

# Shortcuts to Better Brushwork in Adobe Photoshop

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Many Photoshop tools use brushes, so knowing a few brush shortcuts will greatly enhance your ability to work with those tools.

## Brush Color Shortcut

- The shortcut for the Brush tool is the letter B. In the Options Bar, most of the time the Mode should be Normal and the Opacity and Flow should be 100%.
- Not every brush uses color—the brush in the Eraser tool doesn't— but the ones that do use color take their color from the Foreground Color Chip.
- You can press the letter D to revert to the default colors of black over white.
- Press the letter X to switch the Foreground and Background colors.
- To choose a new color, click on the Foreground Color Chip and choose a color from the Color Picker.
- If you see the color you want on your photo, you can use a keyboard shortcut instead.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) to temporarily turn your cursor into an Eyedropper tool.

- Click on a color in your active document to choose that color.

## Practice Project: Brush Away Gray

Here's how to colorize gray hair:

- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) to temporarily get the Eyedropper tool.
- Click to sample a color from the part of the hair that isn't gray.
- In the Options Bar, change the Mode to Color.
- Move the Opacity slider to around 30%.
- Brush over the gray hair to apply the Foreground color. Because the brush is in the Color Mode, it only affects the color of the hair.
- You can sample more than one hair color when using this technique.
- When you're done, be sure to change the Mode back to Normal for the next time you use the brush.

## Brush Size Shortcuts

- To increase the size of your brush, press the right Bracket key. If you press and hold the right Bracket key, your brush will get larger more quickly.
- Press the left Bracket key to make your brush smaller. Press and hold the left Bracket key to quickly make your brush smaller.

## Brush Hardness Shortcuts

You can choose a hard or soft brush from the Brush Preset Picker.

- In the Options Bar, you can also click on Brush Settings and move the Hardness slider to adjust the amount of hardness. Instead of doing that, though, it's often easier to use a keyboard shortcut.
- Press Shift and the right Bracket key at the same time to make the brush harder. There are five levels of hardness for brushes. Each time you press Shift along with the right Bracket key, your brush gets one level harder until you reach the maximum hardness.
- Press Shift with the left Bracket key to make the brush softer.

These shortcuts make it very easy to adjust your brush on the fly.

## Opacity Shortcuts

- Press any number to make your brush partially transparent. For example, pressing 5 will reduce your brush opacity to 50%. Pressing 8 changes the opacity to 80%.
- Pressing two numbers in rapid succession gives you that percentage, e.g. 5 and 7 gives you 57%, 0 and 8 give you 8%.
- Pressing 0 gives you 100%.

## Practice Project: Photo Vignette

- Add some drama to a photo and put the Brush shortcuts into action by painting a vignette around the edges of a photo.
- In the Layers panel, click on the Create a New Layer icon. Always brush on a new layer for more flexibility.
- Use the Brush shortcuts to do the following:
- Adjust the size of your brush

- Make sure your brush is at the softest setting
- Get 10% opacity by pressing the number 1
- Get black for the Foreground color by pressing the letter D.
- Brush around the edges of your photo to darken them, which adds much more drama.

## Brush Lines

The last brush shortcut is for creating straight lines with your brush.

- To create a perfectly horizontal line with the Brush tool, click and hold with your mouse, press Shift, and drag left or right.
- To create a vertical line, click and hold with your mouse, press Shift, and drag up or down.
- To create a diagonal line, click and let go of the mouse, press Shift, and click again in another location.

## Practice Project: Dotted Line Word Art

You can use a brush shortcut to create a straight dotted line in some word art.

- Get the Type tool and type some words or phrases using your favorite fonts. (I used Aphrodite Slim Text for the word Thanks and “My type of font” for the line “for everything you do,” but feel free to use other fonts and words.)
- Get the Brush tool. In the Options Bar open the Brush Preset Picker and choose a hard 9 px brush.

- To create a dotted brush, in the Menu Bar choose Window > Brush to get the Brush panel.
- Change the Spacing to 250% and close the Brush panel.
- In the Layers panel, click on the Create a New Layer icon.
- Click on the Foreground Color Chip and choose the color you want for your dotted line.
- Click and hold with your mouse on your document where you want the line to start.
- Add the Shift key and drag your mouse in the direction you want the line to go.
- When the line is finished, let go of the mouse and then let go of the Shift key.
- If you need to adjust the position of the dotted line, get the Move tool and use the Arrow keys to move it into place.

Learn these Brush shortcuts and it will make your brushwork so much faster and easier!