

Designed and written by

# GEOFF CABLE & GARY CROUCH

The creators and  
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the



## Photoshop Layer Tips

This information sheet is designed as a supplement to the GC2 Photo Club video on the same subject. It is provided to help reinforce learning and as a reference document for you to keep.

Layers are like a digital version of sheets of acetate or film that you can lay one on top of another, like with an old style overhead projector.

You can change the order of Layers, add masks to them to protect areas from changes and show just one layer or any number of selected layers at any time.

You can also change the way layers blend together using blend modes for useful effects.

When you have finished your project you can flatten or merge layers to create a final image, thus saving disc space (saving a multi-layered file requires a larger file size), you can also save your document as a PSD (Photoshop's default file format) and continue editing at a later date.

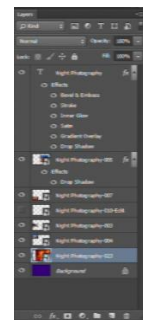


Figure 1

Tak a look at the Figure 1, the Layers Panel. If your layers panel isn't visible, you can open it by clicking on Window > Layers.



Figure 2

At the top of the Layers Panel is a Menu icon that you can click on to access the Layers options, as in Figure 2, from the drop down menu.

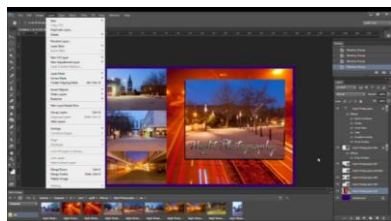


Figure 3

There is also a Layers options menu, that you can access by clicking on the word Layer, at the top of your screen, as in Figure 3.

Always at the bottom of the Layers Stack is the Background Layer. It is always partially locked, identified by the padlock icon on the right, preventing some editing tasks. A background layer can be changed into a normal layer by right clicking on the layer or by simply clicking on the Padlock icon and dragging it into the Trash can (rubbish bin), at the bottom right of the panel.

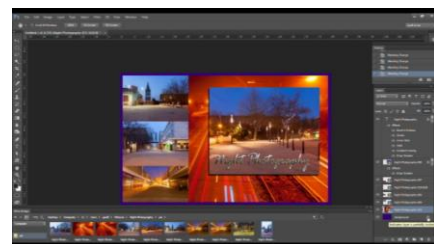


Figure 4

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To select any layer just click on it in the Layers panel.

Selected, or Active, Layers will be coloured blue in the Layers Panel, as in Figure 5.

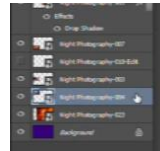


Figure 5

To rename a Layer, double click on the Layer Name in the Layers Panel (be careful, this must be the layers name, double-clicking elsewhere will do something different).



Figure 6

To duplicate a layer, right click on the layer in the Layers Panel and click on Duplicate Layer in the pop up menu or click on the Menu icon and select Duplicate Layer.

You can delete a layer by clicking on the layer in the Layers Panel and dragging it into the Trash can at the bottom right or hitting the delete key on the keyboard.

To turn on or off the visibility of a layer, click on the Eye icon on the left of the layer in the layers Panel, as shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7

To turn on or off the visibility of many Layers, click on the Eye icon and drag through the Eye icons of all the layers you wish to hide.

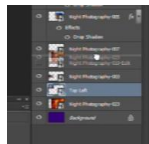


Figure 8

You can change the order of the Layers stack by clicking and dragging any Layer up and down - see Figure 8.

You can change the opacity of a layer by clicking on the little downward facing triangle to the right of the word Opacity and moving the slider that appears as in Figure 9.



Figure 9

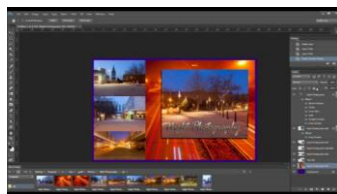


Figure 10

You can lock a layer, preventing that layer from being edited, as in Figure 10. This is useful if you are happy with the work you have done to this layer and do not want to alter it. You do this by clicking on the Lock icon at the top of the Layers Panel. It looks like a padlock.

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Figure 11

You can assign a colour to a layer by right clicking on the layer and clicking on the colours name in the pop dialogue that appears.



