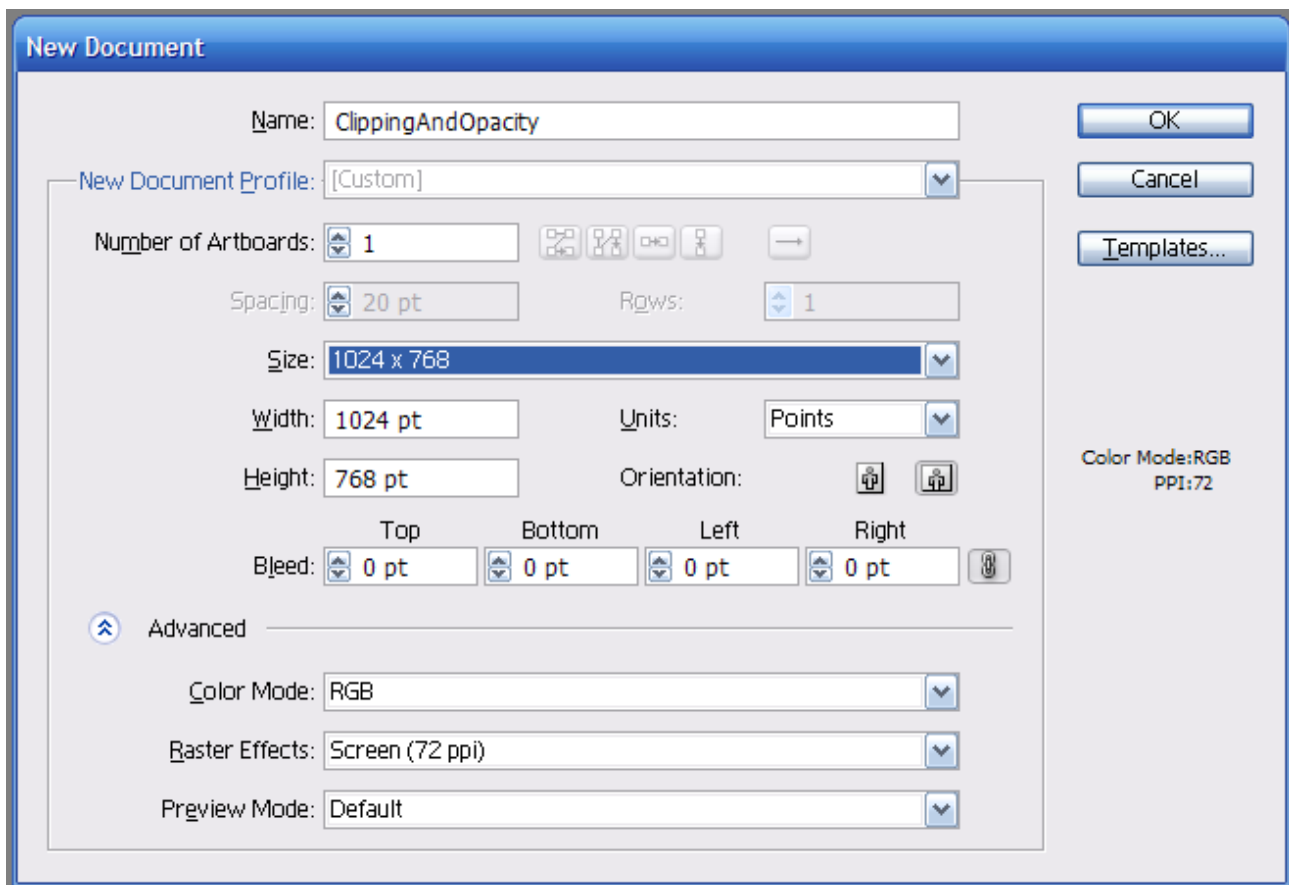


Clipping and Opacity Maps in Illustrator CS4

In this guide we're going to look at creating a design using clipping masks and opacity maps.

