

FIX PHOTOS FAST



with
ACTIONS



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Actions: Fix Photos Fast! Actions Workflow—Photoshop

Lesson 01: Panel Setup

A convenient workspace is worth setting up when you start editing with actions. Let me share how I do it, but the whole key is for you to find the panel configuration that works best for you. As you work with your photos, you may find a better way to configure your panels.

- The default panel arrangement is called Essentials.
- You can access different panel arrangements, such as Photography, from the menu above the panels.

Accessing panel arrangements may vary slightly in different Photoshop versions, but your version should, at the very least, have access to panel arrangements in the Menu Bar. Choose Window > Workspace and you'll see a list of panel arrangements.

Working With Panels

- To view a panel, click on its tab, or click on an icon to expand it. Click on the icon again to collapse the panel.
- To remove a panel, click and drag it by its tab to the desktop. Then click the close button.
- To move a panel, click on its tab and drag it to a new location.
- To nest with another panel, move the tab over the tab of another panel until you see a blue outline around the entire panel. Let go of the mouse, and it will nest with that panel.
- To create a new panel compartment, move a panel by its tab to the top or bottom of another panel, or in between panels, until you see a single horizontal blue line. Let go of the mouse and the panel will become a new panel compartment.
- To create a new panel compartment along the side of the panels, move a panel by its tab to the side of your panel arrangement until you see a long blue vertical line from the top all the way to the bottom. Let go of the mouse to create the new compartment along the side.
- To create a collapsed panel with just a small icon, move a panel by its tab under one of the little side icons until you see a small blue horizontal line. Let go of the mouse to dock it along the side.
- Click on the panel icon to expand the panel, and click again to collapse it.

You can open additional panels from the Window menu in the Menu Bar and add them to your panel configuration.

Linda's Panel Configuration

Here's how I configure my panels when I'm editing my photos with actions. You're certainly welcome to copy my arrangement if you don't know what would work best for you, but as you gain experience, feel free to create your own personalized panel arrangement.

- I like the Histogram panel at the top in its own compartment so I can quickly analyze my photo, something I'll be showing you how to do in a later video.

- I close the Navigator, Clone Source, and Properties panels.
- I do use the Info panel occasionally, so I leave it docked along the left side of the panels in icon form.
- I put the Actions panel as a small icon along the side, above the other icon panels so I have more room if I want to expand it. You can click and drag from the bottom of the panel to change its height.
- I nest the History panel with the Layers panel.
- Channels and Paths can sometimes be useful. We won't be dealing with them in this class, but I put them below the Layers panel in a new compartment. You can double click on a tab to collapse the panel compartment, and click on a tab to expand it.
- I'll put the Adjustments panel in the same compartment as Channels and Paths.
- For scrapbooking in general, I like to add some panels:
 Styles nested with the Layers and History panels
 Brush and Paragraph panels as icons along the side of the panels.

Save Your Custom Panels

To save your panel arrangement, in the Menu Bar choose Window > Workspace > New Workspace, or you can choose New Workspace from the menu above the panels.

Give your workspace a name—I named mine “Linda’s Photography,” and click Save. No need to check any of the other options in the dialog box.

Throughout these videos you may notice that my panels aren't always arranged exactly like this—and that's the wonderful flexibility of panels. You can change them at any time, but if you ever want to get back to the original way you set up your panels, simply choose the option to reset your personal panel arrangement.

Once you get your workspace set up, you're ready to get started!

Lesson 02: Load & Delete Actions

Loading and Deleting actions is easy in Photoshop.

- Download the Fix Photos FAST.atn file from the classroom Download page.
- Open Photoshop.
- In the Menu Bar choose Window > Actions to open the Actions panel, or simply click on its tab or icon, depending on how you've chosen to display it in your panel arrangement.
- Notice that there is a folder called Default Actions already in the Actions panel. You can click on the triangle next to the action folder to twirl the action set open and closed.
- To load a new set of actions, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the flyout menu and choose Load Actions.
- Navigate to the folder on your computer that contains the Fix Photos FAST.atn action and double click on it to install it.
- To delete an individual action within a set, click on the action and click on the Trash icon. Click OK.
- If you change your mind, you can press Ctrl Z (Mac: Cmd Z) to undo, as long as you haven't done anything else.
- Note: Alt clicking (Mac: Opt clicking) on the Trash icon deletes the action without bringing up the pesky dialog box.
- To delete an action set, click on the action set folder in the Actions panel to make it active and Alt click or Opt click on the Trash icon.
- You can always reset your Actions panel by opening the flyout menu and choosing Reset Actions.

Load the Fix Photos FAST.atn action set now so you'll be ready to move ahead with these lessons!

Lesson 03: About The Actions

I've arranged the Fix Photos FAST actions to make it easier to find the action you want when you need it. I discuss what each action does in other videos. In this video I simply want to acquaint you with how I organized the actions so you can find them more easily.

