Photoshop Tips and Tricks

Quick, temporary tool change
While using one tool, hold the shortcut key for another tool to quickly switch to it, do your work, let go of the key and the original tool is back

Scrubby Zoom
While using zoom (magnifying glass) tool: click and drag left or right Scrubby zoom is a feature that some users find annoying until they start using the "fluent editing" (one hand to mouse / one hand to hotkey) approach. To use this feature: while using the zoom tool, click and hold the mouse button, then drag the mouse left to zoom out or right to zoom in - no extraneous clicks and no extra keys to zoom out. Just click and drag until you reach the appropriate zoom level.

Max Zoom and Zoom to Fit
Use CTRL + 1 for zoom to 100% and use CTRL + 0 to zoom the image to fit the space in Photoshop.

Changing Opacity
Changing the opacity of any tool can be quickly done with the number keys. Pressing the number 1 will make it 10%, 2 = 20%, etc. 0 = 100% for values in between multiples of 10, just type the numbers quickly. 15 = 15%, etc.

Isolating layers for more efficient workflow
If you have a lot of layers and are tired of scrolling through them looking for a particular layer, try this. CTRL-click to select the layers you are currently working on the most. With the Move tool active, right-click in the document (not the Layers panel) and select Isolate Layers. All the non-selected layers will be hidden in the Layers panel. When finished, right-click in the document and choose Isolate Layers again.

Precise cursor
If you want to see a precise, or you see a precise cursor and wonder how it got there, press the Caps Lock key. A precise cursor is like a cross hairs. For example, the brush tool's circle that shows you its size, disappears when the precise cursor is turned on.

Custom shortcut keys
You can create your own hotkeys for the commands/features you frequently use.
- From the menu, select Edit > Keyboard Shortcuts
- In the "Keyboard Shortcuts" tab, select "Shortcuts for": "Application Menus"
- Under "Application Menu Command", find the menu item for which you want to create a shortcut
- Click on the menu item and the cursor will appear in a box to the right
- Press the key combination you want to use for the shortcut. If the combination is already used, it will tell you what it is used for. You can then either choose to accept it or try a different combination
- When you're done, click OK and then your command is now available with your shortcut key combination

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Switch between document tabs
Press CTRL + Tab

To improve color casts quickly - Select Image > Adjustments > Match Color from the menu. Check the Neutralize box and click on OK. You can then Fade the effect, etc.

To draw a straight line while using the Lasso tool, hold the Alt key then click the mouse on the first point where you want the straight line to start and then click again on the second point at the end of the straight line.

Quickly finding fonts
You don't have to scroll through the drop-down menu when looking for a font. Photoshop has font searching built in. To search, with the Type tool active, place your cursor inside the font name field in the Options bar (or Character panel) and start typing the name of the font.

Auto invert mask while copying – Hold Alt+Shift when dragging a mask from one layer to another

Modifying the effects of Gradient tool in Adobe Camera Raw (or Lightroom Develop)
Using the Gradient Tool in Lightroom or ACR in Bridge, often covered part of the image you didn't want affected by the tool. Now, you can erase certain parts of the Gradient tool's effect. With the Gradient tool, create the gradient you want. With the tool still active, select the Brush. Now click on the Brush Minus tool in ACR or the word Erase in Lightroom and paint over the area you want to eliminate the gradient effects. You can press the letter O to see the mask as you paint. You can also add to the gradient's effect, just don't click on Erase, then you are adding to the mask.

Center the Radial Filter tool
In ACR or the Lightroom Develop module Select the Radial Filter tool. Hold down the CTRL key and double-click photo. It will create a centered oval filter that you can then adjust.

Adding a Creative Vignette in Photoshop
Often, a good final touch on a photograph is a slight (or sometimes extreme) vignette. There are many applications or plug ins that do this for you, but one simple technique uses paint brush strokes and layer blending modes. The first step is to add a black solid color adjustment layer. Next set the blend mode on the black solid color layer to Soft Light. Fill the layer mask on the Solid Color layer with black. Now using your brush, with white as the foreground color, set to a low opacity (20-40%) and soft edges, brush in the areas you want to be darkened for the vignette. Adjust your brush opacity to control how smoothly your vignette blends into the base layer.

Easy way to resize for the web
Open your image in Photoshop then view your image at 100% (View pull down menu, 100%). Use CTRL Key and the minus key together to reduce the viewing size to the size you wish the image to be displayed on the web. Make note of the percentage number it has been reduced too in the top of the image next to the file name. For example it might say "image.psd @25% (RGB/8). So the image view has been reduced from 100% to 25%.

Now go to Image > Image Size in the menu. You can resize the image based on reduced percentage. Simply change the measurement type for the Width and Height from Pixels to Percent, then enter the percentage value noted above for Width. Photoshop automatically changes the Height value. Click OK.

Now select File > Export > Save For web Command (or the new File > Export > Export As) to save image as a Jpeg.

Saving poorly (under)exposed photos
Method 1
- Duplicate the image first – Image > Duplicate
- Select Image > Adjustments > Hue/Sat, and desaturate the image completely
- Add a Gaussian Blur with the radius between 40 and 45
- Invert the photo – Image > Adjustments > Invert. The image will be blurry and opaque.
- With the original, underexposed image and this blurred image open, using the Move tool, drag the blurred image on top of the original.
- Change the Blend mode of the blurred layer to Overlay.

Clone Stamp Monet
For this process it is easiest to use two documents of the same size. Select a photo for your source document, and create a blank target document with a white Background layer with a blank layer above that.

- Select the Clone Stamp tool (S) and open the Brush Presets panel (Window>Brush Presets), then choose a Scatter or Bristle brush tip. In the Options Bar, set the tool Opacity to 50%.
- Now show the Clone Source panel (Window>Clone Source). In this panel, click the far left Clone Source icon at the top, and leave the rest at their default values. In the Options Bar, **deselect the Aligned checkbox** and ensure the Sample drop-down menu is set to Current Layer.
- Select an appropriate brush size for the effect you want.
- **In the source document** with the Clone Stamp tool active, Alt-click on an area of interest, like a person's eye. This will be the starting point for painting in the target document.
- In the **target document's blank layer** make a single paint stroke where you want her eye to appear. Now **select the Aligned checkbox** in the Options Bar. This locks the starting point and aligns everything so you can continue painting as if you were revealing from a mask—very important if you paint with lower opacity to build up the image.
- At this point, you can continue painting and building up.
- If you hadn't checked the Aligned box, you would be starting over with her eye every time you released the mouse button.

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Bonus Lightroom tip
Speeding up full screen preview
When you select a thumbnail and then hit the space bar to see a preview that fills the screen, if there is a bit of a delay, you may be able to reduce that delay. Go to Edit > Catalog Settings and select the middle tab, called File Handling. In the Standard Preview Size, select Auto. This will automatically render the photo in the size that matches the resolution of your screen. Preview qualities of either Low or Medium will also speed it up.

Closing several photos at once in Photoshop
If you have several photos open and want to close them all, hold the Alt key while closing one photo (by clicking the 'x' to close). This will close all the photos. If you have made any changes to any photo since you last saved it, you will be prompted to save it before it closes.