

# How to create stunning 3D pop-out effects in Photoshop

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It's exciting to imagine what else you could do with your old digital photos. Creating a 3D pop-out effect in Adobe Photoshop is an ideal way to draw attention to your work on social media posts or as a creative photography project.

## Minimum requirements

The pop-out effect is an innovative technique in which parts of an image appear to jump out of their boundaries, creating a dynamic 3D effect.

You will need the following resources to complete this tutorial:

1. Adobe Photoshop (any recent version)
2. Have a basic understanding of the Photoshop interface.
3. At least two high-resolution photos

This is what the completed project will look like:



**Note :** This article uses the latest version of Adobe Photoshop, but you can also try this method on older versions. The basic principles for selecting subjects in an image remain unchanged; only the selection options have expanded in scope. Finally, like all image editing operations in Photoshop, there are multiple ways to create this effect.

## Step 1: Set up your project

Finding the right image is half the battle. Here are some tips for choosing the ideal image for your project.

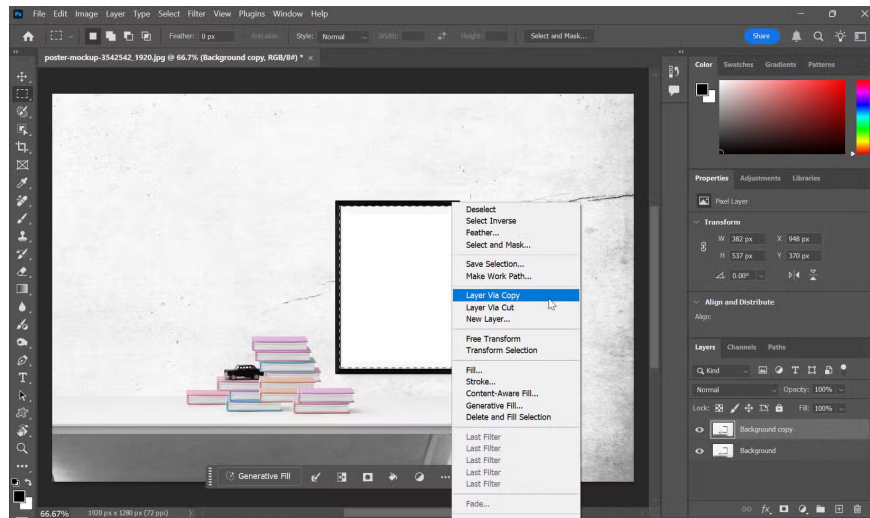
1. Avoid blurry or pixelated images, as high-resolution photos with sharp edges will yield the best results.
2. Choose images where the subject is easily separated from the background. For example, a subject that stands out against a plain background is easier to select and conceal.
3. Action or dynamic pose photos are ideal choices because they create a sense of movement.
4. Choose an image where a portion of the subject can "break the frame" and naturally extend outwards. For example, a hand reaching out or a full-body portrait of you stepping out of the frame.
5. Use images with plenty of negative space. You have enough room to expand the frame without cropping out essential details.

**Tip :** Browse through simple images when you start your first project. Search for images with simple backgrounds on various stock photo websites to find royalty-free images.

## Step 2: Prepare the background image

The background image, or a portion of the background image, frames the featured image. Working on a duplicate layer of the background will preserve the original image for non-destructive editing. In the following steps, creating a new layer by duplicating the original layer will isolate the pixels and set the context for the pop-out effect.

1. Unlock the background layer.
2. Rename this layer and copy it ( **Ctrl + J** ) to preserve the original.
3. Select the area where you want to place the second image.
4. Right-click on the selected area and click **Layer via Copy** .



**Tip :** Photoshop offers several methods for creating selections. In the screenshot above, the author used the Rectangular Marquee to select the empty white area within the image frame.

