

PLACING AN IMAGE INSIDE OF ANOTHER WITH PS CS6

In this tutorial, we'll learn how to place one image inside of another to create interesting composite effects using Photoshop's simple yet powerful **Paste Into** command. With Paste Into, we can select an area in one image, then copy and paste a second image directly into our selection. For this tutorial, I'll be using Paste Into to place a photo inside a picture frame, but as with all of our Photoshop tutorials, the goal here isn't just how to create this one specific effect. Once you've learned how the Paste Into command works, you'll no doubt discover plenty of other creative uses for it on your own.

I'll be using Photoshop CS6 here but this tutorial is also fully compatible with both Photoshop CS5 and Photoshop CC (Creative Cloud). For CS4 and earlier versions, or for another example of how Paste Into can be used, you'll want to check out our original *Placing An Image Inside Of Another* PDF.



The first image.

Here's my second image (the photo I'll be placing inside the frame) ([couple in autumn park photo](#) from Shutterstock):



The second image.

To create this effect, you'll need two images. Here's my first one (the image containing the picture frame) ([autumn frame photo](#) from Shutterstock):

And here's what the final composite will look like:

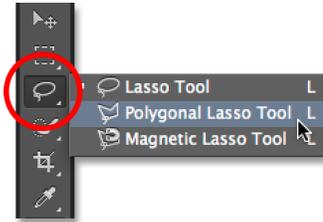


Let's get started!

The final effect.

Step 1: Select The Area Where You Want The Second Image To Appear

Start with the image you'll be placing the second image into and draw a selection around the area where the second image should appear. The actual selection tool you need will depend on the shape of the area. In my case, I'm starting with the image of the picture frame and I want to place my second image into the frame. The frame is a simple rectangular shape so you might think the Rectangular Marquee Tool would work. However, the frame is also tilted on an angle, so a better choice here would be Photoshop's **Polygonal Lasso Tool**.



By default, the Polygonal Lasso Tool is nested behind the standard **Lasso Tool** in the Tools panel. To access it, I'll click and hold on the Lasso Tool's icon until a fly-out menu appears showing me the other tools hiding behind it. Then I'll choose the **Polygonal Lasso Tool** from the menu:

Clicking and holding on the Lasso Tool, then selecting the Polygonal Lasso Tool.

The Polygonal Lasso Tool lets us draw straight-sided polygonal selections by simply clicking at the points where the direction of the selection outline needs to change. Each time we click on a new point, Photoshop adds a straight line between the new point and the previous point, and we continue clicking around the area we're selecting, adding a new line segment with each click, until we've made our way back to the beginning. To complete the selection, we just need to click once again on the initial point.



Selecting the area inside the picture frame with the Polygonal Lasso Tool is easy. All I need to do is click in each of the four corners. I'll start by clicking in the upper left corner, then I'll move across to the upper right corner and click, down to the bottom right corner and click, and then back across to the lower left corner and click. You won't see the traditional "marching ants" selection outline as you're making a selection with the Polygonal Lasso Tool. Instead, you'll see a thin path outline joining the points together:

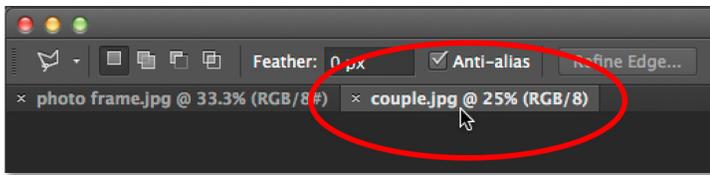
Clicking in the corners to select the photo area of the frame.



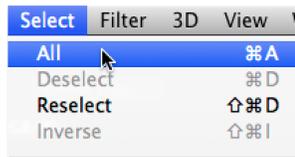
To complete the selection, I'll click once again on the initial point in the upper left corner, and now the area inside the frame is selected, with the standard "marching ants" selection outline now visible:

Click again on the initial point to complete the selection.

Step 2: Select And Copy The Second Image

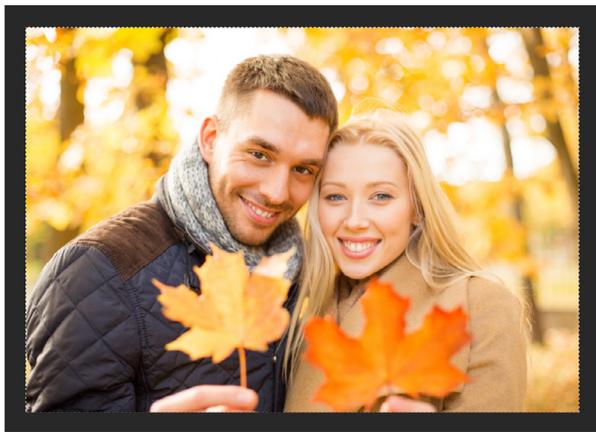


Switching to the second image by clicking its document tab.



