LIGHT OF DAY
Learn how Shadows/Highlights adjustments can improve the lighting in your photos, p16

FIVE O’CLOCK SHADOW
Add contrast to your landscapes utilizing the Burn tool, p22

IN LIVING COLOR
Give your old black-and-white photos a colorful, hand-tinted look, p 25

Get More Online at photoshopelementsuser.com
If you haven’t noticed, there’ve been plenty of new articles and tutorials in the newsletter and on the Web here at Adobe Photoshop Elements Techniques. And we’ve also kept things stable by sticking with the columns that everyone looks forward to.

While I’d like to take full credit for this, I can’t. A bulk of the praise goes to our brand-new Managing Editor, Chad Neuman. Chad has been onboard with us a very short time but has already made a huge impact on the newsletter. What this means for you is that we have a dedicated person seeking out nothing but the very best for our newsletter—the best writers, the best topics, and the best technology. All of this so you don’t have to go to multiple sources to fulfill your digital photography and imaging training.

That said, I’d like to welcome Chad aboard and at the same time throw him directly into the fire by asking you to send him (and/or me) ideas for topics that you want to read about both in the newsletter and on the Web. Heck, why not drop him a note just to say “hi” while you’re at it. Hey, what can I say? We live for this stuff, so the more we hear from you, our readers, the happier we are. See you next time.

Matt Kloskowski
Editor-in-Chief
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features

08 THE MANY FLAVORS OF LAYERS
You’re probably familiar with layers in Adobe Photoshop Elements, but did you know there are many different kinds of layers? Join us for a taste of layers, from the Background layer to adjustment layers.

16 SEEING THE LIGHT: ANALYZE AND ADJUST YOUR LIGHTING
Finding the right light is ideal for taking a good photo, but perfect light is not always available. Learn how to use Shadows/Highlights in Adobe Photoshop Elements to improve the lighting after you snap your pictures.

22 BURNIN’ UP YOUR FLAT PHOTOS
We’ll show you how to use the Burn tool to enhance shadows in your landscape photos. Bringing out the shadows will boost the contrast in a flat-looking photo and create a more dynamic image.

step by step

04 DIGITAL DARKROOM: IMPROVING YOUR UNDERWATER PHOTOS
Matt Kloskowski shows us this amazing technique of balancing the colors in an underwater photo.

06 SPECIAL EFFECTS: PUT IT IN MOTION
Combining two photos using a few selection and blur techniques can create a more compelling image, whether it’s for a company advertisement or just for fun.

25 COLORIZING IMAGES: IN LIVING COLOR
Last issue we looked at adding color to comic art; this issue we look at a different technique to add color to a black-and-white photograph. Try coloring your old family photos to add a new look to your genealogy.

columns

11 BEGINNERS’ WORKSHOP: THREE WAYS TO ERASE
Learn how to use the Eraser tool by creating a photographic collage. You’ll also discover how the Background Eraser and Magic Eraser tools can quickly and easily remove similar color ranges.

19 SCRAPBOOKERS’ WORKSHOP: WRITING AND DOODLING SPECTACULAR BACKGROUNDS
Doodles and handwritten letters come in handy for creating unique decorative backgrounds for your digital scrapbooks. We’ll teach you how to get your doodles into Adobe Photoshop Elements and turn them into custom brushes.

ESSENTIALS

02 FROM THE EDITOR

14 TIPS & TRICKS

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YOUR LEARNING DOESN’T STOP HERE!

It continues online, where you get exclusive access to print and video tutorials, discussion forums, downloads, and a personal user gallery. It’s all part of the value-added benefits of being an Adobe Photoshop Elements Techniques newsletter and website subscriber. Wherever you see the symbol at the end of an article, it means there’s additional material for that story at www.photoshopelementsuser.com/subscriber/printextras.php.
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY HAS BEEN INCREDIBLY POPULAR FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS, BUT IT’S JUST NOW THAT UNDERWATER CAMERAS HAVE BEEN MOVING MORE INTO THE MAINSTREAM. UNDERWATER CAMERAS INTRODUCE NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC ISSUES SUCH AS POOR LIGHTING AND COLOR. WE’RE USUALLY JUST HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO GET THE SHOT. IN THIS TUTORIAL, WE’LL SHOW YOU A QUICK WAY TO MAKE THOSE UNDERWATER PHOTOS LOOK EVEN BETTER.

STEP ONE: You’ll first need to open an underwater photo to work with. This photo was taken by a co-worker of mine, Kevin Agren, in his backyard pool with a special camera bag made specifically for underwater photography. The bag is very affordable and you can pick one up from $30 (point-and-shoot camera) to $120 (SLR camera) at www.aquapac.net. When you’re ready, press Control-J (Mac: Command-J) twice to duplicate the layer so you see three layers in the Layers palette.

[To follow along, download the image used in this tutorial at www.photoshopelements-user.com/subscriber/printextras.php.]

