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ILLUSTRATING IN ELEMENTS
PETE COLLINS

LIGHTROOM AND ELEMENTS
MATT KLOSKOWSKI

THE POSING PLAYBOOK PART 2
TAMARA LACKEY

SUBSCRIBER SHOWCASE IS BACK!
CHECK OUT OUR READER’S BEST PROJECTS AND IMAGES

MAY | JUNE 2013
From the Editor

After a slow start, spring is in the air. It’s such a wonderful time of the year to get out there and take photographs and we hope you’re ready to do just that. And when you’re back behind the computer, ready to edit them, we’ve got some killer tutorials and tips here to help.

First off, we’re very excited to have three new writers in this issue: Michelle Stelling, Erin Peloquin and Pete Collins. In addition to these new writers, we have some of your favorites back like Diana Day, Tamara Lackey, Larry Becker and Matt Kloskowski. And based on all of your feedback we’ve brought The Subscription Showcase back. This is an area of the magazine dedicated to featuring some fantastic photos right from our subscribers. Oh... I almost forgot! As you flip through, you may notice that we’ve added 6 more pages of content. Our goal is to bring you the very best articles you need for making your photos great, and we think these extra pages will help. Hope that you enjoy this issue and don’t forget to visit the subscriber website for more tips, news and tutorials.

Rick LePage  
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SUBSCRIBER SHOWCASE

40 Subscriber Showcase
Presenting some of the best work created by our readers.
Stop Glaring At Me — and Other Blending Mode Secrets

Blending Modes are settings that allow you to mix layers of a document in all kinds of different ways. They’re used for everything from darkening “washed out” images to adding color tints and more. This article is a combination of a few simple tutorials that use Blending Modes, as well as a Blending Mode “Cheat Sheet.”

1. **Open a photo of someone with glare on their glasses** (or use mine, Glasses Glare.jpg) that isn’t blown out pure white, you can use the Color Burn blending mode to paint away the glare. Start by zooming in to at least 100% and then make a duplicate of your background layer by pressing Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J). Then use the Blend Mode menu in the Layers Panel to change it from Normal to Color Burn. Press “D” to set your colors to the default, and then hold down the Alt key (Option on Mac) and click the Layer Mask button. This will add a Layer Mask that’s filled with black.

2. **Press B to activate the Brush tool.** Because the glare we’re painting away in this example is very hard edged, we’ll use a hard edge brush. If the glare were softer, we’d use a fuzzier edge brush to match the blur of the glare. To adjust the hardness of the brush click on Brush Settings in the Tool Options panel, then adjust the Hardness slider to your liking. Now paint the whole glare area to match the rest of the lens. Wherever you paint outside the glare area, it will become too dark, so when you’re done darkening, press X to swap foreground and background colors (so you’re painting with black again), adjust brush size and zoom in to carefully paint away your over-painting strokes.

BONUS: At this point it’s much better, but I also did this tutorial as a video on the members’ site with a bonus step that makes the overall glare even less noticeable.
If you have an image that’s all washed out, like a faded old photo, or one that’s far too dark (like our example image, Dark Window Box.jpg) you can use blending modes to fix either problem. Starting with an overexposed (very dark) image, make a duplicate copy of the background onto a new layer, Control J (Command J on Mac). Next, just change the blending mode from Normal to Screen. The image will be lighter than it was, but because our original was so dark, it’s not enough. Just press Control J (Command J on Mac) again. This will make a duplicate of our Screen layer and will also keep the Screen blending mode in place for the duplicate. Keep repeating the layer duplication until the image looks light enough. I needed to repeat this 8 times to get this image bright enough. Now choose Layer>Flatten Image to merge all the extra layers together into one. - If you’re trying to darken instead of lighten, just use the Multiply blending mode.
One of the cool things you can do with blending modes is tint a picture with a color. Various tints coupled with blending modes can create all kinds of effects, so you’ll want to experiment. Starting with this bright photo of City College in San Francisco (City College.jpg), let’s add a new Color Adjustment layer. From the top of the Layers palette click on the 2nd icon from the left (Create a new fill or adjustment layer) and choose Solid Color from the drop-down menu. Choose a dark yellow/gold color from the dialog and press OK. Now choose the Hue blending mode. All of the vivid colors in the image become that gold color and neutral grays stay pretty close to gray. Then if you change the blending mode from Hue to Color, the whole image seems more intensely tinted gold. Finally, if you click the triangle beside the 100% Opacity value and move the slider down (I chose 50%) your gold tint lets some of the original color peek back into the image. This gives you the popular “retro” faded color look lots of artists are applying to their images these days.
Next time you need to make brown grass look green, consider painting it instead of spending lots of time Cloning green grass onto brown. Start by creating a new blank layer above your image by clicking the Create a new layer icon. Next, zoom in to 50% or greater to see the grass more closely. Press I to get the Color Picker tool (aka Eye Dropper tool) and make sure Sample All Layers is selected. Then press B to select the Brush tool and use the Size slider, located in the Tool Options panel, to make the brush big enough (I used around 70 pixels). Now, hold down the Alt key (Option on Mac) and the Brush tool will temporarily turn into the Color Picker tool. Click on some green grass near a patch of brown to select the green as the foreground color. Then paint directly on the brown patch, but don’t paint all the brown grass yet. Using the Alt (Option) key again and again, resample several shades of green grass and paint random patterns of greens over the browns. Finally, change the blending mode of your green paint swatches to Color, and all your brown grass will turn green.

Most people don’t set out to learn a Photoshop Elements function, we usually just want to know how to fix something. But in just a few short minutes, using a few easy steps, you’ve seen all kinds of ways to fix common image problems using blending modes. And since this only scratches the surface of what can be done with blending modes, I thought a Blending Modes Tips Collection might be helpful. Let’s start with the layout of the Blending Modes panel.

At the top is the Normal blending mode where there’s no change with how the pixels on that layer mix with the others below and right below it is Dissolve. If your layer is 100% opaque, Dissolve does nothing, but as you lower the opacity of a layer with the Dissolve blend mode, it will reveal lower layers in speckle patterns.

The next group contains five blend modes, each mix with the layers below by darkening in some way. Multiply is the most commonly used blend mode of this group. The next group of five blend modes does the opposite and lightens as it interacts with layers below, and Screen is the most commonly used of this group. The group of blend modes that begins with Overlay both darkens and lightens simultaneously with dark values getting darker, and light values getting lighter. Overlay is the most commonly used in this group, and if you have a 50% gray layer set to the Overlay blending mode, it will be transparent. But anything 51% or darker will darken your image, while anything 49% gray or lighter will lighten your image. The Difference and Exclusion blend modes create various kinds of negatives, and the last four items blend based on color or light values.

Knowing what these layers do offers a good starting point, but there’s one more tip that makes working with blending modes much easier. If you know what a group of blending modes do, you might have an idea where to start, but constantly clicking on the Blend Mode menu to cycle through them can be tedious. This shortcut doesn’t work if certain tools are in use, so it’s a good idea to start by selecting the Move tool since the shortcut does work in the Move tool. Start by selecting the layer you want work on and then press V (to select the Move tool). Now just hold down the Shift key and press the + sign. This scrolls through the entire list of blend modes from the top. If you’re clicking through them quickly and you want to go backwards in the list, while still holding Shift, press the minus key.

