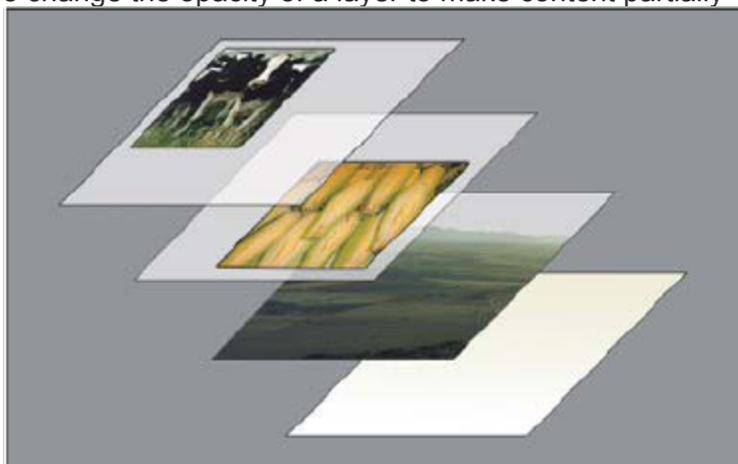# Layer Basics
Photoshop CS6

About layers 💡 *For a video about layers, see www.adobe.com/go/vid0001*

Photoshop layers are like sheets of stacked acetate. You can see through transparent areas of a layer to the layers below. You move a layer to position the content on the layer, like sliding a sheet of acetate in a stack. You can also change the opacity of a layer to make content partially

transparent.
Transparent areas on a layer let you see layers below.

You use layers to perform tasks such as compositing multiple images, adding text to an image, or adding vector graphic shapes. You can apply a layer style to add a special effect such as a drop shadow or a glow.

Organizing layers

A new image has a single layer. The number of additional layers, layer effects, and layer sets you can add to an image is limited only by your computer's memory.

You work with layers in the Layers panel. Layer groups help you organize and manage layers. You can use groups to arrange your layers in a logical order and to reduce clutter in the Layers panel. You can nest groups within other groups. You can also use groups to apply attributes and masks to multiple layers simultaneously.

Layers for non-destructive editing

Sometimes layers don't contain any apparent content. For example, an adjustment layer holds color or tonal adjustments that affect the layers below it. Rather than edit image pixels directly, you can edit an adjustment layer and leave the underlying pixels unchanged.

A special type of layer, called a Smart Object, contains one or more layers of content. You can transform (scale, skew, or reshape) a Smart Object
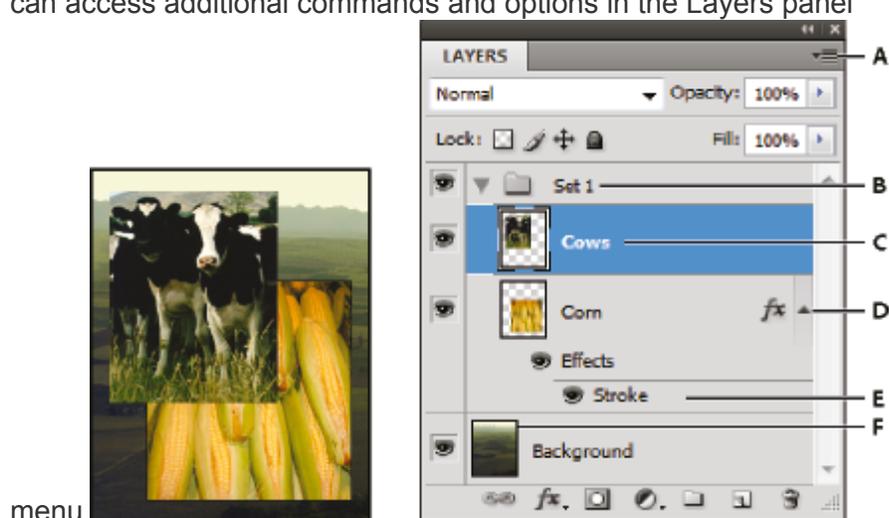
without directly editing image pixels. Or, you can edit the Smart Object as a separate image even after placing it in a Photoshop image. Smart Objects can also contain smart filter effects, which allow you to apply filters non-destructively to images so that you can later tweak or remove the filter effect. See Nondestructive editing.

