Colour settings in Photoshop

Sometimes confusion can arise over colour spaces and colour setting options in Photoshop in general. To overcome this here is a quick summary of the options.

Working spaces – RGB

There are a number of viable options here, depending on your ultimate use for your images. If you are intending to print images then you should choose a colour space with a fairly wide gamut. The normal options here are:

- *Adobe RGB (1998)* This has a reasonably wide gamut, approximating to the size of many inkjet printers' gamuts (though not the exact same set of colours).

- *ProPhoto RGB* This has a very wide gamut, similar to that of most quality digital cameras. It is the colour space that Camera RAW and Lightroom use. It includes some colours the eye can't see!

- *Bruce RGB* Wider than Adobe RGB (1998) and narrower than ProPhoto RGB.

If practicable you should work with 16 bit files with wide colour spaces such as ProPhoto RGB. I would also recommend printer/paper profiling and soft proofing of the results as your printer/ink/paper combination might be unable to print all of the colours if you choose a wide colour space.

If you are intending **only** to publish images on the web and/or use them for projected images or monitor display then you might want to use the much smaller sRGB IEC61966-2.1. The advantage is that the web works to the sRGB standard, lower end monitors and digital protectors have a narrow colour gamut more closely matched to sRGB than to say Adobe RGB. The disadvantage is that you are throwing away a lot of colour depth information that cannot be retrieved without returning to the original RAW file … you do shoot RAW?!

More info on ProPhoto RGB v Adobe RGB is at Luminous Landscape

CMYK

Useful for commercial printing, irrelevant for inkjet printing and most club photographers.

Gray

Only affects images converted to grayscale. If most of your work is either displayed on web, emailed or printed on an inkjet, gamma 2.2 is probably the best overall choice.

Spot

Not really relevant.

Colour management policies

This governs what Photoshop does when it opens an image with a different embedded colour space from the defaults set above, or no colour space embedded at all. As converting between spaces changes colours destructively I minimise the need for conversions and set “Preserve embedded profiles” for all three (RGB, CMYK, Gray).

If you tick the boxes below e.g. Profile mismatches – ask when opening then Photoshop will display a warning box when it encounters a different profile from the defaults.

Conversion options

No need to change from the defaults here, Adobe (ACE), Relative colorimetric, use black point compensation, use dither, etc.

Advanced controls

No need to tick these boxes in most cases.