

Loading and Using Photoshop actions

This short document will describe how to load and run Photoshop actions. It will use the example of loading and running the actions used to create the [luminosity masks](#), which I discuss in another tutorial.

There are a couple of ways to load the downloaded actions into Photoshop.

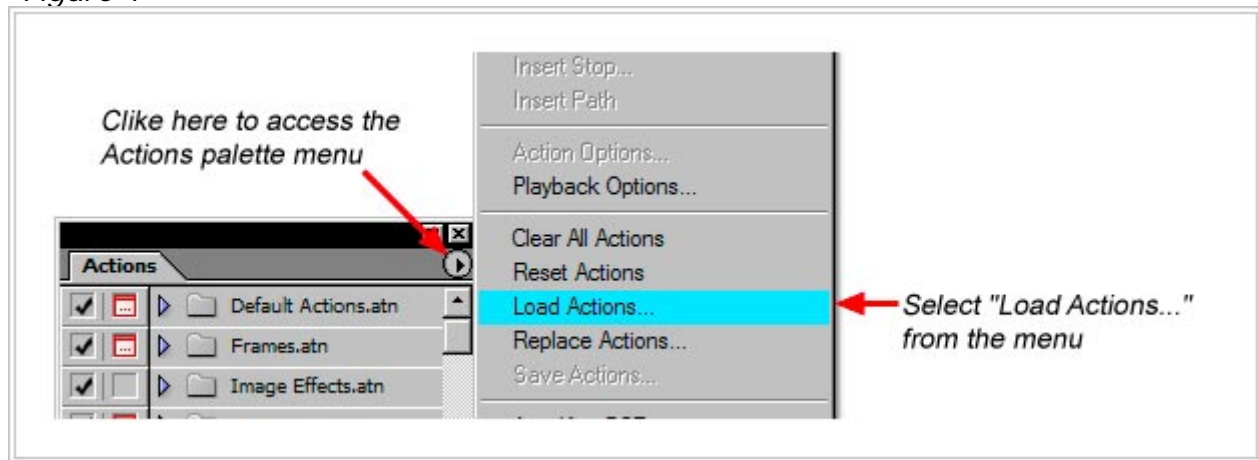
Method #1

The first and easiest is to open Photoshop, go to the place where you saved action file, and double-click the item. Photoshop maximizes and loads the action set at the bottom of the Actions palette. If this works, you can skip Method #2 and go down to the text below Figure 1, which tells you how to run or "play" an action.

Method #2

You can also load the actions "manually" while working in Photoshop. To do this, click the area on the right side of the Actions tab to access the Actions palette menu (*Figure 1*). From the menu, click "Load actions..." A dialog box will appear. Find the actions file from the location where you saved it. Click the file name to highlight it. Then click "Load" in the dialog box to load the actions into Photoshop's Actions palette.

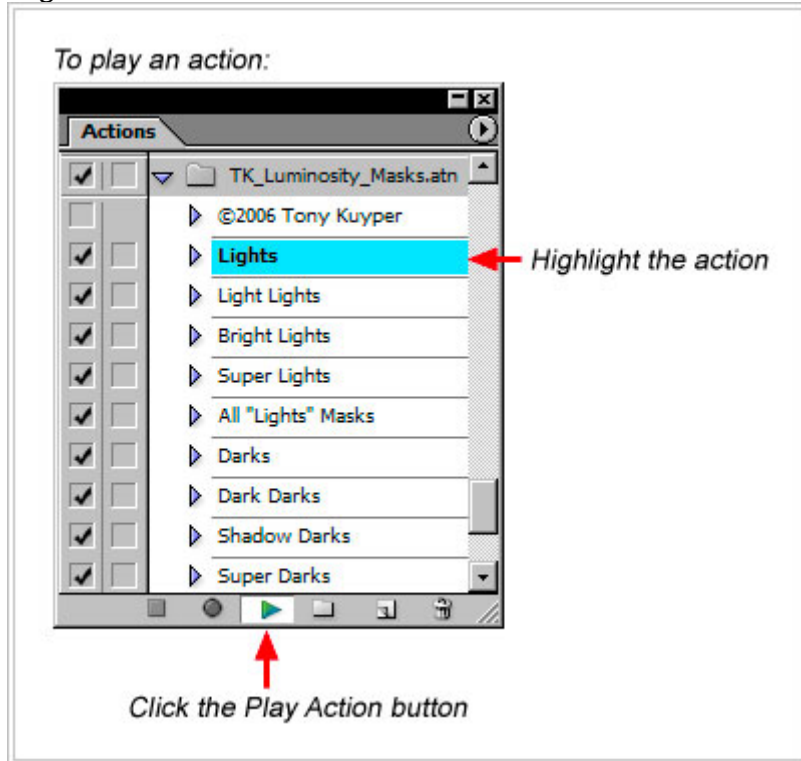
Figure 1



Playing an action

To run or "play" an action, simply highlight the action's name in the Actions palette and click the Play Action button at the bottom of the palette (*Figure 2*). Make sure the file containing the action is open by clicking the arrow to the left of the folder so it points down, showing the contents of the folder. It is important to click on an action inside a folder and not the folder itself.

