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Rick LePage

Editor
Diana Kloskowski

Associate Editor, Online
Elizabeth LePage

Contributing Editor
Matt Kloskowski

Contributing Writers
Larry Becker
Diana Day
Tamara Lackey

Creative Director
Felix Nelson

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Photo One Media, Inc.
15333 SW Sequoia Parkway, Suite 150
Portland OR 97224
(503) 968-1813

President
Craig Keudell

General Manager
Rick LePage

Web Marketing Manager
Thomas Penberthy

Web Development
Jim Mock

Colophon
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Here at PET, we’re always trying to make their letter and website better for our subscribers. This involves not just creating good print articles and tutorials online, but also doing things that make your subscription more valuable. We’re really happy to announce that we’ve struck a deal with B&H Photo (you know, that tiny camera store in New York City) to offer free Standard UPS shipping to PET subscribers. This offer will be available within the Continental US. This is huge. If you place just a few orders for camera gear, electronics or software a year, you’ll more than cover your annual subscription fee here at PET. Subscribers will have a special number to call when they place their order. Keep an eye on the subscriber website for more info. As for the newsletter, we’ve got lots of great articles for you again. The Lightroom column went over very well last time, so we’ll be continuing it. Lightroom is definitely a great place to work on your photography, so I urge you to take a look, as it’s quickly becoming the future of processing your photos. We’re also fortunate to have Diana Day back with a tutorial on creating chalkboard effects and Larry Becker shows us how to add 3-D type to your images. And if you’ve ever traveled to a great location only to find cloudy skies in your photos, Matt Kloskowski has a great tutorial on how to make the most out of the photos you take. Finally, since Easter is around the corner, we included some posing tips, so your photos can look even better coming right out of the camera.

One more thing. We always keep an eye on the website and feedback that you give and I wanted to let you know that we’ve heard your thoughts (ok, complaints) about the subscriber website and feedback that you give and I wanted to let you know that we’ve heard your thoughts (ok, complaints) about the subscriber website. We are working hard to make the subscriber website better and more user-friendly, and we appreciate your patience while we make these changes. If you have any specific suggestions or comments about the website, please drop us a note at info@photoshopelementsuser.com, and we’ll do our best to help you out.

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Make a Scene with 3D Text

Usually when we think of adding 3-D type to an image, it usually ends up looking like an after-thought. But there’s an easy way to incorporate the texture of your image directly into your type and make an impressive text design that looks like it belongs there, and it will probably have lots of viewers wondering if the letters were really cut out of your background material.

1. This technique works with concrete, marble, and even textured metal surfaces, but in real life I work with wood, quite a bit, so I photographed a neighbor’s fence to use as my backdrop. (I’ve provided this file so you can follow along.) Start by opening the file “Fence_for_text.jpg” and select the Text tool by pressing the T on your keyboard. Make sure you’re in Expert mode and that your Layers panel is visible on the right.

2. This works best with bold, fat letters that don’t have the little feet (sans serif) and you should use all caps. I chose Helvetica Compressed and I set my font size to 400p and my leading to 320p. Then I typed in PRO FENCE on two lines. My colors were set to default so my type was black, but the color doesn’t really matter. Click the green checkmark to confirm that you want to create that text layer and then get the Move Tool by pressing V. Move your text somewhere other than the middle, like the bottom right.

3. Turn off the visibility of your text layer by clicking the little eyeball at the left of the text layer in the Layers panel. Hold down the Control key (Command Mac) and click once on the text layer thumbnail in the Layers panel to create a selection in the shape of your type. Click on the background fence layer to highlight it and, with your selection still doing the marching ants thing in the shape of the letters, press Control-J (Command-J Mac) to create a new layer of wooden letters.

Note: you won’t be able to see the letters in your main view but you will see the letters on their own layer in the Layers panel. If you temporarily turn off the visibility of the background layer, you’ll see wooden letters in your main working area.

Version Note: This tutorial uses and references steps as they appear in Photoshop Elements 11, but the techniques all work in version 10 and most steps work in earlier versions as well. It’s just that some features are accessed in a different way.

EXTRAS TRY IT AT HOME

To download the starting photo go to the Magazine section of the website and click on the March/April 2013 issue Photoshop ElementsUser.com

4. There are some small, vertical gaps between boards in this wooden fence and they’ll look funny in the final version, so the gaps need to be patched. With the wood type layer selected (and the visibility of all other layers turned off), zoom in to at least 50% and then click the “Lock Transparency” option at the top of the Layers panel. Now you can press J to access the Spot Healing Brush tool. Alt-Click (Option-Click on Mac) to select some good wood somewhere else as your “Sample From” selection. Then paint over the gaps to hide them. You may need to set a new “Sample From” point occasionally.

Note: you won’t be able to see the letters in your main view but you will see the letters on their own layer in the Layers panel. If you temporarily turn off the visibility of the background layer, you’ll see wooden letters in your main working area.
5 Click the little eyeball to turn on the visibility of your Background layer once again, and then press V on the keyboard to select the Move tool. If you have “Show Bounding Box” checked in your tool options panel, you’ll see a bounding box around your wood letters, though they’ll still be impossible to see since they blend with the background. Click in the box and drag it to about the center of your image area. At this point you’ll start to be able to make out your wooden letters.

