

An update – making your own bottle labels for your home-brew beer

I did a post a few months back about making labels for your home-brew and recently it seems to be the most read post on our blog and I've noticed it being passed around on some of the brewing forums for folk who are asking for advice on making their own labels. Since I wrote the original I've made a whole heap of new labels so I thought it might be time for a quick update on what I'm doing and maybe some more hints and tips that I didn't post last time. The blog post I did is still available if you want to have a look –



- <http://www.elidonald.co.uk/blog/making-your-own-labels-and-pump-clips-for-your-home-made-beer/>

If you hadn't read it previously I'd say go read that post and come back as there is some useful information there that will set you up to get started.

You read it? Good then lets look at some new labels and how I did them.

My labels – how did I choose that design?

I actually didn't start off with that design for my bottles. I've gone through a whole process of trying out different labels until I found the one that got me most

excited and although at the minute I am really pleased with them, they are not perfect but I'll tell you more about that later.

My first label idea was based on the Brewdog labels. I liked the bold colours and text of the design and I liked the slightly grungy look so I had a play about with how I could recreate that kind of idea.



My first attempt was for a coopers lager kit I did, so of course thinking of Australian lager, I made the label yellow. Looking back, it's not a brilliant label not least because of the poor choice of yellow background with white lettering which wasn't easy to read. Also it

was a bit cluttered. I tried to put a name for the beer, details about what it looked and tasted like, the style, the percentage, a logo for my "brewery" and some information about pouring it since it had yeast in the bottle. An awful lot of info to get onto a little square of paper. Things did continue to evolve though.

I switched colours mostly, so each beer had the same label but with the background as a different colour. Red for Goblin Queen, Purple for Heather Ale etc. But I mostly stuck with this design, just adding a couple of little bits to grunge it up a bit and it worked fine for a while, all our beers had this label on them and together they looked quite cool sitting on a shelf and I was pretty proud.



However the grunginess and the massive amounts of text started to annoy me and I wanted something simple and bold. Something modern. So I scrapped it all and started with a blank, white square and said, "What text actually NEEDS to be there?" And the scary thing is, not as much as you think.

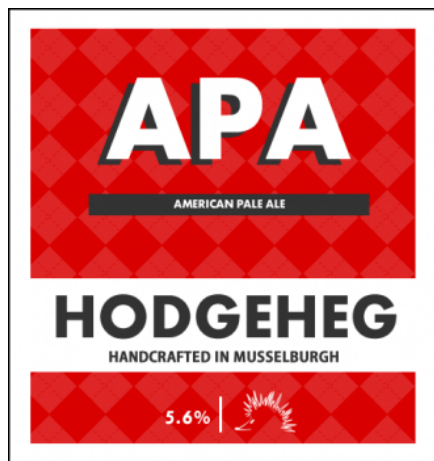
So I went for a very stripped down version, just a square of bold colour and the text I needed in a plain bold font. It worked out great and I am still using this idea although tweaked ever so slightly.



So how do I make the labels?

Ok, I normally use a piece of software called Fireworks to

make my labels but since there are lots of free versions of graphics software out there, I'm going to show you how I would create a simple version of this label using one of the pieces of software you can get for free.



First download a piece of software called GIMP from this webpage and install it. <http://www.gimp.org/>

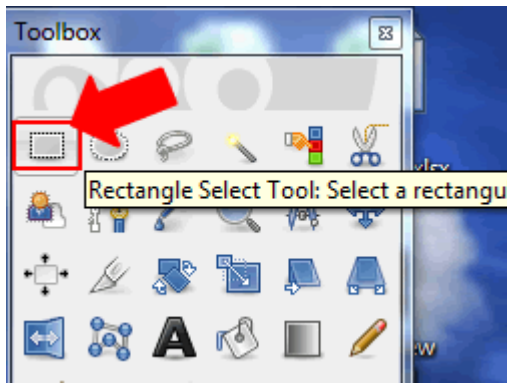
Creating your label

step 1- get started

ok once you have GIMP open on your computer you need to create a new work area. Simply done, click FILE and then NEW. This gives you a choice of sizes to play with. For this label I usually make it around 500 pixel each length so I choose the template from the drop box which nearest fits this size – 640 by 480.

