

USING PHOTOSHOP HISTORY

We all enjoy the History palette and the ability to undo steps. In conjunction with the History palette, Adobe has also included a little used History Brush in the tools palette. Much of what is accomplished this tool can also be done with various other methods, but there are times when it may be just the right tool.

The History Palette Basics: This palette records each individual step we take and allows us to return to any state within a specific chosen range of steps. The default number of steps is 20. Additional steps (each saved to memory for later recall) require more memory and can slow performance. If you have enough RAM you might want to add more saved steps to the History Palette by going to Photoshop Preferences/General and changing the default number from 20 to a larger number.

If you are working on a creative piece or are making numerous corrections the History Palette will help you to “work safe” and will give you the ability to return to previous states in several ways. The control/command plus ‘z’ key allows you to toggle between the last two steps. To return to a previous state you can (a) click on any state in the History Palette or better yet, (b) hold down the control/(command) AND Alt (Windows)/ Opt (Mac) keys at the same time and hit the “z” key rapidly until you reach the previous state you prefer. Not only is this quicker, it allows you to watch your previous steps disappear, one by one when the history palette is visible or by watching the steps disappear on your image. If you go too far, change to command/(control) plus shift key and hit the “z” key to go down the history states. Learning these two commands will help you work much faster.

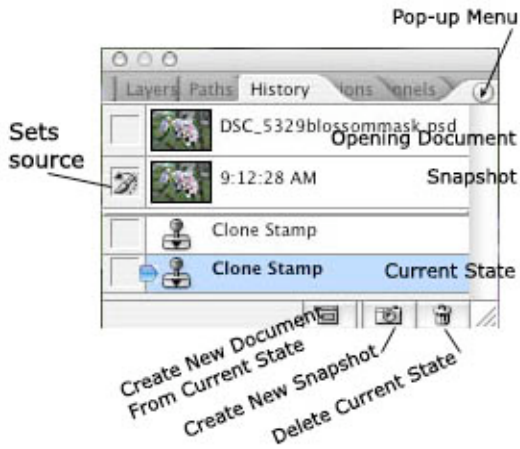
To take a snapshot or make a new file: We have all gone too far with one tool or another. If your adjustments exceed your allotted amount of history steps, you have no way to get back unless you start over (or correct the corrections). There are three icons on the bottom of the History Palette to prevent being stranded.

- The “camera” icon allows you to take a snapshot of the present state and places it under the original image icon at the top of the History palette. If you Alt/Opt click the camera icon, a window will open to name your snapshot. You may return to this state at any time by clicking on the name. Once you return to a previous state you begin again from that point. If you are experimenting or working with a difficult correction, take snapshots often. Once your image is saved and closed ALL history and all history states are lost.

- A safer method is the “Create New Document From The Current State” icon (left rectangle icon) that makes an entire new file at that state but without history or layer information. If you close the original image, the new file remains open until you close it with or without saving it. You might want to save these new documents in a folder and toss them out when your image is complete. (The safest of all is to frequently “Save As a Copy” if you have layers you want saved with the image.)

- The *garbage can* icon is “Delete Current State”, which deletes the current state of the image (same as control (command)/ z.)

Options: Click on the triangle (pop-up menu) to the right of the History Tab on the History Palette for more options and you also find another way to perform some of the above tasks. Under “History Options” – “Create a new snapshot when saving” makes a new snapshot with every “save” command and stamps the time of the save. “Allow Non-Linear History” keeps all the steps active even if you choose a previous history state.



The History Brush Tool: Located in the Tool Box, works in conjunction with the History Palette. As the name implies, the history brush will paint (or combine) any part of a chosen history state from one snapshot to another snapshot. Ways to use it are no doubt endless from more creative users, but here are the basics. (Photoshop always has more ways to make adjustments and some of what I will demonstrate may be accomplished more efficiently using other methods.) The basics are very simple but you must have a plan for the alterations you would like to make before you start. (The Art History Brush is another tool, another lesson.)

- Open an image and notice the original open state appears automatically. (You do not need to take a separate snapshot if this is going to be your base image without adjustments).
- Make alterations, as many steps as you wish, without cropping.
- Flatten the image if you have adjustment layers OR make the background the active.
- Take a snapshot of your altered image and give it a name (not necessary, but helpful).

