

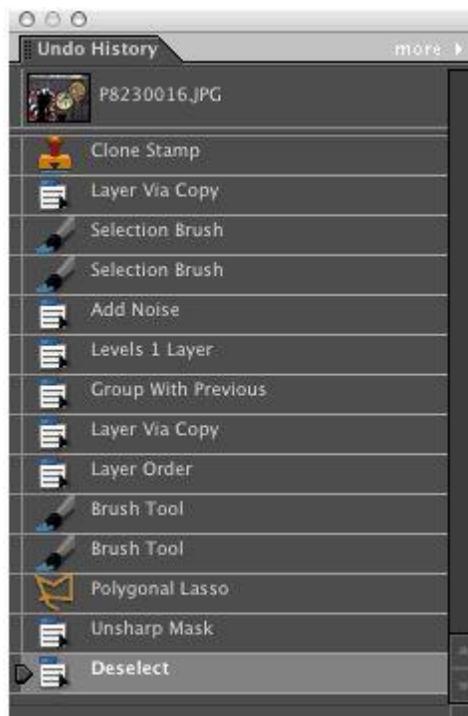
NEWSLETTER

September 2014



Undo History Palette

The Undo History palette can be a lifesaver if you realize you made some changes to your current image that you want to get erase. Of course if it was just the last change you made you can press Control+Z to undo it, but if it's a few changes back you would have to start all over again. However there is the "history palette" that reflects each change you have made since opening your work. Each time you perform an operation that actually changes the pixels of your photo it gets added to the bottom of the Undo History palette. So your most recent change is at the bottom and your oldest change is at the top. Photoshop Elements won't add things like changing tools or changing zoom which don't affect the pixels.



To go to a previous state just start pushing up the slider located on the left of the palette until you get to where you want to revert to. You can also just click on the state you want to go to. When you go to a previous state all the states below it will be grayed-out. You can return to any of those states by clicking on it or by using the slider. Once you perform a new operation you lose the option to return to a grayed-out state and you will begin from the currently selected state.

Notice at the very top of the palette is a thumbnail of your image as it appeared when you first opened it, with its name next to it. By clicking on the thumbnail and then on the bottom state you can see the before and after of your image. If you click on the thumbnail and then perform an operation without returning to a previous state it will be like starting all

over because your previous actions will be lost.

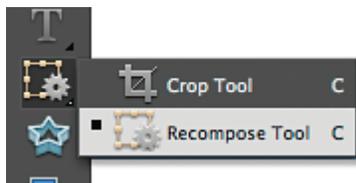
The Default setting for the Undo History palette is 50 actions or as Adobe calls them “states”. After you do 50 operations the top state will be deleted as new ones are added to the bottom of the palette. You can change the default by going up to the Menu bar and choosing Photoshop Elements>Preferences>Performance. When the dialog window opens go to the History States field and make your change. By lowering the number of states your computer might run faster because each state uses some of your computer’s memory. If your computer speed isn't adversely affected leave it at 50 or even increase it to give you more options to revert to.

If you are curious as to what the “cache levels” are it is the number (between 1 and 8) and is used to improve the redraw and histogram speed. Choose more levels for better speed or less for better quality. The default is 4.

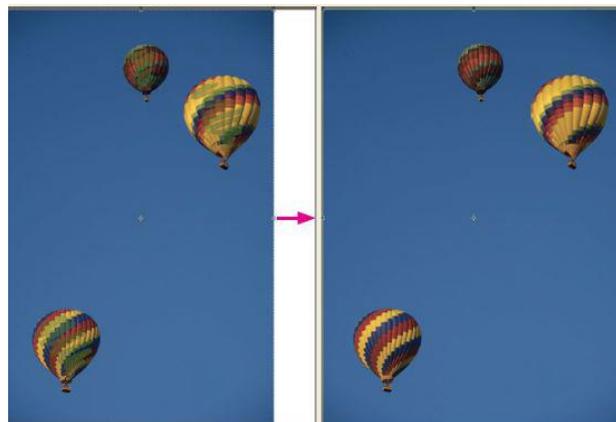
Note: The image above is from Elements 10 but other versions are similar however the setup is slightly different in Elements 12 but the reasoning and results are the same.

Stretch Photos the Smart Way

For times when you don't want to crop, the Recompose Tool (C)—which is nested with the Crop tool—does a great job of stretching a photo to fit a certain size. For example, I use it when I have to print a large image but my photo doesn't fit properly. Rather than cropping and possibly losing important details around the edges, I



simply use the Recompose tool to stretch the background. To keep the objects in your photo (such as the balloons here) from also getting stretched, use the “Mark For Protection” option to paint over important parts of the image. This locks them down (as seen in the green scribbles on the balloons).



