

Casting Shadow

Welcome to the *Casting Shadow tutorial*. This tutorial was designed to teach you how to create the illusion of depth and perspective by altering the shape of your shadows. If you need help with it, or find it confusing, don't hesitate to e-mail me, the information is at the bottom of the page.

Before we begin let's take a look at what a casted shadow

drop

actually is. A lot of people could confuse this tutorial for your average drop shadow tutorial, but it's not, it's actually very different. A drop shadow allows the viewer to recognize that the text or object is elevated from the surface as shown in the image to the right, hence the name drop shadow, meaning it's a hovering above the surface.



Casted shadows are shadows the you see everyday, the shadow that

your monitor is casting against the wall right now, or the shadow that follows you on a sunny day. In other words casted shadow are basically a perspective shadow, which is what people sometimes call them. Casted/Perspective shadows depend on two things;

1. The shape of the object creating the shadow, this will determine the shape of the shadow
2. The perspective/direction in which the light is shining on it, this will determine how the shadow is distorted and how long/narrow the shadow will be.



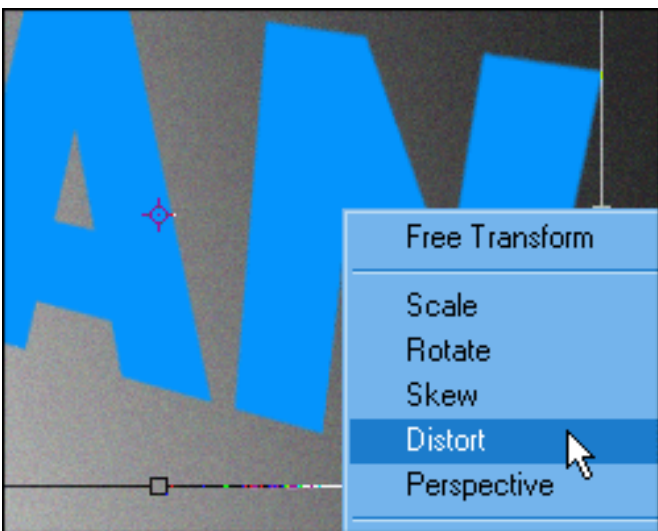
- 1 Before you even think about creating a shadow, you need to find out where the light will be coming from and how the object or text will be sitting on that surface. I will be using the surface to the left along with text. Since the light is coming from the bottom left corner, I'll make things easy and just face my text toward the light as you'll see later on.

If you want to use the same background I used, you can download it [here](#).

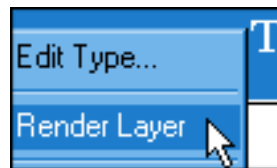
If you don't want to use it, feel free to make your own using the methods I used; the gradient tool with a light **Noise** filter added to create the illusion of an actual surface.



- 2 Create your text in the middle of the canvas. Make sure that your text isn't too big because we are going to stretch, skew, and distort the crap out of it to get the look we want, so allow room. Choose a font that is thick or the same thickness throughout the whole of the letters, fonts with fat ends and thin curves tends to become unrecognizable when they're on a slant, the result is they are hard to read. I chose **Arial** with **Faux Bold** checked.



- 3 Render your type layer by right



clicking on the type icon (**T**) in the Layers palette and choosing **Render Layer**. This allows you to apply a lot more of Photoshop's commands and filters to your text, which is what we will need to do.

With the type layer selected choose **Edit>Transform>Distort** from the main menu, you could also hold down **Ctrl + T**, right-click inside the box, and choose **Distort** from the menu as shown to the left. Once you have your bounding box, start moving the handles and placing them where you

want, make sure your text doesn't look completely skewed or unrealistic.



4



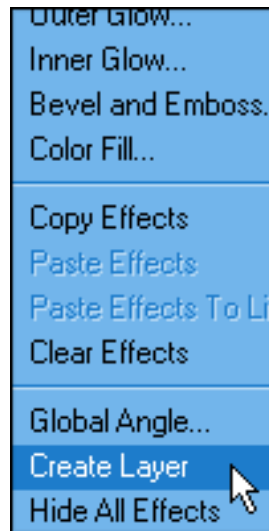
Right-click on your new type layer

and choose **Effects** from the menu. Add a drop-shadow, this should be the default. (you should be looking at it straight away) It doesn't matter how you apply your drop-shadow because we will be changing it dramatically later on, just make sure it's not too far away from the text.

You can use the image to the left for reference.



