

Sometimes you want to make a photographic image look very graphic with crisp, sharp edges and high contrast colors. You can do this by first posterizing it in Adobe® Photoshop®, tracing it in Adobe® Streamline® and then editing and finessing the colors and shapes in Adobe Illustrator®. This technique shows you how.

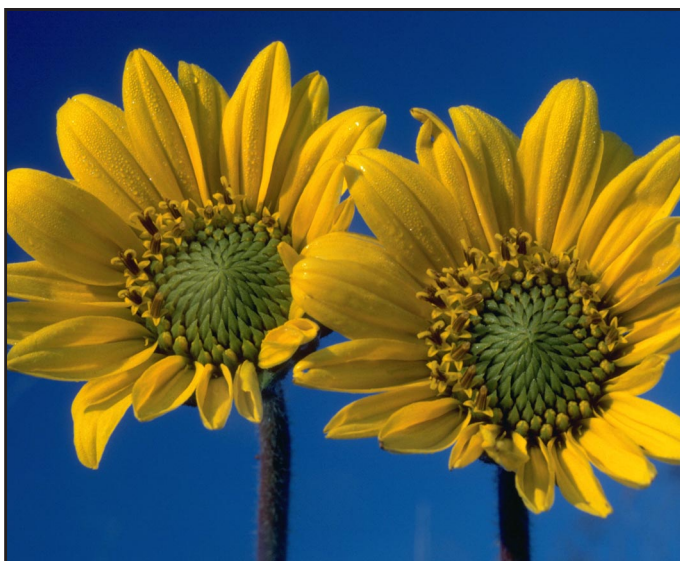


Luanne Seymour Cohen, Creative Director at Adobe Systems, Inc., shares a technique on how to create cool posterized images with Adobe Streamline, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator.

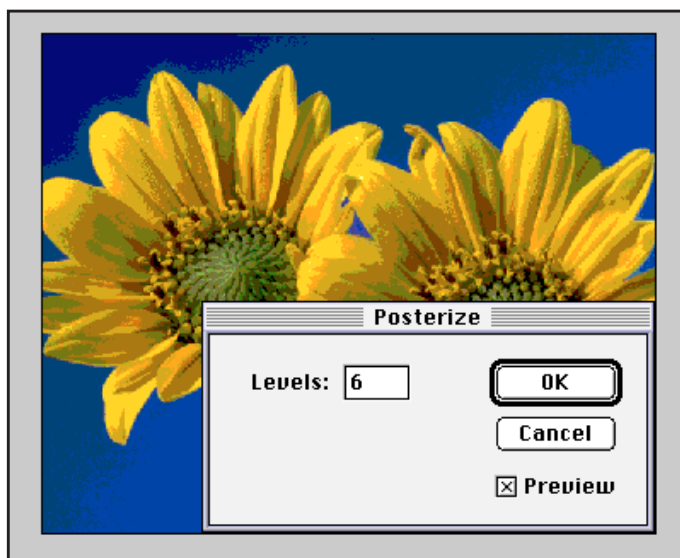
INTERMEDIATE

POSTERIZED IMAGES WITH STREAMLINE

1. Open the original image in Photoshop. For best results, use a higher resolution image. 300-600 pixels per inch will give the best results in Streamline.



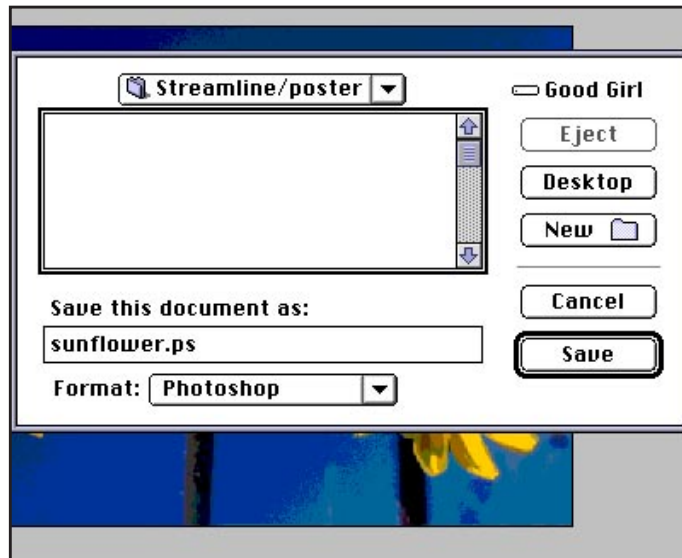
2. To get the best results in Streamline you must first simplify the shapes in your image using Photoshop. To do this choose Image > Adjust > Posterize. Play around with the number of levels, and turn on the Preview button to see the results. Don't worry about the number you end up with, just pick a number that gives you the best shapes while still maintaining detail.



