STONEHEARTH

TRAIT ICONS STYLE GUIDE

Traits are the passive, persistent qualities that make Hearthlings interesting, and unique. Each comes with a random set of four, which in turn creates a specific set of conditions under which that Hearthling will be at their best.

Trait icons serve as the player's at-a-glance guide to these conditions. The icons need to be very easy to find, and readily distinguishable in a group.
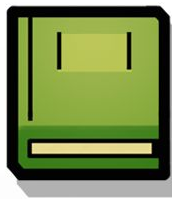
■ Unique Objects

A variety of simple symbols that can be easily told apart is more valuable in this case than depicting a character, a creature, or a scene, which may become noisy or confusing.

A whole set of icons like this would get busy fast, and look too similiar. They emphasize the character, rather than a particular quality thereof.

■ One Symbol Per Story

The facets of a Hearthling's personality don't always translate perfectly to imagery. While it's tempting to clutter the design with supporting details, a successful icon just needs to relate tonally and thematically to the concept driving the trait.

This icon has a lot of cute details, but doesn't actually do a better job of conveyance than the simpler version.
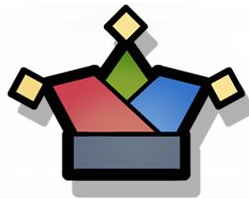
■ Simple, Exaggerated Silhouette

Good visual hierarchy will help these (or any) icons read quickly and remain distinct at smaller scales. Build the design around one major detail, and simplify the rest.

When everything is the focus, nothing stands out.

■ Bold and Bright

Against a UI largely comprised of muted tones, color and contrast help to make traits easy to spot wherever they can be found, and accurately communicates their importance to players.

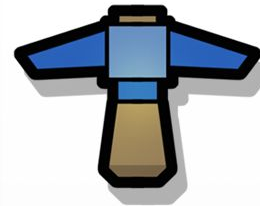Even at this scale, traits are easy to find.

■ Geometric Design

The look for this family of icons was influenced by Stonehearth's stained glass window, in order to ground them stylistically in the UI and connect them visually to each other.

The organic curve in this feather makes for an exciting, active shape. It also makes it stick out like a sore thumb.

■ No Background

Silhouette helps further distinguish trait icons from each other, and the lack of a background helps knock out any potential confusion over metaphors.

Example:

A button you can't actually click on.

Implied power up that doesn't really happen.

GETTING STARTED

Setting Up

Working size: 480 x 320 pixels
Final size: 60 x 40 pixels

Before you begin ▶

Set up a visual reference for how the design of the icon will look at its final size. Look under:

Window > Arrange > New window for....

in order to have Photoshop open up the same PSD in a second window. Pop that one out of the tray, zoom it out to 12.5%, and place it someplace nearby in the workspace.
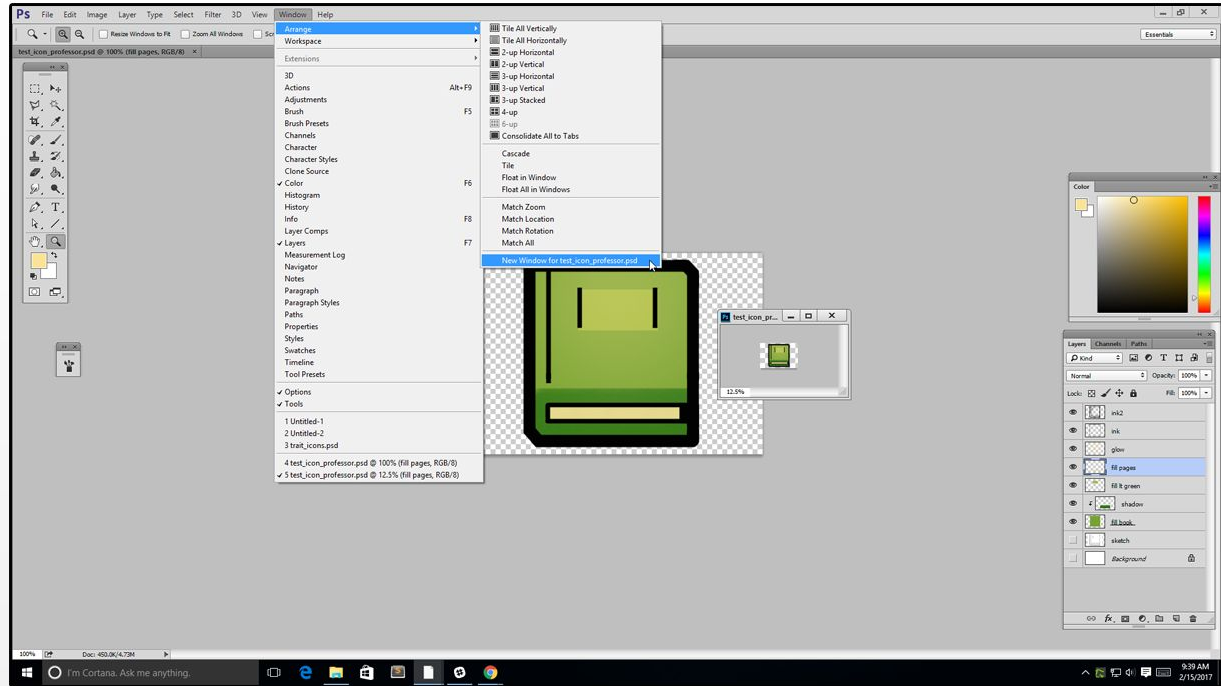
LINEART

