How to Add Snow to a Photo

Here are two methods that you can use to add snow to a photo. It's important to note that for both methods, the size of your photo plays a large role in how the snow effects will appear. You'll probably have to adjust settings and scales to get the effect you want.
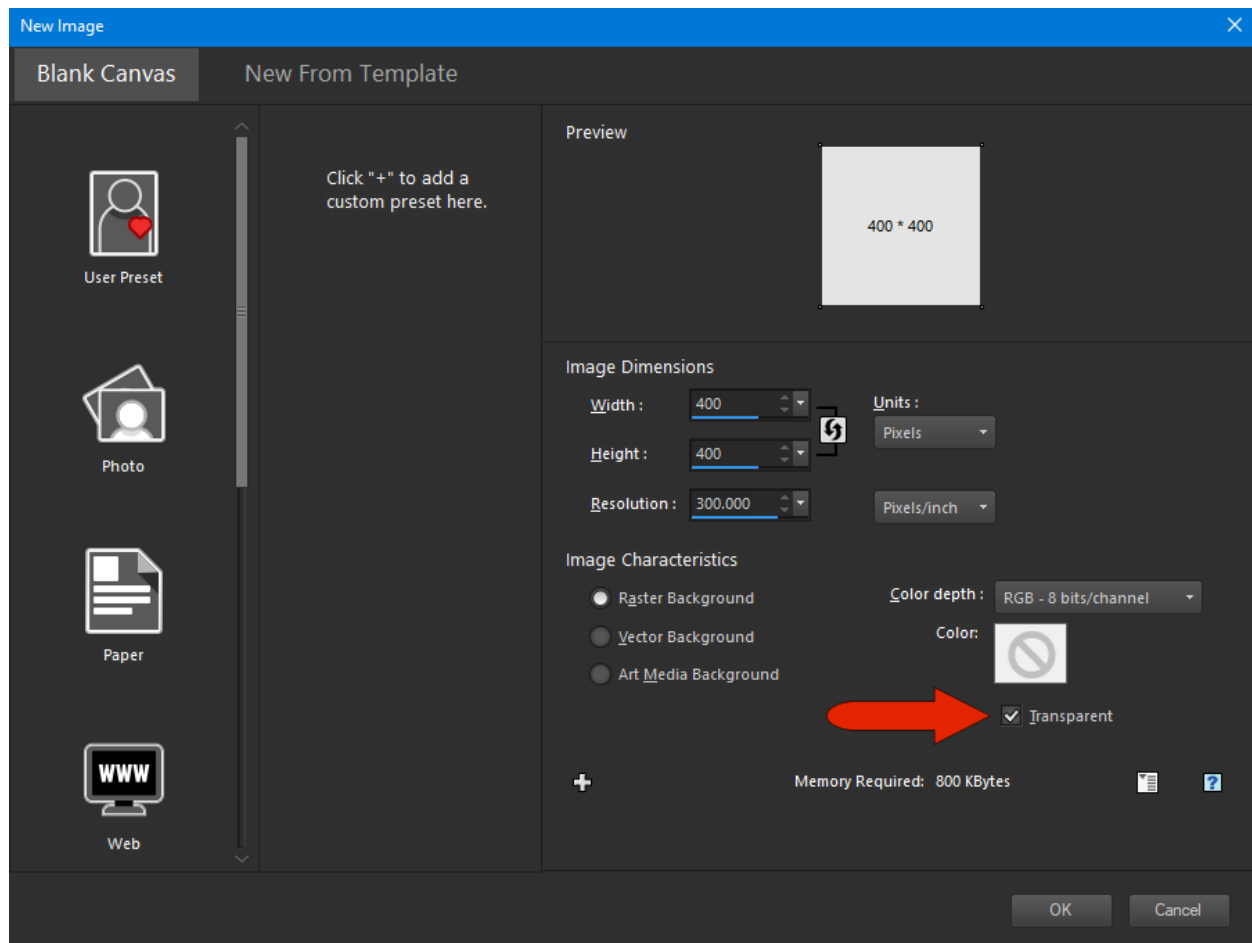
Method 1: Using a Pattern to Add Snow to a Photo

Open your photo in PaintShop Pro's **Edit** tab. For this tutorial, we will be using this image of some children with hockey gear.

