

## Topic 6 – Introduction to Layers

### Learning Outcomes

In this lesson, we will look at working with layers in Photoshop. This will be important for when we look at layer masking a little later. In fact, this is one area where Photoshop performs very well and it's generally a skill that a lot of digital photographers have in their tool box so if you can practice this and get familiar with the layers panel, it will be great for you and your work.

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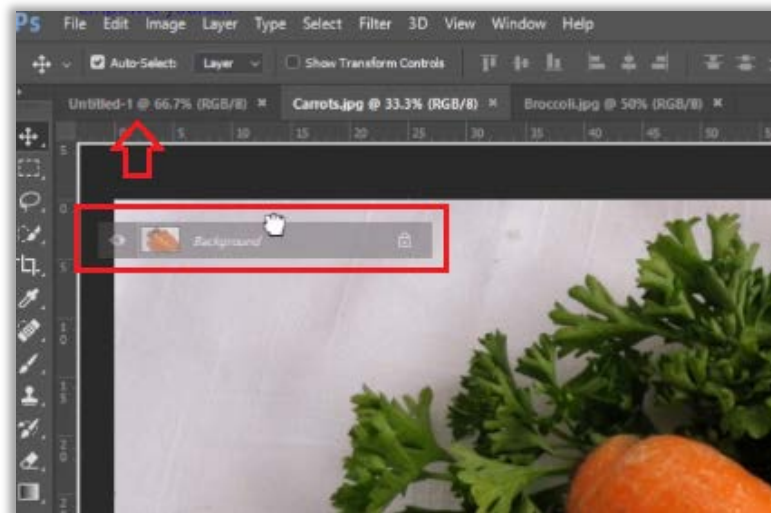
### Introduction to Layers

The key thing about the Layers Panel is that it's all about being able to work with multiple images or photographs in a single document. Let's quickly create a new document. We will pick 1920 pixels by 1080 pixels. We will pick 300 pixels per centimetre. We also want RGB colour in 8-bit with a white background. This would be a pretty standard beginning for me, but depending on the project, this could change. Click OK, and our new document will open up.

Now, in order to add additional files, choose File and then Open. Let's do this again so that we have two images to work with. We could also use the shortcut for this, which is CTRL + O for Windows and COMMAND + O for Mac users. This shortcut is great for quickly opening files. Now, we have three files that are open and we can see the three different tab.

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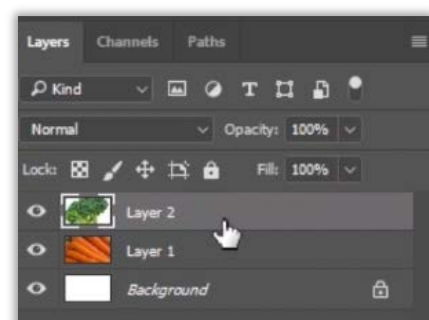
Okay, let's begin by moving the carrots into our blank, or Untitled One tab. We can do this by clicking and dragging from the Layers Panel. Click on the Background and drag this across on top of the tab for Untitled One and this will copy our carrots into the foreground.



You can centre this photograph, by positioning your cursor on the empty canvas area and making sure that you hold down the Shift Key. When you release the cursor, the image will be centred. Let's clear a little space and close that carrots tab as we don't need it anymore.

Let's continue adding files to the Untitled One by dragging the broccoli in the same way we dragged the carrots. Once again, holding down the Shift Key, and then releasing my cursor, will ensure that your photograph is centred. After we have done this, let's close the broccoli tab also. Now we have one tab or document open but we multiple images.

This is now a single, multi-Layered document. In our layers panel, we have our three layers. To control the visibility of each layer, we can toggle this Eye icon. It will hide layers that are unticked/ unchecked.



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As you might expect, we can click on any of the Layers to select that Layer. One thing that really catches a lot of people out when they begin using Photoshop, is that the Background Layer is a unique Layer.

There are a few reasons why this Background layer is different to other layers. We can't move or reposition a Background Layer, meaning that you won't be able to drag it up through other layers to position it in a specific slot. In addition, Background Layers will not hold transparency. You cannot move it because it's locked, and as you can see here, we have a mini padlock to show you this. If you want to unlock it, you simply click on the Lock Icon, and it becomes similar to other layers in that you can reposition the stacking order of layers by dragging it to where you want it. Now, we can have transparency in this layer and we can also erase part of it, should we wish to do so.

