Photoshop Elements 10
for Windows and Mac OS X

JEFF CARLSON

LEARN THE QUICK AND EASY WAY!
Photoshop Elements 10
FOR WINDOWS AND MAC OS X
JEFF CARLSON
Dedication:
For Emma V.
And for Eliana, who waited.
Special Thanks to:

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Contents at a Glance

Introduction .................................................. xiii

Chapter 1  Editing Photos in 5 Easy Steps ................. 1
Chapter 2  The Basics .......................................... 11
Chapter 3  Managing Photos in the Organizer ............. 33
Chapter 4  Cropping and Straightening Images .......... 83
Chapter 5  Quick Fix Edits .................................... 89
Chapter 6  Making Selections ................................. 97
Chapter 7  Working with Layers ............................. 117
Chapter 8  Adjusting Lighting and Color .................. 151
Chapter 9  Fixing and Retouching Photos .................. 171
Chapter 10 Working with Camera Raw Photos .......... 207
Chapter 11 Filters and Effects ............................... 217
Chapter 12 Painting and Drawing ........................... 235
Chapter 13 Working with Text ............................... 271
Chapter 14 Preparing Images for the Web ................. 291
Chapter 15 Saving and Printing Images .................... 311
Chapter 16 Sharing Your Images ............................ 333
Appendix A  Editor Keyboard Shortcuts (Windows) ....... 347
Appendix B  Organizer Keyboard Shortcuts (Windows) .... 351
Appendix C  Editor Keyboard Shortcuts (Mac OS X) ....... 353
Appendix D  Organizer Keyboard Shortcuts (Mac OS X) .... 357
Index ................................................................. 359
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Table of Contents

Introduction........................................... xiii

Chapter 1  Editing Photos in 5 Easy Steps ............ 1
  1. Import and Open Images ....................... 2
  2. Crop and Rotate ................................ 4
  3. Adjust Lighting and Color .................... 6
  4. Apply Corrections ............................ 8
  5. Save the Photo ................................ 9

Chapter 2  The Basics .................................. 11
  The Editor and the Mac App Store .............. 12
  Understanding the Work Area .................. 12
  Opening and Closing Files ..................... 15
  Selecting Tools .................................. 16
  Using the Options Bar ......................... 17
  Working with Panels ............................ 18
  Using the Zoom Tool ............................ 21
  Moving Around in an Image .................... 24
  Arranging Windows ............................. 25
  Arranging Multiple Views ..................... 26
  Using Rulers .................................... 27
  Setting Up the Grid ............................ 28
  Getting Information about Your Image ........ 29
  Using the Undo History Panel ................. 30
  Using Multitouch Gestures ..................... 32

Chapter 3  Managing Photos in the Organizer ........ 33
  Importing Images ............................... 34
  Open the Organizer Automatically (Mac) ....... 35
  Working with Offline Images ................. 38
  Importing Video Files .......................... 41
  Understanding the Organizer Work Area ....... 42
  Working in the Media Browser ................ 43
  Displaying and Changing Information for Your Photos .... 45
  Marking Photos as Hidden ..................... 46
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4</th>
<th>Cropping and Straightening Images</th>
<th>83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cropping an Image</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crop Tool Size and Resolution Options</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightening a Crooked Photo</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5</th>
<th>Quick Fix Edits</th>
<th>89</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making Quick Fix Edits</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking Through Adjustments</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Guided Edit Mode</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Touch Up Edits</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run Automated Actions with the Guided Edit Action Player</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6</th>
<th>Making Selections</th>
<th>97</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the Selection Tools</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Marquee Tools</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting Areas Using the Lasso Tools</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Selections by Color</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Selection Brush Tool</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting Selections</td>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refine Edge Combines Several Softening and Selection Tools</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softening the Edges of a Selection</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying Selection Borders</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## Chapter 7

**Working with Layers** ........................................ 117

Understanding Layers ......................................... 118
Using the Layers Panel ........................................ 119
Layer Basics ...................................................... 120
Background Layers ............................................. 122
Changing the Layer Order ....................................... 123
Managing Layers .................................................. 125
Merging Layers .................................................... 127
Removing a Halo from an Image Layer .......................... 129
Converting and Duplicating Layers ............................... 130
Copying Layers Between Images ................................. 133
Transforming Layers .............................................. 135
About Opacity and Blending Modes .............................. 138
Creating Clipping Masks .......................................... 141
Using Layer Masks ............................................... 142
Applying Effects with Layer Styles .............................. 144
The Style Settings Dialog ........................................ 146
Making Color and Tonal Changes with
  Adjustment Layers ........................................... 148
Applying Texture or Color with Fill Layers ...................... 150

## Chapter 8

**Adjusting Lighting and Color** .......................... 151

Understanding Tonal Correction ............................... 152
Adjusting Lighting ................................................. 153
Get Smart .......................................................... 153
Editing with Adjustment Layers vs.
  Editing Image Layers ........................................ 154
Adjusting Color .................................................... 159
Your Friend, Roy G. Biv (RGB) ................................ 159
Converting to Black and White ................................ 162
Removing Color ..................................................... 163
Replacing Color ..................................................... 164
Adding a Color Tint to an Image ................................. 167
Color Management Is an Imperfect Science ...................... 168
Managing Color Settings in Elements ......................... 168
About Color Profiles .............................................. 169

## Chapter 9

**Fixing and Retouching Photos** ........................... 171

Repairing Flaws and Imperfections ............................. 172
Clone and Healing Overlays ..................................... 173
Making Content-Aware Repairs ................................ 174
Sharpening Image Detail ......................................... 178
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 10</th>
<th>Working with Camera Raw Photos</th>
<th>207</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working in Adobe Camera Raw</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting White Balance</td>
<td>209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting Lighting</td>
<td>210</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting Clarity and Color Saturation</td>
<td>211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharpening the Image</td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Noise</td>
<td>213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cropping and Rotating the Image</td>
<td>214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving Raw Files</td>
<td>215</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying adjustments to multiple files</td>
<td>215</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of 16-bit Depth</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 11</th>
<th>Filters and Effects</th>
<th>217</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filter and Effect Plug-ins</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Effects Panel</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying Filters and Effects</td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Filter Dialogs</td>
<td>221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulating Action with the Blur Filters</td>
<td>223</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blur Filters</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distorting Images</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Liquify Tools</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correcting Camera Distortion</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Lights and Shadows</td>
<td>231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 12</th>
<th>Painting and Drawing</th>
<th>235</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About Bitmap Images and Vector Graphics</td>
<td>236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling Areas with Color</td>
<td>237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Preserving Transparency</td>
<td>238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

How Does that Paint Bucket Tool Work, Anyway? . . . 240
Filling Areas with a Gradient . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 241
Gradient Types. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 242
Adding a Stroke to a Selection or Layer . . . . . . . . 243
Creating a Stroke Layer. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 244
Using the Brush Tool . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 246
Creating and Saving Custom Brushes . . . . . . . . . . 248
Understanding the Brush Dynamics Panel . . . . . . . . 251
Creating Special Painting Effects . . . . . . . . . . . . . 253
Painting with Texture . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 255
Erasing with Customizable Brush Shapes . . . . . . . . 256
Erasing on Flattened vs. Layered Images. . . . . . . . . 257
Understanding Shapes . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 258
Drawing Basic Shapes . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 259
Transforming Shapes . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 261
Distortion Shortcuts . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 263
Creating Custom Shapes . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 264
About the Shape Geometry Options Panels . . . . . . 265
About the Shape Area Options Buttons . . . . . . . . . 266
Using the Cookie Cutter Tool . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 269

Chapter 13  Working with Text . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 271

Creating and Editing Text . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 272
Changing the Look of Your Text . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 275
Working with Vertical Text . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 280
Creating Text on Paths . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 282
Anti-aliasing Type . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 285
Warping Text . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 286
Creating Text Effects Using Type Masks . . . . . . . . 288
Applying Layer Styles to Text . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 290

Chapter 14  Preparing Images for the Web . . . . . . . . . . 291

Understanding Image Requirements for the Web . . 292
Changing Image Size and Resolution . . . . . . . . . . . 293
Choosing File Formats . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 296
About the Save for Web Dialog . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 296
Optimizing an Image for the Web . . . . . . . . . . . . . 297
The Save for Web Preview Menu . . . . . . . . . . . . . 299
Adjusting Optimization Settings . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 300
Choosing Dithering Options . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 304
Optimizing Images to Specific File Sizes . . . . . . . . 305
About Color Models. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 305
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 15</th>
<th>Saving and Printing Images</th>
<th>311</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with Version Sets</td>
<td>312</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving Files</td>
<td>312</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing Compression Options</td>
<td>314</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding File Formats</td>
<td>314</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photoshop EPS</td>
<td>315</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Preferences for Saving Files</td>
<td>317</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding Personalized File Information in the Editor</td>
<td>318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting and Saving Multiple Images</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Resolutions</td>
<td>322</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaying and Printing Images</td>
<td>322</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downsampling vs. Upsampling</td>
<td>323</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cropping in the Print Dialog</td>
<td>324</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing an Image</td>
<td>324</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Contact Sheet</td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing Paper</td>
<td>327</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Picture Package</td>
<td>330</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering Prints</td>
<td>332</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 16</th>
<th>Sharing Your Images</th>
<th>333</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making Your Own Slide Show (Windows)</td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slideshow Options on the Mac</td>
<td>339</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating an Online Album</td>
<td>340</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uploading to a Photo Sharing Service</td>
<td>343</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start with Compatible Files</td>
<td>343</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending Images by E-mail</td>
<td>344</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix A</th>
<th>Editor Keyboard Shortcuts (Windows)</th>
<th>347</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Organizer Keyboard Shortcuts (Windows)</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Editor Keyboard Shortcuts (Mac OS X)</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Organizer Keyboard Shortcuts (Mac OS X)</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index | 359 |
Welcome to Photoshop Elements, Adobe’s powerful, easy-to-use, image-editing software. Photoshop Elements gives hobbyists, as well as professional photographers and artists, many of the same tools and features found in Adobe Photoshop (long the industry standard), but packaged in a more accessible, intuitive workspace.

