Print Anything Online

We look at services that will put your photos on everything from traditional prints to canvas, books, sneakers and more.

WORD FRAMES
Combine text and photos with this nifty framing technique

THE ORTON STYLE
Master this simple effect to add a painterly look to your images

DIGITAL DARKROOM
Matt shows you how to use the Reduce Noise filter

TOOL TIPS
Touch up imperfections with the Healing and Clone tools
Editor’s Note

This month, we’re incorporating a few changes inside Photoshop Elements Techniques. We’re hoping that they will make the newsletter more useful, and will help strengthen the link between the publication you receive in the mail and the Web site.

You also might have noticed that we put the actual month names on the cover—we’re going to be on a more regular publishing schedule this year, with more pages in each issue.

We’ll generally be mailing your newsletter on the second week of every other month. This issue was scheduled to leave the printer on January 7, and the next issue (March/April) will mail on March 10. (We’ll post the full publishing schedule for the year in the Subscriber area at photoshopelementsuser.com.)

We get many calls and emails from subscribers asking about whether an issue has mailed, or why they haven’t yet received their issue. Hopefully, by publishing more regularly, and by letting you know when the next issue will mail, you’ll get a better sense of when the newsletter will arrive at your home. Please understand that we can’t control the various postal services in the countries that deliver your issues; it’s just as hard for us to understand why someone gets their issue three days after it leaves the printer, while another subscriber a few hundred miles away gets theirs three weeks later. We are happy to mail out replacement issues, but we ask that you wait until you’re sure that your issue is lost somewhere on the other side of the world before calling.

As I noted, we are also increasing the number of pages in every issue, which will let us offer both more articles and more in-depth articles. We will look closer at things that surround the “Elements universe,” such as Jeff Carlson’s feature in this issue that covers online printing services. Future articles will look at printers, scanners and how you can use them to enrich your Elements life.

And, while we have redesigned parts of the newsletter, we tried not to make big changes. We wanted to make the text more readable and the tutorials easier to follow. And now, in most cases, photos of completed projects will now be at the start of the article, to give you a better idea of what you’ll be learning.

We’ll continue to tweak things slightly, so please don’t be shy in letting us know what you want more of in the newsletter, whether it be design issues, article types, or other things.

This is my fifth issue as Elements Techniques’ editor, and I’ve truly enjoyed my time so far. I’m looking forward to a big 2009, and I hope that the year brings you happiness and good health.

Until next time,

rick@photoshopelementsuser.com
Photoshop Elements Techniques
January/February 2009

Features

8 Online Printing: From Canvas to Keds
Sure, you can use Elements’ built-in photo printing service to print your pictures, but there are lots of other services out there, many of which offer a wide range of printable products. We take a look at the alternatives. By Jeff Carlson

Techniques

5 DIGITAL DARKROOM
Using the Reduce Noise Filter
With a digital camera, noise can be a problem when shooting in low-light situations. Don’t worry, though: Elements’ Reduce Noise filter can help. By Matt Kloskowski

14 Creating a Painterly Effect in the Orton Style
The photographer Michael Orton developed an inventive landscape technique using slide film, but it has become a popular effect, and it’s easy to create inside Elements. By Rick LePage

19 Word Frames
Placing photos behind text and a simple frame is all the rage right now; Here’s how to do it yourself in just a few easy steps. By Diana Day

Projects

24 Desperados: Making a Wanted Poster
Take a cue from the Old West—and work on your layer chops at the same time—by making this fun poster. By Mike Rodriguez

Essentials

29 TOOL TIPS
The Healing Brushes and Clone Tools
Fixing small (and not so small) imperfections in your photos is easy once you learn how to master these tools. By Mike Rodriguez

34 Tips and Tricks
This issue’s tips include: keyboard shortcuts for saving files; grouping and docking palettes; repairing tool problems; and increasing Elements’ file memory. By Matt Kloskowski

COVER PHOTO: © ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/MARIA BOYTUNOVA
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 do 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@photoshopelementsuser.com, and we'll do our best to help you out.

Frequently asked subscriber questions

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**

[Image - Offroad]

Displacement Maps
Corey Barker shows you how to make reusable effects using displacement maps.

Increasing Canvas Size
Dave Cross shows you how to increase your image canvas size to accommodate text for projects like menus, calendars and invites.

and more...
- Energize Your Photos
- Adding a Sunbeam to Your Photos
- Using the New Camera RAW Profiles
- Uncover Elements’ Hidden Patterns

**TUTORIALS**

[Image - Gift Tags]

Gift Tags
Wendy Williams shows you how easy it is to make customized gift tags for all occasions, complete with your own logo.

and more...
- Simple Lace Mat
- Fold-Out Photograph
- Scrapbook Page Template
- Snow Scene

**EXTRAS**

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.
Let the Reduce Noise Filter Clean Your Digital Photos

By Matt Kloskowski

Ever zoom into your photos and notice lots of little “junk” in them? And, when you try to print your files, you see it even more? That junk is known as noise and it has been a long-time problem for digital photographers. It mostly comes from shooting at higher ISO settings (400 and above), and we typically run into it when we take a photograph in low-light situations—which is usually why we switch to a higher ISO setting in the first place. Well, Photoshop Elements has a way to help you tame this problem, called the Reduce Noise filter. Let’s take a look at how it works.

1. You probably won’t see much noise unless you’re zoomed in at least 100%, unless it’s really bad, in which case you should just throw your camera away (I’m kidding!). Once you do have your photo open and are zoomed in, take a look to see if you notice that little noisy junk throughout the pixels instead of nice smooth areas.
Click on the duplicate layer to make sure that the changes we make will affect only that layer. Then choose Filter > Noise > Reduce Noise. Let’s start with the Strength setting, which is pretty straightforward. At 0, the filter has no effect; at 10 it is at full strength. You may be thinking, “why would I ever use a setting less than 10?” Well, as is the case with many “fixes” we make to a photo, we make compromises. The upside is that you can indeed reduce noise with a high setting. But, by removing noise, Elements is blurring parts of your photo, which leads to a photo that isn’t quite as sharp as you may like. So pick a setting that looks good, but don’t go overboard and try to remove every bit of noise in the photo. (I usually go with a setting between 5 and 7.)

