5

Pathways to Editing in Elements

In earlier editions of Photoshop Elements all editing and enhancement actions were centered around the tools and features in the Full Edit workspace. More recently Elements has provided the photographer with several different levels of editing to choose from. Photoshop Elements 6 introduces a new option to this group, the Guided Edit, which combines both instructions and tools in a single panel. All editing approaches have their own strengths and challenges and in this chapter I will overview each option in turn. In addition I will introduce the advanced concept of 'non-destructive editing' using some of Elements most powerful tools and a couple of features that we sneakily borrow from Photoshop. So let's get started!

Editing Options:

The options can be grouped around five different approaches to the task:

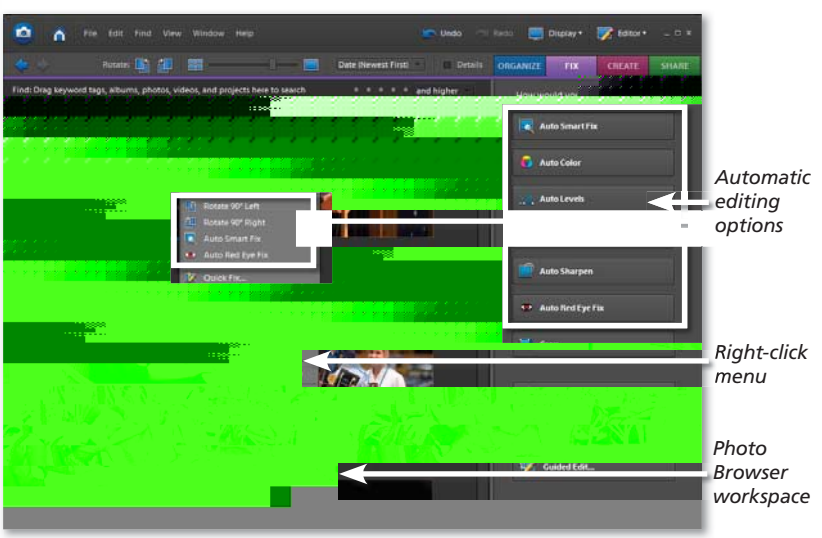
- Automatic,
- Semi-automatic,
- Manual,
- Guided edits,
- Non-destructive and
- Photoshop assisted.

Auto editing summary:

- Simple control using Auto Smart Fix, Auto Color, Auto Levels, Auto Contrast, Auto Sharpen and Auto Red Eye Fix
- Rotate left or right options
- Manual cropping
- Changes applied automatically
- New users start here for good, quick results
- Automatic control of: contrast, color, shadow and highlight detail and sharpness.

Automatic editing

The simplest tools are almost always fully automatic with the user having little control over the final results. These are the types of color, contrast, brightness and sharpness controls that are available in the Photo Browser either via option in the Edit menu, from the right-click pop-up menu or displayed in the new Fix panel on the right of the Organizer workspace. These options provide a great place to start if you are new to digital photography and want good results quickly and easily, but experienced users will find the lack of control frustrating.



Auto-editing options >> *The range of auto enhance options have been expanded for version 6 of Photoshop Elements and now includes Auto Color, Auto Levels, Auto Contrast and Auto Sharpen options along with Auto Smart Fix and Auto Red Eye Fix features found in the previous version. The features are grouped in the new Fix panel and include Rotate buttons and a new Crop option.*

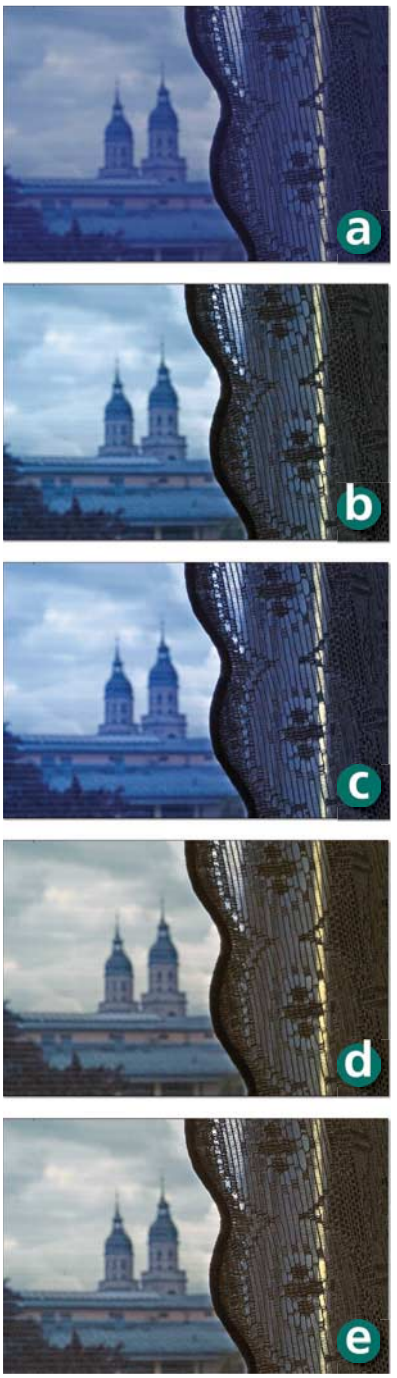
Auto Contrast is designed to correct images that are either too contrasty (black and white) or too flat (dull and lifeless). Unlike the Auto Levels feature, Auto Contrast ensures that the brightest and darkest pixels in the picture (irrespective of their colors) are converted to pure white and black. In doing so all the tones in between are expanded or contracted to fit.

Auto Color concentrates on correcting the color in the midtones of the picture and adjusting the contrast by reassigning the brightest and darkest pixels to white and black.

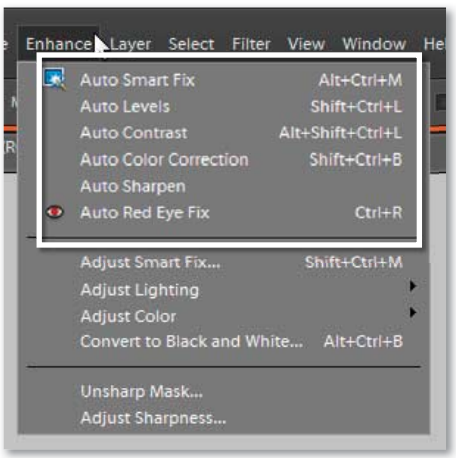
Auto Levels is similar to Auto Contrast in that it maps the brightest and darkest parts of the image to white and black but differs in that each individual color channel is treated separately. In the process of mapping the tones (adjusting the contrast) in the red, green and blue channels, dominant color casts can be neutralized.

Auto Sharpen applies a set amount of sharpening to the photo. Most photographers prefer to be able to adjust the degree of sharpening that is applied to their images and so would avoid using this auto feature in favor of a more manual approach involving the Editor: Enhance > Adjust Sharpness filter.

