

Create a "Minion" Character From the Despicable Me Movie

Let's face it, those minion characters from Despicable Me were pretty darned cute. In today's tutorial, we will use Photoshop and Illustrator to create a cute minion character. Let's get started!

I'm Bad.
thit 4

Tutorial Details

- Program: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator CS5
- Difficulty: Advanced
- Estimated Completion Time: 5 Hours

Tutorial Assets

The following assets were used during the production of this tutorial.

- Jeans Texture
- Iris

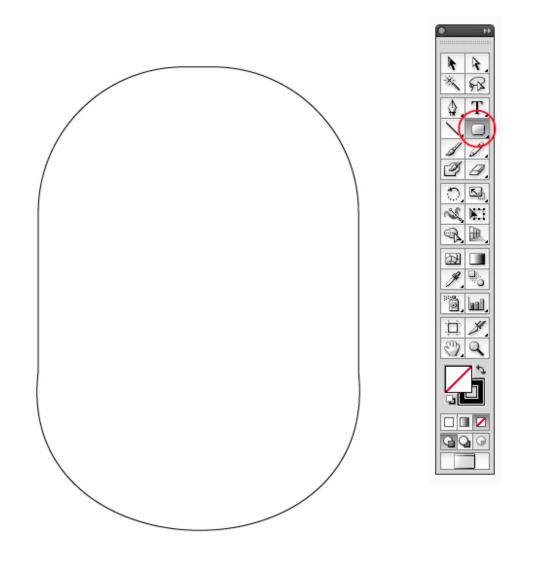
Step 1 - Illustrator

Create an 800x600px document in Illustrator (Cmd/Ctrl + N).

Name:	New Document	ОК
New Document Profile:		Cancel
Number of Artboards:	€1 2888 ∞ 8 →	
Spacing:	Columns: 1	
Size:	800 x 600	
	800 px Units: Pixels	Color Mode: RG
Height:	600 px Orientation: මූ බ	PPI: 72 Align to Pixel Grid: Ye
Bleed:	Top Bottom Left Right 0 px 0 px 0 px 0 px 0 px	
Advanced		
_		

Step 2

Begin to draw the body. Select the Rounded Rectangle Tool then as you drag the cursor, repeatedly press the up arrow key to change the radius of the corners until you get some like the image below.

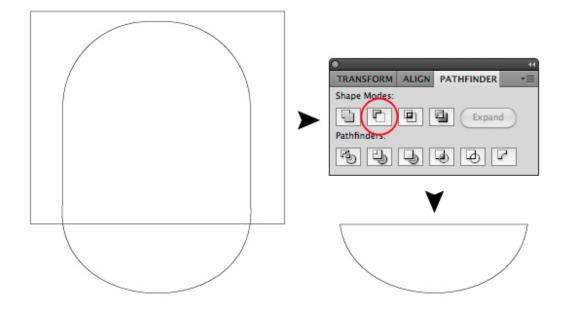


Step 3

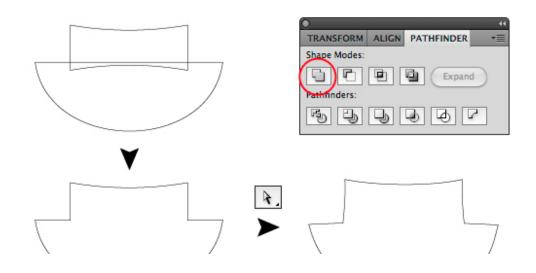
Now copy the body (Cmd/Ctrl + C) and paste it in the same position (Cmd/Ctrl + F), move the original body away for now. With the Rectangle Tool (M) draw a rectangle like the image below, then in the Pathfinder panel press the Minus Front button to obtain the first part of the shape.

For the second one, draw another rectangle and on the Menu Bar select Effect > Warp > Bulge. Set Horizontal and Bend to -11%, leave the rest to 0, click Ok button to confirm. Select the rectangle and in the Menu Bar let's click on Object > Expand Appearance.

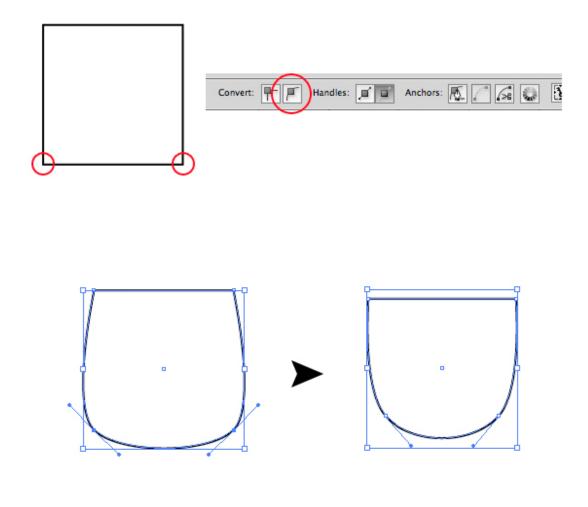
Now dispose the first and the second part like image below, select them and in Pathfinder Panel click on Unite button. To make the shape more rounded use the Direct Selection Tool (A), then try to move the anchor point and handles.



	Warp Options	
	Style: 🕒 Bulge 🛟	ОК
	💿 Horizontal 🛛 Vertical	Cancel
	Bend: %	Preview
¥	Distortion Horizontal: 0 %	
	Vertical: 0 %	



With the Rectangle Tool (M) draw a square (hold down Shift while dragging). Then use the Direct Selection Tool (A) to select the two bottom points and press the Convert Button in the Option Bar. Adjust the handles until you get a result like the image below. (You don't need to do those shapes exactly as I do, because the aim of this tutorial is to create a pack of different minions, so follow my guidelines but try to customize your minion too).



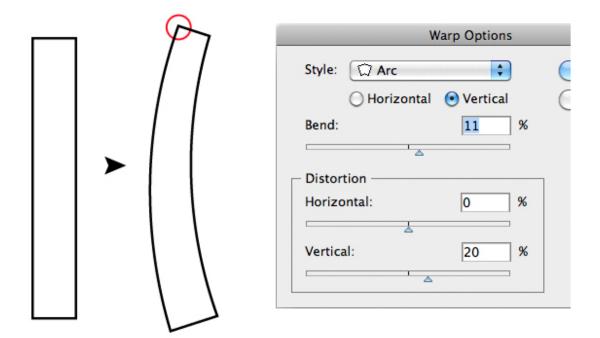
Step 5

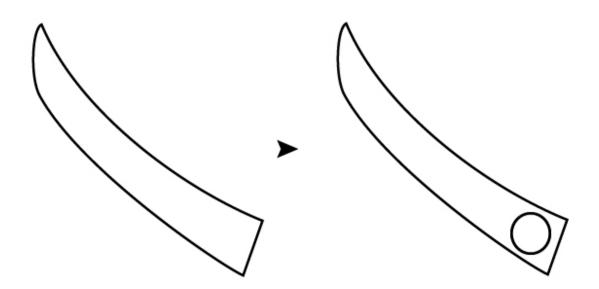
For the shoulder strap let's draw another rectangle. Then in the Menu Bar select Effect > Warp > Arc set Vertical; Bend to 11% and Vertical Distortion to 20%. Remember to Expand Appearance like before or when you will try to rotate or transform this object the effect will be re-applied with some unwanted results.

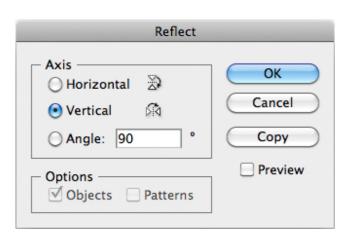
With the Direct Selection Tool (A) round a little the top left corner.

Let's add a circle with the Ellipse Tool (L) and dispose it like the image below. Then duplicate the

shoulder strap and right click on the copy, select Transform > Reflect set the mode to Vertical and click Ok button.

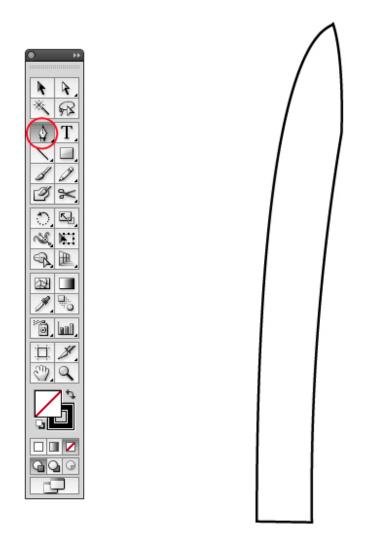






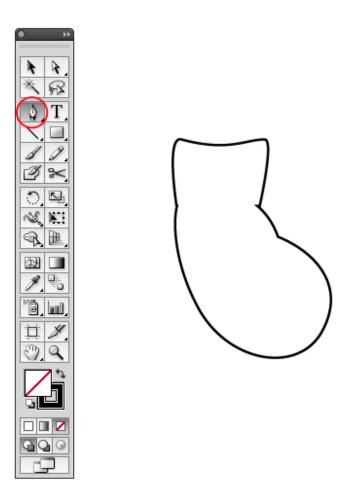


Now let's draw the arm. Select the Pen Tool (P) and draw a shape like below. Then duplicate and reflect it.

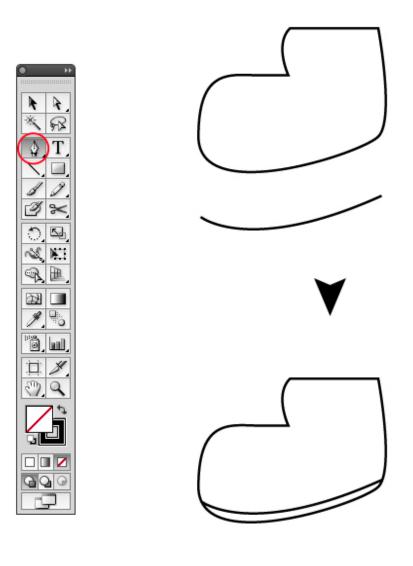


Step 7

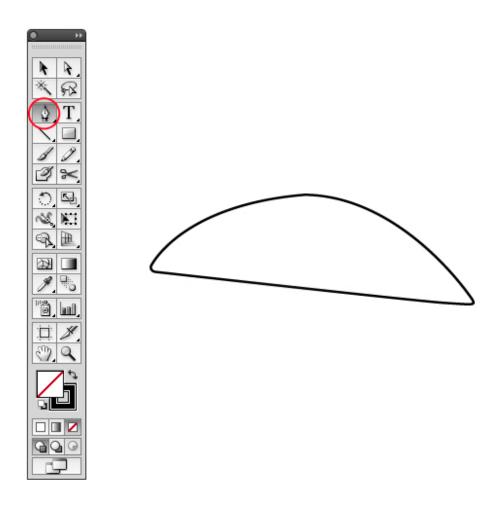
To draw the hand we have to use the Pen Tool (P). Let's draw something like the image below. When you're done, duplicate and reflect vertically the hand. This time you wont need to Expand Appearance because there's no effect applied to the path. Instead, if you select, by mistake, in the Menu Bar Object > Expand you will expand the stroke and the fill (if some) of the path, getting a totally different result, so pay attention.



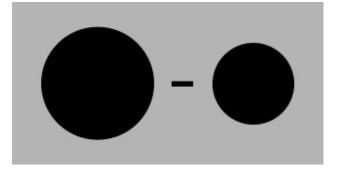
Do the same for the shoe. Draw it with the Pen Tool (P). Create the curved line and then place it on the shoe. So, as usual, duplicate and reflect. If wanted, you can adjust the copied shoe as shown.

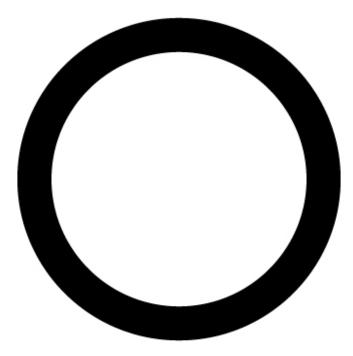


For the mouth draw a casual shape like below. The really nice thing about this tutorial is that we are working with vector layers (and smart objects in Photoshop) so you can make an infinite number of minions simply by change some anchor point.



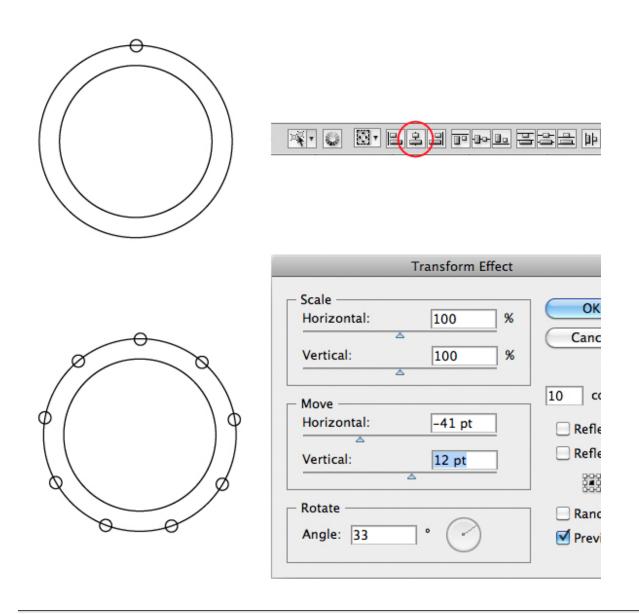
Time for glasses now. Draw a circle with the Ellipse Tool (L), then duplicate and make it smaller. Select the two circles and in the Paths Elaboration panel, click the Minus Front button to obtain the final shape.



