An Idiot's Guide to Photoshop

By Karl L. Gechlik

askTheAdmin.com

This page intentionally left blank

Table of Contents

makeuseof.com

This page intentionally left blank

1. Introduction

A lot of people are intimidated by Adobe's Photoshop. At first glance it is confusing, but with a little help you can quickly be on your way to becoming a Photoshop guru. This is our introductory guide on how to do basic functions in Photoshop.

Photoshop is a layered graphic editing program; it is a great tool for creating, editing and manipulating images. Let me give you a little bit of knowledge to begin with. I wish someone would have explained what layers were in relation to graphic design before I started teaching Photoshop to myself.

Every new piece of data you add to your image is a new layer, even though you see the whole image as one; it does not mean you have the whole image selected. So if you are trying to do something to everything on your screen and it is only affecting one portion of it you are in the wrong layer. Keep that in the back of your mind as we continue.

A new layer is created for each new action you take. If you use the text tool to add some text to the image it will create a new layer for it. However, if you edit that layer and change the font color it is still in the same layer. You can always bring up your layers by pressing F7. The layer portion of the screen is below. This is the heart and soul of Photoshop so make sure you really do keep in mind as we discuss other Photoshop areas. We will go into more detail as we discuss each feature.

I really recommend you read following MakeUseOf article on layers before you begin your Photoshop tutorial.

http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/adobe-photoshop-how-layers-work.

It is an awesome, very short write-up on everything concerning layers.
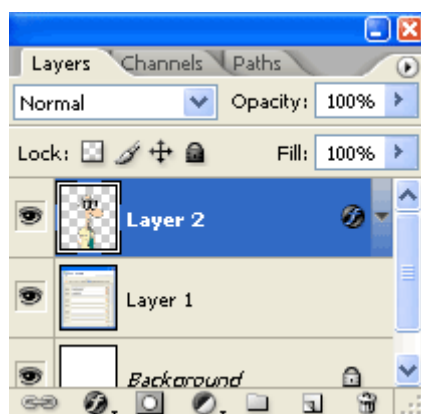
Let's fire up whatever version of Photoshop you will be using, and get started. I will be using Photoshop CS3 so there might be some slight differences between our versions. Nothing major but if you can't find a specific option where I tell you it is… look around a little more.

Every feature I will show you can be found in all versions of Photoshop as far back as 6 (The first version I really got into).

Once the program has fully launched, you will be left with a blank work space.

2. Creating a new document

Your default toolbars will be on your right. To create a blank document you can either hit **(Control + N)** or click File → New.

That will give you this dialogue box.
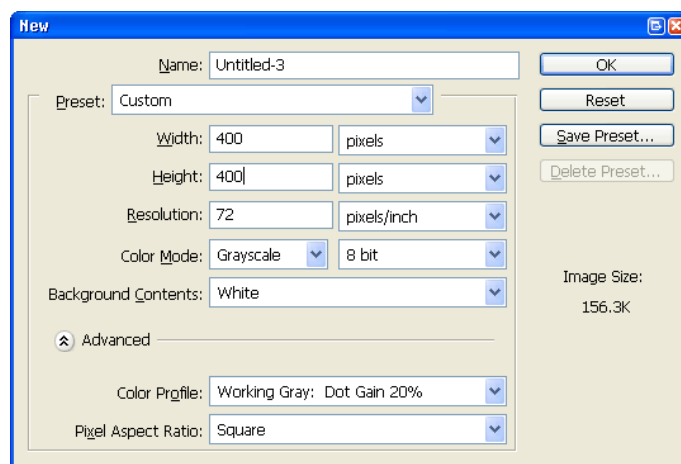
Here is where you define your image's dimensions and resolution.

To start we will create a 400 x 400 pixel box. I like to work in pixels due to my web design background but if you rather use inches or another unit of measure, then use the drop down and switch it up.

Now you see a blank box in your workspace along with your toolbar all the way on the right and the layer bar in between them. Your toolbar contains all of your tools that you can use to manipulate your image. The layer box shows you what layer you are working in and any relationship between them.
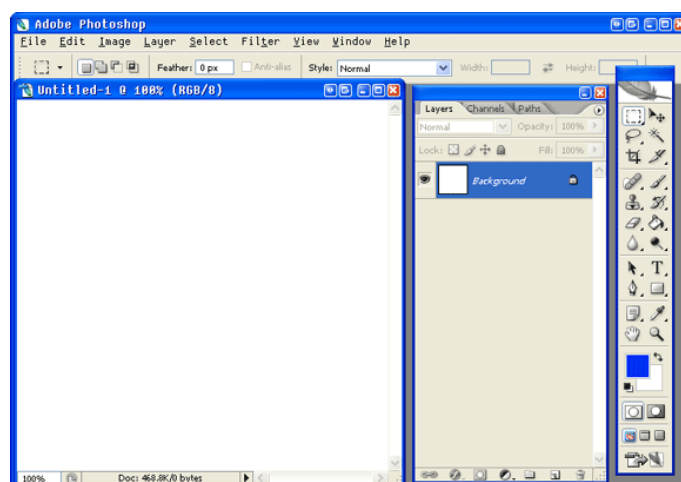
You will notice you have only layer and it is labeled Background with a lock icon. This is how every new Photoshop image starts. As you add items to your image new layers will be created automatically.
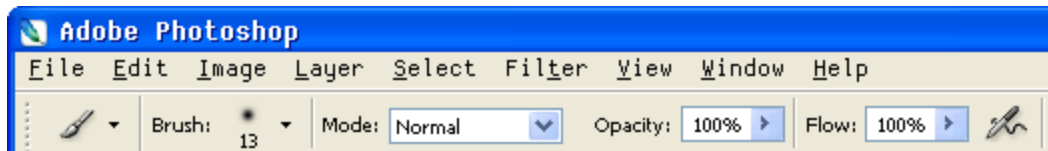
3. Using the paint brush tool

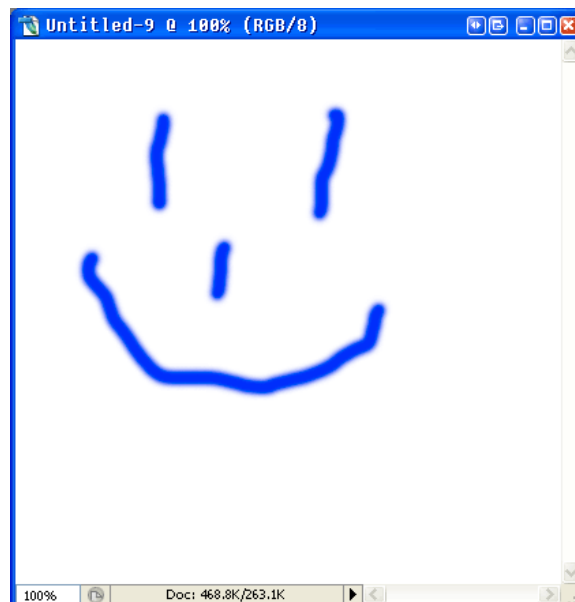Let's use the paintbrush tool to draw a smiley face.

