

5 One-Click Tricks with Photoshop Elements

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We do all our own photography, and one of the reasons we can is because we use Photoshop to process all of our photos. I'd be the first to admit that the Photoshop learning curve is steep. I was fortunate enough to start off with it way back on version 1.0, but I still only use a very small fraction of its capabilities, and really, for what we do, the full version of Photoshop is massive overkill, plus it's hugely expensive.

However, several years ago, I also began using Photoshop Elements, a much less expensive and leaner version (Amazon currently has it for around \$70), and I've found it to be much simpler to use, while still having a lot of the amazing power of the full version.

Here are some examples of simple tricks that can save photos:



Here we were dealing with a big dumpster in the driveway. I could have pushed it out of the way, except it was heavy and I'm essentially lazy - so I made it go away with Photoshop's spot healing tool, which uses "content-aware fill". You wouldn't believe what "content-aware fill" will do in the full version, but in Elements, it's great for dumpsters and trash cans, extension cords in the formal living room, competitor's real estate signs, etc. And it is a one-click fix...usually.



I have a recurring problem making sure the camera is straight. Photoshop has a couple of nice ways to custom rotate a photo to correct that. It's more a two-click deal though - you have to crop out the empty corners, but that also is really easy.



Interior lighting is always a challenge. I really don't like bright light sources, like ceiling lights, in the photos, because they tend to distract, so I shoot in natural light, with a flash, when I can. If the picture is too dark, a simple slider tool lets me adjust brightness in shadows and highlights separately as well as contrast.



Whenever I use a flash, there is a danger that the color balance will be off. Sometimes it's subtle, as in the example above, and sometimes it's way, way off. Either way, color correction is simple - there is an auto-correct option, an eye dropper tool, or a simple slider tool for hue, saturation and lightness adjustments. They're all pretty easy to use.



And finally, I like my pictures to be sharp. But when you take photos in high resolution, and have to post them in a much more practical size, you're going to lose sharpness as a matter of course. So after I re-size the photos to be internet-friendly, it's a one-click auto-sharpen, and they look much better.

The examples above are just a small fraction of the tools available in Elements. It's packed full of useful stuff, along with a ton of filters, special effects generators, and sophisticated text tools, and is a ton of fun to fool around with.

I'm sure there are other photo editing tools out there that are similar, but I'm really happy with Photoshop Elements. I think that with a couple of hours of going through the basic tutorials, you'd be happy too.

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