SVGS MADE SIMPLE

Learn how to find, download, upload, and modify SVG cut files

BY AWARD-WINNING GRAPHIC DESIGNER
AND BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JENNIFERMAKER

Lesson 3:Modifying SVGs in Design Space

Updated 2023

Tip: You can watch the video that goes along with this lesson at **https://jennifermaker.com/svgs**

In this lesson, I'm going to show you how to modify the SVGs you upload in Cricut Design Space. You're going to learn how to fix up the files so they are ready to cut, how to modify and personalize the designs, and how to group and ungroup, attach, and change cut lines to score lines or write lines.

Once you can do this, you will have the key to using SVGs to create amazing projects.

So if you're struggling with this, as I know many of you are, this will erase that feeling of frustration. And you'll be making beautiful things from SVGs before you know it.
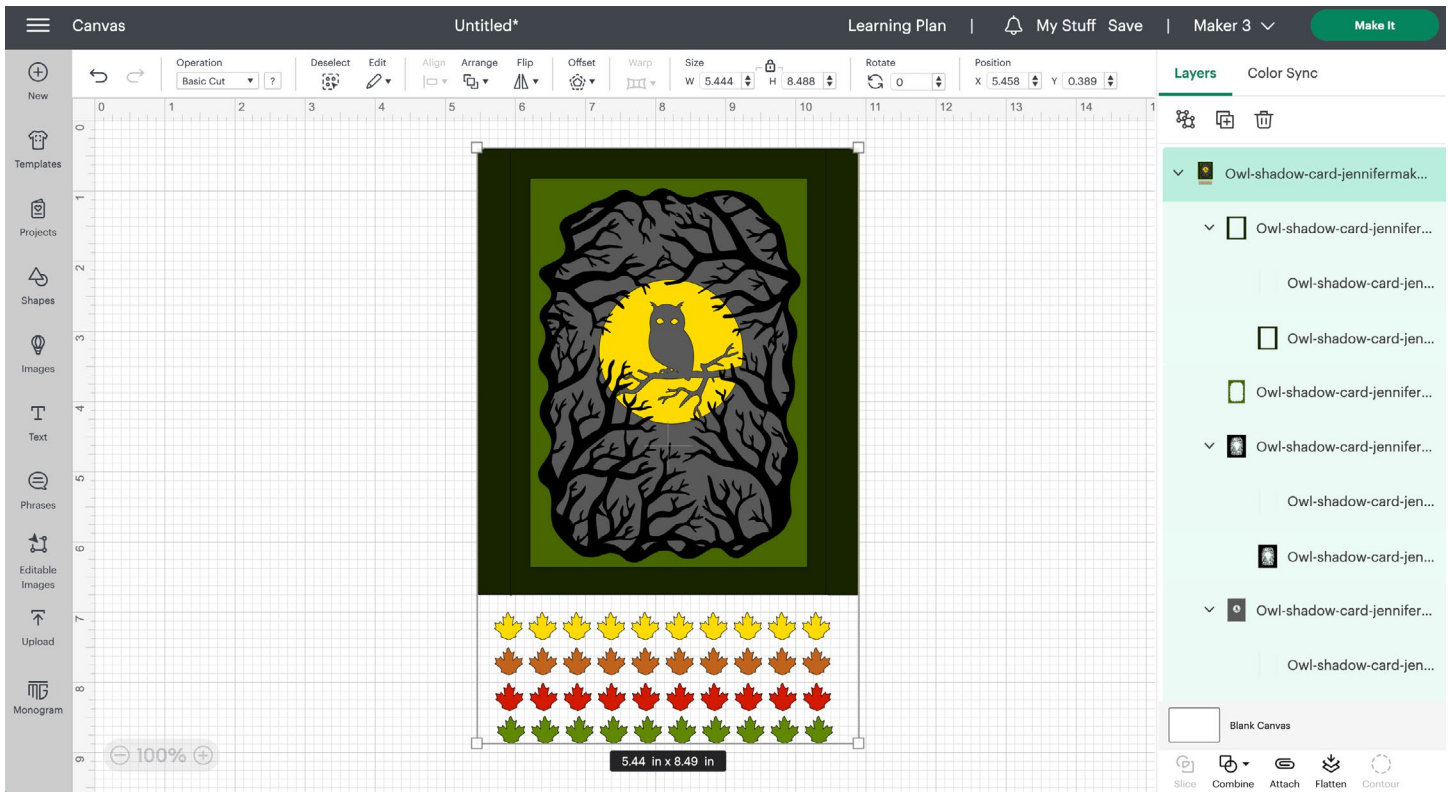
So just to recap, in Lesson 1, I taught you how to find super cool SVG files, how to download them, and where to find the files once they were downloaded.

In lesson 2, I showed you how to prepare those files for cutting, how to modify them, and how to personalize them to your needs.

Are you ready? Let's do this!

How to Prepare SVG Files in Design Space for Desktop

Let me show you how to make your SVGs in Cricut Design Space really work for you! What you see here is my Cricut Design Space application window open with my Owl Shadow Box Card loaded, exactly as it appears right after uploading it and placing it on the canvas. The Canvas is this big open area in the middle with all the lines. (Remember, if you're not sure how to upload files to Cricut Design Space, review the previous lesson and video in this training series.)

TIP: You can modify the gridlines on the Canvas by clicking in the empty white box at the top left corner where the rulers meet. I like to keep my grid turned on.

