

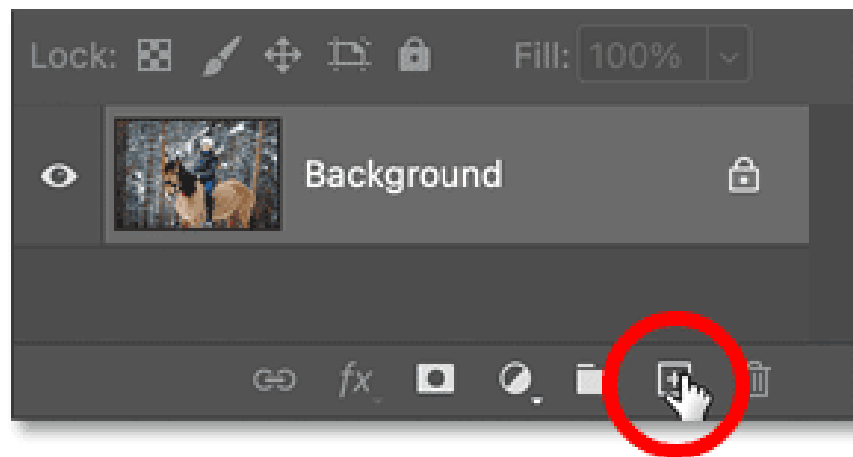
How to Add Falling Snow to Photos Using Photoshop

Nothing adds beauty to a winter photo like falling snow. While capturing falling snow in camera can be difficult, adding snow later in Photoshop is easy.

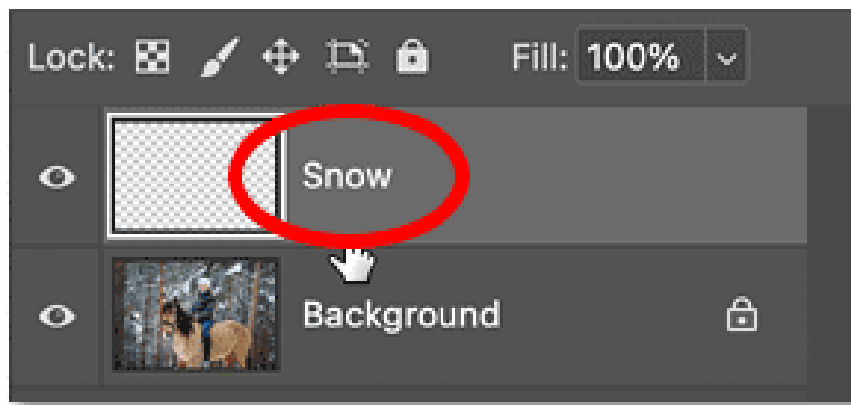
This tutorial will show you step by step how to create a falling snow effect in Photoshop and avoid performance issues with Photoshop when adding snow to larger images.

Step 1: Add a new layer for the snow

In the **Layers** panel , the photo is on the Background layer. Add a new blank layer above the photo by clicking the **Add New Layer** icon .

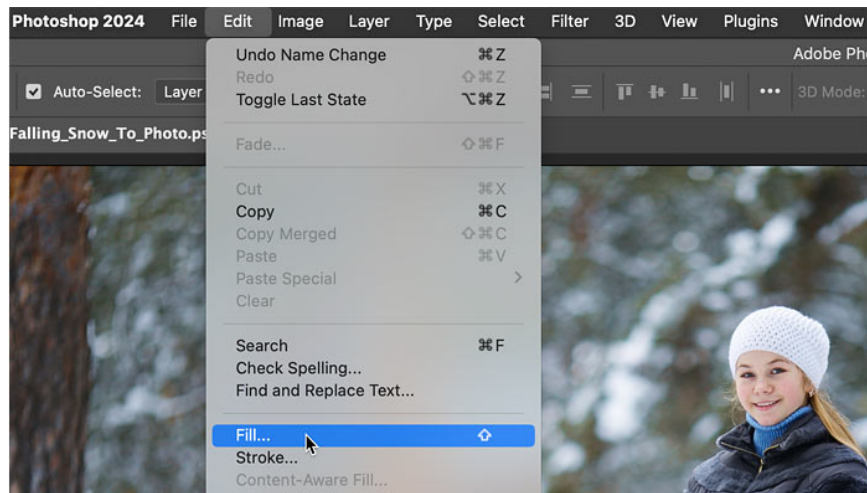


Then, double-click the new layer name and rename it **Snow** . Press **Enter** on a Windows PC or **Return** on a Mac.

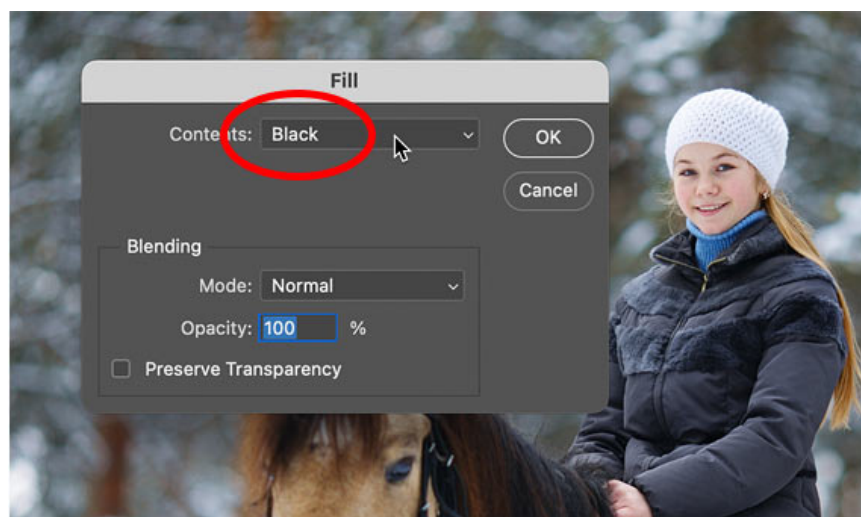


Step 2: Fill the layer with black color

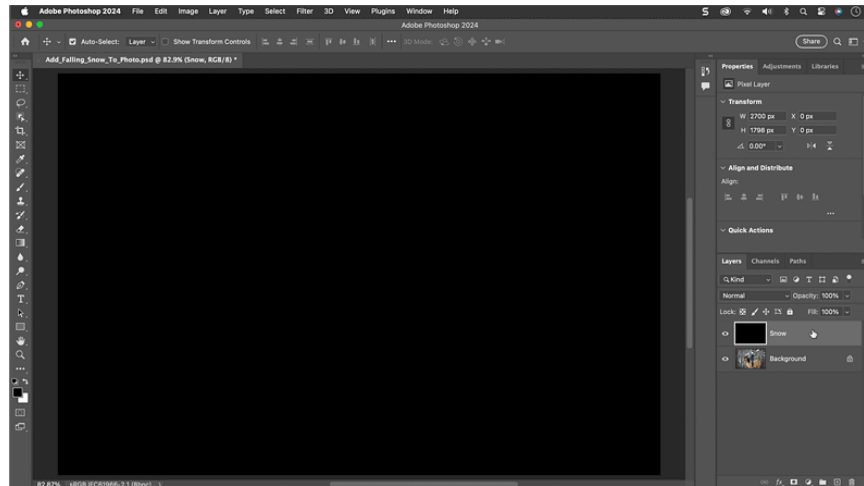
We need to fill the new layer with black. So go to the **Edit** menu in the Menu Bar and select **Fill**.



In the Fill dialog box, set **Contents** to **Black** and click **OK**.



