

Acorn 4

User Guide

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Acorn FAQ

Where can I find Acorn documentation?

Acorn's documentation and tutorials are updated online frequently. Click [here](#) to get started. Although a downloadable PDF is available as an off-line resource, it is impossible to include all the tutorials and updates that can be found online.

Why does Acorn have a button labeled "Purchase" in the window?

Acorn runs in two modes: "paid", and "trial". In trial and paid modes all the functions of Acorn are operational. If you see the "Trial" button in the upper right hand corner of the canvas window, that means Acorn is in trial mode. If you like Acorn, you can click where it says 'trial' in order to make the purchase. After the 14 day trial period has ended, a watermark will appear over your images. No worries- you can purchase Acorn (by clicking on purchase) to make the watermark go away!

Why is it cheaper to upgrade to Acorn 4 at the Flying Meat Store than the Mac App Store (MAS)?

The Flying Meat Store (<http://www.flyingmeat.com/store>) offers Acorn upgrades for \$29.99. The Mac App Store only allows one level of pricing for Acorn, so we cannot offer a discounted upgrade price. The price at the MAS will be the current full price of Acorn, and we cannot give credits or refunds for the difference. Some users feel the extra cost at the MAS is worth it for the convenience of the store and other benefits the store offers.

I bought Acorn on the Mac App Store. Why am I still running the trial version?

You will need to delete the trial version of Acorn from your computer. Perform a spotlight search for "acorn kind:app". Delete all copies of Acorn that are not located in your Applications folder. Re-install Acorn from the Mac App Store. You can find Acorn under your 'Purchases' tab.

I bought Acorn on the Mac App Store. Where's my registration number?

The Mac App Store does not provide a registration number for Acorn, since the store manages all the applications you purchase through it for you. You will notice in the Acorn preferences that there is no registration tab if you bought Acorn on the App Store.

How do I upgrade to the latest version of Acorn?

If you bought Acorn from the Flying Meat Store: Open Acorn. If a dialog box doesn't pop up telling you about the latest version, you can select Acorn ▶ Check for Updates. You will be guided to download the latest version of Acorn if you don't already have it. For paid upgrades, you will be placed in 'trial' mode. If you wish to upgrade, click where it says 'trial'. Your previous registration number should self populate in the Flying Meat Store and you will be guided to provide payment.

If you decide you want to stick with the previous version and do not want to upgrade, delete the latest version of Acorn from your computer. You can download the previous version via the links shown below under 'where can I find old version of Acorn'.

If you bought Acorn from the Mac App Store: Updates are managed through the store under 'Updates'. At this time the Mac App Store does not allow for decreased pricing for upgrading to a new major release.

Can I use the same registration on multiple computers?

Yes, you may use your Acorn registration on multiple computers as long as it is only you using the license. And if you have a single Mac with multiple people using it, you do not need to purchase an additional license. However, if you have multiple computers and multiple people wanting to use Acorn, you will need to buy an additional license for each computer.

Does Acorn support Photoshop files?

Acorn does its best to open PSD images, and if possible, preserve layers. Photoshop styles, and editable text are not supported however.

To save a layered PSD file, choose the File ▶ Export menu, and select PSD from the Format menu.

I'm a student, can I receive a discount on Acorn?

Yes, Flying Meat offers a \$15 discount on Acorn for students through our store only. We require that you send the request to support@flyingmeat.com using your student email address ending with .edu. We will then send the discount code to your student email address. The student discount cannot be used for upgrades, and is not available during promotions and sales.

Where can I find older versions of Acorn?

Here is a list of links to older versions of Acorn, just in case you need one for some reason. However, you should always be running the latest version of Acorn since it has important bug fixes that older versions do not contain.

Acorn 1.5.5, for use with 10.4 and later: <http://flyingmeat.com/download/Acorn-1.5.5.zip>

Acorn 2.6.5, for use with 10.6 and later: <http://flyingmeat.com/download/Acorn-2.6.4.zip>

Acorn 3.5.1, for use with 10.6 and later: <http://flyingmeat.com/download/Acorn-3.5.1.zip>

Currently Acorn 4 is the only version for sale.

I'm not running 10.8+, can I still use Acorn?

Both Acorn 2 and 3 require 10.6+. Acorn 1.5.5 runs on 10.4+. If you wish to purchase Acorn 1, or Acorn 3 go ahead and buy Acorn 4. Email support@flyingmeat.com and let us know your registration name and number. We will create a registration for you. The Acorn 4 registration will not work in Acorn 1 or 3.

What is the recommended resolution for printing?

This is a complicated topic. In general a PPI (pixels per inch) of around 200 - 300 gives good printing results. Read more [here](#) about the relationship between pixels display and printing. You can also check out our tutorial: "All about DPI, PPI, and Printing".

Is there an online forum for Acorn?

Yes! Check out Acorn discussions and topics at Flying Meat's forum: <http://forums.flyingmeat.com>

Acorn Basics

- Installation
- How to Register
- Acorn Community
- Acorn's Workspace
- Tools Palette
- Colors Palette
- Image Measurements
- Rulers and Guides
- Using Arrow Keys in the Palette
- Keyboard Shortcuts
- Preferences
- Using Acorn's Image Browser
- Creating Opening and Saving Images

Installation

Purchasing and installing Acorn directly from Flying Meat

If you haven't already, take advantage of Acorn's 14 day trial period by downloading it from the Flying Meat website: <http://flyingmeat.com/acorn/>. Click on the button that says "Download and Try Acorn", and Acorn will be transferred over the Internet directly to your Downloads folder. Once that's done, navigate to your Downloads folder and find Acorn. If your browser didn't unzip the Acorn file for you, you might have a file named Acorn.zip - double click on that and OS X will unzip the file revealing Acorn.app. Double click on Acorn to launch it and you will be asked if you want to move Acorn to your Applications folder.

After using Acorn and deciding that it's right for you, you can purchase Acorn directly from the Flying Meat secure website: <https://secure.flyingmeat.com/store/>. When the purchase is complete you will receive an email with registration information which will unlock the trial period for Acorn. To enter your registration information, launch Acorn and choose the Purchase ▶ Enter Registration Information... menu item. In the window that comes up, enter your registration information (copy and paste works best). If you ever misplace your registration you can retrieve it from our website: <http://www.flyingmeat.com/support/>.

Purchasing Acorn from Apple via the Mac App Store

You may also purchase Acorn from Apple via the [Mac App Store](#). To do so, open the App Store on your Mac, and search for Acorn or use this [link](#) to navigate to it. To purchase, click the 'Buy App' button in the App Store. You will then be presented with a button to 'Install'. Click 'Install' and Acorn will be placed in your Applications folder.

When Acorn is purchased from the Mac App Store, it does not require a registration number. If you previously were running the trial version of Acorn, you will need to delete the trial from your computer. Perform a spotlight search for "acorn" (without the quotes). Delete all copies of Acorn. Install or re-install Acorn from the Mac App Store. It should be listed under your 'Purchases' tab. If you clicked the 'Install' button and Acorn isn't showing up in your Applications folder once it has completed installing, try re-booting.

Previously purchased Acorn from the Flying Meat Store and need to re-install

You can find a list of links to download older versions of Acorn in the FAQ section above. However, you should always be running the latest version of Acorn since it has important bug fixes that older versions do not contain.

Acorn will be placed in your Downloads folder. Open up your Downloads folder and drag and drop Acorn into your Applications folder. Open Acorn and enter your registration information. If you have misplaced your registration you can retrieve it here: <http://www.flyingmeat.com/support/>.

Previously purchased Acorn on the Mac App Store and need to re-install

Open the App Store application on your Mac. Log in to your App Store account if you aren't already logged in. Click on the 'Purchases' tab located along the top of the window. If you previously purchased Acorn it will be listed there and you can click 'Install' to have it downloaded directly into your Applications folder.

If Acorn is not listed in the Purchases tab, make sure you are logged into the account that purchased Acorn. You can change accounts using the Store menu item.

How to Register Acorn

Once you have your registration number for Acorn, you will want to plug it in so Acorn knows you have done the good deed and that pesky watermark goes away. To do this, choose Acorn ▶ Preferences ▶ Registration from the menu bar.

A panel will appear, with fields to enter your registration name and number. Make sure when you enter them they are spelled exactly the same way as given to you when you completed your order (either via email or the web page). It is recommended that you cut and paste into these fields. Then press the "Register" button and you are good to go.

If you have already purchased Acorn and you do not know what your registration number is, visit Flying Meat's support page and we will send you an email with the information:
<http://www.flyingmeat.com/support/>.

Mac App Store Version

The Mac App Store does not provide a registration number for Acorn, since the store manages all the applications you purchase through it for you. You will notice in the Acorn preferences that there is no registration tab if you bought Acorn on the App Store.

If you installed the trial version of Acorn prior to purchasing on the Mac App Store, you will need to delete the trial version of Acorn from your computer. Perform a spotlight search for "acorn" (without the quotes). Delete all copies of Acorn. Install or re-install Acorn from the Mac App Store. It should be listed under your 'Purchases' tab. If you clicked the 'Install' button and Acorn isn't showing up in your applications folder once it has completed installing, try re-booting.

Acorn's Community

Acorn has a mailing list you can join and ask questions on:

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/fmacorn/>

Check out Acorn's forum for additional topics and discussions:

<http://forums.flyingmeat.com/>

Email support@flyingmeat.com if you have any questions, requests, or ideas.

Acorn's Workspace

The Canvas

In the image to the right you can see Acorn's canvas. This is where the composite of all your layers are viewed and where you draw, crop, or modify your image in other ways.

On the bottom left hand side of the window you can find the image size. Clicking on the image size label will toggle it between the image size, and the image PPI (Pixels Per Inch).

The current zoom (or magnification) level, as well as the option to change the zoom using a slide can be found on the bottom right hand side of the window.

On the top right hand side are the full screen arrows. You can click on these arrows to enter full screen mode.

The file name and format can be found along the center of the top window bar, and the maximize, minimize, expand buttons are at the top left.

[Candy Photo - Copyright © terren](#)

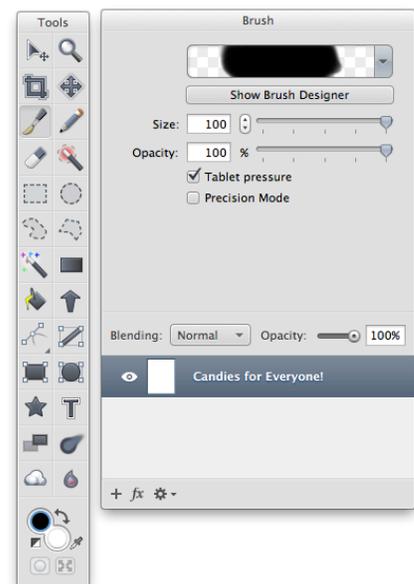


Tools Palette & Inspector Palette

Acorn's various tools are available in the tools palette. When a tool is selected, its options are presented in the inspector palette. In this case, the brush tool is chosen and the inspector palette gives you the option to modify its size, opacity, as well as other variables.

To hide or display the tools palette or inspector palette, choose Window ▶ Tools or Window ▶ Inspector.

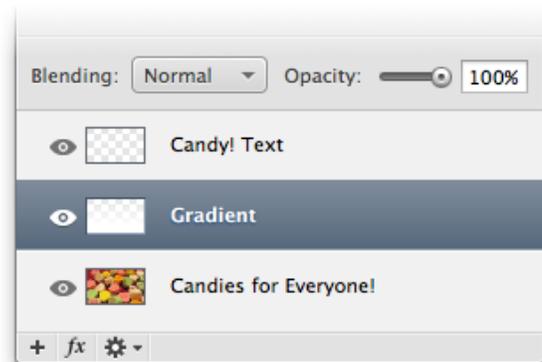
Located at the bottom left hand corner of the inspector palette are 3 buttons. The '+' button allows you to quickly and easily add a new layer to your image. The 'fx' button brings up the filter window where you can search and choose from the various filters Acorn offers. Clicking on the cogwheel allows you to bring up the layer contextual menu where you can add, delete, duplicate, and perform many other tasks with your layer.



The Layers List

The layers list contains a list of all your layers. Layers are composited together to form a single image which shows up in your canvas. The layers list is located at the bottom of the inspector palette.

Also, notice a drop down menu for the blending modes, as well as a slider for the opacity of the selected layer. A lot more information on this topic is available at 'Layers Basics'.



The Menu Bar

The menu bar is located across the top of your screen. It allows you to access the various options available within Acorn such as saving your image, copying and pasting, and viewing guides. When you click and hover over a menu item a drop down menu will appear giving you more choices.

Tools Palette



Move (Shortcut 'v')

You can use the move tool to click on a layer and rearrange the order of your layers. You can also use it to click on graphics in a shape layer, change the bounds of an image, or move the image. This is your go-to tool to start moving things around in Acorn.



Panning / Hand Tool (Shortcut 'h' or hold down 'space')

If you are zoomed in on your image or it is too big for you to see the entire thing on your monitor, use this tool to move your view around. Try out the shortcut of holding down the space bar. Once you get used to it, you will use this tool all the time.



Zoom (Shortcut 'z')

The zoom tool is used for magnifying your image so you can see those pixels up close and personal. It can also be used for zooming out. To zoom in with the tool, simply click, or to be more specific, drag a box around the area you want to end up on. To zoom out, hold down the option key and click. Once you start getting familiar with this action, you can also use the keyboard shortcuts (⌘ +) to zoom in and (⌘ -) to zoom out.



Crop (Shortcut 'c')

The crop tool is for cropping your image down to a smaller size. Use it to define the area of your image you would like to keep. You will notice as you drag it around that there are lines dividing the new image up. These lines are helpful when choosing how to crop an image. Please read up on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_thirds for more information. If you make a mistake, place your mouse near one of the borders of the crop area and drag it out to change it. When you are happy with the area you have selected press return to accept, or esc to cancel.



Rect, Oval, Free, and Polygon Select Tools (Shortcut 'm')

These tools will allow you to make various types of selections in your image. Use the rectangular selection tool to make a straight rectangular selection, the oval tool to make a round selection, or the freehand tools to make a selection that goes wherever you want. If you have a selection and would like to select another area as well, hold down the shift key while using one of the selection tools and the new area will be added to the existing area. Similarly if you selected something you don't want, you can hold down the option key while using one of the tools and the new area will be subtracted from the existing selection. If that sounds confusing, give it a try and see what happens.



Magic Wand (Shortcut 'w')

The magic wand tool works by selecting a single pixel, and then expanding that selection out to neighboring pixels that are the same color. You can adjust the tolerance so that there is a little bit more freedom in determining if a neighboring pixel should be selected or not. This is helpful for selecting a uniform background color and deleting it quickly. Play around with tolerance and feathering to improve the result. The tolerance of the wand can be adjusted in the tools palette, or by clicking on the desired color in your image while simultaneously dragging outwards or inwards.



Brush and Pencil (Shortcut 'b')

This is your most basic tool for getting new pixels down on the canvas. You can adjust the size of the brush and opacity for different results. Holding down the shift key will let you draw in only straight lines.



Eraser and Instant Alpha (Shortcut 'e')

The eraser and instant alpha are good for removing pixels from a bitmap image. If there is a layer underneath it, it will be exposed. For more on how layers work, read the layers basics page. You can also hold down the shift key to erase in straight lines. Instant alpha is an erasing tool that has similar qualities to the magic wand selection tool. Click on the color you want erased and simultaneously drag outwards to increase the erasing tolerance, or inwards to decrease.



Flood Fill (Shortcut 'k')

The flood fill tool works similarly to the magic wand. Instead of selecting an area, the flood tool replaces the color you clicked on with the foreground color. The tolerance setting lets you adjust the thoroughness of the fill. Try experimenting!



Gradient (Shortcut 'g')

Use the gradient tool to fill in your image, shape, or selected area with a gradual gradient. The linear gradient tool will produce a gradient from the point you click to the place where you release your click, while the radial tool will produce a circular gradient expanding from where you initially clicked on the canvas to where you release your click.



Clone, Smudge, Dodge, and Burn Touchup Tools (Shortcut 'Shift-O')

Holding shift (⇧) and repeatedly pressing "O" will cycle through all the touchup tools. The clone tool is typically used for removing unwanted items in a photo. The smudge tool takes a

color from where you start and smears it into other colors of your image, like smearing wet paint. This is useful for removing flaws from photos. The dodge tool lightens the pixels you paint which is helpful if you want to lighten certain areas of your image. The burn tool works in the same way as the dodge tool, only it darkens the pixels rather than lightens them.



Text (Shortcut 't')

The text tool allows you to put text onto an image. Select the tool and click once on your image to bring up the text bounding box where you can start typing. Once you are done hit the escape key, click outside the bounding box, or change to the move tool to solidify the text that you have written. By using the move tool you can move the text around, rotate it, and align it however you want.

If you are looking for more options with the text, go to the menu item Window ▶ Fonts to pull up the font palette.



Shapes (Shortcut 'p', 'r', 'o', ';')

Shapes include the bezier, rectangle, ellipse, line, arrow, and star tools. You can easily add a stroke, fill, and corner radius to your shapes from the inspector palette. You can also modify the angle of the shape and apply a drop shadow. Add shapes to your image, then easily edit them later on by using the move tool to select, move, and adjust the shape dimensions. For more options with shapes, check out the 'Shape' menu item.



Colors

The two color wells represent what you have currently set as your front or stroke color (top left) and back or fill color (bottom right). Clicking on the arrows on the top right allow you to quickly switch the color positions. If your colors aren't currently set to black and white, you can re-set them by clicking the square box on the bottom left. The eye dropper on the bottom right allows you to click on any color in your image, and it will then show up as your front color in the color well.



Quick Mask (Shortcut 'q')

The quick mask mode button can be found on the bottom left hand side of the tools palette under the color wells. Quick mask mode is an additional way of making selections in Acorn, and can be combined with other selection tools such as the magic wand to refine a selection. You can use the brush, eraser, and even filters when quick mask mode is enabled.



Full Screen (Shortcut 'f')

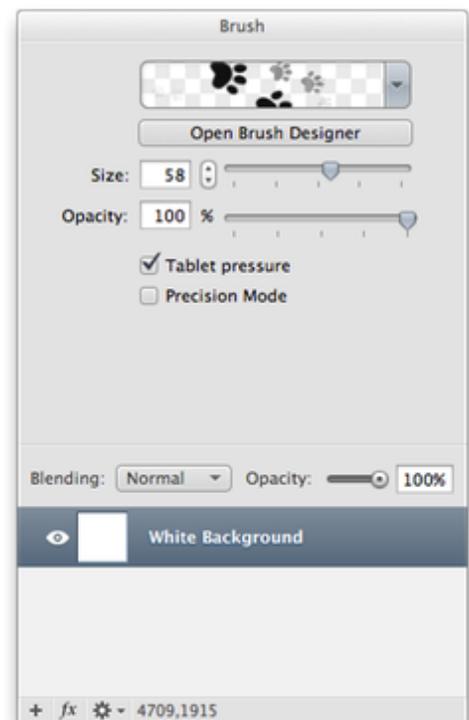
Going to full screen mode allows you to expand Acorn to the entire screen. Toggle between regular screen and full screen mode quickly by using keyboard shortcut 'f'. To hide or display the tools palette in full screen mode, toggle the tab key. Move the canvas anywhere in the screen using the hand tool (quick tip- hold down the space bar and move it around easily).

Inspector Palette

The inspector palette is where the currently selected tools' options are available.

As you can see in the image to the right, the brush tool's options are currently displayed in the upper portion of the inspector palette. You can modify the brush size, opacity, style of brush as well as open the brush designer. Different tools have various settings you can modify, so be sure to play around and experiment with each tool.

The lower portion of the inspector palette includes the layers list, blending modes, opacity slider, and options for manipulating layers. You can read more about the layers list and its various options in the tutorial, 'Layers Basics'.



Colors Palette

The colors palette lets you pick, sample, and store colors in a variety of ways. To open the colors palette click on the front or back color well, choose the Window ▶ Colors menu item, or use keyboard shortcut ⌘C.

Selecting Colors

Along the top of the window is a toolbar with various options to pick colors. There are wheels, sliders, spectrums, crayons, and hexadecimal color codes. Playing around with the sliders is one way to get results.

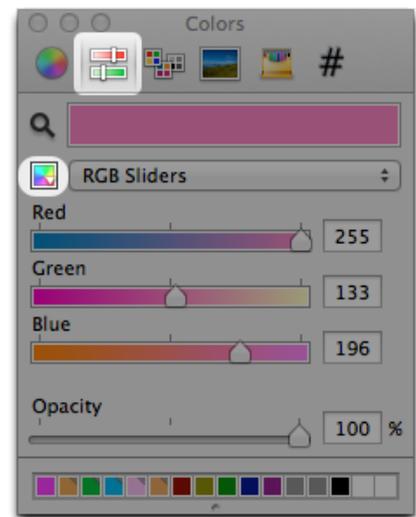
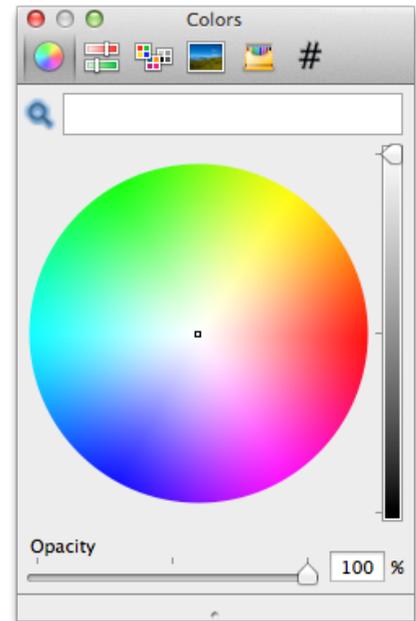
If you already have a picture with the color you want then click on the magnifying glass, put the crosshairs over the color you want, and click once. This will set the color to the one you just sampled. An alternative way to bring up the magnifying glass is View ▶ Select Color.

When you have picked a color, it will show up in the color bar next to the magnifying glass.

Sometimes there's a mismatch between the colorspace that the color picker is using, and the colorspace that the image is using. This results in a color showing up that doesn't match the color that was picked. You can find the color panel's colorspace by clicking on the color space button next to the RGB sliders.

And for the image, you can find out the color profile by selecting the Image ▶ Assign Color Profile menu item. Set the color profile so that the color picker and image color profile are the same.

An additional method to try if the magnifying glass is getting a color mismatch, is to select one of the drawing tools such as the brush, pencil, or fill tools. Hold down the option key to bring up the color picker, and select your color in the canvas.



Adjusting the Opacity

You can adjust how opaque / transparent your color is by adjusting the opacity slider at the bottom of the color palette. A transparent color will have a vertical slash through it in the color bar. The top portion is what the original color looks like without opacity, and the bottom is with the opacity applied:



Pro Tip: If you want to see both the color and opacity level of an existing color in your image, select the brush tool then hold down the option key while clicking on the color. The color and its opacity will be displayed in the colors palette.

Swatches

Colors can also be stored by dragging the color from the color bar down onto the grid at the bottom of the palette. If you don't see the grid, pull on the bottom part of the color window as if it was a drawer.

Keeping a swatch library can save you time later if you consistently use the same colors. Any color swatch that you drag down into this section can be accessed from most other applications on your computer. If you have a green you use on all of your stationary, you can store it and use it in VoodooPad, Keynote, Pages, Mail, iWeb, etc.

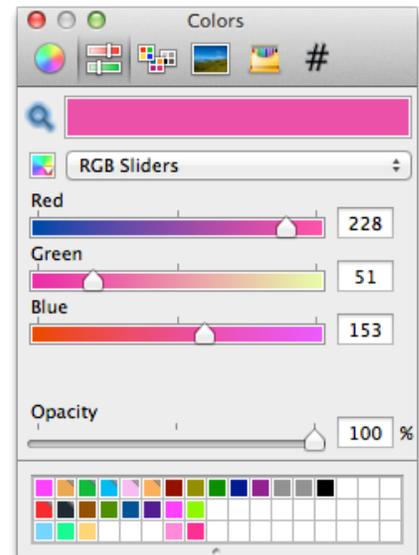
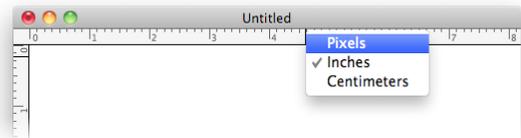
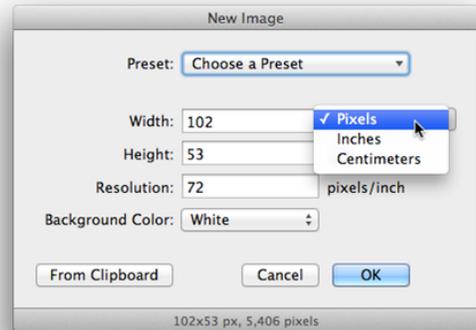


Image Measurements

Images in Acorn can be in units of pixels, inches, or centimeters. When creating a new image in Acorn, you will be given the choice of which measurement unit you wish to apply.

If you wish to change the measurement unit in an existing image, you have a couple of options. You can go to Acorn ▶ Preferences ▶ General ▶ Ruler Units and make your selection.

