Overview of Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is the industry standard in graphics editing, used for creating and enhancing photographs, illustrations, and 3D artwork. With Photoshop you can compose, edit, and manipulate images across multiple layers using masks, transparencies, and color spaces. It's everything you need to make any idea real (**Figure 1**).
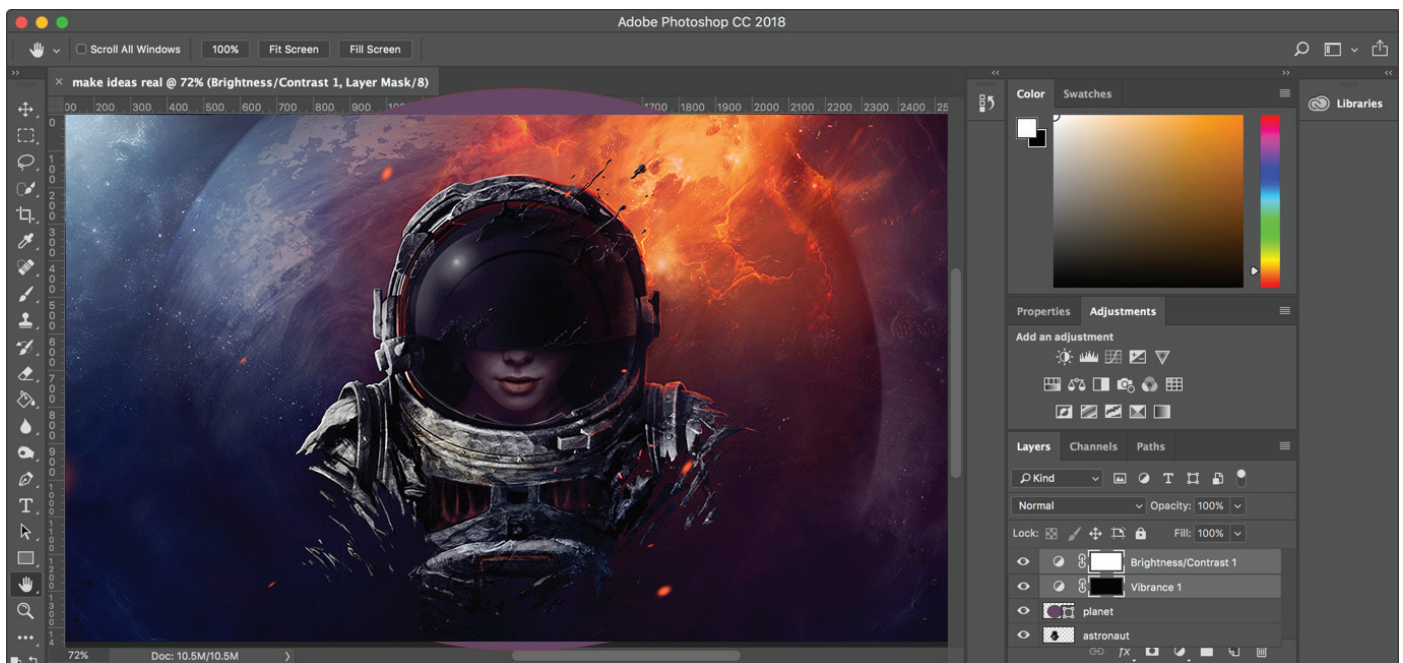

Figure 1 Photoshop CC 2018 interface

Photoshop works with *bitmapped*, digitized images (that is, continuous-tone images that have been converted into a series of small squares, or picture elements, called *pixels*). You can also work with *vector* graphics, which are drawings made of smooth lines that retain crispness when scaled. Compare how these formats appear when resized (**Figure 2**).
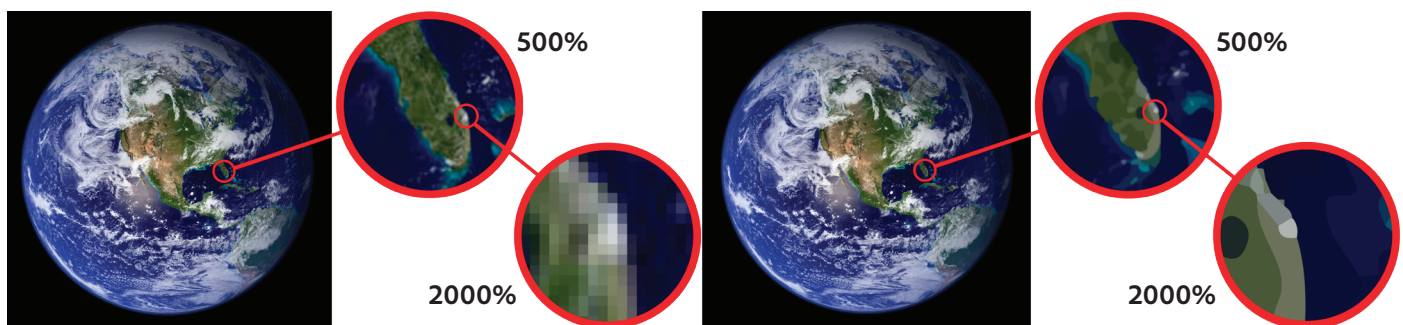

Figure 2 Examples of images at different levels of magnification: bitmapped (left) and vector (right)

You can create original artwork in Photoshop, or import and edit images from a wide variety of sources, including:

- Original photographs from your digital camera
- Scans of photographs, transparencies, negatives, graphics, or other assets
- Stock photography from Adobe Stock and other sources
- Captured video images
- Artwork created in drawing programs such as Adobe Illustrator

