

# Troubleshooting and Getting Help

Nobody's perfect, including Photoshop *and* the brilliant folks who created it. Programmers can't anticipate how every single person who uses a program will push, prod, and poke it—and on what kinds of computers and under what circumstances. So don't be alarmed if at some point Photoshop acts strangely or you just can't figure out how to make something work. If that happens, there are resources aplenty, both inside Photoshop and elsewhere, that can help.

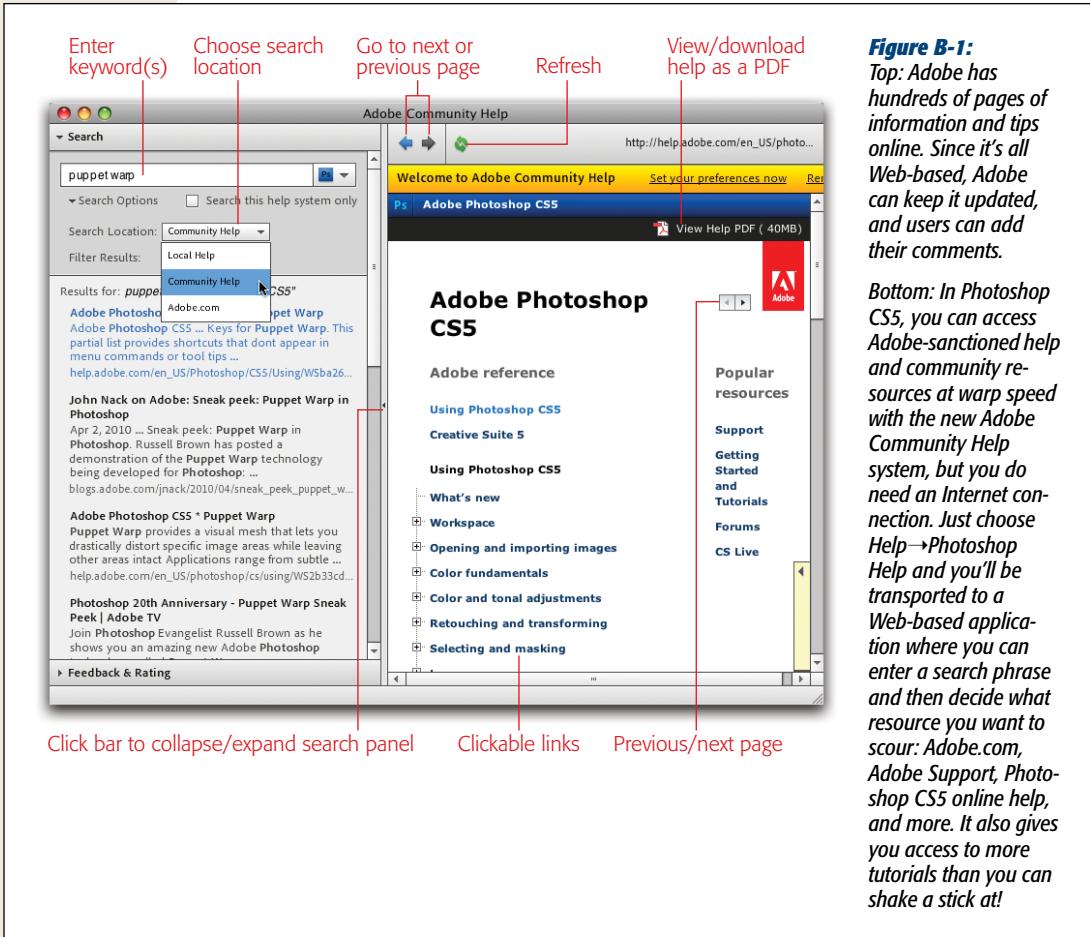
## The Online Help Desk

Nestled snugly within Photoshop's Help menu is the program's own Help system, which gives you access to answers to common questions and links to tons of tutorials. You can take it for a test drive by choosing Help→Photoshop Help. When you do, Photoshop launches another program called Adobe Community Help and takes you to the page shown in Figure B-1 (top). At the top of the page is a handy search field that you can use to hunt down the info you seek, and on the left side of the page is a list of topics. You can enter a choice word or two into the search field (the fewer the words, the better) or scan through the topics. Since this help page pulls its answers from Adobe's online database, you need an active Internet connection to use it.

