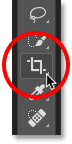
**How To Create A Square Photo Collage**

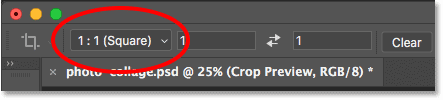
**Step 1: Crop the image into a square**

The first thing we need to do is crop our image into a square. Select the [Crop Tool](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/photo-editing/how-to-crop-images-photoshop-cc/) from the Toolbar:



Selecting the Crop Tool.

In the Options Bar, set the **Aspect Ratio** to **Square**:



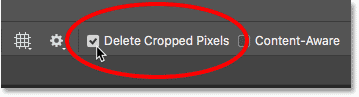
Setting the Aspect Ratio to Square.

Photoshop adds an initial square cropping border around the image:



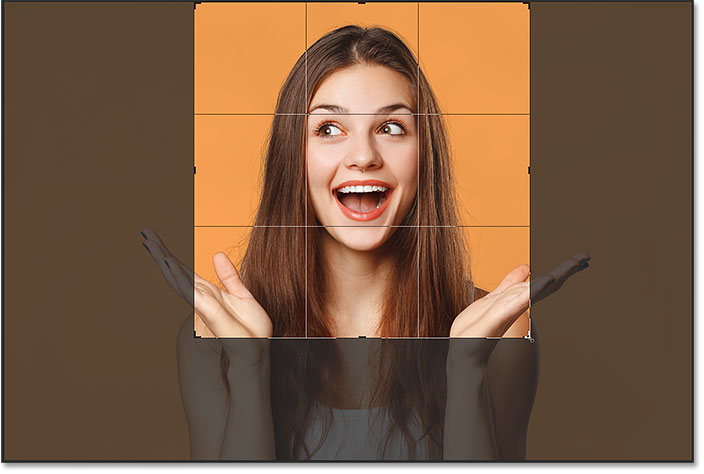
The initial square crop border.

Back in the Options Bar, make sure that **Delete Cropped Pixels** is checked:



Delete Cropped Pixels should be turned on.

Then drag the crop handles to resize the border around your subject. If you're working with a portrait, try to keep the person's main facial features (their eyes, nose and mouth) within the center square:



Resizing the cropping border around the subject.

To crop the image, press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac):



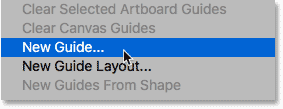
The result after cropping the image into a square.

**Step 2: Add some guides**

To help us divide the image into smaller squares, we'll add some guides.

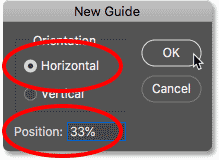
**Adding the first horizontal guide**

Go up to the **View** menu in the Menu Bar and choose **New Guide**:



Going to View > New Guide.

In the New Guide dialog box, set the **Orientation** to **Horizontal**, and then enter **33%** for the **Position**. Click OK to close the dialog box:



Adding the first guide.

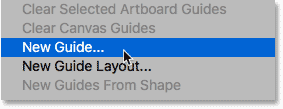
Photoshop adds the first horizontal guide a third of the way down from the top:



The first horizontal guide is added.

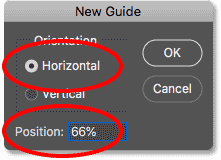
**Adding a second horizontal guide**

To add a second guide, go back up to the **View** menu and again choose **New Guide**:



Going back to View > New Guide.

Leave the **Orientation** set to **Horizontal**, but this time, enter **66%** for the **Position**. Click OK to close the dialog box:



Adding the second guide.

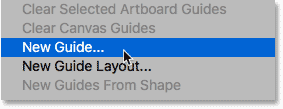
And Photoshop adds a second guide, this time two thirds down from the top:



The second horizontal guide is added.

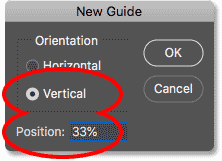
**Adding a vertical guide**

Go back up to the **View** menu and again choose **New Guide**:



Going back to View > New Guide.