Getting Serious About Noise: Going Beyond Elements

While the Reduce Noise filter does a decent job of lowering noise, there are better third-party plug-ins for photographers serious about noise removal. My favorite is Nik Software’s Dfine 2.0, which is priced at $100 from niksoftware.com. Another good one that I’ve tried is Noiseware, which comes in two versions, Standard ($50) and Professional ($70), from Imagenomic (imagenomic.com). Be sure to check their product compatibility charts to make sure that they work with your version of Elements.

3. Make a duplicate copy of your background layer by pressing Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J). You should see two layers in your Layers palette.

4. The Preserve Details setting lets you offset some of the blurriness that the Strength setting can introduce. Once you settle on a Strength setting, click and drag the mouse in the dialog box’s preview area to a part of the photo that has details in it that you may not want to blur (like the eyes or other facial features). Then bring the Preserve Details setting all the way to 0 percent. If those features look OK to you, you’re set and ready to move on. If they start to look too blurry, you can offset it by moving the slider toward the right, which tells Elements to pull back on the blurriness that the Reduce Noise setting adds in detailed areas in the photo. A setting of 100% pretty much negates the effect of the Strength setting altogether.

That’s all we’re going to do with this image, so click OK to commit the filter settings and return to your image. See the note at the bottom of Page 7 to see an explanation of (and when to use) the Reduce Color Noise and Remove JPEG Artifact settings.
Do I Need to Worry About Color Noise?

We didn’t touch the Reduce Color Noise setting in this tutorial, because our image didn’t need it, but many digital cameras tend to introduce color noise with high-ISO shots. Take a look at a group of your photos, especially ones taken in low-light situations, and you’ll get a sense of how much you might need to play with this setting.

Color noise is easy to spot: If you zoom in and see little dots of red, green or blue throughout the noise, then you’ve got color noise (see the image and the close-up on the right for an example). If so, then try moving the slider toward the right to help reduce the color. You’ll still use the other settings to reduce the overall noise.

That Remove JPEG Artifact setting is a little odd. I’ve never actually seen it make a photo look better, so I just don’t use it anymore, although it can be helpful if you’re working with older, low-resolution JPEG files.

Remember when we made a copy of the original layer in Step 2? Well, the benefit of adding the duplicate layer is that we can use it to bring back the sharp parts of your original photo. Select the Eraser (E) from the Toolbox and brush over areas (on the top layer) where you want to bring back sharpness. This will show through the layer underneath, which doesn’t have the filter applied. Don’t go crazy here, or you’ll bring back too much noise. Try erasing over the eyes and any facial features or other parts of the photo you want to remain crisp. (If you are happy with the finished photo, you can choose Layer>Flatten Image to merge all the layers, although I generally save my finished file as a copy, so I can always get back to the original if I need it for some reason.)

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.
It was only a short time ago that you didn’t see the photos you’d taken until they were processed and printed on paper. Unless you were developing them yourself, those prints were your first glimpse at whether the shots were any good. Now, in the digital age, making prints is almost an afterthought.

Still, you can’t hang a digital photo on the fridge, which is why there are a lot of options available for getting your shots committed to paper. Yes, Photoshop Elements has built-in capabilities for getting photos, calendars and books printed online from within the program, but there are also plenty of other services that offer these features and a whole lot more. And many of them have customization options that go far beyond what is possible with Elements.

Regardless of which route you choose, the best part is that you don’t even need to leave your chair—upload the pictures you want and then wait for them to arrive. Let’s take a quick look at some of the options you have for printing photos on paper, ceramics, t-shirts, canvas and more.
Traditional Prints

Online prints have been a staple of the Web for years now. Adobe uses Shutterfly as its current partner (in Elements 6 and 7; earlier versions used Kodak); they do a great job, and it’s easy to just send off your photos directly from Elements for prints (see story below for how easy this is). But there are plenty of other companies that offer prints in all sizes. For example, if you use the photo-sharing service Flickr, it’s easy to order prints of your own pictures, as well as those of your friends, contacts and sometimes even perfect strangers who make that option publicly available.

Other companies that do a nice job with online photo ordering include Mpix, PhotoDirect, Kodak Gallery, and Snapfish. Most offer a range of sizes from 4” by 6” all the way up to poster-size prints, and most also have discounts for multiple print orders. One of the nice features found with almost all of these services is that you can upload photos and share them with family members, who can then order them directly from the service—great for grandparents, grandkids and others looking to get some special memories. (See the chart on Page 11 for current pricing from these services for 4” x 6”, 5” x 7” and 8” x 10” prints.)

Getting Prints from Within Photoshop Elements

With Windows, Photoshop Elements provides the capability to order prints directly from within the Organizer (or on the Mac, via Bridge). Select the photos you want to print, click the Create tab, and then click the Order Prints button. At the top of the screen, specify how many prints of each image to make, and whether the prints will be printed with a glossy or matte finish.

Follow the steps to enter a shipping address and payment information, and to upload the files to Shutterfly (Versions 5 and earlier of Elements used Kodak’s printing services, but the process is similar). The prints will arrive in the mail in about a week’s time, depending on your shipping preferences.
Books

Going beyond simple prints is just as easy. Nearly all of the companies mentioned above have options for creating cards, photo books, calendars, note pads and other paper-oriented wares. Adobe's built-in book- and calendar-making features are great, but when you want to create something a bit more personalized, you can turn to Blurb or MyPublisher, companies that specialize in creating one-of-a-kind books with highly customizable options. Both companies have software you can download (for PCs and Macs) to build your books, and each offers tons of templates for everything from professional-looking portfolios to cookbooks, flipbooks and more. If you've been bitten by the book-making bug, they're worth checking out.

