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Layer opacity and blending

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A layer's blending mode determines how its pixels blend with underlying pixels in the image. You can create a variety of special effects using blending modes.

Specify overall and fill opacity for selected layers

A layer's overall opacity determines to what degree it obscures or reveals the layer beneath it. A layer with 1% opacity appears nearly transparent, whereas one with 100% opacity appears completely opaque.

In addition to overall opacity, which affects layer styles and blending modes applied to a layer, you can specify fill opacity. Fill opacity affects only pixels, shapes, or text on a layer without affecting the opacity of layer effects such as drop shadows.

Note:

You cannot change the opacity of a background layer or a locked layer. To convert a background layer into a regular layer that supports transparency, see [Convert background and layers](#).

- 1 In the Layers panel, select one or more layers or groups.

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- 2 Change the Opacity and Fill values. (If you selected a group, only Opacity is available.)

Note:

To view all blending options, choose Blending Options from the Add A Layer Style icon  at the bottom of the Layers panel.

Specify a blending mode for a layer or group

By default, the blending mode of a layer group is Pass Through, which means that the group has no blending properties of its own. When you choose a different blending mode for a group, you effectively change the order in which the image components are put together. All of the layers in the group are put together first. The composite group is then treated as a single image and blended with the rest of the image using the selected blending mode. Thus, if you choose a blending mode other than Pass Through for the group, none of the adjustment layers or layer blending modes inside the group will apply to layers outside the group.

Note:

There is no Clear blending mode for layers. For Lab images, the Color Dodge, Color Burn, Darken, Lighten, Difference, Exclusion, Subtract, and Divide modes are unavailable. For HDR images, see [Features that support 32-bpc HDR images](#).

- 1 Select a layer or group from the Layers panel.

- 2 Choose a blending mode:
 - From the Layers panel, choose an option from the Blend Mode pop-up menu.
 - Choose Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options, and then choose an option from the Blend Mode pop-up menu.

For descriptions and examples of each mode, see [Blending modes](#).

Group blend effects

By default, layers in a clipping mask are blended with the underlying layers using the blending mode of the bottommost layer in the group. However, you can choose to have the blending mode of the bottommost layer apply only to that layer, allowing you to preserve the original blending appearance of the clipped layers. (See [Reveal layers with clipping masks](#).)

You can also apply the blending mode of a layer to layer effects that modify opaque pixels, such as Inner Glow or Color Overlay, without changing layer effects that modify only transparent pixels, such as Outer Glow or Drop Shadow.

- 1 Select the layer that you want to affect.
- 2 Double-click a layer thumbnail, choose Blending Options from the Layers panel menu, or choose Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options.

Note:

To view blending options for a text layer, choose Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options, or choose

Blending Options from the Add A Layer Style button at the bottom of the Layers panel menu.

3 Specify the scope of blending options:

- Select Blend Interior Effects As Group to apply the blending mode of the layer to layer effects that modify opaque pixels, such as Inner Glow, Satin, Color Overlay, and Gradient Overlay.
- Select Blend Clipped Layers As Group to apply the blending mode of the base layer to all layers in the clipping mask. Deselecting this option, which is always selected by default, maintains the original blending mode and appearance of each layer in the group.



A



B



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Advanced blending options

- Select Transparency Shapes Layers to restrict layer effects and knockouts to opaque areas of the layer. Deselecting this option, which is always selected by default, applies these effects throughout the layer.
- Select Layer Mask Hides Effects to restrict layer effects to the area defined by the layer mask.
- Select Vector Mask Hides Effects to restrict layer effects to the area defined by the vector mask.

4 Click OK.

Exclude channels from blending

You can restrict blending effects to a specified channel when you blend a layer or group. By default, all channels are included. When using an RGB image, for example, you can choose to exclude the red channel from blending; in the composite image, only the information in the green and blue channels is affected.

- 1 Do one of the following:
- Double-click a layer thumbnail.
 - Choose Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options.
 - Choose Blending Options from the Add A Layer Style icon  at the bottom of the Layers panel.

Note:

To view blending options for a text layer, choose Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options, or choose

Blending Options from the Add A Layer Style button at the bottom of the Layers panel menu.

- 2 From the Advanced Blending area of the Layer Style dialog box, deselect any channels you do not want to include when the layer is blended.

Specify a tonal range for blending layers

The sliders in the Blending Options dialog box control which pixels from the active layer and the underlying visible layers appear in the final image. For example, you can drop dark pixels out of the active layer or force bright pixels from the underlying layers to show through. You can also define a range of partially blended pixels to produce a smooth transition between blended and unblended areas.

- 1 Double-click a layer thumbnail, choose Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options, or choose Add A Layer Style > Blending Options from the Layers panel menu.

Note:

To view blending options for a text layer, choose Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options, or choose Blending Options from the Add A Layer Style button at the bottom of the Layers panel menu.

- 2 In the Advanced Blending area of the Layer Style dialog box, choose an option from the Blend If pop-up menu.

- Choose Gray to specify a blending range for all channels.
- Select an individual color channel (for example, red, green, or blue in an RGB image) to specify blending in that channel.

3

Use the This Layer and Underlying Layer sliders to set the brightness range of the blended pixels —measured on a scale from 0 (black) to 255 (white). Drag the white slider to set the high value of the range. Drag the black slider to set the low value of the range.

Note:

To define a range of partially blended pixels, hold down Alt (Windows) or Option (Mac OS), and drag one half of a slider triangle. The two values that appear above the divided slider indicate the partial blending range.

Keep the following guidelines in mind when specifying blending ranges:

- Use the This Layer sliders to specify the range of pixels on the active layer that will blend, and therefore appear, in the final image. For example, if you drag the white slider to 235, pixels with brightness values higher than 235 will remain unblended and will be excluded from the final image.
- Use the Underlying Layer sliders to specify the range of pixels in the underlying visible layers that will blend in the final image. Blended pixels are combined with pixels in the active layer to produce composite pixels, whereas unblended pixels show through overlying areas of the active

layer. For example, if you drag the black slider to 19, pixels with brightness values lower than 19 will remain unblended and will show through the active layer in the final image.

Fill new layers with a neutral color

You can't apply certain filters (such as the Lighting Effects filter) to layers with no pixels. Selecting Fill With (Mode)-Neutral Color in the New Layer dialog box resolves this problem by first filling the layer with a preset, neutral color. This invisible, neutral color is assigned according to the layer's blending mode. If no effect is applied, filling with a neutral color has no effect on the remaining layers. The Fill With Neutral Color option is not available for layers that use the Normal, Dissolve, Hard Mix, Hue, Saturation, Color, or Luminosity modes.

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