# How to retouch photos

Other than correcting color, one of the most common tasks you will perform in Adobe Photoshop is retouching photos to correct imperfections, edit out undesired parts of the photo, and correct problems that result from the photo-taking process. This guide covers several ways to retouch photos using the Retouching tools (**Figure 1**), including use of the Spot Healing Brush tool, the Red Eye tool, the Patch tool, and the Content-Aware Move tool. Use these tools individually, or in combination to fine-tune your photo retouching tasks.
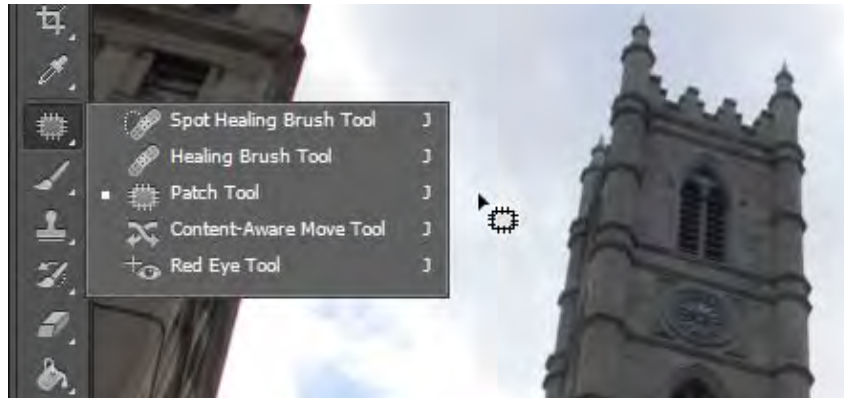
Figure 1 Retouching tools

Using the History panel

Because retouching can require trial and error, you should know how to use the History panel to undo steps.

Like most computer users, you're probably aware of the Undo command available in many applications. This command lets you undo the effects of whatever command you've just applied.

Photoshop takes the Undo command several steps further with the History panel. The History panel keeps track of the last 20 commands you've applied to an image, allowing you to revert to any one of these. When you execute a command, such as transforming an image or adding text, these are added to the History panel. The commands appear in the list in the order in which you performed them. Each command is listed with the name of the tool or command you used to change the image.

You can also take a "snapshot" of a particular set of commands, allowing you to revert to this snapshot later.

Note: Although the History panel is great, it does consume memory (RAM), as do layers. So, if you're working with a complex, multilayered image, you may want to reduce the number of History commands saved. You can do so by choosing Edit > Preferences > Performance (Windows) or Photoshop > Preferences > Performance (Mac OS).

To use the History panel:

1. Open an image in Photoshop.

2. Click the History button in the right-side panel set (or choose Window > History) to open the History panel (**Figure 2**).

3. Execute several commands—such as selecting a part of the image, applying a filter, and adding a layer.

   The point is to add some commands to the History panel.
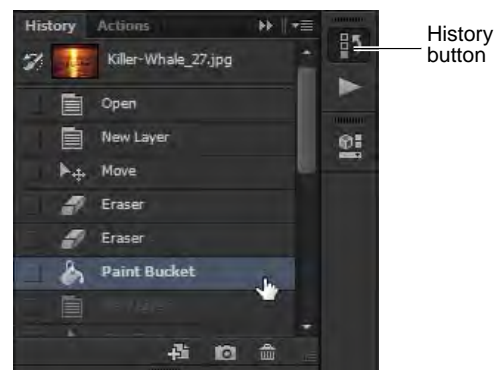

Figure 2 History panel

4. Click one of the earlier commands, such as Move (**Figure 3**).

    Observe that the image reverts to its appearance at the time this command was executed. Any commands executed afterward are temporarily discarded and appear dimmed. In **Figure 3**, for example, the Eraser, Paint Bucket and New Layer are dimmed and the effects no longer appear in the image.

    At this point, the later commands are still available in the panel (if you select either). However, if you execute another command, the dimmed commands will be permanently discarded.

5. To delete a command, select it and then click the Delete icon (**Figure 3**).

    The image permanently reverts to the command prior to the deleted command.
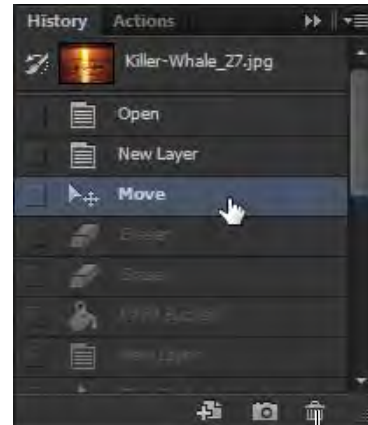

Delete icon

Figure 3 Earlier command selected

Taking a snapshot

You can use the Snapshot feature to capture the image as it appears at any point in the list of History commands. Once you're satisfied with an image, it's a good idea to take a snapshot.