For this third guide, change the **Orientation** to **Vertical**, and enter **33%** for the **Position**. Then, click OK:



Adding the third guide.

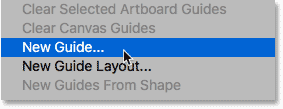
This adds a vertical guide a third of the way from the left:



The first vertical guide is added.

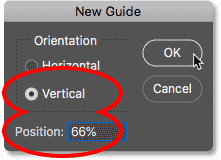
**Adding a second vertical guide**

And finally, go back one last time to the **View** menu and choose **New Guide**:



Going back to View > New Guide.

Leave the **Orientation** set to **Vertical** but change the **Position** to **66%**. Click OK when you're done:



Adding the fourth guide.

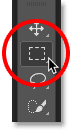
Photoshop adds a second vertical guide, two thirds of the way from the left, and we now have our image divided into smaller squares:



The four guides dividing the image into squares.

**Step 3: Select and copy each square to a new layer**

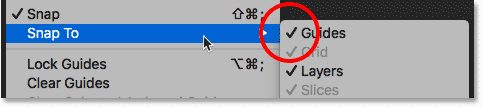
We need to select each square and copy it to its own layer. Select the [Rectangular Marquee Tool](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/basics/selections/rectangular-marquee-tool/) from the Toolbar:



Selecting the Rectangular Marquee Tool.

**Snapping the selections to the guides**

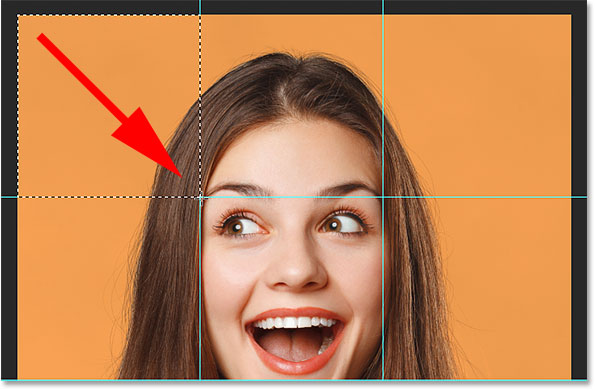
To make sure that our selections will snap to the guides, go up to the **View** menu, choose **Snap To**, and make sure that **Guides** has a checkmark beside it. If it doesn't, click on it to select it:



Look for the checkmark beside Guides.

**Selecting the first square**

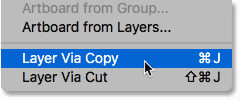
We'll start with the square in the upper left. Click and drag a selection outline around it. If you followed the last step, the selection outline should snap to the guides:



Drawing a selection outline around the square in the upper left corner.

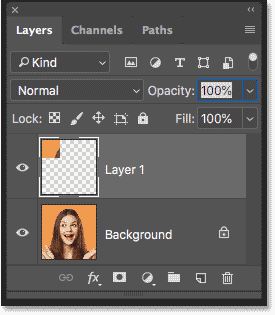
**Copying the square to a new layer**

To copy the square to its own layer, go up to the **Layer** menu, choose **New**, and then choose **Layer via Copy**. Or, a faster way is to press the keyboard shortcut, **Ctrl+J** (Win) / **Command+J** (Mac):



Going to Layer > New > Layer via Copy.

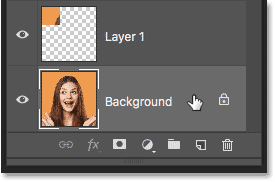
In the [Layers panel](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/basics/layers/layers-panel/), we see that Photoshop has placed a copy of the square on a new layer above the image:



The square has been copied to its own layer.

