

Photoshop Basics

Photoshop Interface

The **Menu Bar** across the top of the screen has nine menus: File, Edit, Image, Layer, Select, Filter, View, Window, and Help. Some menu commands have sub-menus, indicated by an arrow next to the command. Some commands have keyboard shortcuts, as indicated next to the name of the command in the menu.

The **Toolbar** has all of the basic tools; some tools have a tiny arrow in the lower right hand corner that reveals additional options for the tool. Hold your cursor over each tool to see its name and its keyboard shortcut. Toward the bottom of the toolbar are color swatches showing the foreground and background colors. Clicking on one of these swatches will pop up a color selection dialog box. The tiny arrow to the top right allows you to swap foreground and background colors. The tiny black and white swatch symbol to the lower left allows you to reset the colors to the default of black foreground and white background.

The tools you will most likely use for this assignment are the Move tool, the Marquee tool, the Brush tool, the Lasso tool, the Text tool, the Crop tool, the Hand tool, the Zoom tool and the Eraser tool.

The **Palettes** are arranged on the right side of the screen. More palettes are available under the Windows menu at the top of the screen. The palettes are movable and can be docked together; some palettes are grouped together by default. The most important palettes to have open for this assignment are Layers and History.

Resizing and Cropping

To resize an image, go to Image > Image Size. The width and height of the image appear in the resulting dialog box (select pixels as the unit of measurement). Toward the bottom of the dialog box is a Constrain Proportions check box. You usually want to have this checked in order to avoid causing any distortion in the image. Type in a new height for the image; with Constrain Proportions checked you should automatically get a proportional new width as well.

To crop an image, select the Crop tool which is located in the Toolbox, beneath the Lasso tool. Draw a square on the canvas indicating that part of the image that you want to preserve.

Saving and File Format Options

The first time you save a file (File > Save or File > Save As), a dialog box appears with options. Under the Format menu, note that you can save the file in a variety of formats. The two formats that we'll be working with in class are "Photoshop" and "JPEG"; their differences are very important.

- **Photoshop:** this is Photoshop's native file format (.psd extension). Saving a file in Photoshop format preserves layers and other information, allowing you to go back to the file later and make changes to the image.
- **JPEG:** this is the standard format for photographs (.jpg extension). Saving a file in JPEG format will flatten all of the layers and will compress the graphic, reducing its quality somewhat. The first time you save a graphic in JPEG format, a dialog box will ask for a compression level; a higher compression level will give you a better quality graphic, but also a larger file.

The best strategy is to save your file as a Photoshop file until you're finished working on it, and then to save the file as a JPEG. Each time you save the file as a JPEG file you lose some quality due to compression. Remember that to save a file as a JPEG, you need to select JPEG from the dropdown Format menu in the dialog box that you get when you select File > Save As.

Filters

Filters are used to achieve different kinds of visual effects. Go to the Filter menu to view the categories of filters and to select from the sub-menus within each category. Note that selecting most filters will pop up a dialog box that gives you additional options for the filter. As you make selections in these dialog boxes, you can see how the image changes in response. Note that some filters present you with a different interface than others. For now, you should avoid the Extract and Pattern Maker filters, as well as the Video filters and Distort > Displace.

Adjustments

Under Image > Adjustments, you have options for altering the colors in a layer. You can adjust the distribution of dark and light tones in the layer, the color balance, contrast, brightness, hue, saturation, and other color-related features. The options I use most often are Levels, Color Balance, Brightness/Contrast, and Hue/Saturation.

Layers

Photoshop derives much of its power from the fact that it allows you to create images in layers. Essentially, layers are like transparent sheets; when you paint on one sheet, you can still see through the unpainted areas to the sheet below. In addition, the work you do on one layer doesn't have any effect on the work you do on other layers. This is very helpful because you can modify parts of your image while leaving other parts untouched.

It's important to know which layer you're working on; that layer will be selected (its color will be blue) in the Layers Palette. The Layers palette lists all layers, layer sets, and layer effects in an image. You can accomplish many tasks—such as creating, hiding, displaying, copying, and deleting layers—using the buttons in the Layers palette. You can also arrange layers on top of or below one another, and you can adjust the opacity of a layer so that layers beneath it are visible.

Adding text

Selecting the Type tool (“T”) in the Toolbar enables you to type. The Character palette (Window > Character) lets you modify text by choosing its font, size, leading (space between lines), tracking (space between characters), color, and other features. To modify text, the text itself must be selected (highlighted).

When you select the Type tool and click in the document to begin typing, notice that a new layer is added to the Layers palette. Type layers are designated with a “T” and are different from other layers in Photoshop. When you finish typing the text, hit Return or select the Move tool.