



Photoshop Mastery

Taking Photoshop to the next level

■ BY BEN WILLMORE

Fixing Odd Behaviors in Photoshop

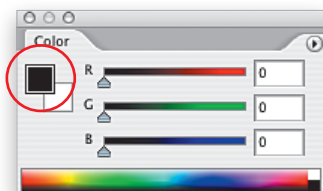
Changing even one checkbox in Photoshop can cause the most unexpected behavior, and it's especially evident when you work on someone else's computer. Recently, when I was teaching at the Lepp Institute, I ran into a few of those oddities and here's how I fixed them.

Here's one: If you usually press the number keys (0–9) to change the Brush tool's Opacity and suddenly notice that those keys are changing the Flow setting instead, click off the Airbrush icon in the Options Bar to get things back to normal. Or, if you prefer to keep the Airbrush option turned on, you can use the number keys to change the Flow setting and add Shift when you want to change the brush's Opacity.



Eyedropper changes Background

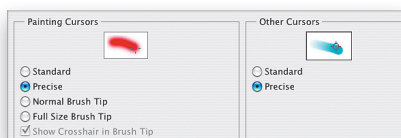
If the Eyedropper tool (I) changes the Background color instead of the Foreground color, then you're either holding the Option (PC: Alt) key or you've got a really obscure setting active. To fix this behavior, choose Window>Color and click on the Foreground swatch that's shown in the upper left of the Color palette. Clicking on the Background swatch causes the Eyedropper tool to change the Background color—a great way to really mess with a co-worker (just be nice and set it back after he starts to pull his hair out).



Cursor is a crosshair

If your cursor ever looks like a crosshair, the first thing to check is if your Caps Lock key is pressed. Next, look at the size of the brush that you're using: If it's one pixel, or if it's so large that its edges would be beyond the edge of the document window, then it will show up as a crosshair, so either change your brush size or Zoom out on the image until it's small enough that you can see the edge of the brush.

If that doesn't solve it, your next stop should be Photoshop (PC: Edit)>Preferences and choose Display & Cursors. If either your Painting Cursors or Other Cursors is set to Precise, then that's the culprit. You'll want to change the Other Cursors setting to Standard and the Painting Cursors setting to Normal Brush Tip. This is also where you can fix another problem: choosing Full Size Brush Tip will make your painting cursors appear much larger than the paint stroke you're applying. If that's the case, change the Painting Cursors setting to Normal Brush Tip and everything will be back to normal.



Gray menus and gray layers

If you find any of the following statements to be true:

- The highlight on a layer suddenly becomes grayed out
- Any menu items related to color (such as Color Balance) are grayed out
- It's impossible to make a layer mask active
- Or you get channel visibility or alpha channel error messages,

then check at the bottom of the Toolbox to see if the Edit in Quick Mask Mode icon is active. If it is, just press Q to activate the Edit in Standard mode.



Bridge broken

And lastly, if any of the choices found under the Tools>Photoshop menu in Bridge stop working, quit Bridge, double-click Bridge's icon to re-launch it, and immediately hold down Shift-Option-Command (PC: Shift-Alt-Control) to reset your Preferences and get things working again.

It's amazing how many weird little obstacles you can run into during a weeklong hands-on training class. The best way to avoid most of these problems is to reset everyone's Photoshop Preferences before class starts (just use the keyboard shortcut in the Bridge tip above when launching Photoshop and everything should behave normally). ■

Ben Willmore is the best-selling author of Adobe Photoshop CS2 Studio Techniques and Up to Speed: Photoshop CS2, as well as co-author of How to Wow: Photoshop for Photographers. Ben spends many of his days as a "digital nomad" in his 40' motorcoach. Learn about his latest adventure at www.wherisben.com.