



Learn about all the new features added to the enhanced Properties panel in Photoshop CC 2020, and why the Properties panel is quickly becoming a one-stop shop for the options you need the most!

Written by Steve Patterson. Whenever Adobe releases a new version of Photoshop, the new features get all the attention while improvements to existing features often go unnoticed. But if speed, efficiency and ease-of-use are important to you, then you should definitely keep an eye on Photoshop's **Properties panel**, now greatly improved as of CC 2020.

The Properties panel is where you'll find controls and options for whichever layer is selected in the Layers panel. And the options change depending on the kind of layer you're working with. Up until recently, the options available in the panel have been rather limited. But Photoshop CC 2020 adds so much more to the Properties panel that you may wonder if other interface elements, like the Options Bar, are headed for extinction.

Comparing the Properties panel in CC 2020 vs 2019

To see how much the Properties panel has improved as of Photoshop CC 2020, we'll compare it with the options found in the CC 2019 version of the panel as we look at the three kinds of layers that have received the biggest updates. These are the Background layer, pixel layers and type layers. You can follow along by opening any image. I'll use [this image](#) from Adobe Stock:



Where to find the Properties panel

The Properties panel is part of Photoshop's default workspace known as **Essentials**. So if you're still using the default layout, then the Properties panel should be available on your screen.

If it's not, then you can open the Properties panel by going up to the **Window** menu in the Menu Bar and choosing **Properties**. But a checkmark beside its name means that the panel is already open, and choosing it from the menu while it's open will close the panel:

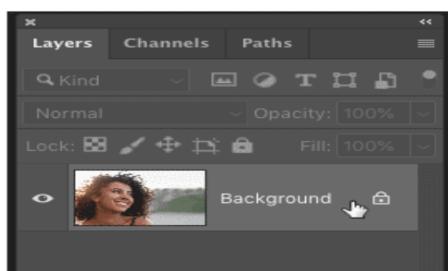


Going to Window > Properties.

Background layer options in the Properties panel

Let's start by looking at the options available in the Properties panel whenever the Background layer in the [Layers panel](#) is selected.

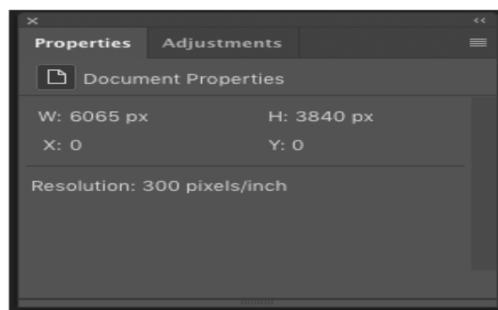
The [Background layer](#) serves as the background for your document. When we open an image into Photoshop, the image becomes the background, which is why it appears on the Background layer. So you might expect that with the Background layer selected, the Properties panel would show options related to the document itself:



Selecting the Background layer.

The Document Properties in CC 2019

But as recently as Photoshop CC 2019, the Properties panel showed no options at all for the Background layer. All it showed were a few details about the document, like its current [width](#), [height](#) and [resolution](#). And none of this information could be changed, at least not from the Properties panel itself:



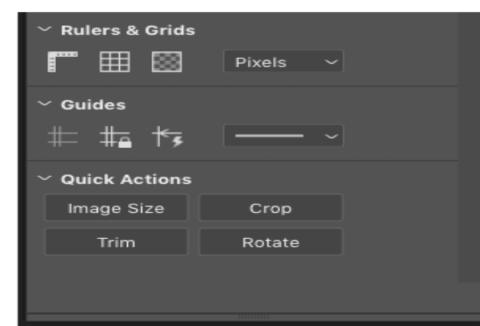
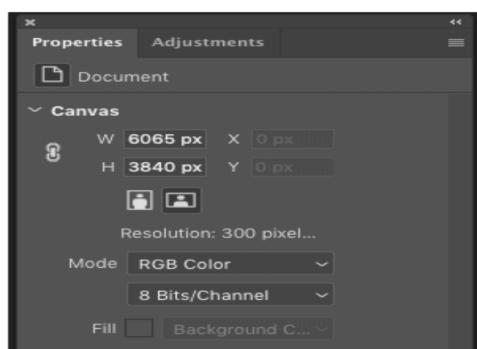
The Document Properties in CC 2019.

The Document Properties in CC 2020

Fast forward to Photoshop CC 2020 and suddenly the Properties panel becomes incredibly useful. In fact, with the Background layer selected, there are now so many things we can do with the document directly from the Properties panel that Adobe divided the options into groups.