STEP TWO: Select the layer directly below the top copy of the photo (it should be called Layer 1). Choose Edit-Fill Layer. In the Fill Layer dialog, select the 50% Gray option from the Use Contents drop-down menu. Leave the other settings at their defaults (Normal Blending Mode at 100% Opacity) and press OK to fill this layer with gray. Then, change the layer blend mode of the top layer (Layer 1 copy) from Normal to Luminosity by choosing it from the blend mode drop-down menu in the Layers palette. Your Layers palette and photo should look like this.
STEP THREE: Click once on the topmost layer (named Layer 1 copy). Then merge that layer down with the gray layer under it by pressing Control-E (Mac: Command-E). This will leave you with Layer 1 and the Background layer. Now click the Create a New Layer icon in the Layers palette to create a new layer on top of all the others. Click on the Foreground color swatch and set the color to R:255, G:0, and B:0 in the Color Picker. Press OK, and then fill this new layer with that color by pressing Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete). Finally, set the layer blend mode of this red layer to Multiply.

STEP FOUR: Click once on the top red layer and merge it with the photo layer below it by pressing Control-E (Mac: Command-E). Now set the blend mode of the top copy of the photo (should be called Layer 1) to Screen.

STEP FIVE: Finally, merge this layer (Layer 1) with the original photo layer below it by pressing Control-E (Mac: Command-E). This should leave you with just one layer named Background. The last step is really simple. Just choose Enhance>Auto Levels to automatically give some more color and contrast to the photo.

That's all there really is to it. If you haven't tried it yet, you can indeed get some amazing pictures underwater, and it opens a whole new world of exploration. Enjoy!

This shot has more blue than we want. The final image has more balanced color.
STEP ONE: Open a photo of people running, either running for fun or in a marathon. This example features a few runners. The background is blurred by motion but the closest runner is mostly in focus. Next, open a photo of an animal running; for this example, we used a running deer.

STEP TWO: If the animal is facing the wrong way, go to Image>Rotate>Flip Horizontal. Use the Lasso tool (L) to draw a selection around the border of the deer. Next, touch up the selection by adding to it (hold down Shift when you click-and-drag) or subtracting from it (hold down Alt [Mac: Option] when you click-and-drag) using the Lasso tool. Be sure to subtract the background areas between the legs of the deer from the selection.

STEP THREE: Go to Select>Feather, enter 1 pixel in the Feather Selection dialog, and click OK. This will soften the hard edge of the selection. Using the Move tool (V), click inside the selection and drag the deer into the running photo. The deer will appear on its own layer. Double-click directly on the name of the new layer and rename it “Deer.” Now let’s move the deer farther away from the photographer’s position.
STEP FOUR: With the Move tool, select the deer and click-and-drag a corner of the selection box while holding the Shift key to make him a little smaller. Press Enter when the deer is at the right size. Perspective is important when creating a realistic effect like this, so we'll make it a bit smaller and drag it higher up the photo (and farther away on the road). The area farthest away from the photographer is blurred, so go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur and set the Angle to 0°. The amount of blur will depend on your photo, but let's try 15 pixels.

STEP FIVE: The deer is blurred accurately to blend in with the nearby objects, but it's still covering the prominent runner's legs. Let's fix this. Turn off the Deer layer's visibility by clicking its Eye icon next to it on the Layers palette. Draw a selection around the runner's legs using the Lasso tool. Be sure to select all the areas that should be covering the deer.

STEP SIX: With the area selected, add a 1-pixel Feather to the selection to soften the edge. Turn on the Deer layer's visibility by clicking its Eye icon, and then click on the Deer layer in the Layers palette to make it the active layer. Press Backspace (Mac: Delete) to remove the deer pixels where it's covering up the runner's legs. Now we have a brand-new photo that people will notice, whether it's for a magazine, a billboard, or just for fun.

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the many flavors of layers

by Lynette Kent

Layers are the key to all photo editing and creative projects in Adobe Photoshop Elements. At first, even Adobe Photoshop didn’t include layers and image editing was limited. The addition of layers to both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements allows for almost limitless creative possibilities.

Every time you make changes to a photograph, you alter the pixels and risk damaging that image. You can make multiple copies of the original file to try various changes, but that’s confusing and really eats up memory. That’s where layers come in.

Think of layers as clear sheets of acetate that you place over your original image to change the look of your base photo. Like the layers of a traditional cartoon cel animation, each layer can be colored and can contain text, graphic objects, or even duplicated parts of your image. Using layers offers a completely flexible way to work. We’ll also go through layer styles and adjustment layers, two awesome ways to modify your images. Photoshop Elements includes different types of layers, so let’s go over each one.

**Background Layer:** When you first open a photograph or any new document, you’re looking at the Background layer. This is the bottom layer in the Layers palette and it’s locked, as denoted by the padlock. You can unlock this layer by turning it into a normal layer—just double-click on the layer and it will prompt you to name the layer in the New Layer dialog. Enter a name if you like and click OK.

**Duplicate Layer:** You can duplicate any layer including the Background layer. In fact, think of this as a safety step whenever you first start editing a photo. To make an exact copy of any layer, simply click on the layer in the Layers palette and drag-and-drop it over the Create a New Layer icon at the top of the Layers palette.

**Selection Layer:** You can create a new layer using a selection from the base image. This makes it easy to modify that selection without affecting the area around it. Make a selection and press Control-J (Mac: Command-J) to copy the selection to its own layer.