Sometimes such automatic fixes do not produce the results that you expect. In these scenarios use the Undo (Edit > Undo) command to reverse the changes and try one of the manual correction tools detailed in the next section.



Auto options examples >>
(a) Original uncorrected image.
(b) After applying Auto Levels.
(c) After applying Auto Contrast.
(d) After applying Auto Color Correction.
(e) After Auto Color and Auto Sharpen



Auto options also found in Edit >> *The Fix panel's auto features can also be found in the Enhance menu of the Full Edit or Quick Fix workspaces.*

Automating editing of several pictures at once

It's true that shooting digital has meant that many photographers have saved the time that they used to spend in the darkroom processing their images. The flip side to this coin is that now we while away the hours in on-screen production instead. Surely with all the power of the modern computer and flexibility of Elements there must be quicker ways to process files. Well yes there is!

5.04 Processing multiple files

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0 | Difficulty level – Basic
Related techniques – 5.05, 5.06

Photoshop Elements users are able to automate a variety of editing functions with the Process Multiple Files feature located in the File menu of the Full Edit workspace. The feature is like a dedicated batch processing tool that can name, size, enhance, label and save in a specific file format a group of photos stored in a folder or selected via the file browser or Open Files.

The dialog's options include:

Source – Files to be processed can be stored in a single folder, the files currently open in the workspace, pictures in the Project Bin or images multi-selected in the file browser.

Destination – Sets the location where processed files will be saved.

File naming – Options for naming or renaming of selected files including a range of preset naming styles.

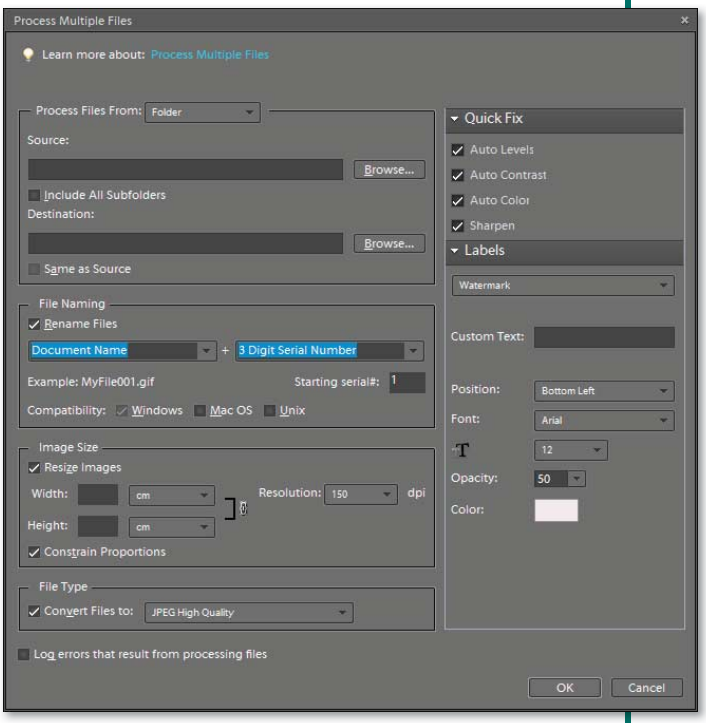
Image Size – Specify size and resolution changes after choosing the unit of measure to work with from the drop-down menu. Proportions can be constrained.

File type – Select the file format that processed files will be saved or converted to.

Quick Fix enhancement – Use the options here to apply automatic enhancement of the files being processed.

Add Labels – Add caption or file name labels to each of the processed files. Also contains an option for watermarking the pictures.

After setting the options for each of the sections in the dialog press the OK button to process the pictures.



Batch processing of files >> *Elements users can automate the application of basic enhancement and editing features to a group of files using the Process Multiple Files feature located in the Full Edit workspace.*

5.05 Multi-selection editing

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0 | Difficulty level – Basic | Related techniques – 5.04, 5.06

Another method of applying automatic changes to several photos at once is to multi-select photos in the Photo Browser workspace then choose an editing option from the right-click pop-up menu or the new Fix panel. There are a multitude of options available using this approach, all of which provide quick editing changes to the selected photos. For best results always apply critical edits and enhancements manually, but multi-select edits are particularly useful if you want to process a bunch of files quickly. The added bonus is that the edited versions of the pictures are not saved over the original file, but rather they are kept in a Version Set, so that it is always possible to extract the original file, or reverse the enhancement changes, if need be.

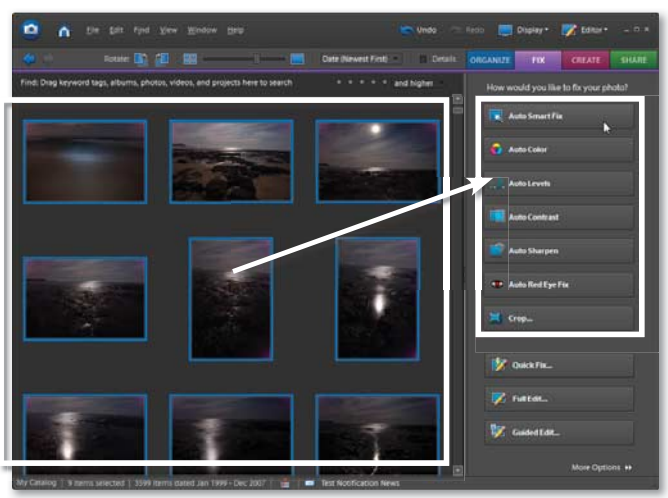
Keystrokes for fast edits of multi-selected photos

Rotate Photos 90° Left – Ctrl + Left

Rotate Photos 90° Right – Ctrl + Right

Auto Smart Fix – Ctrl + Alt + M

Auto Red Eye Fix – Ctrl + R



Auto enhance several files >> *The editing and enhancement options located on the right-click menu or the new Fix panel in the Photo Browser workspace can be just as easily applied to several photos that have been multi-selected as to a single picture.*

This method is a quick and easy means of making automatic changes to a group of photos.

5.06 Bulk Red Eye fixing

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0 | Difficulty level – Basic
Related techniques – 5.04, 5.05

As well as being able to apply the Auto Red Eye Fix feature to individual photos this correction option is also available in the Adobe Photo Downloader dialog. So now it is possible to download pictures from your camera, or import them from a folder, and at the same time be searching the images for red eye and correcting it when it is present. This is a great time saver if you regularly photograph with on-camera flash but as always for the absolute best results apply the Red Eye Fix yourself manually.

Auto Red Eye Fix >> *The Auto Red Eye fix option is also available in dialogs that are used to import or download pictures onto your computer. Selecting this option instructs Elements to search and correct any occurrence of red eye in the photos you are loading into the Organizer workspace.*

Semi-automatic editing

The second level of features sits in the middle ground between total user control and total program control over the editing results. The tools in this group are primarily available in the Quick Fix editor but also encompass some of the more automatic or easy-to-use controls available in the Full Edit workspace. Move to these tools once you feel more confident with the digital photography process as a whole (downloading, making some changes, saving and then printing) and find yourself wanting to do more with your pictures. Again, for the advanced user the tools listed here will provide a degree of frustration as the amount of control over the results is still limited.