In Photoshop, the arrangement of various tools including panels, bars, and windows is called a workspace. You can adapt the app to the way you work by selecting from several preset workspaces or by creating one of your own. The workspaces of different Adobe creative applications share similar appearances so that you can move between the applications easily.
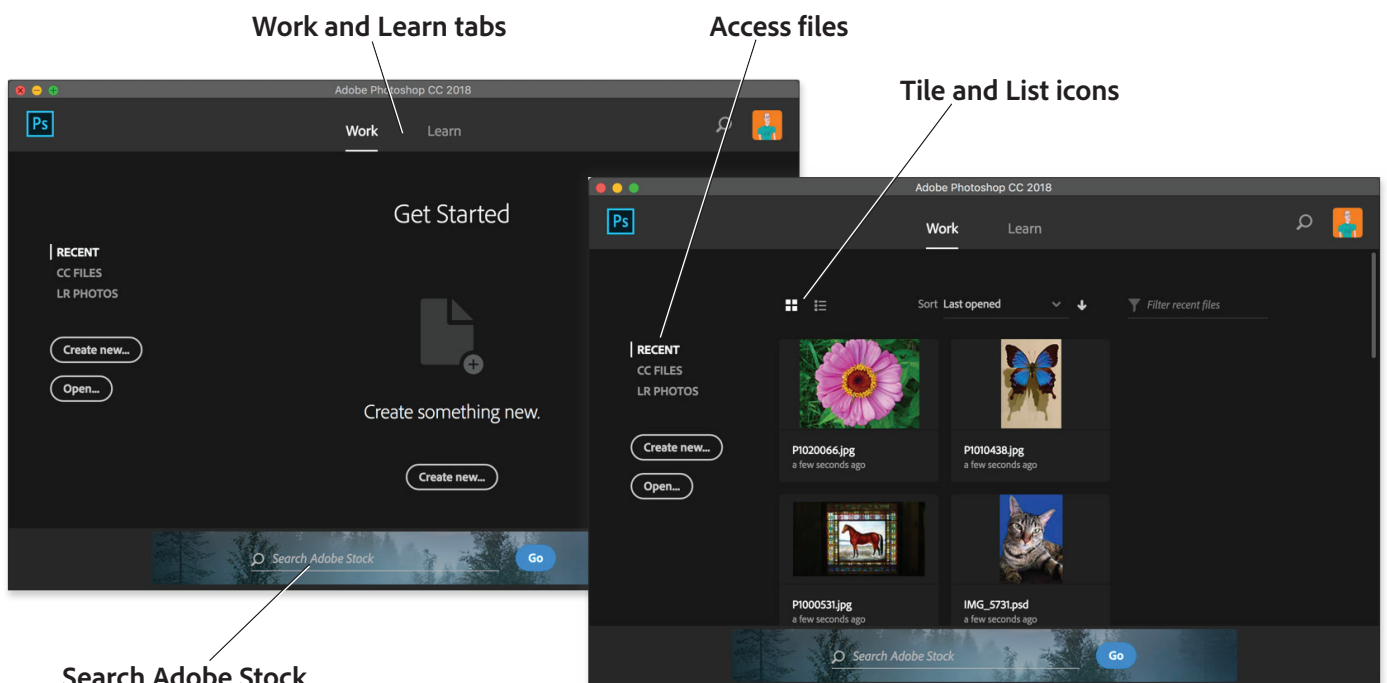
Photoshop uses common graphics image formats such as PSD (Photoshop document), JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group), TIFF (Tagged Image File Format), PNG (Portable Network Graphics) and others. For information on the kinds of files you can use with Adobe Photoshop, see "Choosing a file format" in Photoshop Help.

In this guide, you'll learn your way around the Adobe Photoshop interface, how to create your own custom workspaces, how to open images, review the Tools panel, and get an introduction to basic pan and zoom tools and panels. You can use your own assets, or download the files used in this guide here.

The Start workspace

When you open Photoshop, the Start workspace appears. Two tabs at the top of include the Work and Learn tabs.

If it's your first time opening Photoshop, the Work tab will open and the recent files section will be empty (**Figure 3**). On subsequent openings, this workspace gives you quick access to your recent files, libraries, and presets. Depending on your subscription status, the Start workspace may also display content tailored to your requirements, including Adobe Stock. Photoshop displays the Start workspace at launch or whenever no documents are open.

Figure 3 The Work view in the Start workspace at first time opening (left), and the Recent Files view (right)

To open a document from the Start workspace:

1. Start Adobe Photoshop.

   The Start workspace Work tab opens. If you've previously used Photoshop, your recent files will be shown.

2. Use the options in the Start workspace to browse your recent files and libraries:
   - *Access your assets* - View recently-opened files, define and browse libraries, or select a preset option by clicking the **Create New** button.
   - *Toggle between tile and list views* - Click the Tile icon or the List icon.
   - *Find a stock asset* - Enter a keyword in the Search field. Photoshop displays the search results from Adobe Stock in a new browser window.

3. Use one of these workspace options to create a new document, open an image, or select a defined preset.
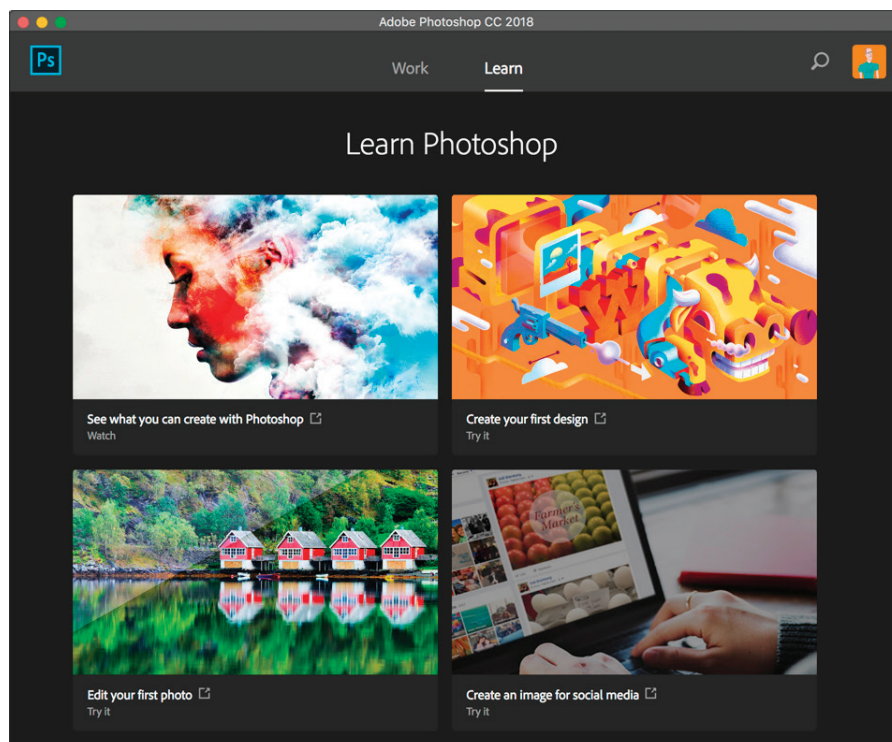
   The Photoshop working area opens.

