



# INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHICS

## Aligning Graphics in Photoshop

Information Sheet No. PS616

For years Snagit or similar software was used to get the screen captures that were then opened in Photoshop and tidied up. The dialog box edges were scrunched inward to delete extra space (to get rid of the unused white) then an action to add a drop shadow, converts the shot into a beautiful black/blue duotone, and save it out as an EPS file. Using this technique you can place anywhere from 2-4 grabs into one Photoshop document to create a single figure. (That way, the project is 1,000 pages of information and not 1,000 pages of screen shots). For the first few hours, I almost went blind staring at the screen, manually aligning the edges of individual screen shots. I'd drag a guide out and move each layer into place until they looked \*perfect\*. I would then painstakingly crop the document down to the exact size of the screen shots, careful to keep all their drop shadows intact.

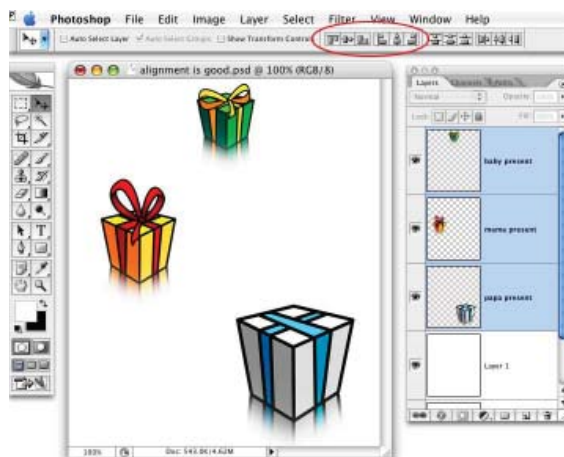
Most peoples smugness at such attention to detail wears off after about 30 minutes, and if they are smart they will go hunting for a more efficient method.

Guess what? Photoshop has alignment tools! The only problem is that you may never notice them. You're only going to see them in the options bar at the top of the screen and they only appear when you have the Move tool selected. Furthermore, they're completely grayed-out unless you have more than one layer selected at a time. Makes sense, of course. You may also found a trim tool that can crop the document down to the pixel color of your choosing.

Lete try this technique out on some really cute vector files. Read on!

### Auto align

**Step 1:** Pop open a Photoshop document with two or more layers of which you'd like very much to align. Press V to select the Move tool and Shift click to highlight each layer, as shown below. The Alignment tools are circled in red.



**Step 2:** Choose your alignment! Below is a sampling of what each button does.

### Left edge align:



## Align horizontal centers:



## Align vertical centers:



## Right edge align:



## Align bottom edges:



## Align top edges:

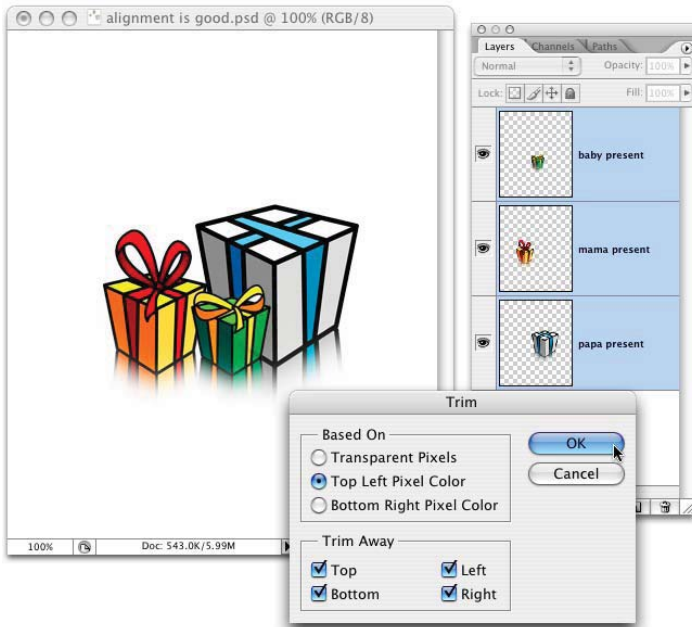


Nestled snugly to the right of the Alignment tools are the Distribute tools. To use them, you have to have at least three layers selected at one time. Their mission is to evenly space layer contents according to their horizontal or vertical center. They are kind of funky; they don't seem to work like you think they would.

## Auto Trim

The other tool that has been a huge time-saver is the Trim tool. After aligning the screen shots perfectly in a single document, you need to "trim" out all the extra pixels. Here's how to do it quickly and accurately:

Choose Image > Trim and in the resulting dialog, determine which pixels you want to zap (transparent pixels, or the color at the top left or bottom right of the document).



Tada! The document is now trimmed down to size without you having to zoom in, squint your eyes at the screen, or place a single guide.



Learning to use these tools can save you a lot of production time, and on large or complicated project with lots of elements, that's huge!