

Customizing Photoshop

By Jay Sprout



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About Sprout...

I'm Jay Sprout. I've been a certified instructor for the New Horizons Computer Learning Center in Detroit, Michigan for three years. I am an Adobe Certified Expert in PhotoShop, Illustrator, Acrobat, PageMaker, and InDesign. Unless death prevents it, I should also be a Macromedia Certified Instructor a couple within a month of this writing.

If you have any questions, you can contact me at jsprout@nhmichigan.com or jsprout@mac.com

For other tutorials and resources, please visit my website at www.sproutgraphics.com

I regularly teach classes in...

- Adobe PhotoShop
- Adobe PageMaker
- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe GoLive
- Adobe Acrobat
- QuarkXpress
- MacroMedia Flash
- MacroMedia DreamWeaver
- MicroSoft Excel
- MicroSoft PowerPoint
- Beginning Windows
- Beg. - Adv. Macintosh OS 9 & X
- Computers Made Easy

Preset Manager Rocks the House, Yo!

Now more than ever, you can save and load just about everything in Photoshop.

In version 5.5, if you didn't save any custom swatches before closing Photoshop, they were lost. Beginning in version 6, Photoshop remembers them in its preferences file so when you launch it, they will still be there. I imagine lots of unhappy users unpleasantly surprised when they reset their swatches and lose what they thought Photoshop saved. You must still save your swatch sets, brush sets, etc.

Photoshop 6 introduced the Preset Manager. Not only can you save several swatch or brush palettes, but edit those collections more easily than ever.

A preset is a library of...

- Brushes
- Contours
- Swatches
- Gradients
- Patterns
- Tools
- Vector Shapes
- Styles

This doesn't even include all the dialogue box settings you can save (and then use in Actions to automate all this work!).

We'll start off by cleaning up the brush menu and palette. This will give you a simple palette of round brushes (whether you have hard, soft or both is up to you). Later, if you want to load a custom set of square brushes as well, for instance, you can.

You'll also save tool settings, custom Vector shapes, and more!