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.
In my ten years of experience photographing children, I have found one universal truth that remains constant: most kids don’t do posing. That being said, many kids are amenable to being moved this way and that and often will take posing direction beautifully—you just have to use an entirely different language to get them to do so, and it often isn’t verbal. Oh, and they also won’t do it for very long.

This little subject was a firecracker, running, jumping, dancing, and showing off her super hero ways. I wanted to show a calmer side of her, a softer look. So I pulled her to the wall and positioned my lens against it, using the wall as a leading line to her. Since she still looked like she was about to pounce at any minute, I asked her to fold her arms—but behind her back not in front. After she did that, I proceeded to tell her exactly how I was composing her in the shot and went into such vivid detail that she tuned out a bit while listening—and I photographed the look I wanted.
Very often the best poses are built off of what I see my subjects already doing on their own. I will see something that is the start of something ... and I just step in to adjust things a bit to match the vision I have for what I want to shoot. In this case, I was photographing this little guy’s sister when I noticed him distractedly playing with the button on his shirt. I immediately pictured this GQ-type image, which would work quite well with his little man outfit and gorgeous curly hair. I saw it as a horizontal spread, like one that would accompany the opening of a magazine article.

**POSIING TIPS**

- Use your surroundings to create leading lines into the image
- With fidgety children, try having them fold their arms behind them to help keep them still
- With energetic children, bore them with details to get them to tune out for a minute and get a peaceful expression
I initiated the “After” shot by first making two key changes. One, I switched to a horizontal orientation; two, I adjusted my color balance. It had been set to AWB, which was giving me a warmer tone than I wanted for this shot—I wanted this to look a bit cooler, in keeping with the overall feel of the “cool” image, so I quickly switched to fluorescent mode (which I rarely use), but I knew it would add a bit of a cooler tone to the image. It did, and it worked perfectly here. After that, I asked the assistant with whom I was working on this shoot to step in a bit closer with the reflector to make the catch lights in his eyes larger and brighten up his skin tone a bit. Then, once I had everything else in place, all I had to do was coax out a better expression. I knew he was a fan of dancing, so I showed him my version of how I thought he looked when he danced, sacrificing any and all sense of dignity, and as his consciousness slowly returned, I clicked the shutter on this warm smile.

Camera Setting:
1/250 • f 2.8 • ISO 800 • Metering: Evaluative

POSEING TIPS
• Great poses often come out of what a subject may already be doing on their own
• Be sure to think about orientation and overall warmth or coolness to compliment the mood of an image
• Different white balance settings can subtly change the feel of an image
• Be sure to bring a zoned-out child back to life with a little laughter to get a great expression for the shot
The first family portrait was shot right in the beginning of the session. Everyone was in great spirits, which is great, but the boy subject was still in “posing for the camera” mode while also wanting to make sure his sister was in line—and the little girl was still quite shy with me, eyes cast downward much of the time. When I have a subject who is in “posing for the camera” mode, I need to loosen them up and get them responding naturally without dampening their enthusiasm to be photographed. In this case, I mirrored back to the boy how formal his pose was and showed him exactly how to drop his shoulder and turn in towards his family more. I also reminded him that I’d take care of his sister, that he didn’t have to worry about her. One of the easiest ways to manage the little girl’s downcast eyes was to drop my angle a bit, and shoot from lower to the ground, to make it less difficult for her to look up at me a bit.

Camera Setting: 1/500 • f12.5 • ISO 200 • Metering: Evaluative

POSING TIPS
- Mirror back to the child how formal their pose looks
- Show them how to pose more naturally
- Remind them that you’ll take care of the rest of the people in the group and not to worry about siblings (same goes for parents!)
- To manage a shy child’s downcast eyes, drop your angle a bit and shoot from lower to the ground

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.
Here are some helpful tips for using a Wacom pen and tablet. I’ve found that using them greatly enhances my ability to quickly and easily edit my photos. It is different than a mouse and so much more powerful, easy and natural to use once you get used to it. But that’s the key point here. You may be one of those people that need to get used to it. If you are, then I urge you to give it a good two weeks to get used to it. It sounds weird, but get used to using the pen and tablet whenever you sit down at your computer. Not just in Photoshop Elements or when you’re working on your photos, but all the time (emails, web surfing, etc...). I think that by the end of your two weeks you’ll have fallen in love with the pen and tablet experience like many others have. I actually put mine down for months. But when I came back to it, gave it two weeks, I became hooked. Now, I won’t use a mouse again. Going back to one, just feels awkward and slow.

THE SECRET RIGHT WAY TO HOLD THE PEN

How you hold your pen and where you put your thumb can actually make your tablet experience 100% better. See, if you just picked up the Wacom pen and held it in your hand like a pen or pencil, you may wonder what that little side-switch button “thingee” is for. By the way, that’s not the official name for it - the official name is “duo switch”, but I like mine better. :-) Anyway, this little feature is extremely powerful. In fact, it’s what separates the pen from being kinda cool, to really useful. That little button serves two purposes. First, it’s a right-click. Right-clicking is probably a huge part of what you do every day on your computer and without it, most of us would probably be lost. Well, if you press that tilt thing downward, it’s the same as if you right-clicked with your mouse. Cool huh? But that’s not it. If you click the button upward it’s a Double-click. Now, you could always just tap your pen on the tablet twice to double click, but every once in a while I’ll accidentally move something or my double-click pressure wasn’t exactly right. That’s why I’ve grown to love using the little button. It takes two tasks that I do all day long and it makes them extremely easy to do. That’s why it’s so important to keep your thumb on the pen in the right place. If it’s in the wrong place (and not on the switch), then you’d have to move your thumb over on top of it all the time. It may take a little getting used to, but after a day of doing it, trust me, it’ll be second nature.
VIGNETTING AND PAINTING WITH LIGHT

One of the most powerful things you can do to your photos in Elements is to draw people’s attention with bright and dark parts of the photo. I have a favorite technique I use on just about every photo.

1. **Open your photo** in the Editor and press Ctrl-J (Mac: Cmd-J) to duplicate the layer. Now you’ll have two layers in the Layers panel.

2. **Now change the duplicate layer’s blend mode** to Multiply. This will darken the entire photo.

3. **Finally, select the Eraser tool** from the toolbox (you can just press the letter E). Make your brush size really big and then simply just start clicking on parts of the photo you want to be brighter. The softer you click the smaller the area is. But when you click really hard and brush with the Eraser tool, it’s like you’re putting a spotlight right on the important parts of the photo. You can also reduce the opacity of the top layer to lessen the effect.

