YIPES, STRIPES!
Use our quick and easy method for creating colorful striped and checked backgrounds, p8

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Inside Elements 7
Smart tools and online extras lead the charge in Adobe’s latest update, p12
It seems like every autumn, Adobe announces another upgrade to Photoshop Elements, and this year is no exception. Version 7, which Mike Rodriguez showcases starting on Page 12, has plenty of new features: the way-cool Scene Cleaner, the Smart Brush, and a whole new online playground in Photoshop.com. As is the case with any major upgrade, the “new stuff” can be overwhelming, but Mike does a great job of honing in on the key features.

If you’re on the fence about upgrading, be sure to check out the videos in our online Learning Center at www.photoshopelementsuser.com; hopefully, they’ll give you what you need to know so you can make the decision that’s right for you.

If you don’t plan to upgrade right away, don’t worry: we’re not going to become Photoshop Elements 7 Techniques. We’ll still offer tips, tricks and tutorials that will work in older versions of Photoshop Elements. We can’t promise that we won’t talk about features and tools found in Elements 6 and 7, but we will continue to follow our mission, which is to showcase basic techniques that work in most recent versions of Elements.

On a related note, we’re hoping soon to post a reader survey online, which will help us get a better sense of the things you like (and don’t like) about the newsletter, what topics you would like more of, and those you really don’t care about. In the meantime, I encourage you to drop me an email to let me know what your ideas are. I have received some good suggestions and constructive criticism over the past few months, and I would love to hear from more readers. (I’d like to know how many people are shooting with digital SLR cameras, for example.) Don’t be shy.

Until next time,

rick@photoshopelementsuser.com
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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.
focusing on light

Controlling light is one of the most important things you can do as a photographer. Whether you're shooting indoors at a party, outside at a sports game, or in a studio, light is the one thing that can make or break a photo. But there are times when you just can't control light, and that's where this technique comes in really handy after the shot was taken.

**STEP ONE:** Open the photo that has a subject you want to draw more attention to. It can be a person in a crowd or something that just has some distractions around it—things that you'd like to take the focus off of, like the background around this flower.

**STEP TWO:** Now select your Rectangular Marquee tool (M). Draw a rectangular selection around the image, similar to the one I have in this image. Leave about an inch or so space around all sides of the selection.

**EXTRAS:** Get this image!

Follow along by downloading this image from the Subscriber Extras area at www.photoshopelementsuser.com
STEP THREE: Right now, if we were to do anything with this selection it wouldn’t look right because the edges are too hard. So go to the Select menu and choose Feather. This selection-modification command lets us soften the edges of our selections.

STEP FOUR: When the Feather dialog opens, enter 75 pixels if you’re using a low-resolution photo (100 ppi or less) like I am here. Try moving it up between 125 and 150 pixels if you’re using a higher-resolution photo, such as something destined for print (220 ppi and above). Click the OK button to close the Feather dialog and apply the feathering to the selection. Right now, your selection should look more like a rounded rectangle instead of the straight-edged one we had back in Step Two. Don’t let this fool you though. Even though it looks rounded, it actually has more to it than that. The selection is really fading the edges, which will see in a moment.

STEP FIVE: Before we go any further, we need to reverse the selection. Right now, the middle of the photo is selected. We actually want to modify the outer edges of the photo so go to the Select menu and choose Inverse to reverse the selection.
STEP SIX: Next, let’s go to the top of the Layers palette and click the Create New Adjustment Layer icon (the small half-black/half-white icon) and choose Levels from the list.

STEP SEVEN: When the Levels dialog opens look toward the bottom of the dialog under Output Levels. You’ll see two sliders—one black and one white. Drag the white one to the left and you’ll see the edges (where the selection encompassed) start to get darker. Don’t go too far to the left or things will start to look fake; drag over just enough so that your subject starts to draw more attention then it did before.

NOTE: Your eyes tend to look at the brighter things in the photo first. So, by darkening the edges you’re focusing the light in the central area of the photo and drawing people in to the area you really want them to see.

STEP EIGHT: Click OK when you’re done to close the Levels dialog. The best part about this technique is that you can change it later if need to. Just double click on that Levels adjustment layer in the Layers palette. The same Levels dialog will open and you’ll see the sliders are in the same place you left them. Just drag a slider to readjust the look of your photo and click OK again for them to take effect.

Matt Kloskowski is Education and Curriculum Developer for the National Association of Photoshop Professionals. He has authored or co-authored several books on Photoshop and Illustrator. His latest book is The Photoshop Elements 6 Book for Digital Photographers, co-authored with Scott Kelby, from New Riders Press. Matt also teaches Adobe Photoshop Lightroom at www.lightroomkillertips.com.

EXTRAS : ONLINE VIDEO

There’s another way to make this effect reusable. Check out the Subscriber area on www.photoshopelementsuser.com, where I’ve added a video as a follow-up to this technique.
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Wide World of Filters
BY DIANA DAY

yipes, stripes! weaving wave filter magic

In this tutorial, I’ll show you a clever and almost magical way to create stripes and checks using the Gradient tool and the Wave filter. This unique method is so quick and easy, you may find yourself adding stripes to your layouts just for fun.

STEP ONE: To start, create a new document with dimensions of your choice, at a resolution of 300 pixels/inch, with a white background. (In my example, I made the canvas 8 inches by 8 inches.)

STEP TWO: Click on the color chips at the bottom of the toolbox to set the foreground and background colors for your stripe. Although there is no limit to the color combinations you can use, I find that a single color, in combination with white, or one light color and one dark color always work well.

