

REDBARONS COOL ICON GUIDE



Hello! I'm redbaron, and in this guide, I'll show *you* how to do TNO icons - at least the way I do them. I will go over a few rules for making TNO icons, and alongside that show how I do icons. Keep in mind that there are a few different... well, substyles, I suppose. The main difference is the amount of color and brightness in use. Take a look at the icons above and try to familiarize yourself with the style, how the icons are "supposed" to look.

Focus Icons

When making TNO icons, it is important that you stick to the style. This means heavy shading, stuff being not very saturated, a lot of contrast and creativity. Try to keep your icons relatively easy to understand, but at the same time not boring. For example, an icon about catholicism: Instead of just putting a cross there or a church, try to make it a little cooler by instead having a Priest stand in front of the St Peters Basilica or something. Try to make it look interesting and appealing! You can even try hiding most of your frames with your assets.

And remember to always shade and bevel everything.

Now, let's imagine you are a beginner at making focus icons. We are going to make something with a soviet medal. Let's take a look:

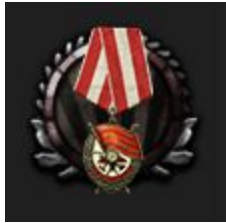


This is really poorly made, but no worries: Everyone starts somewhere. Let's take a look at everything one step at a time.

Firstly, **break the frame!** Doing this makes your icon feel a lot more alive, exciting, and less...boring. So take it out, make it larger so that it isn't hidden behind some frame, make it cover parts of the frame, or maybe even more, who knows, you can do a lot!



A massive improvement, but we are still not quite there. Let's take a look at the frame this time. Firstly, that red is way too saturated: Tone it down! Second of all, that background is incredibly boring. At least add a gradient, or even better, get a proper background.



A lot better! I added a new background and desaturated the red on the frame: Remember, TNO icons do not use heavy saturation! But there's still something weird about this icon. The asset!

You need to bevel and shade your assets.



Great! With effects applied like bevel, gradient, shadow etc, it's finally beginning to look like a TNO icon. But still, there's something...off. You need to desaturate and play with contrast!



Nice! It's looking great. I desaturated it by -30 and increased contrast by around 40. Also, I lowered the brightness a little.

It's by no means perfect, but it fits in because it's desaturated, contrasted and relatively dark.



Here are some final adjustments just to make it look better. I took and separated certain parts into different layers and beveled + shaded them separately. This is again, by no means perfect. This is in fact rather boring, but it just shows how much you can improve a really bad icon into something a lot better, without adding any new assets, or anything. The only addition I added was the background.

If you want to improve this even further, you could add more to make it less...boring. Refer to the icons at the start.

So what did we learn from this? Well, keep your stuff desaturated, break the frame as much as possible and try to be creative!

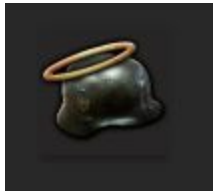
National Spirits

For national spirits, it's mostly the same but there are a few principles I like to stick to.

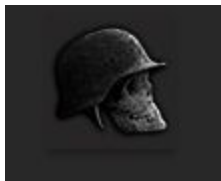
Let's do the same. This is about dead German soldiers.



This spirit is really bad. It does not fit in at all. First of all, you used only vanilla assets: Try to stick to custom assets, and don't use the same one in 2 icons as much as possible. Second of all, that helmet is oversized and blurry as a result of that. Third of all, please for the love of god, avoid using frames.



While it's certainly an improvement, it's still pretty meh. Too saturated and it doesn't convey its point well enough.



Again, doesn't convey its point well enough: But it's arguably the best of all the 3, so I'll stick with this since I'm too lazy to make another version.

So basically, stick to how you'd do focus icons, but try to make it easy to understand, and try to avoid using frames as much as possible.

Asset Making

Whenever I make assets, I always make them when I do the icon. This makes it so that if you need to resize your assets, the shadow doesn't become as thin as paper because you resized your premade asset from 700x700 pixels in size because it automatically adjusts your effects. This also makes it easier for me because I'm not confined to assets I've already made before. Now, let's get to how I actually make my assets.