It's important to understand that most SVG cut files are not ready to go as soon as you upload them, unless they are very simple. Most need some preparation in order to get the results that you want. Instructions and tutorials for the file may be available - I always try to have a video that shows you what to do for my designs - but if you're not familiar with these concepts, it can be confusing.
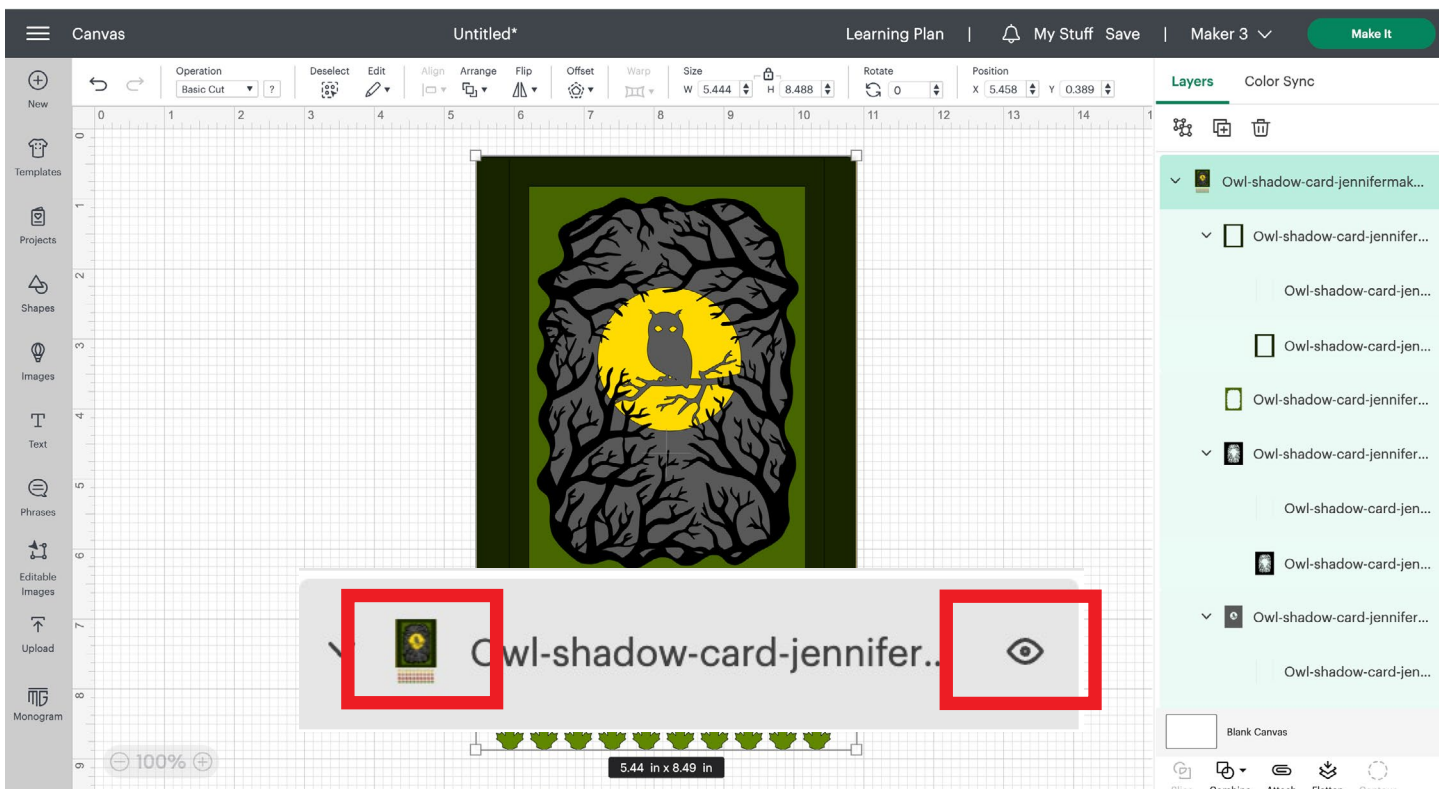
To help you understand, I'm going to walk you through the two big prep tasks you need to do with uploaded SVGs - Modifying Layers and Ungrouping/Attaching. And then I'll show you how to modify and customize any SVG. Let me show you how to do this on my Owl Shadow Box Card in Cricut Design space for Desktop.

How to Modify Layers in Design Space for Desktop

All SVG cut files have at least one layer, and usually more than that. You can view the layers in the Layer Panel on the right side of the Cricut Design Space screen. You can click on each layer in the panel and it will highlight and select it on your Canvas.

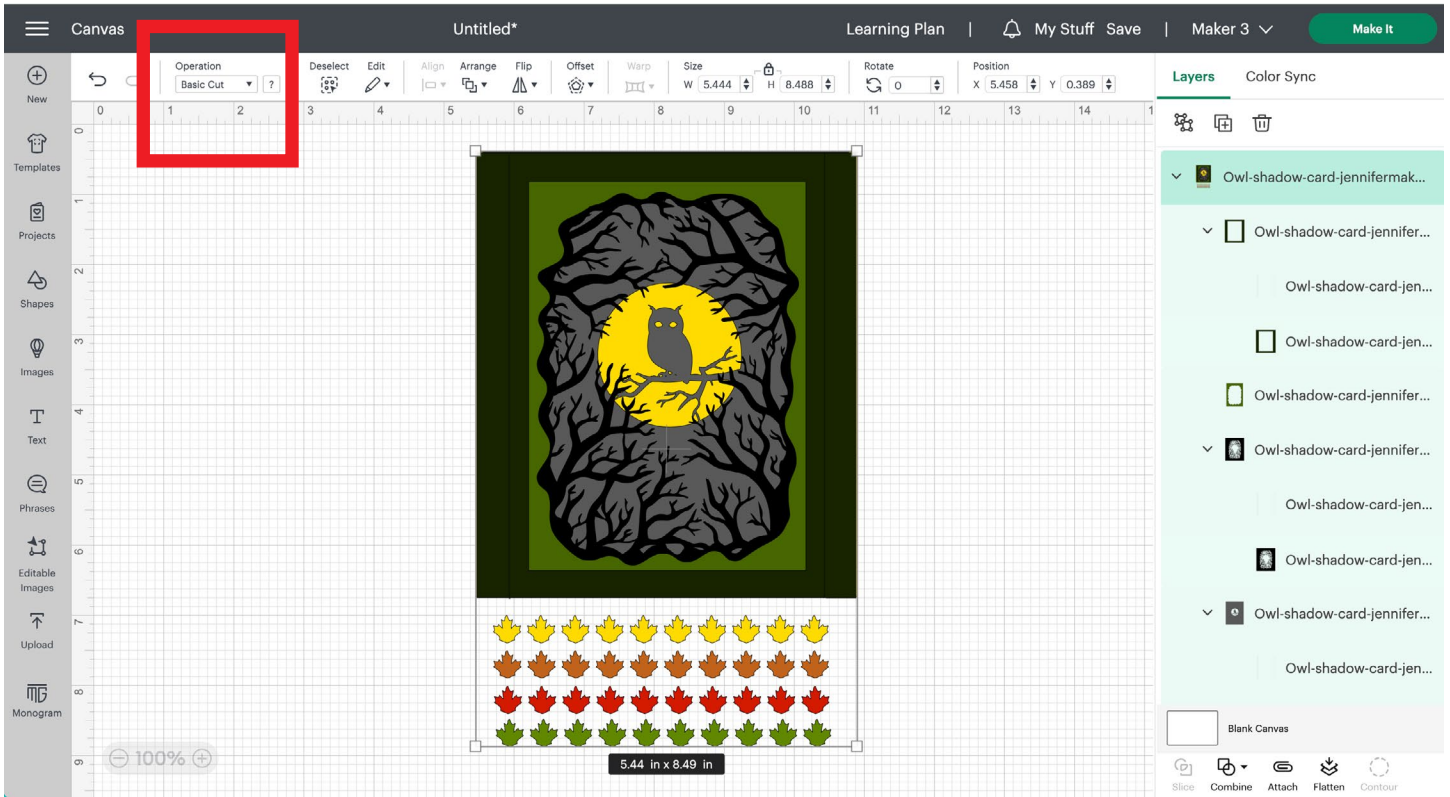Each line item in the Layers panel shows a few important things:
1. A thumbnail of the layer itself (so you can see a general shape)
2. The layer color (indicated by the thumbnail color)
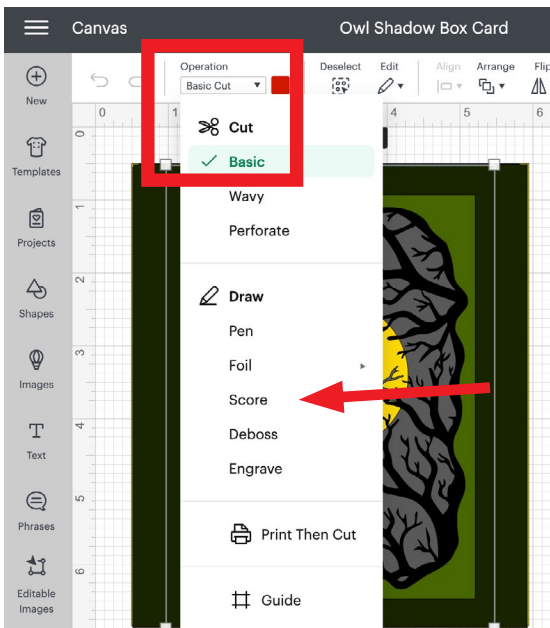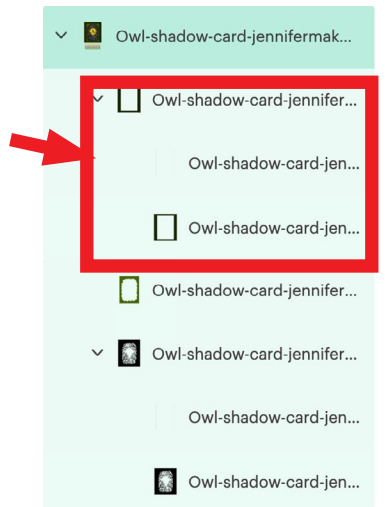3. It's visibility - either visible or hidden

To view the operation for each layer, you will select the layer and then look at the operation selected.

