

# Photoshop Hints and Tips by Sheila Haycox ARPS DPAGB EFIAP

The instructions below relate to CS6 but in most cases will work in other versions of Adobe and Elements. Elements does not have the facility to use some of the operations below.

To show your Layer Palettes and other palettes go to Window on the top row of Photoshop and tick as necessary. Any palettes not required, untick. I always have open: Layers, Actions, History, Properties. Make sure the Options and Tools are Ticked.

## Preferences in Photoshop

Checking how you want to set up your working space. Go to Menu Bar and Edit, Preferences, General. Keep pressing next to find the boxes you need to alter. Some that need altering and would recommend you alter.

**Interface:** I prefer the colour theme to be grey rather than Adobe's default.

**File Handling:** I tend to put Always in the Maximize PSD and PSB File Compatibility.

**Performance:** *Memory Usage:* Make sure you have in use as much Ram as you can, I tend to put mine at the maximum range, as long as you have enough space left for using a printer and other operations. *Scratch Disks:* If you have a second internal disk that has a good amount of space then set this to your Scratch Disk. *History & Cache:* I have set the History to 100 because I have enough memory. Set the Cache levels to 6.

**Cursors:** I like to tick the Normal Brush Tip but make sure you tick the **Show Crosshair in Brush Tip** and also **Tick Precise**.

**Units & Rulers:** I like inches.

## Raw Converter

Raw has a lot of exposure latitude – highlight detail can be rescued much easier in Raw. A Raw image is like a negative, it will always be there even after you have opened and saved an image.

- A menu box will open which is the Raw Converter when you open a Raw image and I suggest you do the following operations.
- At the very bottom of the page in blue will show you which format it is set for and whether using 16 or 8 bit. **Please use 16 bit** this will use every single bit of information and stop any posterization, muddy shadows, noise and a difference in tonal range. Click on this Blue Line at the bottom to alter the Bit size and if you want a different ppi or colour space.

- Next click on the **Lens Correction Button** and open the Color Tab and tick to Remove Chromatic Aberration then open the Profile Tab and tick Enable Lens Profile, this will find your Camera and Lens. (You can make a Preset for these two operations)
- Go back to the **Basic Button** – first tab at top and look at your Histogram, all the Sliders can then be altered to your taste. Just experiment if using for the first time. My order to use the Sliders is usually:  
Clarity: Tend to have Clarity around 25  
Vibrance: Up a little.  
Saturation: Do not touch  
Highlights and Shadows: Alter as necessary watching the Histogram whilst doing it.  
**Tip:** By holding down the Alt Key whilst using the Sliders you can see when they are overexposed/underexposed. Just make them so that the screen shows black.  
Expose and Contrast: Adjust as necessary  
Temperature: Adjust as necessary
- **Noise Button called Detail:** Adjust can be made here if you have used a high ISO but you need to zoom into the image 100%

There are other operations that can be done using the top tool bar, for instance Cropping the image to your taste. Using the Adjustment Brush and Graduated Filter, Spot Removal and Straighten. Just experiment.

You can open a Raw image several times. For example make the adjustments for just the sky only and open. Next time make the adjustments for the base only and open. These two images can then be merged together using Layer Masks.

## Image Size for Printing

You will need to check your image size for printing. On the **Menu Bar go to Image, Image Size** (Elements it is Image, Resize, Image Size). For quality you **must not tick the resample box**, this must be unchecked. If you resample, (which is fine for emailing), then you interpolate the pixels and quality is lost. Obviously if you are doing a “manipulated/derivative” image then this will not matter. There is a bracket joining the size and resolution together, so whatever box you alter then the others will alter accordingly. Cameras download as either 72dpi, 180dpi, 240dpi and if you have opened in Raw and set the ppi to 300 then this will be the figure shown in the Resolution Box. So you should see. If you want to **print an image say 11 x 7.3** which is roughly A4 then **change either the width or height to one of this figures and the resolution with automatically change to a higher amount** depending on your camera quality.

The Document Size on the Image Size Menu Box is only for Printing, disregard this section if you are resizing an image for the Web. Instructions below.

## Sizing for Emails, Competitions & Saving for Web

You can use this method for saving Digital Images for competitions, the web, Flickr, Facebook and email. Very often you are asked for maximum width and maximum height in pixels so below is based on 1400 x 1050 pixels.