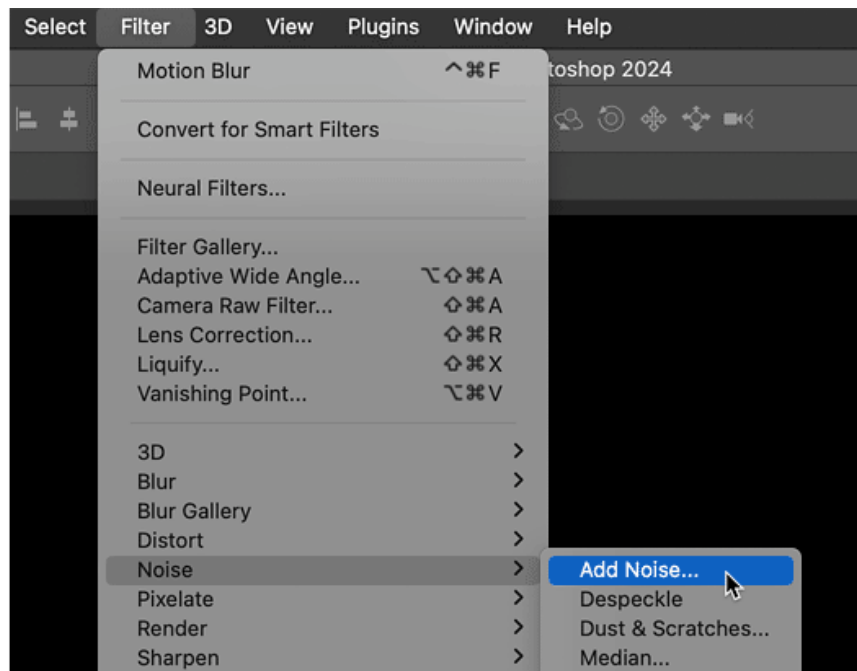
The image is temporarily hidden from view.



Step 3: Add noise effect to layer

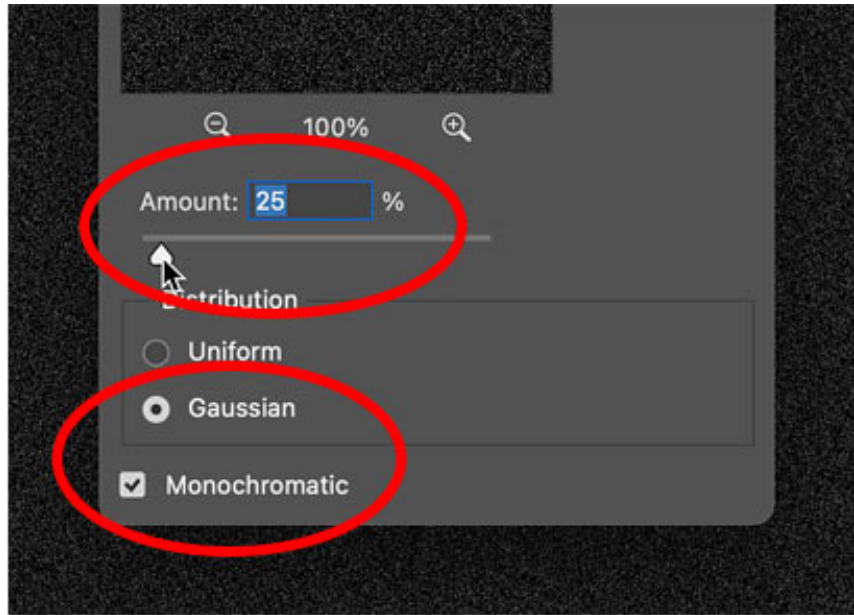
To create snow, first add some noise effects to the layer.

Go to the Filter menu , select **Noise** then **Add Noise**.

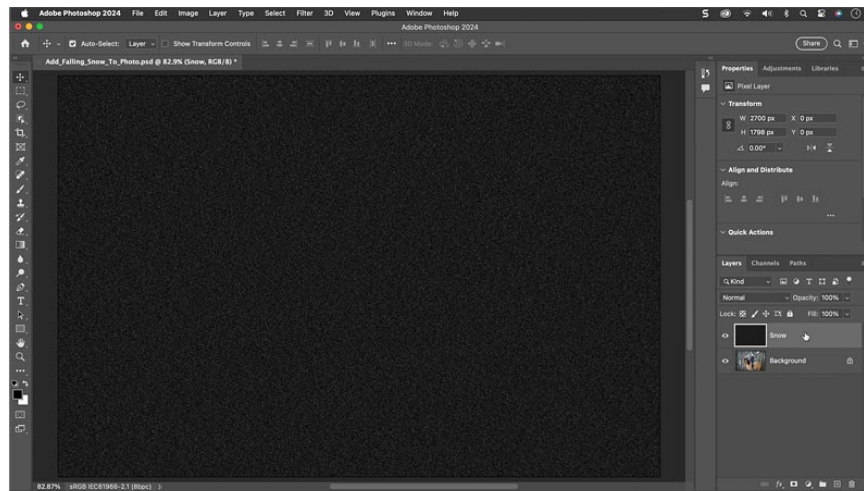


In the dialog box, select **Gaussian** and **Monochromatic** at the bottom.

Then set **the Amount of noise** to around 25% and click **OK** .

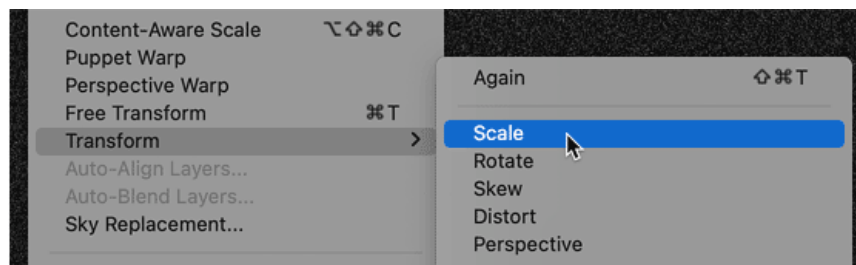


Photoshop will add noise effects to the layer.

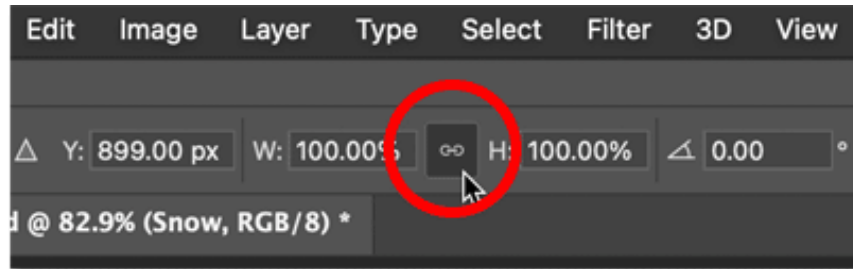


Step 4: Adjust the noise ratio

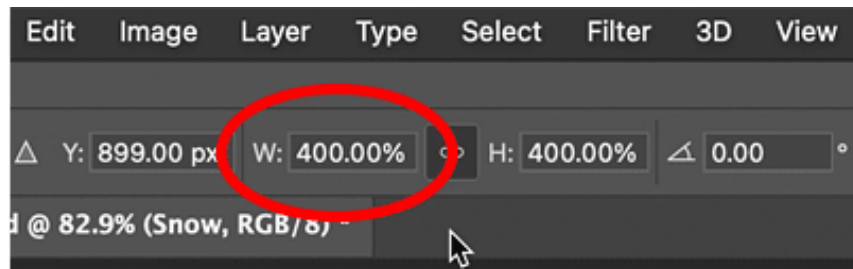
The noise effect will eventually become our snow effect, but the problem is that it's too small. So let's adjust the noise scale by going to the **Edit** menu , selecting **Transform** , then **Scale** .



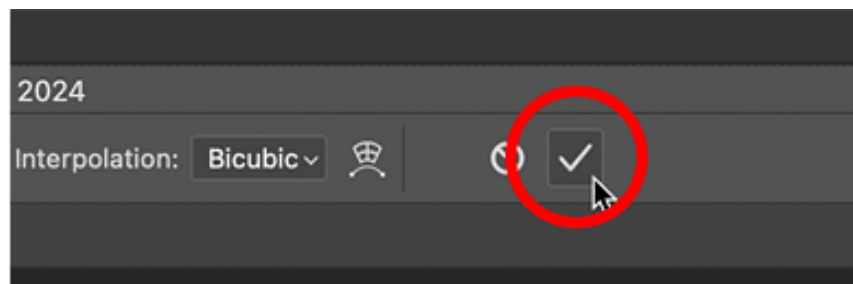
In the **Options Bar** , make sure the link icon between the **Width** and **Height** fields is selected.



