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Welcome to the World of Bokeh

What is Bokeh?

In photography, bokeh (derived from the Japanese ボケ味) refers to the visually distinctive character of the out-of-focus areas of a photograph. Alien Skin's Bokeh plug-in is a realistic lens simulator that allows you to alter the depth-of-field of a photograph after it has been taken. It can also be used to simulate tilt-shift and vignetting effects commonly used by photographers to draw the viewer's attention to certain areas of a photograph. The following highlights the major features of Bokeh:

- Easily create tilt-shift effects (e.g. Lensbaby) using the built-in radial and planar region shapes.
- Simulate realistic depth-of-field effects by importing selection masks from Photoshop.
- Create distinctive bokeh highlights using different diaphragm shapes.
- Plenty of creative controls to simulate many types of bokeh from smooth creamy bokeh to fancy heart-shaped highlights.
- Use natural vignetting to simulate real lens effects (e.g. Lomo) or creative vignetting to focus the viewer's attention to any region in your photograph.
- Ability to save, recall and share your favorite Bokeh settings.

Installation (same for both Macintosh and Windows)

Shut down your graphics host program (usually Photoshop).

Run the installer found on the CD or that you downloaded.

You will be asked to enter the username and password of an account with administrator privileges. If you don't have administrator privileges, talk to your IT gal or consult your Mac OS or Windows manual.

After the license agreement screen, you will see a list of compatible graphics programs on your computer. Choose one and click OK. If you want to install into another graphics program, run the installer again.

Activation

Bokeh has an activation system that works just like the one in Photoshop. Until Bokeh is activated, each time it starts it will ask you to activate. Activation is a very quick and easy process in which Bokeh lets our activation server know that your license code is in use. This only needs to be done once. Bokeh does not talk to our activation server again after it has been activated. No personal information is sent other than the license code.

You can use Bokeh for up to 30 days without activating. After that, Bokeh will stop working until you activate it.

You can have Bokeh activated on up to two computers at once, so you can have it on both your laptop and desktop computers. If you ever get rid of your computer, don't forget to deactivate Bokeh first! You can do that by going to the menu entry **Help>Deactivate**. Then you can activate Bokeh on a new computer.

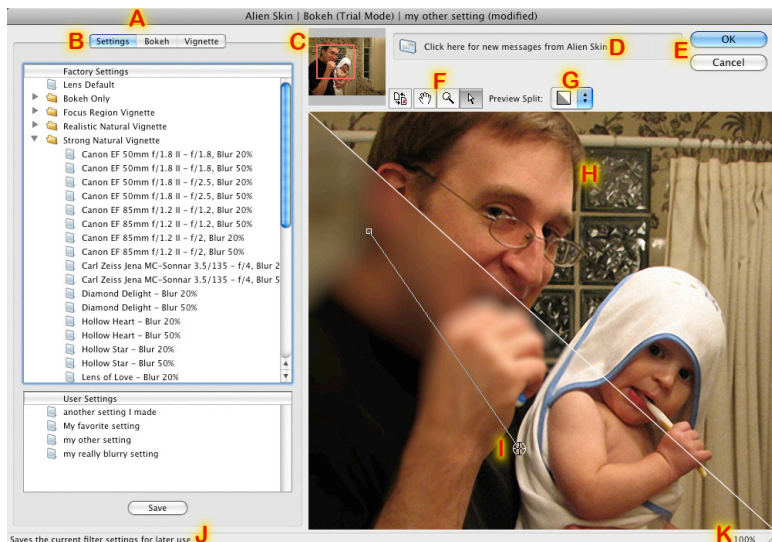
Other Sources of Help

This manual is just one of many sources of help for Bokeh. Once you start Bokeh, check out the Help menu for links to lots of helpful parts of our web site, including video tutorials. The video tutorial on getting started is a great one to watch before you run Bokeh for the first time. Also watch the text at the bottom of the Bokeh window to learn about whatever your cursor is near.