- First of all make sure you have Saved your Original Image, I suggest you make a duplicate of your original so that you do not mess up all your hard work by going to **Image, Duplicate**. Use this one to work on for your email image
- Now go to **Image, Image Size** (in **Elements** its Image, Resize, Image Size)
- **Tick the Resample Image box** which is at the bottom of the menu. (This is only for resizing down, i.e. for projecting, do not tick this box if you are going to Print)
- **Pixel Dimensions area at the top**. Do not worry about the Document Size box, this is only for printing.
- For a horizontal image change the width to 1400 pixels and make sure that the Height is no more than 1050 pixels  
For a vertical image change the Height to 1050 pixels.
- The image on the screen will suddenly go smaller, do not worry, if you click on the Zoom Tool and set to Fit Screen the image will still look ok – the percentage showing will be indicated on the tab at the top of your image.
- **Go to File, Save for Web**. A Save for Web Screen will show and the default in Photoshop is usually Gifs. In the Preset Box change to JPEG High. You can Click on 2-up, 4-up which shows you the different file sizes the image is displayed at different qualities. I tend to use High to Maximum.
- Make sure the Optimized box is ticked, which should be the default setting. The Progressive and ICC Profile are left unticked.
- **Convert to sRGB, is usually ticked by default**. This is important as when projected in a competition or on the web the colours will be more accurate.
- Click OK on the top right to save. It will automatically save as a JPEG. Save this JPEG where required on your computer under a name required. Perhaps a good idea to have a folder saying Email Images or Competition Images..
- If you made a duplicate, no worries, close down this image **without saving**. If however you used your original image, this will of course still be the smaller one so when trying to close so No when the box comes up do you wish to save.
- You now have two copies of the image on your computer. One the larger size and one JPEG (a much smaller one, not suitable for printing but ideal for emailing).

## Sharpening use High Pass

- Duplicate Layer
- Filter, Other, High Pass. Adjust slider to your requirements, trial and error. Start with the Radius at about 4. You should see some detail on the screen which looks like an embossed grey image. Click OK
- Change Blending Mode in the Layer Palette – try soft light to start with.
- If you feel the sharpening is too much then reduce this layer's opacity.

- Alternatively you can selectively sharpen certain areas only by removing the areas not requiring sharpening by using a layer mask.
- If you wish to increase the sharpening then just duplicate the Layer just made this will double the sharpening.

## Sharpening for Digital Projection and Email

Decide on the end result size required; 1024 x 768 as an example. Make your image exactly double this size by changing your image to 2048 x 1536. Go to Filter and Sharpen (not unsharp). Click on Sharpen, then go to the Filter again and click on Sharpen again, then go to the Filter and click on Sharpen again, i.e. 3 times. The image will look awful. Sometimes an image only has to be sharpened twice.

You then reduce your image to the required size, i.e. 1024 x 768, instantly the image looks OK. Save as required, I usually use the Save for Web settings making sure its profile is set to sRGB. However if you are using the image for say the WCPF with the different sizes and in TIFF format then you will have to save normally.

## Adjustments to your image - Levels, Curves etc.

To use Levels, Curves and other similar adjustments, **do not go to Image, Adjustments and change there.** Once an alteration is made it cannot be undone. Please use the Adjustment Layers which can be found in the Layers Palette. These are on the bottom of the Palette but in Elements they are shown at the top of the Palette.

By using the Adjustment Layers in the Layers Palette you immediately create a layer which can be returned to and altered as necessary.

### Levels

To alter the image if too dark or light. Open your **Layers Palette** which can be found by clicking on Window at the top of Photoshop and click on Layer. On the Layer Palette at the bottom there is a **small circle that is black and white**, which will say Create New File or Adjustment Layer if you hold your mouse over the symbol. Click on this and go to **Levels**. A Levels box will open which can be dragged anywhere in your workspace by clicking on to the top and holding down the mouse then dragging. The three sliders half way down will alter your histogram – the left hand slider is the shadows, middle slider is midtones and right hand slider is highlights. Usually you will find your highlights are OK and only the midtones need to be altered. Sliding the middle one to the left will lighten the midtones. Clicking on the Channel drop down box will show Red, Green and Blue. This can also be altered as required. Click OK. You will now have a Level layer in your Layers Palette which can be accessed again by double clicking in the black & white circle. You can make as many Adjustment Levels as required. Clicking on the eye will switch on/off.

