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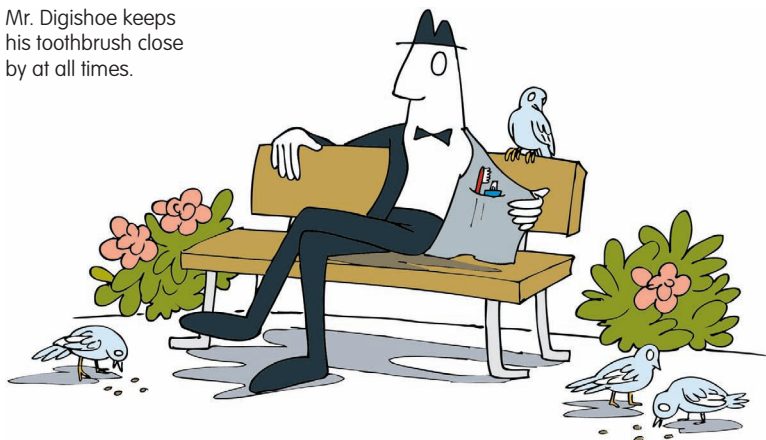
Making a Home for Your Photos

In Year and Month Folders

Even the most disorganized people have certain “filing systems” in their homes. They probably have a closet that holds stuff like coats and suitcases; they put their forks with the other forks in the kitchen drawer...no? OK, they at least have a dedicated silverware drawer or, um, section of their dish rack. They would not go looking for their coat in the silverware drawer, am I right?

Having dedicated places for certain items makes it easy to remember where to look for them when you need them. Even if you're the messiest kid on the block, you probably keep your toothbrush somewhere in the bathroom, right? (No? Aw, sheesh, just read on...).

Mr. Digishoe keeps his toothbrush close by at all times.



Repetition of a system can be quite pleasing.

Now I'll ask that you create a system for your photos that makes as much sense as any system that you have for other items in your house. The two steps that I cover in this chapter have to do with how and where you file your photos and the importance of original photo files. I'll also tell you a bit about some hazards to watch out for when you use image-browsing software to import and adjust your photos, as well as how to go about filing old photos.

Step 4 is very elegant. And it has to do with repetition. It's very simple.

STEP

4

File Your Photos by Year and Month

The most fundamental step you can take to make finding your photos easy is to set up a standardized filing system that you can repeat again and again. You may ask, “Well, but why can’t I just file all the pictures that I took in Jamaica in a folder called Jamaica 2009 and then file all the photos of little Marly at preschool in a Marly Preschool folder?” And I will reply, “What if you meet someone named Jamaica and she becomes your best friend and you take photos of her in 2009, and what if, in the Marly Preschool folder, you also have some good photos of Marly and her friend Susan, so maybe there should be a Marly and Susan folder too?” Don’t argue with me on this one.

There’s No Wiggle Room Here

Some of these examples may seem unlikely, but basically, there is simply too much wiggle room and absence of standards when you start creating folders for your original photo files with random names all over the place. You may associate a group of photos with one thing when you download them, but 10 years down the line, you may associate that event with something completely different.

Let’s just say that filing your photos by year and then by month will serve as the official headquarters of your personal photo collection.



Your year and month filing system will be the headquarters of your photo collection.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**With Photo Organization,
Repetition Is Your Friend**

- Repetitive filing helps you remember how to organize your photos.
- I suggest that you repeat the way that you file your photos over and over and over again.
- It's really great to file your photos in the same way every time you download photos.

Am I being too repetitive?

A friend of mine recently told me that the word repetitive was first recorded in print in the year 1839—very appropriate to this step, because that happens to be the very year that Louis Daguerre announced that he had succeeded in perfecting a technique (later named for him) of making a positive photographic image on a treated metal plate.

How to File Your Photos by Year and Month

Follow these steps to file your photos by year and month:

1. Create a new folder named Photos on your computer: From the desktop, choose File > New Folder (Mac OS X) or File > New > Folder (Windows).
Save the Photos folder inside the Users/Pictures (Mac) or My Pictures (Windows) folder that came with your computer.
2. Within that Photos folder, create a folder for the four-digit year, for example, 2009.
3. Within the year folder, create folders for each month, starting with the number of that month, for example, 01-January, 02-February, 03-March, 04-April, and so on (**Figure 2.1**).
4. Download your photos into the folder for the month in which they were taken.

