

2 Basic Operations

Opening Files

Open

As with most programs, the option to open a file can be found in the File menu, fig 2.1. This operation also has a keyboard shortcut Ctrl-O/Command-O (PC/Mac).

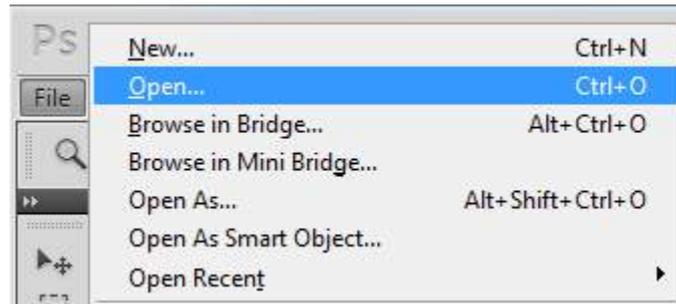


Fig 2.1 opening a file from the file menu

Once you've selected to open a file, the Open dialogue box will appear. From here you can navigate to your files and images, fig 2.2.

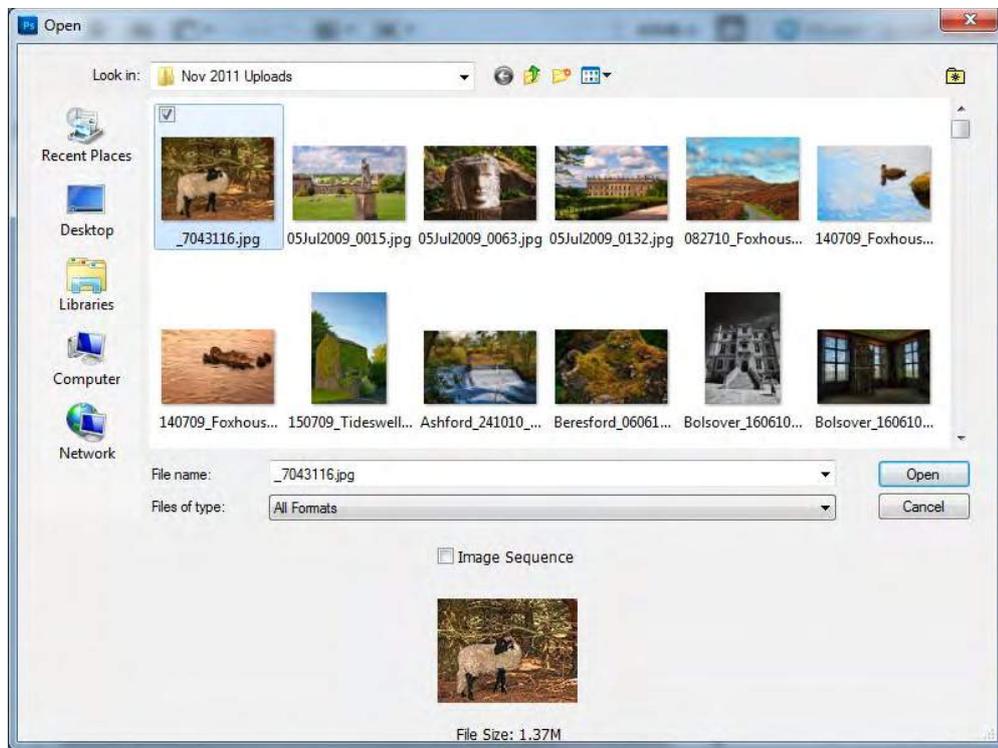


Fig 2.2 the Open dialogue box

Open As

In addition to the standard Open option in the File menu, there is also choice to Open As. The Open As dialogue box is almost identical to the Open dialogue box, except that it allows you open an image in one format and have it appear in Photoshop as a different format, Fig 2.3.

