

Practical Photoshop



Things to do, and not to do, when editing images for submission.

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Why Photoshop?

- Photoshop is the industry standard; your editors will be working in the same program.
- Other programs, including Photoshop Elements, will do many of the same functions.
- Much of what is in Photoshop is of little use for working photographers and is better suited to design work.
- But, it does have features extremely valuable for photographers, too valuable to do without, features not always found in other programs.

Some Caveats!

1. We will be working with images already converted from RAW.
2. That you did RAW-only things, like white balance adjustment, before opening the image in Photoshop.
3. That all other “tweaks” such as sharpening and color adjustments are to be done in Photoshop, as the controls are much more precise.
4. The procedures we’ll do work the same whether your tweaking a JPEG file, or a TIFF.
5. That we’re working on images we’ll be sending to an editor, who doesn’t want them tweaked at all!

Why Tweak At All?

If editors don’t want manipulated images, why tweak at all?

Because you want them to choose your image, that’s why!

The level of tweaking we’ll do today should not be readily apparent until compared to the original.

If you over manipulate the image, if it looks like it has been “Photoshopped” you’ll ruin your chance of a sale.

Seven Things You Need To Know

1. How to adjust “exposure” via levels or other tools.
2. How to bring shadows alive.
3. How to remove dust specks.
4. How to adjust hue and saturation.
5. How to reduce digital noise.
6. How to sharpen images (and how not to!).
7. How to add copyright and caption info.

Some Things You’ll Want To Know

- How to create actions to automate repetitive tasks.
- How to resize images.
- How to resample (interpolate) images.
- How to create contact sheets.
- How to create instant web photo galleries.
- How to optimize for email, the web.

Keep Your Original Image Intact! Save New Files Correctly!

- If you're working with JPEG images, be careful not to save the modified image "over" your original image, or you'll lose (over-write) it.
- "File>Save" does just that.
- Either work on a duplicate layer (Layer>Duplicate Layer) – unless you "flatten" the image, it will save as to the default Photoshop (.psd) file extension or;
- Choose "File>Save As" and give the JPEG a new name.
- Always save JPEGs at the highest (12) setting.
- Multiple saves during a single editing session DOES NOT DEGRADE a JPEG image!
- If you started with a RAW file, you can't save over it accidentally, and so always have the "negative" to go back to.

File Naming Protocols

- It is wise to save new files with the same prefix and numbers (but add a suffix) as the original.
- This way, the two similar images will always remain side by side in your folders when arranged by name.
- For example, the "tweaked" version of IMG_1234.jpg should be "saved as" IMG_1234b.jpg, or something similar.

Step One – Open the Image, Check “Levels”

- Levels is the best tool for examining exposure. It shows the histogram, and allows you to make adjustments (Image>Adjustment>Levels).
- Drag the left and right sliders to, or near, the edge of the histogram.
- Unless the photo is of a uniformly exposed, non-contrasty subject, DO NOT USE AUTO LEVELS! Auto levels can blow the image out.

Step One Alternative

- The new version of Photoshop (CS2) has exposure compensation. (Image>Adjustments>Exposure).
- You can use this tool instead of Levels, or even with it.
- Adjustments are made just like you would when taking the image – by opening up, or stopping down in increments.

Step Two – Using Your “Fill Flash”

- Beginning with Photoshop CS, Adobe introduced “Shadow/Highlight Recovery.”
- This incredible tool acts much like a fill flash to bring out detail in dark areas.
- It tends to work much better on recovering shadows than it does highlights.
- It is a dangerous tool – too much use of it will make your images look bizarre, introduce noise, and alter luminosity and color.
- Carefully used, it is an amazing asset.

Step Two (and a half) Bring On The SUN!

- Although I don’t usually do this for photo submissions, you may want to add some “sunlight” to photos you’re printing.
- This is done either through Photoshop’s own Photo Filters (Image>Adjustments>Photo Filters, or through after market plug-in filters for Photoshop.

Step Three -- Removing Dust Specks

- In earlier versions of Photoshop, select either the Clone Stamp or Healing Brush tool. Set brush size to slightly larger than the specks.
- Make sure “Aligned” is checked.
- Alt-Click next to the speck, place brush over the flaw, and click again.
- The new Spot Healing Brush in CS2 doesn't require the use of the Alt-Click to establish the sampling spot.

