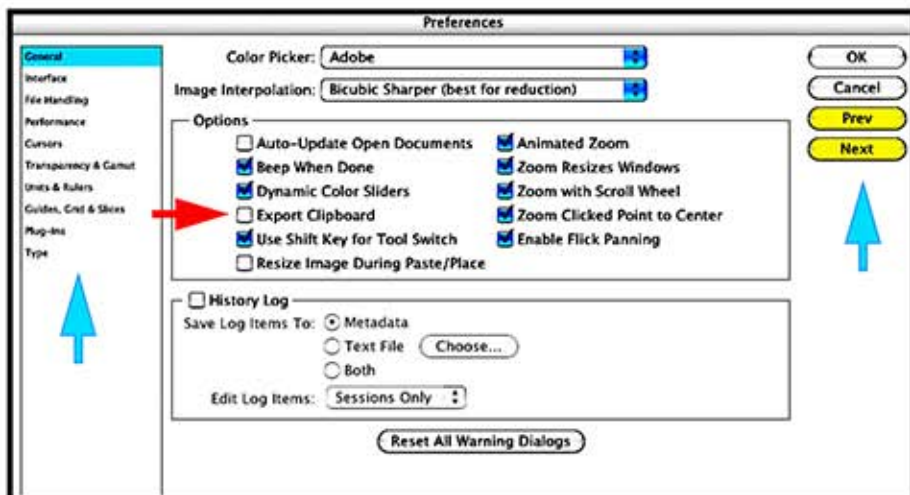
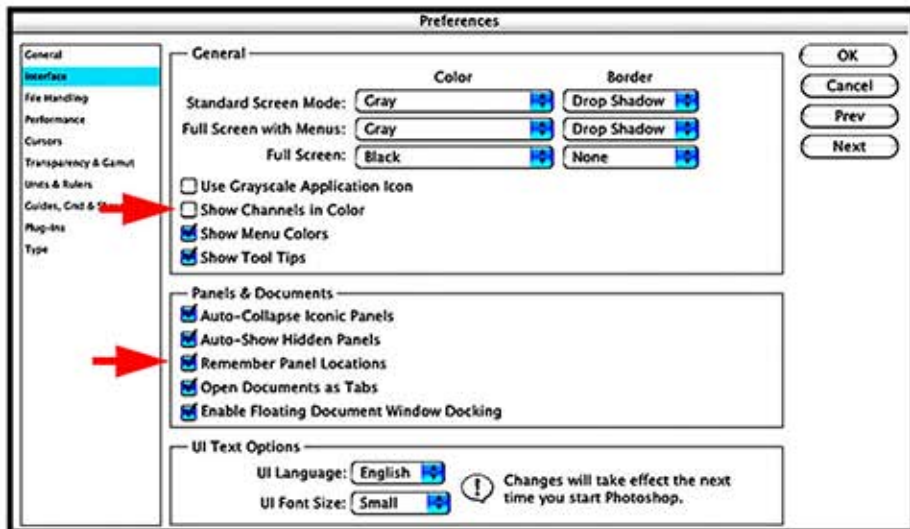


Photoshop Preferences and Color Settings CS4

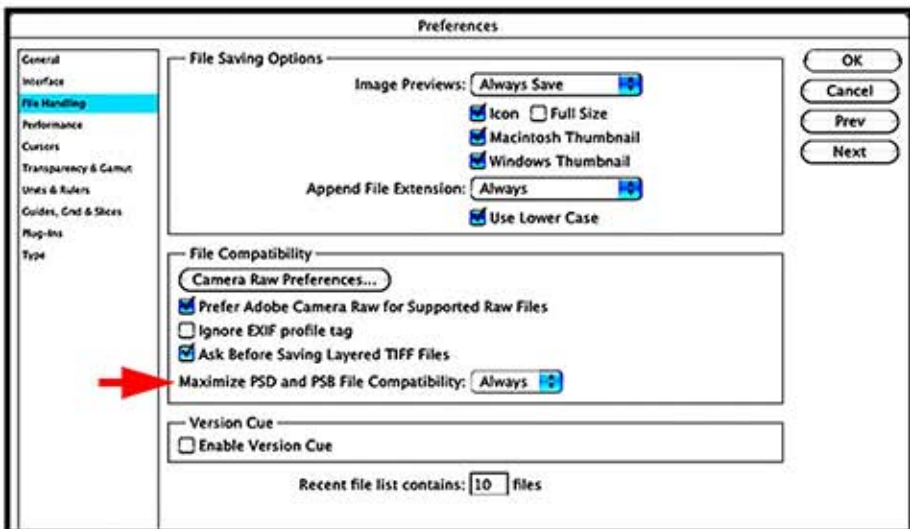
Everyone works differently in Photoshop but we can all benefit from efficiencies in how we work. Individual preferences are neither right nor wrong, just varied. It favors us however, to work in a way that suits us best. I list my preferences below (in CS4) merely as a guide. It is neither gospel nor the only way to proceed. Use it as a starting point. To get started, in Windows from the main Photoshop Menu go to: **Edit > Preferences**. In Mac: **Photoshop > Preferences**.



