

# photokaboom

## Learn Photography

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### Layers Panel Problems

The Layers panel is on the right side of your screen.

If there's a problem, first look there.

#### 1 - Wrong Layer Is Active

**The #1 problem is not having the right layer active (highlighted).**

You usually need to be on a layer with pixels, such as the Background copy layer.

You can't edit a layer that has no pixels, such as a Levels adjustment layer.

There are no pixels there, just lots of mathematics.

A layer is active (highlighted) when you click the layer.

Check which layer is active if:

- Photoshop Elements isn't doing what the program is supposed to be doing.
- A box pops open saying you must flatten the layer and you'd normally not have to do so.

## The Active Layer Jumps When "You're Not Looking"

You'll be nonplussed when the active layer jumps from the Background copy layer up to a Levels adjustment layer.

Photoshop Elements will do so, all by itself, when "you're not looking."

So, check to see if the active has been changed by Photoshop Elements.

## 2 - Wrong Position in the Stack of Layers Levels on Top

You usually want to keep an adjustment layer, such as Levels, on top of the layers stack.

In that position, the adjustment layer can "broadcast" its mathematics down to the layers below.

### Can't See Something

If you can't see something, check to make sure the layer is in the right position in the stack of layers.

Let's say you can't see a face that you've taken from another photograph.

The face may be blocked by a layer above the face layer.

## 3 - Locked Layer

If you can't do something, check to make sure you haven't inadvertently locked a layer.

A padlock icon is present on the right side of the layer if it's locked.

No—don't unlock the layer by clicking the padlock icon in the layer.

Instead—click the padlock icon at the bottom of the Layers panel.

### Background Layer Is Locked

The Background layer is locked by default.

You can unlock it by changing its name.

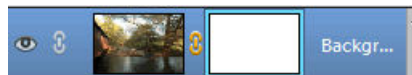
## 4 - Grouped Layers

Check to make sure two layers are grouped, if they need to be grouped.

## 5 - Layer Mask Thumbnail Is Selected

When you create a mask in a layer, the mask is selected by default.

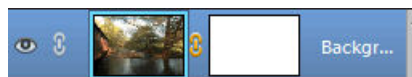
The layer mask has a blue outline.



Layer Mask Thumbnail Selected

Because it's selected, if you do something, it happens on the mask.

When you're done with the mask, click on the photograph thumbnail.



Photograph Thumbnail Selected

If the layer mask is selected, and you want to do something with the photograph, you may not be able to do what you want to do.

Be sure to select the photograph thumbnail—or the layer mask thumbnail—depending on which one you need.

## Tool Issues

### Right One

Check to make sure you've selected the right tool.

If you haven't already, go to [Tools](#).

- Some of the tool icons are similar.

For example, there are lots of tools that have brushes in their icons.

- Some tools are members of a tool family.

For example, the Lasso tool family includes the Lasso, Polygonal Lasso, and the Magnetic Lasso tools.

Check to make sure you've selected the right member of a tool family.

### Missing Tool

If a tool is missing, go to [Brush Tool Is Missing](#).

### Tool Not Working Right

Occasionally a tool will "get sick" for no reason.

The tool will stop working properly.

For example, you may not be able to change the size of a brush.

To cure the tool, try the following, in the given order.

- 1) Click on a different tool.

Then, return to the tool that wasn't working.

- 2) Go to [Reset the Tools](#).

- 3) Save your work, close Photoshop Elements, and then reopen the program.

- 4) Shut down your computer and restart it.

- 5) Delete the [Preference file](#).

## Brush Issues

### Where's the Brush?

If you can't see the brush, press and hold the space bar.

The brush will turn into the Hand tool icon.

The brush may be tiny—or huge.

Press the bracket keys, [ or ], to change the brush size.

### Caps Lock

If you can't change the size of a brush, Caps Lock may be on.

Look for the Caps Lock key, and press it to turn it off.

If that's not the problem, you may have a brush that's huge.

