

Tutorial: Detailed Torn Edges in Photoshop CS

Level: Advanced Intermediate

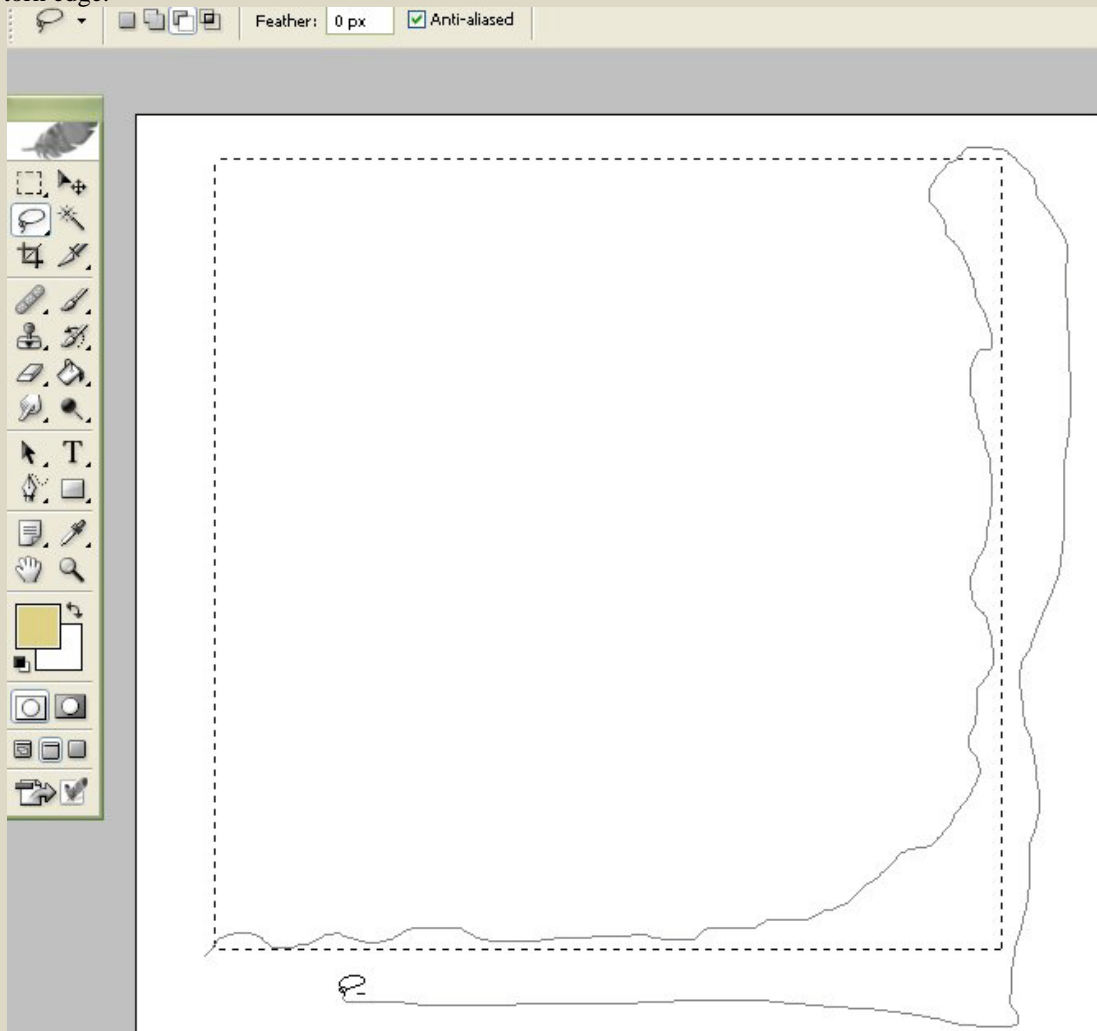
There are many ways to accomplish this effect, but this is a detailed, more realistic version. It takes a little longer than Simple Torn Edges, but if the paper is a focal point it's worth the bit of extra effort.

You can stop at several points and have decent torn paper, or do the whole thing for added details!

These screen shots are from Photoshop CS, but are almost identical in lower versions.

In this tutorial we'll learn to use the Brushes Palette, the Free Transform>Skew Tool, make Selections, use Layer Styles and Filters, Fill opacity, and Levels, and we'll make custom shadows and highlights.

