# CROPPING A SQUARE IMAGE INTO A CIRCLE IN PHOTOSHOP

For the social media assignment, you are being asked to turn in both a square avatar and a circular version of the same avatar. Here are instructions on how to achieve this in Photoshop using a mask.

Before you start, make sure you have the square version of your avatar finished. If it's still a PSD, export it as a jpg (that will make this process easier). At the end, you should have a square version as a jpg and a round version as a png.

Open the jpg of your square avatar in Photoshop.

Using the Circle tool, draw a circle above your image, making it stretch from one end to the other so it's 400 x 400 pixels. (An alternative to this, if you want to make sure your circle is the right size, is to select the circle tool and click once on your canvas. That will bring up a dialog box where you can put in the size of the circle — 400 x 400 — and then just move it so it's on top of your image.

It should look like this:
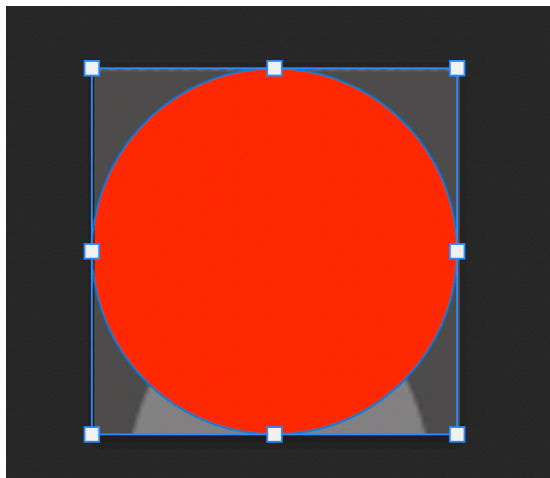
The circle will be on its own layer. That's important.

With the circle layer selected, use the Quick Selection tool or the Magic Wand to select the circle itself. Make sure you see the "marching ants" around the circle.

Click the Quick Mask tool at the bottom of the layers panel to create a mask. The Quick Mask tool is a rectangle with a black circle in the middle and looks like this:
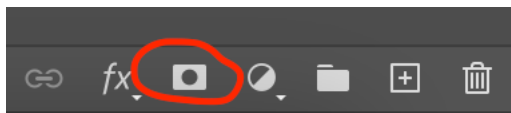

You'll know you did the mask correctly when your circle layer looks like this and you see the mask (with the white circle in the middle):
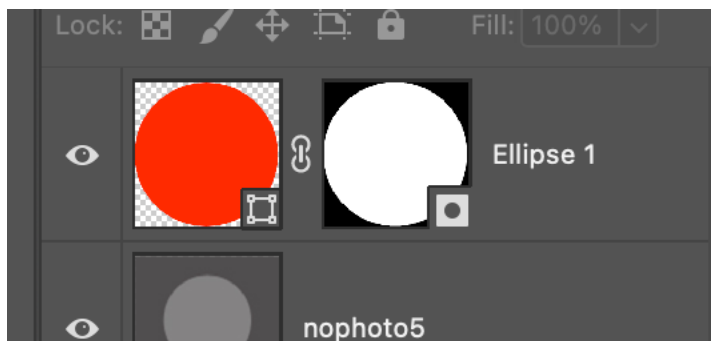
If you don't see the mask, make sure you selected the circle using the quick selection tool before trying to make the Quick Mask. (You can't make a mask without a selection.)

From here, select the Circle layer and click the mask once. This selects the mask. Drag it into the layer that has your avatar in it. Your layers should look like this now:
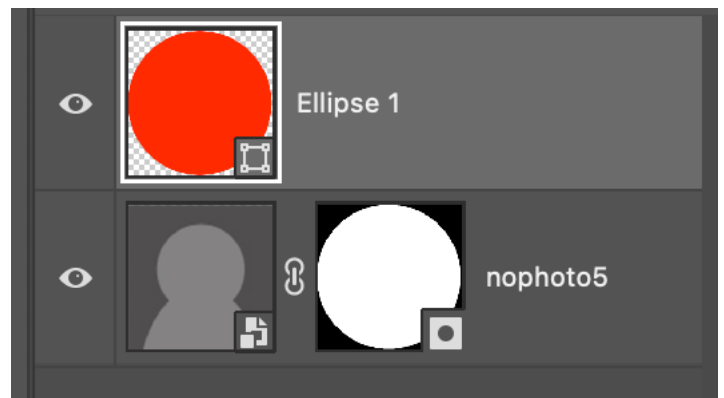
Delete the layer that had the circle in it because you don't need it anymore.

