

Mastering Photoshop's Interface

By Steve Broback, Avondale Media

Adapted from *Secrets of the Photoshop Masters*, an instructional DVD from Avondale Media, www.avondalemedia.com

Photoshop has such depth and power that the myriad of tools, palettes, and interface elements it presents can be overwhelming at times. Long-time Photoshop users know that incorporating just a few critical controls can **simplify their workspace** while enabling them to work faster.

Here are a few of the most useful shortcuts that all Photoshop users can take advantage of right away to boost their productivity. (*Important: many of these shortcuts are single character key sequences, so naturally they won't work if you are typing text into a text layer. Click on a different tool first, or hit the Enter key to move out of text-edit mode.*)

Maximizing Screen Real Estate

Have you ever wished you could **use every pixel of your monitor** to view and manipulate your images? Are you tired of scrolling, moving palettes, and resizing windows to get around? Photoshop gurus know that it's easy to maximize the area available by using the **Screen Mode** controls located near the bottom of the Photoshop toolbox.

Switching Between Screen Modes

The three icons signify the three views available. Clicking the first icon puts you in **Standard Screen Mode** (which is Photoshop's default). Standard Screen Mode is the mode that you're probably most used to working in. It presents you with scroll bars and a resizable document window that can be much smaller than the full monitor area available. When it comes to using screen space, this mode is the *least* efficient.

Next is **Full Screen Mode with Menu Bar**. Most people find this mode to be *much more useful* than Standard Mode. It hides scroll bars and allows your document to occupy the entire screen behind whatever palettes are open. In this mode, the menu bar is still visible.

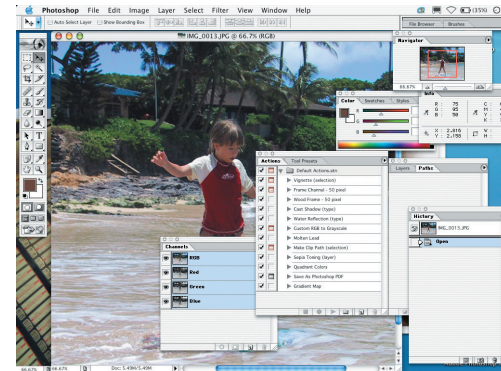
Choice number three is **Full Screen Mode**. Here, both scroll bars and the Menu Bar are eliminated. This is the *favored work mode* of many Photoshop pros.

The all-important shortcut key for changing modes is the **"F" key**. Every time you hit the letter "F" on the keyboard you'll cycle to the next mode.

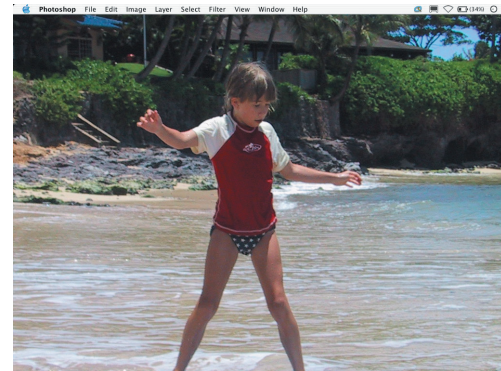
Getting Rid of Palette Clutter

You can toggle your palettes on and off by hitting the Tab key. Hit the Tab key once to make the palettes go away, and again to make them return. Combining this shortcut with Full Screen Mode makes for a very effective workspace.

Many users have discovered this shortcut by accident. In fact, support staff members at Adobe have told me that users accidentally invoking this shortcut make up a significant number of tech support calls—"Where have my palettes gone?!"

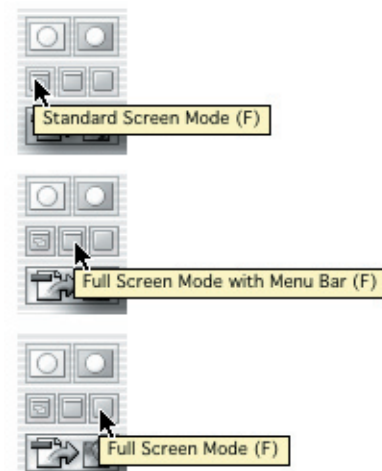


The all-too common on-screen clutter



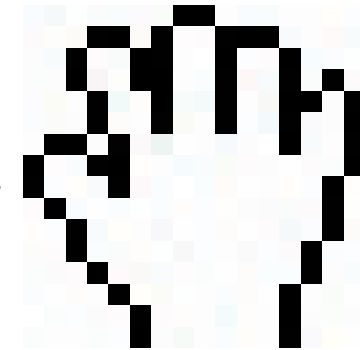
The minimalist interface preferred by many experts

The three Screen Modes. All are accessible by typing the letter "F".



