From the Editor

Hi Everyone,

Happy Holidays! If you’re having trouble editing photos of wintry landscapes, check out Erin Peloquin’s Bright and Sparkly Snow article for some tips. Larry Becker’s Mix & Match Lighting in Layers article shows you some great techniques for creatively lighting your images. Stray hairs on your portrait photos can be pesky, Lesa Snider’s Removing Stray Hairs article has some great pointers for removing them.

Till next time,

Diana Kloskowski
Editor-in-Chief

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The picture was taken at the Applefest in Franklin, Pennsylvania.
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‘TIS THE SEASON FOR SNOW PHOTOS. STEPPING INTO THE PEACE OF A SNOW-COVERED LANDSCAPE OR WATCHING THE JOY ON CHILDREN’S FACES AS THEY PLAY IN THE SNOW IS AN AUTOMATIC TRIGGER FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS TO PULL OUT THEIR CAMERAS.

And as soon as they snap that first snow photo, most photographers realize that shooting in snow is something different. No matter what type of camera you have, a snow-covered scene is likely to confuse your camera’s sensor as it assigns exposure and white balance. Your camera’s sensor assumes that your scene is, on average, a neutral gray. When the scene is truly a bright white, your camera will record the photo looking darker and duller than it should. What’s more, the snow in your image will often create an unnatural color tint.

When editing snow photos, you need to overcome the limitations of your camera’s sensor and apply certain edits unique to the situation that photo was taken in. Whether you shot on a sunny day with light reflecting off the bright snow or a cloudy day with the clouds ready to burst, your edits will bring out the natural beauty of your photo.

PS. I live in Texas! I have only one photo with snow and it has exactly 3 snowflakes in it. It didn’t lend itself to editing tutorials, so the images you see in this article are stock photography and are not available for download.

1 Assess the white balance. Snow often appears blue in photos, especially on cloudy days. In this image, you can see just how blue the image is by looking at the Info panel. I measured the shadowed snow just below the bird’s tail. Snow is essentially neutral, which means that the Red, Green and Blue channels should measure about the same. You can see from the measurements in this photo that Blue is significantly higher than either Red or Green.

To measure the color values in your photo, display the Info panel (Window>Info) and move your cursor over the snow. If you consistently see that one number is higher than the others, you’ve identified a color cast.

2 Correct the White Balance. To fix this color cast, add a Levels Adjustment layer (Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels). Change its name (Layer>Rename Layer) to “Color Correct.” Use the RGB drop-down menu to select the color channel that is out of balance. Move the middle slider to the right to reduce this color in your image. For this image, I selected the Blue Channel and moved the middle slider to the right to remove the excess blue. You can see the effect of this edit in the Before and After below.

Don’t try to make your Red, Green and Blue numbers exactly equivalent. It will never happen. Narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest numbers will produce a big change in your photo. In this image, the original gap between Red and Blue was 41. After adjusting, the gap was 25 and the image looked much more natural.
**Assess the Exposure.** After adjusting the White Balance on this bird photo, its exposure didn’t need further brightening. How did I know? Most importantly, it looked good to me. Your eyes are always the most important judge. However, you can use the Info Panel again to gauge the exposure of the snow. The brightest snow in your image should be pure white. Pure white is represented on the info panel by Red, Green and Blue all measuring close to 255. Measuring the bright area of snow to the left of the bird’s head produced these measurements:

R: 253
G: 252
B: 255

This area is technically “blown out” because the 3 color channels all measure above 240. However, it’s perfectly acceptable—even necessary—for snowy photos to have these bright white areas of snow.

4 **Correct the Exposure.** Let’s look at a photo whose exposure does need some tweaking. This dog photo has the characteristic dull, blue-gray appearance that is so common to snow photography. This appearance occurs when the camera assumes that the snow is a middle gray rather than a brilliant white. The brightest areas of snow measured less than 240 in all 3 color channels, indicating that the snow wasn’t as white as it could be.

To fix it, add a Levels adjustment layer (Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels). Change its name (Layer>Rename Layer) to “Exposure.” Select the white eyedropper and click on the brightest area of snow that you can find with it.

