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# Workspace basics

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Photoshop User Guide      Workspace        *Select an article:*

Learn how to navigate and use the Adobe Photoshop workspace. Use preset workspaces, or create custom workspaces by moving and manipulating windows and panels.

> **Note:**
>
> If you're wondering whether Photoshop or Lightroom is the right application for your requirements, this article will help you decide: *Choosing the right photo app*.

You create and manipulate your documents and files using various elements, such as panels, bars, and windows. Any arrangement of these elements is called a workspace. (The workspaces of different Adobe creative applications share similar appearances so that you can move between the applications easily.) You can adapt Photoshop to the way you work by selecting from several preset workspaces or by creating one of your own.

## Start workspace

The Start workspace in Photoshop gives you quick access to your recent files, libraries, and presets. Depending on your subscription status, the Start workspace may also display content tailored for your requirements. You can also look for the right Adobe Stock asset for your project directly from within the Start workspace.

Photoshop displays the Start workspace at launch or whenever no documents are open.

> **Note:**
>
> If necessary, customize the number of recent files displayed.

**ON THIS PAGE**

Start workspace

A first look at the Photoshop working area

Workspace overview

Manage windows and panels

Comprehensive search

Create documents

Save and switch workspaces

Rich tooltips

Hide tooltips

Windows | High-density monitor support and per-monitor scaling

Use Photoshop with the Touch Bar on MacBook Pro

Windows | Modifier Keys palette

Applies to: **Photoshop CC**

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Select **Preferences > File Handling** and then specify the desired value (0-100) in the **Recent File List Contains...** field.
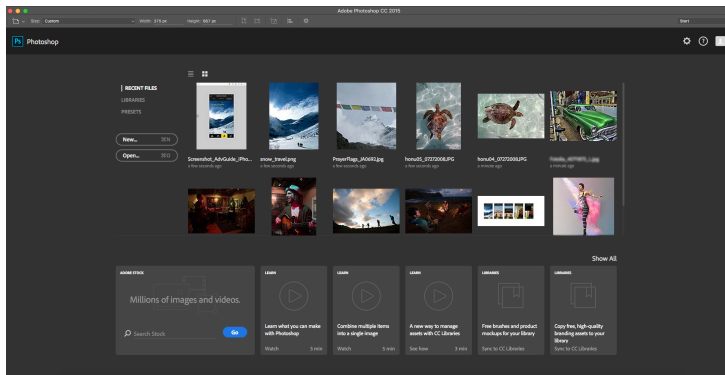


*The Start workspace*

**Note:**

To quit this workspace, simply press the **Esc** key.

## Work with the Start workspace

**Toggle between tile and list views**    Click the Tile icon (⊞) or the List icon (☰).

**Find a stock asset**    Enter a keyword in the **Search Stock** field. Photoshop displays the search results from Adobe Stock in a new browser window.