## Quick Mask

- This is another good method of selecting areas but you do need to change the default setting in Photoshop of the Quick Mask. **In the Tool Bar at the very bottom there is a small square with a circle in the middle. Double click on this and a menu will appear, you need to click on Selected Areas.** I myself choose the opacity to be 100% because I like to see clearly where I have brushed. Click OK.
- Making sure you are on the correct layer, usually the Background Layer, click on the Quick Mask (Q). You are now in Quick Mask and will find that the Background has turned Grey from the Normal Blue.
- Go to your **Brush Tool** and make sure the brush is soft.
- Brush over the area you wish to select – the area will go red.
- Now click Quick Mask (Q) again at the bottom of the Tool Bar.
- Marching ants will appear, these are the selected areas.
- This method is useful for selecting parts of a picture roughly without selecting very accurately.
- You can then make the necessary adjustments using Levels or Curves.
- The **Gradient Tool** is also very good and easy to use in Quick Mask Mode, it will give a gradual fading in of the adjustment you are using. This can be used to all sides of the images, straight, vertically, diagonally. Instead of using the Brush go to the Gradient Tool (G), make sure the Gradient setting is Foreground to Transparent in the box in the Options Bar.

## Actions

- Open the Action Palette by clicking on the Window Drop down Box in Photoshop and clicking on Actions.
- In the top right there is a small drop down arrow beside some lines, it's very small, click here and click on New Set.
- With your Image Open and on the layer you wish to work on
- Again Click on small arrow (top right) to in the Actions Palette and choose **NEW ACTION**
- Type in a NAME you wish to call the action and click on **RECORD**
- **Go through the whole action you wish to record**
- **You can do a crop via the crop tool. (this will probably need a pause put beside it – more later)**
- **Or you can change the size of the image by just going to Image size and clicking on resample and changing one of the pixel figures.**
- You can add a border/stroke
- You can do an Adjustment/Levels alteration, however if you do this you will need on the first time you record to make a very slight adjustment in order for the Levels Adjustment Menu to open. **(this will need a Pause button – more later)**
- **You can insert a Stop by right clicking and inserting a stop, this is useful if you wish to do something with the image whilst the action is not working, i.e. inserting a name, perhaps doing an additional adjustment.**

- **You can Save for Web or Save to your folder and close the image as the final action. (If you have altered the image drastically and do not wish to lose the original image then please make sure when you close the image as the final action you do not Save it)**
- **When all your actions have been completed**, immediately click on **STOP to end recording** (BLACK square at bottom of Actions Palette, next to RED recording button).
- You now have an Action ready.

To run the Action, click on the Named Action you have created and just press the Play button which is little arrow at the bottom of the Action Menu.

As mentioned above a Pause can be inserted, this is done after you have pressed the Stop button and completed your actions. Find your named Action. There will be some greyed out squares, click on the square/squares you wish the actions to pause.

When you play your action and if it has a stop in it when it gets to the Stop you just click on Stop and do your adjustments. You will find that in the Action Box the next action is highlighted, you then just press the play button again to make the action continue.

If you have several pictures to do at once then go to File, Automate and click on Batch and a Menu Box will open. There are several ways to do this.

- In the Action box click on the drop down box and choose the one you want.
- In the Source you can choose the File Folder by clicking on Browse.
- Again in the destination click browse and choose the folder.
- Click OK

All the files you have chosen will get all the moves you wish to make in your action and if you have chosen to pause an action you can then let's say alter the crop, alter the levels and just click OK after each alteration.

## **Dodge and Burn in Overlay Mode**

- Dodge and Burn In Overlay Layer without destroying the original image.
- Open the image. Make a new layer by clicking on Create a New Layer in the Layer Palette.
- Go to Edit, Fill with **50% Gray**. Make sure the Opacity is still at 100% and the Preserve Transparency is not ticked.
- At top of Layer Palette change the blending mode to **Overlay**.
- Dodge or burn as necessary.

Any dodging will not alter the original image. You can delete the layer if required or click off. This Overlay Layer is virtually a transparent layer but one that can be worked on.

## **Changing Shape of a Brush**

Sometimes it is necessary to change a brush shape, i.e. bits of grass etc. Go to your Brush Palette, this can be found by going to Window at the top of Photoshop and clicking on Brush. A Palette will open and by clicking on Brush Tip Shape you will see a diagram to the right, this can be altered as required.

## **Canvas Size**

Sometimes it may be necessary to make your Canvas larger but not the image, i.e. putting a border around the image.

- In the layer palette make a duplicate layer of the image
- With the background highlighted go to Image, Canvas Size.
- If a border is required then leave the white area in the middle.
- By clicking on Relative you can just add say 1 inch on both the height and width, by unchecking the Relative you can change the size to an exact amount required, i.e. 16" x 12". Change to size and colour required. Click OK
- Go to layer palette and click on the duplicate layer. By pressing Ctrl whilst you click on the layer thumbnail the marching ants will appear around the image exactly, you can then make your necessary borders by going to Select, Modify and Expand as required.

