

Understanding Layers

Layers keep different regions of an image separate from one another, such as separating text from the background, and shapes from text. Use the **Layers** tab to select the layer to work on.

In a typical Photo Explosion image, the Background layer behaves like a conventional, flat image. Think of it as paint on an opaque, solid color surface.

You can create any number of layers in an image. Each new layer appears on top of the currently active layer, creating a stack that you can view and manipulate using the **Layers** tab.

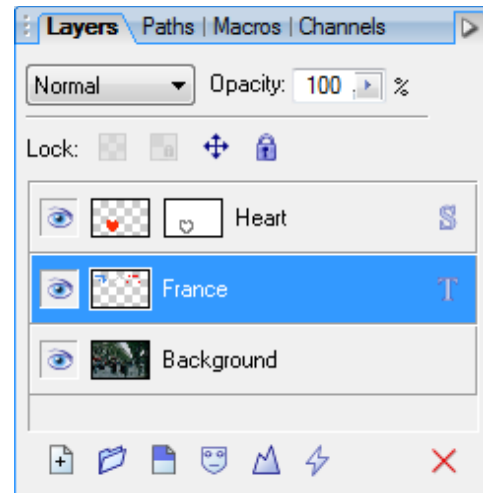


Photo Explosion differentiates between the following types of layers:

- Shape layers are specifically designed to keep drawn lines and shapes, including QuickShapes, separate from the other layers so that you can edit the shapes. For more information about shapes, see [Chapter 21: Working with Shapes and Lines on page 233](#).
- Text layers are similar to shape layers, but they're used exclusively for text. For more information about text, see [Chapter 20: Working with Text on page 227](#).
- Adjustment layers apply corrective image adjustments to lower layers. For more information about adjustment layers, see [“Using Adjustment Layers” on page 174](#).

Note: Adjustment layers are available only in *Photo Explosion Deluxe*.

- Standard layers are additional layers in an image that aren't shape, text, or adjustment layers. Pixels on standard layers are always transparent.
- Filter layers are like standard layers, but you can apply one or more filter effects to a layer without permanently altering its content. You can also control the effects. For more information about filter layers, see [“Using Filter Layers” on page 173](#).

If you cut, delete, or move a selection on the Background layer, the space that's left exposes the background color selected on the **Color** tab. If you perform these tasks on a standard layer, the space is transparent.

Many standard tasks, such as painting, selecting, and moving; cutting, copying, and pasting; adjusting colors; applying effects; and so on, are possible on the Background layer and standard layers.

Other tasks, such as rearranging the order of layers in the stack, setting up different color interactions between layers, varying layer opacity, applying 2D and 3D layer effects, using depth maps, masking, or creating animation frames, are possible only on standard layers.

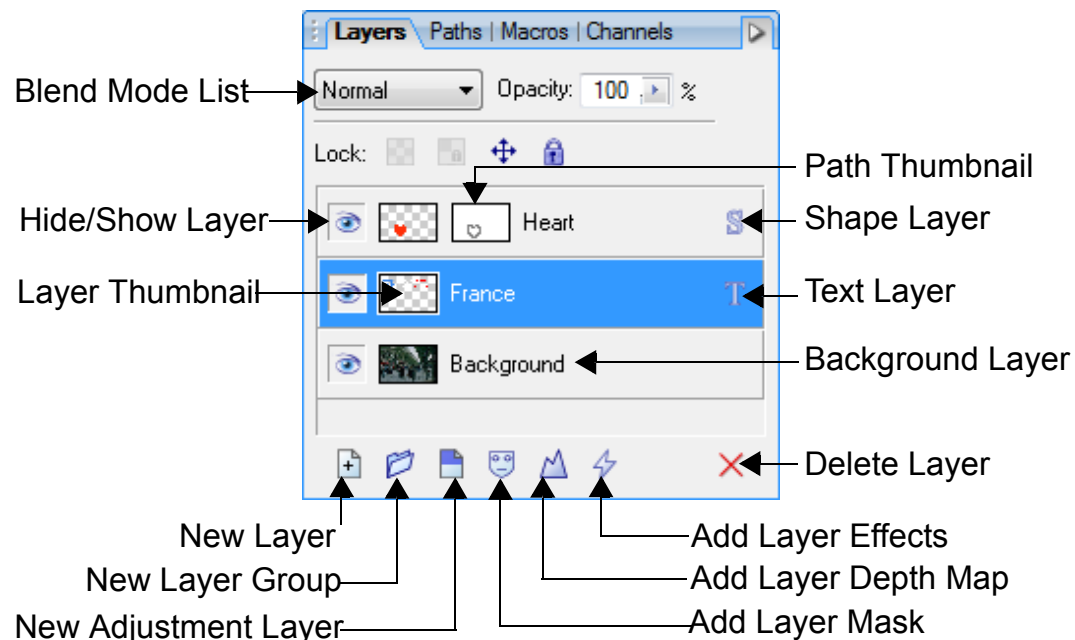
When an image includes more than just a Background layer, to preserve the layer information, you must save the image in Photo Explosion (PEX) format. When you save an image in a standard, flat bitmap format, such as PNG, multiple layers are merged, or flattened. Save your images as PEX files, and export to a different file format when you're finished.

Selecting Layers

To select a layer:

- On the **Layers** tab, click the layer's name.

The selected layer becomes the active layer. Each layer's entry includes a Layer thumbnail, which is visible at all times. Shape layers are marked with an "S" and text layers are marked with a "T".



