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Filter basics

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Using filters

You can use filters to clean up or retouch your photos, apply special art effects that give your image the appearance of a sketch or impressionistic painting, or create unique transformations using distortions and lighting effects. The filters provided by Adobe appear in the Filter menu. Some filters provided by third-party developers are available as plug-ins. Once installed, these plug-in filters appear at the bottom of the Filter menu.

Smart Filters, applied to Smart Objects, let you use filters non-destructively. Smart Filters are stored as layer effects in the Layers panel and can be readjusted at any time, working from the original image data contained in the Smart Object. For more information on Smart Filter Effects and nondestructive editing, see [Nondestructive editing](#).

To use a filter, choose the appropriate submenu command from the Filter menu. These guidelines can help you in choosing filters:

- Filters are applied to the active, visible layer or a selection.
- For 8-bits per-channel images, most filters can be applied cumulatively through the Filter Gallery. All filters can be applied individually.
- Filters cannot be applied to Bitmap-mode or indexed-color images.
- Some filters work only on RGB images.

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Applies to: **Photoshop CC**

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- All filters can be applied to 8-bit images.
- The following filters can be applied to 16-bit images: Liquify, Vanishing Point, Average Blur, Blur, Blur More, Box Blur, Gaussian Blur, Lens Blur, Motion Blur, Radial Blur, Surface Blur, Shape Blur, Lens Correction, Add Noise, Despeckle, Dust & Scratches, Median, Reduce Noise, Fibers, Clouds, Difference Clouds, Lens Flare, Sharpen, Sharpen Edges, Sharpen More, Smart Sharpen, Unsharp Mask, Emboss, Find Edges, Solarize, De-Interlace, NTSC Colors, Custom, High Pass, Maximum, Minimum, and Offset.
- The following filters can be applied to 32-bit images: Average Blur, Box Blur, **Gaussian Blur**, Motion Blur, Radial Blur, Shape Blur, Surface Blur, Add Noise, Clouds, Lens Flare, Smart Sharpen, Unsharp Mask, De-Interlace, NTSC Colors, Emboss, High Pass, Maximum, Minimum, and Offset.
- Some filters are processed entirely in RAM. If you don't have enough available RAM to process a filter effect, you may get an error message.

Apply a filter from the Filter menu

You can apply a filter to the active layer, or to a Smart Object. Filters applied to a Smart Object are nondestructive and can be readjusted at any time.

- 1 Do one of the following:
 - To apply a filter to an entire layer, make sure the layer is active or selected.
 - To apply a filter to an area of a layer, select that area.
 - To apply a filter nondestructively so you can change your filter settings later, select the Smart Object that contains the image content you want to

filter.

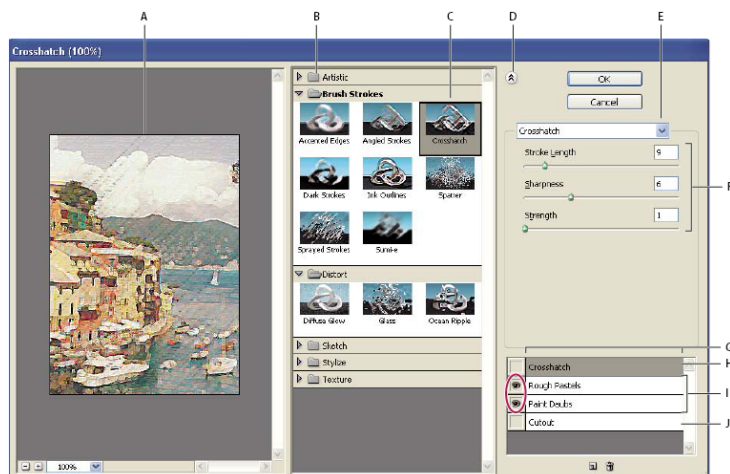
- 2 Choose a filter from the submenus in the Filter menu.
If no dialog box appears, the filter effect is applied.
- 3 If a dialog box or the Filter Gallery appears, enter values or select options, and then click OK.

Note:

Applying filters to large images can be time consuming, but you can preview the effect in the filter dialog box. Drag in the preview window to center a specific area of the image. In some filters, you can click in the image to center it where you click. Click the + or – buttons under the preview window to zoom in or out.

Filter Gallery overview

The Filter Gallery provides a preview of many of the special effects filters. You can apply multiple filters, turn on or off the effect of a filter, reset options for a filter, and change the order in which filters are applied. When you are satisfied with the preview, you can then apply it to your image. Not all filters in the Filter menu are available in the Filter Gallery.



Filter Gallery dialog box

A. Preview **B.** Filter category **C.** Thumbnail of selected filter **D.** Show/Hide filter thumbnails **E.** Filters pop-up menu **F.** Options for selected filter **G.** List of filter effects to apply or arrange **H.** Filter effect selected but not applied **I.** Filter effects applied cumulatively but not selected **J.** Hidden filter effect

Display the Filter Gallery

- 1 Choose Filter > Filter Gallery. Clicking a filter category name displays thumbnails of available filter effects.

