ABRA CADABRA
Demystifying the Magic Extractor tool, p13

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Adding the Lasso tool to your selection tool repertoire, p25

RESTORATION STATION
Dodge and burn your way to correct exposure, p22
By now, Photoshop Elements 4.0 has been out for a while and one of the ongoing questions continues to be, “Should I upgrade or not?” And the answer? Well, it continues to be, “It depends.” Some people will look at the new features and think they’ve gotta have it. Others will happily continue to use Photoshop Elements 3.0.

From the perspective of this newsletter and our website, it doesn’t really matter since we’ll continue to include articles and tutorials that can be used regardless of the version. While the screen captures might happen to be in Elements 4.0, the technique that’s being shown doesn’t change if you use version 3.0. And if there is a different step required in Elements 3.0, we’ll be sure to let you know that too.

At the same time, we’ll be including the occasional tutorial that works only in Elements 4.0, and when we do, we’ll make every effort to include some ideas on how to achieve the same result in Elements 3.0. So, whether you do or don’t move to Elements 4.0, don’t worry (be happy).

Finally, on behalf of all of us here at Photoshop Elements Techniques, I wish you a safe, happy, and peaceful holiday season.

Until next time...

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FEATURES

BRUSHING BASICS
Half of the tools in Photoshop Elements work with a brush in some way, and brushes are one of the most important areas you’ll work with. That’s why it’s so critical to make sure you know the capabilities and basic ideas behind using brushes.

UNDOCUMENTED SECRETS OF THE MAGIC EXTRACTOR
Those of you working with Photoshop Elements 4.0 have probably discovered the Magic Extractor and have been a little confused by its name. Not to worry. This article is all about demystifying the magic and getting the most out of the Magic Extractor tool.

STEP BY STEP

SO YOU WANT TO SELL SOMETHING ON EBAY
Have you ever wanted to sell something on eBay and realized you need to send a photograph? What do you do first? Whether you have a small studio setup or whether you have to put something together, the basics of getting a good clean image are explained here.

SELECTION SECRETS
In previous issues, you’ve learned about the Magic Wand and the Rectangular Marquee selection tools, both of which are used on a regular basis. Here you’ll expand your selection tool repertoire and skill set with the Lasso tools.

COLUMNS

SCRAPBOOKERS’ WORKSHOP: CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT
If you’re like everyone else, you take hordes of photos every year during the holidays. This year we’ll show you how to turn one of those photos into a Christmas tree ornament for your scrapbook layout. It’ll really make your page pop!

RESTORATION STATION: BURN AND DODGE YOUR WAY TO CORRECT EXPOSURE
Age, unregulated temperatures, and exposure to the elements can take its toll on vintage photos. Sometimes this can result in less than desirable exposure problems, but burning and dodging can help restore the detail in these photos for permanent digital archiving.

Wherever you see the symbol at the end of an article, it means there’s additional material for that story at www.photoshopelementsuser.com.
Brushes are one of the most important features you’ll work with in Photoshop Elements. Nearly everything you do to your images and photos will involve using a brush in some way. Elements provides a Brush tool for actually painting color onto your images, but there’s so much more to the Brush tool than meets the eye.

**WORKING WITH BRUSH PRESETS**
While there are a lot of features available when working with brushes, brushes are actually very easy to start using. Once you select the Brush tool in the Toolbox, you’ll see several options in the Options Bar near the menus along the top of the screen. The first area you’ll want to become familiar with is the thumbnail preview. This area shows you what the currently selected brush will look like. You can click on either the thumbnail preview or the small down-facing arrow next to the preview to view a pop-up palette that contains all the brush presets. From this Brushes pop-up palette you can choose a different brush shape and size.

IF I TOLD YOU THAT NEARLY HALF OF THE TOOLS IN PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS’ TOOLBOX WORK WITH A BRUSH IN SOME WAY, YOU MAY BE SURPRISED. IT’S TRUE, THOUGH. MUCH OF THE WORK WE DO TO OUR PHOTOS INVOLVES USING A BRUSH IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. THAT’S WHY IT’S SO IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE YOU KNOW THE CAPABILITIES AND BASIC CONCEPTS BEHIND USING BRUSHES. WE’LL COVER JUST THAT IN THIS ARTICLE.

**brushing basics**

BY MATT KLOSEWOSKI

While there are a lot of features available when working with brushes, brushes are actually very easy to start using.
The next area to look at is the Size pop-up slider. This option allows you to control the size of the brush tip. A smaller size will result in a smaller brush stroke. As you can probably guess, a larger size setting will result in a larger brush stroke.

You’ll also see a setting for Opacity. This essentially controls how much of the color that Elements will apply to the canvas when painting. For example, painting with a color at 50% opacity will look much different than painting at 100% opacity.

**CHANGING BRUSH OPTIONS**

Now that you know the basics, let’s take a look at some of the more powerful options that you have access to when working with brushes. Your leap pad into this area is the More Options button on the right side of the Options Bar toward the top right of the Elements’ interface. By clicking this button, you’ll get a peek at the additional options available when working with brushes. Let’s go ahead and take a look at these settings from the top down:

- **Spacing**: Spacing allows you to control, well, the space between each brush tip shape in the stroke. For example, a very low Spacing setting for a round brush will make the brush stroke appear as one line. A setting in the middle (say 50%) will make the stroke appear as round circles very close to each other, and finally, a higher setting will make the stroke appear as individual dots or circles.