1. Get some real pieces of paper of varying types and make several tears in them. Newspaper tears differently than parchment, printer paper, cardstock, etc., and also tears differently depending on the direction of the grain. Keep these samples on your desk for reference.
2. Open a new document, at least 200 dpi for good printing, make a new layer. Make Rectangular Selection for paper, and use Lasso Tool>Subtract From Selection option to draw a jagged line for the torn edge.



3. Use a rough Eraser to roughen the edges of the tear for a more fibrous look.
 - a. Open the Brushes Palette in the upper right of the screen. This lets you adjust the settings of your brush. Adjust the Angle Jitter so the angle will rotate randomly and the erasing will look better (the same shape brush used over and over will give tell-tale "fingerprints.") You can also adjust the

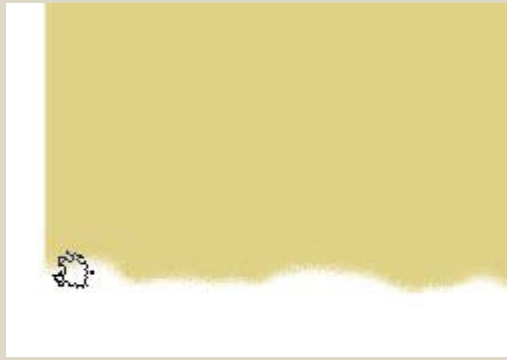
Spacing, Size Jitter, or Roundness if you want to experiment.

b. If you're erasing too much, change either the Flow amount, or in the Brushes Palette increase the Spacing.

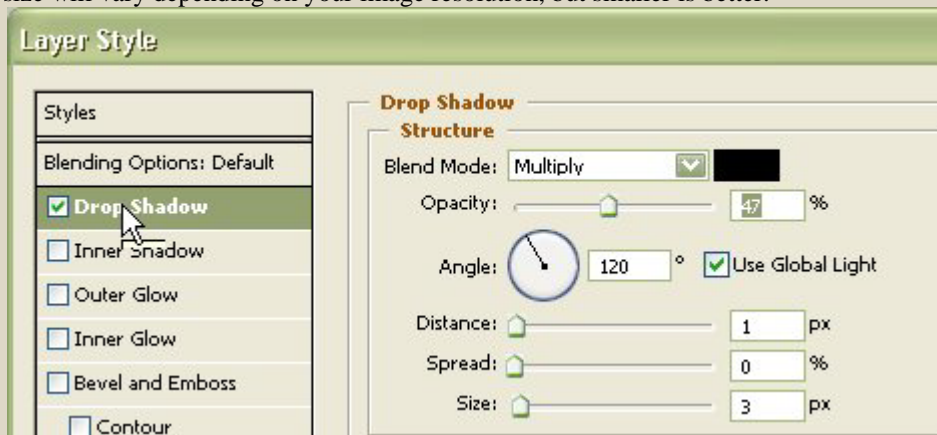
The image shows the Photoshop interface with the Brush tool selected. At the top, the tool options bar displays: Brush: 99, Mode: Brush, Opacity: 100%, Flow: 100%, and an Erase to History checkbox. Below this, the Master Diameter is set to 99 px, with a 'Use Sample Size' button and a Hardness slider.

The main area shows a grid of brush tip samples. The grid has three rows and ten columns. The first row shows solid black dots of varying sizes (1, 3, 5, 9, 13, 19, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21). The second row shows soft-edged black circles of varying sizes (27, 35, 45, 65, 100, 200, 300, 9, 13, 19, 17). The third row shows spatter brush tips of varying sizes (45, 65, 100, 200, 300, 14, 24, 27, 39, 46, 59). A tooltip for the last tip in the third row reads 'Spatter 59 pixels'.

Below the grid is the Brushes palette, which is divided into three sections: Brush Presets, Shape Dynamics, and other dynamic settings. The Brush Presets list includes: Shape Dynamics (checked), Scattering, Texture, Dual Brush, Color Dynamics, Other Dynamics, Noise, Wet Edges, Airbrush, Smoothing (checked), and Protect Texture. The Shape Dynamics section is expanded, showing: Size Jitter (17%), Control: Pen Pressure, Minimum Diameter (0%), Tilt Scale, Angle Jitter (36%), Control: Off, Roundness Jitter (16%), Control: Off, Minimum Roundness (25%), Flip X Jitter, and Flip Y Jitter. At the bottom of the palette is a preview window showing a horizontal, textured black brush stroke.