Photoshop Elements’ friendly user interface, combined with its bargain-basement price, has made it an instant hit with the new wave of amateur digital photographers lured by the recent proliferation of sophisticated, low-cost digital cameras.

Photoshop Elements makes it easy to retouch your digital photos; apply special effects, filters, and styles; prepare images for the Web; and even create wide-screen panoramas from a series of individual photos. And Photoshop Elements provides several features geared specifically to the beginning user. Of particular note are the Quick and Guided photo editing controls that make complex image corrections easy to apply.

Photoshop Elements 10 provides new tools and enhancements that not only help stretch the bounds of your creativity, but also help to make your quick photo corrections and creative retouching even simpler and more fun than before.

In the next few pages, I'll cover some of Photoshop Elements’ key features (both old and new) and share a few thoughts to help you get the most from this book. Then you can be on your way to mastering Photoshop Elements’ simple, fun, and sophisticated image-editing tools.
What’s New in Photoshop Elements 10

For most of its existence, Elements has been “Photoshop Light,” a scaled-back version of Adobe’s image-editing behemoth. Over time, Adobe has retooled Elements to be a powerful asset for digital photographers.

Photoshop Elements 10 continues Adobe’s quest to make an image editing application that responds to people’s real-world needs. There’s a lot of power in being able to apply adjustment layers and clipping masks and filters, but that isn’t always helpful when your goal, for example, is to just improve the exposure in a too-dark photo—and you don’t have the time to learn all the science behind the tools. Here are a few standout items.

The Organizer is the Elements component that lets you manage your photo library—a library that, if yours is like mine, grows larger every year. To help you locate photos, the Organizer now includes visual search features for finding images with similar characteristics or shared objects. You can also locate duplicate images, or easily stack pictures that are close enough to being duplicates.

The Editor, the component of Elements where you do the actual editing, now displays customizable guides when cropping photos for more control over getting the best composition out of your shot. For people who do more than just correct the colors and tones in their photos, Elements now boasts new tools for creating text on selections, paths, and shapes.

Other enhancements include new Guided Edits (such as Depth of Field and Orton Effect), a heap of new patterns and effects for the Smart Brush, new templates for online albums and photo books, and more.

What’s New in This Edition of the Book

I’ve reworked much of the book to better reflect how people today are working with digital photos:

- Looking to get started quickly—as in, you have a memory card full of photos and you want to process them now? A new Chapter 1 offers an easy five-step process for editing nearly all digital photos, with pointers on where to find more detailed information about each step elsewhere in the book.

- A common query (far more common than I expected) from new users is how to use Elements to crop and resize photos. Information about cropping and straightening images is now broken out into its own chapter.

- Many consumer digital cameras now capture images in Camera Raw formats, which offer more image data and therefore more flexibility when editing. Opening raw images brings up the powerful Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) utility. Now, camera raw has gotten the full-chapter treatment, with much more detail on what the ACR controls do—and when to use or ignore them.

- I’ve shifted and combined chapters to make them work better; for example, I combined two chapters that separately dealt with adjusting lighting and colors into one (Chapter 8), and moved the chapter about working with layers closer to the front of the book (mostly to emphasize the utility of editing with adjustment layers later).

- Unlike the previous two editions, this book covers both the Windows and Mac OS X versions of Elements.
How to Use This Book

This Visual QuickStart Guide, like others in the series, is a task-based reference. Each chapter focuses on a specific area of the application and presents it in a series of concise, illustrated steps. I encourage you to follow along using your own images. I’ve also made 20 sample images available for download at peachpit.com/elements10vqs. After you complete the process for registering your book, look for the “Access Bonus Content” text next to the book title in the Registered Products tab. I believe the best way to learn is by doing, and this Visual QuickStart Guide is the perfect vehicle for that style of learning.

This book is meant to be a reference work, and although it’s not expected that you’ll read through it in sequence from front to back, I’ve made an attempt to order the chapters in a logical fashion.

The first chapter speeds through five steps to import, edit, and share your digital photos. The next chapter takes you on a tour of the work area to make sure we’re all on the same page. From there you dive into importing pictures and managing your photo library using the Organizer. Then you explore cropping and straightening, making selections, working with layers, adjusting lighting and color, retouching and correcting images, applying effects, painting, and adding text. Next, you move along to learn a variety of techniques for saving, printing, and sharing images, including special formatting options for distributing images over the Web.

This book is suitable for the beginner just starting in digital photography and image creation, as well as hobbyists, photo enthusiasts, intermediate-level photographers, illustrators, and designers.

Sharing space with Windows and Mac OS X

Photoshop Elements is almost exactly the same on Windows as it is under Mac OS X, which is one reason I combined both versions into the same title this time around. In the few places where a feature is found in one environment but not the other, or if the steps are different for each, I make it clear which version is being discussed.

You’ll also see that the screenshots are a mix of Windows and Mac—but despite obvious cosmetic differences such as title bars and menu bars, everything pretty much tracks the same within the user interface itself.

I also frequently mention keyboard shortcuts, which are faster methods of accessing commands compared to choosing items from menus. Keyboard shortcuts are great time-savers and prevent you from having to constantly refocus your energy and attention as you jump from image window to menu bar and back again.

When this book introduces a command, the keyboard shortcut is frequently also listed, with the Windows version appearing first and the Mac version trailing after a forward-slash. For example, the keyboard shortcut for the Copy command is displayed as “Ctrl+C/Command-C.”

You’ll find a complete list of Photoshop Elements’ keyboard shortcuts in the appendices.
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Have you ever taken a photo, then looked at it later and realized it would be much better if only you had gotten a little closer to your subject, or if a person was to the left of the frame instead of the center? Or maybe the shot is great except for a trash can peeking into the edge of the frame. The ability to crop an image can instantly improve the composition of a photo or remove unwanted elements at its borders.

Another common annoyance is a photo that’s just a bit off-kilter. Using Elements’ straightening tools, you can bend that horizon back into line (or skew it further for a dramatic effect).

In This Chapter
Cropping an Image 84
Straightening a Crooked Photo 87
Cropping an Image

Professional photographers almost always use cropping techniques to achieve perfect composition. In spite of all the advances in film and digital cameras, rarely is a picture taken with its subjects perfectly composed or its horizon line set at just the proper level. More often than not, subjects are off-center, and unwanted objects intrude into the edge of the picture frame. Photoshop Elements offers two simple and quick methods for cropping your images.

To crop an image using the Crop tool:

1. Select the Crop tool from the toolbox (or press C) A.

2. In the image window, drag to define the area of the image you want to keep B. The image outside the selected area is dimmed to indicate the portions that will be deleted.

3. If you want to modify your selection, move the pointer over one of the eight handles on the edges of the selection; then drag the handle to resize it C.

4. When you’re satisfied with your crop selection, double-click within the selection, press Enter, or click the Commit button on the lower corner of the selection D. The image is cropped to the area you selected E.

If you’re not satisfied with your selection and want to start over, click the Cancel button.

A Crop selection includes an overlay splitting the area into thirds to help you compose the shot B. In the options bar, choose other guides from the Overlay drop-down menu.

A The Crop tool.

B Elements highlights the image that will be preserved and dims the portions to be deleted.

C You can easily move and resize the area you choose to crop by dragging the handles around the perimeter of the cropping selection.

D The Commit and Cancel buttons appear on the lower edge of the crop selection.

TIP You can define color and opacity options for the Crop tool shield (the dimmed area that surrounds your cropped selection) in the Display and Cursors area of the Preferences dialog. The default color is black, and the default opacity is 75 percent.
To resize an image to specific dimensions using the Crop tool:

1. Follow steps 1–3 on the previous page to specify an area to crop.

2. From the Aspect Ratio drop-down menu, choose a common photo size.
   Or, in the options bar, enter a size in the Width and Height fields. The double-arrow button between the fields swaps values, making it easy to turn a horizontal crop area into a vertical one, and vice-versa.

3. If you need to change the image’s resolution, edit the Resolution field; you can define it in pixels per inch or pixels per centimeter using the associated drop-down menu. However, see the sidebar on the next page, “The Crop Tool Size and Resolution Options,” for important information.

