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Hi everyone. We’re gearing up for another summer, and even though plenty of people will be taking vacations, we’ve been busier then ever with new articles and online videos for you. Another thing that has kept us plenty busy is a slight changing of the guard. With this issue, I’m handing over the reins as editor-in-chief to Rick LePage.

I’ve enjoyed every bit of being editor-in-chief here at Photoshop Elements Techniques, and I have no doubt that Rick will fill my shoes and then some. He brings over 20 years of editorial and publishing experience to us. If there’s anyone who knows what readers want in a publication, it’s Rick, and I’ve personally seen his dedication in continuing to make this a great newsletter. (If you want to drop him a note before the next issue, you can email him at rick@photoshopelementsuser.com.)

Lastly, I want to say thanks, but you should know you can't get rid of me that easily. I’ve really enjoyed my two big roles for this newsletter: keeping it pointed in the right direction, and writing articles for it. Rick and I are in close communication about the direction of the newsletter, and we’ll continue to talk about how to make it the best place for you to get the most out of Elements. I’m going to keep writing the Digital Darkroom column, and all of the writers you’ve come to know are hard at work on articles for future issues and the Web site, too.

Well, I’m signing off now. I hope you enjoy your summer and any vacations you get to take. Make sure you take lots of photos!

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mattk@photoshopelementsuser.com
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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 Web site subscriber. And don’t forget to look in the Extras section online for free downloads and sample photos for many of the stories in each issue at www.photoshopelementsuser.com/subscriber/printextras.php.
four steps to a great-looking photo

IF YOU’RE LIKE MANY PEOPLE, YOU HAVE SEEN LOTS OF DIFFERENT WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR PHOTOS. BUT FEW OF THE TUTORIALS TELL YOU WHAT TO DO, AND IN WHAT ORDER. ONE WILL COVER SHARPENING, WHILE ANOTHER WILL TALK ABOUT EXPOSURE CORRECTION. IN THIS ARTICLE, I’LL BREAK DOWN THE FOUR STEPS THAT I USE ON JUST ABOUT EVERY PHOTO TO TAKE IT FROM GOOD TO GREAT.

The primary operations I perform on almost every photo are: color correction, levels, dodge and burn, and sharpen. I think it’s important first to get the color and the exposure right in the entire photo. Then I use the Dodge and Burn tools to apply correction to parts of the image that need attention drawn to—or away from—them. Sharpening is always done at the end of the process because it’s the most destructive operation on the photo, so I leave it for last.

STEP ONE: Open the photo that you’re going to work with. Here’s a great candidate: it has a slight color cast and some exposure problems, and it could use a little sharpening.

If you haven’t cropped your photo, and you think it needs it, then go ahead and use the Crop tool (press the letter C) to crop it now. You can do it later, but I usually do it before all adjustments—that way, I’m only focused on areas of the image that are important to me.

STEP TWO: The first step is to work with the color: we want to get that right before we start playing with the exposure settings. If you find that your photo has too much of a color cast to it, then try going to the Enhance menu and choose Adjust Color>Color Variations.
STEP THREE: In this example, I thought the photo looked a little too yellow (or warm), so I wanted to cool it down a bit. To counteract the warmness, click on the Increase Blue button and Elements will add a little blue to the photo. I’ve clicked twice here but you may be able to get away with only once. When you’re done, click OK.

STEP FOUR: Now let’s take care of some of the exposure problems. The photo is a little too light and it lacks some contrast, so we can use Levels to help take care of both. Click the Enhance menu and choose Adjust Lighting>Levels. Try dragging the black slider to the right a little to darken the photo. Then move the middle gray slider to the right a tiny bit to darken it some more (but not quite as much—you don’t want to overdo it). Finally, drag the white slider to the left just a bit to help boost those lighter areas. Click OK when you’re done.

STEP FIVE: Next, we’ll do some dodging and burning, which lets us get a little more selective in what parts of an image that we lighten or darken. First, select the Dodge tool from the toolbox (it’s located in with the Sponge tool down at the bottom of the toolbox near the color swatches), or press the letter O until the tool looks like a lollipop. On the Options Bar at the top of the screen, set the Range to Midtones and the Exposure setting to around 20%. We don’t want to lighten things too much, or they’ll look fake.
STEP SIX: Now start painting on the areas you want to be lighter. Think of the things you want to draw attention to in your photo. In this case, it’s the girl’s face, so I’ve painted a few strokes on her face and her arm to lighten them. Each time you click and drag with the Dodge tool it will make the area even lighter.

STEP SEVEN: Change to the Burn tool (which is in the same group as Dodge). Set the Range to Midtones and the Exposure to 20%, and paint over the areas where you want minimize attention. Here I’ve painted over her hair, sweater, the sky and the grass. Use the left (‘[‘) and right bracket keys (‘]’) to adjust your brush size while painting to make it smaller or larger.

STEP EIGHT: The last step is to sharpen the photo. Do this right before you print it or save it for the Web or for email. Click the Enhance menu and choose Adjust Sharpness. Set the Radius to 1 pixel and Remove to Lens Blur. Finally, adjust the Amount setting. For portraits I usually find that 80% to 100% looks good, but I’ve gone to 150% here and it looks fine. For landscapes you’ll find you can get away with higher sharpening amounts, so try 120% as a starting point and work your way up from there.