For advice on how to download your photos, see Chapter 5, “Downloading Photos to Your Computer.”

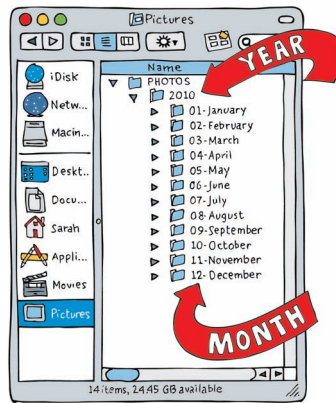


FIGURE 2.1 Create folders for each month of the year inside your year folder.

From now on, every time you download your photos to your computer, you’ll be putting them into the corresponding month folder. The two-digit numbers for each month enable the list of months to stack up chronologically. (Use the main View menu to select a list display.)

You may be put off by the hyphens, but as a rule, it’s good to get into the habit of avoiding any spaces in your names for files or folders. The Web doesn’t always read spaces well when it comes to filenames. And though this doesn’t apply to folders per se, using hyphens (or underscores) is simply a good habit to get into.

Tip: Organizing Photos from Multiple Cameras

If you shoot photos with more than one device, such as a camera and a camera phone, I find that it’s handy to keep separate folders within the month folder to delineate between the two. For instance, inside the folder 03-March, make the folders 03-Camera and 03-Phone.

Retroactive Filing Galore

If you’re feeling ambitious, you can even go back and file old photos by year and month after determining when they were taken (provided that the time and date was set correctly on your camera when you took the photos). The process is a simple matter of sorting your photos chronologically.

A photo from years ago. These birds found their home in the folder 2005/09-September.



How to Sort Your Photos Chronologically

On the Mac, follow these steps:

1. Make sure that you're in List view (View > As List) and that you can see the Date Modified and Date Created columns. If you don't see the Date Modified and Date Created columns, do the following:
 - Choose Finder > View, and choose Show View Options.
 - In the View Options dialog box, select the Date Modified and Date Created check boxes, and then close that dialog box (**Figure 2.2**).

When you return to the Finder window, there will be a column that shows you when the files were modified (if ever) and when they were created.

2. Click the strip at the top of the column labeled Date Created to have the files line up chronologically.

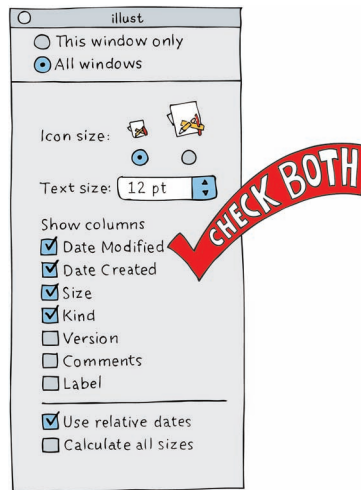


FIGURE 2.2 Select the Date Modified and Date Created check boxes to show these columns in your Finder windows.

In Windows, follow these steps:

1. Choose My Computer from the Start menu. Then choose View > Arrange Icons By, and select Modified.

To have this setting apply all the time, go to the Tools menu, select Folder Options, click the View tab, and select Apply View to All Folders.

2. After you can see creation dates for your old photos, you can then duplicate those photos to the appropriate year and month folders, as explained in step 5.

Tips: Duplicating Photo Files

I recommend duplicating your old files when filing them retroactively rather than moving them because filing by date does not work if you have ever used the Save As function on any of your old photos (which overwrites the original photo and treats it as a new photo). See “Step 5: Never Alter Original Files and Camera Filenames” that follows for how to avoid these kinds of shenanigans by always keeping your original photo files intact.

Retroactively filing photos can be laborious and time consuming. By leaving a copy of your original filing system intact, you’ll at least always have that to return to should you come upon something wonky such as altered creation dates during the retroactive filing process.

