

TomTom Icon Guide Lines



Details

TomTom Icon Guidelines

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Close 2

Overall story: why icons

How do icons help your user interface? Why not just text and buttons? The simple answer is that people don't read before they look. Then, when looking is not enough, they start to read. Looking and recognising is easier than reading. Apparently reading costs more energy than looking.

The scenario's are:

look, recognise something that might apply to your need and then seek confirmation by reading the string name, then press.

Once one is familiar with User Interface the reading stops and navigating commences through looking at icons and remembering the path of icons to click. Also an icon helps when a feature has more than one location, in the map you can recognize an icon easier over a text, especially if you are already somewhat familiar with the icon at hand.

Icons don't stand on their own though, very often an icon can be used for multiple features, therefore one must aim to always accompany each icon with an explanatory sub text (in TomTom's case: a String)

So it's clear that icons are not the answer to all navigation solutions, it's only a means to make navigation easier and more intuitive and less 'techy'. Another reason to use icons is: it's fun and works well for the image of your product. icons can make your product look serious, technical, playful, comforting, bling, or boring.

So icons are more than just usability tools, they can call upon the emotions of a user.

Preparations

We need to have a number of things sorted out to successfully build an icon family:

A - grid (for consistent perspective)

B - sizes for several instances (menu's - lists - map's - headers etc)

C - possible functions

D - choose some basic shapes, corner radiuses

E - select your font (how about the font you use for your User Interface)

F - Create a set of basic colors and gradients (or - optional - surface materials)

G - Choose a lighting and shadow scheme

H - choose a set of (Photoshop) styles to work with

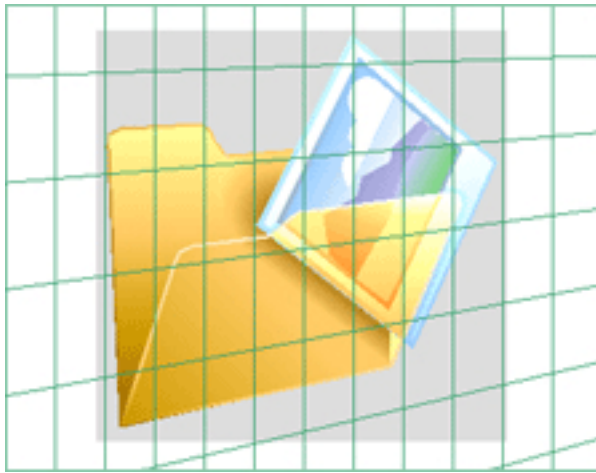
I - choose when to do realism and when not

J - take into account the market brief - function goes above marketing,
but done well they can coexist

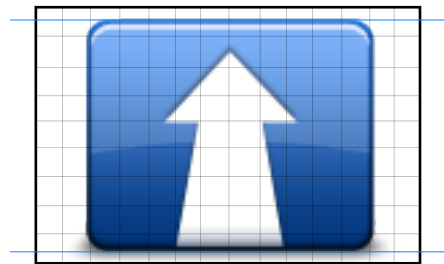
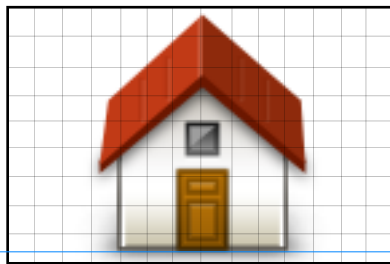
preparations - choosing a grid

Choose a grid for your icon set

The grid for windows icons



The grid for TomTom Icons



As you see we use no perspective - or better said a forced perspective.
Based on the need the icon is either full frontal or slightly shown from above,
never at an angle. there is never a depth perception.

