Digital Test Strips

Making test strips is fundamental to effective and efficient printing in the darkroom and is just as important with digital images. The most effective way to judge the tone or colour is a printed copy of the image.

To make digital test strips firstly make sure that the layer containing the image is the active layer in order to copy the pixels in the image and ensure that any adjustment layers are still effective.

Select the **Rectangular Marquee Tool** (**M**) and check that the selection tool is in **Normal Mode** in the **Options Bar**.

Select a strip of the image in an area where the colour or tone is important e.g. skin tones in a portrait.
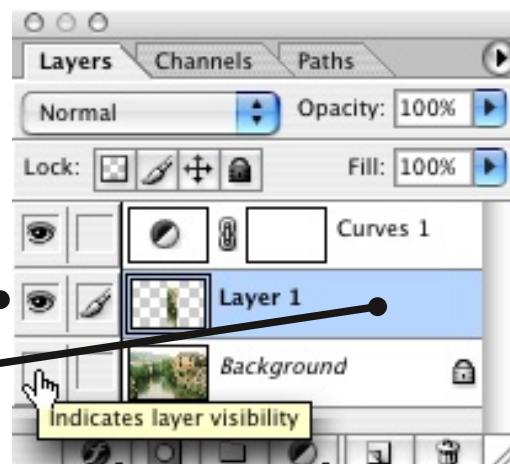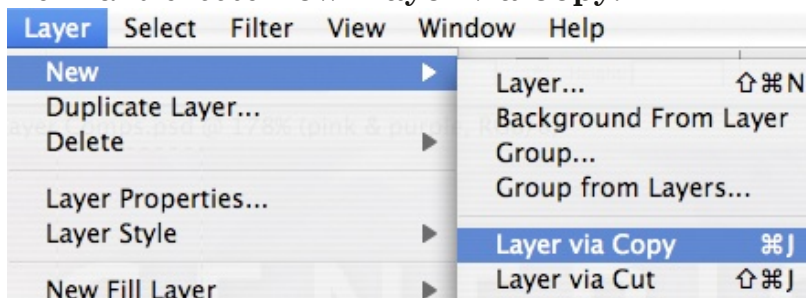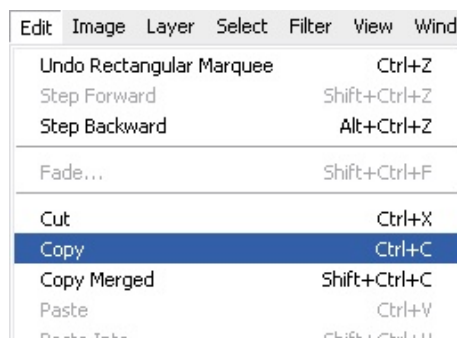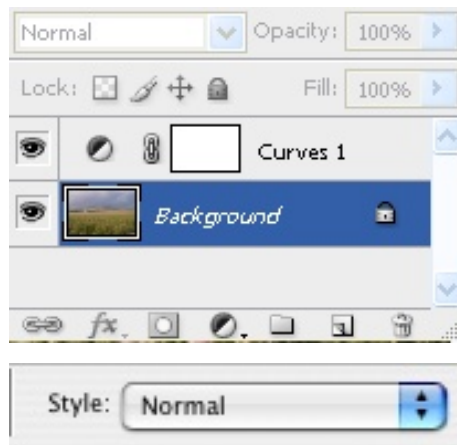
With the selection active go to the **Edit Menu** and choose **Copy** and then immediately return to the **Edit Menu** and this time choose **Paste**.

Alternatively go to the Layer Menu and choose **New>Layer via Copy**.
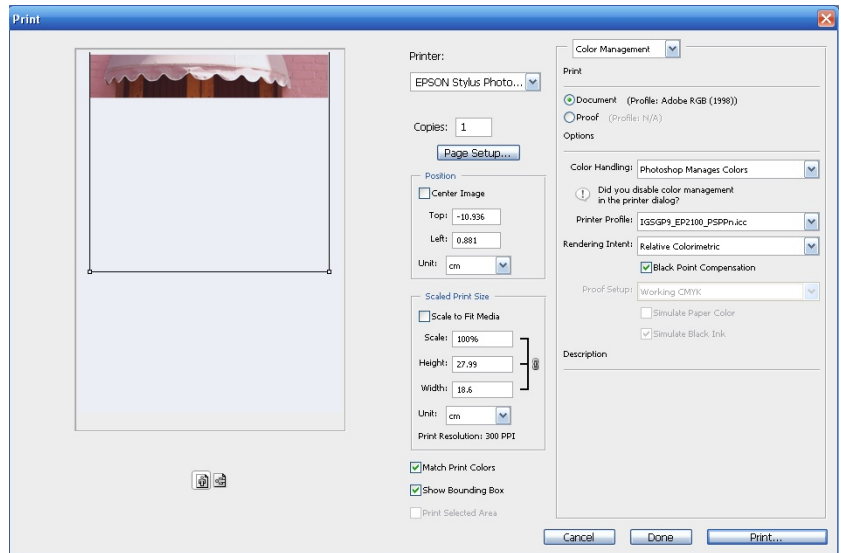
Either method will create a new Layer containing a copy of the selected pixels above the layer containing the image.

To print the strip turn off the visibility of the original image by clicking the **Layer Visibility** icon, the eye, in the **Layers Palette**.
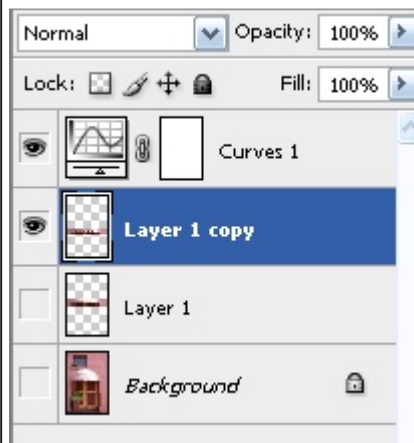
NB The test strip layer should be above the image and below any adjustment layers.
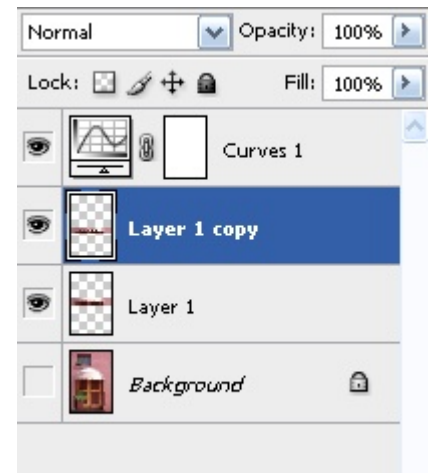
In the **Photoshop Print Dialog** box turn off **Center Image** in the **Position** box and move the test strip to the top of the page with the cursor. Print the test strip by following the printing procedures and settings you will use when printing the whole image.

If it is necessary to print further test strips make the appropriate modifications to the **Adjustment Layers** first. Then duplicate the Test Strip layer ensuring that the new copy is alongside the original test strip in the layer order of the file.

In the image the new test strip is on top of the first so use the **Move Tool** to move the new test strip copy to a position just below the first Test Strip.

Turn off the **Visibility** of the first test strip layer which will prevent it from printing.

Place the sheet of paper back in the printer with the orientation the same as it was when the first strip was printed.

Go to the **File Menu** and select **Print**. The second test strip should appear just below where the first one printed on the page.

Print this second and any subsequent test strips as above making sure that all settings are the same as those that will be used to print the final image.