

Step-and-Repeat in Photoshop

“Step-and-repeat” is the term used for the process of duplicating an object and spacing. Typically step and repeat is used in an object-oriented program, such as InDesign, rather than in a pixel-based editor, such as Photoshop. However, you can indeed replicate a step-and-repeat technique in Photoshop.

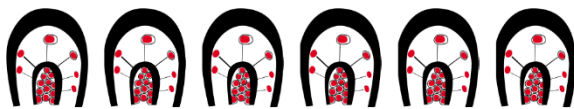
Begin by choosing a motif and placing it on an empty layer.



Hold down the ‘Alt’ key and press the keyboard shortcut for Edit> Free Transform:

Command-T - Adding ‘Alt’ key to the shortcut enables to make and transform a copy of the pixels rather than transforming the original. This will give us the next motif. With the transform bounding box active, click on the layer content and drag to duplicate and reposition. Press the Return/Enter key when done.

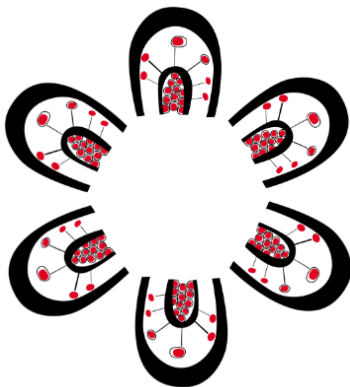
Now here’s where it gets easy! The keyboard shortcut for Edit> Transform Again (which repeats the previous transformation, Move in this case is Shift-Command-T. Again, if we add the Alt key to the combination, we duplicate and transform rather than repeating the transformation on the previously-transformed content. Pressing Option-Shift-Command-T three times gives us a series of motifs.



Afterward, you can manipulate any individual copy of the object by selecting that layer in the Layers palette. And you can, of course, select all of your object layers and merge them into a single layer. You can also use “step and repeat” to, for example, create a dozen marks around a central point, evenly spaced.

Just about any time you need to create a series of identical elements distributed evenly, you can use this step and repeat technique. The three keys to the technique:

- Remember to work on a separate layer.
- Use the Alt key when creating the first transformation.
- Use Alt with the Transform Again shortcut to create the additional replicated objects.



To rotate an element around a centre, begin as above to make the duplicate. In the transformation box, move the centre point for your motif to rotate around. In the property bar, divide 360 degrees into the number of repeats you want: for instance, if you want 9 motifs, enter 40 degrees. Repeat the rotate command with the same keyboard shortcuts as above.