STEP NINE: That’s it! Color Balancing, Levels, Dodge and Burn, and Sharpening are the four main things I do to all of my photos. There is one last finishing touch that I often like to apply; it’s not necessary, but I do like the way it looks. Click the Filter menu and choose Correct Camera Distortion. Drag the Amount slider in the Vignette section to the left a bit. This darkens the edges and draws attention to the subject. Click OK to apply the effect.

IT'S EASY TO GET CAUGHT UP MAKING CREATIVE PROJECTS FOR GROWN-UPS, LIKE CALENDARS, PHOTO BOOKS AND SCRAPBOOK PAGES. BUT WHAT HAVE YOU MADE FOR THE LITTLE ONES LATELY? THE NEXT TIME THE CREATIVE BUG BITES, CONSIDER CONVERTING YOUR PHOTOS INTO ART FOR THE COLORING BOOK CROWD.

STEP ONE: Pop open a photo and immediately duplicate the Background layer by pressing Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J). Then, hide the original layer in the Layers palette by clicking the layer's visibility eye. This is a self-protective move; you won't use the original layer unless the effect goes wrong.

[To follow along, download the image shown here by navigating to the subscriber area of photoshopelementsuser.com.]

STEP TWO: Choose Enhance>Convert to Black and White. In the dialog, select Newspaper from the Style list. This preset does a good job of adding contrast while lightening the background, which is useful since you'll want the background to be white eventually. Feel free to adjust the intensity sliders if you wish, then press OK.
STEP THREE: Choose Enhance>Unsharp Mask. Enter 100% in the Amount field, 2 for Radius, 0 for Threshold, and press OK.

The Radius setting controls how many pixels are sharpened near the edges (outlines) in your image. Threshold lets you specify how far pixels need to be from each other to be considered an edge. By setting the Threshold to 0, you're letting Elements go hog wild and sharpen everything.

Depending upon the amount of contrast in your image, you might want to run Unsharp Mask a couple of times. Press Ctrl-F (Mac: Command-F), which will automatically run it again with the previous settings.

STEP FOUR: Hop up to the Filter menu and choose Stylize>Find Edges. There's no dialog with this one; it's all or nothing. Your image should be looking decidedly like a sketch at this point.

STEP FIVE: Now we'll start to clean up the image a bit. You can use a Levels adjustment to make the background whiter and less gray. Click-and-hold the Create Adjustment Layer icon at the top of the Layers Palette and choose Levels from the drop-down menu.

STEP SIX: The goal here is to reset the white point, or rather, what Elements thinks should be white. To do that, choose the White eyedropper on the far right of the Levels dialog box, then mouse over to the document and begin clicking on any gray areas in the background of your image. Keep clicking until the background becomes as white as possible.
STEP SEVEN: To darken the edges even more, drag the shadows slider to the right. (If you’ve already closed the Levels dialog, double-click the Levels adjustment layer in the Layers palette to open it back up. Click OK when you’re finished.)

STEP EIGHT: In the Layers palette, select the layer with your sketch on it select the Brush tool (B). Press D to set your color chips to the default of black and white and press X until white is on top. Mouse over to the image and paint away any unwanted bits or gray areas in the image. You’ll have to play around with the brush sizes as you paint—in some areas you will be able to use a large brush to paint out the gray. Don’t worry about being too exact, though; it adds to the charm!

As you can see in my final image (on the left), Elements’ filters can make short work of turning your photos into a wonderful drawing. All that’s left to do is to load the printer with paper and dig out the crayons! ■
IN PART 1, WE MET THE BLEND MODES AVAILABLE IN ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS. WE LEARNED WHAT THEY DO, AND EXAMINED THE FIRST 12 MODES (NORMAL, DISSOLVE, THE FIVE DARKENING MODES, AND THE FIVE LIGHTENING MODES). LET’S CONTINUE EXPLORING THE REMAINING BLEND MODES: CONTRAST, COMPARISON AND COMPOSITE.

Each mode in this group takes an image and multiplies the shadows of an image, screens (or lightens) the highlights, and drops the midtones (grays) to create higher contrast. In essence, they combine the principles at work in the Darken and Lighten Modes. For our example, we’ll use a simple RGB document with two layers: Background and Layer 1.

**CONTRAST MODES**

Some call **Overlay** the “when-in-doubt-use-this” mode. It’s a combination of Multiply and Screen, darkening shadows, brightening highlights, and enhancing color. Areas that are 50% gray drop away. Its uses are many, including sharpening, adjusting tones and colors, and various special effects.

The Overlay blending mode can help “pop” an image by deepening the shadows and adding brightness to the highlights.
areas get lighter, and more saturation is added to the colors. It’s great when your image needs a boost; however, you’ll probably need to dial back the layer opacity to get an acceptable result.

**Linear Light** combines Linear Burn and Linear Dodge, with a similar result as Hard Light and Vivid Light, but with higher contrast. You can use both Vivid Light and Linear Light to add a little pop to an otherwise flat image or when applying a texture on top of an image.