Figure 12

At the bottom of the Layers Panel is a row of icons that you can click on to do the following, as shown in Figure 12, from left to right:- 1. Link selected layers 2. Create a layer effect 3. Add a Layer Mask 4. Create a new group of layers 5. Create a new layer 6. Delete the selected layer/layers.

If you apply a layer effect, by clicking on the FX icon, you can transfer that effect to another layer by clicking on the FX symbol that is on the right of the layer in the Layers Panel and dragging it to another layer, as in Figure 13.



Figure 13

This symbol is to signify that the Layer has an effect applied to it. If you want have the effect on a new layer but keep it on the original layer as well, hold down the ALT/Option key as you click and drag.



Type layers are layers that only contain type/text. You create one by selecting the horizontal or vertical type tools from the Tools Panel on the left, Figure 14, or by

Figure 14 pressing the T key.

After writing your text confirm the action by clicking on the tick/checkmark icon at the top and a new type layer appears in the Layers Panel that has a T symbol on its left, to signify that it's a Type Layer.



Figure 15

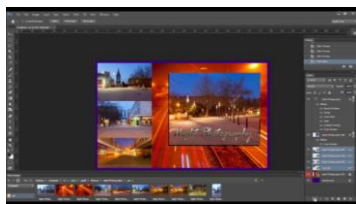


Figure 16

Layer Groups are like folders that contain more than one layer. You can apply opacity settings, Blend Modes and Layer Styles to all of the layers in the group at the same time. You can collapse a Layer Group to save space in your Layers panel by clicking on the little

triangle to the left of the group name. You can colour code a Layer Group to make it easier to find, just as you can an individual layer by right clicking on the layer and choosing a colour to assign from the pop-up menu.

Fill Opacity controls - At the top right of the Layers Panel, below the Opacity controls, is a box to control the Fill Opacity, as in Figure 17, this is a mystery to most people but is quite simple. Just as you can control the overall



Figure 17

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opacity of a layer you can control the opacity of the pixels or shapes in your layer without affecting Layer Styles or the Layer Blend Modes. You make the adjustments by clicking on the triangle icon and moving the slider or clicking on the numerical value in the box and typing in a new one, just as you would for the overall Layer Opacity. As with most things in Photoshop the best way to see how this works is to make some adjustments and see their effects.

You can Merge Layers or flatten the image into one layer by clicking on the Menu icon at the top right of the Layers Panel, as in Figure 18, or by clicking on the word Layer at the top of your screen and choosing an option.

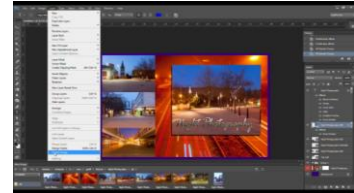


Figure 18

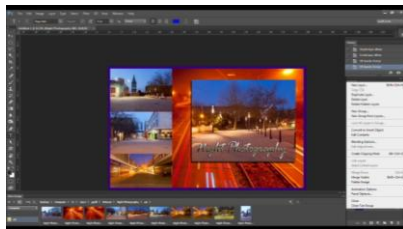


Figure 19

When you merge layers together you can use Blend Modes to control how they blend together or create an effect. You can access these by clicking on the box that says 'Normal' (the default option) and choosing your Blend Mode, as in Figure 19. Once again clicking on and experimenting is best way to see how they work

If you save your file containing all the layers as a .psd file, as in Figure 20, you can return to that document at a later date as many times as you like and continue to edit the layers. This is a major benefit as it means your edits are non destructive, but be aware a large document takes up a lot of disc space.

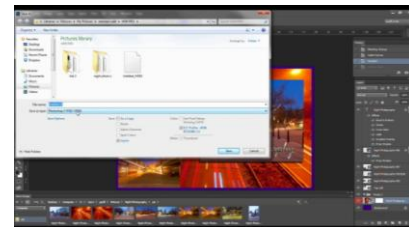


Figure 20

We hope you found this information sheet useful, visit our web site at [www.gc2photoclub.com](http://www.gc2photoclub.com) for more tutorials and information.

Don't forget to subscribe to our newsletter for the latest updates.

Bye for now

Geoff and Gary