Step 1: Create a new image

Go to **File** > **New** and in the **New Document** window set the **Image Dimensions** to a square size that is smaller than your photo, in this case 400x400 pixels. Make sure **Transparent** is checked and click **OK**.
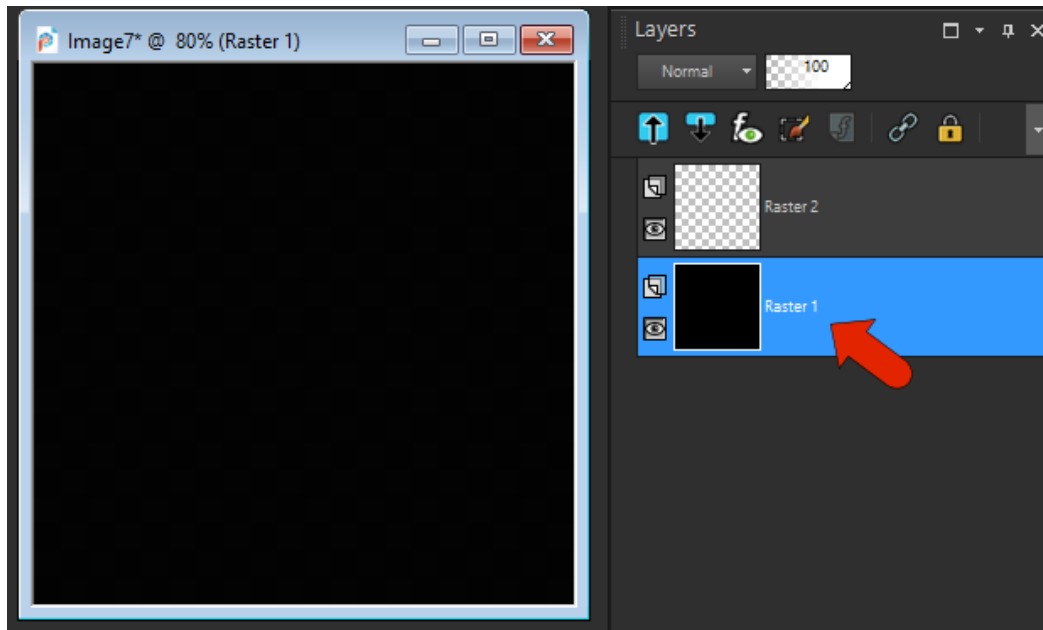
Step 2: Add a raster layer

Make sure your **Layers** palette is visible (press **F8** or go to **View** > **Palettes** and select **Layers**).

Add a raster layer by selecting **New Raster Layer** from the **Layers** menu, or by clicking on the **New Layer** icon at the bottom of the **Layers** palette and selecting **New Raster Layer**.

Click on the bottom layer in the **Layers** palette to make it the active layer, then activate the **Flood Fill** tool.

In the **Materials** palette, set the **Foreground** (top) swatch to black then click on the image to fill the layer with black. This will make it easier to see the snow pattern that will be added on the layer above.
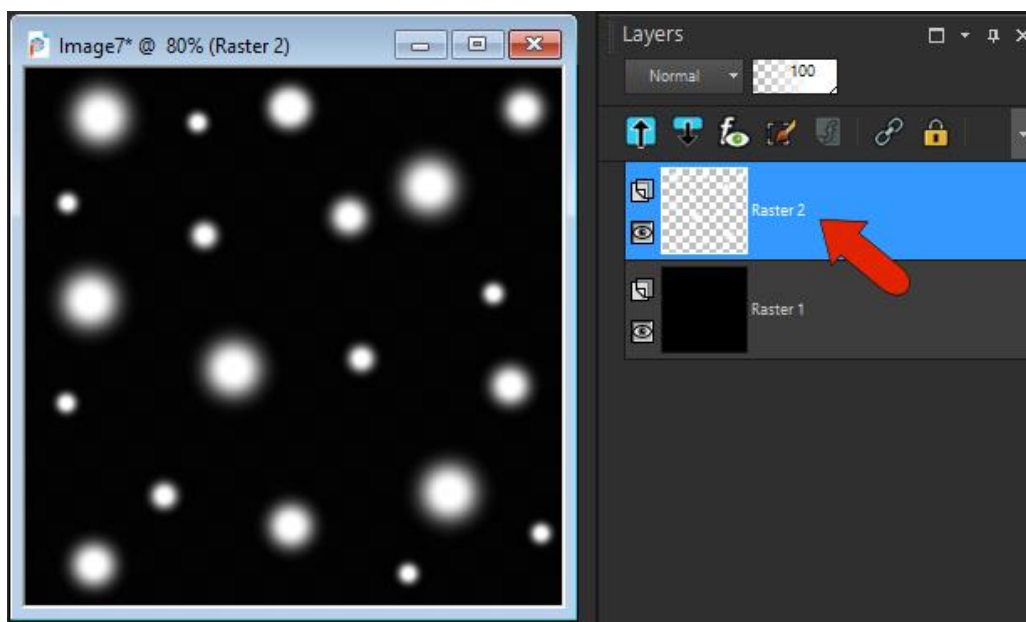
Step 3: Use the Paint Brush to add snow

In the **Layers** palette, click on the top layer to make it active and then activate the **Paint Brush** tool.