User Interface Overview

The next few sections give detailed info on what every control in the Bokeh user interface does. Screen shots are randomly from a Macintosh or Windows computer, whichever was handy at the time. All the gizmos are in the same places and behave the same way on both platforms. They are just more shiny on the Mac.

Below is a screen shot of the Bokeh user interface with the Settings Tab selected.



A: Title Bar

The title bar displays the currently selected setting.

B: Tabs

The Settings Tab lets you quickly select a preset or one of your saved custom settings. The Bokeh and Vignette Tabs let you manipulate every aspect of the filter. Each tab is described in detail in later sections.

C: Navigation Thumbnail

Click and drag the movable red box to quickly move the preview around your image.

D: UpToDate Message Indicator

When you see this visual cue, you have a new message from Alien Skin Software. Click here to open a web page containing the message. UpToDate messages are usually announcements of

updates, new products, or our monthly newsletter. You can set the frequency that UpToDate checks for messages or turn it completely off in the Preferences dialog.

E: Ok and Cancel

Clicking the OK button applies the filter with the current settings. Clicking Cancel closes the filter window without applying the effect. The Enter key is the same as clicking OK and Escape is the same as clicking Cancel.

F: Preview Tools (only one at a time is active)



Click and hold the **Show Original Button** to see the unmodified form of the image. An easier way to do this is to simply hold down the Spacebar.



Click the hand to enable the **Move Tool**. Then click and drag in the preview to move around the image.



Click the magnifying glass to enable the **Zoom Tool**. Then you can click in the preview window to zoom in. Option+click (Macintosh) or Alt+click (Windows) to zoom out.

Double-clicking the magnifying glass resets the preview window to 100% magnification. While in zoom mode, holding down the Spacebar temporarily switches to the **Move Tool**. Many of the same shortcut keys that Photoshop uses to navigate a preview window work in Bokeh too.



Click the arrow to enable the **Adjustment Tool**. While this tool is active, you can see and manipulate focus region shapes overlaid on the preview. The type of focus region is set on the Bokeh Tab.

G: Split Screen Preview

Above the preview area is a menu of options for split screen previewing. When enabled, this feature shows the original image in half of the preview. The entries in the Split Screen menu specify the orientation of the split line or simply turn it off.

H: Preview Area

Preview the effect on your image here. Resize the filter window to make the preview area larger or smaller.

I: Focus Region Controls

When the Focus Region is set to **Radial** or **Planar**, special controls are drawn on top of the preview. The screen shot shows the Planar controls. You can only see and manipulate these controls when you are using the Adjustment Tool, which is the arrow above the preview.

J: Mouseover Help

Whenever you move your cursor over a user interface element, a short description appears in the bottom left corner of the window.

K: Progress Bar and Magnification Indicator

While the preview is being drawn, a progress bar is drawn to the left of the magnification indicator. The magnification indicator shows the current zoom level of the preview.

Menus

Command menus are accessible when you launch Bokeh. Macintosh users will see the menus in place of their usual menu bar. Windows users will see the menus at the top of the plug-in window.

Edit Menu

The Edit menu provides an unlimited ability to undo or redo changes. If you experiment with the sliders and find that you prefer a previous group of settings, select the Undo command from the Edit menu or click Command+Z (Control+Z on Windows) to back up as many times as necessary. The Edit menu also lets you copy, cut, and paste values from parameter fields.

View Menu

The View menu lets you zoom the preview in and out. To display the entire image in the preview window, select **Fit On Screen**. To display the preview at 100% magnification, select **Actual Pixels**. See **Keyboard Shortcuts** for some nifty zooming shortcuts.

Help Menu

From the Help menu you can read the PDF manual (this document). The same assistance can be reached by pressing F1 (Windows) or Help (Macintosh).

There are Help menu entries that go to the following places on our Web site:

- Video Tutorials
- Bokeh Product Web Page
- Alien Skin Software's Home Page
- Online Forums
- Support Knowledgebase
- UpToDate Messages

From the Help menu you can Activate or Deactivate the locally installed copy of Bokeh. See the **Activation** section earlier in this document for more information.