YOU CAN SET YOUR TABLET AND PEN CONTROLS TO YOUR FAVORITE KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

One of the coolest things you can do in your tablet preference is set your own keyboard shortcuts. If you have a tablet with express keys or buttons that you don’t use often, then why not set them as your own personal keyboard shortcuts? That way, you can take your favorite keyboard shortcuts from Elements and map them to a key on the tablet, so you don’t even have to go near the tablet when you’re working on your photos.

First, figure out which keyboard shortcuts you really like in Photoshop Elements. For me, I find I use the Levels adjustment a lot. It’s under Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels. The keyboard shortcut for it is Cmd-L (PC: Ctrl-L). But instead of using the keyboard, I can map my Levels adjustment to an ExpressKey on my tablet.

To create your own shortcuts, go into your tablet preferences and select the area you’d like to customize. In my case, I’m going to click on ExpressKeys. Then, under the express key item you want to map choose Keystroke. Type in the keystroke (in this case Cmd-L on the Mac or Ctrl-L on the PC), give it a descriptive name and click OK.

Now whenever I’m working in Elements, I just press the ExpressKey that I set up the keystroke shortcut for, and it’ll automatically open the Levels adjustment for me. Pretty sweet huh?
Create Photo Montages
Combine multiple photos for one stunning impression

A montage in Elements is a great way to showcase images that illustrate a common theme or celebrate a particular event or person. Using an image itself as the background or foundation of the montage is a particularly effective way to show off a mood-setting or landscape shot while still spotlighting the portraits or other important details. Learning the basics of montage creation in Elements will give you techniques to apply to a wide variety of creative projects, from scrapbooks to collages for your blog and impressive prints for your wall. Once you’ve learned the technique, you can substitute digital papers and graphics for photos - from there, the sky is your limit in combining separate files to make a stunning display.

EXTRAS
TRY IT AT HOME
To download the images used in this montage, go to the “Extras” section of the website and choose the May/June 2013 issue. Photoshop ElementsUser.com
1 **Create a new file in Elements.** Choose File>New>Blank File. For this example, we will create a 20x20" montage sized just right for printing. In the New dialog change the unit of measurement to "inches", if it isn’t already and type 20 in both the Width and Height boxes. Set the resolution to 300 pixels per inch. Select Transparent from the Background Contents drop-down menu and click OK.

2 **Next, insert the background image.** Go to File>Place and navigate to the image that will be the background of your montage. Click the Place button, and this image will appear on your canvas in Free Transform mode. Free Transform gives you control over the photo’s size and location within the montage. To size it, make sure Constrain Proportions is on in the Tool Options.

   Grab any of the corner sizing boxes and stretch out your image until it covers the entire canvas in your new file. Then, click-and-drag the image so that only the part you want to display is visible. In my image, only about 2/3 of the background image will be used in the montage – I stretched the rest off the canvas. When the image is sized and located where you’d like it, click the green check mark to commit the changes.

3 **Plan the rest of your montage layout.** Which photos will you use? What are their sizes relative to the whole? How about their shapes? For maximum visual appeal, choose images that match each other in color or that share a common visual theme. My montage has 2 rectangle openings for images and 1 square opening - I created them using the Shape tool in Elements.

   You don’t have to choose boring rectangles like me – this tool offers all sorts of shapes, from stars to hearts, arrows and flowers. If you do go with rectangles, however, you should generally keep their proportions close to common photo aspect ratios to present a professional and polished look.
4 **Set up your workspace** for easy alignment and distribution of the elements in this montage. Create (non-printing) guides by going to the View menu to make sure rulers are visible. Click-and-drag out from the ruler on the left side of your workspace until you see a guide at exactly the 10-inch mark. Do the same from the ruler at the top of the workspace. These two lines will intersect in the center of your image. Now, go to View Menu>Snap To and put a check mark next to Guides.

5 **Create slots to hold your images** by selecting the Shape tool. In the Tool Options panel select the Rectangle Shape, then select FixedSize from the drop-down menu and set the dimensions to 6x9". Click just to the left of the vertical center guide to create this rectangle. Rename the layer “Vertical Rectangle.”

Next, align it to the vertical center by dragging it to the left until its right side snaps to the center guide. Now that the image opening is on the center, let’s nudge it 10 pixels to the left to give it a slight offset from the center. Hit the Left Arrow key on your keyboard 10 times.

To center this slot across the horizontal axis, select both the Vertical Rectangle layer and the background image layer, Ctrl-Click (Mac: Command-Click) on each layer so that both are highlighted. Select the Move tool (V) and in the Tool Options Panel click on Align Center.

6 Repeat step 5 to create a 6x4" rectangle. Place it to the right of the vertical center and above the horizontal center, then drag it until it snaps exactly in place. Nudge it 10 pixels to the right and 10 pixels up. Rename the layer “Horizontal Rectangle”.

Repeat step 5 one more time for a 6x6" square. Place it to the right of the vertical center and above the horizontal line, then snap it to the center, and use the arrow keys to move it 10 pixels down and 10 to the right. Rename the layer “Square”. Each shape should now be 10 pixels from the vertical center and 20 pixels from each other.

Finally, center the square and horizontal rectangle together against the vertical rectangle on their left. Select both the Square and Horizontal Rectangle layers using Ctrl-Click (Mac: Command-Click), and drag them together until they look well centered with the vertical rectangle – this won’t be exact, just eyeball it.

Your shapes might have different colors from mine, but you should have something like this now.
Next, add the smaller images to the file, starting with the image that will fit in the vertical rectangle. Click the Vertical Rectangle layer to activate it and go to File>Place. Navigate to the photo you’d like to put in this slot and click Place. Click the green check mark to commit, then go to Layer>Create Clipping Mask. Now you will only see the part of your image that is visible through your rectangle. Put this layer in Free Transform by typing Ctrl-T (Mac: Command-T). Size it and move it until exactly what you want is showing up within the vertical rectangle.

Repeat this step for the horizontal rectangle and square slots as well.

Finally, let’s use Layer Styles to add a Stroke to the smaller images to separate them from the background. Select your Vertical Rectangle layer, then choose Layer>Layer Style>Style Settings. Check the Stroke checkbox then use the Size slider to adjust the stroke size to 20 pixels, change the color to black or whichever color will suit your image. Clicking the color square next to the Stroke Size slider gives you all the colors of the rainbow to choose from. Once this picker is displayed, moving your cursor away from it gives you an eyedropper that you can use to select a color that occurs on your photos. This is a great way to tie the elements of the montage together.

Once you have these settings perfected, right click on the layer and select “Copy Layer Style.” Next, Right-click on each of your other shape layers to “Paste Layer Style” onto them.

Make it yours:

• Change up the layer style by using Bevels, Glows or Drop Shadows.
• Try adding a long skinny rectangle across the bottom inch or two of your image and then adding a text box on it as a caption.
• Use digital paper as a background or under text.
• Reduce the opacity of the background layer – this creates a soft look perfect for baby collages, bridal shots or boudoir photography.