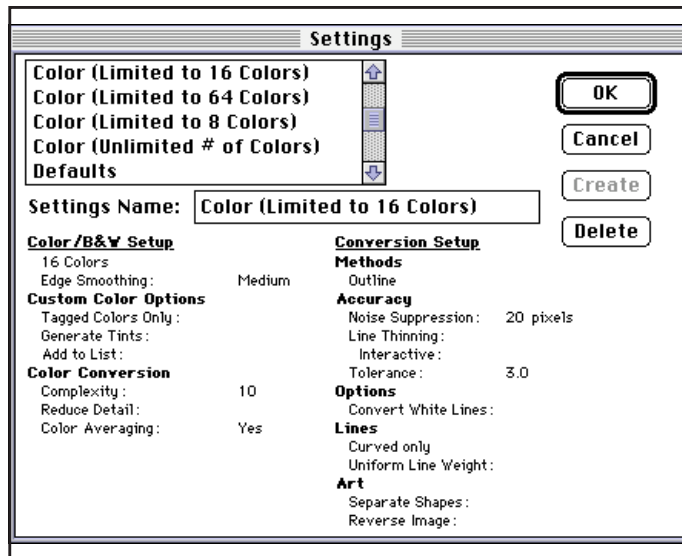
Posterizing in Photoshop

6 levels of posterization means that Photoshop will use 4 tonal values in each channel. This means that for a 3-channel RGB image, you'll end up with 4x4x4 colors or 64 colors.

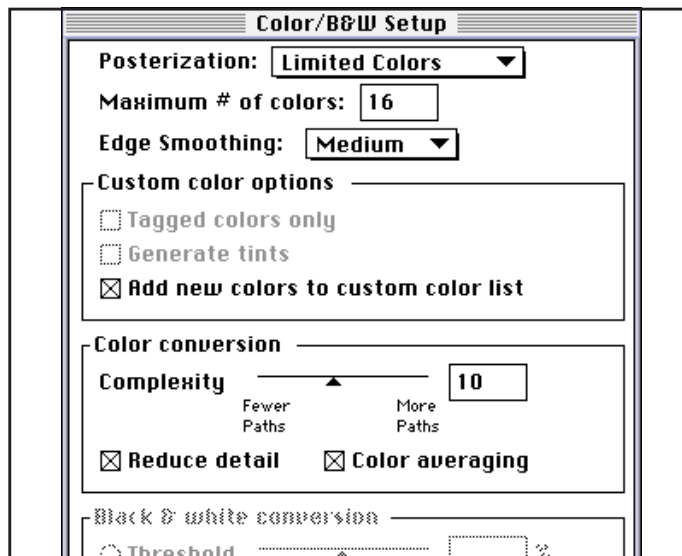
3. Save the file with a new name. You can save the file in TIFF, TIFF compressed, PICT, Photoshop, or Photoshop 2.0 format.



4. Switch to Streamline and open the Photoshop file you just saved. Choose Options > Settings. Select one of the preset Color settings. Don't worry if the number of colors is different from what you want because we will adjust that later.



5. Choose Options > Color/B&W Setup. This is where you will experiment with the Maximum # of colors for your posterization. Select the Add new colors to custom color list. Select Reduce detail. Deselect (for photographic image) or select Color averaging (for images with large areas of color).



Streamline's posterization

Streamline creates a graph of the image color values (histogram). Then it divides the colors evenly into a color palette that contains the number of colors selected in the Color/B&W Setup dialog.