Step Four – Color, Saturation and Contrast

- Sometimes an image needs adjustment to hue, saturation or contrast.
- Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation, or Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast.
- A better way to adjust contrast is to go to Filter>Sharpen>UnSharp Mask and set the sliders to 20-50-0.
- You can always use the “fade” feature to reduce any of these effects.
- As with the other tweaks, make only very minor adjustments.

Reducing Noise

- All digital images have noise. It is akin to grain in film.
- High ISO images have more noise.
- Blue skies are particularly troubling, even at lower ISO settings.

Step Six -- Sharpening

- Almost all images benefit from sharpening.
- But sharpening can introduce “artifacts” and “noise.”
- When preparing images for submission, use a very low level of sharpening.
- When making prints, sharpen at a much higher level.

Sharpening Continued...

- Do not use the “sharpen” tool – use “unsharp mask.” (Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask)
- Unsharp Mask has three sliders: Amount (amount of sharpening); Radius (how many pixels out from the edge that will be affected); and Threshold (the lower the number, the more intense the sharpening).
- Good settings to start with are 85-1-4.
- When sharpening, zoom in to 100% so you can evaluate changes being made.

New in CS2 – Smart Sharpen

- The new version of Photoshop has a better sharpening tool – Smart Sharpen (Filter>Sharpen>Smart Sharpen).
- Only two sliders; Amount and Radius.
- BUT...you can choose the type of blur to remove. For us, that’s lens blur. This yields even better results than Unsharp Mask.

Step Seven -- Copyright and Captioning

- To add a copyright notice and caption that will stay with the image once saved, go to File>File Info.
- This is one task that is very easily automated, which we'll cover under "actions."
- The Web Gallery feature will add a watermark copyright notice across the face of images automatically, but only if the copyright information is filled in during this step.

An Aside...Copyright Watermark

- If you want to manually add a copyright notice to an image, select the type tool.
- Click on the center of the image, type the notice (you can select font and size).
- Go to the layers palette, select the layer with the typing, drag opacity slider left to about 30%.
- Flatten image and save.

Understanding Resolution

Resolution refers to the density of pixels in an image. It is a measurement of ***height x width*** at a certain pixel density (also known as pixels per inch/ppi).

But digital images have no real absolute size or resolution – only a certain number of pixels in each dimension. Change the PHYSICAL size of the outputted print, and the resolution changes.

Understanding Resolution, Part 2

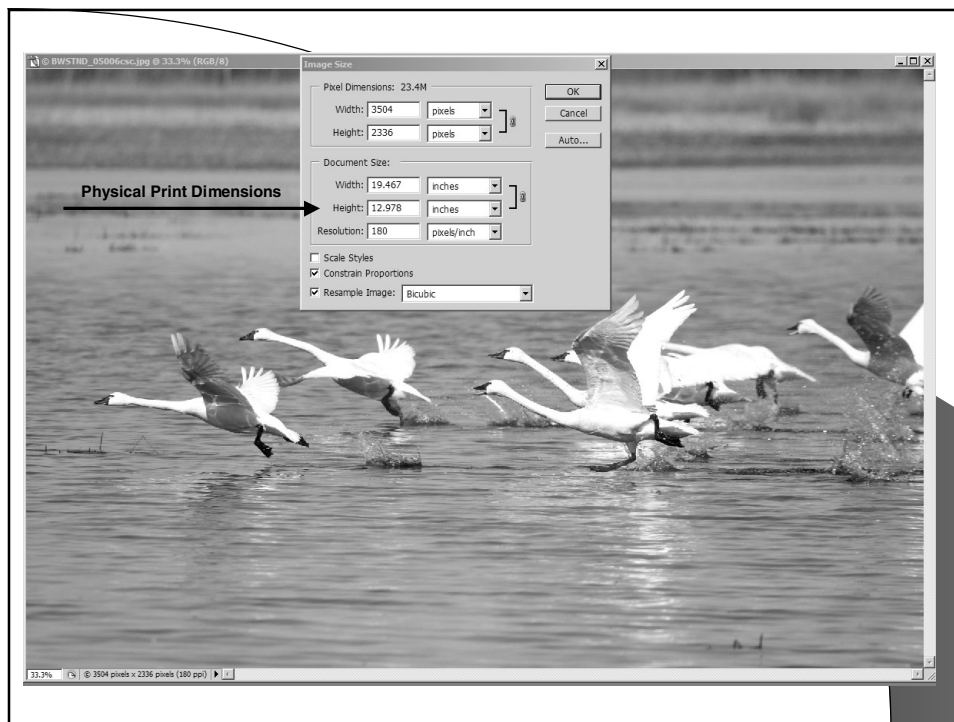
Imagine an image as a cup of coffee. In a mug, it is about three inches across (a small photographic print). Spill the same amount on your desk, and it now is two feet across (a big photo print). Same coffee – different dimensions.