4. Double-click within the selection, press Enter, or click the Commit button to crop the photo.

To crop an image using the Rectangular Marquee tool:

1. Select the Rectangular Marquee tool from the toolbox, or press M.

2. In the image window, drag to define the area of the image you want to keep.

3. From the Image menu, choose Crop. The image is cropped to the area you selected.

**Tip** If you’re planning to print your photos using a commercial print service, be sure to crop your images to a standard size first. The images that digital cameras create don’t match standard photo aspect ratios, which can lead to prints with black bars around the edges.
The Crop Tool Size and Resolution Options

Every digital photo is made up of millions of pixels, colored squares that you typically never see unless you’re zoomed in; the more pixels, the higher the resolution, and in general the more detail you’re able to see.

If you’re cropping the edges of your photo slightly, you don’t need to worry about resolution. However, if you make dramatic cuts, like keeping just one corner of a photo, you could significantly reduce the quality of the image if you print it later.

Using the Crop tool’s Aspect Ratio and Resolution options can lead you down a slippery slope, introducing unexpected image quality problems—foremost among them, unwanted resolution upsampling, which creates a fuzzy, ghosted, and generally out-of-focus effect. For more information on upsampling, see the “Downsampling vs. Upsampling” sidebar in Chapter 14.

As an example, let’s say you have a 4 x 5-inch image with a resolution of 150 pixels per inch. Select the Crop tool, choose “4 x 6 in” from the Aspect Ratio drop-down menu, and enter 150 in the Resolution field. Define the area you want to crop (which by definition will be a smaller area than the original 4 x 5 image), and then crop.

The area you crop from the original image, no matter the selected size, will be forced up to 4 x 6, and will introduce upsampling.

You can use the Aspect Ratio drop-down menu to control the Width and Height ratios of your cropping selection; just leave the Resolution text field blank, and use the Image Size dialog (after you crop) to set the image resolution (described in Chapter 14).

Be cautious when using the Crop tool’s size and resolution options. Here, an image was cropped with a final size defined that was larger than the original image (top). During cropping, the image was upscaled, sacrificing image quality (bottom). Both detail boxes are shown at 100 percent.
Straightening a Crooked Photo

Sometimes even your most carefully composed photos may be just a little off angle, with a not-quite-level horizon line or tilted portrait subjects. The nifty Straighten tool makes short work out of getting your crooked photos back into alignment.

Or, perhaps you’ve scanned an image that shifted when you closed the scanner cover. Elements can automatically straighten it, with the option of cropping it to a clean rectangle.

To use the Straighten tool:

1. Select the Straighten tool from the toolbox, or press P.

2. Using a horizon line or other subject as a point of reference, click and drag from one side of the photo to the other.

   When you release the mouse button, your image rotates and aligns along the new horizontal plane you defined.

3. Use either the Crop or Marquee Selection tool to remove any extra border area introduced while straightening.

To straighten a scanned image:

From the Image menu, choose one of the following:

- Rotate > Straighten and Crop Image.
- Rotate > Straighten Image.

The Straighten and Crop Image command will do its best to both straighten the image and delete the extra background surrounding the image. The Straighten Image command simply straightens without cropping.

continues on next page
Both methods have their own sets of limitations. Rotate and Straighten works best if there is a space of at least 50 extra pixels or so surrounding the image. If this surrounding border is much smaller, Elements can have a difficult time distinguishing the actual photograph from the border and may not do a clean job of cropping.

Although you’ll still need to manually crop your image after using the Straighten Image command, this method is probably a better choice, because you avoid the risk of Elements indiscriminately cropping out areas of your image you may want to keep.

For the surest control, however, straighten your images using the Crop tool as described in the next procedure.

To straighten a scanned image using the Crop tool:

1. Select the Crop tool from the toolbox.
2. In the image window, drag to select the area of the image you want to crop and straighten.
3. Move the pointer outside the edge of the selection area until it changes to a rotation pointer D.
4. Drag outside of the selection until its edges are aligned with the image border.
5. Drag the selection handles, as necessary, to fine-tune the positioning; then press Enter E.

The image is cropped and automatically straightened.

D After you define a preliminary cropping selection (top), rotate the selection so it aligns with your image border (bottom).

E Make final adjustments to your cropping selection (top) before Elements automatically crops and straightens the image.
Index

A

ACR. See Adobe Camera Raw
Acrobat Reader, 315, 334, 339
Action Player, 95
adaptive color, 305
Add Caption dialog, 47
Add Media button, 335
Add to Selection tool, 187
Adjust Color command, 129
Adjust Color Curves dialog, 160, 161
Adjust Date and Time dialog, 46, 48
Adjust Intensity sliders, 162
Adjust Sharpness command, 178–179, 180
adjustment layers
  adding texture, 150
  adjusting lighting, 7, 153–156
  applying, 7, 149
  color/tonal changes with, 148–149, 163, 167
  considerations, 118
  creating, 148–149
  Smart Paint effect, 196
  vs. editing image layers, 154
Adjustments panel, 7, 153, 155, 163
Adobe Acrobat Reader, 315, 334, 339
Adobe Camera Raw (ACR). See also raw images
  adjusting clarity, 211
  adjusting lighting, 210
  adjusting saturation, 211
  adjusting white balance, 209
  camera profiles, 208
  changing defaults, 216
cropping images, 214
noise reduction, 213
rotating/straightening images, 214
saving raw images, 215–216
sharpening images, 212
working in, 208
Adobe Exchange site, 218
Adobe Photoshop Elements. See Photoshop Elements
AdobeRGB color profile, 169
Advanced dialog, 36–38
airbrush, 247
Album Details dialog, 61
albums, 61–66
  adding photos to, 61, 62
  arranging photos in, 63
  backing up, 61, 81, 82
  categories, 64
  creating, 61–62
  creating from folders, 62
  deleting, 64, 76
  groups of, 61–64
  names, 61
  nesting, 64
  removing photos from, 63, 76
  renaming, 62
  reordering photos in, 63
  from search results, 66
  shared, 64, 340–342
  smart, 65–66
  synchronizing, 61, 76–77
  viewing, 62
Aligned option, 176
alignment
  image pixels, 176
  images, 87–88, 195
  layer objects, 137
text, 279
Alignment tool, 195
Alt key, 103, 212
Ambience light property, 233
ambient lighting, 233
Amount slider, 178, 212
Angle option, 224
Angle value, 251
Anti- Alias option, 107, 114, 115
Anti-alias slider, 240
anti-aliasing
  color fills, 240
  color selections, 107
  softening edges, 114
type, 285
App Store, 12
Apply Metadata fields, 37
Arrange Documents button, 25
arrow keys, 41, 102
arrowhead options, 265
artifacts, 189, 212
As a Copy option, 313
Asian language fonts, 281
Asian text options, 280–281
aspect ratio, 85, 86, 214, 324
.atn extension, 95
attachments, e-mail, 343
attributes
  brushes, 250
  Hidden, 46
  image analysis, 55
  quick fix, 6
  searching photos by, 71
  smart albums, 65
  strokes, 244
text, 275
audio
  adding to slide shows, 335
captions, 48
  searching for, 71
audio narration, 337
Author metadata field, 37
Auto button, 210
Auto Color Correction command, 159
Auto Contrast command, 154
Auto Levels command, 153, 154
Auto Sharpen command, 178
Auto Smart Fix command, 153
Auto-Analyzer feature, 55
Automatic Download option, 35, 36
B
Background Color control, 14
Background Eraser tool, 184–185, 192
Background From Layer command, 132
background layers
  considerations, 122
  converting layers to/from, 130, 132
  flattening images to, 129
  overview, 122
  Send to Back command, 124
  styles and, 145
  transparency and, 122, 139, 306
backgrounds. See also foregrounds
color, 14, 238, 308, 325
  converting layers to/from, 130, 132
  converting to black and white, 238
cropping, 4
  erasing, 184–185
  merging with foregrounds, 158
  removing foregrounds from, 186–187
  transparent, 122, 185, 192, 306–308
Backspace key, 104
Backup Catalog command, 79
backups
  albums, 61, 81, 82
catalogs, 78, 79
library, 80
location, 79
multiple copies, 82
online, 80–82
on Photoshop.com, 80–82
preferences, 76, 80
synchronizing, 80, 81, 82
Backup/Synchronization preferences, 80
batch processing images, 311, 319–321
batches
adding keyword tags to, 53
import, 44, 53
viewing by, 44
Before and After options, 90
Bend slider, 286
bevels, 147
Beziér curves, 283
Bicubic option, 294
Bicubic Sharper option, 294
Bicubic Smoother option, 294
Bilinear option, 294
binoculars icon, 53, 60
bitmap images, 236, 272, 273
bitmap shapes, 268
black and white
converting backgrounds/foregrounds to, 238
converting color to, 162
pixels, 304
Remove Color command, 163
resolution, 322
scanning images in, 40
black levels, 155
Blacks slider, 210
blending
edges, 158
layers, 120, 138, 140
pixels, 114, 189, 195
Simple Blending, 157
Smart Blending, 157
with Smudge tool, 181
Blending Mode menu, 138, 140
blending modes, 120, 138, 140, 238
Bloat tool, 227, 228
Blue Omni lighting style, 232
Blur filters, 223–226
Blur More filter, 226
Blur tool, 14, 180, 181
blurring
circular blur, 225
images, 180
motion blur, 179, 223–226
objects, 180
specific areas/objects, 180
BMP files, 314
Border command, 116
borders, 245, 325. See also selection borders
bounding boxes, 121
bracketing mode, 157
brightness, 152, 155, 160, 165, 210
Brightness slider, 210
Brightness/Contrast command, 155
Bring Forward option, 124
Bring to Front option, 124
Browse for Folder dialog, 320
Browser Dither command, 310
browsers. See Media Browser; Web browsers
Brush Dynamics panel, 248–251
brush sets, 241, 252
Brush tool, 14, 246–256
brushes. See also painting
airbrush, 247
attributes, 250
Brush tool, 14, 246–256
Clone Stamp tool, 14, 172, 175–176
custom, 248–252
Healing Brush, 14, 172, 177
Impressionist Brush tool, 253–254
Liquify tools, 228
Magic Extractor, 186–187
managing, 252
presets, 246, 248, 249, 252, 256
brushes, continued
  Selection Brush tool, 100, 109–110
  shapes, 248, 257
  size, 173, 175, 177, 247, 254
  Smart Brush tool, 14, 196–197
  Smoothing Brush, 187
  Spot Healing Brush, 8, 172, 173, 174
Burn tool, 182, 183
burst rate, 158
Byte Order option, 316