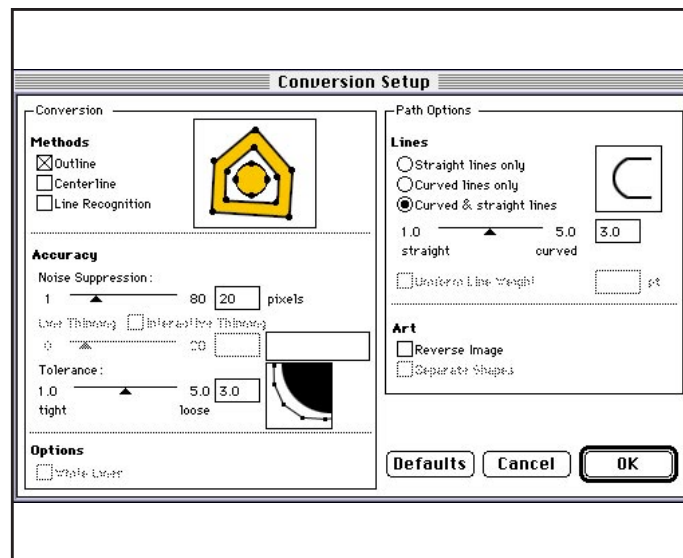
6. Click the Preview button to see how the image's color shapes will be divided up. Keep trying different numbers of colors and complexity levels, (don't forget to click Preview), until you are satisfied with the shapes and level of detail in the preview. The actual colors can be changed later in Illustrator.



Experimentation pays off

In the image at the left, I tried several different color settings starting with 6 colors. I found that 16 was the minimum number I needed to retain the detail in the flower centers. Anything less and the detail I wanted was lost.

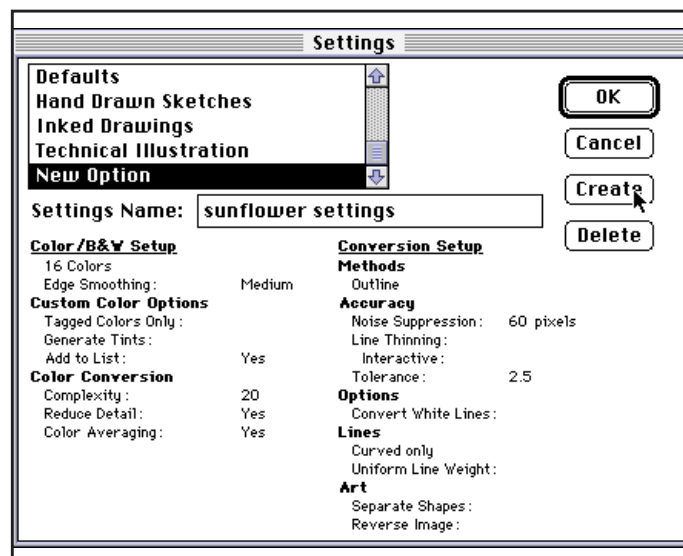
7. Choose Options > Conversion Setup. Choose Outline for a photographic image. If your image has a lot of noise correct it by increasing the Noise Suppression slider. If your image has straight and curved lines, make that selection also.



Noise Suppression

Pixel areas with a diameter measuring the number of pixels selected in the Noise Suppression setting are ignored during conversion.

8. Because you've changed some of the specifications, Streamline has given your settings a new name. You can change it in the Settings dialog if you want, then click Create.



Naming Settings

If you make a change to either the Conversion Setup or Color/B&W Setup after you have saved your settings you will need to resave the new settings with a different name.

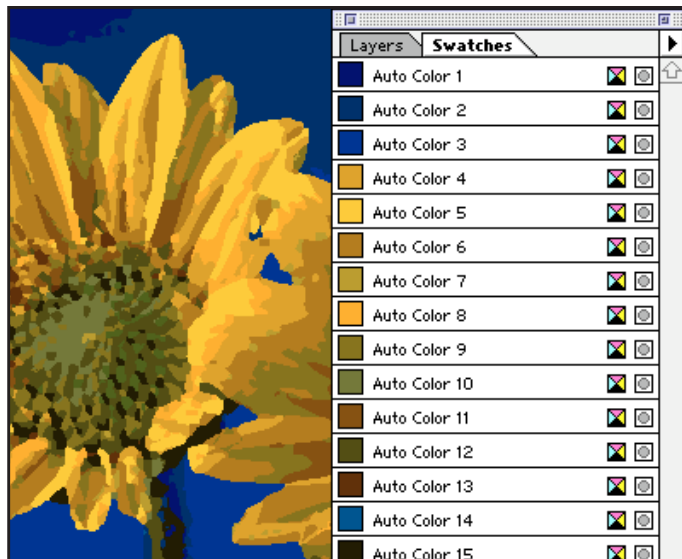
9. Once your settings are adjusted, you are ready to autotrace the image. Choose File > Convert and Streamline will begin the autotrace process. When the tracing is complete, choose File > Save Art As and save in Adobe Illustrator format. Streamline will add or replace a suffix of .ai to the file name.



