

Make a Clipping Mask and Text Wrap in Illustrator



Make the Clipping Mask

1. Create a new document in Illustrator.
2. Create a shape, or type in a letter from one of your favourite fonts. I love curvaceous ampersands and got the one I used for the cover image from a font called Ampersands from Da Font. It's free but a donation would be very welcome, I'm sure. Send some love.
3. Select the shape or, if using a letter, select with the Selection Tool, (V) then go to: Object>Create Outlines then again, Object>Ungroup.
4. I copy the outline so I can paste in place later. The action of filling the letter with graphics removes the outline. If the graphics inside share any colour with the background it's sitting on, it loses some shape definition.
5. Select the graphic or photo you want to display through the outline and place on the same layer as your shape.
6. Make sure the graphic is larger than your shape and send it to the back: Object>Send to Back.
7. Select both the shape and the graphic and go to: Object>Clipping Mask>Make. You can go to Object>Clipping Mask>Edit if you want to move the graphic around or scale it to improve the look if you're not happy with the initial result.
8. Paste the outline using the Edit>Paste in Place command and give it an outline stroke for definition.
9. Group all the elements together.

Make the Text Wrap

1. Create a shape, eg, rectangle, square... anything you like.
2. Select the Area Text Tool and Click into the top left inner-corner of your text 'box'. This fills it with placeholder text.
3. Place the filled text box so that it overlaps your clipping mask.
4. Select your clipping mask group, go to Object>Text Wrap>Make.
5. Change the distance between the clipping mask and the text by editing the Text Wrap options: Object>Text Wrap>Options..
6. If nothing has happened, it's because the Text box is in front of the clipping mask. Select the text box and go to Object>Arrange>Send to Back.

You can create your own Drop Caps using this technique and variations of it. It's a little pairing that really earns its keep when creating a layout and you're stuck for images or colour.