Getting to know Photoshop

If you're a new user to Photoshop, there are several great ways to learn how to use the application, including the Learn tab, step-by-step tutorials, and rich tool tips. Be sure to try out this wide variety of resources to learn the basics, or refine your skills.

Learn tab

The Start workspace also includes a Learn tab, which provides access to a selection of tutorials to help you expand your design and image editing skills (**Figure 4**). There are many more beginner- to advanced-level design and photography courses and tutorials available to view at Adobe Help Tutorials.
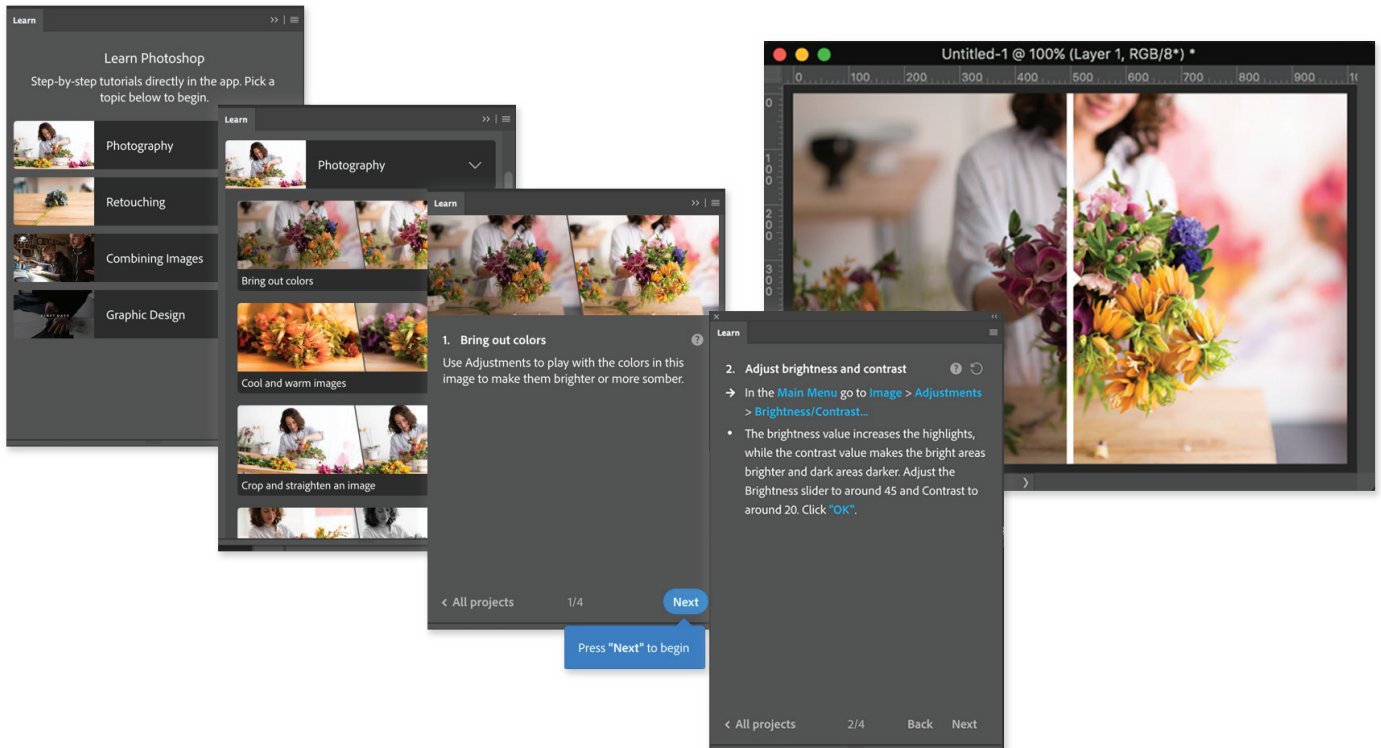

Figure 4 The Learn view in the Start workspace

Step-by-step tutorials

You can now access step-by-step tutorials on basic concepts and tasks directly from within Photoshop. These tutorials cover basic photography concepts, retouching and combining images, and graphic design fundamentals.

In Photoshop, select Window > Learn to access the Learn panel (**Figure 5**) and select a topic. Photoshop opens up a sample file and guides you through the project steps.
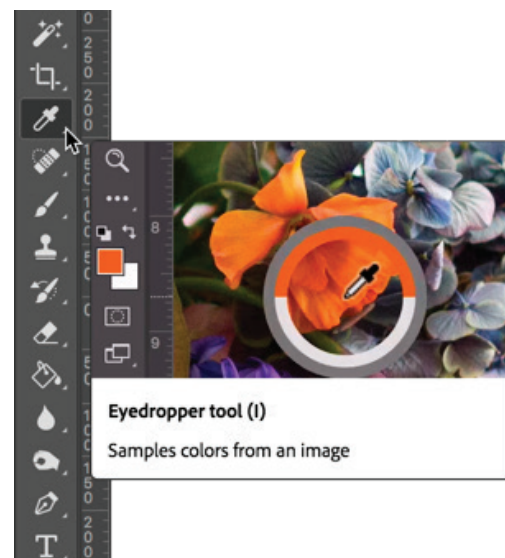

Figure 5 The Learn panel with a step-by-step tutorial and sample file

Rich tool tips

It's now easier to figure out how Photoshop tools work. When you hover the pointer over certain tools in the Tools panel, Photoshop displays a description and a short video of the tool in action (**Figure 6**).

You can also choose not to display rich tooltips. To do so, deselect the Preferences > Tools > Use Rich Tooltips option.

