

Get great detail  
in your subjects!

# Photoshop Elements

From Snapshots to Great Shots

Learn the best  
ways to improve  
the color in your  
pictures!

Jeff Revell

Photoshop Elements:  
From  
Snapshots to  
Great Shots

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Peachpit  
Press

## **Photoshop Elements: From Snapshots to Great Shots**

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## **DEDICATION**

For my wonderful family.

It couldn't happen without you.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is due in large part to two people. First, there's my buddy Mike. Many of our conversations have turned into inspiration for me. I can't remember the exact words he said during one of our chats, but it was something along the lines of me writing a book to show what to do after the picture is taken. Mike has been in the photo finishing business for many years, so he definitely knows the benefits of image processing.

The other person who helped breathe life into this book is my editor Ted Waitt. Ted and I have had many a long chat about expanding the Snapshots series into other realms of photography. He often puts up with my ramblings, but it didn't take much for me to convince him that this was a book worth writing. It was his task to actually make it a reality, which is no small feat. His support and ability to keep me focused are very much appreciated.

Of course, Ted is not the only force behind this book. In fact, he's so busy these days that he introduced me to editor Susan Rimerman, whom it was a pleasure working with right from the start. She is no stranger to the Snapshots series, having already worked on several of the other books, and it was great having her experience at the table for this one.

Lastly, and I know this may sound kind of corny, but I want to thank you. I get emails and Web site comments all the time that offer me inspiration and guidance in knowing what it is that you want to learn. It is always a true joy and pleasure for me to help someone with their photography. It brings so much fulfillment to my life every day, and I am just thankful that so many of you have turned to me to help you with your own pursuits. It really is a great honor and pleasure to help.

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# Introduction

I have written quite a few books in the *From Snapshots to Great Shots* series, and most of them have been about cameras. My philosophy for writing them has been to give a good foundation for taking great photographs through the application of camera technology and knowledge. It's so important to understand the fundamentals and how to apply them when taking photographs. But is that all there is to making a good image? Well, it used to be.

There was a time when all you could control was the exposure of your film, and everything else was handed off to a photofinisher. It was their job to make sure that the film was processed correctly and that everything from that point on was done to give you a decent-looking image. Just how decent depended on who was doing the processing.

Today you can still drop off your files at the local drugstore and get photos back, but if you want to get great-looking images, you need to take control of that other side of the photography coin—the image processing. That's why I wanted to write this book. Because showing you how to take a great photo is just part of the equation. To get the most from your photographic efforts, you need to learn how to finish the photo by using software tools like Adobe Photoshop Elements.

There's an old saying that goes—*Give a man a fish, feed him today. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for life.* Well, not really. You have to teach him not only how to catch it, but also how to clean it and cook it. Otherwise he just has a bunch of fish that he doesn't know what to do with. That's what we are going to do here. Now that you have caught your fish, let's clean it and cook it and make it a truly great meal.

I have hopefully given you some clue as to what this book is about, but if you still aren't sure, read the Q&A.

### **Q: WHY ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS?**

A: It's true that there are a lot of image processing programs on the market to choose from, but I wanted to pick a program that had all the power to handle many different image file types, including raw and JPEG. The program also needed enhancement tools that are fairly simple to use but also very powerful. I also wanted to ensure that there would be image management as well as lots of output options. The biggest feature, though, was having a price tag that wouldn't break the bank. Photoshop Elements has all of these things and more. It has a great image management feature called the Organizer, and many of the same great tools as its big brother, Adobe Photoshop. Elements uses the Adobe Camera Raw software for complete control over raw image processing, and it has a very reasonable price tag.

### **Q: DOES IT MATTER IF I HAVE A MAC OR PC?**

A: Nope. The program performs almost identically on either platform. When there is a difference between the keyboard shortcuts, I list the Windows shortcut first, followed by the Mac shortcut in parentheses, like this: To deselect, press Shift-Control-A (Shift-Command-A). The screen captures in this book were made on a PC using the Windows 7 operating system, so you might see some aesthetic differences (buttons, cursors, and the like), but overall the program interface should look almost identical.

### **Q: YOU WROTE THIS BOOK USING ELEMENTS 10, DOES THAT MEAN I CAN'T USE IT FOR MY EARLIER VERSION?**

A: Not at all. Notice that there is no version number on the front of this book. That's because most of the things we are going to be doing will be general in nature and use the same tools that have been available in previous versions of Elements. I have tried to focus on the basics of image processing, so we address things like color correction, cropping, exposure adjustments, sharpening, and so on. The tools to perform these operations have changed little over the years and will still be there in future versions as well. They are the core elements of image processing, and just like f-stops and shutter speeds, they will probably change very little in the future.

### **Q: DO YOU COVER EVERY FEATURE?**

A: Not even close. Adobe Photoshop Elements is jam-packed with hundreds of features, and this book would be many hundreds of pages long if I covered all of it. My focus for this book is to bring you the information and techniques necessary to take images from your camera and enhance them into something great. I also want you to be able to hit the ground running without getting bogged down by a lot of features.

As in my camera books, we are going to cover the tools and features that will give you a great image processing foundation and let you start improving your photos right away.

**Q: WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO LEARN FROM THIS BOOK?**

A: I like to think of image processing as a three-step process. First there is the import, where I move images from my camera to my computer. Next, it's time to work them over, giving them the right treatment to really fulfill the vision I had when I took the photo. The third step is to do something with my images, whether it's making prints to hang on the wall or sharing them with friends, family, or even clients. These are the processes that you will learn. They aren't overly complicated or advanced, but you don't have to tell anyone that.

**Q: WHAT ARE THE ASSIGNMENTS ALL ABOUT?**

A: At the end of most of the chapters, you will find short assignments where I give you some suggestions as to how you can apply the lessons of the chapter to help reinforce everything you just learned. A lot of the information covered in the chapters will be new to you, and I'm a firm believer in learning by doing. The assignments are simple exercises that will help you gain a better understanding, and also take a nice break, before moving on to the next chapter.

**Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW BEFORE GETTING STARTED?**

A: I realize that not everyone out there is shooting raw image files. Since I am such a huge believer in shooting raw (see Chapter 4), I thought it would be good to give you some of my files to use so that you can follow along with the lessons in Adobe Camera Raw. To access the bonus content, create an account here: [peachpit.com/elements\\_snapshots](http://peachpit.com/elements_snapshots) (it's free), then enter the book's ISBN and follow the book registration instructions. After you register the book, a link to the bonus content will be listed on your Account page next to the book title under Registered Products.

**Q: IS THAT IT?**

A: I also know what fun it can be to share what you learned with others and maybe even show off a bit. To that end, I invite you to show off your before and after shots in the *Elements: From Snapshots to Great Shots* Flickr group. You have worked hard learning new things, so go ahead, join the group, and show us your Great Shots. Just point your browser to [www.flickr.com/groups/elements\\_fromsnapshotstogreatshots](http://www.flickr.com/groups/elements_fromsnapshotstogreatshots), and join in on the fun. I'm looking forward to seeing your work.

# 4



ISO 200  
1/3200 sec.  
f/4  
24mm lens



# Using Camera Raw

## GET THE MOST OUT OF EVERY RAW IMAGE

Does your camera have a raw mode? Are you using it? If so, then you will be doing a large portion of your image processing in Adobe Camera Raw (ACR), the program inside Elements that is specifically for processing raw camera files. The good news is that ACR is simple to use, and the results can be pretty amazing. It's fair to say that once you are done processing your image in ACR, you may have very little left to do in the Editor.

## PORING OVER THE PICTURE

The original image was a little crooked, so I used the Straighten tool on the grate behind the musicians.



I changed the White Balance setting to Shade and then adjusted it with the Temperature slider.



I really wanted the image to pop, so I gave it some over-the-top sharpening and a high setting on the Clarity slider.

ISO 1600  
1/400 sec.  
f/2.8  
28mm lens

Shooting in the raw format can sometimes be challenging. It doesn't require any additional work on the camera end, but the processing can be more extensive. It can also challenge your memory, because the image you see on your computer will not necessarily look like it did when you shot it. The great thing is that you have complete control over everything that is done to the image, and when you are done, you can end up with something that is even better than you first imagined. This shot looked off-color, kind of blue, and a little crooked, but after a few minutes in Adobe Camera Raw, it really came to life.

The Camera Standard profile was the best option for proper color rendition and contrast.

## WHY YOU SHOULD BE SHOOTING RAW

Your camera most likely has a choice of image formats for storing the pictures on the memory card. JPEG is probably the format that is most familiar to anyone who has been using a digital camera.

There is nothing wrong with JPEG if you are taking casual shots. JPEG files are ready to use right out of the camera. Why go through the process of adjusting raw images of the kids opening presents when you are just going to email them to Grandma? And JPEG is just fine for journalists and sports photographers who are shooting nine frames a second and who need small images to transmit across the wire. So what is wrong with JPEG? Absolutely nothing—unless you care about having complete creative control over all of your image data (as opposed to what a compression algorithm thinks is important).

Just to give you a little background, JPEG is not actually an image format. It is a compression standard, and compression is where things can go bad. When you have your camera set to JPEG—whether it is set to High or Low compression—you are telling the camera to process the image however it sees fit and then throw away enough image data to make it shrink into a smaller space. In doing so, you give up subtle image details that you will never get back in postprocessing. That is an awfully simplified statement, but it's still fairly accurate.

### SO WHY RAW?

First and foremost, raw images are not compressed. (Some cameras have a compressed raw format, but it is lossless compression, which means there is no loss of actual image data.) Also, raw image files will require you to perform postprocessing on your photographs. This is not only necessary, it is the reason that most photographers use the raw format.

Raw images have a greater dynamic range than JPEG-processed images. This means that you can recover image detail in the highlights and shadows that just isn't available in JPEG-processed images.

A raw image is a 14-bit image, which means it contains more color information than a JPEG, which is almost always an 8-bit image. More color information means more to work with and smoother changes between tones—kind of like the difference between performing surgery with a scalpel as opposed to a butcher's knife. They'll both get the job done, but one will do less damage.

A raw image offers more control over sharpening, because you are the one who is applying it according to the effect you want to achieve. Once again, JPEG processing applies a standard amount of sharpening that you cannot change after the fact. Once it is done, it's done.

Finally, and most importantly, a raw file is your digital negative. No matter what you do to it, you won't change it unless you save your file in a different format. This means that you can come back to that raw file later and try different processing settings to achieve differing results and never harm the original image. By comparison, if you make a change to your JPEG and accidentally save the file, guess what? You have a new original file, and you will never get back to that first image. That alone should make you sit up and take notice.

## USING ADOBE CAMERA RAW

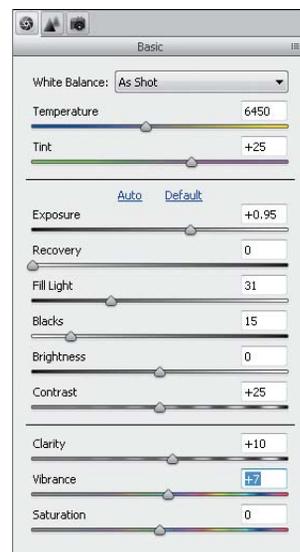
To open your image in Adobe Camera Raw from the Organizer, select the image's thumbnail in the Media Browser and then click the Fix tab. Click Edit Photos. Elements will open the Editor and then open your image in Adobe Camera Raw. If you are already in the Editor, choose File > Open and then double-click the raw file you want to use.

### THE CAMERA RAW ADJUSTMENT TOOLS

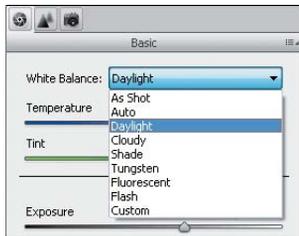
There are three tabs on the right side of the Adobe Camera Raw interface. Each one contains a variety of controls that enable you to make specific adjustments to your image. You will probably do most of your work in the Basic tab (Figure 4.1).