Preferences

Select Edit>Preferences (Windows) or Photoshop>Preferences (Macintosh) to modify preferences. You can also get there by typing Command+K (Macintosh) or Control+K (Windows).

UpToDate

Here you can set the frequency at which the **UpToDate** system checks for messages from Alien Skin Software. The **UpToDate** system informs you about the latest Alien Skin Software products, special offers, software updates and other news. When a new message is ready, a button will appear at the top of the user interface labeled “Click here for new messages from Alien Skin.”

Preview Background

If you use layers with transparency, you can set the color or pattern that is drawn to represent transparent pixels in the preview.

Favor Memory or Speed

If Bokeh runs out of memory, try moving this slider toward the **Memory** side. Then restart Photoshop and you may find that the problem goes away. If you are using images over 4 megapixels, then you may get a mild speed boost by moving the slider toward the **Speed** side.

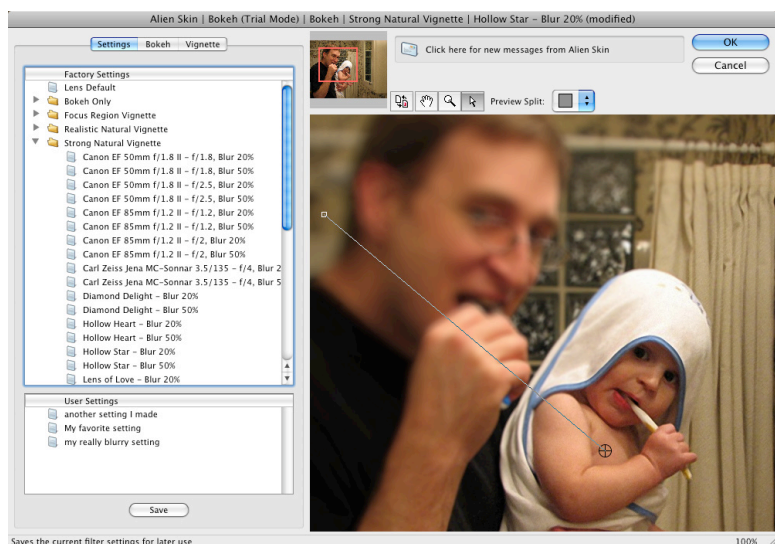
Disable Output On New Layer

Most of the time, the capability to render Bokeh’s output to a new layer is handy. This can be done by turning on the checkbox on the Bokeh Tab named “Create Output In New Layer Above Current”. However, that feature is not compatible with Photoshop actions. If you record an action with that checkbox on, nothing will happen when you play the action back. If you are going to record a lot of actions, it is useful to turn this feature off in the Preferences dialog.

Keyboard Shortcuts

SHORTCUT FUNCTION	MACINTOSH	WINDOWS
Navigate to Next Control	Tab	Tab
Navigate to Previous Control	Shift+Tab	Shift+Tab
OK	Return	Enter
Cancel	Escape	Escape
Undo	⌘+Z	Ctrl+Z
Redo	⌘+Y	Ctrl+Y
Cut	⌘+X	Ctrl+X
Copy	⌘+C	Ctrl+C
Paste	⌘+V	Ctrl+V
Zoom In	⌘++	Ctrl++
Zoom Out	⌘+-	Ctrl+ -
Actual Pixels	Option+⌘+Zero	Alt+Ctrl+Zero
Fit on Screen	⌘+Zero	Ctrl+Zero
Load Factory Default Setting	⌘+R	F5
Load Last Used Setting	⌘+L	Ctrl+L
Save Setting	⌘+S	Ctrl+S
Switch to Move Tool (hand)	H	H
Switch to Zoom Tool	Z	Z
Switch to Adjustment Tool	A	A
Preview Move (with zoom enabled)	Space Bar+Drag	Space Bar+Drag
Zoom In (with zoom enabled)	Mouse Click	Left Mouse Click
Zoom In (with move enabled)	⌘+Click	Ctrl+Click
Zoom Out	Option + Mouse Click	Alt + Mouse Click
Drag preview (with zoom enabled) – also displays original image	Hold spacebar while dragging	Hold spacebar while dragging
Zoom to Actual Pixels	Double-click Zoom Tool	Double-click Zoom Tool
Increase/Decrease Slider by 1	Up/Down Arrow	Up/Down Arrow
Increase/Decrease Slider by 10	Shift+Up/Down Arrow	Shift+Up/Down Arrow
Open Manual	⌘+ / or Help	F1
Open Preferences Dialog	⌘+K	Ctrl+K

