

# Photoshop Power Shortcuts

with MICHAEL NINNESS



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Michael Ninness paid his way through the Graphic Design program at the University of Washington by teaching digital imaging tools and techniques to professional designers and photographers. Since then, he has worked professionally in the graphics software industry as a product manager and user interface designer of products for creative professionals at Extensis, Microsoft and Adobe. In early 2005, Michael returned to his training roots and joined the team at Lynda.com, an award-winning education provider of self-paced online video training, CDs, books and events for designers, developers, instructors, students and hobbyists.

## Session Overview

Shortcuts, shortcuts, shortcuts! Do you dream in keyboard shortcuts? When you drop your keys, do you think Cmd + Z? There are so many keyboard shortcuts in Photoshop (over 650!) that someone actually wrote a book just on Photoshop keyboard shortcuts. Crazy, but true. This always popular session teach you the Photoshop shortcuts you can implement into your workflow to immediately improve your productivity. They may not all be flashy, but they are sure to make you smile as you realize how much time and effort they'll save you.

## Palette Shortcuts

### Default Palette Groups

The palettes that are open by default are arranged into four palette groups and each group can be opened and closed with an F Key. While not every palette has a keyboard shortcut assigned to it, because the palettes are grouped by default, four simple shortcuts gives you instant access to all your primary palettes. For example, say you want to do something in the Channels palette, but the Layers group is currently not open. Simply press the F Key for the Layers group (F7), and you'll be able to click on the tab for the Channels palette to bring it to the front. This is much easier than using the Window menu to open and close your palettes. (For the record, the Window menu is for wimps.) Here are the default palette groups and their corresponding F Key shortcuts:

- F6 Color group > Color | Swatches | Styles
- F7 Layers group > Layers | Channels | Paths
- F8 Info group > Navigator | Info | Histogram
- F9 Actions group > History | Actions

### Don't Close the Palettes — Hide Them!

One of the biggest time-wasters I see people do all the time is fight with their palettes. They keep moving the palettes around, overlap them on the screen, accidentally close them, etc. For a lot of people, their palette management solution is to buy a second monitor and create a wall-of-palettes. Try this instead; get the palettes configured the way you want them, and then leave them that way! Then, if the palettes are ever in your way, simply hide them by pressing the Tab key.

### Minimize Palettes

All palettes and palette groups can be collapsed down to just the vertical height of the palette tab. Simply double-click on a palette tab to toggle between the collapsed and expanded states.

### Palette Docking

Many folks don't realize that you can attach one or more palettes to the bottom of another palette. This is called palette docking. To dock one palette to another, drag the palette tab (not the

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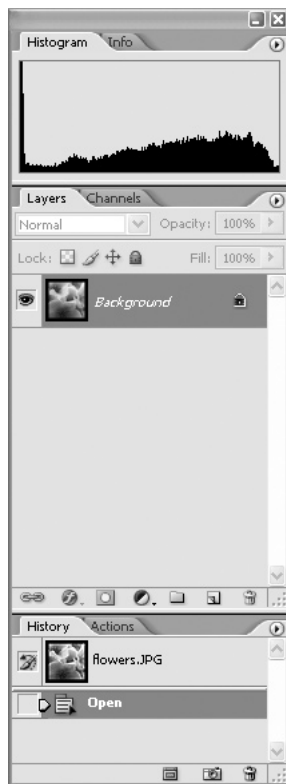
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title bar) to the bottom of another palette and look for the thin black rectangle to appear at the bottom of the target palette. If you drag too far into the target palette, you'll see a black rectangle that goes around the entire interior of the target palette. If you let go there, you will end up grouping the palettes instead of docking them. It takes a steady hand to pull it off—make sure you don't let go of the mouse too early. Unfortunately, there is no way to dock a group of palettes to another palette or palette group, so you'll need to dock one palette to another first, and then add the other palettes to the group afterwards.

## Uber Palette

One thing that annoys me about the Adobe floating palettes is that they are not aware of each other. In other words, when you resize one palette, the palettes around the palette you are resizing do not react to the resize—that is, the other palettes don't get smaller or collapse out of the way so you often end up covering up other palettes during a palette resize. You can combine palette docking and palette minimizing to create a much more useful palette configuration and create an uber palette that allows you to change the size of multiple palettes at the same time.



## Clean Up the Clutter

You can quickly send a palette to the nearest screen edge if you Shift + Click on the palette title bar (not the palette tab).

## Scrubby Sliders

Starting in Photoshop CS, all edit fields in palettes (and in dialog boxes as well) could be "scrubbed" with virtual sliders. To access a Scrubby Slider, put your mouse over the text or iconic label of the edit field. The cursor will change to a finger with a horizontal double-arrow letting you know that edit field can be scrubbed. Press and drag either left or right, or up and down to change the value the direction you want it to change.

