



Wish I Knew: Starting from Zero

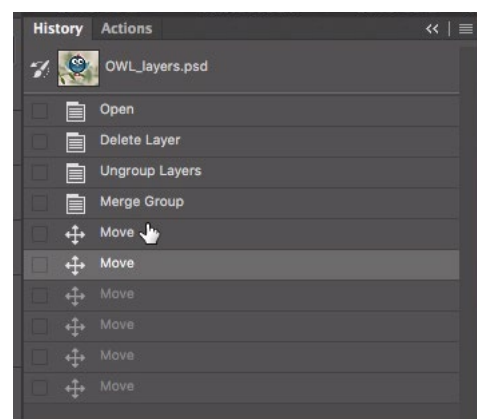
Wish I Knew: Starting from Zero

In this short series, I'm going to cover some things that I wish I knew when I was learning Photoshop. This first lesson will cover some beginner tips and techniques.

Undo, History panel & the step backward command

If you want to undo the last step you took in Photoshop, you can use the Undo command, which can be found at the top of the Edit menu. Alternatively, you can use the keyboard shortcut Command+Z (Ctrl+Z on Win). Let's say that you want to undo more than one step. If you use the Undo command and then go to use it again, the command will have changed to Redo, and that's not what you want. If you need to go back multiple steps, you would turn to the History panel. If it's not already open on your screen, you can access the panel by going to the Window menu and choosing History. (You can locate any Photoshop panel you like within the Window menu.) The History panel gives you a list of what you've done to your picture and the bottom-most step is what you did last. When you use the Undo command, it's simply going one step up in that History list. If you want to go back multiple steps, you can click on the different steps in the History panel to bring your image back to the state it was in at each step.

Often times, I don't want the History panel to be taking up room on my screen, so I will use keyboard shortcuts to go back to earlier steps or forward to later steps in the History panel. To go back a step, the keyboard shortcut is Option+Command+Z (Alt+Ctrl+Z on Win). To move forward a step, the shortcut is Shift+Command+Z (Shift+Ctrl+Z on Win). You can also locate these commands within the Edit menu.



The History panel shows the steps you've taken in your document. Click on a step to move backwards to that step.

Step backward:

Mac: Option+Command+Z

Win: Alt+Ctrl+Z

Step forward:

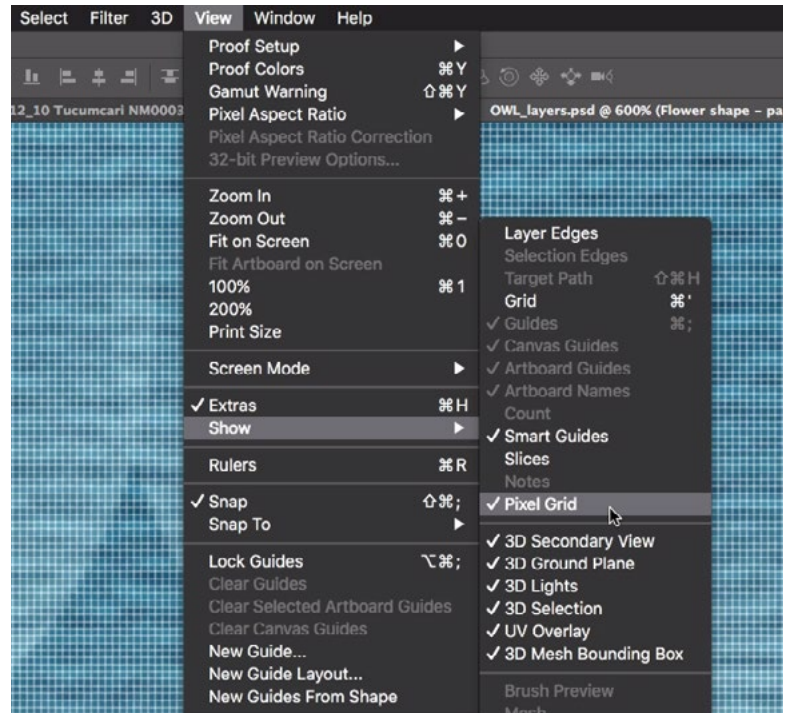
Mac: Shift+Command+Z

Win: Shift+Ctrl+Z

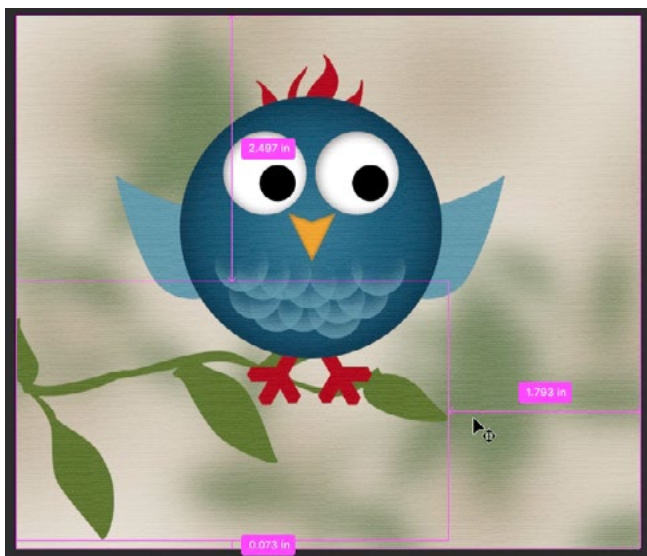
The pixel grid

You may find that when you zoom in extremely close on your picture, you see a tiny grid overlay on your image. It looks as if you're viewing your image through a screen door. This is the pixel grid. The lines are highlighting the edges of each individual pixel in your image. (This will happen regardless of which zoom tool you use.) Know that you can turn off this grid by going to the View menu and choosing Show > Pixel Grid.

The pixel grid may be useful if you are designing icons for the Web that need to be precise pixel dimensions, but for photographic work, the grid can tend to be annoying, so I usually keep it off.



When you zoom way in on your image, you may see the pixel grid, as is shown above. To turn it off, go to the View menu and choose Show > Pixel Grid.



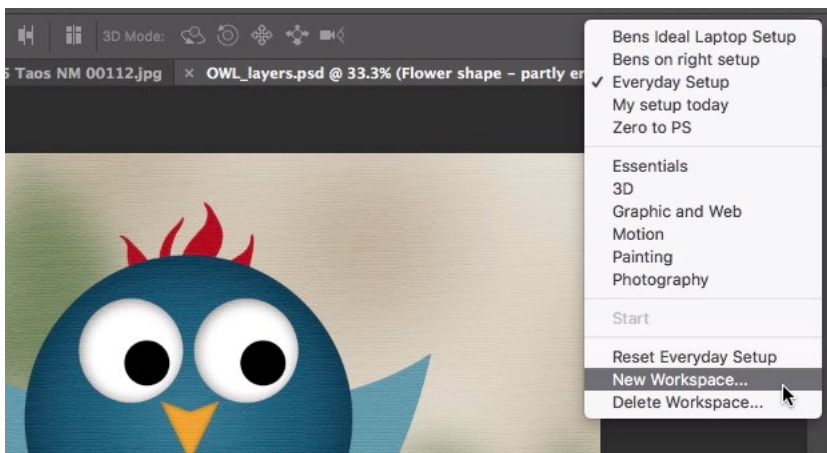
The pink lines represent the smart guides.

Smart guides

Smart guides appear when you use a keyboard shortcut while moving your mouse around the screen. They're represented by pink vertical and/or horizontal lines over your image. They can be useful on occasion, but if you're not looking to use them, they can be an annoyance. If you don't want to see the smart guides, go to the view menu and choose Show > Smart Guides.

Standardizing & saving workspaces

The Photoshop interface is extremely customizable. You have the ability to keep the panels you use the most visible on your screen and hide the ones you don't use. You can also position each panel so that it's most convenient for you. For example, by default, the Layers panel is located on the right side of the interface. I prefer it on the left, so you'll see in the video that my Layers panel is positioned directly next to the Tool Bar on the left side of the screen. You can learn how to customize your interface in the Customizing Photoshop lesson in the Starting from Zero category. The main point that I'd like to make here is that it's extremely useful to maintain a standardized workspace. After you've set up your interface the way you like it, don't change it. This will allow you to commit everything to memory so well that you can move as quickly and efficiently as possible in Photoshop. After your workspace is set up, you can save the workspace by clicking on



I set up the workspace the way I like it and am turning it into a preset by choosing the New Workspace option from the menu on the right side of the Options Bar.