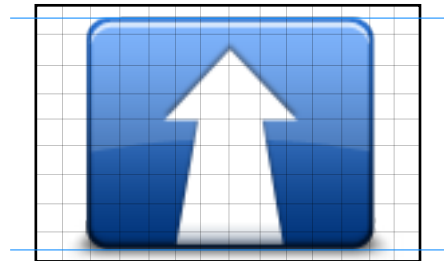
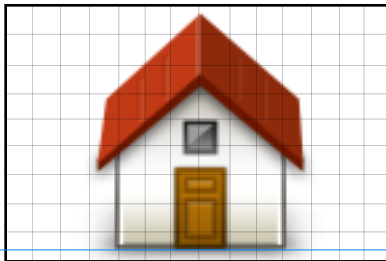
(you can set this as a background for your icon template file)

preparations - choosing sizes

Choose sizes for several instances

menu icons

90x60



List Icons - panel headers

24x24



these follow the same design but stripped of shadow - and corrected for antialiasing

POI icons especially designed to be used on a number of occasions such as the map...



they come in 2 sizes (16x16 without border and 44x44) the 44x44 images can be used inside menu icons.



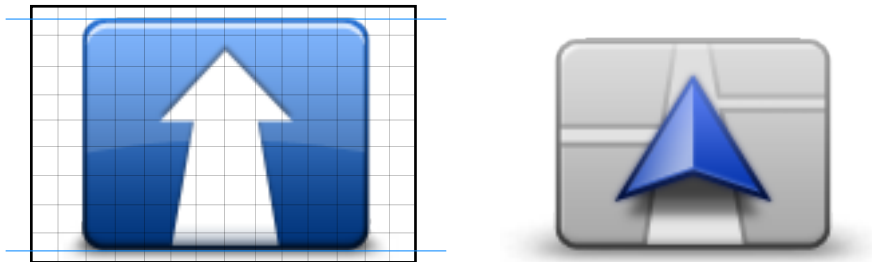
QuickMenu icons (on the driving view) have 48x48 sizes and are usually the same as in the menu.



there are more sizes in circulation but these are the most common ones.

Preparations - Choosing shapes

Choose shapes for several functions either to align or to differentiate
navigating actions are usually square (this is a preference not a rule)



Traffic signs follow the shape and color of the country they are in



company Services are usually round



Special functions can be either square or round - never rectangular (as the top ones)



Preparations - Choosing shapes

Real live objects follow their natural appearance in the forced perspective way



So here it's the perspective and the coloring that makes them family, the shape is secondary.



exceptions can be made to make an icon more lively. if this is a straight perspective it would have been too boring, this is still a forced way of looking at it. The usage of coloring and lighting still makes it family.



(this icon actually does not fit our style so well because it has a real live perspective, so don't do this.)

Preparations - Defining colors and gradients

Your Colors and gradients must be chosen to bring diversity and represent their function, the marketing aspect is of lower importance.

Example: if you want to use the Google logo in a very small space, the lighter letter of the logo would fade into the background. in this case you make the logo black.

A black google logo instead of the usual coloured version:

Google

Colors are widely used to depict the function of an object:

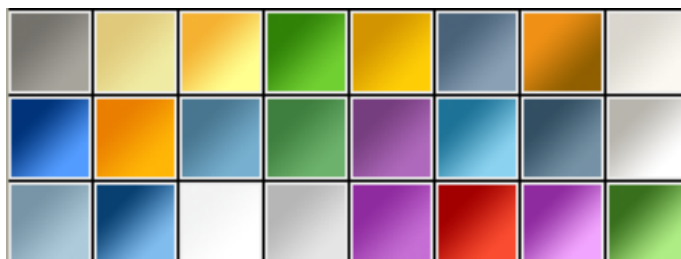
Red is danger and stop, Green is good, Blue means Info, Yellow/orange can be warning.

The gradients always go from Top - lighter to Bottom - darker to match with the lighting effects that are applied to the icons. The outline uses the same gradient principle but a bit darker



Screenshot of gradients

Plus gradient TomTom .grd file



These are the TomTom gradients, you can add more gradients by yourself but make sure the 'fit' between these examples.

Import the file as delivered

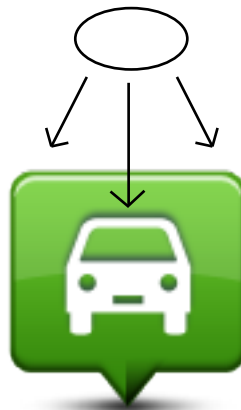
TomTom. grd

Preperations - Lightning effects

Lighting and shadow - Lighting sets the mood like a romantic dinner, therefore the lighting of your icons is the important part in terms of styling, next to shapes, but lighting and shadow is what makes it realistic and tangible.