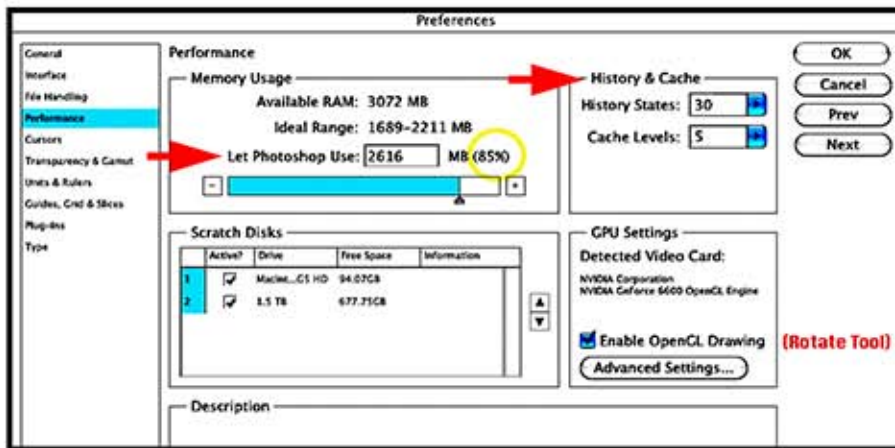
When you open Preferences, the first column on the left lists all the different windows available. Two buttons on the right, "Previous" and "Next" help you navigate among them. The default preferences that come installed on the program are fine for the most part. However, in the first window, "General", I prefer the Bicubic Sharper option for "Image Interpolation" for my Free Transform operations. The next check boxes are pretty straightforward as to what they do. I always uncheck "Export Clipboard" as it consumes memory. "Flick Panning" is a new Move Tool animation feature in CS4, and that affects memory too but I like using it. The "History Log" is for storing your history in descriptive data not images.



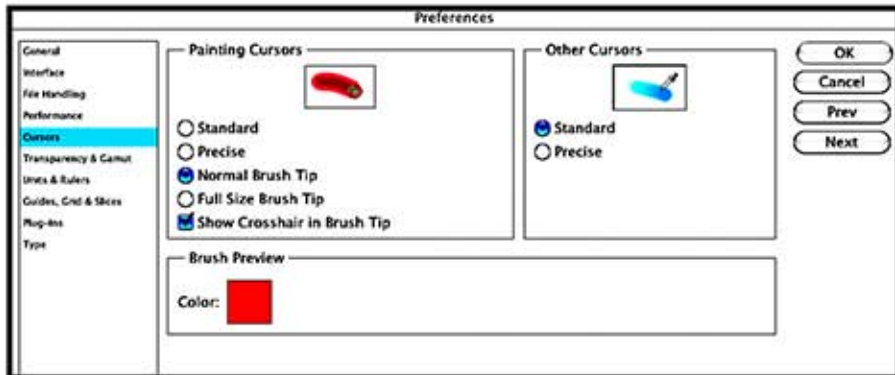
The next window "Interface" starts at the top with the look of the screen which is fine as is. In the series of check boxes below I think it's important *not* to show channels in color when in the Channels panel. "Menu Colors" are cosmetic but I like them. "Gray Scale Application Icon" refers to the color of the Photoshop logo as it appears in the program (silly). I check "Tool Tips" when the program is new then uncheck it later. I also like to have my Panel (formerly "Pal-ette") locations remain where they are when I exit the program so I can pick up where I left off next time. I also like the "Tab" system of working with multiple open files. If you don't, here's where you turn it off. "Floating Document Window Docking" goes with it hand in hand.