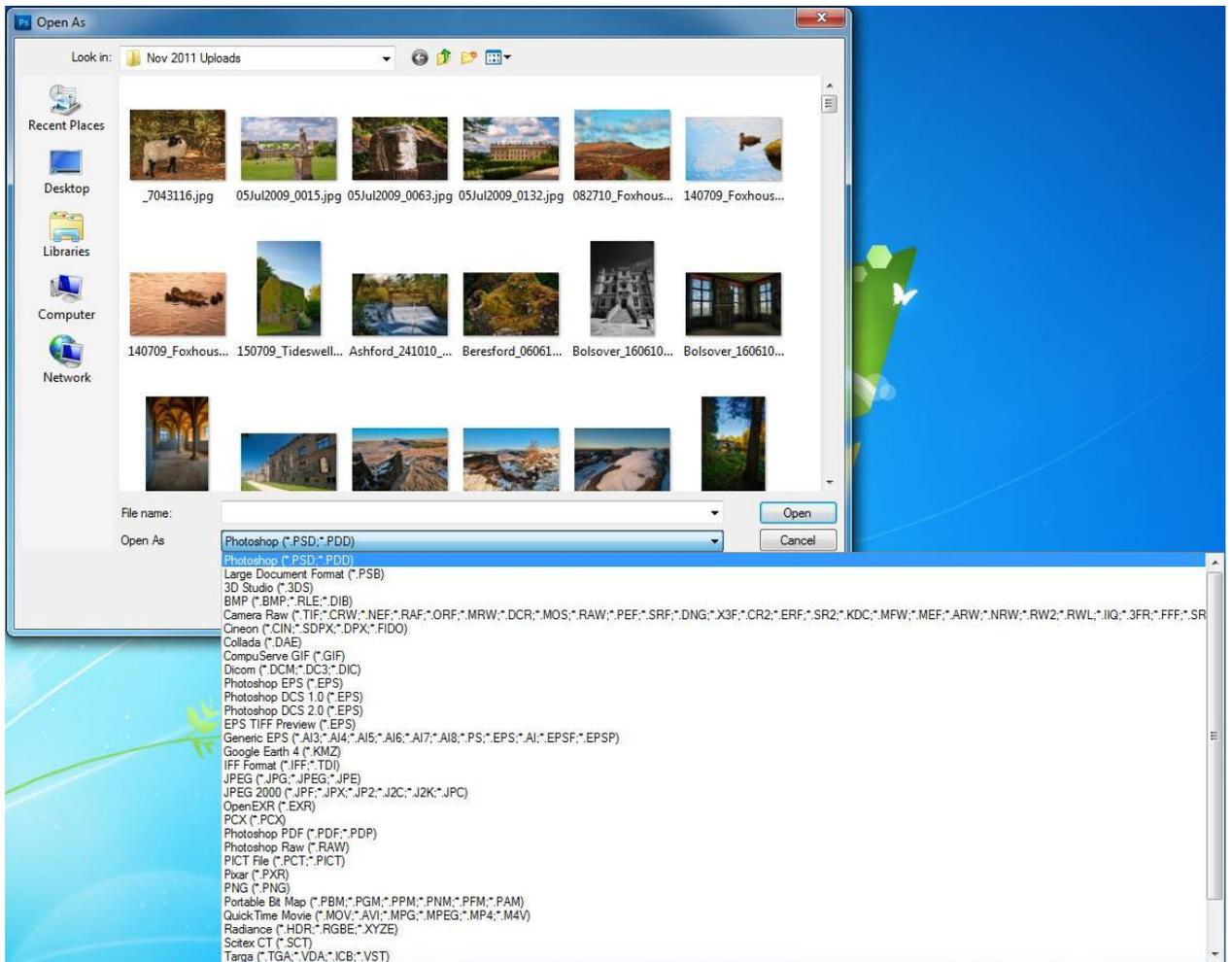


Fig 2.3 the Open As dialogue box, showing some of the many available file formats.

A useful application of the Open As command is that you can open most single layered file formats as a Camera Raw document. This will open the image into the Camera Raw plugin (fig 2.4) that is part of Adobe Photoshop. From here you can quickly and easily make simple adjustments to your image without having to get into complex editing techniques in Photoshop. Editing in Camera Raw will be covered in the second book in this series.