C

calendar view, 70–71
calibrating monitor, 168–169
camera profiles, 208
camera raw images, 207–216. See also Adobe Camera Raw
  16-bit depth limitations, 216
  adjusting clarity, 211
  adjusting lighting, 210
  adjusting saturation, 211
  adjusting white balance, 209
  considerations, 37, 343
cropping, 214
importing, 37
overview, 207
preferences, 317
profiles, 208
QuickEdits and, 67
rotating/straightening, 214
saving, 215–216
sharpening, 212
cameras. See digital cameras
Cancel button, 91, 93, 187, 216, 229
Canon ScanGear software, 40
Canvas options, 5
captions, 47, 48
capturing video, 41
card readers, 2, 34
Catalog Manager, 78
catalogs, 62, 78–79
categories, 57–60. See also keyword tags
  albums, 64
  assigning keyword tags to, 59
  color, 57
  creating, 57
  deleting, 60
  keyword tags, 49
  moving tags between, 59
  nesting, 58
  subcategories. See subcategories
tagged photos, 57–60
  viewing photos in, 60
category icon, 53, 57
CDs
  backups on, 82
  importing images from, 38
  slide shows on, 340
Center option, 279
circles, 101
circular blur, 225
clear, 211
clipboard, 134, 289
clipping indicators, 210
clipping mask, 120, 141, 149
Clone Stamp tool, 14, 172, 175–176
Clone tool, 176, 202
CMYK files, 322
CMYK mode, 168
color
  adaptive, 305
  adjusting, 6–7
  backgrounds, 14, 238, 308, 325
  borders, 325
categories, 57
  converting to black and white, 162
default, 14, 84
directional, 232
filling areas with, 237–240
foregrounds, 14, 238
  grids, 28
halos, 129, 307
lighting, 232
matte, 307, 308
monitors, 169, 299, 305, 310
numeric values for, 29
optimizing, 169
Paint Bucket tool, 14, 239–240
perceptual, 305
presets, 307
removing, 163
replacing, 164–166
restrictive, 305
sampled, 108
saturation, 160, 163, 165, 183, 211
selections, 99, 106–108, 110
selective, 305
shapes, 259, 264, 267
supported by Web browsers, 285
text, 279, 285
transitions, 241, 304
Web images, 292, 296, 301–308
color cast, 154, 159
color channels, 159
color correction, 159–161
color curves, 160
color lookup table, 302
color management, 151, 168–169
color models, 168, 302, 305
color modes, 29
color panels, 302, 303, 304
Color Picker, 57, 232, 237, 239, 307
color profiles, 169, 299, 301, 313
color range, 155
Color Reduction Algorithm menu, 302, 305
Color Settings dialog, 169
Color slider, 213
color space, 299
color swatches, 325
color tints, 167, 209
color values, 308
Colorize option, 167
Commit button, 4, 6, 91, 92, 282
Commit Transform button, 135, 136, 262, 263
Compatibility options, 320
going, 192–193
compression, 314–316. See also optimization
choosing options for, 292, 314
GIF, 292, 296, 302–304
JPEG, 296, 300–302, 314, 315
lossless, 314
lossy, 296, 314
LZW, 314, 316
PNG, 292, 296
RLE, 314
ZIP, 314, 315
connection speed, 299
Constrain Proportions option, 295
Contact Book dialog, 345
contact information, 345
contact sheets, 326–329
Content-Aware option, 173
content-aware repairs, 173, 174
Contiguous option, 107
Contiguous slider, 240
Contract command, 116
contrast, 105, 154
Contrast slider, 210
tool points, 283
Cookie Cutter tool, 14, 269–270
Copy Files on Import option, 38
copying
to Clipboard, 289
As a Copy option, 313
files on import, 38
images, 176
layers, 130, 133–134
shapes, 266
copyright notice, 37, 318
Correct Camera Distortion filter, 230
corrections. See also image editing
applying, 8
color, 159–161
corrections, continued
- Gaussian Blur, 179
- Lens Blur, 179
- Motion Blur, 179
- tonal, 152
Create Adjustment Layer button, 148
Create Adjustment Layer menu, 150
Create Subfolders menu, 35
Create Texture option, 173
crop marks, 325
Crop to Remove Background option, 5
Crop tool, 4, 14, 84–86, 88, 92
Crop tool shield, 84
cropping images, 84–86
- in Adobe Camera Raw, 214
- with Crop tool, 84–85, 92
- for printing, 324–325
- procedure for, 4
- removing background, 4, 5
- straightening during, 5, 87–88
CSS styles, 308
Custom Overlay Color button, 114
Custom Shape tool, 264–268, 269
Cut command, 113

D
Darken Highlights slider, 156
darkening images, 156, 183
date formats, 35
date ranges, 70–71
Date View, 70
date/time
- adjusting for photos, 45–46
- sorting thumbnails by, 44
time zones, 46
- viewing, 48
Day View window, 71
Default button, 210
Default Colors control, 14
Defringe Layer command, 129
Delete key, 104
Delete Options area, 36
deleting
- albums, 64, 76
- categories, 60
- images, 36
- keyword tags, 51
- layer masks, 143
- layers, 119, 122
- selections, 113
- subcategories, 60
- synchronized photos, 77
Depth menu, 216
Deselect command, 113
Detail button, 212, 213
Detail slider, 212
Details option, 45
Difference mode, 138
diffusion, 303, 304
Diffusion option, 304
digital cameras
- background layers and, 121, 122
distortion, 230
- embedded file information, 45, 318
- importing images from, 2–3, 34–37
digital negative (.DNG) files, 216
Directional lighting type, 232
Display button, 44
displays. See monitors
Distance option, 224
Distance slider, 146
Distort filters, 227–229
distortion
- camera, 230
- images, 227–229
- layer images, 137
- shapes, 263
text, 286–287
Distribute command, 137
Dither slider, 303
dithering, 303, 304, 310
Index

.DNG (digital negative) files, 216
docking panels, 19
document window, 21–24, 27
Dodge tool, 182
Done button, 93
dots per inch (dpi), 320–321, 322
downsampling, 294, 323
dpi (dots per inch), 320–321, 322
Draw Custom Path button, 283
drawing tools, 236, 259–260
drop shadows, 146, 284
duplicate images, 73
Duplicate Layer command, 131
Duplicate Layer dialog, 131
dust removal, 8
DVDs
  backups on, 82
  importing images from, 38
  slide shows on, 340

E

Edge Blending option, 158
Edge Extension option, 230
edges
  contrast, 105
  feathering, 115
  jagged, 114, 116
  refining, 114, 115
  smoothing, 114, 116
  softening, 114–115
Edit button, 3
Edit Keyword Tag dialog, 51, 54, 59
Edit Tag Icon dialog, 54
editing. See image editing
editing text, 273, 284
Editor
  closing files in, 15
  described, xiv, 2, 12
  importing images into, 2
  Mac App Store, 12
  opening files/images in, 2, 15
  Quick Fix feature, 6, 89–95
effects, 217–222. See also filters; specific effects
  applying, 220, 222
  changing look of, 222
  displaying, 219
  halftoning, 142
  layers and, 222
  lighting, 231–233
  names, 219, 222
  overview, 217
  previews, 220
  text, 286–290
  undoing, 221
  vs. filters, 218
  warp effect, 286–287
Effects icons, 144
Effects panel, 144, 218–225, 231
Elliptical Marquee tool, 100, 101–102
E-mail feature, 305, 341, 344–345
Embed Color Profile box, 313
Encapsulated PostScript (EPS) format, 315
EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) format, 315
Eraser tool, 14, 158, 189, 256–257
erasing, 184–185, 256–257
EXIF data, 48, 318
EXIF profiles, 317
Expand command, 116
Exposure light property, 233
Exposure slider, 210
exposures, 157–158
extensions, file, 95, 317
eye icon, 121
Eyedropper Color option, 307
Eyedropper tools, 14, 108, 161, 164–166