Settings Tab



The Settings tab lets you create, manage, and share your favorite settings. There are two lists on the Settings tab. The top list contains factory settings. Factory settings are supplied with the product and can't be changed. The bottom list contains user settings, which are settings you can create yourself.

Loading Settings

Simply click on a setting to move all the controls to the values saved in that setting. The only controls that are not loaded from a setting are the **Region and Blur Controls** section of the **Bokeh Tab**. We did that because you generally don't want your radial sweet spot to move just because you are switching lens type.

Saving Settings

To save a setting, first adjust the sliders and other filter controls to your satisfaction. Then, click the **Save Button** at the bottom of the **Settings Tab**. You can also save a setting by pressing Command+S (Macintosh) or Control+S (Windows). The Save Setting dialog box will appear. There you can specify the name and category of the new setting.

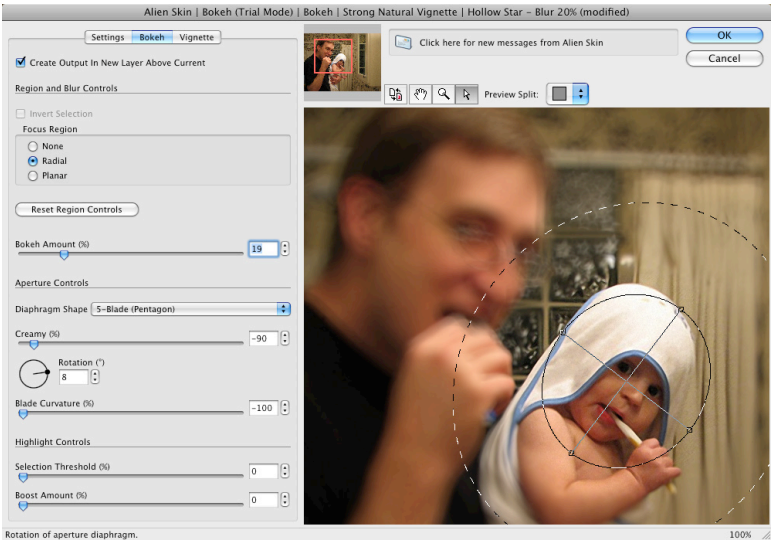
Modifying Settings

To modify the control values in a setting, move the controls and then save the setting with the

same name. This is easy because the Save Settings dialog is always filled out with the most recently loaded setting name.

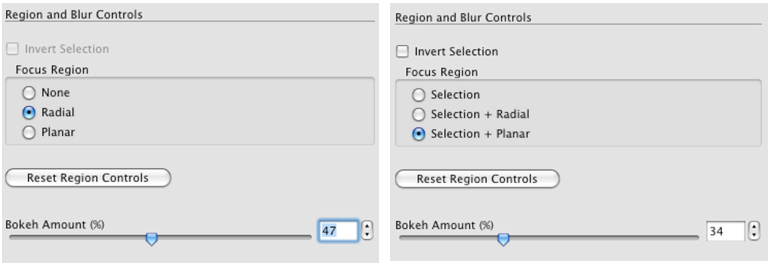
You can also right-click (Windows) or Control-click (Macintosh) on a setting to rename, delete, export, or e-mail it.

Bokeh Tab



Region and Blur Controls

Bokeh can be used with and without a selection mask. Bokeh automatically detects the presence of a selection and changes the GUI controls appropriately, as shown in the following pictures.



