

# Photoshop CS4 Extended

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There's a lot of chatter on the web about the abundance of great new features in this latest upgrade to Adobe's flagship product, *Photoshop*. However, like many *Photoshop* users, I feel like I've just gotten settled in with CS3. But, looking at the long list of new stuff, I can see that many of the features would really enhance my productivity, streamline my workflow, or just be fun to have. I had to dig in and see if it's as good as it sounds.

Begin at the beginning: I downloaded the installer for *Photoshop CS4 Extended* (version 11), a two file contraption, and double-clicked one file to start the process. The installer first checked my computer's system profile and then, after passing inspection, I got to place a tic next to "trial version" and click "Install."

After hearing some horror stories about the installation process for some of the CS4 apps, I was relieved to just sit back and observe a smooth and trouble-free addition of PS CS4 to my system. I fired her up and I have to say that at first glance this is a faster app than the CS3 version! It loads and executes faster than its predecessor on the same machine. (I still have CS3 installed on this PC.)

The redo on the interface, kind of a steel gray theme with panels, tabs for multiple open documents, and drop-downs tucked around the edges, really seems to open up the work area, making it easier to find what I'm looking for, and much gentler on my eyes.

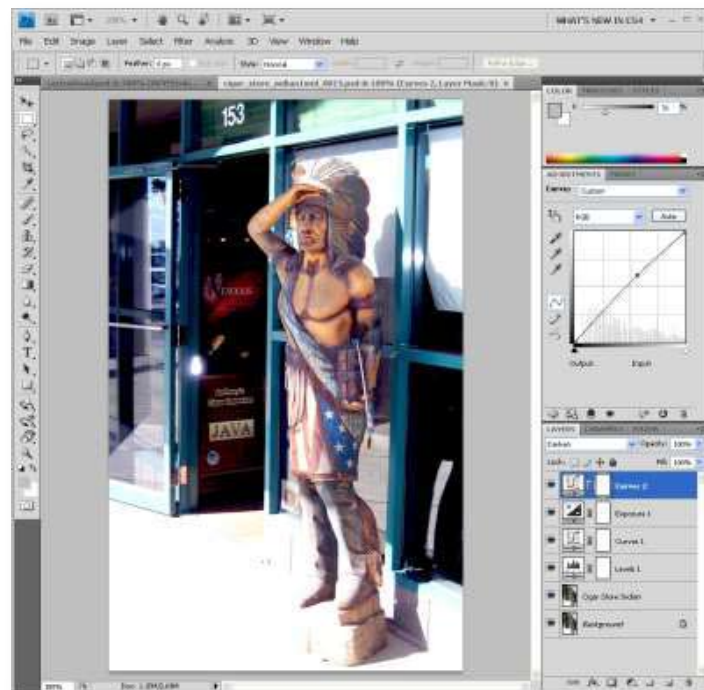
There had been a note of caution. I read somewhere that my 3rd-party filters might not work with CS4. I was able to just copy my AKVIS plugins from the CS3 folder to the corresponding CS4 location. OnOne filters required a re-install. So far, everything's working as desired.

## What's New?

I thought I would first try the Rotate View Tool to see the nifty way I could rotate my open image. I clicked the toolbar icon and promptly received a *Photoshop* message: "Could not complete your request because of a program error." So, off to *Photoshop* Help which, BTW, is totally online now. Once there I saw a link to download Help in a PDF format. I tried saving the PDF file to my hard drive, but after reaching the 28% mark, it

just froze my browser. Going back to online help, I found that this feature does require a video card capable of OpenGL video processing. My NVIDIA GeForce 8600 GTS has the 256 DDR3 video RAM and OpenGL 2.0 support. Back to *Photoshop*. I finally found a *Preference* setting under **Performance > GPU Settings**, where my video card was correctly listed and I could place a tic next to "Enable OpenGL Drawing." I shutdown and restarted the program with high expectations. **\*News Update:** it works and is very useful!\*

This is easily my favorite new addition. The various Layer Adjustments are now accessed through a side panel. It contains a drop-down list of presets



to use as a starting point, if you wish, and then you can proceed to adjust the sliders, curves, etc. as needed. The image updates as you work with a live preview. This is a very big improvement over the previous style dialogs where I would “hope for the best” as I clicked **OK** to see how my layer modifications affected my image.

The panel includes 15 types of adjustments to choose from including a new item, Vibrance, ported over from Camera Raw (which has had some significant *CS4* enhancements, but not discussed here). Vibrance is available in two flavors, as a non-destructive adjustment layer through this panel and as a permanent change to your image, through the Image > Adjustments menu. Basically, Vibrance allows you to bring out the color in less saturated areas of an image, while only minimally affecting the already saturated areas. Some adjustments now include an icon for clicking and dragging in an area of an image, thereby targeting it for modification.

The new Masks Panel provides tools for pixel and vector based masks based on B/W and color selections. There are sliders for adjusting the density and feathering of the mask and quite a few additional controls for refining the mask edge, color range (for using a color selection as a basis for a mask) and inverting the mask.

### 3D Objects

Another pretty exciting addition is the ability to work with 3D objects right in *Photoshop*. You can paint directly on an object or drop a 2D image on to a 3D surface and watch it wrap to the contours. I watched the two Flash demos and it was pretty amazing. From here you can then export to a supported 3D format.

I know that *CS3* had some support for painting 3D buried somewhere in the program, but this new technology is truly impressive and easily accessible. If you need to create a 3D object, I found a tutorial from [designpear.com](http://designpear.com) that recommends starting with the free (of charge) Google SketchUp to make the basic object and then use *Photoshop* to dress it up.

Content-Aware Scaling truly sounds like little nanobots have taken up residence in your machine, just waiting to assist with scaling your image. You'll find this tool on the **Edit** menu. It works best when the background

is lacking in detail or there is a good contrast between the important objects and the unimportant. Basically, this feature allows you to scale your image, adding or removing space between the objects that should not be affected by scaling.

Much of the time your image contrast/detail will not be sufficient to determine what to protect and what to scale. Therefore this tool provides two ways to assign protection to parts of the image so they won't be affected by the resizing. You can use either the “Protect Skin Tone” icon to protect skin tone areas or the “Protect” pop-up for defining untouchable areas with a protection mask from a selection saved as an Alpha Channel.

There are too many significant improvements for this brief review to cover without turning into a novella. You really need to visit Adobe and browse through the Flash demos for yourself. Find the complete list of all the new and improved features at Adobe's web site: <http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/photoshopextended/features/?view=topnew&promoid=DRHXX>

**About:** *Photoshop CS4 Extended*

**Vendor:** Adobe Corp.  
[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

**Price:** Buy US \$999  
Upgrade from US \$349  
30 day trial version can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com>

**Requires:** System Requirements for Windows and Mac can be found at <http://www.adobe.com/products/Photoshop/Photoshopextended/systemreqs/?promoid=DRHXX>