For this image, I set the background color to white and the foreground color a light shade of purple (enter ‘d3bbf6’ into the # field if you want to use the same color I used).

STEP THREE: Select the Gradient tool (G). In the option bar at the top of the screen, click the drop-down arrow to choose a preset from the Gradient Picker. Make sure the Default gradient set is active. Select the Foreground to Background gradient—which should be the first gradient in the picker—and then click the Linear Gradient button in the option bar.
STEP FOUR: Click and drag the cursor from left to right (or right to left—it doesn’t matter) for horizontal stripes. For vertical stripes, drag from the bottom edge to the top edge of the canvas (or vise versa).

TIP: To constrict the line exactly horizontal or vertical, hold the Shift key while dragging across the canvas.

STEP FIVE: From the Filter menu, select Distort>Wave. In the Wave dialog box, enter the settings listed at the far right and click OK. Like magic, the gradient transforms into stripes!

To generate stripes of different widths, change the Wavelength and Amplitude Min. and Max. settings, but make sure all are the same number. (Remember that you’ll need to enter the Maximum numbers before the Minimum ones, or Elements will give you an error message.) Leave the rest of the settings the same as shown above. The higher the settings for the Wavelength and Amplitude amounts, the wider the stripes you’ll get.
Beyond Stripes

Making stripes with the Wave filter is so simple and quick, and the technique lends itself to easy experimentation. Here are three variations (among many) that use the same basic approach.

**Variation One**

Next, we’ll create a checkered design. Using the same file created in the main tutorial, create a new blank layer above the stripe layer. Open the Gradient Presets and select the Chrome gradient. From the Options Bar, set the gradient type to Angle. Drag from the center of the canvas to an edge or corner. (You should end up with something like the graphic on the far left.) From the Filter menu, select Distort>Wave, using the same settings from Step Five on the previous page. You now have checks (shown far right).

This works with lots of the other multi-color gradients as well, so play around with the different presets in the Gradient picker.

**TIP:** After you have applied a filter, you can easily reapply the same filter, with the same settings previously used, by pressing Ctrl-F (Mac: Command-F).

**Variation Two**

In this variation, we’ll create a colorful grid. Using our same file, make sure that the checks layer you just made is selected in the Layers palette, then click Filter>Stylize>Find Edges. Next, press Ctrl-I (Mac: Command-I) to invert the colors. This should give you a narrow grid of colored lines on a black background. To widen the lines, choose Filter>Stylize>Glowing Edges. You can play around with the Edge Width and Brightness settings, but keep the Smoothness setting low to get good results. Repeat this filter multiple times—by pressing Ctrl-F (Mac: Command-F)—to widen the lines even more.
Variation Three

Taking this one step further, here’s how you can recolor any of the designs we’ve created here. This technique can be used to recolor any pattern, design, or embellishment. I’ll use the checkered pattern from Variation One as an example. (Make sure that layer is selected.)

First, remove the color with Enhance>Convert to Black and White.

Next, we’ll colorize it with Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Hue/Saturation, or Ctrl-U (Mac: Command-U). In the Hue/Saturation dialog, click the Colorize box and experiment with all three sliders until you get a color you like. In my example, I used Hue 200, Saturation 40, and Lightness -10.

Many users don’t realize the great potential at our fingertips within Photoshop Elements’ Filter menu. I hope this has opened up new possibilities for you to experiment with and that you come up with some terrific designs of your own.

For more tips and additional methods for creating stripes, go to the Subscriber extras area at www.photoshopelementsuser.com.
The world of accessible digital image editing and creativity has taken yet another step forward with version 7 of Photoshop Elements. Adobe’s latest offering sports several new and enhanced features, and a brand new way of sharing, storing, and backing up your images online.

Most of Adobe’s focus with Elements 7 is online, as the company rolls out the full version of its Photoshop.com Web service (see Page 17), but there are plenty of new things sprinkled throughout the program. In the Editor, there’s a new Smart Brush tool, a new Surface Blur filter, and a very cool addition to Photomerge called Scene Cleaner. The Quick Fix mode has gained some additional touch-up tools to go along with existing Red Eye Removal feature, and in Guided Edit you’ll find the new Action Player, along with an entirely new category, Photographic Effects. And, in addition to being “Command Central” for the online sharing and backup tools, Elements 7’s Organizer adds a Text Search capability that promises to ease the task of finding photos.

While a few pages aren’t enough to detail everything in the update, what follows is a quick look at some of the highlights in Elements 7.

**What does it cost?**

Elements 7 is priced at $100, and upgrades from earlier versions are $80. A version that includes a full year of Photoshop.com Plus membership is $140 ($120 if you’re upgrading). The Plus package gets you more storage space (and other online extras) than you get with the Basic membership.

The upgrade runs on Windows XP and Vista, and requires a PC with at least 1GB of RAM and a 2GHz Intel processor. (Elements 6.0 for the Mac, which shipped earlier this year, remains the current version for Mac OS X.)

Adobe has also announced Premiere Elements 7.0, an updated version of its video-editing software. The basic Premiere Elements/Photoshop Elements bundle is $150 ($120 for upgrades), and $180 for the Plus bundle ($150 for upgrades).

