

Top 10 Photoshop CS3 Features for Easing Your Workflow

Date: Feb 9, 2007 By [Dave Cross](#). Article is provided courtesy of [Peachpit Press](#).

Since the day Adobe released the public beta version of Photoshop CS3, a number of people have compiled their "top 10 new features" lists. Dave Cross takes a slightly different angle by presenting his list of Photoshop CS3's "top 10 features that will affect your workflow." These are the new features and improvements that will have the greatest influence on the way you use Photoshop.

Since the day Adobe released the public beta version of Photoshop CS3, a number of people have compiled their "top 10 new features" lists. I thought I'd take a slightly different angle by presenting my list of Photoshop CS3's "top 10 features that will affect your workflow." These are the new features—and improvements—that will have the greatest influence on the way you use Photoshop.

1. Interface

Besides being the most apparent change when you launch Photoshop CS3, the new interface builds on the strengths of Photoshops past. Part of the beauty of the new interface is that although it's familiar, there are some important changes that make it more efficient. The Palette Well is gone, and the Workspace menu appears right in the Options Bar. The palettes can be collapsed to small icons, and if you press Shift+Tab to hide all the floating palettes, the palettes will reappear when you hover over the right side of the work area. This new interface is all about giving you a larger work area and from what I can tell, it takes the average user around 47 seconds to love this new interface.



[Figure 1](#)

2. Smart Filters

I'm a big believer in building very flexible Photoshop documents, using methods that give me a lot of opportunity to change my mind. Up until now, applying filters was one of the least flexible Photoshop functions because there's no going back once a filter is applied and the document is saved. Thanks to Smart Filters, filters now join the likes of adjustment layers and layer masks as the most flexible way of working. After converting a layer to a Smart Object, any filter that you apply appears in the Layers palette. At any time—even after saving—you can double-click on the filter to edit its settings, hide a filter, or delete it. There's even a layer mask that applies specifically to the filters you've applied.



[Figure 2](#)



[Figure 3](#)

NOTE

photo: istockphoto/David Meharey

3. Quick Selection/Refine Edge

Making accurate selection quickly and easily has always been one of the most important skills you can develop in Photoshop. Photoshop CS3 introduces two new functions for making selections—two of the most important innovations in the world of selections in a very long time. First is a new selection tool called the Quick Selection Tool. Simply choose a brush size and then drag over the area you want to select. It works pretty darn well and takes a lot less effort than the Magic Wand (with which you have to change the tolerance to change the area that's selected).



[Figure 4](#)

In addition to this new tool, all the selection tools have had an extremely important function added to the Options Bar: Refine Edge. After making a selection, click on the Refine Edge button to open an incredible dialog box that lets you fine-tune the selection, from changing its size to adjusting the feathering—all with a live preview. You can even view the selection as a Quick Mask, on a white background, on a black background, or as a grayscale mask. This will, without a doubt, become one of the biggest timesavers that will also give you a more accurate selection.



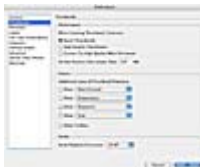
[Figure 5](#)



[Figure 6](#)

4. Bridge/Camera Raw

I could easily have made a top 10 list of just the changes and improvements to Adobe Bridge and Camera Raw, but for the purposes of this list, I'll try to highlight the key changes. Viewing files in Bridge is noticeably faster, thanks in part to new settings in Preferences for the display of thumbnails: you can choose between Quick Thumbnails, High Quality Thumbnails, or Convert to High Quality When Previewed.



[Figure 7](#)

Clicking in the Preview pane opens the Loupe that allows you to get a closer look at portions of the image.



[Figure 8](#)

You can select multiple images as "Group as Stack" to create one icon that indicates the number of images you've stacked together.

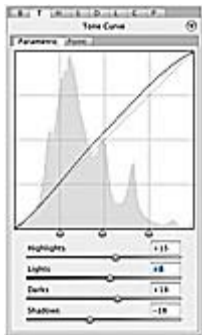


[Figure 9](#)

It's also easier to "filter" the thumbnails based on factors such as labels, ratings, file type, date created, orientation, and copyright notice. Opening a document in Camera Raw reveals the many new features in Camera Raw, including settings for Exposure, Recovery, Fill Light, Convert to Grayscale, new Tone Curves, Split Toning, and the ability save Presets. Plus, in a very startling change, you can now open tiffs and jpegs in Camera Raw.



