

## Mind the Gap! Make Digital Stamping Look More Realistic

*Digi Scrap Tutorial by Helen Ash on March 12, 2013*

If there's one thing I really have fun with in scrapbooking, it's stamping layers of paint and ink onto my pages. I've been a happy stamper for a few years now, but it wasn't until a couple of years ago that I looked at my digital scrapbook pages and realized something was missing.

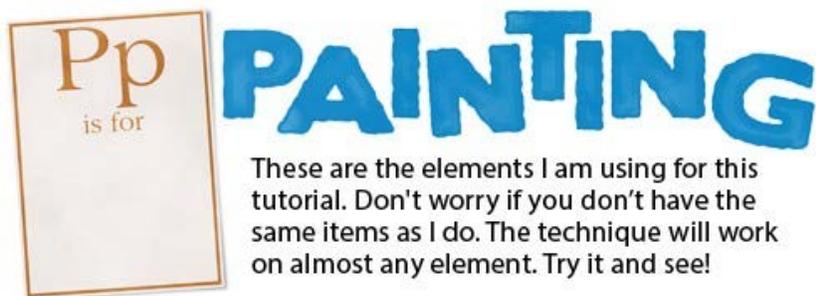
As a paper scrapper, I noticed that stamping over layers of card would leave a slight gap along the outside edges of the card. This was where the paint or ink had naturally missed the layer below. But, when I looked at my digital scrapbook pages, that gap was missing—and it didn't look good!



So, out came the Eraser tool, and from then on, those neat little gaps appeared on all my pages. All was well and good until I wanted to stamp over something that didn't have straight edges! Oh, the struggles I had trying to erase around a scalloped edged mat. A fancy doily was even worse! So, I'm going to share with you a neat little trick for making digital stamps and paints look more realistic when stamped over an element. It will work on any shape, although it is best suited to elements that are not too thick, and you won't even have to get out the Eraser tool!

Before we begin: For the purpose of this tutorial, I am working on an existing scrapbook page using a journal card from [Alphabet Soup](#) by Digilicious Designs and a paint stamp I created from the My Stamp Pad 2 brush set by Darcy Baldwin. You will most likely be using different elements. So, just to be clear:

- Journal card = any element over which you will stamp
- Paint stamp = any element used as a stamp



### Step One: Prepare the Workspace

- Create a new document (File > New > Blank File) or open an existing scrapbook page (File > Open). (Photoshop: Choose File > New.) If you use an existing page, be sure it is layered.
- Open a journal card (File > Open) that you want to use.
- Get the Move tool.
- Click on the journal card and drag it onto your document.

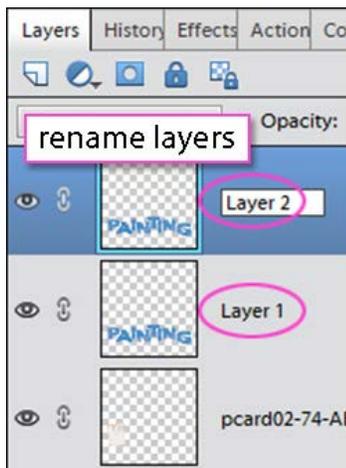
- In the same way add a stamp to your page.
- On your document, position the journal card and paint stamp where you want them to be. Be sure that the paint stamp is on the layer above the journal card. In this example, I have positioned the paint stamp over the journal card so that some of the edges are covered. I have also slightly tilted the journal card and given it a small drop shadow.

**Note:** This is a destructive method of erasing, so be sure to position your stamp and journal card exactly where you want them to stay!



