

Making Test Prints

In Photoshop

Camera Club of Laguna Woods Village

April, 2025 - V1

Why Make Test Prints?

Your eye is not a consistent judge of prints.

- Test prints safely evaluate edits
- Test prints quickly show a range of results for edits
- **Test prints help determine “how far” to push an edit**
- Test prints save money

- Use the same computer, paper & printer for test & final prints -

Original Image

This is the original image, named “nick-hat”, which is unaltered. We will create test prints for this image to optimize the final print.

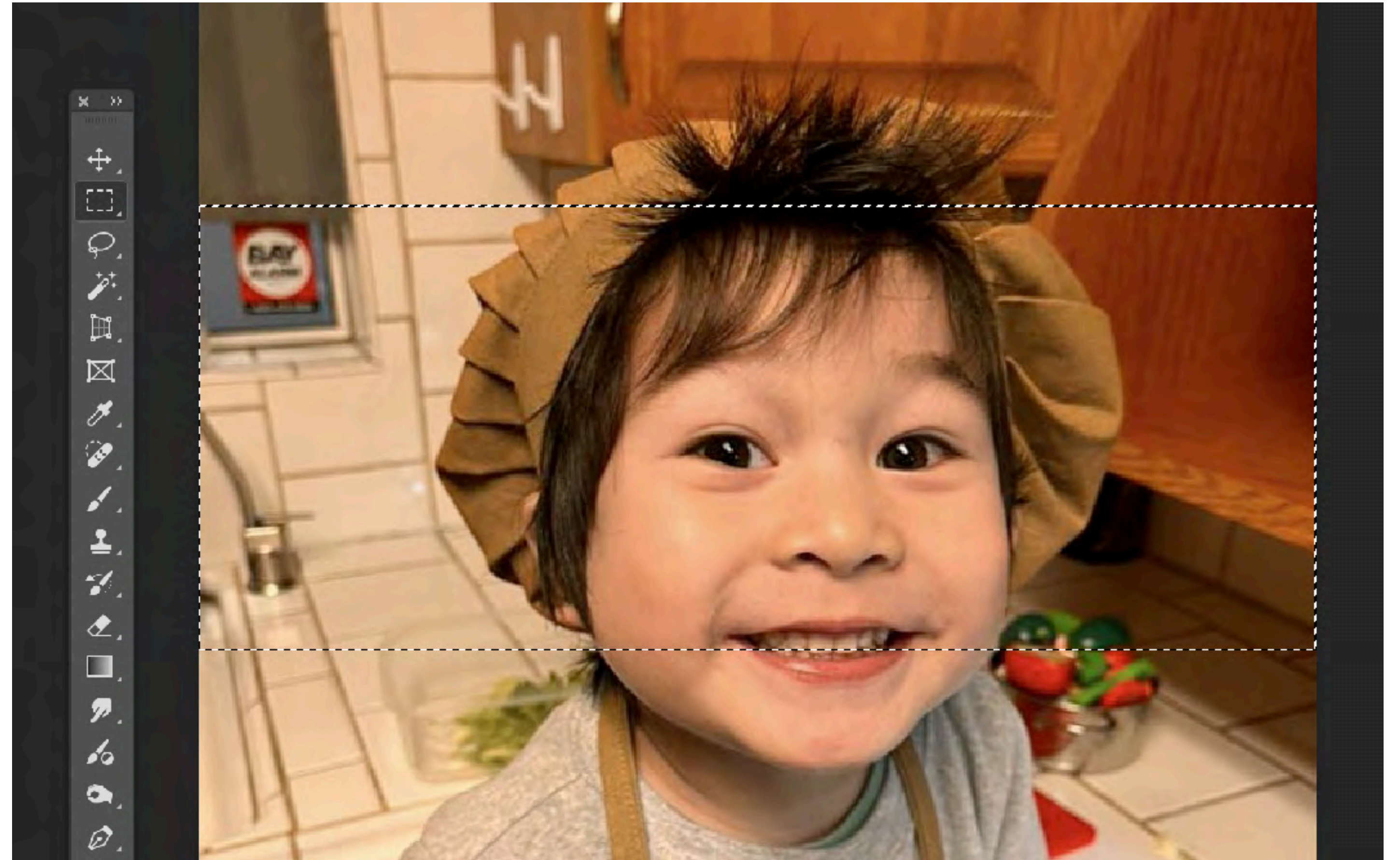
- the image must be the exact dimensions and resolution needed for the final print
- save it as a TIFF file (File/Save As)
- TIFFS are best for printing - NO jpgs
- decide how to improve the image
- in this example, the background will be darkened so that Nick stands out
- how much darker needs to be defined
- the Test Print file will provide guidance



Make Selection

Select a area of the image that contains a cross section of what needs to be tested.

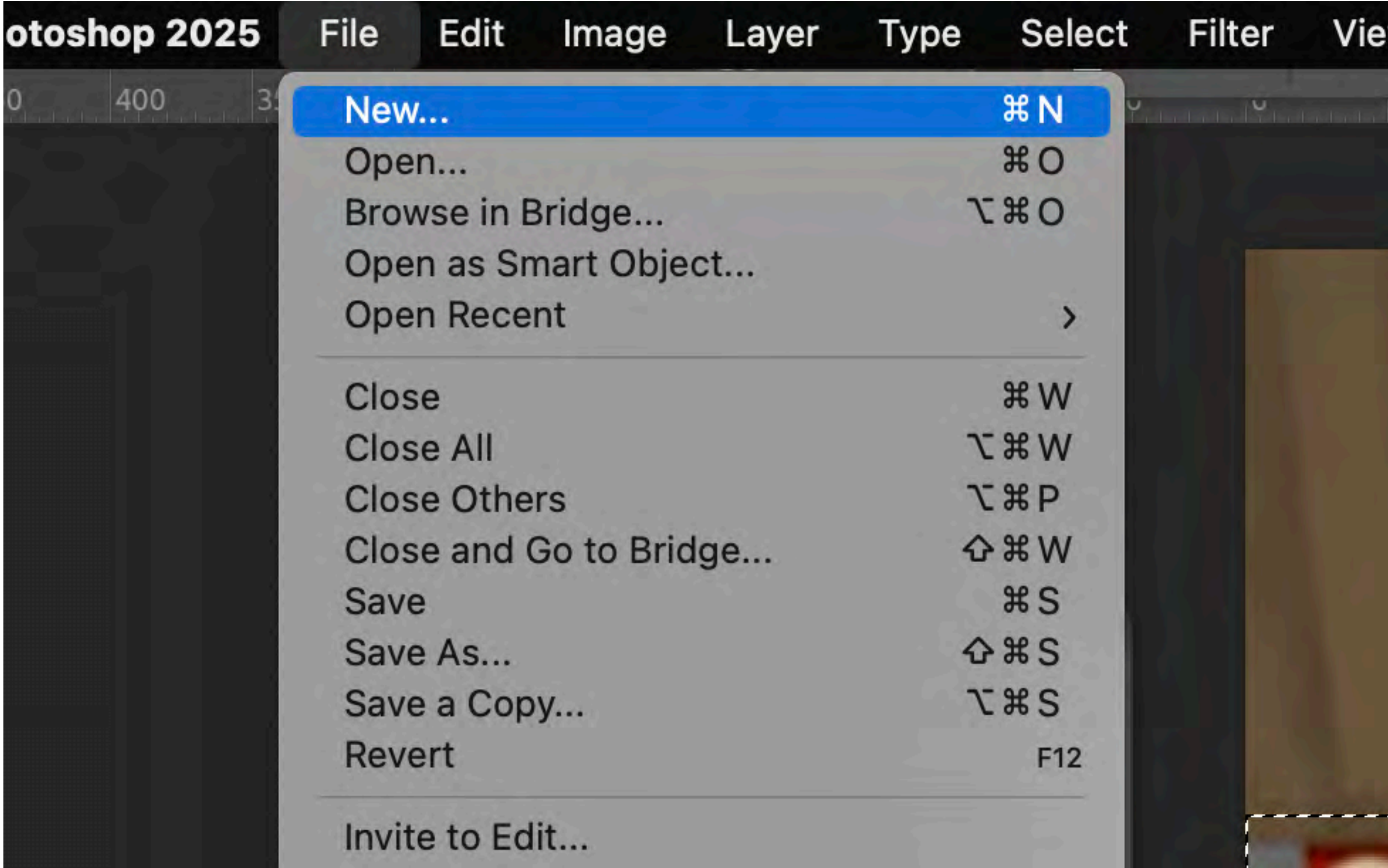
- use the “Marque” tool -see dashed outline in the image
- select the full width of the image
- select enough area in the image so that changes can be seen clearly
- try to keep height of the selection around 2 inches for most images
- COPY this selection Menu: Edit/
Copy



Make New File

Make a new file that will hold your test selection.

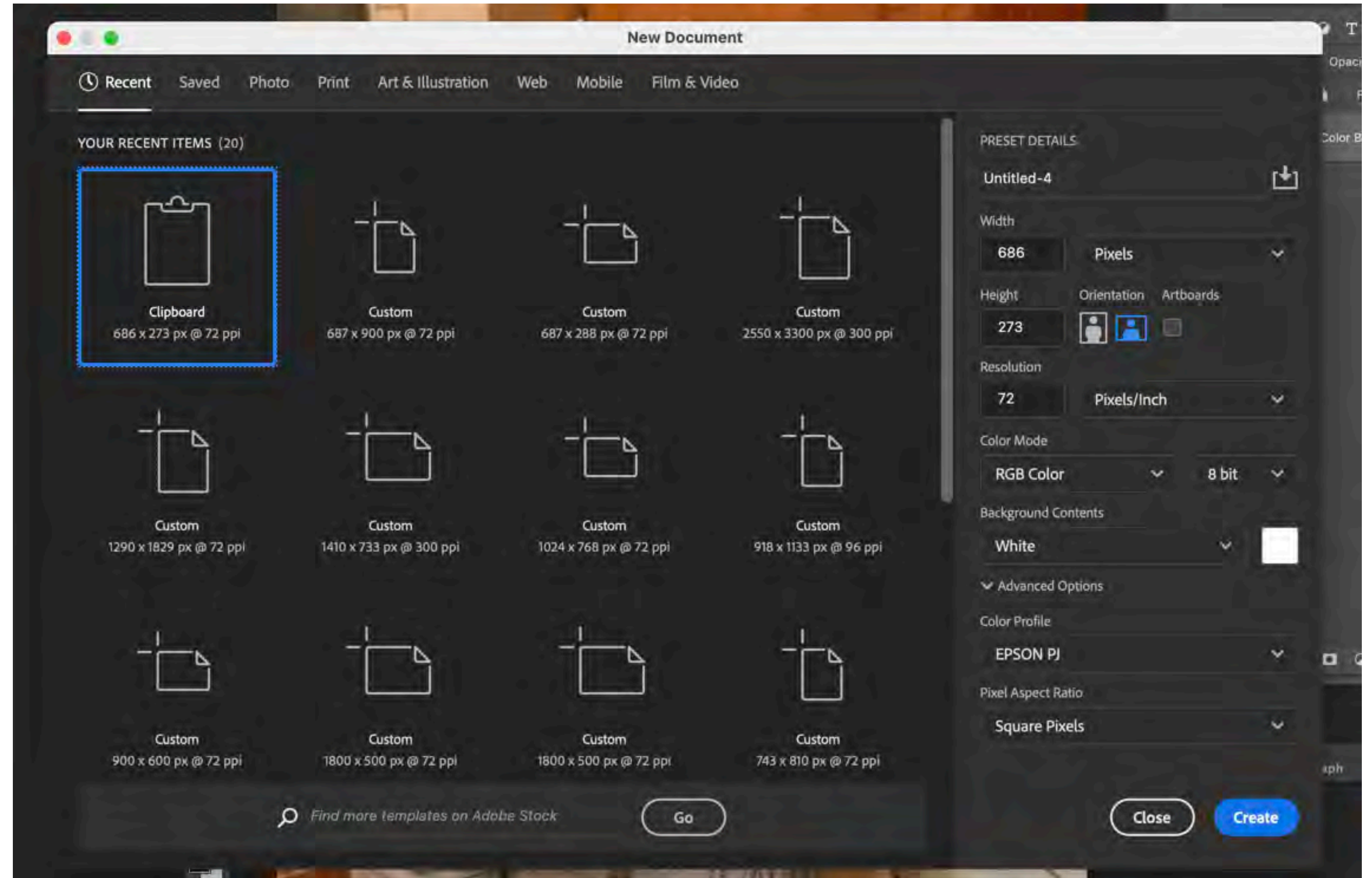
- **SELECT Menu: File/New**



Make New File

Make a new file that will hold your test selection.