## **Curved Horizon**

- Make into a layer or duplicate the background and work on that layer.
- Go to Edit, Transform, Warp (or you can just click on Transform and the symbol in the Options Bar will show which can be clicked on to swap from normal Transform to Warp).
- A grid will open. Click on the image and move as necessary.

## **Layers**

A layer can be an Adjustment Layer (Levels, Hue & Saturation, Black & White plus others) or another Object, or a duplicate of your background layer. These are just piled on top of each other on which masks can be added in order to "erase away" only some part of that layer which will enable to see some of the layer below. An adjustment layer is what it says, it is for altering the exposure, contrast, hue, colours etc.

## **Clipping Masks**

Sometimes you may need to do an adjustment to a layer without affecting other layers. You will need to make it a Clipping Mask. Do this by clicking on the first symbol at the bottom (square with drop down arrow) of the Adjustment Layer you are using. This will just apply the Levels/Curves to the layer below only.

## Layer Masks

As an exercise find a figure or item that you wish to cut out from an image and place in another image. (Make a rough selection using a selection tool on the item you wish to use; copy it and paste it, into the image you will be working on)

- Open the Layer Palette and make sure the item you have pasted into the image is active, i.e. it should be highlighted blue.
- To make a layer mask go to the Layer Palette and click on the square with the white circle in the middle.
- Make sure that the Layer Mask is active, i.e. there will be a small square with the white circle on display next to the eye icon in the layer you are working on. If there is a picture of a brush then you are not in the layer mask. Just click on the white square then the layer mask is active.
- Make sure the background colours are black/white. The black does the erasing and the white puts it back
- Choose a brush in the Tool Box – providing the Cap Lock is not on, use the square brackets to increase or decrease the size of the brush. Use whatever opacity you like, suggest you start with 100% to see what happens. (The opacity can be changed in the Options Bar or just press a number to change the percentage, 4 = 40%). With the black on top in the background colours gently erase the parts you don't want. If you go wrong change the background colour to white and go over it again, magic, what you have rubbed out returns.
- With practise you can rub small parts out at a time and with the opacity of the brush reduced to different percentages you can blend in the layer into the underlying layer. Again, practise with any image to see how it works.

## Cropping

- An image can be cropped to a specified size by entering the amounts in the boxes on the Options Bar
- It can also be used to keep the same proportions if you prefer.

## Stroke – small white border outlining image

- Set the foreground colour to white (found at the bottom of your tool bar).
- Select the image by going to Select All.
- Go to Edit, Stroke (colour should be white as previously set however this can be changed in the colour box)
- Width 1 px
- Location: Click on Inside
- Click OK

## Borders

- Drag the Background Layer down to New Layer (Ctrl J) (You will now have two layers of the same picture.

- Go to Image, Canvas size on the Menu Bar
- A box will open, leave the white area in the middle, click on Relative and in the width and height put say .5 inches. The background colour will now be the colour that is depicted in your Foreground colour in the Tool Box
- On the Background Copy put the mouse on the picture area and Ctrl Click. Marching ants will now surround the image.
- Now Click on the bottom layer (Background). This means you will be able to get rid of the layer if all goes wrong. The copy background will still be there without the border in place.
- Go to Select, Modify and Expand. Expand however many pixels you require the border to be outside the image
- The colour of the border will be whatever is showing on the Foreground Colour in the Tool Box. To change this to a complimentary colour in the image place mouse on the Foreground Colour in the Tool box and then click the mouse on the colour required in the image. Click OK.
- Go to Edit. Stroke and select pixel size. 1 or 2 is sufficient..

## Merge Visible and leaving intact the layers below

- Click on to the top layer
- Go to the bottom of the Layer Palette and click on New Layer
- Right click on the top layer and go down to Merge Visible
- Whilst clicking on Merge Visible hold down on the Alt key at the same time.
- The whole of the image including the layers will appear in the New Layer.

## Adding a Sky using Blend If

Select the two pictures to be blended. Like a landscape and sky. Drag and drop the "sky" into the main picture. Leave the sky picture on top of the landscape and move it into the correct position. Go to **Layer Palette and click the small arrow top right**. In the drop down menu select **Blending Options**. In the Blend If box, bottom of the panel, click and slide the pointer in the **UNDERLYING LAYER**. By moving the pointer you will blend the underlying layer into the top layer. By **ALT/CLICKING the pointer** you can split the operation to extend the Blending Range. When happy with the results click OK.