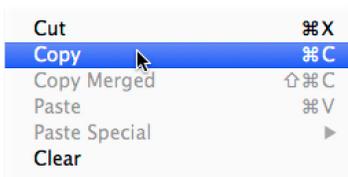
Going to Select > All.

We need to copy this image to the clipboard so we can then paste it into the selection we made in the previous image. To copy it, we first need to select it, so go up to the **Select** menu in the Menu Bar along the top of the screen and choose **All**. Or, press **Ctrl+A** (Win) / **Command+A** (Mac) on your keyboard:



A selection outline will appear around the edges of the image, letting you know it's now selected:

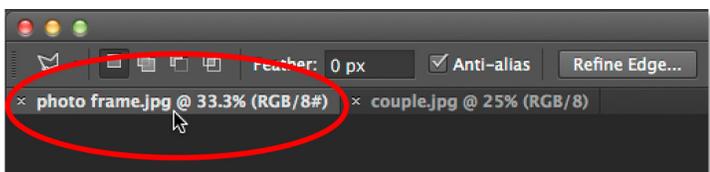
The second image is selected.



With the image selected, go up to the **Edit** menu at the top of the screen and choose **Copy**, or press **Ctrl+C** (Win) / **Command+C** (Mac) on your keyboard:

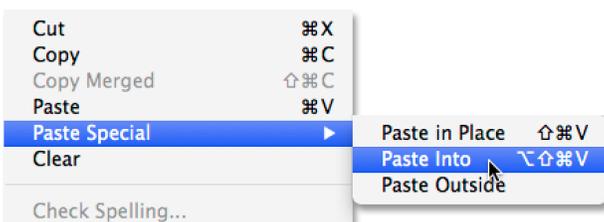
Going to Edit > Copy.

Step 3: Paste The Second Image Into The Selection



Switch back over to the first image by clicking on its **tab** at the top of the document:

Clicking the tab to view the first image again.



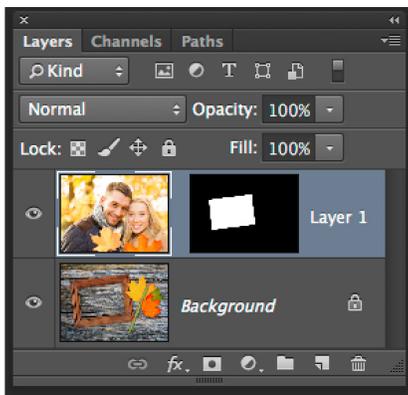
Going to Edit > Paste Special > Paste Into.

The selection we created a moment ago will still be visible. To paste the second image into the selection, go up to the **Edit** menu at the top of the screen, choose **Paste Special**, then choose **Paste Into**:



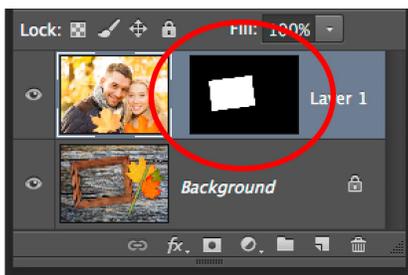
And just like that, the image appears inside the selection. In my case, the image is obviously too big for the frame, but we'll see how to fix that in a moment:

The effect after pasting the second image into the selection.



Before we go any further, though, let's take a quick look in the **Layers panel** so we can see what's happened. Notice that we now have two layers. The original image is sitting on the **Background layer** on the bottom, and as soon as we chose the Paste Into command, Photoshop added a brand new layer above it and placed the second image on this new layer:

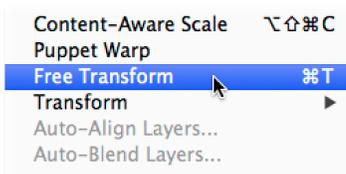
The Layers panel showing the second image on its own layer.



Why is the second image visible only inside the area we selected? It's because Photoshop used our selection to create a **layer mask** for the second image. We can see the mask in the **layer mask thumbnail**. The white area represents the area where the image is visible in the document, while the black area surrounding it is where the image is hidden from view:

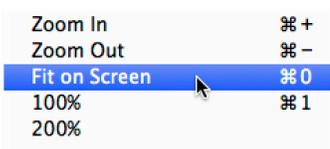
Photoshop turned our selection into a layer mask to control the visibility of the second image.