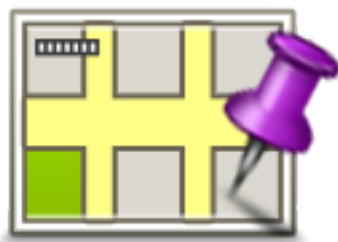
The first part of our lighting was already done by choosing our gradients, how they run from top to bottom with light and dark in the same color range. The slightly darker outline makes it look as if the icon has depth. The shadow or darkness coming from the back.

the lighting is spot on from above and a little bit in front, that gives a bit of a highlight on the top line of the icon (directly underneath the border)



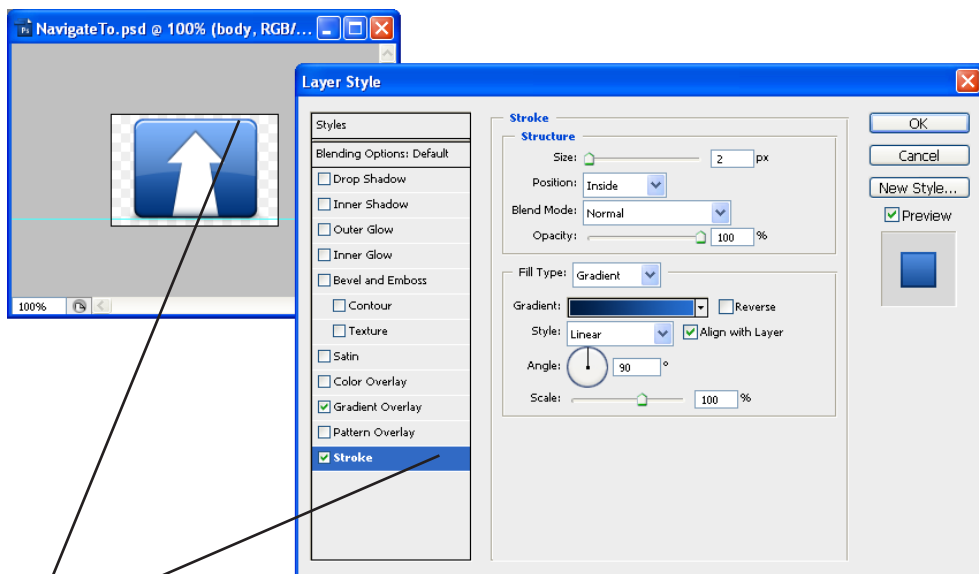
To focus attention and simplify, we use only one light source.

The shadow, since the spot is from the top front, the shadow casted will fade away to the sides. the shadow is darkest there where center of the object is situated on the ground. When 2 objects stand in front of each other the first one casts a shadow on the second object.



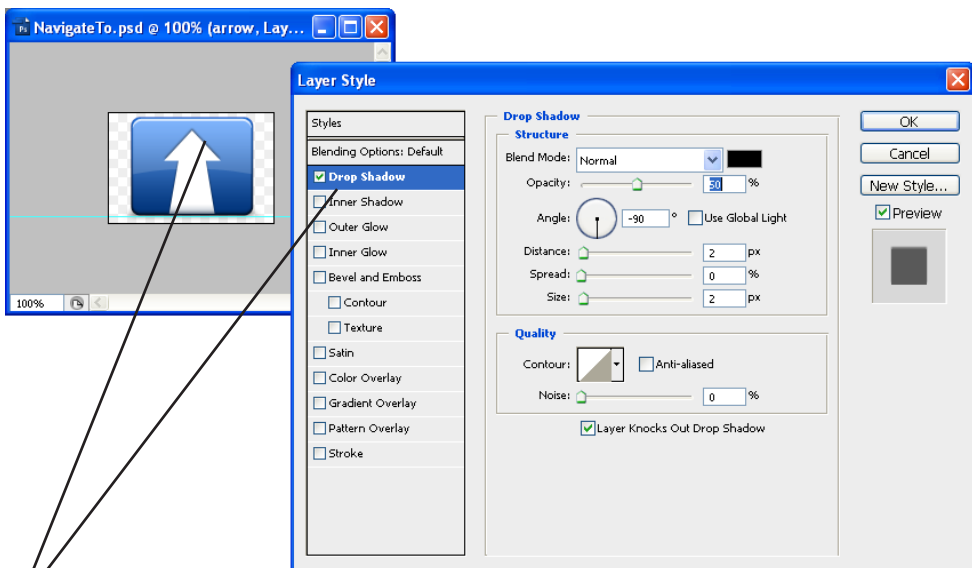
Preperations - Choosing your styles in photoshop

