# Photoshop Layers

One of the capabilities that gives Photoshop so much power is the ability to work with multiple copies of the image and then blend, set the opaticty of, apply filters to, mask and a host of other things with the copies without ever changing the original. It does this with "layers."

A layer is, in its most simple form, a copy of the image resting above the original. There are also special kinds of layers, such as the text layer, smart objects layer, smart filter layer, adjustment layers and more. The level of creativity one can accomplish with these layers is truly unlimited.

Each layer can also have a mask associated with it, that shows only a part of a layer in relation to others. A mask also functions as a selection tool and creates an alpha channel when saved. Use of the mask can be a powerful creativity tool and also help speed production in many ways.

Here is the layers pallet and a description of the controls found there:
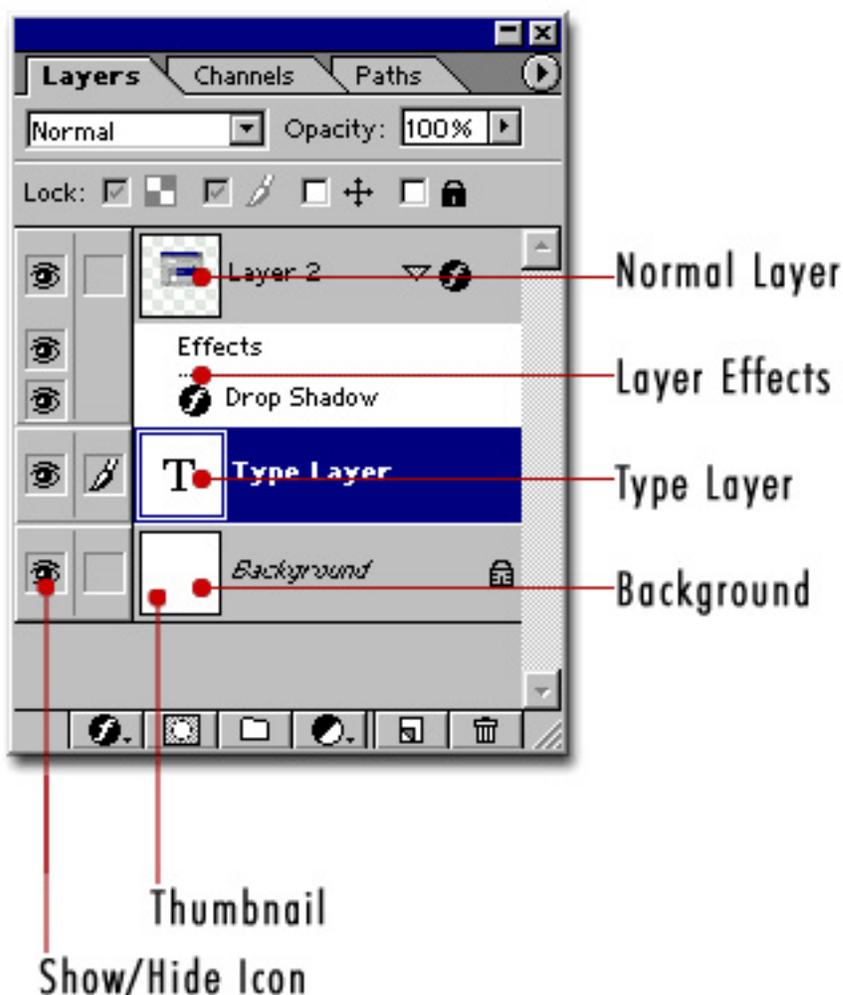
The background layer is locked by default. One workflow suggestion is that it stay locked so you always have the base image to fall back on if you decide to scrap everything and go back to sqaure one. The original image in this scenario is never touched.

Normal Layer: Where your image layer is stored

Layer Effects (Styles): Special effects applied to your image layer. Noted by the little f. Each effect will be listed. Here only the drop shadow is used, multiple effects may be used at once.

Type Layer: The same as an image layer, except this layer contains type that can be edited; (Change character, color, font or size)

Background: Keep it locked. It cannot be moved or have layer effects applied to it. The little icon of the padlock on the right, indicates it is locked. Can be changed into a regular layer by simply double clicking on the thumbnail.

Thumbnail: A small picture of the layers contents.

Show/Hide Icon: If the eye is showing that layer is visible. Click on the eye and the layer will still be there but invisible until you click on the eye again.