You can also modify the base measurement unit if you have rulers present on your image (View ▶ Show Rulers). Right click on one of the rulers and make your selection.



Rulers and Guides

Sometimes things need to be lined up perfectly and relying on human eyes isn't necessary with Acorn. Rulers can be found under View ▶ Show Rulers (⌘ R). Rulers will be displayed around the canvas on the top and left hand sides. The measurements the rulers can display are pixels, inches, and centimeters. To change the measurement unit, right click on one of the rulers. The bottom left hand corner of the canvas is the (0,0) point on the x,y axis. If you want to change the (0,0) point to the top left of the canvas, go to Acorn ▶ Preferences ▶ General.

Guide Basics

Guides can be created by clicking on either the horizontal or vertical ruler and dragging it out onto the canvas. To move a guide, click and drag on the guide with the Move Tool. Notice that as the guide is moved around on the canvas, the measurement number changes based on where the guide is located. If you are placing a horizontal guide then the number reflects where you are on the vertical or "y" axis and if you are placing a vertical guide it is where you are on the horizontal or "x" axis.

You can duplicate guides without going all the way back to the ruler by hovering over a guide you want to duplicate, then holding down the option key while clicking and dragging.

Guides can be hidden, cleared, locked, and created under View ▶ Guides. They can also be deleted by dragging them off the canvas. Guides can additionally be created under the canvas contextual menu (right click on the image to bring this menu up). Guides will not print on your image and are not visibly present when you "print preview".

Aligning with Guides

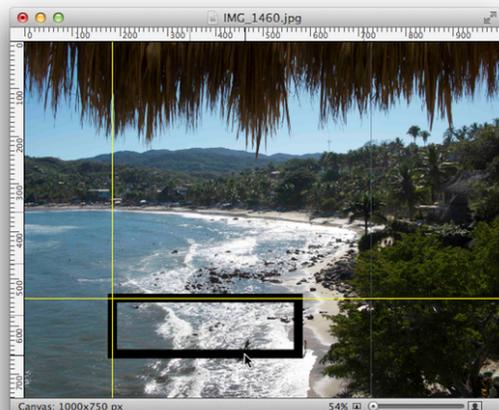
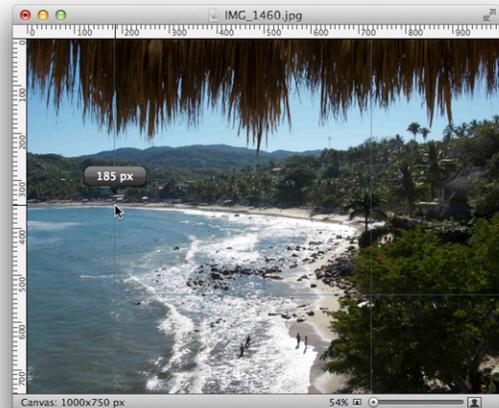
If you have created guides and want to align layers perfectly to them, click on the move tool. Make sure "Snap To: Guides" is checked in the inspector palette. This will take the guess work out of getting your layers to align perfectly on the guides. The guides that can be "snapped to" will turn yellow to let you know which guides are being used. You can align your layer by its outer boundaries, by its horizontal or vertical center, or by a combination of those options. In the image below, a rectangle shape is aligned at its upper left hand corner with 2 guides.

To temporarily disable document bounds and guide snapping, you can hold down the control key while moving your layer or shape.

Pro-Tip: Did you know you can use basic math equations in Acorn's numerical fields? This can be super helpful when placing guides. Choose View ▶ Guides ▶ New Guide. To place a vertical guide at the center of your image, select the 'Vertical' option and in the 'Location' field enter the width of your image multiplied by 0.5 (or divided by 2).

Aligning without Guides

Under the move tool, there is an option to "Snap To: Document Bounds". If this box is checked, when you drag your layer around in the canvas the edges of the layer will "snap" to the boundaries of

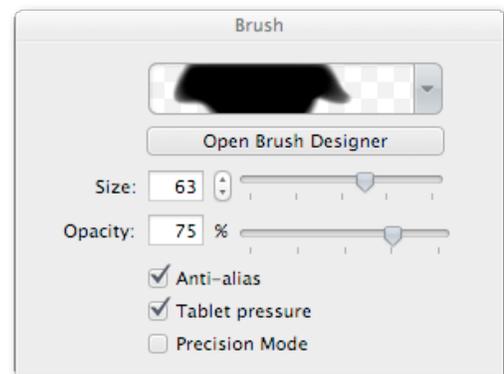


the canvas. In addition, the horizontal and vertical center of the layer will also snap to the horizontal and vertical centers of the canvas.

Using Arrow Keys in the Palette

In several of the tools palette's there are fields to enter numbers. The number in the field will change the size of text, brush size, percentage of opacity, flood fill tolerance, etc.

This example will use brush size. To the right is a shot of the inspector palette showing the brush palette. There is a field for you to enter a number (now set at 63). Next to that are up (▲) and down (▼) arrows to adjust the size, and to the right of the arrows there is a slider. You may also wish to change the number in the field by clicking inside the field, and using the up and down arrow keys on your keyboard. As you do this, notice the slider will move according to the number in the field.



This is different only in the field for text size. When you click on the arrows to the right of the text size field a drop down menu will appear.

Keyboard Shortcuts

If you often find yourself using the mouse to change the current tool you are using, you might be able to speed up the process by memorizing a few keyboard shortcuts. If you forget which key goes to which function, take a look at the menus.

Don't like a particular shortcut, or wish a menu item had one? You can change or add shortcuts via the Keyboard System Preferences, under the "Application Shortcuts" section.

Tools Palette				Layers	
<Tab>	Toggle Palette	D	Reset front/back colors	0,1-9	Cycle the current layer through various levels of transparency
V	Move	H, space-bar	Pan, temporary pan	⌘]	Select next layer
B	Brush	I	Eye dropper	⌘ [Select previous layer
K	Flood fill	Z	Magnify/zoom	Magnification/Zoom	
E	Erase, instant alpha	R	Rectangle shape	⌘ +	Zoom in
O	Oval shape	L	Line shape	⌘ -	Zoom out
T	Text	F	Full screen	⌘ 1	100%.
Q	Quick mask	X	Swap front/back colors	⌘ 2	200%
⇧O	Touch-up tools	N	Pencil	⌘ 3	400%
P	Bezier curve	M, S	Selection tools	⌘ 4	Toggle between 800% and 3500%
C	Crop			⌘ 5	Toggle between 50% and 25%

Miscellaneous			
⇧ Drag	Constrain the oval or rectangle selections and shapes to equal sides.	⌘ F	Perform the last filter again
⌘ ⇧ 6	Make a new image from a screenshot	⌘ A	Select All
ESC	Cancel current transform or crop operation	⌘ Delete	Fill the current selection or canvas with foreground color.
⌘ ^	Anchors the Tool Palette to the top right	⌘ ⇧ Delete	Fill the current selection or canvas with background color
⌘ ⇧ C	Show / Hide the Color Palette	⇧ Delete	Brings up the Fill... panel.
⌘ T	Show / Hide the Font Palette	Delete	Deletes contents of currently selected layer
⌘ D	Remove Selection.		

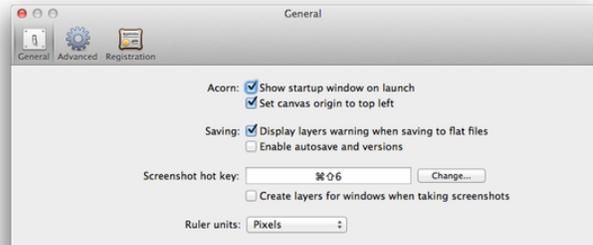
Legend			
⌘	Command Key	⌘	Option Key
^	Control Key	⇧	Shift Key

Preferences

The Preference Panel for Acorn is located under Acorn ► Preferences . There are three tabs labeled General, Advanced, and Registration.

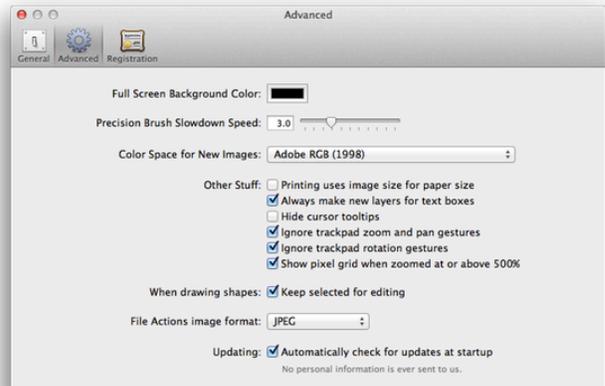
General

The General tab includes preferences for Acorn such as turning on and off the startup window menu and setting your canvas origin to top left. There is also the option to change the hot key for taking a screenshot in Acorn, the option to turn screenshot layers on and off, and the choice of ruler units (pixels, centimeters, or inches). If you would like to use 10.7's auto-save and versions feature, then check the 'enable autosave and versions' box.



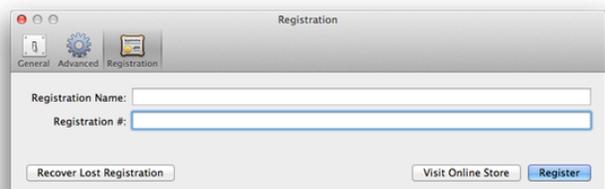
Advanced

The Advanced tab gives you options to change the background color of full screen mode, and to set the speed of the Precision Brush. It also includes preferences on using the image size for paper size when printing, making new layers for text boxes, hiding cursor tooltips, and ignoring trackpad gestures (applies to Macbooks only). You have the option to change the color space for new images and to automatically check for updates when you open Acorn.



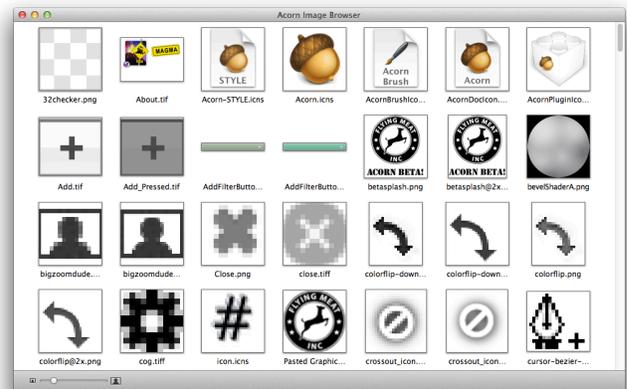
Registration

This is where you enter your name and registration number for Acorn. Once your registration number is entered, it will be saved here for future reference. There is a link to the Flying Meat store where you can purchase upgrades and other software, and a link to the support page where you can request lost registration numbers. The registration tab is not present in the Mac App Store version of Acorn.



Using the Acorn Image Browser

There are 2 ways to browse images files through Acorn. The first method is to go to File ▶ Open Folder (⇧⌘O). Choose either a folder that contains images, or an application. The second method is to hold ⌘ (option, command) and drag your file or the icon of the application and drop it on top of the Acorn icon in your Dock. Either way, the image browser will appear in Acorn with all the images contained within the folder or application.



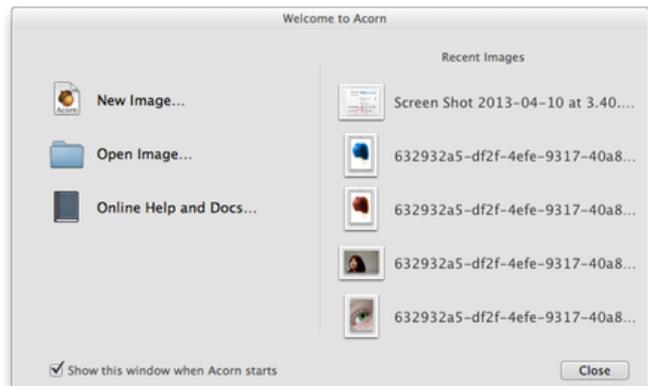
The file browser window will give you a warning if you open up a folder and it can't find any images in it.

Creating, Opening, and Saving Images

Opening Up Acorn

When you first open Acorn you will be greeted by an image similar to the one on the right.

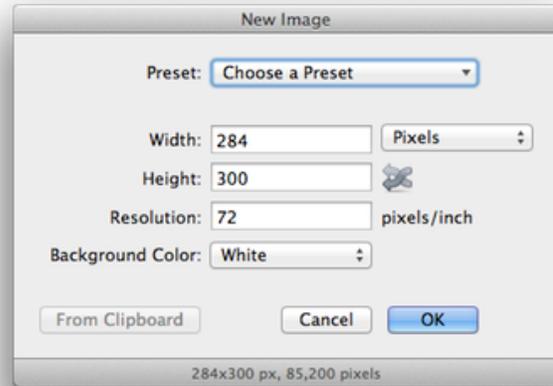
You can choose to create a new image, open an image, or choose from a list of images recently opened in Acorn. If you do not want this window to appear every time you launch Acorn, uncheck the box in the lower left hand corner. If you want this window to re-appear, choose the Help ▶ Welcome To Acorn menu item.



Creating a New Image

To create a new image, choose File ▶ New (⌘N).

You can choose a preset image size, or you can enter your desired dimensions manually. If you are manually entering the dimensions, you have the option to use different measurement values including pixels, inches, and centimeters. You can also select your image resolution and background color. For more information on resolution and PPI, read all about DPI, PPI, and printing.



Creating and Deleting New Image Presets

To create a new image preset, enter the width and height values into the appropriate fields then click on the preset drop down menu. Choose 'Save Preset'. You will be prompted to give your preset a name. In order to delete a preset you have created, hold down the option key while clicking on the preset name. A window will appear to confirm that you want to delete the preset. You can only delete custom presets.

Opening Existing Images

To open an image, choose the File ▶ Open menu item. You can also drag and drop images onto Acorn's icon in the dock. If you would like to combine two or more images together, use the File ▶ Add Images... menu or drag and drop your images from the Finder into Acorn's canvas or layers list.

If Acorn is running and you have an image on your clipboard that you would like to open in Acorn, right-click on the Acorn icon in the dock and select "New Image from Clipboard".

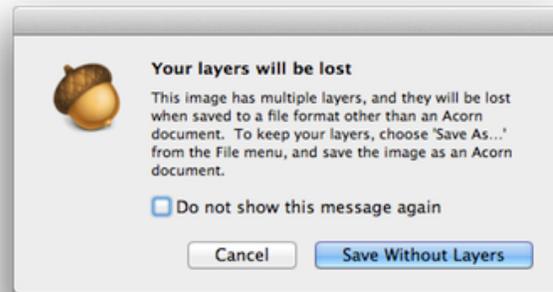
Also make sure to read up on 'Inserting Images', which describes how to combine and resize images.

Tip: If you can only see a small portion of your image, try zooming out using View ▶ Zoom Out or dragging the slider found on the lower right hand corner of the window to the left. Alternatively, you can use View ▶ Zoom To ▶ Fit in Window.



Saving Images

You can save images by selecting File ▶ Save or File ▶ Save As. When working with an image editor such as Acorn, it is a good idea to always work off a copy of an image rather than the original. When in doubt, select File ▶ Save As and re-name the file so you don't accidentally make permanent changes to your original image! Also, be aware that saving certain file types will "flatten" your layers so that you cannot edit them easily later.



Acorn will warn you if you are at risk of losing your layers when saving, unless you have checked the 'do not show this message again' box.

Image File Formats Acorn Supports

Acorn	Acorn files are the native file type of Acorn. This is the most robust file format that Acorn supports. When saving in this format all of your layers, grid settings, text and shapes are saved. You are able to edit them when you re-open the image. This is the recommended format for editing images with layers in Acorn. If in doubt, save your image in this format. The file extension for Acorn images is .acorn.
JPEG	JPEG is a very popular image format used primarily for photographs. Since JPEG is a lossy format, it is not ideal for graphics with text. File extensions for JPEG are .jpeg and .jpg. If you prefer to save with the .jpg extension, manually enter it in the "save as" field as the file extension. Acorn will remember that you prefer .jpg over .jpeg next time you save. Acorn can read and write JPEG images. Read more about JPEG on Wikipedia .
JPEG 2000	JPEG 2000 was designed to be the successor to JPEG. The file extension for JPEG 2000 is .jp2. Acorn can read and write JPEG 2000 images. Read more about JPEG 2000 on Wikipedia .
PNG	PNG stands for Portable Network Graphics, and is a lossless 32 bit image format. If you need to have crisp text or transparency in your image, PNG is the way to go. The file extension for PNG is .png. Acorn can read and write PNG images. Read more about PNG on Wikipedia .
GIF	GIF stands for Graphics Interchange Format, and is a lossless 8 bit image format. Since GIF files can only use up to 256 colors in an image, you will only want to use this format for specific web applications. The file extension for GIF is .gif. Acorn can read and write GIF images. Read more about GIF on Wikipedia .
BMP	BMP is a popular image format on Microsoft Windows. The file extension for BMP is .bmp. Acorn can read and write BMP images. Read more about BMP on Wikipedia .
TIFF	TIFF stands for Tagged Image File Format. TIFF is a lossless 32 bit image format and can preserve transparency. The file extensions for TIFF are .tiff and .tif. Acorn can read and write TIFF images. Read more about TIFF on Wikipedia .
FXG	FXG (Flash XML Graphics) is an XML based graphics interchange format created by Adobe. FXG is still in development, but Acorn supports limited reading and writing of FXG files. The file extension for FXG is .fxg. Read more about FXG on Wikipedia .

PSD	PSD is the native file type for Adobe Photoshop images. Acorn does its best to open PSD images, and if possible, preserve layers. Photoshop styles, and editable text are not supported. Acorn supports writing PSD files via File ▶ Export. The file extension for PSD is .psd
WebP	WebP (pronounced "weepy") is a lossy image format similar to JPEG. WebP is a highly compressed image format created by Google to help speed up the web. Acorn can read WebP images, and can save WebP images via the Web Export panel. The file extension for WebP is .webp. Read more about WebP on Wikipedia .
PDF	PDF stands for Portable Document Format, and is an open standard developed by Adobe Systems. Acorn can read and save PDF files. The file extension for PDF is .pdf. Read more about PDF on Wikipedia .
RAW	Quoting Wikipedia , "A camera raw image file contains minimally processed data from the image sensor of either a digital camera, image scanner, or motion picture film scanner. Raw files are so named because they are not yet processed and therefore are not ready to be printed or edited with a bitmap graphics editor." Acorn can import any RAW image that Mac OS X can natively read. Occasionally, Apple will add support for new RAW formats via system updates. There are many file extensions for RAW files.

Acorn Tools

- Selection Tools
- Drawing Tools
- Gradient Tool
- Clone Tool
- Dodge, Burn, and Smudge
- Flood Fill
- Shape Tools
- Type
- Crop

Selection Tools

The selection tools allow you to isolate a specific area of your image and then work in that area without altering the other areas of the image. Acorn gives you a handful of ways to make selections on your image including the rectangle, elliptical, freehand, polygonal, and magic wand selection tools.

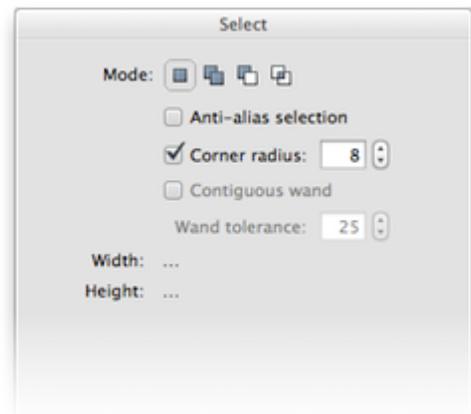
The shortcut key for switching to a selection tool is 'M'. Pressing M multiple times will then cycle through all the selection tools. To remove a selection, choose the menu item **Select** ▶ **Clear Selection**, or use the shortcut **⌘D**.

Acorn will remember your selection when you save your image. If you have a selection, save your image as a .acorn file. You can close your file and quit Acorn. When you re-open the image, your selection will still be there.



The rectangle selection allows you to make rectangular selections and the elliptical selection tool allows you to make oval selections. The freehand selection tool allows you to make freehand selections. This is great if you have a selection that does not fit in a box or a square. The polygonal selection tool allows you make odd selections, but by making multiple clicks. You can finish off your selection with a double click.

The magic wand selection tool will select areas of the same color that you clicked on. You can adjust the tolerance (how close a color has to be to the one you clicked on) in the selection



palette. For a live adjustment of the magic wand tolerance, you can click on the color in your image and drag the magic wand on the canvas inwards (to decrease the tolerance) or outwards (to increase the tolerance).

Selection Tips

- To draw a perfect circle (or square), hold down the shift key after you have started your selection.
- When creating an oval or a rectangular selection, you can press the spacebar to reposition the origin of the selection.
- To grow a selection from the middle of where you clicked, press the option key after you have started your selection.
- To add to a selection, hold down the shift key before you start your selection. The selection cursor will change to include a plus sign.
- To delete from a selection, hold down the option key before you start your selection. The selection cursor will change to include a minus sign.
- To bring back your last selection, choose the Select ▶ Reselect menu item.
- If you have a fully vertical or horizontal selection, holding down the option key will turn the Image ▶ Trim to Edges menu item into "Trim out Selection". Trim out selection deletes the current selection and squishes the two endpoints of your image together (bitmap layers only).
- To convert the current selection into a layer mask, choose the Layer ▶ Add Layer Mask menu item when your selection is active.
- Keyboard shortcuts for making selections from layers include holding down the command key while clicking on a layer in the layers list to make a selection based off using the layer image as a mask. If you hold command + the shift key, the new mask will be added to an existing selection, command + option will subtract, and command + shift + option will intersect.

Preset Selections and Making Selections Fit Exact Dimensions

Acorn offers preset selection dimensions under Select ▶ Preset Selections. If you want your selection a specific size that is not a preset, check out the online video tutorial [here](#).

Feathering a Selection

The feather command will soften up the edges of your selection. You can bring up the feather window from the Select ▶ Feather menu item. The higher the feather radius, the softer your selection will become. The following image was made by first creating a circular selection, feathering with a radius of 10, and then choosing the Edit ▶ Fill menu item.



View Selection Clipped Out vs. Marching Ants

There are two different ways to view your selection. The above image is the traditional "Marching Ants". The image to the right is showing "clipped out". Clipped out shows the area outside of the selection with a darkly tinted transparency.

Is there an advantage to using one or the other? Not really- but it turns out some folks really like the clipped out look, and others like the marching ants. You can alternate between these two options via Select ▶ View Selection As or use shortcut ⌘\.



Moving Selections

Once you have made a selection, you can move it around with the arrow keys. In addition to this, you can hold down the ⌘ (command) key and Acorn will first cut out the selection and then move it around your image. Letting go of ⌘ will then place your floating selection.

You can hold down ⌘ and ⌥ (option) when using the arrow keys, and Acorn will continually copy + place your selection around as you move it. Hold down the shift key to make the selection move by 10 pixels each time you press an arrow key.

The same trick works with the mouse, just hold down ⌘ ⌥ ⇧ when moving your selection with the mouse.

Addition, Subtraction, and Intersection Modes



There are four selection modes available in Acorn. Listing them from left to right as they are displayed in the selection palette, they include: regular, addition, subtraction, and intersection.

Addition - When two or more selections overlap, they will be joined together to create a single selection encompassing all areas of the original selections.

Subtraction - When you draw a selection over an existing selection, it will remove that area of the original selection.

Intersection - Where selections overlap, only the area of overlap will be retained as a selection.

Quick Mask



The quick mask mode button can be found on the bottom left hand side of the tools palette under the color wells. Quick mask mode is an additional way of making selections in Acorn, and can be combined with other selection tools such as the magic wand to refine a selection. You can use the brush, eraser, and even filters when quick mask mode is enabled.

When you enter quick mask mode, it helps to think of your selection as a virtual layer which happens to be either red tinted or clear. Painting with the color white in quick mask mode removes the tinted color overlay. Painting with black restores the color overlay. Anywhere you paint with white is where your selection will be, and when you exit quick mask mode the clear overlay (which you painted with white) will change into a standard selection. Toggle with keyboard shortcut 'q' to view your selections within and outside of quick mask.

Drawing Tools

Acorn has two drawing tools: Brush (B) and Pencil (N). Brushes are used primarily for painting and drawing because they create soft, smooth lines. The pencil is most useful for when you are zoomed in and you need to edit single pixels. This is because the pencil has sharper edges than the brush tool.



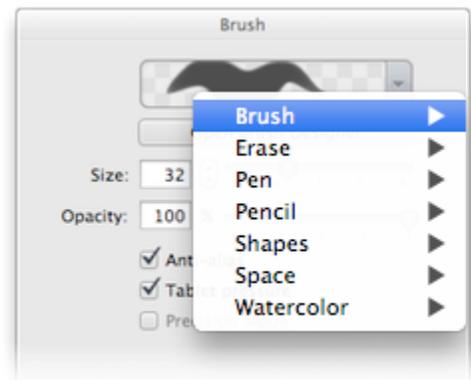
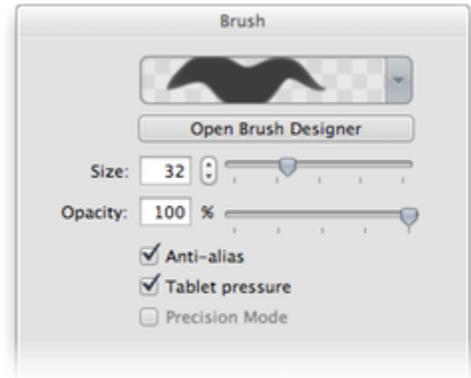
Brush (B)

When you click on the brush tool, you can adjust the size and opacity of the brush in the inspector palette. You can also turn on and off the tablet pressure, anti-aliasing, and precision mode.