**Selecting the Background layer**

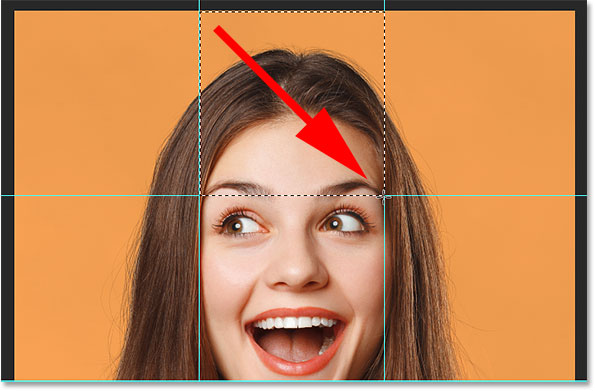
Before we can select a second square, we first need to reselect the image. Click on the [Background layer](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/basics/background-layer-photoshop-cc/) to select it. Each time you select and copy a new square, you'll need to reselect the Background layer first:



Selecting the Background layer.

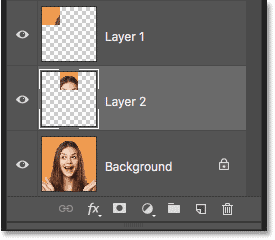
**Selecting and copying a second square**

Then draw a selection around the square in the top center:



Selecting the second square.

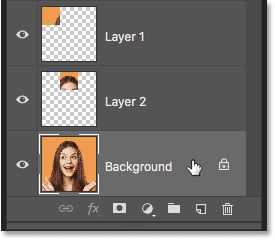
To quickly copy it to a new layer, press **Ctrl+J** (Win) / **Command+J** (Mac). And back in the Layers panel, we now have *two* squares above the image:



A second square has been copied.

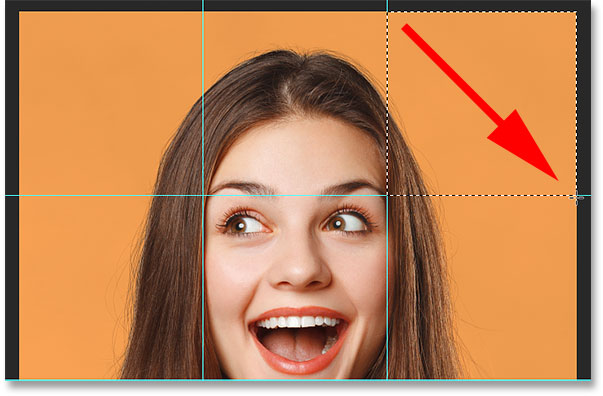
**Selecting and copying the remaining squares**

To select and copy the remaining squares, just repeat the same steps. First, click on the **Background layer** to select the image:



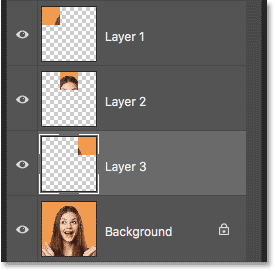
Always reselect the Background layer before selecting a new square.

Draw a selection outline around a new square:



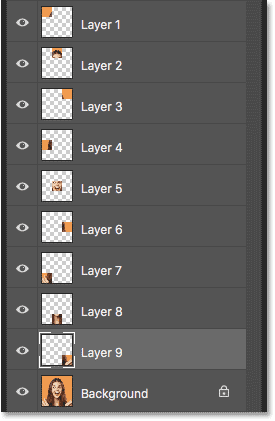
Select a different square.

And then press **Ctrl+J** (Win) / **Command+J** (Mac) to copy the square to a new layer:



The square is copied to a new layer.

I'll continue selecting and copying the squares until I've selected them all. And in the Layers panel, we now see all nine squares, each on a separate layer, above the image:

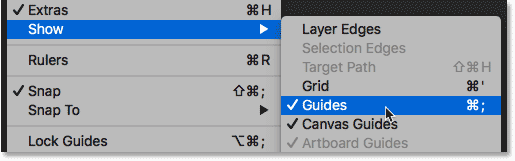


All 9 squares have been copied.