Cards, Stickers and More

Another great option for Showcasing your pictures is with photo cards, business cards, stickers and greeting cards. One of our favorite vendors for these types of products is Moo, a company based in the U.K. that produces high-quality prints and delivers all over the world. Moo's software is built right into the Web site, so you just use your browser to create cards and other things. You can even grab pictures you've already posted on places like Flickr, Facebook, LiveJournal and others, which means you don't even have to upload photos to the Moo site. Moo's mini photo cards are great for using as business or contact cards for friends and acquaintances, and they're reasonably priced.
Shutterfly is the print provider for Photoshop Elements and Photoshop.com.

You can pre-pay for blocks of prints and end up paying less per print; for example, 250 4 x 6 prints costs $19.99, or $0.08 per print.

Pay $49.99 per year for Kodak’s Gallery Premier with Print Plan and pay $0.10 each for 4 x 6 prints.

Also offers Metallic and True B&W paper.

Not surprisingly, the price of ordering prints online varies depending on the vendor and also on the sizes and quantities you want. This chart offers an overview of several popular services, their pricing, and additional details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>4 x 6</th>
<th>5 x 7</th>
<th>8 x 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
<td>$0.59</td>
<td>$1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shutterfly 1</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
<td>$0.99</td>
<td>$3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapfish 2</td>
<td>$0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr 2 prints</td>
<td></td>
<td>$0.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-24 prints</td>
<td>$0.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49 prints</td>
<td>$0.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+ prints</td>
<td>$0.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photodirect</td>
<td>$0.07</td>
<td>$0.25</td>
<td>$1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodak Gallery 3</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
<td>$0.99</td>
<td>$3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpix 4</td>
<td>$0.29</td>
<td>$0.99</td>
<td>$1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ prints</td>
<td>$0.24</td>
<td>$0.89</td>
<td>$1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 (B&amp;W)</td>
<td>$0.59</td>
<td>$1.29</td>
<td>$2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ (B&amp;W)</td>
<td>$0.49</td>
<td>$1.09</td>
<td>$2.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Shutterfly is the print provider for Photoshop Elements and Photoshop.com.
2 You can pre-pay for blocks of prints and end up paying less per print; for example, 250 4 x 6 prints costs $19.99, or $0.08 per print.
3 Pay $49.99 per year for Kodak’s Gallery Premier with Print Plan and pay $0.10 each for 4 x 6 prints.
4 Also offers Metallic and True B&W paper.

CafePress offers a wide variety of things you can print your photos on, including T-shirts, mugs, mousepads, and magnets.

If photo prints are too traditional—and two-dimensional—for your tastes, several companies will put your images on all sorts of objects. CafePress and Zazzle offer clothing, mugs, tote bags, buttons, and more items that can be imprinted with your photos. You can also set up a store to sell your wares, specifying your own markup, but many people choose to just upload images and order products for themselves. You’ll pay a little more compared to what you would spend if you had the products mass produced—a T-shirt, for example—but it enables you to order one-off designs without having to store a hundred copies in your basement.

Zazzle, in addition to the standard fare, will let you customize a pair of sneakers with your own photos.
Web resources for online printing services

Here’s a short summary of the companies mentioned in this story. While this is in no way a comprehensive list of the vendors out there, it’s a great place to start.

**BLURB.COM:** Although they only sell books, Blurb offers an array of styles and sizes, with lots of templates to help you get started, using their free Book-smart software for PCs and Macs.

**CAFEPRESS.COM:** They have everything from greeting cards and calendars to T-shirts, mugs, posters, stickers, magnets and bags. You can also set up your own store to sell your own merchandise.

**FLICKR.COM:** The photo-sharing site lets you buy prints of photos you’ve uploaded, and you can set your account so that others can buy prints of your work. They also have arrangements with many photo-printing services (including Moo, Kodak, ImageKind and Blurb) so you can create almost anything with your photos.

**IMAGEKIND.COM:** This company specializes in printing on fine-art papers and canvas, also offering options for creating framed artwork and things like pro-quality greeting cards. They also have a storefront for selling your artwork, and have a variety of classic art reproductions available for purchase.

**KODAKGALLERY.COM:** One of the granddaddies of the photo-printing world, Kodak Gallery offers prints, cards, calendars, books, digital frames and more, and you can share your photos with friends and family.

**MOO.COM:** A relative newcomer to the industry, Moo has made its reputation by offering beautifully printed mini-photo cards and business cards, as well as postcards, greeting cards and sticker books. They also sell “readymades,” work created by noted graphic designers, if you’re just looking for greeting cards to keep for special occasions.

**MPIX.COM:** Another company that offers standard (prints) and non-standard (wall cling wraps) items, Mpix is a favorite among professionals and advanced amateurs for the quality and breadth of their products. They aren’t the cheapest, but they have an excellent reputation.

**MYPUBLISHER.COM:** Although they don’t offer as many different sizes and types of books as Blurb, MyPublisher is a good alternative for creating books with more flexibility than Photoshop Elements’ native book-making functionality (which is handled through Kodak).

**PHOTODIRECT.COM:** PhotoDirect’s motto is “Best price In the USA: Guaranteed,” and their price of 8 cents per 4” x 6” print is lower than anyone else we could find. They have books, posters and greeting card offerings as well.

**SHUTTERFLY.COM:** Adobe’s current partner for prints, Shutterfly has been offering online photo printing for years. They’ve expanded their product line to include mugs, clothing, books, calendars and services like DVD creation.

**SNAPFISH.COM:** Originally one of Shutterfly’s competitors, Snapfish was bought by HP in 2005. Like PhotoDirect, they tend to focus on low-cost prints, but they offer just about the same set of goods that you can find at Shutterfly.

**ZAZZLE.COM:** Claiming to offer more than 9 million (!) customizable products, Zazzle has the look of a weekend flea market/bazaar, but they have lots of products you can put your photos on, from shoes and bags to skateboards and postage stamps. They also let you sell your designs (which can be put on just about any product they sell).

By Rick LePage
You’ve Been Framed

Most online print services are capable of making larger prints that you can then take to a shop to be framed. But a few companies are bringing framing online, too.

ImageKind—which was recently purchased by CafePress—offers an unbelievable number of printing and framing options. After uploading your image files, you can print on several paper stocks, from glossy photo to fine art surfaces. Then select one of hundreds of frame and mat combinations. At the end of the process, you’ll receive a finished framed version of your photo.