5



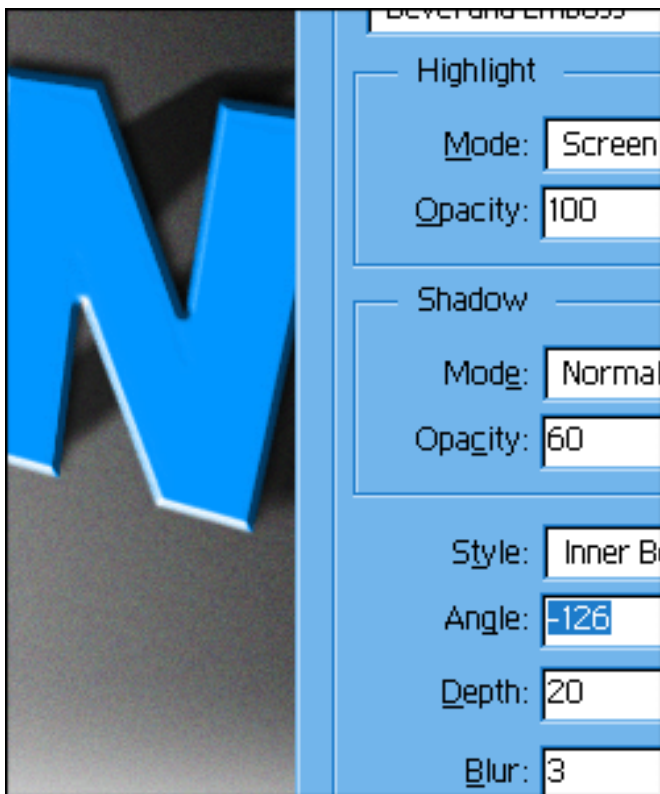
Once you're happy with your

shadow, right-click on the effects icon (🔍) at the right of the layer and choose **Create Layer** from the menu. (as shown to the right) Doing this separates the shadow to another layer so we can modify it.



- 6** Select the shadow layer, choose **Edit>Transform>Distort** from the main menu, grab the handles and re-arrange them so that they fall behind the letters. Here, I grabbed the top middle handle and pulled it towards the top-right of the canvas, I then adjusted the other handles accordingly. Make sure that the letters shadow ends match up exactly with the bottom of the letters, an example is shown to the left.

You can now blur your shadow layer to make it look a little more realistic. Choose **Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur** and input a setting between 2-6 pixels.



- 7** Now we have a casted shadow on very flat text, to add depth to the text, bevel it! Right-click on the text layer in the Layers palette, and choose Effects from the menu. Un-check **Apply** from the **Drop Shadow** menu, choose **Bevel and Emboss** from the pull-down menu, check **Apply** and use the following settings; (only use these settings if you are following along using my example)

Style: Inner Bevel

Angle: -126

Depth: 20

Blur: 3

Inner Bevel was chosen because it looks more realistic being as it doesn't blend the bevel in with its surroundings, the angle was set facing the same direction from which the light is coming from, a large depth was added to make the letters look more three dimensional, and a low blurring was set to keep the hard edge of the text but to eliminate the "jaggy-ness"

Once you've finished your image should look something like the image to the left. Congratulations you're done!



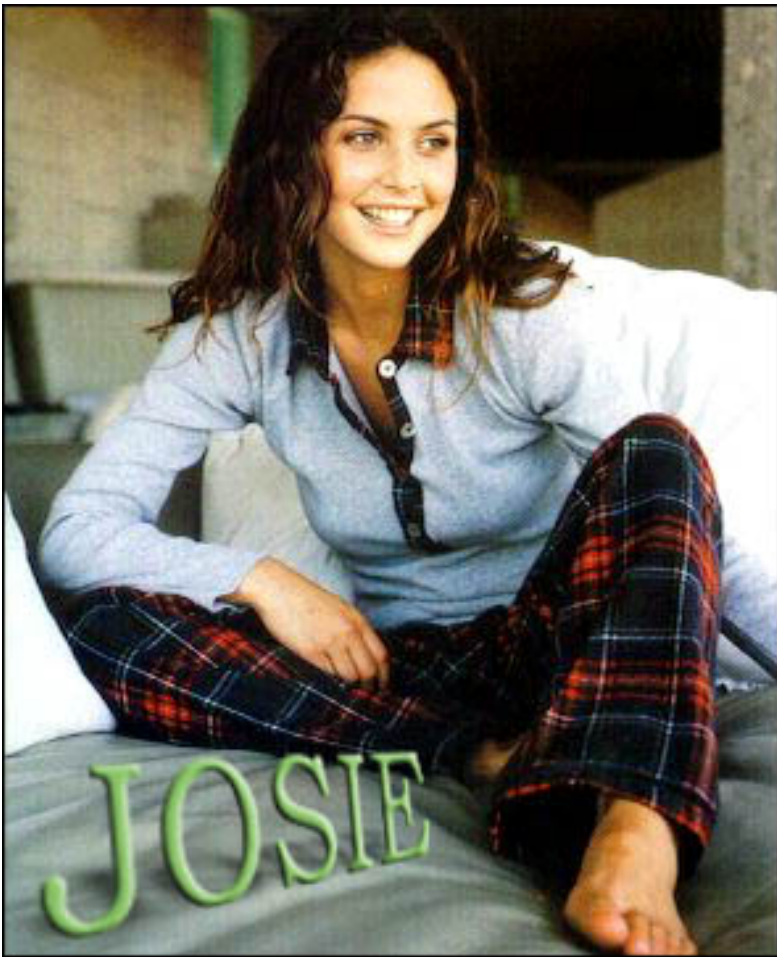
Discussion

When creating casted shadows remember the rules discussed above and everything should work out fine. A great to practice your newly harnessed skill is to find pictures and place text in it and adding a shadow. I find that landscapes, architecture and monumental landmarks are the best photos simply because they offer lots of surfaces and wide open space to slip your text right in there. Some example of this are shown below. If you have any questions, or there are any steps that I can further elaborate on, don't hesitate to e-mail me using the information below.

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Examples

The same method was used to create the word Josie on the bed sheets as was used in the tutorial above. Incorporating text into images is done a lot for billboards, posters, CD covers, etc. See if you can spot it...



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