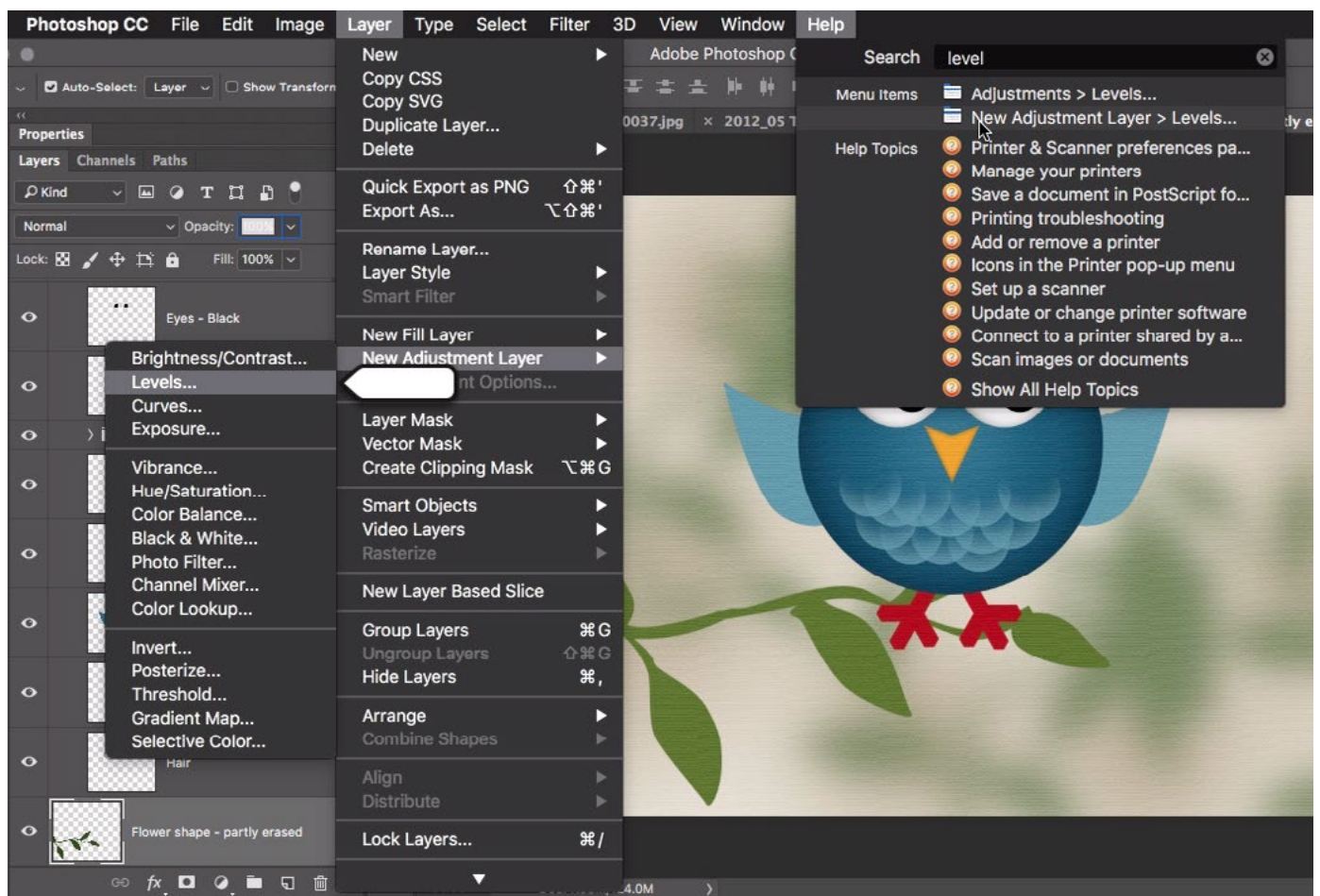
the icon at the far right side of the Options Bar and choosing New Workspace. You'll be prompted to give the workspace a name and click Save. Then, the preset will be available in that workspace menu. If your workspace ever gets changed, you know you can get back to your ideal workspace by choosing it from the menu.

Tab key to hide panels

If you ever find that your panels are taking up too much room on your screen, know that pressing the Tab key will usually hide all of the panels in your workspace. Press the Tab key a second time to make them show up again.

Quickly find a feature

Photoshop has so many different menu items that it can be hard to remember where all of the functions, commands and filters are located. If you ever find yourself wondering where something is located in Photoshop's menu system, click on the Help menu at the top of the interface. At the very top of the Help menu, there is a search field. Use this area to type in what you're looking for and all possible matches will appear below the search field. As you hover over the different choices, Photoshop will show you where each one is located within the menu system. If you click on one of the search results, Photoshop will automatically take you to that particular function without you needing to navigate the menu system.



We clicked on the Help menu and typed in Levels in the search field at the top. When the potential matches appeared, we hovered over the options and Photoshop is showing us where they appear in the menu system.