Step 4: Resize And Reposition The Second Image With Free Transform



If your image is too big for the selected area and you need to resize it (as I do), go up to the **Edit** menu at the top of the screen and choose **Free Transform**. Or, press **Ctrl+T** (Win) / **Command+T** (Mac) on your keyboard to select Free Transform with the shortcut:

Going to Edit > Free Transform.



This places the Free Transform box and handles (the little squares) around the image. Note that the Free Transform box appears around the actual dimensions of the image, not just the part that's visible. If you can't see the entire Free Transform box because your image is so big it's extending right off the screen, go up to the **View** menu at the top of the screen and choose **Fit on Screen**:

Going to View > Fit on Screen.



This will instantly zoom the image out so that everything, including the Free Transform box, fits on your screen:

The Free Transform box surrounds the actual image, not just the small visible area.



To resize the image, press and hold the **Shift** key on your keyboard, then click and drag any of the **four corners** of the Free Transform box. Holding the Shift key down as you drag locks in the original aspect ratio of the image as you're resizing it so you don't accidentally distort its shape. Here, I'm dragging the bottom right corner inward, but any of the corners will work. Make sure (very important!) that when you're done dragging the corner, you **release your mouse key first, then release the Shift key**. If you release the Shift key before releasing the mouse key, you'll lose the original aspect ratio of the image:

Dragging one of the corner handles inward while pressing and holding the Shift key.



To move and reposition the image inside the selected area, simply click and drag anywhere inside the Free Transform box. No need to hold down the Shift key this time. Just don't click on that little target symbol in the center, otherwise you'll move the target, not the image:

Clicking and dragging inside the Free Transform box to reposition the image inside the frame.



If you need to rotate your image as well, move your mouse cursor outside of the Free Transform box. When you see the cursor change into a **curved, double-sided arrow**, click and drag with your mouse. Here, I'm rotating the image counter-clockwise to better match the angle of the frame:

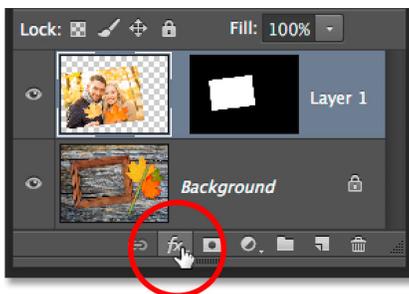
Clicking and dragging outside the Free Transform box to rotate the image.



When you're happy with how the image looks, press **Enter** (Win) / **Return** (Mac) on your keyboard to accept it and exit out of Free Transform mode:

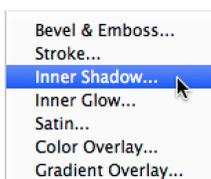
The second image has been moved, resized and rotated inside the frame.

Step 5: Add An Inner Shadow Layer Effect



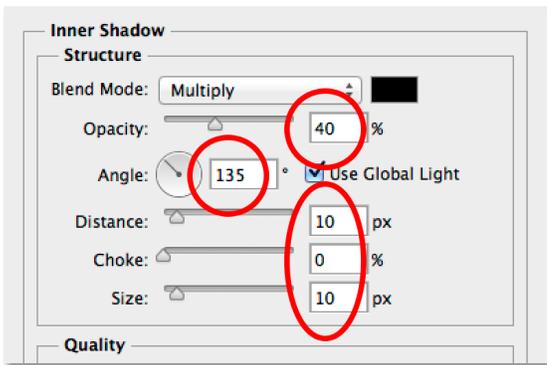
To finish off the effect, I'll add an inner shadow to the edges of the photo so it looks more like it's actually inside the frame rather than looking like someone just pasted it in there (which, of course, is exactly what I did). To add the inner shadow, I'll click on the **Layer Styles** icon at the bottom of the Layers panel:

Clicking the Layer Styles icon.



Then I'll choose **Inner Shadow** from the list that appears:

Choosing Inner Shadow from the list.



The Inner Shadow options.

This opens Photoshop's Layer Style dialog box set to the Inner Shadow options in the middle column. I'm going to lower the **Opacity** of the shadow from its default value of 75% down to **40%** so it appears less intense. I'll set the **Angle** to **135°** so the light seems to be shining from the upper left, although you may want a different angle for your image. Finally, I'll set both the **Size** and **Distance** values to **10px**. The Size option controls how far out the shadow extends from the edge, while the Distance value controls the edge softness, or feathering. The values you need will depend a lot on the size of your image so you may want to experiment a bit with these two options:



Click OK to close out of the Layer Style dialog box. And with that, we're done! Here, after adding an Inner Shadow layer effect, is my final result:

The final effect.

And there we have it! That's how to place one image inside of another using the Paste Into command in Photoshop!

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