**Adjustment Layer:** These layers allow you to change tones, colors, and other settings of the layers below them. To create an adjustment layer, click the Create Adjustment Layer icon in the Layers palette and select the type of adjustment, such as Hue/Saturation, Gradient Map, or Levels.
NEW BLANK LAYER: To create an empty layer ready for painting or other fills, click on the Create a New Layer icon in the Layers palette. The new layer will appear above the currently active layer in the Layers palette. If you would like to add the new layer below the currently active layer, hold the Control key (Mac: Command key) when you click the Create a New Layer icon.

TYPE LAYER: When you select the Type tool and start typing, a type layer is automatically created. This layer contains type as a vector shape, which means you can resize it while maintaining the sharp edges and letter shapes.

SHAPE LAYER: The Shape tools create a shape layer with a vector shape, just like the Type tool does. The text and shapes remain editable as text or shapes until these layers are "simplified" to turn into normal raster pixels (Layer>Simplify Layer).

THE EYES HAVE IT
To see how a particular layer affects your image, click the Eye icon in the leftmost column in the Layers palette to hide it. Click the icon again to turn the layer back on.
- To show or hide more than one layer at a time, click-and-drag through the Eye icons.
- To show just one layer, Alt-click (Mac: Option-click) the Eye icon next to that layer. To view all the previously visible layers, Alt-click that Eye icon again.

LAYER STYLES
To add shadows, bevels, and special effects to your masterpieces, simply click a layer in the Layers palette to highlight it, then select Layer Styles in the left drop-down menu in the Styles and Effects palette. Click the right drop-down menu to select a particular set of styles or special effects. Once you double-click on a style to add it to the layer, a styles icon appears next to that layer in the Layers palette.

BLENDER CREATIONS
Layer blend modes are also a powerful tool. Click on one layer, and then use the blend modes and Opacity slider to change the way the layer interacts with the layer or layers below.
- Click on the blend mode drop-down menu at the top-left of the Layers palette and select a new mode. Note: To quickly see the possible effects in Windows, double-click the blend mode name and use the Arrow keys on your keyboard to cycle through all the options. You can also hold the Shift key and then press the + or – keys to cycle through the modes.
- Click on the Opacity drop-down arrow and click-and-drag the slider to change the layer opacity. For a slider setting, use
In addition to writing for several magazines, Lynette is an artist/photographer and writes books including Photoshop CS2: Top 100 Simplified Tips and Tricks, Scrapbooking with Photoshop Elements, and Teach Yourself Visually Digital Photography (co-authored with Dave Huss).
TOOL TIME: THREE WAYS TO ERASE

In this edition of “Tool Time” we’ll show you how to use the Eraser tool. One of the most straightforward examples of the Eraser tool’s capabilities is to create a simple collage from layered photographs. Just about everyone has family photos that they would like to put together in a visually appealing way. Besides, my mom wants me to do something cool with our family pictures, and if I can combine work with a project for my mother, life is good!

When creating a collage, it’s usually a good idea to have one large, primary image and two or more smaller images balanced evenly around that main background image. Oftentimes, you won’t be using the Eraser tool on a flattened image, since this will erase to the current Background color in your image. When you want to erase parts of an image, it’s usually because there’s something on a layer beneath it that you want to reveal. And it’s not unusual to have holes or transparencies on a layer as part of a creation.

SELECT YOUR IMAGES

You’ll need to get a few family photos into your computer. It doesn’t matter if they’re digital pictures or scans of family photos; just be sure to scan photos in at 300 dpi so you have a good working resolution. Open all the pictures you plan to use in Adobe Photoshop Elements. While it’s only possible to work on one image at a time, the Photo Bin (Window>Photo Bin) allows you to see a thumbnail of all of the pictures that are open, and it allows you to quickly switch between open images. (While numerous images can be open simultaneously, only the frontmost image can be manipulated, and we call this the “active” image.) The active image is always indicated by a blue highlight around the thumbnail in the Photo Bin.

Once you’ve opened a collection of images, you’ll need to decide what kind of background you want for your collage. Maybe you want a picture of the old family home surrounded by various family members, or grandma and grandpa with all the grandkids superimposed small along the bottom; or maybe you just want to blend several images together and allow each one to keep its own complete background. This example of using the Eraser tool features three images of the same person. The goal is to blend the three images smoothly together. I simply want to select one of these photographs to serve as the primary image and blend the other two images on top of that one.

All three images are informal snapshots, but the one where the boy is facing the camera has plenty of space all around the subject. Since people pay the most attention to faces and eyes, it makes sense to make this the central background image of the collage. Make one of the other images your active image by clicking on its thumbnail in the Photo Bin (I’m starting with the skateboarder). Using the Move tool (V), click-and-drag the image onto the thumbnail of your background image in the Photo Bin and let go. The background image will automatically become the active image and the skateboarder will be copied into the middle of the background image as a new layer.

We’ll need to do the same thing for the baseball image, so start by making it
the active image in the Photo Bin. Next, click-and-drag the baseball player on top of the background image. Now you have a single document consisting of the background image with the other two images as layers.

PLACE AND RESIZE
Temporarily turn off the visibility of the baseball player by clicking the Eye icon beside Layer 2. Now, click on Layer 1 (the skateboarder) to make it the active layer, and temporarily reduce its Opacity to 50% (top of the Layers palette). Reducing the Opacity makes it easier to visualize where and how large this secondary image will look best on your background, and you can restore it to 100% once it’s in the right spot.