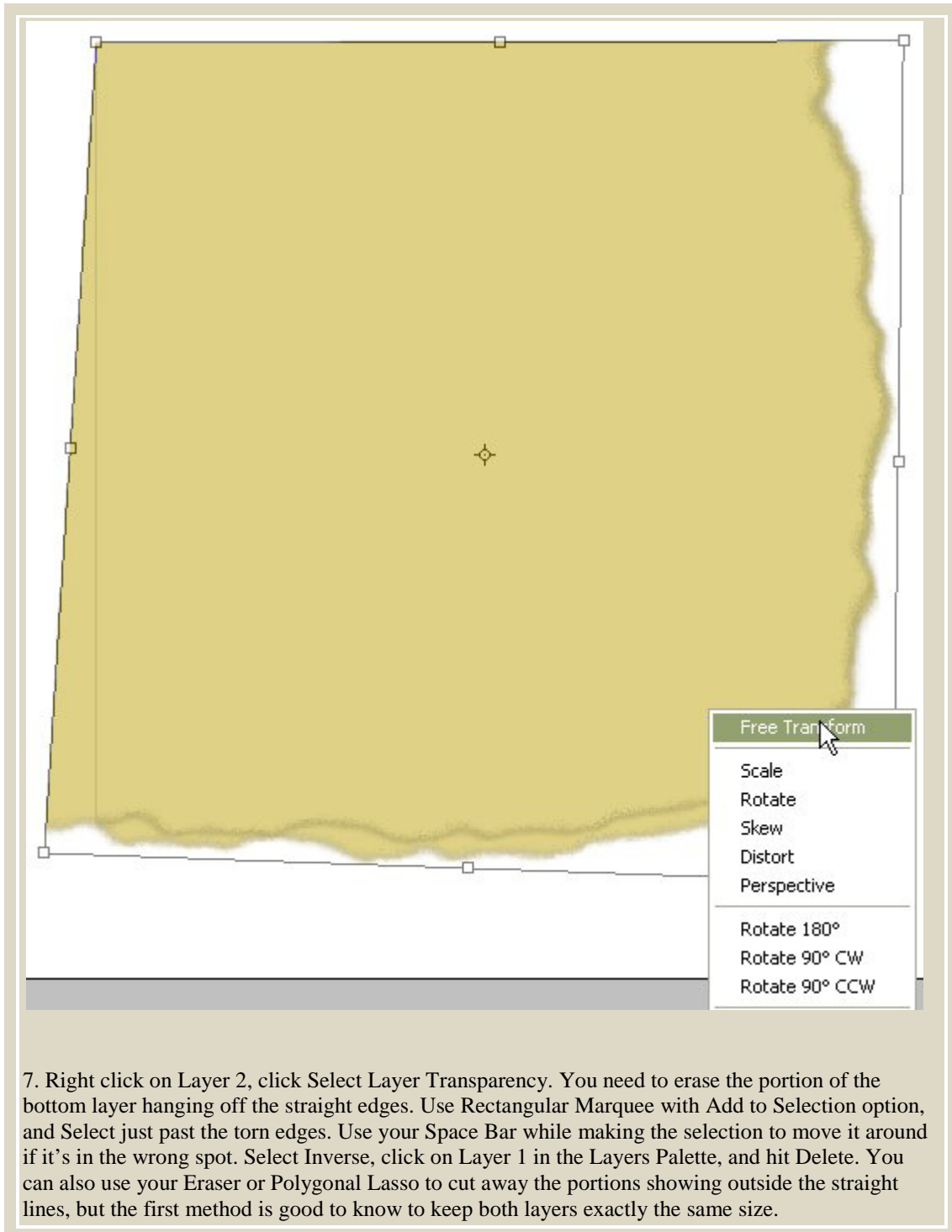


4. Double click on the view icon in the Layers Palette to open the Layer Styles Dialog Box, or choose Layer>Layer Styles>Drop Shadow. Make a small drop shadow, low opacity. The exact distance and size will vary depending on your image resolution, but smaller is better.