Elements 7 should be available in early October from Adobe.com and other online retailers, photo stores, and retailers like Costco and Best Buy.
The Editor

Smart Brush
Located in the Full Edit area of the Editor, the new Smart Brush tool is a combination of the Quick Selection tool (which was introduced in Elements 6) and adjustment layers, offering a speedy way to adjust, enhance, and add effects to your photos. When you select the Smart Brush, a Presets menu pops open, showing nearly 70 effects—in nine categories—that can be applied to your photo. Make your choice from the list (we used Dark-Sky in our example, shown below) and simply paint on your image over the area you want the effect to be applied. After you draw an initial selection, the tool automatically switches to the Add to Selection mode, so to add to your affected area, simply continue selecting. To take away part of your selected area, you can use the Subtract from Selection button or hold down Alt on your keyboard and paint away the parts you want to eliminate.

How does it work? If you take a look at the Layers palette, you'll see that an adjustment layer was created—in our example, a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer—along with the layer mask that accompanies adjustment layers. The area you selected is shown in white on the mask, thus revealing the effect. The black areas on the mask are hiding the effect. To edit the effect, you can either double-click the adjustment layer in the Layers palette or you can double-click the red adjustment pin located in your selection on the image. As long as the adjustment layer is one supported by Elements, the dialog box for that adjustment layer will open and you can make any changes you wish. (Some of the presets were created using an adjustment layer found in the full version of Photoshop and not in Elements, so you won't be able to edit these effects.)

Surface Blur
The Surface Blur filter, found under the Filter menu's Blur section, specializes in softening surfaces while keeping edges crisp and should be a great filter for portraits. The dialog box has two sliders, Radius and Threshold. The higher the Radius value, the greater the area being affected by the blur. Threshold determines how different the tonal values (or brightness values) the neighboring pixels must be in order to be included or excluded from the blur. If a pixel's tonal value is less than the Threshold number, it is excluded from the blur. So, the lower the Threshold number, the less blur will be applied.
Scene Cleaner

Have you ever taken two or more photos of a scene and ended up with unwanted people in them? If so, the new feature in the Photomerge family, Scene Cleaner, is just for you, letting you remove those elements while still retaining your background. You need at least two versions of the image, and the subjects you wish to remove must be in different locations in the images. Here’s how to make it happen:

**STEP ONE:** Open the images in question in the Editor (you can also select an album of photos in the Photo Bin at the bottom of the window). Ctrl-Click each thumbnail in the Photo Bin to select the images you wish to use and go to File> New> Photomerge Scene Cleaner. Alternately, you can click the Guided Edit button in the top right corner of the Elements window and choose Scene Cleaner from the Photomerge category.

**STEP TWO:** Choose one of your photos to use as your final image and drag it to the Final window on the right. In the Photo Bin, click once on the image you’d like to use as the source image (it must be different than the final image). It should appear in the Source window on the left. The border of each image is a different color, to help you identify which image you’re using as the Final and as the Source.
**STEP THREE:** On the right side of the window is a panel of instructions. Scroll to the bottom of the panel and click on the button next to the Advanced menu. There you'll see a blue target symbol, which is the Alignment tool. This can be a big help if your Source and Final images don't line up exactly. Click the Alignment symbol, then alternately hover your mouse over the Source and Final images. You will see three crosshairs. Position the markers in similar areas on each image, and then click Align Photos.

**STEP FOUR:** Scroll back up above the Advanced area and click the Pencil tool. On the Final image, draw a line over a subject you wish to remove. You can change the size of the brush with the Right (larger) and Left (smaller) bracket keys on your keyboard. You can also zoom in by clicking the Zoom tool in the upper left area of the screen. If you need to zoom out, hold down Alt and click with the Zoom tool. Draw as many lines as necessary to remove the entire subject.

**STEP FIVE:** When the subject disappears from the image, a colored line (corresponding to the border color of the source image) appears in the Source window, showing the area being used to “cover up” the subject in the Final image.

**STEP SIX:** Continue drawing with the Pencil tool until all unwanted subjects have been removed. Click Done to exit the Scene Cleaner. You can click the Full button at the top of the panel to return to Full Edit for further editing, if you want. (You can see our final results on Page 14, in the large image on the right side of the page.)

**But how does it look?**

One of the biggest complaints people had about Elements 6 was its dark interface. Sure, it was great for looking at photos, but it made it hard to read menus and dialog boxes. Adobe hasn't dropped the dark grey look in Elements 7, but they have added a preference that lets you change the overall brightness of the interface.

Go to Edit>Preferences-General, and you'll see the User Interface Brightness setting, which lets you change the look from dark gray to (almost) white, as seen in the images at right. For those of us with aging eyes, this is a nice change.
**Guided Edit**

The final area of the Editor, Guided Edit, has a few enhancements to existing tools, such as the ability to adjust levels, found under the Lighting and Exposure area, and fixing Keystone Distortion, under Guided Activities (these features are also available in the Full Edit mode of the Editor). The two major additions to Guided Edit, however, are the new Photographic Effects and the Actions Player.

In Photographic Effects, you are able to quickly turn your photos into works of art through some simple, step-by-step instructions. Each of the three options (Line Drawing, Old Fashioned Photo, and Saturated Slide Film Effect) has its own set of instructions that guide you through the process in just a few clicks. Follow each step in your desired effect and click Done at the bottom of the panel when you're finished (there's also a Reset button if you'd like to return to your original). You'll return to Guided Edit with your new image completed and ready for further editing or printing and sharing. In the examples shown on the left, you can see the Slide Film and Old Fashioned effects, with Before and After views.