To take a snapshot:

1. Click the History command you want to capture.

2. Click the Snapshot icon (**Figure 4**).

3. Scroll to the top of the History panel as necessary to view the snapshot (**Figure 3**).

4. To revert to the snapshot, click it as you would any other History command.

    You can compare different snapshots by clicking on them.
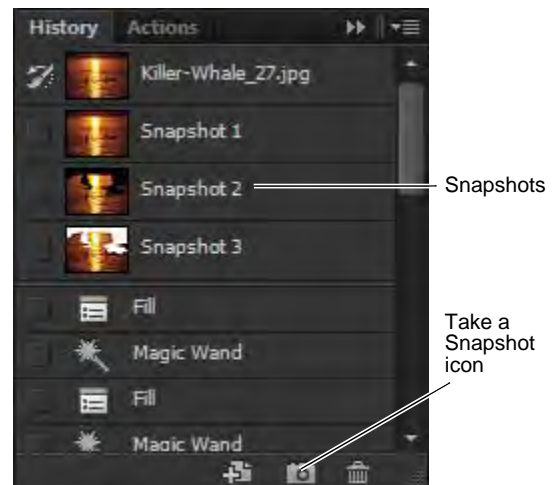
Snapshots

Take a Snapshot icon

Figure 4 Snapshots in the History panel

Using the Spot Healing Brush tool

The Spot Healing Brush tool quickly removes blemishes and other imperfections in your photos. The Spot Healing Brush works similarly to the Healing Brush: it paints with sampled pixels from an image or pattern and matches the texture, lighting, transparency, and shading of the sampled pixels to the pixels being healed. Unlike the Healing Brush, the Spot Healing Brush doesn't require you to specify a sample spot. The Spot Healing Brush automatically samples from around the retouched area.

Note: If you need to retouch a large area or need to better define the source sampling area, you can use the Healing Brush instead of the Spot Healing Brush.

To use the Spot Healing Brush tool:

1. Click the Spot Healing Brush tool in the Tools panel.

   The pointer changes to a brush. Usually the brush appears as a circle.

2. You can change the size or shape of the brush in the Options bar (**Figure 5**).

   The brush should be large enough to cover the entire spot, with some room around the edges.

3. Confirm that the Content-Aware option is selected.

   Content-Aware seamlessly fills the selection with similar image content from nearby. For the best results, create a selection that extends slightly into the area you want to replicate.

4. Position the Spot Healing Brush tool over the area you want to correct (**Figure 6**).

5. Click to apply the correction (**Figure 7**).
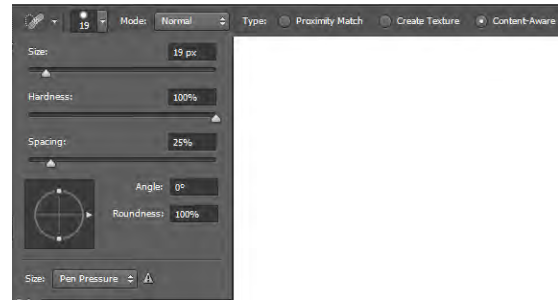
Figure 5 Brush options
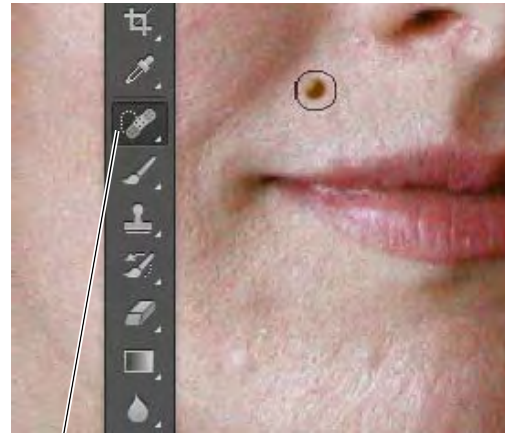
Spot Healing Brush tool

Figure 6 Spot Healing brush positioned over a blemish

Figure 7 Spot Healing brush applied

Using the Red Eye tool

When you take photos with a flash, red eye can often result. You can quickly correct red eye in flash photos of people or animals with the Red Eye tool.

To use the Red Eye tool:

1. Click the Red Eye tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 8**).

2. Position the Red Eye tool over the pupil you want to correct.

3. If you are not satisfied with the result, undo the correction, set one or more of the following options in the options bar (**Figure 9**), and click the red eye again.
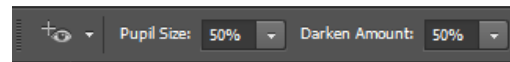
   Pupil Size increases or decreases the area affected by the Red Eye tool.

