

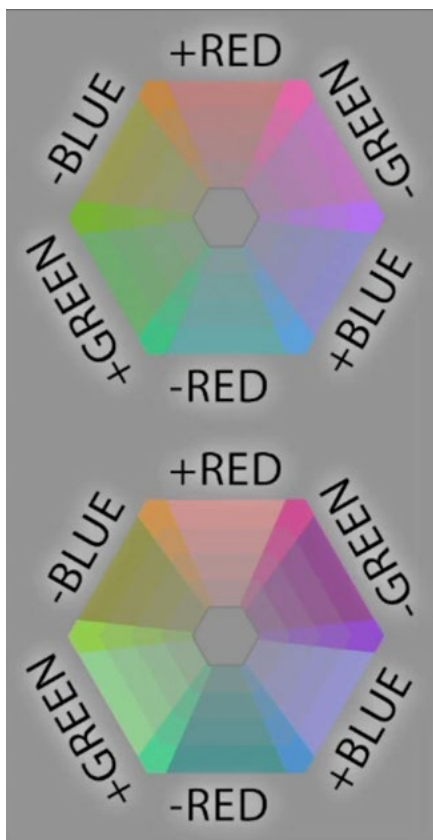


Color Rings Tool

Color Rings Tool

This week, I am going to share a tool with you that will make it easier to figure out what kind of adjustment you might want to apply to an image. With this tool, you will essentially be dragging a special layer group on top of your picture to preview what various adjustments would look like as you move the tool around the image. In doing this, you will be able to determine what color of red, green or blue needs to be adjusted and whether you should increase or decrease it in order to get the effect you're looking for.

When the tool is placed on your image, you will see a circular overlay. The very center of the overlay is an unchanged portion of the image. The colors extending from the center will show you what the image would look like if you added or removed red, green and blue. The effect becomes more extreme as the circular overlay extends outward. By looking at all of the color shifts, you can determine what kind of adjustment the image might need.



FAR LEFT: You can see what the Color Rings Tool looks like when you open its document in Photoshop.
DIRECTLY LEFT: This is what the tool looks like when placed on an image.

Using the Tool to Determine what Color Shift is Needed

The Color Rings Tool can be opened as a Photoshop document. When open, you will see two folders in the Layers Panel. Drag these two folders into the document you'd like to work on. (The bottom color layer is not part of the tool.)

Use the Move Tool to place the center of the circular overlay on the area you would like to adjust. Then, look directly outside of the center area to see what it would look like if you made one of those color adjustments. Move the overlay around while inspecting the color changes on the part of the image you want to adjust until you determine what direction you want to head.

For example, let's say that you have a person in your image whose skin tone doesn't look quite right. You will position the center of the overlay

on the person's skin and then look at the areas extending from that central point. Perhaps the skin looks better when yellow is added. If that's the case, you can use the Move Tool to position the "add yellow" part of the overlay over the person's skin. This will allow you to see what the image would look like if you added different amounts of yellow. The area immediately surrounding the center point would show what the addition of a little yellow would look like. The farthest point from the center would show you what the addition of a lot of yellow would look like.



The color ring was placed over the skin area and we decided that it looks better with added yellow. We positioned the yellow part of the wheel over the skin in order to determine how much yellow would look ideal.

You might notice that there is a small transition area between each of the different colors. This area will show you what the image would look like if you applied both of the adjustments on either side of the transition area. For example, that small transition zone between the +Red and -Green areas would show you what the image would look like if you added red AND removed green.



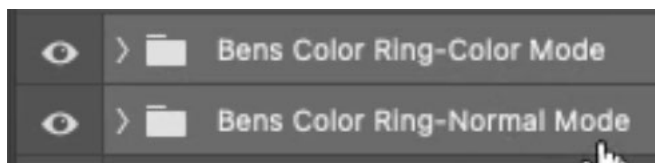
The transition area between +Red and -Green would show you what the image would look like if you added red AND removed green.

Preview Adjustment in the Color Blending Mode

Any time you add any of these colors using the Curves adjustment, you will be adding light to the image, making it brighter. If you take away one of those colors, you would be removing light from the image, making it darker. When I make these types of Curves adjustments, I do NOT want the brightness of the image to change. If that's the case for you as well, you can change the blending mode of the adjustment layer to Color. In this mode, it will allow the adjustment to change the color of the image but not the brightness. (The Blending Mode menu can be found at the top of the Layers Panel.)

There is a second color wheel that will show you what the color change would look like if the adjustment layer's blending mode was set to Color. In the Layers Panel, you can see that there are two folders containing the color wheels.

One of them is set to Normal Mode and the other is set to Color Mode. The Color Mode wheel is positioned above the Normal Mode wheel.



One of the color wheels will show you what the adjustment would look like using the Color blending mode.

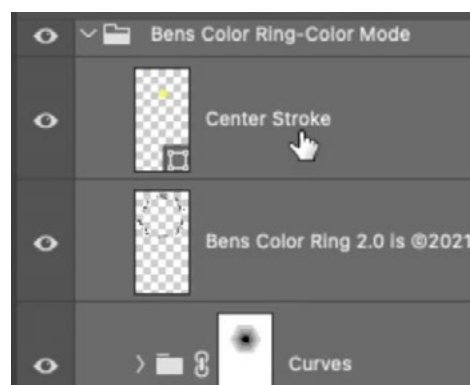
Create an Adjustment Layer to Shift Color

After you have determined what type of color adjustment you need, you can discard the Color Wheel layers and create a new Curves Adjustment Layer. The Properties Panel will appear and the color menu will be located directly above the curve chart. This menu will provide the options of red, green and blue, but these curves will also affect each color's opposite. The opposite of blue is yellow. The opposite of red is cyan. The opposite of green is magenta. If you were to move the blue curve down, you would be removing blue and adding yellow.