6 Now click the Effects icon at the bottom of the Layers panel to display available Layer Effects. At the top of the Effects Panel click the center tab to select Styles and from the drop down menu right below it, choose Bevels. Double-click the third one down on the left (Simple Sharp Inner) and your letters will be beveled. To adjust the bevel, click the blue gear icon to the right of the Bevels drop down menu, and adjust the size and angle to give the letters a carved, beveled dimensionality.

7 Because the top of the Style Settings box has Drop Shadow adjustments listed, you can turn on a Drop Shadow by just checking that checkbox. In order to fine tune the Drop Shadow, click the triangle to the left of the Drop Shadow checkbox to reveal the 3 sliders. I set mine to Size: 111, Distance 120px, and Opacity 69%. This is a matter of taste so feel free to adjust yours differently. When you’re happy with how it looks, click the Ok button to confirm the Effect settings.

8 Now to make the wood of the text look just a bit different from the wooden background, we’ll need to change some of the lighting and colors of the background. Start by clicking on the background to select it. Next add a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer by clicking the New Adjustment Layer icon and choose Hue/Saturation from the menu. It will create the adjustment layer above the Background, but below your wooden text. In the Hue/Saturation dialog box move the sliders to change the Hue, Saturation and Brightness to make it noticeably different from your beveled letters. I dropped all 3 values to add a hint of red to the wood and desaturate the colors as well as slightly darken them.

It’s fairly easy to create photographic letters that look like they’re really made out of your background material as long as you pull your texture from somewhere other than its final position, and always remember that slightly adjusting the color tint and lighting will help sell the effect even more. Now go take some pictures of wooden desks, marble countertops, or scuffed up sheet metal and try your own design.

Larry Becker is a photographer and an instructor. He has taught Photoshop at the college level and conducted Photoshop Elements seminars for Adobe. His work has appeared on the sites of many major technology training companies.
Don’t Let Cloudy Skies Get You Down

Sometimes we don’t get to shoot in perfect weather. Especially when you’re traveling—you simply don’t get to pick the weather forecast for the day. Trust me, it’s happened to me more times than I care to count. I get somewhere really beautiful, and I’ve got cloudy gray skies. Well, there’s a sweet little adjustment in Elements that can take those gray skies and make them look pretty darn cool and dramatic. It’s not going to turn a cloudy rainy day into beautiful sunlight mind you. But more often than not, I think you’ll find this adjustment can make the clouds the star of the photo and you may even find yourself shooting on cloudy days more often.

The rest is pretty simple—just click-and-drag on the sky to paint the effect on the photo. You’ll start to see the dramatic clouds (that you knew were there when you took the photo) showing up wherever you paint. By the way, notice how Elements automatically started adding the contrasty effect to parts of the sky that you haven’t even painted over yet? That’s where the “smart” part of this brush comes into play. It automatically examines your photo for areas similar to what you have painted on and adds them to the selection.

Don’t forget to brush on the areas of sky behind the bridge. You’ll have to zoom in and reduce the size of your brush to around 10-20 pixels to get in there. And I wouldn’t worry about getting every little area, as you won’t see the details as much there.

Okay, this brush is pretty cool, right? But it’s not perfect. There will inevitably come a time (probably sooner than later) where the “smartness” of the brush isn’t as smart as it thinks it is, and it bleeds into a part of the photo you didn’t want it to (like the dark areas on the bridge in the previous step that accidentally got selected too). When that happens, press-and-hold the Alt (Mac: Option) key to put the brush into subtract mode. Then paint over the areas you didn’t want to apply the effect to (as shown here). Again, Elements will do a lot of the work for you and wipe away the areas, even if you don’t paint directly on them.

Note: I find decreasing the brush size when I’m doing this helps me get better results when removing areas I don’t want affected.

1. Open a photo where you’ve got some cloudy gray skies. I took the photo here on a trip to Portland, which has no shortage of cloudy skies at certain times of the year. Then, select the Smart Brush tool from the Toolbox (it’s the large paint brush icon in the Enhance section) or just press the F key.

2. Once you select the Smart Brush tool, click on the thumbnail near the left side of the Tool Options Bar to open the Preset Picker. As you change the Presets pop-up menu and scroll through the Preset Picker, you’ll see there’s a ton of presets to choose from. Let’s go ahead and choose Nature from the pop-up menu, though; to narrow it down. Then click on the add contrast to cloudy skies thumbnail in the top row, which adds contrast to cloudy skies.

3. Now the main thing to remember about this tool is that it is still a brush, which means it has settings just like all other brushes (size, hardness, spacing, etc.). So, using the Size slider in the Tool Options Bar, choose a size that’ll help you paint over the area fairly quickly. In this example, I’m using a 200-pixel brush for the sky.

4. The rest is pretty simple—just click-and-drag on the sky to paint the effect on the photo. You’ll start to see the dramatic clouds (that you knew were there when you took the photo) showing up wherever you paint. By the way, notice how Elements automatically started adding the contrasty effect to parts of the sky that you haven’t even painted over yet? That’s where the “smart” part of this brush comes into play. It automatically examines your photo for areas similar to what you have painted on and adds them to the selection.

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Note: I find decreasing the brush size when I’m doing this helps me get better results when removing areas I don’t want affected.
Here’s another really cool part about the Smart Brush tool: it’s non-destructive to your photo. This means you can always go back and change (or even delete) the effects. You’ll see this in two ways: First, you’ll notice that the Smart Brush tool automatically adds a new adjustment layer to the Layers palette. If you ever find that the effect is too harsh, you can always reduce the opacity of the layer to reduce the effect (which I don’t want to do here because I like the effect, but I just thought I’d let you know).

