

Photoshop Water Ripples Tutorial

In this **Photoshop photo effects tutorial**, we'll learn how to easily add realistic looking **water ripples** to an image! Photoshop ships with a filter designed specifically for creating a water ripple effect, but you'd never know it from the filter's name (no, it's not Ripple or Ocean Ripple, that would be too easy). The filter we'll be using does a decent job on its own, but as we'll see in this tutorial, by running the filter twice, using different settings each time, then combining the results, we can create a more realistic water ripple effect.

I'll be using Photoshop CS5 throughout this tutorial but any recent version will work. Here's the image I'll be starting with:



The original image.

Here's how it will look after adding some ripples to the water, as if raindrops are falling on the surface:

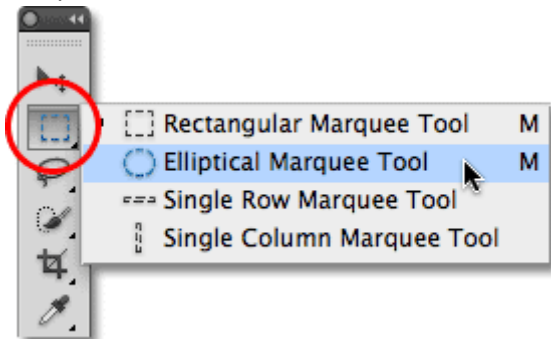


The final water ripples effect.

Let's get started!

Step 1: Select The Elliptical Marquee Tool

The first thing we need to do is draw a selection around the area where the water ripple will appear. Since water ripples are elliptical, we'll use an elliptical selection tool. Select Photoshop's Elliptical Marquee Tool from the Tools panel. By default, it's nested behind the Rectangular Marquee Tool so click on the Rectangular Marquee Tool's icon and hold your mouse button down for a second or two until a fly-out menu appears, then select the Elliptical Marquee Tool from the menu:



1. Select the Elliptical Marquee Tool.

Step 2: Drag Out An Elliptical Selection

With the Elliptical Marquee Tool selected, drag out an elliptical selection where you want the first water ripple to

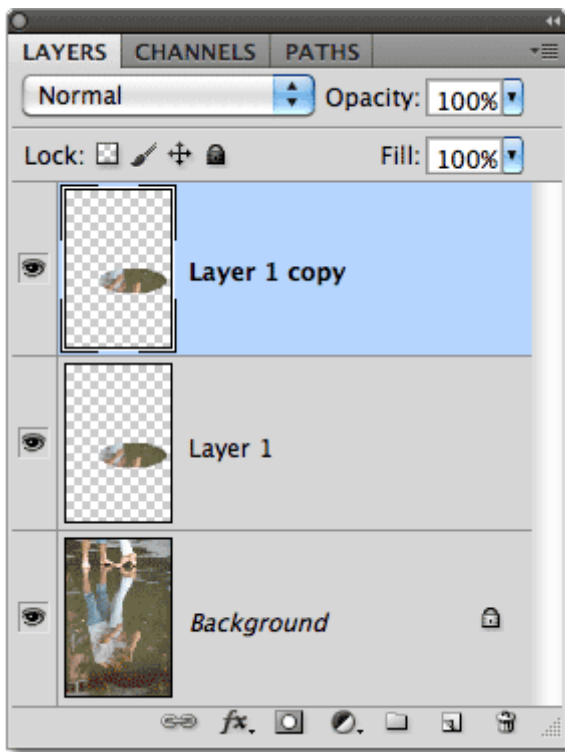
appear in the image. Try to match the shape of the selection to the perspective of the image so that water ripples closer to you will appear more circular than ripples further off in the distance:



Draw your first elliptical selection.