By default, all layers come in with the BASIC CUT operation selected. But not all design layers are intended to be cut. This particular object, like many other SVG designs that I make, has SCORE LINES to help you fold the project after it is cut. But all score lines are really just like lines — YOU have to tell Cricut Design Space that you want them to be scores instead of cut lines. Thankfully, this is easy. Here's how you do it:

First, you identify the score lines. Your instructions or tutorial for the file will mention which lines are score lines, but you can also tell by the fact that the color icon in the layers panel looks like it has no color (it's just an empty box or line(s)). It shows no color because it is just a line.
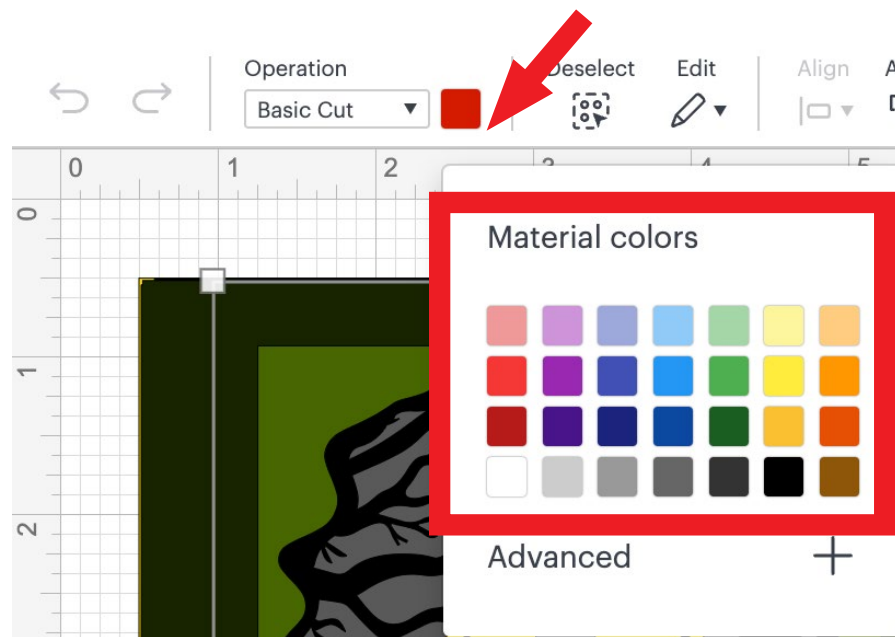

So you click that layer, then click the operation menu at the top of the window and change it from Basic Cut to Score in the menu. Do this for each score line layer. In this file, there are four of them, all indicated by the thumbnails of empty boxes and lines.

Great! So now our score line layers are now designed as scores rather than cuts, and if you have a scoring stylus in your Cricut, it will score these lines instead of cutting them. We still need to attach the score line layers to our base layers, and I'll explain that later.

You can modify layers in other ways, too, of course.

If you click the thumbnail then click the color box near the top of the screen, you can change the color. Note that the Material Colors at the top of the screen show you what colors you already have for this project if you want to choose one of those, or you can pick an entirely different one below.

You can also make a layer invisible (hidden) by clicking the eye icon. A hidden layer — which is indicated by the eye icon with a line through it — will not show on your Canvas and it will not cut out.
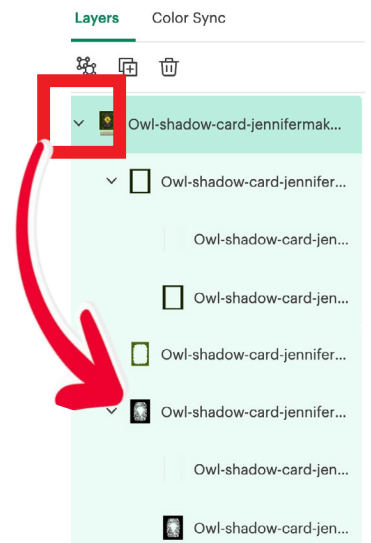
Tip: You can undo any action you take in Cricut Design Space with the Undo icon in the top left corner of your screen. You can also undo with your keyboard — just press Control + Z (on Windows) or Command + Z (on a Mac). You can also Redo things with the Redo icon besides that, or press Control + Shift + Z (on Windows) or Command + Shift + Z (on a Mac) to redo on your keyboard.

How to Ungroup and Attach Layers in Cricut

One important thing you can do (and should understand) is grouping, ungrouping, and attaching layers.

Let's look closely at the layers of the Owl Shadow Box Card. At the top of the Layers panel, note that there is a small black arrow pointing downward, with items indented below it. This black arrow indicates that there is a group in this design, and the layers indented below it are grouped together. If you click the arrow icon, it will collapse the group in the Layers panel to hide everything it contains. In this case, everything in this file is grouped (which is very normal). Click it again to see all the items in the group again.

Before we can change anything about how these layers are attached together, or really have good control over the layers, we need to UNGROUP the layers. So click on the Group in the Layers Panel, then click on the Ungroup icon at the top of the Layers panel.

You'll now see the big group has been disbanded, but we still have a bunch of black arrows! Those black arrows indicate the sub-groups that were in this group. So this is important to note — some files, especially more complex ones, have more than one grouping. You can always ungroup any group, if you need to.

In this case, however, we don't need to ungroup these subgroups. They were set up on purpose so that the score lines were grouped with the layer they belong to. This is important because it's now necessary to ATTACH the score lines to the appropriate layer.
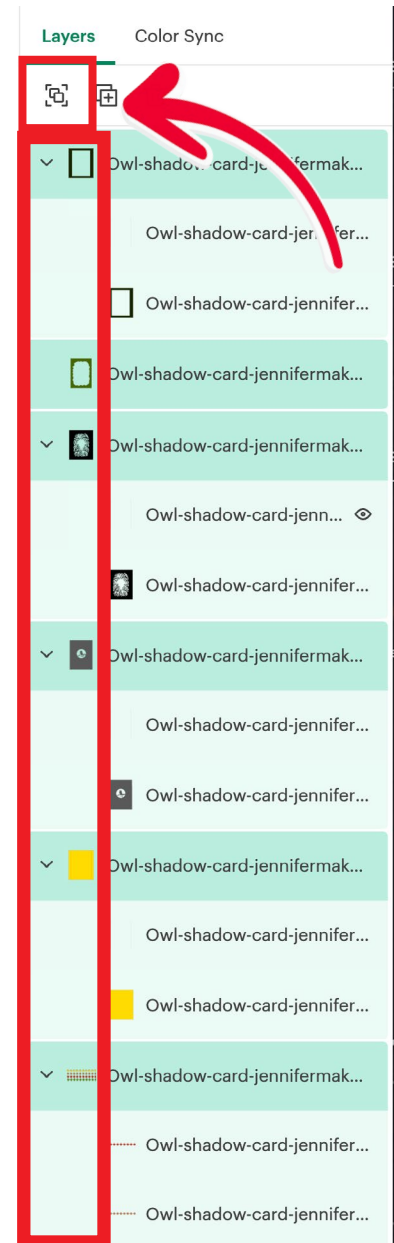
And by now, you may be wondering — what is the difference between grouping and attaching?

