Create a Realistic Pencil Illustration in Adobe Photoshop

Posted by Stephen Petrany in Photoshop Tutorials on July 26th, 2010

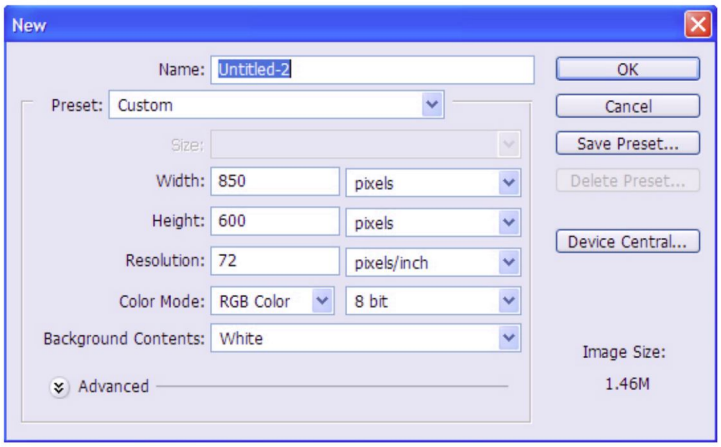
In this tutorial, I will take you step-by-step on how I created this pencil and paper scene. This tutorial is written for advanced users who already have a general understanding of the tools and techniques commonly used in Photoshop. Enjoy!

The Final Image

This is what we will be creating:

Step 1: Setting Up the Document

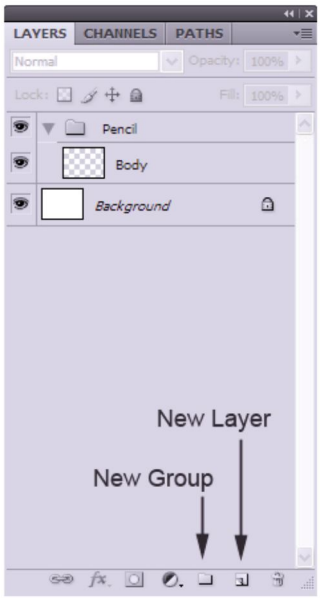
Create a new Photoshop Document *(File>New)* at **850px x 600px**.



Use the *Gradient Tool* to make a subtle gradient (I used two shades of blue)

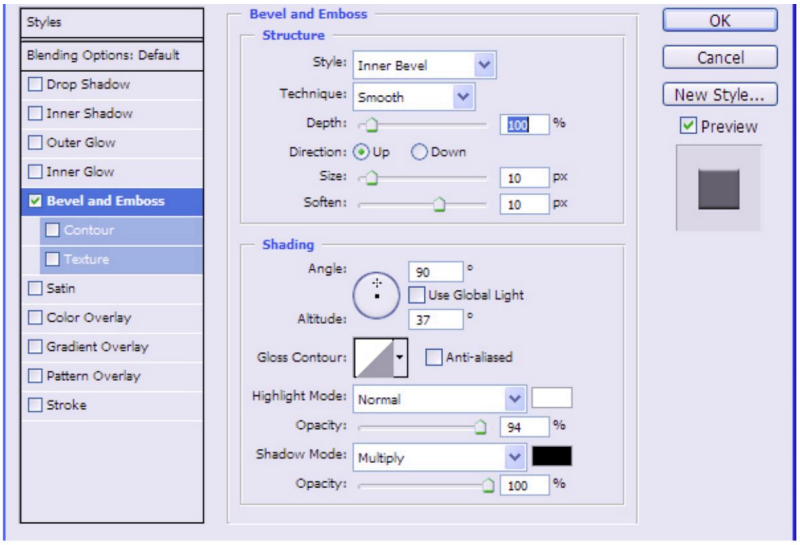
Step 2: Creating the Pencil Body

Create new group called **'Pencil'** with a new layer inside called **'Body'**



Using the *Rectangular Marquee Tool*, create a long rectangle that will become the pencil's body and **fill with a red color**

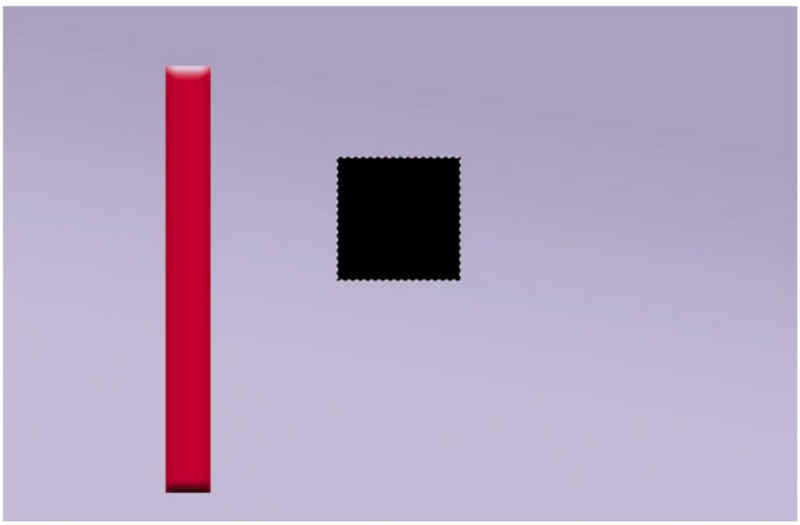
Add bevel and emboss with these settings:



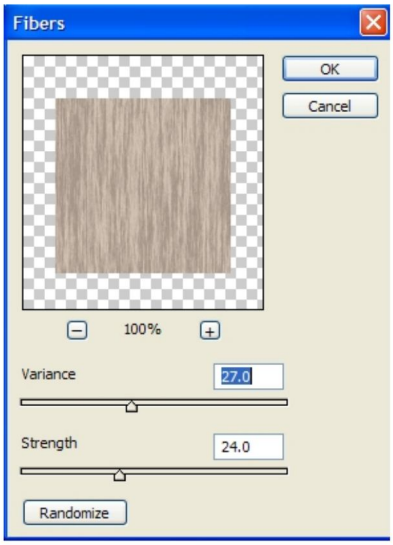
Your image should look like this:

Step 3: Adding to the Pencil

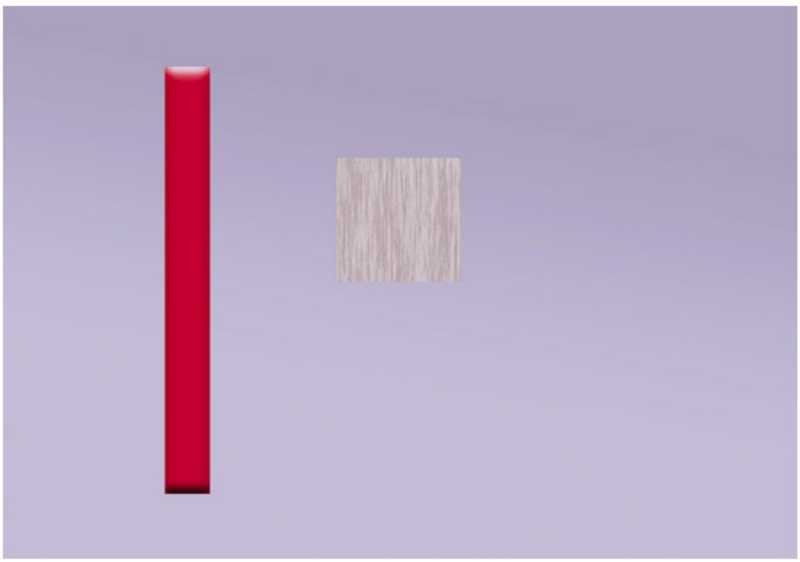
Create a new layer named *'Wood'*. On this layer, create a square with the *rectangular marquee tool* and fill with black.



Select two different shades of tan for your *Background* and *Foreground* colors, then go to *Filter>Render>Fibers* to add fibers to the box with the following settings:

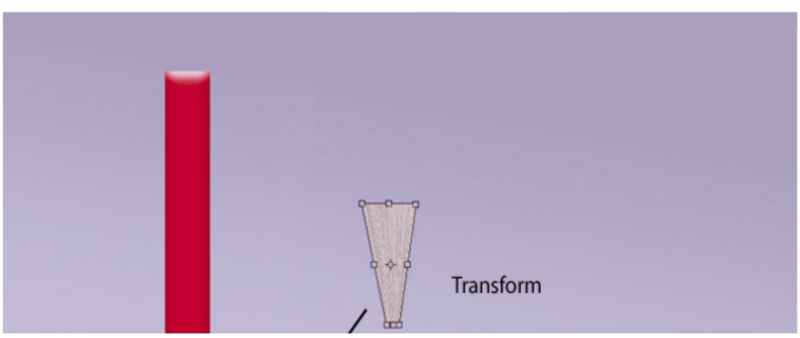


Your image should resemble this:

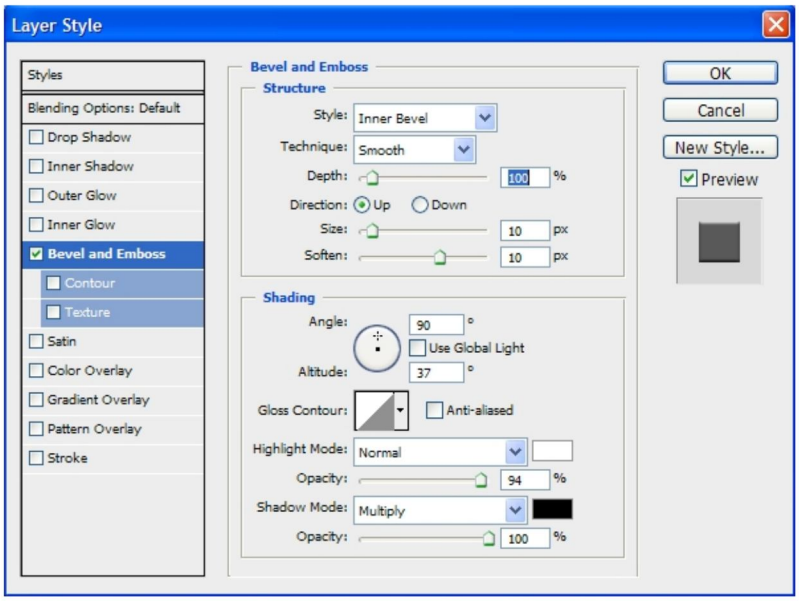


Step 4: Sharpening the Pencil

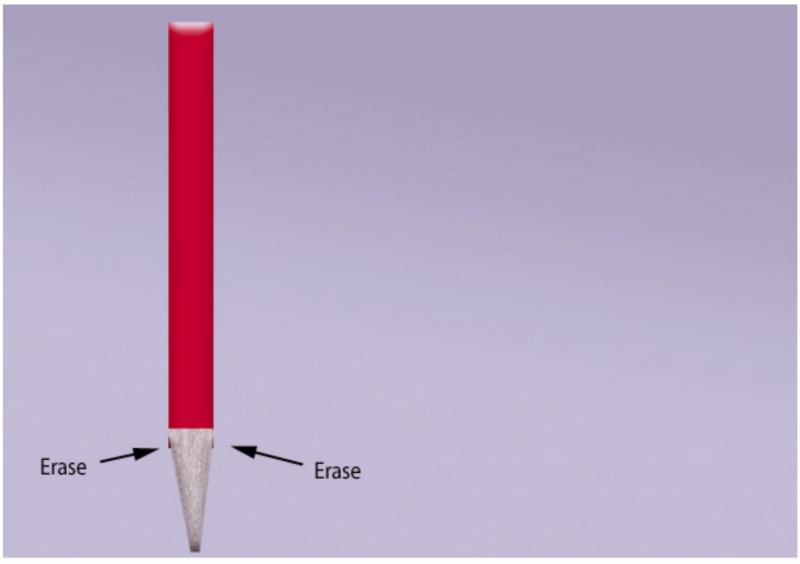
Transform (Ctrl/Cmd + T) the layer *'Wood'* to a tapered shape. Place the shape over the *'Body'* layer as shown:



Add a bevel and emboss:

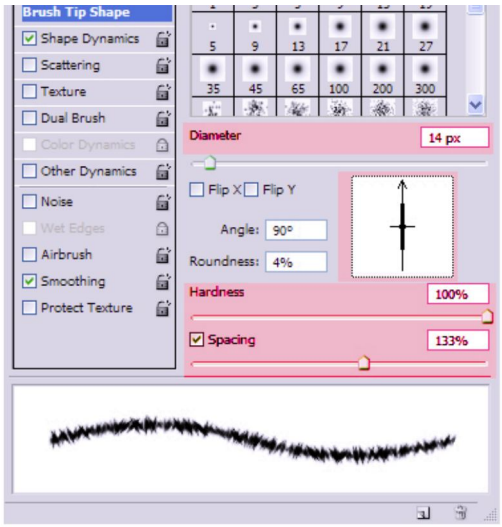


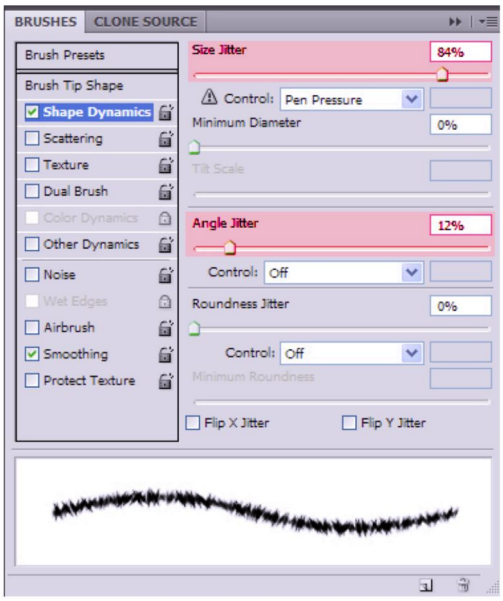
Your image should look like this (be sure to erase any areas of the pencil that stick past the wood)



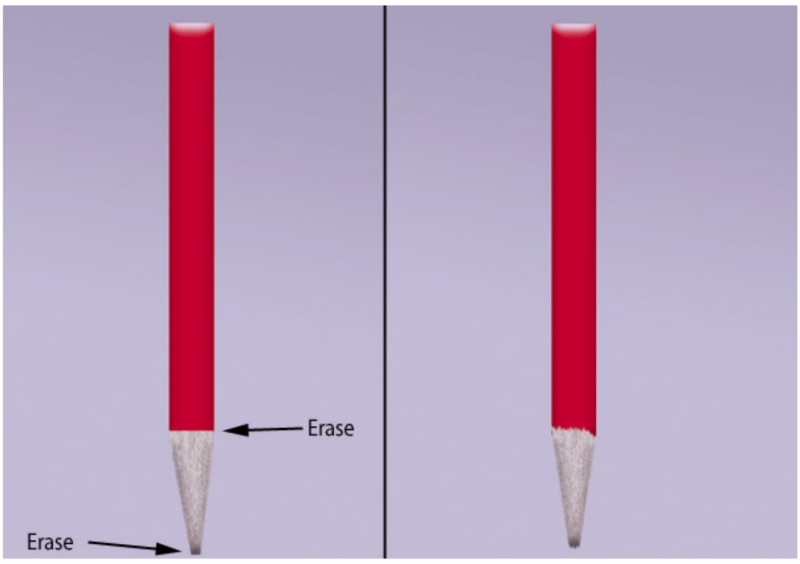
Step 5: Defining the Pencil Tip

Create a new brush by opening up the *Brushes Pallete* and applying these settings (dont forget to **save the brush preset**):