Erin Peloquin is a professional photographer and Elements and Lightroom Instructor. View her portfolio at TimeInACamera.com and her wide range of Elements and Lightroom tutorials at TexasChicksBlogsAndPics.com.
Create a digital scrapbooking layout

Digital Scrapbooking is taking the world by storm. Many people get intimidated with all the software options and feel most of them are too hard to learn, however, Photoshop Elements has made it easy to create custom cards, bookmarks, phone covers and posters as well as scrapbook layouts. I’ll guide you through the process I used to create this simple personalized layout with the help of a digi-kit by snickerdoodledesignsbykaren.com
Create a Digital Scrapbooking Layout | Michelle Stelling

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1 Gather all the photos you want to use in your layout into one folder. For this layout, we’ll be using 2 photos. Generally, 2-3 photos per page is plenty. Make sure you don’t overcrowd your layout with too many photos. One should be the “featured” photo; the one you really want to show off. For this layout, I’ll use the photo of the mother and son as the focal point.

2 Search the internet or your files for the appropriate digi-kit. A digi-kit is premade designs comprised of creative papers, ribbons, elements, word art, frames, etc. that are created by digital designers and can be found online. Just search “digital scrapbooking kits” and you will find many options. You may find free kits, or you can purchase them for around $2-10. The kits are downloadable and come in JPEG, PNG or PSD format, so they are 100% compatible with Photoshop Elements. Once you pick the kit you want to download, place the pieces that you want to use in the same folder with your other photos. This will help you stay organized.

3 Create a quick thumbnail of your layout. This will save you a lot of time and frustration in the long run. Here is a sample of what my thumbnails looks like, nothing fancy, but it will give you guidance as you create your layout. You will also want to look at the pieces in the digi-kit and decide which papers, embellishments, frames, etc. you will use and incorporate them into your thumbnail. Each page should have some text, so you will want to decide if you want a title, subtitle, date and/or journaling. For our example let’s keep it simple and go with just a title.

4 Create a new blank layout in Elements, select File>New>Blank File. In the New dialog box enter the dimensions for your layout. For this example let’s use 12 x 12" with a resolution of 300 pixels/inch. Set the Background Contents to white, name your file (I named mine “layout”) and click the OK button. Keep in mind that you can use whatever dimensions you choose for your layout 8x8", 8 1/2x11", etc.
5 Place a background paper from your digi-kit onto your blank layout. Select File>Place, locate your paper, highlight/select it and click the Place button. Normally digi-kits come with several different papers and backgrounds. I will be using blue textured paper (sd_kittyandtweet_paper11.jpg in Extras) for my background. It should place seamlessly as the paper should be the same size as the blank paper. You will have to click on the green checkmark once you place it.

6 Place the next digital paper onto the layout. Make sure you have the top layer is selected, then select File>Place, locate your paper (sd_kittyandtweet_sd_kittyandtweet_paper18.png in Extras), highlight/select it and click the Place button. Notice that it centers itself perfectly onto your page, therefore filling the entire page with a little blue border. You might want to transform it down a bit if you feel it needs a wider border. Save your file as a PSD.
Now let's add some photos to our layout. Make sure that the top layer is highlighted and again select File>Place to place your photos onto your page. Notice that placing the photos onto your layout will create two new layers in your layers panel. Move the large photo towards the top of the page by choosing its layer, select the Move tool (V), click on the photo and move it into place. Now let's put an effect on the photo. Click on the Effects icon at the bottom of the Layers panel to display the available effects, then click on Styles, next click on the drop-down menu and choose Inner Shadows, double click on the first one (hard) to add the effect to the photo.

Next select the layer that contains the smaller photo of the little boy and click File>Place to place the frame element (sd_mp_kittyandtweet_4-nosh.png in Extras) from the digi-kit onto the layout. Notice the order of the layers, the layer with the frame element should be above the layer that contains the photo of the little boy. Let's rotate and transform the photo so that it falls right into the frame. Choose the layer with the little boy photo, then select the Move tool (V) and hover over the corner to rotate. The icon will turn into double arrows and at that point you can rotate your photo by clicking and dragging to the left.
Place the flower from the kit into the layout. First click on the layer with the feature photo of the mother and son. Select File>Place to locate the flower element (sd_kittyan-dtweet_flower-4.png) and place it on the layout. Check the order of the layers, the layer with the flower element should be above the “feature” photo layer. You may also want to add an effect to the flower. Click on the Effects panel, then click on Styles, select Drop Shadows from the drop-down menu and double click on the last one (Soft Edge) to add the effect to the photo.

Pick the color of your text. First select the Color Picker tool (aka the eyedropper) from the toolbar, next click on the foreground color swatch located at the bottom of the toolbar. Then find a color in your layout that you would like to use for your text. That shade of blue from the mother’s jeans will be perfect, click the Color Picker tool on the mother’s jeans. This will then change the color of the foreground swatch to the color that you picked with the Color Picker tool.

Add a title to your layout. First select the Type tool (T), then choose a font from the list of font choices in the panel below (I used Microsoft Himalaya). Next choose the point size, in this case I selected 72pt with a leading of 72. Click once with your Type tool inside the area you would like your text placed and type in your title. I typed “Mommy’s” on one line of text and hit the enter key to start “Little” on the next line, with “Boy!” on the last line of text. Click on the green check mark to commit the text. You might need to change the position of your text by using the Move tool (V).
12 **Button up your text.** I wanted the word “Little” to be a different font and color from the other words. Select the Type tool (T), then highlight the word “Little” and click on the Color box found below and select a gray from the default swatches, also change the font (I used Freeze!). Next highlight “Boy” and play around with the leading so that it tucks into the text above.

13 **Save your layout** File>Save. I generally save both a PSD and a JPEG file. The PSD file will save the layers. It is very important to have the original PSD file in case you need to make changes to your layout. The JPEG file will compress the layers and therefore flatten them, which will make the file size considerably smaller. To learn more about digital scrapbooking visit www.naods.com.

Michelle Stelling is the founder of the National Association of Digital Scrapbookers. She has taught over 5,000 students worldwide both in the college classroom setting and online. Teaching others how to create beautiful, personalized photos using Photoshop Elements is her passion. Come check out her free weekly webinars and learn more about digital scrapbooking at naods.com.
Illustrating in Elements

Give your sketches new life

One of the great advantages to illustrating in Elements is that you are able to use separate layers to rearrange and manipulate elements. If you are like me however, you love to doodle and sketch in a notebook or on whatever paper you can find. So how do you get your sketches from the notebook into the computer? I am going to show you a little bit of my workflow to hopefully inspire you to pull out some of your old sketches and give them new life. Please keep in mind this is an advanced tutorial and an artistic one so yours will have its own flair. It may also take some tweaking and practice to get it just how you like it. (you can download my sketch from the website to get started or use one of your own)

EXTRAS
Check out the video that follows along some of the more complicated steps from this article located in the online Extras under the Magazine section for the May/June 2013 issue at PhotoshopElementsUser.com
1 **Take a picture of your sketch.** I generally take my sketchbook to a shaded area outside so that I have plenty of light but not so much direct sunlight that it messes up the picture. You will want to practice good photography techniques such as paying attention to camera shake, but remember this is just going to be the base of your image so don’t get too bogged down in trying to get the perfect picture. Always take several and then pick the best of the bunch. As you can see, in this picture I have an interesting blue cast because of how the camera adjusted the white balance. No worries, we will take care of that in the next step.