In the **Materials** palette, set the **Foreground** (top) swatch to white.
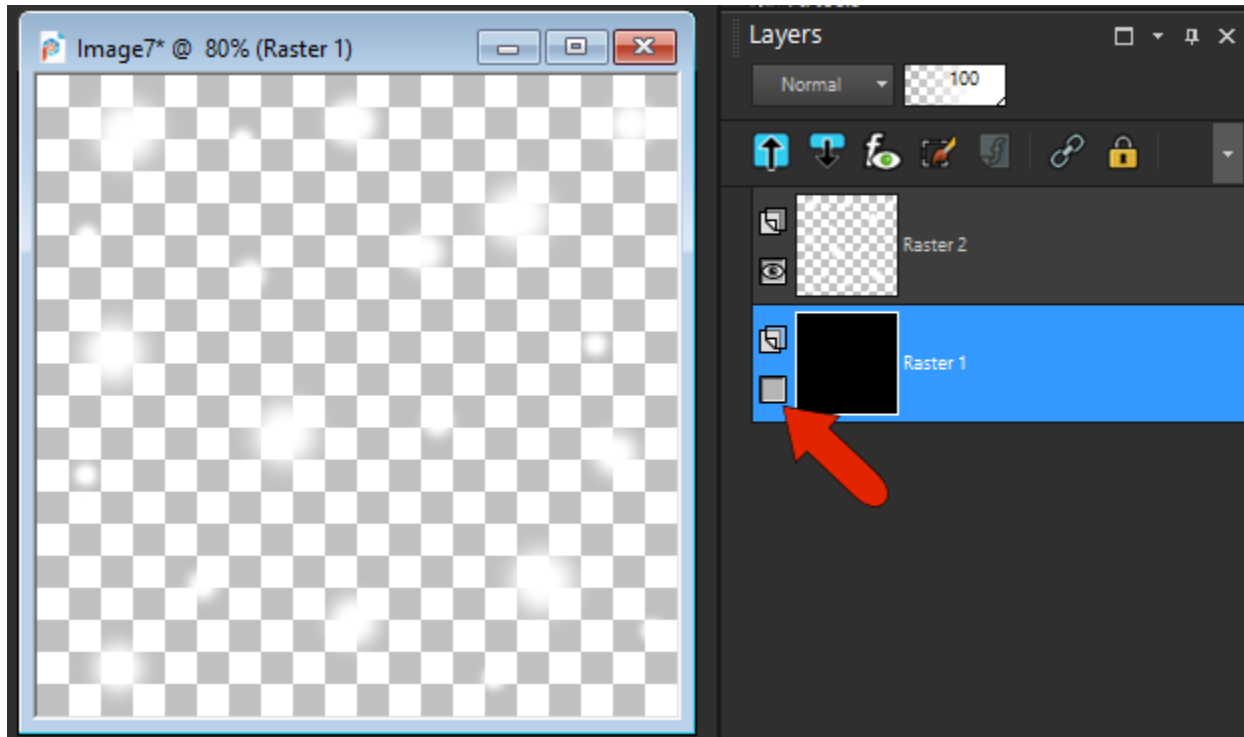
In the **Tool Options** toolbar select the **Default** brush the brush library window. Reduce the **Hardness** setting to around **30**.

Click on the image to place random white paint spots. Using different sizes will produce a more realistic effect. You can change the brush size by dragging while holding down the **Alt** key, or by adjusting the **Size** setting on the **Tool Options** toolbar.

In the **Layers** palette, click on the **Visibility** (eye) icon beside the black layer to turn it off, leaving only the white dots showing.

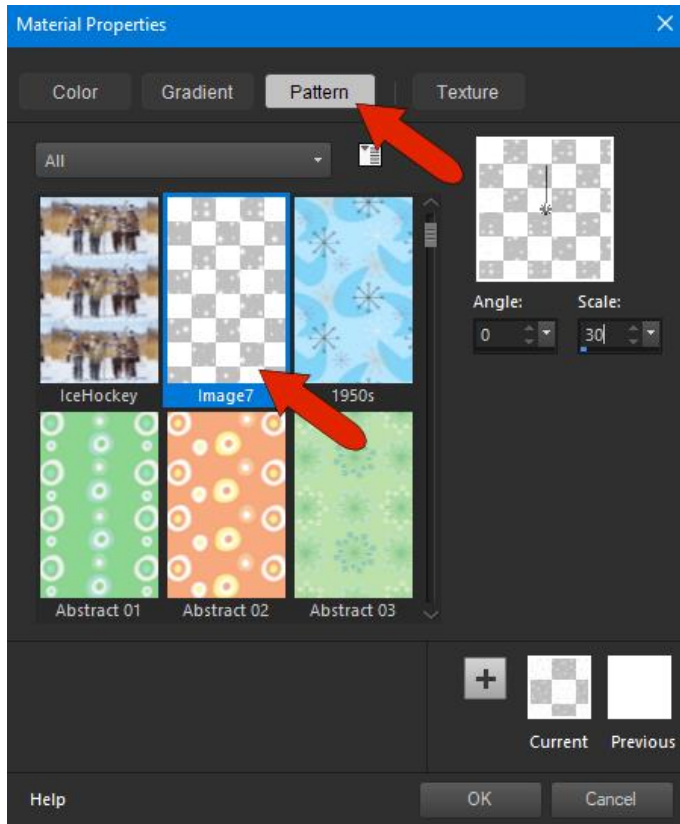Note the title of your image - in this example the title is **Image 7**.