Step 3: Make Two Copies Of The Selected Area

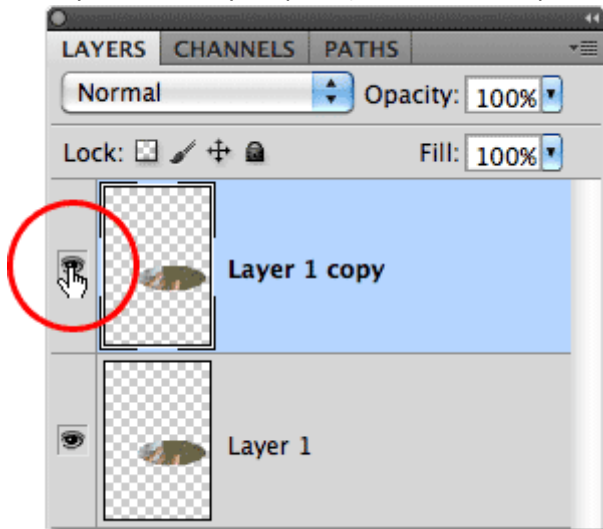
With the selection outline in place, press **Ctrl+J** (Win) / **Command+J** (Mac) on your keyboard **twice** to make two copies of the selected area (you can also go up to the **Layer** menu, choose **New**, and then choose **Layer via Copy** twice, but the keyboard shortcut is much faster). Each copy will be added to its own layer in the Layers panel. The top layer will be selected (highlighted in blue):



Two copies of the selected area appear above the Background layer.

Step 4: Turn Off The Top Layer Temporarily

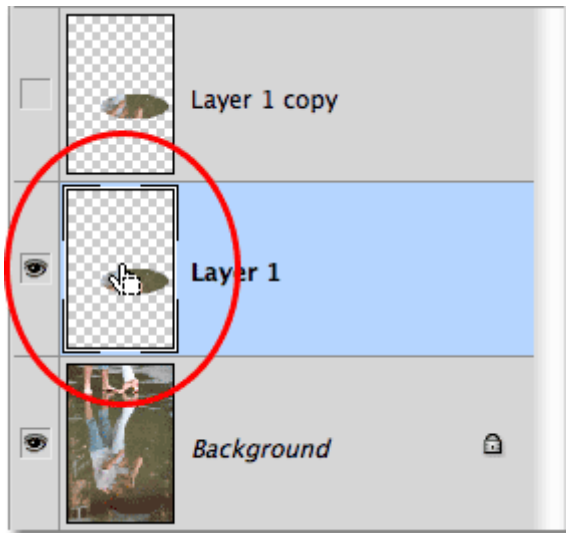
We need to hide the top layer for the moment, so click on its **layer visibility icon** (the eyeball) on the far left of the layer in the Layers panel, which will temporarily hide the layer from view in the document window:



The eyeball will disappear when you click the icon, letting you know the layer is now hidden.

Step 5: Select The Layer Below It

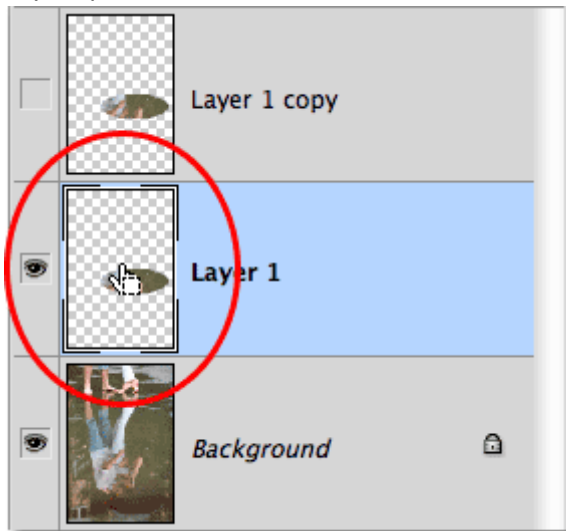
With the top layer now hidden, click on the layer below it in the Layers panel to select it:



Click on the bottom of the two layers to select it.

Step 6: Load A Selection Around The Layer's Contents

Hold down your **Ctrl** (Win) / **Command** (Mac) key and click directly on the layer's **preview thumbnail** in the Layers panel:



Hold down Ctrl (Win) / Command (Mac) and click on the layer preview thumbnail.

This places a selection outline around the contents of the layer in the document, which means the selection outline you drew a moment ago will reappear. The reason we're loading the selection outline before choosing the filter, which we'll be doing next, is to limit the filter's effect to the area inside the selection, otherwise Photoshop would apply it to the entire image:



The selection outline reappears in the document.