5.07 Using the Quick Fix Editor

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0 | Difficulty level – Basic
Related techniques – 5.08, 5.09

The Quick Fix Editor contains a reduced tool, feature set designed to facilitate the fast application of the most frequent of all enhancement activities undertaken by the digital photographer.

The Zoom, Hand, Crop and Red Eye Removal tools and the Quick Selection Tool and Selection Brush are located in a small toolbar to the left of the screen and are available for standard image editing changes; the fixed Palette Bin, to the right, contains the necessary features to alter and correct the lighting, color and sharpness of your pictures. Rotate buttons are located at the bottom of the dialog.

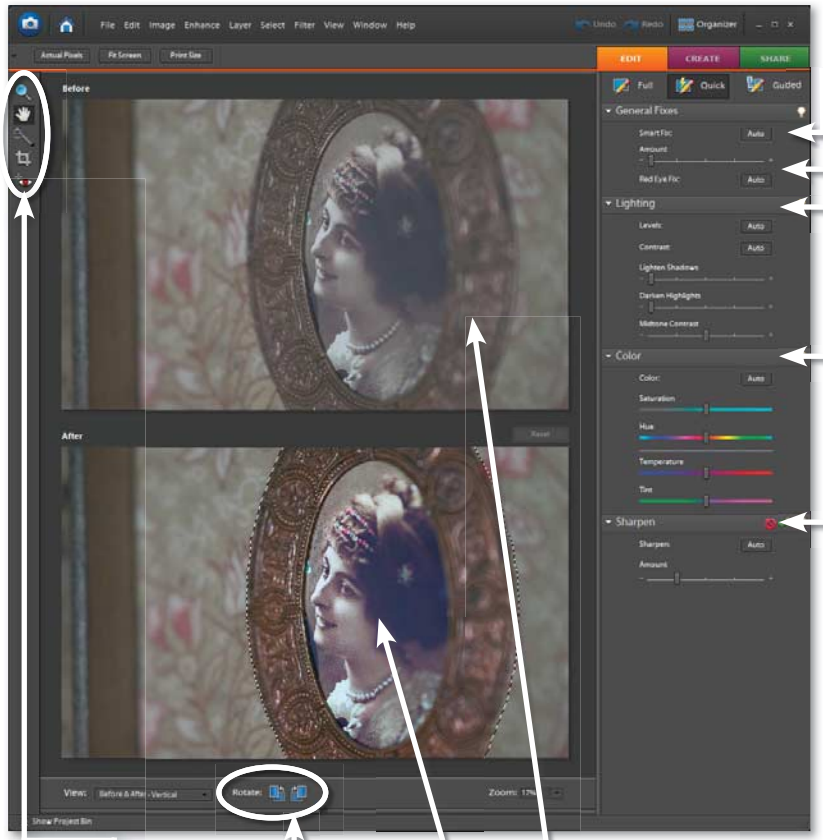
One of the best aspects of the Elements 5.0 version of this editing option is the fact that the user can choose to apply each image change automatically, via the Auto button, or manually using the supplied sliders. This approach provides both convenience and speed when needed, with the option of a manual override for those difficult editing tasks.

The adjustment features are arranged in a fashion that provides a model enhancement workflow to follow – simply move from the top to the bottom of the tools starting with smart fixing and red eye correction, working through lighting and color alterations and, lastly, applying sharpening.

There is no doubt that for making speedy adjustments of your favorite images with the option of some override control, the Quick Fix editor is a great place to start. And the best thing of all is you can see the before and after results of your changes on screen via the zoomable preview windows.

Semi-auto editing summary:

- Middle-level control using the features in the Quick Fix and Full Edit workspaces
- Some changes applied automatically, others via a user controlled slider
- New users progress here with experience and understanding
- Control of: cropping, rotation, contrast, color, saturation, hue, temperature, tint, shadow and highlight detail, red eye, midtone contrast and sharpening.



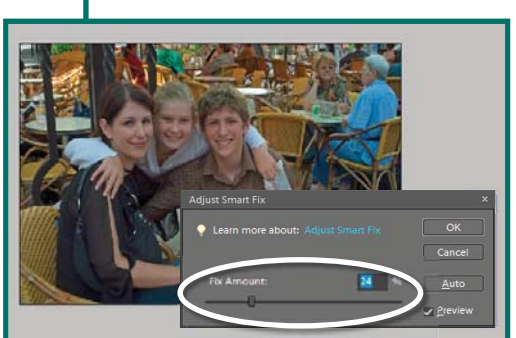
The Quick Fix Editor >> *The Quick Fix editor combines the major automatic enhancing tools with manual override slider controls and great before and after preview pictures.*

5.08 Adjust Smart Fix

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0 | Difficulty level – Basic
Related techniques – 5.01, 5.03

The Adjust Smart Fix (Editor: Enhance > Adjust Smart Fix) version of the Auto Smart Fix feature provides the same control over color, shadow and highlight detail but with the addition of a slider control that determines the strength of the enhancement changes. Moving the slider from left to right will gradually increase the amount of correction applied to your picture. This approach provides much more control over the enhancement process and is a preferable way to work with all but the most general photos.

The Auto button, also located in the dialog, automatically applies a fix amount of 100% and provides a similar result to selecting Enhance > Auto Smart Fix.



Adjust Smart Fix >> *The Adjust Smart Fix option provides a slider control for the auto enhancement effects applied by the feature.*

Manual editing

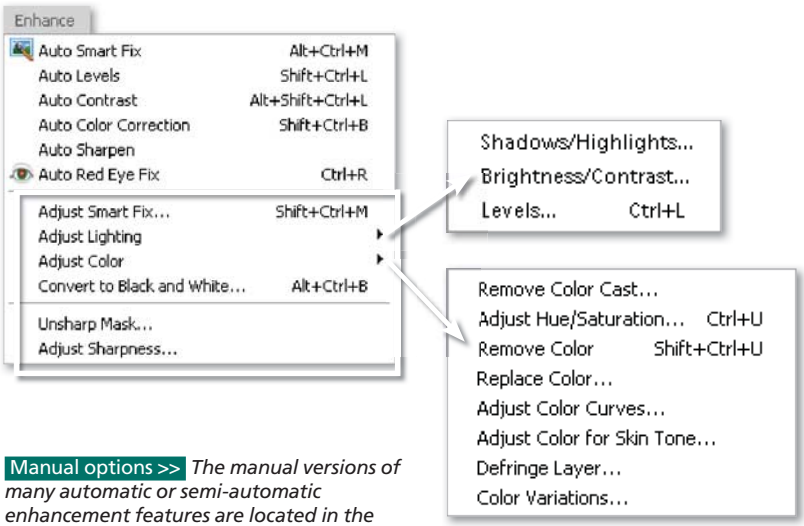
The next approach to editing includes tools and features designed to give the user professional control over their editing and enhancement tasks. Many of the features detailed here are very similar to, and in some cases exactly the same as, those found in the Photoshop itself. These tools provide the best quality changes available with Elements, but they do require a greater level of understanding and knowledge to use effectively.