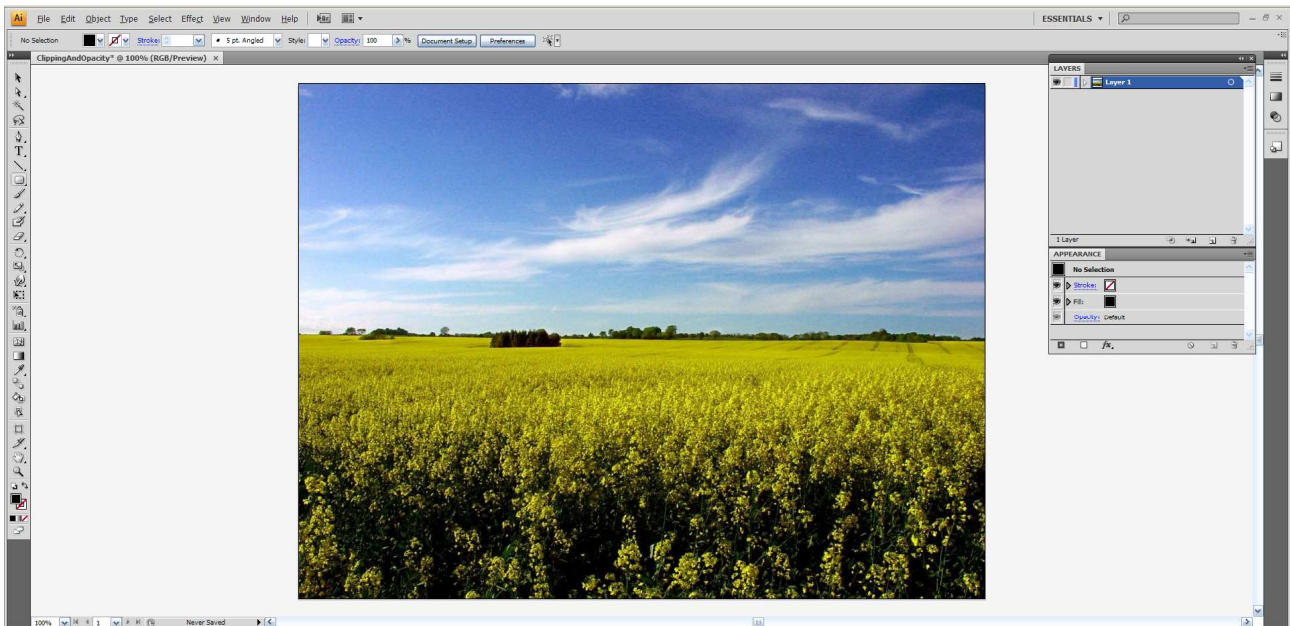
Step 1 – Creating a blank file

Open Illustrator and create a **New Basic RGB** File. Select a size of **1024x768** under the **Size** dropdown menu, change the **Unit** to **pixels** under the **Unit** dropdown menu, and name the file **ClippingAndOpacity** as shown below:



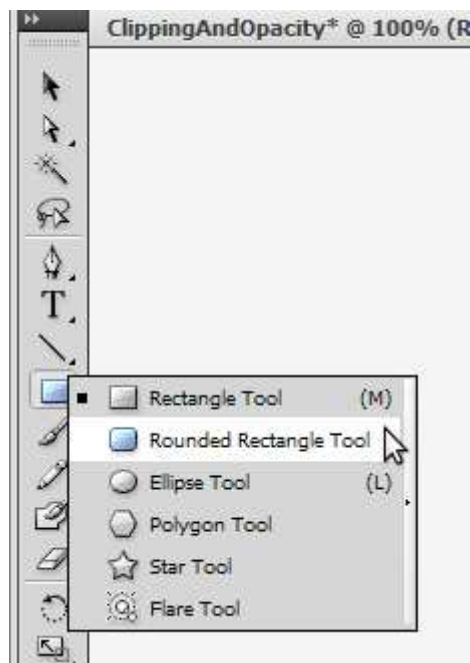
Step 2 – Placing a background image

The first thing we're going to do with a new file is to import an image to use as the background for our clipping mask. To do this, from the Illustrator main menu select **File | Place** and navigate to a folder with a picture you want to use as the background. Select the file you want to use and click on the **[Place]** button to place it on your Illustrator artboard as shown below:



Step 3 – Adding a shape to use as a clipping mask

Now we're going to create an object to use as a clipping mask in the shape of a rounded rectangle . To do this, select the **Rounded Rectangle Tool** by **Left-Clicking-And-HOLDING** the left mouse button down on the **Rectangle Tool** button, and then selecting **Rounded Rectangle** from the pop-up menu:

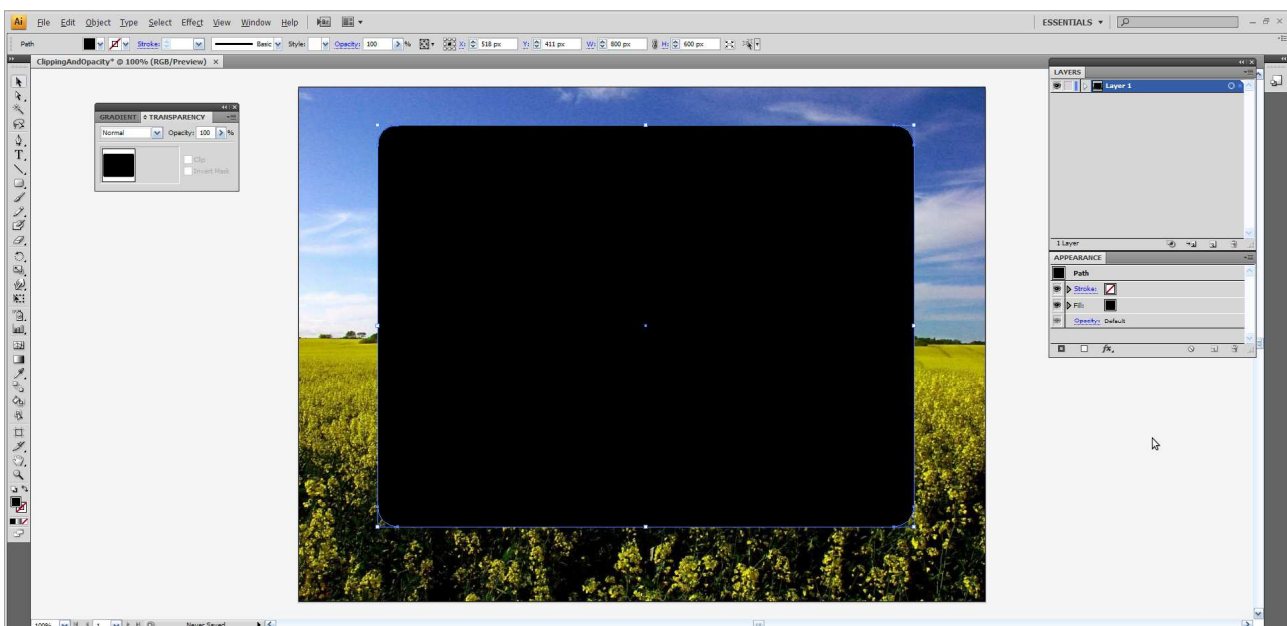


Now with the **Rounded Rectangle Tool** selected, **single left-click once** approximately in the middle of the artboard and enter the following details from the pop-up **Rounded Rectangle Window**:



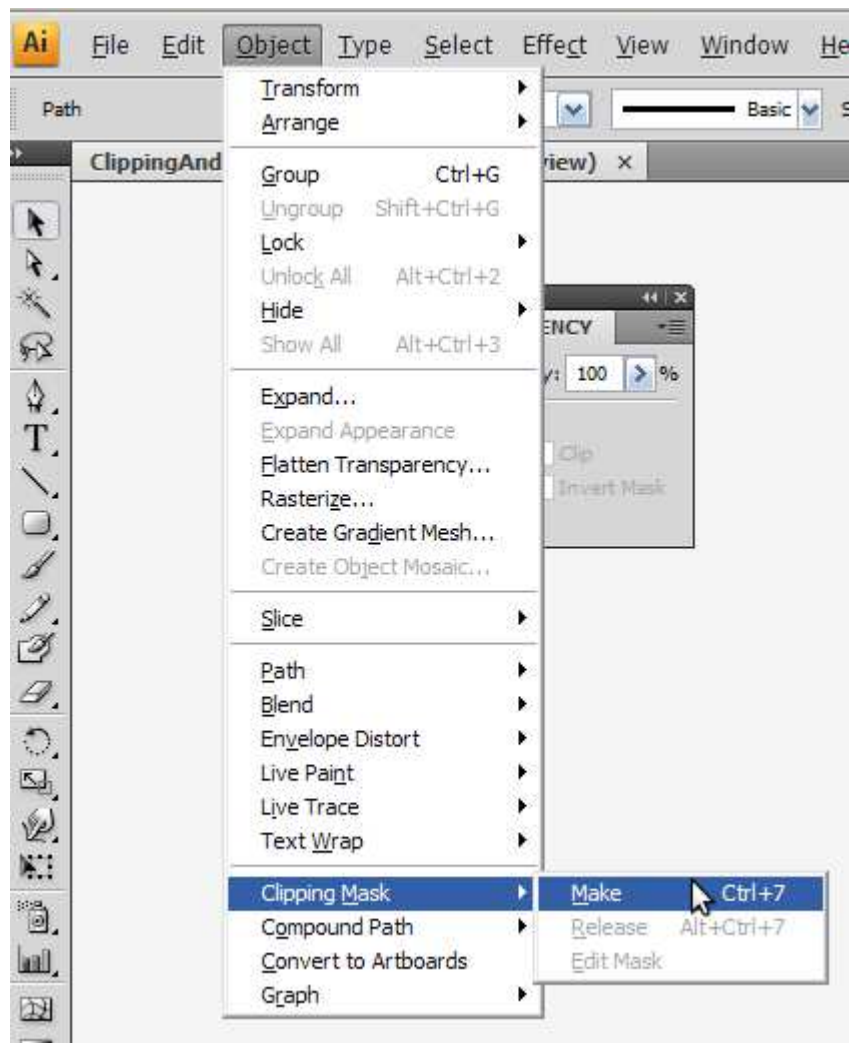
Note: At this point the fill or stroke of the rounded rectangle doesn't matter at all because we're just going to be using the shape as a clipping mask!