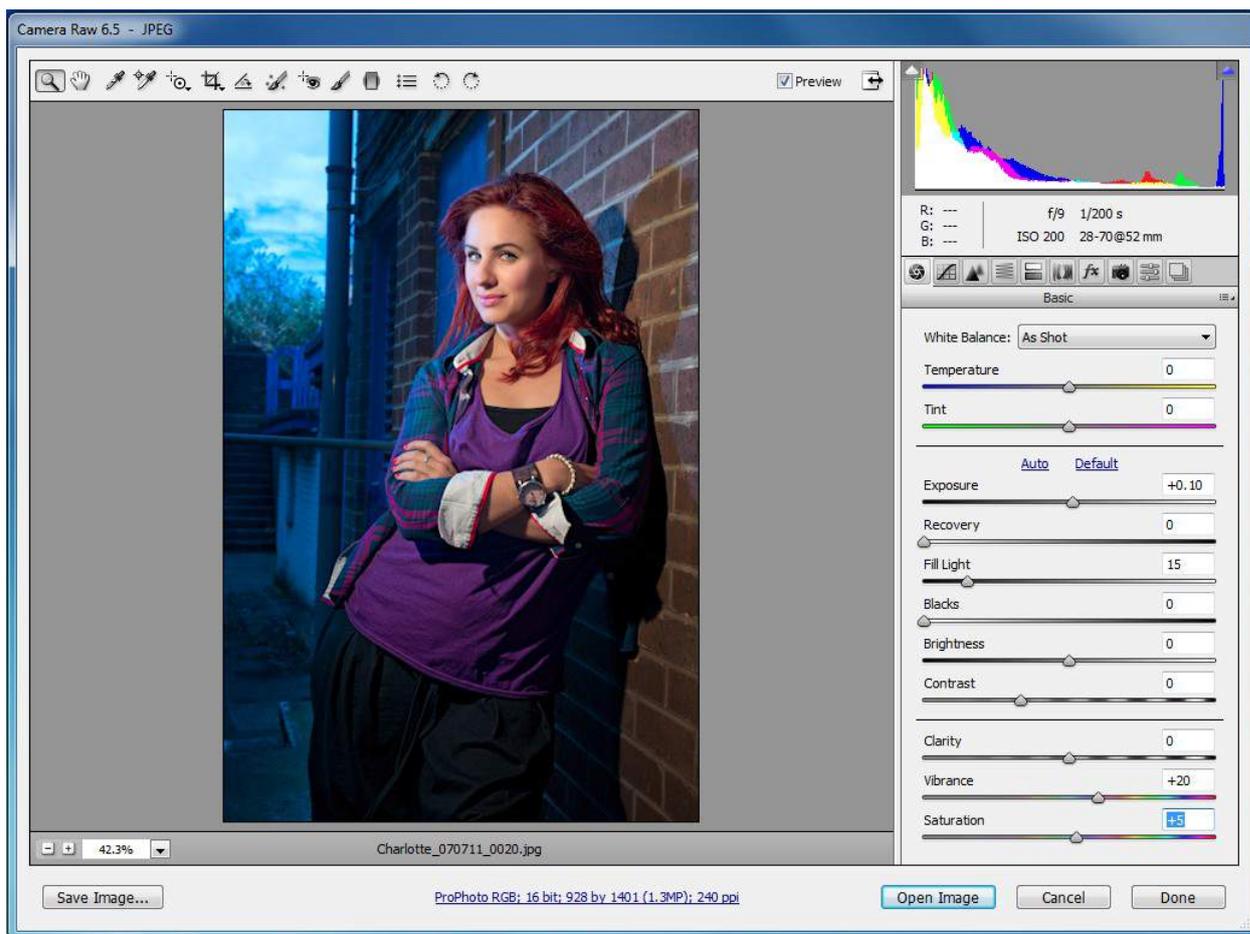


Fig 2.4 Camera Raw

Open As Smart Object

The third option is to use Open As Smart Object. A Smart Object allows non-destructive editing of your image and is useful if you are planning on making extreme edits or multiple transformations, such as scaling, to your image. Smart objects appear in the Layers panel with a small icon in the bottom right hand corner and if you apply a filter to them, they will display the filter below the layer fig 2.5. The application of a filter to a Smart Object is not permanent and the settings can be changed at any time by double clicking on the filter name in Layers panel.