Shortcuts for modifying brush size:

- Hold down the control and option keys at the same time while clicking on the mouse and moving it left (to decrease size) or right (to increase size).
- Hold down the [key (left bracket) to decrease size, and the] key (right bracket) to increase size

If you click on the brush preview window, a drop down menu will appear for selecting different types of preset brushes. You can select from brushes, pens, pencils, and more.



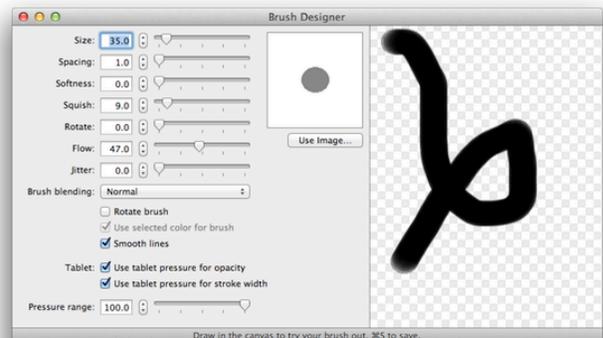
Acorn's Brush Designer

Below the brush preview window there is a button to 'Open Brush Designer'. Clicking on this will open the brush designer which allows you to customize and save your own brushes. Alternatively, you can bring up the brush designer by clicking on the Window ▶ Brush Designer menu item.

The Brush Designer is a powerful tool that allows you to make your very own brushes or modify existing ones. Simply draw in the canvas provided, change the settings for the brush, and watch your brush strokes update to the new settings.

Here is a rundown of the various options:

Size: This is the width and height of your brush. To make your brush bigger or smaller, modify this setting.



Spacing: Acorn uses a dabbing (also known as stamping) method for its brushes. In essence, a brush stroke is a whole bunch of stamps of the same image over and over again. The spacing option decides how close together those stamps appear.

Softness: This option alters the brush stroke to have a softer or harder edge.

Squish: Do you want your brush to have a slight angle to it, like a felt tip pen might have? Use this option to decide how much of an angle.

Rotate: This will rotate your brush dab to your desired angle.

Flow: The flow slider adjusts the amount of paint the brush applies with each stroke.

Jitter: This option adds a range of randomness to your brush strokes.

Use Image...: If you have a pre-existing image you would like to use as the brush, select 'Use Image'. Alternatively, the stamp preview will allow you to drag and drop images into it. You can make a brush pattern in Acorn, and then drag and drop the image into the Brush Designer preview.

Brush blending: Control how the brush strokes are applied to your image. Use Multiply for a felt tip pen feeling, or Darker if you want your brush strokes to add darkness to the image. Use Destination Out to create an eraser brush.

Rotate brush: This will rotate the brush depending on the direction you are drawing. This feature works great with shape brushes.

Use selected color for brush: If you are using a custom image for the brush you can turn this on to make your image/brush change its color to whatever you have set in the foreground color well. If you turn this off, Acorn will use whatever colors are in the image for the brush.

Smooth lines: With this option turned on, Acorn will try and smooth out any edges it finds when drawing. This is especially useful when drawing with the mouse.

A brush with blending set to multiply:



The same brush, with blending set to normal:



Tablet Options

Use tablet pressure for opacity: When this is turned on Acorn will make your brush strokes more or less opaque, depending on the pressure you use with your tablet stylus.

Use tablet pressure for stroke width: When this is turned on Acorn will alter your brush strokes to be thicker or thinner, depending on the pressure you apply with your stylus.

Tablet pressure range: This slider alters the minimum bound for the pressure sensitive options. If you find that there is too much range in the stroke width, you can change this setting to make your brush strokes thicker.

Saving a Custom Brush

To save your brush, type ⌘S and a sheet will appear asking you for a name and category for the brush. You can add your brush to an existing category, or create a new one. If you purchased Acorn from the Flying Meat Store, custom brushes are saved to your ~/Library/Application Support/Acorn/Brushes/ folder. If you purchased Acorn from the Mac App Store, the App Support folder has been moved to:

~/Library/Containers/com.flyingmeat.Acorn/Data/Library/Application Support.

You can exchange your brushes with friends over email simply by sending them your saved brush from the Finder. You can also delete brushes you have created from the Finder.



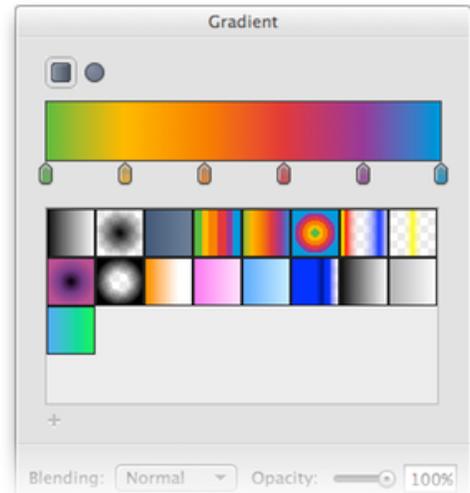
Pencil (N)

The pencil tool can be changed in size and opacity, and the edges look sharper or softer depending on whether or not the anti-alias checkbox is selected.

Gradient Tool



The gradient tool allows you to create a blend of colors fading into one another on your image. The colors of your gradient depend on the colors you have selected with the tabs located just below the gradient display. A rainbow linear gradient is shown to the right. You can see in the gradient palette that it shows a sample of what these colors will look like as a gradient. You can choose a linear or radial gradient by clicking one of the buttons towards the top left of the gradient palette.

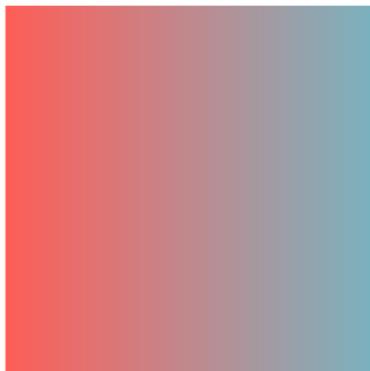


Linear Gradient



Select the gradient tool from your tools palette (keyboard shortcut "G") . When you move your cursor over your canvas, it will become a crosshair. Click and drag your cursor over your canvas and the gradient will grow as you drag. When you release the click, the gradient you have drawn can no longer be modified. The further you drag the cursor, the more mixed the colors will be in the gradient. To create a perfectly horizontal, 45 degree diagonal, or vertical gradient, hold the Shift key while dragging out your gradient.

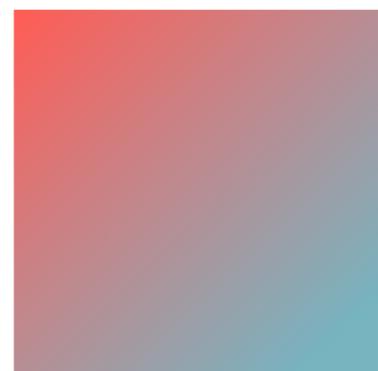
Here are examples of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal linear gradients:



Horizontal



Vertical

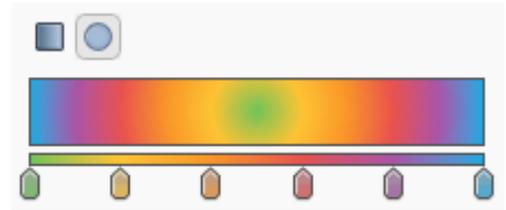


Diagonal

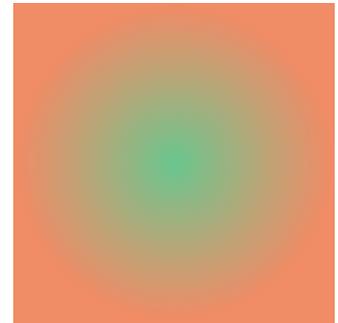
Radial Gradient



Select "Radial Gradient" by clicking on the circular button towards the top left in the gradient palette. Moving the tabs in the radial gradient has different effects than in a linear gradient, so there are two gradient displays showing how the gradient looks both radially (top display) and linearly (bottom display).

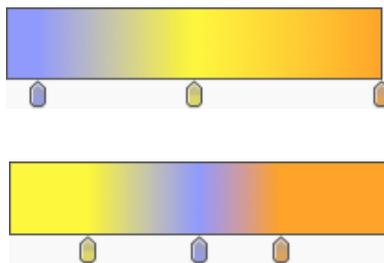


Creating a radial gradient is similar to a linear gradient, but the point where you start your cursor will be the center of the gradient. The farther you drag your cursor, the more the colors expand.



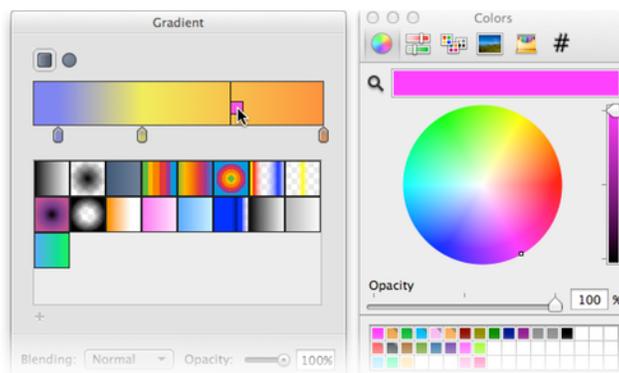
Gradient Colors

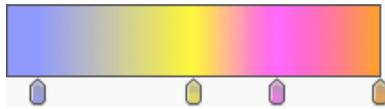
The gradient color positions are controlled by the tabs just below the gradient display. Moving the tabs left and right will change the position and ratio of the colors.



To remove a color, just click and hold on that color's tab then drag and drop it off of the gradient palette. Poof! It's gone!

To add a color to your gradient, open the colors palette. Select your desired color so that it shows up in the colors palette top display window (just to the right of the magnifying glass). Drag and drop the color from the colors palette top display window into the gradient display.





An additional method to add a color to your gradient is to click just below the preview of the gradient where the tabs are located. A tab will be added to your gradient, and its color will be whatever color you currently have present in your front color well.

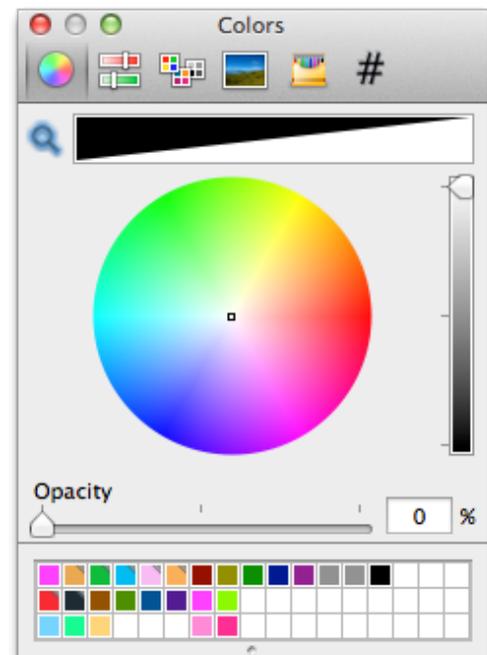
To change a color in your gradient, double click on that color's tab. Its current color will show up in the colors palette. Now you can change the color by selecting a new color.

To duplicate a color in your gradient, hold down the option key while clicking and dragging on that color's tab.

Creating a Transparent Gradient

To create a transparent gradient, you must make one of your tab colors transparent. To do this, double click on the gradient tab of the color you wish to transition into transparency. Once you double click on the tab, the colors palette will open. Slide the opacity of the color down to zero. The box at the top next to the magnifying glass will become half black and half white. This means your color is transparent.

And the gradient in your Inspector Palette will look similar to this:

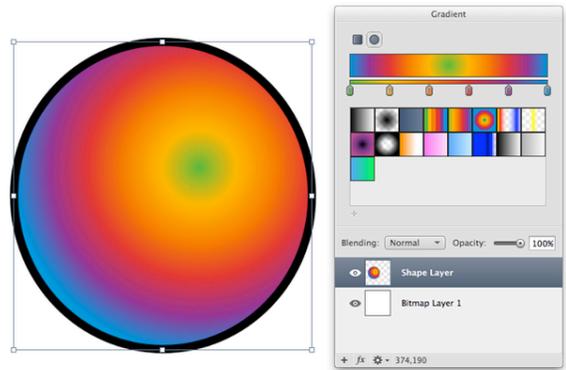


Saving and Deleting Gradients

You can store gradients you create for future use. Just create your gradient, then click on the "+" button towards the bottom left of the gradient palette. You can also click on the gradient display window and drag it down to the list of gradients. Or, right click in the gradient list area and choose "Add Current Gradient". Acorn comes with a handful of gradients pre-loaded. You can delete previously stored gradients by right clicking on the gradient in the list, then selecting "Delete Gradient".

Applying a Gradient to a Shape

To apply a gradient to a shape, first draw out your desired shape (read shape tool for more details). The shape must have a "fill" in order to be able to apply a gradient, so make sure the fill box is checked. A stroke is not necessary, but the gradient will not be applied to the stroke. Using the move tool, select your shape. Next, click on the gradient tool. Set your gradient colors. Drag the gradient across your shape.



Clone, Dodge, Burn, and Smudge

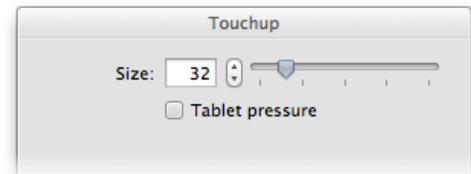
The touch-up tools include the clone, smudge, burn, and dodge tools. You can find them at the bottom of the tools palette. Hold the shift key and press "O" repeatedly to toggle through the touch-up tools. To quickly resize a touch-up tool, hold down the control and option keys while clicking and dragging your mouse on the canvas back and forth.

Pro Tip: When working with the touch-up tools it is best to work on a duplicate layer in order to preserve your original image.



Clone

With the clone tool you are able to copy a part of your image and apply that over an unwanted item to cover it. In the inspector palette you can adjust the size of the clone tool and turn tablet pressure on and off.



Smudge

The smudge tool takes a color from where you start clicking and smears it into other colors of your image as you drag your cursor, like smearing wet paint. This is useful for removing flaws from photos. The smudge options in the inspector palette are the same as the clone tool.

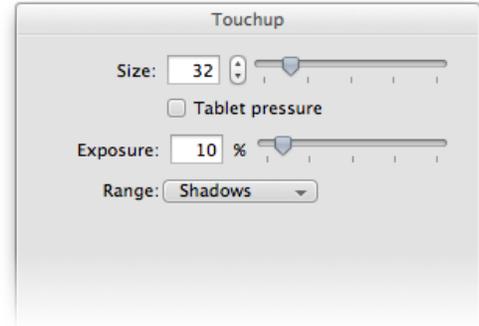




Burn and Dodge

The burn tool darkens the pixels you paint. This is great if you want to darken certain areas of your image. The dodge tool works in the same way as the burn tool, only it lightens the pixels, rather than darkens them.

The inspector palette shows the size, exposure, and range of the burn and dodge tools.



The exposure adjusts the amount of darkening or lightening the tool will perform. To make subtle changes, change the exposure to a lower setting.

The range determines which tones are affected by the tool. Highlights will affect lighter tones, midtones will affect the middle tones, and shadows will affect the darker tones.

Flood Fill



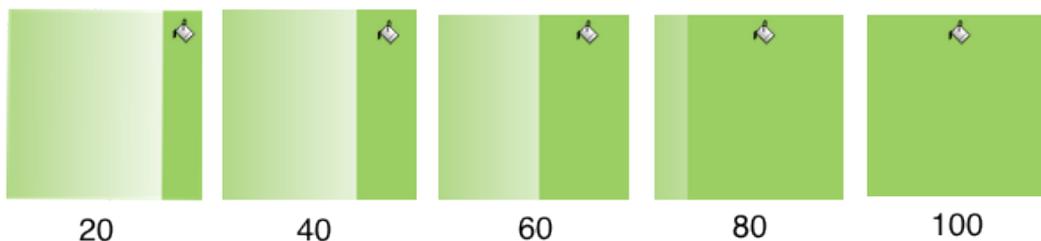
The flood fill tool (also known as the paint bucket tool) is the tool that looks like a bucket with paint spilling out of it. (Keyboard shortcut "K").

This tool is used to fill in areas of your image that are connected together by a common color. Click anywhere on your blank canvas, and it will fill it in with your selected color.

Adjusting the Tolerance

Flood fill has a option called "Tolerance". When you are using flood fill on an image with a gradient or an area with more than one color, you can adjust the tolerance to fill in more than one color on the canvas. The higher the tolerance is set, the more colors it will fill in with your selected color.

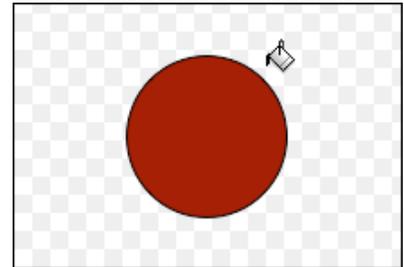
Here is an example:



Below tolerance is the option to select "Anti-alias". If this box is not checked, then flood fill will have a sharp boundary at its edges. If checked, the flood fill tool will bleed a little on its edges, for a smoother transition.

Flood Fill and Shapes

You can also use flood fill to fill in shapes. With the flood fill tool selected, just click inside the shape to fill it with your color. Note: The anti-alias option has no effect on shapes.



Fill an Entire Layer with a Color

In Acorn, there is an easy way to fill an entire layer with a color without using the flood fill tool. Pick your desired color in the colors palette, then drag and drop the color swatch into the appropriate layer. The entire layer will then be filled with that color.

Edit ▶ Fill

If you want additional control over filling a layer with color, try Edit ▶ Fill. This command will bring up the options of what color, opacity, and blending mode you want to apply to the fill.

Shapes

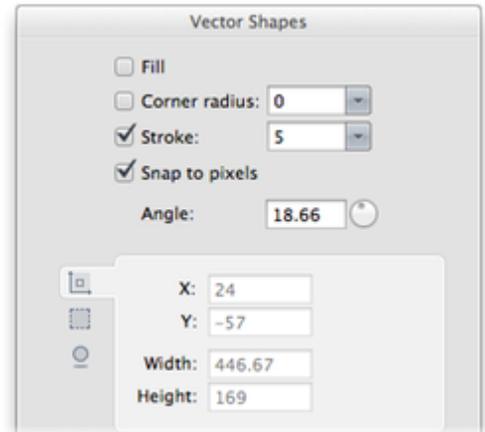
Besides altering bitmap images, Acorn also provides tools to add your own simple vector shapes. Please note that the only file format that can save your shapes for editing at a later time is the native Acorn file format. Acorn's shape tools consist of bezier (P), rectangle (R), ellipse (O), line (;), arrow, and star. Please read 'Bezier Curves' for more detailed information on the bezier tool.

Vector layers (shapes and text) are different from bitmap (or raster) layers. Vectors revolve around lines and shapes, where as bitmaps are pixel oriented. For more information on this topic, read [here](#). You cannot draw on, or erase using the eraser tool on a vector layer unless you have rasterized the layer by selecting Layer ▶ Rasterize Shape Layer. Once you have rasterized a vector layer you cannot go back and modify the shapes or text without undoing subsequent work.

Shape Tools

When you click on a shape tool, the inspector palette will load the shape options. Among other things, you can change the dimensions of your shapes, turn stroke and fill on and off, alter the angle of the shape, and add a drop shadow.

You can move your shapes around in the canvas using the move tool (V).



Rectangle (R)

The rectangle shape tool (R) is how you create rectangles and squares. To create a perfect square, hold down the shift key while you are creating the shape. Press the spacebar while creating the shape to reposition the origin.



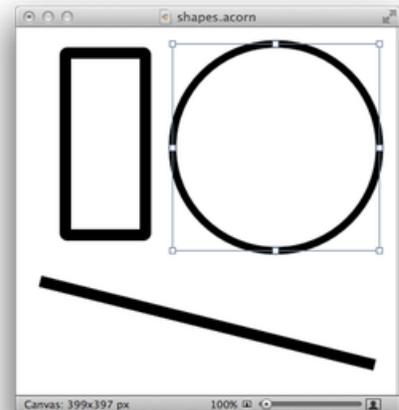
Ellipse (O)

Creating an ellipse is similar to creating a rectangle. You can create oval shapes simply by dragging out the shape. You can create a perfect circle by holding down the shift key while dragging. Press the spacebar while creating the shape to reposition the origin.



Line (;)

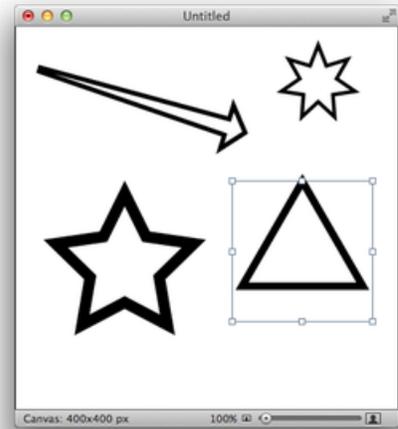
The line tool can be used to create lines at any angle of any length. You may also create a perfect horizontal, vertical, or diagonal 45° angle line by holding down shift and dragging the shape out in the direction you wish.





Arrow Tool

The arrow tool provides you with a flexible and easy way to create arrows in your image. Once you've drawn out your arrow, you can adjust the size of the arrowhead by dragging the selection point in the head towards the tail or towards the tip. To learn more about this tool, read the arrows tutorial.

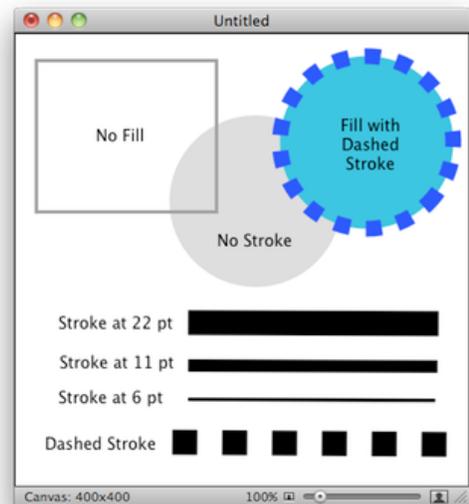


Star Tool

The star tool defaults to a 5 point star, but you can edit the number of points to create many different variations including triangles and diamonds. Draw out a star on your canvas, then with the star selected click on the back tick key (`). A pop-over will appear with various options to modify the star appearance.

Stroke, Corner Radius, and Fill

You have the option to turn on/off fill, and adjust the stroke value in the inspector palette. The stroke is the outline of the shape and the fill is the inner color. Line shapes have no fill, only stroke. Checking the corner radius box and adding a value in the drop down menu will give your shape rounded edges. Increasing values increases the amount of curve in the corners for a more "rounded rectangle" appearance.



Color

Color can be applied to both the fill and stroke of a shape. For Line Shapes, color can only be applied for the stroke, as the line has no fill. The foreground color is the stroke color and the background color is the fill. Select your shape and change the colors using the color palette.



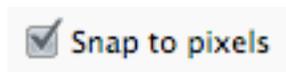
Rotating Shapes



The angle of the shape can be modified by altering the angle value in the shape palette. Another option is to hover over a corner of the selected shape, and a circular arrow will appear. Click and drag once the circular arrow has appeared to achieve your desired rotation. Hold down the shift key when dragging to constrain your rotation to 45 degree increments.



Snap to Pixels



When creating, modifying, or moving vector shapes, you have the option for the shape to "snap to pixels". If this box is checked your shape will move within the x,y coordinates of whole numbers only. This prevents the bounds of the shape from appearing blurry should it be placed on coordinates that involve a fraction. To turn this option off, uncheck the box.

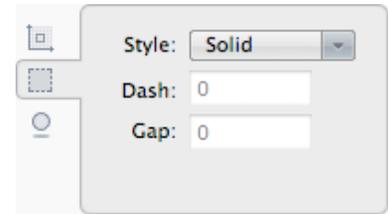
Coordinates and Dimensions

With the shape selected, you can modify its coordinates on the (x,y) axis and its width/height dimensions either by changing the values in the inspector palette or by clicking and dragging on the bounding edge of the shape.



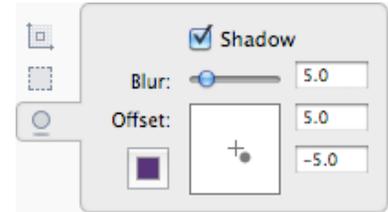
Stroke Style

With the shape selected, you can alter its stroke style from solid to dashed. With style set to "custom", you can enter your custom dash and gap values.