Bonus Tip: A hidden way to access Scrubby Sliders is to hold down the Command key while hovering over an edit field. This is also how you can access a Scrubby Slider for an edit field that doesn't actually have a label.

## Experimenting with Values

Scrubby Sliders are fun to use when you don't really know what value you want to use and you just want to fiddle with it until it looks right. However, there are times when you know what value or values you want to try. For example, perhaps you want to see the difference between 36pt type and 48pt type. When ever you've clicked into an edit field and typed a number, you probably have figured out already that you need to press the Enter or Return key to apply the new value. However, if you want to see one value, and then quickly try another specific value, press Shift + Enter instead. This will apply the value you entered, but the value of the edit field will still be selected. That way, if you want to try another value, simply type in the next value and press Shift + Enter again. When you are done experimenting with specific values, simply press the Enter or Return key to apply the last value entered and deselect the edit field.

## Screen Mode Shortcuts

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## Cycling thru the Screen Modes

Simply press the letter F to cycle through the three different screen modes in Photoshop. The default screen mode is called the Standard Screen Mode. This is the mode where are most likely to work with and compare multiple document windows. The first time you press the letter F, you will cycle to the Full Screen Mode with Menu Bar. (That's a mouthful — I just call it the Grey Screen Mode.) This centers the active document on a neutral grey background. This is the screen mode you should use when you want to do accurate color correction because that lime-green desktop pattern you've got on your Mac doesn't effect your color perception at all, right? Uh, yes, it does. The second time you press the letter F, you will cycle to the Full Screen Mode. I call this the Presentation Mode or the Macho Mode because you have to know all the keyboard shortcuts as the menus are now hidden. Press the letter F one more time and you'll return to the Standard Screen Mode. For those of you who like the seeing your images against a black background but miss the menus when you are in the Full Screen Mode, you can press Shift + F to toggle the menus on and off.

## Set the Screen Mode for all Open Documents

Every document window can have its own screen mode setting. To set the screen mode for all open documents at the same time, Shift + Click on the icon for the screen mode you want near the bottom of the Tools palette.

## Panning in Full Screen Mode

It's the little things, right? While this tip seems small, it was actually one of my favorite new features of Photoshop CS. Once I saw it, I wondered how I lived without it for so long. When you switch to any of the Full Screen modes (pressing the letter F cycles you through the three modes), you can now pan the image window around the screen. By default, the image is centered on the screen, but sometimes this means it will be underneath open palettes. Rather than clutter up your workspace by moving the palettes around, simply pan the image around the workspace with either the Hand tool, or by holding down the Spacebar to access the Hand tool temporarily.

## Panning and Zooming Multiple Windows

You can tile multiple documents to fit on the screen by choosing Window > Arrange > Tile. If the tiled windows are at different zoom levels and/or locations, you can synch them via the Window > Arrange > Match... commands. You can also pan and zoom all the documents at the same time. You can either turn on the Zoom All Windows and Pan All Windows checkboxes in the Options bar for the Hand and Zoom tools, or you can add the Shift key to your favorite keyboard method for panning and zooming to temporarily pan and/or zoom all windows.

## Cycle thru Open Documents

Finding the open document that you want to bring to the front can be frustrating at times. Looking at a list of file names at the bottom of the Window menu isn't always all that helpful, especially if you are working with multiple files you've just pulled from a digital camera (DSCF3154.JPG, DSCF3155.JPG, etc.). Of course, if you are using a Mac running OS X 10.3 or later, you can use the Expose features to fit all open windows on the screen. But, if you are using a Windows machine or an earlier Mac OS version, you can use the Ctrl + Tab keyboard shortcut to cycle through all open documents. Note to Mac users that it is indeed the Ctrl key and not the Command key that needs to be used for this shortcut. This is especially useful if you want to view your images in a "slide show" without leaving Photoshop. To set up the slide show, Shift + Click on the third screen mode icon towards the bottom of the Tools palette to set the screen mode for

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ALL open documents to the black full screen mode. Next, press the Tab key to hide all open palettes. Then use the Ctrl + Tab shortcut to “advance” to the next open image. Heck, people don’t even need to know that you are in Photoshop!

## Type Shortcuts

### Format Multiple Type Layers | v6 – CS

To change a character attribute (Font, Size, Color, etc.) of multiple Type layers at the same time, first link the layers you want to change. Then, with the Type tool selected, hold down the Shift key and choose the formatting option you want from the Options bar or the Character palette.

### Format Multiple Type Layers | CS2

With the selection model changes in Photoshop CS2, it is no longer necessary to link multiple Type layers before formatting them at the same time. Simply select the Type layers you want to edit simultaneously by Shift or Cmd clicking on them in the Layers palette, then make the formatting change you want.