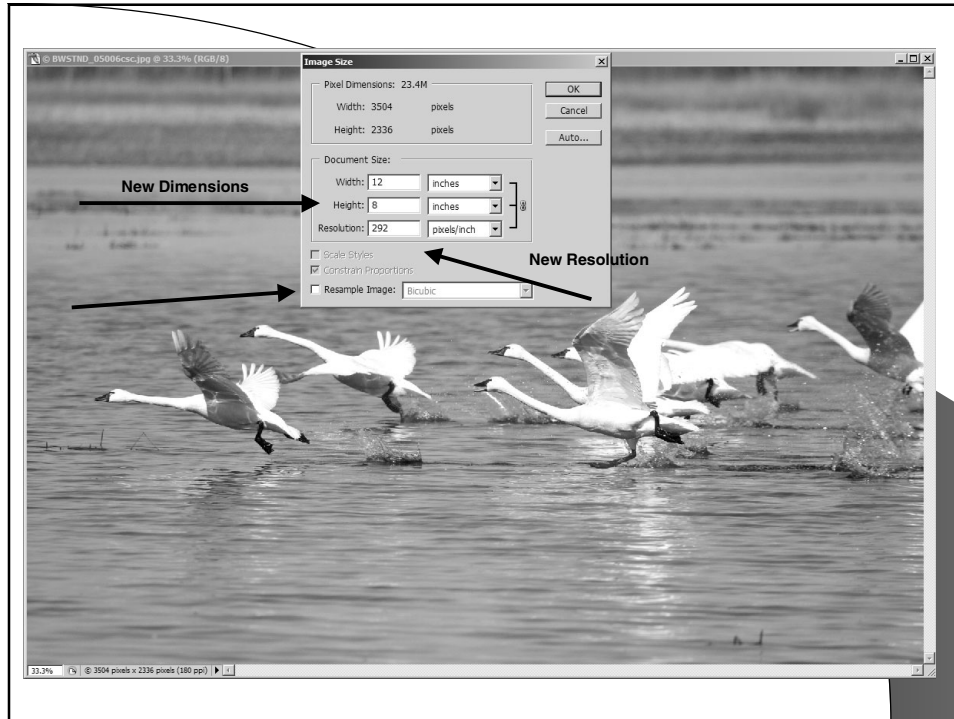
But – in the mug, the coffee is dark brown and looks nice (high resolution). Spilled, it gets “thin” and no longer looks as rich (low resolution). Somewhere in-between is a resolution that will give you the biggest puddle of coffee that will still retain its rich, good looks.

So...change the output dimensions (print dimensions) and the resolution (number of pixels per inch) goes up, or down, depending upon which way you're going.

Resizing

- Resizing doesn't change the number of pixels, it only changes the output size.
- Go to Image>Image Size.
- Make sure "resample" is NOT checked.
- Enter the new dimensions.
- Click OK.
- Notice that if you're going down in physical size, pixels per inch goes UP.