If you are still not happy, make additional adjustments, flatten or make the background the active layer, and take another snapshot and give it another name.

- On the History Palette, choose one snapshot as the base image you wish to make changes to, and click on the name to highlight it (turns blue).
- Choose the history state with the alterations you are most happy with and “set the source” for the brush by clicking only on the box to the left of the snapshot. A brush with a circular arrow will fill the box. Note: Again, if you created adjustment layers, flatten the image or select the background image in the Layers palette before you start. The Background layer must be active in the Layers palette. (Until you have done this a few times, just flatten it to make it easier!)
- Select the History brush from the Tool palette (not the Art History brush) and set the appropriate size.

• Set the opacity to suit the image. Begin painting the altered image to the areas you want to change on your base image. Make one complete stroke without letting go of the mouse button. (The next stroke will apply the same percentage again, doubling the intensity.) The opacity may be changed with each stroke if you wish. Be sure to take snapshots as you go if you want to return to any of these states beyond your set amount of “undos”.

• *You may be able reverse your work if you exceed your un-do steps by: (1) Make a new snapshot of the current state and name it. (2) Highlight this snapshot and move the history brush icon to the base snapshot. Paint back parts of the original state to the most current state, reversing your corrections.*

Ideas for using the History Brush:

Vignettes: Use multiple adjustments to the base image, such as curves, color changes and blur and use those adjustments to paint around the edges of the original image.

Depth of Field: Works on some limited subjects with some cameras; subjects with no motion or movement; requires a tripod with swivel or ball head; manual settings and automatic focus (spot meter, perhaps); easier with fixed length lens; involves two separate photos.

For example: Set the aperture and shutter speed manually so both photos will be exposed identically, but leave on auto focus. Frame your subject on the tripod (and remember your composition). Loosen the tripod (swivel or ballhead) rotate the camera, and focus on the subject closest to the camera, hold down the focus lock button and while still holding the lock button, reposition the camera to the original composition, lock the ballhead or swivel with the other hand, and then click the shutter button. Without moving the camera (or zoom) slowly push the shutter button again, allowing the camera to automatically re-focus on the distant point and click for the second photo. You should have one photo sharp in the foreground and one photo sharp in the background. (Some Canon cameras have a double depth of field feature for this situation and end up with one perfectly focused image.)

Open both photos in Photoshop. Do not crop or make any adjustments. Choose the image that needs the least amount of correction, in this case the second image, and name it “Distance” in the History Palette states (this image has the most sharpness over all.) Select, copy and paste the second photo into a new layer in the “Distance” document. (Then close the second image.) Align the new layer using the alignment features on the menu bar. Flatten the original “Distance” image. In the History Palette, take a new snapshot; name it “Close up”.

At the top of the History Palette make the “Distance” state active (blue). Click the History Brush icon square next to the “Close up” state. Choose the History Brush from the Tool Box. Choose an appropriate brush size.

Paint the sharper foreground area of the “close up” image on the “distance” image.

Contrast Adjustments: Open a contrasty photo. Adjust the blown out or the overexposed area. Take a snapshot and proceed to darken or lighten areas with the History Brush tool using basic instructions. You can use the Color Range tool to select certain areas.

Contrasty Scene: If you do not have a split density filter, using a tripod, bracket the still image in several steps to get the best exposure of all areas. Use the same copy/paste method as described in *Depth of Field* above. Choose only the part of the scene that has no movement, such as mountains and sky in a landscape scene.

Color Adjustments: *Photoshop 7 Artistry*, page 90 gives an example of changing the color of objects, in this case flowers. Imagine a vase of 5 roses. Using Selective color, change the color of all the flowers four separate times, making a snapshot of each new color as you go. Use the opening image as the base image (leave one rose the original color) and paint each of the remaining four roses a different color from the four saved history states.

Be Creative: You can use filters to manipulate any object and paint back just the part you want crisp and sharp. Imagine Motion Blur filter on people, painting the original sharp face back in (fun with sports shots), vehicles, and painting in line work such as the previous lesson by Chuck Murphy. You can paint in various modes; select the flow and opacities from the menu bar. For retouching old photos the history brush can be used to paint out unwanted scratches and spots.

Give it a try!

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October 13, 2005