✔ **Landscapes** ✔ **Portraits** ✔ **Black and white** ✔ **Macro**

Photography

Volume 2

Tips, Tricks & Fixes

Unlock the potential of your photographs

Master manual settings

Creative photography projects

Shoot a range of subjects
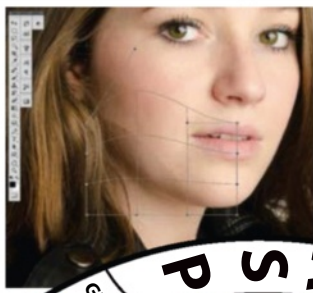
Over **650** essential hints & tips

Welcome to
Photography
Tips, Tricks & Fixes

If you want to develop your photography skills then Photography Tips, Tricks & Fixes will give you all of the essential and practical advice you'll need to master the art of photography. Alongside our 50 photography tips and tricks feature, our in-depth Tips section explores nine of the most popular photographic genres, including portrait, landscape, black and white and tips for lighting your subjects. Each genre has advice on the best kit, subjects, settings and composition as well as simple step-by-step tutorials so that you can capture the best photos of each subject every time. Once you've mastered the basics, the Tricks section invites you to take your photographs to the next level with several creative projects. From creating a levitation effect to shooting zoom bursts and setting up your own home studio, there is an array of fun shooting techniques for everyone. As hard as we try to take perfect photos in-camera, sometimes the end results don't match our expectations. Our Fixes tutorials show you how to use image-editing software to improve and enhance your photos. Follow the step-by-step tutorials to recompose photos, improve close-ups, brighten dull skies and much more. There is even a feature on rescuing old photos. We've also got a free CD at the back of the book packed with files and resources to help you complete the projects, along with video tutorials so that you can further your image-editing skills. Photography Tips, Tricks & Fixes will ensure that you are shooting and editing like a pro in no time.

Photography
Tips, Tricks & Fixes

Part of the

Photography
for beginners™
bookazine series

IP
IMAGINE
PUBLISHING

Contents

08

50 photography tips & tricks

Tips

"Master macro photography"

82

Creative photography projects

Tricks

"Discover creative photography projects"

"Recompose your problem photos in easy steps"

50 photography tips & tricks

Discover essential tips that will enhance your work – whether you shoot
landscapes, portraits, wildlife, commercial or mono

I nside this feature you will find the key to best practise in five genres of photography: landscapes, portraits, wildlife, commercial and monochrome. Discover 50 essential photography tips that you need to know before you can shoot great photographs, from bringing out confidence in models and training your vision of light to researching and planning the perfect wildlife shoot, and pitching your photography ideas to ad agencies. Taking on board some or all of these tips and techniques will help to develop your skills.

This is a collection of some really useful tips, dos and don'ts, observations, attitude advice and handy habits to adopt when taking your own photographs, that will put you on a fast track to becoming a successful photographer, regardless of your genre.

1: Understand the light

Look at the way the light works in conjunction with the elements in your picture, then wait until the clouds move into the right place to bring out the elements in your landscape that you want. The same goes for moonlight and starlight.

2: Face the elements

Go outside and see what happens in a rainstorm with a long exposure, or using flash. But keep your camera protected. Shortly after the rain has finished you'll get some great light and you'll have two shots for the price of one.

3: Shoot against simple backgrounds

Try to use white or grey backgrounds in the studio. A charismatic subject is not going to get any more interesting by having a palm tree in the background.

A-list portraiture advice

4: Keep it quiet

Make sure that you don't have anyone else interfering while you're taking pictures. If celebrities have their managers or PR staff with them, ask them to be quiet so they don't distract the subject.

5: Be friendly

Don't be too dominant, as it's better to let people settle in and relax in their own way. This way you bring out the best in them by letting them come to you. People will relax – it's just a matter of time.

6: Tune in

Find out what type of music your subject likes and have it playing in the background when they arrive. If people feel at home and relaxed then that's half the problem taken care of.

7: Read body language

Visually assess people as they arrive – study their movements. You'll soon tell if someone has low self-esteem, so you can build them up discreetly to make them more confident.

8: Maintain positivity

Never tell a woman she is beautiful because no matter how beautiful she is, she'll never believe it. Be more subtle – tell them 'that's great' and 'this works really well' as you go.

9: Do your homework

Make sure that you always read up about the person you are photographing so you have something to talk about when they arrive – that will put them at ease.

10: Get the right gear

It's important to buy a good camera and spend as much as you can on it, even if it's secondhand, because the better the camera, the less problems you'll have.

11: Know when to stop

As soon as you feel you've got the images that you need, end the shoot then, because there's nothing worse for the subject than a shoot that just drags on.

12: Use just one light

There is no point taking pictures in bad light. A great setup is one light set above the subject's head angled down so it throws interesting shadows underneath the chin.

Beauty and style

Clockwise from above: Brigitte Bardot (1971), Mick Jagger (1964), The Rolling Stones (1964), Audrey Hepburn (1966), David Bowie (1974)

Evocative landscape techniques

13: Be original
People go to the same places as Joe Cornish and get disappointed that they can't get the same pictures as him. You can never be Joe Cornish, so you're far better off trying to capture your own experience of the place.

14: Manage your time
Don't drive a hundred miles only to find that the tide isn't right – tide tables can be checked in advance of a shoot. You might need an hour before your ideal tide level to set up and find the best spot.

15: Work on your own
Go to places on your own and get in touch with your own feelings, ability and workflow. If you always go with others you won't find out what works best for you.

16: Learn from others
Find another visual artist who is willing to share their experiments that didn't work – it shows the thought process that goes into it and can be quite revealing.

17: Be flexible
You can research all the elements of a place and plan your shoot meticulously, only to find that when you arrive, there is scaffolding in front of your view. Be ready to do something different with what you've got.

18: If you can't buy it, make it
You can make homemade filters out of stockings, tea bags, bubble wrap. It doesn't even matter if a piece of equipment is broken – if you've dropped your lens and the front element has moved, see if you can get some nice, unexpected effects.

19: Don't be a one-lens Photographer
Occasionally leave your favourite lens at home and take one with you that you rarely use. This will force you to think about the way you approach photography.

20: Develop your own style
Whether you do long exposures, HDR or exposure-merging in Photoshop, experiment until you find something that really excites you. Then start applying it to a lot of things so you develop a style, because your individual style is what sets you apart.
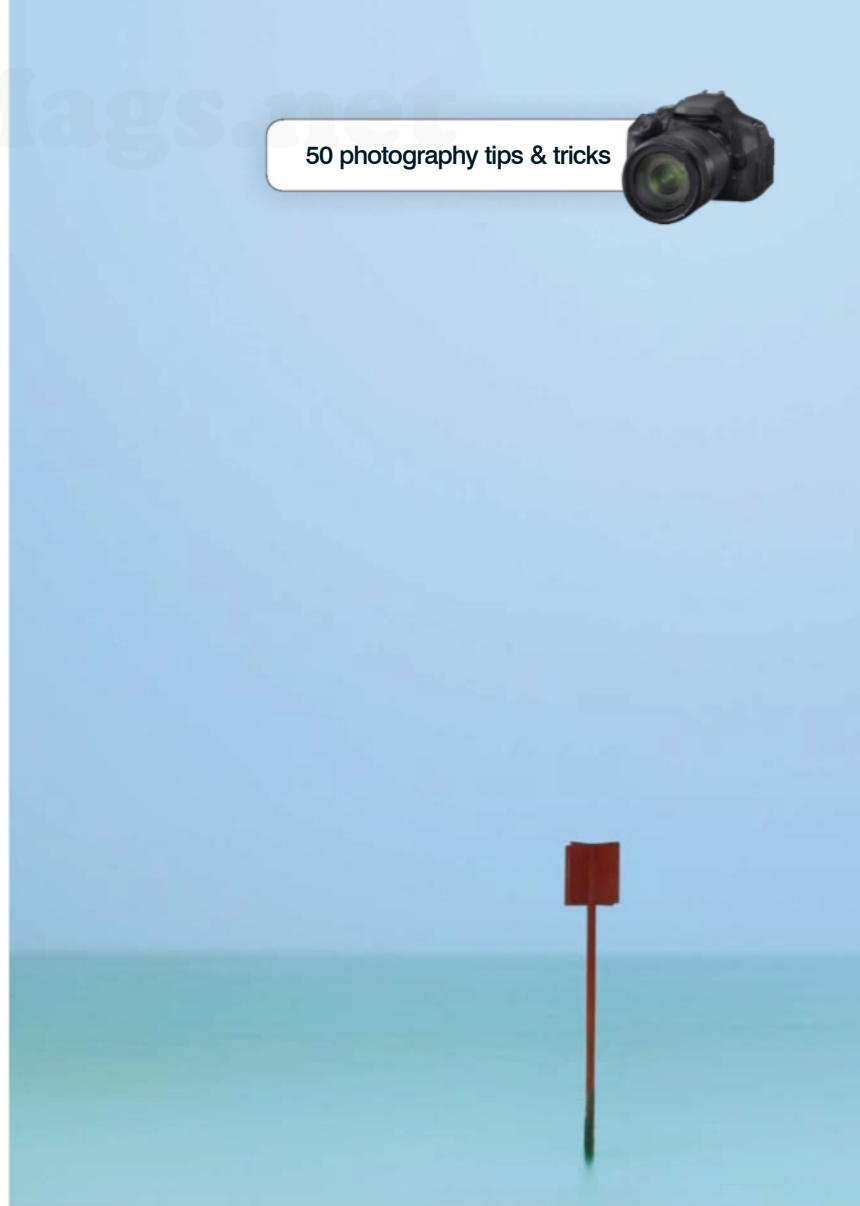
All images © Paul Sanders

Serene scenery
Clockwise from left:
Chillenden, Kent, south-
east England; Borth Y Gest,
Gwynedd, north-west Wales;
Staffhurst, south-east England

22: Experiment with long exposures

Either get out very early before the Sun rises, or invest in an ND (neutral density) filter and use the long shutter speeds the camera requires to correctly expose the image to create great misty effects on water.
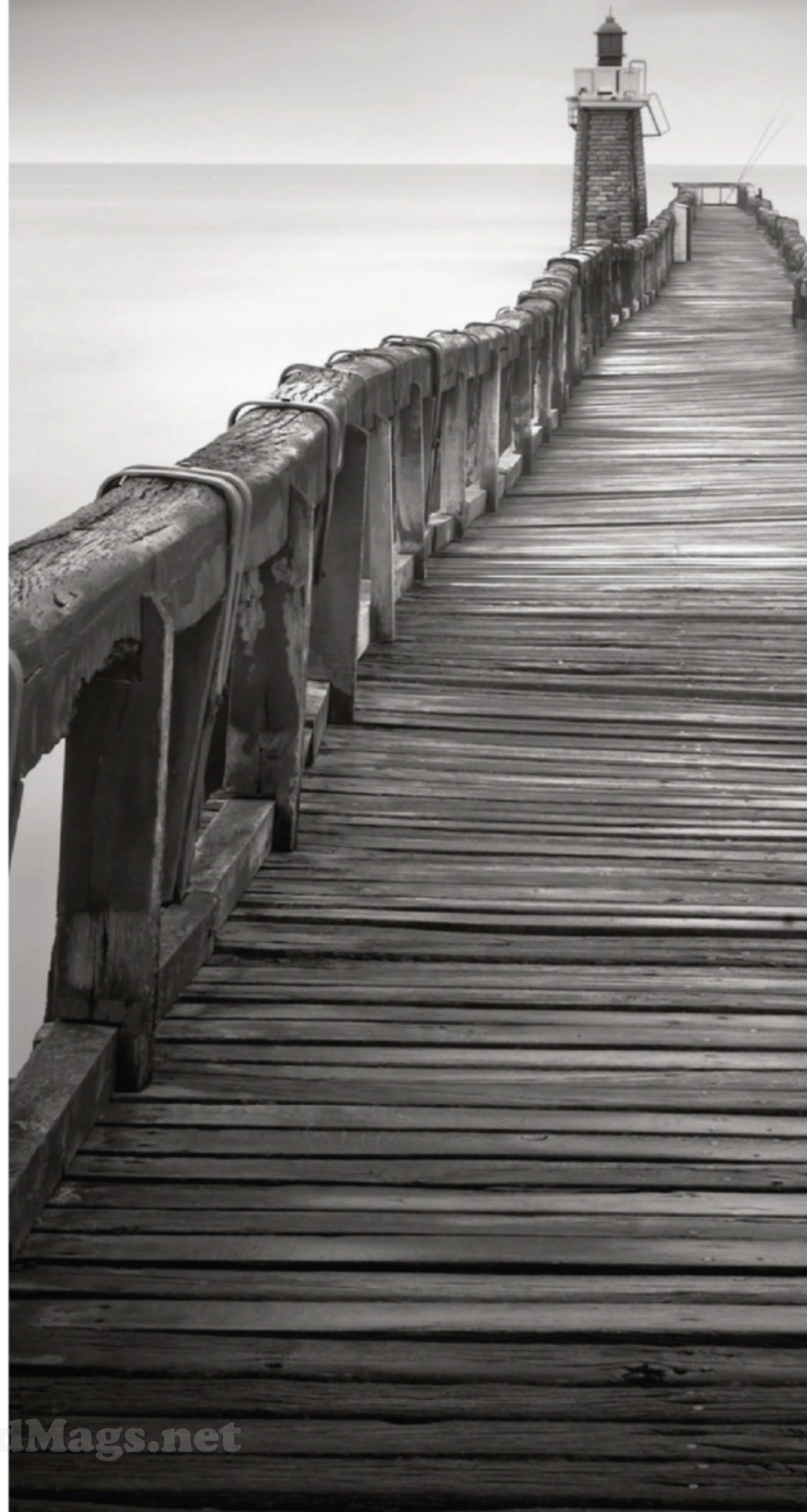
21: Rise early

For monochrome shots dawn can be a far better time to work than sunset. The light is often softer and the colours are more muted, which works better in black and white and there are less people around.

All images © Jonathan Chritchley

Ethereal monochrome tricks

23: Shoot water
Lakes, sea, streams and rivers – water makes such a great subject matter to shoot in black and white. Fantastic, luminescent foreground, great texture and tone and there's so much of it around.

24: Adjust your screen
Set your camera screen to monochrome. You can still work in RAW format and your files will be in colour, but the screen will display in black and white. It gives a good idea of which colours become which tones.

25: Avoid bright days
Black-and-white photos taken on bright days tend to lack atmosphere and be too contrasting. A great black-and-white day is when the sky is grey and menacing! Stormy skies can look fantastic, especially once you add a little contrast in post-production work.

26: Attempt intimate landscapes
Detailed, macro-style images can work beautifully well in monochrome. Potter around old harbours and shoot lobster pots, nets, rusty chains and bits of boats. Crop tight, and think about the texture.

27: Know your kit bag
Ensure that you know where everything is in your camera bag. You don't want to be hunting around for equipment while the light is going or tide is coming in!

28: Create prints
Don't leave all your lovely photographs on your hard drive – print them, or make up a book of your favourites – it's more rewarding to see them this way.

29: Don't over-process
Photoshop is not for fixing, it's for enhancing. Spend about five minutes processing each photograph – any more and it's not the right one. A little contrast with Curves, some Dodging and Burning where necessary.

30: Simplify the shot
Sometimes a very beautiful scene can look amazing to the eye, but be too cluttered and confusing in a photograph, especially in black and white.

Be water, my friend
Clockwise: *Pier Study 2*, Capbreton, south-west France; *Fishing Boat*, Dungeness, England; Selfoss, north Iceland; *Storm*, Dyrholaey, Iceland;

Expert wildlife tips

31: Know your animal
Research the animal's behaviour before you set off so that you know how to interact. If your subject is a grizzly bear and you want it to relax, you need to make a bit of noise. A zebra, on the other hand, will be frightened if you're noisy.

32: Include the landscape
An animal is part of a landscape. There's always a temptation to use the most powerful telephoto lens to get a good close-up, but with a wide-angle lens you can get a real sense of the surroundings that the animals are in.

33: Don't boast
On safari trips there will always be someone boasting that they saw the best animals and got the best shots, but wildlife photography is a game of chance. Accept it and don't boast too much – you could make life difficult for others.

34: Put on the lens hood
When shooting wildlife you should always keep the lens hood on; if you are following an animal that's moving, it might run into the Sun and the flare can catch the edge of the lens, ruining an otherwise great image.

Force of nature
Wildebeest and zebra crossing the Mara River during the great migration, Masai Mara

All images © Steve Bloom

35: Behave
Remember you are an intruder in the animal's territory. It's like walking into their house – if you behave well they will relax, but if you do something that will stress or upset them, they will either run away or attack you.

36: Start with the surroundings
When you arrive at your destination, put down your camera for a day. This may seem odd, but it gives you a sense of the animals' surroundings and the environment in general.

37: Know the best spot
One of the easiest ways to get pictures of animals in Africa is to go to the water hole – the animals will have to drink eventually, so as long as you have patience they will appear.

38: Don't chimp
Don't spend too long looking at your LCD screen between shots – you could be missing great opportunities. This is particularly true with wildlife photography where you can miss a chance in a second.

39: Plan properly
Research your subject – if you want to photograph the great migration of a million wildebeests crossing the Mara River in Kenya, that's seasonal, so you need to turn up at the right time.

40: Move closer
As long as it's safe, the best zoom lens is your own pair of legs, so get as close to your subject as you can. Try to avoid using zoom lenses because you just can't be bothered to walk, it's not a good enough reason.

Essential advertising photography advice

41: Play with lights

It's key that you play with strobe lights to create your own look. Turn on your first strobe light in your studio, and light your subject. Once you have found your angle, direction and intensity, turn on a second strobe light and start playing with it. You could use the second strobe to fill in the background behind your subject, or use the light to create a separation light between the subject and the same background.

42: Develop your skills

The main difference between you and the established advertising photographers is time, so keep shooting and practising your craft and you'll get better. You'll continue to learn and grow, so don't give up if it's something that you are passionate about.

43: Accept rejection

Never be afraid of rejection. Remember the rule: 'It takes ten 'Nos' to get one 'Yes''. If you never try, you will never get accepted. Take on board any constructive criticism and feedback so that you can work towards the 'Yes'.

44: Speak up

Pitch in and take initiative when working with an art director or an ad agency. You might risk stepping on someone else's idea, but remember you have been chosen for the shoot because of your style and ideas.

45: Always be ready

Be ready to travel at any time, any day. You'd be amazed how many times you could lose a vital job only for not being able to answer your phone.

46: Don't fail to plan

Before every shoot, try to make a storyboard, lighting diagram and, if possible, visit the set location so you know where everything is placed. But have a backup plan too; if you're relying on window light to fill your background, bring two or three extra strobes just incase.

All images © Ricardo Suriano

47: Leave an impression
Always carry more than one portfolio with you when you go to interviews. If you're lucky, the agents you show it to will want to keep one to review it further.

48: See the light
Train your vision by taking a walk around town, pay attention to the difference in lighting that you get in the same exact spot just by looking at it from different angles. Also notice the difference in intensity depending on the weather and time of day.

49: Master Photoshop
Advertising photographers need to be able to mix graphics and photography, so it's very important that you spend countless hours messing with Photoshop and learning all of its tricks.

50: Find a niche
Choose your niche (watches, jewellery, shoes), master it and you will see that with time your work will be noticed by agencies and companies that are looking to hire someone in your particular field.

Tips

Develop your camera skills and explore new genres with these top tips

"Create striking images across a range of genres with these essential step-by-steps"

Landscapes

Discover how to capture stunning scenery in the world around you

52

Macro

Learn how to take perfect close-up photos of any subject

TOP TIPS
✔ Stunning vistas
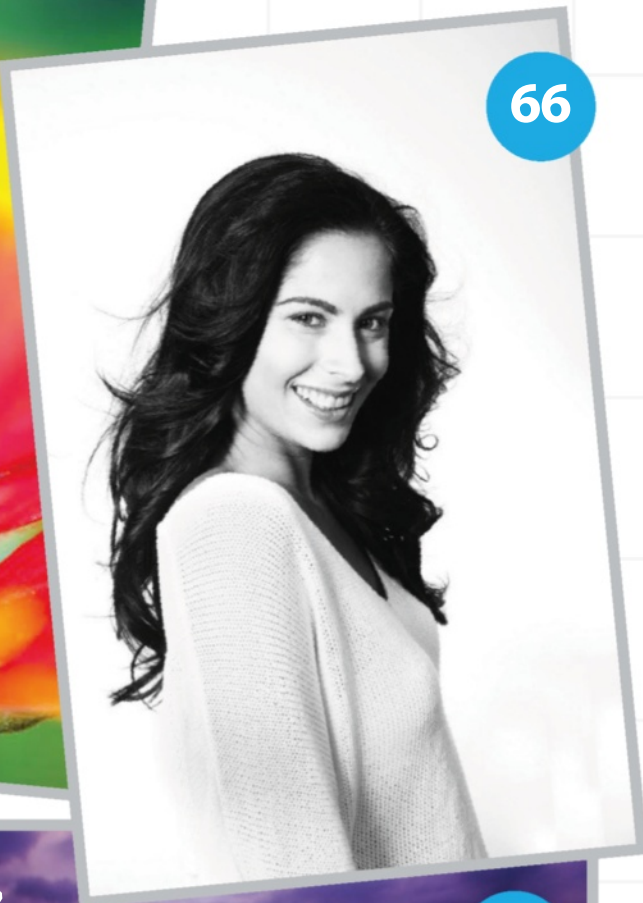✔ Perfect portraits
✔ Master monochrome
✔ Lighting tips

Seascapes

Find out how to capture creative shots of water

Tips | Tricks | Fixes
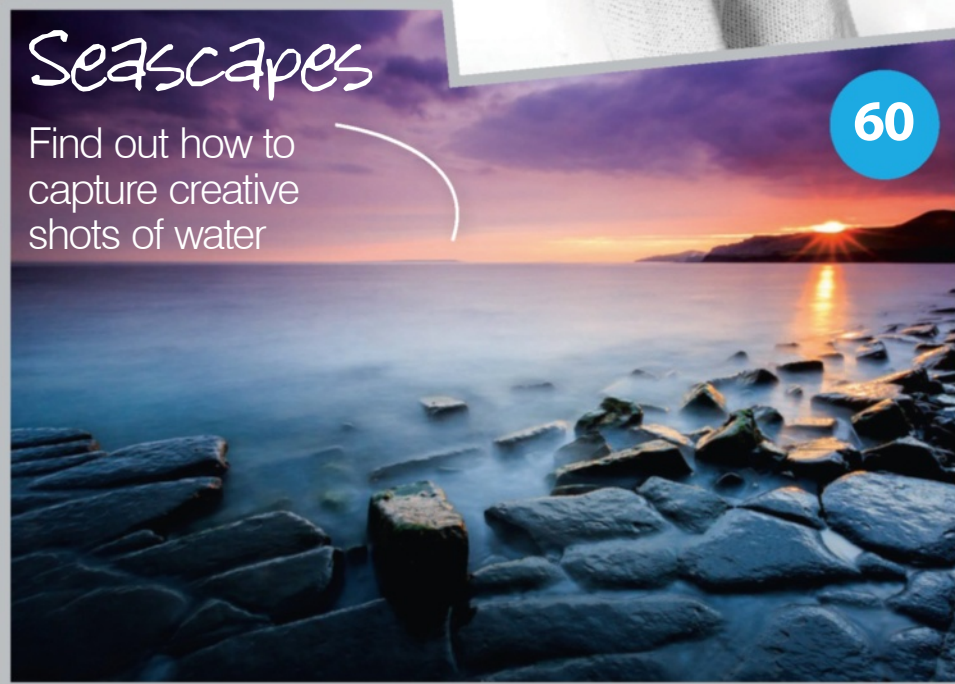
Capture stunning landscapes

Learn these easy tips and tricks for capturing beautiful vistas

It's possible to get great landscape photos on any camera, whether you have a DSLR, a compact or a cameraphone. The genre is a brilliant one in which to practise your skills, as landscapes are stationary. You can take all the time you need to get your settings and composition right, and experiment with more creative techniques and filters. Then, when you have your perfect shot, you can go back to the same spot when the light or weather changes and get an entirely new image. Stunning landscapes can be found anywhere, from the coast to the city, and you don't have to wait for clear sunny days as even cloudy or stormy skies can look great in your captures.

We'll show you the kit and settings you'll need for great landscapes, and how to master compositional rules to create works of art.

Gear guide | Essential kit for landscape photography

Backpack
Carry your essential kit with you to your landscape location.

Tripod
Prevent wonky horizons and avoid blurry shots at slow shutter speeds.

Wide-angle lens
Capture the entire scene without missing out important details.

ND filter
Block some of the light so you can shoot at long exposures.

Look for colour

Seek out vibrant colours to create a strong image that pops out. The colour of the sky and flowers really help this image.

Settings

Discover how to take perfect scenic shots

L andscapes are so popular that many cameras now come with a dedicated Landscape scene mode. This will automatically select the correct setting for taking fantastic photos of beautiful views. However, you may wish to take more control over your camera's settings to achieve certain techniques. For example, many photographers use a slow shutter speed when they want to capture the movement of water. You may also wish to use an art filter, if your camera has them. Vivid mode is great for landscapes as it makes the colours appear more vibrant, even if you're shooting on a cloudy day.

Capture a scene with a high dynamic range

High dynamic range (HDR) photography enables you to take an image that captures more detail in the shadows and highlights. This technique involves shooting a series of photos of the same scene with different exposures. You then layer them on top of each other to produce a well-exposed photo that has a deeper range of colours. You can achieve this with any camera that has manual controls, but it helps if you have an exposure bracketing function which, when turned on, will automatically take three shots for you at different exposures. Some cameras even have an automatic HDR mode that will do all of the work for you.

1: Use a tripod
You'll need to frame each of your shots in the same way so they look right when you layer them. Use a tripod to avoid camera movement.

2: Narrow aperture
Set your camera to Aperture Priority mode and choose a narrow aperture (high f-number). This will keep the entire scene in focus.

3: Bracket exposure
You can do it manually, but if you have an exposure bracketing mode, use it to take over-, under-, and well-exposed shots at the same time.

Info . . .

Shutter speed:
1/125 seconds
Aperture:
F16

If you using a slow shutter speed for your landscapes, you will need to use a tripod to keep the camera steady and ensure you don't get blurry images

4: Layer your shots

You can now layer the shots using software. Photomatix is a free program for creating HDR images, or you could use Photomerge in Photoshop.

Before

Adjust your settings

Pick a narrow aperture

To keep the entire scene in focus, use a narrow aperture (f8 or higher) for your shot.

Slow down your shutter

To let plenty of natural light into your lens and capture some motion, use a slow shutter speed setting.

Try a scene mode

If you don't want to do it manually, Landscape scene mode selects the correct setting for you.

Composition

Follow compositional rules for engaging landscapes

When looking at a photo of a vast and spacious landscape, it can be easy to get lost in the scene and possibly lose interest altogether. This is why it is important to consider the composition of your shot to help grab the viewer's attention. There are several handy compositional rules to learn, and once you get to grips with them, you won't be able to stop looking for foreground interest and lead-in lines when you're out and about. It is easy to produce a well-composed landscape image, and it's often a case of experimenting with shooting from different viewpoints and angles.

Lead-in Lines
Use either natural or man-made lines to lead the viewer through the shot.

Depth
Find some interest in the middle section of your landscape to give it even more depth.

Explore near or far to find different landscapes to photograph

Landscapes are among the most accessible things to shoot – there is always a great view to be found, wherever you are in the world. You can go out in your local area to look for a stunning scene, or travel further afield in search of a completely different vista. You might stumble on a great location while out and about, so it's a good idea to always have a camera with you, or you could research interesting landscapes and carefully plan your shoot. Here are some of the most popular types of landscape…

"There is always a great view to be found, wherever you are in the world"
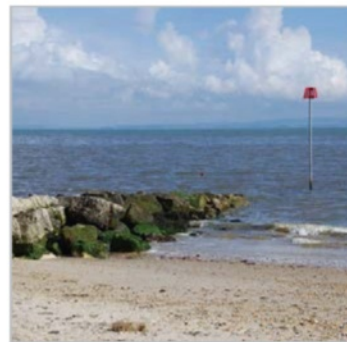
1: The seaside
Visit the coast for beautiful seascapes. You could try a slow shutter speed to capture the smooth movement of the water.
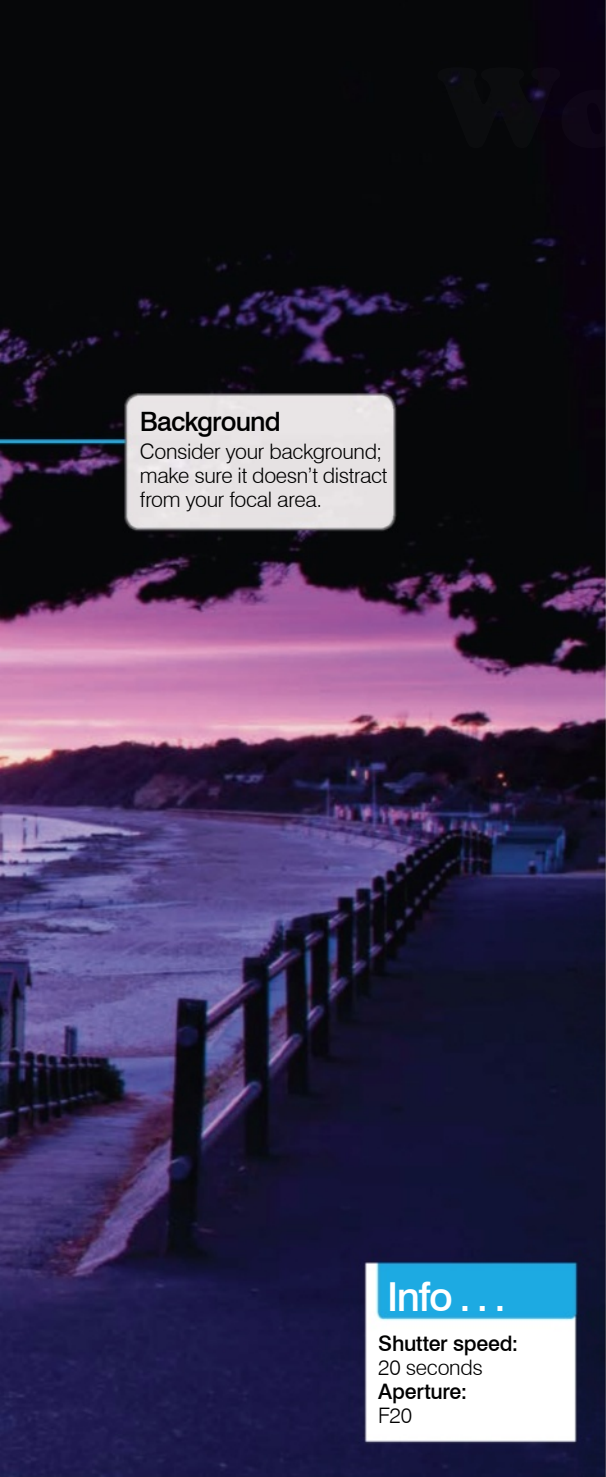
2: The city
Take striking cityscapes. Find an unobstructed vantage point so you can capture the scene without people walking into view.

Background
Consider your background; make sure it doesn't distract from your focal area.

Info . . .

Shutter speed:
20 seconds
Aperture:
F20

Look for a focal point
When setting up, look for a main focal point such as a tree or rock to give the image a clear focus.

Use the rule of thirds
Place your focal point and horizon off-centre in the frame. Use your camera's gridlines to help you.

Straighten horizons
A wonky horizon will ruin your shot. Use a tripod or your camera's gridlines to get it straight.
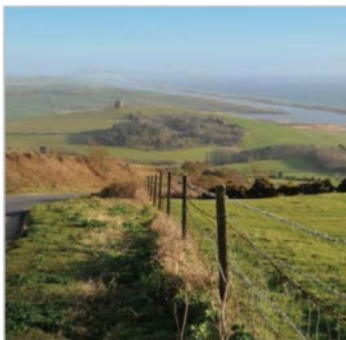
3: The countryside
The patchwork fields and rolling hills of the countryside look fantastic in photos. Old farm buildings make great focal points in the foreground.

4: Public parks
An easy way to guarantee finding a brilliant landscape is to visit a public park or nature reserve. Arrive early to avoid people in your shots.

5: The woods
There are some fantastic shots to be taken in the woods. Tall trees may block out some of the light, so raise your ISO to avoid dark shots.

6: Towns and villages
Your hometown can present some excellent opportunities. Try using streets, paths or rivers as lead-in lines to guide through the scene.

Tips | Tricks | Fixes

Shoot beautiful portraits

Follow our key advice for taking your best-ever people photos

Find the optimum setting | Adjust the mode

Use Aperture Priority
Set a low f-number in Aperture Priority mode. This creates a nice blurry background so your subject stands out in the frame.

Select a scene mode
If you're struggling, Portrait mode can pick the best settings for you, so you can focus on the lighting and composition of your shot.

Use burst mode
To capture everyone with their eyes open, use continuous or burst mode for a series of shots, or use blink-detection mode.

Use selective focus
Make sure their eyes are sharp by using selective/flexible focus mode and moving the focus point over their eyes.

Perfect poses
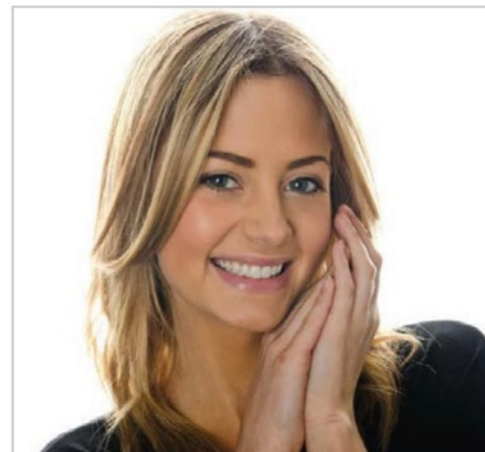
1: Pose with their hands
Introducing your model's hands into the shot can look great. Just make sure their hands are relaxed and don't look awkward.

2: No slouching!
The best poses reflect your subject's personality. But, be sure you encourage them to sit or stand straight for a flattering photo.

Introduce props

1: Interesting clothing
Clothing can be a great prop. Get subjects to interact with appropriate accessories for fun or glamorous poses.

2: Everyday objects
Think about the message you want to convey in your shot and find objects that fit in. These could be simple things that you have to hand.

Light your subject

Position the model

When you're shooting your photos indoors, make sure that your subject is positioned near to the window or your other chosen light source so they do not appear too dark. If using window light, turn off the overhead lights to avoid colour casts in your shot. See the 'Directional light' section on this page for tips on how to position them.

Directional light | Shadows

You may think that capturing shadows across your subject's face in a portrait shot is a bad thing. In some cases, particularly if it appears unflattering for your subject, then it's true that this is the case. However, you can also use shadows for creative and dramatic effect in your shots. You could use natural window light and position your model at various angles for different effects. Or keep your model still and move an artificial light source such as a lamp around to cast shadows. The distance between your subject and the light will affect the strength of the shadow, so move them further apart if you want more subtle results.

1: Backlit

If your subject is in front of the light source, with their back to it, their entire face will be in shadow. Use your flash to fill in the light for a more flattering shot.

Use a reflector

To eliminate harsh shadows and create an even spread of light, use a reflector to bounce the light back into the dark areas. Point the reflector towards the light source and angle it until the light hits your model. Reposition it and watch where the light falls until it's right.

Soften your flash

If you need to illuminate your model with flash, bounce the light off a piece of paper under it for a softer effect, or twist your flash gun to bounce off a wall. Diffusing the flash with tracing paper is also an effective work around.

> "Catch the light in their eyes to create highlights, making a portrait really come alive"

Capture light in their eyes

Catch the light in their eyes to create highlights, making a portrait really come alive. Try placing a reflector on your model's lap to create a larger catchlight and then experimenting to get the effect you want.
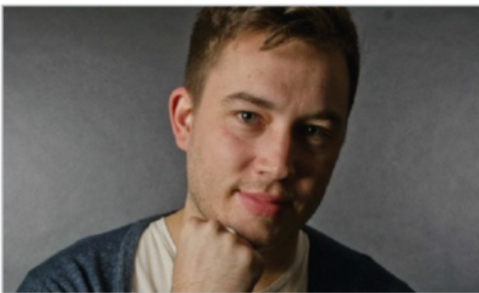
2: 45° away from the light

Turn your subject 45° towards the window for a smooth progression between light and shadow, keeping most of their face still visible.
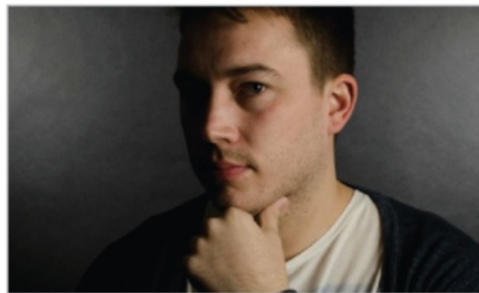
3: 90° away from the light

Get your subject to sit or stand parallel to the window, at a 90° angle. This will produce a harsh contrast between the light and dark areas.

4: 90° facing the light

Positioned parallel to the window, get your subject to turn towards it. Their face will then be well-lit but the back of their head will be in shadow.

Compose the shot

Avoid distracting backgrounds

A busy backdrop will remove attention from your subject, so avoid capturing things like other people in your shot.

Look for colour

Look for a location with nice colours to complement your model. A simple, colourful background is really flattering.

Positioning

Look to position your model off-centre in the frame for a stronger composition. You can always crop into the photo later on in editing software.

Framing your shot | Zoom in or shoot wide

Get up close

Put the focus on your model by filling the frame with them, getting rid of any ugly or distracting backgrounds in the process. Try zooming in so that just their head and shoulders are visible. You can always crop in later using editing software if you need to.

Go wider

If you're shooting in a nice location, you could try including more of the background in order to capture your subject's surroundings. Do this by shooting at a wide angle. It works particularly well if your subject is in a location that they enjoy, to bring out natural smiles.

Consider the eyes | Adjust the direction of the eyes

Use eye contact

For a striking portrait shot, the eyes are very important. Get your subject to look down the lens for an engaging shot that captures their eyes beautifully. A nice trick is to get your model to turn their head away from you but keep their eyes focused on the camera.

Look away

It is okay to break the photo rules sometimes! Try shooting your subject as they look away, and include some 'looking space' in the image. This can often create a more playful or thoughtful look to your portrait and can help to capture your subject's true personality.

Shoot high

For really flattering results, shoot from a high angle, as this is most attractive for your subject. Shooting from below can accentuate nostrils and chins so avoid this. If you can't elevate your position, try getting your model to sit on the floor instead.

Master macro photography

The ultimate guide to capturing stunning close-ups of any subject

Macro is the official term for extreme close-up photography, and the idea is to make small objects look larger than life size. It is a hugely popular shooting technique, as macro images capture fascinating details, patterns and textures that are often invisible to the naked eye. It can also help to show your subject in an entirely new way and can produce some beautifully dramatic and sometimes abstract images, all you need is a little bit of know-how beforehand.

To take a macro photo, you need to be able to focus on your subject while it is very close to the end of your lens. If you are serious about this type of photography, then it is a good idea to invest in some of the specialist kit that we mention in this feature. However, you don't have to spend a fortune to have a go, as most digital cameras now come with a dedicated Macro mode. You can even take stunning close-up shots with your cameraphone, so there really is nothing stopping you from trying your hand at this fascinating genre.

It's not difficult to find a fantastic subject for your macro shots either, as there are plenty of small objects to be found around your house or garden that will look interesting up close. Then, once you have found something to shoot, it is easy to master your camera settings and lighting techniques to help you produce some stunning images. Focusing close up is often the trickiest part of macro photography, but with our few simple tricks you will have no problem taking sharp shots.

We have packed this feature full of all the essential tips you'll need to get started with macro, including some advice on choosing a subject to shoot and how to frame your shot for the best results. Follow our simple guide and then it's all down to you to experiment.

Gear guide | All you need to capture great close-ups

Close-up filters

Close-up filters screw onto your lens and allow it to focus more closely to your subject. Hoya's close-up filters are available in +1, +2, +3 and +4 levels of magnification and you can get a range of different sizes.

Macro lens

A dedicated macro lens will let you focus at a short distance from your subject. This 40mm f2.8 Micro lens from Nikon has a minimum focusing distance of 163mm and a wide maximum aperture for creating a shallow depth of field.

Macro mode

Most cameras come with a Macro mode, which is usually represented by a flower icon on your mode dial or in your camera's menus. It will reduce the minimum focusing distance of your camera, for optimum macro settings.

Extension tubes

Extension tubes fit between the camera body and lens, lowering its minimum focusing distance so you can get closer to your subject. This Dorr Extension Tube Set contains three tubes of different lengths to combine together.

Top macro subjects

Interesting things to shoot up close

1: Intricate insects

Find a particular area that is popular with insects and wait patiently for them to arrive. Insects tend to move more sluggishly in the morning until it warms up, so shoot at this time if possible. Move slowly when shooting insects and use a longer focal length so as not to startle them and make them run or fly away.

2: Beautiful plants

Go out after it has rained or add your own water droplets to create more texture. When shooting outdoors, shield the plant from the wind to prevent blurry shots.

3: Fruit and veg

Look for pieces of fruit and veg that have interesting colours, textures and patterns. Once you have shot the outside of the fruit, cut it open and capture the inside too.

4: Everyday objects

Find objects with intricate details or unusual textures that look great close up. Create an abstract shot by shooting a small part of a larger object up close.

The vital macro settings

Control your camera for great macro results

Macro lenses have a shallow depth of field, so set a high f-number to keep as much detail sharp

Use Burst mode when shooting moving subjects. Use a tripod and self-timer on static ones to stop blurring

If your photos are too dark, use a slower shutter speed or raise your ISO

## Amazing macro on your phone | Get up close with your cameraphone

1: Get in tiny places

A cameraphone lets you get into small places and shoot at awkward angles. Experiment and see what images you can create from unique and interesting perspectives.

2: Use a macro lens

As your phone's camera may not let you focus very close, use a phone macro lens for better results, like this Olloclip that easily attaches to your iPhone.
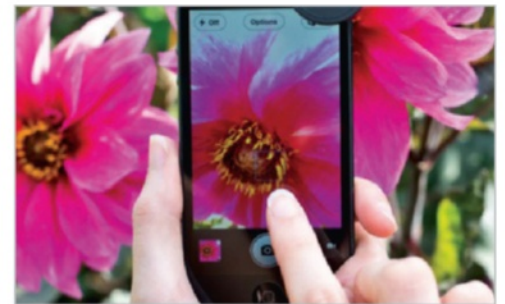
3: Lock the focus

If your phone has a focus locking function, use it to ensure your shots are sharp. Tap the AF Lock button to lock the area of focus while you recompose your shot.

Get perfect lighting

Lighting techniques to help enhance your macro photos

Soften the light

Make use of natural light either outdoors or through a window, but avoid shooting when the sun is very bright as it will create harsh shadows in your photos. For more control over your lighting, create your own using a desk lamp. Try placing some tracing paper in front of it to soften the light for more flattering results.

Keep it natural

Using your pop-up flash when shooting up close will produce very harsh light for your images and could startle your subject if you are photographing insects, so turn it off. If the light hitting your macro subject is too bright, try blocking it with a piece of paper or card, or reposition yourself to create some shade with your body.

Use a tungsten white balance setting when using a desk lamp

Compose for more impact

Position your subject

Knowing how to frame your shot is also a vital part of capturing a marvellous macro photo. The position of your subject and the background you use both affect the overall balance of the image.

1: Fill the frame

As is the aim with macro, your subject will naturally fill the frame if you can get your camera close enough. A tight composition will also create a more dramatic, abstract or intimate image.

2: Position off-centre

Use the rule of thirds to create an engaging composition. Place your subject, or the most important part of it, off-centre. Switch on your gridlines and place it where the lines intersect.

Focus up close

Keep your macro subjects sharp

Stationary subjects

If you are using autofocus, be sure to set the focus point over the most important part of your subject to ensure this is the sharp part of the frame. When you are close to your subject, the camera's autofocus can sometimes struggle. Taking the time to manually focus will ensure your shot is sharp.

Moving subjects

Using continuous autofocus will get your camera to track your subject as it moves and keep it in focus, even if its movements are fast and unpredictable. If you know where your subject is going to land or move to, then use manual focus to pre-focus on that spot, then fire the shutter when they come into view.

3: Add a backdrop

If you can't find a clean backdrop for your shot, add your own by placing a piece of paper or card behind your subject. Try using coloured card or wrapping paper that complements your subject.

4: Try new angles

Produce unique or abstract images by shooting your subject from unusual angles. For example, try shooting from above or underneath and make use of your tilting LCD screen if you have one.

5: Consider colours

If the background is natural, make sure the colours complement each other and there are no distractions. Aim to include no more than three colours to prevent it from appearing too cluttered.

Capture perfect still life shots

Master the skills needed for setting up a fantastic still life shot

The best thing about still life photography is that you can really take your time to get it perfect. When shooting moving subjects, it can be tempting to stick your camera in Auto mode for fear of missing a shot, but if your subject is stationary then you can experiment until you get it right. That's why it is a fantastic genre for practising with manual modes.

What's more, there are subjects wherever you look. You don't have to stick to a bowl of fruit or vase of flowers, although they do make for beautiful shots; just let your imagination run wild and get creative with whatever you can find. Still life photography is also a great way of showing off your kitchen or craft creations, as once you have taken your shot you can share it with the world online. Join social networking sites to showcase your images, such as Pinterest, Flickr and Instagram.

Once you have found your subject, you can experiment with ways of shooting it. Try making use of shadows or reflections and look for interesting angles, props and backgrounds. You can even give your shot an added wow factor with a bit of creative editing. Let us guide you through the process of capturing a still life masterpiece.

Gear guide | Essential kit for still life photography

A camera with manual controls
Control of things like depth of field by using manual. This Nikon D5200 (£720/$800) is a 24.1MP DSLR with P, A, S, M modes and a vari-angle LCD for composing.

Wide aperture lens
A wide aperture lens like the Nikon AF-S DX NIKKOR 35mm f1.8G (£208/$200) lets you create a shallow depth of field. Find out more at **www.nikon.co.uk**.

A reflector for bouncing the light
Whatever your light source, a reflector will let you bounce it back on your subject. This compact Interfit 56cm reflector (£20/$20) achieves a subtle effect.

Sturdy tripod
Use a tripod to compose your shot and keep it straight. The Manfrotto 055XPROB tripod (£175/$223) with 804RC2 pan tilt head (£75/$89) is a solid option.

Setting up

Find a subject and compose your shot

The first step for creating a still life photo is to find a subject. If you need some guidance, look at our tips for what makes an excellent still life subject, then discover how to frame your shot. We will also guide you through the best settings to use, but be sure to make the most of having the time to experiment and find what works best for your particular shot.

Focus carefully

Take your time to focus your shot and make sure the most important element is perfectly sharp. Zoom in on your LCD screen to check.

Choose a subject | Tips for finding the perfect objects to shoot

1: Look for colour
Bright, colourful objects will really stand out. Try to include no more than three colours in your shot to prevent it from looking too cluttered, and look for colours that complement each other. You can experiment with different backdrop shades.