The extra editing and enhancement power of these tools comes at a cost of the user bearing all responsibility for the end results. Whereas the automatic nature of many of the features found in the other two groups means that bad results are rare, misusing or over-applying the tools found here can actually make your picture worse. This shouldn't stop you from venturing into these waters, but it does mean that it is a good idea to apply these tools cautiously rather than with a heavy hand. In fact once most users develop a good level of understanding and skill with the manual tools and features in the Full Edit workspace they seldom return to using automatic enhancement options, preferring to remain in complete control over the pixels in their pictures.

5.09 The Full Edit workspace

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0 | Difficulty level – Basic
Related techniques – 5.07

The Full Edit contains the features and tools used for the most sophisticated of the three different editing pathways provided in Elements 6. The groups of tools included in this workspace are designed to give the user professional control over all their editing and enhancement tasks.

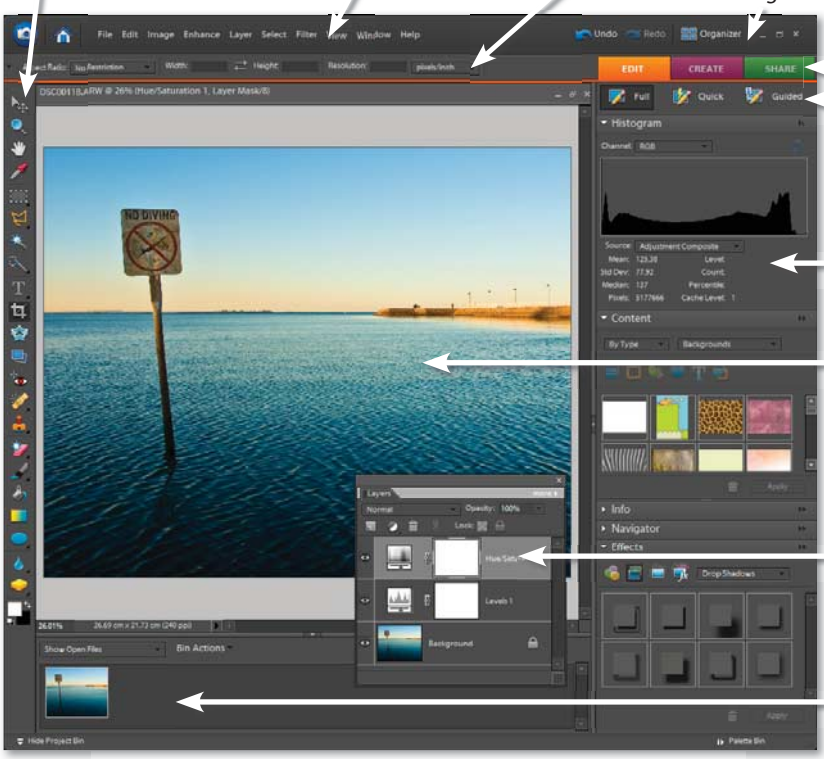


Manual options >> *The manual versions of many automatic or semi-automatic enhancement features are located in the lower part of the Enhance menu.*

Manual editing summary:

- Sophisticated control using the features in the Full Edit workspace
- Most editing changes applied manually via settings input by the user
- Great for complex editing and enhancement tasks performed by more experienced users
- The most control of all the major editing and enhancing of your digital photographs.

As well as providing manual versions of all the automatic enhancement options that we have looked at so far, the Full Edit workspace also includes tools that enable the user to isolate where and how the editing changes are applied to photos. For this reason most advanced techniques detailed in the ensuing chapters of this book make use of the extensive tool and feature set provided in this Editor workspace.



The Full Edit >> *Advanced editing and enhancement techniques are generally applied in the Full Edit workspace.*

Auto/manual feature equivalents

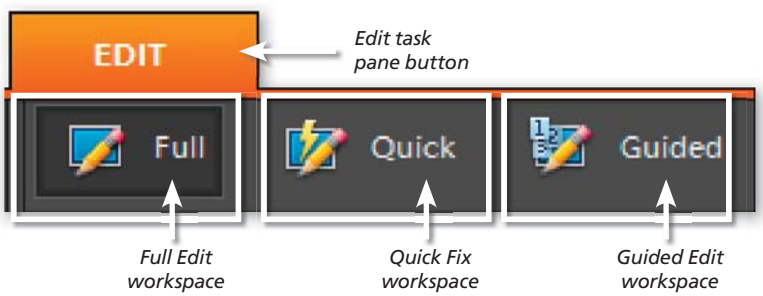
Automatic feature	Manual equivalent
Auto Levels	Levels or Shadows/Highlights or Brightness/Contrast or Adjust Color Curves
Auto Color Correction	Remove Color Cast or Color Variations or Adjust Color For Skin Tones
Auto Contrast	Levels or Shadows/Highlights or Brightness/Contrast or Adjust Color Curves
Auto Red Eye Fix	Red Eye Removal Tool
Auto Smart Fix	Levels or Shadows/Highlights or Brightness/Contrast or Adjust Color Curves together with Remove Color Cast or Color Variations or Adjust Color For Skin Tones
Auto Sharpen	Unsharp Mask or Adjust Sharpness

Manual pathway choices >> *Photoshop Elements provides manual alternatives for all its automatic and semi-automatic editing options. This table summarizes the specific manual features that can be used as alternatives.*

New editing options in Photoshop Elements 6

The Guided Edit workspace is new for Photoshop Elements 6 and combines the step-by-step instructions that used to be found in the How To feature with the direct enhancement control of the Quick Fix edit space.

As part of the interface changes in Photoshop Elements 6, the guys at Adobe have grouped features, tools and options into several task headings. The Task Pane and the associated headings are displayed on the right of the Element's workspaces with different options available in each. In the Edit workspace these include Edit, Create and Share, where as in the Organizer the choices include Organize, Fix, Create and Share. With all the management, editing, enhancement, and production options now available in Elements the inclusion of these task based headings helps the user navigate through the various phases of photographic workflow.



Three edit options >>
Along with a new interface the Adobe engineers have created a third editing workspace to help users with their enhancement activities.

Nowhere are these changes more evident than in the Edit workspace where Elements users now have the luxury of three different ways of conducting their enhancement activities. Once you have selected the Edit heading you can then choose between Full Edit, Quick Fix and Guided Edit workspaces. We have already looked at the Full Edit and Quick Fix workspaces so let's now turn our attention to the newly created Guided Edit option.