**Pin Light**, a combination of Darken and Lighten, is a bit unusual and somewhat unpredictable; it often creates some pretty intense contrasts and color combinations. Because it also takes out 50% gray, it can be used with filters that produce large areas of gray, such as Emboss or many of the Sketch effects. You may come across a situation when it gives you just the effect you’re looking for, but it’s rarely used.

**Hard Mix** posterizes the layer(s) beneath the active layer, reducing the colors to eight: black, white, red, green, blue, magenta, cyan, and yellow. It’s not often I find a use for this one either, but you may (I hope you do!).
COMPOSITE MODES
What distinguishes this final group of modes are their ties to the Hue, Saturation, and Luminosity properties to which they subscribe. We call them “composite” because they don’t look at the individual Red, Green, and Blue color channels; rather they combine all the channels (this happens out of sight) and then work on the composite version of the layer.

Hue only pays attention to the basic colors on a layer, ignoring their brightness and vividness (saturation). This mode works great for changing things from one color to another. Simply create a new blank layer above your image, change the blend mode to Hue, and paint away. Or, for a challenge, combine this mode with the Gradient tool (G) for some cool multi-tone effects (like the apples shown below). Note: For Hue to work, there has to be existing color on the image, and it won’t change the brightness or the saturation; only the basic color.

Saturation is another way of saying “how much.” No saturation leaves only brightness (grays), and complete saturation moves toward fluorescent colors. So how does this mode work? It ignores the colors and their brightness and focuses on their vividness, or intensity. It then adjusts the saturation of the layer(s) underneath so their saturation matches the active layer’s. It’s easier if you see this, so experiment. A common use for this mode is to change areas of an image to black and white. Create a

COMPARATIVE MODES
The two layers in this group are quite similar: Both use a layer to invert colors on layer(s) below and both compare two layers (or one layer with any underlying layers), looking for areas that are identical.

The Difference mode highlights differences between the blended layer and the layer below. Any area that’s white on Layer 1 will invert the colors on the Background layer (or the composite of all the layers below, if you have more than one layer below set to Difference). Any area that’s black on Layer 1 will be unchanged. Areas of like colors cancel each other out and turn black. This mode can be useful for finding differences between similar images, or when aligning photos, perhaps for the purpose of combining elements from two separate but similar images.

Exclusion works in a similar way, but with less contrast. White and black on the blended layer behave the same, but instead of turning areas of like color black, those areas change other colors—often varying shades of gray. Like Difference, it’s mostly used for aligning images (although Difference is usually the better choice for this). It can also be combined with different filters to achieve some interesting special effects.
new layer above the image, set its mode to Saturation and paint with gray or black. Experiment with different opacity settings and try the Gradient tool for a fade-out effect.

Color mode is similar to Hue in that it can change the color of underlying layers but it can also change the saturation of an area, which Hue can’t do. This means you can add color to areas that previously didn’t have any. A popular use for this mode is to colorize grayscale images. Open a grayscale image, go to Image>Mode>RGB Color to convert it to a color image, create a new blank layer above the main layer, set the blend mode to Color and paint away!

The last mode in the menu, Luminosity, takes the brightness information of a layer and applies it to the color of the layer(s) underneath. It doesn’t change colors or their saturation; just their brightness. This mode can help any time you see a shift in color after making some sort of adjustment. For example, if you apply a Levels adjustment layer to an image and notice an undesired color shift along with changes to the brightness (which you want), try switching the mode of the adjustment layer to Luminosity.

So, there you have it: a rundown of the blend modes available in Adobe Photoshop Elements. As we close, here are a few tips:

• Knowing a little about how each blend mode works helps, but there’s no substitute for trying them out. Find the one that gives you the look you’re going for.
• If a mode’s effect is too intense, try lowering the layer’s opacity.
• Combining different blend modes can be interesting and often quite instructive.
• Try some selective masking or erasing. This will allow you to keep desired areas and hide or eliminate areas you don’t want to affect.

Most importantly, use and enjoy these versatile tools. You’ll create new, exciting, and interesting images.

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Adding color to a black and white image is a great technique: simply add a new layer to your image, set the blend mode to Color, and apply paint with the Brush tool.

With a Master’s degree in Educational Technology and 16 years of teaching experience, Mike Rodriguez currently teaches classes in Adobe Photoshop Elements, Paint Shop Pro, and other computer applications. He also contributes videos on Photoshop Elements to photoshopelementsuser.com.
AS PHOTOGRAPHERS, WE ARE OBSESSED WITH CAPTURING THE PERFECT IMAGE. WE HAVE AN ARRAY OF TECHNICALLY CORRECT EXPOSURE COMBINATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM IN ANY GIVEN SITUATION. IT’S UP TO US TO DETERMINE THE SETTINGS THAT COMMUNICATE OUR VISION OF THE WORLD.

Understanding the relationship between aperture and shutter speed is the first step towards more creative control over your photos.

Light is the basis for all of our exposure information: How much light is there? What is the quality of light? Do we need to add light? Subtract light? How much depth of field will communicate my vision of the scene in front of me? What aperture should I select? Do I need a fast or slow shutter speed to capture the essence of the moment?

