Here's a Snowflake Generator

I was working on a snow themed graphics project and wanted several unique snowflakes. Adobe Photoshop provides some Snowflake Brushes, but I wanted several which were different from each other and not seen elsewhere*.

In Photoshop, I drew one side of the first of six arms for the snowflake, copied that side, flipped the copy to form the other side of the arm and started to copy the arm five times, rotating each one. Then it occurred to me that this first snowflake would probably not be one I liked, so I'd have to do all this several times for each snowflake attempt (26 steps!). When I notice I'm doing something repetitively, I make a Photoshop Action to do it for me**.

I see my layered Photoshop document ***snowflake-maker*** as the "factory," and my action as the "machinery" inside the factory. They work together. I'll use the products (snowflakes) I make there in various other Photoshop documents. Many of us need unique snowflakes, so I thought I'd share this snowflake generator with you.
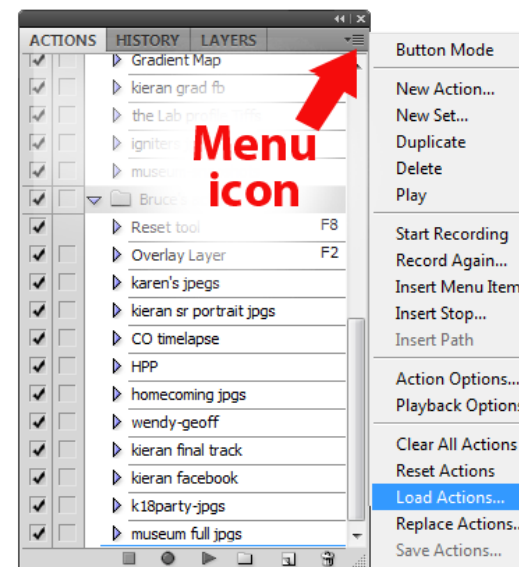
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* Those who subscribe to the latest version of Photoshop can use the Symmetry Tool to reflect Pencil strokes into six radial segments. I own an earlier version of Photoshop, though, so I make my snowflakes manually.

** You can learn how to make your own Actions on pages 4 & 5 of this tutorial: http://brucephilpott.com/photos/morephotoshop.pdf

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Download the free Photoshop document (you may have to copy & paste the link on a Mac): http://brucephilpott.com/tutorials/snowflake-maker.psd and Save it in your Photos folder.

Download my free action set: http://brucephilpott.com/tutorials/Snowflake-set.atn and temporarily Save it someplace on your computer.

Open Snowflake-Maker.psd and go up to Window and be sure your Actions Panel is open. Click the Menu icon in the upper right of the Actions Panel and scroll down and click on Load Actions and navigate to where you saved my Action on your computer. Click on it to load it into your Actions Panel.
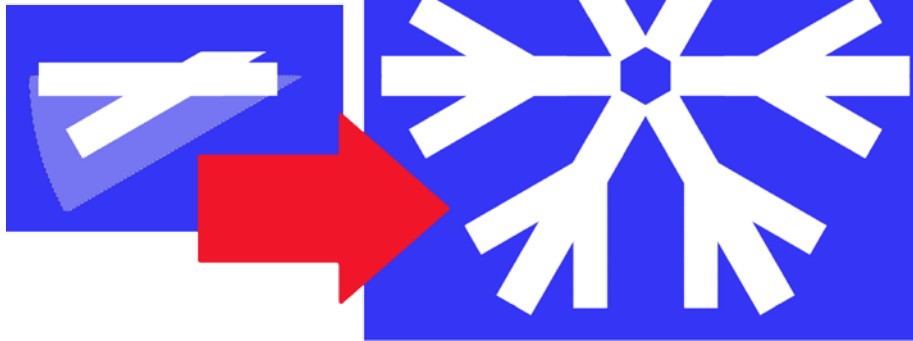
Menu icon

You'll have another Photoshop document open at the same time – either the graphic project you wanted the snowflake for or just a place to accumulate snowflakes for future use.

The Action will "look for" and use layers called "Layer 1" and "wedge."