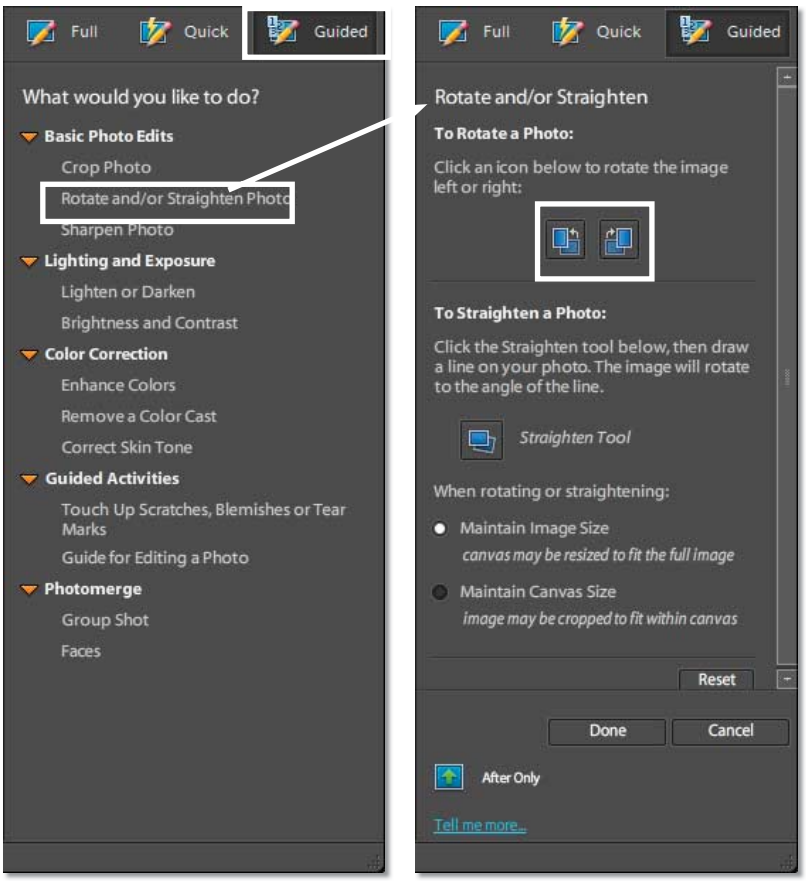
5.10 Guided Edits

Suitable for Elements – 6 | Difficulty level – Basic

Selecting the Guided tab from the Edit task pane displays a list of the tutorials that ship with Elements. Clicking a tutorial heading will reveal subheadings for specific topics. Selecting a heading topic will display a set of instructions together with associated buttons and controls. For instance, in the example on the next page, two Rotate buttons (rotate left and rotate right) are displayed in the panel. Clicking either of these buttons will perform the same action as selecting the same options from the Image > Rotate menu.

Guided edit is best used for learning how to use new tools and techniques or, as is the case with the new Photomerge Faces and Group Shot options, as a way to step through complex techniques.

The Guided Activities > Guide for Editing a Photo entry contains a collection of guided edits that are useful when correcting images. These include crop, lighten, darken, touch up and sharpen.



Guided Edits >> *The Guided edit workspace combines step-by-step instruction with embedded enhancement or edit controls.*

Non Destructive editing, the professional's choice

Though not strictly an editing mode in itself, the idea of making changes to your images in a non-destructive fashion is key to all professional workflows. For this reason I feel that it is appropriate to introduce the idea here. When digital photography was in its infancy, all changes made to the photo were applied directly to the original pixels captured by the camera or scanner. At the time, the abilities of the software and hardware allowed frustratingly few alternatives to this destructive way of working.

For me, as a photographer who trained when film was king, I found the idea of changing my captured image rather distressing, as I would never have altered, cut, or intentionally marked my negatives, so why should I have to work this way when opting for a digital workflow. This would lead me to make countless copies of my original images to ensure that I had at least one copy of the primary capture file to refer to at all times.

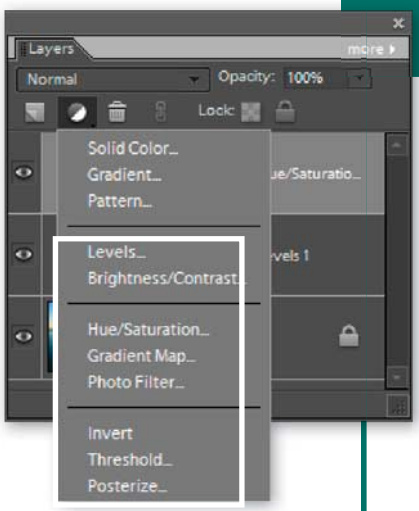
Thankfully times have changed and digital photography is now well out of 'short trousers' and software and hardware has developed to a stage where many of the editing activities we regularly carry out in Photoshop Elements can be executed non-destructively, that is, without altering the pixels of the captured file.

Throughout the rest of the text I will use non-destructive editing and enhancement techniques where ever possible, but to get you up to speed, here I introduce a selection of tools, techniques and features that can be employed to enhance your images non-destructively.

5.11 Adjustment Layers

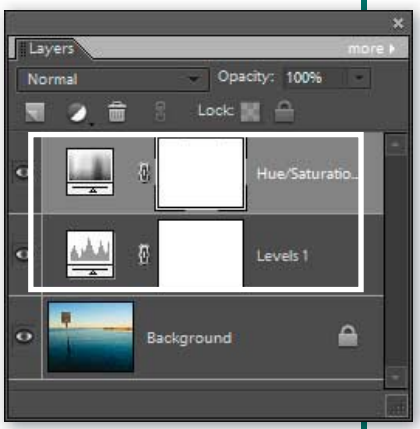
Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0 | Difficulty level – Basic

These special layers alter the look of the layers that are arranged below them in the layers stack. They act as a filter through which the lower layers are viewed. You can use adjustment layers to perform many of the enhancement tasks that you would normally apply directly to an image layer without changing the image itself. When you choose to use an Adjustment Layer rather than applying the enhancement change directly to the image you are choosing to work non-destructively.



Adjustment Layers >> *Photoshop Elements contains eight different adjustment layers.*

Creating an adjustment layer adds a new entry to the layers palette just above the active layer. The adjustment layer entry contains two thumbnails – the Layer Thumbnail on the left and the Layer Mask thumbnail on the right. Double clicking the Layer Thumbnail will display the adjustment layer's dialog. For instance, in the case of a Levels adjustment layer, double clicking the thumbnail will display the Levels dialog. This provides the user with the ability to make adjustments to existing settings, or even rest the dialog, at any time. The Layer Mask is used to customize where and how the adjustment layer's changes are applied. See Technique 5.14 for more details.