Set the color menu to the color you want to change. In the video example, we determined that the skin needed a little more yellow, so we selected the blue curve. Make sure that the Targeted Adjustment Tool is active. It looks like a little hand icon on the left side of the panel. With this tool, click and drag on the part of the image you want to change. Dragging up will add the chosen color. Dragging down will add that color's opposite. In our example, we wanted to add yellow so we selected the blue curve and then clicked on the skin and dragged down. This removed blue and added yellow. The farther you drag, the more extreme the effect will be.

Finally, you will need to mask the layer so that the adjustment only affects the area you want to adjust. If the area is small, it will be easier to start with a black mask. If the mask is completely white, you can invert it by using the keyboard shortcut Command+I (Ctrl+I on Win). This will make the mask completely black. Therefore, the effect will be hidden across the entire image. You can then paint with white in the area you want the adjustment to be applied.

Tip: If you open one of the Color Ring folders in the Layers Panel, you will find that there is a layer called Center Stroke. If you turn this layer off, it will remove the little line that surrounds the center portion of the wheel. This can be useful if you find that line to be distracting.



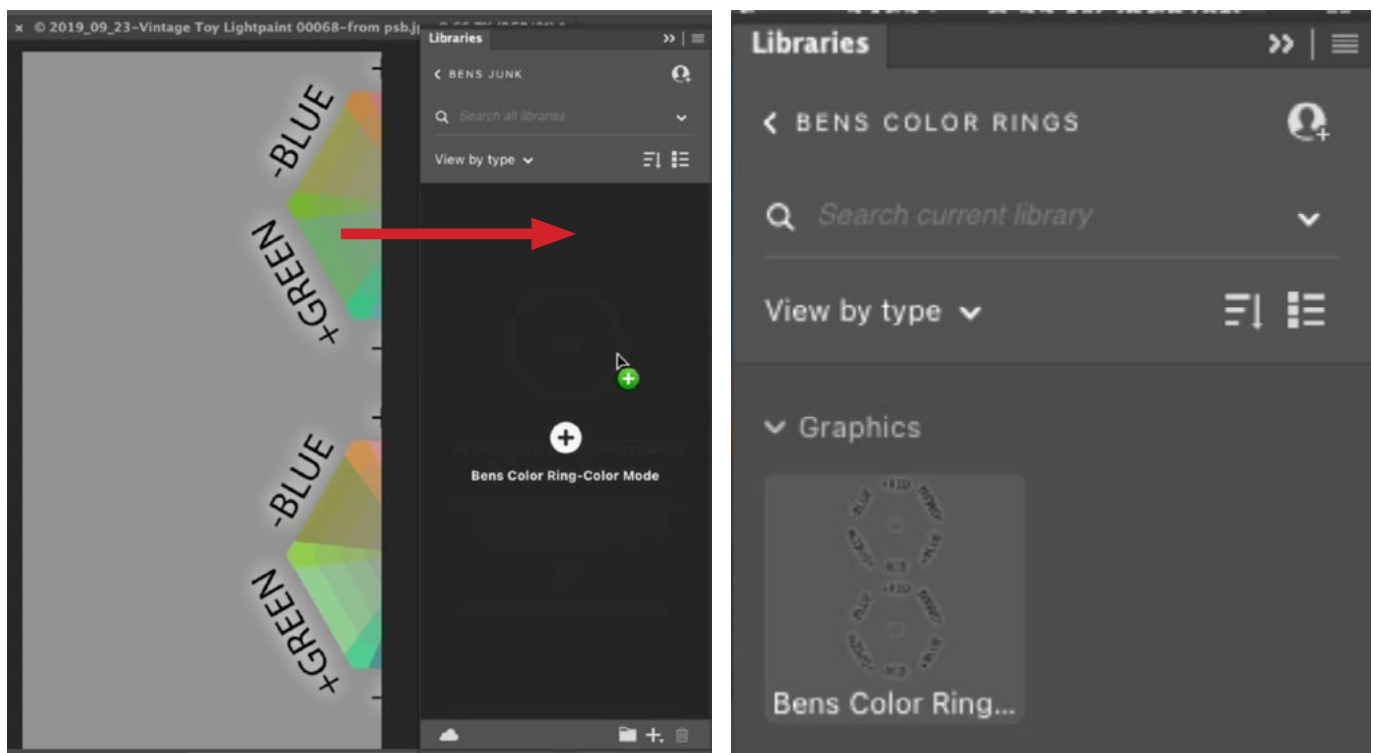
You can remove the line that surrounds the center part of the wheel by turning off the visibility for the Center Stroke layer.

Storing the Color Wheel Tool in the Libraries Panel

The Libraries Panel may be the most convenient place to store this Color Ring Tool because you will always have easy access to it. When using the tool from the Libraries Panel, hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) as you drag the tool from the panel to the image. (If you don't hold this key down, it will be placed as a smart object, and that's not what you want in this case.)

If the Libraries Panel is not already open in your interface, you can access it by clicking on the Window menu and choosing Libraries. When this panel is open, you can create a new Library by clicking on the +Create New Library button at the top of the panel. I created a special library for the Color Rings, but you can choose which of your libraries it should be stored in.

To place the Color Wheel tool into the Libraries Panel, open the Color Wheel document and make sure that both folders/groups are selected. With the Libraries Panel open, click within your image and drag the wheels into the Panel.



LEFT: The Color Wheel folders are both selected and we are dragging the wheels into the Libraries Panel. RIGHT: The Color Wheel Tool now appears in the Libraries Panel.