Clicking with this white eyedropper tells Elements that the spot you are clicking on should be pure white. Elements makes the spot white, and calibrates the rest of the image accordingly. You can see the extra brightness and warmth this added.
5 Add Contrast. Adding contrast is the best way to improve the dull look that you see in many snow photos. Adding contrast means that you are making the bright tones brighter and the dark tones darker. In doing so, you are saturating the colors as well.

Returning to our bird image, I will add contrast by adding another Levels layer (Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels). Rename it (Layer>Rename Layer) to “Contrast.” Change the Blend Mode of this layer from Normal to Soft Light.

After changing the blend mode, you might find that this layer is too strong. If so, reduce the layer’s Opacity at the top right corner of the Layers panel. I used an 81% Opacity for this layer on the bird image.

6 Hide Edits from Specific Areas of Your Photo. This step applies to any of the layers you’ve created in your edit. I’m going to use it to remove contrast that I’ve just created from the very darkest and brightest areas of my photo. I don’t want any part of the photo to be so dark or so bright that it distracts my viewers’ attention from the focal point, which is the bird’s face.

To remove edits selectively, click on the Layer Mask to activate it for editing. Select the Brush tool (B) and choose Black as your foreground color (D). In the Tool Options bar reduce the brush’s Opacity to 30% (type 30). Paint over the areas of your photo that have become either too dark or too bright. You can make another pass or two with the brush if the edit is still distracting.

My final layer mask looked like this:

MASK TIPS
You can see a black and white representation of your Layer Mask painting by holding down Alt (Mac: Option) on your keyboard while you click on the Layer Mask in the Layers panel. Hold down Alt (Mac: Option) and click again to turn off this view.

To display your mask painting as a red overlay on top of your image, hold down Shift-Alt (Mac: Shift-Option) and click on the layer mask. Hold down Shift-Alt (Mac: Shift-Option) and click again to turn off this view.

8 Make the Snow Sparkle. After you’ve corrected the white balance, exposure and contrast in your image, it’s time to make those flakes sparkle. The High Pass method of sharpening is perfect for adding a shiny sharpness to your image.

To begin, stamp your visible layers by clicking on the top layer of your image and typing Shift-Alt-Control-E (Mac: Shift-Option-Command-E). This creates a new layer that is a duplicate of the layers below it. Rename this layer (Layer>Rename) “Sharpening.”
Click OK and change the Blend Mode of this layer to either Overlay or Soft Light. Overlay produces slightly stronger sharpening. Reduce the layer’s Opacity if the strength of the sharpening is too strong. You can also mask this effect from specific areas of your image using Step 4 of this tutorial. It might not be flattering for faces, for example, if you have people in your photo.
**Add Snowflakes.** Instead of adding a sparkly shine to your image, you might rather create the illusion of falling snowflakes.

Add a blank, new layer to the top of your layers stack by clicking on the top layer and going to Layer>New>Layer. Name this layer "Snow." Fill this layer with black (Edit>Fill Layer and select Black from the drop-down menu.)

Create snow on this layer by using the noise filter (Filter>Noise>Add Noise). In the Add Noise dialog, use about 200% for the Amount and make sure that Gaussian and Monochromatic are both checked.

To make the snow more realistic, blur it. Start with the Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur), using 2 or so in the Radius field. Next, add a bit of wind to the image with the Motion Blur (Filter>Blur>Motion Blur). You can adjust the Angle to match the direction of the wind, if it’s apparent in your image. Otherwise, choose an angle that looks realistic. The Distance field controls how long your motion blur is. The higher the number, the longer the blur for each flake.

Finally, change the Blend Mode of this layer to Screen at the top left corner of your Layers panel.
To add dimension to your snow, duplicate your Snow layer (Layer>New>Layer Via Copy). Reduce this layer’s Opacity to 50% at the top right corner of your Layers panel. Flip the layer (Image>Rotate>Flip Layer Horizontal).

Duplicate either of your snow layers to increase the effect. You can vary their opacity and re-run the Motion Blur using a different “wind” angle to make the snow look stormier.

