



How do layers work in Photoshop and Illustrator?

Photoshop and Illustrator software are among the most popular in the Adobe suite. They are also essential for many people working in the world of graphic communications. When you start using this software, how layers work is one of the first concepts to learn.

What is a layer?

A layer is a layer that can contain one or more images, text, one or more graphic elements as well as retouching, depending on the software in question. The layers are organized according to a hierarchy that can be modified by dragging them in the desired order. It is possible to lock them so as not to affect or move them inadvertently. In addition, the eye symbol allows them to be hidden.

The principle of layers in Photoshop and Illustrator is very similar, but there are still differences. Here is how it works, from one software to another.

On Photoshop

Layers in Photoshop are transparent layers, overlapping each other. They are very practical for creating photo montages. Layers are also essential for photo editing, because they allow a non-destructive working method: by performing the editing on separate layers, it is possible to go back, since the modifications are not made directly on the pixels of the original image. The original image therefore remains intact, under the modification layers.

In addition to the layers where you can insert texts, images and retouching, there are also adjustment layers. These layers allow, among other things, to adjust the tones of an image and to add color. Like the other layers, they are non-destructive, i.e. they do not affect the pixels of the image. Changes to an adjustment layer only affect the layers below it.

To better superimpose layers, there are blending modes. These modes allow you to play with the light, tones or even the color of a layer. They can be essential for certain photo montages, allowing interesting effects or smoother fusions of elements.

To properly organize and structure your work, it is possible to group layers together. All you have to do is create a group by clicking on the folder icon and then drag the desired layers into it.

On Illustrator

Layers in Illustrator are like folders: they can group together several elements. Thus, their role is to organize the work and manage the hierarchy

of the layering of elements. In each layer, it is possible to create sub-layers, which can also contain elements.

To trace a graphic element from an existing image or simply to have a reference image, the model layer function is very practical. Items that are part of a template layer have reduced opacity, so it's easier to trace over them. In addition, the model layers are non-printable, which avoids making the mistake of leaving them visible when printed.

To facilitate the organization of the layers, it is possible to choose a color for each of them. This makes it easier to identify elements of the same layer in the panel and on the artboard, since the block outline of the elements is the same color as the layer to which they belong. Besides color, it is a good idea to name its layers for better organization.

No matter the software, good layer organization makes all the difference. As you work, it is important to name the layers and group them into the correct group, when necessary. It's a good habit to adopt that will allow you to see much more clearly!

For more details on layers and to learn how to master Photoshop and Illustrator, there are our trainings! We offer 2 day and 4 day training. Visit the links below for more details.

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