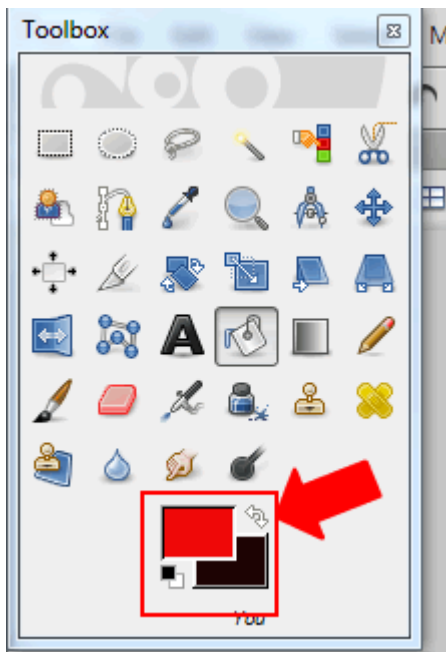
step 2 – draw your label outline

Click on the rectangle tool on the tool box.

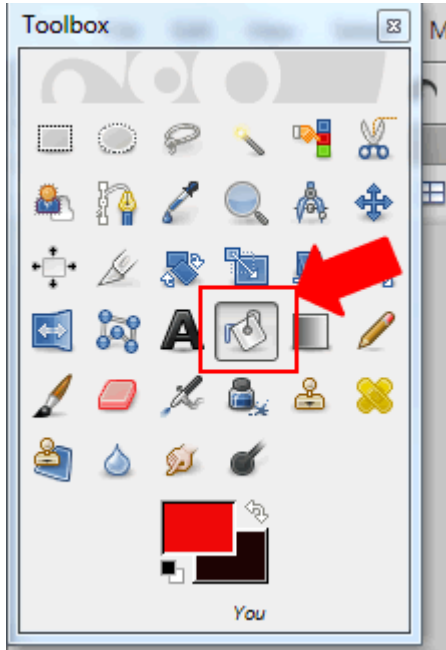


Then drag the rectangle shape to the rough size you want.

To colour the rectangle, double click on the colour box and then choose the colour you want from the pop up window.



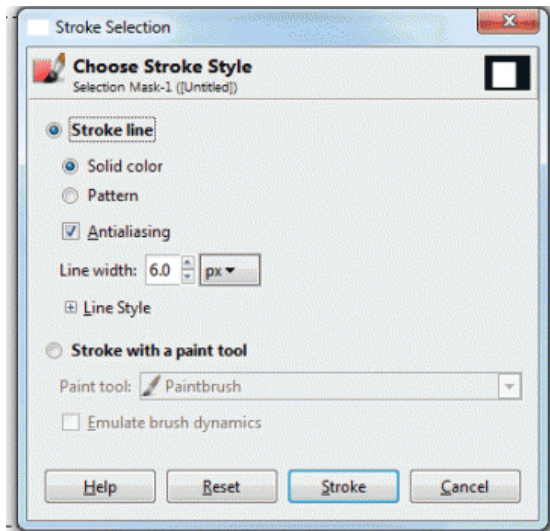
Now to fill your rectangle with the colour you have chosen, click on the fill tool and then on your rectangle. I chose white but you can choose any colour you like.



The next thing we want to do is to create the black outline around the rectangle. To do this we have to choose the background colour. On the graphic above you can see the colour boxes are red and black, red is the foreground colour and black is the background colour. You can either change the foreground colour (as you did previously) or you can switch them around by clicking the little white arrows on the top right of the colour boxes.

However you do it, for this example we want to give our rectangle a black outline so make your colour black.