Select the tool by clicking on the item in your toolbar, as shown below.

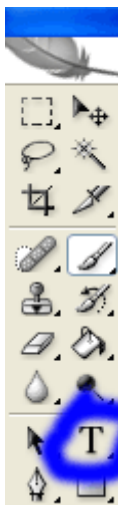Next we pick our brush's size, called the diameter at the top of the screen.

Now use your mouse and paint a smiley face or something more creative. As soon as you start painting a new layer is created for you.
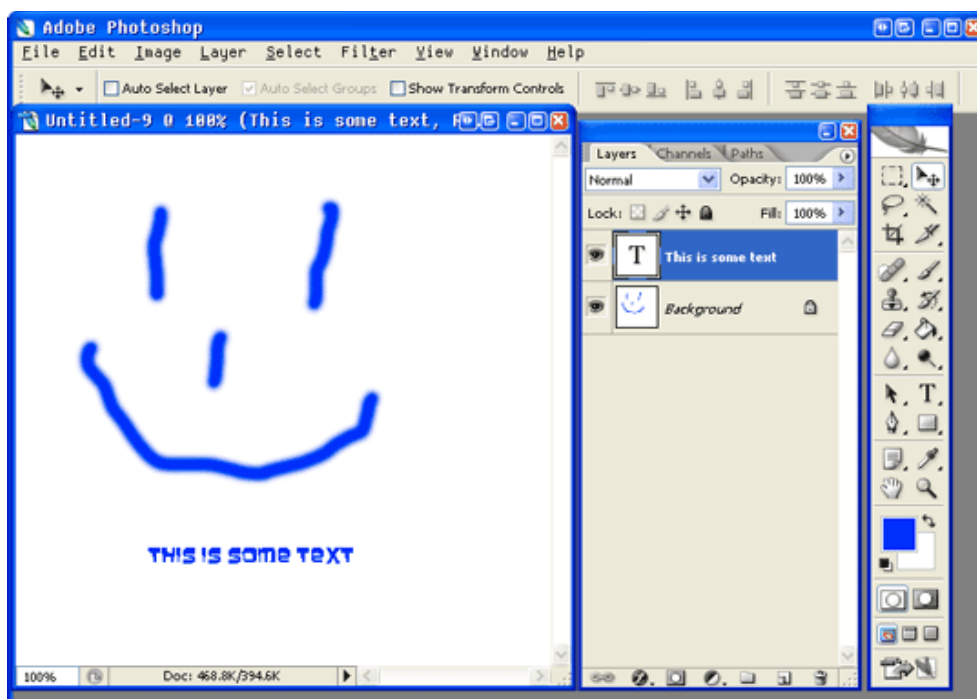
4. Using the text tool to add text

Let's add some text to our image by clicking on our Text toolbar item here

Notice that Photoshop creates a new layer for your text as I said before. Type something in and continue.

After selecting the text tool you can click anywhere on your image and type the word style. You notice your toolbars at the top of the screen change to have word editing tools like font, size and color.

5. Using the move tool

After you finish typing in your text, click on the move tool. You can see the move tool circled in the below shot of the toolbar. Use that arrow to click and move your image around.

Notice that the image does not move, it just moves the text. That's because at the moment it's the text layer that is selected. You need to pay attention to your layers. It is the most confusing thing to new Photoshop users. I sound like a broken record but you will thank me later.
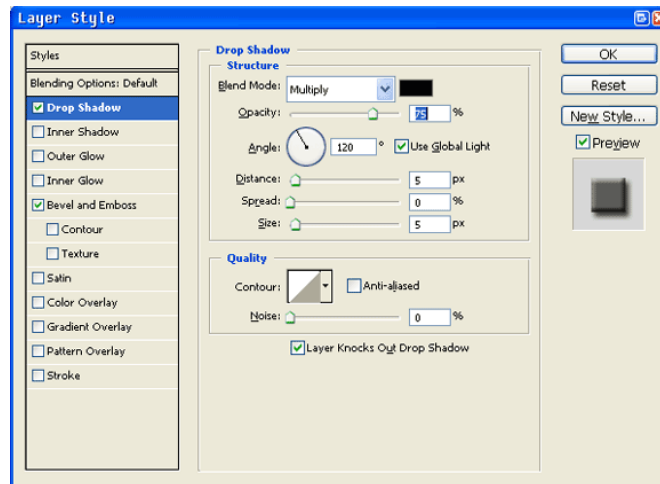
6. Adding layer effects like drop shadow and bevel and emboss

Let's click on the text layer and click the effects button below it.
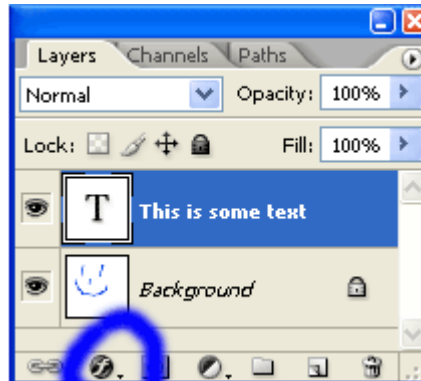
Because we have the text layer selected (you see the big T and the layers name is a portion of your text.) Now we will give the text a drop shadow and bevel and emboss it like so.

