

FIX PHOTOS FAST



with
ACTIONS



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BONUS! Camera Raw—Photoshop Elements

Lesson 1: Camera Raw Caveat

A caveat is a warning of specific conditions or limitations. I love using Camera Raw for editing, and I think you will, too, but you need to be aware of a few things before you make the decision to use it.

As of this recording, there is no way to open photos in Camera Raw from within the Organizer, so if you're accustomed to using the Organizer, it might feel a little inconvenient to open your photos from the Editor.

Camera Raw was created to edit raw images that were not compressed by the camera, but Adobe soon made it possible for us to edit jpegs with Camera Raw as well. That's great because Camera Raw has such a stellar yet simple editing capability.

Editing Raw Files in Camera Raw

After adjusting and saving a raw image in Camera Raw:

- You will have a saved version of the edited .NEF file, looking much better.
- The raw file will look exactly the same.
- A new file with a .xmp extension will be added. This file keeps track of the changes made by Camera Raw so that when you open the raw file in Camera Raw again, it will look like the edited version instead of what you see here. So the changes made in Camera Raw are never actually applied to the original raw file.

Editing JPEG Files in Camera Raw

When you edit JPEG images in Camera Raw, you don't get a .xmp file.

- You'll end up with a saved copy of the file.
- The original file will look the same, but from now on, whether you open the original jpeg file from the Organizer or from the Editor—even if you don't ask it to open in Camera Raw, it will always open in Camera Raw first, and it will look like the fixed version, not the original. At this point, I'm not aware of any way to circumvent that, except to simply click the Open Image button inside Camera Raw—and then the photo will open in Photoshop Elements.
- If you want to get back to the way the original file looked, you can undo all the great changes you made in Camera Raw. Open the White Balance menu and choose "As Shot" and click on Default to get back to the original lighting. You can even undo a crop by selecting the Crop tool and pressing the Escape key.

In a way, this little idiosyncrasy, gives you a file that is virtually indestructible, unless you delete it, because it always keeps the information from the original file intact. As long as you understand that this is the way Camera Raw works with your files, and you're OK with that, then you can enjoy all the great features of Camera Raw for editing your photos! And most of the time you'll be opening the edited version that you saved as a jpeg or PSD file, and they DO open directly into the Editor.

Lesson 2: Editing Multiple Photos

Photos used in this lesson: Camera-Raw-01.jpg, Camera-Raw-02.jpg, Camera-Raw-03.jpg, Camera-Raw-04.jpg

Photoshop Elements has many ways to edit photos, one of which is the Adjustments panel in the Quick edit mode, but I find this panel less intuitive and less effective than using Camera Raw to edit my photos.

In this video we'll take a look at the Camera Raw interface and explore how to improve photos. You can edit one photo at a time in Camera Raw, but the real beauty is that you can edit multiple photos at one time in Camera Raw. This is especially helpful for a series of photos taken in the same location with the same lighting.

- To access Camera Raw, in the Editor choose File > Open in Camera Raw, or use the shortcut, Ctrl Alt O (Mac: Cmd Opt O).
- Navigate to the folder that contains the files you want to edit. Click on one thumbnail and Ctrl click (Mac: Cmd click) on additional thumbnails to select them. If the photos are in a row, you can click on the first one and Shift click on the last one to select all the thumbnails in between. Click Open.
- The Camera Raw interface will open, and your photos will be displayed in a row on the left side.
- I often start by clicking on the Auto setting. Sometimes that will fix the photo, and other times you'll need to make further adjustments using the sliders. If you don't like the result of Auto, click Default to return to the original setting.
- If you want to edit multiple similar photos at the same time, you need to select them all first. Use the same selection techniques you use on your computer, or, if all your photos are similar, click on the Select All button above the thumbnails. The image that was active at the time you select your thumbnails will be the photo that remains visible.
- With multiple photos you can also try the Auto button. Whatever you do to one photo will also be applied to the other photos, because they're all selected. These changes aren't permanent, however. You'll be able to adjust each photo later.

You'll see each photo thumbnail refresh to the new setting.

- The sliders on the right do a great job of correcting the photo.
- Above the panel on the right you'll see the histogram, which is especially helpful to know whether your photos are missing information on the right or left side of the histogram. Moving the Exposure slider and the Whites slider will affect the right side of the histogram. Moving the Blacks or Shadows sliders will affect the left side of the histogram. But mostly you'll just eyeball the photo and see what looks good to you.
- Many photos need more contrast. Move the Contrast slider to the right to add contrast.
- Clarity will add sharpness to your images.
- Vibrance and Saturation both increase or decrease the color saturation, but Vibrance stays away from skin tones, so if your photo has people in it, use Vibrance, if you need more color.
- Once you're satisfied with the look of the first photo, always click on each photo thumbnail to check the other photos. They may need a little bit of tweaking, but most of the work will already be done.

Lesson 3: Camera Raw Earlier Versions

Photoshop Elements 12 was the first version where you could edit more than one JPEG at a time in Camera Raw.

If you have an earlier versions, Photoshop Elements 11 or earlier, you can open and edit multiple Raw images, as I showed you in the video called Editing Multiple Photos, but you cannot open more than one JPEG image.

There is no specific command in the File menu to open photos in Camera Raw. Choose File > Open. If you happen to be opening Raw photos, they simply open up in Camera Raw, and you can select more than one Raw photo and edit them all at once.

