

9 The Cloning and Healing Tools

The cloning and healing tools in Photoshop are very powerful and have many uses such as:

- Repairing and restoring old photographs.
- Removing unwanted or distracting elements from an image.
- Improving portrait and fashion shots by fixing blemishes and creases.
- Removing sensor dust spots from images.
- Recomposing an image by relocating elements.
- Place elements from one image into another image.

These tools have made Photoshop famous (and infamous), particularly in the area of retouching fashion and celebrity images. It's not my place to preach about the moral and ethical issues involved in retouching images. However, I will say that it's a good idea to consult with the subject before you start trying to make them look 20 years younger (or older) and respect their wishes.

The Healing Tools

The healing tools (fig 9.1) consist of:

The Spot Healing Brush tool – this is probably the easiest of the healing tool to get to grips with.

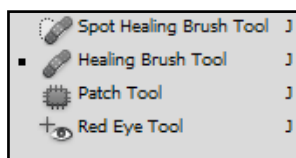


Fig 9.1 the Healing tools

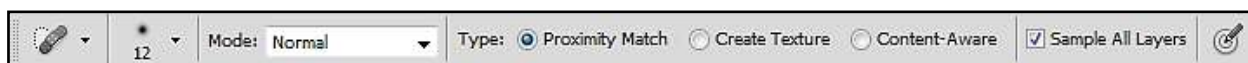


Fig 9.2 the Spot Healing Brush Options panel

The Spot Healing Brush options panel (fig 9.2) has a “Sample All Layers” check box. When selected, it allows you to work non-destructively, by creating a blank layer and using it to contain the edits. When you paint on the blank layer with the Spot Healing Brush, Photoshop will look at the layers below and copy those pixels to the new layer, taking in to account the properties of the brush.

The physical properties of the Spot Healing Brush may be altered by using the drop down menu in the Options panel, fig 9.3.

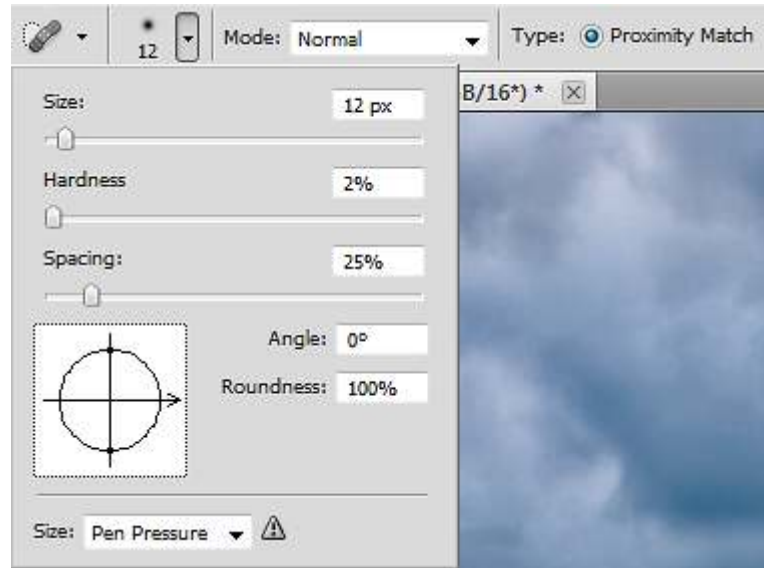


Fig 9.3 alter the brush properties from the drop down menu in the Options panel.

There are three different types of healing which can be selected from the Options panel:

1. Proximity Match - heals the target area with the closely surrounding pixels
2. Create Texture – works in a similar way to Proximity Match but will attempt to create a texture to match surrounding patterns/noise etc.

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3. Content Aware – tries to replace the pixels with similar pixels found close by.

All of these options will attempt to blend the painted area with its surrounding pixels to create seamless tones. Occasionally, it may take a couple of passes with the brush to get a satisfactory result.

The Healing Brush Tool – like the Spot Healing Brush, will also attempt to blend the painted area with the surrounding pixels. How it differs, is that you sample the pixels that you wish to paint with manually. To do this, hold down the Alt/Option (PC/Mac) and click on a clean area of the image. When you paint, the brush will replace the target pixels with the ones that you've sampled and blend them seamlessly, fig 9.4.



Fig 9.4 on the left is a prominent sensor dust spot. On the right we have the same area fixed using the Healing Brush.

An important setting for the Healing Brush tool is the Aligned tick box in the Options panel. When this is ticked, the sample area will move relative to the target area when you paint on a new area. If unchecked the sample area will remain in the same place no matter where you paint in the image. You will usually want to have Aligned ticked to avoid repetitive patterns forming in your image.


The Patch Tool – this tool cannot be used in the “Sample all Layers” mode so it will not work in a blank layer. To avoid damaging your original image, select duplicate later from the Layers panel flyout menu, located in the top right hand corner of the panel. The Patch tool is usually used for fixing large areas and has two different modes in the Options panel:

1. Source – use the Patch tool to draw a loose selection around the area that you wish to fix. Once you have your completed selection outline, click inside the selected area and drag it to a good part of the image. As you drag the selection you will notice the target area change to reflect the pixels in the area you are currently sampling. When you let go of the mouse button the sample area will be set and the original selected area will be replaced with the sampled area and the surrounding pixels will be blended seamlessly.
2. Destination - this mode is the opposite of “Source”. In this instance, you first select a good part of the image and then drag it over the area that you wish to fix.

You can also use the patch tool in conjunction with the Selection tools. Make a selection using any of the Selection tools and then switch to the Patch tool to drag the selection to the sample area.

The Redeye Tool – this tool fixes the problem of Redeye caused by on camera flashes, where there appears to be a red glow coming from the subject pupils. To use this tool, simply click and drag to draw a box over the eye. In most case the default settings will do a pretty good job, but if you need to change the settings, you can increase or decrease the Pupil Size and Darken Amount from the Options panel.

The Clone Stamp Tool

The Clone Stamp tool  works in a similar fashion to the Healing Brush tool, in that the sample point is set manually by Alt/Option (PC/Mac) clicking. The major difference between these two tools is that Clone Stamp tool does not blend its results with the surrounding pixels. This is invaluable when fixing a portion of an image that contains hard edges. All of the Healing tools would try and blend with the surrounding pixels and blur any edge details in the image, whereas the Clone Stamp tool would allow you to paint right up to those edges without any problem.

Another advantage of the Clone Stamp tool over the Healing tools, is that you can assign any brush tip shape. This means that you can use the Brush panel to create textured and randomized brushes to use with the Clone Stamp tool.



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