

# PHOTOSHOP

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO LEARNING THE  
BASICS OF PHOTOSHOP AND CREATING  
AMAZING PHOTOS TODAY!



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# **Photoshop:**

Absolute Beginners Guide to Learning the Basics of Photoshop and Creating Amazing Photos Today!



# **Table Of Contents**

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1 – The Photoshop Toolbar](#)

[Chapter 2 – Basic Photoshop Drawings with the Pen Tool](#)

[Chapter 3 – Color Corrections, Enhancements, and Touch-Ups](#)

[Conclusion](#)



# Introduction

Photoshop represents an incredibly powerful application with a host of intimidating features. For those who wish to get started with using Photoshop but are not sure as to how, this ebook will help you pick up all the basics of this amazing photo and image editing tool.

## **Hold on! You say you don't have Photoshop?**

If you are not a Photoshop user at present, you can pick up a 30-day free trial plan from Adobe. It allows you to download and use a free version of the software thus giving you enough time to get accustomed with the basics on how the tool works.

In case you are unwilling to purchase it long term because of the large expenses involved, much of the things explained here will continue to be applicable for these are common aspects in most of the popular image editing tools such as GIMP and Pixelmator.

We have decided to go ahead with Photoshop largely considering its overall popularity in the modern market. So without further ado, let's get started and explore the wonderful world of photo and image editing.







# Chapter 1 – The Photoshop Toolbar

If we were to take a look at every single tool present in the tool bar, it would require a separate book of its own. So, let us take a look at some of the basic tools that are most commonly used.

While you will get an overview of what each tool does, it would be better if you could get hold of the application itself and played around on it for a while.

## **Move Tool (Keyboard: V)**

With the Move tool, you can move objects around the Photoshop canvas on any given layer. Click and drag anywhere on the canvas to use it. While dragging, the Photoshop layer moves along with the mouse.

## **Marquee (Keyboard: M)**

Marquee allows the selection of a specific part of the canvas in a certain shape. The default shape is either a rectangle or a perfect square (usually produced by holding down the *Shift* button while selecting the canvas area).

It can also be in the shape of an ellipse (or circle, once again produced by holding down the *Shift* button while selecting the area).

## **Lasso (Keyboard: L)**

A free-form selection tool, you can drag it around the canvas and select anything that is covered in the lassoed area. The polygon lasso is accessible within this tool and allows a selection to be created by clicking around on the canvas and marking points.

The magnetic lasso works similar to the regular lasso but attempts to auto detect edges and automatically snap them up.

## **Magic Wand (Keyboard: W)**

When you use the magic wand to click on an area, it automatically tells the Photoshop application to select the spot and anything similar to it around the vicinity. This tool is a crude method of removing backgrounds from photos.

## **Crop Tool (Keyboard: C)**

As can be inferred from the name, this tool is used for cropping the pictures. By specifying the exact size, the tool can be constrained to those proportions or be used simply as a free size.

## **Eyedropper (Keyboard: I)**

With the eyedropper tool you can click anywhere on the canvas and sample the color from that specific point. The tool will cause the foreground color to change to that it has sampled from the canvas.

## **Healing Brush (Keyboard: J)**

With the healing brush you can sample part of the photograph and use it for painting over other parts. Once done, the Photoshop application examines the surrounding areas and tries to blend the painted image along with the rest of the picture.

## **Paintbrush and Pencil (Keyboard: B)**

The paintbrush tool does all the things ideally possible with a paintbrush while the pencil emulates a pencil. Different kinds of brushes may be set for the paintbrush tool.

While airbrush styles and standard airbrush are popular options, leaves and other shapes may also be used to create painting masterpieces.

## **Clone Stamp (Keyboard: S)**

Just like the healing brush, the clone stamp allows sampling of a small part of the photograph. It can be used for painting over other parts. However, it doesn't do anything more than that with the use of this tool limited to painting one area over another.

## **History Brush (Keyboard: Y)**

The history brush allows painting back in time. With the Photoshop application keeping track of every move being made the History brush tool allows the past to be painted into the current photo.

For example, if you have increased the brightness but want to change the brightness of a certain part to its original state, use the history brush on that part and it will return to its original darkness.

## **Eraser Tool (Keyboard: E)**

The erase tool is similar to the paintbrush tool except for the fact that it erases rather than painting.

## **Paint Can and Gradient Tools (Keyboard: G)**

This tool allows a specific area to be filled in with the current foreground color. By default, the gradient tool creates a gradient that blends the background and foreground of the tool. Preset gradients can be created and loaded as well with some of them using more

than two colors.