Now, I gotta get real with you all. This idea of grouping and attaching was hard to wrap my head around at first, and judging from all the emails I get and comments I see on Facebook, it's hard for you too. At this point, I have a good grasp on it, so let me try to explain the difference. Grouping is just a way to indicate layers that belong with one another. Those layers may be anywhere on the Canvas - they are together, but not fixed in place together. Attaching, on the other hand, keeps those layers fixed in place together. So they aren't just together, they are linked by position.
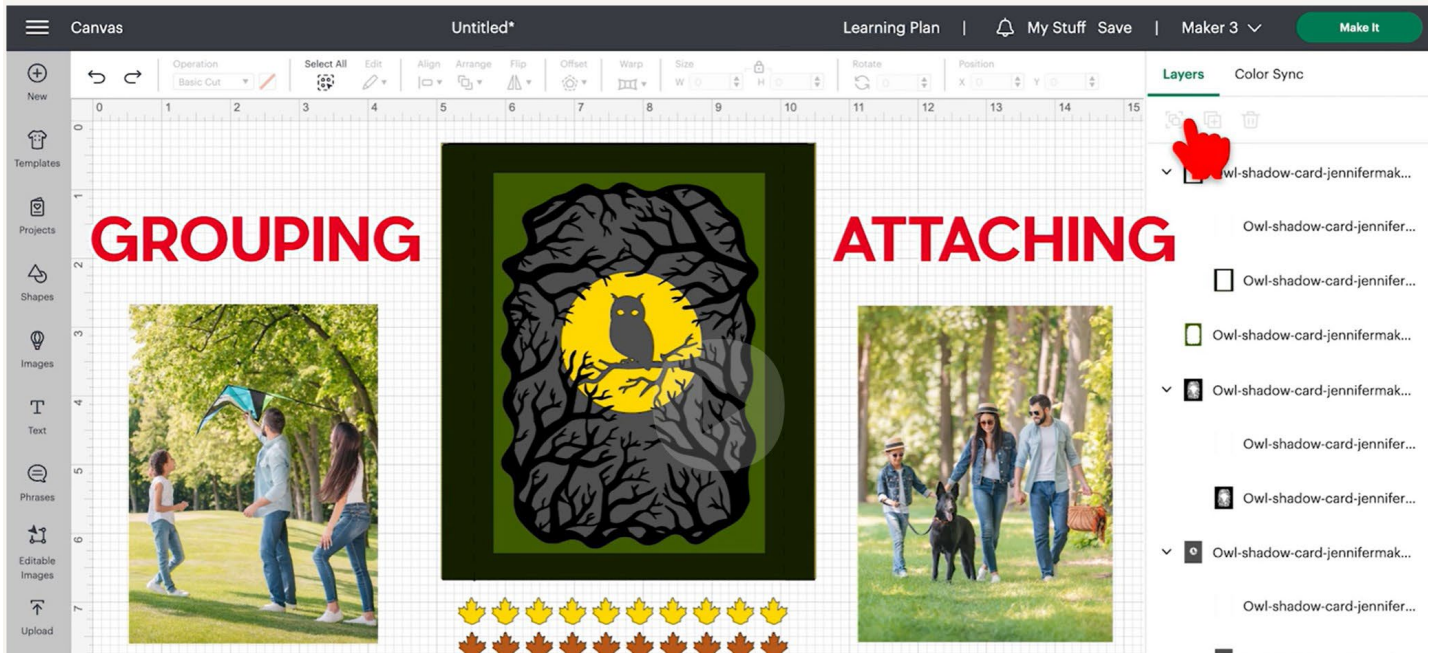
Think of it this way. Grouping is like taking a walk in the park with someone you love. You might walk a little faster or slower at times, someone might stop to talk to a friend, but otherwise you're together - you'll arrive and leave at the same time.

Attaching is like holding hands while you're taking that walk. You have to walk at the same pace and stay together when you're holding hands, right? One doesn't go anywhere without the other.

This is important because we need to get our score lines and our layer cut lines to hold hands! We need to attach them!
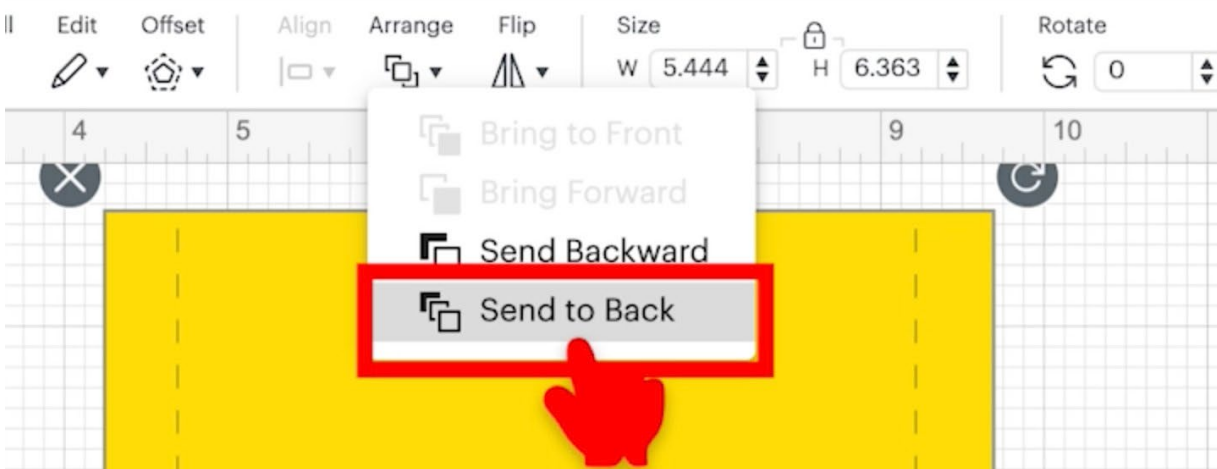
Thankfully, this is also pretty easy. Just select the two layers you want to attach to one another. You can select more than one layer by holding down the Shift key as you click subsequent layers. Then click the Attach button at the bottom of the Layers panel. When the attachment is successful, the word Attach appears above the layers to indicate they are now attached together.

