

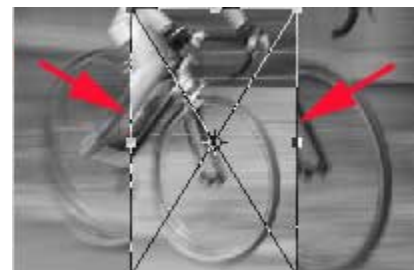
SMART OBJECTS – If you enjoy compositing, you will want to learn how to use Smart Objects!

Before you begin, decide on two or more images that you'd like to use for your composite but DON'T open them.

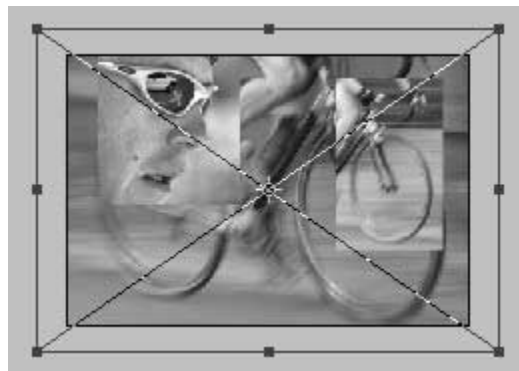
1. Open Photoshop CS2. Go to FILE>OPEN and choose an image you'd like to use as the background for your collage. I'm using an image of a cyclist.



2. To add a second image, you are going to use a command that you may have never noticed. Click on FILE>PLACE. A box comes up. Choose your second image and click "Place". The image will pop into your first image **but** it will have a "Transform" box around it. You could go ahead and size it now if you like. Either way, you must press Enter/Return to continue.



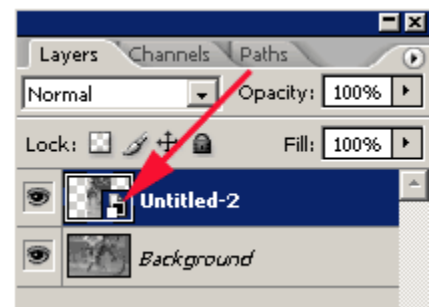
TIP: If your second image is larger than your first and you can't see the transform "handles", just press Control/Command and 0 (zero). You will now see the entire box. Here's an example:



If you can't see the handles of the transform box, press Control/Command 0 (zero)

3. You have just created a Smart Object! Look at your Layers Palette and note that there is a tiny icon at the bottom right of your image icon. This indicates that the layer is a Smart Object. If you do NOT see this icon, then you need to delete the layer and repeat step two.

A Smart Object Layer has a tiny icon on it

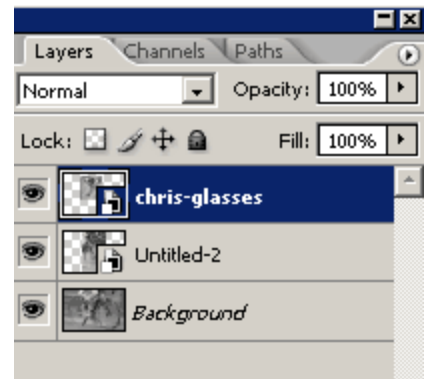


4. To add another image, click again on FILE>PLACE. Choose your image and click "Place". Here is mine:



I now have three layers. One "background" and two Smart Objects.

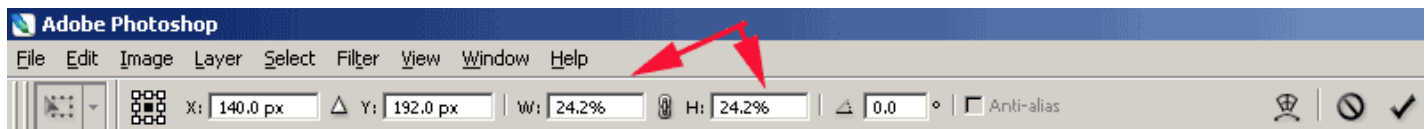
TIP: If you change your mind about one of the images and want to replace it with another, you can simply "REPLACE CONTENTS". Just Right/Click on the desired layer and choose "replace contents" or go to LAYER>SMART OBJECTS>REPLACE CONTENTS. The new image will come in with a bounding box the same as what you just replaced. It is then ready to be resized. Remember NOT to transform larger than the original size and you need to press ENTER/RETURN to commit your transformation before you can continue.