The green squiggles in the left image show areas that are protected. Now when I drag the handles to expand the image, only the background details change, adding more space between the balloons (right).

Organizing Your Photos

If you're a photography nut like me, your hard drive probably has thousands of digital photos floating around in it. That doesn't even take into account what you have on memory cards, flash drives and external drives.

As I'm sure you've discovered, this leads to an important question. How do you keep your photos organized?

Grouping them in folders is a basic solution, but that only lets you organize them one way. What if you have them organized by date or event, but you want to only see ones with certain people in them? You're back to square one.

Rummaging through dozens of folders and hundreds of photos to find the one you want isn't a very good way to spend your precious time.

What you need is a program made to organize images. It will help you tag your photos so you can re-organize them in seconds. You won't have to be locked in to just one system.

With that in mind, here are some free organizing programs you'll might want to try.

Let's start with the ones that come with your computer. Microsoft has the Windows Essentials Photo Gallery for Windows 7 and 8 that makes it easy to tag and sort your photos. You can even do basic editing with cropping, color adjusting, and red-eye removal.

Macs have iPhoto, which provides much the same function as Photo Gallery, with tagging and sorting available as well as editing. [Click here](#) to learn the details of how that works.

There are also third-party programs available for both systems if you want to do more organizing with your photos. One of the best is Google's Picasa.

When you use Picasa for the first time, it will scan your hard drive and build a collection of thumbnails from your images. It automatically organizes the thumbnails by date. From there, you can organize your photos into event albums or sort them by the people in them.

Adding photos to an album is as simple as dragging and dropping selected photos. Remember you can move multiple files at once using the Shift key and clicking with the

mouse to select multiple photos to drag and drop. [Click here](#) to learn more handy keyboard and mouse shortcuts.

Once the pictures are in an album, just drag them around to put them in order.

Identifying people is simple with Picasa's facial recognition. You can name a person once and Picasa will tag them in other photos where they appear. You can then select their name in the left column to see only photos of them.

Additionally, you can give your photos titles other than the default file name. "Aunt June, 1949, Chicago" will be a lot easier to find later than "IMG00602.JPG."

Tagging your photos is a good practice. Tags are descriptive keywords that describe what's going on in the picture.

Keywords for the Aunt June picture might include "white dress" or "in the garden." That can help narrow your search when you're thumbing through 125 pictures of Aunt June.

One thing many people have trouble with in Picasa is that albums only appear in Picasa. So if you uninstall Picasa, your organization goes away. Your pictures will just be in folders like they were before.

However, you can use the File>>Export Album feature to send your organized album to its own separate folder on your hard drive. You can even tell it to number the files so they stay in the right order.

Yes, this creates duplicate files on your drive, but if you're putting files on an external drive to share with family or using them for another project like a photo book, it's a handy feature.

Once the images in your library have descriptive titles and tags, get in the habit of creating titles and tags for photos as you import them to the collection.

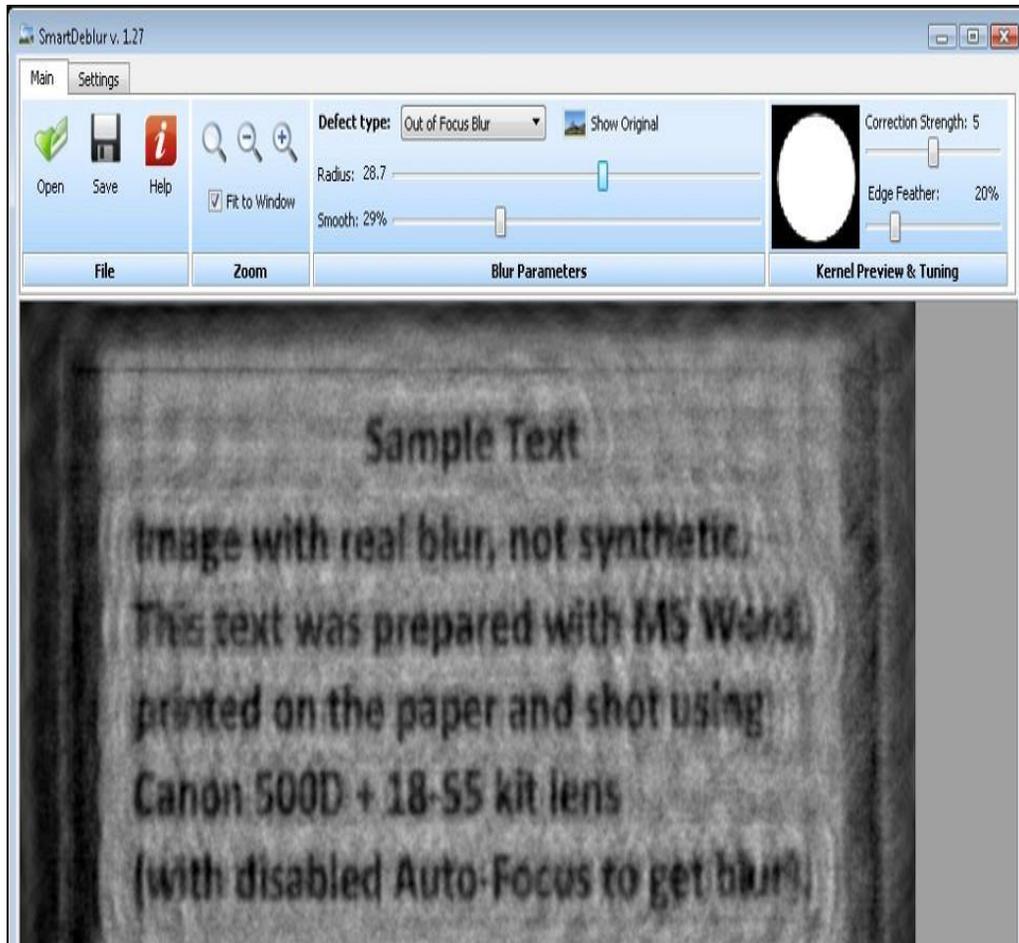
Of course, if you want to organize your photos on a smartphone or tablet, you'll need an app. iOS and Android have built-in photo apps, but they might not be as powerful as you'd like. Instead, take a look at the simple yet powerful Tidy app. (Do a Google search to find it).