You may have noticed a tiny red box on your photo where you started to paint with the Smart Brush tool. This is the adjustment marker, letting you know you’ve applied a Smart Brush adjustment to the photo. If you Right-click on it, you’ll see you can delete it if you want or you can change the adjustment settings. Choosing Delete Adjustment does just what you think it does—the adjustment will be removed totally. But try choosing Change Adjustment Settings instead. It brings up the Adjustments palette or dialog with the controls for whatever adjustment Elements used to achieve your effect. If you’re familiar with that Adjustments palette or dialog, you can always try tweaking the settings. In this case, Levels was used, so the Levels dialog appeared.

Here’s the final before and after images so you can see them side-by-side and see what a dramatic difference it makes in the sky.

Chalk One Up
Creating a Digital Chalkboard Sign

It’s no secret that chalkboard creations are all the rage now. Images of beautifully chalked signs and cards abound on blogs and other social networking sites such as Pinterest, Tumblr, and Facebook. Many of them are intricately hand-lettered, spelling out words of wisdom, witticisms, event promotions, and commercial advertising. Although I’m not skilled at hand-lettering, I am so enamored by fonts, words, and typography, that I couldn’t help but try my hand at a digital chalkboard design. Join me in the fun as I walk you through the steps to create your own.

Our first task is to create a realistic-looking chalkboard. Decide on the size and dimensions you need for your sign. I’ll make my example image 8.5” x 11” with a resolution of 300 pixels/inch. Click New>Blank File from the File menu. In the New dialog, change the Width and Height increments to inches, and then enter your desired dimensions. The Background Contents value doesn’t matter since we’ll be filling it with a color.

A real chalkboard isn’t one solid color, so let’s add a couple effects to our image to make it look more realistic. First, add some noise – Filter>Noise>Add Noise – with these settings: Amount 1%, Distribution Gaussian, and monochromatic. To give the blackboard more texture, go to Filter>Artistic>Smudge Stick and choose the following settings: Stroke Length 10, Highlight Area 0, and Intensity 0. You may not see a great deal of change to the image until you zoom in 100% on it.

1. Click the foreground color chip at the base of the toolbar to open the Color Picker. At the bottom of the color value column on the right side, type in 333333. Go to Edit>Fill Layer and in the Fill Layer dialog, click on the drop-down arrow next to Use, and select Foreground Color. This should give us a good slate color to start out with for our chalkboard.
4. **Download the texture file** I used, or another one of your choosing, and open the file in Elements. Go to Image→Rotate to rotate it, if needed to match the orientation of your image. Select the Move tool (V) and start dragging the texture over to the chalkboard. Before dropping the texture onto the chalkboard, depress the Shift key, so the texture comes centered above your background layer. Then close the original texture. Using the bounding box handles, drag the top, bottom, and sides of the texture to match the size of the chalkboard. If necessary zoom out until you can see the entire bounding box. In the layers panel, click on Normal to open the blending modes menu located at the top of the layers panel, and select Overlay. Adjust the Opacity to 45%. There you have it—a realistic-looking chalkboard, ready to add the lettering.

### Texture Downloads

A well-used chalkboard accumulates a considerable amount of scratches and shading over time. To get this effect, I searched a few of my favorite online texture sites for an appropriate texture. I found the perfect texture in a set provided free by designer Caleb Kimbrough at his blog, Lost and Taken, at this URL: http://lostandtaken.com/blog/2010/7/16/17-scratched-and-scraped-textures.html (I used the first image in the texture set). Look for the direct link to these textures, links to fonts and other resources to use in your images, as well as further examples of chalkboard signs, in the online Extras under the Magazine section for the March/April 2013 issue at PhotoshopElementsUser.com.

5. **Decide on the message you wish to display** on your sign and what types of fonts you like for the message. Ignoring the most basic typography rules, popular designs for chalkboard signs use a variety of fonts and styles, with the words arranged in an especially ornate layout including dividers, borders, banners, swashes, and/or swirks, actually quite busy, in a somewhat vintage style. There is an abundance of free fonts available online to download, including dingbat fonts for decorative elements of all kinds. Pick out the fonts you’d like to use in your design and install them ahead of time. Try to find “sketchy” looking fonts, rather than bold ones with sharp edges, to more resemble chalk drawings. Open a font file by double-clicking on it and you should see a sample of the font as well as an Install button. There you have it—a realistic-looking chalkboard, ready to add the lettering.

6. **Now the fun begins**—add your message to the chalkboard. Select the Type tool (T), choose white as the font color, and a plain font to start with. Break the message up into separate words or phrases to more easily change the fonts and reposition words later. Remember that you will most likely be rearranging the words several times before you come up with a placement that you like—kind of like word refrigerator magnets.

For each word or phrase, click on the chalkboard or drag out a text box, type the desired text, and then click the checkmark to commit the text. For the next phrase, select the Type tool again, click on a blank spot, and repeat for each word or phrase you want on a separate layer. To minimize accidentally selecting an existing type layer when trying to start a new one, go to the Move tool’s options bar, and make sure “Auto Select Layer” is not checked. To try various fonts and sizes, simply double-click on the “T” icon in the layer for the word or phrase you want to change and from the options panel, choose a different font and adjust the size. To reposi-
tion text, while it is selected, press Ctrl-T (free transform) and then drag the text to a new position. Try warping or angling some of the text to add interest.

7. **Let’s add some decorative elements**.