To open a JPEG image in Camera Raw:

- Choose File > Open.
- When the Open dialog box comes up, look for the two menus: Enable and Format. The Format menu will be grayed out.
- Click on one JPEG image and the Format menu will become available.
- Open the Format menu and choose Camera Raw.
- If you Ctrl click (Mac: Cmd click) on an additional image, the Format menu will become unavailable again, so you're only allowed to open one JPEG in Camera Raw.

To recap:

- You can open as many Raw images as you want in Camera Raw, but you can only open one JPEG image at a time in Camera Raw, if you have Photoshop Elements 11 or earlier.

I'm not sure when Camera Raw was introduced, but I checked all the way back to Photoshop Elements 6, and it was there and worked the same way or very similarly to what I showed you in the video on Editing Multiple Photos in Camera Raw. There are a few minor differences between versions, such as whether or not photos that have been edited in Camera Raw will only open in Camera Raw from then on. That depends on the version, and it's something you can check out on your own.

In conclusion, if you see Camera Raw as a major way of editing your photos, you might either consider a Photoshop Elements upgrade, or you can begin to shoot your photos in a Raw format, if your camera has that capability.

Lesson 4: Adjusting White Balance

Camera-Raw-05-color.jpg, Camera-Raw-06-color.jpg, Camera-Raw-07-color.jpg, Camera-Raw-08-color.jpg

Camera Raw can often eradicate color cast, but other times it just doesn't seem to be able to balance the colors correctly, and I find it faster to use the Fix Photos FAST actions.

To adjust the white balance (color):

- Select all the thumbnails on the left that you want to adjust at the same time.
- Open the White Balance menu and choose Auto.
- If necessary, click the Auto link to fix the exposure as well.
- Fine tune the adjustment, if necessary.

Some photos don't respond as well to the white balance settings in Camera Raw, especially when there are one or more colors that are predominant and need to be reduced before color correction can work well. It's also difficult to adjust a photo that has a split white balance because of different lighting on different parts of the photo.

So the moral of the story is this: use what works best for your photo. Camera Raw is just one tool in your tool kit!

Lesson 5: Red Eye In Camera Raw

Photos used in this lesson: Camera-Raw-09-red-eye.jpg

Red Eye is actually quite easy to fix in Camera Raw.

- Click on the Red Eye tool in the Tool Bar across the top.
- For best results, click and drag an outline over the entire eye, including the eyebrow and part of the skin.
- Uncheck Show Overlay to get a better look.
- If the pupil is too light, move the Darken slider to adjust it.
- If you need to adjust the size, check Show Overlay and click and drag on the outline around the pupil to change the size.

Lesson 6: Photos With Contrast

Photos used in this lesson: Camera-Raw-10-high-contrast.jpg, Camera-Raw-11-high-contrast.jpg

If your photo has high contrast with dark areas, do your best to fix it in Camera Raw, but you may also need to open it in Photoshop Elements and apply an action:

- Move the Shadows slider to the right.
- Move the Contrast slider to the right to compensate for any loss in detail.
- Adjust the Exposure, if necessary.
- Select the photo thumbnails and click Open.
- Use one of the Fix Photos FAST actions to complete your editing. I used the action Shadows/Highlights: Mild two times and Contrast at 10% opacity.
- When you open photos from Camera Raw into Photoshop Elements, you will need to save them before closing.

Lesson 7: Saving Camera Raw Photos

Photos used in this lesson: Camera-Raw-13-save-images.jpg, Camera-Raw-14-save-images.jpg

When you're done editing photos in Camera Raw, you have several choices:

- You can click Done and the Camera Raw dialog box will close.
- If you click Cancel and click OK to the dialog box that comes up, all your changes will be lost.
- If you click Open Images, your selected images will open in Photoshop Elements. When you close those photos, Photoshop Elements will ask if you want to save the changes.
- Camera Raw does have a Save Images button that takes you to a dialog box for saving your photos. It looks like it would be a great choice, but here's the problem. The only format available is the DNG format created by Adobe, which isn't a widely used standard format, so I don't recommend that you save your photos here. Click Cancel.
- Instead, select your photo thumbnails and choose Open Images. Then you can save them as you normally do in Photoshop Elements.

Camera Raw is a great tool, and if you're like me, you'll use it often!

Lesson 8: Photo Workflow

I've given you a lot of tools in this class, so in this short video I want to tell you my personal workflow. Which editing tools do I use first? How do I decide where to start?

Like a river flowing downstream, I always go the path of least resistance. Whatever is easiest and fastest, that's the way I go, but I use all the techniques I've taught in this class at one time or another.

I quickly go through my photos and choose the ones I want to keep and discard the rest. (It's better to narrow down the number of photos to fix.) You can use the Organizer or a computer window with thumbnails to do this.

My next step is usually Camera Raw. I open similar photos in groups and edit them as a group first. If you're using an earlier version of Photoshop Elements that only allows one jpeg at a time for editing, it's going to take a little longer.

If you're satisfied with the photos, you'll want to open them in Photoshop Elements and save them as edited copies, or, if a photo needs more help, you can utilize the actions or any of the other tools. Examples would be too much contrast (my actions are wonderful for that!), too much noise because I had to lighten them too much (I use the Noiseware action and maybe some additional sharpening and contrast after Noiseware), a color balance problem (the actions are a big help with color) or maybe I just want to enhance the photos a bit more, or clone something, or use Content Aware, etc. etc. The actions handle the tough areas and provide the finishing touch.

About the only time I do something different is with black and white heritage photos—I don't usually start with Camera Raw with heritage photos. I go straight to the actions, and I often need to use the tools to correct or fix the photos in Photoshop Elements.

As you get better acquainted with the tools, you'll soon develop a workflow that is well suited to your style of editing, and you'll become a whiz at making your photos look great!