Glass Ball - viewed 493,439 times

Introduction

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During the course of this Photoshop tutorial we're going through 9 major steps to create a glass ball. The main goal of this tutorial is that you get an idea how to approach this. It's not that important to remember all settings, but it's more important that you understand what's exactly happening.

The tutorial is divided into 5 main areas:

- Preparing the background and drawing the basic shape (step 1 and 2)
- Filling the shape with gradients and layer styles (step 3 to 6)
- Adding a highlight (step 7)
- Adding a shadow (step 8)
- Adding distortions (step 9)

Note: Photoshop tutorial is spread over two pages. Click on **2** (top or bottom) to go to the second page.

Some important things you need to know about this tutorial:

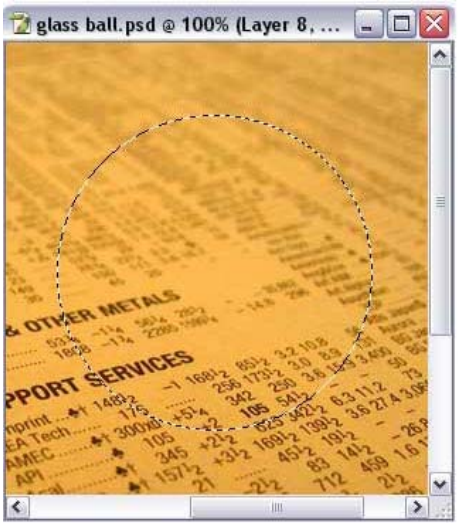
- The tutorial is **only** recommended for people with intermediate and advanced Photoshop experience
- The tutorial was tested many times by us and many other people and we're pretty sure that it doesn't contain any bugs
- It's important that you read very carefully and copy **everything** what is shown in the screenshots
- Doing this tutorial too fast will most likely result in failure
- This is a hollow glass ball, reason why the background inside the ball is not upside down as with a solid glass ball

1. Prepare the document

Save the following file called Newspaper on your computer (**right click** on the link and select in Windows **Save Target As...**).

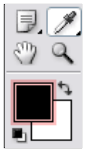
For this tutorial I've chosen to go for a rather small file (640x480 pixels), just to make it easier for you to see what you're doing.

Open the file in Photoshop. Add a new layer by clicking on the **Create a new layer** icon .
Grab the **Elliptical Marquee** tool from your toolbar and make a selection (hold down the shift key before you make the selection to make the selection a perfect circle) somewhere in the area and with the size that I'm showing here:

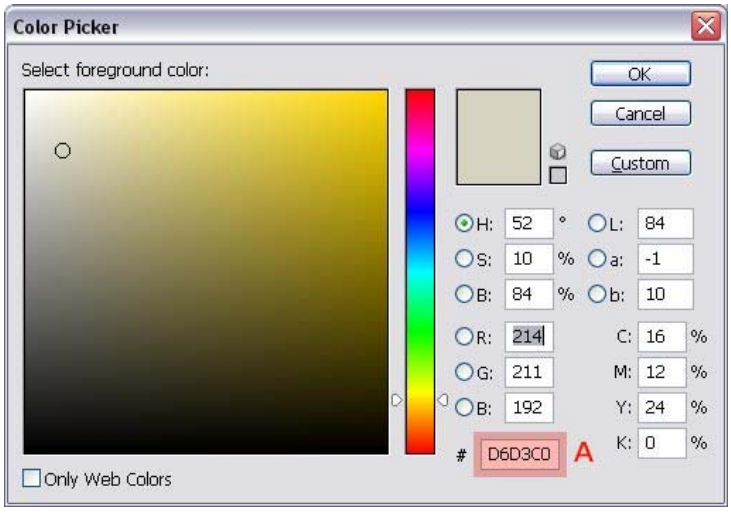


2. Fill the selection with the base color of the glass ball

Click on the **foreground** color in the tool bar marked with red in this screenshot:



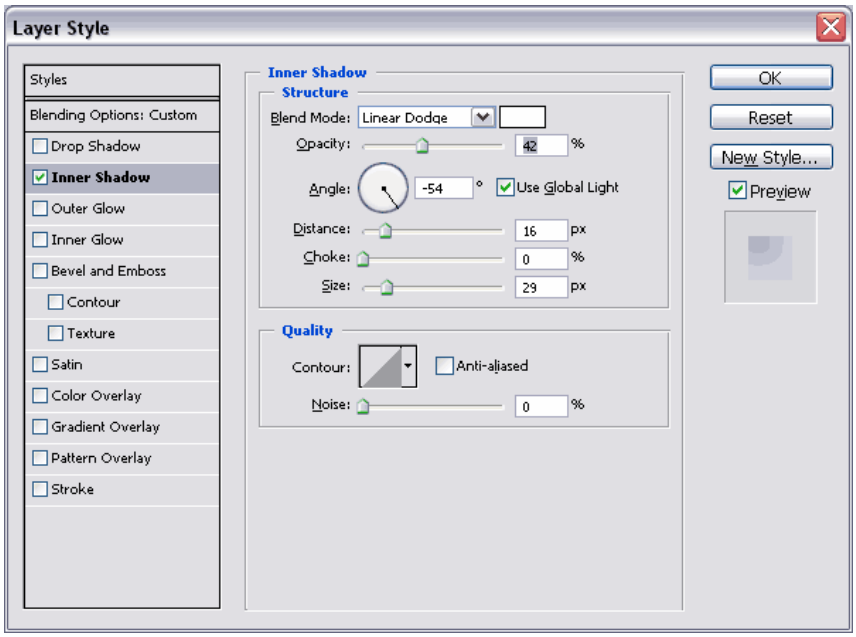
In the **Color Picker** window that opens you enter the value **D6D3C0** in the area marked with **A**:



Grab the **Paint Bucket Tool** and fill the selection with this color.
Press **Ctrl +D** (Command + D on the Mac) to get rid of the selection. You can also use the menu to do this: **Select/Deselect**.

3. Add a layer style

Go to the layers palette and click on the **Add a Layer Style** icon and select **Inner Shadow** and use the settings shown here (watch out: the color **white** is selected):



The result should look like this:

4. Add a gradient

Add a new layer by clicking on the **Create a new layer** icon .

Clip this layer with the layer underneath by pressing **Ctrl + G** (Command + G on the Mac) or **Ctrl + Alt + G** (Command + Option + G on the Mac) if you use Photoshop **CS2**.

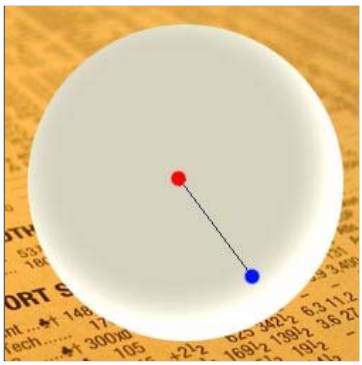
A clipping layer only affects the layer underneath. You'll see soon what I mean.

Change the background color in the tool bar and use the following color: **65645F**. We're now going to draw a gradient using the current fore- and background colors. Select the Gradient Tool in the toolbar (if it's not visible, then look under the Paint Bucket tool).

Take a short look at the next screenshot. Make sure that a linear gradient (**B**) is selected in the options bar at the top and that the option Reverse (**C**) is selected. (mode should be normal, opacity 100%, dither and transparency should be both selected, but in most cases they're probably already having the right values)

If you don't see a gradient that uses your colors at **A** which should look like this , then double click on the gradient in the options bar (**A**) and select the gradient from the list (most likely the first one) and click OK.

Start in the middle where you see the **red** dot and end where you see the **blue** dot (Just before the area where the main color is getting lighter).



The result should look like this:

Press the letter **D** on your keyboard, which makes the foreground color black, the background color white:

Add a Layer Mask to this layer by clicking on the Add Layer Mask icon . Don't you worry if it switches the fore- and background color when you do this, this is normal behavior. **Note:** If the fore- and background colors look like this after you added the mask, then everything is ok. If they are switched, then just click on the double arrow points icon to correct this.

The Gradient Tool is still active, but this time we need a Radial Gradient. Select the Radial Gradient in the options bar (the one beside the linear gradient (marked B in our previous screenshot of the options bar))

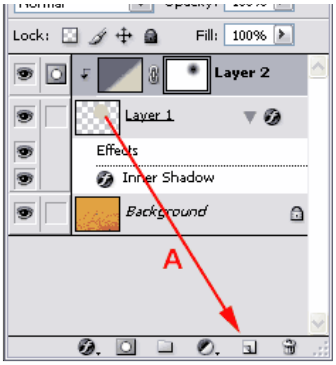
With the layer mask still active (It will have a double border), create a radial gradient by starting in the middle and stopping at the outher edge of our circular shape.