### THE BASIC TAB

A raw image file contains no adjustments when it comes out of your camera. It does, however, contain the metadata that stores the camera settings used to create the image. This includes things like aperture, ISO, and shutter speed settings. It also has the camera's white balance information, which is what shows up in the White Balance control.



**FIGURE 4.1**  
The Basic tab is where you will spend most of your time in Camera Raw.



**FIGURE 4.2**

Click the White Balance drop-down to find a better white balance or change the look of your photo.

## GETTING THOSE COLORS RIGHT

The default White Balance setting is As Shot, but you can change that to several different presets, just as you would on your camera. Included in the list of presets are Auto, Daylight, Cloudy, Shade, Tungsten, Fluorescent, Flash, and Custom (**Figure 4.2**).

Selecting one of these presets will change the Temperature and Tint settings of the image to a preset value. If you do this manually by using one of the sliders below the White Balance presets, the White Balance setting will be set to Custom. If you have something in your image that is neutral in color, you can click on it with the White Balance tool and automatically adjust the white balance. This is also helpful if you have included a white balance card in one of your images.

If you have not included a white balance card in your image, start with a preset that closely matches the light that your photo was taken in. If it still needs a little adjusting, fine-tune it with the Temperature slider until it looks right. The goal of this adjustment is to remove any color cast in your image and make the colors look like they should.

## MAKING TONAL CORRECTIONS WITH THE EXPOSURE SLIDER

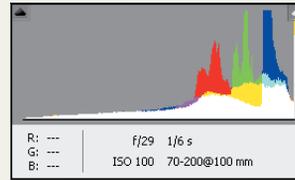
Once you have adjusted the image's white balance, it's time to start correcting the overall brightness and darkness. A good reference for what to adjust can be found in the histogram in the upper-right corner of your screen. A histogram is a graphical representation of the tones in your photo, with the darkest areas on the left and the brightest parts on the right. If your image is overexposed or has areas that are so bright that they will appear as white and have no visual information, the histogram will have a spike on the right side. If there is a lot of black in the photo, the histogram will have a large spike on the left side. The key is to make sure that you have good tones throughout the image and that the blacks and whites are as accurate as possible. The easiest way to do this is by adjusting the Exposure slider.

If you need to make overall adjustments to the image brightness, you can do this by moving the Exposure slider, which has a default setting of zero. The adjustments are related to stops in exposure value. You can make the image four stops brighter by moving the slider to the right, or four stops darker by moving it to the left.

## CHECK YOUR CLIPPING WARNINGS

If you look at the histogram, you will see triangles in the upper-left and upper-right corners of the graph. These are your clipping warning indicators. Clipping is when an area of the photo is either so dark or so light that it no longer contains any detail and appears as black or white in the photo. When this happens, the small triangles will turn white (Figure 4.3). If you want to get an idea of where the clipping is occurring in the photo, click the white triangle and a color overlay will appear on your image in the offending area (red for overexposed and blue for underexposed). Depending on the amount of clipping, you might be able to correct the exposure to get details back in your image.

Remember that sometimes black is black and white is white. That is, there might be areas in your image that contain some clipping but do not need to be corrected. If you have the sun in your shot, no amount of image adjustment will get rid of the clipping warning, so decide just how much effort you need to apply to fixing the problem.



**FIGURE 4.3**

The histogram is full of useful exposure information.

## SAVING YOUR HIGHLIGHTS WITH THE RECOVERY TOOL

The Recovery slider is an amazing tool for fixing those areas in your photo that are too bright without having to make the rest of the image darker. As you move the Recovery slider to the right, the brightest parts of the photo will get darker and darker. The best way to use this tool is to watch the highlight clipping warning in the histogram. You can continue moving the Recovery slider to the right until the warning disappears. An easier way to do this is to click the highlight warning triangle and then move the Recovery slider to the right until the red overlay on the image disappears.

### NOTE

You can quickly turn on the over- and underexposure warning overlays on your image by pressing the O key for over and the U key for under.

## SEEING IN THE SHADOWS WITH THE FILL LIGHT SLIDER

If you have the opposite problem of too many dark areas with no detail, you can try using the Fill Light slider. Moving this slider to the right will lighten the darkest parts of your image without affecting the highlights. The slider can be adjusted to a setting of 100, but it usually isn't necessary to go more than 20 points to fix most problems.

## BETTER-LOOKING BLACKS

As indicated earlier, raw images have no adjustments coming out of the camera, but they all need some corrections to make them look better. That's why the Blacks slider has a default setting of 5. This setting does a couple of things. First, it adds a little contrast to the image by raising the blackest part of the image. Second, it adds some saturation to colors. When you increase the black level, you are setting a new point for which tones will appear black in the image. The higher the number, the darker your shadows will appear. The Blacks slider does not have much effect on the middle or brightest tones in the image.

## FINE-TUNING YOUR TONAL BRIGHTNESS

The Brightness slider is a lot like the Exposure slider in that it can make the image look darker or brighter. The difference is that the Exposure slider can clip the highlights or shadows, but when you move the Brightness slider to the right, it compresses the tones in the brightest parts while expanding the shadows.

The best way to use this slider is to first make your other tonal adjustments (Exposure, Recovery, Fill Light, and Blacks) and then adjust the Brightness slider as needed. It might be necessary to go back and make some minor adjustments to the other tonal sliders after adjusting the Brightness slider.

## ADJUSTING IMAGE CONTRAST

The Contrast slider is set to 25 by default, and moving it to the right will increase contrast in your image. A contrast increase means that you will have an increase in the middle tones of the image, making them either darker or lighter. By lowering the adjustment (moving the slider to the left), you increase the middle tones by making dark areas lighter and light areas darker.

## ADDING SOME VISUAL PUNCH WITH THE CLARITY SLIDER

Of all the sliders in the Camera Raw interface, the one that I always use is Clarity. This adjustment adds contrast to the midtones in a way that can punch up a dull image or soften one that looks too crisp. The default setting for this adjustment is zero, and moving it to the right will increase midtone contrast and make things look more crisp and snappy. Moving the slider into the negative numbers will decrease the midtone

contrast and give things a softer look. This is a great way to improve the skin tones in a portrait. The best way to make the adjustments is to zoom your image to a 100% view so that you can better judge the effects of the slider.