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**Tip:** Adobe's online help is great when you're somewhere with Internet access, but not so great when you're on a plane, on location for a photo shoot, or have an unreliable Internet connection. That's why it's a good idea to download the help file as a PDF so you always have it exactly when you need it. Just click the PDF icon in the upper-right corner of the page to download the whole darned thing.

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**Note:** As of this writing, choosing Help→Photoshop Support does a whole lot of nothin'—it opens the Adobe Community Help Program but with an empty content window on the right-hand side. Oh well!

## When Good Tools Go Bad

Sometimes tools have minds of their own and insist on misbehaving no matter how firmly you press the keys or how loudly you curse. Before you announce your copy of Photoshop possessed by the Dark Lord of Mordor, make sure you:

- **Check the Options bar's settings.** If a brush isn't working, you may have changed its opacity or blend mode and forgotten to change it back. Remember, settings in the Options bar (page 15)—as well as panels and dialog boxes, for that matter—are *sticky*, meaning they don't change unless you change them.

Nine times out of ten, if a tool is behaving or doing something unexpected, it's because you've neglected to change a setting back.

- **Make sure you're on the right layer.** If you're not, *nothing* will seem to work. Your tools won't seem to have any effect because the changes are happening on a different layer than you expect, most likely on a layer you can't see. Take a look at the Layers panel (page 25) and, if the right layer isn't selected, click to select the layer you want to affect and have another go at it.
- **Check for stray selections.** If you've got marching ants somewhere on your image, it can make all kinds of tools act up. For example, a tiny selection (see Chapter 4) can cause the Crop tool to create a microscopic box, make filters run in the selected area only, keep you from activating the Type tool, and so on. Even if you can't *see* a selection, try pressing ⌘-D (Ctrl+D on a PC) or choosing Select→Deselect just in case. Then try the tool again and see what happens.
- **Look for an active Crop or Transform bounding box.** Photoshop has a one track mind, and if it sees an active Crop or Transform box it won't let you do *anything* else until you've accepted it by pressing Return (Enter on a PC) or bailed out of it by pressing Esc.
- **Check your Caps Lock key.** If your brush sizes or other tools start going wonky, check to see if you've accidentally turned on Caps Lock your keyboard. Once you turn it off, your tools should be right as rain again.

