



Visual Design Using Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Certified Associate is an industry-recognized credential that validates foundational digital media skills through live-in-the-application exams for Adobe Creative Cloud software.

Adobe has worked closely with education and industry experts to define the technical and domain knowledge necessary to use Creative Cloud apps in a professional context. This 50-minute exam reflects extensive research on entry-level skill expectations for visual design. The target candidate has had approximately 150 hours of instruction and hands-on experience in Adobe Photoshop. They are familiar with its core features and capabilities, as well as key industry concepts.

The objectives below are relevant across 2018, 2019, and 2020 versions of the exam.

Becoming an Adobe Certified Associate demonstrates mastery of the following skills:

1. Working in the Design Industry

This objective covers critical concepts related to working with colleagues and clients as well as crucial legal, technical, and design-related knowledge.

1.1 Identify the purpose, audience, and audience needs for preparing images.

1.1.a Determine whether content is relevant to the purpose, audience, and audience needs.

i. Key Terms: client goals, target audience, demographics, accessibility, etc.

1.2 Communicate with colleagues and clients about design plans.

1.2.a Demonstrate knowledge of techniques for communicating about design plans with peers and clients.

i. Key Terms: sketches, specifications, wireframes, prototypes, iterations, change orders, drafts, feedback loop, project scope, scope creep, etc.

1.2.b Demonstrate knowledge of basic project management concepts.

1.3 Determine the type of copyright, permissions, and licensing required to use specific content.

1.3.a Identify legal and ethical considerations for using third-party content, such as copyright, permissions, and licensing.

i. Key Terms: Creative Commons, public domain, intellectual property, derivative work, commercial use, attribution, work for hire, fair use, fair dealing, etc.

1.3.b Identify when and how to obtain permission to use images of people and locations.

i. Key Terms: model release, location release, etc.

ii. Key Concepts: permission to use a photo is separate from permission to use a person's face or restricted location, etc.

1.4 Demonstrate knowledge of key terminology related to digital images.

1.4.a Demonstrate knowledge of digital image terminology.

i. Key Terms: image resolution, image size, file types, pixel, raster, bitmap, vector, path, object, type, rasterizing, rendering, resampling, resizing, image size measured in pixels vs document size measured in inches/centimeters, etc.

1.4.b Demonstrate knowledge of how color is created in digital images.

i. Key Terms: color mode, bit depth, gamut, CMYK vs. RGB vs. grayscale, etc.

1.5 Demonstrate knowledge of basic design principles and best practices employed in the design industry.

1.5.a Communicate visually using the elements and principles of design and common design techniques.

i. Key Terms: space, line, shape, form, color, texture, emphasis/focal point, unity/harmony, variety, balance, alignment, proximity, repetition, rhythm, scale, movement, negative space, gestalt, etc.

1.5.b Identify and use common typographic adjustments to create contrast, hierarchy, and enhanced readability/legibility.

i. Key Terms: font, size, style, color, alignment, kerning, tracking, leading, horizontal and vertical scale, line length, etc.

1.5.c Demonstrate knowledge of common photographic/cinematic composition terms and principles.

i. Key Terms: aspect ratio, rule of thirds, foreground, background, color, tone, contrast, cropping, depth of field, field of view, white balance, etc.

2. Project Setup and Interface

This objective covers the interface setup and program settings that assist in an efficient and effective workflow, as well as knowledge about ingesting digital assets for a project.

2.1 Create a document with the appropriate settings for web, print, and video.

2.1.a Set appropriate document settings for printed and onscreen images.

i. Key Concepts: width/height, orientation, artboards, resolution, color mode, bit depth, background, etc.

2.1.b Create a new document preset to reuse for specific project needs.

2.2 Navigate, organize, and customize the application workspace.

2.2.a Identify and manipulate elements of the Photoshop interface.

i. Key Concepts: Options bar, menus, panels, toolbar, artboards, etc.

2.2.b Organize and customize the workspace.

i. Key Concepts: tabbed documents; showing, hiding, nesting, and docking panels; saving and resetting workspaces; shortcuts and menus; etc.

2.2.c Configure application preferences.

i. Key Concepts: Units & Rulers; Guides, Grids & Slices; Performance; Scratch Disks; Interface; etc.

2.3 Use non-printing design tools in the interface to aid in design or workflow.

2.3.a Navigate a project.

i. Key Concepts: panning, zooming, rotating canvas, etc.

2.3.b Use rulers.

i. Key Concepts: showing and hiding rulers, changing the measurement unit on rulers, etc.

2.3.c Use guides and grids.

i. Key Concepts: adding/removing and locking/unlocking guides; setting color; showing/hiding guides and grids; using snap or align options; creating guide layouts; etc.

2.4 Import assets into a project.

2.4.a Open or import images from various devices.

i. Key Concepts: file, camera, scanner, etc.

2.4.b Place assets in a Photoshop document.

i. Key Concepts: embedded, linked, copy and pasted, etc.

2.4.c Use the Adobe Camera Raw interface to process images.

i. Key Concepts: importing raw files, but only at a fundamental level.

2.5 Manage colors, swatches, and gradients.

2.5.a Set the active foreground and background color.

i. Key Concepts: Color Picker, swatches, Eyedropper tool, hexadecimal value, etc.

2.5.b Create and customize gradients.

i. Key Concepts: Gradient panel, editing color and transparency stops, radial and elliptical gradients, etc.