Scrolling Without Scroll bars

Gaining extra space by hiding the scroll bars is great, but how do you scroll? Easy—just **hold down your spacebar** and your cursor will temporarily turn into the *Hand Tool*. Press and drag in your image with the spacebar held down, and you can move wherever you want to.



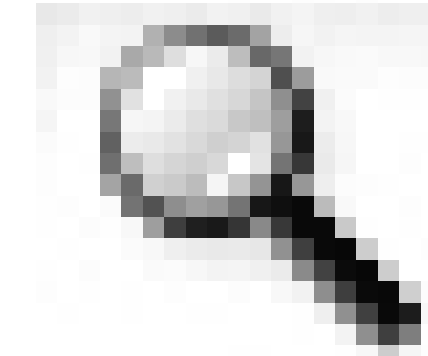
Press the spacebar to temporarily switch to the Hand Tool. This is also commonly called the Grabber Hand.

Shortcuts For Zooming In and Out

There are dozens of shortcuts for zooming in and out in an image, but the simplest is the tried and true shortcut, **Command + Spacebar (Mac) or Control + Spacebar (Windows)**. This will activate the zoom tool until you release the keys. When you do, you'll instantly revert to the tool you were using previously. Clicking with the mouse will allow you to zoom in on the image. *Pressing and dragging* with the tool activated will allow you to zoom in on a specific area.

To zoom out, try **Command + 0 (zero)** on the Macintosh, and **Control + 0** on Windows. That always zooms to where you can see the entire image.

Another handy method for activating the Zoom Tool without having the toolbox, is to **type the letter "Z"**. This brings us to another vital concept: accessing tools using the keyboard.

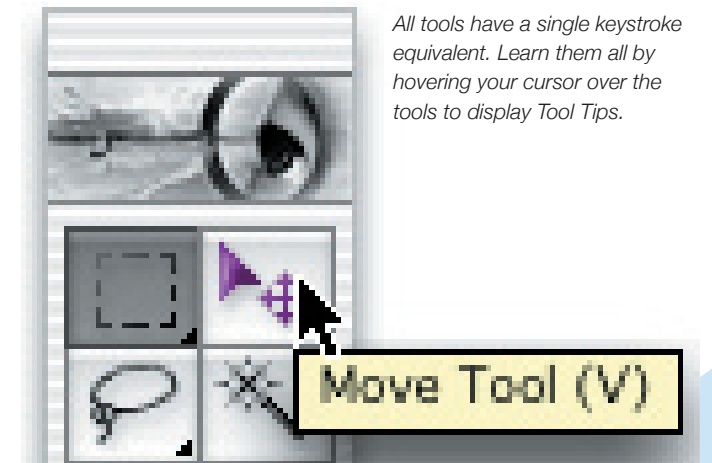


Access the Zoom Tool easily, even with the Toolbox hidden—just type the letter "Z".

Working Without a Toolbox

It may sound a little *inconvenient* to work without the toolbox visible. You may be asking "Won't I need to constantly be turning it on and off with the Tab key to switch tools?" **No. You can switch tools using only the keyboard.**

A few of the more useful shortcuts to memorize include: **"V" for the Move tool**, **"M" for the Marquee**, and **"B" for the Brush Tool**. You can learn the others by hovering your mouse over a tool in the toolbox until the *Tool Tip* appears. The Tool Tip displays the shortcut key for whatever tool you point to.



All tools have a single keystroke equivalent. Learn them all by hovering your cursor over the tools to display Tool Tips.

This technique is just a snippet of the 93 minutes of Photoshop techniques captured on the *"Secrets of the Photoshop Masters" DVD* from Avondale Media. Learn more about this title at www.avondalemedia.com