

DEFINE CONTENT

UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTENT

It's important to remember the purpose (primary goals) of your website and have a full grasp of the different content types you will be using as a designer (and developer). Without that knowledge you are essentially designing in the dark. Content is king and drives design ("Form follows function").

Where to start?

Ask yourself: what is my primary (dominant) content for each page or section of the website? Is it text? Is a photo gallery? Video? If one of the goals is to showcase photography or video, nailing down the aspect ratio (proportion) of each asset is critical.

If you have a range of vertical, horizontal, square and/or panoramic images, the different sizes (proportions) will affect how you choose to display (functionality and visual design) the images on the website. Take the time to note any differences in proportions (in pixels) so you can make an informed decision about how to design and what kind of functionality best serves the content.

If you have video, knowing the pixel dimensions of the video (or videos) will also help anchor the design. Once you have this information, you design around and in relation to the "cornerstone content".

If you have lots of copy that need to be displayed with the photos or video, how will you display the text in a way that is readable but also works with the images?

CONTENT AS "SHAPES"

Use shapes (or the shape tool in Photoshop) to define your "content blocks". Ideally you have some of the actual content to work with as you design your wireframe or flesh out your mockup.

What makes up your content? Your content includes everything such as the navigation labels, captions, photos, videos, social media icons, forms, buttons, search fields, etc.

Think of the grid as a frame, similar to a camera frame. It holds all the content. The elements are the shapes (imagine the elements super simplified) that construct your image in the frame. How you compose an image is equal to how you orchestrate your content elements on a page (layout).

DEFINE CONTENT *continued...*

You'll define the content of your website using shapes to build a wireframe so you have a clear idea of where each element will go when you are ready to create a mockup.

The purpose of a wireframe is so you can define and see how all the content relates to each other and get a solid sense of proportional relationships before you spend time getting all detailed with the mockup.

Mockup = The “high fidelity” version of the website. It has every detail from colors, textures, backgrounds, typography use, etc. that are missing from the wireframe. It is what the final website will (or is supposed to look like) when the website “goes live”.

EXAMPLE: HOW TO DETERMINE THE SIZE OF A VIDEO

1. Open a video that will be populating the website
2. Get info or Show inspector
3. Note the pixel dimensions of the video (1280 x 720) (Figure 1A)

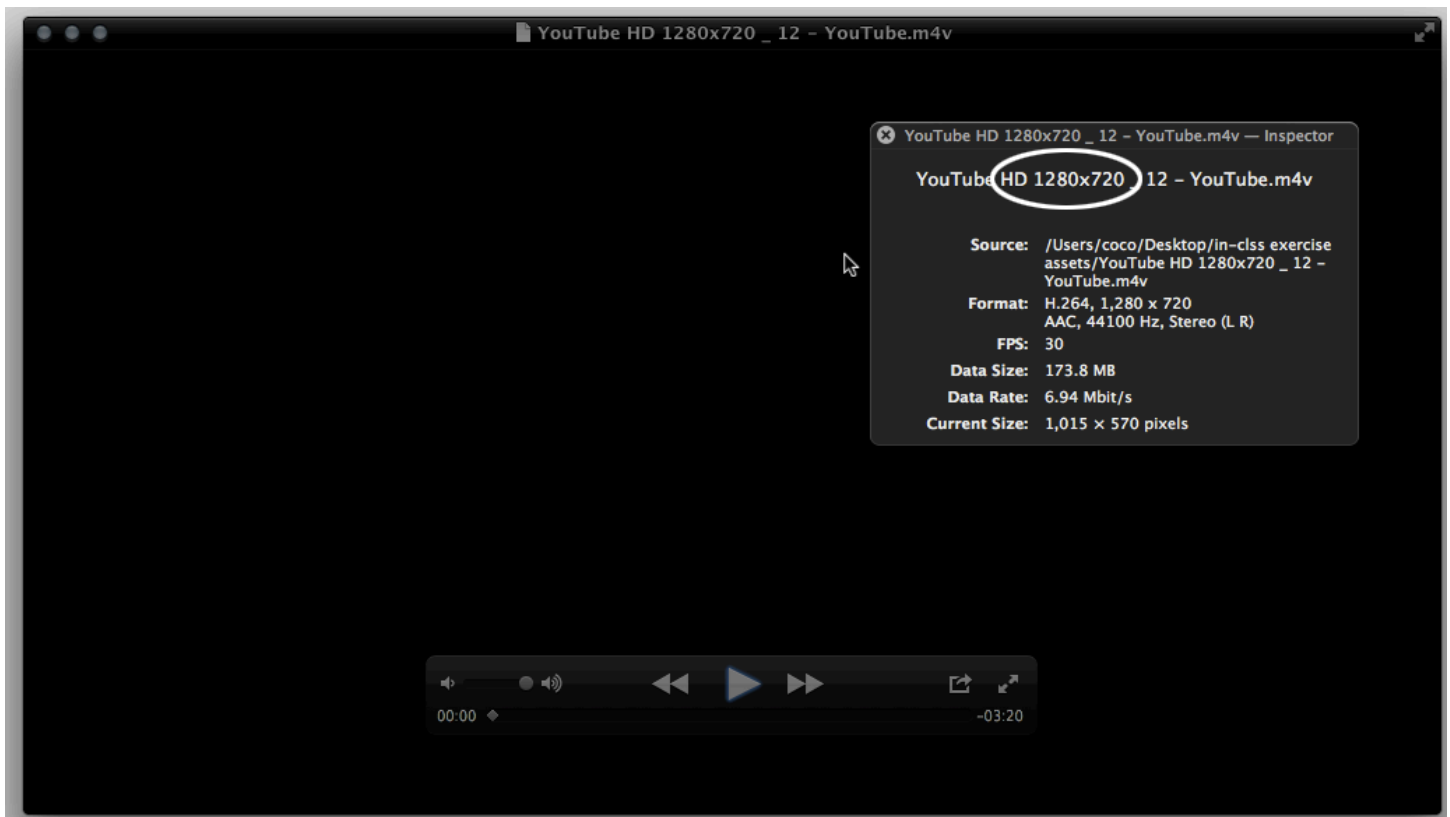


Figure 1A.

DEFINE CONTENT *continued...*

EXERCISE: CREATE & MODIFY SHAPES

1. Create a new file (**Command-N**)
2. Type in **1280 for the width** and **720 for the height**. Make sure the resolution is **72DPI** and the color mode is **RGB**
Click **OK**.

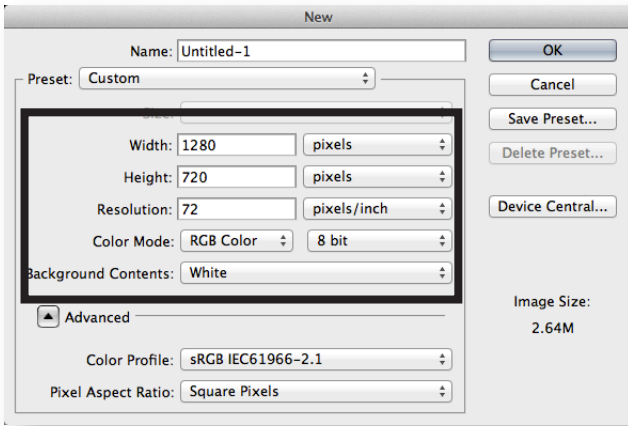
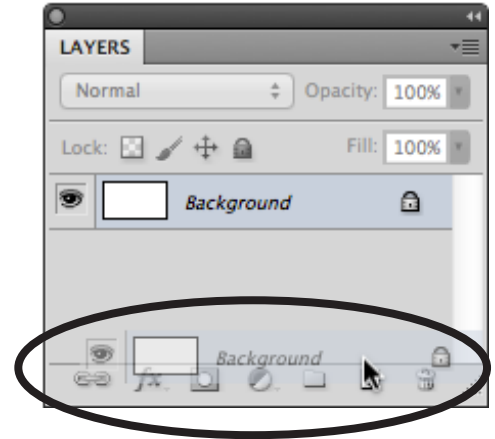


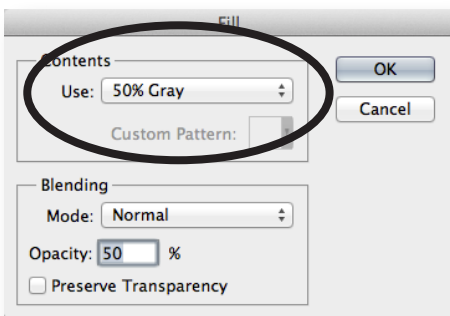
Figure 1B



To copy or duplicate a layer, simply drag the layer you want to duplicate to 'Create a new layer' icon. It is next to the Trash can icon.

3. Duplicate the background layer (Figure 1B)
4. Select All (**Command-A**)
5. Fill the selection with a different color than white so you can see the shape in your wireframe or mockup file.

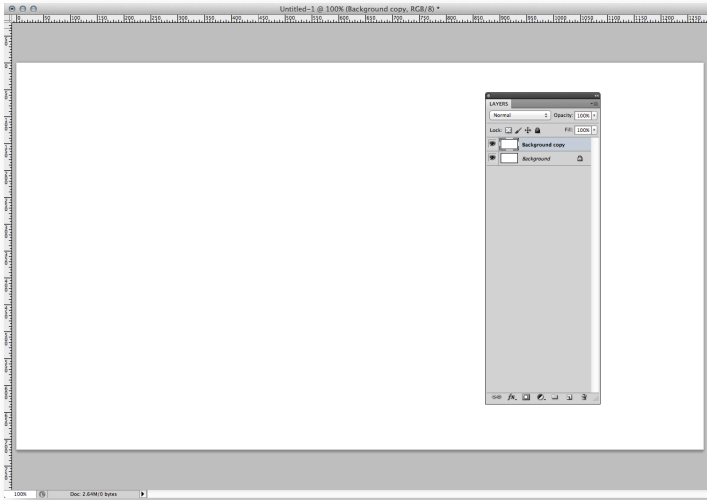
Edit > Fill > Click OK
(Figure 1C)



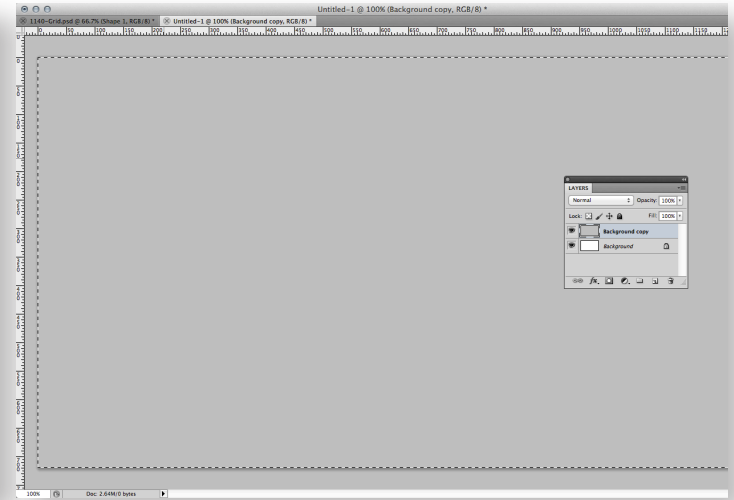
Tip: *To make the wireframe or mockup less distracting, simply use 50% grey for the fill.*

Figure 1C

DEFINE CONTENT *continued...*



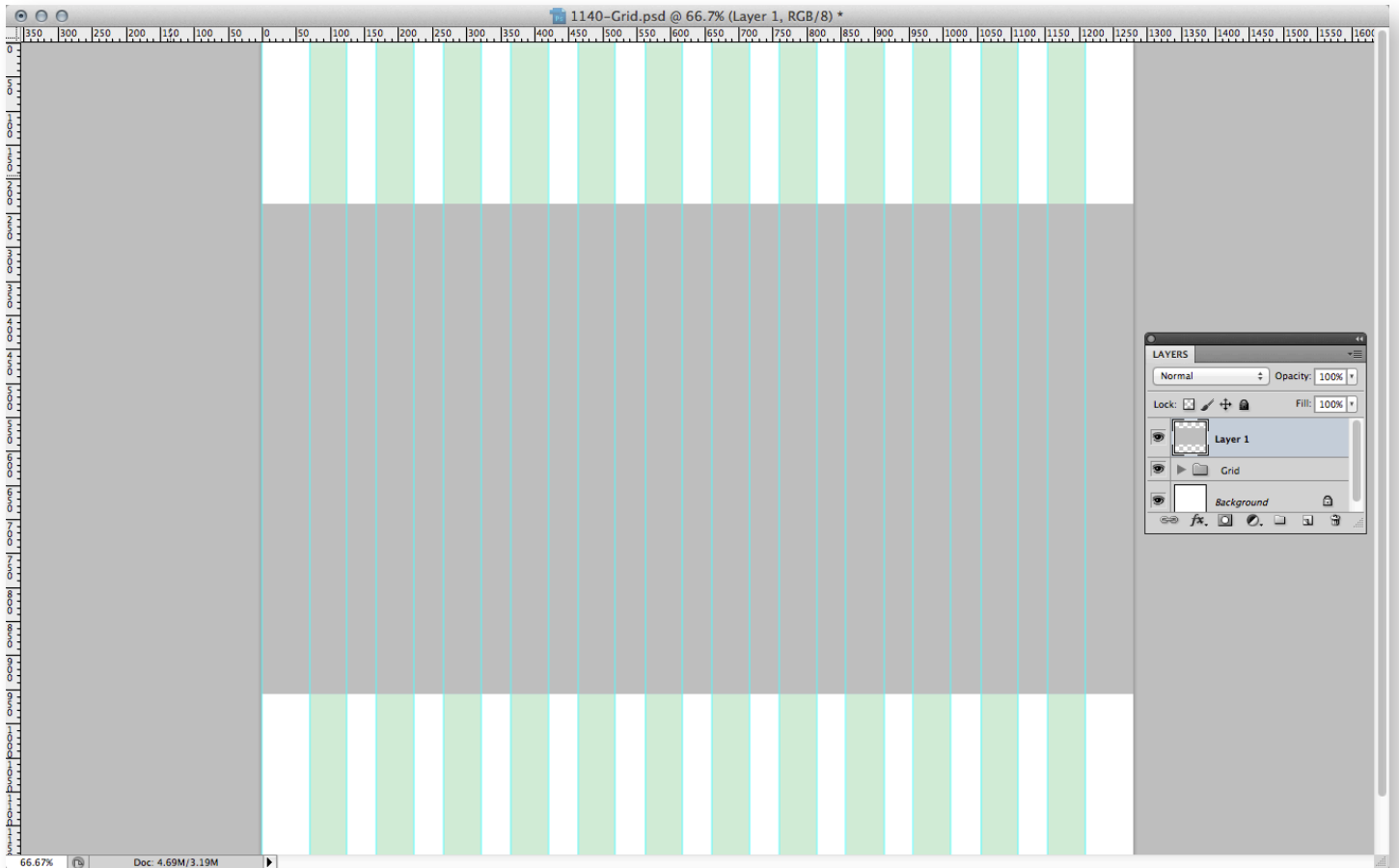
Before fill



After fill

6. Copy (**Edit > Copy** (or) **Command-C**)

7. Make sure your Grid file (or wireframe/mockup) file is “active” and Paste (**Edit > Paste** (or) **Command-V**) into your PSD. It should look something similar to this:



DEFINE CONTENT *continued...*

Let's say we want to make the video 9 columns wide because we have text or captions that will pair with the video once the page loads. Clearly the shape we've pasted into our PSD document is too large.

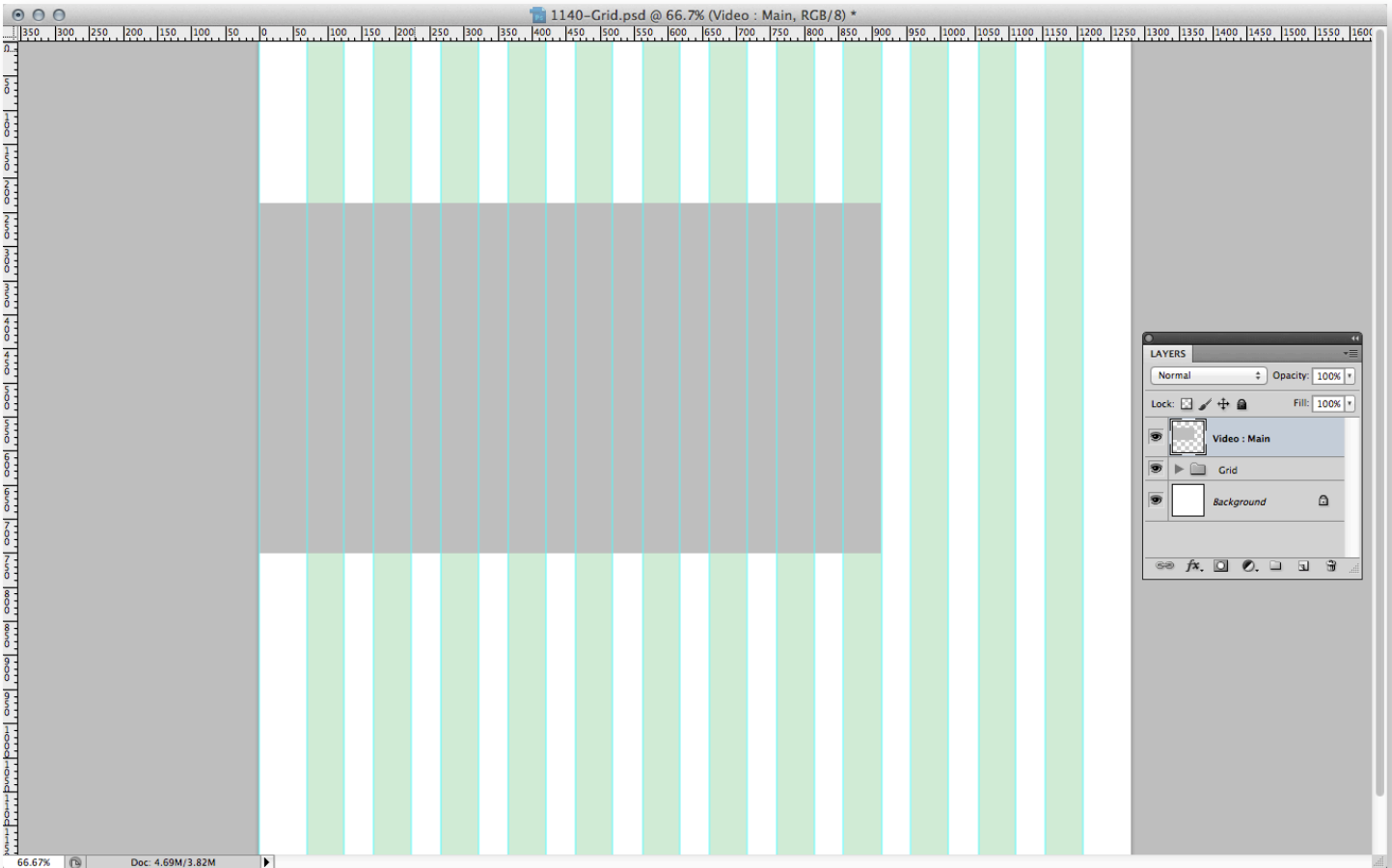
8. Make sure the new shape layer you just pasted is active.

Go to **Edit > Transform** (or **Command-T**)

You should see an outline or "handlebars" around the shape

9. **Hold down the shift key**, grab the bottom right handle bar with your cursor and drag the shape to be 9 columns wide. (Hint: This is a 12-column grid so you can quickly drag up and to the left 3 columns)

10. Your shape should look like this:



*(If you have no clue where you want the content to be placed or how the content shape will size in relation to the other content on the page, **step away from the computer and sketch out a layout**. Map out where all your content will be placed before and it will save you eons of time.)*

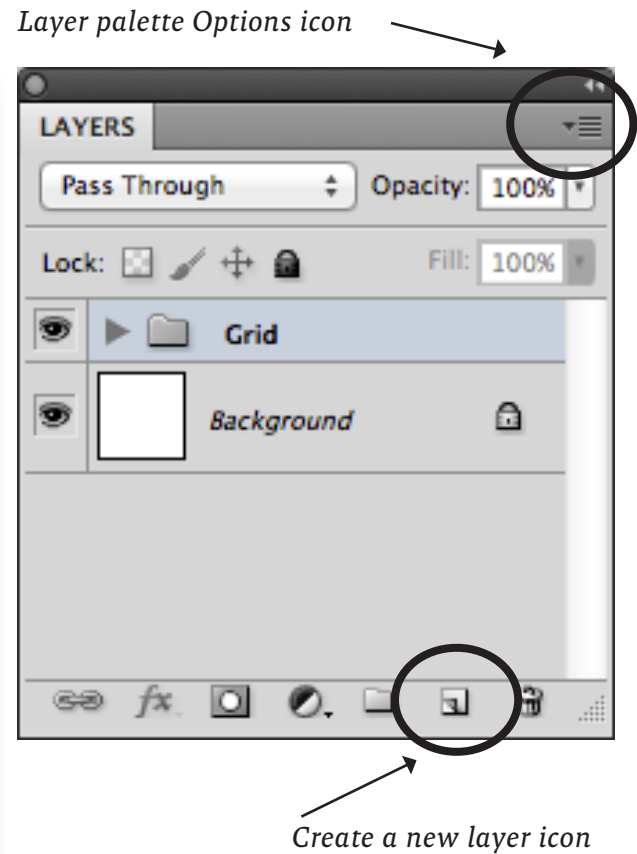
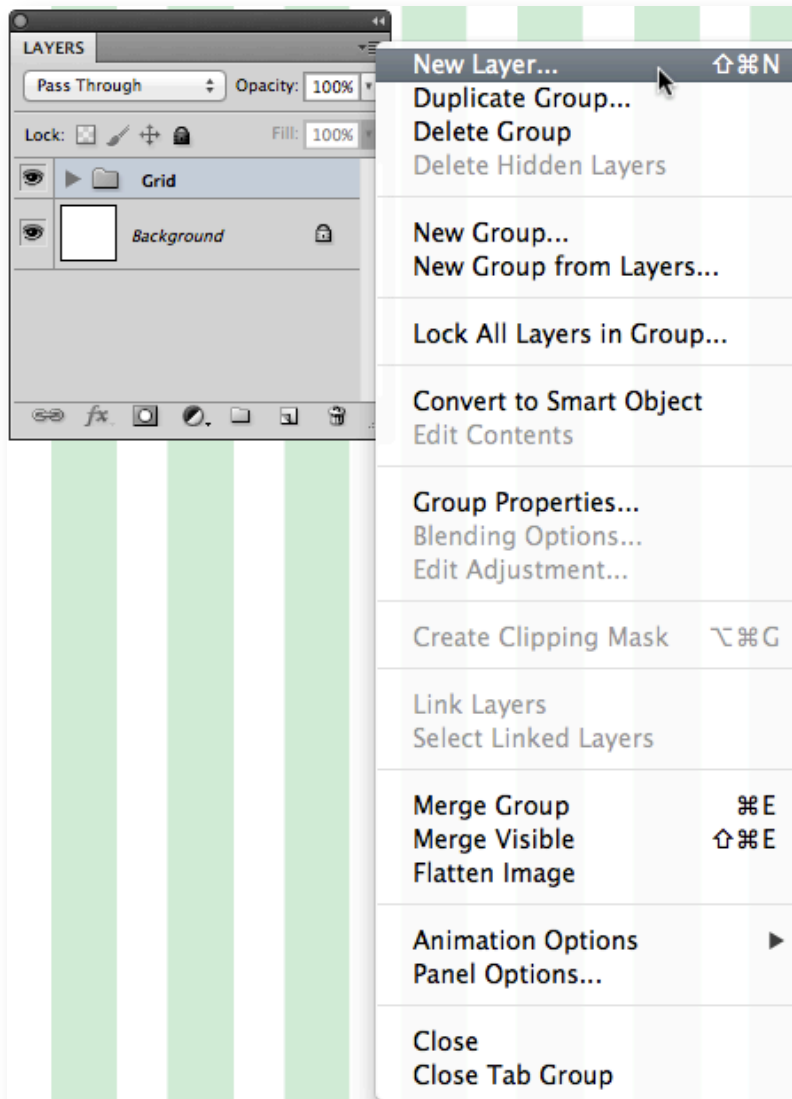
DEFINE CONTENT *continued...*

IMPORTANT! NAME YOUR LAYERS

Keep organized! The time you take to keep your layers organized can save you a ton of possible frustration, miscommunication and even money.

To create a new layer:

1. In the layers palette, click on the Options icon. You should see a menu of items.
2. Select “New Layer” (or) select the “New Layer” icon

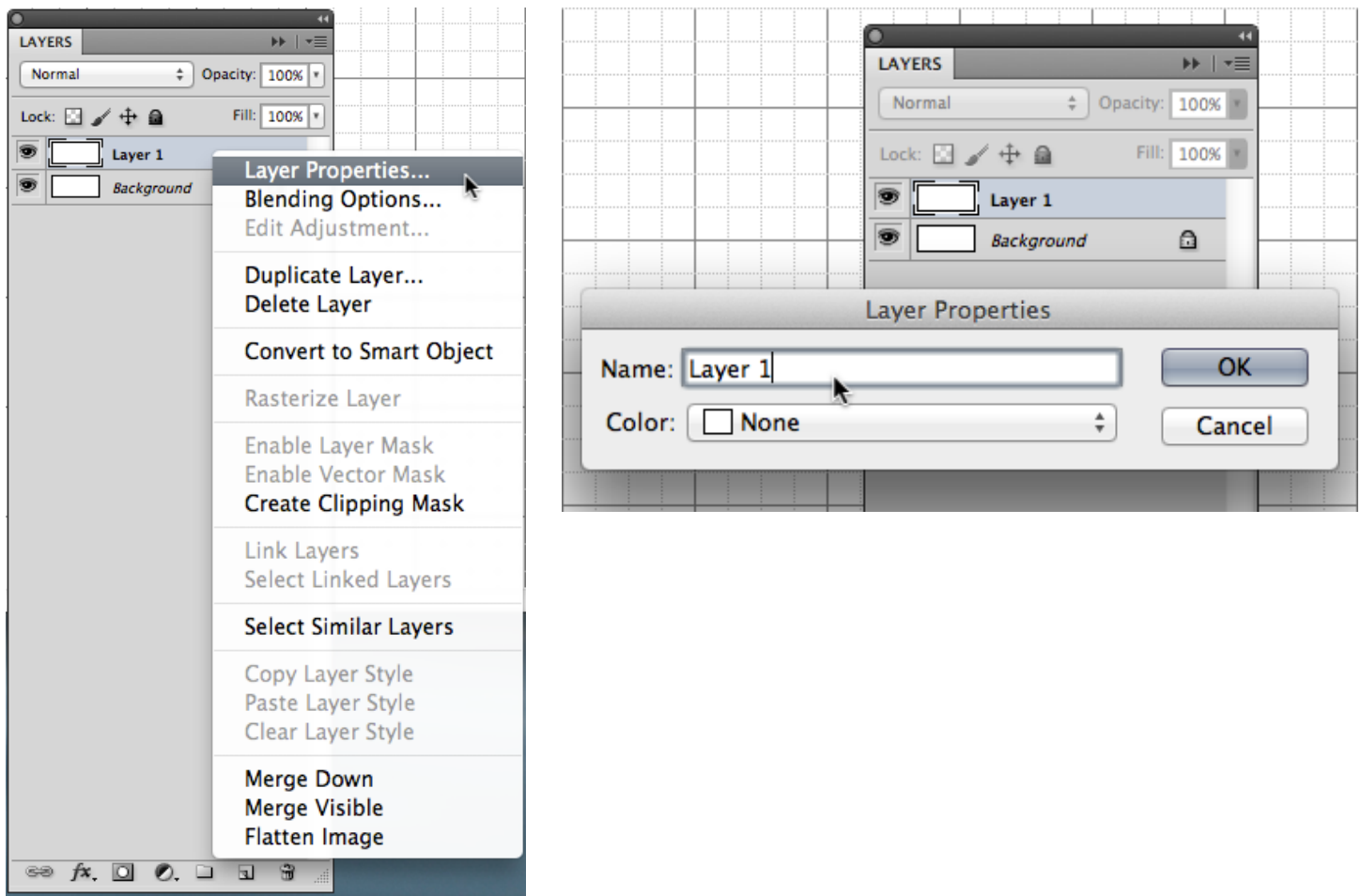


DEFINE CONTENT *continued...*

To rename a layer:

1. Select the layer you want to rename
2. Hold down **Control**, **Right-click** and choose > **Layer Properties** (Figure 1D)
3. Rename your layer

Figure 1D



Recommended Books

- *Content Strategy* by Kristina Halvorson)
- *The Elements of Content Strategy* by Erin Kissane
- *Photoshop CS5 for Windows and Macintosh: Visual Quickstart Guide* by Elaine Weinmann