Mpix sells framed prints, though with not as many options (which can be a good thing if you don’t want to get lost for hours mixing and matching frames and mats). They also offer papers tailored to black and white photography. At Mpix, you can order crazy things like “wall clings,” which put you photo on transparent film that you can stick to your wall (it uses a low-tack adhesive that leaves no residue).

Both ImageKind and Mpix also offer gallery wraps, which are photos printed on canvas and stretched around a wooden frame, similar to paintings you might see in a museum or gallery.

Thanks to modern printing technologies, your photos aren’t limited to simple prints; browse around some of these Web sites and look at all of the options you have for reproducing your masterworks!

Jeff Carlson is the author of Photoshop Elements 7 for Windows: Visual QuickStart Guide (Peachpit Press). He is also managing editor of the Macintosh newsletter TidBITS (www.tidbits.com), a columnist for the Seattle Times, and believes there’s never enough coffee.

If you want to go beyond Elements’ book-making capabilities, companies like Blurb, MyPublisher and others offer high-quality books that you can create in many different sizes and formats. Shown here is a book created with Blurb, showcasing the photographer Beth Dow’s work.

Mpix has a simple Web interface for creating gallery wraps on canvas.

Web resources for online printing services

For an article on preparing your prints for online services, as well as links to the online services mentioned here, check the Subscriber Extras section of photoshopelementsuser.com.
The Orton Effect
By Rick LePage

In the late 1980s, photographer Michael Orton developed an innovative technique for creating rich, glowing landscape scenes. Using slide film and a tripod, he shot overexposed versions of the same scene, one with extreme sharpness, and another with the scene completely out of focus. Then, once his slides were developed, he “sandwiched” the film together, which created the ethereal look that became known as the “Orton effect.”

Thanks to the magic of digital photography and Photoshop Elements, there are many ways to simulate this effect, and it can often be an excellent technique for livening up otherwise drab photos. Here’s a quick tutorial on how to achieve the basics of the Orton effect, with a little bit of advice on how to play with it for lots of different types of photos.

1 First, we’ll create a new, lightened version of the image on a separate layer, which will be the base for building the effect (and which mimics the overexposed settings used by Orton). Click on the Background layer in the Layers palette and duplicate it two times by pressing Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J) twice. Making sure that the top layer (“Layer 1 copy”) is the currently selected layer, choose Screen from the Blend mode pop-up at the top of the Layers palette.
For many photos where I use the Orton effect, I find that it helps to reduce the Screen blending mode’s Opacity setting a bit—for this image, I lowered it to 75%. I also zoom in a bit on my image by pressing Ctrl-+ (Mac: Command-+): This makes it easier to see the intensity of the effect as I apply sharpen and blur filters.

2 We’re going to merge the two layers we just duplicated. With the top layer still selected, choose Layer>Merge Down, or Ctrl-E (Mac: Command-E). Since we need both a sharp layer and a blur layer to create the effect, press Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J) to duplicate Layer 1. Double-click on the top layer (“Layer 1 Copy”) and name it “Blur Layer”; double-click on the middle layer (“Layer 1”) and call it “Sharp Layer.”

3 Turn off the Blur layer’s visibility by clicking on the Eye icon to the left of the layer name, and then click on the Sharp layer to make it active. From the Enhance menu, select Adjust Sharpness. We’re going to oversharpen this layer quite a bit; here I used a percentage of 400% and set the Radius to 0.5 pixels. (If you have a version of Photoshop Elements without the Adjust Sharpness command, you can use the Unsharp Mask filter with the same amounts.)
More Orton

One of the great things about this technique is that it can be used in so many different ways, letting you create everything from subtle glowing images to outlandish, highly processed photos. If you look on the Web, there are endless variations of the Orton effect, although technically, many of them really are more Orton-influenced than actual photos using the full technique.

To see some excellent samples of the effect in use, you can check the Orton galleries on Flickr and SmugMug, among other photo-sharing sites. A few Photoshop Elements Techniques subscribers have posted excellent Orton-style photos in our own galleries, among them Tina Bakken’s beautiful Fall Splendor (right).

And don’t think that this method only works with landscapes; it can create a nice effect with portraits as well, smoothing the skin and creating a lovely glow. When working with faces, use less sharpening than you would on a landscape—I often use only 200%—and you might find that you need to play around with the opacity in the Blur layer to get the right level of effect without making the person look a bit like an alien (unless that’s what you’re going for).

And, if you use clipping groups and a layer mask, you can paint the effect out in certain areas. For example, in the portrait on the right, I applied the Orton technique (bottom right), but wanted the eyes to remain sharp. Clicking on the bottom layer, I added a Levels adjustment layer and clicked OK when the Levels dialog box opened. This created a layer mask that I could use to paint the original eyes back in.

I clicked on the layer mask icon (the white box to the right of the Levels icon in the adjustment layer) to select it. Then I chose the Brush tool (B), and, in the Options Bar at the top of the screen, I chose a small, soft-edged brush, with the Opacity to 60%. I carefully painted inside the eyes, which reduced the effect and brought back some of the model’s sparkle.

For more on the effect, including links to explanations about the technique’s origins, and links to photos in the Elements Techniques galleries, on Flickr and more, go to the Subscriber Extras area at photoshopelementsuser.com.

Create a clipping group with an adjustment layer mask to reduce (or remove) the effect in portions of a photo.
4 Click on the Blur layer in the Layers palette and turn its visibility back on by clicking on the Eye icon. From the Blend mode pop-up, select Multiply. You’ll notice that the photo immediately has a bit more punch than the original, but we also see the effects of the oversharpening in Step 3.

