Dedication:

For Bob

And always for Eliana, who waited.
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Welcome to Photoshop Elements, Adobe’s powerful, easy-to-use, image-editing software. Photoshop Elements gives hobbyists, 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.

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 11

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 11 continues Adobe’s quest to make an image editing application that responds to people’s real-world needs. With this revision, the company has dramatically overhauled the entire application. Over the years, Elements has taken the basic Photoshop structure and bolted features and interfaces onto its frame. Now, items are placed in more natural locations—beginners won’t be intimidated by lots of floating palettes, for example (but experienced editors can bring them back).

After all, 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 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.

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 an advanced search mode that lets you winnow results based on keywords, people, places, and events. The Map mode, which disappeared in Photoshop Elements 10 due to technical issues, is back as the Places view, and is much improved (and also now available on the Mac for the first time).

Adobe is also in the process of phasing out its Photoshop.com service, which no longer appears in the Organizer, in favor of Revel, a way to share photos among computers and mobile devices like the iPad and iPhone.

The Editor, the component of Elements where you do the actual editing, gains the new interface and new guided edits like a Vignette Edit and Tilt-Shift Edit. A ton of little details and performance improvements have been worked into the corners, too, such as operations that a previewed in real time (instead of requiring that you remember to select a Preview checkbox), Exposure and Vibrance adjustment controls in the Quick edit mode, and a way to run Photoshop actions without digging deep into your computer’s folder structure, as in the past.

Overall, Photoshop Elements has received not only a refreshed interface geared toward helping all levels of users, but also benefited from quite a bit of internal work that should make photo organizing and editing smoother and faster.
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/elements11vqs. 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 why this book covers both platforms. 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.
You’re going to encounter a lot of powerful, in-depth information about how to use Photoshop Elements in this book’s 400-plus pages. But who wants to sit and devour the whole thing while a memory card full of photos is waiting to be explored?

If you’re anxious to get started with Elements, the steps outlined in this short chapter will improve nearly all of your digital photos. Then, when you’re ready to fiddle with settings sliders and really take advantage of what Elements has to offer, continue exploring the rest of the book.

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1. Import and Open Images

Photoshop Elements is really made up of two programs that work together—the Organizer and the Editor—and as a result, you can open a photo for editing in two ways. The Organizer stores your entire photo library and lets you apply metadata such as keyword tags. When you want to make adjustments to an image, you send it to the Editor. If you want to edit a photo independently of the Organizer, you can open the file directly from within the Editor.

Make sure your camera is connected to your computer, or the camera’s memory card is plugged into a card reader.

To import into the Organizer:

1. Open Photoshop Elements and, in the Welcome screen, click the Organize button to open the Organizer.

2. Click the Import button at the top left of the window and choose From Camera or Card Reader (or press Ctrl+G/Command-G). The Photo Downloader application launches.

3. Choose your camera or memory card from the Get Photos from drop-down menu (if it’s not already selected) A.

4. Click the Get Media button to download the selected images to your computer.

5. After the images have been imported, click the one you want to edit and then open it in the Editor by right-clicking and choosing Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor; or, in the task bar, click the Editor button B.

TIP See Chapter 3 for details on importing photos into the Organizer.
To open a photo directly in the Editor:
1. Open Photoshop Elements and, in the Welcome screen, click the Edit button to open the Editor.
2. Choose File > Open.
3. In the Open dialog, navigate to the image file you wish to edit and select it.
4. Click the Open button to open the file.

To import into iPhoto (Mac):
1. If you use iPhoto on the Mac to organize your photo library, launch iPhoto.
2. Click the camera or memory card name in the sidebar, listed under Devices.
3. Type a name in the Event Name field; one way iPhoto organizes the library is by grouping images into Events based on when the photos were imported.
4. Click the Import All button, or select the photos you want and click the Import Selected button.
5. When the import process is finished, click the Keep Photos button in the dialog that asks if you wish to remove or keep the pictures you just imported.
6. To be able to edit photos in Elements instead of using iPhoto’s editing tools, you need to do this step just once: Go to iPhoto > Preferences, click the Advanced button, and in the drop-down menu for Edit Photos, choose In application. Locate Elements on your disk and click Open.
7. Select a photo to edit and then either click the Edit button or right-click and choose Edit in External Editor.

TIP Photos shot in raw format first open in Adobe Camera Raw before reaching the Editor. See Chapter 10 to learn more about working with raw photos.
2. Crop and Rotate

The composition of a photo is often just as important as what appears within the frame. If you’re not happy with the image’s original framing, or you want to excise distracting elements like tree branches from the edges, recompose the shot using the Crop tool.

Another common correction is to adjust a photo’s rotation. Unless you set up the shot on a sturdy tripod, it’s not uncommon to get shots that are slightly tilted. Don’t worry, Elements offers easy fixes.

To crop a photo:
1. With the image open in the Editor, choose the Crop tool A (or press the C key).
2. Click and drag across the image to define a selection representing the boundaries of the visible area B. Don’t worry about being precise at first.
3. Instead of drawing a freeform rectangle, you can constrain the selection to match preset aspect ratios, such as common photo sizes or the photo’s original dimensions. Choose an option from the Aspect Ratio drop-down menu in the Tool Options bar C.
4. Click the Commit button D or press Enter or Return to apply the crop.