Step 4: Add a snow pattern to your photo

Returning to your photo, add a new raster layer above the background, which will contain the snow effect.

Activate the **Flood Fill** tool and click on the **Foreground** (top) swatch in the **Materials** palette. This will open the **Material Properties** window.

Click on the **Pattern** tab at the top and select your snow image (in this case **Image 7**).

For now, leave the **Scale** value as is, since it's hard to know how the pattern will be sized relative to the photo itself.

Make sure the new raster layer is the active layer. With the **Flood Fill** tool active, click on your photo to fill the layer with the snow pattern.

In this example, the snow is rather dense, and the pattern repeat is easy to see, because the original photo is much larger than the pattern image.

But we can adjust the pattern settings to achieve a more realistic effect.

Click **Undo** to remove the flood fill then click the **Foreground** swatch again to open the **Material Properties** window.

On the **Pattern** tab, adjust the **Scale** setting – for our photo the original **Scale** setting was around 30 and we increased it to 80.

Click on your photo with the **Flood Fill** tool to add the adjusted snow pattern. You may have to repeat these steps a few times until you're happy with the results.
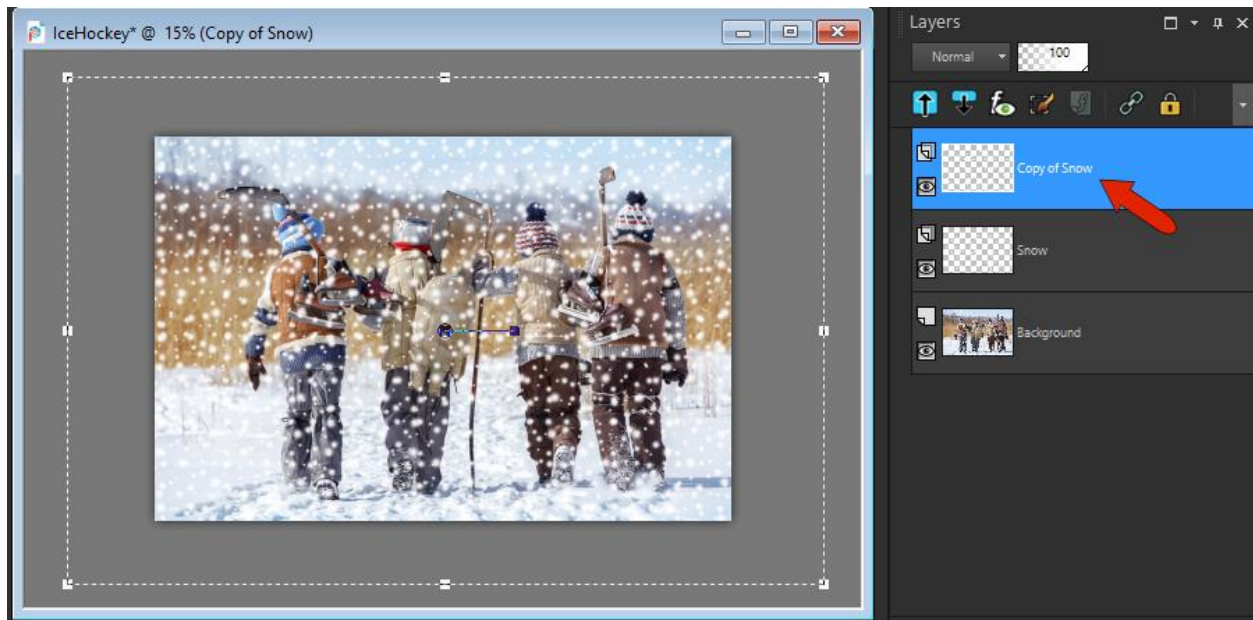

The snow already looks a little blurry because we used a low **Hardness** setting for the **Paint Brush** tool, but you can blur a bit more by going to **Adjust** > **Blur** and selecting **Gaussian Blur**. In the **Gaussian Blur** window, make sure **Preview on image** is checked and then adjust the **Radius** setting to your liking.

