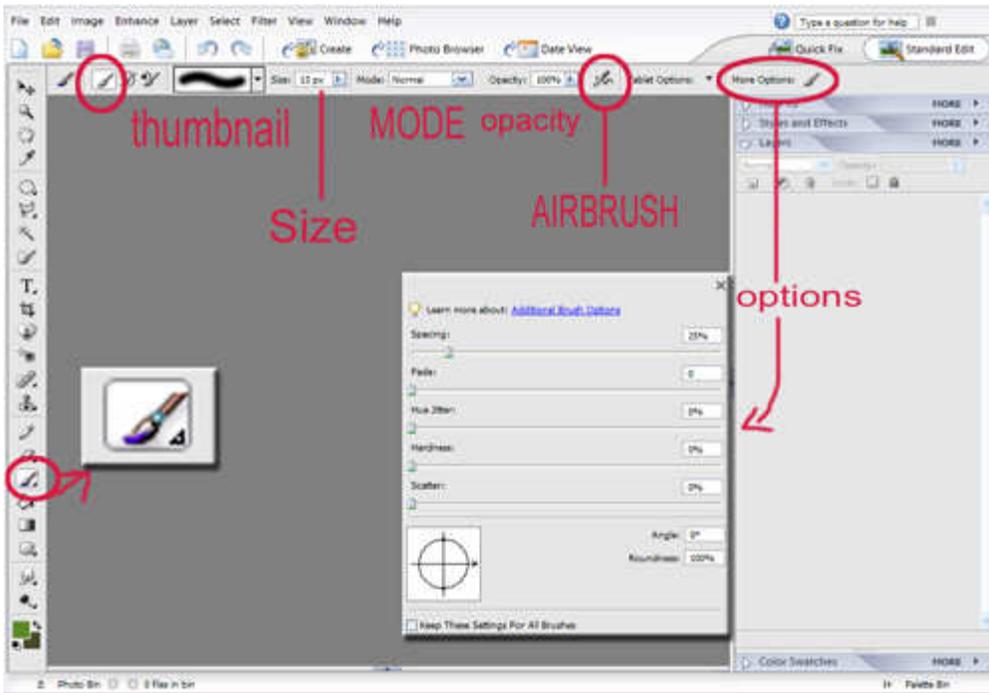


# Brushes Tutorial

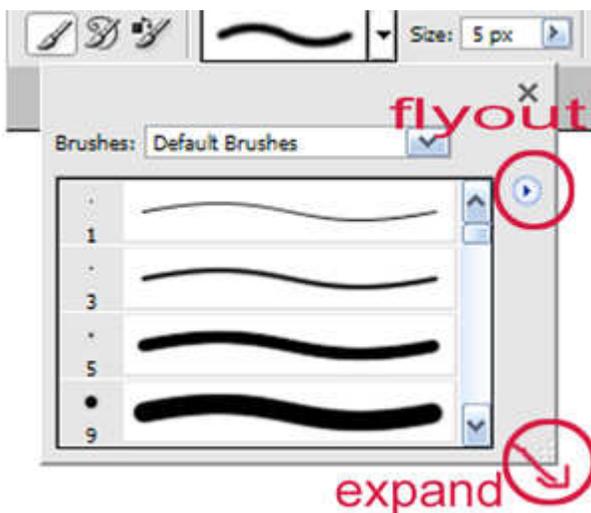
By Hummie

As you get deeper into digital scrapbooking, you will find the need to utilize other tools in PSE, including the brushes. The purpose of this tutorial is to introduce you to the basic features of the standard brush. This tutorial will not cover the two subcategories of impressionist brush and color replacement brush, nor does it cover the pencil tool, which is really another brush.

## THE SETTINGS



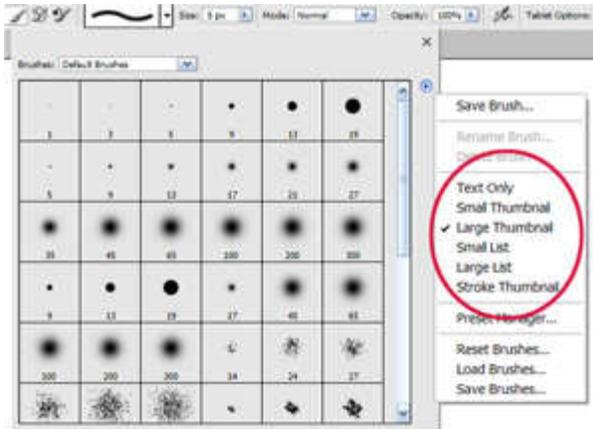
This is a reference graphic to better enable you to find the options on the tool to which I will refer to.



