

How to Fix Photoshop Drag-and-Drop Issues on Windows

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Quick answer

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Many Photoshop users encounter a frustrating issue where the drag-and-drop functionality suddenly stops working. Instead of easily importing images by dragging them into the workspace, users are forced to rely on the 'Open File' menu option, disrupting their workflow. This guide provides a clear and practical solution to resolve this problem on Windows systems.

Whether you are running Windows 7, Windows 10, or the latest Windows 11, this article will walk you through two effective methods to fix the issue: tweaking the Windows registry or adjusting the User Account Control (UAC) settings. There's no need to reinstall Photoshop or explore overly technical workarounds. These straightforward steps will have the drag-and-drop functionality back in no time.

Why Does the Drag-and-Drop Problem Occur?

The issue often stems from Windows security settings that interfere with Photoshop's operation. Changes in UAC configurations or incorrect registry values are common culprits. Interestingly, this problem has been discussed in various forums and even in the feedback section of Photoshop's official website, highlighting its prevalence among users.

Before proceeding, note that this guide is exclusively for Windows users. The fixes outlined here do not apply to Mac or Linux due to their entirely different file systems and OS structures.

Let's dive into the step-by-step process to resolve the drag-and-drop issue in Photoshop and restore smooth functionality.

Steps to Fix Photoshop Drag and Drop Not Working Issue

These steps apply to Windows systems (Windows 7, 10, and 11). Unfortunately, they won't work on Mac or Linux due to differences in file systems and operating systems.

Fix 1: Edit the Windows Registry

1. Press Win + S to open the search bar, type 'regedit' , and select the regedit Run Command.
2. In the Registry Editor, navigate to: 'HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\System' .
3. Locate EnableLUA on the right-hand side and double-click it.
4. In the value field, change 1 to 0 and ensure the Base is set to Hexadecimal .
5. Click OK to save changes.
6. Restart your computer to apply the changes.

7. Open Photoshop and check if the drag-and-drop feature is working.

Note: The 'EnableLUA' change disables certain UAC prompts. If you're concerned about security, ensure you're not installing untrusted software.

Fix 2: Adjust User Account Control Settings

1. Open the Control Panel on your Windows system.
2. Navigate to System and Security > Action Center .
3. Click Change User Account Control settings .
4. Move the slider to the lowest setting, which says Never Notify .
5. Click OK , then restart your computer.
6. Launch Photoshop and verify if the issue is resolved.

Note: This solution is quicker but may not work for all systems. If it doesn't work, try the registry edit solution.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What if the registry and UAC fixes don't solve the drag-and-drop issue in Photoshop?

If the main solutions don't help, try these additional methods:

- Right-click the Photoshop shortcut or '.exe' file and disable "Run as administrator" under compatibility settings.
- Reset Photoshop preferences by holding Alt + Ctrl + Shift (Windows) or Command + Option + Shift (Mac) while launching the app.
- Check for recent Windows updates that might be causing issues.
- Use an alternative method like File > Place Embedded or File > Place Linked instead of drag-and-drop.
- Make sure antivirus or security tools aren't blocking drag-and-drop features.

2. How can I fix drag-and-drop problems on a Mac?

Mac users can follow these steps:

- Go to System Preferences > Security & Privacy > Privacy > Full Disk Access , and add Photoshop to the list.
- Instead of dropping files into the Photoshop window, drag them onto the Photoshop icon in the dock to open as new documents.
- Reset preferences by holding Command + Option + Shift when opening Photoshop.
- Confirm that your macOS version supports your current Photoshop version.

3. Will changing EnableLUA or UAC settings affect other apps?</h3>

Yes, these settings apply to the entire system:

- Disabling EnableLUA or lowering UAC affects how all apps run, not just Photoshop.
- It reduces security prompts, which may make your system slightly less secure.
- If security is a concern, try using File > Place instead of changing these settings.
- Always keep your antivirus up to date if you decide to reduce system security settings.

4. I'm seeing an error that apps can't run with the built-in administrator account. What should I do?

This error is common after changing UAC or registry settings:

- Don't set EnableLUA to 0; instead, use a minimal value .
- Uncheck "Run as administrator" from Photoshop's compatibility settings.
- Create a standard user account just for Photoshop if needed.
- If you require admin access for other software, switch settings only when using Photoshop .

5. Does the drag-and-drop issue affect Photoshop CC 2023/2024?

Yes, and here's how to handle it:

- For Photoshop CC 2024, don't run it as administrator -this causes drag-and-drop to stop working.
- Users on version 25.7 report issues; rolling back to 25.6 has helped some.
- Make sure both the Photoshop executable and the taskbar shortcut have "Run as administrator" disabled.
- For newer versions, adjusting compatibility settings is often more effective than registry changes .

6. Will I need to apply these fixes again after updating Photoshop?

Possibly, yes:

- Some Photoshop updates reset compatibility settings , so drag-and-drop may break again.
- If that happens, check if "Run as administrator" was turned back on.
- Registry changes usually remain unless a major Windows update reverses them.
- You may need to redo the steps after installing new texture packs or assets .

Quick Recap

- Fix 1: Edit the Windows registry ('EnableLUA' to 0).
- Fix 2: Adjust UAC settings to the lowest level.
- These fixes are for Windows systems only and don't work on Mac or Linux.

Conclusion

We hope these steps resolved the Photoshop drag-and-drop issue on your Windows system. If you still face problems or have additional questions, drop them in the comments section below. Once resolved, you can enjoy a smoother editing experience in Photoshop.