

Quick Start Essentials

If you're anything like me, the first thing you want to do with a new program is dive right in. Who wants to read an instruction manual when you can experiment? If you're nodding in agreement, that's fine, but do yourself a favor and just read this short chapter before you jump in head first. You'll save yourself a lot of headaches!

There's no doubt about it, Lightroom has a mind of its own. It's a great mind, but it doesn't always think in exactly the same way that you and I do, or in the way that we're used to working with other programs, so there are a few things that you really need to understand. Read on...

The Basics

Lightroom's designed for nondestructive editing. That's to say, changes you make to your photos within Lightroom's interface aren't applied to the original image data until you export them, and even then it doesn't overwrite the original file, but creates an edited copy.

Firstly you 'import' your photos into Lightroom. That doesn't mean they're actually in Lightroom. They're still on your hard drive as normal files, and in the Import dialog you can decide whether to leave them where they are, or whether to copy or move them to a new location of your choice. To be clear, don't delete your files thinking that they're in Lightroom—they're not.

Adobe Lightroom 3 - The Missing FAQ

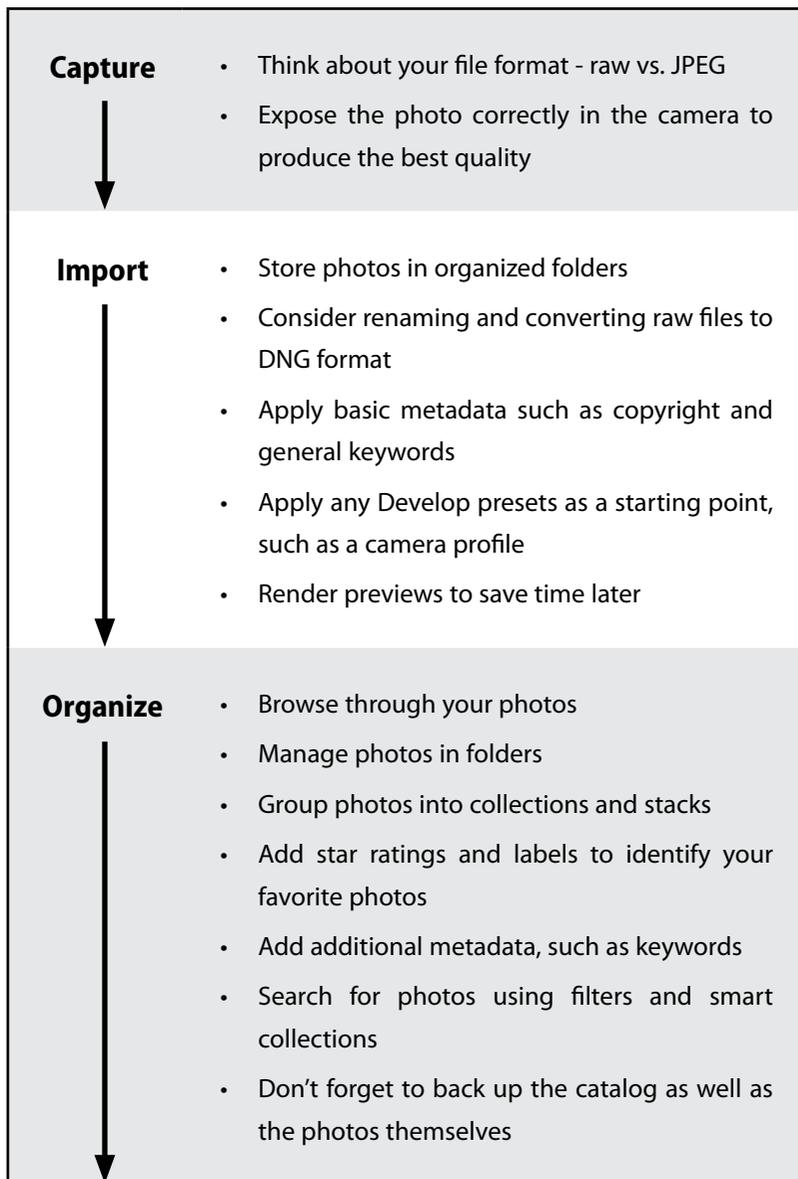
The Lightroom catalog holds data about your photos. It's just a long text database with small JPEG preview files in a nearby folder structure. It keeps a record of where the photos are stored on your hard drive, and other metadata describing your photos. That's where any changes you make in Lightroom are stored too. So next essential tip—don't tidy up your photos on your hard drive or rename them in other programs, or Lightroom will ask you to find them all. If you need to tidy up, do it within Lightroom's interface.

Next in line, you're going to organize your photos in the Library module, sorting them into groups, choosing your favorites, adding metadata describing the photos such as keywords, and then editing the photos in the Develop module. Because it's a database, you don't have to hit 'Save' every few minutes. All of the changes you make are recorded as you go along, but this isn't like resaving a JPEG over and over again, which would reduce the image quality. Instead, all of your changes are saved as text instructions in the catalog until you choose to remove the photos from the catalog. Here comes another essential—if you remove photos from your Lightroom catalog, and then import them again, all of the work you did in Lightroom will be gone. There is a partial exception called XMP, but we'll come back to that later. The main things to remember are to back up the catalog regularly, and if you lose track of the files, don't use Synchronize to remove them and re-import—redirect the links to the new file locations by clicking on the question marks instead.

Finally, how do you get your adjusted photos out of Lightroom? You 'export' them. Consider it a 'Save As'—it creates a new file in the location of your choice, in whatever file format, size and color space that suits your purpose. But that's the great thing about Lightroom—you don't have to keep different sized finished copies of every photo unless you want to, because as long as you have the originals and the catalog, you can output finished photos on demand. You're not just limited to exporting single photos either. The Slideshow, Print and Web modules allow you to create... well, slideshows, prints and web galleries. Publish

Services also allows you to keep your photos synchronized with online photo sharing websites such as Flickr.

Basic Workflow



Develop & Retouch



- Adjust tone & color
- Remove noise, sensor dust, sharpen and apply lens corrections
- Straighten & crop
- Apply effects, such as black & white or split tones
- Switch to Photoshop and other external editors for pixel based editing
- Create panoramic shots and HDR photos in external editors

Output

- Create finished files in the size, format and color space of your choice
- Use Export plug-ins to enhance your export, such as adding borders
- View slideshows and export them to video, PDF and JPEG formats
- Print to a local printer or save layouts to JPEG to print at a local print lab
- Create web galleries to upload to your website
- Use Publish Services to synchronize with Flickr and other photo sharing websites or folders on your hard drive

The Top 10 Gotchas

There are a few things that catch most people out at some stage, so I can't repeat these often enough. We'll go into them in more detail in later chapters.

- Lightroom is designed for nondestructive editing, so don't try to save over your originals.
- Lightroom doesn't 'contain' photos—it just holds data about them—so don't delete your photos from your hard drive thinking that they're safely stored in Lightroom.
- Lightroom's backups only back up the catalog and not your photos—you still need to do that.
- Lightroom's catalog is just a database and, while comparatively rare, databases can become corrupted—so backup regularly, and keep older backups for a while.
- Lightroom needs to know where the original files are, so don't move or rename files outside of Lightroom (for example in Explorer or Finder) otherwise you'll have a long job fixing all of the links.
- Lightroom will not exactly match your camera's rendering when working with raw files, as it's just raw data and there's no right or wrong way of processing it. If you like the camera manufacturer's rendering, you can use profiles in the Calibration panel to emulate that style, or you can build your own profiles to suit your taste.
- Lightroom has 2 or 3 different levels of selection—there's most-selected or active, shown by the lightest grey shade, there's the mid-grey shade denoting the photos are also selected but are not the active photo, and there's the dark grey showing the photo isn't selected. Notice the difference, otherwise you could accidentally apply a command to multiple photos.
- Lightroom's Grid view behaves differently to other views—anything you do in Grid view on the primary monitor applies to

all selected photos, whereas most other views only apply to the active or most-selected photo (unless you have AutoSync turned on—there's always an exception)!

- Lightroom's flags are local to the folder or collection, whereas star ratings and color labels are global. As a result, a photo can be flagged in one collection but not flagged in another.
- Lightroom offers a choice of different color spaces when you output photos, but Adobe RGB and ProPhoto RGB will look odd in programs that aren't color managed, such as web browsers. Use sRGB for screen output, emailing or uploading to the web.

Remember Lightroom's Rule Number 5

If you want an additional quick start introduction, visit Adobe's website and watch the short Getting Started videos at:

<http://tv.adobe.com/show/learn-lightroom-3/>

They'll give you a quick overview of the basics, and then read on or dive right in.

And most importantly, never forget Lightroom's rule number 5...