These are the questions that I face when I compose an image and make creative exposure decisions. For me, it all starts with the relationship of the three main elements of the exposure triangle — aperture (lens opening), shutter speed and ISO (sensitivity to light) — to each other.
Shutter Speed/Aperture Relationship: You have multiple choices when you click.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aperture</th>
<th>f/2.8</th>
<th>f/4</th>
<th>f/5.6</th>
<th>f/8</th>
<th>f/11</th>
<th>f/16</th>
<th>f/22</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shutter Speed</td>
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<td>1/500</td>
<td>1/250</td>
<td>1/125</td>
<td>1/60</td>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>1/15</td>
</tr>
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Exposure Triangle

If any one element changes, the other elements are effected.

The ISO setting we select directly impacts our aperture and shutter speed options. The aperture we select will directly impact our shutter speed and, a change in shutter speed will impact our aperture. Let’s say our meter gives us a reading of 1/250th of a second at f/5.6 with an ISO of 100. I am shooting in Aperture Priority mode with my camera. The meter in my camera gives me a technically accurate exposure, but the result does not communicate what I was visualizing when I clicked the shutter.

I begin to close the aperture down one stop at a time, which results in slower shutter speeds. Each click of my shutter represents a different combination of the same exposure value: f/8 at 1/125th of a second; f/11 at 1/60th of a second; f/16 at 1/30th of a second; f/22 at 1/15th of a second; and f/32 at 1/8th of a second. Now the image is looking like the image I had in my mind when I clicked the shutter. As I close the aperture down, the shutter speed slows by one stop as well. Each and every one of the aperture/shutter speed combinations listed above gave me the same exposure value, but the difference between an image taken at a wide-open aperture with a fast shutter speed and one at a small aperture and slower shutter speed is huge. My camera does a great job of evaluating the scene; it’s up to me to decide on the settings that best communicate my vision.

Now, let’s come up with some definitions:

**ISO**

- The ISO setting is the sensor’s threshold sensitivity to light.
- Higher ISO settings require less light or faster shutter speeds, but also generate more noise.
- Lower ISO settings require more light or slower shutter speeds, resulting in less noise and more detail.
- Where do you set your ISO? As low as you can get away with!
APERTURE
- The aperture is the size of the opening in the lens that allows the light to pass through.
- The bigger the number (f/22), the smaller the aperture opening, and the smaller the number (f/2.8), the bigger the opening.
- Small apertures result in more depth of field (more of the image is in focus), while large apertures result in less depth of field (less of the image is in focus).

The aperture I select determines whether I can see from near to infinity in a scene or it can isolate my subject from the background, making it pop. I might select a small aperture that might communicate the vastness of a landscape. Alternatively, I might want to draw my viewer’s attention to the subject—like the butterfly on the cover of this month’s issue—with a wide aperture.

SHUTTER SPEED
- Shutter speed is the length of time the shutter stays open, allowing the light to reach the camera’s sensor.
- The higher the number (1/1000th of a second), the faster the shutter speed. The lower the number (1/15th of a second), the slower the shutter speed.
- Fast shutter speeds freeze motion, while slow shutter speeds blur motion.

By selecting the creatively correct shutter speed I am able to communicate the vision that I had in my mind’s eye when I clicked the shutter. I am able to stop motion, freezing every drop of water in a crashing wave with a fast shutter speed or, I have the ability to convey a sense of motion by blurring the wings of a bird in flight with a slow shutter speed.
EXPOSURE COMPENSATION

While camera meters are very accurate, they don’t always give an exposure setting that recreates the mood we want to capture. That’s where exposure compensation comes in, where you add or subtract exposure (stops) before clicking the shutter.

My camera meter does a good job of giving me a true reading of the light in a scene, but it does not have emotion. It does not know what was going through my mind when I clicked the shutter. It is up to me to decide whether I want to brighten a scene to communicate lightness or whether I want to darken a scene to add drama to my images. Starting with the exposure that my camera gives me, I will make creative decisions as to whether or not the exposure communicates what it is I am visualizing.

On an overcast day, or in pre-dawn light, I will often dial in plus exposure compensation to brighten the scene removing the dreary look that my camera accurately captures.

On the other hand, I will dial in minus exposure compensation on sunsets, to darken the sky and add saturation to the already colorful world or to darken shadows, drawing my viewer’s eye to the subject in my images. Exposure compensation allows me to take control of my images and to communicate my mood at the time of capture.

Using these tools—aperture, shutter speed, ISO and exposure compensation—creatively will help you take control of your images. Use your camera’s meter to determine the correct exposure and then select the aperture/shutter speed combination and exposure value that will communicate your vision of the world.
Adobe’s Photoshop Express is a new online service designed to let you edit and share your photos with friends, family and the public at large (if you choose). While the service is in its early phases, it still shows a lot of potential. Let’s take a quick look at what Express can do for you.

Before I encountered so many folks all fired up about photography, it’s no wonder, really, when you consider how low the prices for good digital cameras have come, and how easy software now makes the editing and sharing process.

However, there are those among us who enjoy snapping pictures but don’t have the time, patience, or inclination to tackle even Photoshop Elements. Enter Photoshop Express (www.photoshop.com/express/), the free, online photo storage, editing, and sharing service launched by Adobe in March. It’s in beta—which means they’re still playing with features and checking for bugs—but it’s fully functional and fun to play with, especially if you want to get a taste of the online photo world.

