



## Creating Titles in Photoshop

Even if your editing package includes a great titler, there might still be times when you want to craft titles in a paint program or image editor. For example, there might be times when you want to create hand-lettered effects, or more illustrative graphics and titles. For these instances, you'll create your title images in your paint program of choice, and then move them into your editing or special effects package to composite them with your video and other graphics.

In the next section, we'll cover everything you need to know to perform these types of simple composites. Even if you don't expect to ever do this kind of titling work, it's worth working through this tutorial for the compositing fundamentals that will be introduced.

### **Tutorial**    **Creating a Title in Photoshop**

All editing packages come with internal title tools these days, but they often leave a lot to be desired. When compared to sophisticated graphics applications such as Photoshop, they appear rudimentary at best. The good news is that you can use a painting or image editing program such as Photoshop to create titles. In your editing program, you can then superimpose your graphics files over your video. (If you don't want to super your graphics, but just want them on a solid background, you can simply import a graphic into your editing package as is.)

Let's say you want to superimpose a simple title graphic over an establishing shot in your video. Although you could go to your favorite paint program, grab the Text tool, type some graphics, and save the file, when you import this graphic into your editing or effects package, the background behind the text will be solid, and thus will obscure any video layered beneath it.

You could try to use a chroma or luminance key as we described earlier, but keys can result in ragged edges around your characters, and require much more time to render. There are some better solutions.

If you will be performing your composite in Adobe Premiere, Apple's Final Cut Pro, or Adobe After Effects, then creating a title with Adobe Photoshop or higher will be fairly simple, because these programs provide direct support for files in Photoshop format:

1. First, create a new document in Photoshop. If your video is in DV format, you'll need to create a document that is 720 × 540 pixels with a resolution of 72 pixels per inch. Other video formats—and some analog



- digitizing cards—might require different sizes. (See the preceding section, “Pixel Aspect Ratios.”) Check your manual for details. In the New Document window, enter the correct dimensions, and check *Transparent* to give the document a transparent background.
2. Now you can simply pick a color, grab the Type tool, and create a title. Your text will be created on a separate *Text* layer. The layer’s title will be the first few words of your text. Depending on your editing application, you might have to choose *Layer>Text>Render Text* before you save.
  3. Save your document as a Photoshop file, make a backup copy, resize it to 720 x 480 pixels, and import it into Premiere, Final Cut, or After Effects. Upon importing, you’ll be given a choice as to which layer you want to import. Select the Text layer, and your text will be imported with full, correct transparency. Place the text in a track that’s higher in the stacking order than your video. When previewed, you’ll see your text super’ed over your video!

If your editing package doesn’t directly support Photoshop files, or if you’re using an earlier version of Photoshop, or if you want to perform a more sophisticated composite (such as text that fades from top to bottom), then you’ll need to manually create an alpha channel mask for your text.

## Step 1: Create a Document in Photoshop

Create a new document with the appropriate dimensions (720 x 540 if you’re using DV). In the New Document window, enter your dimensions, and under *Contents*, click *White*. This will create a document with a solid, white background. As an alternative, you can open the document *Safe Guides.psd*, located on the companion DVD. This Photoshop document measures 720 x 540, has a white background, and includes a separate layer showing action- and title-safe guides. If you choose to use this document, make sure the Background layer is the active layer. You don’t want to create content in the Safe Guides layer.

## Step 2: Select a Color and Choose Your Tool

Click on the Foreground color swatch to select a color for your text, and then click and hold on the Text tool in the Tool palette to pop out a submenu of other text tools. Select the Horizontal Type Mask tool, the second tool in the menu and the one that looks like a “T” composed of dashed lines (Figure 17.17).

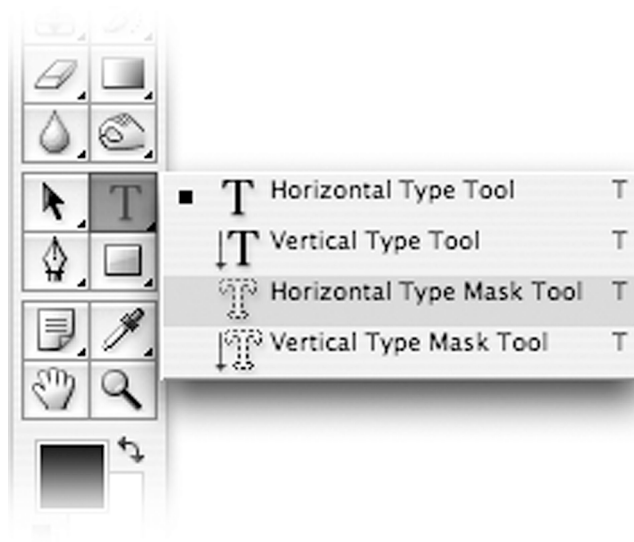


Figure 17.17

Photoshop's Horizontal Type Mask.

## Step 3: Create Your Type

Click in your document window in a location close to where you want the center of your text to be. Click the Center Justify button on the Photoshop toolbar, then enter your text. Set the typeface, size, leading, and other parameters. You won't be able to correct this text later, so check your work carefully. Click OK when finished.

## Step 4: Position Your Type

After clicking OK, you won't actually see any text on your screen. Instead, you'll see a selection, or outline, of your text. You can position this outline by dragging it around with the Move tool (Figure 17.18). (As a shortcut, you can hold down the Command key (Mac) or Control key (Win) to temporarily change your cursor to the Move tool. When you let go, it will revert to the text tool.)



Figure 17.18

After creating type with the Type Mask tool, you'll see a selection rather than colored text.

## Step 5: Color the Selection

To create your type, select *Fill* from the *Edit* menu and choose to fill using the *Foreground* color. This will fill the selection with your chosen color.

## Step 6: Create the Alpha Channel

Now, select *Save Selection* from the *Select* menu. Accept the defaults in the *Save Selection* dialog and press OK. Open the *Channels* palette. Now, in addition to the normal Red, Green, and Blue channels, you should see an additional channel called *Alpha 1*. Click on this channel in the Channels palette to look at your new alpha channel.

The black areas of the channel will be completely transparent when rendered in your editor. In other words, any video positioned underneath these areas will show through. Just like a stencil, the black areas indicate areas of the text layer that will be masked. The white areas indicate areas of the layer that will be visible. Because the black is masking out the area around our text, we'll see the underlying video. Our colored text will be superimposed (Figure 17.19).

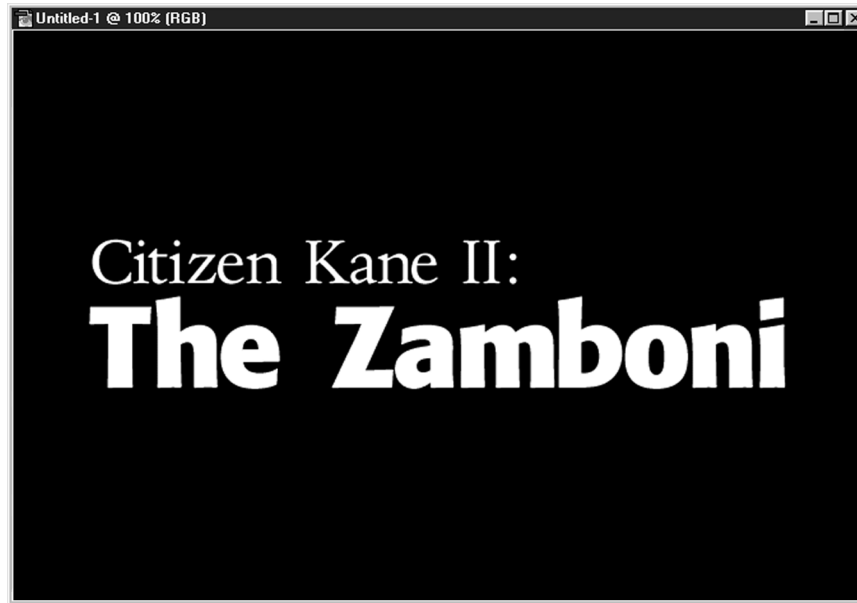


Figure 17.19

The black areas in our alpha channel indicate areas of the image that will be masked away to reveal underlying layers. This alpha channel will result in our colored text being visible, but the area around it being transparent.

## Step 7: Save Your Document

If you're using the Safe Guides document, switch back to the Layers palette and discard the Guides layer. Make a backup copy and then resize your artwork to 720 3 480. Now, save this document in a format supported by your editing or effects program. Note that you'll need to select a format that supports alpha channels, such as TIFF, PICT, or Photoshop (PSD).

## Step 8: Import Your Title and Video into Your Editor

Launch your editing package, and import your source video and the title document you just made. Place both documents in your timeline, with your title document in a higher layer.



## Step 9: Define Transparency

Now you need to tell your software to use the alpha channel that is included in your text document. Some applications such as Adobe After Effects automatically treat the alpha channel as a mask and render appropriate transparency. Other applications, such as Avid Media Composer, will ask you to define the alpha channel when you import the image. Still other applications require you to define the alpha channel as transparent, just as you would define a chroma key to knock out a colored background. Consult your manual for details. If you're unsure of where to find such information, check the manual's index for terms such as *Setting Transparency*, or *Alpha Channels*.

That's it! Remember that if you want to change the text, you not only have to recreate the colored text, but the corresponding alpha channel as well. If you're putting multiple titles on the same screen, you might want to consider creating separate title elements in separate documents, and then arranging them on-screen in your compositing program. This will make it easier to keep your titles discreet and editable.

### Text Fringing

Depending on the size of your text and the color of your background, you might see a thin white fringe around your text when it is composited. Photoshop smoothes text by slightly blurring the edges of each character into the background, a process known as *anti-aliasing*. Because the background in your document was white, the intermediate hues within the blur contain a lot of white. If the background in your composite is not white, these white pixels might show up.

If your final destination is video, the odds are that this fringe won't be seen. However, if your video is being prepared for CD, DVD, HD, or online distribution, or if your titles will be scanned directly to film, then it just might be visible. You have a couple of options for removing it:

- Grab a still from the video over which it will be composited, use this as the background layer in Photoshop, and recreate your text over this layer.
- Before exporting, click on the alpha channel in the Channels palette and apply a Minimize filter (Filter>Other>Minimize). Specify a Radius of 1 pixel. If you're using a very thin-stroked typeface, this might cause some of the type's lines to break apart.

Although this might seem like a lot of work just to get a simple title, remember that there will be times when you'll be using these techniques to create titles that can't be made any other way.



Congratulations! Although this example might seem pretty simple (and somewhat boring), you've actually just learned a fundamental, basic task that you will use over and over again for any type of effects work. Alpha channel masking is an essential concept for all types of visual trickery, from advanced color correction to sophisticated effects. In the next section, we'll take your alpha channel understanding a bit further.