

Topic 2 – Using The Crop Tool

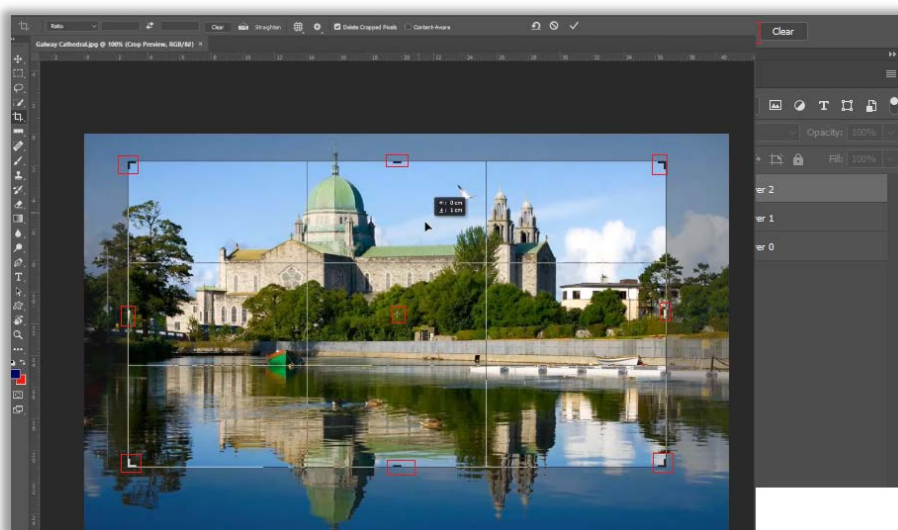
Learning Outcomes

In this lesson, we will look at how we can use the crop tool when editing our photographs in Photoshop.

Using the Crop Tool

Generally speaking, as photographers, we aim to fill the frame. By doing this, we have more scope if we want to print the photograph. However, there may be times when this isn't a requirement and you will want to use cropping, in order to eliminate unnecessary distractions in your photograph.

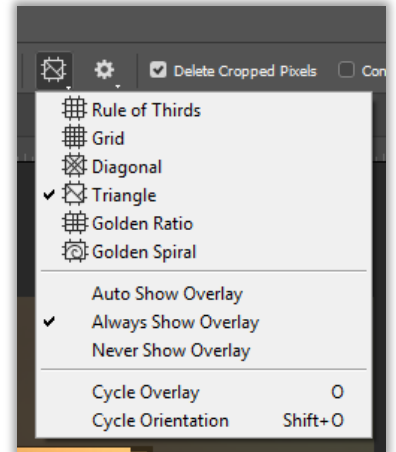
We can choose the crop tool from the toolbar on the panel or alternatively, we can use the keyboard shortcut, which is simply C, for both Mac and Windows users. As soon as you hit this key, you will notice that Photoshop has placed a dotted crop line around the entire photograph. You can reposition these anchor points that you see on the corners or in the centre of the image. Alternatively, you can just click and drag out a crop section in the image area, like so. Then, you can just use the handles to adjust the resizing of the crop.



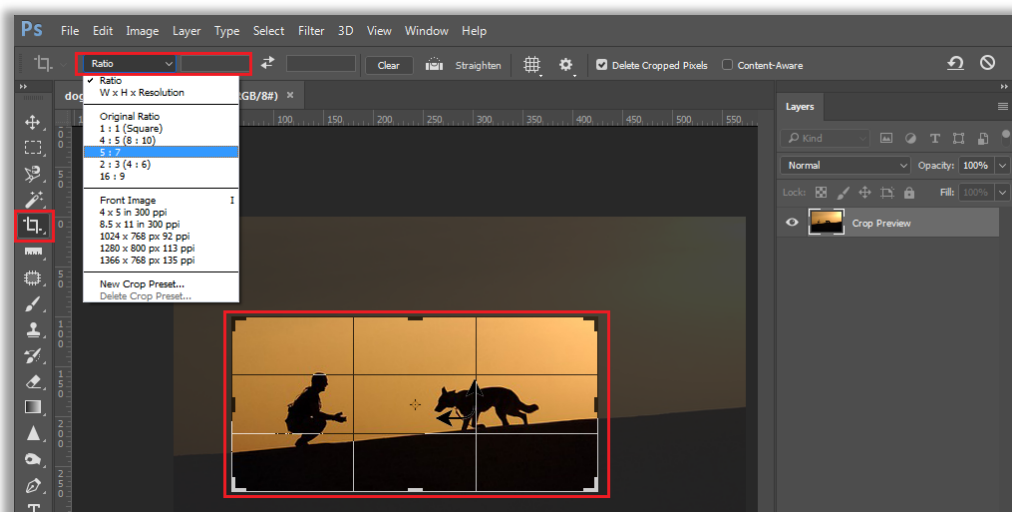
Using The Crop Tool

If you drag the crop section around the screen, it will reposition it, and this is a pretty neat feature. Also, when you drag into the image area, and then hold down the option key for Mac users, and the Alt key for Windows, you will see that it scales the photograph from both sides. When you release the cursor, you can still reposition the image within the crop borderline.