GETTING STARTED
Your Express relationship begins with online registration, which includes establishing a login (your email address) and password, along with a custom URL where your photo collection will live. This triggers an email to which you must click through in order to use the service. If you have dial-up Internet service, don’t bother registering; even with DSL or a cable modem you’ll need a dose of patience with large images.

Express works with most browsers, though the free Flash 9 Player is required. (You’ll be offered the option to download Flash 9 if your computer doesn’t have it installed.)

Upon sign-in you are greeted with a friendly, charcoal gray welcome screen prompting you to upload photos, visit your photo library (My Photos), albums you’ve made public (My Gallery), or peruse the public galleries of others (Browse). The upload process is straightforward; you can choose from images on your hard drive or those that you’ve uploaded to other photo sites like Photobucket or Picasa (Flickr should also be supported by the time you read this). You can also view and edit photos on Facebook, the popular social networking site. Accessing images on these sites requires a separate login each time; however, once you save an edited image in Photoshop Express, it automatically gets updated on the other site. Sweet!

Photoshop Express is Adobe’s first foray into the world of online photo sharing.
Photoshop Express lets you view and edit images on a variety of other online services, including Facebook.

You can upload multiple files from your hard drive to your Express library, into a new or existing album.

Unless you’re lucky enough to have a super high-speed connection, expect upload speeds to be pretty slow for big images. It took almost two minutes for a 5-megabyte file using a public wireless connection, though speeds were zippiest using my cable modem at home. Images are limited to 10 megabytes or 4000 pixels in width or height. If you’re shooting with anything more than a 10-megapixel camera, you’ll need to drop the camera’s quality setting in order to upload those images, or use Photoshop Elements to resize them first. Adobe gives you 2 gigabytes of total storage space, and it’s easy enough to purge photos. One last note: Express only supports JPEG files—no Raw files allowed.

**LIBRARY AND ALBUMS**

All albums are private until you make them public by clicking Share Album. However, Adobe does reserve the right to do whatever it wishes—within reason—to public photos shared with everyone. The initial terms of usage were frighteningly broad, but after an uproar, Adobe promised to amend the agreement.

To delete a photo from an album or the library, click once to select it, then click Remove Photo at the bottom of the screen.

The Library and albums are viewable in grid form, as a single image, a table of information, and as a slide show. Use the slider at the top of the window to adjust the thumbnail size and the view pop-up menu to toggle various pieces of information you want displayed on or off. Use the same menu to sort photos by newest or oldest date, rating, or you can just drag and drop them in any order you want.

The Slideshow layout options include Single, Strip, Grid, and Ring, in either 2-D or 3-D. You can use Viewing Settings to enlarge all or one photo or change the transitions from slide to slide. Slideshow duration can be set with a tiny bar at the top right of the window, and thumbnail size can be tweaked using the slider to its left. That’s pretty much it.

You can present your albums to friends and the public by clicking Share Album at the bottom of the window. Options include sharing your album publicly, sharing it in your gallery and emailing a link to your friends, or just emailing a link to your friends.

You can also email photos and search for photos in your gallery (or anyone else’s public gallery) by name, caption, and keyword fields. You can also easily grab the URL of your own gallery for posting on a web site, and bookmark the galleries of others as a favorite place to visit.
EXPRESS EDITING
Editing is where the real fun begins in Photoshop Express. Simply highlight a photo’s thumbnail and click Edit Photo at the bottom of the window, or use the Photo Options menu. All of the editing tools appear on the left and are divided into three categories: Basics, Tuning, and Effects. Basics includes Crop & Rotate, Auto Correct (color correction), Exposure, Red-Eye Removal, Touchup (for removing blemishes), and Saturation.

You can use the Crop & Rotate tool to remove distracting areas. The Crop tool includes a “rule of thirds” grid overlay, which is useful for improving the composition of your photos. Place the focal point of your image on one of the grid vertices to give you a more visually pleasing image.

The Tuning category includes White Balance, which tells Express which pixels ought to be white; Highlight, which fixes overexposed areas; Fill Light, which simulates flash; Sharpen, and Soft Focus. Rounding out the editing tools is the Effects category, which is similar to Photoshop Elements’ Filter effects. The effects available with Express include Pop Color, Hue, Black & White, Tint, Sketch, and Distort.

Editing in Express is completely non-destructive, and edits can be undone at anytime. If you want to take a peek at the original during the editing process, just click and hold the View Original button at the bottom of the window.

As you move through the list of editing tools, a check mark appears next to the name of each tool you’ve used. Simply click the check mark to remove the edit made by the tool, even after the image has been saved.

With Express’ Pop Color Effect, you can zap all the color in an image except for one, and then change that color.

The Hue Effect lets you create a whole new color scheme for a photo.

FINAL WORD
The only real difficulty I had with Express was remembering not to use any of the buttons on my Web browser. For example, clicking something natural like the Previous Page button will end your viewing session. I got around it by hiding my browser’s toolbar, which is usually a simple menu option for most PC and Mac Web browsers.