### **Blur, Sharpen, and Smudge Tools (Keyboard: None)**

Each of these three tools acts similar to paintbrushes, though the impact on the picture is different for each. The blur tool blurs the paint area, the sharpen tool sharpens it, and the smudge tool creates a smudge of the entire area around the canvas.

The latter is very useful when it comes to creating a nice blend of colors or wisps and smokes that can be added on to the photograph.

### **Burn, Dodge and Sponge Tools (Keyboard: O)**

These tools are similar to the paintbrush and can be used for manipulating light and color intensity. The burn tool darkens areas in the photograph while the dodge tool makes them lighter.

The sponge tool helps in saturation or de-saturation of color in the area where it is applied. All of these tools are useful for creating touch ups on the photo.

### **Pen Tool (Keyboard: P)**

If you are planning to draw vector graphics, this tool will come in very useful. Another area for its application is in the creation of paths that can be put to use in a number of other areas that will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

### **Type Tool (Keyboard: T)**

With the type tool you are able to type horizontally. Tools that are hidden beneath the horizontal type tool also allow typing to be done vertically apart from creation of horizontal and vertical text masks.

### **Path Tool (Keyboard: A)**

You can use the path tool for moving around any of the created paths. It is very similar to the move tool but can be used only for paths.

### **Shape Tool (Keyboard: U)**

This tool allows the creation of vector rectangles, lines, polygons, circles, rounded rectangles, as well as custom shapes. They come in very handy while creating or designing shape masks for photos.

### **Hand Tool (Keyboard: H)**

Clicking and holding down with the hand tool allows you to move around the Photoshop canvas. If the entire canvas has a fit to the screen, this tool won't be able to fulfill its purpose.

However, if you are zoomed in, then the tool will allow easy navigation. It will also come in handy on a picture that is too big to fit on to the screen at 100% view.

### **Zoom Tool (Keyboard: Z)**

With the zoom tool you can zoom in and out of the canvas area by clicking on a certain part of the Photoshop canvas. The default setting is for it to zoom in. For zooming out, you need to hold down the option key and use the tool as in all ordinary circumstances.

### **Color Selection Tools (Keyboard: D for defaults, X to switch background and foreground colors)**

You can manage the color in use with the help of these tools. Foreground color is the color on the top and background color is one that appears in the background. The former is what the brushes are ideally going to use and the latter is what is going to be used upon deleting or extending something to the background.

The couple of smaller options present on the front are shortcut functions. The left one – a black square on a white square – sets the default color for the background and foreground (keyboard: D); the curved double-headed arrow swaps the foreground and background colors (keyboard: X). When you click on the colors either in the foreground or in the background, a color picker is displayed so that the precise color can be set.



## **Chapter 1.1 – The Photoshop Palettes**

Palettes are those things that can be found on the right hand side of the screen. They make it easier to navigate through the documents, switch modes, add adjustments, and do a whole lot of other things.

### **Layers**

The layers palette allows all the layers in a document to be seen. Once you become familiar with the intrinsic world of Photoshop, you will find yourself going back and forth on this palette more often than not.

It allows organization and arrangement of the layers, let you set blending modes, opacity and visibility of layers, allow layers to be merged and grouped, and do a whole lot of other interesting things.

### **Adjustments**

The adjustments panel is where adjustment layers can be easily created and edited. These layers are non-destructive image alterations that impact subsequent layers below them and can be turned on and off without much difficulty.

Color correction is easily its most common use while a number of other adjustments can also be performed for dramatically altering the look of the image.

### **Color Channels**

With the color channels palette, you can take a look at specific colors that combine on to your picture. RGB mode will give you red, green, and blue. The color channels typically differ from one color space to another.

Upon choosing a specific color, the image is shown in different versions of black and white for each of the color channels are simply monochromatic images that represent the light in each channel.

When you switch between these different channels, it gives channel-specific touch ups, overall contrast enhancements, and also converts the photo to a black and white shade in a very compelling manner.

### **Color Picker**

This palette allows the foreground and background colors to be easily altered with the help of sliders.

### **Color Swatches**

This is a set of pre-defined colors from which quick choices can be made. A number of other pre-made swatch collections can either be loaded in or you can create one of your own as well.

## **History**

With the history palette, you can go back in time and undo any previous alteration you may have made. The standard undo command simply lets you toggle between an undo and redo of the latest actions on the image but the history panel lets you go further back on the modifications.