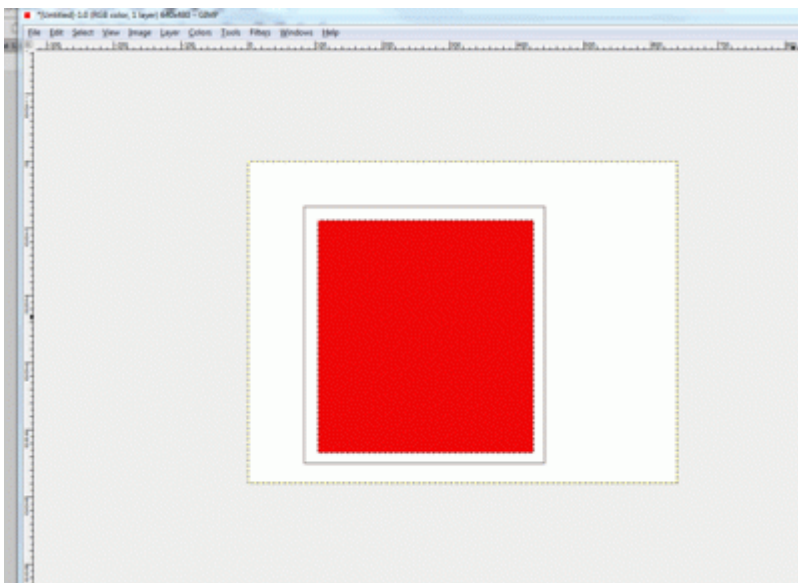
Then using the menus at the top of the screen, click on EDIT, then STROKE SELECTION. It will now open the window where you can edit the outline.



For this example I am going to change my stroke settings to have a solid line and a line width of 1 px then click STROKE.

step 3 – draw your centre rectangles

You should now have a white rectangle with a black outline on the screen. The next thing we are going to do is add another rectangle in the middle of the first and colour it red. We do this in exactly the same way as before. Click on the rectangle tool, draw your rectangle and then use the colour picker and fill tool to colour it, in this instance red.



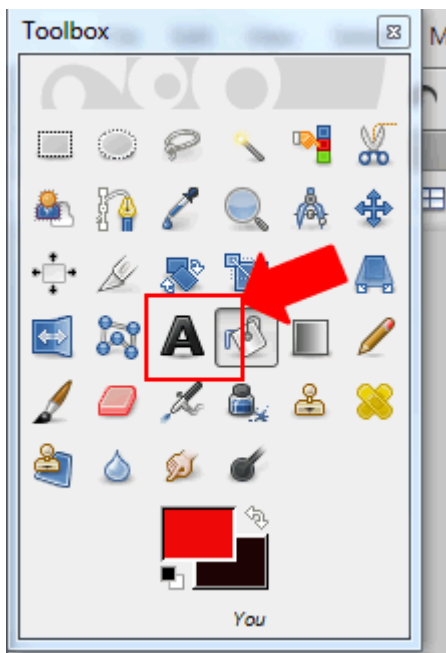
Now you are rocking!

Right next we are going to add the white band where you put the name of your brewery. Exactly the same as before choose the rectangle tool, then draw it out where you want it and then use the colour tool and fill tool to colour it white.

step 4 – adding text

Now we have the basic shapes in place, we are going to add the text. Firstly the name of the beer. in the example I am calling my beer APA, for American Pale Ale.

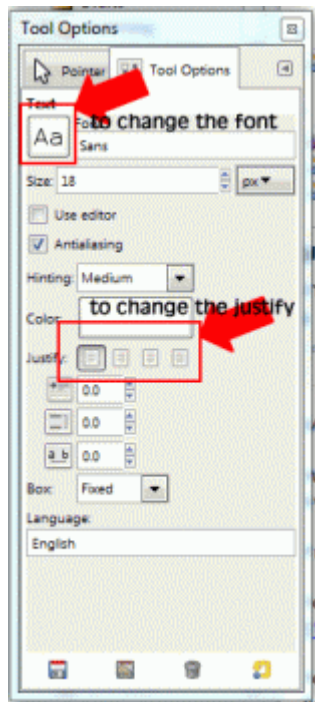
From the toolbox, click on the bold A in the centre, this is your text tool.



As you did for your rectangles, draw out the area you want your text to go. It's good to make it much bigger than you need for the minute, you can always make it smaller later.

