GIMP Cheat Sheet for Graphic Design

A comprehensive cheat sheet covering essential GIMP tools, techniques, and shortcuts for graphic design, image manipulation, and digital art.

Interface & Basic Operations

Core Interface Elements

Toolbox	Contains tools for selection, painting, transforming, etc.
Layers Panel	Manages image layers, their order, and blending modes.
Brushes/Patterns/Gradients Panel	Provides options for brush types, patterns, and gradients.
Image Window	Displays the active image and allows direct manipulation.
Menus	File, Edit, Select, View, Image, Layer, Colors, Tools, Filters, Windows, Help

Basic File Operations

New	`Ctrl + N` : Creates a new image.
Open	`Ctrl + O` : Opens an existing image.
Save	`Ctrl + S` : Saves the current image in its native .xcf format.
Export	`Ctrl + Shift + E` : Exports the image to other formats like .jpg, .png.
Close	`Ctrl + W` : Closes the current image.
Quit	`Ctrl + Q` : Quits GIMP application.

Undo/Redo & History

`Ctrl + Z` : Undo the last action.	
`Ctrl + Y` or `Ctrl + Shift + Z` : Redo the last undone action.	
Edit > Undo History: Access the history panel for more advanced undo/redo options.	

Selection Tools

Selection Tool Overview

Rectangle Select Tool	Selects a rectangular area of the image.
Ellipse Select Tool	Selects an elliptical or circular area.
Free Select Tool (Lasso)	Allows freehand selection.
Fuzzy Select Tool (Magic Wand)	Selects contiguous areas based on color similarity.
Select By Color Tool	Selects areas based on color.
Scissors Select Tool (Intelligent Scissors)	Selects objects by tracing their edges.

Selection Modifiers

Add to Selection	`Shift + Click and Drag` : Adds the new selection to the existing selection.
Subtract from Selection	`Ctrl + Click and Drag` : Subtracts the new selection from the existing selection.
Intersect with Selection	`Shift + Ctrl + Click and Drag` : Creates a selection of the intersection between the new and existing selections.
Feather Edges	Selection > Feather: Softens the edges of a selection.
Invert Selection	`Ctrl + I` : Inverts the current selection.
None	`Shift + Ctrl + A` : Removes the selection.

Quick Mask

Toggles Quick Mask mode for refining selections with paint tools.

1. Select area
2. `Shift + Q` to enable quick mask.
3. Paint to refine.
4. `Shift + Q` to disable quick mask.

Layers & Masks

Layer Operations

New Layer	`Shift + Ctrl + N` : Creates a new layer.
Duplicate Layer	`Shift + Ctrl + D` : Duplicates the selected layer.
Delete Layer	`Shift + Ctrl + C` : Deletes the selected layer.
Merge Down	`Ctrl + M` : Merges the selected layer with the layer below it.
Flatten Image	Image > Flatten Image: Merges all layers into a single layer.
Layer Visibility	Click the eye icon next to a layer in the Layers panel to toggle its visibility.

Blending Modes

Located in the Layers panel, blending modes control how a layer interacts with the layers below it.

Common modes include:

- **Normal**: Default mode.
- **Multiply**: Darkens the image, simulating the effect of overlapping markers.
- **Screen**: Lightens the image.
- **Overlay**: Combines Multiply and Screen modes.
- **Difference**: Shows the difference between the layer and the layers below.

Layer Masks

Add Layer Mask	Right-click layer > Add Layer Mask: Creates a mask that controls the layer's transparency. White = Fully visible. Black = Fully transparent. Grayscale = Partially transparent.
Edit Layer Mask	Click on the layer mask thumbnail in the Layers panel to edit it. Use paint tools (black/white/grayscale) to modify transparency.
Disable/Enable Mask	`Shift + Click` on the layer mask thumbnail to temporarily disable or enable the mask.
Delete Layer Mask	Right-click on layer mask > Delete Layer Mask.

Color Correction & Filters

Color Tools

Levels	Colors > Levels: Adjusts the tonal range of an image by setting black, white, and gray points.
Curves	Colors > Curves: Provides more precise control over tonal adjustments using curves.
Color Balance	Colors > Color Balance: Adjusts the balance of colors in shadows, midtones, and highlights.
Hue-Saturation	Colors > Hue-Saturation: Adjusts the hue, saturation, and lightness of specific color ranges or the entire image.
Brightness-Contrast	Colors > Brightness-Contrast: Adjusts the overall brightness and contrast of the image.
Posterize	Colors > Posterize: Reduces the number of colors in an image, creating a posterized effect.

Common Filters

Blur	Filters > Blur: Blurs the image or a selection. Gaussian Blur is a common option.
Sharpen	Filters > Enhance > Sharpen: Sharpens the image or a selection.
Unsharp Mask	Filters > Enhance > Unsharp Mask: A more advanced sharpening filter.
Noise Reduction	Filters > Enhance > Noise Reduction: Reduces noise in the image.
Distorts	Filters > Distorts: Apply various distortions effects to the image.
Artistic	Filters > Artistic: Apply artistic effects to the image.

Filter Tips

Apply filters on a duplicate layer to preserve the original image.

Use layer masks to selectively apply filters to specific areas.

Experiment with different filter settings to achieve the desired effect.