SUMMARY
When editing snow photos, start by correcting the white balance, exposure and contrast set by your camera. If the photo is bright and sunny, use the High Pass method of sharpening to make the snow sparkle. If it’s a more blustery day, consider adding flying snowflakes to your image. Either way, you’ll have a photo as beautiful as the day you remember!
REMOVING STRAY HAIRS

STRAY HAIRS AND EXCESSIVE CHINStubble CAN DISTRACT FROM THE BEAUTY OF A PORTRAIT. IN ORDER to realistically tone down these distractions, you can employ a combination of Elements retouching tools. And while eyebrows may seem like a subtle detail, trimming and filling them adds a wonderfully professional touch to your portraits. After all, it’s rewarding to bring out your subject’s best and well-groomed self, even if they didn’t arrive in front of your lens perfectly coiffed.

In this column, you’ll learn when to use Elements healing toolset versus the Clone Stamp tool for removing stray hairs of all kinds. You’ll learn how to change the Clone Stamp tool’s blend mode in order to do an incredible job reducing chin stubble, as well as how to use the Lasso tool to create a selection around eyebrows, which lets you easily trim and fill them with the Clone Stamp tool. We’ll also perform all of our edits on empty layers in order to preserve your original image. Let the hair removal begin!

REMOVING LINT FROM CLOTHING

If your subject dons dark clothing of any kind, stray hairs and lint will make their way into your portrait. Happily, if you have a good amount of free pixels around the offending strand, the Spot Healing Brush can get rid of it in a hurry.

1 Open an image in Expert mode. Click the Expert button at the top of the workspace and, if you don’t see your Layers panel on the right, click the Layers button at the bottom of the workspace or choose Window>Layers. Create a new layer by pressing Shift-Ctrl-N (Mac: Shift-Command-N) and in the resulting dialog, name it jacket lint and click OK. In your Layers panel, make sure the new layer is positioned above the image layer.

2 To see the hair or lint better, activate the Zoom tool (Z) in the View section of the Toolbox, mouse over to your image and click repeatedly to zoom into the area where the hair lives. If necessary, press the Spacebar and then drag with your mouse to reposition the image once you’re zoomed in.

TIP: You can also zoom in/out by pressing Ctrl +/– (Mac: Command +/–) repeatedly.

3 Activate the Spot Healing Brush (J) in the Enhance section of the Toolbox. In the Tool Options bar, set the Type to Proximity Match so Elements uses the pixels immediately surrounding the ones you’re about to brush across for the fix. (If the clothing has a lot of tex-

Click here to download RemovingStrayHairs.zip, the sample images Lesa used in this Article.
ture, you may get a better result by using Create Texture instead.) Next, turn on Sample All Layers so Elements looks through the empty layer to where pixels live on the layer(s) below. Use the Size slider in the Tool Options bar to make your brush cursor slightly larger than the hair you’re removing (10 pixels was used here), and then brush across the hair to remove it. Elements marks your brushstrokes in dark gray; when you release your mouse button, it blends the pixels together. If the color or texture of the clothing varies beneath the hair, use short strokes instead of long ones to remove it. Press the Spacebar and then drag with your mouse to reposition the image and continue removing hairs from the jacket.

TIP: You can also change brush size using keyboard shortcuts: press the left bracket key ( [ ) to decrease brush size, or the right bracket key ( ] ) to increase it.

**4 Create a new layer** by pressing Shift-Ctrl-N (Mac: Shift-Command-N) and in the resulting dialog, name it **stray hairs** and then click OK.

**5 Activate the Clone Stamp tool** (S) in the Enhance section of the Toolbox, and in the Tool Options bar, turn on Sample All Layers. Zoom into your image and reposition it as described earlier so you can see the offending strands of hair.

**6 Resize your brush cursor** so it’s slightly larger than the strand of hair you want to remove. Next, tell Elements where to copy pixels from by setting a sample point. To do it, Alt-click (Mac: Option-click) a clean area of pixels as near to the hair you’re removing as possible to match tone and texture. Brush across the hair you want to remove (short strokes typically work better than long ones).