After clicking OK your picture will look like this. Notice the difference in the text's appearance.
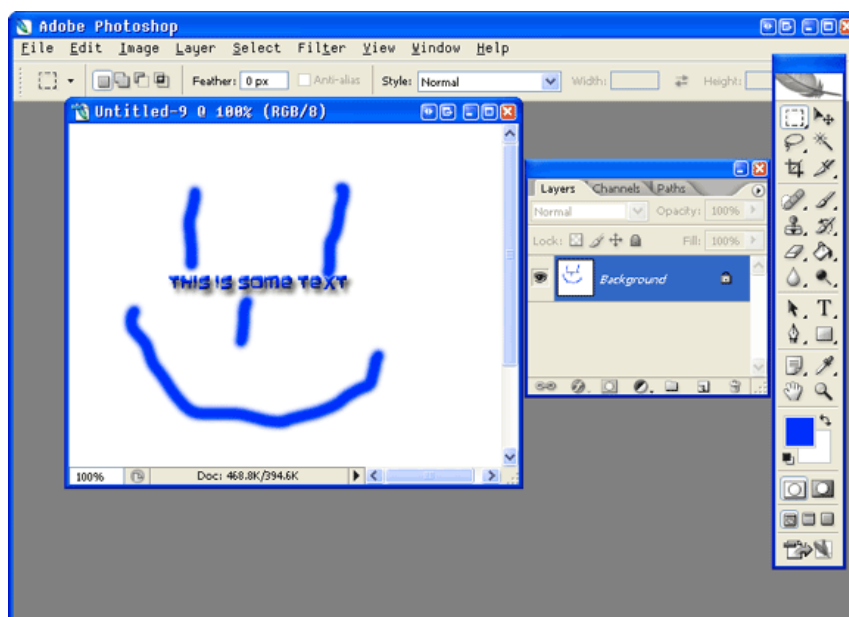

Pretty cool huh?

You can go back and mess around with the other effects, don't worry I'll wait.

7. Flattening your image and some background on layers

Now if you go to above menu, press Layer → Flatten image. All of your layers become merged. No matter how many layers you had, they all become one layer, one image.


At this point, try to use the "arrow" move tool again and see what happens this time. Now the whole image moves. That's because what was two layers before now became only one. You can see that the layers column on the right now has only one layer listed. This is what happens when we flatten our image. When there is one layer it normally says Background on it with a little lock icon. To unlock the layer simply double click on the lock icon.

Even after the layer is unlocked the image is still in this flattened state and you **can't edit** the text or modify the image.

Now let's undo our flattening so we can edit the text again. To do this (Well to Un-Do this – sorry for the pun) we can use a normal Undo or (Control + Z).

> Note: If you wanted to do multiple un-do's like in Microsoft Word you can't just keep hitting (Control + Z) you need to use a different command, called Step Backwards (or Alt + Control +Z.)

Either way this will simply undoes your last action. It will be like it never happened. Paint the wrong line, type the wrong text just step backwards.
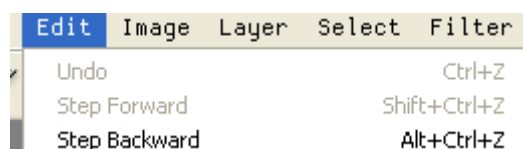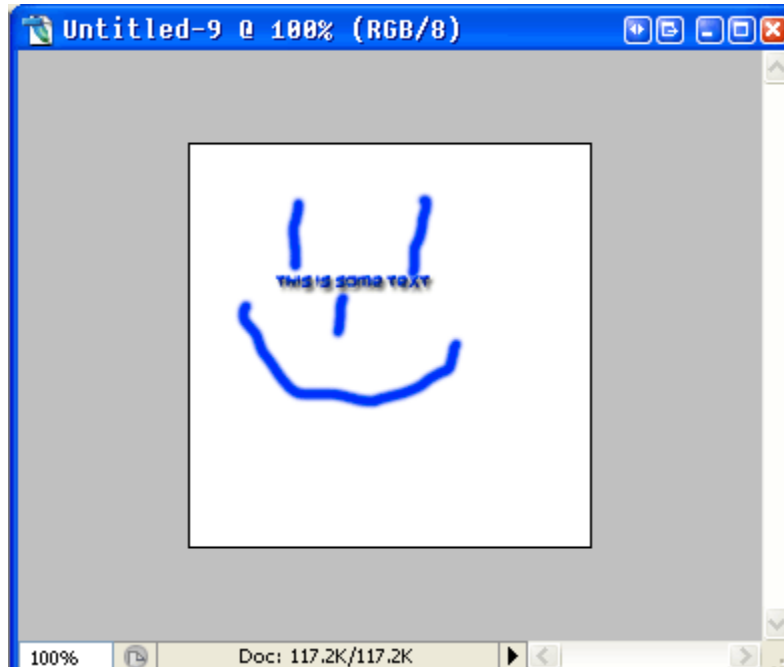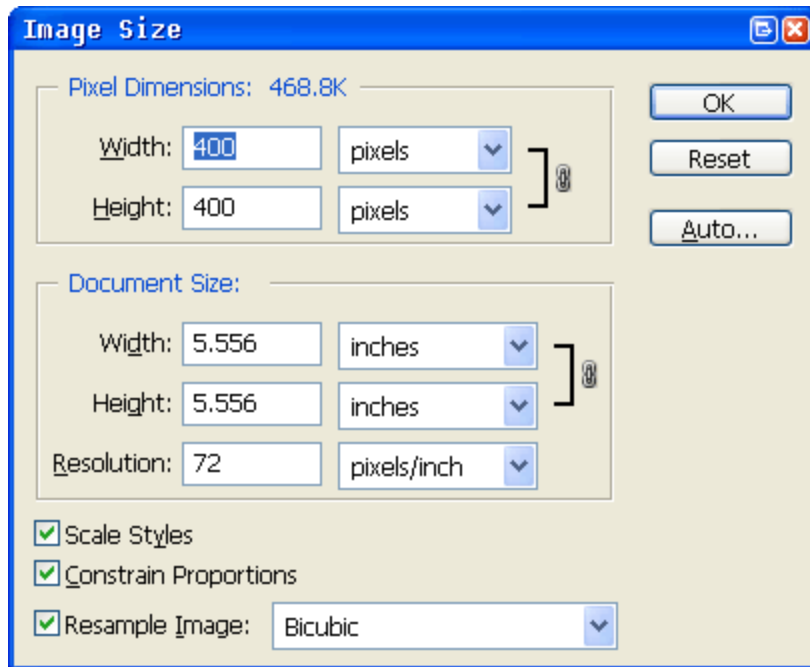

Click the text tool and click on the text layer you will see that you can edit the text again and modify your effects. Make some changes and then step back to undo them.

8. Resizing your image

Now say you want to resize your image all you have to do is go to Image → Size and change it.

Let's take a look at this:

8.1 Resizing the canvas

You can do the same thing with the background canvas you are working on. You can enlarge or shrink your workspace. To do this you would go to Image → Canvas Size. Hit this and you will get a similar dialogue box to the image size box. You can see it below. It will not affect your image but if you make the canvas too small some of your image may be hidden.