By this time we should you have something like this:

5. Add more layer styles

We're now going to duplicate our **Layer 1**.
Click on its icon in the layers palette, hold down the mouse button and drag (**A**) the

layer to the **Create a new layer** icon and release the mouse button.



The next step is to move this duplicate (that has now become the layer with name **Layer 1**) to the top of our layers palette; click on **Layer 1** and drag (**B**) it all the way up until you notice a dark black line appearing above the top layer. At that moment release the mouse button.

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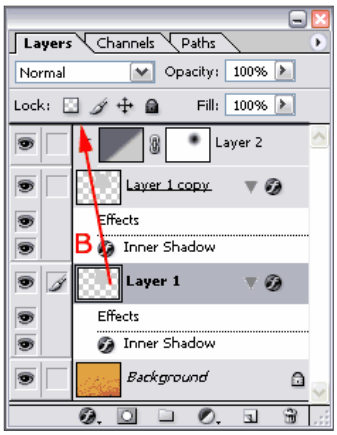
Warning for users of Photoshop CS2 or later : it turns out that **Photoshop CS2** changes **Layer 2** back to a normal layer, one that is not clipped, when we duplicate **Layer 1**. To correct that make sure **Layer 2** is active and press **Ctrl + Alt + G** (Command + Option + G on the Mac). Again, this should only be done in Photoshop CS2.



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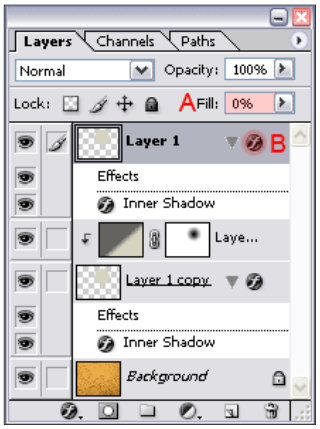
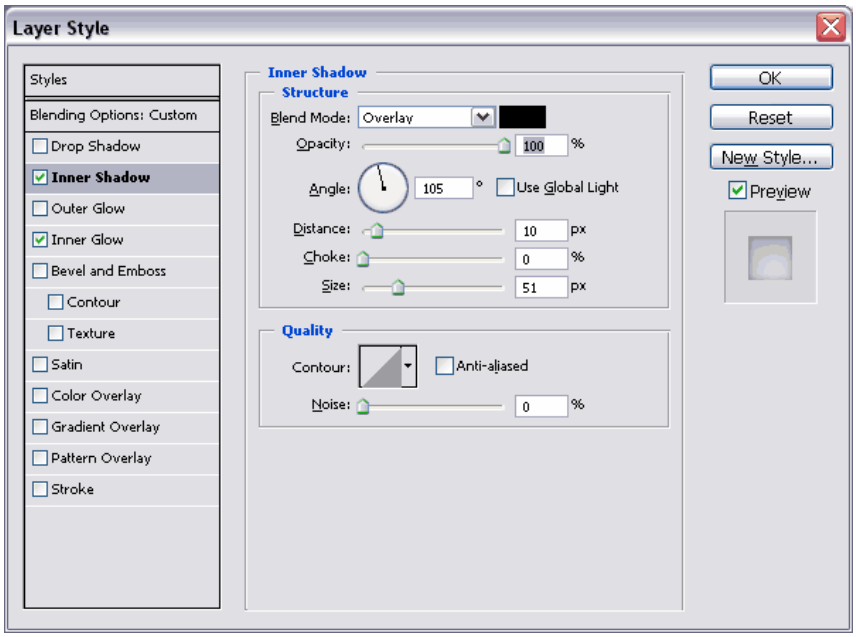
Make sure that Layer on (our new top layer) is active (you will notice the in front of it).