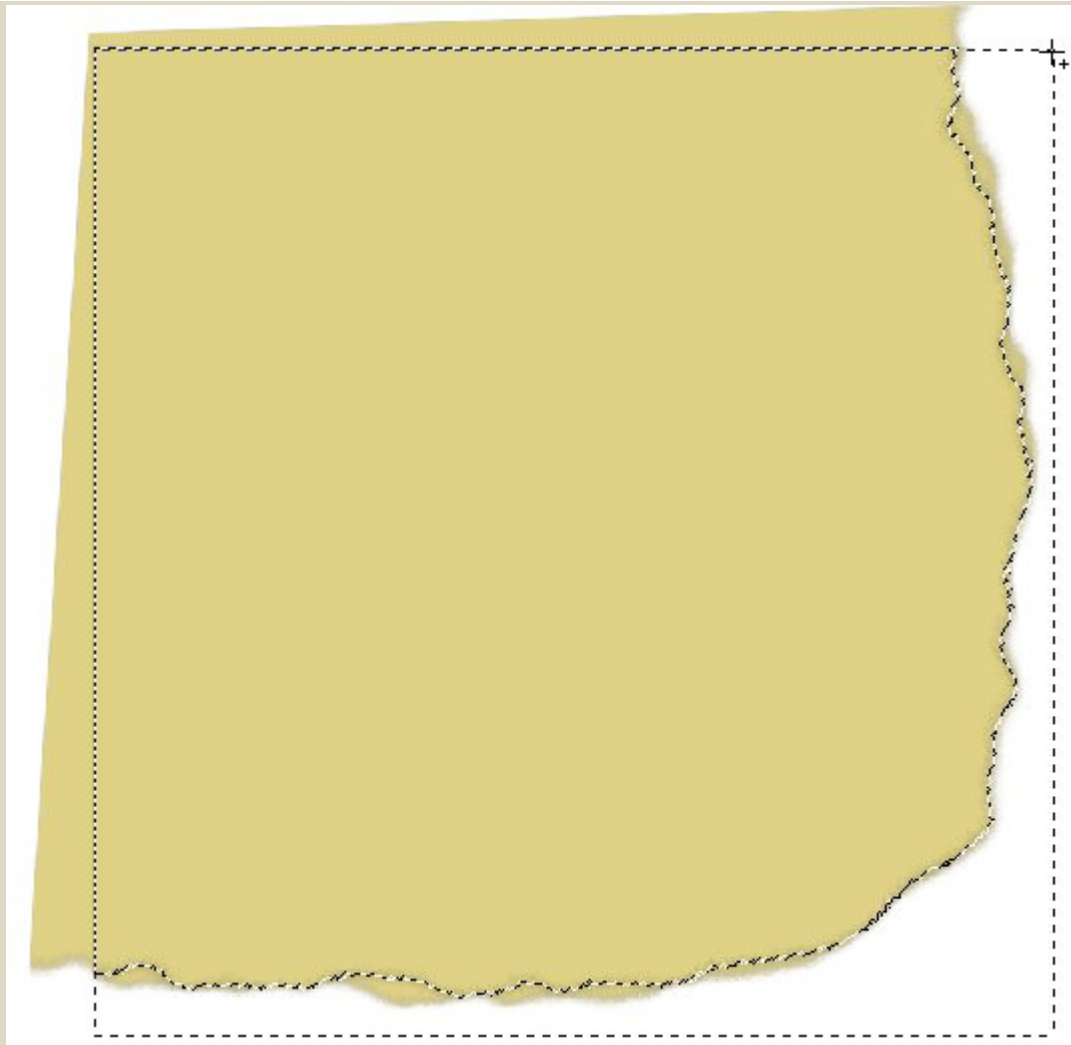


5. Duplicate the paper layer.

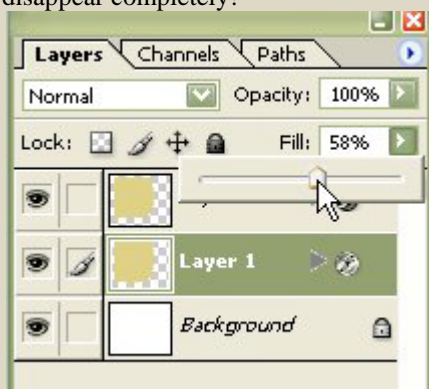
6. Select the original layer underneath, use Ctrl-T, right click Skew, or Edit>Transform>Skew. Skew the paper to offset it for the fibers that hang off the edge of torn paper, as shown. Use your real paper as a guide for how much to offset this layer. You can also Right Click and choose Free Transform to resize it a little, move it around (nudge using arrow keys), and make other changes if you want to experiment.



