

STEVE CAPLIN'S **A** TO **Z** OF DESIGN

F: Filters

Steve Caplin walks us alphabetically through the concepts essential to success for any jobbing or aspiring designer.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Caplin is a designer and illustrator working for a range of national newspapers. His best-selling *How to Cheat in Photoshop*, now in its fourth edition, is published by Focal Press.
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Filters are a quick and easy way to apply special effects to images. Most are customisable, so you can adjust the strength and type of the effect to suit the image you're working on; one or two simply apply a preset effect with no user control.

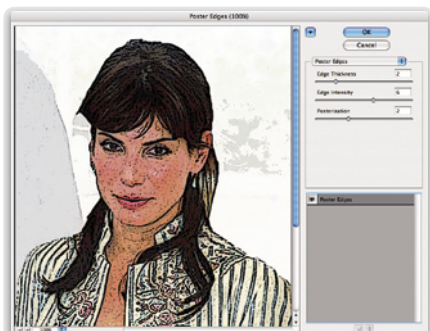
Photoshop's filters fall into two broad categories: the Gallery set, which includes Artistic, Brush Strokes, Distort, Sketch, Stylize and Texture groupings; and all the rest. The Gallery filters were originally bundled as Gallery Effects, and were sold separately, but were later incorporated directly into Photoshop. Whether you choose one of these filters by navigating through the submenus, or by choosing Filter Gallery at the top of the Filters menu, you'll be presented with the same dialog.

The Filter Gallery also allows you to combine multiple filters and apply them to the image in one go. The large preview pane shows the combined effect of as many filters as you choose to stack up. You can even change the order in which the filters are applied by dragging them up and down in the list. Hide the effects of individual filters by clicking on the eye icon next to the filter's name. To add a new filter, click the New Document icon at the bottom.

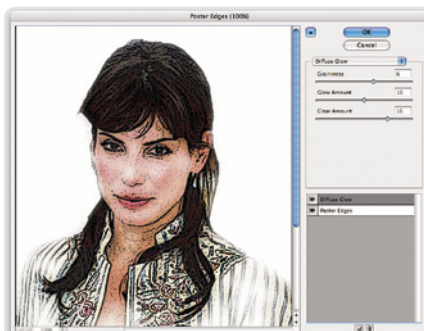
What makes this approach so useful is that in order to achieve special effects such as watercolour, pen and ink drawing or whatever, you need to apply a range of filters one after the other. Rather than choosing a setting and hoping for the best before moving on to the next filter, the Gallery allows you how to modify each filter while seeing precisely how it will effect subsequent effects. Our example shows a sketch effect that uses three filters – Poster Edges, Diffuse Glow and Texturizer – all working in combination.

There are several things you can do after applying a filter or a set of filters using the Gallery. If you choose another layer, pressing command-F will apply the same filter to that layer, in exactly the same way. This is useful when you want to treat a number of layers identically: the keystroke will apply the filter with no dialog.

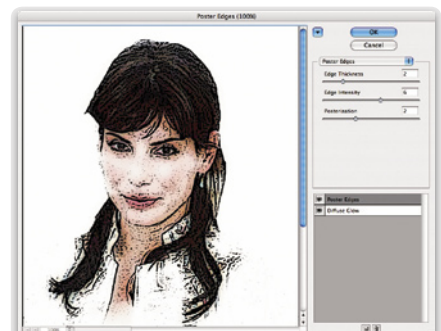
If you've applied a filter and want to change the settings, undo the filter's action and press command-alt-F. This will bring up the filter's dialog, with exactly the settings you previously applied – the difference now is that you can adjust those settings before committing to them. If the previous filter comprised a multiple Filter Gallery stack, then pressing this combination will load



▲ 01 The Poster Edges filter, applied to this photograph of Sandra Bullock, produces a strong graphic effect. Our first step towards creating the impression of a hand-drawn image.



▲ 02 Adding Diffuse Glow to the previous effect brightens the image, adding glowing highlights while hiding the background elements.