Figure 6 Tools panel with rich tool tips

A first look at the Photoshop working area

If this is the first time using Photoshop, the new document or image opens in the default Essentials workspace (**Figure 7**) that displays the application bar (Windows), or title bar (Mac OS). Below the main menu is the Options bar, with the Tools panel on the left, other panels, and one or more document windows that are opened separately.
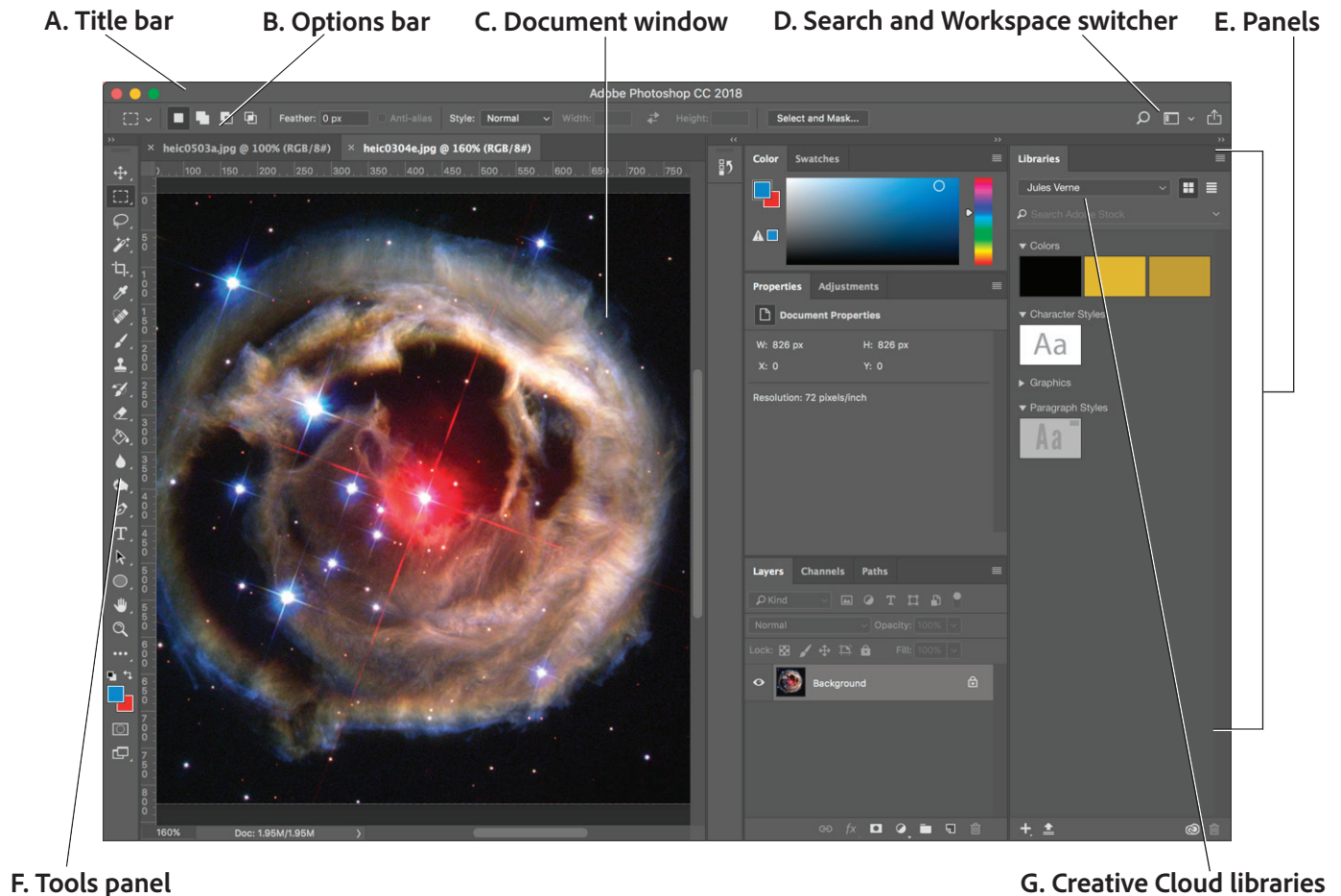
A. Title bar   B. Options bar   C. Document window   D. Search and Workspace switcher   E. Panels

F. Tools panel   G. Creative Cloud libraries

Figure 7 *The Photoshop working area*

Here's an overview of the elements that make up the Essentials workspace:

A. The *Application bar* across the top contains a workspace switcher, menus (Windows only), and other application controls. On the Mac for certain products, you can show or hide it using the Window menu.

B. The *Options bar Control panel* displays options for the currently selected tool.

C. The *Document window* displays the file you're working on. Document windows can be tabbed and, in certain cases, grouped and docked.

D. The *Search* icon lets you search across UI elements, documents, Help & learning content, inspiring Stock assets, and more. The *Workspace switcher* allows you to adjust the layout and functionality of the Photoshop workspace.

E. *Panels* help you monitor and modify your work. Certain panels are displayed by default, but you can add any panel by selecting it from the Window menu. Many panels have menus with panel-specific options. You can separate, group, stack, and dock panels into your preferred layout.

F. The *Tools panel* contains tools for creating and editing images, artwork, page elements, and so on. Related tools are grouped.

G. The *Creative Cloud Libraries* makes your images, colors, text styles, and more sharable across desktop applications and mobile apps. You create new libraries and access them via the Libraries panel.

The *Application frame* groups all the workspace elements in a single, integrated window that lets you treat the application as a single unit. When you move or resize the Application frame or any of its elements, all the elements within it respond to each other so none overlap. Panels don't disappear when you switch applications or when you accidentally click out of the application. If you work with two or more applications, you can position each application side by side on the screen or on multiple monitors. If you are using a Mac and prefer the traditional, free-form user interface, you can turn off the Application frame.

Exploring the workspace options

Preset workspaces are available and optimized for specific types of workflows and creative projects. You can adjust the layout and functionality of the Photoshop workspace for dedicated uses by using the workspace switcher.

To explore the workspaces:

1. Click on the Workspace switcher and confirm the option is set to **Essentials** (**Figure 8**).

2. Select one of the other workspace options, for example, **Graphic and Web**.

    The interface changes to feature the tools and panels best suited for that particular set of tasks.

3. Try another option, perhaps **Painting**.

    Notice how the panels options change.

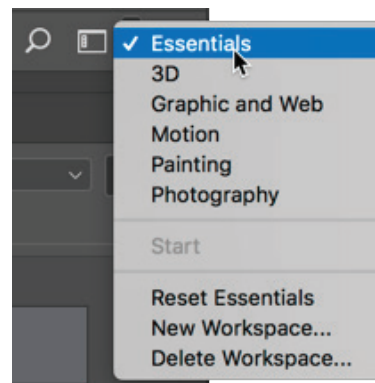4. Choose **Essentials** to restore the default workspace.

Figure 8 Workspace switcher

Customizing your workspace by using the workspace switcher

You may have your own preferred way of arranging panels when working on a document. You can save a current size and position of panels as a uniquely named workspace and restore that workspace even if you move or close a panel. The names of saved workspaces appear in the **Window > Workspace** menu.