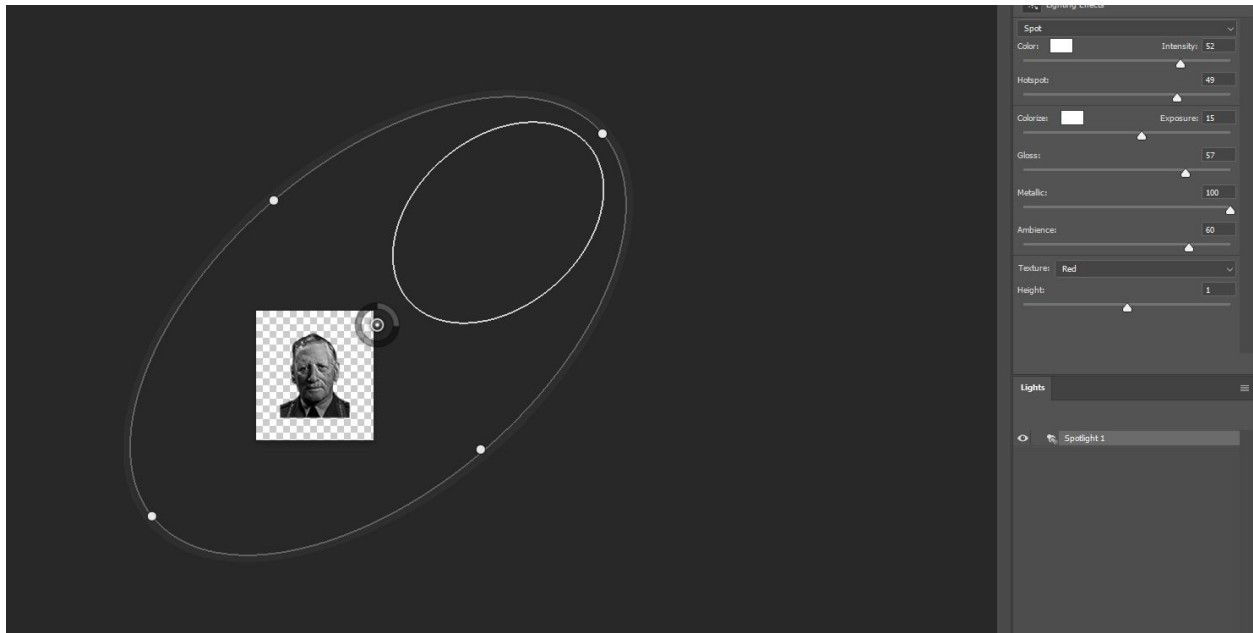
I'll start off with making assets of portraits.



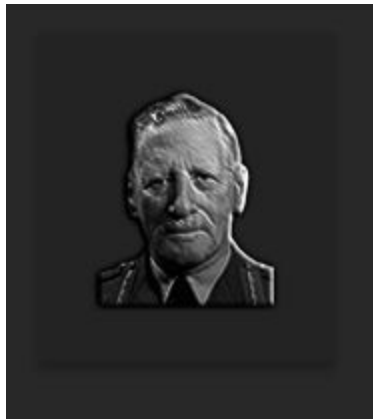
First of all, make it black and white. Then, resize it to 100x100 (Or if you make them while making an icon, you can skip that step)

Then, increase contrast by around 30-50 depending on the source. Also, drop brightness by around -10 to -20.

Afterward, go into Filter>Render>Lightning effects and use these settings. Spin the rings until it looks good



Then, apply a Bevel (I use 2 in size and Linear Light + Multiply set to 100 unlike when I usually make assets) and a shadow. Maybe even throw in a slight gradient.

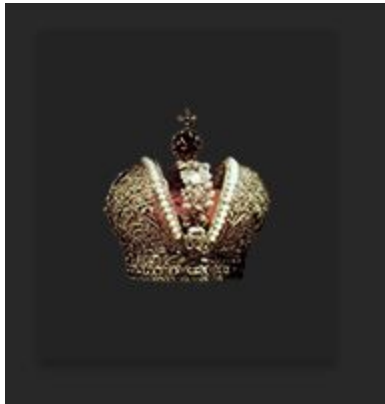


End result should look something like this.

Next, for regular assets.



Take your source picture, resize it to 100x100. Skip this if you do it alongside your icon. Then, increase the contrast by around +50, and drop brightness to about -10. It's important that you don't just do use these settings for every asset, use settings that make sense and look good. Next, I desaturate it by -50.



It should look something like this now.

Then, separate some parts into different layers and apply effects separately. I chose to make the pearls + the red inside separate from the crown. Once that is done, you should have something looking like this:



You can of course always adjust saturation, brightness, contrast, etc. I chose to do this with the pearls: I dropped brightness by around 50 and made it black and white.

Useful Links

[Remove.bg](#) provides free, fast, and easy background removals. It is for the most part reliable and is an amazing tool.

[The AOM Repository](#) is a great repo with a lot of useful assets. You should download it for no other reason than I am one of the ones that run it (and definitely not because it's got literally hundreds of assets available.)