Inside the space you have just drawn, double click and then type the text you want. A text tool bar will appear which will allow you to change the size or colour. Get everything as you want it by highlighting the text you just written and then using this bar to make changes.

To adjust the font or the position of the text, you can do this from the tool options on the left.



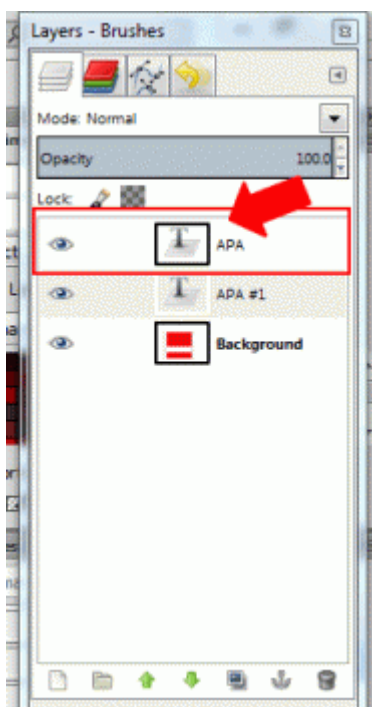
On my example I have text that looks like it has a dark shadow. I made this by having two pieces of text. One white and one black. Then I moved one on top of the other.

To move an item such as text, click on the moving tool from the tool box and then click on the item and drag it to where you want it to be.



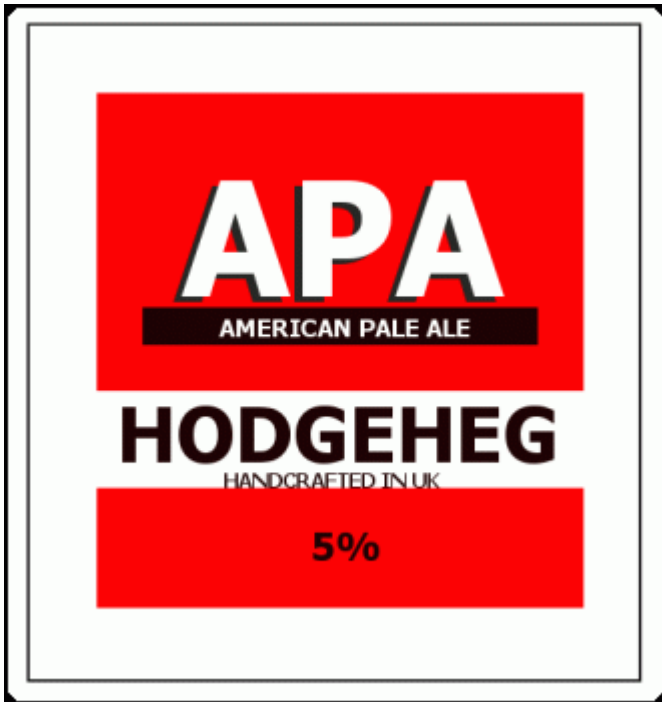
The other tool you need to know about is the layers toolbox. It allows you to move layers to have one on top of the other. In this case the white text on top of the black text.

The layer which you want to be on top, will be top of the list. For example, our white rectangle is the back, then next is the red one, then the black text and then the white text as this is the order we want them to appear.



Adjust yours so that your text appears as you want it.

You now use this same set of tools to add your other text elements to your label and in the end you should end up with something similar to this.



step 5 – saving your graphic

Right, you've created a brilliant label that you are super proud of. Now you want to save it so you can print it and use it on your new beer.

The first thing you want to do is get rid of any of the excess white area (or canvas) around your graphic.

From the menu at the top of the screen, click IMAGE. Then click FIT CANVAS TO SELECTION. this will take out all the excess canvas for you.

Lastly we want to save your creation, so to do this, click FILE and then EXPORT. This will open a window where you can choose the type of file to save and give it a name. I'd recommend using the little cross on the bottom left to choose

SELECT FILE TYPE and then from the list that appears choose GIF.

Now at the top, give your file a name and then click EXPORT.