2 **When you have a good picture** you will want to download it to your computer. Depending on what type of camera you have chosen to use, you will have several different options for downloading. The main thing to remember at this step is to keep the file as big as possible and turn off any options to resize or shrink your picture when importing. One helpful hint to keep your drawings organized is to create a specific folder where you can place any new sketches imported. I have one in my Documents labeled “Drawings.” Inside of that folder I create a second one that I title “Working” and a third one titled “Finals.” This way any new images go into the base file “Drawings” with all the random sketches, and I have a file for the ones I am currently or potentially working on, and a finished folder. Not the most creative organization but very easy and effective.

3 **Once you have downloaded your pictures** and have chosen the best one. Open it up in the Expert section of Elements. You will want to take care of the bluish colorcast of the image by going to Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels to bring up the Levels dialog. Click on the last eyedropper on the right, which is the “Set White Point” eyedropper. Move your cursor over to a section of the image that is supposed to be white and click again. This tells Elements that the point you click on needs to be white and the blue cast should disappear. If it looks too bright or not bright enough simply try clicking on a different area of the image... when you find the right spot everything should adjust and leave you with a white background and a good reference sketch to work with. Now just click OK and you are all set.
To create a new blank layer above your reference sketch, go to the first icon above your Layers palette that looks like a square with a folded corner... if you hover over it, it should say “Create a new Layer.” Click on that icon and a new layer will appear... you may want to Double-click on the layer name and rename it “Line” to help keep track of it. Now you will want to choose the Brush tool (B). Once you select the Brush tool several options appear in the Tool Options panel. Choose the normal brush (not impressionist or airbrush) and use the sliders to set the Size to 4 pixels, Opacity to 100% and make sure your Mode is set to Normal. If your image has a higher or lower resolution you will want to change the size of your brush accordingly. Now you are all ready to make a clean tracing over your sketch.

With the background layer below and the Line layer selected, trace over your original sketch. The goal is to create a good outline, so you don't have to trace every mark, but rather the most important ones. Take your time and if needed lower the opacity of your original background layer to make it easier to see where you have traced. Once you have traced around the entire image, create a new blank layer and drag it between the background layer and your new Line layer tracing. Fill this layer with white by pressing the shortcut keys Shift and Delete at the same time to bring up the Fill Layer dialog... choose White from the Use drop-down menu and click OK. When you are done you will have a nice clean drawing on its own layer with a white background underneath to help you see what you are doing. Rename this layer to White Background. You no longer need the very bottom original background layer, so you can drag it to the Trash or just leave it... it is up to you.

You will want to keep the Line layer that you traced on at the very top and work with each new layer below it. So every time you create a new layer, drag it just underneath the Line layer. So on a new blank layer above the White Background layer but under the Line layer you will start to add color. Click on the foreground color chip at the base of the toolbar to open the Color Picker and choose the color you want to use. Now you can paint in the color just like you are painting by numbers... Depending on how big an area you are painting, you may want to increase the size of the brush, so just move the Size slider in the Tool Options panel to the right to make it bigger. Fill in the entire body with whatever colors you choose and don’t worry about shading for now. A helpful option is to add a new layer for each section of the body so that it will be easy to change later if needed. You will notice in the Layers palette that I have added a layer mask to each of my color layers. To add a layer mask, click on the third icon above the Layers palette that looks like a square with a circle cut out of it (Add layer mask). I do this so that I can clean up any parts of that layer by painting with black to hide any places that might have leaked past the lines. If I hide too much, I simply paint with white to bring the color back.
Once all of the colors are applied, you will want to add some shadows and highlights to help give a sense of depth. Before you start to apply your shadows and highlights you should think about where the light will be coming from in your image. Usually this is going to be either from the upper-right or upper-left to mimic where the sun would be. For this image I want the sun to be coming from the upper-right of the image, so that means that all of my shadows will be falling off towards the lower left of the image. Even though this is a two-dimensional image, you must think as if it is 3D. So any part of the body that sticks out and blocks the light will get some shading. Darker areas appear to recede farther back in the image and lighter areas appear to come forward. Under the nose, the left edge of the body and the insides of the ears are prime areas to apply shadow. Paint lightly and carefully... this will take some practice.

On a new layer just under the Line layer I start with the shadows. I choose a medium sized brush around 15 pixels and set the Opacity down to about 20%. This will allow me to slowly add color in several strokes instead of trying to make it look right in one single stroke. To make sure I have soft edges to my lights and shadows, I click on the “Brush Settings” button and move the Hardness slider to zero on the new panel that pops up. You will want to choose black or a darker color for your shadows.

The same technique applies to adding the highlights. I tend to put my highlights on their own layer just like with the shadows, so that I can raise or lower the opacity later according to how things look. To add the highlights choose white or another light color. All of the highlights should be opposite the shadows... So if you have an area that looks flat or seems to be not quite right, now you will know whether it needs shadows or highlights added to it. Remember to make sure all lights and shadows work together... having them out of place can kill your illustration. Keep reminding yourself that light areas come forward and dark areas recede. So if you have an area that looks flat or seems to be not right, now you will know whether it needs shadows or highlights to it. (This takes time and practice but your eye will learn what to look for.) The drawing is looking pretty good, but it needs a little texture and variety.
This next step is the most complicated, but after you try it a couple of times you should be a pro at making these types of selections; so be patient and remember you have your trusty friend the Undo button.

10 Now we are going to add some texture to the body of the armadillo. You will need to find a photo of an animal or another texture that you want to use. I found a nice picture of a Koala bear and want to use his fur for the inner section of the Armadillo. Open your image in Elements, and then press Ctrl-A (Mac: Command-A). This will select the entire image so you can copy it Ctrl-C (Mac: Command-C) then click the Armadillo image and paste it Ctrl-V (Mac: Command-V). Use this same process to add any more elements later. If you can’t see the image that you have just pasted, check the Layers palette and see if other layers are hiding it. If so, just drag that layer up to the top. At the top of the Layers palette are two options: Blending and Opacity. For now, lower the opacity of the image by moving the Opacity to about 40% and set the blending mode to Normal. This will help you see through the picture to know how to place the fur. Next, press Ctrl-T (Mac: Command-T) and grab one of the corner handles in order to rotate it around and then move it until the fur lines up with the corresponding body part.

11 Next, find the layer with the painted part of the body you want to add the fur to. You will activate that layer as a template for cutting out the fur. Do this by clicking on the little thumbnail image of that layer in the Layers palette while holding the Control button (Mac: Command). Whatever is on that layer will be used to create an exact selection of that shape with the telltale Marching Ants. This is why I paint each section of the body on its own layer. Make sure to go back now and click on the koala (or whatever you used for your fur) layer and change it back to 100% Opacity before you make a copy. With the marching ants showing the correct area, press Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J) to create a copy of just that section. Essentially this is like using a cookie cutter to create sections of fur to match that body part.