The other major addition to Guided Edit is the Action Player, found in the Automated Actions section. An action is a set of commands, tasks, and other functions that can be automatically applied to an image, making common tasks go much faster. While playing actions in Elements has been possible in the past, Version 7's implementation makes it a little easier, although it's still not possible to record your own actions (only the full version of Photoshop has the capability to make actions).

Elements 7 comes with a few preset actions, but we imagine that there will be quite a few new ones cropping up to take advantage of the feature.

**Quick Edit**

Clicking the Quick button in the top right area of the window will take you to the Quick Edit area. This is very similar to the Quick Edit area found in Version 6, but in Version 7 you now have a tool called Whiten Teeth. If you have a subject in need of some digital dental enhancement, simply click the tool and carefully paint over the person's teeth to bring them back to their normal bright, shiny state. There’s a Zoom tool (and some other tools as well) to help you paint in an accurate selection over the teeth.
The Organizer

Before working your creative magic on an image, you must be able to find that image. The new Text Search feature in the Elements 7 Organizer is designed to make that task faster and easier. It’s very useful when used in conjunction with carefully planned and implemented tags.

Let’s say you have several images taken during a hiking trip. You’ve created a tag called Mountains, and applied it to all images containing a mountain. You’ve also created a tag called Lakes, and applied to all the images of lakes. To display only the images containing mountains, click in the Text Search box, located in the upper left corner of the Organizer window and enter the word “mountain.” All photos meeting that criteria instantly appear below. If you’d like to find only the images containing a mountain AND a lake, add the word “lake” to your search criteria. The new results will now be displayed. In addition to tags, you can also perform searches using other information, such as captions, file name, shot date, and digital camera model, which means, of course, you don’t even have to tag your images in order to use this helpful new feature.

Photoshop.com

Part of the joy of photography is sharing with others, and there are several new and enhanced ways to do that with Elements 7 and Adobe’s fledgling Web photo service, Photoshop.com. This service was first announced earlier this year as Photoshop Express (see Volume 5, Number 3 for a feature on Express), and Adobe has added a number of features that tie Elements 7 and Photoshop.com together.

With the standard Elements program, you get a free Basic membership for Photoshop.com, which gives you 2GB of space to share your photo albums with friends and family, but you can also use that space to back up your photos. For an additional $50 per year, you get 20GB of storage space—up to 15,000 photos—new album templates and access to a wide range of online tutorials from Adobe and other companies, including some from Photoshop Elements Techniques and Scrapper’s Guide’s Linda Sattgast, among others.

Here’s how you can create and share online albums and automatically back them up and synchronize them with the Elements 7 Organizer:

STEP ONE: In the Organizer click the Create New Album button (green plus sign) and choose New Album.
STEP TWO: Assign the new album to an Album Group if you choose, and give the new album a name.

STEP THREE: To insure backup and synchronization is active, leave the Backup/Synchronize box just below the Album Name checked.

STEP FOUR: Drag any images you would like to include in this album from the display area in the Organizer to the Items area. You can Shift-Click on the first and last images in a series to select the entire sequence, or you can Ctrl-Click to select non-contiguous images.

STEP FIVE: Click the Share button at the bottom of the panel. In the Album Details panel, select a template to use for your album (to see all the available templates, you may need to click the Change Template button, and then select Show All from the Album Category drop-down menu. When you click on a template, a name and short description appears below the Preview window. Press Apply to apply the template of your choice (we chose the template called Sliding for our example) and click Next.

STEP SIX: In the next panel, you can add a title and subtitle to your Album, and decide whether or not you'd like to include the photo captions. Make your choices and click Next.

STEP SEVEN: You should now be back at the starting panel. To share this to your Photoshop.com account, make sure the choice Photoshop.com is selected in the Share To area, and click Next.

STEP EIGHT: In this last panel, you can choose to share your album with everyone, or only selected people. To enter specific email addresses, check the icon of a person in the Send Email To area. Enter the necessary information and click OK. Finally, you can choose to allow your photos to be downloaded and/or ordered as prints. When you're ready, click Share and Elements will upload your album to your Photoshop.com account.

With the backup and synchronization feature you can add or remove images from your shared album in the Organizer or online at Photoshop.com, and the other location will automatically be synchronized and the changes applied. Additionally, you can take advantage of the Backup/Synchronize feature on all your albums, not just those you've shared online. Click the Backup/Synchronization Preferences button at the top of the Albums panel and in the ensuing window (shown below), check the desired backup options and the albums you wish to back up. Click OK, and the selected albums will be backed up to Photoshop.com.

Mike Rodriguez is an Adobe Certified Expert in Photoshop CS3, holds a Master’s degree in Educational Technology, and has over 16 years of teaching experience. His current teaching assignments include various technology courses as well as a beginning digital photography course. He contributes video tutorials to www.photoshopelementsuser.com and www.layersmagazine.com, and his stock photography is sold through www.istockphoto.com. According to his kids, he also makes “really good smoothies.”
bokeh: getting the perfect soft background

“Bokeh” might be a new term, but it really is a time-tested photographic concept that is easy to master, once you know the tricks.

Sharpness is key to a good image. As important as that is, it’s how we handle the rest of the image, those supporting elements that guide us (directly or indirectly) to our subject, that can turn a good image into a great one.

Do we want our entire image to appear sharp from near to far? Or, will a softer background draw our viewer’s eye to our subject with no distractions. How soft should the background be? What settings are needed to achieve just the right quality of softness, now popularly known as “good bokeh.”

