

The Practical Cartographer's Corner

How to Create a Text Halo Mask in Illustrator CS3/CS4

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Introduction

When you create a map with a dense background of lines, it is often desirable to “cut” the lines around your text. This creates what is often called a *halo* effect. The labels for contour lines present a classic case for this.

The technique described below is more effective than actually cutting the vector lines or using a text stroke halo or drop shadow. It keeps the integrity of the background and eliminates the visual clutter stroke or shadow can introduce.

Steps

1. Duplicate the text objects you want haloed and move them to a new layer, rename it “mask” or some such.
2. Hide the original live text objects layer to keep it out of the way and unmodified.
3. Select and outline duplicated text objects (menu: Type/Create Outlines or command-shift-O).
4. Offset the newly created text paths the desired amount of the halo (e.g. 2 pts, Rounded) using the menu command: Object/Path/Offset Path. [Note: in CS4 this command leaves only the offsets selected, not the offsets and the original outlines, you must Deselect All and then reselect all on this layer.]



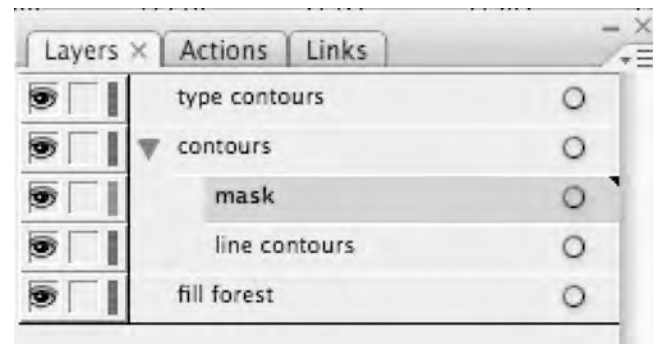
- With all elements of your outlined and offset type selected, open Pathfinder Palette, click on the *Add to shape* area function (first row, first icon, see below) to create a compound shape. Click on Expand button to expand it. [Note: this is not necessary in CS4.] Double check to make sure all elements have been merged into the single compound path shapes for each piece of type.



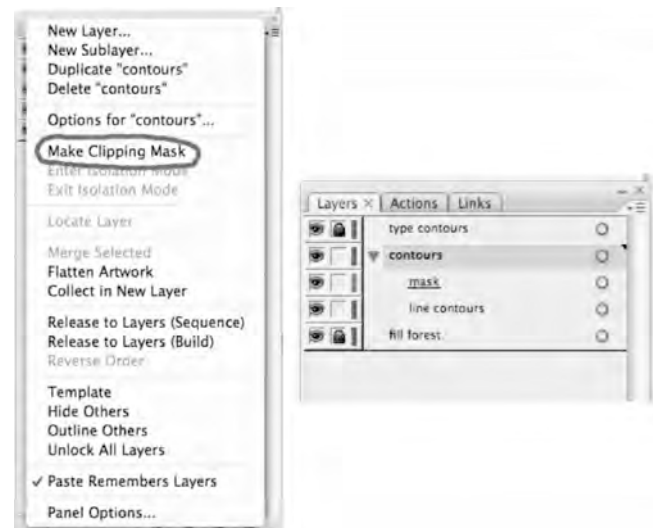
- Next, draw a rectangle on the “mask” layer that completely encompasses all your artwork and be sure it is the topmost object in the layer.
- Select all objects on the mask layer (rectangle plus text outline offsets) and make a compound path using menu command: Object/Compound Path/Make. You should see a compound path of the filled rectangle with all the type outline offsets punched out of it (if it has a color fill).



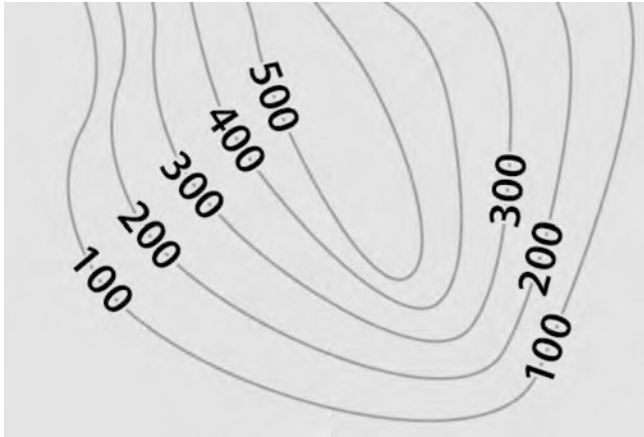
- Move “mask” layer into a set of nested layers (with the lines and/or fills layers you want masked) and make sure it is the top layer in the set.



- Deselect all objects, then select (in the layer palette) the layer containing your set of nested layers, then use the Layers Palette menu command: Make Clipping Mask. This will make the layer “mask” clip all the artwork in the master layer (“contours” in the example). You can tell because the layer gets underlined. Note: For this to work, you must select (highlight) the master layer not the mask layer (see below) *and* you cannot have anything selected.



10. Voilà, your nested artwork layers are cropped by the haloed type mask. Turn on your original type again and it should look like the image below.



Note: This set of steps creates a mask that shows lines through the counters of the letters. If you want to mask the counters as well, you will need to break the compound letters after Step 5 (using menu: Object/Compound Path/Release) and then do Step 6.

Visual Fields

3D Birds-eye-view Raster Maps

Derek Tonn
Michael Karpovage
mapformation, LLC

Hudson Valley Community College (HVCC) in Troy, NY partnered with mapformation, LLC in August of 2008 to replace their old campus map with a new 3D birds-eye-view illustration. John Heiser, Director of Graphics and Printing Services at HVCC, decided on the highly detailed "raster" illustration style which employs Adobe Photoshop to capture fine textures, shadowing, and realistic landscaping.

Heiser explains, "mapformation's 3D raster maps are simply amazing. When I was asked to develop a new, more interactive campus map, I knew right away that it would be in Hudson Valley Community College's best interest to work with mapformation. We simply did not have the staffing resources needed to do this type of work, which is highly-specialized digital illustration." Michael Karpovage, mapformation's raster map designer, was assigned the project and worked closely with Heiser in choosing the right aerial view oblique angle to be used as the basis of the illustration. Karpovage then rendered the campus over several weeks taking great care to accurately portray

building architecture and landscape to give a true representation of the uniqueness of the campus. Text labeling and legend work was then incorporated using Adobe InDesign for crispness and flexibility of type-faces. "We have been For more information about this and other works by mapformation, LLC, see www.mapformation.com extremely pleased with the results," says Heiser. "The map is very versatile and easy to update. And for the few times I cannot update the map myself, I have been impressed with how quickly and easily mapformation can turn around an update. The college has gotten a lot of use out of the map in numerous publications, on the college Web site and for campus wayfinding."

Specifically for wayfinding purposes, HVCC uses the map on three 4' x 7' enlarged signs posted at each of the main campus entrances. Additionally, there are a dozen 11" x 17" signs on metal pedestals located strategically around campus. Also, this year they added several framed 20" x 30" maps in two of their primary student services buildings. These also have racks with campus map brochures next to them. Heiser summarizes that the illustration, "has been a great value to the college."

To view HVCC's interactive map (which was also produced by mapformation designer John Wilcox), go to:
<https://www.hvcc.edu/tour/map/main/index.html>