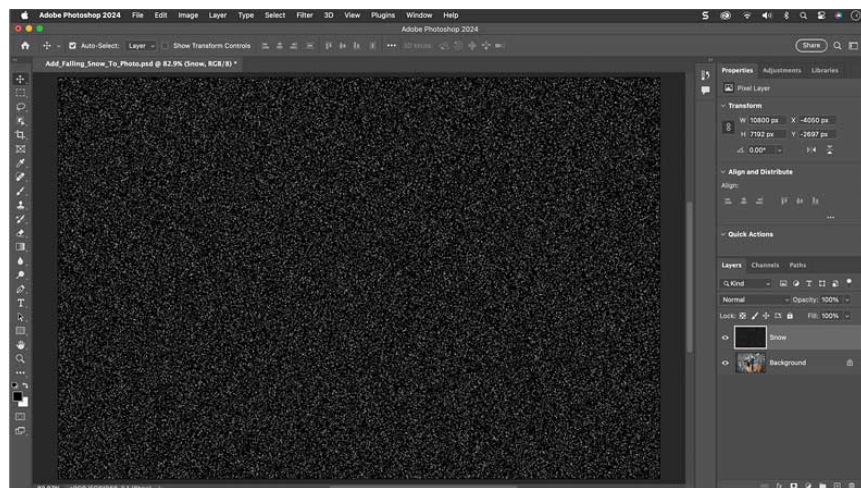
Then change the **Width** to 400%. The **Height** will also change to 400%.



Click the check mark on the Options Bar to accept.



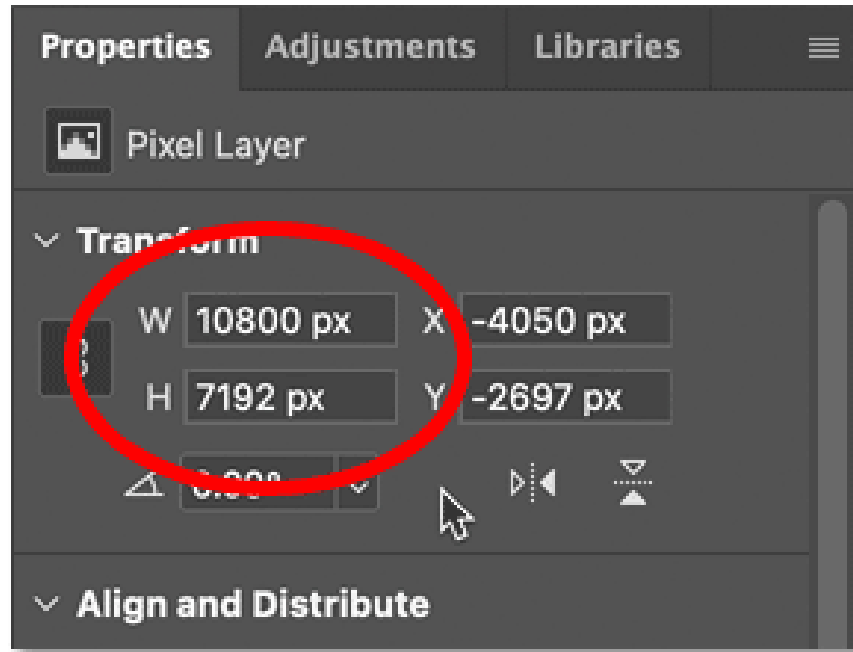
The noise effect starts to look more like snow.



Step 5: Trim excess space

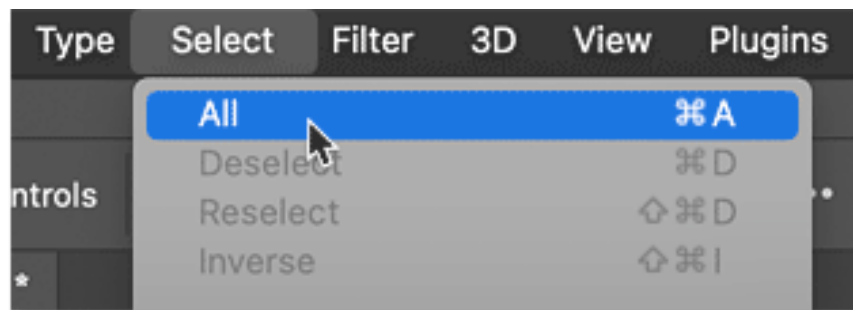
But this is something that can cause performance issues with Photoshop if you're working with larger images. Since the example has shrunk the width and height of the noise layer by 400%, the document size is now much larger.

Notice in the Properties panel that the document width is now 10800 pixels and the height is almost 7200 pixels. This can cause problems when you start applying the noise filter because Photoshop can run out of memory.

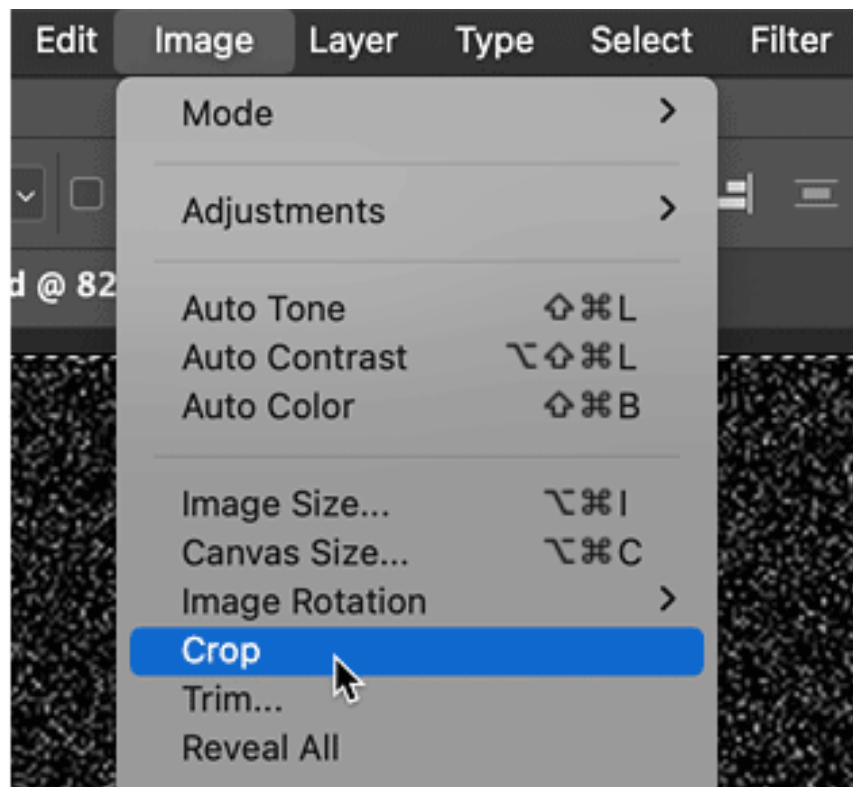


The good news is that we don't need all that extra space so we can trim it.

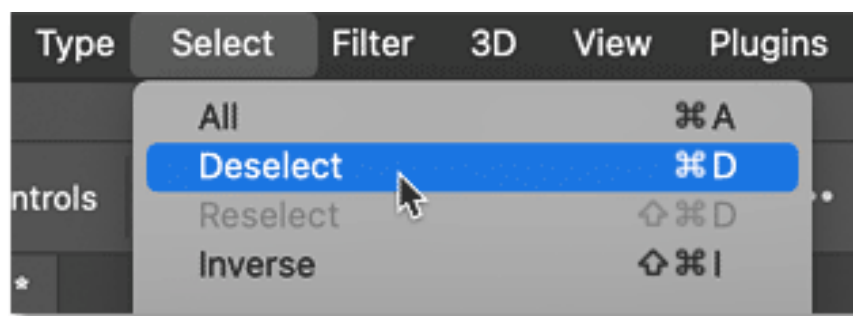
To do that, go to the **Select** menu and choose **All**.