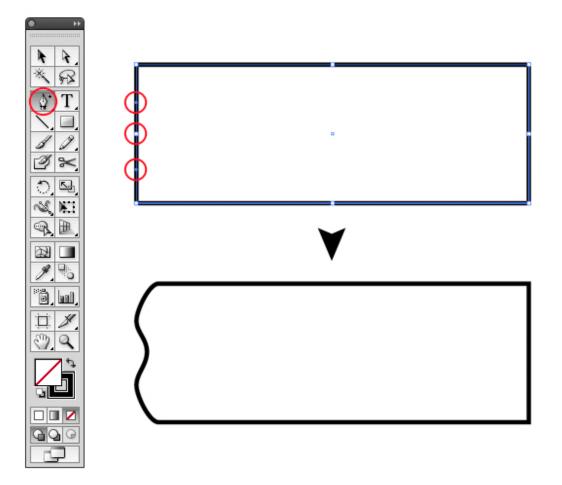


Create another circle, this time smaller. Select the previous shape and the small circle. Next click on the Horizontal Align Center button in the option bar. Put the smaller circle on top like the image below (Hold Shift button and press Up Arrow key to move the circle only vertically).

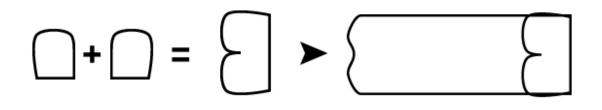
Now select the small circle and in the Menu Bar click Effect > Distort and Transform > Transform. Set the copies value to 10, Horizontal to -41pt, Vertical to 12pt and Angle to 33 degrees. You may need to play with those values until you align correctly the circles like below. This step will be very frustrating if you've never used this feature before. My advice is to experiment until you get a nice result, otherwise you can simple duplicate the circle and place it where you want. The trick is: if you decrease Horizontal value increase Vertical and vice versa.

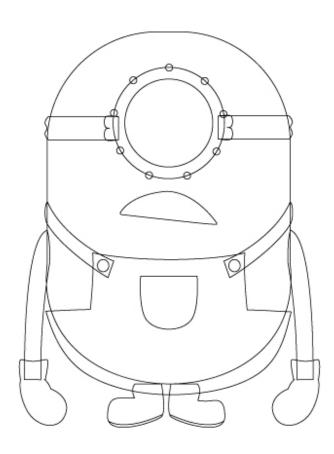


To create the first part of the band draw a rectangle, select the Add Point Pen Tool (+) and add three points on the left side. Then convert the points to curves and adjust them like below. If you want to do a really precise work, just create the first curve, then subtract a rectangle from the shape to crop it. Duplicate, reflect and merge the two shapes with Pathfinder panel, done.

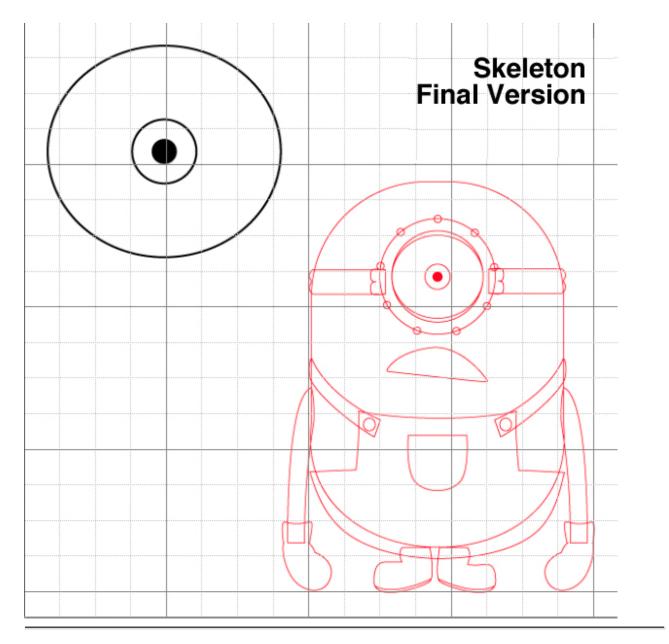


For the second part, simply draw two rectangles and round the corner as the Step 4, then merge them. Let's assemble the pieces now.





Last thing to do for the skeleton is to create the eye. Draw a circle and squeeze it a little (hold Alt key to reflect the transformation in two way). Finally place the eye inside the glasses. Now if you want, you can draw the little circles to complete the eye, but it's optional.



Step 15 - Photoshop

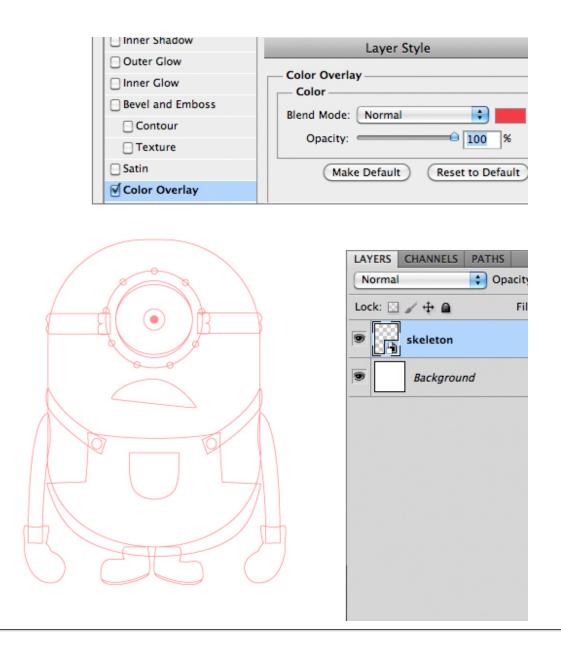
Create a 1200x1200px document in Photoshop set the resolution to 300dpi and color mode to RGB. (Cmd/Ctrl + N).

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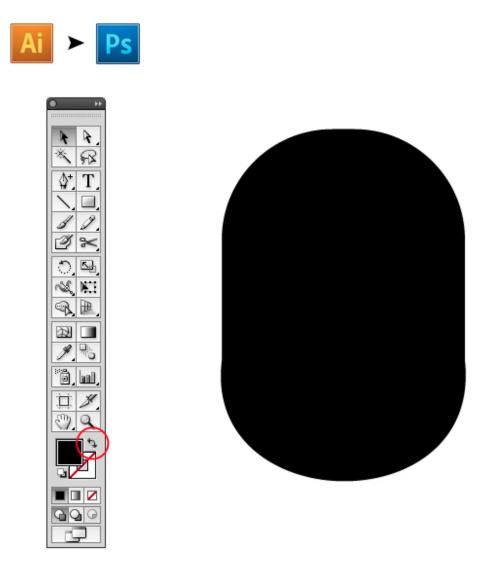
In this project we will use this color palette and some variations derived.



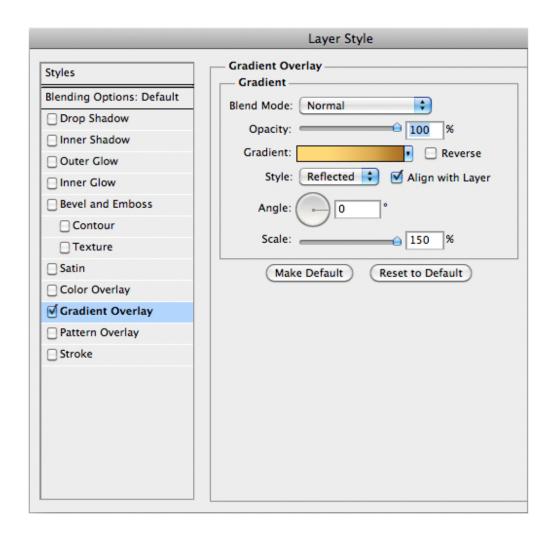
Now open the previous skeleton.ai file and select the entire skeleton. Let's do a copy and paste into Photoshop, be sure to select Smart Objects in the pop-up window that appears. Now double click on the layer in Layers Panel to open the Layer Style window. Check the Color Overlay style and select a red color, press the Ok button to confirm. Rename the layer "skeleton" and lower the opacity to 60%. We will use it as a reference to adjust the various elements. Put this layer on top.



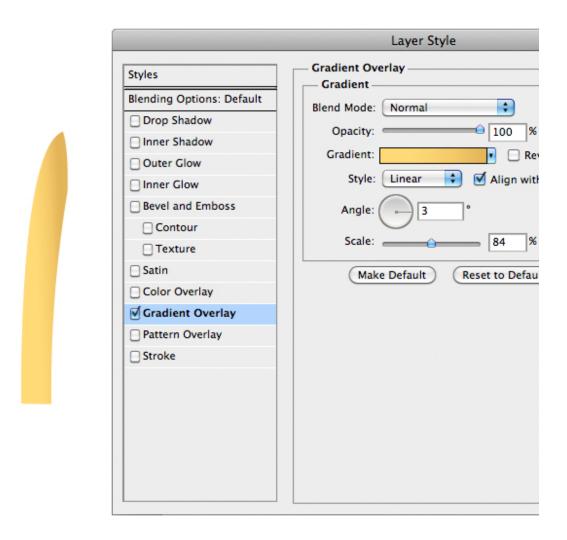
Import every single piece of the character separately. Start with the body. But first in Illustrator, invert the color of stroke and fill by pressing the invert button in the toolbar. Copy the body and import it in Photoshop as a Smart Object.



Let's do the fun part now. Rename the imported layer "body" and double click on it (always stay organized with layers, in this project there are more than 70). In the Layers Style windows check Gradient Overlay and set it as image below. The color for the gradient are #f6da6e and #9a701b. Press Ok to confirm.



Now import the left arm from Illustrator, remember to invert stroke with fill first. Add the Layer Style below. Once finished duplicate the arm layers (Cmd/Ctrl + J) then press Cmd/Ctrl + T to transform the layer, when you see a box surrounding the arm, right click on it and then select Flip Horizontal. In the Layer Style of the copied arm, adjust the angle, you have to do it for each reflected layers in this tutorial. Use now the skeleton layer as a reference to place arms in right place. The original body in the movie has no texture; it's look like plastic instead.



Import the left hand and add the following style.



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	Layer Style
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-	Structure
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Inner Shadow	Depth: 441 %
Outer Glow	Direction: 💿 Up 🕥 Down
Inner Glow	Size: 106 p
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Pattern Overlay	
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Outer Glow	Gradient:
Inner Glow	Style: Linear 🔷 🗹 Align with Li
Bevel and Emboss	Angle: 90 °
Contour	
☐ Texture	Scale: 100 %
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 Inner Shadow Outer Glow Inner Glow Bevel and Emboss Contour Texture Satin Color Overlay Gradient Overlay Pattern Overlay 	Pattern Overlay Pattern Blend Mode: Normal Opacity: 19 % Pattern: Snap to O Scale: 99 % Link with Layer

Layer Style



To create the finger detail, add a new empty layer, make a little round selection with the Elliptical Marquee Tool (M), then with the Gradient Fill Tool (G) fill the selection with a white to transparent gradient as below.

Duplicate this layer, then move the copied layer by pressing one time the right arrow key and then the up arrow key. Now hold down the Cmd/Ctrl key and click on the icon at the bottom of layer thumbnail to load the layer as a selection, and then press Backspace to erase the selected part.

Merge the two finger layers by selecting in them in Layer Panels (Hold Cmd/Ctrl to select multiple layer) and pressing Cmd/Ctrl + E. Decrease opacity to about 40-60%. Finally add this Layer Style to the finger. Duplicate and reflect the hand and the finger. Keep organized the layers by grouping them.