5 From the Filter menu, choose Blur>Gaussian Blur. Here, you want to apply a blur strong enough to reduce all detail in the image. For most photos, a setting of 25 pixels is sufficient, although some lower-resolution pictures benefit from using a blur setting in the 10- to 20-pixel range. The beauty of performing the sharpening step first is that you can see the final effect in the image before you click OK (make sure you have the Preview check box set in the Gaussian Blur dialog box to see the changes directly to your image).

tip One of the biggest issues you’ll run into when using this approach is shadows and halos along the edges in your photos. Sometimes, they’ll make your image look too processed, while other times they add the depth you want. If you don’t like them, reduce the amount of blur by 5 pixels and see what the image looks like, or alternatively, increase the amount by 5 pixels. I generally don’t go over 30 pixels of blur, however.
That’s the basics of the technique in a nutshell. With many landscape photos, however, I will add a Photo Filter adjustment layer above the Blur layer, to give a little bit of warmth to the final image. Here I used a Warming Filter (85), although I’ll also use the Warming Filter (81) from time to time.

Alternative: Orton without sharpening

Many people often omit the sharpening step entirely, preferring the soft hazy effect that the Blur layer achieves. In our tutorial image, you can see the difference between using the sharpening step and not by simply making the Sharp layer invisible (by clicking on the visibility Eye icon in the Sharp layer).

The image is darker, because you are now using the original image from the Background layer, but you can adjust it with either the Opacity setting for the Blur layer, or by creating a new version of the base Orton layer you created in Step 1 (by duplicating the Background layer twice and applying a Screen blending mode).

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Frame Your Words
Cut-out Word Frames: By Diana Day

Perhaps you’ve seen these recently popular templates and wondered: “How did they do that?” Well, this tutorial is for you. These 10 easy steps will guide you through creating a template using the word of your choice. We’ll create a 5” x 7” template here, but once you’ve finished this tutorial, you should be able to apply the same basic steps to make one any size you need.

Frame Your Words
Techniques
Cut-out Word Frames: By Diana Day

1. Let’s start by creating a new blank document with File>New>Blank File. Set the dimensions to 5 by 7 inches, with a resolution of 300 ppi, RGB color mode, and white for background contents.
To more easily position the template on our canvas, we’ll use the grid. From the Edit menu, select Preferences>Grid and set the Gridline every 1 inch and the Subdivisions to 4. If you wish to change the color of the grid to a brighter color, click on the color chip at the right of the dialog box to choose a new color. Click OK when finished.

Turn the grid on with View>Grid, and then turn on the snap-to-grid option with View>Snap To>Grid.

Create a new blank layer above the white background layer by clicking on the Create New Layer icon at the top of the Layers palette. With the new layer active, select the Rectangular Marquee tool (M) and drag out a rectangular shape on the blank document, positioning the shape 2 grid squares away from all edges, except for the bottom edge: make that 6 squares away from the bottom edge.
4 We will fill the selection with black. From the Edit menu, choose Fill Selection, and select Black from the Use pop-up menu. Then deselect the rectangle by choosing Select>Deselect, or using the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-D (Mac: Command-D).

5 Select the Type tool (T) and in the Options Bar at the top of the workspace, click the font drop-down arrow to select a font. A thick, bold font works best for this purpose. I’ll use the Cheap Sign font for my example (available free from Gaut Fonts at fontspace.com), at a size of 85 points, but you can choose any font you would like. Then type the name or word you wish to use. (Don’t worry about its placement or if it goes off the page—we’ll fix that in the next step.)

Tip Here are a few quick keyboard shortcuts to fill a layer or selection with color: To fill with the foreground color, press Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete), or to fill with the background color, press Ctrl-Backspace (Mac: Command-Delete). If you need to reset the foreground and background colors to the default black and white, press the D key. You can also swap the foreground and background colors with the X key.
Let's complete the image by inserting a photo into your template file. With the template open, and the top layer active, select File>Place. In the Place dialog window, navigate to the location of your photo on your hard disk, select the photo, then click the Place button. This will pull the photo into your document and place it in a layer above the black template. Notice that the photo comes into the document with a bounding box around it, ready to be resized.

As noted, depending on the font and the length of the word, you very likely will need to resize it to fit the width of the black rectangle. To move and resize the text, first make sure the type layer is active. Then select the Move tool (V) and, from the Image menu, choose Transform>Free Transform (or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-T [Mac: Command-T]). Drag the word up until it meets and touches the black rectangle. The snap-to-grid setting helps with the positioning of the word: when it gets close to a grid line, it will snap to that line. Drag inward or outward on the corner handles to resize the word to fit the width of the black rectangle. You can also refine the width and height of the word by dragging the side handles and bottom handle to get the word to fit exactly to the width of the rectangle and to position it at two grid squares from the bottom edge. When you are finished positioning and resizing the word, click the green check mark to commit the transformation.

To complete the template, we must merge the word with the black rectangle. With the type layer active in the Layers palette, select Layer>Merge Down, or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-E (Mac: Command-E). You can also toggle the grid off by choosing View>Grid.

This would be a good time to save your file—in PSD format—to preserve your layers for future use.
After using the Place command to add a photo to an image, you must hold down the Shift key when resizing the photo to constrain the photo’s proportions. So, holding the Shift key, drag inward or outward on a corner handle to resize the photo and then drag it into place until it covers the entire black area of the template. Any part of the photo overlapping outside of the template will be non-destructively “cropped” with the final action. Then click the green check mark to commit the placement.

So now you have your photo placed and resized. Are you ready for the hard part? Simply press Ctrl-G (Mac: Command-G) or choose Layer>Group With Previous. Voila! Your photo will be “clipped” to the shape of the template.

After clipping your photo to the template, you can still reposition the photo if you need to. Make sure the photo layer is active, then press Ctrl-T (Mac: Command-T) and drag the photo to move it, or resize it by dragging on a corner handle of the bounding box. Click the green check mark to commit the transformation.

Diana Day, retired H.R. Manager and self-taught Elements user, hosts a PSE Users Group where she teaches Elements to members of her community. Diana also puts her skills with Elements to practical use administering her church’s web page and public relations.

As an alternative to the Place command used in Step 8, you may use copy and paste to get your photo into the template. With your photo open in the workspace, press Ctrl-A (Mac Command-A) to select all, then press Ctrl-C (Mac: Command-C) to copy. Next, make your template document active in the workspace, and press Ctrl-V (Mac: Command-V) to paste. Then continue with the resizing and placement of the photo using the Move tool.