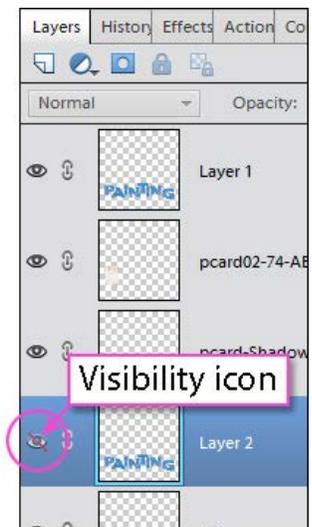
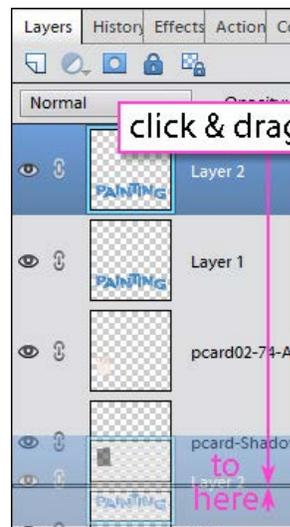
## Step Two: Duplicate the Paint Stamp

- In the Layers panel, double click directly on the name of the paint stamp layer and rename it "Layer 1."
- Click on Layer 1 to activate it.
- Press Ctrl J (Mac: Cmd J) to duplicate the layer.
- In the same way rename the duplicate layer "Layer 2."



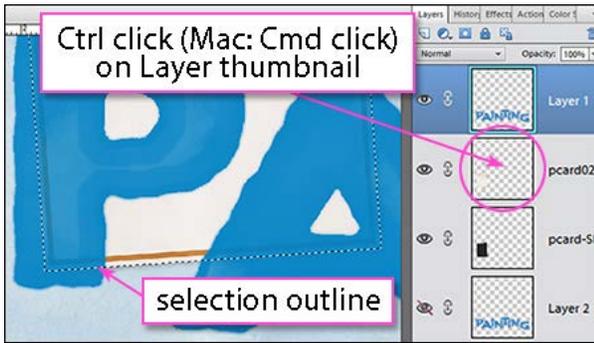
- In the Layers panel, click and drag Layer 2 below the journal card layer. If you have a custom shadow layer under your journal card, drag Layer 2 below it.
- Click on the Visibility icon to hide Layer 2 for now.

**Note:** It is important to do this or it will be difficult to see when a section of the paint stamp is deleted in the next step.



### Step Three: Select and Delete a Section of Layer 1

- In the Layers panel, click on Layer 1 to activate it.
- Ctrl click (Mac: Cmd click) on the thumbnail of the journal card layer to get a selection outline.



- In the Menu Bar, choose Select > Feather. (Photoshop: Choose Select > Modify > Feather.)
- In the dialog box, enter 5 pixels for Feather Selection and click OK.

**Note:** Feathering will give the edge a nice natural stamped look. Depending on the size of your elements, you may want to increase the Feathering a little more. Just be careful not to make it look unrealistic.

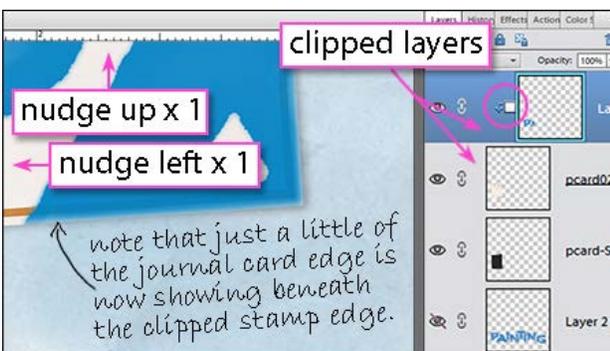
- In the Menu Bar, choose Select > Inverse.
- Press the Backspace key (Mac: Delete key) to delete the section of Layer 1 that lies outside the journal card.



- Press Ctrl D (Mac: Cmd D) to Deselect.
- Get the Move tool.
- Using the Arrow keys, nudge Layer 1 upwards once. Then nudge it to the left once.

**Note:** Depending on the size of your elements, you may want to nudge it more than once each way. Just be careful not to nudge it too far or it could look unrealistic.

- In the Menu Bar, choose Layer > Create Clipping Mask to clip Layer 1 to the journal card.