The border Style



The border is usually set to 1 pixel positioned to the inside and has a gradient as fill type. The gradient is slightly darker the gradient used inside the shape (but not much)

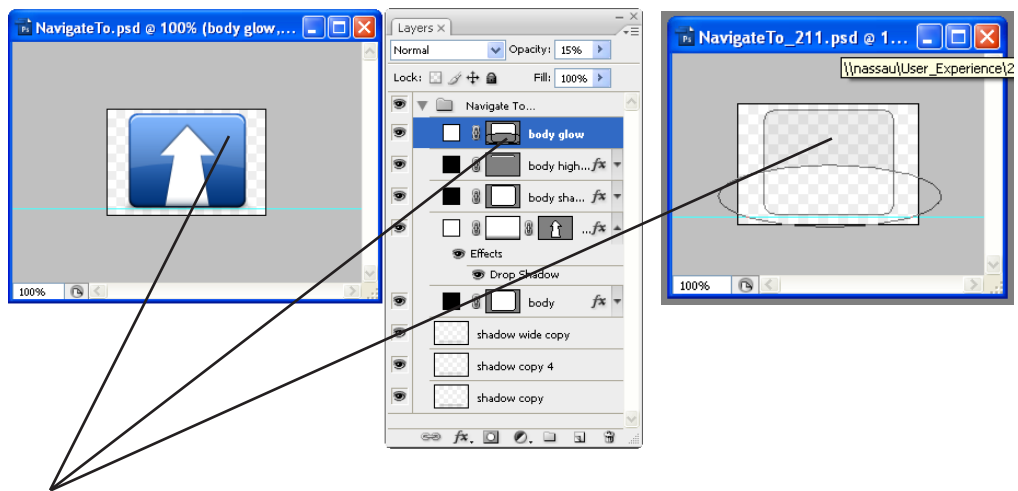
The indenting icon style



The indented style is made by setting up a drop shadow and reversing the direction by -90 degrees, Then the distance and size are set by 2 pixels. the effect gives the impression that the shape has been cut out of the colored shield