12 Continue this process for each section of the body. You can even bring in other types of fur to give the animal a unique look if you want. Once all your fur parts are cut out... choose each layer one at a time and change the blending mode to Multiply and adjust the Opacity down a bit. If any of the parts look a little too dark or not quite right, you may want to experiment with other blending modes such as Overlay or Soft-light. Because you took time to create a layer for each body part, this will allow you to fine tune individual sections to get the look you like. Since I have the flexibility to play around with the image, I was able to find a textured paper image that I used for the tail. So don’t be afraid to try different combinations. (Whew! Congratulations... you made it!)
Now that the armadillo is done, he looks like he needs a suitable environment, so look for an image that he can be placed in. I found a grassy scene to copy and paste as the bottom layer using the same steps outlined above. The scene works OK, but I wanted something a little more grungy or embellished. Armadillos tend to root around and dig in the dirt, so I found another grungy textured piece of paper that I could place over the top. I copied it and placed it on top of all of the layers, including the Line layer. Now I tried changing its mode to things like Screen and Overlay, but found myself liking the Soft Light mode. I like how it is starting to look, but think it needs just a little bit more.

I tried several different options and eventually landed on a leafy pattern. This layer was copied and pasted as the top layer and set to Overlay... however both it and the grungy paper together were a little too much and I didn't want the texture covering the armadillo. So I created a layer mask on the paper layer. Do this by clicking on the third icon above the Layers palette that looks like a square with a circle cut out of it (Add layer mask). A new box appears next to the thumbnail image of that layer and as long as that little box is selected, anywhere I paint with black it will hide whatever is in that layer under a mask. Anything painted with shades of gray will be have levels of transparency according to how close to black it is, and white will reveal or “unhide” anything.

Choose an appropriate brush. For this image I used a large brush set to black, Hardness set to zero and Opacity at about 30%. The low opacity will let me gradually hide anything on this layer and the softness will help it to not have hard edges. I started painting around the inside of the paper but left the frame mostly untouched. This hides a lot of the paper texture as I paint over it several times to get the amount of transparency I like. I did the same thing for the top leafy pattern layer, except I changed the Brush Opacity to 100% to completely mask it away when brushing the front of the armadillo. The great thing about using a mask instead of erasing is that if I take away too much, I can simply change my paint color to white and paint back in any parts of the image.

Once that was done I stepped back and checked to see if I liked all of the settings as far as the strength of the highlights and shadows etc… and named the armadillo “Reginald” and declared it done. Hopefully this will encourage you to work on your own sketches and appreciate how handy it is to work on multiple layers. Have fun being creative.

Pete Collins is an Education and Curriculum Developer for the National Association of Photoshop Professionals and one of the co-hosts of Photoshop User TV. Pete has an extensive background in fine arts, photography, illustration, and graphic design to work. Along the way he has been a wedding, newspaper, sports and stock photographer. With rare combination of proven design experience, and a willingness to teach and inspire, Pete holds a unique perspective on what type of obstacles and demands are placed on today’s creative artists. Pete develops training classes for both Kelby Training Online and PhotoshopUser.com and writes for both Photoshop User magazine and Light It magazine. You can find out more on Pete Collins by visiting http://petecollins.com or petegplus.com
I get a lot of questions from people who wonder if it’s better to use Elements or better to use Lightroom. Personally, I think the answer is both. They each have their place. See, Lightroom is better than Elements when it comes to organizing your photos and editing your RAW or JPEG files. Plus it has better printing templates, better slideshows, and beautiful photo books. So where does Elements come in then? I think Elements is the place we go to when we can’t do something in Lightroom. Lightroom has the absolute best RAW/JPEG editor in the industry when it comes to working with the color, exposure, tone, sharpening and several other things we do to our photos all the time. It basically takes the place of 8 dialogs and adjustments that we work with in Elements and makes life much simpler. But when it comes to selective adjustments and retouching, Elements is far better. Elements is great at layering, adding text, making selections and applying filters (all things Lightroom can’t do). So when I have a photo that has a small area to retouch I’ll jump from Lightroom over to Elements and back to take care of it. But for me, Lightroom is just a better place for our images. Remember, it’s a program that was built for photographers. Elements and the full version of Photoshop were built for everyone out there - not just photographers. With that in mind, I wanted to write an article that shows you the best way to connect the two programs and make working between them seamless.

1. **First, open Lightroom** and take a look under the Photo>Edit In menu in either the Library or Develop module. Elements is not the default editor, so we just need to tell Lightroom to use Elements as our editor. This is where you can integrate photos that you edited in Lightroom with other applications.

2. **Head to the Preferences dialog.** It’s under the Edit menu on a PC and under the Lightroom menu on a Mac. Once you get there, click on the External Editing tab at the very top. You’ll see a section at the bottom that lets you choose Elements, as your own external editor to Lightroom.

3. **Click the Choose button** and navigate to the Elements Editor application on your computer. Don’t choose the Organizer though, because you want the photos to open in the Editor instead. Also, one key point for Mac users, the actual Editor application is in the Support Files folder, so don’t choose the “Adobe Photoshop Elements 11” option. Go into the Support Files folder and choose the “Adobe Photoshop Elements Editor” option instead.
Elements and Lightroom | Use them together to make the most of editing

4 Once you do that you’ve got some other options to pick. First, choose the PSD file format option. Next, choose the Adobe RGB (1998) option for the Color Space (works better if you ever decide to print the photo). Under Bit Depth, Elements does not support 16-bit so make sure you choose 8-bit. Go ahead and set the resolution to 240 if it’s not already, and leave the Compress setting at None. Once you have all of the options selected, you can go ahead and close the dialog. You’re ready to go at this point.

5 Now let’s edit a photo in Lightroom’s Develop module. In this example, I’m going to adjust the White Balance setting to make the photo warmer. To get the overall brightness and tone of the photo right, I’ll increase the Exposure, add some contrast, adjust the Highlights and Shadows, as well as the Whites and Blacks. So far, these settings are exactly the same as you’d have in Elements’ version of Camera Raw. But I’m also going to do a few things you can’t in Elements. For starters, I’ll use the HSL section and add some saturation to the blues. Then I’m going to use the Effects panel to add a vignette to darken the edges a little.

6 I’m also going to use a huge feature, that I use all the time in Lightroom, and it’s something you just can’t do in Elements’ version of Camera Raw. Notice how the sky is still pretty bright compared to the rest of the photo. Normally, you’d have to open the photo in Elements, and make a selection to darken it. But Lightroom has a feature called the Graduated Filter and we can use it on the sky to darken it without selections or layers. I just clicked-and-dragged the filter down over the sky. Then I reduced the Exposure a little to darken it, and even added some blue under the Temp setting to take away that yellow/muddy color the sky had in it.
That’s about all that the photo needs in Lightroom. However, there are a couple of footprints in the bottom part of the photo that I can’t get rid of in Lightroom. That’s where Elements comes in. Lightroom is great at overall color, exposure, sharpness and contrast changes. But Elements is great when I need to get really detailed and target just one area for a change, or to do overall retouching and removing distractions. To make the jump into Elements, go to the top menu and choose Photo>Edit In>Edit In Adobe Photoshop Elements Editor (remember, we set this up back in Step 3). The first time you do this, I suggest choosing the Edit a Copy With Lightroom Adjustments option at the top of the dialog. The rest of the settings should be okay, since you already set them back in Step 4. When you’re ready, just click the Edit button.

