Photoshop Basics

A quick introduction to the basic tools in Photoshop

Photoshop logo courtesy Adobe Systems Inc.

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Photoshop, published by Adobe Systems Inc., is a software application used to alter, manipulate, and edit digital images.

The Workspace

Menu bar. The menu bar at the top of the Photoshop window contains options for Photoshop tools.

Options bar. The options bar beneath the menu bar displays contextual options for tools. It also has the workspace menu to save and load palettes.

Toolbox. The toolbox on the left side of the Photoshop window offers shortcuts to Photoshop tools.

Palettes. The individual panels of information and options for files are on the right side. Each is labeled with a tab, and can be minimized, closed, grouped, or dragged in and out of a dock.

Document windows. Each open document has its own window with a status bar at the right of the zoom percentage in the bottom left-hand corner.

Customizing the workspace

Changing the look of the menu bar. Change which menu items are visible and add color to menu items. Go to *Edit > Menus* and use the dialog box to modify the menu bar and palette menus.

Moving the options bar. Move the options bar by clicking on the handle on its left side and moving it. The options bar will dock to the top or bottom of the screen when nearby.

Moving the toolbox. The toolbox can be moved to any location on the screen by clicking on the light gray area at its top and dragging. Switch between layouts by clicking the double arrow at the top.

Rearranging palettes. You can separate a palette from its group, and move it into another group by dragging the tab fro its original group into a new group. You can expand or collapse a dock by clicking on the double arrows at its top. You can drag some palette tabs out of a dock and close the rest.

Displaying different information in the document window status bar. The status bar displays the document file size as two numbers separated by a forward slash. The first number approximates the image file size with all layers merged. The second number approximates the total file size of the image with layers intact. The status bar can display the dimension in pixels or the file version number.

Saving a customized workspace. Save and load different workspaces (different arrangements of palettes, menus, and keyboard shortcuts) to work more efficiently. After you customize a workspace, select the *Workspace* menu in the options bar, click *Save Workspace* and enter a name for the workspace. You can load a workspace by opening *Workspace* and from the menu list.

Image Files

Creating New Documents. Select *File > New* from the menu bar, then specify document size.

Opening Files. Open a file by selecting *File > Open* from the menu bar.

Saving Files. Save a file by selecting *File > Save*.

File formats for images

GIF. The format can have up to 256 colors. GIF files support transparency and animation. They work best with images that have large areas of the same color.

JPG. The format works best with images that have more than 256 colors. Saving compresses images, degrading quality somewhat.

PNG. The format is similar to GIF in supporting transparency and working best with solid-color images, but is superior to GIF as it supports true levels of transparency for colored areas. PNG produces a better quality image at a smaller file size. You can save an image as a PNG-8 file, the same as GIF with 256 colors, or a PNG-24 file, with millions of colors and variable transparency.

Saving files. To save an image, select *File > Save for Web & Devices*, which opens a *Save For Web* dialog box, showing a preview of the image. Choose to save the file as a GIF,JPEG, PNG-8, or PNG-24. Click *Save* and name the image.

Layers

Layers let you to work on one part of an image without affecting the rest. Show and hide a layer in an image by clicking its corresponding icon in the *Layers* palette. Arrange the layers into groups by going to *Layer > New > Group*.

Rename layers by double-clicking the layer name.

Change the transparency of a layer by changing its opacity with the Opacity slider, or typing a value into the Opacity box.

Duplicate a layer by pressing Ctrl-J on a Windows PC or Command-J on a Mac. You can duplicate a layer by dragging it while pressing the Alt key on a Windows PC or the Option key on Mac.

Select multiple layers by holding down Ctrl on a Windows PC or Command on a Mac, and clicking the layer names. The temporary link between the layers lets you move them or delete.

Link layers by clicking them while holding Shift or Ctrl on a Windows PC or Command on a Mac. With the layers selected, click *Link Layers* at the bottom-left of the *Layers* palette. The relationship remains after you select a different layer, unlike the process of simply selecting multiple layers.

Unlink layers by selecting one and going to *Layer > Unlink Layers*. To unlink a single layer, select it and click its icon. The other layers will remain linked. To temporarily unlink, hold *Shift* and click the link icon. A red X will appear over the icon. Reactivate the link by holding *Shift* and clicking the icon.

Rearrange layers by dragging a layer above or below other layers. Use the *move down* shortcut Ctrl-[on a Windows PC or Command-[on a Mac. Use the *move up* shortcut Ctrl-] on a Windows PC or Command-] on a Mac to move selected layers up and down. Shift-Ctrl-[and Shift-Ctrl-] on a Windows PC or Shift-Command-[and Shift-Command-] on a Mac to bring layers to the top or bottom of a stack.

Select a layer by using the keyboard shortcuts Alt-[and Alt-] on a Windows PC or Option-[and Option-] on a Mac to move up and down through the layers in the *Layers* palette.

Create a new layer by pressing Shift-Ctrl-N on a Windows PC or Shift-Command-N on a Mac to bring up the *New Layer* dialog box. To create a new layer quickly, press Shift-Ctrl-Alt-N on a Windows PC or Shift-Command-Option-N on a Mac.

Merge a layer into the one beneath it by pressing Ctrl-E on a Windows PC or Command-E on a Mac.

Toolbox

Selection Tools

Use a tool to select a specific area of a document for editing. Only the area selected will be affected by changes.