Preparations - Choosing your styles in photoshop

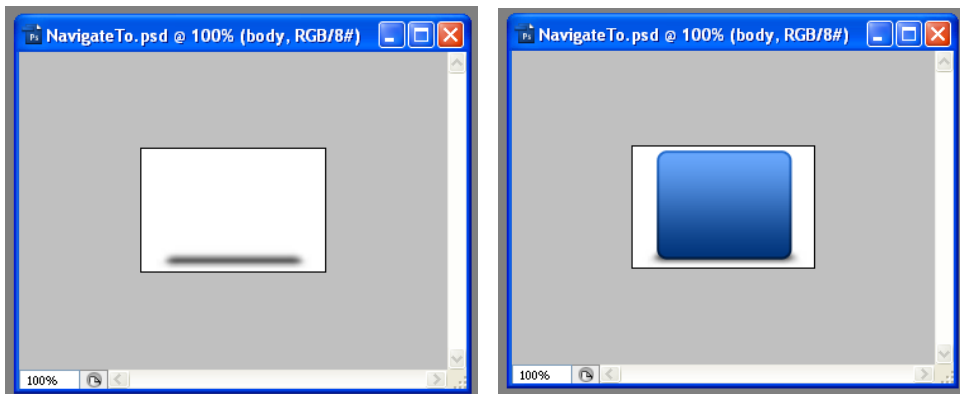
The shine overlay



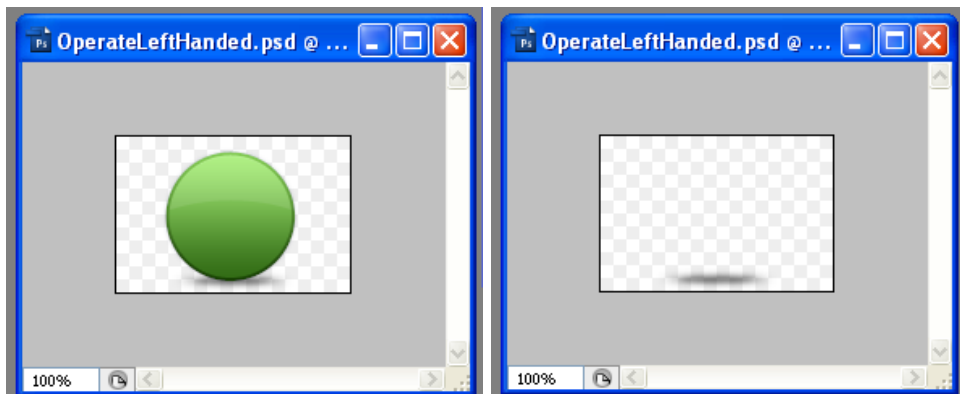
The reflecting shine is made by drawing up a white shape, then setting it to 15 or 25 percent transparency, then you detract the bottom part with a circular shape.
(depending on the background color the transparency value might need to change a little bit)

Preparations - Choosing your styles in photoshop

The Shadow Effect



In itself the shadow is no very subtle, but when placing your shape over it becomes a lot more sophisticated.



The desired shadow effect can be achieved by coping the basic shape, scaling it down in height, make it black and then blurring a little, make a copy make it a pixel wider blur it a little more, then vary a little in opacity until you get the desired effect. (so it's not just making a blur, but actually manipulating 2 or three copies of shadow to get the right feeling of shadow casting.)

Preparations - Add ons and over states

Take into account the several functions an icon can have, and how to prepare for it.



On the top the plus shows a plus, or a minus for adding or deleting the favourite



Disable or enable a feature



Speech icon with settings, so here you can alter your preferences



and this play button indicates that you can start navigation

So enabling and disabling, deleting and adding are always on top, other elements are always on the bottom.
(the predominant ways must be on the right side of the icon, but when it suits you better, it can also be to the left side)

2H. Creating an icon

Now you know the style of your icon, you need to get your info on what to depict:

- Get a good briefing consisting of stringname (an icon can seldomly stand on it's own, the combination icon and string is mostly needed)
- an overview of the feature it going to be used for/in (ask for a meeting with the persons who designed thw flow of the feature)

might any marketing constrants - logo's , brand names etc. but never let that be a deciding factor in your design. the icon is there for the funtion it represents, and not for marketing

Mind catural constranints: in America the traffic signs look different, in Islamic country's the red cross is a red half moon, Currency signs. (we use the dollar sign as international money sign)

Do research: have others already made something similar? look it up in Google image search.

analizing an icon:



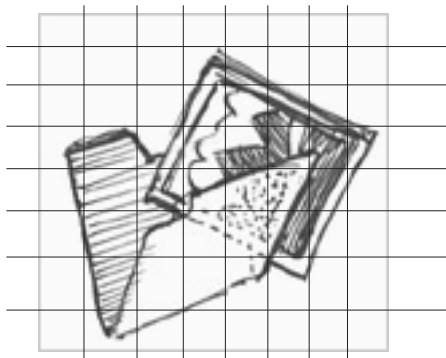
Function that this icon is created for is enabling himself to be the sole user of a device.

The string is that comes with it is **Set Owner**.

so the feature has to do with locking the device for everybody else and you using it with a personal code.