Adjustments applied downwards >> *Adjustment layers alter the look of the image layers that are positioned below them in the layers palette.*

Elements contains eight different types of adjustment layers which are grouped together with the fill layers under the Create Adjustment Layer button in the Layers palette. The same options can also be found in the Layer > New Adjustment Layer menu. They are:

Levels – Adjusts the tones in the picture.

Brightness/Contrast – Lightens, darkens and controls contrast.

Hue/Saturation – Changes the color and strength of color in photos.

Gradient Map – Changes the photo so that all the tones are mapped to the values of a selected gradient.

Photo Filter – Reproduces the color changes of traditional photo filters.

Invert – Reverses all the tones in a picture, producing a negative effect.

Threshold – Converts the picture to pure black and white with no grays present at all.

Posterize – Reduces the total number of colors in a picture and creates a flat paint (or poster)-like effect.

Placing an adjustment layer at the top of a stack of layers will ensure that the editing changes will be applied to the content of all the layers beneath. If instead of changing all the lower layers you want to restrict the effects of the adjustment layer to a single layer then after selecting the adjustment layer, pick the Group with Previous option from the Layer menu. This will indent the adjustment layer in the palette and, more importantly, 'group' the adjustment with the layer immediately below it. This technique is an important one as it changes the way that adjustment layers work and allows their non-destructive editing powers to be applied to individual image layers only.

Gradient Map adjustment layer being applied to both image layers

Gradient Map adjustment layer grouped with Layer 1 so that the convert to gray change only occurs in one layer only

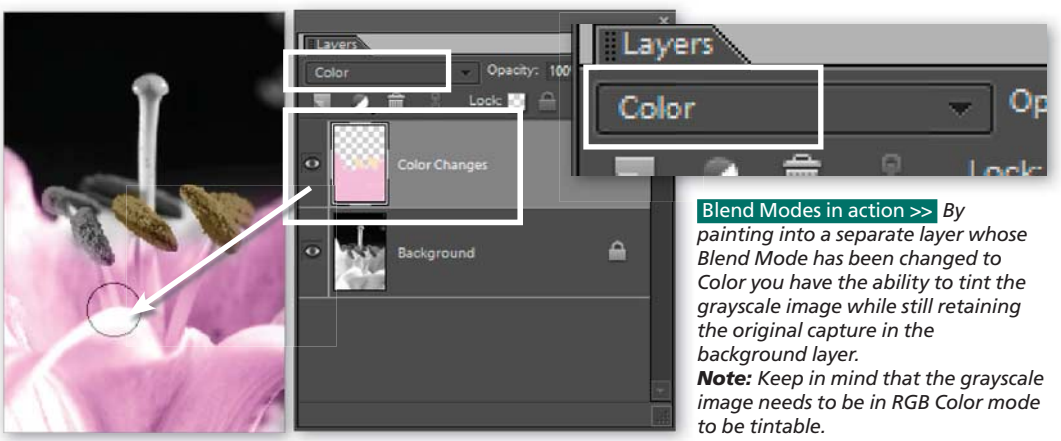
Restricting adjustments to a single layer >> *To link the changes made via an adjustment layer to a single layer only, make sure that the adjustment layer is directly above the image layer to be changed and then with the adjustment layer active, choose Layer > Group with Previous or Ctrl G.*
Pro Tip: *Alt click on the border between a layer and the one below it to Group With Previous.*

5.12 'All Layers' tool options

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0 | Difficulty level – Basic

Removing dust and scratches is a regular correction activity for digital photographers, irrespective of if they are working on scanned historical photos, or recently captured portraits, where the client wants slight skin blemishes disguised. These changes are often performed with Elements' features such as the Clone Stamp tool, Spot Healing and Healing Brushes on the main or background layer. Working this way changes the original pixels forever. A non-destructive work around that provides the same results, makes use of the 'All Layers' options of these tools to keep the changes in a separate retouching layer that sits above the background.

grayscale image to simulate the look of a hand colored photo of old. You may first think that the task is a simple one, select the color, choose the Brush tool and then paint over the grayscale background layer. Do this and you will get a paint stroke of solid color, that obscures all the detail of the original image. Not the look that we are wanting! However, if you change the Brush's Blend Mode (using the drop-down menu in the tool's option bar) to Color then the tool magically applies color in direct proportion as tone of the background image. All detail is retained in the underlying image, but this detail is colored the hue of the foreground swatch. This is the magic of the Color Blend Mode.



Blend Modes in action >> *By painting into a separate layer whose Blend Mode has been changed to Color you have the ability to tint the grayscale image while still retaining the original capture in the background layer.*
Note: *Keep in mind that the grayscale image needs to be in RGB Color mode to be tintable.*

That said, in applying the coloring directly to the background layer we are destructively altering the primary pixels. So let's rework the technique so that it still uses the Blend Mode but protects the original image. Start by creating a new layer to house the color changes. Next change the Blend Mode of the layer to Color. Select the foreground color and then the Brush tool. Make sure that the Blend Mode of the Brush is back to the default setting (Normal). With the new color changes layer selected, paint over the image. Notice that the same coloring effect is produced but this time the Blend Mode change is applied to the layer not the Brush.

5.14 Layer Masking

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0 | Difficulty level – Basic

As we have already seen each time you add a fill or adjustment layer to an image two thumbnails are created in the Layers palette. The one on the left controls the settings for the adjustment layer. The thumbnail on the right represents the layer's mask that controls how the adjustment is applied to the picture.

The mask is a grayscale image. When it's colored white no part of the adjustment layer's effects are masked or held back from the picture below. The full changes are applied to the image. Conversely if the mask thumbnail is totally black then none of the layer's effects are applied to the picture. Shades of gray equate to various levels of transparency. In this way, the enhancement changes produced via an adjustment, or fill layer, can be selectively applied, or merged, with the layers beneath by painting (in black and white and gray) onto the layer mask.

Masking >> *Modifying the mask associated with adjustment layers provides the option to customize where the effects of the layer are applied to the image layer. Using varying levels of gray will also change the strength of the enhancement effect. A darker gray will produce less noticeable changes whereas a light gray will allow more of the adjustment layer's effects to be seen.*

By default the layer mask is set to white so that the adjustment effect is fully applied. To customize the application of the effect, click onto the Layer Mask thumbnail (so that there is a second line border surround in the thumbnail), select the Brush tool and choose black, white or gray as the foreground color. Now paint over the surface of the image. Notice that the adjustment layer effect is reduced or eliminated in the areas where you paint with gray or black. Also notice that the mask thumbnail now displays the painted strokes. It is also worth noting that preselecting an area before creating the adjustment layer will result in a Mask the shape and size of the selection.