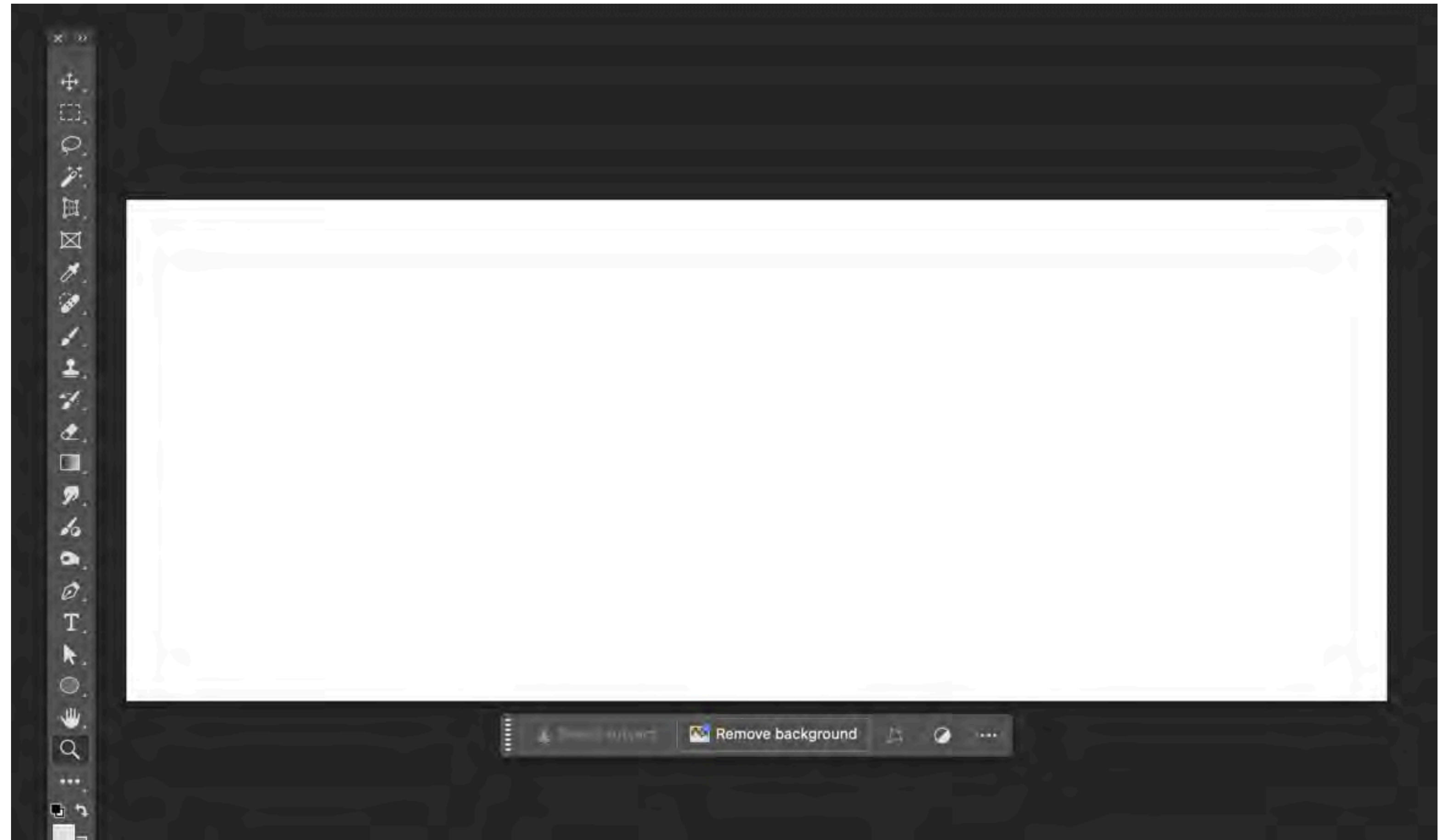
- the file canvas palette will open
- Photoshop will auto-create a file with the dimensions and resolution of the selection you copied
- **CLICK “Create”**



Make New File

Make a new file that will hold your test selection.

- The “new file” that Photoshop creates will have a blank “canvas” that exactly matches the dimensions of the selection



Make New Test File

Make a new file that will hold your test selection.

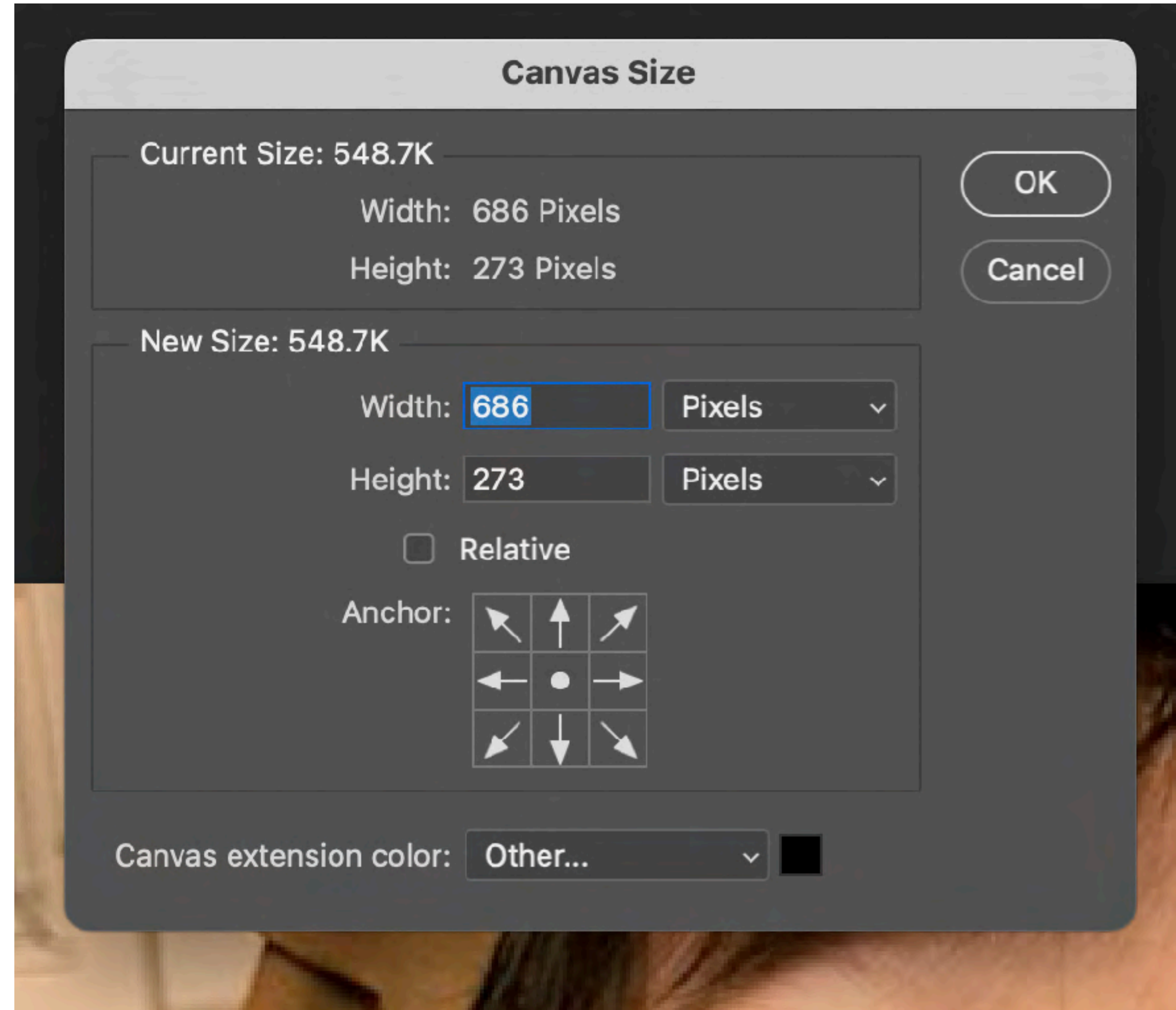
- PASTE your selection into the new file (Menu: Edit/Paste)
- the pasted selection will match the dimensions of the new file canvas
- name this file the same as your original and append "test" (i.e. nick-hat-test.tiff)



Adjust Test File

This new file is your “Test Print” file. You need to make the “Canvas” larger to accommodate three separate test layers.

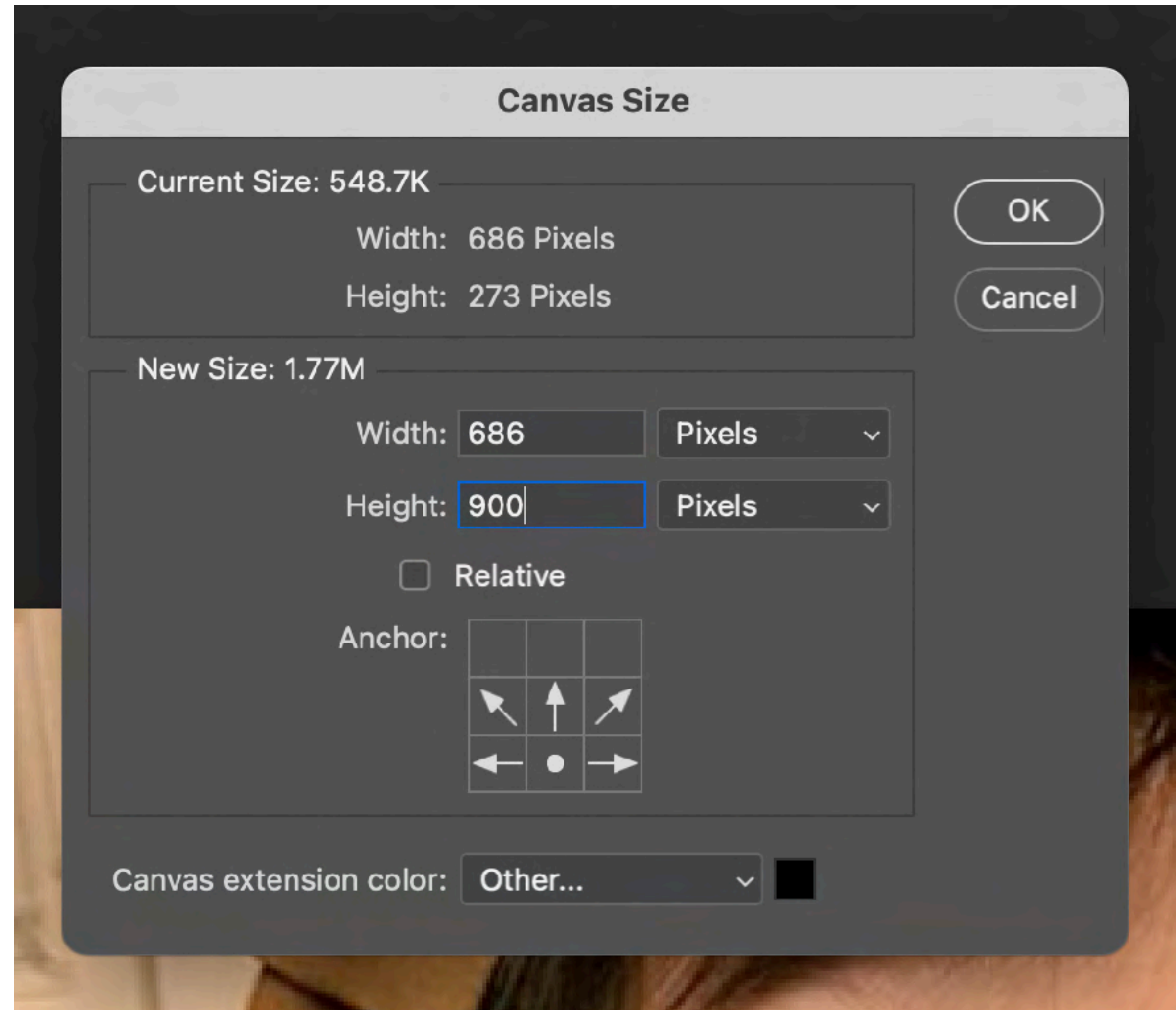
- OPEN the canvas palette (Menu: Image/Canvas Size)
- this floating palette shows the file dimensions, the resolution, and the location of your content (the small circle located “center-center”)



Change Test File Height

This new file is your “Test Print” file.
You need to make the “Canvas” larger.

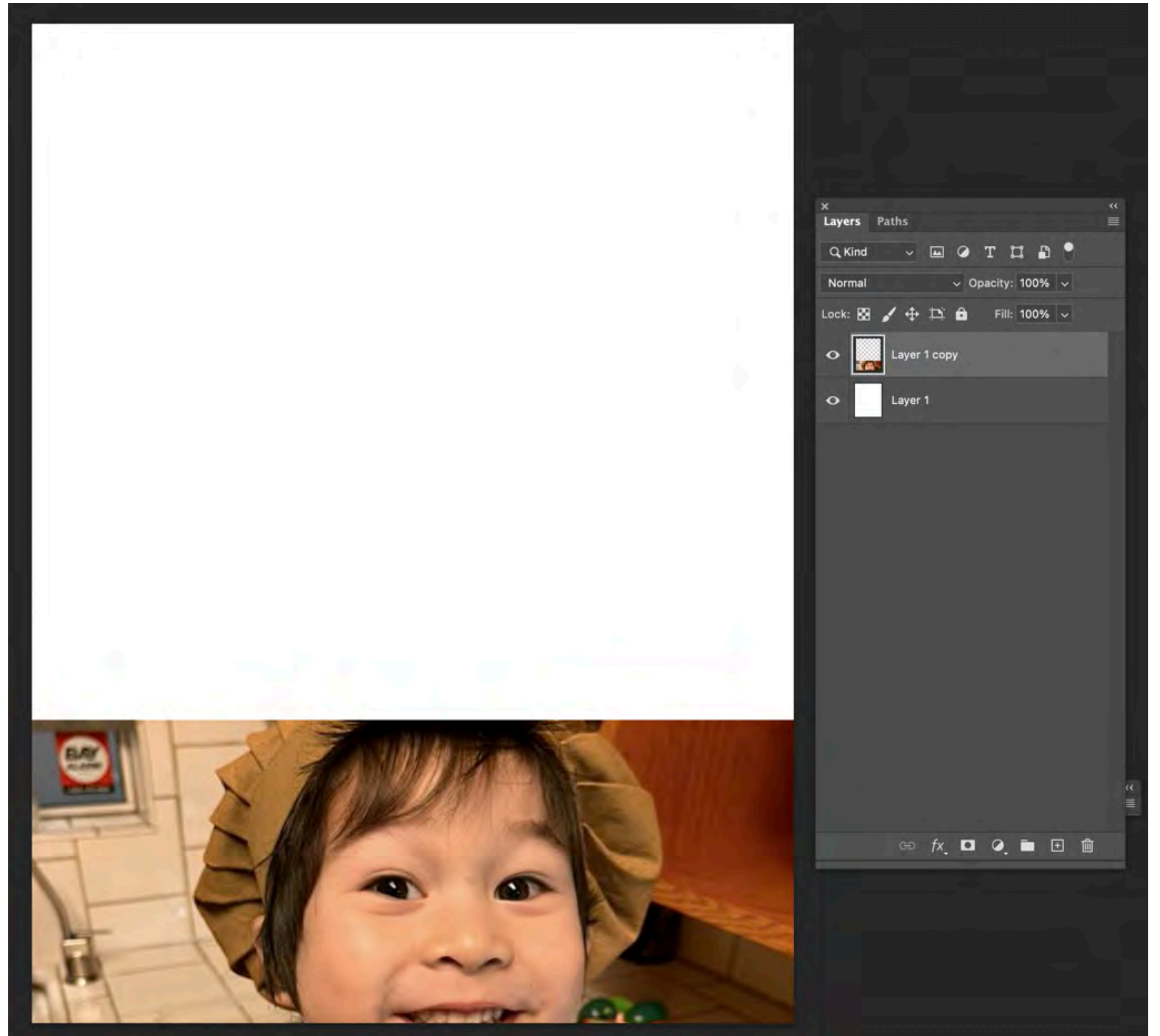
- **CHANGE** the file height to be at least 3X the starting height
- in this example, the height is increased to 900 pixels
- change the location of the file content dot to be “center-bottom”
- **CLICK OK**



Ready for Layers

The “Test Print” now has a canvas height that can hold three of the test strips, one above the other.

