

# Photoshop Mastery

Little things make a big difference when working in Photoshop

■ BY BEN WILLMORE

## Measurement Mysteries Revealed!

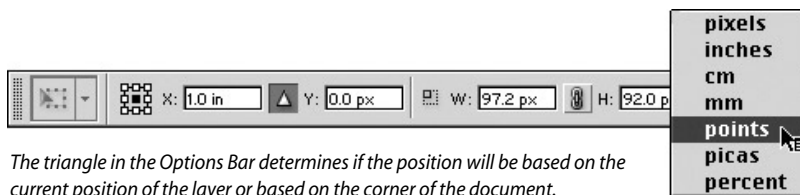
In QuarkXPress, you can mix measurement systems and add 3 picas to the width of a 4" object by typing +3P at the end of the 4" that shows up in the Measurements palette. Photoshop doesn't work like that, but with a little effort we can accomplish the same result.

When entering numbers into the Options Bar, Photoshop usually assumes that you want to use the same measurement system to which your rulers are currently set. You can change that system by going to your Preferences for Units & Rulers, double-clicking on the ruler, or by clicking the crosshair that appears in the Info palette.

If you'd rather use a different measurement system, then you'll need to include a few letters (see below) after the number you enter, otherwise Photoshop will have no idea which system you'd like to use. That makes things a little easier, but you can't mix measurement systems or use simple math as you can in most page-layout programs.

- %=percent      in=inches
- cm=centimeters   mm=millimeters
- pica=picas      pt=points

Here's how I'd transform a 4" wide layer to make it three picas wider: Type Command-T (PC: Control-T) to bring up Free Transform. A quick peek at the Options Bar lets me know that we're starting at 100% of the layer's original size. Next, Control-click (PC: Right-click) on the number that appears in the Options



The triangle in the Options Bar determines if the position will be based on the current position of the layer or based on the corner of the document.

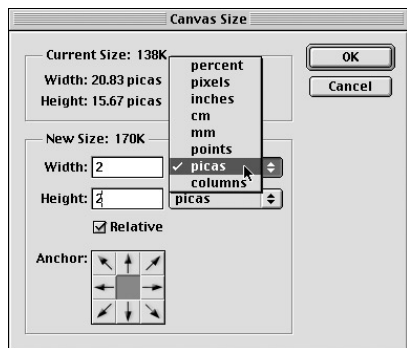
Bar for width and choose picas so Photoshop uses that measurement system to indicate the current width (in this case, 4" is equal to 24 picas). Now that we know how many picas we're starting with, then it's easy to do the math needed to add three picas (24+3=27). If you just type in 27, however, Photoshop will assume you mean to scale that layer to 27% of its original size because that's the default measurement system used for scaling. All you have to do is make sure you entered "27 pica," so it uses the proper measurement system.

That works fine for scaling a layer, but there are easier methods if all you want to do is re-position a layer or add space to your document. Let's say this time you have an 8.5x11" document and you want to add 18 points to both the width and height to account for the bleed needed for a full-page image. In that case, you should choose Image>Canvas Size. When the Relative checkbox is turned off (new in 7.0), it allows you to enter a new width for the image. With that setting, you'd have to use the same approach we did for scaling a layer. But if you turn the Relative checkbox on, then Photoshop isn't thinking about how large the image is, instead it just wants to know how much space you'd like to add to the current width. That way you can change the Width and Height pop-up menus to points, then enter 18 for both, and bingo, your document will become that much larger regardless of its original size.

When you transform a layer, you'll find its current position listed near the far left of the Options Bar. To the left of that, you'll find nine tiny squares, which indicate what part of the layer Photoshop is thinking of (center, upper-left, etc.). Any numbers that you enter will move the layer to the position you indicated relative to the zero point of your rulers, which is usually the upper-left corner of the document. If you're just looking to move a layer a certain amount, then click the tiny triangle icon that appears between the X and Y numbers and then Photoshop will move the layer based on its current position instead of the ruler zero point. So, typing ".5 in" in both the X and Y field will either move the layer a half-inch from the top and left edge of your document, or it will move the layer a half-inch down and right of where it started, depending on whether that tiny triangle symbol is off or on.

With a little practice, these techniques will become second nature to you. That's when you'll realize that the math doesn't have to be so hard: As long as you can add or subtract simple numbers in your head, Photoshop will do the rest. ■

Ben Willmore is founder of Digital Mastery, a Colorado-based training and consulting company that presents the national seminar tour of "Photoshop Mastery." He's also author of Photoshop 7 Studio Techniques. Check out the free Photoshop tips and tutorials at Ben's Web site, [www.digitalmastery.com](http://www.digitalmastery.com).



The Relative checkbox allows you to add a specific amount of space to your image regardless of its original width and height.