

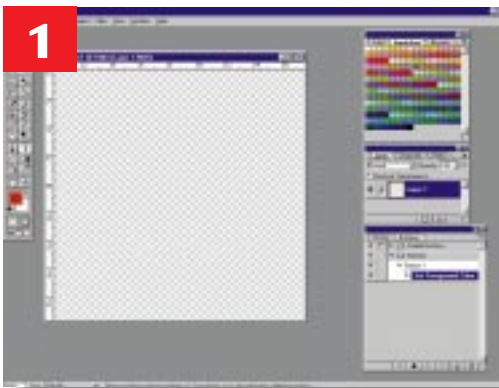


Button it!

Creating web buttons in Adobe Photoshop 5 — Ken McMahon shows you how.

Photoshop 5 makes creating buttons for your web site a quick and simple task. Layer effects enable you to add drop shadow and bevel effects both to the button itself and its text, and Photoshop 5's much improved text handling makes it easier to subsequently edit that text. The actions palette provides the means to record and edit scripts so that once you have a basic design in place, automatically producing variations becomes little more than a button-pushing exercise.

1 First, we need to open a few palettes so that everything we need is to hand [Fig 1]. From the view menu select show swatches, show layers and



show actions, then from the popout menu on the swatches palette select replace swatches and, in the browser, find the file called web safe colours.ico — it should be in the folder called photoshop /goodies/colour palettes.

From the actions palette popout select new set and call it 'buttons', then select new action and call it button one. You can assign a function key to the action if you like, and a colour to differentiate it from other actions in the palette. Press the record button to save the settings: every step you take from now on is recorded in the actions palette in the button 1 script.

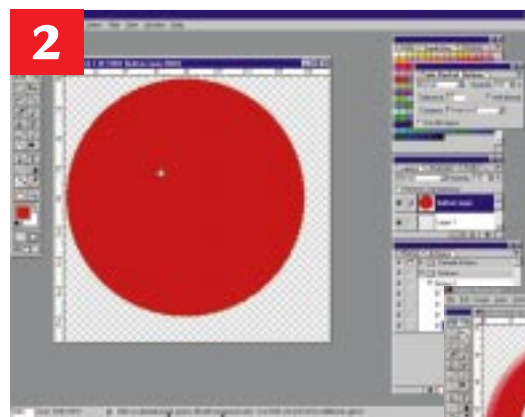
Next, select a colour for the button by clicking on one of the swatches — notice

that the first action appears in the actions palette as 'set foreground colour'.

If you make a mistake, just press the stop button in the actions palette and click on the wastebasket icon to delete the unwanted actions, then click the record button again.

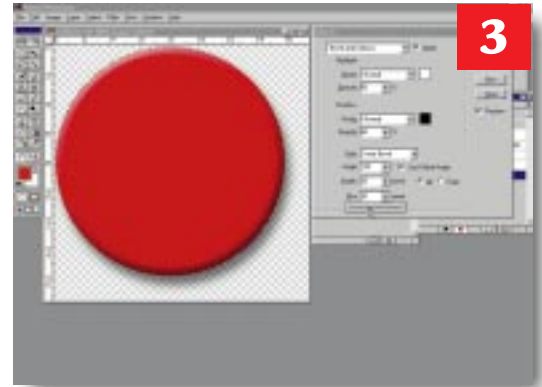
2 The next step is to create a new document slightly larger than the button to accommodate a drop shadow. We are going to create a circular-shaped button, but you will be able to edit this later on to create different sized, shaped and coloured buttons. Select file/new and create an RGB document. We've made ours 500 x 500 pixels. The finished button will be smaller, but it's much easier to work at this larger size and then downsample the image prior to saving.

3 Click and hold the marquee selector tool until the flyout appears. Select the ellipse tool, then double-click on it so that the marquee options palette appears. Select a fixed-size marquee of 450 pixels in both dimensions. Click and drag to position the circle selection in the top left of the window [Fig 2]. Select new



layer from the layer palette popout and call it button layer, then fill the circle selection using the paint bucket.