Smoothing paths

If the shapes that Streamline created are too complex or have too many anchor points, use the Smooth Path feature. Select the path or paths that need simplifying. Choose Edit > Smooth Path. Choose Minimum, Medium or Maximum.

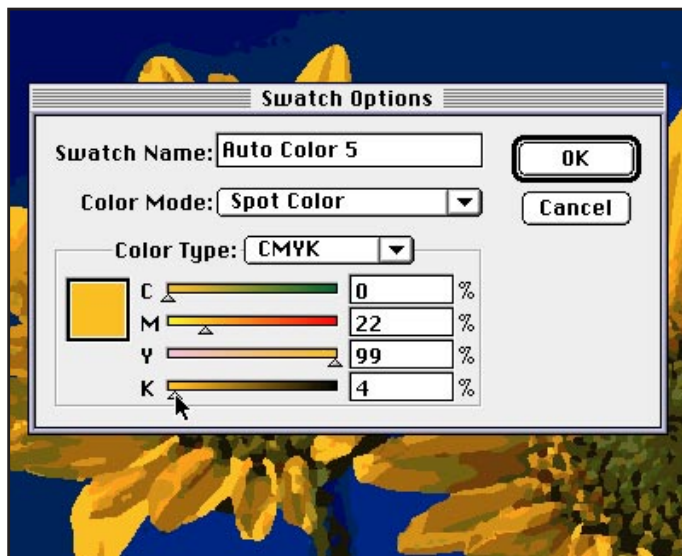
10. Open the .ai file in Illustrator. Choose Window > Show Swatches and view by Name. Notice that there are now several new spot colors at the bottom of the Swatches palette. They are named “Auto Color” followed by a number.



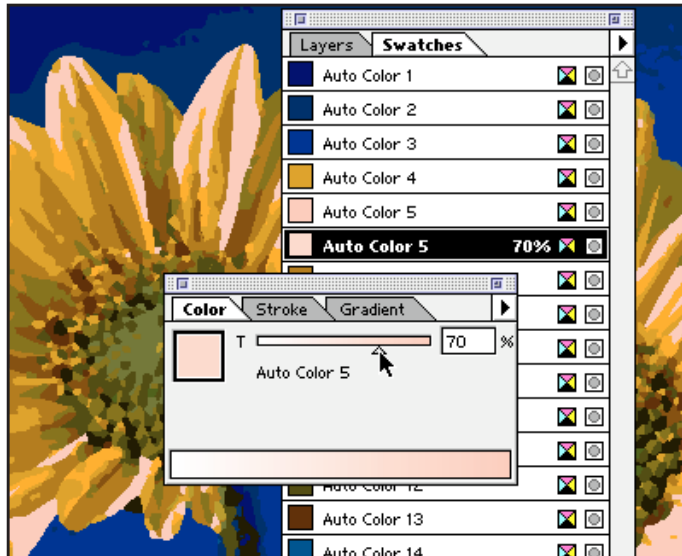
Auto Colors

The colors created by Streamline are named “Auto Color” and are spot colors in Illustrator.

11. To adjust or change a color, double click on an Auto Color in the Swatches palette. Move the Swatch Options dialog so you can see the image. Adjust the sliders to the desired color. The artwork will update in the window so you can preview the new color change. Click OK.



12. To adjust the tone of a spot color, select its name in the Swatches palette and move the slider in the Color palette. The new tonal value of the auto color can then be dragged to the Swatches palette. The added swatch will retain the original color name and have a percentage after it. You can then make a selection in your artwork and target the tonal color.



13. To clean up your file you may want to remove unwanted shapes, breakup complex paths or remove points from a path. To clean up shapes, zoom in on that area. Depending on the complexity of the image you traced, you might have some unwanted lumps and bumps in some of the paths. Use the delete anchor point tool, the scissors tool and/or the knife tool to simplify and split up paths.



14. Once you've removed or simplified the really complex paths, you're done. In the image at the right, I added a gradient and a stroke to the background shape. This adds visual depth to the image.



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Photography: PhotoDisc