You'll want to attach all of the layers that have score lines to their cut lines, just like this.
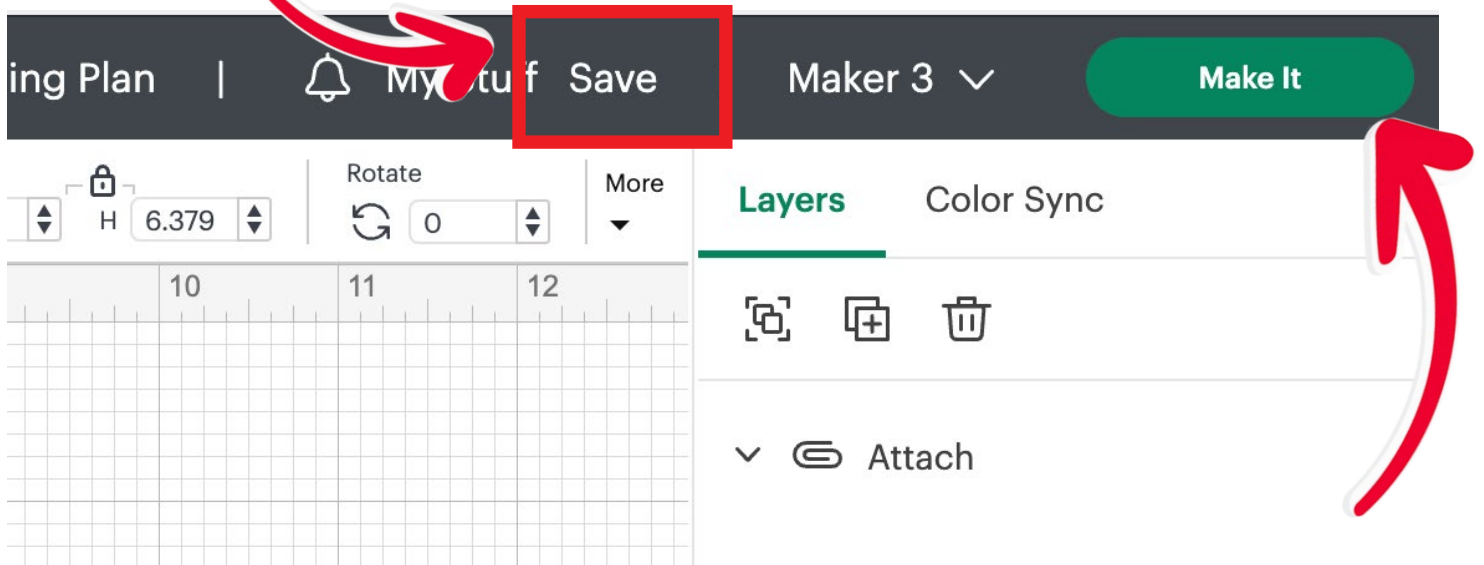

You may notice that our design now looks different than it did before, but it's really just that the layers are in a different order — the last layers we attached are now the front layer. We can change the way the layers are arranged on our Canvas by going to the Arrange menu. For example, we can choose Send Backward while this yellow layer is selected and it will go all the way to the back. See how it changed? Feel free to re-arrange your layers, just know that this only affects how you see them on your Canvas, not your cutting order.

Now, something that trips people us is when they cannot attach two layers. This is pretty much always because of a group. If you ungroup layers and keep ungrouping until the groups are all gone, you can always attach two layers together. Next time you have an issue with attaching, make sure you've ungrouped EVERYTHING, then try to attach the layers.

Ok, now that we've modified the layers from Basic Cut to Score, and attached the layers with the Score Lines to their appropriate Cut layers, let's save this project! Just click the Save link up in the top right corner and give it a good name. You can also choose to put it in one of your Collections to organize it - click on New Collections to make a new one. When you're ready, click Save. Now this project is in our Cricut Cloud and can be accessed anytime we open Cricut Design Space regardless of where we are or what device we are using.
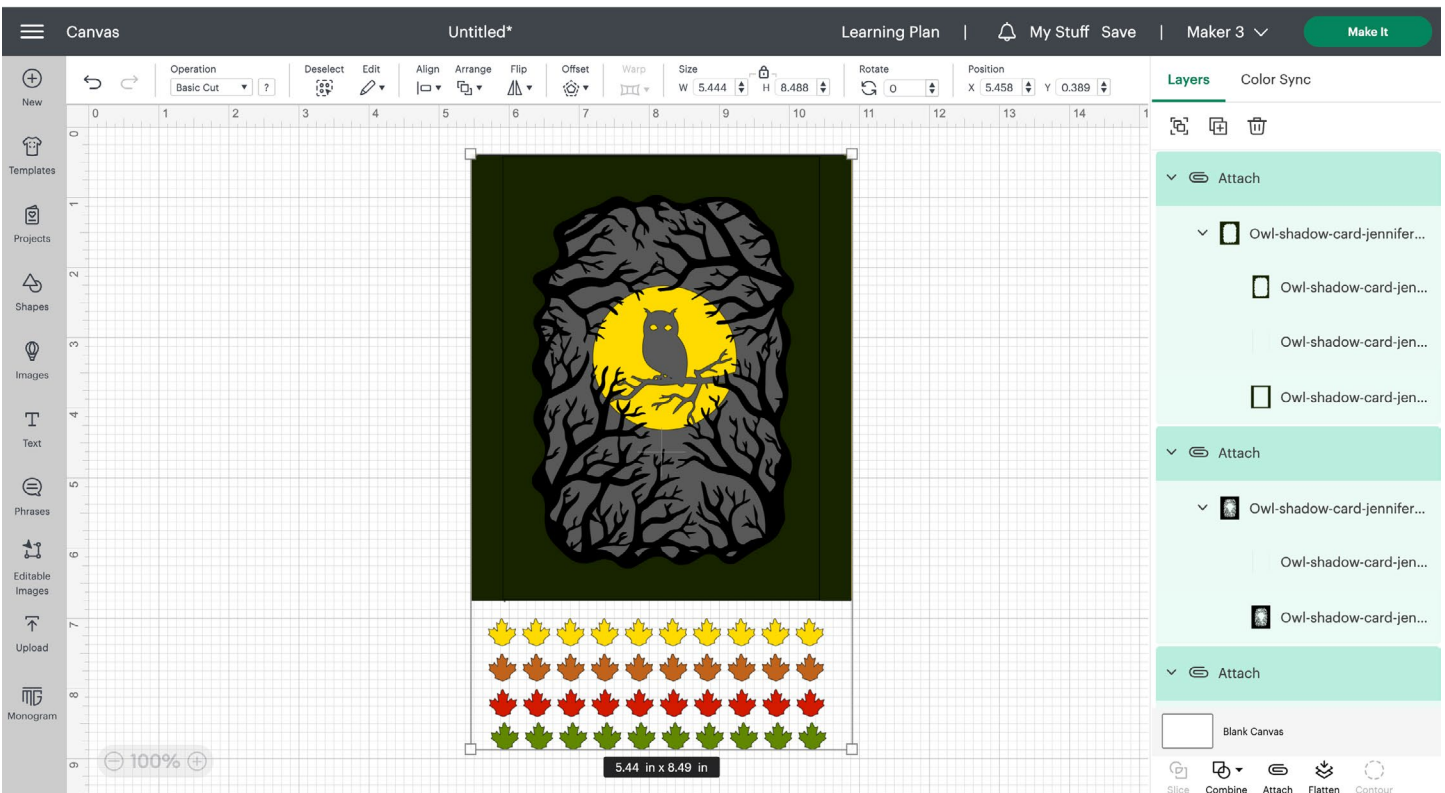

And this file is now ready for cutting. Just click that "Make it" button in the upper right corner and you're good to go.

How to Customize Layers in Design Space

Now you will notice there are a lot more buttons and controls in Design Space than we've mentioned. Many of these you do not need to worry about if you're just uploading and preparing SVG files. But you can use them if you want to customize the SVG. So let me show you a few things you can do:

If you want to RESIZE your SVG, first make sure everything is selected with the Select All button at the top. Now any of the boxes at the corners of the image, and drag it in or out to make it smaller or bigger. A handy measurement appears at the bottom of the design to show you the size as you move the handle. Note that the measurement shows the combined size of all objects selected, so if you have extra items beyond the finished project as I do here with the leaves, use the rulers and grid lines to tell you how big something is instead. For example, right now I've selected the owl shadow box card to be seven inches high because I can see here that there are seven inches from the top of the card to the bottom edge of the card.