Dingbat fonts are ideal for this purpose. There is such a variety of them available free to download online (just do a quick search for “Free Dingbat Fonts” on Google.com). Using a font viewer application is invaluable when trying to find a design you need within all the dingbats you’ve collected.
After getting all your text set in the fonts you want, along with decorative borders and other elements placed on your sign, if you’re like me, you still have some tweaking to do. I rearranged my groups of words and phrases, with their frames and embellishments, several times, until I was satisfied with the design. To make it easier to keep groups of layers together so they can be moved together, rather than separately, it’s a good idea to link related layers. To do that, Ctrl-click (Mac: Command-click) on each layer you wish to link, then right click on the selected layers and choose Link Layers from the menu.

To finish off my chalkboard sign, I added an erased chalk look to the edges and a thin border. Create a blank layer above the texture layer we added in Step 4. I suggest you turn off the visibility of all the layers above, by clicking the eye icon beside the layers, to get a clear view of the background. Get the Brush tool (B) and select the Dry Media Brushes set, and the last brush in that set. Lower the opacity of the brush to about 10%, size the brush quite large, and with the white foreground color, gradually stroke the edges of the image, trying to keep the inside edges of the “chalk dust” blended rather than sharp. Then lower the opacity of that layer even more, to about 50% to 60%, so it looks like erased blackboard.

To make a thin border, create a blank layer at the top of the layer stack, grab the Rectangular Marquee, and drag out a selection an equal distance from the edge all around. Turning on the Grid (View>Grid) will help you get an even selection. From the Edit menu, select Stroke (Outline) Selection. In the Stroke Dialog, enter the pixel width for your border, the color white, and the location Inside.

**ELEMENTS TIP:**
Quickly Create a New Layer: Pressing Ctrl-Shift-N (Mac: Command-Shift-N) creates a new layer, but it brings up the New Layer dialog so you can name it. Personally, I find it kind of annoying and it’s not much faster than just clicking the new layer icon. However, if you throw the Alt (Mac: Option) key into the mix, Ctrl-Shift-Option-N (Mac: Command-Shift-Option-N), then it’ll bypass the new layer dialog and just create a new blank layer in the Layers panel.

Diana Day is a self-taught Elements user, and she teaches Elements to members of her community by hosting a PSE Users Group, presenting at meetings and workshops of photography groups, and tutoring Elements users one-on-one in their homes. Diana also performs photo editing services for photographers and does photo restoration for genealogists when called upon.
For me personally, I have found the act of referencing my past “wins” to be extraordinarily inspirational when I’m in the middle of a shoot and, frankly, just running out of portrait concepts. I’d started by bringing small proof prints with me to a shoot, then moved on to a large binder and finally, blessedly, found the maximum ease by toting an electronic album on my iPhone. I would glance through the images to spark new ideas—but eventually I started finding the listing of metadata to be quite useful, and any time Past Me jotted down additional information about exactly how those poses were achieved—what lighting was used, what games I played in certain situations, and any other helpful information—was quite appreciated by Present Me.

For this first image, I wanted a lovely, loving image of mom and daughter together. That was my goal. I set them up on a small outdoor loveseat just on the edge of the shade, so they were still well-lit, but not squinting. The daughter was D.O.N.E., as you can plainly see from her expression in this shot.

So I turned my attention towards mom, improving her pose—and the overall composition of the shot—by tweaking the pillows around her and adjusting her dress a bit. Often small changes like this go a long way in altering the overall feel of the image. Notice the change in just her body and comfort level, just with these little shifts.

Then I told the daughter that I didn’t need her to do anything but get super snuggly with mom. Since she was now finished with such a hard shoot, after all, she should just take a break. When she was able to be “finished,” her entire expression relaxed beautifully.

Camera Setting: 1/500 • f2.8 • ISO 100 • Metering: Partial

Many young girls love the freedom to simply model for you—especially when they hear you clicking away and murmuring your constant approval. They’ll show you their best catwalk moves, their most compelling hair flips and jut out their hips just like they’ve seen (other!) professional models do. Encouraging this can be a lot of fun, and I often say “You First” when it comes to posing girls. And, truth be told, many boys. Basically, I let them show me their best stuff before we try some of mine.
This subject strutted her stuff as I shot her in an open field, positioning her a fair distance from the trees behind. I shot from a lower angle, so she could more easily cat walk towards me, and the reflector was placed low and underneath her, to the right.

Then I told her that everything she did was fabulous and now it was my turn to try a model pose. I used her idea to place her arms behind her back, like Image 4, but tweaked them a bit, crossing her legs and positioning all her weight on her back foot. I then jutted my chin out a bit and asked her to do the same. I adjusted my angle to shoot from her eyeline because I wanted a clearer image, cutting out some haze from the backlight, and because I felt like it was a more flattering angle for her.

Then I suggested we try a different “look.” While she watched me trying out a few rather goofy ones, she tried to keep her smile in, and we achieved our final shot, a gorgeous expression.

Camera Settings: 1/160 • f 2.5 • ISO 320 • Metering: Partial

I photographed this family of four, at a park, on a late summer afternoon. Since the little boy was hopping around the park so much anyway, I thought it’d be fun to get an image of him and his sister jumping off a rock together. The problem was that they were unsure of their landing and kept looking down as they jumped.