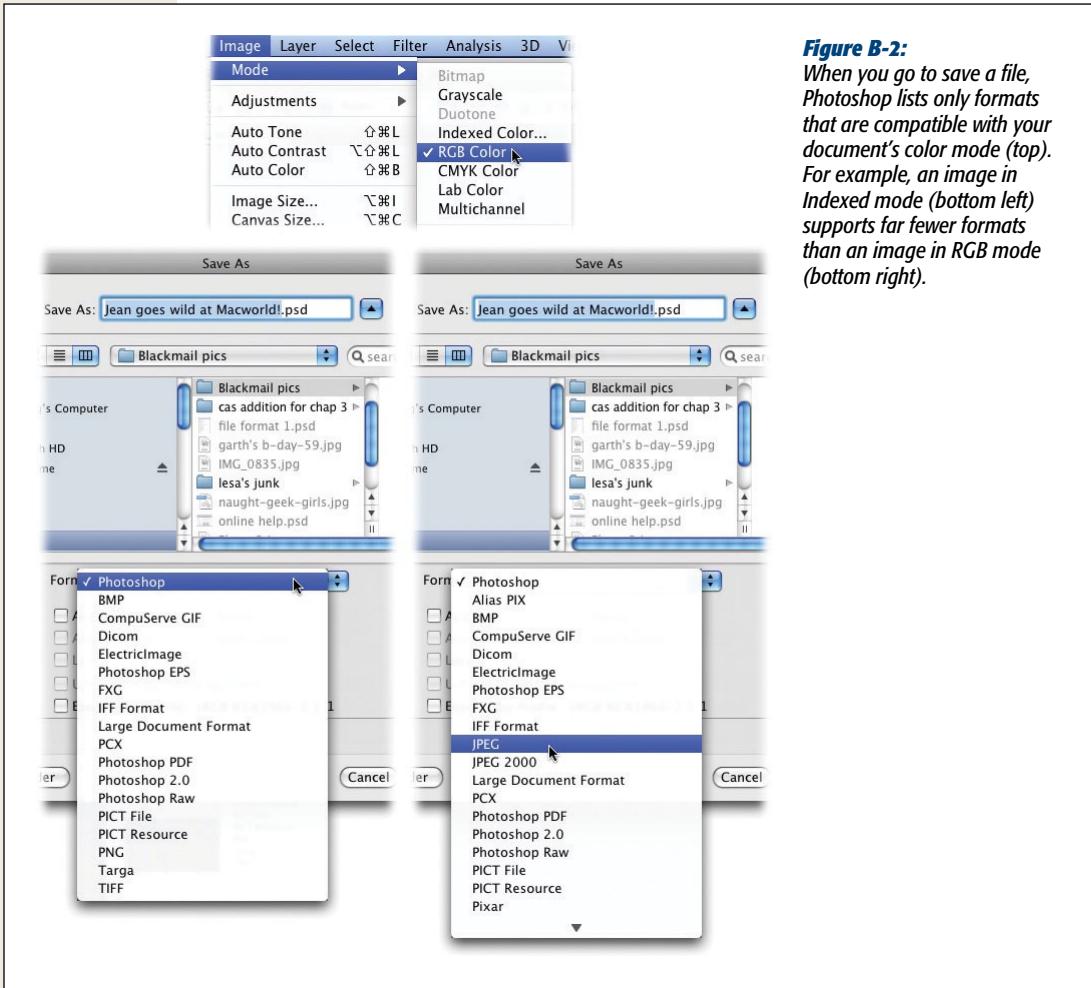
Believe it or not, these four tips will probably fix the majority of your problems. If the trouble persists, see if you can find the solution listed in the next several pages.

## Mysterious Resizing when Dragging Layers

When you drag layers between documents (page 100), you might think that items have changed size along the way. They didn't, though—it only *looks* like they changed size because the document you dragged the layer into is set to another zoom level, or the documents' resolution doesn't match. As you may remember from Chapter 6, resolution controls the size of your pixels, so if you drag a layer from a 72-ppi document into a 300-ppi one, your pixels go from really big to really small. The fix is to *downsample* (see the Note on page 241) the higher-resolution document.

## Can't Save in Certain Formats

Here's an oldie but goodie: Let's say you're poised and ready to save your image but the Save As dialog box (page 49) doesn't list the file format you want. If that happens, there's a good chance your image is in a funky color mode (page 46). For example, Indexed color mode (which is used for GIFs) doesn't let you save in as many file formats as RGB mode (see Figure B-2). To fix this problem, take a trip up to Image→Mode and switch your document to RGB mode, and *then* try saving it.



**Figure B-2:** When you go to save a file, Photoshop lists only formats that are compatible with your document's color mode (top). For example, an image in Indexed mode (bottom left) supports far fewer formats than an image in RGB mode (bottom right).

### Disabled Filters

Have you ever opened the Filter menu only to find that the name of the filter you want to run is grayed out and unavailable? If so, you can bet the farm your image is in CMYK mode or 16-bit RGB. Several filters won't run on anything other than 8-bit RGB images, including whole filter categories like Artistic, Brush Strokes, Sketch, Texture, and Video. To use the unavailable filters, choose Image→Mode→8 Bits/Channel. Then head back up to the Filter menu and run your filter.