Other than that, patience was necessary when uploading or editing files over a few megabytes in size. However, I’m truly excited about the future of Express and I can’t wait to see what lies in the final version. I’ve also caught myself daydreaming about the capabilities of a more full-featured version down the road. What a great time to be snap-happy: The possibilities are endless!

Photoshop Express’ Crop & Rotate tool uses a “rule of thirds” grid to help you compose your final image.

As the founder of the free tutorial site, GraphicReporter.com, and chief evangelist for iStockphoto.com, Lesa is on a mission to teach the world to create better graphics. She writes for NAPP, Layers and Macworld magazines, and teaches for KelbyTraining.com. Catch her Graphics Tip of the Week live each Wednesday on YourMacLifeShow.com.
A clipping group can help target adjustments to only a single layer.

1. By their nature, adjustment layers affect all layers that are below the adjustment. If you want to only affect one layer, here’s how you do it: position the adjustment layer immediately above the layer you want to affect, and then from the Layer menu choose Create Clipping Group—or press Ctrl-G (Mac: Command-G). Now the adjustment layer will only affect the layer immediately below it. (This is indicated in the Layers palette by two things: the adjustment layer is “indented” with an arrow beside it, and the name of the layer below is underlined).

2. Here’s another way to create a clipping group: position your cursor on the border between the two layers, hold down Alt key (Mac: Option key) and click once. (Before you click, the cursor will change from a hand to two intersecting circles.) You can use the same method to “remove” an existing clipping group.

3. When you have a tool other than the Type tool selected and you need to edit an existing type layer, don’t bother heading to the toolbox to select the Type tool. Instead, just double-click on the letter T thumbnail beside the layer. This will activate the Type tool and select the text on the layer.

4. Lightly colored areas of a photo tend to draw the eye more than areas that are dark. But in an effort to lighten areas to draw more attention, we’re in danger of losing detail in those highlights. An alternate approach—which achieves the same end result—is to make the darker areas a little darker, creating the illusion that the highlights are lighter. One simple way to do this is to add a Levels adjustment layer and make the entire image darker. Then press Ctrl-I (Mac: Command-I) to invert the layer mask and fill it with black, Finally, set the foreground color to white and use a soft-edged brush to paint wherever you want to darken the dark areas (to make the lighter areas seem lighter).
It is possible to adjust a layer mask—particularly one that includes shades of grey—using Levels. In this example, shown below, we made a feathered selection and added a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. With the layer mask active we pressed Ctrl-L (Mac: Command-L) to open Levels, and used the sliders under the Histogram to change the size of the mask, and the Output Levels sliders to change the shading. By moving the black triangle, we made the masked area smaller; moving the white Output slider changed the white area of the mask to a light grey.

To add texture to a photo: open a photo of a texture (one that includes cracks, surface texture or a range of colors) and use the Move tool to drag it onto a second photo. If necessary, use Image>Transform>Free Transform to resize the texture to cover the photo—don’t worry about stretching the texture to fit, since you’ll be creating an overlay and many of the details will be lost. Then lower the opacity and choose a blend mode: Multiply or Overlay will give “basic” results, and modes like Vivid Light will be more dramatic. You can also use the Dodge and Burn tool to accentuate the look.

If you need to create a new document that’s the same dimensions as one that’s already open, use File>New, and then from the Preset menu in the dialog box, choose the appropriate document from the bottom of the menu. The file’s dimensions will automatically be entered into the New dialog.

If you want to be able to add Layer Styles to a Background layer, you’ll have to unlock the layer and rename it. To do this in one simple step, hold down Alt (Mac: Option) and double-click on the Background layer. This will automatically call the layer “Layer 0” and unlock it. (If you want to name the layer something else, double-click without holding down the Alt key and a dialog will let you name the layer.) Once the layer is renamed the lock symbol disappears and you can add Layer Styles.

All images by Dave Cross unless otherwise noted.
create grungy backgrounds with custom brushes

DO YOU ADMIRE THOSE POPULAR GRUNGY BACKGROUNDS AND WISH YOU COULD MAKE YOUR OWN? HERE’S AN EASY AND FUN TECHNIQUE THAT UTILIZES SOME OF THE MANY FREE BRUSHES AVAILABLE ONLINE. IN THE PROCESS, WE’LL ALSO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TWO OFTEN-OVERLOOKED TOOLS: DODGE AND BURN.

To download some free grunge brush sets to use with this tutorial, go to the subscriber area at www.photoshopelementsuser.com and click on the Extras button. Look for “Grunge Brushes,” which has links to free brushes all over the Web, and also includes instructions for installing them.

STEP ONE: Start out by creating a new document with File>New>Blank File, or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-N (Mac: Command-N). In the New dialog box, enter 8 inches x 8 inches, 300 pixels/inch Resolution, and White Background.

STEP TWO: Create a new layer and fill it with color. At the top of the Layers palette, click the Create a New Layer icon to get a blank layer above the Background layer. From the Edit menu, select Fill Layer. In the Fill Layer dialog, at the “Use” prompt, click the dropdown arrow and select Color. When the Color Picker dialog box pops up, select a medium color in a dusky tone to use as the base for your background. (If you want to use the same color I used, enter “81c6aa” in the # field.)

