

Topic 3 - Photoshop Filters

Learning Outcomes

In this lesson, we're going to take a look at some techniques that make use of some of the more practical filters. We are also going to learn how to convert layers into smart objects for flexibility when applying the filters, and look in detail at the different controls that the filters have.

Advanced Photography

Photoshop Filters

There are well over 100 filters that come with Photoshop, and they're all located under the Filter Menu, which makes it easy for us when we want to find them. A number of these filters are associated with Filter Gallery. On the other hand, other filters are listed under the menu, broken down into smaller categories.

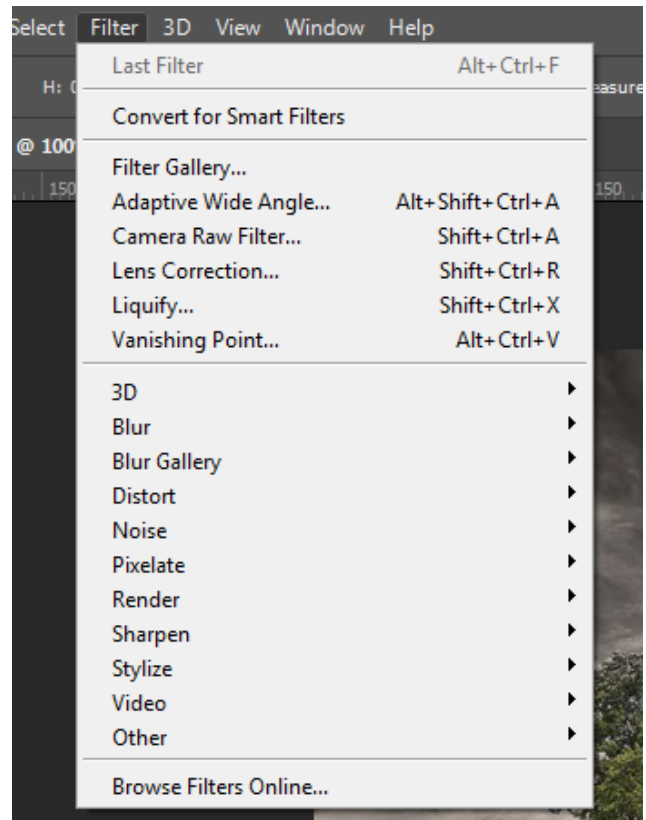
Let's break them up so that it will be easier to know what they are and where they belong. It helps to think of filters as belonging to one of three primary categories:

1. Practical filters,
2. Artistic filters
3. Content creation filters

The practical filters incorporate some keys for sharpening images, reducing noise, and correcting distortions our photography.

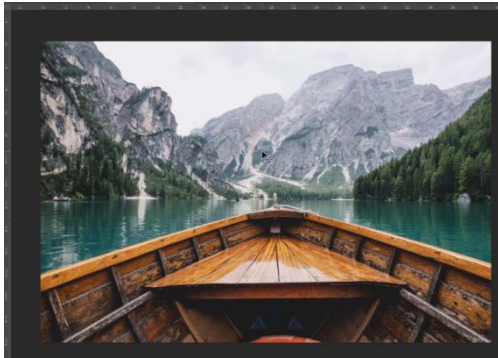
The artistic filters apply creative effects, like the name suggests. These include brush strokes, traditional drawing techniques, and photographic effects, like blurs and glows.

The content creation filters, are useful when you want to render new items, such as trees or clouds.

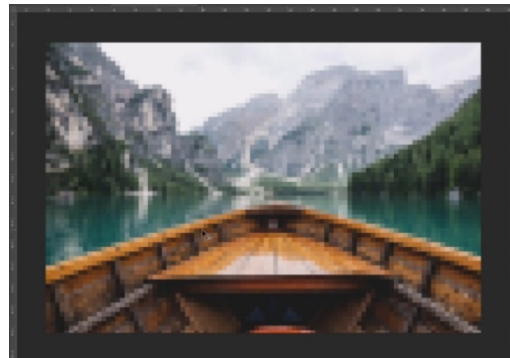


Advanced Photography

Let's begin by pointing out that if you simply select the filter from the list, Photoshop is going to apply that filter and make a permanent change to your image. For example, if we select the Filter menu and then choose Pixelate and we add mosaic to this image, when we click OK, we can see that Photoshop has actually changed the information in the image.



Before mosaic filter



After Mosaic filter

At this moment, we can still undo that change, but if we save this file, then the changes would be permanent. So, let's go ahead and use Command + Z in order to undo that filter, because we definitely do not want this pixilation that we have here.

We want this process to be more flexible and less volatile, so, before we add our filter, let's go and convert our layer to a smart object. There are several different ways that we can do this. From the Layer menu, we can choose Smart Objects and then Convert to Smart Object, we can right-click on the background layer and choose to Convert to Smart Object, or since we are going to be adding a filter anyway, we can use the Filter menu and then pick Convert for Smart Filters. This is entirely the same process as converting to a smart object and as soon as we select it, we can see in the Layers panel that we have the smart object icon.



Advanced Photography

Now, smart filters give us several advantages. First of all, they're not unstable and we can reedit them. Smart filters can be blended with the layer. So, the filter itself can be blended with the layer by changing opacity or applying different blend modes. Smart filters also have their very own filter masks and smart filters can be applied to more than one layer if we convert multiple layers into a single smart object. So, now that we have a smart object, we can add our filter as a smart filter.

Next, let's choose Filter and then Noise and then Add Noise. Now, it doesn't look any different when we add it from the Filter menu, but after we apply those settings, in the Layers panel we can see the smart filter and the smart filter mask. If we want to hide the filter, we can click on the eye icon in order to toggle it off or on. If we want to make changes to the filter, we can double-click and then make edits. Let's move and increase the amount here on this scale, just a little bit, and let's click OK.

If we want to change the blend mode and the opacity for the filter, not for the layer, but for the way the filter is applied to the layer, we can double-click on the icon to the right of the name of the filter. Let's change the blend mode to Soft Light and we can decrease the opacity a little bit. Then we click OK. If we want to mask the filter so that it only appears in some areas of our image, on the Layers panel we need to click on the thumbnail for the smart filter and then we must pick the gradient by tapping the G key and we need to click and drag across the image in order to hide the filter where the mask is black, and reveal the filter where the mask is white.



Advanced Photography

What have we learned in this lesson? A Summary

In this lesson we have learned how to convert layers into smart objects, and we now know about the benefits of working with smart objects and smart filters.