2 - Load Selection



4 - Add Layer Style

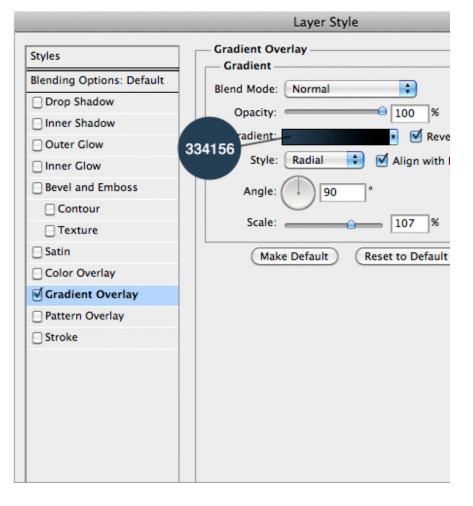


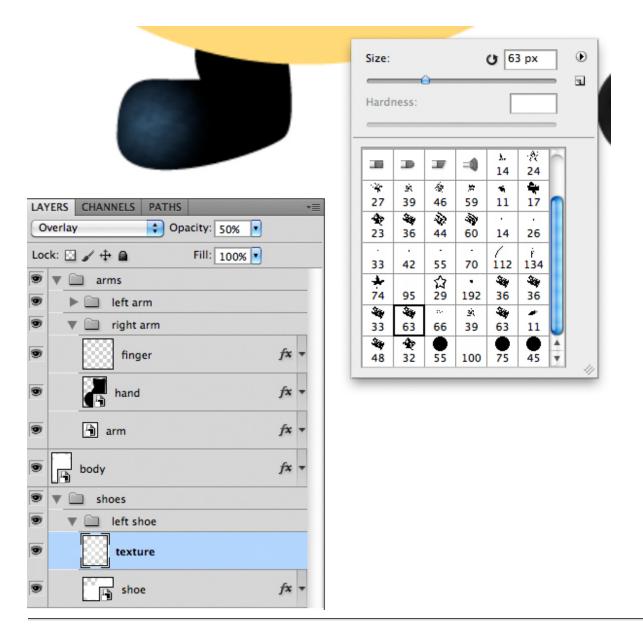
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☐ Stroke	Layer Knocks Out Drop Shadow Make Default Reset to Default	

Import the left shoe now, without the curved line. Add the following Layer Style. (To move the gradient simply drag it once you open the Layer Style panel in the Gradient Overlay tab).

Create a new empty layer, select the Brush Tool (B), right click on the image to open the Brush Tool Option Panel and choose a grunge brush. Let's paint with white to add some detail, then lower the opacity to 50% and set the blending mode to Overlay to gain much deeper color.



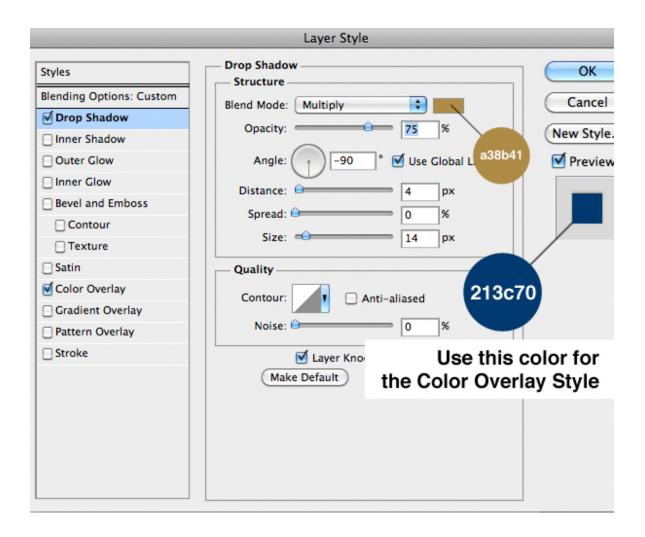


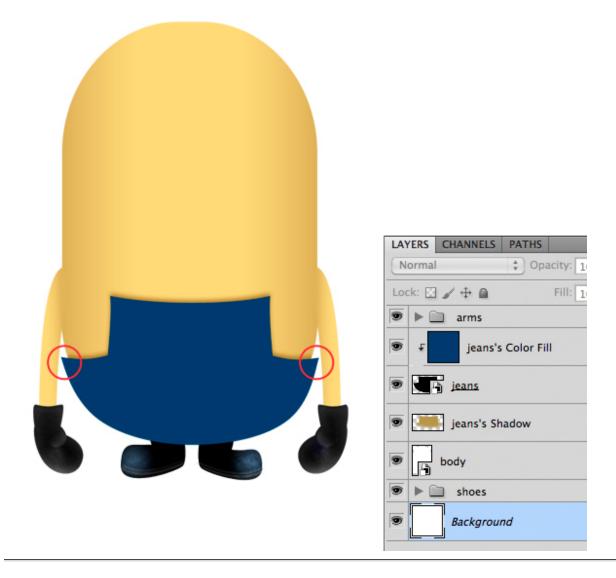


To add more detail to the shoe import the curved line, add this Layer Style and decrease the fill of the layer to 0%. You have to repeat step 23-24 for right shoe (simply import it and add the previous Layer Style by dragging it in the imported shoe layer while holding down the Alt key). Although, you have only to duplicate and reflect the left shoe, and change the gradient position.

	Layer Style	
	Denthala	
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Drop Shadow		
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Gradient Overlay		
Pattern Overlay	Noise: 0 %	

Now is time to do the first part of the suit. Import the center part and add the following style. You'll notice that the drop shadow comes out from the edges of the suit. To fix it on the Menu Bar select Layer > Layer Style > Create Layer to isolate the individual layer style into layers. This is a very nice feature, useful in cases like this. So just use the Eraser Tool (E) on the shadow layer to fix the problem.

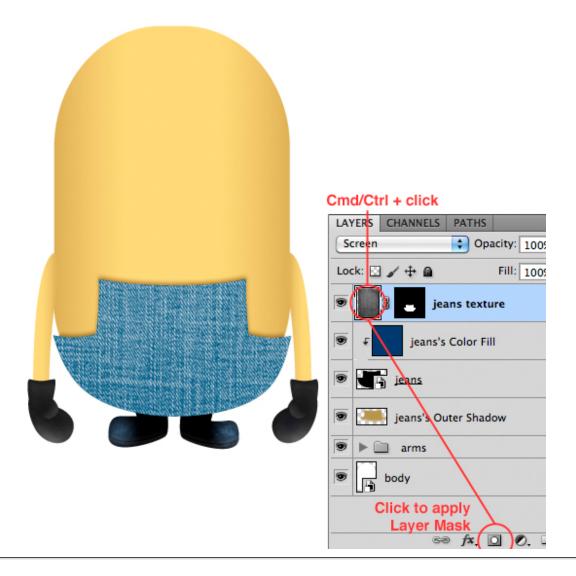




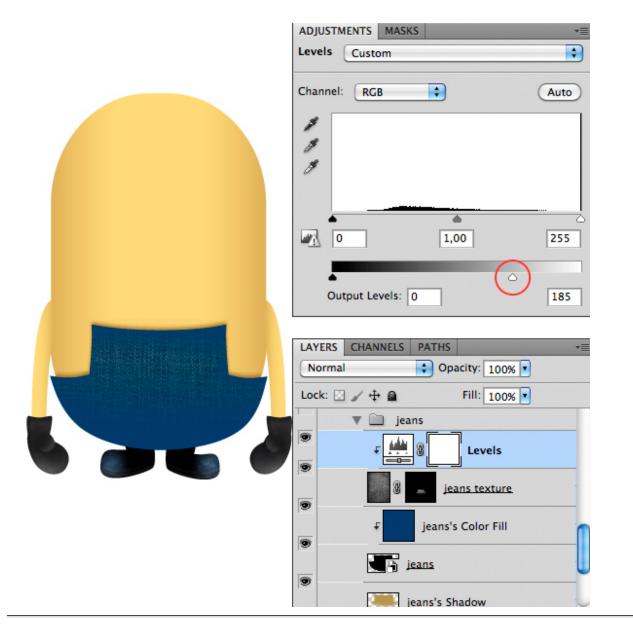
To give a more realistic look to our minion we have to texturize it. So open up the jeans texture in another document, desaturate it by pressing Shift + Cmd/Ctrl + U. Then copy and paste the texture inside the minion document and adjust it like below.



Now let's create a layer mask, simply by loading the suit layer as a selection, Cmd/Ctrl + click on layer's thumbnail, and then press the apply Layer Mask button. Set the blending mode to Screen.

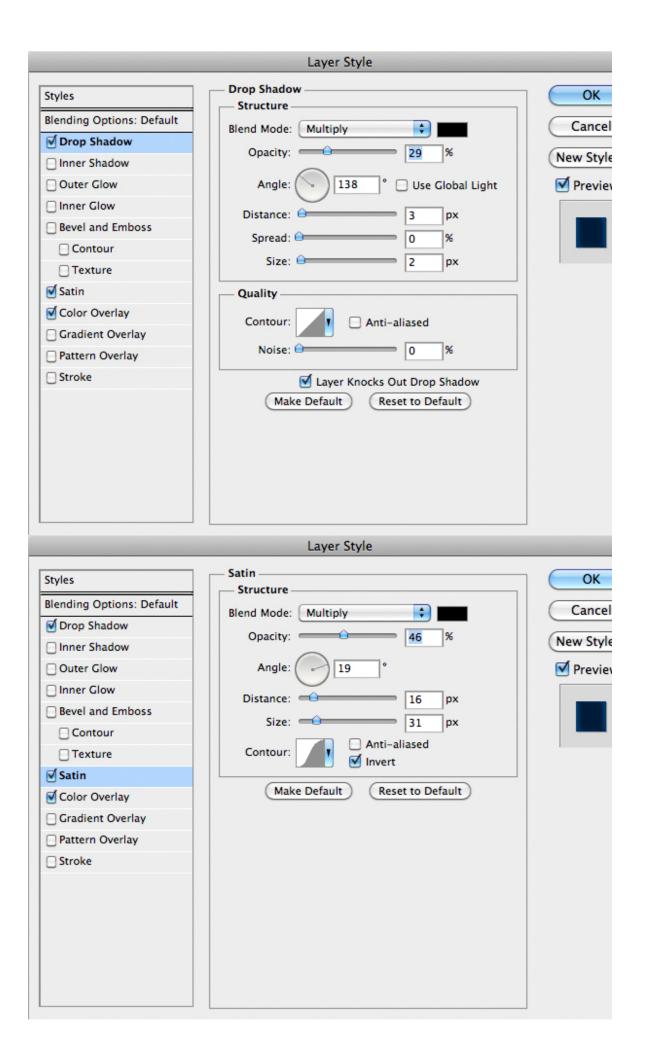


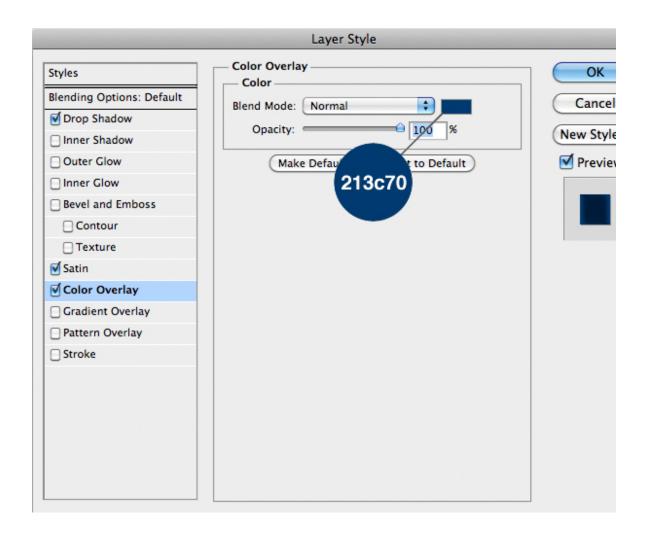
With the Brush Tool (B) select a very soft brush and try to smooth the texture on the edge by painting on the mask like image below. The famous rule is: white shows, black hide. If you think that the overall texture effects is too strong, try to decrease the opacity or apply a Adjustment Layer Levels and decrease the Output Levels right cursor until you get the desired effects.

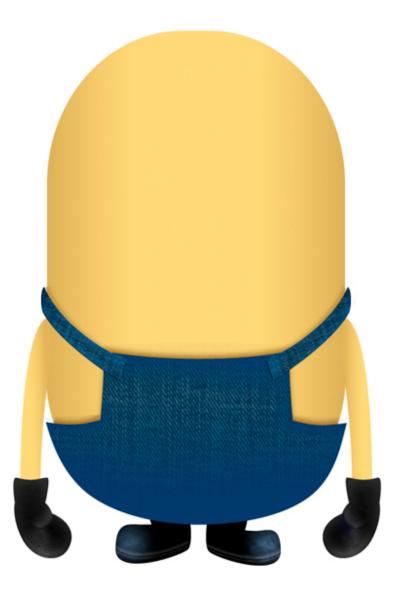


Do the same as step 25-28 to add textures and shadows to the shoulder straps. While repeating Step 25 add only the Drop Shadow styles.