Marquee tools (M) create rectangular or elliptical selections.

Lasso tools (L) create three different freeform selections:

Lasso. Click and drag the Lasso to draw a selection area. Releasing the mouse will close the selection by joining the start and end points with a straight line.

Polygonal Lasso. Click at different points to create vertices of a polygon shape. Close the selection by moving the cursor to the beginning and clicking once, or press the *Enter* key.

Magnetic Lasso. This tool will make a *smart* selection following the edges of contrast and color difference. Click once near the edge of an object and follow around it to lay down a path. Close the selection by clicking at a point near the beginning of the selection, or press the *Enter* key.

Magic Wand tool (W) selects areas of similar color.

Move tool (V) moves a selected area or an entire layer.

Crop tool (C) is used to trim images. Create a selection using the *Crop* tool, then double-click the center of the selection, or press *Enter*, to crop the image to the size of the selection.

Drawing and Painting Tools

Photoshop's drawing and painting tools allow you to create shapes and backgrounds.

Brush tool (B) is used for soft-edge painting or drawing. Draw strokes by clicking and dragging the mouse over the canvas. Change the brush size in the options bar at the top of the window.

Pencil tool (B) is used for hard-edge drawing or painting and has similar options to the Brush tool for size and opacity. It can be used for drawing on, and editing, individual pixels in zoomed-in images.

Eraser tool (E) removes pixels. Choose between Pencil, Brush, or Block from the Mode drop-down menu in the options bar.
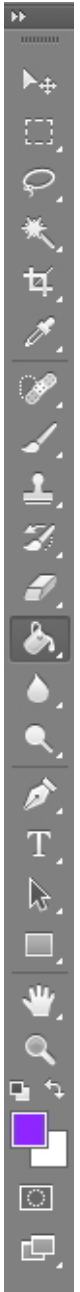
Paint Bucket tool (G) fills a selection with a flat color. Click once in an area you wish to fill.

Gradient tool (G) fills a selection with a blend of two or more colors, known as a gradient. Display the gradient presets and tools by clicking on the small triangle on the right-hand side of the Gradient Tool. Apply a gradient by setting the desired colors, choosing the gradient style, then clicking and dragging the cursor over the area to be filled.

Text Tool tool (T) creates text layers. Select the tool, click in the window, and start typing. Or click and drag to create a rectangular text area that will force text to wrap within its boundaries. Change the font size, color and other properties using the options bar along the top of the window. To finish, press Ctrl-Enter on a Windows PC or Command-Return on a Mac.

Shape Tools

Create shapes by clicking and dragging the Rectangle, Rounded Rectangle, Ellipse, Polygon, Line, and Custom Shape tools (U). The options for a tool is displayed in the options bar.

Selecting Colors

Set foreground and background colors by clicking on the appropriate tile and choosing a color from the *Color Picker*.

Eyedropper tool (I) lets you sample another color from your image, and set it to be the foreground color. **T**o set the background color, hold down the Alt key on a Windows PC or Option key on a Mac.

Hand tool (H) moves the canvas.

Zooming into the image allows you to make subtle changes at the pixel level. Use Ctrl + to zoom in and Ctrl – to zoom out. You can also zoom using the slider on the *Navigator* palette.

Selecting

Making a selection using the layers palette. To select the pixels on a particular layer, press Ctrl on a Windows PC or Command on a Mac, and click the thumbnail (small image) of the layer.

Making a selection using a quick mask. In *Quick Mask Mode* (Q), use a tool such as the Brush to paint the things you don't want to select. This is *painting a mask*. The resulting reverse-selection will be a transparent color. You can edit the transparent layer using drawing and painting tools. Switching back to Standard Mode (Q) will complete your selection.

Alpha channel selections. Open the *Channels* palette to see channels displayed similar to the *Layers* palette. Click the *Create New Channel* icon at the bottom of the palette to create an alpha channel. Use any painting or drawing tool to create a gray-scale image to represent the selection. Press Ctrl on a Windows PC or Command on a Mac, and click the channel's thumbnail. To return to the normal view, click the *Layers* palette tab, and select any layer.

Ethics

Photo manipulation has been used to alter the content of images to deceive or persuade audiences.

Photo images once were considered a reliable source of information and a means of presenting the truth. However, today it's difficult to differentiate between a manipulated image and reality.

Audiences raise question of ethics when publications are discovered changing *reality* in photographs.

In photojournalism, digital editing is controversial. The U.S. National Press Photographers Association code of ethics demands the accuracy of published images and tells photographers not to manipulate images to mislead audiences or misrepresent subjects.

This well-known 1989 TV guide cover (above right) was the result of an unethical decision to put Oprah Winfrey's head on actress Ann-Margret's body and changing the skin color.

Resources

Photoshop.com tutorials
http://www.photoshop.com/tutorials

Photoshop tutorials on YouTube
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLF78F2D0BFBBCC153

Learn Photoshop on Adobe TV
http://tv.adobe.com/show/learn-photoshop-cs6/

Photoshop tutorials from beginner to advanced
http://psd.tutsplus.com/

Creative Photoshop tutorials
http://pixelpetal.com/photoshop/creative-adobe-photoshop-cs6-tutorials/

New Photoshop tutorials
http://spyrestudios.com/26-brand-new-adobe-photoshop-cs6-tutorials/