Activate the brush tool.

Click on the drop down arrow next to the thumbnails. For me, I prefer to expand my thumbnails as they are easier to view. With the mouse, grab the bottom right hand corner and make it bigger.

Click on the flyout right arrow to bring up an options box.



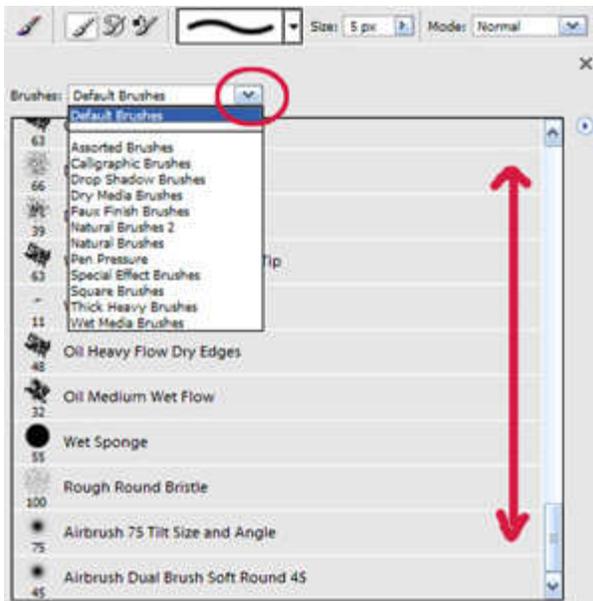
Click with the mouse on the various views available.

“Text only” will generate a list of the brush titles.

“Small Thumbnail” and “Large Thumbnail” will generate views as if the brush were stamped once.

“Small List” and “Large List” will generate views which include text and a thumbnail.

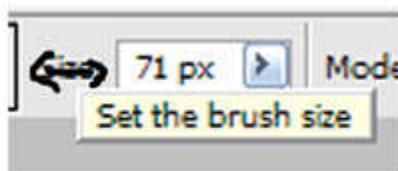
“Stroke Thumbnail” generates a view of the brush as if it were drug across a page.



Slide the navigation bar up and down to view the wide variety of brush choices.

Click on the (second) drop down arrow beside the words “default brushes” to choose even more categories of brushes.

To choose a brush, double click on it. The mouse will take on the shape of the brush.



There are three ways to change the size of the brush.

1. Click on the right flyout arrow and move the slider.
2. Hover the mouse over the word “size” until it changes to a double arrow with a hand, click down and drag the mouse right and left.
3. Use the [ and ] keys on the keyboard.



Click the down arrow to reveal choices for the same blending modes as can be found in the layers palette.

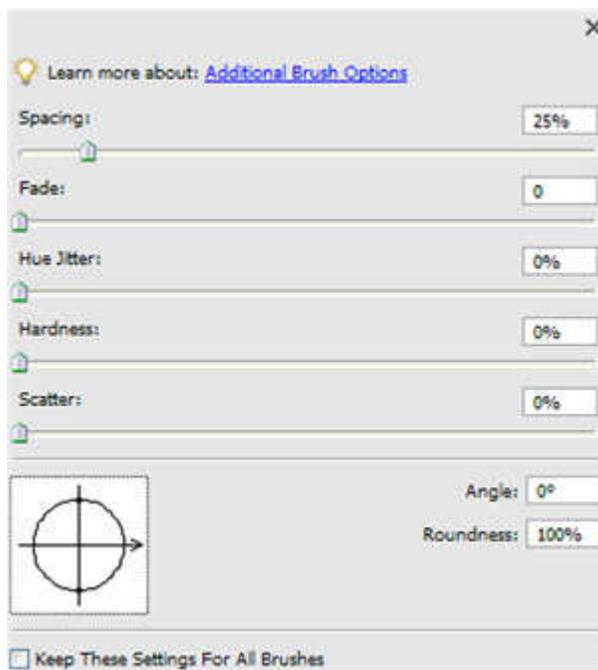
Often, I prefer to put the brush on a layer of its own and change the blending mode from the layers palette because it is editable in that way.



Again, just as in the layers palette, change the opacity of the brush by either clicking on the flyout arrow and moving the slider or placing the mouse over the word “opacity” until the double arrow and hand appear at which time you can click down with the mouse and move it left and right.

The next icon is the airbrush icon. Click on the icon to activate it. Just as with real airbrushes, as long as you click and hold down the mouse, “paint” will continue to spray. Play with it; it is fun. Try holding down the mouse without moving it and watch what happens.

The next option is the tablet options and is only applicable if a graphics tablet is purchased and hooked up with your computer.



The popup box under “more options” is the place where I tend to make the most variations to the brushes.

Each brush contains its own default settings for options. Therefore, the sliders will be in different locations for different brushes when you open the options box.



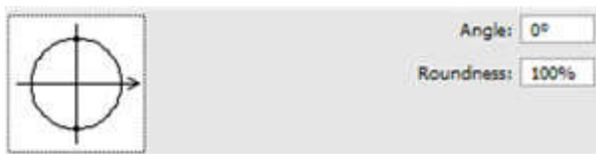
The option I use most is the top bar for spacing. Observe the Thumbnail box as you move the spacing slider. The spacing option will increase or decrease the amount of space before the brush is next stamped down on the paper.

 The fade slider changes how long it takes to run out of paint as you brush. A low number indicates very little paint on the brush and, therefore, it may even only paint for one stamp of the brush. A higher number (up to 9999) indicates a lot of paint on the brush and, therefore, will paint for a long time before it begins to fade. In addition, just as a larger brush requires more paint than a smaller brush, the same number of fade for different sizes will have a different effect.

 The hue jitter slider changes how quickly a brush moves through a range of hues between the foreground and the background colors. A lower number moves slowly through the hues and a higher number moves quickly through the hues. Not all brushes respond to this option.

 The hardness slider changes how sharp or fuzzy a brush appears. Hard brushes have a default setting of 100% (to the right side of the slider). Soft brushes have a default setting of 0% (to the left side of the slider). You can convert a default hard brush to a soft brush by moving the slider to the left.

 The scatter slider changes how random the brush stamps. A low setting retains a straight line stroke, while a larger number throws more randomly. It is quite fun to play with.



Click on the circle with the line and arrow through it to turn the brush. This is handy when applying a grunge brush to an edge as you turn the brush one quarter per side of the paper. To change the angle precisely, manually change the degrees in the box, remembering that a circle is 180 degrees.

The roundness field is similar to turning a real brush from its flat side to its short side. Often it is helpful to imagine how a real paint brush is applied to utilize the options.

## THE BASICS

Before using a brush, set the foreground (and background color if the hue jitter is utilized). The brush will apply the foreground color.

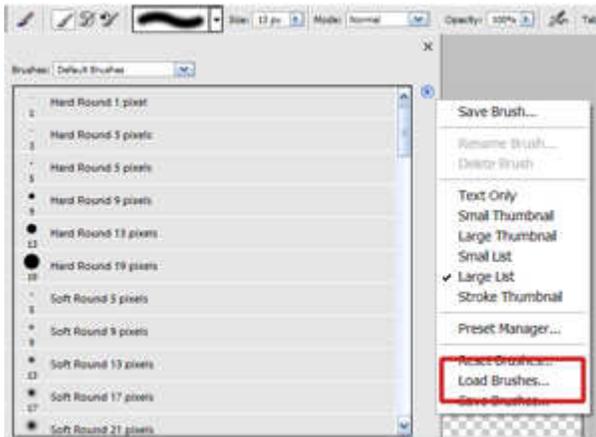
At times, the crosshairs icon, rather than the actual icon that will be stamped, is preferred for precision. To obtain the crosshairs, click on the caps lock key on the keyboard. To toggle back to the actual icon, undo the caps lock.

The crosshairs icon may also appear when the brush is small in proportion to the image. Zoom in close to see the actual icon.

To draw a straight line, hold down the shift key before clicking with the mouse.

## LOADING BRUSHES

There are many places on the internet to download free brushes. It is best not to put these brushes in the Photoshop Elements Preset file under Program Files as it will bog down the computer when the program opens. Place the brush files in a folder that will get backed up often. Brushes have an .abr file extension. Not all brushes made with other versions of Photoshop will work in PSE.



Use the [ABRViewer](#) from Sourceforge to view the brushes to choose one. The viewer requires a [Windows .NET frame version 1.1](#) which is free to download. I recommend installing this program before installing the viewer program.

Utilize this program to export brushes that do not work in your version of PSE as a .png file. Thereafter, create a new brush (as taught below) using the .png file.