2: Find some texture
Subjects with interesting textures add another element to your photo. Place subjects with different surfaces together to show contrast. Remember, cutting open something like a piece of fruit can reveal a whole new texture.

3: Include patterns
Attractive patterns are good to include in a still life setup, whether they are on your main subject or the backdrop of your shot. Make sure you don't include too many different patterns though, as it could result in a busy final image.

Set the scene

1: Remove distractions

Find a clear surface with no clutter or put up a piece of card to act as a plain backdrop to avoid distracting attention from your subject.

2: Fill the frame

Get up close or zoom in so your subject fills the frame, without cutting off any important parts. This creates a more dramatic shot.

3: Try another angle

Once you have taken a shot, try shooting the same subject from a different angle, rearrange your scene, or perhaps use another backdrop.

4: Add a prop

Introduce a prop such as a fork or vase to add context. Think about what will work with your subject and position it so it looks natural.

4: Choose a theme

Rather than just placing a few random objects together, try to include subjects that follow a particular theme. You could work around an item you have already found, or decide on a theme first and then find subjects that will fit it.

5: Create a mood

Shooting certain objects can help you create a still life image with a specific mood: for example, happy or melancholic. The colours and backdrop can also give character to your photo, so think carefully about these as well as your subject.

Lighting

Use natural or artificial light for top results

Having plenty of time to set up your still life shot also gives you the opportunity to experiment with different lighting techniques. Make use of natural light by setting up your shot by a window or outside, or use artificial light from a desk lamp to allow yourself more control. You could even try out both options to see what works best.

To add some depth to your shot, light your subject from the side to create strong shadows across the scene. This can look particularly striking if your subject has an interesting shape, so consider this when deciding what to shoot. Anything goes with still life photography, so get really creative and see what different effects you can create.

Position your subject by a large window, or perhaps on a nearby table or the windowsill

Set your white balance to suit the lighting condition, otherwise your shot will have an unusual colour cast
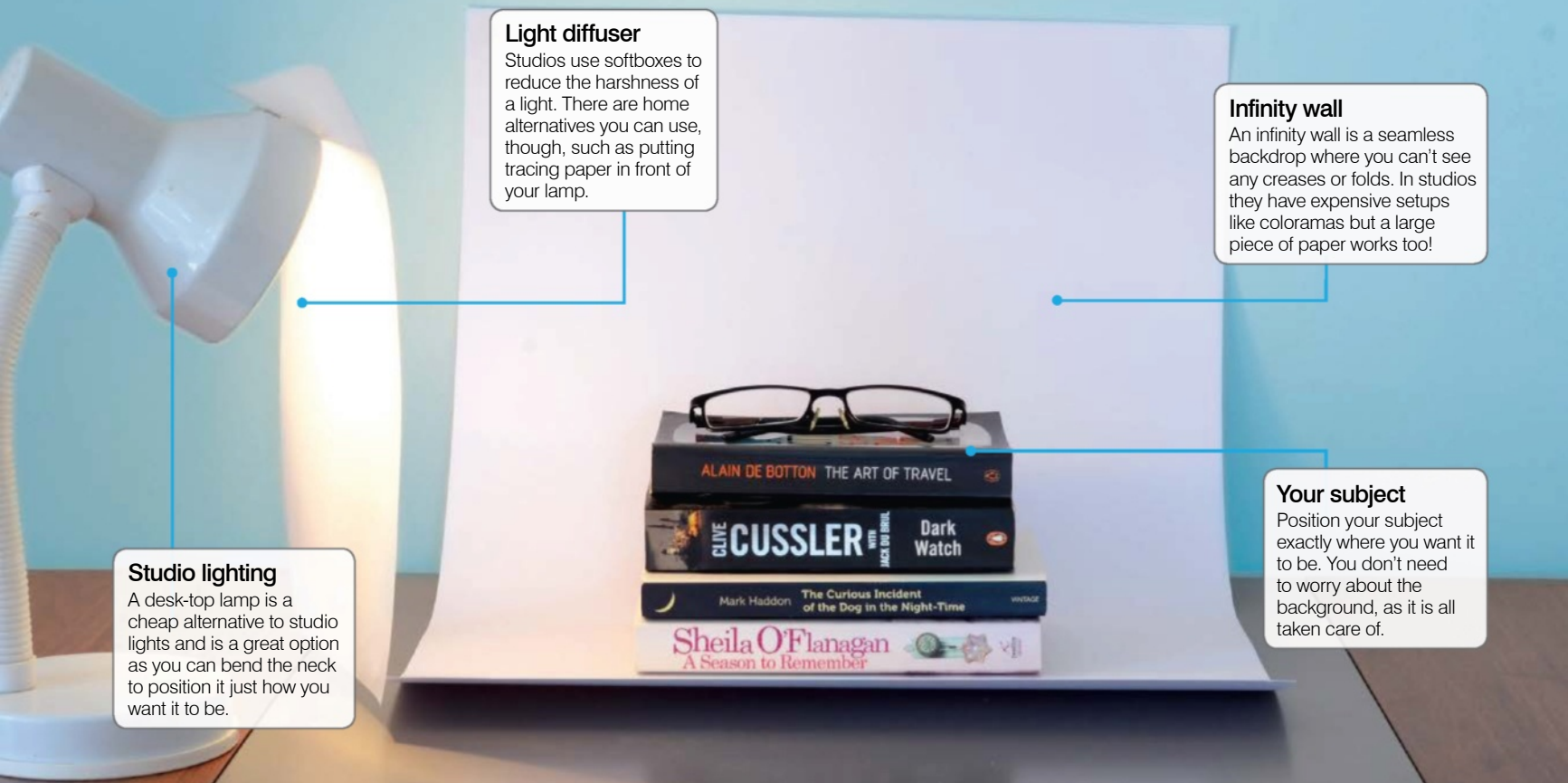
Light position

If light comes from behind your subject it will appear underexposed so reposition it or reflect light back in.

Create a home studio

Use a few items from around your home

Light diffuser
Studios use softboxes to reduce the harshness of a light. There are home alternatives you can use, though, such as putting tracing paper in front of your lamp.

Infinity wall
An infinity wall is a seamless backdrop where you can't see any creases or folds. In studios they have expensive setups like coloramas but a large piece of paper works too!

Studio lighting
A desk-top lamp is a cheap alternative to studio lights and is a great option as you can bend the neck to position it just how you want it to be.

Your subject
Position your subject exactly where you want it to be. You don't need to worry about the background, as it is all taken care of.

How to assemble your studio | Get the most out of home alternatives

1: Put up the backdrop
Get a large sheet of plain paper or card. It will need to be A3 size or larger, depending on the size of your subject. Tape one end of it to the wall and the other end to the table so that the paper curves.

2: Set up a desk lamp
Position your desk lamp to the side to produce some dramatic shadows or put it at the front to light your subject more evenly. Moving it closer or further away will also affect the strength of the light and shadows.

3: Add some tracing paper
The light from your desk lamp can sometimes be a bit harsh, so tape some tracing paper in front of it to diffuse it. This will soften the light and make any shadows across your subject appear much more subtle.

Shoot action photography

Keep up with moving subjects and capture sharp shots of the action

Cameras can capture spectacular shots of moving subjects, as long as you know how to master the settings. By changing your camera's shutter speed, you can freeze seconds of action that are too fast for the naked eye to register, or capture motion blur to demonstrate speed and direction.

The autofocus systems on many cameras have vastly improved in recent times, and will help you to capture fast-moving subjects so that stay sharp and in focus. Even so, it helps to be familiar with the different focusing options on your camera, and focusing manually often produces great results.

Whether you are shooting sports, wildlife, or your kids playing in the park, let us help you get to grips with shutter speeds and focusing techniques, as well as the essential kit for the job, so that you can take your best ever photos. We will also guide you through the tricky task of lighting and composing your action shots, and provide you with some simple ideas for putting our tips into practice at home.

Gear guide | Kit for action photography

Monopod
A monopod is simply a one-legged tripod. It's easier to move around but still provides support.

Telephoto lens
This lens reaches large focal lengths, allowing close-up shots of the action from a safe distance.

Camera bag
A padded camera bag will protect your camera and accessories when you are chasing after subjects.

Camera strap
Use a strap so that you can access your camera in a flash if an unexpected photo opportunity arises.

Dynamic angles

Decide in advance where to shoot your subject from so that you get the best angle, while keeping safe and out of the way of the action.

Freeze action

Capture a split second of movement in your shot

Photography allows you to preserve a single moment in time forever, even if it only lasts a fraction of a second. You can capture the moment a runner crosses the finishing line, your dog catches its ball or your child does a trick on their bike. Changing the shutter speed will produce different effects, while other handy functions will guarantee you come away with the crucial shot. Here, we will show you the best settings for stunning results.

Continuous shooting mode takes a series of shots so you can pick the best one

Sports or action scene modes select the right settings, doing the hard work for you

If you can, set up your camera in advance

Speed it up

A fast shutter speed (1/100sec or higher) will produce a sharp image, even when the subject is moving at high speed.

Shutter speeds | Go fast or slow for different effects

Fast shutter
A fast shutter speed of 1/100sec or over will freeze your subject, although really fast subjects will require higher.

Medium shutter
Using a shutter speed of between 1/60sec and 1/3sec will capture a bit of motion blur as your subject moves.
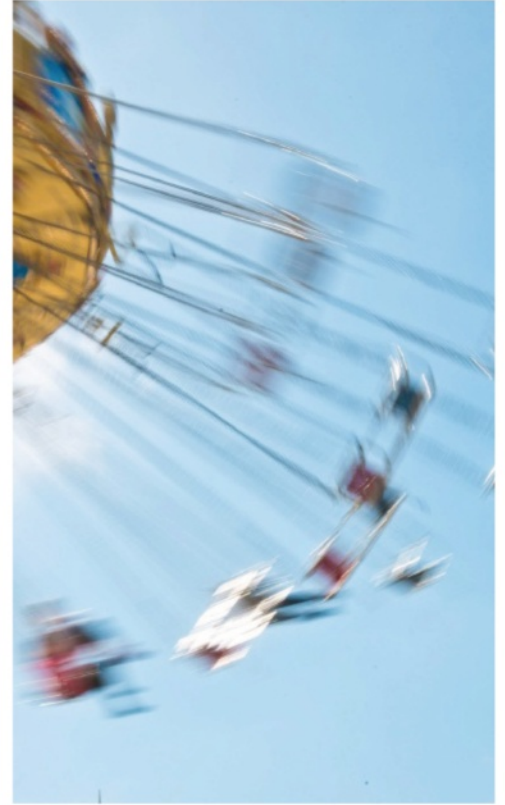
Slow shutter
Selecting a shutter speed of 1sec or slower creates lots of blur that will show the direction of movement for effect.

Lighting | Tricks to help you get well-lit shots

1: Choose your ISO
Using a fast shutter does not allow much time for light to get through your lens. If you are shooting in dark conditions, raise your ISO to make your camera more sensitive to the available light so you can keep using fast shutter speeds.

2: Fire your flash
If the light is low or your subject is backlit, fire your flash to illuminate them. This won't be as effective if your subject is a great distance away though, as your flash may not be powerful enough to reach them. Try to move closer if you can.

3: Re-position your subject
Try to shoot from an angle so that your light source is in front of your subject. This will prevent them from being backlit and therefore underexposed in your shot. It may take a bit of planning to find the best place to stand.

Panning

Create motion blur by tracking movement

Action photography doesn't just have to involve freezing your subject in the frame. Sometimes, including a bit of blur in your shots actually better demonstrates movement, and also helps to show the speed and direction that your subject is travelling in. Panning is a clever way to create blur in your shot while keeping your subject sharp and in focus. It often takes a bit of practice before you can produce great results, but here we give you a step-by-step guide to help you on your way. We also have some useful tips for mastering focusing techniques and composition, so you can produce clear and dynamic shots even if you or your subject are in a hurry.

Pan with your subject | Create background blur to show speed

1: Choose your settings
Select Shutter Priority mode and choose your shutter speed. It will need to be fast enough to freeze your subject in the frame but slow enough to give you time to pan. 1/50sec is a good starting point, but experiment from there.

2: Use burst mode
Burst mode will take a series of shots every time you press the shutter. This will ensure that you come away with a great shot, as even if you first press the shutter too early, your camera will keep shooting until you have finished panning.

3: Steady your camera
A monopod will give you the freedom to swivel your camera as you track your subject for a smooth panning shot. It will also help you to keep your camera steady in order to avoid any unwanted blur.

Keep action sharp

1: Continuous autofocus
This mode will get your camera to continually focus while you are pressing the shutter, which is useful if your subject is moving erratically.

2: Focus tracking
In this mode the camera predicts the speed and direction a subject is moving in and tracks them, which is useful when the motion is fluid.

Get the subject right

Cars make for great panning subjects, as they move in a fluid and steady motion through your frame.

Master your camera's focusing settings to get sharp shots every time

4: Pre-focus the shot
To keep your subject sharp in the frame, pre-focus on the area they will travel into. You could manually focus or half-press the shutter to lock the focus point, and then fully press it when your subject moves into the frame.

5: Pan with your subject
When your subject is in position, press the shutter and swivel your camera along with them as they move. It's likely to be a case of trial and error, so don't be put off if you don't get a perfect shot first time round.

Master wildlife photography

Discover when, where and how to capture amazing photos of animals

Wildlife can be found almost anywhere, and is a great subject for practising your photo skills. You don't have to go to the zoo or a safari park to get excellent images of animals either, as lots of species can be found in your garden or park.

Patience is important to master with wildlife photography, as you cannot direct an animal to pose for you. Capturing those one-off fleeting moments is what makes it so exciting, so don't be put off if you have to wait around! There are also steps you can take to boost your chances of a great shot, such as putting out food to entice animals into view. Just keep a safe distance so you don't scare them off. Of course, taking photos at the zoo also comes with challenges, but there are easy tricks to ensure you get brilliant shots.

Follow our guide for the best way to plan and take your animal shots, learn the best times of day to find certain species, and discover how to edit your images to make them truly stunning.

Gear guide | Kit for wildlife photography

Telephoto lens
Use a long lens to get close-ups while keeping your distance so the animal isn't aware of you.

Remove shutter release
Use a tripod and remote release to take a shot a few steps back from the animals.
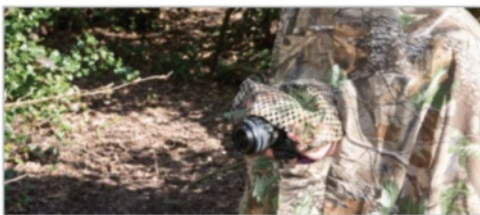
Camouflage cover
Hides and other camouflage can help you blend in with the scenery and not scare your subjects.

Polarising filter
Prevent capturing your reflection when you're shooting through glass by using a polarising filter.

Observe your animal subjects
Discover which areas of your garden attract wildlife, such as a particular tree or a flowerbed, so you know where to set up.

Use natural light

Set up near to areas that are well lit to make use of natural light. You could try setting up a bird table in the most well-lit part of your garden, for instance.

Be prepared

Where to find wildlife and get set up

Planning is a good idea if you want to capture your best-ever animal shots. If you want to photograph certain animals, it helps to know what time of day they are usually most active, or what kind of food you might be able to lay out to entice them, for instance. Having the right settings prepared also makes it easier to get great animal shots when the creatures arrive. In this guide we will help you with these aspects of your shoot, and also highlight the key environments to look out for when wildlife spotting in your local area.
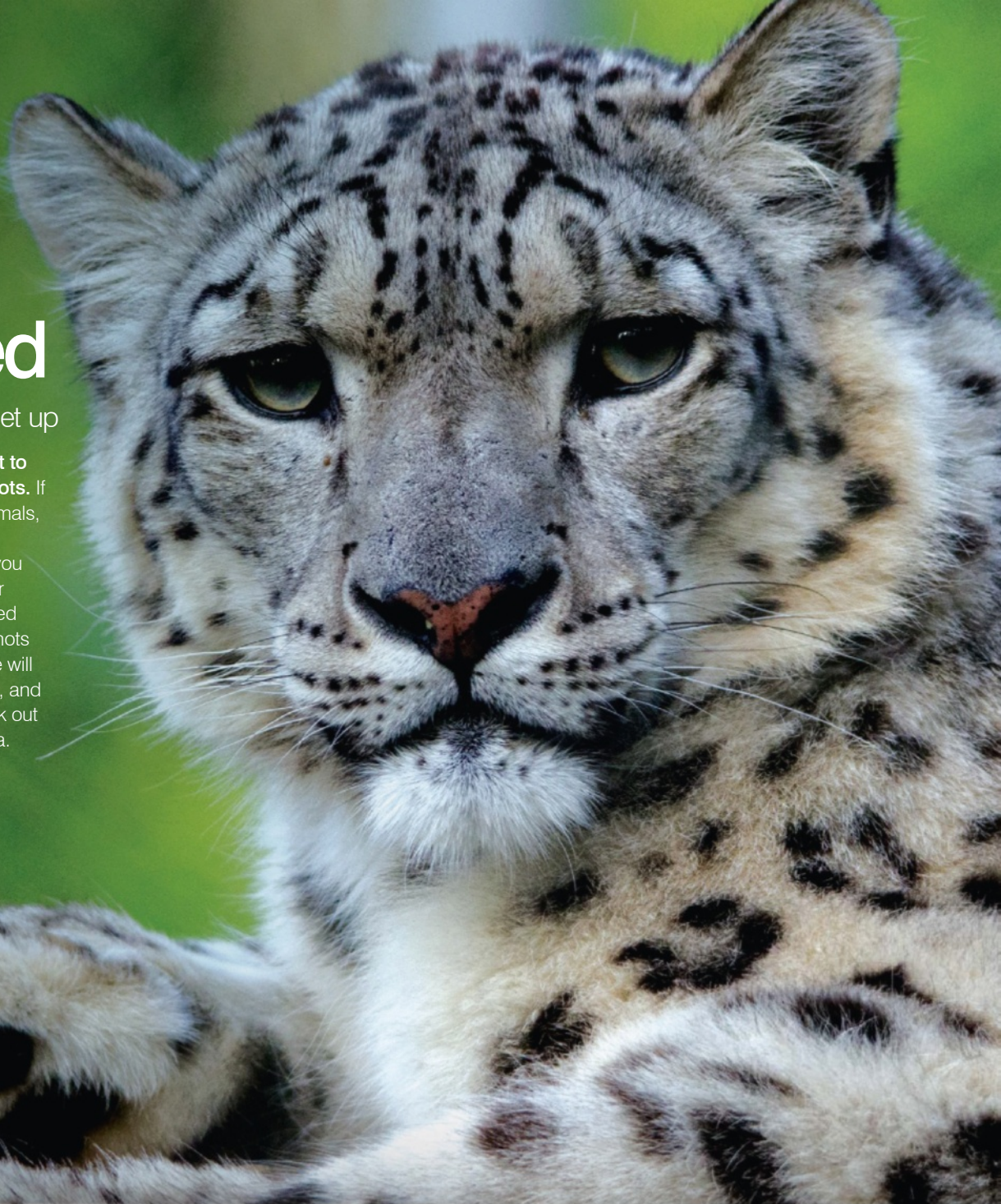
Setting up | Get yourself and your camera ready to shoot

1: Do your research

If you are looking to capture a particular animal, research their habits and feeding times. This will help you plan the best time to phoatograph them and give you an idea of the type of shot to aim for.

2: Choose your position

Position yourself so that the background of your shots will not be distracting. Green plants or trees make a suitably plain backdrop. You can also crop in close to cut out any distractions.

3: Keep quiet

Move slowly and quietly around wildlife so you do not scare them off. Also be sure to turn the sound off on your camera as this could startle animals and cause them to run away.

Nocturnal species

• Lions • Hedgehogs • Mice • Owls • Bats • Foxes • Kangaroos

Animals active at dawn

• Moose • Rabbits • Snakes • Moths • Ferrets • Songbirds • Porcupines

• Hyenas • Skunks • Wombats • Deer • Beetles • Bobcats • Coyotes

• Primates • Squirrels • Elephants • Lizards • Bees • Butterflies • Horses

Animals active at dusk
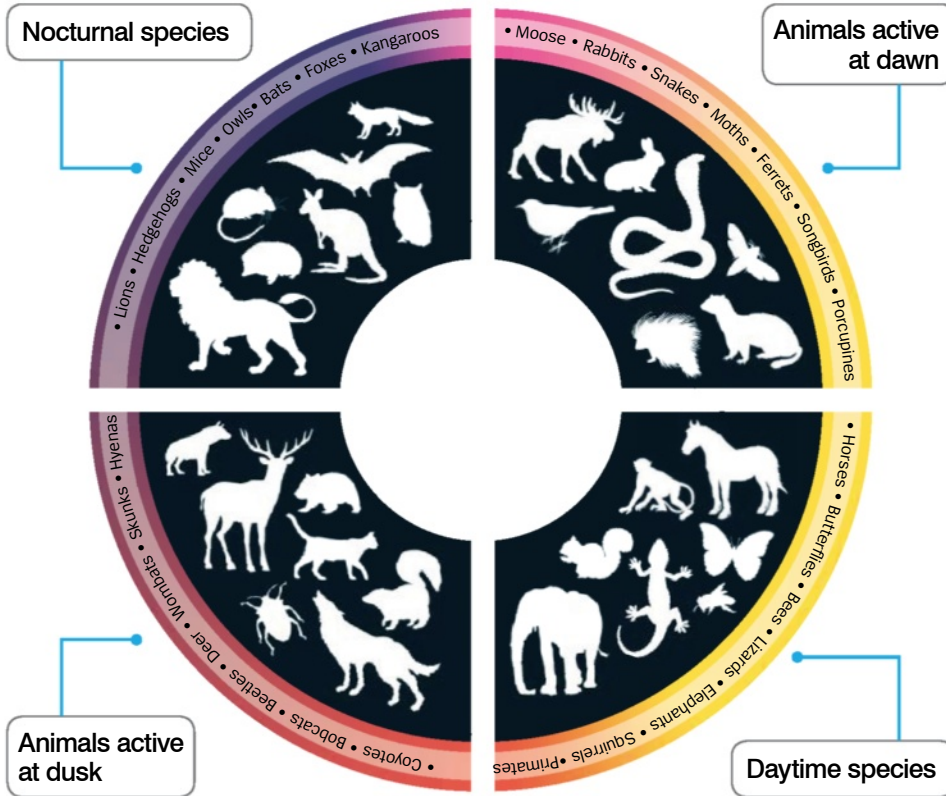
Daytime species

The best time of day to find certain animals

Different species of animals are more active at certain times of day. It may be because this is when they hunt for food, for example butterflies are more likely to find flowers to pollinate in the day. Or it could be that they are best suited to certain conditions. It is useful to know when the species you are looking to photograph is most active, as this is when you are likely to bag the shot.

Use our chart to see what time of day some popular animals to photograph come out at. Use this to plan your shoot and the settings you will need for the lighting conditions that will be available at that particular time.

Perfect settings

Continuous autofocus will help to keep your subject in focus, even as they move around.

Zoom right in to get great shots while staying at a distance from subjects.

Continuous shooting will take several shots in one burst to guarantee a brilliant image.

Select shutter priority and a fast shutter speed for a sharp shot of animals in action.

4: Turn off your flash

If daylight is fading, avoid using your flash as this will scare the animals. Try raising your ISO to make your camera more sensitive to the available light, or wait for them to move into ambient light.

5: Camouflage yourself

Keep a safe distance from the animals and avoid wearing bright clothes that will make you stand out. Wear greens and browns to blend in with the natural habitat and try to keep quiet and still.

6: Be ready to go

If you are shooting a fast-moving animal, they may be gone before you manage to get your camera out of the bag and the lens cap off. Always have your camera out and ready to shoot.

Techniques

The skills and tricks you need when you start to shoot

Whether you are in your back garden or at the zoo, there are a few things that you need to think about before you take your shot. It's easy to forget about composition when you are trying to capture a split-second of action, but it can still help turn a good shot into a brilliant one. By remembering a few simple tricks you can make it easier to increase your chances of coming away with the perfect snap.

You also need to consider obstructions such as fences and glass windows which make it tricky to get good shots of animals in captivity. However, it is easy to overcome the problems they cause by implementing a few tricks.

Get the right angle
Try to shoot at eye level with the subject for more natural, majestic images.

Shoot through glass
When shooting through glass, keep your lens close to the glass to avoid harsh reflections.

Eliminate fences
Use a small f number and zoom in to make fences disappear!

Make use of scene modes

Sports scene mode is handy as it selects the best settings for fast-moving subjects, so you don't miss a shot.

Zoom in close

If can't get too close to your subject, use the camera's zoom so that the subject fills the frame, avoiding distracting backgrounds.
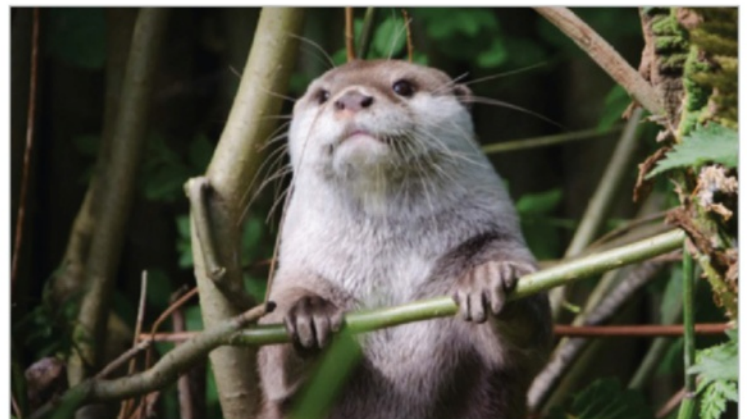
Focus on the eyes

It can create an effective shot if the focus is on the subject's eyes, so move your AF selection point over their eyes to focus in that spot.

Editing

Enhance your creature captures

Getting the perfect shot when your subject is moving can be difficult and often a bit of post-production is needed for wildlife photos. You may not have had time to select the correct settings or think about composition if the moment the animal pulled the perfect pose was fast and unexpected. There may have also been some unavoidable distractions in your shot, such as the fence that was protecting you from a dangerous creature.

There are ways to clear up these issues, however, which we will show you using Photoshop Elements 11. A lot of the edits will also work in free software such as GIMP, though, if you do not have Elements.

Before

Boost colours and sharpen | Adjust levels and colour curves for a more eye-catching shot

1: Remove colour cast
If your image has an unusual colour tint to it, then go to Enhance>Adjust Colour>Remove Colour Cast. Then select a part of your shot that is either black, grey or white, and Elements will correct the colour cast for you.

2: Adjust the Levels
Go to Enhance>Adjust Lighting> Levels. Select the black, white or grey Dropper tool and click on the corresponding colour in your shot. This will automatically alter your Levels. Boost them further by moving the arrows under the histogram.

3: Adjust colour curves
Go to Enhance>Adjust Colour> Adjust Colour Curves and select Default from the Select a Style menu. Move the Highlights, Shadows and Brightness sliders until you are happy with how your shot looks in the preview box.

4: Sharpen up
Shooting moving animals can sometimes leave you with slightly blurry shots. To sharpen them up, go to Enhance>Adjust Sharpness and preview a blurry area of your shot. Move the Amount and Radius sliders until your shot looks a little sharper.

Remove a fence | Two simple methods

Before
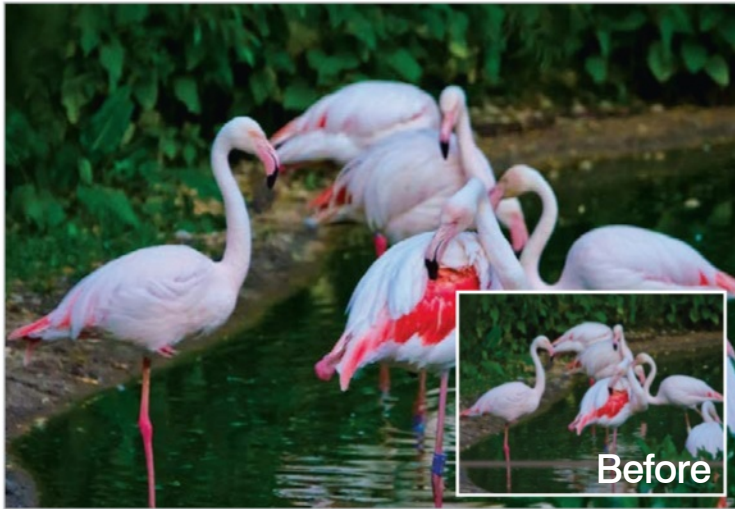
1: Spot healing tool
The simplest way to remove a distracting animal-enclosure fence from your shot is to use the Spot Healing Brush tool. Select it from the toolbar on the left-hand side of the screen in Elements and adjust the brush size.

2: Remove the fence
Now drag your cursor over the fence in your shot and the editing software will remove it. This works by blending the area to the rest of the image as best as possible, and this method works really well in most situations.

3: Clone Stamp tool
If your fence is in a slightly trickier position, then you can try using the Clone Stamp tool. Select it from the toolbar on the left-hand side of the screen in Photoshop Elements and adjust the brush size to suit. You can also amend opacity.

4: Clone out the fence
The Clone Stamp tool works by copying a specific area of the image and pasting it over another area. Select an area similar to that which is covered by the fence (Alt+click on it), and then draw over the fence to paste it on top.

Recompose | Straighten your shot

Before
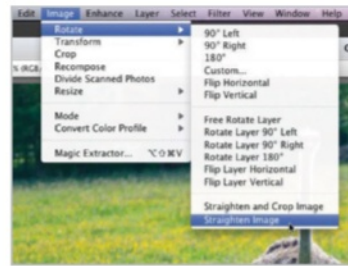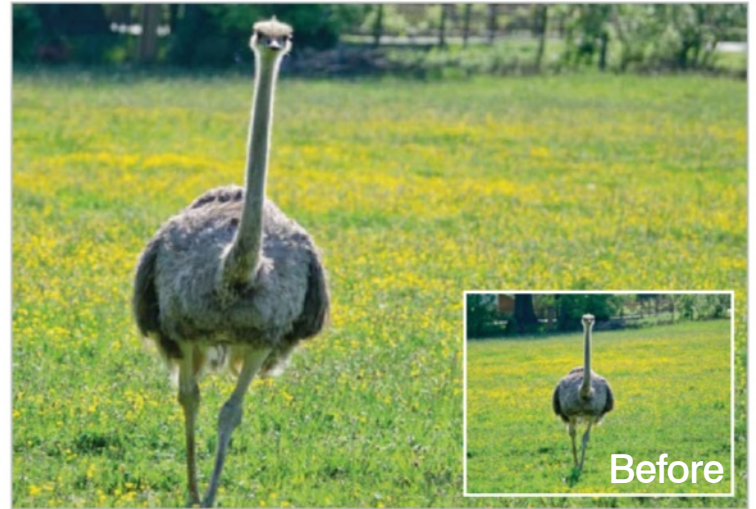
1: Automatic straighten
Elements 11 has a great tool to automatically straighten your image. Go to Image>Rotate> Straighten Image and wait for Elements to work its magic. It is usually pretty accurate, but if it doesn't look quite right you can straighten it yourself.

2: Straighten manually
If you want to straighten your image yourself, then in Elements head to Image>Transform>Free Transform. Now hover your cursor over the corner of your image until you see a little curved-arrow icon, then drag the image around until it is straight.

3: Crop in
Now you need to crop your shot in order to straighten up the edges. Select the Crop tool from the toolbar on the left-hand side, drag your cursor over the image to highlight the area you want to keep. Then click the green tick to crop.

4: Recompose
Using the Crop tool again, improve the composition of your shot. Use the gridlines to position your subject off-centre in the frame, leaving some active space in front of them. When you are finished, click the green tick to complete your shot.

Tips | Tricks | Fixes

Time it right

Shoreline shots work best when the tide is receding, leaving the rocks wet and shiny, and the sand clean and smooth.

Get creative shooting water

Capture amazing seascapes, waterfalls and much more!

Water can be incorporated into your photography in a number of ways, whether you feature it as part of a wider shot or use it as your main subject. You can enhance your landscape shots by including a sea, lake or river and capture reflections in still water, or produce images of dramatic splashes or tiny droplets of water resting on plants. Just make sure that you and your kit stay safe by keeping an eye on the tide and maintaining a safe distance from the water, as well as investing in some good protective gear.

Gear guide | Useful kit for photographing water

Tough camera
Using a tough camera means you won't have to worry about getting it wet. This Nikon COOLPIX AW110 (£300/$350) is waterproof up to 18m.

Shooting for long exposure
Bulb mode, on Nikon's D3200 (£500/$700 with 18-55mm lens), blurs water by keeping its shutter open until you release the button.

Versatile flashgun
Firing your flash can help you to freeze the motion of water. The Nikon SB-700 (£296/$330) can be used on or off camera. Visit **www.nikon.co.uk**

Sturdy tripod and ND filter
For steady and well-exposed shots, use a tripod and ND filter, like this Velbon Sherpa 200R (£107/ approx $167) and Cokin's A154 ND8 (£14/$22).

Shoot water at home

Easy water photography projects to try today

You don't need to travel to the coast or find a nearby lake or river to get great shots of water. There is plenty of scope for taking fantastic images in the comfort of your own home, using common household items and the water from your kitchen tap. From capturing droplets of water in your photos to freezing objects in ice

and then shooting them, there are lots of different ways to get creative with water. Here, we give you our top tips for setting up your own water photography projects at home. Try following the guides to see what interesting and unusual images you can produce, starting with this one to help you capture water droplets.

> "From capturing droplets of water to freezing objects in ice, there are lots of ways to get creative"

Freeze water drops in motion

Switch to Burst mode and your camera will take a series of shots while you are holding down the shutter, so you have a better chance of getting a great photo.

1: Pre-focus
Hold a pencil or straw in the place where your drip will hit the water and pre-focus on it. Either use manual focus, or half-press your shutter to lock your autofocus point on that area.

2: Set your speed
Set your camera to Shutter Priority mode and select a fast shutter speed. Start off with 1/250sec and then make it faster if your shots are coming out blurry or you keep missing the droplet.

3: Start the drips
Pierce a hole in the bottom of a plastic cup and fill it with water so it drips through. Hold it over a dish of water for it to bounce off. Set up near a window or lamp at a distance and switch on your flash.

Have fun with ice

Of course, water comes in many forms, so don't overlook its solid state. When temperatures drop, look for interesting patterns in frozen water and shoot them up close for creative macro shots. Alternatively, create your own ice at home in your freezer. You could even freeze objects in the ice to shoot them in a completely new and unusual way. As ice is a reflective surface, shield it from any bright, direct light to avoid reflections showing up in your images. You'll need a camera with macro mode or a macro lens such as Nikon's DX Micro 85mm 3.5G to get in really close to ice textures.

Shoot creative droplets

Water droplets can help to enhance your photography subjects by adding another texture to them, so it is worth going out just after it has rained to capture droplets on flowers and other objects. Of course, you can also create your own water droplets to shoot at home, too. Simply dip the end of a straw into water and then drop individual beads of water onto your chosen waterproof surface. Try arranging your droplets into an interesting shape and then get up close to shoot them. You can also add a bit of glycerin to the water to help your droplets hold their shape or add food dye for some extra colour.

Get bubbly

Bubbles of air in water can be captured in a number of different ways in your photos. You could submerge your subject in the water and shoot the air bubbles that cling to it, or blow your own bubbles to create more abstract shots. Just fill a container with water and then blow through a straw. To create even more bubbles, use fizzy water or add a bit of washing up liquid to still water. You could even try adding ink or food colouring to produce more colourful results.

Capture the coast

How to shoot stunning seascapes

Coastal scenes are among the most popular subjects with photographers, and it's easy to see why. With jagged rocks and dramatic tides, they can make for truly compelling images. Successful seascapes often use strong foreground interest, and there are plenty of options on the coast: rocks, reflections in rock pools, patterns in the sand and so on. It's best to keep compositions simple and avoid trying to cram too much into the frame – uncluttered, structured scenes work best. Water adds power and motion to shots, and this energy is often best conveyed with the use of a long shutter speed.

Keep shots sharp
To keep everything in your shot sharp, shoot in Aperture Priority or Manual mode and select a small aperture (large f-number) such as f16. Then focus about a third of the way into the scene to maximise the depth of field.

Blur water movement | Get long exposures using a neutral density (ND) filter

1: Set Shutter Priority mode
Shutter Priority (S or Tv) is a semi-automated mode in which you select the shutter speed to get the effect you want and the camera then sets the aperture to get the correct exposure. For good results with waves, set a speed of 15-20 seconds.

2: Put on an ND filter
Neutral density filters absorb light, reducing the amount that reaches the sensor and allowing photographers to set a longer shutter speed than normal. Doing this without an ND will result in overexposure, unless the light is very low.

3: Use a tripod
Your shutter will be open for several seconds to capture the water movement. Even if you have very steady hands, you won't be able to avoid camera shake, so put your camera on a tripod to keep it still during the shot.

Tips for seascapes

1: Use a polarising filter
Polarisers reduce glare and increase contrast and saturation. They reduce 'hotspots' on the water surface and can enhance reflections.

2: Protect your kit
Salt water and electronics don't mix very well, so you'll want to protect your gear from splashes with a rain cover. A plastic bag will work just as well!

3: Look for reflections
Double the impact by shooting a subject with its reflection in the water. Still water will produce best results, so sheltered rock or tidal pools are ideal.

4: Include a focal point
A large expanse of water looks great, but doesn't usually make for an engaging shot. Include a point of interest, like rocks or a distant headland.

Create a dynamic shot

For a 3D look, use a wide-angle lens and a low viewpoint. Position the camera close to foreground interest to create a sense of perspective.

4: Set a low ISO
To get the longest shutter speed possible, set your camera to its lowest ISO value (usually around 100 or 200). This makes the sensor less sensitive to light, meaning you can use longer shutter speeds.

5: Avoid shake
Even on a tripod, your camera will move when you press the shutter, so set the self-timer instead. Also turn off Vibration Reduction if you have it as this can actually introduce shake when your camera is on a tripod.

Consider lighting

Lighting is key in black and white shots, so make sure that your subject is well lit.

Take beautiful black & white photos

Discover how to transform your colour captures into stunning monochromes

Black and white photography has come on a long way since it was first developed in the darkroom. Moving on from film to digital, this traditional medium has really stood the test of time, and it remains as popular now as it ever was. Using this style, you can produce some really sophisticated and often dramatic imagery.

Capturing black and white on camera has improved dramatically over the years, largely thanks to the development of digital technology. Photographers have more options and control over the creative outcome of their monochrome captures, as it's now possible to shoot in colour and convert to black and white later on. Image editing software, such as Photoshop, has even revived long-standing darkroom techniques and brought them into the digital age as specialist editing tools, making it much easier and quicker to convert to black and white than ever before.

Black and white photography itself has developed over time too, with different aesthetic styles emerging across various photographic genres. From landscapes to portraits and still life, there are endless ways to embrace the medium and make it your own. Join us over the following pages as we help you get started in black and white photography by stripping back the colour and focusing on the form of a photograph.

These tips are here to help you improve your photography skills and techniques, which you can then apply to any subject at all. Take a look at our inspirational images to get some ideas together, but try and be as creative as you can! Whatever subject you're shooting, with our simple advice you will get stunning monochromes in no time at all.

"It's now possible to shoot in colour and convert to black and white later on"

Styling black & white

Find out how to get a particular look for your shots

Low-key

Low-key is a style that makes use of dark tones and reduced light, and it makes a big statement when converted to black and white. The shadows are great at drawing you further into the frame in search of brighter highlights. The key to creating a successful low-key black and white effect is underexposing the image slightly in-camera when shooting. For effective results, there will need to be a strong, direct source of light within the scene that contrasts heavily with the shadows. In Photoshop, you can then exaggerate this effect by increasing the contrast using the Curves or Levels tool. Once you have converted to black and white, focus on ensuring that there's enough detail in the highlights to draw any viewers in.

Film effects

Retro is all the rage at the moment, even in photography. Replicating the style of old film is incredibly popular both with colour and black and white images. This effect, however, can only really be achieved during the editing stages, unless your camera offers a designated retro film filter. For the best conversion results, ensure you've exposed the subject or scene evenly in-camera first. In Photoshop, you can then convert to black and white by desaturating the shot. Use the 'Output levels' slider in the Levels adjustment tool and pull in the shadows for a white wash effect. You can then add monochromatic grain using the Add Noise filter.

High-key

High-key lighting creates a bright and bold black and white effect. To effectively shoot high-key in-camera, you need plenty of light both on the subject and in the background. You'll need to use a reflector or fill-in flash to do this effectively. For the best exposure results, adjust your camera settings to slightly overexpose the shot. You'll need wider aperture settings (smaller f-numbers) to do this, which allows more light in through the lens and creates an artistic shallow depth of field effect. In Photoshop, you can then use the Black & White adjustment layer to convert the image to monochrome, and control tonal contrast using the coloured sliders. Increase overall contrast for a punchier result using Curves.

Gritty effects

Black and white is great at bringing out existing textures in a subject or scene. Gritty effects work particularly well with street photography and low-light scenes. To create a gritty effect in your black and white photos, you'll need to up your ISO settings while shooting. ISO not only increases your camera's sensitivity to light but also introduces noise, which replicates the appearance of film grain when converted to monochrome. A well-contrasted scene can also heighten the effect and further adjustments in Photoshop will help to bring out more obvious textures. Use tools such as Levels to increase contrast while editing and introduce more noise if needed using the Add Noise filter.

Shooting for black & white

Top tips for great shots

1: Shoot in colour
Keep your options open by avoiding black and white modes that may be available in-camera. Always shoot in colour, that way you'll have the option to convert to monochrome later on.

2: Work with RAW
RAW image files hold much more information than JPEGs, which means they convert better to black and white and don't decrease in quality or size when edited. Change the file format you're shooting in to RAW before you begin.

3: Watch your exposure
For high or low-key monochromes, you'll need to get the exposure right. Check the histogram to see how over or underexposed your images are. If it's bunched to the left it is underexposed, and if it's bunched to the right it is overexposed.

4: Look for contrast
When you're framing for black and white photographs, look out for existing contrast within the scene. Bright highlights and heavy shadows are ideal for punchier black and white shots when they are converted.

5: Shoot structure
When you are shooting, try to frame strong forms within the scene. Heavily contrasted black and white shots highlight structure well and can make architecture or landscapes really stand out.

6: Adjust your ISO
ISO can increase your camera's sensitivity to light, which is useful if you're shooting in low-light conditions. Upping your ISO settings will result in brighter exposures, but watch out for noise if you want to avoid grainy conversions.

7: Focus on texture
As black and white brings out contrast in a subject or scene, textures can appear tangible. Look to frame and focus on textures in your shots. Rocky landscapes or textured close-ups can be transformed when converted to greyscale.

8: Dramatic skies
Dull grey skies can be a write-off if you intend to shoot a landscape in colour, but dramatic, stormy skies can be transformed and look fantastic when they are converted to black and white. Try increasing the image's contrast when you are editing it to help bring out the texture of the clouds.

9: Fill in with light

Introduce more light and contrast into your captures using a reflector or fill-in flash. With a white reflector you'll need to bounce existing light into the shadow areas of the shot. Flash will give you more control as it's possible to adjust its strength.

10: Wide apertures

If you want high-key results, you'll need to brighten up your exposure by letting more light in through the lens. Work with wide apertures (small f-numbers) to do this. The resulting shallow depth of field will also give your images an artistic edge.

11: Preview black and white

It's possible on some cameras to preview how your image will look when converted to monochrome. Select the editing tab in your camera menu and apply a basic black and white filter. Save the basic edit separately on your memory card.

12: Follow the rules

Use compositional rules such as lines that lead you through the frame and positioning focal points a third of the way across to create a well-balanced shot. Without colour to distract the eye, the composition needs to be on point.

13: Consider colour tone

Pay attention to the colours in the scene when you're composing. A lot of similar tones won't convert well to black and white as contrast will be lacking. Look to frame contrasting colours like red and green if you want successful conversions.

14: Keep it sharp

As black and white brings out textures, ensure all of your shots are suitably sharp up close. You'll need to check your focus and ensure that you're working with the correct shutter speed for steady shots.

15: Filter the light

You can increase tonal contrast in your black and white shots by using specialist coloured filters on the end of your lens. Red and blue filters make a noticeable difference to contrast when you've converted your captures. Red darkens blue and green colours in the scene, while green darkens red hues.
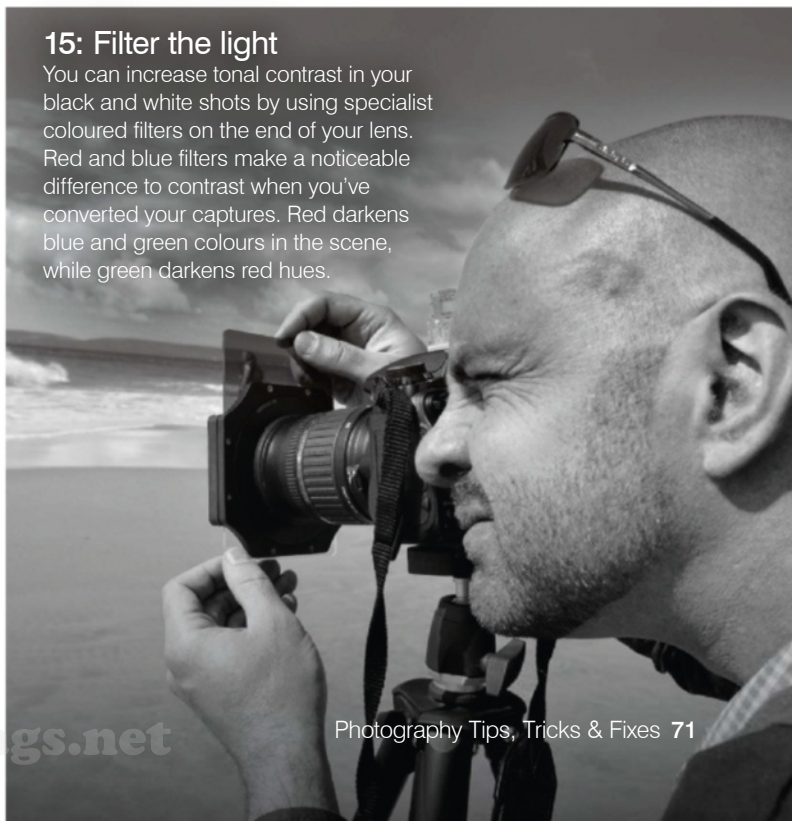
Make a difference

Good lighting is often the secret to professional-looking shots, whether it's natural or artificial.

Discover essential lighting tips

Use our tips and techniques for perfectly lit shots every time

Photography is essentially the recording of light to produce an image, so good lighting is particularly important if you want to produce great shots. Mastering your camera's exposure settings, such as aperture, shutter speed and ISO, will allow you to adjust how your camera reads the light, but for the best results you really need to get the light right to begin with. Of course, you can't have much control over the natural light from the sun, but in this section we will reveal a few secrets for using it to your advantage whatever time of day you are shooting.

Controlling indoor lighting is much easier, but it can also be quite easy to get wrong. A good lighting setup takes careful consideration, but by reading on you can discover simple advice for getting it right every time.

It's important to remember that your camera comes with its own light source as well. Using flash is very useful for a number of situations, but knowing which flash mode to pick for each scenario is vital. Over the course of this section, we will show you everything you need to know to master perfect lighting, using equipment and kit to suit any budget.