Place the skateboarder at the top left of the background and reduced its size slightly. To scale an image, hover the Move tool over the corner of an image’s bounding box and click-and-drag it toward the center until it’s the right size. (If the bounding box is not showing, make sure Show Bounding Box is checked in the Options Bar.) Make sure to hold the Shift key down in order to keep the image in the proper proportion as you scale it. Press Enter to complete the transformation. Enter 100 in the Opacity field to make the layer fully visible again.

In order to place the baseball player, temporarily turn off the skateboarder layer’s visibility and turn the baseball player’s visibility back on. Make the baseball player the active layer, and reduce its Opacity to 50% as you did earlier. Now move this layer to the bottom right and scale it. Finally, return the visibility back to opaque by making the baseball player 100% Opacity.

BLEND IMAGES
Now let’s blend the images together by erasing unwanted parts of the skateboarder and baseball player images with a big, soft-edged Eraser brush. It will be easier if you click the Eye icon to turn off the visibility of the layers you’re not working on while you erase. Also make sure that you click on the layer you want to work on in the Layers palette to make it the active layer. This will help you avoid erasing things from the wrong layer.

Select the Eraser tool (E) from the Toolbox. From the Mode drop-down menu in the Options Bar, choose Brush. Next, click on the brush thumbnail in the Options Bar and choose a large, soft-edged brush from the Brush Presets Picker. Then, use the Size setting to make your brush large enough for the job. A quicker way to adjust the brush size is to press the Left (]) or Right ([) Bracket keys on your keyboard.

Once you have a really large brush, paint away the edges of the upper-left image to blend it with the background. This will be a trial and error process because you may have chosen a brush that’s too large and it erases part of the skateboarder, or a brush that’s too small and it doesn’t produce a soft enough edge. Be sure not to leave any hard transition edges.
In the case of the skateboarder, I went back with a smaller, soft-edged Eraser brush to remove the bottom edge of that photo without erasing too much of the skateboard. Now turn the baseball player layer’s visibility back on and use a large soft brush to blend him into the scene too.

OTHER OPTIONS AND TOOLS
As with practically any project, there’s more than one way to accomplish the collage look. This is just one of the quickest and easiest methods to master. Besides making a cool collage, we’ve also covered the basic settings and capabilities of the Eraser tool. Let’s go over a few Eraser settings we haven’t used yet.

In the Options Bar, you’ll find two other choices in the Mode drop-down menu: Pencil and Block. Pencil and Block have pre-defined, hard-edged brushes. These tools are useful when your subject has a very defined edge.

The two other Eraser tools in the Toolbox are the one with the pair of scissors on it and the one with the star on it. These are the Background Eraser tool and the Magic Eraser tool, respectively. Both of these Erasers remove a family of colors based on where you click. As you click-and-drag with the Background Eraser, it will remove everything inside the Eraser’s diameter that’s in the same color family. If you have an item that’s a very different color than its background, this can help remove the background while leaving that item intact. Be sure to keep the crosshair targeted only on the background and never let it touch your foreground item, as the tool samples from the crosshairs to set the color to erase.

Just click once with the Magic Eraser tool and it will remove the color of the pixel you click on plus any pixels in the same color family that are adjacent to it. Additionally, if you uncheck Contiguous in the Options Bar, it will grab that color family everywhere in the entire layer and erase it. Finally, as you already know from our earlier lessons on other tools, the Anti-alias box smoothes the edges where you erase.

Now you know the secrets of the Eraser tools, so grab some family pictures and start erasing!

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If you’ve entered values in the Options Bar in the Width and Height fields for the Crop tool (C), you can easily swap the values for the two fields by clicking on the two arrows between the Width and Height.

When you click-and-drag with the Crop tool (C), a dark gray area called the Shield appears, to indicate the areas that will be removed when you commit the crop. To toggle the Shield on and off without going to the Options Bar, just press / (forward slash) on your keyboard.

To crop a photo and keep the exact same aspect ratio, choose Use Photo Ratio from the Aspect Ratio drop-down menu in the Options Bar, before you crop. Then, as you click-and-drag, the crop area will be created in the same ratio as your photo.

The Crop tool (C) can be used to add extra canvas to a photo, as an alternative to using the Canvas Size command. To start, you’ll need to see the extra gray area around the image, so either zoom out in Maximize mode, or in Cascade Windows mode enlarge the window of your photo so that the gray is visible. Choose a Background color since the extra canvas will be added in that color. Use the Crop tool to drag an area inside the photo and release. You can then use the Crop tool to simply drag the corner handles of the crop area outside into the gray area to visually add extra canvas. Press Enter to add the extra canvas.

If you would like to maintain the same aspect ratio of the image and keep the size of the new canvas equal on the left and right and on the top and bottom, use the Crop tool to drag...
5. Use the Image Size command to easily make the current photo match the exact size of another open image. Go to Image>Resize>Image Size. With the Image Size dialog open, go to the Window menu at the top of your screen, scroll down to the bottom of the menu where you should see the names of all your currently open documents, and select the document whose size you want to apply to the current document. Click OK and you’re done. (In general, you should choose a document that’s smaller rather than larger than your current photo).

6. In most dialogs that have a Cancel button, try holding down Alt (Mac: Option) to change Cancel to Reset—click Reset to reset to the original values and settings rather than having to cancel and reopen the same dialog.