**REMOVING STRAY HAIRS AROUND YOUR SUBJECT’S HEAD**

If you’re working with a portrait taken against a (nearly) solid color background, fly-away hairs around your subject’s head can be the bane of your existence. While Elements Spot Healing and Healing Brushes can certainly remove them, the automatic blending that these two tools perform usually introduces a blurry spot next to the strands you want to keep. So to keep this kind of retouching from being visible from outer space, use the Clone Stamp tool. Unlike the healing tools, the Clone Stamp tool performs no blending; it simply copies pixels from one area and pastes them onto another. Happily, you can also use the Clone Stamp tool on a new, empty layer in order to protect your original image.
If the background behind the hair shifts in color or texture, be sure to set a new sample point. A handy plus sign marks the area you’re sampling from as you go. Also, be careful not to create an obviously broken strand of hair either; if that happens, just clone farther into the hair so it appears shorter and not broken.

Now, with great power comes great responsibility. While it’s useful to remove the most distracting stray hairs, be careful not to make the hair edges too perfect; else your subject will look like they’re wearing a wig or a toupee! Here’s a before and after version:

**REMOVING STRAY HAIRS ACROSS SKIN**

If a stray hair crosses skin, you can use the Spot Healing or Healing Brush to get rid of most of it, and then switch to Clone Stamp when you need to. That way you let Elements do most of the work and you won’t introduce a blurry spot. Here’s how:

7. **Add another new layer** as described above and name it *eye hair* (creepy yet descriptive!). Zoom into your document so you can see the offending strand and then activate the Healing Brush tool (J) in the Enhance section of the Toolbox. Unlike the Spot Healing Brush, the Healing Brush lets you pick a sample point like the Clone Stamp tool. In the Tool Options bar, turn on Sample All Layers.

8. **Zoom into your document**, mouse over to the image and resize your brush cursor so it’s slightly bigger than the hair. Next, tell Elements where to copy pixels from by Alt-clicking (Mac: Option-clicking) an area nearby. Next, brush across the hair you want to remove. Use short strokes and reset your sample point when tone and texture changes.

9. **If you introduce a blurry spot**, or if you encounter a high contrast line—like the eyelid crease or the lashes—immediately switch to the Clone Stamp tool. Set a sample point by Alt-clicking (Mac: Option-clicking) atop the problem area. In some cases, you won’t be able to drag, you’ll need to single-click to remove the hair. Be sure not to create obviously broken strands of hair. This kind of retouching requires patience and eagle eyes to ensure you don’t create pixel pudding.
Here’s our before and after:

REDUCING CHIN STUBBLE

Photo credit: Fotolia.com/#46195868/magann

While a five o’clock shadow can be visually appealing, an unkept look is not. To give your subject a groomed look, you can use the Clone Stamp to reduce rogue chin and beard stubble.

1. **Create a new layer as described** above and name it **beard trim**. Activate the Clone Stamp tool and, in the Tool Options bar, set the Mode menu according to the whiskers’ color relationship to the skin. If the skin is lighter than the whiskers, set the mode to Lighten. If the skin is darker than the whiskers, set the mode to Darken. Before mousing away from the Tool Options panel, set Opacity to 40%. Finally, turn on Sample All Layers.

2. **Resize your brush cursor** to about 50 pixels and then Alt-click (Mac: Option-click) a clean skin area near the whiskers, and then brush across the stray whiskers to lighten them. Reset sample points often to maintain tone and texture.

3. **Reduce the Opacity** setting at the top of the Layers to approximately 70%, so the retouch looks realistic.

Here’s a before and after version (pay special attention to the neck area).

TRIMMING AND FILLING EYEBROWS

Photo credit: Fotolia.com/#74211921/MatHayward

As luck would have it, you can use the same technique to trim and fill eyebrows. However, this time we’ll create a selection of the area we want to affect, so only that area will be altered, no matter where we drag our brush cursor.