"Using flash is very useful for a number of situations, but knowing which flash mode to pick is vital"

Gear guide | Camera accessories to improve your lighting

Flashgun
Get powerful light with a flashgun such as Nikon's SB-300 (£140/$150, www.nikon.co.uk), which can be tilted up.

Flash diffuser
Diffusers like the Sto-Fen Omni-Bounce diffuser (approx £12/$20) soften flash light, and are available in various sizes.

Flash gels
Coloured gels like Rogue's Universal Flash Gels Kit (£30/$30) let you change the colour of the flash light.

Reflector
A reflector like Lastolite's 30-inch circular reflector (£42/$52) lets you effectively bounce light back into the shadows.

Indoor lighting

Position your light source for the best results

Creating your own light setup means that you can have plenty of control over the lighting for your indoor shots. You don't need to splash out on expensive studio lights though, as a simple desk lamp or bright window will still allow you to get great results for your images.

Whether you are using artificial or natural light, considering the position of your light source can have a big effect on how your subject looks in your photographs. It can a be little daunting knowing where to start when creating your lighting setup, but here are a few secrets to help you on your way to producing beautifully lit photos.

1: Change the angle

Lighting your subject from above or front-on will suppress any texture in your shot, so is useful if you want to smooth wrinkles in a portrait. Lighting your subject from the side will help to emphasise texture and also create shadows that can add depth to your shot.

2: Size matters

A broad light source, such as a large, bright window, will create softer light, as the rays will hit your subject from more directions to fill in shadows and reduce contrast. If you want harder light that increases shadows and texture, use a direct, narrow source such as a desk lamp.

3: Control the distance

The shorter the distance between your light source and subject, the softer the light will be. Moving the light closer will make it broader and create a more subtle effect (although bear in mind it will be brighter). Moving it further away will create a narrow light source for deeper shadows and contrast.

4: Background lighting

Placing your light source close to your subject will produce a greater falloff of light in the background, making it dark. Moving the light source further away will mean your subject and backdrop are kept relatively bright.

Move your subject or light source to control how your shot is lit. The angle, distance and size of the light can all have an effect

"Lighting your subject from the side will emphasise texture and create shadows to add depth"

5: Reflect the light

Using a matte surface to bounce light back into the shadows will also diffuse the light for a softer effect. A shiny reflector will focus the light into a narrower area, so it will therefore be a little stronger and harsher.

6: Adjust the light's strength

It may seem obvious, but it is important to remember that the further away your light source, the dimmer the light hitting your subjects will be. For brighter lighting, move it closer or introduce an additional light source to the scene.

Natural light

Make the most of natural light and use the sun to your advantage

Natural lighting is of course the only source of light for daytime landscape shots, but it is also useful for lots of other types of photography. It can still come with its own set of problems though, as both the time of day and weather can affect the look of your photos. Knowing when to shoot will help you achieve the best results, but you can still produce fantastic outdoor images at any point in the day. There are a few simple tricks for making the most of different lighting conditions, and although you can't control the position of the sun, moving your subject or your own position could mean the difference between producing a good shot and a great one. Read our guide on the right to learn how to make the most of natural light.

Use Mother Nature's light for well-lit shots outdoors. Here we've chosen the 'golden hour' for a warm effect.

When shooting at sunrise or sunset, use a tripod and shutter priority mode set to around 1/10sec or slower to ensure enough light is let in

1: The time of day

Just after sunrise and just before sunset are the best times of day to shoot outdoors. At this time, the sun is low in the sky so it will create a softer, warmer light and project longer shadows across your scene for more depth and contrast.

2: Use the shade

The midday sun is positioned directly overhead and so could cause your shots to look a little flat. The light can also be very bright and harsh at this time, leaving your portrait subjects squinting and overexposed. If this is the case, move into the shade for softer and more even light.

3: Cloudy skies

Don't ignore overcast days, as clouds can help to diffuse the light from the sun for a softer and more even coverage of light. Slow your shutter speed down if your shots are coming out a little underexposed.

4: Backlit subjects

If the sun is positioned behind your subject, it will leave them in shadow. To combat this, use a reflector to bounce the light back into the dark areas. Alternatively, leave your subject underexposed to create a striking silhouette.

5: Combat lens flare

Shooting into the sun will create lens flare. This can give your shots a dreamy look, but if you want a more natural effect, use a lens hood or shade your lens with your hand to prevent it.

6: Low-light shooting

As the natural light fades, you will need to adjust your exposure to prevent dark shots. Use a wider aperture (smaller f-number) or slow down your shutter speed and use a tripod. Only raise your ISO as a last resort.

"You can't control the sun, but moving your subject could mean the difference between having a good shot and a great one"

Using flash

Fire the flash to illuminate your subject

When there just isn't enough light available for your shot, your camera's flash is there to help. It's a great tool for shooting in low-light and indoor situations, such as taking portraits at parties and events. However, that bright burst of light from your camera can sometimes have an unwanted and unflattering effect, so knowing the best flash mode to use is vital for if you want to create natural-looking photos. It's also important to remember that your flash isn't just for illuminating your shots in low light, as it can also come in useful for preventing underexposed daytime images too. Read on to discover how to master your flash and combat some of the common problems it can create.

Flash isn't just for low-light shooting

Switch to slow-sync flash

Firing your flash in low light can cause your subject to appear well lit, but leave their surroundings shrouded in darkness. To illuminate both the foreground and background of your shot, use slow-sync flash to team your flash with a slow shutter speed to let in more light.

"Knowing the best flash mode to use is vital if you want to create natural looking photos"

Use fill-in flash

If your subject is backlit, it can mean that when you take a shot the backdrop of your shot is well lit, but the subject is underexposed. Switching on your flash will fill in the shadows to ensure your entire shot is lit from front to back.

Unflattering flash

When flash is fired at your subject's dilated pupils in the dark, the light reflects off of their retina to make the pupils appear red. It can also create unwanted highlights and make skin appear shiny.

Combat red-eye

Red-eye is a common problem caused by using flash in low light. To prevent it, use your camera's red-eye reduction flash mode, which fires a pre-flash that causes your subject's pupils to contract.

Tricks

Create unique photographs with these fun photo projects and expert techniques

89

82

Creative photography projects

132

Create a home studio

114

Shoot
standout images

Produce stunning shots in-camera with our masterclass projects

It's fun to experiment!

Shoot creatively and then edit in Photoshop for amazing effects

TOP TIPS
✔ Light painting
✔ Vintage effects
✔ Set up a home studio
✔ Zoom bursts

110

120

122

Creative projects

Take your photos to new levels

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back   delete   save

126

Tips | **Tricks** | Fixes

Creative photography projects

Practise your skills using these ideas for amazing photos

When you're starting out in photography, the most important thing you can do is practise. It may seem really obvious, but getting out with your camera and experimenting is the quickest way to learn techniques and master your new kit. Rather than let yourself get bored shooting the same old things day after day, though, we have some great ideas here to inspire you. We've got plenty of fun projects that you can do in your home on a rainy day, such as creating art out of incense and some really interesting macro shots. If you'd rather get outside with your camera, we've got plenty to suit you too, from creating a HDR landscape to playing with shadows.

With these simple projects, you will learn just what your camera is capable of while practising essential skills you can apply to other genres. And what's more, you'll get some truly standout images along the way to show off to friends and family. Try out your own creative ideas too, and let your imagination run wild.

> "Getting out with your camera and experimenting is the quickest way to learn techniques"

Top tips for creative photography

Consider framing
Try various angles and reposition the subject to get the strongest shot. Also consider whether it looks best in portrait or landscape orientation.

Light the shot
Lighting is fundamental for any photo. Try positioning subjects near natural window light, or use your flash or a reflector to fill in any harsh shadows.

Think about colour
Using a vibrant subject can help to add impact to your shot, but try not to overuse colour – stick to three colour tones for the best impact.

Select a backdrop
Make sure the background isn't distracting. You want the attention to be on your subject, so use coloured card or even a bed sheet hung up.

Add creative filters
Most cameras now come with filters such as fish-eye, miniature, sepia or cross-process. Try using these arty effects to make your shot stand out.

Tweak your shots
Most shots need editing, but you can also apply creative effects too. Get some great ideas from tutorials on www.photoforbeginners.com.

Action images
Freeze motion by using a fast shutter speed

Shoot quickly
Burst mode lets you take a series of images quickly, improving your odds of getting the dice at the height you want them.

Freeze it
Use a fast shutter speed (over 1/200sec) to freeze the action. Slow it down if you want to show some movement blur.

Keep on trying!
High-speed shots are often trial and error, so keep experimenting until you get the right positioning.

Use flash
Firing your flash can help to freeze movement in shots like this. Try putting a piece of tracing paper in front of it if it's too harsh.

Perfect exposure
You may have to set a lower f-number when using a fast shutter speed to let in enough light.

Keep it sharp
Using Continuous AF mode will help to keep the moving subject as sharp as possible

Fun shadows

Capture shadow shots on sunny days

Bright, sunny skies offer plenty of great photo opportunities. Get creative with the sunlight by shooting the shadows it casts. You can create unique shadow shots like this using a brightly coloured prop such as an umbrella. You will need to position your model to face the direction of the sun and then shade them using the umbrella. Ask your model to pose so that the shadow has a clearer definition. To ensure that you can fit the scene within the frame, shoot in landscape orientation. You will need to focus on the umbrella and set a narrow aperture (around f11) and fast shutter speed (over 1/125sec) to prevent the image from overexposing.

Great macro

Take a rare look at macro subjects

Set your camera on a tripod and place a glass vase on a piece of white paper. Set up a background with coloured card or even a colourful scarf. Fill the vase with tonic water (for bubbles) and place in a cherry. Use a desk lamp from a safe distance or an external flashgun, slightly raised (try placing it on a stack of books) but lighting the cherry. Make sure your focus is on the cherry rather than the glass and use a wide aperture (low f-number) to throw the background out of focus. Macro mode or a macro lens will help you to get in even closer to your subject.

The increasing number of waterproof cameras and cases available has opened up a host of new opportunities, allowing you to take photos from a new perspective – underwater. Capture your family as they splash around the pool on holiday or try photographing an object submerged in a bath for a unique still life shot. You could try taking a photo of an object at water level, capturing it half-submerged so you can see the distortion from the water. Hold it in the liquid, so that water line is halfway up the lens and take a shot.

Creative portraits

Use props to take unique people pics

To capture this creative portrait, set your camera on a tripod at eye-level with your model. Using string or colourful ribbon, attach an empty frame to a nearby branch and lower it down so that you can see through it to your subject. Be sure that there is enough light so you can shoot without flash, as flash will blow the detail of the frame. Set your camera to Aperture Priority and f8, zoom in so that the frame fills the edge of your view, then set your focus on the model and not the background or frame.

Light painting

Paint pictures in low light using a torch, tripod and your camera

To paint with light, you either need to shoot outside at night or in a dark room. It's best to use a tripod to keep the camera steady. Set your tripod up and attach your camera. Make sure it's secure and set it to Timer mode, so you can be in the right place at the right time. Now set your camera to Shutter Priority and lower the shutter speed to at least 10sec and make sure your ISO is low to avoid noise appearing. Now press the shutter to start the timer, jump into place and start 'drawing' your picture with the torch, being sure to keep moving so you don't appear in the frame. It is often easier to draw around people or objects as a guide, like we have here.

Perspectives

Get fun images by changing perspective

It can be lots of fun to play with perspective. For effective results, you'll need to work in a wide, open space. If you're placing a model in the frame, get them to stand as far back as possible to give the illusion that they're a smaller size. You can then introduce objects or hands around the side of the image at a closer proximity to the lens, so that they will appear larger when compared to the model. Give your model clear instructions to pose so that it appears as though they are interacting with the object or hands. Experiment and practise to capture both subjects in the correct alignment.

Motion blur

Use shutter speed for special effects

The easiest way to convey movement in your photo is to use a long exposure. This means using a long shutter speed to blur the subject, but keeping everything else in focus by using a tripod. By keeping the camera steady, you can ensure that stationary elements are sharp.

Then switch to Shutter Priority on the mode dial and set it to around 5sec, steadily increasing the time until you're happy with the results. You may need to use a neutral density (ND) filter to absorb light, reducing the amount of light coming into the lens and to help avoid overexposure.

Selective colouring

How to make your subject stand out from the scene

The selective colour technique is a clever way of drawing the eye to a particular part of a picture. It works by converting the image to black and white, and then restoring colour to the subject so that it leaps off the frame. Some cameras offer this as a creative filter, and although this is the easiest way of achieving the effect, the results can be much more accurate when you do it yourself. For the best results, choose a photograph with a colourful focal point, such as a bunch of flowers. We've used some fruit and free editing software GIMP to create the effect.

Using layer masks | A guide to selectively colouring shots in GIMP

1: Drain the colour
Open your image then save it under another name. Go to Layers>Duplicate Layer, then select Desaturate from the Colors menu.
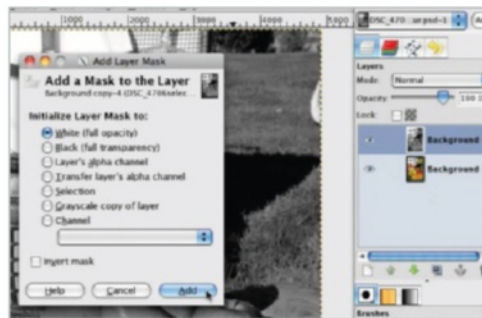
2: Add a layer mask
Go to Layer>Mask>Add Layer Mask and opt for White (full opacity). Select the mask thumbnail and paint with a black brush to reveal colour.

3: Flatten the image
Finally, select Image>Flatten Image to merge all the layers into one. Then save the image (File>Save) and export it with File>Export.

Retro shots

Create an old-fashioned photo

Vintage is currently on trend, and not just in regards to clothing but in photography too, with vintage-inspired camera designs and filter effects to transform your shots into old-fashioned works of art. To create your own retro image, check your camera's shooting modes. You may find a sepia or filter effect that you can apply instantly. Alternatively, use tools in Photoshop such as Hue/Saturation and the Add Noise filter. Reduce saturation first and then increase the yellow hue for a sepia effect.

Bokeh

Blur light for fun images

Place your cup on a small table, about two metres from the wall behind it. Light it with a desk lamp or external flash gun positioned about a metre to the left of the camera and above it.

Hang black cloth on the wall and suspend fairy lights from the top. Put your camera on a tripod and manually focus on the cup. Using a wide aperture (low f-number), the background lights should be blown out of focus to create this lovely effect. Then position the cup so it looks like the lights are steam coming from it!

Themed portraits

Take a creative approach to portraiture

There are plenty of great ways to get creative with portraits. Using a theme will not only give you a brief to work towards, but it will also enable you to include more elements within the frame in the way of props and styling. Selecting a distinctive character from a book or a favourite film is a great way to start.

You'll need to get hands-on with posing your model using props for this, and consider the location of the shoot carefully as it will be dependant on the character you're photographing. You can also ask your subject to change their expressions to convey different emotions, reflecting the character.

HDR vistas

Learn to get perfect results in tricky lighting

If you look at a sunrise or sunset scene, you'll see a full range of tones, including detail in the darkest parts of the land and the brightest parts of the sky. However, camera sensors are unable to record the same range of tones, so will under or overexpose certain areas. The solution is to take three (or more) identically-framed pictures at different exposures: at, under and below the camera's metered exposure. This is known as 'bracketing'. To make it easy, many cameras have an auto-bracketing facility. You then use software like Photoshop Elements or Photomatix to merge the pictures into one image that contains the full range of tones.

Before
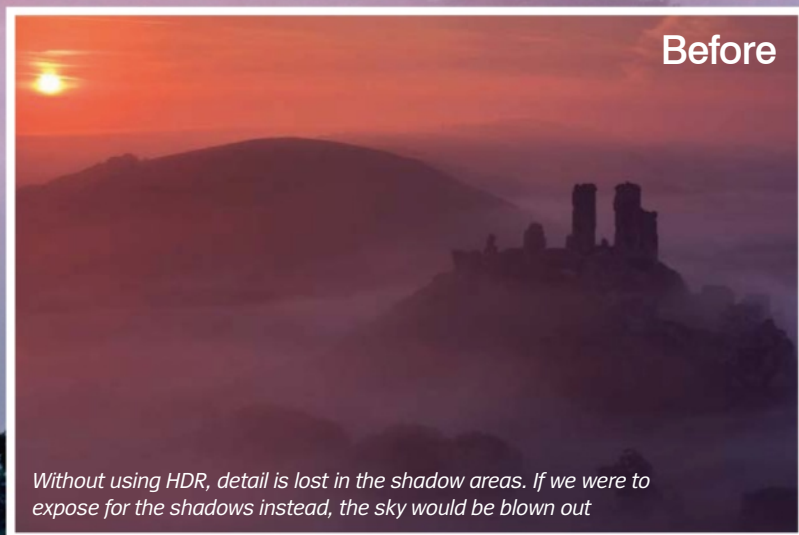
Without using HDR, detail is lost in the shadow areas. If we were to expose for the shadows instead, the sky would be blown out

HDR from start to finish | How to set up, shoot and edit HDR

1: Choose your settings
Set Aperture Priority and pick a high f-number. Set Exposure Bracketing in the menu and move the dial until the lines are under the 1.

2: Use a tripod
Keep the camera steady, as change between shots causes 'ghosting'. Take three shots (the camera will take three different exposures).
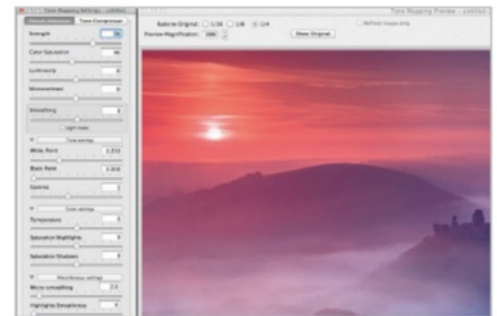
3: Merge the shots
Open the shots in your software and find the 'Merge to HDR' option, which combines them. Use sliders to adjust contrast and highlights.

Zoom burst

Experiment with your zoom for vibrant still-life shots

A zoom burst adds focus to a central point, and blurs the outside in a creative way. Select a brightly coloured subject that is stationary. Switch your camera dial to Shutter Priority mode and set a shutter speed of around 1sec. This should give you just enough time to zoom out while the shutter is open to capture the effect. Frame the subject by zooming in so that it fills the image. Now focus the camera on the centre of the subject. Position your hand on the lens around the zoom ring and once you're ready, release the shutter. As soon as the shutter opens, rotate the zoom ring anti-clockwise to zoom out and capture an effective zoom burst result.
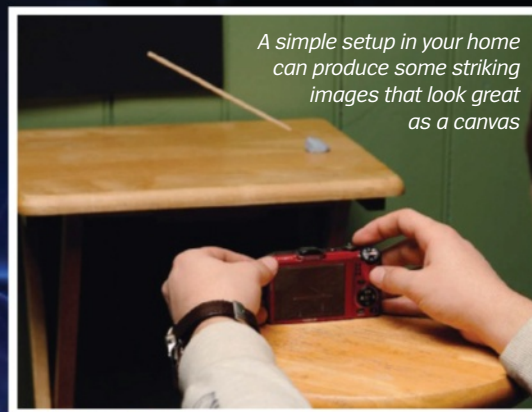
A simple setup in your home can produce some striking images that look great as a canvas

Smoke art

Capture striking abstract images

A great project to try at home is shooting smoke trails. It's easy to do, and all you really need is some incense sticks and some black card. It can take a bit of trial and error, but you'll have a lot of fun experimenting. Here's how it's done…

1: Set up the project
Place an incense stick on a table in front of a piece of black card so that any smoke will be easily visible (with a bit of distance in between). Set up in front of a bright window so the light hits the smoke from behind.

2: Choose your settings
The ideal settings are a low ISO, a fast shutter speed such as 1/250sec, and a high f-number, but you may have to experiment. Turn off your flash and use Burst mode for the best chance of a great shot.

3: Get started
It is important to keep your camera steady on a tripod or hard surface such as another table. Manually focus on the end of the incense, light it, turn off the lights and start shooting! Use your hands to fan the smoke.

4: Edit the shots
Open your best shot in editing software and crop out the incense stick or clone it out. Open the Levels tool and move the sliders in towards the edge of the graph. Play around with the Hue slider to change the colour.

Create a lens flare

Add light and atmosphere to your images with a simple but inspiring lens flare

Before
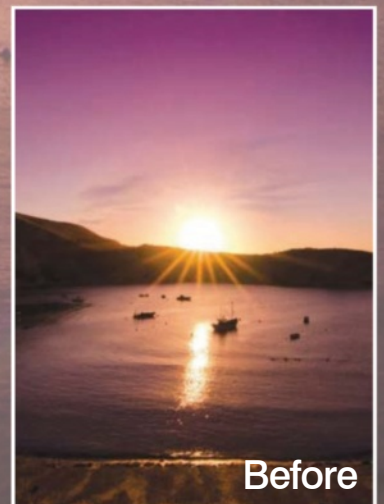
Lens flares have always been somewhat of an artistic effect, created as light scatters through the lens until it reacts with the sensor in a flurry of circular halos. This is a simple technique that requires only one extra layer in Photoshop. When using filters such as the Lens Flare, you need to work in such a way that's not going to damage the original image.

For this technique involving Photoshop's dedicated Lens Flare filter, look towards the non-destructive power of Smart Filters. Smart Filters enable us to go back to settings later on, without them applied permanently to the image. Once a Smart Filter has been added to your Layers palette, controlling the opacity of the Filter is easily done. At 100% Opacity, this lens flare is quite overpowering, so you would generally reduce its opacity until you find an effect that works for your image.

The Lens Flare filter caters for different lenses that you may be using. This lets you match the lens flare to your focal length. You can specify the style of flare depending on the lens or subject, or just what looks best. Here you'll learn how to apply the lens flare to your image and create a believable look that appears like it was created naturally in-camera.
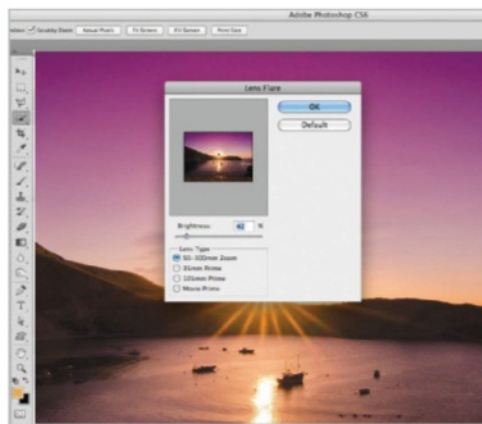
1: Set up the image
Load up the Lens Flare filter by going to the Filter menu and down to the Render options. First, get an idea of where to place the lens flare in your image. You can then go back and re-apply the filter non-destructively later on.

2: Select Lens Type
There are a number of types of flares to choose. Each one imitates a different camera lens and will suit different types of images. For this image, the 50-300m Zoom looked most natural, but this can change depending on your photo and lens.

3: Position lens flare
Placement of the lens flare is important. This can be done with the preview window above Lens Type, by dragging the crosshairs. Keep the Brightness setting low at 10% while you do this, so you're able to see the crosshairs on the window.

4: Adjust flare brightness
Once in place, go ahead and boost the Amount slider to see how intense you want the flare to be. The more this slider is increased the less visible the surrounding details in your image become. Set this Brightness to 140% for a good balance and hit OK.

5: Change blend mode
This lens flare is only a tester to make sure the effect is in the place where it's needed. At the moment it's been applied destructively, but we want to protect the original image. So press Cmd/Ctrl+Z to undo and then add a blank layer and set its blend mode to Screen.

6: Apply Smart Filter
Fill this layer with black (Edit>Fill) and then go to Filter>Convert for Smart Filters. With this layer set up, go back into the Filter menu and click on the top option 'Lens Flare'. This will call up the filter once more, but just hit OK to apply the settings as chosen earlier.

Capture shallow depth of field

Learn how to create a unique landscape with a shallow depth of field

Foreground interest
A shallow depth of field draws attention to the main foreground subject. In this case, it is a bright and colourful poppy facing the camera.

The lens aperture is one of the three settings (along with shutter speed and ISO) that control exposure, as it determines how much light falls on the sensor. However, it also has an effect on the creative look of the image because it controls the depth of field too – the zone of sharpness either side of the point of focus. The principle is quite simple: the smaller the aperture, the greater the depth of field.

While that bit is straightforward, a little confusion is caused by the way apertures are measured in 'f-stops'.

As these numbers get bigger, the aperture gets smaller, eg f4 is a large aperture and f22 is a small aperture.

Normally, portraits are shot with wide apertures and a narrow depth of field, while landscapes are most often shot with small apertures and an extensive depth of field. However, this is not a hard and fast rule, and in the right circumstances, using a narrow depth of field can really add impact to a landscape.

Follow our guide to shooting scenery with a shallow depth of field, for a shot that stands out from the crowd.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Digital camera
Lens with a wide aperture (f4 is fine)
Tripod
Editing software

Shoot! | Capture an eye-catching landscape

1: Choose a location
You'll need an interesting foreground, ideally one where there is a single strong focal point. Even though it will be out of focus, the background is also important. Look for something that provides enough interest, but without distracting features.

2: Compose your shot
Use a tripod – this allows you to make small adjustments to framing and will result in a better composition. Arrange the key elements in the shot according to the rule of thirds. If your camera has gridlines, turn these on to help you compose.

3: Set to Aperture Priority
Shooting in Aperture Priority mode (A or Av) is the best choice for landscapes, as you select the aperture, which controls the depth of field. The camera will set the shutter speed for you. Choose the widest aperture (smallest f-number) available.
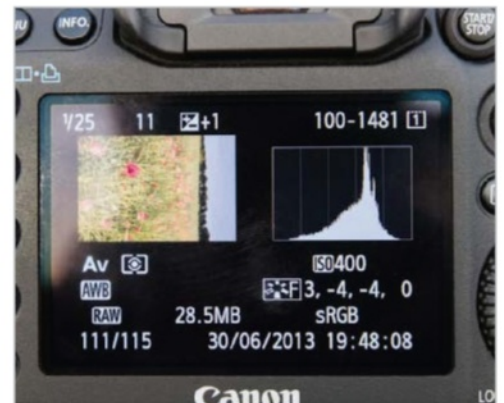
4: Focus on the foreground
Focus on the part of the foreground you want to be sharp. If you have Live View, zoom in, and in Manual Focus mode, turn the focusing ring until the image is sharp. Otherwise, use Autofocus and select the AF point on the part you want in focus.

5: Review the image
Take the shot and use Image Review to check the focus and exposure. The histogram will show if your exposure is correct or not. If it's bunched too far to the left, the shot is underexposed and if it's too far to the right, the shot is overexposed.

6: Adjust the exposure
If it is under or overexposed, apply Exposure Compensation and re-shoot. This usually involves holding down the +/- button and turning the dial. Add positive compensation to brighten and negative to darken. Check your histogram again.

Ways to print and display

1: Mount on aluminium

A great way to show off your shots in style is to mount them onto aluminium and hang them on your wall. www.photobox.co.uk lets you order aluminium prints in a variety of shapes and sizes, including rectangular, square and panoramic.

2: Create acrylic paints

You can get your photo printed and placed behind a layer of acrylic for a high-quality, glossy finish that makes your photo appear as though it is floating on your wall. www.whiteWall.co.uk has an excellent range of acrylic printing options.

3: Print on foam board

A cheap yet attractive way to display your photos is on foam board – two thin plastic boards with a layer of rigid foam in between. Your prints will be incredibly light and have a lovely silk matte look. www.pixum.co.uk offers forex prints in plenty of different sizes.

Edit! | Enhance your landscape shot in Photoshop Elements

1: Remove the colour cast

If your photo has an unusual colour cast, or if you think it could be a little warmer or cooler, go to Filter>Adjustments>Photo Filter. Select a Warming or Cooling Filter, and then adjust the Density slider until you are happy.

3: Correct the exposure

You can brighten up or darken your shot by going to Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels. Use the Color Picker tool to correct automatically, or adjust the arrows under the histogram. Moving them right will darken it, and moving them left will brighten it.

5: Add a gradient

In the Layers palette, click the 'Add New Fill Layer' button. Select Gradient from the drop-down menu and in the Gradient Fill box, set the Style to Linear, the Angle to -90 degrees, and the Scale to 100%.

2: Boost the colours

To make the colours in your shot a bit brighter, go to Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Hue/Saturation. Boost the Saturation slider until the colours look how you want them to, but avoid pushing it too far as your photo will look unnatural and cartoon-like.

4: Adjust the curves

Go to Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Color Curves and choose Increase Midtones in the Select a Style menu. Boost the Midtone Brightness and Midtone Contrast, then adjust Highlights and Shadows until your image has plenty of depth in the foreground.

6: Adjust the gradient

Double-click on the Gradient menu in the Gradient Fill box to open up the Gradient Editor. Adjust the colour of your gradient and the Color and Opacity sliders to change its look. Click OK.

Share! | Create a canvas print to display at home with PhotoBox

1: Choose your print service

You can share your shallow depth of field landscape photo in a number of ways, such as online or by framing it to go on your wall. We have chosen to turn our shot into a canvas print, using www.photobox.co.uk.
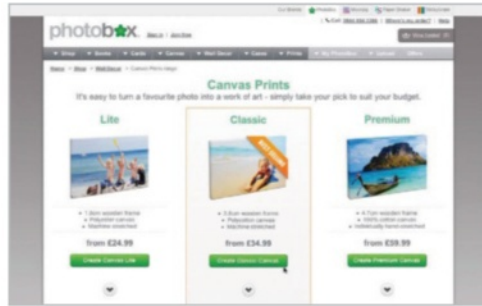
2: Select a canvas style

Click on the Canvas tab at the top of the home page to see the variety of canvas prints on offer. Each has a different thickness of frame and is printed on a different material. Select the one that suits your budget and click Create Canvas.

3: Change the shape and size

Now choose a rectangular, square or panoramic canvas and pick the size you want it to be. Consider the shape of your photo, the space available on your wall and how much money you wish to spend. Then click Create Canvas Now.
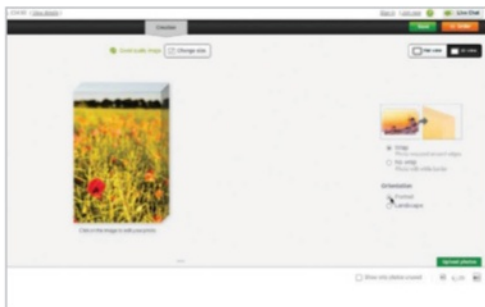
4: Upload your photo

Upload your photo and you will see it displayed on a virtual canvas print. You can change the orientation of your canvas and select whether you would like the image to wrap around the edges, or display the photo with a white border.

Consider the wrap
Leave enough space around the edge of your photo so that the important areas are not lost.

Special place
You could choose a location that is personal to you, helping you to create a really special canvas print.

Bright colours
A scene with bold and bright colours will really stand out, and add interest to a blank wall.
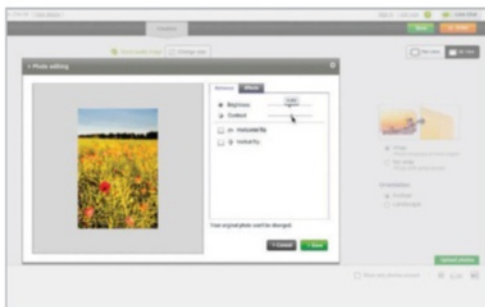
5: Edit your print

Click on your photo for a new menu to zoom in or out and rotate your photo, or open up the Photo Editing menu to adjust contrast and brightness, flip the photo or add effects. Then click Order.

Avoid clashes
Make sure that the colours in your photo will not clash with the colour scheme of your room.

Make buildings stand out

Shoot architecture at its best

Info . . .

What you'll need:
A digital camera
Architecture

Use a wide angle
Zoom out to a wider focal setting on your camera to frame the whole building in your shot. Watch out for lens distortion at extreme wide angles, though.

Compose your shot
Think about using the rule of thirds when composing. Place the main focal point of the building off-centre and place the horizon a third of the way up or down.

Our settings

Aperture: f18 ISO: 200
Shutter speed: 1/160sec

Time it right
The time of day can have a big effect on images, as midday sun can cast shadows across buildings. Early in the morning is best, and less people will be about too.

Capture the foreground
Don't just shoot the building, include a bit of the foreground too. This will add some context to the shot so the viewer can see where it was taken, and it will help guide them to the main subject.

Shooting speeds
If you're shooting handheld, keep your shutter speed above 1/60sec to avoid camera shake. Using a tripod will let you slow down the speed to let in more light.

Make sure you experiment with shooting architecture from different angles. Get down low and move around the building to get shots from interesting perspectives

Switch to Aperture Priority mode and choose a narrow aperture (high f-number) to keep all of the shot in focus

Straighten the horizon

Keep your shots straight, otherwise the building will look wonky. You can use your camera's gridlines to help you keep the horizon level, or rest your camera on a tripod or flat surface to get it straight.

Take your time

Scout out the building before you start pressing the shutter to find out what its most interesting factor is – it might be completely different from another side!

Find a vantage point

Try and find a location to set up your shot where passersby aren't going to get in the shot. You may need to be patient and wait for people to move!

Correct the exposure

If you're finding that your shots are coming out too bright or too dark, use exposure compensation. Move up to +1 or +2 EV to brighten your shot, or move down to -1 or -2EV to darken it.

Lower the ISO

Try and keep your ISO as low as possible to keep noise out. If you need extra light then slow down your shutter speed and use a tripod instead.

If you can't quite fit everything into the frame, try using your camera's Panorama mode (if it has one) to stitch several photos together

Create a vintage-effect photo

Capture a stunning vista and give it a nostalgic feel

Before

Retro photography is very popular at the moment, thanks to the vintage filters of apps like Instagram and the nostalgic look of Lomo images. Lomography is a movement that started in the early Nineties after the founders discovered the unique photos produced by toy film cameras. Lomo photos tend to feature unusual colours, with a soft focus and dark vignettes where the colour falls away at the edges of the frame, which makes them look particularly retro.

However, the good news is that you don't need a Lomo camera to achieve this fantastic effect, as it can easily be re-created using image-editing software. Almost any photo can be given the Lomography treatment, from portraits to still life and landscapes. It is important to make sure that the most important part of your image is positioned in the centre of the frame, otherwise it will become obscured when you add the vignette.

This easy-to-follow tutorial will show you how to take a great landscape shot that is perfect for a retro makeover, then give it the Lomo look in Photoshop Elements 11, and finally post it onto Pinterest to share with the world. We'll also suggest the best subjects for the retro effect.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
A digital camera
Editing software
Social network profile

Shoot! | Take a beautiful landscape photo

1: Choose your aperture
Set your camera to Aperture Priority mode and then select a narrow aperture (high f-number). This will ensure that everything in your photo is in focus so that you can take control of the soft focus blur in post-production later.

2: Keep it clear
Set your camera's ISO as low as possible, preferably at 100 or 200. This will prevent you from taking noisy images, keeping your shots clear with lots of detail. Slow down your shutter speed or widen your aperture if your shots are too dark.

3: Use a scene mode
If you are having trouble getting your settings right, you can always use a Landscape scene mode. Your camera will choose the settings for you so you can focus on composing the shot. It will often capture more vibrant blues and greens.

4: Zoom out
To fit everything into the frame and leave enough space at the edges for the vignette, use the shortest focal length that your camera or lens has. This will involve zooming right out or twisting your lens so that it is set to the smallest number.

5: Use the gridlines
If your camera has gridlines, then use them to help you compose your shot. The grid will help you to keep your horizon straight and position it a third or two thirds of the way up as well as get your main focal point in the centre square.

6: Steady your shot
As you are using a narrow aperture, you may need to select a slow shutter speed to let enough light into the lens. Use a tripod or rest your camera or elbows on a steady surface to reduce camera shake when the shutter is open for a while.

3 of the best retro photo subjects

1: Architecture
Beautiful old buildings and bridges make perfect retro photo subjects as the final photograph will look as though it could have been taken years ago.

2: Portraits
The soft focus look is very flattering for portraits. To complete the retro look, you could get your model to wear vintage clothes for a timeless photo.

3: Still life
Try to find retro-looking objects around your house and position them in a simple setting for an old-school still-life shot.

Edit! | Create the Lomo effect for a vintage photo
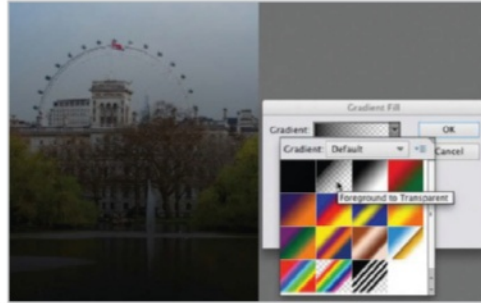
1: Add a vignette
Open your photo and click on the Create a New Adjustment Layer icon at the top of the Layers palette. Select Gradient and choose Foreground to Transparent from the drop-down menu or double-click to open up the Gradient Editor.

2: Adjust the vignette
In the Gradient Fill box, change the Style to Radial and tick Reverse. Now adjust the scale to change the strength of the vignette. Choosing a high percentage will create a subtle vignette, while a small percentage will blacken the frame's edges.
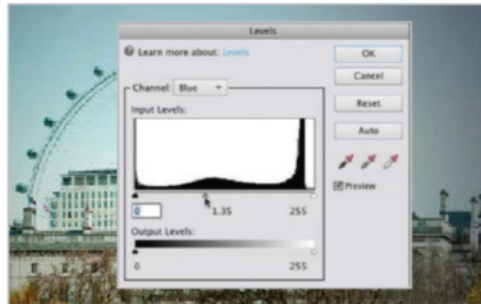
3: Change the levels
Select the background layer and then go to Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels. Individually adjust the levels of each colour channel, bringing out the reds and greens in particular. Tick the Preview box to view the results as you experiment.
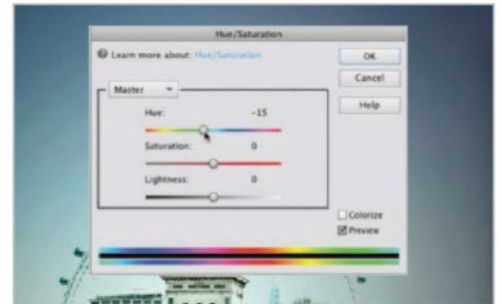
4: Alter the hue
Now go to Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Hue/Saturation and move the Hue slider to further adjust the colours in your shot, trying to keep within the blue and green sections of the slider. Again, tick the Preview box and experiment.
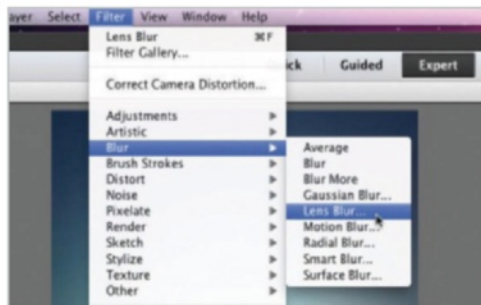
5: Soften the focus
Select the background layer again and go to Layer>Duplicate Layer. Now click on the new layer you've just created and go to Filter>Blur>Lens Blur. Your entire shot is now slightly out of focus, but we'll bring out the important lost detail next.

6: Bring back the detail
On the same layer, click on the Layer Mask icon in the Layers palette. Select the Brush tool from the toolbar, change the colour to black and adjust the brush size as you see fit. Now brush over the main focal point of your shot to bring it back into focus.

Share! | Upload your photo as a pin on Pinterest

1: Sign up

Go to **www.pinterest.com**. If you already have a Pinterest account then log in. If you don't, you can join Pinterest by signing up with your email address or sign in with your Facebook or Twitter accounts, if you already have them.

2: Invite your friends

On the homepage, click your profile at the top and select Invite Friends from the menu. Type in your friend's email addresses or find them through email or Facebook. If they create or already have an account, they can then see your pins.
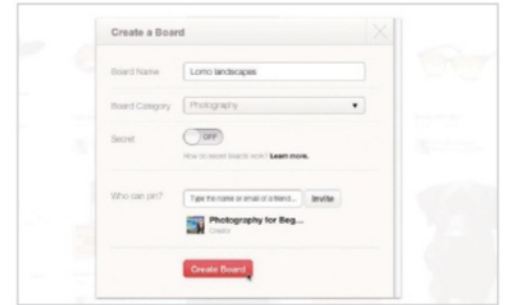
3: Create a board

Click Add+ at the top of the homepage, and then Create a Board. A board will let you group your pins together, so give it a name and select a board category. Decide if you want it to be private or allow others to add pins to your board too.

4: Pin your photo

Back on the homepage, click Add+ again and select Upload a Pin. Select your photo from your computer and then select the board you have just created from the drop-down menu. Now you can add a description to explain your photo.
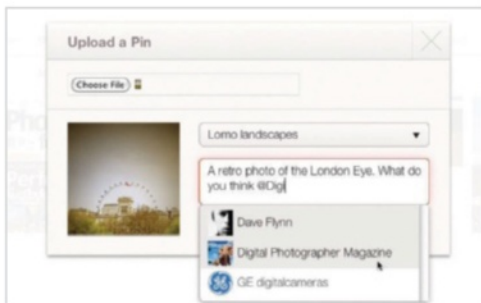
5: Tag your pin

If you want a particular Pinterest follower to see your shot, type an @ symbol in the description box and type their name. It should then appear in a drop-down menu for you to select. Now pin your photo and tick to share on Facebook and Twitter.

Consider noise
We've chosen a low ISO to keep everything clear, but you could use a high ISO to add noise for an even older look.

Centre the subject
Make sure you keep your main subject in the centre of the frame so it's not covered by the vignette.

Colour
Look for bright colours, as dull colours will appear even more washed out when you add the effect.

Tips | **Tricks** | Fixes

Build a photo collage panograph

Discover how to shoot and stitch photos to create an impressive panograph image

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Camera with manual settings
Wide-angle lens
Any image editing software that has layer functionality

Panoramas are intended to capture a much bigger and better view of a scene than your average shot can. These days they don't require specialist kit to photograph either, as many new smartphones and beginner to enthusiast-level cameras come with built-in panorama shooting modes. Using these modes in-camera, you'll be able to capture a full 180-degree view of a scene, which the camera will automatically stitch together for you, eliminating the need to learn difficult editing techniques for a seamless finish.

Although these modes are fantastic for instant results, they can take some of the fun and the challenge away from shooting and creating a panorama. Images don't always have to be seamless to be successful; editing your frames together using a little creative flare can offer some impressive final results too.

A panograph is a great example of a hands-on and fun approach to capturing a panorama. In this easy-to-follow tutorial, we'll be showing you exactly how to shoot, edit and share a panograph for yourself. You don't need expensive kit or a special shooting mode either; the same results are guaranteed with a basic point-and-shoot. We've used Adobe Photoshop to construct our panograph, but you could also use Adobe Elements or other image editing software.

Follow along with us as we break it down into simple steps for you. You'll be capturing, creating and sharing your own panograph in no time at all!

Shoot! | Capture multiple images in-camera to create a panograph

1: Select a scene
Start by choosing an interesting scene to shoot. If this is your first attempt at a panograph, opt for something simple that doesn't feature too many vertical lines. Switch the camera mode dial to Aperture Priority mode (A or Av) before you begin.

2: Set your aperture
Select a high f-number, which represents a narrow aperture. This will ensure that each individual photo appears in focus corner to corner; that way you won't end up with one focus point and a soft background effect in all of your images.

3: Ensure sharp results
As you're using Aperture Priority mode, the camera will determine the correct shutter speed for each shot so that they all appear evenly exposed. It'll need to be above 1/60sec when shooting handheld, though, to avoid shaky shots.

Glued to the spot
Avoid moving your feet when shooting a panograph. Rotate your hips to capture a 180-degree view. Don't forget to shoot up and down too.

4: Make adjustments

The shutter speed might be too slow to shoot handheld, so increase your ISO setting, which in turn will speed up the shutter. ISO determines how sensitive your camera is to light; higher ISOs result in brighter shots, but look out for noise.

5: Set your focus

Ensure that your camera and lens is switched to autofocus, as this will help to guarantee pin-sharp results in all your shots. You now need to position your focus point in the centre of the frame and half press the shutter before you fully press to shoot.

6: Start shooting

Shoot landscape and take the middle panograph photo first. Don't change your position; just adjust the angle of the camera to shoot images to the left, right, up and down. Aim to include a portion of the last image you took in each frame.

Tips | **Tricks** | Fixes

The best Photoshop tools

1: Free transform
You can use the Free Transform tool in Photoshop to resize and rotate individual frames, to ensure that your panograph fits together seamlessly.
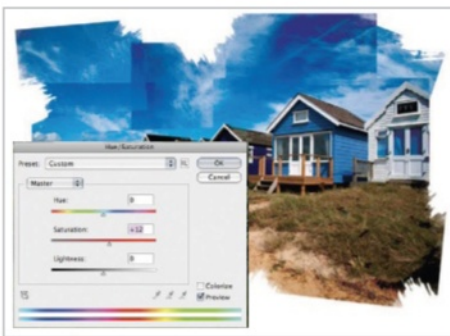
2: Hue/Saturation
Increase the colour vibrancy in your finished panograph using the Hue/Saturation tool so that it's eye-catching and stands out from the rest when posted on social media.

3: Brightness and Contrast
A bit of a boost to the brightness and contrast will add more depth to your final image, as it will punch up the colour tones and enhance the shadows.

Edit! | Construct your panograph collage in Photoshop
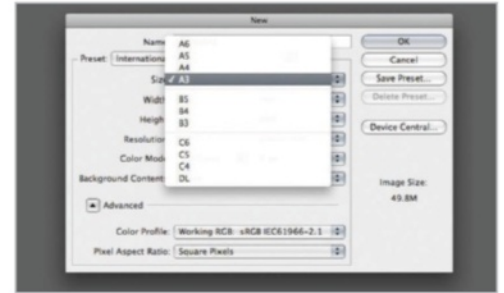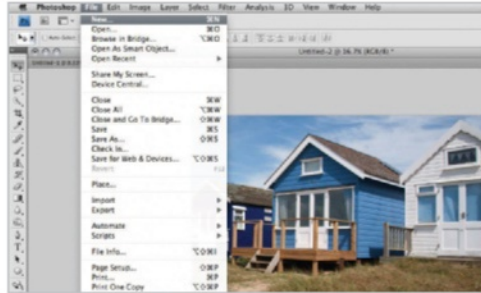
1: Prepare the files
Save all of the shots for your panograph onto your computer. Now open Photoshop and load the images individually. To create a panograph, you'll need to create a blank canvas in which to layer the shots together. Go to File>New to create one.

2: Create a canvas
In the New canvas dialog box, select International Paper from the Preset drop-down menu. You can now select A3 or larger from the size options. Set the resolution to around 300 pixels/inch and opt for a colour, transparent or white background.

3: Add your images
You can now add your images onto the canvas. Start by opening the image that will appear in the centre. Select the Move tool and drag the photo on, then go to Edit>Free Transform and hold down the Shift key as you resize the shot.

4: Build the layers
Continue to add the other photos to the canvas. Layers will begin to build up in the Layers panel. Place them all in a rough order initially and set the Opacity of each to around 50% so that you can align the images correctly as they overlap.