Click the [OK] button to add your rounded rectangle, and then with the **Select Tool** selected, drag it to the centre of your artboard as shown below:

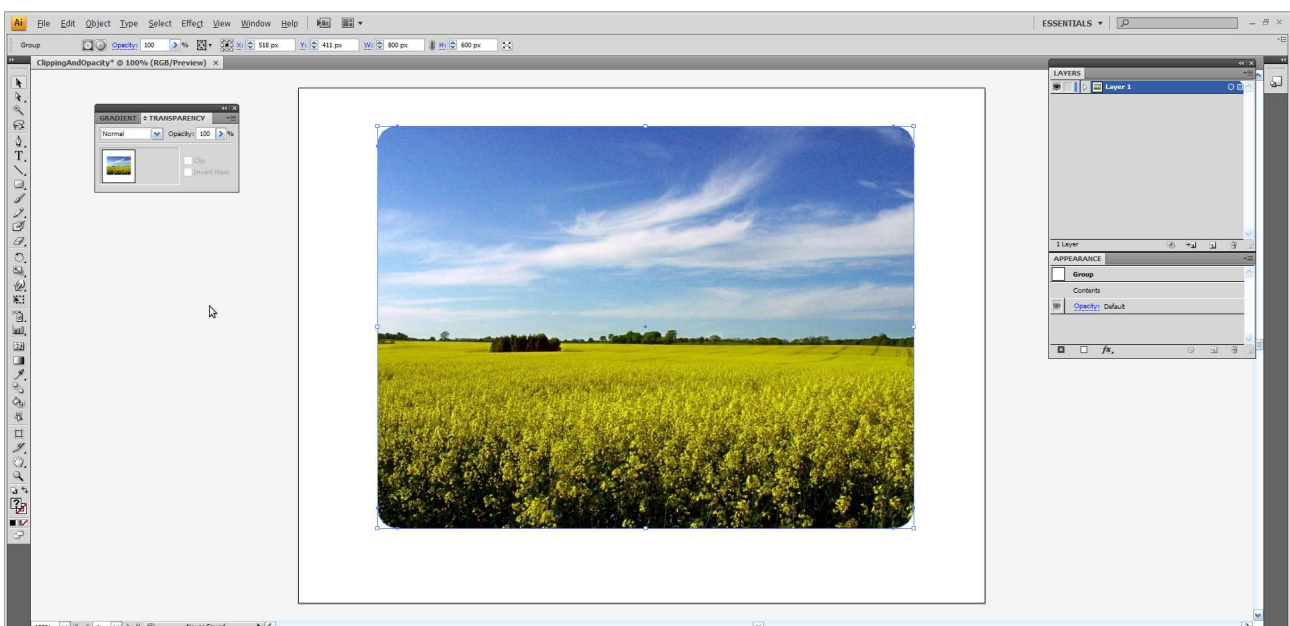


Step 4 – Creating a clipping mask from our background and shape

With the **Selection Tool** selected, and our top shape (the rounded rectangle) selected, hold down the **shift** key and **left click once** on the background image to select both objects. With that done, from the main menu select **Object | Clipping Mask | Make**



The created clipping mask – notice how you can only see the background through the shape we created, complete with rounded corners:



Step 5 – Adding text

With our clipping mask created, we're now going to insert some text and create an **Opacity Mask**. To do this, select the **Text Tool**, then left click onve somewhere on your artboard and type in **your name** (don't worry about font sizes for now).