**Access your assets**    Open a recently-opened file or a library. Else, create a new document using a preset.

## Disable the Start workspace

1. Select **Preferences > General**.

2. Deselect **Show Start Workspace When No Documents Are Open**.

# A first look at the Photoshop working area
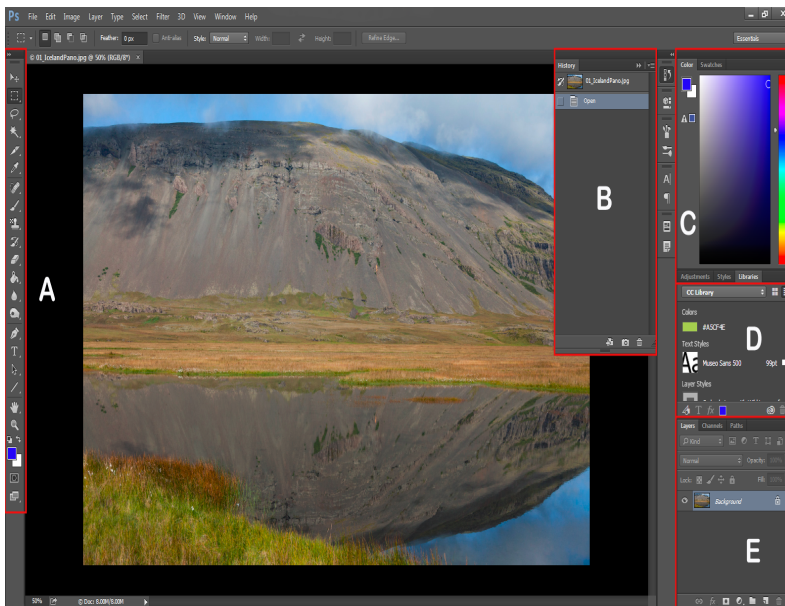


*A:* Tools panel | *B:* History panel | *C:* Color panel | *D:* Creative Cloud Libraries panel | *E:* Layers panel

**Interactive image |** *Click the highlighted areas in the image to view more information about them*

## Workspace overview

- The *Application bar* across the top contains a workspace switcher, menus (Windows only), and other application controls. On the Mac for certain products, you can show or hide it using the Window menu.

- The *Tools panel* contains tools for creating and editing images, artwork, page elements, and so on. Related tools are grouped.

- The *Options bar Control panel* displays options for the currently selected tool.

- The *Document window* displays the file you're working on. Document windows can be tabbed and, in certain

cases, grouped and docked.

- *Panels* help you monitor and modify your work. Panels can be grouped, stacked, or docked.

- The *Application frame* groups all the workspace elements in a single, integrated window that lets you treat the application as a single unit. When you move or resize the Application frame or any of its elements, all the elements within it respond to each other so none overlap. Panels don't disappear when you switch applications or when you accidentally click out of the application. If you work with two or more applications, you can position each application side by side on the screen or on multiple monitors.

  If you are using a Mac and prefer the traditional, free-form user interface, you can turn off the Application frame.

## Usability features

The Photoshop workspace is easy to use and includes a number of usability features:

- Different brightness levels: Choose Edit > Preference (Windows) or Photoshop > Preferences (Mac OS) and select a Color Theme swatch in the Interface section.
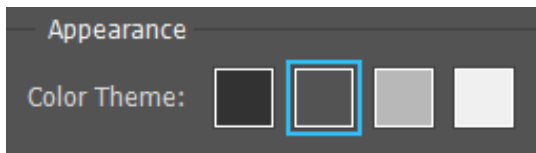
> **Note:**
>
> To quickly decrease brightness, press Shift + 1; to increase brightness, press Shift + 2. (On Mac OS, it's necessary to also press the FN key.)

- On-image displays: Stay informed as you use your favorite tools. On-image displays show selection dimensions, transformation angles, and more. To change the placement of the displays, choose an option from the Show Transformation Values in the

Interface preferences.

- Maximized screen space: Click the button at the bottom of the toolbar to switch between Standard and Fullscreen display modes.

- Set UX color: You can customize the interface to sport one of the following color themes: `Black, Dark Gray, Medium Gray and Light Gray.` To do this, follow these steps:

  1. Choose **Edit > Preferences > Interface**.

  2. Choose the desired color theme.



*Available Color Theme options*

## Hide or show all panels

- To hide or show all panels, including the Tools panel and Control panel, press Tab.

- To hide or show all panels except the Tools panel and Control panel, press Shift+Tab.

> **Note:**
>
> *You can temporarily display hidden panels if Auto-Show Hidden Panels is selected in Interface preferences. Move the pointer to the edge of the application window (Windows) or to the edge of the monitor (Mac OS) and hover over the strip that appears.*

## Display panel options

- Click the panel menu icon ▾≡ in the upper-right corner of the panel.

> **Note:**
>
> You can open a panel menu even when the panel is minimized.