Shape Shadow

Give your shape a drop shadow and customize the shadow position, color, and blur values. Click on the shadow color well once to select it, then change the color in the colors palette.

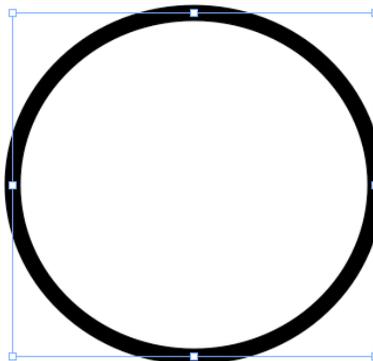


Shape Modification

In order to modify a shape after it has been drawn, the shape must be "selected". You can alter the shape size, color, fill, stroke, position, etc. without having to re-draw the shape. Make sure that you are currently on the shape layer in the layers list. There are a few different ways to select your shape:

- Using the move tool (keyboard shortcut 'v'), click on the shape. This works well if you only want one shape selected.
- Select ▶ Select Next Shape (^⌘]), or Select ▶ Select Previous Shape (^⌘[). This works well if you only want one shape selected.
- Select ▶ Select All. This works well if you have only one shape on the layer, or if you want all the shapes on the layer selected.
- To select multiple shapes, hold down either the command key or the shift key and using the move tool select your shapes. The bounding box will appear encompassing the shapes you select.

You will know that your shape is selected if it has a thin line boundary with control points.



Shape Selection Preference

Under Acorn ▶ Preferences ▶ Advanced, there is the option to keep the shape selected after you draw it: 'keep selected for editing'. This can be helpful if you find yourself needing to modify your shapes frequently immediately after you draw them.

Random Shape Tips

Did you know you can use the arrow keys to move selected shapes? And if you don't have any selected already, pressing an arrow key will select all the shapes on the current shape layer and begin moving them for you. In addition, you can hold down the shift key when pressing an arrow key to move the selected shape(s) ten pixels at a time instead of one. And if you hold down both command and option while pressing an arrow key, Acorn will move the selected shapes half a pixel for you.

Arrows & Star Shapes

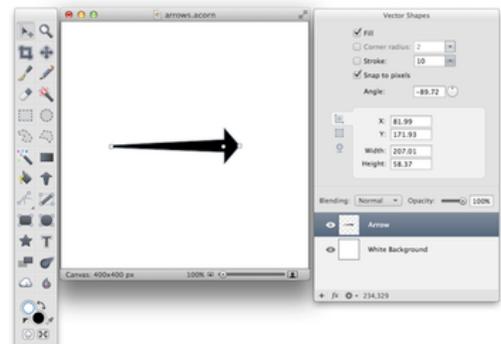
Arrows

To draw a basic arrow, click on the arrow tool in the tools palette and the various options for arrows will be loaded in the inspector palette. Draw out an arrow on your canvas.

Arrowhead Size: The arrowhead can be increased or decreased in size by clicking and dragging on the point at the base of the head.

Arrow Length: The length of the arrow can be increased or decreased by clicking and dragging on the points at the tip of the tail or the head.

To learn more about fill, stroke, and shape rotation, read the 'shape tools' tutorial.



Modifying the Arrow Tail and Arrow Width

In order to modify the shape of the arrow tail, choose Shape ▶ Convert to Bezier Shape. Then, click and hold on the bezier shape tool in the tools palette until a drop down menu appears.



Choose 'Bezier Anchor Select Tool'. Click and drag on one of the bezier points of the arrow tail to modify its appearance.

To modify the width of the arrow, choose Shape ▶ Convert to Bezier Shape (if you haven't already). Select the move tool and click and drag on an edge of the bounding box.



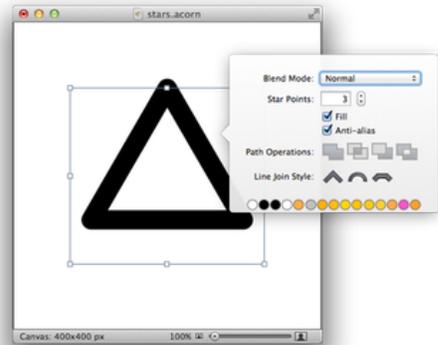
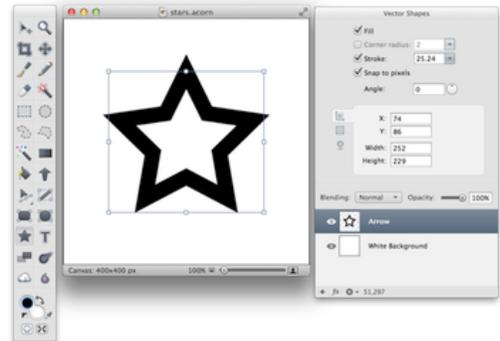
Note: Converting your arrow to a bezier shape is a permanent operation unless you chose Edit ▶ Undo.

Stars

The star shape tool defaults to a 5 point star when you initially draw it on your canvas. All of the standard shape tool options are available for the star in the inspector palette.

Additional options for modifying the star can be found by clicking on the back tick key (`) when you have your shape selected, or by going to the View ▶ Quick Config Popover menu item. A shape pop-over window will appear. The back tick key can be found on the upper left hand corner of the keyboard.

You can adjust the number of points of the star, and change the appearance of the star tips by clicking on different 'line join styles'.



Bezier Curves

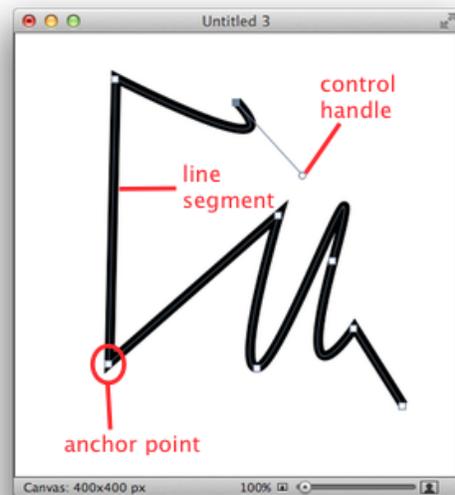


The bezier pen tool is a shape tool used to create custom vector shapes. You can also select it by using keyboard shortcut "P". When the bezier pen tool is selected your cursor will look like the tip of an ink pen.

Creating a Bezier Shape

Bezier shapes have line segments, anchor points, and control handles.

- **Line Segments:** Line segments are what make up the form of your shape. They are connected by anchor points.
- **Anchor Points:** The anchor points are the points where your line segments meet. They define the position of your line segments and are the foundation for controlling the curve of your line.
- **Control Handles:** The control handles allow you to apply and modify curves to your line segments.



When you click on your canvas with the bezier pen tool, an anchor point will appear. You can then click on another area of the canvas to create a straight line. Continue placing anchor points by clicking (or clicking and dragging to make curved line segments) until you get the shape you want. You can hold down the shift key as you are clicking if you want to snap your line segments to the closest 45 degree angle. Double click to finish creating the shape, hit the escape key, or choose Shape ▶ Close Path.

- Bezier shapes have the same shape options such as fill, stroke, width/height, and drop shadow available in the inspector palette as the other shape tools. For more information read the 'shape tools' tutorial.

Bezier Basics

Select Anchor Points (A): Click and hold on the bezier pen tool and a drop down menu will appear. Choose 'Bezier Anchor Select Tool' (keyboard shortcut 'A'). You can then click on an anchor point to select it.

- To select multiple anchor points hold down the shift key when selecting.

- To select the next point in a bezier shape, press the > key. The < key will select the previous point.
- Holding down the shift key will keep the current selected points, and add the next one to the selection.

Adding Anchor Points: To add points to an existing bezier shape, select the shape and choose the bezier pen tool. Hold down the shift key and click on the area of the shape where you want the anchor point to appear. You can also use Shape ▶ Add Points to add more points throughout the shape.

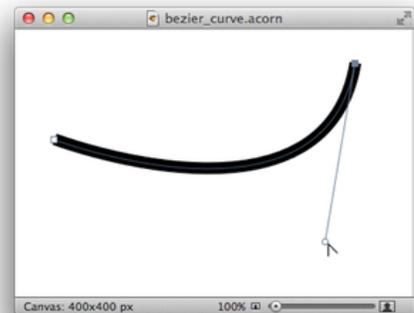
Deleting Anchor Points: To delete anchor points, select an anchor point then hit the delete key. Alternatively, you can select the bezier pen tool and hold down the option and command keys simultaneously and click on the anchor point to remove it.

Reset Bezier Control Points (Shift - C): Click and hold on the bezier pen tool and a drop down menu will appear. Choose 'Reset Bezier Control Points Tool' (keyboard shortcut 'Shift - C'). You can then click on an anchor point to straighten an existing curve, or click and drag on an anchor point to create a curve.

Editing Bezier Shapes

You can use the arrow keys to move selected control points in a bezier shape or click and drag on a control point to modify its position.

Curved Line Segments: To curve an existing line, you can either use the reset bezier control points tool as described above, or hold down the option key and click on an anchor point. The cursor will change to look like this: . Drag your cursor and a control handle will be pulled out of the anchor point. Moving the control handle around allows you to adjust the curve of your line. Once you click out of the shape, the handle will disappear. You can also make the lines curved as you draw them. Just click and drag when placing a new anchor point to make the line segment curved.



Straighten Line Segments: To make a curved line straight, use the reset bezier control points tool as described above, or hold down the option key and click once on the anchor point.

Other Useful Editing Tips

- To delete a selected segment in a bezier shape, hold down the option key when pressing the delete key.

- Hold down the shift key when adjusting the control point will snap it to 45 degree increments as you click and drag.

Converting Text & Shapes into Bezier Shapes

To convert text into a bezier shape, first type out some text. Then with the text selected, go to Shape ▶ Convert to Bezier Shape. You can now modify the text with the anchor points and control handles.

To convert a shape into a bezier shape, first draw out your shape. Then with the shape selected go to Shape ▶ Convert to Bezier Shape.

To turn the stroke of a shape into a bezier shape, choose Shape ▶ Outline Path.



Shape Editing & Viewing

There are various options for modifying your shapes in Acorn. The 'Shape Tools' documentation outlines a few of the basics of shape editing including how to select shapes, and give your shapes a stroke or fill. Acorn also offers additional shape editing options in the 'Shape' menu item, and in the shape pop-over window which will be covered below.

Basic Shape Editing

Adding Shapes: Click on the shape tool of the style of shape you want to add and then click and drag on the canvas to draw the shape.

Deleting Shapes: To delete a shape, select the shape(s) then hit the delete key. Pressing delete on a shape layer without anything selected will remove all the shapes in the layer.

Duplicating Shapes: You can duplicate a selected shape by choosing Edit ▶ Copy and then Edit ▶ Paste. Another option is to use Shape ▶ Duplicate Shape. The copy will be placed right above the original shape.

Resizing Shapes: To resize a shape, select the shape then click and drag on its bounding box using the move tool. Hold down the shift key as you are dragging on the bounding box to keep the aspect ratio of the shape intact. If you know the exact shape dimensions you want, you can use the shape width/height fields in the inspector palette. To resize multiple shapes at

once, select the shapes. Use the move tool to drag on the outer bounding box encompassing all the shapes. You will be prompted by a pop-up window to convert your shapes to Bezier shapes. You can choose to 'Always Convert' to avoid seeing this window in the future or 'Convert' to have the prompt continue to appear.

Filters on Shapes: You can use filters on shape layers. The filter will be present on all shapes in that layer.

Copying Shape Styles: To modify shapes to have the same style attributes (stroke/fill/color/drop shadow/etc) as another shape on the same layer, select the shape(s) you want to change. Then hold down the option + command keys at the same time and click on the shape whose attributes you want to copy.

Flipping Shapes: To flip a shape, choose Shape ▶ Flip Vertically/Horizontally. If you have multiple shapes selected and choose Flip Horizontal or Vertical, the flip point will be the center of the all the selected shapes.

Rotating Multiple Shapes: You can select multiple shapes and rotate them all at once. To rotate shapes around the center point of all the selected shapes, hover over a bounding box corner until the rotation arrows appear. Click and drag on the canvas to rotate. Hold down the shift key to constrain the rotation to 45° increments. To rotate multiple shapes around their individual center axes, use the angle value field in the inspector palette.

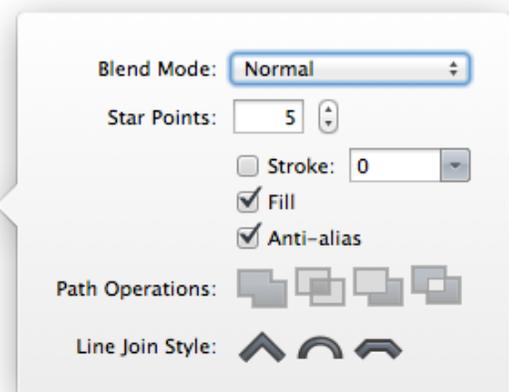
Aligning Shapes: To align multiple shapes on the same layer, select the shapes you wish to align and then choose one of the options under the Shape ▶ Align... menu item. This option can also be accessed by control-clicking on the selected shapes.

Arranging Shapes: Shape orders within a layer can be re-arranged by choosing the Shape ▶ Arrange menu item. This option can also be accessed by control-clicking on a shape.

Shape Pop-Over Window

The shape pop-over window can be summoned by selecting a shape and hitting the back tick key (`), or by going to the View ▶ Quick Config Popover menu item. The pop-over will be placed wherever your cursor is currently located on the canvas. The back tick key is located on the upper lefthand corner of the keyboard. To hide the window, hit the escape key.

There are various options available in the window including the ability to change the selected shape's blending mode, the number of star points, and checkboxes to add or remove a fill, stroke, and anti-aliasing.



The path operations available in the pop-over include union, intersect, difference, and exclude. Path operations are discussed in more detail below.

If your shape has a stroke, you can modify the appearance of its line join style. There are 3 options: pointed, rounded, and bevel. Pointed is the default stroke appearance. If you currently have a corner radius on your shape, you cannot modify the shape's line joint style.

Boolean Path Operations

Boolean operations in Acorn allow you to combine, subtract, intersect, and exclude two or more selected shapes in order to create different shapes. These options can be found under the Shape... menu item, as well as in the shape pop-over window. The style attributes of the top-most selected shape in the layer will be applied to the other shapes involved in the operation.



- Union: When two or more overlapping shapes are selected, union mode will combine the shapes into one.



- Difference: When two or more overlapping shapes are selected, difference mode will subtract the top-most shapes from the bottom-most shape.



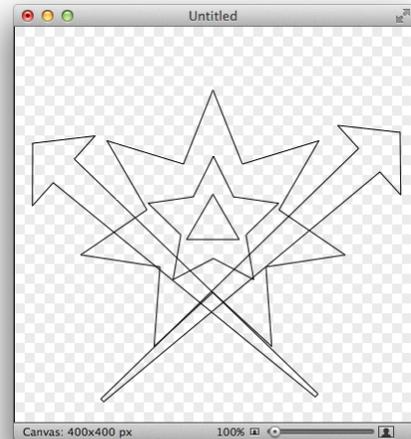
- Intersect: When two or more overlapping shapes are selected, intersect mode will retain areas of the shapes that are overlapping.



- Exclude: When two or more overlapping shapes are selected, exclude mode will retain the areas of the shapes that are not overlapping.

Shape Viewing

Under the 'View' menu item you can choose 3 different options for viewing your shapes. When you select View ▶ Draw Shape Outline, the stroke and fill of the shapes in the current shape layer will be hidden. Acorn will create a simple outline of your shapes which can be very useful if you have a lot of shapes you need to manage, especially when zoomed in. View ▶ Draw Shape Vectors presents your shapes as scaled vectors, and View ▶ Draw Shape Pixels is the standard view.

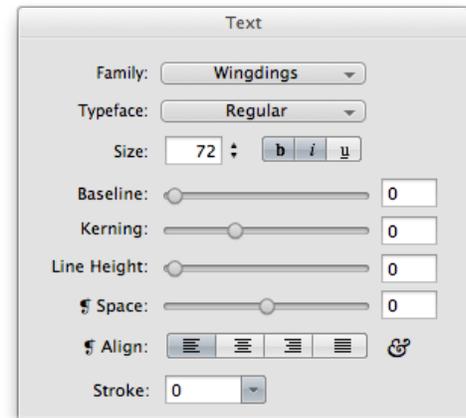


Fonts & Text

Acorn gives you the option to use its integrated text palette, or to call up the OS font manager.

Text Options

When you select the text tool (keyboard shortcut "T"), you will see your cursor change to the type cursor. You can create an area to type by clicking inside your image, or clicking and dragging a bounding box onto your image. When you click to start typing the bounding box will be small, but it will adjust to your type.



Text Color

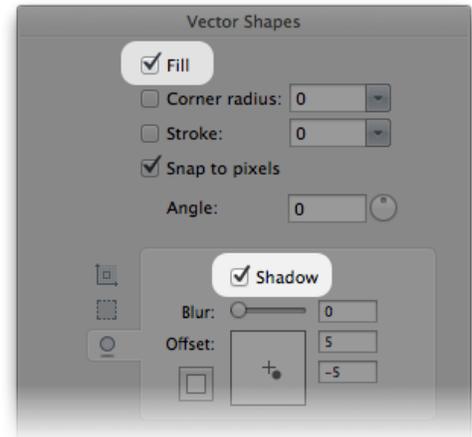


To change the color of the text or stroke you can click on a color well in the tools palette to access the colors palette. The foreground color is the stroke color and the background color is the text fill. Alternatively, you can select your text and bring up the color palette by going to Window ▶ Colors, or typing the keyboard shortcut $\hat{c} \mathbb{C}$.

Text Stroke, Fill, & Shadow

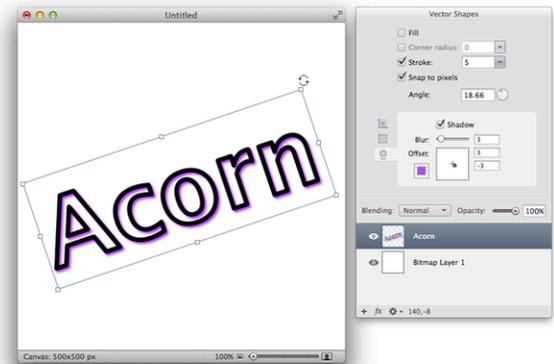
Stroke is the outline of the text. Increasing the stroke makes the outline of the text thicker. The stroke settings can be modified from the text palette.

Fill is the color within the stroke or outline. With the text box selected, you can click on one of the shape tools in order to have access to fill and shadow settings. Stroke, fill, and shadow modifications cannot be seen when the text is being edited. Once you click outside the text box your changes will appear.



Rotating Text

The text box can be rotated by hovering the mouse over one of the text box corner boundaries. A circular arrow will appear. Click and drag in the direction you wish the text to rotate. Another method for rotating text is to have the text box selected, then choose the shapes tool. You can change the angle of rotation in the "angle" field. In the example below the angle is set to 18.66 degrees.



Text Spacing

You will notice on the type palette there are sliding bars labeled Baseline, Kerning, Line Space, and Paragraph Space. There are also buttons for paragraph alignment. They are ordered as follows: Right Align, Centered, Left Align, and Justified.

Paragraph Alignment: The paragraph alignment buttons work within the bounding box to line up your text. Right align will align your text to the right side of your bounding box. Left align will align your text to the left side of the bounding box. Centered will place your text in the center of the bounding box. Justified will stretch your text so it reaches each side of the bounding box.

Baseline: The baseline is the line on which the letters sit, and which the descenders extend below. The first image to the right shows a baseline set to 0. See how the lines sit closer together.

Kerning: Kerning is the space between the letters. The second image shows the kerning increased to 4. Kerning can also adjust the space between two letters, especially between letters with slanted sides like V, W, and A. For example, in the word "varied" there is a larger space between V and A than between the rest of the letters. To kern, highlight the letter before the space you wish to adjust. Then adjust the character spacing until the spacing between the V and A looks even with the spacing between the letters in the rest of the word.

Line Spacing: Line spacing is the space between the baseline and the top of the next line of text, also called leading. The line spacing in the first image has been changed to -18. Notice how the lines of text begin to touch. The lower the number the more the lines will come together. The higher the number the more they will separate.

Paragraph Space: The Paragraph Space (¶ Space) is the space between your paragraphs. In the second image the paragraph spacing is set to 65.

Adding Fonts

To add new fonts to Acorn, place the font file in your ~/Library/Fonts folder. You will need to restart Acorn for it to appear in your font list.

Converting Text to Bezier Curves

Please read Bezier Curves for more information.

Rasterizing Text

Vector layers (i.e. shapes and text) are different from bitmap (or raster) layers. Vectors revolve around lines and shapes, where as bitmaps are pixel oriented. For more information on this topic, read [here](#). You cannot apply Filters to a vector layer unless you have rasterized the layer by selecting Layer ▶ Rasterize Shape Layer. Once you have rasterized a vector layer you cannot go back and modify the shapes or text without undoing subsequent work.

Fonts Manager

You can access the fonts palette by using Window ▶ Fonts menu.

The fonts palette packs a lot of punch for being so small. This little window controls everything that you could want to do with fonts. If you get confused about which button does what, hold your mouse over it for a second and it will display a tooltip about its function.



Selecting Fonts

There are Collections of fonts (like folders in the finder), inside which are font Families, inside which are Typefaces. An example of this in the real world would be All Fonts > American Typewriter > Bold. Collections can be handy if you find yourself often using the same few fonts. You can create your own collections, or use the ones Apple has provided. The 'Fun' collection includes some excellent fonts for parties and cards. If you would like to add a font to the collection, simply drag it in. Adding and deleting collections is controlled by the plus and minus buttons below the collections.

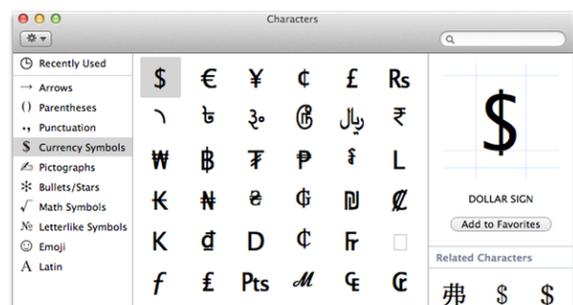
If you find yourself unable to find a font you know is on your computer, make sure the All Fonts collection is selected. Size is controlled by the slider, list, and box to the right of the window. You can enter in a value into the upper box, find a commonly used size in the list, or move the slider until you are happy.

There is also a search field at the bottom of the window. If you find that scrolling through all of your fonts takes longer than you want, simply type the name of the font into the search field and it will instantly pop up in the Family column.

Things like shadow, underline, color, and strikethrough are controlled by the buttons on the top of the window, as well as from the Format ▶ Font menu.

Symbols, Punctuation, and Special Characters

The gear symbol on the lower left hand corner of the font palette is the gateway to adding special characters, varying typography, non-standard punctuation, and other language scripts. Click on the gear and choose 'Characters' from the drop down menu.



Create a text box, then double click on a character and it will be inserted into the box. Alternatively you can drag and drop the character into the text box.

Another way to access characters is through the Edit ▶ Special Characters menu item. If you don't see the option in the menu, go to System Preferences ▶ Keyboard ▶ Keyboard and check the box next to 'Show Keyboard and Character Viewers in menu bar'.

Crop Tool



Select the Crop Tool (Shortcut key "C") and a crop will be placed on your image.

You can then click and drag in the middle of the crop to move it around. Use the arrow keys to move your crop by small increments, or make a new crop by clicking and dragging outside the crop area. You can resize the crop by moving the edges and corner handles.

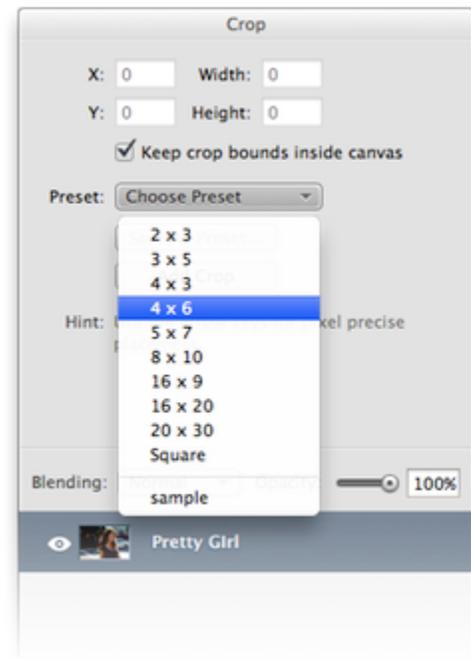
To finalize the crop, press the Return key, press ⌘⌥K, or click the "Crop Image" button in the crop palette.

Cropping Presets

Acorn provides preset cropping choices which are useful if you want your image cropped to a standard width and height.

If you wish to swap the dimension of the crop preset (for example, you want 3x2 instead of 2x3), hold down the option key while clicking on the crop preset you want. Be sure not to release the option key until after you have clicked and released your choice.