To customize the workspace:

1. To create a custom workspace, move and manipulate the interface layout in Photoshop (**Figure 9**) to a create a unique layout.
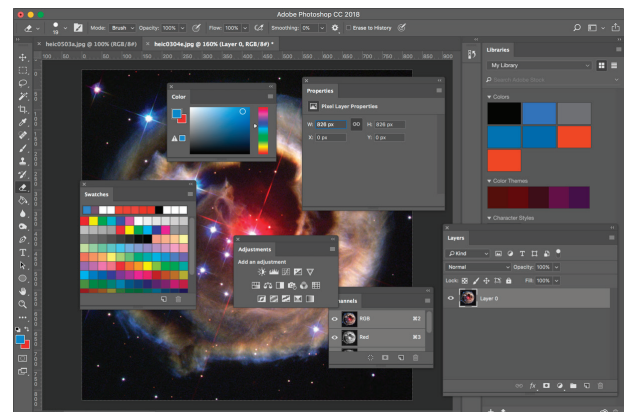

Figure 9 Custom interface layout

2. From the Workspace Switcher menu, select **New Workspace** (**Figure 10**).

   The New Workspace dialog box appears (**Figure 11**).

3. Name your workspace and select the **Capture** options to save in the workspace (Keyboard Shortcuts and Menus).

4. Click **Save**.

   Your new workspace appears in the upper-right corner of the interface in the workspace switcher area (**Figure 12**).

5. Open the workspace switcher menu.

   Even if you change to another type of workspace, at any time you can return to your saved workspace by reselecting it from the workspace switcher menu.

   Photoshop also records any changes you make to your task-specific or saved layouts so that if you switch to a different workspace and then switch back during an editing session, the panels will be exactly where you left them.

   You can restore the saved workspace at any time by choosing **Reset [your named workspace]** from the workspace switcher menu (**Figure 8**).
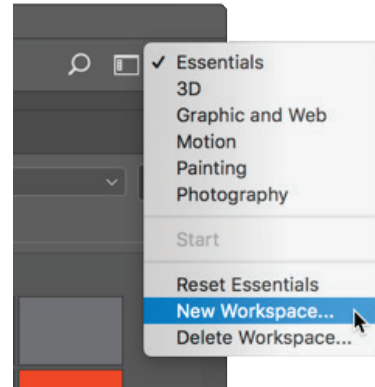

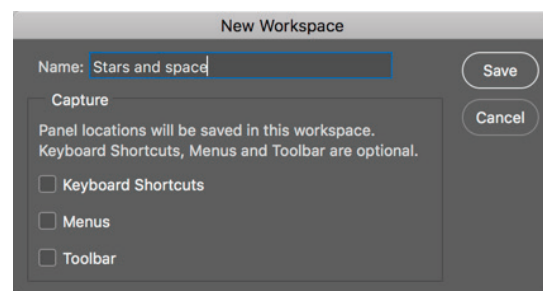**Figure 10** *Creating the New Workspace*
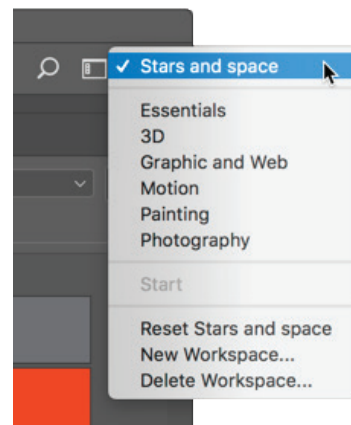

Figure 11 *New Workspace dialog box*

Figure 12 *Reselecting a saved workspace*

Photoshop search

Photoshop features a powerful search function that lets you search across UI elements, documents, Help & learning content, Adobe Stock assets, and more—all from within one dialog box (**Figure 13**). You can search for items right after launching Photoshop or when one or more documents are open.
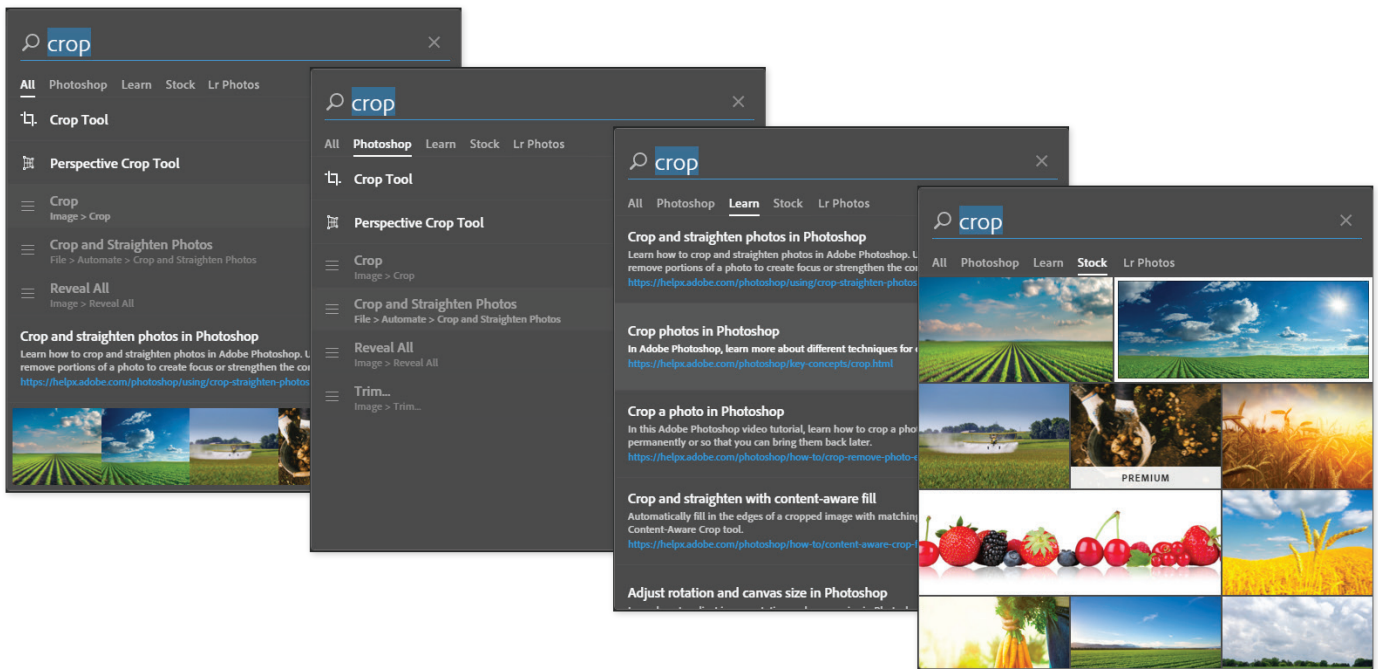

Figure 13 *Photoshop search results dialog box displaying All, Photoshop, Learn, and Stock tabs*

To use Photoshop searching:

1. In Photoshop, click the Search icon in the right side of the Options bar, to the left of the Workspace switcher icon (**Figure 14**).

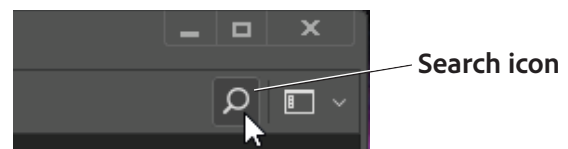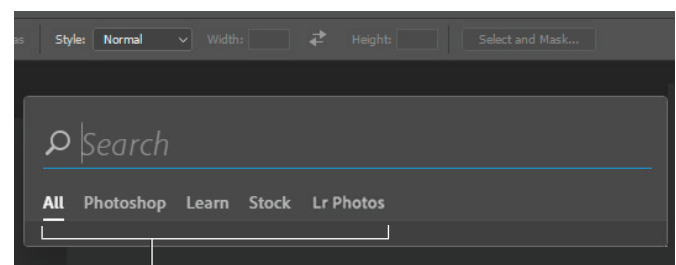2. Enter a search term in the search field that opens (**Figure 15**).

   The results (**Figure 13**) are available across the following results tabs:

   - **All**: displays top results across the three search areas; Photoshop UI elements, Help & Learn content, and Adobe Stock assets

   - **Photoshop**: displays results for UI elements including tools, commands, panels, presets, open documents, layers, etc.

   - **Learn**: shows Photoshop Help/documentation & learning content relevant to the keywords

   - **Stock**: presents Adobe Stock images closely connected to your search terms

   - **Lightroom Photos**: Search your tagged photo collection.

Figure 14 *Launch Photoshop search*

Figure 15 *Search field results tabs*

Opening a file in Photoshop

You can open files using Open command and Open Recent command. You can also open files in Photoshop from Adobe Bridge and Adobe Photoshop Lightroom. Creative Cloud Libraries is another way to access, organize, and share creative assets with other users, and across Adobe desktop and mobile apps. Learn more about Creative Cloud Libraries here.

When opening certain files, such as camera raw and PDF, you specify settings and options in a dialog box before the files completely open in Photoshop. In addition to still images, Photoshop users can open and edit 3D files, video, and image sequence files.
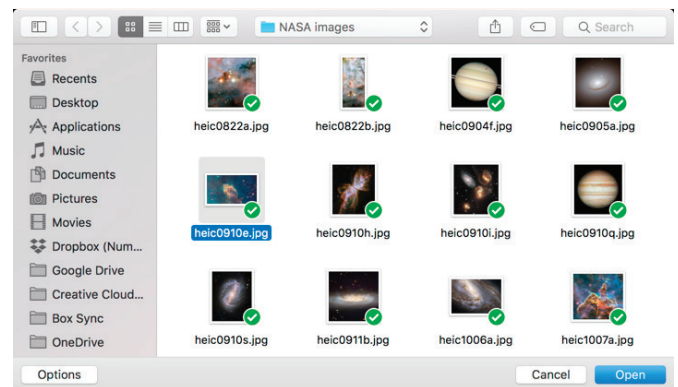
To open a file:

1. Choose **File > Open**.
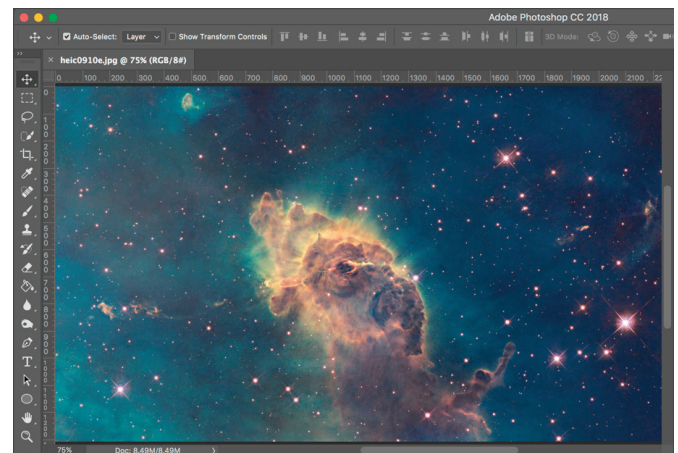
    The Open dialog box appears (**Figure 16**).

2. Browse to the location of the file and select the name of the file you want to open.

3. Click **Open**. In some cases, a dialog box appears, letting you set format-specific options.

    The file opens in its own window, called the document window (**Figure 17**).

4. To close the image file, choose **File > Close** or click the close button on the title bar of the window in which the image appears. (Do not close Photoshop.)

Figure 16 *Open dialog box*

Figure 17 *File open in the document window*

To open a recently used file:

1. Choose **File > Open Recent,** and select a file from the submenu.

How to open a file by using Adobe Bridge

You can also open a file by using Adobe Bridge, a visual file browser that helps take the guesswork out of finding the image file you need. Adobe Bridge opens a separate, full image browser window and works across the Creative Suite software family. The following steps illustrate how to use Bridge to browse and open files.

To open a file by using Adobe Bridge:

1. Choose **File > Browse In Bridge** (**Figure 18**).

   Bridge opens.