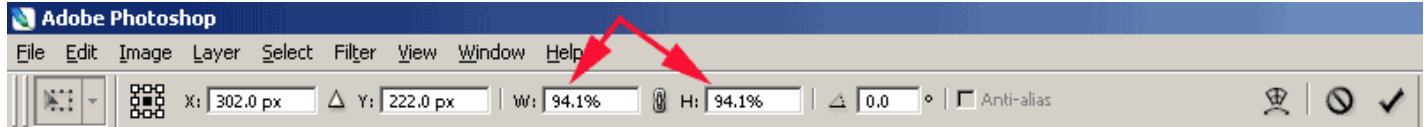
5. So what is the big deal?! To find out, click on one of the layers and the click on EDIT>FREE TRANSFORM. Put your cursor inside the bounding box of the image and reposition it. Now, hold the SHIFT and ALT/OPTION keys. Click and Hold one of the "handles" of the bounding box and resize VERY SMALL. Then press ENTER/RETURN to commit. If this were a conventional layer, your image would be ruined, right?!



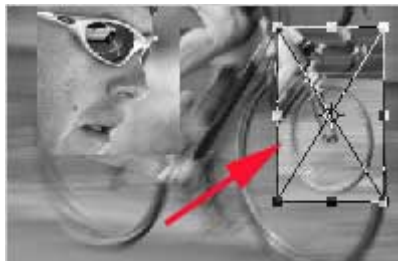
6. Click on EDIT>FREE TRANSFORM again. Look at the OPTIONS bar at the top of Photoshop and notice that it has remembered the dimensions that you reduced your image to! My image was reduced to 24.2%.



7. Hold the SHIFT and ALT/OPTION key and drag the handles until the image is increase to the size you want. **DO NOT** increase past 100%. (**TIP:** *If you want to go back to 100% but can't get it just right, you can type 100% in each box*). I am reducing my layer to 94.1%. Before you press ENTER/RETURN to commit, put your cursor inside the box and position your image if you need to.



8. Did you notice that there was NO PIXELATION! Smart Objects allow you to transform a layer AS MANY TIMES AS YOU LIKE with absolutely no pixilation (UNLESS you go past 100%).
9. Click on your second layer. Click EDIT>FREE TRANSFORM. This time, I will resize and reposition the layer as I normally would. Because I know that I can resize, I'm not worried about getting it perfectly sized!



10. Repeat steps 4, 7 and 8 for each image you'd like to add. If you change your mind about the size of any layer, just bring up FREE TRANSFORM and resize.

At this point, I'm finished with my composite but you may want to add more images and use layer masks to blend your layers. Certain editing and filters require that you "Rasterize" the layer. It will no longer be a Smart Object so only do this when you're sure of your sizing.

OPTIONS:

- Convert your background layer into a Smart Object. Just Right/Click and choose "Group into Smart Object".
- "Place" a RAW image into your composite. Camera Raw will open. Make your adjustments and click "Open" Double clicking on this RAW Smart Object and it will take you back into Camera Raw! Make adjustments and Click "DONE". Click "YES" when asked if you want to save it.
- You can open an existing Layered Document and convert each layer to individual Smart Objects or Link them together and create one Smart Object. When you double click on this particular Smart Object, another document will open showing all your layers. Pretty cool!
- REPLACE the content of a Smart Objects Layer at any time by either Right/Clicking on the layer and choosing "Replace Contents" or go to LAYER>SMART OBJECTS>REPLACE CONTENTS

Although there are limitations to editing SMART OBJECTS, I feel they are "the best thing since sliced bread"!