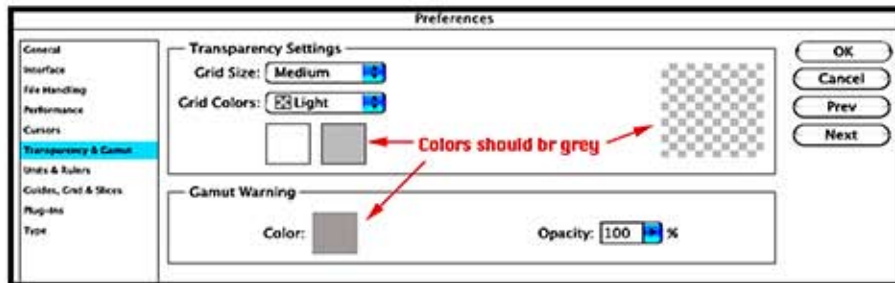
Under "File Handling" you can leave the "File Saving Options" as set. Under "File Compatibility", Camera Raw Preferences as set are fine with me. Although Tiffs can support layers I prefer to keep my layered files as PSDs and flatten my Tiffs so I can tell at a glance in my directory what's the working file and what's the finished file. "Maximize PSD and PSB File Compatibility" is probably a good thing to do to avoid any future conflicts in opening or viewing files in a browser even though it consumes a little more Hard Disk space. Choose "Always" to avoid being pestered with another dialog box. I don't use "Version Cue" but I do occasionally rely on my "Recent File List" and 10 has been enough.



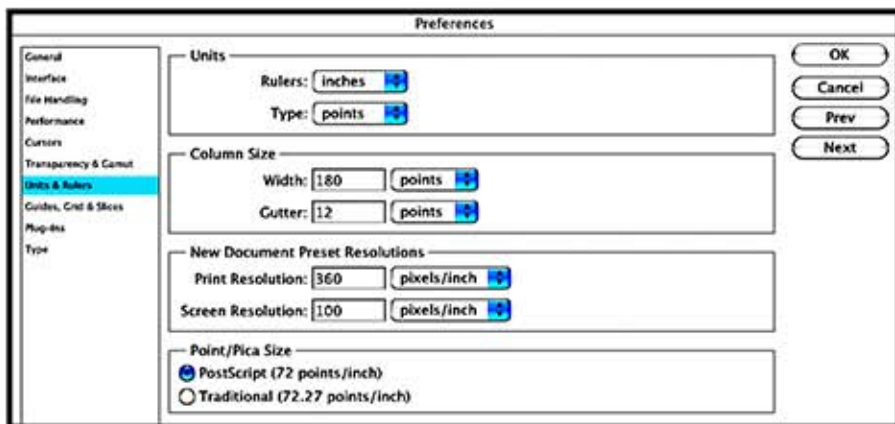
Adjusting preferences in the **Performance** window can speed up your program. Available RAM of 3GB (3000MB) is considered minimum. If all you are running is Photoshop you can allocate up to 85-90% to run it (you need to save some for the System). "History States" can go up to 999 but that will slow performance. Ask yourself if you need to go back that many states. If you do, maybe you should start over. Enabling Open Gl Drawing relates to the new Smooth Zoom and Pan function, Pixel Grid, and the Screen Rotate Tool. These are all slick features but they do take a bite out of performance and aren't essential. Don't enable these if you are low on memory.



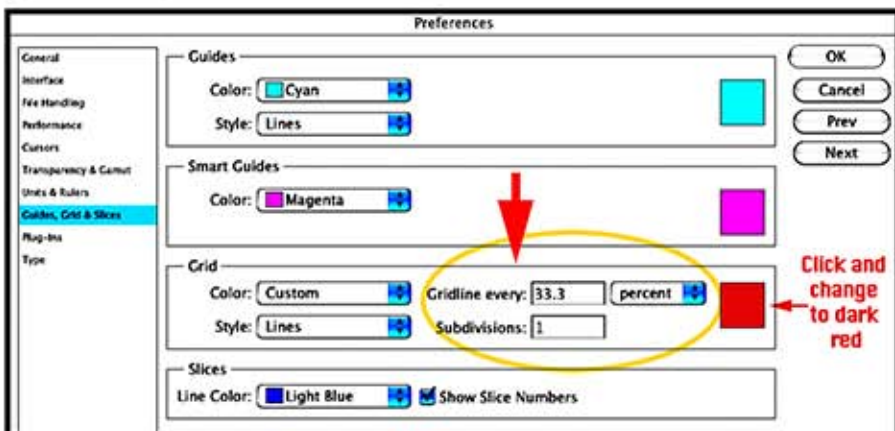
Cursor preferences are important. You need to see the active tip of your cursor in order to have the most control in your retouching. I prefer the combination shown. A "Normal Brush Tip" does not include the full overspray that a "Full Size Brush Tip" would but gives a better indication of the actual effect. "Precise" settings whenever you see them simply show cross hairs and sacrifice visual effect for pinpoint accuracy. The color box is for the Brush Editing Preview mode which I seldom use.