- **Hue Jitter**: This is a fun one. Here is where you can really start to get some realistic and interesting effects. This setting looks at the Foreground and Background colors and creates brush strokes with various color (hue) mixes of the two throughout the stroke.

- **Hardness**: This is another favorite. The hardness setting controls how hard or soft the brush tip shape appears from the center. A soft brush will have soft or fuzzy edges while a hard brush will have hard or crisp edges.

- **Scatter**: This one works best when used with Hue Jitter and can produce some incredibly realistic painterly effects. A higher scatter setting allows the brush strokes to be distributed randomly throughout the stroke as opposed to a nice uniform brush stroke.

- **Angle and Roundness**: These two settings affect the tip of the brush. They’re great when you want your brush strokes to have that calligraphic style to them.

**MAKING YOUR OWN BRUSH**

So at this point you’ve seen how to use the brushes that come with Photoshop Elements. However, what happens if you find that you’d like a different brush shape? Maybe the preset brushes just aren’t enough for you. Well the good news is that you can create your own brushes too. Here’s how:

**STEP ONE**: Press D to set your Foreground color to black, and then switch to the Custom Shape tool (U). Using the Custom Shape tool, create a shape or object on its own layer inside of Elements. You’ll want to make sure the object is black for this technique.

**STEP TWO**: Since this is a shape layer, you have to simplify it. From the Layers palette’s More flyout menu, choose Simplify Layer. (Note: You don’t need to do this if the object on the layer was not created with one of the Shape tools.)
STEP THREE: Select the Rectangle Marquee tool (M) and drag a rectangular selection around the object.

STEP FOUR: Choose Edit>Define Brush From Selection from the menu bar and you’ll see the Brush Name dialog appear. Give your brush a meaningful name and click OK.

STEP FIVE: Now, if you look inside the Brush pop-up palette and scroll down to the bottom, you’ll see your new brush ready to use. You can now paint with it and change its size (and any other settings) just as you’re able to with the other brushes that come with Photoshop Elements.

Hopefully, this article has whetted your appetite for what can be done with brushes. As I mentioned in the beginning, nearly half of the tools in Photoshop Elements involve a brush in some way. The nice part is that once you get to know how one brush works, you pretty much know how they all work. Essentially, by learning more about brushes, you’re learning more about many other tools, as well. I encourage you to explore the possibilities. Enjoy!

Perhaps the biggest breakthrough when it comes to painting on the computer (aside from the painting software itself) is the pen and tablet. These devices are incredible because they offer you something that you can’t fake with a mouse: pressure sensitivity.

When you use a Photoshop Elements’ brush with a pen and tablet, you can adjust how much (or little) of a brush’s effect you want to apply to the image by pressing down softer or harder with the pen on the tablet. Even better, there are settings right inside of Elements that are specific for these types of devices. They’re under the section in the Options Bar called Tablet Options.

In here, you can control the way the pen interacts with a brush by checking off various options. For example, if you check Size and choose a 20-pixel brush, pressing hard on the tablet with the pen will result in a large brush stroke and pressing soft will result in a smaller one.

Pressing the pen on the tablet firmly will result in a thicker brush stroke.

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SO YOU WANT TO SELL SOMETHING ON EBAY AND YOU NEED TO PHOTOGRAPH IT. WHAT DO YOU DO FIRST? LET’S SAY YOU WANT TO SELL A SMALL POINT-AND-SHOOT CAMERA BECAUSE YOU’VE GOTTEN A NEW, MORE ADVANCED ONE. WHETHER YOU HAVE A SMALL STUDIO SETUP OR WHETHER YOU HAVE TO PUT SOMETHING TOGETHER, THE BASICS OF GETTING A GOOD, CLEAN IMAGE ARE THE SAME.

**In the Studio**

**BY HELENE GLASSMAN**

**so you want to sell something on ebay**

SO YOU WANT TO SELL SOMETHING ON EBAY AND YOU NEED TO PHOTOGRAPH IT. WHAT DO YOU DO FIRST? LET’S SAY YOU WANT TO SELL A SMALL POINT-AND-SHOOT CAMERA BECAUSE YOU’VE GOTTEN A NEW, MORE ADVANCED ONE. WHETHER YOU HAVE A SMALL STUDIO SETUP OR WHETHER YOU HAVE TO PUT SOMETHING TOGETHER, THE BASICS OF GETTING A GOOD, CLEAN IMAGE ARE THE SAME.

**STEP ONE:** First, you need a nice clean surface to place your sale item on. In this example, I’m using a white sweep. You can also go to an art store and buy a large piece of white art paper. At home, place a table next to a wall and place your paper so that you can tape it on the wall and let it sweep down on to the table. (Use special masking tape that will not harm the paint on your wall.) Tape it down so it will not move and there will not be any wrinkles in it. It’s very important to have a clean simple environment so your item stands out. There should be a soft curve to the paper falling on the table.

**STEP TWO:** Place your item on the table about 7 to 10 inches from the curve of the paper. The item should be positioned at a 45° angle to your shooting camera so you can show dimension. Place your shooting camera on a tripod directly in front of the item on the white sweep. The tripod should place this camera about 6 to 7 inches above the item on the table. This also enhances the dimension of the item. Look through the lens and fill the frame as much as possible with your sale item. We’re not using strobe/flash to create our exposure, so we must be able to keep our shooting camera still during what could be a slow shutter speed exposure.
STEP THREE: We need to place the lights we're going to use. In this illustration, I've used two lights. A third light high above and slightly behind would be a good addition and give a more commercial look, but for our application, two will do. I have one on the left of my shooting camera at a 45° angle from the subject and about 10 inches above the subject. This is my key or main light. My second light is on the right and aimed at the back of the subject and lighting more of my sweep. It will also soften the shadow cast by the main light. I'm using the modeling lights attached to my studio flash units to light my subject.