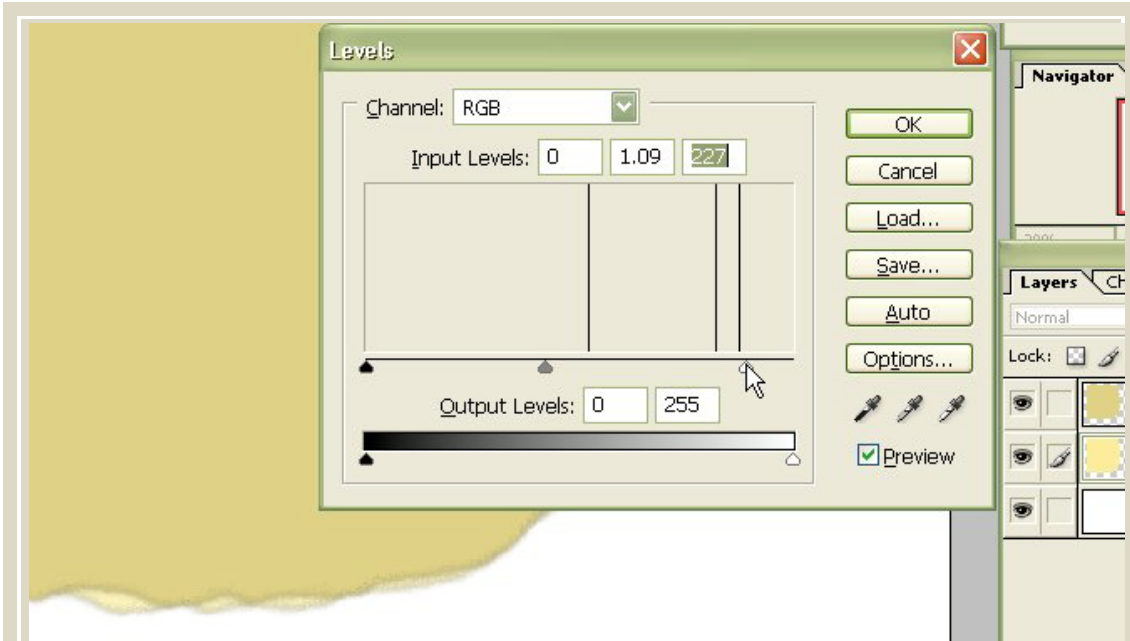
7. Right click on Layer 2, click Select Layer Transparency. You need to erase the portion of the bottom layer hanging off the straight edges. Use Rectangular Marquee with Add to Selection option, and Select just past the torn edges. Use your Space Bar while making the selection to move it around if it's in the wrong spot. Select Inverse, click on Layer 1 in the Layers Palette, and hit Delete. You can also use your Eraser or Polygonal Lasso to cut away the portions showing outside the straight lines, but the first method is good to know to keep both layers exactly the same size.



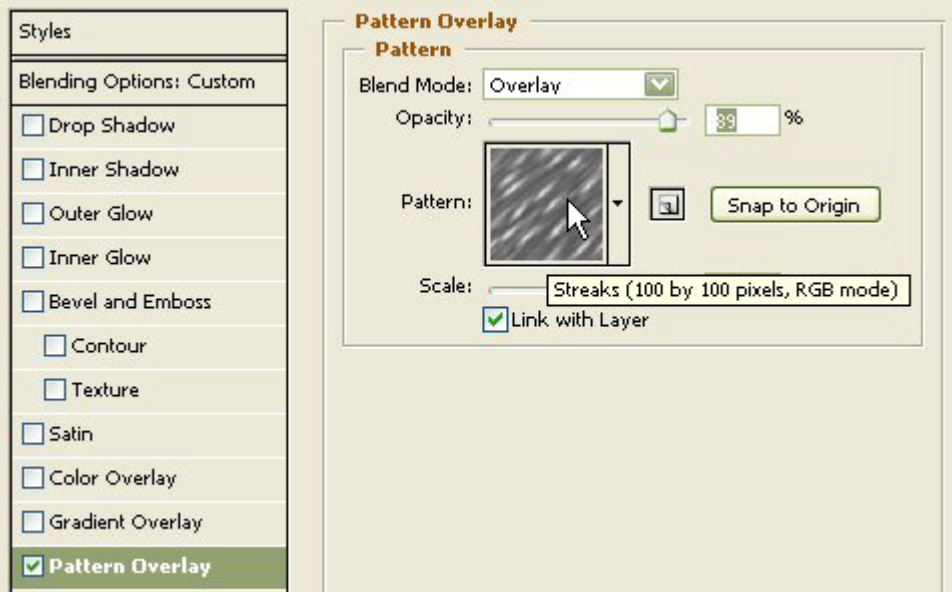
8. Lower the Fill on Layer 1 (do not lower the Opacity as this also affects the Drop Shadow. We only want to make the paper more transparent, not the Layer Styles attached to it.) We only want to slightly lower the fill as we're going to further lighten the paper in the next step, we don't want it to disappear completely!