### Previewing Fonts

Sometimes you don’t know what font you want to use – You’d rather just flip through the fonts until you see one you like. Yes, it is neat that Photoshop CS2 gives us WYSIWYG font menus now. However, I find that isn’t as helpful as I always hoped it would be. Here is a better way to preview fonts. First select the Type layer or layers you want to change and switch to the Type tool. Then, press the Enter key. This puts focus on the Options bar and highlights the Font field. You can now use the Up and Down Arrow keys to cycle through the font list. As you move up and down the list, the type layer will show you your text in the current font. Once you find the font you want, press the Enter key again to apply the change.

### Jumping to the font you want

In the event that you DO know the font you want to use, use this trick. With the Type tool selected, click in the Font field in the Options bar (or simply press the Enter key). Type the first few characters of the font you want to use and press the Enter key.

## Layer Shortcuts

### Duplicating a Layer

Cmd + J is the shortcut for duplicating a layer. Think of “jumping” a copy of the layer up to its own layer. It is a good habit to name your layers as you work on a project so you are not left with a stack of useless layer names later on such as Layer 1, Layer 1 copy, Layer 1 copy 2, Final, Final copy, Final copy 2, etc. As a general rule, adding the Option key to an existing shortcut usually makes that shortcut better. In this case, Cmd + Option + J brings up the New Layer dialog box in the middle of the duplicate operation so you can enter in a real name for the layer as you are creating the duplicate.

### New Layer Below the Active Layer

When you create a new layer by clicking on the Create a New Layer icon in the Layers palette, the new layer gets added above the active layer. If you want the new layer to be added below the active layer, Cmd + Click on the Create a New Layer icon instead.

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## Creating a Composite Copy

There are many times where being able to create a composite copy of the visible would come in handy. This is one of those shortcuts that makes you say “when in doubt, hold down the entire left-hand side of your keyboard”. Press `Cmd + Option + N` and then `Cmd + Option + E`. The first shortcut creates a new empty layer; the second shortcut merges all visible layers into the new empty layer you just created.

## Grouping Layers | CS2

In Photoshop CS2, Layer Sets are now called Groups. You can now group layers into a set by selecting the layers you want to group and pressing `Cmd + G`. To ungroup a set of layers, press `Cmd + Shift + G`.

## Layer Opacity

By far, the quickest and easiest way of changing the opacity of a layer is to have the Move tool selected, and then simply press a number or two numbers quickly. A single number will change the active layer in 10% increments. For example, pressing 5 will change the layer to 50%. Pressing two numbers quickly will change the opacity of the active layer in 1% increments. For example, pressing 2 then 3 quickly will change the opacity to 23%.

## Toggling Layer Visibility | CS2

While there is still no keyboard shortcut for hiding a layer, in Photoshop CS2 you can now undo turning off a layer. First, click on the eye icon for the layer you want to toggle on and off. Then you can press `Cmd + Z` to toggle it back on and off. Unfortunately, it does not work when you turn off multiple layers by dragging thru the eye column in the Layers palette.

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## Blending Mode Shortcuts

### Cycle through the Blending Modes

If you are like most Photoshop users, you have no idea what the heck the Layer Blending Modes really do – You just keep choosing a mode from the pop-up menu and ask “Was it that one? No. Was it that one? No.”, until you find the one that “looks right”. Here’s a much better way when you just want to experiment with the different Blending Modes. With the Move tool selected (Press the V key), hold down Shift and the + (Plus) or – (Minus) keys to cycle up and down through the Blending Mode list.

### Shortcuts for Every Blending Mode

Turns out that every layer blending mode has its own keyboard shortcut. With the Move tool selected, just press (Shift + Option) [Shift + Alt] and a letter. Most of them make sense. For instance, for Multiply, you’d press Shift + Option + M. For Screen, you’d press Shift + Option + S, and so on. Just for kicks, hold down Shift + Option, and press any letter to see what blending mode you end up with. By the way, if you have a painting tool selected instead of the Move tool, the blending mode shortcuts will change the blending mode of the selected painting tool instead of the active layer.

### Three Blending Modes You Must Memorize!

So maybe you’ll never remember what the heck the Vivid Light blending mode does, but you must memorize what the following three blending modes do – Multiply, Screen and Overlay. Multiply ignores white and makes things darker. Screen ignores black and makes things brighter. Overlay ignores grey and makes lighter areas lighter and darker areas darker.

## Channels and Selection Shortcuts

### Channels... Scary. Scary.

Admit it. Are you freaked out by the Channels palette? Then learn to “walk the channels” without leaving the comfort of the Layers palette. Cmd + 1 switches to the Red channel, Cmd + 2 switches to the Green channel, Cmd + 3 switches to the Red channel, and Cmd + ~ (Tilde) switches back to the composite RGB channel.