F

face recognition, 56
Face Tagging feature, 56
Facebook, 343
Faces option, 195
Fade slider, 251
fastening points, 105
Feather command, 115, 224
feathering selections, 114, 115, 224
file extensions, 95, 317
file formats. See formats
File Info dialog, 318
file size. See also image size
  pixels and, 293–295
  resampling and, 293, 294, 295
  resolution and, 293–295
files. See also images
  adding personalized data to, 318
  BMP, 314
  closing, 15
  CMYK, 322
  compatibility, 317, 320
  displaying information about, 29
  DNG, 216
  formats. See formats
  importing images from, 38
  JPEG, 216, 343
  music, 78
  names, 35, 46, 312, 320
  opening from Open dialog box, 15
  opening in Editor, 2, 15
  opening in Organizer, 2, 15
  raw. See raw images
  recent, 317
  saving. See saving
  sidecar, 215
  version sets, 312
  video, 41
Fill command, 237–238
Fill dialog, 237–238
fill layers, 150, 237–238
Fill Light slider, 210
fills
  color, 237–240
  gradient, 241–242, 289
Filter dialogs, 221
Filter Options dialog, 220–221
filters, 217–234. See also effects; specific filters
  applying, 220–221
  blur, 223–226
  displaying, 219
  multiple, 221
  names, 219, 222
  overview, 217
  plug-ins, 218, 219
  previews, 220
  simulating action, 223–226
  undoing, 221, 227, 229
  vs. effects, 218
Find bar, 71, 72
Find button, 54
Find People for Tagging feature, 56
finding images, 69–73
  by attributes, 71
  in date view, 70–71
  displaying date range, 70–71
  duplicates, 73
  on hard disk, 38, 199
  similar objects, 73
  smart albums for, 66
  with text searches, 69
  with timeline, 70
  visually similar images, 72
Flash-based slide shows, 340–342
Flashlight lighting style, 232
Flatten Image command, 129
flattening images, 129
flattening stacks, 75
flicking gesture, 32
Flickr, 343
Flip Image option, 325
Flipbook command, 335
flipbooks, 335
flipping images, 325
Floodlight lighting style, 232
folder icon, 53
Folder Location option, 44, 62
folders
    adding keyword tags to, 53
    browsing, 35
    creating, 35
    creating albums from, 62
    creating keyword tags from, 49
date formats, 35
grouping photos by, 44
importing images from, 38
location, 44, 53, 62
My Pictures, 24, 35
names, 35, 49
saving to, 35
subfolders, 35
watch, 39
font families, 276
fonts, 273, 276, 277, 281, 290
Foreground Color tool, 14
foregrounds. See also backgrounds
color, 14, 238
converting to black and white, 238
merging with backgrounds, 158
removing from backgrounds, 186–187
formats
    choosing, 9
    EPS, 315
    GIF, 292, 296, 302–304, 315
graphics. See also images
    adding to slide shows, 337
    bitmap, 236
    formats for, 292, 296, 315
    vector, 236, 264
grayscale, 161, 163
Grid, 28
Group Shot option, 194, 195
grouping items
    albums, 61–64
    automatically, 37
    in folders, 44
Gaussian Blur correction, 179
Gaussian Blur filter, 226
General area, 48
Geometry Options panel, 260, 265
gestures, multitouch, 32
Get Media button, 2, 36, 38
Get Photos and Video option, 2, 34, 38, 39, 40
Get Photos button, 38
Get Photos from Files and Folders dialog, 38
Get Photos menu item, 38
GIF compression, 292, 296, 302–304
GIF format, 292, 296, 302–304, 315
Gloss light property, 233
glow effect, 146
gradient fills, 241–242, 289
gradient picker, 241
Gradient tool, 14, 241–242, 289
graphics. See also images
    adding to slide shows, 337
    bitmap, 236
    formats for, 292, 296, 315
    vector, 236, 264
grayscale, 161, 163
Grid, 28
Group Shot option, 194, 195
grouping items
    albums, 61–64
    automatically, 37
    in folders, 44
grouping items, continued
- layers, 141
- panels, 19
- thumbnails, 43
Grow command, 106, 108
Grow or Shrink Canvas to Fit option, 5
Guided Edit mode, 93, 196
Guided Edit pane, 95, 188, 196
guides, 28, 84
Guides & Grid Preferences dialog box, 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-beam, 272, 273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC Profile option, 301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>icons, 20, 54, 125, 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>image editing. See also corrections in 5 easy steps, 1–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjustment layers, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>applying corrections, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto-Analyzer feature, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Clone Stamp tool, 172, 175–176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>color correction, 159–161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content-aware repairs, 173, 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dust removal, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhancing detail, 180–181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Edit mode, 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manual adjustments, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matching image style, 198–199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during previews, 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick Fix feature, 6, 89–95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recomposing scenes, 190–191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red eye correction, 14, 36, 94, 206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repairing flaws/imperfections, 172–177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reverting to original, 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selecting areas for, 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharpening images, 178–179, 181, 212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Brush tool, 14, 196–197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Fix slider, 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Paint selection area, 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>touchups, 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tracking edits with version sets, 312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undoing edits, 91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>halftoning, 142, 304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halos, 114, 129, 212, 242, 307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand tool, 14, 23, 24, 227, 228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard disk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>backups to, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considerations, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finding images on, 38, 199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>importing images from, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saving files to, 312–313, 339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardness slider, 251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing Brush tool, 14, 172, 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden attribute, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hidden images, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hide Hidden Files command, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight Details control, 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight Skin Tones button, 191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highlights, 156, 157, 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>histograms, 152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history, undo operations, 30–31, 272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History area, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home icon, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal Type Mask tool, 288–290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal Type tool, 272, 280, 281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hue, 160, 165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hue Jitter slider, 251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hue slider, 160, 165, 166, 167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hue/Saturation dialog, 160, 167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index 369

Image Size dialog, 293–295
images. See also graphics
  8-bit, 216
  16-bit, 216
adding notes to, 48
adjusting multiple, 215
albums. See albums
aligning, 87–88, 195
author name, 37, 318
auto-analyzing, 55
batch processing, 311, 319–321
bitmap, 236, 272, 273
black and white. See black and white
blurring. See blurring
captions, 47, 48
closing, 15
compositing, 192–193
contact sheets, 326–329
converting to black and white, 162
copying. See copying
copyright notice, 37, 318
cropping. See cropping images
darkening, 156, 183
date/time information, 45–46, 48
deleting, 36
deselecting, 37
displaying at 100%, 23
displaying date range, 70–71
displaying information about, 29, 45–48
distorting, 137, 227–229
dodging, 182
downsampling, 294, 323
duplicates, 73
editing. See image editing
embedded information in, 45
enhancing detail, 180–181
filling text selections with, 289
finding. See finding images
flattening, 129
flipping, 325
full screen mode, 67–68
hidden, 46
importing. See importing
index, 273
inverting, 325
JPEG. See JPEG entries
layer, 135–137, 257
lightening, 156, 182
magnification level, 21–23, 24, 26
masking, 110, 114, 269–270
matching style of, 198–199
merging portions of, 194–195
moving around in, 24
multiple views of, 26
names, 35, 46, 48, 312
negatives, 312
notification of new images, 39
offline, 38
in Online Albums, 340–342
opening in Editor, 2, 15
opening in Organizer, 2, 15
ordering prints from, 332
panoramic, 200–205
previewing. See previews
printing. See printing
raster, 269
rating, 47, 67
raw. See raw images
removing from albums, 63, 76
removing tags from, 53
renaming, 48
replacing portions of, 192–193
resampling, 293, 294, 295
resizing, 190, 191
resolution. See resolution
reverting to original, 91
rotating. See rotating images
sample, xv
saving. See saving
scaling, 135
scanning. See scanning images
scrolling in, 32
images, continued
- sending via e-mail, 305, 341, 344–345
- sharing. See sharing images
- sharpening, 178–179, 181, 212
- size. See image size
- slide shows, 67, 334–339
- sorting, 44
- stacks, 36, 74–75
- storing in catalogs, 78–79
- straightening, 5, 87–88, 214
- synchronizing, 76–77, 80
- tagging. See keyword tags
- text on. See text; type
- thumbnails. See thumbnails
- tinted, 167
- title information, 45
- upsampling, 86, 294, 323
- viewing areas of, 24
- viewing on screen, 323
- vignettes, 230
- visually similar images, 72
- zooming in/out. See zoom entries