I first heard the term bokeh when reviewing images on various forums. It was bantered around casually. Everyone seemed to
Below are three images shot at differing apertures, using an 85mm f/1.4 lens. You’ll notice that, as the depth of field changes, so does the bokeh. The image on the far left is at f/1.4. Notice the nice diffused background. The wide aperture softens the background to a pleasing blur in shades of green. The middle image is taken with the lens closed down to f/5.6. The background is beginning to take on some shape and dimension. We’re beginning to lose our good bokeh with too much detail and busyness. The image on the right is closed all the way down to f/16 and we have lost our bokeh altogether. The background is not a pleasing soft green; instead, it has too much detail, which competes with our subject, the posts.

Know what it meant. It was always used to describe something good, as in, “Oh, your image has such nice bokeh!” But, what were they referring to? What is bokeh? A Google search of the word enlightened me, introducing a term for something that I have always worked at capturing in my own images.

Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) writes this about bokeh:

Bokeh (derived from the Japanese bokeaji, “blur”) is a photographic term referring to the appearance of out-of-focus areas in an image produced by a camera lens using a shallow depth of field. Different lens bokeh produces different aesthetic qualities in out-of-focus backgrounds, which are often used to reduce distractions and emphasize the primary subject.

Bokeh is the quality of that out-of-focus area that we achieve through the use of a combination of lens selection and aperture. It is that wonderful, soft, unfocused quality of shapes and colors that tells us when an image has good bokeh. That soft quality is partly controlled by the aperture we select. A wider aperture (f/1.4, f/2.8) will give the background a very soft, diffused look, throwing colors and shapes out of focus. A smaller aperture (f/11, f/22, etc) brings more of our image into sharp focus, changing our background from soft and diffused to one with more detail.

With several apertures to choose from which one is best? That’s where the fun comes in. Simply put your camera on a tripod and set it to aperture-priority mode. Beginning with a wide aperture, take a photograph at each full aperture setting—f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6, f/8 and so on—until you have cycled through your lens’ entire aperture range. Now you can decide for yourself which aperture gives you the best bokeh for that situation with your selected lens.
The focal length of our lens also determines the quality and quantity of bokeh. In general, a wide-angle lens has more depth of field than a telephoto lens, which makes it harder (but not impossible) to get that soft, diffused look. A telephoto lens, on the other hand, compresses our scene, throwing the background out of focus. It is relatively easy to get good bokeh with a telephoto lens, since depth of field is inherently more shallow with a longer lens.

THINKING BEYOND YOUR EQUIPMENT

We’ve covered two very basic techniques for capturing good bokeh in our images, but there is more to it than simply lens and aperture selection. The background itself can contribute, but it can also detract from our image no matter what we do, giving us no bokeh. Trying to photograph a mushroom and berry cluster in Alaska, I needed to have a small enough aperture to get both the berries and mushroom in focus. However, the background was very busy and distracting and with my aperture set to f/22, I could not blur it in camera sufficiently to achieve a soft background.

However, if you start with a great background to begin with, one that is distant enough from our subject so it does not compete for our viewer’s attention, and blurs to a diffused palette of colors, then it compliments the subject. With our subject far enough away, a wide aperture still renders it in sharp focus leaving the background to fade, softly into the distance. When all the elements come together, that’s good bokeh.

Selecting a 200mm f/2.0 lens to photograph a fountain you can see from the examples, even closed down to f/16 (above left), the 200mm lens still shows enough of the background for you to see the pattern in the sidewalk and yet, it is overall very soft. That small amount of detail gives us a bit more information about our image and where it was photographed. And at f/2.0 (above right), the background is a lovely, softly diffused swath of color. The background becomes the palette on which the fountain is placed.
The distance we are from our subject will greatly affect our depth of field, which in turn affects our bokeh. As we move in closer to our subject, our depth of field decreases, throwing all but a small area out of focus. The background is nothing more than soft colors, and detail is non-existent. As we move farther away, the foreground/background relationship changes the effect of a wide aperture and its effect on a soft background.

A different type of blur that creates an interesting bokeh is that of a slow shutter speed as you pan (move the camera) with your subject. Rather than colorful shapes we now capture colorful streaks, coupled with the blur of beating wings. Suddenly there is life and motion within our image, the soft blur creating a lovely bokeh as a result.

While we're at it, why not make our own bokeh? I photographed a Western Diamondback in South Texas earlier this year and I really liked the shallow depth of field, but it still wasn’t quite right. I liked the image enough to work on it a little, and that’s when I decided to create my own bokeh—just the right amount in the right places. A little Gaussian Blur, a slight vignette, and suddenly I had the image on my monitor that I had in my mind’s eye.

We’ve just scratched the bokeh surface. Take what you’ve learned and get out there and experiment. Have fun, because the bokeh doesn’t stop here.

And let’s not forget the most important part of any image: light. The way it plays across our subject is what captures our attention in the first place. How does light effect bokeh? Using backlight in the image above, I was able to create a myriad of colors, with out-of-focus, specular (mirror-like) highlights that dance throughout an image. The palette is varied with shadow and light, with flowers receding into the background to become soft, colorful blurs. Now, in addition to colors and shapes we introduce shadow and light and the possibilities are endless.