7. Many people use the Rectangular Marquee selection tool to select an area and then use Image>Crop to crop to the selected size. Did you know that you can use any selection tool before using the Image>Crop command? Just make a selection—in this case we used the Lasso tool (L)—then choose Image>Crop and the photo will be cropped to a rectangular size that encompasses your selection.

8. The Crop tool (C) can straighten a photo at the same time as cropping. After dragging an area to crop, move the cursor outside the bounding box until the rotate cursor appears. Then click-and-drag to rotate the crop area. It can be a challenge however to make sure that you’ve rotated the crop area the correct amount, so try this: make the crop area smaller than you need, and use the rotate method described, lining up the top edge of the crop area with the horizon line (or whatever you need to be horizontal). Then use the corner handles to resize the crop area to the size you need, while keeping the same angle. Press Enter and your image will be cropped and straightened.

9. Taking that last tip a step further, you don’t even have to select an entire area in order to crop: Just hold down the Shift key and use any selection tool to select several areas that you want to include in the image. Think of it as selecting the “corners” of the crop. When you choose Image>Crop, the image will be again be cropped to a rectangular size that encompasses your selections.

Note: This is for tweaking an image by rotating it a little bit. If you rotate the crop selection 45˚ or more, it will rotate in the opposite direction; for example, if you rotate the right side of the crop selection upward by 45˚, the right side of the of the selection will become the top of the newly cropped photo. To rotate this much or more, you’ll need to rotate after you crop the image using one of the commands under Image>Rotate.
...there’s much you can do to improve the overall quality and impact of the lighting.

Just as you finish arranging your composition and assigning your depth of field, that big bank of clouds roles in and darkens the foreground of your image. Or perhaps you can’t wait for the angle of the sun or brightness to be just right.

There are many lighting-related mistakes to make when taking photos: hard shadows on faces, overexposed and blown-out photos, or flat-looking photos with not much depth. While you can’t completely simulate natural lighting conditions after taking the photo, there’s much you can do to improve the overall quality and impact of the lighting.

In previous issues, we’ve considered in some depth how to use Levels (Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels) to attack exposure problems in images. Levels is indeed a powerful tool. But there are some images that just don’t lend themselves to correction with Levels.

The Shadows/Highlights tool offers some additional control, and often this tool can be used instead of the Levels adjustment.

The Shadows/Highlights tool is most useful on images that require tonal range specific adjustments, which are not simple highlight point and/or shadow point adjustments. Working with some sample images is the best way to see how this works.

[To follow along, download the images used in this tutorial at www.photoshopelementsuser.com/subscriber/printextras.php.]

FIRST EXAMPLE: FIXING FROSTY

Let’s evaluate this image (next page) to see how we can improve it. The lighting in this picture is basically inverted. The background is blown out, and the middle and foreground are way too dark. A fill flash would have helped here if the camera could have been positioned close enough to the subject to make a difference. The bright snow in the background caused an improper exposure.

Make a working copy of this document (File>Duplicate), and then display the Levels dialog (Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels). You should see a fairly full histogram (left) with no apparent major
problems with the highlight or shadow points, so there isn’t much that can be quickly remedied with the Levels tool. And yet this image clearly has problems.

In this image, much of the adjustment needs to be applied to the tonal ranges between the highlight and shadow points. It’s with these kinds of adjustments that the Shadows/Highlights tool can be most useful. Click Cancel to close the Levels dialog. Now let’s fix this image.

**STEP ONE:** Choose Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Shadows/Highlights. In the resulting Shadows/Highlights dialog, you’ll see three adjustment fields: Lighten Shadows, used for lightening the three-quarter-tone portion of the image (the tonal range between the midtone and the shadow point); Darken Highlights, used for darkening the quarter-tone portion of the image (the tonal range between the midtone and the highlight point); and Midtone Contrast, used for adjusting the overall contrast of the image (controls the distribution of tonal values above and below in the midtone).

**STEP TWO:** To brighten the dark foreground of this image, which is currently in the three-quarter-tone range, assign a value of 40 in the Lighten Shadows field. This enhances the brightness of the foreground. This is an improvement all by itself, but you’ll notice that overall the image appears a bit flat—we can improve on this.

**STEP THREE:** Assign a value of 10% to the Darken Highlights field. This darkens the quarter-tone values of the snow in the foreground and not the lightest highlight value in the background. And lastly, let’s adjust the image’s overall contrast.

**STEP FOUR:** In the Midtone Contrast field, assign a +20% value. Note that this field assigns a plus or minus sign to the field value, so if you input these values numerically from your keyboard be sure to start with either a “+” or “-” symbol. This adjustment increases the contrast of the entire image by making the lighter pixels a bit lighter and the darker pixels a bit darker.

**SECOND EXAMPLE: ZIP AND TAZ ON THE BEACH**

This image has a foreground/background reversal of tonal values. In this case, however, the background is more important than the last image. Let’s fix it.

**STEP ONE:** Make a duplicate of your file, and choose Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Shadows/Highlights.

**STEP TWO:** In order to lighten the foreground faces, assign a value of 50% in the Lighten Shadows field. Resist setting too high a value here, as the faces may begin to posterize if you push too hard.

**STEP THREE:** Now to increase the visible detail of the beautiful background mountains, assign a value of 10% to the Darken...
Highlights field. Notice how you can now see much more detail in both the mountains and the sky.