Snow being white, I use a white Pencil or fill to draw on Layer 1 atop the wedge shape. You don't have to be accurate at all: the Action will remove anything outside that wedge shape. (Draw only on Layer 1.)

Near the bottom the Photoshop document, you'll see three sample shapes. For your first attempt, you might make a selection of one of those shapes using the Magic Wand or Polygon Lasso Tool and, on Layer 1, fill the selection with white and drag it to a position above the wedge shape and Run the Action.

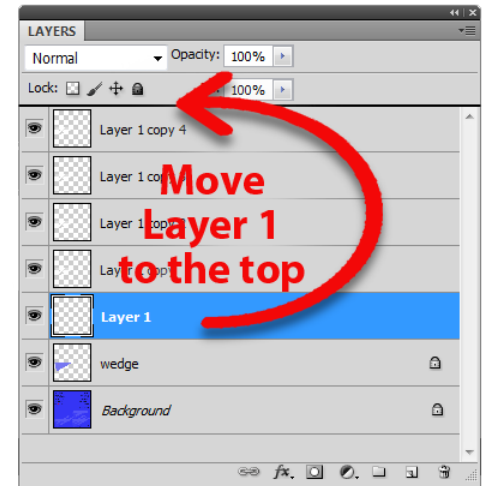*The simple shape below, placed on Layer 1 above the wedge becomes the snowflake at the right.*

After making a snowflake: You can drag Layer 1 to another document first, but do **DELETE this completed Layer 1, then click on the New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel and that will make a new, EMPTY Layer 1**. Turn the wedge layer's visibilty (eye) back on. It would be a good idea to Save a copy of this Photoshop document in case it becomes corrupt. The Action will get confused if it sees changes in the document.
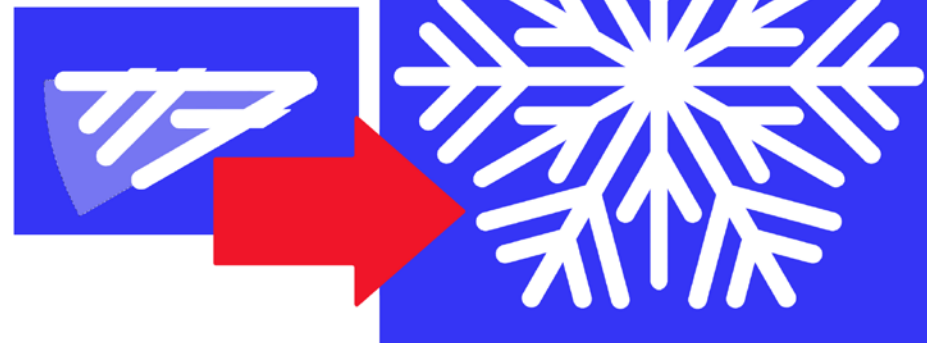
I haven't had good results by free drawing. I either use the Polygon Lasso to make a shape above the wedge area and fill it with white on Layer 1 or I hold Shift while I draw a 25 to 40-pixel wide horizontal white Pencil line along the spine (holding Shift keeps the line perfectly straight). I start at that spine and branch out from there. I'll copy (cont/cmd-j) Layer 1 and Transform (cont/cmd-t), moving and rotating that copied line multiple times. Rotating minus 30° will give you the bottom angle of that wedge.

Then I **drag Layer 1 to the TOP of the copies**, select Layer 1, hold Shift and select the bottom copy and press cont/cmd-e to **merge those layers** (*retaining the name Layer 1*). That way the Action will be able to find Layer 1 to work on. Then I Run the action.

You can further enhance your snowflakes with effects such as a drop shadow,

The simple shape below, placed on Layer 1 above the wedge becomes the snowflake at the right.

outlinging, Bevel & Emboss or filters in the Filter Gallery. You might nibble bits off these beginning shapes using a jagged Eraser brush. Want it larger? Select it and make a path from the selection. You can enlarge the path as desired. The possibilities are limitless! Enjoy!