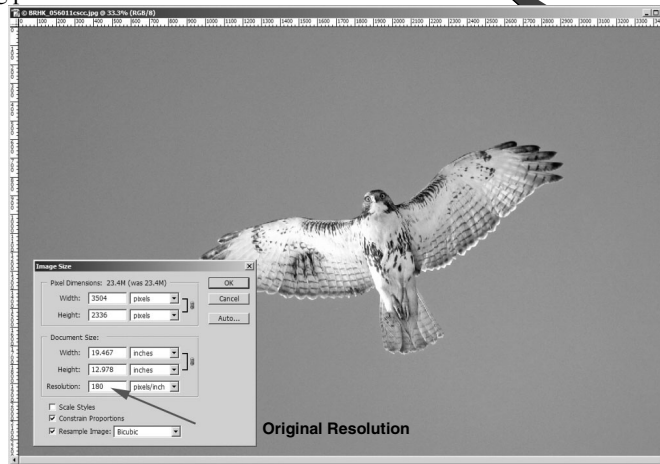


Resampling (Interpolating)

- Resampling, or interpolation, does change the number of pixels – it ADDS pixels to the image.
- This is done by “filling in” with new pixels that the program determines are the “best fit” from surrounding pixels.
- This is not something that should be done for a photo submission; but is more commonly used in print making.

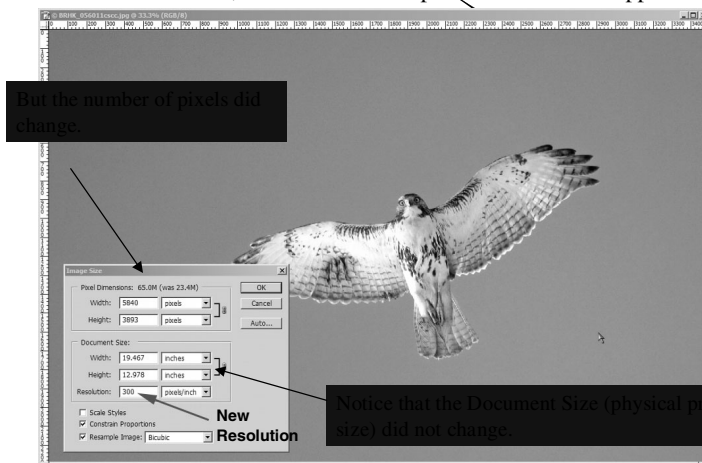
How To Interpolate

To interpolate an image in Photoshop, place a check in the boxes beside Constrain Proportions and Resample Image in the Image Size dialog menu, and select Bicubic interpolation from the drop-down menu. Now, when you change the Resolution (below, set at 180 ppi) to a higher number, the Pixel Dimensions at the top of this menu will change. You are adding pixels.



The Result

In this instance, I increased the output resolution to 300 ppi.



Actions and Plugins

- One of Photoshop's big advantages over other image editing programs is that it allows you to automate repetitive tasks.
- One feature is called "actions" and they are easy to create.
- The second feature is called a "plug-in" and these are usually a mini-program designed to work within Photoshop.

Writing Actions

- Go to the Action Palette, select "new action."
- Give the set a name, give the action a name, and record it.
- Go through the steps you want to record.
- Generally, do not record "save" or "save as" in the action.
- Click the "stop recording" icon.

Turning Action Steps On and Off

- You can easily customize an action as it performs its steps by clicking a step “on” so that it pauses there for tweaking.
- This does not change the original action settings.
- You can also combine two or more actions, or actions and a plugin.

Creating Web Galleries

- Photoshop makes it easy for you to create galleries for your website, or for burning to a CD to send to a publisher.
- Put the desired images all in one folder.
- Go to File>Automate>Web Gallery.
- You can arrange them in a particular order if you do it in File Browser or the new Adobe Bridge.

Making Contact Sheets

- Just as in creating web galleries, put all your images in one folder.
- Go to File>Automate>Contact Sheet II.
- Select>Folder then navigate to that folder.
- Select the number of rows and columns, which changes the size of the images.
- You can print the contact sheets, and also save them as an image.

Optimizing Images for the Web

- Images can be manually resized, and reduced in quality but...
- Photoshop's optimizer is easier.
- Open an image, and go to File>Save For Web.

Practical Photoshop Review

- Check levels, exposure;
- Bring out the shadows – fill flash;
- Adjust contrast, hue or saturation;
- Remove dust specks and other imperfections;
- Remove noise if needed;
- Sharpen lightly;
- Caption, add copyright information;
- Save file with a new name.

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