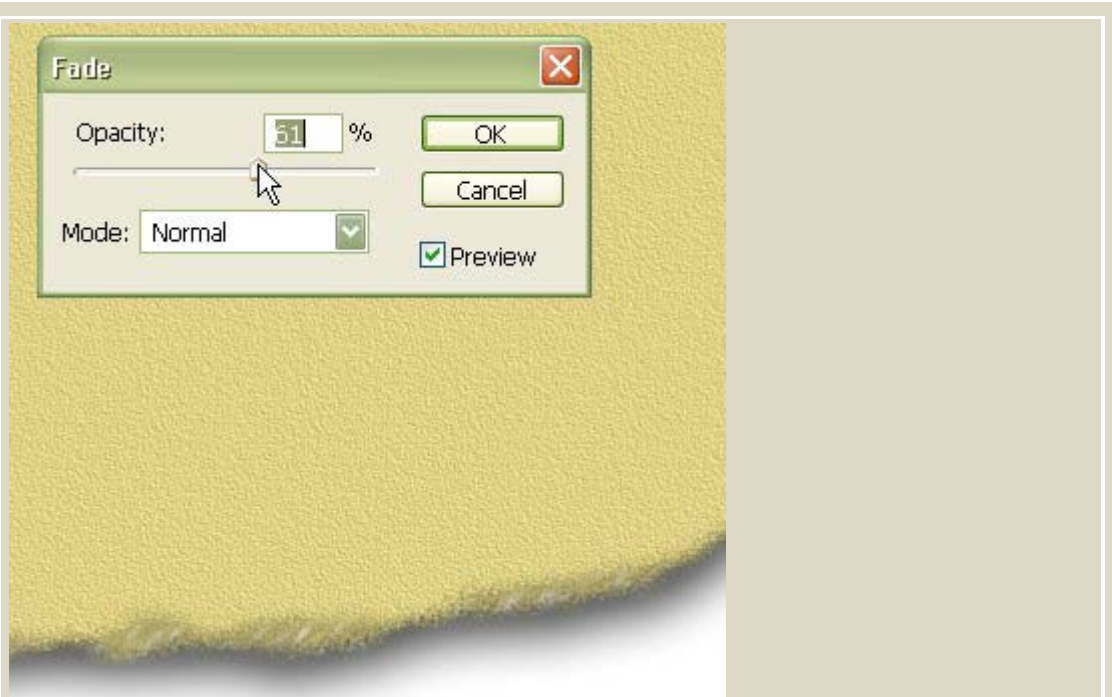
9. Ctrl-L or Image>Adjustments>Levels and brighten and lessen contrast. With white paper you won't do this step, only for two-toned paper like photographs or colored paper.



