



■ BY BEN WILLMORE

Using Layers Like a Pro

Sometimes the difference between a real Photoshop pro and the average user is just the number of tricks they have up their sleeve. Here are some tips to keep up your sleeve, and that may help you on your way to becoming a true Layers power user.

When using the Move tool to drag things around on your screen, you can hold Shift to constrain your movement to vertical or horizontal.

When the Move tool is active, you can nudge a layer one pixel at a time by pressing any of the Arrow keys on your keyboard. Hold Shift to nudge a layer 10 pixels at a time. You can even hold Option (PC: Alt) to move a duplicate of the layer.

If you use the Move tool to drag a layer from one document to another, you can hold the Shift key to center the image in the second document. Or, if both documents are the same size (width and height), then holding Shift will place the layer in the same position it was in the original image.

To move multiple layers between documents, link those layers together (by clicking to the left of the layer thumbnail image for each layer in the Layers palette), and then use the Move tool to drag to another

document. Once you have a bunch of layers linked together, you can hold Command (PC: Control) and click on the Trash icon at the bottom of the Layers palette to delete all the layers that are linked.

If you create a new empty layer and then link that layer to a bunch of other layers, you can hold Option (PC: Alt) and when you choose Layer>Merge Linked, Photoshop will merge those layers into the layer that's active, without deleting the original layers. You can also do this by typing Option-Command-E (PC: Alt-Control-E).

If you have multiple layers linked together and you'd like to unlink them, Option-click (PC: Alt-click) on the Paintbrush icon that appears to the left of the layer thumbnail image of the active layer. That should turn off all the link symbols on the other layers.

You can also Option-click (PC: Alt-click) one of the Eye icons in the Layers palette to hide all the layers, except the one you just clicked on. Option-click it again and all the Eye icons will be back on.

You can also Command-click (PC: Control-click) on the name of a layer to get a selection of everything on that layer. Just make sure the layer you're clicking on has some transparent areas so that it doesn't select the entire screen.

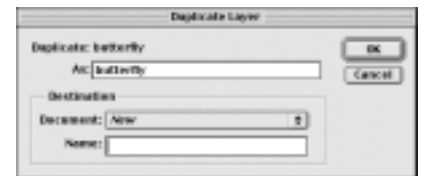
If you select an object, copy it, and then paste it into a different document, you might notice a tiny halo around its edge. That's a hint of the old background showing up. This really shows up when you copy

from a bright-colored background and paste onto a dark one. To remove the halo, choose Layer>Matting> Defringe and use a setting of 1.

To control where a pasted image shows up, make a selection before choosing Edit>Paste and the image will be centered on the selection.

You can hold Command (PC: Control) and then use the Bracket keys ([]) to move the layer up or down in the layers stack.

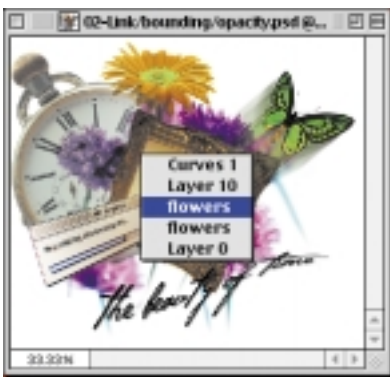
To create a new document that contains a layer from the current image, hold Option (PC: Alt) and drag the layer to the New Layer icon. Then choose New from the Document pop-up menu.



Option-drag a layer to the New Layer icon and then choose New to duplicate a layer into a new document.

Finally, to lower the Opacity of the currently active layer, make sure you're in the Move tool and then press the number keys at the top of your keyboard (2=20%, 23=23%, 0=100%, etc.) This is especially useful when you're attempting to position a layer so it lines up with the underlying image. ■

Ben Willmore is founder of Digital Mastery, a training and consulting company that presents the national seminar tour of "Photoshop Mastery." He's also the Author of Photoshop 7 Studio Techniques. His web site is www.digitalmastery.com.



Control-clicking while using the Move tool will allow you to quickly switch which layer is active.

document. Just make sure you drag from the main image window and not from the Layers palette, otherwise only a single layer will be moved.