NOTE: If you’re editing a RAW file, the other options will be grayed out and you’ll only be able to edit a copy.

This immediately makes a copy of the image (hence the “Edit a Copy...” option we chose earlier) and opens the copy of the photo into Elements just like any other photo would open. In my example, I want to remove those footprints on the sand. First, click the Create New Layer button at the top of the Layers palette to make a blank layer. Then choose the Spot Healing Brush (J) from the Toolbox. Make sure the Content Aware option is turned on and the Sample All Layers option is on as well. Then just paint over the footprints to get rid of them. Elements does all of this on the new layer that we just created, so we’re not making changes to the original photo.

You could just as easily continue making any other changes that you needed to on the photo. For example, if this were a portrait, we may want to brighten the teeth, or eyes, or do any retouching that we’d normally do on our photos. When you’re done, just go to File>Save to save the image. Don’t change the name, and don’t change the location, as it should already be saving the image in the folder where the original file came from. Also, make sure you uncheck the Include in the Elements Organizer option since we’re using Lightroom to organize the photos. Then click Save. If you see a message telling you that this file already exists just choose Replace. See, Lightroom immediately created that image when you jumped to Elements. So Elements knows that an image with that name exists already. You just need to choose Replace to save your changes to it. Remember though, it’s a copy so your original is safe and sound back in Lightroom.
10 After you save the image and return to Lightroom you’ll see your newly edited copy of the photo right next to the original version of it. At this point that new copy is the photo that you’d share, save for the web, email, print, etc… You can even go back to the Develop module and make any of the changes that you normally make to an image and it’ll work just fine. There’s no “proper” order here. If you all of the sudden think you want to make the photo brighter then go ahead and adjust the Exposure afterwards - the photo will be just fine. Also, if you ever decide that you want to re-edit the photo back in Elements, just go to the Photo> Edit In menu once again. This time you’ll want to choose the Edit Original option since you’ll want to see all of the layers and changes you made earlier, and you’ve already created a copy of the image.

Before

After
Creating an Edgy Poster Effect

Using Gradient Mapping and the Filter Gallery

You may be surprised how experimenting with several of the artistic effects in Elements can dramatically alter a photo and give it an edgy look. I’ll show you how to create a contemporary, colorful image especially popular with teens, and then how to experiment with the Filter Gallery to add another effect all your own. The result would be an excellent effect for a graduation party invitation or a poster, as well as an impressive birthday card for anyone.
1. **For this project**, select a photo that has a mostly plain background and good contrast between light and dark areas. An image with the subject engaged in some sort of activity makes the effect even more interesting. Duplicate the background layer with Layer>New>Layer via Copy, or press Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J). The duplicate layer becomes Layer 1.

2. **With Layer 1 active**, click the Adjustment Layer icon in the layers panel, and from the menu, select Gradient Map. A new layer named Gradient Map1 appears above Layer 1 with a thumbnail image on the left and a white mask on the right. The Gradient Map panel also opens displaying the gradient bar, which is a preview of the gradient, based on the current foreground and background colors. The colors of the image in the workspace change to the colors from the gradient.

**How a Gradient Map Works**

The Gradient Map adjustment layer defaults to the current foreground and background colors and applies a gradient across the image. However, unlike a gradient fill, which opaquely fills an area by using a linear or radiant blend of colors, the gradient map applies the colors of a gradient to the luminance values of an image. That is, the lightness and darkness values in the image are used as a map for how the gradient colors are applied. If the foreground and background colors are black and white, the image is converted to grayscale. Should your foreground and background colors be red and blue, for example, shadows in the image map to red, highlights map to blue, and midtones map to gradations of shades between red and blue.

**Need an image?**

If you'd like to practice with the same image I am using, go online to the Magazine section for the May/June 2013 issue at PhotoshopElementsUser.com to download my photo, where you'll also find a few more tips and examples.
3 Double-click on the gradient bar in the Gradient Map panel to open the Gradient Editor. From here we’ll choose a colorful gradient to replace the existing gradient. Click the drop-down arrow beside Preset, and select Color Harmonies 1. When that set opens, select the first gradient in the set.

4 Once the gradient is applied to your photo, you can see the effect of the gradient mapping and how it affects the shadows, highlights, and midpoints. This gradient renders a bright, colorful image, and if you wish to accept the effect as is, click the OK button. I encourage you to also try different gradient presets to see how they look on your image. The same gradient may vary greatly in appearance on different photos, so this gradient may not be the best one for yours.

5 Suppose you wish to modify the gradient you have selected. For instance, after applying the Harmony 1 gradient preset, I decided I wanted a more pastel look for my image. I also thought it would look better with the mapped colors more unevenly distributed. This can be done by adjusting the color stops (the colored boxes) and color midpoints (the little diamond between two color stops) which are attached to the bottom of the gradient bar. Here’s how to adjust the stops and midpoints:

- Double-click a color stop to open the color picker where you can choose a different shade of the color, or a new color altogether.
- Drag a color stop left or right to adjust how much or how little of that color applies to the image.
- Adjust how the colors transition between color stops, by moving the color midpoint closer to one color than the other.
- To remove a color stop, drag it away from the gradient bar.
- To add a new color stop, click the bottom edge of the gradient bar at the point where you want to add a stop. New stops take on the color of the previously selected stop. Double-click to select a new color.
- As you fine-tune the colors and reposition the color stops, you can see in real-time how your image is affected.
After applying and adjusting the gradient map, you may wish to apply another effect to your image. However, after adding an adjustment layer, you may not be able to apply most other effects directly to that layer. So, to make sure any new effect added will apply to the work done so far on all previous layers, create a composite layer. When you create a composite layer (sometimes called “stamp visible”), a combination of the visible layers are copied to a new layer. Here is how to create the composite layer. With the top layer (Gradient Map 1) active, press Shift-Ctrl-Alt-E (Mac: Shift-Command-Option-E). You will see your new composite layer appear at the top of the layers.

Experiment – sample some filters you may not have tried before. From the Filter menu, click Filter Gallery. In the Filter Gallery window, your image will be displayed in the left panel. From the drop-down at the lower left, choose 100% zoom, then grab your image with the Hand tool provided and position it to get a good view of your subject.