## BRIGHTENING DULL COLORS

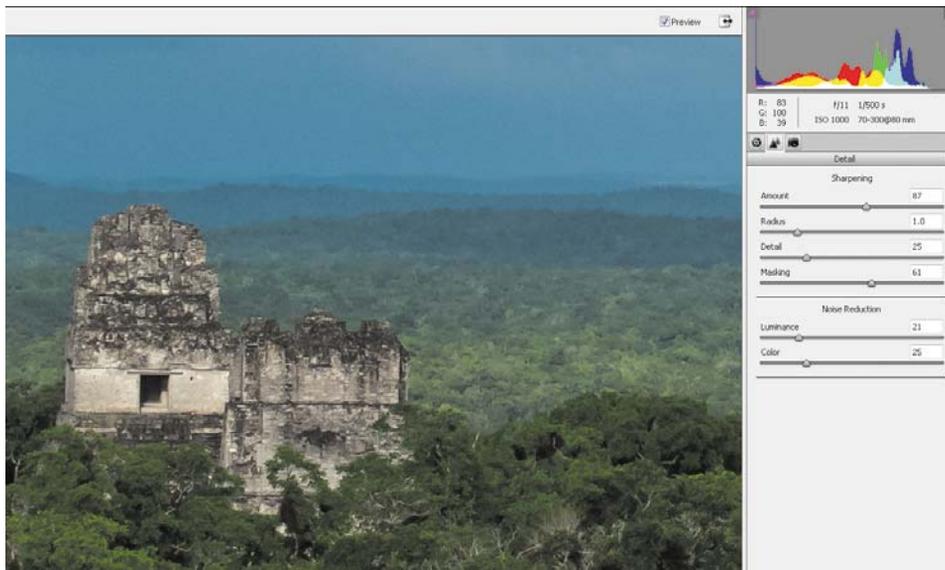
The Vibrance slider is there to let you make adjustments to the less colorful parts of your image. By moving the slider to the right, the saturation of less colorful areas is increased without affecting the already saturated areas. The algorithm that controls the adjustment was written so that skin tones are not as affected by the increase of saturation. You can also get a more subtle palette of colors by reducing the vibrance of the image.

## FROM BLACK AND WHITE TO CRAZY COLORS

If you want to give a boost to all the colors in your image, use the Saturation slider. Moving it to the right will increase the saturation of all colors in the image. Moving it to the left will decrease saturation all the way to the point of looking like a black and white image.

## THE DETAIL TAB

The Detail tab contains two sections for improving your image. Every raw image needs some level of image sharpening and even noise reduction. Even if you are going to do additional work in the Elements Editor, it's still a good idea to spend a little time in this tab to make sure you are getting the best possible details in your photo (Figure 4.4).



**FIGURE 4.4**  
Be sure to zoom in to 100% whenever you sharpen or reduce noise.

## ALL RAW FILES NEED SHARPENING

When you click the Detail tab, you will see that some base sharpening has already been applied to your photo. That's because raw images do not have sharpening added by the camera, like JPEGs do, so Camera Raw adds a little bit to get you started. I prefer to sharpen my images twice during my workflow: the first time in Camera Raw and then once again in the Editor.

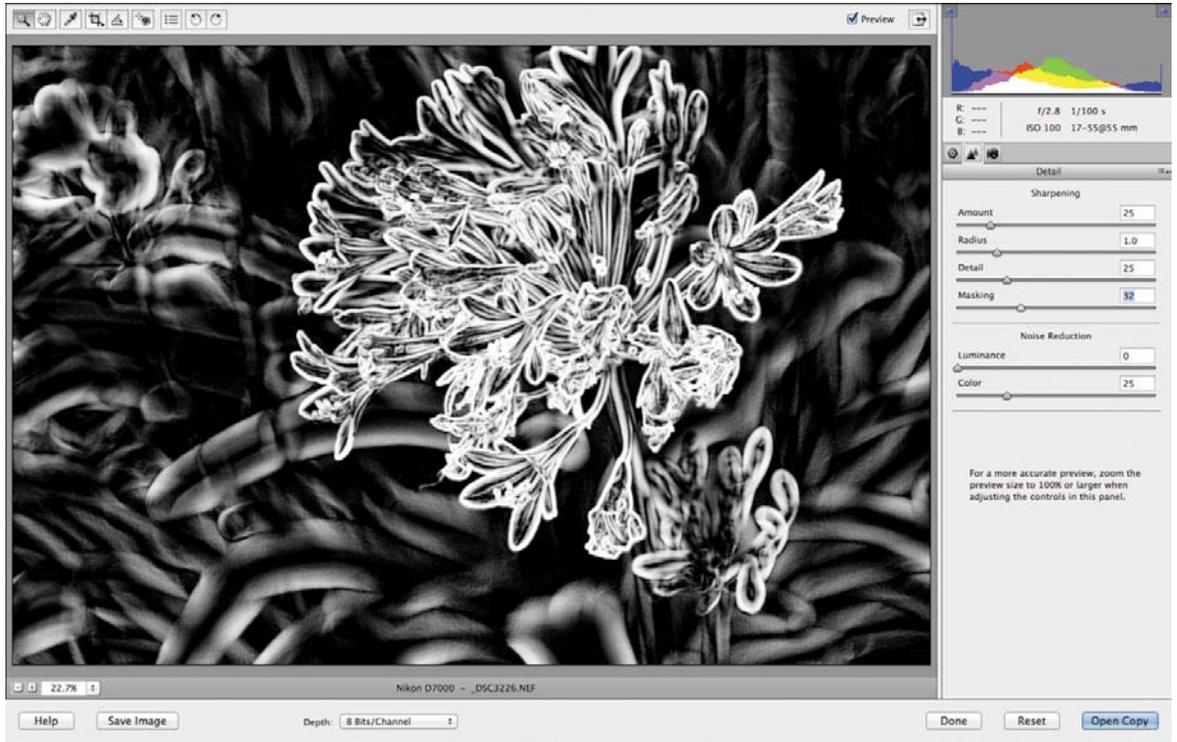
The first thing you should do is zoom in to a 100% view so that you can see the precise results of your sharpening efforts. Then, raise the Amount slider to a level that provides good detail to sharp edges in the image. The goal of sharpening is to make the edges look better without affecting the things that shouldn't be sharp, like the sky or skin or a flat surface. Typically, you will get the best results with the Amount slider somewhere between 50 and 100.

The Radius slider controls how much the sharpening extends out from the edges. The default setting is 1, and I leave it set there most of the time. If you have an image that looks sort of fuzzy, you can try raising this a little bit, but be careful not to go overboard.

The Details slider is set to 25 by default, and that is generally where I leave it. It can be raised if you want to increase small details, like intricate lines. When using this slider, be mindful of avoiding halos. Go too high on the Details slider and you will get contrast lines around your edges that can look like glowing halos. If you start seeing them, lower the Details slider until they go away.

The final slider in the Sharpening section is called Masking, and it is one of my favorites. It allows you to mask out or restrict the sharpening to only the edge areas of the image, while avoiding surfaces. Using the slider is as simple as moving it to the right, but it can be difficult to see the results, which is why I prefer to use a visual helper. Hold down the Alt (Option) key while dragging the slider, and a black and white mask will appear on the image in the preview window. At first, the window will appear completely white, but as you move the slider to the right you will see portions of the image turn black (**Figure 4.5**). Keep moving the slider until just the edges that you want sharpened are white and everything else is black.

If you aren't sure where to start with your Sharpening settings, try these: Amount 70, Radius 1.0, Detail 30, and Masking 70. Now move the sliders and fine-tune for your image. The important thing here is that you don't over-sharpen your photos. A sharp image with good details is great, but one that is over-sharpened will stick out like a sore thumb.



**FIGURE 4.5**  
Hold down the Alt (Option) key when adjusting the sharpen mask to see only the areas you are masking.

## TAMING THE NOISE

Sometimes it's necessary to shoot with a high ISO even though you know it will add digital noise to your image. When this happens, you can turn to the Noise Reduction sliders to help eliminate the problem. There are just two sliders in this section, Luminance and Color. Most noise you will encounter can be handled by adjusting the Luminance slider. All that's required is to move the slider to the right until the noise in your image is gone. Too much noise reduction can make your picture look soft, though, so don't overdo it. You might find that you need to readjust your Sharpening settings after applying noise reduction, but you can also add some sharpness back into the image once it is in the Editor.

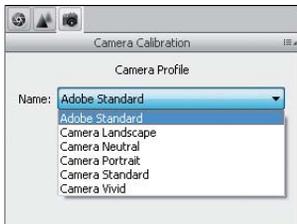
The Color slider is set to a default of 25 and rarely needs to be adjusted. If you are still seeing small multicolored specks in your image, move the Color slider to the right until they are gone.

## THE CAMERA CALIBRATION TAB

Have you ever looked at the image on your camera's LCD screen and thought, "Wow, this looks great!" and then when you get it in your computer it's a little disappointing? You have probably experienced this if you shoot raw, because the image you see on your camera is a JPEG that has been corrected and enhanced by the camera. But since you are working with a raw file, all of that is stripped away once you open it in the computer. A quick way to add back some of that pizzazz is to select a new camera profile from the Camera Calibration tab.

### IMPROVING YOUR IMAGE WITH CAMERA PROFILES

Camera profiles are settings that attempt to match the camera manufacturer's colors in different shooting scenarios. The Adobe Standard profile is the default setting for all raw files. It is fairly generic and treats all raw files the same way no matter which camera produced them. It is simply a base enhancement to improve color rendering in the yellows, reds, and oranges of your image.



**FIGURE 4.6**  
Camera profiles can dramatically change the look of your image.

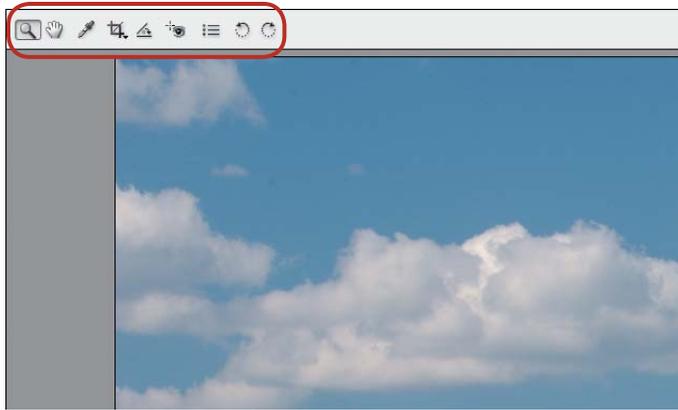
The camera profiles are specific to your camera and often contain choices such as Camera Standard, Landscape, Vivid, Portrait, and Neutral, but they might be slightly different for your camera make and model (**Figure 4.6**).

Using the profiles is as easy as selecting a new profile from the drop-down menu. You will get an instant preview in the main preview window. Press the P key to toggle between before and after views.

There's no way of knowing which profile will look best, so it's best to try them all. I find I get the best results with the Landscape and Vivid profiles. They can be a little contrasty, though, so I don't necessarily use them all the time. It depends on the subject.

## A FEW HANDY TOOLS

We have covered most of the image adjustment features in ACR, but there are some tools you should know about that will help make your editing easier. There is a toolbar at the top left of the ACR window. It contains the Zoom, Hand, Eyedropper, Crop, Straighten, Red Eye Removal, Preferences, and Rotate Image tools. Let's take a quick look at each of these tools and their specific functions (**Figure 4.7**).



**FIGURE 4.7**  
The Camera Raw toolbar is in the upper-left corner of the workspace.

## ZOOM, ZOOM

The Zoom tool's icon looks like a magnifying glass. Click it to select it, and then click on your image to zoom in. You can also click and drag to zoom in to a specific location. Holding down the Alt (Option) key while clicking will zoom back out of the image. If you double-click the Zoom tool icon, the magnification will be set to 100%.