Laurie leads wildlife photography safaris in North America and is an instructor with the Digital Landscape Workshop Series, Photoshop World, and Cruising Through Life training extravaganzas. She is also the Photo Equipment Advice Desk Guru for NAPP. Check out her website, www.laurieexcell.com.
**Elements Q&A**

**By Mike Rodriguez**

**Is there a quicker way to change the position of layers besides dragging them in the Layers palette?**

Here are a few keyboard shortcuts to try, although note that, just like dragging, these shortcuts won’t move the Background layer unless you’ve unlocked it:

- `Ctrl-\` (Mac: `Command-\`) will move the current layer down in the Layers stack; `Ctrl-\` (Mac: `Command-\`) will move it up.

Adding the `Shift` key to these shortcuts (a tip of the hat to NAPP’s RC Concepcion for this one) will move the targeted layer to the top or bottom respectively (also excluding the Background layer).

If you need the layers to stay in their current position, but want to change the layer you have selected, use `Alt-\` (Mac: `Option-\`) to move down and `Alt-\` (Mac: `Option-\`) to move up the stack.

- `Alt-Shift-\` (Mac: `Option-Shift-\`) selects layers below and `Alt-\` (Mac: `Option-\`) selects layers above the targeted layer.

And, one more bonus tip, courtesy of Matt Kloskowski, `Alt-\` (Mac: `Option-\`) will immediately target the top layer. `Alt-\` (Mac: `Option-\`) will target the bottom layer, even if it’s a Background layer.

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**I’m trying to flip one layer in my image horizontally, but all the layers flip. What’s happening?**

Lots of us have been tripped up by this one; it’s easy to miss. When you go to *Image > Rotate*, you see things like 90° Left, 90° Right, Flip Horizontal, Flip Vertical, and so forth, and it appears this is what you need. However, as you discovered, these commands affect the entire document. To flip just one layer, look further down the *Image > Rotate* menu: you have the same commands, but they’re for the currently targeted layer. If you need to flip more than one layer, select the appropriate layers by `Ctrl-Clicking` (Mac: `Command-Click`) on the layer name (not the thumbnail), then go to *Image > Rotate* and choose the rotation amount desired.

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**How can I make an image’s width and height specific pixel dimensions, like 500 pixels by 700 pixels, without distorting the image?**

Select the *Crop tool* (C) from the Toolbar and look in the *Options Bar* at the top of the window. You should see fields next to Width and Height. Enter 500 px (or the desired pixel amount) in Width and 700 px for Height. The “px” tells Elements you’d like to use pixels as your cropping unit. Other options include in (inches), cm (centimeters), mm (millimeters), pt (points), or pica (picas). With these options set, simply crop your image as desired. Note that your crop box will be constrained to the specified ratio, and, depending on the aspect ratio of your image, you may have to alter your composition.

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If you have a Photoshop Elements question you would like to see answered, send it to q&a@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.)
adding dimension to your scrapbook elements

Making elements to use in your scrapbook pages is one thing. Making them look real is quite another. This exercise will help you learn to use two great tools, Dodge and Burn, to enhance your elements and give them depth. Let’s begin by ‘folding’ our paper so we can practice these techniques.

**STEP ONE:** To get started, you’ll need to download two files from the Subscriber Extras section of www.photoshopelementsuser.com: **NM-LayeredTemplate.psd** and **NM-AcanthusPaper9.jpg**. Once you’ve downloaded the files to your computer, open them in Photoshop Elements.

In the Layers palette for the paper, click on the paper layer and drag it into your template file. If the paper layer isn’t at the bottom of the stack, drag the layer down so that it’s the bottommost layer in the palette.

**STEP TWO:** Choose the Magic Wand (W) tool from the toolbox. In the **Options Bar** at the top of the window, click the **Add to Selection** icon (the second icon from the left), set the Tolerance to 20, and check the Anti-alias and Contiguous check boxes.
STEP THREE: Now, we're going to use the different template layers to create the 'folds' of the paper.

Click on Template Layer 1 in the Layers palette to make it active. With the Magic Wand, click in the document on the darkest color gray (shown as Area 1 in this image). You should see the 'marching ants' around Area 1.

In the Layers palette, click on your paper layer. Press Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J) to create a new layer from your selection. Double-click on the new layer and rename it as Fold 1.

(This process, which you will basically repeat for each area, creates a new layer using the area's selection, but with the paper's content.)

STEP FOUR: Make the paper layer active (by clicking on it in the Layers palette) and choose Image>Rotate>Layer 90° Right. Click on Template Layer 2 in the Layers palette. Again using the Magic Wand, click on Area 2 in the diagram above.

As you did in Step Three, click on the paper layer and press Ctrl-J, which creates a new layer. Rename this new layer Fold 2.

STEP FIVE: Click again on the paper layer, and choose Image>Rotate>Layer 90° Right. Then click on Template Layer 3 to make it active. Click in the document on Area 3 to select it with the Magic Wand.

Click on the paper layer to make it active and press Ctrl-J to create a new layer. Name this layer Fold 3.

STEP SIX: One last time, make the paper layer active by clicking on it and choose Image>Rotate>Layer 90° Right. Click on Template Layer 4, then click with the Magic Wand on Area 4.

Click on the paper layer to make it active and press Ctrl-J to create a new layer. Name this layer Fold 4.
STEP SEVEN: If you look at the Layers palette, you’ll see that you now have nine layers: four Template layers, the Paper layer and four Fold layers.

You no longer need the template layers and the paper layer, so delete them by clicking on the appropriate layer and then clicking on the Trash Can icon at the top of the Layers palette.

