

# GANG UP

If you've ever tried to take a good group shot—and what yearbooker hasn't?—you know how hard it is to get a shot where everyone looks good. It seems that every time someone has their eyes closed . . . or looks away . . . or flashes a sign . . . or something. The good news is that Adobe® Photoshop® provides you with a powerful way to get the perfect group shot using its Auto Align Layers and layer mask features.




It seems that in every group shot at least one person doesn't cooperate. This technique can make that problem a thing of the past.

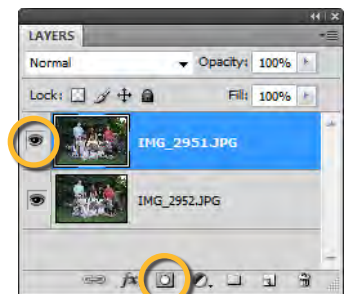
**Tip:** In order for this technique to work, the photos need to be taken in the same sitting and from the same perspective. For best results, the photos should be taken with the camera on a tripod to ensure as much consistency from shot-to-shot as possible.


**STEP 1:** Go to Photoshop's File menu and choose Scripts. From the Scripts sub-menu choose Load Files into Stack.


**STEP 2:** The Load Layers dialog box will appear. Click on Browse to locate the group shot images that you wish to merge. When you have selected the images, click OK. Photoshop will then open each of the images and add each as a layer in a single document. When the process is complete

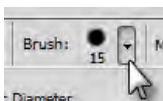
you should see two layers in the Layers panel—one for each of the group shots (see screenshot below).

**STEP 3:** Toggle the visibility of the two layers by clicking on the eyeball  to the left of the layer in the Layers panel. Determine which parts of the top layer you would like to replace with the bottom layer. For instance, you may want to replace a person who has her eyes closed in the top-layer image but not in the bottom-layer image.



**STEP 4:** Turn on the visibility of both layers by revealing the eyeball to the left of both layers in the Layers panel. Then select the top layer in the stack and add a layer mask by clicking on the Add Layer Mask button at the bottom of the Layers panel .

**STEP 5:** The layer mask will appear as a white rectangle on the right side of the layer. Make sure that the layer mask is targeted by clicking on it (you should see a black border around the layer mask to indicate that it is targeted). Switch to the Brush tool by selecting it from the Tools panel .



**STEP 6:** Then go to the Brush tool options bar at the top of the screen. Click on the downward arrow (see screenshot at left) to open the Brushes panel. From the brush types that appear, choose a round brush tip and then adjust the Master Diameter slider to about 100 pixels as a starting place. Set the Hardness to about 90% to give a slightly

soft edge. Note: The size of brush you use will depend on the size of your image. For more information on brushes, see *Tips & Tricks: Brush Up*.



**STEP 7:** Look at the color swatches at the bottom of the Tools panel and confirm that the foreground color is set to black (see screenshot at left). If it is not black, you can set the foreground and background color to their defaults by pressing the D key on the keyboard (the foreground color should then be white, and the background should be black). Then press the X key to swap the foreground and background colors (making black the foreground and white the background). These are great keyboard shortcuts to become accustomed to using.

**STEP 8:** With black set as the foreground color (step 7) and the layer mask targeted (step 5), you will now begin to paint over the “bad” parts of the top layer (for instance, a face with closed eyes). As you paint you will reveal the preferred version of the shot that is on the layer beneath. If you hide a portion of the top image that you did not wish to, you can reveal it again by painting in the same area with white. Simply switch the foreground color to white by hitting the X key. Then paint over the area of color that you wish to hide again. When you have corrected the problem, hit X again to switch back to black and begin revealing other areas.



**FINALIZE & SAVE:** When you have successfully masked out all of the “bad” parts of the top layer and revealed the more pleasing version beneath, you are ready to save a version for use in your page layout application. It is recommended that you save a Photoshop file as a back-up in case you need to come back and tweak the image later. For more information on saving files, see *Tips & Tricks: Saving Files*.