4 Now it's time to add the drop shadow. Select effects/drop shadow from the layer menu and experiment with the setting until you get the desired effect. To produce this subtle drop shadow use normal mode, opacity 60 angle 120,



distance 20, blur 20, intensity 0. Most of these effects are measured in pixels so if your image is smaller you'll need lower settings to achieve the same effect.

We can now add a bevelled edge without even leaving the effects dialogue box. From the pulldown menu, select bevel and emboss [Fig 3], and check the apply box. Once again you will need to experiment to get the best results, but for a realistic effect the angle and degree of the effect need to be similar to the drop shadow. By checking the global angle box you can ensure consistent lighting for all the layer effects.

5 That's our button finished, now it's time to add the text [Fig 4]. Select the type tool and click somewhere in the middle of the button. Type your text into the box and select a typeface, colour and size. If you cannot see the type on your button, make sure the preview box is



checked. Even with the type dialogue box open you can pick up and position the

type so that it's exactly where you want it. We've also tracked this in by -50.

6 You can add layer effects to text in the same way as we did to the button. Select effects/inner shadow from the layer effects menu [Fig 5]. In this case it works well with the default settings so all you need to do is click OK. Bear in



mind that all these effects remain editable so you can go back and change them at any time. Don't be tempted to overdo it with text effects, as they may render the type unreadable when the image is downsampled and the strokes are only a few pixels wide.

7 Finally, select image size and downsample the button to the required final size: save the button as button template.psd and click the stop button on the actions palette. Now, to check your script, close the original button and create a new document at the same size. Before you play the script, turn on the dialogue toggle in the actions palette next to the final save action. This will bring up the save dialogue box at this point, allowing you to change the file-name. Select 'button 1' in the actions palette and press the play button. If all goes well, in about five seconds you should see a brand new button exactly the same as your original, with the save dialogue box open and waiting for you to enter a new filename.

8 So far so good, but no amount of quick buttons is any good if they all look identical. Now we will edit the button 1 action so we can make changes along the way as the button is automatically produced. First, it would be useful to have the document automatically

created for us. Make sure button 1 is selected in the actions palette, press record and create a new document exactly as before, then press the stop recording button. The 'make new document' action now appears at the bottom of our script. To move it to the top, just pick it and drag it. The revised

script will now create a button from scratch without the need for you to create a new document.

9 The easiest way to modify the button maker is to select a new foreground colour before running the script, and then uncheck the item toggle — the one with

the tick — in the actions palette. The script will then use the foreground colour for the button fill.

However, the thing you are most likely to want to change is the text. Just check



the dialogue toggle next to the 'make text' layer action [Fig 6] and the script will halt at this point for you to enter and edit the new text.

10 By editing the script you can make all kinds of variations. Select the button 1 action and duplicate it, call the new script 'lozenge button'.

Select the Set Selection step and press the record button. Create a new lozenge-shaped selection [Fig 7] by first using the rectangular marquee, then adding to either end, using the ellipse marquee with the shift key depressed.



Press 'stop recording' and delete the original set selection step which is above the new one. You will need to add an additional cropping action to this script as you will have loads of redundant transparent space at the top and bottom.

You can continue to duplicate and modify scripts in this way to produce whatever kinds of button you need.

One last thing you will need to consider is file format. By exporting your buttons as gifs you can keep the file size small and make the background transparent. The drawback is that you do

not have sufficient colours to render subtle variations — like those in our drop shadow and bevel effects — very well.

An alternative is to save in JPEG format. File sizes will still be small and you will have no worries about quality, but you will not be able to set a transparent background colour, which means that you need to set the button background to the same colour as your

web page background.

Once you have decided on a format, record the save operation with the required compression and other settings on the end of your script and delete the existing save action.

• There will be more tips on using Photoshop 5 in next month's Workshop.

PCW CONTACTS

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