If an action name is too long to see the entire name, click on the edge of the Actions panel and drag to the left to widen it.

Also, remember to use these actions on the original photo before you move the photo onto another document. The reason I want you to do this is because you'll often need to use more than one action on a given photo, so I've set up the actions in a way that allows you to use multiple actions without worrying about the state of the previous layer—whether it's partially transparent or whether it has a layer mask—these are the kinds of things that can trip an action up, so I built-in a safety net to avoid running into problems with those kinds of things.

If you do move a photo onto another document and then try to run the actions, the action will be applied to the entire document—so do your fixing first, and then move your photo, if needed.

Layer Actions

There are four action groups in the Fix Photos FAST action set. The first group is layer actions and there are only two—Merge Visible Layers and Flatten Layers. Use Merge Visible Layers when you want to take a single layer snapshot of everything you've done to the photo up to that point.

Use Flatten Layers if you want to flatten all the layers in the Layers panel into one layer.

We won't be using these two actions very much in this class, but they're handy to have when you're working on a layered document, such as when you're compositing a photo page. The next three sections we'll use a lot!

Lighting

The next section of actions has to do with the lighting on your photo. Use these actions when you need to make your entire photo, or parts of your photo, either lighter or darker. I put the word Lighter or Darker at the beginning of the name so you would know what it does.

The action called **Contrast** both lightens and darkens your photo slightly to produce more contrast, so I simply used the name "Contrast."

There are several PLAY ALL actions scattered throughout the Fix Photos FAST action set. Run these actions to play all the actions of different strengths in a certain set and put each one on a different layer so you can choose the one you like the best. It's very convenient when you're not sure which strength your photo needs.

Color

The middle section of actions has to do with color in some way, either fixing unwanted color issues or improving the color.

Smooth and Sharp

The last section of actions will either smooth part or all of your photo, or it will sharpen part or all of your photo.

You'll notice that some actions have words in all caps in the name. I did this to make it easier to navigate through the actions and for your eyes to better notice certain actions.

One Final Note: All these actions only require Photoshop to run except for one—the Reduce Noise–Noiseware action. This requires a 3rd party plug-in that is not supplied with this class—it must be purchased separately. You do NOT need to purchase Noiseware to benefit from this class, and I have three other Reduce Noise actions that do work with the filters that come with Photoshop. The reason I include the Noiseware action is because I personally prefer it

over the Photoshop Reduce Noise filters, and I use it exclusively for noise reduction myself, so I wanted to, first of all, be totally up front about my opinions, and I wanted to demonstrate it for you and that way you could make up your own mind about whether you want to purchase it or not.

If you decide you don't want to purchase anything additional, that's perfectly fine. You can use the three other noise reduction actions along with the PLAY ALL option, and they all work great with Photoshop.

To delete the Reduce Noise-NOISEWARE action simply click on it to select it and click on the Trash icon. Click OK to the dialog box that comes up. If you ever want it back it will still be in the original action set which you can download again from the classroom.

So that's a quick introduction to the way I've organized the actions. These are very powerful actions that will quickly help you fix problems with your photos and help them look their best!

Lesson 04: The Fastest Method

When editing, most of us are looking for the fastest way to make our photos look good so we can get on with what we really want to do with our photos. There are three directions you can take when you begin editing a photo or a set of photos:

Method 1: Photoshop Tools & Filters

Open your photos in Photoshop and use the tools and filters to edit your photos. This includes fixing things that can only be done by hand, like cloning an unwanted object out of a photo or correcting the perspective of a photo.

Photoshop does have some auto commands in the Image menu. I've incorporated Auto Color into the Fix Photos FAST actions using the name Color Cast, because it is a helpful command.

But often Auto Color doesn't work—especially on photos with a really bad color cast.

Using these actions, however, you'll be able to correct bad a gad color cast.

Method 2: Camera Raw

Access your photos from either the Bridge or Lightroom and edit them in Camera Raw. (Watch my videos called Amazing Camera Raw to learn how to use Camera Raw.)

Method 3: Fix Photos FAST Actions

Open your photos in Photoshop and edit them using the **Fix Photos FAST** actions. To show you how to use these actions, I filmed a set of videos for each major action focus—Lighting, Color, and Smooth & Sharp.

So which method should you use?

I always start with the fastest method. For me, that will either be Camera Raw or the **Fix Photos FAST** actions, depending on the photo. You'll learn from experience which photos work best with Camera Raw, and which ones work best going directly to actions. Sometimes I use both Camera Raw and actions to complete my editing.

Some photos, though, work best going directly to actions, bypassing Camera Raw altogether.

For example, some lighting problems respond much better to actions because of the multi-step solution provided in some of the actions. I especially see this in photos with a lot of dark and light contrast.

Also, some color problems can be fixed quickly with Camera Raw, but others don't respond well to the Auto setting or the Color sliders, so it takes longer to mess around trying to fix it in Camera Raw than just using the Color actions.