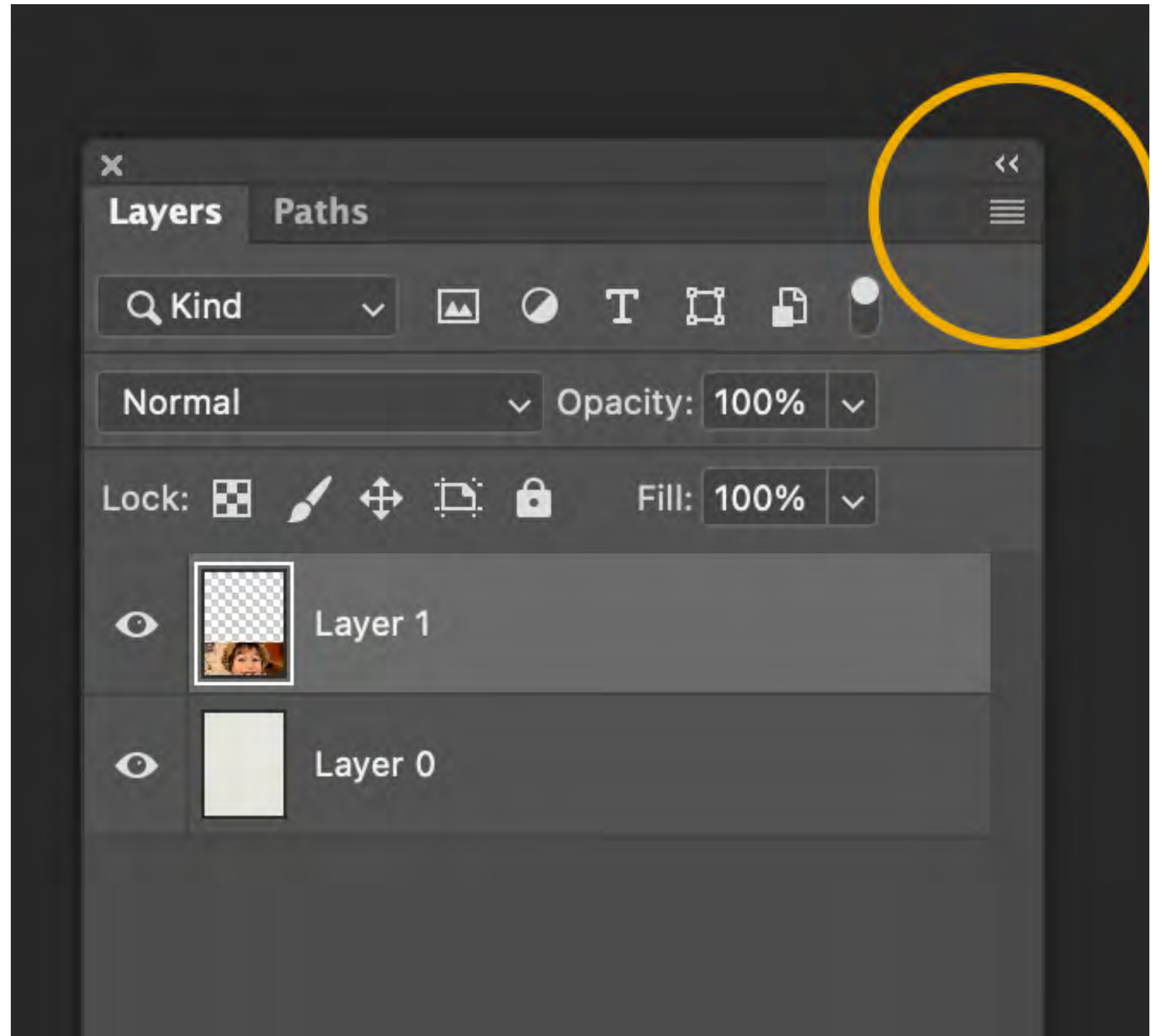
- Note that there is a background layer (locked) and a content layer
- the content layer holds the test strip that you copied into this new file
- your original pasted layer is positioned at “center-bottom” - exactly how you located it in the canvas palette



Duplicate Layer

You now have to create the other two test strip layers, one above the other.

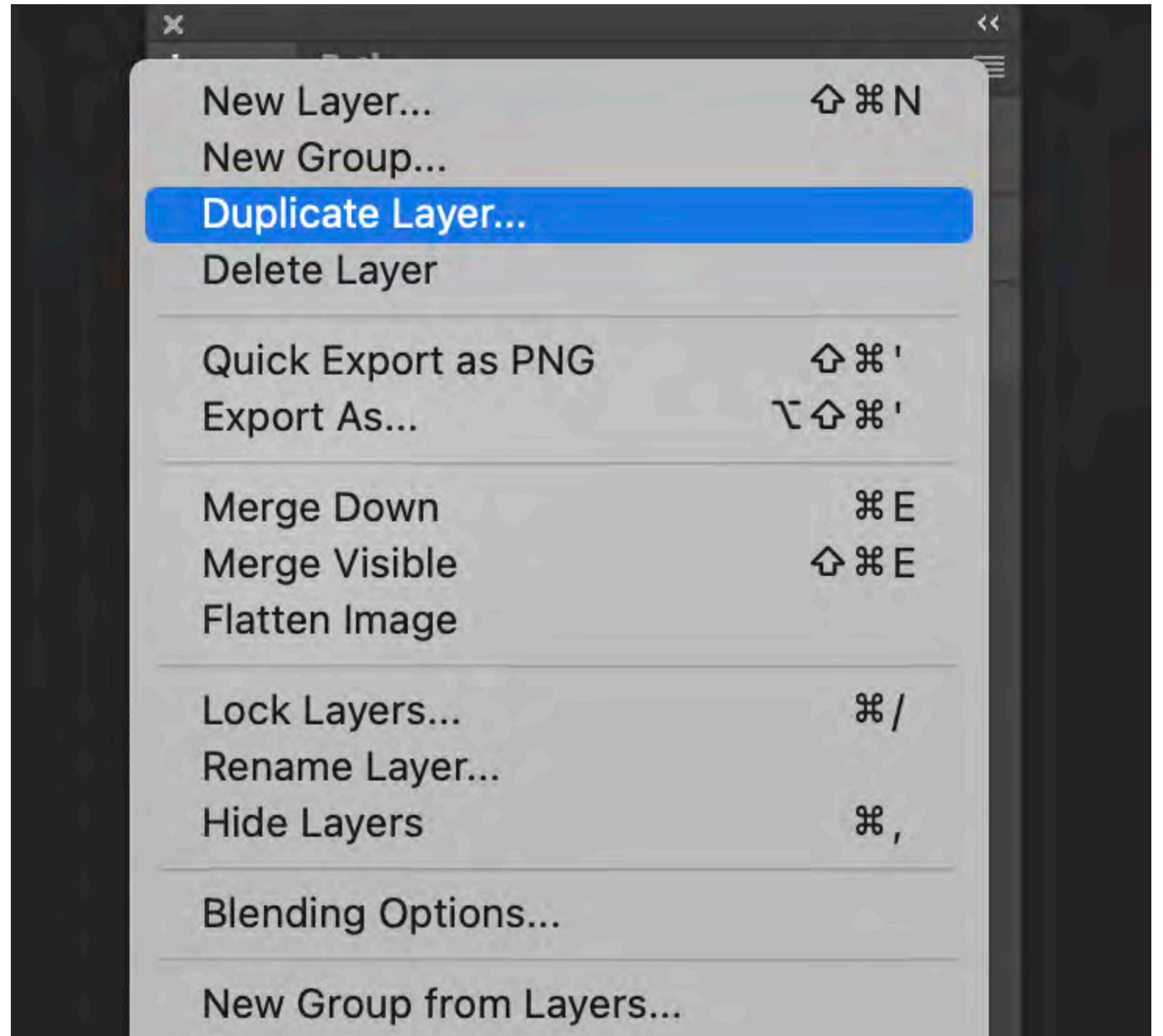
- Make sure the content layer is selected.
- **CLICK** the menu icon in the upper right of the layers palette



Duplicate Layer

A drop down menu will display.

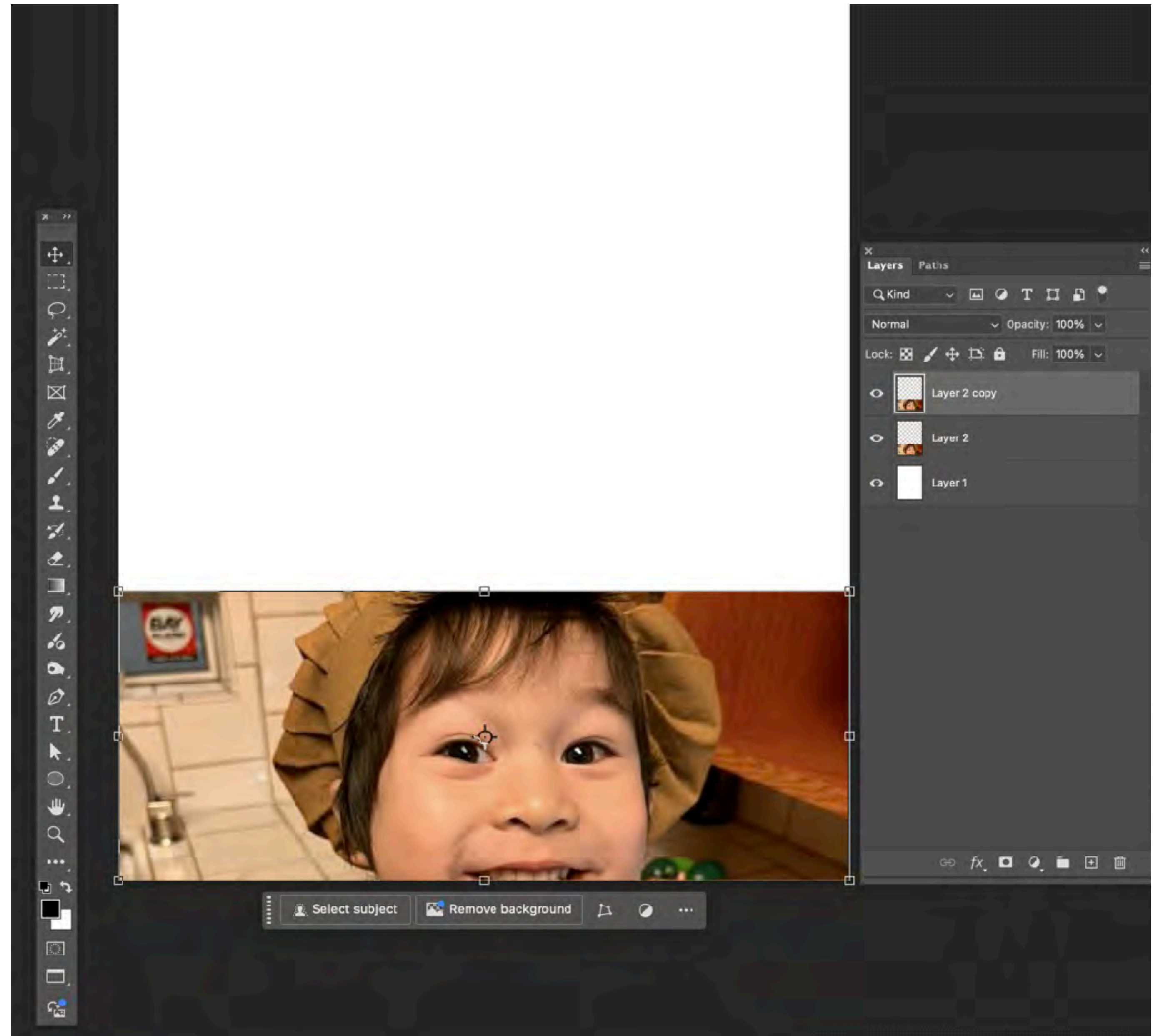
- **SELECT 'Duplicate Layer' from the drop down menu set of options.**



Duplicate Layer

A 2nd test strip layer has been created.