To select multiple layers:

- On the **Layers** tab, press **Ctrl**+click to select multiple layers that aren't adjacent to one another.
- On the **Layers** tab, press **Shift**+click to select multiple layers that are adjacent to one another.

After you select layers, you can move, link, align, duplicate, group, rearrange, hide, merge, and delete them.

To select all layers:

- Open the **Layers** menu and select **Select All Layers**.

To select linked layers:

- Open the **Layers** menu and select **Select Linked Layers**.

Creating New Layers

To create a new standard layer above the active layer:

- On the **Layers** tab, click the **New Layer** button.



To create a new adjustment layer:

- Click the **New Adjustment Layer** button to apply an image adjustment to a layer. For more information about adjustments, see [“Using Adjustment Layers” on page 174](#).



Note: <i>Adjustment layers are available only in Photo Explosion Deluxe.</i>

To create a new standard layer from a selection:

- Open the **Layers** menu and select **New Layer from Selection Copy** to create a copy of the selection and create a new layer.
- Open the **Layers** menu and select **New Layer from Selection Cut** to cut the selection and create a new layer.

Duplicating Layers

You can duplicate one or more active layers and their contents to create new standard layers. If you duplicate layers when you retouch or repair photos, you can see the changes before you apply them. For more information about retouching and repairing photos, see [“Retouching Images” on page 252](#).

To duplicate layers:

- On the **Layers** tab, right-click the selected layers and select **Duplicate**.

Editing Layers

To create a mask on the active layer:

- On the **Layers** tab, click the **Add Layer Mask** button to add a mask to the active layer.



To create a depth map on the selected layer:

- On the **Layers** tab, click the **Add Layer Depth Map** button to create a depth map on the selected layer.

For more information about depth maps, see [“Using Depth Maps” on page 178](#).



To create an effect on a selected layer:

1. On the **Layers** tab, click the **Add Layer Effects** button to create a 2D or 3D effect on the layer.
2. Right-click the layer to copy, paste, show, or hide effects.



To show and hide layers:

- Click the **Hide/Show Layer** button next to the layer name on the **Layers** tab.



The icon switches between an open and closed eye.

To lock layers:

- Click the **Lock Pixel Opacity** button to prevent modifying the layer's opacity.
- Click the **Lock Pixels** button to prevent modifying the layer's color.
- Click the **Lock Layer Position** button to prevent modifying the positions of objects on the layer.
- Click the **Lock All** button to prevent editing the layer.



To change the thumbnail sizes on the **Layers** tab:

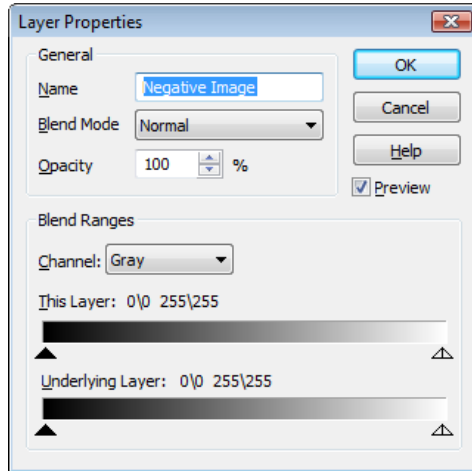
- On the **Layers** tab, click the **Tab Menu** button, and select **Small Thumbnails** or **Large Thumbnails**.



You can edit layer properties, including Name, Blend Mode, Opacity, and Blend Ranges.

To open the *Layer Properties* dialog box:

- On the **Layers** tab, right-click the layer name and select **Properties**.



Adjusting Opacity and Transparency

An opaque object is solid; it can't be seen through. Opaque is the opposite of transparent. When an item is transparent, it is clear, or see-through. The higher the opacity, the less transparent the object.

Opacity and transparency describe how much a particular pixel's color contributes to the overall color in the image. Fully opaque pixels contribute their full color value to the image. Fully transparent pixels are invisible—they contribute nothing to the image. Pixels in between are semi-transparent.

Opacity is a property of the pixels created by individual tools. When you paint with a tool, you apply pixels, which are more or less opaque, depending on the tool's opacity setting. Opacity is also a property of individual standard layers. The layer's opacity setting affects all the pixels on the layer.

Pixels on the Background layer are always completely opaque, while those on standard layers can vary in opacity. Standard layers include a master opacity setting that you can change. The Background layer does not.

Setting a Tool's Opacity

To set a tool's opacity:

1. Select the tool.
2. On the Context toolbar, from the **Opacity** list, select a percentage, or type a value in the **Opacity** box.



Setting a Layer's Opacity

To set a layer's opacity:

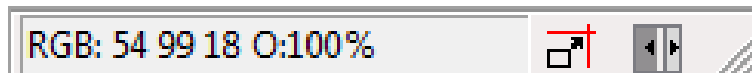
1. On the **Layers** tab, select the layer.
2. On the Context toolbar, from the **Opacity** list, select a percentage, or type a value in the **Opacity** box.

The layer's opacity changes as you adjust it.

Reading Layer Opacity Values

To read the opacity values of pixels on the active layer:

1. Click the **Color Pickup Tool** button on the Tools toolbar.
2. Move the tool to the image.
3. Read the value shown for “O” (Opacity) on the status bar, for example, O:100%.



Editing Layer Content

To move layer content:

1. On the **Layers** tab, select one or more layers that contain the content to be moved,
2. Deselect any items on the layer by pressing **Ctrl+D**.
3. Click the **Move Tool** button on the Tools toolbar.
4. Drag the layer.



To align layer content:

1. On the **Layers** tab, select one or more layers.
2. Open the **Layers** menu and select **Align**, and then select a command.