



By Linda Sattgast

Picture Perfect Gift Books—How To for Photoshop Elements, Pt 4 Create a PDF Book

Lesson 12: PDF Prep

Whenever you create a gift book or children's picture book, you might want to also turn it into a PDF. You might even want to create some books that are exclusively in a PDF format for viewing on a digital tablet or computer.

What I'm about to share with you regarding creating PDFs won't work for pages you create by uploading your photos to an online publisher's website and using their software to create your book pages. They're in the business of selling you books, not giving you a free PDF of your book!

Blurb.com is one online publishing company that will create a PDF for you, but they charge for it. It's a bit spendy, but it's still cheaper than ordering a bound book. There may be some other publishing companies who will also create a PDF, but I'm not familiar with any of them.

If you use Photoshop Elements to create your book pages and covers, then you can turn your book into a PDF. Before you can create the PDF, though, you must turn your pages into JPEGs. Here are a couple of situations you're likely to encounter when creating PDFs.

Resize the Cover

- Open the first image you want for your PDF. Usually that's the cover. If you made the cover for an online book company, chances are it's larger than the actual size of your book, since the printing company needs an extra flap to fold under the edge of the cover.
- An easy way to make the front and back cover the same size as your pages is to move your cover onto a document that's the same size as your pages.
- Open the template you used to create your pages or create a new document the size of your pages. (File > New > Blank File).
- Make your cover document active, and in the Layers panel click on the top layer and Shift click on the bottom cover layer to select all the cover layers.
- Get the Move tool. On your document, click and hold, add the Shift key, and drag the cover layers to the tab of the new page document and then down onto the new document, then let go of the mouse, and then let go of the Shift key to center the cover on the new document.
- If you happen to be using the Floating Windows view, you can do the same thing by pressing Shift and clicking and dragging directly from one document to another.
- Once you've moved the layers, use the Move tool to adjust the position of the cover layers as needed. To do that, click and hold on the document, add the Shift key to constrain my movement to a straight line and drag in the direction your cover needs to move. You may also need to adjust individual layers as I did with the background of the cover.
- Do the same thing with the back cover. The front and back covers need to be the same size as all the inside pages.

Double Spreads

Here's another situation where you'll need to make an adjustment. If you created your book with one or more double spreads of a single photo, you'll need to break these pages up into two pages. I teach how to do that in the How To section of the classroom in the video called Divide a Double Spread.

Sometimes, though, the pages would look weird cut in half. If that's the case, make only one page and choose the best part of the photo for that page. In a PDF, it doesn't matter if you cut out a page because you don't have spreads, so you don't need an even number of pages.

You may want to resize the image by pressing Ctrl T (Mac: Cmd T) to get the Transform options. Click and drag from a corner handle and click and drag inside the document to reposition it. Click on the green check mark to commit the change.

Now you're ready to save this as a JPEG for your PDF. If you print the book, of course you'll want to use the double spread page, but for a PDF, doing it this way will work just fine.

Turn Your Pages Into JPEGs

- For each document in your book, In the Menu Bar choose File > Save As. When the dialog box comes up, give your document a name, choose where you want to save it, and choose JPEG from the Format menu. Click Save.
- When the JPEG Options dialog box comes up,
 - choose None for the Matte,
 - enter a Quality of 10,
 - choose Baseline ("Standard"),
 - check the Preview box,
 - and click OK.

You'll need to save each page of your book as a JPEG, but generally you'll only need to resize the front and back cover and any double spreads.

Naming The JPEGs

Here's one final important note before we go to the next step: Be sure to name your pages so they end up numerically or alphabetically in the order you want them to appear in your PDF.

Lesson 09-13: Easy JPEG to PDF

Once you've turned all your layered book documents into single layer JPEGs, you're ready to create a PDF. There are multiple ways to create a PDF, so if you have a favorite website or software that does it, that's great. In this lesson I'm going to introduce you to a website that's elegant and simple and FREE to use to create PDFs—it's called SmallPDF.com. Here's the link:

<http://smallpdf.com/jpg-to-pdf>

If you end up using this website frequently, you might want to add it to your bookmarks to make it easy to access.

