

# **Shortcuts for Layer Opacity in Photoshop Elements**

By Linda Sattgast

Opacity seems like a pretty simple subject, but there are some opacity shortcuts that will speed up your workflow and also one caveat to watch out for. Once you learn the shortcuts, they will feature prominently on your most often used shortcuts list!

## **Opacity Slider**

- Make sure the correct layer is selected.
- Click on the triangle in the upper right corner of the Layers panel to get an opacity slider.
- Move the slider to adjust the opacity.

## **Scrubby Arrows**

- Hover your cursor over the word Opacity to get a hand with left and right arrows.
- Click and drag to the left or right to change the opacity quickly.

- Drag all the way to the left to get 0%.
- Drag all the way to the right to get 100%.

## Opacity Shortcuts

My favorite opacity shortcut, however, involves the numbers on my keyboard.

- In the Layers panel, click on a layer to select it.
- To quickly change the opacity of that layer, press any number on your keyboard. For example:
  - Press 5 to get 50% opacity.
  - Press 2 to get 20% opacity.
  - Press 0 to get 100% opacity.
  - If you press two numbers in quick succession, such as 5 and 7, you'll get 57%.
  - 0 and 8 will give you 8%.

This method makes it easy to add the same opacity to another layer. Click on a different layer and press the same number to change the opacity, or use a different number. But even better, this shortcut allows you to change the opacity of more than one layer at the same time.

Ctrl click (Mac: Cmd click) on any other layer to select it, or click on one layer and Shift click on the last layer to select a row of layers. The Opacity options at the top of the Layers panel are grayed out and unavailable when multiple layers are selected, but you can still press any number to change the opacity of all the layers at once.

The opacity number at the top of the Layers panel doesn't change until you click on an individual layer.

Note: The ability to change the opacity of multiple layers all at once was introduced in Photoshop Elements 11, so with older versions you'll need to change opacity one layer at a time, but if you have a more recent version, this is a quick way to change the opacity of multiple layers.

## **Watch Out for This!**

This is all very good, but there's one caveat: The keyboard shortcut only works for the Layers panel if you have a tool selected that does not have an opacity slider in Tool Options. In my demonstration, I used the Move tool, which doesn't have an opacity setting.

The Brush tool, however, does have an Opacity option, so using these keyboard shortcuts will only change the Brush opacity. That's great if you're using the Brush tool and want to adjust the brush opacity. The keyboard shortcuts can work in either scenario, but if you want to change the layer opacity, you must consider which tool is currently active.

Rather than thinking about which tool I have active, I just automatically press the letter V on my keyboard to quickly access the Move tool before pressing a number to change a layer's opacity.