By leaving the Background layer white and creating a new color layer above it, you can lower the opacity of the color layer to lighten it if later you decide your design looks too dark.
STEP THREE: We are creating grunge here, and a solid color is just too neat. So let’s add some noise. Select your fill layer, and, from the Filter menu, choose Noise>Add Noise, setting the amount to around 5%. In the next step we’ll add more grunge.

STEP FOUR: Select the Dodge tool (O). This tool is nested with the Sponge and Burn tools and looks like a dark lollipop. If you don’t see it, right-click on the icon directly above the Foreground/Background color chips.

In the Options Bar, click the Brush Picker menu and load one of your grunge brushes. Resize the brush to a large size, set the Range to Midtones, and the Exposure to a number from 20% to 40%.

Now stamp and stroke around on your Color layer with the Dodge tool brush to lighten areas here and there, to your liking. Switch to different brushes in the set and to different brush sets, adjusting the brush sizes and their opacity as you wish.

STEP FIVE: Next, let’s move on to the Burn tool, which is in the same tool group. As the Dodge tools lightens, the Burn tool darkens. Set the Range to Midtones and the Exposure around 35%, and use it with various grunge brushes to darken areas by stroking and stamping on the Color layer.
STEP SIX: In this step, we will add more grunge on separate layers. Here, you might want to add such elements as water stains and grungy stencils of letters or numbers, using appropriate brushes.

Create a new blank layer above your color layer. Get the Brush tool (B) and select a dark gray or black Foreground color. From the Brush Picker, select a grungy or other type of brush. Lower the Brush Opacity somewhat and stamp or stroke on the blank layer to add an effect to your background.

Add another blank layer and stamp or stroke with a different brush color. Continue adding blank layers and brush strokes to build up your background.

Using separate layers here has some terrific advantages:

- You can lower the opacity of any layer where the effect appears too bold.
- Not happy with an element you stamped? Simply drag that layer to the trash bin in the layers palette and start over with a new blank layer.
- If you stamp a brush on a blank layer, and wish to use only part of that element, you can use the Eraser tool (E) to remove the part of the design you don’t want.
- An element stamped on its own layer may be relocated or rotated on the image. Click on that element’s layer in the Layers palette, and press Ctrl-T (Mac: Command-T) for Free Transform (or from the menu: Image>Transform>Free Transform). Then use the mouse cursor to move or rotate the element, clicking the check mark to commit the change.
STEP SEVEN: When you get to the point where you’re satisfied with your grungy background, perform a final Save. (If you know you’re done with your background, choose Flatten Image from the Layer menu: that helps to keep the size of your file smaller.) Then use your new background in one of your photo creations.

On the left is an example where I’ve used my background. I reversed the image and printed it on an iron-on transfer sheet to create a T-shirt for a teen friend.

Utilizing some of the fantastic brushes available online for free download should get your creative juices flowing, and before long you’ll be creating your own backgrounds like a pro. And once you’ve added a photo design to your background, don’t limit yourself to printing on paper. Why not try printing an iron-on transfer or use another specialty medium, such as fabric or canvas?

NOTE: If you are unfamiliar with how to load new brushes in Elements, check out Matt Kloskowski’s tutorial, “Adding Custom Brushes and Layer Styles,” on the Photoshop Elements Techniques Web site by clicking on the Videos button in the subscriber area.

CREDITS

BRUSHES USED FOR MY GRUNGY BACKGROUND:
• SS-Waterstains, by Stephanie Shimerdla (www.brushes.obsidiandawn.com)
• Scumbucket and Giatto, by Sondra Gazin, from Adobe Studio Exchange (www.adobe.com/exchange)
• Grunge brushes by hawksmont (www.hawksmont.com)
• Typogrungebrushes by Scully7491 (scully7491.deviantart.com)
• Ripe Grunge Extreme Pack by RazorICE (razorICE.deviantart.com)

BRUSHES USED IN MY FINAL IMAGE:
• Guitar Girl, created by the author in Photoshop Elements
• Tasty Tattoo brushes by Jason Gaylor (www.designfruit.com)
• Paranoia, The Power of Music, by Kristun (Kristun.deviantart.com)
• Music brushes, by Henda (Henda-Stock.deviantart.com)
• SS-Music, by Stephanie Shimerdla (www.brushes.obsidiandawn.com)

FONT USED IN MY FINAL IMAGE:
• The Battle Continuez, by Chris Hansen (www.1001fonts.com)

FOR MORE DIGITAL EDITING TECHNIQUES, VISIT WWW.PHOTOSHOPELEMENTSUSER.COM

Diana Day, retired H.R. Manager and self-taught Elements user, started a PSE Users Group in 2007, which has grown to 26 members. Diana puts her skill with Elements to practical use as the web administrator and P.R. chairperson for her church.
When processing photos taken at weddings or other special events you can easily take those snapshots from “ho-hum” to “wow” and create a beautiful keepsake. This piece is adapted from a wedding video tutorial for Photoshop by Matt Kloskowski, and I’m taking it a little further to create something you will be proud to display or present to others.