Tip: You can also enter specific sizes for the width and height of the crop, as well as the image’s pixel resolution. See Chapter 4 to learn more.
To rotate a photo:

In the Quick Edit mode, click the Rotate button on the task bar to turn the entire image counter-clockwise in 90-degree increments. Click and hold the tool to reveal a clockwise tool.

In the Expert edit mode, choose Image > Rotate and choose from the following options:

- Choose one of the first three items in the list to turn the entire image in 90-degree increments, such as when you shot a photo in portrait (tall) orientation but the image file was imported with a landscape (wide) orientation.

- To rotate just the active layer, choose one of the layer options further down the menu.

To straighten a photo:

There are a few ways to nudge the rotation and straighten an image, but the easiest is to use the Straighten tool:

1. Click the Straighten tool in the Tools panel.
2. In the Tool Options bar, choose how the straightened image will appear. The default is Grow or Shrink Canvas to Fit, but I prefer to use Remove Background for a cleaner result.
3. Drag a horizontal line that compensates for the amount the picture is rotated. This approach is easier if you have a well-defined horizon line, but in this example, I’m drawing the line perpendicular to the vertical wall corners in the background. The image straightens.

If you’re cropping the image, save time and straighten it before you apply the crop. Drag just outside a corner of the selection to rotate the image and then commit the change.
3. Adjust Lighting and Color

Almost every photo needs a little lighting and color adjustment, whether it’s lightening shadows or punching up the saturation slightly to make colors pop. Elements is awash in color and lighting adjustment choices, but this is where I start.

Quick Fixes

One of the appeals of Photoshop Elements is its Quick Fix adjustments. You don’t need to be a digital imaging expert—you may just want to correct a few shots with the least amount of fuss. See Chapter 5 for more information.

To apply quick fixes:

1. Open a photo in the Editor.
2. Click the Quick heading A to reveal the Quick Edit options (if it’s not already selected).
3. Click an attribute (such as Smart Fix) and drag the slider to make the adjustment. Or, click a preset from the grid; positioning your mouse pointer over a thumbnail previews the change, and clicking it applies the adjustment B. You can also drag within a preset in the grid to make incremental adjustments.
4. If you don’t like the effect, click the thumbnail that contains the reset icon to return to the original state.

A The Quick Fix edits handle many common corrections.

B Reveal a grid of settings presets and see how they affect the image.

Reset to original
Manual Adjustments

If you’d rather handle the details yourself, turn to manual corrections. I prefer to use adjustment layers in the Expert environment, which let you apply corrections without changing any of the original pixels in your image. Other controls, such as those found in the Enhance menu, are less flexible.

To apply an adjustment layer:

1. Click the Expert button to switch to that editor.
2. Click the Layers button in the task bar to reveal the Layers panel.
3. In the Layers panel, click the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer button and choose one of the options. A new adjustment layer is created, and a panel containing options appears.
4. Manipulate the controls in the panel to alter the look of the image.

For example, to increase the saturation of a flat image, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and, in the Hue/Saturation panel, increase the value of the Saturation slider.

Chapter 8 contains much more information about adjusting lighting and color.
4. Apply Corrections

In many cases, you’ll probably be finished editing a photo after the previous step. Sometimes, though, you’ll want to perform a little correction to remove dust spots, crumbs, or other distracting blemishes. The Spot Healing Brush smartly fixes areas like that without any fuss.

Of course, Elements includes an arsenal of correcting tools, enabling you to not only repair small areas but to also take the best parts of several photos and merge them together, or even remove people or objects from a scene entirely. Chapter 9 covers all of those options.

To repair areas using the Spot Healing Brush:

1. In either the Quick or Expert edit environment, choose the Spot Healing Brush from the Tools panel, or press J.

2. In the Tool Options bar, specify a brush size for the tool A that roughly matches the area you want to repair.

3. Click once on the area to apply the brush’s healing properties B.

4. If the area wasn’t repaired to your satisfaction, try clicking it one more time. Elements examines nearby pixels to determine how best to fill the area you’re fixing, and sometimes the first pass may not be exactly what you’re looking for.

Tip For finer detail work and more control, you may want to break out the Stamp tool for making repairs. See Chapter 9.
Now the photo looks more like what you had in mind when you were shooting it. When you’re finished making adjustments, save the image back to the Organizer or to a location on your hard disk.

To save the photo:

2. In the Save dialog that appears, select a location on your hard disk (if you want to move it to a new location) A.
3. Type a name for the file in the File name field (or the Save As field, on the Mac).
4. Choose a file format from the Format drop-down menu; use the native Photoshop format (PSD) to retain any layers you applied.
5. Enable the Include in the Elements Organizer checkbox to make the edited file appear in the Organizer.
   To group the edited version with the original, mark the Save in Version Set with Original box.
6. Click the Save button.

See Chapter 15 for more details on saving files, including other file formats.

To share the photo to an online photo service, as a slideshow, or via email, see Chapter 16.
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