Play around with the size and make your canvas bigger.
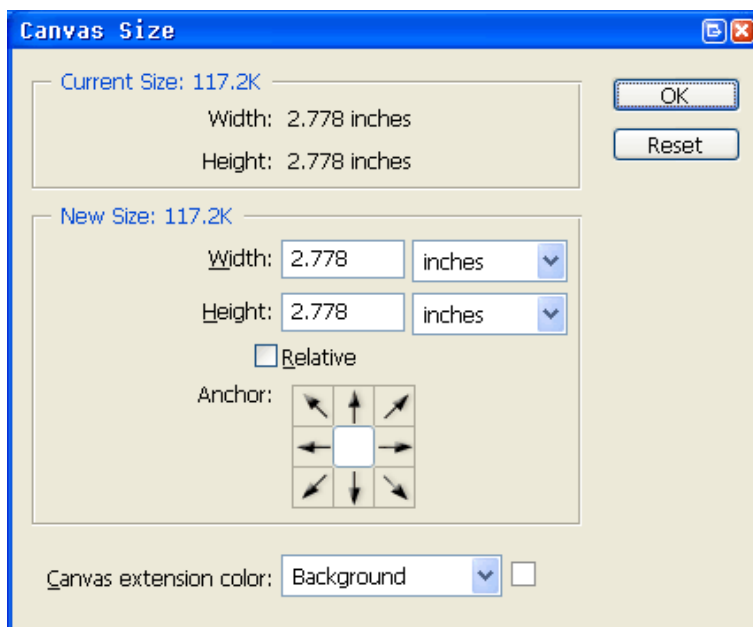
Now I have this smaller image on a bigger canvas.
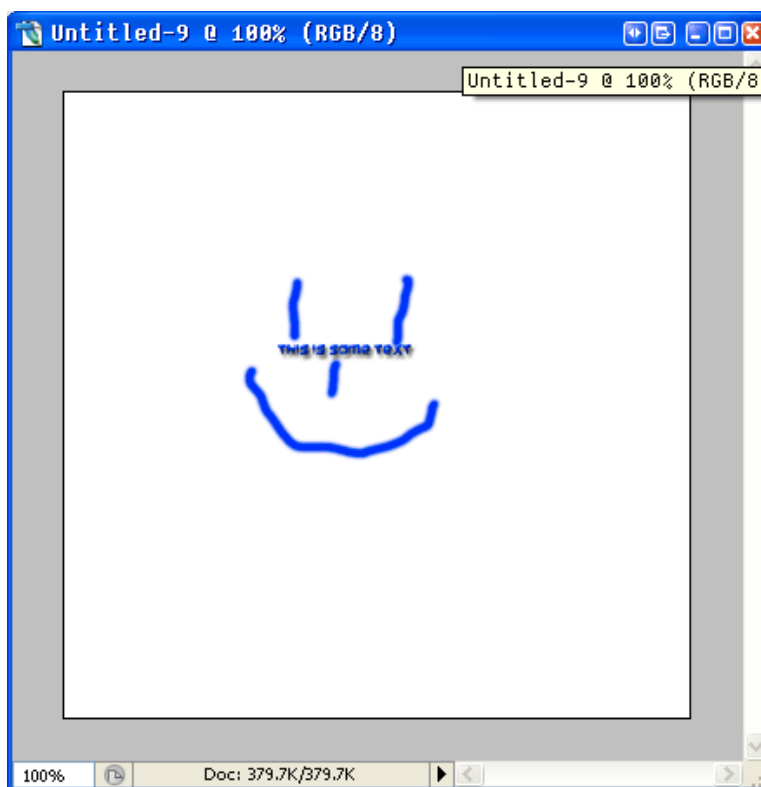
9. Rotating and Free Transform

Let's flatten our image again. Image → Flatten Image. Now do you want to rotate your image? For this we can use free transform, go to Edit → Free Transform (or hit **Control + T**)


This is in CS3 in other versions it might be slightly different. My colleague is using Photoshop Elements and for hit it's Image → Rotate → Free Transform after selecting the option then click the square hollow box under your image and spin or turn it to your hearts content. You can flip it and mess around with it. Try it out.
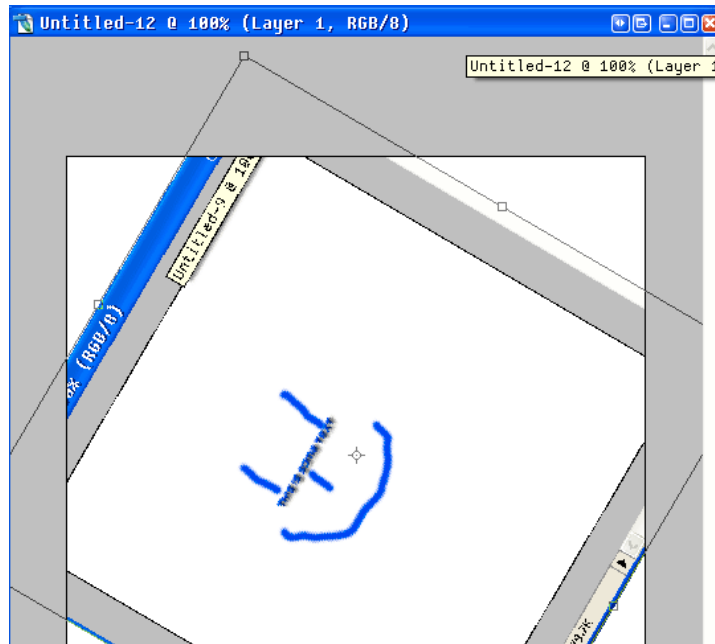
🗯**Note: This can also be used to straighten scanned photos.**

When you are done "Transforming" your image you will need to click onto another toolbar item like text or the move tool. This let's Photoshop know you are done with transforming and it will now ask you if you want to commit your changes like this:
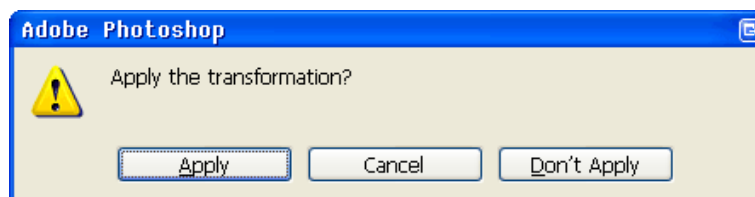
Click on apply and it will render your image to your specifications. Click cancel or Don't Apply and it will back out of the changes.

10. Combining images. Put your test image on a real background

Let's put our smiley face image and text on a different background. Do you have a digital picture on your computer?

Great! Let's use that.

First make sure your image is flattened by going to Image → Flatten image. Then we want to select a box around our image and cut it out.

For this we will use the box tool as seen below **(pressing alt while hitting this tool cycles through other shapes like a circle)** pressing alt while hitting this tool cycles through other shapes, like a circle or a single column of pixels) .

After you select this tool draw a box with your mouse around your image. Like you see in the screenshot below.
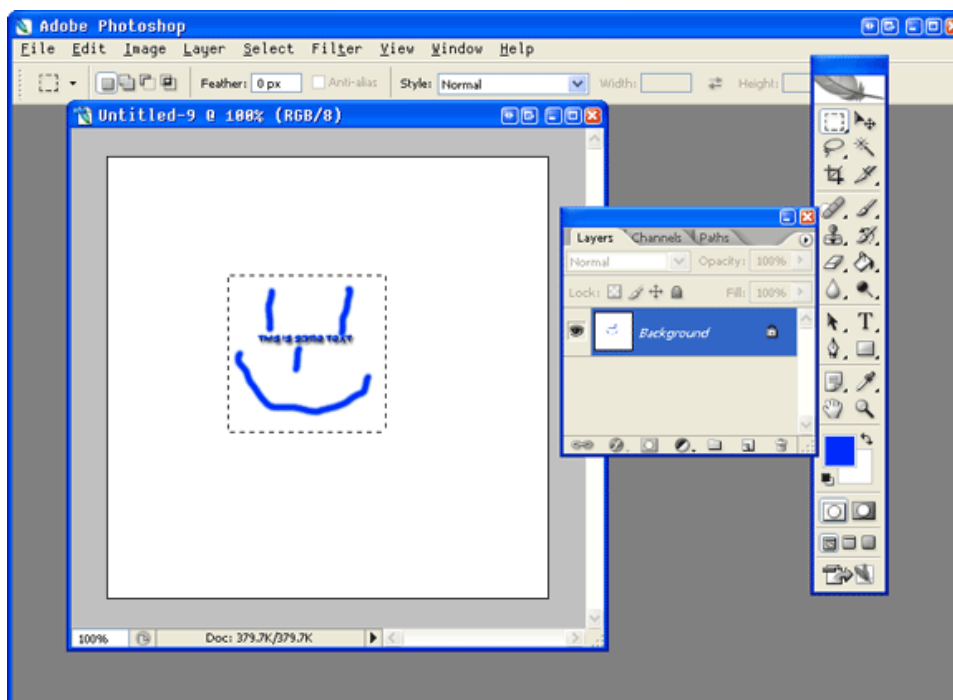
Press **Control+X** or navigate to Edit → Cut. Your smiley face will disappear. You can also use Edit→ Copy (or **Control+C**) to leave the original image.

Now we will open the new image and paste the image we have on our clipboard on top of our digital picture. We do this by clicking file open (Or **Control + O**).
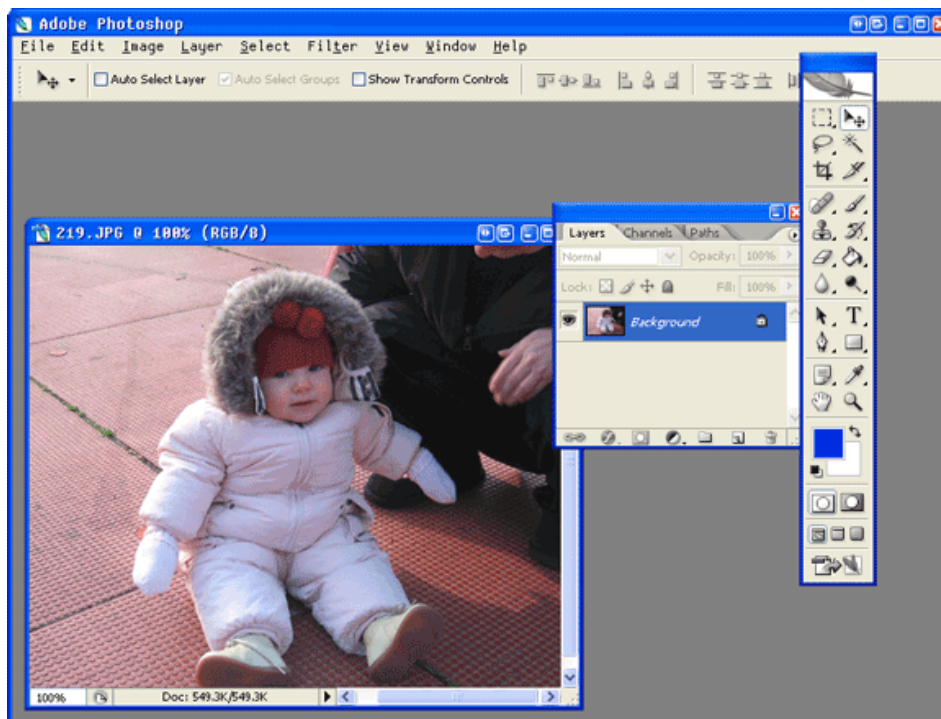

Then go to Edit → Paste (**or Control V**) and your smiley face image and text is now on top of your digital picture. You can move it around, manipulate it and even give it those same effects we saw before on text. You can apply them to any layer.

Let's flatten our image by again going to Image → Flatten Image.

11. Save For Web

Now we will save it for Internet use by pressing File → **Save For Web** (or **Alt + Shift + Control + S**). That may seem like a long hot key but it is the one I use the most often!
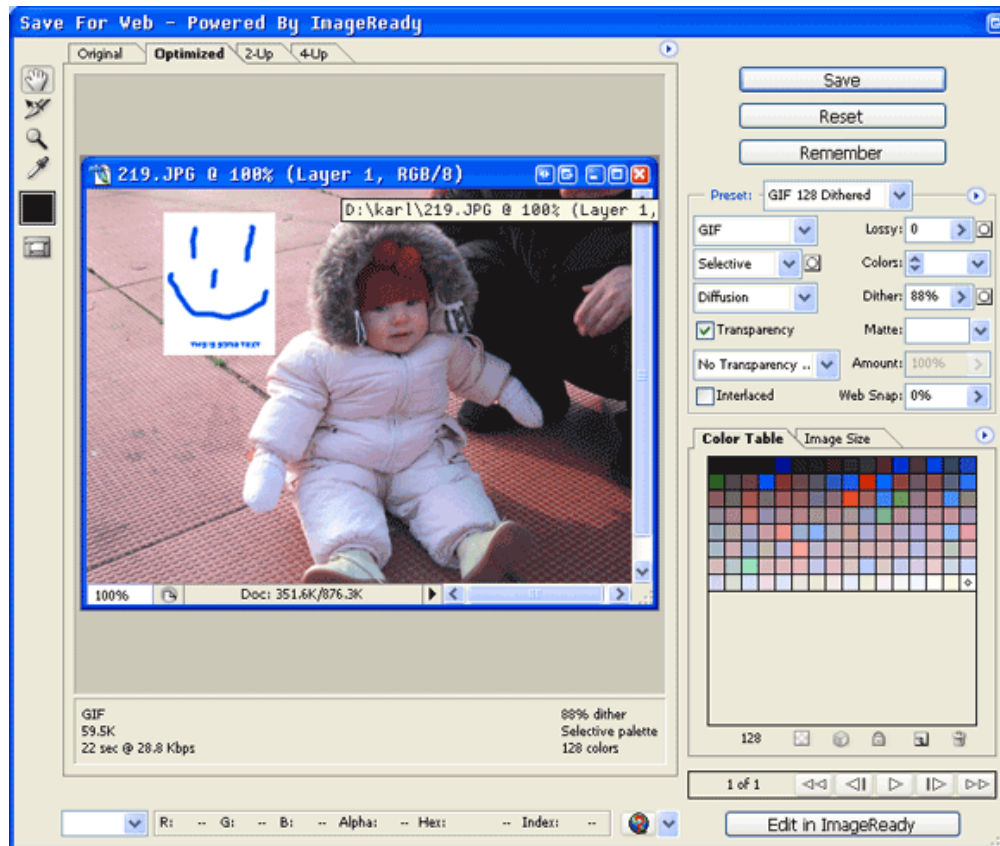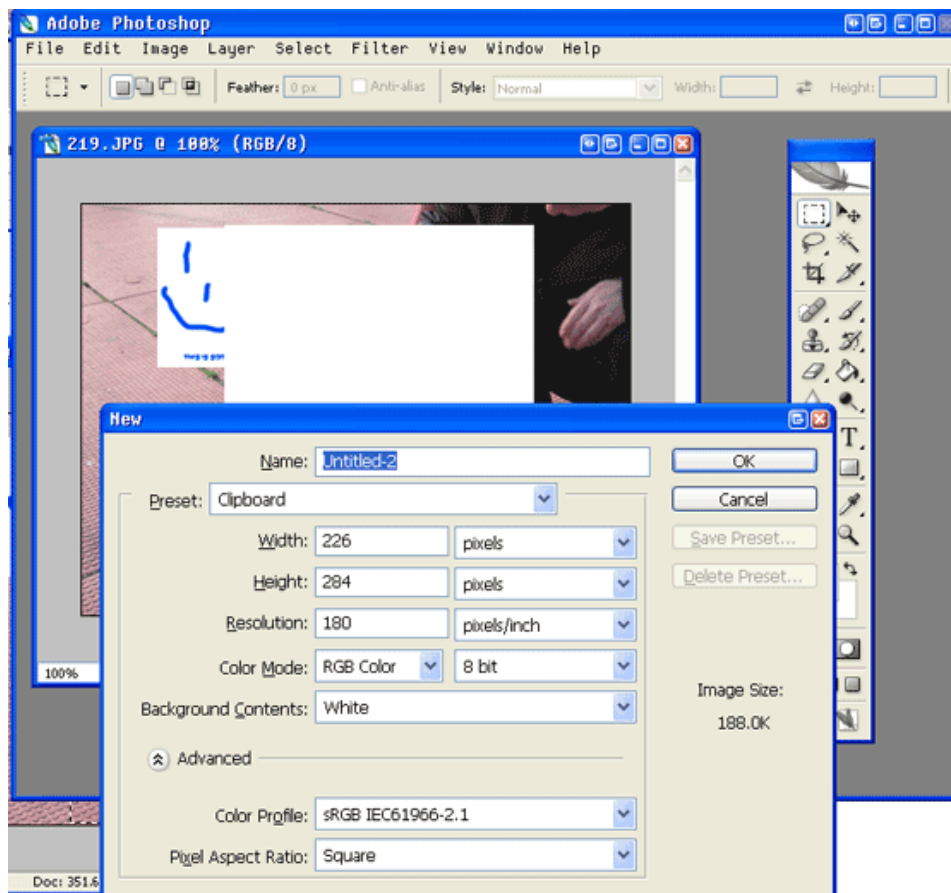
12. Cropping

Now if you wanted to cut out the baby from the picture or 'Crop' her out you would use the same box tool we showed you before to draw a box around her. Like so:
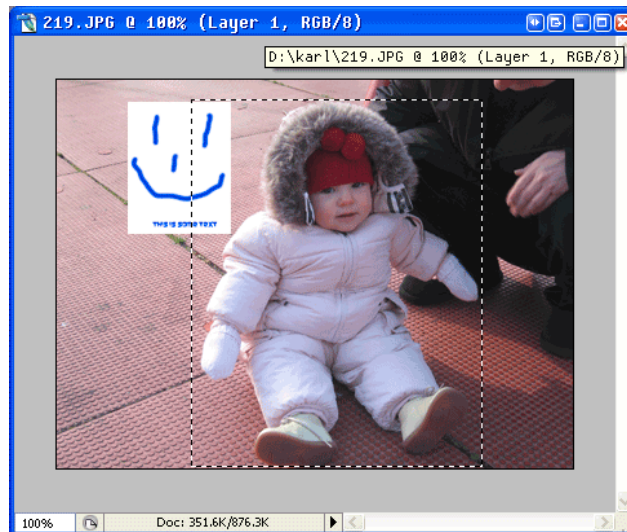
Then hit **Control + X** to cut and **Control + N** to open a new document (note: that the size is already perfect for your cropped image) and then **Control + V** to paste it to the new blank document.

Now we would like to crop out the rest of the smiley face and try and match up the background. Let's use that rectangular box tool from the toolbar select what's left of the smiley face and hit delete.

13. Using the fill tool

And we will use the fill tool to fill it a similar color for now.

In a later guide we will show you how to replicate the background to make a new piece of it. But now let's fill it. Click on the eyedropper tool like you see selected below.

13.1 Using the Eye dropper tool to select an exact color for the fill tool
Use the eyedropper tool to select the background next to the white square. It will set you default color to be that shade of pink.
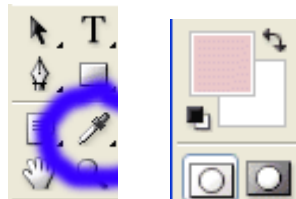
Now we will select the fill bucket and simply fill in this space like so. You can see the fill bucket selected in the tool bar below. It looks like a paint bucket being tipped over:

Deselect your selection by clicking on the box tool and clicking on your image… Not to bad for a first try eh?

Now say we wanted to make this same image black and white – do you know how simple that is? All I do is **Control + A** to select all, **Control + C** to copy my image and **Control + N** to open a new document that will have the black and white version of the image.

Here is where I make a change from RGB color to Grayscale as you see here:
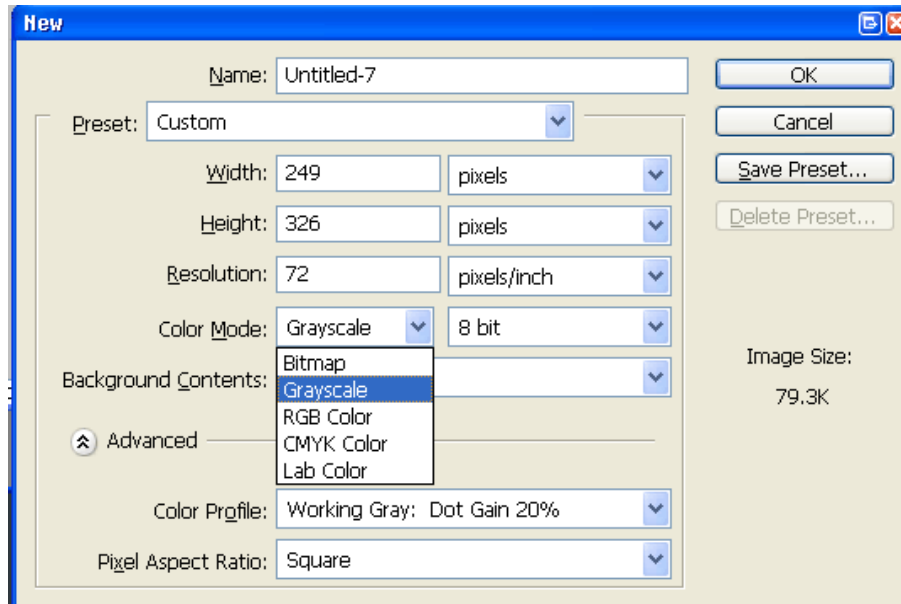
Then I paste my image into this black and white container and bam – black and white image!

askTheAdmin.com

14. Adding a border

It looks like you are catching on fast! Maybe we can try something a little harder. How about adding a border to the image? First we will select our entire image by pressing **Control + A** then we will hit Select→ Modify → Border
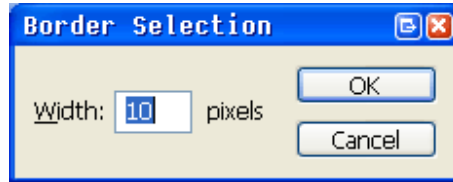
I choose 10 pixels for my border. Then I make sure the color I want is highlighted on the color selector and I fill the image. This is what I get.

15. Creating a watermark

Sometimes people want you to know where a specific image came from. Maybe because it is someone's original work or maybe it is confidential information and you want to label it as such. This is a very simple trick and can be done with either an image or text.

We will use a text watermark in the bottom right hand corner of our image.

Click on the text tool add the text you want to watermark your image. Then if you look on your layer box you will see a setting called opacity. This will allow you to see through your text or image; I usually put it at around 28% and call it a day. You can also add layer effects to your watermark.
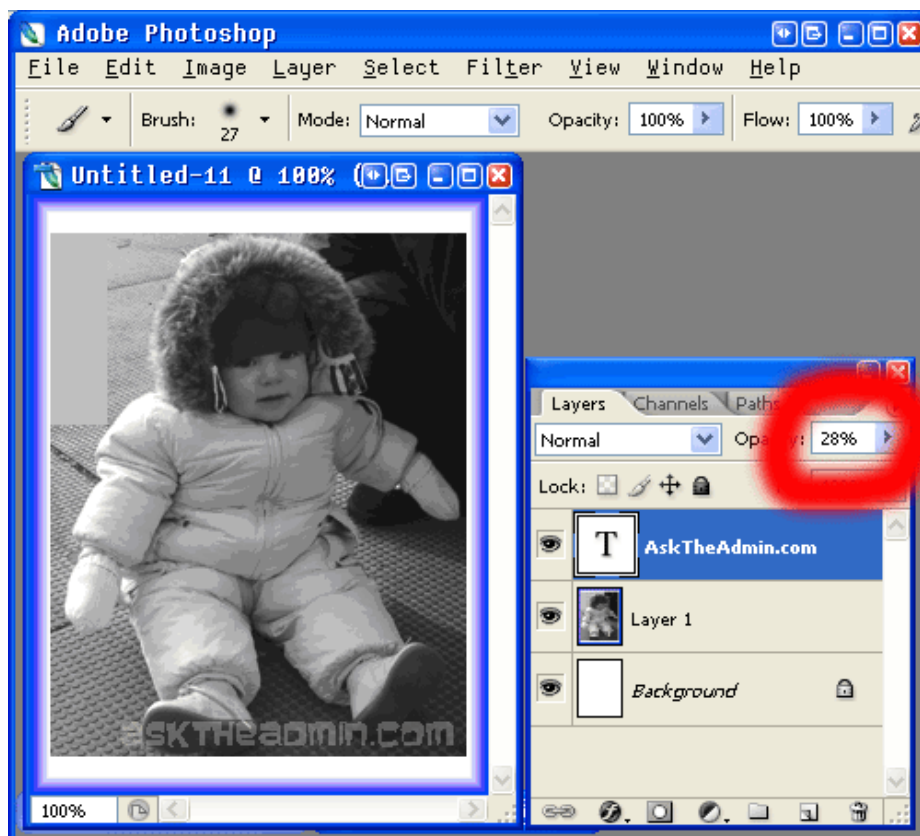
Not to shabby? Impressed by your own work yet? Let's keep on going!

15.1 Blur tool

As our final lesson we will Blur an image, Sharpen an image and then smudge an image. Let's look at the Blur tool.


You can see the tool selected in the above shot. You get to choose your brush for this tool just like for the paintbrush. Hit the blur tool and then paint on your layer and it will blur like so:

If you want to blur just the portion of the image then use the rectangular select tool to select that portion first. Once you made the selection use the blur tool to blur the image.

