BRUSH TOOL BASICS

Selecting the Brush Tool
You can select the Brush Tool by clicking the icon in the Toolbar or by pressing the letter B (for "Brush Tool") on your keyboard:

Click on the Brush Tool icon in the Toolbar or press "B" to quickly select the Brush Tool.

Brush cursor options
As you paint on the screen you can show a crosshair in the center of the Brush Tip by enabling it in Photoshop Preferences. To open the Preferences on a Windows PC, go up to the Edit menu in the Menu Bar. On a Mac, go up to the Photoshop CC menu. From there, choose Preferences, and then Cursors:

Opening the Cursors Preferences. Selecting "Show Crosshair in Brush Tip" option.
Select the option that says "Show Crosshair in Brush Tip" and then click OK to close the dialog box. The next time you paint with the Brush Tool, you'll see a crosshair in the center of the cursor:

![Crosshair](image)

The crosshair marks the center of the brush cursor.

**Painting with smooth brush strokes**

Photoshop does not paint in continuous strokes. Instead, Photoshop "stamps" the document with dots of the current brush tip as you drag your mouse. If the stamps (dots) appear close enough together the illusion of a seamless brush stroke appears, but if the stamps are spaced apart from each other, the individual dots become obvious and the brush stroke appears ridged. Depending on the effect you're going for (like creating a dotted line, for example), you may want a lot of spacing between the stamps, but in most cases, a seamless brush stroke is more desirable.

![Brush Strokes](image)

Photoshop's brush strokes may have bumpy edges.

To reduce stamp spacing for smoother strokes, open the **Window** menu in the Menu Bar and choose **Brush Settings** (called the **Brush panel** in Photoshop CS6). At the bottom of the Brush Settings panel is a **Brush Preview** showing the brush stroke with the current settings. Above the Brush Preview is the **Spacing** option. The default Spacing of **25%** produces a stroke that appears slightly ridged:
Brush Settings in the Menu Bar. The default Spacing value for the brush stroke.

Increasing the Spacing value produces a stroke clearly showing the individual dots. Lowering the value to 10% (or less) produces a much smoother and cleaner brush stroke:

Dots are obvious at higher Spacing values. Dots disappear at lower Spacing values.

Ways to change the brush tip size

**The Brush Preset Picker**
With a brush tool selected, **right-click** (Win) / **Control-click** (Mac) in the document to bring up the Brush Preset Picker and drag the Size slider left or right to adjust the brush size:

Changing the brush size from the Brush Preset Picker.
The Bracket Keys
Pressing the left bracket key ( [ ) repeatedly will make your brush smaller. Pressing the right bracket key ( ] ) repeatedly will make it larger. As you press the keys, the size of your brush cursor changes on the screen, and you'll see the brush size value updating in the Options Bar:

![Options Bar](image)

The current brush size is shown in the Options Bar.

The HUD (Heads Up Display)
Another way to change the brush size is the HUD, or Heads Up Display.

![HUD](image)

The HUD (the red circle is the brush preview).

To access the HUD on a Windows PC, press and hold the Alt key on your keyboard and right-click in the document. On a Mac, press and hold your Control and Option keys and left-click. Keep your mouse button held down and you'll see the HUD showing a preview of your brush cursor, along with its current size (Diameter), the Hardness of the brush, and the Opacity.

You can release the Alt key (Win) or the Control and Option keys (Mac) and the HUD will stay open for as long as your mouse button is held down. To adjust the brush size, drag left or right. Dragging to the right will make the brush larger, and dragging to the left will make it smaller. As you drag, the size of the brush preview will change and you'll see the brush size value updating in the Options Bar.

Changing brush hardness with the HUD
The HUD can also be used to adjust brush hardness. The current Hardness value is shown below the Diameter value. To increase or decrease the hardness, keep your mouse button held and drag up or down. Lowering the hardness makes the brush edges softer, increasing the hardness makes the brush edges sharper. The brush preview outline will update:
Drag up or down with the HUD to change the brush hardness.