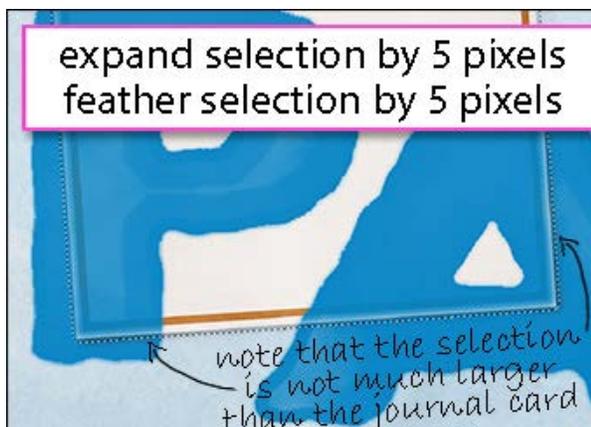


## Step Four: Select and Delete a Section of Layer 2

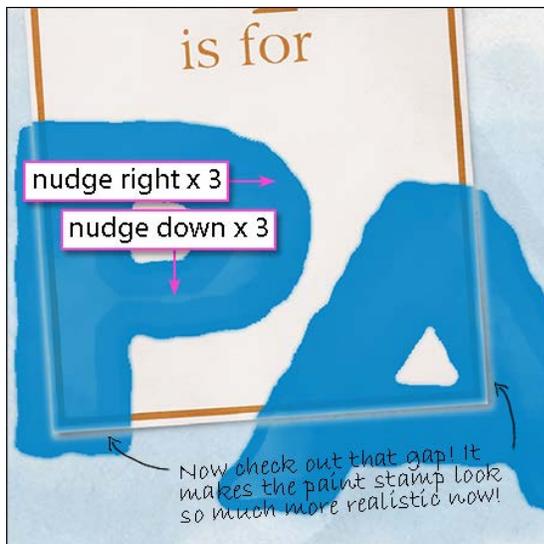
- In the Layers panel, click on Layer 2 to activate it.
- Click on its Visibility icon to make the layer visible.
- Ctrl click (Mac: Cmd click) on the thumbnail of the journal card layer to get a selection outline.
- In the Menu Bar, choose Select > Modify > Expand.
- In the dialog box, enter 5 pixels for Expand Selection and click OK.

**Note:** You may need to play around with this setting a little to suit your chosen element. As a guide, this setting works well for paper and card, but if you were to stamp over something thicker like a chipboard element, then the number of pixels should be increased slightly. Just keep in mind to not let the selection area get unrealistically large.

- In the Menu Bar, choose Select > Feather. (Photoshop: Choose Select > Modify > Feather.)
- In the dialog box, enter 5 pixels and click OK.