First read
Establish the silhouette of the icon, along with it's key features with a 15 pt round brush.

Second read
Add any necessary supporting details to the design with a 7 pt round brush. Use sparingly!

COLOR

Almost every color used for trait icons can be found within the stained glass window. Their color schemes are fairly saturated, and range tonally from mostly light to some middle values. The end result should provide a bold contrast to the stark, black lineart.

RGBY
Typically, each icon starts with red, green, blue or gold as its main color, and accents with either one more color or a neutral variant. Different values of one color in adjacent fills or subtle analogous gradients can be used to add visual interest.

A lighter and darker version of one blue

Subtle red to orange gradient

Exceptions
It is fine to bend the rules a little bit if it's supported by the concept driving the design, and as long as it doesn't negatively impact readability or cohesiveness.
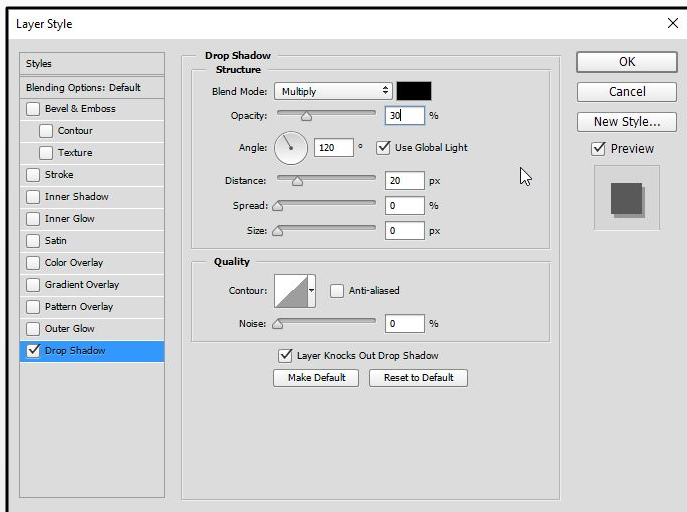
Balanced 3 color palette

shifting an existing red to get a "purple"

FINISHING TOUCHES

Drop Shadow
The drop shadow is applied to maintain continuity between assets that share the flat, stained glass aesthetic.

Use these settings for consistency:

Stroke
Each finished icon has a black, 4 pixel stroke around it to give it just a little more punch.

Without   With

Glow
Every icon gets one. This is applied on its own layer that's masked to the icon's fills, and set to 40% overlay. The glow itself is FAE395, painted in with one, gentle tap of a large-ish fuzzy brush.

Without   With

Layer Style   ✕

Styles

Blending Options: Default

☐ Bevel & Emboss
☐ Contour
☐ Texture
☐ Stroke
☐ Inner Shadow
☐ Inner Glow
☐ Satin
☐ Color Overlay
☐ Gradient Overlay
☐ Pattern Overlay
☐ Outer Glow
☑ Drop Shadow

Drop Shadow
Structure

Blend Mode: Multiply

Opacity: 30 %

Angle: 120 °   ☑ Use Global Light

Distance: 20 px
Spread: 0 %
Size: 0 px

Quality

Contour: ☐ Anti-aliased

Noise: 0 %

☑ Layer Knocks Out Drop Shadow

Make Default   Reset to Default

OK
Cancel
New Style...
☑ Preview