To install a brush for use, first choose either the default brush library or another library from the drop down brush menu. The library that is the active library will be where the brush is loaded. Click on the right flyout and choose "load brushes." Navigate to the folder where you have the brush files. Once loaded, the brush should appear at the bottom of the list.

## CREATING BRUSHES

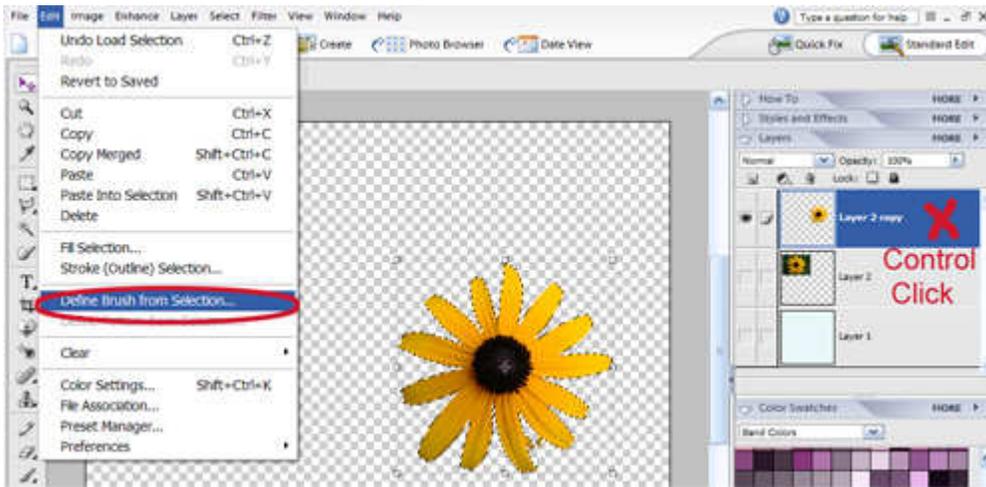
There is a variety of types of brushes that can be created from your own images. Other tutorials will cover creating various types of brushes. This is a basic tutorial for creating brushes that will allow your imagination to start roaming.



For this tutorial, I have started with a photo of a flower from my yard. In the bottom corner, I have extracted the flower from the photo. This extraction is what we will make our custom brush from.

It is important to note that the item used be no larger than 2,500 by 2,500 pixels. PSE will not allow the brush to be created in larger sizes. This size is slightly larger than

an 8 x 8 paper. Therefore, do not resize your item to the size of a 12 x 12 paper (3,600 x 3,600).

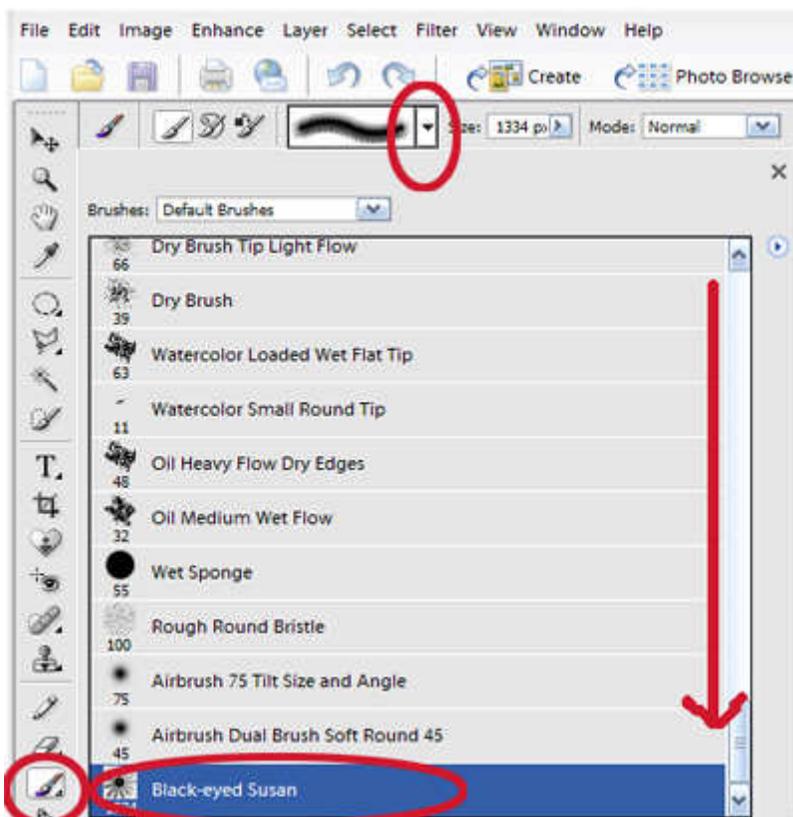


The next step is to create a selection (marching ants) around what you want to make a brush from. In my sample, because I want the whole area of the flower, it is simple to select by holding down the control key and clicking with the mouse on

the layer in the layers palette (or on the icon in the layers palette in some versions).