We can reposition it wherever we like. Let's reposition at the bottom of the Layer stack. When all of the layers are toggled invisible, you see this checkerboard-like pattern on the canvas. This is transparency in Photoshop, a pattern that is very useful when it comes to layering images on top of one another. Let's just toggle back our layer visibility before we continue.

It's often a very good idea to specifically name your layers – it is especially important when you are dealing with multiple layers. As a guideline, if you have more than two images, renaming them is good practice, just to avoid any confusion. Let's quickly rename each of these by double-clicking on them. Once you have entered in the name, simply hit the ENTER or RETURN key to apply that name change. It's always best to keep it simple too, so let's just say we have white, carrots and broccoli.

Now, there are a number of different routes we can take from here. We could use either the carrots layer or the broccoli layer. We could use both, if we wanted to. Let's say we want to make a simple flyer for a food or vegetable event. We would probably need to create a banner that goes along the top of this image.



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Let's add a guide. Again, there are various ways that we can do this. For this particular task, let's click on View, and New Guide. Here, we can choose the position. If you are using a PC, you will need to type in the value, followed by the percentage sign. Let's say we do 20% and we want a Horizontal Guide. Click OK to finalise that. We can also manually drag out guides, by going under View, selecting Show my Rulers. Then, you can drag out a guide from the ruler area to any position in the open document. Let's undo that by using CTRL + Z or COMMAND + Z for MAC users.

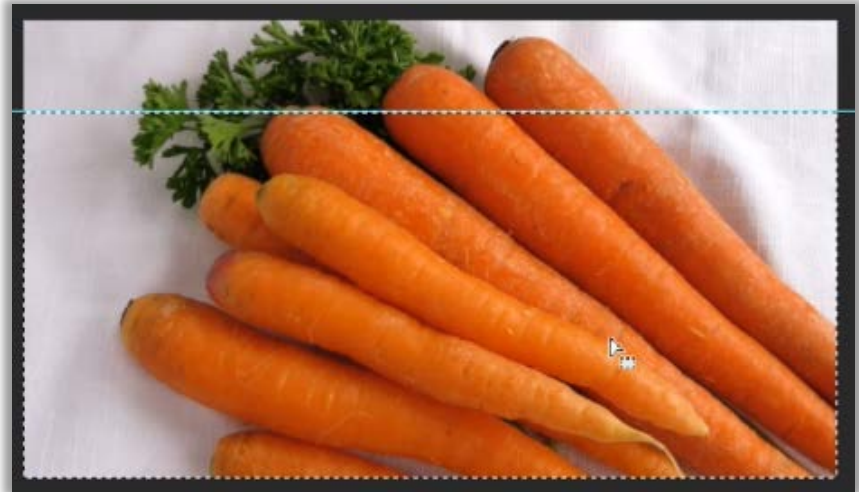
Both layers that we have brought in are pretty large. In fact, they're too big so we will need to resize them. But before we scale them down, it's usually a good idea to hide other layers to ensure that we are just dealing with one at a time. So, let's begin by hiding the broccoli and clicking on the carrots layer, to make sure we have it selected.

Then, we go to Edit and down to Transform and then we click Scale. We have another little problem now and it relates to the carrots file being too big. The problem here refers to the fact that the transformation handles aren't visible to us. To correct this, we need to go to View, and then click Fit on Screen.

We can now see the transformation handles on our screen. Now we are ready to scale it down. However, it's important to remember that we don't want to squash it or to leave it out of proportion. We would like to ensure that its aspect ratio is correct. To do this, we hold down the Shift Key and then we click on any of the corner points which will make our image smaller. Let's go ahead and do this quickly. To apply this, tap the Enter Key, or you can click on the check/ tick mark. So, if we were making a banner, then we only want this to be visible in the top portion of our image, as we may want to write the details of our event in the lower half of the canvas.