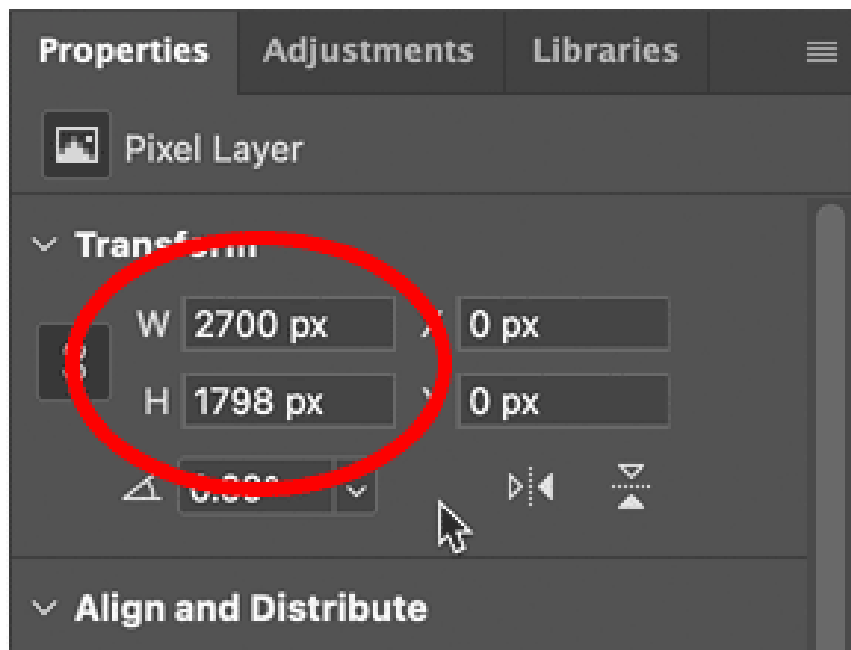
Then go to the **Image** menu and select **Crop**.



Go back to the **Select** menu and choose **Deselect** .



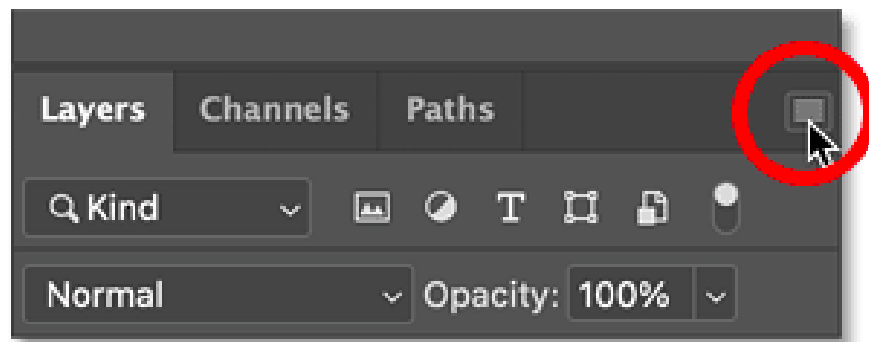
The document is back to its original size and we can start adding some filters.



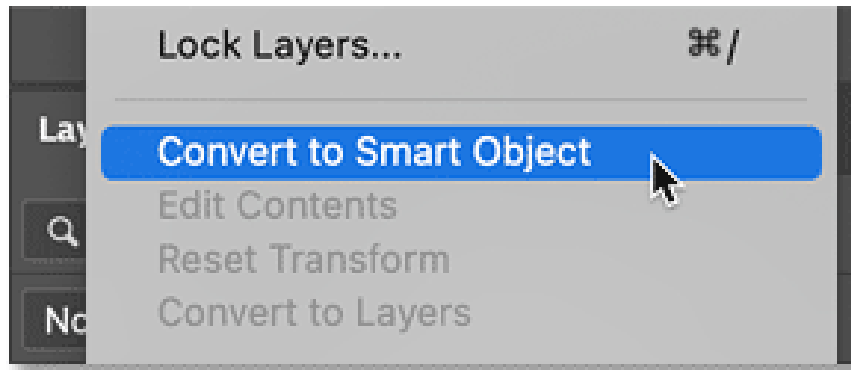
Step 6: Convert the snow layer into a smart object

But before we add any filters, let's first convert the snow layer to a smart object. That way, the filters will be applied as smart filters, meaning we can go back and change their settings if needed.

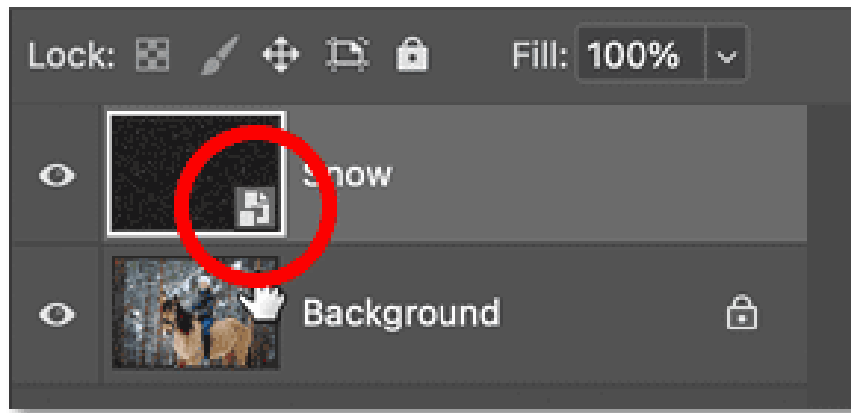
With the snow layer selected, click the Layers panel menu icon.



Then select **Convert to Smart Object**.

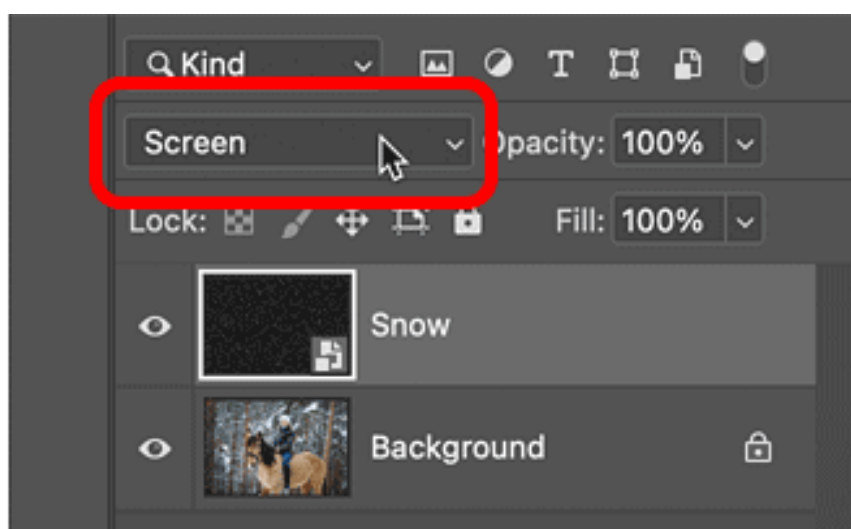


A smart object icon appears in the lower right corner of the thumbnail.

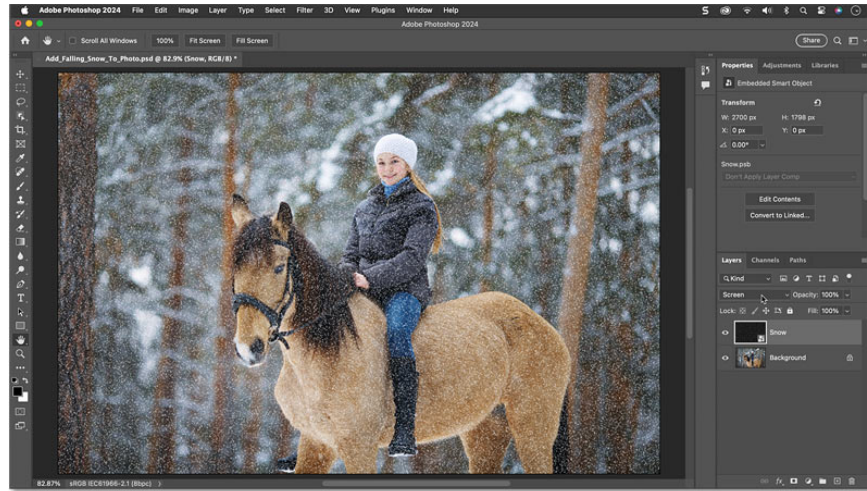


Step 7: Blend the noise effect with the photo

Still in the Layers panel, blend the noise effect with the photo by changing the Blend Mode of the smart object from **Normal** to **Screen** .