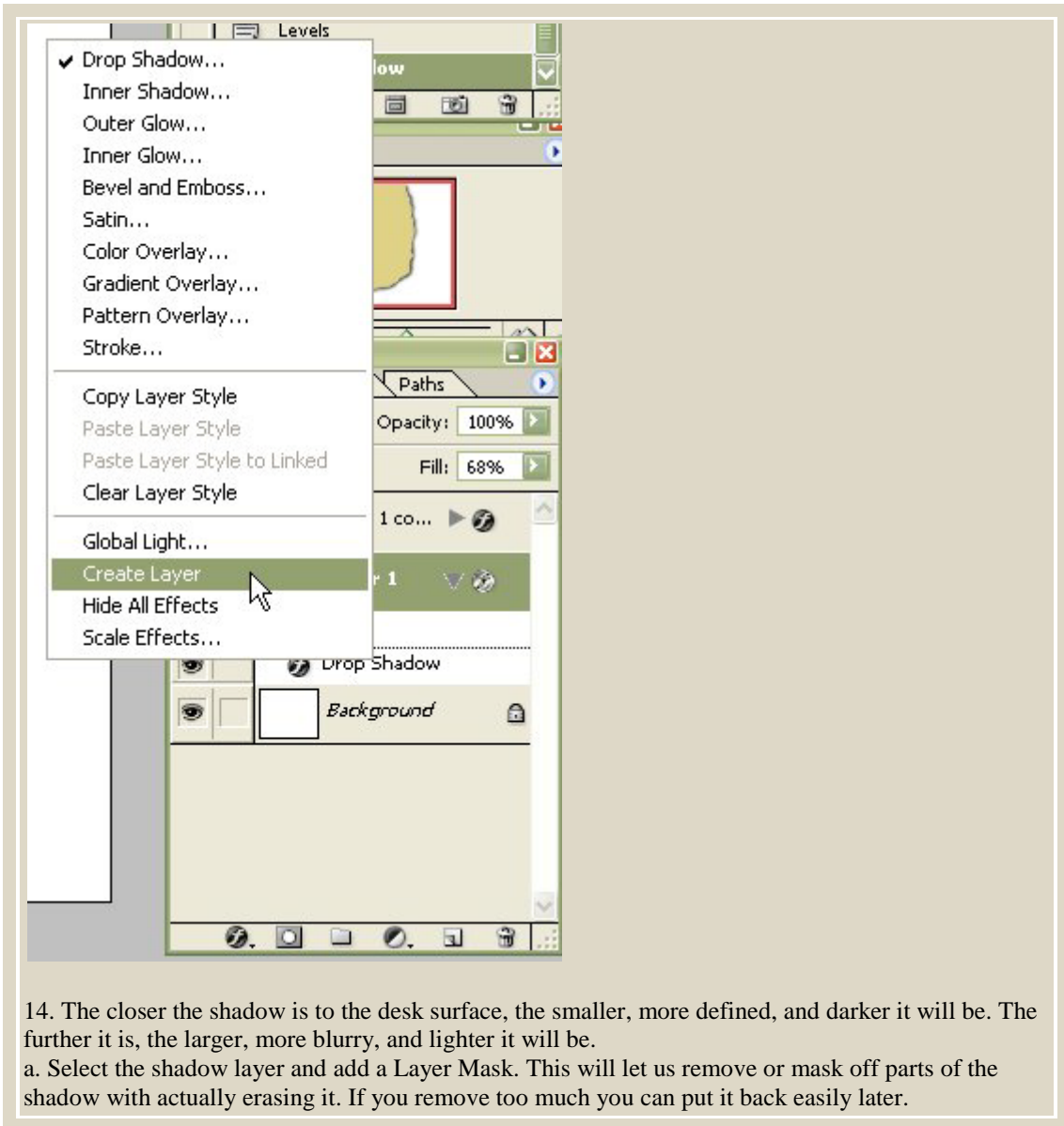
10. Add textures to the paper: there are many ways to do this, but here are two.
- a. For Layer 1, one of the best effects is Layer Styles>Pattern Overlay>Streaks, or a similar long, shaggy pattern. Use Blending Mode>Overlay or Soft Light or Screen and adjust Opacity to suit you.



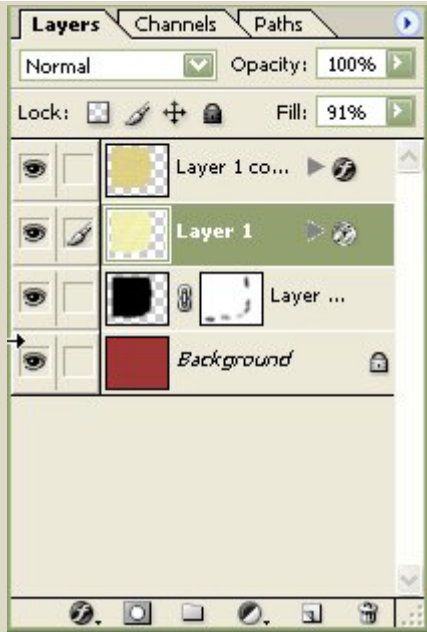
- b. For the top layer we want something more subtle. Either use a more subtle Layer Pattern Overlay, or choose Filter>Texturizer and choose a texture, Scaling, and Relief to suit you. If the effect is too strong, go to Edit>Fade and lower opacity until it's right.



