

# INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHICS

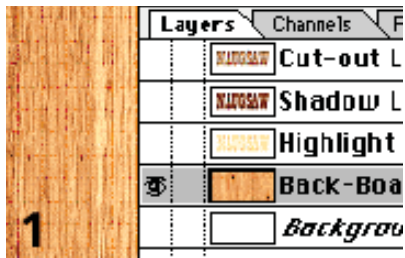
## Simulating Wood Using Layers

Information Sheet No. PS964

### ...or as art for actual wood sign prototypes

This technique is often used to simulate wood signs for original art or client proposals. This example could very easily be carved or sand-blasted out of actual wood and become a very handsome sign. This fact contributes greatly to the overall appeal of the graphic, simply because it could, very well, be a real sign, so lets begin.

### Start with the backboard



Build a background of wood planks. One resource image can be found on Drive S in the folder for this project. You may feel free to check the internet for different "planks" to work this project.

But since the artwork provides you with only a single-plank strip, you'll have to take the board and duplicate sections of it vertically across the field in order to simulate our sign-board of laminated planks. Utilize any knots in your plank as they give the sign a real wood feeling.

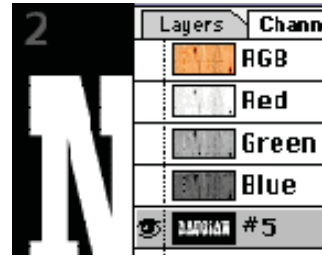
### Now, cut the type

Key the type into a new channel. You'll want the selection later for various operations.

Once our sign board is completed you must bring in the type on its own layer. Now, you may have seen this written up a dozen times by several different writers, but don't get bound up in channels and masks. The Photoshop gurus and writers bring forth page after page of instructions for this technique, but it's really not necessary.

The type is everything here. Look at your layers palette.

Building the sign consists of duplicating the type layer, then applying different effects to each layer, then making sure the stacking order is maintained.



Note here too, that you don't have to be using Photoshop in order to get very nearly the same technique. Any program that has layers,

and blurring will do the exact same thing. (In the accompanying illustrations, watch where the "EYE" indicates active, visible layers.)

### Step 1: Prepare the background.

Easy enough. Make sure the wood looks good. You may at this point want to reduce some of the colors, especially if you're going out onto the web with your graphic.

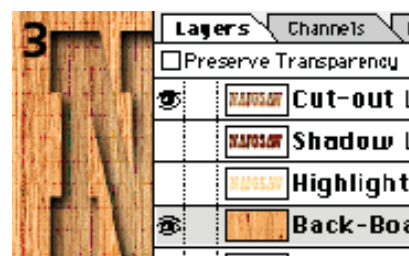
### Step 2: Type. Key your type into a channel.

Without getting too technical, you'll need to make a mask layer.

Once you have this mask, the white portions will show and the black will be "masked" from the rest of the scene. Use your arrow keys to "tweak" the active selection. Count the times you hit the key so you'll know how many you've moved.

### Step 3: Prepare the Cut-out

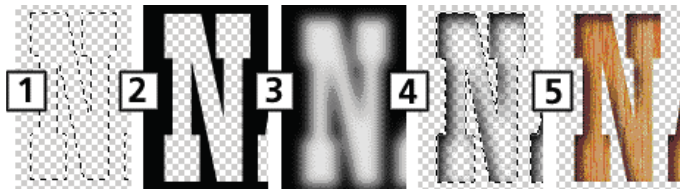
Return to layers view.



Click "New Layer" then load the selection (the type in the mask).

- A: Invert, fill with Black, Deselect (Cmd/Ctrl D)

- B: Gaussian Blur -- perhaps three or four pixels -- you choose
- C: Select All, (or select the "Move" tool) then tweak the selection down and to the right 3 or four pixels
- D. Choose Select menu > Load the selection,
- E. Choose Select menu > Invert selection
- F. Delete the background. You're left with the shadow for your cut-in type.
- G: Overlay the background -- load selection, invert and delete -- **PRESTO!** cut-out letters.



Review: 1) make the selection, 2) invert the selection and fill with black, 3) apply Gaussian blur, Move tool (tap: V) tweak down and to the left several pixels; 4) load selection again, then INVERT the selection again, then delete -- leaves part of the blurred shadow; 5) In a new layer, load selection again, move to the "Wood" Background, press Command/J to float a copy of the selection to its own new layer. 6) color correct the "wood" letters darker to simulate insets.

## Setting Highlight and Shadow

### Step 4: Highlight Edge

You'll want to make the type area slightly darker with the brightness/Contrast setting. This reinforces the visual that it is indeed deeper than the front surface. Now to drive home the realism.



On the light reflecting side of the cuts there'll be a highlight. On the shadow side there will be a slightly darker "lip." You'll want to shop for a very light color.

- Zoom in very close and with the dropper tool
- select a very light color from the existing sign board.
- Now, choose Selection Menu > Re-load selection into a new layer

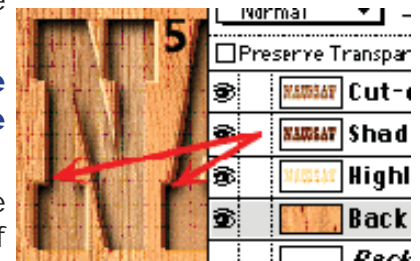
- fill with the light color.
  - While still active tweak the high-light DOWN a pixel or two and to the right to give the illusion of a raised edge to the cut-out. For the shadow side we'll do just the opposite.
  - Drop the Selection (Cmd/Ctrl D)
  - Now, choose Selection Menu > Re-load selection
  - Invert Selection and
  - Delete
- Notice you created a highlight

### Step 5: Shadow edge:

For the dark shadow area, do the exact same thing only select a darker color (Don't use black)

In order to have these new layers be convincing, simply click the dark one up and to the left a pixel or two, and the light one down and to the right a pixel or two. This gives the illusion of the "edge" of the cut opening.

**Voila! Are we done yet? Nope not yet**



Now let's take a different point of view This time we move the light edge up and the dark edge down for "raised" lettering... giving the client a choice of how the sign can be cut.

### Yet another variation?

Hide the background (the signboard) and you've got cut-out letters on a white background!

Now, think about this: The same layers can be reorganized to give the illusion of raised lettering... as if you cut away the background instead of the foreground. It's merely a simple matter of reorganizing the layers.

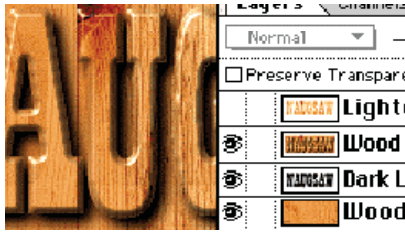


Note that the "Cut-out" layer is no longer needed, and a new Gaussian blur layer is required to show the shadow that is cast on the backboard. This time we simply load selection, fill black, blur, and tweak down and to the right.

## Now, Polish it off

Now, if that's not enough -- how about offering the client a furniture grade sign??? Tell your client that for another \$150.00 you can deliver a furniture quality sign!

This time we take our top layer and dig out Black Box again, applying the "Inside Bevel" to the layer. (In Photoshop 6 and 7 this can be a layer style)



Voila again -- now our raised wood lettering has been sanded, and coated out with a nice coat of clear, gloss, polyurethane! Whoa! If they don't buy that sign, I'll eat my hat!

## To complete the illusion

...hang your sign on a contrasting colored background and provide another Gaussian blur drop shadow to add yet more relief. Blue is good since cooler colors will recede and reinforce the rear-layer effect.



This whole operation should take less than an hour. Remember: It's not a lot of hokus-pokus. It's an attitude. Look at your layers, decide what you want them to do, then have at it.