

# Photoshop, Beyond the Basics: Intro to Layers

## Instructors

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## Vitale Digital Media Lab

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## Lab Hours:

Monday – Thursday: 9am – 10pm  
Friday: 9am - 9pm  
Saturday: 12 noon – 9pm  
Sunday: 12 noon – 9pm

## Scheduled Lab Closings

When we know ahead of time that the lab will be closed for a class, we list it online at <http://wic.library.upenn.edu/lab/closings2.html>

Reminder: Your feedback is really important to us. Please take a minute to complete the evaluation form and return it at the end of class.

## Course Objectives

In this fast-paced class, we will introduce and explore one of the most fundamental yet powerful features in Photoshop -- Layers, which allow you to edit your images in a nondestructive way, retaining as much flexibility and editability as possible. This class assumes a working knowledge of Photoshop basics.

This training is a fast-paced introduction to using layers in Adobe Photoshop, intended for people with no prior knowledge of layers.

In this course you will learn:

- What layers are and why they are useful
- How to use the Layers palette
- How to create, move, reorder, and align/distribute layers
- About layer opacity
- About different types of layers, such as the background, normal layers, and type layers, and adjustment layers.
- About layer masks
- How to add layer styles
- More as time permits

## Where can you use Photoshop?

- Download a free 30-day trial (Mac or Win) at <http://www.adobe.com/downloads>
- Use it for free in the Vitale Digital Media Lab or in the Weigle Information Commons
- Purchase it at a discounted price at the Computer Connection (located in the Penn Bookstore)
- Purchase the *much less* expensive Adobe Photoshop Elements, at the Computer Connection

# Layers palette

**Palette tab** This is used to move the palette around; just click and drag. Clicking will also bring it forward if it's behind another palette such as Channels or Paths.

**Palette menu** Clicking this tiny button opens up a menu of many useful layer-based operations. It provides quick access to common commands without digging through the top menus.

**Layer Blending mode** This drop-down box is used to set how the active layer's pixels blend with the pixels beneath it. This is used to create a variety of effects.

**Layer Opacity** This sets the percentage of opacity for the active layer. Think of it as transparency—but in reverse.

**Locking controls** These icons will lock the transparency, pixels, or position properties of the active layer. Locked layers will have a small lock indicator next to them.

**Layer Fill** Similar to Opacity in that it can be used to set the transparency of a layer. One distinct difference is that this setting will not affect the layer styles.

**Group folder and layers** The expandible/collapsible folder is a container for indented layers under it. Excellent for keeping things organised.

**Layer name** Unless the default label of 'Layer 1' is meaningful to you, keep things clear by double-clicking this text and naming your layers.

**Layer thumbnail** A tiny preview of what is on that layer. Hold down Ctrl/Cmd and click on the thumbnail to create a selection in the shape of the layer contents.

**Clipping layer** This indicator means the layer is clipped by the layer below. It uses pixels of the underlying layer as a type of mask to define visible areas.

**Text layer** The 'T' icon indicates this layer is still editable text. Double-clicking the thumbnail will select the text, and switch to the Text tool to make editing the text easier.

**Style icon** This indicator, along with the arrow button, reveals the style settings associated with this layer. Double-clicking on it brings up the Layer Styles dialog box.

**Visibility toggle** Click the icon to hide/reveal layer contents. Drag up/down this column to toggle visibility of many layers.

**Vector mask** This uses vector shapes, or paths created with the Pen tool, to define visible areas of the layer. This is the best option for when sharp, crisp edges are needed.

**Layer mask** A greyscale image that defines the transparency of a layer. Black areas of the mask hide the layer's pixels, white areas reveal them.

**Active layer** The active layer has a blue background behind the layer name and a double border around the thumbnail. Hold down Shift or Ctrl/Cmd to select multiple layers.

**Adjustment layer** A non-destructive way of making adjustments, eg Levels/Curves. Double-click the icon to change settings. The mask lets you apply the effect selectively.

**New Layer** Click to add a blank layer above the active layer. Or drag an existing layer to this icon to create a copy. Hold Ctrl/Cmd to add a blank layer below the active layer. Hold Alt/Opt to get a Layer Properties box first.

**Smart Object** This layer is actually another Photoshop file that has been inserted as a Smart Object. It can be treated like a layer, but also updated outside of this file.

**Background layer** The default layer of a new file. The background layer has limited editability; double-clicking it can turn it into a regular layer.

**Trash** Clicking here will delete the active layer. You can also click and drag one or many layers down to this icon to delete them.

**Link Layers** Select more than one layer and click this chain icon to link them together. Now if you move a layer, those linked to it will move too.

**Add Layer Style** This icon gives you a menu of layer styles to choose from. Select a style and then set the options as you see fit.

**Adjustment Layer menu** This menu allows you to select from a variety of methods to adjust your image. It creates an adjustment layer (with a mask!) above the active layer.

**New Group** Click to add a blank group above the active layer. Select and drag multiple layers onto this icon to group them. Hold Alt/Opt to get a Group Properties box first.

**Resize palette** Tired of scrolling down to see all your layers? Long layer names being truncated? Click and drag here to resize the palette.