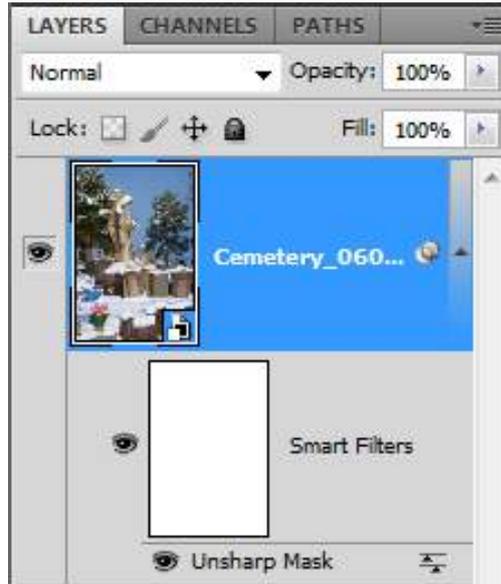


Fig 2.5 a Smart Object

There are several other ways of getting an image into Photoshop, including simply dragging an image onto the work area. You can also use one of the two file browsing options; Bridge and Mini-Bridge. Adobe Bridge and Mini-Bridge will be covered in detail in the second book in this series.

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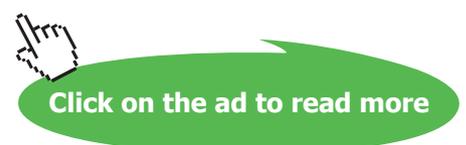


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Saving Your Work

When you need to save your work you will go to the File menu and choose Save or Save As.

Save: If the file has been saved previously, the file will be updated. If the document has not been previously saved you will see the same dialogue box as if you had pressed Save As.

Save As: This command brings up a dialogue box (fig 2.6) where you can name the file, choose the properties that you wish to be included in the file and also choose the file format.

File Formats

When you click on the Format drop down menu in the “Save As” dialogue box (fig 2.6) you will notice that Photoshop allows you to save your file in many different formats. Some of these formats are now redundant and are only there to provide backwards compatibility. Others are specialist formats used in areas such as medical imaging. In reality you only need to know a few of these formats – the number depends on the type of work you are doing.