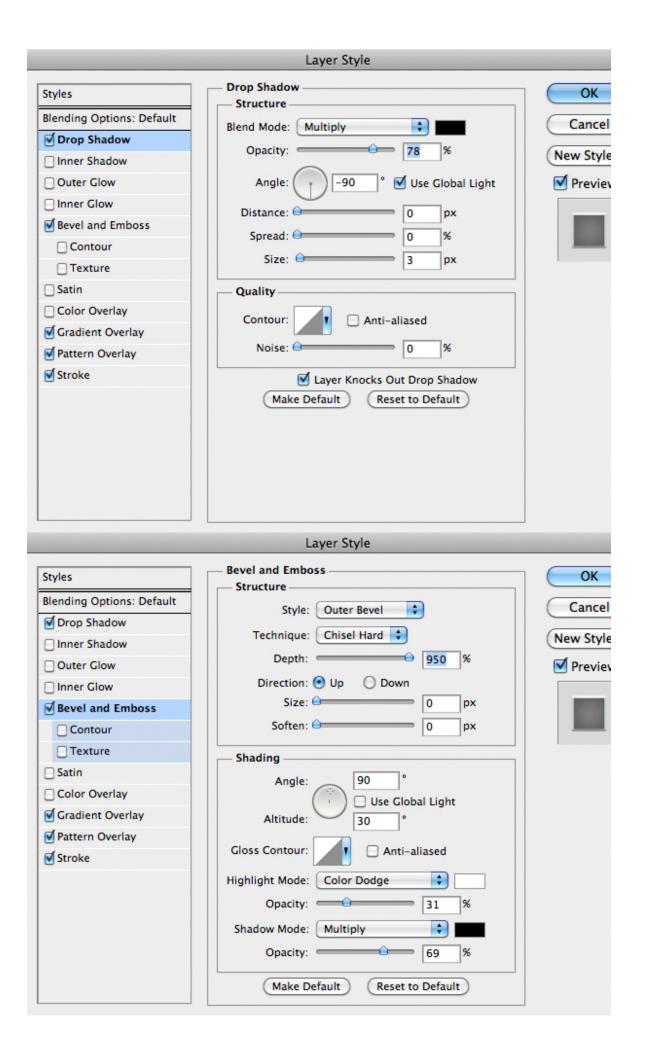
Once finished use this Layer Style below. A good thing is to rotate the texture to give a more realistic looks, remember to unlock the mask from the layer by clicking the little icon between thumbnails in the layer.

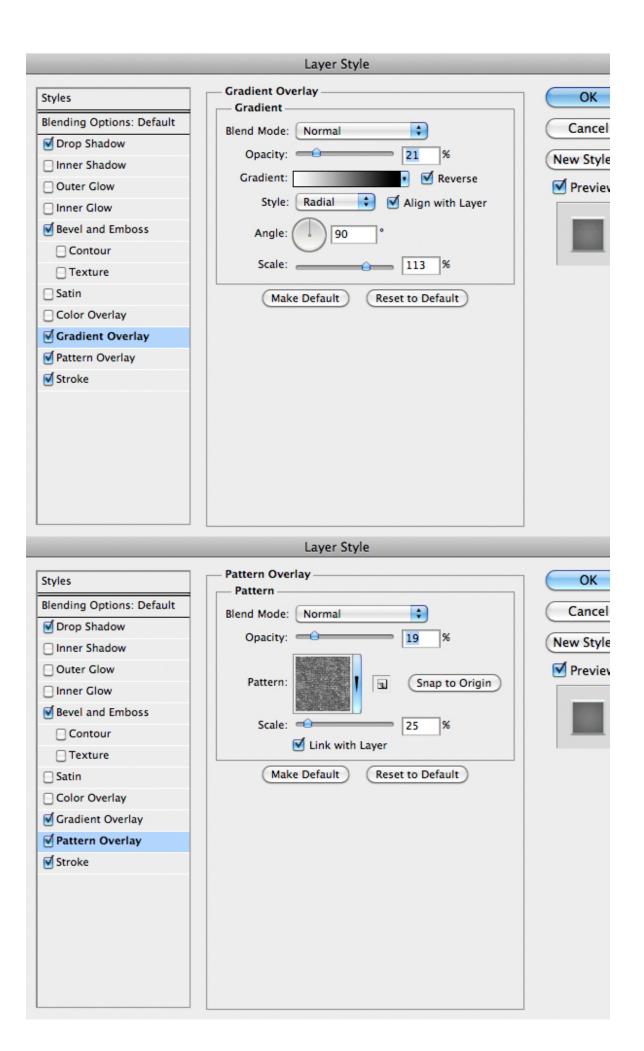




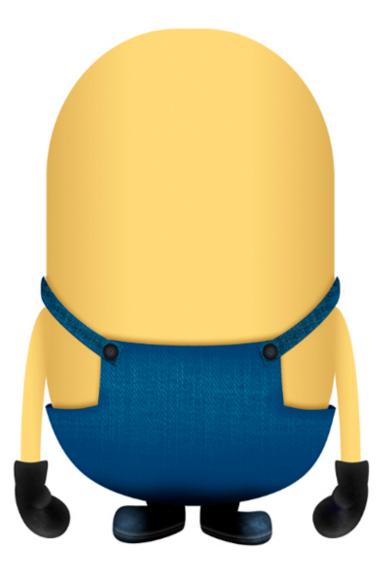


Now import the button and add this Layer Style. Add a Layer Mask to the button and with a hard brush, paint with black in the mask to create a little hole. Duplicate the button and place the copy in the right place.

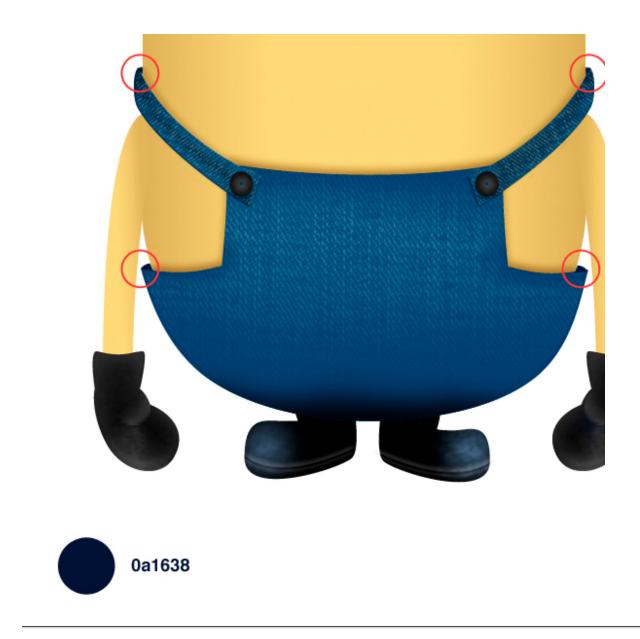




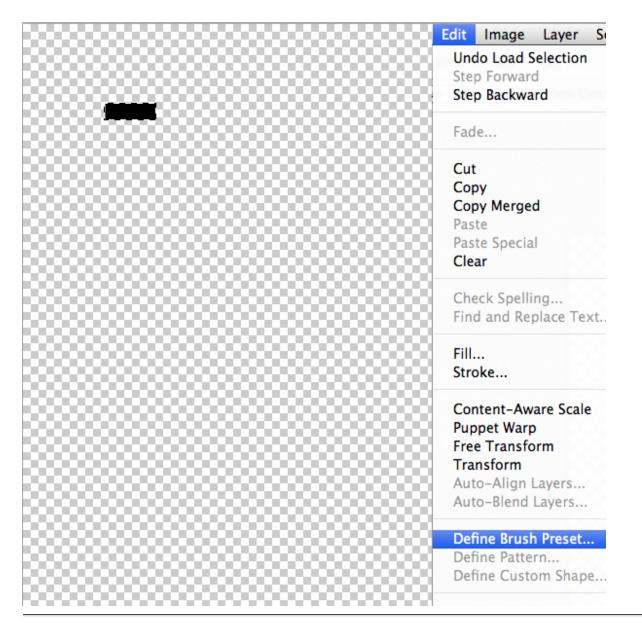
Layer Style		
Styles	Stroke	ОК
Blending Options: Default	Size: D	Cancel
Shadow	Position: Outside	
Inner Shadow		New Style
Outer Glow	Blend Mode: Normal	🗹 Previev
Inner Glow	Opacity: 18 %	
Sevel and Emboss	Fill Type: Color	
Contour		
Texture	Color:	
Satin		
Color Overlay		
Gradient Overlay	13c70	
Pattern Overlay		
√ Stroke	Make Default Reset to Default	
		1



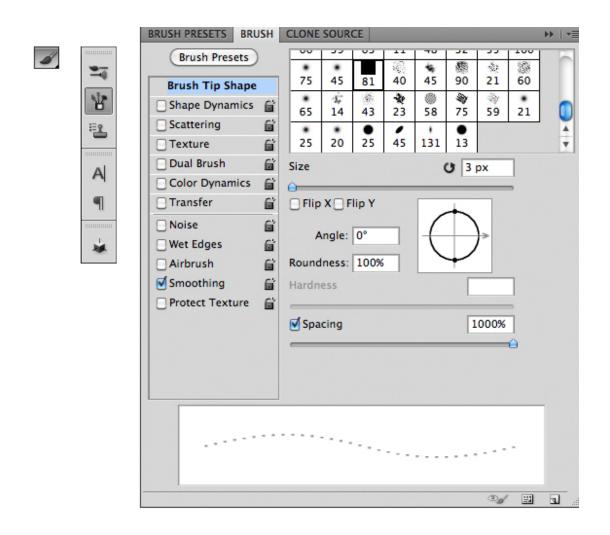
You've probably noticed that there are empty areas between the joints of the suit and the body. To fix it, draw some little triangles with the Lasso Tool (L) and fill the selection with a dark blue.

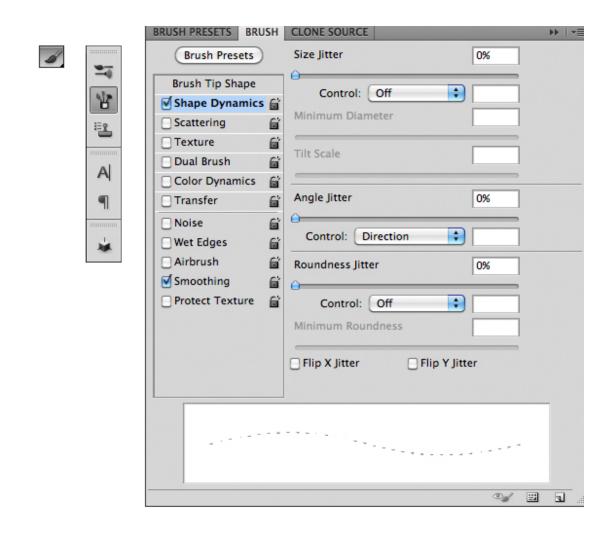


A very nice suite for a minion, but something is still missing. The string and the pockets. To create the string we need to define a special brush that follow the direction of a specific path. With the Rectangle Tool (U) draw a little rectangle, then hold the Alt key and click on the eye icon of the layer to show only the rectangle. Rasterize the shape, then load the layer as a selection by Cmd/Ctrl + click on the icon in the thumbnail, next in the Menu Bar select Edit > Define Custom Brush, call it "string" then press Ok to confirm.

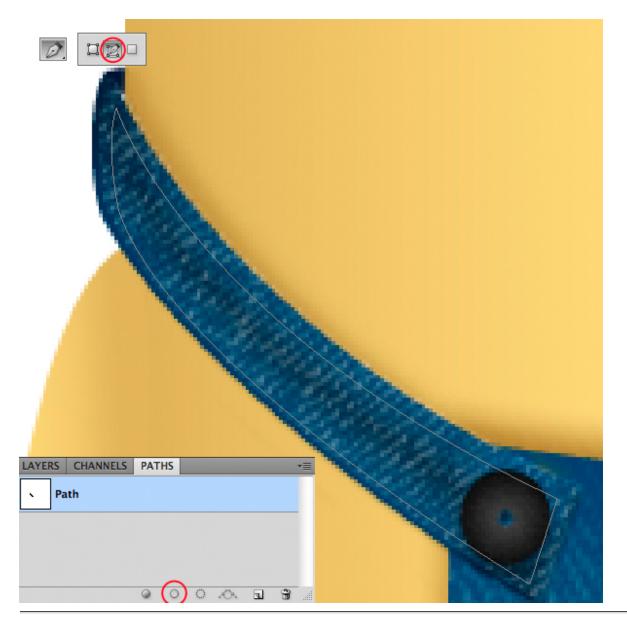


Select the Brush Tool (B). Open the Brush Panel by pressing F5 or in the Menu Bar select Windows > Brush. look for the brush created in step 33. Then set the parameters as below. Finally set the foreground color to white.