[**Get all of our tutorials as print-ready PDFs!**](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/print-ready-pdfs/)

**Step 4: Hide the guides**

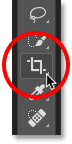
We don't need our guides anymore, so let's hide them by going up to the **View** menu, choosing **Show**, and then choosing **Guides**:



Turning off the guides.

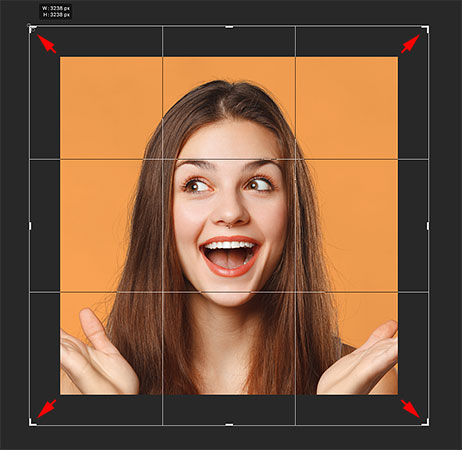
**Step 5: Add more canvas space**

To give us room to move and rotate the squares, we'll [add more canvas space](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/photo-editing/increasing-canvas-size-crop-tool-photoshop/) around the image. And we can do that using the Crop Tool. Select the **Crop Tool** from the Toolbar:



Reselecting the Crop Tool.

Press and hold the **Alt** (Win) / **Option** (Mac) key on your keyboard, and then click and drag any of the crop handles outward and away from the image. The Alt / Option key lets you resize the cropping border from its center:



Adding more canvas space with the Crop Tool.

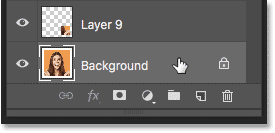
Press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) to accept it, and Photoshop adds the extra canvas space:



More space has been added around the photo.

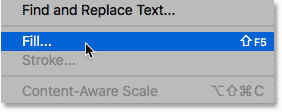
**Step 6: Fill the background with black**

By default, Photoshop fills the new space with white, but let's fill our background with black. In the Layers panel, select the **Background layer**:



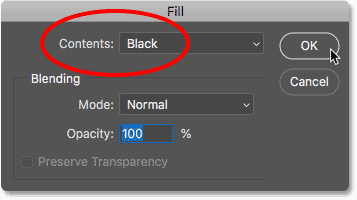
Selecting the Background layer.

Then go up to the **Edit** menu and choose **Fill**:



Going to Edit > Fill.

In the Fill dialog box, set the **Contents** option to **Black**, and then click OK:



Setting Contents to Black.

The image now appears in front of a black background:



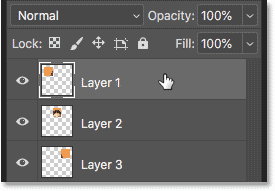
The result after filling the background with black.

**Step 7: Add a stroke around the first square**

At the moment, we can't really see our squares, so let's make them more obvious. And to make them look like separate photos, we'll add a stroke around them. We'll start by adding a stroke to one of the squares, and then we'll copy and paste it onto the others.

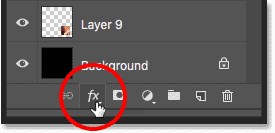
**Adding a stroke**

In the Layers panel, select the top layer (the one that holds the square in the upper left):



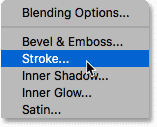
Selecting the top layer.

Then click the **Layer Styles** icon (the **fx** icon) at the bottom of the Layers panel:



Clicking the "fx" icon.

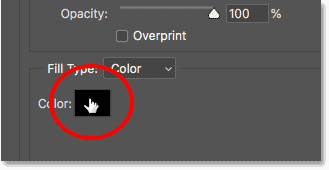
And choose **Stroke** from the list:



Adding a Stroke layer effect.

