

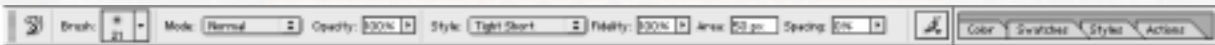


Fundamental Photoshop

Little things make a big difference when working in Photoshop

■ BY BEN WILLMORE

With Photoshop 6.0, Adobe added some new features that let you better manage the clutter of palettes that you use on a daily basis. In 6.0, the number of palettes has increased from 12 to 14 and Adobe did away with the Brushes palette... well, sort of. They decided to integrate that palette into the new Options Bar, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's take a look at what they've done and how I suggest you organize your screen.



Photoshop 6.0's new Options Bar replaces the old Options palette and includes a "palette well" on its right end. The palette well is only available on screens that can display more than 800 pixels in the width of the screen.

The first major change you'll notice after launching Photoshop 6 is the Options Bar that stretches across the top of your screen. This replaces version 5.5's Options palette and it seems to be a big improvement. You'll no longer find yourself searching for the options for each tool. Now they are always available and just a quick glance away at the top of your screen.

If you have a large monitor, then you're in for a treat because the Options Bar also includes a "palette well." When you have a screen that displays more than 800x600 pixels, the well shows up on the far right of the Options Bar.

You can drag the name of any palette into that "well" and it will collapse down so that you just see its name. Then, when you want to use the palette, click on the name of the palette and it will drop down from the well so that you can access all its options. When you're finished, click anywhere outside of the palette and it will return to its collapsed state. I usually store the Color, Swatches, Styles and Actions palettes in the well because I only need those every once and a while.

Now, let's figure out what to do with the rest of the palettes. Adobe added a Character and a Paragraph palette in Photoshop 6.0, but I only use them when the Type Tool is active. So try this: Open those palettes by clicking on the Palettes button in the Options Bar. Drag one of them out of the palette grouping by clicking-and-dragging its name tab into an open area of the screen. Then, drag the name tab of the other palette



You can group two palettes together by dragging the name of one palette onto the very bottom of the second palette.

to just below the first palette you moved. When you do that, a small, thin box will appear at the bottom of the top palette indicating that they will become a stacked grouping. Now, close that palette by clicking on the close box in the upper left of the palette. Then, anytime you're using the Type tool, all you have to do is click the Palettes button in the Options Bar and those palettes will become visible again. Then when you're done working with text, just close the palette again to get them out of the way.

The next thing I'd do is close the History palette because you can use keyboard shortcuts for most of its options. For multiple undo's, use Option-Command-Z (PC: Alt-Control-Z). To reapply multiple steps, just replace the Option key in the last shortcut with the Shift key. When you're using the History Brush, you can change which Snapshot you are painting from (from a pop-up menu) by pressing the right

mouse button in Windows or holding down the Control key on a Mac and clicking the mouse button in your image. I wish there was a keyboard shortcut for taking a Snapshot. If you find yourself taking a lot of Snapshots, record an action and assign it an F-key; that way you shouldn't need to access the History palette for much of anything.

I need to use the Info palette quite often when I'm creating selections and color correcting images, so I like to leave that palette open. I put it at the top of the screen just below the palette well. You might want to group the Info palette with the Navigator palette and if you *do* use the History palette a lot, then you could include that as well.

I use the Layers and Channels palettes all the time, so I always keep them open and ready to use. I usually just leave them in the lower right of my screen where they can stretch out and take up the majority of the screen space.

Now that we have our screen under control, you might be wondering where Adobe hid the Brushes palette. Well, just choose any painting or retouching tool and then click on the down-facing arrow next to the brush sample in the Options Bar—there they are, easy to find and ready to go to work. ■

Ben Willmore lives in Boulder, Colorado and is the founder of Digital Mastery, a training and consulting company which presents the national seminar tour of "Master Photoshop in 3 Days." Ben provides hundreds of free Photoshop tips and tutorials on his Web site www.digitalmastery.com.



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