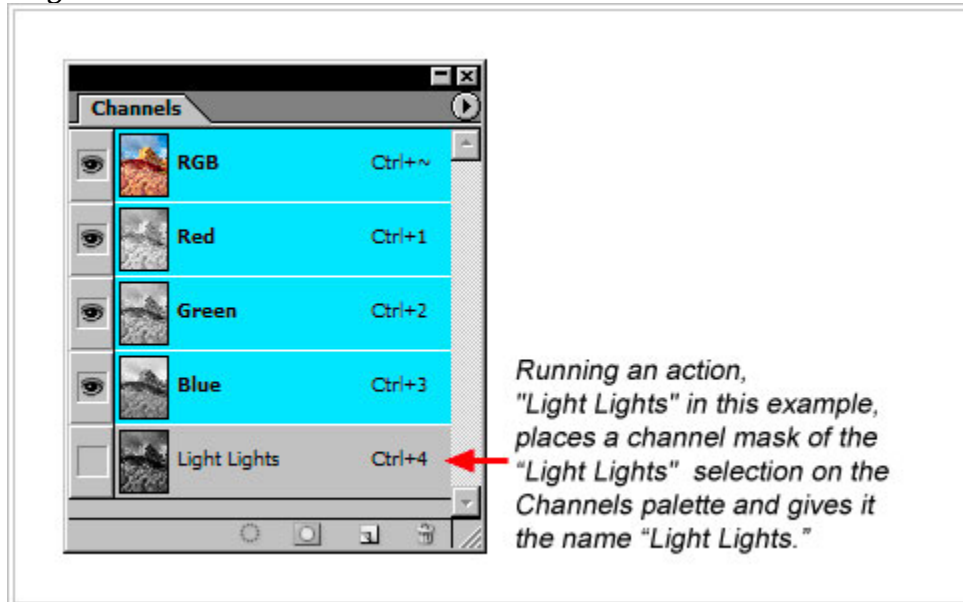
Figure 2



Using the TK-LumMasks(Channels) action set

Each action in the set called "TK-LumMasks(Channels)" creates the specified mask in the Channels palette and gives it the appropriate name (*Figure 3*).

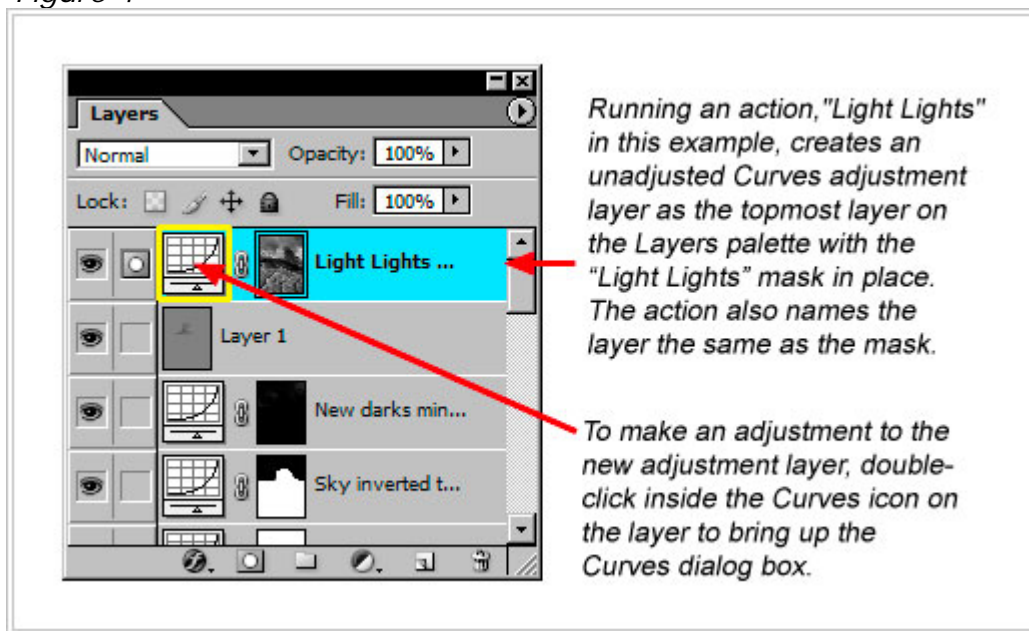
Figure 3



Using the TK-LumMasks(Layers) action set

Each action in the set called "TK-LumMasks(Layers)" creates a Curves adjustment layer with the mask in place as the topmost layer (*Figure 4*). While the action creates an adjustment layer, it does so with no adjustment. To make an adjustment, simply double-click the Curves icon on the layer to bring up the dialog box. Having the action create an adjustment layer provides a slightly quicker method for making adjustments using the masks provided you have an idea which mask you want to use. If you find you've chosen the wrong mask, it's easy to drag the adjustment layer to the trash and run the action for a different mask. With a little experience, you'll get a feel for which mask you need to use. For many users, the TK-LumMasks(Layers) action set is the preferred method for generating masks because it also sets up the Curves adjustment layer.

Figure 4



If you start accumulating luminosity masks on the Channels palette for whatever reason, it's OK to delete them once you've created your adjustment layer with the mask in place. Masks on the Channels palette will increase the image's file size. Once you're done with a mask, there's no reason to keep it unless you want to use it later in your workflow.

The actions for the masks can be run at anytime during your workflow. It is not necessary or advisable to generate all the masks at the start of your Photoshop session. Whenever you run one of the mask actions, it creates the appropriate mask based on the current composite tonal values of your image. This is ideal, because as you work on an image in Photoshop, the tonal values of the pixels naturally change. By creating a "fresh" mask only when you need it, you are assured of having a mask that correctly reflects the image's tonal values at that point in time.

Please email me at tkuyper@hotmail.com with your comments, suggestions, and questions.