

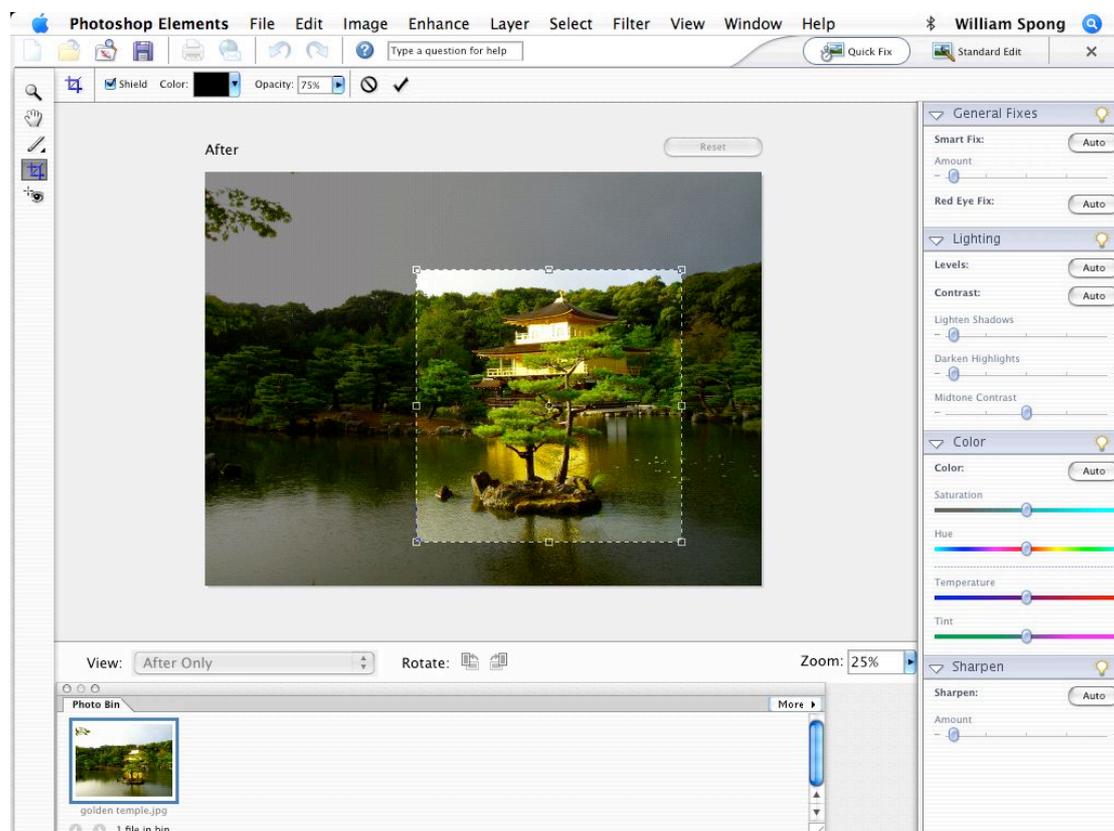
Basic Photoshop Elements Tutorial

After running through the installer, putting in the code for Photoshop (on the back of the CD case) and restarting your Mac you will find the Photoshop Elements application in the Applications folder.

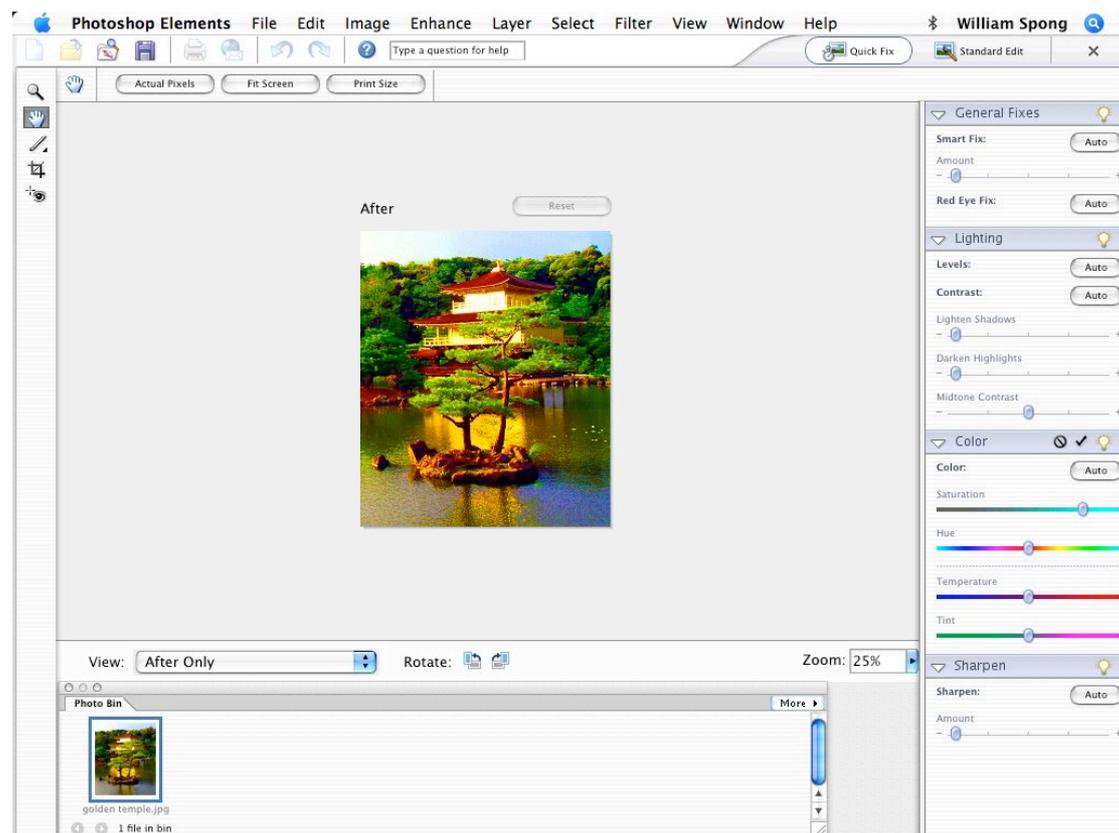


The first tool bar across the top of the screen gives us basic file options (New file, Open file, Open with Bridge, Save file, Print file, Email file, Undo and Redo), next to the basic file options there is a help search function that allows you to enter a word or sentence that you may need help with.

On the right hand side of the tool bar are two buttons to toggle Photoshop into different working modes. The Quick Fix mode is used to make basic changes to pictures such as colour, contrast and brightness changes, red eye removal etc. This mode is good if you are happy with the layout of a picture you have taken and just want to make some general changes.



Here we can see the Quick Fix window. On the left hand side are some basic functions such as crop and red eye removal, and on the right hand side are sliding bars to change general brightness, hue and saturation etc. In the example above I have selected an area to crop. I have done this by selecting the crop tool on the left hand side, and drawing over the area that I want to save (you can change the areas shape by click holding on the small square boxes around the dotted line). If I am happy with the selection I can complete the crop by double clicking within the cropped selection.



By moving the sliding bars on the right hand side I can change the brightness and colour elements of the crop as shown, I can then decide to save the changes or undo them.

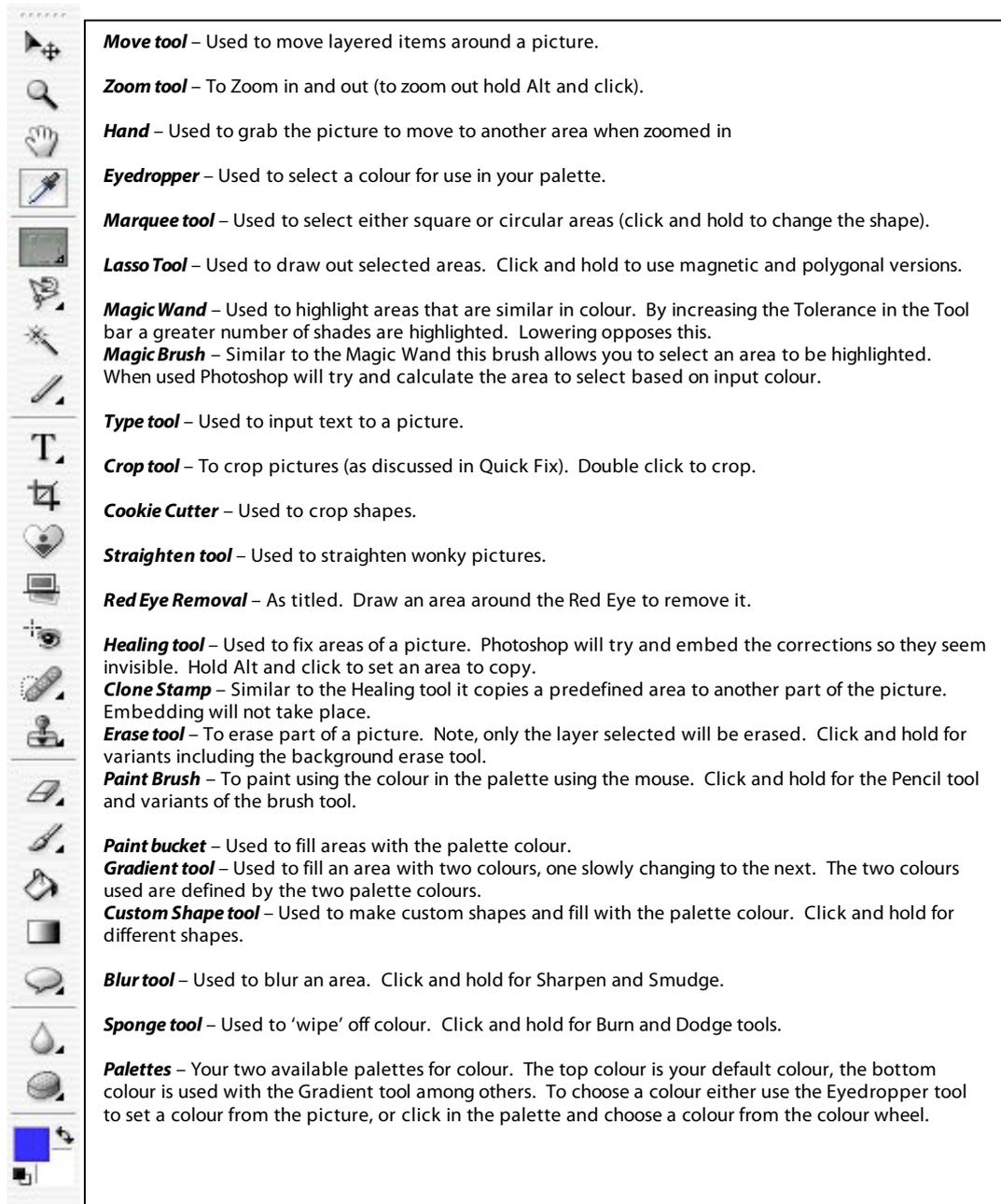
A point of note: Colour changes that occur in the Quick Fix window will only change parts of the picture that are being highlighted, if you have no highlighted areas the whole picture will be effected by your changes.



Here I have only highlighted the sky, so any changes I make to the colour of the picture will only affect the colour of the sky.

Quick Fix is good for changing basic elements of the picture, but the second window selection called Standard Edit is a lot more powerful and gives you all of the editing capabilities of Photoshop Elements (Standard Edit is the default window when you open pictures).

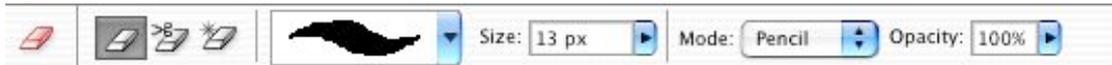
In Standard Edit the first thing to note is there are a lot more tools to use in the left hand column. Breaks down of the tools are as follows;



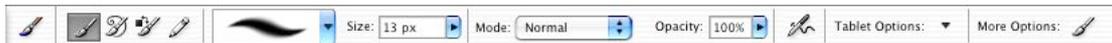
The second difference is the addition of another tool bar at the top of the window.



This tool bar changes depending which tool you are using, for example the Magic Wand's Tolerance setting can be found on this tool bar when using the Magic Wand. You will find that several tools use this tool bar to house a variable that they all share, the size of themselves.



Here we can see the tool bar when the Eraser is selected. From left to right along the tool bar we can see the different erase tools you can use, the type of shape being used to erase, the size of the shape, and the type of erase mode (pencil, brush etc). This does look similar to the brush tool bar shown here.



Again we see the different variants of the brush tool, the shape of the brush, the size of the brush and the mode.

The most important thing to note about this tool bar when you first start using Photoshop is the fact that the tool bar changes from tool to tool, and every variable will change how the tool works.

The last difference you will notice in this window is the box on the right has changed to the selection window allowing you to change layers and styles and effects.



The Styles and Effects area allows you to easily add interesting effects and style to a selected layer.

By clicking and holding on the drop down menus you can choose from a selection of pre defined styles and effects such as shadow and emboss, the main window shows you examples of the effect as seen here.

By clicking on one of the styles it is added to the selected layer in your picture. This style can be changed by editing it from the layers window.

The Layers menu is one of the most important to Photoshop as it allows you to choose the layer that you are working on.

In this window you can choose to see selected layers, delete layers, combine layers and show different effects and styles.

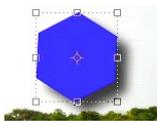
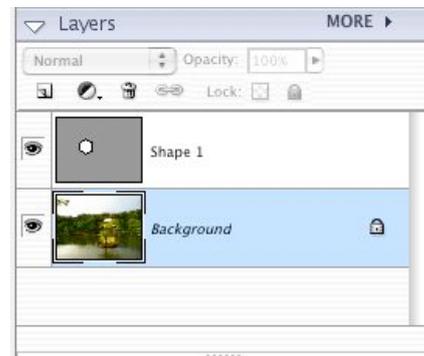
It is important to note that the order of the layers seen here is the logical order that you will see them. For example, if two parts of your picture overlap then the part in the layer above the other one will be seen. This order can easily be changed by click holding the layer you want to move.

The most important element to understanding how Photoshop works with the different tools and how they interact with your picture is the concept of layers.

When we open a new image from say a digital camera we are presented with a flat picture that comprises of one layer. If we simply add a shape using the Custom Shape tool another layer is created in the layers menu.

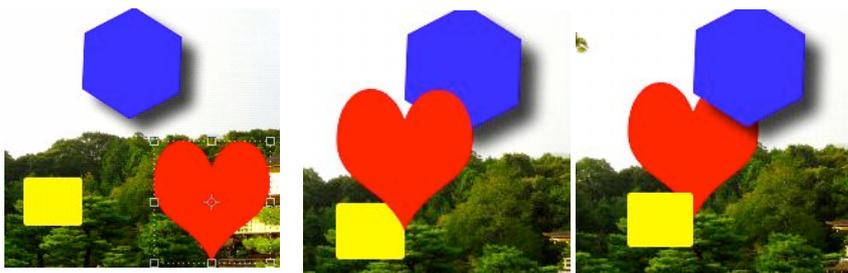
If we click the eye on the left hand of the layer called shape 1 our new shape will disappear, however it has not been deleted, we have just chosen not to see it.

We can also change how opaque our new shape is by click holding the Opacity drop down and changing the value, 100% is completely solid and 0% is invisible.



By highlighting our new shapes layer and clicking on one of the effect in our styles menu we can give use one of our many effects. Here I have added a shadow.

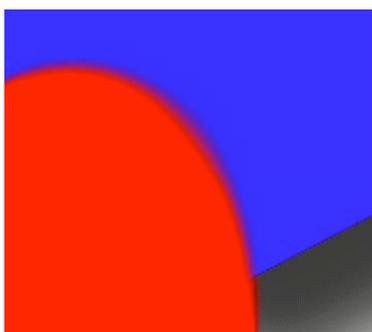
Lets create a few more shapes and see how they interact with each other.



I have made three shapes with the custom shape tool. Notice how when I move the heart over the square and the polygon it moves over it, but if I click and hold the hearts layer in the layers menu and drag it down the list of layers until it is below the square and polygon it moves below them.

Now if I select the heart shape layer and change the colour notice that it doesn't matter where on the screen I click the paint bucket, the shape will be the only thing that changes colour. This is because I have selected the heart shape layer.

Lets look at a different example. This time I have blurred the edge of the heart shape.



Notice that the heart shape edge has blurred, but the underlying layer (the polygon shape) is still sharp.

This is because effects added in Photoshop are layer dependant such that only selected layers are treated with an effect.

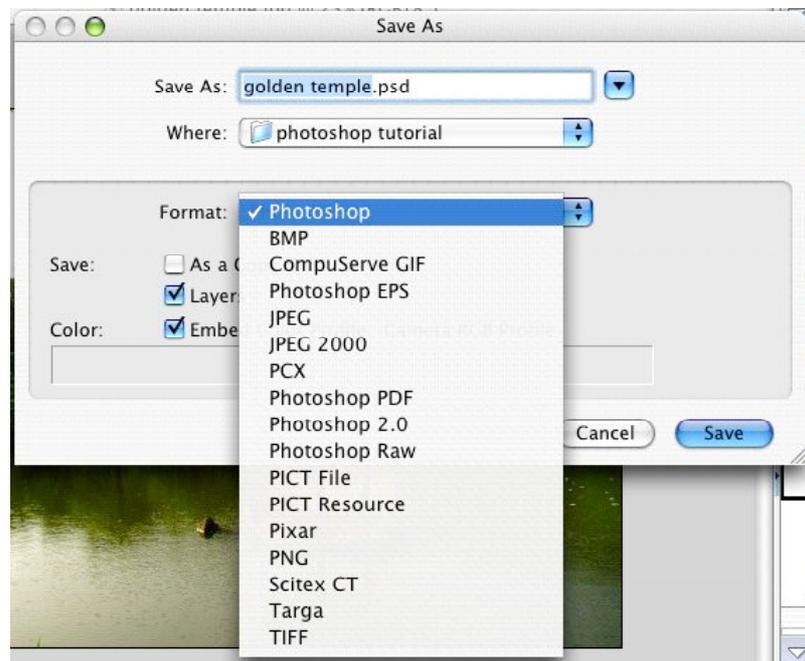
Once you understand the principle of layers have a go at trying different tools with different layers selected and see what happens. A few important notes to make about layers is this; you have to chain layers in order to move them in a group by selecting them and pressing the chain button in the layer menu  (groups will continue to exist unless you un chain them), to combine layers into a large layer chain several layers together and select Menu, Merge Layers – doing this will also merge any style or effect you are using.