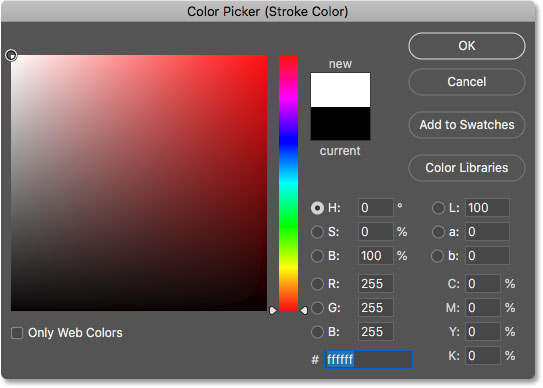
**Changing the stroke color**

In the Layer Style dialog box, click the **color swatch**:



Clicking the color swatch in the Stroke options.

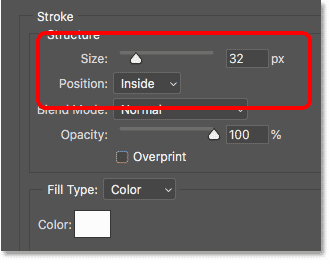
And then in the **Color Picker**, change the color of the stroke to **white**, and then click OK:



Choosing white for the new stroke color.

**Setting the Size and Position**

Back in the Layer Style dialog box, set the **Position** of the stroke to **Inside**. Then, keep an eye on the square in the upper left of your image as you increase the **Size** value by dragging the slider. I'll go with a value of around **32 px**, but this will depend on the size of your image:



Setting the Position and Size of the stroke.

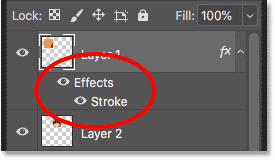
Click OK to close the dialog box, and we now have a border around one of the squares:



The border appears around the square in the upper left.

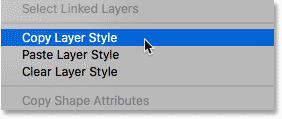
**Step 8: Add the stroke to the other squares**

Back in the Layers panel, we see our stroke listed as an effect below the layer:



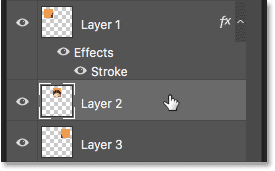
Effects are listed below the layer.

To quickly apply the same stroke to the other squares, we'll copy and paste it. **Right-click** (Win) / **Control-click** (Mac) on the top layer, and then choose **Copy Layer Style** from the menu:



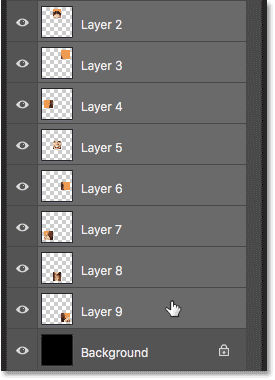
Choosing "Copy Layer Style".

Click on the second layer from the top (Layer 2) to select it:



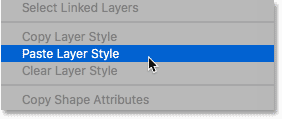
Selecting the second layer from the top.

Press and hold your **Shift** key, and then click on the layer just above the Background layer (Layer 9). This selects all of the other squares at once:



Holding Shift and selecting the bottom square.

**Right-click** (Win) / **Control-click** (Mac) on any of the selected layers, and then choose **Paste Layer Style**:



Choosing "Paste Layer Style".

And just like that, Photoshop pastes the stroke onto the other squares:



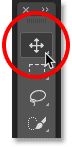
All 9 squares now have the stroke around them.

**Step 9: Move and rotate the squares**

To create more of a collage effect, we'll move and rotate the squares using Photoshop's Free Transform command.

**Selecting the Move Tool**

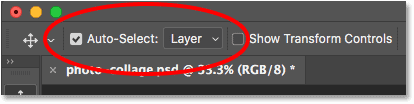
Select the **Move Tool** from the Toolbar:



Selecting the Move Tool.

**Turning on Auto-Select**

In the Options Bar, make sure **Auto-Select** is turned on, and that it's set to **Layer**. This will let us easily select each square just by clicking on it:



Making sure Auto-Select is on and set to Layer.