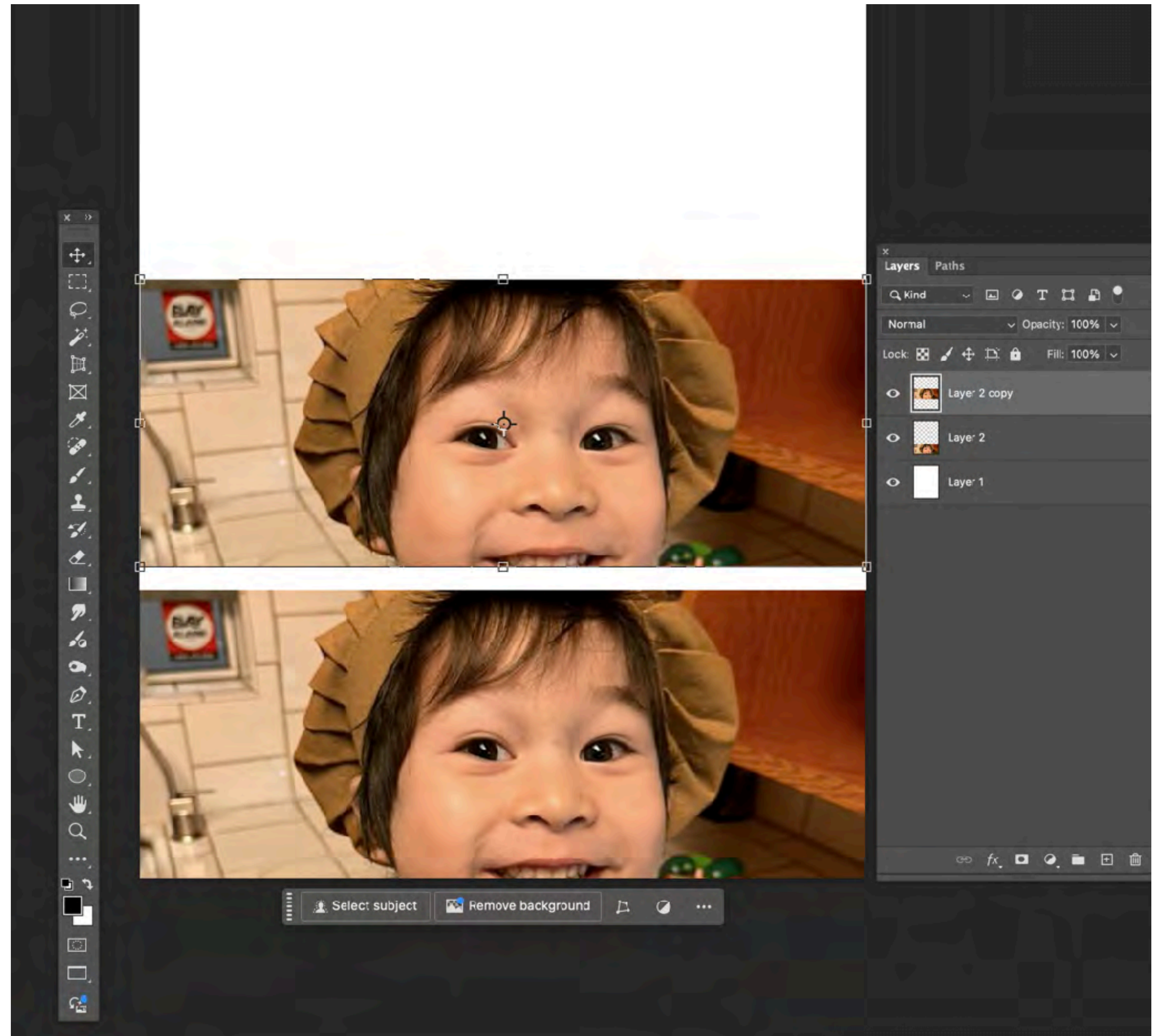
- the duplicate content layer will be the exact same position as the original content layer.
- the duplicate layer will overlay the original content layer
- you will need to separate the positions of these two layers so you can see edits applied to each layer



Move Duplicate Layer

You now have to move the duplicate layer up the page.

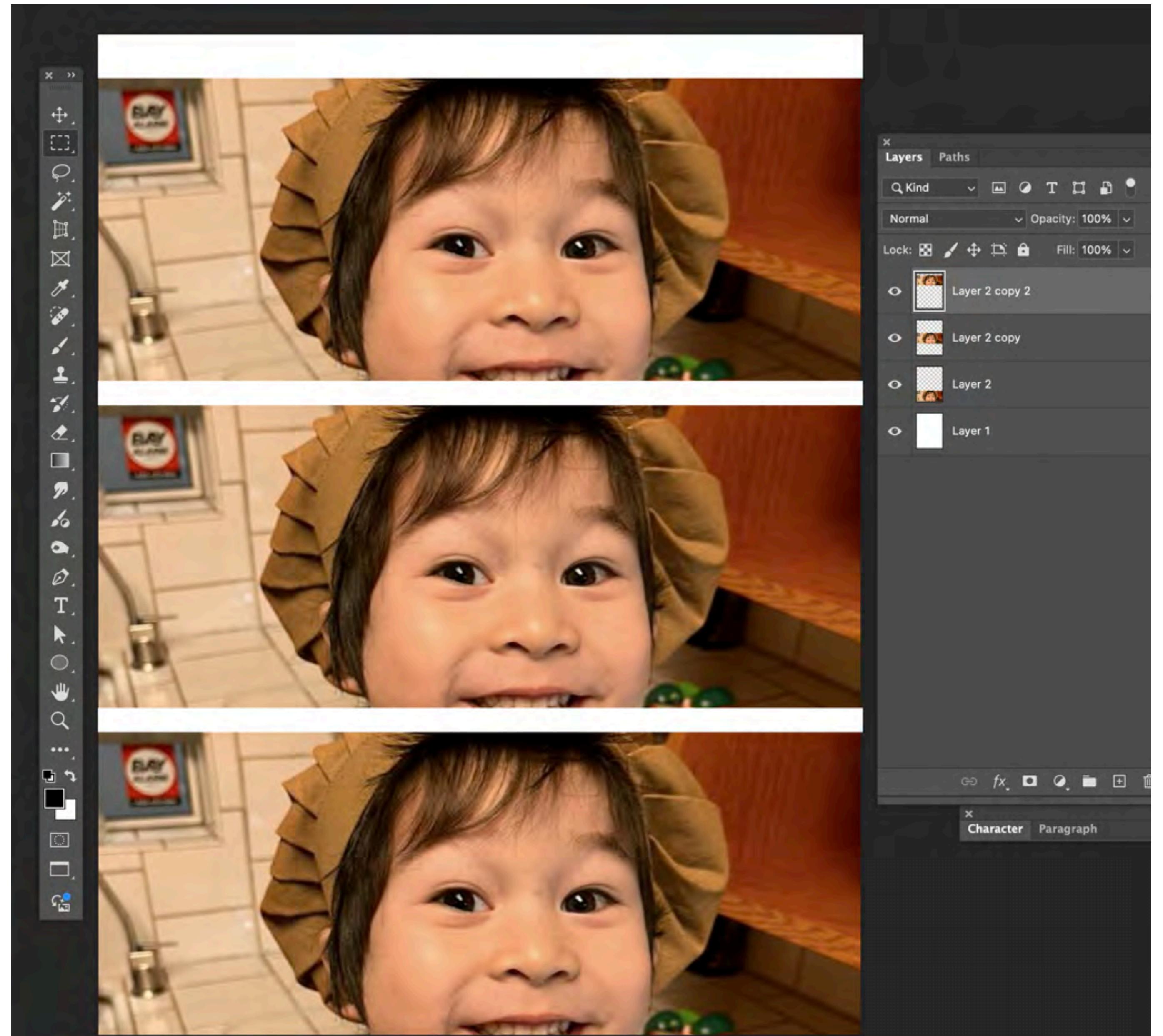
- the duplicate content layer needs to be separated from the original layer
- **SELECT** the “Move Tool” from the tools palette
- **SELECT** the duplicate layer in the layers list
- **CLICK** on the duplicate layer in the file graphic area, hold the cursor down, and drag the image up
- holding “Shift” while moving the layer keeps the layer aligned



Make a 3rd Test Layer

You now have to create and move a third test layer.

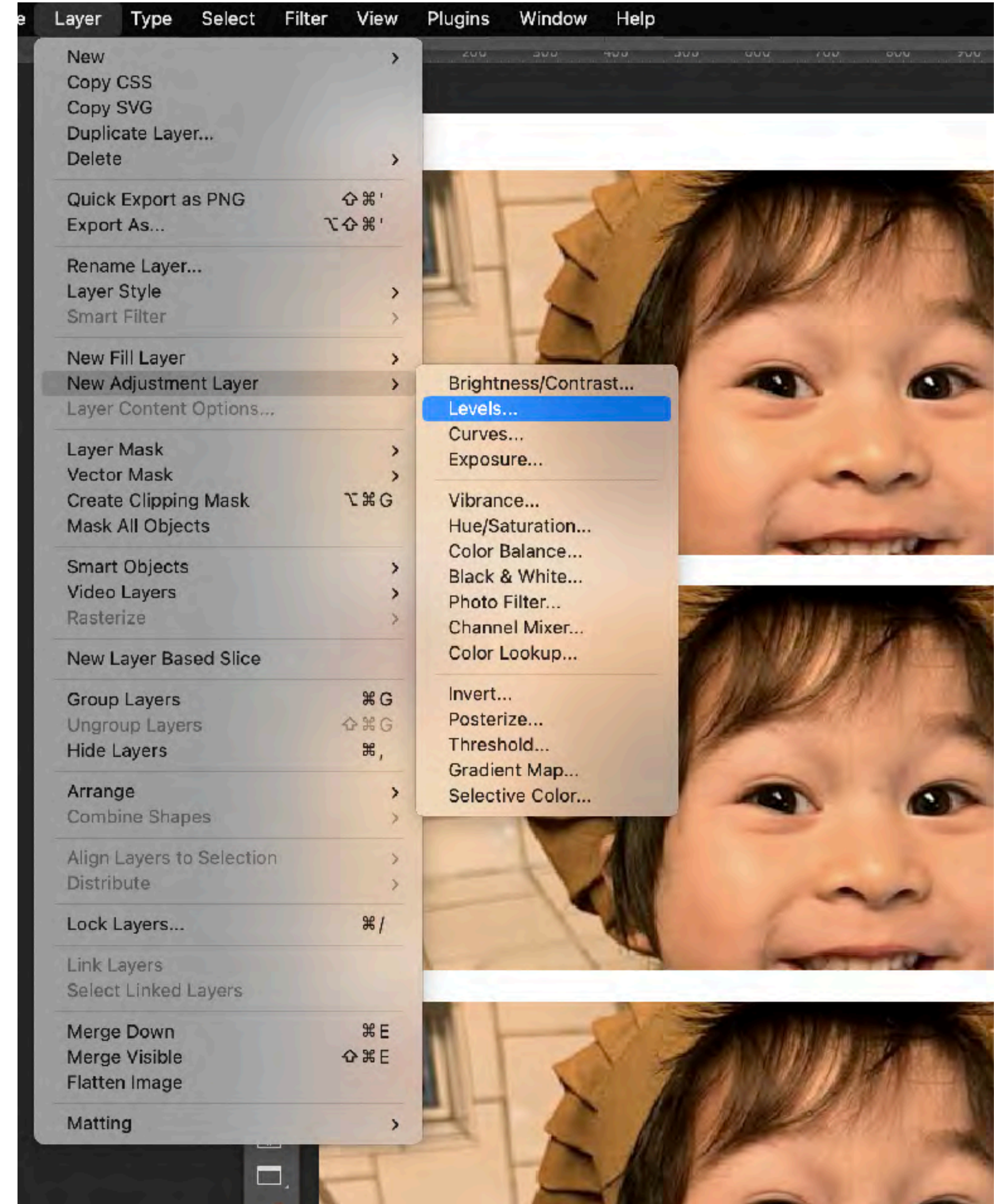
- REPLICATE the steps for making and moving the 2nd test layer
- move the 3rd test layer up the page so that it displays above the 2nd test layer



Make Edits

This example uses the Adjustments Layer for “Levels” to darken the background.

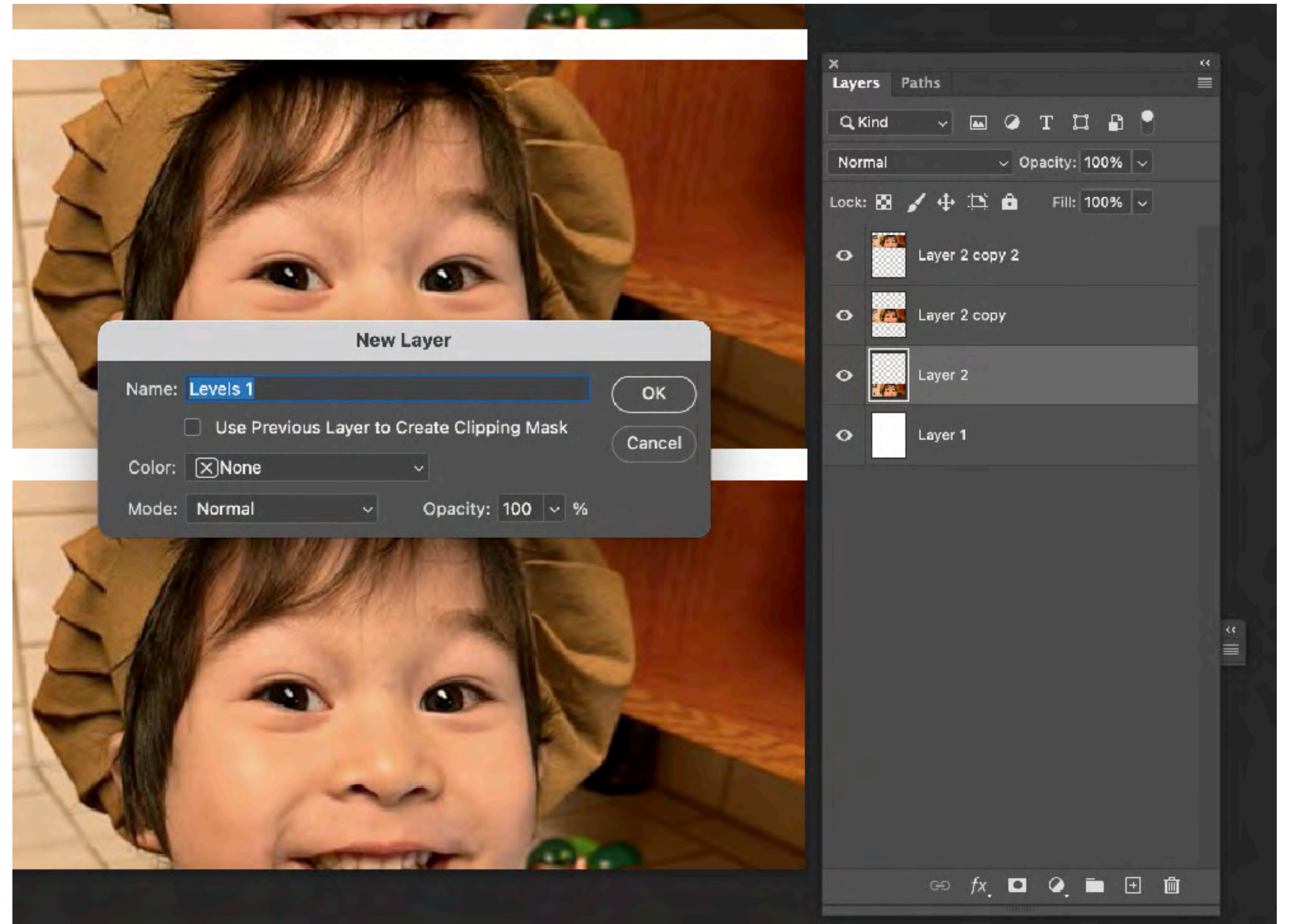
- **SELECT** the original content layer
- **SELECT** Menu: Layer/Adjustment Layer/Levels
- “Adjustment Layers” are **NON-destructive**, meaning edits do **NOT** permanently change the layer pixels and adjustments layer edits can be changed at any time



Make Edits

Each test layer should have a different setting for “Levels” in order to provide a range of options for this edit.

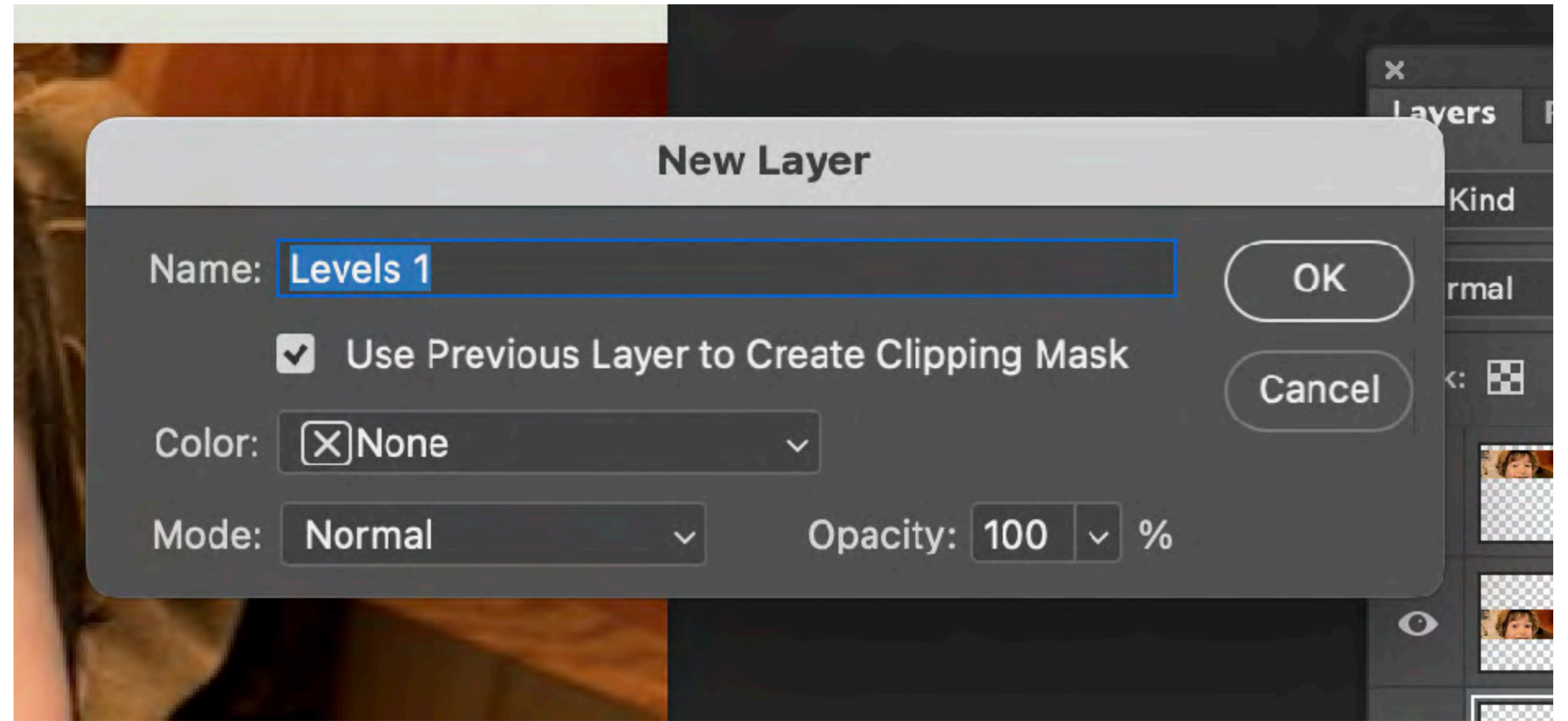
- when menu item Layer/Adjustment Layers/Levels is selected, this floating palette opens
- CHECK the check box for “Use Previous Layer to Create Clipping Mask” (see next screen)
- this check box creates a “Clipping Mask” which means only the layer clipped by the adjustment layer will be affected by the edits



Make Clipping Path

Making a “Clipping Path” means that the edits will only apply to a single layer that is “clipped” by the adjustment layer.

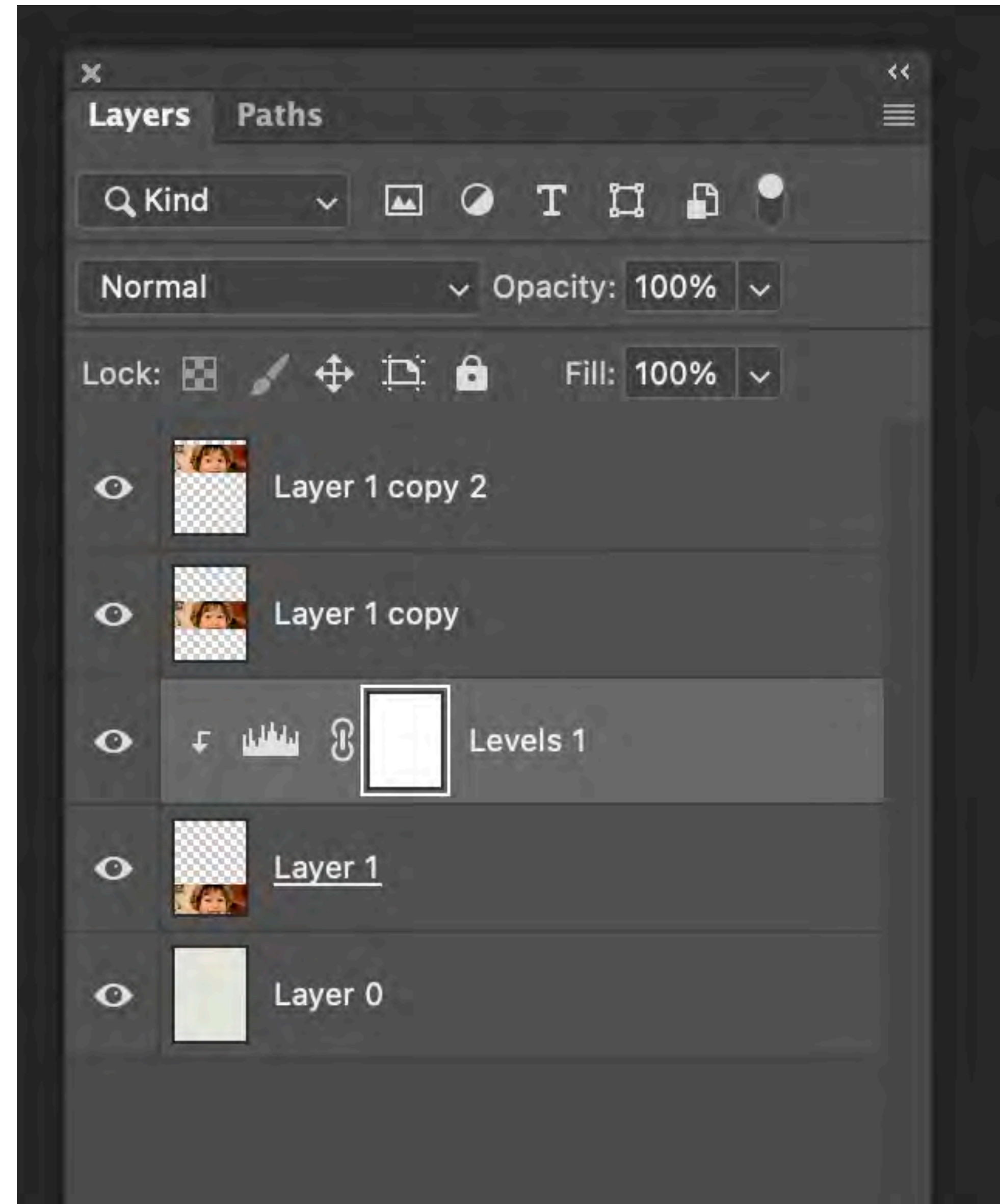
- **CHECK** the check box for “Use Previous Layer to Create Clipping Mask”



Confirm Clipping Mask

The clipping mask should be attached to the layer immediately below the Adjustment Layer/Levels

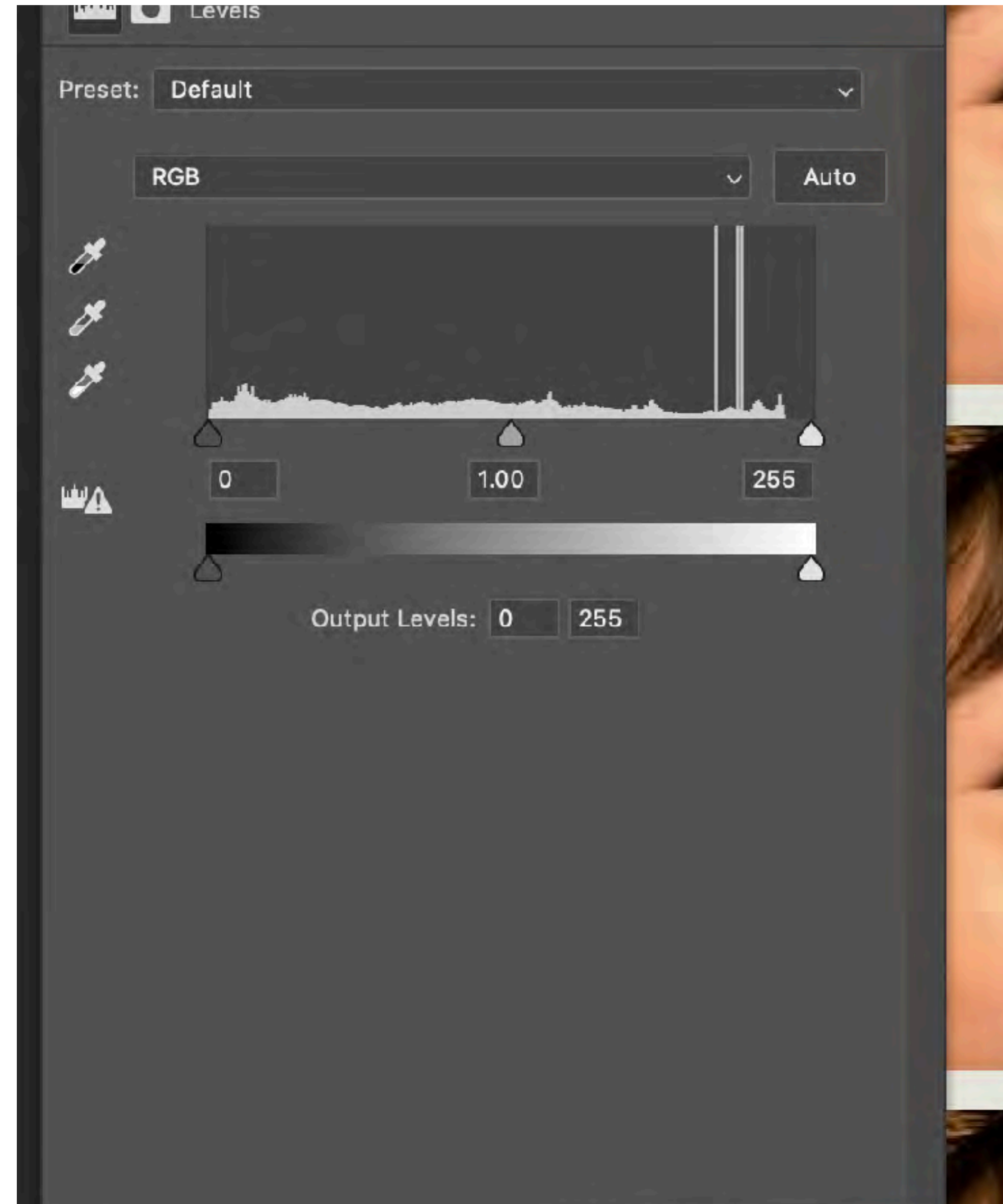
- the clipping mask will have a small downward arrow pointing to the clipped layer
- **CLICK** on the adjustment layer to open the edits palette