Let us finish by looking at the different ways to save a file in Photoshop.

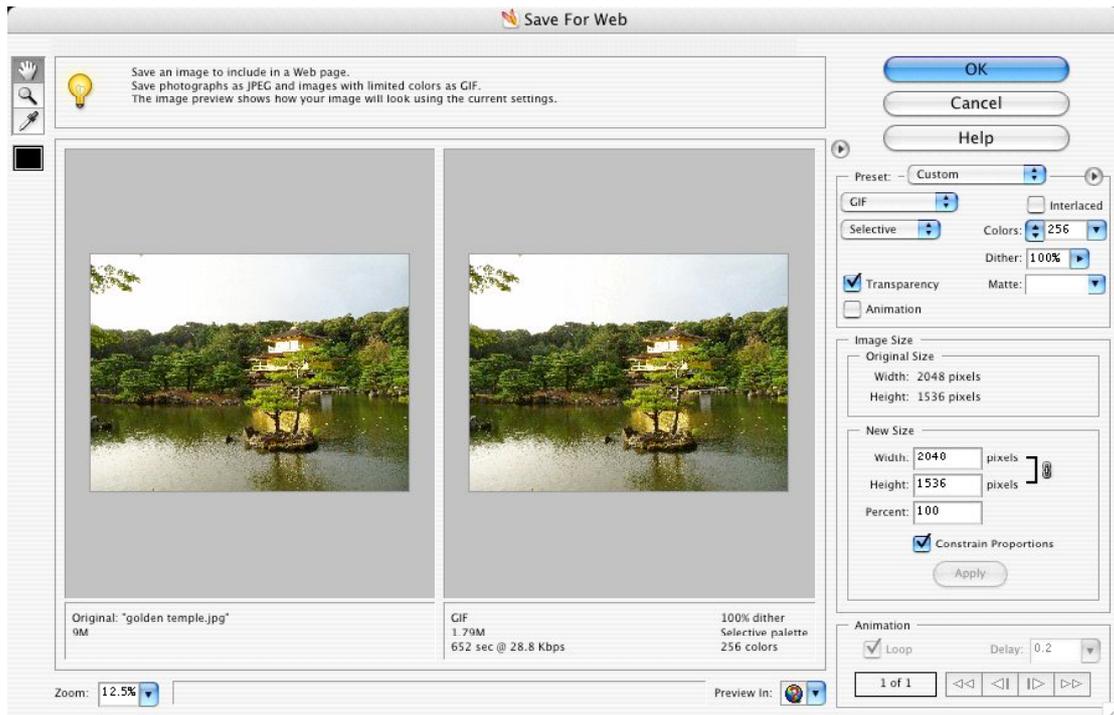
There is of course the Photoshop file, the default way to save a file (files appended with the .psd extension are Photoshop files). It is best to save files you are working on as Photoshop psd files as all the different layer, style and effect data that you have been working on will be saved too so when you come back to your picture it will be exactly as you left it.

Photoshop psd files are however quite large (sometimes up to a few hundred megabytes depending on the size and resolution of the picture) and so saving to a psd file is not such a great idea for pictures destined for either the web or sending via email.

If you choose the File menu and choose Save as... you will be given an option to save the file into a number of different formats including JPEG, Bit file and GIF.



Photoshop comes with a really good way to save files when the size is really important, this is called Save for Web... from the File menu.



Here you can choose between different file formats, edit the variables of these formats and see the compression effects on the picture next to the original and see the resulting picture size. When you find the best balance between the picture size and quality press ok and you'll be asked for a path to save your picture.