STEP FOUR: We must set our shooting camera for the type of light we're using. Your camera should have a setting for flash, daylight, tungsten, or custom white balance. You need to check your instruction book to see how to set your personal camera for the lighting you're going to use. I've set my camera to tungsten, which looks like a lighted light bulb.

There should be a setting on your camera to turn off the built-in flash and you need to do that. At this distance we need to be very careful about depth-of-field. We need to have the item sharp from front to back. I've put my camera on manual setting. This gives me the most control. If you have an aperture-preferred setting that will do also. I want my aperture to be at least F:8 preferably F:11 for depth-of-field (the higher the aperture number, the greater the depth-of-field). Since you're on a tripod, a slow shutter speed should not be a problem. You need to do some testing to get your correct exposure adjusting your shutter speed. If you're using the setting aperture-preferred, your camera will automatically select the shutter speed. Be very careful when squeezing the shutter button so as not to cause movement as you could have a very slow shutter speed.
Helene Glassman is an award-winning photographer/businesswoman in Santa Barbara, California. She has been awarded Master of Photography and Photographic Craftsman degrees by Professional Photographers of America and is a PPA Certified Professional. Her company, Imagery Photography, has been a well-respected and successful portrait and event studio in Southern California for over 25 years.

**STEP FIVE:** Once you have the image you like, you must prepare it for the Web and eBay, so take your image into Photoshop Elements. You may need an added Levels adjustment for contrast, so go to Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels to bring up the Levels dialog. Adjust your image by dragging the left slider under the histogram to the right, watching the image darken as you do.

**STEP SIX:** You’ll also need to resize your image by going into Image>Resize>Image Size. Your image size for eBay needs to be small; too large of an image will take too long to open. Generally, an image needs to be no larger that 72 dpi for the Web and no bigger than 2x3” for eBay. In the Image Size dialog, turn on the Resample Image checkbox at the bottom of the dialog, and then enter either your desired Height or Width (the other dimension will change automatically). Then, change the resolution to 72 pixels/inch and click OK. Remember your image needs to be a JPEG. If it’s not already a JPEG, go to File>Save As and choose JPEG in the Format drop-down menu.

**STEP SEVEN:** To sharpen your image, go to your Filter menu, under Sharpen, and choose Unsharp Mask. Be careful to not overdo the filter. Usually, I sharpen with an Amount at about 50%, the Radius at 1, and the Threshold at 2. If you need more, apply it again. It’s better to do a little a few times as needed instead of being heavy-handed one time.

eBay has its own set of specs and guidelines for you to use. They don’t like a white background because of a contrast issue, but if you shoot your image correctly and go into Elements to enhance it, you’ll find it will show much better on a clean white background. Now you’re ready to sell your item.
In the previous installment of "Tool Time" in the "Beginners' Workshop," we covered some basic tool rules and the Move tool. This time, we'll cover the rest of the tools in the top section of the Toolbox: the Zoom tool, the Hand tool, and the Eyedropper tool.

These three tools don't affect your actual image, and using them won't change any of the pixels that make up your image. All of the other tools in the Toolbox either select a part of your image (so you can move it or edit it) or they actually alter the image pixels in some way, changing your image.

**THE ZOOM TOOL**

With certain types of editing, it's usually a good idea to zoom into your image to inspect the extreme detail of the area you're working on....

Center of the zoom area. In other words, where you click is where you zoom.

When you select the Zoom tool, by default you're in the Zoom In or magnify mode. If you want to change to Zoom Out, you can either change the Zoom tool setting in the tool Options Bar area at the top of your image, or you can change it temporarily by holding down the Alt key [Mac: Option key].

Speaking of the Options Bar, there are a lot of other things you can change there, as well. For example, you can change the numeric percent of zoom by entering a number between 0 and 1600 (don't zoom to 0% though—that's just silly).
If you typically work in Maximize Mode [Window menu>Images>Maximize Mode] the options to Resize Windows To Fit or to Zoom All Windows won't have any affect during zooming. The impact of these preferences is apparent when you work in Cascade or Tile window modes.

The three buttons on the far right of the Zoom tool Options Bar are used to quickly jump to three of the most-requested levels of zoom. Actual Pixels zooms into your image so that one pixel of your image equals one screen pixel (numerically this is 100%). Fit On Screen will show your whole image as large as it can in the working area available. So, you would think Print Size should show you the image at the size it would actually print. Frequently it doesn't, but don't blame Adobe.

Print Size accuracy depends on your system's screen settings and the physical size of your monitor. You can test whether or not it's accurate for your computer's monitor settings by temporarily displaying rulers on your image. After clicking the Print Size button, press Shift-Control-R [Version 3.0: Control-R; Mac: Command-R] and your rulers will appear on the edge of your working area. (If your rulers aren't set to inches, Right-click [Mac: Control-click] anywhere on one of the rulers and select Inches from the contextual menu.)

If you hold up a real ruler to your screen and it's close to the ruler displayed around your image, then the image is print size. If the rulers don't match, your printed piece will be a different size from what's displayed. (Pressing Shift-Control-R [Mac: Command-R] again will hide your rulers.)