How to File Photos Retroactively

Follow these steps to file photos retroactively:

1. After sorting your photos by creation date, select all the photo files from a particular month by dragging the selection marquee around them.
2. Press Command+C (Mac) or Ctrl+C (Windows) to copy the files.
3. Find and open (or create) the corresponding year and month folders for these photos.
4. Press Command+V (Mac) or Ctrl+V (Windows)—*v* for *voilà!* All of your photos to be filed retroactively now are duplicated in this folder.

Note: On the Topic of Command+V/Ctrl+V

The V doesn't really stand for voilà. I don't know what the V stands for, but it means paste, as in "copy and paste." I've heard various explanations—for instance, that it's for vaste, which is Russian for paste, or that it's just close to the C and the X, which are the other keys central to the copy-and-paste process.

But, Wait, Where Are My Photos?

You might not be sure where your photo files are because you did not file them yourself. (Instead, an image-ingesting and image-browsing application like iPhoto did.) Finding them so that you can file them by year and month might be a difficult task.



Did you file your photos?
Or did an application
file them for you?

Tip: How to Find Your iPhoto Photos on a Mac

iPhoto files your photos for you in your Pictures folder, within the iPhoto Library folder, in a folder called Originals. Later versions of iPhoto with the Leopard OS X make it even more labyrinthine and unintuitive to get to those photos. You have to hold down the Control key while clicking once on your iPhoto Library folder and then select Show Package Contents from the box that appears. This opens a new Finder window in which you can access the Originals folder.

When I first got a digital camera (my Minolta DiIMAGE), I used iPhoto to import and browse through my photos and found its ease of use for viewing very handy. However, I discovered something deeply disturbing that caused iPhoto and me to have a totally huge falling out; I will forever, from now on, have a really hard time trusting its benefits.

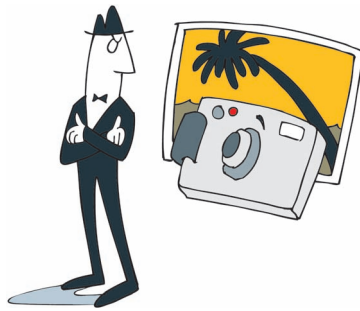
I started to suspect that iPhoto had absolutely no regard for my computer's capabilities at the time. (Yeah, my computer was a little outdated, I'll admit, but keeping up with technology can sometimes be a little overwhelming, right?) iPhoto kept coming out with new versions, and I would dutifully perform the updates. Eventually, iPhoto started taking longer and longer to get started, chugging away on my computer, until eventually it just seemed to take forever before I could actually see my photos. The updated versions had begun to outrun the capabilities of my tired old operating system and slightly anemic RAM. It was time for me to divorce myself from the use of iPhoto.

Then, one day, a couple of friends came over for dinner and wanted to show some photos they had on their laptop. They selected them and opened them all at once using the application Preview. A lightbulb literally went on over my head (I think someone had turned on the light in the kitchen...). But really, I asked them if that's what they always did to browse through their photos, and they said yes, simple as that.

Preview can be a beacon of photo browsing. This, however, is Beavertail Lighthouse in Jamestown, Rhode Island.



So, I tried that with my photos and found that, because I had imported my photos from my camera by using iPhoto, they had automatically been filed in the most annoying, obtuse way possible: by each...individual...day. That meant if I took photos every day of the year (and it was close to that), there would be 365 folders to open to access my photos. I couldn't just easily open all the photos I took on my trip to Rhode Island; I would have to open or expand one folder for each day at a time.



iPhoto, in the early days, was more of a problem than a solution.

I found this iStinkin' inefficient. I was starting to fear that I was stuck using iPhoto if I ever wanted to see those photos again. So, you see, one of the goals of this book is to send you into the future, free of major annoyances like this that may be forced upon you by some applications.

Tips: Fixing Funky Filing

There is a way to remedy the iPhoto filing structure situation. What I did was to use an application called Expression Media. I imported all of my photos from my iPhoto Library/Originals folder into what is called an Expression Media catalog so that I could browse every single photo at once, despite them being located in a million folders. Then, using Expression Media, I exported them to a single folder.