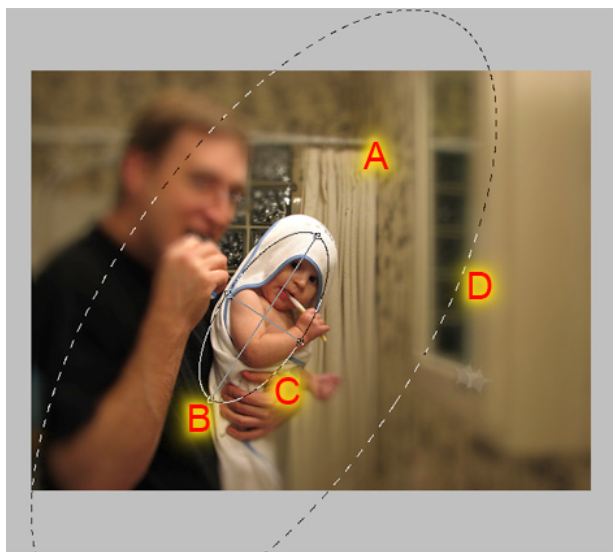
When there is no selection, you can choose between three built-in Focus Region options:

- **None:** With no focus region, the entire image is blurred.
- **Radial:** A radial sweet spot will appear over the image. The area within the solid oval is kept in focus. The area between the solid oval and the dashed oval will be blurred in a gradually increasing amount. The area outside the dashed oval will be blurred the most.
- **Planar:** A planar gradient is useful for creating a gradual change in the amount of blurring.

When a selection is used, you can choose between three ways to use the Focus Region options:

- **Selection Only:** By default, the area within the selection is kept in focus. The area outside the selection is blurred. This behavior can be reversed by using the Invert Selection option.
- **Selection and Radial:** A radial sweet spot is added to the selection region.
- **Selection and Planar:** A planar gradient is added to the selection.

Note that a selection can be used only if Bokeh is not run as a Smart Filter.



The radial sweet spot tool can be controlled by using the mouse to click and drag the regions labeled in the above picture.

A: Click and drag in any region within the dashed line to reposition the radial sweet spot.

B: Move any one of the four control points to make the radial shape more or less oval. If the Shift key is held down, the control points move in 45-degree increments.

C: Move the solid oval to change the size of the radial sweet spot.

D: Move the dashed oval to change the feathering amount.



The planar gradient can be controlled by using the mouse to click and drag the two control points and the line, as labeled in the picture to the left.

A: Move the large control point to change the location where the gradual blurring begins.

B: Move the line to reposition both the beginning and end of the gradual blurring.

C: Move the small control point to change the location where the gradual blurring ends.

Reset Region Controls

Use this button to reset the radial and planar tools to their default shapes.

Bokeh Amount

The “Bokeh Amount” slider controls the maximum amount of blur applied to the

image. Some parts of the image may get less blur depending on the region you have specified.

Aperture Controls

These controls affect the shape of the lens aperture diaphragm and other attributes to generate realistic bokeh. The effects of changing these controls are most visible if there are point light sources in the image. If the scene is evenly illuminated with no highlights, the effects of changing these controls may not be obvious.

Diaphragm Shape

The shape of the diaphragm changes the shape of the circle of confusion, and hence the shape of the bokeh. A perfect circle is the most common shape for a wide open aperture and it is the default setting. Polygons or a heart shape are also possible.

Creamy

Bokeh that is soft and where the diaphragm shape is not obvious is often called “creamy”. This slider allows you to control the amount of creaminess you wish to add to an image.

At negative values of creaminess, the bokeh becomes harsh and can appear as a ring for a circular diaphragm shape. This can sometimes be used for creative purposes.

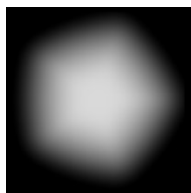
Rotation

Use this control to rotate the shape of the diaphragm. This control is disabled when the shape is a perfect circle.

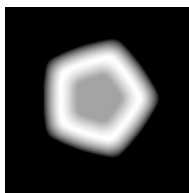
Blade Curvature

By default, all blades are straight at 0% curvature. Positive curvature makes the shape more round. Negative curvature makes the shape more like a star. This control is enabled only for polygon shapes.