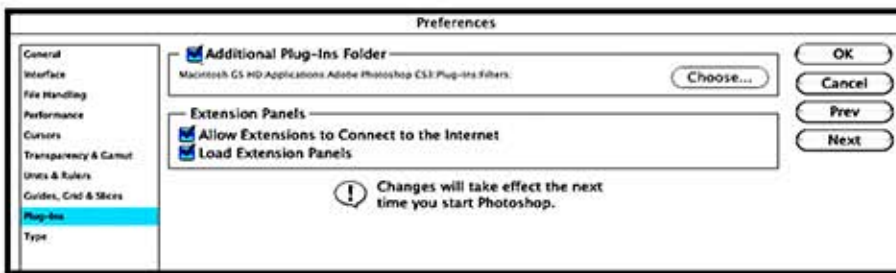
Transparency and Gamut settings allow you to choose the color for the "Transparency" grid effect (how Photoshop indicates that a layer is empty) and the "Out-of-Gamut" warning for color. Medium grey works fine for me for both.



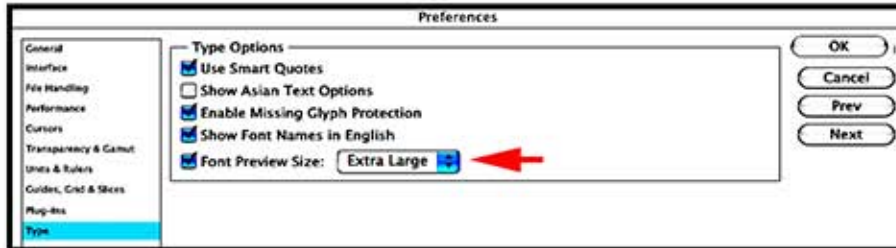
Units and Rulers for the most part can be left as set. If you prefer your "Rulers" to be in something other than inches such as millimeters or percentages then you can always just right-click one of your rulers when in Photoshop and choose your units from the contextual list there. Select Rulers from the View menu in Photoshop or type: **Ctrl./Command R**.



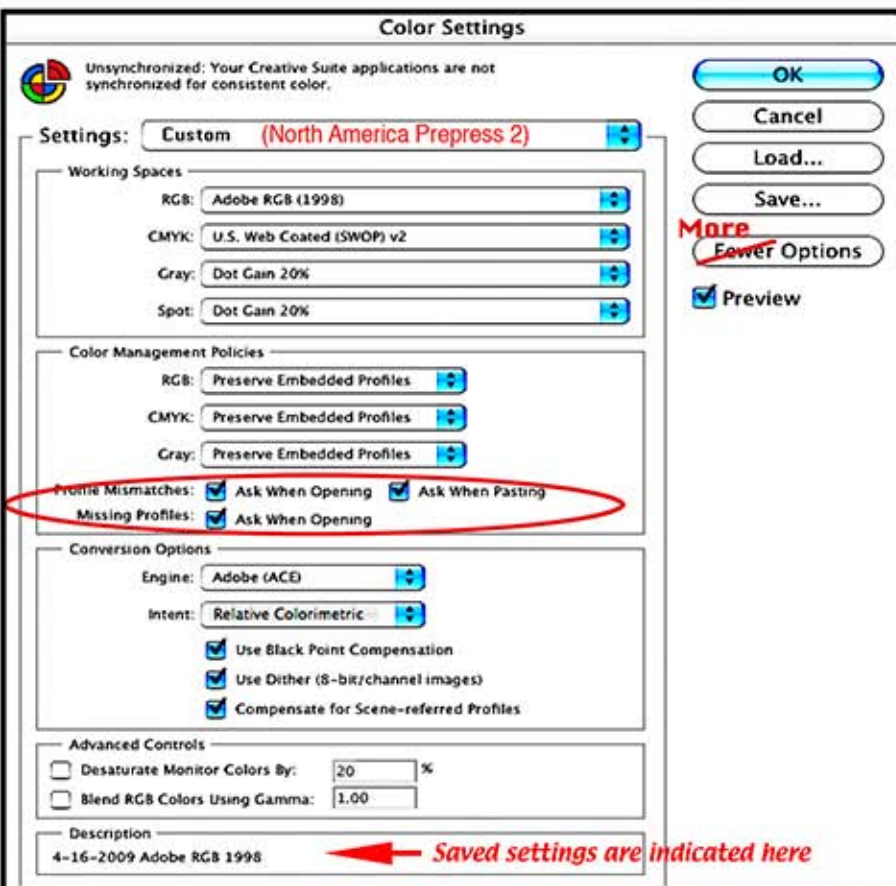
Guides, Grids, & Slices lets you choose colors for these various elements. ("Slices" are for building web sites only). To choose or change a color click on the color box and you will be taken to the Color Picker where you can choose your own color. *The following tip may be worth the price of admission if you are a student of composition.* If you would like to superimpose a "Rule of Thirds" grid over any picture apply the grid settings listed at the left. Then, when in Photoshop with an image open, go to: **View>Show>Grid** or **Ctrl./Command + (apostrophe)** and check your center of interest's location. Turn off the Grid with: **Ctrl./Com. + H**, or from the menu.