So I positioned them to jump from a much higher rock and had mom and dad hold their hands for safety. Then I had down, back on the ground. Since that changed the angle and composition of the shot dramatically, I tilted my lens up a bit to include the natural framing element of the tree branch—then told them to try to jump on me. That way they could look down, and I could also capture their great expressions. It made for a significantly more interesting capture. And I rolled out of the way as quickly as I could after stabilizing my shot.

Camera Settings: 1/320 • f3.2 • ISO 500 • Metering: Evaluative

Tips From The Posing Playbook

Tamara Lackey is a portrait photographer whose work has appeared widely in media outlets, from O Magazine to Men’s Journal and Parenting Magazine. Her latest books are “Envisioning Family” and “The Posing Playbook”, both available at tamaralackey.com.

**Posing Tips**

- Having your subject try out some of her best modeling moves can lift the mood and open up pose ideas
- Position your subject a distance from the background for a sharper portrait
- When it is your turn to pose her, shoot from the most flattering angle
- To keep your subject from feeling awkward in the pose, have her try a variety of “looks” until she relaxes

- Get the whole family involved in the action
- Change your angle and be sure everyone is looking towards the lens
- If anyone is wearing a dress, be sure to position them modestly
- Utilize natural framing elements
Sharpening Your Photos In Camera Raw

In Elements, we have pro-level sharpening within Camera Raw. So when do you sharpen here, and when in Elements? I generally sharpen my photos twice—once here in Camera Raw (called "capture sharpening"), and then once in Elements at the very end of my editing process, right before I save the final image for print or for the web (called "output sharpening"). Here’s how to do the capture sharpening part in Camera Raw:

1. When you open a RAW image in Camera Raw, by default it applies a small amount of sharpening to your photo (not the JPEGs, TIFFs, or PSDs—only RAW images). You can adjust this amount (or turn it off altogether, if you like) by clicking on the Detail icon (circled here in red), or using the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-Alt-2 (Mac: Command-Option-2). At the top of this panel is the Sharpening section, where by a quick glance you can see that sharpening has already been applied to your RAW photo. If you don’t want any sharpening applied at this stage (it’s a personal preference), then simply click-and-drag the Amount slider all the way to the left, to lower the amount of sharpening to 0 (zero), and the sharpening is removed. Oh, and you can stop reading at this point because none of the other settings do anything if your sharpening amount is set to 0.

2. If you want to turn off this “automatic-by-default” sharpening (so image sharpening is only applied if you go and manually add it yourself), first set the Sharpening Amount slider to 0 (zero), then go to the Camera Raw flyout menu and choose Save New Camera Raw Defaults (as shown here). Now, RAW images taken with that camera will not be automatically sharpened.

3. Before we charge into sharpening, there’s one more thing you’ll want to know: if you don’t actually want sharpening applied, but you’d still like to see what the sharpened image would look like, you can sharpen just the preview, and not the actual file. Just press Ctrl-K (Mac: Command-K) while Camera Raw is open, and in the Camera Raw Preferences dialog, choose Preview Images Only from the Apply Sharpening To pop-up menu (as shown here), and then click OK to save this as your default. Now the sharpening only affects the preview you see here in Camera Raw, but when you choose to open the file in Elements, the sharpening is not applied.

This may seem kind of obvious (since it tells you this right at the bottom of the Detail panel, as seen in Step One), but so many people miss this that I feel it’s worth repeating: before you do any sharpening, you should view your image at a 100% size view, so you can see the sharpening being applied. A quick way to get to a 100% size view is simply to double-click directly on the Zoom tool (the one that looks like a magnifying glass) up in Camera Raw’s toolbar. This zooms you right to 100% (you can double-click on the Hand tool later to return to the normal Fit in Window view).

4. Now that you’re at a 100% view, just for kicks, drag the Amount slider all the way to the right so you can see the sharpening at work (then drag it back to its default of 25). Again, dipping into the realm of the painfully obvious, dragging the Amount slider to the right increases the amount of sharpening. Compare the image shown here, with the one in Step Four (where the Sharpening Amount was set to the default of 25), and you can see how much sharper the image now appears, since I dragged it to 100.

5. The next slider down is the Radius slider, which determines how far out the sharpening is applied from the edges being sharpened in your photo. I leave my Radius set at 1 most of the time. I use less than a Radius of 1 if the photo I’m processing is only going to be used on a website, in video editing, or something where it’s going to be at a very small size or resolution. I only use a Radius of more than 1 when the image is visibly blurry and needs some “emergency” sharpening, or if it has lots of detail (like this photo, where I pushed the Radius to 1.2). If you decide to increase the Radius amount above 1 (unlike the Unsharp Mask filter, you can only go as high as 3 here), just be careful, because your photo can start to look oversharpened. You want your photo to look sharp, not sharpened, so be careful out there.

6. Switch to Full Screen To have Camera Raw expand to fill your entire screen, click the Full Screen icon to the right of the Preview checkbox, at the top of the window.
The next slider down is the Detail slider, which is kind of the “halo avoidance” slider (halos occur when you oversharpen an image and it looks like there’s a little halo, or line, traced around your subject or objects in your image, and they look pretty bad). The default setting of 25 is good, but you’d raise the Detail amount (dragging it to the right) when you have shots with lots of tiny important details, like in landscapes, cityscapes, or the photo here, where I dragged it to 78. Otherwise, I leave it as is. By the way, if you want to see the effect of the Detail slider, make sure you’re at a 100% view, then press-and-hold the Alt (Mac: Option) key, and you’ll see your preview window turn gray. As you drag the Detail slider to the right, you’ll see the edges start to become more pronounced, because the farther you drag to the right, the less protection from halos you get (those edges are those halos starting to appear).