2.5.c Create and edit swatches.

2.6 Manage brushes, symbols, styles, and patterns.

2.6.a Open and browse libraries of included brushes, symbols, graphic styles, and patterns.

2.6.b Create and edit brushes, symbols, styles, and patterns.

3. Organizing Documents

This objective covers document structure such as layers, tracks, and managing document structure for efficient workflows.

3.1 Use layers to manage design elements.

3.1.a Use the Layers panel to modify layers.

i. Key Concepts: adding, deleting, hiding/showing, locking/unlocking, duplicating, and renaming layers, etc.

3.1.b Manage layers in a complex project.

i. Key Concepts: renaming layers, creating layer groups, deleting empty layers, keeping the Layers panel organized, etc.

3.1.c Work with multiple layers.

i. Key Concepts: selecting, grouping vs. linking, etc.

3.1.d Flatten and merge layers.

i. Key Concepts: tradeoffs with editability and file size, etc.

3.1.e Recognize the different types of layers in the Layers panel.

i. Key Concepts: background, regular, adjustment, type, fill, shape, vector, Smart Object, active/inactive (hidden), artboard layers, etc.

3.2 Modify layer visibility using opacity, blending modes, and masks.

3.2.a Adjust a layer's opacity, blending mode, and fill opacity.

3.2.b Create, apply, and manipulate masks.

i. Key Concepts: layer masks, clipping masks, etc.

3.3 Understand the difference between destructive and nondestructive editing.

3.3.a Nondestructive editing: Smart Objects, Smart Filters, and adjustment layers.

3.3.b Destructive editing: painting, adjustments, erasing, and rasterizing.

4. Creating and Modifying Visual Elements

This objective covers core tools and functionality of the application, as well as tools that affect the visual appearance of document elements.

4.1 Use core tools and features to create visual elements.

4.1.a Create images using a variety of tools.

i. Key Tools: drawing tools, painting tools, Pencil tool, Brush tool, vector shapes, etc.

4.1.b Modify and edit vector images using a variety of vector tools.

i. Key Tools: shape tools, vector selection tools, etc.

4.2 Add and manipulate text using appropriate typographic settings.

4.2.a Use type tools to add typography to a design.

i. Key Tools: Type tool, Vertical Type tool, etc.

4.2.b Adjust character settings in a design.

i. Key Concepts: using font, size, style, alignment, and color to enhance legibility, readability, hierarchy, etc.

4.2.c Adjust paragraph settings in a design.

i. Key Settings: kerning, tracking, leading, horizontal and vertical scale, line length, etc.

4.2.d Convert text to graphics.

i. Key Concepts: rasterizing type, etc.

4.3 Make, manage, and manipulate selections.

4.3.a Make selections using a variety of tools.

i. Key Tools: Quick Selection, Lasso tool, Magic Wand, marquee selection tools, etc.

4.3.b Modify and refine selections using various methods.

i. Key Concepts: keyboard modifiers, feather, expand, contract, inverse, selecting and masking, adding to and subtracting from selection, deselecting, etc.

4.3.c Save and load selections.

4.4 Transform digital graphics and media.

4.4.a Modify the canvas or artboards.

i. Key Tools: resizing, cropping, expanding, resampling, etc.

ii. Key Concepts: understanding the difference between resize and resample, etc.

4.4.b Rotate, flip, and modify individual layers, objects, selections, groups, or graphical elements.

i. Key Concepts: transforming, warping, distorting, skewing, etc.

4.5 Use basic reconstructing and retouching techniques to manipulate digital graphics and media.

4.5.a Apply basic auto-correction methods and tools.

4.5.b Use various tools to repair and reconstruct images.

i. Key Tools: healing tools, clone tools, Content-Aware tools, liquify, etc.

4.5.c Evaluate or adjust the appearance of objects, selections, or layers using various tools.

i. Key Concepts: adjustments, adjustment layers, histogram, opacity, Eyedropper tool, etc.

4.5.d Apply photographic changes to images using tools and adjustments.

i. Key Tools: Burn tool, Dodge tool, Smudge tool, Blur tool, Sharpen tool, Desaturate options, photo filters, etc.

4.6 Modify the appearance of design elements by using filters and styles.

4.6.a Use filters to modify images destructively or non-destructively.

i. Key Concepts: Smart Filters vs filters, etc.

4.6.b Apply, modify, copy, and remove layer styles.

4.6.c Create, manage, and save custom layer styles.

5. Publishing Digital Media

This objective covers saving and exporting documents or assets within individual layers or selections.

5.1 Prepare images for export to web, print, and video.

5.1.a Check document for errors and project specifications.

i. Key Concepts: setting color space, resolution, pixel dimensions, metadata, etc.

5.2 Export or save digital images to various file formats.

5.2.a Save in the native file format for Photoshop (.psd).

i. Key Concepts: compatibility, saving as a copy, etc.

5.2.b Save in appropriate image formats for print or screen.

i. Key Concepts: file format, bit depth, color space, resolution, pixel dimensions, etc.

5.2.c Export project elements.

i. Key Concepts: exporting layers, exporting selections, exporting to files, exporting to libraries, etc.

NOTE: All key items (Key Terms, Key Tools, Key Concepts, and Key Settings) are examples and not a comprehensive list. Changes in the industry or application may necessitate coverage of items not listed that apply to the Target Candidate description for the Adobe Certified Associate program.