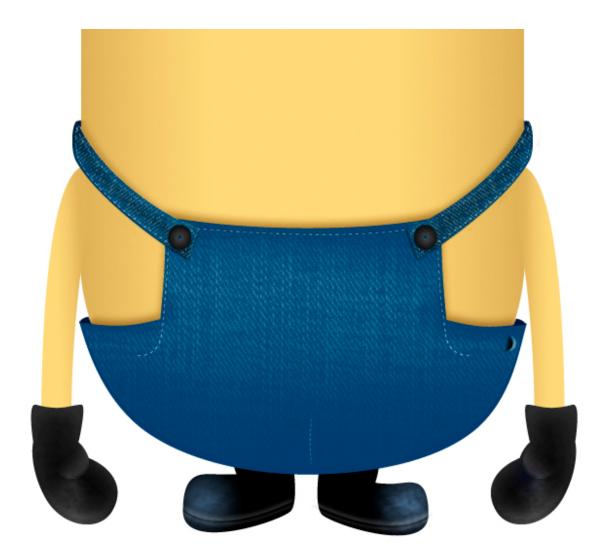




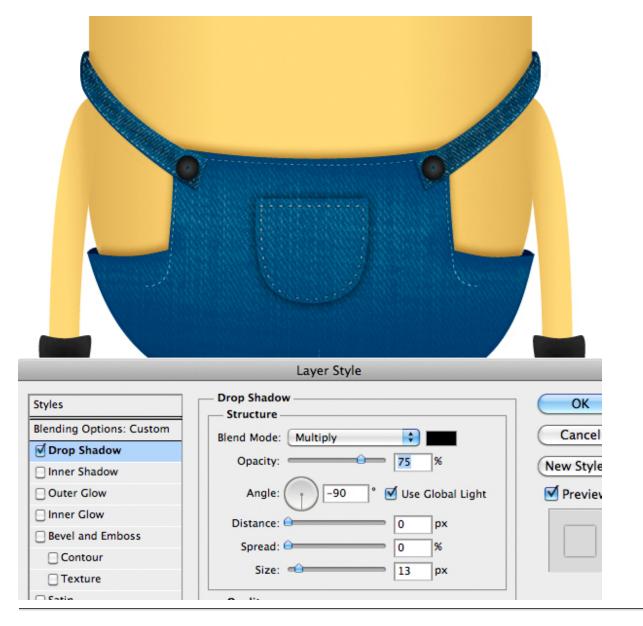
Create a new layer. In the Brush Panel choose the string brush. Next select the Pen Tool (P) in paths mode and draw a path like below in the shoulder strap. Open the Path Panel, select the path and press the Stroke Path Button, be sure to select Brush from the pop-up window and uncheck Simulate Pressure. If you want bigger string just increase the brush size of the Brush Tool.



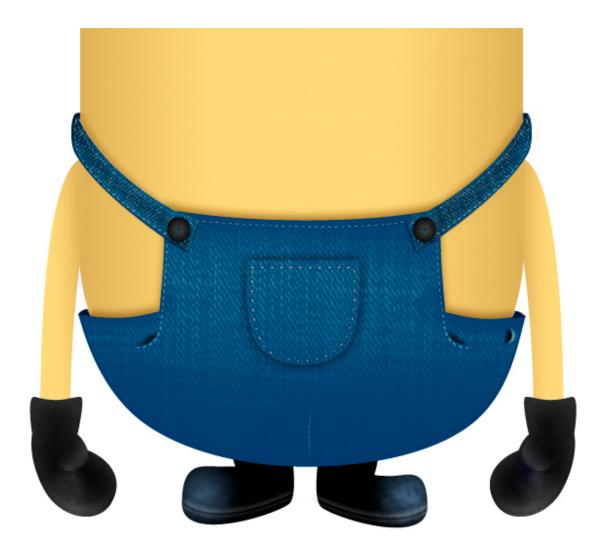
Repeat the step 35 for other string. Take the image below as a reference. Remember to create a new layer for each string.



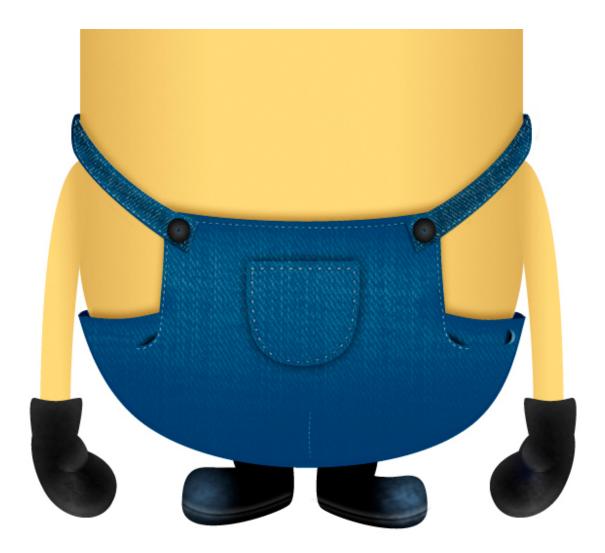
Import the big pocket from Illustrator, give it the Layer Style as below and draw another string. If you want you can add a very soft drop shadow and stroke to the string to emphasize details.



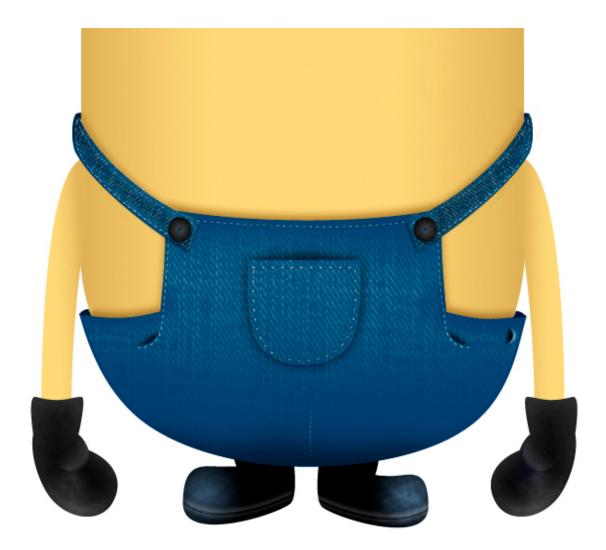
Now is time to add shadows to the small pockets. Use the same technique as step 22. The only difference is that you have to create only a single black to transparent gradient from a circle selection. Then play with opacity and Eraser Tool (E) with a soft brush to achieve a nice effect. I used the same technique to create in another layer a little detail. To create the white parts, simply paint with a soft brush in a new layer, then merge them.



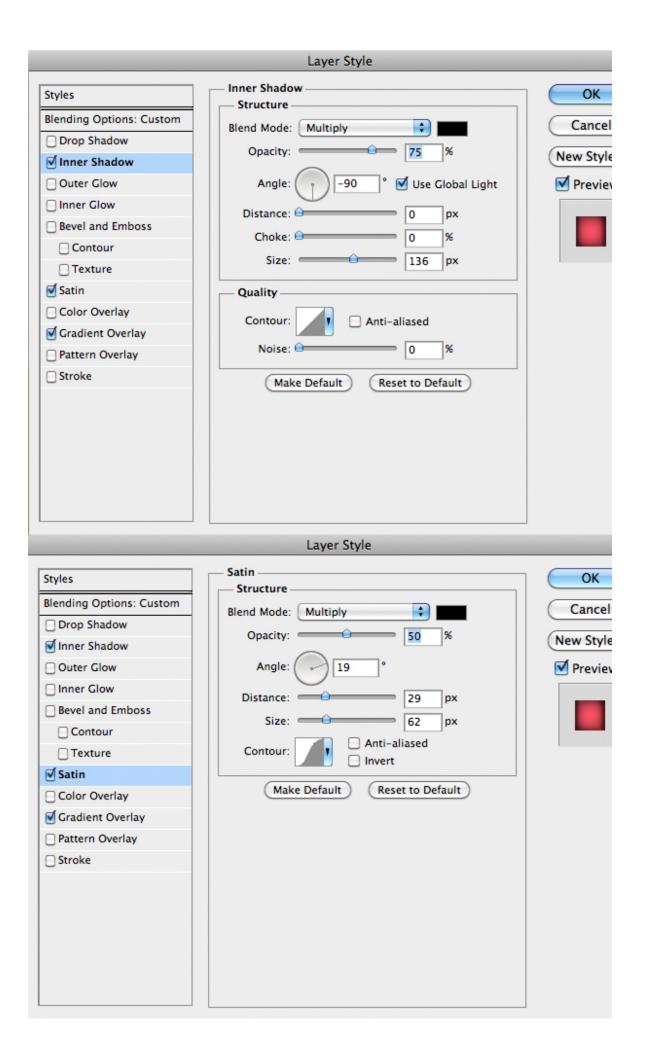
The shadow of the big pocket is the same. Only use a rectangular selection to create the gradient, and then refine it with the Eraser Tool (E).

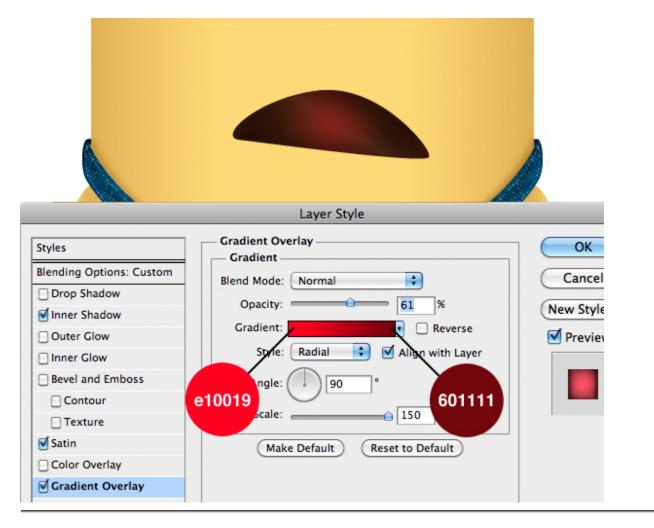


Finally add a big shadow at the bottom part of the suit. Load the center suit layer as a selection, and as usual with the Gradient Tool (G) create a black to transparent gradient. If you want you can select in the Menu Bar Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur to smooth the transition. Then refine the shadow with the Eraser Tool (E).

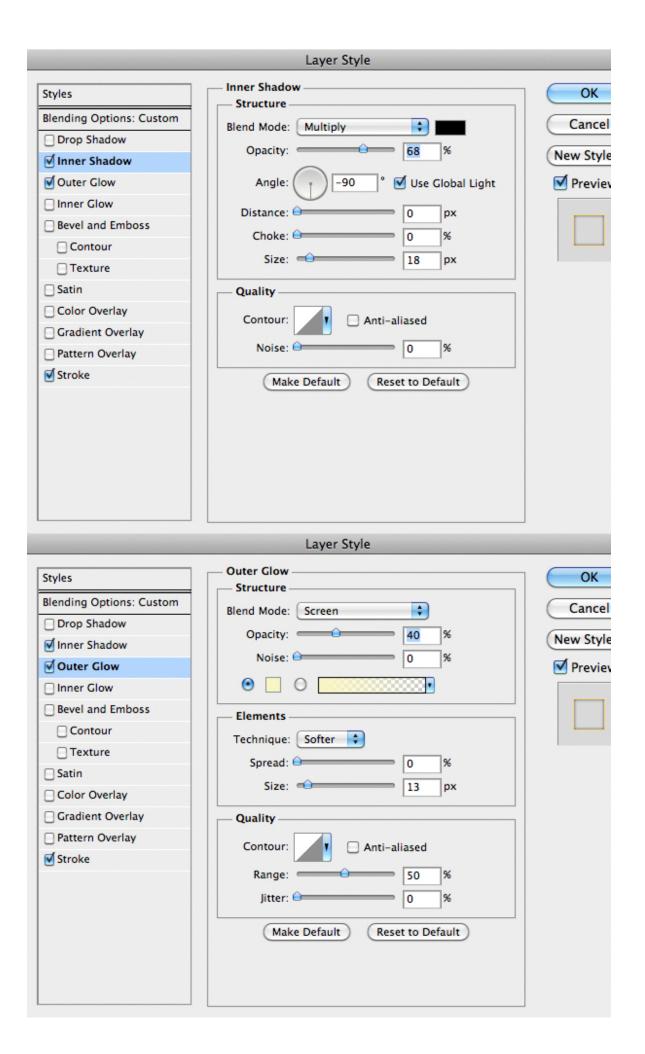


Import the mouth and add the following Layer Style and set the blending mode to Lighten.



