



INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHICS

Adding Pizzazz to Almost Any Typeface

PROJECT
No.

PS606

This tutorial is currently undergoing a rewrite. As such, commands, tools and interface elements may be different for later versions of Illustrator.

This effect is reproducible on practically any typeface, thick or thin, blocky or curvy, if you invest enough time. If this is your first attempt at this process it is suggested that you choose a very plain bold type face to start.

The process involves taking an existing typeface and giving it dimension without relying on a plug-in or separate 3D program.

SET THE TYPE & CREATE OUTLINES

Select the Type Tool and set a line of text at a large point size. The typeface below is Nobel Bold from the Font Bureau (<http://www.fontbureau.com>) and is set at 175pt. For visual interest, I applied the shear tool to the text as shown below.



Note: The Shear Tool was used to create the skewed appearance.

NOTE: THIS EFFECT WORKS ON ANY LENGTH OF TEXT BUT YOU'LL SAVE YOURSELF A LOT OF TIME AND FRUSTRATION IF YOU APPLY IT TO SHORTER WORDS. ALSO, BLOCKY, SQUARE TYPEFACES ARE EASIER TO EDIT WHILE ROUND AND CURVED FACES REQUIRE A BIT MORE ATTENTION. ALLOW FOR SOME SPACE BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL LETTERS FOR BEST RESULTS.

Convert the type to Outlines (MENU > TYPE > CREATE OUTLINES or CMD/CTRL + SHIFT + O).

Offset Path

Select your type outlines and, from the menu bar, choose OBJECT > PATH > OFFSET PATH. When the Offset Path dialog box appears, choose an offset of 5 - 7px. The example uses 7px. These offset values apply to the 175pt type shown so adjust accordingly. The idea is to give your word(s) enough dimension to work with. Click OK. Choose a contrasting color, such as bright green, for the offset path for better visibility.

Once the Offset Path command is applied, you may have letters that overlap. It's best to separate them to provide breathing room and allow for easier editing in the following steps. You may wish to do this before you skew or alter your letters horizontal alignment.

Original path shown in black,
offset path shown in green.

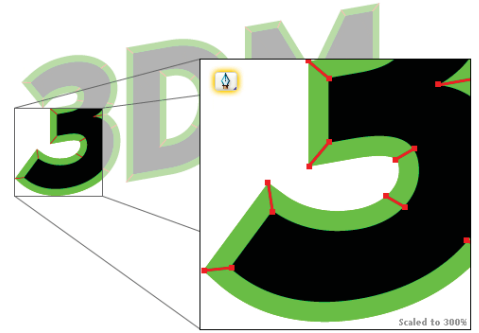


PEN TOOL SCUTWORK

It seems that some people LOVE tedious work and this step in the tutorial is no exception. For precision alignment in this step, turn on Smart Guides (MENU > VIEW > SMART GUIDES or CMD/CTRL + U).

Select the Pen Tool, choose a contrasting Stroke color, and connect the offset paths' anchor points with the corresponding anchor points on the original paths (as shown below). Now you see why it's best to use this effect on short words; there's a lot of connecting going on. It's critical that you connect from anchor point to anchor point, otherwise, the Divide command (applied in the next step) will not create the necessary divisions for the type.

On curved areas where no anchor points are apparent, I add lines where I feel my light source will hit and change to a different color.



NOTE: ONCE AN ANCHOR POINT TO ANCHOR POINT CONNECTION HAS BEEN MADE, SIMPLY PRESS THE "ENTER" OR "RETURN" KEY AND MOVE ONTO THE NEXT SET OF ANCHOR POINTS WITHOUT CONTINUING THE PEN TOOL'S PREVIOUS PATH.

DIVIDE

Once the anchor points are connected, apply the Divide command from the Pathfinder palette (MENU > WINDOW > PATHFINDER or SHIFT + F9) to each individual letter. You can select all the letters and apply the Divide command, however, you may get some unpredictable results. The offset paths are now divided into individual facets. To work with these further, be sure to Ungroup them (MENU > OBJECT > UNGROUP or CMD/CTRL + SHIFT + G).

Color

Think about where your light source is coming from and color the individual facets appropriately. In the example, the light is coming from the upper-left thus the top facets are lighter than the bottom ones. It's best to have at least 3 to 4 colors different from your text object fill to color with: a light, one or two mid-tones and a dark color. To impress and amaze friends and family, you can apply gradients to the facets for even greater realism (as shown).