There's a **Canvas** group, a group for **Rulers & Grids**, and one for **Guides**. There's also a new feature called **Quick Actions**. You can twirl any of the groups open or closed by clicking the arrow to the left of its name.

I've split the Properties panel into two columns here so we can see all of the options at once. And one important note is that none of these options are exclusive to the Properties panel. At least, not for the kinds of [layers](#) we'll be looking at in this tutorial. Every option is also available elsewhere in Photoshop. The benefit with the Properties panel is that it combines the most useful options from [various other panels](#) and dialog boxes into a single, convenient and time-saving location:



The Document Properties in CC 2020.

The Pixel Layer Properties in CC 2020

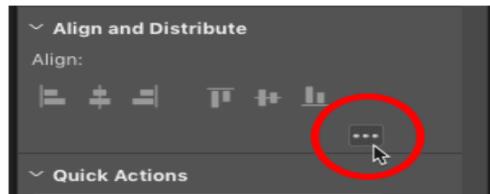
Let's fast forward to Photoshop CC 2020 where once again we see big improvements. And again, there are now so many options in the Properties panel for working with pixel layers that Adobe divided them into groups. We have a **Transform** group, an **Align and Distribute** group, and a **Quick Actions** group just like the one we saw when the Background layer was selected:



The Pixel Layer Properties in CC 2020.

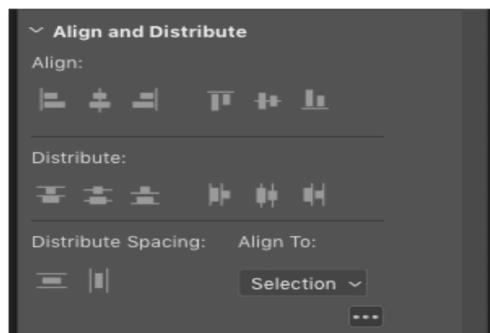
Expanding the Align and Distribute group

In fact, there are even more options available for pixel layers than what we see initially. In the Align and Distribute group, only the basic **Align** options are shown by default. But if you click the **ellipsis** icon (the 3 dots):



Clicking the ellipsis to expand the group.

You'll expand the group to show the **Distribute** options as well:

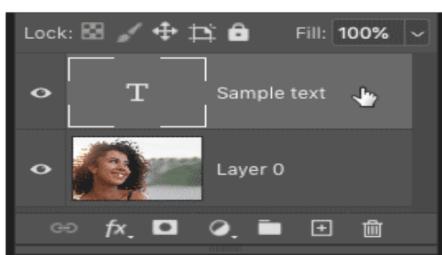


The expanded Align and Distribute group.

Type layer options in the Properties panel

So far, we've seen that the Properties panel in Photoshop CC 2020 now includes more options than ever before when the Background layer or a pixel layer is selected in the Layers panel. But the biggest improvement is with type layers.

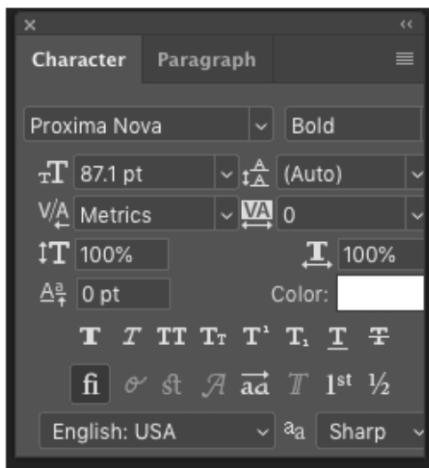
Go ahead and add some text to your document using the Type Tool. Any text will work. And then in the Layers panel, click on the type layer to select it:



Selecting the type layer.

The Character and Paragraph panels

The Advanced button opened Photoshop's **Character** and **Paragraph** panels which are separate from the Properties panel. The Character panel added more options like kerning, baseline shift, and horizontal and vertical scaling, plus common type options like Faux Bold, Faux Italic and All Caps:



The Character panel.

The Type Layer Properties in CC 2020

But in Photoshop CC 2020, every option in both the Character and Paragraph panels (which are still available) has been copied over to the Properties panel. And the panel has once again been divided into groups. For type layers, we have a **Transform** group, a **Character** group, a **Paragraph** group, a **Type Options** group, and a **Quick Actions** group.

I've split the Properties panel into two columns so we can see all of the options at once. If some of these options are missing from your Properties panel, click the **ellipsis icon** in the Character, Paragraph and Type Options groups to expand them:

