Digital Scrapper®

Boost Your Speed With Custom Color Swatches

By Lydia Tarbox—April 23, 2013

This past Christmas, I wanted to put together a Holiday Memories album. After taking photos and journaling about all the activities in which we participated during the season, I sat down to put the album together. I was using just one digital kit to create the entire album, and I wanted to make sure that the colors I used for titles, journaling, photo frames, etc. were uniform throughout the album. But sampling those colors over and over as I went from page to page in the album became tedious. And, frankly, it was a waste of my time.

So, I decided to create my own custom color swatch. Once I had my swatches set up, it was really easy to choose the colors for my fonts, etc. and make sure that, as I worked on the album throughout the month of December, I didn't have to resample any of the colors to achieve a uniform look. And, it was so much faster!

For 2013, I decided to create an album documenting my family's everyday life. Each week, I create a two-page layout that documents the details of our lives that week. I use a different kit each week, but I want all the colors of my fonts, frames, and little extras to match across the two-page spread. So, let me show you how I am using custom color swatches to speed up my process and create uniformity in this special project. I hope this simple tip will be helpful to you as well.
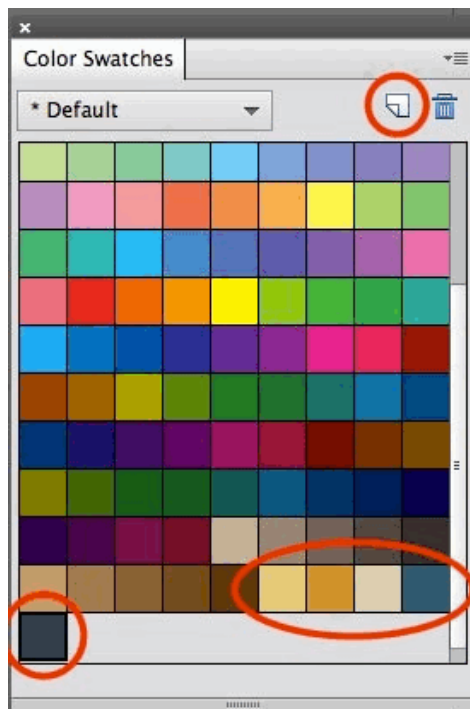
Step One: Create New Color Swatches

- Open the file or files (File > Open) that contain the colors you want to sample. I chose the kit preview file because it had all the colors right there in one image. Easy peasy.

- In the Menu Bar, choose Window > Color Swatches. (Photoshop: Choose Window > Swatches.)

- Get the Color Picker tool. (Photoshop: Get the Eyedropper tool.)

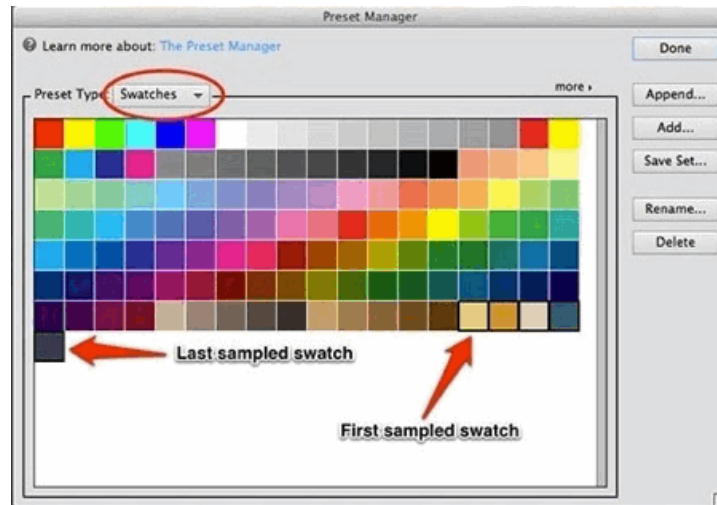- Sample a color from the image by clicking on it.

- In the Color Swatches panel, click on the Create New Color Swatch of Foreground Color icon. (Photoshop: Choose a name for the color swatch. Click OK.) The color you sampled will appear at the bottom of the panel.

- Repeat the last two bullet points for each color that you want to sample.

Step Two: Save Your Custom Swatch Set

- In the Color Swatches panel, open the fly-out menu and choose Preset Manager.

- In the dialog box, open the Preset Type drop-down menu and choose Swatches.

- Click on the swatch of the first color you sampled. This should be near the bottom of all the swatches shown.

- Shift click on the swatch of the last color you sampled.

- Click Save Set.

- Enter a name and choose a location for your set and click Save.

- Click Done.

Tip: I like to save my swatch sets in the same folder as the project for which I'm using them. But, you may want to save your swatches in the default location.

Step Three: Load Your Custom Swatch Set

- In the Color Swatches panel, open the fly-out menu and choose Replace Swatches.

- Navigate to the folder where you saved your swatch set.

- Choose the .aco file you wish to load and click Open.

Your Color Swatches panel should now show only the color swatches that you need for your project. As you move through your project, simply click on each color as you need it. Switching between colors has never been easier!

Step Four: Restore Default Swatches

When you are finished with your project, you may wish to restore the default color swatches to the Color Swatches panel.

- In the Color Swatches panel, open the fly-out menu and choose Preset Manager.

- In the dialog box, open the Preset Type drop-down menu and choose Swatches.

- Open the fly-out menu, choose Reset Swatches and click Done.

Here's the layout I created using my custom color swatch. If you have plans to work on an album or other special project where you want to keep the colors consistent all the way through, you may want to try creating and saving a custom color swatch. You'll be amazed at how much time a little preparation will save you as you set out to create your album.

Credits:
Digi Scrap Tutorial: Boost Your Speed With Custom Color Swatches by Lydia Tarbox
Layout: Week 6 by Lydia Tarbox
Papers and Embellishments: Big Ideas by One Little Bird Designs (originally included in the September 2012 Premier issue).
LIFEtime Templates by Julie Billingsley
Record the Journey 4x6 Templates by Misty Cato
Fonts: Conspiracy, Umbrage, and Boston Traffic