STEP ONE: Duplicate the image and choose Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Shadows/Highlights.

STEP TWO: Assign a 20% value to the Lighten Shadows field. With the Preview checkbox on, you can see the dramatic impact this one adjustment has on this image. The colors in the foreground tundra nearly jump off the page. This is the only adjustment we will make in this image as the highlight values, and now the overall contrast, are the way we want them.

Note: Be careful when making color-enhancing adjustments like these, as the tendency is to go a bit too far, creating an unrealistic appearance.

In all three of these examples the lighting in the original images was less than desirable. Although being able to capture the original images with just the right lighting would have been the best circumstance, you can go ahead and take that picture and rest easy knowing you can make useful improvements after taking the photo.

THIRD EXAMPLE:
DENALI IN THE FALL
In some images, only one portion of the color range needs adjustment, so let’s take a look at an image for which this is true. In this image of Denali National Park in the fall, the big mountain, Denali, in the background is exposed just about right in the bright sunshine, but the foreground, featuring the colored tundra, is blanketed by the shadow of an overhead cloud. Let’s see what we can do to make the tundra “pop” off the page.

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YOU CAN CREATE BACKGROUNDS AND EMBELLISHMENTS THAT ARE AS UNIQUE AS YOUR OWN HANDWRITING WITH DOODLES AND WORDS YOU DRAW YOURSELF. ALL YOU NEED IS SOME PAPER, A FEW MARKERS, A SCANNER, AND ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS! HERE ARE A FEW TIPS AND TRICKS TO GET YOU STARTED.

STEP ONE: Create some doodles and handwritten words on good quality white paper such as 60 to 80 lb inkjet paper. It's best if you use markers rather than ballpoint pens to create your doodles. Experiment with various tips, thicknesses, and pen styles as you work. Once you have your doodles completed, scan them into Photoshop Elements. You'll use the scan to create brushes.

STEP TWO: Because Photoshop Elements won't allow you to create a brush that's larger than 8" on either side at 300 ppi, create an 8x8" new file (File>New>Blank File) and select the Transparent option from the Background Contents drop-down list. Once you have your new file open, select one of the doodles from the scan with the Rectangular Marquee tool (M) and drag your selection onto the transparent file using the Move tool (V).

STEP THREE: In order to make it easier to remove the white background, increase both the Brightness and Contrast (Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Brightness/Contrast) of the document to +100 and click OK. This will make the white background completely white and will make the doodle as black as possible. Then, using the Magic Wand tool (W), hold the Shift key and select all the white background areas. Hit the Backspace (Mac: Delete) key to remove the white background. Deselect the doodle (Control-D [Mac: Command-D]).
STEP FOUR: If you zoom into your document so that you can see your doodle closely, you might see some colored pixels around the edges. These need to be removed so that the brush we’re making will brush in an evenly manner. Fix this easily with the Reduce Noise Filter (Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise). Move the Reduce Color Noise slider all the way to the right (100%) and click OK. You’ll then see that all of the colored pixels are gone.

STEP FIVE: Next, smooth the edges of your doodle as much as possible using the Median filter (Filter>Noise>Median). The settings may vary depending on your doodle, but generally keep the slider to the left (I set my Radius to 3 pixels). Check the Preview box to preview the level of smoothness. Click OK.

STEP SIX: Use the resulting graphic to create a brush (Edit>Define Brush). Name your brush when the Brush Name dialog appears. Your brush will be located at the bottom of the Brushes palette available to use with any tool that uses brushes. Repeat Steps Two through Six until you’ve created as many brushes as you need for your new scrapbooking background.

To begin using the brushes, switch to the Brush tool (B), click on the drop-down menu next to the brush thumbnail in the Options Bar, and then select your new brush from the bottom of the Brushes palette. Select a color for your brush by clicking the Foreground color swatch in the Toolbox, choosing a color (white in this example) in the resulting Color Picker, and clicking OK. Click once to add your custom doodle to the page. If you would like to fill the inside part of the letters with a contrasting color, choose a new Foreground color and then click inside the letters with the Paint Bucket tool (K).
STEP SEVEN: To create a scrapbook page with your brushes, start by creating a simple background by flooding a “base” layer with a color using the Paint Bucket tool (K), or you can create a more complex background by using various brushwork techniques right away. (The background in the final example was created by striped and polka-dotted brushes on top of a solid background.)

As you use your doodled brushes to create your unique background, use each brush on a different layer above the base layer. This is an important habit to gain as you learn to use brushwork techniques to fix possible errors. Brushing on a new layer as you work allows you to quickly hide or delete layers that you don’t like.

STEP EIGHT: Create interest in your background by changing the color you use for each brush. You can also use different Opacity levels for each layer or experiment with the layer blend modes (click on the pop-up menu at the top of the Layers palette to choose different blend modes). Experiment with other brushing options such as changing the angle of the brush. You can find the Angle option, along with other interesting selections, under the More Options menu located at the far right of the Options Bar. Have fun trying different brush settings!

When you’re ready, save your new scrapbooking background as both a PSD file (to allow for further editing, if desired) and as a flattened JPEG file. Drag your beautiful new scrapbooking background using the Move tool (V) into a new file to use it as a background.