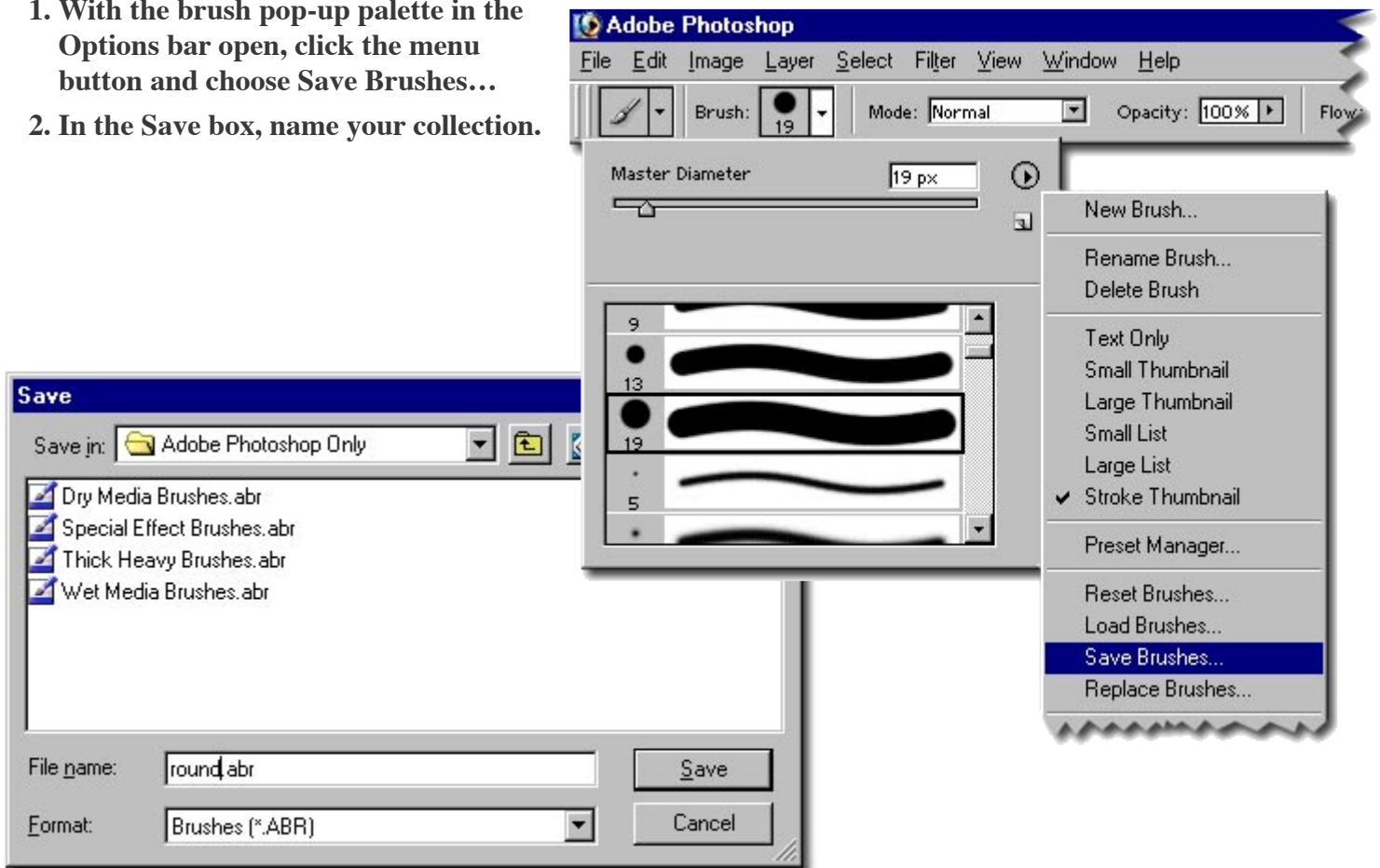
Making Your Own Brush Palettes

The brush menu in the Options Bar and especially the prodigal brush palette in version 7 can be overwhelming. You may use round brushes 90% of the time, once in a while using a square brush for up-close and personal work. All those other brushes are simply clutter you must scroll through when looking for the brush you want.

Tip: An additional advantage in 5.5 is it will make your bracket keyboard shortcuts your new best friend. In 5.5, if you used the right bracket on your keyboard to increase your brush size, it was limited to the brushes in the Brush palette. If you were using the largest hard round brush and pressed the right bracket Photoshop would give you the smallest soft round brush – the next in line.

The easiest way to start off is by saving the default palette under a new name. You'll clean it up in the Preset Manager, then create and save new brushes back in Photoshop.

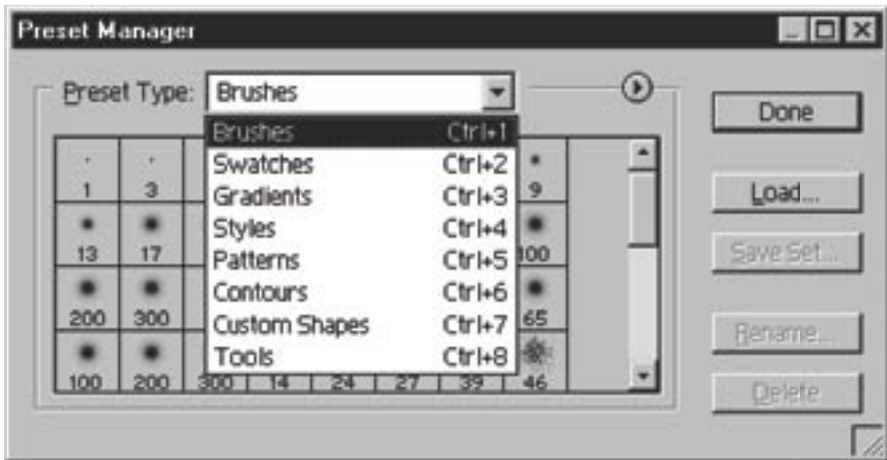
1. With the brush pop-up palette in the Options bar open, click the menu button and choose Save Brushes...
2. In the Save box, name your collection.



Tip: Notice where Photoshop is saving it. If you keep all your presets in the same location it's easy to find them later. However, if you re-install Photoshop, you might want to set aside your presets to avoid Photoshop potentially overwriting them.