## THE HELPING HAND

The Hand tool allows you to move around the image when it is zoomed in. This can be handy when you are working at 100% and want to check your processing on different parts of the image. If you double-click the Hand tool icon, the image will zoom out to fit in the screen.

## BETTER COLOR IN A CLICK

To get an accurate white balance in your image, especially if you have included a white balance card in your shot, you will want to use the Eyedropper tool (**Figure 4.8**). Its purpose is to set whatever color it is clicked on to neutral, which should then correct all the other colors in the image. It works better on medium to dark gray areas, so clicking something that is white or black may not render the desired results. For the most accurate white balance, you should take a photo of a neutral white balance card during your shoot to use as reference. In a pinch, you can grab a shot of some warm asphalt to use as a gray point for balancing your other photos.



**FIGURE 4.8**

The White Balance option can quickly correct colors when used with a white balance card.

## CROP THE UNWANTED

The Crop tool functions very much like the Crop tool that we covered in Chapter 3. Just select the tool, and then click and drag a new crop. Adjust the crop window by dragging the corners. If you want to size the crop to a predetermined aspect ratio, click and hold the Crop tool icon in the toolbar. A drop-down menu will appear with several aspect ratios to choose from, as well as an option to clear the crop altogether. There's also an option to turn on the crop overlay, which will put rule-of-thirds guide marks on top of your crop window to help with the composition.

## DRAW A LINE TO STRAIGHTEN THINGS UP

If your image contains vertical or horizontal lines, such as those in a building or the horizon, that you want to use as a guide for straightening, you can click the Straighten tool. Then simply click one edge of the straight line, drag across to the other end of your straight object, and let go (**Figure 4.9**). The image will automatically be straightened to the line you drew, as well as cropped to keep it squared up. Once you use it, you will instantly see what I am talking about.



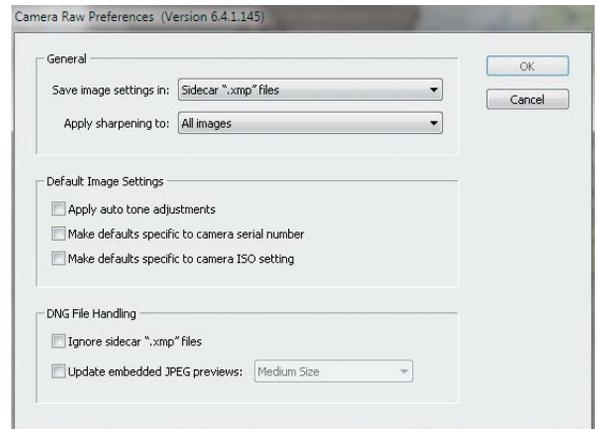
**FIGURE 4.9**  
If you have straight lines that are supposed to be 90 or 180 degrees, you can use the Straighten tool to correct the angle.

## GET THE RED OUT

The Red Eye Removal tool is another easy fix for an annoying problem. Just as you did with the Red Eye Removal tool in Chapter 3, select the tool, draw a box over the red eye, and watch it disappear. Everything should be so easy.

## WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE?

There aren't too many preferences that you need to worry about in Adobe Camera Raw, but one thing you might consider is the Default Image Settings section. It contains three check boxes that let you apply some defaults when images are opened in the program (**Figure 4.10**). The "Apply auto tone adjustments" check box will automatically apply tone adjustments to every image that is opened. The other two check boxes relate to the defaults that are set in the Defaults menu. You can assign default settings to a specific camera serial number so that every time a raw file is opened from a particular camera, a set



**FIGURE 4.10**  
The Camera Raw Preferences dialog.

of default adjustments is applied. You can also do this for a specific ISO setting. This would be handy for setting default noise reduction for any image that was captured with an ISO of 1600, for example.

## ROTATE (LEFT AND RIGHT)

Many of today's cameras have the ability to auto-rotate an image file depending on the orientation of the camera at the time the photo was taken. This rotation data is embedded in the metadata and then read by the software so that the image can be rotated to its appropriate orientation during viewing and editing. If, however, this is not the case with your camera, and your vertical images are displaying in a landscape orientation, you can click one of the Rotate Image tools to rotate 90 degrees to the left or right. It's not a necessity to do this, but I certainly find it easier to work on my images when they are facing the right way.

## THE DEFAULTS MENU

In the Camera Raw interface, just to the right of the tabs title bar, is a small icon that lets you access the Defaults menu. When you click this icon, a pop-up menu appears with options that allow you to revert to the Camera Raw default settings, to the previous conversion settings, or even to custom settings. You can also create a new Camera Raw default for use with future images.

## CREATING A CAMERA RAW DEFAULT

1. Open an image in Adobe Camera Raw.
2. Make all the adjustments that you want to apply as defaults to future images.
3. Click the Defaults menu icon, and select Save New Camera Raw Defaults from the pop-up menu (Figure 4.11).

The next time you open an image in ACR, your new defaults will be applied as a starting point for your processing.

Sometimes it's nice to set a default that you want to use for a large batch of images but not necessarily for all images for the rest of time. In this instance, you can set a new default and then once you are done with it, go to the Defaults menu and click the Reset Camera Raw Defaults option. This will set everything back to the Adobe defaults.



**FIGURE 4.11**

You can set your current adjustments as new defaults in the Defaults menu.

## NOTE

The new default setting is best used if you find that you are applying the same settings to all of your images. So why not start off with those settings? Remember that a default is just a jumping-off point for your edits, so you don't want to change every adjustment setting, just those that would apply to all of your images, like Sharpening, Clarity, and maybe Camera Calibration.

