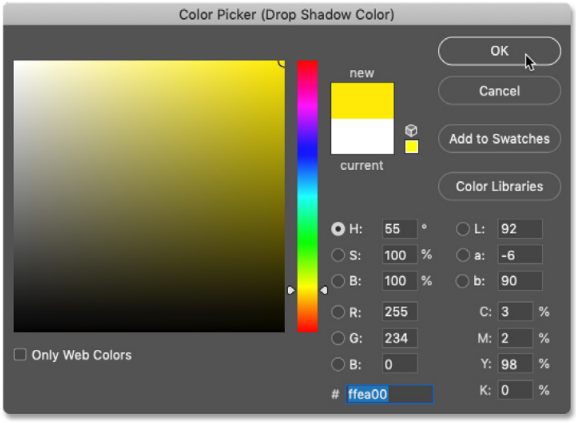
Step 28: Click the color swatch



This reopens the Layer Style dialog box. Click on the **color swatch**:

Clicking the Drop Shadow's color swatch.

Step 29: Choose a new color from the Color Picker



And then in the Color Picker, choose a new color. I'll go with something bright, like yellow:

Choosing a new color for the spray paint.

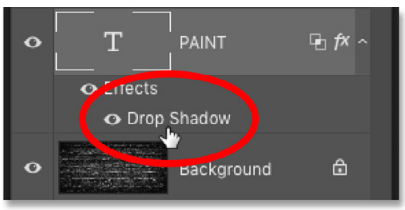


Click OK to close the Color Picker, and then click OK to close the Layer Style dialog box. And now my top text is colored yellow:

The result after coloring the top text.

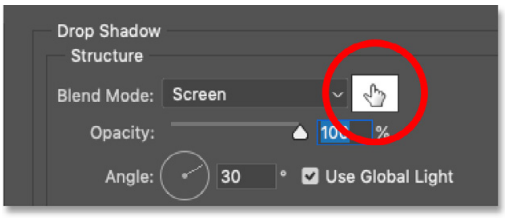
Changing the color of the bottom text

I'll do the same thing with the bottom text. I'll double-click on the words "Drop Shadow" to reopen the Layer Style dialog box:



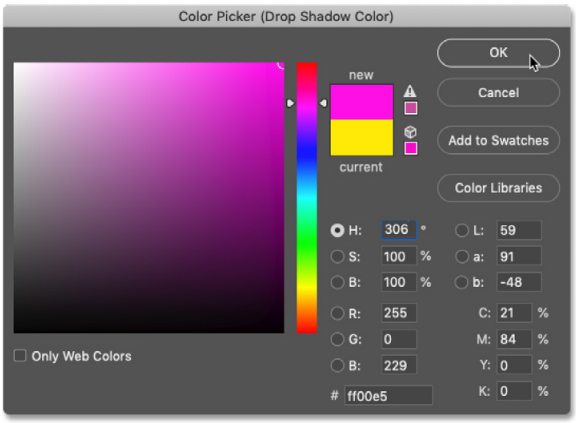
Reopening the Drop Shadow layer effect for the word "PAINT".

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Clicking the Drop Shadow's color swatch.

And then I'll click on the color swatch:



Choosing a second color for the spray paint.

And I'll choose a new color from the Color Picker. For the bottom text, I'll again go with something bright, like a reddish pink:

I'll click OK once again to close the Color Picker, and then OK to close the Layer Style dialog box.



The finished spray-painted text effect.

And here, after adding color to both words, is my final result:

And there we have it! That's how to create spray-painted text in Photoshop!

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