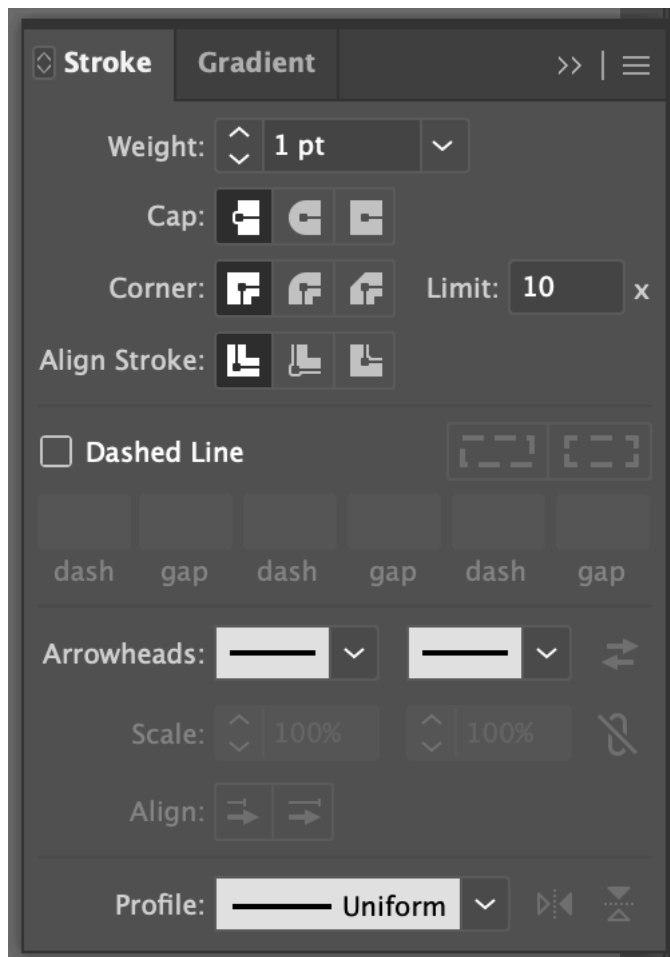The final result should look like this:

From here, you can do a Save As and save it as a PNG, or go to Export and do "Export as PNG" to save your circular avatar.

The stroke panel can actually appear in different ways, depending on whether you've opened Illustrator before or not.

You may see it in its very basic form:
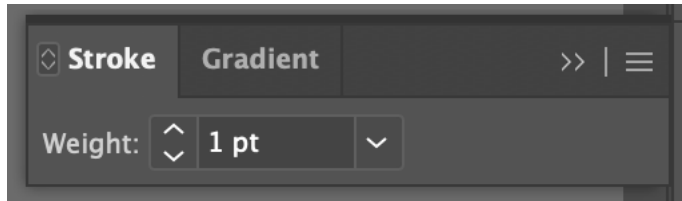
You may see it in it super expanded form:

The most useful version is the version in the first screenshot. But you can cycle through all the versions by clicking the tiny arrows next to the word "Stroke" (they're a little hard to see but they're there!). Just click once while the panel is open and you'll cycle through all the views available.

CAP, CORNER, AND ALIGNMENT

In either of the expanded views, you'll see Cap, Corner, and Align Stroke underneath the "Weight" dropdown.

Cap is most helpful if you're drawing lines or curves with the pen tool or the Line tool. You might want rounded edges as opposed to the default square edges on the ends of your line. (This especially helpful if you're doing, say, a signature, or you just want a less harsh end to your line.)

To give yourself rounded ends, just choose the middle option (with your line selected, of course). Keep in mind that you cannot make one end pointy and the other end round on a stroke, though.

Corner is helpful if you are drawing a shape and you want rounded corners or tapered corners instead. (Tapered corners look like corners that have been cut off cleanly.) The choices are pretty self-explanatory here. This can be especially helpful for advanced text stroke techniques where you're applying strokes to a complex shape (like a person) or text. If you're getting unwanted pointy parts in your art, try changing the corners to rounded to fix it.

Align is helpful when you need really precise alignment with other shapes and the strokes are driving you insane. The default aligns a stroke in the middle of the outer bounds of the shape you drew. The other two options allow you to place the stroke on the inside of the shape or the outside of the shape.

If you're having trouble aligning objects that have strokes, try aligning the stroke to the inside of the shape to help.

DASHED LINES

If you're looking for dashed lines (a.k.a. "coupon lines"), you can achieve this in the Stroke panel. Just checkmark "Dashed Lines" with your line (or shape with a stroke) selected.

When you check Dashed Lines, there are a few things you can fiddle with:
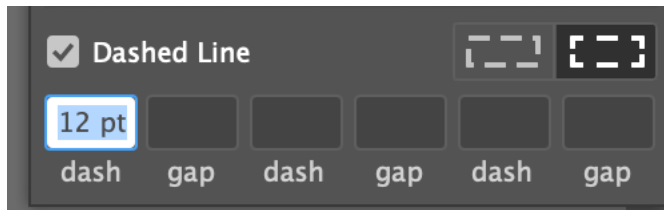
To the right of "Dashed Line", you'll see two boxes. This only applies if you're adding a dashed line around a shape (and if it's a shape that has corners). The default option is the right icon, which gives you actual corners. The left icon strictly applies your dash and gap preferences without regards to corners.

You'll also see that you can adjust your dash and gap size. If you just put one value under "dash", that will make your dashes and your gaps the same size. If you'd like to keep your dashes even but make the gaps a different size, put a size under the first "gap". If you'd like to go hog wild and have more variation, you can adjust as necessary, but do know your pattern is limited by three sets of dashes and gaps.

OTHER SETTINGS

If you have the super expanded Stroke panel, you'll notice a few other settings below the Dashed Lines section. The only one you might want to mess around with here is the Arrowheads setting (helpful if you are drawing arrows or need decorations at the ends of your lines). There are several end caps to choose from — not just arrows! — and you can choose the ends independently of each other.