With that done, click on the **Selection Tool** resize your entered name to fill most of the horizontal space. Place your text so that it's in the middle between the land and sky of the background image.

Note: If you **hold** down the **Shift** key whilst resizing your text, it will constrain the proportions of it so it doesn't get distorted; only scaled.



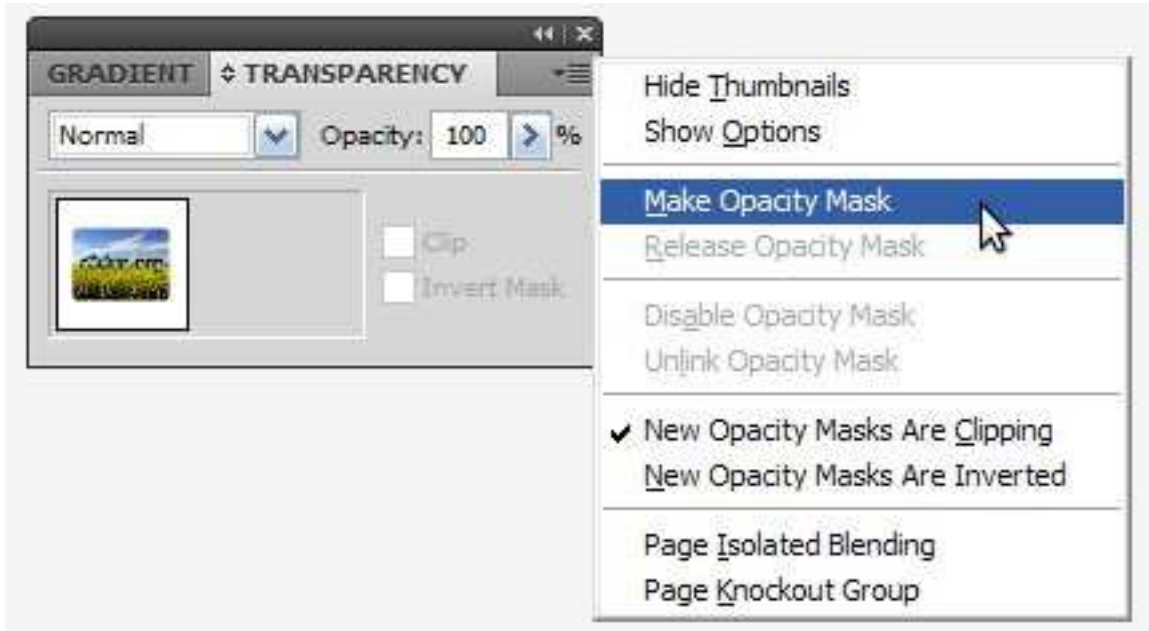
Now, with the text object selected, convert the text to **outlines** by selecting **Type | Create Outlines** from the menu, and then add a radial gradient by clicking on the **Fill Colour** button near the top left of the Illustrator window to bring up the colour swatch, and selecting the radial gradient:



Step 5 – Creating an opacity mask

With our text selected, using the **Selection Tool** hold down the **Shift** key and click on the background image to select both objects. Then, from the menu choose **Windows | Transparency**.

Click in the **top-right** drop-down menu button in the **Transparency Window** and select, **Make Opacity Mask**. Finally, and again in the **Transparency Window**, check the **Invert Mask** checkbox (to switch black areas to show and white areas to be hidden, instead of the default reversed behaviour).



The final result:



Done! Now, we *did* lose our nice bevelled corners in creating the opacity mask, but now you know how to create clipping and opacity masks, you can go again and create some spiffy new designs!

From here you can do what you like, try some effects, add some drop-shadow, whatever makes you smile!

Have fun!