**STEP ONE:** Open the image you are going to use for the project, and set your Foreground color to white. (You will use this color throughout the project.) Using the Elliptical Marquee tool, which is nested under the Rectangular Marquee tool (M), draw an oval over the area of the picture you want to show through.

*(Tip: hold down the Alt key (Mac: Option) and you’ll draw the oval from the center outwards, which can sometimes be helpful when trying to get your oval properly placed.)*

**STEP TWO:** Choose Select>Inverse, which will turn the outer area into the active selection. Then, go to Select>Feather and set the Amount to 15 pixels to create a soft edge. Next, press Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J) to create a duplicate layer. On the new layer, the area inside the oval will be blank, with a slightly feathered edge.
STEP THREE: Make the new layer active by clicking on it in the Layers palette, and choose Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Hue/Saturation, or use the shortcut key Ctrl-U (Mac: Command-U). In the Hue/ Saturation dialog box check Colorize. Set the Hue to +56, Saturation to +25 and Lightness to +47 and click OK. This step will give you a nice sepia-toned overlay, creating an antique look to your project. You can experiment with other colors for a different look or to better suit your project.

STEP FOUR: Create a new blank layer above your overlay layer. Using the Elliptical Marquee tool again, draw another oval around the current opening on the Overlay layer. Making sure you are on that new blank layer, choose Edit>Stroke (Outline) Selection. Set the color to White, the Size to 25 pixels and the Location to Outside. Add a Gaussian Blur to the stroke by choosing Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur with the Radius set to 15.

STEP FIVE: If the oval is still selected, then deselect it by pressing Ctrl-D (Mac: Command-D). Click on the Overlay layer to make it active; we’ll now give it a little depth by adding a drop shadow.

Choose Drop Shadows from the Effects/Layer Styles palette and apply the Soft Edge Drop Shadow. You can adjust the drop shadow settings to your liking by double clicking on the FX icon in the Layers palette and changing the distance, size and opacity.
STEP SIX: Create a new blank layer above the stroke. Select the Paintbrush tool (B) and choose Natural Brushes from the Brushes pop-up at the far left of the Options Bar at the top of the screen. For this example, use Charcoal 59, and set the brush size to 250. Then, click on the Paint Brush icon on the right side of the Options Bar and change the brush settings to Hue Jitter 6%, Scatter 10%, Spacing 31%, and close the box. Paint the outer edges of the project on your new layer. You may need to go over each edge a few times to get the look you want.

STEP SEVEN: Once you have finished with the basic enhancements, dress up your image a bit. Add text and embellishments like corners or a narrow frame. Remember to keep it simple for a more elegant look. You can create your own corners, or download the one I used here (and an alternate corner) in the Extras section at photoshopelementsuser.com.

QUICK TIP: I like to name my layers based on what they contain to help me remember what settings I used. In this example, Layer 2 would be named “Overlay / Feather 15” and Layer 3 would be named “Stroke 20.5 / Blur 25.” You’ll never have to guess again what you did when trying to duplicate a project.
Q: IS THERE A WAY TO SELECT SEVERAL TEXT LAYERS AT ONCE AND CHANGE THE TYPEFACE OF ALL OF THEM AT THE SAME TIME?

A: There are lots of ways to accomplish this, but here’s my favorite: Select one of the text layers by clicking on it in the Layers palette. Go to Select>Similar Layers. This command will select all the type layers present in the Layers palette. Press T on your keyboard to select the Type tool, and make the changes you want; they will get applied to all of the selected type layers. If you just want to change the text from one typeface to another, select a new face from the Font pop-up on the Options Bar and go to Select>Deselct Layers, so you don’t change any other type attributes (like size) by accident.

Q: I’M TRYING TO MAKE A CUSTOM TEXTURE BRUSH FROM A PORTION OF AN IMAGE, BUT THE DEFINE BRUSH FROM SELECTION ITEM IS GRAYED OUT IN THE EDIT MENU. HOW COME?

A: The likely culprit is the size of your selection. In order to create a custom brush, the selected area must be no larger than 2500 pixels by 2500 pixels. If the image you’re using has a high resolution, go to Image>Resize>Image Size and reduce the width or height of the image. Make sure you have the Constrain Proportions box checked, and the other dimension will change accordingly. Click OK to return to your image, make your selection, and go to Edit>Define Brush from Selection.

Q: I HAVE A DOCUMENT WITH TWO LAYERS THAT I WANT TO FLATTEN. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MERGE DOWN AND FLATTEN IMAGE?

A: It depends on what’s on the layers. Merge Down will merge the selected layer with the one directly below. However, both layers must be visible, and if one of the layers is a vector layer, it must be simplified (Layer>Simplify Layer) for Merge Down to be available. Merge Visible will merge any visible layers. Hidden layers will not be affected, and vector layers are automatically simplified. Flatten Image will flatten all the layers onto the Background layer. If any layers are hidden, you will be given the choice of discarding the hidden layers before flattening takes place or canceling the operation.

If you have a Photoshop Elements question you’d like to see answered, send it to mrodriguez@photoshopelementsuser.com. If your question just can’t wait, visit our Photoshop Elements forum at www.photoshopelementsuser.com/forum to get answers from other members. (But still feel free to send your question along for us to publish.)