> **Note:**
>
> In Photoshop, you can change the font size of the text in panels and tooltips. In the Interface preferences, choose a size from the UI Font Size menu.

## Reconfigure the Tools panel

You can display the tools in the Tools panel in a single column, or side by side in two columns.

- Click the double arrow at the top of the Tools panel.

# Manage windows and panels

You can create a custom workspace by moving and manipulating Document windows and panels. You can also save workspaces and switch among them.

## Rearrange, dock, or float document windows

When you open more than one file, the Document windows are tabbed.

- To rearrange the order of tabbed Document windows, drag a window's tab to a new location in the group.
- To undock (float or untab) a Document window from a group of windows, drag the window's tab out of the group.
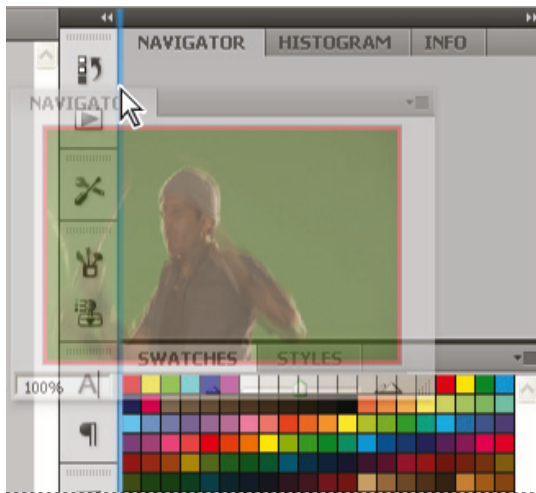
> **Note:**

*You can also choose Window > Arrange > Float in Window to float a single Document window, or Window > Arrange > Float All In Windows to float all of the Document windows at once.*

- To dock a Document window to a separate group of Document windows, drag the window into the group.

- To create groups of stacked or tiled documents, drag the window to one of the drop zones along the top, bottom, or sides of another window. You can also select a layout for the group by using the Layout button on the Application bar.

- To switch to another document in a tabbed group when dragging a selection, drag the selection over the document's tab for a moment.

## Dock and undock panels

A *dock* is a collection of panels or panel groups displayed together, generally in a vertical orientation. You dock and undock panels by moving them into and out of a dock.

- To dock a panel, drag it by its tab into the dock, at the top, bottom, or in between other panels.

- To dock a panel group, drag it by its title bar (the solid empty bar above the tabs) into the dock.

- To remove a panel or panel group, drag it out of the dock by its tab or title bar. You can drag it into another dock or make it free-floating.

*Navigator panel being dragged out to new dock, indicated by blue vertical highlight*
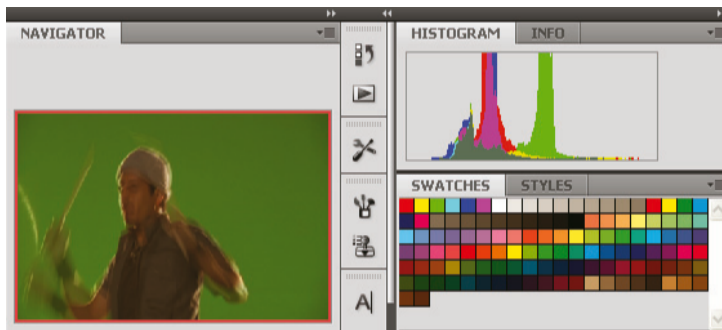


*Navigator panel in its own dock*

**Note:**

You can prevent panels from filling all the space in a dock. Drag the bottom edge of the dock up so it no longer meets the edge of the workspace.

## Move panels

As you move panels, you see blue highlighted *drop zones*, areas where you can move the panel. For example, you can

move a panel up or down in a dock by dragging it to the
narrow blue drop zone above or below another panel. If you
drag to an area that is not a drop zone, the panel floats freely
in the workspace.