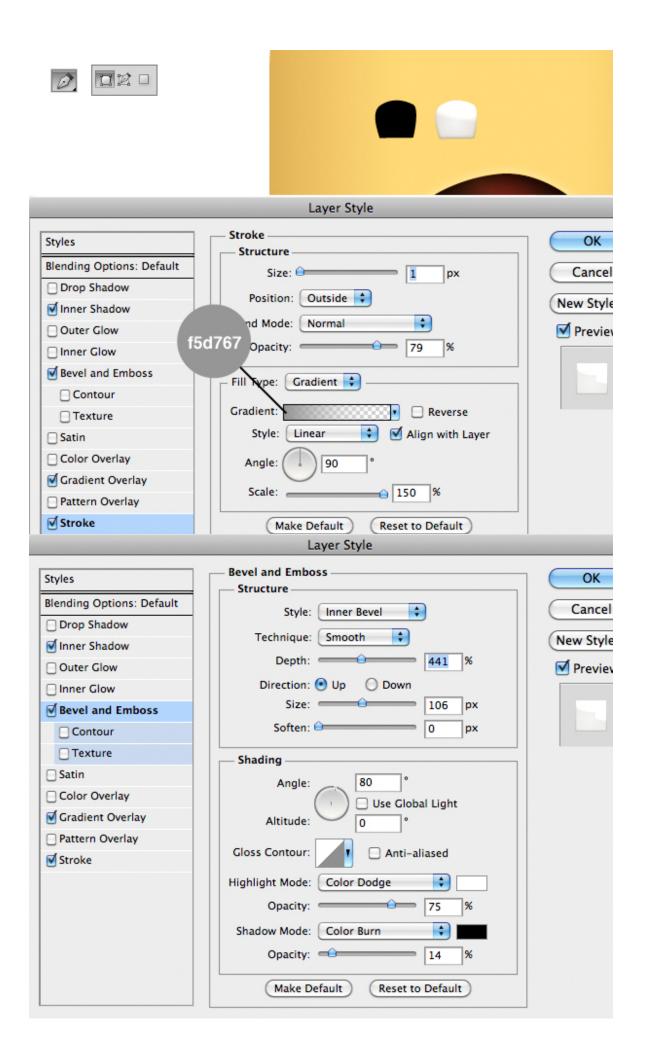


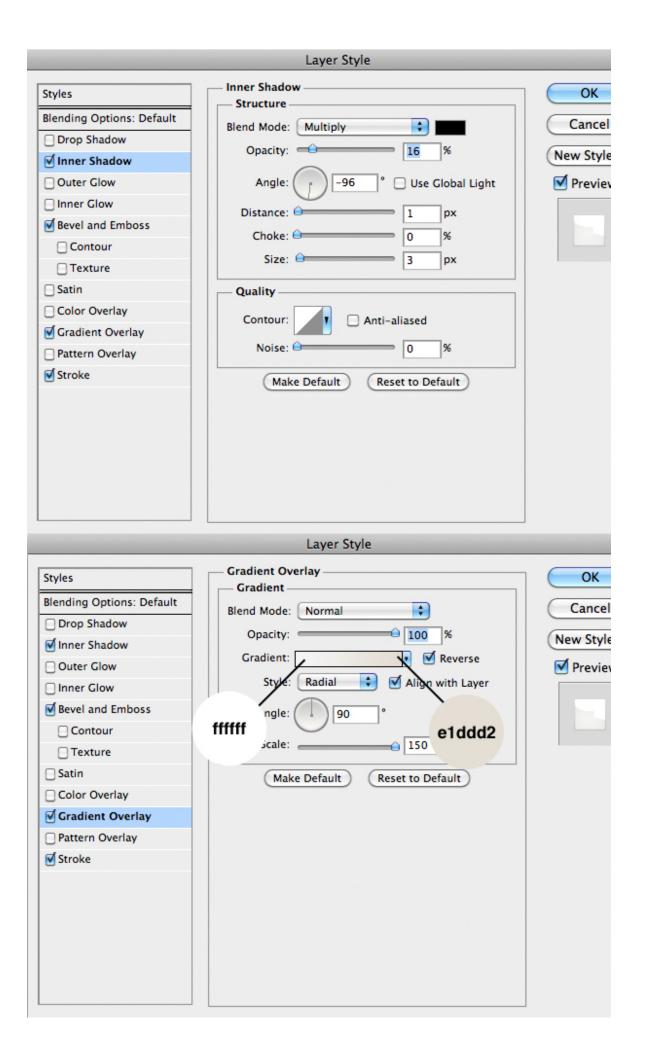
Duplicate the mouth layer, then drag & drop the fx icon to the trash to erase the previous Layer Style and add this instead.



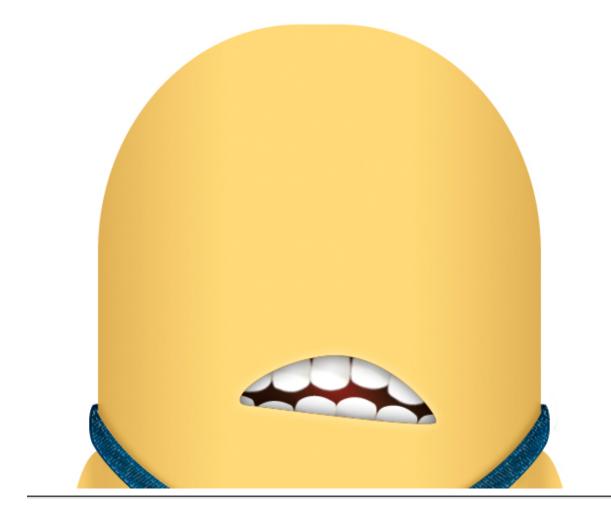
	Layer Style	
Styles	Stroke	ОК
Blending Options: Custom	Size:	Cancel
Drop Shadow		Cancel
Sinner Shadow	Position: Outside	New Style
Outer Glow	Blend Mode: Normal	V Previev
Inner Glow	Opacity: 90 %	
Bevel and Emboss	Fill Type: Color	
Contour	Fill Type: Color	
Texture	Color:	
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Color Overlay		
Gradient Overlay		
Pattern Overlay		
Stroke	Make Default Reset to Default	

With the Pen Tool (P) in Shape Layer mode, draw the teeth and add the following Layer Style.





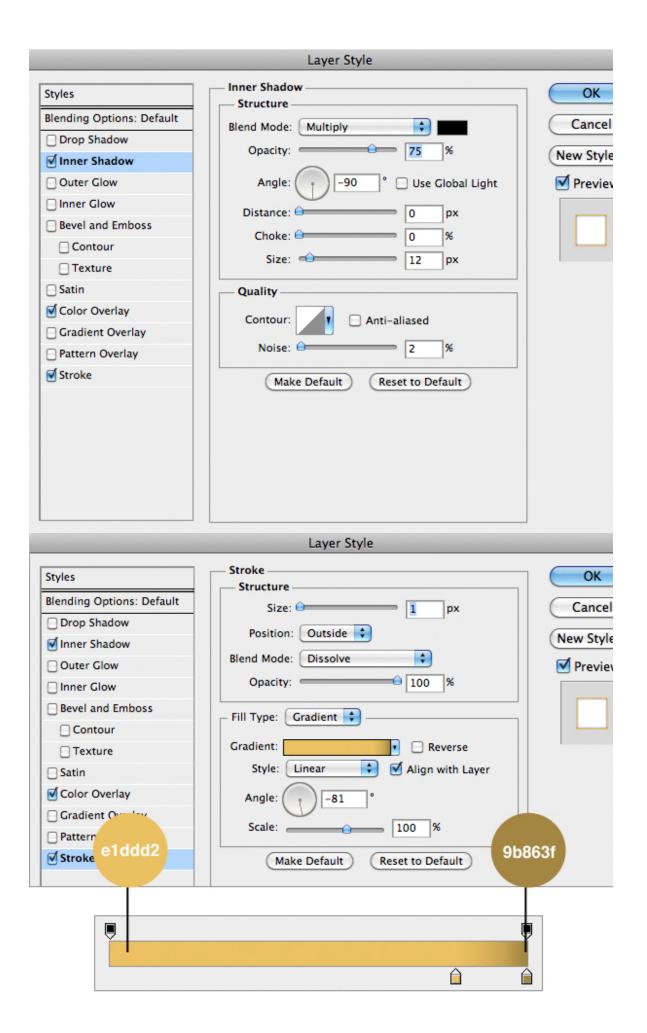
Duplicate the teeth layer about five times. Dispose of them, as you like up and down. Then create two group and apply to them a Layer Mask by load mouth layer as a selection and pressing the Layer Mask button. The teeth must be between the first and second mouth. Rasterize and blur a little the upper teeth.



Step 44

To create the eye import the shape from Illustrator, then add this Layer Style.

	Layer Style	
Styles	Color Overlay	ОК
Blending Options: Default	Blend Mode: Normal	Cance
Drop Shadow		
✓ Inner Shadow	Opacity: 100 %	New Style
Outer Glow	Make Default Reset to Default	🗹 Previe
Inner Glow		
Bevel and Emboss		
Contour		
Texture		
🗌 Satin		
Color Overlay		
Gradient Overlay		

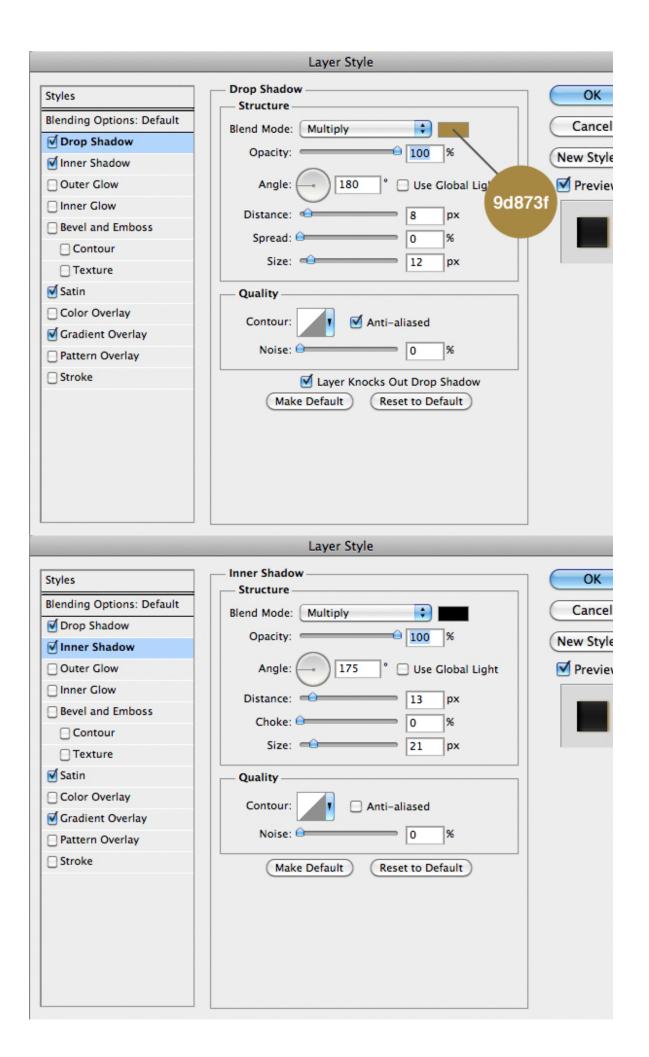


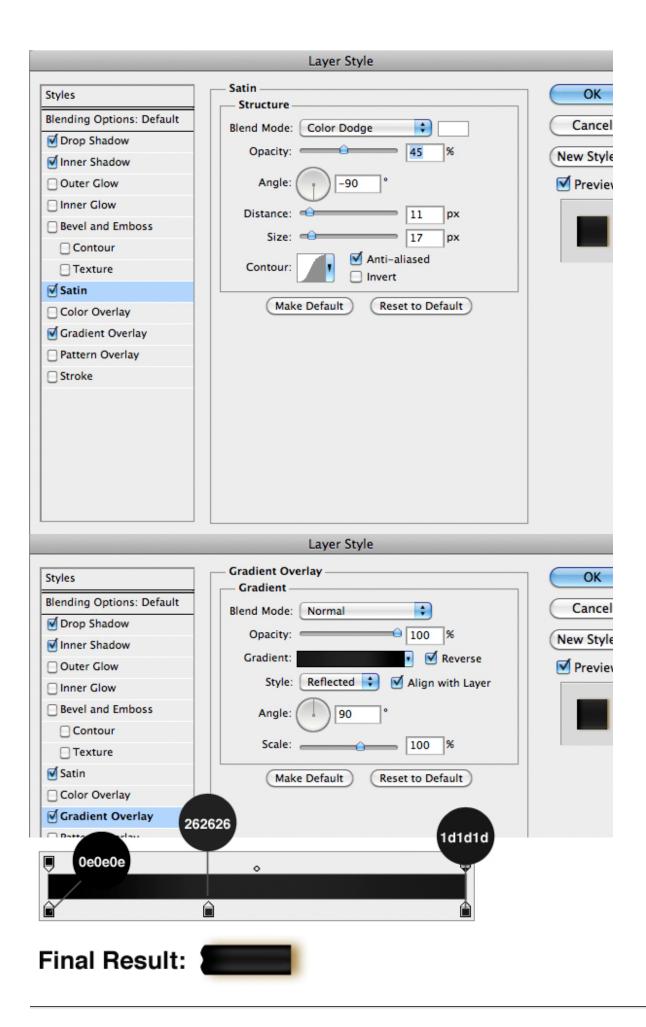
Choose an Iris from the stock (thanks to dead-brushes) in Assets above. I choose the number 19. Place inside the eye shape and then add the Layer Style below. Next duplicate the iris layer, decrease the opacity to 50% and set the blending mode to Overlay.