1. **Create a new layer as described earlier** and name it **eyebrow trim**. Activate the Lasso tool in the Select section of the Toolbox and in the Tool Options bar, drag the Feather slider rightward to roughly 3 pixels.
2 Click-and-drag to draw a selection around the eyebrow’s natural shape. The goal is to select the area of the brow you want to keep; the area outside the selection will be trimmed. This will take practice. Try and make the selection as smooth as possible. You’ll likely need to deselect by pressing Ctrl-D (Mac: Command-D) and have another go at drawing the selection multiple times (do not be set back by this; it’s natural).

3 When the selection looks good, choose Select>Inverse to flip-flop it so everything except the eyebrows is selected (you’ll see marching ants trotting around the document perimeter). Activate the Clone Stamp tool in the Toolbar and in the Tool Options bar, change the Mode menu as described earlier (Lighten was used here, because the skin is lighter than the brows). Leave the Opacity set to 40%.

4 Mouse over to your image and resize your brush cursor according to the free area around the brow. A size of 15 pixels was used here. Set a sample point by Alt-clicking (Mac: Option-clicking) a clean area of skin directly above (or below) the area you want to trim. Next, brush repeatedly across areas that need trimming (you can brush over the same area multiple times because you lowered the tool’s opacity setting in the previous step). Set a new sample point whenever the skin tone changes (you’ll set a slew of sample points in this technique). When you’re finished, don’t get rid of the selection; you’ll use it to fill the brows, too.
5. **To fill the brow, keep the selection and create** another new layer named *brow fill*. Choose Select>Inverse to flip-flop the selection so the brow itself is once again selected (marching ants should only be visible around the brow and not the entire document). In the Tool Options bar, set the Mode menu to Darken (because you’re adding brows that are darker than the skin). Set a sample point inside the brow and then brush across the area that needs filling. Be sure to paint with short strokes in the direction the brow hair is going to fill in the gaps. Set new sample points as necessary. When you’re finished, choose Select>Deselect (or press Ctrl-D [Mac: Command-D]).

6. **Repeat steps 1–6 on the other brow** and then adjust all layer opacity to suit. A layer Opacity of 65% was used here for each trim and fill layer.

Here’s the before and after:

As you can see, some quality hair removal can improve your portraits. Until next time, may the creative force be with you all! 

Lesa Snider, founder of PhotoLesa.com, is the author of Photos for Mac and iOS: The Missing Manual, Photoshop CC: The Missing Manual, and coauthor of iPhoto: The Missing Manual. She’s recorded over 40 video courses including Elements for Photographers and Lightroom Essentials (PhotoLesa.com/videos), and written several ebooks, including The Skinny on Elements and The Skinny on Lightroom (PhotoLesa.com/books). Lesa is also a columnist for Macworld and Photoshop User magazines. Download a free Elements cheatsheet at Facebook.com/photolesa. Twitter: @PhotoLesa.
MIX AND MATCH
LIGHTING IN LAYERS

It's popular these days to apply various kinds of lighting filters to images to create a particular mood or recreate the look of vintage film. But sometimes experimenting with lighting in layers can give you unexpected results. And when you aren't using "premixed" filters, you can mix-and-match your experiments to come up with unexpected combinations and surprisingly pleasing results.

1. **We'll start with a picture that was taken** with no flash and strong backlight so the subject is a bit too dark. Even though it's a JPEG image, I like to start by opening it with the Camera Raw interpreter so I can get the image to a good starting point. Go to File>Open in Camera Raw and locate the file on your drive.

   There were a number of issues with this image beyond the low light of the subject. Overall, an Exposure boost of .92, along with a -18 Highlight reduction, and a +18 boost to the Shadows is almost all this image needs. The only remaining problem is the apparent orange cast to the image. Something I happen to know is that this person had used tanning solution and while it looks great in person, the camera can pick up an orange cast and even amplify it a bit, so let's knock that back. Just slide the Temperature slider to the blue side around -30, then click Open Image.

2. **Our first lighting effect will be a vintage** tint that's warm and cool at the same time. Start by adding a new layer above the background Layer in the Layers Panel. Just click the Create New Layer icon at the top left. Press the G key to activate the Gradient tool. At the bottom of the Toolbox we need to change the foreground and background colors, so start by clicking on the foreground color chip and pick a smoky pale blue from the color picker panel. Click OK and click on the background color chip. This time pick a smoky orangish brown.