> **Note:**
>
> The position of the mouse (rather than the position of the
> panel) activates the drop zone, so if you can't see the drop
> zone, try dragging the mouse to the place where the drop
> zone should be.

- To move a panel, drag it by its tab.

- To move a panel group, drag the title bar.
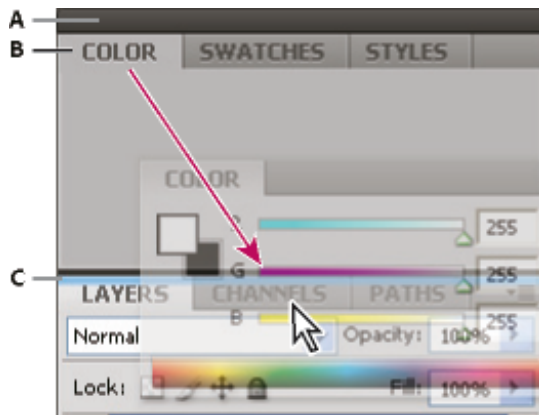


*Narrow blue drop zone indicates Color panel will
be docked on its own above the Layers panel
group.*

**A.** Title bar **B.** Tab **C.** Drop zone

> **Note:**
>
> Press Ctrl (Windows) or Command (Mac OS) while moving a
> panel to prevent it from docking. Press Esc while moving the
> panel to cancel the operation.

## Add and remove panels

If you remove all panels from a dock, the dock disappears. You can create a dock by moving panels to the right edge of the workspace until a drop zone appears.

- To remove a panel, right-click (Windows) or Control-click (Mac) its tab and then select Close, or deselect it from the Window menu.

- To add a panel, select it from the Window menu and dock it wherever you want.

## Manipulate panel groups

- To move a panel into a group, drag the panel's tab to the highlighted drop zone in the group.
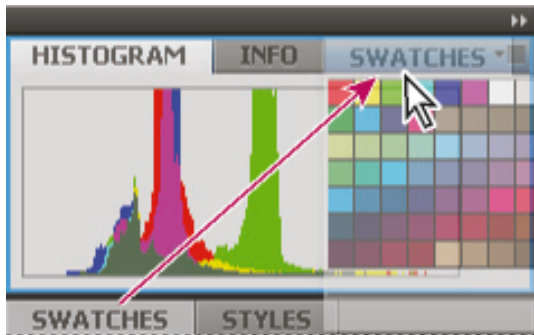


*Adding a panel to a panel group*

- To rearrange panels in a group, drag a panel's tab to a new location in the group.

- To remove a panel from a group so that it floats freely, drag the panel by its tab outside the group.

- To move a group, drag the title bar (the area above the tabs).

## Stack floating panels

When you drag a panel out of its dock but not into a drop

zone, the panel floats freely. The floating panel allows you to position it anywhere in the workspace. You can stack floating panels or panel groups so that they move as a unit when you drag the topmost title bar.
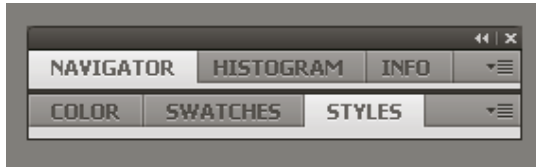


*Free-floating stacked panels*

- To stack floating panels, drag a panel by its tab to the drop zone at the bottom of another panel.

- To change the stacking order, drag a panel up or down by its tab.

**Note:**

Be sure to release the tab over the narrow drop zone between panels, rather than the broad drop zone in a title bar.

- To remove a panel or panel group from the stack, so that it floats by itself, drag it out by its tab or title bar.

## Resize panels

- To minimize or maximize a panel, panel group, or stack of panels, double-click a tab. You can also double-click the tab area (the empty space next to the tabs).