5: Adjust the layers
You may need to adjust the layers so that the central image is on top. To do this, select a layer with the Move tool and drag it up to the top of the Layers panel. Experiment and use the Preview icon next to the layer to see which order the layers work best in.

6: Finishing touches
Once you've finished, you can make final adjustments to the opacity of each layer. Flatten them via Layers>Flatten Image and select a rough edged paintbrush with the foreground set to white. Paint the edges for an artsy effect and then save your shot.

Share! | Upload and share your panograph online with friends

1: Select your sharing site

Once you've saved your panograph, you can upload it to social media or gallery websites like Flickr. Go to **www.flickr.com** to take you to the main homepage. Sign in, or if you don't already have an existing account, opt to create one.
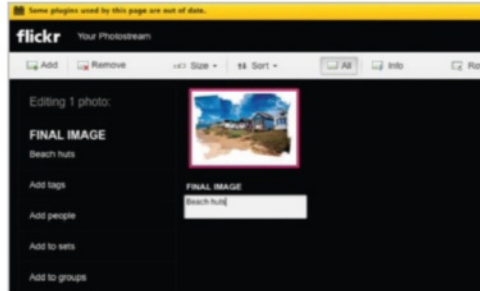
2: Begin to upload

Select the Upload tab, click Choose Photos and Videos and then browse to your panograph. Now fill in the details found on the upload page. Start by adding a caption that shares some information on when and how it was taken.
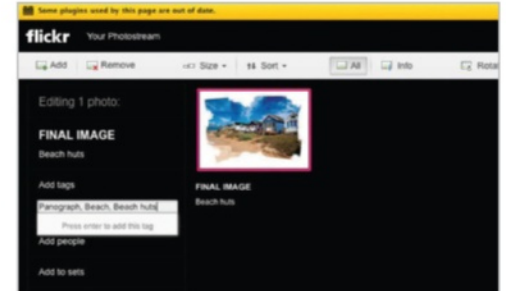
3: Add tags

Make your panograph easy to find when searching by adding tags. Use keywords that relate to the shot to do this. You can also tag people in the shot by typing and selecting their name in the Add People section.
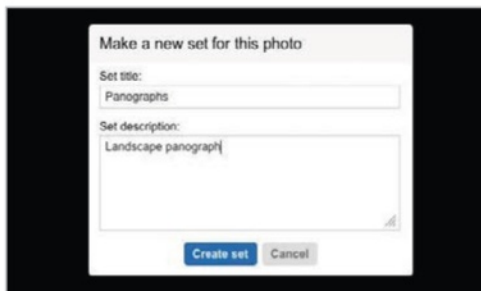
4: Create a set

Create a Set that you can add future panographs to. Set a title for the album and a brief description of what you'll find in it. Then adjust Owner Settings to determine who can see your image and hit the Upload tag to post it on your profile page.

5: Share with others

Once your image has uploaded, go to your Photostream and select a method for sharing the shot. You can send a link to the page via email or click on one of the sharing icons that will enable you to post the image onto Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Tumblr.

Sharp results
Use the correct aperture and focus settings when taking each panograph shot, so that the end result appears sharp and seamless.

Layer opacity
Your panograph will be more effective if select layers have a lower opacity so you can see the edge of each frame used to build it.

Quick adjustments
Increase the colour vibrancy using the Hue/Saturation tool in Photoshop to ensure your final panograph stands out from the rest.
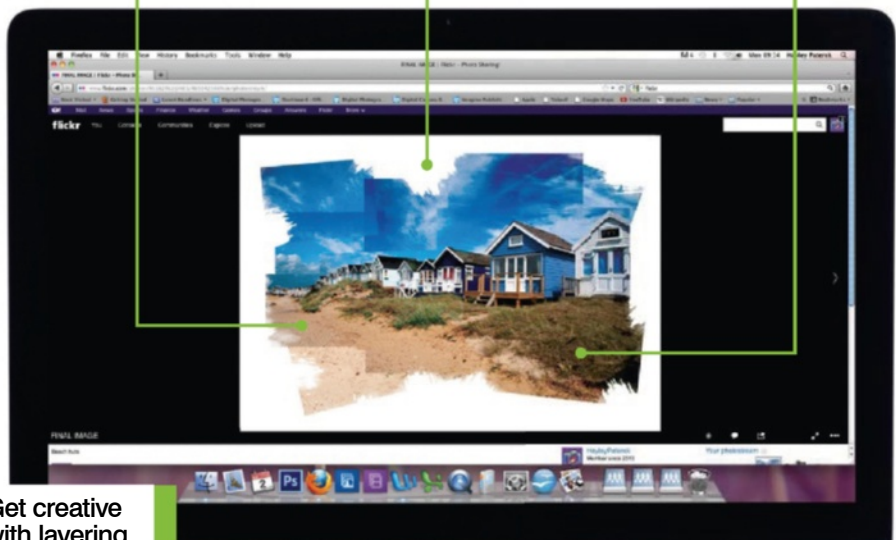
Get creative with layering

Try experimenting with the Layers panel when you are overlapping the frames to achieve creative effects.

Create dramatic portraits

Emphasise form and add drama

Info . . .

What you'll need:
A digital camera
A dimly lit room
A light source

Catchlights
Try moving your model so the light falls into their eyes – this is called a catchlight. If you can't change where the light falls, try using a reflector to bounce some back in.

Choose a light source
These shots need a single light source. You could use natural light though a window, a desk lamp, or a street lamp. Position your subject so the light hits them at an angle for a dramatic effect.

Get the right exposure
If your shot is too dark, even when using a wide aperture, try raising your ISO. Just watch out for digital grain if it is too high. Also, try experimenting with exposure compensation to adjust the brightness.

Some cameras come with a dedicated low-key scene mode, which will select the correct settings for you

Use burst mode
To avoid capturing your model blinking and to get the best chance of capturing a genuine expression, set your camera to burst mode. This will fire off multiple shots at once.

Find a suitable location
Low-key shots are dimly lit, so you need to find a dark location. This can be a dark room with a dark curtain as a backdrop, you could prop up a large piece of black card behind your model, or shoot at night.

Capture emotion

Keep talking to your model and popping your head out from behind the camera to get them to relax. Try and make them laugh to capture true smiles.

Consider the angle

Portraits generally aren't very flattering from low angles, as this accentuates nostrils and chins. Try shooting front-on or from a slightly raised position.

Focus on your subject's eyes using selective focus, or you could do it manually or use face priority focusing

Our settings

Aperture: f4.5 ISO: 1600
Shutter speed: 1/30sec

No flash

Remember to turn off your camera's flash, as the shot should only have one light source. You could use the flash as your light source, but it works better if the light hits your subject from the side.

Select Aperture Priority mode and a low f-number to let enough light into your lens and create a shallow depth of field

Compose for effect

Typically, subjects will look at the camera for a portrait, which can be particularly dramatic in a low-key shot. But don't be afraid to experiment, as breaking eye contact can create a lovely candid photo.

Zoom on in

Zoom in slightly as a wide angle can cause distorted features. A focal length of around 80-100mm is best, so take a step back if you need to and zoom in.

Shoot silhouettes
Underexpose your subjects to show just a hint of them

What you'll need:
A digital camera
A single light source
A subject

Make sure you turn off your flash, otherwise it could fire and illuminate your subject from the front, lessening your chances of a well-defined silhouette

Use bold shapes
Use a subject with a bold and interesting shape that will still be easily identifiable as a silhouette. When photographing people, shoot them in profile or get them to pull a striking pose.

Position the light
To create a silhouette photo, your light source must be behind your subject. Perhaps take the shot when the sun is low in the sky, or shoot from a low angle so that your subject is blocking the sun.

Our settings
Aperture: f11 ISO: 800
Shutter speed: 1/800sec

Use a narrow aperture (high f-number) to ensure that your subject is in focus while you're metering off the background

Simple backdrop

To make sure that your silhouetted subject really stands out, keep the background of your shot as plain as possible so there are no distractions. A blue sky or colourful sunset works best.

Separate your subjects

If you are shooting more than one subject, make sure you position them apart with a bit of space in-between. If they overlap, you may not be able to tell what each subject is.

Shoot in Auto

Trick your camera into exposing for the background by pointing it towards the light and half-pressing the shutter. Keep holding it down and then compose your photo before pressing it fully.

Darken your silhouette

If you are shooting in a semi-manual mode and your silhouette is not as dark as you would like, use exposure compensation and dial it down to -1 or -2 to underexpose your subject even more.

Switch to Spot Metering mode and half-press the shutter while pointing your camera at the sky before shooting

Tips | **Tricks** | Fixes

Create a levitation effect

Shoot and edit a dream-like levitation shot using camera techniques and Photoshop

Before

A t first glance levitation photographs seem to require a good level of editing experience and hours of free time, but provided you've got competent camera skills, some Photoshop ability and plenty of imagination, they can be pretty straightforward to create. The key is to capture as much of the effect in-camera as you can. To do this, you'll need a good-quality camera and a sturdy stool or step ladder, which will enable you to photograph your model in situ. By photographing your model on location, you'll be able to ensure that the focus, lighting and colour balance match accurately with the rest of the scene, which is something you can't always guarantee if you're photographing your model separately with the intent to create a composite during the editing stage. Once you've captured your posed model in-camera, you'll also need to shoot the landscape – you can use this image later to accurately edit out and replace the step ladder, using Photoshop layers and layer masks.

Once you're ready to begin editing, work with layers and adjustment tools to bring the scene together and create a convincing levitation image. You can add to the dream-like narrative by creating a retro camera filter effect too. Adjust the tonal range for intentional colour casts and create a sweet spot of focus to finish up. To help you get the same results, follow our simple tutorial.

1: Set up your shot
Select your location and set up your equipment. Once you've got the step ladder in place, position your model within the frame. Be clear with directions and offer suggestions for poses. Wait until they are posed before handing over the prop.

2: Use shutter priority
Shoot using your Shutter Priority mode. This is particularly important if your model is having to balance on something or if it's a windy day, as you'll be able to use a fast shutter to freeze motion while the camera takes care of the rest.

3: Stay in focus
Switch your camera to auto focus mode to ensure the model appears sharp and in focus. Place your single AF point over the model's face so that the camera does not hunt to find focus in other areas of the image while you're shooting.

4: Burst mode
Working outside, against the wind, and with a balancing model means you may need to use your camera's burst mode setting. Switch to a low continuous burst mode to ensure high-res images and then release the shutter when you're ready.

5: Change perspective
Once your camera settings are in place, get into position. Shoot from a low angle in order to reinforce the levitation effect in your photos. This perspective will look a lot more convincing when you've finished editing your image.

6: Frame the shot
Position the model centrally within the frame and if possible, get their feet above the horizon line. Always ensure there's a strong enough shadow on the ground to create a convincing levitation effect later. Photograph the landscape separately..
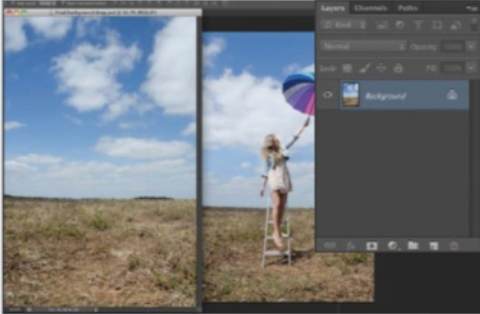
7: Align the layers
Open your start image in Photoshop alongside the straightforward landscape shot of the scene. Using the move tool, drag the landscape shot over the start image and align them. Lower the layer opacity to ensure it overlays correctly.
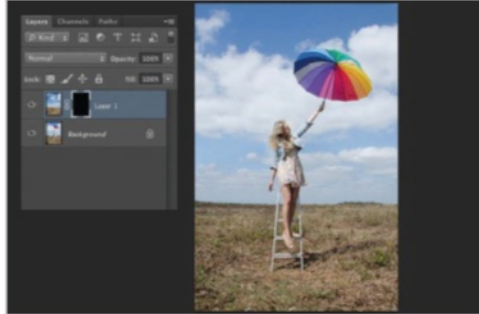
8: Add a layer mask
Add an inversed layer mask to the landscape layer and select the Paintbrush tool with the foreground colour set to white with a high opacity. Click on the layer mask and zoom into your image. Use the brush to slowly paint out the ladder.
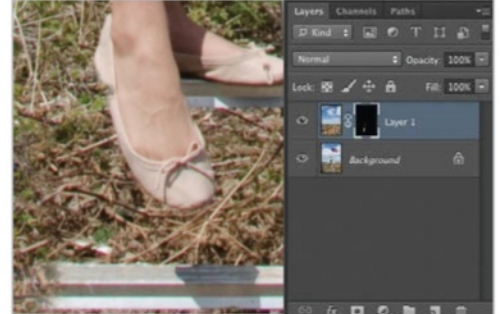
9: Remove the ladder
Zoom in close to areas where the model and ladder meet, use a smaller brush to accurately paint out the ladder. If you make a mistake, switch the foreground colour to black in order to correct. Switch back to white to continue editing.

10: Correct the shadow
Once you've removed the ladder, you'll need to remove its shadow. Remember to retain the model's shadow however, to ensure the levitation looks convincing. Select the clone stamp and work with a soft-edge brush with a high opacity.

11: Clone out
Hold down the Alt key and select an area that is clear of the shadow. Move the brush over the area you want to replace and slowly begin to paint it out. Be careful not to remove too much of the shadow so don't remove the model's shadow too.

12: Merge visible layers
Zoom out and check the ladder has been removed. Merge all visible layers without flattening the image by holding down Cmd+Alt+Shift+E. Now add a retro filter: select Solid Color from the adjustment menu in the Layers palette.
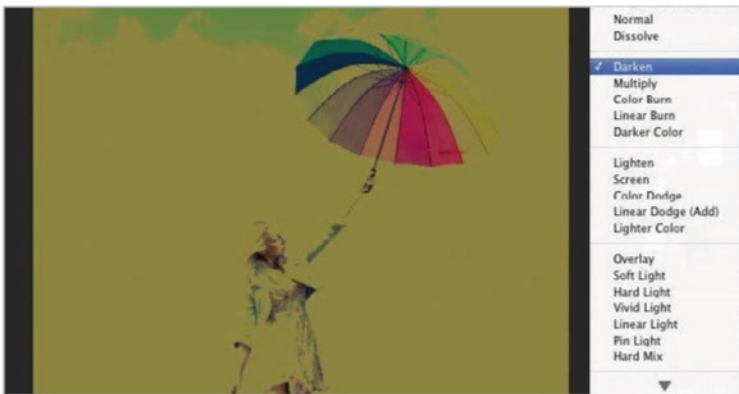
13: Add solid colour
Select a yellow/green tone from the colour picker dialog box and click OK. Select the layer mask next to the block of colour in the layers palette and select Darken from the options. Reduce the layer's opacity to around 26%.

14: Blend tones together
Repeat the last step but this time select a blue colour hue in the colour picker dialog box and opt for Lighten as your layer blending mode. Adjust the layer opacity in the same way as before until happy with the blending results.

15: Complete retro colour effect

Repeat the last step again but now opt for a creamy pink hue with a low layer opacity and lighten blending mode. Before you continue on to the next step, merge all of the visible layers again using Cmd+Alt+Shift+E.

16: Add a vignette

Now select Gradient from the adjustment menu and set your foreground colour to black. In the dialog box select a Radial style and click Reverse with the Scale set to around 176%. Reduce the layer opacity if necessary.
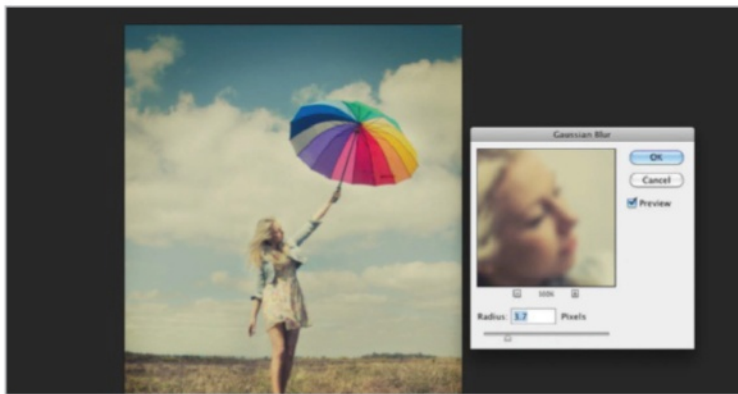
17: Create a blur

To create a retro sweet spot effect you'll need to add a blur to your image. Go to filter>Blur>Gaussian blur. Increase the radius to around 3.7 pixels. Add a layer mask to the blur layer and set your foreground colour to black.

18: Add a sweet spot

Select the Gradient tool with a foreground-to-transparent setting, Radial type with 100% opacity. Place the cursor on the model's face and pull out to a desired width to remove blur from the area, creating a focused sweet spot.

19: Brighten up

To enhance the summery, dreamy effect, you'll need to brighten it all up. Merge all of the visible layers via Cmd+Alt+Shift+E and then select Screen from the layer blending mode options. Reduce the layer opacity here too.

20: Flatten layers

Before you flatten your image, save your shot as a Photoshop file (.psd), to enable you to retain all of the layers for further editing in future. Now flatten all of the layers via Layer>Flatten Image and save your image as a JPEG.

Shoot a zoom burst

Learn how to set up and capture creative zoom bursts in your shots

Info . . .

What you'll need:
A camera with manual settings and a zooming lens
A tripod

The subject
Your main subject can be anything or anyone at all, just make sure it is placed in the centre of the frame so that you can keep it in focus while the zoom burst explodes around it.

The surroundings
Place some colourful objects or a colourful setting around your subject. The surroundings will be the eye-catching part of the zoom burst, so make sure they are as colourful as possible for the best results.

Composition
To capture as much zoom blur as possible, make sure your main subject is centrally placed. The blur will then act as lead-in lines, drawing the viewer's eyes to your main subject and point of focused interest.

Our settings

Aperture: f5.6 ISO: 200
Shutter speed: 1/8sec

Add some flash
You can add an extra bit of creativity by adding flash. If your camera has a slow sync mode, set this and you'll combine a sharp shot with the blurred one.

Experiment
Zoom bursts can be a case of trial and error, but you'll soon perfect the technique. Take the shot then review it on the LCD, looking for nice blurring.

As you are using a slow shutter speed, secure your camera on a tripod to prevent any unwanted blur appearing in your image

Focal range

The best results will come from using a camera with a lens that has an adequate focal range and a wide-angle to mid-zoom range. This will allow for a large amount of the scene to be captured.

Taking the shot

To take the shot, press down the shutter and zoom swiftly in while it is open. Start at the widest focal point and zoom the entire focal range.

Keep it smooth

When you are zooming in, make sure you keep the movement even and smooth as you do it. Try and keep at the same speed throughout the movement and try and stop at the end of the exposure.

Focus it

To make sure the centre stays in focus, select centre-weighted focusing or manually select the focus point in the centre. This will keep your subject sharp, just blurring the edges.

This shot is created by zooming while the shutter is open, so set your camera to shutter priority and select a slow shutter speed of 1 to 4sec

Tweak the settings

If your shot is too bright, use a narrower aperture or ND filter. Use a faster shutter speed if needed – you can get okay results at 1/8sec if you zoom quickly.

ISO settings

If you are shooting in low light, you may need to boost your ISO for a brighter image. Don't turn it up too high, though, as noise may start to creep in.

Shoot dramatic smoke trails

Use a simple home setup to create smoke trail images that you can hang on your wall

Before

Photography in general is a great way to get out and about, explore new places and try something new. However, when the weather is less than great or you're simply looking for things to try within your own home, your photographic creativity can sometimes hit a wall. With this in mind, we have put together this fun project that anyone can do in the confines and comfort of their own homes.

Smoke from any source can make for a very intriguing photographic subject, as ultimately no two photos will ever be the same. Capturing images of smoke can,

however, throw up a number of problems, as it is often almost completely colourless. But taking fantastic photographs of smoke isn't actually that tricky, and the practice also allows you the freedom to get very creative with what you can produce. Although smoke is quite unpredictable in its movement, you can try using your hands or kitchen utensil to disturb the smoke trails and create some interesting patterns.

Getting the best results from smoke photography can take some time, but follow this simple project and you can turn the smoke from an incense stick into a work of art.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Digital camera
Black cloth
Incense stick
Tape
Matches

Shoot! | A simple setup is often the best

1: Use natural light
On-board flash isn't great for smoke photography, so we used natural light. Place the setup close to a bright window and ensure enough light is hitting the smoke. Lighting the smoke from behind will allow it to look separated from the background.
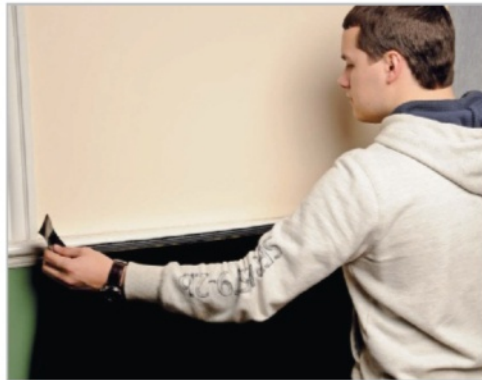
2: Put up a background
We need to pick the best background for the smoke to really stand out. Putting up black cloth, a sheet of A3 black card or finding a dark wall will allow the backlit smoke to be seen. You can even pin up or an old black T-shirt as a background.

3: Set up the incense
Set up the incense stick in front of the black background; the further away from the background the better. Once the incense is lit, focus on the end of the stick as your camera will struggle to maintain any focus on the smoke itself.

4: Turn the flash off
Most cameras will now see the dark background and instantly want to fire the flash to brighten up the scene. However, the flash will ruin the effect we are going for. Ensure your flash is turned off for the shot and allow the camera to do the rest.

5: Choose your settings
You may need to experiment with settings until you get the result you're happy with. Ensure your lighting is correct, allowing the smoke to show up easily, and then shoot. Try Continuous Drive mode for the best possible chance of a great image.

6: Steady your camera
Keeping your camera steady is very important; the smoke can move quickly, so the slightest movement of your camera will cause it to blur. If you haven't got a tripod, try resting your camera on a steady surface like a stool.

Create smoke trails on your smartphone

If you only have a cameraphone, this whole project can be done in the palm of your hand. Just make sure you are close to your subject and you take time editing your shot, ready for the print.

1: Shoot
Make sure you've turned your flash off and are focusing on the incense stick. If you can, try using a faster shutter speed to freeze the smoke trails.

2: Edit
There are lots of editing apps for smartphones. We used ArtStudio to edit out the incense stick and add a bit of colour to our smoke trails.

3: Share
We used Jessops' Print Shop app, which allows you to carry out adjustments and print directly from your phone in a number of sizes.

Edit! | Turn your shot into a masterpiece with Photoshop

1: Crop in
Chances are your final shot is going to be a little wider than you'd hoped. A simple crop in will focus all of the attention on the smoke trails and will remove anything unwanted. Don't worry about the incense stick; this is removed in the next step.
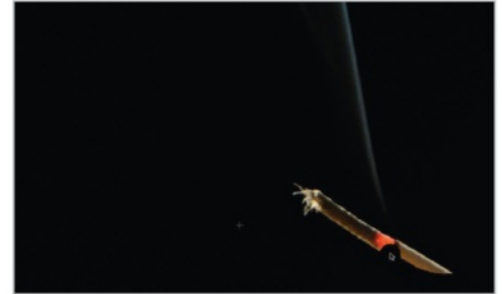
2: Clone
The incense stick in the shot ruins the illusion we are trying to create. In the same way, cutting off the bottom of the smoke trail isn't ideal. Select the Clone tool, choose any area of the black background and brush over the incense stick.
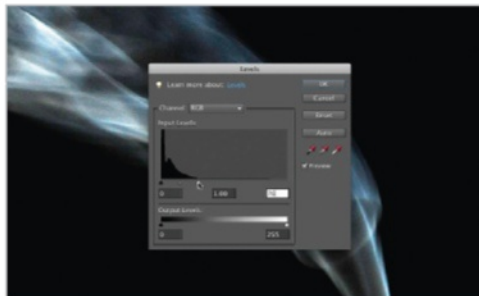
3: Tweak the Levels
To really bring the smoke out from the background you need to brighten it up. This can be done in a number of ways, but the simplest is to open Levels and slide the right-hand arrow inwards to the edge of the line graph.

4: Create a colour layer
If you like what you've got so far, you can just leave it like that. However, adding a little bit of colour can give it a whole new look. The first thing you'll need to do is create a new layer. In doing this, ensure the mode is set to 'Color'.

5: Paint the smoke
Use the colour palette to select a colour and simply brush over the areas you wish to paint. If you'd like to take control over how the colour looks you can adjust the opacity of the layer, making the colour less striking but it will look more natural.
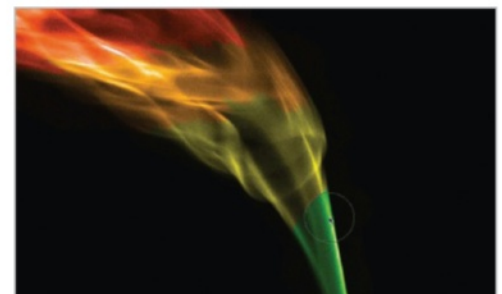
6: Multiple colours
For our final shot we decided to use multiple colours. To do this, you can create a new layer like before for each different colour you use. This will allow you to blend them easier as well as have more control over the way your final shoot looks.

Share! | Get your shot printed for all to see

1: Choose your service
There are lots of online services that provide a range of printing options. For this canvas, we chose to use Jessops. Its website offers lots of different printing styles in a range of sizes. Visit www.jessops.com for the full list of services.

2: Select canvas size
There are a number of different sizes and shapes to choose from, so be sure you have measured up before you continue. Once you're happy with your choice, click on the 'Order' button below your selection to continue to the next step.
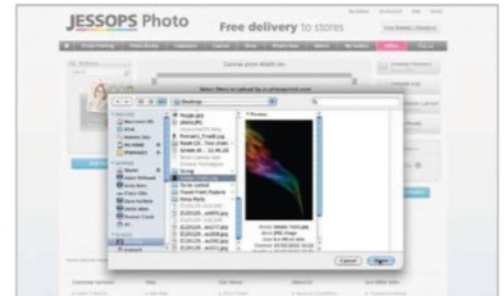
3: Upload a photo
You'll be presented with a blank canvas that's ready for your photo. Click 'Upload' to bring up a separate window, enabling you to browse your computer and select the image you want. Once uploaded, drag the image onto the blank canvas.

4: Edit the canvas
Clicking on the canvas will allow you to edit the layout of your image. From this window you can zoom in or out of the photo, reposition it and rotate it on the canvas. Once you're happy with the look of your print, simply click 'OK'.

5: Preview and order
Once you move through to the order stage, you will see a preview of your canvas. Take note of the four edges of your photo, as it is these parts that will be wrapped around the canvas. Be sure nothing you want in the shot is in these areas.

A canvas print is perfect for your smoke trails

Create photos with light painting

Draw with torchlight and slow shutter speeds

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Camera with manual mode
Tripod
Torch

Choose the location

Avoid brightly lit areas, as darker environments allow for longer shutter speeds and more time for creativity. Also avoid areas with clutter, as you will be moving around in the darkness.

Use a torch

To paint with light you'll need a torch. Use lights with standard bulbs or LEDs and begin by using just one or two. For a touch of flair, cover the torch in coloured acetate or sweet wrappers to add colour.
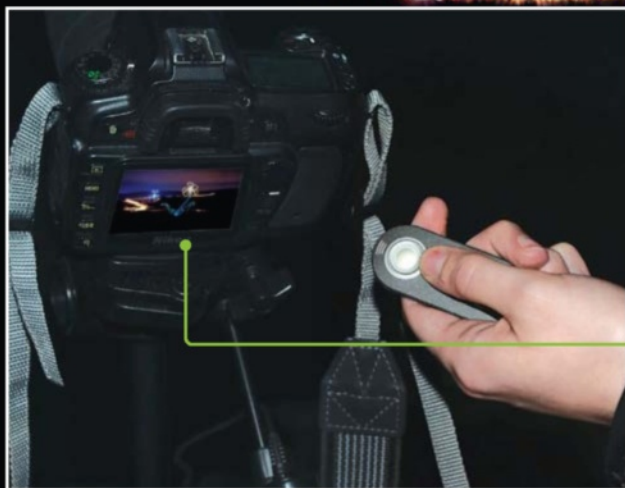
As well as a tripod, you can use a remote trigger. These are both essential to ensure images are free from camera shake

Start off simple

To draw with light, you'll need to move the torch around in front of the camera as the shutter is open. Try something easy to begin with, like a smiley face, so that it's easier to correct if you go wrong.

Use a tripod

At such long exposures, you must use a tripod to avoid getting a blurry shot. Try setting it on a firm surface if possible.

Manually focus

Illuminate the scene where you will draw, switch to manual focus and use the focus ring on the lens until the area you are painting is sharp.

Our settings

Aperture: f5.6 ISO: 100
Shutter speed: 77sec

Use a lens hood

Attaching a hood to the end of your lens will help to avoid lens flare. This occurs when you stray too close to the end of the lens with the torch light.
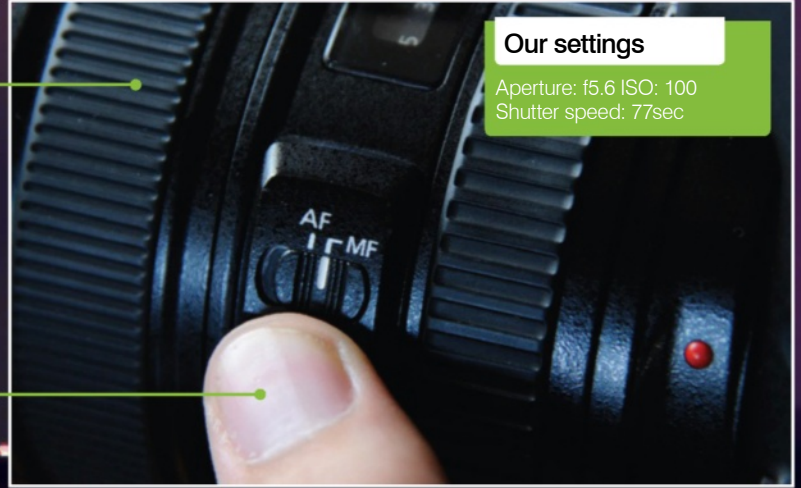
Go manual

Select an aperture between f5.6-8 and an ISO from 50-200. Select a slow enough shutter speed to give you time to paint or use Bulb mode to tell the camera exactly when to open and close the shutter.

Be a ghost

Stand still for long enough and the sensor will capture you. As you paint, slowly move your body to keep it from being fully exposed. If parts of you appear in the end result, don't worry – it adds to the charm.

Dimmable torch

Using a torch that you can dim will help you to adjust the strength of the light you are using on different areas of the frame, helping to create more depth.

Work with other light

Combine your torch light with ambient light such as the moon or city lights, as this will add some mood to the shot as well as make it look natural.

Keep all of your movements flowing and evenly paced. The slower your body moves, the more intense the light trail

Shoot a time-lapse journal

Track progress with photos on your cameraphone or tablet

O2-UK 3G 11:34 89%

back   delete   save

Watch things grow
We documented the growth of our chilli plant, but you can create a journal about any subject that changes in some way over time.

Photography not only allows us to preserve a precious and possibly fleeting moment, it can also help us to see how things grow or change over time. Creating a photo journal is a great way to document the progression of something or someone over several days, weeks, months or even years. Whether you want to record your children or pets as they grow, or track an ongoing project such as a home renovation or personal weight loss effort, taking photos at regular intervals will help to demonstrate the change.

As your cameraphone is always with you, it is a great tool for creating your photo journal. You can set notifications to remind you to take each shot, and there are some great apps available to lend you a helping hand. We recommend Photo Journal App: Once Daily 365, which is available for iPhone or iPad for £1.49/$1.99 from the App Store. As well as allowing you to set reminders, it also lets you turn your images into a time-lapse movie that you can share with others. In this project, we used the app to document the growth of a chilli plant, but you can follow along with whatever subject you like! Read the simple steps below to find out how. Start by taking a before shot to help to show how much your subject has changed.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
A cameraphone or tablet
A changing subject to photograph

1: Make an album
Once you have downloaded the Photo Journal app, open it up and select Add Photo Journal at the top of the screen. Give your photo journal a name and then select the orientation of the images you would like to take: portrait or landscape.

2: Compose your shot
Now set up the first shot in your photo diary. It is important to keep your photos consistent, so find an uncluttered space and remove any distracting objects. Perhaps set up a piece of coloured card as a backdrop that you can use for every photo.

3: Find a light source
If you can, try to make use of natural light by placing your subject near a window, or photograph outdoors. If this is not possible, then either set up a desk lamp to light your shot, or turn on your device's flash to illuminate your subject.
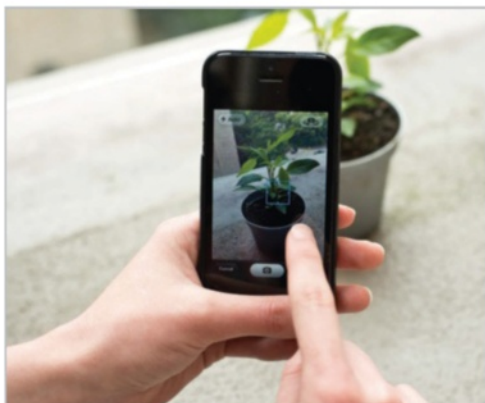
4: Focus on your subject
Once framed, you then need to focus on your subject. Simply tap where it appears on the screen to set the focus point. If shooting a portrait, set the focus point over your subject's eyes; the most important part of the shot.

5: Set a reminder
Once you have taken your first shot, you can set a notification to remind you to take the next one. Tap the Spanner button at the top of the screen and choose how often you want to be reminded and at what time, for example, weekly at 5pm.

6: Take the next photo
When it is time to take your next photo, position your subject in the same place as before and repeat Steps 3 and 4. Try to use the same lighting technique for each photo, otherwise it will look different and appear odd next to the other shots.

3 of the best photo subjects

1: Children

Kids grow up fast, so why not document their childhood to preserve your precious memories of them as they grow? You could use milestones, such as birthdays, or take a photo everyday to really show them grow.

2: Pets

Track your beloved pet as they develop from being a playful puppy or kitten to a fully grown dog or cat. Getting your pets to stay still to capture your shots might be a challenge but worth persevering.

3: Yourself

Take self-portraits to see how much you change over several months or years. This is also good for documenting weight loss! You'll be surprised by the small changes that you wouldn't usually notice.

7: Align your shots

Tap on an image in your photo journal, then select the Align function in the bottom left-hand corner. An imprint of the previous photo will appear over the top so that you can drag your image to realign it so that it fits in with the sequence.

9: Rearrange your photos

On your photo journal home screen you can drag your shots around to change the sequence order. You may prefer to display them in reverse order to create the illusion of turning back time, or simply switch a few around to mix things up.

11: Edit elsewhere

To make further edits to your photos, like boosting the colours or adding creative filter effects, tap the Export button. Tapping the Image button will then copy your individual photos back to your Camera Roll so that you can edit them using other apps.

8: Crop and resize

Pinching the screen lets you zoom in or out of your photo to crop in to your subject or make the photo smaller. Tap the Gridlines button in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen to help you recompose or straighten your shot.

10: Set the playback speed

Tap the Spanner button at the top of the screen to select the speed at which your photo sequence will play. You could display each photo for just 0.3 seconds to create a speedy time-lapse film, or select five seconds to play a slower video.

12: Import your shots

Once you have edited your photos, transfer them back into the Photo Journal app by tapping the Plus button and selecting the Album option. When you have imported your shots, you will need to delete the old ones from your photo sequence.
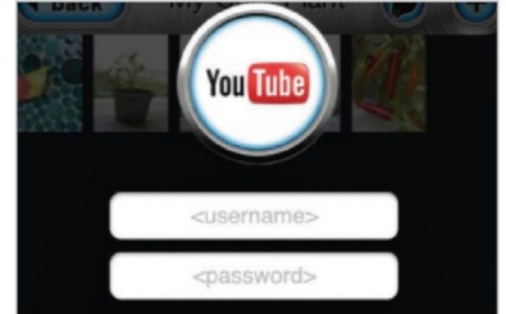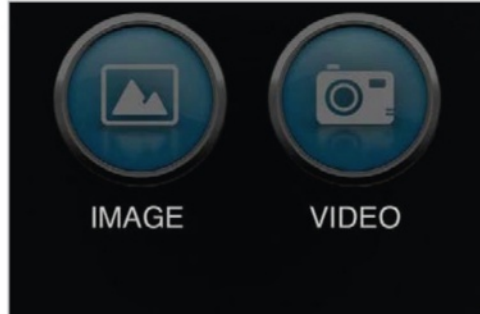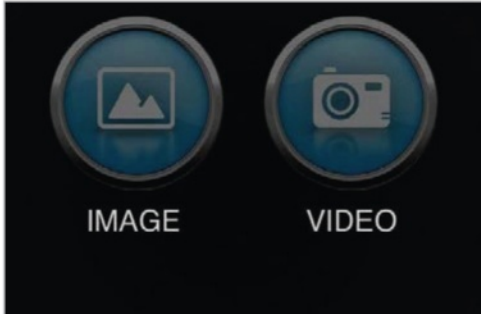
13: Export your photos

Once you have created your photo journal, there are a number of ways to share it. If you would like to share your shots as individual images, tap the Export button and choose the Image option. This will copy your shots to your Camera Roll.

14: Export as a video

Tapping the Export button and selecting Video will save your photo journal to your device as a time-lapse video. You can then keep it for yourself, or share it in any way you like, such as on a social networking site or simply on your phone or tablet.

15: Share on YouTube

The Share button on the Photo Journal app gives you three sharing options. The first lets you post your time-lapse video straight to YouTube. Just tap the YouTube icon and log in to your account, then follow the steps to post your video.

16: Post to Facebook

The second sharing option lets you share your photo journal video on Facebook. Once you have tapped the Facebook icon, click Connect to log in to your account and follow the instructions to share it with your friends.
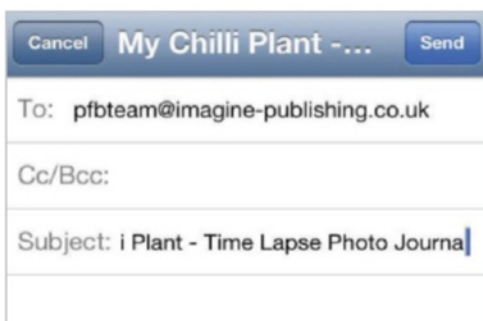
17: Email your video

Finally, you can choose to send your video to friends and family via email. Tap the Email icon and type the email addresses of people you wish to send it to. The video will be included as an attachment that they can download and view.

Use a guide
The Guide button brings up an imprint of the previous shot, so you can line up your current shot with it.

Handy functions
Going back to the home screen gives you plenty of options for editing and sharing your time-lapse photo journal.

Capture the detail
Make sure you capture every stage of your subject's progression so that your photo journal is complete.

Great composition
You can use the gridlines to help you position your subject in the shot, for a smooth time lapse and a pleasing composition.

Get creative with miniature still life

Learn how to play with perspective and get fun, creative photos of miniature models

Add a little miniature madness into your shots by taking a fun and fresh approach to photography. It's not only entertaining to do but it's also something the whole family can get involved in, especially when it comes to thinking up new ideas or even constructing small scenes.

Once you're ready to shoot, this tutorial will help to ensure you get the photo right in-camera. Follow our five simple steps below and you'll discover exactly what exposure settings and shooting modes are essential. You'll not only learn how to get sharp and in-focus results by adjusting your single AF point in camera, but we'll even show you how to use your camera's Aperture Priority mode effectively. Discover how aperture can be used to blur out the background of your images using a shallow depth of field effect, which will help to increase focus on the miniature model within the frame. We'll also cover the importance of perspective, so you'll find out how changing the position you're shooting from can completely alter the way an image is interpreted. Expect to get low to shoot from new angles and zoom up close for a little more magnification.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
DSLR
Tripod (optional)
Filters (optional)

Get creative | Compose and shoot your miniature scenes

1: Compose the scene

Before you begin shooting you'll need to plan your photo and place your models in the scene. When positioning your models in the frame, keep in mind what you want to show in the background and what perspective you'll need to shoot from to frame it.

2: Select a shooting mode

To ensure your miniature model stands out, you'll need to use a wide aperture setting. Rotate your mode dial to Aperture Priority and set a wide aperture between f1.8-5.6. This setting will blur out the background so that the model appears sharp.

3: Choose autofocus

Set your camera's focus setting to single-AF mode. When composing your image, move the autofocus point over the miniature model so the camera focuses only in this area. Press the shutter button down halfway to focus before shooting.

4: Zoom in

If you're working with a zoom lens, rotate the ring around the lens to zoom in close to your subject so they appear much larger within the frame. Using a large focal length on your lens will also compress the background so it appears closer to the model.
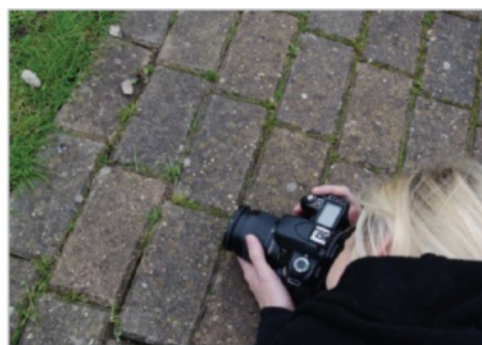
5: Play with perspective

Once you've composed your scene and set the exposure and focusing modes, it's time to shoot. Look through the viewfinder and alter the position you're shooting from to get the best perspective. Experiment and take shots from various angles to see what works best.

Alternative miniature ideas

1: Reading time

Get inspired by what's around you and use it within the background of the frame. Think about adding miniature props to strengthen the narrative too. The model here is reading a homemade newspaper, which reflects the bookshelf in the background.
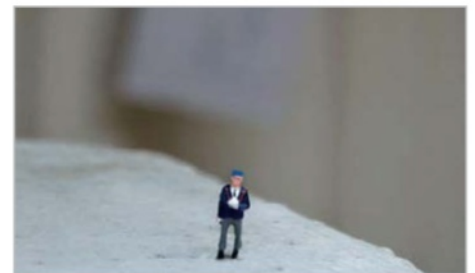
2: Focus point

By adjusting your aperture and the perspective you shoot from, you'll be able to include a lot more within the frame. Using a wide aperture in this image has ensured the focus is on the postman while the letterbox and letter are softly out of focus but still visible.

3: Keep it simple

You don't have to include a lot in the frame. Keep it simple and experiment with ideas first; you can build up your scenes gradually. This model has been placed against a well-known road sign for shopping. The fact that she's holding her purse only adds to the narrative.

Capture a vertical panorama

We show you how panoramas aren't just for landscapes

Turn a traditional landscape panorama on its side for a standout piece of photography.

Make a bespoke piece of artwork for your home.

Panoramas are extremely wide-angle images, generally consisting of a number of shots compiled together to complete the single wide-angle photo. Panoramas are therefore ideal for landscape scenes that are too vast to get into a single shot. However, they can also be used to simply elongate the perspective of the scene.

Often it's not only landscapes that are difficult to fit into a single frame. Even with the some of the widest cameras and lenses, it's still tricky to squeeze everything you want to capture into one single shot.

Commonly, interior images require very-wide angles of view, due to having restricted space in which to stand and having few choices of composition. Utilising a panorama technique is therefore one of the best ways to include an entire interior scene within one single photograph.

Although panoramas are usually kept horizontal, switching the orientation to vertical allows you to take the the simple technique to new locations and capture some truly unique shots. Striking and ornate interiors such as those that can be found in churches and cathedrals will usually have interest at both eye level all the way through to the ceiling above. This type of beautiful interior architecture makes them the perfect subjects for experimenting with shooting vertical panoramas.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Digital camera
Tripod
Editing software

Shoot! | Shoot vertically for a unique perspective

1: Use your scene modes
Many cameras come with a panorama mode. This guides you through taking a succession of images for a finished panorama. If you don't have this mode, you can take a succession of shots and stitch them together in editing software.

2: Choose your settings
If your camera doesn't have a built-in panorama mode, try and take control of the settings. Switch to Aperture Priority and select an aperture of around f11. This will give a large-enough depth of field to have most of the interior in focus.

3: Single point autofocus
Adjusting your AF setting is important, as you want the focus to be the same for each shot. Choose a single point AF to stop the camera from focusing while you recompose, and allowing you to choose the best part of the scene to focus on.

4: Shoot wide
Although not always necessary, selecting a wide focal length allows you to get the most of the scene in the shot as possible. Stitching shots together for a panorama also lets you overlap images, so you can include more than you need.

5: Set up a tripod
A tripod is a key accessory for capturing panoramas. It will help to keep the camera still in less-than-perfect lighting conditions, and ensures you keep the camera in the same position and allows you to smoothly move between each shot.

6: Take your shots
Start at the top or bottom of your scene and focus in the centre of the frame. Take your first shot, then tilt the camera slightly to shoot the next. Repeat these steps to capture the entire view. Turn the page to see how to stitch them together.

Edit! | Create a panorama with Elements Photomerge
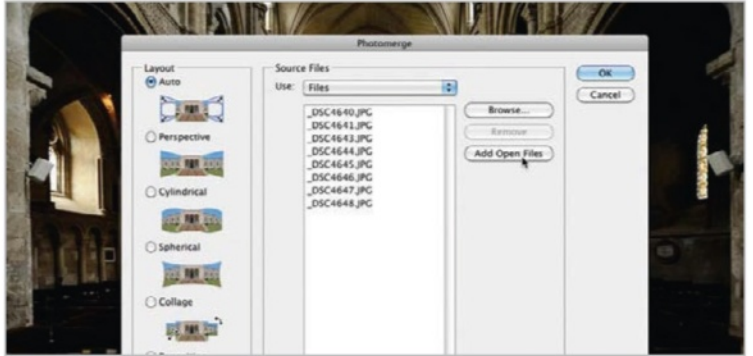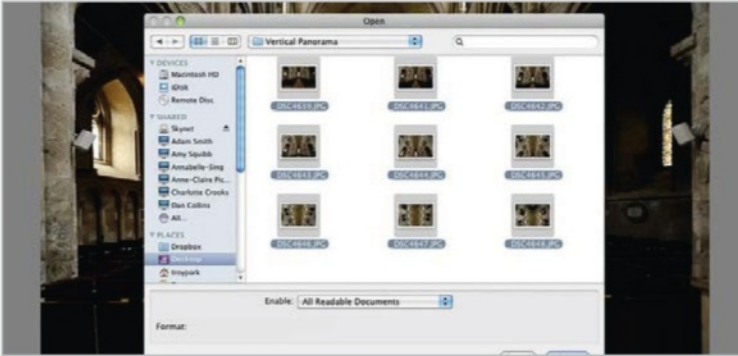
1: Open your images
Once you finished shooting, you'll need to open the images up in Elements. With each of the images open it's easy to see whether they all match colour-wise, as well as see if any of them require any simple adjustments.