Video layers

You can use video layers to add video to an image. After importing a video clip into an image as a video layer, you can mask the layer, transform it, apply layer effects, paint on individual frames, or rasterize an individual frame and convert it to a standard layer. Use the Timeline panel to play the video within the image or to access individual frames. See Supported video and image sequence formats (Photoshop Extended). http://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/video-animation-overview.html

Layers panel overview

The Layers panel lists all layers, layer groups, and layer effects in an image. You can use the Layers panel to show and hide layers, create new layers, and work with groups of layers. You can access additional commands and options in the Layers panel

menu.

Photoshop Layers panel
A. Layers panel menu   B. Layer Group   C. Layer   D. Expand/Collapse Layer effects   E. Layer effect   F. Layer thumbnail

Display the Layers panel

- Choose Window > Layers.

Choose a command from the Layers panel menu

- Click the triangle in the upper right corner of the panel.

Change the size of layer thumbnails

- Choose Panel Options from the Layers panel menu, and select a thumbnail size.

Change thumbnail contents

- Choose panel Options from the Layers panel menu, and select Entire Document to display the contents of the entire document. Select Layer Bounds to restrict the thumbnail to the object's pixels on the layer. *Turn off thumbnails to improve performance and save monitor space.*

Expand and collapse groups

- Click the triangle to the left of a group folder. See View layers and groups within a group. http://help.adobe.com/en_US/ photoshop/cs/using/WSfd1234e1c4b69f30ea53e41001031ab64- 78e3a.html#WSfd1234e1c4b69f30ea53e41001031ab64-78d4a

Convert background and layers

When you create a new image with a white background or a colored background, the bottommost image in the Layers panel is called Background. An image can have only one background layer. You cannot change the stacking order of a background layer, its blending mode, or its opacity. However, you can convert a background into a regular layer, and then change any of these attributes.

When you create a new image with transparent content, the image does not have a background layer. The bottommost layer is not constrained like the background layer; you can move it anywhere in the Layers panel and change its opacity and blending mode.

Convert a background into a layer

1. Double-click Background in the Layers panel, or choose Layer > New > Layer From Background.
2. Set layer options. (See Create layers and groups.)
3. Click OK.

http://help.adobe.com/en_US/photoshop/cs/using/ WSfd1234e1c4b69f30ea53e41001031ab64-78e3a.html#WS8B37F6C0-7854-49 04-934E-EC109F3A3490a

Convert a layer into a background

1. Select a layer in the Layers panel.
2. Choose Layer > New > Background From Layer.
3. Any transparent pixels in the layer are converted to the background color, and the layer drops to the bottom of the layer stack.

4. ***Note:** You cannot create a background by giving a regular layer the name, Background—you must use the Background From Layer command.*

Create layers and groups

A new layer appears either above the selected layer or within the selected group in the Layers panel.

Create a new layer or group

1. Do one of the following:
    a. To create a new layer or group using default options, click the Create a New Layer button ▣ or New Group button ▭ in the Layers panel.
    b. Choose Layer > New > Layer or choose Layer > New > Group.
    c. Choose New Layer or New Group from the Layers panel menu.
    d. Alt-click (Windows) or Option-click (Mac OS) the Create a New Layer button or New Group button in the Layers panel to display the New Layer dialog box and set layer options.
    e. Ctrl-click (Windows) or Command-click (Mac OS) the Create a New Layer button or New Group button in the Layers panel to add a layer below the currently selected layer.
2. Set layer options, and click OK:
    a. **Name** Specifies a name for the layer or group.
    b. **Use Previous Layer to Create Clipping Mask** This option is not available for groups. (See Mask layers with clipping masks.)
    c. **Color** Assigns a color to the layer or group in the Layers panel.
    d. **Mode** Specifies a blending mode for the layer or group. (See Blending modes.)
    e. **Opacity** Specifies an opacity level for the layer or group.
    f. **Fill With Mode-Neutral Color** Fills the layer with a preset, neutral color.

