



Ely Photographic
Club

ACTIONS IN PHOTOSHOP

Actions and automating your work.

There are many You Tube videos that allow you to download Actions, but this note shows you how to create your own.

In the top line Window menu select Actions or just click on the Actions arrow tab just under history tab or press Alt + F9. These all open the Actions folder.

To create a new action set, click on the folder icon at the bottom which says, “create new Set”.

Name your new action set. This will then place this in the list of action. You can move it to where you want by Shift clicking and dragging or Alt clicking and dragging to copy and move.

Note: If you open the history panel and drag it to the right, you will be able to see what you are doing step by step.

To create an Action, click on the button that looks like a new layer icon (i.e. + in a square) and then give the action a name and save this in the set you want. In this case it’s the one we just created.

At this stage you have the option to give it a function key (with shift and Ctrl / Command) and / or colour. If you want certain actions on the same topic to be coloured so they are easy to identify.

Button mode shows the colours. This is accessed by clicking on the menu lines icon at the top right of the Actions panel.

You are now ready to start recording so press the “Record” button when creating the action or the record button on the bottom of this menu. The recording button on the action’s menu will turn red showing you are now recording. It’s not a real time recording so there is no rush. It only records your selections as you go.

For example select an adjustment layer such as Vibrancy and this is added to the action list and whatever vibrancy adjustments you make. If you close the adjustment layer just click on the Actions arrow to open the actions panel, it will still be recording.

It won’t show brush strokes etc, unless you tick the box “Allow tool recording” in the Actions menu. However, if you do allow tool recording to add brush strokes etc select a new layer first so these brush strokes are on a new layer not directly on the original layer.

Actions also does not record zooming in or out, see below on how to add this.

On the menu (top right four lines icon) you have various options such as “insert stop”. You can add this as you go.

If you want to add this later select the action item before the one where you want to stop in the action list you have just created (Say just before the vibrancy adjustment layer) and open the menu and select "Insert Stop". You can then add a message. This is if you only want to go so far with this action on some images and stop at that point. You can move it if you get the position wrong but you must stop recording, shift drag it, then start recording again. This is not the same as stopping for adjustments.

If you just add a message, it will stop the action. To allow the action to continue after the stop tick the continue box when selecting stop action, this is especially important otherwise it just stops the action. The message could be "Vibrancy step; Do you want to stop here" if the remainder of the action is only for some images. Its important to add what the next step is otherwise you may not remember what the stop is for.

To stop and make adjustments before continuing, select the button (The rectangle with a bar across) to the left of the action item next to the check mark. This opens a dialog box with the action selected such as New Layer, Brightness/Contrast allows you to make adjustments as you go rather than go in at the end directly on the adjustment layers. It will obviously be quicker if you let it run with no adjustments then you can adjust later if required. However, spotting something as you go can be easier to fix as you can see what caused the issue.

If you select this it allows adjustments at this point, say for example if vibrancy adjustment layer was an action item it could stop here allow you to adjust and then continue. You can select this button for as many or as few items as required.

As some things are not recorded and as stated above this includes zooming in and out so if you want these you need to "Insert Menu Item" from the menu. Click on this and it is now watching out for a menu item.

You have to use the View menu > Fit on Screen or Zoom in or Zoom out as it still won't recognise pressing Ctrl + or - to zoom in or out.

You repeat this for each menu item you want to add.

Don't forget to hit stop recording when finished.

To edit an action start recording and click on a line item and your next selection such as an adjustment layer will be added below the line you clicked on. To remove a line just drag it to the trash bin. Hit stop when finished.

Real World examples

Say you always do a set of steps to process an image in Photoshop.

Say Brightness / Contrast followed by Vibrancy, Hue/Saturation & Curves.

You set up an action with these items listed with the button to the left on and when you run the action it will go through each step to the end and carry out everything you recorded. If you added stops then it will stop, allow adjustment and then proceed.

Another example would be adding a border to your photo. This can be complicated borders with multiple layers.

You can add an action to multiple files and to do this you can use "Batch". If you have several photos in a folder, it can carry out the action to all or the selected photos from a folder, but I will not go into that here as this is a bit more complicated and involves Windows / Mac work but there are videos on this on You Tube if you want to learn this technique.

YOU TUBE VIDEOS

PHLEARN; How to create A Photoshop Action! Batch Edit Images Dated 5th August 2014

PiXimperfect; Reveal the Secret of Any Photoshop Action Dated 7th March 2019; This shows you how to extract a text file of the contents of an Action and then how to follow it.

F64 Academy with Blake Rudis; You Tube Video WOW! Reflection + Sky replacement in PHOTOSHOP! Dated 18th March 2021 to get the PS Action. Blake explains what's in it as he goes through the video.

Photography By Feaver; How to Install and Export Actions in Photoshop CC Dated 15th September 2020; A 2 minute video on how to install & export actions.