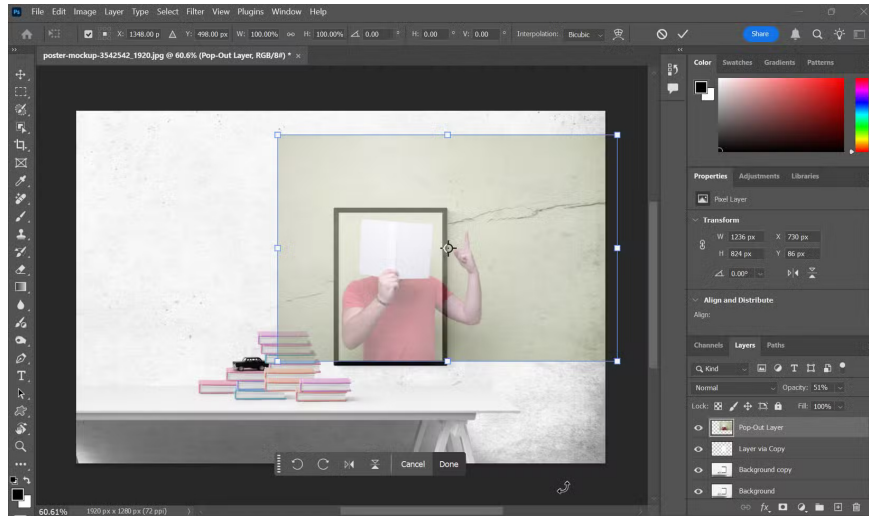
You can create a solid color adjustment layer instead of a new layer over the duplicate. The pop-out effect might stand out more against a consistent background color. Also, if you need to change the background color later, you can do so without affecting the rest of the layout.

### **Step 3: Arrange the photos to create a pop-out effect.**

The pop-out effect works best when part of the object is inside the frame and part is outside.

1. Drag the second selected image to create a pop-out effect on the main document.
2. Press **Ctrl + T** to select and scale the image.
3. Scale the image so that a significant portion of it lies outside the selected frame in the background layer.
4. Temporarily reduce the opacity of the layer to make it easier to adjust the layer's position.
5. Slide the opacity down to 100% after the image is in the correct position.

Proper scaling and positioning are crucial for creating a realistic pop-out effect. Again, over-scaling the top image can create an imbalance between the frame and the pop-out portion of the image.

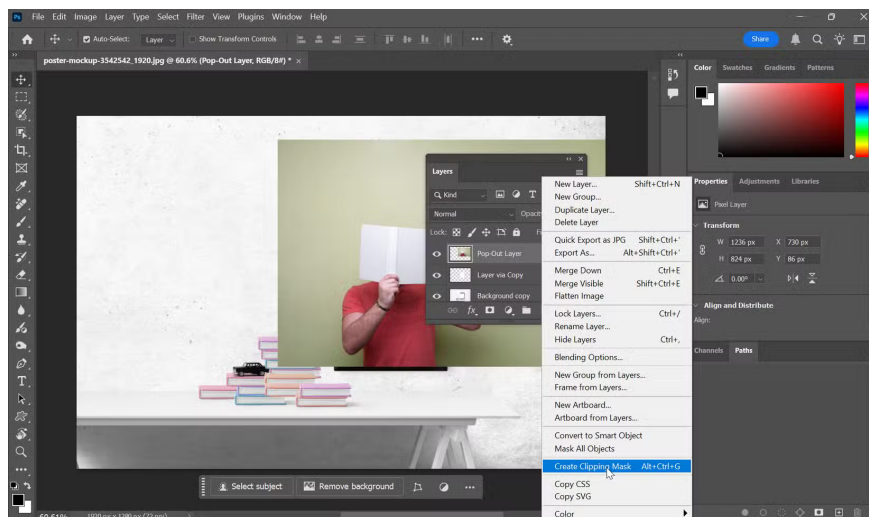


**Note :** In the latest versions of Photoshop, the **Transform** tool scales layers proportionally by default. In earlier versions, you had to press the **Shift** key to maintain the aspect ratio when using the Transform tool.

## Step 4: Create a Clipping Mask

You need to blend your pop-out image seamlessly instead of just stacking layers on top of the frame. The Clipping Mask confines your subject to the shape of the layer below (in this case, the "frame" we created from Layer via Copy). This step is crucial because it creates a perfect edge for the pop-out effect without affecting the background.

To do this, right-click on the image and select **Create Clipping Mask** .