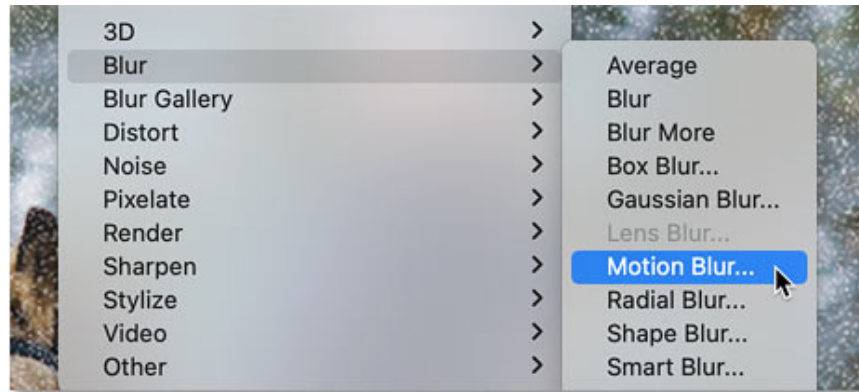


Blend Mode Screen hides the black areas on the layer and leaves only white noise.



Step 8: Add motion to the snow

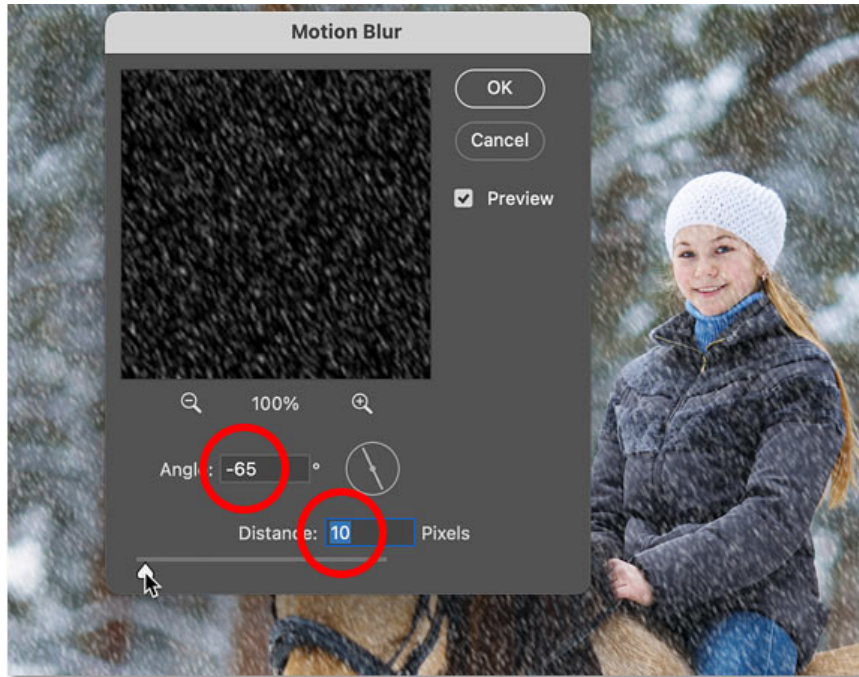
To make the snow look like it's falling, go to the **Filter** menu , select **Blur**, then **Motion Blur**.



In the dialog box, set **the Angle** to the direction you want the snow to fall. I set my angle to **-65** degrees so the snow falls from the top left corner.

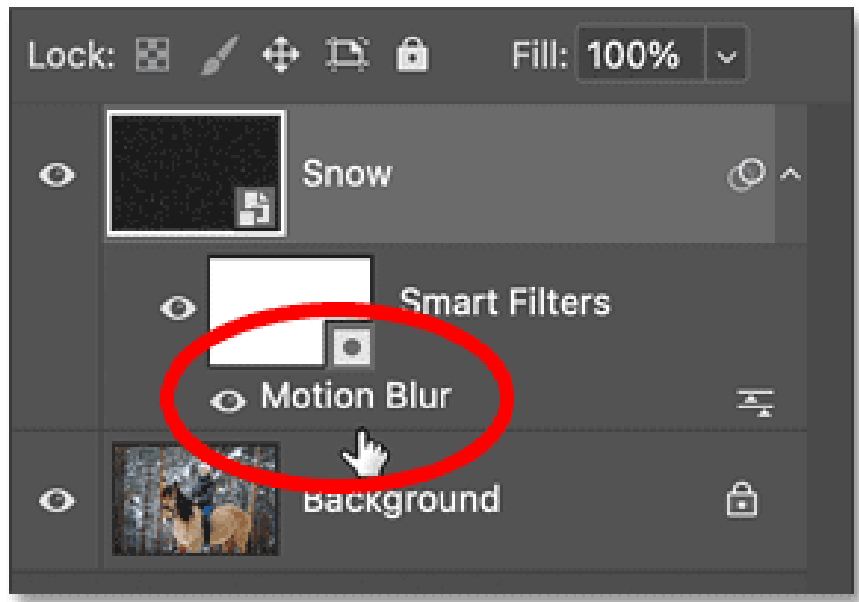
Then adjust the amount of movement using the **Distance** slider . Don't set it too high or the snow will look more like rain. Lower values will work better, so for example we'll set the angle to 10 pixels.

Click **OK** to close the dialog box.

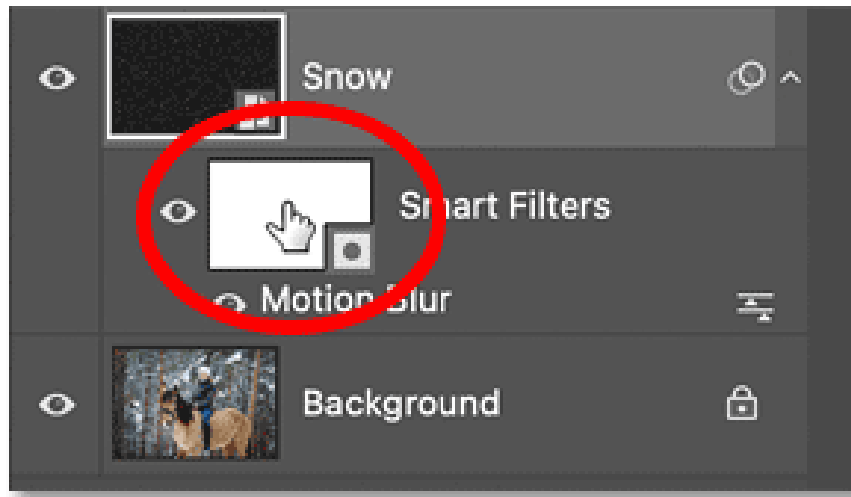


The Layers panel shows that the Motion Blur filter has been applied as a smart filter.

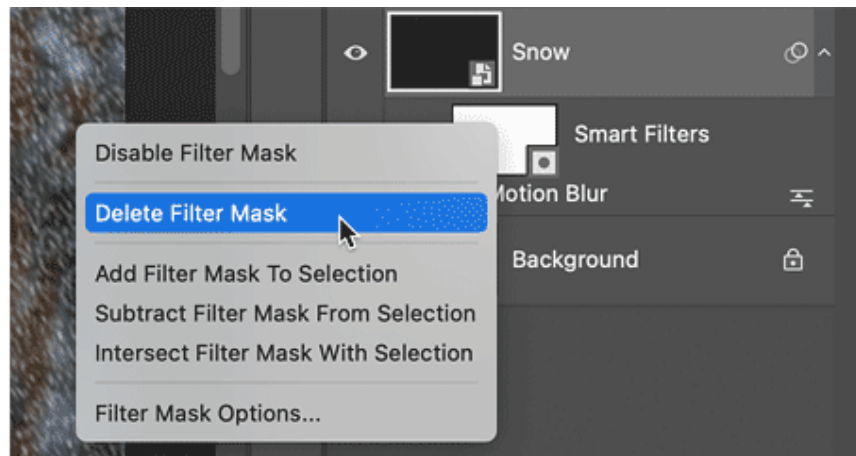
You can double-click the filter name to reopen the dialog if you want to try different settings.



