



Class by Jen White

## Cluster Queen

### Lesson 05 Part 2: Word Strip Cluster



#### Drop Shadows

No - staple

Low - xoxo strip,  
say cheese strip

Medium - heart clip

Custom - picture perfect

Here is one possible example of a word strip cluster using the five elements provided.

#### Evaluate My Cluster—Here's What I Did

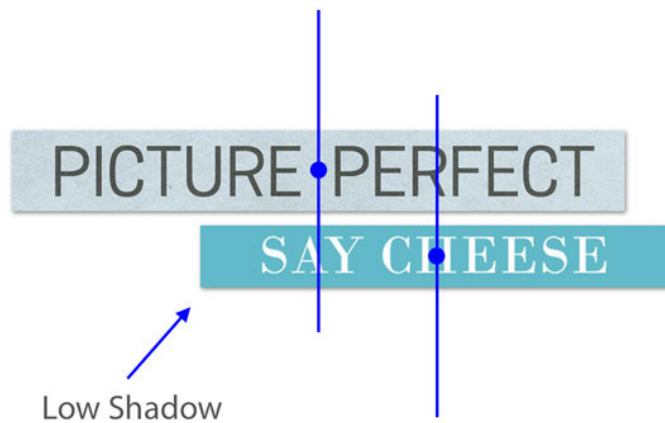
Remember, it's okay if your process of cluster creation is different than mine.

PICTURE PERFECT

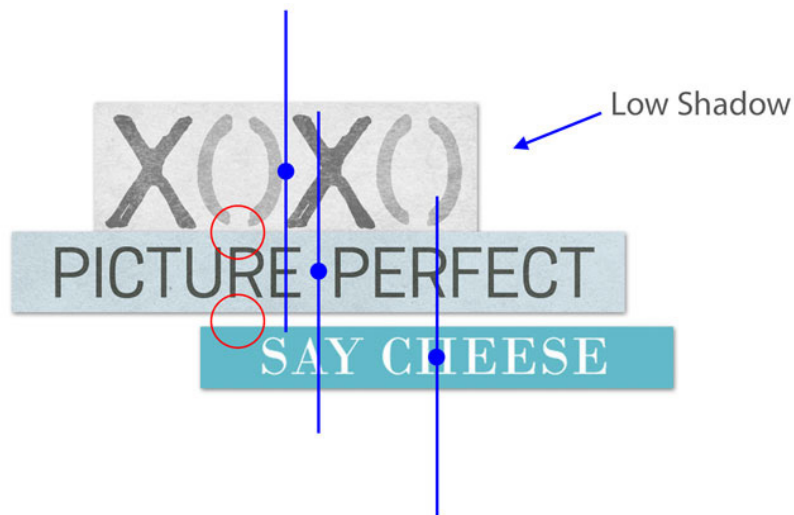


Low Shadow

- As instructed in Step One, I began my cluster process with one of the three word strips. I chose the picture perfect strip to be more prominent. I was planning for it to be the longest or biggest of the three strips.
- I applied a low drop shadow since it's a flat object.



- I added the say cheese strip and also gave it a low shadow.
- I resized the it to be much smaller than the picture perfect word strip.
- I offset the vertical centers of the two strips. Varying the size and centers of the strips adds interest to the cluster.



- I placed the last word strip (xoxo) so that the first one (picture perfect) was slightly overlapping it. Doing this added gap variety between the three strips. Varying the gap is always a good idea when working with word strips. It makes things more interesting.
- I made sure to vary the vertical center of all three strips and make them all a different length.



- Next, I added the heart clip to the design and gave it a medium shadow.
- Now that there was a bulky item under the picture perfect strip, I had to increase the shadow size of that strip to make it look more realistic.



- Notice the size of the clip (in blue) in relation to the size of the word strips (in red). They are very proportional to each other; neither one looks over or under sized. Proportion is very important to make a cluster look balanced.



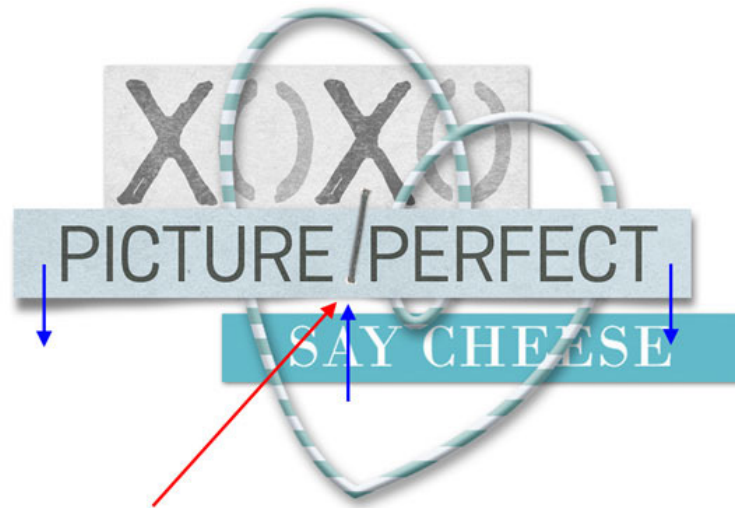
- Remember in Step One when I mentioned covering up parts of a word strip and what to avoid? Look at all the places where the clip is covering the word strips (circled in blue). All the words and phrases on the strips are still easily legible even though they are being pinned down by the clip.



- Finally, I added the staple to pin down the top word strip.
- The staple already has a very small shadow, so I didn't need to add one. Some staples have a shadow built into them and some do not.



- In real life, if a staple was pinning down the word strip between the two bars of the clip (shown by the red arrow above), the shadow would be much smaller at the place the strip touches the background. A situation like this calls for a custom shadow. In fact, I wouldn't be able to make this look realistic without a custom shadow.



- Here is the same word strip with a custom shadow applied. See how the shadow is super small where the staple is holding down the strip?
- To apply this look, I first ran the custom shadow action. Then with the Smudge tool, I pushed the shadow in the middle up and pulled the shadow on the ends down (shown by the blue arrows above).





## Step Two: Copy My Cluster Exactly

- Take the time to create an exact copy of the word strip cluster above. Use the elements I provided.
- Pay special attention to the order and position of each layer and element.
- Follow the advice of drop shadow depth for each of the five elements.

## More Inspiration

Did you happen to try the Additional Challenges above? I had a little bit of time to play. For some extra practice, try copying these designs as well.



Here are two examples similar to the first one I created. The example on the left has two staples being used to fill in the trapped space between the clip and the word strip. The example on the right does not have a staple because there was really no need for one—all the strips were already being pinned down.



These two examples are more minimal, using only two or three of the elements provided.

## What's Your Preference?

Which of my additional clusters do you like best? Your answer might help you narrow down what your style preference is when it comes to clusters.

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**ATTENTION:** Please do not post your results of Step Two on the class Facebook Group. Doing so may sideline the creative process for your fellow classmates.

If you're mega excited to share your result of Step Two, I'd love to see it. You can email it to me or send it via the Help Desk.

**CAUTION:** Don't rush to Step Three until you've successfully completed Step Two.