Clipping Mask Edits

The edit palette for the Adjustment Layer/Levels should now open above the image

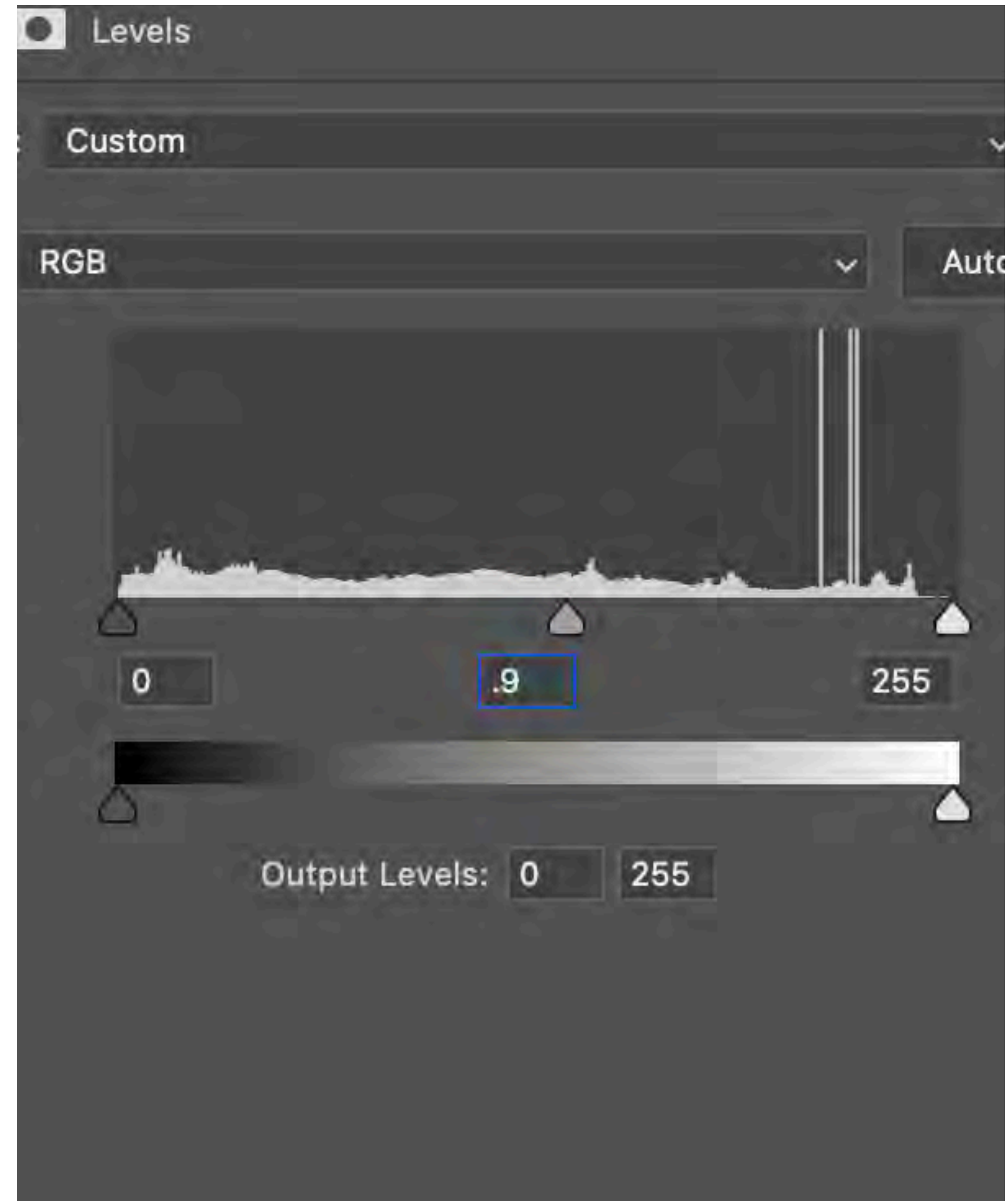
- the Levels edit palette shows the histogram for the tones in the images (shadows / mid-tones / highlights)
- each of the three slider adjustment arrows has corresponding number controls
- these numbers will be 0 for shadows, 1.00 for mid-tones, and 255 for highlights



Edits for 1st Layer

Make changes to the Adjustment Layer/Levels for the first layer

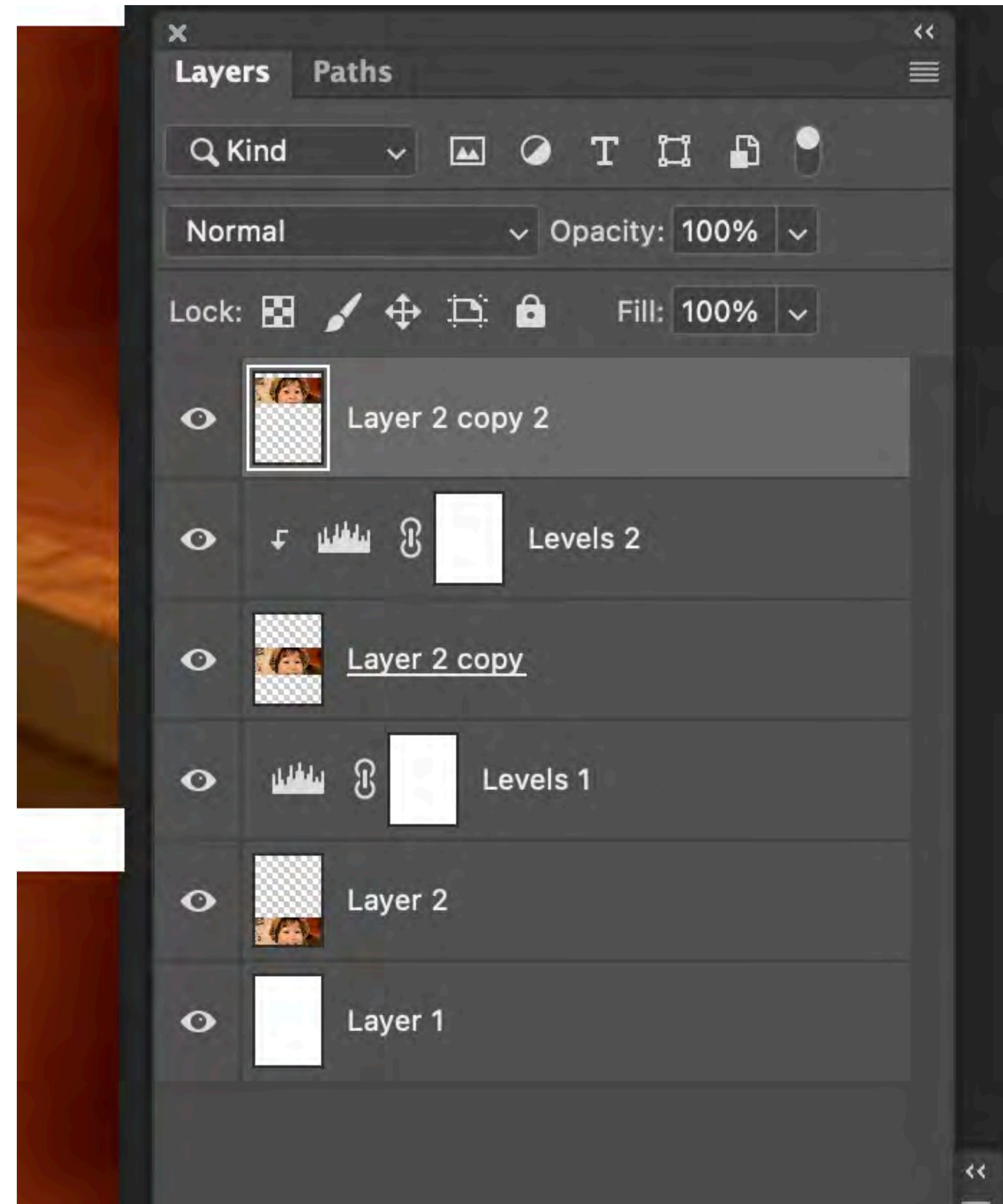
- since we are trying to darken the mid-tones, the number control is reduced from 1.00 to 0.9 for this layer



Clipping Mask 2nd Layer

Make an Adjustment Layer/Levels clipping mask for the second layer

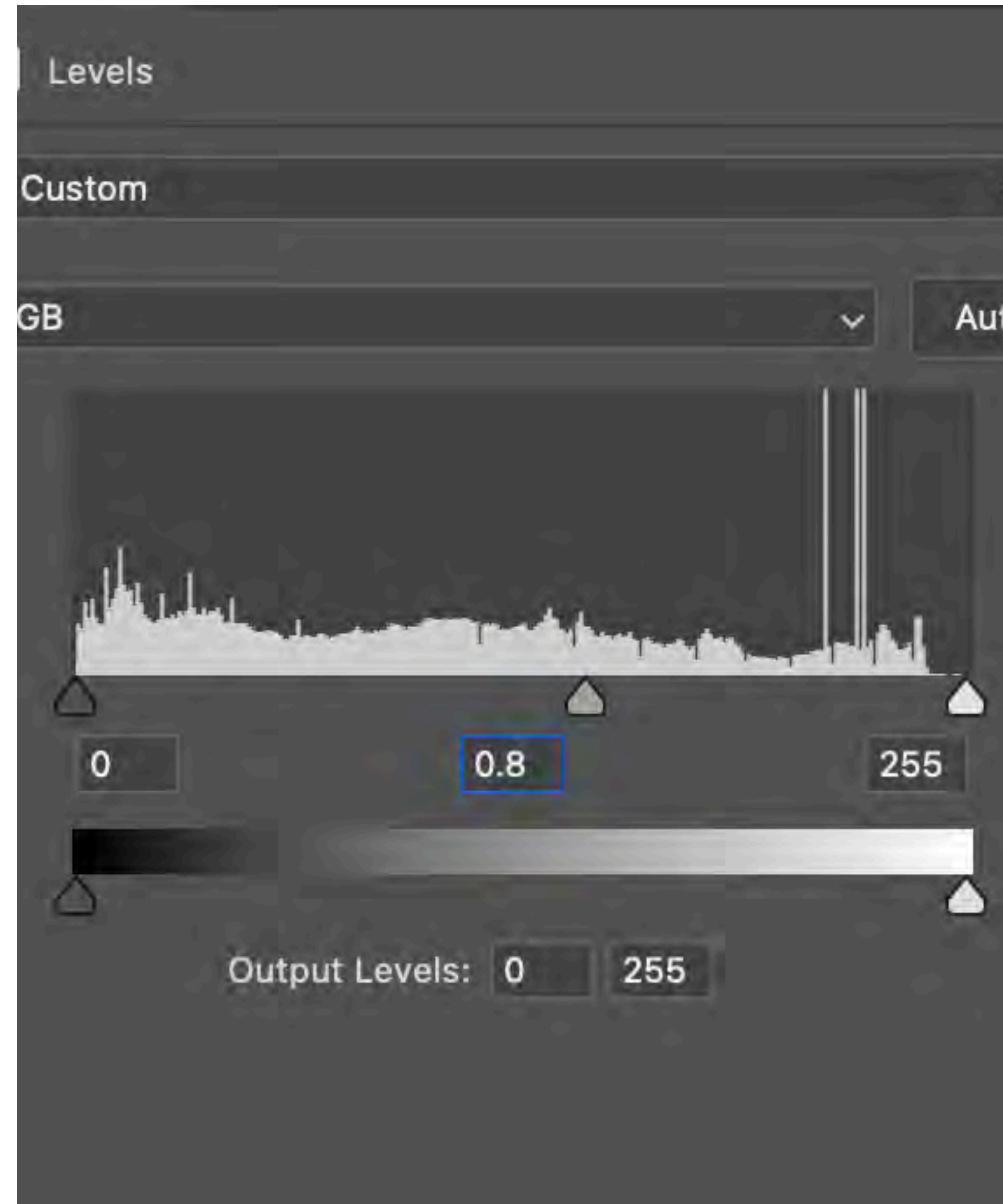
- REPLICATE the Level edit steps as for the first layer clipping mask
- you will be making an incremental change to these settings for this 2nd layer