## **Text**

The text palette as well as the paragraph palette that comes below it allows all sorts of adjustments to the text being created with the type tool. The options are similar to what is seen in a word processor but allows additional specifications such as character width and spacing which are useful for the creation of new designs.





## **Chapter 1.2 – Menus in the Photoshop Application**

Most of the things available in the Photoshop menu can be accessed with the help of the tools already discussed. Nonetheless, there are a few notable items in each of the menus that are worth taking a look at.

### **File**

Like in all other applications, file handles the opening, closing, and saving of all operations.

### **Edit**

Edit brings the usual selection of cut, copy, and paste. In terms of Photoshop, this is the place that lets you transform the layers and also set your color spaces.

### **Image**

This menu gives you access to image and canvas adjustments including destructive effects that can be found in the adjustments palette. The menu options are designed to affect the image as a whole though the application of many of the adjustments is limited to only a single layer.

### **Layer**

Layer allows you to do all of those things that can be done in the layer palette but adds a number of other options into the picture. The menu also allows creation of smart objects and adjustment layers.

### **Select**

The lasso and marquee tools are usually the main options of selecting things. However, the select menu allows a refinement of that selection or lets you create entirely new selections based on criteria such as luminosity and color range.

### **Analysis**

Analysis provides measurement tools that can often come in handy for making accurate alterations to the images. For the basic lessons, this is just about all that you would want to know.

### **View**

View lets you work with different viewing options, hide and show the line guides that have been created. It makes the Photoshop application to snap to corners, grids, and edges on the canvas. Viewing of this invisible grid can also be controlled with the View menu.

## **Window**

The Window menu allows certain palettes and windows to be either shown or hidden. The Photoshop palettes and windows can also be arranged the way you want and saved as a window preset.





# Chapter 2 – Basic Photoshop Drawings with the Pen Tool

## Introducing the Pen Tool

The Pen Tool in Photoshop is extremely powerful but it can also have a very deceiving effect on the user. The primary idea of a pen is something you would normally press down and make a flowing mark with.

The general idea of the pen as a tool that can create dots on paper and connect them automatically based on a number of factors may seem a little farfetched but that is exactly what the Photoshop pen is capable of. Though it may seem a little odd, the tool is an extremely powerful one and useful for drawing vector graphics.

The Pen Tool is essentially a number of tools rolled into one. Its basic operations involve clicking around the Photoshop canvas and getting points to appear. The points get connected by lines and soon start taking a definite shape.

Holding down the shift key before creating a point ensures the line is either straight or in the form of a perfect 45 degree angle. This can be ideal for drawing simple, rough shapes but curves and more unique shapes will require some more work to be put in.

Start by creating a point on the canvas with the Pen Tool. Follow that up with a second point and hold down to drag. Soon a curve starts to appear. Holding down the shift key allows creation of perfect angles and helps in the generation of a more even curve.

While creating points in this fashion, you are likely to see two lines radiating out from the point. Each of these lines has balls at the end which affect one side of the curve when dragged.

One of the lines should be touching the curve while the other should not. The line not touching the curve is the one that has an effect on the next point being made.

An immediate alteration can be made by holding down the option key while the curve is still being drawn into position. If you wish to make the alteration at the end of making the curve, hold down the option key, click on the ball at one end of the line and drag it wherever you want. The longer you make the line, more restrictive it will be on the next curve. The created angle also has a dramatic effect on the curve.

Smaller angles will give you sharper edges while wider angles will give largely rounded edges. You need to work with the tool a little to better understand how to go about with handling the Pen Tool in Photoshop.

In case you are facing trouble with getting the pen tool to work as per your wish, the grid can come in handy. This can be turned on through the View menu and Grid from the Show submenu.

The grid makes it a lot easier to see what is being done and snaps on to the right points. Shapes such as a heart become a lot easier to draw when done with the help of these grids.

## All You Need Is a Good Deal of Practice

Because of its awkward nature, getting a grip on the Pen Tool can prove extremely difficult at first. Tracing photos is one of the easiest methods to practice.

Silhouettes make for excellent starting points because you have to deal with just one color. Once you get a hang of the shapes and strokes, you can make up more complex drawings.







# Chapter 3 – Color Corrections, Enhancements, and Touch-Ups

Now that you have a basic idea about what Photoshop has to offer, it's time to take a look at how these can be used for correcting and altering colors, retouching blemishes, and other unwanted parts on your photos.

## Color Correction

Color correction is a whole lot easier than what you may be inclined to believe. You have to know the colors that are complimentary and you can make use of those for cancelling out too much of any other color.