You can also use iPhoto to undo its own quirky filing system. Simply select your entire photo library, and choose File > Export. Then under the File Export option, send them to a specific folder as Full-Size Images or Originals. You'll have your entire photo library in one place as individual files. Keep in mind that if you have a couple of thousand photos in your library, this process could take a few hours.

Now that you know where your photo files are, step 5 will explain what *not* to do with them.

**STEP
5**

Never Alter Original Files and Camera Filenames

Of course, you will be doing things with your photos, such as resizing for e-mailing or for posting on a Facebook page or applying effects or enhancements to your heart's content. But you will be doing these alterations to a duplicate of the original file created by your camera, and you will file that duplicate somewhere else.

Warning: Don't Tamper with Your Original Files!

The originals are your master files. Simply leave them alone.

Think of it this way—the files that are filed in your month folders are sacred, and you want to keep your filing system of these master files as simple and untouched as possible.

So, let's just leave it at that. After your photos are filed, leave 'em be, and don't touch 'em—duplicate 'em!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Image Editing in Image-Browsing Software

If you ever use software to browse your photos and it lets you make adjustments such as cropping and color changes, make sure that the browsing software is not actually altering your original photos.

This may seem crazy, I know. You can see the photo, and you can see it being altered—why wouldn't that alteration be happening to the original photo? But think of it this way: When you make adjustments to your photos by using software such as current versions of iPhoto, Adobe Photoshop Lightroom, or Aperture, these visual adjustments happen within the world of the software, outside the actual pixels of your photo. The software tells your photos about the adjustments, but it doesn't actually force the changes onto your photo files right away.

If, however, you export a photo from the software with accompanying adjustment information, the software will marry the two and create a new photo that looks exactly like the adjusted image that you saw in the software. You can also manually tell the software to, indeed, write the adjustment information directly to the photos if you want.

In other words, with applications such as iPhoto, Lightroom, and Aperture, the cropping, color enhancing, lightening, and darkening that you do is just an illusion until you decide to make it real.

How to Duplicate Your Photos

Follow these steps to duplicate your photos:

1. Select the photo files you want to duplicate.
You can use whatever selection technique you're comfortable with—drag a selection marquee around the photos, and press Command+A (Mac) or Ctrl+A (Windows) to select all photos. Or Command-click (Mac) or Ctrl-click (Windows) the individual photos you want to select.
2. Press Command+C (Mac) or Ctrl+C (Windows) to copy the files.
3. Press Command+V (Mac) or Ctrl+V (Windows) to duplicate the files in a new folder.

For details on where to file your duplicates, see “Selecting and Duplicating Your Best Shots” in Chapter 6, “Photos for Printing, Sharing, and Reference.”



I duplicated this photo of my mother's cat, filed it, and then e-mailed her the copy.

Now that you've made a home for your photos, the next chapter will give you the grand tour and show you the way around that home.

Beyond the Box: Where to File Movies

There's probably one more thing that your camera does along with its picture-taking abilities (other than look good in front of your face), and this is that it makes movies. I suggest you file your movie files just like your photos but in a separate folder from your Photos folder called Movies, and I suggest, within that Movies folder, that you keep them organized by year and by month. This means you'll be picking them out of your regular photo files as you download photos to your computer. There's an easy way to sort your different file types in separate folders so that you can find your movies all at once.

Here's how to file your movies:

1. Make sure that you're in List view and that you can see the Kind column in your Finder (Mac) or the Type column in My Computer (Windows).

If you don't see this column, on the Mac, open a Finder window in List view, choose View > Show View Options, and select the Kind check box; or in Windows, choose View > Arrange Icons By, and select Type.

2. On the Mac, find the Kind column, and click its title bar. (In Windows, the files will already be sorted by type.)
3. Scroll up or down to find your movie files. They'll have an extension that is something other than .jpg—probably .avi or .mov.
4. Select all these movie files by clicking the first one, holding down the Shift key, and then clicking the last one once (or just click and drag around the lot of them).
5. Drag the selected movie files to the month folder that you created for them.

Do you want a cheap way to edit these little movies together? You can try playing around with iMovie on your Mac, but an inexpensive (about \$30) and simple alternative is QuickTime Pro from the Apple Store online, which allows very basic editing of your movie clips. ■

Makin' movies with a digital camera is like making movies for real, really.

