



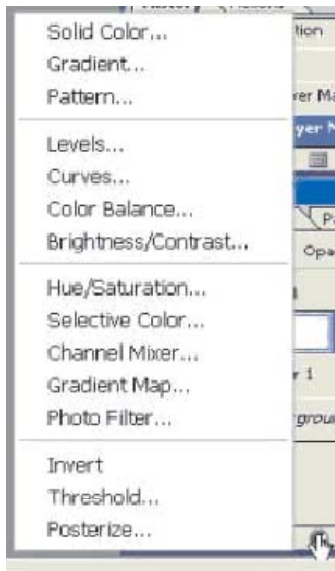
# INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHICS

## Adjusting Layers in Photoshop

Every Photoshop user at some point or the other needs to adjust the properties of their images. Properties like color balance, levels, hue/saturation or something as simple as brightness and contrast. Usually, we all would apply the change on the image or the specific layer itself, which is a very easy way to do it. However, sometimes we need to revert back to the original image, which can cause problems, especially if you have done a lot of other arrangements to the image in the meantime. Sound familiar? That's why today, we are going to talk about how to apply the changes and still be able to revert to the original image. Makes sense? In other words, if you want the world to appear all rosy, isn't it better to wear pink glasses instead of going around and painting everything pink? If you're still confused, just follow along with me!

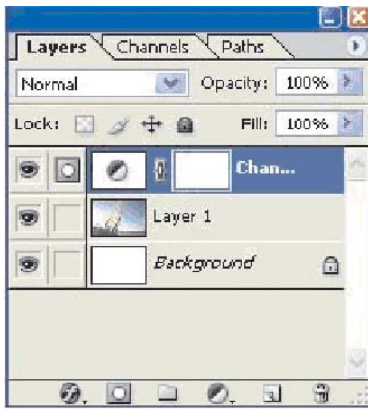
You are going to use the picture given below to follow some of the examples but you may experiment with your own photos when you are finished.

First off, with the adjustment layer feature, there are a total of 12 adjustments you can make to any image.

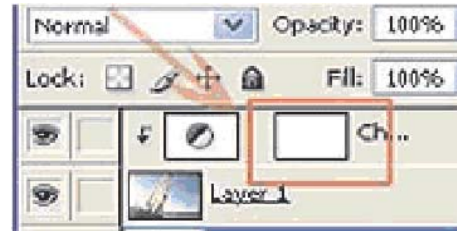


You can create a new adjustment layer by clicking on the adjustment layer icon in the layers palette or you can go to the Layer, New Adjustment Layer menu. Once the menu pops up, you can select any of the 12 options to create the specific adjustment layer. The adjustment layer appears above the image layer and its effect can be turned on or off by clicking once on the "eye" icon towards its left on the layers palette. To remove the layer, simply delete it. To alter any properties of the adjustment layer, simply double click once on the adjustment layer thumbnail (that's the small circle with half black, half white) to open the specific dialogue box, which lets you tweak the settings.

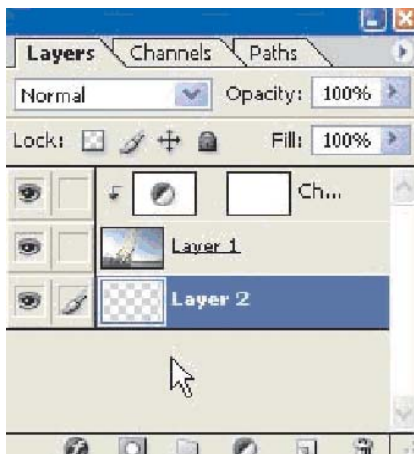




An adjustment layer affects only the layers below it and has no effect whatsoever on the ones above it. If you are working with only a few layers, it's a good idea to position the layers in such a way that the adjustment layer is above the layer which is to be affected by it. Keep everything else above the adjustment layer. However, a problem may arise when you are working with multiple layers, but don't worry, there's a solution for that too. The effect of an adjustment layer can be limited to only one layer by creating a clipping group. Before doing this, you must ensure that the adjustment layer is above the layer to be affected. Press Ctrl + Alt + G on the keyboard. Make sure that your mouse pointer is over the border between the adjustment layer and the "to be affected" layer and left click once.



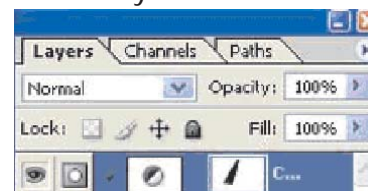
Once you do that, you will notice that the colors in the color palette have switched to black and white. It's rather simple. Take the paintbrush and paint black color on the parts of the image where you want the original form of the image to remain as it is. Paint white over the part that you want the adjustment layer to affect. Don't be scared to paint over it, as this image mask is editable at any given point. For example, in the picture below, I used the channel mixer adjustment layer to turn my image to black and white from colored. Then later, I painted with black paint on the layer mask to turn one of the sails of the boat back to its original color. So, the left sail is unaffected by the adjustment layer, while the rest of the image is under its spell.



