

Layers were introduced in Photoshop 3.0. This addition revolutionized photo editing. For the first time you could do complex compositions easily without having to be a channels guru. Before layers in you wanted to change a composition or even a text font you were in big trouble.

There is a lot to layers and they will take some time to master, but they are not that difficult once you understand how they work. In this tutorial I will explain the concept of layers and describe the features.

Part 1. What is a Layer?

A layer is simply one image stacked on top of another. Imagine I have a piece of paper and I paint it red. Then

I take a piece of clear acetate and paint a yellow circle
And lay it over the paper. Now I take another piece of Acetate and paint some blue type and lay that on top of the yellow circle. I now have a background (red) and 2 layers (yellow & blue). Just like this picture.



Here I have broken apart the image so you can see how the layers work. Each layer stacks on top of the previous one.

That is it! The concept of layer is as simple as that. Photoshop uses the Layers Palette to allow you to do this with your images. More than one layer is sometimes referred to as a composition.

Photoshop's layers Palette is a powerful tool that allows you to do many special things to your image.



The Layers Window.

Normal Layer: Where your image layer is stored.

Layer Effects (Styles): Special effects applied to your image layer, noted by the little f. Each effect will be listed. In this example only drop shadow is used.

Type Layer: The same as an image layer, except this layer contains type that can be edited.

Background: Always locked, cannot be moved or have layer effects applied to it. The little icon of the padlock on the right indicated it is locked. Can be changed into a regular layer by double clicking the thumbnail.

Show/Hide Icon: If the eye is showing that layer is visible. Click on the eye and the layer will still be there but invisible until you click on the eye again.

Blending mode: Changes the way the layers interact with each other.

Layer opacity: Adjusts how transparent each layer is. 0 is completely transparent.

Lock all: If the box is checked the layer is totally protected from any editing.

Lock position: You can make any changes except for moving the image.

Lock image pixels: You cannot draw on this layer if checked.

Lock transparent: You can paint on this layer but not where it is transparent.

Delete: Will delete an entire layer.

New Layer: Click to add a new blank layer.

Adjustment Layer: Allows non-destructive adjustment of colours to a layer.

New Set: Allows you to organize your layers into folders.

Layer Mask: Allows you to paint away parts of your layer.

Layer Styles: Special effects for your layers.



