Using the Liquify Tool
In Elements
By Jerry Koons

The Liquify Tool is a very useful and powerful tool in our toolbox.

It "distorts" areas of pixels in the image.   Specific tools within Liquify, such as Warp, Bloat, Pucker, Shift Pixels and others move pixels to create either an intended correction or an intended distortion of the image.   Your main control is the diameter of the brush,

For example, you can use the Liquify Tool to "open" eyes that were partially closed at the exact time of capture.   You can also slightly enlarge eyes to enhance them or put a small grin on an otherwise somber facial expression.

Sometimes the specific angle that the picture was taken will exaggerate a portion of the body, such as hips, and the Liquify Tool can, in many cases, correct this very quickly.

You can have fun by distorting someone's facial features, but please be careful to not offend them.   It is always wise to have permission first.

Because an area of pixels are moved, images with simple detail areas work best. Complicated areas will be more difficult to achieve the desired results.

The best way to learn about this tool is to practice and you'll find that learning to use the Liquify Tool is fun as well as educational.   You will be able to improve your images, especially of people you like.

Let's perform some of these tasks using the Liquify Tool.

I recommend creating a duplicate layer of your image to perform any "morphing" tasks to an image.
- If you have only the Background Layer on your image, the fastest method is to just hold down the Ctrl key and press the J key to create a duplicate layer.
- If you have multiple layers on your image, activate the uppermost layer and click the *Create A New Layer* icon to create a new blank layer on the top of the layer stack. Then hold down the Ctrl *and* Shift keys and press the E key to create a composite layer of all of the open layers.

Access the Liquify Tool by clicking on Filter > Distort > Liquify.

Select one of the tools and perform an action on the image.   Remember that pressing the Ctrl and Z keys will "undo" the last action and pressing the Ctrl, Alt and Z keys will undo each previous action.

Practice and have fun.

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The following is a portion of the Help Section for the Liquify Tool from Photoshop CS3. The Help Section of Elements 6does not contain any information for Liquify.   Please be aware that some of the nomenclature differs between the two programs.

Distortion tools

Several tools in the Liquify dialog box distort the brush area when you hold down the mouse button or drag. The distortion is concentrated at the center of the brush area, and the effect intensifies as you hold down the mouse button or repeatedly drag over an area.

Forward Warp tool

Pushes pixels forward as you drag.

Shift-click with the Warp tool, the Push Left tool, or the Mirror tool to create the effect of dragging in a straight line from the previous point you clicked.

Twirl Clockwise tool

Rotates pixels clockwise as you hold down the mouse button or drag. To twirl pixels counterclockwise, hold down Alt (Windows) or Option (Mac OS) as you hold down the mouse button or drag.

Pucker tool

Moves pixels toward the center of the brush area as you hold down the mouse button or drag.

Bloat tool

Moves pixels away from the center of the brush area as you hold down the mouse button or drag.

Push Left tool

Moves pixels to the left when you drag the tool straight up (pixels move to the right if you drag down). You can also drag clockwise around an object to increase its size, or drag counterclockwise to decrease its size. To push pixels right when you drag straight up (or to move pixels left when you drag down), hold down Alt (Windows) or Option (Mac OS) as you drag.

Mirror tool

Copies pixels to the brush area. Drag to mirror the area perpendicular to the direction of the stroke (to the left of the stroke). Alt-drag (Windows) or Option-drag (Mac OS) to mirror the area in the direction opposite to that of the stroke (for example, the area above a downward stroke). Usually, Alt-dragging or Option-dragging gives better results when you have frozen the area you want to reflect. Use overlapping strokes to create an effect similar to a reflection in water.

Turbulence tool

Smoothly scrambles pixels. It is useful for creating fire, clouds, waves, and similar effects.

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Liquify tool options

In the tool options area of the dialog box, set the following options:

Brush Size

Sets the width of the brush you'll use to distort the image.

Brush Pressure

Sets the speed at which distortions are made when you drag a tool in the preview image. Using a low brush pressure makes changes occur more slowly, so it's easier to stop them at exactly the right moment.

Brush Rate

Sets the speed at which distortions are applied when you keep a tool (such as the Twirl tool) stationary in the preview image. The higher the setting, the greater the speed at which distortions are applied.

Brush Density

Controls how a brush feathers at the edge. An effect is strongest in the center of the brush and lighter at the edge.

Turbulent Jitter

Control how tightly the Turbulence tool scrambles pixels.

Reconstruct Mode

Used for the Reconstruct tool, the mode you choose determines how the tool reconstructs an area of the preview image.

Select Stylus Pressure

Uses pressure readings from a stylus tablet. (This option is available only when you are working with a stylus tablet.) When selected, the brush pressure for the tools is the stylus pressure multiplied by the Brush Pressure value.

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Before

After View
Warp Tool
Slimming Hips and Shirt

Before

After
Opening Eyes

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Before

**After
Photoshop Diet**