Stone Creek Silk ©

Intro to Photoshop Elements v 10

The first thing I want to say is that there is quite a bit of information in this tutorial, especially if you are fairly new to Elements. You don't need to memorise it all now. I just want to give you an overview of how Elements is put together. Watch it through and, I would suggest, print out the pdf document so you can refer back to the details as and when you want to.

Elements is sometimes called the 'little brother' or 'cut-down version' of the full Photoshop. This is a bit misleading as it's a powerful image editing program in its own right. I've been using it for a number of years now and I'm still coming across things I've not used before.

When you first open Elements you get what's called the Welcome Screen – this gives you the option of loading either the Organiser or the Editor. Elements is made up of two separate but interlinked programs, the Organiser and the Editor. The Organiser is where you can catalogue and tag your images but we're going to start by looking around the Editor where all the creative stuff goes on. I almost invariably want to load the Editor first so the Welcome Screen gets a bit annoying. You can by-pass it by clicking on the Settings link on the top right-hand corner and clicking on Editor. Next time you open Elements you'll go straight into the Editor.

Elements' functions are split into three groups which are on tabs at the top right-hand corner of the screen.

- **Share** gives you options for sharing your images with others via email, Facebook etc. These options are actually part of the Organiser so if you select, say, 'E-mail Attachments' the Organiser will start and you'll carry on from there. We'll look at a couple of these in a later tutorial.

- **Create** gives you templates for creating things like greetings cards, calendars and so on.

- **Edit** gives you access to all the editing functions of Elements. This is where you'll spend the vast majority of your time. Edit is divided into three Modes, Quick, Guided and Full.

    - **Quick -** Bearing in mind that Elements is used by many people purely for improving their digital photographs, the Quick mode contains the automated versions for correcting colour balance or

sharpening photographs. You just tell Elements what you want to do and it makes its best guesses. You have no control over the details.

- **Guided** - Guided mode is more like a Windows wizard. If you install a printer, for instance, you are guided through the process, step by step. You have to fill in information or make decisions as you go along. The guided mode is like this.
- **Full** - In Full mode you have full control. You make the decisions and tell Elements how you want to do things. As this is a Creative Computing course we will be using Full mode right from the start. Occasionally I'll point out Quick fixes that I think are worth exploring but you don't need to leave Full mode to access them as they are also available from the menus.

General tour

At the top of the screen you'll find a row of menus, starting with File, Edit, Image and so on. Click on a menu heading to see the choices available. So, the File menu includes choices such as Open, Close, Save and Print. Many choices have a keyboard shortcut associated with them, shown on the drop down list. So Instead of using a mouse to click on File and then Print you could hold the Ctrl key down and press P. If these are things you do a lot, like printing, it's a good idea to memorise the relevant shortcut.

Tool Bar

On the left of the screen is the Tool Bar. Holding your mouse cursor over each tool will reveal a description of what it is and the associated keyboard shortcut. For instance, the T icon represents the text tool and the keyboard shortcut is also a T.

If the tool has a little black triangle in the bottom right hand corner of the icon then there are other tools hidden beneath it.

Holding your left hand mouse button down while the cursor is over the tool will reveal a drop down list showing the hidden tools – in this case the Horizontal type tool, the Vertical type tool, the Text on Selection tool and so on. Click on the one you want to use and it will come 'forward' to the tool bar ready to use.

Alternatively, if you use the tool keyboard shortcut you can use that to select hidden tools. So, the shortcut for the Text tool is T. If you press the T on your keyboard once you will select the default Horizontal text tool. If you carry on pressing the T you will cycle through Horizontal text, Vertical text, and so on.

Remember that you always have a tool selected – only one at a time. You don't deselect a tool you simply select a new one.

Options Bar

Just below the menus is the Options Bar. Each tool has options associated with it. So, if the Text tool is selected then options associated with text, such as font size, font style and font colour, are shown for you to select. If you change the tool then the options change to things that are relevant to the new tool

you've selected. If the crop tool is selected then we get options like 'aspect ratio' 'height' and 'width'. So the options are specific to the tool.

Panel Bin

On the right-hand side of the screen is the Panel Bin – in older copies of Elements panels are called palettes and the Panel Bin is called the Palette Bin.

A panel is a way to group things that you would probably use together in one place. You'll see how these work as we use them. You can decide which panels are shown in the bin. I usually work with the Layers and Undo History (see below) panels showing as I use them a lot.