- To resize a panel, drag any side of the panel. Some panels, such as the Color panel cannot be resized by dragging.
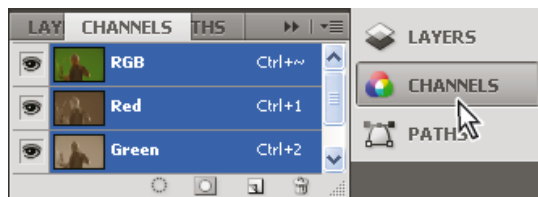
## Collapse and expand panel icons

You can collapse panels to icons to reduce clutter on the

workspace. In some cases, panels are collapsed to icons in
the default workspace.



*Panels collapsed to
icons*



*Panels expanded from icons*

- To collapse or expand all panel icons in a column, click
  the double arrow at the top of the dock.

- To expand a single panel icon, click it.

- To resize panel icons so that you see only the icons (and
  not the labels), adjust the width of the dock until the text
  disappears. To display the icon text again, make the dock
  wider.

- To collapse an expanded panel back to its icon, click its

tab, its icon, or the double arrow in the panel's title bar.

- To add a floating panel or panel group to an icon dock, drag it in by its tab or title bar. (Panels are automatically collapsed to icons when added to an icon dock.)

- To move a panel icon (or panel icon group), drag the icon. You can drag panel icons up and down in the dock, into other docks (where they appear in the panel style of that dock), or outside the dock (where they appear as floating icons).

## Comprehensive search
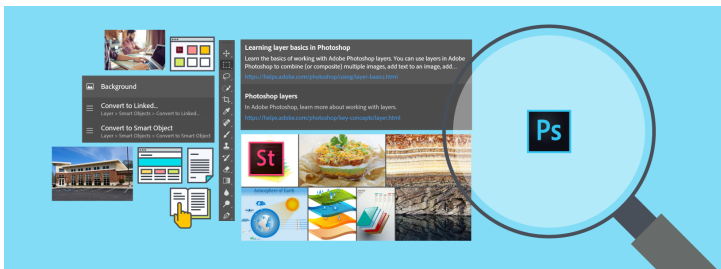


Photoshop features powerful search functionality that lets you search across UI elements, documents, Help & learning content, inspiring Stock assets, and much more—all from within a unified dialog. You can search for items right after launching Photoshop or when one or more documents are open.

For details, see Photoshop search.

## Create documents

When you create a document in Photoshop, instead of beginning with a blank canvas, you can choose from a wide variety of templates, including templates from Adobe Stock. Templates include stock assets and illustrations that you can

build on to complete your project. When you open a template in Photoshop, you can work with it just as you would work with any other Photoshop document (`.psd`).

In addition to templates, you can also create a document by selecting one of the numerous blank presets available in Photoshop.

For more information, see Create documents.
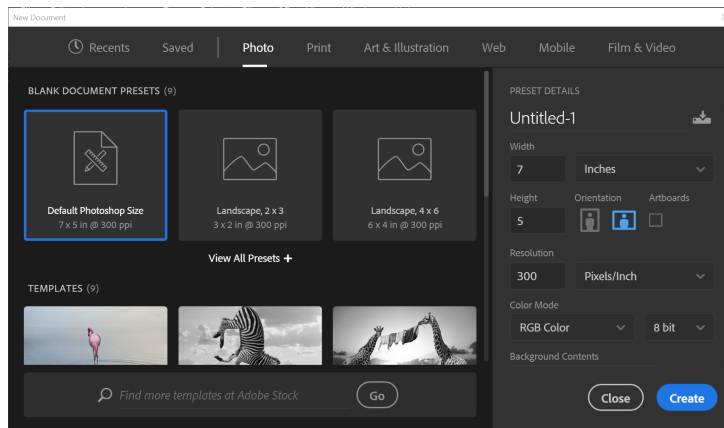


*New Document dialog | Templates from Adobe Stock and blank presets*

# Save and switch workspaces

By saving the current size and position of panels as a named workspace, you can restore that workspace even if you move or close a panel. The names of saved workspaces appear in the workspace switcher in the Application bar.