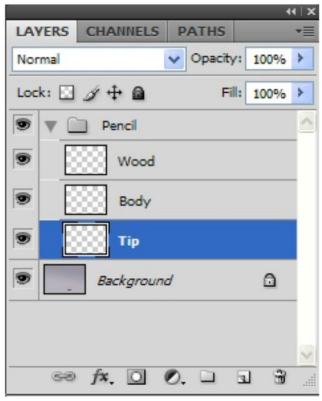


Use the new brush to **erase the top and bottom of the wooden tip**

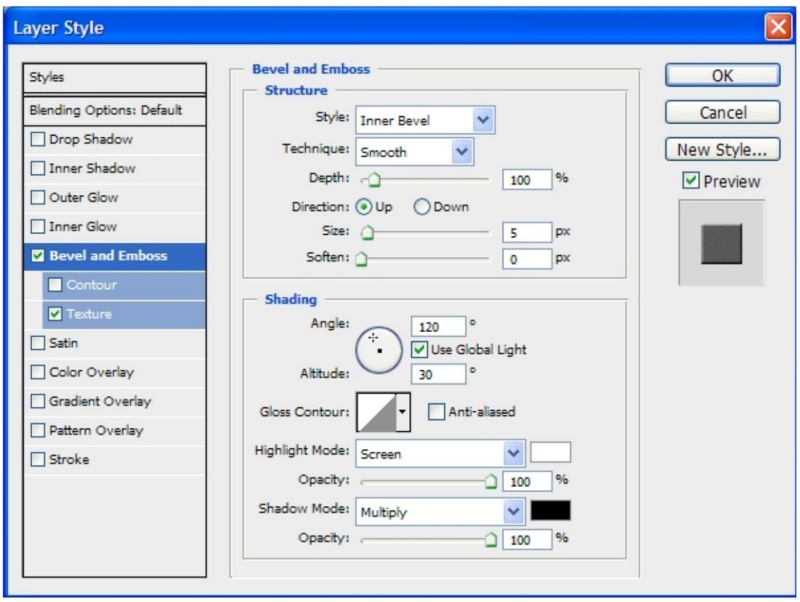


Step 6: Adding a Graphite Tip

Create a new layer called *'Tip'* and place it under the *'Wood'* layer.



Select a **brush size of 6px** and paint a graphite tip. **Give it a bevel and emboss** with the following settings:



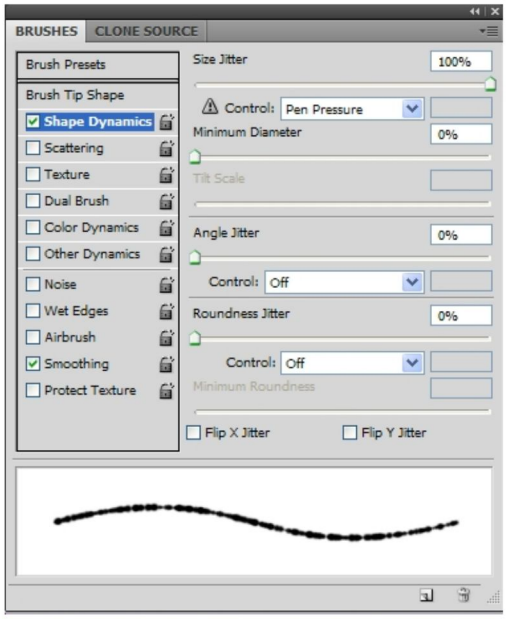
Your image should look like this:

Step 7: Rotating into Place

Rotate (Ctrl/Cmd + T) the pencil to a desired position. This can be done easily by **selecting the entire 'Pencil' group**

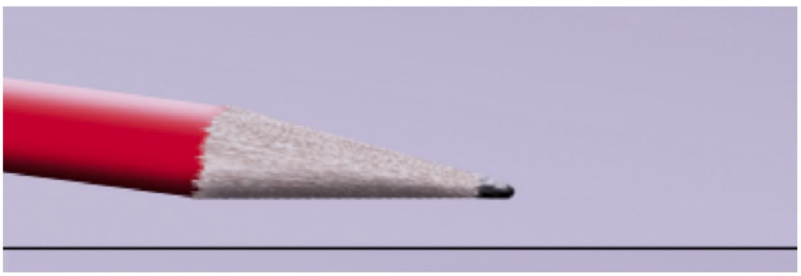
Step 8: Creating the Highlights

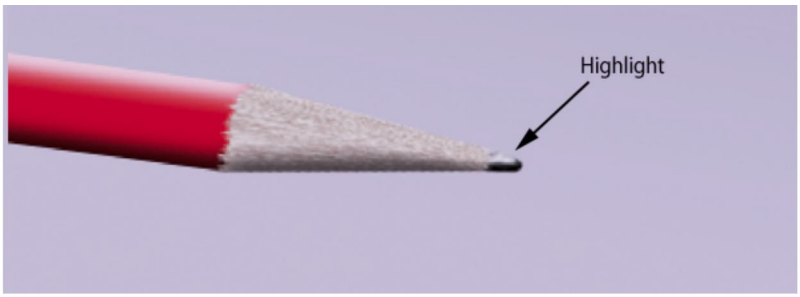
Create a new brush with the following settings:



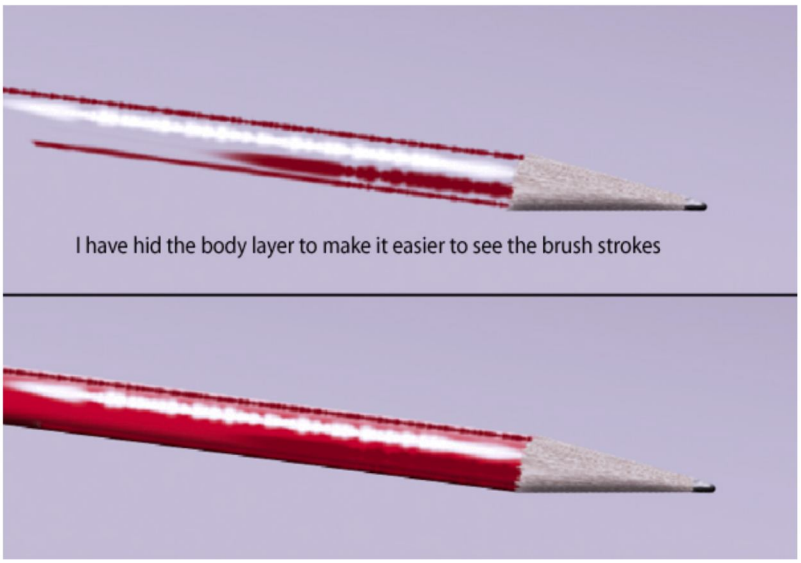
Step 9: Adding Highlights

Use the new brush to **paint a highlight** over the tip of the pencil. (A *size 3 brush* should work well).

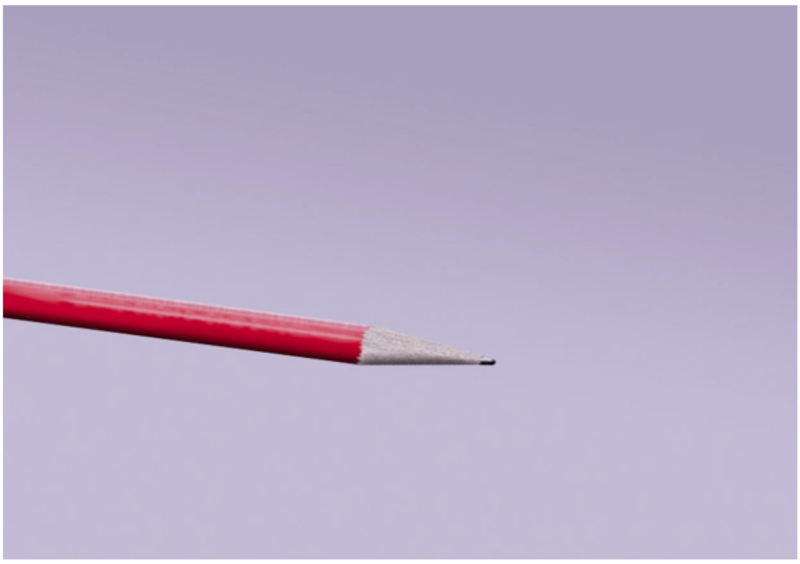




Using the same brush on a new layer called *'Highlights'*, add some highlights **(using white)** and some lowlights **(using a darker red)** to the pencil. Vary the sizes as shown:

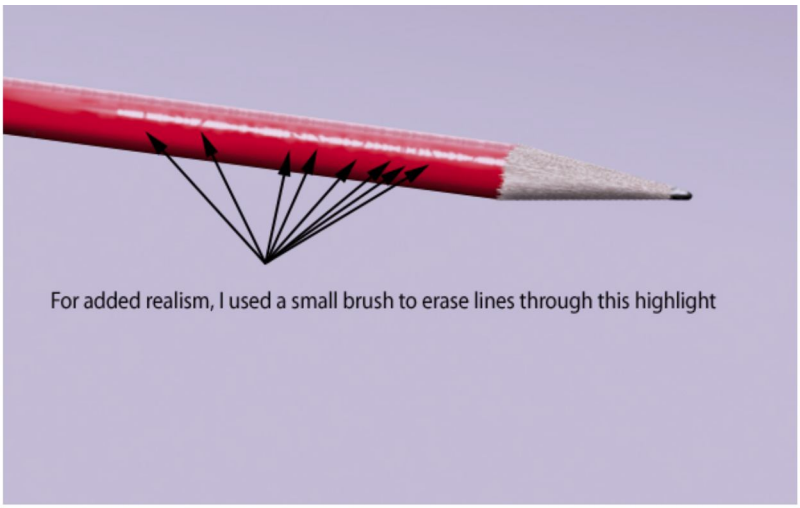


Adjust the layers opacity to 30%



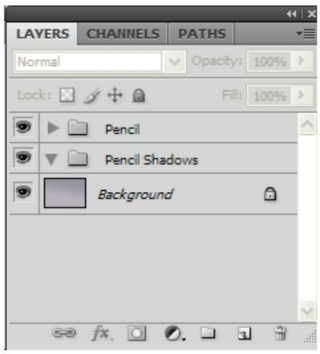
Step 10: Finishing the Highlights

Create second new layer called *'Highlights2'* and use the same brush to **add a final highlight** over the body of the pencil as shown in the image. **Change the opacity to 76%**



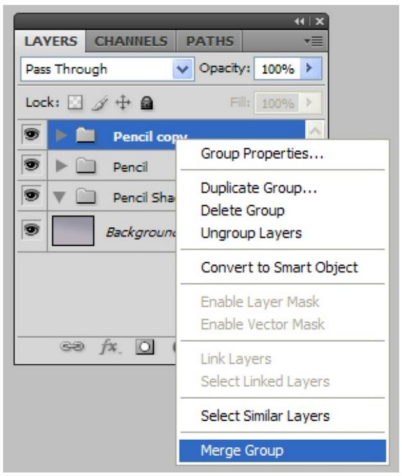
Step 11: Adjusting the Hierarchy

Create a new group and call it *'Pencil Shadows'*. Place it under the *'Pencil'* folder

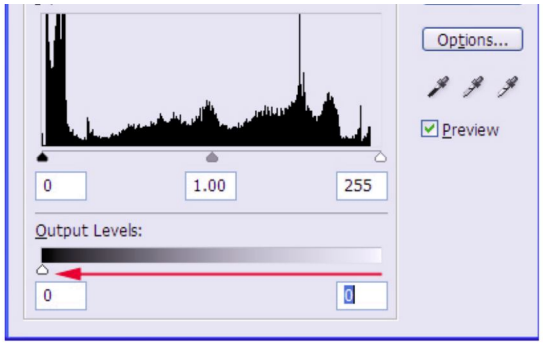


Step 12: Preparing for Shadows

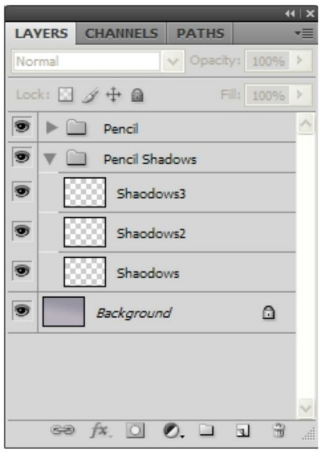
Make a copy the *'Pencil'* group and select *'Merge Group'*



Use the levels to change the merged image to all black

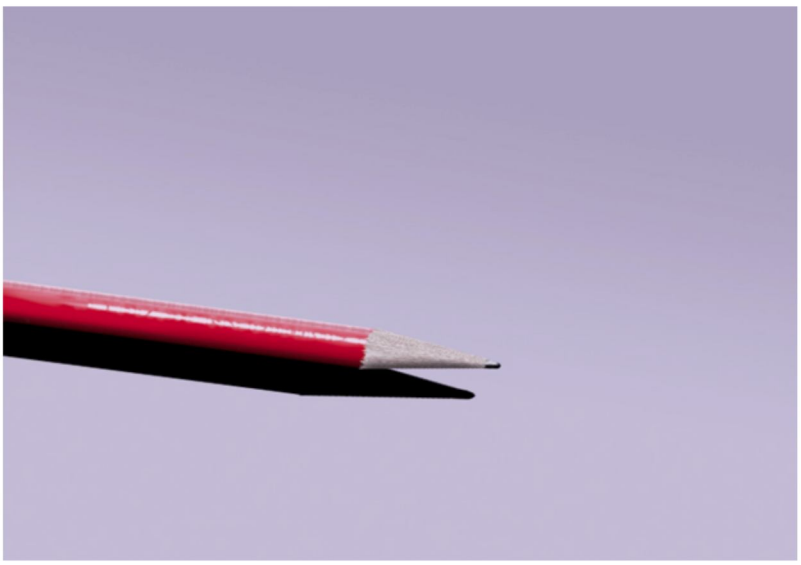


Rename this layer to *'Shadows'* and place it inside the *'Pencil Shadows'* group. **Make 2 copies** of this layer and name them as shown:



Step 13: Adding the Shadows

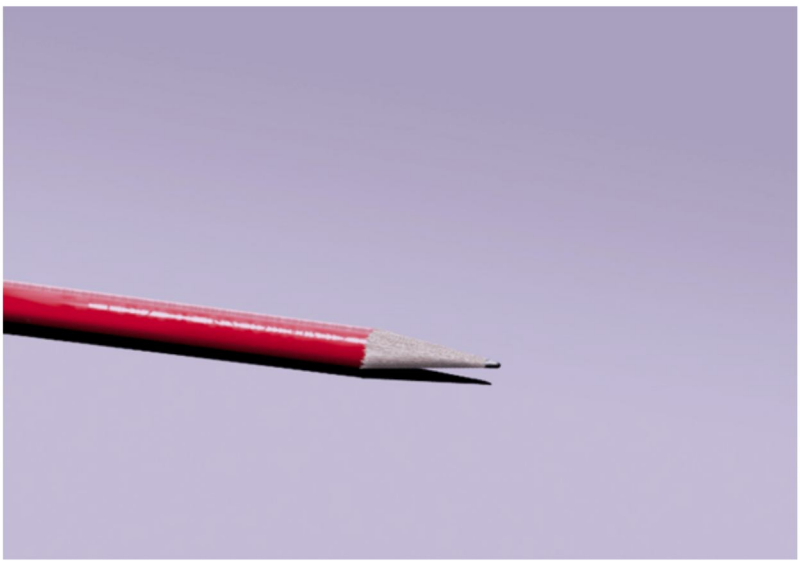
Select the *'Shadows'* layer: **Transform the shadow** to the position shown:



Add a **Gaussian Blur of 1.0 pixels** and give the layer an **Opacity of 18%**.

Easier Work Flow
It may help to hide the shadow layers you aren't using.

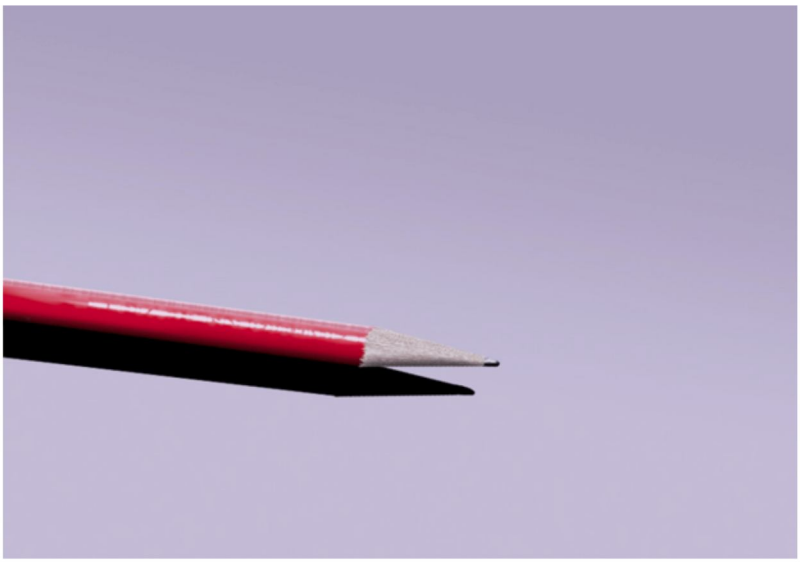
Select the *'Shadows2'* layer and **Transform the layer** as shown:



Give this an **Opacity of 3%**

Select the *'Shadows3'* layer. **Transform it as shown:**

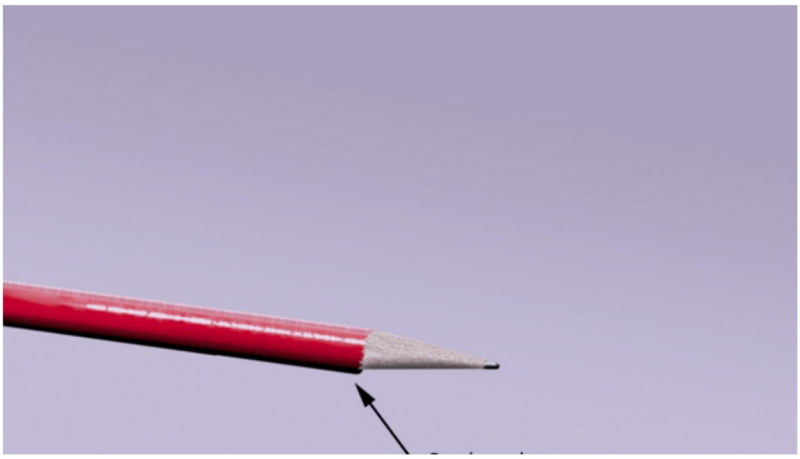
Select the Shadows layer. Transform it as shown...

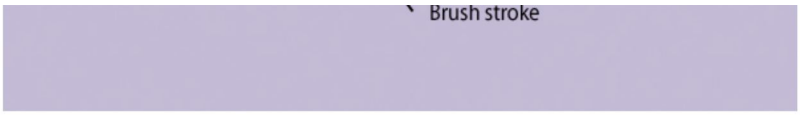


Give this layer a **Gaussian Blur of 13.0 pixels** and an **Opacity of 45%**

Step 14: Finishing the Shadows

Create a new layer called *'Zero Shadow'*. Use a brush (sized at 13 pixels and 100% hardness) to **add a black line** immediately under the pencil.





Give this layer a *Motion Blur* of around 140 pixels at the same angle as the pencil. **Set the layer's Opacity to 80%**

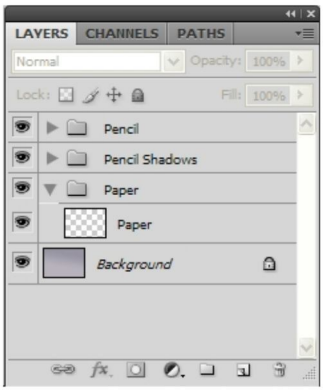
Finding Angles
A quick way to find the angle in Photoshop is to select the ruler tool and use it to draw a line in any direction. The number next to the 'A' in the Info Pallette (F8) is the angle. you can use the line tool the same way, just make sure to delete the line.

Copy the layer you just worked on and give it a **Gaussian Blur of 3 pixels** and an **Opacity of 44%**

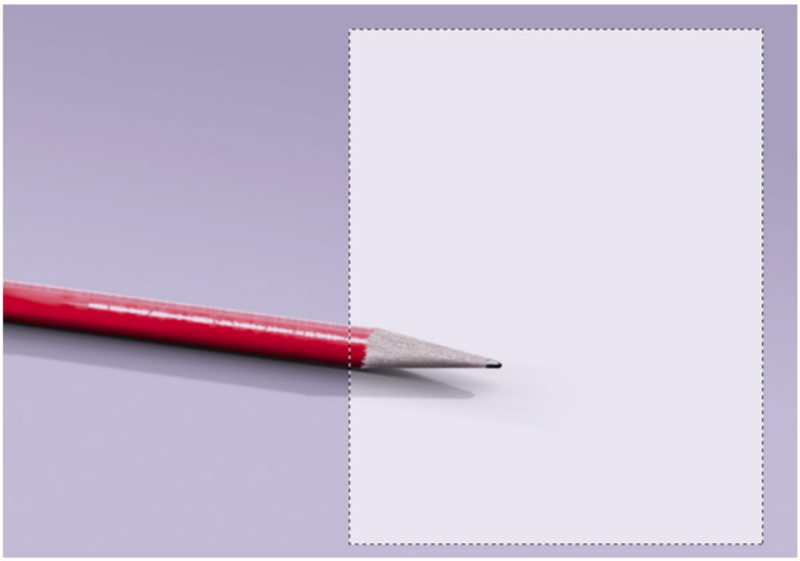
Unhide all of the shadow layers

Step 15: Adding Paper

Create a new group called *'Paper'*. Inside this group folder, create a new layer called *'Paper'*.



Use the *rectagular marquee tool* to create the shape of a peice of paper and **fill with #f1f1e9**

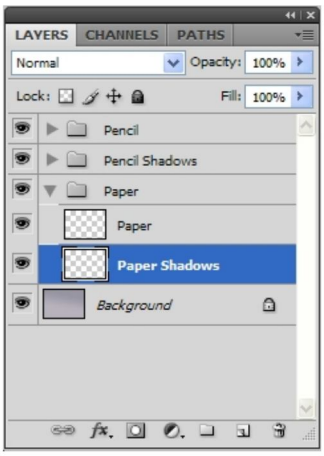


Step 16: Transforming the Paper

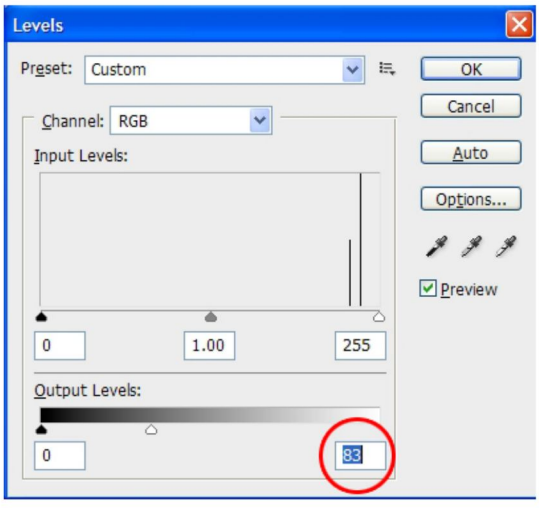
Transform the *'Paper'* layer so that it appears in perspective:

Step 17: Adding Shadows to the Paper

Make a copy of the 'Paper' layer, name it *'Paper Shadows'* and place it below the original *'Paper'* layer



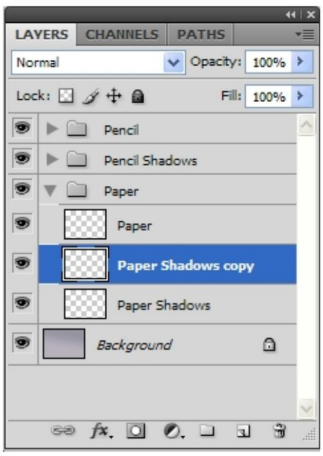
Adjust its levels as follows:



Give this layer a **Gaussian Blur of 1.1 px**

Step 18: Adding More Shadows to the Paper

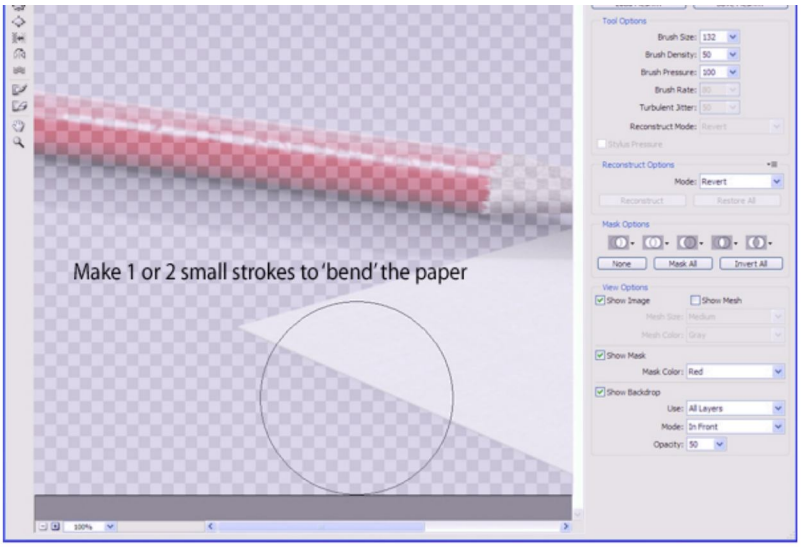
Copy the layer *'Paper Shadows'*



Give this layer a **Gaussian blur of 30px** and an **Opacity of 10%**

Step 19: Adding Depth to the Paper

Select the *'Paper'* layer and go to *Filter>Liquify*. **Use the liquify filter** to make the edges of the paper appear uneven



Your image should resemble this:

Step 20: You're Done!

The image is done.
If you want, you can add a reflection and some sketches to complete the scene:

To add a reflection, just copy the *'Pencil'* group and **merge it**, then position the reflection appropriately and give it a low opacity setting.

To add a sketch, simply create a one on a new layer and **transform it into perspective**.