There's another way that you can use the Zoom tool to give you more control over the area that you zoom into besides just clicking in that area. You can zoom into a precise area of your image by clicking-and-dragging a box around the area of interest. When you let go of the mouse button, your image will be zoomed into the exact area that you selected.

If you have a mouse with a scroll wheel, here's a tip that will help you zoom in and out more quickly. Using the scroll wheel normally just scrolls the image up and down within the window. Holding down Control [Mac: Shift] allows you to scroll horizontally. But holding down the Alt key [Mac: Option key] makes the scroll wheel zoom in and out very quickly. (Note: This method on the Mac uses the top-left corner of your image as the anchor point of the zoom. If the place you want to zoom into is at the bottom right of your image, you'll need to move...
the zoomed-in image within your working window. If you're zoomed in quite a bit, scrolling may not be as fast as using the Hand tool.)

HAND TOOL
The Hand tool (jump to it with the H key), frequently called the "Grabber Hand," is used to grab your entire image, including all layers, and move it within your working window. It's not a complicated tool and it only has one preference setting. The preference option is Scroll All Windows, which scrolls all open windows when you're working in a view mode that shows more than one image at a time (Cascade or Tile).

The only other helpful tidbit about the Hand tool is that most people who use it frequently rarely access it from the Toolbox or by pressing the H key. That's because you can temporarily turn any tool into the Hand tool by holding down the Spacebar. The only time this trick doesn't work is when you're editing text or entering values in a dialog.

EYEDROPPER TOOL
The fourth tool in the Toolbox is the Eyedropper tool (jump to it with the I key). Its job in life is to change the Foreground color based on a color sampled from within your image. Just click the Eyedropper on your image and whatever color you click on becomes the Foreground color.

If you're new to Photoshop Elements, it might help to understand that the Foreground color of an image doesn't mean that things in the foreground of your picture will change to that color. Officially, the Foreground color is the color of the top square (or swatch) at the base of your Toolbox. If you use a drawing or painting tool, that's the color you'll be painting with. The Background color is the square underneath the Foreground color swatch, and that's the color your image will become wherever you erase or delete pixels.

The Eyedropper tool’s single preference setting in the Options Bar allows you to either sample the color of a single pixel (Point Sample), or it can calculate an average of either 3 pixels by 3 pixels or 5 pixels by 5 pixels. ■

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undocumented secrets of the magic extractor

While the title of this article may sound a lot like the title of a Dungeons & Dragons instruction book, it is, in fact, all about how to get the most out of the Magic Extractor feature in Elements 4.

The Magic Extractor is pretty smart, so you don’t have to identify all of the colors in either the foreground or background.

Those of you that have been working with Photoshop Elements 4 have by now probably discovered the Magic Extractor and have more than likely been a little confused by its name. Let’s begin by clarifying a few things. First, the Magic Extractor doesn’t extract magic from your image. It either removes the background or it extracts the foreground from the background in a photo; it all depends on if you’re a glass-is-half-empty or a glass-is-half-full kind of person.

GETTING STARTED
Before we consider how to use the Magic Extractor, take a look at the dialog’s layout as illustrated below, including the arrangement and names of its tools. The operation of the Magic Extractor is both simple and complex (that sounds so Zen). In short, this feature allows you to use the electronic equivalent of a highlighter to define which colors and textures in an image make up the foreground and which colors and textures make up the background.

The Magic Extractor produces selections based on the appearance of foreground and background areas that you specify. You specify these areas by painting in them using either the Foreground or Background Brush tool. In this example, we want to remove a bronze statue of a praying mantis from a background full of...
junk—a real challenge. I’ve targeted different areas of the subject with the Foreground Brush tool (the default color for the Foreground Brush is red), but instead of clicking individual colors and textures with the Background Brush (default color of blue), I deliberately drew lines that crossed large areas of the background.

After defining the foreground and background areas, click the Preview button. If you’re fortunate, the background is gone, allowing you to return to the Elements workspace with just the foreground subject on its own layer. In most cases, Magic Extractor won’t get it perfect the first time. It will probably look something like the image middle left.

FINE-TUNING SELECTIONS
You can remove either Foreground or Background Brush tool strokes using the Point Eraser tool. This is really handy at times when you accidentally slop over on colors or textures of the foreground object with the Background Brush.

In the example shown, we need to individually select some parts of the background, so use the Point Eraser tool to erase the blue lines that we made with the Background Brush tool. Then, switch the Display drop-down menu in the Preview section to Original Photo and replace the erased strokes with dots. Why? Because long lines can take a long time to process, and since it was clear that we weren’t going to get all of the background with a few lines, we replaced them with more selective, smaller areas (dots). Click Preview again to see the effects.

Another common problem is when the background and foreground have similar colors. There are two ways to handle this: (1) You can add more background and foreground samples but you have to use caution. As the number of samples increases, the longer it will take to make a preview, and worse, you often find that parts of the foreground or background that were correctly identified, revert back to the opposite side.

If your selection is close, you can fine-tune the selection by switching the Background drop-down menu in the Preview section to Rubylith and using either the Add to Selection (A) or Remove From Selection (D) tools to make adjustments. These tools work just like the Selection Brush tool in the Editor workspace (any red areas that you remove will be added to the selection, and any areas that you add in red will be removed from the selection).
After you have made all of your adjustments and the preview looks the way you want it, click the OK button to apply the Magic Extractor. Only the foreground area appears in the photo when the image reappears in the Editor workspace. The finished image is shown above to which I added a little more color (Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Hue/Saturation) and a cast shadow for effect.