15.2 Sharpen Image

Let's step back to undo our blurring. Next by clicking the alt key and hitting the blur tool it will turn into a triangle aka the sharpen tool.
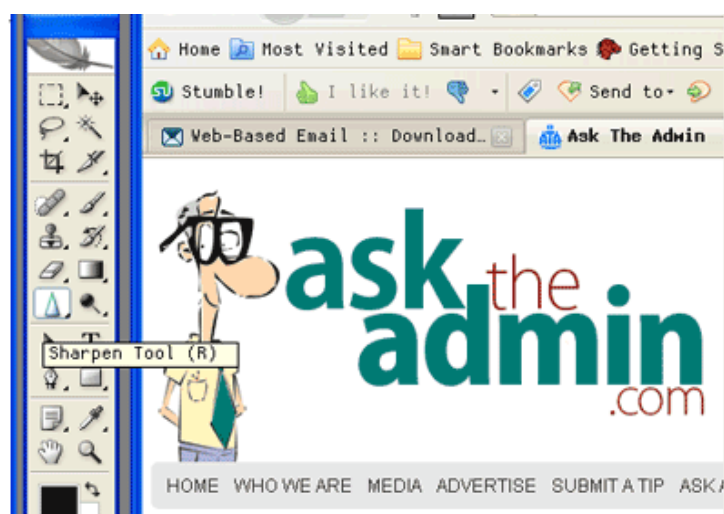
 Select it and paint over a portion of the image like so:

It will sharpen your image. You can step back and un-do what you have done. Now play around with everything you have learned and you are on your way to becoming a Photoshop guru!

As you might have noticed both Blur and Sharpen tools can be further adjusted to your liking. That is to say, when you select one of those tools you will be able to further adjust the impact of the brush by choosing brush size and its strength (see above screenshots).

That is a basic run through on how to open, edit, create, resize and save images for web use inside Photoshop.

In addition to this there are loads of plug-ins and effects you can use with Photoshop anything you can imagine you can find out on the internet. Google it and see what you come up.

Stay tuned for our next installment where we go deeper into image modification and plug-ins.

Appendix

Photoshop Shortcuts

Main Toolbar			
Key	Action	Action	Key
m	Marquee Tool	Move Tool	v
l	Lasso Tool	Magic Wand Tool	w
j	Airbrush Tool	Paintbrush Tool	b
s	Rubber Stamp Tool	History Brush Tool	y
e	Eraser Tool	Pencil Tool	n
r	Blur Tool	Dodge Tool	o
p	Pen Tool	Type Tool	t
u	Measure Tool	Linear Gradient Tool	g
k	Paint Bucket Tool	Eyedropper Tool	i
h	Hand Tool	Zoom Tool	z
d	Default foreground and background colors.		
x	Switches between foreground and background colors.		
q	Switches between standard mode or quick mask mode.		
f	Switches between screen modes.		
TAB	Hides/Unhides open tools.		

File Menu	
Key	Action
CTRL + N	New
CTRL + O	Open
CTRL + ALT + O	Open As
CTRL + W	Close
CTRL + S	Save
CTRL + SHIFT + S	Save As
CTRL + ALT + S	Save a Copy
CTRL + SHIFT + P	Page Setup
CTRL + P	Print
CTRL + K	Preferences > General

makeuseof.com

Edit Menu

Key	Action
CTRL + Z	Undo
CTRL + X	Cut
CTRL + C	Copy
CTRL + SHIFT + C	Copy Merged
CTRL + V	Paste
CTRL + SHIFT + V	Paste Into
CTRL + T	Free Transform
CTRL + SHIFT + T	Transform > Again

Image Menu

Key	Action
CTRL + L	Adjust > Levels
CTRL + SHIFT + L	Adjust > Auto Levels
CTRL + ALT + SHIFT + L	Adjust > Auto Contrast
CTRL + M	Adjust > Curves
CTRL + B	Adjust > Color Balance
CTRL + U	Adjust > Hue/Saturation
CTRL + SHIFT + U	Adjust > Desaturate
CTRL + I	Adjust > Invert
CTRL + ALT + X	Extract

Layer Menu

Key	Action
CTRL + SHIFT + N	New > Layer
CTRL + J	New > Layer Via Copy
CTRL + SHIFT + J	New > Layer Via Cut
CTRL + G	Group with Previous
CTRL + SHIFT + G	Ungroup
CTRL + SHIFT +]	Arrange > Bring to Front
CTRL +]	Arrange > Bring Forward
CTRL + [	Arrange > Send Backward
CTRL + SHIFT + [	Arrange > Send to Back
CTRL + E	Merge Down
CTRL + SHIFT + E	Merge Visible

Select Menu

Key	Action
CTRL + A	All
CTRL + D	Deselect
CTRL + SHIFT + D	Reselect

makeuseof.com

| CTRL + SHIFT + I | Inverse |
| CTRL + ALT + D | Feather |

Filter Menu

Key	Action
CTRL + F	Last Filter
CTRL + SHIFT + F	Fade

View Menu

Key	Action
CTRL + Y	Preview > CMYK
CTRL + SHIFT + Y	Gamut Warning
CTRL + +	Zoom In
CTRL + -	Zoom Out
CTRL + 0	Fit on Screen
CTRL + SHIFT + 0	Actual Pixels
CTRL + H	Hide Edges
CTRL + SHIFT + H	Hide Path
CTRL + R	Show Rulers
CTRL + ;	Hide Guides
CTRL + SHIFT + ;	Snap To Guides
CTRL + ALT + ;	Lock Guides
CTRL + "	Show Grid
CTRL + SHIFT + "	Snap To Grid

Help Menu

Key	Action
F1	Contents

Other Shortcuts

Key	Action
Page Up/Down	Move view up/down 1 screen.
SHIFT + Page Up/Down	Nudge view up/down.
CTRL + Page Up/Down	Move view left/right 1 screen.
CTRL + SHIFT + Page Up/Down	Nudge screen left/right.
CTRL + SHIFT + Z	Previous History entry.
CTRL + ALT + Z	Next History entry.
SHIFT + -	Previous blending mode.
SHIFT + +	Next blending mode.

makeuseof.com

Visit MakeUseOf.com for daily posts on cool websites, free software and internet tips. If you enjoyed this guide/manual then subscribe to MakeUseOf.com (via feed or email) and get instant access to several other such guides and cheat sheets to your favorite programs.

- www.makeuseof.com (latest articles)
- www.makeuseof.com/dir/ (browser cool websites by category)
- www.makeuseof.com/most-popular/ (most popular articles)
- http://feedproxy.google.com/Makeuseof (feed)
- http://feedburner.google.com/fb/a/mailverify?uri=Makeuseof&loc=en_US (subscribe via email)

Don't miss out on our other cool manuals!
Subscribe via email or RSS to download!