In the middle panel, you’ll see the various sets of filters. Click the small arrow beside Artistic, to open the artistic filters. One by one, click on each filter to see how it affects your image. With some filters, you’ll know right
Add some finishing touches to your image. I added two strokes and some text to complete my image. If you use a stroke, the best practice is to add the stroke on a blank layer at the top of the stack. Use the Rectangular Marquee tool (M) to drag out a selection. Turning on the Grid (View>Grid—same command turns it off) makes it easier to line up the selection where you want it. From the menu, click Edit>Stroke (Outline) Selection, enter a pixel width, choose a color, and make the location “Inside” to assure nice sharp corners. Press Ctrl-D (Mac: Command-D) to deselect, and turn off the Grid when finished. By placing my strokes on their own layer, I was able to erase the section of each stroke overlaying the subject, creating the illusion that the strokes are behind her. The font I used for the text is Summertime from dafont.com.

You may very well find one that you love for your image. When you do, click the OK button at the top right of the window to close the window and apply that filter to your image.

In my image, I added Filter>Artistic>Poster Edges (Edge Thickness and Edge Intensity set at 1, and Posterization at 6). This gives more definition to the edges where dark areas meet light areas. I then lowered the opacity of that layer to 50% because I wanted to lessen the effect.
By placing my strokes on their own layer, I was able to erase the section of each stroke overlaying the subject, creating the illusion that the strokes are behind her.

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.
Subscriber Showcase | Projects from PET tutorials and videos

A selection of some of the best recent work by subscribers, showcasing original photos and completed projects from PET tutorials and videos.

GILDED LEAF

This image was taken on a walk in Loudonville, Ohio last fall. The leaf looked so cold, lonely and wet that I couldn’t resist taking its photo. I used levels, and vignette in Photoshop Elements 9 to bring this photo to life. I shot this with a Nikon P7000 camera.
OUT OF THE MOVIES

Rosalie Gower
New Orleans, LA

We took this picture during Skylend’s Senior portrait at City Park in New Orleans, LA. She wanted to get the chandelier in the picture so I had to tilt it and it really made the picture. She is an amazing girl and very beautiful she was such a pleasure to photograph!

I only used a few actions to bring out the clarity and sharpness of the picture. Warmed it up, and used the spot healing brush to fix anything that I didn’t want in the picture.

THE SMOKEHOUSE

Steve Rich
Aiken, South Carolina

This is a HDR processed image that was imported into Lightroom. Inside Lightroom, I completed a lens correction. From Lightroom, the image was imported into Photoshop Elements 11 where I used Noise reduction, Spot Healing Brush, Unsharp Mask tools. The image was then sent to OnOne Perfect Effects 4 for stylizing. Landscape selected, presets used were Magic Forest and Vecchio. Finally the image was brought back into Elements for cropping.
On this foggy morning I was hoping to get a shot or two of this walking bridge, but from the side since it has two locked gates guarding its entrance. For some reason the first gate was wide-open so I was able to get this shot thru the second gate. I edited it in PSE9 with a free B&W action from Pure Photoshop Actions after some Cloning and Content Aware clean-up.

After reading a lot about Camera Raw on the Photoshop Elements Techniques website and magazines I thought I would give it a try. Using a Sony A350 camera I shot RAW images for a day, this one was taken under a pier. It was a great photo, but I wanted a bit more of an urban look. After adjusting a few levels and opacities in Photoshop Elements 8 and adding the free Coffee Shop Vivid, the final image was exactly what I was after.

WANT TO SEE YOUR PHOTO IN PRINT?
Show us how you’ve put our tutorials to work in your images. To submit your recent work to Subscriber Showcase, go to www.PhotoshopElementsUser.com/contests and follow the instructions.

The next deadline for submission to Subscriber Showcase is May 23, 2013.

Each issue we give you a new photo assignment. Winners are announced online. A few may also get selected to appear in print.

Our Upcoming Challenge Theme is Reflections. To enter the Photo Challenge, go to www.PhotoshopElementsUser.com/contests and follow the instructions.
Photography DIY: Making Your Own Flash Diffuser

I almost never use my camera’s pop-up flash because it points straight at the subject, and it’s a bright, harsh light. That means my images will have strong highlights and dark shadows. In other words, they’ll look like bad snapshots. I use the larger, add-on flash units (some people call them “Speedlights” which is actually a Nikon trademarked word, but since I shoot with Nikon gear, it’s okay for me to say, “Speedlight”). But if you just add a Speedlight to your camera and point it straight at your subject, it won’t be much better than just using the pop-up flash. So what can you do?

One of the first things to do is add a diffuser to your light. Usually this is just a frosted plastic dome that sticks out about an inch or so from the face of your flash. Beware, most people think that the light it produces is softer on the subject and therefore you get better pictures because of the frosted surface. The REAL reason the flash looks better in most environments is because the light coming out of the Speedlight head is no longer just beaming straight at your subject. It’s going in lots of directions and bouncing all around in your environment.

I own 4 Speedlights and none of mine came with a diffuser, so I started to buy some from my favorite camera store. But they were around $20 each, so I’d have to spend $80 to get 4 plastic diffusers. So I invented an alternative instead. Here’s how you can make your own diffusers that are actually better (in my opinion) than the $20 version, for around 38¢ each.

Start by going to an office supply store or a FedEx/Kinkos store. You need frosted plastic report covers to make your diffusers. My local FedEx store sells me 8.5” x 11” sheets of the material for 75¢ a sheet. An office supply store probably won’t have sheets of that material available separately, so you might have to buy a $3 report folder with a frosted cover. Another option is Hobby Lobby. They sell BIG sheets (around 2’ x 3’) of the same material in the fabric department for around $4 a sheet. Crafters use it to make patterns for projects.

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Next, measure the **widest part of the case** you carry your Speedlights in. The goal is to make the diffuser as wide as possible, but just narrow enough so it will still fit in the travel pouch. You’ll also want to measure the length of your Speedlight case. My Speedlight case can hold a rectangle of this material that’s 3” wide and 6.5” long. I used a paper cutter to make my rectangles because it’s quick and accurate, but scissors should work just fine. And you’ll definitely need scissors to cut off the sharp corners.

Start by **cutting a rectangle** that will just fit inside your case. If you plan to put sticky Velcro on your flash head and Velcro on your diffusers, then you don’t need to do anything more than cut the simple rectangle and round the corners so they don’t scrape things. This will allow them to slide easily into your flash case, and you’re done. I took mine a step further, because I don’t want to glue Velcro to my flash heads.

I have some snoots and other things I attach to my flash heads from time to time, but I use a strip of Velcro that has grippy rubber on the back of it so it grips the flash head without adhesive. These are called Speedstraps and they’re removable. While I do use my Speedstraps to attach my frosted diffusers, I don’t use Velcro. I just attach my diffusers under my Speedstraps by tucking them in. To make this work I cut narrower tabs at each end of my diffusers, and round the corners of those tabs. That way I just tuck the tabs under the Speedstraps and my dome diffusers are ready to go.

Now when you take pictures using your Speedlight and diffuser, some of the light will still go straight to your subject and some light will spill up and down and bounce around in the environment, softening the light and giving you better results. These work every bit as good as those $20 snap on diffusion domes, but remember I said they were better? That’s because they’re cheap and because they slip easily into your Speedlight case.