[Figure 10](#)



[Figure 11](#)



[Figure 12](#)

5. Clone Source

If you use the Clone Stamp tool even a little bit, a new palette called Clone Source will definitely speed up your work. In this dialog box you can "save" multiple source points for the Clone Stamp tool (instead of "guessing" where you cloned from previously). In addition, the Show Overlay option works wonders when it comes to making sure you have things lined up by enabling you to see an overlay of the area you're cloning, while controlling the opacity and blend mode of the overlay. You can even scale the results of the tool, so you clone a smaller version of the original. The options in the Clone Source dialog box will change the way people use the Clone Stamp tool.



Figure 13



Figure 14

6. Zoomify

If you post images on the Web, Zoomify might change the way you think about making your photos available. Zoomify basically lets you take a large, high-resolution file and put it on the Web without having to actually post a huge file. It creates a combination of jpegs, HTML, and a small Flash movie that allows viewers to pan and zoom quickly and easily. It's very simple to use and really does all the work for you, based on a few choices you make in the dialog box.



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

These screen captures don't do it justice, so check out the sample [here](#).

7. Auto Blend

In an ideal world we'd always shoot photos using a tripod, so it would be easy to blend together a couple of group photos. You know the ones where everyone's smiling except

one person? In Photoshop CS3, it is very simple to blend together two or more photos using Auto Align Layers. In this example, two different group shots were taken (hand-held) and in one photo a person is looking away. In the second shot, he's smiling at the camera, but a couple of people have their eyes closed. To blend these photos together, we first have to line them up: something that can be done in Photoshop CS2 but with lots of manual effort. In CS3 you simply select both layers and from the Edit menu, choose Auto Align Layers. In moments, the two layers line up and all that remains to be done is to add a layer mask and hide the top layer where our subject has glanced away, letting his smiling face show through.



[Figure 18](#)



[Figure 19](#)



[Figure 20](#)

8. Black & White

As much as I am a fan of the Channel Mixer in Photoshop, it can just as easily wreck a photo as make a great grayscale. I say that because it is very easy to move a slider in the wrong direction and totally blow out the highlights on an image. The new Black & White command in Photoshop CS3 provides a very interesting alternative to Channel Mixer, in part because it seems more "difficult" to ruin your photo. It's a very simple dialog box to use, and a large part of what's makes it so great is that you simply open the dialog box from the Image>Adjustment menu (or add an Adjustment layer) and then drag the sliders to get the effect you want. You can also choose from some built-in presets or save your own settings.



[Figure 21](#)



[Figure 22](#)



[Figure 23](#)

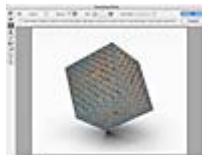
9. Vanishing Point

When Vanishing Point was introduced in Photoshop CS2 it got a lot of attention because of its "coolness" factor. However, questions started to arise about how often the "average" user would actually make use of it. Personally, I often found that there were small issues with the filter that stopped me from using it—issues that have definitely been addressed in Photoshop CS3. One of the most important changes is the ability to alter the angles of the planes (in the past you were pretty much stuck with the angles that Vanishing Point decided you should use). Simply hold down Option (PC: Alt) and drag the plane to the angle you want. In this example, the plane didn't quite follow my photograph, but I was able to easily drag the plane to match the side of the cube.



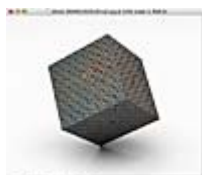
[Figure 24](#)

A second big improvement is the ability to paste in a photograph and have it wrap around multiple planes. Here I pasted a texture and in about five seconds had it wrapped around all three sides of the cube.



[Figure 25](#)

After clicking OK and changing the blend mode to Multiply, I had a very cool effect that would have taken much much longer in CS2.



[Figure 26](#)

NOTE

Cube photo: istockphoto/victor zastol'skiy)

10. Small but Important

The Photoshop CS3 beta had a bunch of small changes and improvements that you might not even notice at first, but are really pretty cool enhancements to the way Photoshop works. Some examples of these small (but important) changes include enhancements to the Curves dialog box, a more informative Image Size command (with explanations of what the interpolation methods are for), and the ability to zoom in up to 3200 percent (from 1600 percent).

You'll also note small tweaks to the Color picker; more choices for sample size for the Eyedropper tool; enhancements to the Sample All Layers function in various tools; improved printing options; the option to add information such as file names and other metadata to files in PDF presentation; the ability to open files as smart object; and something called Device Central, ideal for people designed images for cell phones and PDAs.



Figure 27

In the past it's been a bit of a challenge to come up with 10 things to talk about in a top 10 new features list for Photoshop, but not this time. And I didn't even include in this list the overall speed improvements and the amazing quickness of Photoshop CS3 on the Intel Macs.

One final reminder, however: this is beta software, which means that not everything is working the way it should, and you may encounter problems. As long as you keep that in mind, you're sure to see improvements to your workflow with these new features in the Photoshop CS3 Beta.