2. Use the file navigator in Bridge to browse to the folder where you store your images.

3. Thumbnail previews of the folder contents appear in the **Content** panel of Bridge (**Figure 19**).

   You can sort and filter images by using the **Sort By Filename** menu.
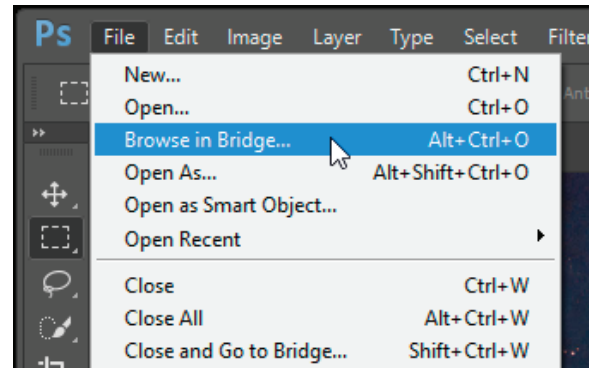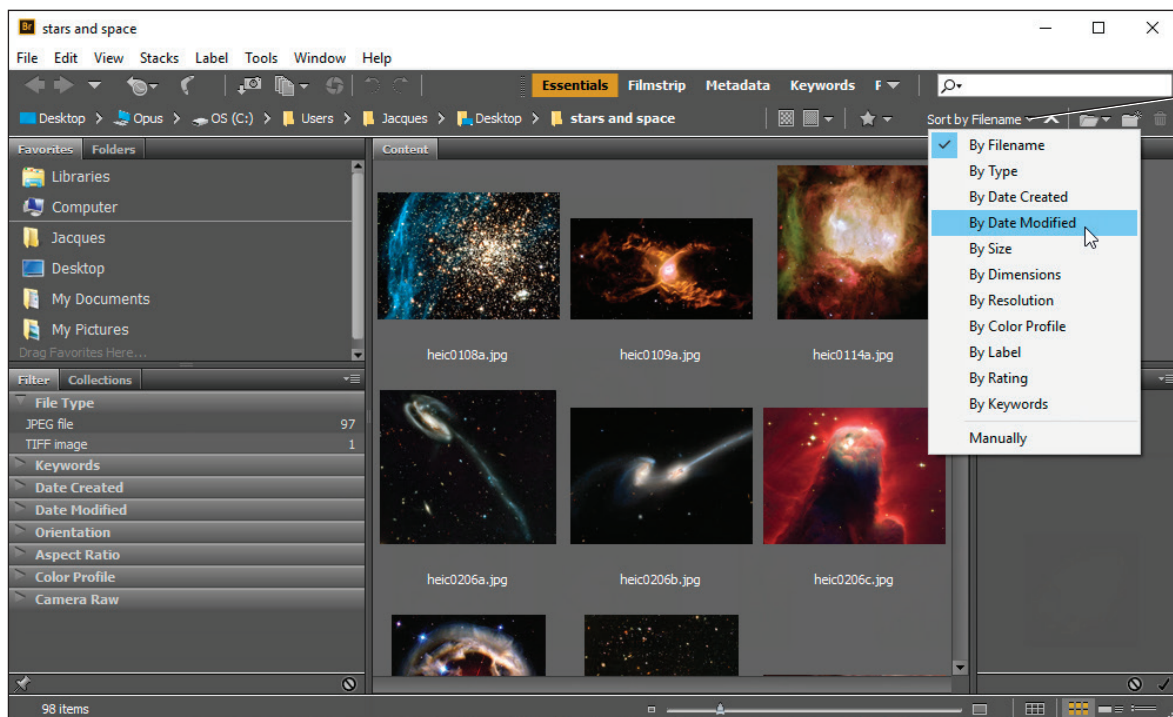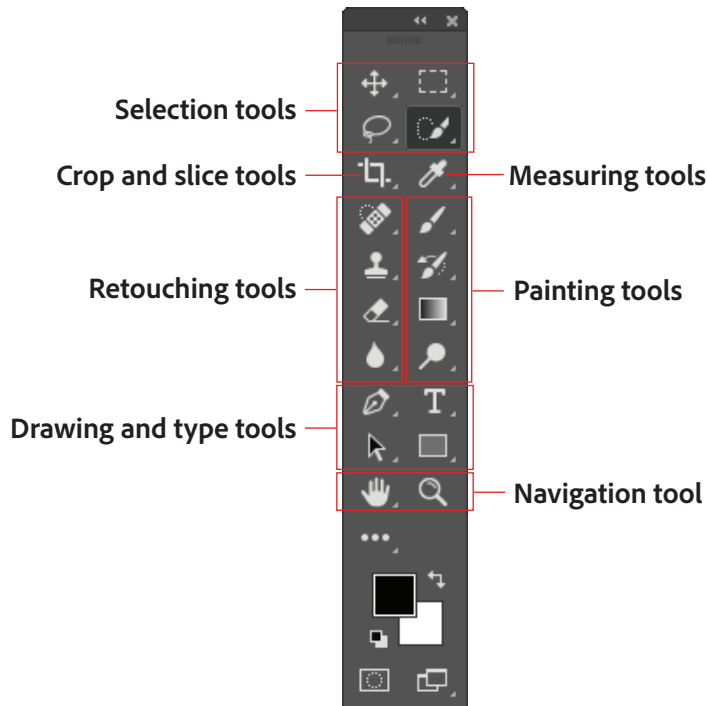

Figure 18 File menu

Figure 19 Adobe Bridge

4. Select a file in the **Content** panel and open the file by double-clicking its thumbnail.

   The image opens in Photoshop.

Photoshop provides an integrated set of tools to help you produce sophisticated graphics for print, web, and mobile viewing (**Figure 20**). Some tools are arranged in groups, with only one tool shown for each group and the other tools in the group hidden behind that tool. A small triangle in the lower right corner of a tool icon is your clue to look for hidden tools. Select a hidden tool by clicking and holding down the small triangle.
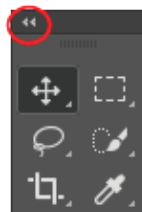

Figure 20 Tools panel

The following section covers the Zoom tool. The process for selecting and using this tool is similar to that for the rest of the tools in the panel.

How to select and use the Zoom tool from the Tools panel

The Tools panel—the long, narrow panel on the left side of the workspace—contains selection tools, painting and editing tools, foreground- and background-color selection boxes, and viewing tools.

To use the Zoom tool:

1. Notice the Tools panel appears as a single column. Click the double-arrow button at the top of the Tools panel to toggle to a double-column view (**Figure 21**). Click the arrow again to return to a single-column panel that uses your screen space more efficiently.

Figure 21 Tools panel

2. Open an image, examine the status bar at the bottom of the image window, and notice the percentage listed on the left end (**Figure 22**).

   This represents the current enlargement view or zoom level of the image.

   Note: This value will also appear in the title bar of the document window.

3. Move the pointer over the Tools panel and hover over the magnifying-glass icon until a tool tip appears, identifying the tool by name and providing its keyboard shortcut (**Figure 23**).