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burnin’ up your flat photos

BY SARA FROELICH

SOMETIMES A PHOTO NEEDS A LITTLE PUSH TO MAKE THE JUMP FROM GOOD TO GREAT: A LITTLE MORE CONTRAST, A LITTLE MORE DEFINITION, A LITTLE MORE "OOMPH!" SELECTIVELY INTENSIFYING SHADOWS WITH ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FLAT PHOTO AND AN APPEALING ONE.

Photos with good exposure can still fall flat due to the time of day the image was taken. One way to fix this is using the Burn, Dodge, and Sponge tools to exaggerate shadows and highlights to create depth in a photo. The Burn and Dodge tools selectively darken or lighten parts of an image; they’re based on traditional photography techniques of changing the exposure on specific areas of a print.

These photo correction tools are at the bottom of the Toolbox above the Foreground and Background color swatches. Click-and-hold the tool to see the various options: the Sponge, Dodge, and Burn tools are on the same icon. Now that you know where to find them, we’ll use the Burn tool to bring depth to an image.

Let’s go over how to bring out the shadows with the Burn tool. Using the brush options of size, shape, and opacity works especially well for correcting parts of an image. The Burn tool is also often used to bring out details in highlights that are blown out. If the highlights are too bright, you can no longer see the detail. The Range option in the Options Bar controls which part of the image the Burn tool affects: Shadows, Midtones, or Highlights. Shadows are the dark areas, Midtones are the midrange areas, and Highlights are those parts that are the lightest in the image. Sometimes you need to adjust these separately. Setting the Range allows you to correct problem areas without affecting the rest of the image. Exposure controls how strong the effect is. Start low, because you can always increase it.

The key is to add more contrast for greater depth and to make it look natural.

In addition to brush size and style, the Burn tool also has Range and Exposure settings.

[To follow along, download the image used in this tutorial at www.photoshopelementsuser.com/subscriber/printextras.php]

Let’s get started. At first glance, this photo of the Badlands in South Dakota looks fine; but it really doesn’t capture the dramatic shadows you see in real life. The Burn tool can be used to accentuate the dark areas on the sides of the hills and add some contrast.
After opening the file, press Control-J (Mac: Command-J) to duplicate the background. Double-click directly on the new layer’s name in the Layers palette and rename it “burn.” The corrections will be made to the new layer, leaving the original background intact. Working on the duplicate layer serves two purposes: first, if you make a mistake you have a good copy to fall back on; secondly, after you have made the corrections, you can toggle the visibility of the burn layer and see the difference with or without the burn.

Choose the Burn tool from the Toolbox. In the Options Bar, set the Range to Shadows—that way the tool affects the darkest parts of the image. The Exposure setting should be very low—about 10% to 20%. We’re looking for subtle changes to increase the already darker areas.

In the Options Bar, click on the drop-down menu next to the brush thumbnail and choose a soft-edged brush. We chose the 65-pixel Soft Round brush, one of the default brushes that come with Photoshop Elements.

Paint lightly with the Burn tool to darken the grass on the mesa and the hillside near the top left of the image from the top of the grass to the next ripple. Check the progress by clicking the Eye icon by the burn layer in the Layers palette to see the difference between the burn layer and the original background. You can increase and decrease the size of the brush as you paint by pressing the Right or Left Bracket key. (The Right Bracket enlarges the brush size, and the Left Bracket key reduces it.)

Because much of the Badlands area was formed by volcanic ash drifting in the wind and eventually becoming hard, the hills have ripples of gently rolling humps in between creases as well as sharp peaks. Lightly go over the creases with the Burn tool to emphasize them and give them more depth. Paint with the Burn tool a little ways up the sides of the crevasses. They will appear darker and stand out more. Lastly, you may want to darken the area between the crevassed hills and the grassy foreground to help differentiate those areas. Toggle the burn layer visibility again to see the difference you’ve made in the photo. Also try reducing the Opacity of the burn layer in the Layers palette to lessen the effect.
Here’s another example of enhancing the shadows in an image to add more depth. This photo of Fairyland Canyon in Bryce, Utah, looks pretty good. But using the Burn tool on the shadows adds some depth, since there’s not much contrast on the cliff face on the left side of the photo. By choosing a 20% Exposure from the Options Bar, we added some more contrast to this photo in the shadows (with the Range set to Shadows). We also used the Burn tool on some of the highlights on the left-hand side of the photo with the Range set to Highlights. This darkens the highlights and brings back some of the details on some of the more flat areas of the rock.

The key is not to overdo it and create an unrealistic-looking shadow. Just remember to dodge and burn on a duplicate layer so you can compare the before and after. The effects should be subtle and not over-exaggerated with areas of extreme contrast. Using the Burn tool at a low Exposure enables us to gradually add shadows to scenic landscapes that have large contrasts. The goal is to add more contrast for greater depth and to make it look natural.

**DEFINING SHADOWS**

Sometimes the shadow areas we want to accentuate are very defined. For this, try incorporating the selection tools. Parts of the bridge’s shadow here have a very distinct edge, so we made a selection around the shadow with the Polygonal Lasso tool; then when we used the Burn tool it only applied to the area that was selected. This prevents adding shadows to areas we don’t want to affect.

Top: Before enhancing the shadows.
Bottom: Using the Burn tool with a low Exposure setting added subtle shadows.

