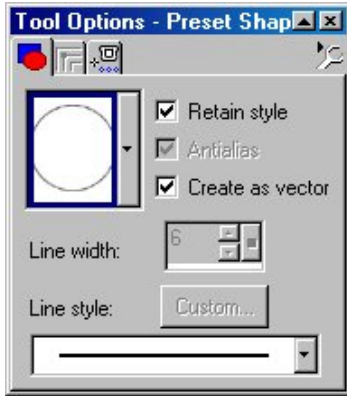


PSP 7 Preset Shapes Tool

The Preset Shapes Tool opens a whole new world to the "artistically impaired" (like me). Paint Shop Pro comes with an extensive set of Preset Shapes and you can easily create your own to add to your library of shapes (I'll cover this later).

The Tool Options palette for this tool allows you to control the final appearance of the shapes you create.



When you click on the window for the shapes, it enlarges and allows you to view all the available shapes.

Retain Style - When this box is checked, the style of the preset shape you choose is unchanged. If it is unchecked, you will only get the basic outline of a complicated shape. The following graphic illustrates this. The graphic on the left is the Cylinder preset shape with Retain Style checked, the graphic on the right, with Retain Style unchecked.



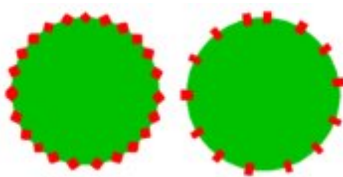
Antialias - You should always have Antialias checked if a shape contains any curves. The following graphic illustrates a circle shape with antialias checked (left) and without (right).



Create as Vector - With this box checked, you will create shapes in vector format. This is the recommended procedure for shapes because vector shapes can be edited, whereas raster shapes cannot.

Line Width - The value in this box will determine the width of the stroked line on the shape.

Line Style - Choosing a line style other than solid can have some interesting effects on a shape. The Line Style is disabled when you have "Retain Style" activated. The following graphic illustrates a couple of different lines styles on a shape. The circle on the left has the Line Style set to "diamond" and the circle on the right has the Line Style set to "short dash".



Changing Colors of Preset Shapes OK, you really like the Cylinder, but you need it to be blue rather than red. No problem. To change the color of a preset shape:

1. Draw the Preset shape with Retain Style and Vector selected.
2. Click on the plus sign to the left of the layer called Cylinder. This will expand the layer.
3. Click on the layer called "Front" and choose "Properties" on the Tool Options Palette. Change the color of the Fill to the color you want the cylinder to be.
4. Or, click on the Pattern Tab and choose a pattern to fill the cylinder.
5. Repeat step 3 on the "Back" layer.

The following graphic illustrates the Cylinder preset shape changed to blue (on the left) and filled with a pattern (two cylinders on the right).



Drawing with Preset Shapes Tool To draw with the Preset Shapes tool, click on the graphic at the top corner of where you want to start drawing and pull the cursor to the right and down. To constrain the shape to a proportional shape (no distortion), hold down the shift key while dragging with the mouse.

The following graphic illustrates an arrow shape drawn without constraining proportionally (left) and with constraining (right).



You will notice that there is no preset shape for a circle or for a square. To draw a circle, select the Ellipse shape and hold down the shift key while drawing. To create a square, select the Rectangle shape and hold down the shift key while drawing.

The second tab on the Shapes Tool Options Palette contains settings for Join and Miter Limit. These work the same as on the Draw tool.

You can create some very nice shapes by settings on the Join and Miter. The following shapes were created (left graphic) Star Shape, Line Width 50, Fill Color and Stroke Color activated and the same, Join set to Round and (right graphic) Same as left graphic except Join set to Bevel.



Rounded Rectangle - One complaint about the Preset Shapes tools has been about the Rounded Rectangle. It does a pretty poor job of created the rounded edges on a rectangle. The solution to this problem is to create the rounded rectangle out of the rectangle shape set the same as outlined above. This method doesn't work well with the rounded rectangle shape, though, as you still end up with a jagged edge. The following graphic illustrates a rounded rectangle created as described here (left) and a rounded rectangle created from the Rounded Rectangle preset shape.

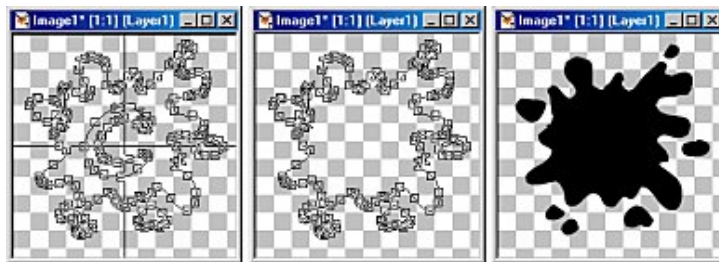


Create Your Own Shapes

One very cool feature about the Shapes Tool is the ability to create your own shapes. This works similar to creating picture tubes. The best source for new shapes are fonts. As an example, the following is how I created the Splats shapes I use on my intro page. I created them from a dingbat font called Splats. I wanted the splat shape, but I didn't want the letters in the interior of the shape.

1. Create a new graphic with a transparent background large enough to hold the number of shapes you want. For this tutorial I created a graphic 200x200.
2. Set gridlines to help you line up the graphics (I set mine to 100x100).

3. Open a new graphic 200x200.
4. Set the Stroke off on the Colors Palette and set the fill color to black.
5. Place a splat font on the new graphic.
6. Click on the Object Selector tool and select the font with the tool active. Right click on the font and choose Convert Text to Curves>Single Shape.
7. To make viewing the letter part of the font easier, I pulled on the right bottom corner of the font to increase the size to almost the size of the graphic.
8. Click on Node Edit on the Tool Options Palette.
9. Drag a box around the letter part of the font graphic and hit delete. The following graphic illustrates (left to right) the font with the letter before removing it, the font with the letter removed and a few of what the font now looks like.



10. Reduce the size of the graphic by repeating step 7 in reverse.
11. Copy your graphic (Ctrl-A, Ctrl-C).
12. Paste your copied graphic on the original graphic "As a new Vector Selection".
13. Repeat with remaining font shapes.
14. Expand the vector layer. You will see that the layers are named after the fonts. This is what will show up under the shape in the Shapes Tool. To give the shapes a more meaningful name, double click on a shape layer and give it a new name. I named mine Splats1, 2, etc.
15. Choose File>Export>Shape. Give the export a name you will recognize. I named mine Splats.

The exported graphic you just created will be saved to your Shapes folder under the folder where you have installed Paint Shop Pro. You can open this graphic and change the shapes if you want (they were saved as vector graphics) and then export the shapes again. The shapes are saved with a .jsl extension. You can now share your shapes with other PSP users. You can also pick up shapes other people have created. If you pick up a .jsl shapes file, just drop it into your Shapes folder. The next time you use the shapes tool, your new shapes will be available for use.

Hints for Installing Shapes

It can be very tempting to run out there and start collecting shapes. This is not a bad thing, but you want to be careful how many shapes you have in your shapes folder. Too many shapes can be confusing when you are looking for a particular shape and loading a large number of shapes can cause performance problems on machines that don't have a large amount of RAM.

I keep the basic shapes I use the most in the Shapes folder and have moved all my other shapes to a Shapes1 folder. When I want to use the shapes from the Shapes1 folder, I click on my File Locations button on the Standard Toolbar (that's one of the first buttons I installed on the toolbar), and change the location for Shapes from Shapes to Shapes1.