Import Batch option, 44
import batches, 44, 53
Import command, 319

importing
- customizing process for, 36–37
- frames from video footage, 41
- icon images, 54
- images from CD/DVD, 38
- images from digital camera, 2–3, 34–37
- images from files/folders, 38
- images from hard disk, 38
- images into Editor, 3
- images into Organizer, 2
- images to/from iPhoto, 3, 40
- images using Watch Folders, 39
- as offline images, 38
- previewing photos before importing, 36
- raw images, 37
- scanned images, 39–40
- tags from images, 50
  - via dragging/dropping, 38
  - video files, 41
- Impressionist Brush tool, 253–254
- index images, 273
- Info panel, 29
- inner glow, 146
- input devices, 32
- Interactive Layout option, 203–204
- interlacing, 303
- Internet connection settings, 299
- Internet Explorer, 296
- interpolation, 294–295
- intersections, 112
- iPhoto
  - automatic launch, 35
  - importing images into, 3
  - importing photos from, 40
  - slide shows, 339

J

JPEG compression, 296, 300–302, 314, 315
JPEG files, 216, 343
JPEG format
  - considerations, 207, 292, 312
  - described, 296, 314, 315

K

keyboard shortcuts
  - Mac, 353–357
  - resizing type, 277
  - slide show navigation, 339
  - tool selection, 16
  - Windows, 347–351
Keyword Tag Cloud, 68
keyboard tags, 49–54. See also categories
  - assigning to categories, 59
  - attaching to folder groups, 53
  - attaching to import batches, 53
attaching to photos, 52
changing icon for, 54
creating, 49, 50
deleting, 51
described, 49
displaying, 48
ingoing, 51, 54, 59
face recognition, 56
identifying photos, 52–54
importing from images, 50
Keyword Tag Cloud, 68
location of, 49
names, 49
notes, 49
organizing with categories, 57–60
properties, 51
removing tags from photos, 53
Smart Albums, 65
sorting photos, 52–54
subcategories, 58
text searches, 69
viewing tagged photos, 53
Keyword Tags area, 48
Keyword Tags field, 50
Keyword Tags pane, 49–54

L
lasso tools, 14, 98, 103–105
Layer Bounds command, 274
Layer From Background command, 132
layer images, 135–137, 257
layer masks, 142–143
layer objects, 137
Layer via Copy command, 130
Layer via Cut command, 130
layers, 117–150
activating, 119, 121
adjustment. See adjustment layers
applying strokes to, 243–244
background. See background layers
blending modes, 120, 138, 140
changing order of, 123–124
compression and, 316
converting backgrounds to/from, 132
converting selections to, 130
copying, 130, 131, 133–134
creating, 120
default, 118
deleting, 119, 122
dragging/dropping, 133, 134
effects and, 222
fill, 150, 237–240
flattening, 129
grouping/ungrouping, 141
image, 154
linking, 125
locked, 119, 124, 125, 126
managing, 125–126
masks, 143
merging, 127–129
names, 120, 125, 131
opacity, 120, 138–139, 151
overview, 118
pasting, 134
PDF and, 315
removing halos, 129
selecting, 121
selecting all pixels on, 101
shape, 258, 266
showing/hiding, 119, 121
simplifying, 147, 272, 274
stacked, 119, 126
stroke, 244, 245
styles, 144–147, 290
text on. See type layers
thumbnail views, 119
transforming, 135–137
transparency, 126, 139
type. See type layers
Layers panel, 119–126
Left Align option, 279
Lens Blur correction, 179
lens flare, 234
Lens Type options, 234
levels, adjusting, 153–155
Levels dialog, 152, 155
library, 36, 78, 80
Library menu, 144, 219, 223
light properties, 233
Light Type option, 231
Lighten Shadows slider, 156
lightening images, 156, 182
lighting
ambient, 233
color, 232
directional, 232
light types, 232–233
shadows. See shadows
soft, 232
spotlight, 233
styles, 231, 232, 233
lighting adjustments
adjustment layers, 7, 153–156
Adobe Camera Raw, 210
Auto Contrast, 154
Auto Levels, 153
brightness, 152, 155, 160, 165, 210
image layers, 154
manual, 155, 158
Photomerge Exposure, 157–158
quick fixes, 6
shadows. See shadows
tonal range, 155
Lighting Angle wheel, 146
lighting effects, 231–233
Lighting Effects dialog, 231–232
Lighting Effects filter, 231–233
Lightness slider, 160, 165, 166
line space menu, 278
line spacing, 278
Line tool, 265
lines, width, 147
link icons, 125
links
layer masks, 143
layers, 125
Liquify filter, 228–229
Liquify tools, 227–229
locked layers, 119, 124, 125, 126
lossless compression, 314
lossy compression, 296, 314
Luminance slider, 213
LZW compression, 314, 316
M
Mac App Store, 12
Mac OS-based systems
general information, xv
iPhoto. See iPhoto
keyboard shortcuts, 353–357
slide shows, 339
MacPaint, 235
Magic Eraser tool, 185
Magic Extractor tool, 186–187, 193
Magic Wand, 14, 99, 106, 107–108
Magnetic Lasso tool, 98, 103, 104–105
magnification, 21–23, 24, 26. See also
zooming in/out
marquee tools, 14, 85, 87, 98, 101–102
mask overlays, 109, 110, 288
Mask slider, 212
masking effects, 141
masking images, 110, 114, 269–270
masks
clipping, 120, 141, 149
layer, 142–143
painting with Selection Brush, 100, 110
shape, 258
type, 288–289
Material light property, 233
matte options, 307, 308
Maximize PSD File Compatibility option, 317
measurement units, 27, 29
Media Browser, 43–44
   albums, 62–66
   attaching keyword tags, 52–53
   backup status, 81
   customizing appearance, 43
   described, 42
   finding photos, 69–73
   hiding items in, 46
   illustrated, 42, 43
   photo stacks, 36, 74–75
   rating photos, 47
   renaming photos, 48
   resizing thumbnails, 44
   selecting/deselecting thumbnails, 43
   sorting thumbnails, 44
   working in, 43–44
memory, 30, 31, 127
memory cards, 2–3, 36
menus, 13
Merge Down command, 127
Merge Visible command, 128
merging images, 194–195
merging layers, 127–129
metadata, 37, 48
Metadata area, 48
Midpoint slider, 230
Midtone Contrast slider, 156
midtones, 153, 155, 156
millimeters, 277
monitors
   calibrating, 168–169
   color, 169, 299, 305, 310
   previewing images on, 299, 310
   resolution, 294–295, 321, 323
   Web images and, 299
month markers, 42, 70
Month view, 71
More button, 119
More menu, 18
motion blur, 179, 223–226
Motion Blur correction, 179
Motion Blur filter, 226
Move tool, 14, 121, 193, 274
movie slide shows, 338, 339
multitouch gestures, 32
music files, 78
My Pictures folder, 35

N
Name field, 48
Narration button, 337
Navigator panel, 24
Nearest Neighbor option, 294
negatives, 312
New Layer dialog, 120, 132
New Layer icon, 119, 120
New Window command, 26
Noise gradients, 242
Noise option, 304
noise reduction, 213
Noise Reduction sliders, 213
notes, 48, 49
Notes field, 48

O
objects
   aligning, 137
   beveled, 147
   blurring, 180
   creating brushes from, 250
   distributing, 137
   finding similar, 73
   layer, 137
   removing from scenes, 188–189
   sharpening, 181
   snapping to, 28, 103, 203, 336
offline images, 38
Offset slider, 282
Omni lighting type, 232, 233
Online Albums, 340–342
online backups, 80–82
opacity
  background layers, 84
  Crop tool, 84
  effect layer, 222
  fills, 238, 239
  layers, 120, 138–139, 150
  Paint Bucket tool, 239
Opacity slider, 138, 156, 222
Open dialog box, 15
optimization. See also compression
  adjusting settings, 300–305
  catalogs, 78
  described, 292
  options for, 292, 314
  presets, 298, 300, 302
  to specific file sizes, 305
Web images, 292, 293, 296–310
Optimize button, 78
Optimize to File Size dialog, 305
optimized previews, 297–298, 299, 309, 310
Option key, 212
options bar, 13, 17
Organize Bin, 36
Organizer, 33–82
  Auto-Analyzer feature, 55
  categories, 57–60
  described, xiv, 2, 12
  displaying/changing photo information, 45–48
  finding photos, 69–73
  importing images into, 2, 36–40
  keyword tags. See keyword tags
  launching, 34
Mac App Store, 12
opening files/images in, 2, 15
options bar, 17
overview, 33
photo stacks, 36, 74–75
scanning images into, 39–40
work area, 42
Organizer button, 34
origin point, 284
outer glow, 146
Output button, 338
Overlap mode, 150
overlays, 109, 110, 114, 173