**burn tool tip**

When using the Burn tool on scanned black-and-white photos, you may get unexpected results. If the image was scanned in RGB mode to preserve editability, the Burn tool may cause a scorched look on the photo rather than just darkening the image. Older photos discolor with age, and the scanner picks up the discolorations even if you don’t see them with the naked eye. If this happens to you, undo the Burn tool (Edit>Undo), and go to Image>Mode>Grayscale to convert the image to grayscale. Click OK to discard color information. Immediately, without using any tools on the image, go back to Image>Mode, and this time, choose RGB to convert the image back to RGB mode. The tools and filters will all be available for use, and the Burn tool will darken as expected without discoloring.
STEP ONE: First, note that we must work with an RGB file and not a grayscale file, because we'll be working with a color layer. So, if you have a grayscale image you want to color for a creative or artistic effect, you'll need to convert it to an RGB file (Image>Mode>RGB). I'll use a black-and-white photo my dad took of me when I was a child by scanning the image into Photoshop Elements using a flatbed scanner. You can use either a scanned black-and-white photo or convert a color photo from a digital camera by choosing Enhance>Adjust Color>Remove Color.

STEP TWO: Once the file is open, let's create a new layer (Layer>New>Layer). In the New Layer dialog, select the Color option in the Mode drop-down menu and click OK. We'll be coloring on this new layer, so selecting the Color blend mode will allow the texture of the image below to show through any color that we add. The original layer (called the Background layer here) is below the new color layer.

Make sure your image has very few blank areas. If you have an image with large highlight areas, you'll need to use the Burn tool (O) on those areas on the Background layer a little before applying a color. The color will only adhere to image areas with existing gray-tone pixels and not areas that contain a lot of white.

IN ONE OF MY EARLIEST MEMORIES, I REMEMBER WATCHING MY MOTHER COLOR A BLACK-AND-WHITE PICTURE THAT MY DAD HAD TAKEN AND DEVELOPED IN OUR BASEMENT DARKROOM. THAT WAS BACK IN THE 1950S, WHEN PHOTOGRAPHERS USED FILM AND COLORING ARTISTS USED BRUSHES AND OIL PAINTS. IN ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS, THERE'S A FEW WAYS TO COLORIZE A PICTURE, BUT LET'S GO OVER THE MOST USEFUL WAY I'VE DISCOVERED. IT'S FUN, EASY, AND CREATIVE.
**STEP THREE:** Select Window>Color Swatches to reveal the different default colors that you can choose from in the Color Swatches palette. (We could’ve accessed the Color Picker by clicking on the Foreground color swatch at the bottom of the Toolbox for more finely tuned color options, but for this article, let's keep it simple and stick with the swatches.) Let's start by coloring the face, so click on the Pale Warm Brown swatch. The color names in the Swatches palette are revealed when you hover your mouse over each swatch.

**STEP FOUR:** To begin the coloring process, switch to the Brush tool (B), click on the drop-down menu next to the brush thumbnail in the Options Bar, and select a soft-edged brush. Then, click on the Airbrush icon. You can change the size of the brush as you paint by using the Bracket keys on your keyboard: Right Bracket (]) makes the brush larger; Left Bracket ([) makes the brush smaller. Now, simply click-and-drag the brush over the area of the image you want to color, selecting different colors as you move from one area to another. Here’s an important tip: Start with the Brush tool’s Opacity on the Options Bar set to about 50%. That setting lets you apply color at a slower rate than if your brush was set to 100%. When colorizing any picture, slowly applying a color gives you more control than applying the color at a fast rate.

**STEP FIVE:** During the painting process, occasionally turn off the bottom layer (by clicking on the Eye icon next it in the Layers palette) to check to see if you’ve missed any areas of a particular subject in the photograph. As you can see here, I missed a few areas, so more work was needed.
STEP SIX: Try not to paint over the same area twice. If you do, that area becomes darker than areas you only paint over once, though this may not be noticeable depending on the saturation of your grayscale pixels in that area. You’ll notice these darker areas mostly on a subject’s face or other relatively plain areas of a picture. If you do get streaks on a plain area, use the Dodge tool (O) to lighten that area.

STEP SEVEN: If you paint outside the lines, don’t fret. Select the Eraser tool (E), choose a soft-edged brush in the Options Bar, and erase any errant brush marks. You can also select an area with the Lasso tool (L) or the Polygonal Lasso tool and go to Edit>Delete to remove color from areas where you mistakenly painted.

STEP EIGHT: If you’re having trouble staying within the lines, here’s a secondary technique to try. Select the Polygonal Lasso tool or the Lasso tool and draw a selection around an area where you want to apply a color. Once the shape selection is drawn, choose a Foreground color that you want to use for the object, select the Paint Bucket tool (K), and click inside the selection to fill it with the Foreground color. This is good for filling large areas as well as drawing an exact edge, though touching up with the Brush tool may be needed.

Now we’re done, and we have a color photo that used to be black-and-white! If you want a slightly darker tone, try duplicating the layer containing the color and then changing the layer blend mode of the copied layer from Color to Multiply in the Layers palette. You can then adjust the Opacity of the new layer to dial in the exact tone that you want. Try different colors on different layers if you want. I tried both red and blue for the shirt to convert this black-and-white photo into a colorful image.