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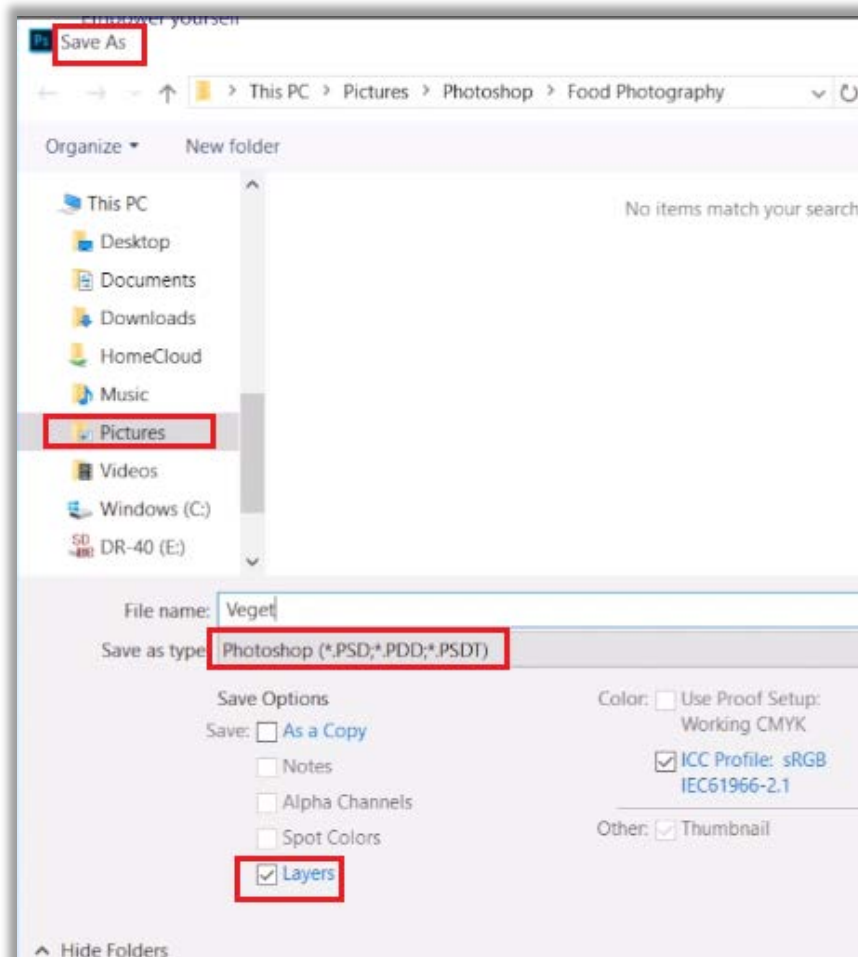
So, we will need to delete the area lower down. To do this, choose the Rectangular Marquee Tool and click and drag so that we can select the area that we want to delete. In this case, we want this bottom area. Once you have your area selected, just tap the Delete Key to remove the section we have highlighted in our photograph. The first thing you will notice now, is that when you look at the Layers Panel, we can see some transparency, denoted by that checkerboard. This is because some of the layer has been deleted. Now, we need to deselect this highlight section and to do this, we can use **COMMAND** or **CTRL + D** or, alternatively, we move to the Select Menu, and then click Deselect. It's much easier and quicker to use the shortcut, so if you can remember that, it will greatly speed up your workflow.

We have the carrots layer sorted so let's make the broccoli layer visible again by clicking on the Eye icon and selecting it in the Layers Panel. The exact same process applies. Go to Edit and Transform, and Scale. This layer is a little smaller to start with, so we can see the transformation handles this time. Again, holding down the Shift Key will scale our photograph uniformly. This is needed to constrain the proportions. When we are happy, we hit Enter or Return to apply this Transformation.



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At this point, we can decide which one we want to use or if we want to use both. Let's keep it simple and go with the carrots. So, we can delete the broccoli layer now that we don't need it anymore. There are two ways that we can do this, we can simply tap the delete key, once the broccoli layer is selected. We can also drag the broccoli Layer down to our Trash icon underneath the Layers Panel.



We can save this file at any point, now that we have done a good bit of work. To do this, go to File, and then Save As. We can name it Vegetable Banner. It's generally a good idea to save it as a Multi-Layered PSD File, which is a working Photoshop file. We can always come back to this at a later time and reedit it in any way that we like. That's the great thing about working Photoshop files. Click save, and if we want to close the file, we go to File, and then Close.



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## What have we learned today? A Summary

We have had a good introduction into working with multiple layers in a document. We have also revised the importance of scaling our photographs uniformly to avoid moving our images out of proportion. Working with layers is one of the most important skills to have when using Photoshop and this lesson will serve as the groundwork for when we move on to further exercises with layers and layer masking.