2nd Clipping Layer Edits

Make changes to the Adjustment Layer/Levels for the second layer

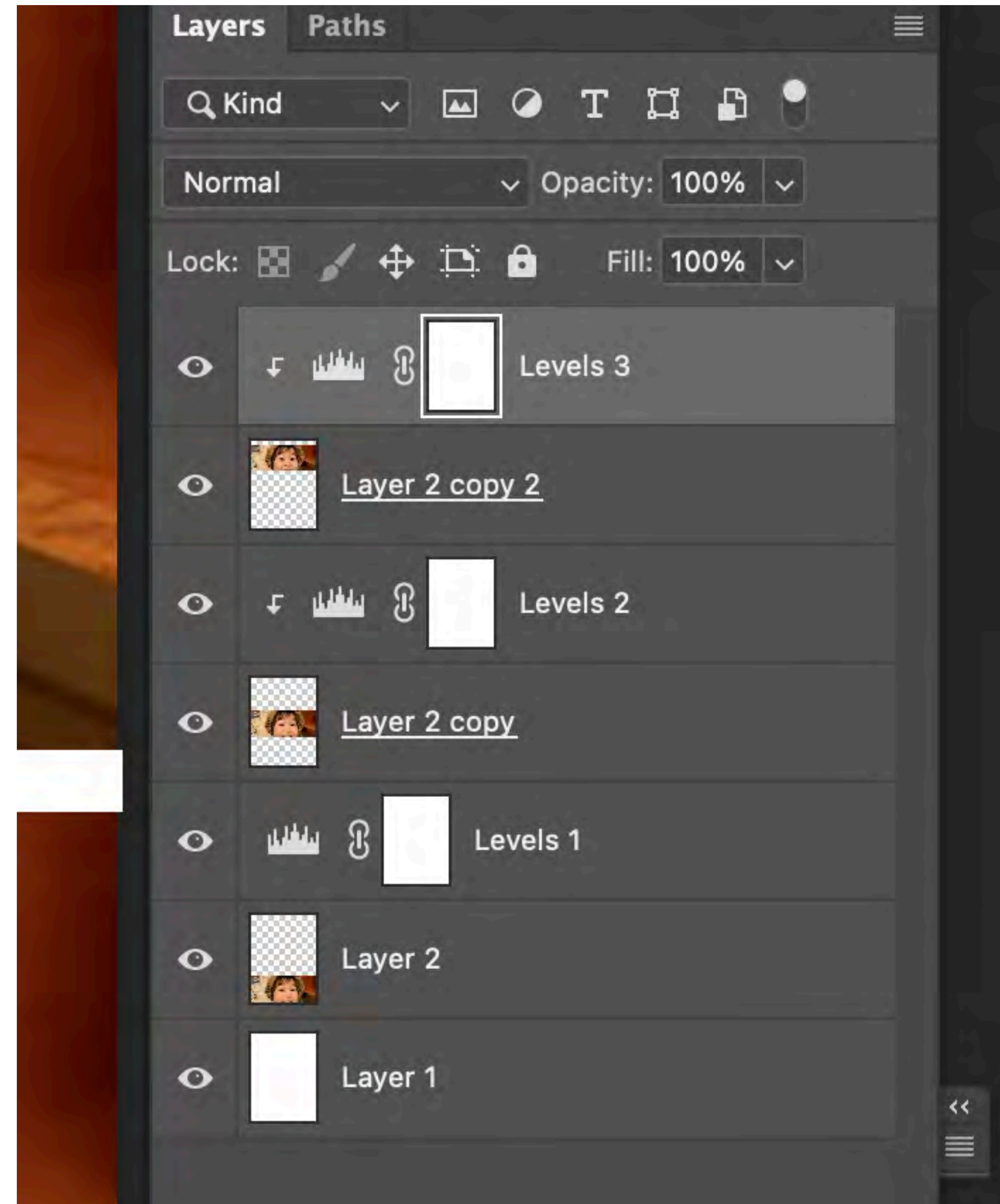
- since we are trying to darken the mid-tones, AND increment the changes, the number control for mid-tones is reduced to 0.8 for the second content layer
- make your increment strong enough to see the difference clearly between the two layers



Clipping Mask 3rd Layer

Now make an Adjustment Layer/Levels clipping mask for the 3rd layer

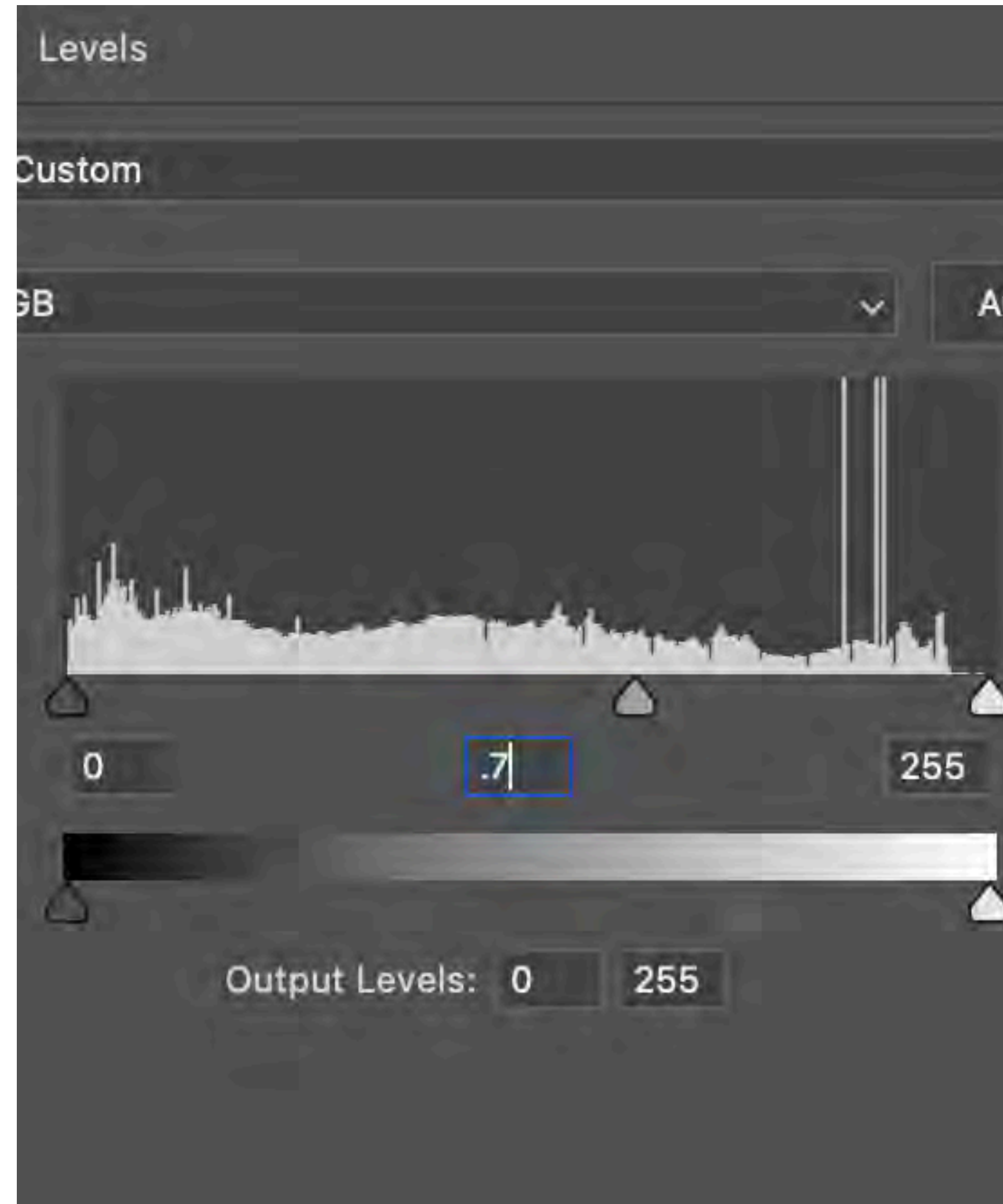
- REPLICATE the steps as for the first and second Levels layers
- a third Levels clipping layer will be created



3rd Layer Edits

Make changes to the Adjustment Layer/Levels for the third layer

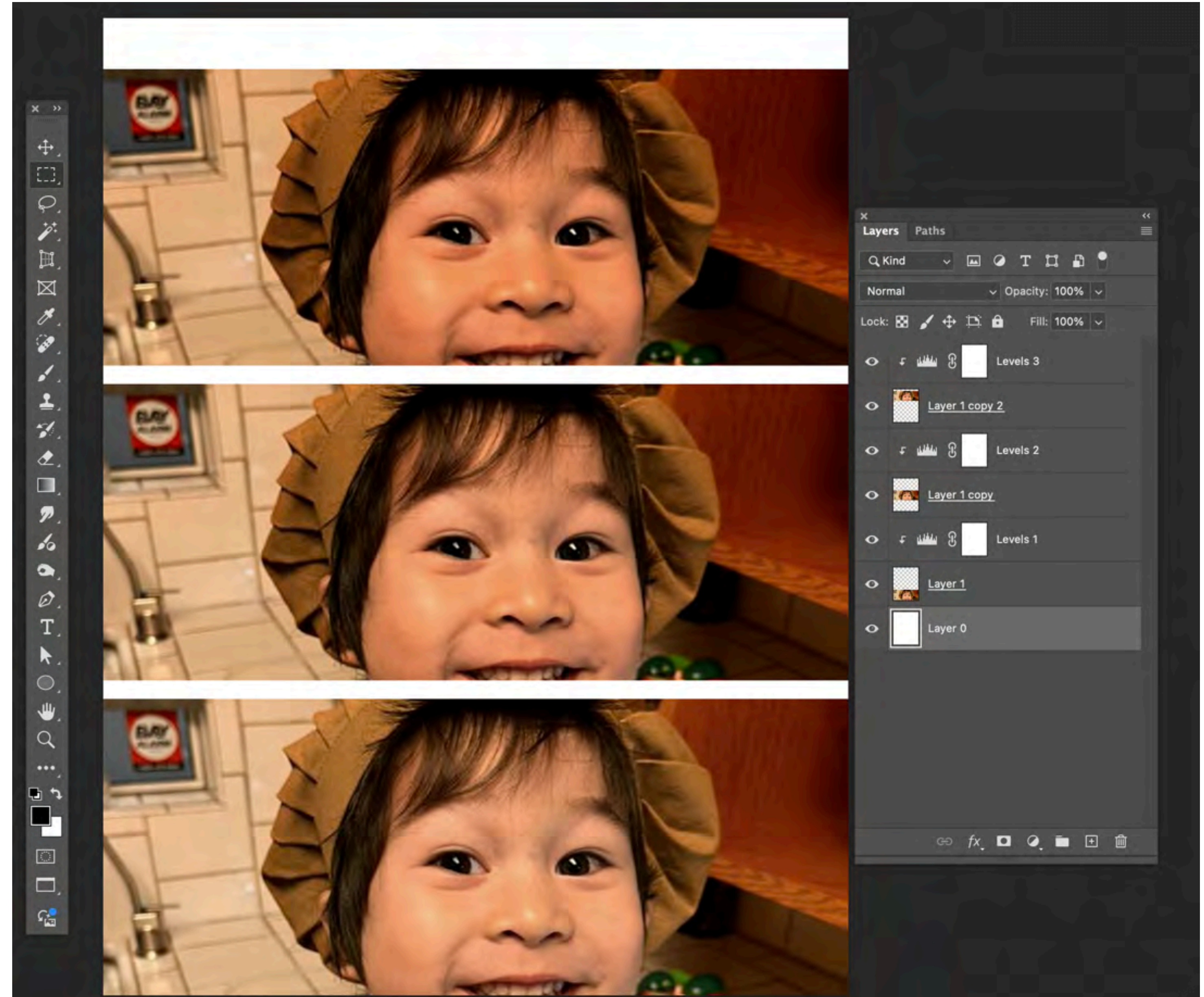
- since we are trying to darken the mid-tones, AND increment the changes, the number control for mid-tones is reduced to 0.7 for the third test layer
- make equal increments between layers and make the increments large enough to clearly differentiate the effects between layers
- **DO NOT BE TIMID** with these edits, the point is to **FIND THE LIMIT** of the test edits
- **GO BEYOND** what you think will work



3 Layers of Edits

Adjustment Layer/Levels have been made for all three layers

- each layer now has it's own unique methodical increment of mid-tones in Levels
- this is just an example of the process of applying Adjustment Layer edits to three test layers
- which adjustment layer effect to use and which incremental change to apply depends on the image being edited



Copy Merge Edits

Now copy all the edits applied to the test print file

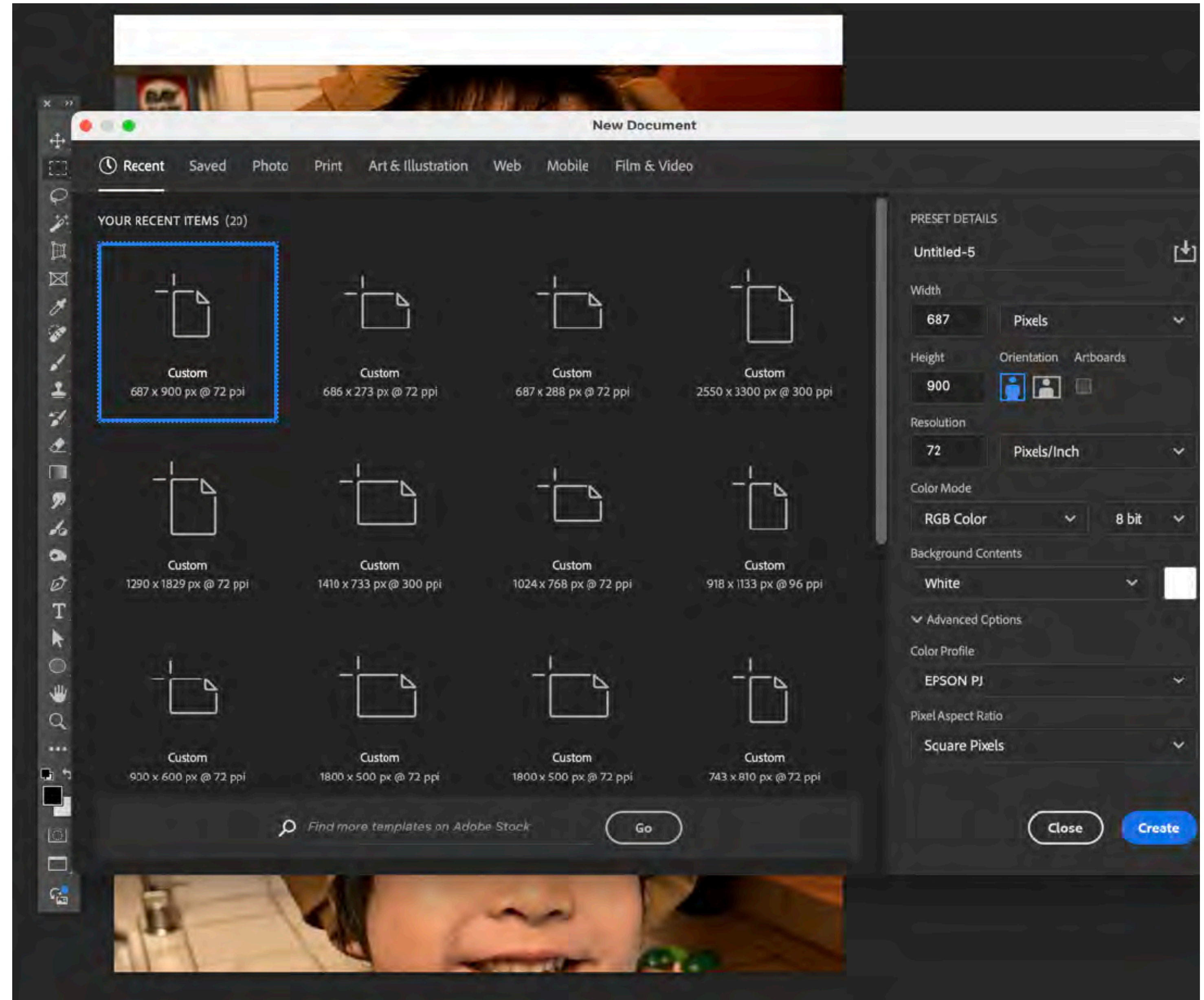
- **SELECT** the entire image (Menu: Select/All)
- Copy everything visible by **SELECTING** Menu: Edit / Copy Merged
- this method ensures that everything visible is copied, no matter what layer is selected when you make the copy
- all filters and effects will be included in the copy



Create New Print File

Now make a new file that will be used for the test print.