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		ormal 🔷 Opaci		
	Loc	:k: 🛛 🖌 🕂 🚔 🛛 🛛 F		
		🔻 🛄 eyes		
		🔻 🛄 left eye		
		🔻 🛄 iris		
		pupil		
		iris copy		
		iris		
Layer Style				
Styles	Inner Shadow	ОК		
Blending Options: Default	Structure			
	Blend Mode: Multiply	Cancel		
Drop Shadow	Opacity: 75 %	New Style		
✓ Inner Shadow				
Outer Glow	Angle: 90 ° 🗹 Use Global I	Light Serview		
Inner Glow	Distance: Distance: 1 px			
Bevel and Emboss	Choke:			
Contour	Size:			
Texture				

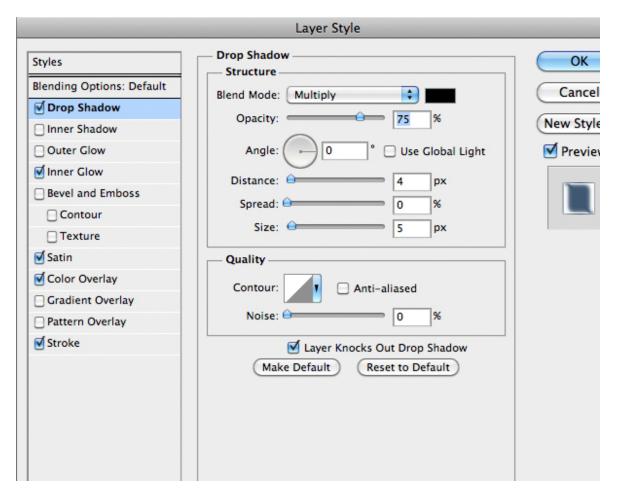
Step 46

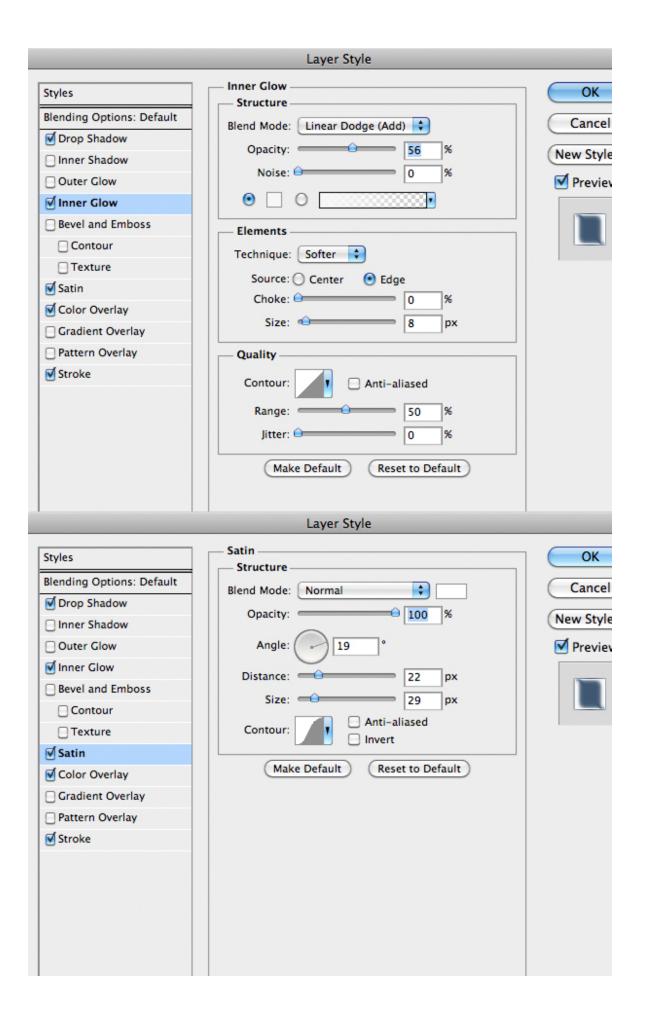
Import the left band from the glasses and add this Layer Style.

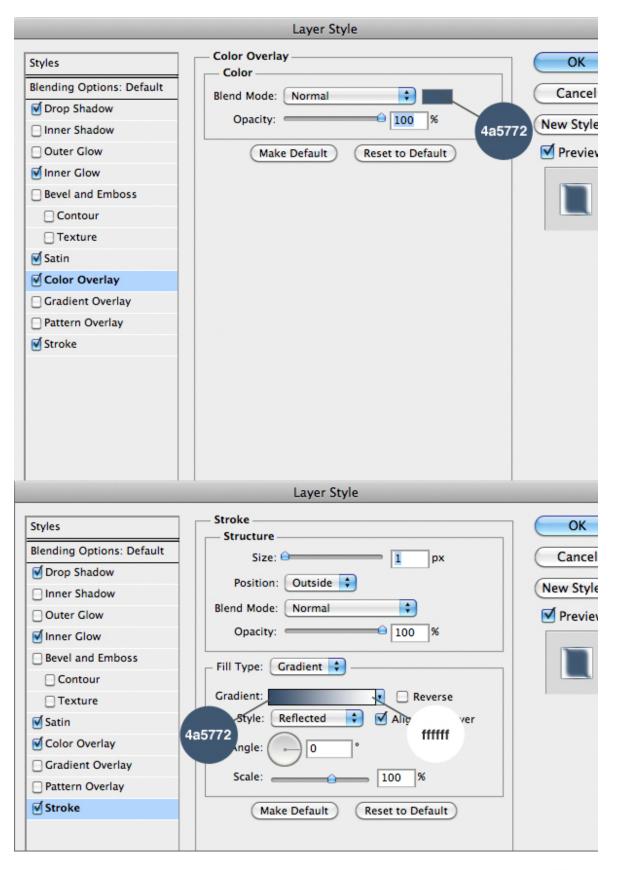




Also import the metal band's part and add the Layer Style as image below. Then add a new layer and paint some white with the Brush Tool (B).



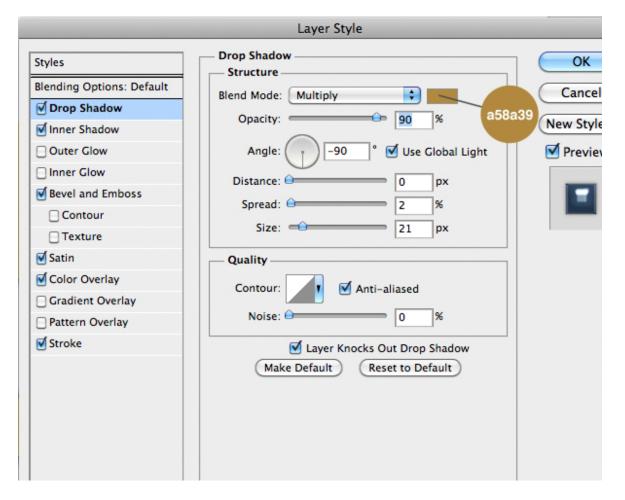


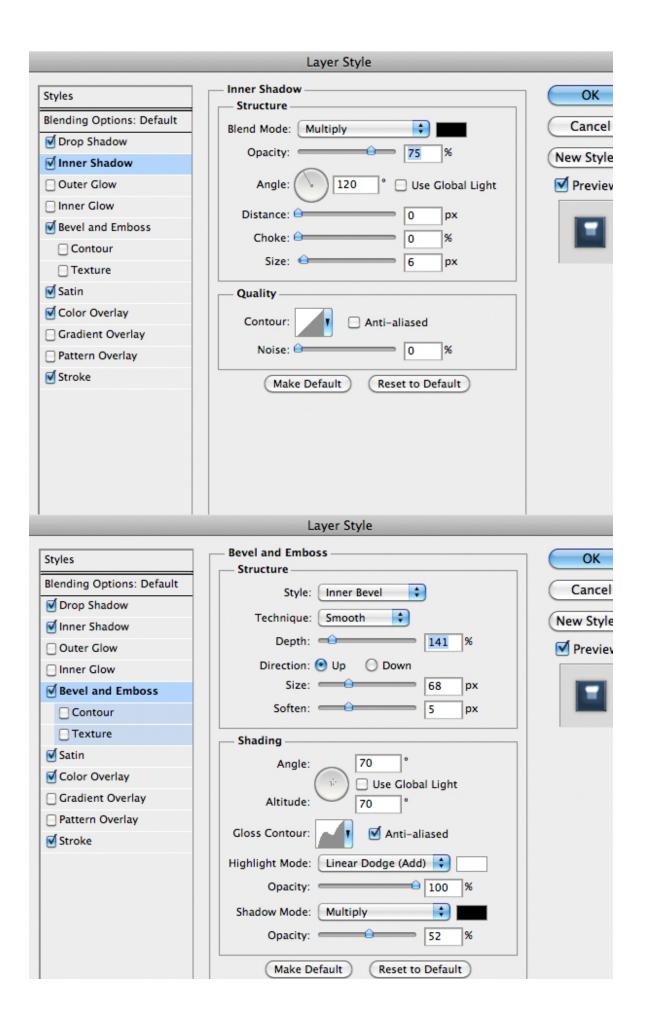


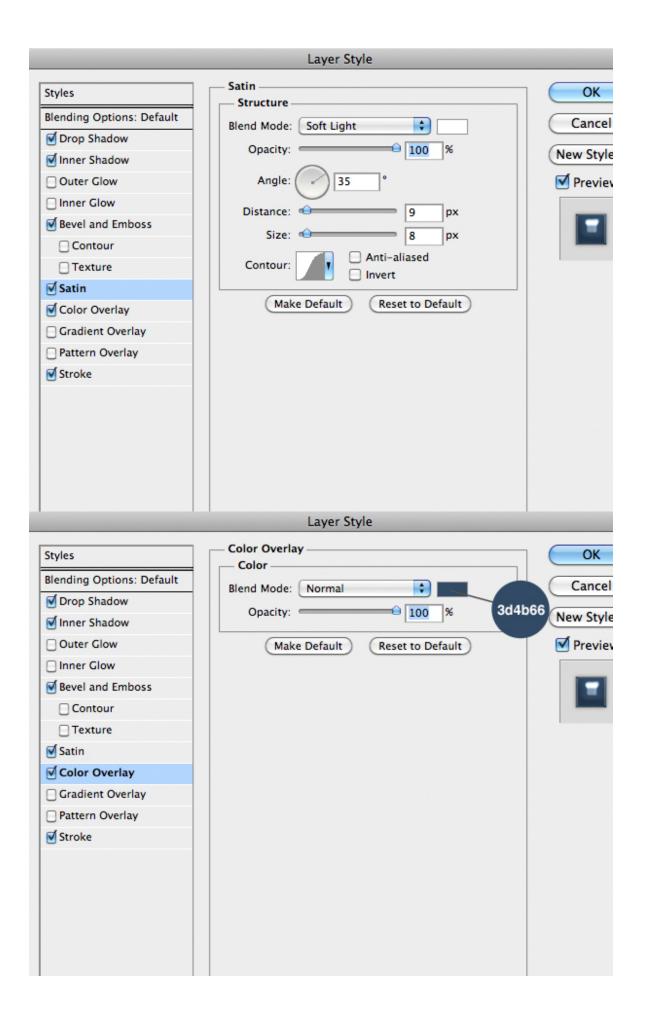


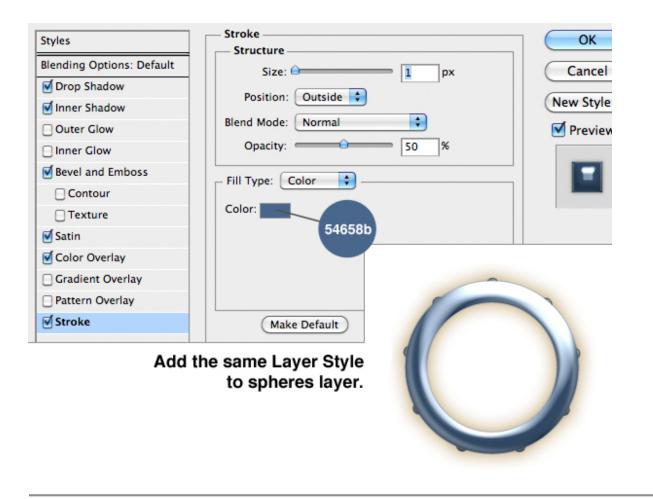


Now let's style the round shape of glasses. Import it and add this Layer Style. Finally import the little spheres and add the same style, just hold the Alt key and drag & drop the Layer Style icon in the spheres layer.