**Click to select a square**

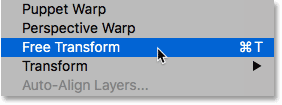
Click on the square in the upper left to select it:



Selecting the upper left square.

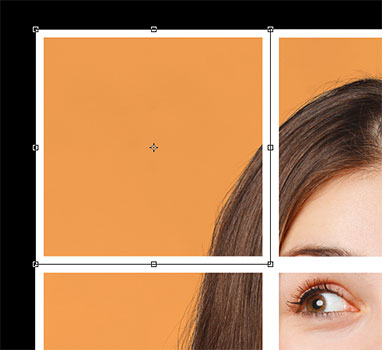
**Move and rotate the square with Free Transform**

Then go up to the **Edit** menu and choose [Free Transform](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/basics/photoshops-free-transform-essentials/). Or, use the keyboard shortcut, **Ctrl+T** (Win) / **Command+T**(Mac):



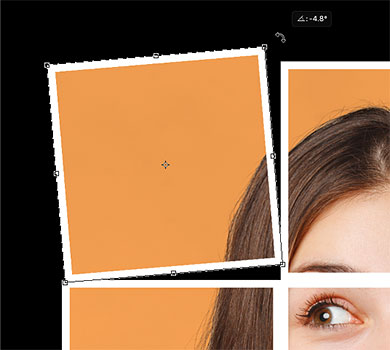
Going to Edit > Free Transform.

Photoshop places the Free Transform box and handles around the square:



The Free Transform handles appear.

To move the square, click and drag anywhere inside the Free Transform box. You can also move it using the **arrow keys**on your keyboard. To rotate it, move your mouse cursor outside the box, and then click and drag:



Moving and rotating the square into place.

To accept it, press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac), and our first square has been moved and rotated into place:



The result after moving and rotating the first square.

**Repeating the steps for the other squares**

To move and rotate the other squares, just repeat the same steps. First, click on a square to select it, and then press **Ctrl+T** (Win) /**Command+T** (Mac) to quickly choose **Free Transform**. Move the square into place, and then rotate it into position. Press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) to accept it.

In my case, I'm going to leave the center square in its original spot, but I'll continue moving and rotating the outer squares until I'm happy with the results. If you just want to move a square without rotating it, there's no need to open Free Transform. You can just click and drag it with the Move Tool, or nudge it into place with the arrow keys on your keyboard:

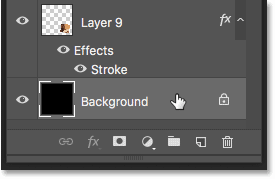


The result after adjusting all of the outer squares.

**Step 10: Change the background color**

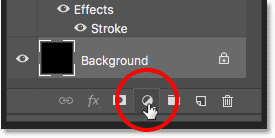
At this point, we've created the main effect, but there's a couple more things we can do. One of them is that we can change the background color. And to do that, we'll use a Solid Color fill layer.

In the Layers panel, click on the **Background layer** to select it:



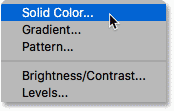
Selecting the Background layer.

Then click the **New Fill or Adjustment Layer** icon:



Clicking the New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon.

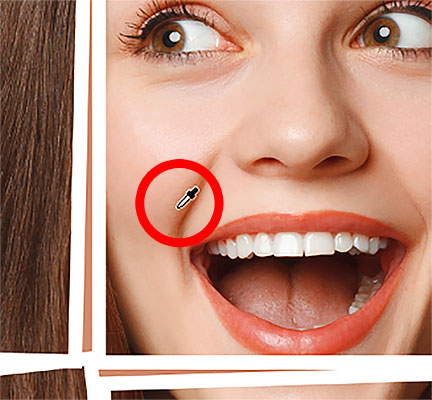
And choose **Solid Color** from the list:



Choosing a Solid Color fill layer.