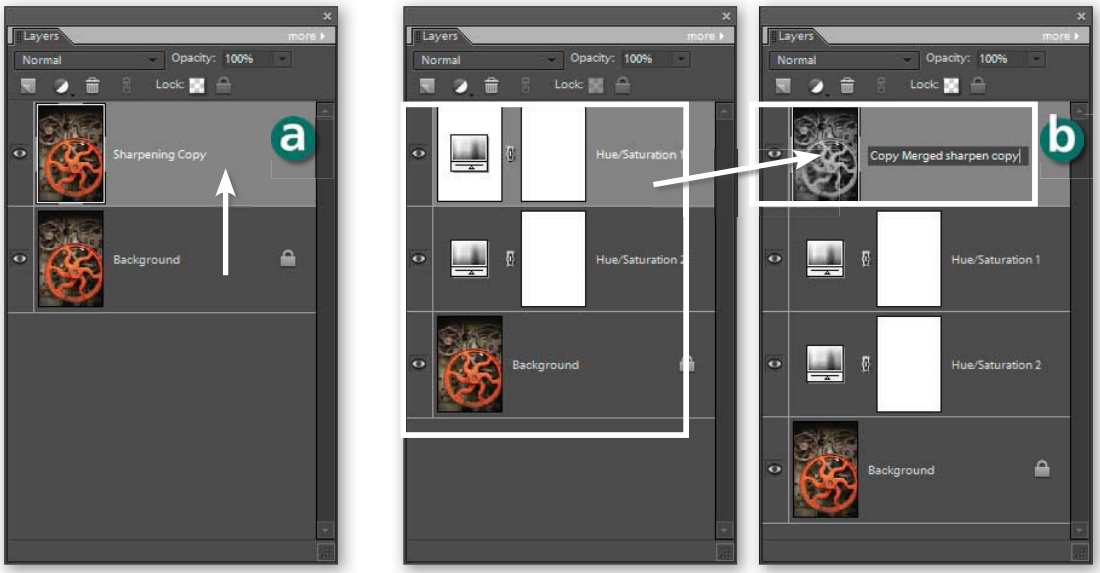
Many professionals use masks on a regular basis to help customize the application of adjustment layer changes and also for governing how the picture parts in separate image layers interact. Though Photoshop Elements doesn't contain all the masking power that its bigger brother Photoshop does, customizing adjustment layers is no problem and, with a simple 'work around' (see Technique 5.12), it is also possible to provide more masking functionality than is generally available to the Elements user.

5.15 Duplicate layers

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0 | Difficulty level – Basic

In situations where none of the above techniques can be used to edit non-destructively it will be necessary to use other means to preserve the integrity of the original file. A clear example of this is when it comes time to add some sharpening to your photos. Now by design, applying a sharpening filter will pretty much change all the pixels in your photo in order to increase the clarity of the picture, which makes the action very destructive and one that should be avoided. So what other route can we take to provide the same results?

Well the simplest way is to duplicate the image layer, and then apply the sharpening filter to the copy, rather than the original layer. This way the primary pixels (in the original image layer) are



Editing layer copies >> *When there is no other option than apply editing changes directly to the image layer then the best way to ensure that your original pixels are protected is to duplicate the image layer and execute the changes on the copy (a). With multi-layer documents use the Copy Merge command to duplicate the contents of all layers first before applying the editing changes to the merge layer (b).*

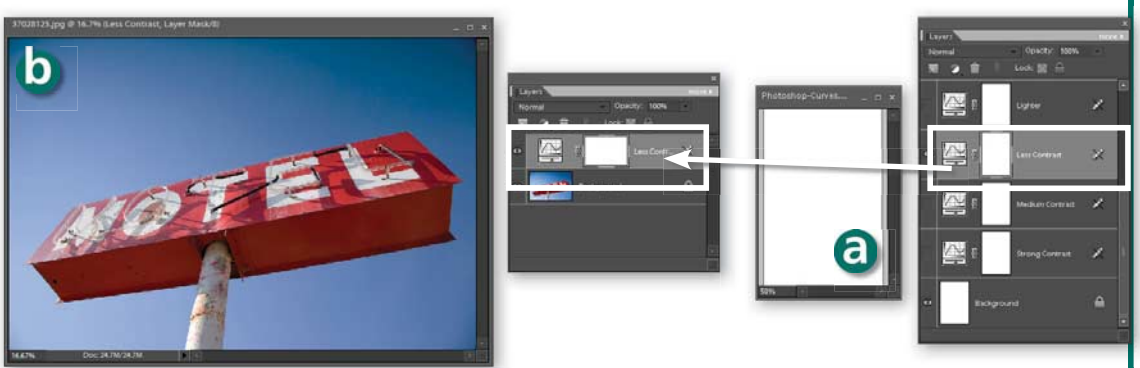
protected and displaying the sharpened result is a simple matter of ensuring that it resides at the top of the layer stack. Alternatively the original can be hidden from view (click the 'eye' icon on the left of the layer entry).

In the case of a document that contains multiple image layers or a combination of image and adjustment layers some photographers would merge all the image layers before copying the resultant layer and applying the sharpen filter. The act of merging means that you will lose the ability to change the settings in the adjustment layers or edit any of the image layers independently. So forget the Layer > Merge Layers command, instead select the whole document using the Select > Select All command and then copy the contents of all the layers to memory by choosing the Copy Merged option from the Edit menu. Next select the uppermost layer in the layer stack and select Edit > Paste. This action inserts a new layer at the top of the stack that is the combination of all the layers in the document. This layer can then be filtered without fear of damaging the original photo.

Secret Pro Tip: Instead of doing the select all, copy merged, paste to top of stack steps, pros simply add a new empty layer at the top of the stack and then do Shift-Alt-Control + E which is a undocumented Stamp Visible command that unfortunately has no menu equivalent.

Giving Elements a helping hand

It is true that Photoshop Elements contains a dazzling array of editing and enhancement tools. In fact, many would say that if you can't find a tool to perform the changes you desire, then you are not really trying. But as we have seen, just having the right tool to hand is not the whole story, it is also important to ensure that you are able to use the tools in a way that preserves the pixels first captured, and produces the best quality enhancements possible. This often means using the tools we have in ways that perhaps were not envisaged when the features were first designed. The next few techniques extend the editing abilities of Photoshop Elements beyond the standard workflow approaches advocated in most texts. These options may not need to be used with every photo, but they will certainly come in handy with specific enhancement tasks and will become an important technique in your editing kit bag.