BONUS TIP:
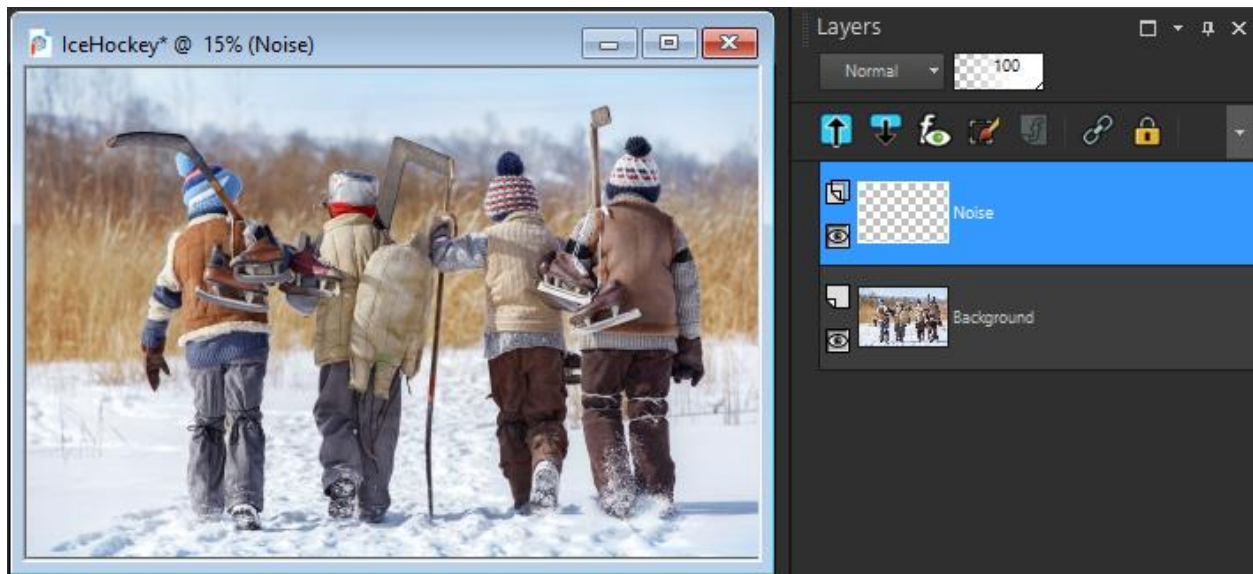
If you want more dense and random-looking snow:

- Right-click on the snow layer in the **Layers** palette and select **Duplicate**.
- Zoom out so that you have extra space around your photo on the image canvas.
- Activate the **Pick** tool and make sure the **Mode** is set to **Scale** in the **Tool Options** toolbar. Then drag outwards to increase the size of the duplicate layer.

Now we've got ourselves a blizzard!

Method 2: Using Noise to Add Snow to a Photo

The second snow effect method will have a slightly more natural appearance. Starting with the original photo, add a new raster layer for noise.
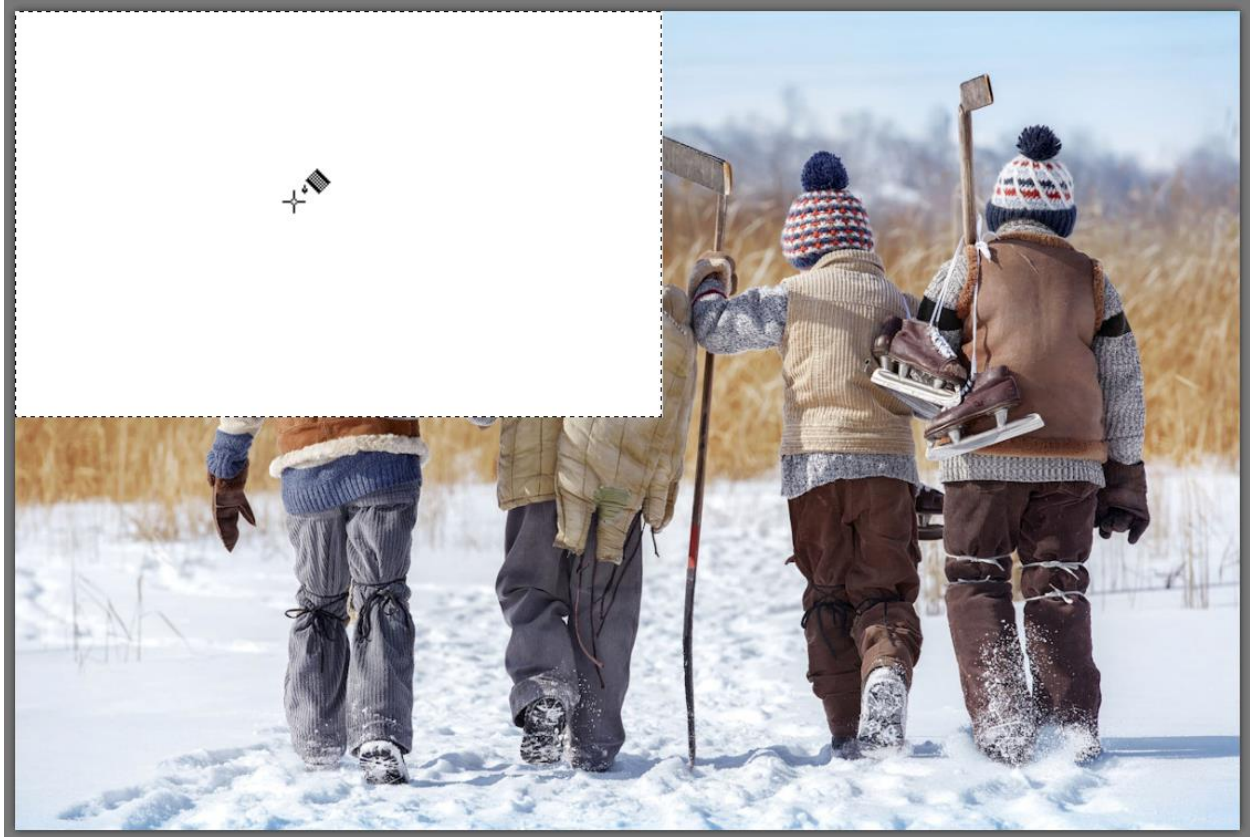

Step 1: Create a selection area

The noise effect is rather dense, so we are going to add it to about a quarter of the original image size, and then scale it up later.

Activate the **Selection** tool and drag on your photo to create a selection area about a quarter of the photo.

In the **Materials** palette, set the **Foreground** swatch to white.

Activate the **Flood Fill** tool then click on the selection area to fill it with white.

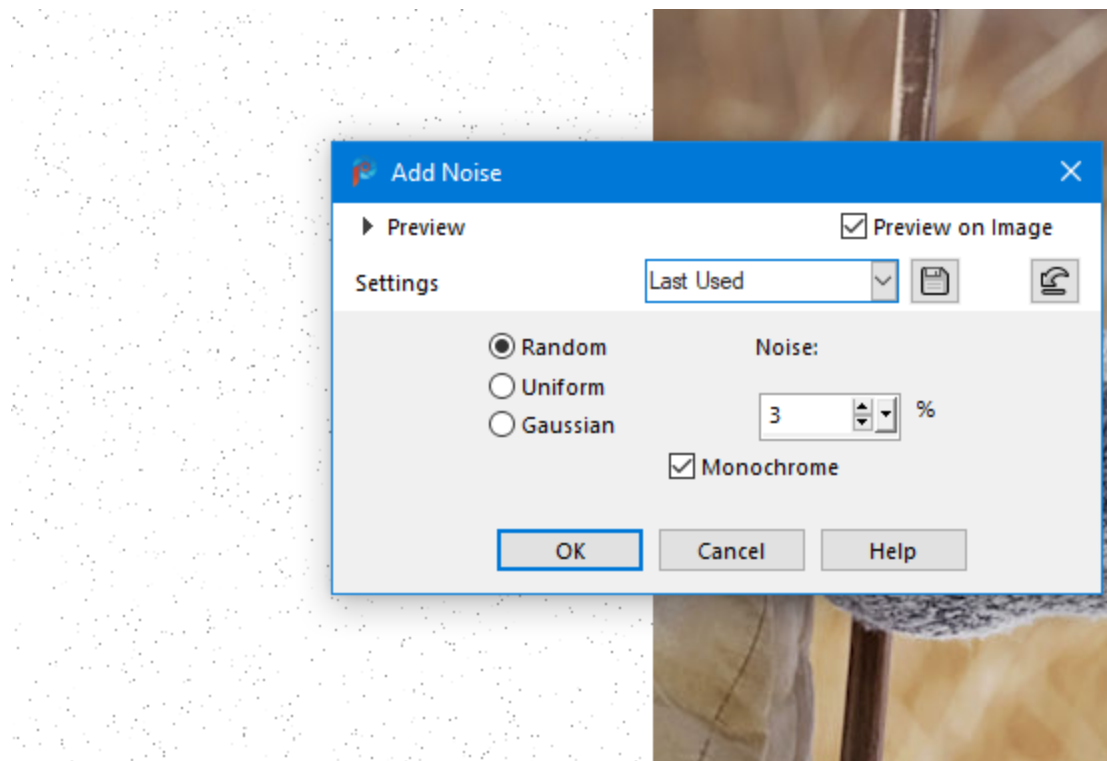Press **Ctrl** + **D** to deselect and remove the selection marquis.

Step 2: Add noise

Zoom in closely on the white area so you'll be able to see the noise that will be added. Go to **Adjust** > **Add/Remove Noise** and select **Add Noise**.
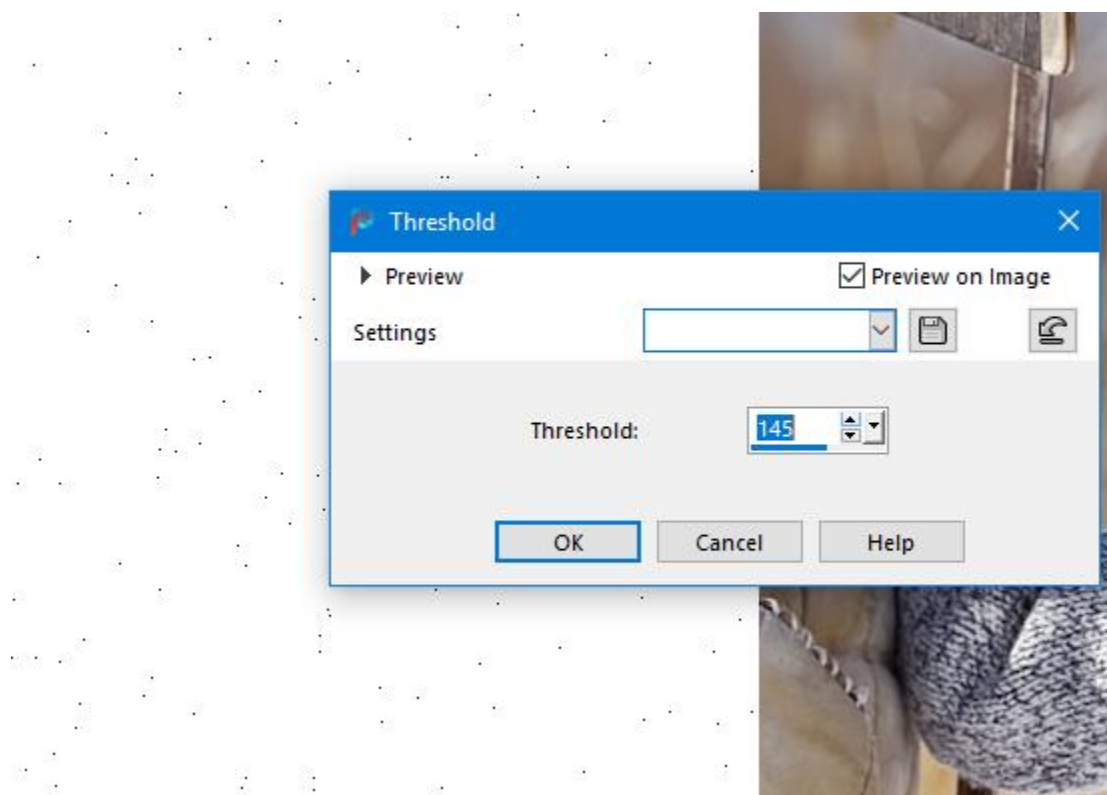
In the **Add Noise** window:

- Make sure **Preview on Image** is checked so you can see how the effect changes as you adjust the following settings.
- Select a **Noise Type**. Any will work; in this example we used **Random**.
- Make sure **Monochrome** is checked so the noise will be shades of gray.
- Adjust the **Noise Amount** percentage until you are happy with the look.
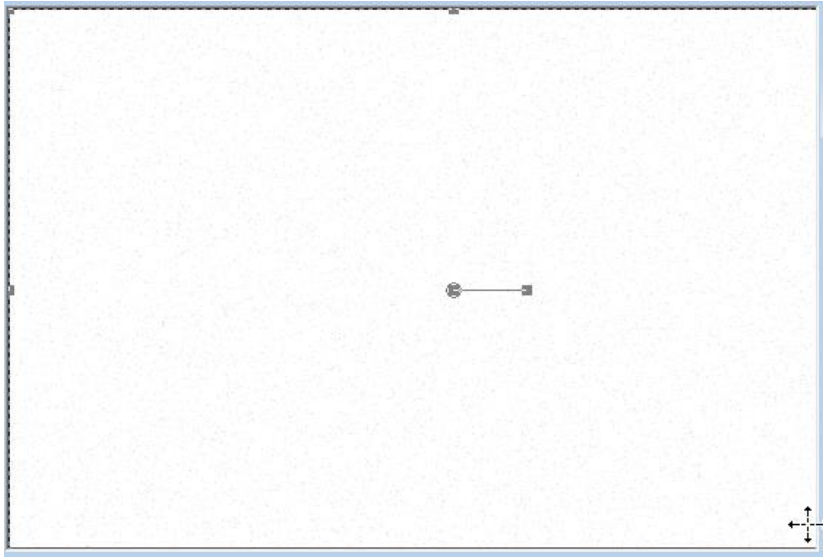- Click **OK**.

TIP: *If you want to greatly reduce the noise density, go to* **Adjust** *>* **Brightness and Contrast** *and select* **Threshold**. *Then adjust the* **Threshold** *slider to find a value at which most of the dots disappear.*

Step 3: Resize the noise effect

With the noise layer still active, activate the **Pick** tool and make sure the mode is set to **Scale**. Drag outward with the **Pick** tool to expand the noise area to cover the photo.

Step 4: Remove the noise background

The next step is to remove the white background of the noise layer, so that only the small greyscale dots are left.

Activate the **Magic Wand** selection tool, and in the **Tool Options** palette set the **Match Mode** to **RGB Value**. Set the **Tolerance** to **0** so that only white will be selected.