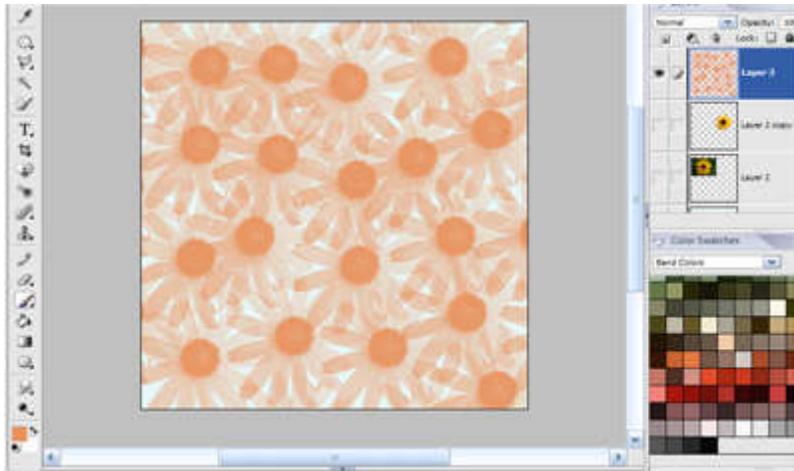
From grunge brushes, utilizing the magic wand selection tool may be more appropriate. To make a brush of my original photo before extraction, a rectangular or elliptical marquee tool may be appropriate. Explore your imagination of selection tools to create unique brushes.

Choose a brush collection from the drop down arrows. The active collection will be the collection where the brush is saved to. For instance, if the “default brushes” collection is active, the brush will be added to the bottom of the default brushes.



Next, go to the Edit drop down menu and choose “Define Brush from Selection.” In the popup box, name the brush and hit “okay.”

To find the brush that was just created, activate the brush tool. Click on the drop down arrow and scroll all the way to the bottom of the brushes.



Use the brush utilizing the options as taught above.

Remember that the brush only stamps or draws in the foreground (and background if applicable) colors, not the color of the original item.

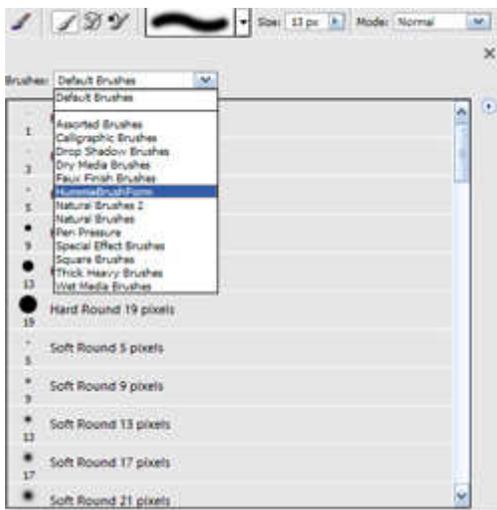
This background was made using no option changes to the brush.

To make a variety of papers with this one layer, change its color, use blending modes, use different background colors (other than white), and play with the opacity, just to name a few ideas to kick start your imagination.

## SAVING CUSTOM BRUSHES

Saving custom brushes in order that they may be backed up is quite a tricky process.

First, recall that I recommended that brushes not be placed in the Photoshop Elements folder because it will bog down the program when it opens. Therefore, there are two types of folders that may contain brushes which react differently within the brush tool. In addition, this creates two different methods of saving brushes.