If so, when you go to change it, you can't see it because the circle is completely outside your screen.

Go to [options bar/Tool Options](#) and check the size of the brush.

## Options Bar/Tool Options Problems

There are two ways [options bar/Tool Options](#) can create mayhem.

## #1 - Options Bar/Tool Options Bar Settings

For example, you may have used the Brush tool last week as an airbrush.

This week, when you go to use the tool, it's misbehaving.

That's because it's still set to be an airbrush.

### Usually

- Mode should be on Normal.
- Opacity at 100%.
- When the Type choice is between Brush or Pencil, select Brush.

### Reset

If you're unsure what settings are appropriate, reset the tool to the default settings.

Go to [Reset](#).

## #2 - Didn't Commit

After you make some changes, two icons may appear in [options bar/Tool Options](#).

There's a green checkmark.

If you want to commit the change, click it.

There's also a red circle with a diagonal line.

If you want to cancel the change, click the red circle.

## Other Problems

### 1 - Didn't Click OK

You have to click OK on many windows.

If you don't click OK, you won't be able to go on to the next step.

### 2 - Wrong Foreground & Background Colors

For most operations in Photoshop Elements, you want to use the default foreground color, black, and the default background color, white.

If you haven't already, go to [Foreground & Background Colors](#).

### 3 - Hidden Selection Selection Is Hidden

If a tool is misbehaving, and you've been working with a selection, check if the selection is hidden.

You may have pressed Ctrl + h to hide the selection.

Press Ctrl + h, again, to make a hidden selection appear.

If a selection reappears, do **one** of the following.

- Press the Esc key.
- Press Ctrl + d.
- Go to Select > Deselect.

### Prevention

Don't hide selections.

### Hidden Selection Deleted, But Still in Hidden Mode

You may hide a selection.

Then, later, you may delete it (press Esc or Ctrl + d)

without first making it reappear.

By doing the above, Photoshop Elements is still in hidden mode.

Any new selection is hidden.

So, you think the selection tool isn't working.

The selection tool is working, but you can't see the new selection because it's hidden.

Press Ctrl + h to make it appear.

### **Prevention**

Don't delete a selection that's hidden.

Make it reappear (Ctrl + h), then delete it.

## **4 - Cropping & Snap to Grid**

If you're trying to crop something, and the cropping border jumps to places you do not wish to crop, then the snap-to-grid feature may be engaged.

Press Ctrl to turn it off temporarily.

To disable the feature, go to View > Snap to Grid.

## **5 - Preference File Gone Awry**

Photoshop Elements stores your preferences in a file.

If you haven't already done so, go to [Preferences](#).

If the preferences file becomes corrupted, Photoshop Elements may misbehave.

Go to [Delete Preferences File](#).

## **6 - Repair, Forums, & Adobe**

If Photoshop Elements is misbehaving, try the following, in the given order.

- 1) Save your work, close Photoshop Elements, and then reopen the program.
- 2) Shut down your computer and restart it.
- 3) Delete the [Preference file](#).
- 4) Insert the Photoshop Elements installation disc and select Repair.
- 5) Search these [forums](#) for a solution.

If there isn't a thread about the problem, join the forum and ask about the problem.

- 6) Contact [Adobe](#).

## **7 - No PSD Thumbnails**

Go to [No PSD Thumbnails](#).

## **8 - Mac Only**

### **Minimize**

If you press Cmd + m, things are sent to the Dock.

Has a photograph in a window disappeared?

Check the Dock on the right end.

Has Photoshop Elements disappeared?

If all of the photographs are tabbed, the entire Photoshop Elements window is minimized when you press Cmd + m.

Check the Dock on the right end.

The above may occur when you press Cmd + j, a common command, and press m by mistake.

### **Poltergeist Infection**

Sometimes computers and their users are momentarily infected by a poltergeist.

If this dire condition occurs, try starting over.

Save your work, reboot the computer, and do your equivalent of taking the dog for a walk.

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