## Horizon, making it level

Go to the Tool Box and select the Eyedropper tool which will go out showing other tools. Select the measuring tool. Click on to the image and draw across the horizon that is sloping. This will then show a Symbol in the Options Bar called Straighten Layer, click on this.

## Cloning

This is ideal to get rid of spots, the odd small detail not required. The Clone tool is in the Tool Box fifth down on the left (Elements, just above the Hand). I find it difficult to explain the clone tool, it's really a lot of practise. However, by

clicking on the Clone Tool (make sure it's not the Pattern Clone Stamp) and choosing the appropriate brush, (try a hard one then a soft one and see the difference), Hold **down the Alt. key** and **click with the mouse on the area you wish to pick up the colour/image**. i.e. spotting out marks in a sky, click near the spot to find the pixel colour nearest to the spot. Now click with your brush on the spot at say 50% opacity. Its difficult to say which opacity, soft/hard brush you should use, its practise. If you make sure the **Align box** in the **Options Bar is ticked**, then every time you click with the mouse the area that you first identified with the Alt key will move in conjunction with the brush. If you uncheck the Align Box then it will always use the part you first identified with the Alt. key.

## Doing a Test Strip

- Open and make a new A4 sheet of paper to the dpi using to print the main image
- Use marquee square tool to make a long thin test area
- Make sure the background colours are black and white
- Go to Gradient Tool – in Linear mode
- Make sure it's the 3rd one along – Black to White
- Drag the Gradient Tool top to bottom
- Go to Adjustment Layers and Posterize and set at 25
- Go to Info palette and gradually work way down to give 10% gradations
- Print to see if blacks are blocked out, should be able to see the 25 gradations when printed

## Smart Objects

Very useful for the control of filters. With your background image highlighted make a copy of this by dragging down to the New Layer within the Layers Palette or shortcut Ctrl J. With the copy background highlighted go to Layer, down to Smart Objects and click on Convert to Smart Object (it might say in CS2 Group to Smart Object).

You can now work on this Smart Object Layer. Go to a Filter, i.e. Motion Blur and say OK. If then at anytime you wish to change the settings of this particular filter you can double click on the filter name you used, in this instance Motion Blur and alter again. You can do as many filters as you wish to the layer. You are then able to click on or off the filters to see the different effects by clicking on the little eye symbol.

## Colour Caste using the Histogram

Open Histogram box and change the Histogram to colours. To correct the caste always add to it, never take away.

Go to Image > Adjustment > Photo Filter. Choose the opposite to the cast and move the slider in the Density change whilst looking at the Histogram as you do it. i.e. reducing red by putting in cyan.

Cyan – Red

Blue – Yellow

Magenta – Green

## Focus Stacking

- Select the images taken with different focusing points
- Open all the selected images in Raw and make the necessary adjustments then Select all and synchronise.
- Either Save or Click done and Close Raw
- Open Bridge and Select the adjusted images
- Click on Tools in Bridge and go down to Photoshop and Load Files into Photoshop Layers
- This will open all the images into how many layers as there are images selected
- Select all the layers
- Go to Edit, Auto Align Layers
- Now go to Edit Auto Blend Layers
- Make sure Stack Images and Seamless Tones and Colors are Checked
- You can now click the layers on and off to see what has been done, layer masks have been created
- Create a new empty layer about the layers
- Right click on this layer and go down to Merge Visible and whilst holding the mouse on Merge Visible press the Alt Key at the same time, this will make a new layer with all the layers below blended together.
- You can now work on this layer for blemishes, exposure etc. etc.

Any dodging will not alter the original image. You can delete the layer if required or click off. This Overlay Layer is virtually a transparent layer but one that can be worked on

## Crop – Hide or Delete

- There are times when you may wish to crop an image to a certain size i.e. for AV's but not too sure where exactly.
- Make your Background a Layer – double click on Background and a menu box will appear. It will say Layer 0 – Click OK
- Go to your Crop Tool and enter the size you require.
- Crop in an area as required/roughly
- You can then drag this layer around but you will see that the edges have not been cropped. This layer for instance can be dragged to another image but you will still be able to move it around and see the edges so that you can place the image in exactly the place required.

## Red Eye

Go to the Layer Palette and click on the bottom and make new layer. It's the little icon that looks like a book and says create a new layer if you hold the mouse over the icon. Change the Blending mode to Colour. You will see that at the top of the layer palette it says Normal. Click here to change it to Colour. Now go to the Brush in the Tool Box (not the history brush) and make it soft and change the size to fit the eye. You can change the size of the brush by tapping the square bracket keys [up and down] to increase or decrease. Brush out the red eye. The Layer can now be merged down to the Background Layer.