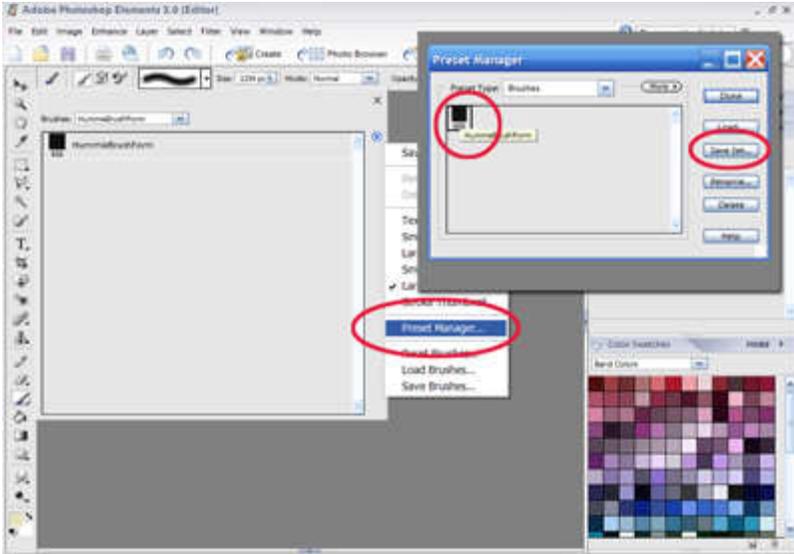


Brushes installed on the hard drive with this path: C:\Program Files\Adobe\Photoshop Elements 3.0\Presets\Brushes appear as a "library" in the first drop down menu.

Be very careful saving brushes into a brush library because any changes made to the brush libraries that are provided with the program may be lost, unless you reinstall the program. This is yet another reason not to utilize this method of saving brushes unless, however, you save your custom brushes to carefully named libraries so as to not accidentally edit another necessary library.

For your convenience in order to save files directly into libraries, I have provided a form .abr file. [Click here to download the file.](#) This library contains one square brush. Feel

free to rename the file with your name. Copy the file several times and rename each file with your name and a different theme/type of brushes. Place the file in the Photoshop Elements Preset folder. PSE must be restarted/started before the new library will appear in the drop down menu.



To save custom brushes into the new library, make the new library the active library before saving the brush (as described above).

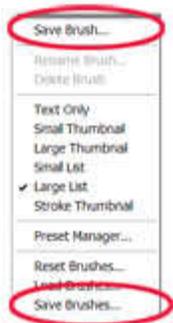
Next, click on the right flyout arrow and choose "Preset Manager."

Hold down the shift key and click to select every brush in the library which you want to save. The "Save Set" button will not be grayed out any more and, therefore, click on it.

Navigate to the Photoshop Elements Preset folder and click on the name of the library. Click "Save."



To delete a brush from a library, right click on the brush and choose "delete brush." A warning box will pop up for confirmation of this permanent change to the library. As a precaution, resave the collection through the Preset Manager as described above.



To back up the custom .abr files, navigate to the Photoshop Elements folder and manually select, copy, and paste the custom files. Another way would be to use the Preset Manager as described above, except to navigate to a different folder on the hard drive.

Another option to back up a library is to use the "Save Brushes" command.

Note that "Save Brush" and "Save Brushes" are two different commands.

The "Save Brush" command will save the brush currently as your cursor into the current active library. This is helpful if you have made changes to the options of the brush, such as fade or spacing.

The “Save Brushes” Command will save the entire active library collection. This works very similar to saving through the Preset Manager. However, the entire library is saved without the ability to choose particular brushes. Navigate to either the Photoshop Elements Preset folder or another folder when using this command.

The .abr files that are not saved in the Preset folder, but another folder that is backed up often, and brought into PSE through the “load” command, do not stay loaded upon changing from one particular brush library to another.

This method is a bit more complicated to understand, but once you get a system down, it is really rather easy. The commands to utilize in order to save brushes without placing them permanently in the libraries are the same as above, except the process varies.

For the first example, we will assume a new custom brush is created and at the bottom of the default brushes. Utilize the Preset Manager command as explained above, selecting only the one brush at the bottom of the defaults before clicking on “Save Set.” Once saved, the .abr file will now contain one brush.

It is okay to have each .abr file contain only one brush.

However, if the intent is to create a collection of brushes in the .abr file, that is a bit trickier. Please note that in order to save a collection, all of the brushes, including the new one, must be loaded before utilizing the Preset Manager commands. Hold down the shift key to select all of the brushes, including the new one, before saving over the .abr file.

Another option is to utilize the “form” .abr file that I have provided, placed in the Photoshop Elements Preset folder so that it is handy. Load all of the brushes for one collection into this library. Create the new brushes under this library. Delete the form square brush. Use the “Save Brushes” command to save the entire collection at one time into a folder for brushes which you have created where it will be backed up often.