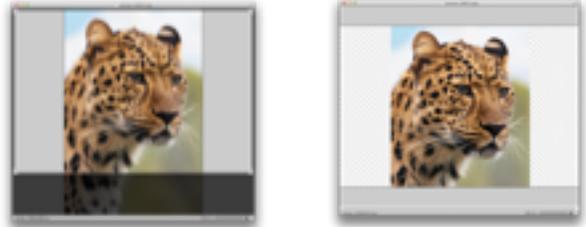
You can also create your own crop presets. This is especially useful if you frequently use crop dimensions not already present in the preset list. Enter a width and height into the crop fields, then click "save as preset" in the crop palette. You will be asked to name the preset. Your preset will show up towards the bottom of the "choose preset" list. To delete a custom preset, hold down the option key while clicking on that preset.



In order to maintain the aspect ratio of a cropping preset while resizing the crop, hold down the shift key while moving a corner of the crop edge in or out.

Keep Crop Bounds Inside Canvas

The crop palette also gives you a check box option to keep the crop inside the canvas. If you turn this option off, you can make a crop outside the canvas. Why would you want this? Well, consider the crop below. When the crop is applied, transparent pixels will be present in the area of selection outside the canvas. This is handy if you would like to resize your canvas while doing your crop.



Cropping by Resizing the Canvas Window

This is the fastest way to crop ever invented. Simply hold down the Control key and resize the window by dragging an edge or corner. This will let you quickly enlarge or shrink an image you are working on.

Fancy Crop

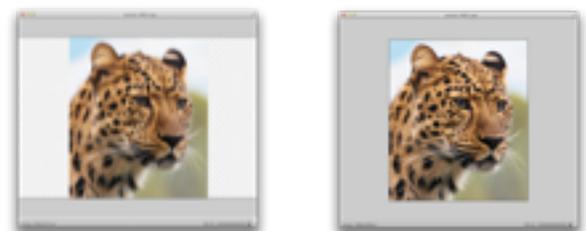
Fancy crop is a built in function that attempts to look at what is on the screen and crop out the extraneous space. This is perfect for any picture with a solid color border you are trying to remove. To do this, choose the Image ▶ Crop menu item. If fancy crop can help you, it will.

Cropping a Selection

If you have a selection (using the various selection tools), you can use the Image ▶ Crop command to crop to the bounds of the selection.

Trim to Edges

Located under Image ▶ Trim to Edges, this little command will automatically crop out anything that is a constant color, or no color at all. To the right is an image before and after the 'Trim to Edges' command has been used.



Select All When Cropping

When cropping, you can use Select All to set the crop to the entire canvas. First, apply a crop to any part of your image with the Crop tool. Then go to **Select ▶ Select All (⌘A)** to adjust the crop to the entire canvas.



Panning While Cropping

If you are cropping a large image where scroll bars are present, you can pan the image while in crop by holding down the space bar then clicking on the image with your mouse to move it around. This makes getting to the area of the image you want to crop easier.

Acorn Layers & Image Adjustments

- Layer Basics
- Layer Masks
- Resizing and Rotating a Layer
- Transforming Layers
- Resizing and Rotating the Image & Canvas
- Curves
- Levels

Layers Basics

Overview

Layers are what make most image editors so powerful. Images are stacked on top of each other in the layers list. You see a flattened version of the layers in the canvas. If you take the text tool and write something on your image, you will notice that a new layer called a shape layer has been created. By using the move tool, you can move around this layer without affecting the layer underneath. Similarly, if you apply a filter it will only apply to the layer you currently have selected in the layers list. Using this properly will give you the best possible results, and will also allow you to be more flexible if you want to change something later. When in doubt, make a new layer.



Hiding and Renaming Layers

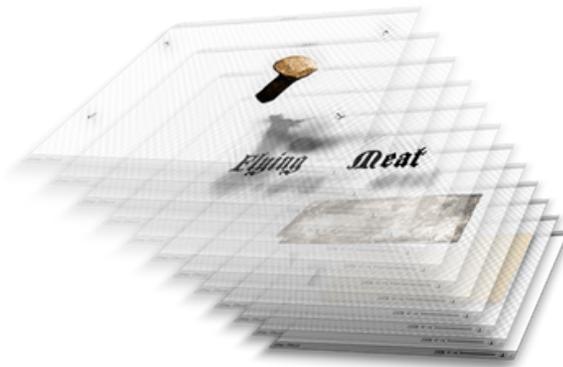
Layers can be hidden and renamed in the layers list. From left to right you can see a visibility mark (the eye), picture of the layer, and the title of the layer. Toggling the little eye next to the thumbnail layer will hide and display the layer, leaving all the other layers visible. Layer names can be changed at any time by selecting the layer then clicking on the existing text.

Pro Tip: To hide all other layers, select the layer you want to remain visible then hold down the option key while clicking the eye. To return all the layers to visibility hold down the option key while clicking the eye again.

Blending Modes and Opacity

Above the layers list there are layer blending options as well as the opacity slider. Opacity is the opposite of transparency. If you pull the slider all the way to the left, it will be 0% opaque and you will not be able to see the layer. If you pull it all the way to the right, the opacity will be 100% and you can see the layer at its fullest.

Layer blending modes can be difficult to understand. They control the way the layer that you have selected interacts with the layers below it. Multiply for example will make all the whites of the image transparent, but leave the blacks alone. Screen does the opposite of multiply by leaving the whites alone, but making all the blacks transparent. The best way to figure out what they do is to play with them or read the blending modes tutorial.



Adding, Deleting, and Selecting Layers

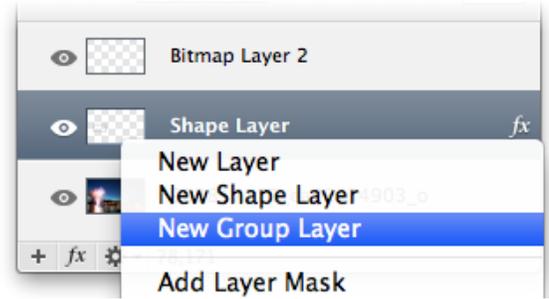
Navigate to the Layer... menu item and you will find options to create a new layer (⌘N), a new shape layer , and to delete the currently selected layer (^⌘-).

You can also right click (or control click) on your layers list to bring up a contextual menu with the options to create and delete layers. Below the layers list, there is a plus button. The plus button will create a new bitmap layer.

To select a single layer in the layers list, just click on it. To select multiple layers you can hold down the command key while clicking on each layer you want selected. To select a range of layers, click on the first layer you want selected then hold down the shift key while clicking on the last layer you want selected.

Grouping Layers

You can group layers together by creating a group layer in your layer list. A group layer works just like a folder. You can create a group by right-clicking inside your layers list, or choosing the Layer ▶ New Group Layer menu item.



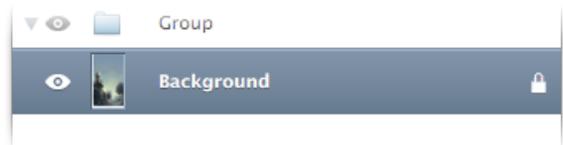
A folder icon will appear in your layers list. You can now drag your layers into this group layer. Notice there is an disclosure triangle next to the eye icon. Clicking on this triangle will show or hide all the layers within this group.

You can rename the group folder by double-clicking the name and entering your own. Grouping layers is also a good way to move multiple layers at once.

Pro tip: If you have a group layer selected and you use the Edit ▶ Copy menu item, you will get a composite of the entire group layer on the clipboard.

Locking Layers

Locking layers is useful if you have an object on a layer that you do not wish to move. Locking the layer it rests upon will prevent you from making unwanted changes.



To lock a layer, right click on the layer you wish to lock. Then select "Lock Layer" from the menu. This is also available under Layer ▶ Lock Layer. You will notice that a small lock icon appears in the right side of the layer. Use the same process to unlock the layer.

Merging Layers

Layers can be merged in a few different ways. Layer ▶ Merge Down allows you to combine layers one at a time with the currently selected layer being merged with the one below it. Layer ▶ Merge Visible merges all layers that are not hidden into one single layer. Layer ▶ Flatten Image merges all layers regardless of visibility. Merging layers can be a good way of keeping your work clean and organized, but it also decreases your ability to change things later on. Consider using Edit ▶ Copy Merged and making a new image from the clipboard so that your layers can be preserved in the original file.

Bitmap and Shape Layers Defined

In Acorn, there are two different kinds of layers that can be created. One is a bitmap layer and the other is a shape layer. Bitmap layers can be image files, pictures that you bring in from iPhoto, or things that you draw. In their simplest form they are a grid of pixels on the screen. Shape layers are more like a set of mathematical instructions rather than pixels. You can go back at any time in a shape layer and change the font, the colors, or the size easily.

Shape layers cannot be drawn on with the brush or erased using the eraser tool. Shape layers cannot be transformed using the transform tools. For example, if you want your shape to have a perspective transform applied, you would need to "rasterize" the layer. Rasterization is the process of turning a shape layer into a bitmap layer. Once a shape layer has been rasterized you lose the editing capability you have with shapes, but the bitmap tools become available to you. If your layer name originally started with "Shape Layer", Acorn will replace it with "Bitmap Layer" when you rasterize.

Important Word of Warning: JPEG, the format that most images are stored in, cannot have layers. Saving out to a JPEG will flatten all of the layers into one. If you would like to save your layers so you can come back later and do more edits, save as the file format .acorn.

If you are curious about the project file used in this example, you can download it here: <http://flyingmeat.com/fs/images/acorn/LayersDemo.zip>.

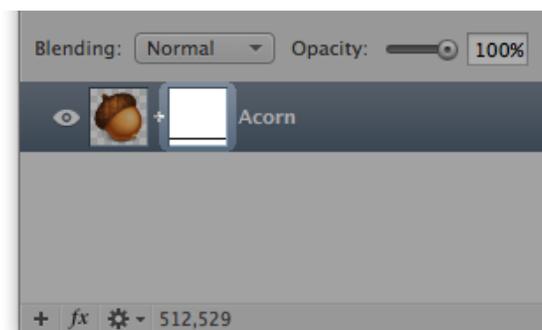
Layer Masks

Layer masks allow you to show or hide certain parts of a layer without actually having to modify the layer itself. This can be tremendously helpful when working with layers without committing to permanent modification.

Creating a Layer Mask

Select the layer that you would like to add on a layer mask. At the bottom of the layers list, click on the cogwheel and select "Add Layer Mask". You can also control-click on the layer to bring up the canvas contextual menu, or choose Layer ▶ Add Layer Mask.

The mask shows up to the right on the layer as you can see highlighted to the right.



Working with Layer Masks

In layer masks, black that is drawn or painted on the mask hides pixels in the linked layer thus exposing the layer below in those areas. In this example the bird layer has the layer mask, and the lion is in the layer below. By selecting a brush and the color black, the bird's background can appear to be removed by drawing on the layer mask.

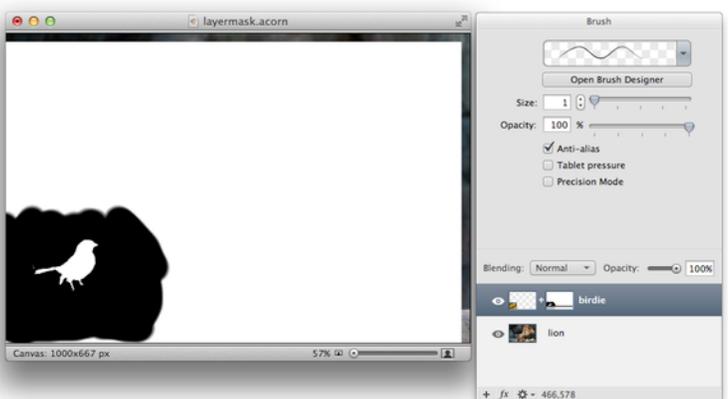


White does the opposite of black in layer masks. Anything drawn or painted in white on the layer mask will preserve that area of the linked layer. If you feel like you have exposed too much of the layer below, you can correct this by changing the color of your pen or brush to white, and draw on the layer mask until you have achieved your desired effect. Play around with the opacity and style of your pen or brush to maximize smoothness between your layers.



To edit and see your work on the layer mask directly option click on the layer mask thumbnail. Option click on the thumbnail again to return to the full layer view.

Important Tip: Be sure that the layer mask is selected if you want to work on it. Click on the mask in the layers section of the palette and a black bar will appear towards the bottom of the mask as shown on the highlighted layer mask at the top of the page. If you want to work on the image rather than the mask, click on the image to select it and the black line will move from the mask to the selected image.



Moving, Disabling, and Deleting Layer Masks

To move a layer around on the canvas without also moving the layer mask, click on the "+" that is located between the layer and layer mask in the layers list. Re-clicking in this location will cause the "+" to appear again and allow the layer mask to move with its layer in the canvas.

Disabling a layer mask allows you to see what things look like in your project without the layer mask present. You can disable a layer mask by right clicking on the layer to bring up the contextual menu and selecting "Disable Layer Mask". The layer mask will turn dark gray to show that it is disabled. The layer mask can be turned on again by selecting "Enable Layer Mask" from the contextual menu.

To delete a layer mask, make sure you have the mask selected. Then you can right click on the layer and select "Delete Layer Mask". Another way to accomplish this is to click on the cogwheel at the bottom of the layers list and the option to delete the layer mask will be presented.

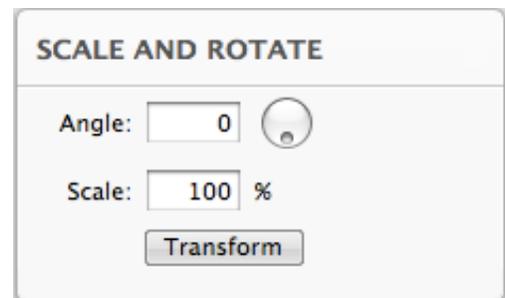
Vector Shapes and Layer Masks

Currently layer masks are bitmap only, which means you cannot draw shapes in them. If you would like a shape in a layer mask, there is a work around you can perform as outlined in the Shapes in Layer Masks tutorial.

Resizing and Rotating a Layer

Resizing a Layer

If you wish to resize a layer but want to keep the proportions within the layer the same then use Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Scale and Rotate (⌘⇧T). Once you bring up this option, the inspector palette will display a scale percentage. You can change the percentage by manually typing in what you want, or you can hover over any corner of the layer and outward facing arrows will appear. Click and drag the cursor towards the inside of the layer to make it smaller, and to the outside to make it larger.



Under Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform you will also find Free Transform and Perspective Transform. Read transforming layers for more information on these options.

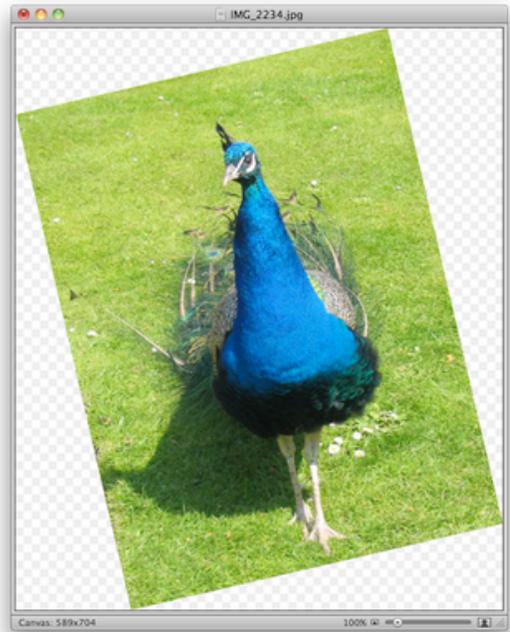
Rotating a Layer

You can easily rotate a single layer in your image in 90° increments by selecting Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Rotate Layer 90o Clockwise (or Counter-Clockwise). If you want more control over the angle of rotation use Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Scale and Rotate (⌘⇧T).

Unlike the other rotate commands, Scale Transform and Rotate allows you to set the layer at any angle in the canvas. Place your cursor outside the layer on the canvas and a rotating arrow icon will appear. Click and drag your cursor until you achieve your desired rotation.

You can manually type in the rotation values you want as well. Click on the angle field to enter your exact number or use the angle wheel.

Once you are finished rotating, double-click on the layer to release it or click 'Transform' in the palette.



Flipping a Layer & Offset and Wrap Layer

Layers can be flipped horizontally or vertically by selecting Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Flip Layer Horizontal or Flip Layer Vertical. This will flip the individual layer on either the 'x' or the 'y' axis.

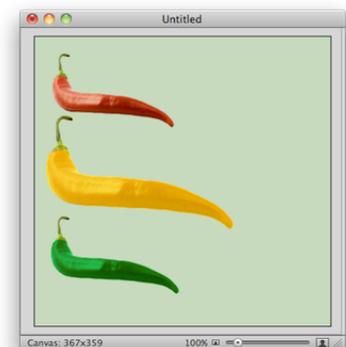
The offset and wrap layer menu item is useful for making seamless tiles. To learn more about this, read 'Creating a Seamless Tile'.

Transforming Layers

The pepper image seen to the right will be the foundation of this tutorial on how to use Scale Transform, Free Transform, and Perspective Transform.

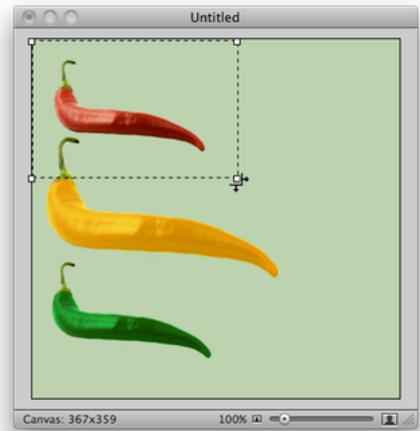
Scale Transform

Select the layer you wish to work on. The red chili will be used first.



Now that the layer is selected, choose Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Scale and Rotate (⌘⇧T). A box will appear around the selected item. There are points at each corner of the box.

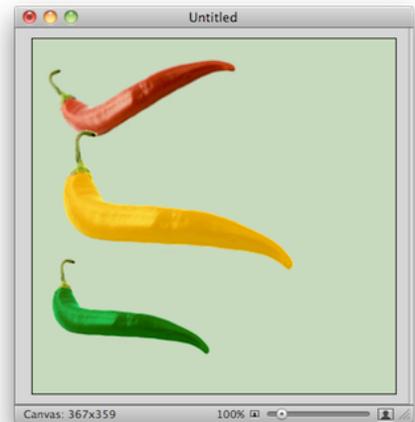
When you roll over any corner of the box, outward facing arrows will appear, giving you the ability to scale your item. Click and drag the cursor towards the inside of the layer to make it smaller, and to the outside to make it larger. Your layer will keep the same original proportions. You may also move the layer by clicking on the inside of the layer (a fist icon will appear) and dragging to move it around your canvas.



Rotating

If you hover outside of the selected area rotating arrows will appear. By clicking and dragging, you can rotate the layer. You can also rotate and scale the layer by using the transform palette.

The red chili has been made a little larger and placed at an angle.



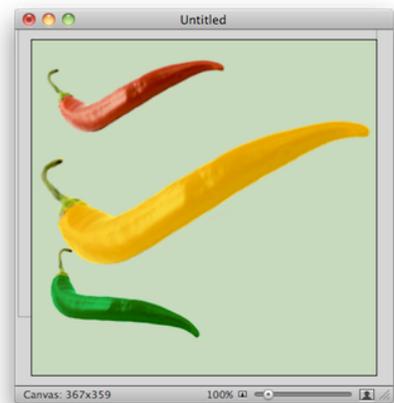
Free Transform

Once again, select the layer you wish to transform. The yellow pepper has been selected here. To select free transform, choose Layers ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Free Transform. A box will appear around the selected item. When you roll your cursor over the corners of the box an icon like this will appear:



It will change depending on the point you select. By dragging any of the corners you can change the shape and size of the selected item. Unlike scale transform, this will not keep the proportions the same as the original. To preserve the proportions while using free transform, hold Shift while dragging out the corners of your object. You may also move and rotate the object, just as in scale transform.

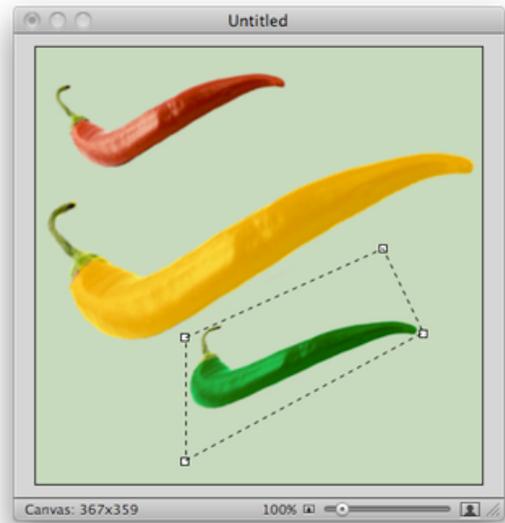
The yellow chili has been made longer and also placed at an angle.



Perspective Transform

Again, select the layer you wish to modify in the layers list. Choose Layers ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Perspective Transform. The box will appear around your layer. With perspective transform you will not be able to rotate your object, although you will still be able to move it around by clicking and dragging.

Instead of the points moving with each other, they will move independently creating the look of perspective. This is useful if you want your image to look like it is pasted onto an item in perspective.



Resizing and Rotating Your Image and Canvas

Resizing Your Image

The easiest way to scale your image in Acorn is to select Image ▶ Resize Image. Type in the dimensions of what you want the image to be, and click the OK button.

When resizing the image, you can choose to see your image dimensions in pixels, inches, or centimeters. Changing the image dimension measurement value will not change the base unit of measurement for your image. To learn more about changing the base measurement unit read image measurements.



Image Scaling

Acorn gives you the option to use three different scaling operations. Most of the time you are going to want to use the "Lanczos" scaling since it is a higher quality scaling algorithm. However, if you would like something a little more low tech, you can choose "Simple Affine". The

"Nearest Neighbor" scaling option replaces each pixel with 4 pixels of the same color. This results in a very pixelated looking image which is useful for some purposes.

When scaling with Lanczos, the original aspect ratio must be kept intact (the option will be grayed out in the window). If you wish to change the aspect ratio, you must choose either Simple Affine or Nearest Neighbor as the scaling option.

Be sure to read all about DPI, PPI, and printing for more information about PPI and resampling your image.

Quick Scaling by Changing the Window Size

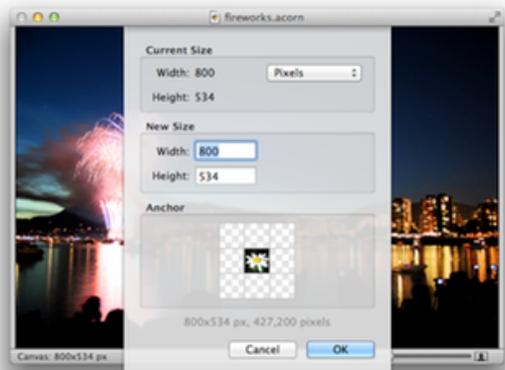
Here is a neat shortcut. If you would rather scale your image without precise measurements, just hold down the option and command keys, and then resize your canvas window using the resize widget in the bottom right. Acorn will then scale your image up or down, depending on which way you resize your window.

Holding down the control key while resizing the window changes the size of the canvas, without scaling the image.

Resizing Your Canvas, Without Scaling the Image

If you would like to change the size of your image without scaling the image, use Image ▶ Resize Canvas.

The 'Anchor' option will keep your image anchored to a specific side or corner in cases where you make the canvas larger.

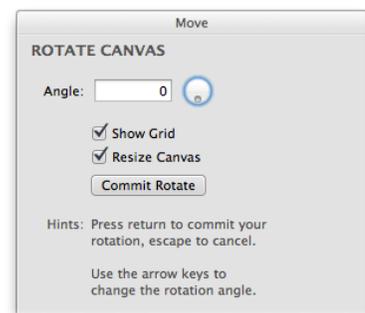


Rotate your canvas.

Under Image ▶ Rotate Canvas there are three options for rotating the canvas: 90° Clockwise (⌘+]), 90° Counter-Clockwise (⌘+[), and Free Rotate.

The rotate canvas palette appears when you select 'Free Rotate'. You can manually enter the angle, use the wheel, or change your angle using the up and down arrows on your keyboard.

Rotating the canvas rotates all the layers.



Fitting the Canvas to Layers

If you want the canvas to be large enough to encompass the largest layer in your project, select Image ▶ Expand Canvas to Fit Layers. All layers will then be fully present within the canvas boundaries.

Fireworks © [jonrawlinson](#)

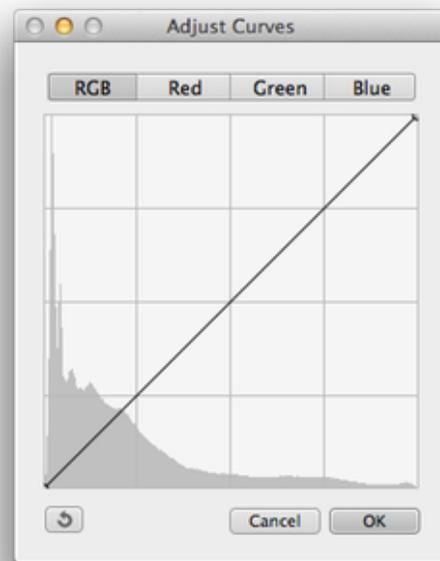
Curves

To bring up the curves window, navigate to Image ▶ Curves. Be sure to work on a copy of your image when experimenting with curves to avoid making permanent changes to the original.