Check the Subscriber Extras area at photoshopelementsuser.com for more examples, additional tips, and a list of download links to fonts suitable for use in your word frame templates.
Desperados: Making a Wanted Poster

By Mike Rodriguez

Ah, the romance and mystique of the Old West Wanted Poster. Every town had them, hanging ominously on the saloon wall, printed on tattered paper, yellowed with age, its message stark and clear: Apprehend the notorious gunslinger, dead or alive, and claim your reward. Let’s create our own wanted poster in Photoshop Elements, with a slightly less sinister tone.

1. First, let’s create the paper. Go to File>New>Blank File and create a file that is 8.5 by 11 inches, with a resolution of 240 pixels per inch, which is a good printing resolution. If you don’t plan on printing your poster, you can use a lower resolution, such as 72, 96 or 150 ppi, which will give you a smaller final file size.

2. Alt-Click (Mac: Option-Click) the New Layer icon at the top of the Layers palette to create a new layer. Using the Alt key causes the New Layer dialog box to open, where you can type in a name for the layer. Let's use the name Clouds 1. Click on the Foreground Color square—the square in front at the bottom of the Tool- box and choose a light tan color (we used R:233, G:191, B:131). Click on the Background Color square and choose a darker tan (R:164, G:125, B:87 in our example).
Let's spice up our old-style paper even further. Click the Create Adjustment Layer icon on the Layers palette and choose Pattern. From the pattern menu, choose Clouds (second row, far right in the Default category). Set a large scale (we used 900%) and click OK. Change the blend mode of the Pattern Fill adjustment layer to Soft Light, and reduce the Opacity to 50%.

Making sure you have the Clouds 1 layer targeted in the Layers palette, go to Filter>Render>Clouds. If you don’t like the first cloud pattern, hit Ctrl-F (Mac: Command-F), which reapplies your most recent filter operation (in this case, with a new, random pattern). When you get one you like, duplicate the layer by pressing Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J).

With the duplicated layer targeted, press Ctrl-F to create a new cloud pattern, and then change that layer’s blend mode to Luminosity, which adds some different coloration to your paper. Feel free to experiment with other blend modes, as they produce different effects, which may be more to your liking.

The main part of the paper is done, so let’s combine the layers. Select the Pattern Fill adjustment layer, then Shift-click the layer named Clouds 1; this will select the three layers that make up the paper. Then press Ctrl-E (Mac: Command-E) to merge those selected layers together. Change the name of the resulting layer to Paper by double-clicking on the layer’s name.
For the edge of the paper we need to “borrow” a layer mask from an adjustment layer. Target the Background layer, click the Create Adjustment Layer icon on the Layers palette and choose Levels. Since we just want the layer mask from this layer, click OK in the Levels dialog box without changing any of the settings. This will create a layer between the Background and Paper layers.

Select the Rectangle Marquee tool (M) and draw a selection inside your paper, leaving a narrow border between your selection border and the edge of the paper. On your keyboard press Ctrl-Shift-I (Mac: Command-Shift-I) to invert the selection. Click the layer mask icon on the Levels adjustment layer we made in the previous step to make sure it’s selected. Set your colors to the default black and white by pressing D on your keyboard. With black as your foreground color, press Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete) to fill the selected area of the mask with black. To make the mask affect the Paper layer above it, we now need to create a clipping group. With your mouse, Alt-Click (Mac: Option-Click) the line between the two layers on the layers palette or simply press Ctrl-G (Mac: Command-G). Then press Ctrl-D (Mac: Option-D) to deselect.
To add an uneven, deckle-edged look to the edge, click on the layer mask (in the Levels layer) again to make sure it's targeted and go to Filter>Distort>Glass. Set Distort to 10, Smoothness to 11, Frosted for the texture, and 170% for the Scale. Feel free to experiment with other settings. When you're happy with the look, click OK.

Let's add some rips to the paper edge. Ctrl-click (Mac: Command-Click) the layer mask icon on the Layers palette to select the unmasked (white) area. Select the Lasso tool (L) and click the Subtract from Selection box in the Options Bar. Using the Lasso, draw small, jagged "rips" in random spots around the edge of your selection (it may be helpful to zoom in closer for this part). Press Ctrl-Shift-I (Mac: Command-Shift-I) to invert your selection, and press Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete) to fill the selection with black. Your paper should now have some rips and tears along the edge. Press Ctrl-D to deselect.

Click on the Paper layer and press Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J) to duplicate it. Double-click the layer name and change it to Edge. To include this new layer in the clipping group, Alt-click (Mac: Option-click) the line between the Edge and Paper layers.

Ctrl-click (Mac: Command-click) the layer mask icon on the adjustment layer once again to select the white areas of the mask. Go to Select>Modify>Contract. Type in 50 (or experiment with your own settings) and click OK. Target the layer named Edge and press Backspace (Mac: Delete) to erase the center portion of the layer, leaving only the edge. Change the blend mode of the Edge layer to Multiply. Finally, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and add a large blur to the layer (we used a setting of 32 pixels). Your paper is finished!
10 Open an image of your poster’s subject and, using the selection tool (or tools) of your choice, make a selection around the person (or people). Copy the selection by pressing Ctrl-C (Mac: Command-C). Switch back to your poster and press Ctrl-V (Mac: Command-V) to paste the selection into your poster. Ctrl-T (Mac: Command-T) will bring up Free Transform, letting you scale the image to fit your poster.

11 Since a full-color image in the Old West simply won’t do, let’s take care of that. The options here are many, so feel free to be creative. Here’s one possibility: Target the layer with your photo subject and press Ctrl-Shift-U (Mac: Command-Shift-U) to remove all the color information, leaving your desperados in grayscale, then experiment with the layer’s blend modes. The effect of each mode depends on the image. (We ended up going with Color Burn.) If the effect is too intense, reduce the layer’s opacity. Another nice touch is to add a bit of noise by going to Filter>Noise>Add Noise. Check the Monochromatic box at the bottom of the dialog and experiment with the other controls until you’re happy with the look.