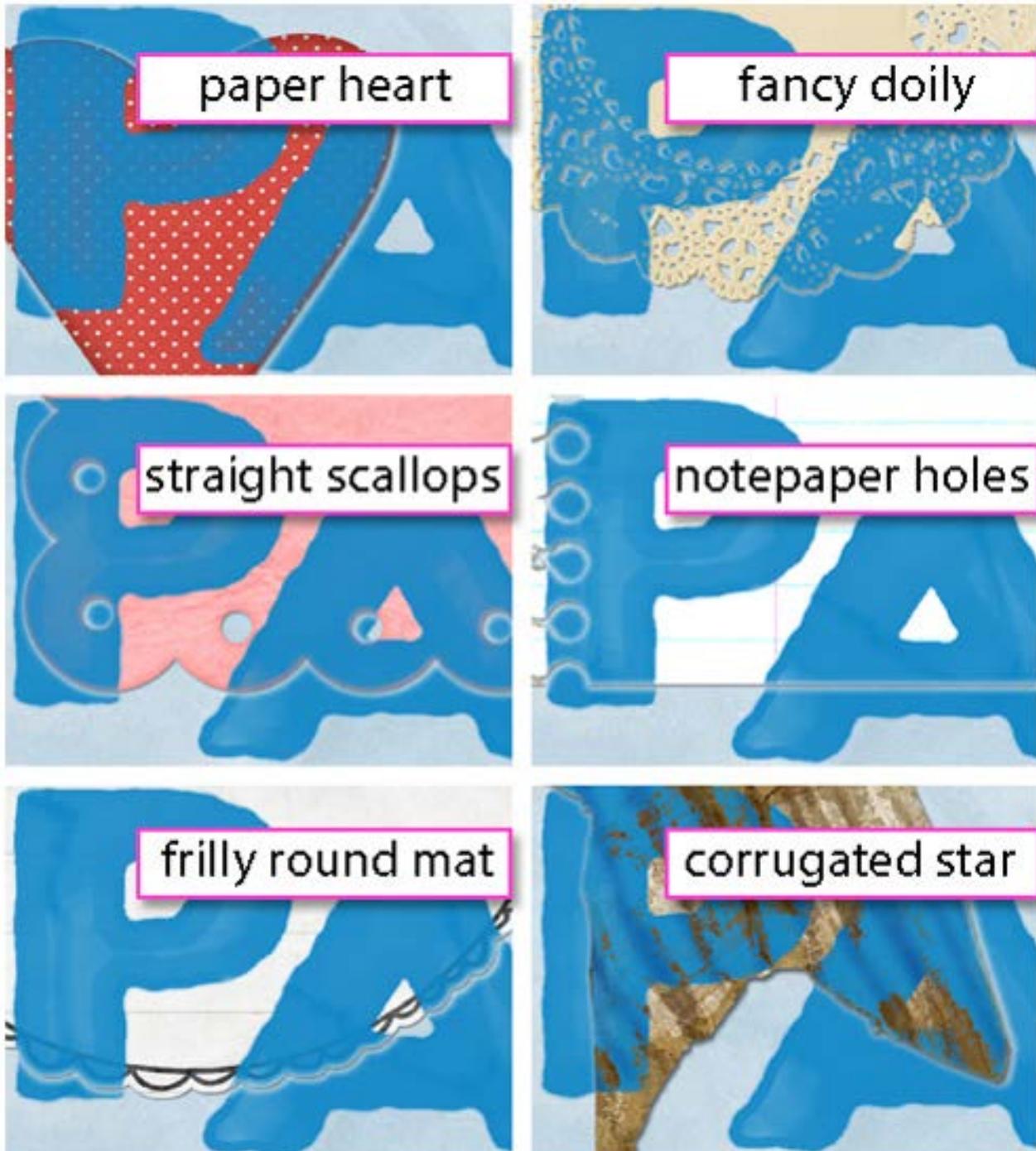
- Press the Backspace key (Mac: Delete key) to delete the section of Layer 2 that lies below the journal card.
- Press Ctrl D (Mac: Cmd D) to Deselect.
- Get the Move tool.
- Using the Arrow keys, nudge Layer 2 downwards three times. Then nudge it to the right three times. You should now have a nice realistic-looking gap around the edges of your journal card.