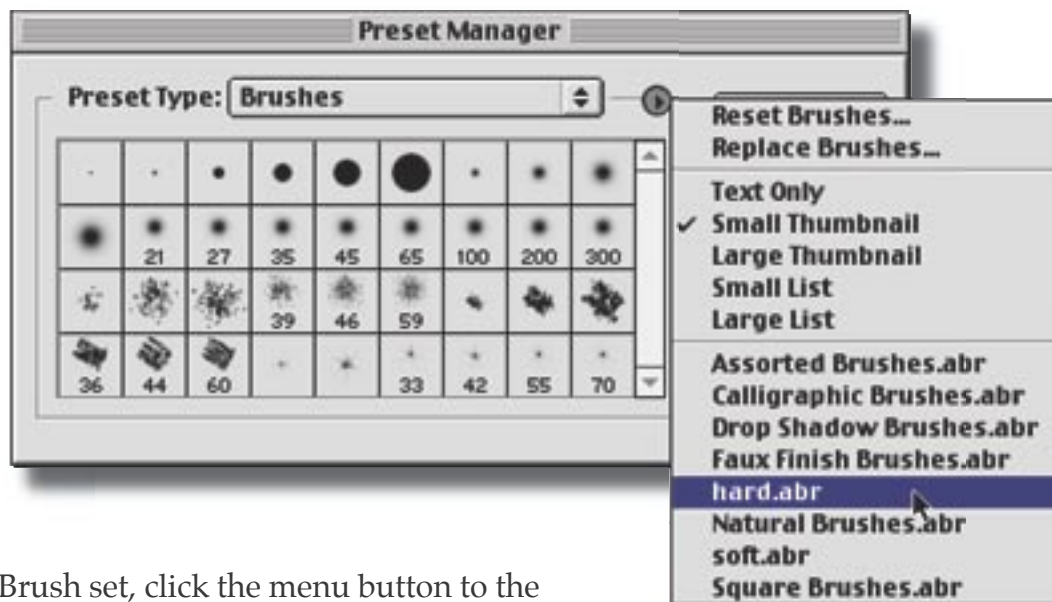
Using Preset Manager

Now you'll clean up your custom set using the Preset Manager.



Click Edit -> Preset Manager...

Choose the Preset Type you want to play with – such as Brushes, Patterns, tools or Swatches.



For a specific Brush set, click the menu button to the right of Preset Type and choose Replace Brushes.

Select your set and click Load.

When you click Save Set..., Photoshop only saves the brushes you have selected. Since that's the case, it's much easier to simply select the ones you want and click Save Set...

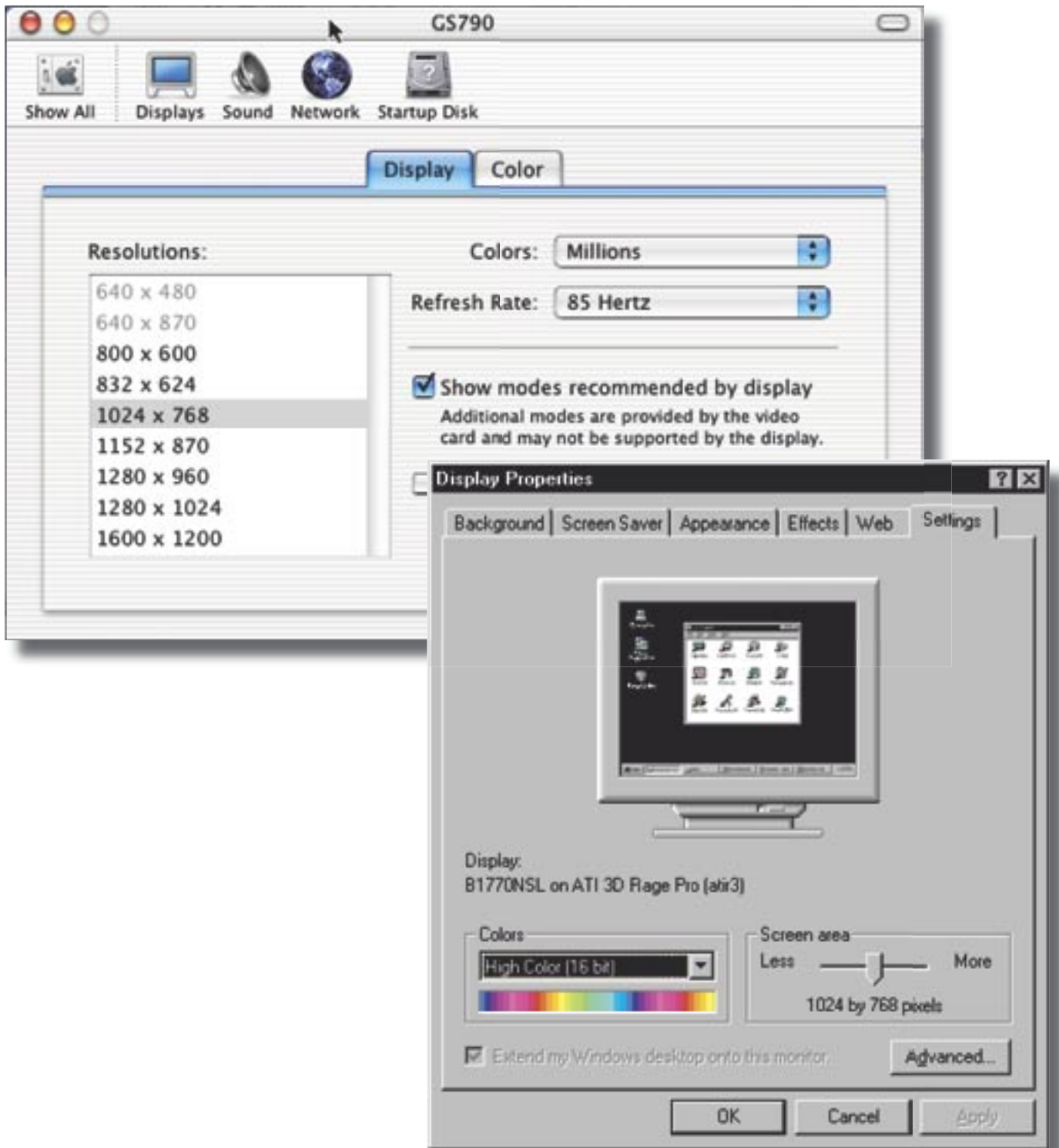
However, you can also select unwanted brushes, click delete and then Save Set...