Curves allows you to adjust an image's tonal range by modifying the diagonal line on the graph via control points. The lower left hand corner of the graph represents the shadows of the image, while the upper right hand corner of the graph represents the highlights. The middle of the graph represents the midtones of the image.

Adding Control Points: To add a control point to the curve, click and drag on the diagonal line where you'd like to make your adjustment.

Deleting Control Points: Click and drag the control point off the graph.



RGB Curve

The RGB curve can be seen by clicking on the first button at the top of the histogram. The RGB curve is where you can modify the lightness, darkness and contrast of the shadows, highlights and midtones of your image without affecting the color balance. The bottommost point of the curve in the lower left hand corner represents the blackest blacks while the upper righthand corner represent the whitest whites.

How to Darken/Lighten Highlights: To darken highlights add a control point near the top of the diagonal line and then drag the point downwards. To lighten highlights drag a point near the top of the line upwards.

How to Darken/Lighten Shadows: To darken shadows add a control point near the bottom of the diagonal line and then drag the point downwards. To lighten shadows drag a point near the bottom of the line upwards.

How to Darken/Lighten Midtones: To darken midtones add a control point near the center of the diagonal line and then drag the point downwards. To lighten midtones, drag a point near the middle of the line upwards.

How to Increase/Decrease Contrast: Dragging a control point to the left or right increases or decreases the contrast. Additionally, the steeper the curve between two points, the greater the contrast. Flattening the curve between two points decreases the contrast

How to Set the Black and White Points: To set the black point of your image (this represents the blackest black), drag the control point located at the bottom left hand side of the diagonal upwards. Dragging the black point upwards lightens the blacks in your image. If you drag the black point all the way to the top, the blacks in your image become white. To set the white point of your image (the whitest whites) drag the control point located at the upper right hand side of the diagonal downwards. This will darken the whites, and if you drag it all the way to the bottom the whites in your image will become black.

Individual Color Channel Curves

The individual color channel curves are available by clicking one of the buttons along the top of the histogram. You can modify the red, green and blue color balance in an image to create a "warmer" or "cooler" effect. The principles are the same as for the RGB curves, except you are focusing on a single color's shadows, mid-tones, and highlights with each curve.

The image of an aurora borealis is used here to demonstrate how modifying the red, green, and blue curves can affect the appearance of an image.

Original image:



Lighten red mid-tones by dragging the middle of the curve upwards:



Lighten blue shadows by dragging the bottom of the curve upwards:



Darken green highlights by dragging the top of the curve downwards:



Levels

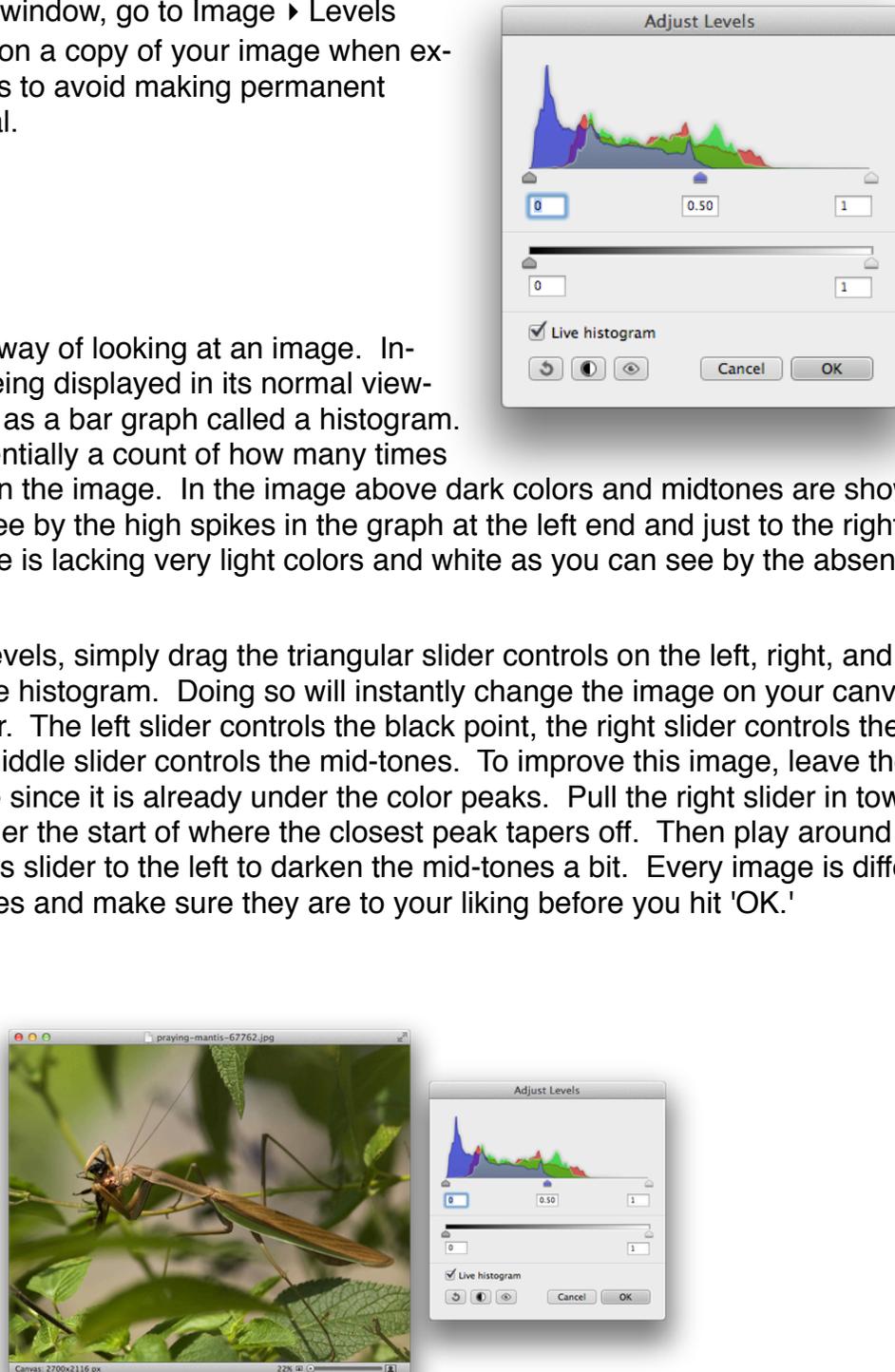
To bring up the levels window, go to Image ▶ Levels (⌘L). Pro Tip: Work on a copy of your image when experimenting with levels to avoid making permanent changes to the original.

Histogram

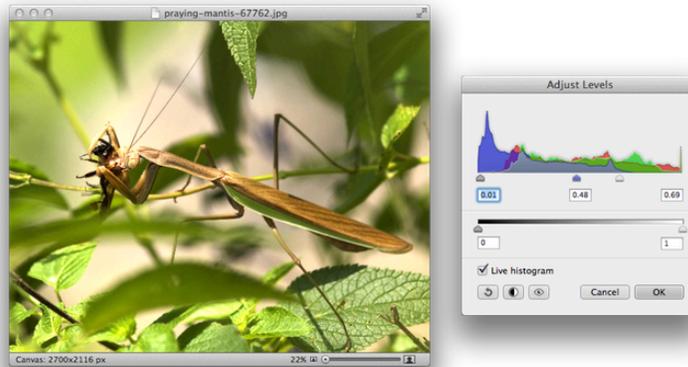
Levels are a different way of looking at an image. Instead of the picture being displayed in its normal viewable state, it is shown as a bar graph called a histogram. The histogram is essentially a count of how many times each color shows up in the image. In the image above dark colors and midtones are showing up a lot, as you can see by the high spikes in the graph at the left end and just to the right of the middle. The image is lacking very light colors and white as you can see by the absence of peaks on the right.

To correct or modify levels, simply drag the triangular slider controls on the left, right, and center at the bottom of the histogram. Doing so will instantly change the image on your canvas, hopefully for the better. The left slider controls the black point, the right slider controls the white point, and the middle slider controls the mid-tones. To improve this image, leave the slider on the left alone since it is already under the color peaks. Pull the right slider in towards the left until it rest under the start of where the closest peak tapers off. Then play around with dragging the mid-tones slider to the left to darken the mid-tones a bit. Every image is different, so look at your changes and make sure they are to your liking before you hit 'OK.'

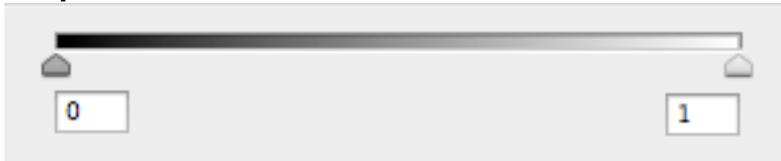
Example Image:



After Levels Adjusted:



Output Levels



Below the histogram is a slider with two control tabs. These control how black the blacks are, as well as the whites. If you bring both tabs in towards the middle you will decrease the contrast of your image. Try experimenting with them to get the hang of it. If you have the 'live histogram' box checked, you will see how your histogram changes when you change the output slider positions.

Reset, Auto Levels, and Visibility



To restore the original values in the histogram and output slider, click on the rotating arrow button located on the left. Acorn can do the levels adjustment for you with 'Auto Levels'. Click on the middle button and the sliders will automatically move to where Acorn thinks they should be located. If you want to quickly see what your image looks like with the levels adjusted and without, click on the visibility button located on the right.

Acorn General

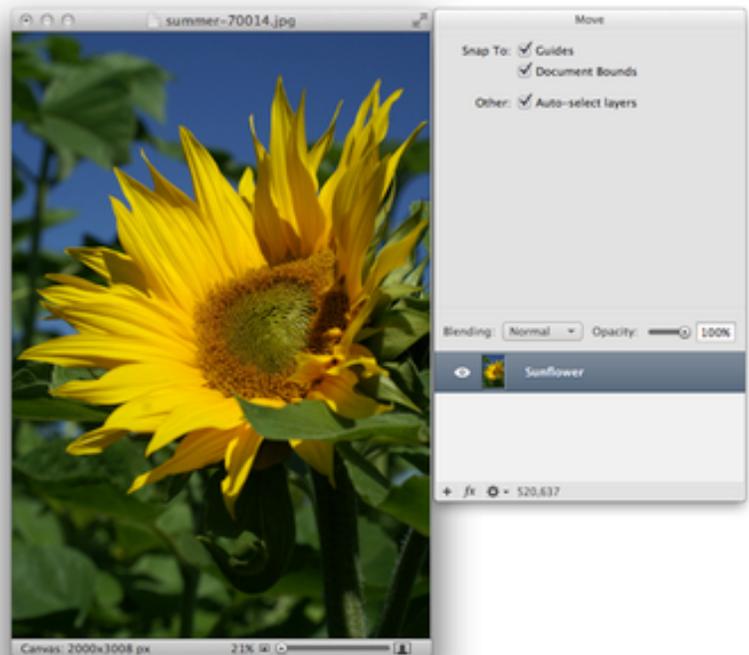
- Filters
- Web Export
- Automation
- Taking Screen Shots
- Copy Merged
- File Actions
- Using Acorn with iPhoto
- Setting the Desktop Picture
- All About DPI, PPI, & Printing

Using Filters in Acorn

Filters are an amazingly easy way to change your image in original and unique ways. What are filters? Filters are effects that can be applied to single layers, group layers, shape layers, and selections. With a little bit of fiddling, filters can create things you never even imagined!

To get started, select the layer you wish to work with in the layers list. This example will use an image of a sunflower.

Bring up the filter window by either picking a filter from the Filter menu item or clicking the 'fx' button in the lower left hand corner of the inspector palette. You can also use keyboard shortcut $\uparrow \text{⌘} \text{F}$.

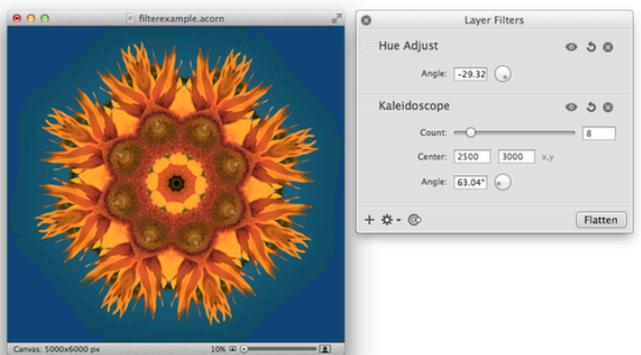
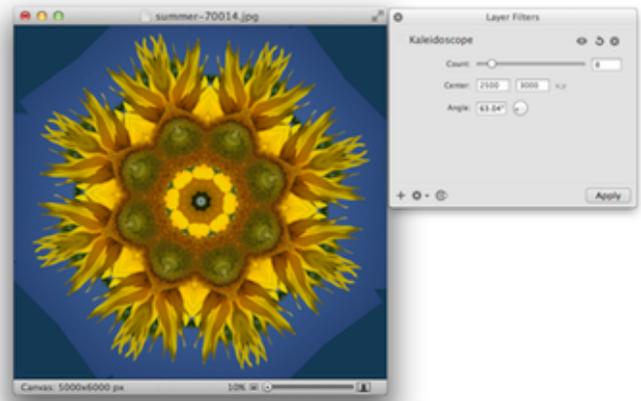


In this example, Filter ▶ Tile Effect ▶ Kaleidoscope was chosen. Acorn shows the effect the filter has on your image immediately.

Once you have chosen a filter, you will see 'fx' on the right-hand side of the layer in the layers list.

If you need to change the values of the filter later, just return to the filters window by double clicking the 'fx'. If you wish to make a filter effect permanent, select 'Flatten' in the filters window. Once you have flattened a filter, you will no longer have the ability to modify it and the 'fx' will disappear from that layer in the layers list.

The power of the filter window comes in stacking filters together to make workflows. In this image, the 'hue adjust' filter has been added on top of the kaleidoscope filter. Play around with adding, deleting, and moving filters around in your filters window to create endless effects!



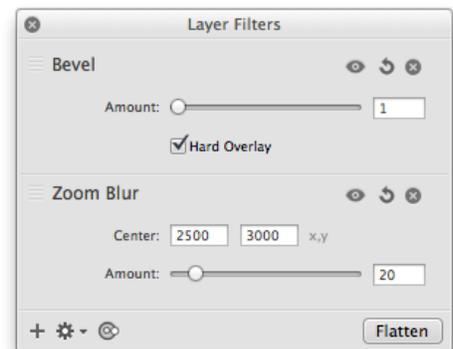
Filter Basics

Adding Filters: Once you have selected a filter, you can add more filters to the same layer by clicking on the '+' button in the lower left hand corner of the filter window.

Removing Filters: To remove any filter, click on the 'X' in the upper right hand corner of that filter's parameters.

Moving Filters: To move a filter up or down in the filters list, just drag and drop it to the location you desire.

Search Filters: The first time you click the 'fx' button, the filter search field will appear. Once you've added a filter, you can click the '+' button again to access filter search.



Copying Filters: To copy a filter, click on the cogwheel in the lower lefthand side of the filter window and choose 'Copy Filter'. You can then select a different layer in your layers list and paste the filter in (⌘V or Edit ▶ Paste).

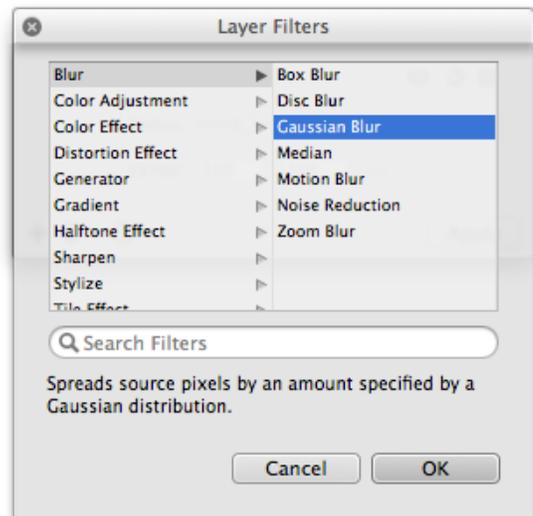
Committing Filters: To make the filter effect permanent on your layer, click the 'Flatten' button at the bottom righthand side of the filter window. You can also choose Layer ▶ Flatten Layer Filters. You can leave your filter effects open to further modification in the future if you don't click 'Flatten'.

Visibility: Click on the eye next to the filter in the filter window to toggle its visibility. If you wish to toggle the visibility of all the filters in your list you can hold down the option key while clicking the 'fx' in the layers list.

Enable/Disable Layer Filters: Control click (or right click) on the layer in the layers list to bring up a contextual menu with these options. You can also navigate to Layer ▶ Enable/Disable Layer Filter.

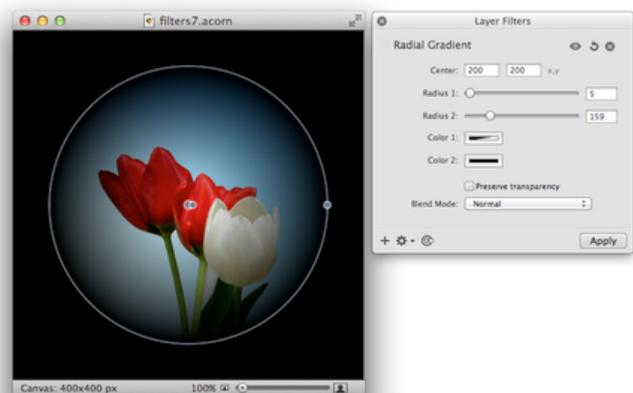
Filter Description: If you select a filter in the filters window, a brief description will appear at the bottom of the window.

Last Filter: The Filter ▶ Last Filter menu item is enabled when when you hit the "Flatten" button in the filter window. You can then use keyboard shortcut Command-F to add the last filter chain to another layer.



Adjusting Filter Parameters

Many filters have values you can adjust in the filters window through sliders or number entry. Some filters contain options that can be manipulated directly on your image such as the 'Center' and 'Radius' options for the radial gradient filter. To toggle the visibility of 'on image' filter controls, click the button to the right of the cogwheel in the lower left hand corner of the filter window.



Creating, Exporting, and Importing Filter Presets

Creating Presets: In order to create a filter preset, first add all the filters you want included in the preset to your filters list. Then click on the cogwheel and select 'Save Filter Preset'. Name your new preset and click 'save'. The filter combination you created will now show up in the presets list for easy use in the future.

Deleting Presets: To delete a preset, hold down the option key while clicking on the preset in the preset list.

Exporting Presets: To export a filter preset, have the preset currently pulled up in the filter list. Click on the cogwheel and select 'export filter preset'. You will be asked to name it and save it to a directory. Share and trade your filter presets with friends!

Importing Presets: To import a filter preset (a file ending in .acstyle) just double click on the file. Acorn will install it automatically.

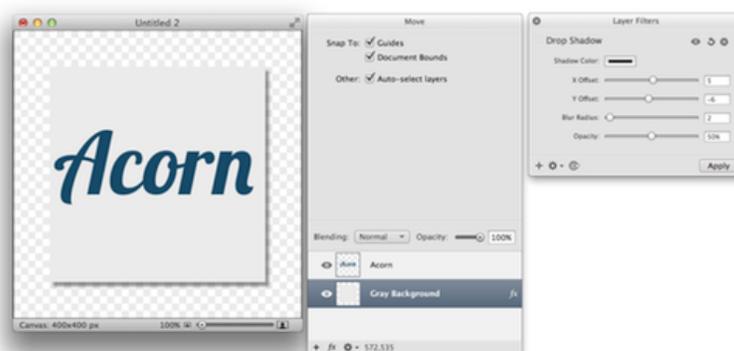
Filters on a Selection

Filters can be placed on a selection, but once you deselect the filter becomes permanent and cannot be modified again unless you undo subsequent work.

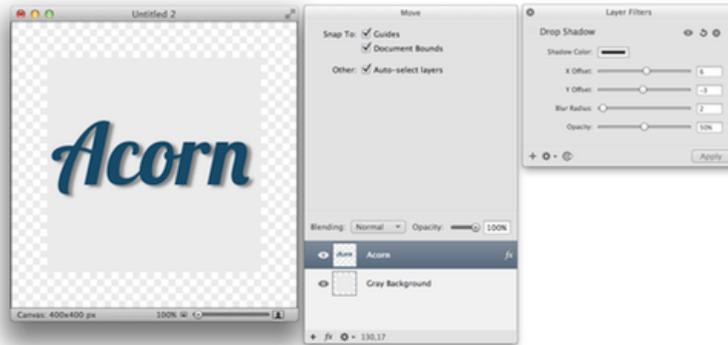
Acorn will remember your selection when you save your image. If you have a selection and you are modifying the filters- you can close your file and quit Acorn. When you re-open the image, your selection will still be there, and you can change the values of the filters.

Filter Example

A drop shadow filter is applied to the gray background layer in this image.



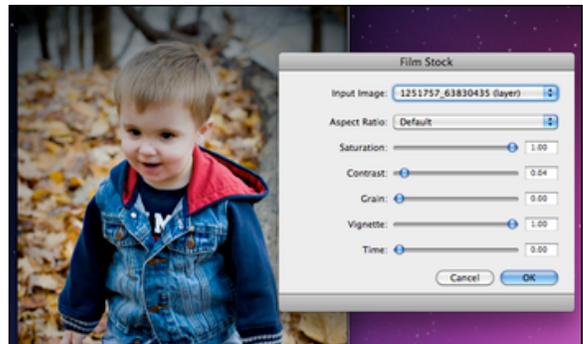
The drop shadow filter is applied to the text layer. The gray background is a separate layer therefore it does not have the drop shadow.



Quartz Compositions

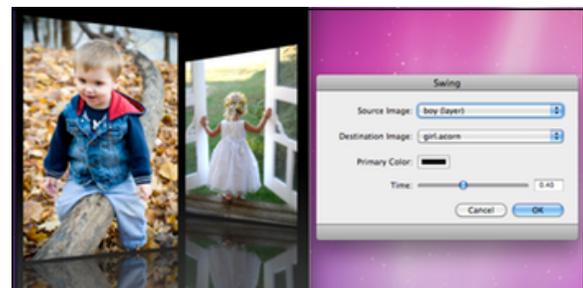
What are Quartz Compositions? Quartz Compositions are filters created using Quartz Composer, which is a visual programming language and IDE provided by Apple. Anyone can create their own compositions, which can then be downloaded and installed. Acorn will list your Quartz Composition filters under the Filter ▶ Quartz Compositions menu.

To install a Quartz Composition, you can either place the composition file (which will have a file extension of ".qtz") into your ~/Library/Compositions folder or you can drag and drop the file into Acorn. If Acorn is running, you will need to restart Acorn for your filter to show up.



Most compositions require some sort of input, such as the Film Stock composition to the right. Other compositions, such as "Color Pencil" do not require input.

When a composition requires a location for the filter, such as the Kaleidoscope filter shown above, Acorn will provide a thumbnail of the image on the left side of the composition parameter window. You can then click and drag to adjust the x/y coordinates of the filter location.



Some compositions, such as "Swing", provide a Time parameter. Adjusting the time value will tell the composition where in its virtual timeline it should hold stationary. In the Swing example to the right, adjusting the time will place the two selected images at different locations from

foreground to background. The time is currently set to .4, which places the selected source image at 60% along its "swing", and the selected destination image to 40%.

Try playing around with some of the filters and experiment, experiment, experiment. For more information, check out the Tutorials or send an email to support@flyingmeat.com and request a tutorial.

Little Boy and Little Girl © [Jason Nelson](#)

Web Export

The time may come when you want to share your images with the internet. Fortunately, Acorn comes with a Web Export panel that will help you choose which image format to use, along with an easy way to compare formats. You can bring up Acorn's Web Export panel via the File ▶ Web Export menu.

To toggle between a preview of your exported image and the original, click on either the "Preview" or "Original" labels in the top left of the window. You can also click on the image to toggle back and forth.



Choosing a format to export your image is as easy as selecting from the list of formats on the left. Some options, such as JPEG and JPEG 2000, will allow you to set how much compression to use via the Quality slider. The higher the quality setting, the bigger the file size. Adjust the quality slider to find the best setting for you. The file size of the current preview is available in the bottom window bar.

If your image has transparent edges that you'd like to minimize, click on the Trim option. This will allow your image to be as small as possible.

If your image has transparent pixels, and you would rather not have them changed to white when exporting as JPEG, you can alter the matte color with the Matte option.

The script icon in the bottom left of the window contains the same entries found in the File Actions menu. Choosing one of these will send your web optimized image to the selected application in the list.

Photo Credits © [jfdervin](#)

Batch Processing using Automator

What is Automator?

"Automator is an application developed by Apple for Mac OS X that implements point-and-click (or drag-and-drop) creation of workflows for automating repetitive tasks into batches for quicker alteration, thus saving time and effort over human intervention to manually change each file separately." - [Wikipedia](#)

Automator can be used with Acorn to process one or more images, and to change the file format of the images. You can crop, trim, and combine multiple images. You may even give Acorn custom commands with JavaScript. Learn more about Automator from [Automator World](#).