Also, in the Layers panel we have a new filter mask (white thumbnail) that takes up a lot of space.



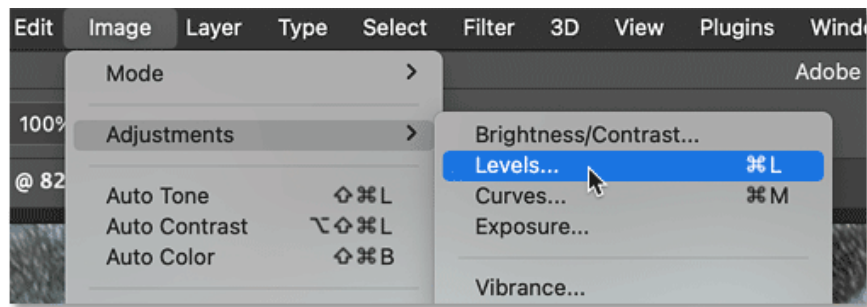
We don't need the filter mask for this effect. So let's delete it by right-clicking and selecting **Delete Filter Mask**.



Step 9: Reduce and lighten the snow

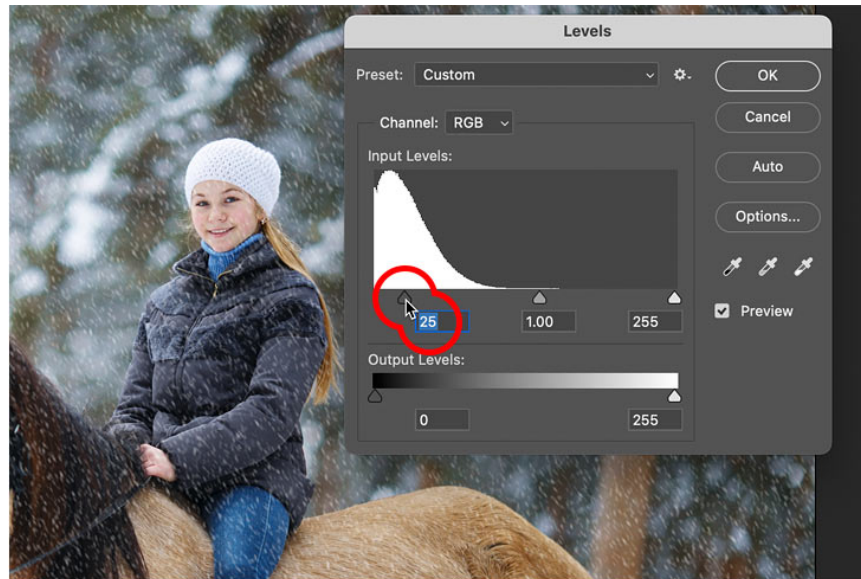
Next, we'll reduce the amount and lighten the snow at the same time.

Go to the Image menu, select **Adjustments** and then select **Levels**.



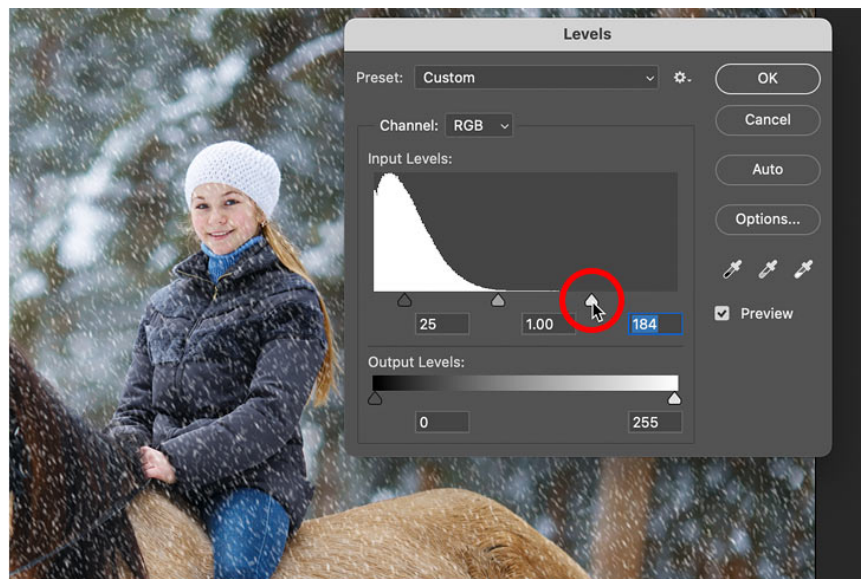
To reduce the number of snowflakes, click on the black point slider at the bottom left of the graph and start dragging to the right.

As you drag, you will see the darker snowflakes start to disappear, leaving only the lighter snowflakes.

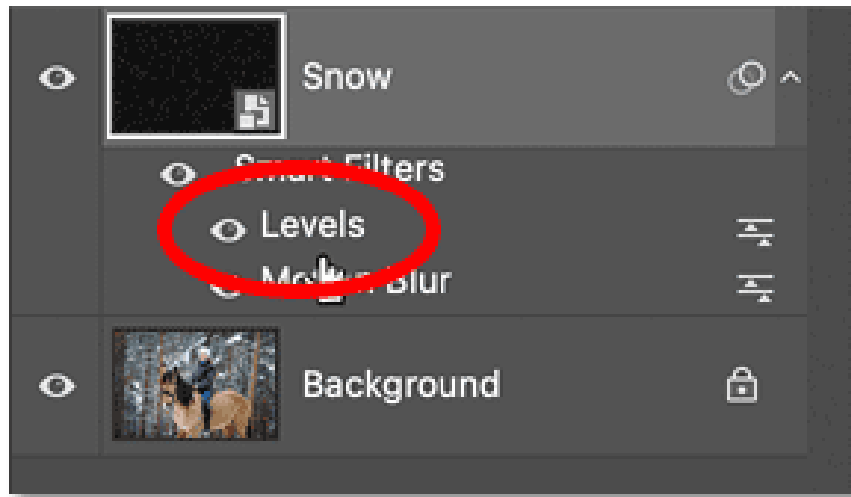


Then, to brighten the remaining snowflakes, click on the white point slider at the bottom right of the histogram and drag it to the left.

When finished, click **OK** to close the dialog box.



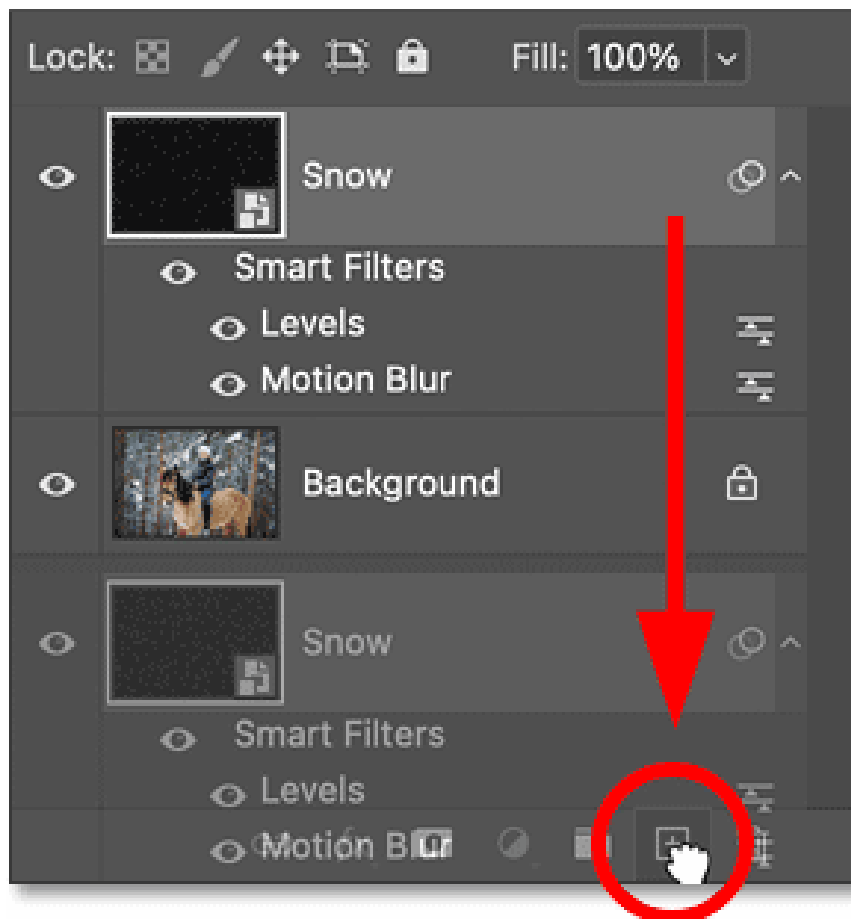
Back in the **Layers** panel, note that even though **Levels** is an image adjustment rather than a filter, Photoshop still applies it as a smart filter, meaning you can double-click its name to reopen the dialog box and change the settings if needed.