A note about resizing: most designers intend for something to be cut at a certain size. If you go too small, you may find it hard to cut the fine details. And if you go too big, it may not fit on your mat. Just keep this mind.
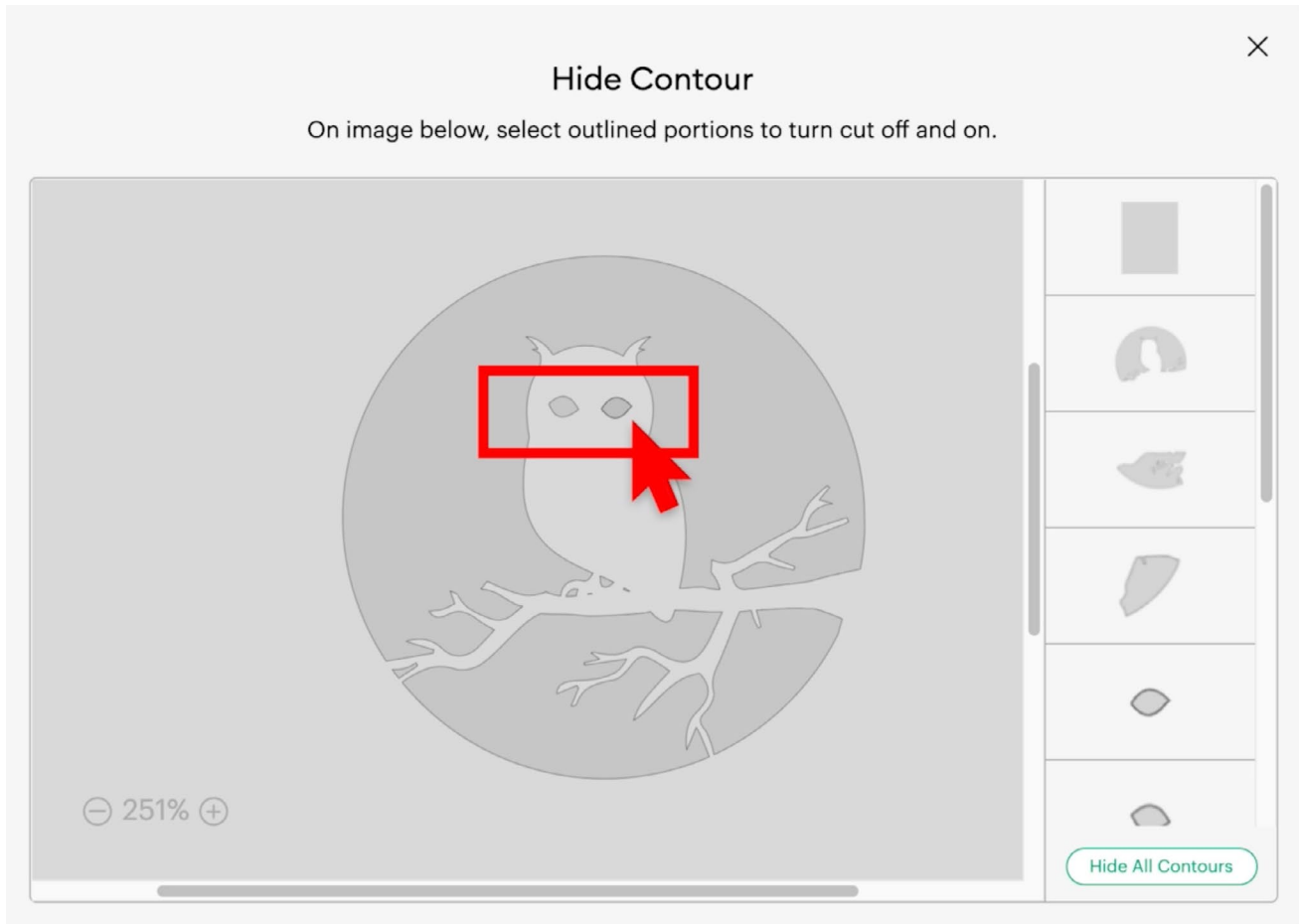
You can also flip a design horizontally, if you want it to be a mirror image. You can even rotate images.
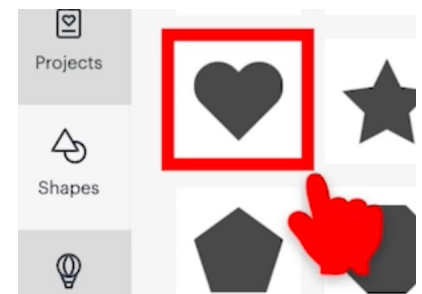
Flip

Something else you can do is change the design itself with special tools like Contour, Slice, Weld, and Flatten.

For example, lets take just the owl layer out and look at it. Let's say I don't like the glowing eyes. I mean, that's not very realistic! To get rid of the eyes, click just the owl layer, then click Contour in the lower right corner. You can see each individual element now. Zoom in a bit if you're having issues seeing things. Now click the eyes to hide them, close the window, and they'll disappear in your design! Easy-peasy!
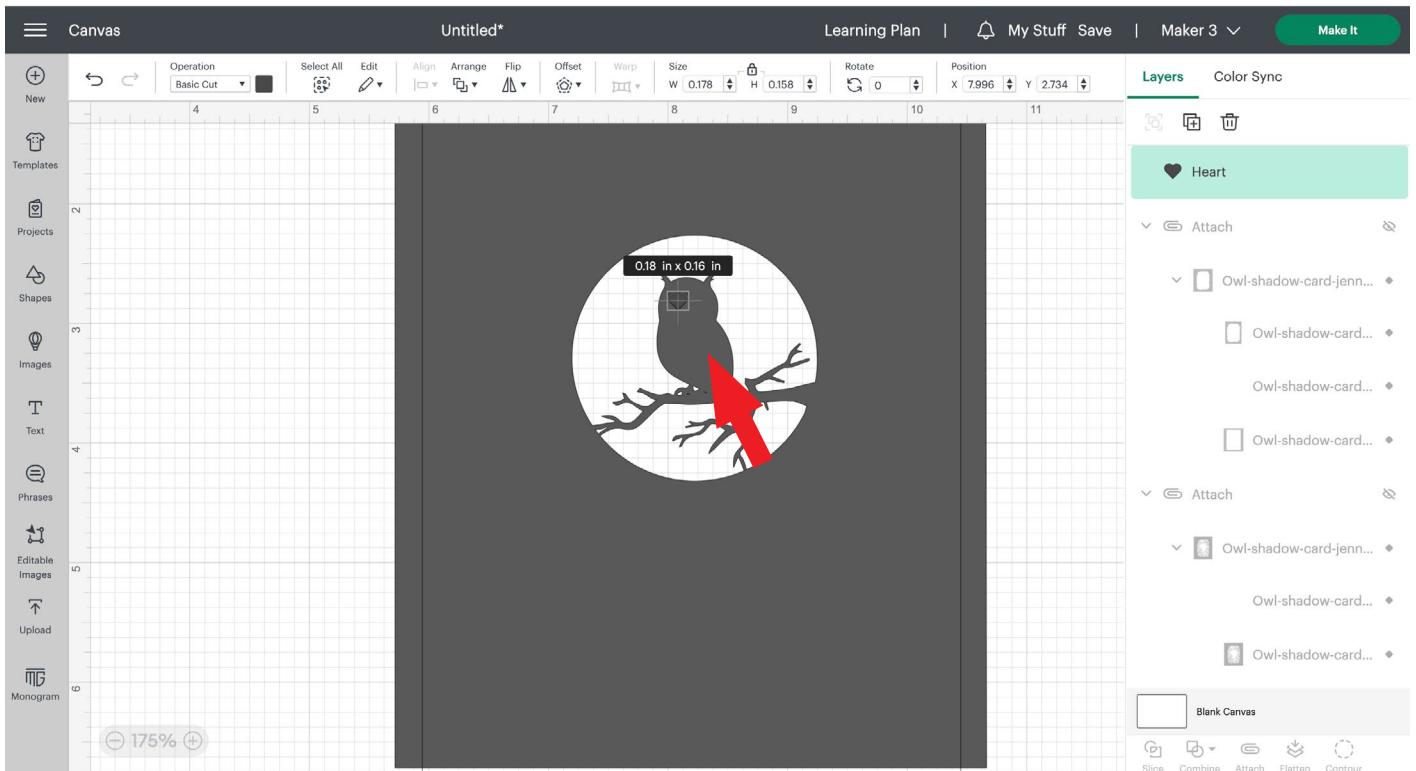