I’m going to change photos to show you the Masking slider. This one’s easier to understand, and for many people, I think it will become invaluable. Here’s why: When you apply sharpening, it gets applied to the entire image evenly. But what if you have an image where there are areas you’d like sharpened, but other softer areas that you’d like left alone (like the photo here, where you want to keep her skin soft, but have her eyes, lips, etc., sharpened)? If we weren’t in Camera Raw, you could apply the Unsharp Mask filter to a duplicate layer, add a layer mask, and paint away (cover) those softer areas, right? Well, that’s kind of what the Masking slider here in Camera Raw does—as you drag it to the right, it reduces the amount of sharpening on non-edge areas. The default Masking setting of 0 (zero) applies sharpening to the entire image. As you drag to the right, the non-edge areas are masked (protected) from being sharpened.

All four sliders in the Sharpening section of the Detail panel let you have a live preview of what the sharpening is affecting—just press-and-hold the Alt (Mac: Option) key as you drag your screen will turn grayscale, and the areas that the slider you’re dragging will affect appear as edge areas in the Preview area. This is particularly helpful in understanding the Masking slider, so press-and-hold the Alt key and drag the Masking slider to the right. When Masking is set to 0, the screen turns solid white (because sharpening is being evenly applied to everything). As you drag to the right, in the preview (shown here), the parts that are no longer being sharpened turn black (those areas are masked). Any areas you see in white are the only parts of the photo receiving sharpening (perfect for sharpening women, because it avoids sharpening their skin, but sharpens the things you want sharp, like the eyes, hair, eyebrows, lips, edges of her face, and so on). Below is a before/after of our boat deck shot, with these settings—Amount: 100, Radius: 1, Detail: 78, Masking: 0.
Lightroom Camera Profiles: One of the Best Features in Lightroom

There’s a great feature in Lightroom called camera profiles. If you’ve ever looked at the back of your camera and thought your photo looked great, and then opened the same photo in Lightroom and been disappointed at how flat it looked, then you’re going to love this.

1. **The camera profiles in the Camera Calibration panel** have turned out to be one of my favorite features. It’s one that I usually use first, yet it’s at the very bottom of the panels list. First select a photo to edit in the Develop module and scroll down the right-side panels area to the Camera Calibration panel. (I know, it’s in the worst possible place.) The good news is that you can also use a keyboard shortcut. Press Command-8 (PC: Ctrl-8) to jump directly to the panel without scrolling.

2. **The profiles are listed** under the Profile drop-down menu at the top—directly below the Process version settings. If you expand the drop-down menu you should see a list of various profiles. What happens if you only see the word “Embedded”? Ah, good catch. Here’s one important thing to remember: these camera profiles only work for RAW or DNG files—not JPEGs, TIFFs, or PSDs. So, if you’re working on anything but a RAW or DNG file, you’ll only see the word “Embedded,” and the rest of this tutorial won’t work for you.

3. **Using camera profiles is really simple.** Click on the Profile drop-down menu and select one you want to apply to your photo (in our example, we used Camera Vivid). You should immediately see a change in the photo. In this case, the colors should look much more vibrant and vivid (hence the name of the profile). What’s really neat is that this hasn’t changed any of the settings for this file in Lightroom, yet. If you look through your panels, all of your settings (Exposure, Blacks, Clarity, Vibrance, Saturation, etc.) are all at their default settings, as if nothing was touched. It’s basically giving you a better starting point, which is why I come to this first.

4. **One of the things you’ll notice** is that these profiles are camera specific. This is seamless to you though. Lightroom automatically recognizes which camera you used and shows you the correct profiles, so you won’t see any profiles other than those available for your camera. If you’ve ever used your camera vendor’s software, you’ll notice that the Lightroom profiles are named almost the same as they are in the camera software. Again, using Nikon as an example, Capture NX has something called Picture Control, which contains settings such as Vivid, Landscape, and so on.

5. **Experiment with the different profiles** and adjust the sliders and you’ll see some fairly drastic results. Some are definitely punchier than others. The inevitable follow-up question when folks see these profiles in action is, “I love ’em. Now how do I apply them to a bunch of a photos without having to do each one individually?” The first step is to press G to enter the Library module’s Grid view. Then choose Photo > Develop Settings > Copy Settings.
6. **This will open the Copy Settings dialog.**
   Since you don’t want to copy anything else here except the Calibration settings, click the Check None button, then click the Calibration checkbox to turn it on. Finally, click Copy to close the dialog.

7. **Now select all the photos you want to apply the camera profile to.** You can do this in the Grid view or down in the Filmstrip at the bottom of the interface. Choose Photo > Develop Settings > Paste Settings and your camera profile setting will be applied to all the photos selected.

8. **You can also create presets from the profiles,** which you can then batch apply as you’re importing photos. I love what the Camera Portrait preset does for skin tones and if I do a portrait shoot, it’s easier to apply the profile as I import my photos.

   In the Develop module, choose the camera profile you wish to create a preset for and click the Create New Preset icon (plus sign) in the Presets panel header on the left. Again, deselect everything except for Calibration. Name your preset something descriptive and click Create. In this example, since we set the profile to Camera Portrait, we named the preset “Nikon Portrait.” In the Import dialog (File > Import Photos), select your preset from the Develop Settings drop-down menu in the Apply During Import panel and all of the photos will automatically have that camera profile added.