11. Use the smudge tool with a rough brush on various Strength settings to get a more fibrous look. For tips on this, see [Simple Torn Paper tutorial](#). (link)
12. Customizing the shadow is what really makes the paper look more real. On Layer 1 we need to increase the drop shadow in Layers Styles, make it big and dark.
13. To put the shadow on its own layer, click on the arrow in the Layer name, right click on the layer style name, and click Create Layer. Name this layer Shadow.



14. The closer the shadow is to the desk surface, the smaller, more defined, and darker it will be. The further it is, the larger, more blurry, and lighter it will be.
- a. Select the shadow layer and add a Layer Mask. This will let us remove or mask off parts of the shadow with actually erasing it. If you remove too much you can put it back easily later.



b. Choose a large, soft brush, like Airbrush>200, color black, on low Opacity and Flow, make sure the layer mask is selected rather than the layer itself and start erasing the shadow.

c. If you remove too much, change the brush color to white to put the shadow back.

d. To add more shadow, go to the Layer instead of the mask and use the same brush and brush on some more black.

15. If you are working on a white background the shadow will look different when you move it to a darker background, so the shadow may look harsh on white. Try filling the background with various other colors to get balanced shadow that will look good on all sorts of colors.

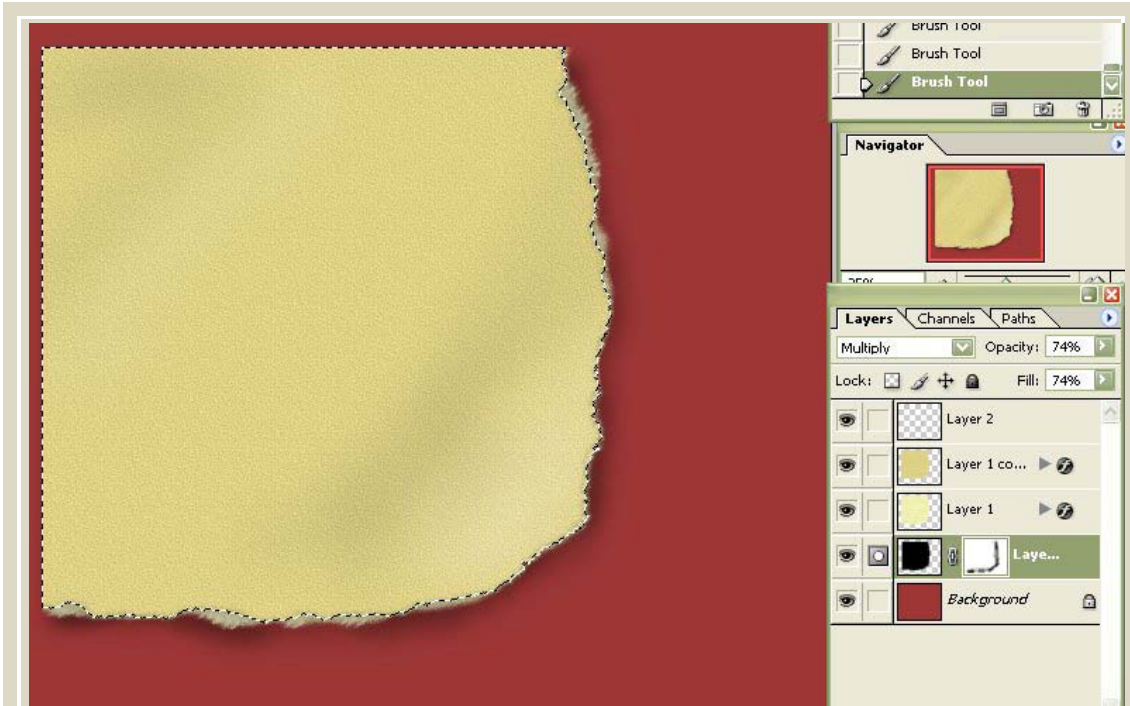
16. To make the shadow under the paper look believable, let's add shadows on top of the paper to make it look contoured.

a. Right click on the top paper layer icon and Select Layer Transparency

b. Create a new layer

c. On the new layer, using a very large soft airbrush on 1-3% opacity and low Flow, color black, stroke on some diagonal shadows. Use white for highlights.

d. Apply Filter>Gaussian Blur to soften the shadows, and lower layer opacity if needed.



17. You're done! You can continue to adjust your shadows and paper edges and textures as needed to get a more realistic effect, or just try not to be obsessive and call this good enough! Custom shadows take some practice, so the more you do it, the more real it will look.