If you want to change aspect ratios, you need to fill in the values here. Let's do, 10 by ten, as an example. We can also select an aspect ratio option from the list here. Let's pick four by five, or eight by ten. We can change the orientation, or swap these around by clicking on this arrows key. The shortcut for this is the X key. If you're not happy with the values, you can simply click the clear button.



There are also a number overlay options that you can choose from. Click on this mesh-like icon and you can scroll through the selections. The rule of thirds will generally be the default selection. Over time, you will become very familiar with these overlay options and you will recognise them as soon as you see them on your screen. By simply tapping the O key, Photoshop will run through the different overlays. You may want to alter the way that the area outside your crop is displayed. To do this, you need to click on the mechanism or gear icon, and you will see options like what we have here.



Using The Crop Tool

You can select show the cropped area, or you can hide it. Photoshop will show us a keyboard shortcut for this. You can see that it is the H key. However, you must be using the crop tool, to do this. You will remember that, outside of this tool, tapping the H key will select the Hand tool. Tapping the H key, while using the crop tool, will toggle this on and off.

The default is generally set to 75, but you can adjust this in any way that you wish. In order to close this, you can hit the return/enter key. Alternatively, you can simply click on the mechanism icon. Look at this option here, delete the crop pixels. You can select this or you can keep the pixels in the remaining cropped file. When you delete the cropped pixels, you will notice that, on the layers panel, we get a crop preview, and then this background layer appears. This will appear as the colour of you background colour in the toolbar.

This next step is important to note. When you click on the check/tick mark in order to crop your photograph, those pixels will be deleted, and you will see that you just have the background layer on the layers panel.

Let's use the Move tool to demonstrate this. When we pick the move tool, and turn the background into a layer by clicking on the lock icon here, if you reposition and drag the image, you will notice that everything beyond the image area has been cropped off and has disappeared.

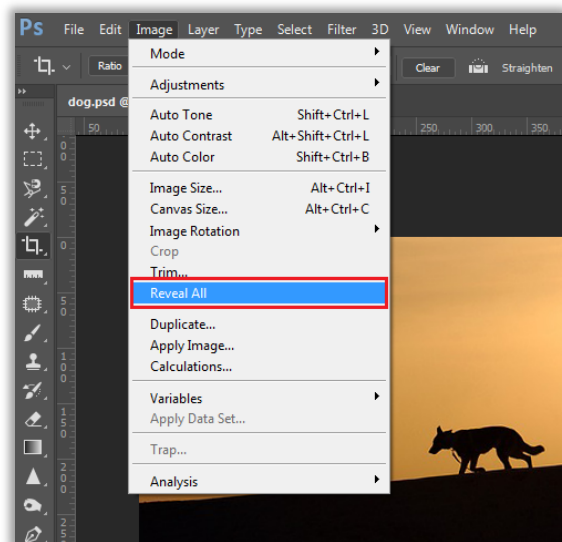


Using The Crop Tool

Let's look at this by reverting the file. You do this by clicking on file, and revert. Let's go ahead and pick the crop tool again. Let's uncheck the delete cropped pixels. Did you notice that in the layers panel, we get a different preview? We have the cropped preview, but we don't have that underlying red layer. When you click on the check/tick mark, the background is converted into a layer. The useful thing here is that we have an account of all of that information outside of our crop. To show you this, let's pick the move tool and drag the photograph within our canvas. We have retained all of this information.

Considering this, it's very likely that your file size will be larger as it holds onto this information, but only if you save this as a .psd file or as a .TIFF file. If you do not crop the pixels, and then you save your file as a .jpeg file, all of those pixels that are outside the canvas size, will be deleted. This is because jpeg files do not have multiple layers.

Should you want to show all of this information outside of your canvas area, go to the image menu, and then Reveal All. This will instantly branch out the canvas to include the image that had been previously cropped.



This is a lot of information to take in, but it's very useful to know these shortcuts and why you might want to crop your photographs. If you want to cancel a crop, click on the universal cancel icon, or just tap the escape key.



Using The Crop Tool

What have we learned today? A Summary

We have learned how to use the crop tool in Photoshop. We've also learned that the crop tool makes it easier to remove distracting aspects in your work, while also preserving cropped information for dynamic editing that photographers usually need. This will become more apparent as you move on to more complex projects.