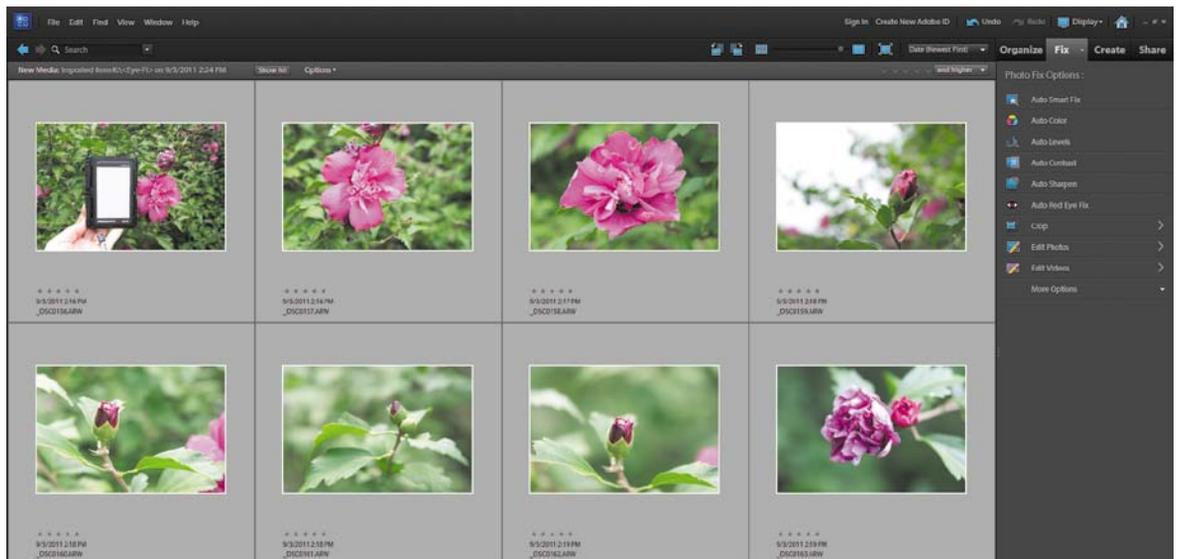
## WORKING WITH MULTIPLE IMAGES

Camera Raw is great for working with one image at a time, but you can also open a large group to speed up your workflow. This will allow you to apply adjustments to all of your images at once instead of opening each one individually. I use this feature all the time when I have taken the time to shoot a white balance card and want to apply the same white balance adjustment to all the photos from that shooting session.

### OPENING MULTIPLE IMAGES IN ACR

1. Go to the Organizer and find the files that you want to use.
2. Select the images by Control/Command-clicking them or by clicking the first image and then Shift-clicking the last image in the group (**Figure 4.12**).

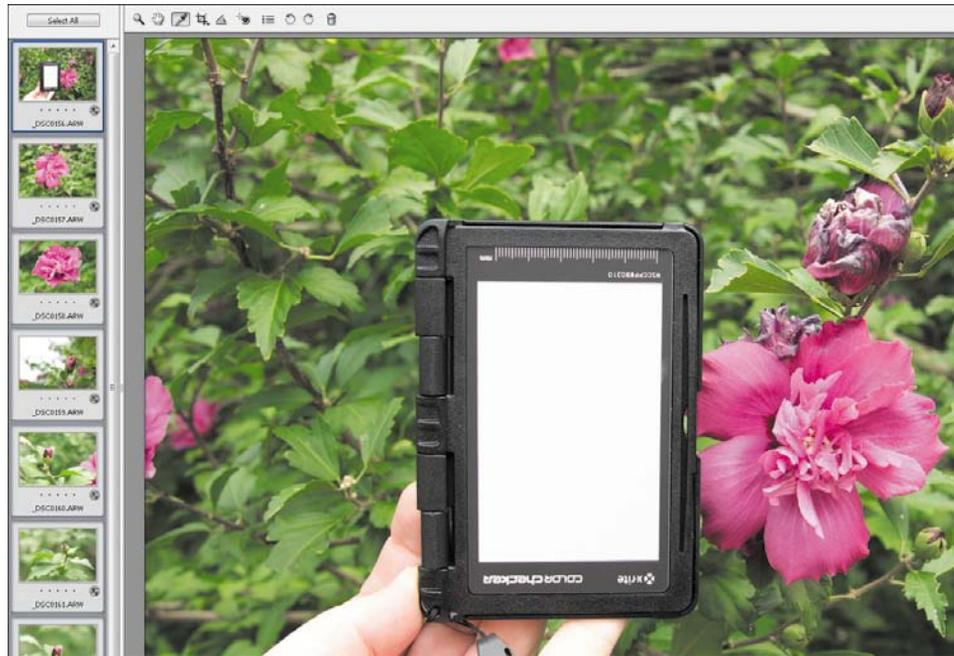
**FIGURE 4.12**  
To open a group of images in Camera Raw, select them in the Organizer and then click the Edit Photos option.



3. Go to the Fix tab and click Edit Photos to open the Editor and send the selected images to Camera Raw.
4. When ACR opens, the images will appear in a filmstrip along the left side of the program. Click one to work on just that image.
5. To apply the same adjustment to all of the images simultaneously, click one thumbnail to make it the focused image.
6. Click the Select All button at the top of the filmstrip to activate changes to all of the images in the strip (**Figure 4.13**).

**FIGURE 4.13**

To make synchronized changes to all your images, click the Select All button at the top of the thumbnail section.



7. Once you are finished making synchronized adjustments to all the images, click a different thumbnail or use the Control-D (Command-D) keyboard shortcut to deselect the group.

Once you are done with your edits, you have a couple of choices. You can click the Select All button and then click the Open Images button at the lower-right corner of the screen to move all of the images from ACR to the Project Bin in the Editor. If you only want to take some of the images into the Editor, Control/Command-click the thumbnails to select them and then click the Open Images button. If you have only one image selected in ACR, you will notice that the Open Images button reads Open Image (singular), and only the selected image will be opened in the Editor.

Of course, you may have only wanted to work on the images in ACR without actually going to the Editor. If that is the case, click the Done button (in the lower-right corner of the screen), and ACR will save your raw edits and take you back to the Organizer. Notice that the image thumbnails in the Organizer have been updated to reflect the adjustments that you made in ACR.