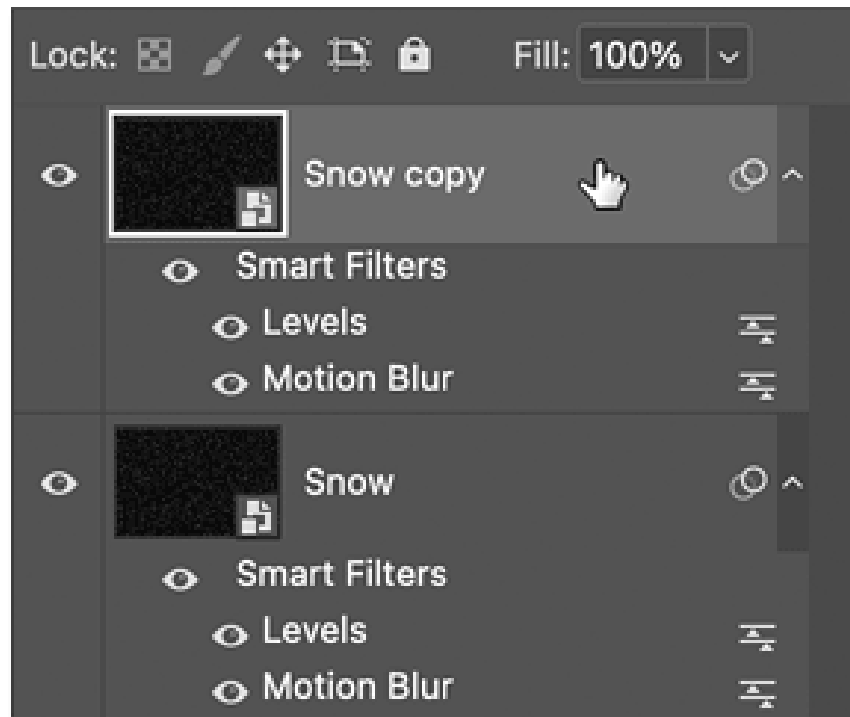
Step 10: Duplicate the snow layer

At this point, the initial snow effect is complete. But let's add a little more depth to it by adding a second layer of snow, this time with larger snowflakes so they look like they're closer to the camera.

In the **Layers** panel , create a copy of the Snow smart object by dragging it down onto the **Add New Layer** icon



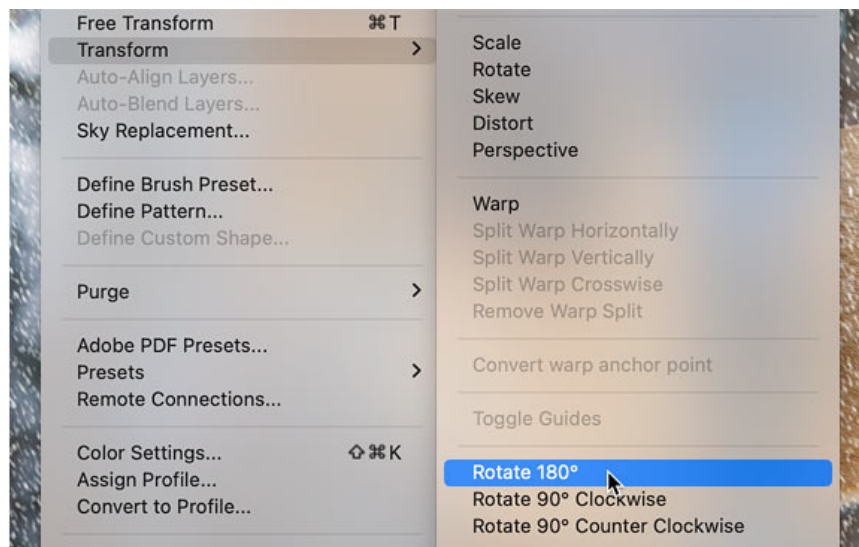
The copy appears above the original, along with copies of the smart filters so there's no need to reapply them.



Step 11: Rotate the second snow layer

Rotate the copy so that the new snowflakes don't just sit on top of the original snowflakes.

Go to the **Edit** menu , go down to **Transform** and select **Rotate 180 degrees** .

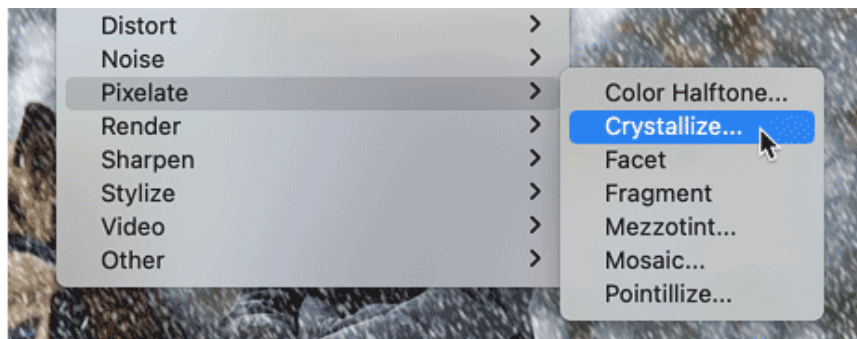


Rotating the copy will double the amount of snow falling.



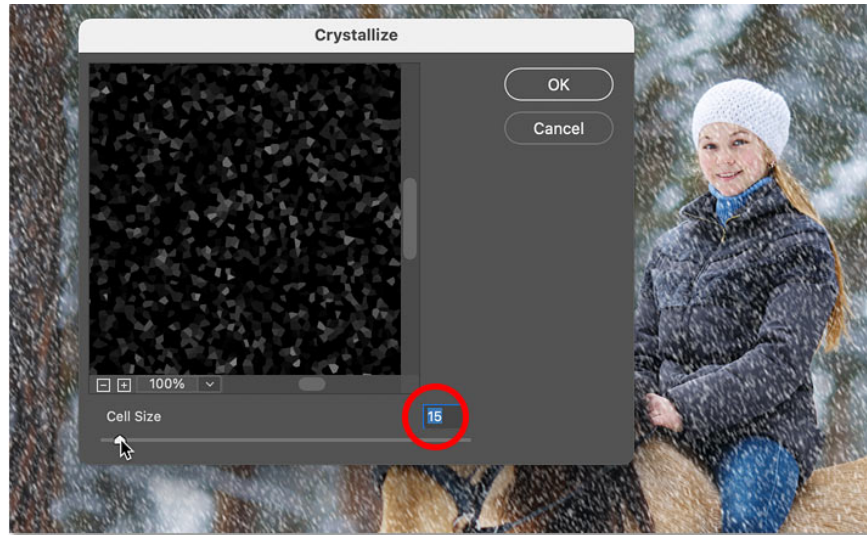
Step 12: Make the snowflakes bigger with Crystallize

To make these snowflakes larger than the original, go to the **Filter** menu , down to **Pixelate** and select **Crystallize**.