2: Panorama Photomerge
Elements has a built-in panorama feature that stitches images together for you. Using this feature you can select all of the images you have open, and change the type of panorama to create. For this panorama we selected Auto.
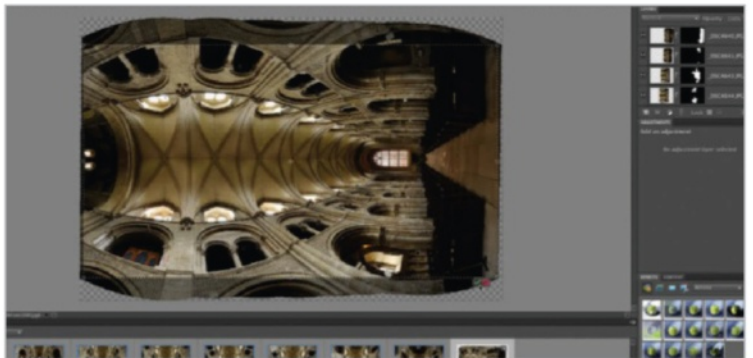
3: Address the edges
With the auto mode selected, the resulting panorama will have uneven edges. Elements offers a function to fill in the edges of the canvas, however this can often look unnatural. Select No to manually tidy the edges.

4: Crop to fit
A simple crop will clean up the uneven edges of the image and finish it off. Select the crop tool and draw the selection. Keep it within the image on all edges to ensure you don't end up with unused canvas space.
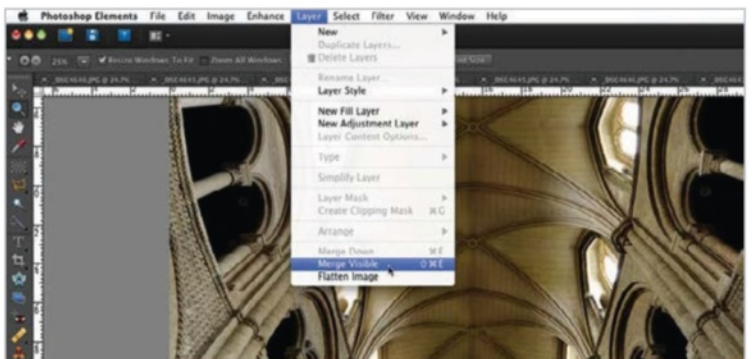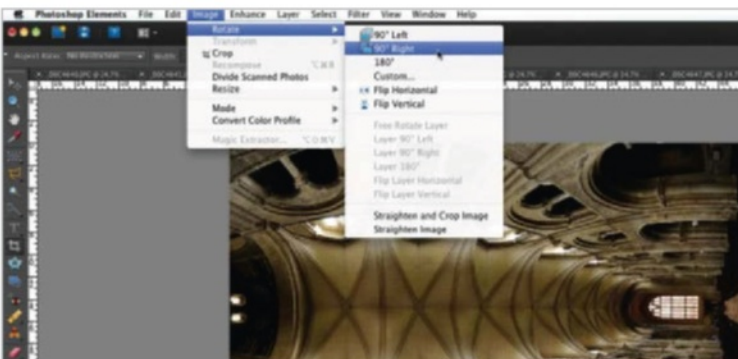
5: Rotate
You'll now need to rotate the panorama clockwise. Simply go to Image>Rotate>90˚ Right to see it turned to the correct orientation. Give your shot a final inspection to ensure there are no errors within the merged images.

6: Merge and finish
When you're happy with the panorama, merge all of the individual layers together to make one single image. Hit Layer>Merge Visible. With this done you can carry out any adjustments to the entire panorama, or simply save it.

Share! | Print your image on a panorama canvas

1: Select your service
There are lots of services available both online and in store for printing your shots. We are using Jessops, who offer canvas prints designed for panoramas that come in a range of sizes. Head over to **www.jessops.com**.
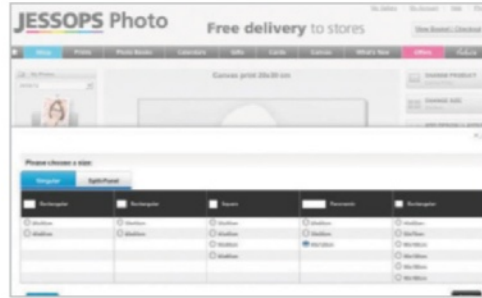
2: Canvas size
There is a huge selection of canvas sizes available from Jessops so you can pick the one that best suits your shot. The three panorama sizes are 20x60cm, 30x60cm and 40x120cm. Simply click on Change Size to bring up the list of options.

3: Insert your image
Using the section to the left of the canvas, you can quickly and easily upload your image to the Jessops website. Then, simply drag and drop the image from the left-hand side onto the canvas to see it automatically fit to the size you have chosen.

4: Edit your canvas
With your image now on the canvas, click on it to open up the canvas editor. Within this window you can change the size of the image within the canvas, as well as reposition it to fit. Check the over-run areas of the canvas and align the edges.

5: Preview and order
The final stage will see a preview window open up for you to have a final check. It's a good idea to ensure no key areas of the image are in the edges of the canvas, as these will be stretched around the wood frame, and will therefore not be visible.
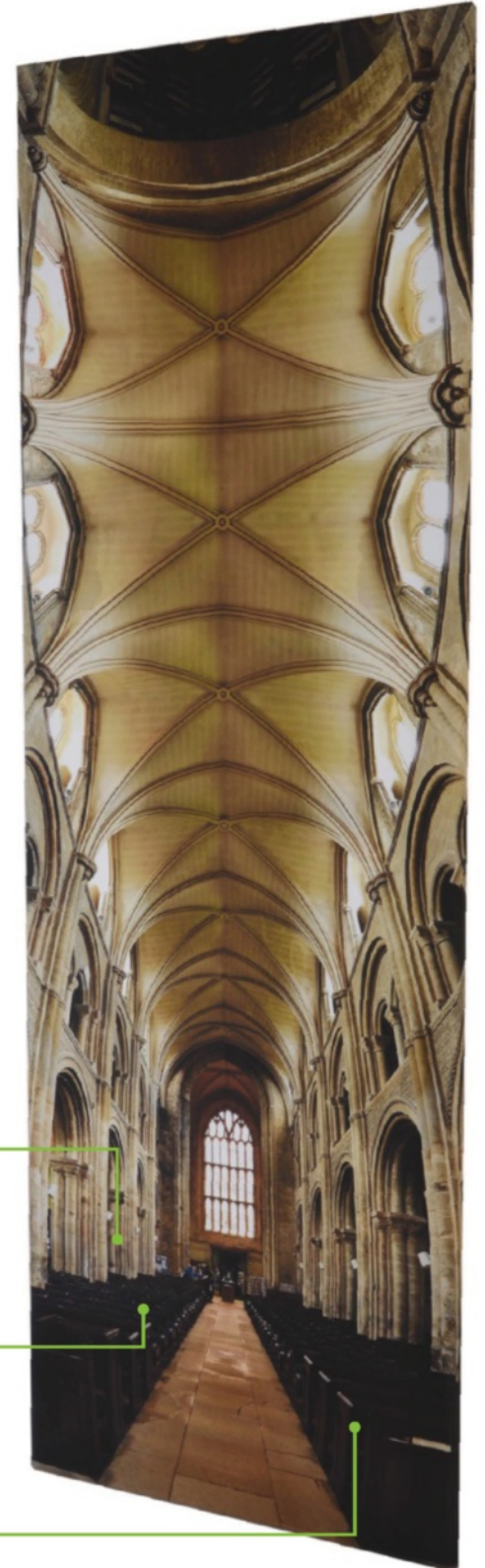
Go large!
Services such as Jessops let you turn your panorama into a longer canvas than the norm.

Be considerate
Many churches and cathedrals can have restrictions on using tripods, so don't be afraid to boost your ISO to ensure you get the shots. But keep your flash off!

Adjust exposure
If your camera switches exposures for each shot, switch to manual to lock the exposure. In auto, point the camera towards the lightest parts then pick a setting in between the two in manual.

Create a home studio

Home cheats for better photos on a budget

Fix shadow on a subject's face

If you only have one light source for your shoot, such as a window or a desk lamp, then the parts of your subject that are furthest from it may be in shadow. You could combat this by buying a reflector to bounce the light back into the shadowy areas. However, if you're on a budget, then a fancy piece of kit isn't the only thing that will work. A piece of white card can perform just as well and is a fraction of the price.

Hold your piece of white card close to your subject, but make sure it is not visible in the frame. Then angle it so that it reflects the light back into the shadows to brighten up your scene. To enhance the effect you can also cover the card in tin foil, although you should be aware that this may produce a harsher light.

The position of the light casts a rather harsh shadow across the models face, which is unflattering and causes a loss of detail in the image.
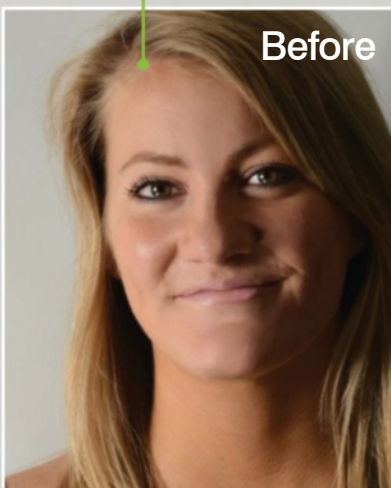
Before

The card reflects the light back towards the model and fills in the shadows. It provides a much more even and flattering look.

Using a home-made reflector can work just as well as a real one to fill in shadows.

Soften harsh light from your camera's flash

Using your camera's flash is crucial if you're shooting in low light or need to fill in shadows in your image. However, sometimes the light produced by your flash can be harsh and unflattering for your subject. To soften the light you need to diffuse your flash, which will create a more even coverage of light. You could buy a diffuser to fit over your camera's flash, however there are some cheaper alternatives that you can make yourself using objects you are likely to have at home or can easily buy in the shops with your loose change.

With a few simple materials there are plenty of ways to soften your flash

1: Use a milk bottle
Recycle an empty milk carton by using it as a diffuser. Thoroughly wash and dry it out first. Then cut the top off using a pair of scissors. Place it over your camera's flash to diffuse the light and create a more flattering image.
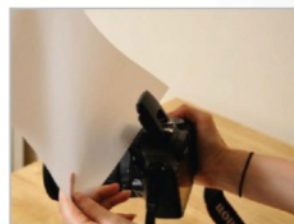
2: Use tracing paper
Place a piece of tracing paper in front of your camera's flash to soften the light. If you have a pop-up flash then hold the tracing paper in place, but if you have a flashgun use an elastic band to fasten it over your flash.

3: Use bubble wrap
Fastening a piece of bubble wrap over your camera's flash is the least effective method, but it is very portable as you can just slot a small square of bubble wrap into your camera bag.

4: Bounce your flash
Bouncing your flash off the ceiling will also create a softer, more flattering light. If you have a pop-up flash, hold a piece of white paper in front of it to bounce the light. If you have a flashgun then reposition it to bounce light off a wall or the ceiling.

Produce a creative colour cast

Sweet wrappers can transform plain images like this

Before

A great way to make a dull shot more interesting is to create an unusual colour cast over your image. This is done by placing colour gels in front of your camera's flash to change the colour of the light. Instead of buying flash gels, place colourful sweet wrappers in front of the flash to get a similar effect. This will also help to soften the light by diffusing your harsh flash light, and certain colours of wrapper can produce a variety of creative effects.

Quick Fix Tricks

Create a wind machine

Try pointing a simple desk fan towards your subject. You may need to position it closer to your model as it will be much less powerful than a professional fan. Alternatively, hold a hair dryer in front of them – just remember to make sure it is on the cold setting!

Keep kit dry in the rain

Waterproof covers and even waterproof cameras are great, but a budget option is to cover your camera with a plastic bag. Use a clear bag so you can see your viewfinder or LCD, and make sure it doesn't cover up the lens.

Substitute a tripod

To avoid camera shake, the best method is to keep your camera as steady as possible. You could use a tripod, but resting your camera on a fixed surface, such as a wall, fence or tree stump will also do the job. Best of all, this method is completely free.

Get rid of distracting backgrounds

It is possible to buy a professional backdrop for your photos to ensure a distraction-free background. However, fixing a large sheet of paper or roll of wallpaper to the wall behind your subject using sticky tac or masking tape is a much cheaper option.

Replace expensive lights

Pro lighting setups can be costly but you don't need to spend out for great photos. Desk lamps can work just as well if you position them pointing down at your subject for a flattering effect.

Capture appealing still-life subjects at home

If you want to get some really flattering results when you're photographing small items, such as jewellery or watches, it is a great idea to use a light tent. These bits of kit are used for product photography as it allows you to cast an even light over your subject from all sides as well as give it an infinity background that looks really stunning.

Professional light tents are available to buy, but they cost a fair amount of money. By following our simple steps below, you can make your own light tent with cheap household items and still achieve amazing results. All you need is a cardboard box, some sheets of white paper (printing paper, thicker card or cloth will do), masking tape, glue, a cutting ruler and a cutting knife or some scissors.

This simple setup may take you ten minutes to make but it gives you perfect, even lighting for a fraction of the cost of a real light tent

1: Measure out the windows
Ensure an even light source by cutting out the four sides of your cardboard box. Flatten your box and measure out each of the windows. Leave a border of about 2cm around each window.

2: Cut out the windows
Use your scissors or cutting knife to carefully remove each of the windows. Also remove the opening flaps on the top to make it completely open. Then reassemble your box.

3: Cover the outside
Cover the two sides and back panel of your box with white paper, using glue or masking tape to secure it in place. Make sure that it's evenly spread around the entire light tent.

4: Line the inside
Line the inside with white paper. Then hang a piece of paper from the back of the light tent so that it curves down towards the front to prevent creases running through the background of your shots.

5: Cover the top
Next, cover the top of your light tent using white paper and some glue or masking tape. This will stop any light escaping, while leaving only the open window at the front for you to shoot through.

6: Light your tent
With one of the windows left uncovered, place a desk lamp on either side, so that it points towards the box. You can also add a third light source to shine through the top window.

Fixes

Follow these simple tutorials to improve and enhance your problem photos

The essential guide to editing

Rescue your old photos

Boost colour
Enhance your golden hour photographs
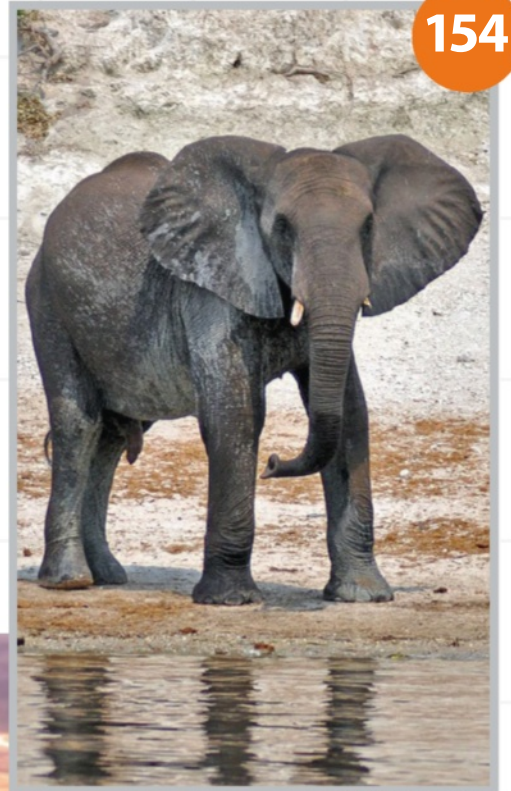
Improve photos
Discover Photoshop's most essential editing tools

162

186

180

The essential guide to editing

Use Photoshop to edit and transform your photographs from average to awesome in the post-production phase of your project

Photoshop is a hugely important part of the photographic process. More and more photographers now rely on this software instead of using the traditional on-camera settings. In the post-production phase you can push your images to the next level and achieve fantastic creative results that just couldn't be captured on a camera alone.

Many factors can let down a photo-shoot, be it the weather, poor equipment or a slightly shaky hand, but all of these flaws can be edited out and corrected as if they never existed. When using Photoshop you only need to master a few key techniques to ensure every editing project looks professional and your images perfect. Once you have these skills mastered, you can really start to develop and grow as a creative.

Over the next few pages we'll run through all of the key Photoshop tools and features that you'll soon find yourself unable to live without. Follow along for how to achieve the best photographic-style effects such as retro and cross processing, high-key summer lighting, textured overlays and even how to create polished high-end advertising pieces. We'll also cover all of the key features and tools you'll need to get started.

Before

Creative editing
We'll show you everything you need to get creative in Photoshop for expert results with your images.
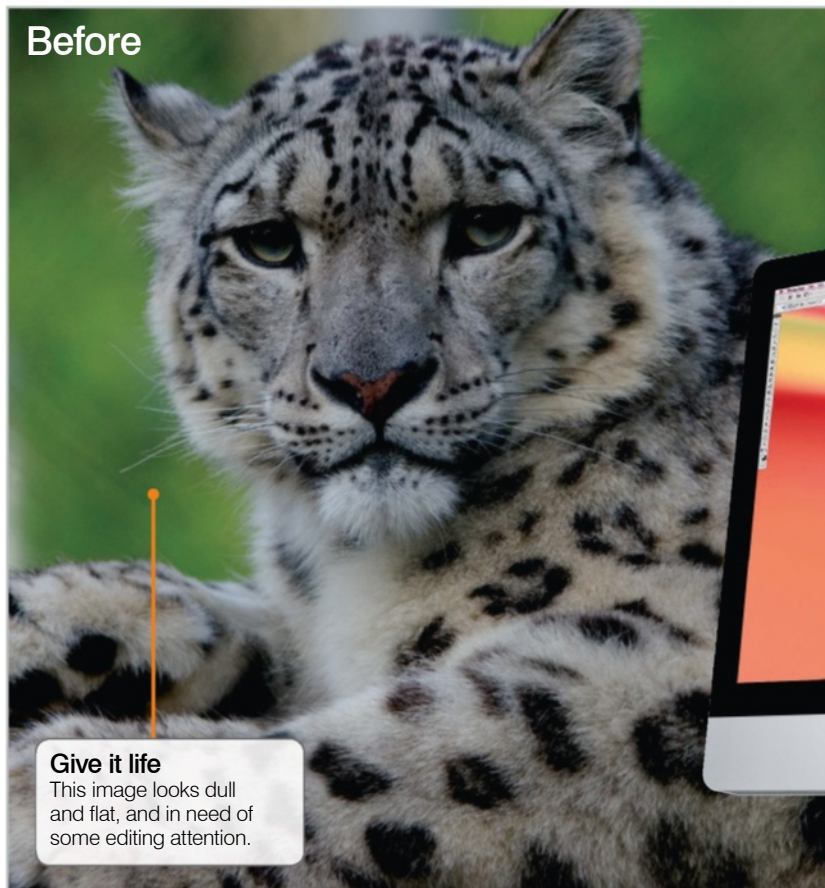
Give it life
This image looks dull and flat, and in need of some editing attention.

Expert images
This shot is now hugely improved, after just a few easy tweaks.

Finding a style

Getting your photography work recognised is vitally important as a photographer. Developing a unique and easily recognisable style will ensure that you get the coverage you deserve, and mastering Photoshop will help with this.

Building on your Photoshop skills with your work will allow you to develop a style that you can easily apply across your entire portfolio. The style you choose to work with will need to suit the theme of your images, so don't be afraid to experiment but also keep in mind what message you're trying to get across to the viewer. Your images don't need to look overly Photoshopped to get great end results. Even small subtle tweaks like the high-key lighting effect can really make your portfolio stand out against the competition.

The key to finding a style is experimentation. Don't be too constrained, have fun and explore what Photoshop has to offer. Combining Adjustment Layers and Layer Blend modes can produce stunning end results without spending hours at your computer. Get to grips with the essential Photoshop functions explored here and you will realise how many amazing effects can be created quickly and easily regardless of your image-editing skill level.

Creative cross-processing

Cross processing is a simple technique to master, involving increasing the image contrast and dramatically altering the colour balance.

To do this we will use a Curves Adjustment Layer (Window>Adjustment>Curves). Click on the RGB drop-down menu and choose Red. Click onto the line adding two anchor points, move these creating an S shape. Repeat for the Green channel then swap to the Blue channel. Don't add any anchor points, just move the top-end downwards and the bottom left anchor point up enhancing the blues in the shadows. Play around with these settings then once happy, set this layer's blend mode to Color.

Before

Curves Adjustment
Adjust curves for the red, green and blue channels to achieve the cross-processing effect

Red, Green And Blue
Move the red and green curves into an S shape and move the top of the blue channel line down
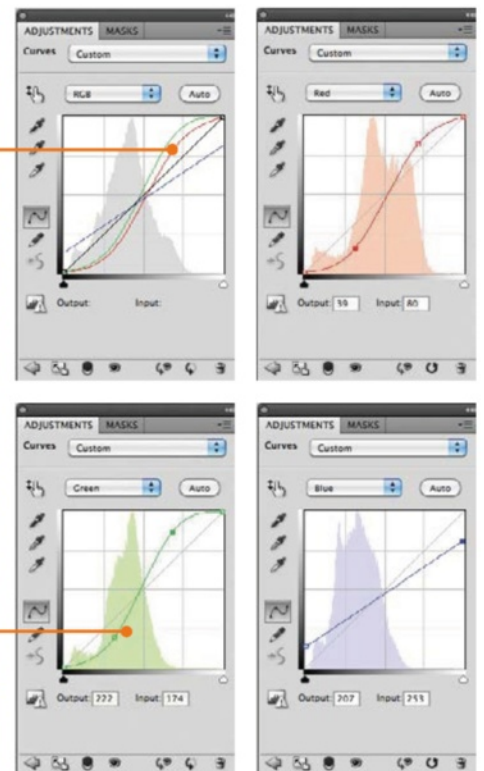
One photo, four distinctly different styles. Experiment with them all and see what suits your style of working best. Who knows, you may discover a Photoshop trick that transforms your entire portfolio!

Clean and sleek advertising effects

Isolate the object and place it onto a white backdrop with a natural shadow. Sharpen and then brighten with a Curves Adjustment Layer. To cut out simple objects, try the Quick Selection and Refine Edge tools. For more complex objects use the Pen tool. Trace your object and save the Path. Make it an active selection and lift it from the Background layer. Make the Path an active selection once more, add a transparent layer underneath and fill the selection with black. Flip and position the layer, blur then use the Gradient tool on a Mask to soften.

Create high-key lighting effects

Duplicate the Background layer then hide the top layer. Click onto the original background layer and add a subtle Gaussian Blur effect. Make both layers visible once more, add a Mask to the top layer. With a low-opacity, soft-edged brush, paint away the area around the foreground object showing the blurred underneath layer, adding a sense of depth. Now add a Curves Adjustment Layer set to Lighter in the top drop-down menu. If you want to strengthen the effect, continue to push the line upwards.
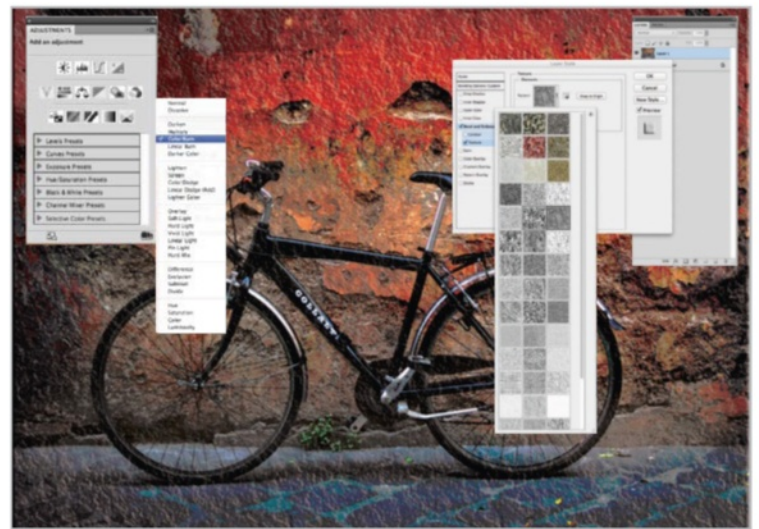
Add texture and Layer blends for depth

Duplicate your Background Layer and go to the Layer Blend modes at the top of the Layers palette. Experiment with the options – Multiply and Vivid Light produce exceptional results, but for this image we have used Color Burn. Double-click on the top layer once the Blend Mode has been applied and check the Texture option from the Layer Styles dialog box. We used a Stucco texture, then on top of the Layers we added a Curves Adjustment Layer, bringing back some highlights and enriching the texture effect.

Enhancements

I n photography, retouching portraits has become a crucial step in the process of enhancing, with the ability to completely transform a shot. However it's easy to over-do it. The best attitude to have when retouching an image is that less is more – lots of small adjustments add up to make a big difference!

Professional image retouchers use a careful combination of Masking, Transforming and Blending modes in Photoshop to achieve flawless-yet-authentic results. As you begin to enhance your images, you'll soon find yourself becoming familiar with the Selection, Warp and Layer Mask tools.

The first things to focus on are the skin and hair regions – once you've perfected these key areas, you'll have the ultimate foundation to work from. The skin is especially important, but synthetic effects can strangle all realism in your image, and so excessive skin smoothing isn't encouraged. Instead, using Channels and a little patience, you can easily work out those blemishes manually. The hair region can cause similar headaches, but once you've mastered the techniques, it's easy to smooth out the strays.

If your shot is still in need of a lift, you can start to manually apply some cosmetic enhancements using existing make-up as a marker, to graft eyelashes, change face-shape and alter eye-colour.

Here, we'll take you through the best ways to piece your portrait together for expertly retouched portraits in minutes.

Hair fixing with Content-Aware

To get rid of stray hairs, make a selection around the edge of the model using the Pen tool. Choose Select>Modify>Feather>5px, then hit Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate your selection into a new layer. Now make a new selection that extends beyond the fringes of the model's loose hairs, then activate your original model layer and press Shift+F5, applying Content-Aware Fill. Use the clone tool to clean up any strays. Further improve the look of hair with 'hair grafting'; using the Lasso tool, select an area of hair then click Copy, Paste and place over the blemish. Hit Transform>Warp to reshape the new hair, and then integrate the edges with a Layer Mask to keep it looking natural.

Enhancing the eyes

Adjusting the colour and sharpness of the eyes is important for creating a unified image. Use the Elliptical Marquee tool to make a selection and then tweak the Hue/Saturation sliders. Now use Sharpen>Smart Sharpen to enhance the eyes.

The eyelashes and eyebrows are essential areas in a head shot, and so filling these will make for an immaculate final image. Simply copy and paste eyelashes, reposition and apply a Darken Blend mode. You can then edit any noticeable edges using a Layer Mask.

Before

See how to clean up and modify images with Photoshop

Apply cosmetic enhancements

To enhance modest eye and facial make-up, create a new layer and set it to Darken Blend mode. Select a colour by sampling the existing make-up then activate the Brush tool. In the menu, apply a 10% Opacity with Multiply Blend mode then begin painting on top to gently enrich the tones. You can also use this technique to enhance the lips. Finally, add in a healthier complexion by applying a Selective Color Adjustment Layer. Tweak Magenta and Yellow sliders in the Reds preset for a natural glow.
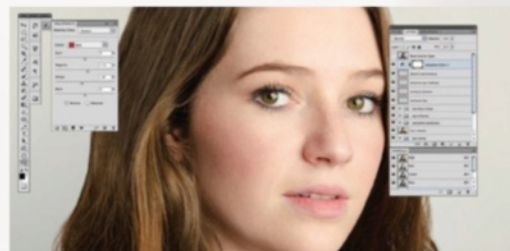
Modify face shape

Making subtle changes to the contour of a model's face is relatively simple and can make a big difference to a portrait. Start by making selections of the face edges and then modify using either the Warp option, or Filter> Liquify> Forward Warp tool. It's best to stick to small adjustments here, otherwise you might end up with some blurring.

The new Photoshop CS6 Liquify tool brush sizes are much larger and can manipulate more pixels, for sharper warping. You can also try straightening the jaw by copying and pasting a selection of this into a new layer, then modifying with the Warp option. Finish up by carefully integrating all edges with an applied Layer Mask.
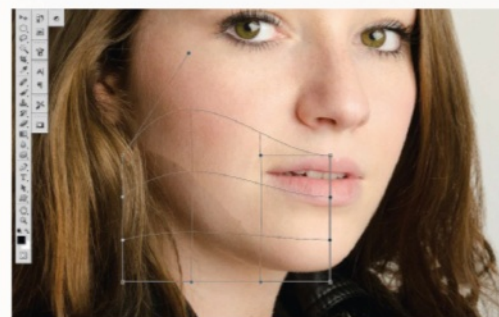
Fixing hair strands

To remedy any stray hairs lurking in your image, carefully apply the Clone Stamp tool, with the Blend mode set to Darken Blend. Zoom in to 200% and sample from even areas to even out the strands. However, this is a time-consuming process and remember that you can only do so much.

Skin cleaning with Channels

The real trick to avoiding synthetic-looking portraits with over-smoothed skin isn't to try and cover up blemishes, but take them out completely, which takes just a little more time and attention. Here's how…

Open up the Channels palette and pick the channel that shows the greatest contrast in light value – Blue in this example. Duplicate your Channel then apply levels to increase the contrast and enhance skin texture. Now copy and paste this duplicate channel into your layers palette, then activate your model layer and use the new Channel layer as a visual guide for editing blemishes. Using the Clone stamp zoomed in at 200% works well. Switch the visibility of your Channel on and off to preview the results.
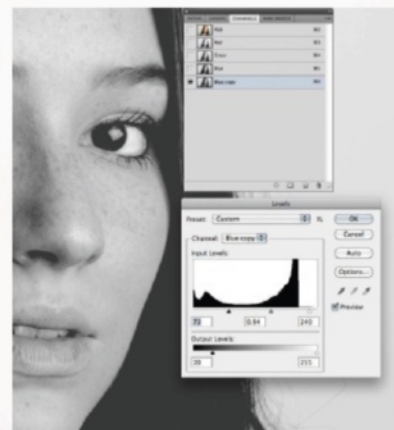
Seamless composites

When you're out on a photoshoot, it's easy to make a mistake. Horizons may be wonky, lighting not set up efficiently or the rule of thirds may be forgotten. But, all of this can be corrected afterwards in Photoshop. You can even merge and composite several photos together to get the ultimate seamless image.

In the mini step-by-step below, we will show you that you can take the best parts of several photos and comp them together to achieve a brilliant, polished final image. No more dull skies, blurred foregrounds or poor conditions. We'll show you how to take specific sections within your photos and replace them with new and improved areas from another photo. Once the composition has been finalised, and the best parts of several photos pieced together, we'll show you how to blend the different layers, match up colours and lighting effects before flattening and saving the final image.

The key to seamless photo blending is to match up the noise and sharpness levels and the colour and lighting tones using as many Adjustment Layers as necessary. The procedure sounds complex but once you have mastered it, you will be producing fantastically creative compositions in no time. For the best results, start building up your image stock library, you never know when a sunny holiday sky or model shot can be used to fix or create a new scene.

When combining images, ensure that the sharpness and noise levels match up. If they don't, try adding an overall effect on top of all layers to match them up a bit more and make the blend less noticeable

Before
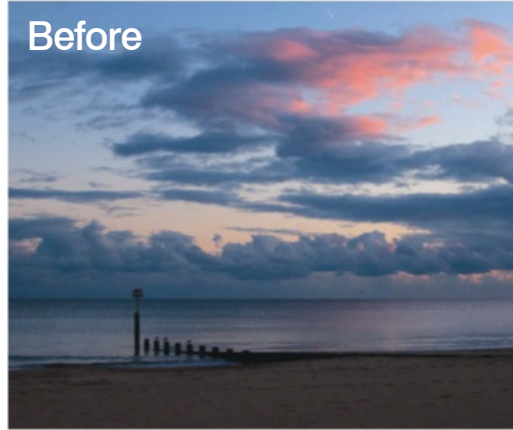
This image is pleasant, but lacks creativity and punch. However, combine it with elements from other shots and we can transform the bland into the beautiful

Comp photos together | Swap in a sky with these simple steps
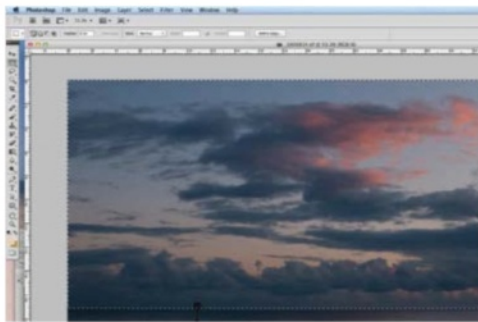
1: Open your images

With your main image selected, source all other elements. In this example we want to add in a new sky. Open all of the images into Photoshop and select the Rectangular Marquee tool, draw over the area of sky you want to place into your main shot.
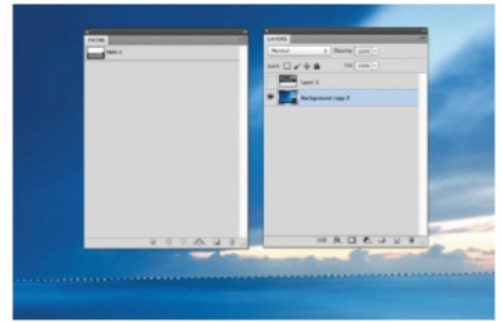
2: Cut out and position

Next, drag and drop the selection into your main image. Resize and then hide this layer for now. Use the Pen tool to trace along the horizon line and land area, save the Path and then make it an active selection. Lift the selection onto its own layer.

"The key to seamless photo blending is to match up the noise and sharpness levels and the colour and lighting tones using Adjustment Layers"
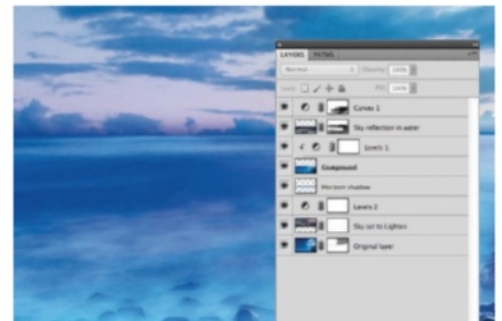
3: Match settings

Make all layers visible and place a Levels Adjustment Layer on each one. Clip it so it only affects the layer below. Tweak the settings to match the two layers' colours and brightness, then match noise settings and add a Curves Adjustment to the top of the stack.

Add in some interest

You may not want to replace the entire sky, just add in a bit more interest. To do this, simply drag the new areas onto the canvas, position and alter the layer's blend modes to suit and then mask away the layers edges to blend the images together.

Tips | Tricks | **Fixes**

Recompose problem photos in easy steps

Adjust composition to create perfect photos using Elements, Pixlr and apps on your smart device

Crop
The Crop tool in Elements gives you options for resizing to a specific size, and also aids recomposition.

Rotate
Turn your image to a preset angle or choose your own. You can even manually drag your shot to rotate it.

Straighten
Wonky photos can easily be corrected using the Straighten tool. It's as simple as drawing a line across your horizon.

Flip
Instantly reposition your subject by flipping the entire photo vertically or horizontally to achieve the look you want.

Straighten & crop | Correct horizons and reposition your subject in Elements 11
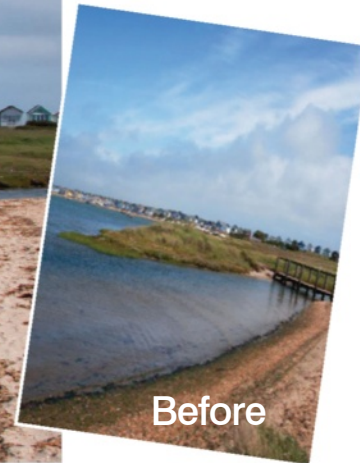
Before
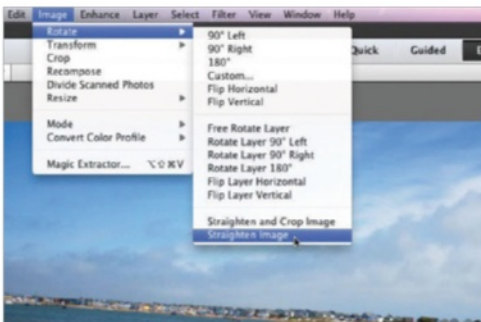
1: Straighten instantly
Go to Image>Rotate>Straighten Image to instantly straighten a wonky photo. Elements will then try to work out where your horizon is and straighten it. It is quite accurate but will occasionally get it wrong.

2: Manually straighten
Click Straighten in the Modify toolbar for three options: Grow or Shrink to changes image size without cropping, Remove Background to remove extra background, and Original Size to rotate.

3: Correct the horizon
Select an option, draw a line across the horizon. When you let go, the horizon will straighten. If you used Grow, Shrink or Original Size then you'll need to remove the extra background by cropping.

4: Select a crop style
To automatically crop your shot, go to Image>Crop. To do it manually, select the Crop tool and pick a style for a range of useful grids: Rule Of Thirds, Grid, Golden Ratio or None.

5: Choose a crop size
To crop your shot to a specific size, select a measurement from the drop-down menu or input your own height and width, or select No Restriction to freely create your crop size.

6: Crop your shot
Now drag your cursor over the area of the photo you wish to keep. When the correct amount of the image is highlighted, click the green tick in the bottom right-hand corner to crop it.

Recompose in Pixlr Express

1: Find your image

Open an image in free online editor www.pixlr.com/express. Click Adjustment and then select Crop. Pick an aspect ratio to decide the shape of your crop. Highlight the area you want to keep and click Apply.

2: Straighten up

Now click on the Rotate button. To straighten up a wonky shot, adjust the Straighten slider and use the grid to help you get your horizon straight. You can also input your own straightening value.

3: Flip and rotate

Next to the Straighten slider you will find buttons to flip and rotate your shot. You can rotate in 90 degree increments left or right, and flip your shot vertically or horizontally in one click.

Rotate & flip | Get a better composition in Elements 11

Before
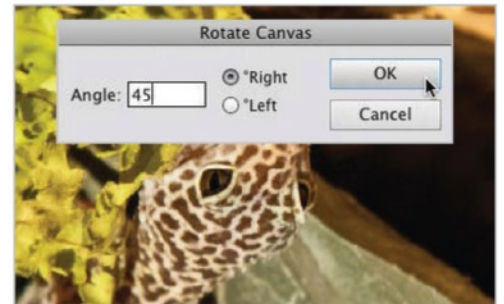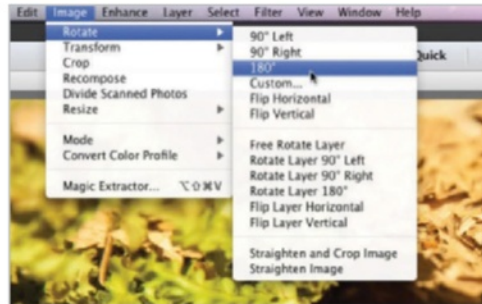
1: Rotate your shot

Go to Image>Rotate for a selection of rotation options. Clicking 90 degrees Left or Right will turn your shot and change its orientation. Clicking 180 degrees will rotate and turn it upside down.

2: Choose your angle

If you want to choose an angle not preset, go to Image>Rotate>Custom. Type in an angle, choose to turn it left or right and click OK. You may have to crop to remove extra background.
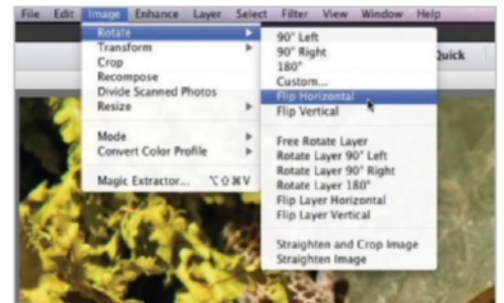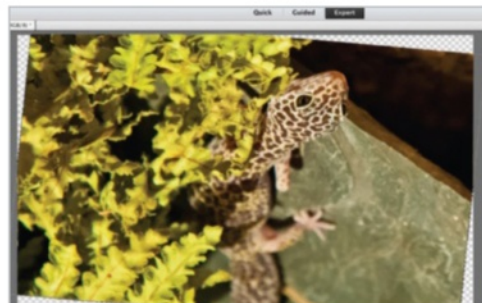
3: Free rotate

Go to Image>Rotate>Free Rotate Layer and drag the corners of your image to rotate manually. You may need to crop in, or create a new or duplicate layer and reveal parts of the background layer.

4: Flip your shot

To reverse the position of the subject, flip it. Go to Image>Rotate and choose to Flip Horizontal or Flip Vertical. Horizontal will move your subject left or right, while Vertical will move them up or down.

Extend backgrounds | Use Elements to zoom out

Before

Crop with BeFunky
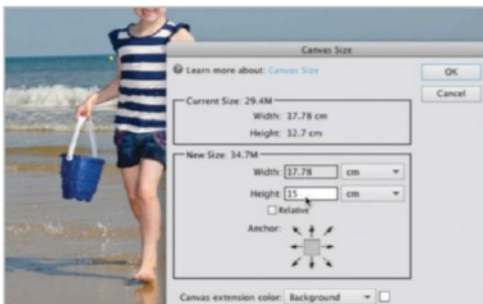
1: Increase the canvas size
If your background is cropped in too tightly, you can easily add more space to the sides to zoom out a little. Go to Image>Resize>Canvas size and then choose your new height and/or width.

2: Choose a direction
Choose which side of the shot you want to add space to by changing the anchor point. Only add background to the sides that are empty. Set the canvas extension colour to Background. Click OK.

1: Make it straight
Open your photo in the free app on your smartphone or tablet and tap the Edits tab at the top. Select the Straighten tool and a grid will appear across your image. Then drag your finger along the slider at the bottom to tilt your shot until it is parallel with the gridlines.
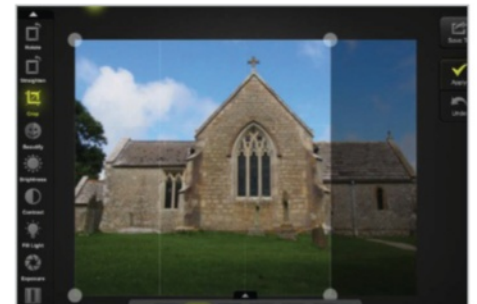
2: Get cropping
Tap the Crop tool in the Edits bar and choose from the preset aspect ratios, or crop freely and decide on your own shape. Drag your finger across the shot to highlight the area that you wish to keep. Tap the Apply icon when you are happy with your changes.

3: Make a selection
Select the Rectangular Marquee tool and highlight an area of the background that is next to the extended area of canvas. Don't include parts of your subject or the blank canvas in your selection.

4: Extend the background
Hold Cmd/Ctrl+T and click inside your rectangular selection. Drag the edges to cover the new areas of blank canvas and fill them with your existing background. When finished, click the green tick.

3: Rotate your shot
The Rotate tool lets you flip and rotate your photo. Tapping the Rotate button will turn your shot in 90 degree increments and then you can choose to flip the image. Save your shot.

Simple ways to
edit your portrait photos

Retouch your portraits quickly with Elements, GIMP or iPhone and Android phone apps
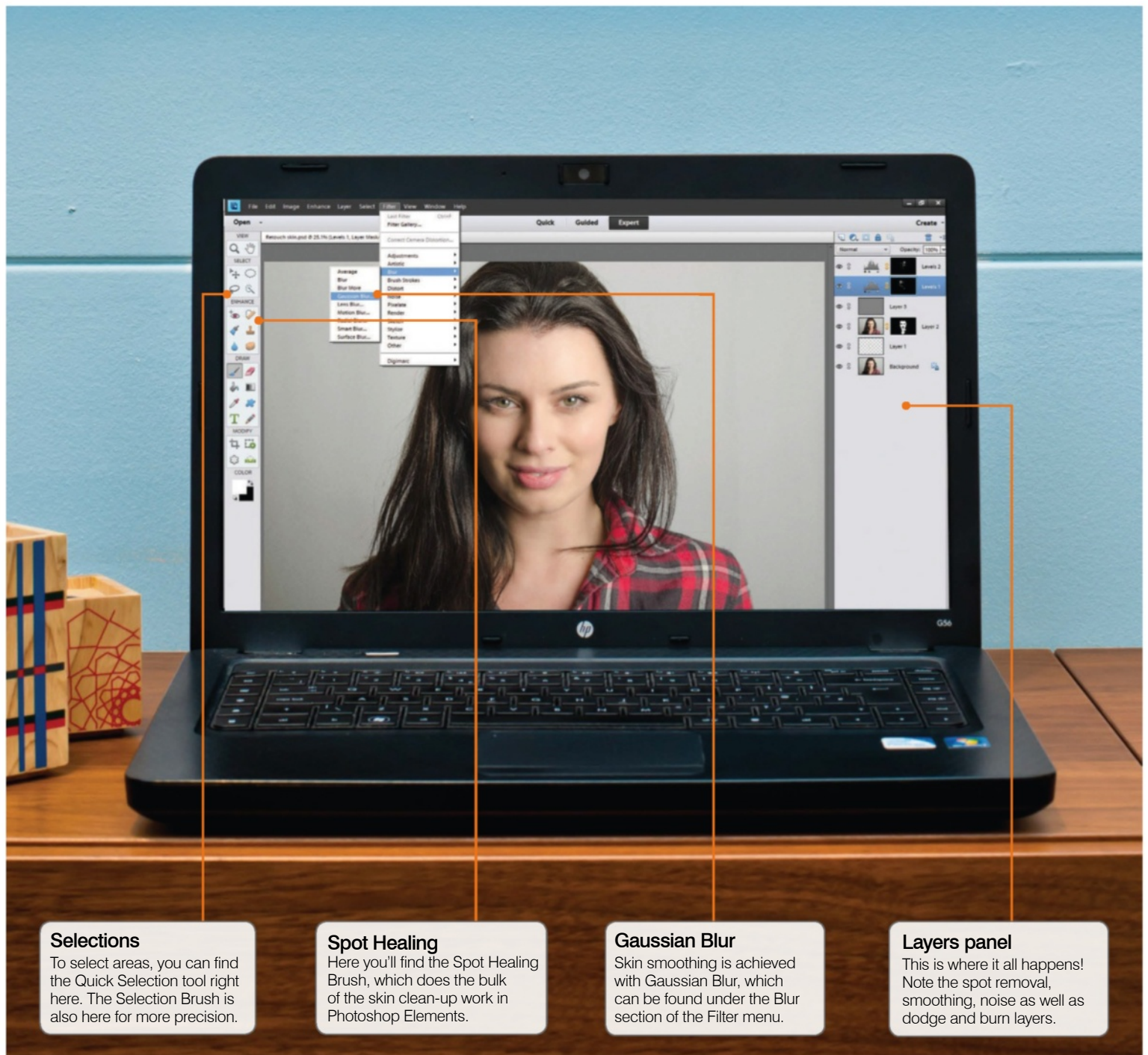
Selections

To select areas, you can find the Quick Selection tool right here. The Selection Brush is also here for more precision.

Spot Healing

Here you'll find the Spot Healing Brush, which does the bulk of the skin clean-up work in Photoshop Elements.

Gaussian Blur

Skin smoothing is achieved with Gaussian Blur, which can be found under the Blur section of the Filter menu.

Layers panel

This is where it all happens! Note the spot removal, smoothing, noise as well as dodge and burn layers.