Not sure where to start? Read the tutorial on how to use Acorn to perform 'Batch Watermarking' to get your feet wet.

Current Acorn Workflows available in Automator:

- Change the file type of images
- Close images
- Crop images
- Run JavaScript
- Add a layer on images
- Open images
- Trim images

Additional workflows you can download:

Change DPI: <http://flyingmeat.com/stuff/BatchChangeDPI.workflow.zip>

Taking Screen Shots

Acorn has the ability to take screen shots, even if Acorn is not the active application. The shortcut key to take screen shots is $\text{⌘} \uparrow 6$. You can change the shortcut key in the general section of the Preferences window.

When you press $\text{⌘} \uparrow 6$, Acorn will make a new image with the contents of your screen. From here you can crop and modify your image.

You also have the option to turn every window into



its own layer. To do this, open up the general preferences window and select the option "Create layers for windows when taking screenshots".

Photo Credit © [Tambako the Jaguar](#)

Copy Merged

Copy merged is a way of flattening your layers or selection into a copy which can then be pasted or made into a new image. The image below has 3 different layers: a shape layer, the primary image layer, and a background layer.

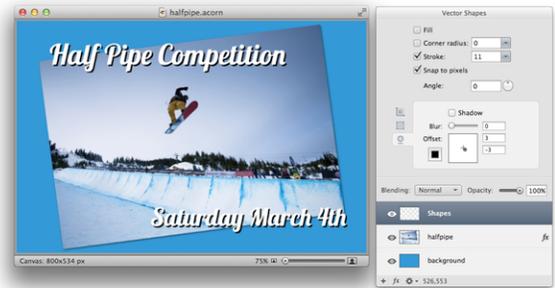
To quickly flatten and copy the entire layer list, click on Edit ▶ Copy Merged. The copy will be placed on your clipboard. You can then create a new Acorn file by choosing File ▶ New from Clipboard (⌘⌘N). As you can see below there is now only one layer, 'image from clipboard'.

Alternatively, you can paste the copy into an already existing file. Copy merged works with selections as well. Make a selection of the area of your image you wish to copy.

Select Edit ▶ Copy Merged, and File ▶ New from Clipboard (⌘⌘N) or paste the copy into your desired location.

Layer ▶ Flatten Image is another method of flattening your layers, but make sure you choose 'Save As' and rename your file immediately after performing this action otherwise you may lose your original work!

Photo Credit © [BC Living](#)



File Actions

You can set up file actions for images that you are working on in Acorn. File actions will take your image out of Acorn and into another application. The actions that come pre-installed include PDF Workflow, Add to iPhoto, Open in Mail, and Open in Preview. To access this feature, navigate to File ▶ Actions.



If you are curious about making or installing new ones, follow these steps:

1. Open the Finder.
2. Hold down the Option key while clicking on the 'Go' menu item. Choose 'Library'.
3. Navigate to the `~/Library/Application Support/Acorn/File Actions/` folder.
4. Start Messing around!

From here you can duplicate the actions that are in there, edit them (open the action in an editor such as TextEdit), or move in pre-made actions.

Creating Custom File Actions

If you are curious as to how to make your own file actions, the easiest way is to open up one of the pre-installed ones in TextEdit and fiddle with it.

```
#!/bin/bash
```

```
/usr/bin/open -a iPhoto "$*"
```

This tells Acorn to open the image in iPhoto.

You may have noticed that you can drag images into the Dock and applications that have the ability to open them will respond by becoming highlighted. Any of those applications can be named in this script instead of iPhoto. Simply changing it to say "Safari" will open the image in Safari instead of iPhoto.

Acorn and iPhoto

Setting up iPhoto to use Acorn as its external editor

iPhoto lets you choose an external editor for photos. While a lot of image correction can be done inside of iPhoto itself, Acorn is here to help with the more advanced editing.

1. Open up iPhoto.
2. Select from the menu iPhoto ▶ Preferences.
3. Make sure the Advanced tab is selected (in older versions of iPhoto this was located in the General tab).
4. Locate the pull down that says Edit Photos.
5. Select the pull down and choose In application...
6. A dialog box will open up, navigate to Applications and select Acorn.

Now when you hit the edit button with a photo selected in iPhoto, it will open the photo up in Acorn.

Quickly edit a photo from iPhoto

This will allow you to quickly edit a photo from iPhoto, and keep it in iPhoto. Letting iPhoto take control of managing where the files are on your computer can be a great way to keep your computer clean and organized. With this method you will not be able to go back and undo, correct, or modify the changes you have made. For example, if you put text on your photo, once you hit save you will not be able to edit the text again.

1. Select the photo you would like to edit in iPhoto. You might want to take this opportunity to duplicate it by choosing from the menu Photos ▶ Duplicate. Now you have a copy of the photo in case something goes awry. You can always delete the original one later.
2. If you have Acorn set up as your external editor, then click the 'Edit' button in iPhoto to have your image open in Acorn. If you don't want to set up Acorn as the external editor, then drag and drop the duplicated photo onto Acorn's icon in the dock.
2. Now your photo is open in Acorn. Add text, edit, and play.
3. Choose File ▶ Save.

4. Say "Save Anyways" if Acorn pops up with a "File Format Warning".
5. Close the picture in Acorn.
6. Now go back to iPhoto. If you double click the image to enlarge it, you will see your changes.

Note: Sometimes the thumbnail in iPhoto will not update right away to reflect the changes you have just made. However, if you open the photo up in iPhoto or add it into a book or calendar the changes that you have made will be present.

Setting the Desktop Picture

Acorn can be used to set or change your desktop picture. Play around and modify your images then immediately use them as your background! Simply right click on your image to bring up the canvas contextual menu.

Click on "Use Image as Desktop Picture". Wait a few seconds, and voilà!



All about DPI, PPI, and Printing

There are a few different factors that go in to determining image print quality, and it can be difficult to understand their relationship to one another. To start, here are a few general definitions of terms:

Pixel Count: The amount of pixels an image contains is the pixel count (for instance, a "10MP / 10 mega-pixel" image has 10 million pixels in it). How the image is displayed on your monitor is determined by this value. In general, the more pixels you have in your image the better it will look since the more pixels there are, the greater the detail. Pixel count is usually displayed in dimensions: "1200 x 900 pixels" or "1200 x 900 px". If you have a digital camera or scanner, you can usually create higher pixel counts by changing the settings of your device prior to taking a picture or scan.

One thing to remember- scaling up an image to increase the pixel count will not make your image higher quality or sharper. Adding pixels to your image this way will only increase the file size, since your computer isn't good at guessing what the extra details should be. It'll just dou-

ble the existing pixels, not add new and better ones. Scaling down your image however (where pixels are thrown out) does not have this problem. Scaling down will usually result in a loss of quality however.

Physical Size Dimensions: This is usually displayed in centimeters or inches, such as "5 x 7" or "4 x 6". When printing to typical photo sizes, you will need to accordingly resize your image to fit standard photo printing dimensions if they aren't already the appropriate size. Displaying the ruler (⌘-R) will show you your image dimensions. You can also control-click on the ruler to change the units that it uses (pixels, inches, or centimeters).

Pixels Per Inch (PPI): Refers to printing resolution quality and is measured in "pixels per inch" or PPI. In general you do not want to go lower than 180 PPI for acceptable printing results. 360 PPI is a typical standard for high quality printing results. Many web images and computer images are at 72 or 96 PPI. DPI (dots per inch) is another term that is occasionally used interchangeably with PPI when discussing resolution. DPI is a measurement of printers, not a measurement of a digital image. Typically a printing DPI value of 300 produces good quality photos.

Resample Image: This is an option available under Image ▶ Resize Image. If you are changing the PPI of your image in order to improve printing results, you want this box unchecked. If you have "resample image" checked when increasing the PPI of your image, you are increasing the number of pixels without increasing their density. This will result in poor printing appearance.

The Math!

Example 1: Pretend you have an image that is 1600 x 2400 pixels with a PPI of 240. You want to know if your image will have good printing results at a size of 4 x 6.

To figure this out, multiply the PPI by the size dimensions you desire: (240×4) and (240×6) . The results are 960 x 1440 pixels. Since your image is larger than these dimensions, and your PPI is greater than 180, you should have good printing results.

Example 2: Your image has a PPI of 72. The print shop wants your image to have a minimum PPI of 300. Your original image size is 1200 x 1800 pixels. You want your image to print out as a 4 x 6 photo. You want to make sure that by increasing the PPI of your image (and unchecking the "resample image" option), you are still going to have a good quality print outcome.

Divide the pixel count by the PPI you have set: $(1200/300)$ and $(1800/300)$. The results are 4 x 6. You should have a good quality print outcome since your PPI is greater than 180, and the boundaries of the image exactly match the print size you desire (if the boundaries turned out to be larger then you would still be okay).

Example 3: You want the highest PPI possible for your image to be able to print at 5 x 7. The image pixel count is 1500 x 2100 and its current PPI is 72.

Divide the pixel count by the image dimensions you want: (1500/5) and (2100/7). The result is 300. You can set the PPI to 300 (with "resample image" unchecked) for the best printing results.

Learning by Example

You want to print the image on the right as a 4 x 6 photo. Its original pixel count is 1742 x 1161 with a resolution of 72 ppi.

You aren't sure by how much you can increase the PPI to improve your printing results, so you get out your calculator. Divide the pixel count by the dimensions you want your image to print:

$$(1742 \text{ pixels}/6 \text{ inches}) = 290.33 \quad (1161 \text{ pixels}/4 \text{ inches}) = 290.25$$

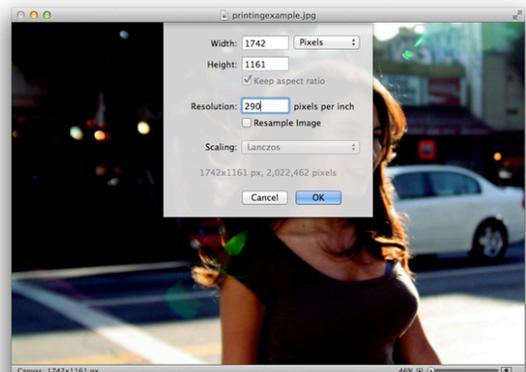
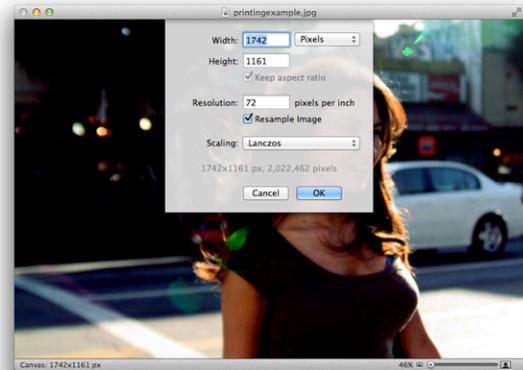
It looks like you can increase your PPI to a maximum of 290 and your image will still be large enough to fit in the 4 x 6 dimensions. Enter 290 in the resolution box and uncheck "resample image".

Now you need to make sure your image is sized appropriately for a 4 x 6 print. Select the crop tool. It is easiest to use the preset crop values. For this example we want to hold down the option key while selecting 4 x 6 in order to swap the width/height.

Click "crop image" once you have your crop lined up the way you want. Be sure to "save as" a different file name so that you don't lose your original image file. Your image is now ready to print at a 4 x 6 size with the highest quality resolution possible with the original pixel count.

Key Points

- You will lose image quality if you try to increase the pixel count of an image beyond its original dimensions. It is better to change the settings on your digital camera or scanner to create a higher pixel count in your images in the first place.



- Uncheck "resample image" if you are changing the PPI of your image to improve printing appearance.
- It is helpful to use the crop tool presets to resize your image to standard photo dimensions. Be sure to hold down the option key when selecting a crop preset if you want to swap the width/height values.

Photo Credits © [Mark Sebastian](#)

Acorn Tutorials

- How to Remove a Background
- Applying Texture
- Layer Mask Examples
- Automating Watermarking
- Watermarking a Single Image
- Inserting Images
- Quick Mask
- Shape Brushes
- How to Fade Out Your Image

Please visit Acorn's [online tutorial documentation](#) to view many more tutorials.

How to Remove a Background

This tutorial will cover how to use the Magic Wand, Instant Alpha Eraser, Blending Modes, and Filters to remove the background of an image.

The original image in this example is asparagus with a green background. The goal is to remove the green background.

The Magic Wand Method

Select the magic wand in the tools palette. Notice in the inspector palette there is a field labeled 'Wand Tolerance'. This number adjusts the range of colors that the magic wand will select. To remove all of the green background seen here and not just sections of it, a tolerance of around 60 should work. Using the magic wand, select the green background. You can tell the background has been selected by all of the little ants marching around it.

Another option for fully selecting the background is to use the magic wand tool and place your cursor over the background. Then click and drag with the mouse to increase or decrease the tolerance of the selection. You will see a circle near your cursor increase or decrease in size in response to the change in tolerance. You can see in real time how your selection grows or shrinks. The first image below shows an appropriate selection of the green background. The second image shows the wand has selected too much and is overflowing into the asparagus.



Now hit the 'Delete' key and deselect by going to Select ▶ Clear Selection (⌘D). You can see the original background has been removed completely. The checkered pattern indicates transparency.



The Instant Alpha Erase Tool Method

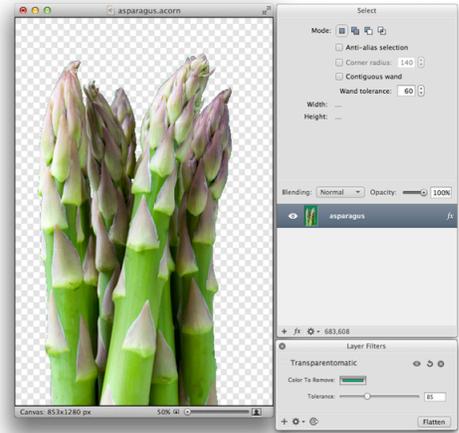
Click on the instant alpha tool in the tools palette. Instant alpha is an erasing tool that has similar qualities to the magic wand selection tool. Click on the color you want erased and simultaneously click and drag outwards to increase the erasing tolerance, or inwards to decrease. The results will be seen in real time as you drag inwards and outwards.

As you can see in the image to the right, the green background is removed leaving transparency. This is because there is no layer below the asparagus to show through the erased green area.



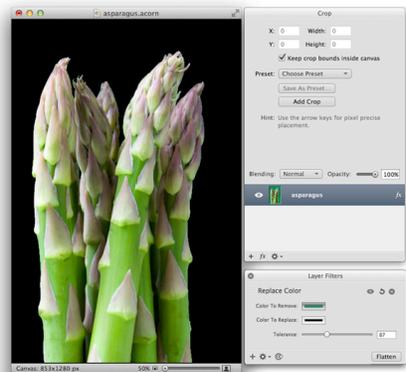
The Transparentomatic Filter Method

Go to Filter ▶ Color Adjustment ▶ Transparentomatic. Click once on the color well to the right of where it says 'Color to Remove'. This will bring up the colors palette. Click on the magnifying glass to the left of the colors display in the colors palette. Using the magnifying glass click on the green background in the image. The green background will be removed. Play around with the tolerance level of the filter until things look right.



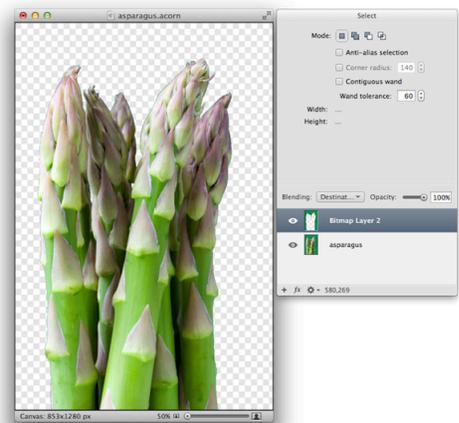
The Replace Color Filter Method

Go to Filter ▶ Color Adjustment ▶ Replace Color. Click once on the color well to the right of where it says 'Color to Remove'. This will bring up the colors palette. Click on the magnifying glass to the left of the colors display in the colors palette. Using the magnifying glass click on the green background in the image. The green background will be removed and replaced with whatever color you choose to have in the 'Color to Replace' color well. Play around with the tolerance level until things look right.



The Blending Modes Method

Select your background using the magic wand tool. Go to Layer ▶ New Layer with Selection. Deselect (⌘D). Now change the blending mode of the layer to Destination Out. This will create a transparent background that is easily hidden or visible by turning the visibility of the new layer on and off.



How To Apply Textures

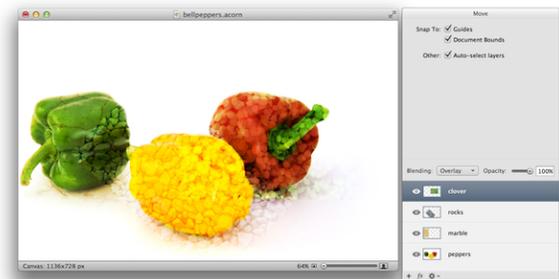
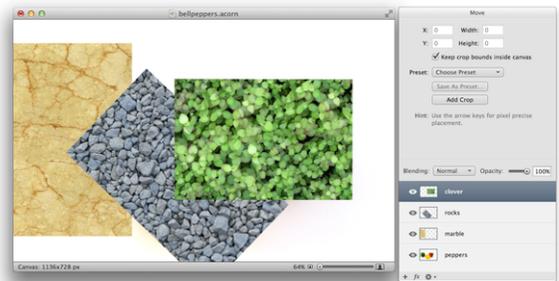
This tutorial will show you how to apply textures to your image using blending modes. All the textures in this tutorial are from <http://www.cgtextures.com>.

Open your image in Acorn, File ▶ Open. The image used here is of 3 bell peppers. Each of these peppers will have a different texture applied using blending modes. Images of marble, rocks, and clover textures were chosen. Choose File ▶ Add Images... to add each of your texture images in separate layers. For more assistance with this, see 'Inserting Images'.

Use the Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Scale and Rotate (⌘⇧T) menu to move the textures images around and change their size and angle.

Change the blending mode of each texture layer to Overlay.

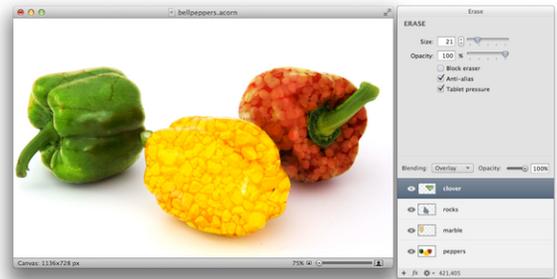
The texture should be noticeable on the flesh of the peppers, not the stems or shadows. To do this you need to erase the texture on the areas where it is not wanted. To make this easier, turn off the visibility on the other texture layers by clicking the eyes to the left of the layers in the layers list. Leave only the original image and the texture you wish to edit visible. Select the layer of the texture you wish to edit by clicking on it in the layers list. Start with the red pepper. Choose the erase tool in the tools palette and erase any unwanted areas of texture.



Repeat this with the remaining textures. Now all the peppers have their own texture.

The blending mode of the textures on the image to the right are all set to Overlay. You can adjust how the textures look by changing the blending mode and opacity on the layer of each texture.

You can also use this technique to apply a single texture to an entire image.



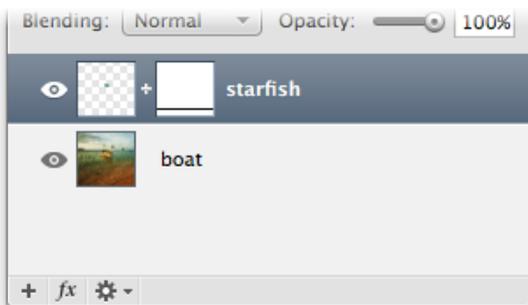
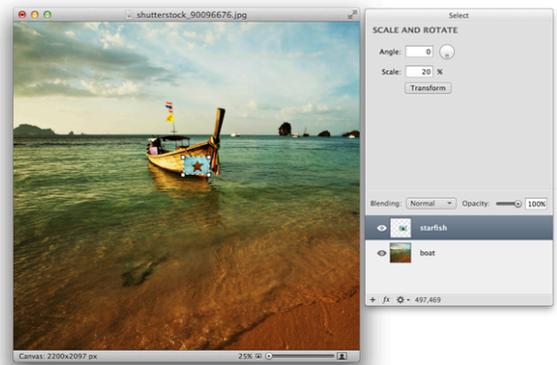
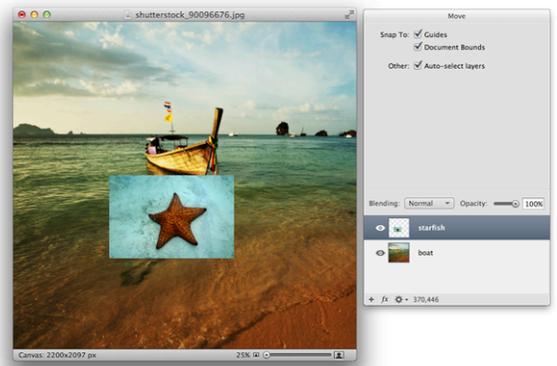
Layer Mask Examples

Layer Mask Example Using Magic Wand

To start, add an image of a starfish and an image with some boats to Acorn in separate layers. The layer with the starfish needs to be above the layer with the boats.

Click on the starfish layer in the layers list to select it. Choose Layer > Rotate and Transform > Scale and Rotate. Scale the starfish layer down to about 20%.

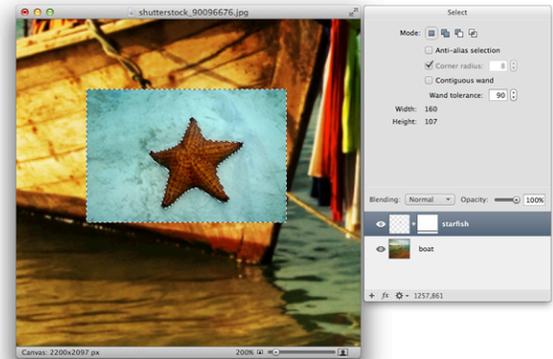
Next, select the layer that includes the starfish and add a layer mask by clicking on the cogwheel towards the bottom left hand side of the palette and selecting "add layer mask". The layers list should now look like this:



Click on the layer mask to begin working on it. You will know the layer mask is selected when there is a black line towards the bottom of the mask in the layers list. Now "mask" everything in the starfish image except the starfish. To do this, select the magic wand tool and set the wand tolerance to around 90. Click on the water around the starfish to select it.

Then choose Edit ▶ Clear (or hit the delete key) to allow the boat layer below to show through. Don't forget to deselect after doing this by clicking Select ▶ Clear Selection (⌘D). Use the move tool in the tools palette to place the starfish where you want it on the boat.

Right now the layer mask is doing its job of exposing exactly the part of the layer below that is situated under the starfish. Notice how the starfish and the boat layers were not actually altered.



Layer Mask Example Using Gradients

You can have a lot of fun combining images seamlessly with layer masks using gradients. Similar to the previous example, open the images you want to combine in Acorn. Place the image that you wish to mask areas from in the top most layer. In this example a cloudy sky above a country road will be replaced with stars. The country road image is the top most layer with the stars image layer underneath.

Following steps outlined previously, add a layer mask to the layer you wish to conceal areas on. Here a layer mask will be added to the country road layer. Select the layer mask by clicking on it in the layers palette.

Now add a gradient to the layer mask. Click on the gradient tool in the tools palette and choose a black to white "linear gradient". The goal is to have the stars show through on the country road image from the horizon to the top of the image, so add a gradi-



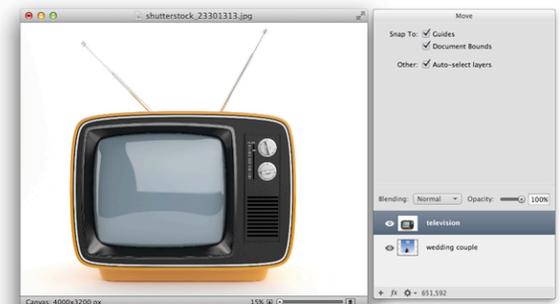
ent spanning this section of the image. The white line in the image above is showing the span of the gradient.

Once the gradient is applied, the layer below will be exposed! Move the star layer around using the move tool so that the stars are where you want them. Have some fun adjusting the opacity and blending settings to get things looking just right.



Layer Mask Example Using 'Paste Into'

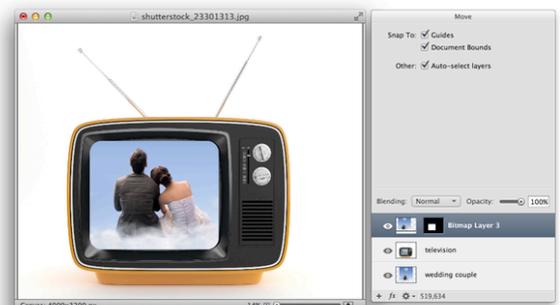
Another layer mask technique is using "Paste Into". With Paste Into you select all or part of one image, then select the area(s) on another image that you would like the initial image to appear on. Since this uses layer masks neither image is being altered, so it is easy to go back and change things later. As an example, take a blank television screen. The goal is to change the television screen to show your image, in this case a married couple.