P
Paint Bucket tool, 14, 239–240
painting. See also brushes
  with Brush tool, 246–247
MacPaint, 235
masks, 100, 110
Paint Bucket tool, 14, 239–240
Selection Brush, 100, 110
Smart Paint effect, 196–197
special effects, 253–254
  with texture, 255
palettes. See panels
Panel Bin, 18–20
panel menus, 18
panels, 13, 14, 18–20
panoramas, creating, 200–205
paper, 324, 327, 328
paragraph box, 279
paths
  freehand, 283
text on, 282–284
Pattern Fill dialog, 150
Pattern option, 304
Pattern Stamp tool, 255
patterns
  applying, 150
defining, 255
PDF format, 315
PDF slide shows, 334–339
Pencil tool, 189
perceptual color, 305
perspective, 137, 205, 263
Perspective Control option, 230
photo albums. See albums
Photo Downloader, 2, 34–36
photo library, 36, 78, 80
Photo Prints button, 324
photo sharing service, 343
Photomerge Exposure command, 157–158
Photomerge feature, 194–195
Photomerge Group Shot command, 194, 195
Photomerge Panorama command, 200–205
Photomerge Scene Cleaner, 171, 188–189
Photomerge Style Match command, 198–199
photos. See images
Photoshop action files, 95
Photoshop Elements
  basics, 11–32
  described, xiii
  introduction to, xiii–xv
  new features, xiv
  sample images, xv
  starting up, 12
  work area, 12–14
Photoshop EPS format, 315
Photoshop (PSD) format, 193, 218, 312, 314, 317
Photoshop.com
  backing up photos on, 80–82
  file compatibility, 343
  Online Albums, 340–342
  synchronizing photos with, 76–77, 80
Picture Package feature, 330–331
Pictures folder, 35
Pixel Order option, 316
pixels
  adding, 114, 323
  black and white, 304
  blending, 114, 189, 195
  color values, 294
  dimensions, 293, 295, 321, 323
  file size and, 293–295
  hiding, 142
image editing and, 176, 177
interpolation, 294–295
number of, 293
removing, 323
selecting all pixels on layer, 101
sharpening and, 178, 179
text size, 277
transparency, 121
pixels per inch (ppi), 321, 322–323
Play Action button, 95
plug-ins, 218, 219
PNG compression, 292, 296
PNG format, 292, 296, 303
PNG-8 format, 292, 296, 303
PNG-24 format, 292, 296, 303
Point Eraser tool, 187
pointer, 272
points, 277
Polygon tool, 259, 265, 282–283
Polygonal Lasso tool, 98, 103, 104, 105
polygons, 282–283
PostScript format, 315
ppi (pixels per inch), 321, 322–323
preferences
  Asian text options, 281
  backup/synchronization, 76, 80
  guides/grid, 28
  raw images, 317
  saving files, 313, 317
  slide show, 334, 335
text, 276
Preserve Transparency option, 238
presets
  applying with Action Player, 95
  black and white, 162
  brushes, 246, 249, 252, 256
  color, 307
  creating, 150
  optimization settings, 298, 300, 302
  textures, 150
Preview menu, 297, 299, 310
previews
  applying fixes during, 92
  filters/effects, 220
  images, 36, 309–310
  online albums, 341
  optimized, 297–298, 299, 309, 310
  print, 324
  Save for Web, 297
  slide shows, 335, 337
  Web browser, 296–301, 308, 309
  Web images, 296, 297, 299, 310
Print button, 324
Print dialog, 324–325
print size, 322–323
printers, 322–325, 327
printing
  choosing paper/paper size, 324, 327, 328
  cropped images and, 85, 324–325
  optimizing colors for, 169
  options for, 322–325
  previews, 324
  quality, 295
  resizing images for, 293, 320
  resolution, 293, 320–323
prints, ordering, 332
profiles
  camera, 208
  camera raw, 208
  color, 169, 299, 301, 313
  EXIF, 317
  ICC, 301
Progressive option, 301, 303
Project Bin, 13
Properties panel, 48, 318
Proximity Match option, 173
PSD (Photoshop) format, 193, 218, 312, 314, 317
Pucker tool, 227, 228
Pyramid format, 316
Q
Quality slider, 301, 343
Quick Edit panel, 67
Quick Fix edits, 6, 89–95
Quick Organize panel, 67
Quick Reorder button, 336
Quick Selection Tool, 14, 91, 100, 106–107
QuickEdits, 67
R
Radial Blur filter, 223, 225, 226
Radius slider, 179, 212
RAM. See memory
raster images, 269
rating images, 47, 67
raw images, 207–216. See also Adobe Camera Raw
  16-bit depth limitations, 216
  adjusting clarity, 211
  adjusting lighting, 210
  adjusting saturation, 211
  adjusting white balance, 209
  considerations, 37, 343
  cropping, 214
  importing, 37
  overview, 207
  preferences, 317
  profiles, 208
  QuickEdits and, 67
  rotating/straightening, 214
  saving, 215–216
  sharpening, 212
Reconstruct tool, 227, 229
Recovery slider, 210
Rectangular Marquee tool, 85, 101–102
red eye, correcting, 14, 36, 94, 206
Red Eye Removal tool, 14, 36, 94, 206
reference point, 261–263
Refine Edge command, 114, 115, 116
Refine Edge dialog, 114, 116
Refine Path button, 283
Refine Path tool, 283
Reflection guided edit, 93
Reflection tool, 227, 228
removable media, 38
Remove Color command, 163
Remove Distortion option, 230
Removing from Selection tool, 187
Rename Files menu, 35
Replace Color command, 164–166
Resample Image option, 293
resampling, 293, 294, 295
Reselect command, 113
Reset button, 91, 93, 187, 216, 229
Resize Windows to Fit option, 23
resolution
    adjusting, 85, 293, 320, 323
    black and white images, 322
    considerations, 322
    Crop tool and, 86
display, 321, 323
    high, 322
    image size and, 293–295, 322–323
    low, 38, 323
    monitor, 294–295, 321, 323
    onscreen images, 293, 321, 323
    options for, 86
    print, 293, 320–323
    recommendations for, 293
    vector graphics and, 236
Web images, 293
restoring catalogs, 79
restrictive color, 305
retouching photos. See image editing
Revert button, 227
RGB Lights option, 232
RGB mode, 159, 168
Right Align option, 279
RLE compression, 314
Rotate and Straighten option, 88
Rotate buttons, 5, 90, 214
rotating images
    layer images, 136
    panoramas, 204
    procedure for, 5
    raw images, 214
    Rotate and Straighten option, 88
    scanned images, 88
    via multitouch gestures, 32
    while importing, 37
rotating shapes, 262
rotation pointer, 136
Roundness value, 251
rulers, 27
Rulers command, 27
sample color, 108
sample images, xv
saturation, 160, 163, 165, 183, 211
Saturation control, 157
Saturation slider, 160, 165, 166, 183, 211
Save As command, 9, 312–313, 315
Save As dialog, 312–313, 317
Save command, 9, 312, 313
Save dialog, 9, 338
Save for Web command, 297–310, 315
Save for Web dialog, 293, 296–310, 315
Save Image Pyramid option, 316
Save Optimized As dialog, 298
Save Project button, 338
Save settings, 313
Save Transparency option, 316
saving
    as copies, 313
    As a Copy option, 313
    file information, 318
    files to hard disk, 312–313, 339
    images, 9
    images for Web, 297–299
    images to folders, 35
saving, continued
multiple images, 319–321
preferences, 313, 317
raw images, 215–216
slide shows, 338
Saving Files preferences, 313, 317
Scale slider, 150
scaling
images, 135
shapes, 261–262
ScanGear software, 40
scanners, 39–40
scanning images
cropping during, 40
into Organizer, 39–40
straightening during, 87–88
Scatter slider, 251
scenes
recomposing, 190–191
removing objects from, 188–189
screen resolution, 293, 321, 323
scroll arrows, 24
scroll bars, 24
scrolling, 32
Search button, 38
search feature. See finding images
Select Icon dialog, 54
selection borders, 98, 102, 113, 116. See also borders
Selection Brush tool, 100, 109–110
selection tools, 98–116
selections, 97–116
adding to, 100, 109, 111, 187
adjusting, 111–113
all pixels on layer, 101
applying strokes to, 243–244
borders, 98, 102, 113, 116
color, 99, 106–108, 110
contrast and, 105
converting to layers, 130
deleting, 113
deselecting, 113
elliptical areas, 100, 101, 102
feathering, 114, 115, 224
filling with color, 237–240
intersection of, 112
inverting, 99
keeping active, 103
lasso tools, 14, 98, 103–105
layer masks, 143
Magic Wand, 14, 99, 106, 107–108
marquee tools, 14, 85, 87, 98, 101–102
moving in pixel increments, 102
overview, 97
Quick Selection Tool, 14, 91, 100, 106–107
rectangular areas, 85, 98, 101–102
reselecting, 113
Selection Brush tool, 100, 109–110
shapes, 261–263, 266
size, 99
smoothing edges, 116
softening edges, 114–115
subtracting from, 100, 101, 112
text, 275, 288–289
tools, 16
with type mask tools, 288–289
selective color, 305
Send Backward option, 124
Send to Back option, 124
Set Date and Time dialog, 46
shadows, 231–233
drop, 146, 284
lightening, 156
Shadows control, 157
Shadows/Highlights dialog, 156, 210
shape area options, 264, 266, 267
Shape Geometry Options panels, 265
shape layers, 258, 266
shape masks, 258
Shape Selection tool, 261–263
Shape tool, 14, 132
shapes, 258–270
adding to existing shapes, 264
bitmap, 268
brushes, 248, 257
color, 259, 264, 267
combining, 265–266
Cookie Cutter, 269–270
copying, 266
creating, 259–260, 265
custom, 264–268, 269
distorting, 263
overview, 258
polygons, 282–283
positioning, 262
rotating, 262
scaling, 261–262
selecting, 261–263, 266
styles, 260
text on, 282–283
transforming, 261–263
vector, 268, 269
Share icon, 341
shared albums, 64, 340–342
sharing images, 333–345
  Online Albums, 340–342
  overview, 333
  slide shows, 67, 334–339
  via e-mail, 305, 341, 344–345
Sharpen tool, 180, 181
sharpening images, 178–179, 181, 212
Sharpening sliders, 212
Shift Pixels tool, 227, 228
shortcuts bar. See Task Pane
Show All button, 36
Show File Names option, 46
sidecar files, 215
Similar command, 106, 108
Simple Blending option, 157
Simplify Layer command, 268, 274
Single Photo View, 44, 47
skewing, 137, 263
skin tones, 161, 191, 211
Slide Show Editor, 335–338
slide shows, 67, 334–339
Small Thumbnail button, 44
smart albums, 65–66
Smart Blending option, 157
Smart Blur filter, 226
Smart Brush tool, 14, 196–197
Smart Fix slider, 92
Smart Paint effect, 196–197
Smart Tag icon, 55
Smooth command, 116
Smoothing Brush, 187
Smudge tool, 181
snapping to images/objects, 28, 103, 203, 336
Soft Omni lighting style, 232
Soft Spotlight lighting style, 232
Solid gradients, 242
sort order, 44
sorting images, 44
sorting photo thumbnails, 44
sound. See audio
source code, 308
spacing, 251, 278
Spacing slider, 251
Spin option, 225
Sponge tool, 14, 183
Spot Healing Brush tool, 8, 172, 173, 174
Spotlight lighting type, 233
Spyder tool, 169
squares, 101
stacked layers, 119, 123
stacking images, 36, 74–75
stacks, 36, 74–75
Standard dialog, 34–36
Star options, 265
star ratings, 47, 67
status bar, 23
Stop Sharing button, 342
Straighten and Crop Image command, 87–88
Straighten Image command, 87, 88
Straighten tool, 5, 14, 87, 214
straightening images, 5, 87–88, 214
strikethrough style, 278
Stroke command, 243–244
Stroke effect, 147
stroke layers, 244, 245
Style Match feature, 198–199
style picker, 260
Style Settings dialog, 145, 146–147
style source images, 199
styles
  background layers and, 145
  CSS, 308
  images, 198–199
  layer, 144–147, 290
  lighting, 231, 232, 233
  shapes, 260
  text, 276, 278
Stylus Pressure option, 105
stylus tablet, 103, 105, 249
subcategories, 57–60. See also categories
subfolders, 35
Surface Blur filter, 180, 226
Swatches panel, 239
Switch Colors tool, 14
synchronization
  albums, 61, 76–77
  backups, 80, 81, 82
  conflicts, 77
  images, 76–77, 80
  photos with Photoshop.com, 76–77, 80
synchronization status icon, 80, 81, 82
T
Tag Cloud, 68
tag icons, 49, 54
Tag Media field, 68
tags/tagged photos. See keyword tags
Task Pane, 13
Temperature slider, 209
text, 271–290. See also type
  adding to images, 272–273
  adding to slides, 337
  aligning, 279
  anti-aliasing, 285
  changing look of, 275–279
  color, 279, 285
  distortion, 286–287
  editing, 273, 284
  entering, 272–273
  filling with gradient, 289
  fonts, 273, 276, 277, 281, 290
  formatting, 275–279
  horizontal, 280–281
  jagged, 285
  on layers. See type layers
  line spacing, 278
  moving, 272, 274
  new line, 273
  orientation of, 281
  overview, 271
  paragraph box, 279
  on paths, 282–284
  preferences, 276
  repositioning, 284
  selecting, 275, 288–289
  on shapes, 282–283
  size, 273, 277, 285
  smoothing edges of, 285
  styles, 276, 278
  vertical, 280–281
  viewing on Web, 285
  warping, 286–287
  text baseline, 284
  text box, 273, 279, 280
  Text button, 337
text effects, 286–290
text insertion point, 272
Text on Custom Path tool, 283
Text on Selection tool, 282–284
Text on Shape tool, 282–283