Zoom in or out of the preview

- 1 Click the + or – button under the preview area, or choose a zoom percentage.

View another area of the preview


- 1 Drag in the preview area with the Hand tool.

Hide filter thumbnails

- 1 Click the Show/Hide button  at the top of the gallery.

Apply filters from the Filter Gallery

Filter effects are applied in the order you select them. You can rearrange filters after you apply them by dragging a filter name to another position in the list of applied filters.



Rearranging filter effects can dramatically change the way your image looks. Click the eye icon  next to a filter to hide the effect in the preview image. You can also delete applied filters by selecting the filter and clicking the Delete Layer

icon .

Note:

To save time when trying various filters, experiment by selecting a small, representative part of your image.

- 1 Do one of the following:
 - To apply a filter to an entire layer, make sure that the layer is active or selected.
 - To apply a filter to an area of a layer, select that area.
 - To apply a filter non-destructively, so you can change your filter settings later, select the Smart Object that contains the image content that you want to filter.
- 2 Choose Filter > Filter Gallery.
- 3 Click a filter name to add the first filter. You may need to click the inverted triangle next to the filter category to see the complete list of filters. Once added, the filter appears in the applied filter list in the lower right corner of the Filter Gallery dialog box.
- 4 Enter values or select options for the filter you selected.

- 5 Do any of the following:
 - To apply filters cumulatively, click the New Effect Layer icon , and choose an additional filter to apply. Repeat this procedure to add more filters.
 - To rearrange applied filters, drag the filter to a new position in the applied filter list in the lower right corner of the Filter Gallery dialog box.
 - To remove applied filters, select a filter in the applied filter list, and click the Delete Layer icon .
- 6 When you're satisfied with the results, click OK.

Blend and fade filter effects

The Fade command changes the opacity and blending mode of any filter, painting tool, erasing tool, or color adjustment. The Fade command blending modes are a subset of those in the painting and editing tools options (excluding the Behind and Clear modes). Applying the Fade command is similar to applying the filter effect on a separate layer and then using the layer opacity and blending mode controls.

Note:

The Fade command can also modify the effects of using the Liquify command and Brush Strokes filters.

- 1 Apply a filter, painting tool, or color adjustment to an image or selection.
- 2 Choose Edit > Fade. Select the Preview option to preview the effect.
- 3 Drag the slider to adjust the opacity, from 0% (transparent) to 100%.

- 4 Choose a blending mode from the Mode menu.

Note:

The Color Dodge, Color Burn, Lighten, Darken, Difference, and Exclusion blending modes do not work on Lab images.

- 5 Click OK.

Tips for creating special effects

Creating edge effects You can use various techniques to treat the edges of an effect applied to only part of an image. To leave a distinct edge, simply apply the filter. For a soft edge, feather the edge, and then apply the filter. For a transparent effect, apply the filter, and then use the Fade command to adjust the selection's blending mode and opacity.

Applying filters to layers You can apply filters to individual layers or to several layers in succession to build up an effect. For a filter to affect a layer, the layer must be visible and must contain pixels—for example, a neutral fill color.

Applying filters to individual channels You can apply a filter to an individual channel, apply a different effect to each color channel, or apply the same filter but with different settings.

Creating backgrounds By applying effects to solid-color or grayscale shapes, you can generate a variety of backgrounds and textures. You might then blur these textures. Although some filters have little or no visible effect when applied to solid colors (for example, Glass), others produce

interesting effects.

Combining multiple effects with masks or duplicate images

Using masks to create selection areas gives you more control over transitions from one effect to another. For example, you can filter the selection created with a mask. You can also use the History Brush tool to paint a filter effect onto part of the image. First, apply the filter to an entire image. Next, step back in the History panel to the image state before the filter was applied, and set the history brush source to the filtered state by clicking in the well at the left side of the history state. Then paint the image.

Improving image quality and consistency You can disguise faults, alter or enhance images, or create a relationship among images by applying the same effect to each. Use the Actions panel to record the steps you take to modify one image, and then apply this action to the other images.

Improve filter performance

Some filter effects can be memory-intensive, especially when applied to a high-resolution image.

- 1 You can do any of the following to improve performance:
 - Try out filters and settings on a small portion of an image.
 - Apply the effect to individual channels—for example, to each RGB channel—if the image is large and you're having problems with insufficient memory. (With some filters, effects vary if applied to the individual channel rather than the composite channel, especially if the filter randomly modifies

pixels.)

- Free up memory before running the filter by using the Purge command.
- Allocate more RAM to Photoshop. If necessary, exit other applications to make more memory available to Photoshop.
- Try changing settings to improve the speed of memory-intensive filters, such as Lighting Effects, Cutout, Stained Glass, Chrome, Ripple, Spatter, Sprayed Strokes, and Glass filters. (For example, with the Stained Glass filter, increase cell size. With the Cutout filter, increase Edge Simplicity, decrease Edge Fidelity, or both.)
- If you plan to print to a grayscale printer, convert a copy of the image to grayscale before applying filters. However, applying a filter to a color image, and then converting to grayscale, may not have the same effect as applying the filter to a grayscale version of the image.

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