Set the **Fill** of this layer to **0%** (**A**) and then double click on the **Layer Style** icon (**B**) to modify the Layer Style of this layer:

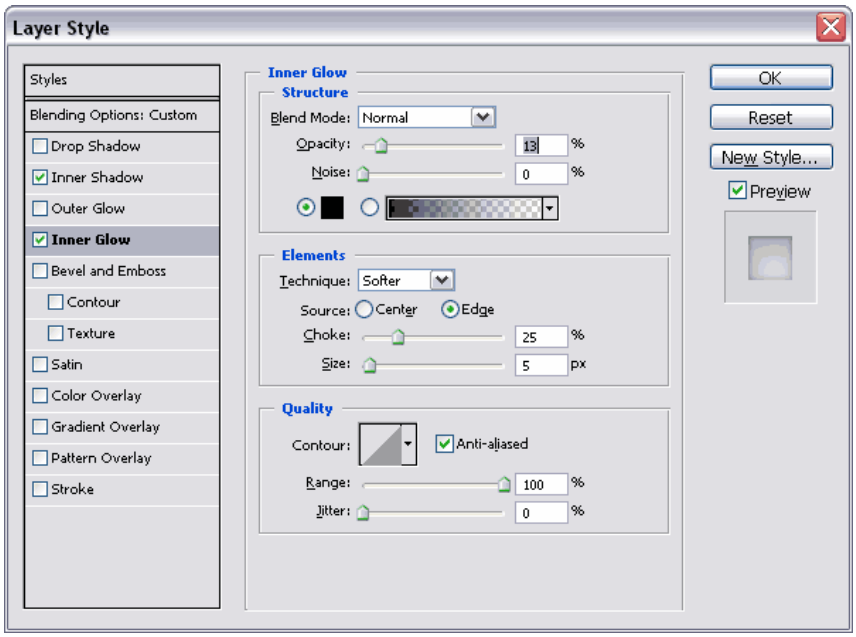


Use the following effects settings for the layer style. Make sure that all settings are exactly the same, including color or blending mode settings.

Inner Shadow
(pay special attention to the option **Use Global Light**, because it's **not** selected! Also notice that we have a black rectangle beside the **Blend Mode**; double click it if yours is not black, to change its color!)



Inner Glow

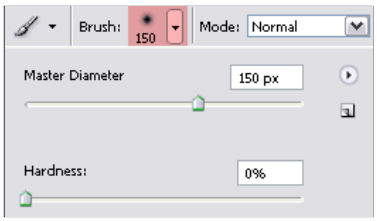


After this our image should look something like this:

6. Add more volume

Add a new layer by clicking on the **Create a new layer** icon .

Select the **Brush Tool** in the tool bar.
Click on the area of the options bar that I've marked in red and select a **150px** brush, with a hardness of **0%**, which is the softest brush you can use.

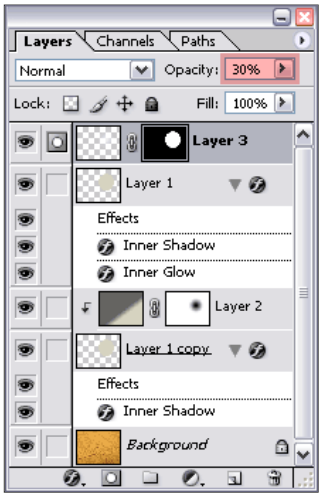


Set the **foreground** color to **white**.
Click once with this brush exactly in the middle of this new layer (**Layer 3**). Now go to the menu and select **Filter/Effects /Gaussian Blur...** and select a **radius** of **25** and click **OK**.

Note: because we've blurred the white dot, white pixels might appear outside the area that we have defined as our glass ball, so we have to get rid of it. It's quite simple and we're going to use a little 'trick' for that.

With the top layer (**Layer 3**) still active we **Ctrl + click** (Command + click on the Mac) on the **thumbnail** of the layer underneath this layer (**Layer 1**) which will load it's shape (the ball) as a selection and all we have to do now is to click on the **Add Layer Mask** icon and we've got rid of all white pixels outside our glass ball.