And, finally, I like to handle blemishes, noise, and sharpening with actions.

So choose the fastest method to edit your photos, and give yourself a little bit of time to learn the different options, so you feel more comfortable making your choice.

Lesson 05: Why Action Layers?

In this video I want to tell you briefly about my workflow with actions so you know why I've set the actions up the way I have and what you should feel free to change.

In the training videos you'll notice that I've set up the actions to put one action on each layer with the name of the action on the layer. If I use a lot of actions, I end up with a lot of layers.

I've done this as an organizational tool to use while I'm working on a photo. I can see at a glance which actions I've used, and I can decide whether to try a different action solution. I often toggle back and forth between two action alternatives to see which one I like better.

If you want to quickly see a before and after view of your photo, or any other step in your photo editing process, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the visibility icon of the action layer you want to view. That will hide all the other layers but that one.

To reveal the hidden layers, repeat the shortcut on the same layer: press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the visibility icon of the visible layer.

Most photo editing can be done very quickly, but occasionally I work with a really tough photo. If I'm not completely satisfied and I think there might be a better way of approaching the editing, I select the layers of the current set of actions by clicking on the first action and Shift clicking on the last action to select them all. To group them into a folder, press Ctrl G (Mac: Cmd G). (Some earlier versions may not have this capability and this shortcut will create a clipping mask instead.)

Grouping layers into folders cleans up the Layers panel and allows me to hide all the action layers with one click on the visibility icon of the folder. That way I can click on the background layer and try again using a different set of actions, but I still have the option to access my original layers and compare the two paths by simply clicking on the visibility icon of the grouped folder.

You can easily delete action layers, or groups of action layers, when they're on separate layers. Simply press the Delete key. If you get a dialog box asking if you really want to delete the layer, click Don't Show Again, and then click OK.

Once you're done editing and are satisfied with the results, you can choose to keep the layers and save as a PSD or flatten the layers.

In routine editing, I do not keep the layers. I've added a **Flatten Layers** action to the Fix Photos FAST action set just for convenience, though you can, of course, access this command from the Layers panel flyout menu.

I save the edited version as a JPEG copy so I can still access the original unedited photo, if I need to. I usually add the word "edited" to the end of the file name to save it as a copy and keep it alphabetically next to the original file.

Would you ever want to save all the layers? A few of you might. If you teach Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, it might come in handy, down the road, to know what you did to a photo. I keep some of the more interesting photos in PSD format with layers, just in case—mainly because I teach this stuff!

The only other time you might want to save the layers is on a special photo that you might want to revisit or tweak down the road. File space is cheap now, so why not?

To save in PSD format and keep the layers, choose File > Save As. Change the file name slightly—again, I usually add the word "edited,"—and choose Photoshop from the Format menu. Then click Save.

So that's the reasoning behind using action layers, and I officially give you permission to flatten the layers and save a JPEG copy of the image once you're done editing!

Lesson 06: Helpful Action Tips

There are five types of Fix Photos FAST actions.

1. Run without Stopping

The first type of action is the kind that runs without stopping. Click on the name of an action—not just the triangle that opens up and shows you the steps the action is going to take—but the actual name, and then click the play button. The action creates an effect and puts the name of the action on the layer, and that's all you have to do. Most of the Fix Photos FAST actions are this kind of action—very simple.

If the effect isn't enough, you can run the same action again. On occasion I'll even run an action three or four times! You can reduce the opacity of an action layer to dial in exactly the amount of effect you want.

Action Example—Color: Cooler

2. Adjust a Setting

Some actions will open a dialog box where you must adjust a setting, such as a Levels or Hue/Saturation setting. You can choose to accept the default setting or make any changes you wish, and click OK.

Action Example—Color: Boost

3. Brush on an Effect

Some actions ask you to stop and brush on an effect using a layer mask and a brush. A dialog box tells you exactly what to do. The action will add a black layer mask to the action layer, change the Foreground Color Chip to white, and select the Brush tool, but it doesn't choose a specific brush or change the settings in Tool Options. You must be aware of brush settings and make sure they're good for your photo.

Action Example—Color: Whiter Teeth

4. Brush Away an Effect

The fourth type of action gives you the option to brush away some of the effect of the action using a layer mask. The action will automatically select the Brush tool, add a white mask to the action layer, and make the Foreground Color Chip black, but again, it won't change any settings in Tool Options, so be sure to check that before using the brush.

Action Example—Reduce Noise-Maximum

5. PLAY ALL Actions

A PLAY ALL action is included with some of the actions that have different strength levels. If you're not sure which strength will work best for your photo, run the PLAY ALL action. It creates a layer for each action and lets you choose which effect you like the best. The lowest strength layer will be visible. To see the other layers, click on the visibility icon of each layer.

Action Example—PLAY ALL Shadows/Highlights

Export Clipboard Message

If you get a message that says: Could not export the clipboard because it is too big to export, just click OK.