   Pretty cool stuff, huh? So, before you consider getting really mad at your camera (or your software) because you like the photos on that tiny LCD screen on the back of your better, check out these profiles. I think you’ll find you can now get the same great look with very little effort.

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### I STILL DON’T SEE THE CAMERA PROFILES?

I’ve often seen questions from people who are shooting in RAW but still don’t see all of the camera profiles listed. It’s probably because you’re using a camera that isn’t supported. Nearly all Canon and Nikon cameras are supported. There’s also some Leica and Pentax camera support. Unfortunately (other than Google searches for custom profiles), there’s no other cameras supported, but Adobe has a free DNG Profile Editor that’ll let you create your own. You can download it at http://labs.adobe.com/wiki/index.php/DNG_Profiles. To get started using the DNG Profile Editor, go to http://labs.adobe.com/wiki/index.php/DNG_Profiles:Editor.

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### ELEMENTS TIP:
How to Change the Order of the Brushes in the Brush Picker:
Let’s say you have a favorite brush in the Brushes palette, but it’s always at the bottom of the list. You can move them to exactly the place you want. Just go to Edit > Preset Manager, when the dialog opens, go to the Brushes section. By default it’s set to display all your brushes, so now all you have to do is click-and-drag them into the order you want them. When you’ve got everything in the order you want, click the Done button.
The All-In-One Zoom Lens

If there’s one question that I hear all the time from photographers it’s “What lens should I buy?”. Now, the answer back to them usually depends on what they want to shoot, but there is one general lens that I’d recommend just about anyone have. It’s an all-in-one, 18-200mm zoom lens. It’s great for just about everything from travel, to sports, to landscape photography, and it’s just a great overall walking-around street photography lens.

Having a versatile lens while traveling let’s you take wide angle photos like you see here of the Eiffel tower and then a few minutes later at the Louvre you can zoom in to get a totally different type of photo.
The All-In-One Zoom Lens

Matt Kloskowski | Gear Watch

The main advantage of this lens is its versatility. A range from 18mm all the way to 200mm means that you can shoot wide landscapes and tightly cropped sports photos all with the same lens. It’s really amazing when you think about it. Carrying a lens like this is like carrying 3 lenses to get the same focal lengths (wide, mid-range, and zoom).

These lenses are also fairly light weight compared to everything else out there. For example, the 18-200 lens is smaller than a 24-70mm lens. Being smaller and lighter means that they’re easier to carry, park around and move with. Plus, you usually don’t even need a camera bag since you won’t be changing lenses. And for you travelers out there, packing light is a huge advantage because you have less to carry. Also, it’s just safer to not lug around a camera bag with thousands of dollars of lenses in it.

Speaking of not changing lenses, that’s a huge checkmark in the “pro” column too. For starters, the more you change lenses, the more you risk getting dust and debris on your camera’s sensor. And I think anyone who’s ever had to change lenses knows that it takes time. Also, while you’re changing lenses (maybe from a wide lens to a zoom), you’re missing everything else that’s going on around you.

These lenses typically don’t have low (wide) aperture settings like f/2.8 or lower. Most of them vary from f/3.5 at the wide angle focal length, to f/5.6 when you’re zoomed in at the longer focal lengths. This means two things:

1) If you’re in low light situations, like indoors or shooting before sunrise or after sunset, then you risk not having a wide enough aperture setting to capture sharp photos without a tripod. Now, if you’re outside shooting at mid-afternoon then you don’t have to worry about it. You’ll have plenty of light to capture sharp photos. You’ll only notice this when the light starts fading.

2) Lower aperture settings will let us get that really shallow depth of field (sharp subjects with blurry/soft background). Since these lenses don’t typically go all the way down to f/2.8 or lower, they won’t produce as soft or nice a background as some of the more expensive, but less versatile lenses will. I’m going to list this as a con, but it’s not really a con. It’s sharpness. I’ve found that these all-in-one lenses aren’t quite as sharp as some of the more expensive lenses. But I’ll counteract that statement by saying you probably won’t notice. You’d need to open the image up full size on your computer screen, and zoom in way in to see it. I think, for most people who simply share their photos online and in smaller prints (smaller than say, 20x30 inches), you’ll never see this difference in sharpness. In a nutshell, does it exist? Yes, to a degree, but when it comes to being practical it’s not anything you’d ever notice.

The Price Is Right

There are lots of excellent all-in-one lens available that’ll fit into almost any budget. Check out our recommendations on the next page.

Top of the Line

Nikon 18-200
$949.95
B&H Photo

Canon 18-200
$699.00
B&H Photo

Middle of the Road

Sigma 18-200
$499.00
B&H Photo

For the Budget Conscious

Tamron 18-200
$299.00
B&H Photo

WHAT ABOUT FULL FRAME?

If you have a full frame DSLR camera, then you’ll want to get the full frame equivalent of this lens. Nikon, Canon, and Tamron and Sigma all make a 28-300mm lens. They range in price from $630, all the way to $2500 so be sure to check out the lens for your specific camera model.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

One more thing to consider is trying the lens out before you buy it. There are several lens rental companies out there that’ll let you rent the lens for a few days, to several weeks. It’s a great way to test out a lens before you actually pull the trigger and buy it. One of our partners here at PET is LensProToGo.com. They ship you the lens in a bulletproof case with the return shipping label all ready to go.