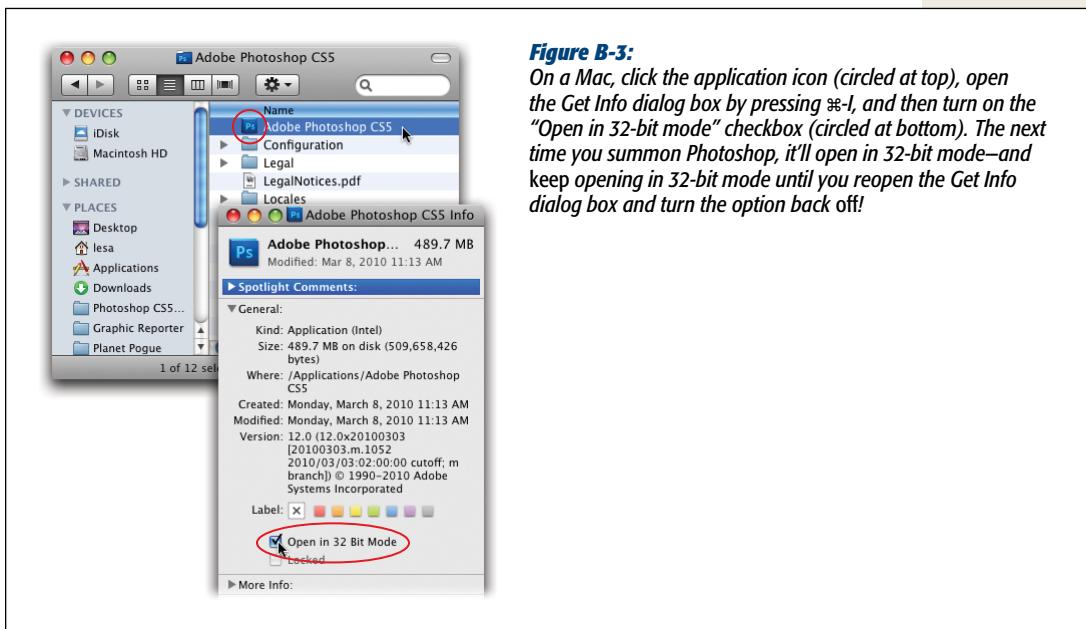
**Tip:** If your image is in 8-bit RGB mode but you *still* can't use some of the filters, check to see if you're editing a Smart Object (page 123). As you learned on page 634, not all filters run as Smart Filters.

## Missing Filters, Plug-Ins, and Adjustments

Photoshop CS5 is now 64-bit compatible on both Macs and PCs, but that doesn't mean every filter, plug-in, and adjustment works in 64-bit mode. If a beloved item is missing from the Filter or Image→Adjustments menu, don't panic. Take a deep breath, quit the program and then relaunch it in 32-bit mode to make the item reappear. Here's how to do the relaunch:

- **On a Mac**, open your Applications folder and then locate the Adobe Photoshop CS5 folder. Open the folder by double-clicking it, find the application icon (it looks like a tiny blue suitcase), click it once to select it and then choose File→Get Info. In the resulting dialog box (Figure B-3), locate the General section (it's in the middle) and turn on the “Open in 32-bit mode” checkbox.
- **On a PC**, the installer puts two different versions of the program on your computer; just locate the 32-bit version and you're good to go.

**Note:** Adobe doesn't support the Windows XP 64 operating system. Even Microsoft *itself* has decided not to update XP 64 (and it's their own software!), so it's no wonder Adobe declared it unsupported.



**Figure B-3:**

On a Mac, click the application icon (circled at top), open the Get Info dialog box by pressing **⌘-I**, and then turn on the “Open in 32-bit mode” checkbox (circled at bottom). The next time you summon Photoshop, it'll open in 32-bit mode—and keep opening in 32-bit mode until you reopen the Get Info dialog box and turn the option back off!

## Uneditable Images

As you learned earlier in this appendix, you can't use all of Photoshop's editing features in every color mode. If you're suddenly locked out of using *any* of the buttons or menus in the Layers panel (like masks, Adjustment layers, opacity—the whole nine yards), your image is probably in Indexed mode (see Figure B-4). Choose Image→Mode→RGB Color and you'll be able to use all the Layers panel's controls.