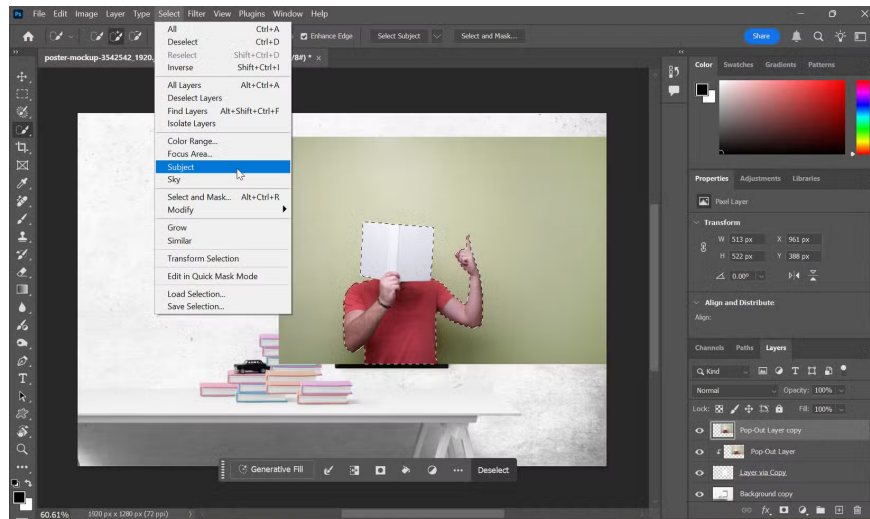


**Step 5: Select the object to which to apply the pop-out effect.**

To enhance the 3D illusion effect, you need to isolate the part of the image that will have the pop-out effect applied.

1. Duplicate the image layer by pressing **Ctrl + J** (Windows) or **Cmd + J** (Mac).
2. With the duplicated layer selected, go to **Select > Subject**.
3. Use other selection tools to add to or subtract from the selection area.

This step creates a separate layer for the part of the image that will "stand out," allowing you to work with it independently.

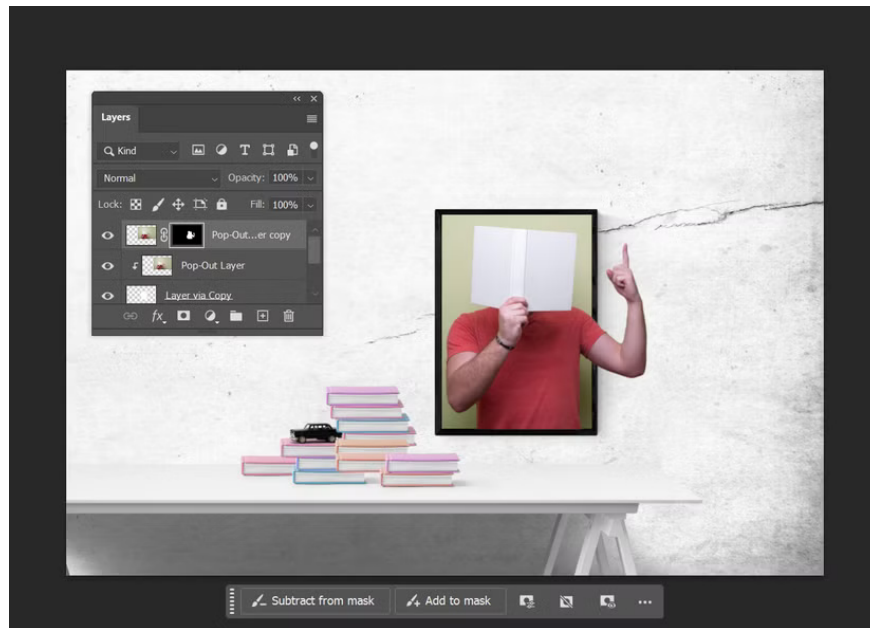


**Tip :** For more complex, softer selections like hair, use the **Select and Mask** option from the Photoshop menu (introduced in Photoshop CC 2018) to create smoother edges.

## Step 6: Create a prominent pop-out effect.

Combine everything by only displaying the visual elements that create a striking effect.

1. Add a layer mask to the duplicated layer.
2. Select the Brush tool and make sure the foreground color is set to black.
3. Carefully paint over the parts of the image you want to hide, revealing the layer underneath.



Layer masks allow you to precisely control which parts of the image are subject to the pop-out effect, creating the illusion of depth.

## Step 6: Finalize the effect

From here, you can add subtle effects to the highlighted subject. For example, select the layer with the pop-out subject and add a drop shadow: **Layer > Layer Style > Drop Shadow** .

Shadows add depth to the effect. Adjusting **Color Balance** or **Hue/Saturation** can also help blend the colors between the subject and the background.

Flatten the image or save it as a PSD for future editing. Finally, export the final result as a PNG or JPEG and share it. Continue practicing with different base images as frames and photos you want to apply the pop-out effect to.

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