## Save a custom workspace

1       With the workspace in the configuration you want to save, choose **Window > Workspace > New Workspace.**

2       Type a name for the workspace.

3       Under Capture, select one or more options:

   **Keyboard shortcuts**    Saves the current set of keyboard shortcuts (Photoshop only).

   **Menus or Menu Customization**    Saves the current set of menus.

## Display or switch workspaces

Select a workspace from the workspace switcher in the Application bar.

> **Note:**
>
> In Photoshop, you can assign keyboard shortcuts to each workspace to navigate among them quickly.

## Delete a custom workspace

- Select Manage Workspaces from the workspace switcher in the Application bar, select the workspace, and then click Delete.

- Select **Delete Workspace** from the workspace switcher.

- Choose Window > Workspace > **Delete Workspace**, select the workspace, and then click Delete.

## Restore the default workspace

1  Select the Default or Essentials workspace from the workspace switcher in the application bar.

2  Select Window > Workspace > Reset *[Workspace Name]*.

## Restore a saved workspace arrangement

In Photoshop, workspaces automatically appear as you last arranged them, but you can restore the original, saved arrangement of panels.

- To restore an individual workspace, choose Window > Workspace > Reset *[Workspace Name]*.

- To restore all the workspaces installed with Photoshop, click Restore Default Workspaces in the Interface preferences.

> **Note:**
>
> To rearrange the order of workspaces in the application bar, drag them.

## Rich tooltips

Figuring out what Photoshop tools do is now easier than ever before! When you hover the pointer over certain tools in the Tools panel, Photoshop displays a description and a short video of the tool in action.

You can choose not to view rich tooltips. To do so, deselect the **Preferences** > **Tools** > **Use Rich Tooltips** preference.

# Hide tooltips

When you position the pointer over most tools and options, descriptions appear in tooltips by default. If you find tooltips visually distracting, you can hide them.

In the Interface preferences, deselect **Show Tooltips**.

> **Note:**
>
> Tooltips are not available in some dialog boxes.

# Windows | High-density monitor support and per-monitor scaling

On Windows 10 Creators Update and later versions, Photoshop offers a full range of choices for UI scaling—from 100% through 400% in 25% increments. This enhancement makes the Photoshop user interface looks crisp and sharp regardless of the pixel density of your monitor. Photoshop automatically adjusts its resolution based on your Windows settings.

In addition, you can adjust per-monitor scaling across monitors with different scaling factors. This flexibility ensures that a high resolution (HiDPI) laptop works seamlessly alongside a lower-resolution desktop monitor, or vice versa. For example, one of your monitors can have a scale factor of 175%, while another monitor can have a scale factor of 400%. So, you can choose either the highest-end 13-inch laptops with 4k screens, the more affordable 1080p models, or tap into 8k desktop monitors, and still have an uncompromised experience within Photoshop.

In Windows, select **Start > Settings > System > Display**. Now, under **Scale And Layout**, choose a scaling factor for each of your displays.

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> **Note:**
>
> On Windows 10 Creators Update and later versions, the **UI Scaling** setting in Photoshop (**Preferences > Interface > UI Scaling**) still applies to some components, such as the **File Info** and **Camera Raw** dialogs. On earlier versions of Windows, this preference applies to all Photoshop components. When the **UI Scaling** option is set to **Auto**, scaling defaults to the value closest to the primary monitor's OS scaling factor—**100** or **200**.

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# Use Photoshop with the Touch Bar on MacBook Pro

See *Use Photoshop with the Touch Bar*.

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# Windows | Modifier Keys palette

The new Modifier Keys palette lets you access frequently-used keyboard modifiers—Shift, Ctrl, and Alt—on Windows-powered touch devices, such as the Surface Pro.

• Select Window > Modifier Keys.

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