4. Select the **Zoom Tool** either by clicking the Zoom tool button in the Tools panel or by pressing Z, the keyboard shortcut for the Zoom tool.

5. Move the pointer over the image window. Notice that it now appears as a tiny magnifying glass with a plus sign in the center of the glass.

6. Click anywhere in the image window.

   The image zooms in according to a preset percentage level, which replaces the previous value in the status bar. The location you clicked when you used the Zoom tool becomes the center of the enlarged view. If you click again, the zoom advances to the next preset level, up to a maximum of 3200%.
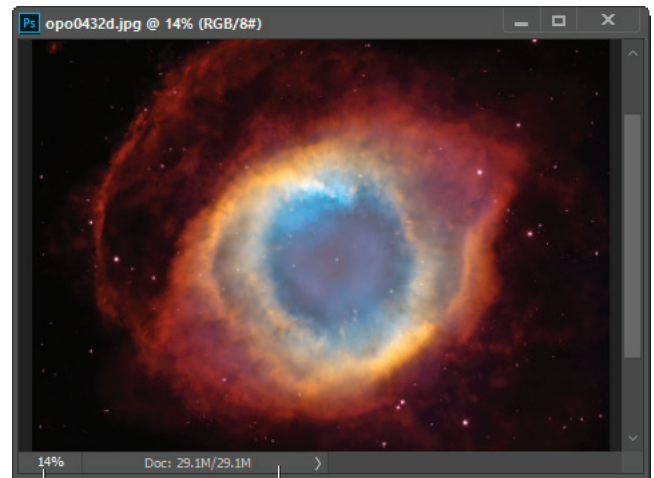
7. Click the Navigator icon on the right side of the workspace (or select **Window > Navigator**) to open the **Navigator** panel.

   Notice a red box is displayed around the zoomed area of the image (**Figure 24**). You can grab the box and move it around the Navigator to locate a specific area of an image.

8. Hold down **Alt** (Windows) or **Option** (Mac OS) so that the Zoom tool pointer appears with a minus sign in the center of the magnifying glass (**Figure 25**), and then click anywhere in the image. Then release the Alt or Option key.
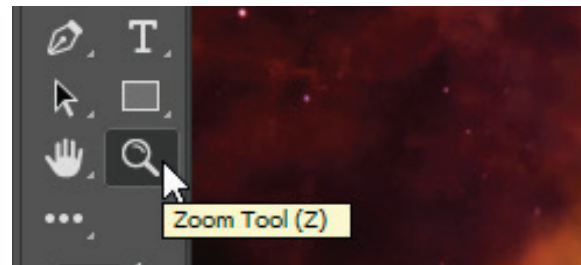
   Now the view zooms out to a lower preset magnification.

   Note: You can also hold the **Alt** (Windows) or **Option** (Mac OS) and use the mouse scroll wheel to zoom in and out of an image.
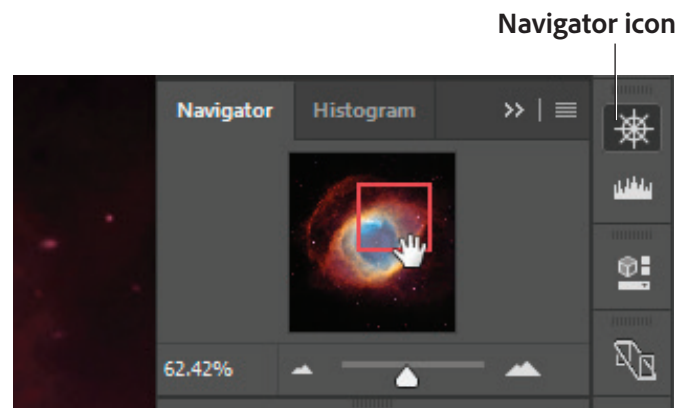

Zoom level   **Status bar**

Figure 22 Zoom level and Status bar in an image

Figure 23 Tool tip

Navigator icon

Figure 24 Navigator panel showing zoom area

Figure 25 Using the Zoom tool with a minus sign

How to scroll around an image with the Hand tool

The Hand tool moves an image within its window. This is useful if you want to see a part of the image that is currently out of view.

To use the Hand tool:

1. Open an image and zoom in until scroll bars appear on the image window.

2. Select the **Hand Tool** from the Tools panel (**Figure 26**). You can also press Shift+H.

3. Using the **Hand Tool**, drag to scroll around and view different parts of the image (**Figure 27**).

Figure 26 Hand tool in the Tools panel

Figure 27 Dragging the Hand tool

Using the Navigator panel

Panning or zooming an image in the Navigator panel is another quick way to make large changes in the zoom level, especially when the exact percentage of magnification is unimportant. It's also a great way to scroll around in an image because the thumbnail shows you exactly what part of the image appears in the image window.

To use the Navigator panel:

1. If the **Navigator** panel is not visible, choose **Window > Navigator**, or click the Navigator icon in the right side of the workspace (**Figure 24**).

2. Locate the slider under the image thumbnail in the Navigator panel and drag it to the right.

   The image in the image window enlarges (**Figure 28**).

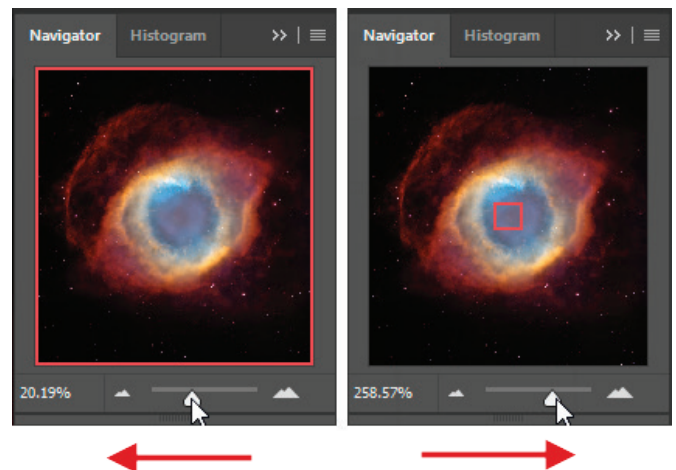3. Now drag the slider to the left and reduce the scale of the image in the image window.

Figure 28 Using the slider to zoom in or out

Images courtesy NASA, and ESA/Hubble, Top 100 Images

For more information

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