With the **Magic Wand**, click on any white area of the noise layer to select all the white, then press **Delete** to remove it.
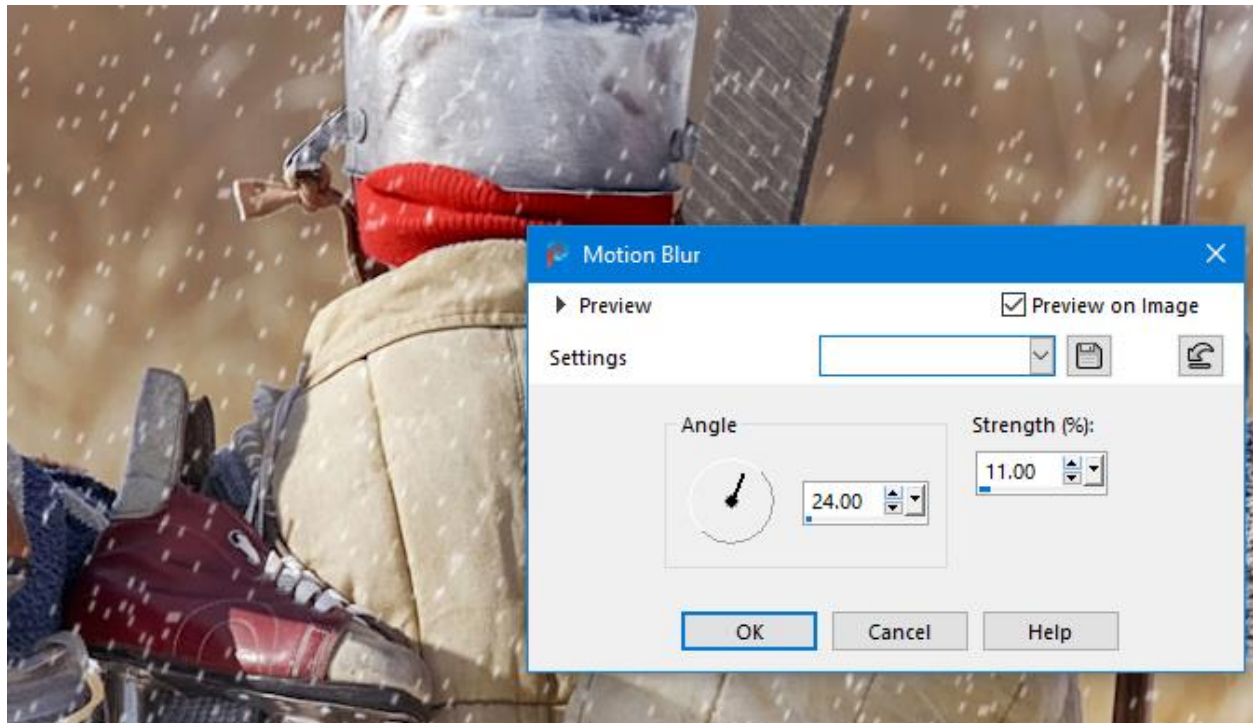
Step 5: Transform the noise to snow!

Press **Ctrl** + **D** to deselect the noise dots, and what remains on this layer is the noise in shades of gray. To change the dots to all white, go to **Adjust** > **Brightness and Contrast** and select **Brightness/Contrast**. Move the **Brightness** slider all the way to the right to the maximum value (255).

To give the snow a more realistic appearance we will add a blur effect. Go to **Adjust** > **Blur** and select **Motion Blur**.

In the **Motion Blur** window, you can adjust the **Strength** percentage to your liking. You can also adjust the **Angle** setting if you want the appearance of blowing snow.

BONUS TIPS:

1. If you find that your snowflakes are too small:

- Make sure the noise layer is the active layer and select the **Pick** tool, set to **Scale** mode.

- Zoom out so you have extra canvas space around your photo.

- Drag outward with the **Pick** tool to increase the size of the noise layer, which results in larger snowflakes.

2. As with method 1, you can duplicate the noise layer for a denser effect, and/or resize the duplicate layer to have snowflakes in different sizes.

How to Add Snow to Other Photos

Once you are happy with the look of your snow effect, you may want to use it on other photos.

If you have another photo open in PaintShop Pro, you can simply copy (**Ctrl** + **C** or **Edit** > **Copy**) the noise layer from the original photo, switch to the new photo and paste it in (**Ctrl** + **V** or **Edit** > **Paste as New Layer**).

Another way to bring the snow effect into a new photo is to drag the noise layer from the **Layers** palette on the original photo into the new image.

Use the **Pick** tool to resize if needed.

Or, if you don't have another photo ready for snow yet, you can save the snow effect as a separate image. You can do this with either type of snow effect we created in this tutorial, and there are two ways to do this:

1. In the **Layers** palette, click on the **Visibility** (eye) icon beside the photo layer to turn off the photo so it is not visible. Then go to **File** > **Save As**, enter a file name and save it in **PNG** format.

OR

2. Drag the noise layer from the **Layers** palette into a blank space on your canvas and this will create a new image. Then use **File** > **Save As** to save it in **PNG** format.

NOTE: *It is important to use **PNG** format when saving your snow effect overlay, since this format will preserve the background transparency.*

Once your snow effect overlay is saved, you can now use it to add snow to other photos at any time.