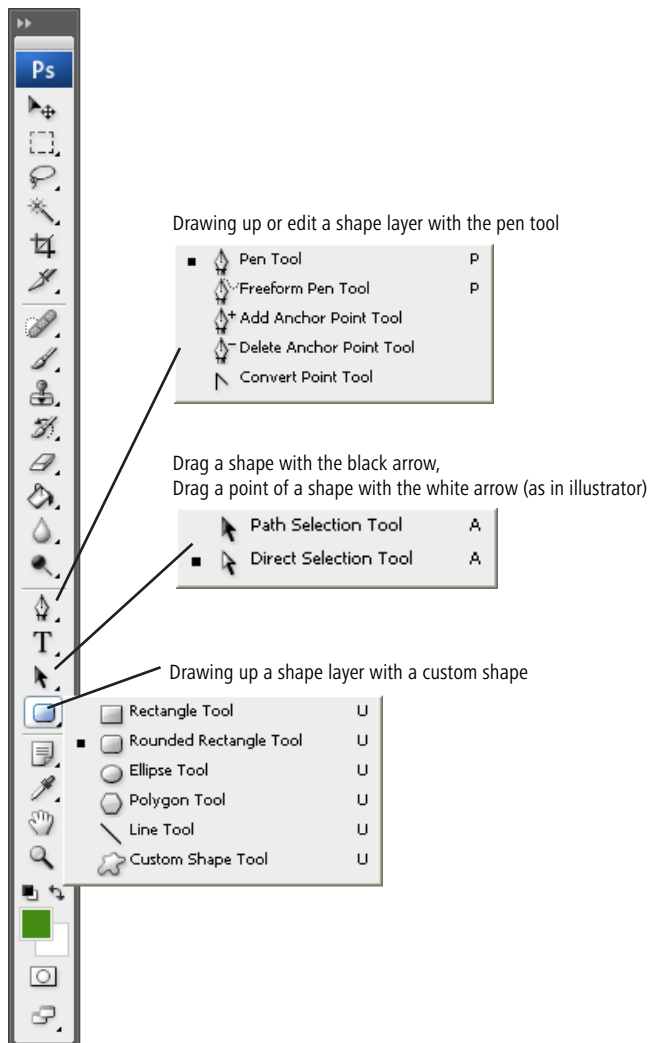
a pass with foto and a key are the real live ecuivalent for setting an owner, and so you know your meethaphors to create an other wise completely digital function.

So once you have your methapor, set up a sketch.

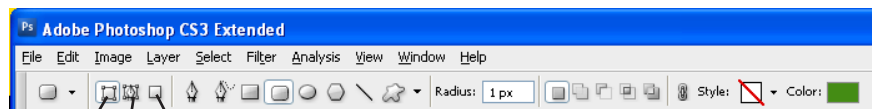


Creating an icon

Draw shapes in photoshop (or illustrator)
start with the right tools



Select the first option here

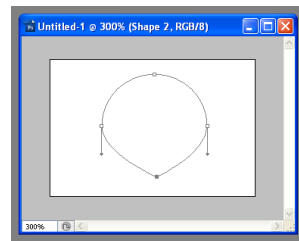
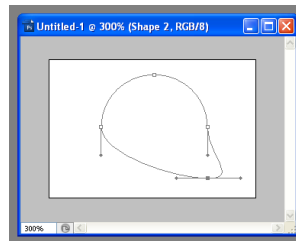
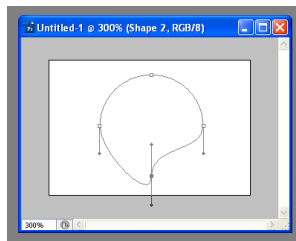
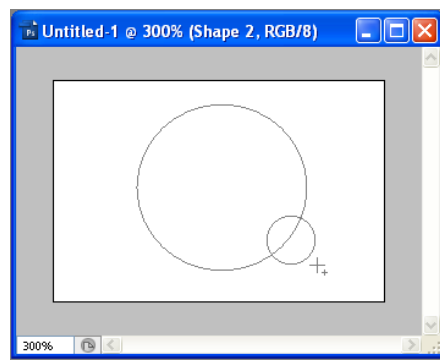
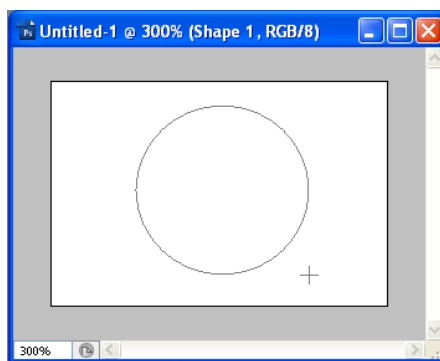