***Note:** To add currently selected layers to a new group, choose Layer > Group Layers, or Shift-click the New Group button at the bottom of the Layers Panel.*

Create a layer from an existing file

1. Drag the file icon from Windows or Mac OS onto an open image in Photoshop.
2. Move, scale, or rotate the imported image. (See Place a file in Photoshop.)
3. Press Enter or Return.
4. By default, Photoshop creates a Smart Object layer. To create standard layers from dragged files, deselect Place Or Drag Raster Images As Smart Objects in the General preferences. 💡*If the placed file is a multilayer image, a flattened version appears on the new layer. To instead copy separate layers, duplicate them in another image. (See Duplicate layers.)*

http://help.adobe.com/en_US/photoshop/cs/using/
WSfd1234e1c4b69f30ea53e41001031ab64-78e3a.html#WS53AFF2EE-B5F3-
4a2c-BDB1-BA9B25A

Create a layer with effects from another layer

1. Select the existing layer in the Layers panel.
2. Drag the layer to the Create a New Layer button at the bottom of the
   Layers panel. The newly created layer contains all the effects of the
   existing one.

Convert a selection into a new layer

1. Make a selection.
2. Do one of the following:
   a. Choose Layer > New > Layer Via Copy to copy the selection into a new layer.
   b. Choose Layer > New > Layer Via Cut to cut the selection and paste it into a new
      layer.
   Note: You must rasterize Smart Objects or shape layers to enable these commands.

Duplicate layers

You can duplicate layers within an image or into another or a new image.

Duplicate a layer or group within an image

1. Select a layer or group in the Layers panel.
2. Do one of the following:
   a. Drag the layer or group to the Create a New Layer button 🔲.
   b. Choose Duplicate Layer or Duplicate Group from the Layers menu or the
      Layers panel menu. Enter a name for the layer or group, and click OK.

Show or hide a layer, group, or style

- Do one of the following in the Layers panel:
  ○ Click the eye icon 👁 next to a layer, group, or layer effect to hide its content in the
    document window. Click in the column again to redisplay the content. To view the eye
    icon for styles and effects, click the Reveal Effects In panel icon ⊤.
  ○ Choose Show Layers or Hide Layers from the Layers menu.
  ○ Alt-click (Windows) or Option-click (Mac OS) an eye icon 👁 to display only the contents
    of that layer or group. Photoshop remembers the visibility states of all layers before
    hiding them. If you don't change the visibility of any other layer, Alt-clicking (Windows)
    or Option-clicking (Mac OS) the same eye icon restores the original visibility settings.
  ○ Drag through the eye column to change the visibility of multiple items in the Layers
    panel.
  Note: Only visible layers are printed.

View layers and groups within a group

- Do one of the following to open the group:
  - Click the triangle to the left of the folder icon 🗀.
  - Right-click (Windows) or Control-click (Mac OS) the triangle to the left of the folder icon and choose Open This Group.
  - Alt-click (Windows) or Option-click (Mac OS) the triangle to open or close a group and the groups nested within it.

Sample from all visible layers

The default behavior of the Mixer Brush, Magic Wand, Smudge, Blur, Sharpen, Paint Bucket, Clone Stamp, and Healing Brush tools is to sample color only from pixels on the active layer. This means you can smudge or sample in a single layer.

- To smudge or sample pixels from all visible layers with these tools, select Sample All Layers from the options bar.

Change transparency preferences

1. In Windows, choose Edit > Preferences > Transparency & Gamut; in Mac OS, choose Photoshop > Preferences > Transparency & Gamut.
2. Choose a size and color for the transparency checkerboard, or choose None for Grid Size to hide the transparency checkerboard.
3. Click OK.