You must also have the ability to spot the areas where these colors are most prominent. This means having the ability to tell, say, when the light area of the photo is dominated by red or the dark area is under domination of a blue color.

The addition of a simple blue filter on the entire photo will likely give you more neutral highlights just the way you want them but the photo will become too cool with the shadows becoming overly saturated with blue color.

There are two important aspects you need to pay attention to for color correction: colors that dominate the photograph and colors that don't. Also you need to find out where these dominating colors are concentrated from a tonal perspective.

This is something that you can do by simply eyeing the photo but the proper method would be to consult the histogram available. Choose Histogram from the Window menu to gain access to this tool.

The left side is for the shadows, right side for the highlights, and the middle section reflects the mid-tones. If the photo is dominated in any area by a particular color, that space on the histogram will be dominated by the same color. This can come in handy for spotting necessary corrections.

## Color Balance

The color balance tool does not have a great deal of flexibility but on occasions when only minor color adjustments are necessary, this tool can help in getting them applied quickly.

If the brightest parts on a photo happen to be a little too red, select the Highlights radio button and move the slider towards blue and cyan until the colors become more neutral and balanced.

Color Balance tool can also be used for creating a number of interesting color effects by emphasizing various colors in their highlights, mid-tones, or shadows.

Playing around with it will give you a nice feel of all that this tool can do. This tool is not something people would ideally use a lot of the times with Curves being a better option in this regard with better flexibility.

However, if you have quick changes to be made then the Color Balance tool definitely makes for a useful choice.

## **Levels**

Levels tool is very much similar to the Curves tool with the added option of having training wheels. There are three main sliders available. The shadows slider is to the left – when you move it to the right the intensity of the shadows increases.

The highlights slider is to the right and moving it out towards the left increases the intensity of the highlights on the photo. The mid-tones slider is in the middle. Moving it left brightens up the photo and sliding it right makes it darker.

The sliders are present mainly to affect the contrast of the picture, while the ones present under Output Level affect the image brightness. When you move the black slider towards the white one, the image brightens up and vice versa, the darkness increases. Under default settings, the Levels tool applies all of these changes across the entire photo but you have the option of selecting and altering specific color channels as well.

At the top of the Levels panel is a little drop-down menu that allows a selection to be made either from all channels (RGB) or of the individual channels (red, green, and blue). If you wish to darken or brighten just the reds, select the red channel and make the necessary adjustments.

## **Curves**

If there is one color correction tool in Photoshop that stands out from all others, it is the Curves tool. It can prove a little intimidating and make you shy away from it though, especially when the Levels tool looks like it is working all too well.

However, this one is a lot better so you would do well to take some time out and learn how it works so you can get down to doing most of your adjustments with it.

This tool is powerful and versatile, and can be controlled with ease once you have the hang of it. Its functionality becomes similar to the Levels tool in a large number of ways once you know how to set your own points. Adjustments can be made either to the entire image or along specific channels, similar to what you see in the Levels tool.

For making a point of the curve, click anywhere on the line and drag along in a particular direction. Pulling towards the top left corner will brighten things up while a pull down towards the bottom right corner will cause everything to darken up.

Mid-tones is represented by the middle of the line. The bottom of the line that touches the bottom left corner is a representation of the shadows with the top representing the highlights.

## **Auto Tone**

There are instances when you can simply allow Photoshop to do a number of things on your behalf. Though it won't be a good idea to rely on the Auto Tone option, you can nevertheless use it and allow the application to make an educated guess on how your photo should look in terms of the color and tone adjustments. It can also help you save a little bit of time on occasions.

Then again there are instances when it gets things right. You need to spare no more than two seconds to see if it is going to work. If it doesn't, undo the changes and apply the corrections on your own.



## Chapter 3.1 – Photo Retouching and Enhancing

It is very easy to do basic enhancing and retouching of photos. When done with the right level of subtlety, it can also prove extremely effective. Here is a look at some of the options to help correct problems in photos such as dust from lens, dry skin, cuts on the face, etc.

### Touch Ups

Use of either the cloning stamp or healing brush will help in accomplishing most of the touch ups that need to be performed. If all that you are trying to do is making a person look their very best then most of the things can be done with the help of a clone stamp or healing brush.

We have already given substantial amount of information on these tools earlier in the book. Nevertheless, we will take another look at what is on offer.

### Revisiting the Healing Brush

This tool has already been discussed a good deal so we are going to stay away from diving into great details. It basically works with the selection of a source point and painting over the area that you wish to “heal” with image data taken from the source point. The tool then works its magic and blends in the painted source material with all that is present in its surroundings.