MAGIC EXTRACTOR TIPS
Here are some additional suggestions for getting the most out of the Magic Extractor.

Use minimum amount of foreground and background samples
The Magic Extractor is pretty smart, so you don't have to identify all of the colors in either the foreground or background. In fact, if you put in a ton of samples with the Foreground and Background Brush, it considerably slows down the time it takes to generate a preview—especially if it's a large image (such as 3000x2000 pixels). Use dots or short strokes rather than filling in a large area. Again, long brushstrokes or painting in entire areas makes a large number of samples for the Magic Extractor to analyze, increasing the preview time.

Zoom in on problem areas
This is especially true when working on hair. When you get a closer view, you can more accurately identify foreground and background areas. Often, the reason a part of the photo isn't correctly identified as background or foreground is because part of the area was accidentally painted wrong at a lower zoom level. Don't forget when zooming in to change to a smaller brush size. The default 20-pixel brush is pretty huge when you zoom in close. Use your Zoom and Hand tools like a pro: to zoom in on a particular area, click with the Zoom tool and drag a rectangle around the area to be worked on. To move to another location while zoomed in, hold down the Spacebar to temporarily change the cursor into the Hand tool. You can then click-and-drag within the dialog window to pan the image to another area without changing the zoom setting. Double-clicking the Hand tool at any time changes the zoom view settings to show the entire image in the preview window.

Swap between Display choices to evaluate the image
The Display setting in the Preview section allows you to see the Selection Area (all of the background removed) or the Original Photo. Oftentimes, when a photo looks like all of the foreground has been successfully extracted, a preview set to Original Photo reveals that someone's hair, ear, or an arm has been removed as well.

Swap between different Backgrounds in the drop-down menu to evaluate how clean the selection is. Adobe put a lot of different colors and types of preview backgrounds in the Preview section, so find a background color that shows if the selection needs any additional work.

Be cautious with Touch-Up values
The edges of selections can, at times, look ragged, so there are two tools that reduce the ragged appearance—but beware. Feather softens the edges, which sounds good, but too high of a setting can result in the foreground subjects having fuzzy edges. The Defringe, when applied by clicking the button, attempts to remove any remaining background along the edge of the selection. This tool is quite aggressive, so it often removes the effects of the feathering.

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Some Quick and Helpful Tips

1. If you’ve been working in Elements for a while, your screen may be messy. Perhaps you’ve closed some palettes or moved some palettes out of their original locations in the Palette Bin. It’s easy to return all the palettes to their default positions. Just go to the Window menu and choose Reset Palette Locations. Voilà! Your screen is tidied up and you have plenty of room to work. I do this each time I’m ready to start a new project.

2. If you often use the colors black or white in your images, you’ll be glad to know there are simple keyboard shortcuts for accessing those colors. Press the D key on your keyboard to set the Foreground color swatch in the Toolbox to black and the Background color swatch to white. Now the Brush tools and other tools will use black. To switch to white, just press the X key on your keyboard. The Foreground color swatch is now white and the Background color swatch is black.

3. Sometimes one area of a photograph needs brightening, but the rest is properly exposed. For example, the large swan in the foreground of the photo below left is too dark, but the sky and the sunlit areas look fine. This technique relies on a blending mode to brighten exposure and a gradient to limit the effect of the blending mode to one area of the photo.

   Start by duplicating the photo layer by dragging it to the Create a New Layer icon at the top of the Layers palette. With the copied photo layer selected, choose Screen from the blending mode drop-down menu at the top of the Layers palette, brightening the entire image. The

Before

After

The Filter Gallery offers previews of one or more filters on a layer, giving you a chance to experiment with different combinations of filters...
swan looks better, but the sky and sunlit areas are now too bright. To fix that, select the photo layer at the bottom of the layer stack. Click the Create Adjustment Layer icon in the Layers palette, and choose Levels, Brightness/Contrast, or Hue/Saturation. When the adjustment dialog opens, just click OK. This creates a neutral adjustment layer that has no effect on the image.

Now hold the Alt (Mac: Option) key as you move your mouse over the border between the adjustment layer and the copied photo layer above it in the Layers palette. Click the mouse when the cursor changes to a double-circle icon. This creates a clipping group that causes the adjustment layer to act like a layer mask on the copied photo layer. (This “faux” layer mask workaround is necessary because you can’t add a layer mask directly to a layer in Elements.)

Next, you’ll create a gradient in the layer mask to limit the area affected by the Screen blending mode on the copied photo layer. With the adjustment layer selected, the layer mask thumbnail on the adjustment layer is highlighted, and the Foreground and Background colors are set to white and black respectively. Select the Gradient tool in the Toolbox, and choose the Radial Gradient option in the Options Bar (it’s the second icon in the group of five icons to the right of the Edit button). Right-click (Mac: Control-click) on the image to bring up the Gradient Picker, and choose the Foreground to Background gradient (it’s the first gradient in the Picker). Click on the swan and drag diagonally toward the right edge of the image. You can repeat the instruction in the last sentence as many times as you like, changing the angle at which you draw the gradient, until you’re satisfied with the result. The brightening effect of the Screen blending mode appears in the white area and is hidden by the black area of the radial gradient on the mask, making the swan brighter without overexposing the rest of the photo.