**Figure B-4:**

*Indexed mode is great for limiting the number of colors in an image you want to post on the Web, but it also limits other stuff like your ability to edit the darn thing using layers. If the Layers panel includes a locked layer named Index (as shown here), you've found the culprit. Switch to RGB mode to regain control.*

## Resetting Tools

If a tool is behaving erratically, you can give it an attitude adjustment by resetting it to its factory-fresh settings. Grab the problem tool and then click the tool's preset menu at the far left of the Options bar. In the resulting pop-up menu, click the tiny right-facing triangle at the top right and choose Reset Tool from the shortcut menu that appears and see if that helps. If you want to reset *all* your tools, choose Reset All Tools from the menu instead.

## Trashing Photoshop's Preferences

If Photoshop won't launch, crashes a lot, or is acting funky, you can try zapping its preferences (Chapter 1 covers preferences). Damaged preference files can cause all those problems and more, and in many cases starting fresh fixes the problem. Here's how to delete the program's preferences:

1. **Quit Photoshop if it's running.**

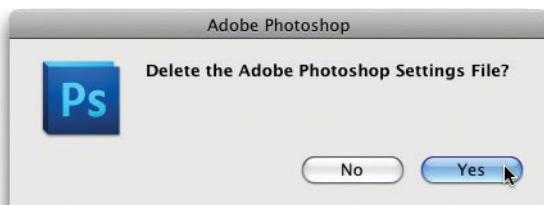
Choose Photoshop→Quit Photoshop (File→Exit on a PC) or press **⌘-Q** (Ctrl+Q).

2. **Relaunch Photoshop while pressing **⌘-Opt-Shift** (on a PC, press Ctrl+Alt+Shift while choosing Photoshop from the Start menu).**

Press and hold this three-key combo while you launch the program, but don't release the keys until you see the dialog box described in the next step!

### 3. In the resulting dialog box (Figure B-5), click Yes.

Photoshop asks whether you want to delete your settings file, which is where the program stores your preferences. (If you somehow happened upon this dialog box by mistake or you've changed your mind, just click No to continue launching the program without deleting your preferences.)



**Figure B-5:**

*You don't have to go hunting for Photoshop's preferences files to delete them; the program takes care of the dirty work for you—if you know the right keyboard shortcut!*

The only problem with this fix is that you'll have to reapply any custom settings you had, like extra scratch disk settings (see Appendix A), guide colors (page 37), and so on. But hey, at least Photoshop is running again!

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**Note:** If you're a Mac user, trashing Photoshop's preferences is the only way you can get the "How do you want the ⌘-H keyboard shortcut to behave?" dialog box (see page 14). Short of manually changing your keyboard shortcuts as explained in the box on page 36, deleting your prefs is the *only* way to change this keyboard shortcut's behavior.

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## Backing Up Presets, Plug-ins, and Actions

Sometimes all the tricks listed above just don't work, and you have to resort to drastic measures: Uninstalling and reinstalling Photoshop. Huge bummer! In that case, be sure to back up any custom presets you've made like actions, brushes, swatches, and so on, and make copies of any third-party plug-ins you've installed (unless you have the installers or the DVD for your add-ons lying around).

All of your custom goodies are stashed in the *Users/[your home directory]/Library/Application Support/Adobe/Adobe Photoshop CS5/Presets* folder. On a PC running Windows Vista, they live in *C:\Users\[your name]\AppData\Roaming\Adobe\Adobe Photoshop CS5\Presets*; in Windows 7 they live in *C:\[User name]\AppData\Roaming\Adobe\Adobe Photoshop CS5\Adobe Photoshop CS5 Settings\Presets*. Copy the Presets folder to someplace safe, like an external FireWire or USB hard drive. Any plug-ins you added are in the Plug-ins folder, which is inside the Adobe Photoshop CS5 program folder, so copy those, too.

Once your files are copied safely to somewhere other than the Adobe Photoshop CS5 folder, head over to Appendix A for the scoop on uninstalling the program.

## Beyond This Book

Thanks to a vast number of gifted trainers, great magazines, and helpful websites devoted to the program, Photoshop users will never be left out in the cold. It is, after all, the most popular piece of software to date. Adobe's website is a great place to start rooting around for additional info. You'll find a design center with written and video tutorials ([www.adobe.com/designcenter](http://www.adobe.com/designcenter)), along with some of the most active forums you'll ever run across. Folks post and reply to questions so often it'll leave you wondering whether they've got real jobs!

