



## Intro to Photoshop Elements v 13

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.

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 (looks like a cog wheel) on the top right-hand corner and clicking on Editor. Next time you open Elements you'll go straight into the Editor.

Starting at the top of the screen you'll see four tabs: the first is eLive which includes a range of training materials. Next come the three editing modes that you can select from:

- **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.
- **Expert** - In Expert 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 Expert 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 Expert mode to access them as they are also available from the menus.

At the top right-hand side of the screen you'll see two drop-down lists

- **Share** gives you options for sharing your images with others via Twitter, Facebook etc.
- **Create** gives you templates for creating things like greetings cards, calendars, Facebook cover images and so on.

## 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 top right hand corner of the icon then there are other tools hidden in the Options bar. Clicking on the tool with your left hand mouse button will reveal the alternatives in the Options Bar. In this case you'll see 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.

## 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.

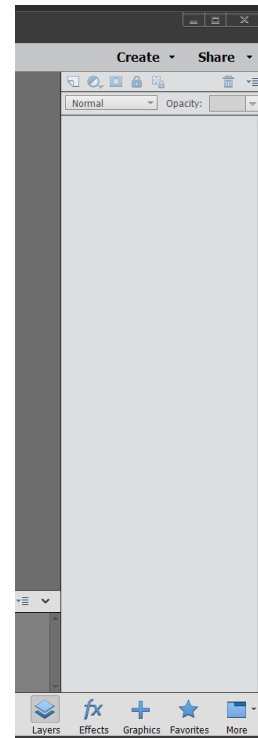
A panel is a way to group things that you would probably use together in one place. You'll see how these work as we use them. You can decide which panels are shown in the bin. I usually work with the Layers and Undo History (see below) panels showing as I use them a lot.

When you first install Elements your panel bin looks like this with the Layer panel showing plus three others permanently available by clicking on the icons at the bottom of the bin.

If you open any other panels, such as the History (previously called Undo History) then they will appear as floating panels and can't be docked into the panel bin.

In order to organise the panel bin as I prefer it then you need to click on the dropdown list next to More at the bottom of the bin and select Custom Workspace. Once you've done that you can remove the panels you don't want in the bin by dragging them out by the tab and then clicking on the little cross at the top right of the panel to close it.

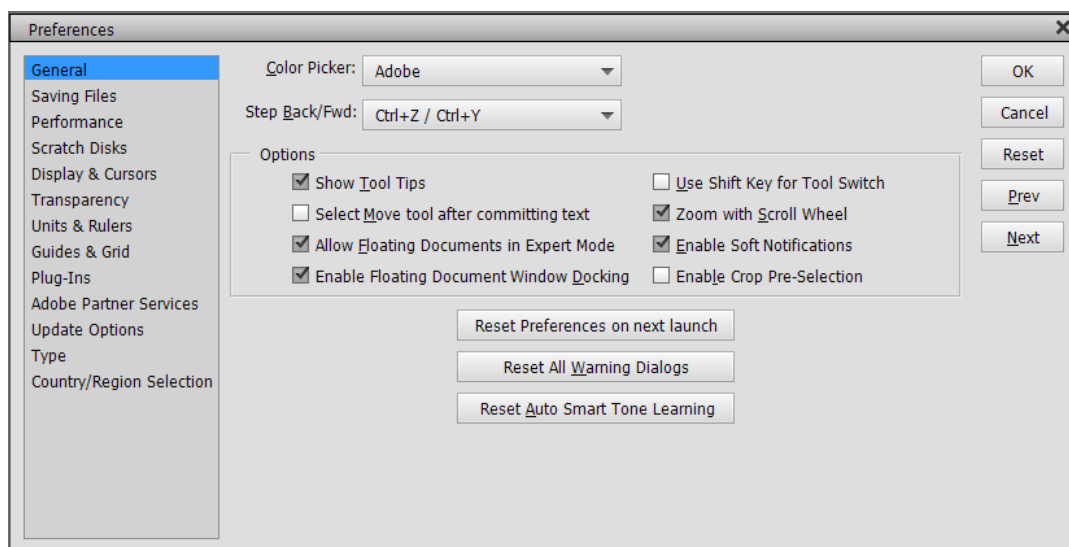
For instance I don't use Effects, Graphics or Favorites much so don't want them taking up space in the bin. I do, however, use History a lot so to get that into the bin I select it from the Window menu. It will then appear as a floating panel along with quite a few others. Drag the History tab out of the floating panel and move it up to the top of the panel bin until you see a blue outline appear, then release the mouse. History should then appear as a tab in the panel bin.



This arrangement of panels is 'sticky' so should appear this way whenever you open Elements but there's nothing to stop you putting other panels in the bin if they are ones you use regularly or are using a lot for a specific project. You can always take them out again when you've finished.

## Preferences

You'll find a pile of preferences that you can customise in Edit > Preferences. I prefer to have the General Preferences set like this:



I find 'Select Move tool after committing text' and 'Enable Crop Pre-Selection' really annoying so I switch them off but do like to 'Zoom with the Scroll Wheel' and 'Allow Floating Documents in Expert Mode' so have those switched on.

You may also want to go into Units & Rulers. I'm afraid I still think in inches so if I'm working on something that is going to be printed I set Rulers to be Inches and if I'm working on something that is going to be viewed on screen, such as an image for my web site or for Facebook then I'll set Rulers to Pixels. I usually have Print Sizes set to Inches.

These are personal preferences and you may like these set differently but I think these are a good place to start.

### **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.

Much better though is the 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.

### **Photo Bin/Tool Options**

The remaining area to look at is the Photo 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 Photo Bin will bring it up to the main working area ready to be edited.

In the same area as the Photo Bin are the Tool Options. 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.

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 Photo Bin/Tool Options by clicking on the triangle on the right-hand side of the bar top. Clicking on one of the icons on the left of the area brings it back.

### **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. 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 Expert 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, 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 13, the Missing Manual', and is published by O'Reilly.
- **You can look on the Internet.** Just be a bit careful – there are some brilliant tutorials and resources out there, which I'll discuss 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.