

Editor – Usual Workflow Steps

Outline of the usual workflow steps when using the Editor in Photoshop Elements. You need to answer a sequence of questions regarding the image being edited to decide which tools to apply. Reference: Adobe Photoshop Help Center, Phillip Andrews book, and the e-book *123di.com*.

Quick Fix

This only works about 50% of the time for me (your personal standard may be higher or lower). It is a good way for a new user to become acquainted with some of the Editor's tools, but we want you to learn how to use the tools better. The before and after views are helpful to judge the changes you have made. So hopefully you will learn and appreciate the Standard Editor.

Crop

Can you improve the image's composition by cropping? This is your last chance to improve upon what you framed in the camera's viewfinder display.

Does the image need to be straightened or rotated?

You have the option to crop to standard size proportions (e.g. 4 X 6).

Adjust Lighting

Can I adjust the whole photo, or do I need to select parts of it and adjust them separately?
Yes – continue with Levels, etc.

No – use Adjustment Layers after making selections (see below).

Levels is the single most useful tool. Levels is the 80/20 tool of image enhancement. You often get 80% of the desired improvement with only 20% of the effort. Auto Levels often works well, so you should try it first.

Study the Histogram that Levels brings up. It is your best indicator of exposure problems and the compromise your camera made. Get used to doing this routinely for all your photos, and you will understand correct exposure and Levels much better.

Does shadow detail need to be lightened? (Shadows/Highlights)

Adjust Colors

Can I adjust the whole photo, or do I need to select parts of it and adjust them separately?
Yes – continue with Adjust Color menu choices.

No – use Adjustment Layers after making selections (see below).

Adjust Color for Skin Tone works well for portraits.

Remove Color Cast works if there is pure white, grey, or black somewhere in your image that you can click on.

Color Variations is next tool to try if the last two did not give the result you want.

Adjust Hue/Saturation is tricky, but sometimes works. Usually do NOT touch the Hue, but just try adjusting Saturation and Lightness.

Touch Up, Heal, Remove Junk, Edit

Scenic photo: Is there a power line or telephone pole you would like to get rid of? Use the Clone Stamp tool, and remember to Alt-click in the region you want to use as a source. Try the Spot Healing brush to remove any dust or small imperfections.

Portrait: Are there some blemishes that you can remove from your subject? Use the Healing Brush, and remember to Alt-click on the source point. Did the flash result in red eyes? Use the Red Eye Removal tool. Are there shadows or highlights on the subject's face? Use the Dodge and Burn tools.

Sharpen

Nature, architecture, and landscape photos usually benefit from using the Unsharp Mask to make details stand out. But don't overdo it!

Adjustment Layers

Is there a part of the image that I would like to adjust separate from the rest of it? (e.g. a person's face, a building façade, the sky, one flower, etc.)

Select that part using your favorite Selection tool(s), and then create an Adjustment Layer. Among your choices are Levels, Brightness/Contrast, and Hue/Saturation. Levels is often the best choice.

Save

When you have finished editing your photo, and you are pleased with the results, then you need to save it.

If the result of your editing work does NOT contain layers you created, then just go to File > Save and the save dialog box will appear. You want to check on the *option boxes*: Include in the Organizer, and Save in Version Set with the Original.

The suggested file name is something like: "original name_edited-1.jpg". Accept this. The next dialog box appears for JPEG Options. Choose 10 or more for the Quality, and save it.

Does it contain layers? Do you want to work with these layers another day in the future? If so, save the file as a PSD file.

But if you are happy with the result of your editing and you are ready to go back to a JPG file, then first go to Layers > Flatten to accomplish this.