These pictures show how a highlight is affected by a 5-blade aperture.



High Creaminess



Low Creaminess



High Curvature



Low Curvature

Highlight Controls

Bokeh effects are most visible when there are bright light sources in the scene being photographed. These controls can be used to boost highlights to make bokeh more visible. It is possible that a scene has no highlights and using these controls to boost midtones or shadows could produce ugly results.

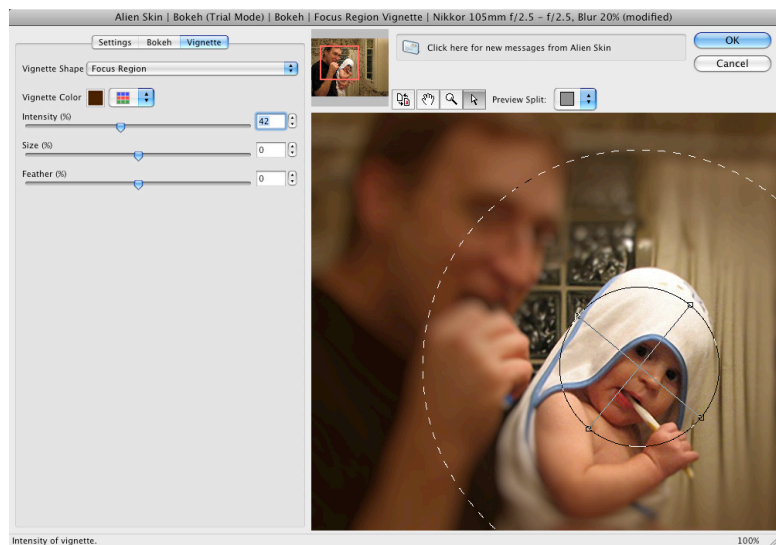
Selection Threshold

Pixels brighter than this threshold are considered highlights. As this threshold is increased, more and more pixels are selected for boosting.

Boost Amount

This controls the amount of highlight boosting pixels get. Large boosting creates brighter and more visible highlights.

Vignette Tab



A vignette is a darkening of the border of an image. These controls simulate natural vignetting like that from real camera lenses. They also provide ways to create vignette effects to creatively focus attention to different parts of the image.

Vignette Shape

There are two types of vignette shape: Focus Region and Natural. When set to Focus Region, the position of the vignette shape follows the Focus Region shape set in the Bokeh tab. When set to Natural, the shape is an oval centered in the middle of the image.

Vignette Color

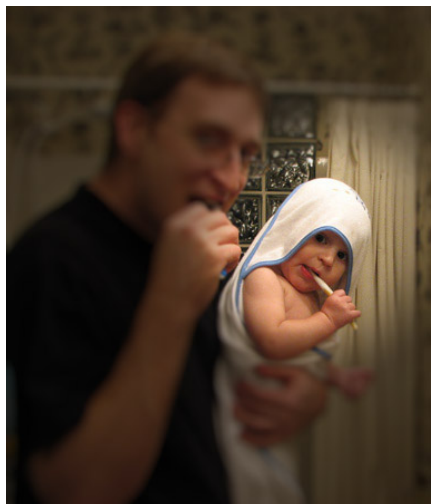
Traditionally, vignettes are black because they are caused by a reduction of light near the border of the image. For creative purposes, Bokeh allows vignettes to be generated in any color.

Intensity

This control changes the intensity of the vignette. At 0%, no vignette is applied. At 100%, some pixels will be completely changed to the vignette color, depending on the vignette shape.

Size and Feather

0% is the default size and feathering amount. If Focus Region is used as the Vignette Shape, these default values are those set in the Bokeh tab. The size and feathering amounts can be increased or decreased from their defaults using these sliders.



Vignette Shape is set to Focus Region and a radial focus region was placed over the baby's head.



Vignette Shape is set to Natural. This just darkens the edges of the photo.