Perfecting skin | Remove spots and smooth lines in Photoshop Elements 11

Before
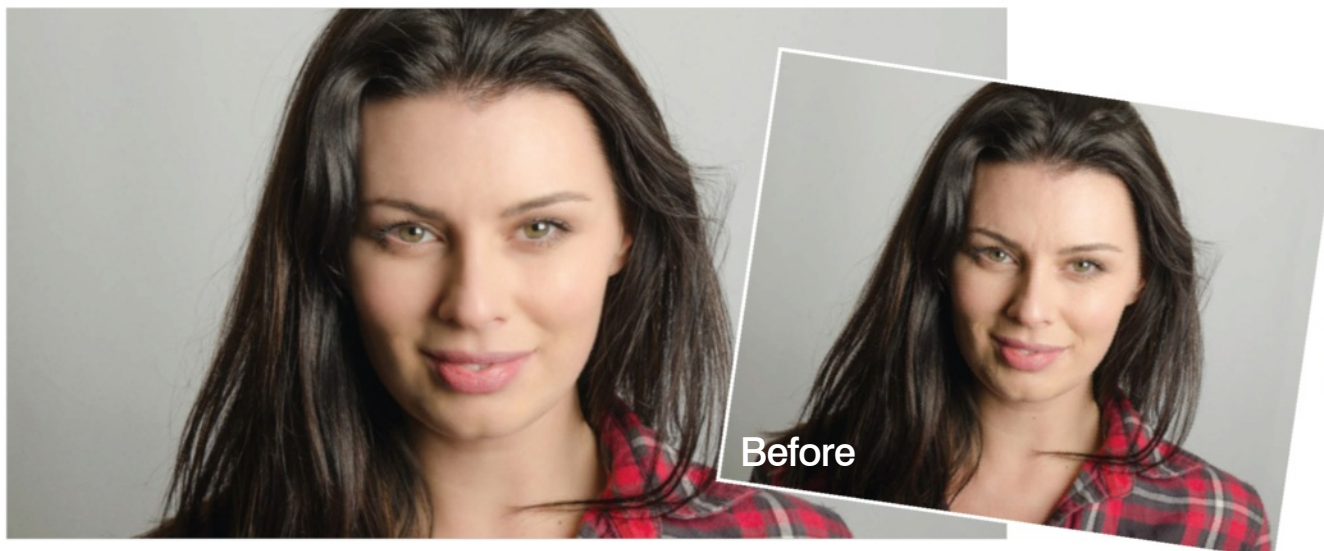
Info . . .

What you'll need:
Photoshop Elements 11, GIMP, Pixlr Express app or use Photoshop CS and PicBeauty app
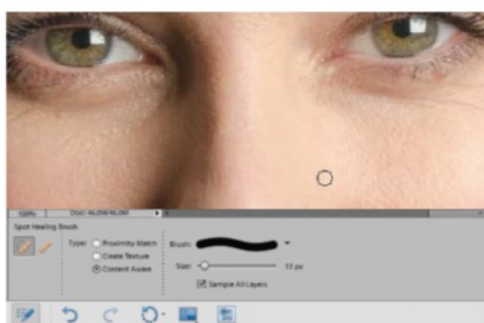
1: Set up spot healing
Open your image in Expert mode, create a new layer on top by clicking the icon in the Layers panel. Press J for the Spot Healing Brush and set it to Sample All Layers. Zoom in to 100%.
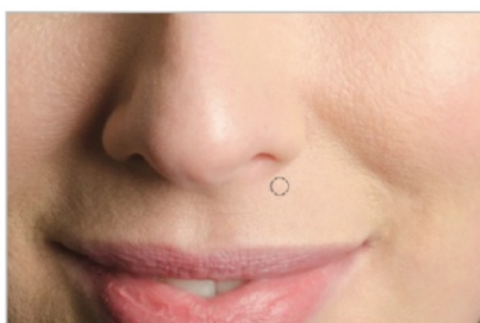
2: Remove spots and wrinkles
Resize the brush to make it slightly bigger than each blemish and click on them to remove. Do the same for lines and wrinkles. Hold down the spacebar and click and drag to move around.
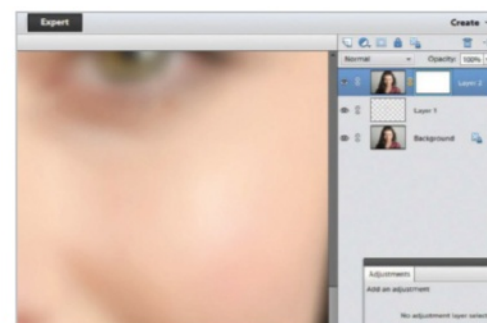
3: Build smooth skin
Create a merged duplicate layer on top with Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E. Go to Filter>Blur> Gaussian Blur and run 10px of blur for a high-res image. In the Layers panel, select Add Layer Mask.
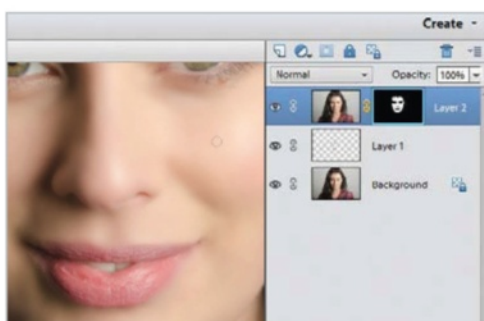
4: Brush in smoothing
Invert the layer mask to Hide All with Cmd/Ctrl+I. Press D to reset the colour palette, which gives a white foreground. Press B for the Brush tool. Brush the blur into skin areas, avoiding face contours.
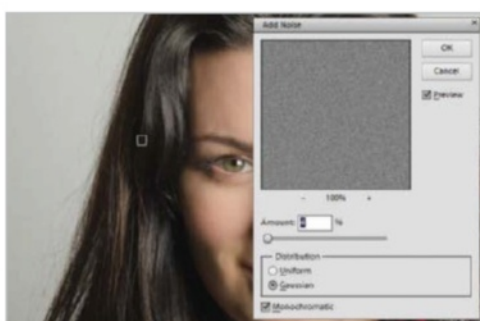
5: Recreate skin texture
Hold Opt/Alt and click Create a New Layer. Click Overlay from the drop-down and check the box below. Hit Enter. Go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise. Add 4%. Check Gaussian and Monochromatic.
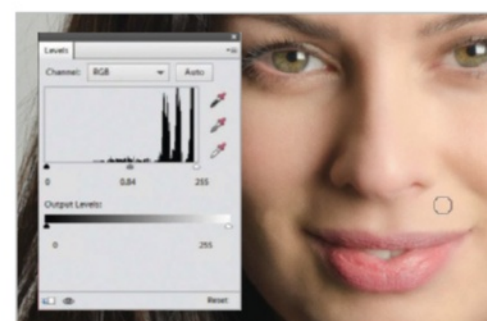
6: Dodge and burn to finish
Add a Levels layer and push the middle slider left to lighten. Add another and move the slider right to darken. Invert both layer masks, then use a white brush at 20% Opacity to dodge and burn.

Beautify with Pixlr Express

1: Find your image

Open the Pixlr Express app on your smartphone or tablet and select Camera to take a shot, or tap the icon to choose a photo from the gallery. Select your image and it will appear in the dialog with options below it.
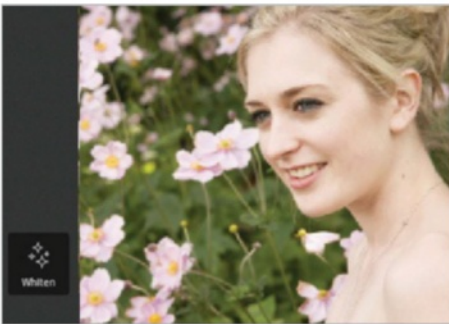
2: Whiten the skin

Click the Adjustment button then select Whiten. Set Brush Size to 65 and change Whitening to 15. Brush into the skin with your finger to whiten. Select the Eraser to brush out unwanted areas.
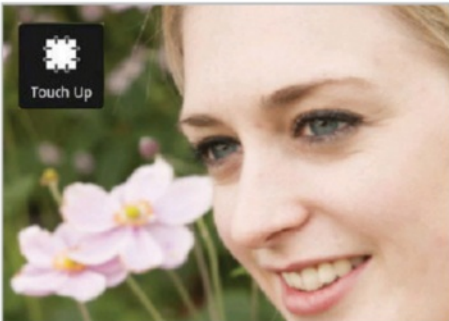
3: Spots and skin tone

Go back and select Touch Up. Set the brush size to about twice that of a blemish. Zoom into the face and click Spot. Touch any spots to remove. Switch to Shine and then brush into the skin.

Whiten eyes & teeth | Master Levels in Elements

Before
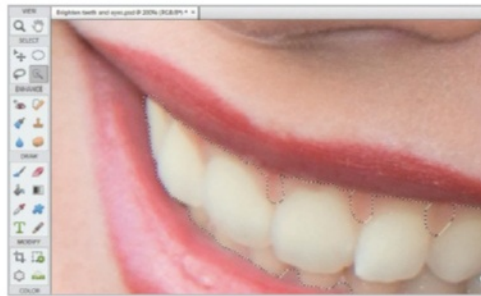
1: Select the teeth

Zoom into the teeth. With the Quick Selection tool (A) click and drag inside to select them, avoiding gums and lips. Hold Opt/Alt and drag to remove from the areas. Add a Levels adjustment layer.
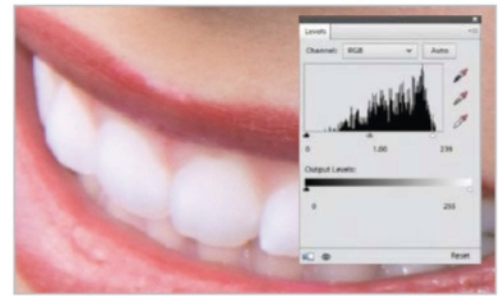
2: Remove yellow and lighten

Change the mode from RGB to Blue and drag the top white slider in. Switch back to RGB and repeat (to about setting 240). Use a black brush to remove the adjustment from unwanted areas.
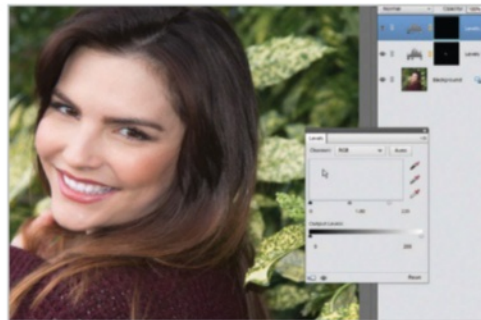
3: Lighten the whites

To lighten the eyes, add another Levels adjustment layer. Drag the top white slider in to about setting 220 to lighten the whites. Invert the mask using Cmd/Ctrl+I to Hide All for the adjustment layer..
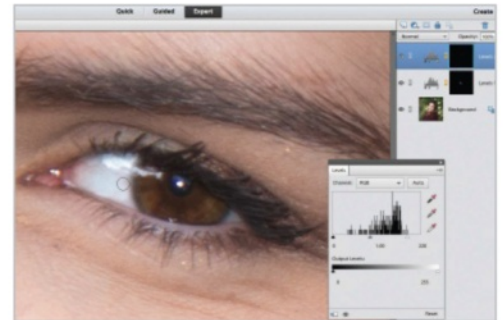
4: Focus the adjustments

Zoom into the eyes and select the Brush tool, press D to make white the foreground colour. Adjust the brush size and brush the adjustment into both eyes. Switch to black (X) to cover mistakes.

Sharpen eyes | Use Elements to bring them into focus

Before
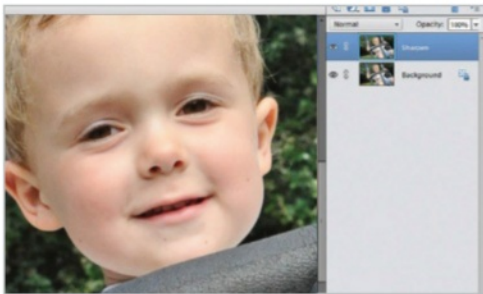
1: Create duplicate layer
Open your image and zoom in close to the eyes. Duplicate the Background layer by dragging it to the Create a New Layer button at the top of the Layers panel. Rename the layer 'Sharpen'.

2: Apply an Unsharp Mask
With the top layer active, go to Enhance>Unsharp Mask. Set Radius to 0.5px, leave Threshold at 1 and push up the Amount slider to suit. You'll need a high setting with the low radius. We used 350%.

3: Add a layer mask
Add a layer mask and invert it using Cmd/Ctrl+I to Hide All and remove the effect temporarily. Press D to reset the colour palette and create a white foreground, then press B for the Brush tool.

4: Focus the sharpening
Take a soft brush at 100% Opacity, resize it and then brush the adjustment into the eyes. Press X to switch to black to brush out a mistake. Use layer opacity to reduce the strength if need be.

Skin retouches using GIMP

1: Set up healing
Duplicate the Background layer by clicking the button in the Layers panel. Change the zoom mode to 100%. Select the Healing tool (H) and resize it to slightly bigger than the spots on the skin.

2: Remove blemishes
Hold down Cmd/Ctrl and click on a clean section of skin to set it as the source area. Then, move around the image, clicking to remove any spots and blemishes, resizing the brush as needed. Make a duplicate of the top layer.
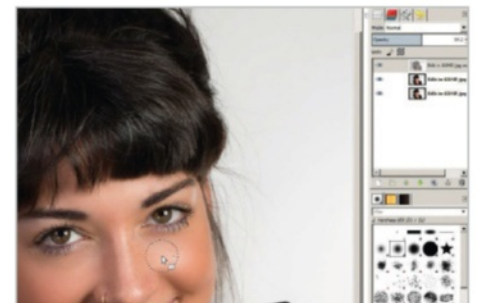
3: Smooth the skin
Head to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set Horizontal and Vertical to 30px. Then Ctrl/right-click the duplicate top layer and select Add Alpha Channel. Next, select the Eraser brush, hold Opt/Alt and carefully brush out the rough skin.

Fix animal compositions

Use subtle adjustments and cropping to perfect composition and tone

Taking photos of elephants, or any other creature on a safari or at the zoo for that matter, can prove very tricky. Getting close enough for that perfect picture is often just out of reach, and images never usually turn out looking quite as lively or spectacular as you had hoped for. Also, getting the composition right first time can be tricky with moving subjects. But that's why Photoshop Elements is around to make these improvements for us!

We look towards the Crop tool to firstly make the composition of the image much better. Just by simply cutting out excess background, we can make the shot look instantly more visually appealing. But it shouldn't end there, and so we look to the helpfulness of Shadows/Highlights adjustment to turn this rather dull and lifeless animal photo on its head.

Get started by loading up your own safari pictures, or bring it closer to home and use a photo of your pet.

Before

Get a better view | Use the Crop tool to make the composition more engaging

1: Find tool
The Crop tool is found in Photoshop Elements's Expert mode. Press C to head straight to it. There are a number of settings with the tool, but we want to be as free as possible when recomposing the image to keep everything in the picture.

2: Position crop box
Start with the top-left corner of the photo and click and drag the cropping box to cover the animals. Finish up in the bottom-right corner of the image. Look to crop out the background areas that don't add any interest to the scene.
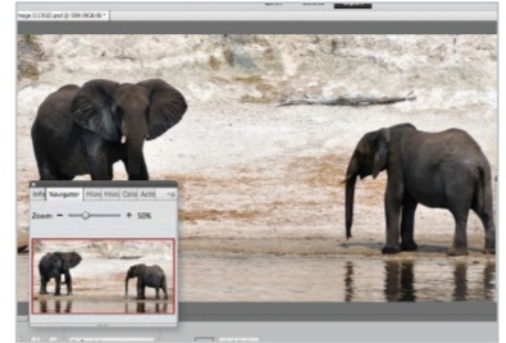
3: Crop in tight
Crop in tight to the animals. Leave a gap of 1-2cm around the sides, but leave more room at the top and bottom parts of the image. Drag the cropping area to adjust its position. Press Enter once you're happy to confirm the changes.

Bring out details | Now it's been cropped, it's time to take the image to another level!
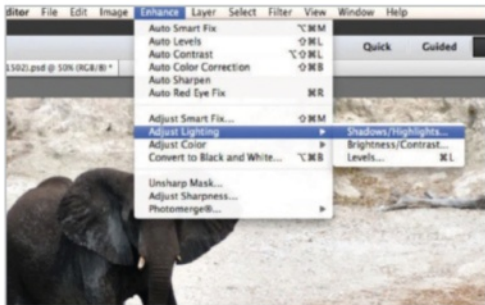
1: Shadows/Highlights
Because the elephants in this picture were far away, they lack detail and look dark. To improve all this in one go, head to the top toolbar and Enhance menu>Adjust Lighting>Shadows/Highlights to open the Settings dialog box.
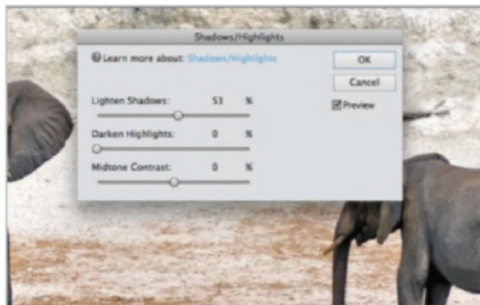
2: Control shadows
You should see an instant improvement to the midtones and details just by loading the Shadows/Highlights adjustment. Increase the Lighten Shadows slider to between 50-60% to bring life back into the image.
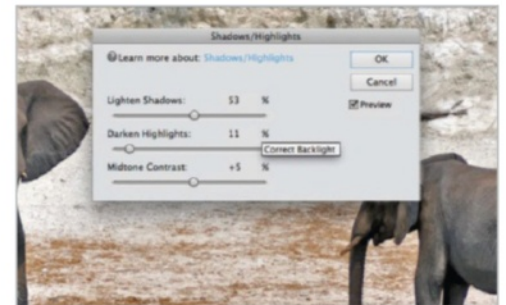
3: Contrast and texture
If your image lacks detail, increase the Darken Highlights slider to 10%. This will greatly improve textures and lighting. The Midtones Contrast can be boosted slightly to 5%, but changes here will be subtle. Hit OK to finish the transformation.

Lighten Shadows
This is where it all begins to look much better, as the Lighten Shadows will reveal detail you never thought could be there.

Darken Highlights
Carefully boost the Darken Highlights slider to bring back details in the brighter parts of your image – great for building up contrast.
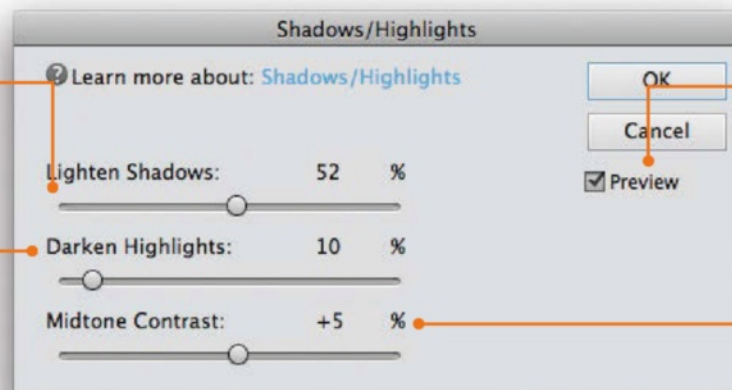
Preview results
Flick between viewing your image with or without the changes applied using the Preview box.

Midtones Contrast
This doesn't get as much attention as the other sliders, but will complete the effect by bringing back details in the Midtones.

Retouch your underwater photos

Restore colour and contrast to your subaquatic images for stunning results

Shooting underwater can offer some very unique opportunities for adventurous photographers, from capturing colourful marine life to dramatic shipwrecks. However, one of the main problems encountered by underwater photographers is trying to capture an image without extreme loss of colour and contrast. The deeper the photograph is taken, the more significant the problem. This applies horizontally as well as vertically – if your subject is too far away, it will appear colourless, with some experts suggesting that anything more than three feet away is unsatisfactory. This is due to the longer wavelengths of light such as red and orange being absorbed by the water, giving everything a blue/green colour cast. The deeper you go,

the more blue everything will appear (even to the naked eye) until eventually blue is the only colour recorded.

Professional undersea photographers overcome these issues by getting as close to their subjects as possible, using a wide-angle or Macro lens for a close focus, or by using flash as a fill light to restore the colour that is lost to the depths. If your images are still colour-depleted, it's still possible to restore them using Photoshop, which is what we're going to demonstrate in this tutorial. Correcting underwater photos is quite simple. However, due to a lack of an accurate grey point which can normally be used to correct colours using the Levels tool, underwater photos need to be manually corrected. Follow these simple steps to find out how.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Photoshop CS
Source files available on the disc

Before
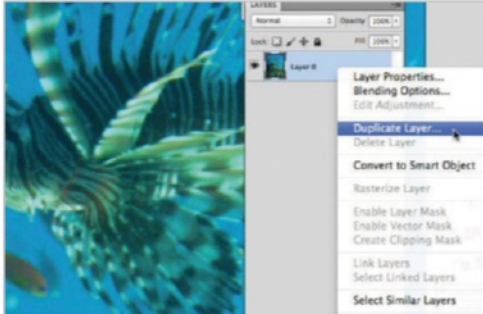
1: Duplicate layer

Open up your underwater photo in Adobe Photoshop and unlock the image by double-clicking on the Background layer within the Layers palette. Select the layer, hold down the Command key and select Duplicate Layer.

2: Eyedropper

Check the colour balance of your photo using the Eyedropper tool. Hover it over the image, watch the info palette – the values should all be roughly equal. Here we can see that the image is lacking red, due to the light being absorbed by water.
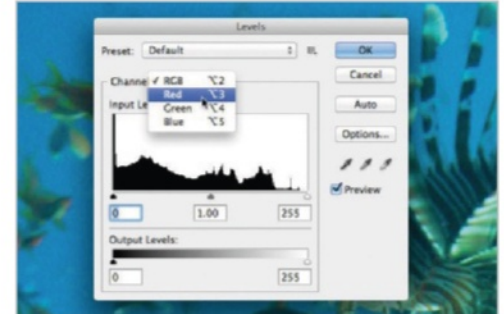
3: Levels

Go to Images>Adjustments>Levels for the Levels tool. Normally, a cast can be corrected using the grey dropper, but due to a lack of grey in the image to sample, we'll do it manually. From the Channel drop-down menu, select Red.
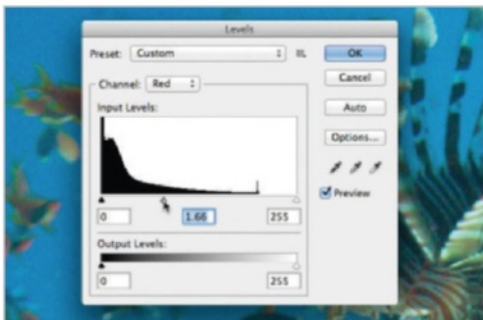
4: Move the slider

Click on the Midtones slider and move it gently to the left to increase the amount of red in the image. Ensure that the Preview option is selected to see the changes as you make them. When you're happy with the results, click OK.
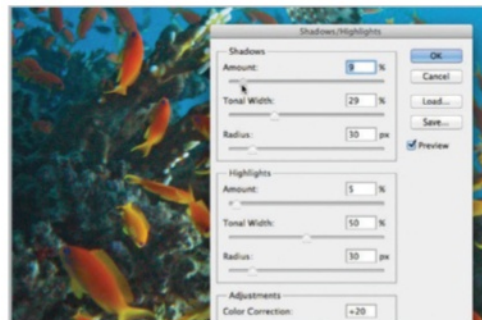
5: Shadows/Highlights

This is a very useful tool for bringing out detail in darker areas of your image, such as the coral. It can also bring back detail within any highlights. Move the Shadows slider carefully and watch the coral come back to life. Click OK.
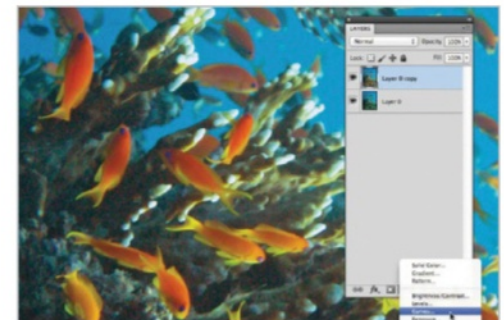
6: Adjustment layers

Adjustment layers are a great, nondestructive way of manipulating your image. Using Curves will boost contrast without losing detail so select the Adjustment Layer drop-down menu at the bottom of the Layers palette and pick Curves.
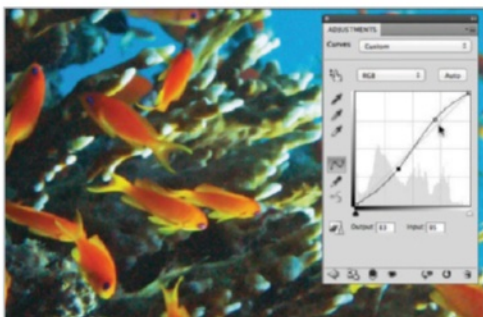
7: Curves

To boost the contrast of your image, you need to create an S shape with the diagonal line within the Curves palette. Clicking and dragging upwards will create the top point, then repeat at the bottom. Play around until you get the desired effect.

8: Unsharp Mask

Getting a sharp image is another common problem underwater, especially if visibility is low and you're using autofocus. For post-production sharpening, go to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask and use the settings above.

9: Cloning

Finally, bubbles, plankton and general debris can give the appearance of Noise within the image, making it look cloudy and dirty. Zoom in close and use the clone tool with a very small brush to clean up any spots for a brighter, underwater shot.

Fixes to improve close-ups

Discover our selection of the top techniques for editing macro and close-up images in Photoshop

Adjustmnet layers
These feature as their own layers and contain all the adjustments you need for improving your close-ups. Manipulate colour, tone and contrast.

History palette
History states are records of the editing process, so you can jump back at any time to undo mistakes or compare revisions.

Layer masks
Used with adjustment layers, masks look to hide parts of an effect. This makes selectively editing your close-up subjects easier.

Adjust exposure | Take control of lighting with Shadows/Highlights

Before
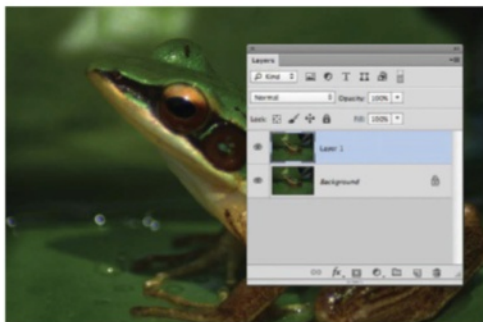
1: Non-destructive edits
Make a copy of your Background layer by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+J. This will let you make non-destructive edits. Then in the Image menu, go to Adjustment>Shadows/Highlights.
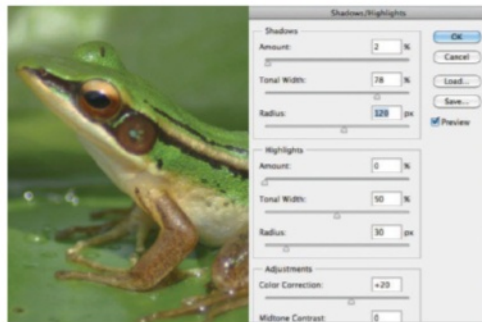
2: Shadow details
Drop the Shadows Amount slider until the lighter parts of your image look correct. Boost the Shadow's Tonal Width slider to keep the detail in darker parts.
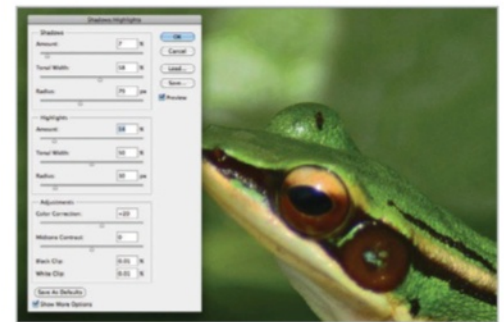
3: Control highlights
To make the exposure more lively, increase the Highlight Amount slider. Keep it around 15% to prevent distortion. This slider will help to control the contrast before you adapt the midtones.
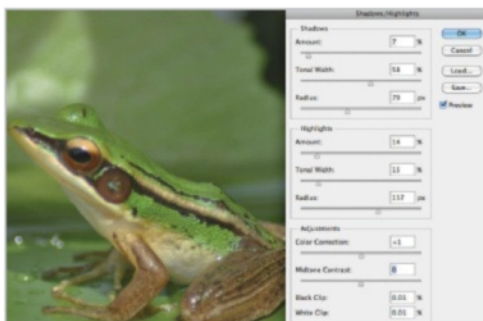
4: Reduce Tonal Width
Reduce the Highlight's Tonal Width to about 15% and boost up the Radius slider for Highlights to 157px. This will help to balance the overall tonal ranges. Experiment for the best results.

5: Colour correction
Use the Color Correction slider to control the strength of colour. Increasing this to about +20-30 should be enough. Slide the Midtone Contrast adjustment up to +60 to bring the effect together.
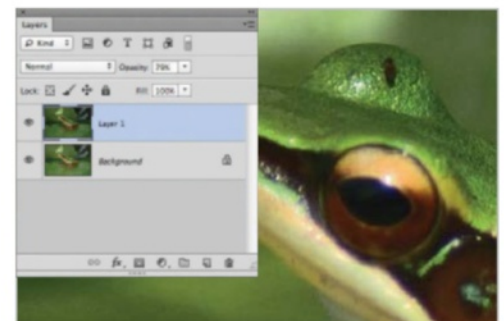
6: Adapt opacity
Hit OK in the adjustment and go to your Layers palette. You can lower the strength of the effect by controlling the Opacity slider. Set this to 50% to soften the changes made to Shadows/Highlights.

Tips | Tricks | Fixes

Recompose your shots

1: Unconstrained crop
The Crop tool will help you to create the best possible composition. If using it, select Unconstrained in the top Options bar to control the height and width of the cropping boundary for your image.
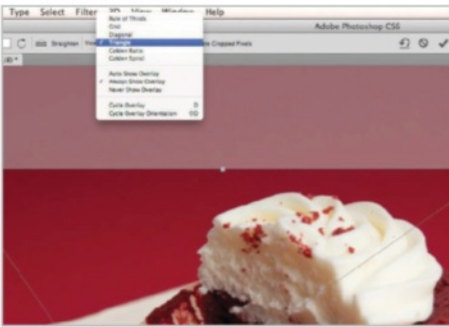
2: Choose guide
The Photoshop CS6 Crop tool has several helpful guidelines and patterns to make for an even better composition. The Rule of Thirds, Golden Ratio and Triangle are just some of the possibilities.

3: Try a preset
Use the grid overlay to match up intersections with the main focal points on your subject. Use the boxes along the edges to readjust, crop in tight to your subject and cut out excess background.

Boost colour | Call up the Hue/Saturation adjustment

Before
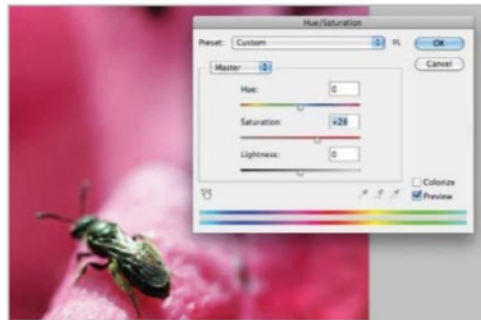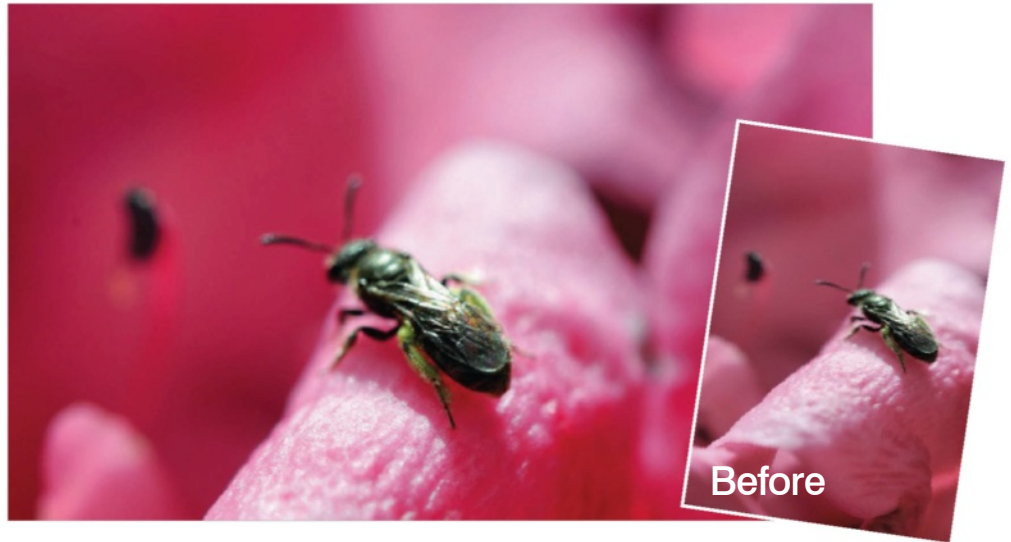
1: Load adjustment
Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. With the adjustment set to Master, all image colours will be affected by changes. Increase the Saturation slider to +15-30 for a more vibrant image.
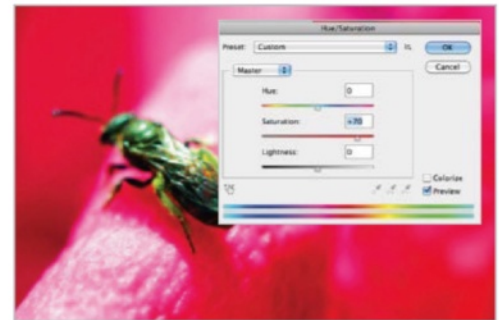
2: Steady as you go
Be careful not to go too high with the Saturation slider, otherwise colours will start to lose definition and quality. To reset any changes made in this adjustment, Opt/Alt-click on the Cancel button.
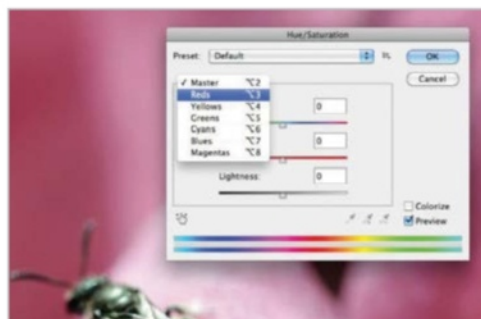
3: Select colour
To improve just one colour, change Adjustment from Master to a colour of your choice. When the Saturation slider is adjusted, only parts of your image with that colour in will become more vibrant.
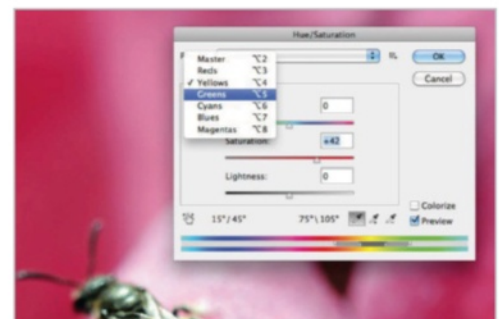
4: Control methods
Controlling the value of the Saturation slider for each colour gives complete control over the balance of colours in your macro shot. When happy, click OK and then save your shot.

Improve detail | Use the High Pass filter for intricate shots

Before
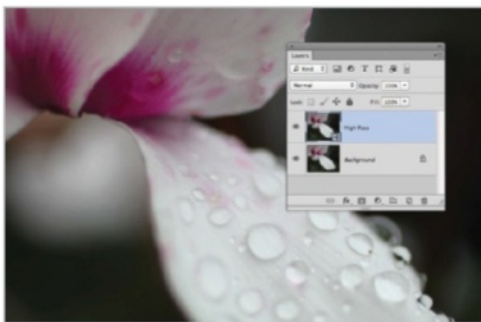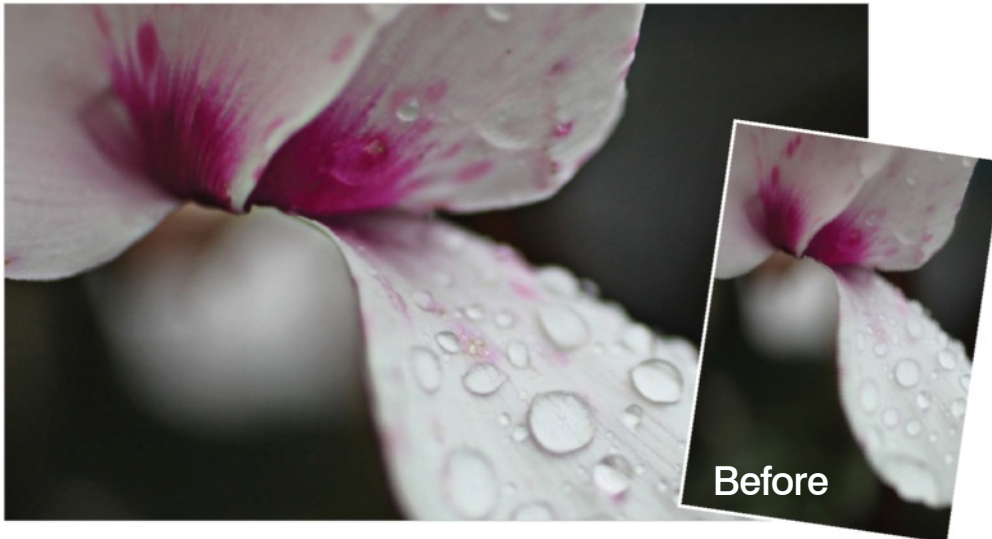
1: Duplicate layer
Create a copy of the Background layer (Layer> Duplicate Layer). Go to the Filter menu, choose Convert for Smart Filter. This converts the layer to a smart one – any changes can be re-edited.
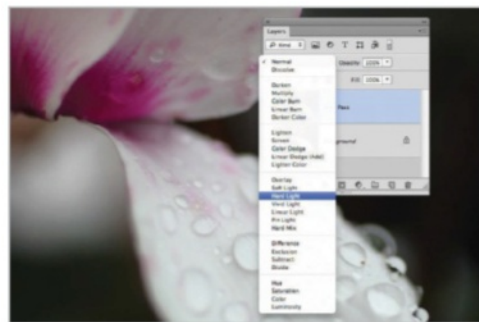
2: Harder blend
Change the blend mode of this smart layer from Normal to Hard Light in the Layers palette. This will increase the exposure and contrast of the image, but only until we apply the High Pass filter.
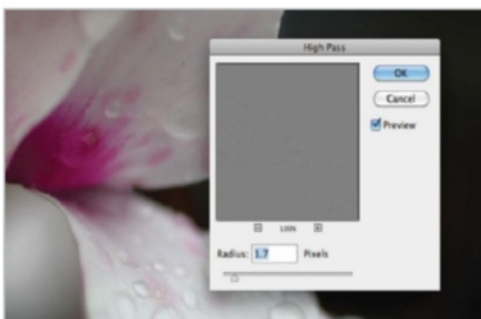
3: Preview filter
Go back to the Filter menu and the Other filter options. From here, select the High Pass filter and a dialog box will open showing a close-up of your image. Tick Preview to show the image changes.
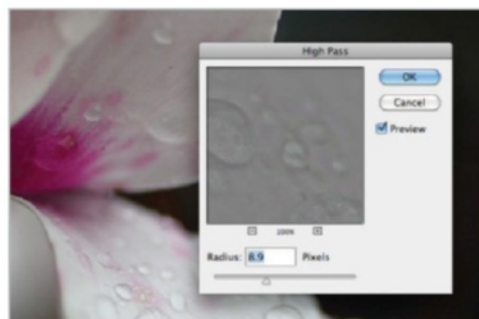
4: More details
Set the Radius slider between 3 and 9px. Any higher and the image will appear abstract. Hit OK. Double-click the High Pass section in the palette to re-open the filter to increase the effect if needed.

The best Macro Plug-ins

Always keep a plug-in or two waiting and ready. These program 'add-ons' focus on an area of editing that would require more time in Photoshop. Here's our selection of the top three…
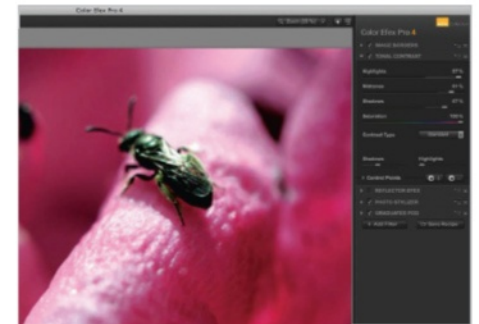
1: Color Efex Pro 4
A creative reduction plug-in that specialises in adapting the colour and exposure of images and lets users make localised changes.
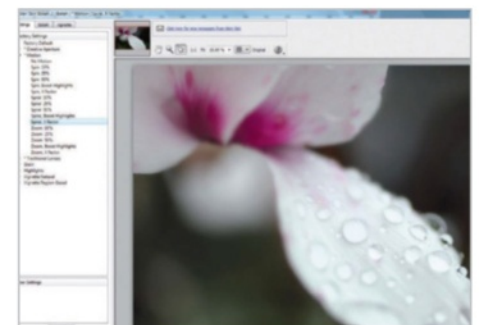
2: Bokeh 2
Applies a lens effect to make images more expressive. Change the focusing, grain and vignette for the ultimate macro effect.
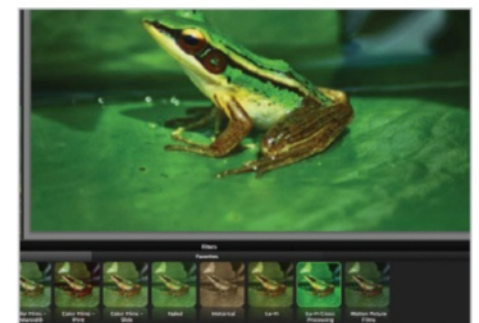
3: Film Stocks
Images can be made to look as if they were shot on traditional film. Layers and blend modes form a big part of this plug-in.

Use levels to improve photos

Photoshop's trusty Levels adjustment is a must-have for solving a range of photographic problems

The Levels adjustment layer should be one of the first places you go to tweak lighting and colour. In fact it's so versatile that it can be used to perform multiple fixes in one go.

The Levels adjustment is commonly used to correct undesirable lighting, but due to its relationship with colour channels it's also helpful for correcting tinted images. It's purely indispensable for any budding Photoshop artist.

The mask that comes with the Levels adjustment can be used to stop changes being made to a particular colour, such as sky or grass. Apply the Magic Wand tool (W) to create a selection (uncheck Contiguous) around one colour. To finish, apply the Levels adjustment and invert its mask (Cmd/Ctrl+I) to protect these areas from being altered. This is a great way to get creative with lighting, as well as add or distort colour. Here we'll guide you through the different uses of the Levels adjustment.

Fool the eye
The Levels adjustment lets you mask away parts of your image, like the sky, to control just the foreground and balance exposure.

Control light
Boost shadows and highlights in areas of underexposure using the Levels adjustment, such as on the road in this image.

Powerful exposure | Take control of colour and light using the Levels adjustment

1: Open Levels
Find the supplied tutorial image to replicate the results shown in these steps. Load your Levels adjustment by going to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels. Hit OK in the pop-up box.
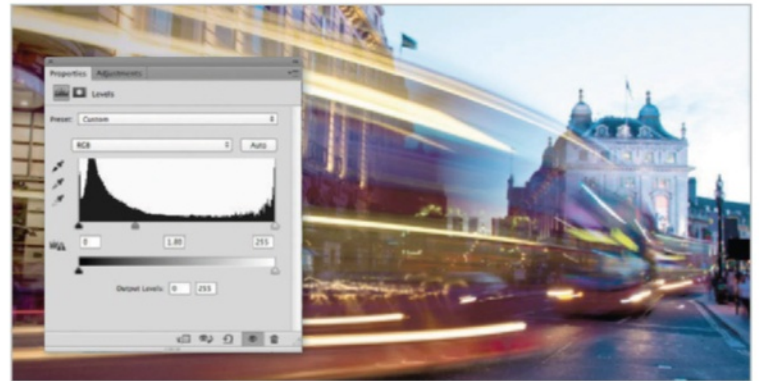
2: Middle of the road
We can brighten up this dim street by shifting the middle of the three sliders to the left. This lightens the dark road, but as a result the sky will lose its impact.
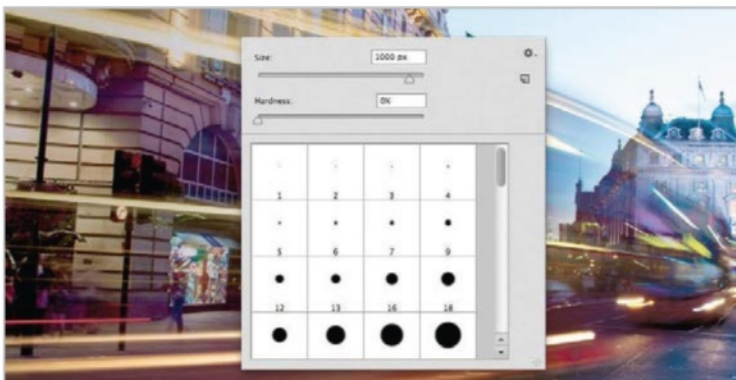
3: Adjust your brush settings
Use the Brush tool (B) set to 100% Opacity and make your Foreground black. Ctrl/right-click over the image, set the Size to 1,000px and Hardness to 0%.

4: Improve the sky
Select the adjustment's layer mask in the Layers palette, paint over the sky to reveal the unedited version and balance the exposure.
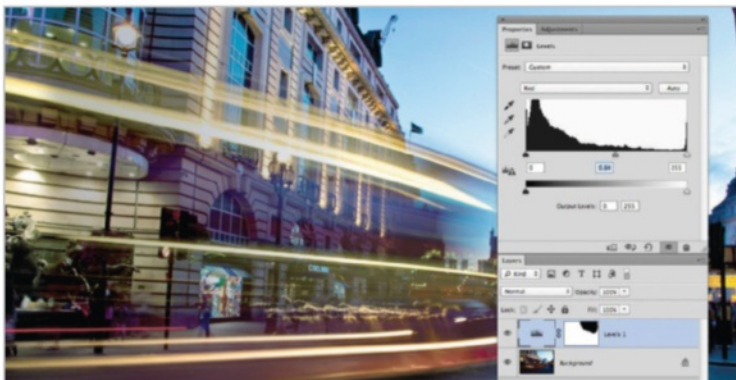
5: Focus on the red
Click on the adjustment's icon in the Layers palette and then change the Levels from RGB to Red using the list of options inside the graph. Also slide the Midtones marker to the right until it reads 0.84.
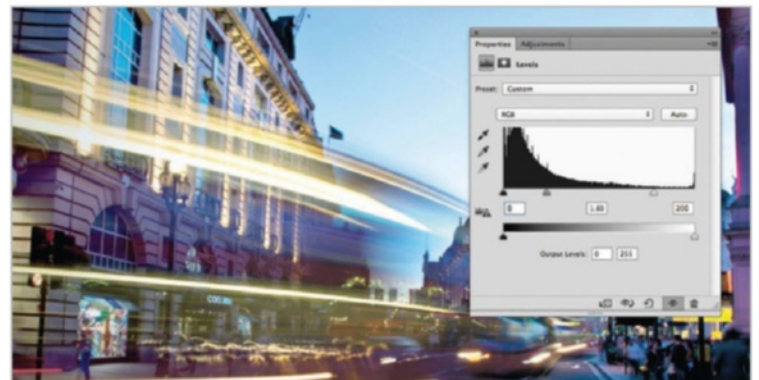
6: Boost the contrast
To give the image one last injection of contrast, switch the Levels adjustment back to RGB. Grab the white marker to control the highlights and slide it up to 200. This will give the light streaks even more vibrancy than before.