But some of the best content isn't available from Adobe—it's posted online by a wide variety of sources. Aside from your fearless author's own website (which appears first in the list below), there are a bazillion other sites bursting with useful, well-written tutorials, shortcuts, and downloads. All the resources listed below are free unless otherwise noted, so visit them all and bookmark the ones you like best. Also included are some of the most amazing Photoshop instructors and authors out there. If you ever get a chance to take one of their classes, you'll be glad you did!

- **The Graphic Reporter.** Your author is on a mission to teach the world to create—and use!—better graphics. To that end, she created this free tutorial site. You'll find a new tutorial posted every few weeks, along with all kinds of other madness and mayhem ([www.graphicreporter.com](http://www.graphicreporter.com)).
- **Kelby Training.** Your author teamed up with Kelby Training to produce several online training courses about both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements. You'll also find other courses by some of the best instructors and photographers in the country ([www.tinyurl.com/lesaatkelby](http://www.tinyurl.com/lesaatkelby)).
- **The National Association of Photoshop Professionals (NAPP)** is the world's largest professional Photoshop organization. Its website is loaded with articles, tutorials, and tips, plus it's the organization that publishes *Photoshop User* magazine (be sure to look for your author's "Graphic Secrets" column in the magazine!). A \$99 yearly membership fee gets you the magazine, access to a help desk, discounts on *PhotoshopWorld.com* conferences, and a slew of other benefits ([www.photoshopuser.com](http://www.photoshopuser.com)).
- **CreativePro.com** is packed with useful information for Photoshop fans, graphic designers, and creative professionals. It covers industry news and offers tips and tricks for all the Adobe Creative Suite programs ([www.creativepro.com](http://www.creativepro.com)).
- **Design Tools Monthly** collects all the news that's important to folks in the graphic design world—including digital photographers—and serves it up every month in easy-to-digest bits along with tips, fonts, and software updates. You can think of it as the executive summary of graphic-design news ([www.designtoolsmonthly.com](http://www.designtoolsmonthly.com)).
- **Planet Photoshop** is a news and tutorial hub for the Photoshop community. It's managed by Kelby Training ([www.planetphotoshop.com](http://www.planetphotoshop.com)).

- **Scott Kelby** is the man behind NAPP, PhotoshopTV ([www.photoshopusertv.com](http://www.photoshopusertv.com)), Kelby Training, *Photoshop User* magazine, *Layers* magazine, and an amazingly long list of books. He knows a thing or two about Photoshop and digital photography and has plenty to say about them ([www.scottkelby.com/blog/](http://www.scottkelby.com/blog/)).
- **Terry White** is Adobe's Director of North American Creative Pro Technical Sales, and writes for *Layers* magazine. He discusses tech topics and Photoshop on his blog ([www.terrywhite.com/techblog](http://www.terrywhite.com/techblog)).
- **Dave Cross** is a Photoshop trainer, speaker, author, and another one of the guys behind PhotoshopTV ([davecross.blogspot.com](http://davecross.blogspot.com)).
- **Taz Tally** is a professional photographer, author, trainer, and an expert on all things prepress ([www.tazseminars.com](http://www.tazseminars.com)).
- **Richard Harrington** is the author of *Photoshop for Video, Third Edition* (Focal Press, 2007). He travels the world teaching folks about motion graphics ([www.photoshopforvideo.com](http://www.photoshopforvideo.com)).
- **Ben Willmore** is an author and professional photographer who travels the world teaching folks how to use Photoshop ([www.digitalmastery.com](http://www.digitalmastery.com)).
- **Jack Davis** is a talented photographer, Photoshop trainer, and author of the popular Photoshop WOW books ([www.adventuresinphotoshop.com](http://www.adventuresinphotoshop.com)).
- **Deke McClelland** is an author, trainer, and podcaster extraordinaire ([www.deke.com](http://www.deke.com)).