Now change the **opacity** of this layer to **30%**. This screenshot also shows how your layer palette should look like at this moment:



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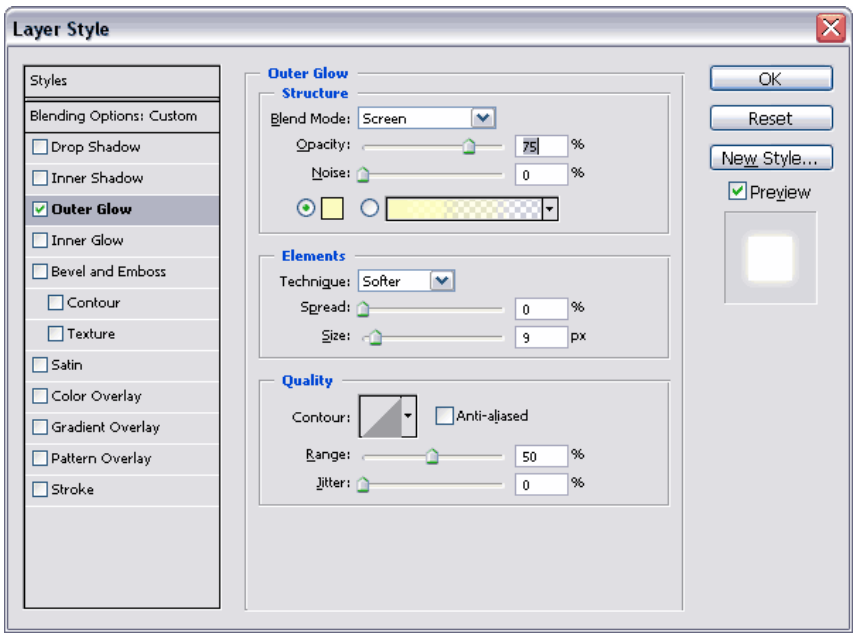
7. Create a highlight

Add a new layer in Photoshop by clicking on the **Create a new layer** icon and that's going to be **Layer 4**.

Select the **Brush Tool** and use a hard brush (**hardness** is **100%**) with a size of **20**. Change the foreground color to white (or a very slight yellow (close to indoor light) using a value of **FFFFE8**).

Place the highlight in the location shown here:

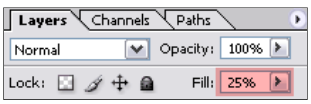
Go to the menu and select **Effects/Blur/Gaussian Blur...** and select a small radius of **.5** and click **OK**.
Go to the layers palette and click on the **Add a Layer Style** icon to add a layer style and select the **Outer Glow** effect and use the settings shown here:



8. Add a shadow

First make the **Layer 1 copy** (the one above the background layer) the active layer by clicking on it; a will appear in front of it.

Now set the **Fill** of this layer to 25%



You'll notice that by doing that, that we're are getting closer to the final result:

If the bottom is too bright (marked with the arrow), then just select the Layer Style of **Layer 1 copy** and lower the **opacity** of the **Inner Shadow** effect (or increase it if that's what you prefer).

We now click on the background layer with the newspaper image on it, to make it active.
Add a new layer by clicking on the **Create a new layer** icon .

With this layer (**Layer 5**) active we click on **Ctrl + click** (Command + click) on the **thumbnail** of the layer above (the one with glass ball, **Layer 1 copy**). The result is a selection in layer 5 that is based on this glass ball.

Press the letter **D** on your keyboard, which makes the foreground color black, the background color white

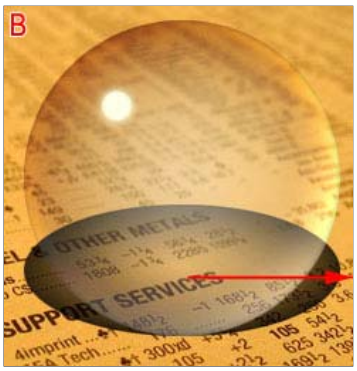
We're now going to draw a gradient using the current foreground color (**black**) in combination with transparency. Select the **Gradient Tool** in the toolbar (if in it's not visible, then look under the **Paint Bucket** tool).

Make sure that a **Radial Gradient** (**B**) is selected in the options bar at the top and that the option **Reverse** (**C**) is selected.

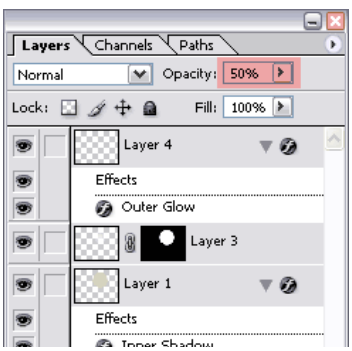
If you don't see a gradient in your options bar (**A**), that looks like one going from transparency to black, then double click on the gradient in the options bar (**A**) and select the gradient from the list (the one right beside **D**) and click **OK**.