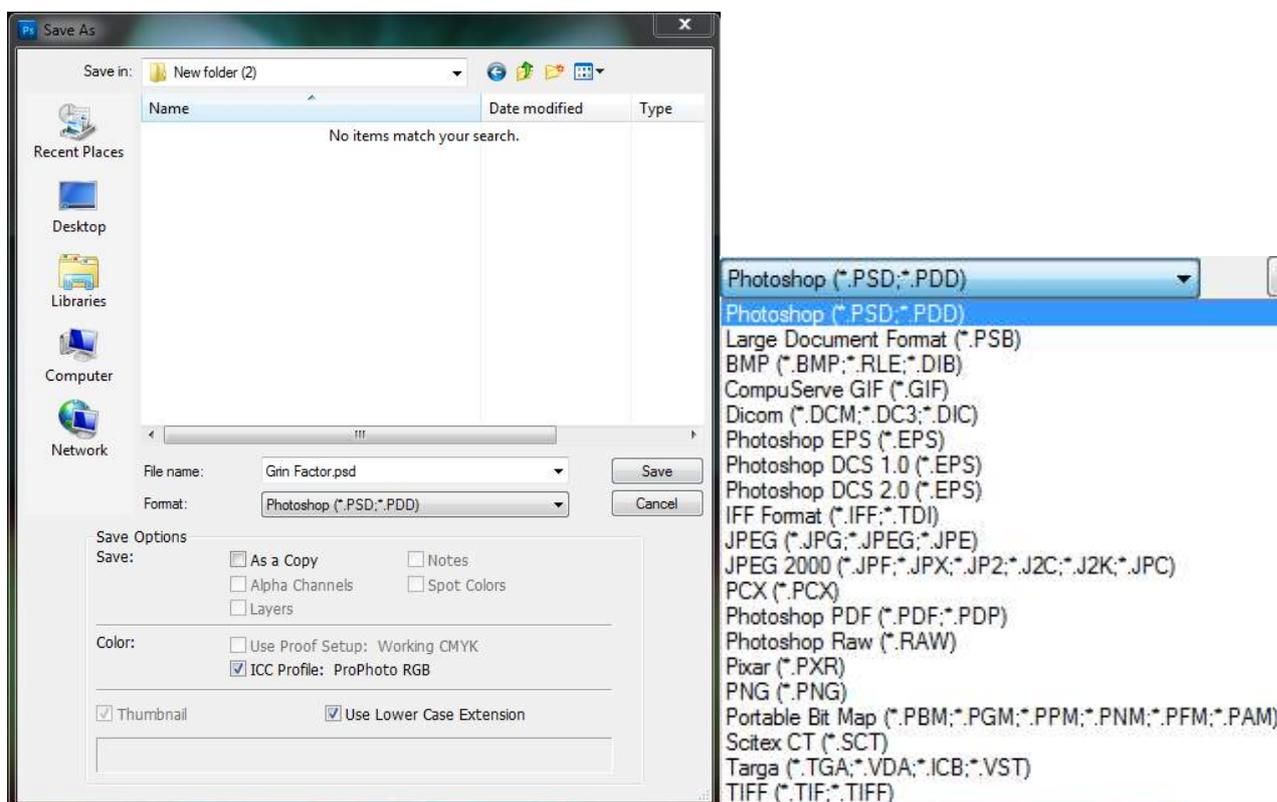


Fig 2.6 the Save As dialogue box and file formats

Popular and Useful File Formats:

PSD: This is Photoshop's native file format and if you only use Photoshop as your image editor, it's the one that will give you the most flexibility. It will retain all layers, adjustments and effects that you have applied to your image. This format also supports high bit depth files up to 32bits. The file sizes for high bit depth files can be extremely large so think carefully before you consider saving your image in anything other than 8bits.

TIFF: Tagged-Image File Format (TIFF, TIF) has most of the same attributes as the PSD format (when opened in Photoshop). This format is useful for its compatibility with almost all software that will open image data. It also allows the use of several different compression methods to reduce the size of your file.

JPEG: Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG, JPG) format is mostly used for images that will be displayed on screen or the web. This file format uses "Lossy" compression, which is to say, that data is lost during the compression process resulting in a much smaller file, but may also compromise image quality. If your camera only takes JPEG images I recommend that you save the image as a PSD during the editing process, as repeatedly opening and saving JPEG images causes recompression of the images and can severely degrade the data, resulting in very noticeable compression artefacts.

GIF: Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) is used to display indexed colour mode graphics. This file format may only contain 256 colours so it is not commonly used for photographs. However, it has several characteristics that have made it very popular in web graphics.

- Small file size
- Supports transparency
- Supports animation

PNG: Like the GIF format this format is commonly used for web graphics. The PNG format is a lot more flexible in its support for 24bit photographic images and alternative colour modes than the GIF format. However, it is not as widely supported in web browsers.

We will look at the JPEG, GIF and PNG formats in more detail when we cover saving images for the web in book three of this series.

PDF: The Portable Document Format (PDF) is very useful for displaying files across multiple platforms and applications. It has the benefit of supporting compression, 16bit format and common colour modes, whilst retaining font, vector, raster information and Photoshop editing (if selected).

Creating a New Document

You can create a new document by selecting New from the File menu or by using the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-N/Cmd-N (PC/Mac). The New dialog box allows you set all of the parameters for your new document and has a number of presets to get you started, fig 2.7 and fig 2.8. It is important to set up your document correctly. For example, you need it to be at the correct size and resolution for its intended purpose. If you select a paper size preset, it will automatically set the resolution for print. Likewise, if a web preset is selected the resolution will be set accordingly.