When Elements is first installed the default panels are the Effects/Content group and Layers. To customise the panels to how I like them I need to remove the Effects/Content panel and add in the Undo History one.

To remove a panel from the bin, simply drag it out by its top bar. To add a new panel to the bar go to the Window menu and click on the one you want to add. It will then appear in the panel bar.

Undo & Undo History

Next, I want to talk a bit about undoing things. With the best will in the world we all make mistakes or simply change our mind. If you just want to undo the last thing you did then hold the Ctrl key down and press the Z key on your keyboard. The redo shortcut is Ctrl-Y. So if I decide I want to add some text to an image but then change my mind, I can click on Ctrl-Z to undo the text and Ctrl-Y to bring it back.

Much better though is the Undo History - this will become your friend! Each time you do something to an image then an entry is made in the Undo History. You can click up and down this list to undo and redo steps. How this works is difficult to describe but easy to see so, watch the video tutorial for a real example.

Project Bin

The remaining area to look at is the Project Bin at the bottom of the screen. This shows all the images you have open at any given time. Double clicking on an image in the Project Bin will bring it up to the main working area ready to be edited.

You will soon realise that all these bars and bins take up quite a bit of space on your screen. You can hide them, except for the Menus, by pressing the Tab key on your keyboard. Press tab again to bring them back.

You can minimise the Project bin, individually, by double clicking on the black bar at the top of the bin. Double clicking on it again brings it back. In earlier versions there was a small triangle on the top bar that you clicked once to hide/reveal the bin.

Floating v tabbed images

As for the images themselves, there are two ways you can display them. You can either have your images on tabs, just below the options bar, or in floating windows. But, in order to have floating windows you need to change one of the Elements preferences. Go to Edit | Preferences | General, turn on 'Allow Floating Documents in Full Edit Mode' and click on ok.

If you want to take an image off a tab and float it then just drag the image's tab with your mouse. You can now move it around, resize it by dragging the borders and so on. If you have two floating images you can view them side by side if you wish.

If you want to put a floating image on a tab, click and drag with your mouse and move the image slowly upward until the image goes pale and there is a blue border round the working area. Release the mouse and the image will be on a tab showing the image name, the zoom percentage and a cross. Clicking on the cross will close the image.

Help

Lastly, for this tutorial, I just want to mention the various ways you can get help. However well you know a program, there is always the possibility of forgetting how to do something or of wanting to do something you've not done before. There are a number of ways to get help:

- **You can, of course, ask me ☺.** I prefer email queries to the phone as I'm often teaching or travelling to shows. I do try to reply as soon as possible.

- **You can look it up in the Elements Help system**. If you press the F1 key at the top left of your keyboard while you are in Elements then that will take you to the online help.

  On the left is an index which will lead you to some useful, usually well written, information. Just click on the plus signs to the left of the headings to reveal sub-headings and so on. So, if I want to find out how to use the magic wand, I click on 'Selecting parts of an image', then 'Making Selections' then 'Use the Magic Wand tool'.

  You can also type keywords in to the search box at the top left of the screen, then click on the magnifying glass to search for information on your chosen subject. I have to say I find this method less than useful.

  Annoyingly, to me anyway, the Elements help is online so if your broadband is slow or, occasionally, non existent, you can't access the Help. You can however, download a pdf version of the online help.

  If you want to do this, bring up the online Help by pressing F1, while you are online. At the top, right-hand corner you'll see 'View Help PDF' – this brings up the PDF version which you can then save to your own hard disk or print. Then if your Internet connection goes down you still

have access to Elements Help.

- **You can consult a book**. I have a number of books on various Elements subjects but if I could only have one, it would have to be Barbara Brundage's book. There is a different version of it for each version of Elements and it's really well written in clear English. It's called 'Photoshop Elements 10, the Missing Manual', and is published by O'Reilly. ISBN: 978-1-449-39850-7 (for the Elements 10 version)

- **You can look on the Internet**. Just be a bit careful – there are some brilliant tutorials and resources out there, which I'll discus in a later tutorial, but some of it is of dubious quality. Also, there are often numerous ways to do any given task and it can be confusing, especially if you are fairly new to Elements, for instance, if one tutor uses menus and another uses keyboard shortcuts. Learn one way initially then, when you have a bit more experience, try the others and see which you prefer.

So, that's our introductory tour round Elements. The next tutorial will cover the basics of image manipulation.