Photoshop features in Elements >> *Users can add to the functionality of Elements by opening Photoshop documents (a) containing Photoshop only adjustment layers (e.g. Curves, Selective Color, Black and White and Color Balance) and then dragging these layers to their Element documents (b). The adjustment layer's enhancements will be applied to the document, but the settings for these layers can not be altered in Elements.*

5.16 Borrowing Photoshop features

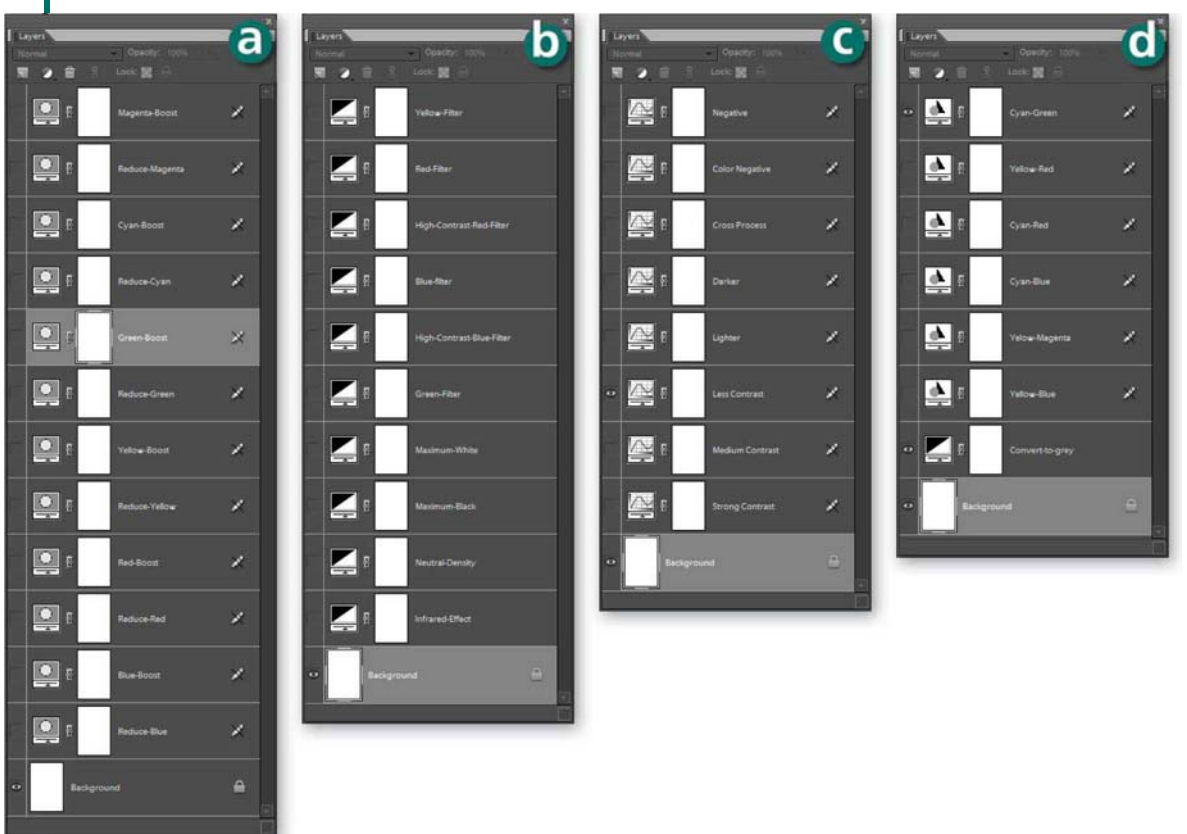
Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0 | Difficulty level – Basic

Because of the professional nature of Photoshop, it contains a range of high level features and tools that are not available in Elements. This said, both Photoshop and Elements contain a range of tools and features and technology in common and much of the nuts and bolts that sit behind the scenes are shared by both programs. This cross over leads to an interesting situation where some features that are Photoshop only can be borrow to be used, in a limited way, in Elements.

We have been talking about the importance of Adjustment Layers as a way of non-destructive enhancing and, as you would expect, Photoshop contains more adjustment layer options than Elements. Of interest to us particularly are the Curves, Color Balance, Selective Color and the new Black and White adjustment layers. Though these features can't be invoked or Adjusted in Elements a Photoshop document containing the layers can be opened in the program. The Adjustment layers

can be seen as separate entries in the layers palette, but for the most part, the settings can't be adjusted, Black and White is an exception, but more on this later. When this scenario is coupled with the fact that Photoshop adjustment layers can be dragged from one document to another, users end up with the ability to apply non Elements based adjustment layers to Elements documents. Cool!

In practice, I created several documents in Photoshop containing Adjustment Layers with a variety of settings, but no image data. I then open these files in Elements and drag the required adjustment layer from the Photoshop document to the Elements file and hey presto, the enhancement is applied. Now that is fine for me, as I have both Photoshop and Elements on my machine, but I know that most readers do not have this luxury, so for this reason I have created several different Photoshop documents that are available from the book's website that you can use for your own projects.



Photoshop donor documents >> *The book's website contains several documents created in Photoshop that can be used to donate Photoshop only adjustment layers to your Elements document.*
(a) Photoshop-Selective-Color.psd
(b) Photoshop-Convert-to-gray.psd
(c)Photoshop-Curves.psd
(d) Photoshop-Split-Tones.psd

Photoshop donor documents

The book's website contains four key Photoshop donor documents (the files containing adjustment layers which can be dragged to Elements documents) designed to be used for specific enhancement activities. Each document includes multiple layers for a single adjustment feature. The settings for each layer differ providing a bunch of preset enhancement options that can be applied to Elements documents by simply dragging and dropping the layer to the Elements files. The donor documents include:

Photoshop-Selective-Color.psd – For boosting or reducing specific colors using the Selective Color Adjustment layer.

Photoshop-Convert-to-Gray.psd – Monochrome conversions using the Black and White feature.

Photoshop-Curves.psd – Curves based adjustment of the tones in your photos.

Photoshop-Split-Tones.psd – Sophisticated split toning effects using Photoshop's Color Balance adjustment layer to separately tone highlights and shadows.

5.17 Advanced layer masks

Suitable for Elements – 6, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0 | Difficulty level – Basic

Along with extra adjustment layers Photoshop also contains advanced masking options that are not available in Elements. We have already see how it is possible to use the masks associated with Adjustment Layers to customize where the layer's effects are applied, well, Photoshop allows users to

Image layer masks >> *Though not designed for this purpose it is possible to use the Layer Masks associated with adjustment layers to mask image layers. In the example above the sky from the upper image layer is HomeSite with the foreground detail from the layer below using the layer mask in the Levels adjustment layer. For this to occur the adjustment layer needs to be created with no settings and then the upper image layer is Grouped with the adjustment layer.*

use masks with image layers to provide the same level of customization when montaging. When a mask is attached to an image layer, it can be used to adjust which parts of the upper layer are visible, and which parts are hidden from view allowing the contents of the layer beneath to show through. This is a very handy function as it is provides non-destructive montage abilities. Elements users can access such masking abilities by highjacking the mask associated with an adjustment layer and use it with an image layer.

The process involves adding an adjustment layer, with no settings applied, to the layers stack in between the two image layers to be montaged. Next the upper image layer is grouped with the no-settings adjustment layer. This action essentially links the image layer with the mask of the adjustment layer. As the mask by default is white, the upper image layer is displayed in full, but paint onto the layer mask with a black (or gray) brush and details of the lower layer will be revealed. By using black, white and gray paint strokes on the mask it is possible to non-destructively mix the contents of the two image layers. Look for examples of this technique throughout the next chapters.