But what if I wanted to put some hearts on this owl? Just because I love hearts! To add heart eyes, click the Shapes icon on the left, choose a heart, resize it to what you want, and position it where you want it.
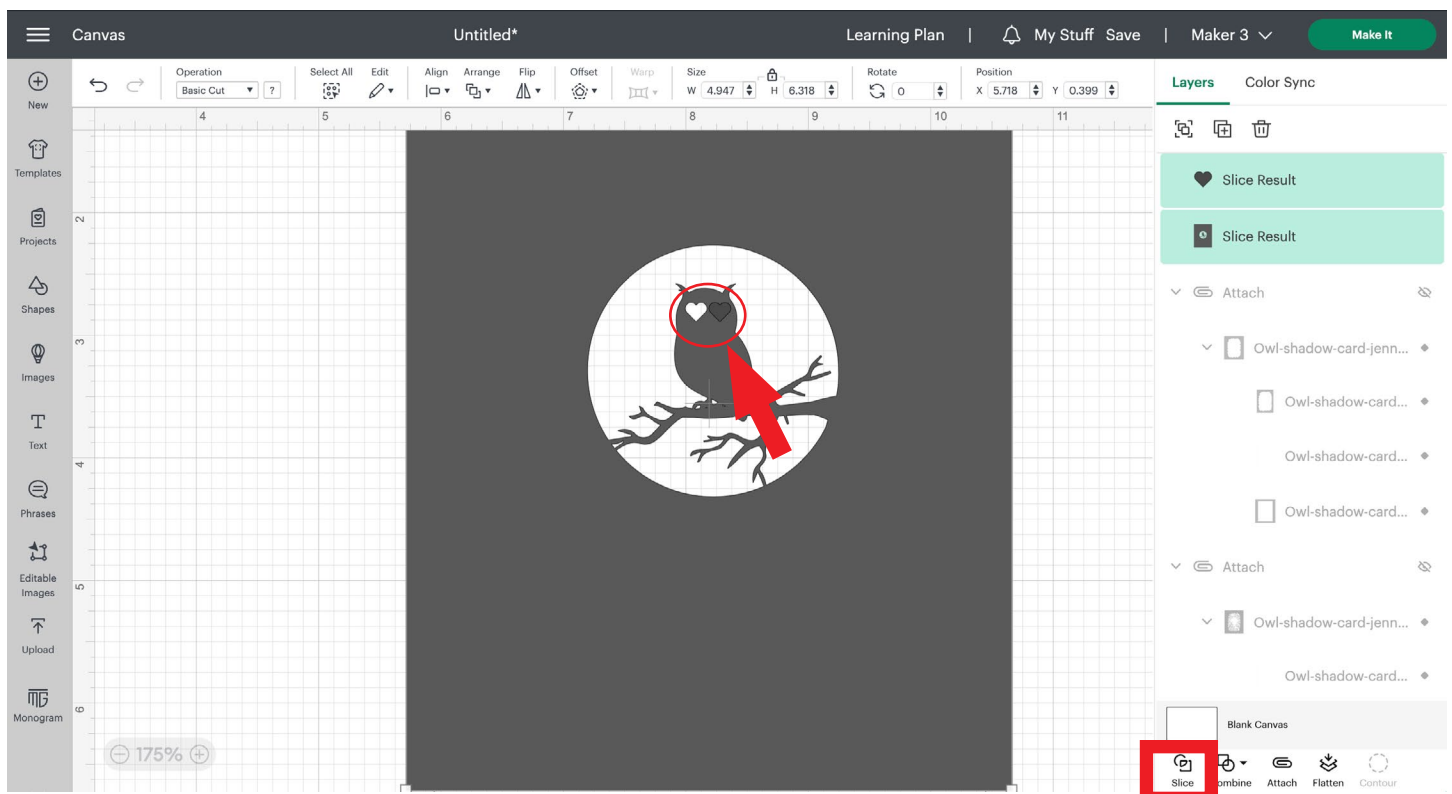
Now select both the heart and the owl layer in your Layers panel by holding down the Shift key as you click both layers and click Slice. If you ever have issues using the Slice tool, be sure you've selected to layers, and only two layers. Slice won't work if you don't have two layers selected, nor will it work if you have more than two layers.
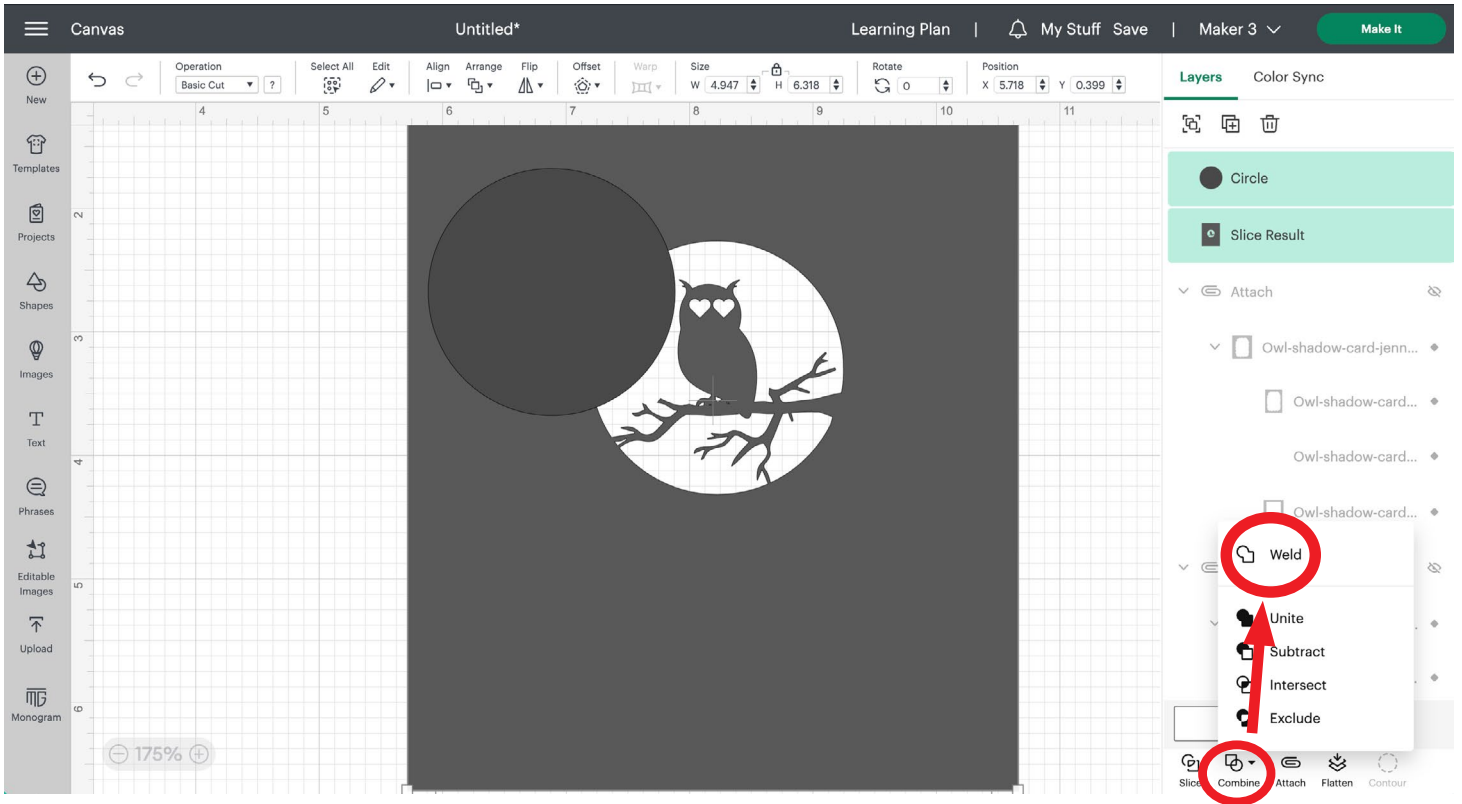
So let's click Slice - and now the owl has a heart! You'll note there are now some extra layers in your Layers Panel called Sliced Results. These are the bits you sliced out. You can hide or delete them. And you can also use one of them to create the other heart eye — just move the sliced out heart to the other side of the owl's head, hold down the Shift key, select the owl layer, then click Slice again. Then get ride of all of the extra sliced results you don't need, unless you actually want to cut them out too.
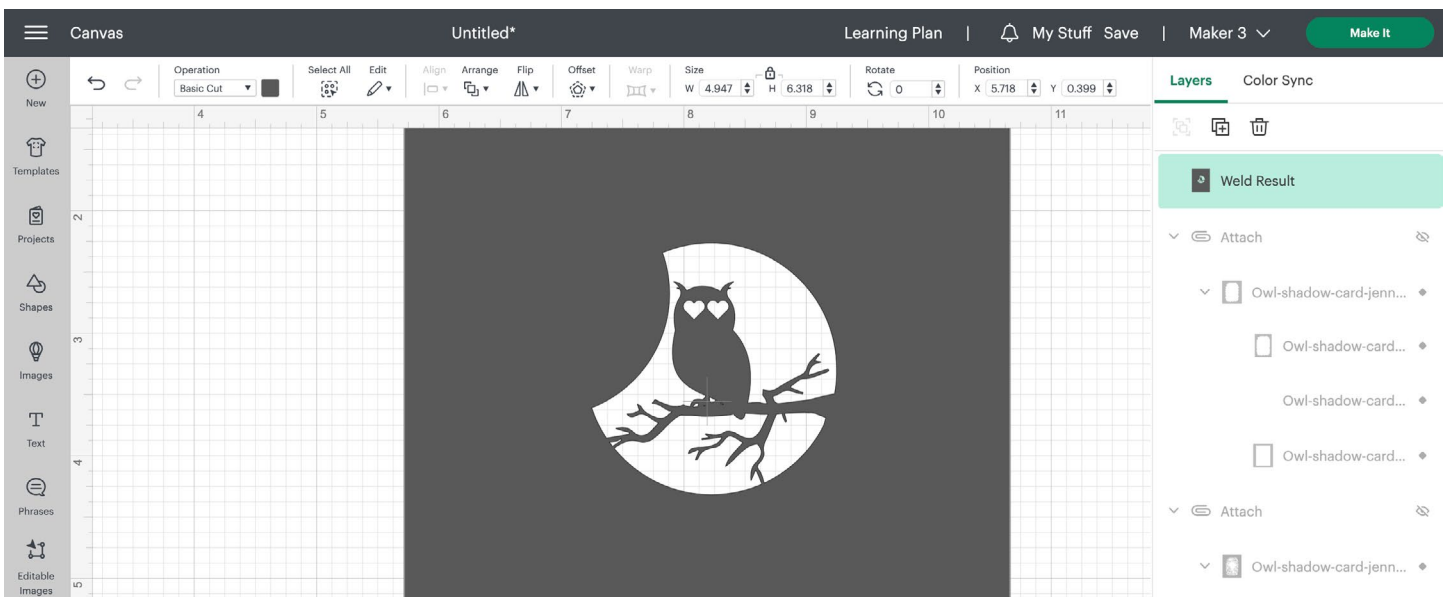
Finally, what if you wanted to change more about this design? What if you wanted the moon to be in a different phase? You can do this, too! Click Shapes on the left, select the circle, make it about the same size as the moon, then position it so it looks like the moon isn't quite full. Now select both this layer and the owl layer — again I am holding down my Shift key to select both layers - and click the Combine button on the bottom right menu, then select the Weld option to permanently fuse them together.