To select several at a time (easier than ever in v7), you can press Command-A and Shift-click to exclude some. You can also click a single brush and use Shift with your arrow keys to get columns or rows at a time.

To change monitor resolution

In Windows, click Start -> Settings -> Control Panel and double click the Display icon. Or, right-click on your desktop and choose Properties. Under the Settings tab, choose a resolution above 800 x 600 (1024 x 768 is optimal).

In Mac OS X, go to your System Preferences (on your dock) and click Displays.



Making Celebrity Brushes



Square brushes, round brushes, hard and soft brushes are all well and good. Something that's a little snazzier is a star, moon, clover or diamond brush. Better still is the granting of your unfulfilled wish for a David Pogue or Deke McClelland brush.

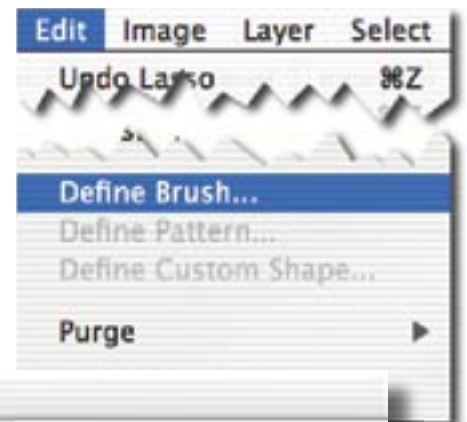
We're going to make a President George W. Bush brush.

1. Make sure feathering is set to zero and select the portion of your image that contains what you want your brush to look like.

Warning: Version 5.5 could do this. Version 7 can do this. For whatever reason, version 6 will only let you define a brush using the rectangular marquee tool.

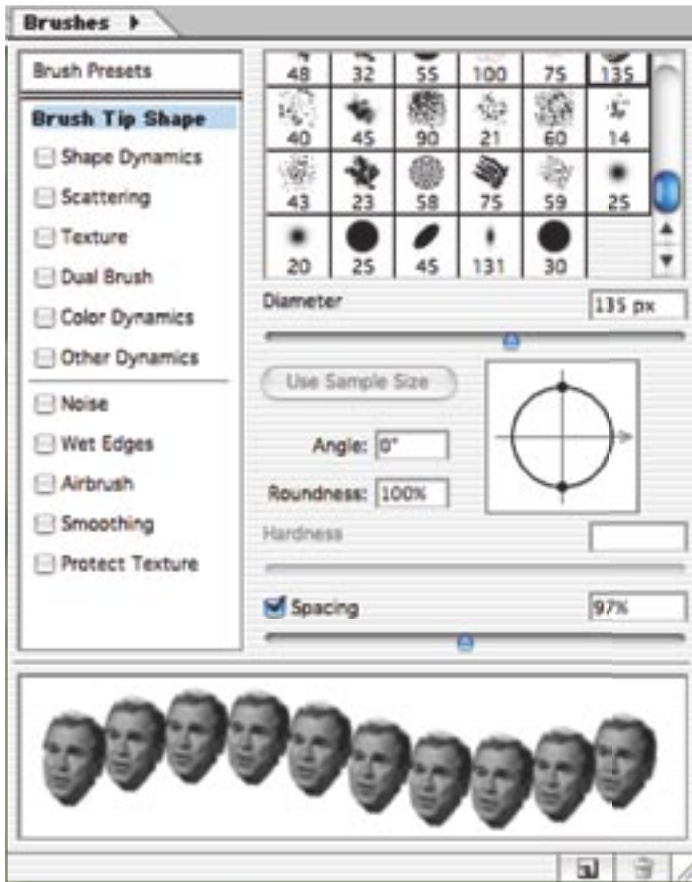
2. Edit -> Define Brush...

The Brush Name dialog box opens.



3. The brush will be visible at the bottom of both the brush menu in the options bar (when an editing tool is selected in the toolbox) and the brush palette.

Tip: The brush palette should be in your docking well. The docking well only shows up if your monitor is set to a resolution above 800 x 600. If you don't see it, click Window -> Brushes.



4. In the brush palette, you can change the spacing and the size of your new custom brush under Brush Tip Shape.

Warning: I don't recall if you can adjust the spacing in 5.5 and I'm sure you can't change the size there. You'll have to adjust the size of the original before selecting the portion you want.

5. Now you can choose a color and paint away.