Here’s another use for a clipping group. You can use this feature to create text that appears to be filled with a photograph. Open a photograph that has a single layer. Choose the Type tool in the Toolbox, and choose a thick font, like Arial Black, in the Options Bar. Type a word in the image and click the checkmark in the Options Bar to commit the type. Drag the type layer (the layer with the “T” icon) under the photo layer in the Layers palette. (If your photo is on the Background layer you’ll have to change it to a regular layer first before you can drag the type layer underneath it. Simply double-click the layer, type in a new name in the New Layer dialog, and click OK.)

Now create a clipping group by holding the Alt (Mac: Option) key and moving your mouse over the border between the photo layer and the type layer and clicking when the cursor changes to a double-circle icon. The text acts like a mask allowing the photo to appear only where there is text on the type layer. Give your photo-filled text a background color by clicking the Create a New Layer icon on the Layers palette and dragging the new layer to the bottom of the layer stack. With the new layer selected, choose Edit-Fill Layer. In the Fill Layer dialog, choose Color from the Use menu, select a color in the Color Picker, and click OK twice.
It's quick and easy to add a frame to an image using one of the effects that comes with Elements. Some of the frame effects require you to make a selection before applying the effect. Use the Rectangular Marquee tool to create a selection where you want the inside border of a frame to be located.

Choose Effects from the drop-down menu at the top left of the Styles and Effects palette, and then choose Frames from the drop-down menu at the top right of the palette. Scroll down to the Recessed Frame thumbnail, and double-click that thumbnail. You'll see a warning asking whether you want to flatten the layers, meaning that it will merge all the layers into one layer. It's wise to save a layered copy of the file before you run this effect because the copy on which you run this effect will no longer contain layers.

Click OK to apply the effect. Your image now sports a recessed border. There are currently two layers in the Layers palette. There's a flattened layer containing all the content that was on the multiple layers in the original file, and an extra layer that was added by the Recessed Frame effect.

Here's a quick way to take a photograph with strong graphic qualities and turn it into a painting using multiple filters in the Filter Gallery. The Filter Gallery offers previews of one or more filters on a layer, giving you a chance to experiment with different combinations of filters and option settings. Select the layer you want to filter in the Layers palette. Choose Filter>Filter Gallery to open the Filter Gallery dialog.

Filters are arranged in categories in the middle column of the dialog. Click the arrow next to the Artistic category to reveal the effects, and find the Cutout filter thumbnail in that category. Click that thumbnail to apply the Cutout filter. The Filter Gallery preview updates immediately, displaying a posterized version of the image. You can fine-tune the effect of the filter by experimenting with the settings on the right side of the dialog. Don't click OK yet.

You can add multiple filters to an image in the Filter Gallery. Click the icon of the page with the turned up corner at the bottom right of the dialog to add a new filter layer. In the center column of the dialog, scroll down to the Texture category, click on the arrow to reveal the effects, and choose the Texturizer filter. Working with the filter options on the right, create a subtle, canvas-like effect by setting the Texture field to Sandstone and keeping the Scaling and Relief options low. When you're satisfied with the preview in the Filter Gallery, click OK to apply the combined filters to the image.
christmas ornament

IF YOU’RE LIKE ME, EVERY YEAR DURING THE HOLIDAYS YOU TAKE HORDES OF PHOTOS. SINCE THE SUBJECT MATTER IS THE SAME, THE PHOTOS TEND TO BE REPETITIVE, AND IT’S HARD TO COME UP WITH FRESH IDEAS FOR HOLIDAY LAYOUTS. THIS YEAR CONSIDER DOING SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT—TURN A PHOTO INTO A CHRISTMAS TREE ORNAMENT AND PUT IT ON YOUR SCRAPBOOK LAYOUT. IT’LL REALLY MAKE YOUR PAGE POP!

STEP ONE: Open the photo you want to turn into a Christmas ornament (File>Open). The best kind of photo is one that has some space around the main subject.

STEP TWO: With the Elliptical Marquee tool (press M until you have the tool), click in the center of your subject’s face (or whichever area you want the least amount of distortion) and drag outward while pressing-and-holding Alt-Shift (Mac: Option-Shift). The Shift key constrains the selection to a perfect circle and the Alt (Mac: Option) key creates the selection from the center out. When you’re satisfied with the size, let go of your mouse, and then release your computer keys. To reposition, just click-and-drag inside the circle.
STEP THREE: Choose Filter>Distort>Spherize. (If you can’t see your entire circle in the preview window, click on the minus button to make your photo smaller.) Most of the time, you will choose the maximum Amount of distortion (100%). Then click OK. If you want a rounder effect, just run the same filter again. Don’t deselect yet.

STEP FOUR: Choose Filter>Render>Lens Flare. When the dialog appears, choose 105mm Prime from the Lens Type options. Within the preview box, click where you want the reflection light flare to appear on your photo. Move the brightness slider until you’re satisfied with the amount, and click OK.

STEP FIVE: Choose Edit>Copy to copy the selection to your clipboard. Move to your scrapbook page and choose Edit>Paste. With the Move tool (V), position the ornament where you want it on your page. Open the Styles and Effects palette (Window>Styles and Effects), choose Layer Styles from the pop-up menu on the left and Drop Shadows from the one on the right. Click on the drop shadow icon of your choice. (In this example, I chose High.)
STEP SIX: To make my ornament look more realistic, I photographed a real ornament and selected the metal top out of the photo. (For more on selecting objects, turn to page 25. Also, you can download a copy of the ornament top at the Photoshop Elements Techniques members’ website at www.photoshopelementsuser.com/subscriber/printextras.php.) Open up the ornament top in Photoshop Elements and use the Move tool (V) to drag it over onto your scrapbook page. Position it on top of the ornament. To resize the ornament top, press Control-T (Mac: Command-T) to bring up the Free Transform command. Press-and-hold the Shift key and resize using one of the corner points. Press Enter (Mac: Return) to lock in your transformation.