The website is simple and uncluttered. Since this is a free site, they do have ads to support the website. I actually clicked on an ad for PDF Editor by Wondershare, and downloaded a free trial. I found it very easy to use.

As of this recording the PDF Editor app by Wondershare costs about \$50 for Macs and about \$70 for the Windows version, or, if you want some more advanced features such as character recognition to make your PDFs searchable, you can choose PDFelement, the professional version by Wondershare for around \$100 for Macs and still just \$70 for Windows. They say they'll put a watermark on your PDF until you purchase the software, but I didn't detect a watermark when I exported a PDF in the trial version, so it's not real obvious if there is one—and it did a beautiful job making the PDF the exact size of my book.

Here's the URL for Wondershare:

http://www.wondershare.net/ad/remarketing/pdf_tool.html?gclid=CLuc2cr8g8gCFQ9rfgod6q0CyA

Having software like this would avoid some of the problems you might encounter creating a free PDF on the SmallPDF.com website, but there are ways around those problems, so let's just go through how to use SmallPDF.com to create your PDFs.

- Either drag and drop your images into the marquee or click on the Choose File button to navigate to your JPEGs so you can select them.
- It may take a few minutes to upload your book JPEGs depending on the number and resolution of the files.
- Once your files are uploaded, select your options. You can choose either US Letter or European A4 size, Portrait or Landscape, and whether you want a margin. When you're finished selecting your options, click Create PDF now!
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Size Limit

- SmallPDF.com only makes two sizes of PDFs, so you can only use sizes that fit up to a vertical or horizontal US paper size or European A4 paper size.
- A smaller size will expand to fit. When I uploaded 6x6 inch pages, they expanded to fit the space. After converting my 6x6 inch book to a PDF, I compared it to a PDF of an 8 x 8 inch page, and the final PDF dimensions were the same.
- A larger JPEG, however, won't shrink to fit the space. It simply cuts off part of the page. To get around this issue you can resize your documents before turning them into JPEGs. For example, you can resize a 12 x 12 inch page to 8 x 8 inches, which will fit just fine. You don't really need a PDF that's larger than 8 x 8 inches anyway since you can increase the viewing size.
- To resize a page, in the Menu Bar choose Image > Image Size. Make sure Resample Image is checked. Change the Width and Height fields to 8 Inches and click OK before saving as a JPEG copy. If you upload files with a sufficient resolution, you shouldn't have any problem making the PDF as big as you want to view it.

White Backgrounds

Another minor problem occurs when you use pages with a white background. The white background on the page blends in with the white PDF document, so it doesn't show the actual edges of the document when there's a white background.

That may or may not bother you, but if it does, you can always add a light stroke outline to your pages before turning them into a JPEG. The PDF will then show the outline which shows the page boundary.

Reducing File Size

Another minor inconvenience is that compression is a 2-step process. If you plan to email a PDF to someone, you don't want your PDF to be a large file size. You can upload the PDF you create to SmallPDF.com again and use the Compress PDF option at the top to compress it, and it does a very nice job of it.

PDF Actions

To help you prepare your files I've created a set of actions that will do the following:

- Convert your document to 150 ppi resolution, so the final PDF is smaller yet still looks good.
- Convert your document to 200 ppi resolution
- Convert a 12 x 12 inch document to 8 x 8 inches.
- You have the option to reduce the resolution at the same time to either 150 ppi or 200 ppi.
- And you can add a black stroke outline to a document.

Any of these options should be done before saving as a JPEG.

These actions work with the current version of Photoshop Elements and prior versions back to Photoshop Elements 11. Of course, any of this can be done manually. The actions just make it faster and more convenient.

Specialty Books

Here's another thought: you could create a PDF only book that you don't intend to print as an actual book. Create your pages using the two page sizes available on SmallPDF.com so they'll fit exactly when you upload them. You can use either size, US letter or A4, to create simple to complex pages or even spreads. I especially like using the horizontal A4 size, which is 11.693 inches x 8.273 inches, for picture book double spreads.

While it would be great to use a PDF creator that has all the bells and whistles, SmallPDF.com is a great free alternative for making PDFs of your books!