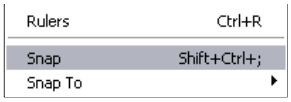
Draw the gradient by starting in the middle of your selection and end at the edge of this same selection.

We're now going to transform this selection in an elliptical shape by using the transform tool. Go in the menu to **Edit/Free transform** or press **Ctrl + T** (Command + T on the Mac). A rectangular box with 8 handles will appear.
Now pull the upper center handle downward (see **A**) until you have a shape that looks like the one in **B**.
Now press **enter** on your keyboard to complete the transformation and press **Ctrl +D** (Command + D on the Mac) to get rid of the selection. You can also use the menu to remove the selection: **Select/Deselect**.

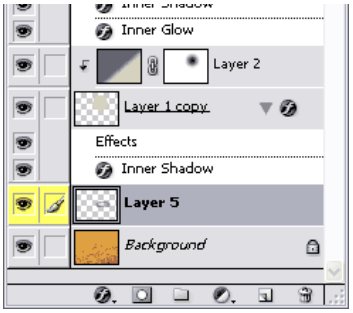


We now have to move this shadow to the right (**B**). Be aware that the arrow only marks the direction, **not** the distance.
Select the **Move Tool** in your tool bar.
To move the selection, click on the shape and while holding the mouse button move the shape in place. Have a look at screenshot **C** to see where you should place this shadow. If your shadow seems to jump while you try to move it, then go to the menu and select **view** and make sure that **Snap** is turned **off**:





Now change the **opacity** of this layer to **50%**. In the menu we select **Filter/Blur /Gaussian Blur...** and select a **radius** of **2** and click **OK**. On the right you can see how the layers palette should look like after you've done all steps (in this screenshot I marked the color of the shadow layer with yellow).



9. Deform inside of glass ball and shadow

In this last step we're going to deform the image inside the glass ball. Make sure that our shadow layer (**Layer 5**) is still active and **Ctrl + click** (Command + click) on the **thumbnail** of the layer above (the one with glass ball, **Layer 1 copy**). The result is a selection in layer 5 that is based on this glass ball (like we did in step 8).

Now got to the menu and select **Filter/Distort/Spherize...**
Select for **Amount** the value **100%** and make sure that **Normal** is selected for **Mode**. Click **OK**.
The shadow is now deformed.

Make the background layer active and press **Ctrl + F** (Command + F on the Mac).
Note: Ctrl + F will always apply the filter that was used previously, in our case **Spherize**.

That was our final step and this is the result:

Tutorial Update - Improving the highlight

In this update we're going to improve the highlight. Click on **Layer 4** that contains our highlight to make it active.
We are now going to transform the highlight by pressing **Ctrl + T** (command + T on the Mac) and entering a value of **65%** for **Horizontal Scale** (**A**) and a value of **45** for Rotation (**B**) and press **enter** twice:

This makes the highlight look more like an actual part of the ball:

Final words

It's important to know that you have to select a background with colors that are not the total opposite of the colors we selected in the beginning of our tutorial when you want to use this technique.

You can make the ball even more realistic by adding more highlights or reflections. For the purpose of this tutorial I've kept it simple by adding just one single highlight.

Also be aware that once you deform the shadow or inside of the ball that you're not able to move the ball, since both deformations are of course in a way "connected" to the background. So make sure that the glass ball is in the right place, before you start with the deformations. Make sure that your background is not to plain. A real glass ball doesn't look cool either on white piece of paper in front of a white wall. Always try to use the environment to strengthen the effects you're using to make the result look more realistic.

Note: Several people have commented saying that the background inside the ball should be upside down. These people are wrong, because that's only the case with solid glass balls, this tutorial however is about a hollow glass ball and inside a hollow glass ball the background is not upside down. You can double check that by looked at a glass christmas ball.

This whole tutorial should be seen as a step in the right direction.

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If you like the final result, that's fine with me, but there will always be people who want to take this a step further. My advice; buy a glass ball or collect images of glass balls. It's the best way to study highlights, shadows and reflections, which can be rather complicated at times.

I hope you enjoyed this tutorial.

For more help with Photoshop check out our Training section.

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