12 One final added touch is a drop shadow for the poster. Click on the Levels adjustment layer (the one with the layer mask) we made in Step 5. Go to the Effects palette and click the Layer Styles icon. From the drop-down menu, choose Drop Shadows, select a drop shadow style and click Apply. Finally, add your text, and you’ve got it.

Now grab that hammer and find the nearest saloon wall. Safety and peace await!

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When it comes to health, a little preventative care goes a long way towards maintaining mind and body. But let’s face it: even the healthiest among us need the skillful hands of a doctor from time to time. And so it is with our images. Even when we do everything “right” (photographically speaking), the occasional rogue pixel pops up and needs to be dealt with, or perhaps there’s something in the image that just doesn’t belong and needs to be removed. Not to worry. It’s simply time to call upon Elements’ medical department, the Healing and Clone tools. In the Healing family, there is the Spot Healing Brush and the Healing Brush. Pressing J on your keyboard will switch between the two. For cloning, your choices are the Clone Stamp and Pattern Stamp tools, which are toggled by the S key. With these tools and a little practice, it will be no trick at all to patch up any hurting pixels.

**Spot Healing Brush**

The Spot Healing Brush is just the tool for quickly removing small imperfections, defects, and flaws. It automatically chooses pixels around the area you are working on and matches texture, lighting, transparency, and shading to create a patch. Unlike its partner, the Healing Brush, it doesn’t require anything other than a click on the flawed area. And it’s easy to use: all you need to do is choose a brush size and shape. Using the [ and ] keys on the keyboard will decrease and increase the brush size, respectively; Shift-[ will make the edge of the brush harder, while Shift-] will make the edge softer, giving a feathered effect.

In addition to brush settings, the Spot Healing Brush’s Options Bar has three primary controls: Proximity Match, Create Texture, and All Layers, which are explained below.

Use the tool to heal with one click whenever possible, so a brush that’s slightly larger than the targeted area usually works best. After setting the desired options, simply position the brush over the area to be healed and click once. If the area is larger, you can click and drag over the blemish.

- **Proximity Match:** This setting uses pixels around the edge of the brush to find an area to use for the patch. I usually try this option first. If it doesn’t produce the effect you’re after, try Create Texture.
- **All Layers:** When checked, this samples from a composite of all visible layers in the document, letting you heal non-destructively (see Page 33).
- **Create Texture:** This option takes all the pixels within the brush area and uses them to create a texture to fix the area. If the first try doesn’t produce what you’re after, try dragging through the area with the tool again.

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**Essentials**

**Brushes:** The Spot Healing Brush and the two Clone tools let you choose the brush tip you’d like to use (the Healing Brush just lets you choose a round tip). Click the arrow next to the Brush Picker menu and choose appropriate tip you’d like to use, along with the brush size and hardness.

**Create Texture:**

Create Texture: this option takes all the pixels within the brush area and uses them to create a texture to fix the area. If the first try doesn’t produce what you’re after, try dragging through the area with the tool again.
Healing Brush

The Healing Brush, nested under the Spot Healing Brush, is much like its partner, but it offers a few more options, and, as a result, is more versatile. To start, select the tool and choose a brush size and hardness from the Options Bar. The other options are described below.

Once you’ve got the tool’s settings to your liking, position your cursor over the area you wish to use as the healing source and Alt-Click (Mac: Option-Click) once with your mouse. Drag your mouse over the flawed area to apply the healing.

In the image at the top left, I used the Healing Brush to remove one of the buoys by simply sampling from another section of the water and painting over the buoy.

Don’t worry that your strokes will often look much lighter than the surrounding area while you are using the brush. When you release the mouse button the new pixels will blend to better match their surroundings.

Mode: This is where you specify the tool’s Blending Mode (how the healing pixels will blend with the existing pixels). Normal will completely cover the old pixels with the new ones. Replace will preserve the noise, film grain, and texture at the edges of the brush stroke. (This can be especially helpful in producing a realistic patch when using a soft-edged brush.) The other blend modes available behave much in the manner they do when used with layers.

Aligned: Checking this box will keep the source area (shown by a + while painting) and your brush aligned with each other, even if you release the mouse button and start healing again in a different area. Deselecting this box will return the source selector to the last source area that was selected each time you release the mouse button.

Clone Overlay: This tiny icon gives you options for the Clone Overlay, which displays a moveable, translucent copy of the image while healing or cloning. (See Page 33 for more.)

Source: This sets the source of the pixels used for the healing. Choose Sampled to select pixels within the image. Choose Pattern to use one of the patterns from the Pattern pop-up palette.

All Layers: As with the Spot Healing Brush, this setting takes a sample from a composite of all visible layers.
**Clone Stamp**

Long before the Healing Brushes, Elements had the Clone Stamp tool, and while the newer tools offer a bit more pizzazz—and power—the Clone Stamp should always be part of your retouching toolbox. It can be used to retouch areas in an image, much the same manner as the Healing Brush, but it can also be used to duplicate areas of an image as well.

As you would with the Healing Brush, position your cursor on the area you would like to use as your cloning source and Alt-Click (Mac: Option-Click) with the mouse button. Move to the area needing altering and begin painting; you’ll see the ‘+’ cursor, which shows you the area being cloned from (see the detail below).

**Brushes:** Click the arrow next to the Brush Picker menu and choose the tip you’d like to use, along with the brush size and hardness (the bracket keys will work for this tool as well, along with any other tool using a brush).

**Aligned:** Checking it will keep the source and your brush continuously aligned regardless of how many times the mouse button is pressed and released. If it is turned off, the source will return to the last sampled area each time the mouse button is released and pressed.

**Clone Overlay:** This works the same way as it does with the Healing Brush. (See Page 33 for more.)

**Mode:** Select the desired Blending Mode for the tool. Normal will replace existing pixels with the new ones. You have the full compliment of blending modes available in this tool.

**Opacity:** Set the opacity of the pixels you’re about to apply. The higher the number the stronger the applied pixels will appear. Lower the number to allow more of the original pixels to show through.

**All Layers:** Samples across all layers (see Page 33 for more).
Pattern Stamp Tool

The tool underneath the Clone Stamp tool is called the Pattern Stamp tool. It operates in much the same way as the Clone Stamp, but, unlike the other three tools we’ve covered here, it doesn’t really “fix” a photo. It can add some interesting effects to your photos, however.

