

Senior portraits with signatures—the easiest way...I can find.

Putting senior signatures on top of or just below a senior portrait is very in. Each year I have schools ask me what the best way to get them onto a page is. So I went to my Photoshop experts and asked. Here is their best solution. If you have a better one, I would love to hear it.

We are going for the look of the picture below (After). It is a screen shot directly off of YearTech Online. To get to that point, here is what we did.

1. Create a sheet for the seniors to sign on. Divide it into quadrants and make sure they stay inside the lines. (Figure A) Seniors should sign with a black, sharpie marker with a medium point (that seems to work best) on white paper, staying inside a single box.
2. Scan the sheet. If your scanner has a "line art" setting, use that.
3. In Photoshop, choose Image>Adjustments>Threshold. Drag the slider over until all the signatures are dark black and filled in. If you start seeing a black fringe around them, you went too far.
4. Using the Magic Wand tool, click someplace where it is white.
5. Choose Select>Similar. This should select all the white on the page.
6. With the white selected, click the Refine Edge button in the Control bar. When the dialog box opens change Smoothing to 2 and Feather to 1. Make sure and click the Remember Settings button to save those settings for the other signatures. (Figure B)
7. In the Layers panel, double click the Background layer to make it editable.
8. While all the white is still selected hit Delete or Backspace to delete the white background.
9. Using the Marquee tool, surround each name, Choose Edit>Copy (or type Command [Control on a PC] C) to copy it and then choose File>New. When the dialog box opens, type in the name of the person as the title of the file. In my case, Terry Jones.
10. Choose Edit>Paste (or type Command [Control on a PC] V) to paste it.
11. Choose File>Save As and save the file as a PNG (for YTO). It will ask you if you want it "interlaced" but just leave it normal.
12. Repeat with the other names on that sheet.
13. Upload the signatures to YTO. I suggest you do it page by page and store them in their own subcategory.
14. Place the senior photos first, then create a photo box on top of the senior portrait and drag the PNG file into it. What you will get is what you see in my After shot.
15. One more thing. When I sent this out, I immediately had someone ask how to make the signatures white on a black background. Do this: Once you have removed the background (Step 8) choose Layer Style>Color Overlay and make the overlay color white. Then continue with step 9. (Figure C)

