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Painting tools

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About painting tools, presets, and options

Adobe Photoshop provides several tools for painting and editing image color. The Brush tool and the Pencil tool work like traditional drawing tools applying color with brush strokes. Tools like the Eraser tool, Blur tool, and Smudge tool modify the existing colors in the image. In the options bar for each of these painting tools, you can set how color is applied to an image and choose from preset brush tips. See [Painting tools gallery](#).

Brush and tool presets

You can save a set of brush options as a preset so you can quickly access brush characteristics you use frequently. Photoshop includes several sample brush presets. You can start with these presets and modify them to produce new effects. Many original brush presets are available for download on the web.

You can quickly choose presets from the Brush Preset picker in the options bar, which lets you temporarily modify the size and hardness of a brush preset.

Save tool presets when you want to store customized brush tip characteristics along with settings from the options bar such as opacity, flow, and color. To learn more about tool presets, see [Create and use tool presets](#).

Brush tip options

Along with settings in the options bar, brush tip options control how color is applied. You can apply color gradually, with soft edges, with large brush strokes, with various brush dynamics, with different blending properties, and with brushes of different shapes. You can apply a texture with your brush strokes to simulate painting on canvas or art papers. You can also simulate spraying paint with an airbrush. You use the Brush panel to set brush tip options.

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See [Brush panel overview](#).

If you work with a drawing tablet, you can control how color is applied using pen pressure, angle, rotation, or a stylus wheel. You set options for drawing tablets in the Brush panel and options bar.

From an expert: Brushes 101

Brushes 101



Expert Andy Anderson shows how to use brushes for painting, correcting, and adjusting an image.

Andy Anderson - InfiniteSkills



Paint with the Brush tool or Pencil tool

The Brush tool and the Pencil tool paint the current

foreground color on an image. The Brush tool creates soft strokes of color. The Pencil tool creates hard-edged lines.

Note:

The Rotation tool rotates the canvas, which can facilitate easier painting. See [Use the Rotate View tool](#).

- 1 Choose a foreground color. (See [Choose colors in the toolbox](#).)
- 2 Select the Brush tool  or Pencil tool .
- 3 Choose a brush from the Brush Presets panel. See [Select a preset brush](#).
- 4 Set tool options for mode, opacity, and so on, in the options bar.
- 5 Do one or more of the following:
 - Click and drag in the image to paint.
 - To draw a straight line, click a starting point in the image. Then hold down Shift, and click an ending point.
 - When using the Brush tool as an airbrush, hold down the mouse button without dragging to build up color.

Paint tool options

Set the following in the options bar. Options available vary with each tool.

Mode Sets the method for blending the color you paint


with the underlying existing pixels. Available modes change with the currently selected tool. Paint modes are similar to layer blending modes. See [Blending modes](#).

Opacity Sets the transparency of color you apply. As you paint over an area, the opacity does not exceed the set level no matter how many times you move the pointer over the area, until you release the mouse button. If you stroke over the area again, you apply additional color, equivalent to the set opacity. Opacity of 100 percent is opaque.

Flow Sets the rate at which color is applied as you move the pointer over an area. As you paint over an area, while holding down the mouse button, the amount of color builds up based on the flow rate, up to the opacity setting. For example, if you set the opacity to 33% and the flow to 33%, each time you move over an area, its color moves 33% toward the brush color. The total will not exceed 33% opacity unless you release the mouse button and stroke over the area again.


Note:

Press a single number key to set a tool's opacity in multiples of 10% (pressing 1 sets it to 10%; pressing 0 sets it to 100%). Press two number keys to set a specific opacity. To set Flow, press Shift and number keys.

Airbrush  Simulates painting with an airbrush. As you move the pointer over an area, paint builds up as you hold down the mouse button. Brush hardness, opacity, and flow options control how fast and how much the paint is applied. Click the button to turn on or off this option.

Auto erase (Pencil tool only) Paints the background color over areas containing the foreground color. Select the foreground color you want to erase and the background

color you want to change to. (See [Auto Erase with the Pencil tool.](#))

Tablet pressure buttons  Use stylus pressure to override opacity and size settings in the Brush panel.

Selecting a cursor preference

The painting tools have three possible cursors: the standard cursor (the icon from the toolbox), a cross hair +, and a cursor that matches the size and shape of the currently selected brush tip.

- 1 Choose Edit > Preferences > Cursors (Windows) or Photoshop > Preferences > Cursors (Mac OS).
- 2 Select the desired cursors in both the Painting Cursors area and the Other Cursors area. The sample cursors change to reflect your choices. For a Brush Tip cursor, choose a size and whether to include a cross hair in the cursor.
 - Normal Brush Tip restricts the cursor size to areas of the brush stroke that have 50% or more opacity.
 - Full Size Brush Tip sizes the cursor to the entire area affected by the brush stroke. For soft brushes, this produces a larger cursor size than the Normal setting, to include the areas of the brush stroke with lighter opacity.

Note:

To combine different types of cursors, select Show Crosshair In Brush Tip or Show Only Crosshair While Painting. Or, for the Pen and Brush tools, press the Caps Lock to toggle between the standard cursor and the cross hair.

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