Solid Objects
Paths (not needed for this)
Select this for creating shape layers

Creating an icon

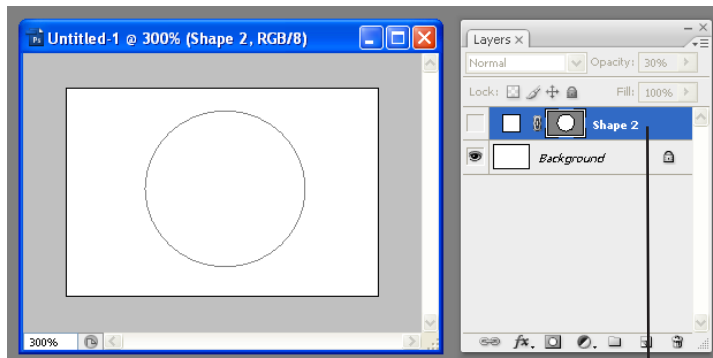
Draw Up the shape

(By dragging with shift or alt selected you can add or subtract elements of your basic shape)

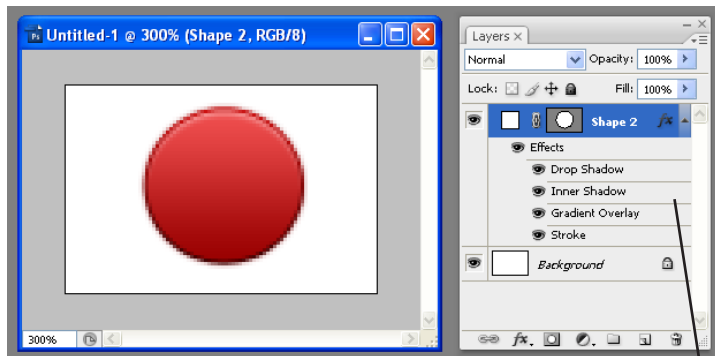


Creating an icon

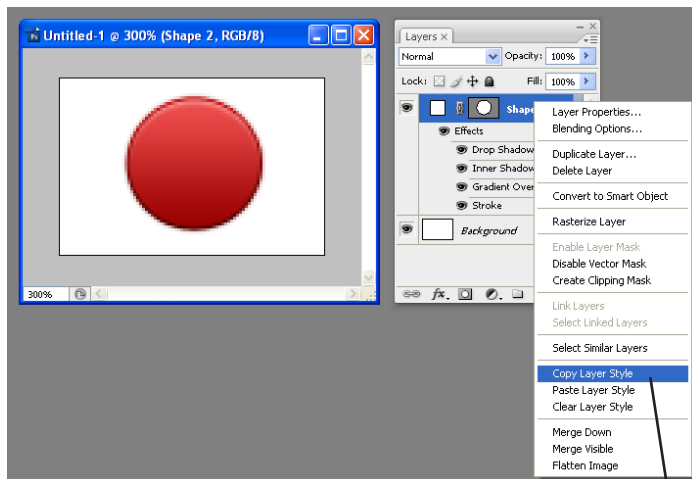
Applying a style



Double click to add a style to your shape



A combination of styles gives the desired effect



Once you have created a (combination of) style(s) you can copy that and paste it above another (shape) layer

Repeat the same process with new styles and shapes to combine.
Copy styles and shapes to make a consistent series.

1i. Round up

Some basic rules:

Icons need to be simple, so never more than 2 object with one control



Never combine more than one function into one icon

- An icon can only represent one function, or one group of functions.

perspective

- Always use a frontal, forced perspective.
- Light comes from above, no angle

Colors

- Use the TomTom Gradients, or make gradients that match.
- Use different colors for different features, function goes above marketing style

Shapes

- Create shapes in ShapeLayers
- Use several shapes layers ontop of each other
- Construct rather than draw

Styles

- Copy styles and create styles with the same values.

Lightning

- Lighting effects come at an angle of 90 degrees with a distance of one pixel and a size of one pixel
- Shadows always underneath the icon, slightly fading out

Testing your icon

Place it on a screen and see if it looks alright with other icons, look at:

Visual

- Basic shapes
- Corner radiuses
- Gradients
- Lighting
- Shadows

Complexity

- Too many messages in one icon creates confusion
- Too many details? Simplify until you have distilled the essence of the object.

The actual message

- Do you understand, and why
- Do others understand your icon, and why (or why not)

If you have further questions regarding icons contact:

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