STEP SEVEN: In the Styles and Effects palette, click on the Low drop shadow icon. In the Layers palette, on the ornament top’s layer, a circle with an “f” in it will appear on the right. Double-click on the circle, and from the resulting Style Settings dialog, move the Shadow Distance slider to zero. This leaves just enough shadow to add some definition to the ornament top.

STEP EIGHT: Add any other photos and embellishments to make your layout complete. I selected the gift packages from a photo and used them to decorate the journaling mat. The red bow and ribbon are from the Real Ribbons CD by Jenny Binder of www.heirloomscrapbooks.com. Because it’s on a layer above the ornament top, the bow appears to be tied to the metal ring.


Fonts: P22 Monet (large words) and Palatino Linotype (journaling).

Linda Sattgast produces videos and an e-newsletter that teaches digital scrapbooking. Visit Linda at www.scrapersguide.com
A ge and exposure to the elements in a musty basement or unheated attic can take its toll on vintage photos. Sometimes this can result in exposure problems, but burning and dodging can help restore the detail. As a bonus, this technique works on both old and new photos.

One of my favorite techniques for correcting exposure on a photo is using the Dodge and Burn tools on a neutral layer, which is a layer filled with a neutral color. This technique gives you more control. Start by opening the photo in Photoshop Elements. The photo in this example is washed out at the bottom of the image and has lost detail in the shadows.

First, fix dust spots with the Spot Healing Brush set at a small size. Simply place the brush over a dust spot and click once. After removing all the dust spots, duplicate the image (File>Duplicate), and set the duplicate aside.

In the Layers palette, click the More button and choose New Layer. We'll do it this way rather than clicking the Create a New Layer icon at the top of the Layers palette because we need the New Layer dialog to set some options. Name the layer “burn and dodge,” but don’t exit the dialog yet. We need to change some additional settings.

Change the blend mode to Overlay, and check the box at the bottom that says Fill with Overlay-Neutral Color (50% Gray). There are other modes that allow neutral layers too, but for now, use Overlay. Click OK and a new layer will be created in the Layers palette.
Because Overlay mode makes the image ignore the neutral gray fill, you won’t see any difference in the image window, but in the Layers palette the thumbnail will be filled with gray.

**BURN AND DODGE**

Type the letter D on your keyboard to set the Foreground and Background colors to their default black and white. Type the letter O until you see the Burn tool appear near the bottom of the Toolbox just above the color swatches. The Burn tool looks like a hand forming the letter “O.” The Burn tool can be used to darken areas of the photo that are too light.

In the Options Bar, click on the brush thumbnail to choose a soft-edged brush. I’m using one that is 65 pixels because of the large size of the image. If you’re using a small, low-resolution photo for viewing on the Web, use a smaller brush size. Choose Midtones for the Range and set the Exposure very low at about 20%.

Work at 100% view. (Tip: You can double-click on the Zoom tool in the Toolbox to instantly bring your zoom percentage to 100%—don’t forget to switch back to the Burn tool, though.)

You’ll be painting with black, but it will just darken the area that you’re painting on because you’ll be working on the Overlay layer. Paint with the Burn tool over the light areas of the image to increase the darkness and to closer match the tones of the rest of the image. As you paint, you should be able to see the brush strokes in the gray square thumbnail in the Layers palette.

If you need to lighten areas, you can do so by choosing the Dodge tool (press O until you see what looks like a lollipop in the Toolbox) and painting with it instead. When using the Dodge tool on dark areas, set the Range to Shadows in the Options Bar. We aren’t quite done with the image yet, so keep the file open, but save your changes.

**SHARPEN WITH AN EDGE MASK**

The last step after correcting a photo is to sharpen. The reason sharpening should always be the last thing you do is that many other edits can soften the photo and remove the effects of the sharpening. If you do it last, this won’t be a problem.

Flatten the photo (Layer> Flatten Image). You now have one layer again: the Background layer. In the Layers palette, duplicate the Background layer by dragging it onto the Create a New Layer icon at the top of the palette. This new layer needs to be the active layer.

We need to find the edges so we can select them to make the edge mask, and for this we will use Smart Blur. Go to Filter>Blur>Smart Blur, and set it to Radius: 3; Threshold 25; Quality: High; and Mode: Edge Only. Click OK. The layer will be black with white edge lines. They’ll be jagged but that’s fine.

Soften the lines by blurring with the Gaussian Blur filter (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur). Set the radius to 1 pixel to blur the lines slightly, and click OK to apply the blur and exit the filter dialog.
We need to select all of the white lines in the image, which could be tricky, but there is an easy way to do it. Type W to activate the Magic Wand tool. In the Options Bar, make sure the New Selection icon is chosen (it’s the first icon in the group of four icons on the left), set the Tolerance to 32, check Anti-alias, and make sure that Contiguous is not checked. Click on a black area to select all of the black pixels in the image. Use Shift-Control-I (Mac: Shift-Command-I) to invert the selection so that the white lines are selected.