Photos are priceless. They're snapshots of time and events that will never happen again. So the last thing you want is to lose them in a computer crash or disaster.

That's why you need to be making a backup. Moving them to a DVD or external drive is a good step, but that still leaves them vulnerable to thieves, floods, fires and other catastrophes. You can continue with the "belt and braces" philosophy forever but there

are many cloud storage services available and we will take a look at them in another newsletter edition.

Fix Blurry Photos Like Magic



I'm sure you're familiar with that scene in every police movie and TV show where a computer whiz "enhances" a tiny, blurry photo to reveal a key detail that helps crack the case. It's one of my biggest Hollywood tech pet peeves

To be fair, though, this one isn't entirely a myth, as SmartDeblur proves. This free download really can sharpen a blurry photo so you can see what it is. It can even make blurry text readable.

If there was only a little blur in the picture to start, you can sharpen it up enough to be usable. For really blurry photos, you wouldn't hang it on the wall, but you could make out text or see who was in the shot.

SmartDeblur uses advanced math to work its magic, but you don't have to understand any of it. Just pick the type of blur defect and move some sliders around until everything looks as good as it can get. Then save it and you're done.

To download SmartDeblur, go to the [SmartDeblur](#) home page. There are two versions: SmartDeblur 2.2, which is paid, and the older version SmartDeblur 1.27, which is free. You want SmartDeblur 1.27, so scroll down to the SmartDeblur 1.27 section (its well hidden so watch carefully or just [click here](#) for a link. Then click the link "SmartDeblur-1.27-win.zip." Install the software and you are ready to go.

You can start with an example file to get a feel for how it works, or you can dive right in with your own files.

Deblurring (is that a real word?) does take time, so be sure you're waiting for the preview window to update completely before you make more changes.

Handy Google Applications

We all use Google for searching but there are many other features available. A couple of my favorites:

1. **Google translation.** Need a quick translation of a word? Go to the normal Google search page and type in "translate (word) to (language)" in the search bar. For instance, you could type "translate apple to French." Google will let you know in less than a second that "pomme" is French for apple. It also includes a small speaker icon that will let you hear the word if you aren't sure how to pronounce it.
2. **Google definition.** When you don't know what a word means, don't reach for the dictionary. Type "define (word)" into the Google search bar, such as "define tintinnabulation" and you'll have the definition instantly - it's "a ringing or tinkling sound," if you were wondering. You'll also get pronunciation, part of speech, and you can click the gray arrow for more information, including word origins.
3. **Google conversions.** Whether you're cooking or helping your child with math homework, odds are you're going to have to convert units of measurement. On the Google search page, enter a search like "convert eight ounces to cups" or "convert 10km to mi." You'll have your answer instantly, and you can even tweak the numbers and units after the fact.
4. **Exclude search terms.** Google's algorithms are really good at searching the Internet to find the information you're looking for. Sometimes, though, I'm sure you get frustrated because you keep getting popular results that just aren't right.

Tweak your search using the minus (-) symbol. Just put it before any words you don't want to show up. Say you want to search for "puppies," but don't want to see sites that sell them. Just type in "puppies -sales" and you're set.

Well that is all for this edition, we should be starting our monthly meetings this month so check your e-mail for details. Remember contributions and ideas for the newsletter are always welcome so don't be bashful!