Open both images in Acorn with the television image in the top layer, and the wedding image in the layer below it. Click on the wedding image layer. Choose Select ▶ Select All (⌘A), then make a copy Edit ▶ Copy (⌘C). Now go ahead and clear your selection (⌘D). Next, click on the layer with the television image. Go to the tools palette and pick one of the selection tools. With this particular example it will be easiest to use the rectangular selection tool with a corner radius (for more information on selection tools read Making Selections). Select the screen of the television.



Now for the fun part! Go to Edit ▶ Paste Into (⇧⌘V) and the wedding image will appear to be on tv. Using the move tool, move the wedding image around until you get it lining up where you want it. If the wedding image is too large or small, click on that layer and use Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Scale and Rotate (⌘⇧T) to fix things.

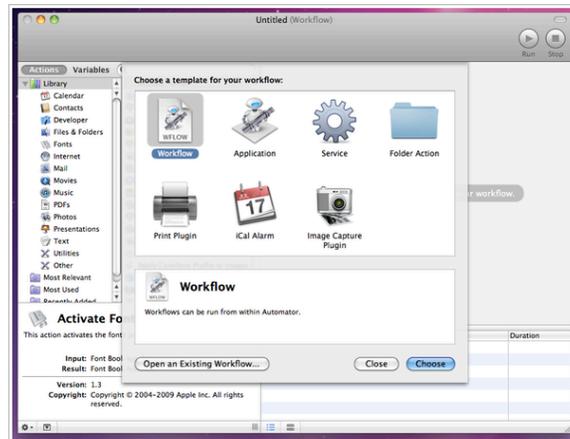


Starfish © [Clinton & Charles Robertson](#); Boat © [Galyna Andrushko](#); Country Road © [Studio 37](#); Stars © [Mark Sebastian](#); Television © [Pablo Scapinachis](#); Married Couple © [conrado](#)

Batch Watermarking Images with Automator

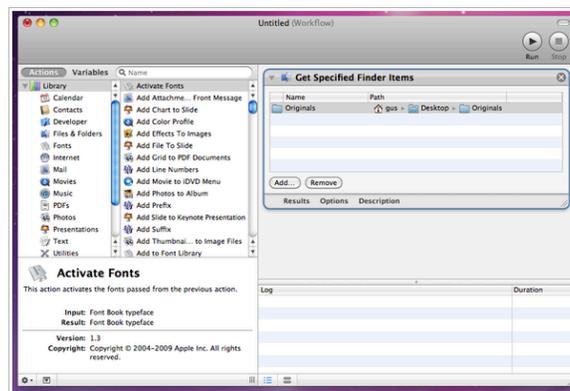
Let's say you have a folder of images on your desktop, named "Originals". You then want to open up these images and put on top a custom image you've made, which will act as a watermark.

Launch Automator (located in your Applications) and make a new workflow:



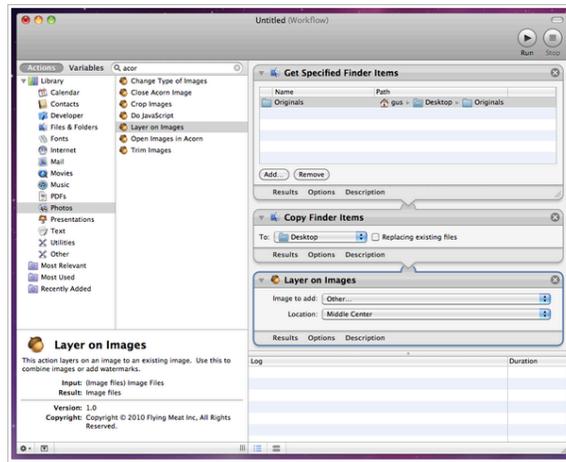
Choose the "Workflow" option.

Next, drag and drop your Originals folder to the area in your Automator window that says "Drag actions or files here to build your workflow". Your action should look similar to this now:



The next step is to add our Acorn action "Layer on Images". You can do this by searching for "Acorn" in the search field, or choosing "Photos" from the Library column and finding it in the next column to the right. Double click on the "Layer on Images" entry.

Before adding your action, Automator will ask you if you want to add a "Copy Finder Items" action. Since you likely want to keep your original images as they are, press the "Add" button. Your workflow should look like this now:



Now tell Automator what to use as a watermark. Click on the "Image to add" pulldown, and find the watermark image you'd like to use. For this example, choose "Bottom Left" for the "Location" pulldown to place the watermarks in the bottom left hand corner of the images. The configured action should now look like this:



Finally, save your Action, and then run it! A copy of the Originals folder will be made (most likely named "Originals 2"). Acorn will then open up each image in that folder, add the watermark to it, save the image, and close it. Success! And completed in a fraction of the time compared to doing this all by hand.

Watermarking a Single Image

If you are interested in watermarking a single image or just a few images, you are in the right spot. If you want to watermark a large batch of images, then check out 'Batch Watermarking'. First things first, choose a watermark. Watermarks are typically company logos, or a copyright with an individual's name. Both examples will be explored in the examples below.

Logo Watermark

In this example an image of doggies will be watermarked with the Flying Meat logo.

Open the image you want to watermark in Acorn, File ▶ Open. Choose File ▶ Add Images... Find the file you want to be your watermark and click 'open'. Below you can see that the Flying Meat logo has been added as a layer above the doggie image.

Adjust the watermark layer size to your personal preference using Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Scale and Rotate (⌘⇧T) (see resizing and rotating a layer). Once the size looks right, click 'transform' in the palette, or double click with your mouse to commit. The watermark will be fairly small in this example.

Using the move tool, place your watermark where you want it. Once you have your watermark layer sized and placed the way you want it, turn the opacity of the layer down. The watermark here looks best around 30% opacity. Also play around with the blending modes to create your desired look -- you can use "Darken" to take out some of the white of the logo. Voila! You have a watermark.

If you think you'll re-use the watermark you created in the future then select the layer with your watermark, copy that layer (⌘C), then File ▶ New from Clipboard (⇧⌘N). Adjust the opacity to where you want it, then save!

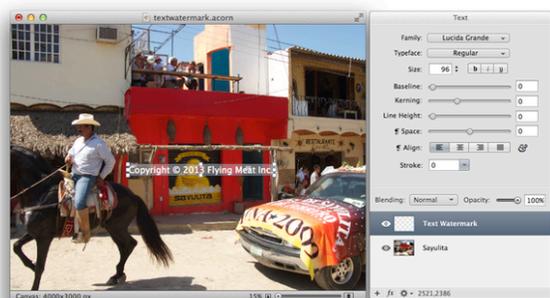
Important Tip: Remember to always make a copy of the original image you are working with, otherwise you may find you've saved your changes and lost the original!

Text Watermark

Text watermarking is just as easy as using an image. Open up the image you want to place a watermark on in Acorn, File ▶ Open.

Select the text tool from your tools palette and write out what you want your watermark to say in the appropriate font, size, and color.

In the example to the right, the opacity of the text



layer was reduced to 60%. Hit the escape key to end text editing and then use the move tool to place your watermark wherever you wish.

It turns out the text watermark is hard to see here. You can either experiment with changing the text color, or you can add a solid shape background to help the text stand out more. To practice the latter, click on the rectangle shape tool in the tools palette. Draw out a rectangular shape that covers the text.

Move the rectangle shape layer below the text layer in the layers list. Adjust the shape's length and width further if needed using the move tool, and decrease the layer opacity.

If you want to move your text watermark around to see where it looks best, you can put your text and shape layers together in a group layer. Go to Layer ▶ New Group Layer. Drag and drop your watermark and shape background layers into the group folder in the layers list. Use the move tool to move the group layer around in your image keeping those layers lined up together.

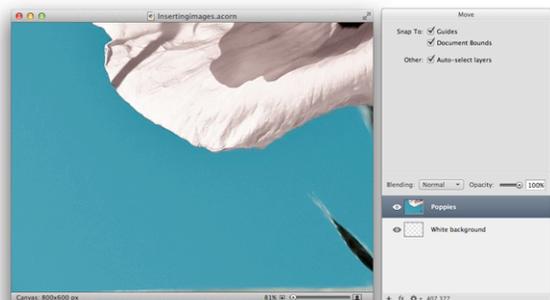
If you think you'll want to re-use your text watermark in the future, copy that layer or group layer (⌘C), then File ▶ New from Clipboard (⌘N). Adjust the opacity to where you want it, then save!



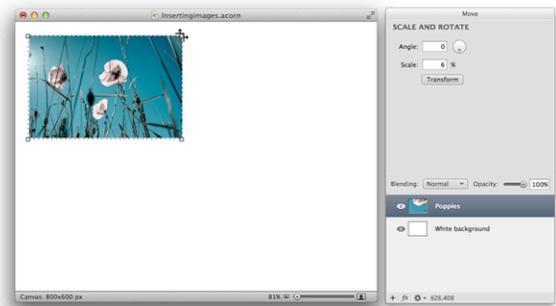
Inserting and Resizing Images

This tutorial will go over how to insert and resize images. Create a new image, File ▶ New. The canvas dimensions used here are 800 x 600 pixels with a white background. Use File ▶ Add Images... to add your first image. Alternatively you can copy and paste images into your canvas, or drag and drop the files onto the canvas.

As you can see, the image of the flower is much larger than the canvas. To resize the image, use



Layer ▶ Rotate and Transform ▶ Scale and Rotate (⌘⇧T). Handles and an outline will appear around your image. Increase or decrease the size of the image by dragging in or out on a corner handle, or you enter a value in the 'scale' field in the inspector palette. You can also move the image around the canvas by clicking in the middle and dragging it around. Once you have the image placed where you want it, double click to end the transformation, or click 'Transform' in the palette.



Add a few more images and repeat the steps outlined above for resizing them and moving them around on the canvas. If you wish to remove or "crop" parts of an image you have added, use the selection tool. Make sure you are currently selected on the image layer you are going to modify. Choose the rectangular select tool and select the area you wish to keep. For more information on how to use the select tools, read 'Making Selections'.



Choose Select ▶ Inverse. Then, hit the delete key. Deselect by using keyboard shortcut ⌘D. Use the move tool to reposition the layer if needed.

Repeat this process with other images you wish to add to your canvas. You can use guides to get your images lining up precisely (see rulers and guides from more information), and the crop tool to trim off any blank areas of canvas that are left over.

This technique is useful for placing many images into a single image, compositing, or creating storyboards.



Quick Mask



The quick mask mode button can be found on the bottom left hand side of the tools palette under the color wells. Quick mask mode is an additional way of making selections in Acorn, and can be combined with other selection tools such as the magic wand to refine a selection. You can use the brush, eraser, and even filters when quick mask mode is enabled.

When you enter quick mask mode, it helps to think of your selection as a virtual layer which happens to be either red tinted or clear. Painting with the color white in quick mask mode removes the tinted color overlay. Painting with black restores the color overlay. Anywhere you paint with white is where your selection will be, and when you exit quick mask mode the clear overlay (which you painted with white) will change into a standard selection. Toggle with keyboard shortcut 'q' to view your selections within and outside of quick mask.

In this example, quick mask mode will be used to select the head of a red toy fox. Open the image in Acorn, File ▶ Open. Click on the quick mask button in the tools palette to apply the quick mask.

Select the brush tool and set the color to white in the foreground color well. Make sure the opacity of the brush is 100% and set the brush size smaller than the area you want to select. Use a heavy solid brush such as "brushy" or "painting 2" and brush over the area of the image you want to select. The quick mask color overlay will appear to be removed from the areas you brush with the color white. It's okay if you make mistakes, you can always Edit ▶ Undo (⌘Z), or switch your brush color to black and brush over the mistake to remove it.

Click on the quick mask button in the tools palette, or keyboard shortcut "q" to see your selection border with quick mask toggled off.

Go back into quick mask mode to tidy up your selection as needed. You will probably need to zoom



in and use smaller brush sizes to get the edges of your selection tight. You can also do some of your work with quick mask, then turn quick mask off and go into other selection tools such as magic wand to get things perfect. Or vice versa, start your work with the magic wand tool then switch to quick mask.

Here the red fox head was removed from its original image and made into a new image by using File ▶ New from Selection. (Important: quick mask mode must be toggled off in order for 'New from Selection' to be enabled).

Have fun making selections!



[Red Fox Photo - Copyright © TinyApartmentCrafts](#)

Shape Brushes

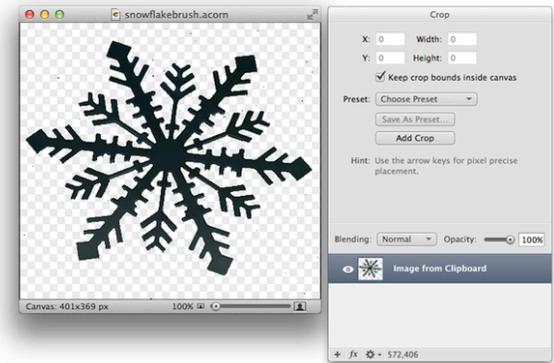
This tutorial will cover how to create your own shape brush. Making a brush can be a time saver if you find yourself using a simple image repeatedly in your projects. Ideally a brush should start out with the image being black and on a transparent background. For more detailed information on removing a background read [How to Remove a Background](#).

First, open the image you want to create a brush from in Acorn, File ▶ Open. This tutorial will use a snowflake image.

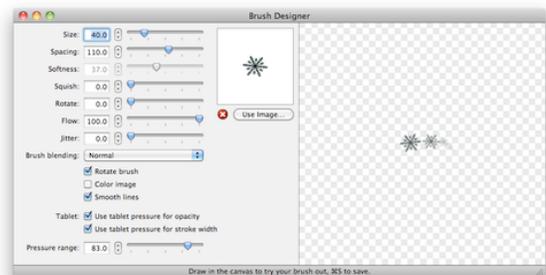


Using a selection tool such as the magic wand, select the snowflake. A wand tolerance of 40 was used here.

Go to File ▶ New from Selection. The snowflake will now be on a transparent background. In order to change the snowflake's color from white to black, go to Image ▶ Invert. Alternatively, you could use Filter ▶ Color Adjustment ▶ Replace Color. Use the crop tool to remove the excess areas around the snowflake and the erase tool to clean up any little bits of color that aren't part of the snowflake. Now is a good time to save your new image.



The image is ready to be brought into the brush designer. To open the brush designer choose Window ▶ Brush Designer. Click on "use image" and select your saved file. Your image will show up in the window.

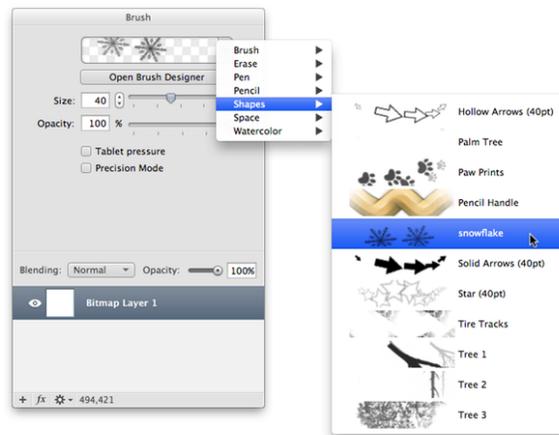


Here is a rundown of the various options for modifying your brush:

- Size - This is the width and height of your brush. To make your brush bigger or smaller, modify this setting.
- Spacing - Acorn uses a dabbing (also known as stamping) method for its brushes. In essence, a brush stroke is a whole bunch of stamps of the same image over and over again. The spacing option decides how close together those stamps appear.
- Softness - This option alters the brush stroke to have a softer or harder edge.
- Squish - Do you want your brush to have a slight angle to it, like a felt tip pen might have? Use this option to decide how much of an angle.
- Rotate - This will rotate your brush dab to your desired angle.
- Flow - The flow slider adjusts the amount of paint the brush applies with each stroke.
- Jitter - This option adds a range of randomness to your brush strokes.

If you click on a color from the color palette while you are in the brush designer, it will apply the color to your brush. Notice at the bottom of the window it states, "Draw in the canvas to try your brush out, ⌘S to save". Once you click ⌘S you will be asked to name your brush and which brush folder to place it in. It makes the most sense to place it under "shapes".

Now click on the brush tool in your tools palette. The brush you just saved can be found under 'Shapes':



Congratulations! You have now created your own shape brush! Play around with the size, color, and opacity:



[Snowflake Photo - Copyright © Petr Kratochvil](#)

How to Fade Out Your Image

This tutorial will show you a few different techniques for transitioning your image to a transparent background.

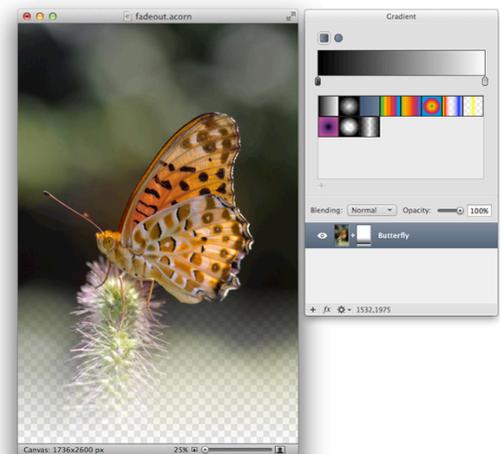
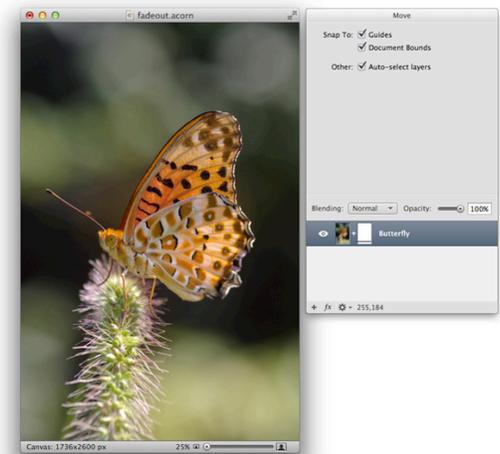
Technique 1: Using a Gradient in a Layer Mask

Creating a gradient in a layer mask is by far the easiest technique for fading out an image. Open your image in Acorn, File ▶ Open. Click on the cogwheel on the lower left hand corner of the layers list in the inspector palette. Select 'Add Layer Mask'.

Be sure the layer mask is selected. You know it is if it has a black line across the bottom as you can see in the image above. Choose the gradient tool from the tools palette. Using the black to white linear gradient, draw out the gradient on your image. Black areas of the gradient will expose the layer below (in this instance it's transparent since there is no layer underneath), white areas will preserve the layer. Hold down the shift key when you draw your gradient if you want it straight.

Voila! That's all it takes to fade out an image. When you save this file, you'll want to save it as either a PNG, TIFF, or an Acorn file. Whatever you do, don't save it as JPEG since JPEG files don't support transparency, and it'll turn the background white.

Be sure to also check out the 'Fade Out Techniques' video tutorial.



Technique 2: Using a Gradient Without a Layer Mask

To start, add a new layer to your image, Layer ▶ New Layer (⇧⌘N). You can also get away with pressing the little + button at the bottom left corner of the inspector palette.

Next, select the gradient tool. Choose the linear black to white gradient. Double click on the white gradient widget. The colors palette should appear. Decrease the opacity slider all the way to the left to 0%.

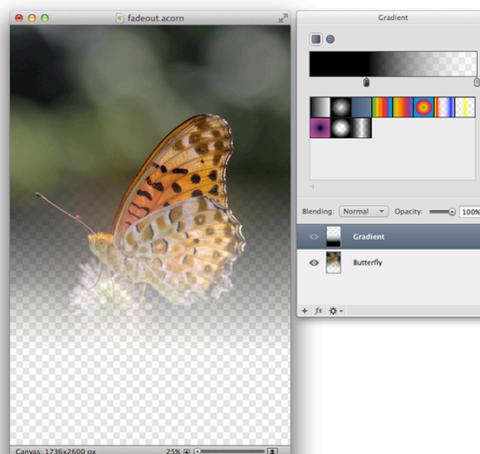
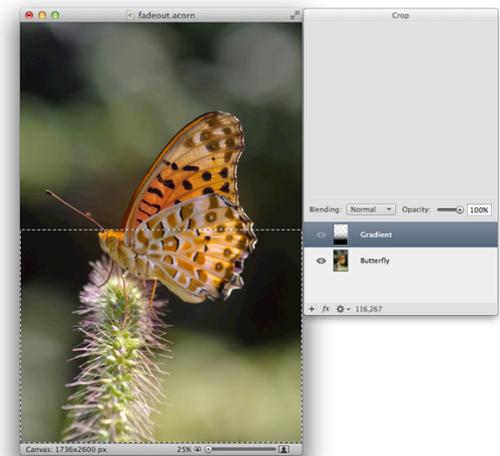
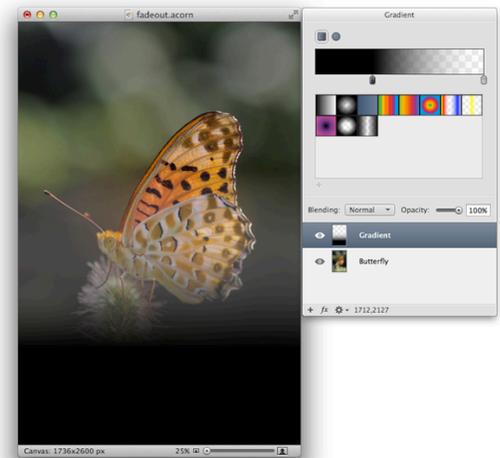
With the gradient tool selected, and the new layer selected and highlighted in the layers list, draw a gradient. If you need help drawing a gradient in a perfectly vertical line, just hold down the shift key as you move your mouse.

These next couple of steps can be tricky-

First, hold down the command key, and click the thumbnail of the gradient layer in the layers list. This turns the layer into a selection. Next, hide the gradient layer by clicking the visibility icon (the little eye) next to the thumbnail in the layers list.

Select the bottom layer, and press the delete button. Deselect (⌘D).

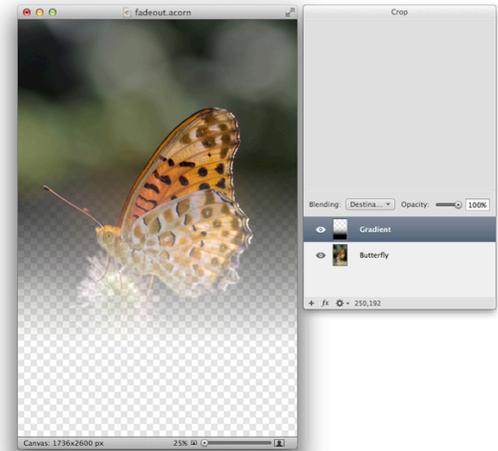
The final image will look like this:



Technique 3: Using Gradients and Blending Modes

This technique uses layer blending to achieve the fade out effect. Make a new layer, Layer ▶ New Layer. Draw a black to transparent gradient on the new layer.

Instead of command-clicking on our layer thumbnail like before, change the blending of the gradient layer to "Destination Out".



Technique 4: Using the Feather Tool

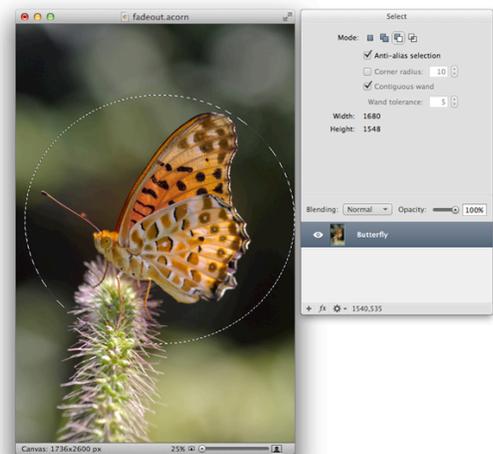
Choose a selection tool from the tools palette. The elliptical selection tool is used here. Select the area of the image you want to keep.

Pro Tip: When using the elliptical selection tool, holding down the option key lets you grow your selection from the middle. Holding down the shift key allows you to make a perfect circle.

Next, choose the Select ▶ Feather. A little window will come up. The amount you enter in the radius field depends on the size of your image. A radius of 65 is used here. Click the OK button.

Notice anything different? Probably not. But what has happened is that the selection has changed slightly so that it's softer on the edges. Choose the Select ▶ Inverse menu item. This will take the selection and turn it inside out, selecting the areas that weren't selected before, and unselecting the areas that were previously selected. Hit the delete key and deselect (⌘D).

If it turns out you want to change the feather value, you can use Edit ▶ Undo (⌘Z) to undo the last couple of steps.



Fading Two Images Together

To take this a step further, you can blend two images together. This example uses the layer mask fade out technique outlined previously. Then, using File ▶ Add Images...bring in your second image. Move the new image layer down to the bottom of the layers list. Using the move tool, position the new layer, and tada! You have 2 images blended together.

