

PHOTOSHOP FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Part 1 Basic Workflow

According to Wikipedia, the concept of workflow goes back to Adam Smith, but the term Workflow is very much a 21st century application. Back in “film days” I dropped 10 or more rolls of film through the film slot at Baboo Labs in NYC’s photo district. The next morning one of my photo assistants would have the transparencies laid out on my light box ready to select and ship to the client. Life was simple then.

Now I come home from a shoot and process my own images. At 3:AM my nose hits the keyboard and I wake up to a screen full of gggggggggggggggs. Seriously, with all of the advantages of digital photography comes the additional burden to the photographer of doing his or her own processing to get the best possible images. This new advantage and additional work creates the need for maximum efficiency and organization.

The photographer’s workflow as I see it, has 3 major parts. 1. Preparing the camera equipment for maximum creativity. 2. Processing and storing the images for output. 3. Output. In the exercises that follow we will be mostly concerned with the processing and storage stages, but not ignoring the camera equipment preparation.

Camera Equipment Media cards, uploading, storage systems, and other good habits

- Lots of Media Cards. If you consider the money you have spent for camera equipment, then think about how you would feel if you ran out of space on a trip because you didn’t want to spend the extra money for large capacity media cards. Remember, you can no longer borrow a roll of film from a friend. But that’s a good thing. One of the great advantages of digital photography is its freedom of continuous shooting. I fill a 4GB media card in a typical day’s shoot. I occasionally fill two 4GB cards.
- Set your camera’s color profile to Adobe RGB-1998. Some cameras are factory set at sRGB IEC61966, which is a narrower standard that works well on monitor screens and projectors. It is OK to downgrade to it for your slide shows, but upgrading from it to Adobe RGB-1998 will not improve your images to the RGB-1998 standard.
- Another almost essential piece of travel equipment is a DVD burner. I use 4GB media cards and a Delkin DVD BurnAway. When traveling, my SOP is to begin burning the day’s take before supper, and clean and repack equipment after supper. I am then ready for another sunrise session.

Computer hardware

At home, a large capacity computer is a must. An important factor in improving your skills is to take many images—often. You will eventually need extra HDs (hard disks). I now use 2 internal and 4 external drives, and I’m running out of space. Why so many? In my case (which could possibly become your case), although I have all images backed up on DVD disks, I constantly need quick access to just about any image I ever made for stock sales. Your needs may not be as imminent, but if you plan to sell stock photography, large capacity HDs are handy storage devices.

- One 300GB Main HD containing programs and first Scratch Disk*.
- One 1TB (one terabyte) external HD for downloading all RAW files and new film scans.
- One 500GB external HD for storing stock and working “My Pictures.” This disk is backed up continuously with DVDs.
- One 250GB internal second HD for “intermediate**” .psd files and current work storage. This portion is backed up continuously with DVDs. This disk also serves as a second Scratch Disk.
- One 200GB and one 160GB external HD for finished, ready for publication images.
- One 1TB external HD for backing up all critical working and stock files.

Of course you won’t have to run out and buy these hard disks all at once. But you will find that HDs fill up fast. Buy as needed. Don’t worry, they’re getting cheaper.

* A Scratch Disk is the HD space that stores the work in progress. Each time you perform an operation or add a layer, Photoshop treats it as another step and saves the previous step in the “History” of your work. These “History” steps act as buffers that you can retrieve if you have gone overboard in your corrections
** Intermediate files are files that are worked to a point where they may have a future use that is not currently determined. They contain all Layers and History that may be changed at a future date.

Software

Photoshop is not just for photographers. Graphic designers, illustrators, art directors, artists, counterfeiters, and many other people use Photoshop. There is something for everybody in Photoshop. But, because we are photographers we should set up Photoshop especially for us. The following adjustments to the default settings should be made before beginning to work in Photoshop.

- Go to **Edit/Color Profile** and change the default color profile to **Adobe RGB-1998**.
- Go to **Edit/Preferences/General** and set: **Units** to “inches,” and **History States** to “40.”
- Open any image and go to **Image/Adjustments/Levels**. Double-click on the black eyedropper in the lower right corner of the panel that pops up. A color palette will pop up. In the three boxes labeled R, G, and B, replace the “0” with “10” (see Fig. 1-1). Click **OK**. Back in **Levels**, double click the white eyedropper and replace the “255” in each box with “245.” Click **OK**. Back in **Levels** again click **OK**. A pop-up box will ask: Save the new target colors as defaults? Click **Yes**.
- Also see Part 2, **Workflow Defaults** for Camera Raw settings.

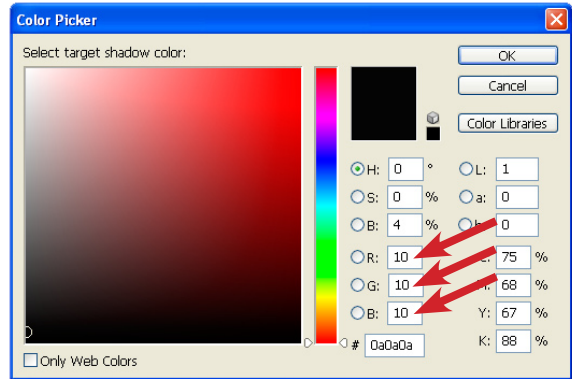


Fig. 1-1

ALSO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH:

- A list of shortcuts and the ability to customized your own shortcuts can be found at **Edit/Shortcuts** in the main menu, or by keyboarding **<Alt+Shift+Ctrl+K>** There’s your first shortcut.
- There is a list of keyboard shortcuts for use as a desk reference, and a formula for how to write an **Action** (algorithm or macro) and use **Batch** automations in the Appendix of these workshop notes.

Photoshop Topics:

- Bridge (Part 2): Organizing, rating, and selecting images, slide shows (Class review).
- Camera Raw (Part 3): Image refinements. tools (Class discusion--when and when not to use them).
- Layers (Part 4): When and how to use layers and adjustment layers.
- Channels (Part 5): Panoramas the hard way, using Channels to enhance detail . . .
- Creativity (Part 6): Blending images, montage, gradients . . .
- Special Effects (Part 7): Composites, typography, and lots of fun stuff . . .

Feel free to use the images that are in the Images folders on the accompanying CD throughout the exercises that follow in Parts 1 - 7, and to practice your skills. Keep in mind, however, that they are copyrighted and not to be sold or used commercially.

If you have any problems working with these lessons, please call me at 407-658-4869. Best times are Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday between 7:30 and 9:30 PM.