Take it to the next level | Combine Levels with blend modes for extra contrast

Before
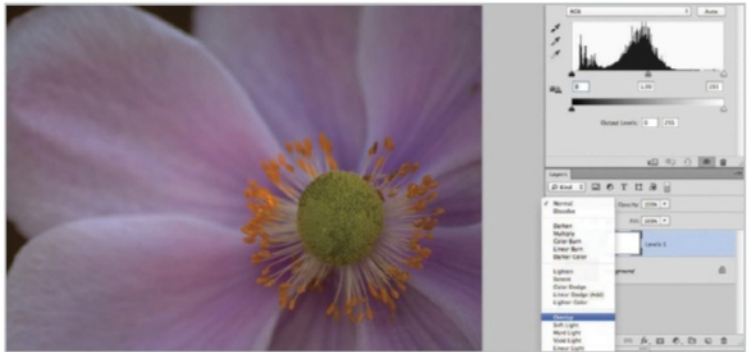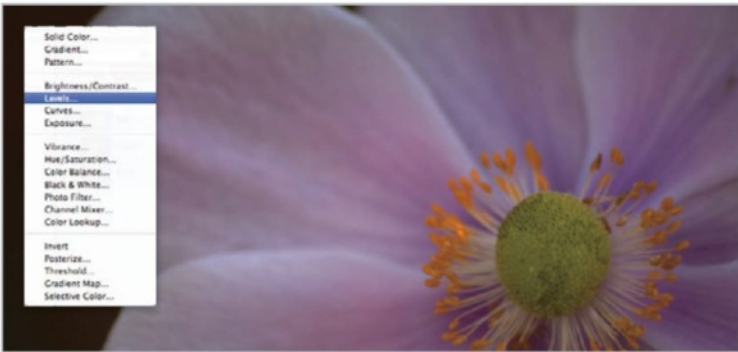
1: Fix the flat contrast
Open the supplied flower image from the disc', which will currently lack a bit of contrast. Load up the Levels adjustment from the Layers palette by clicking on the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer button.

2: Use a blend mode
Before making any changes to the adjustment, change its blend mode from Normal to Overlay in the Layers palette. This improves things slightly, but we can tweak settings to suit the blend mode.
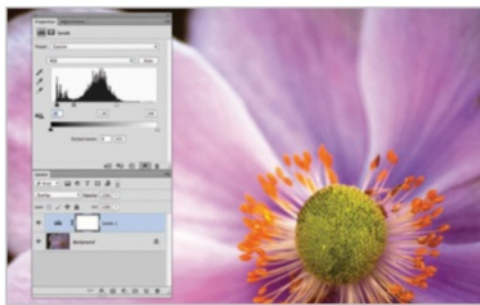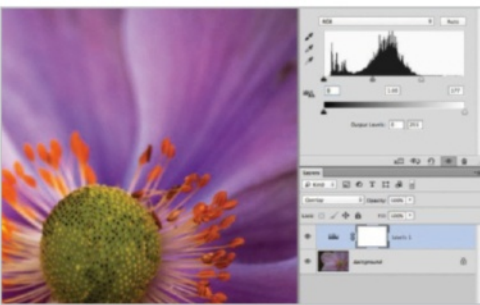
3: Control the highlights
Grab the Highlights marker inside the Levels adjustment and slide it to the left to boost contrast and brightness. Be wary of the brightest parts of the image, but these can also be fixed later.

4: Alter the shadows
Pull the black marker to the right in the Levels adjustment until the contrast is balanced. Slide the Midtones marker to the left to enhance this result further.

5: Original detail
Use the Brush tool (B) set to 10% Opacity, 400px Size and paint over the highlights on the petals. This reduces any over-exposure in these areas by revealing the original Background layer.

Brighten shadows

Correct the underexposed areas of your photos

When you are shooting in tricky lighting conditions, for example on very bright days, it can be difficult to ensure that your shots are evenly exposed. If your subject is in shadow then it is likely that important details will get lost in the dark areas of your photograph. You may be able to correct this in-camera by selecting a wider aperture (lower f-number) or a slower shutter speed to let more light reach your sensor, but this could result in other parts of your image becoming overexposed instead. Editing software is great for brightening up specific parts of your shots for a better overall exposure, bringing out otherwise unseen details. Follow our quick and easy tutorial below to learn how to do this in your own photos.

Before

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Photoshop Elements or other editing software

Bring out detail | Brighten up the dark areas of your photos

1: Lighten the shadows

Automatically brighten the shadows in your image by going to Enhance>Adjust Color> Color Variations. Select Shadows from the list of options as the area that you wish to adjust and set the Color Intensity slider to its centre point. Then click the Lighten button.

2: Adjust shadows further

To brighten the shadows a bit more, go to Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Color Curves. Select Lighten Shadows from the Select A Style box and then boost the Adjust Shadows slider until you are happy with the effects. You can view the changes in the After image at the top.
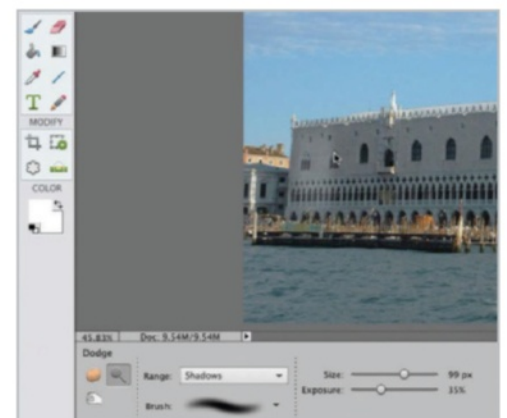
3: Brighten specific areas

Select the Dodge tool from the toolbar on the left-hand side. Set the Range to Shadows from the drop-down menu and adjust the Exposure slider to 50% or lower, then brush over the dark parts of your shot to lighten them up. Adjust your brush size as necessary.

Reduce noise

Learn to bring out detail in low-light photos

Digital noise is the grain that can sometimes appear in photos and reduce their quality. It's a particular problem when shooting in low light. Increasing your ISO to make the sensor more sensitive to light and brighten up the shot can help to create a well-exposed image, but it also has the side effect of creating digital noise. However, this also depends on the camera you are using. You could brighten up your shots by using a slower shutter speed or wider aperture instead, but if this isn't possible, editing software can help save the day.

Here's how to easily reduce noise in your images with some simple adjustments in Photoshop Elements 11, but you could also use Photoshop CS or GIMP too.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Photoshop Elements or other editing software

Before

Clean up shots | Use Photoshop Elements 11 to remove grain
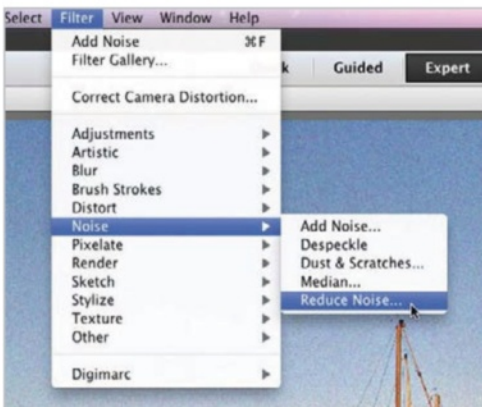
1: Reduce the noise
Once you have opened up your image in your editing software, click on the Filter tab in the top toolbar, and then go to Noise. Select Reduce Noise from the list of options. The editing software will then automatically reduce the amount of noise in your photo.
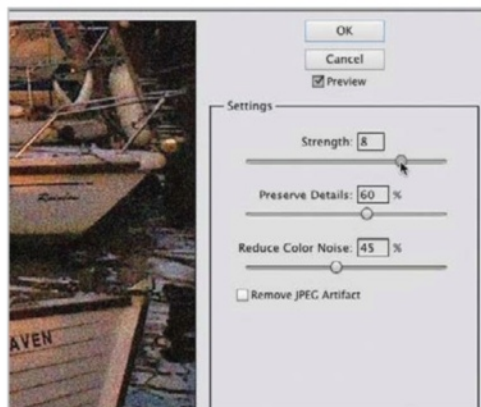
2: Adjust the strength
If you're not happy with the automatic noise reduction that has been applied to your photos, you can then increase or reduce the effect as necessary by adjusting the Strength slider or inputting a specific percentage amount. Tick the Preview box to view your changes.
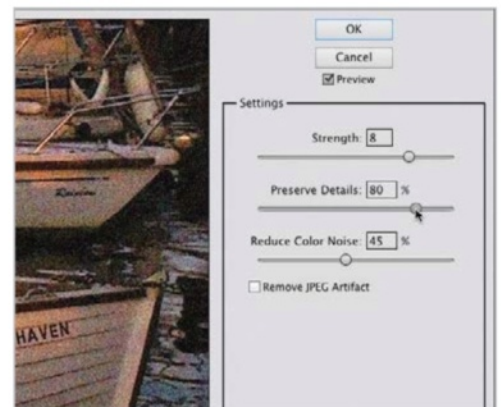
3: Make further adjustments
Boosting the Preserve Details slider will protect the edges and detail in your image, but it will also reduce the amount of noise removal. To target unusually coloured grain, boost the Reduce Colour Noise slider. With the Preview box ticked you can view the adjustments as you experiment.

Brighten up dull skies

Improve your vistas by adding a gradient in three easy steps

When photographing a beautiful scene, it's easy to capture an attractive shot if you consider your composition. However, the time of day you shoot in and the weather can massively affect the outcome of your landscapes. As light and colours are so important, it's a shame when you go out for a shoot and the weather isn't on your side. Dull skies with lacklustre colour can ruin a photo, but there are ways to correct this in editing software. It's important that you get the composition and exposure right in-camera so that you have a good starting point, but don't worry if your shots look a little drab. Back home, upload your photos and open up your editing program to add some colour with a gradient. We've used Photoshop Elements 11, but gradients are available in a variety of software, and the principles remain the same.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Photoshop Elements or other editing software

Before

Add a gradient │ Use Photoshop Elements 11 to boost dull skies

1: Select the sky
Open your image in your editing program and use the Quick Selection tool to select the sky. Zoom in and decrease the tool size to tidy it up. Add a Gradient adjustment layer by clicking the icon in the Layers panel.

2: Set the gradient
Untick Reverse, change Style to Linear and Angle to -90. Click the Gradient box and select Foreground to Transparent. Click the bottom sliders (the 'Color Stops') and choose a sky blue from the drop-down.
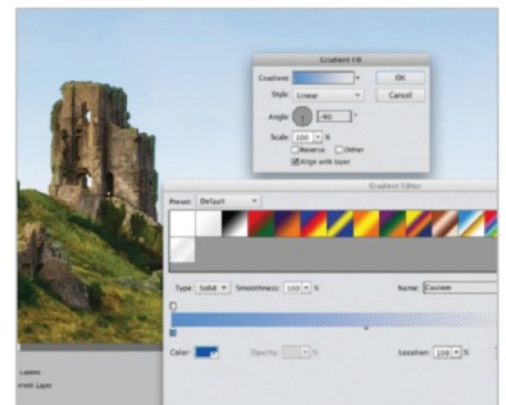
3: Change the opacity
Adjust the opacity with the top sliders so that the colour fades as it reaches the horizon. Click OK, then go to the Layers panel to adjust the overall opacity. Flatten it (Layer>Flatten) and you are ready to save!

Enhance sunset skies

Boost the colour hues in your golden hour shots using layer masks and adjustment tools

The golden hours are unquestionably the best time of day to shoot a stunning scenic vista. Offering an ideal light, the landscape is illuminated by warm colour hues and much richer tones. The position of the Sun at these times can also add extra depth to an image, thanks to longer shadows being cast and brighter highlights.

Many professional landscape photographers use the post-processing stage in order to enhance their exposures, by improving existing colour tones, tweaking contrast and making general corrections to their captures. Of course, if you don't start with a quality shot, you'll never get a fantastic result, so you must always ensure you've captured the scene as best you can in-camera first.

Also, If you're shooting in RAW you may find that colours appear a little washed out on the computer screen when compared to the JPEG preview on your camera's back LCD. Don't worry, the colours are still present, but will require some enhancing in Photoshop to effectively stand out. In this tutorial you'll discover how to use Photoshop's powerful adjustments, such as Curves, Color Balance and Selective Color, to bring out the existing hues and contrast in a shot. You'll also learn how to work with layer masks effectively to make overall and localised adjustments to specific areas.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Photoshop CS

Before

By using layer masks and colour enhancement tools in Photoshop you can ensure your sunset and sunrise shots stand out

1: Increase contrast
Open your image in Photoshop and duplicate the Background layer. Select the Curves adjustment from the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers palette and increase overall contrast by manipulating the anchor points.

2: Control the tones
Select the Curves again within the Layers palette and increase the colour contrast further within the sky. Ignore the effect that this adjustment has on the rest of the image for the moment and just select the layer mask box next to the Curves layer.

3: Reveal the adjustments
Invert the layer mask box to black, to hide the previous Curves adjustment. Now select a soft-edged brush with a high opacity and the Foreground colour set to white. You can now begin to paint over the sky to reveal the contrast.
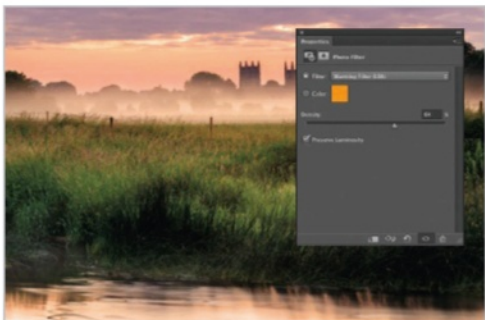
4: Warm up the scene's tones
You can now enhance the existing warm colour tones in the scene by selecting the Photo Filter adjustment. In the adjustment's dialog box, select Warming Filter LBA, click to Preserve Luminosity and adjust the Density slider.

5: Balance the colour hues
Select the Color Balance adjustment tool from the Layers palette and begin tweaking the coloured sliders in the Highlights, Midtones and Shadows to enhance the hues further. Focus on increasing the sunset shade across the image.
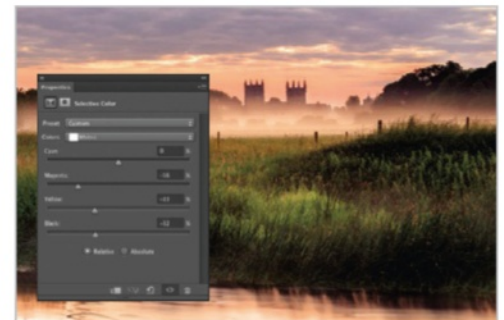
6: Adjust select areas
To reduce the purple hue in the clouds, pick the Selective Color adjustment and make tweaks to the sliders in the white and midtone range. Use the layer mask in the same way as before to make a localised edit that only affects the clouds.
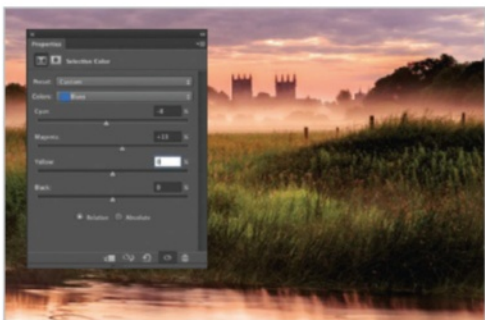
7: Strengthen hues
Select the Selective Color tool once again to make more controlled adjustments to specific hues in the entire scene. Here you can strengthen or soften some colours. Work through the range of options and use the Preview icon to check results.
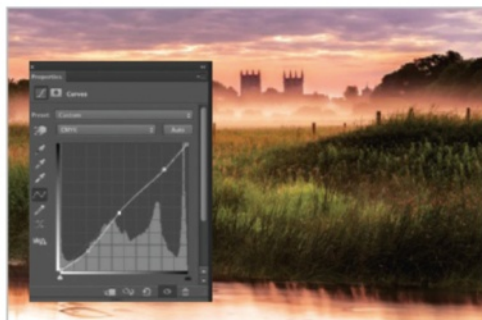
8: Add depth
To ensure all of the adjustments you've made to the colour hues stand out, use the Curves adjustment again. Add two anchor points along the diagonal line and adjust them to ensure that the highlights pop and the shadows stand out.
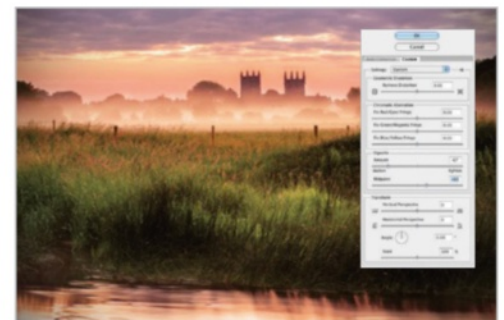
9: Create a vignette
Bring focus to the centre of the frame by adding a vignette. Select the Lens Correction filter from the Filter menu and click on the Custom tab. Adjust the Amount and Midpoint sliders in the Vignette section and click OK. Flatten all layers and save.

Improve your landscape photos

Use Photoshop or Photoshop Elements to easily enhance your scenery shots

Gradient tool
This tool is in the side toolbar. Click and hold the mouse over the Paint Bucket tool to reveal it. The tool options are up in the top bar.

Gradient options
Gradient blend styles are found in the top bar. Use the Foreground to Transparent Blend mode for this project.

Transform tools
The Free Transform tool can be found under 'Edit' in Photoshop CS or 'Image' in Elements, or try the quick keys Cmd/Ctrl+T.

Add a Mask
Use this tool to apply a tweak to your image without affecting the whole photo. Open the mask palette via Window>Masks.

Layers palette
In this palette you'll find such tools as Blends, Opacity settings, and Masks. You can also organise multiple layers.

Adjustment layer palette
Use this tool to fix colour casts, adjust brightness, contrast and more. Click on one and see it appear in the Layers palette.
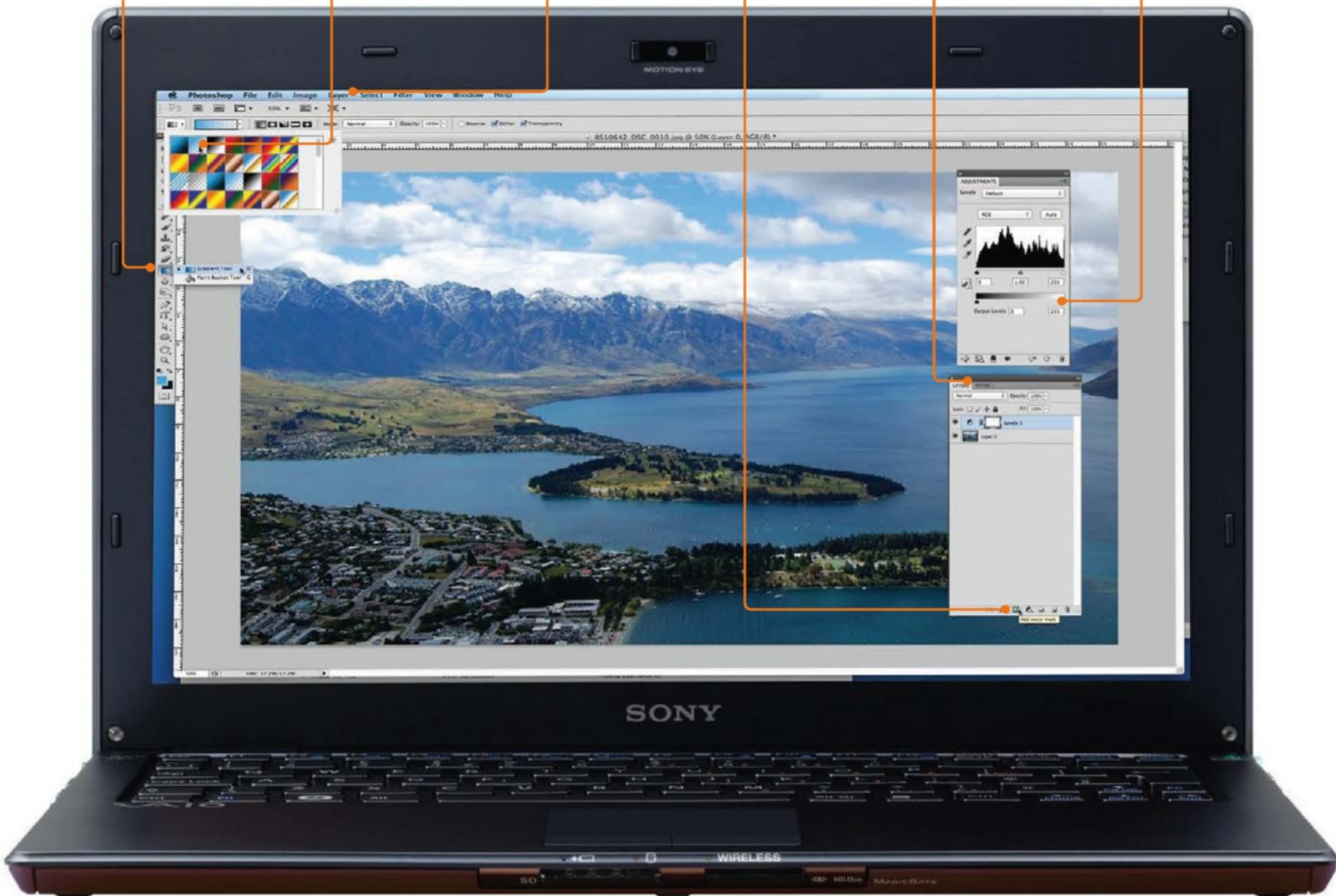
Have you ever uploaded your images to your computer to find that they are not quite as you had anticipated? Well worry no more, as we are about to share our expert Photoshop skills with you, in easy-to-follow tutorials.

We have all been in the situation where we've gone out to shoot some beautiful landscapes and the wind and weather has been against us. This can lower the overall quality of the end results. However, over the next few pages we will run through all of the tools and skills required to achieve amazing landscape photographs in your project's post-production phase.

Say goodbye to wonky horizons, colour casts or lighting issues, as we will show you how to correct all

of these photographic niggles, meaning that there is less pressure on you to capture that one perfect shot in-camera.

In this tutorial we have used Photoshop CS5, but the whole process has been tried and tested in Photoshop Elements 10. Apart from a few parts, which we have highlighted, the whole process works in much the same way. All tools are located in the same place, so don't worry if our interface looks different.

So, it's time to sort through your photo libraries and dig out those landscape photos that need a little TLC. Read through the tutorial before beginning, as you may pick up a few more hints to help you achieve the quality images you've been dreaming of.

Technical Tip

An adjustment layer is a nondestructive edit layer with a ready-loaded Mask. To edit, just click onto the specific layer in the Layers palette and tweak the settings to suit.

Straighten your horizon lines | Make your photos perfectly level before sharing or printing

Before
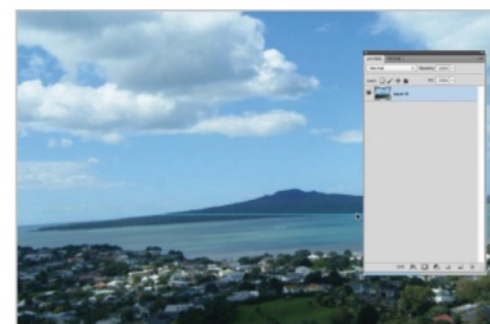
1: Make your layer editable

Open your wonky start photo. Go to the Layers palette and double-click onto the Background layer to make it editable. Press Cmd/Ctrl+R or go to View>Rulers. Click and drag downwards from the top ruler, dropping a line where the horizon should sit.
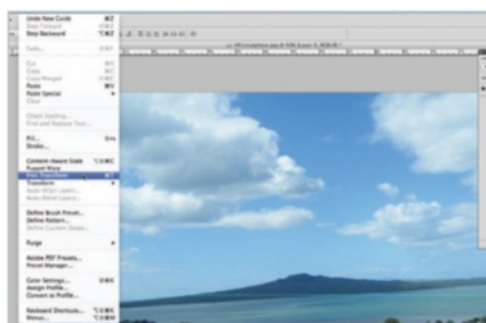
2: Activate Transform

Use this ruler line as your guide. To move it, make sure you're on the Move tool (quick key V) then hover over the guide, click and move. Go to Edit in the top tool bar, select Free Transform (quick keys Cmd/Ctrl+T) to activate Transform.

3: Rotate and line up

Hover your mouse over one of the selection's corner squares to get a rotate icon, then rotate the image until your horizon lines up along with the ruler guide. Hit OK when you're done, then move the line to check alignment. Repeat if necessary.

4: Crop the chequerboard

When happy with your positioning, select the Crop tool (quick key C). Drag the tool over your image and adjust by hovering over the squares along the edges or drag to move. Make sure you are cropping off any unwanted image, then hit Enter.

# Add a gradient | Use gradients to subtly boost colour in your landscapes
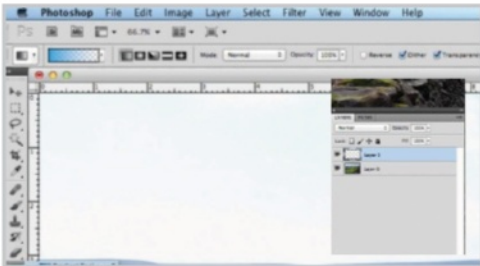
1: Add a new layer
Add a new layer. Press the Create A New Layer button, found at the base of the Layers palette. Select the Gradient tool from the side tool bar. If it's not visible in CS5, press and hold your mouse on the Paint bucket tool and it will reveal itself.
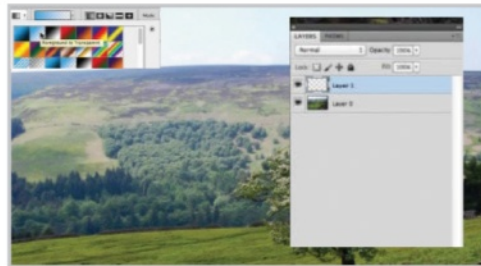
2: Colour and Blend mode
To add a bolder blue tint to the sky, double-click on the foreground-coloured square in the side toolbar, select your blue, hit OK. In the top bar, gradient tool options appear. Click the coloured bar, select Foreground to Transparency blend.
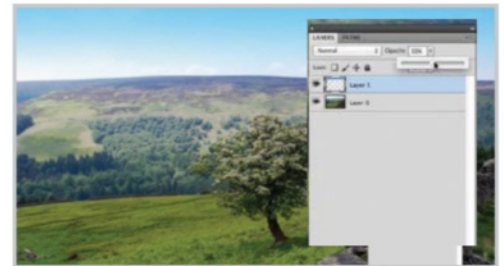
3: Add some brightening colour
Select the Linear Gradient icon, then from the blend mode drop-down select Multiply. Working on the newly added layer, draw downwards on your canvas, holding the Shift key to keep it straight. Lower the opacity in the Layers palette.

Crop for added impact | Make use of the rule of thirds when cropping to enhance composition

A simple crop can drastically improve your composition

Before

1: Rule of thirds
This is an aid that artists and photographers use to ensure the best compositional arrangements. Imagine your photo is divided up into nine squares. Don't centralise your key focal points but position them over the guidelines.
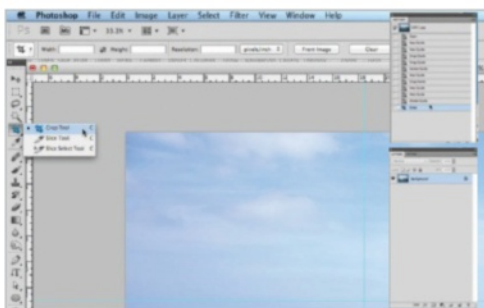
2: Position your selection
Placing your focal points along the gridlines helps to balance your image, drawing your eye in to the scene. Use the rulers in Photoshop to mark out a grid to help show you where your photo should sit.

3: Select the crop tool
You can then correct your image using the Crop tool in Photoshop. With the Crop tool selected, draw a crop box over your image. Use the squares on the sides to alter the shape of the box.

4: Crop or undo
When you are happy with the selected area, hit enter to crop down. If you're unhappy with the final result, press Cmd/Ctrl+Z to undo the crop. Then re-do your crop until you are happy.

Tweaking the brightness and contrast has given this dull cityscape much more impact!

Before

Quick landscape edits
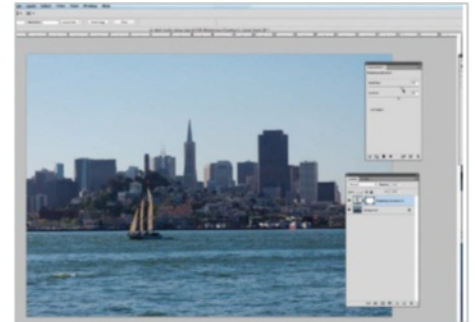
1: Brightness and contrast
Add a Brightness/Contrast Adjustment layer from the Adjustments palette. Just move the two sliders and watch your image improve. To edit at a later date, just click onto its layer in the Layers palette to make the sliders visible.
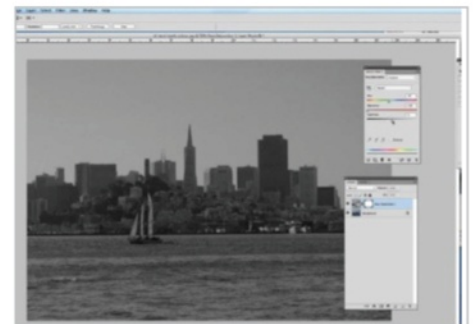
2: Hue/Saturation
In the Adjustment palette move the sliders to see instant changes. Increasing saturation will improve the colour quality, decreasing will turn it to greyscale. In this palette you can also add slight colour casts and brighten the image.
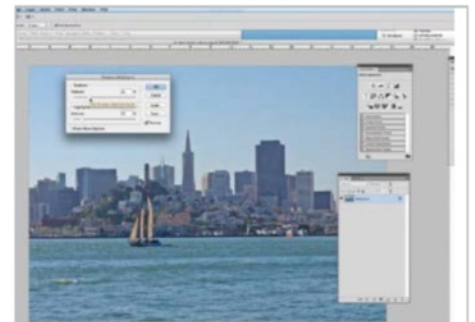
3: Shadows/Highlights
Go to Image>Adjustments>Shadows/Highlights. This dialog box has lots of slider options, but for now stick to the simple two Shadow and Highlight sliders. Experiment with others when you feel more confident.

Correct colours and brightness | Use Adjustment layers
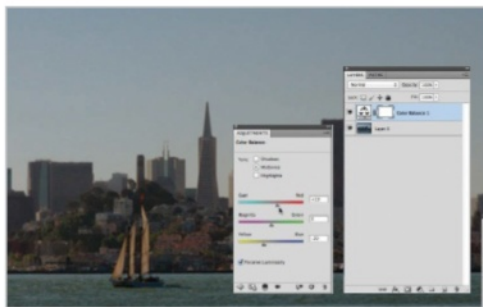
1: Correct colour casts
Bring up the Adjustments palette and click onto Color Balance. The window will show this tool's features (not available in Elements). Our image has a blue cast, so working on Midtones, move the sliders away from the blue end of the scale.
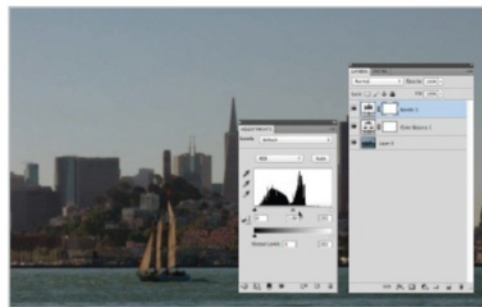
2: Switch to Levels
If the colour cast is extreme, also work on the Shadow and Highlight options. Press the arrow icon in the bottom-left corner of the Adjustment palette to go back and select Levels (Elements: press top-right line icon in the Adjustments palette).

3: Brighten and contrast
The left black arrow affects the shadows, the middle one tweaks the midtones and the right white slider alters the highlights. f unsure what to move, try out the Auto button.

4: Colour tweaks in Levels
Click onto the drop-down menu above the graph and select individual colour channels to tweak by hand, so if your image still has a touch of colour cast to it, you can fix it here.

Correct distracting lens distortion

Restore perspective in warped images of buildings and monuments with these simple steps

Lens distortion is when subjects in an image appear to lean backwards, or the straight lines look like they are curving out. While it can happen with any subject, it's very noticeable on a structure, where your eyes naturally expect walls and pillars to be perfectly straight. Perspective distortion, or the leaning effect, is caused when you shoot at an extreme angle. For example, if you're photographing a tall building and pointing your camera directly up, the resulting image will show the building leaning back. Shooting straight on is the best way to avoid this. Barrel distortion, on the other hand, is often a result of shooting with a wide-angle lens. Zooming in on a subject rather than shooting with a lens at its widest is a good way to eliminate curved-out edges in your image.

Distortion is not always a bad thing, as it can produce some creative results, but if it's not what you intended it can be very distracting. While there are simple steps you can take to avoid creating a distorted image, there are also editing fixes you can apply to an image that's suffering from noticeable distortion. A lot of the larger photo editing programs, such as Photoshop Elements and Lightroom, include an option to correct distortion. In Elements, the Camera Distortion filter lets you adjust the vertical and horizontal perspectives, which essentially pull your image straight. One downside is that reframing will cut off some of the top and side of the image. However, this step-by-step guide will ensure that you do the best job possible.

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Photo editing
software
Distorted image

Before

Warped perspective
Shooting at an extreme angle causes lens distortion, warping the perspective of the subject in the image.

Remove distortion | Straighten up your structure

1: Go to the Filter menu

Open the distorted image in Photoshop Elements and click the Expert tab. Start by right clicking the image in the Layers menu and select Duplicate to protect your image from the changes that you make. In the Filter menu, select Correct Camera Distortion from the list of options.
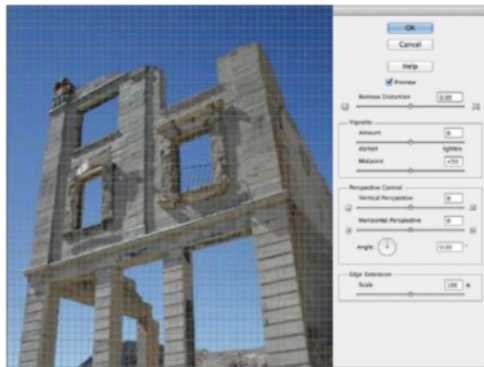
2: Turn on the grid

The Camera Correction filter opens up a new screen. Turn on the Show Grid option at the bottom of the menu – this is a useful guide to help you as you manually straighten up your image.
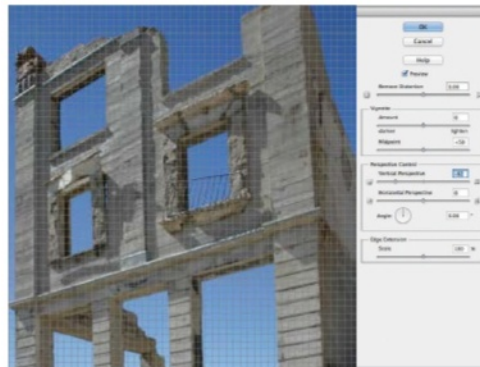
3: Adjust vertical perspective

Move the Vertical Perspective slider left to start moving the building up, using the grid as a visual reference. Pull the building as straight as you can without sacrificing any detail. Click OK.
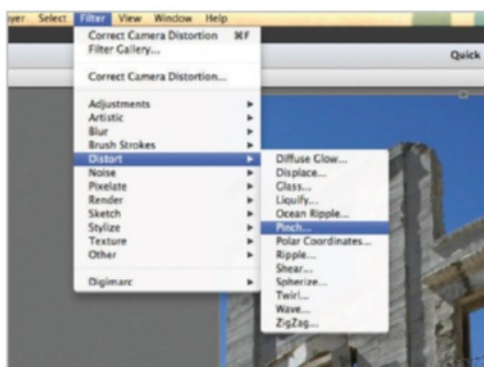
4: Use the Pinch filter

As lens correction is distortion in itself, other distortion filters can be useful too. Fixing the vertical perspective creates a slight bulge in the centre. To fix this we'll add a slight pinch. Go to Filter>Distort>Pinch.
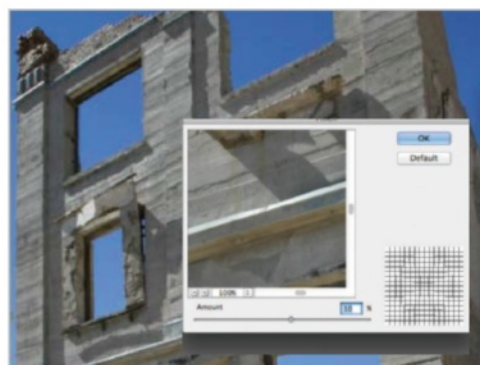
5: Apply the pinch

In the Pinch menu, move the Pinch slider to about 10. You'll see on the grid icon that this will affect the centre of the image without touching the outside, where the lines are already straight. Click OK.

Banish vignetting

1: Identifying vignettes

Like distortion, vignetting is another unwanted lens effect that can creep into an image. Vignetting is characterised by a darkening at the edge of the image.
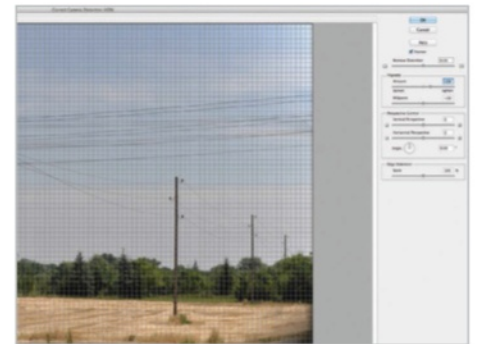
2: Correct camera distortion

As before, open Filter>Correct Camera Distortion. Move the Vignette slider to the left to lighten up the edges of the image and remove unwanted vignetting.

3: Balance colour

Use the Midpoint slider to balance out the colour, making sure that the edges blend with the rest of the image. Click OK, and your photo should be good enough to share!

Sharpen up any photo

Master the sharpening tools in Photoshop CS, Elements and the Photoshop Express app to get rid of blur
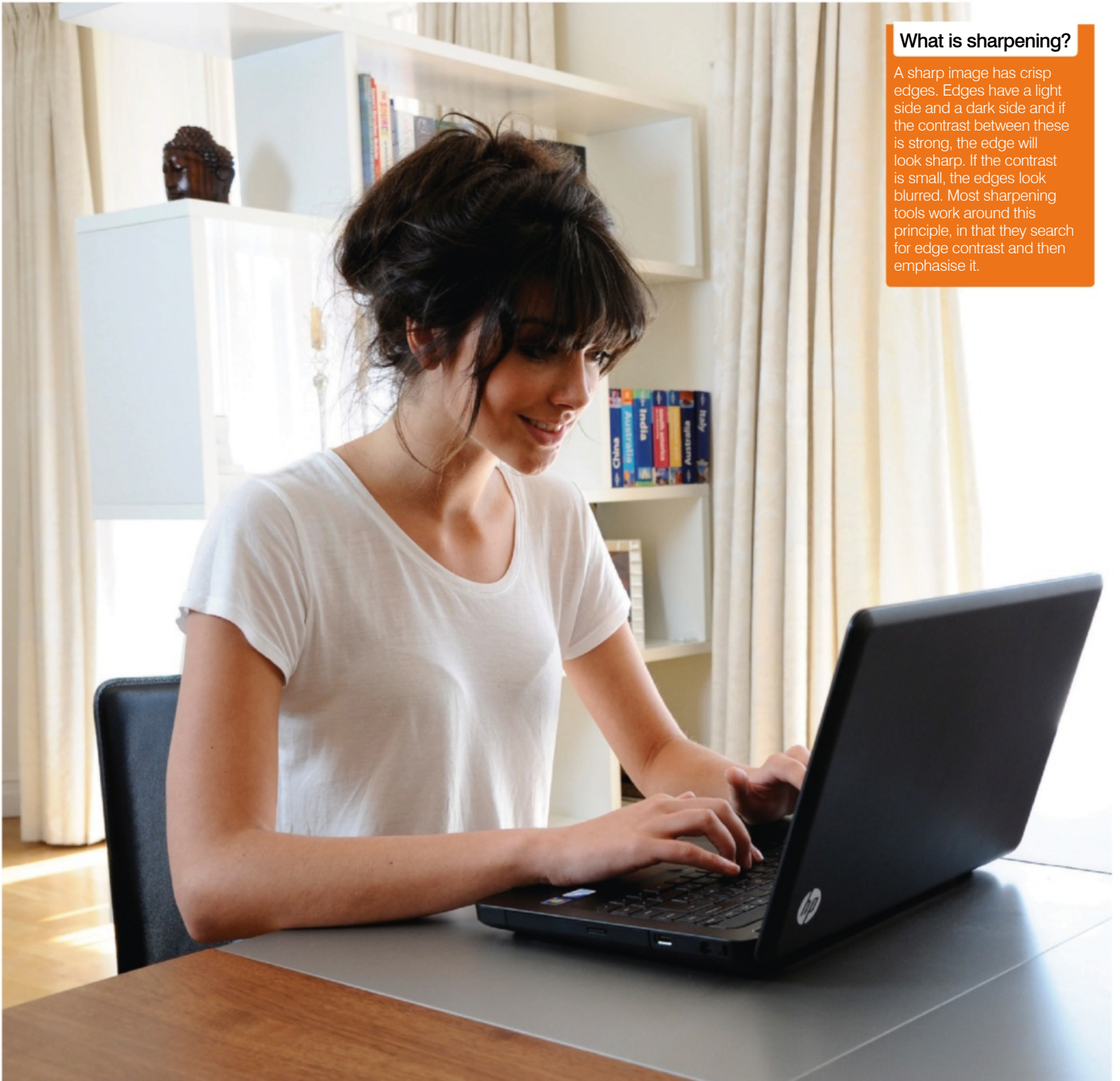
What is sharpening?

A sharp image has crisp edges. Edges have a light side and a dark side and if the contrast between these is strong, the edge will look sharp. If the contrast is small, the edges look blurred. Most sharpening tools work around this principle, in that they search for edge contrast and then emphasise it.
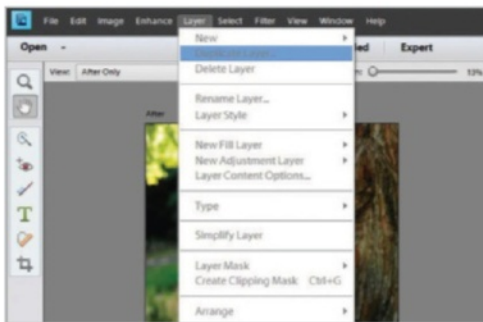
Improve face detail | Get to grips with Unsharp Mask in Photoshop

Before

Info . . .

What you'll need:
Blurry images
Photoshop CS or
Elements

1: Duplicate for safety
Open up Photoshop CS or Elements and go to Layer>Duplicate layer to set up a duplicate layer of your image before you begin to edit. This way you can dispatch the layer if things go awry.
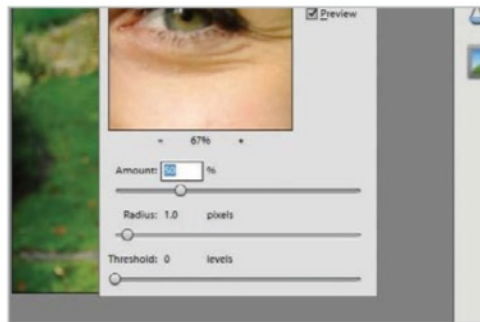
2: Open up Unsharp Mask
In Photoshop CS go to Filter>Sharpen> Unsharp Mask, or in Elements go to Enhance> Unsharp Mask. Use the zoom tools and drag to show a detailed area. Ensure Preview is selected.

3: Tweak the Amount slider
The Amount slider dictates how intense the sharpening is. The further right it goes, the higher the sharpening amount. The sliders work in tandem, so it can be a dance between the three.
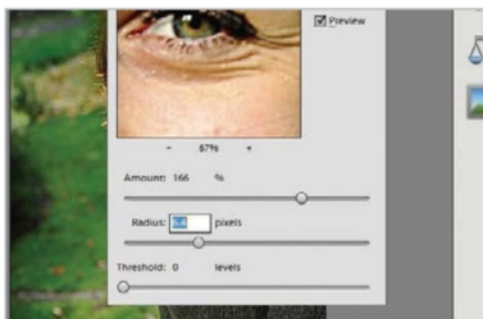
4: Tweak the Radius slider
Unsharp Mask sharpens the contrast between edges in an image, the Radius slider sets how wide the contrast area should be. Fine detail needs a small number, more for large areas of blur.
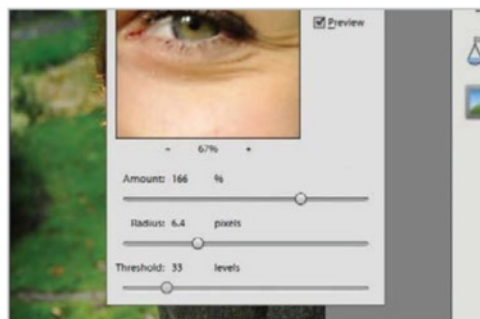
5: Nudge the Threshold slider
The Threshold slider enables you to control where the edit is applied. A low setting will apply the sharpen everywhere, while higher settings are used to only target edges. Click OK.

6: Erase and tidy up
The face detail is much improved, but there are areas where the sharpening process has over-emphasised highlights. No worries – the Eraser tool, set to a soft-edged brush, will sort this out.

Use the Sharpen tool
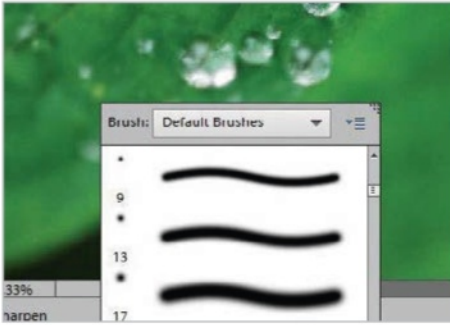
1: Set up the brush
Pick the Sharpen tool from the Enhance section of the tool box and select a soft-edged brush from the Options bar. Then make the size of the brush slightly larger than the object you want to sharpen.


2: Small opacity
You can avoid over-sharpening your image by setting the Strength to 40% opacity in the Options bar at the bottom. Then repeatedly brush over an area of your image to build up the sharpening effect.


3: Brush and sharpen
Create a duplicate layer, and on this new layer use the Zoom tool to focus in and then click and drag to brush the sharpen on. The more times you repeat the process, the more sharpening is applied.