text searches, 69

text-on-path tools, 282–284
textures, 150, 255

Thumbnail Dates option, 46

thumbnail slider, 44

Thumbnail View option, 44

thumbnails
  attaching to keyword tags, 52
  layer views, 119
  resizing, 44
  selecting/deselecting, 43
  sorting, 44
  viewing, 44

TIFF format, 314, 316
time. See date/time
time zones, 46
timeline, 42, 70

Tint slider, 209
tinted images, 167
title information, 45
tolerance, 106, 107
tolerance options, 106, 107, 254
Tolerance setting, 107

Tolerance slider, 240
tonal adjustments, 182–183
tonal correction, 152
tonal range, 152, 153, 155
tool tips, 16
toolbox, 14
tools. See also specific tools
  alternate, 17
  commonly used, 17
  drawing, 236, 259–260
  Eyedropper, 14, 108, 161, 164–166
  hidden, 16
  illustrated, 14
  information about, 16
  keyboard shortcuts, 16
  lasso, 14, 98, 103–105

marquee, 14, 85, 87, 98, 101–102
  options for, 17
  selecting, 16
  settings, 17
  switching between, 103
text-on-path, 282–284
toggling between, 101
  in toolbox, 14
type, 272–290

Tools panel, 16
touch input devices, 32

Touch Up tools, 94
touchups
  dust removal, 8
  with Healing Brush, 172, 177
  with Spot Healing Brush, 8, 172, 173, 174
trackpad, 32

transforming
  layers, 135–137
  options for, 29
  shapes, 261–263
transitions
  color, 241, 304
  slide shows, 67, 334, 336
transparency
  applying to images, 306–307
  background layers and, 122, 139, 306
  backgrounds, 122, 185, 192, 306–308
  compatibility issues, 296
  erasing layers and, 257
  JPEG images and, 307
  layers, 126, 139
  pixels, 126
  preserving, 238, 316
  Web images, 306–308

Transparency option, 306

Transparency slider, 158

trash icon, 122

Trim Guidelines settings, 325

Triple Spotlight filter, 231
tripod, 158
Turbulence tool, 227, 228
Twirl tools, 227, 228
type, 271–290. See also text
  alignment, 279
  anti-aliasing, 285
  applying layer styles to, 290
  default measurement unit, 277
  fonts, 273, 276, 277, 281, 290
  line spacing, 278
  overview, 271
  preferences, 276
  size, 273, 277
type formatting tools, 275–279
type layers
  creating/editing text, 272–274
  flattening, 228
  moving, 274
  selecting text, 275
  simplifying, 228, 272, 274
  styles, 290
  text orientation, 281
type mask tools, 288–289
type masks, 288–289
Type Preferences dialog, 276
type size menu, 277
Type tool, 14, 132, 274
type tool icon, 272
type tools, 272–290

U
underline style, 278
Undo command, 91, 187, 221, 227, 229
Undo History panel, 30–31, 272
undoing changes, 91, 229
Units & Rulers command, 277
units of measure, 27, 29, 322
Unsharp Mask command, 179
upsampling, 86, 294, 323
Use All Layers option, 240

V
vector graphics, 236, 264
vector shapes, 268, 269
version sets, 312
vertical text, 279
Vertical Type Mask tool, 288–290
Vertical Type tool, 272, 280–281
Vibrance slider, 211
video
  adding to slide shows, 335
  capturing, 41
  searching for, 71
  viewing, 41
video cards, 305
video files, 41
View menu, 90
Vignette effect, 115
Vignette option, 230
vignetting, 115, 230

W
warp effect, 286–287
Warp tool, 227, 228, 286–287
warping text, 286–287
watch folders, 39
Web
  sharing photos on, 340–342
  viewing text on, 285
Web browsers
  colors supported, 285
  previewing images in, 296–301, 308, 309
  progressive image downloads, 301, 303
Web color theory, 305
Web graphics, 169
Web images, 291–310
  color and, 292, 296, 301–308
  connection speed, 299
  file formats, 292, 296
  image quality, 294, 295, 300, 301, 305
optimizing. See optimization
previewing in browser, 296–301, 308, 309
previewing on monitors, 299, 310
progressive downloading, 301, 303
requirements for, 292
resolution, 293
transparency, 306–308
Web pages, 301, 303, 306–308
Welcome Screen, 12
white balance, 209
White Balance Tool, 209
white levels, 155
Width option, 105
Window menu, 18
windows, working with, 25
Windows-based systems
  general information, xv
  keyboard shortcuts, 347–351
  slide shows, 334–339
work area, 12–14, 42

X
x coordinates, 29

Y
y coordinates, 29
Year view, 71

Z
zero point, 27
ZIP compression, 314, 315
Zoom field, 90
Zoom In button, 22
Zoom option, 225
Zoom Out button, 22
Zoom slider, 21, 90
Zoom text field, 21, 23
Zoom tool, 14, 21–23, 212, 227, 228
zooming in/out, 21–23, 32, 90
zoom-percentage text box, 22, 23