GIMP: Working With Layers

Layers are wonderful tools, especially to create collages or to delete various portions of an image.

If you do not see the layers area, go to the dialogs menu and select layers. A new window of layers will appear. Every new canvas starts with one main layer. To turn a layer off, so that it is still present but hidden from view, click the eye icon.

Creating New Layers and Renaming Layers:

To create a new layer, go to the layer menu and select new layer. Enter the information for a new layer; transparency is great for overlapping layers or necessary for deleting portions of an image. Give the layer a name that will help you identify it later, such as background. After all the information is set, click the OK button to finish creating the new layer.

To rename a layer after it is created, highlight the layer, right click it and select edit layer attributes, then type in a new name.
Deleting Portions of an Image With Transparency:
If you desire to delete a portion of a photo and have the deleted portion be transparent, add a new transparent layer, right click the layer and then select merge down. This merges the two layers into one layer with a transparent background. Then, using a selection tool, select the area that is desired to be deleted, then go to the edit menu and select clear. This command will clear the area of the first layer and expose the transparent layer behind it.

Linking Layers:
Although you might want to maintain separate layers for later use individually, you might find that there are a few layers you want to move together. For example text written on a shape would be two separate layers. If you desired to move the text and the shape with it, each layer would move separately. To get layers to move together, click the blank box of each layer you desire to be linked together. A chain link will appear to indicate the layers are linked. If you want to unlink the layers at a later date, click the chain link area again and the layers will once again be separate.
Creating a Collage:
Layers are very useful for creating collages. Open a blank canvas document that will become your collage, by going to the file menu and selecting new. Change the image size selection to inches to see what size the canvas will be; type in the desired size for the collage. Click advanced options to expand the area and set the image resolution. If the collage will be printed, set the resolution for x and y at 150 pixels per inch at the very least. The last step is to set the fill to transparency by clicking the dropdown arrow.

Open an image that you want to use in your collage. Then use the selection tools to highlight an area of interest, go to the edit menu and select copy. Go to the blank canvas, navigate to the edit menu and select paste. The selected portion of the original photo will appear on the blank canvas.
Select and paste various portions of photos onto different transparent layers and move them (for assistance finding the move tool please refer to the GIMP main toolbar handout) to create an artistic photo collection. **Be very careful not to paste photo pieces onto the same layer or you will lose the ability to move the photo pieces individually.** A quick and easy way to **make the pasted photo piece into a new separate layer** (rather than following the steps to create a new layer) is to paste the image on the canvas, highlight the floating section layer, which is the pasted photo, and click the new layer icon. Then move the individual images around by clicking the layer with the photo (this is where naming the layers appropriately helps) you desire to move and then moving the corresponding photo around the empty canvas. To move a different photo, click on the corresponding layer and then move the image. Once you have your collage completed, you can merge all the layers down to create one solid image. To **merge all the layers at once**, **right click a layer** and select merge visible layers. Once this step is complete, if you attempt to move the image, you will move all images at once.

**Arranging Layers:**
To change the order of the layers, for example to drop one layer beneath another as seen below with the orange colored shape, highlight a layer you desire to move, then use the up and down icons to control the arrangement of the layers.