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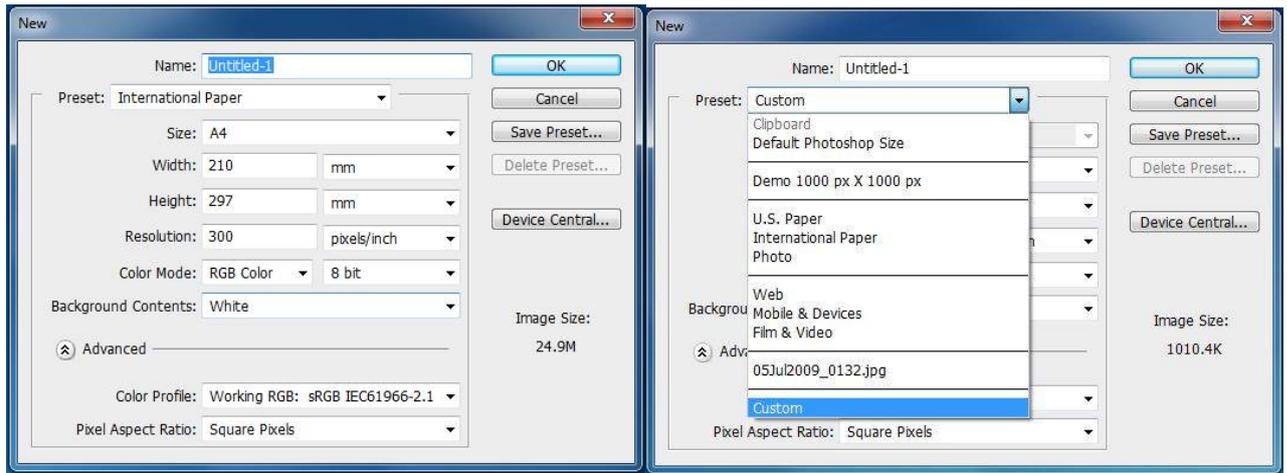


Fig 2.7 the New dialogue box and Preset options

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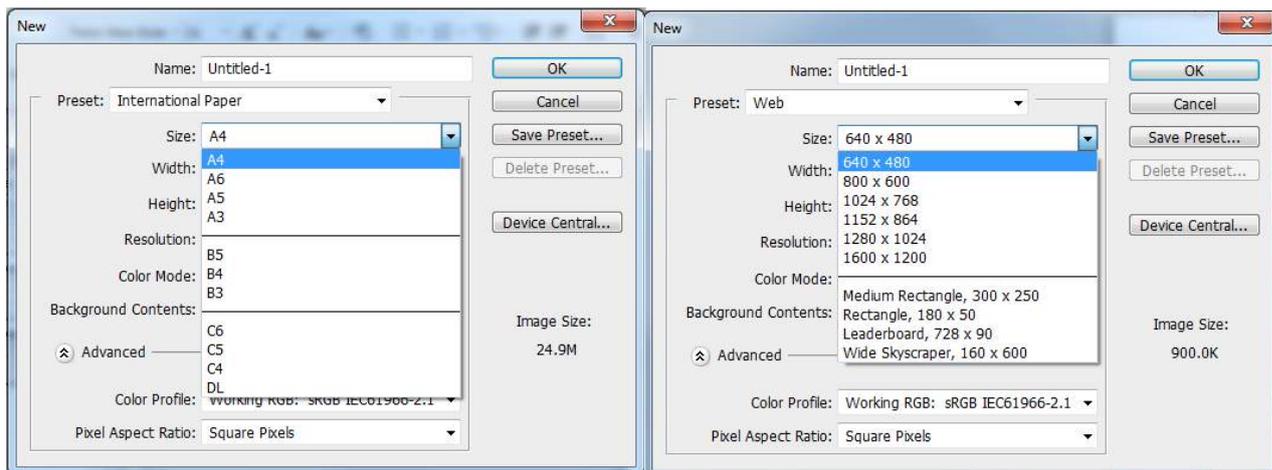


Fig 2.8 International Paper and Web size options

There are other options in the New dialogue box that also need to be determined:

- Colour Mode – For example, RGB for web design and photography and CMYK for commercial print
- Bit Depth – 8 bit is generally fine unless you are intending to perform some major image editing or have a lot of gradients in a design, in which case it would be better to work in 16 bit mode and then convert to 8 bit once the editing process is completed. Web graphics must be 8 bit.
- Background Contents – This determines the colour of your background layer.

Under the Advanced section of the dialogue box there are two options:

- Colour Profile – you should leave the colour profile set to sRGB except for those wishing to do advanced photographic work, in which case you may wish to use Adobe RGB or ProPhoto RGB.
- Pixel Aspect Ratio – in almost all cases this should be set to Square Pixels. Rectangular pixels are only generally used to correctly display widescreen video content.

When you click OK, you will have a new empty document with a single layer.