PROS:
The All-In-One Zoom Lens

CONS:

Matt Kloskowski  |  Gear Watch
Creating Cool Canvas Borders For Your Prints

This is a great technique for showing off your photos in a print, as well as a nice border for images to share on the web. It really helps emphasize the photography and lets you present your photos in a professional-looking way. Plus, it uses the Crop Tool in a really unorthodox way - to add image size, rather than reduce it. Let's get started:

1. In the Elements Editor, open the image to which you want to add additional blank canvas area. Press the letter D to set your Background color to its default white. But if you want to add a different color canvas, like black, just set your Background color accordingly.

2. If you’re in Maximize Mode or tabbed viewing, press Ctrl— (minus sign; Mac: Command—) to zoom out a bit (so your image doesn’t take up your whole screen). If your image window is floating, click-and-drag out the bottom corner of the document window to see the gray desktop area around your image. To enter Maximize Mode, click the Maximize Mode icon in the top-right corner of the image window. To enter tabbed viewing, go under the Window menu, under Images, and choose Consolidate All to Tabs.

3. We’re going to use the Crop tool to add extra space to the image. Usually, we use the Crop tool to take away part of the image but it works well here too. Press the letter C to switch to the Crop tool and drag out a cropping border to any random size (it doesn’t matter how big or little it is at this point).

4. Now click on one of the corner handles of the crop border that you see on screen. Then drag it outside the action image area, into the blank gray area that surrounds your image. You’ll see the cropping border extends outside the image. This is the “extra” area that’ll be added as white canvas space (or whatever color you chose as the Background color in Step 1), so position it where you want to add the blank canvas space. Here, I’ve added the same amount of space on the left, right and top of the image. But I added about twice as much space on the bottom - you’ll see why next.

5. Lastly, just press the Enter (Mac: Return) key to commit your crop. After you press it, the extra area outside of your image, in the gray, will become blank white canvas area. To finish things up, I added some text at the bottom using Trajan Pro for the font.

6. I think you’ll see that this technique looks really nice when printing your photos but, as you can see here, it also looks great when you’re sharing your photos online whether it’s a simple email, blog or social media page.
Photography tips & tricks: Easter Photos

Easter is right around the corner. You’ll find a ton of photo opportunities surrounding the entire day, as well as the days leading up to Easter. So we thought we’d include some photography tips to help you make the most of the holiday.

**PUT THE SUN TO EVERYONE’S BACK**
This tip works best when you’re taking photos early in the morning or late in the afternoon (when the sun is fairly low and not directly overhead). See, if you position the people in your photo so they’re looking at the sun, then you’ll have a bunch of squinty people in your photos. If you position them so the sun is at either side of their face, then it looks too contrasty and harsh shadows start to appear. But if you make sure the sun is behind them, then their eyes will be wide open and there won’t be harsh shadows on their face. Plus, the light the sun casts on their hair has a very cinematic look to it and helps to add more separation between them and their background.

**SHOOT AT THE KID’S LEVEL**
As adults, we often grab the camera and just start taking pictures at our eye level since it’s the most comfortable. But Easter Sunday is all about the kids. So get down on their level. Be part of the action. Run around with them and capture photos of them having a great time, rather than trying to pose them for shots they don’t want. Think of this as a journalistic exercise rather than being the official photographer of the day. Oh, and candy (which there should be plenty of on Easter) makes a great bribe if you do need them to pose.

**CAPTURE THE DETAIL PHOTOS UP CLOSE**
The detail photos can be great in photo books. They provide filler pages in between all of the great portraits. Some tips to capture good detail photos are to shoot patterns. Whether it’s Easter eggs, baskets, candy, or flowers. They all look great as backgrounds (or full pages in a photo book) when you’re showing off your Easter photos. Oh, and you don’t need a fancy lighting setup to do it. Some of the best lighting for detail photos like these, is natural light. Whether it’s outside, or you simply put the Easter basket near a window, natural light can really help make your photos stand out.
THE RIGHT LENS FOR THE EASTER EGG HUNT AND OUTDOOR PORTRAITS

This tip is great because it’s a formula you can follow over and over again when it comes to taking photos of the Easter egg hunt. First, grab the longest telephoto lens you have (18-200, 70-300, 70-200). Then put some distance between you and the kids. Basically, get far enough back to where you can zoom in all the way, and the kids still fill most of the frame. Next, set your camera on Aperture Priority mode so you can control the Aperture setting. Finally, set the aperture on it’s lowest setting for that lens. Depending on your lens (well, really it’s depending on how much you paid for your lens), it may go down to f/3.5 or f/5.6 when zoomed in. Really good lenses (AKA: really expensive lenses) may go down to f/2.8 or lower. Basically, the lower the aperture, the softer the background and the better your kids will stand out from it, and really pop off the picture. Oh, one more thing. It helps if whatever the kids are in front of is at least a 5 feet behind them (or more). In a nutshell, the combination of you standing way back and zooming, and them standing 5-10 feet in front of their background creates separation. Separation, when used with a low aperture setting, gives you the professional-looking photos that you see here.

DONT TELL THEM TO HOLD UP THE EASTER BASKET

I’ve photographed Easter enough time with my own kids, as well as my nieces and nephews, to know one thing. When you tell a kid to hold up their Easter basket or Easter egg, you know what happens? They do exactly what you say. They hold it up high and proud… right in front of their face. While it can make a cute photo to get them peaking through the basket, you’ll probably have better luck to simply ask them to stand with their Easter basket at their side or ask them to hold it in front of their tummy or belt.