Here we go! Now the moon is in a different phase. Isn't that cool? Imagine all of the changes you can make to all the designs you find now!

Weld is permanent. You can Undo it immediately if you don't like it, but once you save and close this design, you won't be able to unweld. Use Weld only when you feel confident about your change.

So as you can see, there's really a lot you can do to modify SVGs in Design Space.

Of course, you get way more control when you just design the SVG yourself and make it just the way you want it. That's just my opinion though! I can teach you how to design SVGs yourself in my Cut Above Course, which I'll talk more about later.

So there you go — lots of ways to prepare and modify your SVG files before you ever cut them out! And don't forget anytime you make a change to any of your files, be sure to save your work.

Wrap Up

So now that you know how to use SVGs in Cricut Design Space, you can cut them and make them!

And at this point, you may be wondering how those SVGs get made in the first place. I mean, they are really cool... But wouldn't it be even better if YOU could make those designs yourself, making them exactly the way you want without compromise?

It's possible... and YOU can do it.

I've taught myself how to do it. And once I knew how to design amazing things, I began sharing them on my JenniferMaker.com blog. And, oh my gosh, it's been SUCH an amazing experience to turn the ideas in my head into real projects, and then to go and share what I made with others who can also make it. I have met so many amazing people through my designs. And I've made my house into a real home with all the things I've made.

And I can teach you exactly how to create designs, too. I am starting up something special — it's called the Cut Above Design course. And in it I can show you how to do what I do, how to make personalized projects that you can upload, share, and even sell. And I can teach you how to do this whether you're on a Mac or a PC, and whether you use Illustrator or Inkscape. All you need is a personal computer, some extra space on your hard drive, a mouse, and your imagination.

Registration for the course is not open yet, but it will open soon. Enrollment is limited so I can offer assistance to all of my students. The course is divided into eight sections, with one section offered per week, but it's completely self-paced — you can go as fast or as slow as you need. And if you want to enroll, be sure to mark your calendars so you don't miss out.

Jennifer

NOTES