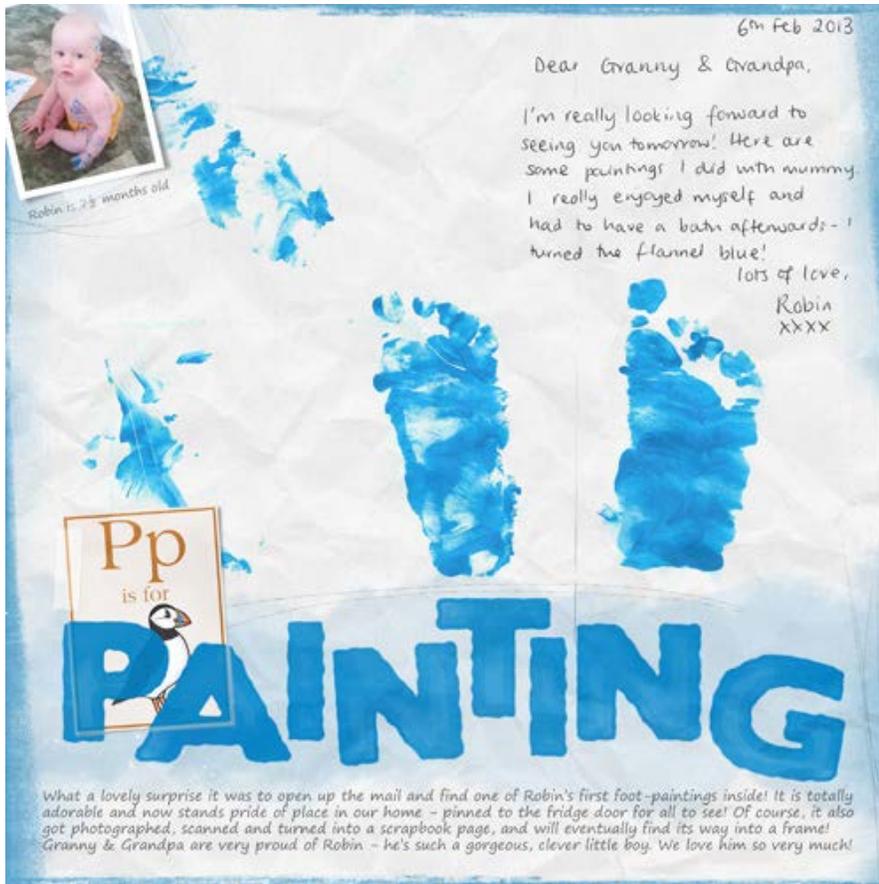
This technique is so versatile and can be used to create that little gap around the edge of any shape. But, keep in mind that it is best suited to elements that are not too thick. It creates a subtle (but pleasing!) effect and it is so much quicker and easier than trying to erase the edges by hand! Try it with paint stamps, brushes, word art, and even clipping masks, and see how rewarding it feels to add that realistic gap to your digital stamping. I'd love to see how you get on, so please post your creations in the [Digi Scrap Tutorial of the Week Gallery](#). I'm looking forward to seeing lots of interesting pages!

Happy creating!

😊 Hx



**Here are some examples of the same paint stamp used over irregular-shaped elements:**



**And, here is my completed layout using the lesson example:**

**Credits:**

Digi Scrap Tutorial: "Mind The Gap!" Make Digital Stamping Look More Realistic by Helen Ash (aka SimplyHx)

Fonts used in screenshots: Myriad Pro and Bradley Hand ITC

Elements used in examples: Scallop Mat from [Recess](#) by Heather Roselli, Painted Cardboard Star from [We Celebrate](#) by Julie Mead (originally included in the July 2012 [Premier](#) issue), Paper Heart from [Carefree](#) by Amanda Heimann (originally included in the August 2012 [Premier](#) issue), Doily from [Home Sweet Home](#) by Leora Sanford (originally included in the February 2011 [Premier](#) issue), Journal Circle from [All I Have To Do Is Dream](#) by Lauren Grier (included with the original [Learn Digital Scrapbooking](#) class materials), Journal Mat from *Travel Adventure* by Linda Sattgast

Scrapbook Layout: *Robin's Painting* by SimplyHx

Photo by Beth Ash

Elements: Card and Tape from [Alphabet Soup](#) by Digilicious Designs (originally included in the September 2011 [Premier](#) issue), Overlay from Textured Overlays Vol3 by Susie Roberts, Scribbles from [ArtPlay Palette Family](#) by Anna Aspnes (originally included in the March 2012 [Premier](#) issue), Edge Grunge Overlay by jomi, Puffin from Clipart, *My Stamp Pad 2* by Darcy Baldwin

Font: Segoe Print

Software: PS CS6, PSE 11