



# Fundamental Photoshop

Learning a few shortcuts can make a big difference

■ BY BEN WILLMORE

**E**ven though Photoshop features literally hundreds of keyboard commands, there are a special group of twenty that I use the most. If you master these essentials, then you can transform Photoshop into a very efficient production machine.

Let's start off with a few commands that will help you navigate around your image. You can clean up your screen by pressing Tab to toggle the visibility of your palettes. Then, if you need to zoom in on your image, hold Command-Spacebar (PC: Control-Spacebar) and click on your image. Adding Option (PC: Alt) will let you zoom out. Then, to scroll around your image, hold the Spacebar to temporarily access the Hand tool. When you're finished zooming in on your image, type Option-Command-0 (PC: Alt-Control-0) to get back to 100% view. If you'd like to simplify your screen even more, press "f" to cycle through the three screen modes (normal, full screen with menu bar, and full screen mode).

Now let's see if there's anything that can help us with the Move tool. First off, you can type "v" to quickly switch to the Move tool. Or, you can hold Command (PC: Control) to temporarily access the Move tool. When you release the Command key, you'll be returned to whichever tool you were using right before you held it down. When the Move tool is active, you can Command-click (PC: Control-click) to make the layer below your cursor active. If you need a layer that's buried below the topmost one, then Control-click (PC: Right-click) and choose the layer you want from the pop-up menu that appears. You can even Command-Control-click (PC: Control-Right-click) to access this menu when you're using any of Photoshop's tools (except the Hand tool). Once you have the layer that you need active, you can use the arrow keys to nudge it one pixel at a time in any direction, or hold Shift to nudge it 10 pixels at a time. Then, if you'd like to merge that layer with the one below it, type Command-E (PC: Control-E).



Command-Control-click (PC: Control-Right-click) to access a pop-up list of layers

Keep the next few commands in mind when you're using one of Photoshop's painting or retouching tools. Type "d" to reset your foreground and background color to black and white respectively. Or type "x" to exchange the foreground and background colors. Then, when you need to change your brush, use the Bracket keys ([ ]) to change the diameter (this only works on round and oval brushes), or add the Shift key to change how soft the edge is. If you'd like to cycle through all the brushes that show up in the Brushes palette, then use the ">" and "<" keys (no need to hold Shift though). Those last three commands are Photoshop 6.0-specific. In 5.5, the bracket keys would just cycle through the brushes in the Brushes palette. If you ever find that your cursor doesn't reflect the brush size that you've chosen, take a look at your Caps Lock key because it usually toggles your cursor between a circle that reflects how large your brush is and a crosshair that indicates where the center of your brush is. Once you have your brush just right, then use the number keys to change the Opacity of your brush (1=10%, 3=30%, 45=45%, 0=100%, etc.).

When adjusting your image with any of the commands under the Image>Adjust menu, try these com-

mands. If there's a number in one of the adjustment dialog boxes you'd like to change, first, click on the number to make it active for editing and then use the Up and Down arrow keys to increase or decrease it. Whenever you open an adjustment dialog box, it always starts with default settings. But, if you hold the Option key (PC: Alt key) when selecting an adjustment, then Photoshop will remember the last settings that you used. Once you're finished adjusting the image, press the Enter key to apply the changes, or press Esc to abort the adjustment. Those two commands aren't specific to adjustments; in fact, they should work in just about any dialog box that has an OK and Cancel button.

When working with selections, you can type Command-H (PC: Control-H) to hide the "marching ants" without getting rid of your selection. This same command will also toggle the visibility of guides, slices, and paths.

Finally, you can type Command-W (PC: Control-W) to close the active document. In Photoshop 6.0, you can add the Shift key to close all the open documents. Then, when Photoshop asks you if you'd like to save your image, type the first letter of whichever button you'd like to click (S=Save, D=Don't Save, etc.).

Now that you've seen the essentials, it will just take you a week of practice before these commands become as automatic as your reflexes. ■

*Ben Willmore is the founder of Digital Mastery, a Colorado-based training and consulting company that presents the national seminar tour of "Photoshop Mastery." Ben provides hundreds of free Photoshop tips and tutorials on his Web site [www.digitalmastery.com](http://www.digitalmastery.com).*