The features of the layers pallet:
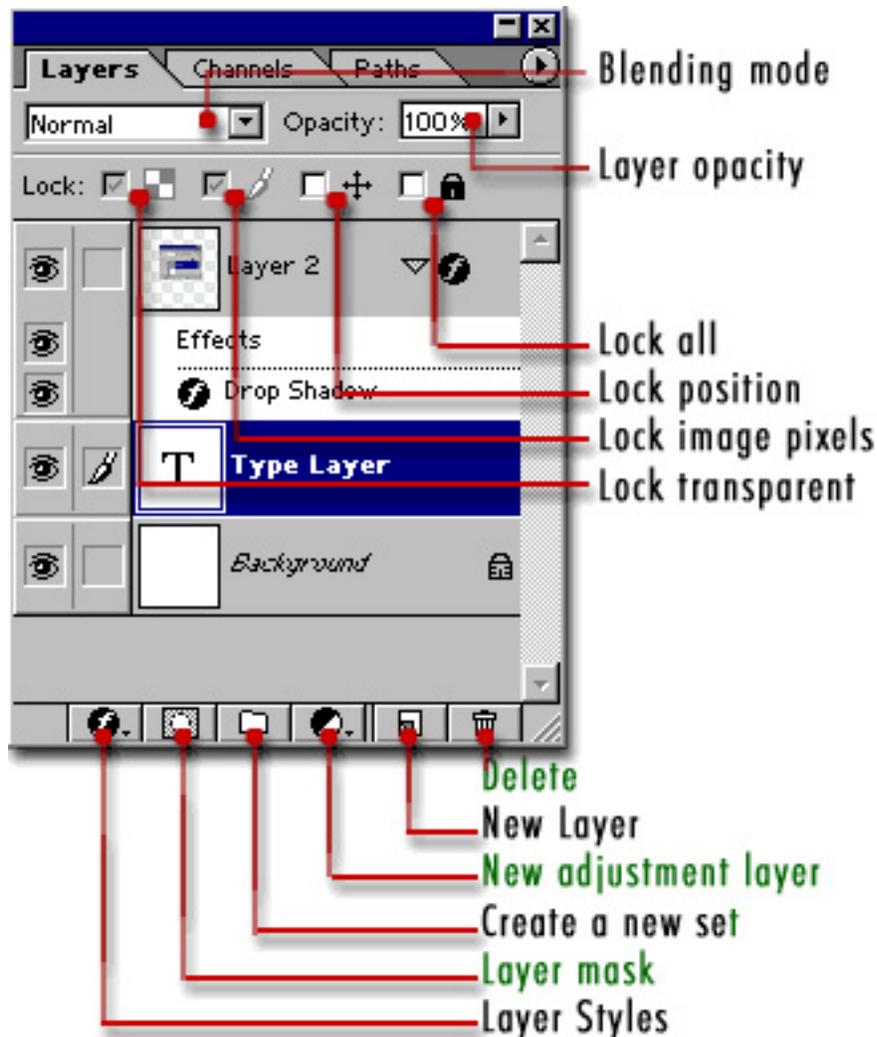
Blending mode: Changes the way the layers interact with each other. Refer to the Blanding Modes graphic on the following pages for what each of these do. Feel free to experiment with them to see how they affect your image. Adjust the opacity of the layer to control the strength of the blended layer on the layer below it.

Layer opacity: Adjusts how transparent each layer is. 0 is completely transparent, 100 is completely opaque.

Lock all: If the box is checked the layer is totally protected from any editing.

Lock Position: You can make any changes except for moving the image.

Lock Image pixels: You cannot draw on this layer if checked.

Lock transparent: You can paint on this layer but not where it is transparent.

Delete: Will delete an entire layer. Either Drag the thumbnail to the icon or select the layer and click on the trash can (delete icon).

Note — the selected layer is always highlighted -Type layer is currently selected in this example.

New Layer: Click to add a new blank layer directly above whatever layer is currently selected..

New Adjustment layer: Allows non-destructive adjustment of colors to a layer. (Can be undone anytime, even after closing document)

Create a new set or group: Allows you to organize your layers into folders.

Layer mask: Allows you to paint away parts of your layer without damaging your original image.

Layer styles: Special effects for your layers. (Allows you to do cool things with no effort). By holding down the "alt" key and dragging, any layer effects can be duplicated to another layer with ease.

Notes about using layers

- **A filter can only be applied to a single layer.** To use a filter on multiple layers, first merge the multiple layers into a single layer (fastest way: select the layers to be merged, hold down Shift + Ctrl, then hit N, then hit E without letting go).

- Adjust the Fill opacity of the layer to **change the opacity of the inside of text**. The stroke and layer effects will not be changed.

- **Mask = Selection = Alpha Channel** — These are the same, one can become the other and vice-versa.

- Alt-click-mask — toggles **viewing the mask** in the main window.

- Control-click-mask — turns **mask into a selection** on the image.

- Alt-click style-drag to another layer — **copies the selected style** to the layer dragged to.

- Flatten image command combines all layers into a single image. Once saved, this cannot be undone.

- Use "Blending Options..." in the fly-out menu to precisely control blending wiht a levels-like dialog box. Use the alt key to split the controls for a smooth transition.

Cheat sheet:

Control J — **copies the current selection** to a new layer. If nothing is selected, it **copies the entire layer** to a new layer.

Shift + Ctrl + N — **New blank layer**

Shift + Ctrl + E — **Merge *visible* layers**

Q — toggles Quick Mask on and off

S — selectes the Stamp (Clone) tool

L — selects the Lasso tool

Blending Modes:

Normal	Normal Dissolve
Darken	Darken Multiply Color Burn Linear Burn Darker Color
Lighten	Lighten Screen Color Dodge Linear Dodge (Add) Lighter Color
Contrast	Overlay Soft Light Hard Light Vivid Light Linear Light Pin Light Hard Mix
Specialty	Difference Exclusion Subtract Divide
Color	Hue Saturation Color Luminosity