

Adding an Edge to your Prints

Adding a black hairline border around our prints can set off the image from the background paper, delineating the exact edge of the photo. If there's a white section of the picture that falls right on the edge (such as clouds or snow), this hairline separates the white subject matter from the white paper background.

There are several ways to add this effect in Photoshop but what I think is the easiest is to use a Layer Effect to “stoke” the image. By using Layer Effects, you can modify the hairline after the fact, or even delete it if you change your mind. Keeping changes editable always is a good idea.

Look at the layer palette and you'll find the background image layer, the bottommost layer. This is a locked layer, noted by the small lock icon. Double-click on this layer to turn it into a regular layer. You can rename this layer, or leave it as the default layer 0.

Now, click the Layer Effects button, the “circled f” icon at the bottom left of the palette and select Stroke from the dropdown menu. This opens the Layer Style dialog box, where you make your choices for size and position of the hairline border. For size, I normally use two or three pixels, depending on my print resolution, but you may find you like a different size for the types of prints you make. Printing at 300 dpi means the line will be 3/300 (1/100) of an inch wide. To make the border show on the image, select Inside as the position.

Now, as you pull over the Size slider, you'll see a border appear on your image. Click on the color square to open the Color Picker and select whatever color you want for your hairline border. Basic black – what I prefer – is 0,0,0 in the RGB boxes, or you can just drag the little circle in the color box to the lower-left corner. Click ok and you've added a Layer Style below the image layer. As long as you don't flatten your image, you can double-click this to modify the effect.