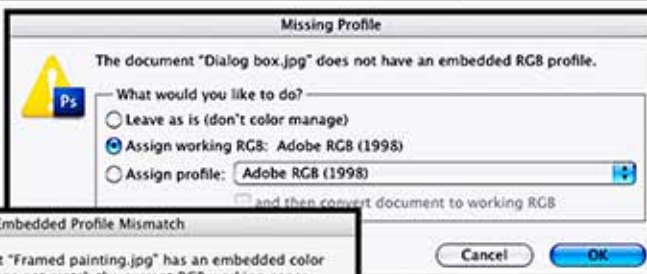
Not much to change here from the factory settings. Leave as set. If you keep your Plug-Ins in a separate folder (which is a good idea as a backup), and want to draw from that too, select and choose where that is.



Most of the Type preferences are fine as set with a couple of interesting options. Checking "Smart Quotes" will give you true quote marks as just shown versus "inch marks" like this. If you spend time choosing fonts, you might want to try a larger "Font Preview Size" such as "Extra Large" which I have grown fond of.



Color Settings are important in enabling you to use the full range of colors available to you. Not respecting the differences between them becomes an issue if you want your prints and projected digital outputs to match what you see on your monitor. Color Settings are accessed via **Edit>Color Settings** in the Photoshop Menu Bar. An images range of colors and borders are called its Color Space and Gamut. Adobe RGB 1998 is a larger space preferred by most fine art photographers and one of the best spaces for printing. sRGB (IEC61966-2.1) known simply as sRGB is a smaller but more popular space preferred by commercial and consumer labs, the web, email, and LCD projectors. In the Color Settings dialog at the left, Photoshop is asking you to make a choice as to your working color space. My recommendation is to use the settings here for Adobe RGB (1998). To plug these in, find and choose "North America Prepress 2" under the "Settings" pull down arrow at the top and you should be good to go. With the "More Options" button activated the hidden settings are fine also. Note, if you deviate from a single setting (such as turning off the check boxes circled to avoid being asked every time a document opens that it is not in your space), the words: "North America Prepress 2" will change to



Since Photoshop can only work in one color space at a time, these are two of the warning dialogs which you might see if a document opens that is not in your color space. Reading the dialogs is explanatory in helping you to make an informed choice. Converting or assigning a new profile to a document remaps its colors to that space. The changes are somewhat imperceptible at the time but the end effect can be very noticeable. Sending an RGB file instead of an sRGB file through the web or to an LCD projector can dull or mute its colors.



When it comes to color gamuts it is always best to start big and work your way down. So I suggest you convert your RAW images to Adobe RGB, and then convert to sRGB when needed for a particular purpose. As always, this article isn't intended to be a thoroughly exhaustive study on the subject of Preferences and Color Spaces, merely a stating point for your further explorations.