Instead of choosing a source from the image after selecting the tool, you select a pattern from the pattern pop-up palette in the Options Bar. The other choices in the Options Bar are identical to the Clone Stamp options with one exception, a check box for something called Impressionist. Checking this box will cause your brush to paint with a—with an impressionist-type of style.

Some interesting effects can be produced by using this tool to stamp a pattern on a layer above your image layer and then experimenting with the blend modes.
Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices

Now that we know what they are, how are they best used? Here’s a few tips to consider building in to your workflow.

**USE ALL LAYERS OPTION TO WORK NON-DESTRUCTIVELY**

In other words, put your healing on a separate layer. How, you ask? By using the All Layers option. Create a new blank layer directly above your image layer and make sure the All Layers check box is on. Then, making sure you are working on the new layer, heal or clone away. By working on a separate layer, you’re able to change blending modes, layer opacity, and, if you don’t get the fix you’re after, you can trash the layer and start over.

**SAMPLE FROM WITHOUT**

With the Healing and the Clone Stamp tools, you can select a source sample from a different image, as long as the two images you’re working with are in the same color mode (such as RGB). You can check the color mode of an image by going to *Image>Mode*. The exception to this is the Grayscale mode. One of the images may be in the Grayscale mode and this technique will still work. And while you’re at it, use that first tip and do all your work on a separate layer.

**ARE YOU TOO CLOSE?**

Finally, a sure tip-off that some cloning or healing has taken place is a repetitive pattern in something that shouldn’t be, such as grass or water. The usual culprit is choosing a clone or healing source too close to the area to be covered. The answer? When possible, choose a source further away, so any repetition isn’t as obvious, and, hopefully, invisible to the unknowing eye.

There you are. Invest a bit of time practicing, remember to use a gentle hand, and soon you’ll be healing and cloning like a pro.

**THE BRUSH EDGE**

A quick way to both frustrate yourself and create an unconvincing result is to neglect to match the hardness or softness of your brush edge with the area you’re cloning or healing. For example, cloning over a soft, blurry background with a hard-edged brush just isn’t going to look good at all. Likewise, using a soft-edged brush to clone over something with fine detail and sharpness won’t look any better. So pay close attention to your image, and choose an appropriate edge for your brush (remember, you can make the edge harder or softer with *Shift-[] and Shift-[]*).

**EXTRAS: CLONE OVERLAY VIDEO**

The way Clone Overlay setting for the Healing Brush and Clone Stamp tools works is much easier to see in action than it is to describe. Once you see how it works, you’ll use it all the time for complicated fixes. Go to the Subscriber Extras area at photoshopelementsuser.com for a link to a video that shows how to use the tool effectively.
Fix corrupted tools quickly

One day you’ll go to use a tool in Elements, and it just doesn’t work properly. To quickly get back to any tool’s default settings, choose the tool from the Toolbox, then right-click on the tiny downward-facing triangle that appears at the far left of the Options Bar. The contextual menu that pops up lets you choose Reset Tool, which will set it back to its factory-fresh defaults. You can also choose Reset All Tools and every tool will revert to the way it was when you first installed Elements.

Let Elements do the math when copying and pasting

If you have copied a selection within a document and want to paste that item into a new file, don’t worry about having to remember your selection’s dimensions for that new file. When you choose File>New>Blank File, Elements assumes that you’re going to paste that selection into a new document and enters the exact size of your copied selection into the Width and Height areas of the dialog box. So just click OK, and paste your image inside—it will be a perfect fit.

Save clicks when you close

This little tip might not seem like much, but it’s one of those things I find myself using over and over again, and it saves time if you open and close lots of documents each day.

When you close a document and you get that dialog asking, “Save changes to the Adobe Photoshop Elements document…before closing?” use keyboard shortcuts. With Windows, press Y (or Enter) for Yes, N for No, and Esc for Cancel. On the Mac, press the letter D for Don’t Save, press S (or Enter) for Save, and C (or Escape) for Cancel.
Shrink palettes down to size

If your palettes are in the way, you can hide them all by pressing the Tab key. But what if you want to hide just one palette? Simply double-click on tab of the palette’s name, and it—along with any grouped palettes—will minimize to just the tab itself, giving you back lots of screen real estate. Need the palette back? Just double-click on the tab again.

Bring order back to your world

Many of us are constantly moving our palettes around, and before long, we end up with one messy set of palettes littering your screen. If your palettes get out of control, you’re one simple move from having them back at their default locations. Just go to the Window menu and choose Reset Palette Locations, and all will be right with your world.

Creating your own über palette

You’ve been able to group multiple palettes (such as Layers, Color Swatches, Histogram and the others available via the Window menu) since Elements 3.0. To group two palettes together, you simply click on the palette name and drag it up into the other palette (see top right).

Did you know that you could also dock palettes on top of one another? This lets you create a giant palette that you can position anywhere on the screen. Here’s how to do it: Drag the name tab of one palette to the bottom edge of a second palette and slowly drag upward. A thin, black double-line will appear at the bottom of the top palette, letting you know it’s “time to dock” (below right). Release the mouse button and your palettes will be docked, one on top of the other. Now, when you move the top palette, all docked palettes will move with it as a group. I use this feature to stack my Layers and Effects palettes (both found under the Window menu) so I can access my favorite effects and my layers in one place.

Make Elements remember more

Photoshop Elements can keep track of the last 30 documents that you had open—found under the File>Open Recently Edited File menu—but by default it only displays the last 10. Would you rather Elements displayed the last 15 instead? Then go to Edit>Preferences (Mac: Photoshop Elements>Preferences), and choose Saving Files in the dialog. You’ll see the “Recent file list contains” setting at the bottom of the dialog. Just enter the desired number of files (up to 30) that you want to have quick access to and it’ll now show those under the Open Recently Edited File menu.

To group palettes, just drag the tab of a palette up into the main area of another palette.

To dock palettes, drag the tab of a palette to the bottom edge of another, until you see the double line. You can dock as many palettes as you want.