

## Distributing Shapes: Get Your Ducks in a Row! (Photoshop Elements)



Tip of the Week by Barb Brookbank on February 14, 2012

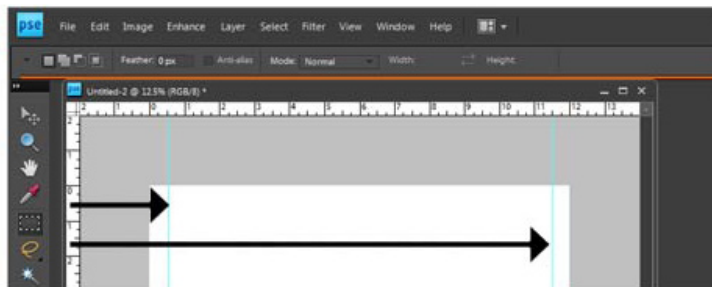
I'm a very structured person. When I decorate, I like things to be square against a wall. I color inside the box. My towels hang at exactly the same length on the towel racks. When I bake, I measure all my ingredients into separate bowls and line them up. I simply like to have my ducks in a row!

When I scrap, I always use Grids and Guides. I'm so regimented that I sometimes wonder if I might have been in the military in another life! But, maybe not. When I have my foundation straight and solid, I feel secure enough to veer outside the lines and get creative.

In this Digi Scrap Tutorial I'm going to show you how to create a template with shapes that are perfectly lined up using the Distribute command.

### Step One: Prepare the Workspace

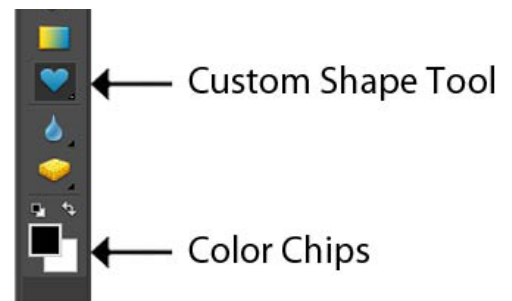
- Create a new document (File > New > Blank File) that is 12"x12" at 300ppi with a white background.
- In the Menu Bar, choose View > Rulers if they are not already visible.
- Get the Move tool.
- Click inside the Vertical Ruler and drag out a Guide to the 1/2" mark.
- Click inside the Vertical Ruler and drag out another Guide to the 11 1/2" mark.
- The positions do not have to be perfect, just as close as you can get them.



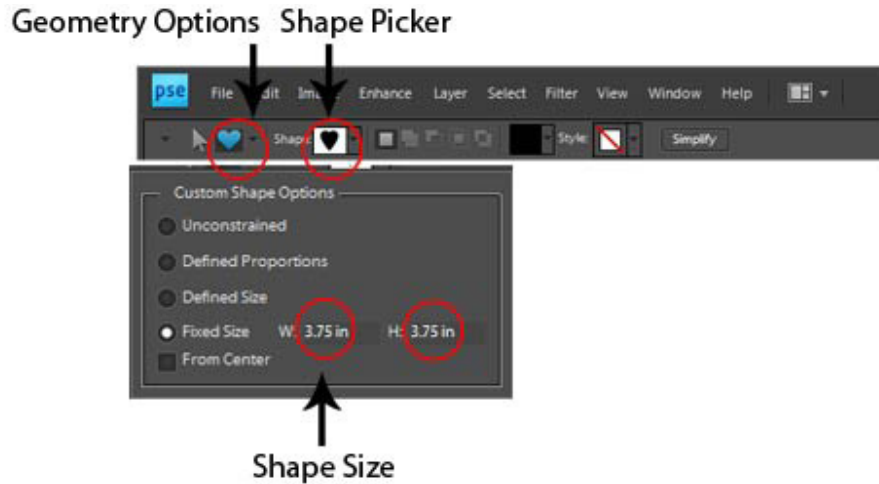
**Note:** Guides were introduced in Photoshop Elements 8.0. If you have an earlier version, you can just use your Grid (View > Grid) to line up your shapes.

### Step Two: Create the Shapes

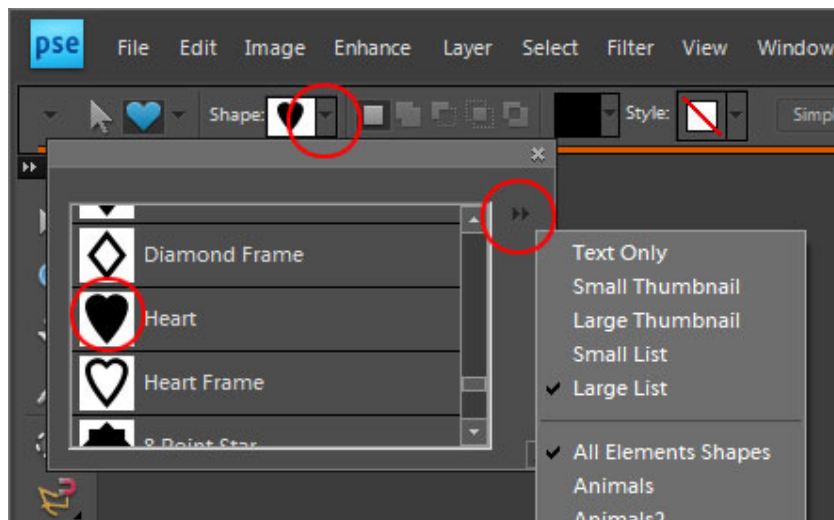
- Press the letter D to reset the Color Chips to the default of black and white.
- In the Tool Bar, get the Custom Shape tool. It is nested with the Rectangle tool.



- In the Options Bar, click on the down-facing arrow to open the Geometry Options. Choose Fixed Sized and enter 3.75in for both the Width and the Height.



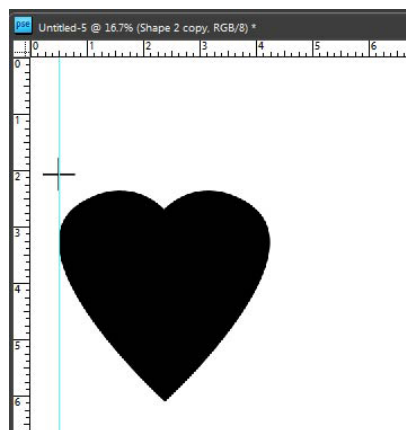
- In the Options Bar, open the Shape Picker and choose Heart.
- If you do not see the Heart shape, open the flyout menu and choose Large List. Then open the flyout menu again and choose All Elements Shapes.



- On your document, position the cross hairs of the Custom Shape tool anywhere along the left Vertical Guide and click to create the shape.

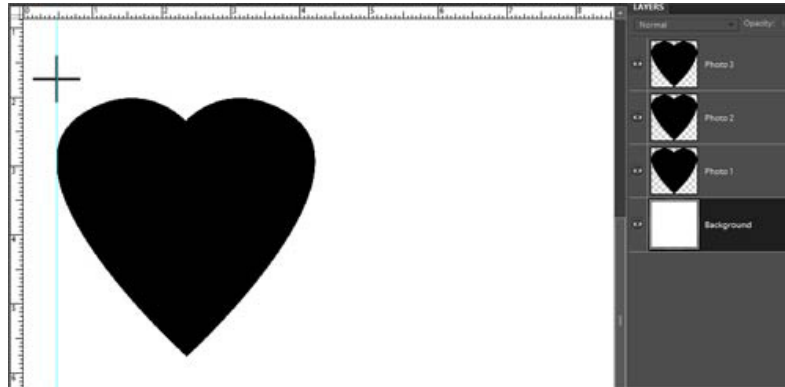
**Note:** The left edge of the shape should touch the left Vertical Guide.

- In the Menu Bar, choose Layer > Simplify Layer.



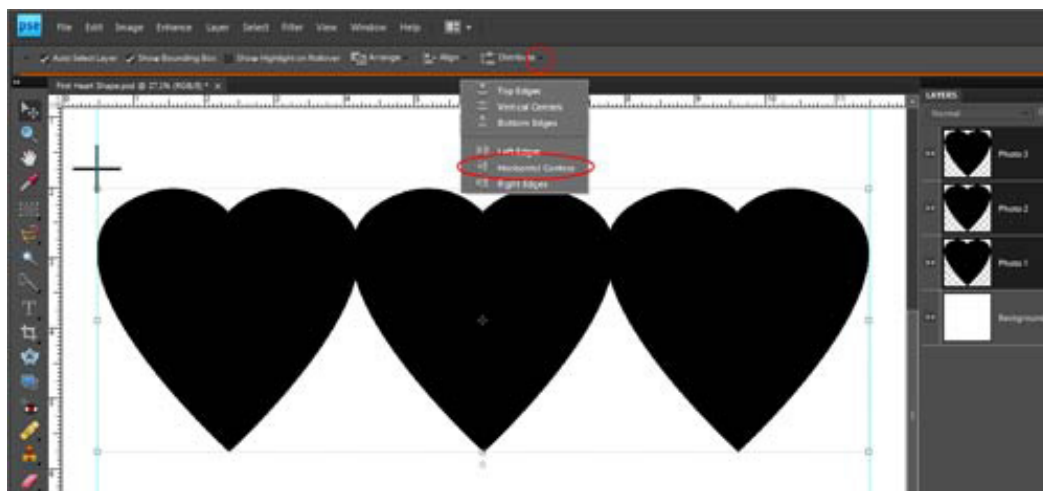
### Step Three: Duplicate and Rename the Shapes

- In the Layers panel, double click directly on the name of the shape layer and rename it “Photo 1.” Click anywhere outside the box to accept the name change.
- With the Photo 1 layer activated, press Ctrl J (Mac: Cmd J) to Duplicate the layer.
- Rename this new layer “Photo 2” using the previous instructions.
- Press Ctrl J (Mac: Cmd J) to create one more duplicate.
- Rename this new layer “Photo 3” using the previous instructions.



### Step Four: Distribute the Shapes

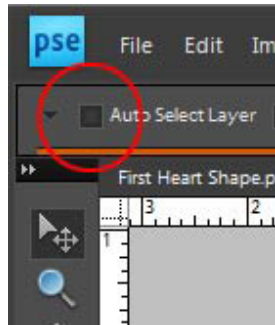
- Get the Move tool.
- In the Layers panel, make sure the Photo 3 layer is active.
- On the document, while holding down the Shift key, drag the shape to the right until it touches the right Guide.
- In the Layers panel, activate the Photo 1 layer by clicking on it. Then while holding down the Shift key, click on the Photo 3 layer to activate all three shape layers at the same time.
- In the Options Bar, click on the down-facing arrow to open the Distribute Options. Choose Horizontal Centers.
- Keep all three layers active for the next step.



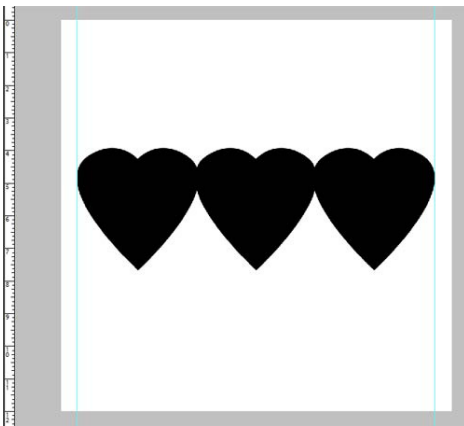
### Step Five: Create a Balanced Design

- Make sure the Move tool is active.

- In the Options Bar, uncheck Auto-Select Layer.



- On the document, while holding down the Shift key, click and drag the group of shapes up or down until the top of the group is at the 4” mark. This is one option for a more balanced design.



- In the Menu Bar, choose Select > Deselect Layers.

### Step Six: Save the Template as a PSD File

- Save (File > Save) as a .psd file using a descriptive name such as “Three Heart Template.psd”
- Use the heart shapes as Clipping Masks for your photos.
- Be sure to save your finished document with a new name so as not to overwrite the template.

Not sure what a Clipping Mask is or how to use it? Check out these videos: [What is a Clipping Mask?](#) and [How Do I Clip a Photo to a Photo Clipping Mask Layer?](#)

Credits:

Digi Scrap Tutorial: Distributing Shapes - Get Your Ducks in a Row! by Barb Brookbank

Kit: [Rule My World](#) by Irene Alexeeva, available to Premier members February 2009

Font: CK Ali's Hand

“My Sweet Valentine” by Barb Brookbank

Software: Photoshop Elements 8.0