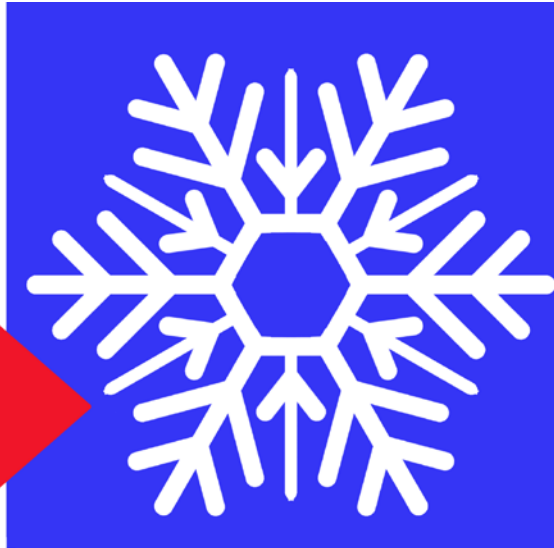Further information about actual snowflakes:
https://www.its.caltech.edu/~atomic/snowcrystals/class/class-old.htm

You might enjoy my other tutorials and articles:
http://brucephilpott.com/photos/index.htm#tutorials

I'm not getting any younger, and my web site won't function any longer than I do, so I suggest you download the ones you want and file them on your computer.
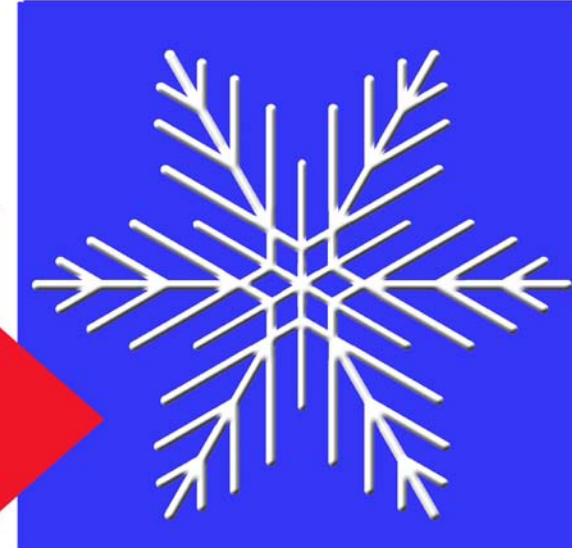
The simple shape below, placed on Layer 1 above the wedge becomes the snowflake at the right.
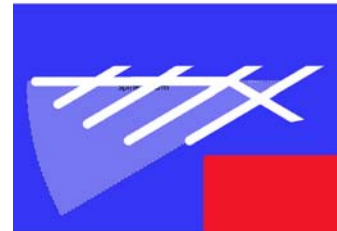
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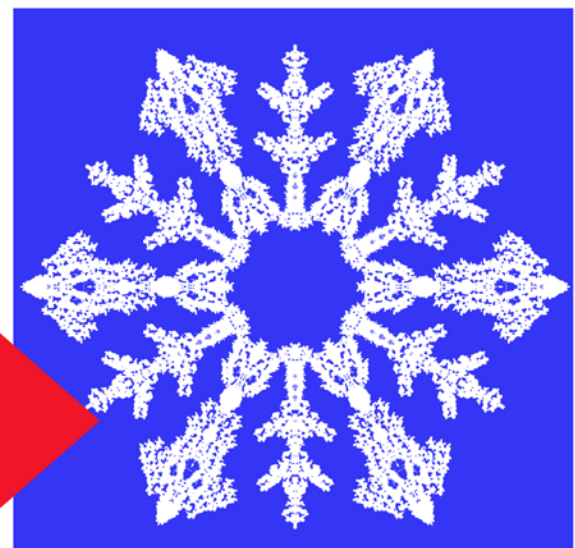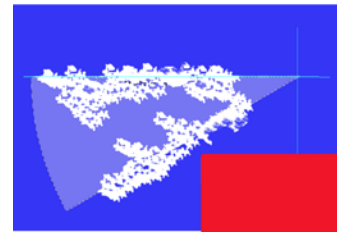
With Bevel and Emboss.

The simple shape below, placed on Layer 1 above the wedge becomes the snowflake at the right.

With Bevel and Emboss.

The simple shape below, placed on Layer 1 above the wedge becomes the snowflake at the right.

Coarse brush stipple.