

Bokeh – Add Magic to Your Backgrounds with a Bokeh Brush!

Tip of the Week by Barb Brookbank on December 4, 2012

There's something very magical about photos with bokeh.

When one part of a photo is out of focus and another part is not, the part that is out of focus is called bokeh.

Sometimes those out-of-focus points appear as circles or polygons. You can even have hearts, or snowflakes, and more when a special lens cover is used. Just google 'bokeh' and prepare to get blown away!

In this tutorial I'm going to show you how to add some pretty little bokeh lights to a photo that already has bokeh. Huh?

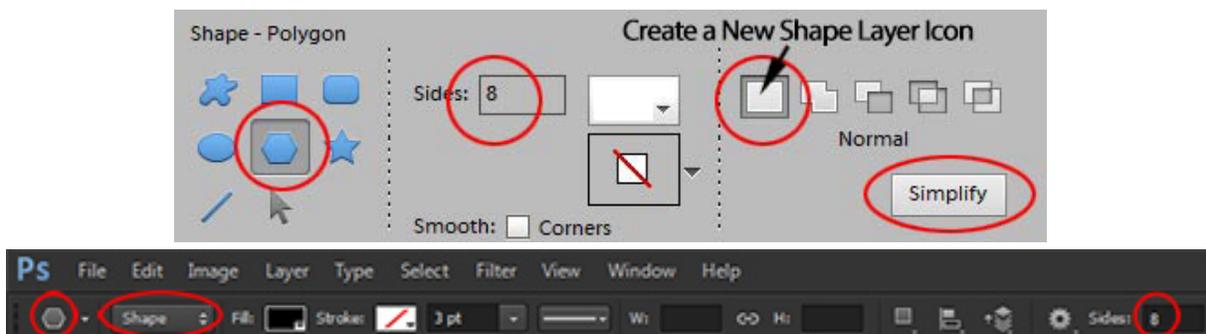
In my photo the background is blurred (bokeh), which brings attention to my little bird. But I wanted those extra little lights, which I didn't capture when I took the photo, so... Photoshop to the rescue!

Step 1: Prepare the Workspace

- Create a new document (File > New > Blank File) that is 900px by 450px at 300ppi with a transparent background. (Photoshop: Choose File > New.)
- Press the letter D to reset the Color Chips to the default of black and white.

Step 2: Create the Shape

- Get the Polygon tool.
- In the Tool Options, enter 8 for the Sides and click on the Create a New Shape Layer icon. (Photoshop: Also set the Tool Mode to Shape and Stroke to 0 px [CS6].)
- In the Layers panel, click on the Create a New Layer icon.
- On the document, click and drag to create a polygon.
- Click on the Simplify button to simplify the shape. (Photoshop: Choose Layer > Rasterize > Shape.)
- Reduce the Opacity to 75%.

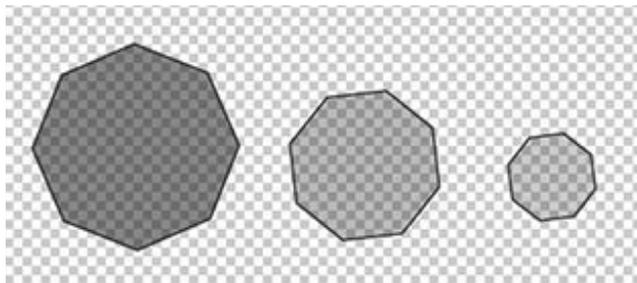


Step 3: Add a Stroke Outline

- In the Layers panel, Ctrl click (Mac: Cmd click) on the thumbnail of the polygon layer to get a selection outline.
- Click on the Create a New Layer icon to create a new layer above the polygon layer.
- Click on the Foreground Color Chip to open the Color Picker. Enter 363636 for the Hex code and click OK.
- In the Menu Bar, choose Edit > Stroke (Outline) Selection.
- (Photoshop: Choose Edit > Stroke.)
- Enter 2px for the Width and choose Inside for the Location. Click OK.
- Press Ctrl D (Mac: Cmd D) to deselect.
- In the Menu Bar, choose Layer > Merge Down.

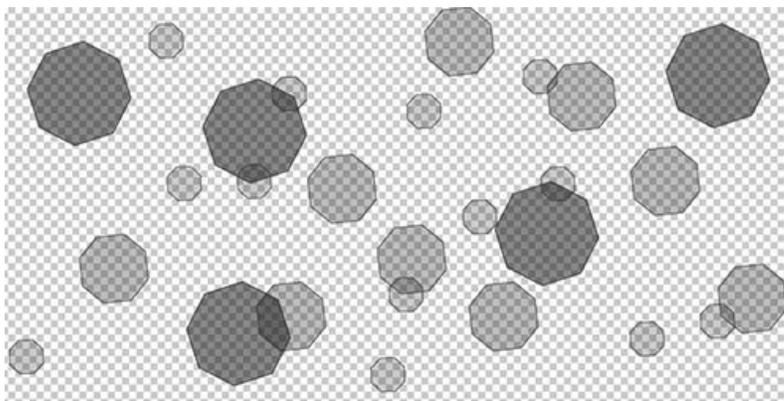
Step 4: Create Two More Shapes

- Press the letter D to reset the Color Chips to the default of black and white.
- Follow the directions in Step 2 to create another polygon, but make it a bit smaller and set the Opacity to 50%.
- Repeat Step 3 on the new polygon.
- Press the letter D to reset the Color Chips to the default of black and white.
- Create one more polygon, making it smaller than the first two and set the Opacity to 40%.
- Repeat Step 3 on the new polygon.
- You should now have 3 polygons of different sizes and opacities.



Step 5: Create the Bokeh

- Get the Move tool.
- In the Tool Options, make sure Auto Select Layer is unchecked.
- In the Layers panel, click on a polygon layer and press Ctrl J (Mac: Cmd J) several times to copy it.
- Repeat with the other two polygon layers.
- To create the bokeh pattern, click on each polygon layer separately and move it around until you have a pattern that you are pleased with. You may want to overlap a few.
- Save the document (File > Save) as a .psd file and use a descriptive name such as “Polygon Bokeh Brush Layered Document.” This is in case you should ever lose your brush or you want to change the pattern—you can go back to the .psd file.



Step 6: Create a Brush

- In the Menu Bar, choose Edit > Define > Brush. (Photoshop: Choose Edit > Define > Brush Preset.)
- In the dialog box, type in a name for your brush and click OK. I named mine “Barb’s Polygon Bokeh Brush.”

Step 7: Use Your New Brush on a Photo

- Press the letter D to reset the Color Chips to the default of black and white.
- Press X to switch the Foreground Color Chip to white.
- Get the Brush tool.
- In the Tool Options, click on the down-facing arrow to open the Brush Picker. Scroll to the bottom where you will find your new brush and click on it. Set the Opacity to 100%.
- Open a photo (File > Open).
- In the Layers panel, click on the Create a New Layer Icon to create a layer above the photo.
- On the document, click to add the bokeh. Add as much or as little as you want. Use the Right or Left Bracket Key to resize the brush as needed. It’s going to look a bit overpowering at first, but we’re going to fix that!
- In the Layers panel, change the Blend Mode to Overlay and reduce the Opacity of the bokeh layer to about 10 - 15%.

Credits:

Digi Scrap Tutorial: Bokeh—Add Magic to Your Backgrounds With a Bokeh Brush! by Barb Brookbank

Font: French Script MT

Photo: Barb Brookbank