Next, we’ll rearrange the fold layers to set them up properly for the dodging and burning. Drag the Fold 1 layer to the bottom of the Layers palette, followed by Fold 2, Fold 3 and then Fold 4. Your Layers palette will now look like the image on the left.

STEP EIGHT: We’re going to adjust the levels on Fold 2 and Fold 4—the undersides of our folded paper—to either darken or lighten the paper. The style you decide is a personal preference; some real papers have a darker underside, some a lighter underside. It’s up to you as to what you do, as long as you don’t overdo the adjustment. Change it enough to make it a few shades lighter or darker.

Click on the Fold 2 layer, and call up the Levels dialog box by pressing Ctrl-L (Mac: Command-L) or choosing Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels. To darken the paper, click the black triangle below the histogram and drag it to the right. To lighten it, click the white triangle and drag it to the left. You’ll also notice the numbers changing in the box below the triangle you’re dragging; remember that number, because you’ll want to use the same amount of Levels adjustment in the next step. (In our example, we darkened the paper, our new black point number is 36.)

Choosing the right paper type

Here are a few tips for working with your own papers and designs:

- Striped or busy patterned paper does not work particularly well for this exercise. Choose something with a small, soft pattern for best results.
- Use a midtone to light paper. It is very difficult to see the dodging and burning on a very dark paper.
- Rotate the paper—I always rotate to the right—to give a more realistic variance to your paper pattern. If, however, you are using a solid or a repetitive paper (like dots), rotating is not necessary.
- If you finish off your paper with brads, staples or pins, and you want the most realistic look, be sure to include shadows or, in the case of staples, burned areas where the staple punctures the paper.
STEP NINE: Make the Fold 4 layer active. Repeat the Levels adjustment (Ctrl-L) to match what you did on Fold 2. Based on the fold layers, Fold 2 and Fold 4 would represent the back side of the paper and Fold 1 and Fold 3 would represent the front side.

STEP TEN: As you can see, you have four distinct layers without depth, shading or realism. This is where dodging and burning comes into play.

Click on the ‘eye’ icons next to Fold 3 and Fold 4 in the Layers palette, which will turn their visibility off. Click on the Fold 2 layer to make it active.

Choose the Burn tool (O) (you might have to press the O key one or two times to bring up the Burn tool) from the toolbox. In the Options Bar at the top of the screen, select a soft edge brush set to a Size of around 400, Range set to Midtones, and the Exposure at 12%.

STEP ELEVEN: Starting at point A in the diagram at right, click and hold down the Shift key and then click at point B. This will give you a straight burn line. Repeat this step until you are happy with the burn amount, about 3 or 4 passes.
STEP TWELVE: Choose the **Dodge** tool, by pressing the **O key** twice. Keep the same settings as you used for the Burn tool in Step Ten. This step will give you a highlight and add to the realism of your paper. Begin at point C and end at point D. You can vary the line a little. You have now created the first curve to your fold.

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STEP THIRTEEN: In the Layers palette, click on Fold 3’s *eye* to make it visible, then click on the same layer to make it active. Repeat the **burning** and **dodging** on Fold 3, going from point E to point F. Again, vary the final dodging stroke just a little to "widen" the effect near point F.

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STEP FOURTEEN: In the Layers palette, turn Fold 4’s visibility on and click to make the layer active. Due to the small size of this layer you should reduce your brush size to about 300 pixels. Repeat the **burning** and **dodging** on this layer from point G to point H. Add a small stroke near point H to about one-third of the way to point G to give some shape to the fold.
STEP FIFTEEN: Working on the layer beneath each fold, we’ll now add some shadows. Click on Fold 1 in the Layers palette and, using the Burn tool, trace along the outer edge of Fold 2. Make two or three passes from point I to point J. Then repeat from point J to point K. You now have a shadow to separate the two layers.

STEP SIXTEEN: In the Layers palette, make Fold 2 the active layer. Repeat with the Burn tool, going from point L to point M, and then from point M to point N along the edges of Fold 3.

STEP SEVENTEEN: Make Fold 3 active and work on this layer to trace (still with the Burn tool) the edges of Fold 4 from point O to P and point P to Q. Make Fold 1 active and burn the area under the point of Fold 4 so it does not “float” and appear lost. You have now completed the basic folded paper.

You can add a few wrinkles by dodging and burning areas of the folds as you prefer (as shown by the arrows in the diagram). Be sure to add a dodge for each burn you add to give the feeling of the paper raising up from the background.

In one of my completed pages, shown at left, you can see how the folded paper truly does add dimension and depth to a page.

Nancy Marti is a designer at www.digitaldesignden.com. She is also a forum moderator at Elements Village and is employed full time for a legal consulting firm.
Adding a little flair for the photo dramatic

Add your own sunlight glare to a photograph by choosing **Filter > Render > Lens Flare**. Adjust the settings depending on the intensity and type of glare you would like. Also, try repositioning the flare by clicking on the spot that you want it to appear in the preview area of the **Lens Flare** dialog box. This will move the crosshairs in the preview. When you’re done, click OK, and you’ve got instant lens flare!

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**Working smarter with multiple windows**

We’ll often have people tell us they have several photos open but can’t see one of them. That’s typically because they’re seeing one photo open in Maximize mode, and, with the Project Bin closed at the bottom of the screen, you can’t get to your other images. If you go to **Window > Images**, you’ll see that there are three options for viewing your open files. The first is **Maximize**, which gives you the largest view of your current image, hiding all the other images behind it. The second option is **Tile**, which rearranges (and usually shrinks) the windows on your screen so that they are all visible. The window with the highlighted title bar is active image. The last option is **Cascade**, which puts your open images in a stacked mode so you can see the title of each one. The one that’s in front is the one you’ll be working on.

To bring any image to the front, go to the **Window** menu. All open images are listed at the bottom of that menu. Just click on the one you want and it will become the active window.

Lastly, you can set the **Project Bin** (Photo Bin in Elements 5) at the bottom of the screen to view all open images. Double-clicking one of the thumbnails will make that photo the active file. You can then click the **Hide Project Bin** button to get the most screen real estate for your images.
Moving around an image without zooming back out

If you’re brushing on an image and zoomed in pretty far, chances are you’ll want to move to another part of the image. Sure, you have the vertical and horizontal scroll bars, but that takes you away from your image. Try this instead: While you’re working, hold down the space bar and your cursor will turn into a hand. Then, click the mouse and drag on your photo. The Hand tool will move your image without the need to resort to the scroll bars and—best of all—you don’t have to switch tools. Just let go of the space bar and you’ll be right back to using whatever tool you were before you pressed it.

Adding a border for emailed pictures

Here’s a little thing I like to do when I email photos to people: After I’m done working on a photo I add a very thin black border around it. I do this because I hate for my photos to just be floating in an email window with all of that white space around them. It can get especially bad if you have any white area near the edges of your images because that white will blend right in with the white in the window you’re looking at the images in (I know: I’m picky). Anyway, by adding a small black border I can avoid this.

So next time you’re done working on an image press Ctrl-A (Mac: Command-A) to select all. Then go to Edit>Stroke (Outline) Selection. Set the Width to 1 pixel, the Color to black, and the Location to Center. Then click OK and save your image like you normally would. Next time someone sees it in an email window it will have a very thin black border around it, which just makes me happy.

Adjusting drop shadow effects

I add drop shadows all the time using the Effects palette. But sometimes, I’m not crazy about the lighting direction of where the drop shadow falls. Well, you can change it by double-clicking the small ‘fx’ icon that appears to the far right of that layer in the Layers palette. You’ll be presented with the Style Settings dialog. Here, you can change things like the angle of the drop shadow, its size and opacity, as well as the distance from which the shadow appears from the object.

Working in inches

If you’re a digital scrapbooker and find that you work in inches more often than pixels, you’ll be happy to know you can set the Info palette to display various ruler units (and inches is one of them). Open the Info palette (Window>Info) and click the More button at the top right. Choose Palette Options from the list. Under Mouse Coordinates, change Ruler Units to Inches. Now the Info palette will display everything in inches to help you better plan your layouts.
Web Spotlight

what’s happening online

Every month, in our exclusive subscriber-only area, we post new videos and tutorials from some of the top Photoshop Elements gurus in the world. Here are a few of the most recent postings:

### VIDEOS

**CLONING 101**
Learn all about the Clone Stamp tool and Elements 6's Cloning Overlay to remove blemishes and other unwanted items from your photos.

**MAKE A COMIC BOOK BACKGROUND**
Dave Cross shows you how to use gradients and the Halftone filter to create an interesting background for your work.

and more...
- ELEMENTS 7 OVERVIEW
- ADJUSTING EXPOSURE WITH CAMERA RAW
- BLENDING LAYERS AFTER USING FILTERS
- JPG VS. GIF: WHEN SHOULD YOU USE THEM?

### TUTORIALS

**WEAVING RIBBONS**
Weaving ribbons might look complicated, but it’s not too difficult a technique to master, and it is really effective on a scrapbook page.

and more...
- MAKING A PIN
- MAKING BRADS
- WINDOW GLASS
- MAKING A BIRTHDAY CARD, PARTS 1 AND 2

### EXTRAS: GET THIS IMAGE!

And don’t forget to check the EXTRAS section of the Web site, where you’ll find downloads, sample files, links and tutorials that go with every issue of Photoshop Elements Techniques.

HOW DO I CHANGE MY EMAIL OR MAILING ADDRESS?
Log on to the subscriber section of the Web site (www.photoshopelement-user.com/subscriber). At the top of the subscriber home page you’ll see a link called “Profile”; clicking this link will take you to your account page. Here, you can change all aspects of your account, including your address, user name and password.

To change your user name, email address or mailing address, just type the new info in the appropriate boxes, then click the “Update Me!” button at the bottom of the page. You’re all set!

HOW DO I CHANGE MY PASSWORD?
The Profile page has a “Change password” link underneath your email address. Simply click that link, enter your old password (for security reasons), the new password you want to use, and click the button at the bottom of the page.

HOW I TELL WHEN MY SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRES?
Your subscription expiration date is listed just under the email field on your Profile page. You can renew your subscription at any time by clicking on the RENEW link in the top menu bar. The renewal time will be added to the end of your current subscription period.

I FORGOT MY PASSWORD OR USER NAME. WHAT DO I DO?
If you can’t log into the Web site, click on the “Lost your Login Info?” link on the login page, and enter your email address. We’ll send you an email that will contain a link to reset your password.

If you don’t get the email within a reasonable amount of time, you might have used a different address to create your account or your spam filter might have trapped the email. If all else fails, drop us a note at info@photoshopelement-user.com, and we’ll do our best to help you out.

Frequently asked subscriber questions

what’s happening online

Every month, in our exclusive subscriber-only area, we post new videos and tutorials from some of the top Photoshop Elements gurus in the world. Here are a few of the most recent postings: