

NEWSLETTER

December 2013



PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS 12

I guess you are all aware of the latest edition and we did talk about it at the September meeting and also the October meeting but for those of you who aren't good at attending here is my take on the new version and upgrade recommendations.

Now as you all are aware the Adobe marketing department found that by releasing a new version of Elements every year around the first of October made it very easy for people who don't know squat about the program to purchase it as a Christmas present for those who do know squat. Of course the people who do know squat are far too polite to ask for the receipt so that they can change the software for something they really want so sales of Elements are a very nice profit source.

With each new release of Elements Adobe issues a glowing description of the new features which either users will not be able to do without or will improve workflow tremendously. Frequently improvements have been made to the organizer which in my experience many Elements buyers do not use. Additionally some "improvements" are more like patches for glitches in the program, changes to the screen appearance or small additions of things that you will use rarely. For example changing the color scheme in 11 to a much lighter version was heralded as a major change. Truth is that the dark and hard to read scheme in versions 6-10 was very unpopular but it took Adobe 5 years to listen to their customers!

So what is new in Elements 12?

For the first time Adobe are offering a download "upgrade" from previous versions (I believe from version 8 onwards) for \$79.99 instead of \$99.99. I am not sure how this works for installing on two machines (which has always been allowed in the past) and I will try to find out.

As with some previous editions Adobe has made a big deal out of changes to the Organizer. They also stress the capability for uploading directly to Facebook and to smart phones. I am not sure how important these are to people; I know I have no interest whatsoever!

The main changes to the editing are:

- Content aware straightening
- Content aware moving
- Auto Smart Tone
- Pet eye correction

None of these are particularly mind-blowing or things which I think you will be using often. Do I think this new version is worthwhile? I think it depends on what version you have now. On a scale of 0 to 5 where 0 = definitely should not upgrade and 5 = definitely should, I think anything prior to Elements 9 rates a 4; Version 10 rates a 3 and Elements 11 rates a 2.

If this sounds a little mean I have to say I'm not against upgrading when there are, in my mind, worthwhile upgrades but I would stress that unless one of the new features is a "must have" I would wait and see what version 13 will bring. After all the new features in version 12 will be there and hopefully some new feature(s) you really like.

A VERY USEFUL WEBSITE

Gone are the days when every gadget and appliance came with a manual, now you are lucky if the box the object came in describes the content in English! However there is a very neat website which has literally hundreds of manuals for a wide range of products. Although they don't have much for computer software they do have manuals for many laptops, printers etc. as well as a great variety of common household appliances and gadgets. If you have bought a new thingamajig and now want to know how to work it this is the [place to go!](#)

ANOTHER VERY USEFUL WEBSITE

Now that you have the new thingamajig there is a mysterious condition that comes with many of them that is called "the day after the warranty expires or whenever you cannot find the receipt syndrome" where the unit begins behaving erratically or refuses to perform completely. I find that going onto the manufacturer's websites and trying to find information is frequently an exercise in frustration as they all seem to be convinced their product is flawless and the

consumer is stupid! However I have found a website that can help. **IFixit.com** has step by step repair guides for cameras, cell phones, laptop and desktop computers plus some general household items. There are forums for asking (and answering) questions about all of these plus troubleshooting guides. Although probably not the answer to all your questions it sure is a good place to start. Get more details at ifixit.com.

WINDIRSTAT

Cnet, one of my favorite sources for reviews of freebies and downloading them has given this software which allows you to Identify how much disk space you're using 5 stars. Their review reads as follows:

QUOTE: WinDirStat. Based on the Linux application KDirStat, this great piece of freeware offers you an informative visual display of your hard-drive usage. It can also analyze your local devices. Depending on the size of your disk, the initial WinDirStat scan may take quite a while, so be prepared to go grab a cup of coffee for 5 to 10 minutes.

When you return, you'll see all of your files (for the drive or directory you decided to scan) displayed in a rainbow of colors. WinDirStat assigns colors to each file type, such as MP3, ZIP, EXE, JPG, and so on. By default, the files that take up the most space are colored blue, the second heftiest are red, and the third largest green. After the first 10 color-labeled file types, the rest appear in gray--but you can change these settings and colors through the Options menu.

Once you've identified where your disk space has gone, you can then more easily decide where you can save space. WinDirStat is loaded with features for managing your files, such as the ability to automatically delete files without even bothering with the Recycle Bin. It's one of those tools that you didn't know you needed until you started using it, but once installed, it's hard to imagine life without it. UNQUOTE

To download visit the Cnet website [here](#).

TESTING A PRINTER

When you put in a new cartridge into your printer it is advisable to run a test page to ensure the color (or black) is working correctly. Of course when you run a test page you print out not only the colors but also a full sheet of text. I know this sounds parsimonious but that is wasting ink and it goes against my Scottish blood to waste anything!

This is pure genius. If you need to test a printer or a new color cartridge, fire up your browser, head to Google.com and print the homepage. It has all the colors while using very little ink. Of course, on days when there is a Google doodle, you can always search for the Google logo instead and print that. Of course you will use the whole sheet of paper but in a pinch you can use the reverse side for another test (now that is miserly!).

NASA ON INSTAGRAM

Here is a nice website with some incredible pictures. NASA decided it would post images from space (and lots of from the ground which might not be so interesting) for everyone. I found some of the pictures from space fascinating and I'm sure you will too. Take a look [here](#).

SHORTCUTS

Thanks to Peggy Johnson for this tip. I think we are all familiar with the "Missing Manual" series of books which were dreamed up by David Pogue. He actually writes the Windows manuals and is also the Technical Editor for the New York Times. At a recent TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference he was a guest speaker and his subject was shortcuts. In this short but very informative video he covers a lot of shortcuts for computers and smart phones in a humorous presentation. Take a look at the video on YouTube [here](#).

PROCESS EXPLORER

If you've ever tried tracking down a process in Windows Task Manager, you know it's like looking for a needle in a haystack. Process Explorer makes the job a lot easier. This freeware utility displays running processes in an intuitive tree format that includes not only process names, but also program icons and other data, such as description, image, and processor time.

It also can identify the process for a given application window or look up a process name in Google--a handy way to spot spyware. The latest version, more than three years in the making, introduces several new features. You can now drill down into the multiple svchost processes and see what each one is controlling via mouse-over tooltip, learn which Internet Explorer 8 process controls which tab, and a new .NET assembly information tab under Properties for assistance in .NET troubleshooting.

Additional features offer detailed information on performance, DLLs, threads, handles, TCP/IP connections, security settings, and environments. Despite its lack of visual polish, Process

Explorer is one of the best Task Manager replacements we've seen. See a video tutorial on YouTube [here](#). The program can be downloaded from Cnet or many other sites.

Well that is all for this edition I hope there is something of interest for all of you. In the meantime have a wonderful holiday season and I'll see you all next year!