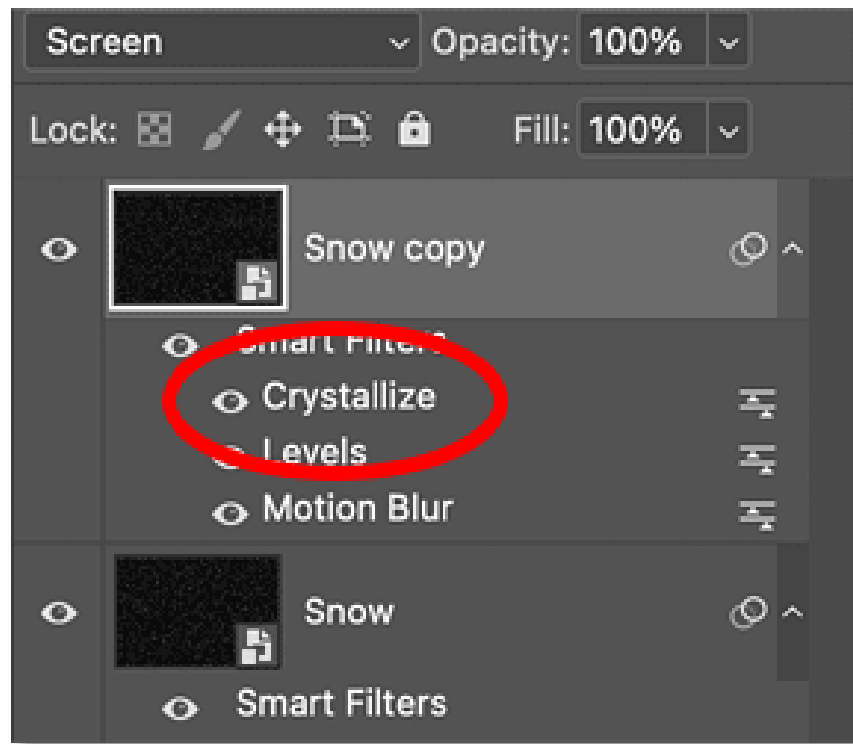


Increase **the Cell Size** at the bottom to somewhere between 10 and 20. For example, I'll choose 15.

Then click **OK** to close the dialog box.



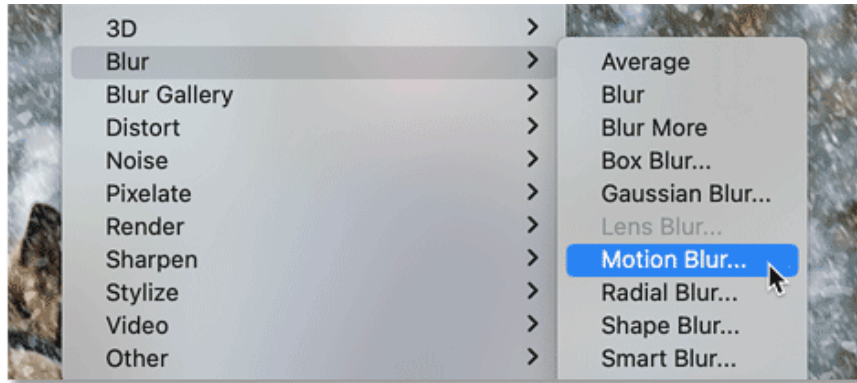
If the snowflakes look too big or not big enough, just double click the **Crystallize** smart filter in the **Layers** panel and try different settings.



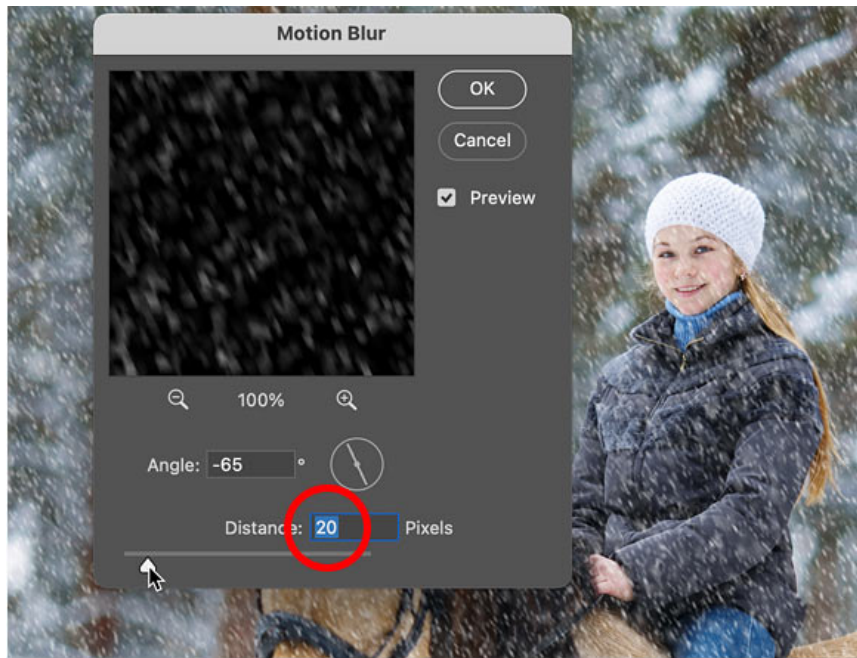
Step 13: Add motion to the snowflakes

The only problem with larger snowflakes is that they don't have any applied movement.

So go back to the **Filter** menu , go back to **Blur** and again select **Motion Blur** .



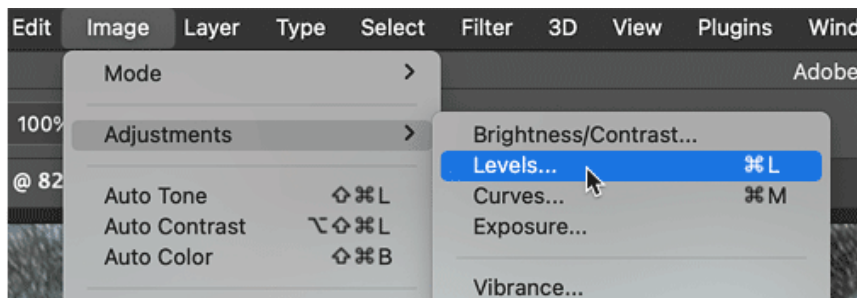
Keep the Angle the same so the snow falls in the same direction. But since these snowflakes are larger, increase the **Distance** to about 20 pixels. Then click **OK**.



Step 14: Reduce and lighten the large snowflakes

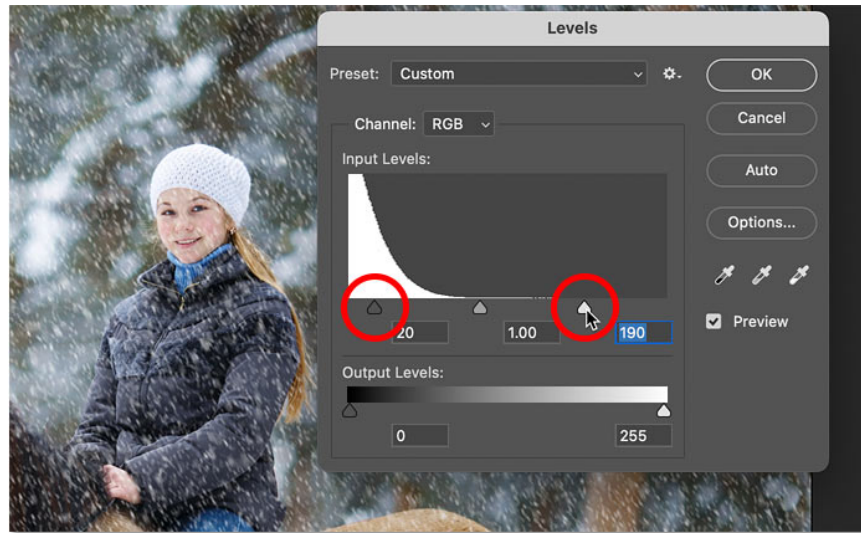
Finally, reduce and brighten the larger snowflakes by adding another Levels adjustment.

Go back to the **Image** menu , go back to **Adjustments** and select **Levels**.



Then, just like we did before, drag the black point slider to the right to reduce the number of snowflakes and drag the white point slider to the left to brighten the remaining snowflakes.

Then click **OK** to close the dialog box.



We have the complete snow effect.



That's how to add falling snow to your winter photos using Photoshop.

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