How to change the HUD's brush preview color
The brush preview color (red in the examples) can be changed in Photoshop's Preferences. Open the Preferences by pressing Ctrl+K (Win) / Command+K (Mac) on your keyboard, then the Cursors category:

Selecting the Cursors preferences. Choosing a new color.

To change the preview color, click the Brush Preview color swatch and choose a new color from the Color Picker. Then click OK to close the Preferences dialog box.

The HUD Color Picker
The HUD can also be used to quickly choose new colors as we paint. The current brush color is shown in the Foreground color swatch in the Options Bar. The most common way to change the brush color is to click on the swatch, then choose a new color from the Color Picker:
The Foreground swatch. Choosing a new brush color from the Color Picker.

Using the HUD Color Picker
To open the HUD Color Picker on a Windows PC, press and hold your Shift and Alt keys and right-click in the document. On a Mac, press and hold the Command, the Control, and the Options keys and left-click.

This opens the default HUD Color Picker, with a Hue strip along the right and what Adobe calls the Hue cube on the left. You can release the Shift and Alt keys (Win) or the Command, Control and Option keys (Mac). The HUD Color Picker will stay open for as long as your mouse button stays down:

The default HUD Color Picker. The Hue Cube is on the left and the Hue Strip is on the right.

To choose a brush color, continue to hold down the mouse button and drag the cursor into the Hue strip on the right, then drag up or down inside the strip to select a main hue:
Choosing a main brush hue from the Hue strip.

Next, continue to hold the mouse button down and drag the cursor into the Hue cube on the left. Move the cursor up or down inside the cube to set the brightness of the color, and move left or right to set the saturation. Releasing the mouse button sets the foreground color and closes the HUD:

Setting the brightness and saturation in the Hue cube.

HUD Color Picker versions
There are other HUD Color Picker versions available. Press Ctrl+K (Win) / Command+K (Mac) to open Photoshop's Preferences. Then look for the HUD Color Picker option at the top. By default, it's set to Hue Strip (Small):

The HUD Color Picker option in Photoshop's Preferences.

Click on the current option to select a different size (Medium or Large) for the Hue Strip. Or you can switch to the Hue Wheel, with various sizes to choose from:
Switching to the "Hue Wheel".

Choosing a color from the Hue Wheel.

**Brush Blend Modes**

Photoshop's **brush blend modes**, found in the Options Bar whenever a brush tool is active, control how the brush interacts with the layer, and how a brush stroke interacts with other brush strokes:

The brush blend modes in the Options Bar.

Clicking the Blend Mode option in the Options Bar opens the complete list of blend modes for the brush tool. Most of them are the same as those found in the Layers panel:
Photoshop's brush blend modes.

Another way to switch between brush blend modes as you're working is to hold down the Shift key and right-click in the document. Or on a Mac, hold the Shift and Control keys and left-click. Then choose the blend mode from the list. When you're done with the brush you can set the blend mode back to Normal to avoid unexpected results the next time you use it.

Importing brushes and brush packs
You can import a wide variety of free and purchased brushes—for example, Kyle's Photoshop brush packs—into Photoshop. Follow these steps:

1. In the Brushes panel, from the flyout menu, choose Get More Brushes.

Select Get More Brushes from the Brushes panel flyout menu...
Alternatively, right-click a brush listed in the Brushes panel and select **Get More Brushes** from the contextual menu.

Right-click a brush and select Get More Brushes...

2. Download a brush pack. For example, download Kyle's "Megapack".

3. With Photoshop running, double-click the downloaded ABR file.

   The brushes you added are now displayed in the **Brushes** panel.

**Note:** You can also use the **Import Brushes** option in the Brushes panel flyout menu to locate the downloaded ABR file and open it. Once you do so, the downloaded brushes are added to the Brushes panel.