   Darken Amount sets the darkness of the correction.
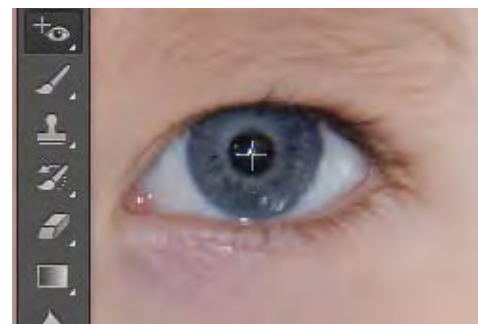
4. Click to apply the correction (**Figure 10**).
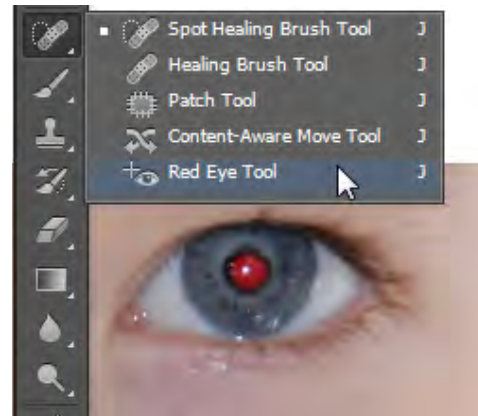
Figure 8 Red Eye tool

Figure 9 Red Eye tool options

Figure 10 Red Eye tool applied

Using the Patch tool

The Patch tool lets you repair a selected area with pixels from another area or a pattern. The Patch tool matches the texture, lighting, and shading of the sampled pixels to the source pixels, making an imperfection disappear into the surrounding image. You can also use the Patch tool to clone isolated areas of an image.

Note: When repairing with pixels from the image, select a small area to produce the best result.

To use the Patch tool:

1. Identify the object you want to remove from an image.

   For example, you can remove the lightpost from the tourist landmark photo shown in **Figure 11**.


Figure 11 Initial image to be patched

2. Select the Patch tool.

3. Drag in the image to select the area you want to repair, and confirm that the Source option is selected in the options bar (**Figure 12**).

    Note: You can also make a selection prior to selecting the Patch tool.

4. To adjust the selection, do one of the following:

    •   Shift-drag in the image to add to the existing selection.

    •   Alt-drag (Windows) or Option-drag (Mac OS) in the image to subtract from the existing selection.

    •   Alt+Shift-drag (Windows) or Option+Shift-drag (Mac OS) in the image to select an area intersected by the existing selection.

5. Position the pointer inside the selection, and drag the selection border to the area from which you want to sample (**Figure 13**). When you release the mouse button, the originally selected area is patched with the sampled pixels (**Figure 14**).
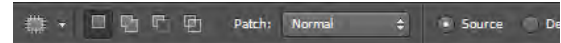
Figure 12 Patch tool options

Figure 13 Drag the selection to the sample area

Figure 14 The patched image

Using the Content-Aware Move tool

The Content-Aware Move tool functions in a similar way to the Patch tool, with the exception that dragging a selection relocates a selected part of an image to a new location. The Content-Aware Move tool automatically samples from around the selection area are to blend together the moved content with the background pixels.

To use the Content-Aware Move tool:

1. Identify the object you want to move in an image.

    For example, continuing work on the tourist landmark photo shown in **Figure 11**, it might be preferable to move the right-most building away from the looming office building on the left.

2. Drag in the image to select the area you want to move. Be sure to leave enough of a margin that edge-region pixels can be suitably blended with background pixels.

    Note: You can also make a selection prior to selecting the Patch tool.

3. To adjust the selection, do one of the following:

    •   Shift-drag in the image to add to the existing selection.

    •   Alt-drag (Windows) or Option-drag (Mac OS) in the image to subtract from the existing selection.

    •   Alt+Shift-drag (Windows) or Option+Shift-drag (Mac OS) in the image to select an area intersected by the existing selection.

4. Position the pointer inside the selection, and drag the selection border to the area from which you want to move the selection (**Figure 15**). When you release the mouse button, the originally selected area is moved (**Figure 16**).
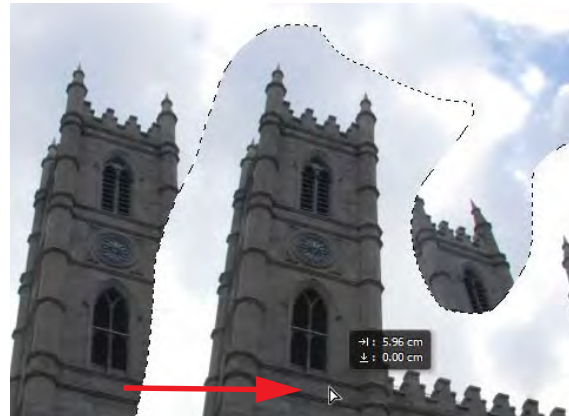
Figure 15 Dragging the image content to be moved

Figure 16 The final retouched image