Sharpen in Elements | Use the Adjust Sharpness tool

Before
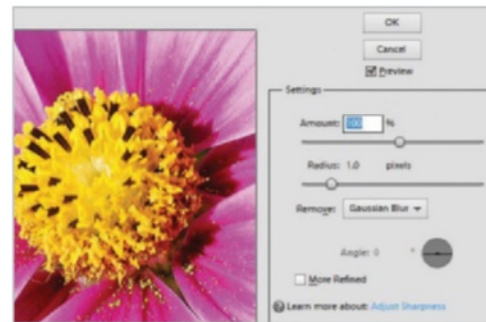
1: Prepare the edit
In Elements, duplicate your image and go to Enhance>Adjust Sharpness. In CS2 onwards, go to Filter>Sharpen>Smart Sharpen. Select the Preview option and zoom into an area.
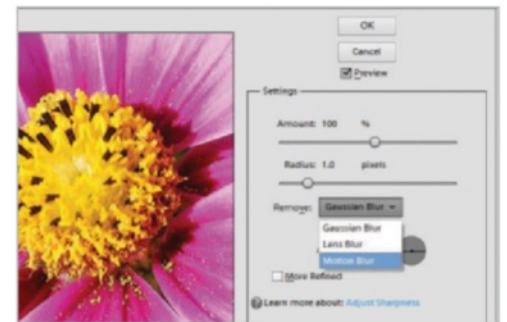
2: Pick your blur
The Remove drop-down menu lets you target types of blur. If your blur is a result of camera shake, pick the Motion Blur option. It's always worth trying each option to see which works best.
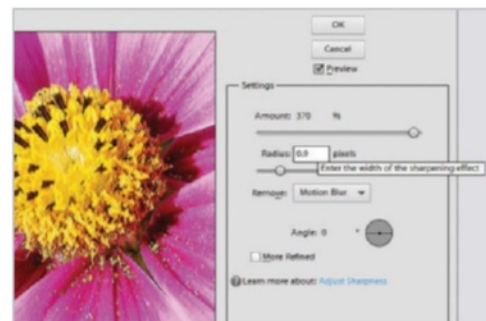
3: Adjust the sliders
The Amount and Radius sliders work in the same way as Unsharp Mask. There is quite a bit of sharpening needed here, so we set Amount to 370. To target the small detail, Radius is set to 0.9.
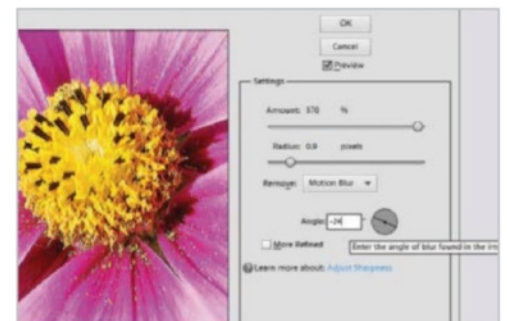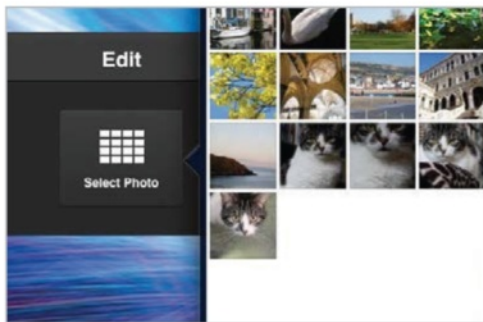

4: Set an angle
Angle sets the angle of blur in the image for the sharpening to react to. It isn't always obvious, so you can click and drag the circle to work through the angles, or if you know the angle, type it in.

Quick edit | Sharpen up in Photoshop Express

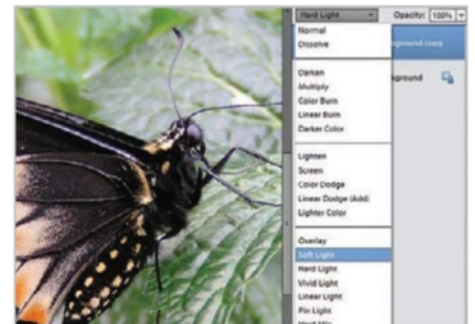**Before**

Use the High Pass filter

1: Blend-Mode magic

Open your image and duplicate the layer. In the Blend Mode menu, select Overlay from the list of options. This will create a high-contrast version of your image. This will highlight the edges, ready to be sharpened.

1: Open your image

Photoshop Express is a nifty way to edit your images on your tablet. You can perform a host of fundamental edits, including sharpening. Tap Select Photo and tap to open your image up.

2: Access the sharpen controls

Tap the fourth icon from the left to find the sharpen facilities. Tap on Sharpen and the screen will darken. A helpful screen will show you the gesture that controls the amount of sharpen.

2: Apply the High Pass filter

Go to Filter>Other>High Pass. The aim here is to adjust the Radius so that the edges are nice and crisp. We went for 2.1, but this will obviously differ according to your image. Check the Preview box.

3: Sharpen the image

To apply the sharpen simply sweep up to increase sharpen, or sweep down to decrease. Sweep upwards slightly and then let go. The image will update. If it's too much, just sweep down.

4: Check and save

Tap and hold the icon that looks like two mountains in the bottom-left. You'll see the original image. Let go and it reverts back to the edited version. If happy, tap the tick icon and tap Save.

3: More Blend-Mode magic

Hit OK to see your sharpened shot. You can make further tweaks with Blend Modes. Soft Light will reduce sharpening, while Hard Light will increase it. Pick the one you want and then save.

Speed up your editing workflow

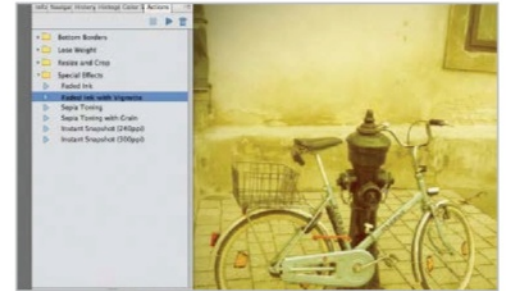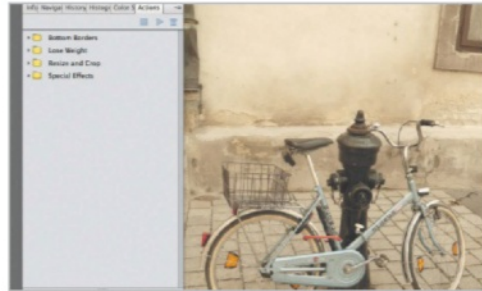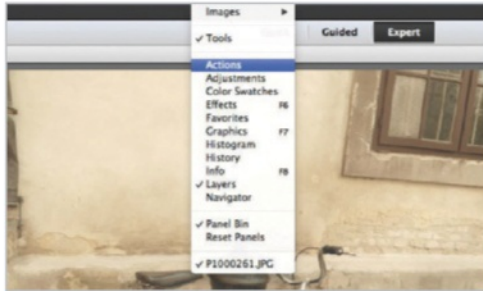Learn tips and tricks for speeding up common photo editing tasks over multiple platforms

Use Actions in Photoshop Elements | Add effects and edits in seconds


1: What is an Action?

An Action is an automated series of edits applied to an image. When you add photo effects in Elements, you are essentially running an Action. There is a dedicated panel found in Window>Actions.

2: Use built-in options

This is the Actions panel, where you will find some built-in Actions. These are categorised by what they do: some have practical applications and some have more fun effects. Click on the folders to see them.

3: Run an Action

To see what an Action does, open a photo in the main window and click on the Action that you are interested in. Next, hit the Play button in the top-right of the panel. The Action will run and you will see the effect.
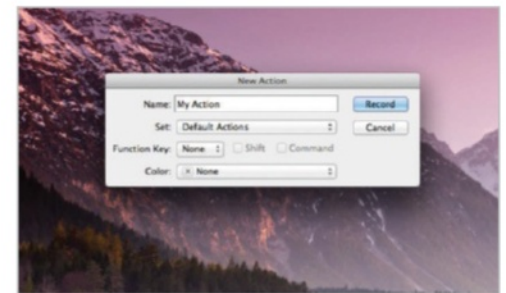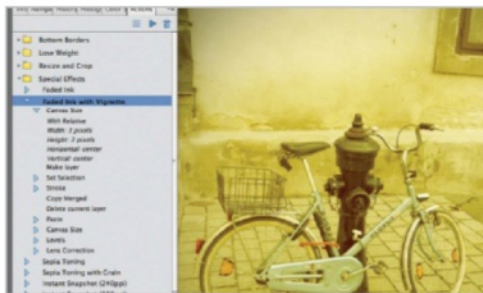

4: View the steps

See how they Actions work by expanding the Action to view the steps involved. Do this by clicking on the arrow next to the Action title. You will then see a list of everything that takes place and the settings used.

5: Find more Actions

There are a limited number of Actions built into Elements, but luckily there are thousands more to download. The Adobe website has some, or you can do a search. Many of these are free, but some will cost you.

6: Create your own

Photoshop CS users can create their own Actions. Hit the Record button to capture all settings and tools applied to an image, and when you are done press the Stop button. You can then name it and save it as an Action.
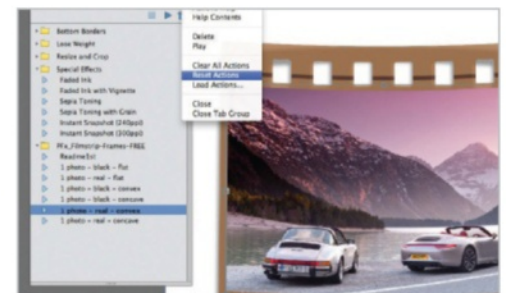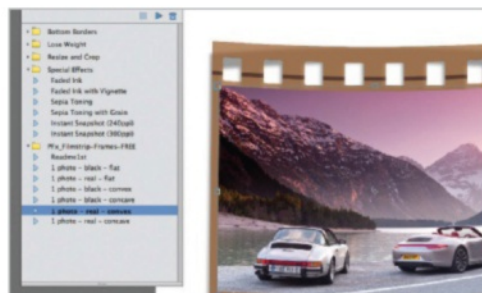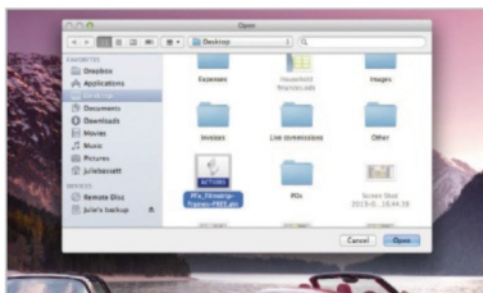
7: Load new Actions

When you find an Action that you want to use, you need to download it and save it to your computer. In the Actions panel, hit the top-right drop-down menu and select Load Action, then browse to the one you want.

8: Run loaded Actions

Any Actions that you load will appear in the Actions panel. You select them in the same way as the built-in Actions and run them to apply the effect. This gives you loads of options to customise your snaps quickly.
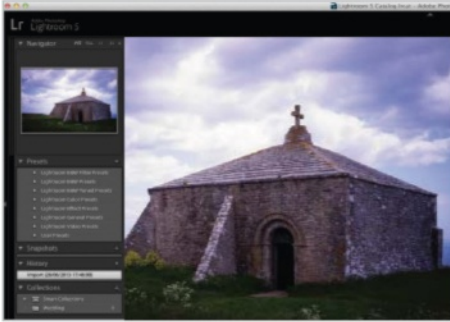

9: Reset the panel

You can choose to reset your Actions at any time, which clears all of the loaded Actions and reverts to just the built-in ones. This means you can experiment as much as you like without clogging up your Actions panel.
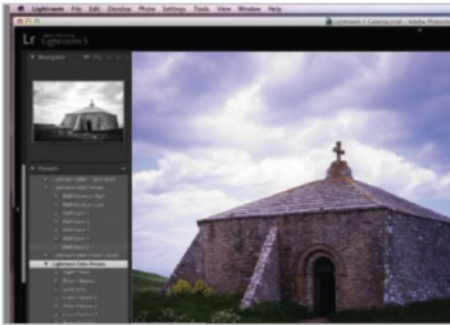
Tips | Tricks | Fixes

Lightroom preset effects

1: Find the Presets

Presets in Lightroom are essentially the same as Actions in Elements. Open your image in Lightroom, then go to the Develop window. Presets are found on the left-hand side of the main window.


2: Preview effects

A handy feature of the Presets that you can't do with Actions is being able to hover over them to see a preview of the effect before you apply it, meaning you can experiment with the different options before committing.
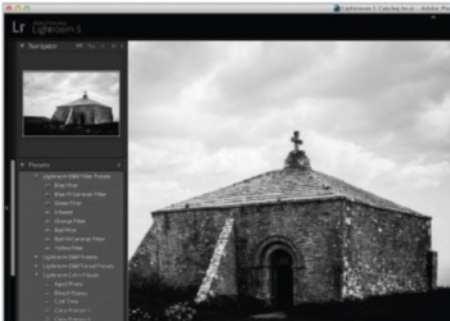
3: Apply and edit

Click on a Preset in the left-hand toolbar to apply it to your image. You can also edit the effect using the tools in the right-hand window. As with Actions, you can download new Presets from the web.

Batch edit in Elements | Process files in one go
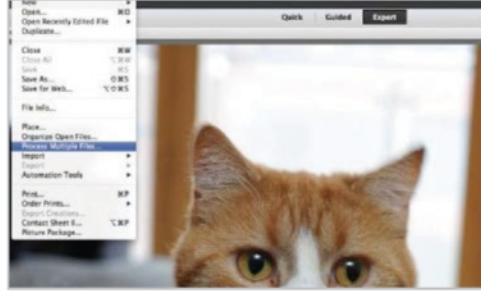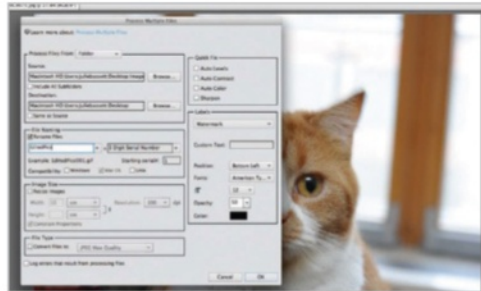

1: Process multiple files

Open Elements and go to File>Process Multiple Files. This will let you batch edit a folder of photos in one go. You can't make major edits, but you can apply automatic corrections, rename files and resize them.

3: Name the files

You might want to give all your files a consistent title. You can enter a name for them and then they will be numbered as well, so you would have MyFile1, MyFile2, etc. This can be useful for organising your pictures.

5: Apply quick fixes

The Quick Fix box lets you apply automatics edits to all your images at once. Just tick the check boxes for the edits that you wish to run. Auto Levels and Auto Contrast are the most commonly used here.
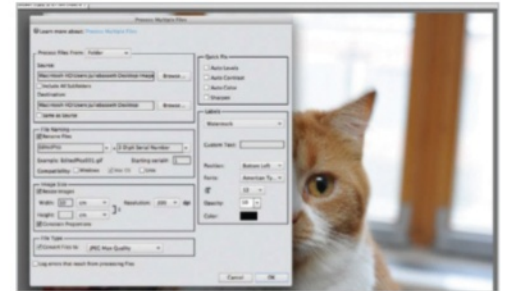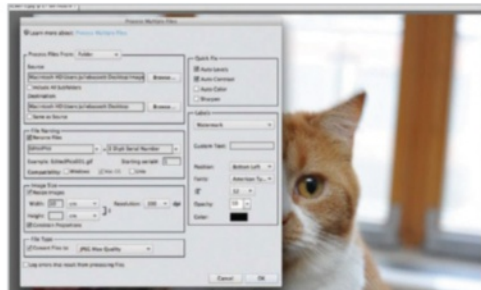

2: Select the destination

Browse to the source folder where the images you want to edit are kept, and then select a destination to save your edited images to. If you tick Same as Source, then your original image files will be overwritten.

4: Select the image size

You can resize all your images in one go by entering a new resolution or size. By default, the size of the image is constrained to prevent distortion, but you can turn this off. You can also save them as a different file type.

6: Add a copyright

Finally, you can add a watermark to your photos by choosing the text, position and font. When you are happy with your edits, hit OK and they will be made. The files will be saved to your chosen destination.

Fast fixes with Snapseed | Make quick changes with this free photo editing app

1: Open your image

Click the camera icon in the top-left of the window to select a photo from your Library. You can also choose to take a photo. This will then open in Snapseed. You will see all of the edits down the left-hand side.

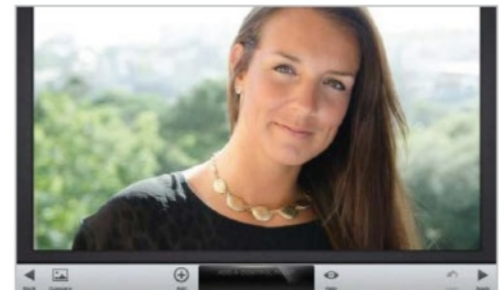### 2: Automatic adjustments

Opt for Automatic for a quick edit. Pick Color Correction or Contrast Correction by swiping up and down, and left and right to alter the effect. Hit the bottom-right arrow to apply and the bottom-left one to cancel.

3: Manual adjustments

For more in-depth edits, select from a range of tools including Selective Adjust, which lets you edit just part of your image. There is a handy help menu (the question mark in the top-left) to show you the controls.
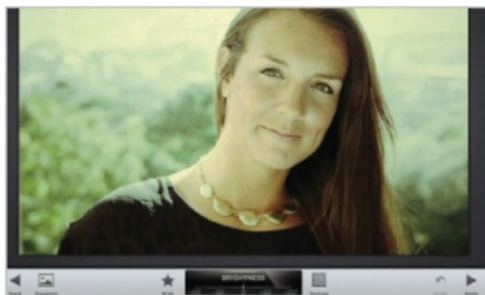
4: Special effects

If you want to get creative, you can add loads of effects, such as Black & White, Vintage (shown here), Drama, Grunge, Tilt-Shift, Retrolux and Frames. Any changes can be undone if you don't like them.

5: Share your snaps

When complete, use the Share icon in the top-right of the window and you will see many options, including Google+, Twitter, Email and Facebook. You can also use the Save option to keep your edited version.

Master RAW conversion

Get the most out of your file processing and create stunning looks for print and screen

Before

Work with RAW for higher image quality and master light, colour and detail to create your own stunning visions

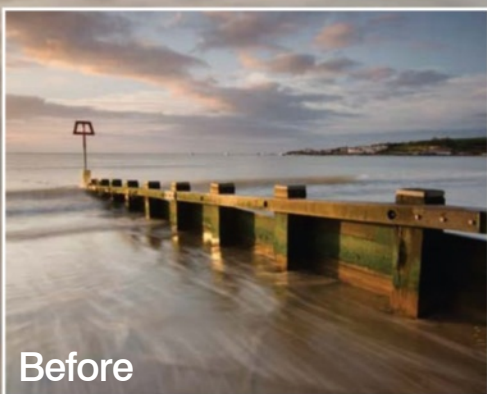W hen it comes to the post-production phase after a successful shoot, many photographers share the same objective. And that is to optimise a photo for editing in Photoshop using Adobe Camera Raw software. To maximise your RAW image's potential, Photoshop offers up many robust image-manipulation options. You may not want to perform too many edits using Camera Raw and use the versatile plug-in to simply prime your shot for the Photoshop treatment. However, if you are most comfortable using Camera Raw exclusively, that's fine with us. The techniques we share here can easily be modified for either workflow, so the choice is yours.

Before we get hands-on in this tutorial, it's really helpful to learn about the Workflow options, which give you a head start in your editing projects. Activate this by clicking the text at the foot of your interface. Set Space to Adobe RGB (1998) as it's the default gamut space used by all professionals in digital and print. A 16 Bit Depth is always a better choice if your computer can handle large files. Use this setting and you'll appreciate more fluid edits in return. Refrain from activating 'Open in Photoshop as Smart Object' though – you will find out why later.

Now it's time to grab your photographs, open up Adobe Camera Raw and get stuck in.
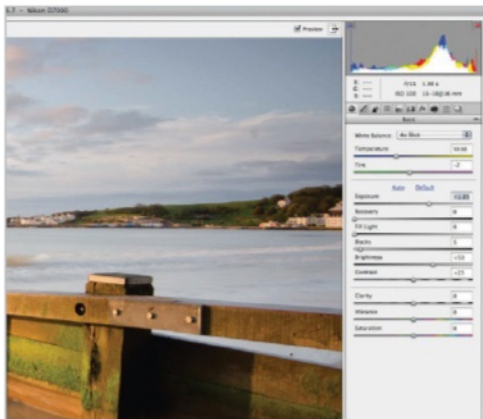
1: Use the Histogram
For a balanced exposure, activate both Clipping Warning icons in the Histogram. Slide negative and positive values to show blue (underexposed shadow) and red (overexposed highlight) previews. Set your exposure bar to minimise both selections.
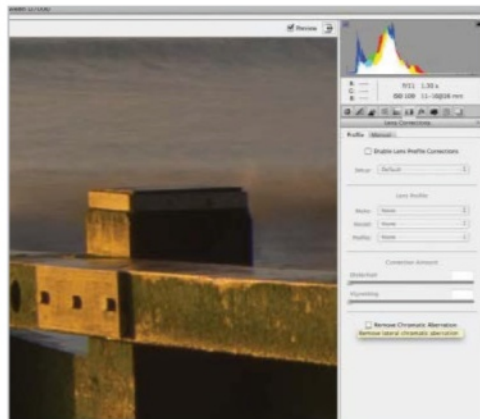
2: Bring back texture
Adjusting the Exposure slider can eradicate texture detail. Remedy this by applying the Fill Light tool. Be careful as this may cause haloing to appear. Luckily this is an easy fix by selecting Lens Correction>Remove Chromatic Aberration.
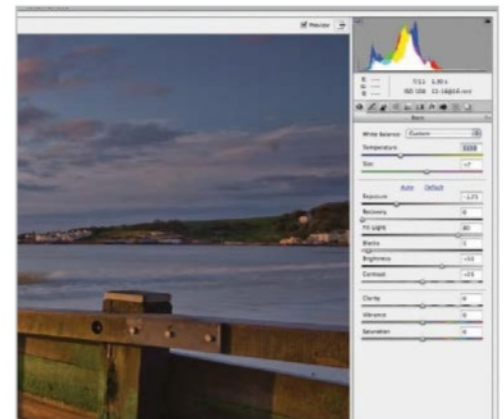
3: Set light temperature
Specify colour temperature by simply selecting the White Balance tool and click the midtones in an image. ACR will give you what it believes to be the right settings, but these can easily be fine-tuned using the Temperature and Tint sliders.
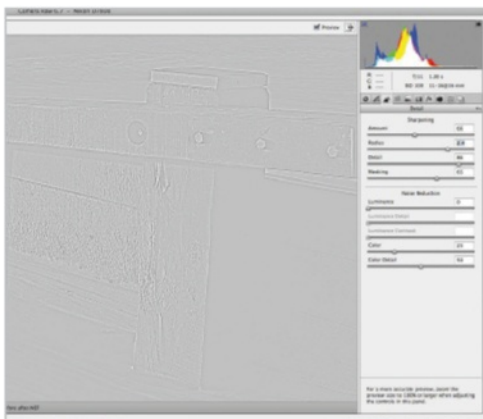
4: Advanced sharpening
Photoshop has powerful sharpening tools, so boosting micro-contrast with the Clarity slider will be enough in ACR. The Detail>Sharpening tools are very intuitive. Hit Shift+Opt/Alt and pull your sliders to target affected surfaces and edges.
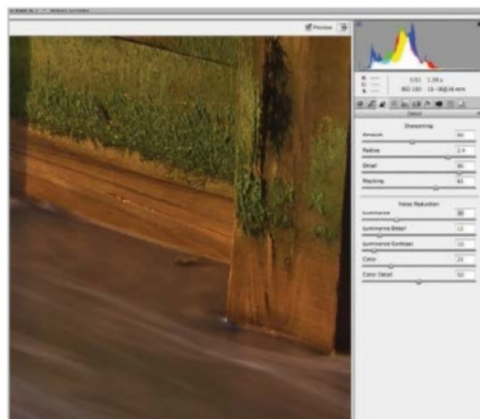
5: Tackle noise
Noise can become an unwanted knock-on effect of sharpening. Fix it now using Detail>Noise Reduction. Set lower values in the Luminance sliders for smoother effects, but don't overdo it as this can create unwanted synthetic effects.
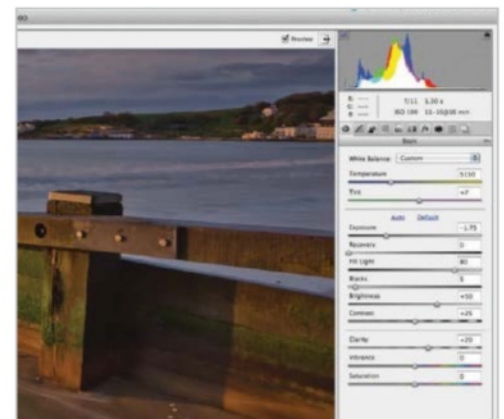
6: Open as an Object
All settings give you the best-possible base image to work with. Hold Shift and press Open Object. Your RAW file is opened in the Photoshop layers panel as a Smart Object. Double click this to reactivate the ACR interface and adjust settings.

Rescue your old photos

Breathe new life into old and tattered images by giving them some digital love and care, with easy-to-use Photoshop tools

Before

Before

Reapply make up
Use a low opacity paintbrush to reapply the subject's makeup, concentrating on the lips and eyes.

Get rid of dust
To complement this filter effect, add the Despeckle filter to combat any remaining particles and debris.

Reduce noise
Apply a Noise Reduction filter to minimise the grain in the image and refine the overall effect.
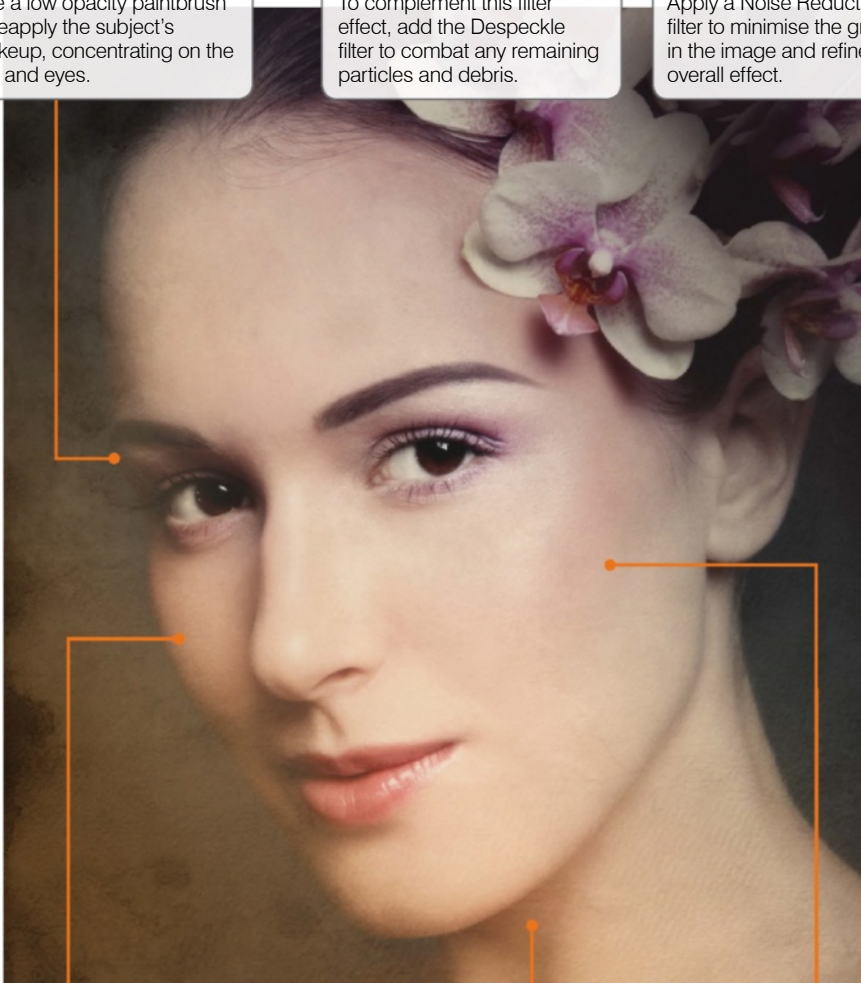
Brighten it up
Restore the colour and vibrance of the image with adjustment layers that balance the colour and increase the contrast.

Sharpen the lines
Reconstruct edges around the face and neck using the Clone Stamp tool, zooming into the image to see details.

Improve skin
Use the Spot Healing Brush tool to clean up scratches and marks on your subject's face by blending them into skin.
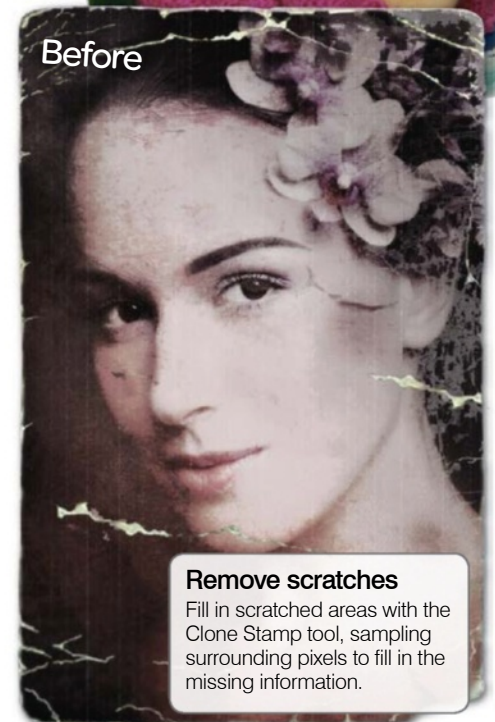
Remove scratches
Fill in scratched areas with the Clone Stamp tool, sampling surrounding pixels to fill in the missing information.

Fill in the gaps
Select a small brush to accurately fill in the pixels in the affected areas that lie close to the defined lines.

Blend the background
For a better blend, choose a large soft brush and sweep over large areas of damage on plain backgrounds.

Use the source
Remember to hold down Opt/Alt and then click to sample nearby pixels as often as possible when painting with the Clone Stamp tool.

Efficiency is key
Instead of going back and forth changing your brush size from the Options bar, use this easy shortcut instead. While you're using the Clone Stamp tool, or the Healing Brush tool, increase the size of its brush by using the right square bracket on your keyboard. Conversely, make the brush smaller with the left square bracket. Constantly changing brush size while you're working on areas of your image will give you a much cleaner and more professional result.

Reconstruct detail
Use existing lines and material to help you rebuild missing details such as the jumper sleeve.

Repair with the right tools

1: Prepare your image
Open up your damaged file in Photoshop. Ctrl/right-click the background layer and select Duplicate to make a copy. Name the layer Background Copy.

2: Select tool
Select the Clone Stamp tool (S) in the left-hand toolbar (with Pattern Stamp) and select a size of 90px, or small enough to fit inside your damaged area, and set the Hardness to 20%.
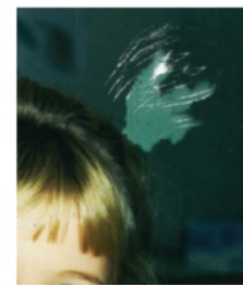
3: Apply the Clone Stamp
Sample a similar colour to a missing area of the image from nearby pixels by holding Opt/Alt, and clicking. Paint in the damaged area. Keep resampling pixels.

4: Now repeat the process
Use the same method to fill in any other missing areas of your image. Zoom in and change your brush size as you go to give better results for different areas.

5: Final touches
Once missing areas have been patched up, clean up blemishes and spots with the Healing Brush tool (J). Sample similar pixels and then paint over these areas.

Thanks to the modern digital age, your favourite old images are no longer destined to a life of slow disintegration inside old albums and frames.

Snapshots that are in bad shape can be given a new lease of life with a few simple restoration techniques. The first step is to scan in your images to get a digital version for you to work on. Most new home scanners will do this very well, but if you haven't got one then head to a professional printing shop for some help and advice.

There are many ways to tackle an ailing image once you've got it onto your computer. However, there are a few key tools that you should keep close by. The most useful ones,

namely the Clone Stamp, Healing Brush and Patch tools, work so well because they've all been designed to reconstruct areas of an image using information from nearby pixels.

Common touch-ups include removing cracks, speckles and blemishes, and also filling in the broken pieces of an image. It doesn't stop there, though, and we take you through additional techniques that include restoring colour to photographs, fixing lighting with adjustment layers and applying filters that will bring out the best in your old images. While some techniques require a little more time and attention than others, once you see your worn image in a new light you'll know that all this effort was well worth the wait.

Dust and speckle removal | Revive aged images

Old images are often marred by dust and imperfections. Grain and dust can appear on photos if the lens or film that was used was a bit dirty. It can also be the result of dust on the surface of a photograph when you scanned it in. Noise denotes the tiny speckles that are often found in images taken in low light.

Luckily, Photoshop has two filters, namely Noise Reduction and Dust & Scratches, that scan the image for debris and then work to remove it. When finished, it's always a good idea to give the photo a final once-over with the Healing Brush tool to remove any missed speckles.

Before

1: Duplicate background
Open up your image in Photoshop and duplicate the background layer by selecting Layer>Duplicate Layer. Name the layer Background Copy. This is good practice for any image you are restoring, as the original image is preserved while you edit.

2: Noise filter
From the top menu, select Filter>Noise> Dust & Scratches. Set the Radius to 13 and the Threshold to 73, then click OK. You'll see a loading bar and, depending on the size of your image and the scale of the adjustment, it may take a while for the filter to process.

3: Lessen the noise
Go back to the Filter menu and this time select Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise. Set the Strength to 8, Preserve Details to 10%, Reduce Color Noise to 70% and Sharpen Details to 30%, then hit OK. You'll notice the speckles reduce.

4: Healing Brush
Select the Spot Healing Brush tool from the left-hand toolbar and choose a brush size of 40px. Go over your image and individually fix up dust and scratches that sit on the main areas, especially on people.

5: Crop down
Select the Crop tool (C) from the toolbar and use the grid overlay options to judge the centre of the image. Use the handles to specify where to crop and hit Return once you're happy with it. Use this to remove rough edges too.

Banish the blemish | Use the Healing Brush tools

Whether it's coffee cup stains or accidental water marks, many old images suffer from unsightly blotches that ruin a good photo. A mixture of the Healing Brush options and the Clone Stamp tool is the best way to repair the damage.

The key to getting it right is to work slowly and methodically through each blemished area. The Healing Brush options let you smooth over damaged areas, while the Clone Stamp tool is a good option to reconstruct heavily affected areas of the photo.
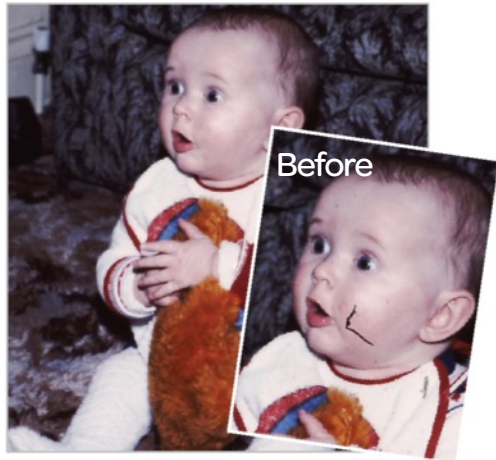
Before

1: Prepare your image
Open your image and duplicate the background layer. Before you start working on making any edits, have a closer look at the image and identify where the problem areas are. This tool is best for large areas.

2: Spot Healing
Select the Spot Healing Brush tool and check the blend mode is set to Normal. Select a brush size of 70px and set Hardness to 80%. Paint over marks and blemishes until they're gone.

3: Smaller edits
Resize the brush to 50px and continue to click on small blemishes and marks across the face, as well as on the plain areas of clothing. Keep the brush size as small as possible.

4: Switch brush
Select the Healing Brush tool (under Spot Healing Brush) and work on larger areas. Set brush size to 70px and Hardness to 20px. Sample an area of fabric by Opt/Alt-clicking, then fill in the areas.

5: Clone pixels
To clean up the stains, switch to the Clone Stamp tool. Set Hardness to 100% to be able to draw in small details behind the marks. Zoom right into the area and work carefully through each section.

Scan in old photographs

1: Scanner choice
All-in-one printers are a good option for scanning images. Ensure the image you're scanning is relatively flat, too, and if you're image is buckled, or has suffered damage, first flatten it between two books overnight.

2: Scan resolution
Place your photograph image side down onto the scanner and close the top. If you have a photo scanning option, select it and then choose a high DPI between 300 and 1200.
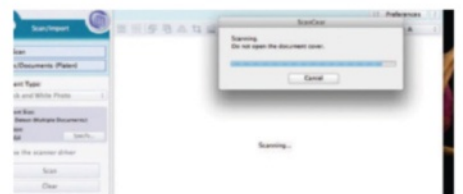
3: Batch scanning
Hit Scan and wait for the scanner to process the image. It may take a couple of minutes with large photographs. If you have a batch of images simply continue scanning them in.

4: View and save
Your image should automatically save to your scanner's default folder. Select the image and choose Save As to save in another location, ready to open in Photoshop.

Restore tone and colour | Give lacklustre hues and faded shades a new meaning

Colour is often the first thing to go 'off' in prints, and orange tints and faded colours are all too common in aging images. Tone and colour can be restored with a number of techniques, for example using adjustment layers to bring vitality back. Hand-colouring techniques introduce brightness into monochrome images even if it wasn't originally there.

The trick to achieving natural results is to accept the limitations of the photographs that you are working with. If you push the colours too far then you may end up with an oversaturated result that can look a little jarring rather than beautifully restored. In fact, a good fix for a coloured image that has seen better days is to simply convert it to a deliberate black and white!

Colour with adjustment layers

Adjustment layers are perfect if you have an image that requires a mixed treatment to get it back to its best, and spending some time finding out what it needs is the best approach. Start with a Color Balance adjustment layer to remove any colour casts, such as orange in this image. Next, add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer to bring up dull colours. Finally, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to deepen the colours. Switch between these three adjustments to tweak your image until you're happy with it.

Before

Remove colour casts

Colour casts are common in film images and can usually be identified by a blue or orange tinge. They are often caused by certain types of lights when the photo is taken, or the way the film was developed. The cast can be neutralised by adding a new adjustment layer to the image by selecting Layer>New Adjustment Layer and then choosing Color Balance. Assess which colour is causing the problem and then use the different sliders, and a bit of colour theory, to neutralise it. For a blue cast, for example, add more yellow.

Before

Hand-colouring technique

Bring a little colour to an old black and white image by colouring it by hand in Photoshop. One of the easiest methods is to simply use a paintbrush. First, change the Mode of your image to a colour one by selecting Image>Mode>CMYK Color. Now select a paintbrush and set its Mode to Color as well. Set the tool's Opacity to 80% and use the Color Picker menu to select a hue. Zoom into your image to catch the detail and start painting, switching brush size as you go.

Before

Go monochrome

A seemingly easy way to turn an image black and white is to change the Mode to Grayscale from the Image menu. While this gets the job done, you have no control over how the image looks and so this should be avoided. A better way to do it is to add a new adjustment layer (Layer>New Adjustment Layer) to your image and select Channel Mixer. In the pop-up dialog box, tick Monochrome and then use the Red, Green and Blue channels to play around with the final effect to your image.

Before

Fix exposure | Balance over and underexposed vintage images

Before the days of smart exposures and auto settings, creating a well-lit image required a bit more foresight. Luckily, in this digital age with the ability to scan in our old images and use image editing software, we can fix the lighting errors of the past and restore old photos. Adjustment layers are a fantastic option to fix up lighting, but when we're balancing out an image we need to apply an adjustment to

sort out areas one at a time. We can do this with the help of masks. Quick Mask Mode is essential for fixing exposure as it isolates the problem areas. Essentially just another form of selection, masks are an easy way to demarcate an area of a photograph to apply an adjustment. Masks edit non-destructively, and work by painting over areas to remove from the effect of the adjustment being applied.

Fix fades

You can mend an old photo's dog-eared corners and faded edges by using the Gradient tool (G) in Quick Mask Mode, which isolates problem areas. Create a new adjustment layer that will apply only to the damaged section. Levels and Exposure are two useful adjustments for fades, and you'll need a good eye to judge when you've matched the shade. Be sure to feather the edges of your mask to blend the effects into the image.

Before

1: Quick Mask Mode

Open up your image in Photoshop and duplicate the Background layer. Enter Quick Mask Mode by selecting the small icon in the toolbar (or press Q). While in this mode, select a large soft brush to prepare to mask your image.

2: Mask and adjust

Determine which areas of your old photo need to be lightened and darkened to correct it, then use the Brush tool (B) to paint over these areas. Exit Quick Mask Mode to view this as a selection. Then, select Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Brightness/Contrast, then increase the Brightness level.

3: Repeat and adjust

Next, switch back into Quick Mask Mode. Now mask out any underexposure in your image, ensuring that you have a soft brush selected. Select Layer>New Adjustment Layer and this time choose Levels from the list of options. Balance out the levels of the underexposed area of the image.

4: Clean up and balance

The select the Clone Stamp tool from the left-hand toolbar to clean up any debris and marks in the image, especially in the corners where they might be faded. Add a final Levels adjustment layer to balance out the image. Finally add the Smart Sharpen filter (Filter>Sharpen) to bring out details in the image.

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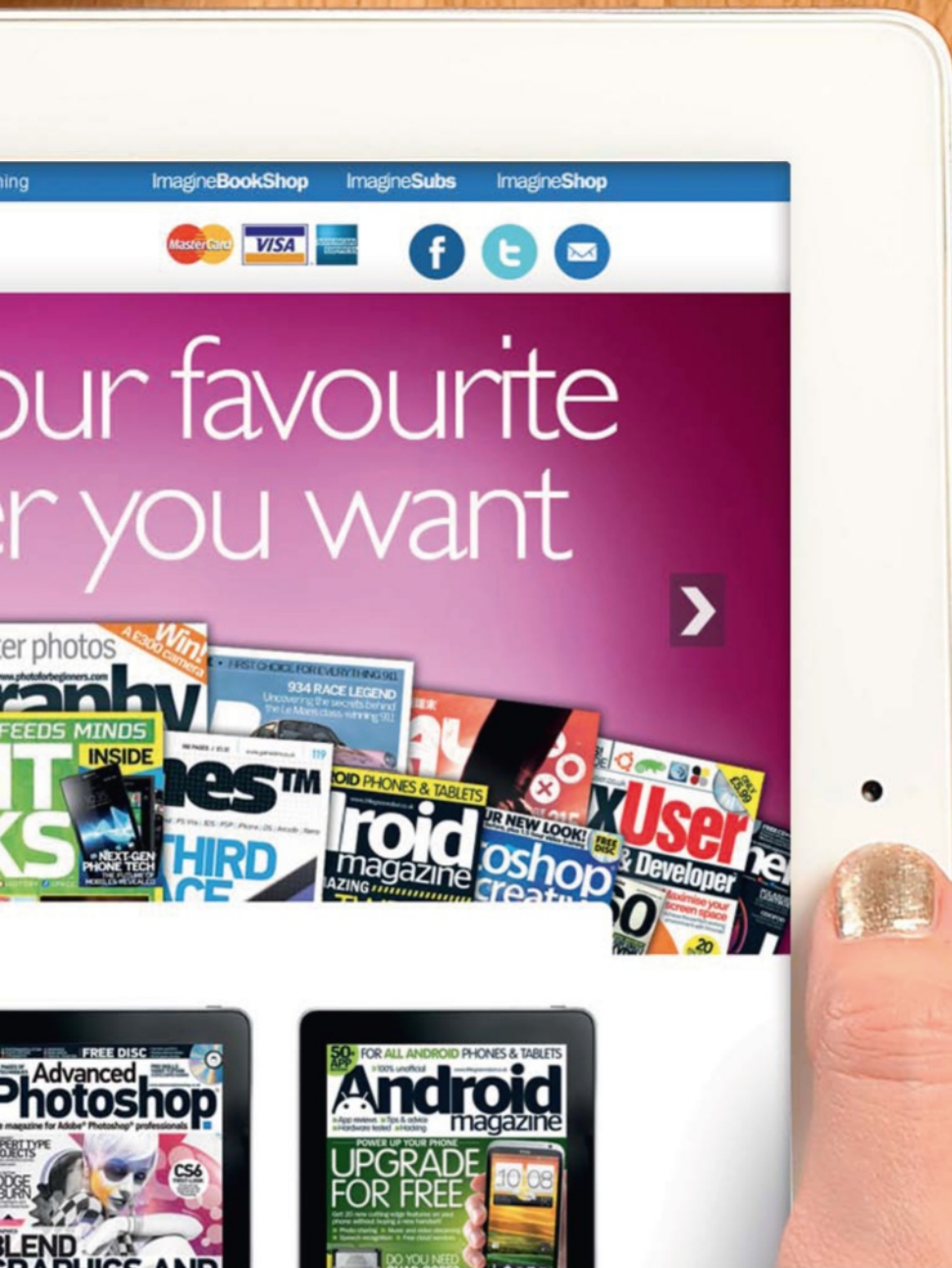
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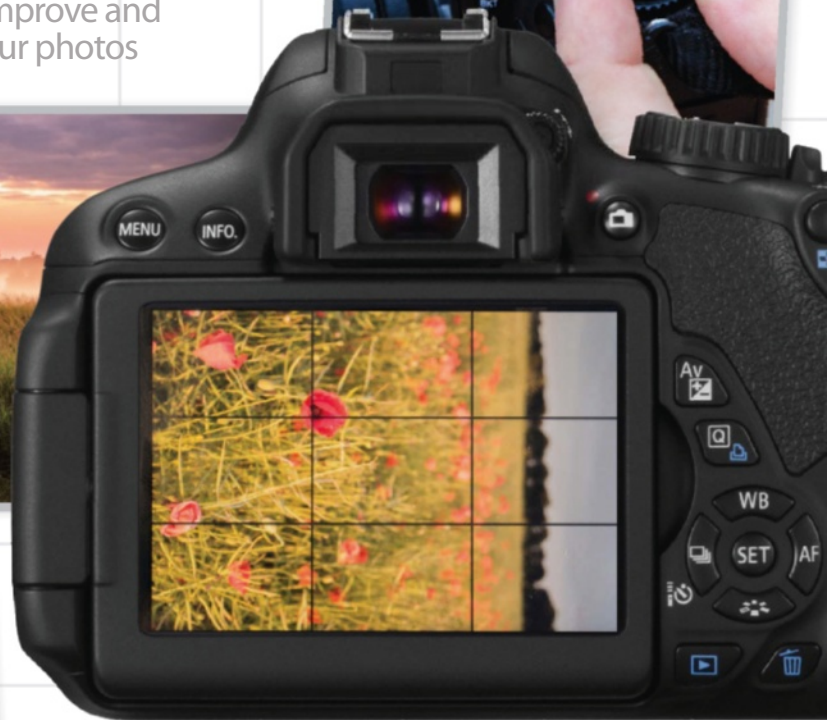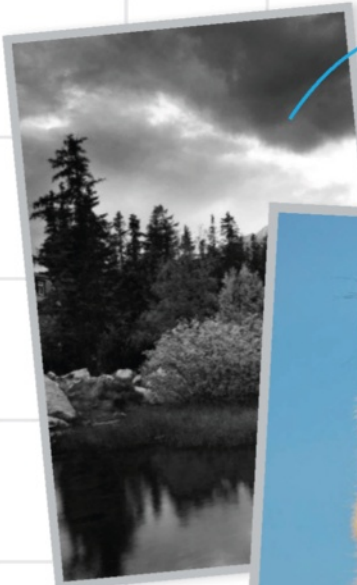
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