**Sampling a background color from the image**

In the Color Picker, choose a new color for your background. Or, choose a color directly from your image by moving your cursor into the image and clicking on a color to select it:



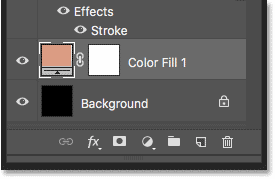
Sampling a new background color from the image.

Once you've found a color you like, click OK to close the Color Picker:



The photo collage with the new background color sampled from the image.

In the Layers panel, we see our new Solid Color fill layer above the Background layer:



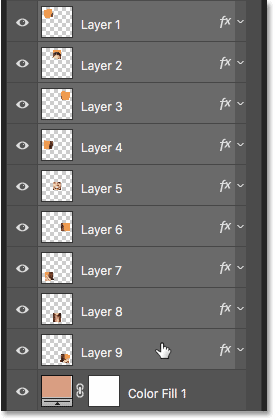
The fill layer sits between the Background layer and the squares.

**Step 11: Add a drop shadow**

Finally, let's finish off the effect by adding a drop shadow behind the squares. To add the shadow to all the squares at once, we'll first place them into a [layer group](https://www.photoshopessentials.com/basics/layers/layer-groups/).

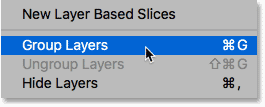
**Grouping the squares**

Click on the top layer (Layer 1) to select it. Then press and hold your **Shift** key and click on the layer directly above the fill layer (Layer 9). This selects all of the squares at once:



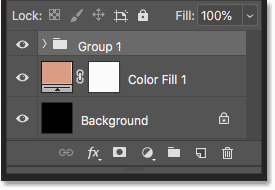
Click on Layer 1, then Shift-click on Layer 9.

Go up to the **Layer** menu and choose **Group Layers**:



Going to Layer > Group Layers.

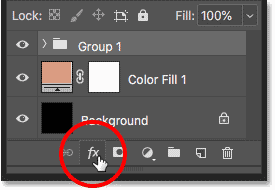
And back in the Layers panel, all of our squares have been placed into a new group. You can twirl the group open or closed by clicking the arrow next to the group's name:



The squares are now inside a layer group.

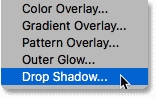
**Adding the drop shadow**

To apply a drop shadow to the group, click on the **Layer Styles** icon:



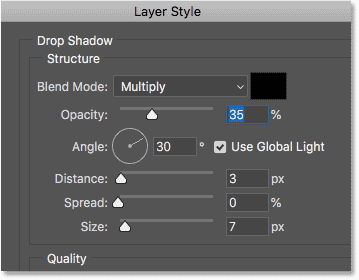
Clicking the "fx" icon with the layer group selected.

And then choose **Drop Shadow** from the list:



Choosing Drop Shadow.

This opens the Layer Style dialog box set to the Drop Shadow options:



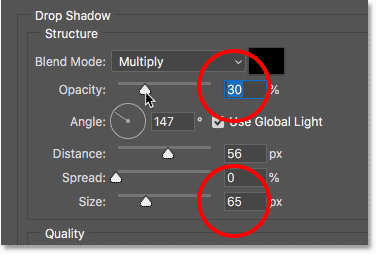
The Drop Shadow options in the Layer Style dialog box.

You can adjust the **Angle** and **Distance** of the shadow from here, but it's easier just to click and drag inside the document. As you drag, you'll see the Angle and Distance values updating in the dialog box:



Click and drag inside the document to adjust the shadow's angle and distance.

Once you've set the Angle and Distance, go back to the dialog box and adjust the **Size** value to soften the edges. You can also adjust the **Opacity** to make the shadow appear lighter or darker. I'll lower mine to **30%**:



Adjusting the Size (softness) and Opacity of the drop shadow.

When you're happy with the results, click OK to close the dialog box. And with the drop shadow applied, here's my final effect:



The final photo collage effect.