### Get Loaded

Take the previous shortcut to the next level. If you want to load a channel as a selection, rather than switching to that channel, add the Option key to the channel-walk shortcuts. Example: to load the Red channel as a selection, press Cmd + Option + 1; to load the first alpha channel as a selection, press Cmd + Option + 4.

### Get Loaded, Part Deux

The Select > Load Selection menu command is another command for wimps – and it only allows you to load selections from alpha channels. If you want to load a selection from an alpha channel, a path or a layer, just hold down the (Cmd) [Ctrl] and click on the name of the alpha channel, path or layer in the appropriate palette.

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## Custom Keyboard Shortcuts

### Remap Adjustments Shortcuts

If you don't know already, at some point (like right now!) you'll learn that you almost never want to apply any of the Image > Adjustments commands to your original Background layer. Instead, you want to use the corresponding Adjustment Layers so that the adjustments are non-destructive, can be edited, masked, etc. I've changed all my common adjustment shortcuts to create Adjustment Layers. So now, when I press Cmd+L, instead of getting the Levels dialog box, I end up with a Levels Adjustment Layer. I recommend you remap the commands for Levels, Curves, Hue and Saturation and Color Balance.

### Your Own Cheat Sheet

Know the keyboard shortcut for Edit > Keyboard Shortcuts? Do you want to? (It's Cmd+Option+Shift+K). You can click the Summarize button in the Keyboard Shortcut dialog box to generate an HTML document of all current keyboard shortcuts that you can then format and print.

## Bridge & File Browser Shortcuts

### "Review Mode" in the File Browser | CS

I find that I often want to use the File Browser in a "Review Mode" after I've downloaded a series of images from my digital camera, so I've created a custom Workspace to switch the File Browser into this mode. First, open the File Browser. Then, drag the Preview tab and group it with the Folders tab. Next, minimize the Metadata tab by double-clicking directly on its tab. Then drag the bottom of the Preview pane all the way to the bottom, and the right edge all the way to the right until you are left with a single column of "filmstrip" of thumbnails and the largest preview possible. After all this set-up, you won't want to do it again, so chose Window > Save Workspace and give it a name. (I put the initials "FB" in front of the name of any workspace I create for File Browser.) Now you've got a workspace that is ideal for going through your images one by one, while using your keyboard to perform commands: Next: Down Arrow; Previous: Up Arrow; Rotate Left: (Cmd + I) (Ctrl + I); Rotate Right: (Cmd + J) (Ctrl + J); Flag/Unflag: (Cmd + ') (Ctrl + '); Delete: Delete.

### Adobe Bridge Shortcuts

Cmd+Shift+O..... Toggle between Bridge & PS CS2  
Cmd+T..... Toggle captions on and off  
Cmd+- (minus)/Cmd++ (plus) ..... Decrease/Increase thumbnail size  
Cmd+ \ (Backslash) ..... Cycle thru default workspaces  
Cmd+Enter..... Toggle between Compact and Full mode  
Cmd+L..... Start slideshow  
Cmd+1-5..... Add Rating stars  
Cmd+0..... Remove Rating stars  
Cmd+Shift+R..... Batch Rename  
Cmd+Option+C ..... Copy Camera Raw Settings  
Cmd+Option+V..... Paste Camera Raw Settings

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## Miscellaneous Shortcuts

### Undo a Save

It's 3:00am. You're strung out on Red Bull and chocolate covered espresso beans trying to meet a deadline. You've got a layered file that you need to save a flattened version of. You flatten the image and in your delirium, you do a Save instead of a Save As. You're suddenly seized by a panic attack as you realize you've just saved over your layers! (What ever you do, DON'T CLOSE THE FILE!) You instinctively look in the History palette but are dismayed that the Save command is not in the list. Don't worry, just click on the previous History State and you'll get your layers back.

### Speedier Launch Times

Loading filters (plug-ins) is one of the factors that affect how long it takes for Photoshop to start-up. The more plug-ins you have installed, the longer it takes for Photoshop to complete its start-up process. I don't know about you, but I've never used the Sumi-e filter and I seriously doubt I could even tell you what that filter does. Navigate to the Photoshop Plug-ins folder on your hard drive, and add the tilde (~) symbol in front of the name of any filter you don't want Photoshop to load. You can even prevent entire folders from loading by adding a tilde in front of the folder name. The next time you launch Photoshop, it will take less time depending on how many filters you've "turned off".

## Additional handouts and Actions available on my iDisk:

### From any OS via a Browser:

<http://homepage.mac.com/mninness/FileSharing2.html>

### In Mac OS X 10.3 or later:

Go > iDisk > Other User's Public Folder

User Name: mninness

### On Windows XP:

Go to <http://www.mac.com> and download the iDisk Utility for Windows application.

(Note: if you have trouble finding the application, I've posted it at the URL above.)

Launch the app and choose the Public Folder option.

User Name: mninness

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