

Adobe Studio on Adobe Photoshop CS2

Design and present like a pro using Photoshop layer comps

Layer comps are a handy way to save the appearance and visibility of the layers in an Adobe® Photoshop® CS2 document. Without layer comps, a designer might need to save several versions of a file, each with different variations for the layers. With layer comps, a designer can simply save a layer comp as part of the file.

Even better, Photoshop also allows you to easily turn layer comps into Adobe PDF documents with each layer comp as its own PDF page. These PDF documents can then be used as presentations to show the variations of a document.

Create layer comps

It's very simple to create a layer comp for a Photoshop document. Start by setting the appearance for the layers in the document. This includes applying any adjustment layers, layer styles, blend modes and opacity settings for the layers. You can also set the x/y position of the artwork on a layer.

Once you have set the layer artwork to the way you want it, open the Layer Comp palette and click the Create New Layer Comp icon at the bottom of the palette. Use the New Layer Comp dialog box to name the layer comp as well as set the options.

Set the layer comp options

The New Layer Comp dialog box gives you several options for what information is stored as part of the layer comp. As expected, the option for Visibility controls whether the layer's visibility setting is part of the layer comp. In addition, the visibility setting controls whether the blend modes and opacity are saved as part of the layer comp.

The Position setting stores the x/y coordinates of the artwork on each layer. This allows you to move artwork to different places and store the position as part of the layer comp. The Position option does not, however, save the z-level stacking order of layers within the Layers palette. This means that if you drag a layer to a new level, or combine layers into a layer set, those changes cannot be changed back by switching to a previously saved layer comp.

The Appearance (Layer Style) setting stores the settings for any of the layer styles: Drop Shadow, Inner Shadow, Outer Glow, Inner Glow, Bevel and Emboss, Satin, Color Overlay, Gradient Overlay, Pattern Overlay, and Stroke.

Tip: As you work with layer comps, you should get in the habit of naming each layer comp with a name that is descriptive of the state of the file. For instance, if you have moved text to the bottom of the artwork, you would want to name the layer comp accordingly.

However, there is an additional setting in the dialog box that can make working with layer comps even more useful. The Comment field lets you add messages remind you what each layer comp stands for. The triangle next to the name of the layer comp lets you display or hide the comment.

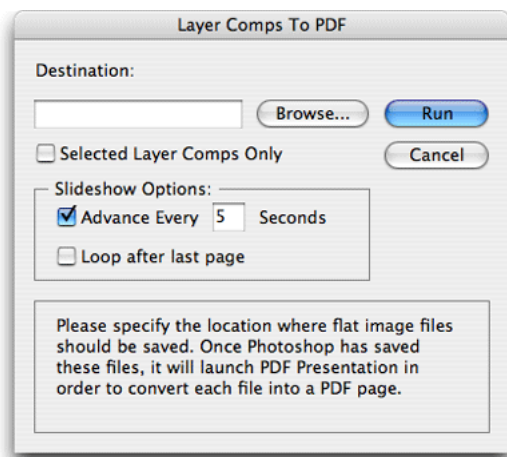


Each of the variations in the televisions comes from simply changing which layer comp is active.

Turn layer comps into a PDF presentation

The joys of working with layer comps aren't limited to just working inside Photoshop. My favorite feature for layer comps is the ability to export the layer comps as individual pages in a PDF document. With this feature I can quickly turn a set of layer comps into a PDF presentation that I can send to a client for review and approval.

Once you have created all the layer comps for a document, choose File > Scripts > Layer Comp To PDF. The controls in the Layer Comps To PDF dialog box are pretty straightforward. The Browse button lets you choose where the files and final PDF will be created. Click the option for Selected Layer Comps only to convert only the selected layers comps into the final PDF.



The Layer Comps to PDF dialog box lets you choose the options for the PDF that contains the layer comps as individual pages.

The Slideshow Options let you control how the PDF will be presented. The Advance Every [x] Seconds option lets you create a self-running presentation that automatically advances through the pages. This option is very helpful if you want to send the final PDF to someone who may not know how to move through a PDF document. Of course, if you don't want to advance the pages automatically, you can use the keyboard to move forward and backward in the presentation. The Loop After Last Page option turns the presentation into a never-ending show. This option is not recommended except for kiosk displays.

Finally, click the Run button to create the PDF. Photoshop automatically takes each of the layer comps and turns it into a separate, flattened image. Then, the flattened images are assembled together into a PDF. The PDF is set to open automatically in the full screen mode. This mode hides all the toolbars and menus in Acrobat and displays only the pages of the PDF. As you can see, it doesn't take much to convert layer comps into a PDF presentation.

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