   Click here to download SmileInTheDark.JPG, the sample image Larry used in this tutorial.
Below the image in the Tool Options bar, from the Gradient pop-up choose Foreground to Background at the top left. To the right of that make sure to select Linear Gradient.

Now, starting at each of the 4 edges of your image, click-hold-drag a straight line about an inch or so long to create a dark gradient border.

Finally, use the Layer Opacity slider to reduce the opacity to about 50%.

Now let’s use the Gradient tool to create a vignette. Start by creating another blank layer at the top of the layer stack. Then press the letter D to reset the foreground and background colors to their defaults of black and white. In the Tool Options bar click on the Gradient pop-up and choose Foreground to Transparent.

Now click-hold-drag from the bottom to the top of your image with a slight angle to the left. (That angle will match the flow of the image).

Next, choose the Overlay Blend Mode from the top left of the Layers panel. At this point the orange will be especially intense, so you’ll probably want to use the Opacity slider at the top right of the Layers panel to pull back some of the intensity. I think somewhere around 60% or 70% looks better.
4 This next trick is going to have somewhat subtle results because the photo was taken with a wide aperture and the background is already a bit blurry. We'll just make it a little blurrier here, but if you have an image that's sharp throughout, this technique is even more dramatic. Click the eyeball on Layer 2 to temporarily turn off the visibility of the vignette layer and click on Layer 1 to select the orange and blue layer.

Press Alt-Ctrl-Shift-E (Option-Command-Shift-E on Mac) to create a new merged layer above Layer 1 and below the vignette layer. Now blur the layer with Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur, and in the Gaussian Blur dialog use a Radius of 35 pixels.

Now press Ctrl-U (Mac: Command-U) and in the Hue/Saturation dialog box, set the Saturation to -60 and boost Lightness to +15.

Next, change the Blend Mode for the layer to Screen. Now click on the Add layer mask icon to add a Layer Mask to this layer and press G to return to the Gradient tool again. At this point just choose Radial Gradient in the Tool Options bar and add some radial gradients to the Layer Mask to bring back the subject while leaving the background softer and hazy.
Next, from menus choose Filter>Render>Lens Flare. I think the 105mm Prime flare looks best and the placement I selected should still allow the subject’s face to be seen.
Now select a blend mode like Overlay, which gets rid of the gray and applies the flare to the image. Hard Light and Linear Light are more intense options if that’s a look you’d prefer.

Experiment. Flip on some layers and turn others off. Try turning on and moving the Vignette layer below the Lens Flare layer. Try turning off the orange and blue layer. Mix and match intensities and layer styles and experiment. And then think back to the original dark image, even before we brightened things in Camera Raw. We’ve come a long way and we have all kinds of options when we light and tint our images in layers.

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.
A WALK WITH DADDY [ PHOTO CHALLENGE 1ST PLACE WINNER ]

Christine Neff Kojetin
Eden Prairie, MN
Capturing Fall colors at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Fall 2014 Edited in Lightroom, minor color, highlights and saturation adjustments.

AUTUMN BENCH [ PHOTO CHALLENGE WINNER ]

Doris Pacheco
Madera, CA, USA
The photo was taken at a local park and the solitary bench and light streaming through the fall leaves drew my attention. This photo was processed in Adobe Photoshop Elements 10 and I used a layer of Topaz Simplify over the top with lowered opacity. The photo was dodged and burned.

UNTITLED [ PHOTO CHALLENGE WINNER ]

Margy Burrell
New Hampshire
Using PSE 13 I enhanced the color of the leaf with layers and masks. I added a texture and brushed it off the leaf itself.

Each issue we give you a new photo assignment. Winners are announced online. Our Upcoming Challenge Theme is Winter. All entries for the Winter Photo Challenge must be submitted by December 31st. To enter the Photo Challenge, go to this link and follow the instructions: www.PhotoshopElementsUser.com/contests