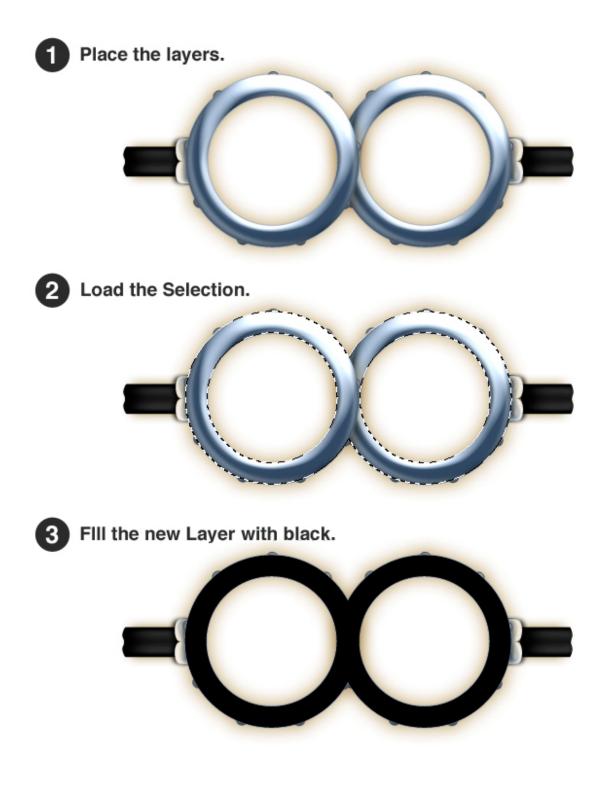


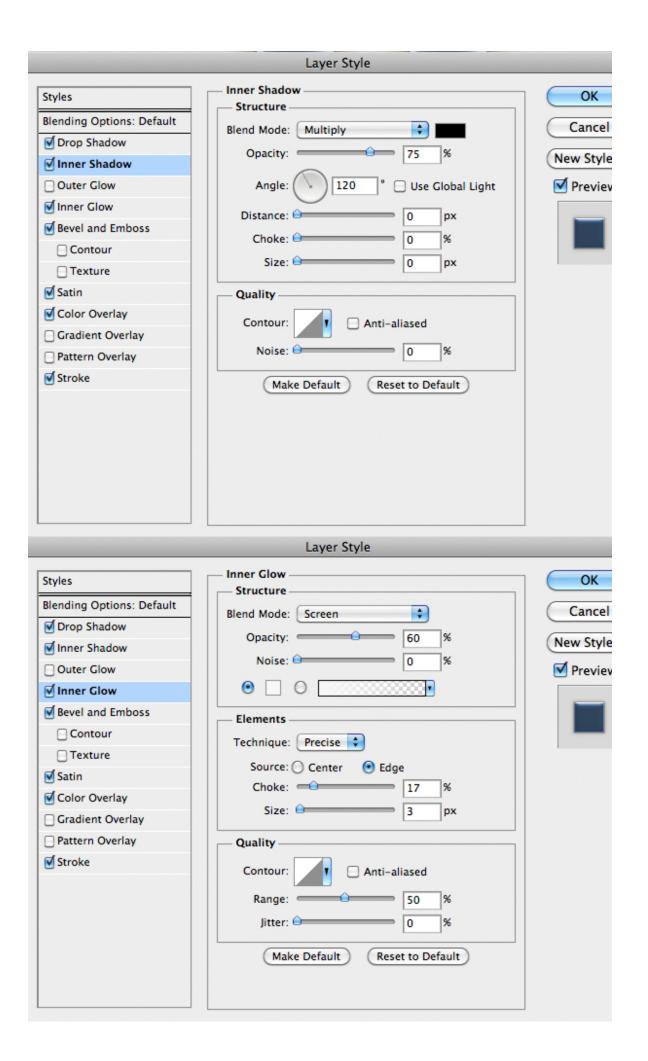
Wait a moment...

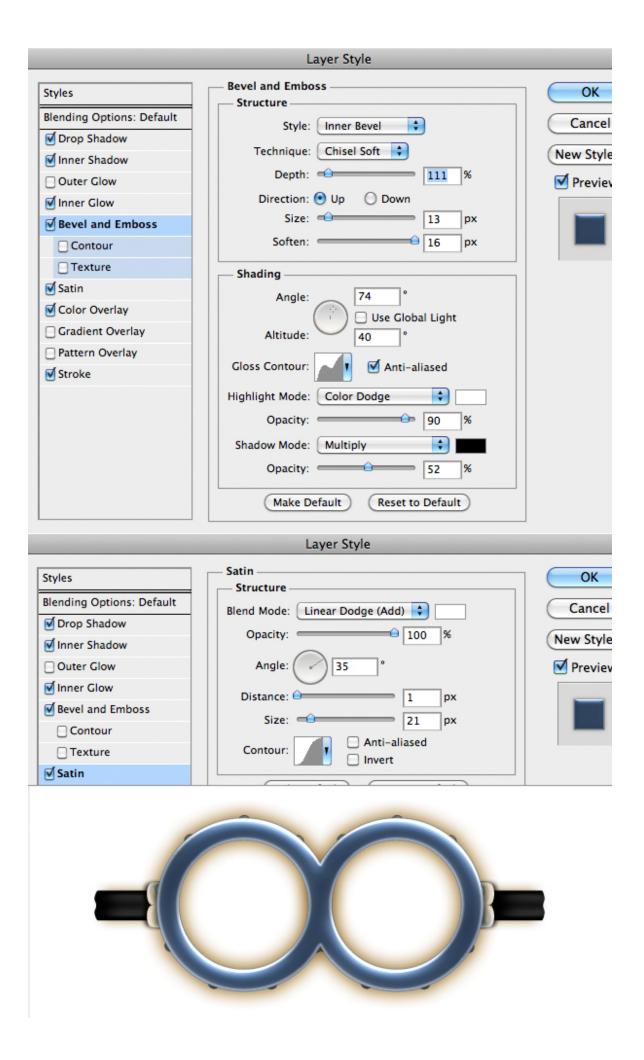
You will probably notice that the effect is different from the final result. This just because we created the monocle version! If you like this simply adjust the various elements and go to step 50, otherwise continue to the next step.

Step 49

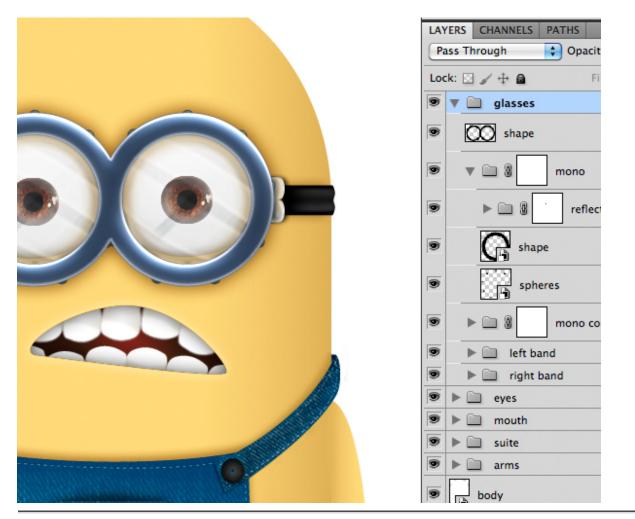
Duplicate the monocle layer and place it as the image below. Create a new layer. Then load the selection of the two monocle layers, Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + click on the thumbnails of the layers. Fill the selection with black and apply the same Layer Style of the monocle layer, change only the value as show below. Obviously, add the other eye too.





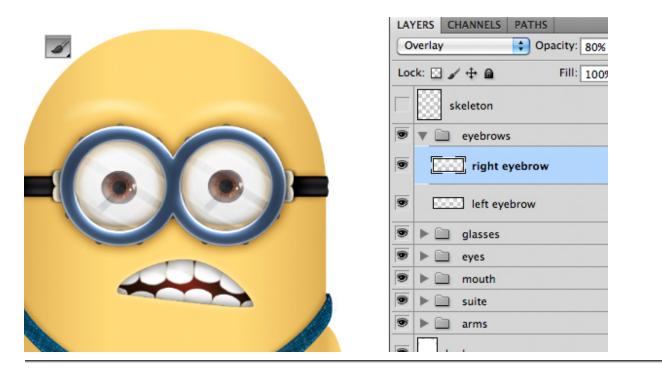


To create the reflection, draw some rectangles with the Lasso Tool (L) and fill the selection with white. Rotate and duplicate them. Then lower the opacity until you get a fine result. A 50% value should work fine. Use Gaussian Blur Filter to smooth the border.

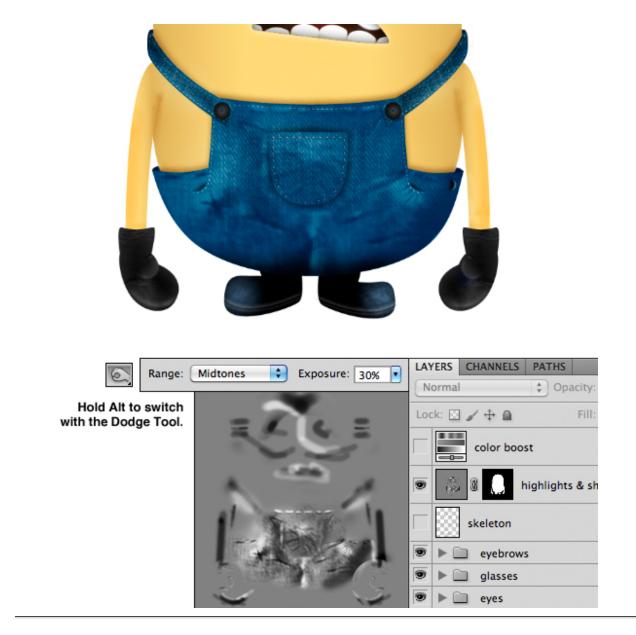


Step 51

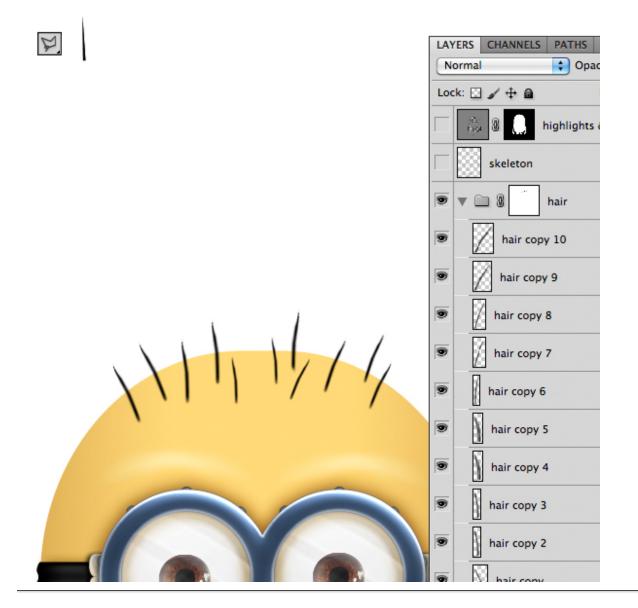
To realize the eyebrow detail, create a new layer and with a white soft brush paint a nice curve as below. To refine it, use as usual Gaussian Blur Filter and Eraser Tool (E). Duplicate and reflect the eyebrow. Then reduce the opacity to 80% and set the blending mode to Overlay.



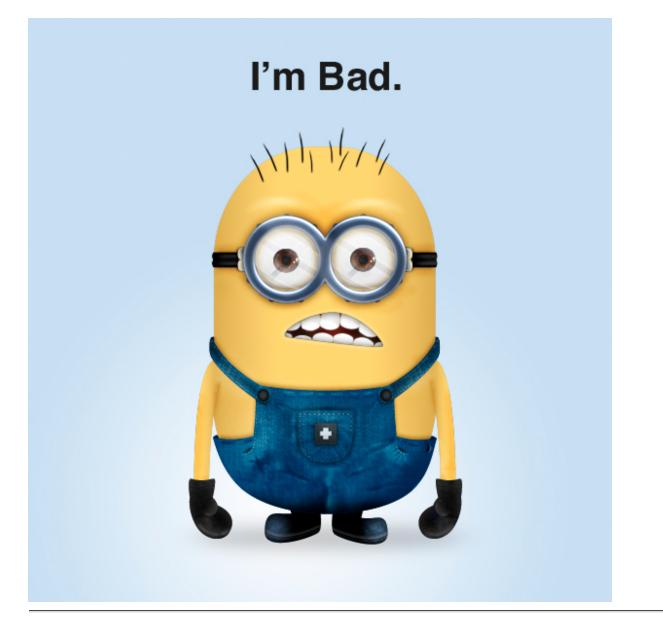
Now we have to add more realistic details to the character, this would be probably the longest step, it's recommended to use a pen tablet. Create a new layer and fill it with 50% gray then set the blending mode to Soft Light. Press O key to select the Burn Tool and set options as below. If you paint with this tool you can add shadows without destroying the layers below. If you want to add highlights just hold the Alt key to switch to Dodge Tool. Instead if you want to erase a correction use the Brush Tool with 50% gray and paint to restore it. So begin to add detail to pockets, suit arms and glasses. Decrease the layer opacity if needed. To add much grunge details use various brush.



Create a new layer then with the Lasso Tool (L) draw a triangle, press Cmd/Ctrl + T to transform it as image below. Duplicate it several time to create the hairs. Select all hair layers then group them. Add a Layer Mask to the group and with a white soft brush paint on the bottom of each hair to smooth the edges. Don't worry if the hairs appear too blurry. We will add contrast later.



Customize your minion by adding a logo, a gradient background, shadow or text.



To boost details use the unsharp mask filter. So in Menu Bar select Filter > Contrast > Unsharp Mask. Set it as below.

	Unsharp Mask
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-0	- 100% + Amount: 100 %
	Radius: 0,5 pixels
	Threshold: 0 levels

Final Tip

Remember you can always change the shape of your minion by double clicking thumbnail icon in a smart objects layer to open the connected vector file in Illustrator. Do this before applying the unsharp mask. Having regard to the fact that the minion will be used as an icon, it will be appropriate during the resizing to re-apply the unsharp mask. Be careful not to exceed with the values.

Final Image