If you have any stray selections in the black areas, remove them from the selection with the Lasso tool (L) by holding the Alt key (Mac: Option key) while you circle them. Go to Select>Save Selection and name the selection “Edge Mask.” You probably won’t need the selection again, but if you do lose it, you can load it (Select>Load Selection) without starting over again.

All we need is the selection from the duplicate layer, not the layer contents, so drag this layer to the Trash icon at the top of the Layers palette. You’ll only have the Background layer left. Go to Select>Feather and enter 2 pixels to soften the edges of the selection before sharpening so the effect is gradual rather than hard-edged.

Run Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask at Amount: 400%; Radius: 0.3; and Threshold: 0. Save the image (File>Save). Compare the sharpened image to the duplicate you set aside earlier. On the full-size image you should be able to see the difference better than in the smaller version here. Everything just looks crisper and cleaner.

Sara Froehlich teaches online classes at Eclectic Academy (www.eclecticacademy.com) in Photoshop Elements, Photoshop, Acrobat, and other software. She also teaches Illustrator and Dreamweaver at LVS Online (www.lvsnonline.com), and is the Editor of Designorati: Illustration at Designorati (www.designorati.com). For more information on all of her classes, go to www.northlite.net.
Step by Step

Selection Secrets
BY TAZ TALLY

great selections are key to successful editing

JUST ABOUT ANY IMAGE-EDITING PROJECT BEGINS WITH A SELECTION, AND THE QUALITY AND LOOK OF YOUR EDITING RESULTS ARE GREATLY AFFECTED BY THE QUALITY OF YOUR SELECTIONS. IN PRIOR ISSUES, YOU’VE LEARNED ABOUT THE MAGIC WAND AND THE RECTANGULAR MARQUEE TOOLS. HERE YOU’LL EXPAND YOUR SELECTION TOOL REPERTOIRE AND SKILL SET.

STEP ONE: Open the image Dragon Fly_Start. Your objective here is to select the edge of the wing so you can enhance the sharpness of the wing’s fine details. If you try to use the Magic Wand to select either the wing or the surrounding wood, you’ll likely create a complex and difficult to manage selection as shown middle right.

STEP TWO: Instead of the Magic Wand, let’s use the Lasso tools. Click on the Lasso tool in the Toolbox. The options for the Lasso tool appear in the Options Bar located above the image. There are three Lasso tools: The standard Lasso tool (a free-form selection tool), the Magnetic Lasso (uses edge contrast to define a selection edge), and the Polygonal Lasso (for drawing straight-edged selections). All three tools are available in the Options Bar.

Select the Magnetic Lasso tool, and try these initial settings: check the Anti-alias checkbox (this will slightly soften the selection edge), apply no Feather (feathering will soften the selection edge—we’ll complete our selection prior to feathering), keep the Width at the default value of 10 pixels (this sets the distance at which the tool will detect a high-contrast edge), set the edge contrast to 10% (this defines the minimum amount of contrast that must exist between pixels for the tool to recognize an edge), and finally, set a Frequency from 50–60 (this defines the spacing, in pixels, at which the Magnetic Lasso tool will automatically create selection points).
**STEP THREE:** Starting at the upper-right corner of the top wing, click once with the Magnetic Lasso to start the selection path, then slowly and carefully drag the Magnetic Wand along the edge of the wing. As you drag the Magnetic Lasso, it will automatically create selection path points. You can add your own points simply by clicking once anywhere you want a point to occur.

Continue dragging your selection around the wing until you’re back at the beginning where you started. You’ll notice that even with your best efforts, the selection path will deviate in some places along the wing’s edge.

**STEP FOUR:** When you’re very close to the initial path point, double-click to close your path and convert it into a standard selection. Now zoom in on the lower-left half of the top wing. You’ll see that the selection was offset from the wing’s edge by the high-contrast pixel edges in the wood grain.

Select either the standard Lasso or the Polygonal Lasso tool (I used the Polygonal tool). While holding the Alt key (Mac: Option), click once then drag along the edge of the wing. Click again to change directions. Continue until you have an outline around the portions of the selection that are outside of the wing. (With the standard Lasso tool, just click-and-drag the tool around the areas you want to subtract from the selection while holding the Alt/Option key.) Double-click to close the selection.

Now hold down the Shift key (to add to the selection), and draw around any portion of the selection that’s currently inside the wing, once again double-clicking to close the selection.

**STEP FIVE:** Your selection outline is now complete and ready to feather. Choose Select>Feather and assign a radius of 2 pixels. Feathering will create a gradational edited edge, preventing any obvious changes occurring at the edge of the selection.
STEP SIX: After you’ve worked so hard to make this selection, save it so you can recall it at any time. Choose Select>Save Selection. In the Save Selection dialog, name it “Wing Top_F=2” (the F=2 indicates a 2-pixel feather). Click OK. Now at any point you can recall this selection by choosing Select>Load Selection and load it on to your image.

STEP SEVEN: Now you can sharpen the wing sections. Choose Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask (we’ll use Unsharp Mask, as it provides sharpening options). You can try various settings, but try starting with these numbers: Amount: 150 (controls the amount of contrast between pixels); Radius: 5 (controls the width of the edges where the sharpening is applied); and Threshold: 0 (controls which pixels will not be affected by the sharpening). (Note: Be sure the Preview checkbox is on so that you can preview the sharpening.) Click OK to apply the sharpening. Note how the details of the sharpened wing are much more apparent than the unsharpened one. If you like the effect you’ve created, select, feather, and sharpen the other wing.

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