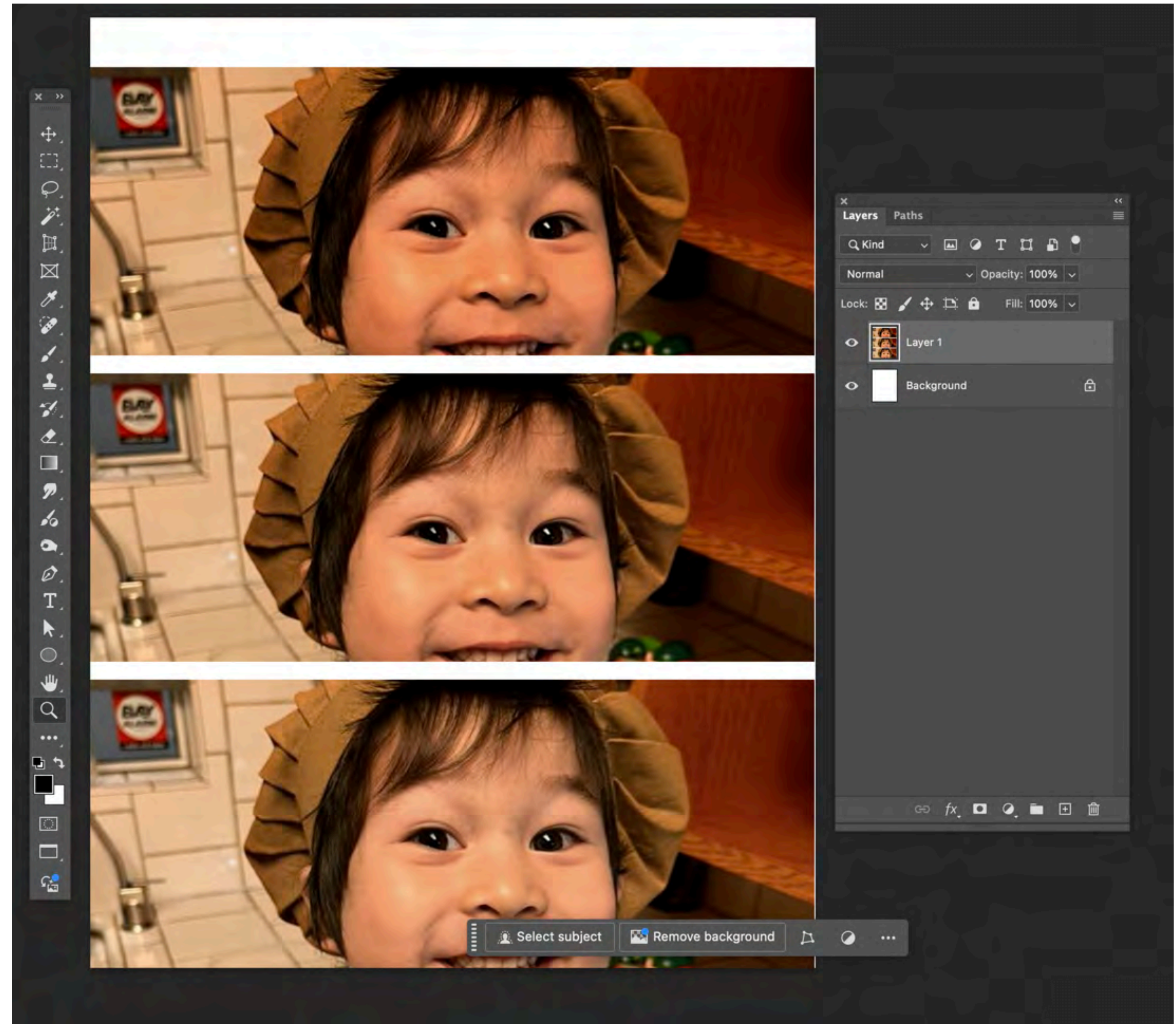
- **SELECT Menu: File/New**
- a canvas palette will open
- Photoshop will auto-select a new file with the exact dimensions and resolution of the content copied to the clipboard by copy merge
- **CLICK Create**



Paste Content to File

Paste the content from the copy merge into the new print file.

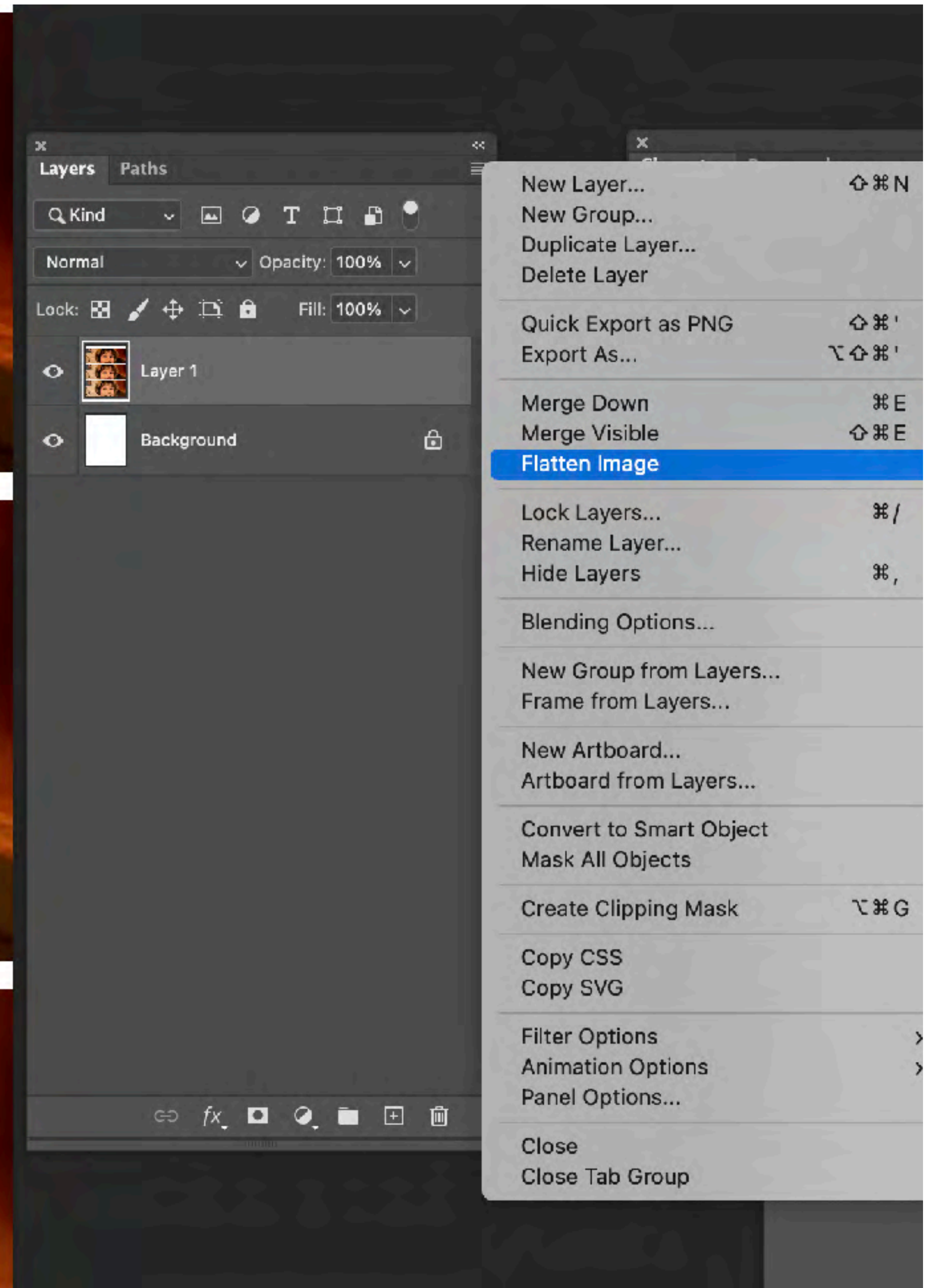
- **SELECT** Menu: Edit/Paste.
- the content is copied directly into the exact center of the new file, on a new layer above the background layer
- **SAVE** this file as “nick-hat-test-print.tiff”
- you now should have three unique files - the original tiff, the test file tiff, and the print file tiff



Flatten the File

We want the print file to be as simple as possible - no edits, filters, etc. .

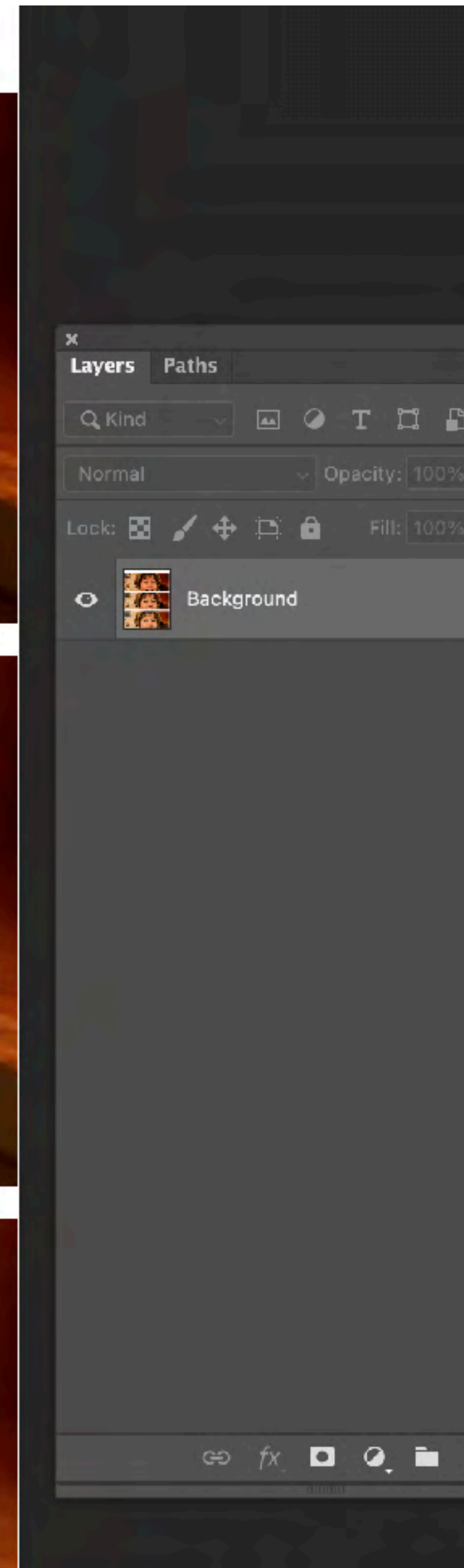
- **SELECT** the Layers Menu icon/
Flatten Image.
- this file is for printing, so it should be a single layer with no other layers or edits



Print the File

Send this file to the printer and then review the resulting print.

- **SELECT** the Menu: File/Print
- follow the printing procedures outlined in the printing PDF
- evaluate the test print in daylight or LED equivalent if possible
- apply the preferred changes from the test to the original Tiff
- **REPLICATE** the steps to create a print file for the final print
- **IF** needed, run another test cycle, and create a 2nd print.



Final Results

This was the final file sent to the printer after reviewing the test prints and applying edits.

- the darkest Levels setting from the tests was applied to the background
- some additional test edits were made to reduce magenta in the overall file
- an edit was made on the front right cabinet cubby to lighten that area so it would not block up
- Nick's face and body were left as is, with no edits, just separated from the background





Summary

Test prints are used to determine how to best improve an image.

- always make test prints in a methodical manner
- focus on the most important edit to improve an image first
- test other possible edits in the order of impact on the image
- repeat the test cycle as much as is needed
- save all working files, and originals in a folder with the Clients name
- save the client folder to one of the Club backup hard drives (Shuttles)
- delete the desktop folder for the client when the final print is paid for!
- good luck!