While you may expect a more realistic result than what you find with the Clone Brush, such is not always the case. The latter has the same working process but does not have any functionality to heal. It simply replaces the target area with all that has been selected as a source point.

Technically speaking, cloning another part of the photo may make it look a whole lot redundant but the Clone Tool can actually come in very handy when you are working with very small parts around the photo – especially areas of contrast and near hard edges.

### Other tools

Apart from the Clone Stamp and Healing Brush, corrections can be made in a number of other ways. For reducing redness in certain parts of the skin, de-saturating the area a little bit will give the desired results. This can be easily achieved with the help of the Sponge Tool.

For removing blemishes and in order to get certain alternatives, the Spot Healing Brush is a better option to the Healing Brush as it does not require a source point to be set.

Content-Aware Fill is one last option to be implemented and is a new feature in some of the latest Photoshop releases such as CS5. In order to use this tool, what has to be

removed should be present in the background layer. Use the Lasso or Marquee tool to select the part you wish to remove and then hit the 'delete' button.

This should be followed by a dialogue box that prompts you regarding what you wish to do with the selection. Set the 'Use' area to Content-Aware and then select the OK button.

Following this, Photoshop tries to figure out what the photo will look like without the concerned element. The success of Photoshop at replacing the part of your photo will depend on the precision of your selection.

In case you select something that is beyond the area you wish to remove, the application is likely to get confused and will produce unsatisfactory results.

Content-Aware Fill should typically be reserved for removing items that are more prominent than blemishes. The Healing Brush tool is a better choice in this regard but the former can just about get the job done!



## Chapter 3.2 – Enhancing a Portrait

With the help of a couple of minor enhancements, a portrait can be made significantly better than the original photograph. Photos have a tendency of picking up far more detail than what someone would normally notice and it is not always that people have pimples, cuts, or other blemishes marring their facial features.

Enhancing a portrait is not always about making the photo look better – sometimes it can simply be a matter of bringing out the best in a person’s appearance.

### Color Channeling

Using color channels is one of the best and easiest tricks for enhancing a portrait. The color channels can be found in the Channels palette on the right hand side of the screen.

If you are working with the RGB color space, four options will come up – red, green, blue, and RGB. While RGB is the color channel as you are seeing it, others are the respective channels.

When you click on each one of them, the tangible differences appear. Blue contains the maximum amount of detail, red has the highest amount of light, while green is a suitable combination of the two.

While dealing with people’s portraits, skin detail is something you would want to avoid. This is precisely what the red channel helps in doing. Sometimes you may have a near-perfect black and white photo in your hands, and yet working with colors can make it all very useful.

In order to get a very nice adjustment, first select the red channel and then do a select all before copying the image. Switch back to the combined RGB channel, go back to the Layers palette, and paste the red channel. A new layer gets created on top of the background and you will have only a red channel appearing on the canvas.

Select a blending mode of Overlay from the Layers palette for the red channel layer and reduce the opacity to around 20 or 30 percent. While making the adjustments, you will notice the nice effect being produced on your image.

It is one of the easiest adjustments for enhancing photos and also one of the more useful ones. It helps in removing unwanted details of the skin, adds contrast where necessary, and improves the color of the photo in certain instances as well.

### Burning and Dodging

These tools can be very useful when you are applying “virtual make-ups” to your subjects. This can be done for both men and women because the procedure is very subtle and the end result as close to the natural thing as possible.

The primary objective is to place added contrasts to the facial features that require



emphasis: the mouth, the nose, and the eyes.

The burn tool can be used for burning the shadows and mid-tones of eyebrows and eyelashes, the inner edges of the lips, and the curve of the nose. The dodge tool can also be used for brightening the mid-tones of the white and colored parts of the eyes and along the inside of the lips.

Though a number of these enhancements are extremely minor, the difference they make to the overall look of the photo is pretty significant. It can feel pretty minor while making the changes but if you track the changes in the History panel and go back to what the original photo looked like, you will realize how much of a change you have applied to the photo and understand the extent to which subtle changes can alter the overall look of the photo.



## Conclusion

Despite the topics that we have covered over here, Photoshop is a very versatile application and offers a lot that is yet to be learnt. Learning the basics is a way to get started but there is a lot more to explore as you make your way on to the advanced stages.

There are a number of books that you can explore apart from online resources such as Lynda and PSDTUTS+ where you get tutorials on the use of Photoshop.

Last but not the least, hope you had a nice and enjoyable experience going through this ebook!