Now, in the case above, the adjustment layer will only affect the Layer 1. Anything we put on Layer 2 will appear in its original form. There's also another way in which you can limit the effect of the adjustment layer on the layer below it. This is accomplished by painting on the layer mask. To do this, click the layer mask thumbnail on the adjustment layer.

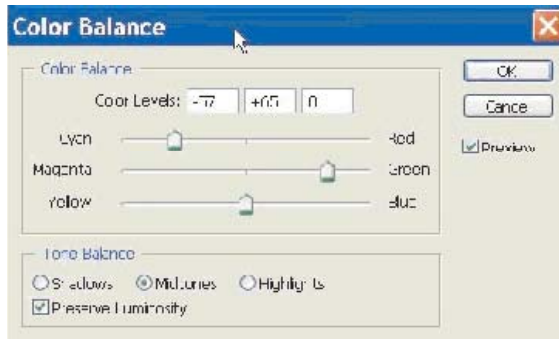


Similarly, you can lessen the effect of the adjustment layer on the image as a whole by simply playing around with its opacity settings. This works just like it does on any other regular layer. If you want to have a bit of fun, you can play around with the blending mode for the adjustment layer.



Now, we have figured out how to create the adjustment layer and how to work around it. The final step is to learn the 12 different options that can be used with the adjustment layer. Some of them are self explanatory, but I will shed a little light on the others right now.

The levels and the curves sub options perform almost the same function. Both of them let you adjust the tonal range of the image. The difference is that the curves option lets you do so in a detailed manner. As any professional photographer will tell you, this function has been a life saver for many, time and time again. The best thing to do is play around with it. Select all the different channels (i.e. red, green and blue) and play around with the settings to see how it impacts the overall image.



Color balance is probably the easiest one to master. It lets you mix the combination of colors present in your image. You can specify how much of these different colors go into shadows, midtones and highlights. It works exactly as it looks. Try different color mixes on an image to see instant results.

This is one possible result after playing around with the color balance setting:

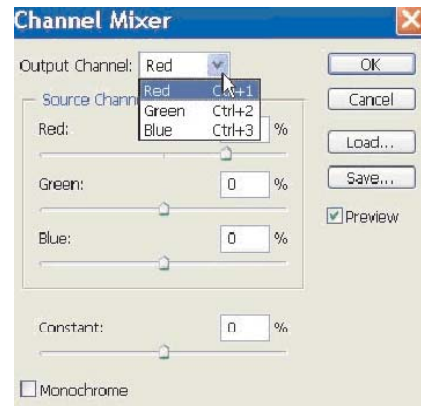


The hue/saturation option lets you adjust how much color is present in the image. Reduce saturation to get rid of the color from the image and increase saturation to make it appear just "like a hippies van right out of the 60s!" The lightness option in the same dialogue box lets you decide how bright or dull you want the image to be.

The channel mixer seems pretty similar to the other effects in the list in many ways. However, one way in which it distinguishes itself from the rest is in the creation of black and white images from colored. In the channel mixer dialogue box, there's an option which

says monochrome. Checking that little box converts your image to black and white. Further on, you can tweak the color settings to create different effects.

The gradient map should be used when you intend to do something artistic with the image. As is the job of a gradient, this function overlays the image with the colors of the gradient. Give it a shot, it can give pretty groovy results sometimes!



The photo filter does to the image what using a filter does to a camera. If you want to make the image appear rosy, just apply the photo filter and choose a rosy color to go along with it.

The invert option reverses the colors present in the image. There are no settings to go along with it. It is either applied or not applied. If you want to get the film negative effect on an image, you should use this filter after converting the image to black and white.

The threshold effect lets you convert any image to black and white. You can use the settings to determine how much of the image is black and how much of it is white. This is a pretty self explanatory function.

The last one in the list is posterize. This function lets you flatten the image colors. There's only one setting for this, which is the tonal level. In plain simple words, lower the setting value and fewer colors will appear in the image.

Now, also remember that you can use more than one adjustment layer for any particular image. You can have a color balance layered on top of a photo filter and top it all off with a hue/saturation layer. As I have said earlier too, the best way to learn about all these options is to play around with them. No matter which one of these sub options you use to improve your image, the basic functionality with respect to the working of the adjustment layer remains the same.

Phew! That was a long one, wasn't it?! Some of this might seem confusing at first, because you won't use all the effects at all times. To sum it up, use adjustment layers when you want to tweak the image without affecting the original picture. This is the best way to enhance your images! Go give this a spin!