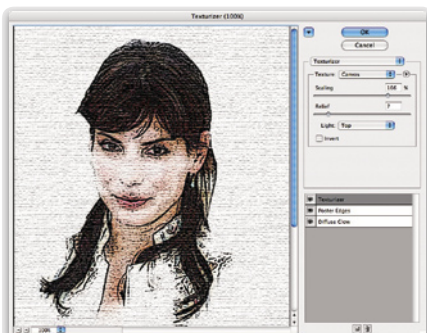


▲ 03 When you drag the Poster Edges effect so it applies after Diffuse Glow, we create a more ethereal feel, as the white shirt fades away into the background.

up the Gallery window with all the filters already lined up exactly as they were the last time you used them.

There's a third, very useful option: immediately after applying any filter, choose Undo and press command-shift-F to bring up the Fade dialog. This reapplies the filter exactly as before, but with a slider that enables you to fade the effect of the filter: dragging to the left will reduce the strength, allowing more of the original layer to show through. In addition, and most usefully, you can change the mode in which the filter was applied using Photoshop's standard light modes: Screen, Multiply, Hard Light and so on. Because you can see the effect of changing to each of these modes before you commit to any of them, it's easy to step through the different modes until you find one that does the job you want. The Fade command means you can greatly enhance each filter's range of operation using this range of extra settings. It's worth noting that you can invoke the Fade command after any brush stroke or adjustment, too.

While most of Photoshop's filters use the colour of the original image, most of those grouped under the Sketch menu (with the exception of Chrome and Water paper)

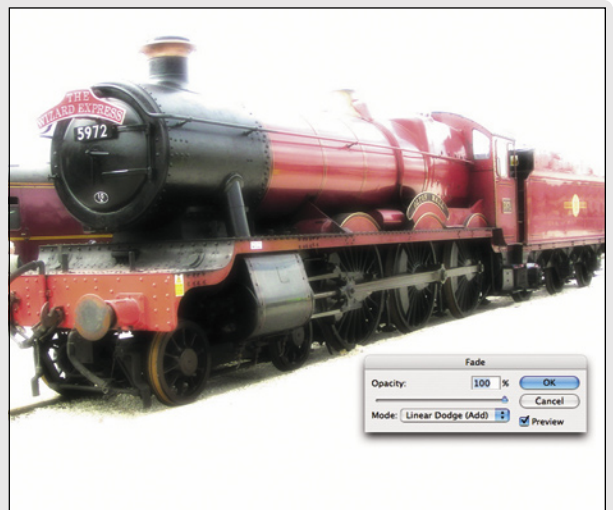


▲ 04 Adding the Texturizer filter with the Canvas setting completes the impression of a hand-drawn sketch on canvas.

► 05 When we apply a lot of Gaussian Blur to this photograph of the *Harry Potter* train, we appear to have damaged the image to the extent that it's now unrecognisable.



► 06 Using the Fade command immediately after the filter, however, allows us to change its mode: here, Linear Dodge gives us a more magical image.



instead produce a two-colour effect using the current foreground and background colours. You can't change these colours while working in the dialog, so you have to guess them before you begin. This is another instance where the ability to repeat a filter comes in useful. If the effect isn't what you want, undo the filter step, adjust the colours and apply the same filter again. The foreground colour also effects one or two other filters, such as the leading in the Stained Glass filter.

The Texturizer filter applies one of four preset textures to an image, distorting the image so it appears to have been printed on a textured surface. You can adjust the lighting direction, and the scale and the strength of the effect, but you can also load other textures to vary the effect. The Patterns folder, inside the Presets folder in your main Photoshop folder, contains a variety of useful textures, and you can also create your own: any Photoshop document can be used as a bump map within the Texturizer filter. So if you find, say, the pattern in the default Canvas texture too

small and repetitive, you can substitute it with a much larger canvas texture of your own for a more convincing result.

Some of the filters make more controllable substitutes for other Photoshop effects. The Threshold adjustment, for example, turns an image to pure black and white, with a slider that sets the cutoff point between the two. However, it frequently produces a very harsh effect, so it's far better to use the Stamp filter (in the Sketch menu), which offers the same light/dark balance slider, but also includes a Smoothness slider that can produce clean results with ease. You can get similar effects using the Note Paper filter, which adds both controllable texture and an embossing effect, and the Torn Edges filter, which produces a threshold image with roughened outlines.

Photoshop CS3 will include Smart Filters, which enable you to adjust the effect of any filter at a future point. Until then, applying a filter to a Photoshop file is an irrevocable step: make sure you duplicate the layer first, so you can easily revert to it and adjust the filter settings as required.