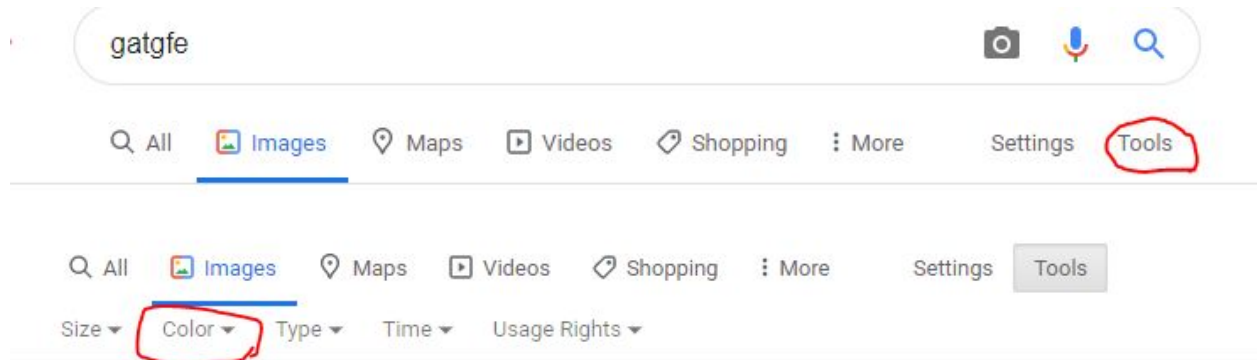
[Gettyimages](#) has hundreds, thousands of historical images that you can find.

[Tomato.to](https://tomato.to) is a fast and easy watermark removal site: Just remember not to tell the police.

Useful Tips

So as recommended by Hetmanivna, I've compiled some hopefully useful tips.

On Google, when searching for transparent images, you can hit the Tools>Color and set it Transparent, which means only Transparent images get shown.



[When you make outline maps, there's a guide to it by 422. Alongside this, there's also a render guide.](#)



Using a real version of an item (for example a coat of arms) tend to give better results than a flat/drawing version.



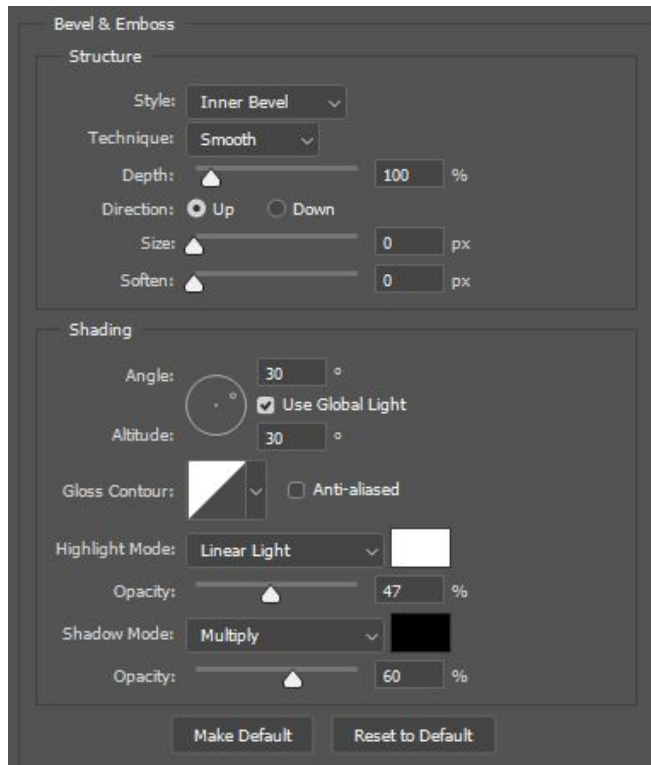
Settings + Further Comments

So, I'll start with the comments. You shouldn't be afraid to diverge from what the requester asks in the request description! Being more creative is always welcome. Besides, you can always just show the seniors+other artists it, and eventually the requester, and it doesn't hurt if you get a no or "I prefer the original idea". Of course, follow a similar topic for the icon.

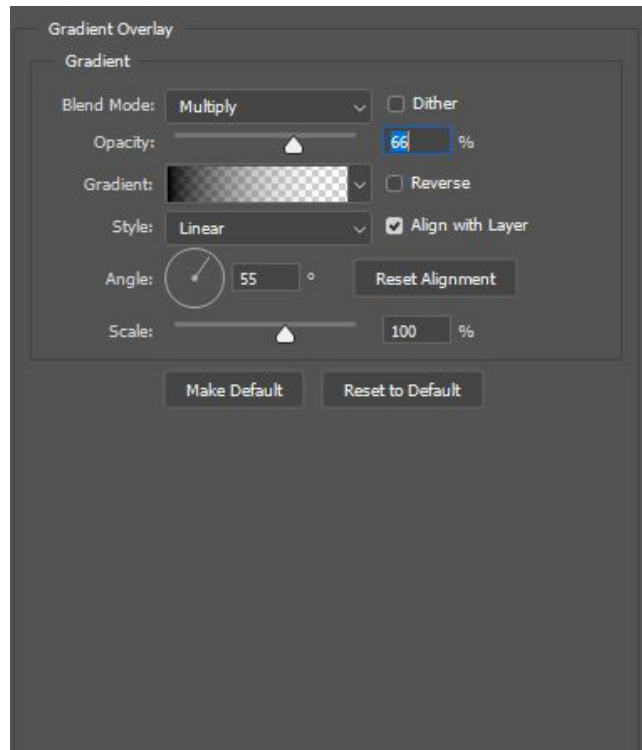
Also, don't give America burgundy style focus icons.

