

# Loading Actions – Photoshop CS2

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## 1 What are Actions?

Photoshop actions are basically scripts that can automate simple or complex processes. Think of them as time savers. They'll give you the ability to do several editing steps with a single click.

They consist of regular Photoshop commands and when executed, it's like the computer is selecting all of the options and doing all of the clicking for you... very handy and efficient.

For the most part, actions are made up of steps that you'll want to complete on a routine basis like creating borders, adding vignette, or putting a signature stamp on your images. The limits are nearly endless and they can quickly become VERY complex.

## 2 Where Can I Get Some Action?

Actions can be found online in several different locations. Doing a [google search](#) for something like "photoshop actions" will produce more hits than Cheech and Chong could ever manage.

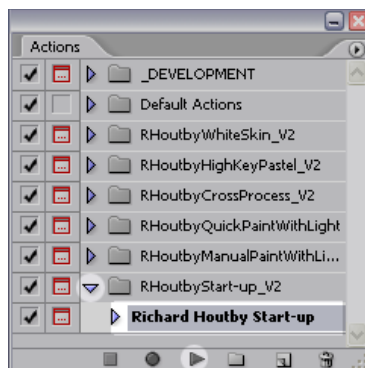
A good place to start is at [ActionCentral](#) but don't stop there. Oh, there's always [my site](#) too!

## 3 OK, So I Have Some Actions... Now What?

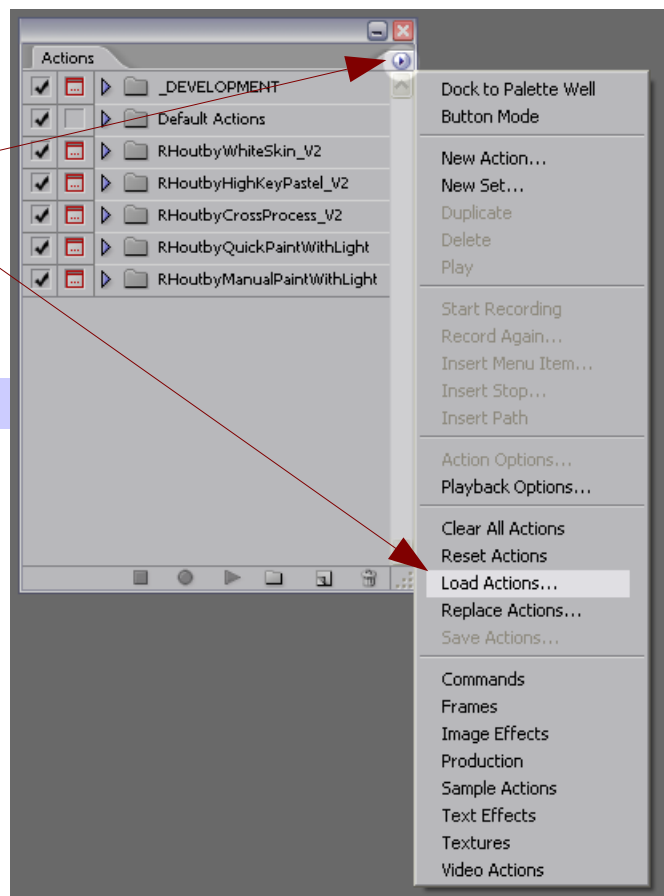
1. Load Adobe Photoshop
2. Find your Actions Palette. If you can't find it, hit ALT+F9 a few times.
3. Click the little arrow button at the top right and a menu will pop up.
4. Click the "Load Actions..." menu option
5. Browse to the file you downloaded and click OK. Now it's in the list.

## 4 Executing

1. Expand the folder that was added
2. Click on the action you want to run
3. Click on the play button to start the action



**Figure 2: Starting an Action**



**Figure 1: Adding Actions to the action palette**

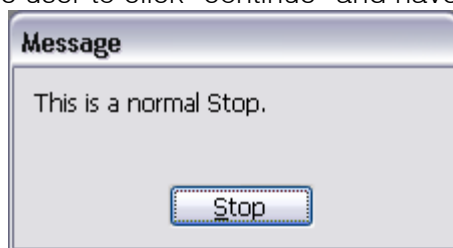
## 5 When the Action is Running

Some actions are completely hands free... you don't have to do anything except wait for it to finish. It would be nice if they were all like that, but they're not.

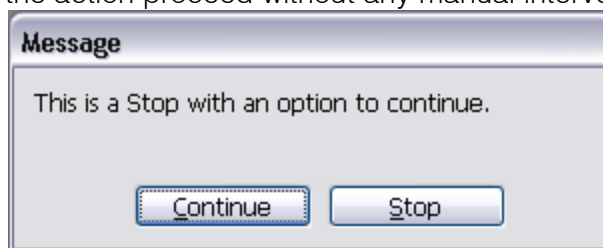
Sometimes actions involve complex steps that require manual intervention for things like masking, tweaking settings, or using special tools (burning/dodging/cloning/healing/etc...). Obviously, when judgment or creativity is required, you're going to have to take control.

(enter Photoshop action stops)

During the Action, you can have what Adobe calls a “stop.” This is basically a message that will pop up with information or instructions. There are 2 main types (Figure 3 & 4)... one that will show some text and then stop the action execution... and another that will show the message and allow the user to click “continue” and have the action proceed without any manual intervention.



**Figure 3: Normal Stop**



**Figure 4: Stop with option to Continue**

When a stop message is displayed, you can't perform any other functions until you acknowledge the message by clicking either “Continue” or “Stop.”

If you click “Continue,” the action will proceed to execute the remaining steps in order.

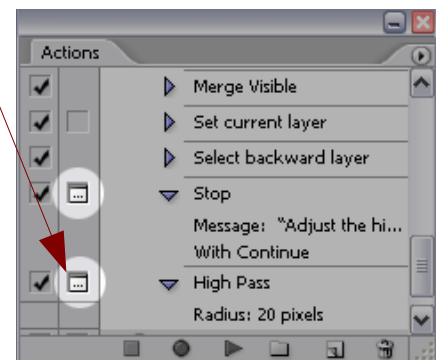
If you click the “Stop” button, the action will stop and return Photoshop control back to you.

After pressing the “Stop” button and completing your manual steps, you can continue the rest of the action (if there is anything else to do) by pressing the play button in the actions palette. This will pick up the execution of the action from the last step that ran (barring you haven't clicked on anything else in the actions palette).

You can also identify an action step to have a user dialog. These steps are identified by a special graphic on the step line.

These steps won't apply the Photoshop adjustments automatically and will stop at the dialog screen so the user can change the parameters and settings. When the user clicks the OK button, the action will continue on with the remaining steps.

Completely automating certain techniques in Photoshop is very difficult. Images are very different so you can't apply adjustments and expect the same result with every image. This is why stops and dialog steps are important. It will allow you to tweak edits by painting in your own masks, adjusting sharpening settings, or adjusting the amount of colour correction (to list a few specific examples) in a long workflow of steps to complete.



**Figure 5: Steps with user dialog**

Actions can help speed up your editing but be careful not to get too lazy. Be creative. Don't leave all of your editing decision to somebody else.