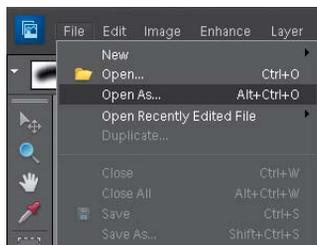
## OPENING JPEGS IN CAMERA RAW

You may find that after working with ACR you really enjoy the power and quickness of the edits and want to edit all of your images with it, including JPEGs. Well, you most certainly can do that, but you have to go about it a little differently than you would with raw files.

The default editor for raw images is ACR, so it opens by default when you go to the Editor. This isn't the case for JPEGs, so you will need to open them differently.

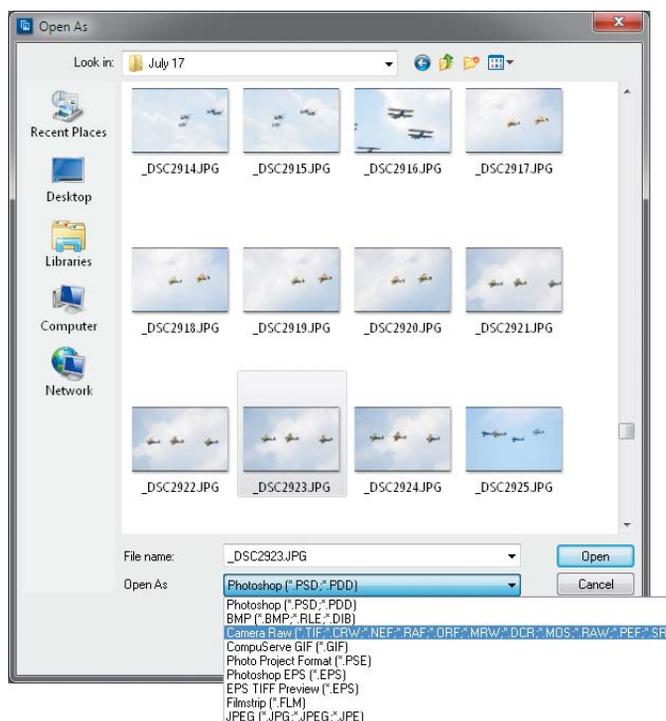
### OPENING A JPEG IN ACR

1. Open the Editor without opening an image.
2. Choose File > Open As (Figure 4.14).
3. Locate the folder that contains the image that you want to open, and then select the file.
4. Select Camera Raw from the Open As drop-down menu (Figure 4.15).
5. Click the Open button.



**FIGURE 4.14**

To open a JPEG in Camera Raw, go to the File menu in the Editor and select Open As.



**FIGURE 4.15**

Be sure to select Camera Raw from the Open As drop-down menu.

You will now have access to most of the features in ACR for editing your image. A few things will be different, because of the differences between JPEGs and raw image files.

First, there are no custom camera profiles. Instead, ACR will use the embedded profile in the file. You will also find that there is no longer a large group of white balance options to choose from. When you click the White Balance drop-down menu, you will only see As Shot, Auto, and Custom. You can, however, use the White Balance tool to click-balance your images using a neutral color in the photo, and you can make adjustments using the Temperature and Tint sliders.

Remember that even though you can open a JPEG in ACR, you will have limited results compared to a raw file. JPEGs have much less exposure information and dynamic range than raw files.

## MY CAMERA RAW WORKFLOW

It can be confusing trying to figure out what to do first to an image in Camera Raw. There isn't really a proper order for the way things should be done, and over time you will develop your own workflow. Until then, here's my ordered workflow for you to follow along with.

### STEP BY STEP

1. Open the image in ACR, and go to the Camera Calibration tab.
2. Select the camera profile that is most fitting for your image.
3. Jump to the Basic tab and adjust the white balance if necessary.
4. Check the clipping warnings to see if there are any problems with the high-lights. If so, adjust the Recovery slider.
5. If there are large areas of clipped shadows that are important to the image, use the Fill Light slider to brighten them.
6. Increase the Blacks setting a little to improve contrast and saturation.
7. Increase the Clarity setting (about 15 to 30 points) and the Vibrance setting.
8. Finally, go to the Details tab, zoom in to 100%, and adjust the Sharpening settings.

Of course, some of these adjustments have an effect other adjustments, so I often go back and tweak some of the previous steps. For instance, raising the Blacks slider can make the image dark, so I might use the Exposure or Brightness slider to lighten things up a little. Just remember that every image is a little different, so be flexible with your edits.

# Chapter 4 Assignments

The best thing to do with Adobe Camera Raw is just play with it and get to know what all the adjustments can do for your image. This might be a problem, though, if you have yet to shoot any raw images. You could use a JPEG, but you really should use raw files to get an idea of all the features. That's why I am including a few of my raw files in the bonus materials for you to play with (see Introduction). Just download the files and import them into the Organizer to get started.

## Get that JPEG Look in Your Raw Files

The camera profiles can have a huge impact on how your images look. Generally speaking, they can make them look just like they did on the camera LCD screen when you took them. Open your file in ACR, and then try some different camera profiles in the Camera Calibration tab.

## Back to Basics

The majority of your processing work will be done in the Basic tab. Spend a little time getting to know the sliders and adjustments here. Try clicking the clipping warnings to see the overlays, and then use the Recovery and Fill Light sliders to make the overlays go away.

## Sharpen Like a Pro

One of the coolest and most useful features of the Sharpening tools is the mask overlay. Masking the sharpening to only the edges, rather than sharpening everything, will give your images a much more polished look. Apply some sharpening to the image, and then hold the Alt (Option) key and move the Masking slider to apply sharpening just where you want it.

## Crop and Straighten

Cropping and straightening work hand in hand. When you straighten an image, you also crop it, because the image is being slightly rotated. Use the Straighten tool to straighten out a line or horizon in an image, and then click the Crop tool to adjust the crop composition.

*Share your results with the book's Flickr group!*

*Join the group here: [flickr.com/groups/elements\\_fromsnapshotstogreatshots](https://www.flickr.com/groups/elements_fromsnapshotstogreatshots)*

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