If you don't feel well about your icon, feel free to ping and ask Senior artists, other artists, your Art Lead, or me. (I'm usually doing nothing productive) You can always ask for criticism in Smokepit. Remember, a senior has to say yes to your icon before you can give it to your requester.

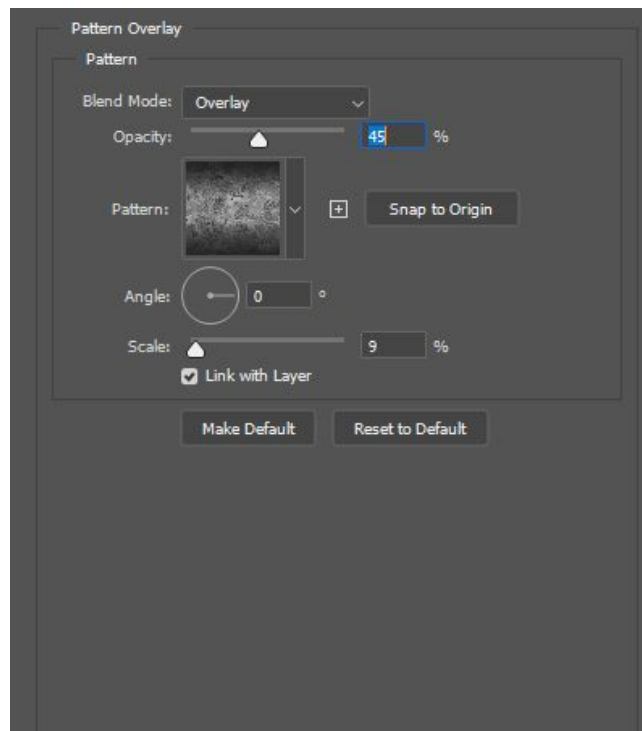
Now, with everything else out of the way, onto my settings. This might be why you came to this guide. I don't know, I don't judge.



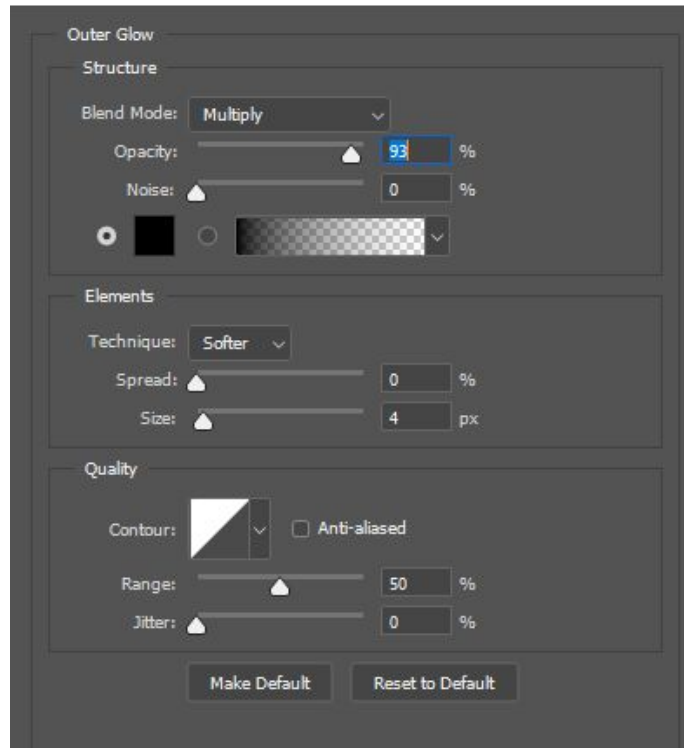
Bevel



Gradient



Pattern Overlay (Thanks to the L'ON dev team for this)



Outer Glow/Shadow

[If you are a TNO artist, here's a message link to a PSD in Smokepit which includes my settings.](#)

I believe that's all for now. I might expand upon this at a later point, but for now, take care! :)